

Dance

Consider the land snail,
lust-driven, rearing up onto
the tip of its tail, or rather its foot,

ballerina en point, slippery critters
which naturalists tell us then sway
in a tricky balance of shell and flesh

to face each other and in some species
to shoot an arrow which is in no way
a metaphor but an actual arrow,

a tiny dart of calcium carbonate
shot right through one slick surface
into the other in order to seal the deal,

so unlike or else not at all unlike
how we two might come face to face,
the sharp barb of losing one's self

in the other balanced against the by and by
inevitable absence so that we hope to preserve
some part of whatever tango, twist, pirouette

we can manage, holding the photo,
the love token as if we could save, embed
the swirl and color, fire and heft of it

as in a paperweight, a stay against
the loneliness, the maydays, the too soon
quiet pressing its full weight upon us.