

“Mr. Hipp, ca. 1940”: The Rain Does the Plow

That’s what they used to say—water
will follow the work. This might’ve made some measure of sense

at the time. If you plant, the crop starts to make its own kind of moisture.
Dew on the leaves gathers

the clouds while you sit in a pasture
sucking on sugar cubes with the sun not on the rise but giving you a break, trusting

in the lay of the land and phony scripture made up by farm salesmen. One way
or another, we got to the plains

by following a lie. Like lie down
in that ditch, a tornado of thorny sand is on the way. Lie down on any cot,

that’s your bed. Get settled. Lie down too long and you might be dead.
A lie follows any flat surface.

Flat like clapboard with only its little notches. Flat like Kansas.

Flat my credit at the Union Bank and flat my pocketbook in winter.

Note: This poem is part of a larger work on the photographs and life of Arkansas
portrait photographer Mike Disfarmer, 1884-1959.