



**AUTUMN**

**NUMBERS**

**BARBARA HOLLAND**



NUMIN

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BARBARA A. HOLLAND

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## WINDFALL



REENBACKS slithering  
across my desk.  
They rustle. Gouged  
from envelopes  
drifting into piles.

Sticking,  
wilted and crumpled; some few torn.  
They are mounting. I can hardly  
count them. They continue coming.

Where shall I put  
tomorrow's payload since today's  
still must be organized,  
how handle them? Bind them in packs  
of twenty and press them down  
to fit in tidy packets?

Leaves are drifting into herds  
and from the boughs  
of abandoned trees in silence  
silver coins are falling.

## IN THE MIRROR

Your face, square, sure  
of itself from over my shoulder  
peeks out beside mine  
from behind my reflection.

How you do it I shall not  
strain to imagine, but you are there  
like a low grade fever

Not all the time  
but fading until almost  
nonexistent. Then strengthening  
again to almost a greater  
reality than mine.

I wonder  
how often, if ever,  
others see you there;  
if sometimes  
you are visible to others,  
but not to me,

or visible at times  
when I am not,  
and if so,  
how much of you

how much!

## HOLDING ON

Shadows filled the pocket  
on his right,  
                            which was flat  
the left one  
ran over with colors  
    bulging.

He had laughter  
tucked into his cuffs  
as he stood on the corner  
by the lamp post  
with both hands clamped  
on his bicycle handlebars,  
until that one moment  
when a sneeze caught him  
and they both flew up in his face.

when the bicycle shuddered  
stood tall on its wheels  
and rattled into traffic  
on its own,

                            while the sun  
stood up on the pedals  
shouting brightness--

blindingly alone.



## ANOTHER SEASON

In bygone years the sunlight  
bit the buildings just this way  
in this season by late afternoon.

Now every one of them has come  
to life with all its faces,  
voices, emotions and events  
so clearly that they all  
but injure me.

Bricks still  
glow almost as with some  
certain light within them.

In country towns a new paint  
in pastels takes on  
an unsuspected vigor  
as if to say,

"Here I am."

So many budding Autumns  
heaped up upon one another  
in piles like flaming leaves  
recall as many other times  
and places as music

and as many dead beginnings.

## DOWN MEADOW SLOPE

Look down the moonsweep  
to a march of spruce  
and see your own form  
naked,

    dancing:  
how fireflies come and go

as if from between your ribs  
how grasses bristle  
through your shins  
how you stick on the twigs  
of a crouching bush  
as if you were a twist of fog.

You are!  
but what is lacking  
there tonight that seems  
to make you real?

END OF AN ERA

*Victory fallen from the Arch  
in Grand Army Plaza, Brooklyn*



YOU would never be satisfied  
with conciliation;  
deploring peace talks  
you would press your demands  
for bombs.

Anyone with as many sharp spikes  
and excrescences to embellish  
a helmet as you have  
could only cry for combat.

Look how you have incited  
your horses to rear and plunge  
as you lash them to leaping  
from the top of the arch.

You have long been pleased  
to deafen daily with those trumpets  
in your ears. Life without  
a continuing clamor  
would be unproductive for you.  
You have to be Queen Tumult to exist,  
to fulfill your imagined destiny.

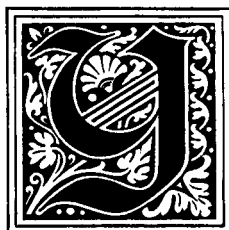
But as of this date  
you have gone too far. A step back  
(always a misdemeanor in your code)  
a change of footing necessary  
to an extra thrust  
of your highly unnecessary sword  
has unstepped you

and you have been poured  
head down in a tumble of scrap metal  
cast as your garments  
from the rear of your chariot,

secured still by some obstinate  
remnant of uncorroded bronze  
to your heels, with your foolish sword  
menacing pedestrians below you  
in Grand Army Plaza.

So much for you,  
Senora Machismo!

PLEASE COME HOME



YOU are only a clean  
little clump of cloud  
out there  
on the horizon. Cute:  
you look kind of nice  
like that:  
puffed up and fuzzy  
keeping the wide blue  
at the edge of the sky  
too busy to be a bore.

A pleasant change for both of us:  
a time for me to get my darkness  
going  
filling up with flecks of gold  
and whirling into a tight twist  
spun at such speed  
it almost buzzes in my eyes;  
the way I like it.

You never did,  
or ever showed me yours,  
but hated mine  
prided yourself on being blunt  
about it, begged me to throw it out.

Yours was a thorny hideaway  
crammed to the top  
with thumb tacks, turkey claws  
and tire treads,  
  the kind of hutch  
you have to run away from  
    to the horizon  
to puff up for a while on your ego  
and float or ooze oily  
as if with innocence, maybe to fool  
the idle and the romantic  
until the air cools and you flatten.

