

Senior Division Poetry

Matthew Hollett, St. John's

Theory of Ghosts (an excerpt)

First your hair went white,
now the rest of you. It's as if you woke up
after the operation,
but hamstrung, as if you have to teach yourself
to move and breathe all over again. Your face
looks the same, a little younger even,

more translucent. From your neck down,
things get stranger. Your long, heavy arms
are waterlogged curtains, soggy with ether,
ectoplasm, entoptic phenomena, whatever
ghosts are composed of. Your abdomen frays off
like a bedsheet torn in half.

[...]

You resolve
to never turn into a nuisance, fluttering books
or levitating candlesticks, ooooo-

ooohing. Squeezing into smoke alarms,
light fixtures, the gap above the refrigerator,
you gradually learn to move through the house
without giving anyone chills. You become a connoisseur
of cobwebs, admiring how they graze corners
barely, but with grace. It makes you shudder

to wonder whether your own tethers to this place
might be so tenuous. It's easy to imagine
what little gravity you have left
frazzling thin, leaving you jettisoned
in Earth's silent wake, as the planet unlooms
like a balloon you let go of.