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DISCOVERY AND RECOVERY OF LANDSCAPE IN NATIVE CANADIAN POETRY: A CRITIQUE OF RITA JOE'S *I LOST MY TALK*

Dr. A .ROSELIN MARY

The labels "Aboriginal," "Indigenous," and "First Nations" interchangeably used along with "Native" often overshadow the fact that the Aboriginal peoples of Canada are culturally diverse and that each cultural group produces its own literature. The usage of the culture-specific adjectives like Cree, Mohawk, Ojibway, Okanagan enunciates their effort to reinstate their identity as well as the impossibility of categorising all Aboriginal writers under the umbrella term "Native" or "Indian".

Okanagan author and director of the First Nations Creative Writing School (the En'owkin Centre in Penticton, B.C.), Jeannette Armstrong, put it in an interview with Renate Eigenbrod on August 6, 2001: "I would stay away from the idea of "Native" literature, there is no such thing. There is Mohawk literature, there is Okanagan literature, but there is no generic Native in Canada." (Armstrong, 25). The diversity of language, culture, beliefs, philosophies, and worldviews of every tribe or community provided a rich and colourful ethnic assortment in Canada. The colonizers could not see it. Their racial prejudice caused them to look at them as uncivilised barbarians to be refined by Western religion and language. The new language and religion of colonisers threw the Native Canadians out of balance. The strong roots in their oral tradition, is palpable in the written text which is talking back- not writing back. The struggle in speaking as well as writing and switching over from native tongue to a foreign language is a universal experience of indigenous writers.

Rita Joe, born in Whycocomog, Cape Breton, Nova Scotia, in 1932, is the best-known Mi'kmaw writer. She was honoured with the Order of Canada in 1990. In her poetry, she "teaches" about onslaughts against her culture, as well as