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Review and Reflection of Paula Salvio's *Anne Sexton: Teacher of Weird Abundance*

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Introduction

To make meaning of our experiences, our lives, and our selves may intuitively appear to be a solitary endeavor, a journey through time, memory, emotion, and the spaces that we have, do, and will inhabit in our lives. Or so a society based on rugged individualism might have us believe. This is particularly ironic because as teachers we are confronted daily by young people who need someone, often us, to assist them in navigating their feelings, confusion, emotions, and experiences. Often we do this by obtusely revealing something of ourselves, being careful, of course, to leave much safely tucked away, out of sight, forgotten, for in meeting our students we also confront ourselves. How much and in what context is that sense of need reciprocated? In our efforts to understand our subjectivities, our selves in relation to the world, we often turn to the life text of Other in the hope of deriving some meaning, some insight into the still unfolding text in which our stories are inscribed and re-inscribed. Anne Sexton's story represents one of those dissonant experiences in which we are forced to confront ourselves through exploring an often disturbingly familiar life, a life that may reveal so much about ourselves that we view the Other with disgust to repel the familiarity. A Stallybrass and White citation hauntingly rang through the psyche. "Disgust...always bears the imprint of desire" (p. 10). What is it that we find so desirous in that which we claim to find so disgusting? Anne Sexton the teacher represents for Salvio "a limit case of an exemplary teacher" which can "expose the insufficiency of viewing teaching and learning from normative standpoints" (p. 6). Yet we found Salvio's portrayal of Sexton validating in a way because we now know, we understand that are not alone. Salvio writes that Anne Sexton serves "as a foil for educators to declare themselves 'dissimilar' to her excessive, tormented pedagogy" (p. 24). She represents the ordinary Other against whom normal teachers judge themselves to be normal, the Other they need to identify themselves as normal, whatever

'normal' may be.

We read Salvio's interpretation of Sexton's life, particularly her teaching life, from our perspectives as two people who find a strange camaraderie with Sexton's ordinary brokenness. Perhaps as Salvio points out we found such resonance with Sexton's life because it was an ordinary life rather than a normal life. In a profession where subjectivation and the foreclosure of possibilities runs rampant, where students and teachers must aspire to the ideal of the norm, to be like everyone else, Sexton tread in, and was ultimately swallowed by, a sea of the ordinary, the broken, the non-normal, the antithesis of the ideal. Salvio, therefore, fundamentally questions both what society wants from teachers and how those social expectations drive what teachers expect of themselves. We as teachers wear masks that both reveal and conceal. What happens when a teacher falls or falters, and what does it mean to do so? How do we as teachers deal with the trauma of teaching and learning for both our students and our selves? How do our pedagogical relationships reveal or stir in us that which we have forgotten or continue to fear, and how does that impact those around us, especially our students? What happens when a teacher "casts her students as just the intellectual companions for which she longs" (p. 7)? Do we as teachers seek to reinforce and reify our own preconceptions in our students? Do we attempt to subjectivate our students by mistakenly equating our interests with theirs? In a weird way, Salvio's examination of these difficult questions through reading Sexton's life turns normality on itself to reveal the extraordinary nature of the ordinary, the abject. In an educational era defined by the standardization, normalization, and subjectivation of both students and teachers, Salvio recasts trauma and struggle through contingency and melancholia as the space in which we live our true day-to-day existence.

We, like Sexton, are products of prevailing social, political, and even economic milieus, the past, present, and what we are expected to become. What trauma and loss do we forget as we negotiate the spaces of our lives? How do the "disturbing sensations brought about by the uncanny" (p. 12) provoke feelings of displacement which make us feel uncomfortable or alien to ourselves? Sexton displayed many manifestations of such discomfort, such as feelings of intellectual inadequacy, discomfort with others, and her "lost presence of self" (p. 12). As much as it is a reading of Sexton's personal life, Salvio's work explores how concepts of the uncanny and melancholia relate to pedagogical practice. As students and teachers encounter concepts through their study and classroom practice, these concepts might set off "a chain of emotions and memories," (p. 14) and how we as teachers deal with such emotions and memories is crucial to teaching practice. Do we seek to normalize these experiences, or do we interrogate them for their pedagogical value? Salvio articulates the potential pedagogic value of melancholic loss:

