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Literature for the Rainbow Nation: The Case of Sol Plaatje's *Mhudi**

David Johnson

Summary

The rise in critical status of Sol Plaatje's *Mhudi* is traced, with the connections between the changing political conditions and the (increasingly generous) receptions of the novel sketched. Brief comparisons to canon construction in Roman, English, and United States literatures provide a basis for the argument that a conservative aesthetic is likely to prevail in the new South Africa, with writing "too angry", "not literary enough", and "not truly South African" marginalised. Brief suggestions are given as to how such an aesthetic might be resisted.

Opsomming

Die opswaai in die kritiese status van Sol Plaatje se *Mhudi* word nagegaan. Terselfder tyd word die verband tussen die veranderende politieke omstandighede en die toenemende gulhartige ontvangs van die roman geskets. Samevattende vergelykings word getref tussen die konstruksie van kanonisasie in die Romeinse, Engelse en Amerikaanse letterkundes wat dan die grondslag vorm vir die bewering dat 'n konserwatiewe estetiese in die nuwe Suid-Afrika die botoon gaan voer, terwyl marginalisering gaan plaasvind van vroeëre werke wat as "te omstrede", "nie werklik literêr nie" en "nie wesenlik Suid-Afrikaans nie" beskou word. Kort en bondige voorstelle word gemaak oor hoe om so 'n konserwatiewe estetiese aan bande te lê.

What happens when protest literature becomes canonised? When the regime against which the literature protested ceases to exist? And, what aesthetic operates in admitting protest literature to the revised canon? Finally, how are the connections between (new) literary canons and (new) nations forged?

To try and shed light on these questions, I consider the rise in status within the South African literary canon of Sol Plaatje's novel *Mhudi* ([1930] 1978). Having set out the passage of *Mhudi* from the margins under the 1930s segregationist state and literary authority, to the centre under a 1990s democratic government and liberated literary culture, I suggest that the histories of nations and canons warn against assuming a complacent narrative of progress.

Any summary of *Mhudi* is, of course, in itself an interesting critical

reading, but it is necessary at the outset to establish how the novel's reputation has been redefined by succeeding generations of South African critics. My reading emphasises the protest aspects of *Mhudi*.

In the preface to the original edition of *Mhudi*, Plaatje describes his objective in writing the novel as twofold:

(a) to interpret to the reading public one phase of "the back of the Native mind"; and (b) with the readers' money, to collect and print (for Bantu schools) Sechuana folk-tales, which, with the spread of European ideas, are fast being forgotten.

(Plaatje [1930] 1978: 21)

There is, however, a third object implicit in these two, which gives the novel its reputation as the earliest piece of black South African protest literature, namely to protest about the theft of African land by the Union government in the early part of the twentieth century.¹ Written by Plaatje at the same time as *Native Life in South Africa* ([1917] 1987), *Mhudi* (1978) is set in the 1830s, and portrays the vicious land-grabbing and military tyranny of the Matabele in a manner that shows up the similarly brutal rule of the Union government of 1913. The novel closes with the defeat of the Matabele by the combined forces of the Boer and the Bechuana. Two passages serve to illustrate how Plaatje's political critique is conveyed in *Mhudi*.

In the first, an argument between Mhudi and her husband, Ra-Thaga, the masculinist logic of "survival of the fittest" is vigorously disputed. Ra-Thaga defends the right of Mzilikazi and the Matabele to occupy the land on the basis "that might is right" (1978: 66), but Mhudi insists that ultimately justice will prevail, and the land returned to its rightful owners. Clansmen of the defeated Barolong

[s]omeday, somewhere and somehow ... will turn up and teach Mzilikazi that the crime of one man killing two potential women-slayers is no excuse for massacring whole generations of innocent men, women and children.

(Plaatje 1978: 68)

Mhudi's principled objection applies precisely to the theft of African land in 1913, and the conviction that it, too, will one day be restored to its true owners.

In the second passage, the defeated Mzilikazi warns that in trusting the Boers, the Bechuana have admitted far more ruthless rulers than the Matabele could ever be:

The Bechuana are fools to think that these unnatural Kiwas (white men) will

return their so-called friendship with honest friendship. Together they are laughing at my misery. Let them rejoice; they need all the laughter they can have today for when their deliverers begin to dose them with the same bitter medicine they prepared for me; when the Kiwas rob them of their cattle, their children and their lands, they will weep their eyes out of their sockets and get left with only their empty throats to squeal in vain for mercy.

