

From *Music in Arabic*, by Mary Jane Ryals

**Ode to Driving at Night,
Low Country, SC**

You've seen them, too, from the bus,
a car, on a evening stroll when a moon
hooks its quarter self into a black sky. Glimpses
in on homes you'll never know.

On the highway, you see them in amber windows,
people shadows so close to your speeding car
their blur startles you. Even closer sometimes,
they hang around on bare bulb porches

leaning into one another. Then it's dark again.
More lights in windows flash by like summer
lightning. The mystery of others--buzz of refrigerator,
sigh of the dog after it turns and settles on the rug,

how the house creaks and settles at night.
Do they, like you, remember the angle of daylight
shining through the house, do they come home
tired, swollen and relieved. Do they shift

their children, soft and heavy on their laps,
and does the smell of garlic linger after dinner?
You've driven all day under the too blue sky,
rocks breaking against the wheels past remote country,

and you pine for your own crowd of family,
your car slashing through the stretch of asphalt
into the black; the last of their lights hums
a polished copper gleam in the window behind.