

# vers libre inexplicable, mock sonnet, half villanelle

*by* strannikov

## **a lesson or two from the Sisters Papin**

**i**

the Sisters Papin at play with their dolls  
enucleate sockets two at a time  
of feathered eyes with no fuss or complaint.

theory confirmed with empiric pursuit—  
though hammering heads of dolls never yields  
slick messes of gore on clean parlor floors

empiricists might more expect to find—  
in a kitchen!—where instruments are found,  
sharp and blunt tools for empiric pursuits!

(when serious matters come to the fore,  
do keep the lights on—rooms can get confused:  
empiric pursuits deserve well-lit rooms.)

**ii**

the Lancelin ladies, those poor dears dead:  
murder can pose such indignities, see?  
you're dead, you've been dead, and still you're carved up!

sure victims of the Sisters' lethal rage—  
although had police not arrived so quick,  
the crime might have classed as rage culinaire:

“the ladies weren't beaten but ‘tenderized’—  
one clove of garlic per stab, three per slice—  
more menu decisions never were made!

such sumptuous fare whole fam'lies could feed!”  
—had science culinaire not been debarred  
by petty jurisprudential pursuits.

### **black forests**

now who might harvest this forest of trees?  
houses to birds and to insects galore  
(even to termites, the insects that bore),  
they'd been left to stand, exhaling each breeze.

a party was held, a fireworks display  
to brighten the dawn of a dark'ning day:  
but one branch caught fire, a limb, then a trunk—  
stupefied celebrants watched them blaze drunk:  
by the time they thought to report the fire,  
the flames spread wide before flaming higher.

there'll be no harvest of these blackened trees,  
they'll topple on down the next sturdy breeze—

a licorice beetle creeps through their night,  
antennas atwitch, averting all light.

### **tyrannies of stage**

this vaudeville world has turned all into stage—  
the message appears on each screen and page:  
every domain and institution—staged.

“the real world” for which newsmen earn their wage—  
costume, make-up, mics, cameras, lights, script page:  
this vaudeville world has turned all into stage.

mandrills and baboons perform from each cage  
‘neath capitol domes, closed-circuit engaged:  
every domain and institution—staged.

cell phones record as each cognitive sage  
parades sandwich boards for our vaudeville age:  
this vaudeville world has turned all into stage.

celebrity cults, each sick sarcophage—  
consumptions performed and hungers enraged:  
every domain and institution—staged.

who'd've thought cameras could spark lying rage,  
souls all mis-measured by external gauge?  
this vaudeville world has turned all into stage:  
every domain and institution—staged.