(Plaatje 1978: 175)

Mzilikazi's prophecy is given ominous authority by the numerous instances in the novel of brutality and racism displayed by the Boer trekkers. Again, the passage relates directly to political events in Plaatje's own lifetime, with black South Africans - including those loyal to white governance - being rewarded in the Land Act with dispossession and impoverishment.

Plaatje's protest in *Mhudi* (1978), however, does not conclude on an unequivocally angry note. There are no calls to take up arms against an unjust regime; indeed, in the final chapters, two ways out of the endless cycles of violence and plunder are suggested. In the first, the possibility of co-existence rather than perpetual conquest is implied when the "good Boer" character, de Villiers, gives Ra-Thaga and Mhudi a wagon and oxen as a parting gift, a gesture that enrages his fellow-Boers. De Villiers justifies the gift as follows: "What did Paulus mean", he asked, "when he said to the Galatians, 'There is neither Greek nor Jew, bond nor free, male nor female, White nor Black, but are all one in Christ Jesus'" (p. 184). The ideal of non-racial equality before a just god - an ideal cherished by the Baralong - might therefore *also* be valued by the Afrikaner conquerors. This possibility hovers in uncertain tension with the second available route of escape from violent racial conflict, namely, the route of individual withdrawal from the political into the private: in the last sentence of the novel, Ra-Thaga promises Mhudi that "from henceforth, I shall have no ears for the call of war or the chase; my ears shall be open to one call only - the call of your voice" (p. 188). Although *Mhudi* offers abundant evidence of bad government, alternatives to violent protest are, therefore, imagined: while there are members of the dominant group like De Villiers, the possibility of a just dispensation for all remains, and with even limited economic autonomy (an ox-wagon), individuals might be able to shut out the oppressive political world.

Early reviews of *Mhudi* did not pick up on the protest aspect, emphasising rather the novel's value as anthropological data.² Clement Doke, for example, senses no protest in *Mhudi*, and indulgently praises Plaatje's efforts:

A story of Native life written in a simple and interesting style, with the obvious advantage that the author is a Native and not a European trying to portray Native thought. Mr. Plaatje has done a good service in writing this. It is a great pity that for Bantu publications the demand is at present so small among the Bantu them-

selves that books such as this have to be written in English. *Mhudi* written in Chwana would have been a still greater contribution, and Chwana sadly needs such additions to its present meagre literature.

(Doke 1931: 86)

Doke's criticisms of *Mhudi* parallel the views of 1930s anthropologists like A.R. Radcliffe Brown and J.D. Rheinalt-Jones studying "Bantu Culture" in South Africa: as the anthropologists studied scientifically the *differential* development of African societies, so Doke directs Plaatje to remain within the segregated domain of African languages.³ According to government ethnologist, G.P. Lestrade:

there is a middle way ... between *repressionist* and *assimilationist* schools, [namely] an *adaptionist* attitude which would take out of the Bantu past what was good, and even what was merely neutral, and together with what is good of European culture for the Bantu, build up a Bantu future.

(Dubow 1989: 36)

In similar spirit, Doke would like Plaatje to avoid assimilating (by writing in English), preferring instead that his talents should contribute to the growth of a (segregated) African culture.

Two decades later, as the segregationist ideology of the 1930s congealed into the state policy of apartheid, *Mhudi* continued to be seen in a paternalistic light. J.P.L. Snyman, for example, writes:

During this period [the thirties], too, we have the first indication that the African is reaping the fruits of European education ... [Compared to black writers in the U.S.], it is encouraging that our Native authors write about their own people Although *Mhudi* would seem to be authentic, it lacks the spontaneity of Mitford's Untuswa series. The reader is aware that the writer is recounting events which occurred a hundred years ago, and it seems as if Plaatje is unable to span the gap and live in the period about which he is writing.

(Snyman 1951: 141)⁴

In addition to limiting Plaatje's area of competence to "Native affairs", Snyman goes one step further, and questions the "authenticity" of Plaatje's version of African history; even *within* his designated literary domain, Plaatje is therefore found wanting.

As Doke's literary criticism repeats in displaced form Lestrade's anthropology, so Snyman's criticisms of Plaatje observe the boundaries prescribed for black South Africans by Native Affairs minister, H.F. Verwoerd:

The Bantu must be guided to serve his own community in all respects. There is

no place for him in the European community above the level of certain forms of labour. Within his own community, however, all doors are open Until now he has been subjected to a school system which drew him away from his own community and misled him by showing him the green pastures of European society in which he was not allowed to graze.

