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Ann Quin's *Berg* and Stewart Home's *69 Things to Do with a Dead Princess*: Schizophrenic Text-Types

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- 1 Among the few critics who cared about Ann Quin in the otherwise uncaring 1980s was Philip Stevick whose seminal article "Voices in the Head: Style and Consciousness in the Fiction of Ann Quin" (1989) records an anecdote in which Quin's psychiatrist, treating her after a breakdown in 1970, ordered copies of her novels to be used as therapeutic material. A request not so naïve once we consider how across all of Quin's oeuvre alienation from specific geographical locales is coupled with the eroticisation of the phenomenal world, and how the fragmenting of all wholes goes hand in hand with the orchestration of the multiple disjointed voices invading her texts — what the paper calls her "schizophrenic writing." In her fiction, Quin develops an idiomatic style blending non-linear narration, multiple viewpoints, and stream of consciousness, marked by poetic lyricism, fantasy-embedded, hallucinogenic registration, to explore such topical themes as the search for identity, the influence of the past on the present, and intergenerational pressures. As Stevick's ground-breaking essay argued so convincingly, crucial was Quin's treatment of the mind, based on her "private conviction that the mind not only does not ordinarily tell stories — it doesn't even try to," (Stevick 1989: 237) and on her eschewal of the analytical in favour of the affected and affective.
- 2 Writing twenty years after Stevick, Stewart Home opens his ground-breaking novel *69 Things to Do with a Dead Princess* (2002) with a sentence unmistakably *Bergian*: "A man who no longer called himself Callum came to Aberdeen intent on ending his life." (Home 2002: 1)¹ In a flattering first footnote to the text, Home posits his intention of "avoiding" such modernist figures as Hemingway, Stein, Beckett, even B.S. Johnson,

and suggesting that “our attention could be more usefully directed towards Ann Quin” (169). The novel’s textual material falls into three roughly equal categories: one third of the novel is made up of psychogeographic descriptions of Aberdeen and the nearby stone circles; a second third is formed by mock-academic reviews of fiction and philosophy, both real and fictitious; and the last third of the novel is taken up by pornographic sex scenes. As Home’s own description for *69 Things* states, “this is a book about the body in which the carnal is a manifestation of consciousness: a book in which it is impossible to distinguish the ancient from the post-modern,”² i.e. detouring instead toward Deleuze and Guattari’s *Anti-Oedipus* (1983). This essay aims to argue that Home’s text detours towards Quin in order to revisit some of the idiosyncratic features of Quin’s poetics *sub specie* post-postmodernism. Philosophically, this detouring takes place through the prism of *Anti-Oedipus*, while also enabling us to read Quin’s schizophrenic writing in terms of its critical function.

- 3 Some of the more recent critical approaches to Quin justify the placement of her work into the comparative context of the Deleuzo-Guattarian critique of Oedipus and capitalism, as for instance argued by Jesse Kohn:

Quin isn’t after the kind of power that can be touched. She seeks something subtler, a power that can be approached but never possessed, one ultimately destined to one of two failures: either Alistair is discovered before killing his father or he succeeds. In either case he loses everything he has gained. Success and failure are irrelevant to Quin. Her power, like Alistair’s, stems not from some Oedipal act, but from the deadly serious practice of child-like play. (Kohn 2014)

- 4 *Anti-Oedipus* (1972), the result of the collaboration of academic philosopher Gilles Deleuze and militant psychiatrist Félix Guattari, deals with the topics of desire, production, synthesis, and subjectivity within the context of capitalism. The authors — taking cue from Marx whose “chief contribution was to disengage capital from its concrete manifestations in order to perceive its laws” — also disengage desire from the desiring subject or desired object, treating it “as a process which goes through different phases in order to reproduce itself.” (Tynan 2009: 30) In opposing capitalism, Deleuze and Guattari advocate the mobilisation of the micro-political, machinic productivity of the unconscious instead of fixed subjectivity. One of the fundamental concepts of *Anti-Oedipus* applicable to Quin’s novel is that of the machine. Used as a trope rather than in its literal sense, the machine for Deleuze and Guattari is “the system of interruptions and breaks” which is related to “a continual material flow (*hyle*) that it cuts into.” (Deleuze & Guattari 1983: 36) This process of interrupting and breaking is said “to condition this [very] continuity” because “every machine is a machine of a machine,” meaning that “the machine produces an interruption of the flow only insofar as it is connected to another machine that supposedly produces this flow” (Deleuze & Guattari 1983: 36). Hence, the entire process of production is continually frustrated, with frustration itself forming part of production.
- 5 Deleuze and Guattari emphasise this machinic — inherently disruptive and frustrating — element as a basic condition for counteracting the two key effects of Oedipalisation, which they term “higher formations” and “transcendent laws”. This element represents “a qualitative aptitude for conflict, which means that the quantity of libido does not branch into two variable forces corresponding to heterosexuality and homosexuality but creates in most people irreducible oppositions between the two forces.” (Deleuze & Guattari 1983: 65) This aptitude for conflict ensures hostility

