

trying to negotiate a plan for his future. Part of him is willing to gamble on his Dad's promise; part of him worries that change will only mean more pain for everyone. This structure allows the audience to flip back and forth in time, building tension over Joe's dilemma.

Thomas's sparse dialogue is supported by clear physical images and actions. He has not sugar-coated Joe's emotional turmoil or the residual tension between the parents. Yet the play is positive: it may not be possible to mend the rift of divorce, but Joe is able to build a bridge of connection which allows his family to move into the future with a clearer understanding of each other. It's a bold examination of a child's growth through one of life's tougher lessons. Like all well-written plays, *Two Weeks, Twice a Year* raises questions that teachers and parents should be prepared to discuss.

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### *Dying to be Thin* is Dying to be Seen

*Dying To Be Thin*. Linda A. Carson. Scirocco Drama, 1993. 48 pp. no price, paper. ISBN 09-697-2613-9.

In her semi-autobiographical, one-person play, *Dying To Be Thin*, Linda A. Carson, herself a survivor of bulimia, provides an insightful, if slightly flawed, portrait of a young woman struggling with an eating disorder. Successfully personalizing the formidable statistics of young women who suffer from negative body-images into a very accessible piece of theatre, Carson attempts to remedy, or at least address, this widespread cultural obsession.

Seventeen-year-old Amanda Jones resolves at the beginning of the play that today she is going to have her "Last Ever in My Whole Life Binge," before fasting away to her ideal weight. As she prepares the copious amounts of food for this binge, Amanda recounts the details of her bulimic history with great candour, explaining how it began, why it has persisted and her own helplessness to stop what she sees as a "stupid" habit. Bulimia is portrayed as the controlling factor in Amanda's life — "I'm always waiting until I'm skinnier before I let myself go out" — keeping her away from school and friends.

There are moments of touching honesty in this play, as for example, when Amanda explains her reasons for purging: "... while I eat, this tiny part of me watches, and sometimes tries to make me stop, but it's way too small so I just block it out. That way I can finish eating and throw up. Throwing up is the only route back to *this* me." The poignancy in Amanda's speech is underscored with humorous interludes, such as her impersonation of "Ms Upperchucker, here to talk to you all today about toilets."

Carson tackles the debilitating effects of his disease with no apologies, depicting in graphic detail the extremes to which Amanda will go in order to

maintain strict control over her eating patterns. However, though it is undoubtedly important to demonstrate how unglamorous a condition bulimia is, Carson deviates from the otherwise tightly unified text in a segment about Amanda's encounter with a depraved individual in a dark alley. Amanda describes how her attacker passes child pornography under a public bathroom door after she locks him out. This section seems strangely out of place, introducing in much too cursory a fashion a rather sordid sub-plot.

With the exception of her questionable depiction of both Amanda's parents and the medical profession as utterly obtuse, Carson very cleverly weaves all of the psychological and sociological contributing factors of bulimia into the monologue without having it sound clinical or artificial. In so doing, she gently opens the doors of self-recognition for those audience members who may themselves be suffering from a comparable disorder.

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### Unmasking the Bully and other Schoolyard Games

*I met a Bully on the Hill.* Martha Brooks and Maureen Hunter. Scirocco Drama, J. Gordon Shillingford Publishing Inc., 1995. 52 pp., \$9.95 paper. ISBN 0-896239-02-1. *Not So Dumb: Four Plays for Young People.* John Lazarus. Coach House Press, 1993. 205 pp. \$16.95 paper. ISBN 0-88910-453-0.

When eight-year-old J.J., the new kid at school, denies she is being tormented by Raymond the schoolyard bully, her perceptive comrade-in-arms, David, challenges her frightened silence with this well-observed harasser's catalogue:

'Right—nothing. Nothing Number One: he calls you names. Nothing Number Two: he terrorizes you. Nothing Number Three: he makes you sick at your stomach so you never want to come to school. Am I getting close? Nothing Number Four: he extorts money from you.' (30)

Martha Brooks and Maureen Hunter's play *I met a Bully on the Hill*, is a perceptive and compassionate exploration of the archetypal conflict between the playground bully and his quarry. First produced by Prairie Theatre Exchange in Winnipeg as part of its 1986-87 school tour, the socially realistic one-act play directly reflects the culture and concerns of its elementary school audiences; adults are on the periphery in this depiction of a child's world.

At some point most young children find themselves in J.J.'s shoes. With a light, humorous hand, *I met a Bully on the Hill* offers several practical solutions to bullying. Brooks's and Hunter's characters are complex and sympathetically drawn. As the play's gruff nine-year-old antagonist with a blood sense for his peers' Achilles tendons, Raymond presents a manipulative, angry exterior which masks a frightened child; he lives in mortal terror of the dark and of his sadistic older sister. The playwrights have created an engaging triumvirate of co-conspirators who join forces to defuse Raymond's destructive offensives: "Jonquil