



WATER COLOR

POEMS BY Lila Dunlap

Metambesen
Annandale-on-Hudson
2019

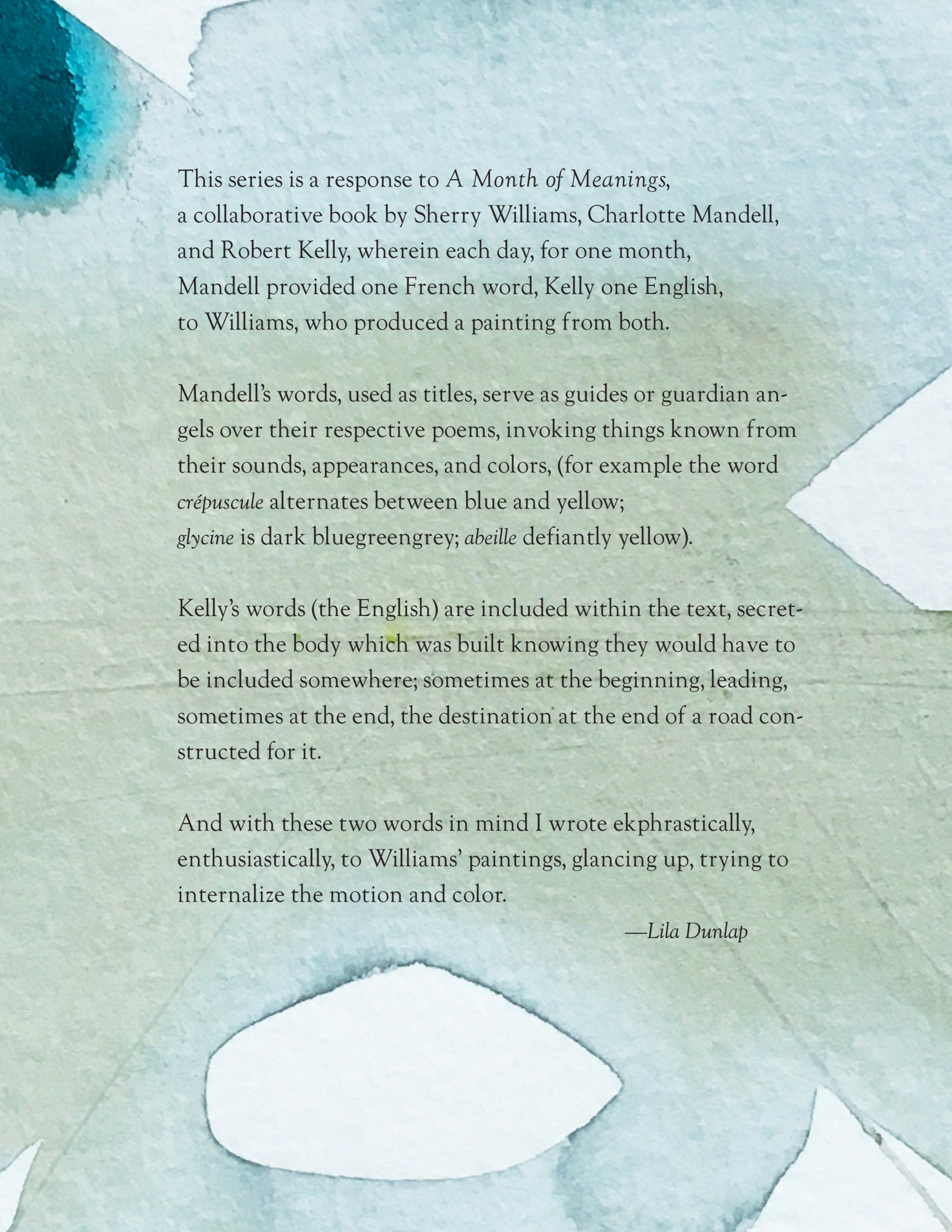
WATER COLOR

is the sixty-fourth in a series of texts and chapbooks
published by Metambesen.

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Poems © 2019 by Lila Dunlap

Ink drawings © 2019 by Sherry Williams



This series is a response to *A Month of Meanings*, a collaborative book by Sherry Williams, Charlotte Mandell, and Robert Kelly, wherein each day, for one month, Mandell provided one French word, Kelly one English, to Williams, who produced a painting from both.

