

# Red Clay Journal

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**Art and Photography: L. Alicia Fuller & Willow Noelle Groskreutz**

**Poetry: L. Alicia Fuller, Elaine C. Hill, Ted Jackins, Samuel J Fox**

**Prose: Willow Noelle Groskreutz**

### What is a part Elaine C. Hill

Grasses rest send long shoots past  
thousands of hues of green  
called for drink receives vinegar  
poured into time slowly wine and water  
those eyes seeing me in this  
angels rise the horizon holds sun I pull grass from among herbs  
feel a sting ant's homeland  
life blood dying comes eventually  
lives within one we can all choose  
first ants like pen points send fear into bloodstream water  
stamping relic of drumbeat to  
and being cared for in burnt  
do I move the tumult

leaf succulent with sweet  
paint under stems thirsty Christ  
on rags breathed in sour the hour  
a spear in side sharp I've seen  
revolution the host of sea mountains  
tingling of mingling poison with  
to all not everyone lives multiple  
resurrection but we have to die  
move past stabs takes friendship  
swell of toxin an army underneath how

### The Fire Lapping At the Creek Ted Jackins

#### For Adrienne Lenker

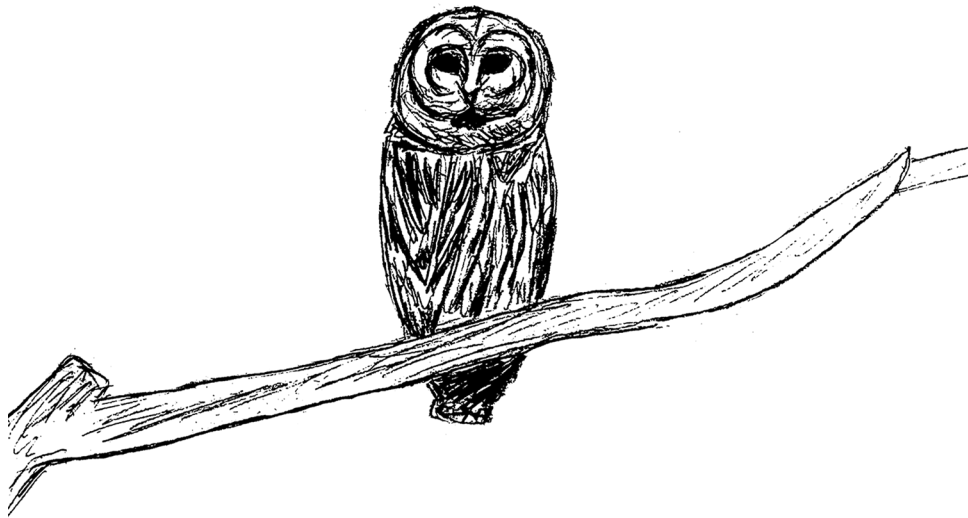
Voices whisper  
Over arpeggiated  
Lakes,  
The sound calling  
The body back  
Into the deepest  
Woods,  
Filling the mind  
With images of  
Long walks to  
Hidden waterfalls,  
As guitars roar  
Like river rapids  
In the still  
Of dusk.

#### March Samuel J Fox

Downpour for weeks.  
It seemed things were growing,  
trees engulfed by luminescent bulbs,  
sprouting like promises.  
All month was the First.  
You had me foolhardy, flagrantly  
disregarding the omens:  
the saturated muddy ground, sinkholes  
in the wooden floorboards,  
the rusty bicycles you promised to ride.  
I was drowning  
and neither one of us were any good  
at swimming.



Trickle Photography, 2023 L. Alicia Fuller



**Warmth: A Haiku**  
**Samuel J Fox**

Once, at the cusp of  
spring, the stalk of my joyful heart  
unthawed into bloom.

**Omens**  
**Willow Noelle Groskreutz**

I don't believe in coincidences. My inability to understand meaning and significance does not imply a lack thereof. I believe the earth, the world, the cosmos, the all – it speaks. Constantly. In languages I cannot understand. In signs I can only begin to interpret.

