**Homage to J.B. Priestley\* by Deborah Tyler-Bennett**

They’re falling through old nets again, the Eva Smiths

and Daisy Rentons, official corridors echoing progress

of girls sent chasing forms. Life picked-over one quid

at a time. ‘No computer access,’ finds them sneered at.

Today’s moral chorus is less dinner guests, more *Gogglebox*.

Sofa jurors scanning *Benefit Street*s for scroungers.

Easy saying what we’d have done as crisps pass round,

as glasses fill with red.

Food-banks strain, a girl just out

of school finds steady work slips through tired fingers,

factory floor, then gift shop giving way to grubby

club-back assignations.

Catch Daisy Rentons, Eva Smiths through rain,

*The Arctic Monkeys* sing how scummy men

view girls who walk too fast, arms folded,

shoulders hunched.

Morning, she gazes grey water seeing

hope’s flotsam, wearing last night’s papery smile,

catch her before she’s laid bare below

a morgue’s dissecting light.

Implications fester, mobiles chime, tweets or

rapped doors breaking *Jeremy Kyle*’s staccato.

A nation opens up, as all of our Inspectors

come to call.

*\*Daisy Renton/ Eva Smith are names taken by the dead girl in J.B. Priestley’s play,* An Inspector Calls*, first performed in 1945, the play being set in 1912.* **Copyright Deborah Tyler-Bennett.**

**First World War Sequence by Deborah Tyler-Bennett**

**Sons of Summer\***

Long since it fanned that post-war wedding,

(girls’ skirt-lengths not quite flapper,

matriarchal tweeds stubbornly Victorian)

the tree stands, canopy for further

christenings, nuptials, wakes.

How many groups posed underneath its awning?

Step time backwards from that wedding,

wayfarers sharing, with Edward Thomas,

worries on behalf of best loved fields

and who would tend, with farmhands

gone for soldiers

later, girls circling toddlers round the trunk,

telling they had wedding pictures here,

smallish gathering, after Pals marched away,

sun-blushed lads once grateful for oak’s shade,

picture’s edges absence stained.

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**Faulty**

**Deborah Tyler-Bennett**

Homeless tonight, that gently-spoken boy,

card-bed blocking outer service doors,

from marble dining-rooms floats light applause …

bar chattering with fabricated joy.

Polite, old-fashioned, coy,

he won’t beg money. Freezing on harsh floors –

coins, conversation, pause,

then walk away. ‘Goodnight, softly spoken boy,

this isn’t how young years are meant to be,

so many childhood promises get broken’ …

From a poster, tribute-actors frown,

*Faulty Towers* – *A Dine Out Comedy*

Basil, Sybil, Manuel – Antics frozen,

implying crazy worlds turned upside-down.

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**POEM AND PAINTING 9**

**The Stray Dog**

**Hui-Ling Chen**

**Picture: “Launce’s Substitute for Proteus’s Dog” by Augustus Leopold Egg.**

**This year sees the 20th anniversary of Animal Friends, founded in 1998, one of many charities concerned with Animal Rights. 2018 is also the year of the Animal Welfare (Licensing of Activities Involving Animals) (England) Regulations 2018, concerned with dog and other animal welfare.**

*In her poem, related to one of the dogs in Augustus Leopold Egg’s picture, Hui-Ling reflects on the need to be aware of our duty to uphold animal rights.*

Maybe I am wrong,

to think he cannot survive on the street,

that black medium size dog.

He is used to the noise, the cruelty, and the neglect.

It is a natural process of life, survival of the fittest.

When we look into each other’s eyes,

on this night on the street,

he and I have the same feeling of suffering,

but I understand why, he doesn’t.

In this moment, I know his right

will always be my duty.

**Copyright: Hui-Ling Chen**

**POEM AND PAINTING 10**

**A Knitting Afternoon**

**Hui-Ling Chen**

**Picture: Mary Isabella Grant Knitting a Shawl by Sir Francis Grant.**

**Of relevance is the Human Rights Act 1998, Article 8, which is concerned with rights to privacy in domestic life.**

*“A Knitting Afternoon” is a picture about an aspect of private domestic life, as indicated in Hui-Ling’s poem.*

She was knitting wishes.

