

The Power of Domestication in the Lives of Musical Canons¹

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The current debate about canons, within the field of music as within other humanist disciplines, is conducted almost exclusively about the supply side: whether it is concerned with the history of canon formation or with what to do about inherited canons today (especially in pedagogical situations),² it is a debate about the ideologies and responsibilities of authorities, of those who determine the canons and impose them on publics. The purpose of this essay is to suggest how a discourse about musical canons can relate supply to demand—how, instead of

1. This article derives from my remarks at a special session entitled “Cross-Canonical Themes: Constituting, Recording, Domesticating Musical Canons,” given at the 1994 annual meeting of the American Musicological Society in Minneapolis. I thank Ellen Koskoff and Lawrence Gushee, my partners on that panel, for their stimulating contribution to the session, and Ruth Solie and Mary Hunter for comments that helped me turn my remarks into their present form.

representing musical publics as inert recipients, it can describe the processes of negotiation between authorities and publics over the canonic.

One model of the relationship between supply and demand in the cultural marketplace is provided by the French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu in his study *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste* (1979). Since Bourdieu in this work treats music as a prime constituent of culture, it is no mere grace of style that his metaphor for that relationship is itself musical:

In the cultural market—and no doubt elsewhere—the matching of supply and demand is neither the simple effect of production imposing itself on consumption nor the effect of a conscious endeavour to serve the consumers' needs, but the result of the objective orchestration of two relatively independent logics, that of the fields of production and that of the fields of consumption.³

In this passage Bourdieu is concerned with more than the workings of canons, but what he says about cultural supply and demand can be made specific to the workings of canons.⁴ In the case of musical canons, the “field of production” would describe the formation and perpetuation of the canons by the culturally powerful, and the “field of consumption” would describe the use of those canons by musical consumers. And if

2. There have been several major recent contributions to the study of musical canons that combine canonic history with consideration of current issues, especially in university-level teaching. These include Katherine Bergeron and Philip V. Bohlman, eds., *Disciplining Music: Musicology and Its Canons* (Chicago and London, 1992) and Marcia J. Citron, *Gender and the Musical Canon* (Cambridge, 1993).

3. Pierre Bourdieu, *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste*, trans. Richard Nice (Cambridge, Mass., 1984; original French ed., 1979), 230.

4. Indeed, Bourdieu's terms of analysis have been adapted to the American debate over canons by John Guillory in *Cultural Capital: The Problem of Literary Canon Formation* (Chicago and London, 1993). As his title indicates, however, Guillory concerns himself exclusively with literary canons.

those fields are governed by “relatively independent logics,” what is it that “orchestrates” them? The answer I would like to propose here is that they are orchestrated by a shared transformation, a common process of *domestication*.

The consumer’s process may be the more obviously domesticating, at least in a metaphorical sense. Learning a musical canon and forming one’s musical taste around it are processes of taking the canon to heart, making it one’s own, feeling at home with it, so that one can use it as a touchstone when one listens to other music. But the producer’s process—the promulgation of a canon—is equally a process of domestication, and is literally rather than metaphorically so. Music cannot be canonized without being taken away from its original situation, its original context, and given new surroundings, new homes. The new surroundings are in part musical surroundings: a work becomes canonical when it is no longer found or heard or spoken of most often in the company of other works from the same time and place, but in the company of its fellow canonic works, from whatever times and places. But canonization also means making new social settings for music.

