

OF SCATOLOGICAL INTEREST

I once attended a scientific meeting
In Maynooth, the Pontifical Seminary of Ireland.
The invited speakers
Were given the bishop's rooms, while
The others attending
Stayed where the seminarians lived.
The difference was
That the bishop's rooms
Were twice as large,
Had two fireplaces
To be stoked with peat briquets, stacked
Like brown egg cartons
In the hall.
And hard to light.
It was an Irish April,
I had to pile more briquets on the fires
Twice each night.
I had always wanted to see a bishop's bathroom.
Ireland probably has a lot of bishops,
Because we had this whole floor
And a large communal bathroom.
It was dark, a kind of labyrinth of marble partitions
Ending at eye level,
Shower heads sticking up above,
Like gray metallic sunflowers.
So you could see your fellow bishops
Standing up,
But not sitting down.
The labyrinth was made of cubicles,
Each with a door to a bath and a toilet.
Some of the doors were missing.
I went into one cubicle, looked
If there were a hook for the bishop
To hang up his cassock.
I tried to imagine
The sound
Of the pastors of Ireland passing water.