

and soon she became enamoured of the modish modern art emerging in the French capital, as well as the bohemian lifestyle that went with it. She found her subject in the female form and began to paint a series of sensuous, highly charged nudes. *Sleep* (1933) on the previous page depicts her younger sister Indira and is also possibly the most erotic with its sinuous swellings and subtle fluctuations of flesh. By 1934, though, Sher-Gil hankered for change. "I began to be haunted by an intense longing to return to India," she wrote, "feeling in some strange way that there lay my destiny as a painter." She returned to the family home in Simla in the Himalayan foothills. And there she was to meet Malcolm Muggeridge.

With a family to support, the irresistible attraction, if not necessity, of earning a regular salary had drawn Muggeridge back to India in 1934, but leaving Kitty in England having to cope alone with three young children troubled his conscience. In January 1935, Kitty visited for three weeks but what should have been a happy time reunited together again descended into constant rows and argument, the quarrelling continuing by post after she had returned to England. He resisted her entreaties for him to return. These were not happy times for Muggeridge. He had serious marriage problems and was having an affair in Calcutta. Professionally he felt as aimless as he had in Moscow and in a state of deep depression, not helped by the news from Europe and the realisation that Germany was rapidly re-arming and another war looked to him inevitable. Life in India had only reinforced the sense Muggeridge often had of being an alien - a stranger in a strange land. He felt morbid and often found himself actively wishing for death. In this mental mood he was transferred by *The Statesman* to Simla. This remote mountain eyrie is highly reminiscent of rural England and is where the whole of the Imperial Government decamped to for the summer. The move was timely, his presence had become a bit of an embarrassment at the offices of *The Statesman*. However, Muggeridge soon lost interest in Simla's political affairs and his communications back to Calcutta grew progressively shorter until they almost ceased altogether. His interest in life was only aroused when he first encountered Amrita, mentioned in his diary dated 22 May 1935:

"All the while there was something exciting me. I'd seen a woman at Sipi Fair, half Hungarian and half Indian, beautiful in a way, wearing an exquisite sari. Warden, a Parsee, had introduced me to her, and had asked if I'd join them both at the Cecil

Hotel dance. This was in my mind. I smelt emotional entanglement".

Ten years younger, Amrita was similarly immediately excited by Muggeridge for in a letter to her sister Indira she wrote:

"I have met an Englishman of whom Mummy has undoubtedly written to you and of whom consequently you must have the most utter misconception! He is really one of the most interesting, fascinating remarkable people I have ever met....Among this dull uninteresting and scandal mongering crowd, we are an immense relief to one another."



Amrita and Malcolm with her parents

Her portrait of Muggeridge reproduced on the front cover of *The Gargoyle*, done over several sittings in her studio, depicts a man who reflects this caustic objectivity. His right hand is placed prominently in front, rather larger than life and through its languid posture, provides it an independent existence.

"Amrita had her studio there, and I sat for her; or rather lolled on a sofa, sometimes reading, or just watching with fascination the animal intensity of her concentration, making her short of breath, with beads of sweat appearing on the faint moustache on her upper lip. It was this animality which she somehow transferred to the colours as she mixed them and splashed them on her canvas."

They found themselves to be kindred spirits and the affair was intense, mutually exhausting and brief: it lasted just three months. By the time Muggeridge left in September 1935 for London, both probably regarded their parting as a salvation. Amrita's painting career really began in earnest at this time. She died six prolific years later of a mysterious illness in 1941 at the young age of 28.

colleague, the late Lord Longford, was a fool for God, all right, and a tremendous fool in his own right, but would never have harmed so much as a fly.) And these alliances - together with his own behaviour - left Muggeridge easy to make sport of, as long as you could be convinced that there was nothing meretricious about the various shallow theories of "liberation" that were near-regnant at the time.

Most impressive to me is the anti-climax of his reception into the Church of Rome very late in life. This did not give Muggeridge the peace that he had expected (Ingrams' biography is better on this than Wolfe's), and he may have vaguely understood that it wasn't really peace he had been desiring. He was a fair example of restlessness and unease - of what has been called divine

discontent. There certainly remain moments when Muggeridge was entirely Mr. Worldly Wiseman. But to read his biographies is to see there are other moments in his turbulent life when he was temporarily promoted in Bunyan's cast of characters and could stand in for Mr. Valiant-For-Truth.

ENDS

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Malcolm Muggeridge: A Biography by Gregory Wolfe is published in paperback by ISI and available from the Society.

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Laid Bare - the free spirit of Indian Art

by David Williams

An exhibition at the Tate Modern in London celebrating the art of painter Amrita Sher-Gil was sure to generate much curiosity by anyone seriously interested in the life and times of Malcolm Muggeridge. In the words of Sir Nicholas Serota "In an age of art celebrities Amrita Sher-Gil is the first celebrated artist of modern India. The facts of her extraordinary life and work must be made accessible to the world." In point of fact, outside a substantial holding in the collection of the National Gallery of Modern Art in New Delhi that her family bequeathed to the Indian nation, Sher-Gil's artistic legacy remains largely unseen. Indeed, with over thirty of her sumptuous paintings on show, the largest display of an Indian artist ever mounted in Europe, it is interesting to reflect that not one of the paintings has been seen exhibited before in Britain. The exhibition arrived in the former power station - now popular public space on the South Bank - in late February having previously opened at the prestigious Haus der Kunst (House of Art) museum in Munich in October where it ran successfully for three months. In both Munich and London, the art was bolstered by an interesting thirty six minute documentary film called *Amrita Sher-Gil: A Family Album* presented by her niece Navina Sundaram.

Sher-Gil is a bewitching enigmatic figure whose life entices almost as much as her art. Born in 1913 to an Hungarian opera singer and an aristocratic Sikh scholar, and enjoying an exotic

and privileged upbringing, Sher-Gil enrolled in Paris's prestigious Ecole des Beaux-Arts at the age of 16.



Her gusting free spirit was already evident - she had been expelled from convent school in India -

He described the KGB's most ruthless agent, his former acquaintance Kim Philby, as "a boy scout who had lost his way." And, during much of World War II, he preferred to think of the Nazis as absurd and pitiable rather than wicked.

Having briefly been banned by the BBC for a 1955 *New Statesman** attack he wrote on the soap-opera culture of the British royal family - a polemic that now seems astonishingly mild - and having drifted morosely away from the Punch editorial chair as if to vindicate Cockburn's judgment, Muggeridge was at last to find his milieu. [ED * This is incorrect. Muggeridge was banned in 1957 following a later article on monarchy "*Does England Really Need a Queen?*" in the *Saturday Evening Post*]

Again, he was drawn compulsively to that which he found loathsome. Television, he could plainly see, would be the death of literacy and the handmaid of instant gratification. It would instil cheap and commercial values and incite the nastiest forms of populism. He fell for it like a ton of bricks. He wallowed exuberantly in its corruption. He was a natural. He was perfectly well aware, as his diaries show, that he was expending his spirit in a waste of shame. But he enjoyed it and excelled at it, and he may have hoped to turn the greatest weapon of crass modernity against itself.