towards unification and “the anoedipal quality of the flows of desire on the very terrain of Oedipus [which] traverse the triangle, breaking apart its vertices.” (Deleuze & Guattari 1983: 67) In other words, such flows preclude “Oedipal sexuality, an Oedipal heterosexuality and homosexuality, an Oedipal castration, as well as complete objects, global images, and specific egos” from attaining the status of the code. There is, in other words, no easy break from Oedipus through simple aberration from the mainstream norm:

We do not deny that there is an Oedipal sexuality, an Oedipal heterosexuality and homosexuality, an Oedipal castration, as well as complete objects, global images, and specific egos. We deny that these are productions of the unconscious. What is more, castration and Oedipalisation beget a basic illusion that makes us believe that real desiring-production is answerable to higher formations that integrate it, subject it to transcendent laws, and make it serve a higher social and cultural production. (Deleuze & Guattari 1983: 74)

- 6 Read in this context, it becomes clear that the narrative of Ann Quin's first published novel *Berg* (1964) deals imaginatively with the very anoedipal frustrations and disruptions theorised, some eight years later, by Deleuze and Guattari.
- 7 *Berg* famously opens on a note of identity reversal and parricidal intention: “A man called Berg, who changed his name to Greb, came to a seaside town intending to kill his father...” (Quin 2019: 11)³ This powerful opening line sets the tone for a dark, psychological farce set in Quin's (never quite specified) hometown of Brighton. Its declaration of parricidal intent is coupled with a performance of identity reversal, and accordingly, the rest of the plot is a series of reversals in which the intended parricide never takes place as Alistair Berg (the protagonist) becomes entangled in a web of deferrals, substitutions and repetitions instead.
- 8 The well-known plot does not need rehashing in detail here, suffice it to just say that instead of killing his father Nathaniel/Nathy as per the behest of his mother Edith, Alistair/Aly becomes involved with his father's mistress Judith, goes on to kill his father's caged budgerigar Berty, Judith's cat Seby, and winds up strangling a vaudeville-act dummy made in his father's image. Berg then consciously misidentifies a body washed up on the beach as his father's and returns to Judith. The story closes with Berg having replaced his father in Judith's room, and a man resembling his father moving into the adjacent room Berg had previously occupied — the cycle returning to its beginning, ready to restart.
- 9 This is coupled with extensive animal parallelism underwriting and accompanying the crucial Oedipal triads: Nathy's budgie Berty always endangered by Judith's cat Seby — until both are dispatched as surrogate sacrificial animals by Berg. Quin constructs the sexual identities of her characters through animal tropes. Dead or alive, these animal allusions form alienated images of gender and sexuality that leave the characters in the novel void of any meaningful relationship. Berg's “sexual rebellion” (Morley 1999: 128) consists in its reworking of the Western Oedipus complex meta-narrative, but Quin modifies this traditional structure with her insertion of animals, both alive and dead, as well as living-dead (stuffed), further complicating her parody of Freud's Oedipus with the uncanny in which the dead live on, as Judith's room is a taxidermic museum, with stuffed animals giving Berg the evil eye even in death.
- 10 Berg's own body on page 1 is in turn rendered amphibian, “white-scaled [...] with curled-webbed toes”, continuously identified as a “fish without fins”, and repeatedly imagining there to be “birds waiting [...] outside to tear me to shreds” (60). Again, the

cyclicity and essential stasis of the whole process is brought home on the penultimate page where Berg is informed that Judith has ordered herself a cat, while a stuffed budgie flutters on the periphery (160). Judith's body, too, is sub-classified into subhuman alienation: "Her fingers that had played with a button between her breasts, now flew, dived into a thin gold net which encased her yellow bush of hair" (25). Judith's "fingers" and "breasts" seem to exist as separate entities, as well as "her yellow bush of hair" where Quin's adjective "yellow" sits uncomfortably as a replacement of "blonde", and perhaps equates Judith's body to that of the yellow bird on the table.

