

Editor's Introduction

The Weather in Proust gathers, in its first five chapters, the writing toward a book on Proust that occupied Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick in the last years of her life. I've titled the entire volume after the opening essay, the only one in which Proust is always her central focus, but which, in its capacious concerns with subjects as diverse as Neoplatonism, Bette Davis, affect theory, and puppet theater, suggests that under that title much can be safely subsumed. "Cavafy, Proust, and the Queer Little Gods," which follows, records Eve's discovery of a madeleine moment: responding to an invitation to speak about C. P. Cavafy afforded her the chance recognition that Cavafy's periperformative invocations of the "queer little gods" were the inspiring force behind her realization of their role in Proust. What is "in Proust," indeed, is likewise but differently in question in "Making Things, Practicing Emptiness." There, her textile practices, while resistant to verbal translation, nonetheless involve texts, often by Proust; text and textile are warp and weft woven together in such forms as accordion books and looms. "Melanie Klein and the Difference Affect Makes" underscores one important theoretical strand in the Proust project. It is measured in "Affect Theory and Theory of Mind." Those theoretical relations are instantiated in this chapter by a reading of the difficult fifth volume of Proust's *A la recherche du temps perdu*.

The next group of essays opens with "Anality: News from the Front," which contains what may have been the last sentence Eve composed, a parenthetical remark about the hope inspired by the inauguration of Barack Obama, which took place less than three months before her

death on April 12, 2009. It is followed by two much earlier pieces, “Making Gay Meanings” and “Thinking through Queer Theory,” valuable now for the ways in which she reviews her career as a queer theorist, and revealing for the citations from earlier work that she chooses. Each piece also makes interventions into the scenes of their delivery, showing that her career as a queer theorist continued to the end of her life, as “Anality: News from the Front” certainly demonstrates as well. The final essay, “Reality and Realization,” written soon after her breast cancer had metastasized to her spine, provides the ground note encounter with impending death, and with Buddhism, that subtends much that comes before, including, centrally, the work on Proust.

This collection does not represent all of Eve’s unpublished and uncollected work. There are early poems, MLA papers, even class syllabi and assignments, not to mention advice to job seekers, that may appear or reappear (a previously unpublished early essay on James Merrill, for example, is slated for publication in *GLQ* in 2011). Only one piece of late writing is not reprinted here, a talk titled “Come as You Are.” It reworks virtually all of “Reality and Realization” in the characteristic way in which Eve treated her own writing as a series of movable modules. (Those practices guided me in making one chapter out of three separate yet overlapping and diverging talks on Cavafy; I detail such editorial decisions and procedures in the notes to each piece. [Notes that I have added appear in brackets.]) To “Reality and Realization,” “Come as You Are” adds several pages used again later in “Making Things, Practicing Emptiness.” At appropriate points I have inserted as notes to “Reality and Realization” and “Making Things, Practicing Emptiness” virtually all the passages from “Come as You Are” that do not appear in those two pieces. Omitted, however, are two poems of Eve’s (previously published in *Women and Performance* 16, no. 2 (2006): 327–28) that initially were part of “Come as You Are.” It seems apt to close this editor’s introduction with them.

Death

isn’t a party you dress up for, man,
 it’s strictly come-as-you-are, so don’t get too
 formal, it’s useless. *Don’t* grab that prosthesis,
 those elevator shoes, or girdle to jam your tummy
 in, for your interview with Jesus or
 forty-nine days in the bardo of Becoming.
 The point’s not what becomes you, but what’s you.

Why did I buy those silk PJs with feathers
so long before the big affair began?
I've always slept in the nude. Now I sleep in the nude forever.

Bathroom Song

I was only one year old;
I could tinkle in the loo,
such was my precocity.
Letting go of Number Two
in my potty, not pyjama,
was a wee bit more forbidding
— and I feared the ravening flush.
So my clever folks appealed
to my generosity:
“What a masterpiece, Evita!
Look! We'll send it off to Grandma!”

Under the river, under the woods,
off to Brooklyn and the breathing
cavern of Mnemosyne
from the fleshpotties of Dayton —
what could be more kind or lucky?

From the issue of my bowels
straight to God's ear — or to Frieda's,
to the presence of my Grandma,
to the anxious chuckling
of her flushed and handsome face
that was so much like my daddy's,
to her agitated jowls,
Off! Away! To Grandma's place!

As, in Sanskrit, who should say
of the clinging scenes of karma,
“Gaté, gaté, paragaté”
(gone, gone, forever gone),
“parasamgaté; bodhi; svaha!”
(utterly gone — enlightenment —
svaha! Whatever svaha means),
Send the sucker off to Grandma.
Gaté, gaté, paragaté;
parasamgaté; bodhi; svaha!

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