Sex was the selling point, overtly and subliminally, of the television "mass-cult." (Did Muggeridge ever read or encounter Dwight Macdonald?) Very well, then, a guru would appear on the seductive screen and warn that sex was ultimately a disappointment. Ridicule was the predictable harvest for this, of course, and Muggeridge reaped it in heaping measure. I think it's clear that he enjoyed the obloquy and felt that he was earning it, so to speak, vicariously. He plodded on with a series of well-made television documentaries, which I personally find intolerably mawkish but which gradually won him a sort of underdog's respect. Gnarled pilgrims at Lourdes, simple fisherfolk on the shores of Galilee, mitered bishops with the common touch. . . . And then the jewel in the crown. In a 1969 film entitled *Something Beautiful for God*, he launched the persona that we all came to know as Mother Teresa. In a near-perfect return-serve to the hedonism of the day, he made a star out of a woman who scorned pelf and pleasure. Wolfe's book gave this chapter fairly straight. I have a minor quarrel to register with a biographer who is in general punctiliously honest. Wolfe has obviously read the testimony of Ken Macmillan, Muggeridge's ultra-professional cameraman, but

he chooses to elide it, and thus lets stand the claim, directly rebutted by Macmillan, that the filming of the documentary involved a miracle, manifesting allegedly divine light around the figure of Mother Teresa. The simple explanation involves a Kodak film especially designed for crepuscular scenes. (Simplicity isn't always to be despised, as I may have hinted.)

Wolfe's *Malcolm Muggeridge* begins with a pledge. "The temptation," the biographer wrote, "is to play Boswell to Malcolm's Johnson, concentrating on his innumerable witty retorts, bon mots, and other examples of his dazzling sense of humour. This is a temptation that I have resisted." He kept that rather forbidding promise throughout, and I'd say that the world of the devastating riposte was not Wolfe's natural territory in any case. "Urbane and witty," he writes about the magazine *Night and Day*, which was brought low by a lawsuit from Shirley Temple against Graham Greene, "it could also be acerbic and satirical. Ironically, this satirical sharpness was to hasten its downfall." The contrasts here are non-contrasting, and the irony is no irony at all. Having met the Muggeridges in Canada, Wolfe records in a deadpan fashion that "after partaking of the simple dinner that was their regular fare . . .," and one wants to say, yes, well, that's quite enough about that. Wolfe makes some errors that may be simple clumsiness: George Orwell underwent no "disillusionment" with communism, in which he had never believed. But other errors are not stylistic. I'll eat my shoes if Claud Cockburn was ever even for a moment a religious "seeker." Still, the cumulative effect of Wolfe's narrative in *Malcolm Muggeridge* is so serious and so genuine that the biography ultimately forces a reconsideration of its subject.

Muggeridge was not the C.S. Lewis of his time, any more than he was the Samuel Johnson. Just as his actual witticisms were few (is there really a Muggeridge epigram or aphorism for the ages?), so his grasp of theology was slight. But he was the first to admit the latter deficiency, and not even Wolfe will defend his book "*Conversion*" One respects Muggeridge, rather, for his imperfections and contradictions and shortcomings, and for his readiness to be boring rather than fascinating on questions that he believed to be important.

In his later years, Muggeridge formed alliances with moralistic authoritarians like Mary Whitehouse of Moral Re-Armament, who were not so much foolish as plain sinister. (His other

All the while, Muggeridge could not shed the fear that he was a phoney and a failure. Enlisting in British Intelligence in World War II was a near-faultless decision on his part, because it gave him the excuse to leave home and it caught him up in a world where things were deceptive and dishonest by definition. From this came his long friendship with Graham Greene. From this, also, came the moment of despair in which he attempted suicide. Muggeridge had actually been rather a good British agent in the Portuguese African port of Lourenço Marques, hampering the German spies at every turn and even helping to trap and capture a U-boat. But he felt himself a hollow poseur and one night swam out to sea with the intention of drowning. He changed his mind only at the very last minute. Even on this grave matter, he could not quite achieve authenticity. At the time, he passed off the fiasco as an attempt to baffle the local Nazis, and he stuck to this version for many years before confessing in his autobiography that he had sincerely meant to take his own life but had undergone yet another epiphany when he saw the lights of the shore. (I cannot resist adding that he was challenged to come up with a true account only because David Irving had unearthed the cover story while making one of his dark trawls through the German archives.)

All this invites the question: Was Muggeridge a “fool for God,” or just a fool? For the first four or even five decades of his life, he could scarcely tell his alienation from his anomie. Despite the steadying influence of his old Cambridge companion Alec Vidler, an unassuming priest who really did have a vocation, Muggeridge rolled and pitched from job to job, home to home, and mistress to mistress. Claud Cockburn, who despite their vast quarrel over communism really admired Muggeridge for his qualities as a friend, made an excellent diagnosis when he told him, “With you, the tendency to become bored has the quality of a vice.” Kingsley Amis once told me of a night of impossible squalor and depression, when a drunken Muggeridge proposed that both men try and take advantage, seriatim, of an equally sozzled Sonia Orwell. This joyless, wretched orgy was proposed merely in order that an already dispirited evening should not end.

It seemed at one stage that his appointment to the editorial chair at *Punch* would give Muggeridge something solid to do. The venerable Victorian weekly had a big circulation but a flickering pulse; it urgently required what

P.G. Wodehouse would have called snap and vim. The appointment of Anthony Powell as literary editor and Claud Cockburn as roving scribbler at the magazine resulted in two excellent pen-portraits of Muggeridge, who might have become the English Harold Ross. Cockburn wrote, “I began to have the feeling that with this fiercely gentle, chivalrously ungentlemanly man on the far side of the grandiose editorial desk, jerking and flashing his eyes, from time to time cackling out a cacophony of furiously raucous expressions like a sailor’s parrot loose in the Mission Hall, something new and special in the way of clowning and satire might yet be made of this ancient publication.”

Powell, not atypically somewhat more circuitous, added: In the beginning . . . was the sceptical wit mocking all, and the wit was with Muggeridge and the wit was Muggeridge. This first Muggeridge--never wholly exorcised but undergoing long terms of banishment from the Celestial City of his personality - would sometimes support, sometimes obstruct, what then seemed his sole fellow, Second Muggeridge. Second Muggeridge, serious, ambitious, domestic, . . . with a strain of Lawrentian mysticism, . . . had a spell-weaving strain and violent political or moral animosities (animosity rather than allegiance being essential expression of Second Muggeridge’s teachings), both forms of vituperation in the main aimed at winning a preponderant influence in public affairs. . . . In due course, . . . Third Muggeridge became manifest at full strength, hot-gospelling, near-messianic, promulgating an ineluctable choice between Salvation and Perdition. He who was not with Third Muggeridge was against him, including First and Second Muggeridge. In this conflict without quarter First Muggeridge, who treated life as a jest - now so to speak a thief crucified between two Christs - came off worst.

That last arresting image, of a uniquely Muggeridgian Golgotha, illuminates the way in which Cockburn and Powell both naturally employed the image of the clown or the jester. As it happens, this was Muggeridge’s own favourite point of comparison between religion and Shakespeare - for both afforded special roles to the “rough and tumble acrobat, horseplay jester for God”: religion with St. Francis of Assisi and Shakespeare with King Lear’s only sincere and simple friend. Occasionally, and despite his reputation for hard-headedness about totalitarianism, Muggeridge would enact the role of the naif without apparently volunteering for it.

