

# Looking Beyond the Solstice

Stephen O. Taylor\*

## I

Time is space a Japanese  
Print would enclose with seacoast  
Or temple walls and furnish  
With pine, peony or stone.

Time: springwork of the  
Universe unwinding,  
Silent water all unflowing;  
Line nor circle answers: all a maze.

A hill grows toward the sky  
Almost nothing in a day;  
A pebble shifts an inch toward  
The sea: Will I speak?

## II

Advance and retreat of the  
Year's armies confounded in  
Self-combat: pawns fall bloody—  
Red or bloodless, yellow-dry.

At night, the bitch cries at pups  
Birthing, forgetful of the  
Moan she made at their begett-  
Ing, or bitten nursing, or

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Without child to suckle.  
The moon watches burning, white,  
Or black, uncaring, falling back,  
Swell to greatness, only to be

Caught and by the sun devoured,  
Unless the sun forgetting  
Old perfidy feels the bite  
Of her dark mouth. Sharp tooth

Reasons well enough to make  
The soul feel pain, pierced by frost  
Or heat where the root joins the  
Body. Both burn the petal:

Resolution in ice or  
Flame with no delay for  
Contemplation at the poles  
Or in passage; passage is

Reason enough, mutation  
Is the form's revelation.  
What can thought, faced with this, do?  
Run myths to earth; stop all the

Spinning drift of galaxies;  
Make motion be implied in  
Static essence, the seasons  
Be mandalic symbols mind

Can operate? Be content  
That thought does not fly south in  
Winter; but take more care lest  
The labyrinthine animism

Bound in tree and leaf should find  
All the world objectified  
In desert, unbind itself  
And build again its halls in

Man's poor mind.

## III

Higher peaks whitened to a line  
Still above the hills near the valley,  
Mist hides the highest:  
All white, tree and earth and stone.

Brown scrub lowers  
Rain-darkened beneath grey walls,  
A dearth felt winter will fill;  
Winter sits about us,

Mirthless, her line threatening grim  
Fall for leaf and dust; limbs will  
Lie shattered, trees learn to bear  
Their loveless burdens, though now

The wine of rotting apples  
Rests in skins the worms have claimed,  
As if the days would wait for  
Sour juice to mellow; bare

Trees await their harvest; un-  
Prophetable birds flee south,  
Unwilling to eye the slate  
Waters for a resting place

Among the rushes. But dark  
Blood-purple berries, holy  
Ivy, oak, reddened by the fall frosts,  
Give consent that soon

Falling snow be white:  
Metaphor of birth.