

THE GODDESS OF PENCILS

By Matthea Harvey

had her choice of the P's and passed
on Goddess of Pearls or Perennials.

She isn't interested in anything enduring endless irritation
only to be pried open for a single lustrous bauble.

Nor does she want to be lauded for the simple fact of living
through winter, spring, summer, fall, over and over again.

Because she knows the feeling of keeping
silvery secrets locked inside until they must spill out,

she chooses pencils, spends centuries waiting
for people to invent them. She does give one little push—

makes a shepherd trip over a shiny boulder then notice
the way it stains his hem. Before long he is marking his sheep

with the strange substance so his neighbor can't steal from him.
Soon they're digging mines, lining cannonball moulds

with graphite for a smoother weapon. This was not quite
what she had in mind. Never mind. Here comes the first pencil

just as she imagined it, one grey moon-dot in a wooden
hexagonal sky. Now thoughts, light and various as the breeze,

are being launched back and forth across seas.
True, there are days when she'd prefer to be indelible

instead of interim (could have chosen ink),
but call her infatuated with slate-grey, argent-ardent,

and she'll slow-blink her assent. She does love the way
the doves on telephone wires at dusk look penciled in.

All over the globe she can hear the quiet crunch of
thousands of pencils spinning inside pencil sharpeners.

A child is peering at a pencil on his desk. He picks up
a second pencil, begins to draw the first.