The time has come to take back those lines. Muggeridge had a sort of epiphany as a very young man, being overwhelmed by a rural sunset which “in its all-embracing beauty conveyed a oneness” and deciding “that to identify oneself with the spirit animating it and giving it meaning, contained the promise of ecstasy.” This trope recurs in an undergraduate study that Muggeridge did at Cambridge, based on the “*Evidences of Christianity*” by the early-nineteenth-century natural philosopher William Paley. The result may be no more than the Argument from Design writ large, but there’s no reason to doubt Muggeridge’s sincerity about it.

Continuing this rather soft-centered, impressionable attitude to the Numinous, Muggeridge made the voyage to India that so many progressive-minded young Englishmen undertook in those days, and he was duly impressed with the saintliness and simplicity of Gandhi. But paradox intrudes itself here at once. When Muggeridge was not being awed by spiritual simplicity, he was being attracted by religious complexity. He wrote about his “love” for “the inconsistencies of Christianity” and his belief that “faith must be based on doubt.” He was still a long way from Roman Catholicism, but his quest for the “inclusive” - for a reconciliation between the sacred and the profane, as well as between the simple and the difficult - already involved catholicity.

Perhaps, like St. Augustine, he didn’t want full acceptance quite yet or, knowing himself pursued by the Hound of Heaven, was prepared to give it time to catch him. Meanwhile he had a certain toughness and curiosity to keep him going. He saw plainly that the British day in India was waning (he was ahead of his time in this respect), and he was soon to see through communism, the grand illusion of the twentieth century. Enlisting at the *Manchester Guardian*, another flagship of the English *bien-pensant* class, he was quick to realize that its lofty policies masked an institutional hypocrisy about, among other things, the true source of the newspaper’s income. Satirizing this in his first novel, *Picture Palace*, he made the valuable discovery that there is no intolerance like liberal intolerance. (The paper’s owners took harsh legal steps to ensure that the novel was suppressed.) Thus, when he became the Guardian’s correspondent in Moscow in 1932, he was riper than perhaps he understood for a crisis of belief.

A.J.P. Taylor told him as he was embarking, “If the Russians do not come up to your expectations, don’t take it out on them.” Muggeridge’s reply is worth quoting: “No, no. It will be Utopia. I must see the Ideal even if I am unworthy of it.” This Mosaic echo is evidence that Muggeridge already had a religious cast of mind. Of course, it was not only the Left in those days that believed in the virtues of a planned economy and hungered for an alternative to post-Versailles chaos and misery. But the disillusionment in Muggeridge’s case was on a scale commensurate to the original fantasy. Stalin’s Russia hadn’t just fallen short of the ideal; it had become a plain Hell for the body and the mind. His reports from the Ukraine in the year of the famine stand comparison with André Gide’s “*Retour de l’URSS*” and Eugene Lyons’s “*Assignment in Utopia*” as irrefutable evidence of a new barbarism. The ancillary lesson he drew, about the gullibility and credulity of Western intellectuals, was to last Muggeridge the rest of his life.

Muggeridge’s sheet isn’t as snow-white, however, as some of his admirers like to believe. A previous and more hagiographic biography, written by Richard Ingrams, mentions that in his dotage Muggeridge became prey to anti-Semitic outbursts and paranoid suspicions. I had thought that this late lapse was the extent of it, but Wolfe bluntly points out Muggeridge’s lifelong susceptibility to this most toxic of all prejudices. And in *Winter in Moscow*, a 1934 novel that dwells on the most lurid aspects of Judeo-Bolshevism, he gave full vent to his dislike. Some subsequent exposure to Nazi ideology and practice qualified, but did not entirely dispel, this disfiguring element.

While he was thus engaged in becoming a failed novelist and a brilliant journalist (his book *The Thirties* remains a classic snapshot of what his friend Claud Cockburn called “The Devil’s Decade”) and managing to turn up always in the right place at the right time, his private life was a cauldron of adultery, misery, and penury. He fought incessantly with Kitty, whom he may not have forgiven for his repeated betrayals of her, and she requited this by openly bearing another man’s son. (The boy was to become in some ways Muggeridge’s favourite child.)

[ED. Charles Muggeridge. The father was Michal Vyvyan]

The life and times of Malcolm Muggeridge.

by Christopher Hitchens

There are numberless ways in which the faithful may taunt, or perhaps I should better say tease, the unbeliever. One such tactic - and for my money the most irritating - is to say that God believes in you, even if you can't return the compliment. Another is to contrast the modest simplicity of belief with the contortions of the malcontent intellectual. "Don't mind me," says the humble friar or devoted nun, brushing past on some modest errand of altruism. "I'm just doing the Lord's work."

Those of us who experience difficulty in recognizing this as genuine humility always used to have a fine old time at the expense of Malcolm Muggeridge. Here was a man ever-ready to uncork a sermon about the fallen state of the species and the pathetic vanity of our earthly desires - all while he was notorious as an apostle of carnality and a ringmaster at the circus of his own self-promotion. Every personality type in the eternal argument over divinity is to be discerned in John Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress*, that founding text of Protestant fundamentalism. And it was there in *Pilgrim's Progress* - winding between Vanity Fair and Doubting Castle, encountering the likes of "Great-Heart," "Mr. Standfast," and "Little-Faith" - that one seemed to have the best chance to catch the lineaments of Muggeridge. He was Mr. Worldly Wiseman.

A difference between American and British audiences is that Americans tend to know Muggeridge by his writing, while the British associate him with the early days of television celebrity. When I was young in the 1960s, Muggeridge seemed to be ubiquitous, on game shows and quiz-marathons no less than on brow-furrowing panels about serious matters. The man appeared to have no unaided thoughts.

An excellent mimic would be required to do an impression of his face, which resembled that of a vain old turtle. But almost anyone could have a shot at imitating his voice, with its commingled bray and bleat. My own first appearance on the tube was to debate apartheid as a guest on his Sunday-evening chat-show, portentously called "*The Question Why*." (I forget if it had a question mark or not. Perhaps it was like the title of Sidney and Beatrice Webb's apologia for Stalinism: "*Soviet Communism - A*

New Civilization," which had a question mark for its first edition and none for the second.) Muggeridge was married to Beatrice Webb's niece, Kitty, and had been brought up in that area of the British Left that was bounded by the Fabian Society, the *New Statesman*, the London School of Economics, and Bloomsbury more generally. The tone-setters of this melioristic and high-minded environment placed a lot of faith in social action for the improvement of health, housing, and the rights of labour. But they also stressed the improvability of human nature, this last to be attained by more sexual and educational freedom. In those days, the word "crusade" was still acceptable, and the great anthem of the movement was William Blake's "*Jerusalem*": I will not cease from Mental Fight, / Nor shall my Sword sleep in my hand / Till we have built Jerusalem / In England's green & pleasant Land.

