“Both of us can move mountains”:
Mary Quayle Innis and Her Relationship to Harold Innis’ Legacy

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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’oeuvre de Mary Quayle Innis (1899-1972). En comparaison de l’oeuvre 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’oeuvre de Harold, en comprenant celle de Mary Quayle.

Keywords: History; Toronto School; Feminist/Gender

Introduction

“Both of us can move mountains” Harold Innis writes in a 1919 letter to his fiancée, Mary (Emma) Quayle, not long after he returned to Toronto upon completing most of his PhD obligations at the University of Chicago. The innocent ambiguity of the phrase—do they budge those boulders separately or together?—persists in our understanding of Mary Quayle Innis and her relationship to her more famous husband’s life and work. While the issue of Mary Innis’ role has yet to be raised in the secondary literature on Harold Innis, there is cause to speculate that a woman largely unknown even to Innis specialists might figure meaningfully in both Innis’ work and in the foundations of communication research in Canada.

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Mary Innis is remembered in the Innis scholarship the way a distant relative might be captured in an old family photograph, such as the studio portrait of her at mid-life as seen here. It is an image of someone who, in adherence to a Victorian code almost forgotten even in her day, quietly served her husband’s career while he lived, then became a fixture of Toronto society in widowhood. If the secondary Innis literature is to be believed, hers is a picture of someone who typed Harold’s manuscripts, raised the couple’s four children, and after Harold’s early death in 1952, lived a matronly life of middle-class splendour in Toronto. This impression—though incorrect in both fact and substance—is the conventional one we have of her, and is sustained by the scant and sometimes patronizing attention Mary receives in Innis scholarship.

Donald Creighton’s 1957 biography of Innis devotes its only significant statement about the young Mary Quayle to her appearance. A recent essay by Charles Acland in the most comprehensive survey of Innis scholarship identifies Mary Innis as a “published poet and arts patron,” and their marriage as one with an “extremely conventional gender split” in which Mary served as “keeper of their cultural life” (1999, p. 246). The only Innis scholar to speak of Mary’s writing career even minimally is the late Irene Spry, who knew her personally, and who represents her as Harold Innis’ “charming and brilliant wife” and a “noted author” (1999, p. 108). Beyond these remarks on Mary’s appearance, her belles lettres, and unspecified talents, the dozens of books and articles on Harold Innis tell us little else about the woman to whom he was married for 31 years, and who herself
write and edited 14 books as well as numerous short stories, magazine features, and research articles.

The case to be made for better understanding Mary Innis is more than a matter of feminist scruple—of bringing into focus the woman beside the celebrated man. The more we learn about her life and work, the more room there is for speculation about her influence on Innis’ thought. Features of Innis’ books that are enigmatic in light of his own background may well be explained by Mary’s presence. Among these features is the remarkable fact that Mary, daughter of a telephone engineer, wrote about media before Harold did. Also, reading Mary’s and Harold’s work together makes visible and meaningful his neglected books on Alexander McPhail, Simeon Perkins, and Peter Pond. As well, there are the many references to biography and literature in Innis’ communication works, citations that may have originated in Mary Innis’ longstanding writerly interest in human personality and her love of fiction. Finally, there is the fact that Mary, working from Harold’s notes on early editions of *The Fur Trade*, *The Cod Fisheries*, and *Empire and Communications*, revised and edited the modern editions of these classics, thus directly shaping how Innis is read today.

Since Innis scholarship is largely unaware of Mary’s life, the case for her inclusion in critical understanding of Harold’s work, as well as for appreciating her own neglected contributions to Canadian culture, takes the form of a biographical narrative here. She thought her life and her writing inseparable, and it is fitting to honour this image of herself in a style appropriate to the woman.

**1899-1920: Childhood and school years**

Mary Quayle was born to a Methodist family on April 13, 1899, in St. Mary’s, Ohio. Her mother, Effie Lloyd, had taken a course at a business college, and by all accounts favoured her daughter’s further education. Her father, Frederick Quayle, was a British-born tradesman who earned a good living installing telephone systems across the United States, and spent the 1930s doing similar work in China. The Quayle family migrated across the U.S. at the turn of the century, as her father moved from contract to contract, with Mary and her three brothers finally settling in Wilmette, Illinois, a town just north of Chicago. Here she attended New Trier High School in nearby Winnetka, Illinois (Dagg, 1995a).

