

University Press, 1969): "Separation is not only dialectically correlative with transcendence, as its reverse; it is accomplished as a positive event...The possibility for the home to open to the Other is as essential to the essence of the home as closed doors and windows" (173). In Nietzsche's work, I have in mind Zarathustra's need to walk alone and, while doing so, expressing the idea of "gift-giving virtue" as the highest virtue. See Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Portable Nietzsche*. Trans. Walter Kaufmann (New York: The Viking Press, 1954), pp. 186-87. It does seem that the depth (more precisely, *elevation*) of his solitude is proportionate to his generosity.

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Filmmakers of the Postwar Era (Washington, DC: Smithsonian Institution Press, 2000). The pitfalls of thematic treatment become evident in this otherwise stimulating survey of so-called underground artists. Almost everything is squeezed through the same dry-as-sawdust grid associated with Cold War politics, although such artists are so highly idiosyncratic as to resist such generic grouping. On the other hand, Woody Haut (see note 7) uses discretion when addressing David Goodis's work, and notes that he was "reticent about making explicit social statements" (23).

10. Elias Canetti, "Kafka's Other Trial," in *The Conscience of Words*. Trans. Joachim Neugroschel (New York: Farrar Straus Giroux, 1979), p. 114. Also see p. 82: "Fear of a superior power is central to Kafka, and his way of resisting it is transformation into something small.... One has to avoid violation, which is unjust, by vanishing as far away as possible. One becomes very tiny or changes into an insect to spare others the guilt they incur by lovelessness and killing.... There is no situation in which this withdrawal would be less possible than matrimony. A man always has to be there, whether he wants to or not, part of the day and part of the night, in a proportion corresponding to that of the spouse, a ratio that cannot be altered, otherwise it is not marriage."
11. Emmanuel Levinas, *Otherwise Than Being or Beyond Essence*. Trans. Alphonso Lingis (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1981), p.121.
12. "To be myself means," Levinas says, "to be unable to escape responsibility. This excess of being, this existential exaggeration called being me—this outcrop of ipseity in being, is accomplished as a swelling of responsibility.... The I is bound to the not-I, as if the entire fate of the Other were in our hands. The uniqueness of the I consists in the fact that no one can answer in his or her place... The putting in question of the I by the Other, is, ipso facto, an election, the promotion to a privileged place on which all that is not me depends... This election signifies the most radical commitment there is, total altruism" (73). See Emmanuel Levinas, *Proper Names*. Trans. Michael B. Smith (Stanford: Stanford UP, 1996).
13. David Goodis, *Cassidy's Girl* (New York: Fawcett/Gold Medal, 1951), p.5.
14. Pierre Klossowski, *Nietzsche and the Vicious Circle*. Trans. Daniel W. Smith (Chicago: U Chicago P, 1997), p. 39
15. Robert Stone, *A Hall of Mirrors* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1966).
16. Robert Solotaroff, *Robert Stone* (New York: Twain Publishers 1994), p. 37.
17. See Levinas's *Totality and Infinity* Trans. Alphonso Lingis (Pittsburgh: Duquesne

