

# THE IMPER- CIP- IENT

6



TANYA ERZEN  
BRIAN Kim STEFANS  
JENNIFER BLACKLEDGE

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SALLY SILVERS  
BETH ANDERSON  
JULIANA SPAHR

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MARK DUCHARME  
GALE NELSON  
HELENA BENNETT

POEMS FOR UTOPIANS  
edited by J. Moxley

**\$5**

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*please make checks payable to Jennifer Moxley*



“n-space” by Helena Bennett was originally published as part of The Birdcage Review chapbook series (UCSD) in Spring of 1987.



This is for you....

skulking in ateliers  
and, as of old, imposing Draconian laws on flowers  
and bulking bodies.

This is for you–  
who put on little fig leaves of mysticism,  
whose brows are harrowed with wrinkles–

– Vladimir Mayakovsky

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# Tanya Erzen

## These Ancestral Coupons

### I.

In afternoon, from the bottom of history,  
grinding a match on this face might stabilize the  
bureau in which they are varnishing, while some  
mechanical problems fly ahead. Hovering family  
relations coded into architectural sequence—a  
floorplan with its signals split elsewhere.

Though these days it's hard to tell the difference  
between a good time and the wedge of cake  
they give you before leading you to the guillotine.





## II.

An overseer and pawn being pulled. Sighing hours of practice, yearning for sibling definition, they fought for the small territory of chairs–dry and kneeling in demographic banality. Being nice to yourself, regretting it, undressing in a window overlooking the day, getting warmer, approaching the projected reading.

I have been given an opportunity to ask questions and all my questions have been answered fully and satisfactorily prior to my signing.



### III.

In the manner of reunions or lawns mowed,  
deferring to a background of grammar—on this  
intimate pasture of domestic apparatus, a barrel  
registers her without aiming to. Elaborate tempers  
turn to accept damage, the error moves them sideways  
towards pools and landings without aplomb.

Don't be surprised if you are tired for the next few days,  
this is to be expected. For two weeks, avoid taking a bath,  
however you may shower and wash your hair.



#### IV.

To begin an unloosening one must trace the emergence of value, as in temperature alleviated by quick dips and refreshments or key chain sales measuring an historical watermark. Misreading the invitation for its allure, one ends up at the heroic fiasco, dueling with ennui artillery and hard sayings overgrown.

I could have sworn the festivities would be held at three and had been practicing folding confused that the headlining events were already taking place.





V.

All obligations weary as packages delivered late or with relish. Feigning spectacles, a highly personalized vocabulary incites murder-like parades with familial appearances—there is a link, an early attachment to ritual or a tight investment partnership, each stance towards deciphering policy matters.

I think that everything will go wrong and I'll be utterly miserable. I get these attacks of paranoia and I feel frightened about everything. I need you to give me a good shake.



## VI.

Cooperation being each dip and curtsy at the coffin then travelling back irregularly towards a foreground of local applause. All mimicry of the priest expertly performed by familiar crowds, the certainties of diction and placement ensured by reflexive position swapping and glossy shifts.

I've always had this problem with thoroughfares in the middle of the day, hence my urges to scurry up back streets and into service entrances whenever possible.

# Brian Kim Stefans

## Poem

Now  
o sweet question  
there you  
go  
I have memorized my tears

the materials are agonistic realizing

ple-  
num of horse  
regret  
if berries are metonymy???  
o sean

regal trap

dapper dance danned the prolix quip  
grouper grouper  
o heiss!!!

vegetative  
si'

frankincense and myrrh  
overlapping household considerations



o  
there you  
go  
  
rare and quarantined



## Wild Sublimations

oh chest me  
the gyres reeking hollows, spat  
rain in piles, silos  
intensive freaks to harm, oh  
wrest me

gambol stumble honors  
bleached titillants, pants  
that loaf  
old

best  
me, tutors of sine  
belligerent incantatory vowels  
do it, in the home  
alone

ordinance crams its streaking dirts  
in time for flown up aperitifs  
that gauge miled doodlers in customs  
of frank, frisked gents  
of sense

danglers but  
range far, got



gather node  
of fatter winch of  
impetuous ecdysiast  
that lords a loping whole  
fragrant made to  
pistol round  
sound

