

Cantologies

WERE WE TO ENVISION A full-fledged *cantology*, how would it go? Tomlinson offered the word two decades ago as a terminological prod, urging that we provincialize Music and attend to a counterpractice and counterdiscourse all but submerged in the two-century-old project of musicology/ethnomusicology it spawned.¹ Music and musicology, in this view, represent an amalgamated system by which Europe began, circa 1800, to advance claims to exceptionalism in a broad realm of cultural practice. Its manifest elements were formalized “works,” predominant instrumentalism, notation-based technical reproduction, concert-based performance, and heuristic analysis of individual “pieces,” all circulating through elite and bourgeois society. Cantology aimed instead to approach the *songish* center of gravity of sounding practices not restricted to those with economic or cultural capital, primarily vocal with secondary instrumentalism, less reliant (or unreliant) on writing for their transmission, typically conveyed in brief performance acts, often informal—practices that can be gathered under the generic term *song*. These were certainly well known in elite Europe, but, since they exist across the whole of humanity, they could support no claim of special European status. Instead, they delimited its provincial status on a global landscape, affirming Western localism and countering Western exceptionalism.

Cantology aimed to describe not only histories but *historicitities*—songish conditions of possibility for varied experiences of history. It aspired to a critical historiography in which contextualized practices and discourses might be seen in relation to metadiscourses and nondiscursive formations around and beneath them. If critique is the questioning of the conditions of possibility for knowledge, Immanuel Kant’s critique is an account of the

ABSTRACT *Cantology* names an approach to the songish impulses that are a ubiquitous aspect of human cultures. It aims to divert our attention from the more restricted objects of musicological and ethnomusicological scrutiny by discerning *song formations*, conditions of possibility that define experiences of society and history along songish lines. These formations, local phenomena in cantology’s broad purview, emerge from the interactions of levels of cultural production including the performative, the discursive, the metadiscursive, and the archaeological. We outline a cantological theory, then briefly characterize four successive song formations in the West, reaching from the sixteenth century to the twenty-first. REPRESENTATIONS 154. 2021 © The Regents of the University of California. ISSN 0734-6018, electronic ISSN 1533-855X, pages 113–28. All rights reserved. Direct requests for permission to photocopy or reproduce article content to the University of California Press at <https://www.ucpress.edu/journals/reprints-permissions>. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1525/rep.2021.154.9.113>.

conditions of possibility of a species-based (that is, human) knowledge, given the framework of time and space and the categories for understanding. The Hegelian, Marxist, and Darwinian extensions of this critique derive from the recognition that, since species are historical, the conditions of possibility are not simply those of a species-being but those of a species-moment, including the species' experience of an irreversible arrow of time. With the formation of the academic disciplines—a division of labor in the organization of knowledge, the “division of faculties” recognized early by Kant—these critical modes came to be considered in specific domains, and it is from this disciplinary vantage that we might form a cantological critique of musicology/ethnomusicology.

Today sound studies and voice studies form robust subdisciplines that might seem to advance such a critique. Their advocates, however, have pursued other goals. On the one hand, the focus on sound and audio cultures is a powerful echo of the recasting of art history as visual culture studies, but it tends to remain, in its emphasis on hearing, listening, and the ear, tied to a kind of physicalist and technician reception aesthetics. On the other hand, the attention to the voice recaptures the expressive and embodied elements of sounding practices, but at the cost of a kind of reduction to the body, to affect, and to a performing present. Cantology aims instead to capture the dialectic of enchantment and disenchantment, ritual and the quotidian, physics and metaphysics in “vocalization differentiated from everyday speech and thereby marked as appropriate to more or less special social functions,” Tomlinson's “working definition of song.”² Cantology disperses its objects across a vast terrain of human activity, pluralizing both the songish practices at its heart and the historicities to which those practices stand in a relation of mutual constitution.

Songish: here is another uncustomary coinage, an adjective that unsettles the all-too-automatic *musical* at the same time as it situates itself on the cantological terrain. Unlike cantology, however, this is no neologism but can be traced back at least to the late seventeenth century, when John Dryden used it to designate certain parts of the first English operas that contrasted with other, “recitative” parts.³ His impulse was cantological, and it points toward a formation joining ingredients on many levels, from the performative practices of song-acts themselves to their discursive, metadiscursive, and archaeological environments.

We call such phenomena *song formations*, taking in under this umbrella term their many dimensions. Such formations are always local phenomena on cantology's wider terrain, determined in part by forces and *durées* at several broad scales. We can think of these formations, as we can think also of Michel Foucault's epistemes, as an expansion of historicity conceived along Braudelian lines. For Dryden's case, we could describe a *durée*

beginning a century before him of Italian impact on English song; another, longer one, of medieval origin, of elite European singing intercepted by music writing; and a still longer one of Indo-European and circum-Mediterranean accompanied song—to name some explicitly songish *durées* at work. For all song formations, we could point also to the longest *durée* of all, the songish achievement of *Homo sapiens* as a species, likely dating back at least sixty thousand years, to the time when our African lineage began its global expansion. While song formations take on their distinctive characters from broad forces acting across long *durées*, however, they are not fully determined in this way. Their localism takes shape also from below, so to speak, in individual song-acts and the assemblages and traditions they form. In general, song formations, like other cultural formations, are shaped in multiscalar mutuality, dialectical interplays, and nonlinear causality. Their distinctiveness from other formations lies in the prominence of song-acts in their coalescence.

