

Ode to the Areola

Dark pigmented nebula
deepening around the nipple
after childbirth, purple
haze surrounding
the storm's eye

not to be confused with
aureole—that crown of light
radiating from saints' heads
in certain medieval paintings
from the Latin *aureolas*
derived from *aurum*
meaning, 'gold'

which is also the root for *oriole*—
those amber-plumed passerines
flashing against late July's foliage
aging from Kool-Aid lime
to hunter green. Until recently

I thought *areola* descended
from the same root as orioles
and saints' crowns. But in fact
it derives from the Latin word
for 'open place'—which might
connote a sun-filled plaza
somewhere in Tuscany

and not a chocolate cloud
capping the snowy flesh
my newborn rooted for at dawn
his mouth a withered rose
his head a halo of light.