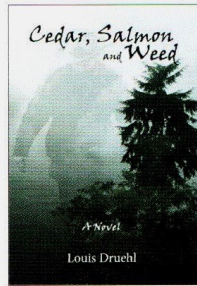


her childhood alone—she writes that she built “comforting walls” around her emotions and that for her parents to be fulfilled as artists they had to be “more than just paternal or maternal”—but this is as reflective as the writing gets. Near the end of the book, Scoones describes leaving home as soon as she could after high school and surmises that “It must have been strange for them to see their second child leaving home.” “What!?” I said out loud. “There was another child in that family? And this is the first time he or she gets a mention?” I rushed off to Google, where I discovered that Scoones has a brother living in Fredericton, not a large enough city for me to believe that he never ran into his sister. It’s obvious that this family has a lot more going on below the surface than Scoones is prepared to reveal, but rather than disappointing me, it made me read and reread the book more closely, as I savoured whatever tiny glimpses I could get of anything that would help fill in the picture of Molly Lamb Bobak’s inner life. —Patty Osborne

## TWO FISH IN A WESTERN SEA

**Cedar, Salmon and Weed** is probably not the Great Canadian Novel—but it could be the Great Bamfield Novel; it seems to have few competitors for that distinction. Self-published by the author, Louis Druehl, with assistance from Granville Island Publishing, *Cedar, Salmon and Weed* is set during the 1970s in Bamfield, an isolated community on the west coast of Vancouver Island, at the far end of a sixty-mile-long dirt road “strewn with beer cans, mufflers, hubcaps, and odd bits of clothing.” From the author bio we learn that Druehl is “a Professor Emeritus at Simon Fraser University, where he taught and researched kelp for thirty-six years.” It is not surprising, then, that kelp gets mentioned a number of times in Druehl’s novel, along with

sea asparagus, cedar, hemlock and “the wonders of marine biology.” (Here’s one character rhapsodizing about molluscs: “I love their simplicity and diversity. The unsegmented grace of *Octopus vulgaris*, the castanet clapping of butter clams, and the effortless gliding of limpets, snails and abalone.”) *Cedar, Salmon and Weed*



has been blurbed by Howard White of Harbour Publishing (“worth reading just for the coastal ambience, even if the story weren’t such an energetic romp”), by the CBC broadcaster Grant Lawrence (“absolutely drips with soggy coastal flavour”) and even by former Senator Pat Carney (“captures an untidy, imperfect world of human flotsam and jetsam stranded on the kelp-strewn beaches”). There are comparisons to “Steinbeck’s masterpiece *Cannery Row*”—but Grant Lawrence’s reference to *The Beachcombers* feels more apt to me. Nick Adonidas and Relic would fit right into these pages as comfortably as a pair of geoducks in sand—or, with a nod to Druehl: two patches of *Haloclonium spendens* clinging to salt-water-sprayed granite.

I’ve been to the small Vancouver Island beach near Jordan River where Theresa Kishkan’s novella *Winter Wren* (Fish Gotta Swim Editions) is set; I’ve



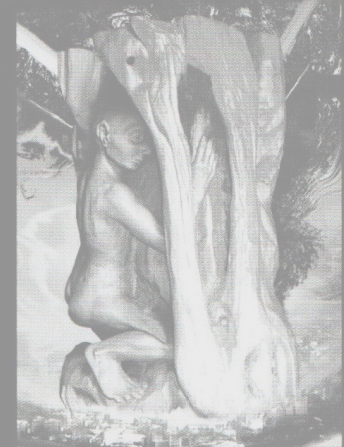
seen the waterfall that tumbles over sandstone onto the shingle just below, and the solitary cabin facing south and west, surrounded by salal. *Winter Wren* tells one possible story from the many that cabin could tell. As the novella begins, Grace Oakden, a painter now in her sixties, has just purchased this isolated cabin. She has recently moved

back to BC from Paris, where she ended a long relationship with a married man. Later, Oakden gets to know the cabin’s former owner, as he lives out his final years in a Sooke nursing home; she slowly becomes part of the nearby communities, Sooke and Jordan River. There are flashbacks to Oakden’s life in Paris, and ongoing attempts to “paint the sky at sunset.” The beauty of the novella format is what might be called its “ample brevity”: long enough to develop characters, to establish a mood and flesh out a specific setting; brief enough to read through in a day or two. *Winter Wren* is the first title from Fish Gotta Swim Editions, a new publishing venture that intends to focus on the novella. Operated by Kishkan and Anik See, a writer based in Amsterdam, Fish Gotta Swim dreams of swimming happily among the bigger fishes.

—Michael Hayward

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