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### ***A Humument* app by Tom Phillips as a work of literature: between text and embodiment**

Since the launch of the iPad in 2010, the popular imagination has been haunted by many tales of the device's almost magic potentialities, oriented mostly toward promotional goals. A wide range of competitors followed the path, eager to hop on the wagon (with the most potent rival, the cheaper Samsung Galaxy using Android coming to the fore), often imitating the basic features of Apple corporate aesthetics and technological innovations. This – apart from excellent sales results – is a visible sign of iPad's immediate success. In consequence, the discussion accompanying the rise of the tablets has been arranged along the familiar axes mirroring cultural wars between consumers feeling both an obligation to defend the brand of their choice and / or an urge to attack its opponents. More sophisticated critique has been applied to strategies employed by Apple which apparently lead to the creation of a complicated and rich, albeit closed system consisting of hardware (computers, tablets and smartphones), software (operating systems and applications) as well as retail platforms (iTunes and App Store) and a data cloud (me.com transformed in 2011 into iCloud) – all within the reach of any Apple ID holder. Nevertheless, the following years saw a rapid recognition of the significance of mobile apps as cultural agents. They are increasingly employed as tools of social change; one fresh example is Buycott ([www.buycott.com](http://www.buycott.com)), launched in 2013 as an app aimed at facilitating consumer boycotts based on ethical values and at enhancing the spectrum of fair-trade philosophy and practice (O'Connor, 2013). The potential of mobile apps as a means of artistic expression was recognised even earlier, by Jörg Piringer whose works have been available for download from the AppStore at least since 2010 (*abcdefghijklmnopstuvwxyz, Konsonant, Real Beat, Gravity Clock, Art of Noise*). In 2011, Zentrum für Kunst und Medientechnologie in Kassel launched the first edition

of its App Art competition (with awards for Scot Snibbe's and Lucas Girling's *OsciloScoop*, Rainer Kohlberger's *field* and Michael Wong's *School Helper*, <http://en.app-art-award.org/>).

My paper focuses on a unique iPad app. I am particularly interested in the relation between “literariness” and the text’s materialities, which in this case is grounded in the networked nature of ubicomp computing and the tangibility of touchscreen. I would like to examine the usefulness of the notion of “liberature” proposed in 1999 by Polish poet and literary theoretician Zenon Fajfer, and later developed by him in cooperation with Katarzyna Bazarnik. I am also interested in the following questions: What constitutes “literariness” of a touchscreen device application connected to a wider environment? How – if ever - does it differ from its print (or remixed multimodal for that matter) incarnation? Does the concept of text as an event (Simanowski, 2013) rely upon interactive media environment, or is it a question of a wider analytical framework? While attempting to provide an answer, I will [?] draw on the theory of affordances, reaching out to the original concept formulated by James Jerome Gibson throughout the 1950s and 60s in his fundamental take on ecological perception.

### ***A Humument* – between an artbook and a mixed-media object**

In order to delve into the nuances of entanglements inherent in wider media ecologies of the current communications environment, I have picked *A Humument* app by Tom Phillips as an example. Launched in 2010 for iPad, with a version for iPhone released the following year, it has drawn much attention from the critics and journalists alike (King, 2012; Smyth, 2012; Walters, 2010; Service, 2010; Frankel, 2010). The app derivates from Tom Phillips's lifelong project started in 1968 when he purchased a 1892 Victorian novel by William H. Mallock, *The Human Document*. Phillips was directly inspired by William Burroughs's cut-up technique described in an interview published in *Paris Review* in 1965, and decided to initiate a project in a similar vein. Phillips's original idea was to work upon the physical aspect of the book through collage, cut-ups and a set of graphical enhancements, yet it all started with a

simple but quite elaborate operation of covering certain words with black ink, so that the “other” text would come to the surface, creating a “palimpsestically intertextual” (Wagner-Lawlor, 1999), multimodal and mixed-media artefact – in accordance with the opening sentence on the first page of *A Humument*: “I sing a book of the art that was of mind art, though I have to hide to reveal” (Phillips, 2010). This is a variation on the following passage from Mallock's *The Human Document* (where narrator has just found the journal of Marie Bashkirtcheff): “What a pity, I said, that a woman like Marie Bashkirtcheff, with such resolute frankness, and such power of self-observation, should have died before her experiences were better worth observing. She often tells us herself that she has nothing in her life to hide. A woman who can say that has not much to reveal” (Mallock, 1892: 1-2). A comparison of the two excerpts provides a glimpse into the process of “extraction” of the new text out of the primary text.