(Christie & Collins 1984: 173)

Plaatje is to be "guided" by the ultimate authority of white critics; he is encouraged to express himself "within his own community"; and he is denied access to "the green pastures of European society".

Mhudi's recovery within the critical institutions of white South Africa took place in the 1970s as a result of the considerable labours of Tim Couzens, Brian Willan, and Stephen Gray. Gray concentrates on the influences on Plaatje in writing *Mhudi*,⁵ but both Couzens and Willan insist on applying a quite different aesthetic in assessing the novel. Rejecting the patronising Eurocentrism of earlier critics in favour of a more generous historical perspective, they both praise *Mhudi* for its literary subtlety, and its implicit embrace of democratic values. For Couzens

it is an interesting novel and can, I believe, lay claim to some remarkable achievements. These achievements are: (1) a perceptive awareness and built-in critique of his own use of language, (2) a fascinating view of history, in the way in which it is presented almost unique in South African literature, (3) an elaborate defence of traditional custom, (4) a skilful and very early use of the folk-tale in the African novel as a device to reinforce the model of history Plaatje is creating, and (5) a complex concentration of the novel around the idea of race relations and its major "pin-prick" in South Africa - the land question.

(Couzens 1971: 188)⁶

In his detailed discussion of *Mhudi*, Willan is similarly positive in his judgement. Whereas in much of his writing, Plaatje was obliged to adjust his expression to the pressures exerted by his constituencies, audiences, and political constraints, in *Mhudi* his creative capacities were unchecked:

There is scope for a much freer expression of his personality and beliefs, his humour, his enjoyment in exploring the literary and cultural possibilities of mixing Tswana tradition and Shakespeare, his admiration for the qualities he believed women to possess, his vision of the consequences of continued injustice in South Africa, his hope that the ideals of human brotherhood might yet provide a solution to South Africa's evils; above all, perhaps, an optimistic faith, a generosity of spirit, a commitment to the idea of a South African nation - all things are conveyed in *Mhudi*, and in a totality and coherence not expressed elsewhere.

(Willan 1984: 361)

The Couzens-Willan aesthetic coheres with the ideals of the Freedom Charter,⁷ and in these terms, *Mhudi* is an exemplary novel: it suggests that all national groups should have equal rights, that the land should be shared by all who work it, that there should be equal human rights, and that there should be peace and friendship. In addition, certain literary criteria are also satisfied: a sophisticated use of language (particularly irony), an acute reworking of historical narrative, a mastery of different genres, and a subtle articulation of political protest. *Mhudi* accordingly becomes on this reading a literary resource in the collective struggle against the apartheid state and its oppressive culture.

While the Couzens-Willan interpretation of *Mhudi* represented a minority position within the South African English Studies establishment in the 1970s and early 1980s,⁸ in the 1990s a new critical consensus now prevails in which Plaatje's status as the Shakespeare of South African Literature is unchallenged.⁹ There are a number of recent papers celebrating *Mhudi* as the pre-eminent literary guide to the New South Africa. Tim Couzens (in a more recent piece) praises *Mhudi*, because

it advocates South Africanism, a common society, a common, (though not enforced culture), where all the citizens are equal before the law, are free to meet, to express their opinions, to record their vote, in the full view of the Great Judge in whom Plaatje believed.

(Couzens 1993: 118)

Stephen Gray argues that "in the new canon of the South African novel *Mhudi* must now be seen as a central work" because it emphasises the appropriate universal values:

personal happiness, fidelity, social justice to all, honouring the past in its true forms, rejecting the distortions of expedient politics, letting the voice of literature be heard in its fullness and richness.

(Gray 1992: 72)

And J.M. Phelps focuses on instances in the novel of political conflict resolution, concluding:

Plaatje shows that the fundamentals of democratic political process have deep roots in African culture, both the Baralong and the Matabele, and it is their solid African foundation which is the illuminating contemporary reference point to emerge from the novel The narrative effectively dramatizes the countervailing resources in the various communities which can unite the generations, and which

do prevail when they are fostered by tradition democratic process and respect for the freedom of speech.

