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1. From The Coptic

Stevie Smith (1902-1971)

Three angels came to the red red clay
 Where in a heap it formless lay,

Stand up, stand up! thou lazy red clay
 Stand up and be Man this happy day.

Oh in its bones the red clay groaned
 And why should I do such a thing? It
 said,
 And take such a thing on my downy
 head?

Then the first angel stood forth and said,

Thou shalt have happiness, thou shalt
 have pain,
 And each shall fall turn and about again,
 And no man shall say
 when the day shall fall
 That thou shalt be happy
 or not at all.

And the second angel said much the
 same
 While the red clay lay flat in the falling
 rain,
 Crying, I will stay clay and take no
 blame.

Then the third angel rose up and said,
 Listen thou clay, raise thy downy head,
 When thou hast heard what I have to
 say
 Thou shalt rise Man and go man's way.

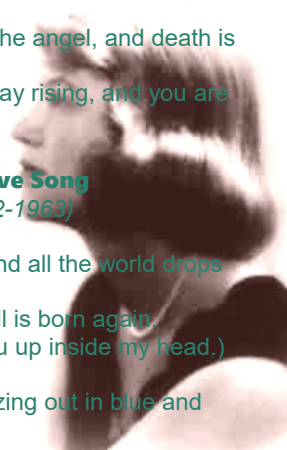
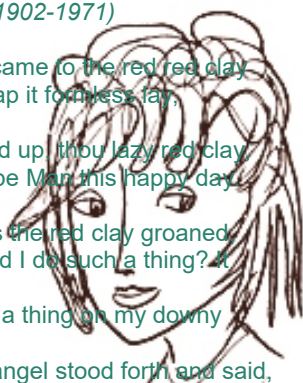
What have you to promise? the red clay
 moans,
 What have you in store for my future
 bones?
 I am Death, said the angel, and death is
 the end,
 I am Man, cries clay rising, and you are
 my friend.

2. Mad Girl's Love Song

Sylvia Plath (1932-1963)

"I shut my eyes and all the world drops
 dead;
 I lift my lids and all is born again.
 (I think I made you up inside my head.)"

The stars go waltzing out in blue and
 red,



And arbitrary blackness gallops in:
 I shut my eyes and all the world drops
 dead.

I dreamed that you bewitched me into
 bed
 And sung me moon-struck, kissed me
 quite insane.
 (I think I made you up inside my head.)
 God topples from the sky, hell's fires
 fade:
 Exit seraphim and Satan's men:
 I shut my eyes and all the world drops
 dead.

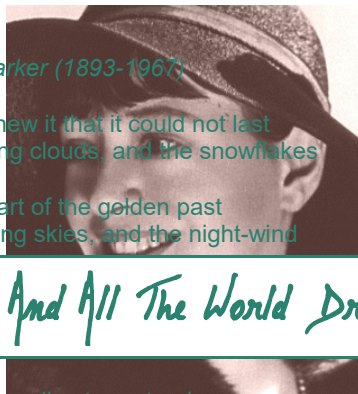
I fancied you'd return the way you said,
 But I grow old and I forget your name.
 (I think I made you up inside my head.)

I should have loved a thunderbird
 instead;
 At least when spring comes they roar
 back again.
 I shut my eyes and all the world drops
 dead.
 (I think I made you up inside my head.)"

3. Nocturne – Homage To My Hips

Nocturne
Dorothy Parker (1893-1967)

Always I knew it that it could not last
 (Gathering clouds, and the snowflakes
 flying),
 Now it is part of the golden past
 (Darkening skies, and the night-wind



I Shut My Eyes And All The World Drops Dead

sighing);
 It is but cowardice to pretend.
 Cover with ashes our love's cold
 crater –
 Always I've known that it had to end
 Sooner or later.

Always I knew it would come like this
 (Pattering rain, and the grasses
 springing),
 Sweeter to you is a new love's kiss
 (Flickering sunshine, and young birds
 singing).

Gone are the raptures that once we
 knew,
 Now you are finding a new love
 greater –
 Well, I'll be doing the same thing, too,
 Sooner or later.

