

AQA English Literature A-level

Poetry: Love Through the Ages Anthology (Pre-1900)

Sir Thomas Wyatt: 'Whoso List to Hunt, I Know
where is an Hynde'

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WHO SO LIST TO HOUNT I KNOWE WHERE IS AN HYNDE

Sir Thomas Wyatt

Brief Summary

“Whoso list to hunt”, written in the 1530s or 40s, was one of the first sonnets written in English. It concentrates on the theme of love as a **despairing and vicious pursuit**. More specifically, this poem presents the failed “hunt” of a woman who is loved by another man.

The poem’s Petrarchan form is significant because it was the first of its kind. The sonnet began as a form of song and, thanks to Francesco Petrarch, became one of the most widely used forms of poetry across Europe in the 14th to 16th centuries. The poem’s author, Sir Thomas Wyatt, introduced the romantic Petrarchan sonnet form to the English readership.

Wyatt uses **conceit**, an extended metaphor, in which the sport of hunting for a deer is likened to courting an unattainable woman.

Summary

Context – A time of political turmoil, particularly in the Monarchy // The sonnet is said to be about Wyatt and Ann Boleyn’s affair prior to her marriage to Henry VIII

Structure - fourteen line sonnet // Rhyme scheme typical as follows ABBAABBA CDDC EE and last 6 lines alternate between sonnets, Wyatt’s being CDDCEE // separated into an octave and a sestet // iambic pentameter // ends in rhyming couplet

Language – Use of conceit (extended metaphor), personification, alliteration, consonance and irony

Key Points – Could be based on Wyatt’s chase of Boleyn or Henry’s relationship with Ann // Courtly, unattainable love typical of the time // Hunting was a social sport for upper-class men

Synopsis

- The poem opens with the sentence: **“Whoso list to hunt, I know where is an hind,/ But as for me, hélas [alas], I may no more”** (lines 1-2). The voice is immediately established as in the first person. The speaker says that if anyone is looking for a place to hunt, they know where to find deer but unfortunately, the speaker himself cannot keep hunting. This creates **expectation**, as the reader **waits for an explanation** as to why the speaker can no longer hunt.
- The metaphor of the deer is continued throughout the poem and the speaker describes how even when he follows the deer both with his mind and physically, she runs away: **“Yet may I by no means my wearied mind/ Draw from the deer, but as she fleeth afore/ Fainting I follow.”** (lines 5-7)
- The deer (or the woman) is **personified as the wind** **“sithens in a net I seek to hold the wind”** (line 8) depicting the woman’s **evasive nature**. The speaker is unable to catch her and keep her for himself. The metaphor here is potentially problematic in the way it negotiates gender roles. The male speaker is the hunter with a “net” who tracks down the innocent female who has no means of protecting herself except in her ability to



flee like a vulnerable deer, most often associated as being the hopeless victim in the chase of such a hunt.

- The **volta** comes in line 9: “**who list her hunt, I put him out of doubt**”; the speaker warns any other potential suitors of the **dangers of pursuing a woman who evades capture**.
- The speaker explains why the woman is **unobtainable** in the final lines and the poem ends with the **female voice overpowering** that of the original speaker: “**Noli me tangere, for Caesar’s I am,/ And wild for to hold, though I seem tame.**” This potentially **subverts the gender roles** previously laid out by the deer-hunt metaphor as the female has the final words.
- The poem can be split into three sections: the **octave** (first 8 lines) where the speaker explains the hunting process, the **volta** which warns other men of pursuing the woman, and the final **sestet** (last 6 lines) where the speaker further explains his warning and the female voice overpowers the original speaker.

