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Arabesques For Travelers: Landscape and Literary Imagination

Bryce Milligan

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*Carl
Hertzog*
Lecture Series



**Arabesques for Travelers:
Landscape and Literary
Imagination**

by Bryce Milligan

The Carl Hertzog Lecture Series

Carl Hertzog Lecture Series



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The Carl Hertzog Lecture Series

The Hertzog Lectures, inaugurated on February 5, 1989, is presented biennially to honor the memory and life work of the "Printer at the Pass," J. Carl Hertzog (1902-1984).

A premier typographer and book designer long before his association with the University of Texas at El Paso, Mr. Hertzog brought his international renown to the then-Texas Western College in 1948. He launched Texas Western Press in 1952, serving as its director until his retirement in 1972.

Books bearing the distinctive Carl Hertzog colophon reached a standard of excellence that is unexcelled to this day.

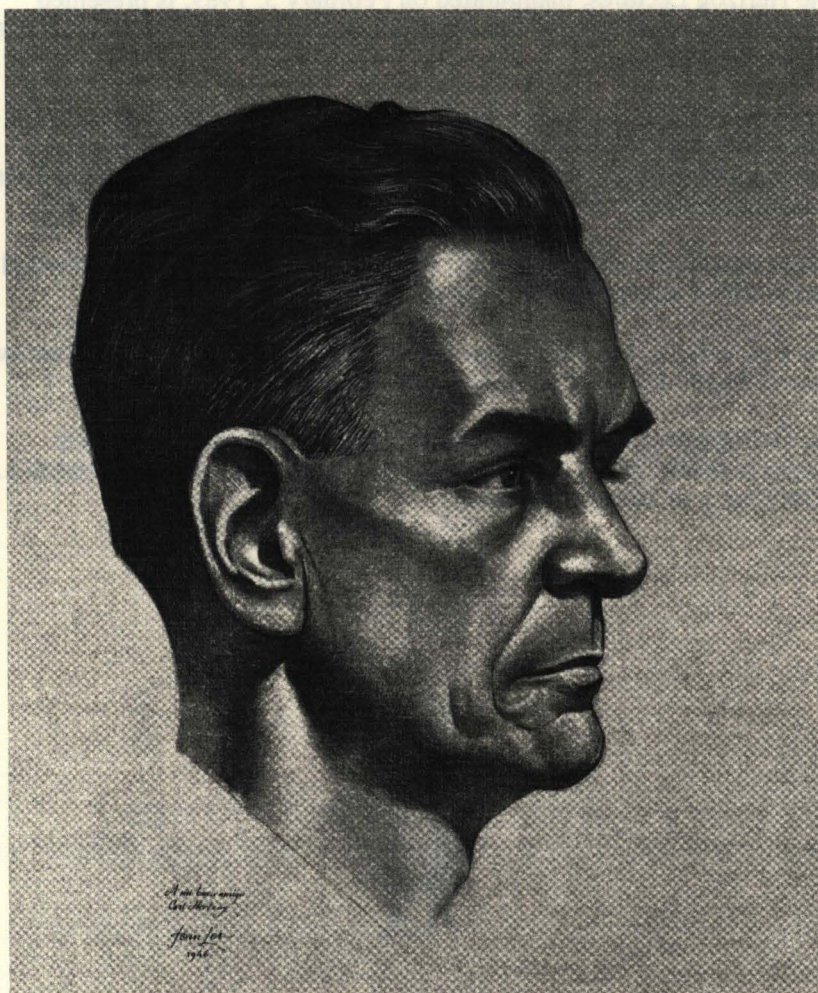
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Texas
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(Drawing by Tom Lea 1946)

J. Carl Hertzog 1902-1984

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Arabesques for Travelers: Landscape and Literary Imagination

by Bryce Milligan



February 18, 2018

Carl Hertzog Lecture Series, No. 18

I am so honored to have been asked to give the 2018 Carl Hertzog Lecture. As a Texas book designer and independent publisher myself for the last 40 years, I have been aware of Hertzog's work for decades, both as an aesthetic model and as an example of sheer endurance. I can only aspire to emulate him. I am further honored by the fact that of all the individuals who have preceded me at this lectern, I am the first poet. A couple of us were fiction writers, including the redoubtable novelist Jeanne Williams, who gave the lecture in 1993. Others have been collectors, bibliographers, editors, historians, designers, printers, journalists, critics—all bibliophiles, of course, and all nonfiction writers of one stripe or another. In my life I've worn most of those hats, plus a few others, but I am indeed delighted to be the first poet in the list.

