

"America" by Tony Hoagland

1. Noun Plural
2. Verb Present Ends In S
3. Adjective
4. Article
5. First Person Singular Pronoun
6. Third Person Male Singular Pronoun
7. Object Of The Preposition
8. Gerund

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Then one of the _____ Noun Plural _____ with blue hair and a tongue stud

_____ Verb Present ends in S _____ that America is for him a maximum-security prison

Whose walls are made of RadioShacks and Burger Kings, and _____ Adjective _____ episodes

Where you can't tell the show from _____ Article _____ commercials,

And as _____ First Person Singular Pronoun _____ consider how to express how full of crap I think _____ Third Person Male _____

_____ Singular Pronoun _____ is,

He says that even when he's driving to the _____ Object of the Preposition _____ in his Isuzu

Trooper with a gang of his friends, _____ Gerund _____ rap music pour over them

Like a boiling Jacuzzi full of ballpeen hammers, even then he feels

Buried alive, captured and suffocated in the folds

Of the thick satin quilt of America

And I wonder if this is a legitimate category of pain,

or whether he is just spin doctoring a better grade,

And then I remember that when I stabbed my father in the dream last night,

It was not blood but money

That gushed out of him, bright green hundred-dollar bills

Spilling from his wounds, and--this is the weird part--,

He gasped "Thank god--those Ben Franklins were

Clogging up my heart--

And so I perish happily,

Freed from that which kept me from my liberty"--

Which was when I knew it was a dream, since my dad

Would never speak in rhymed couplets,

And I look at the student with his acne and cell phone and phony ghetto clothes

And I think, "I am asleep in America too,

And I don't know how to wake myself either,"

And

I remember what Marx said near the end of his life:

"I was listening to the cries of the past,

When I should have been listening to the cries of the future."

But how could he have imagined 100 channels of 24-hour cable

Or what kind of nightmare it might be

When each day you watch rivers of bright merchandise run past you

And you are floating in your pleasure boat upon this river

Even while others are drowning underneath you

And you see their faces twisting in the surface of the waters

And yet it seems to be your own hand

Which turns the volume higher?