

Diane Wood Middlebrook on: "Her Kind"

Because Sexton's writing seems so personal she is often labeled a "confessional" poet and grouped (to her disadvantage) with poets such as Lowell, Berryman, Roethke, and Plath. But Sexton resisted the label "confessional"; she preferred to be regarded as a "storyteller." To emphasize that she considered the speaking "I" in her poetry as a literary rather than a real identity, Sexton invariably opened her public performances by reading the early poem "Her Kind."

[. . .]

No matter what poetry she had on an evening's agenda, Sexton offered this persona as a point of entry to her art. "I" in the poem is a disturbing, marginal female whose power is associated with disfigurement, sexuality, and magic. But at the end of each stanza, "I" is displaced from sufferer onto storyteller. With the lines "A woman like that ... I have been her kind" Sexton conveys the terms on which she wishes to be understood: not victim, but witness and witch.

From "Poets of Weird Abundance" Parnassus (1985)

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Excerpted Criticism [1]

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Criticism Target:

Anne Sexton [2]

Author:

Diane Wood Middlebrook [3]

Poem:

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