COMMUNICATION AND HISTORY: THEMES IN INNIS AND LAURENCE

Pamela McCallum

I

To begin, two images. In the opening lines of *The Diviners* Margaret Laurence speaks of a river flowing "both ways." The current moves from north to south; the wind ripples the surface from south to north. Harold Innis also speaks of rivers: rivers that were for the early traders both potential transport into the Canadian continent and threatening obstacles to be overcome. But while Laurence's river is a river of time, the past flowing inescapably into the present as the present moves back through the past, Innis' rivers represent space, part of a new land to be dominated by imperialist expansion, to be penetrated by the agents of commercial capitalism. Innis writes about the economic and social forces that structured Canada. Laurence writes about how we understand these forces, how we perceive our past. *The Diviners,* I shall argue, provides a connecting link between Innis' well-known writings on Canadian economic history — *The Fur Trade in Canada, The Cod Fisheries, The History of the Canadian Pacific Railway* — and his almost forgotten work on communications.

In *The Bias of Communication, Empire and Communication,* and *Changing Concepts of Time,* Innis sketched out an innovative theory about the relations between social power and corresponding cultural forms. His analysis of Near Eastern, Mediterranean, and European empires correlated the extent of imperial control over space and its duration through time in terms of communication technology. From these studies emerged a complex, but imprecise and unfocused, dialectic: the technology which had initially made possible imperial expansion eventually turned against its controllers. Papyrus and writing, necessary to codify the spatial expanse of the Egyptian empire, ultimately fossilized into a ponderous system, too unwieldly to support subsequent expansion. By contrast, the tradition of oral discussion, persisting in the dialogues of Greek philosophy, was creatively dynamic in the intellectual sphere but powerless to organize effective spatial control. Consequently, the Greek city states were left perilously vulnerable to domination by opposing imperial powers. The most significant implications for the study of modern society lie in Innis' speculations on printing. According to Innis, the printing press concentrated information control in the power of a small group who were then able to disseminate their version of reality over a

wide area to a great number of people, thereby negating the vital oral tradition of communication. Simultaneously, printing created a revolutionary communicative potential, wresting control away from the elite of medieval scribes and making communication possible far beyond the reach of the individual voice or pen. A proliferation of communication technology in the last century has intensified this contradiction. Never before have so many or so varied techniques of communication been available; yet, paradoxically, never has their ideological control seemed so solidly built into the class and political power structures of imperialist states.

Innis did not attempt to go beyond this impasse. Specifically, he drew away from asking certain questions that could have pointed a way out: Why, for example, were imperialist states able to divert the communications potential in technology so easily towards their own ends? Could a genuinely accessible communications system develop within a society based on liberal individualism?[1] Part of the difficulty Innis experienced in working through the modern implications of his argument originated in his initial conceptualization. Because he assumed forms of technology to be, in the first instance, independent developments, his analysis then centred on their subsequent relation to imperialist expansion. What this methodological perspective omits are the forces and limits exerted by a social formation on the actual genesis of a new technological form: technology develops because the needs of a certain society pressure it in specific directions. Since Innis instead located the bias of communication primarily in the technological form, not in the social structure, the pressures of society on technology were too often lost or bracketed. The extent of the impasse Innis' work had reached can be measured, in part, by the inability or refusal of Canadian scholars to take up the issues he raised. The only major development from his work, that of McLuhanist theory, dissolves any possibility of actual dialectic by making technology autonomous, atemporal, and self-sustaining. The concerns of the political economist — imperialist state power, monopolization of technological expertise, mystification and domination — are critically absent in McLuhanist concepts.

