

“The Dead Can(’t) Dominate Like This”:  
The Ordinary Life, Cinema, Modernism and Ann Quin’s *Three*

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**Abstract**

Ann Quin は主に 1960 年代に作品を発表したイギリスの作家であり、リアリズム文学が再評価されていた戦後のイギリスにおいて実験小説を執筆し続けた人物である。本論文はイギリス文学における戦前と戦後の分断を埋めるための試みの一つであり、20 世紀半ばにリアリズムの復興の中で衰退していったとされるモダニズム文学を受け継ぐものとして、戦後作家である Quin の作品を位置づけることを目指すものである。具体的には、Quin の第二作目 *Three* (1966) を取り上げ、戦間期のモダニズムを代表する Virginia Woolf の *To the Lighthouse* (1927)、とりわけその第二章にあたる“Time Passes”と比較し、*Three* が Woolf の文学実験を受け継ぎ、かつ発展させた作品であることを示す。両作品はともに、重要な人物の喪失をその人物が不在となった後の日常生活を描くことで浮かび上がらせるものであり、その手法について映像作品における日常空間の描き方からアイデアを得ている。本論文では、内容（日常描写）と手法（映画的表現）の観点から両作品を比較し、モダニズム文学を継承し発展させた一作品として Quin の *Three* を論じる。

**Key Words:** Ann Quin, *Three*, experimental novel, post-war literature, modernism, Virginia Woolf, *To the Lighthouse*, the ordinary, cinema

The post-war period is thought to have seen the revival of literary realism behind the decline of experimental modernism. Writers and literary critics were likely to appraise realism positively “for its direct relevance to people’s lives in striving to present an accurate and truthful representation of historical and political actuality”, while regarding “modernism as escapist, elitist and obscure, and therefore antithetical to the democratic and populist values of the post-war social consensus” (Poplawski 556; Brannigan 621). The British literary scene of the period was harsh on those authors who were regarded as experimental. B. S. Johnson, one of the novelists labelled experimental in the 1960s, lamented: “*avant-garde* and *intellectual* were [. . .] considered words of abuse [. . .] in England” (Coe 281). Such a trend spread in academic studies as well, and these authors have been ignored by scholars while a sharp dichotomy has been drawn between

inter-war modernism and post-war realism in the literary history of the twentieth century.

This essay explores one of these neglected experimental novels of the post-war period: Ann Quin's second novel *Three* (1966). In my view, this work is akin to literary modernism and it is thus appropriate to compare it with its predecessors of the inter-war period to examine their linkages. I will read it in parallel with *To the Lighthouse* (1927) by Virginia Woolf, particularly its second chapter, "Time Passes" because both of these texts treat the same theme in a similar way. They both illustrate the absence of the central characters, Mrs Ramsay and S, by describing ordinary life after they disappeared from the world rather than a detailed account of what caused it. Put differently, they emphasise their absence by showing that quotidian life swallows tragic events such as death and the revelations those events could provide for other characters. In both novels, ordinary life prevails over major events or heightened moments. Furthermore, although they clearly have quite different narrative voices, both of the authors are thought to have created their narratives based on the same concept and structure under the influence of cinema. Their representation of everyday life was developed from an observation of how cinema represents the external world of quotidian life. First, I will explore the "Time Passes" section of *To the Lighthouse*, along with Woolf's essay "The Cinema" (1926). Then, in comparison with Woolf's texts, I will examine *Three*, demonstrating that by analysing it and Woolf's writings in parallel it is possible to break through to a new reading of Quin's novel. In a wider perspective, this essay is an attempt to bridge the gap between inter-war modernism and post-war literature. By shedding light on Quin and showing that her work not merely has much in common with Woolf's text but also develops some of its ideas, it will provide an example of the inheritances of modernism that the literature after the war succeeded to.

### **Cinema and the Representation of Ordinary Life in "Time Passes"**

The second section of *To the Lighthouse*, "Time Passes", is an attempt to write about the death of Mrs Ramsay not by closely observing the death itself, but rather by representing the world after it, particularly the place of everyday life or the house where she stayed. By showing the empty house where the dead lived, it emphasises the death or absence of the character indirectly yet vividly. In order to describe a world that would continue even if someone died, Woolf created a narrative based on her notions of how cinema represents everyday life: the narrative of showing the external world while disrupting the plot; the narrator seeing the world without existing in it. With that experimental narrative, "Time Passes" describes the ordinary life which continues while normalising tragic events and heightened moments.

