

Q.D. Leavis's Criticism: The Human Core

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IN THE PRESENT RECONSIDERATION of the literary criticism of Q.D. Leavis (1906-1981), I wish to discuss three related topics. First, I want to show that, independent of her collaboration with her famous husband, F.R. Leavis (1895-1978), Q.D. Leavis is an important critic. Second, I will argue that she is, in particular, a major critic of the novel, especially of the nineteenth-century British novel, and specifically the English and Anglo-Irish novel. Thirdly, I will support my case by discussing her method of analysis in, arguably, her finest discussion of a nineteenth-century novel, "A Fresh Approach to *Wuthering Heights*" (1969).

When Q.D. Leavis died in March 1981, David Holloway in *The Daily Telegraph* (London) described her relationship with her husband, F.R. Leavis, as forming "one of the most formidable literary partnerships ever."¹ Presumably, he had in mind the Brownings, the Carlyles, Harriet Taylor and John Stuart Mill, and George Eliot and George Henry Lewes. In North America, we might think too of the Leavises' contemporaries: Mary McCarthy and Edmund Wilson, the Trillings or Janet Lewis and Yvor Winters. A collection of

essays edited by Whitney Chadwick and Isabelle de Courtivron, entitled *Significant Others: Creativity & Intimate Partnership*² describes, among others, the relationships of Camille Claudel and Auguste Rodin, Clara and André Malraux, Virginia Woolf and Vita Sackville-West, Frida Kahlo and Diego Rivera, and Lillian Hellman and Dashiell Hammett. It shows that couples in love inspire each other. Though allied interests and love may be difficult to disentangle in most of the cases listed above, it is certainly true that the Leavises assisted and supported each other in their critical endeavors. Their mutual dedication to *Dickens the Novelist* (1970), as much and more the work of Q.D. than of F.R. Leavis, says it all:

We dedicate this book to each other as proof, along with *Scrutiny* (of which for twenty-one years we sustained the main burden and the responsibility), of forty years and more of daily collaboration in living, university teaching, discussion of literature and the social and cultural context from which literature is born, and above all, devotion to the fostering of that true respect for creative writing, creative minds and, English literature being in question, the English tradition, without which literary criticism can have no validity and no life.³

Fuller obituaries of Q.D. Leavis followed, but while there are, at least, fifteen books and countless articles about F.R.

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Leavis, less than half of these concern the Leavises together. Indeed, there are only half a dozen articles that discuss Q.D. Leavis independently, and one of the best of these is as yet unpublished.⁴ The first of them, M. B. Kinch's "Q.D. Leavis: 1906-1981: An Appreciation" establishes the grounds for seeing Q.D. Leavis as an important literary critic. Kinch indicates "five distinctive types of critical activity" in which he shows Q.D. Leavis's indisputable accomplishment:

the rehabilitation of a writer who has been neglected or underrated or both; the investigation and rejection of claims to classic status made for a writer whose neglect is shown to have been fully justified; the discovery and celebration of a forgotten writer whose work is shown to be superior to many established classics; the immediate recognition of an individual work, since generally accepted as a modern classic, by a relatively unknown writer; and the uncompromising analysis and rejection of an inferior book by a distinguished contemporary writer.⁵

Kinch first discusses how Q.D. Leavis, in her 1938 review in *Scrutiny*, shows how Richard Jefferies had been neglected and underrated. She praises Edward Thomas's biography of Jefferies and, in fact, indicates, in detail, how a complete edition of Jefferies' works should be carried out.⁶ As in her highly critical 1947 *Scrutiny* review of a selection of short stories of Henry James by David Garnett,⁷ Q.D. Leavis reveals her complete and convincing competence as a critic through the depth and extent of her reading of both Jefferies and James. Her judgments in both cases are persuasive because she knows her subjects so well.

Second, Kinch shows how Q.D. Leavis challenged the attempt to rehabilitate the novels of Charlotte Yonge in her 1944 *Scrutiny* review "Charlotte Yonge and 'Christian Discrimination.'"⁸ In this review, she makes the important point that, whatever the ideological or theological orien-

tation of a novel (whether, say, Christian or Marxist), it is first of all important that it be a convincing and successful novel. Kinch's third claim is supported by Q.D. Leavis's "discovery and celebration" of the forgotten novels of Margaret Oliphant. Here Q.D. Leavis wrote introductions for a 1969 edition of *Miss Marjoribanks*, as well as for a 1974 edition of Oliphant's *Autobiography and Letters*.⁹ Though she does not claim to have read every word that Margaret Oliphant wrote (and wonders who has), she provides an important critical sorting out of the major novels.

