

*James Ulmer*

## These Nights

the full moon drains me.  
White roses below my window  
seem about to rise from their stems,  
confused by so much light.

The shadow of streetlights  
describe a ladder I keep trying  
to climb, hoping for ease. But gravity  
holds me now. I walk our rooms:  
leaded windows, brass doorknobs, ornaments  
of coming and going. You wanted  
to live here surrounded by roses, hornets  
droning, the blossoms lasting  
into winter—all this ruined now  
by your absence. The time  
you read my cards the five of cups  
turned up—three cups spilled, two full—  
and you warned me not to mourn.  
Now the rooms swirl with a faint  
dust, or pollen, in which my steps  
leave no trace. I remember how  
your breasts lifted and fell as you slept,  
my uncertain ground, partly in shadow,  
partly in light—how the moon  
weaves through these blinds! Often  
you would murmur in your sleep,  
and I would lean close to listen.