

A Wichita Mountains Ontology



How do you write a place? Ontology is mapmaking, tyranny of boundary. Elk heighten the browline with their grazing, border as appetite. Eating away indigenous place names till few are left. In the **smoky winter air**, boundaries open up, bony fingers waving as they shag off all their **red & yellow leaves**. In a hot prairie spring, goldasters, tickseed, the young bison who **molt in grassy** retreats. You clamor along Lost Lake, see a collared lizard sunning, and write in your head: *a mountain boomer sprawls like a gash on the forehead of a rock*. Summer. Winter. Ontology is a symbol not on the key.

This rather barren area up here - I say, barren, I should say open area -"
"This is a barren area up here - I say, barren, I should say open area -"

Low in
a col,
you hold a bobwhite (fallen, slightly stunned,
like when a cat bats a mouse) in your hand.
Scanning the gap, you lack a snake's scent sight,
and so head to higher ground's light,
dumping sand from your burred brown hiking boots.
The quail twitches. Cold for them, and not right
for the season. Our sin of nothing done,
not striking when we should have will leave us
stunned, too, looking at it as if it were
something curious, something we did not
coax out of the earth, burning it against
its will.

slaughtered blue over gray mountain manes
canyon echoes a valley of splinters gone

crumbling to a trillionth of dust

the Meers Fault a jaggy smile like true crime,
rictus in the Richter, *the body was discovered*

*two days later by two Oklahoma City bikers who were
walking along what is known as Parallel Forest –*

| *Ragged terrains hampered rescue efforts and MAST
helicopter at Fort Sill does not remove bodies*

*plaque at the
trailhead —*

“DON’T EVER GO ALONE”
IN MEMORY OF
DR. PHILIP MITCHELL, M. D.
1963 – 1992

sheer face of the Zoo Wall over the Narrows
rappelers delight
tempter

and those names they give the routes: side saddle slap roof the dihedral crazy alice yellow corner
sweet jesus squeeze play larin has balls ...

Doom Cave on Widowmaker
deep in Charon’s Garden.

quartz

malachite

egirine

orthoclase

barite

bornite

These are hills I will play dead on.



Hiker finds human remains at Wildlife Refuge

The investigation by our law enforcement officers has been closed as there is no indication of foul play," said Evan Monnett, Public Affairs Specialist for Oklahoma U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. "We are thankful to our staff and partners who have helped with the search efforts."

Public affairs specialists say they are appreciative of the help they received from these partners in the investigation, but as of June 21, the search is no longer active.

Notes

Photographs on pages 1 and 5 by the author.

Photograph on page 4 from Art Halloran's *The Nature Man's Stories of the Wichita Mountains*, independently published in 1972. Text from the House Subcommittee on Fisheries and Wildlife Conservation of the Committee on Merchant Marine and Fisheries proceedings on transferring part of the Wichita Mountains Wildlife Refuge to Fort Sill in 1956.

Pages 4 and 5 contain fragments from articles by KSWO News. The memorial on page 4 is a real one at a trailhead in the Wichitas. Dr. Mitchell died while climbing in the Rock Rooms on Elk Mountain. The rappelling sites listed are real.

The Wichita Mountains belong to the Indigenous nations who have lived and continue to live in the area now designated as southwestern Oklahoma, including the Wichita, Comanche, Kiowa, and Cheyenne-Arapaho nations.