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“Anderson County, Pottawatomie Creek, Mid-May, Mid-Day”

By Elizabeth Schultz

"Green," my friend said, "I go for the green. It's green that makes me feel nostalgia. Especially, when shadows fall." With my friend's enthusiasm for green motivating me, I drove south, following my Kansas map's promotion and the green dashes along Route 59: "Scenic Roads. Looking for scenic beauty? Drive any of the roads paralleled by the dashed green lines." On the palette ahead, blue sky was smooth overhead with rumpled yellow earth beneath; blue and yellow fused midway into a long smudge of spring green. I drove toward that smudge which defined a horizon. As surely as if I had gone underwater, I became immersed in its quickening green.

Along the road, green came up to meet me. Young corn, just above ground, undulated anxiously in row upon row of pale green ink. Wheat, sorghum, brome, taller and a darker green, rose up in dense masses in other fields, as if laid on the earth in thick paint, with meadows of grass stretching out easily into the corners of the landscape's canvas. Intersecting field and meadow were thickets and hedgerows of trees and bushes, with greens of contrasting shades—the new leaves of oak, hackberry, and ash, light-colored as if just washed, against cedars' deep, smoked green.. Increasingly, I realized that English, in which words for "blue" proliferate, has only limited words for "green"; to convey the many tints of green in a Kansas spring, one is forced to draw on the names of jewels—emerald, jade—or foods—lime, olive, avocado—all of which, being imports to the region, it seems to me would taint a description of our spring.

I turned onto Scipio Road, its narrow way edged in grass greens, with spots of purple clover and yellow mustard, intensifying and enlivening the green, and headed for Pottawatomie Creek. As I approached the creek, green clambered up and over the road, the leaves of locust, sycamore, and persimmon fluttering in arches above me. The creek, however, had dug a deep and crooked way into its surrounding green. Through the rough and tumble of the greenery on its banks—a congress of grape and creeper vines, buckbush and bristly greenbrier, the creek twisted along, defining itself by its mud-brown color and its gurgling sound. Standing watch over this congestion was a champion cottonwood. Its trunk, elephantine and silver-grey, solid and massive in its simplicity, contrasted with this wild creek-bank confusion of greens, although the tree's myriad leaves, twirling and winking above me like shiny green sequins, added to the scenic hilarity. As did the butterflies—painted ladies and yellow swallowtails—and the birds—a black-throated and a parula warbler—which had arrived out of nowhere like circus visitors from climes where colors, other than green, were a possibility. Could one have too much of green? When did green become claustrophobic and overwhelming? When did you want the grass on the other side of the fence to be lavender?

As I turned back toward Scipio, green persisted. The land seemed to swell with greenness; I surfed on greenness driving down the road. Willows, their drooping branches changed from winter's chartreuse to boisterous splashes of bright green, embraced a pond. Further on, a rupture of purple irises gave me pause. Set back from the road and planted in a straight line, they marked a homestead, a family's attempt to contribute another color, another dimension to this space. Down the road and after a turn or two, I reached the St. Boniface Church cemetery set into the slope of a small green hill. Bluebirds darted among the monuments, perching jauntily on their statuary. The monuments, both old and new, face east, and I did, too, our shadows extending out before us like long fingers. Dates inscribed on the oldest monuments associated them with men

and women born in the early nineteenth century. As shadows thickened to lavender in the valley beneath us, I imagined their lives in these green prairies.

Elizabeth Schultz, author and KLT member, explores her own response to the natural world in "Senses of Place," a *Stewardship Notes* feature.