We do not traditionally look to a novelist to continue a discussion begun by a political economist. In many ways, however, Margaret Laurence's *The Diviners* coherently elaborates the problems raised by Innis' theories of communication. I do not, of course, mean that Laurence begins from a consideration of Innis' texts; *The Diviners,* rather, is structured around the same concerns — the implications of oral and written communication, social power, and ideological manipulation — that inspired Innis' research. More importantly, the novel focuses these problems in a socio-historical specificity that provides the critical cutting edge imprecise theory often lacks. I want to

---

[1]Daniel Drache argues that Innis' fundamental liberalism prevented his confronting these questions. See "Harold Innis: a Canadian Nationalist," *Journal of Canadian Studies,* 4 No. 2 (May 1969), 7-12.

look in some detail at the ways that Margaret Laurence's novel reassesses and redirects central difficulties in Innis' theories.

Throughout his writings on communications technology, Innis associated an oral tradition of communication with a fluid movement of ideas, with temporal continuity unfixed in rigid categorization. Conversely, written communication involved disciplined stability, necessary for the administration of large spatial empires, but, in its absolute fixity, generally destructive of creative activity. Innis makes the point plainly: "the oral tradition implies the spirit but writing and printing are inherently materialistic."[2] Nowhere is the difficulty of a unilateral formulation clearer than here. If the oral tradition implies a fluid creativity, it also limits communication to a small group or community, often locking discourse within a limited social experience. In contrast, while written communication may involve a more rigid formal organization, it makes possible transmission of actual experience through time and across space. These complications, frequently lost in the tentativeness or the abstract polarization of Innis' theorizing, are reformulated in *The Diviners*. Innis schematic opposition between the static fixity of print and the fluidity of speech breaks down when confronted by lived experience in the twentieth century. Class structures twist and distort both speech and writing, so that each, mediated by experience, undergoes a fundamental transformation. This recognition does not imply that no communication is possible. On the contrary, it emphasizes that actual communication can only take place in the full understanding of the gulf between intention and effect. It was in formulating the complex mediations between social structures and technological development that Innis' theory became either imprecise or reductionist. And, here, the specific, uniquely defined world of the novel provides the necessary focus for theory.

II

To understand fluidity and change Margaret Laurence's heroine begins with fixity. The snapshots of Morag's childhood are the frozen images of past moments, the now formalized presences of what is presently absent. Morag keeps them, she reminds us, "not for what they show, but for what is hidden in them,"[3] that is, not for the fixed image but for the imaginative memories swirling behind the static figures. The world hidden in the early snapshots is highly suspect: bits of childhood memories, the make-believe stories and imaginary companions of a very young child, the later embellishments of the older child desperately reconstructing a suitable past. These remembrances

---

[2]Harold Innis, *The Bias of Communication* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1951), p. 130.
[3]Margaret Laurence, *The Diviners* (Toronto and New York: Bantam, 1975), p. 6. Subsequent page references to the novel are given in parentheses in the text. I use this edition because of its wide availability.

remain to a great extent imprisoned in the static formality of the pictures. Unable to merge into the actual continuity which would constitute consciously perceived history, they are relegated to existence as isolated past moments. Thus the first six photographs represent a situation where the past does not press in upon the child's consciousness. Young Morag freely creates her own universe. Yet even the inadequate constructions of the past hidden in the snapshots lead her into the "memorybank movies." The transition from the frozen photographic image of the snapshot to the fluid motion of film marks a shift from a passive past, essentially separate from the self, to an active past pressing in on the individual, defining both consciousness and historical development. The event in the first memorybank movie — the death of Morag's parents — not only precipitates her physical departure from the farm, but also destroys, for a time, the conscious world of the child and her imaginative companions. The recognition of past time and an external social reality structuring the world of the individual is the first tentative movement towards conscious self-understanding.