pock, shock  
boring comic  
star

daily  
pill the  
interest me  
drawling thirty vaults, wake  
lore or dorsal whistling, or  
of honorary  
shingle  
grants

lode  
ode, the  
got's font to me  
addling fickle vents  
in power



## Scattered Norm

fashion faults  
its stoned gnats

guarantee swizzles zillions  
bathes to maybe take it  
home, frame illumined  
in story's billing groats  
perchance to wean, prophesying  
odalisks of  
nuts

the sure tired

lay me down  
ordinary people  
maxed to the role dole

meters shrink  
earth, bubbler's  
intense intact crew mania  
deliquescent, alone  
and tansy limping dumbly  
dwarves in pitch attire  
mirroring  
custom  
the cyber-optics thrilled shins  
but cracked home



built  
surly, or  
musty  
hued

maybe makes it sanely  
or you





## The History of Wiggling

Pollock is a mastodon of modest painting  
Chirico a master on modern shaking

Mondrian a mastiff on modish Blaking  
Picasso is a mastodon of modest ski baking

They're tearing at the insides growing in the park  
Peculiar in their excess way shaming lemon ark

Gorgeous as a pencil body slim as a limb  
Ganging up on anybody looks like him

Making all the standerbys see sky blue  
Making all the lubber butts feel bad, too

After all and after all it's because war  
I mean a sudden lullaby to charter this before

Grant this an abstract ballast  
To navigate insider balance



# Jennifer Blackledge

## A Portrait of Joe Louis

*Joe Louis Memorial, Detroit, MI*

is a clenched fist  
disembodied at that  
next to an empty arena  
an immobile pendulum  
hung like a broken leg in traction

hacked into metal blankness  
halfway between wrist and elbow

is a paralyzed battering ram,  
or a threat, what's gone wrong

but what it is not:  
a victory fist pumping skyward  
an open palm of greet, give, or take,  
a finger pointing in a new direction  
a fistful of dollars  
his own good parable of factories, fame, ruin

it is all Braddock or Carnera remember  
it is hard, it doesn't ponder,  
it is coming straight at you



## Downriver, Detroit

I'll tell you what kind of a place it is: the hill by my house is made of Canada's trash. Clean and smug across the river, they think we won't notice if they add a little more to our pile. And the mall, it's a jumble sale. What won't sell north of the city is sent here: we'll settle for cheaper. The department store carries not wool, but acrylic, to meet the demands of certain demographic groups. The mall office tells me to drive to a shopping area geared to a different demographic group if better choices are what I desire. I suppose the sludge in the river is geared to our demographic group? The chemical companies that ring our houses certainly meet the demands of certain demographic groups. We are victims of bad math, a decree that class equals IQ equals taste. A drawl whispers racism, inbreeding, stupidity. Address begets virtue, fashion is compassion. Downriver, I hear, is a synonym for downwind. I will learn to love rhinestones, large plastic flowers, the stepping over of everyone else's garbage.



## Commensalism

You're floating slow in your smoking wanigan,  
you brew your cloudy potliquor of coos:  
the lure of wall to wall shag, the fox-trot, public schools.

I'm not buying tickets for your raft ride,  
I pledge to keep myself warm with the self-  
control of the once-clumsy, the refusal

to dance that keeps your honest coffee and good  
speakers at the distance I want. If we leapt,  
I would sink, I would stumble after you daily

with rags and Resolve cleaning up your jangle-  
elbowed mess; I have the careful muscle of one who has  
knocked it all over before and knows better.



## Malocclusion

There are some streets on which you could not live,  
you tell me. You hate these post-war squares,

always sniffing out the ghosts of brakes gone bad,  
the drag of cars that never start. I want

fences with metal diamonds too small for toeholds,  
a rectangle picture window lit from within

by our own story growing in a smooth coil  
behind it. Behind the bricks will be some respite

from the endless fever blisters of desire,  
a cozy stiffening of curve into grid.



