PRETTY OWL POETRY







MASTHEAD

Kelly Lorraine Andrews Gordon R. Buchan B. Rose Kelly

COVER ARTIST

Clara Gargano

Pretty Owl Poetry
Established | 2013
visit us at www.prettyowlpoetry.com

CONTENTS

Nicole Connolly	Regret for Mania: The Book of Job	6
Sonja Johanson	Spell for Ballasting a Boat	7
Megan Denton Ray	Chlorine & Sage	8
	Dream Pieces	10
	Dr. Brewer Tells Me I Am the Poster Child of	12
	Prozac	
	ROYGBIV	14
Katie Hibner	Extrapolating my family tree	15
Tara Roeder	Picking Up the Pieces	17
	Compare and Contrast Is Not a Valid Genre	18
Ian Martin	why are there so many missed connections in	19
	dollar stores	
	i am going to be strong and good if it kills me	21
Nick Alti	Foucault's Pendulum Proves Nothing about Loss	22
	Skinless Moose: Origin	24
Jessica Morey-Collins	Bad Love Grammar	26
Michael Martone	Excerpts from the Winesburg Appendix	28
	Contractor Johnnie Ritchie Discovers Something	29
	above the Drop Ceilings of Winesburg's Halde-	
	man Erlichman Infirmary	
	Hunter and Art Hunt, Student Fund Raisers	30
	Ross Tangent, U.S. Army Retired	31
	The Flyway of Blue Trucks	33
	Things	34
	The Girlhood Home of Zerna Sharp	35

Regret for Mania: The Book of Job

Nicole Connolly

```
for the gamble / of my life god needed me to be beautiful so the boils erupted only / in my atria always pained to receive // before anyone could be saved / there existed 40 days thirst & a devil //
```

god commands if I must ask / why it rains only on everyone / around me to do so on my knees / let him / pull my head back until my throat becomes a barren well // my tongue a bucket

on a string // I am trying to make it flood // counting myself among the animals with nothing / to prove except coupling / how it makes one worthy of the boat & the sea / the rainbow as the next bouquet

of apology flowers / before he leaves again // it's all how god teaches / me to look him in the eyes

Spell for Ballasting a Boat

Sonja Johanson

Not about the boat

about the load.

How you choose

how you pace

how bedrock has intrusions

and marble

can be sold for gain.

How cobbles line the streets

can turn your ankles

the way displacement

makes you measure weight

and measure space.

How much air you can

keep open

with water at the gunwhale

with a hold that's full

of stone.

Chlorine & Sage

Megan Denton Ray

In my dream, my father saw me naked and he did not look away. I don't blame himthe way the water slid off me as I climbed the ladder out of a glassy pool, the way my hair was long and slicked against my back. I was glistening, a bright jewel bobbing in the sun. I don't blame him for watching, for hiding behind a pillar to peek at me. I pretended I didn't notice. After all, I am nearly thirty now. It's been years since we've seen each other. Maybe he didn't recognize me. Maybe he saw me as my mother's emerald ring, gasping at the bottom of a lake. Didn't he pawn us both for drug money? Didn't he watch as I slipped out of my floral nightgown to propel my body forward into water? A revival. For years, I dreamt of slinging peach pits into the creek behind our house.

For years, I dreamt of drowning in that creek, or anywhere, really—to hear the song and pitch, the intersection, my final clink into water. Father, here is a word. It is algae. It is anchor. I have emerged from this pool. This creek. I am emerald. I am having late coffee and oranges in my late morning chair. Here, father, take this locket—it is sleek and impossible. I, daughter of your desert, have stuffed it full of cherry chief sage.

Dream Pieces

Megan Denton Ray

In my dream, I was full of illusion, supremely sophisticated with straw-blonde hair, poured out onto the pavement. I was naked, whole, and unafraid, and when I looked up, a crowd clapped and clapped, playing circus tunes.

I joined them, rose up to the big tent. Heroic, and floating, they wrapped me in gold fur and gray fur, placed me in the light, crowned me a *jewel*.

I was in my own body, still small and shining.