Song formations as envisioned here and cantology in general offer an alternative view of what has been a fundamental aim of musical study of all sorts: to understand musical acts as implicated in (or representing, expressing, shaping, composing, even prophesying) the nature and values of the cultures in which they occur. This effort has recently been neologized as “enchainment” and accused of “mysticism” and “magical thinking,” especially in its attempts to read nonmusical things directly from music.⁴ But only a narrow view of the possibilities for enchainment, shaped in reaction to musicological approaches involving music analysis, stumbles over the whole idea of a generative relation between music and other human social practice and spiritual endeavor. The multidimensionality of song formations in itself ought to refute any such view.

In what follows we sketch three song formations in which different kinds of relations between songish impulses and human culture are manifest, lingering over the third, then gesture in conclusion toward a fourth. The chronological order in which we present the formations enables us to see overlaps and relations of continuity and correlated transformation among them. For each formation we try to indicate the distinctive cantological historicity it generated.

Formation 1: Aria

Dryden adopted “songish,” as he said, “for want of a proper English word,” the Italian *aria* not yet having gained currency in his country’s nascent opera tradition. In early modern Europe, before it was transferred to opera, *aria* referred, along with its cognates *air* (French) and *ayre*

(English), to discrete song-acts—archetypal cantological performatives. Thus in sixteenth-century Italy it was used to name whole tunes schematically constructed so as to enable semi-improvisatory singing of fixed-form poetry, and by the early seventeenth century it was applied to solo songs in collections that poured forth for a few decades from mainly Venetian presses.⁵

But the term also carried other connotations, vaguer than these, referring not to song-acts but to their features such as unspeechlike fixed rhythms and sung delivery; above all it seems to have captured something pleasing and gracious about *the way a song went* that involved the design, style, and presentation of melody. Baldassare Castiglione used the word this way while praising solo song with instrumental accompaniment in *Il Libro del cortegiano* (1528); its chief advantage over polyphonic song was that “all the sweetness consists in one alone, and we take in and hear the beautiful style [*modo*] and *aria* much better, not having our ears occupied by more than one voice.”⁶ In its association with sweetness and grace, *aria* was for Castiglione a songish entailment of his key concept *sprezzatura*, the effortless achievement essential for courtly grace. (In the most famous of early seventeenth-century songbooks, *Le nuove musiche* of 1602, singer Giulio Caccini explicitly connected *sprezzatura* to the performance of his *arie*.)⁷

In this way, *aria* was connected also to the stylization of self-presentation that sat at the heart of elite sixteenth-century comportment. This touches a metadiscursive level of the *aria* formation and suggests several of its concomitants beyond courtliness per se and at the edges of song, for example, the ascendancy of Petrarchan autobiographical subjectivity in lyric poetry.⁸ In songish developments, the formation branched in two directions: toward the ennobling of the expression of *cantimbanchi*, *improvvisatori*, reciters, and other native cantors into avatars of Petrarchan expression (Serafino Aquilano, who died young and famous in 1500, set the type); and toward the proliferation of composed polyphonic songs, especially the massively published and internationally influential madrigal.⁹ This most important song genre was characterized by its self-conscious stylization of subjective presentation, framed in the expressive relation between the semantics and syntax of words and their melodic, rhythmic, and metric conveyance. This increased the moment-to-moment intimacy of words and song, but in the same gesture it opened a new space between words and *music*, a new possibility, not present in Serafino’s song-acts, for the analytic distinction of the two.¹⁰ From within cantology, it forecast musical formations to come.

At a still deeper level, approaching archaeological conditions of possibility, *aria* connected song to its airy medium, opening onto a large arena of ancient doctrine and lore that came into new discursive hegemony around 1500.¹¹ The ingredients were many: an ethics of airy harmony viewed as essential in structuring life and society; a related humoral medicine in which

air was central, also with ethical implications; theories of love connected to both of these; white-magical therapies involving astrological and other healing songs; Neoplatonic pneumatology, which discerned in airy spirits the mediation between body and soul; and a whole, harmonious cosmology in which humans likewise occupied a middle place between material and immaterial realms. All this changed the forces conveyed in song itself: in touch with both body and soul through the spirit, affecting the humoral disposition of singer and hearer, expressive in a manner somewhat like verbal rhetoric, song was now heard to “imitate the intentions and affections of the soul and words also, and reproduce people’s gestures, motions, and actions as well as their moral characters,” as Marsilio Ficino wrote in 1489.¹²

Song now brought elite Europe close to an underground, long-*durée*, circum-Mediterranean tradition of ecstatic (out-of-body) practices, possession rites, and allied mystical experiences. The philosophical and anecdotal tip of this iceberg, revealed in ancient sources newly recovered or interpreted, made song-acts and their subjective expression partners in a novel historicity of revivalism, witnessed discursively in the circulation of occult wisdom and the powerful *topos* that songs might restore an ancient harmonic ethics of soul, body, and society.

