



**“A little less precious an attitude”**

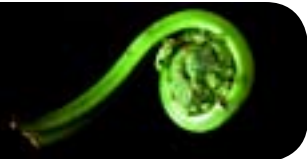
*The Fiddlehead* and the modernization of Canadian poetry



“A fiddlehead, that small plant in the Saint John River valley in the spring, and which is said to be symbolic of the sun.”

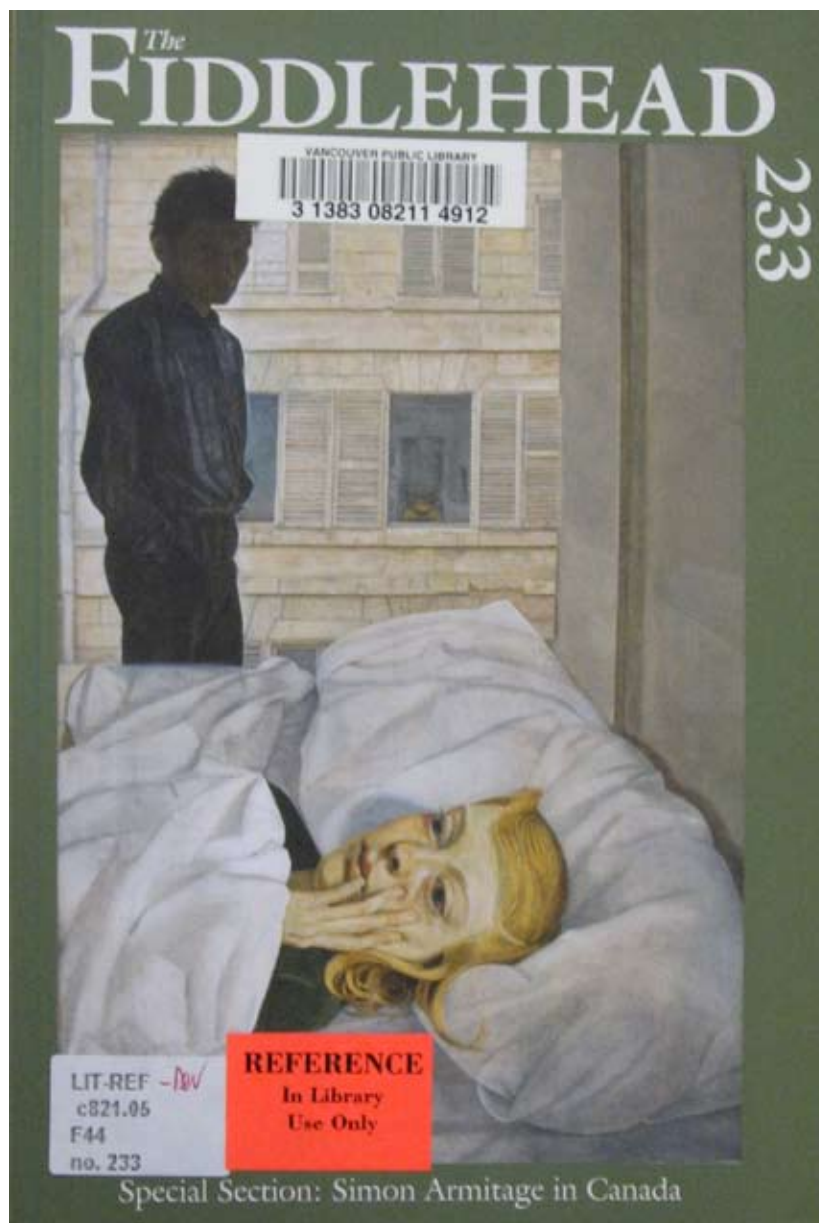
—A.G. Bailey, *Fiddlehead* 1(1), February 1945

