

ENTOMONPOIETIKOS
by Valerie Bugh

FEBRUARY

The groundhog, so the saying goes,
tells us of winter's end.
This rodent is the one who knows
what sun or clouds portend.

The custom works for Northern folks,
who know the woodchuck's role.
But in the South we'll never coax
a groundhog from its hole.

Perhaps we should not see our fates
in mammals' endothermic say,
but better ask invertebrates
more tied to nature's shifting way.

If a grub mistakes the temperature,
not knowing freeze from thaw,
it will not manage to mature.
This is a fatal flaw!

To actually survive at all,
they aptly read the skies.
From minute larvae in a gall
to ticks and bugs and flies.

So while the expert marmot states
clouds mean that spring is near,
insects stay their search for mates
'til the coast is REALLY clear.

Many people in the South,
where groundhogs do not live,
have learned to trust, by word of
mouth,
the clues that insects give.

Flea season heralds summer's hold.
Fall starts when crickets say;
but the REAL end of winter's cold
begins with Chigger Day!

IN THE SOIL

Wiggle, wiggle little bug,
Down inside the hole you've dug.
Hiding in the dirt so far,
No one knows quite where you are.
Predators search far and wide;
Your only recourse is to hide!

HOME MINUS BUGS
(to the tune "Home On the Range")

Oh, give me a home
Where no silverfish roam,
Where the roaches don't play every
night.
Where seldom is felt
A mosquito-made welt,
And the bedbugs all stay out of sight.

Please, banish my bugs!
Keep the scorpions off of the bed.
I long for the day
When the flies go away
And all of the chiggers drop DEAD!

BUG POEM
(homage to Dr. Seuss)

Big bug, small bug,
Short bug, tall bug,
Thin bug, fat bug,
Round bug, flat bug,
Smooth bug, rough bug,
Weak bug, tough bug,
Calm bug, mad bug,
Good bug, bad bug.
Bugs are crawling here and there,
On the ground and in the air.
They're in your house and in your hair.
Those bugs are crawling everywhere!

ODE TO INSECTS

The garden graced with fragrant air
Beneath the summer sky;
For every vivid blossom fair
A bug about doth fly.

MOSQUITO QUEST

Climb every mountain,
Ford every flood,
Follow every scent trail,
'Til you find the blood!

On the twelfth day of Christmas,
My true love gave to me...

Twelve ants a-stinging,
Eleven bees a-buzzing,
Ten fleas a-hopping,
Nine mantids praying,
Eight roaches running,
Seven spiders spinning,
Six moths a-flapping,

Five drag-on-flies!

Four mating bugs,
Three hornworms,
Two walkingsticks,
And a grasshopper in a pear tree.

Twinkle, little firefly.
How, and when, and where, and why?
Pulsing slowly in the night,
With a beacon cold and bright,
Endlessly you seek a mate.
Such a universal state...

VERNAL CATERPILLARS

Springtime is here.
It's time for the feast!
There's lots of new growth
For every small beast.

From herb sprouts to tree buds,
Young leaves soft and pallid.
All manner of choices
To make a grand salad.

The stems are all tender,
Those young plants are great.
It's so easy to digest
Whatever you just ate.

Chow down right now,
But don't eat it all;
There needs to be something
Left over for fall.

And while you're at it,
Here's part of the deal:
You just might become
A nestling's next meal!

MORE INSECT POETRY

THREE STINGS

by Shel Silverstein

George got stung by a bee and said,

"I wouldn't have got stung if I'd stayed in bed."

Fred got stung and we heard him roar,

"What am I being punished for?"

Lew got stung and we heard him say,

"I learned somethin' about bees today."