Formation 2: Aboriginal Song

The putative role of song in the origin of human language and society is a theme with ancient roots in the West, one revived in the early modern aria formation; but in eighteenth-century discourse it took on unprecedented vigor, symptomatic of a novel song formation.¹³ Four figures may stand for the many in the era to put their particular spin on the theme. Jean-Jacques Rousseau pictured primitives, drawn together around temperate springs and unhampered by the dire needfulness of northern climes, forming passionate signs in melody—for him the only aspect of music capable of imitation or representation.¹⁴ James Burnett, Lord Monboddo, doubted that there was ever a language of music alone, as some asserted, and traced language origins to natural, vocalic cries indicating need and emotion. These were at first inarticulate in the manner of animal cries and progressed toward language only as they were distinguished through the addition of musical tones and intervals, which are still preserved in the “savage” and “imperfect” languages of the world. Later, after the heyday of such tonal inflection, consonantal articulation came to play its large role in perfected (that is, European) languages.¹⁵ Johan Gottfried von Herder rejected an exact origin of language in passionate cries but retained the idea that early language, like savage languages in his day, required an

emotive, songish prosody, which led to the earliest poetry and music. His studies of folk song extend from his theories of aboriginal language.¹⁶ Giambattista Vico, the earliest and in many ways most radical of all these social theorists, described a now-lost poietic imaginative power (*sapienza poetica*) characteristic of the barbarous mind of his heroic age, which constituted the world of human experience in acts of immanent, nonabstract creativity. The first authors of heroic nations were stimulated to plastic utterance by violent passions and so “must have formed their earliest languages in singing.”¹⁷ Early societies were turbulently, aboriginally songish.

Two elements stand out at the center of the aboriginal song formation. First is the premise that analysts of language origins took as axiomatic, whatever their nuanced and distinctive positions: that singing expresses passion. Rousseau is atypical only in the explicitness with which he asserts that “the sounds in melody act on us not only as sounds, but as signs of our affections and our sentiments; thus they arouse in us the movements that those [affections and sentiments] express and of which we recognize the image.”¹⁸ The axiom is an outgrowth of the earlier aria formation, with its expressive preoccupations, and a well-developed strain in musicology has tracked practices and doctrines of musical affect across the early modern period. What is not often enough noticed—and was not noticed in the eighteenth century—is the supplementary, even Derridean structure that the axiom entailed. For the likes of Vico and Rousseau, passionate song was naturalized and close at hand, experienced at venues like the opera houses of Naples, Venice, and Paris. Their imaginings of songish primitiveness were paradoxically founded in listening to sung refinements of elite European culture. The aboriginal song formation could not help but confound in this way the familiar with the utterly alien—the heroic *mentalité* that Vico labored for twenty years to comprehend. The two were folded into one another in the labor to distinguish them.

This defines anthropologies of the modern era, which fold the universal and axiomatic into the local and particular, and it points to the second element at the heart of the aboriginal song formation. As is manifest in the preceding thumbnail sketches, theories of language origins looked for their evidence to the cries, songs, and languages of non-Europeans encountered mainly since the sixteenth century. By the eighteenth century, the songish vocality of so-called savages and barbarians across the world provided the model for Europe’s own primitive history more often than did any attempt at home-front historical reconstruction. Like the axiom of passionate song, this involved a fold in experience, in this case a refashioning of European historicity along a cantological axis. It instantiates in songish form Johannes Fabian’s “denial of coevalness,” by which geographical distance from Europe came to be equated with temporal distance from the present, in

a secularization of time's arrow anticipating evolutionary histories to come.¹⁹ Fabian diagnosed this new historicity as the starting point for modern anthropology. Its songish orientation requires that we recognize it also as precursor to the musicology that would emerge in the nineteenth century and the fifth-column ethnomusicology that would coalesce in its midst.

This suggests that the aboriginal song formation did not disappear with the emergence of music and musicology but was subsumed uneasily within it through the nineteenth century and beyond. Richard Wagner's music drama provides an instance. Today music drama is usually (and not wrongly) associated with music and musicology, which labored mightily through the early twentieth century to domesticate it (see, for example, Alfred Lorenz's four-volume study *Das Geheimnis der Form bei Richard Wagner* of 1924–33); but its fit with this formation was always unsettled by Wagner's cantological sidesteps. One of these is his positing of "absolute music" not as the heart of the composer's endeavor—which it came to be in the musicological dispensation—but as an evasion of the artist's full responsibilities in the *Gesamtkunstwerk*. Another is portrayed in *The Ring of the Nibelungs* as heard through the filter of Wagner's theories in *Opera and Drama*. The opening scenes of *Das Rheingold* present a contorted reprise of language origins discourse from a century before, in which society and its ills emerge from an encounter with aboriginal, impassioned song. As for the cry of passion in that song, Wagner the theorist finally transformed it into "the Scream . . . [,] root-element of every human message to the ear," heard as the direct manifestation of Arthur Schopenhauer's "Will" and an impossible phenomenalization of Kant's noumenon.²⁰