It might be believed that Woolf, as a modernist, is concerned about expressing inner feelings or revelational moments and less interested in describing the world outside or factual details of

life. However, as scholars point out, factual descriptions of the external world in ordinary life are as crucial as the expression of the inner landscape in Woolf's fiction.<sup>1</sup> In her memoir "A Sketch of the Past", she wrote about "moments of being" and "non-being", or heightened moments revealing "some order" and "nondescript cotton wool" consisting of daily habits and routine work: "The real novelist can somehow convey both sorts of being" (Woolf, "Sketch" 72, 70).<sup>2</sup> Everyday life is a significant setting where the external world and internal visions resonate. As Olson says, "[t]o look inward, as Woolf's characters do, is not to abandon ordinariness or the external world, because inwardness of course is shaped by a myriad of external factors" (Olson 59). It might be true that intensive feelings and revelations in moments of being affect characters; yet, "shock is brief, and life is long" and therefore "the problem is how to integrate this moment back into the fold of everyday life, the place where real change can actually manifest itself" (Olson 64).

*To the Lighthouse* is one of Woolf's novels demonstrating "her interest in recording the patterns of 'an ordinary mind on an ordinary day'", and cinema gave her clues to describe them (Sim 8). David Trotter and Laura Marcus point out that the novel, particularly its second section "Time Passes", is deeply concerned with her essay "The Cinema" (1926). In the essay, while criticising a narrative film which just follows the plot, she asserts "obvious sources of interest" regarding cinema are in "the wonders of the actual world, flights of gulls, or ships on the Thames; the fascination of contemporary life—the Mile End Road, Piccadilly Circus", or the external world where "a gardener mowing the lawn outside" and "a tree shaking its branches in the sunshine" (Woolf, "Cinema" 173-74). As Trotter claims, Woolf approves cinema's ability "to show" contemporary life as it is with the audience's "attention withheld from narrative or symbolic meaning" or the plot's progress (Trotter 162). The plot structure makes the story focus on events while excluding unrelated things and trivial matters in quotidian life; therefore it is incompatible with the representation of everyday life (Olson 20-22). Woolf approves cinema as a device "to show" the factual details in quotidian life independently of the plot's progress.

Moreover, she believes ordinary life can be observed more closely "when we are not there", or from the position of the audience who 'see life as it is when we [they] have no part in it'.

We behold them as they are when we are not there. We see life as it is when we have no part in it. As we gaze we seem to be removed from the pettiness of actual existence, its cares, its conventions. The horse will not knock us down. The King will not grasp our hands. The wave will not wet our feet. Watching the antics of our kind from this post of vantage we have time to feel pity and amusement, to generalise, to endow one man with the attributes of a race; watching boats sail and waves break we have time to open the whole of our mind wide

to beauty and to register on top of this the queer sensation—beauty will continue to be beautiful whether we behold it or not. (Woolf, “Cinema” 172)

The idea of seeing the world without being noticed, as both Trotter and Marcus claim, is adopted for the narrative of the “Time Passes”: “Woolf’s radical experiment in narration [. . .] in which reality itself is presented as if in the absence of the perceiving subject [. . .] is [. . .] mirrored in ‘The Cinema’” (Marcus 148).<sup>3</sup> Imagination about the world which exists without us stimulates the author to write about the absence of “not only the objects of mourning (Mrs Ramsay, Prue, Andrew), but its subjects” (Trotter 170).

Significantly, the extract above prefigures the world that “Time Passes” represents, a world consisting of both common life and heightened moments. She writes, on the one hand, the audience can observe people’s behaviours in everyday life (“the antics of our kind”) and “to generalise, to endow one man with the attributes of a race”; on the other hand, they can see beauty and eternity in moments of being (“watching boats sail and waves break we have time to open the whole of our mind wide to beauty and to register on top of this the queer sensation”). This finding helps her to write the world of being and non-being, or to be more precise, the world where moments of being show themselves yet soon disappear in quotidian life, in the second section of *To the Lighthouse*.<sup>4</sup> In “Time Passes”, the narrator does not avoid referring to the heightened moments or tragic events; it tells that important things happen, such as the death of some family members, the outbreak of the First World War and sublime revelations about beauty. Yet, the meaningful things recede into the background of the everyday. In this sense, this section is what Sayeau calls “*antievenal*”, where “[t]he evental structures are maintained in place, but are at the same time ironically undercut, eroded from within” (Sayeau 39).

In “Time Passes”, the absent audience-narrator represents in an antievenal form the world where quotidian life swallows events and revelations. Though the oscillation between non-being and being, or between the ordinary and events, is seen throughout this section, all of the extraordinary revelations appear temporarily and are soon integrated into ordinary life. For instance, the tragic events such as the death of the central figure Mrs Ramsay are bracketed and juxtaposed with ordinary activities such as Mr Carmichael’s reading Virgil at night, disturbing the conventional hierarchy in fiction between everyday life and shocking events (105, 104). Similarly, revelational moments are always pursued by the ordinary life which can normalise them. On some occasions of quotidian life heightened moments come to reveal “significance in the landscape” or “beauty” in the external world; yet, they do not continue for long; the “dream” shrinks and “contemplation was unendurable” (110). Some revelation could possibly come to Mrs McNab, who is representative of everyday routine habits: “Visions of joy there must have been at

the wash-tub” (107). While showing the possibility of receiving a fundamental notion (“‘What am I,’ ‘What is this?’”), the narrator concludes that it disappears in her daily life: “But Mrs McNab continued to drink and gossip as before” (107). As these examples show, events and moments of being are always swallowed into non-being in “Time Passes”. They always end with ordinary life’s triumph over tragic events and the revelations about extraordinary existence.

