

ASSEMBLY LINE STORIES

Pastiche in Sylvia Fraser's The Candy Factory

Lorna Irvine

I
N HIS STUDY OF FORMULAIC FICTION, *Adventure, Mystery and Romance*, John Cawelti suggests that "literary formulas assist in the process of assimilating changes in value to traditional imaginative constructs."¹ The peculiar, often repulsive stories that comprise Sylvia Fraser's novel, *The Candy Factory* (1975), illustrate Cawelti's suggestion. A pastiche of traditional popular formulas, these stories slightly alter established codes in order to incorporate contemporary fashions in sexual roles. In toto, the novel is a ghost story, replete with gothic overtones; its chief ghost, Mary Moone, is presented as the author of each story. However, this format seems but a convenient artifice for allowing Mary Moone freedom to interfere with the endings of the seven central stories and to elucidate, in the two framing stories, her reasons for changing the anticipated endings. Yet in spite of certain alterations, she assimilates change without revoking the basic formulas she uses. The novel does not cancel formulaic myths, as it would if its aim were chiefly parodic, but rather reshapes them.

What reshaping occurs? The novel offers as *topos* a contemporary urban world, commercial, mass-producing, faceless. Like the candy produced in the factory of the novel, the characters (all in some way connected with the factory) do fit into confined moulds. On one level, these moulds are their stories, on another their representation as characters within these stories. Essentially, the character moulds, or codes, divide into masculine and feminine; thus, the sexual dynamics of each story are crucial to its development. By no means is this focussing on sexual roles arbitrary but signifies a major assumption in popular fiction: that is, pornography, hard-boiled detective fiction, love story, melodrama (all of which are present in *The Candy Factory*) commonly describe a sexually divided world in which the term 'masculine' denotes activity, aggressiveness, sadism; the term 'feminine' passivity, introversion, masochism. Because these antithetical terms frequently function as nouns instead of adjectives (masculine = man; feminine = woman), the battle between the sexes becomes a major ingredient in formulaic plots. With varying degrees of success, Mary Moone endeavours to reshape this

battle both by diminishing the gender specificity of the terms masculine and feminine, and by minimizing their opposition. Thus, although *The Candy Factory* uses and even exaggerates popular fictional roles for its male and female characters, it does so in order to dramatize their frequent absurdities and to suggest their inadequacies in reflecting today's world.

Before they are altered, the seven central stories read like a compilation of contemporary popular fiction. The first, the story of the tramp, is pornography, a revelation of historical and individual acts of sadism. The tramp emerges from the bowels of the candy factory, the basement of its hierarchical structure, to comment on various struggles for power. But in this story, the power struggle becomes increasingly limited; we are told of the tramp's attacking a woman, an attack that culminates in sexual violation and possible murder. The language directs our reading: "He sniggered, squiggling his fingers inside the silky lining, thinking of the silky little woman who owned it, thinking of her creamy-pink cunt"; "The tramp fell panting, voracious, upon the shuddering woman, feeling his cock, swollen and hot-headed like a boil pumping to burst." Here is Henry Miller's world, the battleground between cock and cunt, masculine sadism given absolute physical expression. The opposition between the sexes is total. As the female character in this story, Mary Moone figuratively presents herself without a face, the necessary prop for fantasized seduction and rape; she waits, lights candles, stares into a mirror, is "swaddled in a flimsy white gown of antique lineage, slashed low to reveal milky white shoulders and a slender neck." Her masochism invites the tramp's brutality. Images of female helplessness and entrapment increase the sexual tension: "The woman, her hands over her face, began to pray"; she is "like a frightened moth caught in a storm." Thus, the codes of pornography reinforce the dichotomy between men and women that underlies those of the following stories.

The tone of the next story abruptly changes. Conscientiously saccharine, the love story of Danny and Daphne depicts the age-old struggle between man's yearning for independence and woman's for protection, the stuff of countless jokes. The plot fulfills our expectations: boy and girl meet, fall in love, quarrel, then reunite. The characters are stereotyped, advertisements for the bourgeois myth of courtship: Daphne like "that goddess the suntan people used to splash across two billboards"; Danny "spreading a glossy smile over his sensibilities — the beer commercial again." Their actions seem unreal; Danny performs as if he were "in one of those schmaltzy slow-motion commercials." Significantly, their rigidity results from their efforts to comply with established sexual roles, Danny's that of assertive masculinity, Daphne's of affiliative femininity. An essential conflict is thus programmed into their roles. Represented here as elsewhere in the novel by actual battle imagery, this conflict, this battle between the sexes, dominates the plot. Daphne describes the tension: "Without her knowing how,

or why, she had become the enemy, someone to be outfoxed and discredited." Controlled by the omnipresent advertising of sexual codes, these characters unwittingly expend their energy in protecting themselves from attack rather than in loving each other.