Feathered red-gold fabric opened between my legs like a pair of wings. My brilliant threads were thrown outward and outward, and the crowd clapped and clapped, pulling me apart, playing circus tunes. My thighs pressed together, blocking in their treasure—a mother sea that swung open like an iron gate.

I looked down and saw our two bodies, poured out onto the pavement. We were lying together in whiteness, in Spring, and fenced in—surrounded by dogwood blossoms, hyacinth, pre-saffron crocus. We were reading each other's bones with our eyes shut. The word *softly* had a shape in my mouth, tasted like a million ginger ales, and I felt safe. Looking up through the trees, the crowd gasped and cheered, and the sun—her yolk was moving freely, tumbling in her prize. My sea was lifting up, bending and rippling back, curving toward your body in some solemn spillage. *I have a sore throat*, I said, and you started to stroke my throat as though you had known forever. Inside me, an organ I had never felt before reddened, yes, a little.

Dr. Brewer Tells Me I Am the Poster Child of Prozac

Megan Denton Ray

To get here, to the Prozac place, I turn right by the dental office that has the neon toothbrush in the window. To get here, I have to push past the distant mother coming to my bedside with tea and a thermometer. To get here, I have to stop loving the feeling of fever and flu and sick days. I have to loosen my grip on the world of illness. And I have never been here. This story lives in a place that doctors are not taught to reach the difficulty and compromise of cure, the weight of illness passing. This plastic bottle holds my illness. No, my cure. If Prozac were a career person, it would be the mailman, the one who creeps out of the heart in worn tennis shoes, with postcards, smiling sneaking in once a day to deliver some joy, where, from the shadows, crows and peacocks call.

This is no pharmaceutical hymn, although the first few weeks are fairy tales, complete with golden curtains and frosting, cream-colored birdsongs poking at my brain, a disorientation so sweet I spin. And if you have been sick, like me, for a long, long time, Prozac might make you fly. On and on my mind goes around. I have a red rush in my veins—a hummingbird in my chest, the tiny propeller of my body. I screech to a halt in front of the florist, where I buy armloads of tulips. The cure doesn't fill me up so much as it empties me of my contents and leaves me, like a vase, waiting to be filled.

ROYGBIV

Megan Denton Ray

The red amaryllis on the kitchen table turns her face to the bowl of mandarin oranges. She asks where are your friends, the lemons? She asks where are your friends, the limes? The woman with the cornflower apron has entered the kitchen. Her shoes are clicking and clacking, cerulean grape stompers—she's going to make some wine.

*

Here is the brick red house on Grigsby Chapel Road, its terracotta pots on the front porch full with August marigolds. Here is the willow tree, laughing not weeping, limbs heavy with bluebirds. I see now what I've forgotten: the blue-green of dusk descending, and manic, my mother feeding plums to the sky.

Extrapolating my family tree

Katie Hibner

Extrapolating my family tree, or I should say, "my family grid" (as they will inevitably be redubbed), I imagine my progeny as savants of vector pruning, corrector fluids, of juicing polynomials for investor drams.

Their overlords will be holdovers from an age of oration, embellishing their cockpits and observation decks with chicanery wreaths, clickbait stamens.

In my descendants' off-hours, those bosses will recircuit their frontal lobes. They'll magnetize them to the spectacle of sick bay windows,

treat them to occasional quilts and partridge nuggets, pump the adits to their work capsules with fruity analgesics.

Cufflinked to their rubrics (and sucking face with their interfaces), my posterity will allow their hard drives to age, moldering their ancestral graphs;

they will overlook my remote node; they will sit on their vestigial hands; they will watch the quadrants flake off.

Picking Up the Pieces

Tara Roeder

I find pieces of *whatever that was* in garment bags and smushed between the pages of old prayer books. They smell like the ocean or float like leafy helicopters. Some sparkle. Two are sodden cardboard. I put one in a VCR.

Some pieces of *whatever that was* might sing me a song that sounds like the Florida Keys. I shove them in my handbag, embarrassed. A group of them forms a collective to study pataphysics. One of them bites me.

