Some children

would only sleep with the windows wide open, as if lying under the stars or out in the street.

couldn't settle except with a breeze coming in (occasional hailstones, stray bullet-fire, bricks)

were afraid they'd lose part of themselves in the black-out

so they lay there alert for the sound of the adults safely back from the dark, for the hooves of the horses

that leapt from the paintings downstairs to roam with the foxes and night birds, all the souls who'd been turned into trees.

Every infant kept vigil, awake and on the *qui-vive*: who goes there, what is that company out there?

At this latitude

Polar day is such a magical time - people walk by the lake together until late, enjoying the warmth

and the golden light. Sometimes it's hard to sleep, even in imperfect surrender, but people

are happy and the light is so golden together out late by the lake. Polar night creeps in slowly like a discreet

arresting officer, till one morning round coffee time you understand there will be no more light

until next year, like climbing alone into an MRI scanner, the cold slicing through you like meat at the deli counter

the fear that the sun will never return. Time passes into a blender. People grow feral. It's hard

not to let the bitter winds take you. Is it wrong to resist, to desire to live elsewhere than this?

Marathon

Across this field the farmer's left a track for you to race down sky wheat sky far hedges banks of remedies a corridor you run each visiting night to see her nil by mouth no flowers

Around you in the tumbling air the plants secure their future lives as down the hollow-way its leafy tracts and ducts you run through double doors to raise funds catch a person leaving

You'd run for years if need be x-ray penicillin x-ray this sea of corn you'd swim it like Leander there and back each evening guided by the light beam at her window laser chemo laser

outpaced at last by racing winds the lamp extinguished questions still to ask why all the dust the flies what are your reasons for running

The Gloves

Mrs Dalloway said she would buy the gloves herself 'Mrs Dalloway in Bond Street' - V Woolf, 1923

Some days were long, and up to the elbow, a mix of polyester silk and cloud cover -

sunless gloves, but still offering something, protection for the delicate wrist-parts of the mind

so that as we walked the city, masonry falling around us, tears rising to our eyes,

sap rose also to our fingertips, and though no bees or butterflies settled on our palms

leaf buds burst through the stitching, papery new skins of delphiniums,

sweet peas, irises blossoming, saving us from arriving at evening empty-handed again.