

Brick Books Classics

THE FIRST THREE TITLES

- **Anne Carson,**
Short Talks
- **John Steffler,**
The Grey Islands
- **Dennis Lee,**
Riffs

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The First Three Titles

- ▶ ANNE CARSON, *Short Talks*
- ▶ JOHN STEFFLER, *The Grey Islands*
- ▶ DENNIS LEE, *Riffs*

BRICK BOOKS

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THE BRICK BOOKS CLASSICS SERIES

¶ On the occasion of the publisher's 40th anniversary, Brick Books is proud to present THE FIRST THREE OF A SERIES OF SIX Brick Books Classics: Anne Carson's *Short Talks*, John Steffler's *The Grey Islands* and Dennis Lee's *Riffs*.

The series is designed by world-renowned typographer Robert Bringhurst, and is printed by Coach House Printing. Each of these new editions includes an introduction written by an esteemed Canadian poet or scholar. Also, each of the authors takes a moment to contextualize and reflect on the composition and legacy of their book in an afterword. These materials broaden the conversation around the works; offering fresh insights, unique perspectives and rich memories. These expanded editions will appeal both to new readers and to those already familiar with the books, several of which have become staples on school curriculums and in conversations about poetry both here in Canada and beyond our borders.

Brick Books has been publishing new and established voices in Canadian poetry since 1975. Poetry itself is born of second looks, from looking longer; these Brick Books Classics are another look at some of our foundational texts.

“*Short Talks* was Anne Carson’s first book of poems, and it signaled to the world of poetry that a new and distinctive voice had arrived on the scene.”

— JON EBEN FIELD, *thirdspace: a journal of feminist theory and culture*

“Each piece in Anne Carson’s *Short Talks* is a startling gem—some disorienting, some intimate, some wry, some wistful, many bright and impish. This volume, slender in multiple dimensions, will be easy to return to again and again.”

— VICKI ZIEGLER, *Book Gaga*

“It’s the unexpectedness of Carson’s observations that makes *Short Talks* so appealing...”

— BARBARA CAREY, *Books in Canada*

“Anne Carson’s short talks are witty, concise and true. She writes with the precision of a diamond-cutter. Every facet of each piece is made to shine. Every sentence is lambent. *Multum in parvo* indeed!”

— RACHEL WYATT

“The voice is laconic and composed but its images come off these pages resonant (more than resonant, shaking) with their own newness. ‘What if the names for things were utterly different?’ it asks, and goes on to show us how things glow when their utterly right names reach them.”

— DON COLES

Anne Carson

Short Talks

*with a new afterword by the author
and a new introduction by
Margaret Christakos*

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SHORT TALK ON TROUT

In haiku there are various sorts of expressions about trout – “autumn trout” and “descending trout” and “rusty trout” are some I have heard. Descending trout and rusty trout are trout that have laid their eggs. Worn out, completely exhausted, they are going down to the sea. Of course there were occasionally trout that spent the winter in deep pools. These were called “remaining trout.”

SHORT TALK ON MAJOR AND
MINOR

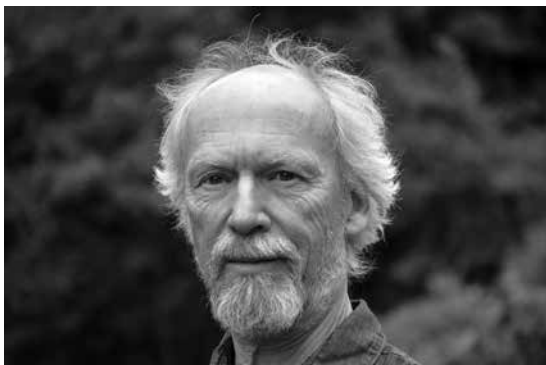
Major things are wind, evil, a good fighting horse, prepositions, inexhaustible love, the way people choose their king. Minor things include dirt, the names of schools of philosophy, mood and not having a mood, the correct time. There are more major things than minor things overall, yet there are more minor things than I have written here, but it is disheartening to list them. When I think of you reading this I do not want you to be taken captive, separated by a wire mesh lined with glass from your life itself, like some Elektra.



ANNE CARSON was born in Canada and teaches ancient Greek for a living.

JOHN STEFFLER was the Parliamentary Poet Laureate of Canada from 2006 to 2008.

His other books of poetry include *Lookout*, *That Night We Were Ravenous*, and *Helix: New and Selected Poems*.



DENNIS LEE has written more than twenty books of poetry, including *Civil Elegies*, which won the Governor General's Literary Award, and *Alligator Pie*, the children's classic. His most recent collection of poems is *Testament*.

Photo of Anne Carson by Einar Falur Ingolfsson

Photo of John Steffler by Susan Gillis

Photo of Dennis Lee by Susan Perly



Anne
Carson
Short
Talks

with a new introduction
by Margaret Christakos

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John
Steffler
The
Grey
Islands

with a new introduction
by Adrian Fowler

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Dennis
Lee
Riffs

with a new introduction
by Paul Vermeersch

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“I am placing it among other masterpieces of environmental writing like Thoreau’s *Walden*, Aldo Leopold’s *Sand County Almanac*, and Gary Snyder’s *The Practice of the Wild* ... an iconic book that sets dramatically before us, in a way that is richly complex, at once meditative and expansive, the difficult and essential encounter of wilderness.”

