

Lesson #2: “the mother” by Gwendolyn Brooks¹

Abortions will not let you forget.
 You remember the children you got that you did not get,
 The damp small pulps with a little or with no hair,
 The singers and workers that never handled the air.
 You will never neglect or beat
 Them, or silence or buy with a sweet.
 You will never wind up the sucking-thumb
 Or scuttle off ghosts that come.
 You will never leave them, controlling your luscious sigh,
 Return for a snack of them, with gobbling mother-eye.

I have heard in the voices of the wind the voices of my dim killed children.
 I have contracted. I have eased
 My dim dears at the breasts they could never suck.
 I have said, Sweets, if I sinned, if I seized
 Your luck
 And your lives from your unfinished reach,
 If I stole your births and your names,
 Your straight baby tears and your games,
 Your stilted or lovely loves, your tumults, your marriages, aches, and your deaths,
 If I poisoned the beginnings of your breaths,
 Believe that even in my deliberateness I was not deliberate.
 Though why should I whine,
 Whine that the crime was other than mine?--
 Since anyhow you are dead.
 Or rather, or instead,
 You were never made.
 But that too, I am afraid,
 Is faulty: oh, what shall I say, how is the truth to be said?
 You were born, you had body, you died.
 It is just that you never giggled or planned or cried.

Believe me, I loved you all.
 Believe me, I knew you, though faintly, and I loved, I loved you
 All.

¹ Brooks, Gwendolyn. “the mother.” *Blacks*. Chicago: The David Company, 1988. 21-22.; first published in *A Street in Bronzeville*. New York: Harper & Brothers, 1945. 3.