

## Our Speckled Sides

There is a dam Samuel near where we met  
and a waterfall too and every autumn the salmon  
swim up the river and die at the bottom of it

so many that they put a fish elevator there and  
most of the time it just sits on the side of the dam  
like the rest of us watching the water tumble

from black to white to black again and listening  
to hear its name in the roar because like us Samuel  
it does not know its true name only the name

others call it by sometimes they say fishway  
sometimes they say salmon sled sometimes  
they call it that which pulls tiny rainbows from

the lake and casts their eggs into the turning shallows  
and returns later their darkened corpses to be eaten  
maybe by birds or maybe just lost in the deep silt

and do you think Samuel that we are similar  
do you look at the concrete wall and wonder  
if we are holding water in for a reason or just

letting everything pass through us and maybe scooping up  
a few brilliant moments and tossing them  
onto paper where they can be seen and then

where they can cease to be what makes them  
so special Samuel is it us are we making  
the night longer are we folding our speckled

sides and hurling our bodies up and up and  
what is up there Samuel what is just past  
the lip of the dam what is just past the falling

of our bodies from black to white to black?

William Stratton teaches writing at SUNY Plattsburgh. His collections are *Under the Water Was Stone* (2014) and *These Things Too Have Shape* (2016). He has poetry published or forthcoming in: *FIELD*, *Sugar House Review*, *The North American Review*, and others. He is an associate poetry editor at *The Saranac Review*.