

# Elegy for the Carrie Furnaces, Rankin, PA,

by Rebecca Clever

We dream the ghosts of laborers.  
 Their shadows cross the Homestead Steel Works footbridge  
 through machinery smoke and ore dust to Eighth Avenue.  
 Fencing topped in barbed wire flanks the bridge  
 on both sides. Behind it, mills and furnace stacks

a wide wall of brown brick and rust.  
 Kingdom of right angles. Just beyond the mills  
 barges quietly carry coal, drift as graceful rectangles  
 down the Monongahela River, dirty waterway  
 with the Native American name meaning high banks

or bluffs, breaking off and falling down at places.  
 In the distance the soft whine of a train whistle. Above,  
 the furnace's blue flame licking sky, a dragon breathing  
 in the dark, a torch to catch the birth-marked moon on fire—  
 glowing button in a mad stitching of stars sewn flat

against the celestial ceiling—hell daily heating heaven  
 'til heaven hushes it, dousing it dormant. Now a cinder  
 cone volcano asleep on ruins, but man's masterpiece  
 for thirty years. You paid your dues. How long to resurrection?  
 How light transforms you: your testimony sacred ground

of crumbled brick; graffiti, the can-sprayed fighting word;  
 rusty pipes, bolts, joints; paint peeling; towers flaking orange  
 & brown, old skin shed for new. We tour your body.  
 Snapshot your belly where ore cars dropped their waste  
 along your tracks. Near a broken shovel silent spirits linger.

We think we know what happened here:  
 sweat/exertion  
 birth/creation.

We gather your remains.  
 We make it art.