

MICHAEL JOYCE

[before you leave a place in your dreams it is best]

before you leave a place in your dreams it is best,
if you can, to put things back in order behind you:
scrub the stain of dried milk from the marble corridor,
comfort the girl weeping soundlessly on the low sofa,
try once more to decipher the strewn papers that before
skittered from your grasp, look in the mirror again
to see if the nacreous swirl of the void is still there
or if a lifelike portrait of your mother has replaced it,
a charming young lady in low heels moving effortlessly
through an otherwise jittery home movie, now fading,
the cream-colored silk suit with pink piping at the lapels
that for years she kept wrapped in glassine tissue paper
disappeared somewhere perhaps your sister can recall