Fourth, Kinch points to Q.D. Leavis's 1942 review, "A Novel to Recommend," of Arthur Koestler's *Darkness at Noon* as an instance of her "immediate recognition of an individual work, since generally accepted as a modern classic, by a relatively unknown writer."¹⁰ This, indeed, is one of the most attractive features of Q.D. Leavis's criticism. Although she can be withering about work she finds self-indulgent or immature, the power of her arguments and her enthusiasm for the novel inspires the reader with a desire to read the novels she recommends. This surely is a sign of what a fine literary critic she is. Finally, Kinch points to Q.D. Leavis's 1938 review of Virginia Woolf's *Three Guineas* as "the uncompromising analysis and rejection of an inferior book by a distinguished contemporary writer."¹¹ Kinch, it seems to me, successfully establishes solid grounds for regarding Q.D. Leavis as an important literary critic. Clearly, her collaboration with F.R. Leavis was important to her, but reconsideration is necessary to indicate her particular contribution to literary criticism and to demonstrate the nature of her critical method. I hope that this reconsideration will show that, by any standard, Q.D. Leavis is a major critic of the novel, one on whose work twentieth-century criticism of the novel is founded.

Born Queenie Dorothy Roth in

Edmonton, North London, England, into a Jewish family (her father was a draper and hosier) in 1906, she became a brilliant student at Latymer School, publishing essays in the school magazine by the age of fourteen. Her family valued the arts highly, and, as an adolescent, Queenie Roth was steeped in the novels and stories of Henry James. Before the age of eighteen, she won a scholarship to Girton College, Cambridge, to study English. All her life, Queenie Roth was a dedicated reader. A fellow student at Girton, Gwendolen Freeman, recalls:

We were jolting up the Huntingdon Road to Girton in the college bus, all of us hungry and relaxed after a morning of Cambridge lectures and reading. Near college we passed Queenie erect and alone, strolling along the path. She was not only not hurrying to lunch. She was reading as she walked, her book held high before her eyes, she may have been short-sighted. (I never asked why she wore glasses.) It could not have been easy to read as one walked along that country path, and presumably she had been reading all the two-and-a-half miles from Cambridge.¹²

Commenting on her undergraduate education in "A Glance Backwards, 1965," Q.D. Leavis reveals how her method of writing about literature was shaped by the criticism of Leslie Stephen and by what she learned from H.M. Chadwick:

I preceded my purely literary work as an undergraduate by taking Anglo-Saxon and associated studies under a great Cambridge teacher and scholar, Professor H.M. Chadwick [who] invented for us students at Cambridge a course of study, highly educational and rewarding, on the early history and literature of England which was comparable with what the Classical Tripos at Cambridge or Greats at Oxford do for the early history and literatures of Greece and Rome.... His students acquired an anthropological attitude because they had to study archaeology, myth, folk-lore, religious rites, early architecture and other arts while centring on literature and on the associated arts and

beliefs as the expression and highest products of those cultures. This inspiring teaching...made it inevitable that when in our later purely 'Eng. Lit.' work we read Chaucer, we at once saw him *correctly*, not as a crude and naïve poet at the beginning of English Literature, but as the sophisticated artist who brought a slowly-developed tradition of several strands to a climax of achievement by enriching it with grafts from European poetic traditions.

It is not surprising that she sub-titled her Cambridge Ph.D thesis, *Fiction and the Reading Public*, supervised by I.A. Richards and published by Chatto and Windus in 1932, "A Study in Social Anthropology." In a number of places in her work, Q.D. Leavis uses the metaphor of the iceberg in relation to the analysis of literature. It is a useful metaphor to demonstrate both her understanding of literature, as an inseparable part of culture, and her critical method in analysing works of literature. In "A Glance Backwards, 1965," she uses the metaphor to explain what she set out to accomplish in *Fiction and the Reading Public* and why she chose to undertake the work.

