

Grita, a voice controlled interface, and the Little Poetic Interactions

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Escaping from the standard peripherals of input allows us to explore the creation of proprietary hardware. This exploration releases our capacity to imagine new experiences moderated by a computer although independent from the limitations of keyboards, mouses, etc.

The representation of the interfaces into physical objects allows us to include non-computing day-to-day codes into the experience of the poem. Seeing a hanging thread or a knob indicates—directly and routinely—what the expected action by the user is without the need for guidelines or explanations. This has made the electronic poem cleaner, simpler, and more direct, allowing it to be released from the all too typical and necessary introductory spaces in other works.

The inclusion of guidelines for interfaces used in poems creates a distance between us and the poetic experience because it demands an extent of learning that applies only to the piece and, in some cases, evokes interfaces from other not virtual spaces.

Contrastingly, its absence, when the piece achieves to synthesize the interface in a simple element that does not need an explanation further than a single word, a visual suggestion, or the presence of a familiar operating method, allows us to go through a discovery process rather than indoctrination and at the end create a better predisposes us for the composition.

The observation of the poem when it is free from the traditional computing interfaces adding simple hardware creates a closer and new feeling. The poem is read through a simple interaction, similar to that of reading a book or going up the stairs, which places the poetic text in rightful place, more appropriate than the relative passive attitude in the traditional form: screen + mouse.

Simple physical interfaces are well suited for poetic material as their proximity and familiarity allow a direct relationship with the text semantics. The surprise of controlling a text with a voice, knob or string allows an intuitive involvement with the piece.

A modular aesthetic was created for the cubes based on the “shadow of electronics.” By incorporating inner lamps the visual remains generated by the inner electronics is used as a visual key for the proprietary hardware.

The “shadow of electronics” is an aesthetic aiming to highlight the internal hardware, but abstracting it through the use of light and opaque acrylic. The components can still be guessed -- recognized inside the cubes without being accessible directly or visually.

The hardware consists of simple microcontrollers in charge of interpreting the impulses controlled by the analog actuators to later translate it into keystrokes which are efficiently interpreted by the computer actuating the poem sequences programmed in Flash.

Little Poetic Interactions currently contains the following pieces:

Module “Conceiving the Dragon”:

We witness the entire process of poetry writing. We may see each of the poetic “bursts”, from the first to the last one, thanks to an automatic technique of saving in each pause. The interface consists of a screen connected to a dial that the reader may turn in order to move forward or backward during the analysis of the poem.

Module “Poorly Wrapped”:

It reflects upon the language as a construct where the cell is the written letter. The interface is based on a thread linked to a screen. As the reader pulls the thread, the poem unwraps.

Module “Grita”:

It is based on a random reaction to a stimulus by the reader, the poem does not work if the reader does not follow the instruction of the title. If the reader wants to read, he must scream. The phrases appear in no particular order and can only be read as shouting is maintained. The digital poem seeks to steal the

breath of readers to express the strength of its semantic seizing on the power of the human voice turned into a scream.

This time we are going to dig a little deeper in the poem "Screams" and its different aspects.

The reader's voice as the medium to maintain the poem in viewing mode confirms the involvement of the spectator – who's attention is a necessary condition for the text to arise. This concern to identify the participant's attention is central to the piece.

Similarly, the possibility of texture the voice gives as an interactive material over the use of keys, or even touch in general, amplifies the control range for the piece. Raising or lowering the volume of the voice in combination with the use of rhythm or tone, causes the text to move, change verse, or hold for as long as we need to read it. Differently from voice recognition, where it is preferential for the oral matter to be monotonous, articulated, and with no mayor nuances. "Grita" empowers the user to unchain the power of their oral matter, find textures, contrasts, without articulating a word, to expose the power of their orality. The user does not confront the habitual sentiment of negotiating with the technical limits of the algorithm of voice recognition. On the contrary, by not using words, they can explore distinct nuances of their voice liberated from the personal semantic, and instead lend those nuances to the poem's semantic.

Aditionally, the strucutre of the poem is such that there is a forced footer that reads "until" between the title and the verse, which makes the meaning of each verse associated to an expressive lapse. Some fragments:

"Scream

until

my reasons to be content

can no longer remain standing"

"Scream

until

each letter

becomes an orgasm”

“Scream

until

I have no spare fat, nor lack of nerves

to carry me on the back“

The poem contains a database of 19 verses that appear in a random manner. Each of the verses is associated with a poetic image about time and the lengths of its duration. In the same manner, the duration of the verses vary, some are short with 5 words and others long with 11 words. This difference in length lets the reader's experience vary with each interaction. In some cases, the scream only needs to be held for a few seconds; in other cases, to complete the reading one must hold the volume for an extended time.

Graphically, the texts (title, footer, verses) have been mounted over an infinite horizontal line. This line helps increment the sensation of movement, tension, and voice measure. It simulates a sinusoidal wave line, but instead of producing waves, it holds the text in an infinite virtual space and it moves to the intensity of the reader's voice. At the same time the deep red color (close to the color of blood) that is used as a background evokes images of the verses that many times speak of internal corporality.

“Little Poetic Interactions” is an ongoing project and will be adding further modules to the collection.

The exploración in simple interfaces associated to screens gives a wide range of possibilities for diverse installation spaces where each reader can have a profound and personal experience with the text in a simple and significant manner.