

**The Lonesome Death of Bridget Furey
or: Pessoa Down Under**

Jack Ross

The Dead

this is the war I lost
a woman
versus three poets
– Bridget Furey, ‘Brag Art’ (*brief* 7 (1997): 31)

New Zealand poet Bridget Furey flickered into existence for a brief moment between the late 1980s and 1990s. Her contributor’s bio in *Landfall* 168 (1988), describes her as ‘22 years of age. Recently returned from an extended working holiday overseas; presently living and working in Dunedin.’ That would put her date of birth sometime around 1966.

Her next, and final, contributor note, in *A Brief Description of the Whole World* 7 (1997), says simply: ‘Bridget Furey has just returned to Dunedin after a stint overseas.’ (*brief* 56) The rest, it would appear, is silence.

In her brief period in the limelight, Furey contributed three poems – ‘Ricetta per Critica,’ ‘The Idea of Anthropology on George Street,’ and ‘The Book-Keepings of a Ternary Mind in Late February’ – to our most celebrated literary periodical, *Landfall*. And another, ‘Brag Art,’ which must now be regarded as her swansong, to its antithesis, the avant-garde quarterly *A Brief Description of the Whole World*.

Out of curiosity, I spent some time recently trying to track down an image of Bridget Furey. I drew a blank in the local repositories, but the photograph opposite, taken by Alen MacWeeney and dated ‘Loughrea, 1966,’ though clearly not of the poet herself (unless she was unusually prone to concealing information about her age) may come, perhaps, from some cognate branch of the family? Loughrea is in County Galway, Ireland. This Bridget is described in context as a ‘traveller.’

One is tempted to speculate further that this branch of the family may have included a certain *Michael* Furey, quondam lover of Gabriel Conroy's wife in James Joyce's short story 'The Dead' (1914), and the principal inspiration for its immortal last paragraph:



Bridget Furey

[\[http://hdl.handle.net/10599/5393\]](http://hdl.handle.net/10599/5393)

Yes, the newspapers were right: snow was general all over Ireland. It was falling on every part of the dark central plain, on the treeless hills, falling softly upon the Bog of Allen and, farther westward, softly falling into the dark mutinous Shannon waves. It was falling, too, upon every part of the lonely churchyard on the hill where Michael Furey lay buried. It lay thickly drifted on the crooked crosses and headstones, on the spears of the little gate, on the barren thorns. His soul swooned slowly as he heard the snow falling faintly through the universe and faintly falling, like the descent of their last end, upon all the living and the dead.

When Good Poets Get Bored

one must swing the ice pick
so she can shine like
a sacrifice
(Furey 31)

As you may have gathered by now, there *is* no ‘Bridget Furey.’ She was a hoax – or should one say a persona? – created by two other New Zealand poets, Michele Leggott and Murray Edmond.

Landfall has (to date, at least) made no official comment on the incident, but the founding editor of *A Brief Description of the Whole World*, fellow-poet Alan Loney, did not encourage the two collaborators to repeat the experiment. They had been forced to confess to their involvement when Loney attempted to contact Bridget Furey in order to solicit more poems.

Furey, then, remains largely still-born, her small handful of poems sandwiched tantalisingly between two pillars of New Zealand Lit: the official canon represented by *Landfall* and the alternative tradition enshrined in what is now called *brief*.

Murray Edmond composed a kind of epitaph for her in a recent email to the author:

the reclusive Bridget Furey ... may be dead by now, likely of an overdose (tho’ of what who knows?).

Of what indeed? *Why* would two poets choose to spend their time in such a manner, composing mock verses for an imaginary alternate self? The first answer is probably the simplest: as a tribute to possibly the most famous (non-existent) poet that ever (didn’t) live: Ernest Laylor Malley.

The Ern Malley Affair

I had read in books that art is not easy
But no one warned that the mind repeats
In its ignorance the vision of others. I am still
The black swan of trespass on alien waters. (Malley 24)

The story is a familiar one, and has been told many times – most conveniently in Michael Heyward’s *The Ern Malley Affair* (1993). Put briefly, two young Australian poets, James McAuley and Harold Stewart, irritated by what they saw as the pretentious obscurity of Modernist poet and critic Max Harris’s

magazine *Angry Penguins*, decided to put his critical acumen to the test by inventing a poet and fabricating a number of spurious poems by him.

Ern Malley was the name they chose, and they created his entire body of work – 17 poems – in a single day in 1943. They also provided him with a fake biography, a wasting disease, and a doting older sister, who sent Harris the poems after her alleged brother's death at the early age of 25.

