"Both of us can move mountains": Mary Quayle Innis and Her Relationship to Harold Innis' Legacy

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Abstract

Abstract: This paper offers an account of the life and work of Mary Quayle Innis (1899-1972), the wife of Harold Innis, and a figure largely unknown in the Innis scholarship. Using material taken from her writing, archival sources, and interviews with two of the Innises' children, this paper provides background on her contributions to Canadian culture as a writer and editor. The paper also speculates on her possible influence upon Innis' political economy and media research, and suggests that in understanding Mary Quayle Innis better, puzzling features of Harold Innis' own work are illuminated. A full bibliography of works by and about Mary Innis is attached.

Résumé: Cet essai présente un compte-rendu de la vie et de l'œuvre de Mary Quayle Innis (1899-1972). En comparaison de l'œuvre de son mari Harold Innis, Mary, qui était écrivain et éditeur lui-même, est rarement reconnue, mais cet article vise sa contribution à la culture canadienne, en explorant des archives, des extraits de sa propre écriture et des entretiens avec ses enfants. Cet article spécule sur son influence possible sur l'écriture de Harold et propose qu'on peut mieux comprendre certains traits intriguants de l'œuvre de Harold, en comprenant celle de Mary Quayle.

Keywords

Harold Innis; Mary Quayle Innis; Toronto School; History; Feminist/gender

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Works about Innis. Harold Innis (1894-1952) was a Canadian economic historian whose study of history became the basis for new insights into the nature of economic society and of the social process. Writing a sketch of Canadian economic history as an introductory chapter to his doctoral thesis, A History of the Canadian Pacific Railway (1923), Innis became aware of the paucity of the materials for such a history and the poverty of the concepts so far employed. With vast industry he devoted himself to the accumulation of the materials. Innis’ industry was matched by his imagination; his contribution to the materials was less important than his development of a new concept, a new approach.