Homage to My Hips
Lucille Clifton (b. 1936)

these hips are big hips.
 they need space to
 move around in.
 they don't fit into little
 petty places. these hips
 are free hips.
 they don't like to be held back.
 these hips have never been enslaved,
 they go where they want to go



they do what they want to do.
 these hips are mighty hips.
 these hips are magic hips.
 i have known them
 to put a spell on a man and
 spin him like a top!

4. Interior

Dorothy Parker

Her mind lives in a quiet room,
 A narrow room, and tall,
 With pretty lamps to quench the gloom
 And mottoes on the wall.
 There all the things are waxen neat
 And set in decorous lines;
 And there are posies, round and sweet,
 And little, straightened vines.

Her mind lives tidily, apart
 From cold and noise and pain,
 And bolts the door against her heart,
 Out wailing in the rain.

5. I felt a Funeral, in my Brain

Emily Dickinson (1830-1886)

I felt a Funeral, in my Brain,
 And Mourners to and fro
 Kept treading - treading - till it seemed
 That Sense was breaking through -

And when they all were seated,
 A Service, like a Drum -
 Kept beating - beating - till I thought
 My Mind was going numb -

And then I heard them
 lift a Box
 And creak across my Soul
 With those same Boots of Lead, again,
 Then Space - began to toll,

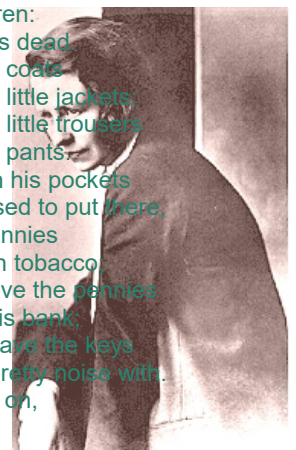
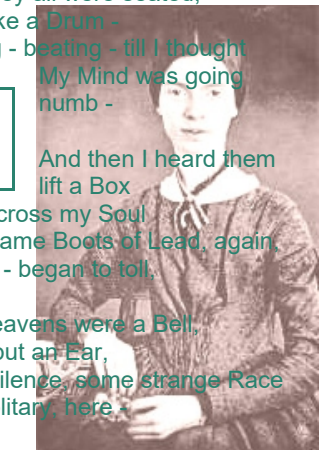
As all the Heavens were a Bell,
 And Being, but an Ear,
 And I, and Silence, some strange Race
 Wrecked, solitary, here -

And then a Plank in Reason, broke,
 And I dropped down, and down -
 And hit a World, at every plunge,
 And Finished knowing - then -

6. Lament

Edna St. Vincent Millay (1892-1950)

Listen, children:
 Your father is dead
 From his old coats
 I'll make you little jackets;
 I'll make you little trousers
 From his old pants.
 There'll be in his pockets
 Things he used to put there,
 Keys and pennies
 Covered with tobacco.
 Dan shall have the pennies
 To save in his bank;
 Anne shall have the keys
 To make a pretty noise with.
 Life must go on,



And the dead be forgotten;
Life must go on,
Though good men die;
Anne, eat your breakfast;
Dan, take your medicine;
Life must go on;
I forget just why.

7. Hatred – Secret

Hatred
Gwendolyn Bennett (1902-1981)

I shall hate you
Like a dart of singing steel
Shot through still air
At even-tide,
Or solemnly
As pines are sober
When they stand etched
Against the sky.
Hating you shall be a game
Played with cool hands
And slim fingers.
Your heart will yearn
For the lonely splendor
Of the pine tree
While rekindled fires
In my eyes
Shall wound you like swift arrows.
Memory will lay its hands
Upon your breast
And you will understand
My hatred.

