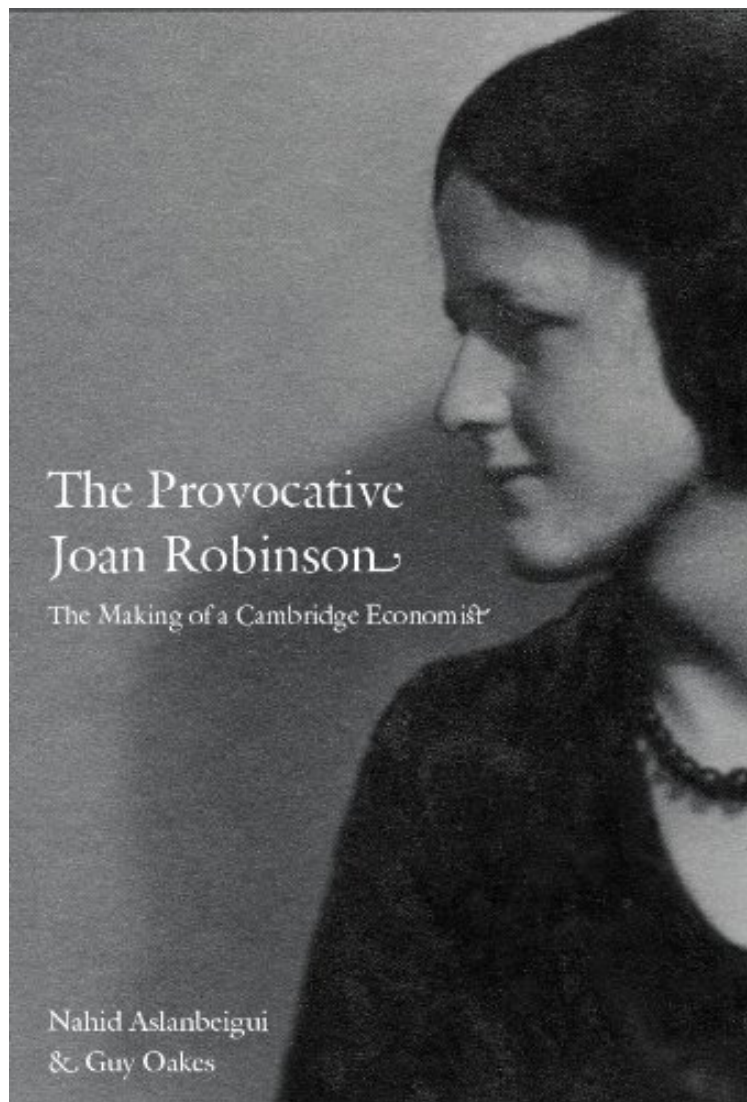


(Library ebook) The Provocative Joan Robinson: The Making of a Cambridge Economist (Science and cultural theory)

The Provocative Joan Robinson: The Making of a Cambridge Economist (Science and cultural theory)

Nahid Aslanbeigui, Guy Oakes
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Nahid Aslanbeigui, Guy Oakes : The Provocative Joan Robinson: The Making of a Cambridge Economist (Science and cultural theory) before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised The Provocative Joan Robinson: The Making of a Cambridge Economist (Science and cultural theory):

3 of 4 people found the following review helpful. GrippingBy Martin ChickThis is a rare instance of a serious academic study of an important moment in the development of economic thought which is also an utterly gripping read.3 of 10 people found the following review helpful. If you don't know algebra and calculus, then it is impossible to

understand Keynes's analysis in the GT By Michael Emmett Brady This is a very interesting book. Joan Robinson is shown to be a cynical, opportunistic, careerist who basically relied on A C Pigou and Richard Kahn to find, correct, and fix up her numerous mathematical errors (See pp. 5-6, 105-106, 113-118, 206, and 241). The authors show that she had no grasp at all of algebra and calculus in the period 1932-1933 or at anytime during her life. This directly leads to questions that are not considered at all by the authors. Question 1 is "If Joan Robinson was so obviously mathematically illiterate and inept in 1932 and 1933, then how could she have possibly read AC Pigou's 1933 "The Theory of Unemployment" and/or JM Keynes's 1936 "General Theory"? Question 2 is "If Joan Robinson was mathematically illiterate, then what is one to make about her exchanges with Keynes in the period 1931-1936?" It would have been impossible for Joan Robinson to have understood Keynes's comparison contrast between his model and Pigou's that was presented by Keynes in the appendix to chapter 19 of the GT. It would have been impossible for Robinson to have understood Keynes's technical analysis as presented in chapters 20 and 21 of the GT. Question 3 is "What is one to make of the claims put forth by Joan Robinson, attributed to Gerald Shove AFTER he had died by Kahn and Robinson, that Keynes had never taken the twenty minutes that was necessary to master the theory of value?" Question 4 is "How could she have been able to compare the work of Keynes and Kalecki and determine that Kalecki had presented the theory of effective demand first, given that both theories require a mastery of algebra and calculus?" This means that all of the Keynes-Robinson correspondence over the GT amounts to a giant bluff on her part that succeeded in advancing Robinson's career. This appears to have been the only reason for Robinson's association with Keynes. Joan Robinson is revealed to be a Macbethian character without any character. This book goes a long way in explaining why no one at Cambridge, then or now, understood what it was Keynes was doing in chapters 19, 20, 21, and the appendix to chapter 19 of the GT. Robinson simply was making it all up as she went along. Perhaps the best example of this is her paper about a Cambridge economist at Oxford which is taken seriously as scholarship at Cambridge to this very day.

One of the most original and prolific economists of the twentieth century, Joan Robinson (1903–83) is widely regarded as the most important woman in the history of economic thought. Robinson studied economics at Cambridge University, where she made a career that lasted some fifty years. She was an unlikely candidate for success at Cambridge. A young woman in 1930 in a university dominated by men, she succeeded despite not having a remarkable academic record, a college fellowship, significant publications, or a powerful patron. In *The Provocative Joan Robinson*, Nahid Aslanbeigui and Guy Oakes trace the strategies and tactics Robinson used to create her professional identity as a Cambridge economist in the 1930s, examining how she recruited mentors and advocates, carefully defined her objectives, and deftly pursued and exploited opportunities. Aslanbeigui and Oakes demonstrate that Robinson's professional identity was thoroughly embedded in a local scientific culture in which the Cambridge economists A. C. Pigou, John Maynard Keynes, Dennis Robertson, Piero Sraffa, Richard Kahn (Robinson's closest friend on the Cambridge faculty), and her husband Austin Robinson were important figures. Although the economists Joan Robinson most admired—Pigou, Keynes, and their mentor Alfred Marshall—had discovered ideas of singular greatness, she was convinced that each had failed to grasp the essential theoretical significance of his own work. She made it her mission to recast their work both to illuminate their major contributions and to redefine a Cambridge tradition of economic thought. Based on the extensive correspondence of Robinson and her colleagues, *The Provocative Joan Robinson* is the story of a remarkable woman, the intellectual and social world of a legendary group of economists, and the interplay between ideas, ambitions, and disciplinary communities.

This is a remarkable book. It is the first attempt of which I am aware to deal with the complexity of Joan Robinson's contributions to Cambridge economics in the 1930s. Robinson is an iconic figure, and a series of legends—mostly created by Robinson herself in a complex process of personality and career formation—makes such a historical reconstruction necessary. Necessary is the right word, since the entire history of what is now called macroeconomics, and a number of elements of the history of neoclassical economics in the pre-Second World War period, have been told from the perspective of Cambridge, England, by individuals engaged in defending the Cambridge tradition.