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John B. Flannagan, *Jonah and the Whale: Rebirth Motif*

Dominic Carter: The artist John Flannagan found the bluestone for this sculpture in Woodstock, New York. The piece is called *Jonah and the Whale: Rebirth Motif*. The whale is suggested by the stone's irregular contours and a few simple lines for the head and tail. Jonah, on the other hand, is more intricately carved—an expressive human figure trapped inside the womblike belly of the whale.

According to the Old Testament, Jonah was a prophet who disobeyed God and was later thrown by sailors into a stormy sea. The Lord told a whale to swallow him up—saving him from drowning. Jonah spent three days and nights in the whale's belly, praying for deliverance. The Lord listened, and, the Bible says: "He spoke to the fish, and it vomited out Jonah upon dry land."

This tale of spiritual rebirth held great appeal for Flannagan. Like a lot of artists, he was spiritually at odds with the modern world of industry and machines. He wanted to create images that appear to have evolved from nature rather than from the sculptor's hand. He said that his aim was to "produce a sculpture feeling as direct and swift as drawing, a sculpture with such ease, freedom, and simplicity that it hardly feels carved, but rather to have always been there."