

## Well Enough Alone · *Debora Greger*

Blood red, blood purple, jet and jade  
— hands dripping slippery stones,  
she clambered back a dry-rocked shore  
that should have told her not about  
foothold or balance but that when,

in rows on her bureau, the prized ones  
dried, they too would dull. She glowered  
toward the feigned or real uninterest  
of two men outside, desultorily sweeping  
leaves from the square's broken tree.

In dream's ceaseless present, I'm benched  
at that window, my mother's reflection  
glassily rising. This time when I turn  
around, I'm wearing a mask of a man's face.  
My hand swaggers to her temple—

under her powdered skin, the warm stone  
of her small skull. I kiss her surprise-  
rounded mouth— words into wakefulness,  
resolving nothing. Again the square's pigeon  
cries, "Who cooks, who cooks for you?"

There was no question in it when my mother  
would ask, "Why can't you leave  
well enough alone?" as if the present  
were already being told in another person,  
first in the simple past tense, as now,  
and soon in the perfect.