Her dress reflected her expectations for the quiet country afternoon.

She sat still, concentrating on the imagination of knitting her future.

Her enjoyment is framed in time, painted with lines and colours.

How would she know, on her normal knitting afternoon,

She shared her pleasure with uncountable eyes?

**Copyright Hui-Ling Chen**

**POEM AND PAINTING 12**

**“Perseus on Pegasus, Hastening to the Rescue of Andromeda”**

**Richard Byrt**

**Painting: “Perseus on Pegasus, Hastening to the Rescue of Andromeda” by Lord Frederic Leighton.**

**In 1918, 100 years ago, some women in the UK were given the vote – but only if they were 30 or over, and owned a certain amount of property.**

*In this poem, Andromeda reflects on women’s rights to make their own decisions and not have to be subject to paternalistic actions and attitudes.*

Why he should think princesses like me

want to be rescued, I’ll never know.

He always has to be so active,

Frantically rushing around rescuing maidens.

There was I, minding my own business

about to swim away from Cetus, the sea monster,

when along comes His Lordship,

offspring of Danae and omnipotent Zeus.

Yes, Him, Perseus, looking very manly,

showing off his well-toned torso,

wearing almost nothing except a drape

chastely placed, and bearing the head

of Medusa. There he was on Pegasus,

his white charger, insisting on rescuing me,

even though I told him I’m perfectly able

to grapple with Krakens any day,

and didn’t want to be rescued.

But he took no notice, grabbed me,

lifted me onto Pegasus. Believe me,

when you’re soaring to the Heavens with Perseus,

you’re in for a bumpy ride.

**Copyright Richard Byrt**

**POEM AND PAINTING 13**

**The Woman You Left Behind**

**Richard Byrt (with Zee Oliver’s suggestions)**

**Painting: The Girl I Left Behind Me” by Charles Green.**

**In 1928, 90 years ago, all UK women of 21 or over, were given the vote.**

*In this poem, a woman asserts her rights to independence and to make her decisions, at a time when those rights weren’t (and often, still aren’t), recognised.*

I’m glad you left me behind.

All that manly swagger.

All that talk: Your right to fight.

Your right to serve your country.

Your right to serve your Queen.

Your right to earn your shilling.

Yes, I’m glad you left me behind.

I’m not one of those girls who cling,

Cling to their soldier lovers, or cry

When they march away. I’m no longer that girl.

I’m the woman you left behind.

Yes, I’m glad you left me behind

To enjoy my right to a life of peace.

My right to earn my shilling.

My right to serve my Queen.

My right not to be told what to do

By my soldier lover. Good luck, go to your war.

I’m glad I am no longer that girl

But the woman you’ve left.

The woman you left behind you.

**Copyright Richard Byrt**

**POEM AND PAINTING 14**

**A Right to Life**

**(To commemorate 70 years of the NHS)**

**Richard Byrt**

**This year is the 70th anniversary of the founding of the NHS in 1948.**

**Painting: “The Good Samaritan” by William Small.**

*Nowadays, we can easily take our NHS for granted. This poem considers the reliance of poorer people on the charity of “good Samaritan” doctors in Victorian times. Rights to life are considered from the imagined perspective of the doctor in the picture.*

Suddenly, she stumbled again by the side of the road,

fell senseless. Sal volatile could not revive her.

He ran to the physician’s house in the village.

“I have no money to pay you, Sir.”

He grabbed his coat and stethoscope,

gave her a salve, stopped a horse and cart,

ordered her to be driven, post-haste, to the poor law hospital.

“I have no money to pay you, Sir.”

“No matter, she is your wife. Even though you are not the father,

she and her unborn child have a right

to their health. A right to their life.”

**Copyright Richard Byrt**

**POEM AND PAINTING 14**

**Painting: “The Good Samaritan” by William Small**

The tophat kneels upon the grass

examining a gypsy girl.

Would his kind act thus today

in our postmodern world?

Post-modern, yes, and now post-Truth,

they teach us grim necessity

as mother of loss of invention,

and loss too of compassion.

What would that genteel doctor say

could he see such sad regression.

**Copyright Stephen Wylie**