

Prisoner of the Swifts

Judith Skillman

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Prisoner of the Swifts treats themes of birth, creation, cosmology, and mortality with the lyricism and depth readers have come to expect from Skillman. Four sections weave a delicate tapestry, that of pedestrian lives overlaid and informed by the acrobatic flight of swifts.

Praise for Judith Skillman

“Like Dickinson, another poet whose passionate imagination ‘overflowed / the room’ to embrace the whole universe, Skillman watches the aerial acrobatics of never-alighting swifts beyond her ‘Victorian walls,’ and discovers in them the strength of spirit to confront her own frailty and to celebrate a life ‘that seeds and recedes.’ These poems ‘render in iridescence’ the mortal lives, with their windows onto eternity, of us all.”

—Carolyne Wright

“These poems start from a well-stocked base of knowing what can be known—flowers, stars, children, illness and suffering, the vicissitudes of aging—and cross boundaries into the unknown, the story-behind-the-story, ‘the collage of past and present,’ the territory of the Mysteries. They ask questions of life and find some shadowy, but none-the-less real, movement toward answers in the metaphysics of these perfectly executed poems.”

—Judith Roche

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“Skillman is expert in resizing the modest to meet the expectations of readers hoping to see the outlines of larger things. Her expansive imagination squares with insight, and in the end both seem aspects of a single unified sensibility.”

—David Riggsbee, *The Cortand Review*

“You will feel fortunate to have spent these hours...with a poet who knows every trick in the book yet never lets on that she’s doing anything other than saying what’s in her heart...”

—from David Kirby’s preface to *Heat Lightning: New & Selected Poems 1986 - 2006*

About Judith Skillman

Over the past three decades Judith Skillman has written and published numerous poems for books, journals, and anthologies. She has collaborative translations from Portuguese, Italian, and French. Skillman's publications include *FIELD*, *The Iowa Review*, *The Southern Review*, *Poetry*, *The Northwest Review*, and *Midwest Quarterly*. She has ten books of poems.

From 1977 - 1978 she held a teaching assistantship at the University of Maryland, while working towards her masters degree in English Literature. She received the King County Arts Commission’s Publication Prize in 1987, judged by Madeline DeFrees. This prize enabled her to find a publisher for her first book, *Worship of the Visible Spectrum* (Breitenbush Books.) In 1991 Skillman was awarded a Washington State Arts Commission Writer’s Fellowship.

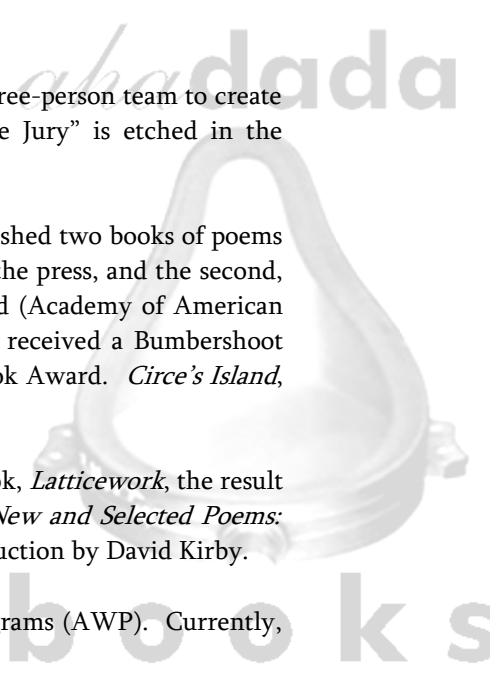
Three residencies during the 90’s, one from the Hedgebrook Cottages for Women Writers, and two from the Centrum Foundation, allowed her to pursue her creative work while raising three children. In addition, she received the Richard Hugo Memorial Scholarship in 1992 to attend the Centrum Writer’s Conference. Other awards include the Stafford Award from the Washington Poet’s Association, First Prize in the Pacific Northwest Writers Conference, and Honorable Mentions from *The Journal* and *Kalliope*.

Judith was commissioned from 1994 - 1997 as a literary artist member of a three-person team to create an original artwork for the Kent Regional Justice Center. Her poem “The Jury” is etched in the windows of the jury waiting room.

Poems were nominated for a Pushcart Prize in 1984 and 2001. She also published two books of poems with Blue Begonia Press. The first, *Beethoven and the Birds*, was funded by the press, and the second, *Storm*, received additional support from the Eric Mathieu King Fund Award (Academy of American Poets). Her collection *Red Town*, published by Silverfish Review in 2001, received a Bumbershoot Literary Arts Award and was a finalist in the Washington Center for the Book Award. *Circe’s Island*, was published by Silverfish Review Press (2003).

In 2003 she was a finalist in the David Robert Books Competition and her book, *Latticework*, the result of a collaboration with textile artist Erika Carter, was published in 2004. *New and Selected Poems: 1986 – 2006* was published by Silverfish Review Press in 2006, with an introduction by David Kirby.

Judith is a member of the Richard Hugo House and Associated Writing Programs (AWP). Currently, she is a faculty member with the University of Phoenix, Washington Campus.



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