

Elegy for the Wakarusa Wetlands

1.

Sluggish, steaming water,
dense with microbes and
beavers. Still and somber
through winters, come
spring explosive with
peeper and frog jubilation,
shenanigans, turtles stacked
on downed, drowning
branches, crisscrossed,
birds gliding, gyrating,
navigating the glossy
water, grasses and bushes
tangled, sucking, smooching,
a mess, opaque, fecund,
deep in, deep down: now
gone beneath the gavel,
beneath gravel, filled
by bulldozers, smoothed
by graders: mourn for
the black snake, who
twisted around your arm,
the family of five possums,
monarchs, warblers, rabbits,
rehabilitated, set free,
smoothed over and under
into concrete graves.

2.

On the edge of town,
on the edge of night,
at the beginning of

the year, just before rain,
we were suspended,
my executor and I.
She had questions for me.
What did I want her to do?
When was it enough?
Where did I want to be?
We walked the littoral,
where rumpled woods
met manicured campus,
where the children's
cemetery endured, fusing
sorrow and accusation.
Crossing a brook, in full
gurgle, embroidered with
ice, one stone at a time.
Overhead, storm churning
clouds, curdling purple,
with a convoy of geese,
in rapturous sobbing,
coming in under the clouds,
and the setting sun gilding
the breasts of the clouds,
tinting roseate the breasts
of the birds.

3.

He parked the car.
Left the door open.
On tape, the Lakota
drum pulsated, beat
the last light into night.
He danced alone,
one man in the dark,
remembering how
in dreams the prairie

chicken came to
his family. Bending,
swerving, shaking
his rattles, his bustle
of hawk feathers,
he was shaping
the dusk, his silhouette
telling the story.

~ Elizabeth Schultz

Elizabeth Schultz, after retiring from teaching at the University of Kansas and from doing academic writing, turned to essays, a memoir, and poetry. Her essays are published in *The Nature of Kansas Lands*, the memoir in *Shoreline: Seasons at the Lake*, and the poetry in numerous reviews and five books: *Conversations*, *Her Voice*, *The Sauntering Eye: Kansas Meditations*, *Mrs. Noah Takes the Helm*, and *The Quickening*