

Transmission Report

It's the year two thousand and twenty two
on planet Earth, apparently, and I'm careering
through time and space, careening
between galaxies, scanning the frequencies.
The weather is mostly cosmic drizzle,
and the media mostly celestial drivel,
but for a century now I've picked up a station
called 'the BBC'. And despite occasional interference
have experienced
deep vibrations
in my brain cells, tear ducts and funny bones.
As a bonus,
it annoys the hell out of tyrants and moguls.

But what is it, this BBC, this corporation
with nothing to flog, this *soul of the nation*?
If there's some world order it's trying to favour
then it's a complete failure:
just recently I learnt all there is to know
about the sex life
of the natterjack toad,
then witnessed war,
then considered the meaning of meaning of life,
then deep-dived beneath Antarctic ice.
Then watched a pride of lionesses
make a football stadium's grassy plain
its natural terrain.

Above gridlocked airwaves
and channels jammed with cross-talk and static
I set my clock and steer
by a signal that pulses keen and measured and clear.

Simon Armitage

A poem commissioned to celebrate the 100th anniversary of the BBC.