

## 1988 ALCUIN CITATIONS

The Alcuin Society is pleased to announce the finalists for the 1988 ALCUIN CITATIONS which are the only national awards for excellence in book design in Canada. Winners were selected from books designed and published in Canada in 1987.

The 1987 finalists were selected from over 150 books submitted by publishers across the country. This year's competition introduced a new category, **Poetry Chapbook**, in addition to **Poetry, Prose** (Non-Fiction/Fiction), **Pictorial, Juvenile, Education** and **Other**.

Judges considered, among other things, sound marriage of design and content, appropriate (not just appealing) cover design, page layout, typography and where applicable the balance of illustration and text.

The judges this year were: Don Dickson of the Vancouver Design Team; Roberto Dosit from Praxis Design; Ron McAmmond from the University of British Columbia Press and Ronald Hagler School of Library, Archival and Information Studies, UBC. All are from Vancouver, B.C.

The commentary was written by Ronald Hagler (Chairman).

### **Juror's Statement**

We were asked to identify books meeting our criteria for first, second, and third prize. We were allowed a category of "Other" to use at our discretion. We were not required to award an available prize if we felt the criteria were not met among the applicable submissions; but we were allowed to cite "Honourable Mentions".

It must be stated that the best may remain unacknowledged in these awards simply because it was not on the table to be judged. Over 150 items were submitted, but this represents only a small proportion of Canadian publications. Some trade publishers known for excellence are not submitting items. As judges we wondered if news of the competition could be spread to more freelance designers who might prompt the entry of their work in future years. Many of Canada's private presses seem to be aware of the competition. It is hard to know how inclusive is this year's coverage of this important part of the field, but they feature significantly among the prizes and honourable mentions.

A further awkwardness stems from the fact that although the Society established the above-mentioned prize categories, it is hard to define some of them. It may not seem difficult to determine what is a children's book or poetry, but it can be: one of this year's poetry prizes goes to a "prose poem", and some items offered as children's books could as easily have been in the "educational" category. Even the line between fiction and non-fiction is becoming ever more tenuous; and although we agreed among ourselves as to what constitutes a "pictorial" book, we were less certain that those making submissions would always agree with our distinction between a pictorial book and a book of non-fiction with many illustrations. Some of the most appropriate and imaginative design is presented not in works of running text and illustration, but among works a librarian would call "reference books": directories, bibliographies, etc.; it was awkward to have to judge these alongside non-fiction prose (with or without illustration).

We offer the above as helpful suggestions to improve the acceptance and legitimacy of the Alcuin Citation awards in the future. Now to the judges findings in detail, presented in no "order of importance". This will not, like the Academy Awards, build up to The Biggest Prize of All.

Ronald Hagler

## Poetry

No first prize.

2. *SOUS LA LANGUE/UNDER TONGUE*; by Nicole Brossard; Montreal and Charlottetown, L'Essentielle and Gynergy Books; designers Odette Des Ormeaux and Libby Oughton

3. *FORTY DAYS AND FORTY NIGHTS*; by John Terpstra; Windsor, Netherlandic Press; designer Tim Inkster

This was the largest group of submissions, containing most of the private-press publications submitted. Poetry is extremely difficult to set, with the designer at the mercy of the writer of sometimes short, sometimes long lines or poems. It is especially disappointing when the text pages are well done, but the cover is not; yet this occurred often enough to be commented upon. *Sous la langue / Under Tongue*, a single short prose-poem, pleased us as, perhaps, the most "whole" book in the entire competition as a physical object. Its rich paper,