

Leigh Cooper, "America", *AmeriQuests* 13.2 (2017)

"America"

America I thought I liked you
It doesn't seem so anymore

Vast
Incomprehensible
Indefinable
More than meets the eye
But also animalistic, basic, rudimentary
Have we evolved?
No, I don't think so
Some days I think so
Mostly, I wonder
I wonder how our country can be so different - how can people be so different?
Does my experience, my America, come at the cost of other's experiences? Other's
Americas?

Existential questions about human nature and the nature of society have been filling my
mind recently
But really, can't we all just be good people?
My America isn't like the real America, so it would seem
Where does the goodness go? Where does it hide? It hides from Washington now, rests in
individuals where it grows
Not Hibernating - the individuals don't allow it to pass into the cave
I know it's there
But is it strong enough?
I want goodness back

Progression is such a tease
But - sometimes it stays?
I am confused
Who isn't confused? Those who watch Fox News
I suppose
Our president
He doesn't allow himself to be confused
That is some kind of America

My America seems to change like waves
Reality and realization of reality rise and fall in the way of grief

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The kind of grief of losing your loved one
What would I tell my father?
This can't be our America, this certainly wasn't his.
But America I don't want to grieve this loss - I'm not ready
I don't want you to be lost
America I thought I liked you
People need you

America you pathological liar
Oh, is that not really who you are? Is it just our president?
Does that make me feel better?

America I thought I liked you
I have no words
Belief.
It can be a scary thing
Words.
"What does it mean when he says words?" the reporter asked.
I smiled. I thought I knew what words meant
Can this be real?

What do you need? Medicine? More sweets?
It's like a puzzle

Why do so many people believe him?
Real policy from fake facts
Where does he get his information?
A president who gets his news from TV news
What the fuck
"The media's the opposition party," says Bannon
I'm not getting less scared

What can we do? Where can we go? Can we leave? I've always asked a lot of questions

I feel the need to think of positive things
To counteract
How can I say only the horror? Feel only the devastation? There are good people here,
too
But sometimes it's nicer to melt into the fear, the shock, the heartbreak

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These are thoughts. Just pieces. Not together - make you think of something else? Me, too.

Does that sound familiar?

A strong wind pushing under our wings, resilience bearing us forward - this we need.
America we need to like you

America I've followed you around, I've been here.

A little prodding. A hip-check here and there. Sometimes a hug.

Sometimes a raucous party, a celebration of you!

But you need some shoves, a smack to the face, a means to utilize my kickboxing practice.

It's how I feel America

But I want to love you. People want to love you.