I wanted to find out what part the reading-public has played in determining the form and quality of English imaginative writing. For my purpose Literature (with a capital L) was simply the part of the iceberg that showed above the water, though this top section, and not the whole, was what was then selected as proper to be studied by university students. In fact, when my book appeared in 1932, a leading senior academic of the Cambridge 'English' School, writing an article on 'English Studies at Cambridge,' held it and me up to opprobrium, since, he said, to read 'bestsellers' (as popular fiction was then contemptuously labelled) showed a depraved taste and was quite outside the literary field. I felt that part—the major part—of the iceberg had been submerged by the passage of time but was still not negligible from my point of view, since having been read with pleasure by so many it must tell us something important about the formation

and taste of the reading-public at any given time, and the climate of literature is determined by public taste to a great extent.¹³

Directly following two lengthy quotations from Q.D. Leavis's writing is probably the best place, before we proceed any further, to discuss her manner, or style, of writing. A frequent critical cheap-shot at her husband has been to say that he is a poor writer, implying thereby that his critical judgments are invalidated by his supposedly inferior prose. In fact, F.R. Leavis is a careful, exact, and often passionately persuasive writer as is Q.D. Leavis, though some readers have found her sentences (and paragraphs) long, complex, even convoluted, and her syntactical constructions perplexing. Perhaps her early, extensive reading of Henry James can be held responsible, though, despite their love of the long sentence, the writing of both is generally clear and comprehensible.

Close reading of Q.D. Leavis's sentences, from the two passages of her writing just quoted, reveals, I think, that, like "the Master" himself, Q.D. Leavis is a master of subordination within the complex sentence. Take, for example, the last sentence from the passage just quoted, "I felt that part—the major part—of the iceberg had been submerged by the passage of time but was still not negligible from my point of view, since having been read with pleasure by so many it must tell us something important about the formation and taste of the reading-public at any given time, and the climate of literature is determined by public taste to a great extent." Admittedly, this is a difficult sentence to understand, especially if removed from its context, but once restored to its context and read carefully, is it not perfectly clear? "[T]hat part—the major part—of the iceberg" refers to "popular fiction" or "bestsellers," as opposed to "Literature (with a capital L)." Time submerges "popular fiction" more rapidly than "Literature

(with a capital L)" but, from the point of view of Q.D. Leavis's study, "popular fiction" is "not negligible" because, first, it has been read with pleasure by many readers and, second, gives us insight into "the formation and taste of the reading-public at any given time." She then adds, though perhaps by this point the sentence has run on, "and the climate of literature is determined by public taste to a great extent." The additional thought is, however, necessary to her overall argument as she endeavors to show in *Fiction and the Reading Public* that "the climate of literature" at any time is shaped by diverse elements of "public taste." This is what she always argues following her "anthropological" approach to literature.

The point I wish to make is that though Q.D. Leavis's meaning has sometimes to be worked for, and she certainly likes long sentences—they are essential to the kinds of modifications and qualifications in argument that literary criticism needs to make. Her persuasive power as a critic lies not just in the strength but in the subtlety of her arguments. And subtlety can often only be achieved by the kinds of modifications and qualifications found within long sentences. Just as Q.D. Leavis remarks of Charlotte Brontë, I think that we are persuaded that Q.D. Leavis "thought out exactly what she meant to write, choosing each word deliberately."¹⁴

Shortly after completing a first-class undergraduate degree in 1929, Queenie Roth married her Girton tutor, F.R. Leavis, who had helped her to secure the Otilie Hancock research fellowship to support her doctoral research. Tragically, her parents broke with her completely for marrying a gentile. In 1940 they were killed during the German *blitz* on London. No reconciliation had taken place. In the meantime Q.D. Leavis had had two children, Ralph in 1934 and Kate in 1939, and assisted her husband in establishing the critical quarterly *Scrutiny* (1932-1953) of which she was an editor and to which she

regularly contributed articles and reviews. Her husband's doctoral work was closely related to her own. His Cambridge Ph.D. thesis, completed in 1924, was entitled "The Relationship of Journalism to Literature: Studied in the Rise and Earlier Development of the Press in England." Indeed, it can be argued that *Fiction and the Reading Public* picks up where "The Relationship of Journalism to Literature" leaves off. In fact, both Leavises were deeply interested in the social context of the novel as well as in the novel itself. Both were dissatisfied with the kind of criticism the novel received.

