

Silence

A maelstrom of mayhem,
Continuous flux of cars and of trucks,
Of busses on turnpikes, bridge trestles and trusses,
The rumble of trains, the roar of the planes;
Demolitions munitions and blare of the blast,
Cacophonous chaos, bulldozers and cranes,
Construction, production, commotion, confusion;

The tumult and turmoil, the bedlam and bluster,
Crowds screaming aloud team names at the games;
The hubbub of clubs, their rumpus and ruckus,
Guitar-screaching bars, their dissonant discord;
The scores of the jangling jingles in stores
As raucous as racket from restaurant TV;
The clutter and clatter of telephone chatter—
The city shows us no pity.

I left all the noise of its loud neighborhoods
For the peace and repose of a walk through the woods,
And done with the hustle, the hassle, the din,
I listened to rustlings of leaves in the wind,
The pine-needle padding beneath my boot,
Twig snap as I bent a branch or a shoot.
How refreshing a refuge this silent asylum!

I chanced on a chapel, a temple mid trees,
And dared past the door to so peaceful a space
That bell chimes or plainchant would be out of place.
Not a chirp of a cricket, no birdsong or breeze,
I knelt on both knees in this church of the thicket,
Preparing to pray.

When all sounds had been dulled surrounding this lull,
There then rose the din of the noise within:
The pain of the past, the now of my needs,
The fear of the future, fitful and fretful,
The tirades of parents, teachers, and preachers,
Thoughts thund'ring at speeds of thoroughbred steeds.

I sensed that the drone of the city drowned out
Inner demons that nerve my internal noise;
Oh, if I could possess such quiet and poise
Within as this chapel's chamber without!

Stephen Wentworth Arndt