Notes

1. Although the term *Stimmung* was most famously taken up in critical discourse by Heidegger in *Being and Time*, I am here referring to Pierre Klossowski's analysis of Nietzsche's "tonalities of the soul" in *Nietzsche and the Vicious Circle*. Klossowski goes to greater lengths than Heidegger to uncover the affective dynamics of *Stimmung* in a volatile artistic personality. See *Nietzsche and the Vicious Circle*. Trans. Daniel W. Smith (Chicago: U Chicago P, 1997), pp. 30; 93.
2. David Goodis, *Down There* (New York: Black Lizard, 1990). Citations refer to the Black Lizard edition titled *Shoot the Piano Player*. This novel is also published by The Library of America Series "Literary Classics of the United States" as *Down There* in *Crime Novels: American Noir of the 1950s*. New York: Library of America, 1997.
3. Francis Davis, *Outcats: Jazz Composers, Instrumentalists, and Singers* (New York: Oxford UP, 1990), pp. 117-18.
4. *Ibid*, p. 118.
5. Henry Sussman, "The All-Embracing Metaphor: Reflections on Kafka's 'The Burrow,'" in *Glyph 1: Johns Hopkins Textual Studies* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 1977), p. 100.
6. James Lincoln Collier, *The Making of Jazz: A Comprehensive History* (New York: Dell, 1978), p. 360.
7. Woody Haut, *Pulp Culture: Hardboiled Fiction and the Cold War* (London: Serpent's Tail, 1995), p. 34.
8. Woody Haut relates how, during David Goodis's script-writing days in Hollywood, the writer used to sit down at the piano at parties and "play his rendition of Basie's One O'Clock Jump." Haut also describes the episode in Goodis's 1946 novel, *Dark Passage*, where the paranoid runaway protagonist is momentarily relieved when, in the apartment of a woman he is beginning to mistrust, he suddenly discovers her collection of Count Basie records. Her fondness for jazz makes her a trustworthy person. See his *Pulp Culture*, p. 23.
9. A case in point is David Cochran's *America Noir: Underground Writers and*

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Turley pleaded for help as Eddie played the piano, seems to gain its full sense as the novel concludes, as Eddie resumes playing. The meaning of obduracy is in the *resumption* of playing—in the mute power behind the music itself, which sustains it as a condition of its possibility. It seems to be the case that Eddie's obduracy and cool are but the forces and expressions that best ensure the continuation of his piano playing. Everything is mobilized within him—fury, lyricism, passivity—to resume the freedom to play the piano. It is as if he helps his family so as to return to his piano playing less encumbered, more sovereign. In his return to the Hut, to the piano, to obscurity, his integral mastery inserts a break in the *eternal return of Eddie's family destiny* (atavism) *by the individuation of his self-performance*. In other words, he wills his obscurity differently—not as atavism, but as *creative separation*. His willful return to playing is the *affirmation of his difference* in the infernal cycle of family belonging that sought to end his playing in an obscure, snow-covered field in New Jersey. He makes obscurity *his own* obscurity, and his piano playing is *not his father's* but his own.

In this regard the novel's *political* sense (Cold War allegory, etc.) loses some weight as the story winds down. Likewise, the *moral* allegory, according to which Eddie risks his sanctuary and anonymity in order to save his brother and thereby redeem himself for abandoning his wife in her moment of need, loses some of its credence. For the hospitality extended by Eddie in helping his brother is based on a sovereign reserve of freedom and privacy, and it is back to this existential reserve that Eddie goes. The allegory is straightforward--about the right to turn the key to your own room whether to open it to welcome someone, or close it to shut them out. It is in this allegory that we find one of the few places where the thought of Nietzsche and Levinas would agree. The powers of giving (artistic or otherwise) have an inner relation to the resources of absolute privacy that underwrite them and guarantee their perpetuity.¹⁷ That is why Eddie's resumption of piano playing in the final scene of the novel is not a selfish gesture, but generosity. "Give man," his friend Clarice says, encouraging him to play. "You got an audience" (158).

would be the fulfillment of the promise, i.e., for Eddie to *keep playing* no matter what. The perversion of that promise from classical music into jazz does not destroy the formal parameters of said promise, only its specific contents. In fact, Eddie's solitude is not, in the final analysis, at risk, for the death of his wife, his delay and subsequent failure to prevent her suicide, reconfirmed his own inner experience as something separate since birth and *out of phase*. He is the *one who did not respond to the cries of the living*. Now his residual sociality has been hollowed out; it will henceforth ring ever more falsely as belated or quasi-autistic. Lena, the tough waitress who for no obvious reason repeatedly seeks to penetrate his coolness and establish some kind of romance with Eddie, never really gets through to him. She is continually rebuffed during their harrowing exodus through a near-blizzard to the utterly desolate environs of his birthplace in Southern New Jersey, where they meet up with Eddie's brothers. He keeps his cool so to speak. Yet Eddie does seek to save Lena's life, unsuccessfully, when they are ambushed. Yet this was heroism at a distance just as it was with his wife. A mode of comportment that we have defined as "cool" shows itself here on the battlefield, like back in the jazz club, as a formal *echelon* that *simulates the normalcy of belonging*. Thus "cool" is a simulacrum of cooperation that at once resists blind subordination and hides Eddie's separation from everyone else. To Eddie, whose birthright was obscurity and distance, community never becomes a firm reality but something phantasmal, issuing from a residual instinct of family allegiance that is obeyed even while being overcome through the sovereign assertion of his inner experience.

