



Thanks for having me, Introduce self

From the framing, things which stood out:

- A constraining of possibility by conditions of planetary capital
- Possibility of rupture – affecting into a word of which we are part – bringing about new possibilities.

These questions very closely mirror some of those which I'm grappling with, and have been for a number of years.

My practice is one which is centred on text, sometimes in an expanded sense, but within that there's a big range between what could be considered more conventionally academic writing through to much more formally experimental, exploratory writing as practice. Really these modes of writing are trying to do similar things – that is to bring about new possibilities, in thought, or perhaps in some way, in being and action, with an emphasis on theoretical argumentation, or in something more creatively experimental. Quite a lot of the writing I do in fact blurs this divide, but nevertheless, something of a distinction, as a tendency at least, stands.

Adam Walker, 'Technospheric Speculations: Materiality, Textuality and Impropropriety', in Danielle Child (ed.), *The Routledge Companion to Art and Capitalism* (New York: Routledge, 2026).

Adam Walker, *Textual Actants (Infrastructure)* (London: Ma Bibliothèque, 2026).

I have two forthcoming pieces of writing coming out next year, which sit at quite different points along this spectrum, but also, I think, in combination, circle around and prod at these questions we're considering here today.

The first of these texts is a chapter, forthcoming next year in the Routledge companion to art and capitalism, called **Technospheric Speculations: Materiality, Textuality and Impropropriety**. I'm not going to read this chapter in its entirety, but I want to share a kind of architecture of this fluid thing I term 'technosphere' which I develop through it, which is really my theorization of these constraining conditions of planetary capital.

I'm not putting this schema forward as claimed singularly accurate model of objective reality, but rather as a speculative tool to think with, and when we move into discussion we can consider whether and in what ways it may or may not be helpful.

The schema articulates how the technosphere reproduces as a stasis, but in the chapter I also try to suggest some means of disrupting that – of bringing about rupture and new possibilities. Critical within this is a relationship between different modes of textuality, and textuality and materiality, and I particularly look to a notion of the 'improper' text.

That then leads into the writing-as-practice – the would-be-disruptive arttext which I'll share some of at the end from my forthcoming book *Textual Actants (Infrastructures)*. This book circles around some of these same questions and ideas, Part of what that is trying to do in this book is work through relations of materiality and textuality, and—through impropropriety—open possibility and disruption (I'm not sure how

successfully). But I'll put that into a bit more context when I come to read some of it.

Okay, so let's get into it then.

'TECHNOSPHERE'



Technosphere Magazine [webstairresearch project initiated by Haus der Kulturen der Welt] (2015–2019)

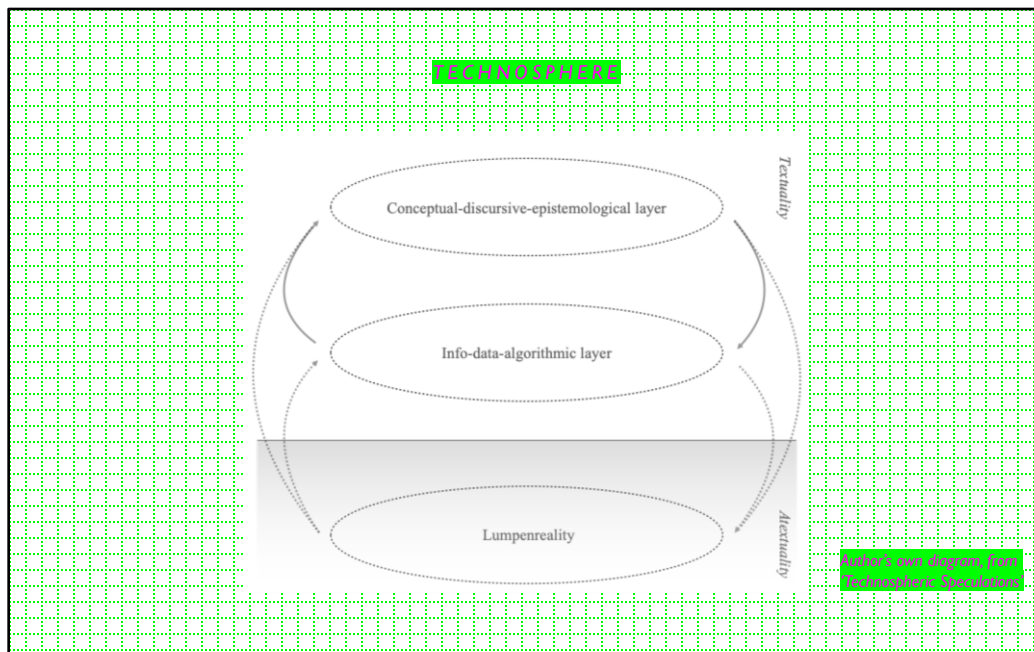
This thing I'm terming 'technosphere', a word I initially encountered through the Haus Der Kulturen der Welt (HKW) *Technosphere Magazine* project (2015-2019), is an accretion of human activities, histories, relations, circulations, technologies, systems of production and ascribing of value, societal structures, and more. It is a structure which frequently diminishes humans, but is constituted through ourselves and our collective practices, structures and technologies.

