

To Give Up the Ghost

M. Rather, Jr.

he must be willing to be castrated,
be willing to cup scrotum and pull, to feel

the transformation of the heart, into pools
of blood at his feet. And if, in the warm night

he wakes sweating into thrift store sheets,
with blood in his navel,

then he must not forget that before he received
a wound in his thigh, he received a leather jacket

from his father, he received a map with red lines.
He must remember that he had a mother

made of pine branches, and sharp green grasses.
She was made of mornings where the sun

was little more than mist behind clouds,
was little more than the color of breast milk,

was little more than foam on the edge of a lake.
She was like the snow he captured between teeth.