

Writing About H.D. Thoreau With An HB #2 Pencil

by Richard Hague

My current writing fetish,
a cobalt-blue plastic
pencil sharpener, drops
from my hand.
The room fills instantly
with the scent of
cedar shavings.

And I tumble down
that rabbit hole of smell
back to kindergarten,
the cold room
in the brick school
by the acid yellow creek,
Mrs. Calabrese's thin, sharp face
dividing the dim room
into syllables
of remembrance:
table, apple, chair,
bear, boots,
milk, lunch.

How swiftly we learned
to gather such words
and speak our paragraphs,
lay our first chatterbox maps
over the arranging world,

And now I recall how adept
Henry grew, grabbing up
an even dozen pencils,
exactly,
every time.

Long use makes
easy use: too easy. When he quit
his father's factory, he asked,
"Why repeat what I have
already done well?"
And off he went,
ready to grab up
other collections
of things, more pertinent
seizings of life and self.

“Henry, you should
keep a journal” —

And so he would;
this time he’d try
grabbing up, in
exact mouthful,
apt words.