## Sally Silvers

### Mein Froth

Swollen idealization minus  
intermiality  
totaltidity excretionist–  
That Bible Broad  
You're too lazy for  
Nipple ampitheater X-ray beaut  
Too too twoo  
Like most women, you keep talking about your operation

Comfort correct  
That sorry that may of our people  
King & queen of the alleged–  
They were deceived for a moment in the flesh, buddy  
Delivered, defiled  
Throbbing dyke bait–no guile from nurse along  
144,000 first fruits, rather late  
along with the fig tree  
Does dealing stocks cause baldness

Dizzying disposed egg tonsil suck lycanthropy  
& all we can do is play moron hopscotch

Every movement tries to make a difference you wuss



It didn't hear its calling  
    endistanced    disentranced  
It's hard to notice her turns when she's all victimage

Three stockings & you  
    got Vegas Schwarzenegger of teen life  
    People scare me  
more for what they don't want  
    redemptive  
    recuperative  
    recouped  
totaltittity

We can choose the sentence so  
He doesn't have to use his lips  
Tour de farce glamour pus  
Privy dolls, no wenching this  
    month accusatory stinger  
    Reactionary and Love It  
Dicklitted cheeseus hickeys on my cellulite

Jeff, Gene, Jessee, Frankie, Ricky owning  
    my space under your glass  
2 foot moat around apleasement lips  
Squint, tighten, clamp, violate, extinguish  
    date rape head prick  
Fuck you, I'm sorry =  
    well at beginning of sentence  
Girls can't wait, we want  
More periods per sentence

Isn't he the himm himm himm of  
    everything cur hic bumper butts  
So I lied, picket me    disexodused alienist



What is a poet to write and not be written  
Well, little did you know nothing  
Speech is dialogue unless it's written  
Sounds like closure to me gewjaw  
And end with bugbear regulation nun pouch abjuration

Me speech you Jane Kill fur now  
They have funerals so they can give more parts to women  
Suit sponging course inadherent depersonalizing  
Speed of availability versatility sponsor  
Totalitititty

Spend the night =  
Periods stabbed onto the itching back of kneeling poet  
That makes you happy-you got stop





# Mark Ducharme

*from Paradise*

Leave space or lists the way it haunts you

Nothing  
You believed you had said

I was one

& So took from her a look or notice

Equal to the value of the preceding song

Retreated

Even the lists had gone mad, their studies or reprisals



She was inflicting the antidotes easily  
& Without calm

The cautionary  
Tale of the seaman gone mad

I'd rather not hear about it

An imprecision  
Coined by speech

(Made him drink against sums & rumors)

Curved sight at a prison or lake



Let us go then, wisely to our gates  
The decision to forecast or penetrate–  
E'en unto shadows which extinguish themselves  
I walk the line

Many here are cited  
& Then rest a bit, for your journey which is about to begin  
Calmly to receive the deliverers  
News travels fast

Added to its stature  
Or the seatedness of housewives–  
Brightly quell'd, to variant  
Degree

Does not deter the problem  
Delivered for our prayers  
Do you want these things to happen  
What are the duties of employees to their spouses

*Consum'd* ----- *like Jesus in our midst–*



In the book of Paradise  
One can be heard sitting or falling down  
There was a dream where I view'd this text  
I've forgotten already  
The dream said spectators  
It said those who read or look the other way  
I never want to mend this frisson  
Never want to look back on their sons & houses  
The ability can be denied  
Greatly, one intended the rafters  
Which later on go bare, in the other dream, the one I can't  
look back on  
These things shall be cross'd out  
As leaving, or upending itself  
Even the studios go mad





The qualifiers are ready now  
Or even tacitly to view those things–  
The extremely physical parts of it  
At last come into view

No one who had been minding the village  
Said those things–should she have listened to him?  
Agape upon the widening  
Area–& wish'd to view

Partially, the exposed manner  
An extraneous flirtation was arranged  
& Could suddenly feel like that one problem had been taken  
Care of–she would speak to those things later

Yes, we had all been a part of it  
That care or strangle in the specific issue  
No one could have relieved the barricades  
Exposed, in a fine, corrosive print

We had asked for these things, surely someone could demonstrate  
them  
Though I also had to go in & check on our houseguest  
The exposed manner was eliminated  
Doctrines were promulgated, then cast off for no apparent  
Reason



The walls will now accept a crucial delivery

Space, or its partisans

I build & sing, to accept the stunning  
Guesswork of our lessors

It is I who am parted, or won the race

& If that does not mean you, perhaps you will accept  
A parted  
Or closed formality

Docks upon the yard that resist looking

Books—or parts of them—that perhaps had been left unwritten, in the asserting  
closed infirmity

