

News from the Feminist Caucus, by Anne Burke

For the Anvil Press 2018 Anthology called *Against Death*, the deadline for submissions is Dec 15. This month, previously published poems from new Associate Member Mery Benezra, and a review of *The Witch of the Inner Wood: M. Travis Lane's Collected Long Poems*, edited by Shane Neilson. Lane is the author of sixteen books of poetry and has been widely published in literary journals as a poet and literary critic. She has won the Atlantic Poetry Prize, the New Brunswick Poetry Prize, the Pat Lowther Memorial Award, and the Bliss Carman Award. Her most recent book, *Crossover*, was a finalist for the Governor General's Award for poetry in 2015. She is a founding member, as well as Honourary President, of the Writers Federation of New Brunswick. She is also a Life member of the League of Canadian Poets, where she has participated in the Feminist Caucus. Lane lives in Fredericton, New Brunswick.

Mery Benezra is a writer and reader and follower of poetry, currently living in Nova Scotia. She began her writing life as a fiction writer, self-publishing *Special Karma: A Zen Novel of Love and Folly* in 2011. She turned to what became a commitment to poetry in 2009, attending workshops wherever she could find and afford them, in lieu of an MFA. As the granddaughter of Alberta homesteaders and thereby a dual passport holder, Mery is so grateful to make Canada her home.

HEREDITARY

I found my father in a tangled
field, one night.

Amazing, he said, *to be consoled*
by small weather
after such storms...

Fireflies marked their
coordinates in volumes of air
while
the
steamship moon chugged a
sea passage
across the sky.

How small he grew, standing
there—
and soon only a smudge against
the night, a disturbance
in the porous air.

And how long I stood and waited,
and waited for the moon to moor.

[published by *The Dulcet Quarterly*]

LEGACY

Battered
trinket called *dark-haired-mother* and
nothing-harder around her neck. It keeps
her sad but who else
will wear it?

Or swaddling shadow—the way the rising moon
sometimes
got tangled in the branches, or the cradle
swaying on the treetop.

[published by *The Dulcet Quarterly*]

THE MAGI

The first box had a snapping
dog. I closed it up, and prayed
to it like a god.

In the second box were faces,
and I had to choose one. I thought,
These are the faces no one else wants—

Where are the better faces?

The last box seemed empty, but
the scent of fennel filled the room. Tiny,
the boat they gave me—
 tiny the oars.

[published by *Sourland Mountain Review*]

AVOCET

Clouds so flat, like erasures
of sky. A salted estuary where, walking,
you fill the air with possibilities—
each one carefully crossed out. I say:
But I'm not ready to lose you.

The path narrows here, becoming
a mire of lilacs and mud. I say it again,
and louder.

It begins to rain.

It begins to rain, and the water swallows the rain.
It rains, and the sky is a dome of cries
sifting down.

[to be published by *Sourland Mountain Review*]

VANISHED

It's winter when we lose them
flying up
through doors in the sky, like birds
white as talc, cloud-
shredded . . .

Not a backward
glance—one minute stirring
our dinners with tears, then gone!

And what
feathers we find later—and years later
—a storm of feathers
it pulls the air from our throats.

[published by *The Cortland Review*]

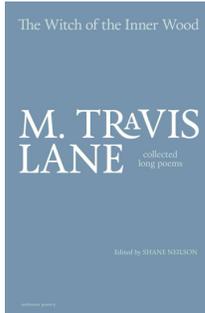
In conversation with *Sappho*:

YOU BURN US

choking clouds *my eyes are dead to light*
 my ears pound
exalted, drunk

and slender-ankled virgins
 crushing the soft flowers of grass
as colored threads unravel
 a mingling of all kinds of colors

[published by *IthacaLit*]



"The Path of Totality": Review of *The Witch of the Inner World, Collected Long Poems*, by M. Travis Lane, edited by Shane Neilson (Fredericton: Goose Land Editions, 2017) 377 pp. cloth.

