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In the vein of Balzac, I think language structures the world. Here's why. Language is the neighbor on my block who asks me every day if I'm recycling (she takes our cans, there a lot of them of various kinds, we are college students, and this is how we notice recycling). Language is my sister screaming through the bathroom door that I can't sing, and this is how I know where to sing NSYNC the loudest. Language is dialectical Parisian, Quebecois, Acadian Chiac, Creole—or it's not. Language is my crying over the end of *A Tale of Two Cities* at 14, even though I didn't understand the plot until I was 19. Language is the reason we can each individually look at the world and see a different world. Language is the reason that when I see milk, I think of Eva Hoffman's translated milk, which both sounds and tastes different in two languages. BU is not where my love for books started; but it is certainly where it was enriched, challenged and deepened. Did you think I was going to say "finished" just now? My love of books is not finished.

Comp lit changed where I thought my college experience was going. I transferred from an art school to BU and grieved for the creativity I had lost. I transferred into Anthropology which was incredibly interesting, but didn't feel "right". The first class that I remember feeling most like myself again, in Boston, was when I took Immigrant women in Literature with Professor Ines Garcia de le Puente. This class changed the tone of my college education. I will never forget Eva Hoffman, or Lara Vapnyar, Nina Barbarova, or even Maria, who was an exchange student in our class at the time, who taught me what it felt like to have a friend again. I will never forget the women who migrated across the world and looked for themselves the whole time. I will never forget being given the language to talk about the grief of leaving a place you loved in your soul, nor will I forget

the diversity of reasons why these women left their places to begin with. I will always have this knowledge. I will always have the vocabulary of translation. I will always think about how some things signify and others are signified. This will go with me where I go.

There are some passages, we know which ones, that just come along and break open our hearts...and the most incredible part is that readers never expect it. For example, I knew when I took Primo Levi within Holocaust studies with Professor Nancy Harrowitz that I was bound to have my emotional capacity stretched, my knowledge of what happened historically at this time sharpened. What I didn't expect was to fall in love with Primo Levi's voice, with Italian, to have my eyes pinned to the page by a clinical examination of things so vile they make our heads spin around on our shoulders, to read about chemistry, to be saying science words, and hear poetry. I was, in short, affected, reaffixed, and then affirmed. Affected and affirmed in a way I could not have previously foreseen.

Professor Margaret Litvin is the reason I am graduating from BU. I met her once and we talked for forty-five minutes, and I left that office feeling seen. I had just spoken to a lover of language and that was a palpable feeling of rightness. I had just spoken to a person who appreciated that my path was slanted and nervous, and she did not penalize me for that. She fought for my past to be counted, fought for me to crawl out of the pigeon-hole that transfer credits had left me in.

Professor Petrus Liu in his Queer Theory class gave me the language I needed to talk about my life, myself, and my beloved friends, while simultaneously deconstructing everything I thought I had ever known. Special shout out to Foucault, Eve Sedgwick and JB, who is not Justin Bieber, but the true king, Judith Butler.

Because of Comparative Literature and the World Language and Lit Department, I have gulped down French. But I have tasted Italian, Spanish, German, Hebrew, Persian, Arabic, and Russian. Professor Corrigan, I will probably never stop saying “Skotoprignyevsk” to myself while I’m doing my laundry. It’s such a great word. It sounds so good.

Is this not an incredible feat? Y’all, I’ve been here for only two years! I can’t imagine the stories that all of you have, after being here for four.

I had a Professor at SCAD tell me before I transferred, when I asked him for advice about how to pick a major, due my general anxiety of choosing anything, ever, he said “Pick the thing that makes you think in the way you want to think.” In this way, my two college experiences have truly unified. I never expected that something could have filled the gap between my grief over the creativity, technicality and physicality of printmaking and my intense love of language, linguistics and fiction. But guess what, it has been filled. With books! With the people in this department, both students and faculty, who give their breath and their passion to the books that give the world more breath, that help us see with more passion. Because I never expected to read Gilgamesh, The Conference of the Birds or the Tao Te Ching. I never expected to read any other book of Elie Wiesel besides Night. I never expected to be reading entire books in a different language: shout out to Le Pere Goriot and Madame Bovary. I never expected to write about queer culture in a play about religion from the 1700s, but hey Tartuffe and Catherine Opie, that was something I was allowed, and encouraged to do here.

I never expected to spend an entire semester reading a single, twelve booked, 800 page novel called *The Brothers Karamazov* by Fyodor Dostoevsky with Professor Yuri

Corrigan. I never expected that the performance I was learning about in the Theater of French Enlightenment would couple with *Gender Trouble* by Judith Butler and then have dinner with the social psych of Balzac, Flaubert and Victor Hugo, which then proceeded to choke me as I read Ivan Karamazov, Kolya Kratsokin and Grushenka quote their ideas. Needless to say I was excited. *The Brothers Karamazov*, as well as Professor Corrigan's teaching of it, completely exploded my idea of what a novel is, and what it means to be a reader of one. Our class discussion had me feeling like Ivan Karamazov more than once and let me tell you that was stressful. Needless to say, I managed to pass your class without brain fever and I consider it a true win. It was the best class I took in college.

I think we've all been taught to think in the way we most value: through careful reading of both books and bodies in the world, through intensive observation, patience and listening. These were things I did not expect to learn. By becoming a better reader, we've given ourselves the tools to be a better people. I was taught to be this good of a reader. It was just a coincidence that I enjoyed it.

Books are the reason that we can all read a page and either take away nothing, a particular feeling, or life. And the window on the sixth floor, just outside the doors of the Comp Lit department, are high enough above everything to say that Boston from this angle was something I also read once. It feels right that this window allows all people, anyone who takes the time to make it here, the clearest, most unobstructed seat for observation. I can see the Pru in the distance with the orange sun setting on it, and it looks green-orange, like a vertical sea painted in steel by Frank Lloyd-Wright. I can see from up here, with my feet literally planted in my love for the World Lang and Lit department that everything changes and nothing waits.

This department BLOWS MY MIND. I wish there was a cuter way to say that, but there's not. And I am very thankful.