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Duets

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DUETS

Neil Shepard

I've left you, my daughter, for the first time,
quite cavalierly, to arrive at this colony.

And everything was planned, the wild, reclusive, looping lines
of mind's indulgence, the world's static filtered out.

But I had not reckoned with the twined song in my chest,
the subtle couplets you've written everywhere on my being.

I cannot hear my own voice without hearing yours. How odd,
this lyrical interference comes from another source,

another powerful voice whose self-promotions send waves
of song into the future. Shall I tune you out, set the frequency

to something further down the dial, some golden oldies?
You're merely three years old, in love with this new language

that beams forth with every breath. You're all experiment:
Why is a madhouse a house that's mad? Where's the arrow

fired from the string of a rainbow? Little literalist, maker
of new meanings, the world's freshly sung, the forms undiscovered.

The waveband's broad enough to hum in four-dimensional time,
beyond AM, FM, shortwave, curving to the edge of time-

lessness where memory converts to song. Does love for what's gone
explode in sonic booms? Out there, in uncircumscribed air,

is the world circular? Can your eccentric namings bring me round
again, or will it all be squared by schoolmarms and golems?

Courage, little one, and songs of your own transmission.
Should you see me out there, along the edge, cosmic dust

in your eye, as my father was stardust for me, hum a few bars
of something unforgettable—as another singer
did for her father. Make it in quaint couplets across the
distances, and let these old emissions echo back to you.