

Carol Ann Duffy

Translating The English 1989 (1989)

Welcome to my country! We have here Edwina Currie¹
 and The Sun newspaper. Much excitement.
 Also the weather has been most improving
 even in February. Daffodils. (Wordsworth. Up North.) If you like
 Shakespeare or even Opera we have too the Black Market.
 For two hundred quids we are talking Les Miserables,
 nods being as good as winks. Don't eat the eggs.
 Wheel-clamp. Dogs. Vagrants. A tour of our wonderful
 capital city is not be missed. The Fergie,
 The Princess Di and the football hooligan, truly you will
 like it here, Squire. Also we can be talking crack, smack
 And Carling Black Label if we are so inclined. Don't
 drink the H2O. All very proud we now have
 a green Prime Minister. What colour yours? Binbags.
 You will be knowing of Charles Dickens and Terry Wogan²
 and Scotland. All this can be arranged for cash no questions.
 Ireland not on. Fish and chips and the Official Secrets Act
 second to none. Here we go. We are liking
 a smashing good time like estate agents and Neighbours,
 also Brookside for we are allowed four Channels.
 How many you have? Last night of Proms. Andrew
 Lloyd-Webber.³ Jeffrey Archer.⁴ Plenty culture you will be agreeing.
 Also history and buildings. The Houses of Lords. Docklands.
 Many thrills and high interest rates for own good. Muggers.
 Much lead in petrol. Filth. Rule Britannia and child abuse.
 Electronic tagging, Boss, ten pints and plenty rape. Queen Mum.
 Channel Tunnel. You get here fast no problem to my country
 my country my country welcome welcome welcome.

¹ British minister for agriculture who famously told the truth about salmonella contamination in eggs.

² A chat and game show host; also a dj.

³ Composer of extremely popular musicals such as *Evita* and *Cats*.

⁴ Ex Conservative Party MP and popular novelist.

Words, wide night (1990)

Somewhere on the other side of this wide night
and the distance between us, I am thinking of you.
The room is turning slowly away from the moon.

This is pleasurable. Or shall I cross that out and say
it is sad? In one of the tenses I singing
an impossible song of desire that you cannot hear.

La lala la. See? I close my eyes and imagine the dark hills I would have to
cross
to reach you. For I am in love with you

and this is what it is like or what it is like in words.