

## Wilderness House Literary Review 11/1

*Pat Simpson*

**Anne Boleyn**

I had it all. . .

What I did not have my dear  
red-haired Henry once moved  
heaven and earth to bring me.  
A lusty cur sniffing at my skirts  
he breached the walls of Rome  
offered the honorific of heads  
staring and mute in their piked  
place along the stony ramparts.  
No, the cunning of his counsellors  
could not save them; out of the  
pantheon of my pleasure they  
plunged like spent comets. I  
stood lean and dagger-sharp in  
my drive, surprising all hapless  
enemies with unwomanly will.

Still it was as a woman I fell.  
This cursed womb betrayed me.  
This womb and the Amazon war  
I waged against all Adam's sons.  
I charged witchcraft, popish plots.  
Secretly, I knew my stillborn boys –  
this toxic fruit – died of derision  
a loathing felt since first I tripped  
the steely trap of men's desire.  
The play's the thing, but I stood  
centered on a mean and stunted  
stage. Wasn't the birthing chamber  
my jail? Wasn't Henry's wrath the  
bastard issue of my ill-played role?  
Yes, I became Queen, only to forfeit  
the throne at the hour of my crowning,

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As the church bells rang, my kingdom  
crumpled and contracted, running arrow-  
straight and narrow, tracing the bloody  
footpath towards the Towers' gaping maw.