

After School

for a long time I wanted
to get out of that school
where I had been sent
for the best

I thought of climbing
down the vine
outside the window
at night

after the watchman
had turned the corner
to the boiler room
in the sweet autumn dark

I wanted to slip
through the still dining hall
and down the cellar stairs
in the girls' wing

where I had set the waltzing
in the first book
of "War and Peace"
I would pass unseen in that crowd

into the cellar
and the secret door to the steam pipes
and under the street
to the swimming pool

I would have persuaded
a girl I liked
to meet me there
and we would swim whispering

because of the echoes
while the light from the street
shone through the frosted windows
like the light of the moon

all down the long hot room
where the sound of the water
made the heart beat loud
to think of it

but I never
got away then
and when I think now
of following that tunnel

there is a black wolf
tied there waiting
a thin bitch
who snaps at my right hand

but I untie her
and we find our way
out of there as one
and down the street

hungry
nobody in sight at that hour
everything closed
behind us.

**Sem alumnus
W.S. Merwin's poem
"After School,"
written with his
experience at
Wyoming Seminary
in mind ...**