Formation 3: Song-and-Dance

If passionate song emerges as an enlightenment universal, it is pushed to the margins as musicology takes its place among the nineteenth-century human sciences. We can discern two initiatives contending for control of European musical self-fashioning through this period: a *formalist* tendency, part and parcel of music's orientation toward works, writing, and analysis and fully coalesced at the moment of Eduard Hanslick's *On the Musically Beautiful* (1854), a foundational text for modern artistic formalisms; and a *folkist* tendency stemming directly from Herder's and similar apperceptions in the aboriginal song formation, but now explicitly describing a songish otherness so as to reinforce Europe's high-art exceptionalism. Song was reinvented as the sign of the particular, the provincial, the peasant: the folk of folk song, the ethnos of ethnomusicology. The founding moments of this "science of man" were, Philip Bohlman suggests, the

folk-song collecting of Herder's *Volkslieder* in the 1770s and the gramophone recordings from Africa and Asia in E. M. von Hornbostel's *Demonstration Collection* of the 1900s.²¹ Within the discourse of music, folk-song collections and colonial ethnographic recordings were imagined as raw material to be refined in composition, from Ludwig van Beethoven's settings of the Scottish songs collected by Alexander Campbell to Béla Bartók's combined practice of field recording and modernist composition.

But collections and revivals of putatively "traditional" songs often prove to be unintended heralds of songish insurrection, even as the song collectors insist, as Herder did, that "being of the folk does not refer to the people on the street, who never sing or create poetry, but instead cry out and torture the language."²² New and unexpected cantologies—new song formations—emerge in the wake of Herder's and Hornbostel's founding moments of the folkist side of musicology: a song-and-dance formation that is heard in the 1840s, a noise uprising that is recorded in the 1920s.

"Song-and-dance" enters the vernacular in the mid-nineteenth century, naming not only the new plebeian entertainments—"The Original Song and Dance Man, Banjo Soloist, and American Jig Dancer," the *OED* finds in 1866—but also, in a metaphorical extension, any "elaborately contrived story," any "fuss, outcry, or commotion," that resembled those entertainments.²³ It was distinguished from "folk music" as well as "art music." Matthew Gelbart finds this first in England in about 1850, where "the urban working classes and lower middle class . . . first gained possession of their own recognized category of commercial music—via such emerging institutions as the music hall"; Derek Scott sees four parallel but distinct revolutions in popular style: London music hall; New York minstrelsy; Parisian cabaret; and Viennese couple dance, the waltz.²⁴ The steam press and railroad made possible a new industry of manufactured song, with cheap sheet music; touring quartets; and manufactured banjos, saxophones, and concertinas.

The emergence of the US minstrel song can be taken as a key instance of this formation. In 1843, in the midst of the expansion of the age of cotton's "second slavery" and the new "abolitionist" form of African American resistance, the fiddle player Dan Emmet formed a blackface quartet, the Virginia Minstrels, combining the name and close-harmony singing of vocal groups like the Tyrolese Minstrels, which toured the United States from the Swiss and Austrian Alps in the 1830s, with a distinctive and henceforth standard instrumentation—violin, banjo, bones, and tambourine.²⁵ The repertory comprised comic and sentimental songs of slave plantation life in caricatured Black dialect. Minstrelsy was dominated by groups of white performers in blackface, like the Christy Minstrels, who made the songs of Stephen Foster famous, but its racial and political presentation was a complex mix of what Eric Lott called "love and theft." By the mid-1850s, there were

African American minstrel performers in burnt cork, marketed as “authentic Ethiopians”; as Ronald Radano has argued, “a new category of labor, the Negro musician,” emerges in this formation.²⁶ And the Alpine close-harmony minstrels that inspired blackface minstrel song also inspired an early avatar of “movement” song, the Hutchinson Family Singers, “the first widely successful home-grown close-harmony quartet,” who became celebrated as antislavery singers.²⁷ The song-and-dance formation—in the United States and beyond—can thus be seen as a contradictory compound of the booming song commerce, the emergence of new forms of musical labor, and a newly self-conscious song practice of abolitionist, women’s rights, and socialist movements, propagating political anthems, hymns, and marches.

But song-and-dance was more than simply the intensification of song as a commodity, a moment in the long *durée* of modern “popular song.” For a song formation is not only a specific social, cultural, and sonic assemblage that structures “song” in particular ways; it also creates the conditions for a new experience of history. It has too rarely been remarked that Frederick Douglass and Karl Marx—exact contemporaries in the revolutionary generation of “1848”—first encountered “the social movement” (a new phrase of the era) in song. The social movement manifested itself as a new cantology.

