

*Denis Johnson*

## The Bluebird Motel

I saw you last in a motel in Santa Cruz  
among the wasted stooges of our friends.  
In memory I turn between its doors and your face,  
in memory see the party dissolve behind us,  
a snow of tiny mirrors, each containing a prisoner.  
I wish I understood the physics of a glance,  
because I feel that yours in memory holds something  
that might make me comprehensible to myself,  
might save me from having to love you without hope, might  
make fire to precede me now when the only fire  
that precedes me is the fire  
of memory. In memory I ask what makes you think  
I want to talk about the bloody darkness  
or see you test the patience of its arms  
there in your lonely upholstery, there in the military  
preservative chemistry and being  
of your coffin? In memory  
I end up back at this intoxicated beach  
resort motel where you aren't dead yet only  
because I wanted to imagine it, but now  
I want to say something, I want you to know something,  
I want you to know that our love,  
as empty, rank, and inexplicable  
it may have seemed, or seems to us now, gazing  
back and finding nothing to redeem it,  
redeemed us both.  
I want you to know it's the reason I'm still alive,  
it's what carried me across the threshold  
when I wanted to carry you across the threshold, but—  
lacking courage, and having traded away my strength—  
in the twilight of reasons, at the end of lies,  
never mind what I concoct, never mind the stories I tell them—  
I left you there to die.