

Henry VIIIth Towers Over Anne Boleyn

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She wore such small clothes
his hands could make her disappear,
kingdoms glistening on the collar of a blouse.

The palace dwindled to a picture frame:
a man pressed against a piece of silk.

The name of Henry swaggers on the tongue.
Demanding dreams, a son sends shivers
through the throat. A lust, a deed,
a woman torn to the lacy bone.

His royal crown rolls on the bed,
a ruby setting fire to her hair.
Henry's hands dressed in a tiny blaze.

2/

In a wide-eyed photograph
the Tower of London shadows nicely.
Tourists stare at the ground
where Anne Boleyn blocked the little light.

Pressed against Henry's royal window
my camera swerves and bobs
like the necks of American ladies
as they search for drops of blood.

I am proof that he existed.
My shadow fits his with space to spare.
The history in my brain is a memory,
Henry repeated, relived.

Later, family jewels tease
in guarded cases. Crowns as
shockingly incomplete as severed heads.
We drop our stares, release.

Faces burning with the chill of a ruby.

Barry Dempster