

self-seeking journey, all is not lost. A case can be made to show that even the best writers are only seeking themselves; but in doing so, they illuminate both the inner and outer human landscapes no matter what or where the territory lies. Literature must be planted firmly in some soil. Even works of non-realism such as those of Jorge Luis Borges make use of spiritual landscapes which have at least been partly inherited by the writer.

Just as some African and Pacific island literature is translated into English or French, so good non-local writers translate a foreign cultural landscape. Any translation is necessarily imperfect, but the link provided makes comprehension more probable.

Margaret Laurence was in Somalia and Nigeria for seven years. Her ability to write great fiction about East and West Africa, Canada, and the British Isles is due in part to her imaginative comprehension of the Other — an ability nurtured by her experiences on the African continent.

When like can only speak for like, distortion follows. Emissaries between peoples can help give us an appreciation of human differences and shared universals. Martin has done for us what Michener and Melville were unable to do for her.

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### Critique

Kristine Martin demonstrates the need for the serious scholar to address the topic of African and Pacific literature in the form of comparative analysis. She has provided a good example for others to emulate, for her study is concerned with self-identity in the formation of ethnicity.

Other readers who are unfamiliar with African and Pacific island transitional literature may question the relevance and importance of Martin's article on first reading. However, the author makes two key points which appropriately address any concerns about relevance for widening our frame of reference. First, she notes that "the major concerns of many African and Pacific writers are issues which determine their viability as members of an ethnic community." And her second major point is that African and Pacific literature provides "a focus, a means by which people can identify themselves as members of a group whose bonds transcend the maelstrom generated by the collision of transitional and technological forces."

Beyond the analysis of literature in the formation of ethnic identity, however, is Martin's carefully crafted biographical information concerning the development of her course at the high school level in Australia. It is a lesson from which we can all learn in developing ethnic content in our own classes and courses. Indeed, Martin shows what obstacles stand before us while demonstrating that the roadblocks are surmountable.

Scholarly endeavors such as Martin's must be used as tools for analyzing and bringing forth the vital reservoir of spiritual and intellectual power of racial minorities throughout the recently colonized world, for the significance of self-esteem in the formation of a positive ethnic identity is paramount. Anything less than the full development of ethnic artists in academic circles can only serve as a dilution and camouflage for that which we call ethnic studies.

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**Literature of Oppression:  
A Critique of "African and Pacific Literature"  
Mary Sisney**

Kristine Martin states that "the literature which has developed over the past thirty years in Africa and over the past ten in the Pacific mirrors their shared experiences and outlook." Black Americans have also lived in a society controlled by whites. They have also been portrayed as uncivilized, culturally deprived, less-than-second-class citizens. And black Americans have also felt "bitterness, frustration, and longing." It is not surprising, therefore, that black American literature has many of the characteristics Martin found in African and South Pacific literature.

Like the writers of the newly independent African and Pacific nations, such post-Civil War black writers as Charles Chesnutt, Paul Dunbar, and James Weldon Johnson were intent upon redefining black identity. Their major characters were doctors, teachers, and talented musicians. This emphasis upon the black middle class — "the talented tenth" — was an attempt to demonstrate that former slaves could succeed in a white world. Perhaps more important, it was also an attempt to erase, or at least to neutralize, the Joel Chandler Harris and Thomas Nelson Page images of shiftless black buffoons, dominant in late nineteenth century American literature.<sup>1</sup>