

# Therapy as Memoir

reviewed by Debra Weinstein

## A Dialogue on Love

Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick  
Beacon Press  
hb \$24.00, 220 pp.

Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick's *A Dialogue on Love* is a memoir which recreates Sedgwick's first long-term therapy. It is an intense, daring book, which begins where poet, I.D. left off in her *Tribute to Freud*. (I.D. gave up writing a journal of their session after Freud told her it was antithetical to her treatment.) Sedgwick shares with her reader everything she shares with her therapist. Early on, Sedgwick explains to her therapist how her scholarship on gay men is a lot like therapy. "The work is about sex and love and desire," Sedgwick says, "so it's almost bound to be involving at that intimate level."



Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick by David Koehn

*A Dialogue on Love* is fashioned after Robert Merrill's "prose of departure"—prose "spangled with haiku." Sedgwick's prose of departure is a recreation of her therapy sessions with Shannon Van Wey (she has sought therapy after treatment for breast cancer). Van Wey has contributed his notes, as well, which helps to take the memoir out of the first person and into the larger world. We witness the patient's first experience of transference. Overwrought with "feelings," Sedgwick wants to tell Shannon: "I could adore you, but you won't think

enough....Don't you care what garbage comes out of your mouth?" Also, her first experience with countertransference after Shannon lets her know that he has thought about something she has said: "I exist on weekends?" Sedgwick asks with pleasure.

In the end, patient and therapist meet at the therapist's home. Sedgwick has just been diagnosed with spinal metastasis of the breast cancer; Shannon has been hospitalized for a cardiac illness. Sedgwick tells Shannon the essence of Sogyal Rinpoche's stories about gurus dying. His students and intimates are sad, but, "at the same time, very well-equipped with a certain soul-seed of that person inside them."

This is an fine, tender, important book that teaches us how to die, and in that lesson, how to live, as well. The reader will return time and again to *A Dialogue on Love* for its sentences, phrases, ideas, and poetry. It is a meditation, which, as Sedgwick's therapist might say, functions "like art—you can turn it around and around."

DEBRA WEINSTEIN IS THE AUTHOR OF *RODENT ANGEL* (NYU PRESS, 1996), A BOOK OF POEMS.



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—from the Foreword by Marilyn Hacker

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