

Willow

Afterwards he returned to
that very spot.
Removed socks and shoes.
Tamped the mud
with his naked feet. Let
them root through
the ooze till his legs flushed
bullrush green.
Birds roosted in his woody
hair. A hive grew
its great carbuncle from his neck.

They never did find the child.

By autumn they lost him too
until the river
gave him back; defoliated,
bare and gaunt.
They found a children's trainer
tangled in his
mossy beard; familiar style,
size 12.5. They
tried for weeks to shake it free
but it was always
out of reach, and he was not a tree.