

# JOLLE@UGA<sup>®</sup>

JOURNAL OF LANGUAGE & LITERACY EDUCATION

*/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 pint-sized 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](mailto:certo@msu.edu)