In the next story, Mary Moone shifts to the world of the hard-boiled detective, Sam Ryan, a loner "like Mike Hammer, like Sam Spade." The phallic connotations of these last two names stress the sexual specificity in this genre. For, confined in his behaviour by a limited definition of masculinity (aggressive, tough), the Op has a correspondingly limited understanding of femininity. Like the detectives with whom he associates himself, Sam fluctuates between defining women as sexually frigid or sexually promiscuous. His two ex-wives illustrate this sexual categorizing, the first a woman "ice cream clear through . . . from the frosted strawberry smile to the frozen cherry at the bottom," the second a woman who would "screw anything that came up the front walk." His dehumanization of women is further emphasized in his use of the slang characteristic of this genre — "cool babes," "dames," "whores," "pussycats," "broads" — and in the macho image he attempts to create by plastering his walls with *Playboy* cartoons and photographs. Because his relationships with women are struggles for proof of his masculinity, sexuality again becomes a battle.² To exaggerate the constrictions of the plot of the hard-boiled detective story and to illustrate graphically the Op's fundamental fear of women, Mary introduces into this story the sexually suggestive image of the trap. Sam reads Agatha Christie's *The Mousetrap* and, at the end, is himself caught in a trap. Thus this story, too, threatens to end in a disaster needlessly inculcated by a rigid adherence to sexual codes.

UP TO THIS POINT IN *The Candy Factory*, Mary Moone has used three fictional genres in which antagonism between male and female characters is a traditionally accepted necessity of plot development. She turns now to two stories that illustrate more ambiguous kinds of sexual stereotyping. The first, the story of Beau and Morgan, although less formulaic than the previous stories, nonetheless makes use of popular clichés about relationships between men. Its major clichés address homosexuality. Beau is presented as ethereal, sensitive, masochistic; Morgan as physical, tough, sadistic. Both men have had neurotic relationships with their mothers. On one side of the Freudian dilemma, Beau's mother attempts to compensate for an unhappy marriage by enslaving her son. The result is that Beau has spent his adult years attempting to escape from "the sexual feelings" that his mother has aroused in him. In his office, he keeps a replica of Michelangelo's *Pietà*, an image that symbolizes both his passivity and his attitude to women; he can empathize only with the virgin/mother. On the other side, Morgan's black Mama actually commits incest with her son. And this

union dominates Morgan's life: "he was going to jump into the swamp with her, and do for her as he used to after Pa died, as Pa used to do, just letting her flesh roll over him, sucking him up into the pit he had sprung from." From this Faulknerian background, his present violence erupts. Apart from being actors in a suggested formula for gay fiction, the white Beau and the black Morgan illustrate from a different perspective the preserved dichotomy between masculinity and femininity that inevitably results in struggle.

If the story of Beau and Morgan is based on the codes of gay fiction, that of Eve and Brigitte is based on the popularized codes of women's liberation. It too is filled with clichés about women's relationships with each other. Eve, "surfer of her shorthand than of her femininity," certainly despises men: "She had had quite enough, this last year, of lovers with burnt-out fuses crawling to her in their tattered Superman suits." Masculine and tough, she is presented as a threatening bitch. But, if she cannot form close relationships with men, neither can she with women. Thus, her struggle with the feminine, passive Brigitte demonstrates yet again a stereotyped sexual antagonism. Although the story presents other hackneyed examples of women's liberation — the factory's misspelled and illogical weekly circulars denouncing the suppressive male hierarchy; the battle between the beauty contestants and the Nellie McClungers — what it predominantly illustrates is the inability of individual women to cooperate with each other. When Eve and Brigitte come to blows, their physical struggle makes concrete the often abstract tensions that initiate conflict between women in much popular literature.