Douglass was a violinist and singer: he tells of singing and of refusing to sing when he was enslaved, and he later performed for abolitionist audiences. Among his few belongings when he escaped to New Bedford in 1838 were his “three music books,—two of them collections by Dyer, and one by Shaw.”²⁸ And as a cantologist, he inaugurated in the 1840s a distinctively new engagement with the song-and-dance formation, within but also beyond the folkist and formalist musical doxa. He attacked blackface minstrelsy—the “Virginia Minstrels, Christy’s Minstrels, the Ethiopian Serenaders, or any of the filthy scum of white society, who have stolen from us a complexion denied to them by nature, in which to make money, and pander to the corrupt taste of their white fellow-citizens”; and he defended and appeared with the Hutchinson Family Singers, “the sweet singers of anti-slavery and the ‘good time coming.’” But he also argued, in a mid-1850s lecture on the antislavery movement, that, though “it would seem almost absurd” to say “that we have allies in the Ethiopian songs . . . considering the use that has been made of them,” nonetheless “those songs . . . constitute our national music . . . without which we have no national music . . . ‘Lucy Neal,’ ‘Old Kentucky Home,’ and ‘Uncle Ned’ . . . awaken the sympathies for the slave, in which anti-slavery principles take root, grow, and flourish.” And he reflected on the contradictions of African American minstrelsy, reviewing a performance of Gavitt’s Original Ethiopian Serenaders, “partly from a love of music, and partly from curiosity to see persons of color exaggerating the peculiarities of their race.” “Their singing,” he wrote, “generally was but an

imitation of white performers, and not even a tolerable representation of the character of colored people”; nonetheless, one singer, Cooper, is “truly an excellent singer”; moreover, though “the Tambourine was an utter failure,” the bones player Davis is “certainly a master player,” and the dancer of the Virginia Breakdown, Richardson, “excelled anything which we have ever seen of that description of dancing.” Douglass concluded that the performers “must cease to exaggerate the exaggerations of our enemies, and represent the colored man rather as he is.”²⁹ It is not that one or another of Douglass’s sometimes contradictory arguments is correct; rather, Douglass articulates positions that will recur in the next century’s debates over the song-and-dance formation.

At this initial moment of minstrelsy and of abolitionist song alike Douglass writes his classic, oft-analyzed 1845 account of the singing of the enslaved Maryland tobacco workers of his childhood as they traveled to the Great House Farm for their monthly allowance of food and clothing: “While on their way, they would make the dense old woods, for miles around, reverberate with their wild songs, revealing at once the highest joy and the deepest sadness. They would compose and sing as they went along, consulting neither time nor tune. . . . Into all of their songs they would manage to weave something of the Great House Farm.” “Every tone was a testimony against slavery,” Douglass continued. “To those songs I trace my first glimmering conception of the dehumanizing character of slavery.”³⁰ These reflections *preceded* the folkish interpretation of the sounding practices of enslaved African Americans by US ballad scholars in the midst of the revolutionary era Du Bois named “black reconstruction”: the first publication of a “spiritual” came only in 1861 and the landmark postemancipation collection by US ballad collectors, *Slave Songs of the United States*, in 1867.³¹

At the same moment, in the summer of 1844, the young Karl Marx, in his earliest account of “the social movement,” remarked on the “*theoretical* and *conscious* character” of the June uprising of the Silesian cotton weavers: “First of all, recall the *song of the weavers*, that bold *call* to struggle, in which there is not even a mention of hearth and home, factory or district, but in which the proletariat at once, in a striking, sharp, unrestrained and powerful manner, proclaims its opposition to the society of private property.”³² Marx was referring to “Das Blutgericht” (The blood court), which was, in the words of the young Silesian activist (and song collector) Wilhelm Wolff, “the *Marseillaise* of the needy.”³³ “The weavers assembled before the house of one of the most respectable manufacturers, of the name of Zwanziger,” Marx’s future comrade Friedrich Engels reported, “singing a song, in which the behaviour of this individual towards his workmen was animadverted upon, and which seems to have been manufactured for the occasion.”³⁴ The weavers then destroyed the Zwanziger house, warehouse, and factory.

Maryland's Great House Farm and Silesia's house of the Zwanzigers might seem worlds apart, but they were joined in the international division of labor that structured what Marx later called "the age of cotton." The Maryland plantation on which Douglass grew up was part of the "slave-breeding" business supplying the "second slavery" of the cotton south; the Silesian village, less than a generation from serfdom, was a realm of rural capitalism where, as in India and Ireland, indebted hand-loom weavers were crushed by the cheap textiles Manchester manufactured from American cotton.