In summary, “Time Passes” represents the loss of Mrs Ramsay by describing quotidian life with the narrator in the position of the audience of the cinema. Her death could have a great impact on the story and the life of the family, yet Woolf chose to avoid focusing on the event itself but show it indirectly by describing the abandoned house where she stayed and would do if she lived in order to expose the absence or death of the character. Such representation of absence is done by highlighting a significant function of everyday life—incorporating into itself events such as death, war and heightened moments. Although tragic events and revelational moments happen in this section, they are represented as ultimately reduced and integrated into ordinary life.

Importantly, the novel as a whole ends by striking a balance between being and non-being. In the second section, the balance is tilted towards the latter: the ordinary surpasses the events and moments of being, leading to an emphasis on the death or absence of Mrs Ramsay. Yet, as Trotter suggests, that “is the basis for her [Mrs Ramsay’s] subsequent reconstruction, through ritual enactment, through loving memory, in the novel’s final part” (Trotter 175). The next section, “The Lighthouse”, sees her resurrection in Lily Briscoe’s painting. What Lily aims at is to rescue Mrs Ramsay from oblivion in the repetition of daily life and represent her on canvas. For this aim, she needs to restore the balance between being and non-being. Sim suggests that Lily’s attempt is “to maintain a dual and paradoxical perception of ordinary things that sees them as at once familiar and known, yet miraculous” (Sim 12). In the final section, “the ordinary is a site that can be not only mundane and familiar but also extraordinary” and the oppositional concepts of being and non-being form “a positive, dialectical relationship” (Sim 13).

### **The Ordinary and Cinema in Ann Quin’s *Three***

*Three* has a similar structure to the “Time Passes” section in *To the Lighthouse*. The central issue, the supposed suicide of a girl called S, is represented by describing ordinary life after she disappeared. She lived with a middle-aged couple, Ruth and Leonard, for some reason, and went missing when the three stayed together at the couple’s seaside villa, The Grey House, at the end of summer. The couple open her journals for clues to why she went missing, but they cannot form any clear idea about her tragedy. Although the disappearance of S and shocking events cast a shadow on the couple’s life, ordinary life and repetitional habits swallow these events in the end.

The novel is comparable to “Time Passes” in both story structure and narrative. As Woolf

does in “Time Passes”, Quin represents ordinary life as a space which normalises events and revelations to expose the absence of S. She also created a narrative for this purpose with ideas she gained from cinema. According to Nonia Williams Korteling, “Quin was an enthusiastic viewer and analyst of European art house cinema”, and it influenced the narrative of *Three* (Williams Korteling 83-84). Similarly with Woolf’s, Quin’s novel shows quotidian life in an antievental structure with the narrator beholding without been noticed. Moreover, in Quin’s work, this narrator is relevant to the contents: while in “Time Passes” the narrator tells what s/he sees from the position of the audience without being involved in the story, the narrator of *Three* could be the central but absent character herself. In short, it is S that speaks as the invisible narrator. After disappearing, she becomes the ghostly figure or transparent narrator who observes the couple’s life without being seen. In this sense, Quin develops the idea about the audience-narrator and builds it into the story. There are little biographical sources published about Quin except an autobiographical essay, “Leaving School”, and an interview with Nell Dunn. Although she refers to Woolf in the essay, saying “Virginia Woolf’s *The Waves* made me aware of the possibilities in writing”, it is hard to decide the extent to which Quin was influenced by her writings (Quin, “Leaving School” 64). Yet, even if unintentionally, Quin shares and develops the ideas and concepts of “Time Passes” to create a new novel in the post-war period, which exemplifies that literary features of modernism are inherited by writers of the post-war era.

*Three* consists of two different alternating types of sections: one of the everyday life of Ruth and Leonard after S disappeared, and the other for two types of journals she left in the house, a taped recording and a written diary. In the sections of the couple’s life, the third-person narrator describes details of their everyday life in a prosaic style and never tells their inner voices. By contrast, the first-person poetic narrative of S’s journals is full of fragments of her thoughts. The temporal settings differ between these two sections: the couple in the fictional present and the journals in the fictional past. However, it needs to be borne in mind that the story pivots on the former even in the sections of the latter, for these journals appear on the page only when Ruth or Leonard reads or listens to them in the fictional present. Hence, the time and place of the novel are always set in life after S’s disappearance. This temporal structure implies that the focus of the novel is not on the event itself but on the life of the couple after it.

