

After the flood

Half a broom, a skull and spine
And the first white wood anemone
Were three things I noted, visiting the river
For the first time since the floods last winter.

Other galleries displayed a bucket
empty up a tree, a sodden sandbag,
the popping carcass of a pregnant sheep
against the island, and beneath my feet

Shingle, where last spring wild garlic
Drifted on banks and this year, banks
Of driftwood thicket where only last year
sunshine sprinkled silver on the fry.

Swept clean of silt, the current runs
Lightly, live-hearted through this museum
of polished bones. The flighting kingfisher
is there, now gone, as were the snows of winter.

These things move me, grouped together
In this temporary exhibition by the river:
The first white wood anemone,
A skull and spine and broken broom.

Catherine Chanter