Digital Gonzo: (L)iterary Dromoscopic Performances by Ross Goodwin and Simon Morris

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The subject of this article is (l)iterary dromoscopic performances inspired by American counterculture which – as I aim to demonstrate – can be understood as a commentary on the condition of the "protein-based" writer in the age of digital machines.

In the first part of the title's post-generic label, I refer to the concept of iterability derived from the writings of Jacques Derrida[1] – that is, repetition within difference, involving displacement[2]. In her monograph *This Is Not a Copy*, Kaja Marczewska[3] announces the advent of an "iterative turn", emphasizing that in the age of hyperinformation, "plagiarism" reveals its creative potential. I borrow the notion of the "dromoscopic text" (one that does not merely describe movement but rather actualizes it) from Michalina Kmiecik[4], who applies the

[1] Jacques Derrida, "Signature Event Context," trans. Samuel Weber and Jeffrey Mehlman, in Margins of Philosophy (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982), 307.

[2] Krzysztof Skibski uses the term "iterature" in reference to interpretation as repetition with variation; see Krzysztof Skibski, Poezja jako iteratura. Relacje między elementami języka poetyckiego w wierszu wolnym [Poetry as iterature: Relations between elements of poetic language in free verse] (Poznań: Wydawnictwo Naukowe UAM, 2017).

[3] Kaja Marczewska, This Is Not a Copy. Writing at the Iterative Turn (New York, London: Bloomsbury, 2018).

[4] Michalina Kmiecik, "Awangarda i tekst dromoskopowy" ["The avant-garde and the dromoscopic text"], Teksty Drugie 1 (2018): 272–296.

assumptions of Paul Virilio's[5] dromology to avant-garde poetry[6] – poetry that problematizes speed, productivity, and the depersonalizing force of "technological vitalism".

A few preliminary observations before I proceed to the case studies. First, I situate the selected records of (l)iterary performances within the framework of non-anthropocentric humanities, which prompts a renegotiation of the modernist concept of authorship – for instance, by replacing the term "author" with "curator" or "producer"[7]. I found this problem missing from the discussion of intellectual property in Aldona Kobus's impressive monograph *Autorstwo. Urynkowienie literatury i fantazmat podmiotu autorskiego*[8] (Authorship: The marketization of literature and the phantasm of the authorial subject). The creators of the text-events I have chosen to analyze are human–machine assemblages, and the question of post-authorship is explicitly thematized in these works.

"Assemblage" functions with a very specific meaning in art theory: it refers to three-dimensional collages composed of found objects (assembled from prefabricated elements)[9]. In the 1960s, Robert Rauschenberg, Kurt Schwitters, and Tadeusz Kantor used such practices in an attempt to restore to audiences an authentic experience of contact with the materiality of the object. As a philosophical category, however, assemblage refers to a description of the reality we inhabit: polyphonic, affective, and emergent[10].

Manuel DeLanda, in *Assemblage Theory* (2016)[11], following Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari[12], offers a warrior with a bow on horseback as an example of an assemblage – a collective that forms a unity on the battlefield, since "[t]he war machine emerges [...] as an effect of the soldier's decision-making, the speed of the horse, and the lethal potential of the bow"[13]. Writing-oriented human–machine assemblages are described – though without using this term and without addressing conceptual literature – by Maciej Wróblewski. In his inspiring book

[5] From Greek dromos – race, racetrack; a "parascience" of speed. See Paul Virilio, Speed and Politics: An Essay on Dromology, trans. Mark Polizzotti (New York: Semiotext(e), 1986).

[6] Kmiecik analyzes two poems by Julian Przyboś: "Na uskrzydlonych kołach" ["On winged wheels"] and "Na kołach" ["On wheels"].

[7] Kenneth Goldsmith uses terms such as "non-authorship" and "postproduction"; see "I Tweet, Therefore I Am: A Conversation with Kenneth Goldsmith," interview by Trace William Cowen, Nailed, August 1, 2014, https://www.nailedmagazine.com/features/interview-with-kenneth-goldsmith-by-trace-william-cowen (accessed August 30, 2025).

[8] Aldona Kobus, Autorstwo. Urynkowienie literatury i fantazmat podmiotu autorskiego [Authorship: The marketization of literature and the phantasm of the authorial subject] (Toruń: Wydawnictwo Naukowe UMK, 2021).

[9] The term was introduced into art criticism by William Seitz in the catalogue of an exhibition at the Museum of Modern Art in New York; see William Seitz, The Art of Assemblage (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 1961), https://assets.moma.org/documents/moma_catalogue_1880_300062228.pdf (accessed September 3, 2025).