N. Katherine Hayles, who devoted much attention to the print version of *A Humument* in her *Writing Machines*, underlines the fact that Phillips follows the strategies employed by Mallock himself. A narrator created by the Victorian writer reveals in the introduction to *The Human Document* that the novel tells the story of two deceased lovers (Irma and Grenville), based on the archive of documents they had left (“scrapbook of journals, letters, and memorabilia”, Hayles, 2002: 78), which he had found on the table one day: a consequence of a conversation with a certain Countess Z. The very physical shape of the archive is significant: “It was a scrapbook in reality, not in appearance only; and its bulk was explained by the fact that its leaves were of thick cartridge-paper, and that the manuscript, whose sheets varied in size and appearance, had been pasted on to these, with a liberal allowance of a margin” (Mallock, 1892: 7; cartridge paper is considerably thicker and heavier than any regular one). Hence according to Hayles, Phillips's artistic recreation of the book “seeks to bring into view again [...] suppressed hypertextual profusion” (Hayles, 2002: 78) which has been evoked by the variety of sources constituting the archive (integration of the word and image is employed for the same purpose as the additional “hypertextual effects”, Hayles: 2002: 81). The act of obliteration of the

existing words serves “to silence the rationalizing consciousness of narrator and editor” (Hayles, 2002: 81). Moreover, in the interpretation provided by Hayles, the “rivers” of text running over so many pages throughout the book (and typical for Phillips's other books and graphic works) are seen as a clear reference to both hypertextual paths of reading and the possibilities of multiple treatment of a single page.

However, it is also interesting to see how Phillips himself describes this artwork's production process. (*A Humument* is usually categorized as an artbook.) He insists on algorithmic qualities, bringing to mind the famous set of rules proposed by the *Ouvroir de littérature potentielle*: not limited to the text, but embracing the whole creative process. Phillips's narrative about how he launched the project (available on his webpage and in the information provided with the app) is shaped into a chain of events combining planned acts and serendipitous yet meaningful occurrences. It all started when he decided to work on the first three-penny book he would find in a London thrift store, thus “employing chance” (Phillips, 2012). The story begins with a significant opening: “*A Humument* started life towards noon on November 5th (Guy Fawkes Day) 1966 at a propitious place. Austin's Furniture Repository stood on Peckham Rye where William Blake saw his first angels and which Van Gogh must have passed once or twice on his way to Lewisham” (Phillips, 2012). Mentioning of Blake seems particularly important, provided how his hand-painted poem books, in which he attempted to integrate text, image and space, have contributed to a wider understanding of literary forms, with the very materiality of their physical structure becoming a medium of expression as meaningful as the text itself, thus helping to close the dichotomized gap between form and meaning. All too often this type of work is classified in the all-encompassing, vague and somewhat boundless category of artbook.

The reason behind this act of categorisation is rather obvious: the artists have often tried to broaden the concept while taking on the book as such. Many intriguing examples have been generated by the Fluxus movement, with notable cases of Emmet Williams, Robert Filliou and Daniel Spoerri. Particularly interesting in this regard is

the work of Dieter Roth, an artist loosely connected to the Fluxus but relatively less known than the movement's other members. Starting with a series of concrete poetry edited in cooperation with Daniel Spoerri as – not surprisingly - *material* and published in 1958-59, this Swiss artist treated the book primarily as a medium and has broadly expanded its concept with his intensive artwork. According to Roth, “books should [...] mean a thing layered in groups i.e. community of like-minded things pasted or sewed together standing about or about standing i.e. sandwiched or lying around (not sandwiched)” (Roth, 1972: no. 1-10; Walter, 2003: 48). Hence in his early works he concentrated on concrete poems intended to form a visually integral whole (freeing them, for example, from the constraint of page numbers). Later, in the 1950s and 60s, he started to integrate other items in his books, making them increasingly object-like and sculptural. He eventually radicalised his strategy and presented some ironically treated books, shredding and transforming them into “literary sausages” (*Literaturwurst*).

