

## Eli Mandel's new volume of poetry turns on and transforms with an idiot joy

**AN IDIOT JOY**, by Eli Mandel.  
M. G. Hurtig, 85 pp., \$4.50

Eli Mandel brings out his third book of verse in *An Idiot Joy*. Late of this campus, and now at York University, he seems to have a very promising position in Canadian literature. This volume, which may well be the best of the lot, should ensure his status as a poet of calibre.

*An Idiot Joy* achieves an interesting midpoint between message and emotion. The combination of the two makes the poetry readable, yet utilizes a word structure complex enough to be considered well above amateur levels. Mandel's poetry has an allusive nature. However, the images do not lose themselves within their diversity. They remain interesting.

"Regina Painters" exemplifies Mandel's acuteness in the use of these descriptive devices:

Mostly they see it as an abstract  
Flat as a canvas slashed by  
lather  
Or a bashed-in metal flower.  
  
Never the single-minded whore  
Wearing her badge of custom-  
ers,  
A face like grain  
last harvest  
Where the brainless asphalt  
lies.

One can see that his descriptions never fall over themselves. Many poets fail in achieving this. Their imagery attempts to liven up dead text. The result is that they overlap and are lost in the melée. Mandel uses his imagery as an intrinsic part of the message.

There is a broad span of ideas in the volume. Social comment, political criticism, personal conflict and expansion of observations are all found in at least one poem. Whatever the incentive, Mandel finds a unique method of transporting the thought from himself to the reader.

There is a disturbing trend in the poetry. The poems tend to be negative or pessimistic in their outlook. The ordeal is open, and there appears to be no attempt to swing away from this pattern of thought. Where a more subtle, satiric device could be used, there is open cynicism. The politically orientated poems could become more effective by these means.

Depression and frustration are both given the same "opened heart" treatment. It may be that Mandel has turned to paranoid poetry. He isn't the first to tread this path. However, unlike his predecessors and contemporaries, he is able to illustrate his ideas without becoming schmalzty or oppressing.

Mandel is able to remain above the emotional flow when writing

of his personal life or thoughts. By conserving words he does not mire the reader in wails of useless emotion. The conservation of thought thus is a saving grace in a brand of poetry not always popular.

Aside from the poetry, Mandel has written two prose messages. All members of this campus could benefit from these. They reflect the unique and not necessarily desirable situation on campus.

There appear to be very few weaknesses in the book. The most obvious is "Poem":

You would have me deny my  
murderous thoughts.  
It is a metaphor I distrust.

The poem is slight. There is no real depth to the message he is trying to push. This situation is infrequent in the book.

A very strong part of the book is the two sections of sequential poems. By using the main themes of the moon and sea through several poems, he achieves a satisfying effect.

In his first poem Mandel writes of the I Ching, and the similarity of control it and poetry has over him. He has penetrated the meaning of the I Ching and replaces it with his book. If this is the case he has written a book of intellectual mystery and personal prophecy, a book that will bring about the transformation of those that read and understand.

## leftovers

By RALPH MELNYCHUK

I wish to announce that the position of Casserole Editor is now up for grabs.

After the shortest term of office on record, I am going the way of all past Casserole editors—through the long, hot and stuffy halls of academia.

During my two and one half year career with The Gateway I met many wonderful people (plus a few who were not so wonderful), underwent many valuable experiences, and had a great deal of fun.

But before I retire to my year of purgatory in Assiniboia Hall, I would like to make a final few nasty remarks that somehow or other never made it into print—my Memoirs of a Midget, as it were.

• • •

The City of Edmonton Engineers Department has to be one of the most ingenious pile of bureaucrats going.

Who else could rectify that curse of all U of A drivers—Edmonton's bridge problem?

I mean, a bridge that is used 24 hours per day costs a lot of money. So the engineers converted the Fifth Street Bridge into a part-time bridge. Most times it is out of service at nights.

Most traffic comes in the daytime anyway, so all the City has to do is install a few more part-time bridges (they must cost much less) and things will all be hunkey-dorey.

• • •

Many thanks must go to the Association of Academic Staff and the U of A administration, especially the head of the philosophy department, for teaching me that professors are human beings with all the faults of human beings. A couple of former philosophy professors deserve some credit for this too.

For, believe it or not, professors can get fired here, although they don't call it that. But for some strange reason they never seem to eliminate the lousy teachers.

• • •

I believe in the principle of a fair day's wage for a fair day's work. But in the case of U of A's planning department, the principle should be reversed.

The University should pay the planning department NOT to work. Then maybe some of the chaos around this place would disappear.

• • •

The Gateway is a fun-loving, but simon-pure newspaper that any red-blooded Canadian mother would be proud to read to her five-year-old son.

Much of the credit for this goes to the wonderful crew in the print shop, who catch and delete certain undesirables that tend to slip into our copy from time to time.

Thanks also go to Provost Ryan in this regard.

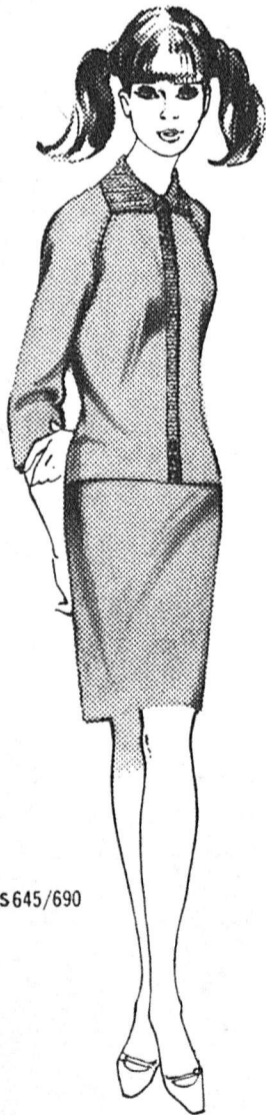
Actually, the boys do a wonderful job, and I am truly grateful for the many hours reading proofs and chatting.

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To end on a serious note, I should like to thank all those I have worked with in any way, apologize to those I have insulted, and laugh at those politicians (student and otherwise) I have taken seriously.

Ave atque vale—hail and farewell.

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## Graffman at symphony

The Edmonton Symphony Orchestra is back this year bigger than life, and with it Brian Priestman, Edmonton's own larger-than-life conductor. Some nine performances are scheduled, featuring a host of guest performers.

The first concert gets underway this very weekend, tomorrow at 8:30 and Sunday at 3:00 p.m. Noted pianist Gary Graffman is the visiting artist, and he will wend his skilful way through Wagner's "Tannhauser" Overture, Delius's "Walk to the Paradise Garden", Rachmaninov's "Variations on a Theme of Paganini", and "Concerto for Orchestra" by Bartok.

An interesting feature of this and future concerts is the pre-performance Symphony Preview held on Friday morning (whoops! We just missed this one) at Molson's Edmonton House. These previews, held at 10:00 a.m., give concertgoers a chance to meet the performers on a more personal basis.

Season tickets for the Symphony are now on sale at the Bay ticket office; these vary in price from \$15.00 to \$38.00.

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