

a head that does not settle  
in the cup of my palms like cloudy water  
a head I might strike  
on the smog-brown backside of night  
and set the blue tongues singing under my soup

## The Proof / Russell Edson

He looks from a window, leaning his elbows on a windowsill; and he is like the head of a turtle peering from the body-house . . .

Then suddenly, before he can know, the windowsill goes soft; his elbows dent down as if into fresh dough.

The walls begin to swell into melting breasts and drooping eyelids that slide to the floor.

The ceiling weighs down, and the light fixture is the umbilicus of an extended belly; a pregnancy smiling the happy, if not foolish, revelation.

The windows sag into closing ovals, as though lips of people whistling whose lips are becoming earth even before their songs are done.

Out of the tracings of windows and doors, the corners of rooms, that shimmer on the surface he emerges as from a pudding . . .

## The Shuttle / Russell Edson

I think of a village where the dying are put in automobiles . . . Where the dying slowly lift from the ground in automobiles, rising over thatched rooves . . .

. . . The old man begins to feel a little better. He yawns almost refreshed—yes, quite refreshed; he's getting younger!

The automobile changes into a four-poster bed.

He becomes a little boy sailing through the clouds in a crib.

And then, what seems a spot no bigger than a distant bird, develops into a tiny village, like those seen when traveling in snow-covered mountains.

He arrives in a cradle. And he's hungry. A woman smiles and opens her blouse.

Meanwhile, in this same village, as I think of metaphysical symmetries, a dying old man is being seated into an automobile, slumped forward on the steering wheel; the automobile begins to move down the road, slowly lifting into the sky . . .

### Fireflies / A. Poulin, Jr.

The sweet smell of wild strawberries and hay crushed in my back, thirty years ago I'd fall asleep with flashes of fireflies by my bed, a whole tribe of eyes, the guardian angels of my genes.

Now it's winter where I live and each breath I take is rye. While I pray to that terrible dark for sleep, the lucifern light of their deaths and lives still blinks on and off inside the glass of my balding head. The glow of my grandmother's gangrene. My godmother's cells scorched whiter and whiter in her memory. Cancer's blue ember in my father's throat.

I wait for that mysterious fuel to exhaust itself, the almost inaudible click of one worm's corpse falling into final dark.

They won't burn out. They will not die. They flash and flash, a borealis in my clenched eyes.