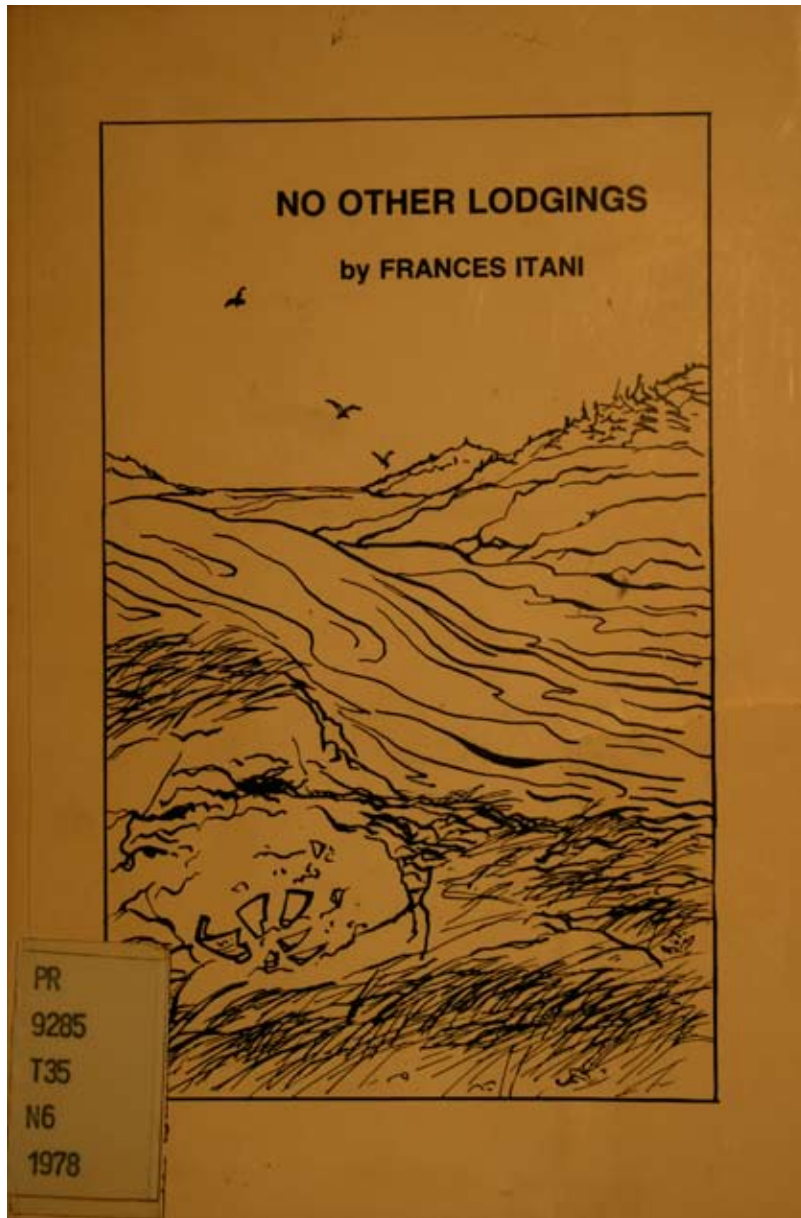
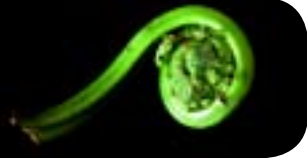




## *The Fiddlehead*

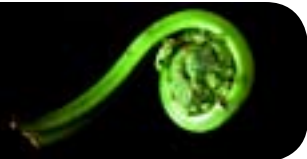
- University of New Brunswick (Fredericton)
- Founded by history professor A.G. Bailey
- The oldest literary magazine in Canada (1945–)
- Contributors include: Milton Acorn, Margaret Atwood, Gwendolyn MacEwen, Joyce Carol Oates, Michael Ondaatje, Carol Shields ...





## Fiddlehead Poetry Books

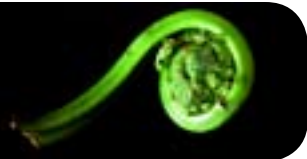
- Founded, published and edited by Fred Cogswell
- Became Goose Lane Editions in 1981
- Contributors include: Alden Nowlan, Joy Kogawa, Dorothy Livesay, Al Purdy, Lynn Coady, Douglas Glover ...



