

METRICA (2023) — MARISSA LEE BENEDICT AND DAVID RUETER

RUPERT — READING ROOM — VAIDILUTĖS G. 79, 1000 VILNIUS
EARTH BONDS — 22 APRIL 2023

DESCRIPTION:

THE CEILING LIGHTS TURN OFF. A RECEIPT FLUTTERS TO THE GROUND.
TWILIGHT ENCROACHES.

THE VIDEO MONITOR ON THE WALL DEPICTS A SCENE SIMILAR TO THE ONE IMMEDIATELY OUTSIDE THE
ADJACENT WINDOW, EXCEPT DAY IS EXCHANGED FOR NIGHT.

THE CEILING LIGHTS TURN ON. A RECEIPT FLUTTERS TO THE GROUND.

THE RECEIPT BEGINS WITH A QUERY: SOMEONE (OR SOMETHING) IS QUESTIONING THE BUILDING
MANAGEMENT SYSTEM, ASKING WHY IT IS SPITTING OUT QUOTES FROM TEXTS IN OLD RUTHENIAN
AND LITHUANIAN, AND HOW IT IS APPARENTLY USING THESE TEXTS TO MAKE DECISIONS ABOUT THE
ROOM'S LIGHTING.

THE CEILING LIGHTS TURN OFF. A RECEIPT FLUTTERS TO THE GROUND.

ON A NEARBY BOOKSHELF, DUST JACKETS LOOK ASLANT, WARPED BY A DIGITAL SKEW. OTHER VOLUMES
ARE WRAPPED, PACKED, AND SORTED AS IF THEY ARE BRICKS, CATEGORIZED BY THEIR WEIGHT, TEX-
TURE, AND SIZE RATHER THAN THEIR CONTENTS.

THE CEILING LIGHTS TURN ON. A RECEIPT BEARING AN INTERPRETATION OF THE WORD "PERPETUITY"
FLUTTERS TO THE GROUND.

THE CEILING LIGHTS TURN OFF.

A RECEIPT FLUTTERS TO THE GROUND.

OVERVIEW:

DIPPING INTO A POOL OF TEXT FROM LITHUANIAN STATE ARCHIVES, METRICA (2023) IS AN AMBI-
ENT PERFORMANCE OF INSTITUTIONAL DYNAMICS, SCORED BY QUERIES TO A LARGE LANGUAGE MODEL
(LLM) AS TO WHETHER THE LIGHTS SHOULD BE TURNED ON OR OFF. OBLIQUE INTERPRETATIONS OF
CONTRACTS AND LAND DEEDS FROM THE LATE 14TH CENTURY UNTIL THE PRESENT HISTORIES THAT HAVE
BEEN WRITTEN AND OVERWRITTEN BY WAVES OF OCCUPATION AND SUBSEQUENT LAND REFORM—HAUNT
THE ROOM. THE EXCERPTED AND FRAGMENTED LANGUAGE OF THESE BONDS OF PROPERTY, AMPLIFIED
BY THE MISE-EN-SCENE, INFLECTS THE SPACE WITH AN UNSETTLED ATMOSPHERE, A PERPETUAL TWI-
LIGHT.

MATERIALS LIST:

THERMAL RECEIPT PRINTER; 10-YEAR THERMAL RECEIPT PAPER; WIFI ROUTER; CIRCUIT-BREAKER BOX
WITH OUTLETS; DESK LAMP; BUILDING MANAGEMENT SYSTEM (BMS) LIGHTING CONTROLS; CUSTOM BMS
SOFTWARE WITH AI TEXT ANALYSIS AND SYNTHESIS; LITHUANIAN METRIKA VOLS. 1 (1380-1584) AND
25 (1387-1546); TEXTS OF LITHUANIAN LEGISLATION CONCERNING POST-SOVIET PRIVATIZATION AND
LAND REFORM (1991-1997).

SINGLE CHANNEL VIDEO WITH SOUND (5 MIN), LOOPING.

