

Two Sides of the Same City

Willoughby Highwalk, Barbican

From this balcony, watch a brother who looks like me, bike flashing in third gear, until he is reborn as a bird, swift as night.

There's something 'bout his flighted body shone on a stretch of glass, carried on a contrail. A liberty not reflected on the grit of an estate like this, nor its salted coat, or the dimpled brick.

To him, Moor Lane is an open mouth, expanded in quiet. Light—slick off the face of its scrapers, the rock-grey of a city turned stream.

In the morning, bopping past the stretch, I wonder if his back still slouches from sleep, if he catches his frame upon the glass, and a mother who looks like mine echoes in his ears:

Straighten up, look smarter.

From this balcony, a scraper, void of its daylight glare. If a brother clocked the white walls and the foam backs, the mesh chairs and the matted desks, at what point will he be made no more

than a fledgling?

— Francis-Xavier Mukiibi