



## STARS

We are drawing stars, their sharp angles  
crossing each other in the dark, thin wake  
of the lead. In Aunt Nell's cabin on the Santiam,  
my father sits behind me, I think,  
his grown-up hand a soft, warm shell over  
mine. It leads the route of lines: up and right  
then left and down, makes five-sided shapes  
with five long points reaching out.

Under the dome of his sure five fingers  
my small muscles learn the motions of these stars,  
their geometry, to follow them by heart,  
eyes closed, pencil tracking along paper.  
Or my right fore-finger practices alone  
in the air over trees and water,  
a wire sparkler, then, bright and alive.

Now, my fast, five-pointed scrawls loop  
wild tangles of lines on papers  
new students don't understand.  
Those are the places in the writing  
most full of life, I tell them,  
the river still rushing quietly by,  
our old yellow pencil leaving  
sharp galaxies behind.

Jane Thielsen