The sixth and seventh stories are melodramas, the first told from the perspective of the wife, Celeste, the second from that of her husband, Charles. Celeste's character is an amalgam of fantasy (the fairy-tale princess) and middle-class ethics (the self-denying wife and mother). Like Ibsen's Nora, she seems a puppet, manipulated originally by her father and now by her husband. Her doll-filled room with its obsessively frilly decorations stresses her immaturity. In this story, too, jealousy between women seems a necessary cliché of the plot: "Celeste deftly manipulated Brigitte so that both were reflected in the same antique mirror, and Celeste could enjoy, along with her guests, Brigitte's *gaucherie* framed in her own good taste." Narcissistic and masochistic, Celeste suffers the fate of the passive woman; she has no identity and therefore cannot maintain a mature relationship with her husband. Furthermore, her passivity forces her husband to assume a dictatorial control of the family. Once again, traditionally feminine qualities are pitted against masculine ones so that the battle between the sexes necessarily becomes the major conflict of the plot.

Celeste's melodrama prepares us for Charles'. As the president of the candy factory, he has power and wealth. Both represent his masculinity. But like Celeste, he too has been manipulated; the sexual mores of his ancestral past hang heavily

over the present. In his office, a grandfather clock that has belonged to his grandfather, his father, and now himself loudly reminds him of the patriarchal family with its stress on masculine dominance. But from the wall, his mother's portrait reminds him only of "how she used to call him twenty times a day to see if she should put on her rubbers." Inevitably, the roles are repeated in his own marriage. As it does in each of the stories, the evocation of the past therefore emphasizes the conservative tradition that dominates definitions of sexual roles. The specifics may slightly change. In contemporary melodramas, as Charles does here, the characters may search for extra-marital proof of their sexual potency. But the ideology of the patriarchal family remains; battleground that it is, it must nonetheless be preserved. These domestic stereotypes, Celeste and Charles, thus play out a drama that has been written long before they were born, a drama of discordant family life, a drama in which women and men cannot coexist.

THESE ARE THE OBVIOUS FORMULAS of the central stories. If *The Candy Factory* were merely a compilation of typical popular fictions, the sexual roles of its various characters would now be reasonably clear. But, when we return to the opening story, "The Legend of Mary Moone," we discover directives that encourage us to criticize and reformulate with Mary Moone the conflicts of the characters. Here, she explains to us that all the stories arise from "the mistakes and disappointments of her own life." Moreover, they are "in a spooky way a whole book of characters in a timeless dance with lost possibilities of her own life." Apparently she has written these stories to fulfil certain of her wishes. But how do they do so? As she observes the lives of the people around her, she sees the same sexual conflicts that have dominated her life — formulaic stories with formulaic endings. The material in her Special Accounts Book reveals only her own mistakes and disappointments; the characters always fall short of what she can see to be their potential. Thus, she interferes. Instead of preserving the impasse arrived at in each story, an impasse that results from role playing, Mary Moone chooses to alter the endings. By forcing the characters to confront their pasts, she offers to each the possibility of exorcising that past. And thus, to the hand moulds "dating from the time old Xavier presided over the Production Line," she attempts to give new shapes.³

Although the plots remain formulaic, her proposed endings alter the conflict. What she attempts to make manifest is a latent content not dominated by a character's gender. For, as she observes "the small gestures that indicate what a person really thinks and feels apart from what he says he thinks and feels," she realizes that stock sexist responses and gestures are only superficial signs of more profound conflicts. The genres she uses certainly require struggle; but they do

not require that struggle to be a sexist one. Thus, she shows that both male and female characters need to be released from the outmoded battle between the sexes. Instead of their measuring each character against a sexual opposite, she suggests that writers should find alternative ways of dramatizing destruction and growth. For that struggle discussed by Beau between the Death Wish and the Life Wish is common to male and female characters alike and need not be typified by sex.⁴ By thus shifting her focus, Mary undertakes to assimilate changes in value to popular fictional constructs. Contemporary social awareness of sexism necessitates a changed presentation of fictional characters.

Not surprisingly, the endings that Mary offers extend character codes. Before she interferes, her stories demonstrate traditional conflicts; trapped by their fictional roles, the masculine characters disavow gentleness, the feminine characters aggression. Each story threatens to end with a stalemate. But her experiences with the tramp have shown Mary how to break the stalemates. The tramp's story is therefore a catalyst for the following stories, and for this reason, Mary herself is the female character in it. Her past has typed her as a woman, just as the pasts of each of her characters have sexually typed them. If she is to show that characters need not be so typed, she must undergo an experience that extends her own character. Thus, she turns to that other artist, the tramp. In this story, she seeks to combine the brutality of the tramp's limited sight (he has only one eye) with her own equally limited vision of benevolence. By allowing the tramp to pierce her anonymity, to give her a face, she accepts a changed role in her own story. Furthermore, along with her alter-ego, the tramp, she acknowledges that "nature seldom needs to be altered *or* interpreted . . . *except, of course, human nature.*" In the following stories, the alterations result from her desire to cancel the sexual division between activity and passivity, masculinity and femininity.