Context

Literary Context - Renaissance Poetry (1500-1660)

Love poetry in this era was typically about **courtly** and **unrequited love**. According to Pilkington, the development of courtly love “**may perhaps have been the greatest change in Western culture between the fall of Rome and the rise of the Renaissance.**”

- Courtly love put women on **pedestals** and **glorified amorous passion** in a way that was anathema both to Classical civilization and Christian salvation.
- Its doctrines were codified in the 12th century treatise *Tractus de Amore et de Amoris Remedia*, nominally by Andreas Capellanus.
- In courtly love, “**the woman is the dominant figure, the man a pupil who must be instructed until he becomes a fit partner for his lady**” (Eleanor of Aquitaine, Hawthorne Books, Inc.: New York, 1977, 252-3)
- While this may seem unexpected given women’s disadvantage relative to men in the Middle Ages, one could argue that **deifying** a woman **obliterates** her and is therefore another kind of **objectification**.
- Kleinbach sketches the main features of courtly love poetry:
 1. The poet sings the **joy of his love**, which is an exalted feeling.
 2. He **praises** and **extols** the woman he loves, who is superior and can be approached only with **veneration** and restraint.
 3. Love is a **passion that affects the lover’s body and soul** and tends to unbalance him (love-sickness).
 4. The lover becomes his lady’s **servant**. Her love must be **difficult to obtain**, and he must prove his **valor and faithfulness**. The relation between lady and lover is envisioned, often in the poetic imagery used as well as in manuscript illustrations, as a transfer of the **feudal relationship** between lord and vassal (homage).



5. The effect of this love is that the **male lover becomes ennobled** in his whole being, including his fighting power, social mores, and moral and religious attitudes. "Courtly love" thus becomes the force that generates courtliness or courtesy.

6. In some cases, this **ennoblement** is **caused by the very thought** of the beloved lady.

- Love poetry often alluded to the courtship of a woman as a battlefield for men, the surrender of the female and the victory of the male in winning his female prize through heroic acts.
- Courtly love **evolved** over the centuries until by Shakespeare's time it was romantic love and a prelude to marriage.

- Wyatt was inspired by **Francesco Petarch** (1304-1374), an poet who is often considered the father of the Italian Renaissance.
- The bulk of Petarch's poetry is addressed to an idealised Laura and is both an **outgrowth of medieval traditions of courtly love** and something that hearkens back to the **lyric poetry** of the ancient world.
- The sonnet form began as a song sung in **medieval Italian taverns** and became popular across Europe (largely due to Francesco Petarch) in the 14th, 15th and 16th centuries.
- The Petrarchan sonnet typically consists of an octet ABBA ABBA rhyme scheme, followed by either CDE CDE or CDC DCD for the sestet.
- "Whoso List to Hunt" is a Petrarchan Sonnet and is partly a **translation** and **imitation** of one of Petarch's sonnets; "**Sonnet 190**".
- Wyatt brought the sonnet form over through his translation/ imitation in the 1530s/ 40s. This made England one of the last countries to adopt the sonnet form.
- Wyatt is largely credited as the **first English poet** to write in the sonnet form.
- Many of Petarch's sonnets included **complaints about love** and its potential to cause men suffering. They would also often feature an **animal** which **symbolises the object or aspects of love**, as is the case in "Who so list to hunt I know where is an hynde".

Historical Context - Relating to Wyatt

- Wyatt was a courtier and diplomat in the court of Henry VIII. This gave him a **powerful position**, especially as poet in the early Renaissance era. This era saw a renewed appreciation for art and an abundance of artistic and cultural change.
- Wyatt came from a **respected family**, his father was a Privy Councillor to Henry VII and a trusted advisor when Henry VIII ascended the throne in 1509.
- Sir Thomas Wyatt followed in his father's footsteps and became a member of court under Henry VIII. He was entrusted with many important diplomatic decisions as a member of the King's Service.



<https://tinyurl.com/wyatt-portrait>



- Wyatt's poems were **circulated around the Court** and may have also been published anonymously in "The Court of Venus" (an early anthology of works, earliest edition in 1537).
- The first time his poems were published with his name attached was 15 years after his death.
- The Christian Church was collapsing, and political correction was ambiguous and taboo, which meant that many poets at the time used **conceit and extended metaphors** to create allegories to **protect their position and status**. Such a metaphor can be seen in "Whoso List to Hunt" in the form of the deer which represents a woman.
- It is suspected that the poem is based on and alludes to **an affair Wyatt had with Anne Boleyn**, which the poet was imprisoned for in May 1536. He was released later that year due to his father's close friendship with Thomas Cromwell and was allowed to return to his usual duties.

