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## BIOGRAPHY

**ARAYA ASGEDOM** was born and grew up in Addis Abeba, Ethiopia. He left for Cairo as a political refugee in 1984 and later landed in Vancouver, British Columbia, as an immigrant. He completed his architectural studies at Carlton University School of Architecture in 1987 and is currently on the faculty at Hampton University. He has held numerous workshops and seminars at different schools of architecture and was part of the team that won the First Progressive Architecture Research Annual Award in 1994.

White Papers, Black Marks
Architecture, Race, Culture
ed: Lesley Naa Norle Lokko.
Minneapolis: University of Minnesota
Press, 2000.

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THE UNSOUNDED SPACE

Frontispiece photo
credit:
'Incandescent Green',
detail of concrete wall
cast in red satin fabric.
Araya Asgedom

This page photo
credit:
as above

If 'being-as-having-been' is authentic, we call it repetition.

Martin Heidegger, Being and Time

Order emanates from repetition...ritual orders both 'life' and 'art'. Since each repeated event occupies a unique place in ontological time, repetition subtends both stasis or consistency and dynamism.

Kofi Agawu, African Rhythm: a Northern Ewe Perspective

As long as subjectivity (the self) and objectivity (the world of things) are conceived as mutually exclusive, music can only refer to subjectivity, the self. Were the inner world wholly devoid of objectivity the outer world nothing but object, the music's theme could only be an inner life devoid of objectivity. But this is the crux of the matter: the existence of music puts these categories and antithesis in question.

Victor Zuckerkandl, Man the Musician

If there is a lesson in the broad shape of the circulation of cultures, it is surely that we are already contaminated by each other, that there is no longer a fully autochthonous echt-African culture awaiting our salvage by our artists (just as there is, of course, no American culture without African roots). And there is a clear sense in some post-colonial writing that the postulation of a unitary Africa over against a monolithic West—the binarism of the Self and Other—is the last of the shibboleths of the modernizers that we must learn to live without.

Kwame Anthony Appiah

## THE CONTAMINATED SPACE

One of the most fashionable items that a young person could wear in revolutionary Ethopia was *berebaso*, a sandal made from used tires. Geja Sefer, my neighborhood, was not far from the edges of the central market, known as *merkato*—from the Latin *mercatus*, named by the generals of the Italian army (who, by the way, took an interest in the planning of several cities during their 1935–39 invasion of the country)—where such items and countless others were traded under open skies or improvised shade. I used to walk for about forty-five minutes to the crowded shoe market and get myself a pair of these used-tire sandals. The material for the sandals was made for a strength and friction beyond the human foot, which, incidentally, gives the pair a feet-life of their own. A sturdy bottom, with two wide laces—the threads still visible from the cross-section of the tire—form an 'X' over the foot, while another, equally wide lace hugs the foot just below the Achilles tendon. Perhaps wearing a used-tire sandal was an unconscious identification with the peasant, on whose behalf the young of Ethiopia called for the return of the land to the tiller? The sandal was ridiculously affordable. What was fashionable to me (though with a tinge of class consciousness) was of course necessary to the urban and rural poor. In time, its appeal wore out, the youngster matured and went onto other things. Except for two events: some two decades after what I might call my 'used-tire sandal period', I came upon Kwame Anthony Appiah's account of James Baldwin's choice of *Yoruba Man With a Bicycle*, a sculpture who 'is very jaunty, very authoritative [whose] errand might prove to be impossible, [yet] grounded in immediate reality by the bicycle.'[1] Appiah extends Baldwin's assessment by saying that the sculpture 'is produced by someone who does not care that the bicycle is the white man's invention—it [the sculpture] is not there to be an Other to the Yoruba self'.[2]

The other event, Steven Jay Gould's article *Creating the Creators*, is a meditation on Darwin's (or our interpretation of Darwin's thoughts) on evolutionary process. Gould claims that, unlike that which we are led to believe (i.e. evolution's work as the

ever-refining of oneself and one's work on the road to progress), evolution is characterized by unpredictability and change, which could not have been imagined by say, the original event, production or performance. Gould puts the matter this way:

> *Precise [evolutionary] adaptation, with each part finely honed to perform a definite function in an optimal way, can only lead to blind alleys, dead ends, and extinction. In our world of radically and unpredictably changing environments, an evolutionary potential for creative response requires that organisms possess an opposite set of attributes usually devalued in our culture: flexibility, not admirable precision.*[3]

The common thread that I want to draw out of *Yoruba Man* and the used-tire sandal example is the profound necessity of improvisation in the conduct of our lives and its indispensability when it comes to questions of creative cultural productions, in particular. Whether it is the radical shift from a used Goodyear or Michelin tire into a sandal, or the transformation of the traditional Yoruba person into what James Baldwin has characterized as a 'sort of polyglot...on his way to confront the city' where 'nothing looks like it fits him too well',[4] we are witnessing a strategy—a way of beholding the lived world, and a predisposition to cultural artifacts whose language and meaning arise out of improvisation. The Michelin of 'admirable precision' to borrow Gould's phrase, meets the radical imagination of the sandalmaker—and the human gestures skillfully directing the knife's blade to turn this potentially disposable product of scientific culture into a ubiquitous, yet linguistically and culturally charged commodity. In evolutionary lingua, the improvisation of the sandalmaker is understood as a 'quirky shift and latent potential'.[5] Original purpose, utility and meaning are signified upon by the radical

shift of imagination that the sandalmaker brings to the nature and assigned meaning of of tires. Improvisation thrives within the space of contamination, the dynamic interaction that rises out of formal (and presently) separated spheres.

*The outstanding fact of the twentieth century European culture is its ongoing reconciliation with black culture. The mystery may be that it took so long to discern the elements of black culture already there in latent form and to realize that the separation between cultures was perhaps all along not one of nature, but one of force.*
*James A. Snead, Repetition as a Figure of Black Culture*

Improvisations of this kind make sense when one places these and other cultural products of the contaminated space within a field of repetition. Again, in the case of repetition, I am not making a case for identical repetition. Rather, I am concerned with what Amiri Baraka has called 'the changing same'[6] that sense of belonging to two realms, of tradition and innovation; of affirming one's creative lineage, but also knowing that traditions are the inventions of consensus.

I will further interpret the notion of non-objectivity and 'deep' meaning by looking at polyphony, whose practice is found mainly in musical productions, but whose lessons might help us envision (or sound) potential positions within architectural thought. For the moment, however, let me mention that the condition of operating from within two or more cultures, or essentially moving in the contaminated space (used-tire/sandal; bicycle/Yoruba man; city/rural; scientific/non-scientific; literate/oral) and thus engendering more than a binary consciousness has been foreshadowed (or foresounded) by the polyphonic/polyrhythmic music of Africa.

Thus there are essentially three (architectural) phenomena which support the notion of the contaminated space: improvisation, repetition and polyphony/polyrhythmy. The story that follows, then, is the working out of these questions from a number of different directions. Our African experiences are as polyglot as Yoruba Man, as radically transformed as the used-tire sandal, as polyphonic

and polyrhythmic as traditional and contemporary music.

Photo credits: Concrete Sculpture', model details, Araya Asgedom

One is tantalizingly humbled by Appiah's observation that the Yoruba Man sculpture, and by extension a substantial measure of Africa's art, 'is not there to be an Other to the Yoruba [African] self...'.[7] Nor is the used-tire sandal endowed by the makers and traders of it with the kind of meaning that I claim for it here. It works both ways. The inescapable condition is that the African, as well as the Westerner, is living in a culturally and artistically contaminated space. To further complicate things, we are educated in the ocular language of Western architecture, which raises two questions: one, to what extent do we need the library of Western architecture, and two, how do we build a truly polyphonic African library which does not reduce the architectures of Africans either to a pre-colonial status, or to the developmental 'box'? These are large questions which cannot be dealt with adequately solely within the context of this essay. But they are questions which have provoked and which continue to provoke this architect, who cares for the contaminated space. This essay reflects my own contaminated space: my African experiences, my major disciplinary training whose historical and theoretical loci are of European origin, and the affecting presence of African and African–American sonorous cultures. In recognizing these crossings, I hope to make a case for an architecture which will be informed by embodied, productive vision as well as the sonorous space of the audible.