(Phelps 1993: 54-5)¹⁰

Taking these readings together, Plaatje's message in *Mhudi* in the 1990s is then not too different from Nelson Mandela's inaugural messages for the new South Africa:

The South Africa we have all struggled for, in which all our people, be they African, Coloured, Indian or White, regard themselves as citizens of one nation is at hand Ours has been a quest for a constitution freely adopted by the people of South Africa, reflecting their wishes and aspirations. The struggle for democracy has never been a matter pursued by one race, class, religious community or gender among South Africans In the political order we have established there will be regular, open and free elections There shall also be a social order which respects completely the culture, language and religious rights of all sections of our society and the fundamental rights of the individual We speak as fellow citizens to heal the wounds of the past with the intent of constructing a new order based on justice for all.

(Nelson Mandela speech 1994)¹¹

For Plaatje and for Mandela the same values are therefore paramount: a common unified South African nation; all citizens equal before the law; individual freedoms (of speech, association) protected in the constitution; democratic process (the right to vote) enshrined; and the rights of different (racial, religious, language) groups respected. To borrow Benedict Anderson's phrase, the community Plaatje tentatively imagined in literary discourse in *Mhudi* over seventy years ago is now being realised in political discourse in Mandela's speeches.¹²

The story thus far - unusual in literary history - is a happy one: once unjustly discarded in the racist South Africa of the 1930s, *Mhudi* is now installed as a treasured icon in the new rainbow nation.¹³ To interrupt the final chapters of this tale with difficult questions seems like bad manners, the critical equivalent of criticising Mandela and the government of national unity. Nonetheless, there are patterns to be noted in considering how historically literary canons have functioned within their given national polities.

Dual imperatives characteristically drive the construction of literary canons. On the one hand, their appearance reflects a defensive bulwark against anarchy; they are invariably constructed following periods of war or major civil upheaval: Virgil's *Aeneid* was produced as a Roman classic to rival Homer after Octavius had ended a hundred years of political instability by defeating Antony in 31 B.C. at Actium;¹⁴ Shakespeare was established as the gold standard of English literature in the eighteenth century as the

English state cemented its authority following the revolutions of the 1600s;¹⁵ and in the U.S.A., the category "American Literature" was consolidated in the wake of the Civil War.¹⁶ On the other hand, canons figure (like flags and anthems) as part of the emergence of a confident, even aggressive, national identity, often defined in opposition to former rulers or competing nations: Roman literature against (though also incorporating) Greek; English Literature against the Ancient Classics, and also French Literature; American Literature against English Literature.

The most obvious point to stress is that this process of creating a national literature involves the *selection* of certain texts, and perhaps more interestingly, the *exclusion* of certain texts. The aesthetic criteria applied in such selection combine standards (inevitably vague) derived from: (1) How the nation defines itself. (Is this novel distinctively English, American, Indian?), and (2) Romantic literary categories, which emerged conterminously with the nation state. (Is this a work of genius? Is this literature that transcends its time and place? Is this autonomous art, embodying universal truths?).¹⁷ Academic institutions are vested with the power to make these decisions, and also to disagree within certain limits about such decisions. Shakespeare in England, Melville in the U.S.A., and now Plaatje in South Africa have thus met these selection criteria, and stand as part of how their respective nations define themselves.

What about those writers who fail the selection criteria? In South Africa, in the context of protest literature, there are two categories of interest. Firstly, there is the tradition of black consciousness writing from the 1970s and 1980s, a tradition "inadequate" both in terms of negotiated nation-building, and in terms of "universal truths". It is unlikely that there will be arguments for prescribing Mongane Serote's *To Every Birth its Blood* as a high school setwork book. Secondly, there is the tradition of anti-imperialist writing produced from the sixties onwards in the front-line states. This writing, too, fails in terms of universal literary value, and, even though it might have been decisively determined by South Africa's destructive regional hegemony, it falls outside the boundaries - political and literary - of the South African nation. As with Serote's work, Agostinho Neto's poetry can never hope to challenge Plaatje's authority.

The conservative drift of this aesthetic polices not only the borders of the canon, keeping out voices too angry, or insufficiently "literary", or not "national" enough; it also keeps writers *within* the canon in place. What is emphasised in reading *Mhudi* then, is not so much the elements of anger and protest, but rather the elements of reconciliation and nation-building (Couzens's criticism of *Mhudi* from the early 1970s to the late 1980s exemplifies this shift). What might accompany such a reading is an exclusive considera-

tion of the formal aspects of the novel. The result, as with the canonical Shakespeare,¹⁸ might be a domesticated, aestheticised, depoliticised Plaatje, a Plaatje functioning in an unreflecting, uncritical relation with the new nation.