Critics tend to focus on the voice of the journal sections. For instance, Andrew Hassam attends to “the diary as an open structure which itself questions realism” (Hassam 136). He reads the work in the context of female writing, seeing its poetic diary as an example of “a fantasy discourse that [. . .] enables women to transcend the limitations of a masculine realism” (Hassam 139). The frame is clear and convincing, yet it might not fully explain the uniqueness of Quin’s inner speech. According to Philip Stevick, it is in the function of “mind as a theater”: “mind, in

Quin, tends to organize itself as a reflection of *sensory* experience”, and the external world is represented through the mind as something “unfamiliar”, “eroticized”, “fragmented” and yet “merging into another thing” (Stevick 232, 237, 234-35).

While these previous studies analyse the inner voice in the journal sections, they rarely shed light on the descriptive sections of the couple’s life or dismiss them as “the background information to the diary sections” (Hassam 135). However, the sections of the couple, which constitute half the novel, should be considered as significant as those of the journals. Williams Korteling attends to the couple’s sections, pointing out that the narrative was created under the influence of cinema. She refers to one particular film as an influential source, *Last Year at Marienbad* (1961), and mentions it must have inspired the author to describe “close detail stripped of temporality” in order to represent the world losing reality and reveal a “continuum between the real and imaginary” (Williams Korteling 85).<sup>5</sup> This suggestion is crucial; and yet, by reading the novel in parallel with *To the Lighthouse*, the influence of cinema can be considered differently. In my view, representing “close detail” of quotidian life independently of the plot is not a means to demonstrate that something “real” turns out to be something “imaginary”; instead, such representation is used to show ordinary life as it is and reveal that non-being (“real” life) prevails over moments of being (“imaginary” visions). Moreover, cinema should be important to consider the narrator of the novel. As I will show, the narrator of the couple’s sections is comparable to the cinematic narrator or “monstrator-narrator” (Gaudreault 34). This comparison, which casts light on the transparent narrator who sees the couple without being seen, helps to notice what is implied in the text. That is, this invisible narrator should be S, who left the couple’s house for another world of reflected images or the world of cinema. After leaving the couple, she becomes a ghostly figure who sees their life without being seen to tell the result of her disappearance. Unlike that of “Time Passes”, the narrator of Quin’s novel speaks inside the story as the important character.

The couple’s life is narrated “in the showing mode, [. . .] evok[ing] in readers the impression that they are shown the events of the story or that they somehow witness them” (Klauk and Köppe). Showing is a narrative mode that focuses on what can be observed from outside, such as actions and appearances of characters, and rarely reveals their inner feelings directly; therefore, it requires the reader to “infer” their “traits” (Klauk and Köppe). The following scene of their dinner exemplifies that the couple’s life is told with the narrative of showing.

They slid the sides of the table out, lit the candles in their glass containers. The flickering of the television, he watched, she fed tidbits to the cat, who stretched and purred from the buffalo pouffe. Now and then Leonard burst into laughter, rocked himself backwards, forwards, held onto the table. More potatoes darling? Don’t mind. Yes or no? She stood

beside him, over him. (14-15)

Indifferent to the characters' inner voices, the narrator clings to objects and actions. Significantly, as in "Time Passes", these details do not contribute to the plot's progress.

Such description might appear to defamiliarise their ordinary life: it might seem that, as Stevick points out, "[t]he merest detail seems unfamiliar", or, as suggested by Williams Korteling, the "setting, filled with familiar things, becomes unfamiliar, made strange" (Stevick 234; Williams Korteling 89). However, in my opinion, the narrative of the couple's sections itself never highlights the details in order to "recover the sensation of life [. . .] to make one feel things, to make the stone *stony* [. . .] to make objects 'unfamiliar'"; it avoids giving such an effect of defamiliarization (Shklovsky 12). Or, it is rather in S's journals that the couple's life is defamiliarized. In the couple's sections, the details in their everyday life are shown with "list-like narration", or what Olson calls "a purely factual style" (Williams Korteling 88; Olson 35). According to Olson, it is a suitable style to represent the ordinary because lists "defy the possibility of [. . .] a narrative event, ever occurring"; they "equalize all of the items listed" and "[t]he equality of the list works against the desire to read and interpret particular elements of the novel as more or less important" or extraordinary (Olson 35). The narrative of showing, in other words, is used to avoid defamiliarization and represent the ordinary life of the couple as it is.

Instead of defamiliarising, it exhibits their quotidian life in detail while undermining the importance of events with an antievental structure. Although *Three* is based on the framework of a suspense drama about a family, it rejects the reader's expectations that what happened to S will be revealed and that the couple's cold relationship might change. The narrator as a whole refuses to provide any clear answer to the supposed suicide of S, nor tells of any shifts between the couple even after their reading S's journals and Leonard's violent rape of Ruth. The last scene of the couple's sections implies these events that could have changed their relationship are normalised and incorporated into their everyday life. Ruth has left home after the rape yet returns there, while Leonard is reading the newspaper with an article that a female body supposed to be S's has been found but the case remains under investigation. The section ends with the quotation of this article, leaving many things about the event remain uncertain.