## Canadian poetry: donnish wits who ape the witty Donne?

- 1860s–1920s: no serious forums for Canadian poetry
- Magazines that published poetry included *Dominion Illustrated Monthly*, *Massey's Magazine*, *Our Monthly*/*The Canadian Magazine*
- Canadian poetry generally stuck to a long tradition of Victorian verse





## The little magazine gets big

### Early magazines

*McGill Fortnightly Review*, 1925–27

*The Canadian Mercury*, 1927–29

### Toronto

*Reading*, 1946

*Here and Now*, 1947–49

*Contact*, 1952–54

*Teangadoir*, 1953

### Montreal

- *Preview*, 1942–45

- *First Statement*, 1942–45

  - later *Northern Review*, 1945–56

- *Direction*, 1943–46

- *Elan: a magazine for young writers*, 1946

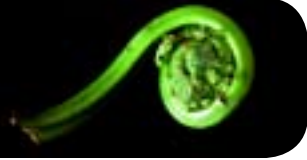
- *Index: a guide to good reading*, 1947

- *CIV/n*, 1952

- *Yes*, 1956

Others *P.M.*, *Protocol*, *Impression*, *Contemporary Verse*



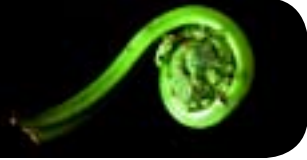


“There is no publication whose primary aim it is to provide an outlet for the wide variety of Canadian art that does exist.”

—editorial, *Here and Now* 1(1), December 1947

“We need an outlet for experiment, and a franker discussion of the directions poetry is to take ... What we need is in short a poetry mag with daring and little less precious an attitude.”

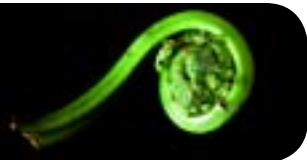
—Raymond Souster, letter to Louis Dudek, 1951



### ***Fiddlehead: the beginning***

- Founded by Alfred Goldsworthy Bailey (1905-97), a University of New Brunswick history professor, “honorary” librarian and founder of the Bliss Carman Society
- Originally, *The Fiddlehead* was “published” exclusively for members of the society

“I brought together a group, meeting at my home, to write on subjects picked at random. Robin Bayley (no relation), Linden Peebles, and Dorothy Howe, at first. Later I invited others. The Bliss Carman Society was not really a society but my guests. We would listen to each other and criticize each other as constructively as possible.” —A.G. Bailey



## ***Fiddlehead*: the early years**

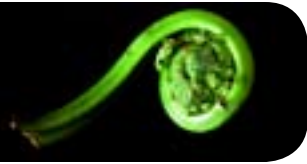
1952: *Contemporary Verse* stops running; Alan Crawley gives *Fiddlehead* his subscribers' list. *Fiddlehead* moves to quarterly publication, with the first such issue running 60 pages.

1953: *Fiddlehead* expands to a public audience, begins inviting contributions from around the world and switches to a smaller format.