RUPERT'S LIBRARY (FOUND BOOKS), DUST JACKETS, PACKING MATERIALS (PALLET WRAP, DOCUMENT
POUCHES, AIR BAGS, CARDBOARD).

MOUNTED LASER PRINT (35 X 27 CM), METAL FRAME (FOUND, RUPERT'S LIBRARY).



Photograph of a photograph; excavated cellar of the Lower Castle of the Palace of the Grand Dukes of Lithuania (likely dating from the 1990s).

GLOSSARY

alienated intelligence (AI)

the received, unacknowledged, sedimented heritage of myth, literature, technical regulations, and everyday language. When assigned to a sphere distinct from the world, a realm of representation and not of reality, language re-appears as a haunted, alien intelligence. Philosopher Stanley Cavell sees this as emerging from the way language spans and binds the public and the private. For Cavell, “language is our fate. It means hence that not exactly prediction, but diction, is what puts us in bonds, that with each word we utter we emit stipulations, agreements we do not know and do not want to know we have entered, agreements we were always in, that were an effect before our participation in them. Our relation to our language—to the fact that we are subject to expression and comprehension, victims of meaning—is accordingly a key to our sense of our distance from our lives, of our sense of the alien, of ourselves as alien to ourselves, thus alienated.”

building management system (BMS)

a computer-based control system that monitors and manages the mechanical, electrical, and electromechanical services in a building. Designed to optimize the performance of building systems such as heating, ventilation, and air conditioning (HVAC), lighting, and security, the BMS ensures that each of the systems under its control operate efficiently and effectively. The BMS can also monitor energy usage and provide data for energy management and sustainability reporting. Power dynamics and management can come into play with BMS, as it is used to centrally control and monitor systems, enabling surveillance or control by a single authority.

EXAMPLE

In Stanley Kubrick’s 1968 film “2001: A Space Odyssey,” the fictional character HAL 9000 (Heuristically programmed ALgorithmic computer) is an AI whose duties include

those of a “building management system” for the spacecraft during its mission to Jupiter.

day for night

a set of cinematic techniques that transform a scene filmed in daylight to one that appears to be filmed at night. Employing filters, special lighting, or other visual effects that create an illusion of darkness, the technique was often employed in the era of silent films, with prints being tinted blue to achieve a simulation of “moonlight blue,” mimicking an effect of the retina that shifts perception of low-light scenes towards the cooler end of the spectrum.

EXAMPLE

To achieve a moody and unsettling atmosphere with less sensitive film, 1940s film noir directors often shot day for night.

historiography

the study of written history and the writing of history. This includes a study of the methods, assumptions, and biases that shape the writing and interpreting of history. Historiography is concerned with critical questions such as: who writes history; why are certain events and people included or excluded from historical registers; and how historical narratives are constructed and interpreted.

EXAMPLE

Like building a castle, where you start—where you lay the foundation—determines everything that follows; every action is based on and constrained by past actions; every support is a form of fear.

land reform (Lithuania, post-Soviet)

refers to a series of legislative and administrative measures that were implemented in Lithuania after the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991. The main goal of the reform was to restore

private ownership of land, which had been abolished during the Soviet era. The reform involved the redistribution of state-owned land to private individuals and legal entities, as well as the creation of a new legal framework for land ownership and use. The reform had a significant impact on the social, economic, and political landscape of Lithuania, as it allowed for the emergence of a new class of landowners and entrepreneurs.

large language model (LLM)

refers to a type of artificial intelligence (AI) algorithm trained to find patterns and relationships in “natural” or “ordinary” language (language that has evolved through human use and repetition, without conscious planning or premeditation), and to process and generate new text based on the complex relationships that it models from such language. Trained on massive amounts of text data, LLMs are increasingly employed in translating languages, analyzing sentiments, and producing vast amounts of new linguistic content.