Wyatt's Mission with Language:

- Wyatt professed that he was most **concerned with linguistic experimentation**; he wanted to **"civilize" the English language** and bring it up to the statuses of other powerful European languages. This is important as a potential reason for Wyatt's concentration on translation and imitation of sonnets by Italian poet Petrarch.
- Wyatt took Petrarch's sonnets and used his subject matter but noticeably often **altered the rhyme schemes**. Petrarch's sonnets consist of an octave rhyming ABBA ABBA followed by a sestet with various rhyme schemes. Wyatt employs the Petrarchan octave but **often used a sestet rhyme scheme of CDDC EE**. This marked the beginning of **English contribution** to the sonnet form which later developed into a traditional form of 3 quatrains and a closing couplet (see Shakespeare's [Sonnet 18](#) or [Sonnet 130](#) for some famous examples).
- In "Whoso List to Hunt", however, Wyatt strictly follows the Petrarchan sonnet form, demonstrating his practice of **elevating** the English language to that of a **higher status** associated with the European languages.

Wyatt's love poems:

- Wyatt's 96 love poems appeared posthumously in 1557 in a book called "Tottel's Miscellany".
- Notably, the **first 31 sonnets** were all **written in Petrarchan form** and 10 were **direct translations** from Petrarch.
- His poems were known for their **serious tone**, a **stiffness in construction** paired with **metrical uncertainty** which hints at the poet's grappling with the new sonnet form.
- The poems are regarded now as significant milestones of progression within the English literary timeline.
- Wyatt was also important in introducing the **personal perspective** into English poetry; he involved his own experiences despite following the strict rules of the form.



- “Whoso List to Hunt” is a good example of this as it potential alluded to Anne Boleyn’s relationship with Henry VIII, he says **“Graven in diamonds with letters plain,/ There is written her fair neck round about,/ ”Noli me tangere [Do not touch me], Caesar’s, I am”** (lines 11-13).

The title “Who so list to hount I knowe where is an hynde”

- The poem’s title **suggests that the deer is already caught** and in fact belongs to another person. This is **confirmed** in the final lines: **“Noli me tangere, for Caesar’s I am,/ And wild for to hold, though I seem tame.”** (lines 13-14).
- According to some traditional and contemporary interpretations of the poem, the person the deer belonged to was Henry VIII. Allegedly, Wyatt had an affair with Anne Boleyn (Henry VIII’s 2nd wife) before she became queen.
- Despite this, it is possible to discern that the deer is already **“owned”** by someone else without bringing in Wyatt’s personal context. The speaker continuously suggests the **“hind”** is impossible to capture because of her skilfulness and evasive nature. However, he later reveals that the **real reason** she is untouchable is because she has been **taken by a more powerful man**.





Who so list to hount I know where is an hynde

Offers a lady to the reader, almost as a challenge. This reflects the poem's patriarchal social context, in which women were property of men and passed between them (usually from father to husband-to-be).

'Travaill' meaning 'to work' in French, combined with 'vayne' suggests it was a waste of work / hopeless love, and did not benefit him. Thus he deters other suitors. Anne Boleyn was raised in France so these linguistic details perhaps indicate she is the 'hunted'.

He is losing the race or hunt.

Suggests he is still enchanted by her, as though under a spell. 'D' sounds are long and drawn out, reflects almost the dreamy state (dreaming of her captivating beauty?). This is supported by the verb 'fainting' he is struggling to maintain consciousness thinking about her.

He compares the deer to the wind. Holding the wind is an oxymoron: the wind cannot be held. Reflects the futility of the hunt; the deer will never be captured.

Title repeated, yet there is a change of tone and discussion. Here lies the volta; the sestet begins.

'Graven with diamonds' the verb 'graven' is a harsh verb

Whoso list to hount, I know where is an hynde,
But as for me, *hélas*, I may no more;

The vayne travaill hath **wearied** me so sore,
I am of them that **farthest** cometh behind.

Yet **may** I by no means my **wearied** mind
Drawe from the **deere**, but as she **fleeth** afore

Faynting I followe. I **leave off** therefore,
Since in a net I **seke** to hold the wynde.

Who list her hount, I **put** him **owte** of doubt,
As well as I may spend his time in vain.