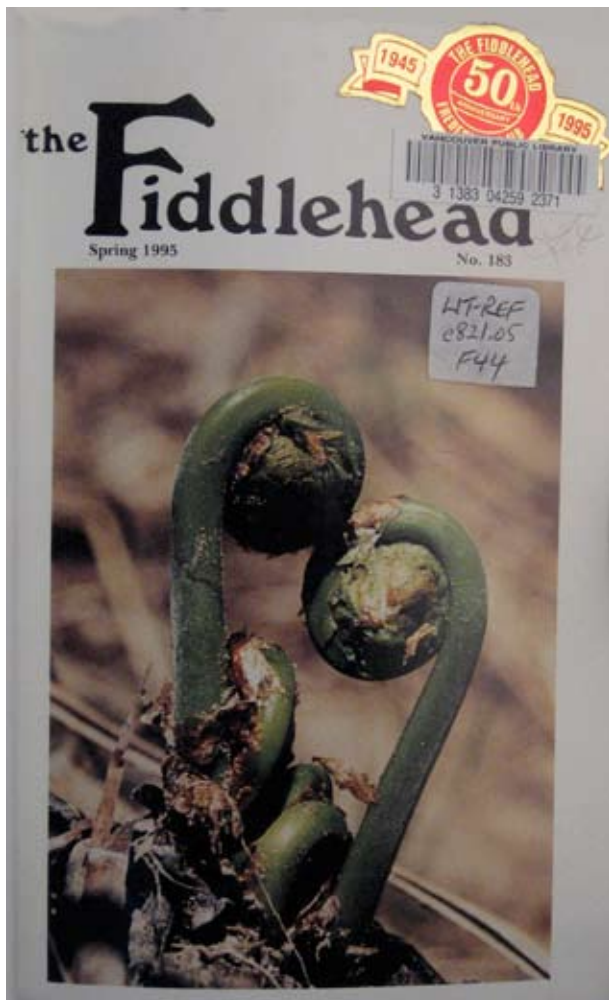
1957: *Fiddlehead* editor Fred Cogswell takes full editorial control at the magazine and Fiddlehead Poetry Books.

1966: Cogswell steps down as editor. Incoming editor Kent Thompson re-establishes an editorial board.





## Then and now



“By continuing a tradition is not meant a slavish imitation of past themes and methods, nor does it mean a complete break with the past. To continue a tradition is to develop it to the point of contemporaneity. As this point is forever in motion the tradition must be forever unfolding by means of constant experimentation.”

—A.G. Bailey, 1945

“Do not look at this journal as old! It is experienced, wise enough to recognize excellence, always looking for freshness and surprise.”

—*Fiddlehead* website, 2008



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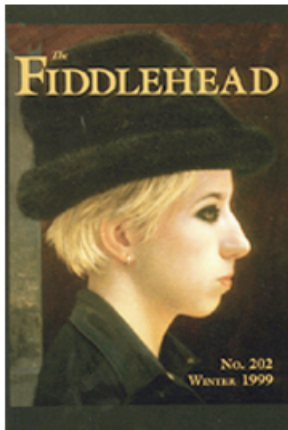
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# The FIDDLEHEAD



...a fiddlehead, that small plant that grows in the Saint John River Valley in the spring, and which is said to be symbolic of the sun.

Alfred Bailey  
February  
1945

(first issue of *The Fiddlehead*)

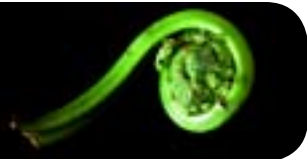
"...a poem published in the national consciousness."

– Tom Wayman

Canada's longest living literary journal, *The Fiddlehead* is published four times a year at the University of New Brunswick, with the generous assistance of the University of New Brunswick, The Canada Council for the Arts, and the Province of New Brunswick.

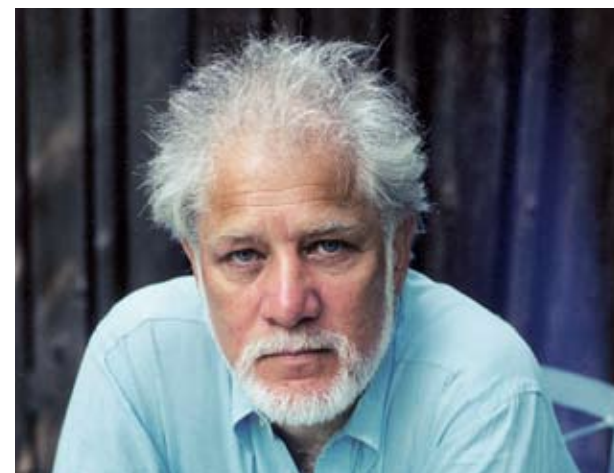
First published in 1945, *The Fiddlehead* is known as a *WHO'S WHO* in Can. Lit. Many - now well-known - writers have found their first home in our pages, and they, as well as some of our editors and assistants, go on to win awards and prizes across the country.

