

Two Poems

James May

Late Coleridge

In their drawing room, they had at one side a mirror that filled an entire wall. When he rose to leave, Coleridge would inevitably start to walk into the mirror.

—Walter Jackson Bate

If it gets to that point and, leaving,
you walk toward what seems the greatest,

most open space, but find instead yourself,
a jowly mess, pale as the settee

where friends flinch on the peripheral
(one stands halfway up, out of pity,

not sympathy), admit that this stumble
was no mistake but rather a symptom

of that uncertainty you've felt
unfurling in you like a slow sore throat.

The clock, the brass girandole, the thumb-
width flames drilling through wax, all obscured

because you see too much of what you didn't.
Stand there. Breathe. Watch it all cloud over.

The Problem with Poems that Describe Love

A long-planned-for day of no plans. We woke
gradually, warm skin warming the other's,

while last night's rain
continued darkening all the new green
we'd failed to comment on during the week.

And after letting Heika out into the backyard
where she scattered the suddenly

legible rabbits to safer places
in the thickening English ivy below the azaleas,

we went back inside to finish our coffee
and the board game from the night before—

All our words making other words.
The strange way the name for a letter

needs more than itself to spell itself.

