**The Child on the Cliffs**

Mother, the root of this little yellow flower

Among the stones has the taste of quinine.

Things are strange today on the cliff. The sun shines so bright,

And the grasshopper works at his sewing-machine

So hard. Here’s one on my hand, mother, look;

I lie so still. There’s one on your book.

But I have something to tell more strange. So leave

Your book to the grasshopper, mother dear,—

Like a green knight in a dazzling market-place,—

And listen now. Can you hear what I hear

Far out? Now and then the foam there curls

And stretches a white arm out like a girl’s.

Fishes and gulls ring no bells. There cannot be

A chapel or church between here and Devon,

With fishes or gulls ringing its bell,—hark!—

Somewhere under the sea or up in heaven.

“It’s the bell, my son, out in the bay

On the buoy. It does sound sweet today.”

Sweeter I never heard, mother, no, not in all Wales.

I should like to be lying under that foam,

Dead, but able to hear the sound of the bell,

And certain that you would often come

And rest, listening happily.

I should be happy if that could be.

—Edward Thomas

**Of Bright & Blue Birds & The Gala Sun**

Some things, niño, some things are like this,

That instantly and in themselves are gay

And you and I are such things, O most miserable . . .

For a moment they are gay and are a part

Of an element, the exactest element for us,

In which we pronounce joy like a word of our own.

It is there, being imperfect, and with these things

And erudite in happiness, with nothing learned,

That we are joyously ourselves and we think

Without the labor of thought, in that element,

And we feel, in a way apart, for a moment, as if

There was a bright *scienza* outside of ourselves,

A gaiety that is being, not merely knowing,

The will to be and to be total in belief,

Provoking a laughter, an agreement, by surprise.

—Wallace Stevens

**Born Yesterday**

*for Sally Amis*

Tightly-folded bud,

I have wished you something

None of the others would:

Not the usual stuff

About being beautiful,

Or running off a spring

Of innocence and love—

They will all wish you that,

And should it prove possible,

Well, you’re a lucky girl.

But if it shouldn’t, then

May you be ordinary;

Have, like other women,

An average of talents:

Not ugly, not good-looking,

Nothing uncustomary

To pull you off your balance,

That, unworkable itself,

Stops all the rest from working.

In fact, may you be dull—

If that is what a skilled,

Vigilant, flexible,

Unemphasised, enthralled

Catching of happiness is called.

—Philip Larkin

**The Frog Prince**

I am a frog

I live under a spell

I live at the bottom

Of a green well

And here I must wait

Until a maiden places me

On her royal pillow

And kisses me

In her father’s palace.

The story is familiar

Everybody knows it well

But do other enchanted people feel as nervous

As I do? The stories do not tell,

Ask if they will be happier

When the changes come

As already they are fairly happy

In a frog’s doom?

I have been a frog now

For a hundred years

And in all this time

I have not shed many tears,

I am happy, I like the life,

Can swim for many a mile

(When I have hopped to the river)

And am for ever agile.

And the quietness,

Yes, I like to be quiet

I am habituated

To a quiet life,

But always when I think these thoughts

As I sit in my well

Another thought comes to me and says:

It is part of the spell

To be happy

To work up contentment

To make much of being a frog

To fear disenchantment.

Says, It will be *heavenly*

To be set free,

Cries, *Heavenly*the girl who disenchants

And the royal times, *heavenly*,

And I think it will be.

Come then, royal girl and royal times,

Come quickly,

I can be happy until you come

But I cannot be heavenly,

Only disenchanted people

Can be heavenly.

—Stevie Smith

**Elevators I**

An enormous list:

coming and goings, nights and mornings,

births and deaths

and rebirths and second deaths

and little lapses like grace notes

where sadness surges in:

sadness surges in,

a passing-windshield light-effect

on the ceiling.

Would you prefer it some other way?

I’m versatile.

I’m hungry.

I’m hot.

I’m not really sad either.

I’m happy, it’s just that this happiness

isn’t the happiness I expected or sought

and for a time I confused

this happiness with the sadness

I thought I was experiencing.

I feel a lot better now.

Oooh. That should give you

an indication of the improvement.

Oooh, there it goes again.

And again,

only I didn’t say ‘Oooh’ this time.

I can’t explain it,

but it feels terrific,

like a totally fulfilled infatuation

or a California Lifestyle apartment ad.

—Donald Britton