

Sept. 7, 1995

Dear David Roskies,

If I wait for some peaceful moment to write you the letter you deserve, I will never write you. I work on my stories, teach school, and for the most part leave living and correspondence to others. So please accept this note, for what it's worth, as the merest token of my appreciation for you and your work. I've been a fan of Against Apocalypse and The Shtetl Book for some time, and having just read A Bridge of Longing, I could no longer hold my tongue. I don't remember the last time I read a book that had me exclaiming so often: O Lord, if only I knew what he knows! For me you are quite simply an invaluable resource. I could expand on this sentiment ad nauseum, but I'm too selfish with my time and too apprehensive about how to say what I actually mean. Perhaps sometime I can tell you face-to-face how important your writing has become for me, to say nothing of how it has validated me personally-- this especially with regard to A Bridge of Longing. To be honest, your knowledge of Yiddishkeit is downright intimidating to a dilettante such as I, and for a while I'd been half-expecting you (given you were even aware of my work) to unmask me for a fraud. So it's doubly gratifying to be mentioned in your book among the roll of "creative" betrayers. That I am a betrayer (not to say poacher, deceiver, imposter, etc.) is an issue of conscience I struggle with daily, but looking at Jewish letters through your magical lens leaves me feeling vindicated for once, as if what I thought was a mask has been my real face all along. But rather than belabor a dubious metaphor, I'll shut up, except to ask again that you accept this brief expression as an ounce in advance of the ton of gratitude I owe you.

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P.S. Enclosed is a talk I gave at a Tikkun conference which you may or may not have seen.