

Unfinished Love Poem

- for James Wright

Like I've been saying
All along, I'm not sure
Where they've gone
Off to. Why can't I think
Of that place as full
Of lovers secretly kissing
In unmodified light?
This afternoon's rain settles
Along my jaw.
I hope my bus is late.
Three beers by noon,
And now I go to chop
The rows of onions
For my bosses who mark
Up the booze for us all.
We keep coming back.
This is the life I've got.
I make salads from hearts
Of iceberg picked by migrants
Who curse and bless
This country, state, and town;
Their corner with the motel
Whose windows acquire a sheen
Over them as they drink
Five-dollar Cuervo
And spit it into their hands
To slick back their hair,
Desiring the unattainable
Strippers who pass through
Once a month. Oh Sweet
Jesus, I keep imagining
The regulars and the lawyers drunk
Again, sliding off their chairs.
What I really like
About the clearest days
Isn't the light itself.
At the trolley stop in Sharon Hill,
Where I grew up and most can't
Leave, I'd stand there
With the two bums,

Big Bob and Chicken Man.
 For being desolate, they dressed
 Nice. They stank, though,
 And sniffed glue every chance
 They could. Otherwise,
 They no longer seemed to desire a thing,
 Not even the other's shadow
 On the hottest afternoons, flirting
 With oblivion, waving to it
 As it floated by quiveringly
 Over their ears,
 White and light as milkweed.
 Trying to think of them again,
 In their polyester suits
 And dress shirts
 Buttoned all the way up
 To their scruffed wattles,
 Whose collars resembled a hit pigeon
 I saw once by the curb—
 Its wings lifting slightly
 As another A. Duie Pyle rig
 From Pittsburgh barreled through
 Sharon Hill, where I grew up,
 Without stopping until it hit
 The limits of West Philly—
 I can see they have
 Completed that agenda the dead
 Stars have laid out, and I don't know
 Where they are now. So it is
 This bus stop
 We all end up at,
 Telephone wires swaying
 Between oceans, the sun
 Hovering right there, between
 Our fingers, with all its busted light.
 I've heard it called a lot
 Of things, not one of them
 Accurate. The pines
 And maples dripping with rain,
 For example, have their Latin
 Names that make them
 Seem larger, which I can remember
 Well enough most days,
 Which I love.