Harris loved the poems, publishing them *en masse* in a special issue of *Angry Penguins* in June 1944, and subsequently as a short book, under the title *The Darkening Ecliptic*.

Which is when things started to go awry. Max Harris was sued by the South Australian police for the alleged 'obscenity' of some of the Malley poems. Despite the fact that Harris had by then detected the imposture, he was found guilty and fined five pounds. Shortly afterwards *Angry Penguins* folded. Malley refused to go away, however. His poems continue to be reprinted, discussed, praised, and denounced to this day. They are now a cornerstone of the Australian poetic canon, far outshining any productions of their two authors *in propria persona*.

Roughly forty years after Malley's alleged death in the 1940s, did it seem an opportune moment to Edmond and Leggott to stir up similarly the New Zealand literary establishment? Leggott, after all, had herself recently returned from a long 'stint overseas' – working on a Doctoral thesis about American Objectivist poet Louis Zukofsky. What could be more likely than the somewhat homespun quality of much New Zealand poetry and – especially – poetry criticism struck her as a bit behind the times in the mid-1980s?

Certainly Bridget's first set of poems, the three included in *Landfall* 168, make few concessions to the uninitiated reader. The first, 'Ricetta per Critica' [Recipe for Criticism] takes us on a quick cook's tour of literary modernism 'as the nineteenth century drew to a close ... in shells and golden elbows sailing past a new Byzantium'. Perhaps the most telling allusion here comes in the second stanza, taking us:

from the Charcoal-burners to Marinetti's circus
simply by sailing in a new direction a whole world
of culinary delight or recipes for disaster

Allen Curnow seems appropriately sandwiched here between Marinetti and the 'circus' of futurism – though who precisely who 'Groqwyn' is (described as a 'fascist fly') remains a little unclear. Is he the facile critic who is being guyed by the poet, or is there some deeper meaning there? In any case, the slightly-off tags continue to fly thick and fast:

From Duchamp:

oh Garibaldi at the holy gates cavorting with futurisms
thin enough to drape like laundry round the kitchen –
next a clicking of legbones, Giuseppe, and she is descending
a staircase hung with noodle dough naked

and about to slip into the modernist jacuzzi

to Ezra Pound:

the meat and drink of politics a brew
of bodies piled like pasta ('in hell') nothing
the old canto-maker at his gelato couldn't have
cooked up 'must thou go the road to

hell'

to William Carlos Williams:

weeping catastrophe from the kitchen floor it's raining
chicken giblets as the doctor arrives with his red barrow

uncertain where to deliver or abort the last primavera
of all momentary aphasia as the ships pull out

'Momentary aphasia' might be, in fact, a good description of the effect this poem is liable to have on the unwary reader. What seems at first sight substantive dissolves under closer scrutiny, leaving one only with the sense of a mischievous sharp tongue, immense erudition, fricasseed with a deep underlying fury.

That rage becomes more intense in the next poem, 'The Idea of Anthropology on George Street' (presumably an allusion to Wallace Stevens's 'The Idea of Order at Key West'). This is a bitter satire on a kind of Jack-the-lad academic whizz kid, with more in common, perhaps, with Carly Simon's 1972 anthem 'You're so vain' than with the rather more stately and philosophical Stevens poem.

Was it Billy Zydeco's leg
in the air, synergism of phallus and wheel,
artefact disappearing through a turnstile door,
stage party invites in cuneiform passed under the
boardroom table? Jism, just juice. Freshly.

Again, it's hard to attribute biographical allusiveness to this poem in the absence of a biography, but one yearns to detect in this 'Glass case whizz kid' some ex-lover of Bridget's:

Wow. & ow. (o, & pow).

The last of this early group, 'The Book-Keepings of a Ternary Mind in Late February' is more meditative in tone (as befits its apparent echo of Eliot's 'Thoughts of a dry brain in a dry season'). Its last stanza has an especial poignancy as a kind of self-portrait of the poet herself, in the guise of one of Chagall's models:

She wants to take both glasses and pour them over
the white drapery he is condemning her to
wear like paint, she has a notion to uplift
the fiddler from the street and snap his matchstick
wrists for musical effect. But the future perfect
will allow them only one-way flights and she is
already three-quarters full and falling
into the theatre of the city, the opera of images
where the swarming paint is still wet upon the flats.