In fact, the technosphere is not even this yet. Here at the outset of this presentation, it is an undefined term sitting as a placeholder: a 'thinking tool' which might take us somewhere other than the well worn paths around more established terminology.

The technosphere is a fluidly shifting entity which pushes against any limit or conception placed upon it. Moreover, we always perceive it partially, from within: as a would-be totality, there is no external position from which to comprehend the technosphere. This slipperiness of concept poses challenges for a meaningful analysis, yet grappling and probing through this—attempting to understand *what* we are theorising at the same time as attempting to do so—nevertheless holds critical value, especially when, as will be addressed, forms of thought and enquiry within the technosphere are increasingly inflected *by* the technosphere

I use this term 'technosphere' as a stand-in for the fluidly indefinable, un-fully knowable, entangled global systems of power, capital, technology, economy and socio-cultural relations within which we inextricably exist.

Speculatively, acknowledging that any attempt to diagrammatize the technosphere is flawed and partial, I propose considering it as a textual entity as shown here.



In its 'upmost' strata it is formed by (and forms) the histories, narratives, ideologies, epistemologies, mythologies and more which we record, re-read and re-tell, and through which we live. All of these modes, functions and processes of text (which in turn inform more procedural, instrumental texts such as legal and policy documents) constitute what we might call an 'upper' conceptual-discursive-epistemological layer of the technosphere.

However, this 'upper' layer exists in continuous, ever-accelerating interplay with another which sits 'beneath' it. The 'lower' info-data-algorithmic layer is constituted by the exponentially increasing reams of information and data which are measured, recorded and stored; and all the formulae, code, algorithms and 'artificial intelligences' comprising our accelerating abilities to make use of these. Though taking different forms, as with the upper layer, these constituent parts are textual too. This second layer reproduces and exacerbates the conditions of the former, but also loops around to feed back into and mould the ways we think, each premising the other.

