



[The Obsession of Her](#)

What does it mean to talk about a lover as an anonymous person? Does it mean being afraid of telling one's feelings to the person directly? Does it mean being obsessed with the person? It's often easier to express feelings through the poem or a song than talking to a lover. But why go the easier way?

The work of Thomas Campion (1567-1620), an English composer, poet and physician, raises these questions. He lived during the Renaissance, like William Shakespeare. It's known that Shakespeare had a lot of enemies, and it's possible that Campion and Shakespeare weren't necessarily friends. It's interesting that Campion became a doctor. "He is a keen observer of human frailty, particularly that brought on by the conflicts of love and sexuality. He is also a moralist. Campion does not hesitate to offer his vision of what is proper."¹

One of his poem written in 1617 that attracts my attention is "There is a garden in her face". It contains three stanzas, and each one has six lines. The rhyme scheme, ababcc, makes the rhythm changing through the poem. I feel like it flows from the gentle and sensitive, through the little bit aggressive tone. The poem's turn is ironic, both the truth and beauty the poem describes may be just the male gaze. Janice Loreck, a university researcher in Australia, discusses this topic in her essay, "Explainer: what does the 'male gaze' mean, and what about a female gaze?," which appeared on The Conversation in 2016. She wrote, "The 'male gaze' invokes the sexual politics of the gaze and suggests a sexualised way of looking that empowers men and objectifies women. In the male gaze, woman is visually positioned as an 'object' of heterosexual male desire. Her feelings, thoughts and her own sexual drives are less important than her being 'framed' by male desire."² At the first reading the poem appears to be just about the beauty, but turns out it has sexual connotations. Theme is feminine beauty, but a beauty which is inaccessible. The poem portrays the author's admiration for the perfect beauty of the woman in his mind.

My first impression of this poem was the image of a woman who stands strong against any man. Only a man who pleases her, perhaps her future husband, will be allowed to kiss her. Is she a young girl? Who is the woman the poet is speaking about? Why is she anonymous? Does she even know he is in love with her? Or maybe she knows but she just doesn't pay attention to him?

The image of "cherry" evokes a sensory experience of woman's lips, and shapes the reader's perception of something pretty, sweet and attractive. When the speaker says, "There cherries grow which none may buy", is he referring to her red lips or creating a metaphor for woman's virginity? . Maybe it actually is about the virginity because her brow is "Threat'ning with piercing frowns to kill / All that attempt with eye or hand / Those sacred cherries to come nigh."

At first I asked myself a question: "What does "cherry ripe" actually mean?" My small group also pointed out that "cherry" could have sexual connotations. In English, it's slang for a woman's hymen, and sometimes for the clitoris. Is the poem one big vulgar joke, or is it about the outer beauty of a woman?

Theorist Renee Wade wrote in her 2018 essay, *Feminine Beauty: Radiating Your True Femininity and Unique Beauty*:

"A woman need not always to be behind a man; a woman's femininity can certainly propel a man to do more, and become more. Men need a source of feminine energy!"³

I strongly believe this is true. Even though many men want just one certain thing from their girls, they actually need them. A woman can encourage her man to do big things in life, and respect is very important in every relationship. Man must understand woman's value, both of them are equal. Women rights are human rights and they can't be taken away.

The speaker is obviously obsessed with this woman, but it's funny how he talks about only her physical beauty through the whole poem. It's interesting that he doesn't mention anything about her personality. The metaphor of the garden shows us how the speaker sees the woman as something to enjoy.

The poem is about a pretty woman. If the pretty woman were the speaker, it could become a poem about woman with much respect for herself, waiting for someone special to fall in love with.

My analysis of this poem is a proof we can discuss about some topics which almost nobody's comfortable talking about in the public in front of many other people. Sex is often referred to something ugly and uncomfortable, but that's just a normal thing in our lives and we can talk about it through the literature, just like Campion did.

1-Jorgens, Elise Bickford. "Poetry Foundation." *Poetry Foundation*

2-Loreck, Janice. The Conversation, 5 Jan. 2016

3-Renee Wade, Founder of The Feminine Woman