That process is obvious in the case of jazz, which has always relied on recording for canonization, since recording takes jazz literally out of public spaces and into domestic ones, into the listeners’ homes.⁵ Other forms of music that have grown up largely in the twentieth century are developing their canons by means of the same domestication.⁶ Another recent canoniza-

5. In recent studies of the jazz canon, there has been considerable dispute about the role of recording in defining the canon, as well as in defining a “core repertory” of jazz standards. See Scott DeVaux, “Constructing the Jazz Tradition: Jazz Historiography,” *Black American Literature Forum* 25, no. 3 (Fall 1991): 525-60; Krin Gabbard, “The Jazz Canon and its Consequences,” *Annual Review of Jazz Studies* 6 (1993): 65-98; Richard Crawford and Jeffrey Magee, *Jazz Standards on Record, 1900-1942: A Core Repertory* (Chicago, 1992); and the comments on Crawford and Magee by Barry Kernfeld and Howard Rye on pp. 526-29 of “Comprehensive Discographies of Jazz, Blues, and Gospel,” part one, *Notes* 51, no. 2 (December 1994): 501-47.

tion heavily dependent on recording is the creation of a “world music” canon in and for Western culture out of certain favored non-Western traditions, such as Indian classical instrumental music, Indonesian gamelan music, West African drumming music, and Tibetan Buddhist chant. It is not only the dependence on recording that marks this canonization as domestication, but also the act of taking non-Western music out of its home culture and giving it a new home in ours.⁷

By contrast to these twentieth-century processes, the formation of the Western classical canon, at least in its initial stages, may appear to have been a more public affair. Starting as early as the eighteenth century in some places, concerts were devoted less and less to the playing of new works and more and more to the replaying of old ones. This shift in practice could be called a process of domestication only by invoking still another sense of the word: repetition of the same works gradually makes them familiar, and so in effect tames them. But a more literal kind of domestication was also going on in the formation of the Western classical canon, right from the start. Music created for public, or relatively public, places in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries—concert works, opera,

6. The remarkable success of Martin Williams’s *Smithsonian Collection of Classic Jazz* (1973) has been followed up by the Smithsonian Institution with canonizing anthologies of other American musical traditions: the *Smithsonian Collection of Classic Country Music* (1981) and the *Smithsonian Collection of Classic Blues Singers* (1993), along with comparable anthologies of popular song (1984) and musical theater (1989). None of these, of course, is the only entry in its field.

7. Ellen Koskoff, in an account at once humorously anecdotal and seriously analytical, describes the pitfalls of domesticating Balinese gamelan music in an American conservatory, in “What Do We Want to Teach When We Teach Music? An Apology, Two Short Trips, Three Ethical Dilemmas, and Eighty-two Questions,” to appear in *Rethinking Music*, edited by Nicholas Cook and Mark Everist (Oxford University Press). See also Philip Bohlman, “Ethnomusicology’s Challenge to the Canon; the Canon’s Challenge to Ethnomusicology,” in Bergeron and Bohlman, eds., *Disciplining Music*, 116-36.

oratorio, and church music—was transplanted into people's homes, where it became part of their daily lives and increased its influence on their musical thoughts. In principle as well as in effect, this process was comparable to the twentieth-century domestication of jazz or Broadway songs or blues or world music through recording. But in the case of the Western classical canon, because it was formed before the invention of sound recording, there was originally a different medium of transplantation: the printed domestic arrangement.⁸

It is worth looking at some domestic musical arrangements from the formative period of the Western classical canon because these arrangements, sitting squarely at the intersection of the formation and the social use of a canon—or, if you prefer, of canonic supply and demand—can shed light on the general issue of how the two are orchestrated.

Domesticating Arrangements

We have William Weber to thank for making the formation of the Western classical canon an important subject in music history.⁹ Over the years that he has examined the early stages of that development, he has given more and more recognition to the role of published arrangements of music for the domestic

8. As early as 1928, in an article entitled "The Curves of the Needle," Theodor Adorno recognized a parallel between the domestic function of the phonograph in the twentieth century and that of the parlor piano (the principal instrument called for in domestic musical arrangements) in the nineteenth; he was not concerned in that article, however, with the role of either machine in canon formation. But in a much later article, "Opera and the Long-Playing Record" (1969), he was very much concerned with the effect on the listener's experience of transplanting public music, by means of recording, into the home. Both articles, along with a third on "The Form of the Phonograph Record," appear in English translation by Thomas Y. Levin, in *October* (Cambridge, Mass.) 55 (1990): 48-66.

