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.