BEATS OF SILENCE

'The most important issues of improvisation in African musical idioms', John Chernoff writes, 'are matters of repetition and change.'[8] As a framework through which notions of innovation and change are made possible, repetition is characterized by the following set of conditions:

(1) *repetition provides a continuous beat;*
(2) *by providing a stable basis of rhythmic response, repetition clarifies changing rhythms;*

(3) *repetition brings out rhythmic tension between two or more rhythms;*

(4) *repetition is a key factor which focuses the organization of rhythms in an ensemble;*

(5) *repetition locks a rhythm and makes possible the occurrence of dynamic and open structure.*[9]

Paraphrasing the above five points, one arrives at a working definition of this phenomenon: in providing a stable chorus of beats and organizing rhythms into an ensemble, repetition produces tension and clarification between rhythms while allowing for the emergence of dynamic and open structures. Allow me to expand on what this definition might suggest. The provision of a stable chorus of beats enables the building of underlying structures, a sort of rhythmic grid of reference into which one weaves other possibilities. The dimensions of this underlying structure infuse, as Kofi Agawu has demonstrated, the various individual and collective strands of a community from its language to its song, from its drumming and dance, to its musical
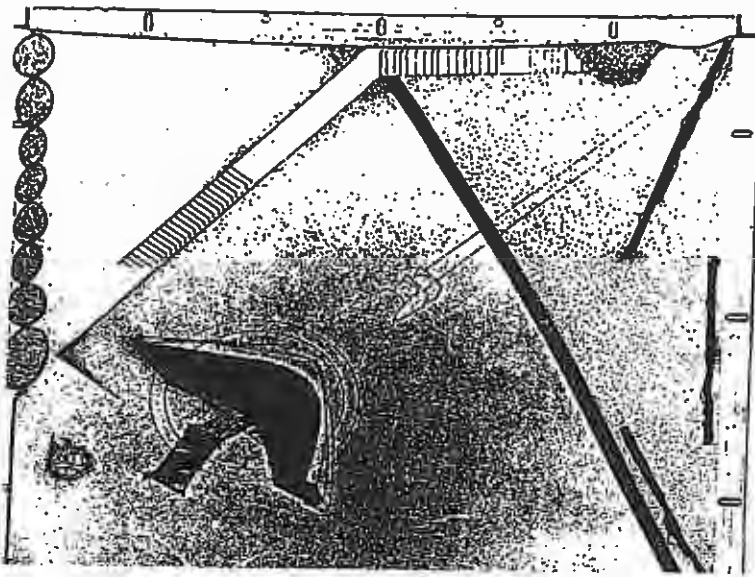


Illustration credit 'Theatre of Forces' drawing, by Araya Asgedom.

and folk-tale performances.[10] In a society where there is a profound sensibility of rhythmic dimensions to life, labour and love, the necessity of such an underlying structure cannot be diminished. It is the plane of reference, the field where possibilities for a serious play of difference are organized. Without the organization of a structure that allows for repetition, stasis or consistency, the possibility of imagining and thus recognizing dynamic events will be diminished. The power of rhythmic difference can only be felt fully when there is a structured background beat. Agawu rightly points out that 'the overriding characteristic of repetition is a form of unity produced by the convergence, or at least mutual existence, of certain opposed tendencies.'[11] The anticipation or invitation of opposition within an organized rhythmic structure is best understood in light of the principle of cross-rhythming. In the performance of African traditional drumming, the lead drummer is usually seen as the organizer of rhythms. His drumming points to the opening where other drummers may enter or leave a particular performance. The openings made possible by the lead drummer allow other rhythms to cut across different beats. From this point of view, 'the African drummer concerns himself as much with the notes he does not play as with the accents he delivers.'[12] This is to say that silence is as much a part of the music as the sounded beat—having a structured beat thus allows for dynamic relationships and open structures.

What we have come across in this characterization of African musical idioms is a focused, structured and important relationship between the background beats and solos and the space created by the opening of the background to give voice to the solo drum. In this sense we have been aware of music as only one part of the sonorous consciousness which enables the emergence of other possible voices. Recent scholarship has focused far wider attention on the presence of rhythmic consciousness, not only in musical events and productions, but also in how the ordered rituals of daily life are connected by what the scholarship names as the 'soundscape'. Kofi Agawu's work on rhythm's role in Northern Ewe, Ghana, is a good starting point for the discussion of such issues.

## THE GESTURE OF SOUND

Northern Ewes find meaning and order in daily 'rhythmic exertions', where the rhythms of the day and night are divided into seven periods: dawn, morning, afternoon, late afternoon, evening, night, and middle of night. The day begins with the cock's predawn crow and proceeds to the singing by devout Christians of 'morning devotional' accompanied by drums, rattles, bells and castanets in the local church. The rolling of household mats ushers in the morning chores, where after breakfast 'the rhythms of grinding, pounding, chopping, and fanning combine to define one large, staggered pulse,' and where sometimes, walking in the rural neighborhoods, according to Agawu, 'you can tell what is being cooked from how the pounding sounds.' Market days offer 'the scene of the greatest rhythmic expression'.[13] Because of this profusely rhythmic expression, where life in all its guises unfolds in both motivated and unmotivated ritual, it is necessary that the notion of 'repetition' provides a key to understanding [these] rituals.[14] This is not to say that Northern Ewes do not invite change, rather it means that change is always understood within the context of the ritualized rhythms of their society, where repetition provides 'a forum for the creative interpretation and reinterpretation of culture.' Given a set of cultural events, providing a creative interpretation (or as Northern Ewes would say) 'to do things according to today's open eyes'[15] means that one is confronted with both anticipated and unanticipated conditions of relations. To resolve the conflict of interpretation inherent in a given condition calls for improvisation. Agawu gives us a good example of such improvisation in the construction of form in a song that exploits repetition as a device for change.

A singer–composer of the village of Matse, Adjei Komi, performs songs during funerals and wakes, as well as providing inspirational songs for those going into battle, or simply for entertainment. He relies, for his improvisations, on a 'stock of verbal and musical phrases which he arranges in a particular order to fit a particular performance context.'[16] We might read 'stock' song material as being the formal and informal

structures of understanding that Adjei Komi shares with his cultural and social milieu. The examples (see Appendix A) below were 'improvised one afternoon in September of 1986', and in addition, he 'relies...on the contour of speech tones and the rhythm of individual words.'[17]

While these two songs provide us with particular examples of the role that repetition plays in the construction of an artistic form (and moreover recognize the inseparability of repetition from improvisation), we can further examine the context of such a song by looking at the larger cultural framework of Northern Ewe rhythmic organization. The two examples are part of a wider rhythmic structure that, according to Agawu, 'can be analyzed either "two-dimensionally" as a succession of beats or groups of beats, or "three-dimensionally" as the projections of a two-dimensional process into gestural space.' The problem—one which Agawu first formulates and then advances its potential resolution—is that as soon as we begin to speak of musical structures, we are entangled with metaphorical expressions which can only be accessed through concepts, and these concepts in turn are available only through language. In the end our analysis is 'trapped in...metaphorical space.' Agawu recommends that if we take this metaphorical or 'governing space' not as a 'constraint but as an enabling condition', then one can construct 'degrees of semiotic transfer across the realms of symbolic activity'[18] which, as I have said, exists in the Northern Ewe's rhythmic organization of daily activities or performances.