- 11 Immediately after killing Judith's cat, Berg is made aware of the "bits of fur clinging" to his hands (26), and although he never mentions the incident again, as shown by critic Jennifer Komorowski, "the rest of the novel is filled with references to fur." (Komorowski 2015: 2) Freud's notion of the involuntary repetition is at play here, and when Berg enters Judith's flat he is "confronted by warmth, smell of wet fur" (54), which neatly echoes his feeling "something like wet fur against his face" (37) when he falls after the incident. The uncanny prevalence of wet fur echoes the murder, as he wipes his hands he notices "bits of fur clinging to them" (35). As Komorowski suggests, "the uncanny presence of wet fur is both indicative of Berg's guilt as a result of killing the cat, and the fact that he cannot escape his unresolved Oedipus complex." (Komorowski 2015: 3)

- 12 Despite the strictly familial plot, *Berg* features a series of breaks and flows in the protagonist's search both for stable subjectivity and freedom from it:

I must recall the precise feelings that have nurtured the present circumstances, when nothing at all from outside interfered, not even thoughts of time past, present, or time future. Isn't there a moment caught between two moods, that space within, separated from life, as well as death, when the sun is faced without blinking, when eternity lies here inside; no divisions whatsoever, simply a series of circular motivations? [...] Definitely the supreme action is to dispose of the mind, bring reality into something vital, felt, seen, even smelt. (31-2)

- 13 Quin's protagonist perceives continuity — in the form of "feelings that have nurtured the present circumstances" — as a series of interferences but is still pinned down to a certain point where one's subjectivity achieves the point of no "divisions". Such desire in turn is frustrated by "a series of circular motivations", hence revealing its innately antagonistic nature vis-à-vis the mind: "the supreme action" being "to dispose of the mind," with the goal of superseding perception with "vital, felt, seen, even smelt" reality. Thus, despite his presumably triangulated subjectivity, Berg is not unaware of the machinic processes of production and counter-production.
- 14 Throughout, Berg's attempts to murder him are undermined by his creeping realization that not only will he not kill his father, but he will come to resemble, even displace, him (step into his life, take up with his lover, assume his place in the household, etc.). Quin's achievement lies in marrying this thin plotline based on almost vaudevillian cross-dressings, mixed gender-roles and blurred identity boundaries, with a thick style generative of precisely this central narrative ambiguity:

Window blurred by out of season spray. Above the sea, overlooking the town, a body rolls upon a creaking bed: fish without fins, flat-headed, white-scaled, bound by a corridor room — dimensions rarely touched by the sun — Alistair Berg, hair-restorer, curled by webbed toes, strung between heart and clock, nibbles in the half light, and laughter from the dance hall opposite. [...] A week spent in an alien town, yet no further progress — the old man not even approached, and after all these years, the promises, the plans, the imaginative pursuit as static as a dream of

yesterday. The clean blade of a knife slicing up the partition that divides me from them. Oh yes I have seen you with her — she who shares your life now, fondles you, laughs or cries because of you. Meeting on the stairs, at first the hostile looks, third day: acknowledgement. A new lodger, let's show him the best side. [...] His arm linked with hers. As they passed Berg nodded, vaguely smiled, cultivating that mysterious air of one pretending he wishes to remain detached, anonymous. Rummaging under the mattress Berg pulled out the beer-stained piece of newspaper, peered at the small photograph.

Oh it's him, Aly, no mistaking your poor father. How my heart turned, fancy after all this time, and not a word, and there he is, as though risen from the dead. That Woman next to him, Aly, who do you suppose she is?

He had noticed the arm clinging round the fragile shoulders; his father's mistress, or just a friend? (12-3)