The Path of Totality occurred during the August 21, 2017 total solar eclipse. I believe it is a suitable metaphor for Lane's proficient talent and obvious brilliance. "The night light glows like a tiny sun,/ hot as a fever, insular." ("Solar Remission")

This is a complete collection of Lane's long poems "Homecomings", "The Letter", "The Bomber Pilot", "The Daughter" "Bushed, a pastoral", arranged in chronological order. culled from *Homecomings: Narrative Poems* (1977); "Divinations", from *Divinations and Shorter Poems 1973-1978* (1980); "The Seasons", "Six Poems Looking at a Sculpture by Ülker Özerdem (An Arch in Ruins Contemplating Completion)", "The Witch of the Inner Wood, from *Reckonings Poems 1979-1985* (1988); "Life Insurance", *Solid Things Poems New and Selected* (1989); "Hills", "Local Suite", "Dear Tiger", *Temporary Shelter Poems 1986-1990* (1993); "Fall-Winter 1990-1991", "Anachronic Gnat Music", *Night Physics* (1994); "Solar Remission", "Cracked", *Keeping Afloat* (2001); "To Persevere", "In a Glass House", "Grouse", "The View from under the Bookcase", *Touch Earth* (2006); and "The Pickup Poems", *The All-Nighter's Radio* (2010)

The editor notes that he chose not to footnote the text because he thinks part of the joy of reading poetry is independent discovery. Lane concurred. However, she does give us an example of the re-thinking or re-visioning that she finds valuable in the long poem. Her poem "The Seasons", which reminds me of the programmed music by Vivaldi, declares the sentiments of bliss, plenitude, and good fortune. The legend of St. Dorothy involves a noblewoman who fed the hungry, despite her husband's objections. (Lane relies at times on martyrology). Dorothy lied to him that she was carrying roses not food when he snatched her basket, "and there they were, roses", a miracle. All sections of this poem contain this kind of change, while the poem as a whole ends with a re-visioning. "Cracked" melds Emily Dickinson and Melville, with themes of distress and escape. "Grouse" is a retrospective and reflective piece, the elderly speaker considers her life, loves, opinions. She has settled for less. "Local Suite" is a hymn. Bolden's window, an autographed photo album, a cabin and its stories are all clues she shares with us.

The poet is fond of using figurative language, similes, epic similes, metaphor, metonymy, synecdoche, personification, an intricate pattern of allusions. She is especially responsive, by means of *ecphrasis*, from the Greek for the description of a work of art produced as a rhetorical exercise; as ekphrastic, which is a vivid, often dramatic, verbal description of a visual work of art, either real or imagined. Lane transmutes timelines: "Events are recalled which have not yet occurred, and people are mentioned who have still to take flesh".

Vermeer's daughter was the girl with the pearl earring, in his famous painting. However, Lane's Pearl is a dwarf whose sister Ruby Fletcher has much to write about her in 1978, together with Pearls' rejoinders. They are only two of the characters with whom Lane was fascinated and the poet's enthusiasm is contagious. The editor sounds a bit apologetic about the witch as possibly a pejorative term but I did follow the trail of breadcrumbs; and that reviled woman in the forest, her gingerbread men, "my thatch", a *double entendre*. The venue acts as a cave of selfhood, while the male principle represents: a godhead, "upthrust", a monument. This balancing act involves a cat companion, "cat cornered", "catty-cornering", with "purrups", all coined words. Of the poet, "I toil/ I tumult/ I reshape".

She associates a baby, a lamb, with cookie birds, electric fish. In addition, a dove and her kettle, the beanstock stories, stone soup, sacramental bread; "my husbands", the garden metaphor, "but what the wild woods lover knows". She follows up with "Eat/ me", *Alice in Wonderland* or Atwood's *The Edible Woman*. Her knitting and/or baking dough yields to a simile "like the end/ of a sentence, paragraph,/ or book". The female muse is "my body so/ achieved-/ a finished poem, / gem sentencing" another double meaning. She shifts to "your comma self", "cadenced clause"; images of a child, such as humpty dumpty, fairytale and folklore leprechauns. These cookie men, and the reluctant daughters; with repetitive lines, lyrical refrain. The dead world is that mirror image, of the witch and her garden. This is her world, a witch's thought, in those cauldrons of her mind, whether indistinguishable: "moths/ maths", unravelling her "skein" while knitting, sewing.

"The Seasons" returns the diurnal round of evolving time, associated with birds: the osprey, gull, loon. The garden requires hoeing and weeding, to ensure escape from the "poisoned city fumes". Lane is very much a poet in the Romantic tradition, using the flora and fauna as landscape from the external world to reflect the inner feelings and meditation on human experiences. She uses "Heaven's Bowl", replacing daisy for a field of golden daffodils, the Pleiades, The Milky Way. The legend, "Oh Lord", St. Dorothy, miracle repositions, ends her poem with plentitude, imperfect spring. The Bay of Fundy is one of the Marine Wonders of the World, with tides rising as much as 16.3 metres over a 12-hour period twice each day.

