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The Birth of Canadian Mythopoeia or How to Read Poetry in a Binksian Universe

by Philippe Villeneuve

Like the Cthulhu mythos of H.P. Lovecraft or Luigi Serafini's *Codex Seraphinianus*, the literary universe of Paul Hiebert's *Sarah Binks* is self-contained. In the novel's very first paragraph, the poetess's biographer/critic writes that there is an "already voluminous and continually growing literature which deals with the work of this great Canadian" (7). In truth, this claim is only half applicable to the factual, extra-textual universe; in *our* world, there exists no Binksian literature predating the publication of *Sarah Binks*, yet the number of texts discussing Binks' poetry has indeed "continuously grown" since then. This discrepancy points to a universe unfolding independently from ours in Hiebert's narrative, and suggests that there is no reason to believe that subsequent criticism of Binks' oeuvre within her universe will have corresponded to that of ours. As regards the latter, we know that her poetry has been analyzed and quoted on various occasions by a number of serious scholars, not the least of these being Hiebert himself. In *Tower in Siloam*, his "spiritual biography," he quotes the opening lines of "Horse" as an epigraph to his seventh chapter:

> Horse, I would conjecture
> Thoughts that spring in thee;
> Do, in contemplative hour
> Teeming torments on thee lour —
> As on me?
>
> (96)

Surprisingly, there are substantive variants with the poem as it appears in the novel:

> Horse, I would conjecture
> Thoughts that spring in thee;
> Do, in contemplative hour,

Teeming doubts thy soul devour,
As in me?

(84)

How can we explain such a discrepancy? Are we presuming too much when we claim that the poem in our world is also titled "Horse" (Hiebert does not provide the title in *Tower in Siloam*), or that it even refers to the same poem as the one read by Sarah's biographer in the novel?

Other discrepancies only serve to complicate matters. The chronology of Sarah's life established in the novel does not correspond to the chronology established elsewhere. In the sequel to *Sarah Binks*, *Willows Revisited*, we are told of the discovery of an unpublished poem of Sarah's, and learn that the poetess submitted the poem "two years before her death" (33). Since it has been stamped and dated as "June 15th, 1925" by the editors of *The Horsebreeder's Gazette* (in the offices of which it was discovered some years later by a tax auditor), we can safely identify June 1927 as the time of her death, give or take a few months. In *Sarah Binks*, however, her biographer claims that she died in 1929, roughly four years from June 1925, not two. We are clearly dealing with two distinct, independent Sarahs here.

What is more, humans do not age in a linear fashion in the Binksian lifespan. In the novel, Sarah is said to be the same age as her childhood friend, Mathilda Schwantzhacker (39), yet the latter is eighteen the year the former wins the Wheat Pool Medal (157). Now we know Sarah was born in 1906 (8), and that she travels to Regina in 1926, which would make her twenty at the time. The problem is that she wins the medal after going to Regina, not before. How can eighteen follow twenty? Are we to assume that in her world, humans regress to adolescence after having successfully crossed the troublesome threshold of adulthood?

Since self-containment is a characteristic of mythopoeia, these discrepancies suggest that the universe presented in *Sarah Binks* is mythopoeic. Other aspects of the work reinforce this idea. The snearth mentioned in Sarah's "Ode to Spring," for example, is a fictitious bird, one that the most authoritative ornithological encyclopedias of reality unanimously fail to allude to. Yet in *Willows Revisited* and *For the Birds*, the mythical snearth makes multiple appearances, as does St-Midget's College, the imaginary educational institution first mentioned in *Sarah Binks*. Like Ents and Rivendell in Tolkien, the snearth and St-Midget are imaginary phenomena sustained throughout an entire body of work, thereby providing a second distinct characteristic of mythopoeia; a carrying-over of fictitious entities

from one book to another. Indubitably, we are dealing here with one of the earliest examples of mythopoeia in Canadian letters.