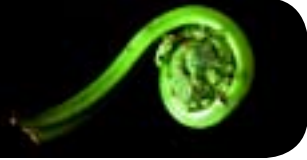
Do not look at this journal as old! It is experienced; wise enough to recognize excellence; always looking for freshness and surprise.



**And the list goes on ...**

Irving Layton, Gwendolyn MacEwen, Ralph Gustafson, Michael Ondaatje, Joy Kogawa, Joyce Carol Oates, Robert Kroetsch, Nino Ricci, Milton Acorn, Margaret Atwood, David Adams Richards, Greg Hollingshead, Raymond Souster, Carol Shields, Karen Connelly, Lynn Crosbie, Steven Heighton ...

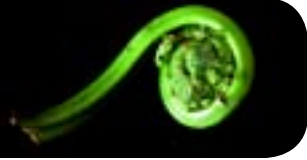




## Fiddlehead Poetry Books and Fred Cogswell

Fred Cogswell (1917-2004)

- Editor, critic, professor, translator
- Also a poet; one of *The Fiddlehead's* major contributors in its early years
- Editor of *The Fiddlehead*, 1952-66

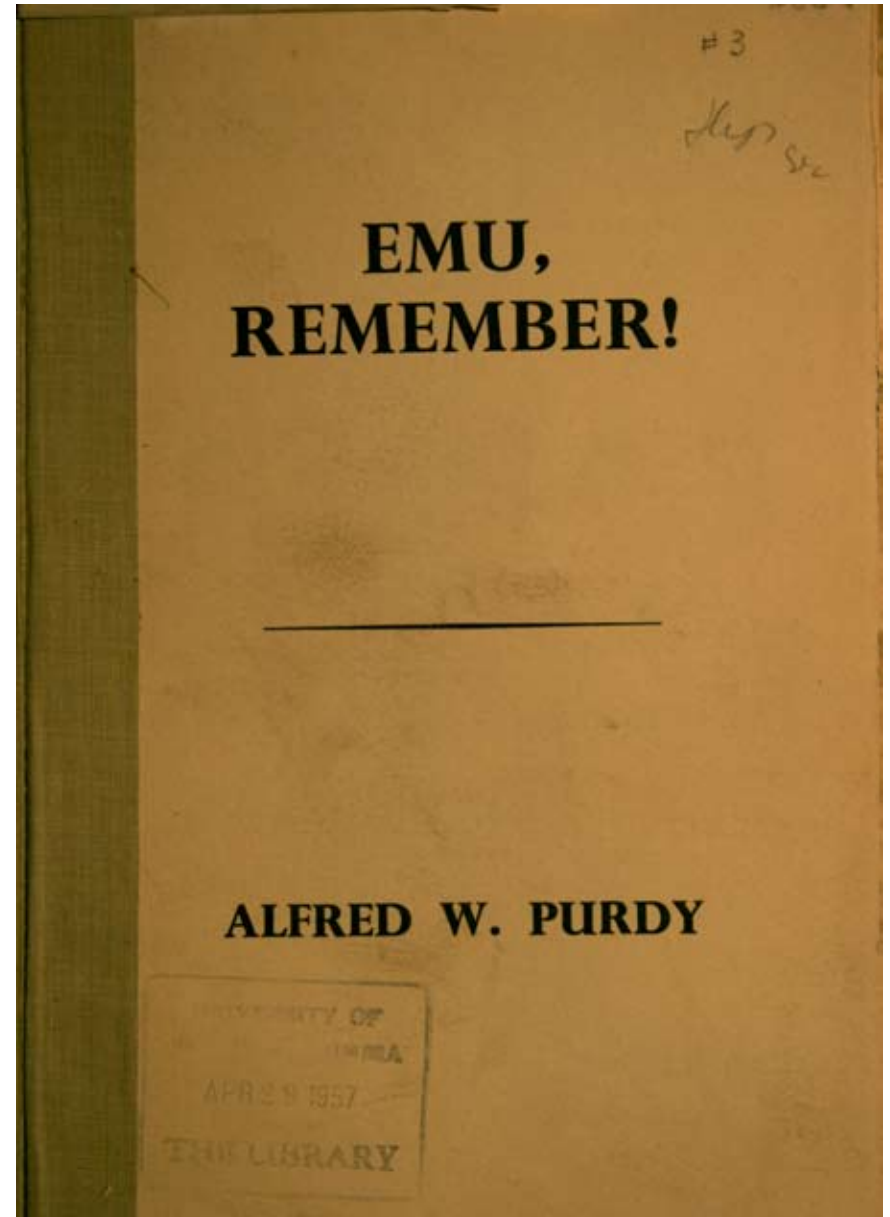


## Fiddlehead Poetry Books

1954: while editing *The Fiddlehead*, Cogswell persuades the University of New Brunswick to finance one poetry book per year based on editorial board recommendation

1957: Cogswell breaks with board (and funding) to publish *Emu, Remember!* by Alfred W. Purdy. He edits and finances all Fiddlehead Poetry Books from then on.

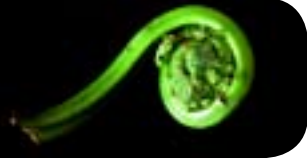
1981: Cogswell retires from Fiddlehead Poetry Books. Another UNB professor, Peter Thomas, buys the company and changes its name to Goose Lane Editions.





## Epigraph

600 copies of *LANDFALL* by Roo Borson have been published in Fredericton, New Brunswick, Canada, in 1977 by Fiddlehead Poetry Books (Fred Cogswell). The copyright remains the property of the authors. *LANDFALL* is Fiddlehead Poetry Book No. 217.