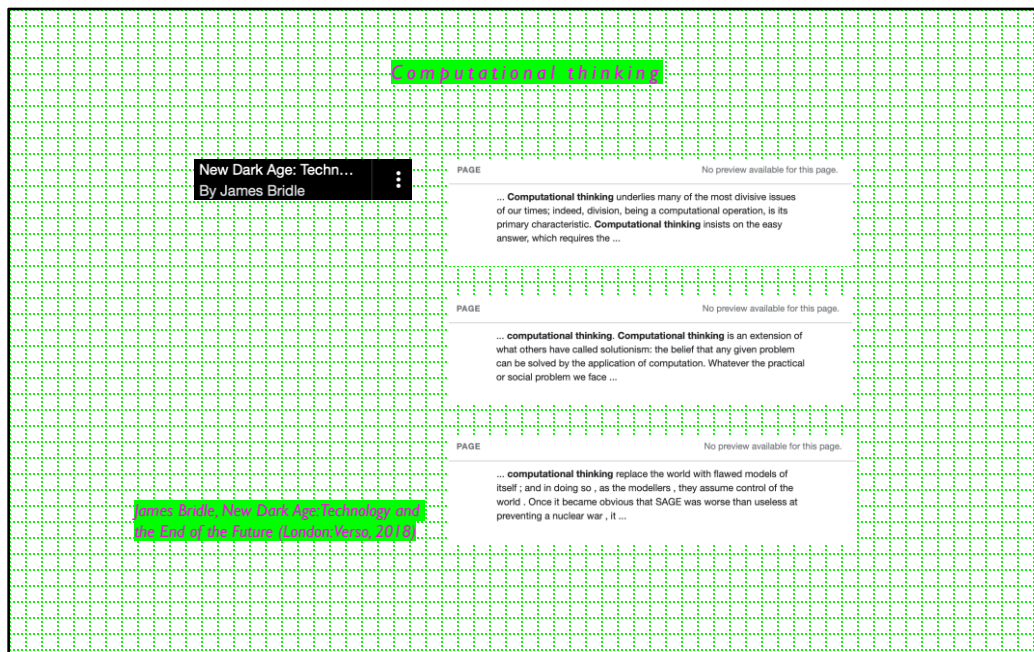
The conceptual-discursive-epistemological layer and the info-data-algorithmic layer, in looping reproduction of one another, jointly comprise the upper, acknowledged, textual portion of the technosphere. Advocates for, and beneficiaries of, the technosphere—whether Silicon Valley ideologists or tech-enamoured policy advisors—too often re-circulate the illusion of this portion alone as the technosphere in its entirety: a dematerialised future trajectory shedding cumbersome, messy materiality. This projected image of the technosphere is one where location and sited-ness cease to matter, with subject, action and object floating in a de-spatialised network of instantaneous connection. However, this is to consider the technosphere only as a surface: in the terms in which it projects itself and in the interests of the dominant hegemonies operating through it. It is to deny the complexities and histories of context. For power and capital, this is a useful fiction.

However, minimal excavation beneath the two textual layers reveals a third, obfuscated one. This is a residual, bodily, material layer: a 'lumpenreality' which does not fit within the textual logics of the technosphere's projected image. There are viscerally violent, material, bodily realities just beneath the surface of the technosphere. It is the space of exhausting low-paid and dangerous construction work behind the CGI renderings of new desert cities, of debt-bondage and absent labour rights at sea, of the monotony and isolation of vital but un- or under-paid domestic labour within a context of atomised individualism, and of poorly regulated and dangerous subterranean mineral mining which enables our 'free-floating immateriality'. In its persistent atextuality this layer is rendered unviable and irrelevant; unreadable through the textual codes of the layers above it. And yet, paradoxically, it is the substrate upon which the visible layers of the technosphere above are hugely reliant.

We all have a physical, bodily relation to domestic, reproductive and material care labour: for many in the undertaking of it; for all, at various points in our lives, as the recipients of it. This is not removed in the technosphere; it continues to be exploited—simultaneously ignored while being relied upon. As Nancy Fraser (Leonard and Fraser, 2016) observes, alongside limitless natural resources, a second false premise of capitalism is a limitless supply of unpaid care. This work is devalorised, un- or under-paid, and its practitioners often go un- or under-protected, as highlighted during the outbreak of the Covid-19 pandemic. It is disproportionately undertaken by those who are subject to compound intersecting inequalities, upholding and reproducing established proprietorial power relations through the technosphere.