Thus she is able to reformulate the codes of the love story. As long as Danny experiences "his vulnerability . . . as loss of power. His tenderness . . . as loss of control," he remains trapped — the man of steel. Until Daphne can enact her realization that "she should have established herself from the start as a person with tastes and needs of her own," she remains faceless. In order to make them realize how arbitrary are the boundaries within which they believe they can act, Mary creates a situation that forces both of them to change their typical responses. Danny's plunge into the water to save Daphne from her apparent imminent drowning corrodes his steel-like armour. This baptism, a symbol Mary uses in various ways in each story, gives Danny a new perspective on his life. Because he can now acknowledge his need of affiliation, Daphne can respond to the change in his character by acknowledging hers for independence. Able to concentrate on the sharing of gentleness and assertiveness, they can begin to use creatively the energy they have wasted in barricading themselves from each other.

Read in terms of its ending, the portrait of Sam Ryan reveals the self-destructiveness of the hard-boiled detective's macho image. Throughout, Mary emphasizes his sexual conflicts; plagued by doubts about his masculinity, he encounters repeated situations that exacerbate his anxiety. Looking around the boardroom of the candy factory, "heavy with cigar smoke and male aggression," he watches a former football player, hired for his macho image, now fat and out of shape. He remembers the rampant homosexuality at the boy's camp he had attended and during his life in the army. When he goes to his favourite bar, *The Jungle*, transvestites and homosexuals keep appearing, and talk about them pervades the conversation. His response to his memories and experiences is both comic and desperate: "What was happening to the raunchy old world Sam the Pecker knew and loved?" Unable to fit human beings into the sexual moulds he thinks that he understands, Sam feels as if he were disappearing. This feeling is astute; the Op traditionally defines himself in opposition to women. But why should he have to define himself in this way? In order to exaggerate the archaism of restrictive sexual stereotyping in this genre, Mary translates Sam's latent fears into actual situations. At the end of the story, she allows him to copulate with a faceless dummy — surely a symbol of the woman's role in the hard-boiled detective story — and to be caught "right inside her goddam twat." With his sexual anxieties thus graphically realized, Sam must passively listen as the ghostly voice constructs for him a different role: "Why do you think you have to steal love? . . . Why not just a man who's sometimes mean, sometimes meek and often lonely?" If he can learn to define himself by humane values rather than specifically sexist ones, he may also learn how to solve the crimes he has so badly misconstrued.

IN EACH OF THESE STORIES, the pervasive images of facelessness seem to suggest not only the absence of idiosyncratic features in stereotyped characters but also the dehumanizing effects of our sexist mythologies. Male and female characters waste their energy in battling against each other; their roles are antagonistic. In the story of Beau and Morgan, Mary illustrates the profound psychic split experienced by the individual because of the established dichotomy between masculine and feminine characteristics. Beau recognizes the problem: "I am becoming a man without a body, incapable of rational action, while you are becoming a man without a mind, incapable of rational thought." Here is the disastrous splitting of what should be a unified personality. At the conclusion of this story, Mary thus offers her vision of the male character: a blend of activity and passivity, of aggression and gentleness. Beau must act to save Morgan from dying while Morgan must accept his intervention: "Morgan lay his head against the edge of the chocolate vat, feeling the bite of steel into his

forehead, smelling the sweetness of the chocolate, feeling its gentle warmth as it bubbled up out of the earth, hearing the kind voice telling him to be still. . . . Morgan wept." Morgan's tears and Beau's physical interference unite the two men. Symbolically, their union verifies the feminine and masculine polarities of the personality, and emphasizes bisexuality. Without recognition of both poles, the human personality cannot be complete.