And **graven** with diamonds in letters plain
There is written, her **faier** neck **rounde** abowte:

Helas meaning 'Alas', negative connotations such as sadly, unfortunately. Wyatt appears to pity himself or seem to be reflecting in dismay. Caesura starts here; could represent breaks in telling his story as he contemplates his past. Assonance on the 'm' syllables makes them appear longer and the tone weary.

More assonance, "so sore" combined with the verb "wearied" emphasises his pain - the harsh assonance of the 'so' sound and creates a literary raw pain. Suggestion that heart ache has become physical.

Alliteration of 'f' sounds link the deer to the speaker, nevertheless they are separated by the line break. Mirrors how connected he is to her mentally (a compulsion) versus how she is not his.

This follows on from the third line - love is making him ail / suffer physically.

Attempts to convince himself or free himself from his obsession.

The speaker reveals the futility of the hunt for any other potential hunter, thus the challenge posed in the first line closes.

'Graven' also aurally evokes the speaker's grave



describing indenting something, such as an object - this implies that the 'hynde' is an object/pet/possession and has a diamond collar. This shows she belongs to someone of high status. The phrase 'graven with diamonds' is contradictory that something seemingly beautiful is being suppressed and indented.

We get the sense she is in a beautiful cage.

Poet does not literally mean Emperor / Julius Caesar but Wyatt cannot openly state 'Henry'. The similarities in status between the monarch Henry and the Emperor Caesar / the general and statesman Julius Caesar make it likely Wyatt is alluding to him.

Noli me tangere, for Cesar's I am,
 And wyld for to hold, though I seme tame.

or serious state of mind following his defeat.

This warning letter 'plainly' around her neck yet in spelled out in beautiful diamonds. While plainly may mean clearly, this phrase is contradictory and could reflect the speaker's prior disorientation and confusion.

The fact that the diamonds embellish and highlight the deer's beauty (drawing people to her) yet warn captors off her is contradictory

Appears domestic but is really wild and therefore difficult to make one's own.

Another contradiction here.

Perspective

- 'Whoso list to hount I know where is an hynde' is written from the perspective of a male speaker courting a woman who is unattainable.
- The poem reflects **the patriarchal context** of the early 16th century. The woman belongs to a powerful man - either "Cesar" or Henry VIII - reflecting the way under *coverture* laws the very being or legal existence of the married woman was suspended. Her property passed into male hands and she was seen as his dependent.
- The speaker establishes himself as being able to tell others where to find a deer, which alludes to his knowledge of where to "hunt" for a woman. The female figure is therefore set up as the vulnerable prey of a man's sport, although she has managed to **elude him** so far. The **power dynamic** is uneven.
- The sport of hunting was very popular during Henry VIII's reign; Henry was fond of it and spent a lot of his time hunting in the grounds near the palace in Bushy Park. .



- We later learn that this woman escapes the speaker, she “**she fleeth afore**” (line 6). The use of “**fleeth**” further reiterates the **predatory nature** of the male figure. The woman feels afraid of his advances, like a deer being hunted, and she runs away from him.
- We may be tempted to see this as the female **outwitting** or **overpowering** the male speaker - after all, he is **physically vanquished**: sore and fainting. However, in the last lines of the poem we learn: “**There is written, her fair neck round about: / Noli me tangere, for Caesar's I am**” (lines 12-13). The woman is already “**owned**” by another, more powerful man. The female is both under the gaze and pursuit of the male speaker as well as under the control of another man.
- Furthermore, her “**voice**” is **deceptive**; it is not her own voice but the voice of her captor’s, who has placed the sign around her neck. Therefore, we can **learn nothing of her own desires**; she is **spoken for** and **silenced** by Cesar.
- Wyatt, as a high-class poet, a member of the King’s Court and a part of an elite cohort among the monarch, had experience of hunting. The common people of the period were not allowed to engage in sporting activities, so his status would have given him an elite and relatively **unique insight** into such experiences.
- We know that Wyatt was possibly romantically involved with Boleyn and was later **imprisoned** in the Tower of London for allegedly **committing adultery** with her. Thus, he had experience courting a woman who could not be his. This gives the poem **greater weight** as it potentially relays the true emotions of the author.