[10] See Mateusz Chaberski, Asamblaże, asamblaże. Doświadczenie w zamglonym antropocenie [Assemblages, assemblages: Experience in the foggy anthropocene] (Kraków: Księgarnia Akademicka, 2019).

[11] DeLanda defines assemblage as follows: "a multiplicity composed of many heterogeneous elements that establish various connections and relations among themselves – across historical periods, genders, systems of power, and different natures. The cohesion of an assemblage consists solely in the co-functioning of all these elements at a given moment, since what we are dealing with here is 'sympathy.' Assemblages, therefore, are not about filiations but about alliances and the merging of elements; they do not involve typical inheritance of traits, but rather mutual contagion, epidemics, and currents of air" (quoted in and trans. after Mateusz Chaberski, 144).

[12] Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia, trans. Brian Massumi (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1987).

[13] Chaberski, 245.

Literature and the Machine, he proposes a conceptual triad: "machine discourse," "discourse by means of the machine," and "discourse about the machine"[14]. From a non-anthropocentric perspective, and in the context of large language models, one would need to add yet another category: the discourse of the machine (distinct from human discourse – as Noam Chomsky has noted, computers "do not think as humans do"[15]). Since Wróblewski is primarily concerned with the typewriter, he does not pose what I consider a fundamental question: what is the difference between rewrite (rewriting), retype (typing out again), and copy/paste? "If Warhol [the king of bluff] was a [analog] machine in the era of the photocopier, the typewriter, the tape recorder, and early computerization, Kenneth Goldsmith should be regarded as a digital machine, a word processor"[16], writes Marczewska in *This Is Not a Copy*. The operations of remediation and their consequences are also thematized in the texts I analyze.

A final preliminary remark: the texts I have selected make it possible to examine how the products of human–machine assemblages bring together two extreme conceptions of literature: the manic and the technical (mechanical). In what ways is the automation of literature connected to madness, and – when viewed from a non-anthropocentric perspective—can the hallucinations of artificial intelligence be considered an equivalent of human inspiration?

Simon Morris, Pierre Menard's Avatar

The text-events I have selected – *1 The Road* by Ross Goodwin and *Getting into Jack Kerouac's Head* by Simon Morris – are examples of conceptual literature, or perhaps even experimental translation: they are variants of Jack Kerouac's iconic novel *On the Road*, repeated within an altered, digital communicative situation.

"Conceptual writing" – a performative and processual, intellectual (rather than emotional) "form, often critical of reality, [which] seeks to draw attention to the complex entanglements of texts within media, institutional, and cultural formations"[17] – began to gain popularity in

[14] Maciej Wróblewski, Literatura i maszyna [Literature and the machine] (Toruń: Wydawnictwo Naukowe UMK, 2015). "Machine discourse" refers to "writing with the machine, a fact that manifests itself at the level of literary theme, the environments in which works circulate (as exemplified by hyperliterature and the blogosphere), but also clearly asserts its presence at the level of the organization and transformation of the writerly imagination" (19; for example, the serialized novel). "Discourse about the machine" denotes a situation in which the machine appears as a theme or a point of departure for civilizational diagnosis (for example, the industrial novel or the uncanny stories of Stefan Grabiński). Wróblewski defines "discourse by means of the machine" least precisely, situating it "at the level of the organization of the writerly imagination" (22; for example, the imitation of the narrative of "television spectacles") (translation mine, PZ).

[15] Noam Chomsky, „The False Promise of ChatGPT", New York Times, 8.03.2003, https://www.nytimes.com/2023/03/08/opinion/noam-chomsky-chatgpt-ai.html accessed 27 August 2025.

[16] Marczewska, 176.

[17] Mikołaj Spodaryk, "Literatura postelektroniczna? Od ekranu do kartki papieru, czyli podróż powrotna z bagażem nowych doświadczeń" ["Post-electronic literature? From screen to paper, or a return journey with new experiences"], Annales Universitatis Paedagogicae Cracoviensis. Studia de Cultura 2 (2016): 123. As Piotr Marecki and Aleksandra Małecka write: "In opposition to traditional readership, the theorist-artist promotes thinkership (a neologism meaning roughly 'thinking-as-reading'), that is, a mode of reading in which, instead of reading a work linearly, the recipient browses it selectively and engages in reflection upon it" (Piotr Marecki and Aleksandra Małecka, "Przekład literatury konceptualnej. Studium przypadku lokalizacji «Paint the Rock» Shiva Kotechy jako «Namaluj Popka»" ["Translating conceptual literature: A case study of the localization of Shiva Kotecha's 'Paint the Rock' as 'Namaluj Popka'"], Przekłady Literatur Słowiańskich 1 [2018]: 104; translation mine, PZ).

the early 2000s[18]. Literary texts were accompanied by critical interventions, especially those of Kenneth Goldsmith, who, together with Craig Dworkin, founded UbuWeb and edited the anthology *Against Expression*[19]. In his introduction, he advances the thesis that the emergence of the internet – and, more broadly, the advent of the era of digital hyperinformation – has the same significance for analog literature as the invention of photography had for painting. The strategies by which authors position themselves within this new environment were described by Marjorie Perloff in *Unoriginal Genius* as arrière-garde[20].

