

tinguished from history when, so often, one wants to say of a particular work that it contains the essential elements of both forms? (Saul Bellow's *Herzog* seems to me to fall squarely into *both* categories as they are described by the author.) These difficulties seem to suggest that the term *myth* is a less useful critical implement than it looks at first, and even sometimes appears to be just a rhetorical device for providing critical, theoretical support for the kind of novels Golding likes to write. If myth is not a clear category, those who have misconstrued Golding have not perhaps been so demonstrably wrong as at first appeared. Certainly they may have failed to read with sufficient intelligence and care the words on the page. But they can hardly be blamed for not putting Golding into so dubious a category.

In short, the close reading of the texts that we find in the first five chapters—each devoted to one novel—is more helpful, critically, than the theoretical categorization that is attempted in the last chapter. But I am not completely happy even here: for some of the key concepts associated with the *myth* category are in constant evidence throughout the analyses. *Free Fall* is, of course, the test case, since it is that book which most obviously marks a shift of emphasis and approach, and is also most obviously obscure. The authors' analysis of *Free Fall* emphasizes that its distinctive feature is precisely that structure of process, and discovery, characteristic of myth. And the discovery is at two levels. First of all there is Sammy Mountjoy, trying to discover, in the writing of an autobiographical novel about his own past, the key to his own problems. Secondly there is William Golding 'playing a waiting game' and finding a clue to the puzzle, which eludes Sammy even up to the beginning of the last page of the book. Now, I do not dispute that this is what Golding meant the book to be. But I am still unconvinced by it as a novelistic structure. Not only is the ending, if viewed in the above light, intolerably oblique. The whole structure seems to me unsatisfactory. Why does a painter have

to write a novel in order to find the key to his problems? Why doesn't he do it in his own medium—paint? (One reply would be: it would not give Golding a novel to write. But I don't think this is good enough to account for the awkwardness of the conception.) More important, the whole idea of process and discovery (insisted upon throughout this critical study) is only obliquely applicable to the novel. Of course we can read about characters discovering themselves; and in doing so we make discoveries ourselves too. But, in the novel, as distinct from the dramatic performance, there is no real future, and hence no real process in the work itself. There is, liberally, a world of difference between the notion of imitation that is present in the novel and that which applies to the drama (the drama as performance, not drama as script). The drama works by drawing us into a world apart—we enter the walls of the theatre and live there awhile with the actors. But the novel's 'world' is enclosed, not by real walls, but by the covers of a book. The novelist 'goes after reality with language' (as *Herzog* says). The reader makes his discoveries by his response to words on the page, whereas the theatre audience makes theirs by responding to actions performed. In so far as I understand the analysis of *Free Fall* in this book, it seems to me to be asking of the novel that it should be able to enact a discovery in a way only possible to the drama. Is this, perhaps, a matter of placing something in the wrong category?

I put the point as a question because I am not confident that I have fully understood either *Free Fall* or the account given of it by the authors of the present book. What I am sure of, however, is that they have provided an invaluable aid to understanding Golding. And their work would seem to suggest a further stage of critical study: namely a placing of Golding in the context of modern fiction generally, and a critical appraisal of his stature as an artist. I hope they pursue their work in this direction.

BRIAN WICKER

THE WARES OF AUTOLYCUS. Selected Literary Essays of Alice Meynell. Chosen and introduced by P. M. Fraser. *O.U.P.* 30s.

This collection of Alice Meynell's Essays ranges in time from 1895 to 1908 with one solitary essay written in 1917 for the *Dublin Review*. Twenty-nine of the thirty-seven essays were written between 1895 and 1899 for the *Pall Mall Gazette*. The dates are important. In the

strangely detached mannerisms of her style Mrs Meynell is clearly pleased with herself. And well she might be. It was rare for a woman at this date to have achieved such a secure place in literary criticism. It must be remembered that this was a double triumph: neither intelli-

gent women nor the art of literary criticism were yet considered respectable. For both Mrs Meynell earned more than respectability. She proved to the world that both had something unique to offer to the life of the mind. No wonder she is pleased with herself. Yet her self-consciousness never embarrasses the reader: it is the artist's simple detached regard for a work well done and she embraces the reader warmly in her regard, and in the reflected light and warmth of her satisfaction our pleasure is increased.

The formal somewhat stilted style as exemplified in the frequent use of the passive voice and of meiosis reveals a bony or muscular quality of mind. Her form of criticism does not derive simply from Matthew Arnold's Victorian moralism nor does it decline into the shallow emotivism of ten years later. It has a precision that in a modern age might have been called machine tool. She is concerned (though I do not know that she ever says so in so many words) with the meeting point of matter and form in a poem: that thing we call style. In the essay on Gray's *Elegy* she contrasts Gray's

*Full many a flower is born to blush unseen
And waste its sweetness on the desert air*
with Shakespeare's

*The summer flower is to the summer sweet,
Though to itself it only live and die.*

The thought of these two passages, she tells us, is cleft by an unfathomable difference. 'It is a difference from the beginning, as all style dates from the beginning, and even from beyond and before the birth of the thought.' That is a most shrewd comment on style and it betters Flaubert's 'Le style est l'homme'. Mrs Meynell knows where she is going and what she is looking for: that core of identity that makes a poem what it is and gives it something so much like the gift of life that we say it springs from the creative impulse. So back in 1897 Mrs Meynell detects the 'lack of singleness of heart' in Gray and the neo-classical style. That is saying a great deal when we recall that thirty

years later the canons of eighteenth-century classicism were still held up to English school-children as poetic ideals.

But let it be quite clear. Mrs Meynell is no mere debunker. Her purpose is always positive, to identify and place the matter under discussion whether it is a poem, a novel, a complete corpus of work or the literary characteristics of a nation. In her pursuit she is at once formidable and lovable. Her thought strides purposefully on and carries us with it. The reader is always conscious of being caught up in the momentum of her ideas. She never talks down to us. She pays her reader the compliment of assuming he is familiar with the terms of the debate. Sometimes this is obviously a teasing kind of game, as when in the essay on Gray's *Elegy* she deliberately delays quoting the Shakespeare couplet until the end. More often it is simply the adult assumption that people know what she means—in the essay on Dickens for instance, authorship is assumed to be a quality essential to the novelist.

For all her angular syntax, loftiness and what to us must sometimes seem remoteness she is never far away. This is brought about sometimes by her ready descent, if that is the word, into familiar informal comment as in the essay on English Women-Humorists (p. 112). But most of all in a paradoxical way this awareness of the writer comes from her very determination to subordinate herself to her subject. Not surprisingly this is most manifest in the essay on Francis Thompson, the longest in the work. But it is there throughout because we are never allowed to forget that there is something more important than Mrs Meynell's analysis and that is the poem itself. We recognize her because she is always saying Look, Listen. This is vintage criticism and because it is a vintage that has been scattered in various cellars and nearly lost we must be grateful to Mr Fraser for gathering it together in one vault.

GERARD MEATH, O.P.

THE EXPLORING WORD, by David Holbrook. Cambridge University Press, 1967. 45s.

In *The Exploring Word* David Holbrook continues his mission, which he began in *English for Maturity* (1961), to improve the teaching of English in schools. In his first book he was mainly concerned to offer suggestions as to how English can be taught more creatively in secondary schools. In this new book he turns his

attention to Teachers' Training Colleges at a time when they are offering their students courses in a B.Ed. His argument is that the present system hinders rather than helps the teacher in the classroom. One of the reasons for this is that the whole aim of teaching English has never been really questioned at a