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Woman Weighing Gold

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Woman Weighing Gold

The gold cannot be heavy
with significance. Her body
is ballast: a crescent
of peach dress under the cloak—
perhaps six months grown.
She is too gentle, holding
the scale with one hand like a bit
of cloth. The Delft painter instructs me
that what is not possible
is this woman ever quitting
her expression—not for the boy
delivering milk at her door, or child
crying in another room. There is just
this room, and she is fixed
in the light of Vermeer
the way Catherina, who bore him
eleven children, felt when daily
his eye fell on her. That blessed
light. The woman does not weigh gold,
but equal parts endurance,
and that other, that blackness
enclosing her in this room.
Yes, she will give birth.
And daylight through the window
as though she cried out
I am here only a while, light.

Lauren Mesa