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Chris Terry:
"The Ogre of Downing Castle" Revisited.
Recollections of F. R. Leavis and Morris Shapira

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The Paper

Dr Frank Raymond Leavis (1895 -1978) was the central figure in literary criticism in the 20th century in the U.K., arguably world-wide, initiating fresh ideas on new bearings in poetry, exploring the great tradition in the novel, the idea of a university, the crucial role of evaluation and reevaluation with a view to the influence on moral feeling, thought, and action bred through literature and culture. For much of his life he lectured at Cambridge University and, for most of it, taught as Director of Studies at Downing College in the university. He was initiator of the critical journal *Scrutiny* (*Scrutiny* appeared from 1932 until 1953 when it stopped. For two decades *Scrutiny* monitored thought, literature and events. It was a major thread of challenge, dissent and analysis during those turbulent years in Britain and Europe) and later Professor of English at York University, for example. He also did much to create and develop the Cambridge English Tripos (English Literature, Life and Thought), turning English Studies into a central academic discipline.

This essay contains reflections on Dr Leavis, the Downing School of English, and Morris Shapira by a Leavis pupil of the closing years at Downing. More a memoir than a study, it takes letters received from Dr Leavis and one from Q. D. Leavis as the anchors for a story about the turbulences of that time as experienced by an undergraduate but recollected in retrospect.

It considers the proposed reasons, causes, for damage done, the nature of a single incident, the framework of a search for healing. One issue is that of pastoral "care" about (or for) undergraduate and former students. It is also about proximity to a national icon and the dynamics of teaching or learning in that context. It sketches a personal link to Dr. Leavis, its privileges and its pitfalls, its emotional insecurity, while re-affirming or re-discovering the integrity and the necessity of Leavis' creative achievement in searching for a constant celebration of creative life sustaining values in the flux of the modern world after 1918.

Simultaneously, it regrets the frantic debates and wounding squabbles within the Downing School from about 1963 onwards which denied the values the Downing experience sought to establish. It is argued that this was, in part, made inevitable by a cult building up around "the great man" in the search for security in the latter years which created both zealots and revisionists to their own detriment. Respect transformed into discipleship - a form of distance - and this into a form of dependence requiring revolt. In the process damage was done to the cause, to individuals around it, and to figures in the Diaspora.

Based on letters received from Dr Leavis and one from Mrs. Leavis, the account speculates about the outlines of the crisis as it affected Dr Leavis and documents both his immersion in it and his emergence from it at a personal level. Another element considered is the energy released by the clash of adolescence, middle age, and old age (student aspirants, acolyte teachers, the Master) - the generations in conflict in the confined world of Cambridge. In this context the difficulties faced by the administrative body at Downing College concerned with winding down a whole era of teaching are taken into account: the task of finding a successor for a great, active and controversial figure in fairness and with harmony. At yet another level it is about looking for and finding doorways into the past and meeting friends on the other side.

And, finally, it includes a positive memory of Morris Shapira, Director of Studies as of 1963, whose teaching was unique, selfless and effective during his Downing years. He is portrayed here as a victim of the process of post-Leavisian denouement at Downing College.

The Author

*Christopher J. Terry, BA, MA (Cantab.), PhD (Kent): Once scholar (elect) in English at Downing College Cambridge, he was from 1961 to 1964 a pupil of Dr F. R. Leavis Fellow of Downing College until 1962, as of Morris Shapira, supervisor for English Studies at Downing College. These were among the last years of "The Downing School of English" at Downing College. During this time he co-authored a pamphlet supporting Leavis with Howard Jacobson as the main writer and Peter Jewell. The pamphlet *The Ogre of Downing Castle and other stories* supported Dr Leavis against C. P. Snow on the theme of the "two cultures". These recollections go back in part to that moment.*

Chris Terry has taught at the City of London School ("a Leavisite" in those days), at universities in Canada and Germany, also teaching Ethics, English and Philosophy in the German state school service, functioning in part as a school adviser on preventing drug or related misuse. He has published verse, mostly in Canada, and articles on Nietzsche, Mann and Marvell, as well as, variously, on teaching methods and eating disorders for German publications. Having recently left Germany, he currently lives in The United Kingdom, writing, working partly in London, and partly teaching Philosophy in a Sussex college.

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The paper contains the announcement of a Conference at Downing College, Cambridge, on F.R. Leavis in September 2009 and a Centre for F. R. Leavis Studies, including a website & archive project, both organised by Dr Chris Joyce, University of Surrey.