As the couple's sections show, *Three* and "Time Passes" have in common the narrative feature—representing ordinary life in an antievental structure with the narrative of showing. Using such a narrative and structure, they both show that quotidian life integrates events into itself to emphasise the absence of the important characters, S and Mrs Ramsay. As I will illustrate, S is the one who tries to bring change or revelations to the couple's stable but frozen life; yet their stability is too strong and her attempt results in her succumbing to the assimilating power of their

quodidian life. The last section of Ruth and Leonard is followed by the final section of the written journals, which ends with “I know nothing will change” (143). This novel does not reveal the secrets of S’s disappearance nor allow her to break their life of “nondescript cotton wool” (Woolf, “Sketch” 70). The last passage of the journals indicates the severity or cruelty of the ordinary through which she disappeared from their life. In *Three*, as well as in “Time Passes”, ordinary life always triumphs over events and revelations.

Each couple’s section alternates with a journal section expressing S’s inner thoughts and revelational visions. The oscillation between the ordinary life of the couple and S’s heightened visions is repeated throughout the novel as in “Time Passes”. Furthermore, these journals reveal that she had incompatible feelings towards the couple’s life, which also represents the conflict between ordinary life and revelational moments. S knew the life of Ruth and Leonard is non-being kept by their everyday habits: “nothing really varies inside the house. Even moods between them can be regulated, recognised, stemmed from an action, non-action, each might consciously or unconsciously perform” (136). On the one hand, she found it attractive because it could give her protection against her anxiety: “A recognisable nausea provokes the desire to become something in their lives, anything. Everything” (60). However, living with them, she also felt the need to defy their “cotton wool” life that lacks emotion and change, writing “[t]o see their cotton wool faces, zipper mouths expand, shrivel, contract. To throw their salt-cellar out of the window, drill through their soundproofed walls” (63). She aimed to disturb the life of the couple and bring imagination, emotion or what might be called “moments of being”: “This is no less imagining. But a situation I long to wade in right up to the very limits of imagination if possible. Gain another level, an added dimension, preferably bringing them both with me. How far can the emotions stretch though?” (62).

As a person “[p]ursued by a compulsion to jeopardise such a bourgeois stronghold”, she saw herself on the side of trespassers who unsettle the couple’s life, wishing she could have “join[ed] in them” (61, 136).<sup>6</sup> She found the routine life could be animated by the trespassers: after their act of vandalism “for the first time the gardens look alive. Even the statues seem human” (136). The trespassers mirror her, who tries to endanger the fortress of cotton wool the couple have built, bring some change and make it “alive”. Her final decision to go to a lake near the Sugarloaf mountain means that she chose to leave the couple and “join in” the trespassers. The trespassers are represented as a part of a storm: “Then they came. In the middle of a storm. [. . .] Then they left. When the storm passed”; “Clearing the mess. Trespassers make. Orchids. The pots. Broken. Difficult to tell whether a storm had been the cause. Or not” (103, 102). The storm came from the mountains near the lake (this storm began with “the rumble of thunder. / Released from the mountains”) (103). It is a place full of life and emotions, “making trees at times appear human”,

where the couple and S attempted to go together several times but failed because of accidents or bad weather (136). She gave up her ambition to go to the lake with them and decided to refuse their life and go there alone. Her final attempt disturbed their cotton wool life, and yet, as she expected, even her disappearance cannot change it; as stated above, the showing narrative representing their life in the fictional present denies the possibility to bring change.

Hoping to heighten the life of Ruth and Leonard, S chose to go to the lake and join in the trespassers to oppose those who cling to everyday habits—this is the ending of the novel and is also where the novel begins. By taking into account the framework of the story in the fictional past, it becomes possible to have further notions about the narration of the couple's sections. My hypothesis is that by going to the lake S gains the position of the invisible narrator who "behold[s] them as they are when we are not there" to tell their life after the event (Woolf, "Cinema" 172).

Interestingly, Evenson and Howard relate the narrative of the couple's sections to that of cinema: "[t]hese sections of Ruth and Leon together are carefully rendered by a cinematic, third-person eye, so that even when Ruth and Leon are in separate places, their narratives run parallel through alternating paragraphs" (Evenson and Howard 60). This suggestion that the novel shows their life as if by arranging the different shots of different scenes indicates that there is the invisible narrator who manipulates the narrative of those sections. Criticising the idea that cinema only shows and so has no narrator to tell, André Gaudreault asserts as follows. "[T]he cinema contains [. . .] two types of narrative": "monstration and narration" or showing and telling. Monstration is "micro-narratives (the shots)" or "the material [. . .] recorded by the camera (= the monstrator)"; then, "the editor (= the narrator)" creates narration by editing them (Gaudreault 32-34). The narrative of monstration or showing in the couple's sections, which appears to be "carefully rendered by a cinematic, third-person eye", makes the narrator invisible; however, there should be the one who constructs the narrative, arranging those detailed descriptions in order to tell that "nothing will change".

