

Myra Sklarew

Myra Sklarew has published collections of poetry, prose and non-fiction, most recently *A Survivor Named Trauma: Holocaust Memory in Lithuania*, SUNY Press, and *Altamira*, a new edition of poetry edited by Jona Colson, Washington Writers' Publishing House. In a world still reeling from the COVID-19 pandemic, a new manuscript, *Lie Perfectly Still: Essays on Science and Medicine*, explores at the juncture of science and the humanities. Awards include the PEN Syndicated Fiction Award, the National Jewish Book Council Award in Poetry, an NEA fellowship.

The Sunflowers of Umbertide

Before I go into the dark places, before I enter
the tunnel of the past, before I climb down
into the pit where I kneel on the earth,
where those I once loved leave me a remnant
of bone, before their lost names scatter
to the wind, before the trees forget what they witness,
before for no reason at all a child is taken
from life, before, before...

I stand in Umbertide
where the sunflowers turn their bountiful heads
eastward, their buds still in circadian rhythm.
And I am warmed by them, my eyes fill
with their seeds and petals, florets in perfect spirals,
their golden offerings risen high on their stems.
I carry them in my arms, the entire field of sunflowers
from Umbertide, so the coldness of the pit
In the cold country will not freeze me entirely.