Melancholia and the uncanny can be read as vital structures of feeling that offer educators important resources for teaching and learning, for they can

function as indices to histories—both personal and social—that we have turned away from or conceal. Rather than working to cure away these strains in the curriculum, I consider how we might draw on the dispiritedness of melancholia and the sense of estrangement brought about by the uncanny to provide insights into our teaching lives. (p. 14)

Pedagogically, we can de-center and question socio-political constructs because the inability to grieve melancholic loss corresponds to the inability to broach the socially unmentionable or unbearable. In questioning and remembering, we “give expression to that which our culture has deemed unspeakable or ungrivable” and “engage that which we have cast beyond the pale of the curriculum so that it can be properly remembered” (p. 13). Salvio illustrates this point in the troubling story of Sexton’s student Chris Leverich and his articulated sense of loss at not getting to know Sexton (p. 18-19). She asks how Sexton’s past sexual distress and loss entered her teaching and how that might have unmoored some sense of loss in Leverich (p. 19-20). The importance of pedagogy in the case of Leverich lay in “creating occasions...for Leverich to refine an attachment to the half-spoken losses haunting his personal past and to coordinate these losses with the larger social field” which is difficult “when the losses a person suffers with are not recognized as legitimate and thus not granted public space for articulation” (p. 20). As imperfect, ordinary, non-normal people, how can imperfect teachers teach? How do we know how our pedagogical practices, tinged with our own sense of ungrivable loss affect our teaching and thus our students? How does proscription or foreclosure of grief through losses both physical and in the realm of ideas subjectivate us as students and teachers? As much as we attempt to categorize the pieces of our lives with such terms as ‘professional’, ‘personal’, ‘public’, or ‘private’, they are but one with many influences and voices. It is Anne Sexton’s struggle with the visible reality to which we can all relate. Is there such a thing as ‘excess’ in expression of the self, and what are the consequences repression and revelation? Although Sexton’s struggle is interpreted and internalized differently for each reader, it is, as Madeleine Grumet points out, “...what she doesn’t know about what she knows...(p. ix)” in which we find our own meanings.

The Entombment of Loss

Can one be a ‘good’ teacher without experiencing loss? True teaching and learning drudge the drama of the past. They delve into the ‘psychic tomb’, the place where the pain of melancholia lies, where the improperly bereaved lie in crypt. Opening that crypt may reveal sexual feelings or unknown desire, but isn’t that to be expected, and what do those feelings truly represent? For whatever or whomever was lost was improperly bereaved in the beginning, one should expect a ‘learning curve’. Opening the psychic tomb or even the crypt places one in the vulnerable position of the Other. If a teacher never places herself in that position, can she ever know what it is to the Other? Can she then experience the melancholia associated with loss? Can she be a ‘good’ teacher? Creation of the masks and personae evident in Sexton’s work allowed her to mourn

loss. Loss and mourning are those parts of our selves that we do not want to address, those parts that we 'disavow'. Sexton remains as a model for teachers in understanding the pedagogical self. Judging her actions and poetry, or the masks and personae that she created, as inappropriate or crazy, allows us to continue disavowing the loss that we harbor in our own tombs. We see a "woman in ruins, untrustworthy, and strange" (p. 25), but if we were to create the masks and personae (through writing, performing, etc.) as she did, would we not appear the same? Why are we so afraid to do so? To recognize vulnerability in our selves is to recognize the Other and "threaten the meticulous work [of]...mainstream culture (1) to solidify normative notions of what it means to be a good teacher and a good student; (2) to possess emotional stability; and (3) to determine which physical bodies and bodies of knowledge are most worthy" (p. 23).

When knowledge and the body are at war, it is the body that is most vulnerable. Our quest for knowledge leaves us wondering what to do with the flesh of the body, a loss or void characterized by desire that, at first light, is physical. Upon further reflection, as was the case with Sexton's student Chris Leveritch, the desire is a need to grieve loss, a psychic desire, but we often do not get past the incorrect identification of physical desire. We become so disgusted with the self that we push the knowledge back into the crypt in an effort to preserve the flesh. Our quest for knowledge becomes a loss that we mourn. As teachers, we console ourselves through the art of teaching, through the teacher-student relationship. It is the 'melancholic pedagogy' of Anne Sexton, understanding the vulnerability of the Other, that offers us the opportunity to gain insight into our selves and to find what it is for which we grieve.

