

## The Poem Stays

## The Poem Stays

*Abortions will not let you forget.*  
Gwendolyn Brooks

When she wrote about the damp small pulps  
in 1945, it was her first book,

and she was black, twenty, small. And she was a woman.

The editor said, Miss Brooks, please remove this

poem, and she said, The poem stays.

In those days, editors descended from a long train

full of men who lived in houses where things unspoken  
happened, speeding away from things beginning to turn.

I like to think of them standing in Random House,  
her little sheaf inside a warehouse of stacked words.

What is there to say about a poem complete  
in its understanding of what never was

by a writer who would not be shaped by silence.

Of two people in a dim room, one in white

shirtsleeves, one adjusting her hat before she steps  
out to the sidewalk and squints up at the sun.