

For 1 September 2026 Workshop

Polly's draft

Sunset

after "The Sunflower" by Gustav Klimt

in a book
of Klimt's Rosebushes
Apple Trees and The Bride
a lonesome sunflower presides—a cyclops
surrounded by insects buzzing in a frenzied high

a short crown
of yellow hair circles
her face above a layered gown
of jade—her flowerhead casts a glance
downward in communion with her heart-
shaped leaves tinged with lavender tongues

alone in her
exquisite presence
her spirit hides within
towering like a baroness
behind gold who fears herself
exposed—disease nibbling away
stolen fibers of beauty and borrowed lime

the wind's arms
hook beneath each leaf's bony
stem pulling-pulling against her roots
anchored in composted past lives of rotten
kiwi, potato peels, sweet pepper seeds until suddenly
like a kite when its strings snap, the taproot's hold releases

Note: The painting can be viewed here:

<https://www.getdailyart.com/en/23929/gustav-klimt/sunflower>

Sky ocean sky

by Kimberly Satterfield for 9.1.26 workshop

spills silver light
into just past sunrise.

Undifferentiated,
bay & air
deceive the eye.

There is freedom or
confusion in water, wind
depending

on the swell of breath-tide,
one's state of mind.
In flood, bend, curve

liquid surface conforms to
itself not to the shape of things,
reminding us of

our insignificance. We
whose bodies float before birth
do not have dominion.

We are sixty percent water
can live but days without
lubricant & cushion.

Yet, in return we offer back
anointings of crude oil,
glittering cities of garbage.

Blue is not a requirement
for the fluid cording of water
realms—green stream, blood red

river. Brown creeks come
burgeoning or as broken
flow. Wild wet worlds

nurture & devour life,
tumble our dead
in borderless graves.

This: heaviness is the weight
of water carried. That: we are
weightless when carried by it.

Connie 9/1/26

The Night I Met Mary Oliver

It was 1993 or maybe 1994, in San Francisco.
My first poem just published, in a calendar—
all about a farmer's market with peaches
and fistfuls of basil, valley harvest hauled
on flatbed trucks.

I waited in line at the table
where she sat with a glass of water and stack of books.
When it came to my turn, she smiled,
asked my name. I could not find a way
to tell her that I, too, find solace walking in the forest.
I, too, stroll the beach, yet never knew
to write a poem
about whelks, hermit crabs, or the musicality of mussels.
I did not know I could write a poem about a woman
cleaning toilets in the Singapore airport
with bucket and rag, that I could witness the world
through the people living it.

I only stood there, mute, as she signed my book
and handed it back.
Then I gave her a calendar, inscribed to her
on the month of my poem. May? June?
She took the gift.
I don't know if she read it.
I don't know if she hung any calendar on her wall.

Fog and streetlights obscured the stars
when I stepped onto the urban street—
so far from her Truro Woods, marshes and ponds.
Maybe she wrote a poem that night,
posed questions without answers, like the ones
I'm still learning how to ask.
I guess I'll just have to wonder.

Little spit of a fish rises
a dimpled suggestion
then another and another
like escalating rain tapping a beat.

Fingerlings I cannot see, pale
as dew dissolving, shoot
the surface in a burst of nerve
gamble it all for a miniscule
fly in side-long shafts of sun
before bigger fish stir.

A gill-red flash splits the water
recoils back to rock bed mother-
father-auntie-uncle— a rock
for every season etched on ear bones—
porous pea gravel, grapefruit rock,
bowling-ball rock, tractor tire rock.

Sandstone-hued, basalt-flecked fish
deep in pools will forgive your shadow,
rise again if you're still enough
but their flash is faster than your eye
and need surfaces again
to flip-feed where our lives intersect.

I'll ease into a pool downstream
become another boulder,
wait for you— admire your spots
green and brown, yellow halos,
blood bright streaks— before you vanish
through water's billow and warp.

Teach myself sight in a new world,
patience for my own fingerling instincts
self-rearing in tumult, water's
strong arms curling around me.

Persephone

We were wild that day, staggering through the field, arms overflowing with blossoms – wild-striped, prismatic, pungent. Blood lily. Jacaranda. Amaryllis. Lavender. Shooting star. Rose. Myrtle. A contest – who could gather the most, who could balance one more cluster atop her ungainly bundle. We were girls – wild with sun and perfume, collapsing in giggles as petals fell to the ground. We goaded one another on – anything to prolong our hours of play.

I wandered off, intrigued by a narcissus, a single bloom on a slender stalk – neat white petals surrounding orange-yellow pistils – that grew more beautiful, more enormous by the second. I reached down to pluck it and –

no one else saw the ground break open. No one else saw a being – more wind-and-ice than man – sweep me into his chariot. No one else saw the chasm fill behind us with rocky soil.

My uncle – Hades – carried me off.

Later – rumblings on Olympus that he wouldn't have dared without my father's consent.

You know my father, right? The king of the gods. The god of sky and thunder. The god who turned himself into a swan and . . . The god who turned himself into a bull and . . .

Zeus could have rescued me but all he sent was a messenger boy. Hermes. And only after my mother sank into such despair that Earth herself starved.

I'm sure you've heard the story. Hades tricked me into eating half a pomegranate. Or maybe it was six seeds. I can't keep it straight myself, but I'll never forget that fruit in his palm – rind cracked, plump seeds gleaming in scarlet mounds.

I had no say in the grand compromise – six months a wanderer, staggering above ground, six months a nominal queen in my rapist's palace.

They say my mother, Demeter, was party to the deal. But every year, when the underworld sucks me back into its darkness, she pulls her grief tight around her back, her shoulders, her full bosom. Then the frigidity of the land matches my own.

Sarah Ahlers Sept 1 Workshop

[NEPTUNIDA]

Daughter of Neptune,

sing me something sweet.

I want dreams that ease in like Dad's

soft breaking white water,

waves of a baby's wonder at

their new ability to blow bubbles between their lips.

Take me out of my own dream

where the dirt is warm, the bones

are composting the way they do

with time and Terra Mater

dry and wet, dry and wet.

I have loved

many things that have not loved me

but no mindless jelly stings as much as

the salt in my eye. Wipe away the man's face—

then a boy's face, really— whose white

face shown blue under middle school

cinema dates, whose birthdate appears

every year-after-year, a harbinger of his absence,

of my useless knowing.

Pixie sticks and poems, my hand in his

on a park bench in Vienna. I was asking him

'What makes more sense than this?'

As if he knew, as if he could smell it.

My mouth was sticky with regurgitated piña colada,

(what else would a teenager order her first time in Europe?)

Sister sea-witch, wash it all away now, please,

send seahorses stampeding over the broken

bits of my ego. An ego so bruised

it blackens like seaweed on the beach.

Whisk me away in the current of

"I'm over it now," while my hair sways

mermaidish over wave after wave

of doubt.

Sorry my submission is a little late!

For my Midwife On Her Deathbed (Nadja L-H Sept 1)

We are all destined to die, so let me ask you this:
Have you laid your body down on the green moss,
laid it down on the great grey rock?
Have you flung yourself into the waves,
into the star-stunned night, ecstatic?

Have you given thanks for the black crowberries,
for the bright lake, for the foaling mare
and the raven's egg? Knelt in the
sweet white clover and the yellow-eyed daisies,
and wept?

Have you tasted love, whispered
the words *holy, holy, holy*?
Have you offered all of your kindnesses
to this beloved earth?

Yes, and let me ask you this as well:
Is there someone who will remember
the touch of your hand on their daughter's head,
cradling her newborn story?