high schools across the nation are similar. See Kozol, *Savage Inequalities* 29–30, 45, 52, 54, 57–58, 106, 112–13, 118, 149, 229–30. As Kozol sees it, urban public schools replicate the conditions of segregated schools before the historic *Brown v. Board of Education* decision in 1954.

[2] The partnership has operated continuously since 1992 and in 1997 received long-term funding through a gift from a Penn alumnus.

[3] According to Annette Kolodny, "[I]nstitutions of higher education will be called upon to play a variety of unprecedented roles in a transnational information age. [. . . T]he new information technologies will make higher education both more necessary *and* ongoing, if only because learning to make connections and to reason rigorously across and between the disciplines is a lifelong process requiring sensitive tutelage. The twenty-first century, in other words, will be a century in which people are constantly 'going back to school' in one form or another" (34–35).

[4] Kozol notes, in a single, crushing paragraph, the extensive losses to the New York City schools during times of financial distress. These cuts have never been restored during economic expansions (*Ordinary Resurrections* 280). Kolodny describes the effects of budget cuts on academic planning at the University of Arizona (17–18, 20–21).

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Being in Love

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Recently, a gifted undergraduate came to me with some urgent questions: Should he major in literature? And if he did, what practical benefits might he realize? I asked one question: "Are you in love?" By this I meant, "Are you in love with literature?" Then I inquired, "Does your heart skip a beat when you encounter your love? Do you ache when the two of you are separated? Do you resent anything that intrudes on you and your love?"

Had the answer to any of these questions—and especially the first one—been no, I would have counseled the student against majoring in literature. In my experience, studies motivated by anything short of passionate love will not have a happy outcome.

Since my specialty, Yiddish literature, is not an undergraduate major at UCLA, I am rarely called on to offer advice concerning this question. But I do teach undergraduates, mostly English majors, and I see the difference between those who are besotted with the subject and those who are not. The ones who are in love will be fired up, positively or negatively, about almost any work: they are engaged, perhaps enraptured, perhaps enraged, but hardly ever neutral. The ones who are not in love may be equally intelligent and talented, but they remain more distant.

Once the love has been established, I feel free to talk to the student about the particular satisfactions of studying literature in depth. For me, the heart of the matter is at the level of lan-

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guage. I have always been thrilled by metaphor, by cadence, by metrical tension, sometimes even by the choice of a word.

An avid involvement with Yiddish is especially rewarding, because the history and the culture of eastern European Jewry emerge through its idioms and turns of phrase. For example, the expression *vi ikh bin a yid*, translated literally as "as I am a Jew," means "by my word," or "as sure as I live." In the historical context of Yiddish speakers, being alive is synonymous with being Jewish. The all-encompassing Jewishness of Yiddish speakers could be, and traditionally was, taken absolutely for granted. Indeed, the Yiddish equivalent of English "hey, mister" is *reb yid*, literally "Mr. Jew."

The cultural milieu of Yiddish manifests itself even in individual words. Take the verbs *leyenen* ("to read") and *bentshn* ("to bless" or "to say the benediction after a meal"). Both words are originally from Latin, and they are related, respectively, to English *legible* and *benediction*. These words imply two historical facts: first, that before the migration of Jews onto German-speaking territory, where the birth of Yiddish as we know it took place, Jews lived somewhere where Latin, or languages derived from Latin, were spoken; and, second, that reading and saying blessings were daily activities, the names for which had entered the quotidian vernacular instead of remaining in Hebrew, the more formal language used for study and prayer.

Then there is the term *bashert* ("meant to be"). Used in a variety of contexts, it reveals the extent to which eastern European Jews believed in fate, despite their fundamental acceptance of Judaism as a system of laws. Although most Jewish marriages in eastern Europe were arranged, at least until the turn of the twentieth century, people nonetheless used *bashert* to refer to their spouses: *mayn basherte* for a wife, *mayn basherter* for a husband, both with the meaning "the one who was destined for me."

These tidbits have always delighted me, but I recognize that they are not everyone's cup of tea, even among those who are in love with literature. So I talk to students about some of the other gratifications and advantages of this major. From my attraction to words, it is probably no surprise that I have, for my entire career, remained devoted to close reading, and I like to discuss the rich possibilities of attention to literary detail.