- 15 To take but the opening page, we can see Quin's narrative technique is not the stream of consciousness of a character in a Woolf novel, registering sensation, conflating past and present, musing on other people in a kind of watercolour voice, nor is it the interior monologue of Joyce, as Bloom or Stephen observe the phenomenal world and interrogate themselves.
- 16 Berg's talk, as Stevick and others have pointed out, "scarcely seems 'inner' at all, seems rather actual speech, acted out in the theatre of the mind, and one imagines Berg talking aloud to himself, at least shaping his words with his lips." (Stevick 1989: 232) When on the bottom of the page, a "meeting on the stairs" with the father takes place, featuring a furtive first confrontation, this is not a conversation recounted or remembered. No such conversation, the rest of the book shows, has taken place or will — it is mind as a theatre both of remembered wound and desire, possibility, projection, rationalisation, aggression, in which the subject is the leading character with the best, and often the only lines. Even what later poses — indented, block quote — as a different textual entity, and thus could be mistaken for letters from Berg's mother Edith, turns out not to be written and or objectively "out there" at all, just a remembered/imagined whole, as a unit, seemingly with not only the words but the rhythms and intonations intact.
- 17 However, the neat alignment between the Deleuzo-Guattarian machine and Quin's machine-like narrative needs further elaboration as, first of all, their Oedipus, taken as an investment of a social field with libidinal energy raised to the status of a dogma, aims at subordinating desire, while Berg strives to embrace the productive and counter-productive tendencies within his desire to kill. The question to address would be this: as long as *Anti-Oedipus* promotes the libidinal energy of the social field comprising Oedipus and posits the latter's insubordination within the former, why does Berg eventually end up within the very triangulation with which that the novel sets off?
- 18 First, it should be emphasised that neither *Anti-Oedipus* nor *Berg* posits the possibility of a complete destruction of Oedipus. Despite his "I kill therefore I am," Berg's ultimate and unavoidable triangulation is due to his wondering "why the power, the grace of being a god momentarily, surely one can gain this state for longer?" (36) His desire conflicts with his urge to pin down his flows to a sensually stable point: "In my nothingness I will create the idea" (35), Berg claims while, for Deleuze and Guattari,

a desiring-machine and a partial object do not represent anything, a partial object is not representative, even though it admittedly serves as a basis of relations and as a means of assigning agents a place and a function; but these agents are not persons, any more than these relations are intersubjective. (Deleuze & Guattari 1983: 47)

- 19 Ignoring the status of the relations and agents, Berg prioritizes the person and subjectivity and, as a result, falls victim to what he attempts to counteract. "In my nothingness I will create the idea, I shall see what I have imagined, and from that alone will spring my entire actions" (35).
- 20 Berg's desire for representation and his inability to embrace "nothingness" is further symbolized by the multiplicity of unintentional killings that accompany the only killing he ever has the express intention to carry out: deaths of animals and mock executions of the ventriloquist dummy are not merely tragicomic suspense but also Berg's attempt to derive his actions from the imaginary realm. His triangulation ensues, since "from the moment that we are placed within the framework of Oedipus [...] the cards are stacked against us, and the only real relationship, that of production, has been done away with" (Deleuze & Guattari 1983: 24) and replaced with the "factory of the unconscious," i.e. the imaginary. This further links to the individual nature of Berg's fantasy which is based on "the ego, insofar as it is determined by the legal and legalized institutions in which it 'imagines itself,' to the point where, even in its perversions, [it] conforms to [...] the law." (Deleuze & Guattari 1983: 63)
- 21 In *Berg*, the war against the code is fought and lost, but it is an attempt worth the while: a theatrical murder of the dummy at least foregrounds that the figure of the father is no more than a dummy. The "intention to kill" that opens the novel is meta-textually akin to a machinic desire producing the ripples of flows and breaks which signify that Oedipus is but another break. An early reflection on his course has Berg experiencing a rare occasion of insight:

But this was hopeless, far worse being the border-line case, brewing on tit-bits made up from the antidotes of artificial respiration upon the imagination; the survival of those who preferred remaining halfway, never accepting, or rejecting, aware only of the urge to defeat boredom. I take, I see, I subject my own mediocre self into something big. Berg walked away from the reflection that threw a superficial slant on the growth that had formed inside. (34)
- 22 Berg's creed here — "I take, I see, I subject my own mediocre self into something big" — expresses his internal libidinal split into two conflicting forces as enforced by Oedipalisation. One half of it is his acknowledgment of "higher formations," an Oedipus personified ("I subject myself as a partial object to the global person who is someone big") and the other part is his awareness of the existence of the "transcendent laws" ("my own mediocre self tends to align itself with someone big").
- 23 By failing to grasp Oedipus's status as the code, Berg allows it to calibrate the disjunctions and breaks of "his" plot: as the narrative unwinds, Berg less and less frequently ruminates on his own powerlessness, and his voice is more often overridden by the voices of other characters. The range of displacements through the murders of animals and the dummy, and the eventual loss of Berg's narrative voice by the end of the novel, signifies Berg's subjugation to the Oedipal code which necessitates "the projection of all the breaks-flows onto the same mythical locale, and all the nonsignifying signs into the same major signifier." (Deleuze & Guattari 1983: 73) Thus, Berg as a character with a schizoid potential ends up as an Oedipalized neurotic.