Coolness is an element of his craft that Eddie keeps projecting in the face of adversity. He has in him the spirit of what Camus called "rebellious asceticism," and what he is rebelling against is interference of any kind in his playing. The corporate music world interfered; marriage did too—Kafka foresaw this; and family likewise made its unruly demands. The Hut is not, like Kafka's burrow, an "entirely self-contained subterranean enclosure," however much Eddie intends it to be. Turley and the thugs invade the space quickly. But at the end, *Eddie returns to playing*. At the end of the novel, after his friend Lena is gunned down by thugs, Eddie returns to the Hut and resumes—after an inner struggle and the persuasions of a prostitute who has endeared herself to him at their boarding house—his cool piano playing.

The obduracy or rebellious asceticism we remarked in Eddie when brother

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Rheinhardt does not seem to have a personality-forming trauma in his background, and the reason for the collapse of his career as a classical musician remains unclear.¹⁶ He is nevertheless incapable of extending generosity or sanctuary to others in need, for such gestures would promote a moral idealism that he could not tolerate in himself. Rheinhardt is a survivor operating between the countercultural renegades and promotional right-wingers of New Orleans. He parties with the hippies and beatniks, but he works for a radio station--WUSA--that seeks to exacerbate the seething racism of the genteel South. Once again, it is his cynicism that marks his coolness as fundamentally less altruistic than Eddie's mode of comportment. The (however reluctant) Good Samaritanism that Eddie demonstrates, endangering his simulacrum of serenity to help his brothers and other down-and-outs, is a behavior that would only arouse Rheinhardt's cynicism. Worse, those friends who expect a concrete gesture of love or sacrifice, however expressed, will be endangered by their all-too-human expectations. Witness Geraldine, the misbegotten girlfriend of Rheinhardt who hangs herself in a jail cell after a race riot, when it appears that Rheinhardt's own efforts to save his life made him oblivious to her dire predicament during the riot.

It remains to be asked to what extent their need to dissimulate their dark impulses in a cool format is based on their predispositions as musicians. In any case they are unlike the other members of the community who still believe they form a family or community—communities of hippies, evangelists, Peace Corps volunteers. For Rheinhardt, these communities are invalidated by their naïve commitment to altruistic-sounding ideologies that at bottom only prove self-serving. For Eddie, community is always already invalidated or distantiated by the obscurity of his upbringing and his failure to save his wife.

IV

Conventional morality might presume that Eddie's valiant effort to help his brother escape is the good deed by which he will redeem himself for abandoning his wife. Yet this payment of debt to his dead wife by demonstrating his loyalty to family and friends could breach the solitude out of which his music issues and therefore the music itself. Such an act, however heroic, would demolish the secret meaning of his wife's sacrifice, for she had a sordid affair with the manager for the sole purpose of enabling Eddie's musical career. We are dealing, then, with a morality that serves the promise of Eddie's music. The only suitable outcome

A passion in him, an affect overriding reason and control mechanisms, subverted his composure, and he fled. His uncontrollable fury is perhaps an atavism, unconscious link to the villainy he shares with his brothers. His wife's scandal incites Eddie's "growl," animal utterance. In any case, following these tragic events, his revulsion at his own impulsiveness makes him resist himself, *neutralize his own monstrosity*, and this behavior has nothing to do with the Cold War or any other political context. His former life remains a secret and his self-discipline, which had failed him in his response to his wife, is severely invoked, taken to a new level of mastery. His lyrically apathetic playing seems a near-absolute suppression of his impulsive rage.