Experimental translation in the context of the many "turns" in the humanities has been discussed, among others, by Tamara Brzostowska-Tereszkiewicz and Katarzyna Bazarnik, who emphasize a shift fundamental to this practice: from "identity" and "representation" toward "difference," "displacement," and "innovation"[21]. I draw on this concept in a broad sense, referring not only to translation from one language to another but also to all forms of adaptation, transformation, and variation[22]. I follow Krzysztof Bartnicki[23], who, in the preface to *Translations of Jan Kochanowski*, underscores that "everything is translation", and that faithful translation is possible – if at all – only in the case of Pierre Menard, who rewrote *Don Quixote*[24]. This gesture by Borges's protagonist can, moreover, be regarded as a model (l) iterary performance[25].

A contemporary avatar of Menard is Morris (b. 1968), the author of the novel *Getting inside Jack Kerouac's Head*, published in 2010. The Beat Generation's "Bible" (in the 2000 Penguin edition – to which the final publication alludes both illustratively and typographically[26] – as well as in its original scroll form) inspired the post-author to undertake a layered remediation: the text was (following the scroll) "de-novelized" (Morris replaced the fictional names of the characters with their non-fictional counterparts: Sal Paradise becomes Jack Kerouac, Dean Moriarty – Neal

[18]Marjorie Perloff, "Conceptualisms Old and New," Ha!art 50 (2015): 13–16.

[19]Craig Dworkin and Kenneth Goldsmith, eds., Against Expression: An Anthology of Conceptual Writing (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 2010), online: https://monoskop.org/images/3/3c/Dworkin_Craig_Goldsmith_Kenneth_eds_Against_Expression_An_Anthology_of_Conceptual_Writing.pdf, dostęp 1.09.2025.

[20]Marjorie Perloff, Unoriginal Genius. Poetry by Other Means in the New Century (Chicago, London: The University of Chicago Press, 2010).

[21]Tamara Brzostowska-Tereszkiewicz and Katarzyna Bazarnik, "Przekład eksperymentalny: techniki, formy, metajęzyki" ["Experimental translation: Techniques, forms, metalanguages"], Przekładaniec 43 (2021): 7.

[22]For example, Patience Agbabi published a volume of new, rap-inflected Chaucerian Canterbury Tales – Telling Tales (2014), while Alice Oswald de-heroicized the Homeric epic in her pacifist Memorial: An Excavation of the Iliad (2011).

[23]In Poland, such practices are associated with Krzysztof Bartnicki, who refers to his distinctive modernizations of Jan Kochanowski's works as "Polonization." Garutko sobotniej ropy [A small pot of Saturday oil] (2022) is a modernized version of Pieśń świętojańska o sobótce [St. John's Eve Song of the Midsummer Night], while in Tłumaczenia Jana Kochanowskiego [Translations of Jan Kochanowski] Bartnicki presents variations on fragments of nine texts, including epigrams, an exercise based on the Iliad, and Szachy [Chess], which he reworks under the title Trony [Thrones].

[24]Krzysztof Bartnicki, Tłumaczenia Jana Kochanowskiego [Translations of Jan Kochanowski] (Katowice: Wydawnictwo Biblioteki Śląskiej, 2025).

[25]Other projects of this kind include Phil Gyford's online publication, begun in January 2003, of entries from Samuel Pepys's seventeenth-century diary, and Vanessa Place's Twitter-based project (launched in 2011) of disseminating Margaret Mitchell's Gone with the Wind.

[26]On the cover, instead of the black-and-white photograph of Jack Kerouac and Neal Cassady, there appears an image of Morris and his friend, the poet Nick Thurston, posed in the same manner.

Cassady, Carlo Marx – Allen Ginsberg, etc.), then "blogified," and subsequently republished in codex form, yet – consistent with the logic of blog entries – beginning from the end.