Meanwhile, Roth aimed at liberating the form and enhancing the meaning of the text to encompass in the object the process leading to its final production. For example, *book* (1958-1959) is composed of loose pages and contains no binding at all, while his slitbooks (*festerbilder*) consist of vertical, horizontal and diagonal slits cut out of cardboard. The readers (or should they be called users in this context?) are invited to actively co-create such a book and produce its new versions through a simple act of reordering the loosely fit pages. Therefore, his series of spiral books made in 1960 and 1961 (*bok 2 a*, *bok 2 b*, *bok 4 a*, *bok 5*), according to Bernadette Walters, “explore motion and its visual representation” (Walter, 2003: 49). Roth's most famous book, *Copley Book*, on which he worked between 1962 and 1965, goes even further in expanding the concept of the book as an object. The idea was to create a publication using a number of experimental printing techniques, while also taking advantage of possible mistakes and faults. For example, when one of Roth's handwritten notes intended to appear in the book got lost in the process, the typesetter was asked to include in the publication his letter of apology and a detailed description of the missing note. The artist himself declared: “i think i will give up worrying about

accurateness of execution i want to give the executioner a chance of his own” (Roth, 1962 in: Walter, 2003: 80). The book was published twice, in 1965 and 1974, and the original plan called for including in it the correspondence exchanged by the project’s major figures: Dieter Roth himself, a typesetter working on the book, and Richard Hamilton who coordinated the project in London. Other books by Roth (starting with *Kinderbuch* published in the 1950s ) were often made by hand and released in limited editions with distinctively different individual copies: Roth’s endeavours were as flexible as Phillips's *A Humument*.

### **From liberature to negotiation of affordances, or “bookishness” of the book**

According to Katarzyna Bazarnik and Zenon Fajfer, who suggested a notion of “liberature” to conceptualise integrity of the text and its physical form beyond the well-known binary of form and meaning, William Blake's strategy has much wider consequences: “Imbued with a vision of the spiritual and bodily integrity of the world, Blake expressed this unity in a new kind of art – in a book in which the word and the image interpenetrate each other to form an inextricable whole” (Bazarnik, Fajfer, 2010: 87). Taking this observation further, I would argue that liberature on a very basic level refers generally to literary forms that integrate the artist's worldview (often to be discovered in the process of production of the work), the creative process and the meaning of literary work itself, where “literariness” embraces the material shape of the book/artwork. In case of electronic literature, it would also incorporate the programming procedures, the code and the technological process in which production of the artwork is grounded. It is however necessary to ponder over this concept in more detail. In 1999 Polish poet Zenon Fajfer introduced the concept for the first time in an article published in a local literary magazine “Dekada Literacka”. It sounded familiar yet provided a new topic for discussion (Fajfer, 1999). The familiarity of the term is grounded in its obvious Latin etymology – yet with a twist. The word actually refers to two distinctive forms: the noun *liber*, *libri* which means “a book, books”, and the adjective (in masculine form) *liber* which denotes “free”

(*libra, liber, liberum*). Fajfer developed his idea by highlighting the creative opportunities offered by acts of undermining the dichotomy of form and content that is well grounded in literary tradition, which in his view concerned the very materiality of the text and the book's physical shape. As an artist, he deconstructed the definition of the book ("a material object in the form of bound sheets of paper forming a volume, containing a text in words recorded in graphic signs, which serves to convey various kinds of information", Fajfer, 2010: 25); however, this does not mean relegating the textual aspect to the backstage. According to Fajfer, what distinguishes artbooks from liberature is the fact that in the latter, "it is the literary aspect which is dominant" (Fajfer, 2010: 140). This is probably why Zenon Fajfer calls for a "total literature" that would rely upon the following understanding of the literary work: "The physical and spiritual aspects of the literary work, that is, the book and the text printed in it, should complement each other to create a harmonious effect" (Fajfer, 2001).