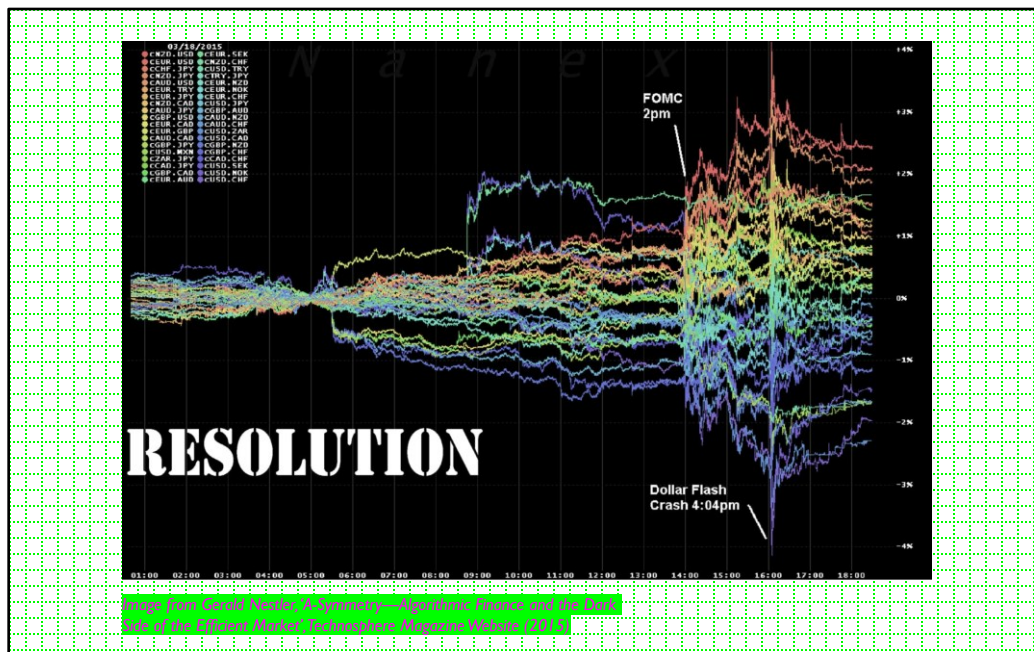
The lumpenreality incorporates resolutely physically situated material infrastructure too, which despite projections of untethered immateriality—typified in terms such as the 'cloud'—persists.

This is the organic, bodily, material, atextual space of the lumpenreality. While obfuscated, it is a persistent, integral part of the technosphere. The lumpenreality exists in a paradoxical relationship with the textual layers above it: it is simultaneously both irrelevant and inconsequential in its refusal to render cleanly into textuality, while also deeply, disruptively troubling in the periodic moments of confrontation it instigates: when those slickly ephemeral lives lived predominantly in the textual layers cannot avoid their own bodily materiality.



James Bridle (2018, p. 4) uses the term ‘computational thinking’ to describe the bounded, restricted parameters of thought which are viable within the technosphere. The technosphere is a contingent present, aleatorily arrived at through an effective infinitude of events and micro-events. Paradoxically, itself the result of a very particular history, it now self-projects as an ahistorical inevitability and forecloses thought and action which might go beyond it. In a self-fulfilling (and self-reproducing) loop, various logics and structures—be they market economics, a (neo)liberal individualism, faith in technological progress, and so on—can go unquestioned precisely because to do would be to push toward (and perhaps reveal this existence of) the technosphere’s margins.

Through tautological logics of the inevitability of the way things are and the unviability of questioning them (via recursion to such justifications as ‘common sense’, ‘necessary’, ‘natural’ and ‘come to terms with’), the technosphere acquires a rigid, ossified quality. In contrast to both the slick immateriality of its projected techno-utopian image, and the ceaseless productive activity needed to maintain one’s status as subject within it (lest one slip into the lumpenreality), this face of the technosphere looms up in unyielding immobility. When soft human flesh collides with it, it is the latter which bruises and breaks.



Possibility and uncertainty inherent in 'future' are foreclosed and a set of existent power relations and hierarchies are reproduced in place. Ironically, the chance contingency by which this present state has been arrived at is, in self-justification, presented back as a teleological path of progress. The future, in any kind of open sense, is increasingly annihilated. Trading in appositely named 'futures' on derivatives markets exemplifies this. Escalating computational power enables the incorporation and synthesis of ever more knowledge into probability models such that the plethora of possible futures can be priced ever-more accurately into the present, a phenomenon which Gerald Nestler (2016) terms the 'derivative condition'. The unknown future is thus recuperated and priced into the present, its potential to disrupt extinguished. Technological advancements serve to cut off the shoots of possibility ever closer to the present; variation not only in months or weeks but in minutes, seconds, and less is already priced in.



