

THROAT CHAKRA

Still swaddled in sheets, I listen
 through wafer-board walls,
 my mother-in-law shuffling
 arthritically to the kitchen
 in sloppy slippers, muttering to herself,
 morning's many burdens.
 She loses a stage-whisper debate
 to her three cats cranky for breakfast,
 white hiss of kibble filling their bowls.
 Running tap, clanking stove-top—
 her first pot of pekoe on the go.

Out of sync with the ceiling-fan thrum,
 her daughter snores softly beside me,
 more refined than her dad's
 wood-lot rumble from the next room.
 I'm ambushed by a sneeze—
 morning pollens percolating
 through the screen. Sleep abandons me
 like kitchen blinds snapping up,
 it's after seven, after all.

Her running banter crowds me
 out of the cottage, down
 to the shore, where my Nescafe mingles
 with seaweed and wet sand.
 Occasional gulps
 heard from under the dock.
 Chips of diamond float on the sunny bay,
 swallows swoop for flies,
 a lone cormorant crosses the cloudless sky.

Footsteps on the jetty—
my mother-in-law carrying another cup
of what she thinks I like in my coffee,
busy expounding on the day's beauty
and the flicker that followed her down here.
It strikes me how her stiff upper lip
got her through the Blitz, helps her soldier on
with disc disease and diverticulitis,
always staying a step ahead
of self-doubt, never surrendering
to that quiet she fears
might one day drown her out.