It's easy to mock this tradition, though it has some great achievements still standing to its credit. But one would not wish to sneer at a man like Henry Thomas Muggeridge, Malcolm's father, who devoted a good life to the socialist cause. One of the several merits of Gregory Wolfe's biography *Malcolm Muggeridge* was that its author understood the duality of motive. He shows us a young Muggeridge who became impatient with his father's do-good schemes and with the heresy of the perfectibility of man. Yet Wolfe also describes a rather selfish and unappealing figure, embarrassed by his family's dowdiness and desiring to be more dashing and fashionable and renowned.

No serious person is without contradictions. The test lies in the willingness or ability to recognize and confront them. Wolfe's biography suggests that Muggeridge was sometimes opaque to himself and sometimes not. But the book is clear on one thing: those of us who had thought that the man came to religion only late in life, after years of exhausting debauchery, were quite mistaken. I once contributed some doggerel to the *New Statesman*, expressing the received opinion about Muggeridge: In my youth, quoth the sage, as he tossed his grey locks, / I behaved just as any young pup. / But now I am old I appear on the box-- / And tell others to give it all up.

What that writing was is difficult to say. It's easier to say what it was not. Muggeridge called himself a journalist, but he had nothing in common with the talking heads on American news with their feigned interest, or with the writers of American news with their feigned objectivity. If the word "journalism" had any connection with the word "journal", then that's what he was doing: scribbling live in front of a camera and ruminating verbally in his books. In doing so he dissolved the lines between typewriter and microphone long before the Internet would make them virtually the same. You could have Walter Cronkite and Tom Brokaw and the Brothers Brinkley, all cool and aloof, if anything seemingly even more bored than the viewers. But Muggeridge was engaged. In Marshall McLuhan's vibrant phrase, he was "hot media". He was absolutely magnetic. If you read his books, you wanted to see him live. If you saw him live, you wanted to read his books.

There were two other writers in the '60s credited with breaking the journalistic mold: Tom Wolfe and Hunter Thompson. Wolfe was best known for his "new journalism" forays into the crazy underbelly of popular culture in such mod books as *The Electric Kool Aid Acid Test* and for later naming the '70s the "Me" decade. Thompson, a reporter for Rolling Stone, launched his "gonzo" journalism with his books, *Hell's Angels* and *Fear and Loathing in Las Vegas*. Both were highly creative authors whose non-fiction accounts read like gripping fiction. But Muggers had already been there, out-wolfing Tom Wolfe and out-gonzoing Hunter Thompson. One thing we Yanks like about Brits is that they strike us as opinionated rather than "objective". To name a few: Kenneth Clark, Richard Dawkins, Francis Crick, Alistair Cooke, and of course, Muggers. Fed on Beatles, Monty Python and the scandals of Princess Di, we find these authors delightfully eccentric. Muggers, of course, played well into that schtick. To my group at university, he was as familiar as the furniture, and we affectionately called him "the world's oldest living fossil". All meant in fun, of course, as I'm sure he would have taken it.

All of which begs the question of his writing. The answer to that unasked question lies, I think, in Muggeridge's lifelong love of St. Augustine. In his *Confessions*, Augustine tells of his fascination when he came upon someone reading silently. His subsequent popularization of reading to oneself (now considered normative) is often thought to have irretrievably altered the

previous practice of reading aloud and perhaps even invented the self to which to read. Muggers reached back to an earlier Augustine skilled in rhetoric and the oral tradition, and like himself a "*Vendor of Words*". Whether spoken or written didn't matter - and in this Muggers, so much a part of the media age, yet stood apart from it.

I watched the video of a TV show on Muggers which was later made into a photo essay book called *A Twentieth Century Testimony*. In one part Muggers walks through a graveyard musing on death. It's a striking scene, and indeed he almost seems like a skeleton back from the dead to deliver a eulogy. But this soliloquy is so lyrical, so eminently quotable, that for all his expressive delivery, he seems to be reading it. On the other hand, the book cries to be read aloud, if only for the pleasurable sensation of hearing the words proclaimed, preferably in the haunting tones of the Ghost of Christmas Past. It's a truly wonderful, soul-baring moment in the video, and a wonderfully dramatic piece in the book, echoing the style of Augustine. But rather than offered as a prayer to the divine, these confessions are given to the viewer and reader. Even when the subject was himself, a journalist to the last.

There is a recent tendency to regard Muggeridge as a purveyor of certain views, and then to argue with those views, as if his intent were solely persuasive. Whether that was his intent or not I cannot say, but in my case it certainly wasn't the effect. As I've said, I frequently had no knowledge of, or interest in, his subjects, and was solely captivated by his style. That style was intensely verbal. I once read the oft-quoted soliloquy, "*A Part in Search of a Play*" from *The Infernal Grove*, the second volume of his autobiography, for an audition. I not only got the part but the director asked where I got the audition piece. Ian Hunter ends his brilliant biography, *Malcolm Muggeridge: A Life* with this line from Muggers: "If my words are sincere, true words, hot from my soul, they will live; if not it is better that they should die. All that matters is that one should have tried." Muggers called out in the hot words not of one settled, nor in conclusion, but setting out as an explorer. The spark once kindled, one wants passionately to follow him in his quest.

ENDS

Ed: The Most of Malcolm Muggeridge was published in the UK with very similar content as Tread Softly for you Tread on my Jokes.

He went on to perform *Mugg Shots* at a centenary service in Whatlington, at the village hall in East Hoathly and at the Brighton Festival. *Mugg Shots* was also performed at the Komedia Theatre in Brighton, the Yvonne Arnaud in Guildford, the Jermyn Street Theatre in London and many other theatres and halls around the country. Wherever the show went, Peter's wife Sheila as Stage Manager kept the show on the road. Later on, we arranged for John Ford to play Alec Vidler to Peter's Muggeridge at an evening with the PG Wodehouse Society at the Savage Club in Whitehall, recalling Malcolm Muggeridge's meeting with "Plum" in Paris as a secret service officer.

Two years ago, at the ripe old age of 85 he played to packed houses in Cairo, a trip in which we stayed as guests of the British Ambassador. I will never forget Peter's innocent, or not so innocent, question shot across the breakfast table to the Ambassador and his charming wife. "What do you think of Tony Blair?" We all laughed at the impossible question for a member of the Diplomatic Service to answer – the Prime Minister



and Cherie had been very regular guests of the Ambassador en route to Sharm El Sheikh, the Red Sea Resort, with their children. His Excellency was, I must say to his credit, suitably and predictably diplomatic.

He was a great friend and will be sadly missed. Ironically, Peter Stockbridge died at the same age of 87 as the man whom he had been portraying so well in his performances. Whilst supporting Peter in his *Mugg Shots* performances we often joked to the audience about me being 'his niece.' In point of fact I gained a great affection for 'Uncle' Peter and he did a great deal to help me bring Malcolm back to life for a generation that did not know the original.

A Humanitarian Funeral Service was held for Peter Stockbridge in Brighton on 20th February 2007. It was very well attended by hundreds of friends as well as family.

