

why they all talk the same, like some sort of
religious cult which hopes to achieve a

oneness with God, or Nirvana, through a
repeated nonsensical mantra, and
someone got (even liked) the idea of
using real words but speaking them as if
they had no meaning. You know the voice? It
sounds like lapping waves — which would be fine, but

often they're speaking of anything but
water: the poem could be about a
drive-by shooting; still the voice they read it
with would shimmer like a silent cove and
lull the listener to sleep. Now then, if
this slow hypnosis is the purpose of

poetry, then what is the purpose of
sleeping pills? I don't mean to be rude, but
what's the reason for writing something if
you don't mean it enough to say in a
voice like you use for hailing a cab and
ordering toast and coffee — man if it

is your own poem you shouldn't speak it
so reverently, like the subject of
itself. I would admire your wit and
all if you were lampooning yourself, but
is that it, or is it how you think a
poem should be read? Hell, it's one thing if

you mean it, but if, as I suspect, it
's no more than a regurgitation of
the others, it sucks. No buts, ifs, or ands.

WALKING IN TOWN ON A SNOWY EVENING

I may have to move to New York to finish this poem
(I've never been there). I'm trying to write a sonnet.

In Marquette in the winter I like to wear black at night.
that way the drivers can tell me apart from the snowbanks.

I'm walking. Trying to think of a new idea
so that when my grave is covered up in snow
a bunch of professors I probably wouldn't like
will make their students analyze my poems.

—

Somebody told me once (a million times)
that every single snowflake is unique.

So I walk along this street (I'm sure it has
a name) I walk alone along this street
and watch a million individuals
fall from the sky and turn my jacket white.

MANIFESTO

I want a girlfriend.
I don't want a living arrangement domestic partner
significant other insignificant other male or female
lover
I want a sweetheart,
want someone to give me a scarf or necklace to hang from
my rear view mirror,
want whether we're doing it (or not) to echo in whispers
off locker room walls.
I want to take her to that Mexican stand in the parking
lot off Sixth Avenue
where the city has roped off the streets and ripped up
the sidewalks for reconstruction
for tacos de lengua burritos de tripa lemon wedges
radishes,
I want to watch a fallen streetlamp cast our shadow on a
billboard
and to know in my heart as her skirt moves with the breeze
we're not really that big.
I want to take her to the races and spend more on ice
cream than on the horses;
I want to handicap better than she does, but I want both
of us to be wrong,
and I want to bet
a little money
no more than I can afford,
but to make my wager exciting
I want to place it
all on one horse.

— David Sklar

Marquette MI

THREE ROOMS

On
Saturday
I drive to
the Denton Road
Liquor Store
for two forty-ounce
bottles of Budweiser.
On my way out, I drive