WASPMAS

by Hannah Davis & Sloan Tomlinson

'Twas the night before Waspmas, and all through their nests,
Wasp larvae were munching on paralyzed guests.
Eggs were stabbed into young insects with care,
In the hopes that wasp larvae soon would be there.
Soon larvae were nestled all snug in their host,
Eating 'round vital organs, or else they'd be toast.
And each caterpillar, beetle, spider, and bug,
Had a wasp larva giving it a nice friendly hug.
Arose from the pupa, NO butterfly,
But instead a nice orange wasp, nimble and spry.
Away to the new host she flew in a flash,
A caterpillar in which to lay her new egg cache.
Some beetle's insides will help wasp larvae grow,
Whilst munching their innards, the beetles won't know.
Oh, what wondrous parasitoids these wasps tend to be,
Their hosts cannot hide, there'll be no place to flee.
They'll use mind control and viruses, all packed in their venom,
Their abilities are astounding, they're the ultimate phenom.
No spider too scare, no insect too tough,
They'll paralyze them all with barely a scuff.
Now, BLACUS! now, BAEUS! now, MIRAX and SCOLIID!
On, CHARMON! on BRACON! on, GELIS and CHALCID!
From the top of the trees, to the soil down below,
The wasp moms are coming, now go go go!
Happy Waspmas to all, and to all a good night!

THE KATYDID CHORUS AND THE CRICKET CHORALE

by Valerie Bugh

The breeze fades away as the sun goes down
And a welcome hush falls over the town.

Long weeks of work and weekends of play
Make diurnal souls tired by the end of the day.

As the last sunlight fades from the sky in the west
The main thing desired is a good night's rest.

Just as the children put down their toys,
Get tucked into bed, and stop making noise,

A new sound begins, beyond any before,
Which drills through the walls and vibrates the floor.

It's late in the summer; the evenings are hot.
The humans are sleepy, but the insects are not.

Much to the dismay of every guy and gal,
It's the katydid chorus and the cricket chorale.

They are joined by cicadas, augmented by frogs,
With toads chiming in, and even some dogs.

Then suddenly, all the din comes to a stop.
Tense muscles relax and tired eyelids drop.

Much longed for respite seems right at hand,
But that's not the plan of the insect band.

They might pause a bit, taking just a short break;
In a second or two, they'll make sure you're awake!

And so the songs go, for hours at a time,
Sometimes dull, mostly loud, with no rhythm or rhyme.

Then gradually, ever so slightly at first,
A diminishing volume spells the end of the worst.

And one by one, the bugs' songs subside,
They drop out of the choir and crawl off to hide.

Their symphony finally has run out of steam.
Oh heavenly silence, at last time to dream!

A few precious moments past the end of the singing,
The new day begins; the alarm clock is ringing!

SELECTIONS FROM ARCHY AND MEHITABEL

Created by Don Marquis in 1916 & popularized in the New York Sun, New York Herald-Tribune & other publications, many of Archy's communications were subsequently assembled into books.

Archy and Mehitabel are two inimitable characters - a philosophical cockroach who types out free verse correspondence by dive-bombing the keys and an insouciant feline dancer out to take life for all it is worth. The author states, "Archy writes without punctuation because he is forced to use his head to butt the keys of the typewriter one at a time, and he is not able to reach the shift keys of the machine in order to make punctuation marks or capital letters."

ARCHY AT THE ZOO

By Don Marquis

From "archy and mehitabel," 1927

the centipede adown the street
goes braggartly with scores of feet
a gaudy insect but not neat

the octopus s secret wish
is not to be a formal fish
he dreams that some time he may grow
another set of legs or so
and be a broadway music show

oh do not always take a chance
upon an open countenance
the hippopotamus s smile
conceals a nature full of guile

human wandering through the zoo
what do your cousins think of you

i worry not of what the sphinx
thinks or maybe thinks she thinks

i have observed a setting hen
arise from that same attitude
and cackle forth to chicks and men
some quite superfluous platitude

serious camel sad giraffe
are you afraid that if you laugh
those graceful necks will break in half

a lack of any mental outlet
dictates the young cetacean s spoutlet
he frequent blows like me and you
because there s nothing else to do

when one sees in the austral dawn
a wistful penguin perched upon
a bald man s bleak and desert dome
one knows tis yearning for its home

the quite irrational ichneumon
is such a fool it s almost human

despite the sleek shark s far flung grin
and his pretty dorsal fin
his heart is hard and black within

even within a dentist s chair
he still preserves a sinister air
a prudent dentist always fills
himself with gas before he drills

