The clouds were pretending to be clouds/ and Goat gone feral comes in where the fence is open...
or How to Get Your Poem Published in The New Yorker
Janine Certo

I’ve heard that, first, you must be a famous poet, a Big-name poet,
but submit the shoddy stuff----
a lyric illumination peppered with
derivations of the words “water” and “light.”

You best scale down the literariness,
appeal to the broad New York audience, a sizable literary nation.
Add whimsy and exclamation.

As example: Franz Wright’s Wheeling Motel:

The vast waters flow past its back yard.
You can purchase a six-pack in bars!

If that’s not your thing, write a poem about
a reader reading (but not a poem), like
Robert Bly’s Sunday Afternoon:

I am reading/Longinus
while the Super Bowl is on.
The snow is falling, and the world is calm.

Keep it casual,
or about death.
Submissions should be lively,
but not overly literate---and listen:
Elizabeth Bishop had problems
with this, so concede to commas,
and keep it brief.

Wait eight weeks.

You might storm the cream
of the Midtown office, slick
as an infiltrating spy, be an intern, an acquaintance, a staffer,
someone’s lover.
You could be featured
more than Robert Creeley in his whole life.
The New Yorker is sublime arrival: word breaks and line breaks that give pause to readers at home who may not “read poetry, but they read The New Yorker poems.”

They loll on gray winter Sundays, mug and magazine, crossing a leg expectedly toward the pintsized form fitted tight in the feature text of: “Squid Hunter: Can Steve O’Shea Capture the Sea’s Most Elusive Creature?”

They glance up from the poem, tilt their heads, smile vaguely and think: “I don’t understand this...but maybe I should?” Then light streams in from the window--

“No, this is quite good.”

Janine Certo is an associate professor of language and literacy in the Department of Teacher Education at Michigan State University’s College of Education. Her interests include poetry and creative expression in public schooling, poetic language theory and writing instruction. Her poems have been published in a number of journals, magazines and anthologies including Burningword Literary Journal, Illya’s Honey, The Endicott Review and Muddy River Poetry Review. She can be contacted at certo@msu.edu