- 24 Underlying Quin's narrative is a certain schematic grid that renders the entire narrative action mechanical, uncannily automatic, like a round of switching in a game of trading places. No change has taken place, Berg has not escaped his prison, but merely re-shuffled the roles of prisoners and prison-keepers, the mechanism merely ready for another repeat. And this because he has not cut himself free of, or at least transformed, the only chain link immune to change, the whole plot's unmoved mover, and also the crux of all of Berg's problems: the all-excusing, all-forgiving, yet all-pervading mother.
- 25 It is her incessant pleas that set her son on his futile mission, and her constant carping and nagging communicated through her letters holds him back from developing a fully independent persona. As shown by Francis Booth in the section of his monumental *Among Those Left* devoted to Quin, "it is his mother from whom Berg needs to be free and not his father" as it turns out "she is the one who is holding him back from a fully independent life if anyone is," (Booth 2012: 501) the Oedipal mother of whom the son never lets go. Despite all the split and recoupled doublings and psychoanalytic dynamics of her narrative, Quin in *Berg* creates a story of stuck stasis, of mechanical proceduralism, a narrative of schematisation that at one and the same time parodies and pays homage to the grand narratives of psychoanalysis.
- 26 Born Kevin Llewellyn Callan, Stewart Home is, according to his website, "the most out-there writer on the planet — the only person on earth who is visible to the naked eye from outer space! He really does burn that brightly" (Stewart Home Society website) — and according to Iain Sinclair, he is "a dynamo of invention, recycling Dadaist provocation into fugues of inspired counter-terror." (Sinclair 1994: 21-2) Ever since the early 1980s, Home had more or less systematically set about to position himself within the sort of dissenting tradition that runs "from the Free Spirit through the writings of Winstanley, Coppe, Sade, Fourier, Lautréamont, William Morris, Alfred Jarry, and on into Futurism and Dada — then via Surrealism into Lettrism, the various Situationist movements, Fluxus, 'Mail Art,' Punk Rock, Neoism and contemporary anarchist cults." (Home 1988: 4) A tradition, Richard Marshall adds, of "piss-takers, pranksters and jokers who used their slapstick rhetoric and parodic works to entertain, incite, educate and instruct a huge radicalised readership." (Marshall 2001)
- 27 Here again is not the place to rehash Home's multicoloured career of spoofs, interventions, adopted public personae, and mock-occult society memberships. In this context, it is perhaps worth mentioning two of his activities occupying him around 2000, at the time he was working on his 69 *Things to Do with a Dead Princess*. This was the Neoist Alliance — an occult order with himself as the magus and only member dealing with psychogeographic activities — whose manifesto called for "debasement in the arts" and in a parodic manner plagiarized a 1930s British fascist pamphlet on cultural politics. Symptomatically, this activity was followed by Internet ventriloquism using two MySpace profiles as Mister Trippy and a ventriloquist doll called Tessie (who often claimed to be pregnant and expressed exasperation upon Home's suggestions that dolls cannot become pregnant). Home's novels in this period switched from incorporating subcultural elements to focusing on issues of form and aesthetics.
- 28 If Quin's *Berg* foreshadowed and indirectly anticipated Deleuze and Guattari's diagnosis of schizophrenia vis-à-vis capitalism in *Anti-Oedipus*, preceding their work by almost a decade, then Home wears his own Deleuzo-Guattarian credentials on his sleeve:

This is a book about the body in which the carnal is a manifestation of consciousness: a book in which it is impossible to distinguish the ancient from the post-modern. Drawing on literary modernism and recent continental philosophy, as well as pulp appropriations, *69 Things to Do with a Dead Princess* illustrates that *schizophrenia may well be the only sane response to capitalism*. (<https://www.stewarthomesociety.org/books.htm>)

