

AMY PLYBON

Incubation

In spring we bring them,
Gentled in newspaper,
To a house hidden from the road,
To a dirty white house, to the eggman.
Squinting like a jeweller
Fondling a precious stone,
He turns them in the light.
The eggman sorts the barren
Or cold from the warm
Inlaid with brown blood on one end.

Twenty-one days and we return:
Lying in a wooden case,
We see a hundred solemn eggs
Laid out, lined up and labeled
Like a century of stones.
Whispering, he points
To our eggs and they quiver
As if some ghost were breathing
On them, and a web of cracks
Covers each inverted dome.

They are born slowly
As their alabaster shells
Wilt and break around
Each slimy crystal of blood
And bone clawing at its womb.
Then they peck at the last shreds
Of white membrane that cling
To them, and stand
Like fossils risen from the dead.