

## **Earliest Memory**

*After Elizabeth Bishop*

Perhaps my earliest memory is of peeing myself in school. What is the sensory nature of that except warm – no, hot – searing hot liquid, like an outpouring of white light as though energy from a magic spell. This is one way to talk about shame, replace it with the physicality of something – like piss. And do they not each share a repulsive malleability? Perhaps, but in reality, shame is non-physical. Unlike piss, if you should try to catch it, hold it, you would realise you could not. You could only touch and feel stained, and since shame is contemporary – stained and being stained.

## Paul Has a Conversation with a Ghost

The ghost has the anatomy of a man  
but with breasts that are softer than mine, and rounder.  
Paul, who is virginal, who has never seen real breasts before,  
is pouring himself a glass of milk,  
while I am stood in the corner observing him.  
He watches the ghost, waiting for it to speak  
but no words come, only movements. It signals  
with its wet face – lacquered eyebrows and dripping lips –  
a whole head slick with amniotic fluid.  
Its expressions are surprising yet timid.  
Ghosts are afraid like my mother.

I tell Paul we should leave, but he says nothing.  
He has forgotten me. Enchanted,  
he moves towards the ghost and  
when he gets too close, they touch,  
causing its whole body to concave into a sphere.  
Paul picks it up like a beachball,  
or maybe something with more flesh, like a baby.  
He rocks it back and forth,  
gesturing words in its spectral language.  
Paul, speak! I cry. Paul, please! Say something quickly,  
before you lose the name of your mother.

BIO -

Kaylen Forsyth is a writer currently based in Liverpool, originally from Maryport in West Cumbria. She is beginning an MA in Creative Writing at the University of Manchester's Centre for New Writing and previously studied at Liverpool John Moore's University. Her poetry focuses on the psychology of place, and subtle yet intimate connections to the paranormal.