For Agawu, the primordial rhythmic event is encapsulated in gesture. Gesture 'is the physical manifestation of a more fundamental communicative urge....[and because of its temporal nature] when deployed within a clearly defined context, its communicative potential and intention cannot be doubted.'[19] Accordingly Agawu's construction of a conceptual model that would help make the dynamic relationship between the various elements of Northern Ewe rhythmic expression begins with gesture as the primordial rhythmic event and concludes with dance or stylized gesture. In this model, the spoken word is a unit of normal, hierarchically ordered language with attributes of tone (pitch) and rhythm. It takes place within a two-dimensional

space, and generates vocal music. Vocal music (song), in its autonomous existence as a self-regulating semiotic system, manifests two rhythms: free rhythm which is unmeasured and recitative-like, more accurately described as 'speech rhythm', while strict rhythm is measured and 'song-like' and organized into recurring groups
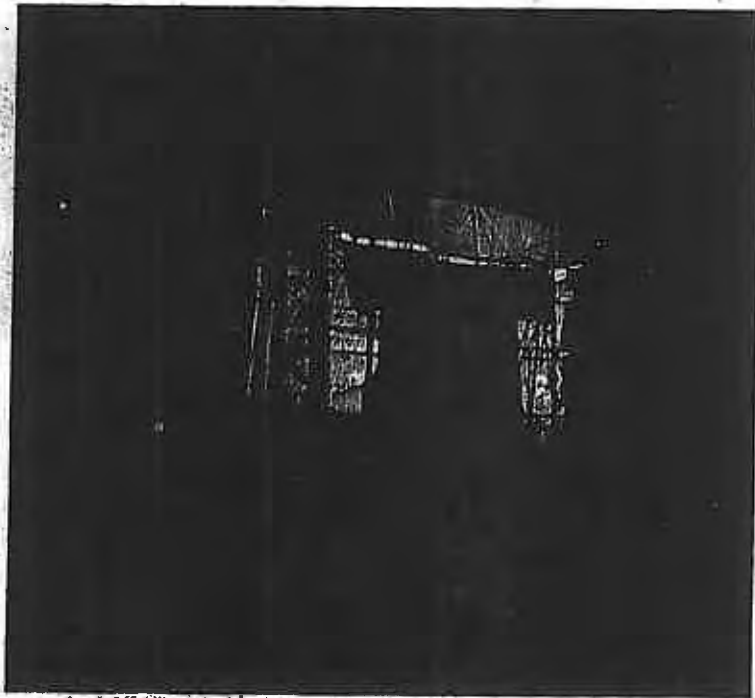
describable with respect to meter.[20]

Instrumental music takes over the rhythmic and tonal attributes of song but leaves behind the verbal component. Like vocal music instrumental music is made up of free rhythms, where the rhythms and tonal patterns of performed speech or oration (when drums are used as speech surrogates) are replicated. Strict rhythm prevails when

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its meters are structured. Instrumental music has the capacity to be performed as an autonomous creative process. Dance music is a form of stylized gesture and is characterized by its sympathetic movement to instrumental music.[21] The conclusions that Agawu draws from the five generative stages articulated in the model are that

(1). *Rhythmic expression originates in gesture, terminates in stylized gestures and starts anew.*

(2) *Instrumental drumming (music) has its origins in language and gesture.*

(3) *The true meaning of dance emerges only from a consideration of its linguistic bases.*

(4) *Language and gesture are the bases of rhythmic expression.*

(5) *The generative model has synchronic as well as diachronic aspects.*

The first allows the freezing of a slice of Ewe expressive culture for observation while the latter is the generation of successive stages by previous ones. The diachronicity of the expressions in the model means that the generation is also a process that can be reversed, not only from the end, that is from the stylized gesture back to the first stage gesture, but from any one of the intermediate stages, going back and forth between the others. The dynamic nature of rhythmic expression is a reflection of how easily our bodies—through gestural articulation—move from speech to music, from dance to song, from rhythmic walking to rhythmic speech.[22]

We have seen in the two song examples by Adjei Komi that repetition in Northern Ewe community plays a very significant binding force. But the other concomitant role that repetition plays is the stress on improvisation, the creative adaptability that accompanies, on the one hand, the successive lines or meters of a song (the shift in the sequence and content shown in the paradigmatic arrangement of Adjei Komi's songs), and on the other hand, the dynamic shift of the rhythmic event, as seen from the rhythmic expression model—from one stage to another, sometimes in a linear fashion but at other times breaking away from this sequence. We are also reminded how these rhythmic events (and their forms) are fundamentally ritualized events. As ritual events, their grid of expression is heavily ordered. Rituals, however

they are transformed, always speak of time past, present and future. For Northern Ewes, the past, as recreated in ritual, gives them 'assurance of the known and the familiar'; as a ritual that sheds light on the present, it 'enables them to take stock of what has been achieved'; and as an indication of future possibilities it 'provides a forum for creative interpretation and reinterpretation of culture.' Embedded within this interpretation of culture is that order 'emanates from repetition [and that] since each repeated event occupies a unique place in ontological time, repetition subtends both stasis or consistency and dynamism.'[23] In other words, repetition overrides stagnation and aspires towards change and improvisation. Transformation and repetition are close to each other to the extent that a viable order emerges out of repetition, and that it is in repetition that we apprehend improvisation. What is opened at this moment is the uniqueness of the temporality of repetition, its place in the existential temporality of the rhythmic individual and society. Does participating in the past through ritual entail that repetition is solely a re-enactment of past events? Yes, in the sense that we are taking part in events, actions and rituals that have been part of our world prior to our coming on to the event's stage. In this we are grafting ourselves on to the continuous chain that was made up by our ancestors. In the grafting on to our rituals to ancestral spaces we often believe that we are reliving, replaying and recelebrating the lived times and celebrated events of our past. From this point of view we hold on to realized time at the expense of potentiality (the possible lives, the possible plays, the possible celebrations) of those events that we try to enact in the ritualized events. Having broached the possibility of a potential past—as opposed to the realized past—which we do not usually associate with our ritualized actions and thoughts—does this mean that we might approach time's possibilities in a different way? In repeating the past, even the 'usable past', are we just recalling a by-gone event, or are we involved in an interpretation of the past within our present frames?

THE DESTINY OF REPETITION

Photo credit: 'Incandescent Croon', reinforced concrete column detail. Araya Asgedom.

It is imperative that we ask what kind of temporality is involved when we, along with Kofi Agawu, say that 'each repeated event occupies a unique place in ontological time [and that] repetition subtends both stasis or consistency and dynamism.' The consistency of things known is joined together with the dynamism of things hoped for. The assurance of familiar events travels together with movement of the future. The coming together of dynamic and static events is located in the now, where we are obliged to act—in the present. Does this mean that the past, present and future have not only a potential, but also a concrete manifestation of being collapsed in this moment? Or does the fact that repetition subtends both stasis and dynamism point to the existence of two temporal frames, one of which might be called 'clock' time and the other something that is very basic in its fundamental unity, or may even lie outside of 'clock' time? Martin Heidegger's contribution to the understanding of the question of temporality invites another reading of repetition which I believe expands our notion of the past. Heidegger's great insight is that our relationship with the past is the retrieving of 'former possibilities and handing them down to the present.'[24] This present in its 'authentic' form is also the 'moment of vision...an ecstatic moment...with which *Dasein* is carried away' to whatever possibilities and circumstances are encountered in the Situation as possible objects of concern'.[25] This ecstatic 'moment of vision', I would argue, is the moment of improvisation, where former possibilities of ancestral models are extended, interpreted and reinterpreted in the present to be projected as understanding in the future. If, in temporality, the past, present and future have characters of being fundamentally united, how do we understand repetition? One of the fundamental aspects of repetition after all is the re-enacting of the 'the known and the familiar' through rituals. How do we interpret our understanding of repetition as our joining of the soundscape of our ancestors? And if repetition is also marked by change, conflict and dynamism, what is the significance of it in the light of temporality where the past and the future are already prefigured in the *en*-presenting, the Heideggerian 'now'?