However, these aspects of the concept of liberature that are aimed at distinguishing it from the more general and broad category of artbooks (or, as Fajfer proposes, *book art*) are probably least convincing. On the one hand, the notion of liberature serves to conceptualise the textual items that have always belonged to the domain of literature yet their multimodality or the peculiarities of their material and physical shape have been overlooked and neglected (in her *Brief History of Liberature*, Katarzyna Bazarnik traces the history of such literary objects over centuries, from the ancient Egyptian hieroglyphs, the Jewish Torah, cabbalist writings, the Bible, and masterpieces of ancient Greek and Roman visual poetry, to Dante's *Divine Comedy*, Sterne's *Tristram Shandy*, Blake's and Mallarme's poems, a rich tradition of modernist avant-garde starting with James Joyce, as well as the Futurists, Dadaists, Constructivists etc.); on the other, there exists a set of distinctive projects which are very difficult to classify (for example, series of poetry books written and / or published by Zenon Fajfer and Katarzyna Bazarnik published regularly by Korporacja Ha!Art publishing house). Also, as both authors carefully and persistently remind, liberature stretches out those interpretations grounded in

Mitchell's "pictorial turn" that are limited to analysing the graphical shape of the text and its non-material verbal meaning. What seems crucial to the very concept of liberature is the tangibility and sensuality of the reading / using experience; therefore the physicality of touch (and of auditory imagination) are as important for the production of meaning as the cognitive process (often understood as a disembodied process); in fact, the former is understood as inherently included in the latter, in accordance with the tenets of situated cognition. In this sense, employing the notion of liberature might help in designing the theory of textuality which would reject not only the dichotomy of form/meaning, but also a set of two other important oppositions: mind/body and individual/environment. Nonetheless, I argue that in order to fully utilize the concept of liberature, one needs to augment it with the theory of affordances.

Our starting point would be, in reverse order, the latter Donald Norman's reformulation of the original theory as proposed by the pioneer of ecological perception, James Jerome Gibson. According to Donald Norman, the term affordance "refers to the perceived and actual properties of the thing, primarily those fundamental properties that determine just how the thing could possibly be used" (Norman, 1988: 9). In this sense, what writers / artists and their audience would deal with would be the "bookishness" of the book – the way its material shape and the sensual clues (including visual and tangible) it instigates invite preferred ways of using it. Affordance, however, stimulates a rather obvious manner of behaviour, and it would be interesting in its own right to analyse to what extent it is a matter of cultural conventions. Therefore, the liberary work and other instances of liberature seem to negotiate a wide range of the book's affordances, and by "negotiating" one can also mean attempts at making those affordances visible, as normally we are not quite aware of their existence. As Norman puts it: "When simple things need pictures, labels, or instructions, the design has failed" (Norman, 1988: 9), to which one might add that if design has failed, the perception has been refreshed. That being said, one could define the various modes of liberature (from artbooks through book art to liberature), the miscellaneous ways and the varied extent of negotiating affordances.

Yet there is still a deeper level of understanding of literary materialities when we reach out to the original theory of affordances outlined by James Jerome Gibson (in cooperation with his wife Elisabeth Gibson) in *The Ecological Approach to Visual Perception*. Inspired by Gestalt psychology (particularly by the work of Kurt Lewin and Kurt Koffke), Gibson invented the word “affordance“ in an attempt to capture a very special relationship between the living organism and its environment. His definition reflected the radical non-binary aspect of his theory of ecological psychology, where neither the organism nor the environment are considered separate phenomena: “The affordances of the environment is what it offers the animal, what it provides or furnishes, either for good or for ill. [...] I mean by it something that refers both to the environment and to the animal in a way that no existing term does. It implies the complementarity of the environment and the animal” (Gibson, 1986: 127). Further, the researcher becomes explicit about his holistic approach: “An affordance cuts across the dichotomy of subjective-objective and helps us to understand its inadequacy. It is equally a fact of the environment and a fact of behaviour. It is both physical and psychical, yet neither. An affordance points both ways, to the environment and to the observer.” It is thus understandable why in what will follow I am going to consider the manifold materialities of *A Humument* – some of them including the contemporary environment of ubicomp computing.