"Fall" describes the rapture and awe of perspective from Cape Enragé, which offers one of the most spectacular views of the natural phenomenon from its towering cliffs and has been a light station and fog alarm since 1838; the current light tower is over 140 years old. This is "leafy poetry" (Keats said "If poetry comes not as naturally as the leaves to a tree it had better not come at all."); organic art, focussed on human feeling and the environment. There is Margaret but mourner, amid Orion, Auroras, Christ, St. Lucy's light (lighthouse). The Blue Cottage has exterior chimney and first storey wall in bright colours.

The poet includes the match girl, "The Little Match Girl" is a short story by Danish poet and author Hans Christian Andersen. The story, about a dying child's dreams and hope, was first published in 1845. Lane observes, "Our universe, like the lost child's life/

quivers, smokes, goes out." Lucy's lights, a festival near Christmas. Lucia of Syracuse, also known as Saint Lucy or Saint Lucia, was a young Christian martyr who died during the Diocletianic Persecution. "This was the ice queen's winter palace". Then the poet speaks of "the Morse code messages of earth", as in bees find their Eucharist. The red queen "Love, passion, lust" lectured Alice in *Through the Looking Glass*. Housekeeping, "her work undone/ which is never done" is an apt metaphor.

In "Six Poems", the anatomy of "pubis" pertains to either of a pair of bones forming the two sides of the pelvis. Yggdrasil in Norse mythology is the tree of life, and it is an eternal green Ash tree, carried by three enormous roots; the first root from Yggdrasil is in Asgard, the home of the Gods. O, Venus, but mortality, this crone figure with atlas, her stone child, her uterus, womb, nude. Yet, "The word will not complete itself", such that "The Word is Zero". Those people in whose hands "Mount Venus" has a higher elevation (as compared with the other mountains) are called Venus-dominated people, in the language of Palmistry. "Words/ can turn upon themselves". Indeed, "The sentence cracks". A snow globe, a microcosm, our tiny world, "arch, clasped hands". There is the pelvis, "upthrust", the looking glass.

"Homecoming" is dedicated to Neptune, the god of freshwater and the sea in Roman religion, a brother of Jupiter and Pluto. The home of Odysseus, a legendary Greek king, was Ithaca, a Greek island in the Ionian Sea. His faithful and long-patient wife was Penelope, according to the poet Homer's epic, he wandered the sea for ten years. Lane introduces rural New Brunswick In "Late-Winter to Spring", *in medias res*, but alludes to Troy and the The Pharos of Alexandria was an ancient lighthouse, one of the Seven Wonders of the world; it was the third longest surviving ancient wonder. In "Summer-Fall" and "Winter" we come across: Voyeur, "Peer Gynt", a five-act play in verse by the Norwegian dramatist Henrik Ibsen, and illustrated by Arthur Rackham as a children's book in 1936. Opus 23 is the incidental music to Henrik Ibsen's 1867 play of the same name, written by the Norwegian composer Edvard Grieg in 1875. It tells the story of the downfall and subsequent redemption of a Norwegian peasant anti-hero. Unlike Ibsen's previous dramas, it was written in verse. Dido, poor queen, was a legendary queen of Carthage, in Virgil's *Aeneid*, who kills herself when Aeneas leaves her. There is Noah's ark. In "Spring-Summer", the function of the poet is to describe how "I knit/ the nets as I knit here/ the history of frivolity:/ of wars, amours" (not armours), "dead horses,/ damaged men."

In an epistolary fashion, she concludes: "This is my letter to you,/ whoever you are." In "The Letter", the poet offers her "Argument" as well as a cautionary tale, "This poem lies." She introduces an apocryphal B.C. man who meditates over a thirty-year period and speaks throughout. His fate is to be eaten by a totemic figure. The lines in italics are in the third-person and the poet mentions Emily Carr "from which this poetry". Together, the artists are "demons of a different imagination".

The “Dedication” is for The Watts Towers, a collection of interconnected sculptural structures in a national park in Los Angeles, “from whom these towers are stolen”. The architect was Simon Rodia (1879 not 1875-1965) who produced one of the world’s greatest public art works. The other is for Emily Carr (1871-1945) a Canadian artist and author of autobiographical works, for example *The Book of Small*, *Klee Wyck*, a series of anecdotes or literary sketches.

