

Susan Bradley Smith

“His name was Honey”: Bi-Coastal Communication in the Age of Otherwise Unemployment

I’m English, my husband said, annoyed
at his university’s pompous treatment
of “one minute’s silence” for Remembrance
Day. It’s not the 11th hour of the 11th day
of the 11th month in England. He was feeling
this sorely and unreasonably, being most put
out by the newly announced slogan of his
employer, it now being officially a place
where “Great Minds Collide.” I don’t
“collide” with anyone at work, he said, nor
do I collude with constructed silences.
Who writes this shit?

His name was Honey, I said, the
Australian journalist on Fleet Street
who’d convinced King George that
silence and remembrance was a
good publicity stunt. Besides, I said,
it’s only 8am here on the west coast
of this vast “colony” that irritates you so.
If we keep this conversation up
there’ll be silence rocking all over
the world. Like the helicopters
this morning, protecting Prince
Charles and Camilla and their pretty
poppies on their visit to the not-Scottish
Perth. It was like Vietnam out there
by the Swan River this morning,
I said, feeling stupid, just stopping
myself from pushing the metaphor
north of Capricorn, to our current
apocalypse: him, there; me here.

Dry toast makes a lot of noise when munched (facetime is not flattering to the upper-middle-aged) but a kinder sound no doubt than the collapse and crush of bones in coffins. Silence is rarely polite—hurricanes are merely ghosts of such suffocation. Never a monarchist before sundown, “Fuck the Royal Family” he offered, then, “My all-time favourite Gibson Le Paul guitar’s colour is called Honey Burst.” This, just I’d been about to say goodbye. Which I soon did, grateful for our fresh armistice.