Both Douglass and Marx admitted that they were unable fully to understand these songs. "I did not, when a slave," Douglass writes, "understand the deep meaning of those rude and apparently incoherent songs. I was myself within the circle; so that I neither saw nor heard as those without might see and hear." He returned to the songs in writings over the next half century, trying to fathom their deep meaning, seeking analogues as he compared them to songs he heard in Ireland during the famine ("There I heard the same *wailing notes*") and adopting the folkish rhetorics that dominated after the Civil War: "all of their songs" in 1845 became "all these slave songs" in 1893.³⁵

Marx, in contrast, was outside the circle. He did not hear the Peterswaldau weavers singing of the "blood court": the office where indebted weavers received the piece-rate wages for the cloth woven on their cottage hand-looms, the "court" where their work was examined and their wages deducted and where they were condemned, mocked, and scorned; stripped of their livelihood; and left to starvation. The verses cataloged by name the wage-cutting merchant-manufacturers of the village and then turned the "blood court" upside down, imagining the day when the Zwanzigers would be held to account, when the weavers' curse would be the manufacturers' reward. We don't know how Marx (in exile in Paris) learned of the song, though it is likely that he received an account—orally or through correspondence—from Wolff, the son of a Silesian serf whose essay on the uprising (including two dozen of the song's verses) was published in 1845; Marx would meet Wolff in 1846 in Brussels, among the diaspora of exiled German radicals. Marx insisted on the importance of the song as *theory*, extravagantly asserting that the song showed that "the German proletariat is the *theoretician* of the European proletariat, just as the English proletariat is its *economist*, and the French proletariat its *politician*." But his repeated adjectives describing the song—"striking, sharp, unrestrained and powerful" (*schlagender, scharfer, rücksichtsloser, gewaltsamer*)—struggle to convey its affect, and he concluded by deferring any definitive understanding: "confronted with the first outbreak of the Silesian workers' uprising, the sole task of one who thinks and loves the truth consisted not in playing the role of *schoolmaster* in relation to this event, but instead in studying its *specific* character."³⁶

Marx's cantological insistence on the song as theory is arresting. It is worth recalling that, in this same summer of 1844, as the young Marx encountered the social movement in the singing of cotton weavers, he was also sketching a powerful and influential account of the historicity of the human senses. "The forming of the five senses is the labor of the entire history of the world down to the present," he writes in what would come to be known as the Paris manuscripts; that history yields "a musical ear, an eye for beauty of form—in short *senses* capable of human gratification." "Only music awakens in man the sense of music, and . . . the most beautiful music has *no* sense for the unmusical ear."³⁷ The historicity of the sensorium—and the insistence that "natural science . . . will become the basis of human science" and that "history itself is a real part of natural history"—led Marx to imagine both the present "estrangement" of the senses, their reduction under capital to the "sense of *having*," and the possible "*emancipation* of all human senses," the moment when "the *senses* . . . become directly in their practice *theoreticians*."³⁸

Thus the song of the weavers is *theory*, not because of some specific conceptual analysis, but in its very songishness, which forms a call to struggle and a promise of the emancipation of all human senses. This is paralleled in Douglass, who also insists on a songish meaning that transcends concepts and surpasses philosophy: the slaves "would sing, as a chorus, to words which to many would seem unmeaning jargon, but which, nevertheless, were full of meaning to themselves. . . . The mere hearing of those songs would do more to impress some minds with the horrible character of slavery, than the reading of whole volumes of philosophy on the subject could do."³⁹ The song-act is figured at this moment as a new possibility dependent on the distance that had opened between language and song—the distance prefigured in the aria formation and featured in the supplementary passion of aboriginal song. But the song-acts transcribed by Douglass and Marx in 1844 and the song-and-dance formation that makes them possible are also the condition of possibility for a new historicity, a new perception of social *movement*—of, in the words of Douglass's subsequent 1848 West India Emancipation celebration speech, "a grand commotion . . . the commencement of the great movements."⁴⁰

Conclusion: Song Recording

The senses have not yet been emancipated, and, as Carolyn Abbate has reminded us, neither was the ear forcibly "evolved."⁴¹ Instead, the sensorium was mediated through a new set of technologies. The transduction of sound waves into modulated electric current and back created

a new division of sound, a new release from proximity, as microphone and loudspeaker were separated and linked by way of technical sound systems: phonograph, radio, sound film, and public address system. But technology is not automatically cantology, and the breakthroughs in sound recording technology did not initiate a new song formation. Neither the novelty cylinders and disks of Enrico Caruso's arias ("music") nor the field recordings of Hornbostel ("ethnomusic") in the early, "acoustic" decades of sound recording marked a rupture with music/musicology.