Compare and Contrast Is Not a Valid Genre

Tara Roeder

the very idea of flickering lizards sunning on bare stone excites me. as does pushing the button on a traffic light—the promise that something might change, if only from red to green.

furthermore, i enjoy the lilt of my voice when i impart newly acquired knowledge—e.g., the reason *octopi* is not the appropriate plural of *octopus*, or the fact that a fallen branch may be kept alive in a glass of water for several days.¹

however, i have never understood things like *pennywise* and pound foolish, scorched earth, and home free.

i have absolutely wanted to itemize loss like a card catalogue. i have likewise wanted to forget your hands. but not everything

or, on the contrary, maybe everything.

¹ the latter was learned through naked desire, a death-defying attempt to hold the greenness of a leaf.

why are there so many missed connections in dollar stores

Ian Martin

it's dark and i'm not here a low rumble of anxiety

like trucks passing by like trucks having sex

it's dark and i'm a truck with conflicting plastics

don't whip me with that two dollar belt, i'm fragile

the belt is also fragile h&m has better belts

it's dark and i'm conflicted about which parts are me

and which are knockoffs and which are flipper toys

and which glow in the dark i can't tell if you see me

or just an unbelievable deal can you turn on the lights

as if the store is closed but scared of closure

i am going to be strong and good if it kills me

Ian Martin

consider the mighty streetlamp its strong, porous interior consider how it stands, its stance its adherence to municipal standards consider how this makes it mighty

consider how might is arbitrated
consider how soft the light is
how it splays itself
across the mighty pavement
and that this is not a sign of weakness but utility

consider how utility is arbitrated and that light comes out of a bulb without trying, once it knows how

Foucault's Pendulum Proves Nothing about Loss

Nick Alti

1. I call for alchemists or any magic to turn my eyes to ammonites, transform my heart into a bucket of water for tadpoles to swim & devour each other within.

2.
If another acorn
falls into my boots
I'll combust, & if
another beloved one
pleads on the answering machine
for me to answer
for me to please answer
for me to at least try
to distract her
from such an intolerable, lucid dying
I'll put my forehead
against the faded pink carpet.

3.
I'm inside a suitcase putting cold shrimp in my mouth pretending I am ocean or, at least, a small whale.

Skinless Moose: Origin

Nick Alti

Before a telescope, distant vision—borealis lights hold each other; not lifeless suffusion—color lovemaking.

My own heart, cloudlike: as in moving too far away, as in ascending amaranth, or broken by a plover deadening.

Before a mailbox, intimate subsidence—my best efforts, the sediment; I'll send you this picture of my waterlogged thermal socks

& at a time most closely resembling the origin of introspection
I'll dig up the doll heads we buried
trying to forgive ourselves for this parody of a garden.

I noticed you glued the head back onto the porcelain Demeter perched above the toilet in your bathroom. What'd you think that'd do for you? What'd you feel when he fucked you?

Tonight, I'm painting the sky with fireflies & turquoise eggs; here is the new galaxy, one you can reach up to & dismantle at your leisure.

The body of distressing obsession is a skinless moose drooling into my mouth as I sleep. Do not take these mouthfuls for indulgence; most things that hurt come often.

Bad Love Grammar

Jessica Morey-Collins

Simple Past but it never is, is it

of me, he made a landscape. a fanfare of grassland and granite. as if the Past Perfect

whorl of fusion dwelled in his attention, he bloomed me. I will not be so

true again.

Active love forces the door open— Construction

Past Continuous how my bones grow, still, out of him—lift my flesh, still

my piled-on bids—will he ever call back? some lid weighted with unwanted offers. turned down, off, up—his vacancy of response is at Phrasal Verb best a booze stupor. better to shut off-persistent whir's sudden si-(Separable) lence—than to fling the self upon an altar only to be filled up with his

greasy sex.

Present giddy with absence, waking daily dangling over the shook-open throat of

Continuous a whole day without him.

came across him as a fragment of smooth bone stuck out from a rock slab—intractable when I ran into him at the bar. Last call's lonely hold-Phrasal Verb out edging toward throw up, and in bad need of a seeing to. and when I (Inseparable)

offered to get off for him, he turned into a lucid dew-drop, as pure and

glinting, and as easy to put up with.