Colonial Constructs

Seeing that provocation and dissent are the diastole and systole of critical enquiry, I close with a provocation: literary forgery is a sort of spurious literature, *and so is literature* [my emphasis]. Consequently, when we imagine the relationship between [them], we should not be thinking of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde but rather of Tweedledum and Tweedledee. (Ruthven 200)

'Where the swarming paint is still wet upon the flats.' To continue this conjecture of Bridget Furey as Ern Malley redivivus, I'd like to introduce here a comment from a recent conference I attended. It was the *14th International Conference on the Short Story in English*, held in Shanghai in 2016, and dedicated to 'Influence and Confluence in the Short Story: East and West.'

At one of the plenary sessions, Canadian writer Clark Blaise proposed a new schema of the Affluent North versus the Indigent South to replace what he saw as the outdated unchanging East / Go-ahead West one. Someone in the audience (not me) asked 'What about Australia and New Zealand?' To which he replied – and I quote – 'Australia and New Zealand are merely colonial constructs.'

It seems an odd phrase for a Canadian to use. What, after all, is Canada if not a 'colonial construct'? Or do the older New World colonies possess a legitimacy that the newer ones lack? Perhaps 'authenticity'

might be a better term to use than 'legitimacy,' in that case?

What actually makes a person, a culture, a piece of writing 'authentic'? Because it comes from the heart? Because it is a true expression of its environment? Because it lacks guile or subterfuge?

But *nothing* in colonialism is authentic, can be authentic. Colonialism is the polite mask we don to cover dispossession, usurpation, even genocide. Perhaps it's for that reason that the deliberately *inauthentic* holds such currency among us – or those of us who hail from down under, that is.

Ern Malley has been hailed as Australia's greatest poet not so much in spite of the fact, but *because of* the fact that he never existed – just as the 'Australia' he wrote in and about cannot be said to exist, except, possibly, in the imaginations of those outside it. But – by the same criterion – should we call Mudrooroo (or, for that matter, B. Wongar) her greatest novelist?

The fact that both of these men, Colin Johnson ('Mudrooroo') and Sreten Božić ('B. Wongar') had (at least implicitly) claimed Aboriginal ethnicity as a kind of guarantee of the 'authenticity' of their writing seemed to have the effect of completely discrediting them when a controversy began over their 'true' ethnic origins.

Colin Johnson's claim that 'his dark skin meant he was always treated as Aboriginal by society, therefore his life experience was that of an Aborigine' (Mudrooroo) did not really satisfy most critics. Nor did Božić's statement that the name 'B(anumbir) Wongar' – which he says can mean 'both *morning star* and *messenger from the spirit world*' – was given to him by his tribal wife Dumala and her relatives in the course of instructing him in their traditional ways (B. Wongar).

On the one hand, such cases seem to illustrate the tendency of Europeans to try to monopolise both sides of the colonial debate: to disenfranchise the subaltern, and then impersonate them, with equal facility – and, dare one add, cynicism?

On the other hand, did those novels and stories of Mudrooroo's and Wongar's which had been so praised by critics, and prescribed for so many university courses, suddenly lose all value when their authors' ethnicity came into question?

What exactly *had* we all been reading? Books? Or windows onto some alleged alterity? One reason that Mudrooroo's and Wongar's fictions satisfied those demands so well was because they had been written with them in mind. As at a fraudulent séance, it turned out we'd been talking to ourselves all along.

Catfish

one
i kept in hiding
one
i renamed 'citoyen'
one
who stood doyen
(Furey 31)

Of course, it's true to say that such questions of cultural usurpation are not reserved for the post-colonial world – let alone the 'colonial constructs' of the South Pacific. The case of Bridget Furey certainly raises such issues, but there must be more to her than that for us to maintain an interest in her.

At this point, then I'd like to take a complete cultural tangent and throw into the mix one of my favourite reality TV shows, *Catfish*, which has been running now for seven years, since it began on MTV in 2012.

In the 16th episode of the 4th series (first broadcast in August 2015), our dynamic duo of presenters, Max and Nev, discovered that Ayissha's online romance with 'Sydney' had been with 'Whitney,' instead, all along. What's more, 'Whitney Shanice' (like 'Sydney') turned out to be just one more online identity of her *real* interlocutor, who admitted to having '8 or 10' online identities, which she used for a variety of reasons: including viciously criticising Ayissha online in order to jump in – as herself – to defend her.

