

LAURIE CLEMENTS LAMBETH

## *When*

As though dipped in a wash of color, vinegar-thinned dye,  
the green shelled eggs we gathered from the Auracana hen's nest:  
smooth tiny prizes when laid.

Not exactly solid green, but wavering in intensity and swirl,  
small end at times a dark, marbled comma.

When she laid them:  
their presence in the henhouse rarer over years as the hen aged.  
One to three eggs a month, sometimes in succession.

Hands full of nothing but brown eggs, my mother would announce,  
*She didn't feel like it today*, as though Henny Penny had more control  
over her body than she did her name.

I used to say we weren't sure yet  
about children. We still aren't. Which is to say we don't feel like it today.  
Which is to say we won't, we've wavered.

And look, here I am applying such thin  
gauze to connect eggs to eggs, age to age. At some point in the story  
all eggs stop, don't they, but it's a fractured analogy:

the hen's eggs destined  
for scramble or batter, and we're talking about cell division  
and what comes after, that stranger growing between us.

I've left  
decisions too long, have ridden out the flow like a bodysurfer  
who prefers the water sluicing around her head as the crest lifts her  
to launching from the wave's base and taking it.

Years suspended  
in Houston I've wished for that old home in Laguna or the one

with the Auracana hen and horses. With the pomegranate  
tree near the gate, its fruit broke open through

the mercy of neglect,  
flung to new shapes by our unwanting. The bright, paned flesh  
glowed to stained glass translucence, each segment a parcel of light.