

SONG OF THE SUN

James Longenbach

1.

Two children side by side
In the cathedral at twilight, knowing
They'd missed the train.
And once, just
Before dawn, they stumbled
Down an alley, it was Christmas,
To a courtyard strung with tiny yellow lights.
They learned to read,
To make love. The fields
Grew taller than their foreheads
And the trees sent taproots
Deep into the ground.

2.

What happened next
Had never happened before
Though it would happen again.
From her body came forth another body not
More beautiful but beautiful
In a different way.
Miraculously
There were people who helped them care for this body,
Feed it, clothe it,
And when this happened
Again, it had never
Happened before.

3. *Song of the First First Child*

*In the middle of a steep staircase
I fell asleep I didn't know
Whether to look forward
Or back each step
Looked dangerous to me
You called this being born I call it
Making a sandwich
Taking the bus if
You could understand me
I would tell you
Everything I'd show you
Sunlight on my golden hair*

4. *Song of the Second First Child*

*Before I could walk I
Walked through snow a forest
Shagged with ice who's there
Said the bird I could not
Say I could say
Only what I'd heard before I said
It differently there was
A little girl she could not
Speak she spoke
The pine trees
Shagged with ice she said
You're beautiful*

5.

To imagine you've changed is to preserve
The person you once were.
Alternatively, to recognize you've
Never changed, that now you
See yourself as then you

Didn't, couldn't,
Even if you'd tried,
Is to feel
Viscerally a part
Of time, to collaborate
In the project of becoming, always
To have begun.

6.

What happens next takes
Seconds, it takes a thousand years.
A dog barks once,
A cricket chirps, the children
Lift their heads to breathe in fields, a flag
Snapping in the wind, the sun
A daub of Tintoretto's
Crimson sliding into the Great Salt Pond — let's
Count together,
Kathryn, Alice, Marc,
Jillian, Owen, Adam, everybody,
Five, four, three, two —

7. *Song of the Sun*

*No matter where
You are no
Matter where I
Go if you are
Speaking
To me I have
Said this
Before I say
It now I will be
Listening
To you
Speak*