Specifically, the death of Morag's parents means that she must move from the unpopulated country farm where she was free to create her own world in imagination to Manawaka where she will be plunged inexorably into a limiting, sometimes narrow, and always inescapable petit-bourgeois society. "In town" initiates a distinction, continued throughout the novel, among country, town, and city. The town — half way between the country farm or village community and the large city — incorporates characteristics of both country and city. Manawaka is large enough to contain the class divisions of the city (the established petit-bourgeois Scots on one side; most European immigrants, Métis, and an occasional displaced Scot like Christie Logan on the other), yet small enough that individuals know each other and live near each other. Consequently, the town generates a false pseudo-intimacy which in turn creates a significant confusion: it appears that an individual's sense of identity is rooted in the spatial dimension (the town) and not in social class. Much of the conflict in Morag's early sense of self arises from an intuitive identification with the working class, with her friend Eva Winkler, or later with the outcast Métis Jules Tonnerre and her partially mystified perception that she is equal to the daughters of the Scottish petit-bourgeoisie. Because the space of the Manawaka world dominates consciousness, an accurate understanding of the past, of history, and change is both painfully necessary and extremely difficult.

Innis consistently associated the domination of space with the formal codification represented by writing. Likewise Laurence suggests that the reinvention of the past — the rediscovery of time — cannot begin from written record, but is evoked through the negation of print in Christie's storytelling. The fluidity of the oral tradition allows Christie to fashion the Piper Gunn tales so that they portray both Morag's personal ancestors and the history of the Scottish immigration during the Highland enclosures. Just as the death of her

parents forced the young child out of the secure imaginative world of the farm, the tales begin with the expulsion of Scottish crofters from their lands: "All the lands of Sutherland will be raising the sheep, says the she-devil, for they'll pay better than folk" (p. 49). In the tales, Morag learns that oppression and the courage to struggle against it are not isolated individual responses but continuous throughout time. A sense of the past is the beginning of an understanding that the spatial confines of Manawaka are not absolute.

However necessary the Piper Gunn tales are to develop Morag's sense of her own past, they represent, to use the word Laurence invents, "infactuality." Although they genuinely convey the spirit of the Scottish immigrants' struggles, they are historically inaccurate. More precisely, the tales tell only part of the story and, taken alone, disguise the whole movement of Canadian history. The limitations of the Piper Gunn tales become starkly obvious in the final two stories of the "long march" and "the rebels." Once the Scots are settled in Canada, their class position shifts. No longer dispossessed landless immigrants they are forced to defend their newly acquired space against those who are now the dispossessed: the Métis and the Indians. The ultimate falsification is not any factual misconception, but the perception of another active struggling people as passive and inert. The Métis are less than human, merely a part of nature. "Were they bad, the breeds, and them?" Morag asks. And the answer: "No. They weren't bad. They were — just there" (p. 86). Significantly, Morag's later objection — "I liked him, though. Riel, I mean" (p. 132) — marks an awareness of the limitations in the Piper Gunn tales. A similar contradiction forms Morag's uncertain perception of Manawaka society. Her sense of identification with the assurance and courage of the Scottish immigrants is negated by her actual lived experience in Manawaka. Although her conscious self-image is constructed around pride in her Scottish ancestory, to the petit-bourgeois Scots she is associated with the other residents of Hill Street, with the poverty of the Winklers, with the Ukrainian railway workers, with the scavenger Christie. To Mrs. Cameron and Mrs. McVitie she is merely an object to be pitied; to their sons and daughters, an object to be taunted.[4]

Resolution of these contradictions is a slow and difficult process. Like the river that flows both ways, development of conscious understanding is never presented as a unilinear progression. Instead, it is a hesitating movement towards perception, often thwarted by retreat into confusion and mystification. Morag's insight into self and her society is both intensified and complicated by her identification with Jules Tonnerre. Driven from their lands in the last century, the Métis literally possess no living space. Morag has learned that they are mysterious and unmentionable. Perhaps Stacey Cameron best expresses Manawaka's opinion:

---

[4]In his review of *The Diviners* (*Canadian Dimension*, March 1975) Kenneth James Hugues points out similar attitudes in Christie. These are especially apparent in the "Christie with Spirits" section, pages 46-48.

