



**THE GRIFFIN TRUST
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**ROO BORSON'S *SHORT JOURNEY UPRIVER TOWARD ŌISHIDA*
AND
CHARLES SIMIC'S *SELECTED POEMS 1963-2003*
WIN THE 2005 GRIFFIN POETRY PRIZE**

TORONTO, June 2, 2005 – Roo Borson's *Short Journey Upriver Toward Ōishida* and Charles Simic's *Selected Poems 1963-2003* are the Canadian and International winners of the fifth annual Griffin Poetry Prize. The C\$100,000 Griffin Poetry Prize, the richest poetry prize in the world for a single volume of poetry, is divided between the two winners. The prize is for first edition books of poetry published in 2004.

The awards event was hosted by Scott Griffin, founder of the prize, August Kleinzahler (International winner 2004) was the Emcee, with judges Simon Armitage and Erin Moure announcing the Canadian and International winners for 2005.

Among the more than 300 guests celebrating the awards was the Guest of Honour, Her Excellency the Right Honourable Adrienne Clarkson, Governor General of Canada. In addition, poets, publishers and other literary luminaries attended the celebration which took place at The Stone Distillery, Toronto. The two winners will be invited to read at this year's Dublin Writers Festival on June 16th.

The judges for 2005 are the distinguished poets Simon Armitage (U.K.), Erin Moure (Canada) and Tomaz Salamun (Slovenia) who, between them, not only read 433 books of poetry from 12 countries, but selected poems from the shortlist to compile The Griffin Poetry Prize Anthology: A Selection of the 2005 Shortlist, edited by Moure and published by the House of Anansi Press. Royalties generated from the anthologies, published annually, are donated to UNESCO's World Poetry Day. Copies of submitted poetry books are again being donated to Corrections Canada.

All short listed poets read excerpts from their books at a sold-out event at the MacMillan Theatre on June 1st, attended by more than 800 devotees. The Canadian 2005 Shortlist includes Roo Borson's *Short Journey Upriver Toward Ōishida*, George Bowering's *Changing on the Fly* and Don McKay's *Camber*. The International short listed books are Fanny Howe's *On the Ground*, Michael Symmons Roberts' *Corpus*, Matthew Rohrer's *A Green Light* and Charles Simic's *Selected Poems: 1963-2003*.

The judges are selected on an annual basis by the Griffin Poetry Prize Trustees, Margaret Atwood, Carolyn Forché, Robert Hass, Michael Ondaatje, Robin Robertson and David Young.

The Griffin Trust was created to serve and encourage excellence in poetry written in English anywhere in the world.

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THE GRIFFIN TRUST
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THE 2005 GRIFFIN POETRY PRIZE
Canadian Winner



Book: *Short Journey Upriver Toward Ōishida*

Poet: **Roo Borson**

Publisher: McClelland and Stewart Ltd.

Citation: “To lose “North”, in some idioms, is to lose all direction. In her journey, **Borson** finds North. This is the work of a poet writing at the height of her powers. It is a poetic journal of mortality, of the “why be born?” and “do you still love poetry?”, of entering middle age, and of journeying through landscape, seasons, plants, pasts, to find it again. The book is a small perfection in its construction, moving deftly through seasons and forms: poetic prose for a garden of persimmons, haiku rising out of prose sequences for the autumn record, and the book’s fulcrum, the “Water Colour” poems, not haiku but poems that bear haiku’s arrested feeling and succinct observation. As for Basho, **Borson’s** mentor and poetic ancestor, setting off toward North – *lost, loss, losing* – is to find the journey itself and one’s own corporeality, out of grief and into the light of words.”

Biography: Born in California in 1952, **Roo Borson** has made her home in Canada since graduating with a Master of Fine Arts Degree from the University of British Columbia in 1977. *Short Journey Upriver Toward Ōishida*, also nominated for the Governor General’s Award, Pat Lowther Memorial Award and shortlisted for the Trillium Book Prize, is her tenth book of poems, which include *Water memory* (1996) and *Night Walk: Selected Poems* (1994), a finalist for the Governor General’s Award. In addition to her prize winning essays, **Borson’s** poetry has won many awards including the CBC Prize for Poetry in 1982 and 1989, and has been a finalist for the National Magazine Awards in 1990 and 1993, the Governor General’s Award in 1984 as well as 1994, and in collaboration with Kim Maltman and Andy Patton as PAIN NOT BREAD, won the Long Poem Prize in the Malahat Review in 1993. Among her publications are: *In the Smokey Light of the Fields* (1980), *Intent, Or, the Weight of the World* (1989), *Landfall* (1977), *Rain* (1980), *A Sad Device* (1981), *The Transparence of November; Snow* (1985) and *The Whole Night Coming Home* (1984). **Borson** has given readings across Canada, in the United States and in Australia, and has been published in a wide array of anthologies including *The New Oxford Book of Canadian Verse*, the *Norton Introduction to Poetry*, the *Norton Introduction to Literature* and *The Morningside Papers*. She has served as the Writer in residence at both Concordia and the University of Western Ontario. Currently living in Toronto with poet and physicist Kim Maltman, along with Andy Patton and Maltman, **Borson** is a member of the collaborative performance poetry ensemble PAIN NOT BREAD.



THE GRIFFIN TRUST
For Excellence In Poetry

The 2005 Griffin Poetry Prize
International Winner



Book: *Selected Poems 1963-2003*
Poet: **Charles Simic**
Publisher: Faber and Faber

Citation: “**Simic** is something of a magician, a conjuror. Out of nothing it seems, out of thin air, the poems appear before our eyes. One apparently casual observation leads to another, and suddenly, exponentially, we are spellbound. It is a trick many have tried to imitate but few have achieved. At the centre of **Simic’s** art is a disarming, deadpan precision, which should never be mistaken for simplicity. Everything appears pared back to the solid and the essential, and it is this economy of vocabulary and clarity of diction which have made his poetry so portable and so influential wherever it is published. **Simic** is one of the few poets of our time to achieve both critical and popular acclaim; he is genuinely quotable, and it is entirely possible that some of his phrases and lines will lodge in the common memory. Without any hint of loftiness, then, and from a position which is entirely his own, **Simic** manages to speak to the many and not just the few.”

Biography: Pulitzer Prize-winning poet **Charles Simic** has published five books of essays, a memoir, numerous translations and sixteen collections of poetry. Born in 1938 in Belgrade Yugoslavia, **Simic** immigrated to the United States in 1952 and saw his first poems published in 1959. In 1961 he was drafted into the US Army and in 1966 earned his Bachelor’s degree at New York University, publishing his first full-length collection of poems *What the Grass Says* in 1967. Since then he has published more than 60 books in the United States including *Jackstraws* (Notable Book of the Year in the *New York Times* 1999), *Walking the Black Cat* (finalist for the National Book Award in Poetry 1996), *A Wedding in Hell* (1994), *Hotel Insomnia* (1992), *The World Doesn’t End: Prose Poems* (for which he received the Pulitzer for Poetry in 1990), *Selected Poems: 1963 – 1983* (1990), and *Unending Blues* (1986). He has also published many translations of French, Serbian, Croatian and Macedonian and Slovenian poetry and has twice won the Pen International Translation Award. Amongst his many accomplishments and accolades, **Simic** was the Guest Editor of *The Best American Poetry* 1992 was elected a Chancellor of the Academy of American Poets in 2000 and has received fellowships from the Guggenheim Foundation, the MacArthur Foundation and the National Endowment for the Arts. Since 1973, **Simic** has lived in New Hampshire where he is Professor of English at the University of New Hampshire.