III

It would of course be misleading to suggest that coolness always adopts the guise of self-mastery. For the sake of a comparison from which Goodis' work can benefit but also to offer a preliminary sketch of a certain cool canon and its underlying stratum of affective disturbance, let us look at the work of Robert Stone, a writer more widely read than Goodis yet whose pessimism has left him short of literary sainthood. Upon turning from Goodis's Eddie to Robert Stone's cool character, Rheinhardt, in *Hall of Mirrors* (1967), we are immediately struck both by the similarity of their fall from grace out of brilliant musical careers into morbid obscurity, and the stark contrast in their behaviors.¹⁵ Although both are cool, that is, remote and prone to communicative evasion, their pasts hidden behind them, Rheinhardt (who is nicknamed "Jack Frost") almost thrives in chaos instead of self-discipline. He is drunk most of the time and subject to hallucinations. He is not vulnerable to romantic or familial allegiances. His existential modality, as it were, embodies another kind of rebellion reminiscent not of Kafka's humility but of a Nietzschean cosmic embrace of chaos that, paradoxically enough, offers Rheinhardt protection. Chaos is the specific form of non-engagement suited to his kind of coolness. His coolness is careless, but hard as steel. We have to be careful in making distinctions, for Eddie and Rheinhardt are very strong and very cool, yet there is also their irreducible difference: the first self-disciplined yet subject to an allegiance and altruism that temporarily effaces his self-effacement; the other, Rheinhardt, subject to an internal rage for chaos whose outer manifestation disrupts the lives of others, even while protecting his own. Cool is a shield, but also a weapon. As Robert Solotaroff has pointed out,

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would hardly suit daily life, where it is usually ascribed to iniquity. It is this striking compression of force in Eddie that enables him to spring up from his piano at the last minute to enable his brother's escape. As the two thugs chase Turley to the rear of the Hut, Eddie suddenly knocks over a stack of beer crates, obstructing their path; Turley slips out the back entrance. Eddie's action makes him an accomplice, endangers his life and shatters the sanctuary he has so rigorously established for himself at the Hut. The killers will hunt him down. A sequence of desperate events will take Eddie and his brother to their rural birthplace, where a final gun battle ensues.

Is there no other motive for his self-endangering bravery than family loyalty? If we look closely at the circumstances of his wife's confession of betrayal and subsequent suicide, we find that Eddie's response was not entirely scrupulous. Shocked at her confession, he deliberated whether to flee or stand by her and work things out:

He tried to look at her. He said to himself, Yes, look at her. And go to her. And bow, or kneel. It calls for that, it surely does. But—

His eyes aimed at the door, and beyond the door, and there was fire in his brain. He clenched his teeth, and his hands became stone hammer-heads. Every fiber in his body was coiled, braced for the lunge that would take him out of here and down the winding stairway to the fourth-floor suite.

And then, for just a moment, he groped for a segment of control, of discretion. He said to himself, Think now, try to think. If you go out that door she'll see you going away, she'll be here alone. You mustn't leave her here alone.

It didn't hold him. Nothing could hold him. He moved slowly toward the door.

"Edward—"

But he didn't hear. All he heard was a low growl from his own mouth as he opened the door and went out of the bedroom. (81)

Eddie's failure to sympathize with his wife's situation and console her was due to his rage at her betrayal and the perfidy of his manager. He tried to control himself, to control thought, to command himself to act noble and morally responsible.

