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

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