

# Pax

Helena Neufeld

Professor (Canadian)  
asks if I have anything to add  
to his definition of patriotism.  
Chides that I (the Yank)  
should know,  
And once I did.

Once, the line was:  
Patriotism is loving your  
country despite its cracks and  
daring to mend them.  
I knew this in my bones.

I have spend long,  
blue-lit nights trying to  
predict the future.  
I have spent cold Tuesdays  
watching maps like salvation.  
I have turned away  
altogether and gone to bed.

I know how fast things go south,  
crumbling and weeping.  
Reading and watching,  
silent prayers in a house of  
nonbelievers.

The truth is,  
I have nothing much  
to say about patriotism.  
We tear ourselves apart.  
Once I'd have defended  
my country to this room  
of foreigners.  
Once I'd have drawn the party  
line in the sand, said that  
sometimes patriotism  
is blindness.

There is no line anymore,  
No bone-deep knowing, no sand.  
Just the bitter dregs  
of the *Pax Americana*.

We are all of us  
yearning for a time  
that never happened,  
a peace that did not exist.