Prepositional Phrase	::	between us, a sleep as dream rich as teeming soil—each microscopic animal eats its portion of the sun. To be <i>with</i> glitches subjectivity, self set as an object, specific, able to be sized up and prized for its definable attributes, its nice ass and laugh so often like a rockslide
Passive Construction	::	gathered by my lapse of self-control, I am held by his assurance that I am or I am nothing at all.
Present Perfect	::	sudden surge of self's center, centrifugal, the freedom to be any damn one or to be many, the flood of I filling every crevice, having no more name than thank you, having no more and having no more stain of a used up love.

Excerpts from the

'Winesburg Appendix'

Michael Martone

Contractor Johnnie Ritchie Discovers Something above the Drop Ceilings of Winesburg's Haldeman Erlichman Infirmary

It is always the case that when you start a renovation, thinking it will be easy to add a door or window, you discover the compromises and quick fixes the previous builder concocted on the fly years ago. Look here, you say, I am going to put a door right here where this window is, use the window's header for the header of the door, only to find there never was a header there. That's okay though. I will be able to retrofit, rig something up that will work more or less. So I wasn't too surprised when renovating the H&E Infirmary—already a hodgepodge of clinics, offices, wards, theaters, centers, and practice suites dating from the Nixon administration—to discover this ancient braids of pneumatic tubes woven around and through the buildings above the acoustical tiles. It seemed to have at one time worked, transporting charts and reports, scripts and the pills prescribed. It is hard to believe that this twisted system worked, that the little lozenges and their cargos found their ways from one end of the place to another. I have yet to find the vacuum, the heart of the matter that drew the atmosphere out of the coiling tubes, coaxing the capsules hither and yon. Nor have I found the central switches, the junctions, the gates. They are there someplace, I guess. I am just following one lead or another as it telescopes through the chases behind the old plaster walls, between the joists in the floors, the girders in the ceiling. It is strange to think that once they moved through this mesh of circulatory arteries real blood in bags, through the branching branches, to some anemic or hemorrhaging patient waiting patiently, the picc line already in place, the drip dripping, the slender gauge needle already inserted into a throbbing vein.

Hunter and Art Hunt, Student Fund Raisers

The thing is we have been selling these chocolate bars door-todoor in Winesburg for as long as we can remember. We used to like chocolate, but we don't anymore, having had to eat our consignment too many times. "Bring back empty boxes," is what we hear from Mrs. Wiggs our faculty advisor. She advised us to bring back empty boxes, and we took that to mean that if you couldn't sell all your consignment you had to buy the surplus yourself and eat it. It is hard to sell the chocolate after awhile. The town's not that big, and all the children in it are selling the same thing to the same people who are all the parents. We got a lot of different kinds of no-ing. You can see the bars of chocolate that got there before us in a pile on the floor of the front hall. The adults at the door looking down at us are always sad and a little angry. We think we are raising money for a field trip to someplace, we don't remember. Maybe South Bend. Maybe a toboggan ride at Pokagon. Maybe Muncie. We don't remember. We end up eating the candy ourselves. It's like eating the quilted skin of hand grenades. Long ago we gave up the dream of being the number one and two top sellers and winning a premium or two. Once, I wanted that Huffy bike, and Hunter, he'd go on and on, as we opened bar after bar, about those stilts that fit on the bottom of your shoes and lifted you up, a little bit, off the ground.

