

## LOVE LONGS FOR AN OBJECT

to be polite

i lend my face to oblivion

black stand-in  
for a black absence

body like a hook  
to hang x-rays of the stain  
half-angel  
half-drought

we are anachronistic  
glitches        a toy gun  
                  smuggled into a barracoon  
                  cited as the cause  
                  for the transatlantic slave trade

we the light's  
  night off  
  an excuse to skip  
  to break  
  to leap over the breach

we are bakongo burial in spirit  
broken crockery and punctured shells  
cascade from our watery mouths

we swallow entire oceans to be here  
we wear *other planets like scars* to be here  
i curl up  
on the engorged heart of history  
with a gruel of dissolved ivy  
and oleander to be here

i spend most of my time  
making allowances  
for hands that hunt like alley pigeons  
scrambling to sate their lust  
for the calamitous

i am supposed to feel  
  relief  
  in being

God's favored ghetto

a rain-filled divot  
half-pond  
half-gauntlet

i am meant to wrap myself in this  
meant to enjoy that every drop of sweat off my shoulders is a fist  
to enjoy the way this union loves to love its weapons  
even if only for the sublime moment of discard

joy is meant to be impossible  
as i am permanently fixed  
and split  
between the moment of diagnosis  
and the agony of destination

joy is meant to be impossible  
for we are the un-illumed  
our privation  
the bedrock  
for stupid white myth  
black skin stretched into scrying mirror

and yet

i rumba i flounder  
i stab

i lay hands  
on a chest

that shivers and quakes  
like a pyramid of handcuffs

By Quenton Baker