In unpublished memoirs written not long before her death, Mary describes scenes of early twentieth-century America like so many slides in a magic lantern show. The young Mary recounts an amazed visit to a country fair flea circus, startling encounters with child labourers at a textile mill and a chain gang along a road, and a terrifying experience of ball lightning as it rolled through the Quayle’s rented house. There is something of Becky Thatcher, that adventurous good girl and boon companion of Tom Sawyer, in Mary’s memories of her all-American childhood and the moral challenges she faced after a move to the segregated U.S. South. In Illinois and elsewhere in the North, she writes that “I never or at least very seldom [would have] taken chances or done things I knew my mother would not approve.” After the trip southward, she reflects that “I would not dream of
mentioning the mill or the convict gang, yet conscience did not disturb me” (Innis, M.Q., 1972, p. 41).

A precocious child and winner of high school writing prizes, Mary began an undergraduate degree in English literature at the University of Chicago in 1915. The university, founded in 1890 with a major donation from oil magnate John D. Rockefeller, was unique for admitting women and minorities at a time when many others did not. At Chicago, Mary also took a number of courses in political economy and history, and published a chapbook of her poetry titled April (1920). She left Chicago briefly to do war service in Washington, and returned to finish her B.A. degree in the fall of 1918. In the winter of 1919 she enrolled in a political economy class taught by a young Canadian PhD student and Great War veteran, Harold Innis.

One of the few veterans on campus, and using a cane as a result of a shrapnel injury at Vimy Ridge, Innis cut a dashing figure that had already earned him admiration at Chicago. Yet it was Mary that made the lasting impression on Harold who, chronically short of funds at graduate school, was teaching courses while preparing his dissertation on the Canadian Pacific Railway. Creighton describes their early acquaintance in Harold’s first course as an instructor at Chicago, a campus not known for its romantic atmosphere:

He began to notice her. He found that in her case he could perform the lecturer’s duty of fitting a name to a face with surprising ease. Her eyes were wide-set and blue and serious. There was a pensive loveliness in her features and a dignity and elegance in her slight figure. They talked. They went to movies together. She had read a lot, in literary regions where he had not ventured very far. Her intellectual interests were comparable with his, and the quiet determination with which she pursued them equalled his own. By the time spring came he began to realize that he was in love. (1957, p. 42)

1920s: Early years of the marriage

Mary and Harold Innis were engaged in the spring of 1920. He submitted his thesis at Chicago in the summer of that year, and joined the Department of Political Economy at the University of Toronto in the fall. They were married in Chicago in May 1921, and Mary returned with Harold to his modest apartment in Toronto. Toronto in the 1920s could not have been more different than the Jazz Age Chicago the Innises left. Ethnically homogeneous, resolutely Protestant, and without the bootleggers and gangsters of the “City of Big Shoulders,” as Chicago was called, “Toronto the Good” might have been a little disappointing to the well-travelled and intellectually ambitious Mary.

The marriage confirmed a working relationship that had emerged during their courtship. Mary had accompanied Harold on his PhD research, visiting libraries, typing manuscripts, and working alongside him as he prepared his dissertation on the CPR. As Harold Innis wrote in his unpublished memoirs with reference to the CPR manuscript, “my wife had spent endless time in typing it . . .” (Innis, H. 1952, p. 113). After their marriage, Mary joined Harold on research trips relating to the Fur Trade manuscript, travelling in Europe and across Canada in 1922-3.
Only in 1924, with the birth of the first of their four children, Donald, did Mary stop long enough to assume the responsibilities of a full-time mother. Three other children would follow—Mary in 1927, Hugh in 1930, and Anne in 1933. Mary Innis published short stories in several Canadian magazines of opinion and letters with a national readership, *Saturday Night* and *Canadian Forum*, during these years of intensive parenting. She placed a few stories in the late 1920s and early 1930s, and some forty-five more stories between 1938 and 1947. A selection of her stories, which typically feature elaborate character sketches, would later serve as the basis for her 1943 novel, *Stand on a Rainbow*. The novel is an account of a year in the life of a middle-class family, and according to Anne Innis Dagg, is drawn almost entirely from incidents in Mary’s domestic life (interview, August 15, 2002).

