

YOU CAN EVEN MOVE IT TO A SITZ-BATH

i am suffering from a massive attack
of bleeding, throbbing hemorrhoids,
the sort which are of such a magnitude
that were you asked whether you would rather
face death or a bowel movement
you would opt without hesitation
for the firing squad,
especially if they would let you
lie on your side as they fired,

and i have literally dragged my ass to school
and then to the tax man
from whom i have learned that i now owe
five hundred dollars in addition to
the eighteen hundred that i paid the irs a month ago,
and that i can expect a bill for interest and penalties
in thirty days, after which it is not unreasonable
to anticipate a complete audit of all returns
back to those golden years
when to take a shit was still sometimes a pleasure,

and my wife is not speaking to me,
for some reason i don't even remember --
finding a reason for not speaking to me
never having been a major problem for her --

and my baby daughter, who always gives me big smiles,
has suddenly quit smiling -- i wonder if she understands
what my wife has probably been muttering about me
in my absence,

and the last thing i can contemplate at the moment
is going out in search of a new woman,

and i am behind on not only a deskful
of responsibilities and chores,
but also on things i really want to do,
like letters to my other children
and a couple of pretty good ideas for poems,

and of course i can't even consider sitting at the
long enough to re-type the story which has just been
but which the editor has requested a cleaner copy of
before the fast-approaching deadline,

and i hate hot baths -- they leave me
weak and sweating and unable to sleep --

but i run the scalding water anyway
and lower my ignominy into it

and stare at a copy of a moveable feast,
first one of the fitzgerald chapters
and then the one about ezra pound's bel esprit movement
to free major eliot from lloyd's bank,

and it is the paris to which i have been
and about which i have written
and to which, before the recent financial hiroshimas,
i had hoped to introduce my children,

and suddenly, in spite of everything,
i'm happy.

LETTERS AND SCIENCE

The brochure for the new course advertised it
as a "Metrics Workshop."

Thank God, I sighed, at last I'll be getting
a few students who can tell an iamb
from something you use to hold a door open.

Naturally it turned out to be
a matter of inches and centimeters.

THINK TINY AND CARRY A BIG STICK

tiny tim was on the johnny carson show the other night.
it was obvious he had come down in the world,
but the discernible aspects of his decline
were not sufficient to account for
the vehemence of the audience's reaction to him:
they hooted and giggled and pointed and stomped
like a bunch of midwest grammarschoolers
at a carny sideshow.
had there been any chance of their being
allowed on stage,
i really think they would have done
serious physical harm to him.
at the very least, they would have tweaked his nose,
or pulled his hair