

ODE TO COPROLOGY

by POD

(I run a coprology practical for medical students each year and we take a liberal arts approach to a delicate subject)

I am a coprologist!
Proud to study ..IT
not Information Technology
nor International Trade
more like Internal Trafficking
of digesta previously made.

How I revel in the beauty
the baseness of the beasts
the tiny little parasites
indulging in my feasts

The study of gut parasites
causing nasty diarrhoea
requires a strong constitution
with little room for fear

People tend to avoid
handling horrid excrement
particularly when it may contain
many an infectious element

However, diagnoses are easy
but dirty jobs to do
using various techniques
to examine a little poo

The first major task
to score the matrix under test
involves a personal assessment
of stool appearance at its best

Patients relate frequency
clinicians consistency and gel
laypersons note colour
while experts swear by smell

Sensitive preparative techniques
reduce volumes to dregs
revealing small protozoan cysts
and larger helminth eggs

Experienced microscopists
identify species without troubles
while young trainees discover
many new types of bubbles

Many think ascarid roundworms
cause diarrhoea most foul
but nasty tangles of adults
can obstruct your bowel

Heavy infections by whipworms
heads buried in your septum
cause you to strain and grunt
sometimes prolapsing your rectum

Hookworms with wicked smiles
and large lusty appetites
dine upon bloody meals
causing nasty anaemic blights

Pinworms with perianal habits
make disease an ill-defined thing
typified by irritability
and a very itchy ring

The taeniid gargantuan
impressive in its size
causes patient consternation
passing segments as it prize

The cryptic liver fluke
hiding in biliary spaces
causes fibrotic changes
upsetting hepatic stasis

The wily Giardia flagellate
carpeting the intestinal wall
blocking off absorption
promoting diarrhoeic squall

The tissue lysing Entamoeba
crossing the colon in force
often invades softer tissues
forming abscesses filled with sauce

Balantidium the consummate athlete
accomplished swimming that it boasts
nonetheless does not differentiate
between humans and pigs as hosts

The prolific gut coccidia
indulging in sexual trysts
results in runny faeces
full of tiny oocysts

Timely detection and treatment
allows prognosis less than dire
drying up the runs and trots
and soothing the burning ring of fire.