

Julia Williams / from MY CITY IS ANCIENT
AND FAMOUS

My City Is a Puzzling Equation

people are particles or people are waves
in my hands matters
gain gravity

I want to build houses in
a dead century

I must find a place for my feet

My City Has Lofty Ideals

altitude gives me the bends
collapses my bones
inner ear: a saddle
a small matter of my brain
slipping

My City is a Golden Ratio

remind me that the street hasn't licked us yet
congruent squares and triangles equal
no one is crooked around here
that's why it's safe for kids to be kids
architects are most impressed by space *between* houses

My City Is an Ancient and Famous Destination

snow on sandstone walls. last night
the city froze a waxy blue
red shapes blossomed in my cheeks
my blood here, and my language

we don't hear birds here. the air
is white and hazy with our voices
I saw moisture from my lungs
hang from my eyelashes and ears

touch nothing and don't pause. this city
contracts and crackles on itself
snaps bright pieces off our lives
explains our bodies to us, our most simple sounds

My City Glows When We All Fall Silent

if you often interpret silence
you know noise vibrates
and the violent can't be soothed by empty rooms

this makes sense
we cloak the streetlights to confound moths
this makes sense
we wear masks to underscore our authority

loud voices remind me of engines
remind the masked they are visible
noise gathers in fabric, but bends in water
peels our eardrums
moves us closer to our doors