

A Phenomenology of Alzheimer's Disease

Here is the great and terrible mystery of the illness,
when the air is hazed with after-rain, the trees occult
and innerly-green with it, and a vast dark romance

of bluebells glimmers, hallucination in the heart
of the beech wood – was this the last time,
I ask myself (unsteady among the slippage

of tenses), when you will exclaim at the sky,
gesturing at the calligraphy of contrails in the far blue,
or will murmur some words that mean 'beautiful'

while you wave at the garlands of travellers' joy
winding through the hedge we walk past arm-in-arm?
Will this have been the last time you say my name

as if you still knew me? (And what are these half-thoughts
if not a half-wish for an ending?) I'm begging you
Look at the bluebells but you do not choose to hear me.

I saw an exhibition once of things that were made
just to be broken, for the sound of their breaking.
I stood there listening for as long as it took.