A scene in couple's sections where some of S's voice record is repeated suggests that the narrator "'speaks' through the articulations" or editing (Gaudreault 33). As Williams Korteling points out, it is "not quite exact repetitions of earlier on in the transcript" (Williams Korteling 102). There are slight changes of punctuation marks and line breaks; more importantly, some phrases are omitted ("Never before. Not like this. No one has touched me ever / never") and some added ("Then the rush of it. Demanding more. But without asking") (114, 118). This manipulation is comparable to editing of digital audio. Her tape is edited: the narrator edits taped recording with its fragments removed, spliced or rearranged. This suggests that the narrator of those sections not just shows the couple's life independently of the plot but also tells it through such manipulation.

Yet, these changes of S's voice cannot be fully explained by the art of editing. Inexplicably,

the narrator adds some phrases voiced by S that would not exist in the original journal tape. This psychic phenomenon seems to indicate S's existence as a ghost. She thought that by going to the lake she could become "a body to [. . .] never be discovered, or for anyone ever to be certain" (139). Her coat found with a note in its pocket is the only one clue that suggests her suicide, and her body has not been found until the last scene of the couple's sections. In short, she is bodiless or invisible throughout the sections of the fictional present, and no one can say whether she still exists or not. Because of such ambiguity, she is represented as a ghostly figure. Though Leonard tries to drive away her shadow and says "the dead can't dominate like this", she is still with them as "an invisible third" who could "misle[a]d" them (3, 57). For instance, at dinner, although only the couple are in the house, Ruth "nearly brought three plates in—strange" (48). Similarly, Leonard rushes to the street because he "[t]hought I [he] saw her [S]—could have sworn it was her crossing the street just now [. . .] [was] confronted by someone you've thought dead" (80). For the couple, although S disappeared, she is still there, existing as an invisible presence.

What is more important about the uncannily edited tape is the fact that through some mysterious process S speaks even after disappearing. This inexplicable phenomenon suggests that S not merely exists as a ghostly figure haunting the couple but also speaks, or shows and narrates, their life from the lake, the place she is supposed to be during the period in the fictional present. She went there not just to disturb the couple's life while knowing "nothing will change" but also to see the consequence and tell it as the narrator of the couple's sections.

The lake where she has gone is a place of reflection, or an insubstantial place made of reflected images. The lake "[i]sn't marked on the map", and "looking so unreal, at times not like water at all, but a strip of steel, or just a field of blue flowers" (104, 134). The possibility that it is a reflected image is emphasised repeatedly. It looks like "[a] piece of glass" or mirror: "it might have been a mirror flashing in the sun" (110, 141). S could see it by projecting on the backs of her eyelids: "If I closed my eyes I could see the lake, that flat piece of stillness, glinting in sun, as though a particle of the moon had fallen" (143).

By going to the lake, on the one hand, she becomes a shadow on the screen, or a member of the trespassers who are compared to an insubstantial figure. As Williams Korteling suggests, "[the trespassers] are not real, complete people, but a blur of faces, arms and legs [. . .] [doing] cartoon-like, exaggerated violence [. . .] as 'images flickering on a screen[]'" (Williams Korteling 110). And S, after disappearing from life, literally becomes a shadow reflected on screen. The couple have several reels of film with S in them, and at the end of one of the reels, she transforms from a living figure into a shadow: "[S on the screen] dived into a huge wave [. . .]. The film slowed down. He [Leonard] stared at the square piece of light on the wall, in the middle flecks of black like hair" (90). It could be an interesting coincidence that Woolf, watching the German

expressionist film *The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari*, sees such an “unintentional” and “accidental” shadow “shaped like a tadpole” on the screen as a new possible expression for emotions: “The monstrous, quivering tadpole seemed to be fear itself, and not the statement ‘I am afraid’” (Woolf, “Cinema” 174). This is what she believes cinema lacks and so future cinema should gain. Coincidentally, Quin seems to deploy this idea in *Three*, where these shadows try to bring emotions and revelations into the frozen life. The acts of the trespassers are thought a result of exploding emotions, “giving vent to years of repressed feelings” (137). They are to change a place of apathy to one of emotions. This would be what S means by “[g]ain another level, an added dimension, preferably bringing them both with me”.

As a shadowy presence, she haunts and affects the couple. In the fictional present, the most significant means by which to intervene in and disturb their life is her journals, which her absence lets them read. These diaries could possibly give the couple a shock to change their apathetic life, for they could make them think about themselves. S noticed in the past that Ruth was shocked when she saw faces “frozen” like herself. The “white faces frozen” of passengers on a train “in that timeless area between one point and the next” are a mirror of her face living in the house where “nothing really varies”. This confrontation of self could “[interrupt] [. . .] [h]abits they [the couple] parcel up” (102, 136). The recognition that the couple with “frozen” faces live a cold life endangers the place of security, disturbing with a shock the life constructed neatly by their habits. Reading S’s journals, the couple come to examine their life. For instance, Ruth confesses in her diary that she feels that S has threatened the “security. A home we [the couple] have built up together”; yet, at the same time, she realises the fact that the secure fortress is built on “a certain smoothness in day to day living” which robs her of “laughter”, a means to express her feelings (124). Such reflections on their life shake their relationship. A slight change of her attitude upsets Leonard: “What’s happened to—happened to us Ruth lately what . . .” (127).

