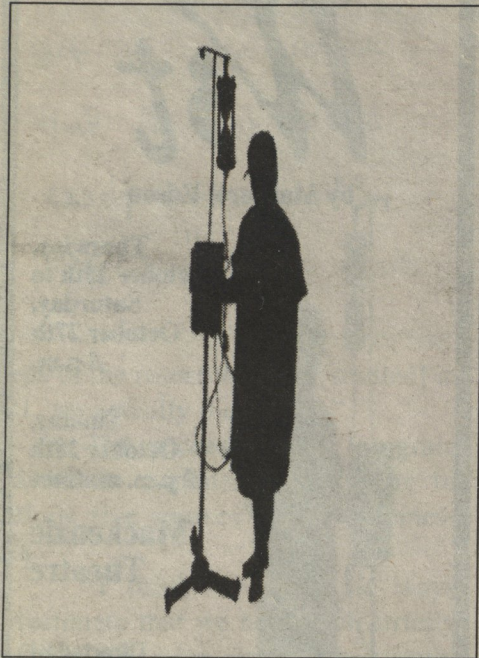


Wit: The Worlds of Academia and Medicine Meet

by Joel MEGGS



Though the play is dotted with occasional humour, *Wit* is a challenging play that forces viewers to question what is really important in life.

Although this is Henry's first foray into directing, she says that the parallels between Vivian's life and her own life have been helpful to draw upon in putting this play together onstage.

"Knowing something about Donne, knowing something about the fact that she is a Donne scholar, there is something you already know about her character," says Henry.

When asked what kind of reaction she hopes to elicit from audiences with this staging, Henry points out that a play this challenging will invariably provoke mixed reviews.

"I think the responses to this play will be varied. I think some people will be very disturbed because of the drama of it — Vivian requires you to join in the suffering. So that, for some people, is hard. Other people will hopefully be able to see some of her strengths. She is a very strong woman. I think it's [a play] you come to, you're pulled in, you have a really profound experience, and you go out fairly quietly."

The play deals with the meeting of two worlds, the world of academia, represented by Dr. Bearing, and the world of professional medicine, represented by nurses and doctors. Because many of the themes and issues raised by *Wit* will no doubt be of interest to university faculty and students, a couple of panels are being organized to coincide with the play's staging. The first, to take place on the afternoon of the 26th will deal with classroom teaching. (In the play, Vivian is depicted as a hardened, cold and caustic professor who deals with her students in a harsh manner that is sure to conjure up images in students' minds of their worst professors.) The second, to take place on the 28th, will be a discussion of the theme of compassion in the medical profession for the sick and dying. In the play, Vivian is treated with an indifference by her doctors that verges on the comical.

The play's producer, Gerry Gray, had the idea to organize an educational component around the production. Dr. Shannon Murray, professor of English here at UPEI, is the driving force behind organizing these panels.

"On Friday there will be a panel [consisting of students and faculty] to talk about the issue of kindness in the classroom," says Dr. Murray. "And then on Sunday, we'll put together a panel of people who are interested in the health profession —

doctors, nurses, people who are suffering from cancer, people who are just interested in issues of doctor-patient relationships. So there, what we are trying to do is to make connections between different community groups — the Cancer Society, PEI Medical Society, Department of Health — and a play."

There is no doubt that a play as charged with controversy about the roles and responsibilities of researchers and scholars will generate some stimulating discussion.

Rehearsals are well under way for ACT's production of *Wit*, a play about a professor's battle with terminal cancer. The play is slated to run from the 25th to the 28th of October at the MacKenzie Theatre. There are also going to be a couple of panels held on the 26th and 28th on campus to discuss issues raised by the play.

Wit's director, UPEI's own Jeannie Henry, came across the play while at a directors' workshop that took place at the university over the summer. The play immediately struck a chord with Jeannie, who is an English professor herself (like the main character) who specialized in seventeenth-century poetry (like the main character). Henry knew that ACT was looking for new directors, so she stepped up to the plate and pitched *Wit* as the play to kick off ACT's 2001-02 season.

The play follows the plight of Dr. Vivian Bearing, an English professor whose specialty is the poetry of John Donne, with whom her life is completely tied up. She is diagnosed with stage four ovarian cancer and subjects herself to a highly rigorous experimental treatment that causes her a great deal of suffering. She uses the poetry of John Donne to try to come to terms with what she is going through, only to realize that she has entirely missed the point of his poems.

Investigating the Young Liberals

by Brad DEIGHAN

A large rectangular poster contains three young, bright, smiling faces. Health care, Kyoto protocol, decriminalization of marijuana, poverty, student debt — with these issues stamped on the front of the poster beside the three smiling faces, the poster quickly and easily draws a student's attention and declares the glory of fighting for such issues. It is hard for a student to turn his or her head and keep on going about their business when they see such an intriguing invitation, a chance to unite with fellow students, speak their minds, and possibly make a difference as to what should be done concerning these issues, issues that have been directly affecting students in the past, in the present, and will continue to do so in the future.

After seeing the poster one may find it very appealing to go out and become part of this group called The Young Liberals of Canada. However, after checking out their Internet web site (www.youngliberals.ca) one may begin to wonder whether it is all it is cracked up to be on the poster or whether it is really only a promotional and fund-raising exercise put on in order to keep the Liberals on top with a large supply of young

new followers. On the site, it is said that to become a member of this group the fee is one hundred bucks. However, you do get a pin that will make you stand out in any crowd, you get newsletters and, yes, you get to go to the amazing "Thank You" meeting that will mark you as a supporter of the Liberals and thank you for it (and your hundred bucks).

UPEI has its very own group of young liberals, for which there is no fee. Meetings are held at the school in order to give students easier access. The basic idea with this group is that it provides students with a "middle-man" to talk to about student issues. This "middle-man" (or middle-woman, of course) is someone who has connections with the Liberal party and will, in turn, speak with the Liberal Party about the concerns of us poor students.

As for the headings found on the beautiful poster (Health care, decriminalization of marijuana, etc.), there really wasn't much concerning them on the website, maybe an article somewhere, but really no information on what the Young Liberals are doing about the issues. However, we are assured that there actually is something being done concerning them.