Because it is so autobiographical, the novel’s montage of domestic scenes is revealing in its emotional honesty. Among the trips with the children to the cottage or the park, or during a rainy day at home, there lie hints of the hardship of raising a family while Harold spent long hours at the university building his career. Consider a scene in one vignette from the novel, and in a chapter titled “One of Those Days.” The children are behaving like the characters in *Lord of the Flies*, the protagonist “Leslie” has just had a wisdom tooth pulled and, as the reader will learn from a passage that follows, her husband “Arthur” will soon ring and tell her that he can’t be home for the dinner she is elaborately preparing. The tension between Leslie’s maternal obligations and intellectual aspirations is evident, and perhaps something of Mary Innis’ own frustrations is discernible, in this excerpt:

> The afternoon was really no worse than the morning, but Leslie felt less able to bear it. She concentrated on preparations for the dinner which was tacitly to bribe Arthur into looking after the children so that she could go to bed early. Her secret, sustaining cup of tea she carried into the living room where she had the ill fortune to sit down beside *The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*. Though she had renewed this first volume at the library, she had not got beyond the middle of the third chapter. She understood now why the first volumes of many classics were rebound while subsequent volumes bore their original bindings in virginal freshness. There were evidently many self-improvers as weak-willed as she. (Innis, M.Q., 1943, p. 86)

The Innises’ daughters, Mary Cates and Anne Innis Dagg, speak of the marriage’s several sides in separate interviews. Mary Cates depicts her parents as having “lived parallel lives, both involved in reading and writing” (personal communication, September 1, 2002). Anne Innis Dagg describes her mother as being “annoyed” at being taken for a faculty wife, when she thought of herself as an author and scholar in her own right (Dagg Interview, August 15, 2002). Mary Innis, Anne Innis Dagg writes elsewhere, “felt frustrated as a serious writer and academic, the areas of greatest importance to her, probably because of the way she felt marginalized by others” who saw her only as a wife and mother (1995a, p. 8).
1930s (1): Media and history

It was in their newly built house in north Toronto that the Innises planned their only formal research collaboration, *An Economic History of Canada*, published in 1935. Anne Innis Dagg comments on the remarkable nature of the *Economic History* project. “When you think of how many professors could go home and tell their wife to write a book in their subject,” Innis Dagg said, “it’s amazing” (Dagg Interview, 2002). Harold commissioned *An Economic History* as a textbook for a course he taught in Canadian economic history, since no teachable general primer in the subject existed. Mary, with four children under the age of ten, researched and wrote it with Harold’s assistance. The book, a masterpiece of compression, sold well enough to warrant revision and enlargement in 1943, and was published as part of a series on “Staple Industries of Canada” edited by Harold Innis for the Ryerson Press. (Innis’ *The Fur Trade in Canada* was published as part of the same series.) Mary Innis’ text was the first general economic history of Canada published in English, and became the standard text of its kind in Canadian universities for a generation.

*An Economic History of Canada* combines technical analyses of agriculture and trade with indignant commentary at the “evil conditions” of nineteenth century industry in which “no laws protected employees from accident, long hours, bad conditions, or child labour” (M.Q. Innis, 1935, p. 212). There is evidence here of the social conscience that Mary would display often in her writing and correspondence over the years. But *An Economic History of Canada* is more remarkable for what may be the earliest evidence of an Innis writing about media in an explicit and extensive way. This can be better appreciated by carefully dating Harold Innis’ interest in the subject of communication.

Creighton traces Harold Innis’ first publication about communication to his 1942 article, “The Newspaper in Economic Development,” an outgrowth of Innis’ curiosity about the pulp and paper industry, among other economic staples in Canadian history (Creighton, 1957, p. 111). Robert Babe sees Innis’ three books on media, all published in the 1950-52 period, as arising from deeper sources. Babe (2000, p. 59-60) argues that for Innis, staples like fur, fish, and timber are “communication” insofar as the production of primary economic goods acts to create cultural environments that, in turn, condition certain kinds of behaviour and meaning. Money is also a medium in Innis’ view, notably since he departed from neo-classical norms in believing money to be a phenomenon that entered into and reorganized culture, rather than being a neutral agent. Babe writes that “although Innis seldom if ever used the term ‘media’ in his staples studies, retrospectively we can see that his communication thesis was germinating through this period” (2000, p. 59). However, as revealed by the relationship between the staples thesis and communication traced by Creighton and Babe, it is apparent that media *qua* media do not feature in Innis’ writings until the early 1940s.

