Harbor Song

Judith Skillman

Follow this and additional works at: https://ir.uiowa.edu/iowareview

Part of the Creative Writing Commons

Recommended Citation
Available at: https://doi.org/10.17077/0021-065X.3673
Two Poems · Judith Skillman

HARBOR SONG

The woman who stands with squid
behind her purse and the men
who stand with their curved
fishing poles, casting their hooks
upon a gesso reflection of sunset

all of them as essential as water.
The tugs that maneuver the flat boat
into shore and the rays of sun which appear
to diverge but are in fact parallel
and the ferries without lifeboats,
and the woman who stands with purse and squid

all of them as essential as water.
The sculpture of Christopher Columbus
and the drunk sleeping on his hook
in the wall, not so much a man
as an apparition, and the recessed
aquarium where at wrong angles
some tourists stand and stare, their curved
mouths like hooks descending

all of it as essential as water.
The meal we had, and the ferries
that did not tilt as the wine went straight
to our heads and the sun fell further
toward sunset, casting parallel rays
which we took to be slanted,

all as essential as water.
The homeless, walking along pilings
which stand half dead, black threading
whitecaps and the imaginary skulling
of knees, and the woman and the man
who fished away from us, while I clutched
my purse; the catch they hid
from us while the optical illusion
of the sun died away,

all of it as essential as water.

**The Housewife Dreams of Order**

They say a spray of lavender
hung upside down in a closet,
they say lemons. But she
knows better. She lets

the old screen off its hook
and stands clear. There,
it is morning. It is morning,
and noontime, and evening again,

yet she has not moved.
She is planted squarely
in the space of their comings
and goings, she is waxen

and broad leafed, her shoulder
blades oiled as a fine wood,
her mind swept clean.
Nothing moves in her, no

shadows upon the triangle
of her throat and neck,
no kerchief. The wind is a rosin
which plays her hair.