market. In a recent article, for instance, on the origins of the musical canon in eighteenth-century France and England, he writes this about domestic arrangements of music from Lully's operas, as well as of works by Corelli, Handel, Mozart, and Haydn:

To understand how these works ended up constituting the musical canon, we have to look beyond the sacred walls of the concert halls and opera theaters and ask ourselves how the practices of popular culture assured them of their permanence.¹⁰

I would disagree only with the distinction Weber draws here between the sacred and the popular. The parlor could be just as much of a shrine as the concert hall or opera house, and public performance just as much a "practice of popular culture" as domestic performance. The point, though, is that music was canonized as much by the private devotion of domestic performance as by public worship in the concert hall.

Weber himself cites an example of a domesticating arrangement that is in every sense devotional. This is an English publication from about 1820¹¹ that fits operatic and other vocal numbers by celebrated composers with new texts—sacred texts

9. His most extended treatment yet of this subject can be found in William Weber, *The Rise of Musical Classics in Eighteenth-Century England: A Study in Canon, Ritual, and Ideology* (Oxford, 1992). That study of the "performed" canon is complemented by his subsequent article on "The Intellectual Origins of Musical Canon in Eighteenth-Century England," *Journal of the American Musicological Society* 47, no. 3 (Fall 1994): 488-520. For lists of his earlier publications in the field, see the bibliography of the former and the footnotes to the latter.

10. William Weber, "Mentalité, tradition et origines du canon musical en France et en Angleterre au XVIIIe siècle," *Annales* 1989, no. 4: 862 (my translation).

11. *The Beauties of Mozart [etc.]* (London, n.d.), British Library B.1006.a., cited in Weber, "Mentalité, tradition et origines," n. 37. Weber gives "c. 1810" as the date of publication, but I prefer "c. 1820," given in the British Library's Catalogue of Printed Music, because that date allows for the melodies of Rossini contained in the volume.

in English—apparently for domestic performance. The title of this publication is

The Beauties of Mozart, Handel, Pleyel, Haydn, Beethoven, and Other Celebrated Composers adapted to the Words of Popular Psalms and Hymns for One or Two Voices, with an Accompaniment and Appropriate Symphonies for the Piano Forte, Organ or Harp, By an Eminent Professor.

We are assured that canonic considerations played a part in this enterprise by the volume's Prefatory Remarks, which begin:

In compiling the present Work, it has been the object of the Editor to adapt Popular Psalms and Hymns to a more elegant and fascinating style of Music than has hitherto been attempted; and for this purpose he has selected the most admired Compositions of the best Masters, in order to gratify the ear, and at the same time improve the taste of those Performers who have been chiefly accustomed to practise the ordinary Psalm Tunes.

Three of these “most admired Compositions of the best Masters” are numbers from *Don Giovanni*; one such piece is an adaptation of Don Giovanni's Serenade (see Example 1 below). Who could resist asking what our Eminent Professor was thinking of when he turned three numbers from *Don Giovanni*—more than from any other single work—into Popular Psalms and Hymns? The opera was already well advanced toward canonization at the time of this publication; no one in England then would have denied its status as one of “the most admired Compositions of the best Masters.” And it could clearly have been considered a moral work, in that it made an example of wickedness. But did the Eminent Professor expect his customers to know the story? To know the original words or scenario of the Serenade? If they did, wouldn't they have been scandalized to be singing the libertine's song as a hymn? Or did he perhaps hope to inculcate the innocent against this increasingly famous, and hence respectable, song of dissoluteness,

The grass & flowers which clothe the field! Mozart.

Andantino

The
grass, and flowers, which clothe the field, And look so green and gay, Touch'd
by the scythe, de = fenceless yield, And fall and fade a = way: Fit

“The grass & flowers which clothe the field,” mm. 1-12, from *The Beauties of Mozart [etc.]*.

should they ever hear it in its original form, by teaching it to them with inverted meaning, that is, by turning it into a warning to the young to consider their mortality? He would surely have been scandalized to learn how strongly his transformation of the text—with its flowers that “look so green” being “touch’d by the scythe”—can remind readers today of the original scenario from which he was at such pains to protect the users of his volume. And readers of this article would no doubt be scandalized if they thought anyone today could prefer this “improvement” to what has become Da Ponte’s and Mozart’s sacred text. Each of these potential scandals in its way is a function of the canonic status of Don Giovanni’s Serenade.