Apart from Henry James's *Notes on Novelists* and C.H. Rickword's "A Note on Fiction" in the short-lived *The Calendar of Modern Letters* (1925-1927), the Leavises thought that there was little satisfactory discussion of how to criticize fiction. They used *Scrutiny*, in part, to advance such discussion and in collaboration (which was always important to them both) developed an idea of "the novel as a dramatic poem." Briefly, they believed that the novel had always been strongly influenced by Elizabethan (particularly Shakespearean) drama and that the best novels had the same kind of organic unity of character, image, language, symbol and theme as poetic dramas of the highest order. So, during the Second World War, during which their second son Lawrence Robin was born (1944), Q.D. Leavis was publishing her four-part "A Critical Theory of Jane Austen's Writings" in *Scrutiny* (1941-1944) while her husband was working towards his *magnum opus* on the English novel, *The Great Tradition* (1948), with which she assisted.

Though Q.D. Leavis would later (1959) compare Jane Austen's fiction to a canoe and Charlotte Brontë's to an iceberg, the argument of her study of Jane Austen's novels is that Jane Austen deepened her novels through revision. Q.D. Leavis sees the development of Austen's novels as palimpsestic. In revision, she argued,

Austen moved towards a deeper personal involvement in, and discovery of, the "human core" of her fictions. *Pride and Prejudice* may have begun as parody of Fanny Burney's *Cecilia* but at the point in revision, when Austen moved from outside to inside the central characters in her novel, she began to dramatize human love and relationships in a more convincing way. To accept the full implication of her divining metaphor and in Q.D. Leavis's own words, "We can always see where Miss Austen's interests and preoccupations lie in any novel by observing where the stress falls and where the deepest current of feeling flows."¹⁵

Again, writing of *Mansfield Park*, Q.D. Leavis observes that, "in general the point when Jane Austen's immature draft becomes in conception the novel as we know it is when the author changes her treatment so that from being outside, in a relation of satiric superiority to her characters, and their involvements, she is to be found inside."¹⁶ Commenting on "A critical theory of Jane Austen's writings," David Lyons asks, "Who else was treating fiction like this is 1941?" He observes further that Q.D. Leavis's "analysis of Austen reveals an original and sophisticated sensibility. We glimpse, through obiter dicta and glancing allusions, a felt theory of how great fiction is written, of how it must emerge from the life and living of its author."¹⁷

Q.D. Leavis's literary co-executor and editor of her *Collected Essays*, Ghan Singh, agrees with Lyons about the importance of "A Critical Theory of Jane Austen's Writings." He writes, "The first—and in many respects the most substantial and original—piece of close critical enquiry she undertook was her classical essay in four parts on 'A Critical Theory of Jane Austen's Writings'—a critique which is as original and pioneering as it is representative of her critical principles, methodology and approach."¹⁸ What both critics acknowledge is a significant *critical de-*

velopment in Q.D. Leavis's work from the anthropological method of *Fiction and the Reading Public*. As she investigates the deepening of human concern in Jane Austen, a deepening of her own critical practice and personal engagement occurs.

As her family responsibilities lightened a little and her health returned after a struggle with breast cancer in the late 1940s, and her responsibilities with *Scrutiny* drew to an end with the winding up of the journal in 1953, Q.D. Leavis found time to teach and to develop further her critical interest in the novel. One of her most impressive and original inquiries into "the novel as dramatic poem" is her two-part essay on "Hawthorne as Poet," which appeared in *The Sewanee Review* in the spring and summer of 1951. From the time of her work with H.M. Chadwick she saw the importance of comparative study. She was later to write essays and to lecture on the American, Anglo-Irish, French, Italian and Russian novel.¹⁹ Her interest in Henry James and Edith Wharton, on whom she had written in *Scrutiny* as early as the 1930s, clearly inspired a need to understand the tradition from which they emerged. As she noted in "A Glance Backwards, 1965," in the passage I have already quoted, "when reading for example the early nineteenth-century American novelist Hawthorne I naturally asked myself what does he tell us about the nature of the society in which he wrote, and then went on to inquire why the Calvinistic rural society of seventeenth- and eighteenth-century Scotland produced so *different* a literature from the similar theocratic society set up in New England by the Pilgrim Fathers who emigrated from England and were Hawthorne's ancestors—both directly in fact and artistically by determining the theme and values of his writings."²⁰

