

FROM THE THIRD FLOOR OF THE DUFF-BABY HOUSE SANDWICH ONTARIO

I stand at a north window
on the third floor
of this stately house
imagine families
crossing the river in winter cold
hauling supplies
loaded up on sleds

refugees of war
desperate for shelter, food, warmth

seeking that one thin horizontal line
of eerie silence stretched
across a flat skyline —
courthouse, church steeple, graveyard

and hear curses and laughter
in the icy British stillness

I imagine soldiers dining here
in frivolous candle light
fretting over a morning assault
fearing traitors and spies and assassins
feeling spooked by a cold January moon

From this third floor
I imagine men and women and children
slipping across a windswept river
with daytime collapsing all around
yet somehow lifting themselves
despite this meddlesome burden of fear

Then suddenly I wake from my reverie

to the carpenters
hammering down the roof
from a cannonball
that crashed through
in a battle that won nothing
for nobody