### **Manifold materialities of *A Humument***

In order to reveal the full potential of this project, I look at *A Humument* as a continuum spanning its different incarnations: the most obvious are the treated print version and the iPad app, but one should not forget about the other offspring derivative of the major artwork, like the opera. There will be also a number of minor graphic works (for example, opera scores, individual pages functioning as autonomous works of art, material shared directly from the app across social media sites etc.). In fact, what one can see is a very subtle and richly networked artwork that is a mixed-media object which also embraces different media. Therefore, it mobilizes

different materialities, and hence I would argue that recognizing *A Humument* as a work of literature calls for: first, considering it an artwork in a state of flux and at the same time an artwork that epitomizes the flow of creative process; second, tackling the ways it negotiates the differing sets of affordances. In case of *A Humument*, the integrity of initial concept, the artist's viewpoint and the material object produced requires also addressing the role of chance and pattern within an algorithmically organised process. Phillips himself has coined a significant phrase, "invited accident" (Smyth, 2012). It well captures the tension between the planned consecutive moves and the contingency of spontaneously emerging moments, which is clearly visible in some of the operations applied to Mallock's original book. For example, page 99 has been transformed through many acts of folding out the remaining part in half. The same page in the 1987 edition was processed with the help of a game-like operation of tossing the dice, to determine which words should be obliterated (Smyth, 2012). Also, the most significant element of the text, its title (*A Humument*) appeared when Phillips accidentally folded the original novel's title page. Many pages of the print edition have different versions (for example, page 85 exists in 20 variants), and the whole book has been printed several times, each edition being a modification of the preceding one (published for the first time in 1970 by Tetrad Press as *The Humument Book: A Treated Victorian Novel*, it has had five editions from Thames & Hudson, in 1980, 1986, 1998, 2004 and 2012).

Phillips provides us with a story that consists of a visible autothematic thread, one of its most convincing examples to be found on page 11: "ok / the changes are / the method **ok / it is a / humument** / ok it is a rule that / a rule / rules / the fiction". Some of the critics even suggest that *A Humument* can be read also as a kind of autobiography. Apparently, the artist has noticed in Mallock's novel certain elements related to his own life: page 50 consists of Tom Phillips's self-portrait (actually, it is cut in half as if folded or collaged with another picture of him playing cricket), accompanied by rivers of text that read: "At last – welcome! / my own self!" and "play / the shadow of / fifty years. / only imagine a century". At the bottom of the page one can see Roman numerals XXV – V – LXXXVII, which stand for

25.05.(19)87 and, according to Adam Smyth, represent the date of Phillips's 50<sup>th</sup> birthday, when he hired The Oval cricket ground in London to host a celebration on this occasion (Smyth, 2012). Such parallels possess certain game-like quality based on solving a series of riddles (what in particular comes to mind are adventure games or Alternate Reality Games endowed with a strong narrative) or incarnate the very logics of oracles and fortunetelling where usually one thing leads to another. Yet the most explicit expression of Phillips's credo comes with the information note accompanying iPad app, which reads in the first sentence, "A Humument, an oracle of love and life: a diversion of chance and change" (Phillips, 2010).

Therefore the strategy of creating rivers of text running across the page could also be seen as an attempt at setting in motion the textual machine that produces considerable tensions between the determined and the aleatory. Page 7 reveals two paths of text with phrases "scribe the / once or twice story" and "scribe / the story reveals / a sister / story", which in the context of the other fragments "a veil thrown over / a / veil, / as / changes made / the book continue." and "see / now / the / arts / connect" might be interpreted as a literary form in a state of constant flux, stimulated by impulses coming from a steady set of rules on one hand, and by the contingency of unplanned and spontaneously emerging occurrences on the other. Such interpretation can be justified by a passus on page 6: "only one half of the toge story" (Bill Toge is the protagonist of *A Humument* created from the words "together", "altogether" in Mallock's novel), accompanied by a photo of a man that seems to be folded so that it indeed reveals only half of the figure. Again the above-mentioned tension between the planned and the emergent random is also visible throughout the process, as it is narrated by the artist himself: when at some point Phillips needed another copy of this obscure, hard to find Victorian novel, he found it in another branch of exactly the same thrift store where he had purchased the first copy; it had already been annotated by its previous owner. The artist eventually purchased 15 copies of the book and to some extent he traced back the history of each of those items. Apparently, what Phillips sees in every copy of the book is a unique physical object possessing a distinctive materiality marked (and often augmented) by the traces left by its previous

owners, not just another standard incarnation of the same text.