Then you have to return  
if only to shake the flakes of rust  
from the spikes on your coffee table.

Of course, I miss you  
if looking at you in outline  
packed solid with double parked cars  
and underfed dogs is what I mean  
or hearing one of your usual lectures  
still discussing itself in circles  
above an empty setting at a table.

## SOUTHWARD RUNNING

It is all as it should be;  
he shall soon be entering from the North  
as I have often seen him,

running

his right arm lifted high  
above his head  
flourishing a five branched  
candelabrum

its small fires flattened  
by his speed and bright  
with the wine-sharp pallor  
of a city evening  
against the peach glow  
of the arching lamps

running

as if with the pressure  
of news to spring  
upon the ear and eye

in sparks  
in mantra.

ignoring questions  
friends and onlookers swept aside

slight curling at the edges  
of a skimmed milk moon  
and all the sky  
widened to five more senses  
and dimensions,

running!

## NOVEMBER

The lightness and delicacy  
or of dried leaves stretched tight  
across a spread of twigs  
which terminates in crushed claws;

this after sundown  
often. Sometimes floating  
on the surface of my hair,  
fumbling at the root  
of my skull or grazing my cheek  
as with the touch  
of a whisper  
saying, Now,

    Come now.

I course maps with a finger  
count costs  
consider the calendar  
and cower in forgetfulness  
but even under all of that  
hard knuckles  
and the dried claws  
of the dark against the shuddering  
glass in the kitchen window

rasps the old hunger  
and more of an echo  
of a still resounding ache alive;  
I want you

and the nights  
are afraid for me.



## VANDALISM

A smart bite of gravel  
which you dropped in my boot  
and which gnawed at the stance  
of my determination or a muscle  
rendered useless  
by a bruise;

bullet holes pocked  
in the lid of my grand piano  
after your last invasion  
of my privacy of mind.

These I charge  
with damage to my self esteem

not you  
with your fuse and matches.

## NEW ENGLAND OVERCAST

It sweats outside  
today.

          There is such a stinginess  
with water now

that even mature drops  
must be husbanded

and only a damp sigh  
may be expected  
from clouds.

Remember  
how on such days as this

you were so quick  
to send me  
back to my center of the swirls  
of fog that edged out  
in feelers  
from under the bed,

how accurate

                          your timing  
when you retrieved me  
for the sun's return

while madness  
was settling in the folds  
of the curtains

ready to drip the night  
away

          with hammers.

## REFLECTIONS

It is strange  
that no one notices that a bank  
of carrot and paprika leaves  
extricate the weight  
of a drowning morning  
with imitation sunlight,  
or how brooding  
and its attendant panic  
make a madness of repetition  
as if in the confrontation  
of mirror with mirror  
until disrupted  
in that deadliest of conversations  
by the brawling of the winesap wind  
and the deep gong  
of the sky.

## IN THE STRENGTH OF THE MOON

So now you have seen them  
where the driveway swings close  
to the house;

the slim high spears  
planted among the pebbles  
like staves,

the swinging lanterns

a spread of antlers  
which almost snagged among the branches,  
beak thin and curved,  
the probing muzzle of a fox

frozen

in the sight of the floodlights  
on the porch,

by the loss of identity,  
remaining just enough  
to break the paralysis

to continue beyond it  
and into the woods.

Why then

do you look at me that way?  
Perhaps you never should have come here  
and have seen them. Maybe because  
I was with you

when they passed the house  
and it was my driveway.

## ALL ABOUT EDDIE

When he writes  
the walls around him  
blaze like a gauze of sunlight  
as when it stretches  
in slant sheets  
downward to the moss  
untorn by branches  
through an endless  
flow of motes  
his musings dazzle  
in their up and on,  
on streams of brilliance.  
humming of that  
which ought or should be  
which was  
and is  
with an insatiable appetite  
for oats  
sewn wild!

## IN RESIDENCE

These nights your window  
loosens a single wing  
just one reflected glass  
cross-hatched against the dark  
creaking

perhaps  
as if in gladness

The rectangle behind it glows  
as if someone  
were there.

No shadow ever seems  
to cross it.

The swinging casement  
indicates a lack of air  
a longing

to leap down and dance  
among the leaves

which bounds the window  
momentarily  
above the shadowed park  
and lends it a code of slashes

My heart rejoices  
in the glare of the bookstore  
on the corner across the street  
with its negative blind  
rolled down  
across the door.

## FAMILIAR CREATURES

I know that some one unseen  
shared that house  
with me  
who circled the table  
in darkness of thought  
around and about  
all night  
whose typing  
came in gusts from the bathroom  
who played organ  
at night in the grove  
outside my window  
None of this  
had anything to do at all  
with tall figures  
with the heads of animals  
drifting in procession  
outside on the curving gravel  
of the driveway  
with the strength of the moon.

