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## At the Dam

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## At the Dam

Men stand tossing their snags,  
jerking, reeling, jerking.  
Rods pivot against their belts,  
arching with each pull. I see  
you in blue on the opposite  
bank. Your Shakespeare  
curls like a question mark  
when you set the hook. A line  
of light from your wrist-  
watch marks my body  
in quick X's. I watch you play  
the fish. The river throws up  
a shiny brown salmon that comes  
down, "smack," like a centerfold pin-  
up in *Field and Stream*. Its body  
furrows the water as you drag  
it in. In your hand it is an amputated  
leg, kicking. You bend over it,  
turning it into another piece  
of still life around your feet.

To my right a glass wall  
of water slides over the algae  
spotted dam. Foaming water  
below bubbles with fish hurling  
themselves against the cement.

A drunken man hangs over the water  
holding a grappling hook. "Through  
the belly! Through the belly!"  
his friends yell. The man lifts,  
flips a fish onto the mud.  
Blood sprays the grass as it beats  
the earth like a drum. Men stamp  
on its head until I hear it crack.  
Then I see she's heavy with eggs.  
Fingers lift her by her eye sockets  
above a plastic pail. A man slips a knife  
in her anus, moving it up her belly.  
Out drop clear pink eggs the size of wild  
grapes. Then he tosses her to a dog.

*Sandra Sylvia Nelson*

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SANDRA SYLVIA NELSON has published work in many magazines and journals, including the *Virginia Quarterly Review*, the *North American Review*, *The Iowa Review*, and *Ms. Magazine*. Her work has appeared in *Hard Choices*, an anthology by *The Iowa Review* (1996), and in the textbook *Exploring Literature* (Longman Press, 2016). She lives in Milwaukee, Wisconsin.