To explore these questions, we need to examine Heidegger's insights into the

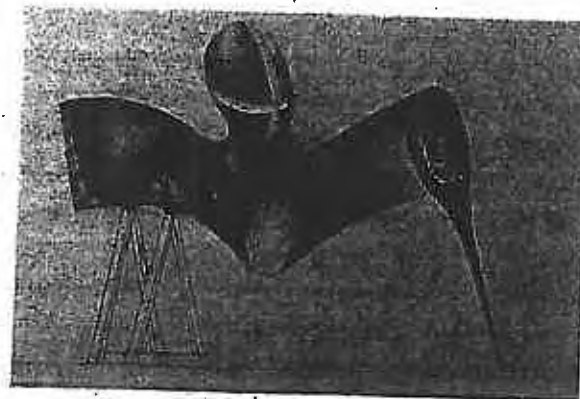improvisation in African musical idioms, are matters of repetition and change.'

I would like to sketch a mutual theoretical signifyin(g) between what Heidegger has called 'the moment of vision' and what I will name as the 'moment of hearkening'—that moment of attentive listening that is one of the preconditions of improvisation in jazz music. What I mean by a 'moment of attentive listening' is not only the hearkening that is required of us as everyday listeners, but that which also arises out of the hearkening of the moment of attentive and creative musical production. I will cite Heidegger's 'moment of vision' from *Being and Time* in order to provide a background 'beat' within which we might thread our understanding of jazz music's 'moment of hearkening'. That 'present' which is held in authentic temporality (and which thus is authentic itself), we call the 'moment of vision'. This term must be understood in the active sense of an ecstasis. It means the resolute rapture with which *Dasein* is carried away to whatever possibilities and circumstances are encountered in the Situation as possible objects of concern, but is also a rapture which is held in resoluteness. The moment of vision is a phenomenon which in principle cannot be clarified in terms of the 'now'. The 'now' is a temporal phenomenon which belongs to time as *within-time*-ness; the 'now' in which something arises, passes away or is *present-at-hand*. 'In the moment of vision' nothing can occur but as an authentic present or *waiting-towards*, the moment of vision permits us to encounter for the first time what can be 'in a time' as *ready-to-hand* or *present-at-hand*.[32]

The 'eternal cycle' between improvisation and precomposition is that journey between ancestral sites of musical productions and the possibilities in the moment of creation. Typically, jazz musicians define improvisation in two ways. Firstly, it is the 'focus on the product's precise relationship to the original models that inspired them'. The musician approaches the original musical models as 'theoretical materials and vocabulary patterns'. Secondly, it is the coming together of 'dynamic conditions and processes underlying the transformation [of the original model's theoretical and vocabulary patterns] and creation'[33] of new ideas and performances.

In establishing a precise relationship between the original models and

Image credit: Sketch by Araya Asgedom.

improvisation, the improvisor is thrown in the path of repetition and revision where the past (having-been-ness) is brought forward (retrieved) to the present—not for its past material but for its possibilities. In the dynamic conditions and processes that the improvisor engenders within a musical performance, the improvisor is 'carried away to whatever possibilities and circumstances are encountered in the Situation as possible objects of concern'. The performative Situation, having been informed by the theoretical possibilities of the past, leads to 'developing personal sounds, expanding repertories, creating melodic ideas, and experimenting with varied applications in solo constructions, [where] improvisers live at the threshold of new possibilities for invention, possibilities that expand dramatically with every discovery.'[34] The moment of discovery and expansion of new possibilities arising out of the mastery of the potentials of *having-been*-ness is pushed towards a zone of vision that 'permits us to encounter for the first-time what can be "in a time" a *ready-to-hand* or *present-at-hand*.' What is crucial in this 'moment of hearkening' is the encounter for the first time with *what can be*. When I say 'for the first time', I do not mean the kind of record-breaking feat associated with a number or certain quantity, but rather the discovery and realization of the potential, on the one hand, of ancestral phrases, licks, ideas and arrangements, and on the other hand, of the possibilities of that discovery as it flourishes in the improvisor's current interpretation. This *can-be-ness* in the first-time encounter is 'the unpredictable quality of the band's

nature of temporality, understood as an existential temporality. Let me invoke Heidegger's definition of what constitutes present, past and future. The primary concept of the future is our 'peculiar capacity to be...[that is] to be expectant.' In expecting, we are ahead of ourselves, and from this point that is ahead of ourselves, we come back to ourselves. This 'coming towards itself [the *Dasein*]...from one's most peculiar possibility, a coming-toward which is implicit in the *Dasein's* existence and of which all expecting is a specific mode, is the primary concept of the future.'[26] The past, or *having-been*-ness, is characterized by modes of 'retaining, forgetting, repressing, and suppressing.' Heidegger is emphatic about our mistaken attitude that the past is something of a by-gone:

> *That which we are as having-been [past] has not gone by, passed away, in the sense in which we say that we could shuffle off our past like a garment. The Dasein can as little get rid of its [past as] bygone-ness as escape its death. In every sense and every case everything we have been is an essential determination of our existence....I myself am my own having-been-ness...it [Dasein] can be as having-been only as it exists.*[27]

Existentially, the present is not the same as presence or as extantness. We are surrounded, as Beings, by other beings of the world. The world that is extant around us is the furniture of our existence. Only as *en*-presenting, 'the comportment of myself toward... something present [at hand] which is in my present', do I make my presence as *en*-presencing.

Heidegger's conclusion is that 'the future, the past [*having-been*-ness] and present, in a more original (existential) sense...are employing these three determinations in a signification that lies in advance of common time.' Here is the crucial difference between, on the one hand, the existential temporality of the future as *capacity-to-be*, the past as *having-been*-ness, and the present as *en*-presence and, on the other hand, common time, as then, *at-the-time*, and present respectively. 'The latter time determinations', Heidegger says, 'are what they are only by originating in temporality',

which is the former. The common times are the expressions of temporality. 'Expecting, the future, retaining the past, and *en*-presenting the present—all of these express themselves by means of the now, then, and *at-the-time*.'[28] The fundamental constitution of temporality, then, is that 'the future lies in *coming-toward-oneself*, that the past [*having—been-ness*] lies in *going-back-to*; and that of the present in *staying-with, dwelling-with, being-with*.'[29] But these constituents of temporality seem to stand apart as we just put them. Not so. Their coming together as belonging in an original temporal moment is in the condition where *Dasein* is determined by the '*toward, back-to*, and *with*' of temporality, and that this temporality as the originator of future, past and present (understood as common time) 'stands outside itself...[and] is carried away within itself'.[30]

What does the following phrase mean—that temporality 'stands outside itself...[and] is carried away within itself'? 'As future, the *Dasein* is carried away to its past [*has-been*] capacity-to-be; as past [*having-been*], it is carried away to its *having-been*-ness; and as *en*-presenting, it is carried away to some other being or beings. Temporality, as the unity of future, past and present does not carry the *Dasein* away—just at times and occasionally. Instead, as temporality, it is itself the original *outside-itself*.' This *outside-itself*-ness of temporality we call *ekstatikon*, or the 'ecstatic character of time.'[31] In calling the future, past and present 'the three ecstases of temporality', and in their 'belong[ing] together intrinsically with co-equal originality,' Heidegger opens another possibility where we might consider the repetition of the past [of *having-been*-ness], of participating in events that have been part of our ancestral horizon as belonging with co-equal originality with the present and the future. For the moment let us recall Agawu's definition of repetition: 'repetition subtends both stasis or consistency and dynamism'; or his identification that 'the overriding characteristic order that grows out of repetition is a form of unity produced by the convergence, or at least mutual existence, of certain opposed tendencies.' Let us remember that Adjei Komi, in performing his songs 'relies on a stock of verbal phrases' on his way to improvisation through repetition. Let us heed John Chernoff's remark that 'the most important issues of

musical negotiations.' And as 'a fundamental ingredient in every performance', this 'moment of hearkening' is 'the product of all that players have experienced' and where 'musical decisions that take place during improvisations are made instantly.'[35] This action of making decisions does not depend on the 'making something out of nothing' (that popular perception of improvisation), but is in fact the reliance 'on thinkers having absorbed a broad base of musical knowledge, including myriad conventions that contribute to formulating ideas logically, cogently, and expressively'.[36]

