THE CORRECTION

When I got it wrong at school—missed a word, could not recite the long division tables—I would lock my knees beneath my little plywood desk in back where all the tall ones sat, and sneak my uniform sleeve up and bite down on my forearm, make myself keep quiet, doing that, not crying; gnashing hard with my gapped teeth until the dotted “O” sunk in because I couldn’t hold my breath, so had to clench my skin while no sobs flayed my lungs: those lightless rooms where loud girls kept themselves, and stayed unsorry.