

# Returning

“We can always come here again,”  
my six-year-old assures me, balanced  
on the corpse of a fallen ponderosa  
on its way to becoming black soil.

She peels back the bark and brushes away  
the rotting wood digested, it seems, by mites.  
A muscular hoar-haired grain is exposed.  
I move my fingers along the resilient core.

No, I think, we can never come back to this.  
Earth will embrace the tree and this girl  
will shed her skin before I wake again.

—George Handley

This poem tied for second place in the BYU Studies  
1999 poetry contest.