

Surface

Like a motel, the table by the bed
the dressers, veneer, everything
matching, serene and restful as motels
are meant to be, for the business traveler
who clinches a merger, the hungry lovers
who clinch and merge,
the invisible room
service, the waiter's smile as he enters
each opened door,

although you know, some days
with an ear to the facing, you can hear
the plywood peeling strip by strip,
the glue melting, dissolving to liquid,
and in a wind the water roils oily black
or turns viscous, even tears the heart,
all the while the veneer's shining smooth, the grain
unmarked,

and who would know, or even care, unless you prized
something solid, something durable, unless you counted on it.

Judith Pacht's manuscript was a finalist for the 2008 Philip Levine Prize. Her poems include those published in *Ploughshares*, *Runes*, *Cider Press Review*, *The Los Angeles Review*, and *Solo 6*.

