

situation in *Baby Doll*. But in effect this is not so. The atmosphere quite lacks the febrility of the Kazan picture, and the facts are stated with an uncompromising lucidity that never in any way seeks to disturb by overheating the emotions. René Clement has directed the picture in an impersonal—almost documentary—way that makes its bare statement all the more telling. This film is tragic, where *Baby Doll* is melodramatic. Maria Schell's performance as Gervaise is less of a tour-de-force than that of Carroll Baker as Baby Doll, but it has a dignity and humanity which the younger girl is not allowed to present; and at the end, when the tiny bedraggled Nana tentatively pushes across the table a sweet her mother is too drunk to pick up, one is racked with a liberating pity. Life in late nineteenth-century Paris may be grey and ruthless, but it has a positive and invincible courage that is wholly lacking in the sleazy backyards of Benoit, Mississippi, where the garbage blows round the lacrimose inhabitants. I have never before so clearly appreciated the distinction between realism and sensationalism.

MARYVONNE BUTCHER

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## REVIEWS

WALES AND THE ARTHURIAN LEGEND. By Roger Sherman Loomis.  
(University of Wales Press; 21s.)

This is a collection of ten articles, nine of which have already been published. All deal with Welsh elements in early variants of the Arthurian story. All are marked by wide erudition and by imaginative vision. But at times there is an apparent reluctance to carry the arguments to their obvious conclusion. The most important of the essays, that on Celtic sources for '*Gawain and the Green Knight*', provides an example. Professor Loomis analyses with definitive mastery the mingled background of Irish and Welsh folk-lore that would suggest that the Romance took shape in some such area as the Palatinate of Chester in the fourteenth century and then states that the author of 'the narrative framework' was 'in all probability a Frenchman perhaps a contemporary of the architects of Amiens and Rheims Cathedrals'. In the same fashion Professor Loomis still emphasizes the crucial importance of Brittany as a centre of diffusion for the Arthurian story while all his research is suggesting that the real centre lay somewhere in the Welsh Marches, at a time when Brittany and Wales were

almost without contact. There is an occasional strange slip; thus Gervase of Tilbury is quoted in a footnote as 'Gervasius von Tilbury'. There are some stranger omissions; there is no reference to the close Irish associations of Gruffydd ap Cynan which is perhaps the key to the twelfth-century amalgam of much Welsh and Irish Legend. But no criticism can affect the fact that once again Professor Loomis has placed Arthurian studies in his debt.

GERVASE MATHEW, O.P.

EARLY IRISH LYRICS: EIGHTH TO TWELFTH CENTURY. Edited with translation, notes and glossary by Gerard Murphy. (Oxford: Clarendon Press; London: Cumberlege; 42s.)

The critic's remark that Old English poetry is a small body of verse almost completely surrounded by scholars has been applied also to Old Irish verse. It is a mild criticism and, like many others, an exaggeration. But it does suggest a truth. The reader of modern Irish has until quite recently been cut off from first-hand acquaintance with this early poetry by reason of the archaism of the language in which it is written; furthermore, although this early verse has been vividly illuminated by the critical studies of modern scholars, the results of their labours are likely to have reached English readers only indirectly, or as *caviare* to the general. This gap between scholar and common reader is effectively bridged by Professor Murphy with his anthology of fifty-eight Irish lyrics composed between the eighth and twelfth centuries. The student of Old and Middle Irish will find every facility here: textual and metrical notes, variant and restored readings, and a glossary that is really helpful. Indeed, from the point of view of critical apparatus this work is likely to establish itself as a standard book of reference for years to come.

Translations of verse, however, always pose a problem. How convey what, in the last analysis, is untranslatable? Should the translation be free or literal? Kuno Meyer chose the former, forty years or more ago, and achieved memorable results; Professor Murphy prefers the latter and achieves accuracy, but loses much of the haunting beauty of the originals.

Though primarily intended for the serious student, this book is one that cannot fail to interest lovers of literature in general. Untrammelled by the conventions of the bardic schools and the demands of princely patrons, these early examples of the Irish lyric tradition are delicately wrought, and when touching on personal experience they have an extraordinary sincerity and directness of feeling. The anonymous poets cared little for fame, in many cases it is through