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To Show Peter the World

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To Show Peter the World

*“Are we, perhaps, here just for saying:
house, bridge, well, gate, jug, fruit-tree, window . . .”
R. M. Rilke (Ninth Duino Elegy)*

It seems as if sometimes in sleep
the names drift off from their things.
The name-mist lifts. The things shine, clean.
On other nights the usual heavens
slide under and are gone.
New constellations gleam, suggestive.

It seems that I am bound to be
yet one more Adam, with my seven-month son;
not Lear, exhausted, bearing his daughter
at the very end of things, vowing
with all music what can never be, but
at the beginning, Peter, in truth
at the start of it all. *We two will sing.*

There are days, child, I have woken
ashamed of the names, wanting,
for your entering, fresher ones
for what you will come to know,
and what I must learn to do, all
over again, is trust the necessity,
the endlessness, the grace of our naming,
which is human, which is what we do,
and sound again around lips and teeth and tongue,
and roll again down bones and veins,
familiar syllables, yes, the usual ones,
until they assume the unknown again,
until no name's familiar,

and not only to wander with you
the present borders of our naming
but to be there to watch and listen
as you begin going on beyond,
making *your* names for the things, as
Peter shows Peter the world, this
place into which we have only brought you,
and in which we must leave you.