The topic suggested to me by Mr. Stakes was the connection between Texas landscapes and literary creativity. It rapidly became apparent that it would be close to impossible, and very likely close to meaningless, for me to attempt a broad appraisal of Texans' literary responses to our vast and varied physical environment. As your own Marcia Daudistel likes to say, you could cut Texas into four states and each would still be "wildly varied." It would take a combination of A. C. Greene, Elroy Bode, and Don Graham to accomplish such a task, and even then the ensuing internecine battles would require more than one Ranger to quell. In fact, I reviewed a book some thirty years ago that attempted a similar task and my conclusion at the time was that "the battlefield was littered with the missing." Rather than risk such a judgment myself, I have opted for the better part of valor and will focus on one writer's creative response to landscape—my own.

Pondering this relationship between landscape and literary creativity, I began to think of how important far West Texas has been to me as a writer. I never met Carl Hertzog, but I remember making a couple of long trips out here—650 miles from Denton on a Honda 305 motorcycle in the early 70s—partially on the off chance of meeting Tom Lea, the author of *The Wonderful Country* and *The Brave Bulls*, books that helped to shape my identity as a Texan. I grew up in Dallas

and on the high plains of the Panhandle. Neither one resembled in the least the landscapes of far West Texas or Northern Mexico—not physically, anyway. Certainly there were cultural, linguistic, and emotional resonances, but one doesn't just fall in love with desert mountain landscapes unless born into them—or until you've camped among javelinas, scorpions and rattlesnakes, hiked across seas of cholla, prickly pear and creosote, and stared at the Milky Way beneath these dark and velvety skies. As it happens, I raised an astronomer, so our family spent a lot of time on top of Mount Locke, which remains one of my favorite places on the planet and is one part of a landscape which appears in a number of my poems.

But before we humans actually travel, our first explorations of the world are often through reading. As a child, my interior, imagined landscapes were drawn from books: from *Huckleberry Finn* to *The Lord of the Rings*, from *Ivanhoe* to *Wuthering Heights* to *Walden Pond*—along with an endless string of biographies and histories that introduced me to the Gobi Desert and Asian Steppes of Ghengis Khan and Marco Polo, the great forests of Robin Hood's England, the Rockies of Jim Bridger and Kit Carson, the Dakotas of Black Elk, the mystical Macondo of García Márquez, the list goes on and on, as it must, I'm certain, for every reader.

I've lived in San Antonio since 1977. I was first drawn to that city certainly by a childhood fascination with the Alamo, fueled by books written by Margaret Cousins, Walter Lord, Lon Tinkle and others. After moving to San Antonio, I began to hear other sides to that story. I became something of an expert on Chicano literature and I began to see San Antonio and South Texas through the words of Carmen Tafolla, Gloria Anzaldúa, Angela De Hoyos, Tomás Rivera, Rosemary Catacalos, Rolando Hinojosa, even that El Paso import, Ricardo Sánchez. The result is that, for all that I appreciate and have written about the hydrology of the river that runs beside my house and the legendary springs that feed it, for all that I know of the region's flora, fauna and geology, the landscapes that I inhabit on a daily basis are now defined much more by human culture than by physical features. This informs my creative response to it.

I spent the last few years compiling and editing *Literary San Antonio*, just published, and I am now writing a series of vignettes that explore anecdotal associations with literary persons and moments within that urban landscape. For writers and readers alike, these form a kind of background noise to our experience of a place, urban or rural. Some quick examples of this. In 1854 a German immigrant named Julius Berends opened the first bookstore in San Antonio, at 220 E. Commerce Street, which he named "The Old Curiosity Shop" after the 1841 Dickens novel. In December of 1872, into that shop walked the great southern poet Sidney Lanier. Berends was simply overjoyed to have a real, breathing, published author in his frontier bookshop, and he introduced Lanier to the Beethoven Männerchor, which Lanier accompanied on his flute, and to the Alamo Literary Society. Lanier was taken by the place. Not only did he write a substantial history of the city, he composed a piece for solo flute, "Blackbirds," inspired by San Antonio's grackle population. Two years later, in 1874, that bookshop was purchased by one of its employees, Nic Tengg, who ran it until his death in 1927. His sons kept it open until 1962. That story is most certainly part of the way I experience Commerce Street in San Antonio, and now I'm writing about it. Likewise the fact that Robert Frost celebrated his 64th birthday with a party in Rosengren's Bookstore in the Milam Building on the corner of Travis and Soledad. A photograph from that party hung in the store for the next fifty years. Or the O. Henry story "The Enchanted Kiss," which is nothing less than a psychedelic absinthe trip on the midnight streets of downtown San Antonio.

