

Arts

Hot air blown over Inflatable Mistress

By ROBERT PRYER

Since publishing *A Gentleman's Guide to the Inflated Mistress* the authors, Edward Zwolinski (York English Major) and Veronica Fisher (freelance artist), have found themselves unexpectedly on the defensive. Neither expected a hostile feminist response to a book which satirizes the sexist male perspective toward relationships. Actually, this book can be read as satirizing any man (or woman) with a taste for emotional depersonalization, and for reaffirming female stereotypes.

In the introduction, the narrator suggests that men who find it too difficult to cope with the emotional dynamics of a relationship should turn to an inflated mistress for undemanding solace. But never take your inflated mistress for granted, the book warns. The narrator has been appalled to find that the abuse inflated mistresses suffer often mirrors that of women in so-called "real" relationships. In order to halt the degrading treatment of inflated mistresses, men must therefore be educated in the acceptable mode of conduct towards them. It is within this satirical context that Zwolinski and Fisher would like the rest of the book to be read.

Unfortunately, if the introduction is not read or if the intent of the satire is not considered credible, then *A Gentleman's Guide to The Inflated Mistress* becomes just a book of poly-propylene doll etiquette. Consider this passage entitled: The Age of Disposability:

What is most difficult for a contemporary Gentleman to find is a woman who is willing to make sacrifices... a woman who will listen to his troubles in a pressure-free environment, a companion who will not make overwhelming demands, a seductress who will cater to his every whim and a partner who will be flexible enough to accommodate his crowded schedule.

An inflated Mistress... has many advantages over the typical female. She is rarely argumentative, and she will never attempt to dominate conversation. She is not subject to sudden changes in mood. She refuses to demand vast amounts of your time and money, and you are always guaranteed satisfaction for any such investments. She conducts herself with the business-like demeanour of a professional. She will not interfere with any existing relationships you

may be involved in, and will never complain about being taken to a hockey game instead of the ballet. She does not need to be constantly "wined and dined," and is quite possibly the closest a Gentleman can come to the perfect, absolutely ideal woman.

This excerpt along with the rhyme "Lost your Main Squeeze/Afraid of Disease/Try one of These/And you need never Worry/About Aids again with/A Gentleman's Guide to the Inflated Mistress," and illustrations appeared on posters advertising a reading from the book at Carleton University's Architecture Pit on Jan. 20th.

The posters were approved by Carleton student council's Raffael DaSilva (CUSA Vice-President for clubs and societies) and displayed the Tuesday before the reading. That evening, during a CUSA Council meeting, a copy of the poster was presented to Lisa Fishbayn (CUSA, Arts and Social Sciences representative). Fishbayn brought the obviously sexist poster to the attention of CUSA Council. By coincidence, the authors Zwolinski and Fisher were present in a nearby pub and were contacted by DaSilva. The authors attended the meeting and presented a copy of *A Gentleman's Guide to the Inflated Mistress* for the council's perusal. Words were exchanged and voices rose. Fishbayn asked co-author Veronica Fisher, "how can you have anything to do with this" (kind of sexist writing). Fisher responded by saying that she had collaborated on the book from the perspective of someone who knew "what it was like to be treated like an object" in a relationship.

Motions were passed during the Council meeting to have the posters removed and to condemn the authors' public reading (Fishbayn: "It was disgusting and we didn't want it"). The reading could not be cancelled, because CUSA's had no jurisdiction over the Architecture building where the reading was being held. Finally, DaSilva took full responsibility for approving the posters (Fishbayn: "He approved it [the posters] without reading it, or so he says"). He made a public apology and after the meeting went around campus and pulled all the posters down. Zwolinski offered Fishbayn a copy of *A Gentleman's Guide* but according to Fishbayn, "I was so

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BABAK AMIRFEZ

WHAT IN GOD'S NAME—? The IDA Gallery's exhibition (above) is just one of the many features of this week's Ice Cube Show. The festival includes plays, readings, screenings, bake sales and parties.

Vanier Production's Black Tulip: a play that couldn't blossom

By OTAV LOMBARDO

Seventeenth century Holland was a volatile nation during the reign of William the Orange. The mob determined what passed for justice, intrigues abounded, and strangely enough there was even a 100,000 guilder reward awaiting the first person to grow a black tulip. It was in this setting that Vanier College Theatre celebrated its 15th anniversary last week by staging director Fred Thury's play, *The Black Tulip*.


Based on the novel by Alexandre Dumas, Thury could have created a charming romantic drama. But from its beginning, this play was dominated by the turbulent atmosphere conducive to the creation of violence, injustices or strange twists of fate inherent in the plot. Unfortunately, however, the play's full potential was never realized in this production.

It began promisingly enough. The audience's attention was caught in

the beginning when in the play the hero Cornelius Von Bearle (David Fuller) is charged with the unjust murder of his godfather Cornelius (Cameron Gourelly) and of co-patriot John Dewitte (Larry Shapiro). Fuller gave a good performance as the naive but scholarly victim. Too unsuspecting to ever consider the threat of malice, Van Baerle is blind to the ends that his neighbour Isaac Boxel (Bernard Leman) will go to be the first to breed and grow the black tulip. It doesn't come as a surprise when Boxel takes advantage of the wrongful execution of van Baerle's godfather to have him implicated in the treasonous plot. Van Baerle's good behaviour in jail convinces Rosa Gryphus (Valerie Hall), the jailor's (Sam Rosenthal) daughter of his innocence. The rest of the plot follows von Bearle and Rosa's quest for the black tulip and his ultimate acquittal.

Unfortunately, more than just off-key Dutch accents flawed this play. Even though the *Black Tulip* had a cast of 19 players and numerous, elaborate scene changes, it never seemed to capture the sense of urgency that a romance drama of this calibre should command. The dialogue between von Baerle and Rosa is at times too colloquial, and does not capture the insecurity of two individuals caught in unfortunate circumstances. The ending, though emotionally satisfying, was predictable because of the play's Calvinistic overtones: God likes to see the good guys win.

Though this production at times seemed simplistic it is not the plot that needs revising; Dumas' novel provided a solid basis for a sentimental romance. But while we all can appreciate a happy ending, in theatre, it is the quality of the production, not the ending, that should put the smile on your face.



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