

## 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.