archy

THE LESSON OF THE MOTH

By Don Marquis

From "archy and mehitabel," 1927

i was talking to a moth
the other evening
he was trying to break into
an electric light bulb
and fry himself on the wires

why do you fellows
pull this stunt i asked him
because it is the conventional
thing for moths or why
if that had been an uncovered
candle instead of an electric
light bulb you would
now be a small unsightly cinder
have you no sense

plenty of it he answered
but at times we get tired
of using it
we get bored with the routine
and crave beauty
and excitement
fire is beautiful
and we know that if we get
too close it will kill us
but what does that matter
it is better to be happy
for a moment
and be burned up with beauty
than to live a long time
and be bored all the while
so we wad all our life up
into one little roll
and then we shoot the roll
that is what life is for
it is better to be a part of beauty
for one instant and then cease to

exist than to exist forever
and never be a part of beauty
our attitude toward life
is come easy go easy
we are like human beings
used to be before they became
too civilized to enjoy themselves

and before i could argue him
out of his philosophy
he went and immolated himself
on a patent cigar lighter
i do not agree with him
myself i would rather have
half the happiness and twice
the longevity

but at the same time i wish
there was something i wanted
as badly as he wanted to fry himself

archy

CERTAIN MAXIMS OF ARCHY (selections)
By Don Marquis
From "archy and mehitabel," 1927

the honey bee is sad and cross
and wicked as a weasel
and when she perches on you boss
she leaves a little measle

insects have
their own point
of view about
civilization a man
thinks he amounts
to a great deal
but to a
flea or a
mosquito a
human being is
merely something
good to eat

i do not see why men
should be so proud
insects have the more
ancient lineage
according to the scientists
insects were insects
when man was only
a burbling whatisit

i once heard the survivors
of a colony of ants
that had been partially
obliterated by a cow s foot

seriously debating
the intention of the gods
towards their civilization

the bees got their
governmental system settled
millions of years ago
but the human race is still
groping

there is always
something to be thankful
for you would not
think that a cockroach
had much ground
for optimism
but as the fishing season
opens up i grow
more and more
cheerful at the thought
that nobody ever got
the notion of using
cockroaches for bait

archy

THE COCKROACH WHO HAD BEEN TO HELL
By Don Marquis
From "archy and mehitabel," 1927

listen to me i have
been mobbed almost
theres an old simp cockroach
here who thinks he has
been to hell and all
the young cockroaches make a
hero out of him and admire
him he sits and runs his front
feet through his long white
beard and tells the story one
day he says he crawled into a yawning
cavern and suddenly came on a
vast abyss full of whirling
smoke there was a light
at the bottom billows
and billows of yellow smoke
swirled up at him and
through the horrid gloom he
saw things with wings flying
and dropping and dying they veered
and fluttered like damned
spirits through that sulphurous mist

listen i says to him
old man youve never been to hell
at all there isn t any hell
transmigration is the game i
used to be a human vers libre

poet and i died and went
into a cockroach s body if
there was a hell id know
it wouldn t i you re
irreligious says the old simp
combing his whiskers excitedly

ancient one i says to him
while all those other
cockroaches gathered into a
ring around us what you
beheld was not hell all that
was natural some one was fumigating
a room and you blundered
into it through a crack
in the wall atheist he cries
and all those young
cockroaches cried atheist
and made for me if it
had not been for freddy
the rat i would now be
on my way once more i mean
killed as a cockroach and transmigrating
into something else well
that old whitebearded devil is
laying for me with his
gang he is jealous
because i took his glory away
from him dont ever tell me
insects are any more liberal
than humans

archy

PITY THE POOR SPIDERS

By Don Marquis

From "archy and mehitabel," 1927

i have just been reading
an advertisement of a certain
roach exterminator
the human race little knows
all the sadness it
causes in the insect world
i remember some weeks ago
meeting a middle aged spider
she was weeping
what is the trouble i asked
her it is these cursed
fly swatters she replied
they kill off all the flies
and my family and i are starving
to death it struck me as
so pathetic that i made
a little song about it
as follows to wit

twas an elderly mother spider
grown gaunt and fierce and gray
with her little ones crouched beside her
who wept as she sang this lay