However, as S expected, the couple’s life never changes after all. Going to the lake, on the other hand, she gains a position to see the result of her attempt. For her, the insubstantial place is not just “unreal”. “[S]een only from the far distance” when she was with the couple, it looked “unreal” (134). And yet when she “[c]rossed over the breakwater” alone and went outside the couple’s territory, she found that it had a different reality: although it looked a “flat piece of stillness”, “it could be touched” (143). More importantly, it “would not be fragmented by my [her] touch” (143). This notion, which suggests both nearness (“could be touched”) and remoteness (“would not be fragmented by my touch”), is quite similar to Woolf’s idea about cinema: the audience can see things closely and clearly as if they were near enough to touch the objects they see, but “[t]he horse will not knock us down. The King will not grasp our hands. The wave will not wet our feet” (Woolf, “Cinema” 172). Going to the place with this reality is a means for S to

take a new position from which to see the life of Ruth and Leonard without belonging to it. S is the character inside the story; she is absent from the scene as a character living with them but present there as the narrator, showing the life after leaving them and tells the consequence, “nothing will change”.

The scene referred to above, where the couple view the photos and films of S, indicates that S has taken part in “another country” which looks like a reflection on the screen when seen from the couple’s world (140). Yet, it also suggests that the couple, watching the screen, might be seen by someone while they do not realise. Ruth asks Leonard, suspecting his voyeurism: “Did she [S] know you were taking it? [. . .] Strange how she never faces the camera always her head turned away” (84). If someone could observe another secretly, those seeing could also be observed by the seen on another occasion. In this scene, the couple watch S moving on the screen, and yet they are seen by the narrator whom they do not notice. In a metafictional way, Ruth’s question leads the eyes of the reader to the one who should narrate. This anonymous narrator’s position echoes the state S attempted to reach by going to the lake. S saw the place the couple lives as “the country” and the lake “another country” (143, 140). These countries are adjacent to each other and located in the same world. People in the former can look into those in the latter, and vice versa. She exists in another country, seeing while being unnoticed by them.

Significantly, S’s narrative in the tape-recorded journal sometimes exposes its similarity with that of the couple’s sections. On some occasions it becomes merely lists of ordinary objects and everyday actions like the narrative of the sections in the fictional present.

Sofa. Flora-pregnated. / Chippendale chairs. Unchipped. Upholstered in blue. / They call turquoise. / Persian rugs. Second skins. For them. / Warm napkins / Silverware pawns. Salt-cellar dominates. / Rooms soundproofed. / Paintings / not hung / too small. Not small enough. But still-lives she used to do. / Burglar-proofed. / China plates / on the wall. Glass doors. Concealed lighting. White curtains / transparent. / Nursery done in egg-shell blue. Empty. / A special place for the cat. Never used. / Visitors. Change of linen. Every other day. / Existence bound by habit. (20-21)

Knowing that their life is bound by habits, she represented in the form of a list those objects and unconscious acts which maintain the life as in the sections of the couple. Furthermore, her never using the first person “I” in the tape recording brings it close to the narration of the couple’s sections. While the reader knows the speaker of the tape is S and so identifies the narrator as her, it is actually a voice of an invisible presence or ghost who has never been given a name or clear identity (she is just called S throughout the novel), like the narrator in the fictional present.

Reflecting S's expectation, couple's sections show that their quotidian life prevails over the events and revelations. It describes the life of the couple after her disappearance in an antievental form, listing their movements, actions and objects. Such a narrative might appear to be given by a mechanical third-person eye like a camera, recording the external world objectively. In "The Ontology of the Photographic Image", André Bazin says:

Originality in photography [. . .] lies in the essentially objective character of photography. [. . .] For the first time, between the originating object and its reproduction there intervenes only the instrumentality of a nonliving agent. For the first time an image of the world is formed automatically, without the creative intervention of man. (Bazin 7)

However, there is always one who handles the machine, even if "[t]he personality of the photographer enters into the proceedings only in his selection of the object to be photographed and by way of the purpose he has in mind" (Bazin 7). Cinema, consisting of shots by a camera, is neither objective: to borrow Gaudreault's words, it is "a complex of [. . .] monstration and narration" and so "the narrator 'speaks' through the articulations" or editing (Gaudreault 34, 33). The narrative of the couple's sections echoes S's notion that their life will never change, and so the narrator is not an objective recording machine. In order to show the triumph of everyday life over shocking events, it is an important strategy to show their life prosaically. The narrative reflects S's consciousness and represents her perspective; or she could be the narrator of the couple's sections.