underscores the fact that it is not only seemingly external forces--political, economic, etc.--which, as the "enemy" of existential composure, must be neutralized with careful modulation of one's selfhood in work and art, in bus driving and piano playing. Apparently "internal" affects and compulsions can likewise surge as the *enemy*. It bears repeating that such *internal combat* is precisely what makes it difficult to politicize Goodis' novels, that is, from the point of view of Cold War ideology and the like. Borrowing the terms of Pierre Klossowski, on a daily basis characters can ambush themselves or be ambushed from without, be "*possessed, abandoned, possessed again and surprised*."¹⁴ Hence under the measured selfhood of both Cassidy and Eddie lies an explosive virulence. Canetti, we recall, spoke of Kafka's husbanding of defensive energy. In Goodis' characters this sort of energy reaches volcanic potential, and fumes as a mute depth of latency in their personae. When Cassidy is ambushed by hired killers down by the docks of Philadelphia, he brazenly takes them on and, one by one, disarms and cripples their attacks with swift, astonishing prowess. Likewise in the derelict phase of his life following his wife's suicide, and before he begins his job at the Hut, Eddie brawls ferociously with a number of drunkards and petty criminals. Later, when the waitress, Lena, is beaten by the bouncer in a bar fight, Eddie leaps into the fray to defend her and fractures Plyne's cheekbone. And when Plyne, a robust former wrestler, chases Eddie into the street, he gets stabbed to death in a ferocious struggle with the pianist.

Eddie's power to vanquish his adversaries seems to come out of nowhere, and was not visible in his classical career. The bouncer fatally misinterprets Eddie's passivity and cool demeanor as "gutless," for it is anything but that. There is tremendous force compressed in his muscles, however casual his playing, his "soft, easygoing rhythm."

What are the dynamics of this compression? Betrayed by his wife, then self-betrayed by his atavistic (uncool) response to her, he *must not betray himself again, his powerful feelings*. Music is the sonorous circuit or system of melodies under which his impulsive affects abide in their mute latency. These mute affects are of a volcanic intensity, as we said, and pool in a depth of fury. *The affects themselves are never tranquilized by the music but rather sustain it as an invisible source of power*. Is this but the criminal element rendered mute, or a sovereign feeling carried over from his classical bearing? It is not directly expressed in the cool music, this depth of fury, for its raw expression

withdrawal from power.¹⁰ This is one of Canetti's most brilliant analyses of Kafka, and we don't think it is misguided to invoke it in the present context. "This obduracy," Canetti says, "follows its own harsh laws, one could say that it aids him in husbanding his defensive energy." In Eddie's case, obduracy takes on the format of piano playing and its simulacrum of serenity, while husbanding his defensive energy. He is in withdrawal not only from musical big business, but his own terrible powers. He keeps playing as if to fulfill a promise--to himself, his audience, Teresa his dead wife? Only when this tacit promise is carried out does he respond to his brother and take on another pledge as it were, on his brother's behalf. Turley's appeal for help, a violent intrusion into a zone where Eddie's identity had been seemingly neutralized into a gentle atmosphere and tonality of soul, would be called an "anarchic insinuation" by Emmanuel Levinas.¹¹ In other words, the appeal singularizes Eddie, makes him emerge from anonymity into a space where it is *anarchy to have an identity again*, not, as some postmodernists would argue, not to have one. One is answerable now, pulled in subversive directions; one feels *elected*, called out across fatal landscapes. Both Goodis and Levinas help us see that no matter how withdrawn a life appears from without, its substance is secretly aroused or chagrined by a concatenation of responsibilities before which it feels unequal.¹²

Hence Eddie's initial obduracy before his brother's appeal, his fanaticism of control, does not mean that he is inaccessible or unsympathetic. It does mean, at the very least, that Eddie wants to keep playing the piano. Playing has its intrinsic sense and value apart from any promises. As David Goodis shows in another novel, *Cassidy's Girl* (1951), self-discipline in one's work gives one something to live for—not a means to an end, but a goal in itself. The absurdity of events surrounding the demotion of Cassidy to the status of a bus driver after being an airplane pilot who is wrongfully blamed for a fatal crash caused by his suicidal co-pilot, is coolly synchronized and leveled out by the austere sincerity with which Cassidy approaches his new work. Like Eddie's piano playing, which indirectly intimates for us today the economics of demotion or downsizing that we encounter in our own lives, bus driving and maintenance are taken up by Cassidy as a form of sanity and a practice of measured selfhood. "Aside from the pay, it was emotionally important for Cassidy to do this type of work. Keeping his eyes on the road and his mind on the wheel was a protective fence holding him back from internal as well as external catastrophe."¹³ This passage from *Cassidy's Girl*

other hand, subordination is an internal drama of self-discipline—control of affects from within and without, obedience to the commands *that Eddie gives to himself*.