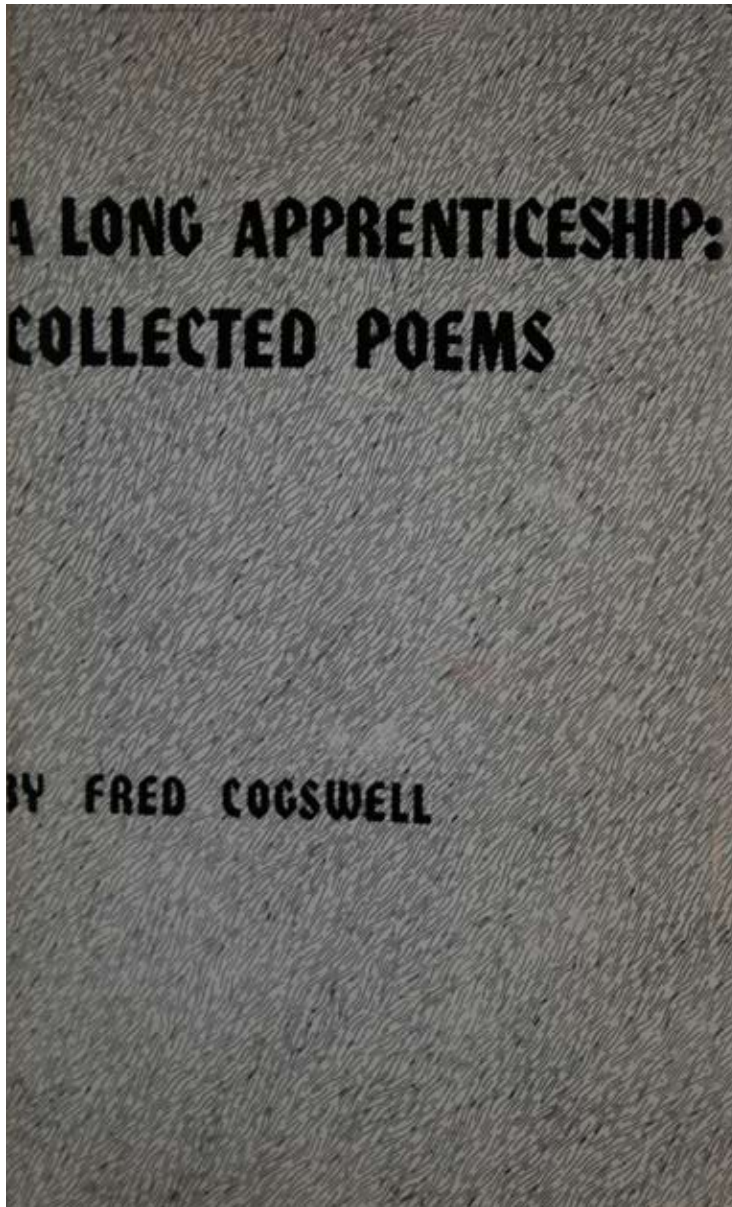
## Goose Lane Editions

Publisher: poetry plus fiction, non-fiction, art books, reference, history, travel ...

Designer: Design firm with such clients as the Canadian Museum of Civilization, Boreal Editions and the Frick Art and Historical Center

Other media: operates BTC Audiobooks in collaboration with CBC Radio



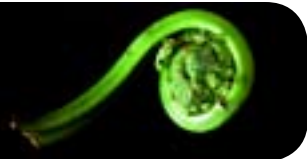


“On Canadian Poets” by Fred Cogswell  
(from *Fiddlehead* 10)

In Canada where only echoes speak  
Men honor well the literary clique  
Who ape the thoughts traditional and true  
Called forth by circumstance they never knew,  
And still preserve the safe and sure tradition  
Of saying what is only repetition.

Dot Livesay slides in early Auden’s slot;  
Smith’s glassy shadows are out Eliot;  
While P.K. Page and Patrick Anderson  
Are donnish wits who ape the witty Donne.

O Canadians, when will the truth be known;  
No other coat can fit you, save your own,  
Tailored by Time’s needle, measured by Need’s tape,  
Nine cloths stitched into one coherent shape?  
Work then to serve our most immediate needs,  
Words serve for binding threads as well as deeds.