Q.D. Leavis accepts Henry James's view that Hawthorne's intention is poetic. She regards his best work the stories, "The

Maypole of Merry Mount," "Young Goodman Brown," "My Kinsman Major Molineux," and "The Snow Image," and the novels *The Scarlet Letter* and *The Blithedale Romance* as dramatic poems. She sees Hawthorne's dramatizations of the conflicts between the "iron" Puritans and "silken" royalists in early America as a complex, imaginative rendering that appeals for a sympathetic understanding of, for example, the human core of the tragic relationship between Hester and Dimmesdale in *The Scarlet Letter*. Q.D. Leavis's critical discussions of Hawthorne, Melville, James and Wharton show her to be an important critic of both the American and the British novel.

Indeed, Q.D. Leavis is a literary critic whose work becomes deeper as she develops and matures. Her best critical work, in fact, was written during the last twenty-five years of her life. During her last decade she was still lecturing and writing pieces such as "Jane Austen: Novelist of a Changing Society" (1974), her article on Charles Kingsley's *The Water Babies* (1976), and "Melville: The 1853-6 Phase" (1978). Within a year of her death, she delivered six lectures on the American, Anglo-Irish, English, French, Italian, and Russian novels at the Queen's University, Belfast, in the spring of 1980. Her lecture "The Englishness of the English Novel" was delivered as the Cheltenham Festival Annual Literature Lecture in October 1980. It was published in *New Universities Quarterly* and *English Studies* shortly after her death in the spring of 1981 and gathered in the first volume of her *Collected Essays* in 1983. This is the volume in which we find her major work on nineteenth-century English fiction as well as in *Dickens the Novelist* (1970), where her chapters on *David Copperfield*, *Bleak House*, and *Great Expectations* appear.

In 1957 and 1958 she published introductions to *Mansfield Park* and *Sense and Sensibility* for editions of the novels published by Macdonald. Introductions to

Penguin editions of *Jane Eyre* and *Silas Marner* appeared in 1966 and 1967, to the Zodiac Press edition of Margaret Oliphant's *Miss Marjoribanks* in 1969, and to a Harper Colophon edition of Charlotte Brontë's *Villette* in 1972.

But, arguably, the best piece of this period, though the chapters on Dickens and the above introductions are all extraordinarily good, is "A Fresh Approach to *Wuthering Heights*," delivered as two lectures at Harvard and Cornell in 1966 during her only visit to the United States and gathered in *Lectures in America* (1969) with her husband's lectures "Luddites? or There Is Only One Culture," "Eliot's Classical Standing," and "Yeats: The Problem and the Challenge." Q.D. Leavis uses the metaphor of the iceberg not only in describing the relation of "Literature (with a capital L)" to the whole culture which produces it, but also in relation to the different kinds of balance achieved by different kinds of works. One work, she argues, exhibits the "balance of a canoe on the surface of the water." Another will exhibit "the balance of an iceberg where four fifths of the mass is out of sight." The latter, she argues, "has irresistible strength, force and appeal to the imagination and incomparable beauty."

For Q.D. Leavis, *Wuthering Heights* appears to be such a work. So, in her "Fresh Approach" to *Wuthering Heights*, we find her distinguishing between what she calls the "sociological novel" and what she considers the real novel. On the surface we have the sociological novel about two opposed ways of life represented by *Wuthering Heights* and *Thrushcross Grange* in which the old farming way of life of the Heights gives place to the newer middle-class life of the Grange. There is a tragic inevitability about this movement that Q.D. Leavis sees Emily Brontë detail with the detachment and impersonality of great art. This sociological novel is the visible fifth of the iceberg. Beneath the surface, Q.D. Leavis divines the real novel

in which Catherine Earnshaw's "fatal immaturity" in her relationships with Heathcliff and Edgar Linton is overcome in the next generation by her daughter Catherine Linton's marriage, following the death of her first husband Linton Heathcliff, to Hareton Earnshaw.

