

No wonder the words eke out such heaviness and death,
such malformations of the soul. No wonder
the metaphors emerge bleak-eyed from the cellar,
dragging their rusty chains behind.

While the muse works the nine-to-five
in pantyhose and pumps, struggle,
her shady twin, fuels the story,
throws into the fireplace a sheaf of paper
to lift the blaze and craft the ash heap.

All over the city, smoke hangs its signals,
drifts over the chicken farmer whose hens won't lay
and whose poems produce nothing but polite rejection,

over the housewife crossing out sentence after sentence
of her opening chapter, while in the backyard
her children throw sand in each other's eyes,

over the writer whose shadow thrown across his page
is a darkness he's trying, trying
to understand.

by Carla Funk