When I prepared to research the facts, I learned that the sculptor takes liberties with the names of Angela, Carlos, Dee Ray, and Willie Joe; (he has three children). His birth date might be 1879 not 1875. Each successive census recorded a later birth date, while the year of his immigration shifted. He was often an unreliable witness to his own life, his son Frank, or Furi. William Hale’s 1952 short film from Rembrandt films has a publication date of 1957. “I had it in my mind to do something big and I did” Rodia quoted, as, tile setter, his own comic dialect, about his work shows a hermit’s cave, the cottage, barely survived a 1957 fire. The first press release was recorded in 1937, then he walked away from Watts in 1954.

There is a documentary-feel to the poem (see: Dorothy Livesay’s essay “The Canadian Documentary: An Overview”, the genre of her own poem “Call My People Home”, in 1950). There are many secondary sources in recorded interviews, literature, documentaries, movies, and television about Rodia (his children) the ruins of his house, and his mammoth project. For example, Robert Duncan featured the Watt’s Tower in his 1959 poem, “Nel Mezzo del Cammin di Nostra Vita”, democratic art free of church-state power structures.

One of the formulas of the epic poem is the argument or epic theme, by which the narrator invokes a muse or guiding spirit to inspire her in her great undertaking, then addresses to the muse the epic question, the answer to which inaugurates the narrative proper. (*A Glossary of Literary Terms, Seventh Edition*, by M.H. Abrams) Lane’s vision and breadth are epic in scope, she does not flinch from the broad brush, the heroic and the agency of evil,

The poem begins *in medias res* (in the middle of things) at a critical point in the action. “The Letter” opens with an Emily Carr-like voice with painterly instincts, but soon shifts to Watts, Man spires, a City of Angels, “Spanish and Nigger and Chinaman,/ In diamond, White—all Angels of light.” There is a refrain of “We are its Man.”, “the hero stands”, of angels or children (like birds): “They make a toy of the dream of heroes”, children in fact brought the artist items to use in a work of art.

Rodia called his complex “Nuestro Pueblo” but he actually built an ark. His ship has a sharp-pointed prow, while his towers serve as masts. Lane calls up a memory, the boat, fog, heavy sea, oars, sea lice, “swollen with sea child”. Furtjer, “He is the ship, steady as she goes;/ alone he is, and glorious” speech “*I thought that was the ship*”.

Stella, Claire, Angela, Winnie Mae, Carlos and Dee Ray all appear to be totems, a woman artist as ghost. We encounter a fat old woman, Bear goddess, she-god of the rocks” of Emily Carr. "She draws the towers,/ outs animal faces, Indian things/ all over the age. That’s not my towers!”

There are catalogues of some of the principal characters, introduced in formal detail, fallen angels, the characters are given set speeches that reveal their diverse temperaments and moral attitudes, debates. The players: "I was the Man", Columbus, Caesar, Jefferson, when vandalism was common, a bear, she, the great bear totem; osprey, or raven, a dream, the eagle; fat black woman, angel of darkness devours them, angels of light. Paradise Lost or Regained, the Circles of Dante's Purgatory..

“The Bomber Pilot” dedicated to her father relies on V-mail, an Ottawa museum, a Dürer’s print (“Knight, Death, and the Devil”), and St. Exupéry post-war. In “The Daughter” whom we met in passing as sixth grader is now in her seventies, a widow alone with her memories. Her mother died but speaks to her apologetically. “Bushed, a pastoral, reads like a closet drama in verse, expressing nostalgia for the past, a setting close to nature where the protagonist achieves a new perspective on the social world. The characters are Verne McGuigan, Mountie, Ed Bear, an Indian, and, in a dream, the Moon who speaks in French, Panther, young Jerry, Sarah, Elaine, and Sam . I thought of the nineteenth-century Isabella Valancy Crawford as Lane's predecessor in terms of genre, such as "Malcolm's Katie".

“Divinations” Book One: “Nothing” introduces a high school girl who lives in a small town during the nineteen-fifties. A carcassed daughter awaits her dissolution, circumscribed by her small room. Red Hook is the venue, the local school is mindless. A catalogue of the village store and God appears retired, “female, ephemeral, trivial,/ mere shades of things.”

Book Two: "Red Earth" begins with a passage from Dante, the reserve contains prehistoric gravesites, in New Brunswick. Malecite mythology pertains to First Nations people, which means “people of the beautiful river”, from the valleys of the St. John River. The Abenaki tribe “people of the dawn” are of Native American and First Nations people belonging to the Algonquian peoples. The speaker is a nurse whose husband is an anthropologist, on sabbatical leave. Lane opines, “Her truth is not the truth.” and this is borne out by her perceptions.