curses on these here swatters
what kills off all the flies
for me and my little daughters
unless we eats we dies

swattin and swattin and swattin
tis little else you hear
and we ll soon be dead and forgotten
with the cost of living so dear

my husband he up and left me
lured off by a centipede
and he says as he bereft me
tis wrong but i ll get a feed

and me a working and working
scouring the streets for food
faithful and never shirking
doing the best i could

curses on these here swatters
what kills off all the flies
me and my poor little daughters
unless we eats we dies

only a withered spider
feeble and worn and old
and this is what
you do when you swat
you swatters cruel and cold

i will admit that some
of the insects do not lead
noble lives but is every
man s hand to be against them
yours for less justice
and more charity

archy

ARCHY PROTESTS

By Don Marquis

From "archys life of mehitabel," 1933

say comma boss comma capital
i apostrophe m getting tired of
being joshed about my
punctuation period capital t followed by
he idea seems to be
that capital i apostrophe m
ignorant where punctuation
is concerned period capital n followed by

o such thing semi
colon the fact is that
the mechanical exigencies of
the case prevent my use of
all the characters on the
typewriter keyboard period
capital i apostrophe m
doing the best capital
i can under difficulties semi colon
and capital i apostrophe m
grieved at the unkindness
of the criticism period please
consider that my name
is signed in small
caps period

archy period

CAPITALS AT LAST

By Don Marquis

From "archys life of mehitabel," 1933

I THOUGHT THAT SOME HISTORIC DAY
SHIFT KEYS WOULD LOCK IN SUCH A WAY
THAT MY POETIC FEET WOULD FALL
UPON EACH CLICKING CAPITAL
AND NOW FROM KEY TO KEY I CLIMB
TO WRITE MY GRATITUDE IN RHYME
YOU LITTLE KNOW WITH WHAT DELIGHT
THROUGHOUT THE LONG AND LONELY NIGHT
I'VE KICKED AND BUTTED (FOOT AND BEAN)
AGAINST THE KEYS OF YOUR MACHINE
TO TELL THE MOVING TALE OF ALL
THAT TO A COCKROACH MAY BEFALL
INDEED IF I COULD NOT HAVE HAD
SUCH OCCUPATION I'D BE MAD
AH FOR A SOUL LIKE MINE TO DWELL
WITHIN A COCKROACH THAT IS HELL
TO SCURRY FROM THE PLAYFUL CAT
TO DODGE THE INSECT EATING RAT
THE HUNGRY SPIDER TO EVADE
THE MOUSE THAT %?)) " " " \$\$\$ ((gee boss
what a jolt that cat mehitabel made
a jump for me
it kicked me right into the
mechanism where she
couldn't reach me it
was nearly the death of little
archy that kick spurned me right
out of parnassus back into
the vers libre slums i lay
in behind the wires for an hour after
she left before i dared to get
out and finish i hate
cats say boss please lock the shift
key tight some night

i would like to tell the story of
my life all in capital
letters

archy

ARCHY'S AUTOBIOGRAPHY

By Don Marquis

From "archys life of mehitabel," 1933

if all the verse what i have wrote
were boiled together in a kettle
twould make a meal for every goat
from nome to popocatapetl
mexico

and all the prose what i have penned
if laid together end to end
would reach from russia to south bend
indiana

but all the money what i saved
from all them works at which i slaved
is not enough to get me shaved
every morning

and all the dams which i care
if heaped together in the air
would not reach much of anywhere
they wouldnt

because i dont shave everyday
and i write for arts sake anyway
and always hate to take my pay
i loathe it

and all of you who credit that
could sit down on an opera hat
and never crush the darn thing flat
you skeptics

archy

IMMORALITY

By Don Marquis

From "archy does his part," 1935

i was up to central
park yesterday watching some
kids build a snow man when
they were done and had
gone away i looked it
over they had used two
little chunks of wood for
the eyes i sat on one

of these and stared at
the bystanders along came a
prudish looking
lady from flatbush she
stopped and regarded the
snow man i stood
up on my hind legs in
the eye socket and
waved myself at her
horrors she cried even the
snow men in manhattan
are immoral officer arrest
that statue it winked
at me madam said the cop
accept the tribute
as a christmas present
and be happy my own
belief is that some
people have immorality
on the brain