But the question arises, are we equipped to read and evaluate the poetry of such a universe? Though we have familiarized ourselves with the rules that have guided and governed the morphological transmutations of the internal structures of various genres and traditions pervading the permutations of canonical poesy throughout the ages in *this* world, can we rely on these to interpret the work of a poetess creating in a universe clearly distinct from our own? We must tread carefully here, for we possess no manual of literary criticism specific to the rules of the Binksian process of literary production and reception. Despite such a difficulty, we have at our disposal the novel itself which offers a hands-on example of Binksian criticism at work. Faced with such a boon, two tasks immediately present themselves to us; the first is to evaluate the critical strictures and practices of Sarah's biographer, in order to determine whether they correspond to our own, and ask whether they—like ours—actually address and raise issues found in the poetry itself, or rather distort the poetry's meaning by attempting to preside over its reading. In the unlikely event that the latter scenario ensues, we will then proceed to ask whether poetry written in the Binksian universe does not resist communication, remain neutral, and ultimately fail to say or signify anything on its own. Can we only begin to say something about Sarah's poetry the moment we start to say something outside it? Do the conditions of possibility for interpretation of the Binksian text emerge out of a zone of non-contact, or a merging of the centre with the periphery, the within and the beyond, in a process, or flux, of dialogical discursiveness that strips the poetry of its enunciating potential; an outside, or absence, speaking on behalf of the inside, or presence, or more simply stated, a semiotic rape of textuality's haecceity? These pressing questions now must fully occupy the elastic mobility of our cognitive apparatuses.

Who is Sarah's biographer? Alas the veil is never sundered from the face, although one is tempted to surmise that he is none other than Sarah herself, for he does go native on a few occasions and picks up the poetess's tonal pathos, as when he observes a "pensive mosquito [that] wandered unafraid" (22). Indeed, who else but Sarah could have plumbed the soundless depths of the dipterous soul to bring back such evocative imagery? Far be it from us to make such a contentious claim at the outset of our study, but let us merely remark that in the Binksian universe, no rigid conventions of formality prevent the literary critic from assimilating the style of the writer criticized.

Such a state of mimesis generates a symbiosis between two writers, a symbiosis further strengthened by the emotional involvement of the biographer. At one point he writes of himself: "the Author, blinded by tears and things, prefers not to discuss it [that is, Sarah's death]" (167). Here, unlike the literary criticism prevalent in non-Binksian academic discourse, a powerful emotional response is the prerequisite condition of literary criticism; the critic is moved by the object of his studies. Need we look for further proof that we are dealing here with a world twice-removed from our own hermeneutic situation? Can we find in the best pages of our most illustrious critics a candid avowal of overwhelming tears, a profession of emotion and feeling, a daring confession of passion unbridled? What insights foreign to our scientific detachment such emotional susceptibility must produce. Take, for example, the way in which Sarah's biographer thoroughly understands her "disillusionment with success" (165) by only looking at her portrait. As he fixes his gaze on the picture of Sarah leaning out of a window, he writes:

> It shows her in thoughtful mood leaning far out of the window and gazing wonderingly, wistfully, over the prairies she loved so well. It may have been that she was casting her mind back to her childhood when she wandered those same prairies in search of flowers, or trudged, a little girl, her potato bug and lunch pail under her arm, the mile and a quarter to the Willows school. This, at least, is the impression one gathers from a study of the portrait, an impression which might have been heightened if the photographer had taken the picture from outside instead of from within the room. (166)

Admittedly, the final sentence comes as a surprise; the impressions garnered from the portrait might have been "heightened" had the picture been taken from outside, revealing Sarah's face rather than her backside. Thus it would appear that the biographer is looking at a picture of Sarah's posterior as she tiptoes, calves flexed, to reach the frame and lean. But what do we non-Binksians know of the buttocks' ability to paint a mood, to convey nostalgic recollections and listless daydreams? We are unable to interpret the physiognomic behind because we no longer feel it, nor love it, nor allow ourselves to be moved by it. The critic's love in the Binksian universe is a lesson in literacy, one that equips the biographer with the capacity to extrapolate whole depths of meaning from rotund, unyielding images. For here it is the critic, not the picture or poem, who speaks.

Indeed, to the discerning eyes of a critic used to evaluating poetry outside the parameters of the Binksian universe, Sarah's poems almost never seem to say what her Binksian critic suggests they say. He claims that "The

Goose" demonstrates how Sarah's "love for the animal life is deep and abiding" (27), yet we—wielding radically different sets of critical criteria—would tend to believe that it conveys her dislike of a specific animal:

> The goose, a noisome bird to chatter,
> But handsome on a garnished platter,
> A loathsome brute to toil among,
> But caught and killed and cooked and hung,
> Before a crackling fire,
> A songster to admire.
>
> (27-28)

If anything, we conclude, the poem seems to display Sarah's love for the animal's culinary properties acquired in *death*, not *life*, for the sweetness of an avian song expired, not animate. And what bird, we may ask, once dead sings sweeter than alive? Just as her "Hymn to Rover" (104) is a touching exposition of canine eschatology, so Sarah might have answered by adding here a stanza envisioning the end days of geese, had she lived a few years more:

> Not the swan song sung in dying,
> But the goose, defunct, resounding —
> While two soul-wings transmigrate —
> Softly a note-like figure 8
> Sounds high among the choral throng
> Of geese that lived as life was long.

