

PORTRAITS -
POWER AND GLORY
VIS-À-VIS
FORM AND CONTENTMENT

A collection of biographical sketches by
JOHN O'LOUGHLIN



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PREFACE

Comprised of thirty-three biographical sketches of some of the twentieth-century's most influential and powerful people in both politics and the arts, including Hitler, Stalin, de Valera, Mussolini, de Gaulle, André Malraux, Bertrand Russell, Dali, Lenin, Simone de Beauvoir, and David Ben-Gurion, *Portraits – Power and Glory vis-à-vis Form and Contentment* (1985) seeks to provoke as well as praise, and should prove of interest to those who are curious to learn how various exceptional men - and one exceptional woman - measure up to a Social Transcendentalist analysis or, more correctly, to the scrutiny of someone who approaches life from a specific ideological standpoint with a view to measuring the achievements of others in relation to it. Although I have dealt with some of the subjects, including Sartre, Huxley, and Durrell before (see *Becoming and Being*), my treatment of them here is much more subjectively critical and thus a reflection, in large measure, of the way my thinking had progressed in the intervening three years since the earlier excursion into biography which, characteristic of a more relativistic approach to literature colouring my work at that time, also embraced a series of autobiographical sketches. No such relativity applies here, however, although the choice of both politicians and artists is anything but absolutist!

John O'Loughlin, London 1985 (Revised 2008)

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MALCOLM MUGGERIDGE

I have read most of this great journalist's writings, and have derived, besides pleasure, much useful information and knowledge from them. I particularly admired *Chronicles of Wasted Time, Vol. II*, which mainly dealt with his wartime experiences in Intelligence and Administration. I also admired *The Diaries*, which span the greater part of his adult life. He has an amazing facility with words, spinning them with seeming effortless across vast tracts of the imagination in a style both fluent and complex, graceful and robust.

Few people could have been more fluent or articulate in speech either, and I always found it a pleasure to listen to him on Radio 4's 'Any Questions'. His was one of the few voices to enliven the programme, and not simply in his tone-of-voice but, more importantly, in what he said with it. For, unlike most people, Malcolm Muggeridge spoke his mind and, again unlike most people's, it was an intensely individual mind, which made it all the more worth hearing.

Few people have exploited free speech like him; for, indeed, few people truly know the meaning of free speech. It takes both intelligence and courage, intellectual courage, to speak one's mind freely and frankly, and this great man had both. His death was a great loss to both letters and freedom. For of all the major public personalities of his time, he came the closest to being a guru and God's Englishman. Not for me to begrudge him that!

ARTHUR KOESTLER

Few people could have been more admired in print and less known in speech than this British citizen of Hungarian Jewish extraction who, not surprisingly, spoke English with a markedly foreign accent. But if he was unattractive and thus secretive in speech, he was more than adequately compensated for this disadvantage in prose, spinning, for a foreign-born journalist, some of the most word-perfect, complex, imaginative, and enlivening prose ever recorded in English letters.

First and foremost a philosopher, Koestler pursued his evolutionary and 'holonic' theories with a rigour, consistency, and patience seldom encountered in British philosophical writings. In this respect, he was closer to the French, particularly Sartre, with whom he was friendly for a time during his Paris years. But, for all his personal literary brilliance, Koestler was flawed, perhaps partly on account of his foreign origins, by pedanticism, by too great a respect for past thinkers like Darwin and Freud, and never really broke free of them to establish himself as a major thinker in his own right.

Yet I cannot deny that, for a time, his influence on me was considerable, even in politics, and I owe my own ideological position in part to his thinking, which served as a springboard to my intellectual freedom. Of all his books, probably *Janus - A Summing Up* (which I read, incidentally, before his much earlier *The Act of Creation*) had the most influence on me, though I also admired *From Bricks to Babel*, the more recently-published selective anthology spanning several decades. Koestler may not have been a genius of the first rank, but he was arguably one of the cleverest men of his time.