The Opening

“Whoso list to hunt, **I know where is an hind,**
But **as for me**, alas, I may no more;
The **vain travail** hath wearied me so sore,
I am of them that **furthest come behind.**”

- ‘Whoso list to hunt I know where is an hynde’ opens with a **repetition** of the title. This repetition demonstrates to a reader that the title is a **formal address**, as it is repeated like in a traditional letter.
- The use of first person indicates that the poem will be based on **personal experience**.
- The speaker also **asks for the reader’s sympathy** as he recounts his futile efforts to entrap the deer. He says “**as for me, alas, I may no more**”. The pause before and after “**alas**” suggests that the speaker is tired, or that he is sighing deeply. The speaker reveals that his exhaustive efforts were useless and he seems to **wallow** in this revelation. He seems defeated. However, as modern-day readers, we are led to ask by what? By the female who evades capture? Or by a social system which allows men to claim women, with men higher up the social ladder getting the first pickings?



Structure

Rhyme scheme and form

- The poem is consistent in its rhyme scheme: **ABBA ABBA CDDCEE**.
- The rhyme scheme is repetitive and **controlled** and **ordered**, suggesting the speaker writes from a point in time where he has since had the opportunity to **reflect on his experience** and **gather his thoughts**. This, however, is contradicted by the use of the present tense “**Faynting I follow**” (line 7). Has the metaphorical hunt passed and the speaker desisted or does he continue (albeit in mind alone, not in action)?
- The first octave (first 8 lines) follows the regular rhyme scheme **ABBAABBA**. Wyatt uses mainly **monosyllabic** words which gives the section a **factual** and **consistent** tone.
- Use of a **repetitive rhyme scheme reflects the speaker’s obsession** and his numerous attempts to capture the woman/ deer.
- Once we reach the **volta**, the rhyme scheme changes to the following **seset, CDDCEE**. The volta is significant here as it represents **change**. Accordingly, the discussion changes. The speaker stops talking about his chase and explains why the woman is unobtainable. He suggests that anyone else who attempts to hunt the woman will be wasting their time.
- While the “**am/ tame**” in the final couple may sound like a half- or slant-rhyme, to contemporary readers it would have sounded like a perfect rhyme.
- Whilst the **new rhyme scheme follows a similar pattern** (the second and third lines rhyme, just as in the octet’s two quatrains), the rhyme sounds are new, indicating change.
- The change in the last 6 lines is unsurprising. However, the poem it was modelled on - [Petrarch’s Sonnet 190](#) - employed a slight different rhyme scheme for the sestet: **CDE CDE**. Petrarch’s rhyme scheme perhaps unites the stanzas better, while Wyatt’s rhymes, which are in **closer proximity** to each other, lend the ending a more **final** feel.

Meter

- ‘Whoso list to hunt’ follows **iambic pentameter** throughout.
- This sonnet was written when the English sonnet was just start to take shape. Thus, it **differs from later English sonnets** which have a standard sestet rhyme scheme of **CDDC EE**.
- However, there is some **metrical ambiguity** in the first line, which contains 11 syllables rather than the standard 10. Furthermore, iambic pentameter contains five sets of unstressed-stressed syllable pairs (for example, the words “above” “belong” “destroy” are iambic). However, the stresses seem to fall on the first, (possibly) third and fifth syllables of the first line, rather than the second, fourth and sixth, as would be expected. This irregular stress pattern gives the sense of a **tripping motion**, perhaps mirroring the way the speaker has fallen for the woman.



- The **comma** in the middle of the first line further disrupts the expected pentameter by creating a **pause**. This **metrical confusion** represents the confusion in the speaker's heart and mind.
- The metre then **stabilises**; lines 2 and 3 roughly conform (in syllable number and stress patterns) to iambic pentameter. However, this **stabilisation is only temporary**; line 4 contains an extra syllable, which drags out or extends the line, mirroring the **protracted nature of the hunt** for the slow huntsman. This extension to signal the length of the hunt is repeated in lines 6-7; **enjambment** links the two lines so that it does not draw to its expected close after the ten syllables have been spelled out, but instead runs on.
- Metrical irregularity is present throughout the poem, strengthened by the **commas / caesura** which break up the lines. This irregularity suggests that Wyatt is **still grappling with the sonnet form**; it does not yet come fluently to him.