In the light of Phillips's ongoing fascination with *I Ching*, the opposite poles of the creative process, chance and determination, might be interpreted as yang and yin elements – the basic forces ruling the cosmos according to this Chinese book of oracles. The active yang in this case would signify the strong, momentary impulse of aleatory which usually requires reaction and stirs the process of decision making; the passive, steady and stabilizing yin would signify the procedures determined by the existing order of things. Tom Phillips has revealed in an interview that from the very beginning he had *I Ching* oracle in mind (Walter, 2010). In fact, he used *The Human Document* instead of *I Ching* when he was developing a commentary on his artworks for an exhibition in Johannesburg in 1974 (and he has used it ever since, calling Mallock's novel his "personal *I Ching*", a fact that has significant consequences for the iPad app). Also, a page in *A Humument* reads: „reader / changes / book, the book / / of / circumstances". Interestingly, following Espen Aarseth's argument one can be reminded that *I Ching* – being basically a set of lexias commenting upon 64 hexagrams that represent different combinations of yang and yin forces acting in the world – can be seen as an example of a proto-hypertext (Aarseth, 1997; Alexander, 2011), along with other early literary forms and religious books, as well as a number of "aids to textual management" (Landow, Delany, 1995: 4) that can be also described as paratext (Genette, 1997). However, on many levels one can also note an intriguing relation of *I Ching* to the materiality of the "outside" world: the suggested consulting methods resort to a set of special coins or a set of 49 yarrow stalks. In both cases it is the manipulation of physical things that sets in motion a very specific form of textual analysis – in fact, it belongs to the process of deciphering, as it is said that yarrow possesses a special ability of capturing communication between the earth where it is rooted and the cosmic forces, as the plant grows into the air (Wilhelm, 1967).

### ***A Humument* and affordances of ubicomp: locating the networked text**

Apparently, in many respects *A Humument* app continues and extends the

integrity of the artist's worldview, grounding the project, the creative process and the textual object itself. According to Phillips, the idea of oracle immediately resurfaced as soon as he got acquainted with iPad, which inspired him to start working on the application (Walter, 2010). The first version of the application premiered on November 15, 2010. Produced in cooperation with Alice Wood (an illustrator of children's books), John Bowring (technical expertise) and Jonathan Hills (consultancy), it consisted of .tiff files from the 2004 Thames & Hudson edition, upgraded with over 30 newly modified pages (Wood, 2010). Again, one can note how the two concepts interweave, with clearly visible tension between the algorithmically designed process and employed chance confronted with the particular materialities of the project. "Suddenly this machine [the iPad], which features the pages at exactly the same size, comes around, and you can fiddle about, and it can have its own 'roulette wheel' which gives you chance pages. So these oracle ideas popped back into my mind with force" (Walter, 2010). Thereby one of the basic distinctive features of *A Humument* app—the function of Oracle—came into existence. One can choose it from the menu at the bottom of the screen where it is signified by a sizeable „O". It combines two randomly picked pages, and the text in the rivers displayed on the screen provides for the oracle reading for the date the user chooses from the "roulette wheel" mentioned by Phillips (as demonstrated before, it is this particular feature, typical for iPad calendar, which directly inspired Oracle). In another review, he quite clearly says: "The idea of an oracular use of *A Humument* was early on at the back of my mind, thinking of the *I Ching* and the *Sors Virgiliana*, but only properly surfaced when it became electronically possible for the user to invoke chance himself and be doubly at its mercy with both a fixed and aleatoric page" (King, 2012).

