

The judges for this year's competition were Crispin Elsted, Ron McAmmond, Robert Bringhurst, and Reinhard Derreth. All the judges made notes about the winning books, and often commented on books which, although they received no award, merited attention. We offer here the remarks made by Robert Bringhurst inasmuch as they reflect the general concerns of all four judges.

Notes on the Winners and Other Books

The task of the book designer, like that of the concert musician, is not to create something from scratch, but to serve a work which already exists. His task is to elucidate, realize, interpret, and in a manner of speaking to translate a text into physical form. His resources include the tools and materials of the printing trade — paper and ink, presses, trimmers, folders, stitching and binding machinery and so on — but his resources, like those of the concert musician, should also include some other things: (1) an intimate and personal knowledge of the history and traditions of his craft, and of the verbal and pictorial arts which it serves; (2) his own humanity. The designer, like the dancer, the actor, the musician, must reach into the depth of his own character in order to interpret and embody the text he is there to serve. And he should know the history of his craft not in order to be bound by it, but in order to be free to bring as much or as little as need be of that history to bear on a particular problem here and now.

Some texts, like some musical scores or dramatic scripts, are inherently more worthy than others, but one important test of a piece of typographic design is always how it serves and interprets the text at hand, no matter what text that is. Sometimes the typographer, like the jazz musician, may bring a great deal of himself and his own inventiveness into the work at hand. More often, he must keep out of the work's way. And a book, almost by definition, is a work in which the author, not the typographer, has principal claim on our admiration and attention. The book is a domain in which the designer must be impeccably prepared, sumptuously talented, and yet modest enough not to overperform.

The books submitted to this competition demonstrate that some superbly qualified book designers exist among us, but that they are scarce. The books also demonstrate that some Canadian publishers do and many do not know or care very much about standards of design. It is a well-known problem in the industry: the legacy of a technological and economic revolution which is still underway, and which has severed commercial manufacturing and marketing from traditional craftsmanship more often than it has bequeathed to skilled artists new opportunities, new audiences and new tools. This

predicament necessarily places a good deal of strain on any publisher who cares what he or she is doing. Perhaps all of us — typographers, authors, publishers and readers — may find solace in the remark of one of the finest typographer/printers of this century, Victor Hammer, who said: "The work itself is what matters, and when it is authentic, the condition of its accomplishment will necessarily be adverse."

Poetry

The books submitted in this category covered a considerable range, from the sloppy and thoughtless to the joyful and knowledgeable creations of designers who have learned their trade and who practice it with honor. There were good books from Porcupine's Quill, Exile, General Publishing, and Aya as well as from Coach House Press, which in the end won all the acknowledgements in this category. A couple of the judges were impressed by the titles submitted from General Publishing's Spectrum Series, but the typographical quality of the books was very uneven, and their necessary fealty to the series design prevented them competing successfully one by one against the books from Coach House or Porcupine's Quill which are individually designed.

The Coach House books impress with their application of sophisticated typography to commercial paperback production — a feature long associated with Penguin Books, but maddeningly scarce in Canadian trade publishing. The Coach House books impress too with their range, from the traditional to the experimental in design, and they give clear evidence that each title is designed from the text out, not from the cover in. (Surprisingly, however, all the Coach House books in the contest, if they were perfectbound, as many of them were, suffered from vertical alignment problems.)

The merits of the winning book ought, I think, to be obvious to anyone handling it. The Fitzgerald won our attention in spite of its bad cover, because of the immaculate typography of the insides. The Cookshaw was particularly impressive to me personally, because of the designer's thorough yet inventive fidelity to the theme and title, and because of the understated but great technical skill evident in its execution.

Prose

The submissions in this category were disappointing. Many of the books were badly bound (the action of the pages poor, the spine margins haphazardly calculated, if they were calculated at all) and the design quality overall was dull. Many of the books were caught be-