Other Laws of Physics
by Julia McDaniel

1.
My father, with his brisk, fumbling hands,
should not have handled glass. He had failed
to learn the fine science of matter not just once
but many times beyond me. There was something
about the softness of the wrong woman’s lips
that pressed his mind to the skeletons
of ash, the ones tucked precariously between
the thrum of his heart and the molting threads
of his suspenders. He should have studied
the nature of refracted light instead. After she left him,
the woman he could not love said he had been haunted
by a room of perfectly efficient mirrors, never grasping
what it would contain except for the latent glow
of its own intensity. What could she understand
of a lapsed physicist with no consolation
but the angel wings he carved out of sapphire shards?
They were never meant for her, she knew:
they belonged to his theory of faultless edges,
as if he could encage transcendence in the grip
of his shuttered windows.

2.
On Sundays, we rise together in that blistering,
early-morning blue. The sunlight floods
the kneeling angels’ faces with some fear
or awe that is almost alive. It is never in their wings:
I’ve traced them closely through the service
because I do not believe in god, and you hold my hand
although you say I have placed my faith in a science
no less terrifying than yours. I am here
because you are here. Because I’ve heard you say
you love me and caught the prayer in that same
exhaling breath, because when you bend your head
over your Bible although you do not need the words
I see how you might look when you are whole
and brimming to your edges and yet alone.
Because there is a certain peace as the angels
wait for you to find me again, to pull closer
as our eyes meet. Do you not see? They wait in the room of our own infinity.