

Jonah in the Belly

Lon Young

So this is how you'll preserve
me, Lord? in a slosh of brine?
Go ahead, though I've borne no fruit, torn
loose from my roots and gone my own way.
I should be plunging through the vast black
deep like a spoiled melon dropped overboard.
But your bowels were moved;
You rinsed and wombed me.

How long till I sour in this reeling
vat of guts? My cries rendered blubber-deaf
against the rushing of great waters.
A pulse in my brain, a breach of trust.
Once I grasped the tongue of your thunder.
This is no cellar, but the belly of hell.

What have I fled?

Take me back. I taste it now; I taste the salt
even of Ninevah and her people, and tears for them
in gales, in flood. It is enough
that you regard them.
Save me, Lord.
I've swallowed my pride and softened the bones
of my skull until it's as supple as a gourd
sprung new in the night.