



The Inventory by Bara Braver

When King Henry died,
at 55 years—

though who would believe it
given his marital history,
and the swells and creases
of his swollen girth—

a commission was appointed
to measure, count, and catalogue
his worldly goods,

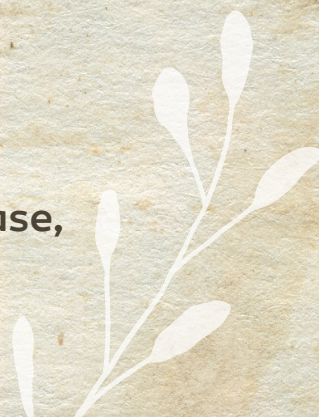
from the crown that weighted his regal head
to the collar that fit round the neck of his favorite hound.

The inventory of his possessions
kept for historians
and the merely curious
at the British Museum:

the material history of a life
in small detail,

the worn pillows, frayed curtains,
cutlery, cups and clothing,

and one mottled leather eyeglass case,
the detritus of his earthly days.





And what of me, at a greater age,
my accumulations, accretions?
When I die, who will count each pillow
and note its wear?

The attic horde could fill one book,
things left behind, at each chapter's end:
a button-eyed doll,
yellowing silks of baptisms
and a wedding
skates grown dull
boots now porous
letters crumbling
and broken chairs,
rump-sprung.

What could they tell of me,
and my mortal life?

Little enough,
I think,
and some misleading traces:
I have not saved with thoughts of history.

Better to find a living witness
who remembers laughter
wrote down stories
noted sins, and counted blessings
remarked on warm hands
measured longing, and joy
one who knew me
as I was.

