



## All in green went my love riding

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“All in green went my love riding” is an example of Cummings's use of an ancient myth to communicate his message to a modern audience. The poem is about courtly love, and it alludes to the Roman and Greek myth in which Diana or Artemis, goddess and protectress of wildlife, is challenged by the hunter Actaeon. The goddess changes Actaeon into a stag, whereupon Actaeon's own hounds attack and kill him. Cummings retells this story, using fourteen stanzas, each of which paints a graphic picture that chronicles a part of this chase.

The poem is replete with colors: the green garb of a lover, the golden color of the horse, the silver dawn, the redness of the roebuck, the whiteness of water. It is equally specific in other details, such as numbers: There are four hounds and four deer. These and other details paint a picture that combines beauty with terror; the beauty of the place and the lover are enveloped in the ominous atmosphere of death.

Told from the view of Diana or Artemis, this poem describes the chase, beginning with Actaeon's departure and concluding with his death and Diana's swoon. Though the poem ends with these images, it is not a lyric about finality or mortality. On the contrary, it is about vitality and life, for the lovers are united in their ecstasy, just as the poem is united by its repetition (with the variation in the final line) of the first and last two stanzas. Thus the color green, the color of life, connects the lovers, who themselves are joined in the cycle of life and death.

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