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Unto Tarshish

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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