

Resistance

It's war again: a family
carries its family out of a pranged house
under a burning thatch.

The next scene smacks
of archive newsreel: platforms and trains
(never again, never again),

toddlers passed
over heads and shoulders, lifetimes stowed
in luggage racks.

It's war again: unmistakable smoke
on the near horizon mistaken
for thick fog. Fingers crossed.

An old blue tractor
tows an armoured tank
into no-man's land.

It's the ceasefire hour: godspeed the columns
of winter coats and fur-lined hoods,
the high-wire walk

over buckled bridges
managing cases and bags,
balancing west and east - godspeed.

It's war again: the woman in black
gives sunflower seeds to the soldier, insists
his marrow will nourish

the national flower. In dreams
let bullets be birds, let cluster bombs
burst into flocks.

False news is news
with the pity
edited out. It's war again:

an air-raid siren can't fully mute
the cathedral bells -
let's call that hope.

Simon Armitage