Ross Tangent, U.S. Army Retired

Somebody's got to keep track of all this. I volunteer. I tend the flags. Everyday, I am up before dawn, like Francis Scott Key on his boat in the bay, hauling my long-handled red Radio Flyer wagon behind my tricycle to all my stations—the Durkheim High School, the PO, the WOWO transmitter, the car dealership, the war memorials, all the graveyards and cemeteries. I live at the Legion, Post 13. I am its only surviving member, a Viet Nam veteran, retired sergeant major from the Old Guard, 3rd Infantry Regiment. A medic, I saw action at Duc Pho with the 4th Battalion. At night, I sleep in the big empty hall. I leave the bingo machines on, the soft glow a lucky night-light. It is there, it's the rusting Quonset hut on the north side, where each morning I hoist the first flag of the day. I time it so on my transistor radio the anthem they play on the Little Red Barn show accompanies me. It is the last flag I lower and stow at the end of the day. Down in Fort Wayne, they leave their flags flying all the time, rain and shine. Oh sure some of the places try to light them up at night to show some respect but that's not right. By law there are only a few places in the whole country where flags can be flown continuously. There's Fort McHenry, for sure, and the house in Baltimore where the Banner was made. The Iowa Jima statue, the Green in Lexington, The White House, Washington Monument, the Arch at Valley Forge and Custom Houses at ports of entry. That's it. All the rest is disrespectful if not downright illegal and just plain wrong. So each night

I retrace my steps and haul in what I hoisted that morning, putting the flags to bed before I bed down in the recliner in the game room at Post 13. "Taps," I'm told, had something to do with shutting off the alcohol at the end of the day. They used to ship sailors home in casks of spirits or so I remember. I remember when this place was jumping. The Falstaff and Old Crown flowed. Now, nothing to steep in but the silence. The wind seeping in through the chalking. I wrap myself up in the old flags at night when it is cold. I burn the wore out ones right here, inside, to stay warm.

The Flyway of Blue Trucks

Ruth Cameron's father, Edgar, built this 200 foot-high tower on the outskirts of Winesburg, Indiana, in the early days of the Second World War to spot (what was widely believed at the time) the coming aerial bombardment by the Nazi Luftwaffe. Ruth scanned the sky well into 1948, suspicious that reports of Victory in Europe might not be accurate. Today, her Zeiss optics binoculars are turned earthward as she tracks the traffic on the old Lincoln Highway, recording the parade of blue trucks (North American Van Lines livery) as it enters into and leaves out of the headquarter's city of Fort Wayne. She keeps track of all the households hubbing through that city, the lumbering blue trucks idling in the breakdown lanes as they wait for instructions to rendezvous with one another in the empty parking lots of ruined city and shuffle their cargos from one van to another under the cover of darkness.

Things

Things was, at one time, quite the thing in Winesburg. It was the notions store when there was still interest in domestic sewing, home haberdashery. Its bins, drawers, shelves, cabinets, displayed tables contained all kinds of things—bias tape, grommets, collar stays, rickrack, twill tape, piping, selvedge, tracing wheels, thimbles, pinkin shears, pattern notchers, hook-and-eyes, awls, tape measures, zippers, elastic, interfacing, eyelets, trim, fringe, ribbon, thread, yarn, snaps, toggles, buckles, needles, needle threaders, darning eggs, pins, buttons (all kinds of buttons)—covered buttons, ceramic, frogs, hair, intaglio, enameled, worked, plastic, shell, vegetable ivory, metal, filigree, electroplated, wood, mica—fabrics, clews, patterns. Things and things. You can still see ghosts of mannequins and dress forms through the soaped windows. There are just so many things to keep track of, of which to keep track. I can't bring myself to liquidate the inventory even though no one for some time has taken any notion of notions. In the back office I make lists. I make lists of lists. I fear I am losing the ability to name the names of things. That the particular permutation of letters that make up names to name names is evaporating. One day, I fear, I will only have, lodged in the cabinets of my brain, a list of things. This thing. This thing. And this. This thing thing here. This thing there. All the things of Things just things.