Stories like these form an imagined landscape that overlays the physical one, coloring it like those New York artists who worked for the Santa Fe Railway re-painting black and white photographs of New Mexico in colors only glimpsed in the most glorious of sunsets and thereby defining for many Americans what the "real west" was supposed to look like. Thus the streets of San Antonio are, for me, no longer mere streets, but stories; the river is for me not just a glorified green creek, but what Frederick Law Olmsted called "invaded nymphdom."

I would contend that, unless one is a scientist, a naturalist perhaps, working within a specific geographic region, every landscape one encounters is enhanced, if not completely warped, by one's literary experiences. To this day, when I'm hiking in the Tetons or the Sangre de Cristo mountains I am simultaneously in the Misty Mountains of Tolkien's Middle Earth; on every canoe trip down some small Texas river, John Graves is there with me; driving north out of the Hill Country, I see the landscapes not as they are now but as they were described by Charlie Siringo, Frank Dobie, Steve Frumholz, Larry McMurtry, Steve Harrigan....

The contortions of time play a role as well. Growing up in the 1950s and 60s, the high plains and Palo Duro Canyon were for me, imaginatively, still the haunts of the Comanche and Kiowa. My grandmother arrived in the Panhandle in the 1890s in a covered wagon, following roughly the Santa Fe trail, even though by that time trains were easily available. But, by God, those still-visible ruts were my ruts, as if I had been in that wagon. Again, an imagined landscape overlays the physical one.

The topics of creativity and landscape necessarily pair the admittedly subjective with the ostensibly objective. How a creative mind perceives and re-presents a landscape is, in fact, often judged by just how near or far from objective reality the creative product ends up being. Perhaps this is more apparent in the visual arts. A photorealist painter is appraised by how well he or she mimics the camera; impressionists and expressionists alike by how effectively they have conveyed the emotional content of a scene; the truly abstract artist by whether we can discern if there was ever any real landscape involved at all.

A bit of a family story. In 1917, my grandmother, Docia Pauline, asked her husband W.B. for a "paint kit"—that's what she always called it—as a Christmas present. Raised in a dugout on the high plains, W.B. didn't know jack about painting, but he was happy to let her have her fun. He was a dry-land dirt farmer and the Santa Fe telegraph operator in the thriving village of White Deer, about 40 miles east of Amarillo.

Well, down the road in Canyon at West Texas State Normal School, they'd just hired a new art teacher. So Pauline packs up her "paint kit" and hops on the train once a month to spend an afternoon learning to paint. After a few months, W.B goes to see an exhibit of work by the art teacher, who happened to be a young Georgia O'Keefe. W.B. took one look at O'Keefe's abstracts of Palo Duro Canyon and said—in an accent prefiguring Festus Haggan of *Gunsmoke*, "That woman cain't paint." Pauline ended up being a fair hand at painting flowers on china plates, but you wouldn't want to live long in the same room with a portrait she did of you. W.B. spent the rest of his life laughing when he told that story until I showed him a collection of O'Keefe's realistic paintings of flowers and cow skulls. He thought it over for a while and then hollered out—this is on his death bed, mind you—"Got dang, Pauline, that woman learned to paint from you!"

The point here is, of course, that every creative response to landscape, whether in literature or any other art form, operates on the basic principle that one man's ceiling is another man's floor. Totally subjective. Further, our own creative responses to particular landscapes re-shape our prior notions that were themselves shaped by the creativity of others.

I'd like to read for you one of my prose poems that exemplifies this shifting subjectivity based on the influences of literature, film, early Santa Fe Railway advertising, and popular song—as well as on personal experience and observation. It's called:

Down the Road a Bit in America

If you didn't own a Ford back in the day then likely you didn't take those long rambling road-trip vacations to remote caverns or hidden canyons or desert meteor crash sites, and so there will not linger at the back of your memory a dusty adobe motel with honest-to-God tumble weeds and windmill water thick enough to chew, but rather the postcard visions of these same places, painted in back-alley New

