Books by JL Williams include *Condition of Fire* (Shearsman, 2011), *Locust and Marlin* (Shearsman, 2014), *Our Real Red Selves* (Vagabond Poets, 2015) and *House of the Tragic Poet* (If A Leaf Falls Press, 2016). She is interested in expanding dialogues through poetry across languages, perspectives and cultures and in cross-form work, visual art, dance, opera and theatre.

She has been published widely in journals, her poetry has been translated into Dutch, Spanish, Turkish, Polish, German, French and Greek and she has read at poetry festivals in Scotland, Turkey, Cyprus and Canada. Williams wrote the libretto for the opera *Snow*, which premiered in London in 2017, was Writer-in-Residence for the British Art Show 8 in Edinburgh with the artist Catherine Street and plays in the poetry and music band Opul.

www.jlwilliamspoetry.co.uk
Also by JL Williams

Condition of Fire
Locust and Marlin
JL Williams

After Economy

Shearsman Books
Contents

After Economy 9
Antelope 10
Opacus 11
Iskele Super Tamam 12
New Aesthetic 15
Asterism 16
History, like the Rhine 17
How to Mourn 20
Georgian Gallery 21
Hey Did You Hear About the Kurds… 26
Woodnote 28
Water What Sounds 29
Grief for the Lost Child 30
The Immaculate Contraption 32
Bread Song 33
una selva oscura 34
Little Mice 35
*The breeze blows* 36
Selenotropism 37
Basin 38
Market at Golgotha 39
arroyo where last you 40
Almost 42
House of Rivers 43
Crèche 44
I Love You and Your Rainbow Machine 45
Watching Breaking Bad 50
Desiderata Nocturne 51
Blood on the Trees 53
Europa 55
By remembering I fold myself into you 57
In the Garden 59
Canto 60
The Banished 61
The Disappeared 62
Infinity Song 63
Transhuman 65
I Enquire of You 66
Belief 68
*My friend, who* 69
‘There’s No Such Thing… 70
Paradigm 71
The Home of Hunger 72
Good Work 73
*It is a couple of days* 75
Letters from Home 76
You Are the Ear 77
Ithakas 78
Through Darkness We Realise Shining 79
Euskal Herria 80
One Half is Night 82
Will You Do That? 83
Arcadia, Texas 85
*While on the plane* 86
The Thousand-Petalled Night 87
Bounty 91

*Notes and Acknowledgements* 94
for RJ Iremonger

you on the horizon
SAMPLER
After Economy

First they choose the forest with the most trees, then they bind each tree in strings of brights. Then they bring electricity to the roots, covering the plugs so as not make fires.

Then they drive the firetrucks up, it is winter, you remember—each red truck shiny as a new toy. Then they unwind the hoses, embrace the soft tubes and three people at each wheel begin to turn.

The first rinse takes some time, a glassy sheathing, the second ices each branch quick and soon the entire frozen forest glitters and shimmers from within—each bulb encased in ice

a mouth through which the final word of the world is shining out; light, light.
Antelope

In our hollow horns, music.
Beyond the long slope of stone,
shallow where myriad anemone bloom,
eels were raised for Antioch Caesar’s blessing.
Bounce now, ‘blouson of white like mist’ he said,
where under water is blue and bellow below,
her hair a gold bubble shaft, his
white hands, beneath the water, like ivory
and art and I am. Bold, blow, he says
I am a boundary, and boundless.

Then when the great plains were covered
in snow as white as ivory,
we watched the last antelope,
like a dream of what man had been, bounding the drifts
and where his airy horns had broken off, music blew out
as if from French horns, women’s mouths,
the caves we enter into.
The wing of the plane
slicing through heavy mist.

Time slows down, or you become
part of geological time.

Somewhere rock
is turning into diamond.