Mandell's words, used as titles, serve as guides or guardian angels over their respective poems, invoking things known from their sounds, appearances, and colors, (for example the word *crépuscule* alternates between blue and yellow; *glycine* is dark bluegreengrey; *abeille* defiantly yellow).

Kelly's words (the English) are included within the text, secreted into the body which was built knowing they would have to be included somewhere; sometimes at the beginning, leading, sometimes at the end, the destination at the end of a road constructed for it.

And with these two words in mind I wrote ekphrastically, enthusiastically, to Williams' paintings, glancing up, trying to internalize the motion and color.

—Lila Dunlap

crépuscule

Seashore shifts, and the god is revealed
to be wind and rain, sun or bitterness
of horizon, spit of sailors
or me when I am displeased

These are ferris wheels, Fortuna, and hurricanes,
smattering sun on the Gulf of our childhoods,
whatever breeze blows over whichever bay
you need enough to call it home,
your feet having dug deep, deeper, making quiver,
almost, an ancient muscle.



aulne

You see? This is where I open.

Is where I begin to take you in,
and where I began. My omphalos, navel,
scar and sacred site, inedible pleasure
made circular

—and you could kill me here, too,
apricot color of love the color of no apricot
ever seen with human eye

—for out from the cavern
has grown a forest so thick
and black, which is to say containing all colors,
so far and deep and wide that even the entrance
to the Origin is lost in time.



glycine

Glyphs, he looked for
in the rich coniferous forests of the world,
but he never found nothing and he never will.

For the moss under our feet it is that speaks,
somniferous, playful, contented songs
hums fairy music, ancient stuff
but nothing that can be dated.

And as such there are also vines, toads,
snails and various other aquiferous beings
wide awake in their half-sleep, singing, inviting
to the dance of milk-music me and you
and whoever else is near and wants to hear.



cypres

Oh how we love to make things out of things
in the bright day. A horn,
carved from human bone and painted with gold.
Like to work, whittle away
and square off time for even other kinds of work,
organizing, beginning, tooling, making tools
out of other tools, using tools. Funny
injection we are, people, into the world,
when we first laid hand on bone
of fallen comrade, or log of wood,
stone and idea, breath, penis, game
of tongue when thrown around the mouth,
serum of the hands and of the brain.



tilleul

Why don't you instead
arrive at the insides of my thighs.
Find my red stamp. My hair
can kill you any time it wants.
I can. Love you until you come full circle.
Stretch your orgasm. From the tip of your cock
down thru your balls, your hips, stomach, knees,
until your body becomes just one sound.
And you hide your face under my pillow.
Hide from the sun, who spies
on us via the moon, long claw
it uses to see, burrowed into my house
as I burrow into you with my fingers, slowly,
and kiss you, moon that you are, hard rock
glowing on the stage of my mind.



abîme

Abated waves my bloody rudder
the hull of my trireme buttered
with pitch or black night, I can't tell
thru these huge waves of darkness
emanating from my soft head.

The lights in my eyes drip, moons and stars,
backwards up my back you can find them
past my dimples, love handles, curvature
of spine the turn of my bilge,
pliant here you'll find all one might need
over the course of an artist's-life,
pickles and brandy, rats, hard cheeses and nuts—
come home, come home before morning.



framboise

Two gentlemen and a maid enter in from the garden,
pick our girl up off of the plate, devour,
and, giggling, all is good once again.

Rain returns to the cobblestones, the leaves
of plants droop under its pressure in pleasure,
petals fall off of their roses.



encens

So this is how God enters the room.
Fire and evil clouds. Frankincense
smoke the cathedral, smother the people.

The event is syphilitic, hungry, charcoal
and relics aflame. The loss of history
and the making of it.

Do you believe in history?

