

6 THE GIRL IN THE RIVER

The girl in the river found tektites. She searched
amongst catfish and frogs. She perched

on diluvial rocks, in water,
like any sedentary river's daughter.

She sifted, shifted sand and pebbles
in thin and broad-leafed bevelled

weeds. Little fish swam, nibbled
at her toes, as shrouded shadows quibbled

at the taste of her feet in sun-heated
water. Close to the river bank, depleted

and denuded by a neighbour's cattle,
she dressed for daylight's battle.

The skirts of her armour floated,
and the edge of her bloated

clothing, clotted and drifted at a tangent.
All was silence till plangent

laughter of jackass-jokers intruded.
In context with the river's secluded

care, her hair drifted down
with the weight of her gown;

snagged, in riparian grass and sedges,
in the mud, at the brackish water's edges.

High banks with Richmond bird-wing vine
on which Richmond bird-wing butterflies dine,

rose steeply away from a water runnel.
The trees at the top formed a tunnel.

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