

# A critique on what lips my lips have kissed

[Life](#), [Love](#)



Edna St. Vincent Millay's *What Lips My Lips Have Kissed*, is an imagistic regression into the mind of a desensitized woman. It grazes the mystic ideals held within intimacy and sexual intercourse, while also maintaining an underlying awareness of the author's bisexuality.

Though, the relationship stigmas she touches on still apply to human love affairs today, this poem can only be seen as revolutionary for its time period and the feminist movement. In this essay I intend to show how this poem, among many of Millay's other works, have attained cult status, due to their close correlation with her life.

When Millay states *What lips my lips have kissed, and where, and why, I have forgotten*, she is obviously referring to her past lovers (Millay). The ideal that gives more value to this statement is knowing that these lovers include men, women and highly acclaimed laureates. She goes on to use very symbolic imagery to signify the presence of these lost lovers.

Terms like, ghosts, birds, and of course lips, are used to identify their presence throughout the poem. Millay likens herself to a tree, whose birds have vanished one by one (Millay). This human connection to nature adds to the poem's intrigue and its mysticism. The entire purpose of her sullen regression is summed up at the end of the poem when she says,

These last three stanzas sum up the main premise of the poem and also resemble the feelings of a woman who has been desensitized to intimacy. This is a very revolutionary position for a woman to be in during the 1930's to 50's considering that the cultural expectations of the American women were very strict.

Men feared that women would become unruly and sex crazed if they experienced sexual intercourse with more than one partner. Millay's promiscuous nature and her edgy perspective definitely go against the grain of what society expected. This rebellious nature in the poem can be directly correlated to experiences in Millay's real life as a bisexual.