Photo: Peter performing as Mugg to the Archbishop of Westminster at the Garrick Club

Malcolm Muggeridge: Vendor of Words

by Gord Wilson

Although I submitted the Larry Norman interview to **THE GARGOYLE** (Issue no. 13, Jan 2007), it should not be assumed that I agree with some of Norman's expressed views, particularly this line: "Muggeridge's writing style was not that compelling." Of course I don't know to which particular pieces Norman is referring, but in my reading of Muggeridge, "compelling" is the *mot juste*. I first discovered Muggeridge in the downtown library in Seattle, Washington USA. The book was *The Most of Malcolm Muggeridge*, a collection of columns and reprint pieces published by Simon and Schuster. I kept checking the book out and carried it with me everywhere I went. I kept reading it over and over, each time chuckling anew. I'd read bits to people who "did not get it". "Who is Frank Harris?" they'd ask.

"What's the Church of Christ Economist?" "Who are the Bodgies and Widgies?" Or to put it more briefly, "What's he talking about?" I often didn't know either, but that in no way lessened my enjoyment. What captivated me was a certain kind of writing I'd never encountered before - and never would again. The next few years would bring a flood of new Muggeridge books which I avidly, if casually, devoured. But just as suddenly the tap turned off, and asking the store clerk for Muggers was rewarded with quizzical looks and blank stares. Living on the border of British Columbia, I fared somewhat better in Canada, finding Fontana paperbacks at Eatons and used Collins hardbacks of *The Chronicles of Wasted Time*. But eventually even my favorite bookstores drew a blank. I felt this loss primarily as the absence of a certain type of writing.

quo, however imperfect that status quo might be. Muggeridge held no brief for preserving past establishments or hierarchical structures. Elitism of every sort was abhorrent to him because it divided men into spurious levels of importance, some greater, some lesser, all unjustified in the sight of their creator.

Muggeridge did care, however, quite passionately about preserving the values and standards, and especially the vision of the Christian religion which he thought lay at the

heart of the fabric of our civilisation. That is the only real sense in which he could be called a Conservative.

ENDS

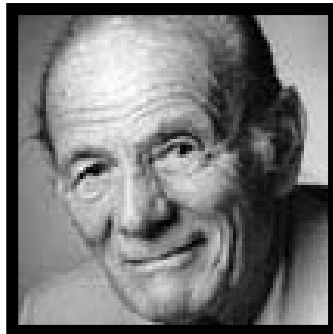
John Dixon is a member of the Society and a regular contributor to The Gargoyle. The Malcolm Muggeridge Society welcomes contributions from all members for publication.

A Tribute to Peter Stockbridge – actor and friend

11th Jan 1920 – 5th Feb 2007

by Sally Muggeridge

Most actors, according to Peter Stockbridge, rather yearn to do a one man show. This topic of conversation arose in the Green Room whilst Peter was playing Chichester in 1991 in *Preserving Mr Panmure* when fellow actor and friend Edward Duke remarked to him “Well, you could always do Malcolm Muggeridge”. As it happened Peter had long admired Muggeridge and the idea stayed with him. He began to jot down a few ideas, a few Muggeridge stories and a structure for a possible performance. He suggested the idea to the playwright John Ford and they agreed that any script should have a chronological base. Also that it should tell the story of the 20th century through events that my uncle Malcolm had witnessed and personalities he had met. Of course, it could not duck the issue of Malcolm’s spirituality and above all it should be a creative work in its own right and reveal the complexity of Malcolm Muggeridge’s unique character, warts and all.



Peter and John read widely, including Malcolm’s two autobiographies – *The Green Stick* and *The Infernal Grove* – and the three biographies by Ian Hunter, Gregory Wolfe and Richard Ingrams and much of Malcolm’s other writings. The BBC producer, Jonathan Stedall, generously lent them many hours of tapes from the BBC series *Ancient and Modern*. They also studied the rhythm of Malcolm’s delivery and speech mannerisms so that the dialogue should not betray any distinction between Malcolm’s own words and Peter’s own. *Mugg Shots* was written.

The problem of a one man show is the demands it makes upon the actor’s memory (particularly the memory of an ageing actor!). One of his first engagements was when Malcolm’s daughter Val, my cousin, and my Aunt Kitty’s nephew, David Dobbs, invited Peter to meet them. He performed much of the script, anxious lest our inclusion of the contradictions in Malcolm’s character should offend. Val was delighted, kindness itself according to Peter, and introduced Peter to her brother Leonard and to me.

Peter told me later that this gave him and *Mugg Shots* a huge shot of energy and changed his life. At the time I was busy exploring the possibility of somehow marking the forthcoming centenary of Malcolm Muggeridge’s birth in March 2003. After having seen the performance and loved it, I arranged for Peter to fly out to Chicago and to perform to great acclaim at the two day Centenary “*Muggeridge Rediscovered*” Conference at Wheaton College in the United States. This was May 2003. The following month back in England Peter performed again at the Centenary Luncheon celebration held at the Garrick Club in London, where surviving friends, admirers, relatives and colleagues of Malcolm Muggeridge had gathered in his honour. Peter was perhaps understandably a bit worried at performing before an eclectic group that included His Excellency Cardinal Cormac Murphy O’Connor, David Frost, Bill Deedes, Jonathan Dibleby and Conrad Black, but he was, as always, superb and well-received. Some probably thought it was Malcolm, still alive at 100!

was not so much Right-wing rather than Left-wing, but simply much more comfortable in an environment where a particular ideological stance was less pronounced.

It was, in fact, the prevalence of ideology of any kind that Muggeridge instinctively sensed to be inimical to everything he believed in and considered to be worthwhile. He frequently observed that power was to the collectivity what sex was to the individual: a proposition which led him to see ideology as performing the same function in the pursuit of power as erotic fantasy did in the pursuit of sex. It was the mental stimulus which sustained the appetite. For Muggeridge, ideology was all about justifying an agenda to put the world aright, the overweeningly predominant concern of the modern age. As an agenda itself, this idea was, for him, an illusion. Truth, on the other hand, was based on a different premise. It broached the subject of public events from the point of view of why they were happening, not from the point of view of influencing what was happening. In other words, this dichotomy straddled the two roles of action and reflection. Muggeridge expressed this dichotomy by distinguishing between the Question How and the Question Why, and actually succeeded in getting the BBC to credit a television talk show he hosted with the latter title.

Another aspect of ideology which greatly frustrated Muggeridge, perhaps influenced by the fact that it hampered the progress of his own career, was the unfortunate tendency it had of forcing people to identify with the entire gamut of views held by whichever camp they chose to plump for:

'A twentieth-century man is expected to fit into a particular category and vote the ticket that goes therewith. He is on the left, which means that he supports the Kremlin against the Pentagon; that he upholds birth control, abstract art, Lady Chatterley's Lover and the Wolfenden Report, and abhors Kipling, de Gaulle, and the American way of life. Or he is on the Right, in which case, vice versa.

Any variation in these rigidly adumbrated loyalties and abhorrences causes confusion and rage. One realises how they dominate people's minds if one happens to take a position which cuts across them. From one side comes accusations of being a Communist, a Jew and a homosexual; from the other of being a Fascist and an advocate of apartheid, flogging and capital punishment, quite irrespective of whether any of these matters are at issue.'