What the Eminent Professor said he wanted to “improve,” of course, was not the song itself, but the “taste” of his psalm-singing flock. It is clear, though, that to do that, he also needed to improve Mozart’s and especially Da Ponte’s taste. All this improving makes “The grass and flowers which clothe the field”—and the whole collection from which it comes—a wonderful example of how musical arrangements canonize: they popularize the music at the same time that they elevate both it and its audience. The nature of a canon—any artistic canon—is to establish standards of taste. But once a work is turned into a standard of taste, it is always subject to being used in bad taste. To be monumentalized is to be put at risk of being trivialized, for the reason that a canonized work is at one and the same time elevated as a symbol of good taste and denatured—cut off from the original context with which the work was congruent and slipped into unforeseen contexts with which it is more or less incongruent.

Joseph Kerman writes that “the idea of a canonical work of music has to imply the idea of a canonical musical performance”—a rendition by a performer “representing the composer’s inspiration and doing his best to convey this faithfully, ‘authentically.’”¹² The “idea of a canonical work of music” has given birth, in fact, to various and even contradictory models of canonic performance. Starting in the nineteenth century, it

inspired the creation of critical editions of the works of “the best Masters” and a tradition of performances embodying the purist principles of those editions. But the cult of the composer’s own performing style (or that of the composer’s time and place) began even earlier, at least as early as the publication of what purported to be Corelli’s embellishments to his own violin sonatas in the eighteenth century. Both “Urtext” and “period” performances—both Busch’s Bach and Harnoncourt’s—can be claimed in different ways as “canonical.” Yet each relies on its own transformations (of instruments, of sounds, of interpretative conception) and transplantings—the Brandenburgs, after all, were written for neither the symphonic subscription series nor the early music festival.

And if “the idea of a canonical work” gives rise to both these types of performance, it gives rise to devotional performances from *The Beauties of Mozart* as well. This may seem like more of a stretch: how can we consider a performance that to us represents open distortion, even travesty, of the original—as opposed to hidden transmutation of it—a “canonical musical performance”? Reading a little further in the Prefatory Remarks of that collection shows us the Eminent Professor doing some hiding of his own, making his own claim as preservationist by minimizing his transformations: “the chief employment of the Editor has been confined to selection, adaptation, and the introduction of occasional accompaniments and symphonies.” Later still he claims that the volume “as a whole will afford young performers an opportunity of cultivating an intimate acquaintance with the beauties of the respective Authors.” Even sacred texts, he seems to say, need to be domesticated—both transplanted (for “intimate acquaintance”) and transformed (with “adaptations,” etc.)—so that consumers, especially the young, can learn to perform them reverently, canonically. But the sacredness of the text

12. Joseph Kerman, “A Few Canonic Variations,” in Robert von Hallberg, ed., *Canons* (Chicago and London, 1983), 183.

conditions the process of arrangement. The awkwardness, the bizarreness, even the bad taste of any arrangement of a canonic score—whether it is the imposition of a hymn text on Don Giovanni's Serenade in *The Beauties of Mozart* or the incongruous literalness of transcription in Tchaikovsky's orchestrally "colorized" *Mozartiana*¹³—is nothing but a sign of how the sacred has been negotiated in that arrangement.

