

Previous books by JL Williams include *Condition of Fire* (Shearsman, 2011), *Locust and Marlin* (Shearsman, 2014), *House of the Tragic Poet* (If A Leaf Falls Press, 2016), *After Economy* (Shearsman, 2017), *Origin* (Shearsman, 2022). Published widely in journals, her poetry has been translated into numerous languages. She has read at international literature festivals and venues in the UK, Sweden, Germany, Denmark, Turkey, Cyprus, Canada, Hungary, Romania, Montenegro and the USA.

Williams has undertaken collaborations with artists, perfumers, filmmakers, composers, choreographers and others, and is currently exploring how yoga, meditation and breathwork can support creativity. She was a librettist for the award-winning covid-response *Episodes* project by The Opera Story and the English Touring Opera children's opera, *The Wish Gatherer*. Williams is Creative Projects Manager at the Edinburgh Futures Institute and curates Utopia Lab. She is hopeful about the simple and mysterious power of poetry that allows us to know ourselves, each other and the world more deeply. jlwilliamspoetry.co.uk

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“This tour through Piranesi’s dream worlds is also a tour through collective desire. With a subtle clarity, Jennifer Williams shows how our fears and longings manifest in architectural fantasies: the dream home, the model workplace, the palace of wonders. The buildings of these tense lyrics are at once familiar and disturbing, the way an influencer’s aspirational feed betrays what’s bloodthirsty about want. Where one poem comforts or pleases, another unsettles, and another confuses, because in this oneiric logic feelings flow with less reason and more truth. By pursuing her own obsessions with skilful and restrained poetic commitment, Williams has made a very personal map that anyone can, and should, follow in order to find themselves lost.” —Harry Josephine Giles

“Like Italo Calvino’s invisible cities, these oneiric architectures rise up revealing a glimmering imagination. The visually compelling constructions in these poems possess a beauty that can be subtly unsettling in its materials, proportions, or the relationships or emotions hidden within. At a time when our eyes are already jaded from the remixed possibilities of AI-generated imagery, this intriguing collection is balm for the inner eye, offering an expansive poetics of space as well as

an invitation to take in a sharper and more intricate view of the details around us, and savour the questions about our ways of inhabiting.”

—Juana Adcock

“Jennifer constructs cities and skylines of words, inviting us to live within their shelter and syllables. Her poem-architectures are exact ambiguities, precisely lit from every angle of language and geometry, to pinpoint each space, each proportion.” —Iain Matheson

ALSO BY J.L. WILLIAMS

Condition of Fire

Locust and Marlin

House of the Tragic Poet

After Economy

Origin

SAMPLE

JL Williams

Strange Architectures

SAMPLE

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SAMPLE

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SAMPLE

For James and Imogen, with whom I've built a home.

SAMPLE

SAMPLE

Strange Architectures

SAMPLE

SAMPLE

I often dream of buildings.

Sometimes they are versions of places I have been. More often they are new to me, more real than any I know.

Where are these places we inhabit in our dreams?

How can we reach them?

SAMPLE

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Capacious central foyer,
multi-level entrances
into tremendous apartments.

Cathedral ceilings, crystal wall
views to the sea.

Turkish rugs.
Sculpture.

A sense of space
(how could we afford this
ever).

Intercom,
guards, multiple
pools outside
to which residents only
are granted access.

An enormous room
with vaulted ceilings
made of wood
painted white.

A huge bed
made of wood
painted white

with a mattress
and white crumpled sheets
in which I sleep

but it is not my bed.
It is a shared bed
and a shared room

and it does not feel clean.

SAMPLE

A house by the sea
built low down
in the sand

so only a clerestory
running below the roof's edge
is visible to the sea's waves

(it is lightless inside
and only the sea
gleams).

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Three towers, as in the Tiergarten
in Berlin, with pastel
glass or plastic glazing
the stairwells, creating
one long yellow,
one pink,
one blue
channel between
brick reminiscent of panes
in traffic lights or lighting gels.

Walking through the garden
quickly because I am late
for the opening party, a biker
slaps my ass as he rides past
and I look to the buildings
as if for help.

SAMPLE

5 (The German Professor's House)

There is a gargantuan garage
along the entire side of the house.
The house itself is many-roomed, extensive.

The German professor
and his German wife
both smoke rolling tobacco;
his in a brown pouch,
hers in a pink.

Maids are cleaning
various small rooms.

I sit in a patio, empty
but for a beech wood
table on which rests an amber
ashtray.

Outside the garage
turns into a health spa
in which many people
are bathing and being massaged.

There is a problem
between the husband
and the wife
but it cannot
be spoken.

The garage
has a plastic corrugated roof
that allows a wan light
to diffuse within the space.

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