If Muggeridge was able to find a temporary home which was more conducive to his temperament and inclinations with the Conservatives, he nevertheless evinced a distinct sympathy with the Left which was in some ways both stronger than his sympathy with the Right. It was also more deeply rooted, I think, than could be explained by any residual element in his Socialist upbringing. For all his disquisitions against the follies and fantasies of liberalism, he was really torn apart by a love-hate relationship with it, as people often are with some particular anathema. In point of fact, he was enormously drawn by liberalism: intensely longing, as all imaginative men do, for a happier, more tolerant and pain-free condition for the human race than was warranted by the actualities of existence. It was fashionable in some circles to see Muggeridge as a full-blown cynic, but this was not really so. He had no quarrel with the precepts of liberalism - liberalism in the best sense, that is, as opposed to permissiveness - only the notion that such precepts could ever be realised through the medium of power rather than love.

All this is set out very cogently in *Confessions of an Egghead*, an article included in *Tread Softly, For You Tread On My Jokes*. There he argued that all those, up to and including Christ himself, who attempt to fathom the meaning of the universe, whether in terms of science, philosophy or religion, are really, in one way or another, liberals. However, their ruminations invariably fall foul of authority, which is quintessentially conservative (with a small c), because the two are fundamentally incompatible. Their mutual antipathy embodies the eternal conflict between love and power, or the Will and the Imagination. When, as has happened in the contemporary world, authority has taken on the lineaments of liberalism, then the results are catastrophic because the two poles have become inextricably merged. What must be rendered to Caesar cannot and should not ever be confused with what must be rendered to God.

The advantage of Conservatism, from Muggeridge's point of view, was that it prescribed the diminution rather than the aggrandisement of power as the requisite condition of a better and more prosperous society, ignoring the fact that these may not always be the same thing. Its disadvantage was that it still proposed that material well-being was of paramount importance and unbridled greed and self-interest the means of achieving this. Politically speaking, this meant being committed to the maintenance of the status

Which is that Muggeridge “whipped up a frenzy” by touring around the U.S. and Britain talking about “an authentic photographic miracle” that occurred during the filming of *Something Beautiful for God*. It is true that Malcolm believed that the portion of the film shot inside Mother Teresa’s Home for Dying Destitute in Calcutta was radiated by a light not explicable, photographically-speaking. So too did his cameraman and producer, and for that matter countless people who have seen the film. As for the promotional tour of Britain and America, it never happened.

Chatterjee’s final defamatory shot has in our time become the last refuge of scoundrels, namely an accusation of anti-Semitism. Chatterjee writes that Muggeridge was “deeply anti-Semitic”; then he goes further: “[His] entire life and actions were determined by prejudices”. Suppose for a moment that this were true - it was not, but if it were how could a doctor, living in India, a stranger to Muggeridge, possibly know this? And how odd that none of Malcolm’s acquaintances, or even his toughest critics, noticed it first, and said so.

It is a mistake to apply the sensibilities of one generation - particularly this one, which has allowed political correctness to strangle free speech - to the private jottings of a man from an earlier generation. In his diaries, Muggeridge referred to Jews as Jews, and if he happened not to like the person being referred to, he said so. People today avoid that. The simple fact that Muggeridge volunteered in 1939 at the first

possible opportunity to go off to fight against Hitler, and spent the next 5 years of his life doing so, might be considered a case of actions speaking louder than words. Like the 13th stroke of a deranged clock, Chatterjee’s anti-Semitism libel casts doubt on all that precedes and follows it; it would make me distrust the truthfulness of anything he might say on any subject.

I fear I have given Chatterjee more time and space than the blatherskite merits. Let me conclude, then, simply by listing some other factual errors in his chapter: Muggeridge’s home was in Sussex, not Surrey. Oliver Hunkin was not “the head of BBC television’s religious affairs programme”. Malcolm’s wife, Kitty, did not know in 1968 of her husband’s earlier affair with Pamela Berry. Muggeridge was never “the darling of the religious Right in the United States”. Pope John Paul II (another of Dr. Chatterjee’s targets) did not appear “in the rather strange company of Grace Kelly, Charlton Heston, David Niven [and Muggeridge]”, although this unlikely foursome did travel to Rome to film a television programme at the Vatican.

I could go on but what’s the point. Dr. Chatterjee is a nasty bit of goods, a guttersnipe who tries to attract attention by squirting venom at his betters, at least when they happen to have been Roman Catholics.

Ian Hunter

Was Muggeridge a Conservative?

by John Dixon

A year or two ago, I was asked by a completely uneducated friend of mine whether or not Muggeridge was a Conservative. It was an interesting question which I found very difficult to answer in terms that she would understand because in some ways he was and in some ways he was not. Similarly, leftist acquaintances of mine were all too liable to dismiss Muggeridge as a Conservative which always made me feel uneasy since I felt their attitude diminished his true stature as a writer and thinker, at least in their own eyes if no one else’s. The memory of these experiences got me thinking just how exactly his position was vis-a-vis Conservatism.

In his maturity, Muggeridge clearly found the left-wing journalists and intellectuals among whom he mingled far less congenial than their opposite numbers in the Conservative camp. Of the two broadsheets he worked for on a semi-permanent basis (discounting the *London Evening Standard* which, as he saw it, was merely a mouthpiece for the private obsessions of its owner, Lord Beaverbrook) he greatly preferred the *Daily Telegraph* to the *Manchester Guardian*. This was primarily because the editorial line of the former intruded far less on his own fundamental convictions even though, in the case of the Guardian, those convictions were still only inchoately formed. The truth is that Muggeridge

his full-length documentary about her work (which Sir Kenneth Clark, whose own television series, *Civilization*, ran to great acclaim, hailed as “the most moving and beautiful thing ever put on television”), and then written the book, *Something Beautiful for God*, then Mother Teresa would not have become a well-beloved figure around the world. Who knows if this is true or false? Perhaps God’s providential plan for the (now) Blessed Teresa depended on her chance meeting with a hard-living, hard-drinking, then agnostic English journalist; then again perhaps not. To the thousands of people whose lives were touched by Mother Teresa, she would have been known without Muggeridge; also, and what mattered more, she was known to and loved by God.

Certain it is that, having met her, Muggeridge was quick to spot the genuine article, the real thing: “in a dark time, a burning and a shining light; in a cruel time, a living embodiment of Christ’s gospel of love; in a Godless time, the word dwelling among us, full of grace and truth.” And this is precisely what sticks in the Chatterjee craw. The Dr. wilts at the confrontation with goodness (I would say saintliness, but let’s agree to wait on that); he can only disparage, scoff, attempt to tear down, diminish. It reminds me a little of the occasion when Germaine Greer, then a leading feminist, travelled to India and met Mother Teresa; afterwards a reporter asked her what that was like? “She reminded me of things I have spent my life trying to forget”, Ms. Greer replied. Perhaps Mother Teresa’s simple goodness reminds Dr. Chatterjee of things he would prefer to forget. Dr. Chatterjee goes on: “It is essential to get to know Muggeridge the man, both private and public, in order to appreciate why he was driven to find someone like Teresa, why he was driven to worship her, and why and how the admiration became mutual.” Well, I did know Muggeridge the man, private and public, perhaps as well as most (save Kitty and family), and I can attest that this sentence is rubbish. Given Malcolm’s robust independence, he was never “driven” to find anyone, still less to “worship” anyone or anything mortal. Many valid criticisms can be made of Muggeridge, but sycophancy is not among them.

