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Blackness and the Baroque

In this paper I'll try to construct and test a couple of speculative definitions—of blackness and the baroque. Moreover, the paper will be an occasion to think about the relationship between blackness and the baroque, which is already complicated by the fact that one term usually denotes a style and a cultural epoch while the other is supposed to index a range of overlapping, sometimes antagonistic identities that nonetheless are often understood to constitute a monolith. I'll examine these divergent aspects of the terms while also considering them as part of a more general politico-aesthetic impulse as well as an unenclosed, internally differentiated spatio-temporal coordinate in both its proximity to and remoteness from the historical period and geographic zone demarcated in the paper's title. While taking seriously the divisions between music and philosophy, in this paper I will also try constantly to attune myself to the blurring of those divisions. The artists/thinkers whose work I will briefly engage (musicians/musical theorists Glenn Spearman and Glenn Gould and philosophers Gilles Deleuze and Sylvia Wynter) all operate in the spaces between or over the edges of generic determinations and protocols. Attention to the unpredictable and elaborate revisions of given shapes and forms in their work will be emphasized and I'll work to show that a kind of contrapuntal deviance in their work, which might best be understood by way of da Silva's notion of the "un-hinged," occurs at or as the asymptotic relation between blackness and the baroque.