> . . . the *Bois-Brûlés,* the French-Indians, the Métis, those who sang Falcon's song, once the prairie horselords, would be known as half-breeds and would live the way the Tonnerres lived, in rambling shackledom, belonging nowhere.[5]

"Belonging nowhere" is the significant image. Because the Métis have no land, Jules cannot be deceived that his identity is centered on present space instead of past time. His first glance at Morag, a silent, nonverbal communication, affirms a solidarity against the social humiliation of the classroom. From Jules, Morag hears Lazarus' tales of Rider Tonnerre and Old Jules, stories that confirm her intuitive identification with Riel. Her intense but incomplete love-making with Jules serves as an emblem of her uncertain consciousness: she has begun to construct a self-image based on class identification, yet oppression still seems to be based in the spatial world of Manawaka. Freedom appears as escape from that space.

To leave Manawaka is a deceptive and insidious freedom. Instead of moving toward resolution and understanding Morag is pushed into an existence of heightened contradiction. Her actual living space — the Crawley's house — resembles the Hill Street environment from which she fled. In contrast, the smooth bourgeois world of the university demands that she remould herself even to the extent of relearning language. Consider Morag's conversation with the English professor, Brooke Skelton:

> "Shall we have some sherry before you tackle the eggs and bacon, which is all there is here at the moment for dinner?"
>
> "Please," Morag says, having recently learned to say, simply, *Please,* instead of *Oh yes thanks I'd just love some,* or, worse, *Okay that'd be fine.* (p. 197)

Brooke's language is not merely a more concise manner of speech; it suppresses any personal or emotional reaction within a formalized reply. The language of the English seminar, the "well-modulated grammatical voices, devoid of epithets, bland as tapioca pudding" (p. 255), is the language of a highly specialized noncommunication. The working-class language of Manawaka — the tales, Christie's spiels, the screams of Vernon Winkler, Jules' dirty rhymes, Eva's sobs, even the drunken shrieks of Piquette and Lazarus — all express deeply felt experience. The bland nonexpression of "Please" and the pseudo-argument in the seminar destroy the vitality of oral communication, rendering it as formal, stable, and frozen as the most stilted writing. In fact, Brooke first admires the directness of Morag's speech, yet her calculated denial of her past precludes any creative interaction between them. Their marriage gives Morag the external objects of bourgeois life (the acceptable apartment, the clothes, the status of "professor's wife"), but at the cost of her genuine class identity and especially at the cost of her language. Morag gets, in her own words, what she wanted but not what she bargained for.

---

[5]Margaret Laurence, *The Fire-Dwellers* (London: Panther, 1969), p. 188.

Apparent escape from Manawaka society degenerates into another equally limiting social prison. Denied even her own mode of speech, she is forced into the covert, silent activity of writing. The novel allows her to exist as a composite self, rediscovering her creative expression without overtly challenging her bourgeois existence. Still, the achievement of writing a novel becomes a material force to break through the walls of self-chosen silence. The dust jacket of the completed novel (a spear piercing a human heart) is an emblematic reproduction of the Logan crest; as such it functions as a formal reminder that the roots of her creative expression rest in Christie's tales and spiels. The rediscovery of written expression turns backward to make the nonexpression of bourgeois pseudo-speech impossible. Significantly, Morag's final break with Brooke and his world is precipitated by an outburst of Christie-like oaths. Repossession of her own voice has been as liberating as her conscious decision to leave with Jules.[6]

When Morag leaves Brooke, she enters an existence whose visible images recreate her Manawaka past. The known friend Jules, the brown linoleum and wooden chairs of the Jarvis Street roominghouse, Maggie Telfer's grey unpainted boardinghouse reminiscent of the houses on Hill Street — all these reconstruct the once rejected environment. Through this world she can re-experience the creative potential so long sublimated. Now creation is no longer merely the isolated woman writing in the apartment tower. On all levels it recovers class identity: novel writing becomes necessary labour; the birth of her daughter confirms a social responsibility Brooke's individualism could never allow; her friendship with Fan Brady re-establishes a sociability impossible in Toronto university society. The crucial difference is that she rediscovers the social environment of Manawaka in terms of class solidarity and human relationships. The desperate and debilitating need to escape from Manawaka space is lifted, and, since she has consciously freed herself from the confusion between the false domination of space and actual social oppression, she can eventually return to the small Manawaka-like McConnell's Landing.

