Gwendolyn Brooks, "The Boy Died in My Alley"

to Running Boy

The Boy died in my alley

without my Having Known.

Policeman said, next morning,

"Apparently died Alone."

“You heard a shot?" Policeman said.

Shots I hear and Shots I hear.

I never see the Dead.

The Shot that killed him yes I heard

as I heard the Thousand shots before;

careening tinnily down the nights

across my years and arteries.

Policeman pounded on my door.

“Who is it?" "POLICE!" Policeman yelled.

"A Boy was dying in your alley.

A Boy is dead, and in your alley.

And have you known this Boy before?"

I have known this Boy before.

I have known this boy before, who ornaments my alley.

I never saw his face at all.

I never saw his futurefall.

But I have known this Boy.

I have always heard him deal with death.

I have always heard the shout, the volley.

I have closed my heart-ears late and early.

And I have killed him ever.

I joined the Wild and killed him

with knowledgeable unknowing.

I saw where he was going.

I saw him Crossed. And seeing,

did not take him down.

He cried not only "Father!"

but "Mother!

Sister!

Brother."

The cry climbed up the alley.

It went up to the wind.

It hung upon the heaven

for a long

stretch-strain of Moment.

The red floor of my alley

is a special speech to me.