

BETSY KENNEDY

Ohio Steeltown

The spark from fires in furnaces, sputters, spills
in air still raw with smoke. The men in town
begin to stir, as day shifts start at mills
where steel is king, where noise and heat pound, pound
incessantly against their brains. At noon,
they rest outside, while girls like kites on strings
flit by. The men enjoy flirtations, soon
wish more, but young girls dream of other things.
At nightfall, embers, red from ovens, glow,
and men in fitful sleep, seduced by pay
that bought their food, feel old. And their wives know
how steel takes youth so greedily away.
In Youngstown, life goes on, the dawn returns.
The never-ending fire continues, burns.