

Sylvia Plath and Anne Sexton lived at the heart of the emergence of confessional poetry in the nineteen-fifties and sixties. The two women became friends while attending seminars given by Robert Lowell, a pioneer of the confessional movement. Sharing common experiences of mental illness, unhappy marriages, childbirth, and social pressures created a bond between them that significantly affected their poetry. Sylvia Plath, at the age of thirty-one, tragically ended her own life, as did Anne Sexton, eleven years later, at the age of forty-six.



It was my intention to comparatively study the lives and poetry of Plath and Sexton from the aspect of the effects of mental illness on their writing, specifically looking for the evidence of hope and hopelessness in their bodies of work. The process of this project required that I write my original poetry even as I studied theirs, and my goal was to create a comprehensive collection of fifteen original confessional style poems published side by side with short compositions about the connections and commonalities I discovered between myself and these two women.

My collection is titled *Good for the Soul: A Tribute to the Confessional Poets Sylvia Plath and Anne Sexton*. In my research, I discovered that their hope and hopelessness was my own. They used the resources of their experience to convey, in metaphor, the love, hate, joy, guilt, sadness, confusion, wonder, and desperation they felt in their world. I did not discover with certainty what propelled them both to give up on life, but I do know that in my quest to understand them as poets, I found we had much in common. And I found the poet in myself.



Bonnie Kennedy