Somewhere glass
of a very old greenhouse
is shattering.
Iskele Super Tamam

Some room three hundred years of light in it
No furniture a branch with six flames of magnolia
The body on the floor is half in darkness half in light
The skin of the body is half dark half light
The tongue of the body is speaking in all tongues
The walls are so white I polish them and polish
What floods my mind is a thousand years
Of river pushed to the tops of trees
And stones rubbing stones as stones rub skin
Into the shapes of this body this very body

&

He says in Arabic
he sings he sings he sings
He says in Arabic
in words of bird script
in words of sky script
these words are written by birds on the sky
He says in Arabic
it is the dark burning
The words I remember
are from another poem from another sky
where it is darkness
has power to heal
I realise also
that what he says
is also what I overheard some time
in some place it was some question
asked to the sky by birds
No one here is really from here
except for the trees
In Arabic the words
are weightless in Hungarian
the words are heavy jewels
There is sea there is land
There are vast tracts of undeveloped land running from hand-shaped mountains to the sea
There are houses half-finished, human-sized dollhouses, living rooms and bedrooms filled with air
The air smells of salt and soil and green leaves
Sometimes mimosa sometimes lemon flower sometimes bougainvillea
There are birds calling morning prayer and skinny cats and pregnant cats and out of the dryer fluffy cats and a tiny wild dog barking a wolf

How do we love everyone how do we fight how do we fight complacency how do we wake how do we wake up how do we play how do we play fight how do we win how do we win kindness how do we play

we go to Othello’s castle we go to the Venetian palace we go to the poet’s prison overlooking the garden once this mosque was a cathedral the tree outside was born in 1299 it doesn’t practise religion

I am not from my home or from my new home completely. In this third culture I have no flag, I speak no language but my own. There are many third cultures and in each our homes are our tents and our passports are our tongues. I am not a colonist I am a traveller

You say to go away but I will not go away.
You ask me to be quiet and for an eternity
I am quiet. But as you say this poem is a poem we are all writing, I recognise your words in my poem my words in your poem, his words in her chest her words in his sails their words in their hearts those very old words in this newborn poem, my love there is no sadness breathing could not forgive my love without breath I can’t even stop loving you my love this poem may die some evening in a garden by the sea when dusk is blushing
up from the earth her eye of moon her hair of bats
but we won’t be there
to witness the light stop shining

&

don’t be afraid
just cuz
you can’t stop love
New Aesthetic

the whale carcass on the beach with nearly all the flesh washed away
the taste of those salty bones defamiliarising words
Asterism

You cough out a mouthful of glitter and I see stars.

Did you forget your dream again? In the long pool, bodies and stars.

There is a threat coming from other people, but really it is because there is a star inside you sucking everything toward it.

On your forehead, a star, here, and a star, here.

Vastness is not darkness, it is the light within the star.

The light hits you and I see a tattoo with stars.

In all the broken places, constellations.

Once there was a universe with no people in it, just stars.

Disgusted with yourself, you close your eyes and implode.

Forgotten cellar in Egypt in which there is a 6,000-year-old map of distant stars.

Stone whose constellations shift in time with stars.
History, like the Rhine

As we said, history, like the Rhine, passes through a castellated region, and like that of the river, this stratum begins and ends suddenly.

Samuel Lucas, *Secularia; or, Surveys on the Mainstream of History*, 1862

() 

The way you licked my leg 
was how a man would lick.

I bought you. Thus I had every right to free you.

My hand is broken because I built every castle history lapped, 
that damn river 
whose silver veins 
seam the skin of the world.

Between the turrets 
I carefully cut 
as a child with an automatic saw, 
was the space in which my whole life would take place.

It’s not about dreams. 
It’s about the way I lick.

Baby you forget 
this jazz quartet 
doesn’t know how to end the song.
Ezra walked from castle to castle
in the footsteps of the ancient bards.

Later in the birdcage
in a Pisan piazza he cried
*the words, the birds.*

There is a poem translated from the Scottish
to Italian in which the bird species changed.
From the hoof of the fountain unicorn
in the courtyard of the palace in Linlithgow

I stare at the wall
as if my eyes
are butterflies
pinned to green baize.

James Alieurs (Ever in Bondage)
Belle A Vous Seule (Beautiful to You Alone)

That’s what
the bosses say,
says the sign.

My hand a piece of silk
in the burn, your tongue
sliding up the inside of my leg, the fire
raging in a hearth big enough to cradle
twenty able-bodied men.

Between my thighs
that unspeakable crystal
you dreamed
in this life or the next.

The time of castles
was also my time
but this time
is also my time.

James Alieurs
Belle A Vous Seule
The words
flow over
ma langue.