

**white upon white**

*a cento for mae losasso*

*(via jane jacobs*

what kinds of city streets are safe  
which city parks are best avoided  
which slums stay slums while others don't  
domestic dreams which money can buy  
the fun filtered through the consumable  
while we wake to pitched roofs or piazzas  
certain acts & events of attention  
(& this holding station that doesn't hold  
but opens out into anxieties  
textual gaps the leakage of toxic waste)  
all the buts yets whethers etcetera  
articulate only incompleteness

**memories read as dreams**

*a cento for amy evans*

when the ferry turns from san Francisco  
like a detour *en route* to something else  
that's the kind of risk we have to take  
up against rights, permissions & controls  
such trash makes hardcore for our metalled roads  
a buried *kouros* face down in the grit  
a headstone turned into a drain cover  
the traces of a gateway or an arch  
the earth's still pregnant with its treasures  
this hooded falcon little cross-eyed king  
you add to you don't cancel what you do  
you reveal what pulse nerve breath already know  
something dangerous & vital as childbirth  
the gift of itself love seeks to make

## **approaches**

*a cento for WSG*

this temporary trace of presence  
created space constructed solitude  
wraps about line-ends breaks at caesurae  
its measured divisions dislodge the now  
the coordinates of the everyday  
this container load of words & relics  
trails typewriter ribbons texts in a cloud  
an object that will stand & will not move  
an object that moves & will not stay still  
places its weight on the preposition  
the heard cadences of spoken language  
tests the very texture of the social  
to know itself only in retrospect

## Sonnet 61: The Watchman

*4 sophie seita*

So what is wakefulness in translation?  
my eyelids heavy through the watchful night  
till darkness fades & birds begin to sing  
every shade of blue imaginable  
Is it the version that you sent to me?  
the surrender & blurring of the self  
I hear the hum of the air-conditioner  
the whisper of the occasional car  
this unplanned & unwanted vigil  
then the silence when all suddenly stops  
birds become aeroplanes clouds bags of air  
I take the words of others into me  
I wake to watch & trace your distance  
from me, far off, & never close the gap

**From SERIE NOIRE**

**nagori**

*4 lisa robertson*

oh *non, oui, non*, while we queue to pee  
pure sonic logic drives us onwards  
the red-haired singer sings of the commune  
sings modernism & the world to come  
the lightship turned into a restaurant  
Josephine Baker become a *piscine*  
while pickpockets dip into our handbags  
& greater rogues peddle a dream of power  
the train has already left the station  
eased silently away from the buffer  
greenlighted for an unforeseen future  
we try to savour the lingering taste  
even the aftertaste of bitterness  
of the season that will never return

## belzebuth

*4 lyn hejinian*

in the beginning was the alphabet  
these letters will help you leave the uk  
the red-faced demon offers the bitter  
drink that bears his name (this fallen angel)  
*j'ai perdu le do de ma clarinette*  
Sidney Bechet emerges from the shades  
we were the cool kids, lost boys, misfits  
blues in cellar bars, poets in basements  
K left alone to face the tribunal  
while you depart for concerts & airports  
the empty air is filled with music  
the first needs the second to give it sense  
the self needs the other to know itself  
these notes together generate a whole

## **muskrat ramble**

*4 olivier bossard*

the deserted streets back to the hotel  
the healthful benefits of wine & sex  
red faces & animated talk  
to put on a play, to publish a book  
the paintings that programmed our responses  
the reset of imperial memories  
you'll find the plug socket under your seat  
(the poisonous rectal glands of the skunk)  
naked & afraid in the trade-off  
where beauty & truth have been revalued  
every statement checked for its loyalty  
every object comes with a warning note  
you hold your headphones firmly to your ears  
I wear my mask & try to learn to breathe

## **Covode 18: out of this world**

### **I. new ballgame**

there was no vegetation  
no sign of life  
only dust storms & winds  
& millions of miles  
from the nearest library  
we play darts in the bar  
we read through the system's history  
we touch fingers to the screen

### **II. deep impact**

we have spent two years / in this thin atmosphere / capable of  
sustaining investors / but no place for a dog / a 50kg robot rover /  
returning with samples / deep incisions in the crust / a slice of real  
estate / with stunning overviews of Earth / & a potential for  
development

### **III. we remember**

feeling worn out / in St Mark's Square  
finding the Caffè Florian / closed  
everything more difficult / than we had expected



#### **IV. moonshot**

I'm obsessed with exploration  
she says  
the moon in her eyes  
becomes another waste plot

#### **V. perfect seal**

amid constant talk of  
extra-terrestrials  
& vaccines  
we donned our / protective suits  
that was the way we minimised  
what it was really like  
the truth becoming a blur  
with all areas suddenly off limits  
(we all knew someone who had died)

#### **VI. interlude**

our conversations were clotted  
with new terminology  
our exchanges grew softer  
as restrictions eased

then the second wave broke  
with an end to the conversations  
the walks across the fields  
our lungs full of / cold city air

exhausted frustrated increasingly  
emotional about / missed connections  
we return to a baseline  
knowledge of what closeness might be

#### **VII. a report on planetary protection**

keep the anecdotes / for future times  
we need to protect the survivors

we have been on assignment  
to visit the most far-out sectors

water is a scarce resource  
our constant restlessness  
has damaged the surface rocks

#### **VIII. quantum uncertainty**

it's a fact / that there is uncertainty  
we wait patiently / & kill time

while our former colleagues / ignore our emails  
if you're going to do Mars / just go for it

she handed in her notice  
& started to feel human again  
she wasn't sure she could sustain it

#### **IX. among the masks**

let's not forget our objectives  
while we work more uncertainty  
into the systems

there is therapy available  
& counselling for the elderly

she had taken her leave / & returned to Earth  
she had seriously considered / returning to the red planet  
but declined the offer

it was a short-term apprenticeship  
to death

#### **X. disease prevention**

so NASA sent us rocks / to learn from them  
because laboratory samples on Earth

were contaminated  
life brought back / into the biosphere  
a microbial ripple effect  
known as the Mars variant

## **XI. the moon in your hand**

for a long while  
the project felt precarious  
investigations to mine gold  
& platinum  
for evidence  
of the Earth's present

now the oligarchs have arrived  
& the celebrities are expected  
on site

there are no planning regulations  
or safety measures  
we retreat into our cabins  
left to our own devices

## **XII. simple time**

lakes & mountains & glaciers  
cross-country trips through ghost towns  
canyons

the best minds of my generation  
in helmets goggles & facemasks

what knowledge of America  
from brown bears & golden eagles  
from soil samples  
from wheels on icy Texas snow

### **XIII. biosigns**

the government has failed us  
the voice announces / as the Board reconvenes  
we have options / an escape plan  
reorganising the city's demographics  
occupying spaces vacated by the state

we are hiring for the project  
it's another emerging market

a meteorite brought life  
to small-town America  
long before the dot.com crisis

our policy adviser  
understands space advocacy  
even if she's working  
from California