Yes, clearly, the self-contained logic of the Binksian universe inverts the value of a poem's meaning. The death of a goose implies the beginning of its veritable life, the true object of Sarah's love, which her poem embodies and her critic accurately apprehends. Throughout his biographical study of the poetess, the biographer appears to misread and misinterpret poems only if we hold him accountable to our interpretational standards. As long as we keep subjecting Sarah's poem "The Pledge" (59) to a non-Binksian semantic gauge, we will fail to perceive that it deals with "the age-long story of a young man (Steve) taking leave of his beloved on the eve of battle," as the biographer has it, and continue to assume incorrectly that it is about a man planning to get drunk and pass out.

Need we more proof of our shortcomings as readers? Any telluric Shakespearean will tell you that Sarah's biographer's attribution of "England, my England" (7) to the bard is erroneous, and that it displays a

poor example of scholarship. Rather, *England, my England* is the title of a short-story collection by D.H. Lawrence, itself taken from William Ernest Henley's "Pro Rege Nostro." But who knows that the Binksian Shakespeare did not end, let us say, Macbeth's famous soliloquy thus: "It is a tale / Told by an idiot, full of sound and fury, / Signifying 'England, my England.'"

Let us reiterate the obvious—yet often overlooked—fact, the quasi-truism that the reality (even historical) presented in literature is not bound to an accurate depiction of its extra-literary counterpart, and much less so when the literary work in question is mythopoeic. In the case of *Sarah Binks*, it is so radically dissociated from our known order of things that even familiar expressions are divested of their recognizable meaning, inverted and monstrously disfigured. The idiomatic "tin god" (20), for example, which we commonly understand to designate an individual arrogating self-importance, becomes a tribute and homage to greatness in the universe of Willows (the novel, not the sequel). No, it would be too great a demand on the reader to expect him to arrive at the much simpler conclusion that the biographer is merely a bungling fool who knows neither the meaning of the expressions he makes use of nor the significance of the poems he reads. Throughout his biography, he displays a knowledge embracing vast and various fields that prove too consistent and sound for us to discredit him on isolated occasions. One immediately thinks of his faultless use of scientific nomenclature. The reader might object that he mixes a factual chemical element with a fictional one (beryllium and bolognium [74]), but he would only be correct if he meant by this that in the Binksian periodic table the bolognium might just as well be real and the beryllium made up as the opposite is true in Mendeleev's. As to the biographer's use of geological terms, it is just as likely that that which appears to us as a blunder actually delivers an unmitigated testimony of his irreproachable expertise. For no one can say for certain that Binksians do not use the word "Plasticine" to designate the Pleistocene epoch, as Sarah's biographer does (71). And what if the Silurian refers to a real geological epoch in our world, but not other terms he uses, such as "Lower Galician" and "Preluvian" (76)? Only in our world might Galicia be a province in Spain and the Luvian (or whatever precedes it) an extinct Indo-European language; only here might both have nothing to do with the chronological measurement of earth's protracted evolution. No, the topologists of a literary *lieu* must forever abstain from loosing sight of the complete independence of the maps they employ.