Social Context and Pedagogical Practices

Even as teachers we are all situated in the world in our own way. Salvio examines the public-private dialectic through an exploration of how Sexton's personal life and the world in which she found herself affected her teaching practices. In so doing she demonstrates that no immutable barrier exists between the public and private realms. Salvio's analysis of how Sexton's feelings of intellectual inadequacy, of being out of place, and of feeling oppressed by the way the social construct through which she struggled affected her teaching practice raises the question of how much of ourselves we dare show as educators. The "grotesque realism infused in Sexton's pedagogy opposes a severance of the material body from conceptions of reason ascribed to the academic, the intellectual, or the 'good' teacher" (p. 37). Sexton was dismissed as simply irrational, illogical, and un-academic, not coincidentally traits misogynistically ascribed to women in her social milieu. Sexton represented, in her way, the reality of a woman's life during her time, and she was a manifestation of that reality. Salvio points out, however, that Sexton's teaching practices also provided a site of resistance to the social expectations that sought to subjectivate her:

Sexton's teaching materials unsettle the "given" social expectations and anxieties about the psychic, emotional, and physical borders that should circumscribe a teacher's body.

Rather than being poised as a female teacher who represents elevated forms of culture, Sexton represents the actual lived-in female body in post-World War II America providing us with a metonymic reminder of sexual difference and the contingencies between middle-class life and madness, anxiety and teaching, sickness and health (p. 40).

In examining Sexton's pedagogy in the context of the word in which she lived, Salvio starkly raises a series of questions upon which we as educators must reflect: Do we as teachers yield to subjectivation, and do we in turn subjectivate our students? Do we pass on what is "normal," or do we dare to trouble prevailing social and political discourses? Do we even raise an awareness of how we and our students become normalized by culture? Certainly we walk a fine line in such troubling because much is left to our discretion and what we desire from our pedagogical experiences and relationships. Perhaps one of the most difficult questions with which we struggle as educators concerns what we expect and desire from our pedagogical relationships. Do we seek as teachers a sense of immortality in which our students incorporate us and we live on through them? Salvio examines this question through her analysis of Sexton's final assignment in her course "Anne on Anne" in which Sexton required her students to formulate a persona from Sexton's poetry and lectures. Reflecting on Sexton's "Anne on Anne" assignment, Salvio herself initially "feared that Sexton had no place in the classroom" (p. 46). Certainly such an assignment points to the danger of "composing curriculum that is tainted by our own narcissistic attachments" out of a "fantasy that our students will incorporate us" (p. 42). Based on her research, however, Salvio concluded that Sexton was "indeed a diligent and devoted teacher" whose assignment contained "specific ruptures in the lure to merge into one, producing the potential for a contingent rather than continuous relationship with the figure of the teacher/poet" (p. 46). Teaching is indeed a political act, and we must realize that resistance to normalization carries its own risk of normalization and subjectivation if we seek to impose our interests on our students and desire our students to incorporate us as the expense of themselves.

The Complexity of Pedagogical Relationships

Relationships between students and teachers are based on many dynamics such as power and powerlessness, promise and loss. Salvio examines the complexity, consonance, and dissonance attendant to pedagogical relationships through a reading of the often-strained relationship between Sexton and John Holmes, her first poetry teacher. Probing the relationship between Sexton and Holmes, Salvio reveals a multi-layered, ultimately strained, and arguably failed pedagogical relationship, a dialectical struggle between contingency and continuity, between questioning and convention. Salvio analyzes the relationship between Sexton and Holmes through the framework of mutual recognition which requires a "balance of assertion and recognition" between teacher and student (p. 53). Mutual recognition produces inter-subjective tension, a hermeneutic process of projection and reflection, a mutual awareness of each other's subjectivity, and de-objectification of the Other. Sexton's relationship with Holmes

emerged in the context of history, Holmes' self-forgetting and disavowal of his own demons, inter-subjective failure, and Holmes' self-deceit that his interests, constructed from the wreckage of his past, were congruent with Sexton's. What resulted was not a true pedagogical relationship, but a relationship tragically bereft of mutual acknowledgement and a true openness to the possibility of understanding. The relationship between Sexton and Holmes was characterized by narcissistic control of a student by a teacher in the context of socio-political and educational norms.