Arrangement History

If domesticating arrangements are crucial to the consumption, or reception, of musical canons, they should form an important object of musicological study. The history of musical consumption, which generally appears under the rubric of *reception history*, is often concerned with arrangements or alternate versions of works—but primarily those made for public performance. Likewise, it is concerned with the history of discourse about musical works—but primarily the public discourse about public performance, that is, the history of reviews and other published criticism.¹⁴ Domesticating arrangements of music deserve more attention than they have received because they manifest both the prescriptions of canonic authorities and the adaptations of musical consumers (or, at least, the adaptations proposed to them). They are precious documents of mediation (or "orchestration," to use Bourdieu's word) between the "logics" of canonic supply and demand. There are

13. See pp. 56-61 of my article "Nineteenth-Century Musical Tributes to Mozart," *Studies in Music from the University of Western Ontario* 8 (1983): 47-65.

14. An example of musical reception history that examines both textual revision and critical response and considers the interrelation of the two is Jane Fulcher, *The Nation's Image: French Grand Opera as Politics and Politicized Art* (Cambridge and New York, 1987).

rich histories to be told by examining these documents—anthologies of favorite excerpts, transcriptions for solo piano and piano duet, vocal scores, simplifications for students and amateurs, adaptations for school and studio use—and by investigating the motivations of the mediators, or “orchestrators,” who produced them. Fortunately, these arrangers and editors and anthologizers, these Eminent Professors, have left us trails of words, in addition to the evidence of the notes: Eminent Professors love to write prefaces, and those prefaces display their motivations and ideologies for historians to read and interpret.

A separate consideration needs to be given here to the arrangements made for pedagogical use. The history and future of the “teaching canon” has become a matter of intense interest lately in American musicology. No doubt because the musicologists who research and debate this subject are mostly university-level teachers of music history and music appreciation themselves, their attention has focused largely on canons in the university and conservatory curriculum.¹⁵ But the teaching of musical canons begins much earlier—with a child’s first music lessons, with the singing of songs in day care and elementary school, with “music appreciation” in the elementary and secondary schools, with *Sesame Street*—and who would deny the importance of these early impressions in defining their own version of the musical canon?¹⁶ It follows, then, that in the history of musical canons a corresponding importance should be given to the role of arrangements created for the instruction of the very young.

It would be hard to imagine a more important landmark in the history of the Western classical canon, for instance, than

15. Marcia Citron places the “teaching canon” in relation to other forms of musical canon in *Gender and the Musical Canon*, 22-28.

16. There is a need, accordingly, for a critical history of school and studio music texts on the model of Frances FitzGerald’s *America Revised: History Schoolbooks in the Twentieth Century* (Boston, 1979).

Clementi's *Introduction to the Art of Playing on the Piano Forte* (1801), the first important keyboard method book in which the "lessons" consist primarily of arrangements of works by "Composers of the first rank, Ancient and Modern"—Lully, Couperin, Corelli, the Bachs, Haydn, Mozart, and Beethoven.¹⁷ From this list of names it is clear that the Clementi *Introduction* takes part in precisely the canonizing process described by Weber. Furthermore, the same issues of the ideologies of producers and consumers that Weber raises about concert givers and audiences can equally well be raised about Clementi and the buyers of his *Introduction*. But the domestic side of Clementi's enterprise raises questions of its own: the coincidence that this first keyboard method built around canonizing arrangements is also one of the very first methods designed specifically and exclusively for the fortepiano¹⁸ makes it tempting to speculate that the distinctive powers of that instrument may have been crucial in allowing the broadest range of musical genres and styles to be transplanted successfully to the domestic parlor for canonization.

Likewise, flipping through the tiny simplifications of masterpieces in Clementi's *Introduction* can remind us of all the considerations peculiar to the pedagogical enterprise that bear on the choices in a "teaching canon": the ideologies and self-serving needs of teachers, publishers, and school authorities,¹⁹

17. Muzio Clementi, *Introduction to the Art of Playing on the Piano Forte* (London, 1801; reprinted with an introduction by Sandra P. Rosenblum, New York, 1974). On Clementi's innovation in using arrangements of music by the masters, see Rosenblum's introduction, pp. xv-xviii. As Leon Plantinga writes, in *Clementi: His Life and Music* (London, 1977), p. 166, "the most original part of Clementi's *Introduction*, paradoxically, is his printing of other composers' music."

