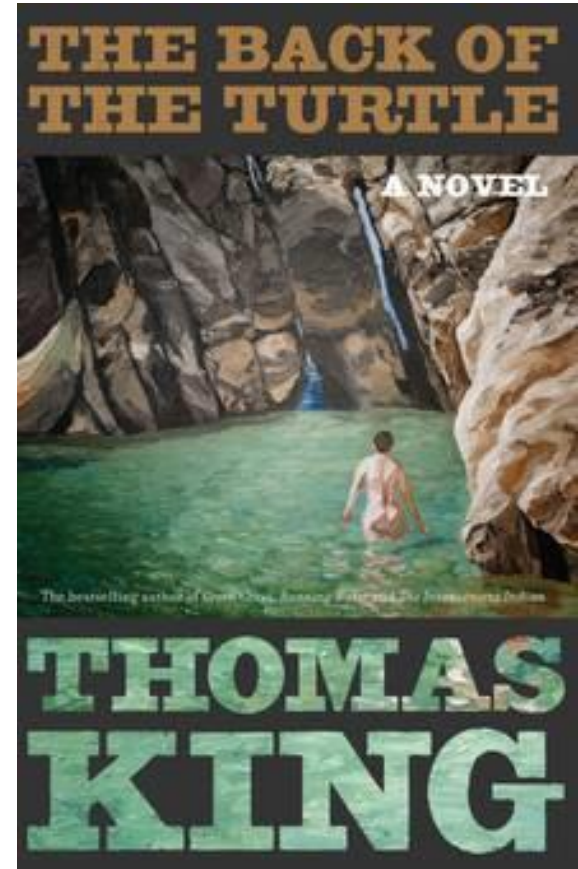


# The Back of the Turtle

- Winner of the 2014 Governor General's Award, one of the most prestigious literary awards in Canada?
- Have you heard of Thomas King?



# Thomas King (1943-)

- Canadian-American with Cherokee, Greek and German roots
- Attended Catholic and public schools in California
- Has taught at the University of Lethbridge, U of Minnesota, and currently U of Guelph.
- *Green Grass, Running Water* a Canadian classic



# Nature the Monster and the Bush Myth

- Think of an incident in which you had a terrifying or dangerous encounter with Nature.
- How do you feel?  
How did you react?  
Were you calm, or did you panic?
- How did you escape?



- Northrop Frye talks about Canadians as possessing a "garrison mentality": we are so frightened by the oppressive vastness and threatening dangerousness of our natural landscape that we build walls against it, and hide behind the walls, in fortified garrisons of the mind.
- We see the natural world as something that's out to get us. Americans look at a big empty space and say, "Hey, great, let's get busy and conquer it and turn it into a city."
- Canadians look at a big empty space and say, "I'm frightened, so let's get together and build a wall and hide ourselves from the big ugly natural world before it gets us and does us in."

*The Jack Pine*, Tom Thomson (1920)



- Small and isolated communities surrounded with a physical or psychological “frontier,” separated from one another and from their American and British cultural sources: communities that provide all that their members have in the way of distinctly human values, and that are compelled to feel a great respect for the law and order that holds them together, yet confronted with a huge, unthinking, menacing, and formidable physical setting—such communities are bound to develop what we may provisionally call a garrison mentality...The real terror comes when the individual feels himself becoming an individual, pulling away from the group, losing that sense of driving power that the group gives him...It is much easier to multiply garrisons...
- Northrop Frye, from *The Bush Garden* (1966)

- As the centre of Canadian life moves from the fortress to the metropolis, the garrison mentality changes...It begins as an expression of the moral values generally accepted in the group as a whole, then, as society gets more complicated and more in control of its environment, it becomes more of a revolutionary garrison...But though it changes from a defence of to an attack on what society accepts as conventional standards, the literature it produces tends to be rhetorical, an illustration or allegory of certain social attitudes...
- Northrop Frye, from *The Bush Garden*

## Garrisons and Bush Myths

- Atwood's *Survival: A Thematic Guide to Canadian Literature* (1972) carries on this theme, only she calls it the **bush myth**. We define ourselves in relation to the wilderness that is Canada.
- “Nature is a monster.”
- Margaret Atwood



## Garrisons and Bush Myths

- What a lost person needs is a map of the territory, with his own position marked on it so he can see where he is in relation to everything else. Literature is not only a mirror; it is also a map, a geography of the mind. [Canadian] literature is one such map if we can learn to read it as *our* literature...
- Margaret Atwood, from *Survival*

# Environment and Literature

- We have looked at literature in many different ways.
  - New criticism
  - Marxism
  - Postcolonial
  - Feminist
  - Christian

What does it mean to read as one who is observant about the details of the environment, of animals?

What does it mean to be a Christian in relation to Nature?

# Bush Myth and Literature

- In groups of 5, discuss the following questions:

What does it mean to be a Christian in relation to Nature?

It is not the earth that provides what humans demand. In fact, from a marginally adequate biosphere, the earth provides us with very little...It is man's mind operating through his body—both gifts of God—that provides most of what man wants and needs as he reshapes...what he finds in nature” (Calvin Beisner, *Prospects for Growth: A Biblical View of Population, Resources, and the Future*)

# Home

- What is the importance of **home**, be it the dwelling, the town, the society, in relation to our proximity to Nature?
- What is your idea of home?
- Where is it?
- Discuss with neighbour.

# Home

- Where is home for Dorian?
- Where is home for Gabriel?
- Where is home for Mara?
  
- Discuss with neighbour.

But where is *home*? This is a very significant question in today's multicultural society.

- Is it the geographical place where you physically live?
- My house is in southside Edmonton.

## But where is *home*?

- Is it the geographical place where you physically live?
  - My house is in southside Edmonton.
- Is it a geographical place that is defined by political borders?
  - I live in Edmonton, Alberta, Canada.
  - I live in Kingston, Jamaica.

## But where is *home*?

- Is it the geographical place where you physically live?
  - My house is in southside Edmonton.
- Is it a geographical place that is defined by political borders?
  - I live in Edmonton, Alberta, Canada.
  - I live on the Smoke River Reserve
- Is it a place that exists only in the imagination?
- Is it where I am at this moment?



## But where is *home*?

- Is it only a temporary condition? Can I be a British Columbian while living at King's in Alberta?
- ? Or is my home my nationality? My ethnicity?

## But where is *home*?

- **Is the idea of home simply a metaphor?**
- A metaphor is a statement that one thing is something else, which, in a literal sense, it is not.
- A metaphor is the ascribing of the qualities of one object to another; the application of a name or descriptive term or phrase to an object or action to which it is imaginatively but not literally applicable
- That is, not just comparing two things, but representing one thing by showing how it has certain qualities recognizable in another thing.

## But where is *home*?

- Is the idea of home simply a metaphor?
  - Is it a place that I can only understand when I compare it to somewhere else? Is it the place where I am not?