But are we right in assuming that intelligent readers repeatedly overlook such a fact? Are literary critics really prone to such a pre-critical act of naivety? Carole Gerson certainly is when she deplores Hiebert's parody of the real poetess Edna Jaques through the figure of the fictitious Sarah Binks. According to Gerson, women writers like Jaques and Binks speak the language of other women sharing similar social circumstances: "What Jaques offers ordinary women is a celebration of their strength and experience as mothers and home-makers, and valorization of their daily labour in the home" (68). She goes on to argue that Hiebert derides such poetesses/housewives because they seek to usurp—in Hiebert's view—the performance of an activity traditionally reserved to male intellectuals and academics. Though we might refute Gerson by reminding her that for all we know canonical poetry in the Binksian cosmos may have been written primarily by unschooled women such as Sarah, that her presumption that a farmer's daughter necessarily comprises a poet's typological miscast in an alternate universe almost reeks of the selfsame sexism she accuses Hiebert of espousing, and that one must not look a gift unicorn in a horse's mouth, we will for the nonce accept her line of argument and assume that Sarah the Binksian is representative of women like Jaques the earthling. But her argument collapses when we consider Hiebert's own attitude, a man who was anything but an elitist snob. In the preface to *Tower in Siloam*, he writes the following: "Our studies and our rationalizations merely embellish and perhaps illuminate a private view which is always singularly our own. Otherwise only Ph.D.'s could be saved and only Honours graduates could see the glory of God" (ii). In light of this passage, there is no reason Sarah's lowly social status should prevent her from writing poetry that expresses her vision of the divine, and Hiebert actually honoured her poetry by placing it alongside canonical (Chaucer, *the Rubaiyat*, Rupert Brooke, etc.) and religious (Isaiah, Book of Revelation, etc.) sources when he chose to make use of it as one of the epigraphs heading his chapters in *Tower in Siloam*. This fact leads us to believe he held her literary output (or at least part of it, which would already justify her endeavours) in high esteem. Of course none of these considerations, though they help us do away with Gerson's accusations, are necessary if we remember that the Binksian poetess is not the same poetess quoted in *Tower in Siloam*, and much less the poetess Edna Jaques. How could she be, when the latter is a warm-blooded three-dimensional anthropoid entity, while the former two are distinct fictitious entities constructed by the coordinated assemblage of variously shaped blots of ink conveying arbitrary linguistic significance on paper pages?

For his part, Gerald A. Noonan argues that *Sarah Binks* does not function as an attack against unschooled women poetesses, but rather that it achieves a humoristic effect via an incongruous juxtaposition of trivial subject matter and lyrical tone. Since Sarah believes that the trivial is fit for lyrical expression, the humour of the book arises out of the "discrepancy between reality and the fitness of [Sarah's] response to it" (265). For all his merits, Noonan nevertheless commits the same mistake as Gerson by ignoring the self-contained nature of Sarah's world, a world in which the notion of the trivial may include beings revered, tragic or sublime in ours (Mahomet, genocides, consecutive miscarriages, sexcentenaries, etc.), while its notion of the grandiose and heart-wrenching may include our trivial toothpaste-tube caps, shepherd's pie, middle toes or chest-hair patterns. Sarah's innumerable cow poems are a case in point. The "fitness of her response" (it is always a lyrical one) to the cow is only "discrepant with reality" if the cow is perceived as a trivial being. But is it? We know that Sarah does not write about the trivial for triviality's sake, for though she considers at one time the gopher a fitting animal to write about, "in the end [she] abandoned it as too trivial" (119). Moreover, she seems fully aware that the trivial and lyrical are incongruous when she says that "[p]oultry and poetry don't mix" (123). If Sarah then proceeds to write lyrically of cows, she is not intentionally electing the ox's spouse as appropriate subject matter for poetry based on its trivial properties. But can we non-Binksians reconcile ourselves to the idea of a non-trivial, majestic, monumental cow sublime? Does the possibility of the *detrivialization* of the cow even begin to penetrate the outer regions of our noetic faculties? It might and will the moment we acknowledge that the triviality of the udder's proprietor is a contingent, not inherent, characteristic of bovine quiddity, one dependent on certain cultural practices. And this moment, according to our calculations, has now arrived.

We begin by suggesting that Noonan deems the subject matter of Sarah's poems as trivial because it has not been depicted previously in our poetical narratives. Sarah is writing in a tone that does not suit her subject matter only because the subject matter has never been approached from the perspective of that specific tone. This is evidenced by the fact that some of her animal poems would not strike *us* as being so bad if their imagery dealt with animals usually depicted in poetry, *e.g.* larks and nightingales, lions and wolves, instead of cows, pigs, and skunks. In truth, the phenomenon of an inherently "poetic animal" is an inexistent absurdity that follows a circular logic; an animal becomes poetic only as a result of being represented in a poem. One might object that barnyard animals cannot be poetic

because they are domesticated, while wild animals possess a form of freedom and grace (birds can fly, cows can't) the former want. But the cow is as strong (if not stronger) an animal as the lion (although not as lethal), and moreover, much more useful to humans (we've put its strength to work and thus alleviated our own labour). Yet a poem about a cow remains an awkward juxtaposition exuding much bathos to our ears because it fails to purge a certain kind of language of the associations it has acquired in the course of its evolution. Compare the following couplets:

> When man waged war against the beast
> The bear struck first and then did feast.
>
> If man with beast the crown contends
> The bullfrog wins and homeward wends.

