**How I discovered poetry**

It was like soul-kissing, the way the words

filled my mouth as Mrs. Purdy read from her desk.

All the other kids zoned an hour ahead to 3:15,

but Mrs. Purdy and I wandered lonely as clouds borne

by a breeze off Mount Parnassus. She must have seen

the darkest eyes in the room brim: The next day

she gave me a poem she’d chosen especially for me

to read to the all except for me white class.

She smiled when she told me to read it, smiled harder,

said oh yes I could. She smiled harder and harder

until I stood and opened my mouth to banjo playing

darkies, pickaninnies, disses and dats. When I finished

my classmates stared at the floor. We walked silent

to the buses, awed by the power of words.