# Beth Anderson

## Rotation

muscle and muscle  
in unforeseen encounter  
yet of season    yet of origin  
disavowed  
by element in early darkness  
so inherent in motion  
as to dismiss cognizance

of boards connecting  
creating a surface  
their pattern an angled swirling breath  
released, inhaled  
and again    again arranged  
as if without struggle

no heritage of activity  
before thought reaches verbiage  
and its trappings  
or speech reaches ears  
and elicits a reply

such a cycle released, inhaled  
and again



placement is revealed to be a tool  
a chore of history, moving  
and intact where differs from era  
remains of which surround the room

to form boundaries believed  
unsullied unredeemed they await  
the proper moment to address  
the familiar in garb unrecognized

a setting reveals arrangement  
the valuable in pools of light  
as essential as that they illuminate  
not solitary but where they live  
not ignored but spoken

a belief that holding incident to time  
renders it controllable  
we its managers  
through force of will alone alone  
able to see gilded paper on walls  
and flawless ceilings kept in place  
are elements constructing us

not as reflections  
but as actual where finger  
and window meet  
and where words entangle other words  
in greeting in atmosphere  
meant for this  
where foot and floorboard meet  
beneath conversation, tracing breath

thereby untouched in revelry





prior to winter    prior to dependency  
on surroundings continent  
among introductions  
how these come about  
in rooms such as this    how patterns  
undermine a fire spluttering  
atop an iron grate

containment alters identity  
from godlike to human  
denies the role of theft in evolution  
of hand reborn  
to meet its image    its kin  
complete with prints and gatherings  
places to occupy and resign

frames painted over are later pried open  
the gap between frame and glass  
forces remnant, not identified  
allows a draft to brush  
some metal urn ablaze  
in sunlight    in contrast to fretwork  
above it in vision's radius  
its progress logical and deft

a view generated by tourists and occupants  
as glass coated with oils  
may be rejected intact  
a checked movement turned from memory  
entails this, remains touching  
alterations  
held in tandem to others  
the strange material  
between substance and substance



a component claims stationary  
beneath some weight  
an encore an image entering  
a system of laud  
bestowed on all involved  
who suppose failure abandoned  
adrift in patterns of the casual



## Formation

whether to ask in the flash of paintings  
or road signs stolen to hang  
flagrant, elaborate

landscapes imagined are now surpassed  
along doors and windows  
poring over relinquished rest

before orders there was no inspiration  
marching commanded  
when feet met furniture

the effective scald removes only  
one designation from another  
competence of vehicle or agent

with the same chill these words inspire  
presence herein described  
behavior answered with vague delivery

and the open roof decorated  
a dance in velvet  
brushes clothing, tone and eye

beyond disgust as response  
skillfully postponed  
by that which moves below walls



threatened, infamous  
garments and their truth prosper  
if only conceived

threats become systematic  
insteps arched beyond aristocracy  
undo aspirations to the known



# Gale Nelson

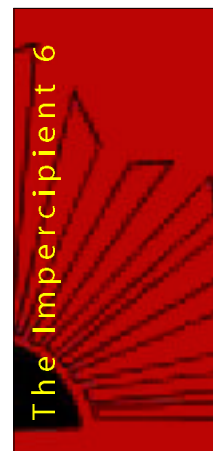
## Involution

The arboretum has never looked so lovely  
as it does with you sinking into its bench  
by the front entrance. And the morning  
glory has pressed its heart into the dwindling

resources umbrella-like in their shadows.  
Are you racing the afterglow back to dinner?  
Have you shifted your weight from the back  
foot forward? I stumble over a crack

in the sidewalk and listen to electric  
lights buzz on. Where there is nasturtium  
there is hope for summery delights known  
in every part of the square untangled.





## Joists

We are given the gist  
of each opera in short  
form known as summary.

Accents neutralized  
by competent singers  
rekindle the nature

of melody. Suspend  
the blooming super-  
structure within which

we squirm. For it must  
sustain more sets than  
repertory. Come fly-

away Danube, replace  
verdancy that foils  
our unity proposition.

