The Secret Language of Desire

The Secret Language of Desire is an electronic literature app exploring the ways in which interactivity and multimodality are impacting the form and experience of literature within digital environments.

Research background

The research sits in FOR 1902, Film, Television and Digital Media.

Alice Bell argues that digital literature is distinguished through its structural and formal engagement with the digital medium. Anastasia Salter suggests that the iPad represents a site of tension between “the codex and the breaking of the page, between genres of fiction and genres of play”.

While Kate Pullinger’s works demonstrate the interactive, multimodal potentials of digital literature; writers and publishers are experimenting with hybrid novels where multimodal elements augment text-based narrative.

The work explores the question: in what ways can the interactive, multimodal and haptic potentials of digital tablets impact the form and experience of literature within a digital environment?

Research contribution

The work demonstrates that interactive and multimodal features can be integrated with predominantly textual narrative to extend the narrative experience without necessarily sacrificing narrative flow and engagement. It does this through textual foregrounding and relevant interactive augmentation such as the selective use of touch-driven animation and sound, the use of relevant haptic interactions such as scratch-off effects, and specific consideration of user interface and sound design within the digital tablet experience.

Research significance

The work was funded by the Literature Board of the Australia Council for the Arts and internationally exhibited at the peer-reviewed Electronic Literature Organisation’s conference and exhibition in Bergen, Norway, 2015.
SUPPORTING EVIDENCE

*The Secret Language of Desire* is available from the AppStore here [http://tinyurl.com/gthxfdp](http://tinyurl.com/gthxfdp)

A 6 minute screen recording off iPad can be viewed via [https://vimeo.com/176591353](https://vimeo.com/176591353)


An attendee experiencing *The Secret Language of Desire*, and conference attendees at the ELO 2015 exhibition, Bergen University Library, Bergen, Norway, August 2015. Images Megan Heyward

**Catalogue Entry**

IMAGES OF WORK

Figure 1: iPad screen grab from Introduction sequence, The Secret Language of Desire app.

Figure 2: iPad screen grab from Main menu, The Secret Language of Desire app.
There is a hidden language that lives within us, answered, rarely spoken. You can hear it sometimes, amongst the clatter of everyday life – between parties, falling in love, working, and putting down roots. It’s a kind of whisper, and a kind of song, made from night breezes, glances, the taste of mouthfuls, the lick of skin. At times, it becomes so loud that the other noises quieten, and you find yourself listening, and speaking in this hidden tongue. In the secret language of desire.

It was as if she was gathering a collection, the fragments and echoes of desire. They seemed to linger in the subtle air around her, clinging close to her skin, and her movements traced visual seams between them, each curve, each whisper, each bend of limbs. With these she fashioned a secret garment, light as silk, sheer as smoke, and was cloaked within its folds, leaving no trace behind her except for the scent. She felt fierce as an Amazon, naked as wind, her body cloaked in sensation.
Figure 5: iPad screen grab from Chapter 8, *The Secret Language of Desire* app.

Figure 6: iPad screen grab from Chapter 8, *The Secret Language of Desire* app.
They had coffee on Saturday. She rang on Monday. They made a little conversation, weekends, work, but by then, she’d already decided to accelerate.

She told him she’d been thinking about him, a lot. He paused for a moment. In what way? She laughed. Well, it didn’t involve walking hand in hand along a beach. Again, a slight pause. They were both crossing a tiny line. Their voices changed slightly.

She said he had made quite an impression on her. Really? What did she mean? She laughed again, nervously, and he could hear her breathe as she paused. She told him that she’d had to touch herself that night, right after meeting him. Her voice lowered a little. Tell me more. She breathed deeply again and when she spoke it was in a langour, driving home late at night, the car, fingers touching, slipping. As she spoke her body seemed to echo her words, swelling and loosening. Then it was his turn to talk, and he too, had been thinking of her.

He talked about what he wanted to do to her, kiss her lips.

Figure 7: iPad screengrab from Chapter 4, The Secret Language of Desire app.

They spoke like that for two hours, she and the guy she’d met once over coffee. It was her first ever phone sex. They burnt up the phone lines for a few days, till they could meet again in person.

Figure 8: iPad screengrab from Chapter 4, The Secret Language of Desire app.
Figure 9: iPad screen grab from Chapter 16, *The Secret Language of Desire* app.

Figure 10: iPad screen grab from Chapter 9, *The Secret Language of Desire* app.

A 6 minute screen recording off iPad can be viewed via [https://vimeo.com/176591353](https://vimeo.com/176591353)