

MICHAEL JOYCE

[we were at home alone in a very big place and it wasn't a dream]

we were at home alone in a very big place and it wasn't a dream although everyone wanted it to be, or at least as far as they could see no, it wasn't, it wasn't at all, and it was bigger than you can imagine and empty although there was a sense of hundreds of others moving there in the night, in the walls, along the attic rafters, among the speckled insects the characters of a multicolored dream, of a raft, an ark, a doomed ocean liner, candles on the table, a string quartet, though none of us, as we said, were dreaming, no, none of us or at least none that we could see alone there in the dark, imagining others' eyes in the way you do remembering a lover, a dead parent, the smoldering gaze of Dietrich in *Der Blaue Engel* singing "falling in love again." you have to understand how big this was and how empty and you will when you remember, uncertain when the night would end never being certain if she could hear you, alone there then long after what you do not know, cannot recall, light so stark it made you blink, grit of sand on your lips and nostrils, scent of cotton baking in the sun and nothing coming into focus, not even a snake stirring in the scrubby sage, the window fogged with mottled dust, unable to wet your mouth even after a drink of lukewarm water, waiting for what, for someone, or some time after all this when reverie, though not a dream, would be a fit name for it, for this place and time, that is, call it California or Tulsa, Antibes or Paradise, and the year nineteen sixty eight or two thousand and eleven, lucky numbers for someone somewhere if you could only get through to them somehow