Yet in *An Economic History of Canada*, media of various kinds are addressed openly and often. Postal services, telegraphy, newspapers, and advertising are dealt with in the book, and there are twenty-three references to media in total cited
in the index. The discussion of media is primarily descriptive in character, although there is often a tantalizing intellectual rationale implied in the exposition. For example, Mary addresses the rapid development of Quebec’s economy after the Conquest of 1759, and the involvement of British capital and trade that followed on the seizure of the colony from France. The implications of this economic catalyst for media were that “with the development of postal facilities and the growth of trade came the development of newspapers, which in turn did much to stimulate trade and the improvement of communications” (M.Q. Innis, 1935, p. 59). Or, underlining the importance of basic communication infrastructure to Canada’s early development, she writes that “government telegraph lines were built to accommodate sparsely-settled communities and joint-stock telephone companies appeared to serve small centres” (1935, p. 240).

It is important not to overstate the significance of these references. There is no explicit attempt to conceptualize the relationship of communication to economic or cultural change, though the lucidity of Mary’s prose makes those connections that are present clearer than does Harold’s elliptical style. But, in a manner that foreshadows Harold’s time and space bias concepts, Mary explores the concatenation of forces that make for the emergence of a new cultural environment. Writing of 1870s Canada, she argues that “as railway lines were extended, telegraph lines and postal facilities were extended also” (1935, p. 191). The correlation of transportation and communication is already evident from the coureurs de bois in The Fur Trade, who rely on oral networks to negotiate travel and trade as they ply Canadian waterways. But Mary Innis goes a little further, stating that “with the improvement of postal facilities came the spread of education, the rise of the newspaper and the correlated rise of advertising” (1935, p. 191).

There is here an underlying sense of the complex form of causality that is captured in Innis’ staples thesis, and that resurfaces much later with particular reference to media in The Bias of Communication and Empire and Communications. The modernization of the postal system, itself following on the extension of the railway, encourages the development of literacy, the press, and advertising. Therefore, while the staples thesis was launched with the publication of The Fur Trade in 1930, Mary’s Economic History is arguably the first instance of the staples thesis being applied to communication. It is impossible to determine whether the idea of relating the staples thesis to media originates with Harold or Mary, though we know that Harold consulted extensively with Mary on the book (Dagg Interview, 2002). But it remains an intriguing possibility that the transition from the staples thesis to the bias of communication argument is enabled by this collaboration, with Harold’s training in political economy added to Mary’s liberal arts education and professional interest in communication.

1930s (2): Memoirs and character studies
In her unpublished memoirs, Mary meditates upon a writer’s lifetime of carefully observing human nature. “How much we learn too late about the people to whom we have been closest all our lives . . . .” she writes. “We learn not by being told but by looking back from the greater experience and compassion of mature years, and
piecing together evidence which was always before us, but was too close to us to make sense at the time” (1972, p. 68).

This line from her memoirs summarizes her preference for seeing the human condition as it is reflected in the peculiar details of particular individuals. Abundantly evident in her short stories published in the 1920s and 1930s, this viewpoint is also sustained in the non-fiction more typical of her mature writing. From her late 1930’s scholarly articles in the Dalhousie Review on John Galt (1940), the nineteenth century Canadian novelist and businessman, and Philip Henry Gosse (1937), the nineteenth century Canadian naturalist, to her later biographical works like Travellers West (1956), Mrs. Simcoe’s Diary (1965), and The Clear Spirit (1966), the signature feature of her writing and editing is the human story as told through the lives of idiosyncratic personalities.

This novelistic style contrasts with the macro-historical outlook characteristic of Harold’s major works. Civilizations rise and fall in the space of a few pages of Empire and Bias, obscuring people in the dust thrown up by history. The Innis of both the political economy and communications books is the law-giver, the consummate social scientist and student of deep structure. But reading Harold Innis in proximity to Mary’s collected works brings a different Harold Innis sharply into view. This is Innis as the editor of diaries by Simeon Perkins (1948) and Alexander McPhail (1940), and most notably, the author of the woefully neglected 1930 volume Peter Pond: Fur Trader and Adventurer.

