

At the New Year

Every single instant begins another new year;
Sunlight flashing on water, or plunging into a clearing
In quiet woods announces; the hovering gull proclaims
Even in wide midsummer a point of turning: and fading
Late winter daylight close behind the huddled backs
Of houses close to the edge of town flares up and shatters
As well as any screeching ram's horn can, wheel
Unbroken, uncomprehended continuity,
Making a starting point of a moment along the way,
Spinning the year about one day's pivot of change.
But if there is to be a high moment of turning
When a great, autumnal page, say, takes up its curved
Flight in memory's spaces, and with a final sigh,
As of every door in the world shutting at once, subsides
Into the bed of its fellows; if there is to be
A time of tallying, recounting and rereading
Illuminated annals, crowded with black and white
And here and there a capital flaring with silver and bright
Blue, then let it come at a time like this, not at winter's
Night, when a few dead leaves crusted with frost lie shivering
On our doorsteps to be counted, or when our moments of coldness
Rise up to chill us again. But let us say at a golden
Moment just on the edge of harvesting, "Yes. Now."
Times of counting are times of remembering; here amidst showers
Of shiny fruits, both the sweet and the bitter-tasting results,
The honey of promises gleams on apples that turn to mud
In our innermost of mouths, we can sit facing westward
Toward imminent rich tents, telling and remembering.
Not like merchants with pursed hearts, counting in dearth and darkness,
But as when from a shining eminence, someone walking starts
At the sudden view of imperturbable blue on one hand
And wide green fields on the other. Not at the reddening sands
Behind, nor yet at the blind gleam, ahead, of something
Golden, looking at such a distance and in such sunlight,
Like something given—so, at this time, our counting begins,
Whirling all its syllables into the circling wind
That plays about our faces with a force between a blow's
And a caress', like the strength of a blessing, as we go
Quietly on with what we shall be doing, and sing
Thanks for being enabled, again, to begin this instant.

John Hollander

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