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A dirt path, densely covered in trees, connects me from the storm creek to the willow pond. It is on this trail that I saw the owl.

It was just before dusk in December. The owl perched on a branch hanging over the trail. To my surprise, she did not fly off when I noticed her or walked closer. She had downy brown and white features and round, blinking yellow eyes. Blinking, I later learned, is how owls communicate warnings or fear.

She let me observe her for a while before soundlessly swooping away.

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In folklore, seeing an owl in the daytime is perceived negatively. But the way I see it, interpretation is imagination mixed with intuition. Negative doesn't necessarily mean bad. And usually, the most uncomfortable things are the most worthwhile.

I saw the owl the same winter I decided to peel away old layers of scar tissue and peek at what lay underneath. My shadows had always been something I wore, like clothes. Opaque feelings to poeticize with ambiguous words. Never something to confront head-on.

The owl encouraged me to accept the darkness and examine it. Stare it right in the face. Trembling and blinking but not backing down. No. No more of that. You can't run from something that lives inside you. The only way out is through.



## **Early Evening Rain in Statesville** **L. Alicia Fuller**

It's no secret to anyone that the sound of the rain is the most satisfying and calming sound. It's the sound of time standing still, traffic slowing, people staying indoors, and dreamers claiming it for ourselves as we sit in a window and listen to its siren call summoning us to empty minds and stop.

Our culture doesn't allow it as though it's a sin against our ancestors or the heads of state. They say Paris is more beautiful in the rain and I'm sure it is, but I have to say that there's something about a small country town in a soft downpour.

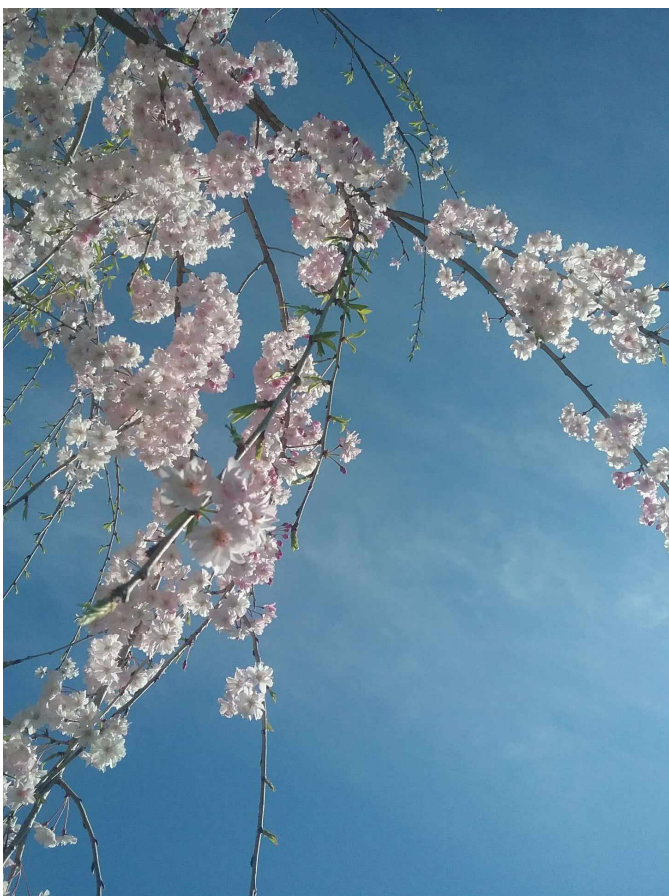
I walk downtown sidewalks with my umbrella in my left hand and casually extend my right outside the umbrella's dry safety to allow the cold rain to touch my skin, refreshing it: hypnotizing it. I don't try to explain the rain just like I do not try to explain joy.

My childhood floods back to me, sitting on the deck with my father watching the storm roll in across the plains and then tempting fate by running back and forth in the drizzle. I do not understand why this ceases when we become adults, this tempting the rain.

I walk past a coffee shop and gaze up at the clocktower. In its stillness, only right twice a day. I've walked by thousands of times, but there's something about it in the rain. They grey sky sets itself as subtle backdrop to its emerald façade weathered by time but still trying its best to tell it.

