**The Mirage**

Anshu Choudhry

She thinks, like her mother

she is carrying the monsoons captive in ten clay pots

over her stony head, above her rickety neck and dancing

feet perched on the knife-sharp

edge of a brass disc. Her serpent-tail

of a braid flying as she spins around like a she-cobra

coiling to suckle the tail in her thirsty mouth,

dry and parched

like the desert on which she crawls miles

each day, to carve out the river

buried under sands, to seep the graves

of dead wells with her sweat, to expurgate these ghosts

from their slumberous depths. She does not know,

but she is slithering back in history

to her grandmother,

and that the sand is pulling her down deeper

to her great grandmother—that the dunes are rolling

over her quested soul and the undulating future

is swallowing her present with her daughter

eating hot sand

and gulping it down with the sun, to be sated.