



POETRY FOUNDATION

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Thinking American

BY HAYAN CHARARA

--For Dioniso D. Martinez

Take Detroit, where boys
 are manufactured into men, where
 you learn to think in American.
 You speak to no one unless someone
 speaks to you. Everyone is suspect:
baldheaded carriers from the post office;
old Polish ladies who swear
to Jesus, Joseph, and Mary;
your brother, especially your brother,
waiting in a long line for work.
 There's always a flip side.
 No matter what happens,
 tomorrow is a day away,
 or a gin bottle if you can't sleep,
 and if you stopped drinking,
 a pack of cigarettes. After that,
 you're on your own, you pack up
 and leave. You still call
 the city beside the strait home.
 Make no mistake, it's miserable.
 After all, you bought a one-way
 Greyhound ticket, cursed each
 and every pothole on the road out.
 But that's where you stood
 before a mirror in the dark,
 where you were too tired
 to complain. You never go back.
 Things could be worse. Maybe.
 Detroit is a shithole, it's where
 you were pulled from the womb
 into the streets. Listen,
 when I say Detroit, I mean any place.
 By thinking American, I mean made.

Prompt: The American Mind

~~Launch~~
Launch

What words or phrases would you use to describe the American Mind / character?

This author seems to think they are: conformists, tired, paranoid, false, confused, conflicted, strangely optimistic, strangely loyal.

the word implies that people are like cars, produced in a factory that turns out thousand of the same thing. with this word, the author has implied that individuality is dead - manufactured into men is also an example of alliteration

Suggests are paranoid about everything, everyone: people of different nationalities, religions, the poor, the government, even family.

suggests Americans have a fake optimism, one created by various addictions and clichés like "tomorrow is another day"

Americans confuse hate and love, love things that hurt them, hate things that help them (especially if those things aren't easy - road with potholes.)

Americans are conflicted about how they feel about themselves, their hometowns, etc.

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Prompt: Write a poem that captures the American Mindset based on the words and phrases you used in your launch - pay particular attention to imagery, detail, and music.