How a writer constructs sentences, builds paragraphs, accumulates fine points of plot, and develops character says much about that writer's outlook on the world, as well as about the writer's temporal and geographic world. I enjoy pointing out that while the early-twentieth-century impressionist poets Mani Leyb and Moyshe Leyb Halpern belonged to the same literary group, Di Yunge, and had the same artistic goals and theoretical stance, their work is so different that no one would confuse them. Readers who love the gentle Mani Leyb are often put off by the volatile Halpern, and those who love Halpern's fervent declarations often find Mani Leyb's poetry insufficiently edgy. Through this demonstration, where the student in love is sure to have a strong response, I can illustrate my conviction that studying literature teaches much about personal proclivities.

My identity as a literary critic and biographer is intertwined with my identity as a psychoanalyst. Through my work with patients and as a supervisor of analytic candidates, I have come to appreciate the endless hidden ways in which human beings affect one another. The analyst dreams about the patient's conflict; the patient somehow understands exactly how to push against the analyst's boundaries; the supervisee picks the supervisor without a realization by either that they endured similar childhood traumas. For me, then, the pleasure—or the displeasure—of the literary experience is integrally related to the conscious and unconscious processes that are engaged by reading. Emotional responses, such as identification and empathy, can enrich the reader's self-awareness. A reaction of distaste, or even of revulsion, is also worth paying attention to. Is the author trying to

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disgust or repel, or is the reader's antipathy based on some crucial, and often unrecognized, resonance with the work?

This question brings me to the deepest insight I can impart to the student in love: the realm of literature is the realm of the soul. I like to be explicit about the gift of joining with another person or with the essence of another culture or era. The experience of an intense connection can, if one is fortunate, lead to lifelong nourishment.

My introduction to Yiddish literature, quite some time before I knew I would devote many years of my adult enthusiasm to it, was nothing short of transformative. In *The Family Moskat*, by Isaac Bashevis Singer, I discovered a world that, although it was now preserved only between the covers of a book, fairly crackled with energy, passion, conflict, tragedy, joy, spirituality, earthiness, and profound intelligence. Orthodox Jews sparred with secularists; young men and women rebelled against arranged marriages and committed suicide if they remained single; political activism was reviled and defended. I drank it all in with a gusto I had not imagined possible.

By the time I came to Yiddish, the living culture of eastern European Jews had been geographically destroyed and the Jews themselves virtually obliterated. Therefore, it was only through the literature and through the wonderful surviving members of that culture with whom the literature put me in contact that I discovered a landscape and a perspective on humanity that I could never have acquired otherwise. Majoring in literature can work that kind of marvel.

To earn one's living by reading, writing, and teaching is an incomparable privilege. The student who is in love tends not to worry about job security, concluding that there is no more desirable way to spend part of a day than to read and probe literature's secrets and that the insights literature imparts will be valuable in any further endeavor.

Since I believe, as an analyst and as a teacher, that my emotional state inevitably affects what I think and say, I have had to ponder the subject of majoring in literature in the light of the events of 11 September. Although I had begun to think about this essay before that day, in the aftermath of the attacks I thought I should address the subject with new eyes. Is it a luxury to focus on literature when matters in the world can go so awry? Is it socially helpful to study literature, or is entering the world of fiction or poetry simply escaping into fantasy and unreality? I quickly came to the conclusion that at a time such as this, we need literature and literature majors more than ever. Literature is a reminder of civilization and continuity, the concrete manifestation of our uniquely human accomplishment, language, used to reflect creatively on the complexities of our existence. Literature is, by its very presence, a protest against wickedness and brutality—a truism, perhaps, but especially comforting in these troubled days.

In the end, since I know that theory is based on experience, I recall my past. I remember that when I decided to pursue doctoral studies in Yiddish literature, a favorite uncle expressed concern about how I would earn a living. "Why not do something practical, like studying engineering?" he advised. But I was in love, smitten with a language, a culture, and a literature. Although I was to learn that, like any enduring romance, this love would have its bumps and sadness along the way, I know the match was *bashert*.

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