Enjambment and Caesura

- Wyatt uses an combination of **enjambment** and **caesura**
 - The first 4 lines use **caesura** and **end-stopped lines** lend the speaker's voice a **matter-of-fact tone** which matches his offer of information "**I know where is a hynde**" (line 1).
 - However, the use of enjambment appears in the second part of the octet: "**by no means my wearied mind / Drawe from the deere, but as she fleeth afore / Faynting I followe**".
 - The **caesura** and **end-stopped lines resume** in the sestet
 - This journey suggests that the speaker has become **lost in his thoughts and emotions** while recounting the hunt, but regains sense with the volta, mirrored by the return of structure to the poem.
 - The **direct address** in line 7 also suggest an attempt by the speaker to push off the emotions in which has become **subsumed**.

Language

Extended Metaphor and Allusion

**"Whoso list to hunt, I know where is an hind,
But as for me, hélas, I may no more."** (lines 1-2)

- Throughout the poem, Wyatt uses an **extended metaphor** or **conceit** of hunting as the process of courting a woman.
- The speaker says he knows where to find "an hind": a deer or a woman for other men to attempt "to hunt".
- One interpretation is that the whole poem is an **allusion** to the rumoured affair between Wyatt and Henry VIII's 2nd wife Anne Boleyn. There is much evidence for this.



However, it is important not to lean on this interpretation purely on the basis of its **contextual intrigue**.

“Noli me tangere, for Cesar’s I am” (line 13)

- The ‘hind’ belongs to Caesar, or another powerful man for whom Caesar is a euphemism.
- The hunt - a pastime of the landowning upper classes - and the reference to Caesar indicates the poet occupies an important position in society. Accordingly, Wyatt as he was a prominent figure in society and an esteemed friend of the Monarchy.
- While the speaker compares the woman/deer to the free-roaming “**wynde**” (line 8) and asserts, through the message on her collar that she is “**wylde**” (line 14) and therefore presumably free, we know that she is not **autonomous** or free to make her own decisions. Instead, she is owned by a “**Cesar**” figure and bears the mark of his ownership around her neck, where she is almost **branded** with his word, which **masquerade** as her own.

Consonance and Assonance

- Wyatt uses an abundance of **consonance** and **assonance** throughout.
 - Examples of assonance include: “**so sore**” (line 3), “**drawe from the deere**” (line 6) and “**faynting I followe**” (line 7)
 - The harsh sounds in “**so sore**” (line 3) relay the speaker's pain, frustration and bitter attitude.
 - The assonance lends the lines **internal unity** which **counter the metrical irregularity**.
 - “**Who list her hount, I put him owte of doubt**” (line 7) is an example of consonance.
 - The repetition of the consonant ‘ow’ sounds appears to **reflect the speaker’s pain** whilst also drawing out the sounds of the words, putting emphasis on “hount” and “owte” and “doubt” which in turn forces the reader to heed his warning.

Themes

Love and Loss

- The **extended metaphor** of hunting describes love and courting as a violent sport. This almost equates violence with **lust and sexuality**, or suggests that the pursuit of love necessarily involves violence.



