

Janine L. Certo

September 16, College Poetry Class

*Who reads her while she reads? Her eyes slide
under the paper, into another world
while all we hear of it
or see is the slow surf of turning pages*

-from Rainer Maria Rilke's *The Reader*

It's not the whole of the class I worry about,

who tonight are seeming to let themselves, their
eyes, pour onto the page and into the world
of lines to see what they'll find. It's little Miss

twirling-her-blond-curls, looking up at her bangs,

while *The Reader* sits askance at her desk, resting
like a quiet night, indifferent as the cat that walks away.

Inside, how many of us will be shifted---surprising even

ourselves--- with the poetic turn: *How much does she lose/
when she looks up? When she lifts/ the ladles of her eyes. . .*

Outside, the campus purrs with thunder, shadows press

at the window, the river flows on to fall. Can you taste it?
Can't you taste the year ahead? You, in the back row,
picking up your Frappuccino with the long pink straw,

your tongue twirling out now, reaching for it, grabbing it.

Janine L. Certo is an assistant professor of language and literacy at Michigan State University's College of Education, where she teaches undergraduate and graduate English language arts, writing, and poetry courses in the Department of Teacher Education. She studies aesthetic philosophy and poetry pedagogy, as well as children's and adults' poetry experiences, knowledge and dispositions. She has been funded by a grant from The Spencer Foundation to place poetry prominently in elementary schools. Her poetry has been published in *The Endicott Review*.

30,000 Feet

When our plane hits turbulence,
I reach for the *Sky Mall*, lose myself
in the paper-shopping of gadgets,
possibilities I'll never purchase:

the Slumber Sleep Pillow,
the Precise Portion Pet Feeder,
The Giddy Up! Core Exerciser,
The Teeter Hang Ups Inversion Table.

I envy the boy across the aisle,
face pressed to his tag of window,
hands spread on the fuselage wall,
marveling at the wing outside

and the engine behind. I used to be
like that---wonder girl in the sky---
before age stole trust. But I saw
the acne-faced pilot

(whose gaze I met as I boarded
the plane). He was drinking a
Coke. He was laughing.
The seat belt sign is still on, and

the boy is now tilting his head
at the DC 9-30/40/50 safety
information card, turning
it sideways and over, considering

cartoon people bracing, popping
out seat cushions and exit doors,
sliding down yellow escapes
so easily.

Janine L. Certo