- 29 In footnote number 3, Home goes to some length acknowledging the usefulness of Deleuze and Guattari's theorising of "microfascism as a phenomenon that exists across the political and social spectrum" and credits their theorisation of desire as productive "as useful in undermining the notion of repression and thus the entire edifice of organised psychoanalysis" (169-70). Still, Home criticises "D & G" for grounding their concept of the machinic production of desire "in a massive and unexamined belief in the so-called unconscious" (170). Home insists that "we must be careful not to overrationalise capitalist societies since it was precisely this error that led to the sorry spectacle of 'ultra-left' negationism" (171). And it is in reference to Quin that Home reiterates poet Jeppe Aakjær's aphorism, "I learn nothing from the dead words of living men. I learn everything from the living words of dead men — long live the dead!" (170).
- 30 Opening with the epigraphs from Samuel Taylor Coleridge on "truth as divine ventriloquism" and Karl Marx likening himself to a "machine devouring books," *69 Things to Do with a Dead Princess* tells the tale of Anna Noon, a twenty-year-old student with a taste for perverse sex involved with an enigmatic older man alternatively called Callum or Alan, and a ventriloquist's dummy. Anna lives in Aberdeen and her sex life revolves around the ancient stone circles in this region, whose sublime grandeur provides a backdrop against which Anna is able to act out her provocative psychodramas. Callum or Alan is planning to kill himself the moment he has read the last of his large collection of books, including the fictional *69 Things to Do with a Dead Princess* by the fictional "cult writer" K. L. Callan. This fictional document brings forth a conspiracy theory about the death of Diana, Princess of Wales, claiming that Diana was murdered, then her corpse was dragged around Scottish stone circles, until it fell apart, and Callum/Alan decides to test this by repeating the process with a ventriloquist dummy.
- 31 That Home's *69 Things* revisits and updates Quin's *Berg* is as explicit as its Deleuzo-Guattarian affinities: not only does it directly reverse her evasion of geography in *Berg*'s "seaside town" with its obsessively meticulous psychogeography of Aberdeenshire, it also replaces her reversals of parricidal intention with a suicidal one and upgrades her latent eroticisation of the physical world with full-fledged pornographic provocation. But most importantly, Home's *69 Things* is *Bergian* by virtue of its style whose primary gesture is that of merging of discourses, the unscrambling of social codes. In the maddeningly detailed critical piece, "Does Aberdeen Exist? An Essay Review of Stewart Home's *69 Things*," Kevin O'Neill — most likely yet another of Stewart Home's ventriloquised avatars — identifies the following three social codes, or "text-types," as crucial for the textual "production" of *69 Things*: the academic, the psychogeographic, and the pornographic.
- 32 Let us take just one example of each, the first one from a more or less random paragraph from the first chapter which, O'Neill goes to some length explaining, illustrates the dominant linguistic mechanism of the majority of the text, i.e. the repetition of the clause structure S-V-X (subject-verb-complement), as shown here:

SUBJECT	VERB	COMPLEMENT
We	trudged	towards Union Street.
Alan	was talking	about Erich Fromm again.
He	'd read	through several Fromm books the previous night.
They	offended	him.
He	'd sell	them as soon as he could.
Alan	ridiculed	the treatment of...
He	jibed	that Fromm falls behind his own premises.
Fromm	was mistaken	to equate futurism with death.
Alan	stumbled, resumed	his speech, but he'd forgotten about Fromm.
He	was dismissing	what Louis J. Halle had to say in The Ideological Imagination.
I	couldn't follow	the thread of his argument.

(11)

- 33 This, in Home's rendering, would be the so-called academic type of discourse whose dull monotonous structure foregrounds the (bad-)writing process, and thereby prevents the reader from engaging with the text. It also conveys the mechanisation of the syntactical structures of language as repetitive and recursive code.
- 34 In the porn text-type, as in sex, the two complementary compositional techniques on full show, so to speak, are those of variation and repetition. As when variation of sex-organ terminology yields such increasingly hilarious results as 'erect tool' (9), 'phallus' (10), 'beef curtains' (10), 'molten genetics' (69), and 'chief implement for the propagation of our species' (117). Or when wholesale repetition on pp. 42-3 and 98-9 provides phrases repeated in an almost identical syntax:

SUBJECT (S)	VERB (V)	COMPLEMENT (X)
I	've never met	anyone (S) who made love (V) with such scientific deliberation (X).
Every stroke	told	to the uttermost.
This position	elevated	my behind and Alan (S) proceeded (V) at once to avail himself of it (X).

(42-3)

I	never knew	anyone (S) to fuck (V) with such scientific deliberation (X).
He	made	every stroke (S) tell (V) to the uttermost (X).
This position	elevated	my anus and Alan (S) proceeded (V) at once to avail himself of it (X).

(98-9)

- 35 Any literary aspirations of Home's style are systematically subverted by the obvious mechanistic, inelegant, tedious repetition, whose preposterously heightened display bordering on caricature makes the text type itself into preposterous caricature.
- 36 Finally, Home's "psychogeographic" text-type presents the strongest commitment to a creative rendering of reality, but also its questioning and erasure — an opposition to the documentary style. As the main narrative action consists of the couple's trips across Aberdeenshire, the novel too traverses tedious sections which describe the landscape and stone circles, in deadpan enumerative style full of lists of measurements, as exemplified here:

SUBJECT	VERB	COMPLEMENT
Cothiemuir Wood	seems originally to have consisted of	11 upright stones, mostly about 7 feet high, forming a circle 25 yards in diameter.
The two flankers	were	9 and a half feet high, and 15 feet asunder, the space between them
	being occupied	by a massive recumbent stone upwards of 5 feet in diameter and 13 and a half feet in length, lying on the west side of the circle.
The recumbent	was	still correctly positioned.
The three other uprights	were	no longer vertical and
these leaning stones	spoke	the ravages of time.
I	took	my skirt off and
	pulled	my knickers down around my ankles,
	allowing	Alan to take a picture of Dudley entangled in my arms.

