

adult theatre and drama education across Canada for over 15 years. Currently he is consulting Artistic Director of Cordella Arts Centre, City of York.

SHIFTS IN PERSPECTIVE

Double vision. Betty Jane Wylie. Copsycript. Distributed by Playwrights Union of Canada. 63 pp., \$5.00. [First produced: Theatre Direct, Ontario, 1985]; **Hedges.** David Carley. Copsycript. Distributed by Playwrights Union of Canada. 26 pp., \$5.00. [First produced: Smiths Falls, Ontario, 1985]; **Switching places.** Rex Deverell. Copsycript. Distributed by Playwrights Union of Canada. 33 pp., \$5.00. [First produced: Globe Theatre, Saskatchewan, 1986].

Double vision is a gentle and powerful play about three women at one of life's crossroads. It is realistic and moving but never maudlin as it delicately explores the relationship which exists between the three generations.

Lara is 72 years old, a widow living alone in house she cannot maintain either physically or financially. She is determined to maintain her independence although she is quite aware that she is close to the end of her life. Her daughter Eileen, 44, recently divorced and living in a tiny apartment with her 15-year-old daughter Corrie, is the "worrier" in this fractured family as she attempts to do what's best for everyone and still mold a new life for herself. Teenager Corrie makes it clear to the audience through "asides" that she feels unloved, unnoticed and unimportant. The asides are useful in that they allow the audience to see past surface attitudes to complex, individual personalities.

When the play opens, the elderly woman and her daughter are returning home from a visit to look at a senior citizens' retirement home. The old lady is resolutely unimpressed, and at times scathing in her comments: "It's a waste basket. For throw-away people. I don't want to be thrown away." As the play progresses we understand her strength and her point of view, as well as her daughter Eileen's fears for her.

When Eileen must go back to her office for awhile, it is an opportunity for Corrie and her grandmother to have a real heart-to-heart talk over Tarot cards and a pedicure. One sees how strong the relationship is as the secret Corrie has been keeping from her mother slowly comes out. Lara provides balance and perspective as well as the acceptance her grand-daughter craves. Corrie's only aside in this scene is answered by Lara as if she could read her mind, and indeed there is that depth of empathy.

The title *Double vision* might refer to the grandmother's perception of the two younger women, or to her ability to see her own life juxtaposed against

her grand-daughter's. It could also refer to the physical dizziness that can accompany the frailty of old age. Whatever the interpretation of the title, the play, with its sparing and effective use of Icelandic words and customs, is a realistic and good-humoured picture of the last day in Lara's life, containing the conversations that will resonate in the two younger women for the rest of their lives.

In Carley's *Hedges*, we have the world in microcosm. An ordinary suburban situation: two houses with a yard each and a hedge dividing them. Hedge is a living, speaking entity who along with Widget, the owner of the hardware store, narrates the story. The neighbours – the Smiths and the Joneses manage to have a good, friendly relationship. They take turns visiting each others' homes in order to watch sad movies and share boxes of tissues as they cry together over the real "sobbers".

What ruins this accord is a row over the dog owned by the Joneses. She prefers to leave her "autographs" on the Smiths' side of the hedge. Instead of complaining about the problem or talking to their neighbours, the Joneses simply act in retaliation, and "simply" is the operative word here. They rapidly escalate from tossing the offerings back over the fence to buying a large dog named Rex who naturally produces even larger "autographs" for their former friends. The hostilities increase in intensity and absurdity.

Widget could have acted as a go-between and peace-maker, but chooses instead to make a profit selling ammunition such as lime, portable "space-invading" radios, and garbage can lids as shields to both sides. He refuses to acknowledge his contribution to the hostilities, and Hedge of course is the one who suffers the most because he is in the middle.

This is an amusing morality play rooted in reality which ends with a sombre political warning. One family is holding the American flag while the other has that of the U.S.S.R. The Hedge carries a globe for he is our world, our environment, and Widget turns out to be Canada as the arms salesman, putting money ahead of the survival of the planet. In this new era of glasnost when walls as significant as the Berlin Wall are being dismantled, being this specific with the political reference dates the play.

Leaving the ending unattached to specific countries would mean that the play would contain a relevant lesson about all kinds of conflict situations ranging from the personal to the international.

Crisp dialogue and witty writing make this play a pleasure to read, and it should be a delight to stage.

In the eternal battle of boy meets girl, boy woos girl, and then attempts to drag her into his cave, what would happen if there were a couple of gods coaching on the sidelines? What if the superbeings interfered? Rex Deverell's *Switching places* adds unusual twists and a different perspective on teen dating.

Machogod embodies the "Love 'em and leave 'em. Never get too involved"

perspective of some men, while Sexgoddess represents strong women who are sexy and intelligent. Scott, a young and apparently thoughtless stud-in-training, pursues Sal (Sally) in order to "have" her. For him the conquest is all, and it isn't until he changes that attitude that there is any hope of a real relationship developing.

Just when the reader has relaxed into thinking that this play is a straightforward examination of issues surrounding teenage sexuality, Sexgoddess intervenes with a lesson in the form of a surprise pregnancy. The real surprise is that it is Scott who gets pregnant!

Scott experiences the nausea, the restrictions on his social life, and the responses of his parents, which are reassuringly stereotypical as is Sal wondering if it is really hers. After all, Scott has been so promiscuous. The idea of male pregnancy is not developed here; Deverell simply uses it as a vehicle through which Scott must cope with what a teenage girl might face as the result of his conquest mentality.

Machogod and Sexgoddess play a wide variety of other characters irrespective of which "side" of this issue that person seems to be on. This creates a strong forward momentum in the action of the play, and should provide interesting acting and directing challenges. *Switching places* would certainly be suitable for production by or for a high school audience, providing entertaining and amusing consciousness-raising.

Wendy McNaughton is a drama resource teacher for the Scarborough Board of Education in Toronto. She studied theatre at the University of Calgary.

HEAR OUR CRY: REAL ISSUES FOR REAL YOUTH

Skin & Liars. Dennis Foon. Playwrights Canada, 1988. 112 pp., \$11.95. ISBN 0-88754-468-1; **One thousand cranes.** Colin Thomas. Photos (from original production) David Cooper. Simon & Pierre, 1989. 83 pp., \$9.95. ISBN 0-88924-189-9.

Skin & Liars and *One thousand cranes* are plays dealing with issues that reflect the concerns and reality of many young people. Although uniquely Canadian, these plays have a universal appeal and truth about them. They are plays of significance, plays that encourage a response and involve the viewer.

In the foreword to *Skin & Liars*, Dennis Foon, a well known writer and director of Theatre for Young Audiences (TYA) in Canada writes: "It became clear to me that theatre could be a way to communicate ideas, a way to work toward change. . . . These plays are a vote for the future." *Skin* tells the sto-