

Analysis of Edmund Spenser's sonnet

67

[Amoretti](#) was a sonnet cycle written in the sixteenth century by [Edmund Spenser](#). Sonnet 67, "Like as a huntsman after weary chase," is written in the form of an English or Shakespearean sonnet, consisting of four open quatrains followed by a [couplet](#), often with the rhyme scheme ABAB CDCD EFEF GG. The lines are written in iambic pentameter, albeit with several substitutions, such as the initial trochaic substitution in the second line.

The poem is written in first person. It is an extended [simile](#), comparing the lover to a hunter and the beloved to a doe. The poet compares the lover to a hunter pursuing a doe unsuccessfully. When the lover/ hunter sits down to rest, tired from the extended chase, the doe returns to drink at a brook.

This suggests that perhaps in love, aggressive pursuit is not the only successful technique; instead, the beloved needs to consent of her own free will,

Edmund Spenser's Sonnet 67 is one of 85 sonnets from Amoretti which was written about his courtship of Elizabeth Boyle. Spenser and Boyle were married in 1594. Sonnet 67 uses a hunting themed metaphor common in 16th century England comparing the woman to a deer and the man to a huntsman in pursuit. Sonnet 67 appears to have been inspired by an earlier work by Petrarch, Rima 190, but with a different ending. In this paper we will take an in depth look at this work, also commonly referred to as "Lyke as a Huntsman".

First we will take a look at a literal interpretation of Sonnet 67. This piece begins with a huntsman in pursuit. His stalked prey, a deer, has gotten away from him. He is tired and sick of spending all of his time hunting this deer and so he sits down in the shade to rest with his dogs and decides to give up his hunt for the deer. But then the deer comes back from the way it had gone to drink from a nearby stream.

The deer sees the hunter sitting there in the shade and seeing that he is no longer hunting her, she decides that he is not a threat and she comes straight to him without fear. Because of the deer's trust the hunter was then able to easily tie a rope about her

neck and capture her. He then notes how strange it is to see a wild animal so tame to be caught in that way.

Next we will look at the first half of Spenser's Sonnet 67 in a metaphorical sense. "Lyke as a huntsman after weary chase, / Seeing the game from him escapt away," (ll. 1 and 2), portrays a man, a suitor if you will, as the huntsman and a woman as his game. The man has been chasing after and longing for this woman and she keeps getting away from him. He is trying to court her and she is not encouraging him, she doesn't want anything to do with the man. He decides to stop and rest for a bit because chasing after this woman is so exhausting emotionally and mentally. Suddenly he realizes that he has been courting her for a long time and that he isn't going to win the woman's affections and resigns himself to giving up on his courtship of her.

Now we will look at the second half of Sonnet 67, also in a metaphorical sense. The woman sees that the man is no longer chasing after her "There she beholding me with mylder looke," (Spenser ll. 9) and suddenly decides he might not be such a bad suitor after all "Sought not to fly, but fearelesse still did bide:" (Spencer ll.10). Spenser turns this piece around from the original Petrarch piece here. He shows that it is the woman that is in control as opposed to the man. He reaches out to her nervously because she has been running from him all this time and now she seems to be encouraging and wanting his affections. He appears hopeful that his sentiments will be well received by the woman and at the same time fearful of rejection. But she allows him to court her now and encourages him to love her instead of playing hard to get and running off again. The man then thinks that it seems very odd to see the woman who was so adamantly against him and his affections and who was such a free spirit to be a gentle, meek, mild woman willing to submit to a man. But it wasn't that she didn't want him necessarily it was that she wanted him on her terms not his.

Edmund Spenser's Sonnet 67 "Lyke as a Huntsman" is a metaphorical piece written in the late 16th century in England for his wife in terms of their courtship prior to their marriage. The sonnet goes through the long chase after the love of a woman and Spenser's frustration with it. It then shows him at his breaking point finally giving up. When the woman comes back and finds that he is no longer chasing her fervently she decides she does want him and they wind up together in the end. Petrarch's version of this, Rima 190, ends with the deer, or young lady if you will, being free because she belongs to Caesar and he has branded her with a collar that makes her safe from hunters, or suitors. Spenser's adaptation of this, along with the rest of the sonnets in Amoretti, differs greatly from other sonnets of this time period. Most other sonnets end in tragedy with the suitor unable to attain his love. Spenser's version is rare in that in the end, he gets the girl.