

Book Review: Glenn O'Brien, Ed., *The Cool School: Writing from America's Hip Underground*. New York: Library Classics, 2013. ISBN: 978-1-598532562 (Hardcover). 471 Pages. \$27.95.

Reviewed by Tim Tomlinson¹

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A memorable scene in Robert Stone's National Book Award winning novel *Dog Soldiers* (1974) features Hollywood hustler Eddie Peace introducing the protagonist Ray Hicks to a couple of adventure-seeking squares. Adventure, in this case, is heroin, intravenously injected, which Hicks arrives on the scene to administer. "Raymond [Hicks] is the operator," Eddie Peace tells the squares. "He's the original hip guy. The whole world is goofs to him."

In one indelible moment, Stone collapses nearly all the qualities that manifest as hip or cool or underground in Glenn O'Brien's anthology, *The Cool School: Writing from America's Hip Underground*: illicit substances (in some cool schools, the harder the hipper), hustlers, thrill seekers, danger, and, in the center of it all, a character who knows the score better than anyone and cannot be surprised. [NB: Stone's scene does not appear in O'Brien's anthology—I'm not complaining—but it could, especially because so many of O'Brien's selections conjure its action, milieu, and characters.] Stone has commented that the creation of Hicks derives in part from Neal Cassady, whom Stone knew. Cassady, immortalized as Dean Moriarty in Jack Kerouac's *On the Road*, a cool school bible, might qualify in his own right as an original hip guy. Indeed, his "Letter to Jack Kerouac, March 7, 1947 (Kansas City, Mo.)," appears in the book, as, of course, does Kerouac in essay form in his "The Origins of the Beat Generation." Kerouac and Cassady flow-chart into so many of the book's other hipster representatives: Gregory Corso, Diane Di Prima, Carl Solomon, Herbert Huncke, Amiri Baraka, Joyce Johnson, John Clellon Holmes, William S. Burroughs, Brion Gysin, Ed

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