

THE CIN CIN NATI REVIEW



## Tide Pool

The old oceans  
return us, slowly tug us, along the familiar fiction  
of childhood.

—Norman Dubie, “Popham of the New Song”

I'm dating my sixteen-year-old  
self again. I'm a romantic dog. Woody  
Allen is a hero & Portnoy a god  
but I've yet to rub Buddha's fat  
vegan belly. In my free time I still  
think my time is free. I ditch my public  
education staring at the holes in  
asbestos tile & go to read Plato  
on a jetty alone because I've been told  
he was serious & I want to be serious  
even if I can't stop punctuating sentences  
with Dude. Most Californian sea life  
is dull brown or gray except  
sea anemones, which are mostly shades  
of blue & red. The jetty smells  
of sea lions & fishermen except  
I've never seen sea lions or fishermen  
there, only a baby great white  
once after a storm, jaw opened  
on the wet rock, too small to fit  
around my knee, its incisors  
kind of cute. My life's already  
been punctuated by death & Ecstasy,  
needles piercing cranial tumors & feral  
dogs chasing us on horseback through  
the pill-popping alleys of Baja—  
so I think this makes me a poet

even though I'm not really sure  
what a poet does. Katie says,  
But you can't be special in this  
city unless you're a movie star  
& why would you want to do  
that? I've shown her my spot  
on the rocks at Sunset & PCH  
& my wave doodles in the foreword  
of the Plato because I can't focus  
long enough to make it through  
the first page. Look, I say & poke  
the red mouth of a pubis-sized  
anemone so it wraps its sticky  
around my forefinger & shudders  
as though my forefinger were  
a grunion & this were midnight  
& this tide were receding & I'd  
come ashore to mate & was now  
a piece of moonlight caught flopping  
back to join the rest of the ocean's  
moonlight. She's from a family  
that uses words like proper—  
her parents say I'm Jewish & I've  
got an artist for a dad. A sandpiper  
probes the orange sand, the large  
telescopic eyes of crabs move  
every time we touch hands.