(93)

- 37 Home's apparently authentic, or at least "precise," records of Cothiemuir Wood stone circle also function as a parody of documentary travelogue. If these records were merely accurate, they could be seen to produce coherence in the narrative, the surface function obscuring the critical. But the travelogue discourse is undermined by a number of stylistic choices, the most jarring of which are the extreme lengths to which Home's maddening descriptiveness goes in order to provide exact measurements for the stones. These not only become omittable and tedious, but raise legitimate doubts as to their source, as there is simply no way for Anna to know these exact measurements unless she has done the measuring herself, which she never does. This strategy has come to be termed as postmodern double-coding, in that a doubly coded text aims to function both as an attack and as what it attacks. In all three of his text-types, Home foregrounds the writing process to deconstruct them in an internal parody of

discourse. Home's parallel techniques of porn, psychogeography and academia are reductive of all: they present writing as a system, nothing more.

38 Home's triad of discourses of pornography, psychogeography, and academia is composed of text-types that do not communicate with one another — a point brought home perhaps the most problematic part of Home's style in *69 Things*: his representation of speech as always reported and indirect. Although narrated by Anna in the third person, and in one third made up of her partner's endless diatribes on books existent or not-so-much so, not once does the novel present direct speech. This creates problems of attributing speech to characters, exacerbated in the use of academic text types, subverting such concepts as originality and source-attribution, both key for academia.

39 Most Berg-ian of all the features of *69 Things* is the schizophrenic motif that destabilises Home's narrative, destroying old codes, freeing desires beneath socially constructed identity. The novel's "nervous breakdown" gives birth to multiple voices in constant interplay, where none is allowed to dominate. Coherence lost in schizophrenic bedlam. The form of the novel destroyed, it ends with the parallel between the disappearance of Alan and his suicide within Anna's consciousness, the narrative turning to the beginning only in order to note that "there was no beginning":

The mystery was revolved with the stroke of a pen. We'd stopped living. The beginning did not, could not, exist prior to the end. A man no longer called Alan came to Aberdeen. He told me his name was Callum. I believed him. Interpretation spelt out the elements of a dream. Hallucinations within the hallucination that was already speech. The body of a dead princess as a metaphor for literature. Works of condensation and displacement. Living out the death of these fantasies in blasted and blistered night, we were consumed by the turning of a page... (168)

40 The breakdown of identity here is coupled with identification of "speech" with "hallucination". Astonishingly, in a book so loud with apparent talk, nothing is ever explicitly said or surely heard or directly related, and so all remains indefinable, unattributable, ventriloquised. Home problematises the speech situation in order to deconstruct hierarchy and subvert certitude — his narrative contains, to paraphrase Stevick, nothing but "voices in the reader's head."

41 The concluding "consummation by the turning of a page" is textually brought home by the final footnote (there are twelve chapters and twelve footnotes) that follows after the concluding aposiopesis — literally inviting the reader to "consume" the book by turning towards the final page. There, *69 Things* takes a step further than even *Berg* in the self-deconstruction of the text, treating us to an endless loop of self-contradicting statements, a textual *perpetuum mobile* that apparently goes *ad infinitum*:

A man no longer called Alan came to Aberdeen. Alan and Callum came to Aberdeen. He told me his name was Callum. Alan left Aberdeen. Somewhere along the line he slipped out of my life. A man called Alan came to Aberdeen with me. The life slipped out of Callum. The life slipped out of him. [...] My life. Slipped. He slipped out. Slipped out. Life slipped out. Along the line. A man called Callum. If I could slip out. Reach out and touch. [...] No longer. A man. [...] Alan slipped out of his life. A man called Callum changed his name to Alan and I am no longer sure whether or not I killed him. (182)