On the one side, there exist conventions and on the other, free formulations of musical ideas whose 'moment of vision' and 'moment of hearkening' is always informed by the formal possibilities presented by houses of traditions. This is to say that there are conversations (or as musicians prefer to say, 'musical conversations'), between the past and the present, but also in the moment of improvisation with various other sources who will contribute to the production. In forming the outcome of a particular performance, Paul Berliner tells us that 'the improvisor enters [in musical conversation] on many different levels simultaneously.' Some of the constituents of these multiple conversations that we read from Berliner are:

(1) *The conversation with the underlying composition—conversing with its formal features—the player converses with predecessors within the jazz tradition;*

(2) *A conversation with self where the inner dialogue by which individual band members develop the logic of their own specific parts;*

(3) *The player converses with the instrument, to the extent to which expression is shaped by idiomatic features of playing technique, or by idiosyncratic feature of an instrument's responsiveness;*

(4) *The musician also enters into a personal historical conversation where the player's unfolding ideas grow, moment by moment, out of a cumulative lifetime of performance and musical thinking;*

(5) *The conversation among band members constitutes another group conversation, and finally;*

(6) *The conversation that takes place between the audience and the individual as well as the group*

*of improvisors.*[37]

If all these musical conversations lead to a successful interpretation of musical ideas through the masterful workings of improvisation, then, an 'extraordinarily transcendental experience takes place in which the players feel, if only momentarily, "in touch with the big picture" where their "moment of hearkening" becomes "timeless, peaceful, yet energizing and euphoric"'.[38]

The moment of timeless production and being engulfed by its energy, I suggest, is that kind of time which Heidegger has called the 'moment of vision', that 'phenomenon which, in principle, cannot be clarified in terms of the 'now', but is "an understanding...existing in the *potentiality-for-Being*"' whose temporalization 'is determined with equal primordiality by having-been and by the present.'[39] We have also said that this 'moment of hearkening', in being 'carried away to whatever possibilities and circumstances that are encountered in the Situation as possible objects of concern', and in its projection of its potentials, is intimately tied with ancestral models, and arises out of the mastery of the model's conventions. The 'moment of hearkening' and above all the mastery of conventions takes place through repetition. But does this mean that repetition is the re-enactment of past conventions? How can one avoid repeating the past in repetition?

The answer might lie in our consideration of repetition not as the inheritance of the actual past, but as a way of seeking the potentialities of the past. Heidegger suggests that we understand repetition in the following terms:

*arising, as it does, from a resolute projection of oneself, repetition does not let itself be persuaded of something by what is 'past', just in order that this, as something which was formerly actual, may recur. Rather, repetition makes a reciprocative rejoinder to the possibility of that existence which has-been-there. But when such a rejoinder is made to this possibility in a resolution, it is made in a moment of vision.*[40]

In the reciprocative rejoinder that one proffers to the past, we reaffirm that the improvisor is seeking not to repeat the past, but to extend its possibilities. The improvisor, in repeating the work of ancestral models, is not replicating the past, but affirming its potential. With their unique temporal character which subtends the static and the dynamic, and arising out of moments of repetition, the 'moment of vision' and the 'moment of hearkening' are the deep spaces of improvisation for the transformations of creative works.



THE AUDIBLE SPATIALITY OF HOMO MUSICUS

In that society where music cannot be thought of as separate from words, where poets chanted and sung their verses, the father of Western philosophy, Socrates, finds himself desiring one thing: to make music. This twinge of conscience, this hesitation as to whether one has lived one's life to the fullest, makes itself felt as Socrates spends the last days of his condemned life in the confines of a prison cell. His friends ask him about a current rumour in Athens: that he has turned his great intellectual power to the composition of verses. Throughout his life, Socrates confesses, he had been instructed through dreams to 'cultivate and make music'.[41]

The great dialogues of Socrates, the logic of arguments that he taught his

Athenian students, and for which he stood accused and condemned to die by poison, were not enough for the philosopher. To the end, he remained a scrupulous philosopher. In his last hours, he realized that his life-long quest of logical reasoning alone had failed to provide insight into the reasons of the heart. He turns to a dream, to a series of 'intimations in dreams' to reason whether he has not fulfilled one significant part of being a human: that of being a *homo musicus*. His words should have been chanted and sung. He wanted to explore, at long last, the validity of constructing a sonorous being alongside the logical man. Victor Zuckerkandl, the philosopher of music, takes this occasion of Socratic doubt as a metaphor for Western man's repression of his musicality, his sonority. Among the various issues that Zuckerkandl explores, in his remarkable two-volume work, is the inclusion of what he called 'the order of auditory space' as being the counterpart of the order of visual-geometrico haptic space. In Zuckerkandl's account, music is an avenue to a non-conceptual, non-referential mode of knowing the external world, and we cannot afford not to allow musicality to affect our predilection for guidance by scientific conceptions of space. The order of auditory space emerging out of the tones themselves and progressing to form chords finds its fullest expression in the ensemble. The simultaneous motion of tones in the ensemble, in the polyphony, according to Zuckerkandl, is the greatest demonstration of the order of the audible space.



Though spoken from within European musical thought, polyphony is also one of the major outcomes of musical organization in the music of sub-Saharan Africa. Polyphony, according to Simha Arom's study of Central African Republic music, is a procedure that has four basic elements to it: first, it is 'multi-part, i.e. made up of several (at least two) melodic or rhythmic lines that are different and superimposed;'

second, it is 'simultaneous,' that is, it happens in the same space and time; third, 'heterorhythmic,' where there is 'rhythmic articulation [that] is different for each separate part'; and fourth, the parts of the music are 'non-parallel, because of the independent development of each part vis-a-vis the others, where both contrary or divergent movements occur, as opposed to parallel movements.'[42] These four elements, then, are the constituents of the auditory space whose ramifications we would like to understand for architectural thought.

One of the best examples of a polyphonic music, or as Zuckerkandl puts it, 'a type, with almost epigrammatic pointedness, [which] exemplifies how, when tones sound, we enter a different order in the "whence of encounter and the where of relation"', is the quartet in Act II of Verdi's *Othello*. The point with which Verdi assembles the multiple voices of Desdemona, Iago, Othello and Emilia through the 'return of chaos' symbolized by the handkerchief which is the vehicle of their tangled web of love, friendship, power and betrayal. Shakespeare composes his literary spaces and dialogues in 'the scene between Desdemona and Othello, the conversation between Emilia and Iago, which Verdi has brought together.' The literary form itself obliges the writer to follow the linear unfolding of events. In Verdi's production 'the four voices are to sound simultaneously; the four melodic lines are to be woven together into one texture.' Verdi's intention, though arising out of the articulated and clear voices of the four characters 'each obeying its own urgency', is the 'combination of the lines, the tonal unity that proceeds from their union [which makes possible] what is happening between these people and to them, what is about them and above them.'[43] Verdi makes the actors not speak but sing 'the single fate twisted from four life threads'. Polyphony makes the efficacy of simultaneous singing, simultaneous music making, simultaneous musical conversations preferable to simultaneous speech. For in simultaneous speech, what comes out is disorder—the nonsense, of four voices. We will make perfect sense out of the individual speeches, but only as long as they remain

separate. The space of the four voices speaking simultaneously, though belonging to the world of the auditory, 'does not [yet] share in the specific order of the auditory space'.[44] They can stand and make sense individually, but they will not be meaningful once the voices are spoken simultaneously. The case changes, dramatically, when the voices stop speaking and begin singing.