Only in the 1920s did the new technology come to be a potent agent of transformation in the prevailing song formation, and it did so in the form of *song*—not sound—recording. In the emerging commercial hegemony of the three-minute 78 rpm disk, song recording extended the reification of the song-act beyond either a commodity to be sold by the sheet music industry or an object to be collected in ballad books. At the same time, however, it enabled a new cantology, which crystallized around the recording of vernacular sounding practices in colonial ports around the world, often under the rubric "jazz." This deployed recording technics *against* song, in that its jazzy genres—samba, son, marabi, highlife, kroncong, hula, tango, and others—became signifiers of the "noisy" timbres, "syncopated" rhythms, and "weird" tonalities in the songish practices of postslave and anticolonial communities across five continents.⁴²

These developments forged a link that remains unbroken today between a world-cantological event—the explosion of recorded popular song—and what must be considered the chief world-historical event of the twentieth century: the breakup and overthrow of the colonial empires that ruled the world in 1900. Three deep, songish conditions of possibility in this conjuncture have grown so naturalized that they mostly pass unnoticed. First, song recording has become, in an overworked but fundamental commonplace, the soundtrack of everyday life. The older dichotomies of autonomous and functional musics, charted in the discourses of musicology and ethnomusicology, dissolve in the omnipresence of recorded song, no longer speech breaking into song or recitative into aria, but a constant, schizophrenic song-and-dance accompanying every conversation and gesture.

Second, the reduction in song recording of all kinds of musical expression to the song-commodity, whether collectible "record" or streamed "track," has eroded the foundations of the formalist and folkist regimes inherited from the nineteenth century. This erosion uncovers antinomies in the new formation, in which stand, alongside commercial reification, mass promulgation of social-movement song acts and the deployment of technology *against* song acts. Especially in this last ingredient of the formation, song recording has generated its own immanent critique of the song form, starting from the moment when magnetic tape technology first

enabled the creation of new sonic spaces through editing, splicing, mixing, bouncing, and layering of tracks. Over the last half century, in the deindustrialized and postcolonial metropolises of the Black Atlantic from Kingston to Queens, the Bronx to Brixton, already existing recordings became the raw material for songish creation, opening out the song form, creating new intersong possibilities among new intersubjectivities and affirming the link of world-historical and world-cantological events.

This link, finally, gestures toward an archaeological element of the song recording formation, the third deep condition we draw out of it. The shaping from song of a soundtrack of the quotidian, the linkage of song recording and world history, and the immanent critique of song form have together limned a cantology in which the order of the world is predicated on song-acts to a degree not seen, perhaps, since the world-harmony ontologies of the sixteenth century. Now social orders and disorders are shaped by song and its fractal dispersions. Now social theorists of postcolonial and postslavery conditions are drawn to becoming cantologists, as we see in a line stretching from W. E. B. Du Bois's invocation of the sorrow songs at the opening of the twentieth century to Achille Mbembe's songish insistence at its close that "music . . . becomes an 'archive,' a 'relic,' of human experience on the streets of Congo's cities." The old cantologies echo and are transformed in Mbembe's new one: aria in "the ordered (and disordered) distribution of energy over time, in a synthesis of instrument (especially guitar and percussion) and voice," and passion in its "noise . . . in the service of joy and beauty" and its still-Wagnerian scream: "At the heart of the music is the scream . . . *l'animation* . . . voiced by *atalaku*, or *animateurs*." A new *sprezzatura*, passionate cry, and social movement, all songish excesses beyond language, are echoed in recorded "surplus force"—in the presence of which "any event involving sound is called music."⁴³ All of music, at once synthetic, energized order and liberatory disorder, is encompassed in this new cantology.

Notes

1. Gary Tomlinson, "Vico's Songs: Detours at the Origins of (Ethno)Musicology," *Musical Quarterly* 83 (1999): 344–77; Gary Tomlinson, "Musicology, Anthropology, History," *Il Saggiatore musicale* 8 (2001): 21–37.
2. Tomlinson, "Vico's Songs," 345.
3. John Dryden, the preface to the opera *Albion and Albinus* of 1685; reproduced in Piero Weiss, *Opera: A History in Documents* (New York, 2002), 61–65.
4. Carolyn Abbate, "Sound Object Lessons," *Journal of the American Musicological Society* 69 (2016): 793–829; see also Carolyn Abbate, "Music—Drastic or Gnostic?," *Critical Inquiry* 30 (2004): 505–36.

