

## Visiting Helen in the Afternoon

*i.m. Helen Cadbury 1965-2017*

I have washed my hands before  
the first set of doors,  
sanitised them before the second,

I have passed the dying,  
their oxygen, their drips,  
their hushed visitors and found you here,  
still you, giddy from Oromorph.

You tell me you get Byron now  
and I joke that he had bowel trouble too  
or was that Coleridge,

though I don't feel like joking,  
what I feel like is hugging.  
What I feel like is running a mile.

We play the denial game  
though afterwards I wonder  
was this kind of me, or cowardly?

You say on steroids the ideas  
for stories just keep coming,  
one every minute. You make notes  
so they don't escape.

You worry that I've cycled without a helmet,  
I worry I may have stayed too long.  
You look at the patch of blue,

the white clouds at the top of the window  
where the glass isn't frosted  
and say 'that's the real world,  
my own bit of it, everything blue and clear.'

*Carole Bromley*