

## Light of the World

Separated from the Light of the World,  
I fled conflict—  
to Paris,  
raging against the Light,  
beautifying evil,  
starved for love.

At Notre Dame, I gawked,  
open-mouthed. Begged stone  
to bind up wounds. Returned  
again and again to the queen.  
Stalked the structure:  
towers, flying buttresses, nave,  
high altar. Mocked her preeminence  
with drunken dance,  
upside-down photography.

Along the Seine, I dragged  
heels over revolutionary stones,  
once bloodthirsty for revenge,  
and flung accusations at my own  
tapestry of disappointment.  
Desperate for purpose, I ached  
for a reason to return home.

Naiveté grasped vampire friendship.  
The beginning of the end became  
the treasure of darkness.

And there I stalled.  
Toured Great Britain, solo.  
Hitchhiked verdant County Sligo.  
Mistook independence for romance  
while bridging the Vltava. Traded  
truth for lies, passion for love  
until my visa expired.

Falsely declared,  
I sweat in the immigration queue  
and worried  
how conflict fared over absence.  
Determined to embrace the return,

I veiled heart and mind with Paris glitter.

Smothered in black couture, inside and out,

I sunk into a dark abyss.

Vampire spirits materialized.

Threaded lies.

Paralyzed me.