The complementary story of Eve and Brigitte dramatizes a similar splitting, presented here from the perspective of women. Eve's aggressiveness and Brigitte's passivity are polarized. Furthermore, stereotyped role playing occurs throughout, underlined by the frequent use of game imagery. But with Mary Moone's help, both women are forced to analyze the destructive rules by which they have played their lives. Brigitte recognizes that Charles' "game had been to break down her game . . . his defense was to destroy her defenses." And Eve finally acknowledges that, while apparently denying her femininity, she too has played by established rules: "There was little doubt that it [her position as Charles' secretary] had served her as the type of low-key marriage she despised, syphoning off her masochistic 'housewifely' need to be slavishly loyal." The psychic split and the playing of set roles are further dramatized in the Amazon-like battle between the Nellie McClungers and the beauty contestants: "blue jeans" oppose "red-satin costumes"; "leather boots" oppose "spike heels." Although, "in an orgasm of fantasies fulfilled," the crowd encourages antagonism between women, Mary Moone makes it clear that such antagonism defeats all women. Rather, they must join in friendship. Mary thus alters the ending of this story by allowing Eve and Brigitte to become friends. Removed from the stultifying sexist competition, they can now pursue their individual growth.⁵

Nonetheless, Mary does not imply that new definitions of male and female characters will be easily developed, nor new roles easily assumed. Speaking succinctly to Celeste Hunter, the ghostly voice informs her that "the old games have broken down . . . and you don't know what the new ones are." This observation applies not only to melodrama but to each of the stories in *The Candy Factory*. The novel seems, then, to make two major assertions: the old sexual codes are now inadequate; new codes exist but have not yet been satisfactorily incorporated into popular fiction. Its focus is primarily on the destruction of the old — thus, the various representations of death — although it tentatively offers directions for the new. While suggesting that popular culture is a mirror, it implies that the present mirror is not spacious enough.⁶ Consequently, Celeste's melodrama emphasizes the necessary breaking of conventional characterizations: Celeste "saw her vanity mirror and plunged through it in a splatter of splintered quicksilver." Again, references to facelessness evoke stereotyping. After breaking her doll's face, Celeste finds herself the defendant in an absurd trial "to save face," a trial that concludes by having her own face replaced with that of a donkey. In

the melodrama of her life, her role has established and limited her character: "You were the longest, wettest soap-opera in town. That was your *theatre*, and how you *gloried* in it . . . you always took your parts from the scripts your husband brought home." But Celeste's story, too, has a hopeful ending. Mary shows her that the battle she has waged with Charles — the battle between the sexes — is in fact a sham battle. She should have been fighting for her "own life and dignity." Thus, although a new script for her life has not yet been clearly printed, it will be determined by her ability rather than her sex.

Faceless portraits, traps, games, mirrors — all suggest the limitations of the characters and imply sexual determinism. So too do the images of machines and robots that dominate Charles' story. In an earlier description of Charles, Sam Ryan imagines him "not human! He was humanoid! *a robot*." Throughout most of his story, Charles does perform like a robot, spewing out memorized speeches, divorced from his emotions, trapped in a predetermined, masculine role. But Mary's interference with the ending of Celeste's story correspondingly affects the ending of Charles'. When, with her eyes open, Celeste leaves home in "that silly melodramatic way," Charles no longer has a rationale for his actions. Now he has to look at the "bloody human problems" he has always avoided. Furthermore, because Celeste establishes a new role for herself by replacing him as the chairperson of the board of directors of the candy factory, Charles need maintain no longer the equation between masculinity and power. Mary presents his release positively. He escapes from the industrial hierarchy that he has always hated and from the battle with his wife that has sapped his energy. His epiphany is perhaps the most striking of all. Catapulting himself through his window (another example of breaking glass), Charles at last takes his feet off the ground and becomes for a moment a space traveller. He has been freed from his "corporate identity" and from his conventional masculine role.⁷

In the final chapter of the novel, Mary makes some effort to tie up loose ends; yet she fittingly allows it to conclude with an ellipsis. She does not attempt to develop her altered formulas perhaps because she cannot rid herself completely of the old ones. We recall the endless struggle of her parents who relive "every mortification of their married life" while they watch the wrestling matches on television. Parental images are not easy to erase. Nonetheless, Mary understands that elucidation of the past must precede the assimilation of new values. In each story, the characters recall their parents and analyze their relationships with them. Mary thus encourages them to exorcise the past so that their futures will be more various. Charles' vision of the future seems also Mary's: "Soon, with the blindfold of daylight removed, he would be able to see Infinite Time and Infinite Space . . . light beamed forth billions of years ago; galaxies hurtling through the universe — the discus game of the gods." Here is an old/new topos, borrowed from science fiction and applicable to all the stories she has written. With the

removal of sexist blindfolds, each character's space will be extended. Games will continue, but the battle between the sexes will not be one of them.