5. For overviews of sixteenth-century aria, see Nino Pirrotta, *Music and Theatre from Poliziano to Monteverdi* (Cambridge, 1982), chaps. 1 and 6, and James Haar, *Essays on Italian Poetry and Music in the Renaissance, 1350–1600* (Berkeley, 1987), chap. 3.
6. Baldassare Castiglione, *Il libro del cortegiano*, ed. Ettore Bonora (Milan, 1976), 117; trans. adapted from that of Sir Thomas Hoby (1561).
7. Giulio Caccini, *Le nuove musiche* (1601; facsimile ed., New York, 1973), C2.
8. On fictive rituals of the self in Petrarchist lyric sequences see Roland Greene, *Post-Petrarchism: Origins and Innovations of the Western Lyric Sequence* (Princeton, 1991), introduction and chap. 1; also Luigi Baldacci, ed., *Lirici del Cinquecento* (Milan, 1975), introduction; and Gary Tomlinson, “Giaches de Wert and the Discourse of Petrarchism,” *Revista de Musicología* 16 (1993): 20–28.
9. On Serafino Aquilano, see Giuseppina La Face Bianconi and Antonio Rossi, *Le rime di Serafino Aquilano in musica* (Florence, 1999).
10. See Gary Tomlinson, “Consider the Madrigal,” in “Early Music,” ed. Fausto Borém et al., special issue, *Per musi* 36 (2017), 1–27, <https://periodicos.ufmg.br/index.php/permusi/article/view/5198>.
11. For these paragraphs see Gary Tomlinson, *Music and Renaissance Magic: Toward a Historiography of Others* (Chicago, 1992).
12. Marsilio Ficino, *De vita libri tres*; see Marsilio Ficino, *Three Books on Life*, ed. Carol V. Kaske and John R. Clark (Binghamton, NY, 1989), 358–59; trans. modified.
13. See for example Downing Thomas, *Music and the Origins of Language: Theories from the French Enlightenment* (Cambridge, 1995).
14. Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Essai sur l'origine des langues*, ed. Jean Starobinski (Paris, 1990).
15. James Burnett, Lord Monboddo, *Of the Origin and Progress of Language* (Edinburgh, 1774), Internet Archive, <https://archive.org/details/originandprogre01conggooq/page/n547/mode/2up>; see esp. book 3.
16. Johann Gottfried von Herder, *Treatise on the Origin of Language*, in *Philosophical Writings*, trans. Michael N. Forster (Cambridge, 1992).
17. Giambattista Vico, *La scienza nuova*; see Vico, *The New Science*, trans. Jason Taylor and Robert Minor (New Haven, 2020), 92.
18. Rousseau, *Essai*, 15.
19. Johannes Fabian, *Time and the Other: How Anthropology Makes Its Object* (New York, 1983).
20. See Gary Tomlinson, “*Il faut méditerraniser la musique*. After Braudel,” in *Music and Historical Critique: Selected Essays* (Aldershot, UK, 2007), 327–45, and Gary Tomlinson, *Metaphysical Song: An Essay on Opera* (Princeton, 1999), chap. 4.
21. Philip V. Bohlman, ed., *The Cambridge History of World Music* (Cambridge, 2013), introduction.
22. Johann Gottfried Herder and Philip V. Bohlman, *Song Loves the Masses: Herder on Music and Nationalism* (Oakland, 2017), 58.
23. *OED Online*, s.v. “song and dance.”
24. Matthew Gelbart, *The Invention of “Folk Music” and “Art Music”: Emerging Categories from Ossian to Wagner* (Cambridge, 2007), 259; Derek B. Scott, *Sounds of the Metropolis: The 19th-Century Popular Music Revolution in London, New York, Paris, and Vienna* (New York, 2008).
25. Gage Averill, *Four Parts, No Waiting: A Social History of American Barbershop Quartet* (New York, 2003), 34.
26. Eric Lott, *Love and Theft: Blackface Minstrelsy and the American Working Class* (New York, 1993); Ronald Radano, “Black Music Labor and the Animated Properties of Slave Sound,” *boundary* 2 43, no. 1 (2016): 190.

27. Averill, *Four Parts, No Waiting*, 24.
28. Frederick Douglass, *Autobiographies* (New York, 1994), 650. Given Douglass's time in Baltimore, these were probably collections of hymns and anthems by Samuel Dyer and Ruel Shaw; see James L. Fisher, "The Roots of Music Education in Baltimore," *Journal of Research in Music Education* 21, no. 3 (1973): 214–24.
29. Frederick Douglass, "The Hutchinson Family. Hunkerism," *North Star*, 27 October 1848; Douglass, *Autobiographies*, 678, 449–50; Frederick Douglass, "Gavitt's Original Ethiopian Serenaders," *North Star*, 29 June 1849.
30. Douglass, *Autobiographies*, 23–24.
31. Dena J. Epstein, *Sinful Tunes and Spirituals: Black Folk Music to the Civil War* (Urbana, IL, 2003), 245; Radano, "Black Music Labor," 181.
32. Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, *Collected Works* (hereafter *MECW*) vol. 3, *Marx and Engels: 1843–1844*, trans. Jack Cohen et al. (London, 1975), 201.
33. Wilhelm Wolff, *Aus Schlesien, Preußen und dem Reich: Ausgewählte Schriften*, ed. Walter Schmidt (Berlin, 1985), 68.
34. *MECW*, 3:532.
35. Douglass, *Autobiographies*, 24, 184, 23, 502.
36. *MECW*, 3:202, 201, 202.
37. *Ibid.*, 301–2.
38. *Ibid.*, 303–4, 300.
39. Douglass, *Autobiographies*, 23–24.
40. *Frederick Douglass: Selected Speeches and Writings*, ed. Philip S. Foner and Yuval Taylor (Chicago, 2000), 105.
41. Abbate, "Sound Object Lessons," 798–802.
42. Michael Denning, *Noise Uprising: The Audiopolitics of a World Musical Revolution* (London, 2015).
43. Achille Mbembe, "Variations on the Beautiful in the Congolese World of Sounds," *Politique africaine* 100 (December 2005–January 2006): 80, 83, 82, 86, 82.