

Instead—musings on Psalm 42

by [Muriel Nelson](#) in the [July 14, 2021](#) issue

If Herbert Howells hadn't held a tune
in his ear as bombs kept falling on London,
if he hadn't argued with himself—*like*
or *as*?—and come up with a tie (both),
if he hadn't let his melody make more
of his awkward choice than the psalmist's point,
we wouldn't have the flowing rhythm of "Like as
the Hart" to carry us now, or occasion for our choir
to stop rehearsing and hear a pastor
muse that the ancients followed the hart (the heart)
which could sense unseen water (a diviner)
and lead a thirsty soul in hopes for a spring
into graceful deerlike ways of lifelong longing.