Near the end of *Mythologies*, Roland Barthes writes: "Man is stopped by myths, referred by them to this motionless prototype which lives in his place, stifles him in the manner of a huge internal parasite and assigns to his activity the narrow limits within which he is allowed to suffer without upsetting the world."⁸ Up to a point, the stories of *The Candy Factory* use static formulaic structures. At the same time, however, they offer wider limits and suggest certain upsettings of established fictional worlds. The novel therefore seems kinetic; even without complex character development and with the ghostly, artificial interferences of their creator, the stories attempt to reactivate prototypes. Perhaps, as John Moss suggests, the factory of the novel has "no higher meaning — it is simply a representative family-run capitalist monolith, emblematic of our society in general."⁹ But if not a higher meaning, the workers in that factory do have an alternative one. Both emblem and potential, they portray the dangers of preserving the dichotomy between masculine and feminine and of encouraging the struggle between men and women. Through her narrator, Mary Moone, Sylvia Fraser seems therefore to imply that sexist stereotypes no longer mirror our society. Popular culture must reflect the changes.¹⁰

NOTES

- ¹ John Cawelti, *Adventure, Mystery and Romance* (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1976), p. 36.
- ² "The intense masculinity of the hard-boiled detective is in part a symbolic denial and protective coloration against complex sexual and status anxieties focusing on women." Cawelti, p. 154.
- ³ Such altering of stereotyped characters is of course problematic. Robert Warshaw suggests that "one goes to any individual example of the type with very definite expectations, and originality is to be welcomed only in the degree that it intensifies the expected experience without fundamentally altering it." *The Immediate Experience* (New York: Doubleday, 1962), p. 130.
- ⁴ This conflict is articulated in the story of Beau and Morgan when Beau offers his theory of struggle. He begins: "It is my belief that much seemingly erratic, bizarre and 'illogical' human behaviour can be attributed to the workings of the Death Wish in opposition to the Life Wish."
- ⁵ In an interview with Marjorie Earl, Sylvia Fraser comments: "When I had more time for my women friends it came as a revelation to me to see that women are capable of real friendship. . . . They are not rivals, as is widely and popularly supposed. They really like each other and enjoy each other's company." *The Tribune*, 21 March 1978, p. 24, col. 2.
- ⁶ David Manning White writes in his essay, "Popular Culture: The Multifaceted Mirror": "Popular culture is a multifaceted, pervasive process by which most people decide what they buy, what style of clothes they wear, how they spend their leisure hours and otherwise acculturate themselves in a mass society. It is a 'spa-

cious mirror' which we enter in some ineluctable way." *Popular Culture*, ed. David Manning White and John Pendleton (California: Publisher's, 1977), p. 8.

⁷ "The world is full of great ladies who can't find their mates. . . . This is because women have changed so much, leaving men far behind. Men haven't caught up yet. They are still super-achievers living for their work at the expense of their personalities and their psyches. Women have been through an orgy of self-examination and it's given them new energy and new directions. This has to come yet for men. The light of analysis is now on them." Sylvia Fraser, interview with Marjorie Earl, p. 24, col. 2.

⁸ Roland Barthes, *Mythologies* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1972), p. 155.

⁹ John Moss, *Sex and Violence in the Canadian Novel* (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1977), p. 154.

¹⁰ "But the short story market is changing. . . . Popular magazines cut out fiction some years ago but now they are moving back and buying fiction again. But today they are not buying the old-fashioned formula fiction. Women no longer want to read it. They are interested in themselves and in their own situations and they want to read the truth. This opens the door of popular magazines." Sylvia Fraser, interview with Marjorie Earl, p. 24, col. 1.

PIT PONIES, SYDNEY, N.S.

Christopher Levenson

Born underground and grown
 used to the dark,
 they are well-cared for,
 have all they need to survive
 and haul coal ten hours a day.
 It is ready to hand — warm straw,
 food, a clean barn. Pit ponies,
 oblivious of season,
 stay there all winter long
 half a mile out,
 under the Atlantic.

One day each year
 they are brought to the surface, stand
 sniffing the unpumped air,
 discover fresh grass and feel
 on jaded flanks
 if the day is fine
 unmediated sun.