Salvio illustrates Holmes' self-deception and narcissism through his failure or refusal as a teacher to recognize that Sexton was not simply engaged in self-indulgent poetic catharsis. Rather, through her poetry *and* her pedagogy, Sexton was attempting to find and occupy an inter-subjective middle space by disrupting the public-private dualism and re-conceptualizing the personal not as an exclusive interior haven, but as that which coexists with and negotiates socio-political, cultural, familial, and historical spaces and relationships. Her critique and challenge of the social norms through which she lived and struggled, challenged the order to which Holmes had submitted himself, to his vision of poetic aesthetics, his concepts of the purposes of writing, and pedagogy. How do we use our pedagogic power, power that emerges from our own lived experience? How does what we forget result in our own self-constructed self-deception and the desire to resist the threat of an Other to the normalcy that characterizes our schools, classrooms, and worldviews? Autobiography as a pedagogical device, although inherently risky, also presents a powerful tool through which we as teachers and students might find that middle space, that inter-subjectivity, that mutual recognition.

Sexton represents something of a tragic hero in the text of her own lived experience, revealed and concealed in her writing, and in Salvio's portrayal. She chafed in her socio-political milieu and felt disconnected from the world. In poetry and among writers, Sexton felt at home, that she belonged, as if she were among "her people" (p. 55). Pedagogic relationships exist on many levels, and in the context of Sexton's desire to belong, to please and impress, her relationship with Holmes assumed the pedagogical characteristics of teacher-student and parent-child. As their subjectivities clashed, Holmes, unable to recognize or appreciate Sexton, sought to censor her. Sexton brought Holmes face-to-face with himself, with a past toward which he developed a willful amnesia, and he responded by attempting to impose his sense of aesthetic worth on her. As teachers can we bear our students facing us with our own fears and demons and threatening to disrupt the comfortable perceptions of self and world that we carefully construct? Do we question the worth of our students' thoughts, feelings, and emotions? Do we view their motives, as Holmes viewed Sexton's, as "wrong?" Holmes ascribed to Sexton all that which he disdained and forgot of his own existence, and in so using his pedagogic authority he created a void in the space where the Other should have lived and been honored.

Salvio at least partially explains Holmes' inability to recognize

Sexton through Holmes' narcissism in which he cast himself as self-perfected through his repudiation of that which caused in him a sense of vulnerability, difference, pain, and inner conflict. Narcissism, therefore, functioned for Holmes as a form of self-purification in which he shed his self-loathing to arrive at a sense of self-love through self-deception. We can extrapolate this narcissism to instances in which teachers revert to control mechanisms when the comfort of classroom and curricular pragmatics, order, and normalcy face threats from the challenge of unusual or abnormal students or ideas. Salvo again focuses on autobiographical writing as a mechanism to "illuminate those aspects of self-deception on which we rely to sustain our sense of pedagogical authority. In pedagogical relationships, use of the "autobiographical *I*" entails risk for both students and teachers. Autobiographical writing occurs in a specific socio-political context and is a double-edged sword in which disclosure can result either in affirmation or revilement of student and teacher alike. Salvo points out Sexton's insistence that she hides in her secrets as her commentary on the stifling socio-political conditions in which she lived, wrote, and taught. We thus control our personae as viewed by the world by regulating what we reveal and conceal of ourselves, and in doing so we perhaps narcissistically seek self-perfection.

The Need for Forgiveness

Trauma is a wound to the mind or body. Often, it is not available to one's "consciousness until it imposes itself again, repeatedly, in the nightmares, flashbacks, and repetitive actions of the survivor (p. 84)." To secure a sense of attachment, we attempt to forget the trauma, hiding our 'true selves', so as not to be hurt again. We become anyone but ourselves. In the end, nothing 'feels real'.

"Learning bears a strong resemblance to trauma precisely because it provokes a crisis in meaning that often leaves a person feeling at a loss for words. Not only does a person feel inarticulate, but their sense of self, society, and meaning feel incoherent, and broken down (p. 85)." We feel vulnerable, lost, and unsure, and we scramble to attach to something familiar. The learning process, much like trauma, can only be worked through via language, specifically detailed, metaphoric narratives that connect to life, but yet, these are the very things that seem "beyond language and form (p. 86)," or are they just beyond the language and forms that are available, or familiar, specifically to Others? Salvo writes that women's ways of representing themselves through narrative challenge the dominant form of representation. If your form of expression does not seem representative to me, I become less committed to identifying with you, and as a result, my sympathies are less committed. Therefore, "the autobiographies written by [the Other] are less likely to be believed because of the conflicts with other predominant figures (p. 88)." As Foucault's 'politics of memory' posits, those who have authority are believed while those who do not have authority are not. Where does authority lie within a classroom or even within a school?