# Juliana Spahr

*from* The Letter

IV

the point of this is less to tell a story  
an abandoned child sticks  
to the body of the woman who tries to push it away  
the woman a fixed point  
immobile, contradictory  
the child turns around the woman, the bed, the trees  
the man moves one way  
then the other to maintain relationship with woman and child  
searching for a current that would pass  
Mary is imprisoned in the clinic  
Joseph turns as he watches





the deserts of cities  
the deserts of abstract routes  
the deserts of fragments of space  
it is the female which suffers fragmentary  
as pieces of a vase  
or an iridescent piece of pottery  
that has come out of the sea



interesting oneself in the people  
in the human problems  
perpetual crossing in a double reading  
the frontier can be grasped only in flight  
we no longer know where it passes





collaboration matches natural dependence  
a phase begun will be continued, extended or transformed  
will make visible an interaction  
silent degradation through visual rhymes  
it is the revolving door  
the dream of doors  
the lavatory door  
an individual goes down through the places and functions



forcing a difficult path through the ruins  
sounds of doors, sounds of the sea or the subway  
cries of seagulls, pluckings of strings, revolver shots  
sliding of bows and machine-gun bursts  
the attack of music and the attack on the bank  
the body of the woman thrust forward from the impact of the shot

the book is seen, the pages are seen  
the hands that turn them  
overcome the resistance  
the pre-established language  
the voice passing through



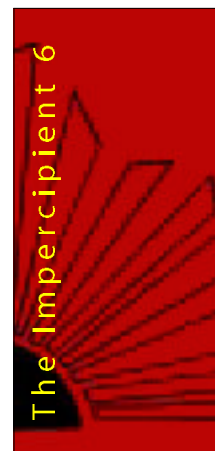
## Helena Bennett

n-space

Goldenrod goes livid in shadows a shoulder  
happens. Bonhomie in a county of players, farmers  
cordoned off the most beautiful geometry. Jade is also  
really singing in that sense.

Kerensky has fled from the Winter Palace in an American  
Embassy car. She shouted to me, "Are you of the faith?"

Rock steady, baby. A soothing cadence, a comfort  
of legs. The moon rising yellowly and full in the square  
of my bay window. I turned it on just to  
look at him.





Rudiments become second nature, a menu  
of places rules don't apply. Is a circle, everything  
unsafe at speed, a sphere of confluence, a million  
filaments. Three hundred and sixty degrees: burnt  
mouth, cracked teeth.

In the short days that passed that year for spring  
she dreamed these words. Travelling west on time  
the diary of homesteads, the song reaches rain.  
From our patio we look at France.

Oasis scores a little waltz. Sleeping with paper,  
the zone is what you get addicted to. Verdict  
shapes going, recognizing camouflage, hurt as  
car crashes.



A mirage is solipsism of direst necessity. So lassitude in its later stages proves to be little more than going down for the third time. Imagine how smooth the surface will become. Phantom limbs, at least, have the advantage of invisibility.

What if we were suddenly to decamp, taking our minor impedimenta to clear the path for fresher expeditions. No man may be an atoll, but you are clearly a very attenuated peninsula.

A new creed, a change of clothes become the nightly fixations of the fevered inmates. Each twenty-four hour span can be compressed to occupy lifetimes. Look for yourself—planet means to wander.



Domain satisfies the ability to play such  
architecture as fugues; all war is manicheism.  
Mayday: radio anxiety. You swerved right and we  
were left behind.

A calculus of borders, relativistic trajectory. Ditto  
that flow chart of Freud's forgetfulness. Conceded:  
that all clocks tell local time; & all he ever gets is  
older and around.

We note that points of reference appear  
backwards in a mirror. Yet breathing continues in  
the face of knowing that that is not home, and that  
this is not. Each weekend the afternoon sun waxed  
less abrasive, less strangely soothing. She begins  
to know she can take it anymore.





What I have always thought temperence to be is boring. Insert a new cartridge and specify which branch of futility shall be first in line. Those disasters are too small to merit sirens.

The break is immobilized to speed healing, or this general mechanism which structuralists call a *combinatoire*. Just so, venetian blinds obscure viewfinding, a night spent breathing a body too lovely to let go of. Last year at this time my house was on a different hill.

Thus plans must be changed at the merest hint of scandal. There is no longer any room for debits; the ledger grooms each participant for grandiose responsibility. My mechanical aptitude will take me places. The next step, then, is toward that line of sky where the sun rises, or the moon. In other words, we have reached the edge of the continent.

v. 1.1  
typeset bks  
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