

## A NEW YEAR GREETING

by

W. H. Auden.

On this day tradition allots  
To taking stock of our lives,  
My greetings to all of you. Yeasts,  
Bacteria, viruses,

Aerobics and Anaerobics:  
A Very Happy New Year  
To all for whom my ectoderm  
Is as Middle-Earth to me.

For creatures your size I offer  
A free choice of habitat,  
So settle yourselves in the zone  
That suits you best, in the pools

Of my pores or the tropical  
Forest of armpit and crotch,  
In the deserts of my forearms  
Or the cool woods of my scalp.

Build colonies: I will supply  
Adequate warmth and moisture,  
The sebum and lipids you need,  
On conditions you never

Do me annoy with your presence  
But behave as good guests should,  
Not rioting into acne  
Or athlete's foot or a boil.

Does my inner weather affect  
The surfaces where you live.

Do unpredictable changes  
Record my rocketing plunge.

From fairs when the mind is in tift  
And relevant thoughts occur.

To fouts when nothing will happen  
And no one calls and it rains?

I should like to think that I make  
A not impossible world,  
But an Eden it will not be:  
My games, my purposive acts.

May become catastrophes there  
If you were religious,  
How would your dramas justify  
Unmerited suffering?

By what myth would your priests account  
For the hurricanes that come  
Twice every twenty-four hours  
Each time I dress or undress.

When, clinging to keratin rafts,  
Whole cities are swept away  
To perish in space, or the Flood  
That scalds to death when I bathe?

Then, sooner or later, will dawn  
The Day of Apocalypse,

When my mantle suddenly turns  
Too cold, too rancid for you,

Appetizing to predators  
Of a fiercer sort, and I

Am stripped of excuse and nimbus,  
A Past, subject to Judgment.