

SCRUTINY AND ITS INFLUENCE

Scrutiny: A Quarterly Review was a literature periodical founded in 1932 by the prominent British literary critic F. R. Leavis and his wife Queenie Dorothy Roth. Leavis remained its principal Editor until the final issue in 1953. Other editors include Lionel Charles Knights and Harold Andrew Mason.

The first issue of *Scrutiny* appeared early in May 1932. It included a galaxy of subscribers including T.S. Eliot, George Santayana, R. H. Tawney and Aldous Huxley. As it became more and more popular, its circulation rose gradually, with 750 copies being printed in the 1930s, and 1000 copies in the 1940s. At its height in the 1950s, *Scrutiny* printed 1,500 copies. Most of these were held by colleges and academic libraries for circulation. Since *Scrutiny* was widely read by scholars and writers, Leavis became very influential in 20th century literary criticism.

Besides its editorial staff, *Scrutiny* was able to have a contributing body of many important literary critics, including Marjorie Bewley, William Empson, L.C. Knights, Michael Oakeshott, Herbert Read, I. A. Richards, George Santayana, Derek Traversi, and Martin Turnell. Some of the contributors to *Scrutiny* were contributors to *Left Review* as well. Many of these contributors focussed on the topics of education and politics. However, according to Richard Poirier, its most important achievement was a nearly complete revaluation of English literature.

Scrutiny became a vehicle for the new Cambridge criticism, upholding rigorous intellectual standards and attacking the dilettante elitism of the time. Many would regard it as Leavis's greatest contribution to English letters. Leavis believed that literature should be closely related to the criticism of life, and therefore a literary critic's duty is to assess works according to the moral position of the author and society.