Keys Type Mouse

Cody Walker

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By:  Cody Walker

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September 22, 2016

Date
Abstract
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This is a work of interactive poetry. Each piece explores a different affordance of digital text. "Mouse" uses the screen's plane as the ground for its exploration: the reader's cursor reveals, snips and exposes the malleability of digital text. "Keys" invites the reader to perform its inscription by typing: to advance the text, the reader must use the keyboard. "Type" takes this to an experimental extreme: it provides a playground for letterforms to interact and collide. The text is created and altered by each character the reader inserts.
Acknowledgments

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Table of Contents:

keys —— 2
mouse — 6
type —— 14
keys  type  mouse
keys
Jacie remembered the first time she'd used a keyboard. The computer was her father's old desktop, and its keyboard was a maze of giant slabs. The pockets between the keys were traps for her fingers. The letters on the keyboard didn't look at all like the glowing letters on the screen: the green script that appeared with each push - neon green incantations - wordly tokens suspended against the dark. She wanted to learn their magic. Her father had lifted her in his lap; his enormous hands hovered over hers. She called out the alphabet, and he guided her fingers to each letter and pressed down.
"Keep your eyes on the screen" he said. When she had started, she guessed at where the letters might be, and waited for her Dad's fingers to guide her to the correct ones.

Eventually, Jacie started calling out the letters faster - faster than her father could keep up with. She would call out a letter and look expectantly at the screen, waiting for her the familiar press of her father's calloused hands over hers.

She wanted to learn to type by herself, but it was hard to reach the desk without her father's lap for height. She perched on her knees and pushed the keys down with twitching uncertainty. Often, she needed to look down to guide her touch to the right key.
"Keep your eyes on the screen"
Now, her laptop is open before her, waiting for her touch. Her fingers hover above the keyboard unassisted.
The memory of her father's hands haunts her, leading her fingers to the wrong keys. Each keypress is a puncture in her muscle memory, each chain of letters is a ward against her father's ghost.
mouse
Chester made the first incision directly above the left optic nerve.

B-073 didn't flinch.

It remained sedated, limp under the tender pressure of Chester's gloved fingers.
A ginger pull on the edge of the cut separated scalp from skull.

Chester folded the skin back and pinned it in place with a surgical clip.
In Chester's hands, the drill traced an enlarged projection of an oval.

The sinuous whirring of the drill was punctuated by the stuccatoed churning of the drill-end as it came into contact with the skull.
Chester slipped the tweezers into crevice and secured it with a firm squeeze. He removed the skull's aegis.
And there it was: the pale organ. Corralled folds of tissue and the sheen of thin protective membrane illuminated by the overhead lights.

He glanced at the diagram and cut into the dura matter.
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