The order of auditory space for the four singing voices is found not in their separate but in their unified states. A unified state does not imply that the four voices (actors) sing in the same tone. Their tones may be different, but their happening together is what makes the order of the polyphonic space. In other words, it is the presentation of four different positions, four different interpretations of a given condition, but sounded in simultaneous space and time, and producing the polyphonic ensemble that speaks of a different order of space. Seen from here, might we consider that Socrates's point was that he did not fully grasp the meaning of the external world, the objectivity of the world through the speech of philosophy? Could his dialogues, for all their sophistication in logical constructions of 'why things are the way they are' have been sorely tested by the return of the dream that beseeched him all along—to sing, to put tones to his words? What do the tones that are put to words indicate? The four voices of Verdi's *Othello*, in singing the words of Shakespeare's characters, have put tones together with words and transformed them into unified polyphonic statements of 'what is happening between these people and to them.'[45] Does this mean that the tones point to something that exists outside of the inner world of the singers?

As Zuckerkandl puts it, it was Hegel, among all modern philosophers, who tried to seal music's fate as belonging to the inner world of the singer, as a phenomenon that is turned 'inward'.

*In tone, music forsakes the element of external form. For the musical expression, only the inner life of the soul that is wholly devoid of an object...is appropriate....the fundamental task of music will therefore consist in giving a resonant reflection, not to objectivity in its ordinary*

*material sense, but to the mode and modifications under which the most intimate self of the soul, from the point of its subjective life and ideality, is essentially moved...the tones merely resound in the depths of the soul, which are thereby seized upon in their ideal substance, and suffused with emotion....it is precisely this sphere, this intimacy of soul-life, the abstract appropriation of its own reality, which is grasped by music.[46]*

Hegel's words were composed at a time 'when [Western] music had moved very far from its origins and was within sight of its supreme achievement in Beethoven.' This is to say that the chasm between sung words and musical tones had never been greater than at this time. It was a time when 'vast structures consisting of nothing but tones, overwhelming manifestations of energy divorced from matter, capable of arousing the highest admiration and the deepest emotions had become facts of musical life.'[47] With music's reliance on the unworded tone, this late phase of Western music seems to completely engulf the world of subjectivity. As far as the word refers to an objectivity (to things that lie outside the naming subject), the dismantling of the union between word and tones in the sung word will accomplish the severance of the external world from the 'inwardness' of the subject, words and tones seem to have been on collision course. 'Words, naming things, referring to objects, turned outward; tones expressing the life of the soul wholly devoid of objects, referring to the purely subjective, turned inward.'[48] If the divorce between tones and words were to sustain itself as a true picture of the world, a number of things, chief among them the vernacular accent that folks put on their music, would not have been possible. Nor would such vernacularizing of musical phenomena point to something other than 'pure subjectivity'. Zuckerkandl considers folk song as a clue, not to the opposition, or their separation, but to the intimacy between word and tone. The crucial factor in this intimacy is that the tones point to something more than the object the word points to. Zuckerkandl puts across his point this way:

*The tone the singer adds to the word is not at odds with the word, does not pull in the opposite direction, away from what the word says; rather, it accompanies the word on its way to the thing, to the object. Only, unlike the mere word, it does not stop at the object: it breaks through the dimension of objective existence, thus making it impossible for what the word denotes to the nothing but object, to remain frozen in its existence as object. The tone does not blur the word's meaning but rather deepens it.[49]*

The deepening of the word's meaning is carried if we notice that 'sometimes, usually at the end of a line, or a stanza, the tones detach themselves from the words and the melodic movement continues freely on its own, but the wordless tones never turn their backs on the words preceding them; on the contrary, they serve to explore and savor their [the words]. meanings more deeply.'[50] The deep space into whose caverns the tones reach beyond the word is the space of 'non-objective' tone. The tones point, not to Hegel's 'soul,' where 'the most intimate self of the soul from the point of its subjective life and identity, is essentially moved' but to 'a non-objectivity behind the objects.'[51] To illustrate the point that tones point to an existence in the world, Zuckerkandl chooses two words, 'Beware' and 'Rejoice'. He asserts the incontestability of the difference between the sung 'Beware' as conveying more of a warning, and the sung 'Rejoice' more of a rejoicing than its spoken counterpart. Where is he going with this distinction? 'When the song resounds, when we hear the words "Beware" and "Rejoice" and words speaking of resignation and defiance, of reaping and falling,' Zuckerkandl asks, 'whose inner life is grasped here? Is it the singer, the composer who is warning, rejoicing, resigning himself to his fate, rebelling, reaping, falling?'[52] The answer: no. It is not the composer's or the singer's soul-life, but 'the inner life of warning and rejoicing, of resignation and defiance'. The dimension that is touched, disclosed by the sung 'Beware' and. the sung 'Rejoice' encompassing as it were the non-objective beyond of 'Beware' and 'Rejoice'. This state is not the inwardness of Hegelian

subjectivity as opposed to the object, to something of the external world, but the inner life of things in the world. The inner life of tones belong to the external world as much as to the singer. It is the quality of being that is shared at the same time by the inner life of the self and the inner life of the thing in the world. When a singer sings the 'the inner life of warning and rejoicing, of resignation and defiance' he or she shares with the world of things those qualities of being, not as something that stands against him or her, but to whom he or she belongs.

What does this position augur for us? Does it mean the eclipsing of the dividing line between the external world of things and objects and of our body and the interior of our selves? Is this the categorical rejection of exteriority and interiority? Zuckerkandl suggests that we devise another way of looking at the division between the subjectivity of our existence and the objectivity of the external world. According to him, the new musicality of our existence will dictate that 'the antithesis of "inside" and "outside" is not...abolished, but it is, so to speak, turned on its side: the vertical [intellectual] post that we set up for the division] becomes the horizontal. The wall separating the self from the world now runs straight across everything, becomes a bridge joining the two.'[53] Thanks to the delayed tone that runs after the word has been spoken, thanks to the tone that clings to the melody after the word has been pronounced, we come to partake in the inner life of things around us and reposition the old vertical barrier that separated the self from the external world, to a two-way horizontal bridge that connects us to the world of things behind, before, on the sides, and beyond our bodies.

## THE EXCESS OF MY VISION IS THE LIMIT OF MY ARCHITECTURE

By articulating the interpenetration of the inner lives of the singing subject and the

external world Zuckerkandl suggests that the division between subject and object is henceforth marked not by a vertical post but by a horizontal bridge that connects the self with the world. This horizontal axis is not the 'X' axis of Cartesian logic where there is the always already implied existence of the vertical 'Y' axis. Rather it is the bridge of understanding which will speak of a different position of visualizing (or if I may be allowed to indulge in my own locution, of *resounding*) the connectedness of self and world, of subject and object.

But we know that we have been afflicted, since the ascendance of descriptive geometry, by this condition of grid, of being located at the intersection of instrumentally mathematized horizons, seemingly forever under the gaze of the hegemonic retina. The question is—in the light of what we have learned about the deepening of meaning made possible by the tone and its implication for the redefinition of our connection to and apprehension of the external world—where does such thought lead architecture? What is the state of architecture's discourse regarding its embeddedness within the ocularity of projected methods, albeit their technological sophistication?

In a 1992 essay entitled 'Vision's Unfolding: Architecture in the Age of Electronic Media'[54] Peter Eisenman, an eminent architect of the late twentieth century, poses a tantalizing possibility for architectural thought. Among the various strands of thought buried in this rather short and provocative essay is the notion of *excess*, and its being a necessary condition for the transformation of mere 'building' into 'architecture'.

