

Heat, Night, and Dusty Roads

Nancy Owen Nelson

Not much to do in our little town
but talk about the boys and
sneak by their houses after dark
in cars with bent fenders
and listen by their windows
hoping to hear a voice say
the most ordinary things,
like *turn up the tv and shut up*
Billy Joe, I'm trying to hear Elliot Ness
on the Untouchables

or sit in our bedrooms with the lights out
waiting for one of them to drive by on
the dirt road that swirled with hot dust
only a few hours ago. . . watching for headlights
and listening for the groaning of an old engine

and while we wait talk about our bodies
and how they change and how we treat them
and how we feel and how strange it all is

or talk about the party where we danced
up close with sweaty palms and cheeks
to the sounds of the Platters or *Soldier boy*
oh my little soldier boy I'll be true to you

and what happened afterward and who drove home
with who and how it is that it ended up different
from the way it began.

Not much to do in our little town it seems
so delicious thinking of the hot, sticky
nights full of promise and pain.