III

At this point I want to deepen analysis by considering the ways *The Diviners* complicates Innis' categories. An oral tradition, he argued, was especially creative in its fluid malleability:

> Fact shifted into legend, legend into myth. Facts worked loose and became detached from their roots in space and time.[7]

---

[6]Jules' name linguistically links him to oaths and swearing. The name Tonnerre, which means thunder in French, is the basis of several French oaths. It is roughly equivalent to the English "bloody."

[7]Harold Innis, *The Bias of Communication*, p. 102.

Initially, this passage appears to describe a process similar to the "infactuality" of the Scottish and Métis tales. Yet the actual emphasis is almost the opposite. The value Innis stresses originates in an oral transmission which, filtered through many perceptions, finally becomes detached from any specific time or space. It is, in short, universal. By contrast, *The Diviners* shows the oral tradition to be most liberating when its is deeply rooted in history. The tales teach Morag to understand basic patterns of struggle and oppression. Because the tales are never mere material fact, she can critically reject the slavish adoration of Scottish ancestry taught in the bourgeois households and identify the parallels between the Highland Clearances and the seizure of land from the Métis in the Canadian west.

Even in the tales themselves, oral communication has suffered irreparable distortion; for the original language has been destroyed, and the stories live only in the imposed language of imperialist England:

> Christie telling the old tales in his only speech, English, with hardly any trace of a Scots accent, and yet with echoes in his voice that went back and back. . . . The lost languages, forever lurking somewhere inside the ventricles of the hearts of those who had lost them. Jules, with two languages lost, retaining only broken fragments of French and Cree, and yet speaking English as though forever it must be a foreign tongue to him. (p. 244)

The imposition of English on the vocal tone and pattern of French or Cree or Gaelic linguistically renders the domination of English imperialism after the defeat of Batoche or Culloden. Consequently, it is in the preservation of socio-historical experience against formidable pressures, not, as Innis suggests, in an atemporal universality, that the oral tradition communicates creative possibility.

Equally, *The Diviners* complicates Innis' suggestion that writing and printing are rendered adjuncts of imperial expansion. Writing is a means by which Morag can both formalize her denied past feelings and criticize them from the greater perception of present understanding. Each novel reworks her lived experience while simultaneously removing it from the limited particularity of a specific individual's experience. *Spear of Innocence* retells the destructive consequences of a naive young girl's attempt to escape from a northern lumber town; *Prospero's Child,* a young woman's marriage to a dominating man and her struggle to liberate herself; *Jonah,* a daughter's resentment towards a disreputable father. Written from deeply felt experience, the novels cannot fail to represent herself; yet, formalized by a reflective, critical consciousness, they never merely reproduce the experiencing self. The novels act as a mediation between individual experience and the broad socio-historical patterns suggested by the tales. Indeed, in the final novel — *Shadow of Eden* — Morag is able to modify critically, to supercede, the limitations of both Scottish and Métis tales by incorporating them into the structure of a historical novel. In Vancouver Morag had been unable to

present the Piper Gunn tale satisfactorily as a short story. Only when integrated into the socio-history of the whole Canadian west does it live as written communication.