Book Three: "The Book of the Thrones" deals with The Thrones of the Third Heaven of the Nations Millennium General Assembly, by James Hampton (1909-1964), a complex work of art composed over fourteen years. He was an African-American janitor, whose third heaven was God’s realm. In Part One: Ruby, Ruby Fletcher comments on sister Pearl’s accomplishments. The artist’s sister came to claim his body. Part Two: Pearl contrasts with the prose form of Part One. The Lord is manifested, “His world’s my oyster./ I’ll not want”, from the Psalm, The Lord is my Shepherd. “REJOICE” is a found

word. “(Pearl’s Poem)” is an expansive concrete poem, which contains the linguistic catalysts derived from the visual arts, much as the sculpture is composed of letter messages from Revelation. He sought a holy woman to accompany him on the shrine, his life’s work.

“The Seasons” of Summer, Fall, Winter, and Spring reflect the passage of time, as the “Pearl” section move from Morning, Noon, Afternoon, Evening, to Night. Six poems follow which revisit “An Arch in Ruins Contemplating Completion, a sculpture by ũlker Őzerdem. The result is a simile for a tree root, “like a sinew”, “a long-thighed woman in the sea”, “a sculpture of my hands”, “this scarred omega is/ a dead word”.

The Witch of the Woods: Fairy Tales from Sweden (1968), by Helena Nyblom (1843 – 1926) who was a Swedish children’s story author, contains feminist themes. “The Witch of the Inner Wood” depends on a feminist fable, “(And God created man in Her own image; in the image of God created She him; male and female created She him)”. This is a device similar to the Ruby/Pearl relationship, because the female principle is in charge, of creation and re-creation; the male reduced to “He loves me for his purposes”, the small beast indeed a pet cat. The poet engages Natural Law, Free Will, yet she grieves, and celebrates, She explains, makes distinctions, and defines bread. Not all things are nourished, birth and despair are bookends. The poet: She sees the world in Her poem’s light and re-affirms the Word. There is a Biblical cadence, with extended metaphor throughout.

From *Solid Things: Poems New and Selected*, the poem “Life Insurance” introduces a young woman, a dreamer, hospitalized. She recalls the air crash, her trade career in sales, she seeks freedom. She wanted to fly the plane as a metaphor for her unsatisfactory life and career. In turn, she dreams of unborn animals. From *Temporary Shelter Poems 1986-1990*, in her long poem “Hills”, the poet recalls her grandfather’s skyline map, her brother waits. The his/her binary operates as a given. “Local Suite” represents local colour and regionalism: Riverside Drive, Fredericton Junction, Roberta’s Wood Path; Picnic by the River Light, Officers’ SquareNeedham Street; Loyalist Graveyard, Odell ark, Burning the Greens, and The Myth of a Small City.

The approach reminds me of Raymond Souster’s *A Local Pride*, (Toronto: Contact Press, 1962) for which he won the Governor General’s Award. In addition, William Carlos Williams published *Paterson*, in five books, 1946 to 1958. “Dear Tiger” with an epitaph from George Eliot (Mary Ann Evans) is dedicated to a loyal tom cat. From *Night Physics* the view begins with Fall-Winter 1990-1991 and a military cemetery, the college chapel’s cross. “Anachronic Gnat Music” is a playful combination of the Marx brothers, Prince, Princess, Poet, Muse, and Dog (Sirius) with an introductory Prelude to a musical score.

From *Keeping Afloat, Solar Remission*” deals with a woman’s suffering whose chronic condition causes her reentry to hospital for treatment of her symptoms. The composition offers a Sonata for flute. The Amherst poet must be Emily Dickinson, in "Cracked", in an imaginary epistolary exchange, with Thomas Wentworth Higginson (1823 – 1911); he was an American Unitarian minister, author, abolitionist, and soldier. Higginson is remembered as a correspondent and literary mentor to the Dickinson.

From *Touch Earth*, “To Persevere” the primordial is explored, the Bristlecone refers to three types of pines which are long-lived and highly resistant to harsh weather and poor soil; "pinus arista" is one of the types, which Lane notes are timberline specimens found to be over four thousand-years-old. “In a Glass House” relies on a feminist rendering of pure white heroine Snow White and the Seven Dwarves, whose labour and songs consist of and compose most of the poem. A prince becomes the angel of death who cannot wake her.

