

& poor

Caleb Femi

Two Bodies Caught In One Cell

A light crawls through the window and folds in on itself
to kneel beside a boy praying in a South London police cell.
Of these two bodies, one was there at the Beginning
which goes without saying that one of these bodies is the first
of God's children and since we are all God's children
the two bodies sit as siblings would inside a cell
where no way is up and no side is the right side
and the cell expands as all extraterrestrial things do beyond
the capacity of the walls.

Walls cannot exist without justice
and the needle that points to justice is magnetized
by what we are able to sleep with. Do we not know sleep
by night? The third body that is always there
until the body of light shoos it away
like a shunned sibling, a Cain
found beside the light body of Abel
waiting in a cell, praying.

Coping

Dark skin boys scare everything in the dark
though really
we're just trying to scare away the dark.

Round here this is how we greet each other:
what's good, my g?
as if to say, *are you safe, my g?*

Isn't this how you would call out to your friends
if you too were in a dark place,
standing on the edge of a ledge?

Shoutout to us boys who play out here,
God knows how we do it.
Maybe God doesn't know,

maybe an estate, tall as it is,
is the half-buried femur of a dead god
and the blue light of dawn

his son in mourning, looking
on the things we do
when there is one less boy amongst us.

How we pour the holy spirit out of the bottle
onto the concrete where his ashes lie,
stir it into a clay, mould it into a new body

and like a kite in fading wind,
watch his soul return back to good earth
settling into his body like he never left.

Isn't this what you would do for your friends
if you too were in a dark place,
standing on the edge of a ledge?

Boys In Hoodies

The inside of a hoodie is a veiled nook where a boy pours himself into a single drop of rain to feed a forest. Each tree grateful for the wet boy, unaware that the outside world sees this boy as a chainsaw.

Have you heard the canned laughter of a chainsaw? Don't listen for it in forests, amid the ankles of trees, or the tongue of dried leaf.

Listen in the vibration of pavements when the concrete is wax,
outside of a Morley's where one chainsaw says to the other
'member that time when

and the money was in his socks.

Then a rip of laughter erupts like the chugger of iron

or heavy rain

and nearby trees brace for death or life.

You are 4 minutes from home
 when you are cornered by an officer
 who will tell you of a robbery
 that took place 40 minutes ago in the area
 and you fit the description of a man—you laugh
 13, you tell him, you're 13.

You blink and are petted on the shoulder
 by another officer whose face will take you
 back to Gloucester Primary School,
 a Wednesday assembly about *being little stars*.

This same officer that had an horizon
 in the east of his smile when he told
 your class that you were all *supernovas*:
the biggest and brightest stars.

You will show the warmth of your teeth
 praying he remembers the heat of your supernova
 but he will see only the dark side of your moon.
 You will watch the two men cast lots for your organs.

Don't you remember me? you will ask.
You gave a talk at my primary school.
 Whilst fear condenses on your lips,
 you will learn that supernovas are in fact dying stars
 on the verge of becoming black holes.

East Dulwich Road

When a knife enters you, there will be no pain.
People on the street & on buses will stare
as if witnessing a natural phenomenon.
They will imagine the pain they think you are in
but you will feel none at all.

You will question if you have always been
an empty cove waiting to be filled by another boy's rage.
Whether this is how mutation works, after many generations
your black body now comfortably accepts the blade
like an inheritance—a birthmark on your obsidian torso.

