



Anne Sexton: Teacher of Weird Abundance (SUNY series, Feminist Theory in Education)

Paula M. Salvio

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The poet's life as a teacher.


A Pulitzer Prize–winning poet who confessed the unrelenting anguish of addiction and depression, Anne Sexton (1928–1974) was also a dedicated teacher. In this book, Paula M. Salvio opens up Sexton's classroom, uncovering a teacher who willfully demonstrated that the personal could also be plural. Looking at how Sexton framed and used the personal in teaching and learning, Salvio considers the extent to which our histories—both personal and social—exert their influence on teaching. In doing so, she situates the teaching life of Anne Sexton at the center of some of the key problems and questions in feminist teaching: navigating the appropriate distance between teacher and student, the relationship between writer and poetic subject, and the relationship between emotional life and knowledge. Examining Sexton's pedagogy, with its “weird abundance” of tactics and strategies, Salvio argues that Sexton's use of the autobiographical “I” is as much a literary identity as a literal identity, one that can speak with great force to educators who recognize its vital role in the humanities classroom.

“Salvio's achievement in this book ... is in making something intriguing and resonant out of inauspicious material. She is able to show how Sexton's damaged life, and the poetry which was her real focus, came together in the classroom in compelling, if not always happy or successful, ways.” — Biography

“Our best teachers are dissonant and enigmatic figures; they haunt and inspire us with their strangeness and provoke in us anxious excitement and wild thoughts. Paula Salvio's engrossing meditation on the melancholic life and work of Anne Sexton stays close to this discomfiting insistence. With sensitivity, insight, courage, and a writer's flair, Salvio presents a compelling study of Sexton's life that will provoke readers to be grateful for the power of creative, honest, and searching scholarship.” — Deborah P. Britzman, author of *Novel Education: Psychoanalytic Studies of Learning and Not Learning*

“Who is the poet who teaches? When that poet is Sexton, Paula Salvio argues, the issue of teaching persona is never far from the center of the room. The fact that Sexton has never been studied through this lens is the first reason to read this book; the second is that Salvio teaches her readers more about Sexton, poetry, and teaching than any course I know.” — Dawn Skorzewski, author of *Teaching One Moment at a Time: Disruption and Repair in the Classroom*

Paula M. Salvio is Associate Professor of Education at the University of New Hampshire and the coeditor (with Gail M. Boldt) of *Love's Return: Psychoanalytic Essays on Childhood, Teaching, and Learning*.

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