



**THE GRIFFIN TRUST
For Excellence In Poetry**

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

C. D. WRIGHT'S *RISING, FALLING, HOVERING*

AND

A. F. MORITZ'S *THE SENTINEL*

WIN THE 2009 GRIFFIN POETRY PRIZE

TORONTO – Wednesday, June 3, 2009 – C. D. Wright's *Rising, Falling, Hovering* and A. F. Moritz's *The Sentinel* are the International and Canadian winners of the ninth annual Griffin Poetry Prize.

The Griffin Poetry Prize was founded in 2000 to serve and encourage excellence in poetry. The prize is for first edition books of poetry written in, or translated into, English, and submitted from anywhere in the world.

The awards ceremony was held at the Stone Distillery and hosted by Scott Griffin, founder of the prize, and Trustees Margaret Atwood, Carolyn Forché, Robert Hass, Michael Ondaatje, Robin Robertson and David Young.

Celebrated literary critic and writer James Wood was the evening's featured speaker.

Judges for the 2009 Griffin Poetry Prize are the distinguished writers and poets Saskia Hamilton (United States), Dennis O'Driscoll (Ireland) and Canada's Michael Redhill. They read 485 books of poetry, including 33 translations, received from 32 countries around the globe.

The judges are selected on an annual basis by the Griffin Poetry Prize Trustees.

Some 400 guests attended the dinner, including poets and publishers, former Canadian Governor-General Adrienne Clarkson, writers Graeme Gibson, Austin Clarke and Jane Urquhart, and CBC Radio Executive Director Denise Donlon, among others.

The Fermenting Cellar was transformed into a Mexican theme, with the funk ensemble LMT Connection playing live music for the guests.

On the previous evening, the shortlisted poets read excerpts from their books at a sold-out event for more than 800 people at the MacMillan Theatre.



The 2009 Griffin Poetry Prize shortlist features collections by three Canadian poets – Kevin Connolly’s *Revolver*, published by House of Anansi Press; *Crabwise to the Hounds* by Jeramy Dodds, published by Coach House Books and *The Sentinel* by A. F. Moritz, published by House of Anansi Press; and four international poets – the late Mick Imlah’s *The Lost Leader*, published by Faber and Faber (a selection of which was read by acclaimed Argentinian/Canadian playwright and actor Guillermo Verdecchia); Derek Mahon’s *Life on Earth*, published by Gallery Press; C. D. Wright’s *Rising, Falling, Hovering*, published by Copper Canyon Press and Dean Young’s *Primitive Mentor* published by University of Pittsburgh Press (a selection of which was read by famed Canadian actor R. H. Thomson).

Also that evening, renowned German poet and essayist Hans Magnus Enzensberger was honoured with the 2009 Lifetime Achievement Award. Trustee Carolyn Forché paid tribute to Enzensberger and presented him with his award.

After the readings, Trustee David Young presented each poet with a leather-bound edition of their book.

In September, The Griffin Trust will take the two winners of the 2009 prize to Reykjavik, Iceland to read at the International Literary Festival. They will be accompanied by several poets, shortlisted in previous years.

The Griffin Poetry Prize Anthology: A Selection of the 2009 Shortlist, edited by Michael Redhill and published by House of Anansi Press, is now available at most retail bookstores. Royalties generated from the anthologies, published annually, are donated to UNESCO’s World Poetry Day. As in past years, copies of the submitted poetry books are being donated to Corrections Canada.

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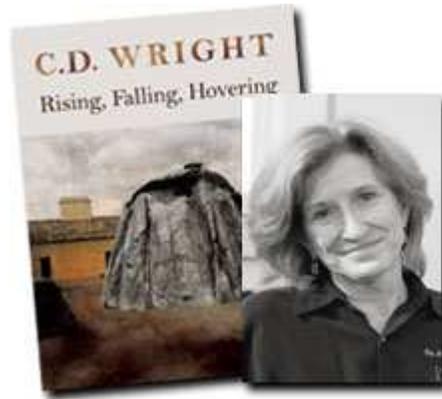
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International Winner