Secret
Gwendolyn Bennett

I shall make a song like your hair . . .
Gold-woven with shadows green-tinged,
And I shall play with my song
As my fingers might play with your hair.
Deep in my heart
I shall play with my song of you,
Gently. . . .
I shall laugh
At its sensitive lustre . . .
I shall wrap my song in a blanket,
Blue like your eyes are blue,
With tiny shots of silver.
I shall wrap it caressingly,
Tenderly. . . .
I shall sing a lullaby
To the song I have made
Of your hair and eyes . . .
And you will never know
That deep in my heart
I shelter a song for you
Secretly.

8. The Mother
Gwendolyn Brooks (1917-2000)

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.

9. Song
Gwendolyn Bennett

I am weaving a song of waters,
Shaken from firm, brown limbs,
Or heads thrown back in irreverent
mirth.
My song has the lush sweetness
Of moist, dark lips
Where hymns keep company
With old forgotten banjo songs.
Abandon tells you
That I sing the heart of race
While sadness whispers
That I am the cry of a soul. . . .

A-shoutin' in de ole camp-meeting-
place,
A-strummin' o' de ole banjo.
Singin' in de moonlight,
Sobbin' in de dark.
Singin', sobbin', strummin' slow . . .
Singin' slow, sobbin' low.
Strummin', strummin', strummin'
slow . . .
Words are bright bugles
That make the shining for my song,
And mothers hold down babies
To dark, warm breasts
To make my singing sad.

A dancing girl with swaying hips
Sets mad the queen in the harlot's eye.
Praying slave
Jazz-band after
Breaking heart
To the time of laughter . . .
Clinking chains and minstrelsy
Are wedged fast with melody.
A praying slave
With a jazz-band after . . .
Singin' slow, sobbin' low.
Sun-baked lips will kiss the earth.
Throats of bronze will burst with mirth.
Sing a little faster,
Sing a little faster,
Sing!

10. Pursuit
Sylvia Plath

*Dans le fond des forêts votre image me
suit*

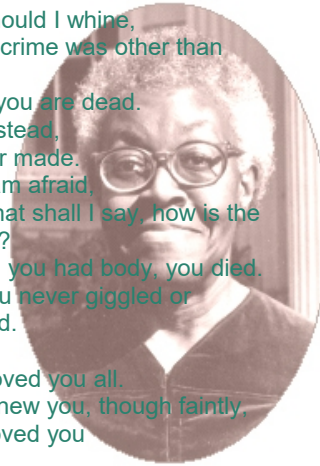
Racine

There is a panther stalks me down:
One day I'll have my death of him;
His greed has set the woods aflame,
He prowls more lordly than the sun.
Most soft, most suavely glides that step,
Advancing always at my back;
From gaunt hemlock, rooks croak
havoc:
The hunt is on, and sprung the trap.
Flayed by thorns I trek the rocks,
Haggard through the hot white noon.
Along red network of his veins
What fires run, what craving wakes?

Insatiate, he ransacks the land
Condemned by our ancestral fault,
Crying: blood, let blood be spilt;
Meat must glut his mouth's raw wound.
Keen the rending teeth and sweet
the singeing fury of his fur;
His kisses parch, each paw's a briar,
Doom consummates that appetite.
In the wake of this fierce cat,
Kindled like torches for his joy,
Charred and ravened women lie,
Become his starving body's bait.

Now hills hatch menace, spawning
shade;
Midnight cloaks the sultry grove;
The black marauder, hauled by love
On fluent haunches, keeps my speed.
Behind snarled thickets of my eyes
Lurks the lithe one; in dreams' ambush
Bright those claws that mar the flesh
And hungry, hungry, those taut thighs.
His ardor snares me, lights the trees,
And I run flaring in my skin; what lull,
what cool can lap me in
When burns and brands that yellow
gaze?

I hurl my heart to halt his pace,
To quench his thirst I squander blood;



He eats, and still his need seeks food,
Compels a total sacrifice.
His voice waylays me, spells a trance,
The gutted forest falls to ash;
Appalled by secret want, I rush
From such assault of radiance.
Entering the tower of my fears,
I shut my doors on that dark guilt,
I bolt the door, each door I bolt.
Blood quickens, gonging in my ears:

The panther's tread is on the stairs,
Coming up and up the stairs.

