



## **Selected Poems, 1963-1983**

*Charles Simic*

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Made by the author himself from 40 years' work, this selection is an overview of an astonishing poet. Simic is a master of the absurd and unexpected.

## Selected Poems, 1963-1983 Details

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Author : Charles Simic

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### Josh Ang says

I have never read Simic's poems, so this volume that spans much of his career gives a fairly good overview of his work. Arranged chronologically with selections from his anthologies, it gives the reader an idea of the styles and concerns of the different stages in his career. Often accused of being repetitive or stagnant, some critics have pointed out that there is little development in Simic's poetry and that the later poems read like the ones written earlier in his career, and not as well-crafted. Harsh criticism for any writer.

I felt that the earlier poems like "Stone", "Butcher Shop" and "Fork" read like meditations on inanimate objects, which invariably seek a deeper significance to them. For example, in 'Stone', the speaker seems to marvel at the imperceptibility connoted in "From outside the stone is a riddle.../ Yet within, it must be cool and quiet", and wondering at the way "sparks fly out/ When two stones are rubbed", which suggests "it is not so dark inside after all". In comparison to the peacekeeping "doves" or anger that "gnash with a tiger's tooth", the tranquility of the stone what can sink "unperturbed" when it is thrown into the water, and with "just enough light", suggests a balance in moderation that the persona is longing for. No grand gestures needed; only silent reflection.

Other poems like "The Writings of the Mystics" critique the romanticism of finding the sacred in the ordinary and mundane. The book the persona hoards excitedly celebrates the "presentiment/ Of a higher existence/ In things familiar and drab...", and the reader is simultaneously made aware of the very prosaic setting the persona is in, nonetheless made "hushed, and otherworldly", in a self-reflexive manner. "Shelley", too, seem to touch on this theme. For example, Simic revels in the lyricism of Shelley's poems, that "spoke of a mad, blind, dying king; / Of rulers who neither see, nor feel, nor know; /Of graves from which a glorious Phantom may /Burst to illumine our tempestuous day", only to compare that with the prosaic image of "Going to have my dinner/ In a Chinese restaurant I knew so well", where the only thing vaguely romantic and fantastical is "a three-fingered waiter", which totally smashes the grand imagery of the previous lines, making it look almost hyperbolic and absurd.

I felt that the later poems reflected a deeper awareness of the failure of language to reflect experience, for example in "The Old World", where the persona acknowledges that "There was something/ Long before there were words". There is also heightened concern with appearance vs reality, e.g. in "The Friends of Heraclitus", where it reads "The world we see in our heads/ And the world we see daily,/ So difficult to tell apart/ When grief and sorrow bow us over", which also reflects a world weariness with trying to seek meaning, where "Nothing is what it seems to be,/ Nor are we" in "Blood Orange".

Simic grapples with the mutability of life, as well as its imperceptibility, but nonetheless continues to seek some answers, , as he asks of the trees in "The Secret Doctrine". "What did they say? / What did they say? / I went badgering / Every tree and brush". There may not be any answers, but the thing is to keep asking.

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### Andreashide says

Es uno de los mejores libros de poesía que he leído. Algunos poemas son incomprensibles para mi, pero la mayoría tienen una profundidad desgarradora. Lo recomiendo mucho, sobre todo su poema "el mundo"

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**Martin Ott says**

Just reread and I firmly believe that Simic deserves to be in the pantheon of great 20th century poets.

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**Violet says**

Some of his best work, these words will linger on with me..

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**Blair says**

a girl stripped to the waist is the first and last miracle

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**Hajar Alobaid says**

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**Robert says**

Click here: [<http://www.robertpeake.com/archives/3...>]

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**Richard Janzen says**

Wow. I'm not much of a poetry person, but I sure appreciated these poems. Many clever observations,

unusual perspectives, and incredible language choices.

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### **Rick Bursky says**

I return to this book again and again.

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### **Dawn says**

How could Simic not be good? His poems are funny and tight and sometimes beautiful, but often they were like a hard elbow next to you, making you look at something ridiculous.

...I am on a street corner  
Where I shouldn't be.  
Alone and coatless  
I have gone out to look  
For a black dog who answers to my whistle.  
I have a kind of halloween mask  
which I am afraid to put on. (Empire of Dreams, p 137)

But as for the middle of the book, oh Charles. One after another. These are the years of your life, I guess. Somebody died, didn't they? Somebody told you to stop writing about death, didn't they. Somebody told you about love and you laughed and later you regretted laughing. I don't know, Charles. I'm just guessing.

But I'm happy to report that I laughed too. Throughout the book. I laughed or did a little half-laugh when I got tired and sometimes I wished there was somebody in the room to listen to the poem when I read it again, aloud.

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### **Monkey C says**

the pages of my book are yellow and torn. i carried this book with me everywhere i went when i was an undergraduate. there are also 2 traffic tickets wedged in the pages which i used as a bookmark at one time or another (the tickets are from 2001 -- expired inspection and no insurance). the cover has faded to a brownish off-white. some of the pages are stained with water marks. all signs of love, and how much this collection has meant to me over the years.

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