

IN MEMORIAM, J. H. W.

Death takes strong-legged men,
asking no questions, answering none.

But no one thought of death, there,
where boys' games and boys' things
filled the short winter afternoons
with guns, snares, tracks in the snow.

Or the long summers, with school
far off and the woods near
and large enough for running —
just running, not going anywhere.

He ran (and swung far out
on wild grapevines, and climbed trees)
because the young, strong legs
wanted to know how strong they were.

Death would have had to run
fast and far to catch him then.

Later, going away to college,
working and marrying, the legs
still sometimes wanted to run, but the woods
were smaller and farther away.

And if he dreamed of going somewhere
(or getting away somewhere) the dreams
faded, and the circuit closed,
from home to office and back again.

Death didn't even have to follow,
then, to catch him. Death waited
quietly, while one day's round
turned back upon the day before.

And casually tripped up the middle-
aging legs, and took him.

Barriss Mills