Salvo states that female subjectivity is rarely represented as 'active and desirous'. In this case, how does one reveal one's true self in a teaching situation, when that very self hides from the threat of shame? "One has to sustain an engagement with the image and

what lies beyond it. One has to be willing to complicate what appears evident or straightforward (p. 82).” We need to sustain our engagement with the Other and be willing to complicate our relationship by understanding how it impacts our teaching. Anne’s daughter Joy notes that what her mother could not provide for her daughters she made sure they got from somewhere else. Did she do the same for herself? What Anne could not provide for herself, did she get from teaching? Perhaps that is what teaching provides, a satisfaction of a need, or a way to repair what a trauma has damaged – a reparation, even if it is with the threat, and in Anne’s case the reality, of humiliation.

“What can be learned from looking into the [Other’s] heart? [The] use of personae can be understood as a means for bringing [teachers] into closer contact with aspects of themselves that, while deeply intimate, remain radically unknown to them. Such intimate disturbances can never be severed or successfully denied, for they return at the most unsuspected moments, taking us off guard, bringing us face to face with forbidden lost loves or aspects of our selves that we fear and thus find far too disturbing to address. Thus, the foreign and the familiar intermingle, resisting control and easy categorizations (p. 89).”

This is the essence of subjectivity. Even so, I could not understand why, at times, I found myself gasping for air, choking back tears and the memories that brought them, struggling between memory and fantasy, overwhelmed by emotions that, at first, I was unable to understand. The words from Stallybrass and White continued to haunt me. “Disgust...always bears the imprint of desire” (p. 10). Looking into Anne’s heart and realizing that what first appeared as a level of disgust at her actions were actually desires to understand why I, an educated woman as mother, wife, daughter, sister, and teacher, tuck away parts of my self about which I question my propensity to be good-enough, and how the hidden aspects of my self have come to bear upon my teaching. As a result, my demons returned at a most unsuspecting, moment, took *me* off guard, and brought *me* face-to-face with the parts of *my* hidden self, far too disturbing and painful for me to address. What appeared foreign – Anne’s tortured soul– intermingled with the familiar - my own life - and I lost control of the onslaught of connections. For quite some time, I struggled to find a way to make sense of it all and ‘narrate’ my thoughts that so complexly intermingled with those presented in the book. “...language is a medium through which the self is at once composed and decentered (p. 88),” yet I struggled to find the language, and therefore, a sense of composure even in my crisis of learning. Is this the melancholia for which we long? This is truly an overwhelming sense, a rush if one will, of realizing how comparably ordinary one’s life is – ordinary, but not normal, a seemingly unstable space to exist. If immersion into this trauma was true learning, what had been experienced before this point? This learning was emotionally exhausting, pushing the limits of what I knew of the self, uncovering that which I chose to deny. Wallowing in the humility of my own subjectivity I wondered, what self had I brought to the classroom? Had I created the space for students to experience the conflict and loss of equilibrium required for one to

learn? In the struggles with my own subjectivity, had I created the space for them to deal with their own by engaging “them in claiming or giving voice to alterity (p. 100)”? Had I been good-enough in my application of a reparative pedagogy? Without conflict and disequilibrium, such as that which exists here, one cannot become immersed in educative inquiry, and it is at this point that I realize that I am the fallen teacher. In true inquiry form, there are more questions than answers. As a teacher, one should ask the self, “Now, if [you] are not [Other], how can [you understand] about being one? In what ways are [you] an [Other] still (p. 101)?” Be careful. Your subjectivity becomes naked and exposed. Even so, “I bend down my face to yours and forgive you,” as I must forgive the self.

