

# NEW ENGLAND REVIEW

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## Burnside Soleil

In California for Your Birthday, We Saw a Coyote  
at Dawn

I lived my first life wrong,  
or much of it, which I realized  
crouching in the hollow of a tree,  
a "goosepen" some call it,

a place where a hermit once dwelled  
with a wood stove chimney'd  
through a cracked husk.  
Bay laurels ribbed the fogged trail,

roots scalded to stone glyphs.  
We watched the redwood bark  
plait and then constellate green.  
I've sometimes wondered

if I will recognize the end  
of things, and if this could be  
a study in recognizing my own  
end, which isn't to say purpose,

though that, too, must be the meaning.  
A doe, later in the foothills, appeared  
among oak and ivy that draped  
like a baldachin—or we appeared,

and with your boot bleeding your left heel,  
you had to keep walking to the shore.  
I sat on the trail, though, I'm sorry,  
waiting for the deer to decide enough,

which she did, bounding up the path,  
but there from the brush, a fawn



crouched and considered the creature  
I am—another come down from the peak.

In the one photograph I have  
of them, I see now they weren't doe  
and fawn but yearlings, their summer  
of forbs, ranging hunger hidden

in thickets, not foundlings  
within the care of my attention  
or my memory. I tell you everything  
and will, always, or try,

so they were deer and then just deer  
by the time we made it to town,  
past all the bleached houses  
on the few blocks, and I couldn't

say what had happened, not yet,  
so we stood together on that beach  
embanked by a cloud where two fishermen  
cast lines as if for hawks.



## Notes on the Second Horse in Charles Ray's *Two Horses*

One might think of heaven as pure  
mathematics, the abstraction of a falcon.  
Or back then, an actual falcon bristling

through pine, his departure signaling  
sparrows and chickadees to trill  
like a mind slowly roused.

I never liked sleeping in my own bed,  
so sticks scaled and crinkled  
with woodlice—I could pretend to like it.

The forest, darkling, was tender.  
Paradise is remembering before anything  
happens, so—tired near blue beeches,

I imagined myself older in the tundra,  
low birches, harebell and campion  
like a theory of color.

But that wouldn't be autobiography  
from which I could return.  
In these woods, I

could be found, a recollection  
like cotton grass, blown, becoming itself.  
You tell a story twice to hide the first.

This is the one that we need to know,  
that a boy had climbed the trees,  
calling me back to the lake,

our tent like a sail, I don't know  
what happened to him, which is almost  
the end.