- The poem leaves the reader wondering what would happen if the deer were caught. Literally speaking a deer would be killed after being captured - would her **metaphorical capture** end in sexual violence?
- The speaker shows signs of frustration, which could certainly be interpreted erotically, as a result of a lack of sexual intercourse. However, it seems that this frustration is most deeply rooted in the speaker's inability to capture the woman. "**I seek to hold the wind**", he says (line 8), which signifies the impossibility of a union between the speaker and the woman he loves. Thinking about the qualities of wind, we may discern the speaker's **static nature**; she is the "wind", constantly moving around him, while he remains where he is. If we were to **read the poem autobiographically**, this could allude to Wyatt watching Anne Boleyn progress up the ranks to finally being the King's wife.
- The poem suggests that **even with the masculine threat of violence, the female cannot be tamed** and made obedient. It seems that the speaker, the man, is the character who experiences the loss of potential love most prominently and he warns others of making futile attempts: "**who list her hunt, I put him out o doubt,/ as well as I may spend my time in vain**" (lines 9-10). Nevertheless, **power is misattributed**; it is not the woman's wind-like qualities that enable her to evade capture; ultimately it is her ownership that stops the reader from approaching. The power lies with the man rather than the woman.
- It is **ambiguous** as to whether the speaker has **accepted** that he cannot have her and **processed his loss**. While he says "**leave[s] off**" the hunt (line 7), realising the futility of the pursuit, he seems mentally stuck: "**may I by no means my wearied mind/ Drawe from the deere**" (lines 6-7). Admittedly, the latter line comes before the former, yet the use of present tense **troubles the chronology**. Is he still obsessed with the deer, although he has given up the hunt, or does "**leav[ing] off**" (line 7) include relinquishing his mental obsession over her? Loss is a prominent theme in the anthology. The speaker in "la Belle Dame Sans Merci", for example, is so devoted and obsessed with the elfish woman he falls in love with, that he continues to linger in the cold, waiting for her return. Similarly, in "Non Sum Qualis Eram Bonae Sub Regno Cynarae", the speaker cannot let go of his lover and she haunts him even when he engages in indulgent activities like dancing, feasting and having sex with prostitutes.
- In the end, he appears willing to let her escape and also to **overcome** him at the end by overpowering his voice.
- Love in the poem is also **unusually presented** in comparison to other poems in the anthology. It seems **violent**; the act of chasing a being who runs away in fear is not like the romantic love presented in Thomas Hardy's "At an Inn" or Keats' "La Belle Dame Sans Merci". Nevertheless, the possible hint at enchantment in the lines "**Yet may I by no means my wearied mind / Drawe from the deere**" (lines 6-7) parallels the "faery"-like figure in "La Belle Dame Sans Merci" who seems to cast a spell over the knight.



Sexuality /Violence

- Sexuality is not **overt** in this poem. The speaker does not detail the deer/ woman's physical charms; we just get a reference to her "**faier**" neck (line 10). Nevertheless, we can assume from the metaphor that it is a poem about **frustrated lust**. The metaphor has the two roles of **predator** and **prey**, which immediately sets us up to expect the poem to be about sexual conquest. The **competitive** aspect of the hunt "**I am of them that farthest cometh behind**" (line 4) also recalls misogynistic ways of talking about sex, such as the phrase "to score". The **violence** inherent in the hunt likewise mirrors the way sex is (misogynistically) imagined as violence, as in the phrase "to bang". Finally, Furthermore, the notice around her neck asks him to "**touch [her] not**" (line 14). While this could be interpreted as an **emotional touching**, as in the phrased "I'm touched", it hints that the speaker's interest - preempted by Cesar - is in **physically touching** her.
- The poem may suggest that the female figure is **above the violent sexuality** presented by the stalking male. This is revealed both by her flight from the hunter and her (or her owners') statement "**noli me tangere**" (line 14). In this way, the woman can be seen as presented as above the man in terms of purity.

Unrequited Love

- Unrequited love is significant throughout "Whoso list to hunt" as the speaker is unable to capture the deer who he so desperately desires.
- The deer is an extended metaphor for a woman. This **metaphor** works well as it would have been **relatable** for the audience for whom Wyatt wrote. For the members of the Court of Henry VIII, hunting was common practice and the King was especially fond of the exercise. The frustration of a deer being just out of shot, or constantly slipping through the hunter's grasp would have been very familiar.
- The speaker is devoted to the 'hind' to the point of mental and physical exhaustion "**weried me so sore**" (line 3). Wyatt implies that love is **compulsive**, it is animalistic and visceral, like the act of hunting. The speaker describes persistence even when he realises the task is fruitless: "**may I by no means my wearied mind/ Drawe from the deere**" (lines 6-7).
- The poem is unusual in its unromantic tone, it uses the theme of love as a function for a "hunt", suggesting the attraction of love is in the pursuit of a woman. At the time, when women and men were kept very separate and there was **little to no contact** between the two genders, it makes sense that there was a feeling of **chasing down** or working for a woman's attention.
- While it may seem like the hunter's love or lust is unrequited, **we do not really know what the deer/ woman feels**; we only know of her actions. The "I" of the final couplet is not the deer/ woman's voice; it is the owner's, mimicking hers. The sign has been "**graven**" (line 11) by another hand and placed around her neck; she has not written it. Her fleeing action



