show what was just ahead. I get ahead climbing on his back then he floats away

and I get ahead floating downstream. Probably, getting ahead is terrifying for the

inner core. I can only think in terms of in and out since then. I can only feel feel-

ings as it down my back. There's the right lever. Stuck holding space for a miser-

able institution that hovers in the virtual world of a clique that only arises when

someone is there to suck up to. When no body to suck up to, no one can get ahead

and everyone stops. We obscure the tracks of climbing and sucking because it is

better at masking our immorality. A child can hardly hide a thing, the nose grows

but then everything nothing was a lie. Is there a way to write without intending to. Without just waiting to intend to. Writing seems to anchor the waiting but is

wish it could replace my need. If it wrote all my thoughts before I thought them,

LOVE LANGUAGE

The love letter kills the beloved and preserves the self The beloved now exists only in our reverie

The suicide note kills the self and preserves the beloved We exist now only in their reverie

The failed love letter never stops being overwritten The successful suicide note never stops stopping

The love letter offers the beloved only sweet nothings, makes the beloved into sweet nothings, cuts up the lover into sweet nothings, traits of the lover become the lover but the tracks must be covered over and false tracks must be laid down to get the world off the lover's scent, so much so that the lover dis-

appears into the letter, initials, abbreviations, The day _ departs, the waves of departure are him ten as the world rotates to from the room's core when something turns in on itself. The world rotates to

The suicide note stops being written when the love letter is taken up.

Emerging from an Abyss, and reentering it—that is tasteless. But those tracks are. Not just lines in sand. But elemental. Do you have Life, is it not Dear?

miotics popularized by fore you can write because to write you must hate every thought you have when being. French post-structural- you aren't writing. Hate your thoughts so much you try even harder to get them ism – writing kills the right. Writing is trying way too hard to fix your thought (but before you give up Where the word is, the "thing," a shocking no- on thinking altogether). Writing is myopic because the writer can't escape itself. other disappears. Where sadism.

Perhaps the most extreme and all that. To be an adult means your nose won't grow when you lie. But then articulation of Morbid you also lose track of when you're lying so you end up always lying to yourself Semiotics is Blanchot's claim that writing is a it not just sticking us to more. A.I. can replace writing but not the need to write. I Foucault adds that you I'd still need to write. When you need to write the issue of redundancy is absocannot write while you lutely out the window. What even is redundancy. When you don't need to write, are living, only in the when you need to share or publish, then redundancy is a problem. To write in darkroom afterwards,

belatedly and nostalgically in hazy after-images, or else we write preemptively and prospectively, before any encounter. Strangely, he says the heterosexual only experiences desire through anticipation and the homosexual only experiences desire through retrospection. Perhaps, for the bisexual, foretaste and aftertaste are merged (the sexualization of deja vu).

For Kristeva, what makes us human is that we do not move on after a loss, a kill, a sacrifice but linger over the remains.

For Freud, the kill is inscribed as a totem, a unary trait that bonds the community, serving as a reminder to never repeat the kill whose violence founded our civilization.

For Wilde, we always kill the one we love – some with a sword, others with a kiss.

Felix Bernstein

For Lacan, the count starts with the kill, a notch on our belt, mnemonically inscribing the void of absence into the symbolic. The slashed zero (Ø), a tally marking the first loss, produces the first trait in a chain of resemblances that will inaugurate our search for more of the same.

In 1969, a few years before she took her own life, Argentine poet Alejandra Pizarnik wrote, "With every word I write I remember the void that makes me write what I couldn't if I let you in." A sentiment that consecrates and seals her Morbid Semiotics.

"If you speak about what is, it means that someone didn't come - not that they came." (1963, Diary).

The day _ departs, the waves of departure are mis-felt as a shift in the climate In her introduction to Pizarnik's The Most Foreign Country, Cole Heinowitz writes:

If the poet's object of desire stubbornly insists on appearing in the world, her words will condemn to get so lonely you hallucinate a presence? On the twelfth day of this dopamine it to a state of death-in-detox, he realizes he never wanted to climb ahead. To climb over your back. He language. Even memo-These notions seem to was bad at climbing ahead. He was too obvious. He was already ahead so why ries must be destroyed stem from a Morbid Se- did he try. He was too far ahead. Where even was he. How much self-hatred be- for the poem to come into

tion that signals vice and Inscape only and then it turns out there is too much room inside and not enough the other is, the word outside. We are supposed to morally evolve as we age. But, really, we just get disappears. An exclusive disjunction that requires a deadly choice: kill or be killed.

> In the end, Pizarnik chose to terminate her words, sparing her beloved from any further murderous inscriptions but losing herself in the process.

A poet is a time mechanic not an embalmer. (Dear Lorca)

-Jack Spicer, in his outlandishly rigorous theories, seems to offer a way out of Morbid Semiotics.

Words are what sticks to the real. We use them to push the real, to drag the real into the poem. They are what we hold on with, nothing else. They are as valuable in themselves as rope with nothing to be tied to. (Dear Lorca)

The word does not signify the 'world' but is rather a sticky barnacle that clings to the physical world. Word and world are not in a relation of signifier and signified, but rather of inscription and medium, which are compacted into a single palimpsest. Words are things which stick to other things like barnacles (implicitly words aren't exactly real things but vehicles that enable us to find real things).

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^{*} Władysław Strzemiński's Sun's Afterimage (1948-49, oil on canvas, 73×61 cm).

Words have an autonomous materiality and physicality independent from any referent.