Integrating Pond’s own rough-hewn memoirs directly with Innis’ commentary, Innis reveals Pond (1740-1807) from the inside out. Pond, a fur trader active in founding the Northwest Company, and the person believed to be the first European to explore the Athabasca River in northern Alberta, is the personification of the historical forces chronicled in Innis’ better-known book of 1930, The Fur Trade. In a similar vein, Harold Innis edited and provided introductions for two diaries later in his career: the daily writings of the Nova Scotian politician and merchant Perkins (1735-1812), and those of McPhail (1883-1931), founder of the Saskatchewan Wheat Pool.

Innis is frankly appreciative of Pond, an explorer whose achievements in mapping lands west of Hudson’s Bay were overshadowed by the fame of his protégé, Alexander Mackenzie. The reader can’t help but think that Innis, a farmer’s son from Otterville, Ontario, who earned a PhD, then roamed the Canadian northwest in a canoe during his Fur Trade research, saw himself reflected in this backwoods savant. There is something in Pond’s practical intelligence (Pond learned aboriginal languages), survival skills (Pond worked longer in the woods than almost anyone in the Northwest Company’s history), and toughness of spirit (Pond was once charged with the murder of another fur trader) that draws Innis to him. “From a pecuniary point of view, Pond had learned the lessons of the fur trade to advantage,” Innis writes admiringly of Pond’s capacity to assess human character. “He knew men and was able to judge men to superintend his outfits. Success in the trade was dependent on judgement of character since the men were far removed from direct supervision throughout the winter” (1930b, p. 46).
These three books are strangely invisible within the Innis literature. We can take the example of the Acland and Buxton volume (Spry, 1999), arguably the most comprehensive volume of Innis scholarship, as well as one of the most recent. There is no reference to the Pond, Perkins, or McPhail texts in the “works cited” list in the Acland and Buxton volume, although both major and minor texts by Innis are recorded in detail. The neglect of the Pond, Perkins, and McPhail studies from usual scholarly consideration of Innis tends to reproduce our sense of him as someone better at nomothetic analysis than conveying the fine grain of concepts, representing lived history, or even sounding his own voice. But reading Harold and Mary Innis together makes his biographical works visible and intelligible. Her lifelong commitment to the personal draws the reader’s attention to this forgotten tendency in his writing. Add to this the fact that Innis wrote encyclopaedia articles on various railroad titans, and toward the end of his life became interested in the role of the entrepreneur, and the case for valuing Harold Innis as a close observer of human particularity is strengthened. However, minus the parallels with Mary’s far greater interest in thick description, it is much more difficult to place Harold’s biographical writings, or even remember that they were published at all.

1940s and early 1950s: Middle age and widowhood
The 1940s elevated Harold Innis to the position of elder academic statesman, and Mary increasingly played hostess to graduate students, faculty, and dignitaries. After some early political battles, Harold’s rise was rapid: he became Head of Political Economy at the University of Toronto in 1937; president of the Royal Society of Canada in 1946; and finally Dean of Graduate Studies at the University of Toronto in 1947. He also began to publish the essays later collected in his three books on communications.

For Mary’s part, after a decade of editing the newsletter of the Young Women’s Christian Association, the YWCA Quarterly, she published a history of the YWCA, Unfold the Years, in 1949. She researched and wrote a two-volume history of Canada for elementary school students, Changing Canada, which appeared in 1951-2. Through these years in which her reputation as a popular historian and professional writer was ascendant, Mary’s confidence in her powers grew. In her catalogue of women writers of non-fiction in Canada from 1836-1945, The Feminine Gaze, Anne Innis Dagg notes that it required “a great deal of ambition for an early woman to write a book and have it published . . . . To write a book of non-fiction indicated that a woman felt her ideas and information should reach a wider audience than the friends and relatives who made up her private sphere” (2001, p. 13). In this book inspired by her mother’s example, Innis Dagg’s comment speaks for Mary’s development as a non-fiction writer too.

In July 1950, Harold became seriously ill with the cancer that would lead to his early death. True to form for someone with an extraordinary work ethic, he alternated hospital stays with his usual rigorous schedule of academic labour and travel. Mary was a constant companion during his bouts of illness. Anne Innis Dagg remarked “when he became sick with cancer, for most of a year she stayed
with him, and spent every day at the Western Hospital when he was there” (Dagg Interview, 2002). After several brief periods of remission, Harold died at home in 1952, just a few days past his 58th birthday. Mary Innis was a widow at the age of 53. “To a new widow the change is severe,” she wrote 17 years later. “In a strange country you feel your way and more slowly. A woman who has lost her husband is in a new country and she may conclude at first sight that it is hostile” (Innis, M.Q., 1969, p. 13).

