


## **What the Old Griot Said to the Young Politician**

Patrice Wilson

—  —

This may seem strange, but I tell you true:  
rocks like wrinkled peach pits  
with edges your tongue cannot get between  
have found their way into your mouth.  
You practice speaking words around them,  
sound like Eliza Doolittle or  
the Wiley College debaters,  
you are fired up at  
history, slavery, segregation,  
your rocks are black as charcoal,  
dark as your grandfather's skin,  
dark as I am

and you want to argue around them,  
but you swallow them inadvertently, their edges  
defying your digestion, your whole  
eating apparatus; they will leave you  
not without pain, not without perhaps  
a bit of blood, not without imprinting  
on your soul a weakening in the lining  
of your skin, as if you were becoming  
the stick figure among stick figures  
that you actually are in the lively,  
colorful drawings of small children,  
yes, my friend, small children.