ESCHATOLOGY

I once attended a scientific meeting

in Maynooth, the Pontifical Seminary of Ireland.

The invited speakers

were given the bishops' rooms, while

the others attending

stayed where the seminarians lived.

The difference was

that the bishops' 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 a 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.