1952-72: A second career

With Harold’s death, Mary began a second career as a university administrator and participant in government commissions, a career that paralleled her husband’s own. Writing and editing, characteristically, continued to be a central part of her life. Her first major task was the preparation of new editions of Harold’s historical epics, and with S.D. Clark and W.T. Easterbrook assisting, she published The Cod Fisheries in 1954, The Fur Trade in 1956, and a collection of Innis’ political economy articles, Essays in Canadian Economic History, in 1956. (Later in 1972, she would revise and edit a new edition of Empire and Communications.) As “the only one who could read what he had written,” Mary decoded Harold’s notoriously illegible notes on the previous editions of the fur trade and cod fisheries volumes, and revised the manuscripts in accord with his wishes (Dagg Interview, 2002). It may never be clear just how much revision she did, but her role as Innis’ principal editor and her influence on how he is read today have never been fully appreciated. Anne Innis Dagg writes:

[Mary] Innis updated and improved these books in two ways: by adding references, alone or with notes, that had appeared after the date of publication of the book, and by adding Harold Innis’ own questions and comments which had occurred to him since the book was published. These addenda were difficult because of the poor writing and cryptic notations used by Harold Innis which made them difficult to decipher and track down to the source. In all three books she also prepared the indices. (1995a, p. 6)

Mary was named Dean of Women at University College, part of the University of Toronto, in 1955, serving nine years as protector and advisor to thousands of female students. “Perhaps not gregarious by nature,” the principal of University College writes in a tribute to Mary after her death, “she nevertheless moved easily among her students, a gracious, humorous, and witty table companion, never imposing her personality, a fine listener and observer” (Hallett, 1972, p. 2). She was appointed the only Canadian woman delegate to the Commonwealth Conference on Education in Oxford, England in 1959, and was made vice-chair of the Committee on Religious Education in Ontario public schools after she retired from University College in 1964. She received honorary doctorates from Queen’s University in Kingston, Ontario, in 1958, and from the University of Waterloo in Waterloo, Ontario, in 1965. This was overdue recognition of her contributions as a public intellectual to Canadian culture and university life.

During these years, she continued to write and edit. Another volume of history for elementary school students, Living in Canada (co-authored with Alex

Mary’s commission as the chief editor of Harold Innis’ political economy and media writings is perhaps not even the most consequential contribution she made. There is evidence that her presence is felt in the original writing and research of his books themselves. Anne Innis Dagg believes that many of the unconventional references to literature, biography, and memoirs in Harold’s works come from her mother. “Nobody’s ever mentioned this from all the literature on Harold Innis,” Anne said. “It’s something that struck me as very, very odd that so many of the sources—if you look at the footnotes in the later work—are memoirs, biographies, and autobiographies. They’re not the hardheaded texts of sociologists, historians, and economists. That would have come from my mother, I imagine” (Dagg Interview, 2002). Or, as Alison Beale describes their reading preferences, “on the domestic front, Innis was said, perhaps apocryphally, to have read just one novel, and that because he was courting his literature-loving wife Mary” (Beale, 1993, n.p.).

It is important to recognize, however, that Mary Cates does “not believe there was any influence of one upon the other. My mother was a very remarkable woman, who had a very interesting life, and I think she can be respected on those terms” (personal communication). Mary Cates’ opinion suggests some necessary caution in making a case for her mother’s effect on the selection of original sources in Harold’s research. An extensive search through Mary Innis’ collected papers in the archives of both the University of Waterloo and the University of Toronto revealed no direct evidence of influence, and making the forensic task more difficult, it is known that Mary destroyed many of her personal papers before she died (Dagg Interview, 2002). At best, the argument is circumstantial and speculative, based on what we know of their very different reading habits and Anne Innis Dagg’s intuition that her mother’s presence is felt in Harold’s choice of memoirs, biographies, and literature as some of the eclectic data used in his political economy and communications books. Still, given what we know of their active collaboration on the *An Economic History of Canada* (Innis, H., 1972) the possibility of further and unacknowledged influence is there.