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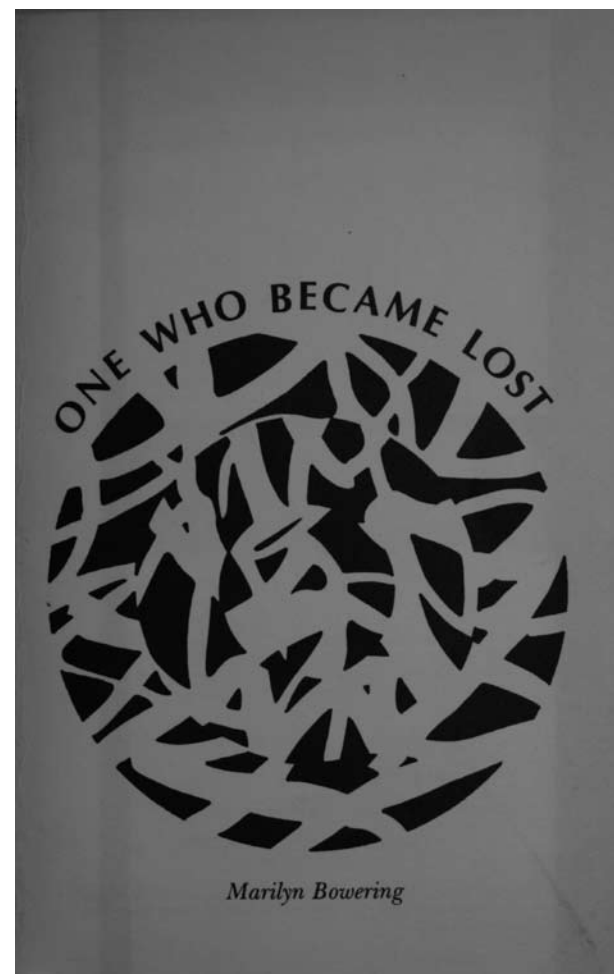
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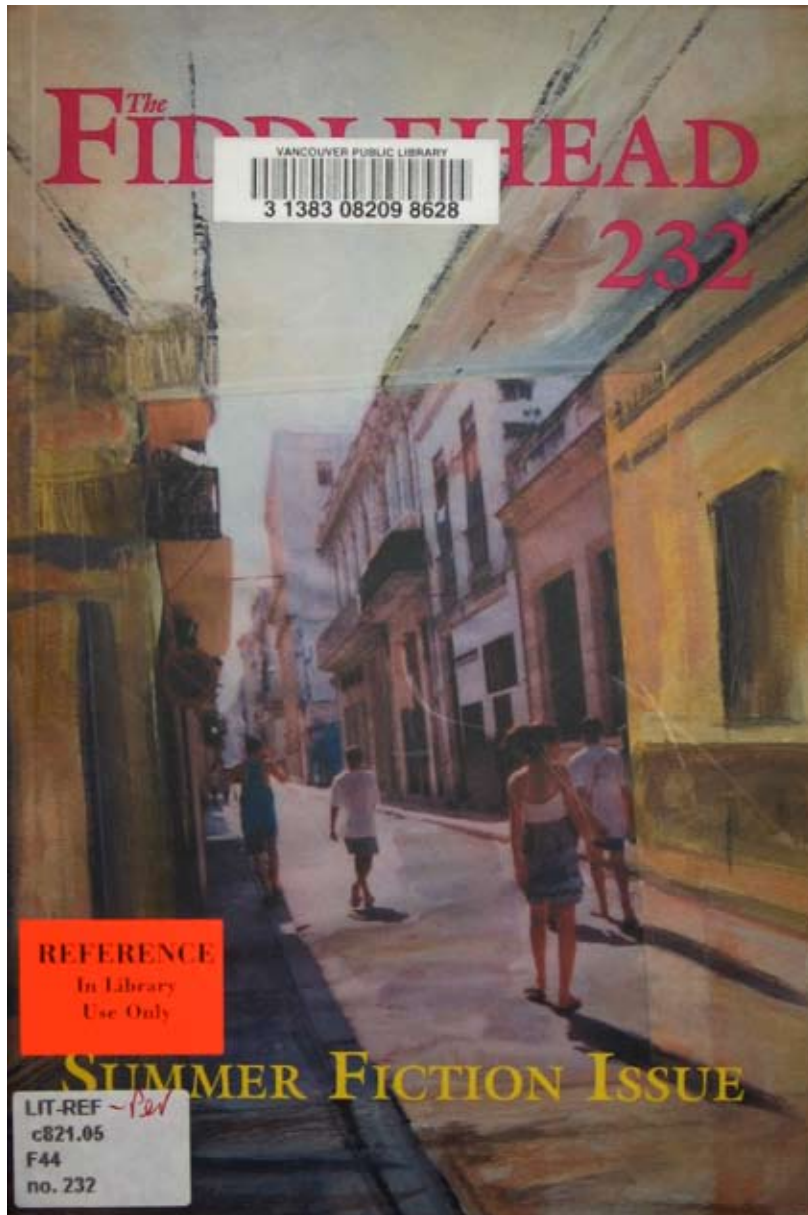
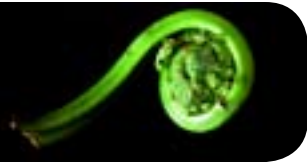
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Thanks!





## Questions

1. Is the “little magazine” still a viable venue in which to promote Canadian poetry?
2. What are the advantages and disadvantages of a monolithic publishing enterprise such as Fiddlehead Poetry Books under Fred Cogswell?
3. Why might a small coastal city like Fredericton (pop. 10,062 in 1941) happen to be a good place to set up a literary magazine?