The second Catherine Linton achieves a maturity in her human relationships that her mother (the first Catherine Linton) failed to attain. Maturity, as dramatized in great literature, is always a central value to both F.R. and Q.D. Leavis. The second Catherine Linton provides a convincing example of how romantic immaturity and self-indulgent egotism can be overcome. Q.D. Leavis supports her argument by inviting comparison of *Wuthering Heights* to Henri-Pierre Roché's modern French novel *Jules et Jim*. In Roché's novel, the central character, Kate, resembles Catherine Earnshaw in her "fatal immaturity," and her daughter simply repeats the pattern of her mother's behaviour. This, in Q.D. Leavis's view, is a crucial element in distinguishing between *Wuthering Heights* and *Jules et Jim*, which she characterizes merely as a "remarkable modern novel."²¹

Q.D. Leavis begins her "Fresh Approach" by noting that, while *Wuthering Heights* was rejected as "obviously and abominably pagan" when it first appeared, it was subsequently installed as a classic whose mystic significance was beyond criticism. But in view of fresh attacks on the novel as melodramatic, factitious, or sadistic from a new generation of readers she has met in the university classroom, Q.D. Leavis wants to ask what kind of classic *Wuthering Heights* is, since candid readers do find it "a striking achievement of some kind." But, as she notes, "The difficulty of establishing that a literary work is a classic is nothing compared to the difficulty of establishing *what kind of classic it is*—what is in fact the nature of its success, what kind of creation it represents."²² However, such exploration is not

uncritical. Although Q.D. Leavis does not believe that *Wuthering Heights* is a seamless work of art, she wants to know "what is the novel."²³ She challenges G.D. Klingopulos's account of *Wuthering Heights in Scrutiny* (1947) in which he indicated that "the author's preferences are not shown" and that the novel is not "a moral tale." Q.D. Leavis replies by going directly to the human core of the real novel:

Actually, I shall argue, the author's preferences are shown, Catherine is judged by the author in the parallel but notably different history of the daughter who, inheriting her mother's name, and likenesses both physical and psychological, is shown by deliberate choice, and trial and error, developing the maturity and therefore achieving the happiness, that the mother failed in, whereas we have seen the mother hardening into a fatal immaturity which destroys herself and those (Heathcliff and Edgar principally) involved with her.²⁴

She argues further that,

if we were to take the sociological novel as the real novel and relegate the Heathcliff-Catherine-Edgar relationship and the corresponding Cathy-Linton-Hareton one, as exciting by ex-centric dramatic episodes, we should be misconceiving the novel and slighting it, for it is surely these relationships and their working out that give all the meaning to the rest. For instance, though Cathy has in the second half to unlearn, very painfully, the assumptions of superiority on which she has been brought up at the Grange, this is only part of her schooling; it is only incidental to the process by which we see her transcend the psychological temptations and the impulses which would have made her repeat her mother's history; and this is not a question of sociology or social history but is timeless.²⁵

Q.D. Leavis's concern as a literary critic of the novel is to reach from the sociological to the timeless. Social history is where she begins but reality is where she ends. In fact, to her, excellent novels provide

the best social history because they dramatize and embody reality. She canvasses Emily Brontë's debt to Scott and the Gondal origins of *Wuthering Heights* which, as a first novel, she feels stumbles in places particularly in the realization of Heathcliff. Though the novel may have begun life as a reworking of the sub-plot *King Lear*, Q.D. Leavis argues that it "became a responsible piece of work, and the writer thought herself into the positions, outlooks, sufferings and tragedies of the actors in these typical events as an *artist*."²⁶

She concludes her discussion, "I would make a plea, then, for criticism of *Wuthering Heights* to turn its attention to the human core of the novel, to recognize its truly human centrality. How can we fail to see that the novel is based on an interest in, concern for, and knowledge of, real life?"²⁷ Q.D. Leavis is a literary critic of major importance principally because she asks questions like this last.

Early in her career, in *Fiction and the Reading Public* (1932), Q.D. Leavis saw the need to try to account for why Dickens and George Eliot had enjoyed large, unified audiences for their novels and why, within a generation, Henry James and Marie Corelli had radically different readerships. Serious fiction and the best-seller had been split apart. Like her early mentor, Leslie Stephen, she believed that literature was "the product of the interplay between writer and reader."²⁸ So, it was always important to Q.D. Leavis to analyze even the best novels with a full awareness of their socio-historical context. Such understanding helped to open up at least one level of a novel. But as a critical diviner, Q.D. Leavis wanted to identify the human core of the best novels. Certainly she was a pioneer in seeing the importance of discussing novels in their socio-historical context, but having the high standards and perception of a true literary critic she was also able to deepen our understanding of the works of such major nineteenth-century novelists as Jane

Austen, Charlotte and Emily Brontë, Charles Dickens, Nathaniel Hawthorne, Henry James, and Herman Melville. Truly, Q.D. Leavis is a major critic of the English novel, and a significant critic of the American novel.

