

“Southern History” by Natasha Trethewey

Before the war, they were happy, he said.
quoting our textbook. (This was senior-year

history class.) The slaves were clothed, fed,
and better off under a master’s care.

I watched the words blur on the page. No one
raised a hand, disagreed. Not even me.

It was late; we still had Reconstruction
to cover before the test, and — luckily —

three hours of watching *Gone with the Wind*.
History, the teacher said, of the old South —

a true account of how things were back then.
On screen a slave stood big as life: big mouth,

bucked eyes, our textbook’s grinning proof — a
lie
my teacher guarded. Silent, so did I.

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