I believe in trees and creation. I believe
in the soft sweetness of wood, in the juice of its flesh,
our flesh, its hot tears, exploded as roses.



sauterelle

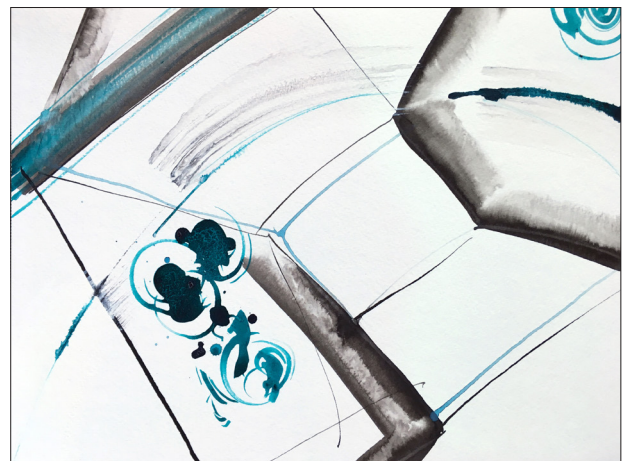
The process of Mass, the turning, the science.
The lending, the austerity, the utter charity.
Of giving you the Ultimate. The ultimate what?

Yes, Mass,

I know thee by thy garments. Thy gold.
Thy wooden Savior, always posed the same.
But what are you when I'm on my own?
Where do you appear in the sea? When do you come?

I know already
the mystery of the fish, in my hand, you are alive, in my cup;
you crawl out of the dark bitter brine
and invite me to ride on your back. We are going down
to get our family and friends who didn't make it, the places
we are urged to forget in this life, in order to make it.

Because all are alive, we dive.



victoire

Elysium suffused with vaporous clouds
thru every substance, vapor like none
I've ever seen, vapor of distance, distant
loves and sufferings; we are free now
having won, oh delight, toes in the water,
coal, straw, and bean; we think
no longer, having no more work left to do;

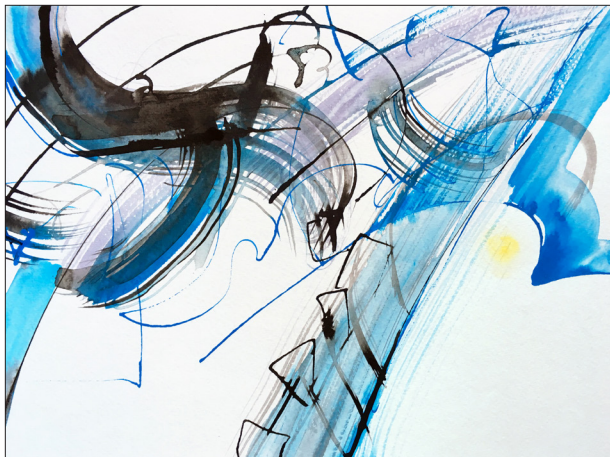
thick blue eyebrows of the god.



jaune

Everything you need is in this water,
this ice cube, you hold in your hand.
This ice that is in fact holding you
in its swirling purple galaxy.

An ice train, through the night.
December Express, to find warmth within
we curl into each other, substance;
as we ride these myriad ice-chains,
straddled along them or in a vicinity
near enough to hear them ringing.



ruisseau

The two of swords
appears to me now. Crossroads, and
I am blind to see where I'm going.

But I wield my two birds, and they give me directions.

and on the roadbed a murder of crows
settles down around me in a circle.
Is this augury? No,
this is just God settling down
in a particular kind of way.

The roadbed groans, becomes a dirt road.
And I an omen in the mind

the silver sun as hot as a horse in July.



nuage

at the end of the swamp there is a marsh
staring out at the ocean

at the end of summer there is a breath
one has never felt before, flat and wide

cold and from my cabin I see it all
no matter where I am, the limit
of where I can be, now,
the presentation of what could, what would

and myself retreat to my watercolors
I see the blue of the distance, the grey, gleam,
sand and metal, blazes, colors come and go,
I know, as the light changes, and so
does my work, the paint under my pen,
as I too have changed, and no longer want
what I thought I wanted, what I really wanted
is what there is to see
and so comes to be.



