

12.1

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.