At a certain point such information stops making sense, and you just have to accept the proliferating forest of personae offered up to you so easily by modern social media as an irresistible temptation to a certain sort of person.

What exactly *is* a catfish? Thanks to the TV show, the term has now come to mean any kind of unscrupulous online troll or predator, but specifically one who fabricates a fictitious online identity. As the original 2010 *Catfish* documentary explained it:

They used to tank cod from Alaska all the way to China. They'd keep them in vats in the ship. By the time the codfish reached China, the flesh was mushy and tasteless. So this guy came up with the idea that if you put these cods in these big vats, put some catfish in with them and the catfish will keep the cod agile. And there are those people who are catfish in life. And they keep you on your toes. They keep you guessing, they keep you thinking, they keep you fresh. And I thank god for the catfish because we would be droll, boring and dull if we didn't have somebody nipping at our fin. (Harris)

Just as there must surely have been a little of Ern Malley behind the Bridget Furey hoax, so too I would have to postulate a little of the catfish. It's not that the actual TV programme was born or thought of then, but the basic idea of deliberately introducing some discord to rile up the other fish and keep them fresh is

surely a universal one.

Which brings us to the main point of this comparison – another of the major (probable) influences on the creation of Bridget Furey – the Portuguese Modernist poet Fernando Pessoa. Pessoa (which coincidentally means ‘person’ in Portuguese) is famous for publishing under a variety of names (including his own).

These were not mere hastily assumed personae in the Poundian sense, however. They, or at any rate the major ones, were fully fleshed out with biographies, bibliographies, discordant styles, and a variety of contradictory opinions. He called them heteronyms. He himself has been called many things, but probably never (as yet) a catfish. And yet he *was* a bit like that, surely? A catfish *avant la lettre*?

The fact that he started out as a poet in (bad) English, rather than Portuguese, shows a certain fluidity of identity from the very first. ‘*Eu não escrevo em português. Escrevo eu mesmo*’ [I do not write in Portuguese, I write myself] is one of his most celebrated *dicta*. I have it up in my kitchen as a fridge magnet – though I should add that the woman who translated it for me in a shop in Lisbon opined that it sounded ‘a bit pretentious.’ Maybe she was just sick of seeing all those Pessoa mugs, t-shirts, shopping baskets and posters on sale in every tourist gift shop.

After all, what *is* a heteronym but an artfully forged and skilfully substantiated fake identity? The actual merits of Pessoa’s writing can be hard to perceive in translation. *Whose* writing, anyway? One of the things that conspire to keep him in the public eye is the constant proliferation in the actual number of heteronyms he is alleged to have created – in one of the many senses Pessoaan scholars have so far identified. Is it 74? 84? 124? It depends on who last edited his *Wikipedia* page, and (of course) on the way in which you *mean* the question.

How many heteronyms can dance on the end of a pin? It would be easier if one could simply conclude that there *was* no definitive answer to the question. But maybe, just maybe, as in the Periodic Table of Elements, there may really be a final, arithmetically convincing solution.

The Year of the Death of Ricardo Reis

that boy i kept five years
in my apartment
while the war waited
just outside the door
(Furey 31)

José Saramago's novel *The Year of the Death of Ricardo Reis* (1984) depicts the effect of the death of Pessoa on his drifting creations, as they try to come to terms with the melancholy of their floating, spectral state. Australian novelist Peter Carey's *My Life as a Fake* (2003) tries to do something similar with the 'Ern Malley' myth. 'Bob McCorkle,' his version of Malley, lurches into life like a kind of Frankenstein's monster as a result of the intense acts of inventive energy which have been poured into his creation.

Perhaps a more subtle evocation of his influence can be found in critic and historian Martin Edmond's unpublished novel *White City*, a fictionalised autobiography of Ern Malley, a few sections of which were published in a special issue of *Landfall* in 2007. Martin Edmond, son of the poet Lauris Edmond, is also the cousin of Murray Edmond, Michele Leggott's co-conspirator in the Bridget Fury hoax.

Martin began his career as a prose writer with a book entitled *An Autobiography of My Father*, so it's safe to say that he's no stranger to the paradoxical effects of shifting identities. In his stand-alone 2004 essay *Ghost Who Writes*, he evokes the persona of Pessoa to explain his own conception of the writer as one who channels voices, regardless of what those voices may prompt you to say.