We said that the difference between Eddie's childhood and newfound obscurity is that the latter is deliberate, characterized by a certain mastery of emotions and focus of consciousness. Even when his brother, bleeding and battered by thugs, confronts Eddie after a six-year hiatus, Eddie continues to keep playing the piano and barely looks up from the keyboard.

He came up behind the musician and put a hand on his shoulder and said, "Hello, Eddie."

There was no response from the musician, not even a twitch of the shoulder on which the man's heavy hand applied more pressure. And the man thought, Like he's far away, he don't even feel it, he's all the way out there with his music, it's a crying shame you gotta bring him in, but that's the way it is, you got no choice.

"Eddie, the man said, louder now. It's me, Eddie."

The music went on, the rhythm unbroken. It was a soft, easygoing rhythm, somewhat plaintive and dreamy, a stream of pleasant sound that seemed to be saying, 'Nothing matters.'"

"It's me," the man said, shaking the musician's shoulder. It's Turley. Your brother, Turley. "

The musician went on making the music. Turley sighed and shook his head slowly. He thought, You can't reach this one. It's like he's in a cloud and nothing moves him.

But then the tune was ended. The musician turned slowly and looked at the man and said, "Hello, Turley."

"You're sure a cool proposition," Turley said. "You ain't seen me for six-seven years. You look at me as if I just came back from a walk around the block." (6)

Eddie waits until his song is finished before responding. His insistent, stubbornly cool playing points back to an *obduracy* that subtends whatever political value one assigns its. As Elias Canetti said of Kafka, obduracy is Eddie's "true talent." According to Canetti, it is Kafka whose stories most consistently depict a

about a cool insurrection, then, and not merely refusal of power.

Here the question needs to be raised as to the validity of distinguishing the cool style from the hardboiled style that would seem to be the most likely precursor of David Goodis's fiction. After citing David Goodis's confession that "I am not Dashiell Hammet," Woody Haut remarks that, on the other hand, "Hammet was no David Goodis," and explains what he means by pointing out that "Goodis's fiction contains a tortured beauty that can take one's breath away."⁷ Like Kafka, from the beginning of his career Goodis sides with the humiliated. Not only does he not rely on the hardboiled stock of detectives and private investigators for his protagonists, instead preferring paranoid or romantically vulnerable losers that work in blue-collar jobs, but, Haut remarks, Goodis also strongly endorses "jazz, black culture and the healing power of music" (23). These and other features of his work would support a characterization of *Down There* as participating in the "birth-of-the-cool" genres of musical and literary expression. Anecdotal evidence suggests that the writer David Goodis was personally involved with jazz music and thought highly of it.⁸

II

The sweeping claims linking the psychology of *noir* novels to the Cold War are no substitute for phenomenological analysis.⁹ Obscurity can be a necessary condition of an artist's craft and lifestyle, even an intrinsic feature of a personality inclined to reticence. And neutrality, as we will see in Eddie's case, can be the rigorous pacification of atavistic impulses to achieve artistic mastery. Not politics at all but the mortifying compulsion of a solitary and terrible ascetic.

