

QUENTON BAKER CRUEDA MEETING JUNE 13

Quenton Baker is a poet and educator from Seattle. His current focus is the fact of blackness in American society. He is the recipient of the James W. Ray Venture Project award from Artist Trust. He is the author of *This Glittering Republic* (Willow Books, 2016).

TRANSIENT

*Some [stars] are there but some burned out
ten thousand years ago.... You see memories.*

—Anne Carson

We built gods
 real slick-smooth
big god-looks
 on that stage
big god-breath
 big god-sweat
the bass pumped
 like priest-shrieks
like pure ghost
 had climbed up
in church hat
 in blue dress
the pews full
 but none sat
in god's house
 the fake dark
the track lights
 the sound man
he's drunk but
 we're gods
we built us
 this big sound
this black shit
 the trunk-thump
of raw truth
 we built us
we bang drums
 we sing loud
we're break beats

we're *hands up!*
the whole crowd
is white-faced
but who cares
you paid ten

but so what
your head nods
for my beats
your arms up
for my words
your drunk dap
for my fist
your drunk lips
for my lips
your scrunched fives
for my wax
your drunk love
in drunk eyes
for my swag
for my steez
that I know
is dead light.

ST PETER'S CHURCHGOERS STARE AT THE YOUNG BROTHER COMING HOME FROM A SATURDAY NIGHT WALKING ACROSS THE STREET AND RAPPING TO HIMSELF

You call him some racist shit,
some ignorant shit.

You point and say: that's the one the sirens come for.

You translate the jangling language the empty flask speaks to the brass that buttons his back pocket as sin talk.

You think his 7AM stumble across your arrival is a willful toetap to death rhythms.

You smell the liquor poisoning his pores and believe him prodigal.

You hear the headboard slap in the sweat-made grooves of his naps and clutch your daughters' arms,

and in that noble intent to protect you miss the seraph playing fugue on his harpsichord heart, you miss the goosebumps jumping his skin in this, his moment of modest creation—
a melodic prayer thick with failure you impose and grace you did not think to recognize.

God is in him

black as the ever-expanding backhand of the universe.

The Devil is around him

banging deep on the boy's tom-tom skull,

and the brother is begging

for words that fit.