

ACTAEON AND ARTEMIS

The mountain rears up to the bow
Of silver, doing what I would do,
This night through,
To her. I hunt her stag as though
The beast were my own soul, pursued
By hounds of my desire. The rude
Constraints of winter ride abroad through me,
For cold, white anger drives me on to be
A forceful knife against Artemis' breath.
She is the huntress whom I hunt to death.

Though I am not, the summer is.
My rage has sunk in softness.
My vain distress
That she eludes me turns to bliss.
I stand beside this stream and see
The goddess of eternity
Naked in my sight, in her true shape
To suffer the forcing of my eye-beams' rape.
The hounds of my intent are silent too:
The seeds of quietude are passing through.

My soul has come to me, and I
Am stag. The horns of my desire
Much like a fire
Have thrust themselves from me to lie
On her like hands. But now my hounds,
The hounds of time, in furious bounds
Have leapt upon my sides. I sink the prey
Of my own lust for her, and lose in day
What night and Artemis brought forth for me:
A peace within, beneath the moon's own tree.

—Ian MacLennan