18. The very first, apparently, were published less than a decade earlier. See Katalin Komlós, *Fortepianos and Their Music: Germany, Austria, and England, 1760-1800* (Oxford, 1995), 122.

19. John Guillory argues, in this context, that the primary motivation of any pedagogical institution is the reproduction of the institution itself. See Guillory, *Cultural Capital*, 57.

as well as their notions of what is appealing to children and what is good for them at various ages. At the same time, we can be reminded that canonic choices made out of such pedagogical considerations continue to exert an enormous influence on people's tastes and thoughts long after they have finished their studies. We can imagine, for instance, why in college music courses the canonic excerpts from *Tristan und Isolde* have always been the Prelude and Love-Death, and not the Love Duet; but then, even when some students later realize that those choices represent an evasion of the sexually explicit, isn't it still the Prelude and Love-Death that remain best fixed in their memories and that continue to represent the essence of *Tristan* for them?

The wider we open our definitions of musical canons, of arrangements, and of domestications, the more deeply we will be able to understand the role of domestic (including pedagogical) marketing in the history of Western musical canons. There have been excellent "arrangement histories" of certain canons: *The New Oxford Book of Carols*, by tracing the development of each carol from one arrangement to another, gives the whole canon of Christmas carols in the English-speaking world its history,²⁰ while Carol Oja's biography of Colin McPhee describes and assesses the role of his pioneering arrangements and adaptations in giving Balinese gamelan music its place in the West's canon of world music.²¹ More such studies are needed: histories of school arrangements of folk music and jazz standards; histories of sheet music and fake books; and of canonizing anthologies, in print and on recording, from Herder through *Heart Songs* to *The Best of [you name it]*.²² But there is an equal need to connect all these studies as contributions to the same history.

20. Hugh Keyte and Andrew Parrott, eds., Clifford Bartlett, assoc. ed., *The New Oxford Book of Carols* (Oxford, 1992).

21. Carol J. Oja, *Colin McPhee: Composer in Two Worlds* (Washington and London, 1990).

Canonic Consumers and Their "Practice"

Even after we have examined the arrangements made of canonic music for domestic use, we still have to investigate how the consumers have actually used these materials, because consumers, as we know, always have things their own way. If we are teachers, we know this about our students as consumers of ideas. We know, that is, that whatever we have heard ourselves say to them they have turned into something somewhat different. And whether the source of that conversion is inattention or ignorance or conscious resistance or the perspective of a new generation or the creative spirit of an individual, we know that we need to take account of it. Likewise, in the study of canonic domestications, we need to take account of the power of consumers to use musical materials in ways unforeseen by those who arranged them.

A theoretical framework for considering this power is provided in social science by the Theory of Practice, the study of how consumers in a mass-consumption society actually use the products of that society, as opposed to how the people in control of production design their products to be used. The version of this theory that I find most illuminating when applied to the domestic uses of musical canons is the book by the French historian Michel de Certeau translated into English as *The Practice of Everyday Life*.²³ De Certeau is concerned there with "the tactics of consumption, the ingenious ways in which the weak make use of the strong," lending "a political dimension to everyday practices."²⁴ Consumption, in his words, is an

22. Lawrence Gushee's contribution to the AMS-Minneapolis session on "Cross-Canonic Themes" included a history of canonizing jazz publications (record guides as well as recorded anthologies) pre-dating the *Smithsonian Collection of Classic Jazz*.

23. Michel de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life* (originally *Arts de faire*), trans. Steven Rendall (Berkeley, 1984).

