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FABRIC

Fall/Winter 2024

Threads: The Writing of Wilma Elizabeth McDaniel

Karen Neurohr

Meet the “Okie Poet” who wrote about the fabrics from which she was cut, Oklahoma and California. Wilma McDaniel published fifty-one chapbooks of poetry and prose yet is largely unknown in her home state. “If you don’t know about Wilma McDaniel, you should,” Oklahoma journalist Ann DeFrangé eulogized. “She is part of your state’s cultural fabric. She represented you in her words to the rest of the world.”

STORIES

Fall/Winter 2023

The Kept and the Killed

Erica X Eisen

Begun as part of the alphabet soup of Franklin D. Roosevelt’s New Deal policies, the Farm Security Administration (FSA) had been tasked with resettling struggling farmers onto more fertile ground, providing education about agricultural science, and giving loans for the purchase of land, feed, and livestock. Arguably its most enduring legacy today, however, is the hundreds of thousands of photographs the agency produced to document the plight of destitute farmers, many of whom were trapped in an inescapable pit of debt made deeper still by the environmental devastation of the Dust Bowl.

Killing the Negative: Poetic Interventions

Poem by Quraysh Ali Lansana and Art by Joel Daniel Phillips

FOOD

Spring/Summer 2023

Food Lessons from the Dust Bowl

Mary Larson

“Resources were in short supply during the Dust Bowl years of the 1930s, especially in the hard-hit farming and rural communities of Oklahoma, Texas, Kansas, New Mexico, and Colorado. Under the sharp realities of this scarcity, food was more than just fuel for bodies; it signified comfort and community, as reflected in oral histories, journals, diaries, letters, and newspapers of the period.”

HOME

Spring/Summer 2020

Hardship, Hope, and Home

Kimberly Roblin

“Her name is not as familiar as John Steinbeck or Woody Guthrie, but it should be; they voiced the pulse of a nation, but she took its picture. Dorothea Lange humanized the Dust Bowl and Depression in a way novels and songs could not. Employed by the Farm Security Administration (FSA), she photographed rural poverty and brought it into searing focus. Traveling the country, she documented migrant workers, farmers, and laborers, many of whom were Oklahoma Dust Bowl refugees. No matter the state—Oklahoma, New Mexico, Arizona, California, Oregon— the destination was ultimately the same: the intersection of hardship, hope, and, surprisingly, home.”

Mapping Woody Guthrie

Will Kaufman

“Then, in the wake of the socialist whirlwind and the oil busts in Oklahoma and Texas, came the dust storms, turning out a wandering tribe of American refugees numbering close to half a million, transforming the nation’s demographic and cultural landscapes as comprehensively as its natural one. In the mix was Woody Guthrie, making his way westward toward California’s Eden, gathering on the road and the rails the store of knowledge underpinning a body of writing that would catapult him to international renown.”

EARTH

Summer 2015

Weathering Heights—The Oklahoma Forecast

Gary McManus

“Oklahoma’s unique setting within the Great Plains provides its citizens with some of the most variable—and violent—weather on earth. Most people immediately think of the 1930s Dust Bowl years as the “big” weather event in our state, but we’re impacted by devastating weather nearly every year. Tornadoes, like those in Moore in 1999 and 2013, can destroy whole communities. After a particularly bad hailstorm, entire neighborhoods will reverberate with the sound of workers replacing roofs. Ice storms and blizzards have left significant parts of the state paralyzed and without power for days at a time. To plan well for future weather events, and to best manage limited resources, we must take a long view of weather patterns. Such are the lessons of weather history.”