

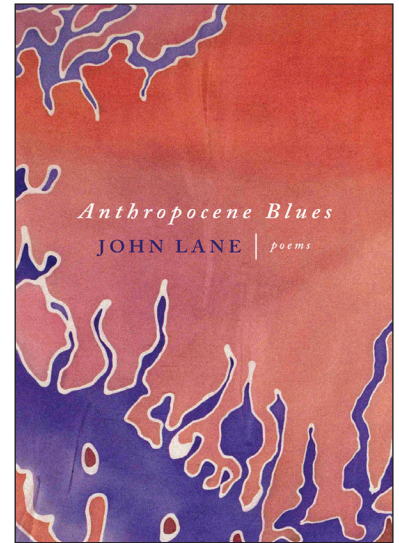
# Anthropocene Blues

by *John Lane*

September 2017 - Poetry/Nature

9780881466256 • \$17.00 • Paperback • MUP/P549 • 72 pages • 6 x 9

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Contemporary poems inspired  
by Earth's new epoch

**Macon, Georgia**—In the story of the earth, geologists tell us that around 12,000 years ago the planet shifted from the Pleistocene to the Holocene. There probably were poets to sing about that change, but of what they sang, we have no records. Even earlier, paintings on cave walls point toward an artistic response from our upstart species. These early artists painted the Pleistocene's last great ice age herds thundering past.

Now John Lane's traveling geologist sings a dawning epoch's blues. The Anthropocene is upon us, and his poems show how humans believe they have become "the planet's boss, the big chief, the emperor of air, diesel fuel,/bow thrusters, and tax shelters..."

And if you don't believe the times are changing, consider these poems—full of dead-on-the-road groundhogs and radial tires, carbon-spewing adventure travel, masturbating parrots, and mounds and mounds of garbage—as twenty-first-century objective correlatives John Keats might recognize.

But all is not collapse out there. The puny human voice William Faulkner praised in his Nobel acceptance speech sings amidst the 6th Great Extinction. These lyrics and narratives deposit the pleasures of contemporary poetry in the carbon record.

To give our best attention to the natural world might be said to be the duty of any thoughtful citizen of the Anthropocene. But to give it with verve, humor, and compassion, to celebrate its small survivals and grieve its losses with large-hearted wisdom takes a poet with the capacious vision of John Lane. *Anthropocene Blues* is a book to be thankful for.  
—Don McKay, author of *Angular Unconformity: Collected Poems*

John Lane's poems sing "our rich niche secured by our own pecking," with all the gorgeous ambivalence such a phrase—at once bitterly ironic and genuinely praiseful—reveals. The central nerve of this book is the long, wandering-but-broken poem "Erosion," which shows our cultural and ecological wearing-away but also what connections are revealed in that slough, what bones are unburied, what contradictions are compressed into close proximity. *Anthropocene Blues* does the vital work of close observation, unsentimental and expansive in scope, that is always the lifeblood of poetry. —Elizabeth Bradfield, author of *Once Removed*

For John Lane the blue notes vibrate with deep time resonating in our present dilemmas. He is fully alive to the questions they raise in their freshly seen metaphors, always embedded in the muddy waters of materiality, but inevitably, he knows, mediated by modern technology. Between fox pad and iPad, the poems here pursue a fertile inquiry. —Terry Gifford, author of *Whale Watching with a Boy and a Goat*

**John Lane** is professor of English and Environmental Studies at Wofford College and director of the Goodall Environmental Studies Center. He is the author of a dozen books of poetry and prose, with his latest, *Coyote Settles the South*, selected as a finalist for the John Burroughs Medal in Natural History Writing. A member of the South Carolina Academy of Authors, Lane is one of the co-founders of Spartanburg's Hub City Writers Project.

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