Morris – a conceptual writer and the author of a documentary film about Goldsmith[27] – sat down to rewrite *On the Road* on May 31, 2008. It took him 289 days. If his own account is to be believed, he did not rely on a text converter – in a self-commentary titled *Learn to Read Differently*, he confessed that he treated the process as "a kind of meditation" [28]. In this way, he alluded to the practices of Hunter S. Thompson, who retyped *A Farewell to Arms* by Ernest Hemingway and *The Great Gatsby* by F. Scott Fitzgerald in order to find out "what it feels like to write those words"[29]. The point of these literary exercises, in Thompson's case, lay in embodying the experience – they were a staging, a reconstruction of the act of creation, perhaps even a form of paratheatrical embodiment. If we agree that rewriting is the highest form of close reading, the choice of the title *Getting into Jack Kerouac's Head* becomes understandable. That said, Morris did not set out on a journey in a 1948 Buick with the top down, did not swallow Benzedrine by the handful, washing it down with bourbon. He did not hammer furiously at a typewriter while racing at eighty-five miles per hour along the ribbon of a desert highway[30].

The book was published by Information as Material, an independent press founded by Morris and operating as a collective that releases works by artists "who use existing material and transform it in order to generate new meanings – thus disrupting the existing order of things"[31]. A playful coda to Morris's performance was provided by a book by London-based artist Joe Hale, who rewrote *Getting inside Jack Kerouac's Head*, publishing excerpts on a blog over the course of a year – like Morris – and then issuing it in codex form, this time arranging the text in its conventional order[32]. In his commentary on this gesture, Dworkin emphasized that it was "conceptual literature for the age of social media", grounded in practices such as retweeting or reblogging.

Kerouac's *On the Road* proves to be an excellent source text for commentary on post-authorship. It is no coincidence that the multi-authored monograph *Rethinking Kerouac* (2025) opens with an essay by Matt Theado titled *Reading a Copy of On the Road* (emphasis mine). Following, among others, Tim Hunt[33], the scholar emphasizes that there is no definitive, standard, agreed-upon edition of Kerouac's iconic novel. It was only in 2007 – half a century after the first edition – that a transcription of the novel's draft, the 36-meter scroll about

[27]Sucking on words: Kenneth Goldsmith Documentary, 2007, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TT_Epx1s6mI.

[28]Simon Morris, "Learn to Read Differently", in: Book Presence in the Digital Age, red. Kiene Brillenburg Wurth, Kári Driscoll, Jessica Pressman (New York: Bloomsbury, 2018), 184.

[29]Brian John Spencer, "Hunter S. Thompson – Typing Out the Work of the Best Writers", The New Irishman, June 5, 2014, quoted in Simon Morris, "Learn to Read Differently," 183.

[30]I paraphrase the opening of the introduction to Getting Inside Jack Kerouac's Head written by Kenneth Goldsmith; see Kenneth Goldsmith, "Retyping On the Road: A Case for Appropriation," in Simon Morris, Getting Inside Jack Kerouac's Head (York: Information as Material, 2009), vii. The text also appears as a chapter in Kenneth Goldsmith's Uncreative Writing (New York: Columbia University Press, 2011).

[31]http://www.informationasmaterial.org/about/, accessed 31 August 2025.

[32]Joe Hale, Getting Inside Simon Morris' Head (New York: Information as Material, 2014).

[33]Tim Hunt, Kerouac's Crooked Road: Development of a Fiction (Carbondale, Edwardsville: Southern Illinois University Press, 1981).

which Ginsberg wrote that it was "visionary, authentic, and revolutionary" [34], was published by Viking Press as *On the Road: Original Scroll*. Legend has it that the writing process was spontaneous (in reality, as biographers suggest, the act of writing – or rather note-taking – was preceded by conceptual work). In order not to interrupt the process, Kerouac taped together multiple sheets of paper and fed the resulting scroll into his typewriter. He no longer had to change pages or number them, and could surrender himself to a three-week creative frenzy. In a sense, this allowed him to write in a way analogous to how one writes today in word processors. This founding legend of *On the Road* can itself be regarded as a performance, with the scroll as its record. After Kerouac's own revisions, editor Malcolm Cowley joined the work on the text, compelling the author to introduce a number of changes motivated by commercial and legal concerns (hence the pseudonymization), and incidentally adding "thousands of unnecessary commas"[35], thereby altering the rhythm and dynamics of the prose. Morris's gesture – stretching Kerouac's frenzied three-week act of creation over 289 days – can be read as a manifesto of slow writing in the age of instantaneous copy/paste.

The Road Novel of Google Street View

Morris's (l)iterary performance enters into an unexpected dialogue with Goodwin's *1 the Road* (2018, Jean Boîte Éditions), a record of a performance advertised as "the first novel written by artificial intelligence". A critic for *The Guardian* remarked that it reads as if a Google Street View car were describing its journey across the country, while *The Electric Kool-Aid Acid Test* was being narrated by Siri[36].