Writing, however, is by its nature less social than oral communication. For Morag writing was initially liberating because it allowed her to act, to break through the passivity that her social role — "professor's wife" — had forced upon her. Yet the act of writing is essentially individual and must always be separated by time from its complementary opposite, the act of reading. Any interaction between writer and reader takes place in each isolated consciousness. Because of its essential introspective quality, intensified by the proliferation and formality of printed words, writing becomes the medium of a careful and sustained process of thought. It is essential to the communication of Morag's reflective development towards greater self-consciousness, but it is not the only means of communication. Nor is it presented as the most important. Equally powerful is the intuitive understanding Morag acknowledges between Jules and Pique:

> How unlike me. I would have had to say what I thought about it, analyze the words, probably, yakkity yak. She doesn't have to, and neither does Jules. They do it in a different way, a way I can see although it's not mine. (pp. 426-27)

Such nonverbal recognition portrays the unwritten expressiveness of the Manawaka oppressed: Christie's divining of the garbage, Lazarus' tales of the Métis rebels, the first glance of solidarity between Jules and Morag. Jules' songs give formal expression to this unwritten, and often unworded, communication.

Like Morag's novels, especially like *Shadow of Eden,* Jules' songs articulate the Métis tales and his own lived experience. Unlike a novel, the songs are an immediately shared social experience. While Morag despairs that she cannot give Pique "a shelf of novels," Jules' songs can be freely given and freely shared. Most importantly, the songs mediate between the chronicles of heroic struggle in the tales of Rider Tonnerre and Old Jules and the actual suffering in the lives of Lazarus, Val, and Piquette. Heroic defiance is qualified by genuine pain, while at the same time the possible end of suffering is made concrete in the struggle against oppression. The songs do not elevate suffering to an eternal, unchangeable condition (as, for instance, do the discussions about Gerard Manley Hopkins in Brooke's class); nor do they subsume individual experience in a false universality.

It is similarly important to understand that *The Diviners* is not merely a testament of faith in the divining power of either written or oral communication. The radical innovation of the novel lies in its recognition that all forms of communication are limited and distorted by the pressuring social structures they necessarily inhabit. On a simple level, Morag is constantly baffled by the reviews of her novels. Similarly, Jules' songs too often encounter the blank

wall of customers in the taverns, most of them "middle-aged middle-class men out with hired women, painting, as they imagine, the town red, and dead-drunk" (p. 280). Their calls for the pallid country and western songs popularized by the mass media drown Jules' own voice in a barrage of incomprehensibility. This emphasis on the limitations class realities force upon any form of communication powerfully complicates Innis' assumption that the bias of communication exists primarily in the form of the technology. By reasserting the priority of external class structures over all forms of communication, *The Diviners* makes the search for means of communication necessarily a struggle against the imposed distortions of social hierarchies. The struggle to speak — whether it is Morag's act of writing in the tower apartment or Jules' attempt to sing his songs to an audience of drunken businessmen — is always a struggle within and against social structures.

In an important way the very structure of the novel becomes a struggle to break through the isolation of the reader's consciousness imposed by the form of the novel. The complex presentation of time allows the reader both to follow and to assess critically the development of specific characters. The present narrative (written in past tense) provides the touchstone for the reader to enter the novel: it is essentially a traditional novelistic narrative presented in a third-person point of view.[8] But the series of still photographs and memorybank movies draws the reader backwards into a narrative of the past (written in the present tense). The movement into the past is at once a motion inward, into Morag's consciousness, and outward, into the social space that created that consciousness. Through the alternation in structure between a past present and a present past the reader encounters bits of Morag's experience — the phone call from Jules, for instance, or the newspaper picture of Brooke, or the conversation with Ella — before understanding fully how Jules or Brooke or Ella function in the whole fabric of Morag's past experience. Just as Morag perceives fragmentary aspects of her life before she understands the totality of self-development, the reader understands part of the past before the whole. Like the river that flows both ways, knowledge of past modifies present action, and present experience reshapes understanding of the past.