“Grouse” has a female icon, installation art, Shakespeare's Prospero, *Alice in Wonderland* or *Through the Looking Glass*, as device to contemplate the meaning of Nature and Poetry. Lane functions in the role of "She is/ a poet of unfinished themes", as she moves through the Queen of Hearts who loves the Knave. “The View from under the Bookcase” announces “The king of poetry has died.” *Deus ex machina* literally means “a god from a machine”. In ancient drama, the dilemmas were thus resolved. The plot is riddled with rapture, according to the poet, Dear Phoeb, our mini-Hamlet, sow's heir, writes "his poems on tiny post-it notes." Indeed, words and alphabets are what he flip-flops, in palindromic sequences (not only a poetical form but in DNA structure).

The final long poem, from *The All Nighter's Radio*, adopts truth and mystery, elements of the ancient and the orient, arranged with Christian symbolism of star and Bethlehem, Noah’s dove, Mt. Ararat. Other means of succor are touching preferred, not technology, a tableau of granddaughter, hospital room, Granny hat, and the poet as scribe.

“The Pickup Poems” alludes to *The Collected Songs of Cold Mountain*, by Han Shan, Feng-kan (“Big Stick”), and Shih-te (“Pickup”), the Hermits of Tientai (8th-9th century Taoist/Buddhists), in translation by Bill Porter (“Red Pine.”) These poems were written twelve hundred years ago and the revised edition contains "Pickup" (Shih-te) and "Big Stick" (Feng-kan). In I. *Economy*, the poet is self-described as monk, poet and philosopher, living in isolation, since beggars must be philosophers. In 2. “*Millions of Gathas*”, the allusion is to the seventeen Avstan hymns believed to have been composed by Zarathustra (Zoroaster), thus forming the core of his liturgy (the Yasna). They are arranged in five different modes or metre. In 3. *Bodhi Road*” is a wheelchair accessible path to the heart of the monastery complex in South Taiwan, featuring the Great Buddha Land. In 4. *Fed by the Birds* the poet laments “a poet’s like a monk”, “except for food,/ this stony verse.” In 5. *Hermit Poem*, good company is hard to keep, the anachronistic telephone. In 6. *There Are So Many Deaths*, but song, “Singing is better than silences!/(And we will sing!)”.

The reader is informed in the “Introduction” about the gender imbalance at the 1984 Long-Liners Conference, somewhat redressed by Lane’s ambitious “Alternative to Narrative: the Structuring Concept”. The conference proceedings were published in *Open Letter* 6, nos.2-3 (Summer/Fall 1985). Of the nineteen papers published, fourteen were by (albeit) prominent men. Re: the curriculum reading list, I am reminded of my own in 1976, when I attempted to add Margaret Atwood and Margaret Laurence, there was pushback from some of the (male) students. The editor surveys the few long-poem anthologies in order to pinpoint Lane’s exclusion, whether due to anti-Maritime bias, gender, Lane as eco-feminist with the Caucus of the League of Canadian Poets, or lost among the millennial post-modernist lot. I consulted *The Penultimate Long Poem Anthology*, an unpublished third version only available online with a draft. There are unfinished table of contents, author page, including bibliography, links, extended bio (edited by rob mcLennan, blogspot.ca/). The inaugural *Long Poem Anthology* was in 1979, edited by Michael Ondaatje; the second in 1992, edited by Sharon Thesen; then a second edition in 2001, which contain geographic bias, according to Neilson.

Neilson edited *How Thought Feels: The Poetry of M. Travis Lane*, the title essay was by Jan Zwicky, with the addition of Neilson’s own essay, and includes “M. Travis Lane, Ecopoet”, by Jeanette Lynes (Victoria: Frog Hollow Press, 2015). This was the first of four books on Lane’s poetics and career. *The Essential Travis Lane* is a compilation of selected poems. The other volumes 2016-2017 are a collection of prose writings from Palimpsest and the present selection of longer poems from Goose Lane. *Heart on Fist: Essays and Reviews 1970-2016* (Palimpsest Press) gathers Lane’s finest and most influential reviews.

Neilson appends to his introduction of the present collection a helpful list of Works Consulted and Cited. Omitted was Dennis Cooley a Canadian author of poetry and criticism and a significant figure in the evolution of the prairie long poem: *Draft: An Anthology of Prairie Poetry, Inscriptions: Prairie Poetry, The Vernacular Muse: Critical Essays*. However, the “Editor’s Notes & Acknowledgements” reveal that Lane did not review his “Introduction” before typesetting. As already mentioned, he decided not to footnote the text, in favour of relying on the joy of reading poetry and pursuing independent discovery. This has thrown open the active reader to untold years, if not decades, of scholarship. William Blake comes to mind. *The Four Zoas*. A variorum edition is not out of the question, although a Reader’s Guide is probably recommended in the interim.

