

**ANNE SEXTON :
A CONFSSIONAL POET**

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BIOGRAPHY

1928-1974



- One of popular poets of her time whose poetic career is marked by a formidable list of honour's, awards and fellowships.
- Principal tenets of sexton's poetry its confessional aspects.

- Her madness and urge towards suicide
- Her sense of loss, agony and pain, her confession that she was writing about her life, was enough reason for critics to dissect her life and associate blindly everything in her poetry with her personal life
- It was seen in juxtaposition with Sexton's need for salvation through her poetry.

HER CONTEMPORARIES

- Robert Lowell and Sylvia Plath.
- As Lowell extends his "self" to external world.
- And as Plath disassociate her "self" from external world.

- Feminist reading of her poetry inspired by some of her poems like *In Celebration Of My Uterus* and *Menstruation at Forty* has been insufficient to justify Sexton's poetic voice. But she is not as radical as Sylvia Plath in her denouncement of Patriarchy.
- She is a female voice in conflict between many polar opposites in her poetry.

- Her female sensibilities in the light of Psychoanalytical feminist theory.
- Mid 20th century America, Socio-Political & Philosophical scenarios – and changes occurring in the position of women.
- With the publication of Sexton's first book ***To Bedlam and Partway Back*** she was immediately identified with confessional group.

- The term confessional was first used by M. L. Rosenthal in his review of Robert Lowell's *Life Studies*. A book said to be a turning point in Poetic Tradition.
- For Robert Philips *Confessional Poets* it was a literary movement which included Robert Lowell and Sexton's W.D. Snodgrass, Sylvia Plath, Roethike, Allen Ginsberg etc.

HISTORY

- It traces its literary tradition to Eisenhower years.
- Also a tradition of confession from Sappho, Catallus, Augustine, Rilke, Baudelaire and Whitman.
- According to Phillips in modern times, in contrast to 'Eliotic Mantle of Reticence' they turn loose those emotions earlier reserved for father confessor or analyst

- The *Lost Son* of Roethke and Snodgrass' *The Hearts Needle* are earlier publications in this mode.

THEMES OF CONFESSIONAL POETRY

- Insanity or Mental Illness
- Father complex and willingness to write about it.
- Ugliness and anguish of life etc.

FEMALE PERSPECTIVE

- She writes not just as a Poet but as a House Wife and Mother.
- “In celebration of women I Am”.
- “Double Image” explores her own relationship with her mother and with her daughter which are far from satisfactory.

DIVERGENT INFLUENCES

- Presence and beyond poetry.
- Pervasive imaginative structure of her poetic world.
- Feminist analysis theory.
- Power of language and its constraints
- World view, Polarities and Tensions
- Hierarchies of repression.
- A third generation feminist and her struggle for identity.

UNION WITH GOD

- She looks around for some sustaining force as God :
“God was there like an island I had not rowed to”. “The Awful Rowing Towards God” (1975).
- Attainment of her goal and unity with God.
- Sexton’s God is perhaps, if father surrogate who would help her tide over all her personal crises.
- Darkness and bloom - She commits Suicide in 1974

THANK YOU