York studios where big sky sunsets and painted deserts came out just this side of psychedelic. But either way, whether the etched memory is real or second-hand illusion, now, a few miles down the road from one of America's more famous caverns, there is a rundown tourist court. . . . Probably, just down the road from every geographic or cultural oddity on the planet there is some equivalent of the rundown tourist court—I mean, Lord, there's a souvenir shack on top of Mount Sinai—but in America, generally a mile or two down what was in the '30s a two-lane blacktop but is now a pot-hole pocked, disintegrating back road half a mile or more off the smoothly sterile modern highway, up out of the landscape will rise some raggedy remnant of the days when being a tourist was a serious communal adventure, some L- or U-shaped building made of the very soil it stands on, lined with peeling, turquoise-painted door frames with illegible numbers, looking very much like some backwoods brothel except that you're in the wrong state for that and besides, only the goldenest of golden-hearted hookers would deign to make a warm and welcoming getaway of such a place—and there are not many of those ladies left (maybe there never were all that many)—and with the wind whipping up a dust storm in the distance that looks like sundown before the Ragnarök, and your GPS spouting nonsense, and your cell phone that's texting "are you kidding?" to your every inquiry— then that place by the side of the road begins to have a certain appeal, and you begin to think of yourself as a hollow-souled wanderer about to meet Gabrielle Maple by the now defunct gasoline pumps where she will be reading Françoise Villon and you will quote T.S. Eliot to her, or maybe its appeal is not Depression-era romanticism at all, but simply the exotic absence of neon, whatever, but you see a wavering light in the office window and a rusted "vacancy" sign that's creaking a soprano solo above the deep tenor hiss that is sand-blasting your windshield, and now you don't really decide, but your hands turn the wheel of themselves and set the brake and turn the key, and you wonder if there's coffee inside and just how gritty it is, and just how bad the scorpions in the shower will be, and whether the silhouette in the window can possibly match your imagination.*

This next one is called "Advent's End." Imagine driving through a recent blizzard up 281 from San Antonio to Dallas. I fused that experience with the memory of a drive through a blizzard in 1959 up 287 along the Oklahoma border. It is perhaps of interest to note that the landscapes of memory are as vivid as the images of the present. But underneath the observed realities and the personal history, you may hear echoes of Robert Frost, Dylan Thomas, the Bible, James Joyce, and other writers who have shaped the way I experienced these wintry Texas landscapes.

Advent's End

Fog clogs the highway but clears the mind of all but the tail lights wavering in and out of focus as distance and density compete for attention with the black ice creeping across the asphalt the further north you get, transiting both map and memory as you recall another winter drive toward another death bed fifty-six years ago, the night a cop pulled your father over somewhere between Estilene and the bridge over the dry-as-Ezekiel's-bones Prairie Dog Town Fork of the Red River for speeding in a midnight blizzard, and it was only when you heard your father explain that his father was dying that very night in a hospital still a hundred miles away that your seven-year-old self understood that all journeys can end without arriving at an appointed end—just a slide and a thump, barely audible through the downy snow-thick air, just a wheezing cough and a gasp, just a glance away from the business of staying alive long enough to earn a wistful moment or two of longing or regret or admiration in the tumbled memories of those left behind, perhaps no more than an image, enshrined in the mind for no apparent reason, like that other winter night when you were too old to believe in Santa but were determined to believe simply because you did not want to not believe when you snuggled beneath your grandmother's quilts (three deep—oh, we were quilt-rich back then) when at the fringe of sleep you saw your father in the swirling white cold beyond the rimed and rattling panes bringing in the gift only Santa could bestow because only Santa could know and the option of believing because

you did not want to not believe was abruptly null, your faith sucked into that void from which faith in anything other than the present moment never returns without its twin shadows of guilt and doubt, shadows that cloud at once the meaning of yesterday and the potential of tomorrow as thoroughly as the fog clogs this highway yet lenses all time into momentary focus when you hear the dead calling you to breakfast from the kitchen on Christmas morning and you smell the sage and pepper-rich sausage your grandfather had slaughtered, butchered and smoked only weeks before, and grandmother's biscuits and turkey hash and the strawberry preserves made from your own labor the preceding spring when the ruby fruits stained your hands as if . . . and here speculation falters as memory stumbles, and you are parking your car in the hospice parking lot because yes, if you refuse to die in a corporation hospital they will be happy to rent you a room in which you can die at your leisure, and you lean back, exhausted by hours of hyper concentration, minding the road, fighting the ice, entering the ghostly vortices that envelop the car as if to enshroud it but engine heat keeps the pall from forming on the hood although snow begins to freeze on the windshield almost at once, so you hesitate to shut off the ignition, reluctant to leave because to quit the car is to quit the dream and to step again into the storm.

There is a phrase in that piece that summarizes this conflation of actual with imagined landscapes—the experience is “transiting both map and memory.” This next prose poem does much the same thing, but it is imagining a future memory rather than reconstructing a past one. I mentioned that the landscape of the Davis Mountains appears in several of my poems. This piece is called “A Desert Mountain Love Song,” and it too is about a death, albeit this one is my own. You can relax because I'm not dead, and I don't plan to be for quite a while. But it's always good to have a plan, so to speak.