Whether Mother Teresa admired Muggeridge I cannot say; I suppose she did, although I have read their correspondence, which is slight; her letters to him are friendly, often urging him to come into the Church, and respectful, but I didn’t notice any undue admiration. The notion that Mother Teresa and Muggeridge formed some kind of mutually

beneficial, symbiotic alliance is too silly to require much refutation. If true, why would Muggeridge have donated all royalties from his film and book to the work of the Missionaries of Charity? Incidentally, Chatterjee asserts that the film *Something Beautiful for God* is “not unlike a Soviet propaganda film” which shows, if it shows anything at all, the near infinite vagaries of aesthetic judgment.



Dr. Chatterjee’s accusation that MM had “an entrenched white supremacist view of life” is again hardly worthy of rebuttal. It would certainly have come as a surprise to the Government of South Africa which denied Muggeridge a visitor’s visa when he wanted to go there to interview, among others, Alan Paton (author of *Cry the Beloved Country* and other books Muggeridge admired). The visa was denied on the ground that Muggeridge was such a vocal opponent of apartheid (in print he had called apartheid “a vile doctrine”). I remember Malcolm laughing as he told me that he was no less obnoxious to Governments of both right and left, having been denied visas by South Africa and the Soviet Union. To accuse a dead man of having been a lifelong white supremacist is the kind of charge for which evidence, however flimsy or spurious, is usually proffered. But no, the Chatterjee pen offers up only the unadorned libel, then moves on to the next lie.

It is “highly bizarre”, he tells us, that the demand for birth control should be strongest “precisely when the possibilities of food production are seen to be virtually illimitable”.

Equally any evidence will do to support those salvations he recommends. “The religious disciplined man,” he assures us, “is the best defence against dictatorship, exploitation and general social evil.” He conveniently forgets that the Roman Catholic church he so admires openly proclaims itself a dictatorship, and that the religious disciplined men of Italy, France, Portugal and Spain scarcely provided much of a barrier against Mussolini, Pétain (or de Gaulle), Salazar or Franco.

He seems to find it impossible to imagine that there is anyone not prosperous and admired, spoiled by materialism. He states as a proposition commanding universal agreement, “We are weary of affluence.”

Sex he finds *ludicrous*. “Sex as a pleasure is wrong,” he announces, without feeling any need to justify the absolute condemnation. He remains obsessively interested in the sexual peculiarities of his contemporaries, especially the recently dead

(“One wishes for more detail....”) and his obituaries of Maugham, Ian Fleming, Beerbohn, Kennedy and Churchill are notorious for their prurience.

But then, as he confesses, “Sex is my King Charles’s head.” Perhaps if he had not found psychology such a bad joke, he might have been more wary of such Freudian slips. Everyone else knows what happened to King Charles’s head.

ENDS

Born in 1925, Alan Brien is a novelist, journalist and critic of distinction. Serving as an air-gunner in the RAF in the War, he enjoyed a long and successful career in Fleet Street, writing variously for the Daily Mail, the Sunday Dispatch, Sunday Pictorial, Sunday Telegraph, Spectator, New Statesman, Sunday Times, Evening Standard, Punch, as well as being a regular broadcaster on radio and television. In 1987, his novel on Lenin was published. Now retired, Alan lives in North London.

Biographer Ian Hunter Responds

*ED In July 2003, Dr Aroup Chatterjee published a critical account of the life and work of the world famous Albanian nun who died in 1977 and was about to be beatified. It was entitled **Mother Teresa – The Final Verdict (Meteor Books)**. In the June 2006 issue of **THE GARGOYLE** we republished Dr. Chatterjee’s chapter on Muggeridge’s life and role in bringing Mother Teresa to prominence. In the January 2007 issue of **THE GARGOYLE** we carried a response from member and regular contributor John Dixon. In this issue Ian Hunter, a patron of the Society and author of the biography **Malcolm Muggeridge – A Life**, and two anthologies: **Things Past** and **The Very Best of Malcolm Muggeridge** adds his criticism.*

I had intended not to reply to Dr. Aroup Chatterjee’s scattershot libel of Malcolm Muggeridge published in the July 2006 Gargoyle; after all, I am honoured to have called Malcolm my mentor and friend; moreover, as his biographer, and editor of two anthologies of his work, I might be considered one keeper of the Muggeridge flame bound to come to his defence.

In fact, I do not see it that way at all, but the Chatterjee accusations are so malicious, so distorted and scurrilous, that some response is fairly demanded. I am pleased that Mr. John Dixon skewered some of the Chatterjee lies in the January 2007 Gargoyle. Let me have a go at one or two more. But first, let me say that I support unequivocally the Editor’s decision to republish

the Muggeridge chapter from Dr. Chatterjee’s book (*Mother Teresa - The Final Verdict*). Malcolm believed in - and more than most - practiced free speech. He relished a verbal dust-up with his adversaries, as they, often to their chagrin, discovered. So let the Chatterjee chatter away, say I, and let Malcolm’s defenders cudgel the misguided Dr. without quarter or reserve.

Let’s start with the Dr.’s first sentence: “There would be no Mother Teresa without Malcolm Muggeridge”. The patent absurdity of this sentence, biologically-speaking, should not obscure its other inherent absurdities. Presumably what Dr. Chatterjee means to say is that if MM had not done his initial BBC interview with Mother Teresa in March 1968, then undertaken

Bless My Soul

by Alan Brien

("Sacred Cows", Sunday Times Magazine, 3rd April 1977)

IF there is any creature I find less sympathetic than a sacred cow, it is the sacred cowherd. And this, it seems to me, is Malcolm Muggeridge's true role.

Our sacred cows in the West, like living goddesses of Nepal, are quite often more to be pitied than resented. It can be very lonely, rather tiring and frustrating, above all, being above all, not much fun up there on the pedestal. You are never allowed to be fallible, gullible, irritable or wrong. But the cowherd, working on his percentage, can always plead that he is only human. He is just the front man for a mystery that cannot be approached direct. So every guru has his chila, every champ his manager, every star his agent, every freak his barker, every gangster his mouthpiece and the perennial aim of the power behind the throne is to outlast the power behind the throne. Our hero, MM, has survived in the same way by herding many a sacred beast to the sacrifice without singeing even much more than his own eyebrows.

The voice is the voice of Malcolm, the mug is the mug of the Mugg, but the message must always be the message of the Lord. Now it is the Lord God, but it has been the Lord Camrose, also General-Secretary Joseph Stalin, also the *Manchester Guardian*, also Mr Punch, also the BBC. Malcolm Muggeridge is a cowherd for all seasons – he must never be blamed personally for where his sacred cow of the decade leaves its sacred cow pats.

There is no problem charting Muggeridge's succession of causes. Indeed, he has documented the primrose path in his own volumes of autobiography. He likes to identify his own part in life's soap opera as increasingly that of "a displaced person". I would substitute instead "a born defector", or perhaps "the natural double-agent". The difference is not always easy to detect as Muggeridge, who also occasionally likes to present himself as a sometime secret-service man, has good reason to know.

