

**Maddy Searle**

## **Before Christmas**

There are pagan echoes.  
The supple green branches,  
Remembering half-forgotten lives,  
Are obscured by Middle-Eastern tales.

The supple green branches,  
Seeming deathless,  
Are obscured by Middle-Eastern tales  
Of a boy-king.

Seeming deathless,  
The year is born again. The festival  
Of a boy-king  
Is but one of many.

The year is born again. The festival  
Seeking the return of the light  
Is but one of many.  
All humans feel the change.

Seeking the return of the light,  
Great stone shrines were built.  
All humans feel the change  
And, if we look, we can still see.

Great stone shrines were built  
Many lifetimes before us  
And, if we look, we can still see  
There are pagan echoes.