

Unto Tarshish

But Jonah rose up to flee unto Tarshish from the presence of the Lord, and went down to Joppa; and he found a ship going to Tarshish: so he paid the fare thereof, and went down into it, to go with them unto Tarshish from the presence of the Lord.

—Jonah 1:3

I

Here, weeds wrap about my head.
Acid razes my flesh smooth.
I am out of sight—
Far from the presence. . . .
Yet I cannot tell the origins of this strife.
Is it I that chiefly torments myself?

II

Deep in some visceral place
Where dwells the knowledge of my doom,
I realize I shy from light and warmth
As do the creeping things of life
That dwell under stones and rotting logs.
Encapsulated in this tight cell,
I have become ambivalent to all light and sound.

III

In observation of lying vanities,
I am afraid to cry aloud.
Three days and three nights
Under mountains, with the bars of earth around,
Have me questioning the mercy in a belch
When Nineveh has much cattle.

—Laura Hamblin