may suggest that the hunter's desire is not requited. However, given the social context of the time - including the **harsh punishments for adultery** - it may be that the woman could not have expressed or acted on her own desire. If we consider the poem autobiographically, we know that Wyatt was thrown in jail for supposedly committing adultery with Boleyn. Thus, while he could not permanently "have" her, the desire between them seemed to be **mutual**. We also know that Boleyn was eventually **beheaded** by Henry VIII, revealing just how much **power** he had over her life. If the deer/ woman flees in the poem, we should ask ourselves, does she not desire him, or is it possible that she **desires him too** but **cannot openly express it** as she belongs to a powerful other?

Critical Responses

Feminism

- A modern feminist view would might focus on the **violence of the hunt** and on the characterisation of the woman as a deer, which **infantilises** or **dehumanises** her - is she not a woman with her own **developed subjectivity**, as he is?
- Gender is interesting in the poem as Wyatt proscribes strict gender rules to the characters: the female is given the status of an animal or even as the property or the rightful property of the man, and the male figure is given the task of conquering the fleeing female.
- The woman, however, refuses to be captured. Therefore, she upsets the social expectations of the contemporary readership, **subverting expectations of female submission** and masculine dominance.
- We cannot ignore, however, the speaker's suggestion that the woman may be out of his reach because she belongs to another man: "**for Cesar's I am**" (line 13).
- The woman is still helpless in her **interaction** with the male figure; she is **unable to shape the dynamics** of their encounter as they have already been set out for her and she is the prey. Her choices are limited: life or death.
- For the speaker then, men take an active role in relationships and the woman is submissive, she does as she must do and is passive. The woman in "Whoso List to Hunt" finds a **glimpse of freedom** in the ability to flee from one man's grasp, even if she works under the control of another man.
- The poem suggests that despite the feminine tendency to **strive for autonomy and freedom**, their capacity to charm men and be pursued, women will never be truly free: any freedom they experience is found in the form of protection by men from other men. A woman's agency is never really her own.



Comparisons

'Whosolist to hunt' - 'Sonnet 116'

Similarities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Both Wyatt and Shakespeare appear devoted to the person they are writing about contextually. Both use simple, direct and use mainly monosyllabic words to get their points across. Both poems are in sonnet form, although the sesets have different rhyme schemes, reflecting the fact that the poems were written at different points in the English sonnet's development. Wyatt had a forbidden love affair with Boleyn, while Shakespeare is rumoured to be bisexual and possibly had an affair with his patron, the Duke of Southampton, which would have involved running a huge risk.
Differences	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Whilst Shakespeare focuses on idealized, purity of love, Wyatt portrays love as a fruitless venture Shakespeare appears to write more generally about an abstract idea of love while Wyatt writes about a specific pursuit of a woman. Shakespeare writes that love is an "ever-fixed mark" and "not Time's fool"; it "bears out even to the edge of doom". In contrast, the speaker in Wyatt's poem suffers but desists. Wyatt's poem has sexual undertones whereas Shakespeare's poem equates love with "the marriage of two minds"; love in Sonnet 116 is primarily mental or spiritual.

'Whoso list to hunt' - 'Ae fond kiss'

Similarities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Both written about a woman who is unattainable or no longer attainable Wyatt and Burns both speaking from personal experience - their respective affairs with Ann Boleyn and Nancy McLehose Both poets are almost saying goodbye in their poems
Differences	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Wyatt had a physical barrier to love (imprisonment) and Burns only societal disregard (affair). Wyatt was much more secretive and ambiguous about the true inspiration for his poem, whereas Burns literally references 'my Nancy' Burns address Nancy directly "thee" while Wyatt's speaker is addressing anyone who would like to hunt. Burns' poem is therefore more personal. Burns wrote in a song format, while Wyatt in a Petrarchan sonnet. "Ae Fond Kiss" is deeply emotional whereas "Whoso List to Hunt" only displays frustration. This reflects the different levels of connection the speakers have with the deer/ woman and "Nancy"; in Wyatt's poem, it is not clear whether the speaker and





the woman were ever intimate, whereas the speaker in “Ae Fond Kiss” and his beloved “**loved sae kindly**”.

