

Becoming a Writer

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Early on, in class, the smooth new pencils,
the ice-white paper, copper-bladed rulers,
all spoke order, a progression of lines.

Until, with our clumsy hands
we smeared on layer after viscous layer
of black, yellow, red, blue acrid paint.

Later, playtime over, art an elective,
we learned perspective: one-point,
two-point, lines meeting in infinity.

The gray-black boxes made buildings,
the buildings made cities, all too
sharp, too straightly perfect for our experience.

Much later, freed by experience to shape
irregular lines, experiment with color,
shading, the talk turned to intent, to meaning.

What I made once with my own hands
has smudged, smeared lightly by an
index finger across an ice-white sheet

trying to get the shadow right