A lot of American landscape writing uses highway numbers—think of Route 66 or Highway 1 or I-95—familiar to most contemporary readers. In this piece, I mention FM 118, which is not exactly on a

par with the great iconic roads of American fiction. Still, in the Age of Google, it seems reasonable to assume that almost any road can become iconic now.

A Desert Mountain Love Song

You knew the place for what it was the first and only time you saw it—below the tree-line stand of aspen on the summit of Mt. Livermore, where from a den of red-skinned madrones a clear eight-mile sight line across the valley of the Limpia (dry for decades but a chirping little stream in your earliest memories) revealed the gleaming twin domes, now a trio, atop Mt. Locke—a place you knew no one but a lost coyote would ever find you so you put an “x” on a map and took the coordinates so that years later, which is to say yesterday, you could send postcards to your daughter and your son on opposite ends of the country saying simply “Look here when you have to. All my love,” after which you stole the keys to your caregiver’s car and lit out down the highway with just one small backpack, a flask of Jameson’s and the Colt peacemaker no one ever knew you had—just in case the old bastard takes too long in coming or the errant coyotes come too soon—and now you’re here, having ditched the car at dawn off 118 with a thank you note to its owner and hiked up the canyon—more arduous a task than you imagined—found the spot curiously unchanged and cut the saplings to weave a lattice couch to keep your ass off the ground and your eyes on the sky, spread out your grandfather’s four-stripe Hudson Bay blanket, put on your hefty red Guatemalan shirt ’cause it gets cold out here at night and besides, you told everyone that you would be wearing it, and then the vest with all the kitschy patches of all the places you’ve been with the love of your life and you brush away the twinge of guilt over not lying down beside her back in the city but you know that when they gather up what’s left of you, when they find you that that’s where most of your bones or maybe your ashes will end up, and you lie down on the couch, looking up at the wonderfully dark and brilliant sky, the darkest skies on the continent, exhausted by the drive and the hike and the cancer and it is all just as you imagined it would be, all as it should

be, as you slip the blue bandanna over your head to keep your jaw from falling open in the long night because you remember the horror of your father's last gasp, wired and tubed and miserable, mouth gaping and nostrils flared, and you swore you wouldn't go that way, so here you are listening to the javelinas rooting in the brush and the rattlers winding in their lethal almost silence among the boulders that glisten with quartz and rhyolite, and the occasional swoop of owl wings as the doors slide open atop Mount Locke and the silver-white dome turns in search of a planet where the air has not been fouled by its most intelligent vermin, and you crush the sage in your hand and put it to your nose, and wait "in the shadow of your own words" (as your first good song put it so long ago) and you wish you had your old Martin with you now, but one of the kids would want it so you left it but you can still feel its music in your hands like you can still feel your love's breasts and hips and hair of sixty years back, and you pray that if there's anything at all beyond the veil, it will be her voice calling your name.

I mentioned earlier that contortions of time also play a role in the way we conceive of particular landscapes. Here is the opening section of a much longer prose poem entitled "Eós and the Train Horns." It focuses on the question of the accuracy of memory by posing the question, "whose memories are you remembering?"—specifically in relation to the impossibility of a physical landscape being described by the person who believes they witnessed it.

Eós and the Train Horns

Dawning memory is tangled in its tellings, fractured into multiple perspectives, more than one of which could have been yours, so you remain unsure of exactly how far away the red and yellow Santa Fe Chief locomotive was when your grandfather yanked you off the tracks in front of his yellow and brown depot in White Deer, Texas. A few yards, a quarter mile? They tell you that you were two years old (there's

most of the problem: whose memories are you remembering?) but you know you remember specifically placing two buffalo nickels on the hot iron track, to be flattened by the Chief. Or was it the Santa Fe El Capitan? Or are the crushed nickels later memories layered upon an earlier one? You remember the vibrations, the sun's glare on the silvered steel, the heat of the cinder bed and other . . . things that appear too closely observed: the rattlesnake dozing in the shade beneath the wooden loading platform, the twisted brown faces in the rust etching the cast iron wheels of a baggage cart with its curved oak handles worn smooth as glass, the tap-tap-tappeting of your grandfather's telegraph key, the rhythmic squeak of the speckled blue porcelain-on-metal Western Union sign swinging in the endless Panhandle wind, the painting of a Navaho bead maker on a fading Santa Fe calendar on the depot wall, the echo of your father's warbled whistling of an Edith Piaf song — things too richly enshrined in the telling to have been true of the moment but which were certainly true of the time. And thus unravels your first living memory, leaving you to re-weave the tapestry of who you really are.