In life, as in death, Mary’s professional and personal lives were indistinguishable. Her last work as an editor, a revised edition of *Empire and Communications* (Innis, H., 1972), was published the day after she died suddenly of a stroke on January 10, 1972, at the age of 72.
Conclusion

Speaking of the human capacity to believe in things that are patently fictional, as evident in the letters written to Sherlock Holmes or Romeo and Juliet as if they were real people, Mary writes “What a lot of gags there are in the great Age of Communication” (1968a, p. 38). For a generation, it has been an article of faith among communication scholars that Harold Innis invented communications research in Canada. Acknowledging that Mary Innis might have had some influence on that legacy, at least as based on what is admittedly circumstantial if evocative evidence, transforms our understanding of Harold Innis while taking nothing away from him. Rather, it suggests that media were considered by the Innises years before Harold is formally believed to have applied the staples thesis to communication; it enriches our appreciation of neglected works like Peter Pond (Innis, H., 1930b), allowing us to meet a very different Harold Innis on the page; and it explains some of Harold’s more atypical sources in his books, as well as the significance of Mary as editor and interpreter of his notes. While it is impossible to resolve the uncertain meaning of the line with which this paper began, it is apparent that the young lovers moved a few mountains in their time. Thanks to Mary and Harold Innis, Canadian communication scholars can see much further and more clearly today.

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Notes

1. A shorter version of this paper will be published as an appendix in a biography of Harold Innis written by media historian Dr. Paul Heyer. This biography is to appear with Rowman & Littlefield in the fall of 2003.

2. Mary (Innis) Cates and Anne Innis Dagg agreed to be interviewed for this research. The other surviving member of the Innis family, Hugh Innis, declined to be interviewed.

All four Innis children in turn entered, and graduated from, the University of Toronto between 1943 and 1956. The oldest brother, Donald, became a geography professor at the State University of New York campus in Geneseo. Donald died in 1988. Mary Cates married a surgeon, raised a family in British Columbia, and did graduate work in French literature. She now resides in San Diego, California. Hugh Innis is a professor of Image Arts at Ryerson University in Toronto, and has appeared as a frequent political commentator on radio and television. After doctoral work in
biology, Anne became an advisor in the Independent Studies program at the University of Waterloo. She has published a number of books in zoology, feminism, and Canadian women’s history.

3. This count excludes 11 references to the laying of telegraph cable lines.

4. I am grateful to an anonymous reader for this information supporting Innis’ interest in the personal.

5. The labour and latitude for editorial interpretation in Mary Innis’ revision of these works is revealed, by way of example, in the Editor’s Note to the 1972 edition of Empire and Communications. Here is her editor’s note in its entirety:

For a year after the publication of Empire and Communications in 1950, Dr. Innis wrote in the margins of his copy new ideas, suggestions, quotations, references—many to newly published books—which might be incorporated in the footnotes of a second edition. These additions, referenced by a letter, if to a specific word or passage, consisted often of phrases, questions, and words, and the references were almost always incomplete. The additions were, after all, the raw material for new documentation, not footnotes in themselves. He would have deleted some, expanded others, and completed the references.

It was decided to publish the new material very much as it stood. Quotations have been traced and ascribed wherever they were indicated. Many of the references are to books published in the ‘30s and ‘40s, which have been brought out since in new and expanded editions. Wherever possible the editor has located the quotation or source in the new edition and supplied the reference in square brackets. It is possible that there are quotations that were not indicated as such and have not been recognized.

Parentheses and question marks are those used by the author. Expanded references and additions by the editor are enclosed in square brackets. Punctuation has been added as seemed necessary to make the meaning clear. The author had indicated a few changes in the body of the text, and these have been made without comment. (1972, xiv)

References (to sources other than by or about Mary Quayle Innis)


Cates, Mary. (2002). E-mail correspondence, September 1.


Dagg, Anne Innis. (2002). Interview at University of Waterloo, August 15.


Bibliography of major writings relating to Mary Q. Innis

(a) single and co-authored works by Mary Q. Innis


(b) edited works by Mary Q. Innis


(c) secondary sources concerning Mary Q. Innis


Dagg, Anne Innis. (1995b). Mary Quayle Innis. In Mary Ann Dimand, Robert W. Dimand and Evelyn L. Forget (Eds.), *Women of value: Feminist essays on the history of women in economics*. Aldershot, UK: Edward Elgar Publishing. (This is the published version of the 1995a manuscript written by Anne Innis Dagg.)