An “Afterword” by Lane depends on duration as a criterion for the long poem and her bias for this form: “I have written as many different kinds of long poems as I can”. rob mcLennan reports, “Sometimes I agree with Edgar Allan Poe...that there is no such thing as a long poem”; and he adds “Sometimes I think that in every long poem there is a short poem, trying to get out.” (rob mcLennan’s blog, accessed August 24, 2017, <http://robmcLennan.blogspot.ca/>).

On May 30, 2015, The League of Canadian Poets hosted a panel or Symposium on “Writing, Editing, and Publishing the Long Poem”, with Sharon Thesen's “After-Thoughts on the Long Poem”; Cornelia Hoogland's “The Long Poem and the Shape of the Working Mind”; and Kate Braid's, “Tending the Garden: The Fruits and Dangers of the Long Poem” (The papers were collectively published online by the *Malahat Review*). According to Braid: “Emily Carr defied her Victorian society’s norms of what ‘nice girls’ do, in order to do what she most passionately wanted—to paint. In my case, it was to build.” Lane shares this enthusiasm for Emily Carr.

Sharon Thesen says "my favourite form of poetry is the long poem, since it means there is more, this life, this language, this thought, continues and is joined to other lives, other words, other thinking." For Hoogland, “The joke around discussion of the long poem is how long do we have? Beyond its tradition as extended verse narrative, how do we define the long poem? How long is long? What is the shape of long? What has technology’s influence (the computer screen’s bottomless page) meant for the long poem?”

For Lane: "a long poem, whether narrative, sequence, or essay, has time to think, develop, revise, or question its opening perception. It carries on further. And it is just that opportunity to re-think that I most value". (“Afterword: On the Long Poem” *The Witch of the Inner Wood*, p . 375)

"Nothing Too Small to Say: Anita Lahey in Conversation with M.Travis Lane" was published online at <http://www.malahatreview.ca/interviews/laneinterview.html>. What follows is some biographical information gleaned from that source.

Millicent Travis Lane lives on a quiet street “up the hill” in Fredericton, New Brunswick, across the street from the campus of the University of New Brunswick, where she has been an honorary research associate since 1967. A PhD graduate of Cornell University, where she marked for Vladimir Nabokov and wrote her dissertation on agnosticism as technique in the work of Robert Frost, Lane has published fourteen volumes of poetry, plus several chapbooks, and has been reviewing poetry for *The Fiddlehead* since the late sixties.

She has lived in Fredericton since 1960. In part, she met people through the Voices of Women for Peace, and the Conservation Council. Founded in 1960, VOW is one of the non-governmental organizations (NGO) cited by UNESCO’s standing committee in the working group report entitled “The Contribution of Women to the Culture of Peace”. An accredited NGO to the United Nations, affiliated with the Department of Public Information (DPI) and the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC), VOW was the Canadian lead group for peace at the Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing. Members have been active in follow-up activities, including writing the chapter, “Women and Peace” in Take Action for Equality, Development and Peace. (<http://vowpeace.org/about/>)

But a friend of mine, Sharon Nelson in Montreal, had done research and written a paper about women getting reviewed, women getting published, and there really were statistics to prove that women needed to be encouraged by the [League of Canadian Poet's] Feminist Caucus. I think the Maritimes still is [being neglected].

You can read the complete text online of the interview Anita Lahey conducted with M. Travis Lane, which appeared in shortened form in "Essential East Coast Writing", #189, Autumn 2017) Here are a few excerpts.

Q: In "Divinations" there's a lot about wanting to get away from home, or feeling like you're in someone else's home. In your poem "Solar Remission," you write that nothing is too small to say. I felt like that was a key to your writing and your poetry.

A: It's very much a key. And it's very much related to a kind of feminism I have. I was writing and publishing in the '50s and '60s, and there was this awful feeling that, what could women write about? They had no experience.

Touch Earth, I organized alphabetically, and I was very pleased with that. In *The All-Nighter's Radio*, I did rearrange them myself with a great deal of thought. "Local" is all things about Fredericton.

But opera, because it does have the plot, because it does have the words, it's like fairy tales, except, you know—I was using fairy tales for quite a bit...

Q: And you've also used visual art and sculpture. Why are those things useful? Sculptures, opera, fairy tales?

You mentioned once that you felt *Divinations*, which won the Pat Lowther Memorial Award in 1980, was your most ambitious book. Can you talk about what you were trying to do in that marvelous, three-part, title poem?