42 Stewart Home's *69 Things* erects a mock monument to Ann Quin's uncanny ability to lampoon psychoanalysis and other authoritative discourses of the 1960s and to ventriloquise high literary experiment while employing the popular genre of the thriller in order to deal with the stark realities of 1960s working-class, thus avoiding

the pitfall of cultural elitism. By more recent critical estimates, like Giles Gordon's in 2002, Quin's was a unique voice combining a "working-class" sensibility and agenda with "the technical advances of the nouveau roman" (Gordon 2001: ix), a point made even more pronouncedly by Jennifer Hodgson in her preface to *The Unmapped Country*: "Quin was a rare breed in British writing: radically experimental, working class and a woman [...] on a search for the spiritual antipodes of her homeland, which she depicts in her writing as buttoned-up, repressed, and mildewed around the edges." (Hodgson 2018: 7-8) And so Home's detouring towards Quin equals not just a parodic recuperation of an obscured precursor, nor is it merely a pastiche of the stock techniques of literary experimentalism. In fact, to come back to the beginning, the first footnote in *69 Things* states Home's dislike for figures like Hemingway, Stein, even the "rumoured B.S. Johnson revival" (169). Home's footnote seems to be making the provocative suggestion that once a certain "type" of experimentalism has received the official stamp of the establishment, it runs the risk of being fetishised as a paragon of the experiment, its erstwhile radicality neutralised and outsideness integrated, its positions of potential opposition expropriated. Both Quin's and Home's styles attempt to eschew this fate by treating text types with double-coding, pastiche, internal parody and stylistic parallax in order to challenge any neat critical classification and pigeonholing.

- 43 Directing his attention to Quin entails for Home a recuperation of a long-lost unique literary voice, and a redefinition of the category of literary experimentation as such. By Home's own avowal, writing — in the genre-bound sense of the commercial publishing industry and its various academic fronts — has never been a justifiable end in itself, but one of an integrated set of means of pursuing an "abolitionist" programme to undermine "social separation" by "simultaneously confronting 'politics' and 'culture.'" (Home 1988: 4) This places Home's revisitation of Quin's novel within a broader framework of experimental activism that is irreducible to the usual categories and overlaps with other similarly heterogeneous projects. Both Quin's and Home's fiction perform ventriloquist acts designed to challenge both a certain type of subjectivity and the novel form itself.

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NOTES

1. Further in-text references are to this edition.
2. Online: <https://www.stewarthomesociety.org/books.htm>. Accessed 30 November 2019.
3. Further in-text references are to this edition.

ABSTRACTS

In *Berg* (1964), Ann Quin develops an idiomatic style blending non-linear narration, multiple viewpoints, and stream of consciousness, marked by a poetic lyricism and hallucinogenic registration, in order to explore such topical themes as the search for identity, the influence of the past on the present, and intergenerational pressures. Stewart Home's novel *69 Things to Do with a Dead Princess* (2002) revisits some of the idiosyncratic features of Quin's poetics *sub specie*

Home's parody of literary post-postmodernism. Philosophically, Home's detouring towards Quin takes place through the prism of Deleuze and Guattari's *Anti-Oedipus*, and also enables a reading of Quin's schizophrenic writing in terms of its critical function. The essay argues that Home's revisitation of Quin's novel within a broader framework of experimental activism and that both the authors' novels perform ventriloquist acts designed to deconstruct a certain type of literary subjectivity and the novel form itself.

Dans *Berg* (1964), Ann Quin développe un style idiomatique mêlant narration non linéaire, points de vue multiples et *stream of consciousness*, marqué par un lyrisme poétique et un registre hallucinogène, afin d'explorer des thèmes d'actualité tels que la quête d'identité, l'influence du passé sur le présent et les tensions intergénérationnelles. Le roman de Stewart Home, *69 Things to Do with a Dead Princess* (2002), reprend certaines des caractéristiques idiosyncrasiques de la poétique de Quin sous la forme d'une parodie du post-postmodernisme littéraire par Home. Sur le plan philosophique, le détour vers Quin par Home se fait à travers le prisme d'*Anti-Œdipe* de Deleuze et Guattari, et permet également une lecture de l'écriture schizophrénique de Quin en termes de fonction critique. Cet article démontre que la relecture du roman de Quin par Home s'inscrit dans un cadre plus large d'activisme expérimental et que les romans des deux auteurs réalisent des actes ventriloques destinés à déconstruire un certain type de subjectivité littéraire et la forme romanesque elle-même.

INDEX

Keywords: Quin Ann, Home Stewart, Deleuze Gilles, Guattari Félix, parody, post-modernism, experimental literature

Mots-clés: Quin Ann, Home Stewart, Deleuze Gilles, Guattari Félix, parodie, post-modernisme, littérature expérimentale

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