

# Youth

By James Wright

Strange bird,  
His song remains secret.  
He worked too hard to read books.  
He never heard how Sherwood Anderson  
Got out of it, and fled to Chicago, furious to free himself  
From his hatred of factories.  
My father toiled fifty years  
At Hazel-Atlas Glass,  
Caught among girders that smash the kneecaps  
Of dumb honyaks.  
Did he shudder with hatred in the cold shadow of grease?  
Maybe. But my brother and I do know  
He came home as quiet as the evening.

He will be getting dark, soon,  
And loom through new snow.  
I know his ghost will drift home  
To the Ohio River, and sit down, alone,  
Whittling a root.  
He will say nothing.  
The waters flow past, older, younger  
Than he is, or I am.

James Wright, "Youth" from *Above the River: The Complete Poems and Selected Prose*.

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