Goodwin – an "artist, hacker, and gonzo data analyst" [37] – immersed himself as a teenager in the 1990s in the classics of counterculture. He was inspired not only by Kerouac's autofictional novel, but also by New Journalism (anti-)reportage: *The Electric Kool-Aid Acid Test* by Tom Wolfe, a theorist and representative of New Journalism, and *Hell's Angels: The Strange and Terrible Saga of the Outlaw Motorcycle Gangs* by Hunter S. Thompson, a precursor and theorist of gonzo aesthetics, who in 1967 published an account of his roaming with – as he put it – "Huns on wheels" terrorizing California (they, too, were human–machine assemblages).

Goodwin set out – like Kerouac – to travel the route from New York to New Orleans, but in the company of artificial intelligence. He mounted a camera on the trunk of a Cadillac, a GPS device on the roof, and, inside the car, installed a microphone to record conversations, along with a clock. The sensors supplied data to a literature-trained neural network system. Every twenty seconds, the camera captured an image, which was first converted into typographic characters and then into a description. Goodwin drove while rolls of receipt paper, printed with the generated text, emerged from the device and filled the back seats of the car. This is,

[34]Hunt, xvi.

[35]Letter quoted in Adam Gussow, "Bohemia Revisited: Malcolm Cowley, Jack Kerouac, and On the Road," The Georgia Review 2 (1984): 291.

[36]Brian Merchant, "When an AI Goes Full Jack Kerouac", The Atlantic, 2018, https://www.theatlantic.com/technology/archive/2018/10/automated-on-the-road/571345/, accessed 7 September 2025.

[37]https://rossgoodwin.com/, dostęp 30.08.2025.

of course, a reference to the literary legend of how Kerouac wrote his *opus magnum* in just twenty days: on a scroll.

In the book's preface, Goodwin reflects on his method. He describes *1 the Road* as a "manuscript" written by a car – and immediately qualifies this:

> Or perhaps the drivers wrote it, using the car as their pen. Or perhaps the machine wrote it, using our traversal of the landscape as its means of coherence. Or perhaps those who wrote the machine's training corpus have written it together, reaching out from their work, out from the past, to influence a new story.
> Or perhaps I wrote it. But I am less sure than ever about that.
> [...] I could describe my role as writer of writer. But whether the machine itself is a writer remains a question that is about as relevant as whether a submarine is a swimmer [...][38].

The "Word Car"[39], as a writing machine, evokes the automobile, which Filippo Marinetti – fascinated by the aesthetics of the machine and the information revolution – described as an "extension" of the human. Emiliano Ranocchi[40] translates the title of the essay *L'uomo moltiplicato e il regno della macchina* (1915) as "multiplication," but the English rendering *Extended Man and the Kingdom of the Machine*[41] – *extended* seems more adequate – after all, "extended" is a synonym of "augmented," a term commonly used to describe augmented reality.

Although Goodwin does not mention this, a precursor to the car-as-writing-machine can be found in the camera-car of Ed Ruscha (b. 1937), an American artist influenced by Dadaism, Fluxus, and pop art, as well as a pioneer of self-publishing. In 1963, he published the booklet *Twentysix Gasoline Stations*, which featured black-and-white photographs of gas stations located along the famous Route 66 from Los Angeles to Oklahoma City (a route connecting Ruscha's home with that of his parents). As such, the work is not only a commentary on pervasive standardization but also – as Grzegorz Dziamski has observed – a dialogue with the road movie[42].

[38]Ross Goodwin, "Introduction," in Ross Goodwin, 1 the Road (Paris: Jean Boîte Éditions, 2018), 12–14. The remark alludes to an aphorism by Edsger W. Dijkstra, the Dutch computer science pioneer: "The question of whether machines can think is about as relevant as the question of whether submarines can swim".

[39]https://rossgoodwin.com/wordcar/.

[40]Emiliano Ranocchi, "Proroctwa Marinettiego i Jasieńskiego. Rzecz o awangardzie (po)nowoczesności" ["The prophecies of Marinetti and Jasieński: On the avant-garde of (post)modernity"], in Awangarda Środkowej i Wschodniej Europy – innowacja czy naśladownictwo? Interpretacje, ed. Michalina Kmiecik and Małgorzata Szumna (Kraków: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Jagiellońskiego, 2015), 51–70. "It is entirely trivial whether Marinetti predicted Google and Facebook. What he did was more important: long before Marshall McLuhan and Nicholas Carr, he described the needs to which the American internet corporation and the social media platform respond, while also showing how speed, synchronicity, and spatialization consistently follow from one another" (58; translation mine, PZ).