The Girlhood Home of Zerna Sharp

The house, located at 44 Zerna Street (Maple Street having been renamed in her honor) was the girlhood home of Zerna Sharp, author of the Dick and Jane Readers. However, the house located at 44 Zerna Street is not the actual girlhood home of Zerna Sharp, author of the Dick and Jane Readers. The house located at 44 Zerna Street is actually a replica of the house that was located at 44 Maple Street (later renamed Zerna Street in honor of Zerna Sharp, author of the Dick and Jane Readers) when Zerna Sharp, author of the Dick and Jane Readers lived there as a child. The actual house at 44 Zerna Street that Zerna Sharp, author of the Dick and Jane readers, lived in as a girl and that is now replaced by a replica is currently located at Henry Ford's Greenfield Village, located in Dearborn, Michigan, outside of Detroit, Michigan. Henry Ford's Greenfield Village, located in Dearborn, Michigan, outside of Detroit, Michigan, collects and preserves many houses that once were houses of important American inventors and artists as well as many other historic structures and artifacts such as windmills, train depots, one room school houses (where Zerna Sharp, the author of the Dick and Jane Readers, first distributed the Dick and Jane Readers), and the hat Lincoln was wearing the night he was assassinated. In 1932, Henry Ford moved the actual girlhood home of Zerna Sharp, author of the Dick and Jane Readers, to Greenfield Village in Dearborn, Michigan, outside of Detroit, Michigan. It was discovered, years later, that Henry Ford when

he moved the girlhood home of Zerna Sharp, author of the Dick and Jane Readers, to Greenfield Village in Dearborn, Michigan, outside of Detroit, Michigan, did not do so knowing it was the girlhood home of Zerna Sharp, author of the Dick and Jane Readers, but instead believed the house, at what was then 44 Maple Street, was a fine example of the Carpenter Gothic Style of vernacular America domestic architecture, sending it (in one piece) to Greenfield Village in Dearborn, Michigan, outside of Detroit, Michigan. Tours of the replica of the girlhood home of Zerna Sharp, author of the Dick and Jane readers, located at 44 Zerna Street, are by appointment only.

CONTRIBUTORS

Nick Alti recently graduated Western Michigan University and utilizes his flashy new degree as a bartender in his hometown of Stevensville, Michigan. Recent publications include Maudlin House, Steam Ticket, and Newfound. He reads poetry manuscripts and helps edit novels for New Issues Press.

Nicole Connolly lives and works in Orange County, CA. She received her MFA from Bowling Green State University, and her work has appeared, or is forthcoming, in such journals as Assaracus, Pithead Chapel, Flyway, and Big Lucks. She currently serves as Managing Editor for the poetry-centric Black Napkin Press.

Clara Gargano, aka "cloro", studied at the Academy of Fine Arts of Brera, Politecnico di Milano and University of Michigan. She has been exhibiting in Milan and Brianza since 2008. Cloro illustrated two children's books, published in 2014 and 2016 with Montaonda publishing house. She now works as tattoo artist.

Katie Hibner's poetry has been published by inter rupture, SOFTBLOW, Storm Cellar, Up the Staircase Quarterly, Vinyl, and Yalobusha Review. She has read for Bennington Review, Salamander, and Sixth Finch. Katie dedicates all her poetry to the memory of her mother and best friend, Laurie.

Sonja Johanson has recent work appearing in BOAAT, Ninth Letter, Poet Lore, and The Writer's Almanac. She is a contributing editor at the Eastern Iowa Review, and the author Trees in Our Dooryards (Redbird Chapbooks). You can follow her work at www.sonjajohanson.net

Ian Martin is, by and large, bi and large. Ian's work has recently appeared in rout/e, Absolutely Orbital, and In/Words. You can read more of Ian's work at www.ian-martin.net/library

Michael Martone was born in Fort Wayne, Indiana, right down the road from the town of Winesburg. Brooding, a book of essays, and The Moon Over Wapakoneta, a book of stories, will be published next year. He lives in Tuscaloosa, Alabama.

Jessica Morey-Collins is a Pushcart nominated poet and educator. She earned her MFA from the University of New Orleans, where she worked as associate poetry editor for Bayou Magazine. She is currently working on a Masters of Community and Regional Planning at the University of Oregon. She tweets @cautiousmonster.

Megan Denton Ray's work has appeared recently or soon in The Sun, Salt Hill Journal, Cimarron Review, The Adroit Journal, and elsewhere. She currently lives and teaches in Indiana.

Tara Roeder is the author of the chapbooks (all the things you're not) and Maritime. Her work has appeared in venues including 3:AM Magazine, Hobart, THRUSH, and The Bombay Gin. She is an Associate Professor of Writing Studies in New York City.