l'envers

key in the crotch of volcano, clutch
the balls of the beam, indeed
pulsating, squirrels and Flopsy and Mopsy
brown as our deepest desires
far underground run



encre

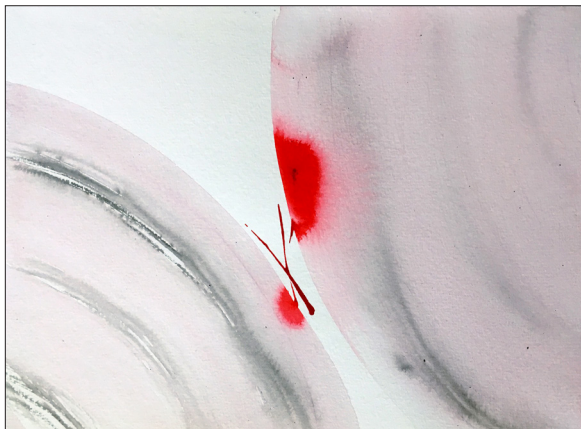
streak of sense, streak of flesh,
in sun what sin to be uncovered
so bare a tiger could just come up
and lick me, terrifying

a pulse of limb, length, to show her,
while the forest burns, and you like it,
because it has stolen all of your clothes.



verveine

blue flower, bottleneck, where the spark,
my ass where you slapped it,
everyman, pinprick, pinpoint, pinched,
lower down lover, feel seams of
the skin, one motions, thru again,
back into who and you and good
in the nerves, my new set of them,
while wind, envelop, and enter
the tunnel between worlds that would force you into it
anyway



abeille

yes there he is
the flute player I've been waiting for
ocean at his thighs, he presses
one note into another, his mother,
back into the womb, they say,
making play,
the secrets of line and color
one must keep one's heart in one's pocket
to play like this, one's knees on the ground
as the water comes in by the millions.

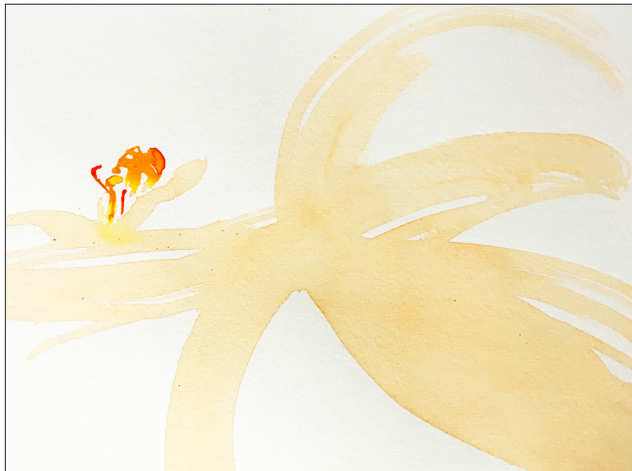


fleur

on two legs making themselves luminous
hunched like buffaloes, the sun
explodes in us so we get naked
and see ourselves like bananas be eaten
easily on the road, oh we love the sun,
we spread our secrets, having learned them,
and now we want to tell everyone

my nipples ripen like strawberries and I ripen
orange thing stamen pistons pistols
weapons gleaming having been cleaned
he laid on the table, as did I

oh how I love to spread myself how I love the sun



aléatoire

This is the last time I will
write like this.

I feel already
another priestess
see me and take hold of my throat,
and here she is; her traces in the air
subtle, fingertip nudges, barely
concealable ridges in the seams of matter,
the vapors I rely on to live,
and dark as she is— or light
for she is crooked as death
mirage bone structure perfected in hollow pallor—
she will kill me as I need to be killed.
But I am not afraid.

Because Christ survived,
and Pan, and,

willow wings wreathed by Spring
the witches congregate to receive

phoenix not a new idea but
new to me.



sillon

Tau represents the Earth
someone said. The shape of it?
The fact that to make its sound
the tip of the tongue has to collide
with the back of the teeth?

Right then,
a secret space, almost a delta,
a sound, and in shape, imagine,
the top of your mouth hiding behind your teeth.

A bird with no beak. Harmless
and heartbreaking. As is
Earth.

On a wire by the thousands they flock
but then they leave.

Find me
daydreaming about those Purple Martins

and rip my tongue out of my mouth
or suck it
until we no longer need to speak



funambule

system of hunger and release

inside of which is a volcano, showered
in perpetual shadow, culminated power

of silky evil hours; stones and moths
mouths, the work of millions, disambiguate
as the night toils, unseen, for the trees,
for you, unbeknownst and also a tree

