

Red Lead      Brieve Morison

How the white hot cinders  
make the sunset seem so pale  
As black buckets climb  
the backbone of the whale  
And the harpoon railway tracks  
that glisten in the light  
Running from the mines up North  
of high grade hematite

A belch of smoke dims the light  
As with the moon it confers  
A gash of sparks joins the stars  
From the red hot Bessemers  
And the humming spokes and chains  
Of the wheels of the night shift  
Through the unslept stolen hours  
I can hear them drift.

The tracks that cross the road  
From the open casting sheds  
Are destined for the shipyards  
Steel cradle beds  
And underneath the arclight  
Underneath the steel  
Young men serve their time with tools  
Their fathers first did feel.

In a cold grey western morning  
The tide brings in the rain  
Men and women factory bound  
From the town that bears its name  
And they leave the streets of battles  
Of men and famous ships  
And crossed the bridge they built themselves  
To where the heavy hammer hits

From the carpenters and welders  
The slingers and their crews  
The broken fingers twisted backs  
And Sunday lunchtime booze.  
The working in all weathers the

Stain of the red lead

The 7-30 siren drives the late ones from their beds

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