

Arthur Henry King

## Winter Solstice

The messages come early in the morning,  
by means of a dream  
(but young men have their visions),  
or struggle towards decision through a stream  
of indecisions,  
or real — or imagined — pain  
(the shadow of age),  
or thought of someone dying: they contain  
a warning  
insisted upon again and again  
in varying images lost on waking,  
though by retrospective strain  
in sum they seem  
a bone-shaking  
*Totentanz* of puppets on a stage —  
skeletons dressed out with ragged infelicities  
rattling the highways in frustrated rage,  
or groping about warrens of ruined cliff cities  
more fearful if buried under a forgotten dream  
than when I remember their articulate story:  
*memento mori.*

Christ rose before the light  
and with His glory  
harrowed, scarified,  
cleansed and clarified  
even these last obscenities of the night  
into the relaxation of release  
from anxiety, and the acceptance of His peace.