There is, for the contemporary writer, a certain comfort in placing literary work within seemingly "eternal" landscapes—mountain ranges, vast plains, ocean vistas—when compared with the ever-shifting appearance of a modern city. In San Antonio at the moment we are debating the preservation of urban "view-sheds," as if a local ordinance or two could prevent the sprouting of yet another skyscraper beside some beloved scene that itself did not exist only a century ago. The fact is that everything changes, landscapes included. The Blue Hole, the huge headwater spring of the San Antonio River was described by Olmsted 160 years ago as one of the great gems of the natural world; it is now mostly a dry hole. The frozen wilds of Jack London's Alaska are rapidly sprouting wildflowers. The Northwest Passage is no longer a myth. The most accurate, most realistic literature of today will inevitably become the historical fantasies of tomorrow. Recognizing this may spur a more urgent sense of the necessity to include political content in one's writing, no matter the genre. But it may also spur us

to live and write more in the moment, to observe more closely and preserve with greater heart—for however long our writing may last—what the land has meant to us.

I'll close with a poem from the Texas hill country about creatively loving a landscape.

West of Lampasas

for T.J. Poole

I sought the crumbled limestone crown
of this middling hill with no reason

beyond it being taller than its mate
across the way, when a path—glimpsed
through scrub oak and cedar—lured me
toward some imagined sunny height

even as the gulley-riven slope pulled
my steps toward the arroyo that runs,
when it runs, off toward Little School Creek.

But then a lane emerged beyond a fall
of storm-wasted cedar, rounded
the hill then cut straight

across the tangled landscape
—a private road, not the county's—
recently strewn with crushed marble
almost too white to walk on.
Further on, aging elms
embowered the narrow lane

barely wider than a wagon path
but lacking ruts or other marks
of human passage, I could not
but wonder who had renewed
with glistening stone
a path so antique, older

than the present generation,
older than our grandfathers,
and so, though it was not my labor
I made it my path for the day
until the alley opened out
onto an empty meadow.

Birthplace? Deathplace?

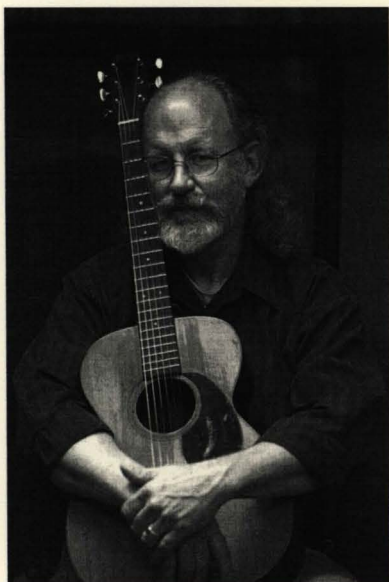
Homeplace? No carved stone,
no threshold or hearth,
no rude cross gave a hint.
Only the path told how
this land had been loved.

* Incidentally, I call these “prose poems” because that is how others have described them. I’ve included four in this lecture. They first appeared in *Southwest Review*, *Clover*, and the *Asheville Poetry Review*, and all were nominated for Pushcart Prizes. They subsequently appeared in my book, *Take to the Highway: Arabesques for Travelers*.

(West End Press, 2016).

Bryce Milligan

Born in Dallas, Texas, Bryce Milligan has lived in San Antonio since 1977. He holds a M.A. from the University of Texas in Linguistics and Ancient Languages. Milligan is a prolific, award-winning author in numerous genres, ranging from children's books to novels for young adults, plays, and adult poetry and criticism. Bloomsbury Review called him a "literary wizard." Critic Paul Christensen wrote of Milligan as "one of the principal writers of the region and a force at the center of the literary art movements of Texas." James Hoggard, past president of the Texas Institute of Letters once wrote: "More than any individual I can think of, Milligan has been intensely active and supremely successful in fostering both a public awareness and involvement in the humanities in Texas."



He has been the publisher/editor/designer of Wings Press since 1995, where he has published some 250 titles in all genres. Wings Press has been profiled in numerous publications, including *Poets & Writers Magazine* and the *Huffington Post*. Ramón Renteria, *El Paso Times* Book Editor, wrote that, "Without publishers like Milligan's Wing Press, Latino and Chicano literature would remain in a deep well in America." His book designs have been the focus of two exhibits, at the San Antonio Public Library (November 2015) and at the Bihl Haus Arts Gallery (San Antonio), entitled "Necessary Work: Bryce Milligan's World of Words and Design," curated by Dr. Agnieszka Czeblakow, UTSA Rare Books Librarian (April-May 2016). Milligan was a judge for the 2012 National Carl Hertzog Award for Excellence in Book Design.

