



The Missing Ink: The Lost Art of Handwriting

Philip Hensher

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When Philip Hensher realized that he didn't know what a close friend's handwriting looked like ("bold or crabbed, sloping or upright, italic or rounded, elegant or slapdash"), he felt that something essential was missing from their friendship. It dawned on him that having abandoned pen and paper for keyboards, we have lost one of the ways by which we come to recognize and know another person. People have written by hand for thousands of years? how, Hensher wondered, have they learned this skill, and what part has it played in their lives?

The Missing Ink tells the story of this endangered art. Hensher introduces us to the nineteenth-century handwriting evangelists who traveled across America to convert the masses to the moral worth of copperplate script; he examines the role handwriting plays in the novels of Charles Dickens; he investigates the claims made by the practitioners of graphology that penmanship can reveal personality.

But this is also a celebration of the physical act of writing: the treasured fountain pens, chewable ballpoints, and personal embellishments that we stand to lose. Hensher pays tribute to the warmth and personality of the handwritten love note, postcards sent home, and daily diary entries. With the teaching of handwriting now required in only five states and many expert typists barely able to hold a pen, the future of handwriting is in jeopardy. Or is it? Hugely entertaining, witty, and thought-provoking, *The Missing Ink* will inspire readers to pick up a pen and write.

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