Eisenman senses the shortcomings of our ocularity, our way of responding to the challenges of the 'electronic paradigm'. The electronic paradigm is contrasted with the mechanical paradigm, 'the *sine qua non* of architecture...the visible manifestation of the overcoming of natural forces such as gravity and weather by mechanical means' within which architecture had been operating for so long, and continues to do so today. The electronic paradigm, according to Eisenman, directs a powerful challenge to architecture because it defines reality in terms of media and simulation, it values

appearance over existence, *what can be seen over what is* (emphasis added). What makes this value of appearance over existence a challenge to architecture, Eisenman tells us, is 'the mutual devaluation of both original and copy' where formerly with the presentation of the original 'the human subject...retains its function as interpreter, as a discursive function' while in the case of the copy, 'the subject is no longer called to interpret'.[55]

It is arguable whether, in this age of mechanical reproduction, the subject has given up on its interpretive agency. But more than this contention, it is Eisenman's ambiguous gesture towards overcoming the pre-eminence of sight in architectural ordering that I would like to examine. Eisenman correctly identifies the shortcomings of the discipline when he says that

> *architecture has resisted this question [the ambiguities of how and what we see] because, since the importation and absorption of perspective by architectural space in the fifteenth century, architecture has been dominated by the mechanics of vision...[and that] it is precisely this traditional concept of sight that the electronic paradigm questioned.*[56]

If the electronic paradigm has been responsible for such questioning, then Eisenman's choice of the fax as the image of such challenge is a poor one. The ground to test the viability of the challenge of the electronic paradigm to the hegemony of vision in architecture would have been to look at the complex and sophisticated ways of architectural representation made instrumental by design software. That the electronic paradigm prefers the appearance of things over their existence, traps Eisenman's proposition that the electronic paradigm offers a challenge to architectural representation within the web of the ocular, despite his wish to distance himself from his mechanical cousins, architects of the modern era and before.

Eisenman also proposes to make architecture look *back* at the subject, instead of the subject looking *at* architecture, thus setting in motion the universalizing gaze of the subject. Eisenman suggests two steps towards the possible reversal of the subject/object dichotomy. The first, is 'to detach what one sees from what one knows—the eye from the mind', and the second, 'to inscribe space in such a way as to endow it with the possibility of looking back at the subject.' He does not elaborate on the first position, but offers, in the second case, the possibility to 'rethink the idea of inscription'[57] in architecture. For Eisenman, architecture is the embodiment of inscription—since we cannot think of the window, the door, the wall, the axis, without their corresponding idea of window, door, wall and axis. Citing the anomalous column at San Vitale and the column hanging above the staircase in his own project, Wexner Center, the idea of excess that is not mandated by function becomes for Eisenman a possibility of rethinking the idea of inscription in architecture.

Eisenman wonders how the translatability into architectural space of such an inscription that is 'the result of an outside text which is neither overly determined by design expression or function' could become possible. His response uses Gilles Deleuze's idea of the fold, or more correctly the folded space, that 'articulates a new relationship between vertical and horizontal, figure and ground, inside and out.' The fold, as theorized by Deleuze and extended into architectural theory, possibility by Eisenman, contains no narrative, linear sequence; it contains a quality of the unseen...it can be considered to be effective; it functions, it shelters, it is meaningful, it frames, it is aesthetic. Folding also constitutes a move from effective to affective space [and] is not another subject expressionism, a promiscuity, but rather unfolds in space along side of its functioning and its meaning in space—it has what might be called an excessive condition or affect.[58]

Though the condition of the fold is still thought of within the purview of vision, Eisenman ends his essay with the following statement, suggesting that he is open to other ideas of inscription that have the potential to disengage us from the hegemonic vision, the monocular vision that 'attaches seeing to thinking, the eye to the mind'. Architecture will continue to stand up, to deal with gravity, to have 'four

walls.' But these four walls no longer need be expressive of the mechanical paradigm. Rather they could deal with the possibility of these other discourses, the other affective senses of sound, touch, and of that light *within* the darkness (emphasis added).[59]

I mentioned earlier that there is the real possibility of partaking in the inner life of things in the external world because of the deep meaning that tones lend to our words in the act of singing. Making music, not just as a subjective expression, but as participation by the subject in the objective world of things has helped us, according to Zuckerkandl, to reposition the former vertical division between subject and object into a horizontal bridge whose result would be the interpenetration of the subject and object, the expression of the inner states of things through the subject's expression. This transformation of the intimacy between subject and object has been made possible because the sonorous human being as a music maker, as homo musicus, has



revealed herself or himself to the intimacy of tones with words. It is an intimacy which, when the word expires, carries and deepens its meaning through tone. The tone's longevity of expression does not occlude the functionality of words, but transports them into a non-objective space where meaning deepens. We saw how the words 'Rejoice' and 'Beware' still remain functional, still hold on to their

meaning and in addition deepen and strengthen their meaning as the tone is allowed to exceed the space of the functional and point to the beyond, to the non-objective.

While Eisenman's intimation of extending the effective functional space of architecture 'by an excessive condition of affect' is embraced through the Deleuzeian fold, I suggest that the excess that words acquire through tone analogously

accomplishes the potential extension of the effective into affective architecture. Though the electronic paradigm, properly understood, might be grounds to question the visuality of architecture's reliance on the 'eye as the mind', its embeddedness within the digital world of bits (whose localization, after everything is said and done, is still enmeshed within the cross of 'X', 'Y' and 'Z' coordinates) seems to make it still part of the world that we wish to overcome. Nor would the Deleuzeian space of curvature have much to do with the electronic age. Its conceptual validity seems to rest in its folding and unfolding, in its escaping from the rigidity of Durand's grid, in its power of lying in the fluidity of its curvature which cannot be normalized by the verticality and horizontality of Eisenman's 'mechanical age'.

If, as Eisenman suggests, 'to dislocate vision might require an inscription which is the result of an outside text which is neither overly determined by design expression or function,'[60] then the world of sonority is that outside text which cannot be overly determined, either by the mechanical, or by the electronic age of architecture. The question is not one of overcoming the mechanical in favor of the electronic, but one of breaking away from the equivalence of the visual, that connection of the eye to the mind with the architectural. And I argue that sonority offers a productive mode of thought analogous to an architecture of excess which, having fulfilled its effective functionality goes further, to endow the building with its affective non-objectivity—so that it becomes architecture. By non-objective, I am referring to its Heideggerian sense of the full medley of the 'tangible' and the 'perceptible;' the ever 'non-objective to which we are subjects' as well as the 'objective.' The 'world' is the many 'path[s] of birth and death, blessing and curse' that we transport ourselves into Being. The 'world' is the stage upon which our historical decisions are made. The 'world' is where we inquire about our discoveries, and our abandonment. Though non-objective, the 'world' nevertheless gives an object its 'guiding measures.' In a typical Heideggerian expression, the world means 'all things [which] gain their lingering and hastening, their remoteness and nearness, their scope and limits'.[61] The ever non-objective space to which the tone points to after the word has fulfilled its effectivity or functionality, is

the space of affective architecture whose non-objectivity is measured through the excess or deep meaning inscribed into it. The scope and limit of such an architecture will lie beyond its functionality and points to its constitution as excess. Its meaning is deep because, like tone, it 'is the result of an outside text which is neither overly determined by design expression or function.'[62] The architecture of excess that is aware of its sonority is neither of the mechanical, nor of the electronic age, but rather in its condition of excess—in its musicality, it speaks of the possibility of overcoming epistemological vision in favor of an ontological vision of architecture. It will be informed by an 'outside text' whose voice is doubled by a vision so that the effective (the functional and the objective) together with the affective (the excess and the non-objective) aspects of its creative production will inform each other.

