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Moritz, Wright win Griffins

June 5, 2009 | 7:22 PM | By Suzanne Gardner

Prolific poet A. F. Moritz was awarded the 2009 Griffin Poetry Prize at a gala on Wednesday night in Toronto. The author of more than 15 books of poetry won the \$50,000 award for his 2008 collection *The Sentinel*. This marks the first time Moritz's publisher, House of Anansi Press, has captured the world's richest poetry prize.

After thanking the Griffin trustees and jurors, as well as his publisher, Moritz, 62, turned his praise to the readers of poetry and their support for the award: "These two days have been a wonderful time, so I say, 'Why don't we all get together and do it again next week?' This time, you read your poems to me." In conversation with *Q&Q Omni* after the ceremony, Moritz explained that he thinks the Griffins "get people who are bewildered by the number of poets to say 'Ah, now there's an entrance point.'"

Moritz, a professor at the University of Toronto and a Guggenheim Fellow, bested the two other poets on the Canadian shortlist: Jeramy Dodds, who received a nomination for his debut collection *Crabwise to the Hounds* (Coach House Books), and Kevin Connolly, who was nominated for his fourth book, *Revolver* (Anansi). Connolly, the poetry editor at Coach House, essentially had two titles in the running, as he was the editor of Dodds' collection.

The evening's other award, the international poetry prize, went to Arkansas native C. D. Wright for her collection *Rising, Falling, Hovering* (Copper Canyon Press). This was the second time Wright, 60, a professor at Brown University, was shortlisted for the Griffin, having been nominated in 2003 for her collection *Steal Away*. Wright was visibly moved during her acceptance speech and told reporters afterward, "This is very moving to me. There's some gestalt about the way [the Griffins are] put together... I don't know any other model quite like it."

Wright beat out Ireland's Derek Mahon for *Life on Earth* (The Gallery Press), U.S. poet Dean Young for *Primitive Mentor* (University of Pittsburgh Press), and the late Mick Imlah of Scotland for *The Lost Leader* (Faber and Faber). Imlah passed away last January at the age of 52.

Prior to the awards portion of the evening, guest speaker and renowned *New Yorker* literary critic James Wood referenced the recent Oxford professor of poetry scandal in a speech about the importance of poetry in a world overrun by novels.

The jury for this year's Canadian prize was composed of U.S. poet and professor Saskia Hamilton, Irish poet Dennis O'Driscoll, and Canadian poet, novelist, and playwright Michael Redhill.

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