

responsibility of educating priests, the appropriate form of seminary life is far from clear. Such institutions must, at least, be communities that support and challenge their members in a life of study and prayer. The recent increase in vocations to priesthood in England, in some dioceses at least (Bro. Antony needs to scrutinise some recent figures), suggests that men are still hearing the call to the ministry of word and sacraments. The machine may be falling to bits, but the harvest is still there to be reaped.

### PATRICK AND OISIN

Aside from their tenebrous conversation, I sat learning my catechism with its woodcut mysteries and polysyllabic runs, its 'clandestine solemnisations', its 'morose delectation and concupiscence'. In the stove-warmed kitchen, neighbours' names seeded and uncurled upon their tongues, a back-biting undergrowth mantling the hard stones of 'calumny and detraction'.

Father Hughes had clapped the frost out of his gloves and clattered the silenced room. 'Hands up who said their morning prayers this morning'. My hand was a tendril reaching with the others, 'Who'll say their catechism'?

The night wore on. The phrases that had sapped my concentration atrophied, incised tablets mossed and camouflaged by parasites and creeping greenery.

SEAMUS HEANEY