

## Dowser's Prayer

*Maria Mortensen Davis*

I am religious  
the way small desert towns  
are named after water;  
eleven or twenty worn buildings,  
brown hills, dust.

I know this land was once  
a paleolake. I can remember it  
foggy and moss-grown,  
mastodon and ground sloth drinking  
in the gray dawn

of time, but that baptism  
has long since dried.  
Now even my sweat wicks away  
before it reaches my lips,  
snatched away in a sandy gust.

Thirsty, I see water  
everywhere I look—  
here in Sand Wash  
or Indian Wells  
or Cave Creek—

written in seashells  
embedded eye-level  
in a limestone cliff,  
in turgid cactus, virga  
like a gray smudge,

mesquite roots deep  
as the water table,  
afternoon cumulonimbus.  
I draw it from dry stalks  
like the kangaroo rat  
or Moses.

Mornings, I lick dew from my own skin.  
And when white-hot afternoon  
glare becomes unbearable, when  
flash flood seems more dream  
than threat,

I rest in the shade  
and drink the canyons  
with my eyes: turbid stone  
flowing thickly from one wave  
into another.