— DON MCKAY, for *What is Stephen Harper Reading?*

“This is a book of such excellence that someone in the future is liable to say about the author: ‘Steffler — Steffler? — oh yes, he wrote *The Grey Islands*, didn’t he?’”

— AL PURDY, *Books in Canada* (1985)

“At times the narrative was harrowing, as we were given glimpses of the unmitigating ferocity of land and sea, and of past lives and inhabitants wiped out — their “black skeleton houses” left as solitary reminders. At other times, we were offered humour, absurdity and a light-hearted vision of endurance and strength, of body and spirit.”

— HEATHER CRAIG, *Books in Canada* (2008)

“It is important to have stories like these, full of anecdote and detail, messages and dreams, written into the national literature.... John Steffler’s nascent classic of wilderness literature claims certain space in the Canadian canon.”

— KEMENY BABINEAU, *Poetry Spoken Here*

John Steffler

The Grey Islands

*with a new afterword by the author
and a new introduction by
Adrian Fowler*

BRICK BOOKS

BRICK BOOKS CLASSICS 2 BRICK BOOKS

*

Under everything I'm often vaguely anxious, uneasy in the middle of my actions here. So many things strange to me. The tide for example. It constantly changes the terrain in the low shoreland east of the cabin, and I'm always a bit afraid of getting stranded there.

Paths appear and become submerged. Little knolls that I cross on foot at one time of the day and fix in my memory as landmarks, at another time of the day have turned to islands.

At low tide the sea is bordered by natural meadows. The incoming tide slides up into these grassy fields – a beautiful lush sight – but tricky as far as walking is concerned. It's often impossible to know before stepping forward into the tall grass whether my foot will find solid earth or water below the leaves – and if there is water, how deep it will be.

*

the cold rooms. morning, the fire out. ice
in the bucket. clothes stiff on a chair. day
and night the same wool next to the skin. the
long touching of naked bodies only in summer,
years away, another life, a dream. will will
will moving the stiff limbs. setting to work.

bad food. little food. fever in bed. under a
slow tide. hot. cold. poker clanking, kitchen
voices floating above. sky-wind, snow-desert
circling circling, shaking the thin walls.
stillness in here. a warm pool. warm sinking.
man a little thing. death a little thing.

“Cool cat, hot *Riffs*... It’s the jazzy song of a word-lover... It’s a slim, accessible paperback whose jazzy cover is like the opening blast of the syncopated, reckless, apparently impulsive writing within.”

— *Globe and Mail*

“Lee’s driving energy and faultless craft make *Riffs* an unusually easy book of poems to read. And while it sometimes indulges in pure headlong excitement at the expense of deeper emotion, it also swirls into little eddies of complex, original beauty. Its climax is deeply moving, with its reverberant image of dolphins arcing over a silver sea.”

— *Maclean’s*

“The poems in *Riffs* are honest, passionate and full of insight. Their masterful rhythms and melodies re-establish Lee as one of the country’s great poets.”

— *Montreal Gazette*

“...Impossible to put down. Lee has a way of making language seem inevitable... Whether the emotional moment swoops or falls, we are taken along for the ride in an entirely convincing, captivating way... one of the finest poets in the English language.”

— *Quill and Quire*

“Lee resurrects the music of Dylan Thomas, the wordplay of e.e. cummings, the zany delight of his own *Alligator Pie*.”

— *Ottawa Citizen*

“Poet Dennis Lee may add love-junkie beatnik of distinction to his long list of credentials.”

— *NOW Magazine*

Dennis Lee

Riffs

*with an afterword by the author
and a new introduction by
Paul Vermeersch*

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BRICK BOOKS CLASSICS 3 BRICK BOOKS

Sweet christ, you are
lovely – over & over:

tonight I can nearly
taste it. Track of your hopscotch your

quicksilver
trace in my

mind; wry bracketed giggle,
that triggers an ache at the

core; and over & over, new
sister & stranger your born-again

flow on my
tongue ...

Why aren't you here?

The angels'
cure for when they miss someone *very* bad is
malt whiskey.

'Dja
know that?
I never knew that.

Found out
my own way, special,
just since you

went away and to-
night at 2:48 A.M. I am
practising up being an angel twinkle twinkle mud

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- 1 Anne Carson, *Short Talks*
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- 2 John Steffler, *The Grey Islands*
Introduction by Adrian Fowler
ISBN 978-1-77131-343-8 (February 2015)
*
- 3 Dennis Lee, *Riffs*
Introduction by Paul Vermeersch
ISBN 978-1-77131-344-5 (March 2015)
* * *
- 4 Marilyn Dumont, *A Really Good Brown Girl*
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