THE TONE OF ARCHITECTURAL VISION

The key theoretical threads that I wish to draw out of the preceding discussion are: *first*, the importance of repetition; *second*, the strategy of improvisation; *third*, the significance of non-objectivity which would deepen the meaning of architecture; and *fourth*, the openness to and necessity of cultural contamination for creativity.

OF REPETITION

Repetition can be approached from:

(a) *repetition as 'having-been-ness'*;
(b) *repetition as the articulation of the 'changing same', and*
(c) *repetition as occupying a unique ontological temporality.*

Repetition as 'having-been-ness' is the consideration of the past not as a static event, not as a chronologically fixed date which we can bring to our own age by mere visual or formal invocation, but one of searching the possibilities that would have been in the creative work of our ancestors. We are approaching the model, not for its material, but for what it might suggest, and specifically, suggest possibilities of its own incompleteness. In its second sense, repetition is the recognition that when we participate in the act of creation through repetition, we are repeating not the thing itself but a repetition whose difference can be measured qualitatively—the 'same' thing, but at the same time different. That this character of the 'changing same' is a quality inherent in repetition also means that repetition participates, in its third form, in two different horizons of temporality, temporalities of time past, and temporalities of time present. Partaking within a time that was, a work or a culture reassures the continuity of former possibilities and the familiarity of the 'usable past'. In this it might seem to stand still, to reaffirm its own stability. But within its changing side of the same, the work participates in the interpretation of its own possibilities. Thus repetition comes to subtend both the dynamism of its present unstable world, as it makes sure that it is not cut off from its productive past.

OF IMPROVISATION

Musical improvisation holds three fundamental notions of creativity that an architecture of improvisation learns from: the first is that creative work is made possible because improvisation is a simultaneous engagement of both moment-to-moment composition and precomposition. Second, that practising improvisation is enlisting multiple conversations within the spectrum of possibilities that, on the one hand, tradition bestows upon us, and on the other, of opening ourselves to the presence of, what Heidegger has identified as the 'possibilities and circumstances...encountered in the Situation as possible objects of concern.' Third, it will mean that the architect converses with the tools of the discipline, the materiality of architecture, and the craft of its constructive logic.

## OF NON-OBJECTIVITY

One could perhaps speculate that one of the reasons for the difference between a building and an architecture is the presence or absence of deep meanings in the building. For an architecture of improvisation deep meanings arise out of a set of commitments which privilege the necessary excess in order to move the project from its state of being an effective building to an effective and affective architecture. This means that a building's effectiveness is not the only measure of its meaningfulness—rather like the best moments in Western and non-Western architectural traditions, it is the inscription, the embodiment of non-quantifiable meanings in the architecture, which holds. To put it in another way, the difference between a building and an architecture can be analogous to the difference between a speech and a song respectively.

## OF CONTAMINATION

Despite the cultural wall that nations and cultures continually build in order to 'protect' the purity of their own cultural imaginations and products, and the denial by dominant institutions of art and culture to the contribution that marginal cultures have made to their fundamental transformation, cultural contamination has been going on far wider and longer than we would like to admit. This is not to deny that cultural contamination has been neither consensual, nor the manner of its transference and the degree of its impact been benign. The complexity of the contaminated space and our desire to neatly divide in a binary fashion the world of the Same from the Other will perhaps continue to be the disputed territory among culture. Indeed there is a mounting feeling that the neat division of the margin from what is assumed to be the institutional is another misreading of the interdependence of origin and ab-origin. What I attempted to say at the outset of this essay about the used-tire sandal affair and the *Yoruba Man with a Bicycle* sculpture and its attendant commentary by Baldwin seem

to me to be good examples of the contamination of cultures. Kwame Anthony Appiah, the Ghanaian philosopher, put this condition well when he observed that:

> *[if] there is a lesson in the broad shape of the circulation of cultures, it is surely that we are already contaminated by each other, that there is no longer a fully autochthonous echt-African culture awaiting our salvage by our artists (just as there is, of course, no American culture without African roots). And there is a clear sense in some post colonial writing that the postulation of a unitary Africa over against a monolithic West—the binarism of the Self and Other—is the last of the shibboleths of the modernizers that we must learn to live without.*[63]

Appiah's eloquent assessment of the condition of cultural contamination holds a great deal of truth about the state of our discipline. To say that there is 'no longer a fully autochthonous *echt*-African culture awaiting our salvage by our artists' is to speak of the complex interpretive work demanded of the truly conscious African architect. This demanding work, as I have argued throughout this chapter, is one of a contaminated sensibility where the sonority of black cultures must be brought together with the habit of ordering architectural thought from within Euro-and-ocular-centric philosophical, artistic and architectural traditions. The architecture of improvisation is an attempt to open ourselves to the sonority of being and thinking without relinquishing the constructive aspect of our embodied vision. It is a work that points towards the potential overcoming of the binarism of the architectural Self and Other in favor of an architecture of a sonorous vision.

## APPENDIX A

The text for the songs performed by Adjei Komi and as transcribed and

analyzed by Agawu in *African Rhythm: A Northern Ewe Perspective*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, UK, 1995, p74–6, is as follows:

1    *Okosi kpataku ee*

2    *Okosi kpataku ee*

3    *Okosi kpataku, ade mefoa gbe o, eto medegbe*

4    *Okosi kpataku, ade mefoa gbe o, eto medegbe*

5    *Vuotete, ategblome batri ee*

6    *Okokoese no, kpokutsiku kple agbetxia gbe ee*

7    *Okokoese no, kpokutsiku kple agbetxia gbe ee*

8    *Samamu nu dio doto madi, vuo me di o, gao me die o, gbagba*

9    *Samamu nu dio doto madi, vuo me di o, gao me di o, dza o*

10    *Haio, baio, baio, baio*

11    *Ne mevo nu dio do tome*

12    *Ne vuo me di o ga me di o dza o*

PARADIGMATIC ARRANGEMENT:

1

2

3

4  5  6

7  8

9  10  11

12

Agawu provides a good analysis of the song's reliance on repetition, and we need to listen to him in its entirety. Adjei Komi starts off with an idea *(1)*, repeats it by adding a little suffix *(2)*, extends it further by adding several more words *(3)*, and then repeats the extended version *(4)*. Although an additive or developmental process may be observed across units *1–4*, the units are grouped together under the same paradigmatic class because of their identical points of departure. Adjei Komi then

introduces a new idea *(5)*, and, without repeating it this time, moves to another idea *(6)*, which is immediately repeated *(7)*. Then comes yet another idea *(8)* which is also immediately repeated *(9)*. The pattern of repetition is interrupted by a fourfold repetition of a single 'song word,' *baio (10)*; Adjei Komi seems to be 'killing time' here, taking a breath as he plans his next move. Then comes a new idea *(11)*, followed by a close musical variant *(12)*. The overall narrative process consists of a gradual accretion of 'new' units alternating with repetitions of 'old' units.

The text of the second song reads:

1    *Kpakpra ne xo madzi dzi ee*

2    *Kpakpra ne xo madzi dzi ee*

3    *Madzi drui ade dzo mado gbe, gbagba*

4    *Kpakpra ne xo madzi dzi ee*

5    *Madzi drui ade dzo mado gbe, baio*

6    *Haio, baio, baio*

7    *Kpakpra ne xo madzi dzi ee*

8    *Madzi drui ade dzo mado gbe, gbagba*

9    *Afi magbe kale gbo*

10    *Afi magbe kale gbo*

11    *Afi magbe kale gbo*

12    *Afi magbe kale gbo*

13    *Afi magbe kale gbo*

14    *Kale de nyo vivie menya woa, dzo me nu e*

15    *Ava kale e nyo vivie menya woa wo, dzo me nu e.*

PARADIGMATIC ARRANGEMENT:

1

2  3