

PATRICK COLE

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In the dark

In the dark at the bottom of the Great Lake,  
the wooden shipwreck  
has time to think.

“I’ll go back to my materials,” it states.  
“They always said, ‘You go back  
to your materials when you sink.  
In fact you can at any time!’”

But there’s hardly any rush. It could  
be centuries, in this blackness, in  
this cold. “Do I even remember how  
to go back to my materials?”

Who does? “As a ship, I no longer  
belong. I never really did. But how hard  
it is to believe in this eternity which  
surrounds me!” So it doesn’t begin.

“Why can’t I give up the ship-form,  
even here, even now?—Because one day  
I could be found. And then a ship I’ll  
still be. But how unlikely! Oh, to decay!  
To pieces, to rot, rot, rot!”

It’s uncanny, this not belonging  
at the bottom of a lake. The Captain’s  
quarters, as he left them. Soup spoon,  
goblet, fork, beside the plate upon the table.

Poor hard ceramics, so much work to  
do, to be undone. What say you, old bowl,  
tureen?

“I am my materials, always was, never not.  
Like the bones of the Captain there, himself. Still  
the crumbs from the star that spilt them. Never more,  
never less. There is no going back to your materials,  
shipwreck, nor darkness, nor wet, nor cold.”

And if I ask the bones?

“You can ask the bones, but the bones don’t answer.  
Ask the bones, but the bones don’t answer.  
Ask the bones, but the bones don’t answer.  
Now how will you answer the bone?”

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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Patrick Cole lives in Barcelona, Spain. His work has also appeared in *The Offbeat*, *Angry Old Man*, *Cosmonauts Avenue*, *The Conium Review*, and the *Writing that Risks* anthology.

HERON TREE

26 May 2019

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