The Innocence of Forgetfulness

Race is a concept of extraordinary complexity and explosive history which academics spend lifetimes researching, but still find difficulty in articulating. Those who suffer its effects, want to remember the concept of race. Some who perceive themselves unaffected by race wish to rationalize it away, particularly in our curriculum, through concepts such as “celebrating diversity,” “tolerance,” and the laughable fiction of the colorblind society or the melting pot. The tragedy lies in the fact that racism affects and hurts us all, whether we choose to realize it or not. Salvio examines a paradox in Sexton’s pedagogy through Sexton’s failure to give race a prominent space in her teaching or her larger body of work. As much as Sexton’s poetry and pedagogy challenged and confronted the self and the social, she appears to have succumbed to self-forgetting and the lack of mutual recognition of the Other with respect to race. Considering the time in which she lived, how could Sexton have been oblivious to race? Was she, as Salvio speculates, suffering too much physical and emotional trauma to attend to race? Did Sexton, if she even thought of race, address it indirectly through her more general critique of socio-political conditions? A clear answer remains elusive.

Ironically, by failing to provide a discursive space for race in her classroom while teaching in the Teachers and Writers Collaborative, Sexton perpetrated a type of normalization and control over her own students, much as Holmes had attempted to do to her. Salvio points out that by failing to teach Ellison’s *Invisible Man* with the same passion and perspective with which she taught poetry, Sexton imposed her own aesthetic judgment on her students, again following in her old teacher’s footsteps. This episode illustrates Sexton’s lack of mutual-recognition of the Other, the abandonment of inter-subjective tension, and the failure to build a bridge to the middle space between the self and the social which characterized her poetics and poetic pedagogy. She, like her old teacher Holmes, equated her interests with those of her students.

Salvio further illustrates Sexton’s discomfort with teaching literature and her racial innocence through an encounter between Sexton and her student Pricilla Batten while Sexton was teaching with the Teachers and Writers Collaborative at Wayland High School in Wayland, Massachusetts in 1967 (p. 109-112). In the encounter, Pricilla submitted a draft to Sexton in which she

attempted to “approach and engage the black presence portrayed in *Invisible Man*” (p. 109). Sexton criticized Pricilla for literary non-specificity in her writing, but Sexton used the same technique in her own poetry. Salvio questions whether Sexton could herself address race with the same specificity that she demanded of her students. In her encounter with Pricilla, Sexton as a teacher seemed to project her own failure onto Pricilla in order to aggrandize herself and rationalize her exclusion or deprecation of race in her classroom. Sexton’s admonition to write about “what you know” willfully or not distorted Paley’s advice that students write about what they “*do not know* about what they know” (p. 112). Paley succinctly encapsulates the very essence of the act of reflection upon which we approach and breach the boundaries of knowledge and understanding. Did Sexton engage in narcissistic control because she wrote about what she knew rather than what she did not know about what she knew? Could this explain her omission of race from her classroom? This again raises the question of how we use our pedagogic authority. Can we as teachers say “I don’t know?” Would such an uncomfortable admission in fact open a space of mutual recognition of the Other as we search for the middle space of understanding?

Despite her penchant to challenge, Sexton seems to have taught in a taken-for-granted educational context while simultaneously challenging the aspects of prevailing socio-political norms that she knew and through which she struggled. Sexton was ultimately not immune to self-forgetting as illustrated in Salvio’s exploration of Sexton’s racial innocence. Sexton attended to and disregarded certain aspects of herself, the Other, and the world based on subjectivity wrought from lived experience. Reading Salvio’s interpretation of Sexton’s life, especially her teaching life, can elicit perhaps a sense of inner subjective tension and trauma from which we might gain a greater understanding of ourselves and our pedagogical relationships, our teaching, and our recognition of the Other.

Why do we use autobiography? How can we use writing to forge deeper mutual understanding and to inquire into and even challenge prevailing socio-political notions of normalcy? Salvio inquires of herself why she chooses the life text of another to gain insights into her own pedagogy and writing. In reply, she points to Sexton’s use of personae as a literary device by which we can don masks that represent parts of ourselves which we tend to disavow, repudiate, and self-forget. Salvio characterizes Sexton’s masks as protective sheaths that illuminate what conventional autobiography tends to obscure and facilitate introspection along the continuum of the self and the social. Autobiography as used and taught by Sexton represents critical inquiry into ourselves, others, and the world in which we negotiate our existence. To challenge is to risk. Sexton’s literary autobiographical poetics offers a bridge to that middle space between the self and the social, the space in which we truly exist.