**Go Down to the River**

go down to the river and swallow it whole, roll the rocks around

in your mouth, pocket some in your cheeks, let the silt and grit get caught

in your teeth and grind it in, taste the blessed mountain of it, eat the bark

scaled at the mill upstream, suck back the slurry of the paper-plant waste,

chew on the trash of campfires gone bad, cans of cheap beer

and shards of glass, choke back the roach burns, the good-time condoms,

make this river yours, gulp it down, the last of the Coho eggs, the chin-hair

of the moose knee-deep in algae, tamarack needles drifting off,

the silken dive of the loon, the yellow pollen pushing at the shore, the dead

cedar fronds like lace on your tongue, make this water holy water,

stick your dirty thighs in it, drink deep from last year’s winter,

the crackling of the lakes, the snap of branches, the ice chattering

over beaver dams, the gun-shy grouse, chuck it down the hatch,

don’t spit it out, the mushroom spore, the frog sperm — get it down, get it down

*from “understories”*