

GOTHIC MARY POPPINS

It was early when you saw her
in the summer sunshine,
an autonomous shadow
at liberty on the pavement.
Imaginary ravens cawed
their enthusiastic lament,
wreathing her regal darkness.
Imaginary bats flitted like stars
around the rim of her parasol,
a black membrane stretched
across etiolated fingers.

The midnight lace of her collar pinched at her neck.
The wasp waist of her jacket pinched at her abdomen
The boater — bluebottle black — pinched at her temples.
Her eyes were kohl graves, their wet occupants
buried alive in a bone cliff face.

She saw you looking.
The finger and thumb
Of her gloved hand pinched
and released, like beetle jaws.
Her charcoal lips smiled.
"Dance with me"
she whispered in your head,
"We'll click and clatter
on the cobbles of the high street.
Not too close now, lest the light be sucked
from your ephemeral carapace."

Robin Knight

Brighton