The pattern, as I see it, is of an eloquent advocate – a word spinner and jest-juggler without peer among advertising copywriters – who too easily becomes imprinted by the all-embracing gospel he is asked to preach, then

equally suddenly rejects the imprint, only to emboss upon his psyche another monolithic creed. After each failure the revulsion is dramatic, permanent, possibly near hysterical.

For example, as a young man he wrote leaders for the *Manchester Guardian*, full of simple faith in progress, the classic doctrine of liberalism. Even 40 years later he is still denouncing that innocent idealism in terms of manic hyperbole: "Liberalism [he wrote in 1965] will be seen as *the* great destructive force of our time: much more so than Communism, Fascism, Nazism or any other lunatic creeds Compared to the long-term consequences of Gilbert Murray, Bertrand Russell and Mrs Eleanor Roosevelt, Hitler was an ineffective dreamer, Stalin a Father Christmas and Mussolini an Arcadian shepherd."

He went to Moscow in the mid-1930's, anticipating the foundation of Utopia, and prepared to sell up and settle there forever. Disillusioned, he has never ceased denouncing everyone on the Left, even those who never shared his naive expectations, as dupes of the Kremlin. After the war he wrote leaders for the *Telegraph* as assistant editor, and it is the Tory leaders he supported then he now places in the pillory. He came to fame as a combative, critical Editor of *Punch* – a magazine he has since rarely missed an opportunity of denigrating. And he finally established himself as a household image on television, with his knobkerrie face and that strangulated voice which, next to Edward Heath's, must be the most extraordinary and artificial of any public man. Yet his favourite topic is a denunciation of TV as a medium fit only for hucksters and charlatans, guaranteed to process reality into trivia.

For an intellectual of his repute, many of his essays are curiously ill-informed, self-contradictory or just plain silly, better fitted for the *Sunday Express* than the *Guardian* or the *Statesman*, or even the *Telegraph*, despite a surface glitter of sequinned rhetoric. The quotation on liberalism is one standing for many. Muggeridge on contraception and abortion, with he loathes with a virulence which seems barely rational, will seize any stick, however feeble and rotten.

Letter from the President of the Society



*I could not resist taking a trip along to the Tate Modern in London to learn a little more of Amrita Sher-Gil. Sixty five years after her death, the fascination for Amrita's life and art has suddenly acquired an international dimension and level of interest that even Malcolm Muggeridge could never have anticipated. Without doubt she had a brief but blazing life, and for a short period of three months in 1935 at the age of 22 she shared that life intensely with Muggeridge and made a deep and lasting impression on him. Each struggled to eke out a living from their art – Muggeridge from his writing, Sher-Gil from her painting, and each had a deep sense of melancholy and a foreboding of tomorrow. A book by Yashodhara Dalmia called **Amrita Sher-Gil – A Life** is an interesting read and includes a full account of the affair as well as several prints of her work. Unfortunately, the exhibition in London did not include Amrita's portrait of Malcolm Muggeridge which is reproduced on the front cover – neither incidentally did a large art book on Sher-Gil's work for sale at the Tate Modern.*

At the time that the previous issue went to print, we knew that member Peter Stockbridge was in hospital with a serious illness and we were saddened to hear of his death in February. Peter was invaluable to us in renewing awareness of Malcolm Muggeridge's life and writing at the time of forming the Society and a full tribute is included in this issue. I am sure all members who much enjoyed Peter's performance as Muggeridge- in the US, in England, in Spain or in Egypt - would wish to convey their condolences to his widow Sheila.

I am delighted to include a number of lively contributions from members in this issue and hope that they will encourage you to put your thoughts and views to paper or to computer for future issues.

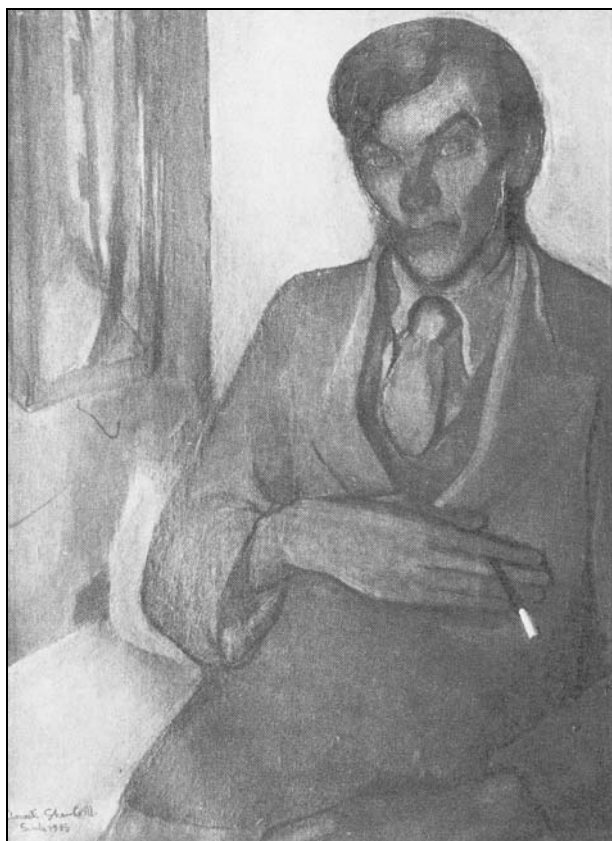
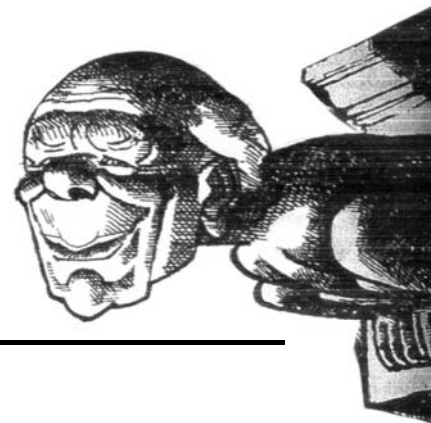
The current subscription year ends on the last day of May and due to the rising cost of postage we would ask for payment of your new subscription without waiting for a letter of reminder. Subscription for 2007-2008 is £15 or \$30 - adverse movement in the exchange rate and higher international postage rates has obliged us to increase US subscriptions. You can use Paypal but it is better for us and perhaps simpler just to put a cheque/check in the mail using the envelope provided.

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Portrait of Malcolm Muggeridge by Amrita Sher-Gil 1935

“Amrita came to the station to see me off in the early morning – a most unusual time for her to be about. We walked up and down the platform together until it was time for me to get into the little mountain train. Through the carriage window we went on talking until with a shrill whistle, the train began to move. Speaking in French –an affectation we practised – she said we’d had some *beaux moments* together, which was true, but also some *moments noirs*. I continued to look out of the window until she was out of sight. I knew I should not see her again.”

Malcolm Muggeridge
(Like it Was - Diaries)

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The Gargoyle is published quarterly and contributions from members are welcomed by the Editor on any aspect of Malcolm’s diverse life.

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