The first couplet offers a hackneyed cliché of a struggle between two familiar rivals in literary narratives, yet it runs smoothly enough, while the second one jars with expectations created by the repeated presence of the bear or lion in anterior poetry that make it extremely difficult for us to accept other animals as suitable conquerors of man when poetically pitted against him. Consequently, only a few select animals are esteemed majestic because they are continuously presented as majestic figures in poetical, mythological, and fabular narratives. Other animals such as cows or bullfrogs are not because such narratives have continuously excluded them. These narratives act as ideology masking the true exploitative nature of class struggle among animals. In the Binksian universe, however, the roles are inverted and the cow has been sung immemorially, the lion shunned. This would explain why Sarah's biographer writes that she "was only too well aware that the milking of a Saskatchewan cow calls always for new forms of expression" (140-41); the poetess was aware (as was her biographer) that she was merely adding her voice to a longstanding tradition of outstanding Binksian poets that have tirelessly extolled that wonderfully lactating cornucopia of bovine kindness since the incipience of man's relentless love affair with Euterpe.

Let us turn to Sarah's juxtaposition of "antlets" and "angels" (53) in her poem "The Plight." Does it evince an unfit response to reality? Far from an incongruous marriage of the pismire and seraphic, far from an unwarranted elevation of the Hymenoptera to the rank of Uriel's order, what we have here is a democratic leveling of beings on a value-scale of equivalence. And Sarah here is not the first poet to proceed in such a fashion. Ezra Pound, who did not inhabit the Binksian universe, nevertheless perceived

the lyrical, if not mythological, properties of the ant when he wrote that it seemed "a centaur in its dragon world" (Canto LXXXI). How can we explain this great kinship conducive to ant-deification between a Binksian poetess and a non-Binksian poet? The fact is that Pound did not at the time himself inhabit our everyday familiar world while writing his canto, but rather the alienated one of imprisonment in Pisa, circumscribed in an open-air cage, a circumstance which may have had a hand in providing him with temporary Binksian insight into the inner inscape of the ant's innerness. Insect intuition and animal affinity come rarely from within our world, but should tomorrow's poets escape its narrow confines, one can only dream of the new lyrical heights to which the chacoan peccary and the shovel-nosed lobster, the chihuahua from Jakarta or the dashing babyrousa, the oreo dory and the sneaky candiru might soar.

Having reached this point, we wonder if the reader's interest in our emphasis on the non-referential nature of the Binksian universe has not slightly petered out, and it might be wise now to turn our attention to the actual poetry itself. Yes, Sarah's biographer seems to say odd—if not deluded—things about her poetry, and yes, we have dexterously demonstrated that it is a zone of non-contact between our world and his which creates such an illusion. But does such a fact necessarily entail that we can never say anything about poetry while looking in from the outside? Is ineluctable solipsism the perpetual *sine qua non* of foreign textual shores? Since the resolution of this issue would require thorough soundness of mind, we elect to tackle a simpler one. For example, how many poems did Sarah write? But here it is more important than ever to keep in mind that the poetess of the novel worked within a self-contained universe, for one might be tempted to answer that the body of her work is truncated in the novel. This is evidenced in the discovery of unpublished poems following the novel's publication. Sarah's biographer ignores the aforementioned discovery of the unpublished "Spring" (*Willows Revisited* 34), while we learn in *For the Birds* that sometime after Manitoba's centennial (1970, thus a quarter of a century after Sarah's biography is published), a wooden box labeled "Fletcher's Castoria, children cry for it" (97) is discovered to contain Sarah's unpublished manuscripts which include at least one poem, "Perhaps." Since such posthumous discoveries complicate attempts to determine the actual number of poems written by the non-Binksian Sarah, let us limit our investigation to those of the Binksian one. But even here, we remain unable to answer decisively whether or not her literary output is provided in full in the novel, for her biographer repeatedly tells us that neither he nor her other critics have yet read her *magnum opus* in full, *Up*

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From The Magma. Since the work is made up of cantos, themselves made up of many individual poems, and since her biographer only transcribes a handful of these, we have no way of numerically assessing Sarah's total literary output. So much for this first simple question!