Murray Edmond, too, though better known as a poet and dramaturge, has – in his recent novella collection *Strait Men and Other Tales* – composed a series of stories 'almost like urban myths, a kind of informal history of a counter-culture,' claims poet-critic John Newton in his blurb comment. Novelist Emily Perkins, a little further down the jacket-cover, chooses instead to emphasise the slippery, a-historical nature of these works:

Stories are disputed and rights are stolen; danger lurks at the edges, sometimes in comic guise. 'Morning will determine whether scene from thriller or screwball comedy,' reads one character's journal entry: the same, *Strait Men* suggests, could be said of life. (Edmond)

The identity crisis implied by this multiplicity of masks threatens, at times, to overwhelm any stable sense of the literary self in our own corner of the Antipodean colonial construct: witness 'one of [our] more notorious acts of plagiarism ... when a winning short story in a competition run by [*Metro*] magazine turned out to be a chapter from a Martin Amis book' (Brown). As a friend of mine, Murray Beasley, commented at the time, in the late 1990s, all that its 'author' would actually have had to have done would have been to preface her story with the words: 'My name is Martin Amis. This is what *I* have to say...' to make it a perfectly respectable act of literature.

Then there's MOTH, the 'Museum of True History,' whose series of art exhibitions and websites chronicle an alternative history of personalities and artefacts which are – like Monty Python's renowned *Hackenthorpe Book of Lies* (Chapman, Cleese, Gilliam, Idle, Jones & Palin) – all of them guaranteed false. Despite the running header 'lies and madness' on their latest site (*MOTH*), there's an embarrassing

fervour to *believe* in many of the viewers who first encounter these extracts from MOTH's faux archives and artefacts.

I discovered this myself when talking to some of the visitors to 'Fallen Empire,' a collaboration between Museum of True History, artist Karl Chitham and myself at Dunedin's Blue Oyster Art Project Space in 2012. I felt a bit guilty, I must confess, at wasting so much of their time with this particular pack of lies when most of us have so little of it to spare.

Vanishing Points

and poets bawled and called
across cafes
(Furey 31)

Michele Leggott's recent book *Vanishing Points* (2017) accomplishes a shift in her work from 'poetry' (arranged on the page in long lines, punctuated only by four-spaced gaps) to 'prose' (printed in paragraphs, with conventional pointing). This shift has emboldened her also to invent rather than simply attempt to resuscitate the voices she hears. Her study of the Taranaki war of the 1860s led her to fabricate an Emily Dickinson-like poet to comment upon the drama.

After completing the piece in question, she discovered a *real* nineteenth century New Zealand painter and poet, Emily Harris, at least one of whose few surviving poems does indeed betray a Dickinson-like freedom and boldness with rhyme. Leggott, who is now completely blind as a result of macular degeneration, can no longer accomplish the kinds of intricate page arrangements and archival research which characterised her earlier work, so is now forced to rely almost entirely on amanuenses in her continuing search for the missing works of Emily Harris.

But: can one, admittedly very striking, poem make a poet? Is there not a certain element of self-deception in this quest to find a downunder *doppelgänger* for Emily of Amherst? Of course there is. Leggott has read her Borges (cited repeatedly in the book), as well as her Pessoa. The *emblematic* side of her blindness has never been invisible to her. Where authenticity is a vain hope, pursued vainly by those who hope to find it in born-again indigenism, perhaps the most futile – because the most brutally inappropriate – of religions, then perhaps the truest poetics really *is* the most feigning.

The self-serving impostures and complacencies of colonial oppression are no joke: but cruellest of all is, perhaps, the *overwriting* of alternative experiences accomplished by well-meaning outsiders, often with the most innocent of motives. The (appropriately named) Bridget Furey may sound like little more than a footnote to literary history.

Perhaps, however, this is the lesson she has to teach, and the reason why her ghost goes marching on.

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The Complete Poetical Works of Bridget Furey (1966-c.1997)

Ricetta Per Critica

Risorgimento diamonds sprinkle the Mare d'Azov
four times a year the best tossed
behind tall ships which began the world's liquefaction
as the nineteenth century drew to a close
and drained il miglior grano duro
in shells and golden elbows sailing past a new Byzantium

miracles against the grain
from the Charcoal-burners to Marinetti's circus
simply by sailing in a new direction a whole world
of culinary delight or recipes for disaster
on the boil strain rinse and leave to drain
many things have changed but not

