

TOOLS OF THE TRADE

They are here
because they were his.

The carpenter's scribe
with its fence and rail
and the smoothing plane
have no work to do
at this desk where I
labor with words.

They belong to the shop
by the river's side
where he readied the grain
and wrote in wood,
making marks to guide
the precise blade-stroke

that fit the waiting edge.
Next to pens and stray
bull-dog clips, they have
no function but to
revive the memory
of my grandfather's

sturdy hands and how
he spoke with gentle
measure as if to teach
that words gained strength
from the quiet silence
of what had been first

trimmed and cut away.

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