

2nd Place Poem

To a turner of wood - by Paul O'Brien

I, too, have no answers, only this:
there is no craft in a spalted stump
left unworked on the turner's lathe;
a bowl is made only by hollowing.
Yet, your sin is not your heart's recoiling
on being spun hollow against its grain;
it is remaining blind to the salvation
of things. Your house has room for a thousand callers
and though a howl of grief might call too often,
shrieking like a fierce wind through a makeshift door,
was there ever a storm that didn't grow calm?
So I dare you, now, to recall the choir of things
that once sang for your attention:
the inky stripe of starlings in the winter sky,
the eerie Brocken spectre eclipsing the sun
and even the honeyed, hexagonal cities of bees.
Disclaiming the affinity of things
is a kind of dying. It is a veiled unworlding —
for you and also for them.
The fallen branch is calling for seasoning
and the seasoned blank demands the lathe.
Come home. The world turns for you.
It will not have thought ill of your absence.

Paul O'Brien