[41]Filippo Tommaso Marinetti, "Extended Man and the Kingdom of the Machine," in Filippo Tommaso Marinetti, Critical Writings, ed. Günther Berghaus, trans. Doug Thompson (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2006), 107–119.

[42]Grzegorz Dziamski, "Konceptualna teoria i praktyka (część II)" ["Conceptual theory and practice (part II)"], Dyskurs 6 (2008).

In 1966, Ruscha, accompanied by photographers, set out on a car trip to Los Angeles along the route Kerouac had taken while writing *On the Road*. When their typewriter broke down, they decided to dispose of it somewhere near Las Vegas by throwing it out of the car window. Ruscha photographed its scattered remains on the highway (as if documenting a victim at a crime scene), and included the images in an album titled *Royal Road Test*[43]. As Jaleh Mansoor observes, what was symbolically destroyed in this gesture was Kerouac's typewriter[44].

Morris refers back to Ruscha's dromoscopic performance in his own work, *Royal Road to the Unconscious*. He used *Royal Road Test* as an instruction, but instead of throwing a typewriter out of a speeding car window, he did so with a copy of Sigmund Freud's *The Interpretation of Dreams*, cut into fragments. Reading the writings of the famous psychoanalyst, he observed that the mode of description does not correspond to the object of study: Freud presents what is irrational in a scientific manner – correctly and logically. "I wondered what would happen if I subjected Freud's writings to a seemingly random act of total madness," Morris wrote in his self-commentary *Learn to Read Differently*[45].

To carry out the work using the cut-up method – that is, to release 223,464 words from the constraints of syntax – Morris enlisted the participation of seventy-eight students (in the context of post-authorship, one might ask whether they were co-authors). The scraps of paper flew out of the car window, forming an artistic installation that was subsequently documented and – presented as a record of the performance – published as an instance of spontaneous action, creative madness. The digital version of Morris's Freudian cut-up was titled *Rewriting Freud*. *The Interpretation of Dreams* was entered into a computer program developed by Christine Farion. The program randomly selected words and laboriously reconstructed the book, producing what Morris described as "incestuous relations between words," and generating a new text from the original phrases[46].

The experiments of Morris and Goodwin can be situated within the tradition of the American road novel – useful both because of its episodic structure, which lends itself readily to digital repetition, and because of its association with "being on the road" as an expression of courage, freedom, and a departure from routine. How deceptive such an association may be is demonstrated in Peggy Pacini's[47] comparative analysis of Kerouac's scroll and Goodwin's *1 the Road*. Pacini treats remediation as a pretext for examining the consequences of modernization and the impact of social acceleration – drawing on Paul Virilio's dromology, David Harvey's[48]

[43]The action was repeated by other artists: Corinne Carlson, Karen Henderson, and Marla Hlady with an Apple computer, as Macintosh Road Test (Toronto, 2000).

[44]Jaleh Mansoor, "Ed Ruscha's «One-Way Street»", October 111 (2005): 127–142. Ruscha shares one more connection with Kerouac: in 2010, he reimagined On the Road as an artist's book published by Gagosian Gallery (edition of 350 signed copies; price: $10,000 per copy); see https://gagosian.com/exhibitions/2009/ed-ruscha-on-the-road-an-artist-book-of-the-classic-novel-by-jack-kerouac/ (accessed September 7, 2025).

[45]Morris, "Learn to Read Differently", 166.

[46]The aleatory moment can be viewed here: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hUhq1HzLYEU (accessed September 8, 2025).

[47]Peggy Pacini, "From Beat Generation to Hacker Generation: The Experimental Road Narratives On the Road and 1 the Road," in Rethinking Kerouac: Afterlives, Continuities, Reappraisals, ed. Erik Mortenson and Tomasz Sawczuk (New York; London; Dublin: Bloomsbury Academic, 2025), 173–186.

[48]David Harvey, The Condition of Postmodernity (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1989).

concept of time–space compression, and Hartmut Rosa's[49] theory of acceleration – on the road novel. The key category here is speed, which translates into efficiency. Kerouac wrote his novel in twenty days, inscribing the creative process within the logic of capitalism, yet doing so subversively, while simultaneously rebelling against it. Kerouac's frenzied writing finds its counterpart in Goodwin's data processing. Whereas Kerouac's novel challenges the commonly accepted conception of time and its social use, in the AI version, the journey of the "Word Car" is sponsored by Google and overseen by employees of Artists + Machine Intelligence at Google Research. As Pacini writes, Goodwin's experiment exposes the American "cannibalistic, junk-space of technocapitalism": "Because the narrative is processed through data received by sensors, the road becomes a panoptic medium that reflects a consumerist and productivist vision of society"[50].

