

Pauline Lacanilao

EROSION

Love is an ontological catastrophe.
Slavoj Zizek

Soul lobotomy, it dug right in,
knifed the narrow threshold
between your breathing
and a dark airless birth, reached
for your slurring heart, and yanked.
Numb for once, you believed
you'd been healed. Tightening
the tourniquet that held the grim
grip in place, you let it take you.
Who knows what marvelous
depth you beheld in that sleep
under sleep or why it couldn't
keep you. But when you came back
your shadow was heavier, swaggering
through bleached hallways
finding rest only in the cradles
of your cheeks.
Was it the methadone
or the meetings that brought
the certainty back to your step,
the flesh back to your face?
We celebrated every day
then every thirty

until the years were what we tallied.
But one full decade down,
an arrhythmia in your blinking
betrayed the cruel length
of a minute: no ceaseless ticking
towards any razor's edge
would escape you
from ontological catastrophe.
Everything erodes but death—
that affair you turned down
so long ago, disappointed
it asked you to risk nothing
you didn't already know
we will all one day lose.

ZEN GARDEN

Nothing existed
before raking through
the white gravel
of cheap cocaine
—and nothing after.
All our highs
were one.

A wordless prayer
took time away
from our steady dance
of drag and bow and breathe—

line after meditative line, we drew
a dry sea in the stony sand
until there was no more sand,
only drought. Still, we went on.

In the garden, everything
was a symbol, even the spaces
between symbols strained
with an invisible weight.

And when the emptiness
finally emptied itself
into us, the flat stones sat
unchanged in their mossy formations,
the white waves remained frozen
in eternal cresting

but the garden
ceased to be a garden—
and Forever escaped
our Now

its wings flitting deep into a sky
as distant as silence
from the chaos of a thought.