There is yet another essential function of this iPad app that enhances and reconfigures the original idea applied to print versions: "share it" button which is typical for the modern networked media environment. Needless to say, it is currently ubiquitous throughout diverse media platforms and services, epitomizing the push toward hyperconnectivity permeating the emerging society of networked publics

(Varnelis, 2008), where broad definitions of "sociology of associations" include also non-human actors. Therefore, while tackling the networked logics of contemporary media, one should address yet another aspect: the changing paradigm of computing technologies manifesting in ubicomp or postdesktop computing, based on myriads of connected data-processing devices on micro- and macroscale enabled by the broad possibilities of cloud computing, including the locative media and internet of things (adding another element to the three waves of cybernetics described by N. Katherine Hayles in *How We Became Posthuman*). According to Ulrich Ekman, what we deal with is "the third epoch of computing (after the mainframe and the personal computer, one preoccupied with the question whether and how computing is, should be, or can be moving on from existing primarily as distinctly recognizable units so as to be multipliciously and pervasively integrated into our living and working environments [...])" (Ekman, 2013: 22). The networking technologies – glued together with the many forms of wireless communication (WiFi, WiMax, satellite communications, Bluetooth and RFID) which, according to Adrian Mackenzie, can be seen "as prepositions ('at,' 'in,' 'with,' 'by', 'between,' 'near,' etc.) in the grammar of contemporary media" (Mackenzie, 2008) – invite a new philosophy of media which Mark B. N. Hansen has called "atmospheric, collective, and microtemporal" (Hansen, 2013). The connective force of wireless communication-based computing is its vital element: "Because of their pre-positional power to connect subjects and actions, wireless networks act conjunctively, they conjoin circumstances, events, persons and things" (Mackenzie, 2008). The full potential of the iPad and a wide range of similar devices (which, by the way, illustrate Mark Weiser's original concept of computing by "inch") relies very strongly on the logics of such new grammar of contemporary media, conjoined with wireless communication and enabled by the massive cloud data storage services; additionally, it becomes much more tangible than the PC or even laptop from the previous generation of computing technology.

In accordance with the now somewhat trivial and mundane philosophy and practice of creating a highly "shareable" content, the consecutive pages of *A Humument* can be posted on Facebook, Twitter, Tumblr or e-mailed directly from the

application. However, in the case of *A Humument* it is more than just a typical mobile application feature. A careful investigation of Phillips's oeuvre reveals many traces of *A Humument* in his works. This is the case of *IRMA*, an opera he composed in 1969. Its score was published as a separate work in Henri Chopin's sound poetry magazine *OU* in 1970 and has been displayed as an autonomous artwork since. The first performance was staged that year in Bourdeaux, France, while in the UK the opera premiered at the University of Newcastle two years later. The history of performances and of the recording version also includes some major changes: the 1978 version was produced by Phillips's student, Brian Eno, who one year earlier had asked Gavin Bryars to write a score for *IRMA*. The Bryars-Eno version was released on Obscure Records LP. Probably the 1988 version is best known, recorded by AMM for Matchless Recording, with vocal performances from Elise Lorraine (Irma) and Phil Minton (Grenville), with accompanying ensemble consisting of Keith Rowe, Eddie Prevost and John Tilbury (for whom Phillips also composed a work for piano). Tom Phillips joined the vocalists on several occasions, both on stage and in the recording studio. Again we are confronted with the artist's narrative of chance and pattern when he recalls: "*IRMA* was composed in 1969, completed in fact on the day a man first walked on the moon" (Phillips's homepage). Yet what seems to be much more important is the fact that seen in the light of his entire oeuvre, *A Humument* seems to be a networked and a networking text, embracing W.H. Mallock's novel, various incarnations of the treated print versions, the spin-off opera, the numerous individual pages available as autonomous artefacts, and the stream of shareable content posted through social media. The iPad app seems to be the crowning of a series of events held under the name *A Humument*, yet owing to the tangibility of the touchscreen and its connection to the broad environment of networked media and cloud computing, and cloud computing, it may be seen as an embodiment of the entire project.

One could rightly perceive *A Humument* a text as event, or rather a whole set of

events, one leading to another or at least prefiguring what is going to happen and giving the reader / user a chance to get a glimpse of the literary flux which constitutes text in this case.

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