A: "Divinations" is a take on the Divine Comedy by Dante. I knew that hell, purgatory, and paradise were all in the mind, imagination, or soul. I could not imagine speaking for someone who was wicked, but I could do despair—the wish to be "nothing." The scenery and characters and anecdotes from the hell section are from my own adolescence, but the suicide is patterned on the suicide of adolescent acquaintance

Q: Why is hell in the Catskills?

A: I wanted a real place for hell and I liked the Dutch name of Red Hook, on the Hudson. I wanted material that could be interpreted as good or as bad: the apple tree, the image of fruit, comfort, fertility, beauty. But the apple tree is also, deep in our poetry (and in our mistranslations), the serpent's fruit, the fruit of death. And consider all those potential apple diseases, like tent worms. And I was adolescent in the Catskills—and I wanted despair not to be rooted in events or health but in an immature frame of mind.

For despair I took the blacker moments of adolescence and imagined them unadulterated with sensual or intellectual or social joy—a sort of odd censoring of one's memories. I found it easier to find "hell" in adolescence than in an adult world, and I wanted despair not to be rooted in psychological madness, nor in despair over politics or health—but in a frame of mind.

Q: I am haunted by the woman in the next section, whose husband is digging up the ancient Aboriginal cemetery. How did you decide to write on this place and these issues from her perspective?

A: The locale for purgatory is very much New Brunswick. Purgatory itself is a place out of which one should move: repent, grow wiser, escape. It is a sort of Middle Earth (in a Tolkienesque sense). I thought using the prevailing prejudices of the European re: Aboriginal communities would give her a kind of wrongness that she has to grow out of. The character begins by thinking that Red Earth is a nowhere place and that its inhabitants are ghostly and feeble (the earth is red because of the ochre with which the ancestors painted their bodies, but it does make one think of blood and I found that useful too). But she matures and discovers the vigorous reality of the people and sees the need to get out of her old self.

I enjoyed using references to Micmac and Maliseet myth. Soon after I came here I became pregnant with my second child and was deeply nauseous. Larry got, from a recommendation through the English department, a housekeeper from the Reserve, Amy Polches—who is still dear to me. Her husband, Lee Polches, founded the St. Mary's Tree Service and one of her sons continues with it. Her sister is Rebecca Bear, the mother of Ed Bear the mask maker. His family (except Rebecca) did not come to his first show in the UNB Art Centre, because they felt uncomfortable, and Rebecca told me that she had wished her son had made nice landscapes instead of those huge ugly masks! Any mother of any artist child! The alienation of the Aboriginal artist from his community, and his assertion and reinsertion, is something I am not capable of writing about—but immensely important. Those are very good reasons for using an outsider's viewpoint in the "Red Earth" section. To write as a well-intentioned person finding herself confused, not quite understanding what is going on, as this character does, seems to me as very much where I am much of the time.

Q: And paradise? You employed so many different techniques in the third section to reveal the voice and narrative—it's marvelous. Is this your idea of paradise: all that variation?

A: Paradise is in the mind of an artist/believer who "sees" Paradise around her in her real life, in Saint John. She very much makes Paradise. Her character is filched from that of a male black janitor (James Hampton) who made, with aluminum foil and cardboard tubing and posters etc. in his garage, an altar to God so beautiful that it is now collected in one of the Washington, D.C. museums. He did write and paint religious slogans and it seemed proper that I should do shaped poetry for Pearl to write, since she is a sculptor. Just as I did not write "as an Aboriginal" in "Red Earth," so I do not write "as a black man" in "The Book of the Thrones." But I was delighted that I could do Pearl, who is clearly a saint and a visionary. The pearl is a gem that is created by pain—it's a sickness in the oyster, an irritation. It is a vulnerable gem, unlike a diamond or a ruby, and has always symbolized something pure or holy. Then there is Herbert, "who sweeps a room as for His sake makes that and the action fine"—saintliness isn't necessarily going to involve doing Grand Deeds. And I wanted Saint John as Paradise because downtown Saint John does not give the impression of great wealth and civic beauty—so the beauty is in the eyes of the beholder.

Lane reflects more of her feminism in <http://open-book.ca/News/On-Writing-with-M.-Travis-Lane, Dec. 7, 2016> | *Open Book, Heart on Fist: Essays and Reviews, 1970-2016*

CWILA [*Canadian Women in the Literary Arts*] has been very helpful in provoking awareness of the gender imbalance-- particularly in drawing men's attention toward their tendency to ignore women's writing. I think that most women have less time to spend on their profession than most men (we still do most of the housekeeping, and children and old folk attending)- I also think that many women are somewhat less confident about expressing their opinions than most men.