Concrete

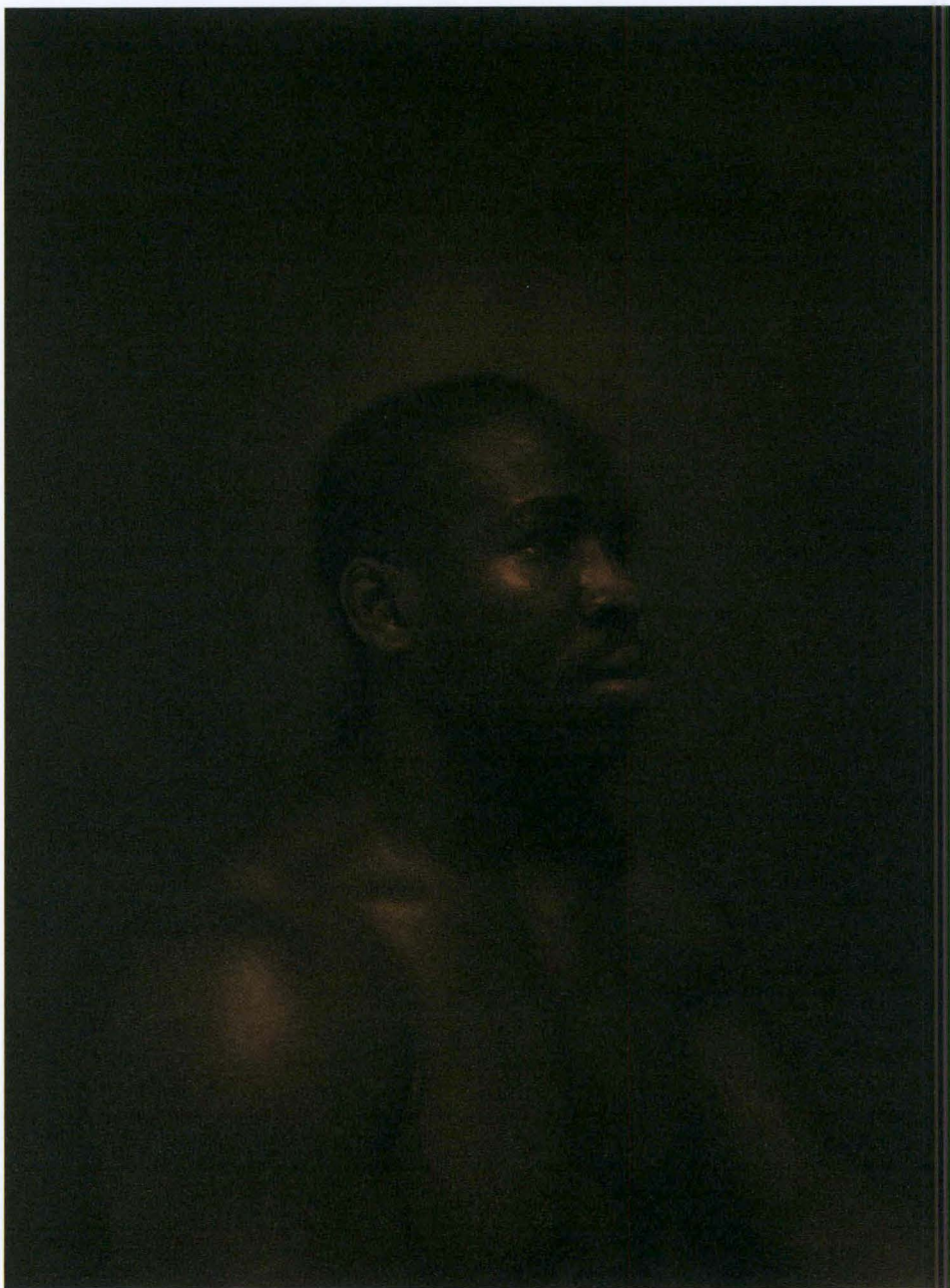
is the lining of the womb
that holds boys to their mothers.
When Edwin took a blade to the gut
bled out like a stream running back to its brook
concrete held him soft as a meadow would a lamb
that his death looked like a birthing.

We who did not know how to weep
raged into the night like the ambulance
that came to lift the empty body
(his mother asked for the sirens to be turned off
lest it disturb her now resting boy).

That night we went to chew on the pitchfork of war
so that our grief, as if it were a rotting tooth,
may be plucked out.

Caleb Femi, *No Face No Case*, 2017, jpg, 10 × 8 inches





Caleb Femi, *Light*, 2016, jpg, 6 × 6 inches