

Listening

for Fanny Howe

My whole life I was swimming listening
beside the daylight world like a dolphin beside a boat

—no, swallowed up, young, like Jonah,
sitting like Jonah in the red room
behind that curving smile from the other side

but kept, not spat out,
kept, for love,

not for anything I did, or had,
I had nothing but our inside-
outside smile-skin...
my paper and pen...

but I was made for this: listening:
“Lightness wouldn’t last if it wasn’t used up on the lyre.”

—Jean Valentine