There is a final hesitation regarding the canonisation of *Mhudi*. Arguments for the inclusion of previously marginalised texts in the canon, frequently proceed on the analogy that such inclusion might mirror the inclusion of previously excluded communities in the national polity. To admit *Mhudi* into the canon demonstrates in some way a commitment to the concerns and interests of, for example, rural black women, as if inclusion in the canon equals inclusion in the national polity. Or, alternatively, *Mhudi* has the capacity to represent the interests of rural black women in the literary canon. The negative corollary is that the absence of *Mhudi* has in the past, and might in the future, mean no representation for such a constituency in South African English Studies.

Such an argument, though quite possibly generous in spirit, is misconceived. It rests, in the first place, on sliding together two distinct meanings of "represent": one, as "speaking for" in politics (*vertreten*), and two, as "re-presentation" in art or philosophy (*darstellen*).¹⁹ *Mhudi* might have the capacity to represent rural women in the second sense (though this, and the aesthetic implied, might be disputed), but the novel clearly cannot represent any constituency in the first sense. Discussion of such representation belongs in the domain of political struggle, and to insinuate it into the discourse of literary debate is disingenuous.

Further, to pretend that the exclusion of rural women in South Africa might in some way be addressed by including a novel like *Mhudi* in the literary canon, is to compound the blurring of the two senses of "represent". John Guillory explains that institutionally exclusions in literary studies occur *not* at the level of selecting texts, but at a much earlier stage:

In fact, as is well known, strategies of exclusion are employed historically most effectively at the level of access to literacy, a complex of social facts corresponding to all of the following questions: Who reads? What do they read? How do they read? Who writes? In what determinate circumstances? For whom? The objective of "representation" in the canon, as well as the achieved cachet of the non-canonical, both reflect in the mirror of practice an unproblematic image of a universalised literacy not exhibited by any social formation.

(Guillory 1987: 485)

In other words, rural women are denied a voice in a number of ways that precede access to literary studies.

In conclusion, the argument is that if *Mhudi* is to be studied in the English

syllabuses of the new South Africa (I think it should be), it should be read with the following in mind: its relation to its own context and its own reception history, and also its relation to *other* protest literatures, both from within and outside the boundaries of the South African nation. Further, its political ambiguities should be highlighted and explored, rather than flattened into a liberal ethic, and endorsed. Finally, the difficult questions of access to - and political representation within educational institutions should not be conflated with questions of the canonical and non-canonical in all-too-easy gestures.

* This article is based on a paper of the same title delivered at the "Culture and Colonialism" Conference in Galway, Ireland in June 1995. My thanks to the Centre for Science Development and the University of Natal for funding my attendance at the conference.

Notes

1. See, for example, Tim Couzens's Introduction to the Heinemann edition:
It is my contention that *Mhudi* is not only a defence of traditional custom as well as a corrective view on history, but is also an implicit attack on the injustice of land distribution in South Africa in 1917.
(Couzens 1978: 17)
2. In his superb *Sol Plaatje: A Biography* (1984: 361-364), Brian Willan summarises the first reviews of *Mhudi*. There were more generous reviews; I have quoted the Doke one as best capturing the temper of the period.
3. On the relation between anthropology and segregationist policies in the 1930s, see Paul Rich (1984: 54-58) and Saul Dubow (1989: 34-37).
4. As in the 1930s, there were critics more sympathetic to Plaatje. See, for example, Jordan K. Ngubane's (1951) defence of Plaatje and H.I.E. Dhlomo. But, again, it is Snyman who more aptly captures the mood of the time.
5. See Stephen Gray (1976). Another influential piece concentrating on the formal aspects of *Mhudi* is Tony Voss's "A generic approach to the South African novel in English" (1977).
6. See also Couzens's further arguments about *Mhudi* (1973).
7. The Freedom Charter was adopted at the Congress of the People on 25 and 26 June 1955 in Kliptown, Johannesburg. Three thousand delegates from the

African National Congress and its allies adopted the Freedom Charter as the common programme in their struggle against the regime. The main sections of the Charter proclaim:

- The People Shall Govern!
- All National Groups Shall Have Equal Rights!
- The Land Shall Be Shared Among Those Who Work It!
- All Shall Be Equal Before the Law!
- All Shall Enjoy Equal Human Rights!
- There Shall Be Work and Security!
- The Doors of Culture and Learning Shall Be Opened!
- There Shall Be Houses, Security and Comfort!
- There Shall Be Peace and Friendship!

