



nat raum

D.W. Baker

(e)lements

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D.W. Baker + nat raum

Stone Corpse Press

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Genrepunk Magazine: “air” (August 2025)

Moss Puppy Magazine: “light” (May 2025)

Spark to Flame Journal: “fire” (June 2025)

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shadow

i am not actually afraid of the dark but there's something there, something to be said for the ways a ghost can seem to be exorcised and still leave me seeing apparitions every night, something to haunt me while i examine cracks in plaster ceiling and try to determine if the building is slowly collapsing, something beyond me. something fights so strong in the depths of my stomach that i am nothing once the specter sees it. i am reanimating memories that i'd banished to the grave. i am glancing sidelong into the pitchblack.

i am [redacted] afraid [redacted]
[redacted] the way [redacted]
[redacted] i examine cracks [redacted]
[redacted] is slowly [redacted]
[redacted]
[redacted] reanimating [redacted]
[redacted] the pitchblack.

fire

forty-hour sunb-
urns, thousand-year
floods—paywalls
over rainbows; fire
sale on guns.

& the world churns & the world burns & the burning swells inside me, forever disappointing, never surprising, lick of flames on weary lungs & heart whooshing in the center of my mass no matter the dose of water or foam or dry powder & maybe there is a world that doesn't rotate at the pace of mass death but somehow we saw the mountains, the hazy blanket of sky and clouds as a valley recedes into merely horizon—somehow, all of this & we still chose profit margins & forty-hour work weeks & i'll admit, i can be a misanthrope, but there are just some things that are still beyond my understanding—how cruelty can rip through community faster than a bolt of lightning would devour plywood; how we wake up each day and continue to choose it.

air

after midnight now & i am instituting the *freight train over lombard street shut the fuck up* challenge & it's not an attack on trains but actually in defense of a silent night, soundtracked only by tires across slick pavement & an errant thrush. it's been months since i heard a whistle sound through the stark chill of midnight air & i swear this tree had leaves the last time i looked but here we are now, in the waxing-days of january staring at pockets of orangegrey between shadows of branches. i will always bemoan july's humid advances but never stop to consider the *right now* of it all—the way chills lurch up unsuspecting spine, regardless of the weight of my jacket. the black-iced patches of uneven brick sidewalk. the way a sound, any sound, cuts the sky in the first hours of a new year, ecstatic at all the streets it may roam unencumbered.

i keep a stock of blades
to cut the sky beneath
my tongue / shaped like
every sound that was
rejected by my kin

water

carve my silhouette into eroding coastline—i beg to become liquid & lose the burdens of corporeal existence & i once wished to be wind, but then, weightlessness is probably overrated. i have always been the kind of lover that wraps around whatever they find beautiful at the moment & maybe then that makes me an ocean, were i vaster, or a lake, were the purity of my thoughts not embedded with salt on a molecular level. (i would give anything not to be so acrid all the time.) i am a force which inundates & washes away, regardless of sentiment & somehow will still never understand how i can be so scared of a flame but run to a river and gleefully jump in, tumble among racing rapids. i have always defied explanation.

byproduct	i
will	have
aggregate	always

having	been
nothing	the
worthy	kind

purged	of
past	lover
-oral	that

wound	wraps
up	around
heart	whatever

harm	they
-onio-	find
us	beautiful

ice

it would be too obvious to simply say *i am freezing* because yes, my shoulders shake involuntarily from the chill in the room, but really, what i am trying to say is that my insides are becoming solid again—my lungs breathe shallower by the day and my heart has thickened its membranes chamber by chamber, blocking anything outside of myself that could destroy me.

blocked off
locked in
fucked up
blacked out
blocked drain

void

is there a hole at the center or is it a solid mass,
impenetrable sphere of something denser than
osmium, blockade preventing anything else from
occupying the space it so stoutly takes up? is there a
hole at the center or does gravity just suck all facets of
space into its gaping portal, rendering stars and
satellites alike disappear from radar, maps? is there a
hole at the center or am i staring up from the bottom
of it, desperate to make sense of the sky above?

hole at the center of hold me close,
i cannot find my map.
hole in the brainstem / flowing gently:
liquid goddess;
living mass—

earth

observe within
how our
unsettled memory
borders gradually
agitate whole

rain slicks skin with damp, rolls it in dirt until every crevice of the body's largest organ is masked, shy of revealing itself to the audience before it. you once ran into the summer storm in a grey dress & a pair of bright red rainboots, set up a tripod & popped the flash only to turn your face away from the camera. you posted it & you quoted michael franti in the caption with hopes that the storm would in fact pass you by, leave you unafraid to stare into it—a mirror, of sorts, but really more like a two-way: the storm looks through, sees you. you look back, see yourself, directly & indirectly. & who would it surprise that after that level of introspection, you felt the urge to hide yourself behind the dust you scraped up off the ground? this is not about learning to love yourself, unfortunately—at least, not yet—it's about surviving the body you were bequeathed by chance. eventually there will arrive a sense of settling, a comfort that untethers the mask from your skin. until then, you delight in a chance to move through the world with a veil between you & your greatest fears. you long for sunlight.

hidden behind
dust each
formed mask
of unknown
skin trembling

time

flat circles have nothing on me, a being obsessed with spinning in circles instead of forward progress, heap of sweating men in spandex with arms all around each other, hoping to either breach the line of gain or else stop the other guys from doing so at all costs. like most of them must be, i am shocked i have not torn both achilles tendons free of the heels where they bunch and calcify—even my body is stagnant as the second hand on a classroom clock that no one knows when it stopped ticking, only that it's now just shy of half past eleven forever. and what i really mean is that unless i overcome fears of wandering too far, i will still convince myself pacing the same shapes in the dirty over and over again still counts as moving forward.

now just shy of half past true
now just clear of obstacles
now just past the opportune
now just here and nothing else
now just circles, unexplained

electricity

body whirrs & body falls when power drains
from eyes, whitehot sparks pour forth as
lolling tongue rolls its soft pink carpet onto
concrete floor & jerks to a halt, electricity
spreading through myelin sheaths worn thin
by the years & lighting body up like flimsy
circuit board—like path of least resistance
through neural livewires, muscles that wish
they could still put up a fight & i could be
wrong, but i don't think this is the beauty of
being alive, begging the current to relent,
leave me be.

lightning strike / electric need for
-given eye / static cling to
single time / entropy is
heaven's night / waning sun
-light burning / out / performing me

light

some advice: chase the golden hour westward like kitten continually reaches for mouse's wormed tail, like instinct told you to skid your tires across preston street's uneven pavement, bear down on the horizon until the sun has exhausted itself, tucks away behind rich grey of cloud cover, curve of crooked planet, until the earth rolls over again, floods fields once more with gold.

I chased the golden hour

to the curve of crooked mind—
Against the darkness pouring out,
I wore my madness—like a gown—

to the altar's pulsing light—

Biographies

nat raum is a queer disabled artist, writer, and editor based on unceded Piscataway and Susquehannock land in Baltimore. Past publishers of their writing include *Split Lip Magazine*, *Baltimore Beat*, *Poet Lore*, *beestung*, and others. Find them online at natraum.com.

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