Q. D. Leavis: A Bibliography of Primary and Secondary Sources

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ABSTRACT
Critics usually describe Q. D. Leavis as the author of the influential Fiction and the Reading Public and as F. R. Leavis's wife. However, although both critics are concerned with the relationship between literature and life, she has a style of her own and wider interests. The present bibliography of all writings by and about her is an attempt to contribute to her long-due recognition as an important figure in contemporary literary criticism.

It's my wife (who's very different from me—hence our lifelong collaboration is historic) who's the authority on prose fiction. She's both critic and scholar. I think that, on the novel, she has no rival in the world.

The words above (Robertson vi) offer an accurate description of Q. D. Leavis, wife and collaborator of F. R. Leavis and clearly one of the most undervalued figures in twentieth-century literary criticism. Queenie Dorothy Roth was born in London in a Jewish family and studied at Girton College, Cambridge University, where she became the student of her future husband F. R. Leavis. She married him in 1929 and wrote her doctoral dissertation on the novel, understanding the genre in a broad sense, since, as she stated in its introduction, "it is at least as important to take account of the fiction that does not happen to be, or to have become, literature as of the novels which ultimately get into the textbooks" (Fiction 13). In it she also discussed the process of cultural decline which, in her opinion, had started in the seventeenth century. Her dissertation was published in 1932 under the title Fiction and the Reading Public (item A11 in the present bibliography) and had very negative reviews, possibly because of its really new approach. This work has nevertheless had a major influence in the field of literary studies and its continuing value
is shown by the great number of reviews which appeared after its reprinting in 1965. In his famous article “Scrutiny: A Retrospect,” F. R. Leavis indicated that the main contributions of this work were “its documentation and analysis of the developments that had left our culture in the plight that disquieted and challenged us” (2) and acknowledged the central role of the dissertation in the founding of the periodical Scrutiny (1932-1953), which was to undertake a revision of the English literary canon.

Q. D. Leavis became, together with her husband, one of the major contributors to Scrutiny, with a great number of articles and reviews between 1932 and 1947. Her work centred on the nineteenth- and twentieth-century novel, especially women writers, showing an interest in women’s writings many years before Feminism as a movement came into existence. Q. D. Leavis herself used to describe her work as “concentrated seminal work” (Englishness 25). She produced long and controversial articles on writers such as Jane Austen, George Eliot, the Brontës and Edith Wharton and her writings served as the (sometimes unacknowledged) basis for later discussions about these writers and their place in the literary canon.

Q. D. Leavis’s criticism shared with that of her husband some basic principles such as the belief that moral and literary values go together in any great work. She differed, however, in her conviction that any approach (be it sociological, archetypal, biographical or formalist) was valuable as a tool to examine literary works. Her discussions can be mordant when she comes to analyse works or authors that remain indifferent to the persistent decline of culture in contemporary society. A good example of her personal style is the review she wrote for the book Three Guineas, entitled “Caterpillars of the Commonwealth Unite!” (A40), and the reaction it provoked in Virginia Woolf:

A violent attack on Three Guineas in Scrutiny by Q. Leavis. I don’t think it gave me an entire single thrill of horror. And I didn’t read it through. A symbol though of what wiggings are to come. But I read enough to see that it was all personal—about Queenie’s own grievances and retorts to my snubs. . . . Oh Queenie was at once cancelled by a letter from Jane Walker—a thousand thanks. . . . (301)

There are several facts that explain the bitter tone we hear in many of her articles. We may find it impossible to believe today that a person so much devoted to the scholarly study of literature did not get a teaching position at the University of Cambridge, when she was so clearly qualified for it. In fact, at times the Leavises have been accused of being paranoid in their professional lives, but it is true that there were conscious attempts to discredit them in the academic world, as the excellent book by Garry Watson The Leavises, the “Social” and the Left (B39) shows. Together with this we must remember Q. D. Leavis’s delicate health throughout her life, as well as her many responsibilities at home and several personal and family problems.

She finally achieved a long-due reputation as a scholar in the mid-sixties, when the Leavises travelled to the United States for a series of lectures at Harvard and Cornell. These lectures were later published in 1969 in a volume entitled Lectures in America (A82). The following year marked the highest point in their collaboration as critics, with the publication in the centenary of Charles Dickens’s death of Dickens the Novelist (A87),
Q. D. Leavis has not received the kind of critical attention she clearly deserves. The first scholar to pay attention to her work was Garry Watson in the book mentioned above, in which he studies the writings of both husband and wife as an intellectual team. Robert Boyers, in his brief but insightful *F. R. Leavis: Judgment and the Discipline of Thought* (B9), devotes excellent pages to Q. D. Leavis's article on Edith Wharton. Francis Mulhern's book *The Moment of Scrutiny* (B26) presents her as one of the most prolific contributors to *Scrutiny*. The very first critic to undertake a critical study entirely devoted to her was William Walsh in a chapter of his book *F. R. Leavis* (B38) entitled "The principal collaborator," which perfectly summarizes her achievement:

