

POEM FOR AMERICA

America
my almost country
tis of thee
I might have sung.

"We are not Canadians,
we are British North Americans,"
my New Brunswick anti-confederation uncle said.
"Maybe we should secede
and go back where we belong."

Only who belongs there
any more?

In Cambridge I lived on Tory Row
and was at home and homesick.
"Why didn't you Canadians
come in with us?"
my room mate once asked me.
"But we weren't Canadians then,"
I said,
"We were you.
Why did you leave?"

When I think of America
I think of the other Americans
George the Third's persistent subjects
buried in loyalist graveyards.
How many of them died
their first cold starving stubborn winter
away from home?
A Revolution is a civil war.

America is a land of civil war.
Also it is (or was) Utopia.

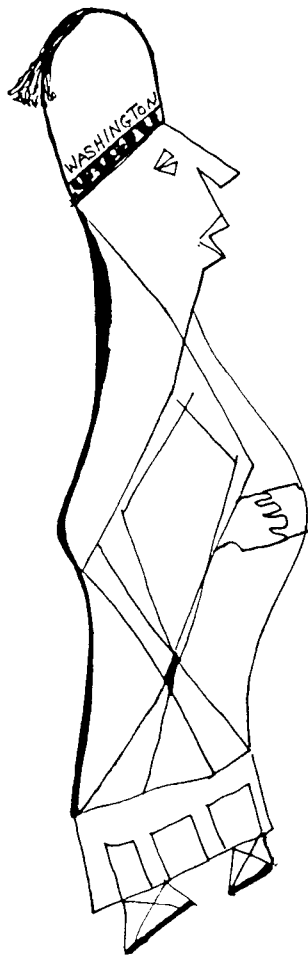
I did not choose Utopia.
Therefore I did not choose you.

I chose instead
non-perfectibility, the non-ideal,
and this non-country for which I half apologize.
(My roots are in a province
where people say
"I am going to Canada"
and I live in another
where people blame the East for hail and duststorms.)

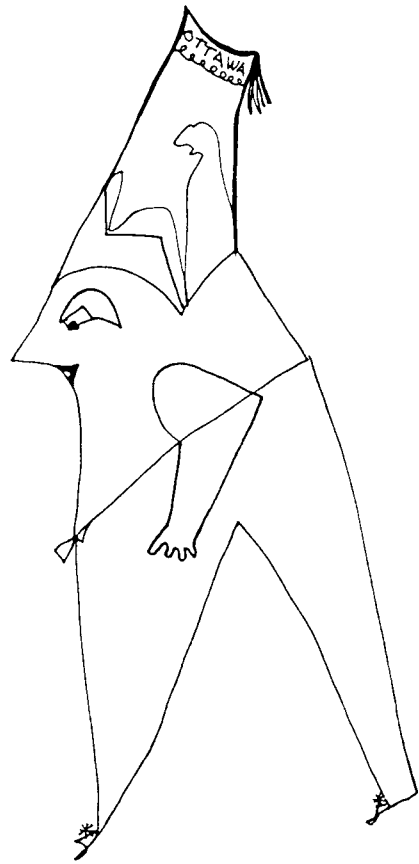
I did not choose you
and yet, America, I am torn
I love
I grieve for you

my dear my feared
my nearly
native land.

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45



46