(For a summary of the Charter, see Alex la Guma (1972: 229-244).

8. • Arguing for a greater critical engagement with African literature, Tim Couzens quotes the impressions of a visitor to Cape Town University in 1976:

In the Department of English at Cape Town no African or South African writers at all are studied in the first three years. In the final, Honours year ... African literature as a whole occupies a mere six hours When I asked the Professor whether this was not rather a small amount of time to allocate he remarked, looking out over the African city almost literally burning at his feet ... that this seemed to him "about right".

(Couzens 1977: 45)

9. It should be added that Plaatje's resurgence is not confined to the precious world of literary criticism. Two schools have been named after him, a play based on his *Mafeking Diary* called "Place of Stones" was produced in 1989, his house in Kimberley at 32 Angel Street has been declared a national monument, and there has recently been talk of a movie (see "New Direction for Scriptwriter", *The Star* 18 Feb 1994: 11).
10. For further versions of these arguments, see also K.M. Nyatumba (1990: 33-37) and E. Thompson (1992: 6-11).
11. Nelson Mandela. Speech delivered on 9 May 1994 in Cape Town, reproduced in "Inauguration Supplement" of *New Nation* 5 (13 May 1994).
12. I have chosen Mandela's speeches to demonstrate the contemporary resonances of Plaatje's arguments; I might as easily have quoted from the Interim South African Constitution, which embodies the principles (according to contemporary critics) underpinning *Mhudi*. Indeed, the Constitution is, if anything, closer to Couzens's Plaatje, commencing as it does with a nod to the "Great Judge". To quote from the Preamble:
- In humble submission to Almighty God,
We, the people of South Africa declare that -

Whereas there is a need to create a new order in which all South Africans will be entitled to a common South African citizenship in a sovereign and democratic constitutional state in which there is equality between men and women and people of all races so that all citizens shall be able to enjoy and exercise their fundamental rights and freedoms.

And so on

(Interim S.A. Constitution 1993: 4)

13. A certain flattening out has been effected in constructing this narrative. There are, of course, many who would continue to view Plaatje's achievements through racist lenses: *The Citizen* newspaper, for example, in covering Plaatje's house becoming a national monument, reports only the size of the Anglo-America Corporation's donations to the monument trust, and makes the briefest mention of Plaatje's achievements. (See "Plaatje Home First Museum for Black", *The Citizen* 20 Aug. 1991: 12). Nonetheless, the main details of this tale of redemption hold true.
14. For a discussion of how the Roman literary canon was constructed, see James G. Zetzel (1983: 83-105). For an account of how the Graeco-Roman literary canon was taught in the provinces of imperial Rome, see R.R. Bolgar (1954)
15. Gary Taylor in *Re-inventing Shakespeare* (1989) argues that "Shakespeare's coronation as the King of English Poets finally occurred in the middle of the eighteenth century" (1989: 114), and further, that "[t]he rise of Shakespeare coincided with the growth of cultural conservatism. It also coincided with upsurgent nationalism and expansive imperialism" (p. 120). For further discussion of how the connections between nation and canon were forged in this period, see Lawrence Lipking's *The Ordering of the Arts in Eighteenth Century England* (1970: 329), where he concludes: "English literary history was shaped by the need for definition of the superiority of the national character".
16. See Russell Reising's *The Unusable Past* (1986). Although Reising concentrates on the influential critics of American literature writing in the McCarthy era, he provides insightful surveys of their nineteenth-century predecessors. Also interesting is Nina Baym's observation:

But from its historical beginnings, American literary criticism has assumed that literature produced in this nation would have to be ground-breaking, equal to the challenge of the new nation, and completely original.
 (Baym 1979: 125)
17. The emergence of the categories of the "aesthetic" and of "taste" in early modern Europe, and their convergence in the work of Immanuel Kant, is traced in fascinating detail by Howard Caygill in *Art of Judgement* (1989). Caygill is particularly interesting in relating the philosophical and political discourses of the period.

18. There is a critical industry tracing the construction of the canonical "Shakespeare". See, for example, Taylor's *Re-inventing Shakespeare* (1989).
19. See this distinction as set out by Gayatri Spivak in her oft-cited essay "Can the Subaltern Speak?" (1988: 275-6).

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