

Judith Barrington

## Back Porch, Rockaway Beach

The wood must once have been shiny and red  
but now it sprouts ringlets of faded paint.  
Remnants of color etched into the grain  
roll like waves across sun-bleached wood  
or whirl round in eddies, like contours on a map—  
the map of this pine tree's history.

Old handrail's worn smooth by generations  
of skin: children's sticky palms  
fresh from the ice cream shop  
or warm dry palms back from the dunes  
where hot sand cleaned them  
and their lines— *life, health, fate*— emerged

like the grainy story of wood itself.  
Two tales have been told here  
and will be told through many sunsets:  
*From Forest to Handrail in a Mack Truck.*  
and: *Human Palms*  
*Or How One Lifeline Touches Another.*