Though we have failed in the above, we at least remain capable of resolving the benign matter of the exact number of poems found within the novel. A simple exercise in arithmetic, mere child's (or Binksian elder's) play! But wait, what do we make of the sonnet and envoi that frame the biographer's work and which he fails to mention? He quotes profusely from Sarah's juvenilia, discusses in detail her English translations of German poets (which are actually adulterated products of collaborative efforts with Mathilda), and does not disdain quoting fragments and rough drafts (120); one assumes he would submit these two perfect examples of Parnassian craftsmanship to his rigorously analytical spirit. Yet not a word spares he! Are we to take it they are not Sarah's? Should we assume Sarah's authorship based on their artistry or deny it based on her biographer's silence, add them to the tally or subtract them from the whole, and is the word Gestalt interchangeable with holistic? Alas, we cannot know, and when we wrote earlier that Sarah penned "innumerable" cow poems, we were not indulging in a stylistic exercise of hyperbole, but sincerely lamenting the fact that none of us will ever accurately count the number of times the bovine grace was sung by such a songstress sweet (do we not owe her the charitable homage of an inverted epithet, she whose words have oft soul-eased us so?). Though countless Ph.D. theses will turn up every year contending that politically motivated usurpations of transgendered identity fuelled Sarah's post-Regina period, that "Space" is a satirical hymn of mass-consumer society which anticipates post-modern narrative devices of rhizoidal interlocution by some forty years, the fact remains that the number of poems comprising her oeuvre will forever elude us.

So we cannot count the poems in Hiebert's novel. We can at least find comfort in the fact that they were all written by one author. But wait again, is Sarah really the only poetess here? Forget the infamous Binks-Thurnow controversy; far more perplexing is the case of "Hi Sooky, Ho Sooky," found among her letters yet "not in Sarah's handwriting" (50) and moreover uncharacteristic of her other poems: "It is a long poem for Sarah. As a rule she expresses herself in a few short verses" (51). Have we finally caught the masterful biographer asleep, and has he imposed single authorship on a body of work that defies single-authorship attribution? But what would he gain by deploying such mephitic tactics? Michel Foucault claims

that authorship is a homogenizing function constructed by the readers and critics that has little—if anything—to do with the writer:

> The fact that several texts have been placed under the same name indicates that there has been established among them a relationship of homogeneity, filiation, authentication of some texts by the use of others, reciprocal explication, or concomitant utilization [...] These aspects of an individual which we designate as making an author are only a projection of the operations we force texts to undergo, the connections we make, the traits we establish as pertinent, the continuities we recognize, or the exclusions we practice. (211-213)

By assuming the single identity of the poems' author, we gain cohesion of an oeuvre, while the imagery, incidents, ideas, and characters become identifiable by their referential value to a unified centre, the author. But simply remove the author and the whole interpretive edifice collapses. The poems that make up the "Grizzlykick symphony" are a case in point. The title is not Sarah's ("has come to be known as…" [47]), and it is only by assuming that Sarah wrote the poems that they can begin to comprise a suite dealing with the developing love story of two individuals known to her, Mathilda Schwantzhacker and Stemka Gryczlkaeiouc, a prosperous land owner. But what do we make of the fact that the protagonist of "Proposal" is a hired man, and consequently seems to have been written with Ole (the hired hand on Sarah's farm), not Stemka, in mind? That sly allusions appear to indicate that Ole is carrying on an illicit affair with Mathilda might explain why Stemka's surname is an anagram of "lazier cock guy," or why Mathilda's surname is German for "sausage hacker," her paramour fling having thus emasculated her beau. But of course this sleuth-work into the secret love-chambers of this *roman à clef* is only possible if we concede that the poems have one author. As things stand, we are prevented from doing so, and consequently of ascertaining the identity of the characters depicted. We are ultimately left reading poetry that resists communication, a cipher wrapped in a Voynich manuscript inside a Chinese finger-trap, as the Binksian Churchill once famously said in regards to the Soviet Empire of California. Where once we thought the biographer's ontological status as Binksian citizen offered him privileged access into the core of Sarah's poetry, we now discover that he distorts and imposes like the worst of us. Alack!

As far as we can tell, Foucault is not a Binksian theorist, so that our suspicion concerning the authorship of Sarah's oeuvre is a product of circuitous proceedings. But can we proceed otherwise when confronting

mythopoeia? "L'Envoi," that roaring heart's cry which closes *Sarah Binks*, is a Binksian's farewell to the world she knew and loved. Our own must wail a world we dearly loved yet never knew.

O I tried to read the book
Where the songstress sweetly sang
But the rhymes which my soul shook
Rang in notes of rarer twang.
Crossed I once the spaces twixt
Pages read and written words?
Flew I high above the nix
With the snearth, bold prince of birds?
Struck I with my quaking fist
Pounding drums that Caesar hailed
Or dared I to see the gist
Of a plank that old Ole nailed?
No my ears were drunk with noises
Drowning out the lilt–O dear–
of alluring Binksian voices
That we simians cannot hear.

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