As Q.D. Leavis responded with lively critical interest to the complex dramatizations of life in the novel, so we respond to the life in her critical writing. She saw the reading of literature as a process of continuous and engaged evaluation and re-evaluation. At the end of her life she was engaged with the novels of Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn. And throughout she was interested in the Cambridge tradition and in the nature of criticism as well as in the novel. Indeed, an essay should be written on her essays on H. M. Chadwick, A.C. Haddon, Edwin Muir, George Orwell, George Santayana, Leslie Stephen, and Henry Sidgwick, since her interest in the Cambridge tradition and

modern criticism provides a useful complement to F.R. Leavis's essays on Johnson, Coleridge, Arnold, and Eliot as critics.

Q.D. Leavis asserts that she is "adwoser and not a navvy."²⁹ However, if we take "dowsing" in this metaphor to represent the critical function of finding the "human core" of a work of literature, we see that "navvying" may involve the academic investigation of the cultural context that supports that work. A great strength of her work is that it embodies both. Perhaps the last word on Q.D. Leavis as a literary critic should be given to her husband and principal collaborator. In a January 1975 letter to P.J.M. Robertson, F.R. Leavis wrote, "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."³⁰

1. "Obituary: Mrs. Q.D. Leavis," *Daily Telegraph*, 20 March 1982, 16. 2. London and New York, 1993. 3. London, 1970, vii. 4. Sarah Emsley, a doctoral student in the Department of English, Dalhousie University, Halifax, Nova Scotia, Canada, has written an excellent essay, "Q.D. Leavis and Women Writers," delivered at the Orlando Project's Conference, "Women and Literary History," University of Alberta, September 1997. 5. Retford, Nottinghamshire, 1982, 8. 6. "Lives and Works of Richard Jefferies," *Scrutiny*, Vol. 6, No. 4 (March 1938), 435-466. Reprinted in *Collected Essays*, Vol. 3, ed. G. Singh (Cambridge, 1989), 254, 263. 7. *Scrutiny*, Vol. 14, No. 3 (Spring 1947), 223-229. Reprinted in *Collected Essays*, Vol. 2, ed. G. Singh (Cambridge, 1985), 177-184. 8. *Scrutiny*, Vol. 12, No. 2 (Spring 1944), 152-160. Reprinted in *Collected Essays*, Vol. 3, 234-244. 9. See *Collected Essays*, Vol. 1, ed. G. Singh (Cambridge, 1983), 135-181. 10. *Scrutiny*, Vol. 11, No. 2 (Summer 1942), 161. 11. "Caterpillars of the Commonwealth Unite!"

Scrutiny Vol. 7, No. 2 (September 1938), 203-214. 12. "Queenie at Girton," *The Leavises: Recollections and Impressions*, ed. Denys Thompson (Cambridge, 1984), 5. 13. "A Glance Backwards, 1965," *Collected Essays*, Vol. 1, 10-11. 14. *Ibid.*, 192. 15. *Ibid.*, 73. 16. *Ibid.*, 97. 17. "Q.D.L." *The New Criterion* (March 1991), 23-24. 18. "The Achievement of Q. D. Leavis," *The Aligarh Journal of English Studies*, Vol. 9, No. 2 (1984), 189. 19. The latter three of these essays are gathered in *Collected Essays*, Vol. 2, 216-276. "The Anglo-Irish Novel" appears in *Collected Essays*, Vol. 3, 61-81. 20. "A Glance Backwards, 1965," 11. 21. "A Fresh Approach to *Wuthering Heights*," in *Lectures in America* (with F. R. Leavis) (London, 1969), 104. Reprinted in *Collected Essays*, Vol. 1, 228-274. 22. *Lectures in America*, 85. 23. *Ibid.*, 87. 24. *Ibid.*, 88. 25. *Ibid.*, 101-102. 26. *Ibid.*, 101. 27. *Ibid.*, 137. 28. "A Glance Backwards, 1965," 13. 29. *Ibid.*, 25. 30. P.J.M. Robertson, *The Leavises on Fiction: An Historic Partnership* (London, 1981), vi.