He has edited several anthologies, including *Daughters of the Fifth Sun* (Riverhead) and *Floriscanto Si!* (Penguin), ground-breaking, award-winning collections of contemporary Latina fiction and poetry, and *Literary San Antonio* (TCU Press, 2018), a collection of 300 years of writing in San Antonio. His latest book is *Take to the Highway: Arabesques for Travelers* (West End Press, 2016), which received the Notable Writers Book Award and the Writers League of Texas Discovery Prize. Milligan is the recipient of the TLA Lone Star Book Award, the Gemini Ink "Award for Literary Excellence," St. Mary's University's "Art of Peace Award," the San Antonio Public Library's "Library Champion" award, the San Antonio Arts & Letters Award, the San Antonio Artist Foundation Literary Arts grant and a dozen or more Pushcart Prize nominations.



Sara Langworthy

2018 Recipient of the Carl Hertzog Award
for Excellence in Book Design

Title: *Naturans Naturata*

Author: Sara Langworthy

Publisher: Sara Langworthy, 2017
Iowa City, IA

Printer: Sara Langworthy

Remarks by Sara Langworthy at the Carl Hertzog Lecture, February 18, 2018:

Thank you, I am greatly honored to be here and to receive the Carl Hertzog Award for Excellence in Book Design. A list of previous awardees and runners up is a who's who of excellence in fine printing and book design, and I am honored to be included in that group. Thank you for hosting me; everyone I have met has been very gracious and welcoming.

I want to thank the jury for selecting my book. I also want to thank and acknowledge the Friends of the University Library for providing this forum where we can honor and celebrate the art of the book. I realize that this is an award for excellence in book design specifically, but to quote Carl Hertzog himself on that particular term. In preparation for my visit I read *Printer At the Pass: the Work of Carl Hertzog*. On the term 'book designer' Hertzog wrote: "I am called a Book Designer, period. This implies that I draw up plans and specifications, and that is all I have to do. ... [it] does not convey the idea of constant supervision or worry over quality.... For years I have been trying to invent a descriptive term, but as my wife says to me, "People don't know what you do, except that it has something to do with books."

I think that is why a lot of us are here today, because we all have something to do with books.

In reading about Hertzog, I felt a kinship with him, especially through his remarks about book design and production, and his ethic of paying close attention to every single detail.

I was struck in particular with how physical an activity was his design work and his pursuit of excellence in typography. As a fellow printer, I can well relate to the extremes to which we will go in order to achieve just the right inking, or composition on the page. Arranging small pieces of metal into the exact desired balance of white space and inked letterform is not a speedy process. I read many examples

of extreme commitment to material and typographic excellence in Hertzog's work, from setting and resetting a sequence of pages to avoid breaking the word 'feather' and thus breaking the rhythm of a name, or, when the perfect Truesdell typeface was not available in a large enough quantity to set the entire book at one time; he set three pages of type, printed those pages, distributed the type back into the case, and then set three more pages, printed again, distributed again... and continued in this way until the entire book was printed. This is not an efficient way to print a book, but it is the choice one makes when the best type for a text is only available in limited quantities.

I see a lot of the passion and commitment of my peers in the work and commitment of Carl Hertzog. I am grateful to the jury for encouraging works that lean as much towards fine art editions as they do contemporary book design and publishing. Just as there was art in the book design of Carl Hertzog, there is a strong design sense within many of the finely printed artist books being produced today.

One final quotation from Hertzog that particularly struck a chord with me, as I try and balance the costs and effort of producing books by hand with the realities of the audiences for these books: "after all costs I made about \$1000, but I think I did about \$2000 worth of work and \$5000 worth of worrying."

Events such as this one recognize some of the excellent work being done in the field today, and that celebration does much to counteract the psychic weight of that worry.