The background from which Eddie comes did not prepare him to fit into the corporate world of music making, where betrayal and seduction are normative pursuits much like they are in Hollywood. It is not hard to imagine that an unpretentious tavern like the Hut would be more fitting; indeed, at no point does Eddie express disdain for or discomfort with his post at the Hut. The economics of the musical career have always been dicey, and musicians often take what they can get—"down there" as well as "uptown." Stricken with remorse, Eddie foregoes concert performances and takes up a performance of self in the cool style. Confidence and poise are transferred intact from his professional bearing. But as a concert performer, mastery of his art meant, at the same time, servitude to the commercial industry with its parasites and management experts. In the Hut, on the

caressed but *censored* by the playing: his performance seems to be *without a performer*, as the following passage reveals:

Three years, and aside from the music he made, his presence at the Hut meant nothing. It was almost as though he wasn't there and the piano was playing all by itself. Regardless of the action at the tables or the bar, the piano man was out of it, *not even an observer*. He had his back turned and his eyes on the keyboard, content to draw his pauper's wages and wear pauper's rags. A gutless wonder, Plyne decided, fascinated with this *living example of absolute neutrality. Even the smile was something neutral*. It was never aimed at a woman. It was aimed very far out there beyond all tangible targets, really far out there beyond the leftfield bleachers. So where does that take it? Plyne asked himself. And of course there was no answer, not even the slightest clue. (26, emphasis added)

It is tempting to construe a Cold War allegory out of Eddie's neutrality, which resembles a disillusioned isolationism. Exposed as Eddie was to the violence of betrayal in the institutions of work and marriage, it would not be entirely misleading to suggest that his withdrawal to spend his remaining days in the cool neutrality of the Hut has a political meaning—in general, a withdrawal from power, or refusal of power, and more specifically, a refusal of complicity with the status quo in the music world. It was the latter motive--refusal of complicity--according to James Collier, that inspired the development of the "cool" style among black jazz musicians, who wanted to avoid "playing the role of the flamboyant black entertainer."⁶ The milieu of jazz, in which blacks and whites collaborated for the first time in a sustained manner that far exceeded the isolated roles of blacks in American baseball, also encouraged a cool ethos in white performers. Chet Baker, whose trumpet playing in Collier's opinion was "passive, sometimes to the point of self-pity," made a moody if not darkly romantic recording of "Let's Get Lost" that epitomized the politics of institutional nonconformity, albeit taken to a new romantic pitch. In this context, Melville's *Bartleby* also comes to mind; one could say that the development of "cool" was, on an emotional level, the becoming *Bartleby* of jazz players—the "I prefer not to be Satchmo" or the persona of the clownish entertainer that Louis Armstrong, in spite of his virtuosity as a trumpet player and composer, often projected in public performances. We are talking

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out of character for him but a recrudescence of the biographical obscurity from which he came. With obscurity being his birthright, he has no sense of entitlement; hence it is not out of a sense of public shame and disenfranchisement that Edward Webster Lynn the concert pianist becomes "Eddie" the tavern pianist. Yet there is something different about his later obscurity. Now it is a willed persona, that of the cool cat.

The jazz critic Francis Davis describes Eddie as an example of the "outcat," a combination of the "outcast and far-out cat."³ In Eddie's case, "far-out" means subdued modulation of tone, a "hip" non-grammatical speech style, but also remoteness—removal from the here and now of discursive sociality, rigorous commitment to the here and now of piano playing. Eddie's altered speech pattern is immediately noticed by his brother, who has an exaggerated respect for Eddie and projects a mantle of entitlement for him that Eddie obdurately shuns. "Eddie spills words like 'ain't' and says 'them there' and 'this here' and so forth. You know Eddie never talked that way. Edward was educated, an artist, and had a cultured manner of speaking...the Hut is a long way from Carnegie Hall" (67). Eddie's taciturn persona of cool, which Francis Davis describes as "too self-absorbed to be part of any movement...and too self-reliant to seek audience or peer approval," seems most suited to the pianist because "the keyboard—a complete orchestra within hand's reach—is just the instrument for a musician determined to keep his own counsel."⁴ Indeed, Eddie keeps his own counsel to such an extent that, in the three years he has worked at the Hut, he has not divulged a single biographical detail to his co-workers and audience. After Eddie's brother, Turley, invades the tavern in desperate exodus from the thugs he ripped off, seeking Eddie's help, he has a conversation with Plyne the bouncer. Plyne tells Turley that Eddie "never talks about himself. There's a lotta things about him I don't know...Nobody's got him down pat. Only thing we know for sure, he play the piano" (19). The muted lyricism of Eddie's nocturnal performances sustains the overall composition of atmospheric obscurity because his performances are not clarified or distinguished by the expression of an identity. Owing to the aloof narrative structure, our lack of access to his subjectivity prevents us from describing his situation as "barren narcissism" for we don't have the evidence that Henry Sussman does when he uses this term to describe the uneasy, clamorous self-referentiality of the consciousness that inhabits Kafka's burrow.⁵ Furthermore, music, unlike digging, constitutes a form of hospitality and public interface. Eddie's egoism is not being