24. *Ibid*, xvii.

art of “tactics” (as opposed to strategy), of seizing opportunities when they present themselves, of “tricks”;²⁵ it is an art of “renting,” which “transforms another person’s property into a space borrowed for a moment by a transient.”²⁶ “The procedures of contemporary consumption,” he writes, “appear to constitute a subtle art of ‘renters’ who know how to insinuate their countless differences into the dominant text.”²⁷

If we consider a musical canon as a “dominant text,” as “another person’s property,” a property “owned” by the cultural authorities who have determined its boundaries, then de Certeau’s metaphors give us a way of considering the use of that canon by listeners as something more active, more opportunistic, more transformative than is suggested by a word like *reception*. The main reason for doing this, for giving attention at all to what individual consumers do or did with musical canons, is simply that a canon does not really exist until it is consumed, until it is “rented” in de Certeau’s sense, until individuals have not just domesticated it into their own social settings but internalized it into their own thinking about music. A musical canon is a social construct that has no social force until individuals use it, and by then they have already reconfigured it in their individual ways—“insinuated their countless differences” into it. It only makes sense, then, for us as students of canonic processes in music to put consumers at the center of our studies and ask what happens when those consumers take music home with them and take it to heart as canonic.

The “insinuated differences” are by nature elusive. Eminent Professors make their rationales evident in the prefaces to their canonizing productions, but consumers don’t necessarily make it easy to find out what they really do with or think of the music that is offered to them as canonic. Yet it is possible to catch glimpses. For the study of contemporary cultural con-

25. *Ibid.*, xix-xx.

26. *Ibid.*, xxi.

27. *Ibid.*, xxii.

sumption, sociological surveys—such as those that Bourdieu has conducted—measure “differences,” mostly by social group, though they often provide only the crudest glimpses of individual “practices.” De Certeau, searching for exactly those practices, assembled accounts of individual experience from his own memory, from anecdotes related to him, from journalism and the arts. The practices of consumers of past eras—especially practices as ephemeral as their understanding of and attitudes toward musical canons—may not seem discoverable by the same means, but those consumers can occasionally be found out in their letters and diaries, or as they were represented in contemporary novels and other art, or in inferences from the canonic texts into which they insinuated their differences.

Taking such trouble to discover the practices of nameless individuals is justified, for de Certeau, by his interest in celebrating the spirit of “the ordinary man ... this anonymous hero”—to whom he dedicated his book—in privately resisting or transforming social authority and power. But championing the ordinary person’s resistance to authority can be just as sentimental an exercise as championing the autonomy of genius. Ordinary people can themselves be sentimental about their resistance to authority, their rejection of canonic taste, and it is up to researchers to resist being taken in by their subjects’ self-delusions. The sociologist Simon Frith, for instance, shows an admirable critical distance in this assessment of the ways groups of British rock fans describe themselves:

If group identity is part of teenage culture for conventional reasons ... then even people with an ideology of individual taste become a group of individualists and need the symbols and friends and institutions to assert themselves as a group.... One of the paradoxes in my survey was that the group which most stressed individual musical choice also most stressed the importance of shared musical taste for friendship—music served as the badge of individuality on which friendship choices could be based.²⁸

28. Simon Frith, *Sound Effects: Youth, Leisure, and the Politics of Rock 'n' Roll* (New York, 1981), 208.

Every act of resistance contains an acknowledgment or re-inscription of authority, as de Certeau himself recognizes in his description of a friend who in her walks around her city avoids streets with proper names: “her walking is thus still controlled negatively by proper names.”²⁹ Resistances to musical canons are “still controlled negatively” by the authority of those canons. Students who listen to assigned music not quite, or not at all, the way their teachers tell them to, whether they are frustrated at their failure or proud of their difference, nevertheless acknowledge the canonicity of the teachers’ practice of listening. Non-Western students who study “world music” at Western universities, even as they undertake the study for their own reasons, cannot help being conscious of the subject as a canon of musical otherness for Westerners. Apparently different levels of resistance may even embody the same acknowledgment. The canonicity of jazz is equally recognized by jazz collectors who wouldn’t be caught dead owning *The Smithsonian Collection of Classic Jazz* because they hate putting jazz in the museum, by those who wouldn’t be caught dead owning it because they prefer their own canonic choices, and by those who buy it without intending ever to listen to it. The range of resistances does not so much define the standing of any given canon in its society as map the society touched by that canon.