As much as "Time Passes", *Three* utilises the narrative of showing the external world and the concept of seeing without being noticed to describe both quotidian life and possible revelations. And it confirms the same ending: the former prevails over the latter. Moreover, in Quin's novel, the central figure, S, is the narrator seeing while unnoticed, and in this sense the narrative is connected to the contents it tells. As she did in her journals in the fictional past, the narrator S represents conflicts between ordinary life and possible revelations in the fictional present. It might be possible to say that *Three* as a whole is the *third* journal of S, who shows and tells the couple's life as the narrator. As the two journals record oscillations between their ordinary life as a fortress and the revelational events brought by S and the trespassers, the novel as a whole shows that these conflicts continue by juxtaposing the external world in the couple's sections and shocking imagination and dream-like representation in the journal sections. All three journals—the taped recording, the written diary and the novel as a whole—trace S's attempt to bring some emotions and revelations into the life of Ruth and Leonard, and reach the same conclusion: "nothing will change" (143).

Meanwhile, it should be noted that there is a significant difference between *Three* and *To the Lighthouse* as a whole: the former concludes that the ordinary swallows the extraordinary, and the latter not. As I stated above, though ordinary life prevails over the events or revelations in the “Time Passes” section, the proportion between non-being and being is recovered to recall Mrs Ramsay on canvas in the final section, “The Lighthouse”. By contrast, *Three* does not salvage S from the oblivion of everyday life. In this novel there is no Lily Briscoe who can restore the lost person by reconstructing her image from memory or her journals. Ordinary life swallows the events and possible moments of being without exception. In this respect, Quin’s novel might appear closer to postmodernist literary works, in which “universal, overarching explanatory systems and ideologies [. . .] have come to be seen as narratives that lack credibility and adequacy” and so eternity or revelations found in moments of being are rejected (Shaffer 7). However, *Three* still retains in its narrative framework conflicts between non-being or fragments in daily life and revelations that unites these fragments into animate life. In this sense, Quin is a successor to literary modernists, inheriting and developing a legacy of them.

In summary, *Three* has much in common with the second section, “Time Passes”, of *To the Lighthouse*. Both represent the absence of important characters by describing ordinary life after they disappeared. In these works, everyday life always swallows events or revelations. In order to tell such a story, these writers created with clues gained from cinema a narrative of showing quotidian life and a narrator seeing it without being seen. Significantly, Quin’s work inherits these ideas from Woolf and develops them by linking the absence of S with that of the narrator to create a new experimental novel.

## Notes

- <sup>1</sup> Recently, scholars such as Liesl Olson, Michael Sayeau, Bryony Randall and Lorraine Sim have argued that everyday life is an important content of literary modernism.
- <sup>2</sup> For Woolf, representing the external world or everyday reality is necessary to express a character because “[r]epresenting ordinary experience becomes the means by which characters are best revealed, an idea at the heart of Woolf’s essays on the novel” (Olson 65). In her view, tragedy or heroic events are not suitable for expressing a character. Woolf writes about the ex-husband of her mother Julia, Herbert Duckworth, who died three years after the marriage: “like all very handsome men who die tragically, he left not so much a character behind him as a legend. Youth and death shed a halo through which it is difficult to see a real face—a face one might see today in the street or here in my studio” (Woolf, “Sketch” 89). In a great event like a heroic death, character cannot be revealed; it is in an ordinary situation such as “in the street

or here in my [her] studio” that the character can be expressed.

- <sup>3</sup> Marcus links this idea of seeing without being noticed to “realist film theor[ies]” by critics such as Stanley Cavell and Alexander Bakshy (Marcus 113-116).
- <sup>4</sup> Trotter confirms the link between the representation of common life and cinema, claiming the key concept of “Time Passes” is that “one might grasp the commonness of the common life by means of a principle (or theory) of constitutive absence” (Trotter 169). I agree with this idea, and yet I feel his argument seems in a rush to equalise “the common life” with “beauty” or might not take into consideration the concept of being and non-being. In my view, ordinary life is *not always* represented as beauty in her novel; rather, it is a space which allows beauty to show up at *some* moments but soon normalises it in the repetition of daily life.
- <sup>5</sup> Although there is not enough space for details, *Last Year at Marienbad* (1961), written by Alain Robbe-Grillet and directed by Alain Resnais, should be significant not only because it is a cinematic work that influenced *Three* but also because the writer Robbe-Grillet was an author of the Nouveau Roman. Critics have compared Quin to the authors of the Nouveau Roman, pointing out their conducting formal experiments around the same period of time (Evenson and Howard 53). This topic is of great importance, yet in this essay I will focus on showing the traces of modernism in Quin’s novel.
- <sup>6</sup> This novel was published in 1966. Since the 1950s class had become a leading issue in the literary industry in the UK as shown by the playwrights and novelists called the “angry young men”. It is possible to read *Three* in the context of class conflict because the nouveau riche couple’s life is criticised in the story. However, Quin herself denied the alignment in an interview conducted when she was writing the novel, saying what she finds interesting is not the class system itself but the habits and behaviours of everyday life (Dunn 133-134).

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