

1950

B. DAVIS

ON SEXING BACTERIA
(Dedicated to J. L.)

Confess, K-12, do you conjugate,
When fanned by flames erotic?
Can we believe you really mate?
Is fission then meiotic?

You long eluded watchful eye
When cultures were not mixed.
Pray tell, dear lady, why so shy?
Once in ten to the sixth!

The evidence is indirect,
Lysenko would have a fit!
"On casts of dice you bourgeois build
Your theories, full of wit."

Perhaps it's done with mirrors
Or with principles dissolved.
Yet round a union much more firm
The world has e'er revolved.

Why don't the opposites attract?
Where is this bug's libido?
Perhaps her hull is too intact
For this blunt-nosed torpedo.

Today, alas, mechanic views
Are sadly out of fashion.
We needs must find a chemic root
For this rare-flowering passion.

With foods select, with traits diverse
We use means wholly proper.
The progeny are neatly nursed —
But who is which ones popper?

Perhaps a quantum, a cosmic ray,
A meson, pi or mu?
Perhaps this gene's inherited;
Perhaps that rose anew?

With N-Z for muscle and sugar for heat,
With phosphate to make you fertile,
With potash to give your flagella a flip,
Please — take off that chastity girdle.

So mate on the plate or hide in its dew;
Or sleep in the deep or lie out in full view;
Or fuse to amuse or to have babies too —
But somehow unite and recombine — do!

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NZ base medium