Yet, the rain doesn't always coat the world in beauty: the shell of historic buildings set in a pile of rubble and its ashes mire the streets alongside the rain as it washes away the destruction into the gutter. After the fire, we can only hope change will bloom forth something better than before.

On the street corner, I gaze at the light posts, trees, old brick, and new stone, what's left and what's coming, the Vance Hotel in her glory. The rain tinkers with the sounds of its falling, on window pains and down drains, across the eaves of trees and against my coat, as the wind nudges me homeward.



**Top Left: *Within the Reeds* Photography, 2023**  
**L. Alicia Fuller**

**Bottom Left: *Sky Awash with Angels* Photography, 2023**  
**L. Alicia Fuller**



**Spring's Silhouette: Black and White Photography,  
L. Alicia Fuller. 2023**

**March 19th, 2024**  
**Samuel J Fox**

Let the past be what it will. Spring is finally here, here: ajar with light.

**Wet Season Haiku**  
**Samuel J Fox**

Rain pours down from roofs  
like wine being emptied from  
God's gilded carafe

**Is also together**  
**Elaine C. Hill**

Ants black seeds  
to form ground  
clumps red sand  
hills under sage  
blueberry plants  
millions move  
around thin roots  
take up new space  
antennae dance  
together touch  
head chest thorax  
rhythm cascades  
in legs specks of  
dirt body-sized  
heave rebuilding  
each clod caked  
mandibles grasp  
home's sandy mass  
each chitlin can  
feel the weight  
surface fracture  
electric cue  
to ripple deep  
tunnel made

**Preaching Through the Glass**  
**Ted Jackins**

**For Karly Hartzman**

Melding country  
And shoegaze,  
Guitars cascade  
Over a sea of  
Pedal steel,  
As vocals swoon  
And sigh,  
Or else shout  
Through the musical  
Fog,  
Like Civil War  
Ghosts  
Calling out in  
The cemetery dark.

## Home Willow Noelle Groskreutz

Home is a people, not a place.

At least, that's what I used to say until I went home after a few years of living away. My memories from childhood hold solace, leading me to believe home is anything familiar. But familiarity, like comfort, can be sticky. Perhaps home is a people or a place you can always go back to.

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This story would be more romantic if it was reversed. If I'd gone from a place like so many others to one that doesn't compare with anywhere else in the world. Like Alaska. Instead, I packed up my most precious belongings and witnessed the landscape change from my car window. It took me twelve days to reach North Carolina.

Alaska is easy to romanticize. It's breathtaking at any given moment. Anytime I looked up, it was stunning. Drop dead gorgeous every single day. But that's just it. The beauty becomes redundant and somewhat overwhelming. With magnificence so intense, it makes you forget that other beautiful places exist. And that makes the world seem very small.

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I thought I had to justify my decision and rationalize my emotions. Oh, logic. How it muddles intuition. The truth is I just needed to go. Trade in the cold shoulder of Alaska for a warm, gentle embrace and accept that trust is a leap of faith.

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North Carolina is a place that's easy to overlook. When I first got here, it seemed dull in comparison. Such a stark, flat contrast. It took me a while to overcome the initial shock. I yearned for wilderness, someplace quiet and untouched where I could process the gravity of my decision. So, I started going for walks. That is where I discovered how many places there were to escape to and explore in my own backyard. Once I learned to adjust my attention to smaller details and accept the land for what it was, it revealed its treasures. All the beauty and magic in the seemingly mundane.

I may not know the city well. I can't tell you where all the cool places are. But I can tell you which animal makes which sound and little signs that say what the weather will do. Like how blackbirds gather before the cold. For me, that's a deeper understanding of where I'm at in the world.

It takes a while to get to know a place and all its intimacies. To become in tune with how things change. That's a knowingness too many people take for granted or ignore altogether. I know the Piedmont and how it moves. Things have become familiar. It's a home now.

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Homes are created, and some are destroyed. And sometimes, home finds us. In little happenings and large.



**Museum of Wild Abandon  
Photography, L. Alicia Fuller, 2023**