The Gonzo Post-Author

Kerouac's "inspired" writing, its repetition with variation by the assemblage represented by Goodwin, and Morris's experiment with Freud all evoke the premises of a literary technique favored by the Surrealists: automatic writing, which links writing with the (sub/un)conscious. It contains a rebellious potential, resisting rationalization, objectification, and normalization[51]. Pacini overlooks an important context that allows Goodwin's (l)iterary performance to be considered from the perspective of the creative act and process: its overt reference to gonzo – a journalistic avant-garde that is radically subjective, politically incorrect, "mad", and characterized by a loose отношение to facts and a penchant for linguistic hyperbole.

In Spanish, *gonzo* means a madman, a lunatic. The central figure in the reportage by Hunter S. Thompson or Charlie LeDuff is the author himself, while the subject is his own adventurous, often confrontational reporting exploits. The style of these anti-journalistic, contestatory, and subversive anti-reports is described as "bold, exaggerated, satirical", as well as "mad, extreme, and transgressive". For William Stephenson, the gonzo-like author-protagonist evoked the figure of the Trickster[52].

Gonzo emerges from the experiences of the Beat Generation – "poets of the long breath", celebrants of individuality and creative expression, "children of blue-bearded Homer singing in the street"[53], in search of transcendence and unity with the cosmic being (for instance, through the fusion of Buddhism and hallucinogens[54]). Neal Cassady – friend of Ginsberg, who

[49]Peggy Pacini, "From Beat Generation to Hacker Generation: The Experimental Road Narratives On the Road and 1 the Road," in Rethinking Kerouac: Afterlives, Continuities, Reappraisals, ed. Erik Mortenson and Tomasz Sawczuk (New York; London; Dublin: Bloomsbury Academic, 2025), 173–186.

[50]Pacini, 177.

[51]See Marta Rakoczy, "Pisanie automatyczne, czyli o trudnych związkach awangardy z nowoczesnością" ["Automatic writing, or the difficult relations between the avant-garde and modernity"], Zagadnienia Rodzajów Literackich 2 (2019): 115–128.

[52]William Stephenson, Gonzo Republic: Hunter S. Thompson's America (London, New York: Continuum, 2012).

[53]Jack Kerouac, "Essentials of Spontaneous Prose", in The Portable Jack Kerouac, ed. Ann Charters (New York: Viking Press, 1995), 484.

[54]See Adela Kuik-Kalinowska, "W drodze do psychodelicznego satori. Używki w prozie i poezji beatników" ["On the way to psychedelic Satori: Intoxicants in the prose and poetry of the Beats"], Teksty Drugie 6 (2006): 27–41.

praised "mystical visions and cosmic vibrations" [55], and who died of an overdose in 1968 – became one of the central figures of *On the Road*.

The literary experiments of the Beatniks, and later of the New Journalists inspired by them, sought to expand the boundaries of realism – for instance, through attempts to represent psychotic states. An iconic example is Wolfe's *The Electric Kool-Aid Acid Test*, a record of a journey with a group that included Ken Kesey. The Merry Pranksters traveled in a brightly painted school bus called *Furthur*, experimenting with LSD (this was a time when Timothy Leary was still able to conduct research on psychedelics within academia). The reference to a countercultural form of augmented reality was so crucial for Goodwin that, in his self-commentary on *1 the Road*, he wrote: "I believe that research into artificial intelligence is culturally as significant as research into LSD was in the 1960s"[56].

Just as researchers examine the effects of psychedelics on creativity or the creative potential of schizophrenic symptoms[57], discussions of the possible creativity of large language models[58] return to the issue of so-called AI hallucinations[59]. This medical term is used to describe a tendency toward errors – attributive, mathematical, conceptual, or programmatic. As a result, AI-generated texts may include, for example, "golems" (when an LLM produces a fictional figure supposedly involved in historical events) or "virtual voices" (fabricated quotations attributed to real or fictional individuals)[60]. Drawing on Italo Calvino's idea of unexpected meaning – according to which creativity should be assessed on the basis of the work of art rather than the nature of its creator—Daniel Raffini observes: "Hallucinations are a key concept for explaining how human–machine interaction can operate creatively, even in the context of automation. [...] As a factual or linguistic error, a hallucination functions as a gateway to multiple interpretations"[61].

Here is the opening passage of *1 the Road*:

> It was nine seventeen in the morning, and the house was heavy.
> It was seven minutes to ten o'clock in the morning, and it was the only good thing that had happened.
> What is it? the painter asked.
> The time was six minutes until ten o'clock in the morning, and the wind stood as the windows were freshly covered with boxes.

