

THE SEVEN HILLS OF THE DOVE. By Scharmél Iris. (Bruce Humphries; \$3.)

HYPHENS. By James Russell Grant. (Putnam; 7s. 6d.)

THE GUINNESS BOOK OF POETRY. (Putnam; 10s. 6d.)

Scharmél Iris's work is little-known in this country. W. B. Yeats, in the only preface he ever wrote for a book of American poetry, praised him very highly indeed, and T. S. Eliot has said it would be a sign of defeat not to welcome his work. This collection of religious poetry has a perceptive preface by Padraic Colum. There is a transcendental quality about his work; he is concerned with simple unchanging religious truths and not with the impact of human history on them. So he is an optimist who is unaware of insecurity; he is equally unaware of, at least he chooses not to regard, the impact of Christianity on society. Perhaps these are some of the reasons for little notice being taken of him in an age which expects to find its own insecurity reflected in its writings; the looseness of style and occasional otiose epithets may be another.

Hyphens is the exact opposite of *The Seven Hills of the Dove*. Here is insecurity and distress and a man struggling with reality that is craggy and will not be moulded; the style is oblique and elliptical. For all that there are pools of clarity and many flashes, if not of insight, at least of illumination. One would say that James Russell Grant is more a poet of this age than Scharmél Iris. That is not to gainsay Mr Eliot's assertion that Scharmél Iris is the poet this age needs.

The poems in *The Guinness Book of Poetry* were chosen by the judges for the first year of the Guinness Poetry Awards from among those submitted to them. There are the established writers, those whose names we find chiefly in periodicals like *The Listener*, *The New Statesman*, and some quite new. Such a collection is a useful guide to the quality of poetry written in any one year, and is a tribute to a perceptive work of patronage.

GERARD MEATH, O.P.

THE SPIRIT OF THE SPANISH MYSTICS. By Kathleen Pond. (Burns and Oates; 16s.)

This book is subtitled 'An Anthology of Spanish Religious Prose from the Fifteenth to the Seventeenth Century'. There are twenty-eight extracts, most of them fairly substantial, from the writings of Jesuit, Franciscan, Dominican, Carmelite and other sources from 1470 to 1650, all well translated by Miss Pond. The selection is fairly representative and contains writings of the less famous Spanish mystics as well as St Theresa, St John of the Cross, St Peter of Alcantara and so on. The short introduction, without harping too loudly on the harshness of

Spain's countryside and climate, allows us to see not only the sharp contrasts there are in the Spanish character, but the practical simplicity and common sense that marks so much of the religious writings. A good book for occasional reading.

G.A.M.

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

271 Edgerstoune Road,
Princeton, N.J., U.S.A.,
30th January, 1959.

DEAR SIR:

May I just correct a misstatement in Mr Michael Fogarty's contribution to your January issue?

As is made clear at several points in the narrative (pp. 20, 82, 243, etc.) the action of my novel *Lucky Jim* takes place *outside* Wales. Nor have I taken a Welsh college and put it in England: innumerable details of staff, organization, physical arrangement, etc., differentiate Jim's college from any of the four Welsh colleges I know—namely Aberystwyth, Cardiff, Bangor and Swansea. As far as I knew last September, by the way, these were the *only* four colleges in the University of Wales. Mr Fogarty seems to think there are five. Perhaps the new arrival has turned out to be Jim's college.

I realize I cannot expect people to read novels with the close attention which would make this kind of letter unnecessary, but it irritates me to find Mr Fogarty talking about 'the college of which he [Amis] writes' as if the whole thing were agreed to be a *roman à clef*. The next time anybody tells Mr Fogarty that *Lucky Jim* contains 'recognizable portraits' I hope he will realize that he is being misled.

Yours truly,
KINGSLEY AMIS.

PROFESSOR FOGARTY writes:

'If I have let myself be misled by those more familiar with other