The doctrine that the world is always al dente
though the time of preparation may be critical—
oh Garibaldi at the holy gates cavorting with futurisms
thin enough to drape like laundry round the kitchen –
next a clicking of legbones, Giuseppe, and she is descending
a staircase hung with noodle dough naked

and about to slip into the modernist jacuzzi
three minutes and Groqwn's disaster is replete
the meat and drink of politics a brew
of bodies piled like pasta ('in hell') nothing
the old canto-maker at his gelato couldn't have
cooked up 'must thou go the road to

hell' (van Eng himself knew Groqwyn
for the fascist fly he was) 'the shade of knowing
so full of the shade of hell' (to paraphrase
a phrase) revolution done to turn the head
or stomach 'crying VIVA FERNINANDO and in all parts of

the piazza were flames in great numbers and grenades burning

to sound of bombs and mortaretti and the shooting of
guns and of pistols ...' the obscene rubric
of Malebolgia lowers itself on innocent and corrupt alike
flowered hands reach silently into the mess wiping
weeping catastrophe from the kitchen floor it's raining
chicken giblets as the doctor arrives with his red barrow

uncertain where to deliver or abort the last primavera
of all momentary aphasia as the ships pull out

– *Landfall* 168 (December 1988): 377-78.

The Idea of Anthropology on George Street

Who he was. The theatrical red Honda as
chariot. Had edge, Kid Creole, liquid boogie
wouldn't do. All-comers, then Billy Zydeco
on two wheels for a parking motif. Chopped
through an exchange of hands, iso-jack
the-lad manners, phone-in, talk-back control of
the tie. Also theatre. Hands-on promiscuity
raw silk and rolled edge, deployment had nothing
the overnight pack revealed, lambently geared
to a one-night bull market. The old museum
with its palimpsest architecture downsidings
all futures. Was it underwriting dinged the coup's
immaculate fender? Was it Billy Zydeco's leg
in the air, synergism of phallus and wheel,
artefact disappearing through a turnstile door,
stage party invites in cuneiform passed under the
boardroom table? Jism, just juice. Freshly.

Offshore, taboos multiply harmlessly for the Kid
and his all-stars. They breakfast on boxed PR

brioche printout spill of guts. Jeremy Bentham
look-alike prints out paper keys. Glass case
whizz kid. Wow. & ow. (o, & pow). Breakout
patterns link head and shoulder with the tied lines
nobody connected to museological narratives
in the display cases. The doctor riding a
well-covered liberal ass through city
parks. Who wants a psychic dig? The—
rapists would pay him to present. A case
history could never resist, diaphanous in its
assent, nodding at the up and up, wistful
only in the sense. Ass hits Honda:
BIG BANG THEORY BORN IN VACUUM:
Tell us, if you know, what message to
code in the strings of time. Excavate
your machine, mocker up those 5.30 eyes, turn
sharp. There was never a word for her. Fax it.

– *Landfall* 168 (December 1988): 378-79.

The Book-Keepings of a Ternary Mind in Late February

Lately Chagall has been saying it, over and over
to a violin: ‘The jaws of a three-quarter moon
may swallow me up, the peppermint lovers who fly
out of my kettle have looked at Paris
and there they saw the three-quarter moon
put on a thin coat of riverboats and serenades.
Her ripples desolate the painted ceilings
of de Sade’s cracked-cup cafes. She stirs
tiny quavers of light, grace-notes, into the Seine.’

He is clearly doubting these words as they fall.
In the Louvre Paganini’s violin is bandaged,
muted with absurdity, and yet a Renault passing by

blows a cool jazz air in his face then veers
effortlessly into the future perfect.
By the time Chagall gets there on his tender bicycle
workmen in chapeaux are wrapping her in gauze.
He murmurs, 'Absinthe,' and 'Alabaster,' alternately.
A swallow on an acid-eaten cornice plunges low.

She wants to take both glasses and pour them over
the white drapery he is condemning her to
wear like paint, she has a notion to uplift
the fiddler from the street and snap his matchstick
wrists for musical effect. But the future perfect
will allow them only one-way flights and she is
already three-quarters full and falling
into the theatre of the city, the opera of images
where the swarming paint is still wet upon the flats.

– *Landfall* 168 (December 1988): 379.

Brag Art

this is the war I lost
a woman
versus three poets

(world where women

one
i kept in hiding
one
i renamed 'citoyen'
one
who stood doyen

*(where women are
far between*

one must swing the ice pick
so she can shine like
a sacrifice

and few
and few

that boy i kept five years
in my apartment
while the war waited
just outside the door

and poets bawled and called
across cafes

– *A Brief Description of the Whole World 6* (July 1997): 31.