But also the opposite – words are useful only insofar as they rope real things into the poem. To cling to the word-in-itself is fetishistic, like being a stamp collector or being a nonsense poet caught up in wordplay.

Still, Spicer's metaphor of the word as rope and barnacle is one of adhesive overlaying not signification. Yes, the word seems to tie itself to a referent, but it does this through a material physics rather than cognitive linguistics. So neither the word nor the thing conquer one another – there is no murder-suicide, word and thing live together until they die of natural causes.

I yell "Shit" down a cliff at an ocean. Even in my lifetime the immediacy of that word will fade. It will be dead as "Alas." But if I put the real cliff and the real ocean into the poem, the word "Shit" will ride along with them, travel the time-machine until cliffs and oceans disappear. (After Lorca).

For Spicer, words are material things subject to decay, entropy, and rotting that live on in the poem till a physical death. The alphabetic corpse is a rotting sack of shit that will keep rotting until the end of time, flesh and letter and earth interpenetrate in a grotesque palimpsest.

We actually have not gotten far from Morbid Semiotics.

Let's start over -

For Blanchot, the Thing of love is killed by its inscription

For the Romantics (Freud, Hegel, Wordsworth, Clare), the first love is always already lost but can be reconstructed by the act of

recollection, verbalization, and transference... we only find the first love in the eyes of the second love, the foretaste is the aftertaste of an always missing first taste.

The romantic theory does not, like Kant, foreclose the noumenal primordial ground to a mystical silence but forces the representative name to manifest the real in the symbolic.

"And all the charms of face or voice /Which I in others see /Are but the recollected choice /Of what I felt for thee." (The Secret, John Clare)

The romantic's re-collection of traces into the mold of the first love forces the stranger to conform to our lost ideal — but by lending our first love the name of our second love, we lose them both in the encryption of morbid letters. Every letter becomes a variation on a single theme.

Freud does not go far from Clare. Before transference, there is first love. When love is dislocated, love retroactively becomes the lost Thing of total enjoyment that every subsequent object will only approximate – these new object relations are called transference, or secondary loves. Rather than diluting the primal love, the secondary simulation purifies and elevates it. Loving is aping an ideal enjoyment that never occured. Love like sex is mostly simulated.

The first love is canceled, re-presented, re-collected, and signified through the second love. An unspeakable love becomes spoken. The first Thing may never have existed but romantic desire is propelled by searching for the primal as if it were real.

The drive aims at recovering the Thing but gets off to readymade scraps found at hand. Each new object relation is another detachment from the Thing but also another opportunity to make-do with what remains. To savor what has been spared.

you are fundamentally not fathoming redundancy. What do you fathom? Just that it is happening; whether you intend it or not. But that does not mean you can stop intending it to happen. You can never stop intending, it's as if that intention was making it happen. Can you stop being objected to? Can you stop being found by an object? Not even having the object is refuge from its pull. Can you at least punctuate the object? Who am I speaking to in the solitary position when the loneliness fades away? Am I suddenly not as alone or do I just care less and less. But also care more and more about what is ahead. What is happening as I get ahead of myself. In living, I am behind myself. In writing ahead. In writing I want to get behind and in living I want to get ahead. Can I be content with being behind when I'm behind, and ahead when I'm ahead? There is contentment somewhere. As some glue to life. The contentment certainly does not emanate from the word life (which causes headaches). But the contentment is somewhere, I guess it does not appear. Usually, we are glued without noticing. But even when you're unstuck from life, you are still somehow glued to it. I feel unstuck right now. Somewhere it is a relief. To not be only stuck. But reliefs are terrifying. To be thrown into relief is to be thrown into the worst possible light. Better to avoid being compared. But then you are compared with yourself. With what you were or will have been. Better to be always the same. If I were always the same face then this would not be a problem. But I am never the same face. But I am never the same face always in somewhat of the same way. The same way of never-being-the-same. Time out is sinking deeper into the trouble you're in. Not timeless but an interval of looping and unendurable time that never reaches a terminus. Actually, that is always what time is. But now you are forced to sit with it. Some of us loved time out because we needed to be broken off from the group (or pushed closer together with them). We just didn't like the natural proximity and were willing to take a chance on another configuration. If we were in trouble there was more of a chance that we would be cooped up together. Two enemies in trouble together would have to sit side by side. They'd get in trouble for trying to abolish each other but end up being pushed nearer than if they had just remained

We lose track of our own primordial enjoyment but also miss the enjoyment we gave to our first love. New tracks must be laid down through a new chain of letters leading to a new source of love. You preserve a single trait of the first love and address yourself to a second love, who, however unrelated, bears that initial trait, which we cover over with the false tracks of the new

Can there be a mark, not transferable, a third love, nonconsecutive, that encroaches on resemblance, that cuts across our feedback loops, a notch on the belt that we cannot retrace?

Maybe if we love the same person a third time, we'll be thrown into a moment that moves too fast to allow the relief of inscription, letters, and notes.

When a double suicide succeeds, we die in each other

When a double suicide fails, we die to each other

For the failure to succeed, we'd have to cease containing each other, cease being each other's doubles, and meet only in the modest overlap between two untouchable lives.

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FELIX BERNSTEIN stages psychofictional scenes as lectures, essays, satire, and melodrama, using errant bodies of imagery and discourse to bore holes through crusty ideals. He is the author of Burn Book (Nightboat, 2016) and Notes on Post-Conceptual Poetry (Insert Blanc Press, 2015)

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