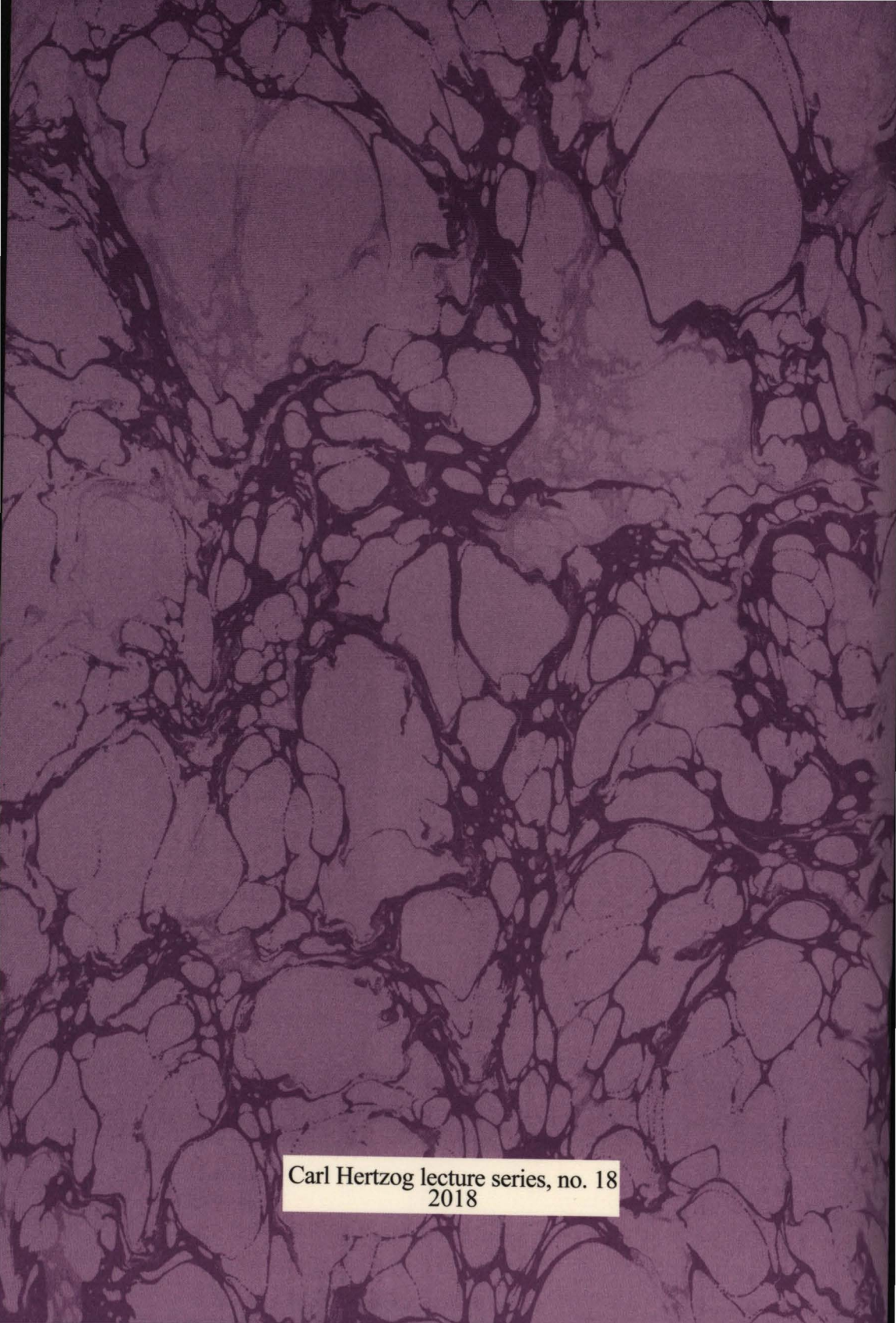
I wish to thank the Friends of the University Library for honoring and recognizing the fields of book design, and book arts, and especially for honoring the legacy of Carl Hertzog, a printer and book designer whose works and writings I am very glad to have come to know.

Thank you.

Biography

Sara Langworthy

Sara Langworthy lives and works in Iowa City, IA, where she maintains a private studio and is Associate Professor of Practice at the University of Iowa Center for the Book. She previously lived in Minneapolis, where she held artist's residencies at the Minnesota Center for Book Arts (MCBA) and the Highpoint Center for Printmaking. While at MCBA, she printed two of their annual *Winter Books*, receiving the Minnesota Fine Press Book Award for her work on *Distance from the Sun* by Louis Jenkins. She was the recipient of an Artist Book Production Grant from the Women's Studio Workshop in Rosendale, NY, and an Emerging Educator Award from the College Book Art Association. In 2015 she was a finalist for the MCBA Prize, and a first runner-up for the Carl Hertzog Award for Excellence in Book Design. Langworthy teaches workshops nationally, and is a board member of the Fine Press Book Association. Her artist books and broadsides are in numerous national and international collections, including The Library of Congress, The Walker Art Center, and Yale University.



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