

Alchemy

*From the beginnings of the world
his arrival and her welcome
have been prepared. They have always
known each other.*

From "Her First Calf," Wendell Berry

It's the time after reading, still cosy on the couch:
our son asks me to carry him, belly-to-belly.

For months we've played this game,
yet the words I recite still quicken:

*My tummy's so heavy . . .
The baby's moving so much tonight!*

He giggles, shifts some more, as I bear his 40 pounds to bed,
shelter him completely under his thick, Spider-Man quilt.

He wiggles within his makeshift womb,
thrusts a hand—fingers splayed—into the room's half-light.

Then his eyes peek over the rim, deepen with all he wants.
At last, I sigh. My beautiful baby!

He re-enacts his cries in the night, while I hold him to my heart,
pouring forth all the welcome his first arrival did not have.

TERESA McCURT