

Writing

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First it was a pencil, and then
a pen and nib and ink,
a stained dent in the finger.

Calligraphy!
Sit up straight,
Hold the hand so, the pen thus,
Bear down on this stroke, lightly that one.

Then a fountain pen,
a ballpoint,
a typewriter.

The hand worked,
it tired,
it strained.

Writing was physical work,
a skill learned,
putting ink on paper,
banging keys strike the platen.
Words went
from thought to hand's movement,
shaping meaning on a page.

Computers are different.
Nothing real on screen,
no words burned onto paper
funneled feeling and thought
through brain and hand
to letter forms.

Not writer's cramp,
but carpal tunnel syndrome.

Once, to erase,
they rubbed the parchment's surface
with pumice, polished it and scribed it over.
Or just crossed out or wrote above.
If you erased paper too hard,
it rubbed away and made a hole.

So,
you wrote, scratched out, changed, inserted,
All with colors and arrows and carats,
scissors, tape, paste up and whiteout.
Changes of thought, of heart, of song
embodied in layered ink on layered paper.

Now, it's non-real letters
deleted by non-real erasing.

Meaning is forged out of life,
out of being, living, loving,
in words hammered
on the soul's anvil.

Words are recalcitrant,
resistant, robust; they
need a lot of pounding.
Can a keyboard take it?