

Barbara Henning

from A DAY LIKE TODAY

## RAINING ALL DAY

Coughing on the street  
after teaching coughing again.  
Lost another four pounds.  
Must write a book some day,  
called Cough. Clear and quiet  
on the subway, then the climb up  
to the street and two blocks  
of coughing. Almost always  
coughing in the rain. At St Marks  
John Godfrey holds out his hands,  
now arthritic. We older poets  
hold each other in our words.  
When I climb into bed, the guys  
above us pull out their bed  
and it rolls noisily across the floor.  
I want to remember my dreams,  
but this anti-coughing drug  
makes me sleep so deeply  
that when I stand up, I'm sleep  
walking. In the morning, like  
Mark Teixeira, I must admit  
that this noisy cough has not  
improved. John Cage says about  
noise that it does not have to  
disturb. When we really listen,  
we will find it fascinating.

## TWICE IN ONE LIFETIME

After copulating, the male's  
pedipalp breaks off in the female  
spider and forms a plug,  
preventing other orb spiders  
from fertilizing her. Then  
she eats her mate. In the 90's,  
there was the tech bubble  
and after that the housing bubble.  
What looks in a still photo  
like a very delicate glass  
bulb is in fact a bubble.  
A big bubble is suspended  
above me in the middle  
of the room. I watch it drift  
over the bed. Then I stand up  
and reach out. There's a spider  
inside the bubble. When it pops,  
I wake up. My love says,  
It's Anancy the trickster. Shortly  
thereafter, an elderly man drifts  
toward Central Park where  
a few hours later he's found  
sleeping on a bench near the zoo.

## WHEN I ARRIVE

Boulder is sizzling, 100 plus degrees and so dry I can smell the wildflowers, I mean wildfires, outside the city. Dry conditions over much of the nation's bread basket will lead to higher food prices. Hot dry weather is making massive dust storms in Arizona. Scarcity of water also threatens power plants and gas and oil production. Food supplies are at risk. Bernanke says the economy is stuck in the mud. Then it starts raining and the drought is over. Monsoon and each day there is more and more water and mud slides develop in areas where the fires have burnt out the ground cover. Biking is a challenge. When damp, my seat slides down and when I stop to adjust, zap down again. When unable to extend, my long legs can't engage the necessary muscles. On Sunday, the rain stops and the sun is blazing again. I hang my bedding on a line. As we drive away, the sheets are flapping in the breeze.

## THE SPEED OF LIGHT

A magnificent frigate sea bird  
lives in the Galapagos,  
the blue-footed booby.

In Untemyer Gardens a lion's  
magnificent calm stone face  
is smeared with graffiti.

In Mountain Lion OS you can  
now zoom in or out of your  
document just by pinching  
or spreading two fingers.

An invisible energy field slows  
the particles down. Without it  
all elementary forms of matter  
would zoom around at the speed  
of light. Quick zooms, abrupt  
edits and a restless camera  
accelerate the momentum.

We're sauntering along Avenue A  
while our boy zooms ahead  
on his scooter, so fast and  
graceful, slipping his right  
foot behind his left and then  
leaning toward the left to go  
around the corner. Pennsylvania  
is now leaning democratic,  
and with the recession, more  
than a few young adults are  
leaning on their elderly parents.

## ACROSS MY EYES

Strip mined or boiled loose  
underground. Pipe it. Burst it.  
One million gallons of crude  
bitumen into the Kalamazoo  
River. In the house with my  
muscles pumped up, I turn off  
the news and then my love's  
guitar sends a chord across  
my eyes and I drift into—  
let's go to bed. I hear him  
showering. Then he's doing  
qi gong by candlelight.  
He climbs into our bed,  
saying he's sending me qi.  
His hands are burning hot.  
Overhead, smog-forming  
nitrogen oxide and sulfur  
dioxide drifting eastward from  
mid-western power plants.

## ON ANY GIVEN DAY

There are 650,000 people  
in the US without a place  
to sleep. When we wake up  
sparrows are busy pecking  
around the base of the locust  
tree. Kayin comes to yoga  
with me and draws pictures  
of hummingbirds. When  
hummingbirds fly backwards,  
they still have a very upright  
body posture. Animals frequently  
tangle horns with each other.  
The boy is wearing a hat  
with big horns and rattling eyes.  
Everybody knows the animal  
is telling outright lies, still  
he gets 51% of the poll. Why  
don't their brains turn to pudding?  
At night, Kayin asks,  
Does your body keep working,  
Barbara, when you go to sleep?

## NEW YEAR'S EVE

Mr. Zlobin writes a book  
about Americans and how we  
interrogate complete strangers.  
Two men interrogate a woman,  
one in gentle, soothing tones,  
while the other fires staccato  
bursts of accusatory questions.  
Her husband is reading a magazine  
called Wired when she repeats  
her question. He snarls and  
commands that she be still.  
To issue spoken commands  
on most Androids, you must  
tap the microphone gently.  
In Russia, children are raised  
by their grandmothers.  
An average mother would never  
dream of leaving her child  
with a teenager. She says  
it seems as if he doesn't care  
about her. He stands up  
in a wild sea storm in the Gulf  
of Alaska, where a Shell Oil  
drilling rig runs aground  
with 139,000 gallons  
of diesel fuel. The unified  
command will be monitoring  
the situation. It's midnight  
with fireworks when he walks  
out while his wife is pleading  
with him to stay. Frankenstein's  
monster on occasion turns  
out to be rather sweet.