The role of consumers in the life of the canon is strange not only because they acknowledge by resisting, but also because they domesticate by vacating. In Joseph Kerman’s incisive phrase (offered, however, with reservations), a canon is an “enduring exemplary collection [of works].”³⁰ But a work does not function as “exemplary” until the user moves outside it, using it to understand, to place, to judge another work. Henry Gates, Jr., in his collection of essays called *Loose Canons*,

29. De Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, 104.

30. Kerman, “A Few Canonic Variations,” 177.

addresses the consumption, the renting, of canons—in this case the literary canon—like this:

People often like to represent the high canonical texts as the reading matter of the power elite. I mean, you have to try to imagine James Baker curling up with the *Four Quartets*, Dan Quayle leafing through the *Princess Cassimassima*. I suppose this is the vision, anyway. What's wrong with this picture?³¹

What's wrong with this picture, what makes this such a telling parody, besides that it names the wrong sort of authority figure, is that a canon is not what anybody reads (or looks at or listens to) so much as what someone is expected to *have* read (or looked at or listened to), preferably back in school. People who have the memory not just of the experience of canonic works, but also of canonic discourse about them, have “exemplary” comparisons within easy reach of their mental armchairs, whenever they “curl up with” or “leaf through” something new or non-canonic.

My favorite instance of a consumer's “rental” of a canonic work is the story of a friend of mine who loves opera. A few years ago I was surprised to learn that she had been to see a production of *Lulu*, because I knew that her operatic taste barely extended to Strauss. But she was actually very pleased, in her way: “It was really beautiful,” she told me, “and now I never have to see it again!” Never needing to see something again means needing to have seen it once, and the canonization of an artistic work is accomplished, to be precise about it, not so much in the declarations of the proper authorities that it deserves to be canonic, as in the crystallization of consumer opinion that produces sentences like my friend's. The phrase that announces its canonization—“I never have to see it again”—also announces the speaker's resistance to it.

31. Henry Louis Gates, Jr., *Loose Canons: Notes on the Culture Wars* (New York, 1992), 20.

Dutifulness, it seems, can be one of the most powerful forms of resistance.

This is not evidently a story about the power of domestication in the life of a musical canon. The ephemeral act of attending an opera is a far cry from the commodification—whether as printed arrangement or as recording—that characteristically brings music into the home. And the assertion that one *Lulu* is enough stands in contrast to the repetition—replaying, rehearsing, remembering—that defines the domestic side of the canonizing process.

But, in its way, this too is a story of a musical arrangement. By the time my friend told me about having seen *Lulu*, she had already arranged her memory of the experience into at least two distinct parts, the part she resisted—“I never have to see it again”—and the part she didn’t—“It was beautiful.” This process can be seen to parallel the process of producing commodified arrangements, the process by which, for instance, Don Giovanni’s Serenade was turned into “The grass and flowers which clothe the fields.” In that case the notes of the original Serenade were embraced for the most part, as even the original subject matter was to a certain extent, but at the price of resisting—and purging—the original words and their message. It is in the nature of canonization for some part of the original work and its meaning to disappear in the process, a victim of resistance.

But once it is canonized, the resistance itself disappears from view. “The grass and flowers,” anointed as one of the “most admired Compositions of the best Masters,” is ready to “improve the taste” of performers who may have no idea that Mozart wrote the music to very different words. Likewise, when my friend comes to use *Lulu* as canonic, it won’t matter whether she found the opera beautiful or ugly, whether she liked it enough to see again or not. She will be using the work as exemplary, taking stock of what makes something else not-*Lulu*, just as users of *The Beauties of Mozart* knew their taste had been “improved” when they could tell that the “ordinary

Psalm Tunes” that had once satisfied them were not-Mozart. The canonic is always a domestication, a work doubly arranged, doubly resisted, doubly transformed through insinuated differences—first by authoritative mediators and later by individual, “domestic” users—so that it can function in the memories of those users as a template for what is not itself.