> The complexity of accomplished criticism is also the final impression left on us by Mrs Leavis's criticism, a criticism characterised by originality, lucidity, conviction and point, and a criticism which, perhaps under the huge wing of her husband's reputation, has not had its proper recognition. It belongs with the best of the period. (118)

In this book we find an accurate description of the fundamental principles of her criticism, although Walsh analyses the co-authored volume on Dickens in a separate chapter, as if concerned that he might otherwise take away from F. R. Leavis's reputation. *The Leavises on Fiction: An Historic Partnership* (B30), the book that pays most attention to Q. D. Leavis, was published in 1981. Its author, P. J. M. Robertson, gives equal status to both writers and studies the two-way collaboration we can find in their writings. M. B. Kinch published in 1982 a brief volume under the title *Q. D. Leavis 1906-1981: An Appreciation* (B19), more a tribute to her figure by an author who openly admires her than a rigorous scholarly work. Finally, in 1983 Chris Baldick published some suggestive reflections on *Fiction and the Reading Public* in his book *The Social Mission of English Criticism 1848-1932* (B3). Other scholars who have dealt with F. R. Leavis's criticism (Bilan, Greenwood, Wellek, Eagleton, McCallum, Bell, etc.) have either overlooked her work entirely or mentioned her in passing. Definitely, the final book on her is still to be written.

We find a similar situation concerning published bibliographies on her work. The first one we have found dates from 1972, and it includes only two of her books and the brief comment "Mrs Leavis was a frequent contributor to *Scrutiny* and has written a number of
introductions to novels by Jane Austen and others” (Willison 1073). In 1979 William Baker publishes an article entitled “F. R. Leavis, 1965-1979, and Q. D. Leavis, 1922-1979: A Bibliography of Writings By and About Them” (C2), which contains a great number of errors. The title itself has one, since in fact the article includes two articles from 1921 but none from 1922. Also, an article on Joseph Conrad written by her husband is attributed to her. Kinch’s volume includes a selected bibliography, which refers the reader to Baker’s for further reading — and thus requires no more comments. Finally, the publication of F. R. Leavis and Q. D. Leavis: An Annotated Bibliography (B20) by M. B. Kinch, William Baker and John Kimber is a significant step ahead. Most of the errors have disappeared but still Q. D. Leavis is overpowered by the figure of her husband. Except for the books and articles devoted exclusively to her, all the items dealing with her together with her husband are mentioned only in his section. This bibliography presents an additional problem: Although it was published in 1989, the most recent items included are from 1984, and therefore it does not incorporate the final two volumes of her Collected Essays, in which we can find a great number of unpublished articles and some which are difficult to find in their original sources. The present bibliography runs up to 1992 and attempts to be more detailed, providing references to works from periods of her career which have not received attention in earlier publications. It also makes an effort at accuracy, correcting small errors and oversights in sources and pagination. Finally, in quoting Q. D. Leavis’s books references are made to the first edition, with the following exceptions:


**Q. D. LEAVIS: PRIMARY SOURCES [A]**

**1921**


**1923**


**1924**


**1925**

Q. D. Leavis: A Bibliography


1928


1930


1932


1933


A18. "'Our Serious Weeklies.'" *Scrutiny* 2 (1933): 182-83.
1934


1935


1936


1937


1938


1939

1940


1941


1942


1943


1944


1946


1947


1948


1950


1951


1955


1957


1958


1965


1966


1967

1968


1969


1970

A88. Letter to Dennis Cox about Storm Jameson, including another letter written by the novelist. No date, but probably written in the seventies. Brotherton Library (Leeds), Department of Manuscripts and Special Collections [MS. 436].

1971


1974

1975


1976


1978


1979


1980


1981

1983


1985


1989


WRITINGS BELONGING TO A PERIOD OF SEVERAL YEARS

A108. Letters to Chatto and Windus written between 1931 and 1939. Reading University Library [MS2444].


Q. D. LEAVIS: SECONDARY SOURCES

Books and essays in books [B]


states that “Mrs Leavis ought to be thought of as the co-author of her husband’s book The Great Tradition” (VIII).


Essays and reviews in periodicals [C]


**rs in periodicals [D]**


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Reviews of the books published by Q. D. Leavis [E]

1. **Fiction and the Reading Public** (A11)

   a. **First edition (1932)**


   b. **Reissue (1965)**

2. *Mansfield Park*, by Jane Austen (A73)


4. *Jane Eyre*, by Charlotte Brontë (A76)


5. *A Selection from Scrutiny* (1968)

6. Lectures in America (A82)


7. Miss Marjoribanks, by Mrs Oliphant (A85)


8. Dickens the Novelist (A87)


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**Reviews of the books published on Q. D. Leavis [F]**

1. **The Leavises, the 'Social' and the Left, by Garry Watson (B39)**
   

2. **The Leavises on Fiction, by P. J. M. Robertson (B30)**
   

3. **The Leavises: Recollections and Impressions, ed. Denys Thompson (B37)**
   
Q. D. Leavis: A Bibliography


4. F. R. Leavis and Q. D. Leavis: An Annotated Bibliography, by M. B. Kinch, William Baker and John Kimber (B20)


Unpublished dissertations [G]


Audio-visual materials [H]


Works Cited