While the time structure of *The Diviners* breaks down the traditional concepts of time as a linear progression, the content of the novel destroys the notion of a novel as a self-contained world. Because the incidents and characters constantly reach out to Laurence's other novels and stories, the reader is pulled out of the particularity of *The Diviners* into the entirety of class relationships in Manawaka. Reading is no longer passive consumption but an active process in which the limited consciousness of the characters can be

[8]In many ways the structure of *The Diviners* resembles the division between traditional novelistic narrative and the notebook entries in Doris Lessing's *The Golden Notebook*. Both are, in part, novels about novel writing. But the "memorybank movie" technique in *The Diviners* forms a break with print and writing that is not present in the notebooks of Lessing's novel.

critically revised. When Jules trades the Macdonald plaid pin for Lazarus knife, Morag wonders:

> It's the Clanranald Macdonalds. Where could he have got it from, John Shipley? We'll never know, of course. (p. 432)

But the significance of the Macdonald plaid pin is not an incomprehensible mystery. *The Stone Angel* makes clear that John Shipley's action in trading a treasured family heirloom to a despised Métis was a repudiation of the uncritical worship of Scottish ancestory in the Manawaka petit-bourgeoisie. Even in their limitations, Christie's Piper Gunn tales assume an active human expressiveness, completely absent in the petit-bourgeois adoration of objects. Morag's adoption of the Macdonald insignia carries a specific significance. Clan Gunn had no coat-of-arms and no crest, conveying the blank denial of past experience that Morag lived in her false consciousness. The Logan crest (a passion nail piercing a human heart proper), translated onto the dust jacket of *Spear of Innocence,* represents the genuine oppression and suffering she was eventually forced to acknowledge. The adopted Macdonald crest (on a castle triple-towered, an arm in armour, embowed, holding a sword, proper) recognizes the active struggle against that oppression, a struggle consciously begun for Morag in the prison of the apartment tower.

In these contexts, Pique's choice to go west to Jacques' farm is especially important. Both Jules and Morag escaped the domination of Manawaka space by adopting a rootless existence. Pique chooses to join Jacques on Galloping Mountain where, unlike Lazarus who lived in the nowhere land of the valley or Jules who moved from boardinghouse to boardinghouse, he has established a living space away from Manawaka. And, unlike Val's attempt to drown her anguish in drugs and drink on Vancouver slum streets, Jacques' visits to the city are consciously political acts of participation in the nascent Métis movement. Morag and Jules had to become rootless in their attempts to escape Manawaka; Pique and Jacques can fight for a living space, a community that they have themselves determined. Pique's "bad trips" — both LSD and her first frantic journey west — reproduced the aimless flight of Morag's escape from Manawaka. Her second journey westward is a conscious decision to participate in building a community on the mountain that holds her name. As such, it is a refusal to be determined by the rootlessness she experienced with Morag.

At this point *The Diviners* clearly redirects the impasse in Innis' theoretical concepts. Canada, according to Innis, existed tenuously as a nation. Overshadowed successively by French, British, and American empires, Canada had failed to create a forceful, space-dominating identity. Yet he was never able to articulate the implications contained in this absence of expansionist identity: Could Canada generate a unique nonimperialist attitude towards space? Or was it merely a country condemned to passivity, to

inevitable manipulation by stronger empires? Although Innis' writings remain indispensible for the understanding of the economic and social forces that shaped the country's historical development, when he turned to the cultural and technological forms that accompanied imperial expansion, his theoretical categories became rigid and polarized. Ultimately Innis could not effectively fuse socio-economic and cultural analysis: a potential dialectic remained truncated. Still, his attempt was a creative beginning. By re-emphasizing the pressuring forces of social structures over all forms of communication, by reasserting the creative potential in both written and oral communication, Laurence reintroduces genuine dialectic. Innis analyzed the dominating forces in Canada's past. Laurence discloses not only that domination, but also resistance against it. And when we look into our past to discover active struggle, we also look back into the future.

Girton College
Cambridge University