EXAMPLE

Human languages—visual, textual, spoken—are not so much governed by rules and logical certainty, but instead provide meaning through a multitude of complex patterns of use, biases, and contextual referents. To comprehend and speak, then, requires experience, not a rulebook. LLMs are attempts to model, simulate, and deploy experience, derived through the filter (through the ruts and pathways) provided by language itself.

literary unconscious, the

“Eloquent testimony to Freud’s success as a lawgiver in his own right, the unconscious sway of psychoanalysis as an arbiter of modern thought and a staple of therapeutic practice represents the consummate kind of success any mythological system or set of imaginative

texts can have. If it is the highest art to conceal art, to make fiction masquerade as a simulacrum of revealed or natural truth, then Freud succeeded more completely than most, more completely, probably, than any writers save Milton and those earlier lawgivers who wrote the Old Testament” Perry Meisel, Freud, A Collection of Critical Essays (1981)

Lithuanian Metrica or the Metrica of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania or “Lietuvos Metrika”

(from the Latin ‘matricula, or’ “office book,” and Polish ‘metryka,’ or “archive”) is a set of historical documents that encode and structure foundational regimes of land ownership and property in Lithuania. A collection of legal documents from the 14-18th century produced by the Chancellery of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania (GDL), written primarily in Old Ruthenian (followed later by Polish and Latin), the Metrica details records of land transactions from these periods, including the names of landowners, their families, and their ancestors. These records were used to determine land ownership and inheritance rights, as well as to track the movement of people and goods across the territory of the GDL. Held for a period in the 1500s at the Lower Castle in Vilnius, the books were copied, destroyed, stolen, and lost through numerous wars and political occupations over the centuries. Microfilm records of the over 600 books are preserved at the Lithuanian State Historical Archives in Vilnius, and are digitally scanned and accessible to the public.

Palace of the Grand Dukes of Lithuania (Lietuvos Didžiosios Kunigaikštystės valdovų rūmai Vilniaus žemutinėje pilyje)

a reconstructed historical palace in Vilnius, Lithuania, located on the original excavated foundations of the Lower Castle—a palace originally built in the

15th century as the residence of the Grand Duke of Lithuania, and served as a center for administration, storage, and record-keeping for the Chancellery of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania (GDL). The place has been destroyed and rebuilt several times; sporadic archaeological excavations of the site were conducted in 1964 during the Soviet occupation, and continued (underfunded) during the 1990s. In the early 2000s, the palace was fully reconstructed as a museum that showcases its own role in the history and culture of Lithuania.

perpetuity

in legal terms, perpetuity is a bond or an obligation that extends indefinitely, without a specified end date, and lasts for an infinite period of time. The rule against perpetuities limits the duration of certain legal interests, such as trusts, to prevent them from lasting forever, ensuring that property remains transferable between generations and is not tied up indefinitely. Lawyers frequently find ways to circumvent the rule against perpetuities, to allow for more flexibility in estate planning and uphold the testator’s intentions while still adhering to the law.

EXAMPLE

To circumvent the rule against perpetuities, the Walt Disney Company set the duration of a governance agreement to expire 21 years after the death of the last surviving descendant of England’s King Charles III.

possession

sits as the intersection of the concepts of haunting and ownership. In this context, haunting refers to the presence or influence of a person or entity, often involving a sense of lingering attachment or control. Ownership, on the other hand, implies a legal or rightful claim over something, such as property or an object. These concepts combine in the idea of possession,

where an individual or entity exerts control over something, either physically or metaphorically. This can manifest in various ways, from the legal ownership of property to the idea of a person being “possessed” or influenced by a supernatural force. Possession encompasses the complex and multifaceted nature of control, attachment, and influence.

skew

as a verb, skew means “to move obliquely,” describing an action or motion that deviates from a straight or linear path. This can refer to the way an object is positioned or oriented, creating a visual impression of asymmetry or distortion. As a concept in statistics, skewness measures the asymmetry of a probability distribution. A distribution is said to be skewed if it is not symmetric and has a tail on one side that is longer or fatter than the other.