***Rising, Falling, Hovering* • C. D. Wright**
Copper Canyon Press

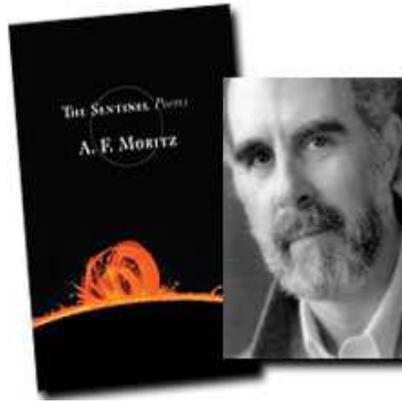
Judges' Citation: “C. D. Wright’s thirteenth collection, *Rising, Falling, Hovering*, reminds us what poetry is for. This is poetry as white phosphorus, written with merciless love and depthless anger, but it is ‘not a chemical weapon, it’s an incendiary ... it is for illumination’. *Rising, Falling, Hovering* is about conflict, local and global, and how failures of the heart bring disaster on every scale. In the long poem that anchors this book, Wright ties together the war in Iraq, the war on the poor, the challenges borders present, and family crises to create a portrait of the human soul riven by separateness. It is, primarily, a red-hot political epic, in which Wright states ‘to be ashamed is to be American’ and that ‘happiness is for amateurs’. And yet, how can we react to a poetry this alive with invention and purpose but with joy? In *Rising, Falling, Hovering*, C. D. Wright wakes the reader – from dreams of both a perfect world and one drowned in horror – to the saving beauty of clear sight. Over a long career marked by deep moral engagement and constant reinvention, Wright has placed herself and her readers ‘at a crossroads’, as she writes, which is not just a place, but ‘the very instant you stopped looking for meaning and began rifling among the folds of feeling instead where things were to be made new again ...’ ”

Biography: C. D. Wright was born and raised in the Ozark Mountains of Arkansas. She has published 12 previous poetry collections. Her collaboration with photographer Deborah Luster, a journey into the prison-industrial complex entitled *One Big Self*, was honoured with a Lange-Taylor Prize from the Center for Documentary Studies. Wright has also received fellowships from the MacArthur Foundation, the Guggenheim Foundation, the National Endowment for the Arts, and the Lannan Foundation. In the 1990s she served for five years as the State Poet of Rhode Island. Wright is currently the Israel J. Kapstein Professor of English at Brown University, and lives outside Providence, Rhode Island.

Summary: Deeply personal and politically ferocious, *Rising, Falling, Hovering* addresses... “the commonly felt crises of [our] times” – from illegal immigration and the specific consequences of empire to the challenges of parenting and the honesty required of human relationships.



Canadian Winner



***The Sentinel* • A. F. Moritz**

House of Anansi Press

Judges' Citation: "A. F. Moritz has beautiful command of what William Empson called 'a long delicate rhythm based on straight singing lines'. In his extraordinary collection *The Sentinel*, we never lose our bearing, so sure is his formal grace, even as we are carried into fabulous circumstance, get lost in places we know, are found in imaginary cities or in any 'prosperous country'. We read his fable of a city awaiting the arrival of a butterfly and stand with the crowd in wonder, as a creature so large it blots out the sun transforms to 'a humble yellow thing', so menacing and loud it crashes to the sea 'like a fighter jet' but erupts in 'a burst of quiet'. After such a dazzling show, we are left with unreadable feelings to watch 'the black ocean again'. It is a place Moritz often asks us to stand. He is at once moved and troubled by 'the black imperial/Roman traces' that our language shares with the classical poets, numbering himself among the barbarians with their 'slaughter/and triumph'. He stares out between the bars of its alphabet at the 'darkness/of useless vigilance', or inwardly as 'the keeper/of my own breast'. In the title poem, the one keeping watch – a figure, we now know, for the poet – stands on either side of two forms of darkness, 'the outward/dark before his face' and the dark of the camp at his back, where he imagines soldiers settling down to sleep. Their 'dreams of bleeding inwardly' are the dreams of this unsettling, superb collection of poems."

Biography: A. F. Moritz has written more than 15 books of poetry. He has been a finalist for the Governor General's Literary Award and he has won the Award in Literature of the American Academy and Institute of Arts and Letters and a Guggenheim Fellowship. His recent collection, *Night Street Repairs*, published by House of Anansi Press in 2005, won the ReLit Award and *The Sentinel* was given Poetry magazine's Bess Hokin Prize. A. F. Moritz lives in Toronto and teaches at Victoria University.

Summary: Mortality, love, ethics, civilization, divine presence, human body, modernity, the natural world and constructed spaces. *The Sentinel* watches and reports back to us in a voice that is timeless and worthy of trust. Whether describing renewal and regeneration, the despair brought on by global capitalism, or a place where decay and loss meet their antithesis, A. F. Moritz's magisterial voice, rare insight and supple craft are on impressive display.