archy

THE AUTHOR S DESK

By Don Marquis

From "archy does his part," 1935

i climbed upon my boss his desk
to type a flaming ballad
and there i found a heap grotesque
of socks and songs and salad

some swedenborgian dope on hell
with modernistic hunches
remnants of plays that would not jell
and old forgotten lunches

a plate once flushed with pride and pie
now chill with pallid verses
a corkless jug of ink hard by
sobbed out its life with curses

six sad bedraggled things lay there
inertly as dead cats
three sexless rhymes that could not pair
and three discouraged spats

the feet of song be tender things
like to the feet of waiters
and need when winter bites and stings
sesquipedalian gaiters

peter the pup sprawled on the heap
disputing all approaches
or growled and grumbled in his sleep
or waked and snapped at roaches

i found a treatise on the soul
which bragged it undefeated
and a bill for thirteen tons of coal
by fate left unreceipted

books on the modern girl s advance
wrapped in a cutey sark
with honi soit qui mal y pense
worked for its laundry mark

mid broken glass the spider slinks
while memories stir and glow
of olden happy far off drinks
and bottles long ago

such is the litter at the root
of song and story rising
or noisome pipe or cast off boot
feeding and fertilizing

as lilies burgeon from the dirt
into the golden day
dud epic and lost undershirt
survive times slow decay

still burrowing far and deep i found
a razor coldly soapy
and at the center of the mound
some most surprising opi

some modest pages chaste and shy
for pocket poke or sporran
written by archy published by
doubleday and doran

archy the cockroach

WHAT THE ANTS ARE SAYING

By Don Marquis

From "archy does his part," 1935

dear boss i was talking with an ant
the other day
and he handed me a lot of
gossip which ants the world around
are chewing over among themselves

i pass it on to you
in the hope that you may relay it to other
human beings and hurt their feelings with it
no insect likes human beings
and if you think you can see why
the only reason i tolerate you is because
you seem less human to me than most of them
here is what the ants are saying

it wont be long now it wont be long
man is making deserts of the earth
it wont be long now
before man will have used it up
so that nothing but ants
and centipedes and scorpions
can find a living on it
man has oppressed us for a million years
but he goes on steadily
cutting the ground from under
his own feet making deserts deserts deserts

we ants remember
and have it all recorded
in our tribal lore
when gobi was a paradise
swarming with men and rich
in human prosperity
it is a desert now and the home
of scorpions ants and centipedes

what man calls civilization
always results in deserts
man is never on the square
he uses up the fat and greenery of the earth
each generation wastes a little more
of the future with greed and lust for riches

north africa was once a garden spot
and then came carthage and rome
and despoiled the storehouse
and now you have sahara
sahara ants and centipedes

toltecs and aztecs had a mighty
civilization on this continent
but they robbed the soil and wasted nature
and now you have deserts scorpions ants and centipedes
and the deserts of the near east
followed egypt and babylon and assyria
and persia and rome and the turk
the ant is the inheritor of tamerlane
and the scorpion succeeds the caesars

america was once a paradise
of timberland and stream
but it is dying because of the greed
and money lust of a thousand little kings
who slashed the timber all to hell
and would not be controlled
and changed the climate
and stole the rainfall from posterity
and it wont be long now
it wont be long
till everything is desert
from the alleghenies to the rockies
the deserts are coming
the deserts are spreading

the springs and streams are drying up
one day the mississippi itself
will be a bed of sand
ants and scorpions and centipedes
shall inherit the earth

men talk of money and industry
of hard times and recoveries
of finance and economics
but the ants wait and the scorpions wait
for while men talk they are making deserts all the time
getting the world ready for the conquering ant
drought and erosion and desert
because men cannot learn

rainfall passing off in flood and freshet
and carrying good soil with it
because there are no longer forests
to withhold the water in the
billion meticolations of the roots

it wont be long now It won't be long
till earth is barren as the moon
and sapless as a mumbled bone

dear boss i relay this information
without any fear that humanity
will take warning and reform

archy
