

# Christine Paice

## *Gabriel in the Playing Fields*

For six charcoal months I sat  
in a chair by the window pretending  
everything was all right.

Heavy glitter on the washing line.  
Streets dark with water.  
Her breath walked slowly round the room.

Death is an act of bravery  
a song of dust bouncing from planet to planet.  
I forgot the precise measurement of time.

Somewhere in another universe  
tulips were singing in Amsterdam.  
and no one asked, but still you came  
into this preternaturally cold universe

with your parchment limbs and aching skin  
snot sobbing from your nose  
like a gigantic cosmic cobweb  
where the underworld begins.

You placed your huge sock-less feet on the carpet.  
Deep in the layered waters.  
Coughing up the stillness.

Before you carried her over the playing fields.

Light pulsing through you  
like a hologram dazzling the acres.  
The afterlife glinted in the trees.

You were wing deep in the emerald middle  
the weight of her body breaking the quiet world.  
Kids were playing in the park.

I could still see her small delicate feet  
poking through branches.  
Wild pear, wyche elm, rosewood, ash.

The sun weaving electric  
a wake of startled atoms weeping  
on a plain wooden bench.

Everything I thought I knew  
falling from the unsealed universe.  
Even the dogs were quiet.