I

The obscurity that enshrouds the piano player in the tavern called Harriet's Hut does not only belong to the atmosphere of this typical low-life establishment in the back streets of Philadelphia. To be sure, Eddie, the protagonist of David Goodis's novel *Down There* (1956), has been playing "down there" in a neighborhood where "there were no street lamps, no lights at all" for three years, and one would assume that the obscurity of the setting has permeated his mood.² Yet obscurity is not an element foreign to his persona but a stigma stamped into his being since childhood, whose positive articulation makes the atmosphere of the Hut as much his creation, or production, as his mood and persona are extensions of the Hut. Integral with the cool music, the atmosphere is a tonal milieu that results from the rigorous dissimulation of his feelings. As we will see, this *simulacrum of serenity* co-constituted "down there" masks a depth of fury and self-revulsion traceable to a personality-forming trauma, but which also originates as a reaction to the piano player's criminally-tainted heritage.

Raised in a dilapidated farmhouse at the end of a dirt road in rural New Jersey, Edward Webster Lynn was "more or less a small, puzzled spectator" whose "childhood was mostly on the passive side." His family consisted of his "villainous brothers," a mother who was "an habitual shrugger" and a father that the author describes as "a slothful, languid, easy-smiling drinker" (67-8). Although these unpromising features would hardly encourage loyalty, geographic isolation and lack of exposure to the wider culture instilled in the wayward brothers a severe feeling of family allegiance. The only distinguishing trait of this household--aside from its criminality--was the father's ability to play the piano. Claiming that he was himself a childhood prodigy, the father taught his son "in the shabby, carpetless parlor" and Edward quickly came to evince remarkable talent on the piano. His rise to fame as a concert pianist at Carnegie Hall is a stunning achievement that brings him from general obscurity into the limelight of public recognition. But with success come promotional parasites and their intrigue, and Edward's wife is pressured into a sexual affair with his manager. Out of shame she confesses to Edward, then jumps out of a window to her death. Her abrupt betrayal and suicide constitute a personality-forming trauma for Edward, who, following a period of debauchery and battle with other homeless losers and drunkards, disappears into the alleys of Philadelphia to take up his new career playing jazz piano at Harriet's Hut. There, as we said, his secretive comportment is not

A Cool Character and His Depths of Fury: Impulse and Form in David Goodis's *Down There*

C. S. Schreiner

Art is not a matter of pointing up alternatives but rather of resisting, solely through artistic form, the course of the world, which continues to hold a pistol to the heads of human beings. -- Theodor Adorno

Serenity is merely a kind of armistice between irreconcilable impulses.
-- Pierre Klossowski

The present study undertakes a phenomenological analysis of the literary representation of the *Stimmung* “cool” in terms of the emotional affects that shape it and the events and pressures that provoke it.¹ The modern evolution of this cool disposition can be explained generically in terms of the counter-traditions (*noir* fiction, cool jazz) that arose in response to certain challenges of postwar American culture. Yet the experiences described in the present study are of an utterly personal—almost incommunicable—struggle with self-discipline, affective volatility, and vocation. The cool disposition will be shown as an affective format or simulacrum construed by and masking disparate impulses both creative and destructive and issuing from a specific confluence of personal and cultural exigencies. Typically understood as an absence of affect, cool is instead described here as an involution of turbulence...*the eye of the hurricane externalized as a persona.*