[55]Allen Ginsberg, "America," in Howl and Other Poems (San Francisco: City Lights Books, 1956), 39.

[56]Goodwin, 16.

[57]Kerri Michalica, Harry Hunt, "Creativity, Schizotypicality, and Mystical Experience: An Empirical Study", Creativity Research Journal 25 (2013): 266–279.

[58]See, for example, Artificial Creativity: Looking at the Future of Digital Culture, ed. Alessandra Micalizzi (Cham: Springer, 2025).

[59]João G. Patrício, "Is Delulu the New Trululu? Artificial Intelligence Hallucinations as Input in the Creative Process," Revista de Comunicação e Linguagens 60–61 (2024): 226–245.

[60]Vipula Rawte et al., "The Troubling Emergence of Hallucination in Large Language Models: An Extensive Definition, Quantification, and Prescriptive Remediations," in Proceedings of the 2023 Conference on Empirical Methods in Natural Language Processing (Singapore: Association for Computational Linguistics, 2023), 2544.

[61]Daniel Raffini, "Authorship and Hallucination in AI-Generated Literary Texts", in: Artificial Creativity, 28.

> The time was three minutes to ten o'clock in the morning, and the conversation was finished while the same interview was over.
> It was three minutes to ten o'clock in the morning, and the sheets of coal had been broken.
> A patch of green grass seemed to be seeking its face, but it was not much to see. A small patch of grass had already been stretched along the sidewalk, and the steps of the barn were locked.
> It was forty-two in the morning, and the driver had to stay alone and start back from the parking lot[62].

As Raffini observes, the sentence "It was seven minutes before ten in the morning, and that was the only good thing that had happened" contains a semantic error, since time (the indication of an hour) does not generally carry either positive or negative connotations. "Therefore, [the sentence] requires a non-literal interpretation, which, in the semantic gap opened by the system's hallucination, may contain additional meanings," Raffini argues, offering examples of such creative readings: "Perceiving time as the only positive event transports us into an emotional landscape dominated by boredom and negativity, or even into a dimension beyond the boundaries of reality, where time itself can be perceived as something good. Alternatively, we might attempt a metaphorical interpretation, in which the morning represents a new beginning. This is an example of how hallucination can function as a creative factor"[63].

The literary experiments of human–machine assemblages prompt a redefinition not only of creativity but also of originality. In his book on plagiarism as a tactic of resistance, Stewart Home[64] – a novelist and "art terrorist," and a member of the Neoists[65] – argues that the modernist myth of creativity is another version of the grand narrative of progress (I would add: acceleration, speed), from which one must liberate oneself in order to preserve artistic freedom. I define digital gonzo as yet another iteration of this anarchic gesture, but also as an ironic appropriation of the Cassandra-like visions of the total mechanization of literature – the "textapocalypse": "a wave of artificially generated texts that will displace original human creativity" [66]. Digital hooligans of the "hacker generation"[67] respond to such claims by playing with the concept of "poetic frenzy." This involves a reversal of roles: the human remains rational and engaged in programming, while the machine succumbs to hallucinations.

[62]Goodwin, 41.

[63]Raffini, 28.

[64]Stewart Home, Neoism, Plagiarism & Praxis (Edinburgh, San Francisco: AK Press, 1995).

[65]Neoism is an underground, parodic art movement that emerged in the late 1970s in the United States and Canada. Its practitioners opposed the institutionalization and commodification of art. It was initiated by the Hungarian-born Canadian performer Istvan Kantor. See Kamila Wróbel, "Hero's Revolutionary Song: Istvan Kantor aka Monty Cantsin," in Trickster Strategies in the Artists' and Curatorial Practice, ed. Anna Markowska (Warsaw; Toruń: Polish Institute of World Art Studies & Tako Publishing House, 2013), 93–100.

[66]Mariusz Pisarski, Figury obecności w cyfrowych mediach. Od hipertekstu do sztucznej inteligencji [Figures of Presence in Digital Media: From Hypertext to Artificial Intelligence] (Kraków: Universitas, 2024), 225.

[67]I refer here to the title of Peggy Pacini's article "From Beat Generation to Hacker Generation."

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KEYWORDS

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Abstract:
The article examines (l)iterary dromoscopic performances inspired by American counterculture, which can be understood as a commentary on the condition of the "protein-based" writer in the age of digital machines. In what ways do the products of human–machine assemblages bring together two extreme conceptions of literature: the manic and the technical (mechanical)? Can the hallucinations of artificial intelligence be considered an equivalent of human inspiration?

ITERATIVE TURN

GONZO

artificial creativity

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