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PATIENCE WHEATLEY

For Leah's Tenth Birthday

I remember your father
left by the English midwives
in a crib beside me.

Streaked with my blood,
a few minutes old
he sucked his thumb

then air
testing new freedom
with searching mouth.

I stroked his head
squeezed out of shape by birth
and remembered I'd been told

*there's no pain so terrible
as the pain of being born.*
Ten years ago

you, my granddaughter,
full of tiny swelling eggs
a mouth open for love

struggled into midday, like your father
with less pain in being born —
no doubt about it

I wish you to be
a better maker than your grandmother
who would assuage all pain for you

but failing that
will try at least to help you
change pain to art.

Patience Wheatley's third book of poetry was published by Pendass Productions. Her poems appear in The Missing Line published by Inanna Publications in 2004.