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Author's own screenshot. (Evidence of this software has been thoroughly removed from the internet)

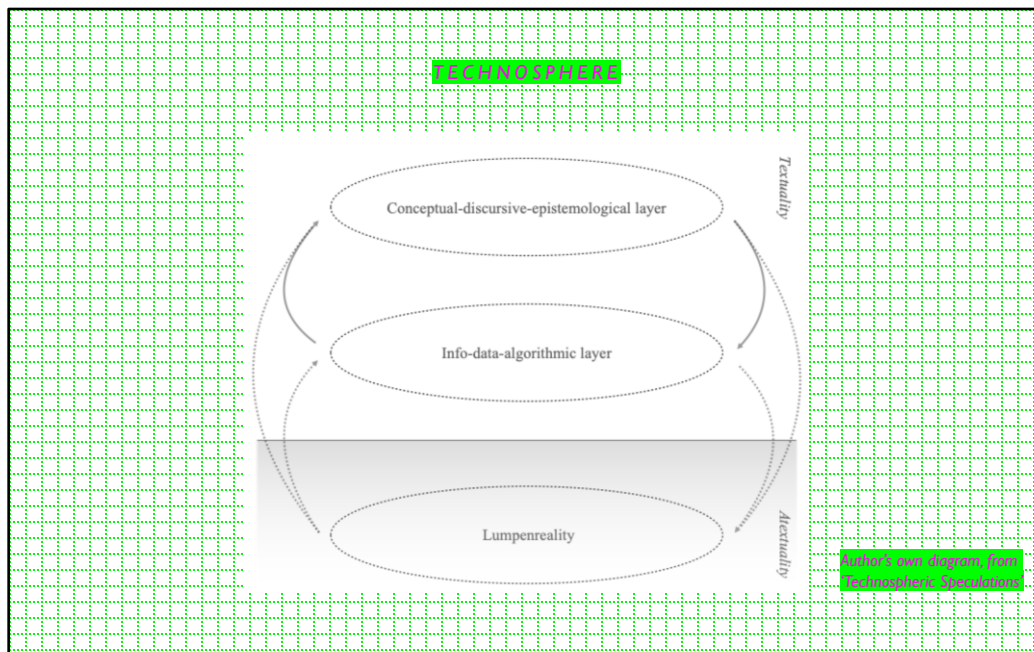
Note this screen shot – disappeared from internet, but found old screenshot.

Three and a half decades after its publication, Deleuze's (1992) *Postscript on the Societies of Control* still contains significant foresight in articulating what has materialised as our present condition of technospheric subjecthood. A disciplinary model of boundaries and enclosure, of fixed moulds, of the individual on the one hand and the amalgamated mass or population on the other, has given way to one of perpetual real-time modulation calibrated and particular to each of us. Where the demarcated space of the special economic zone or tax haven became a chief technology for bypassing labour rights and other restrictions on capital in the disciplinary society (Easterling, 2016), the emergence of the gig-economy and opaquely abstracted citizenships and tax statuses now enable control at the granularity-scale of the singular subject, micro-targeted and in real-time. We are each increasingly uniquely encoded, inescapable in data trails and biometrics, as we pass each other by on the very same streets.

Alongside this segmentation between us, each of us is also individually disaggregated. Those *human* aspects of us are cast into the lumpenreality, while the *individual* is sliced and diced into the 'dividual' (Deleuze, 1992) so as to be best—that is to say most profitably, productively and normatively—dispersed across, through, and as the technosphere's upper, textual layers. As Deleuze writes, the society of control is premised on code-text (superseding preceding law): a generative text environment of continuous movement and modulation in which each of us must continuously monitor and re-perform ourselves, lest those segments of us unto which the technosphere does still ascribe some value are left behind and we slip wholly into the lumpenreality.

Such perpetual performance of ourselves is central for Paulo Virno (2004), who articulates a context of continually required virtuosic performance. Our 'linguistic-relational capability' underpins this, manifesting

in opportunism, flexibility, creativity and so forth: vital qualities of both the sought-after 'knowledge economy' and also, as Pascal Gielen (2009) observes, of contemporary artisthood. As we strive, in such reperformance, to make ourselves technospherically viable and valuable (and indebtable), our linguistic-relational capability becomes the core resource which, via dividuating segmentation, the technosphere extracts and exploits. Simultaneously, exponentially increasing surveillance and computation render our linguistic-relational performances into textual data trails and archives.



This linguistic-relational capability which the technosphere desires and devours (as labour when performed and as resource by default) is severed from the human who is thrown into the lumpenreality (where, for example, we need and offer material care). Ironically though, as Virno (2004) observes, our linguistic relational capability is *at the same time* the defining characteristic of our human-ness. From that very first utterance, and its marking as text, stem such phenomena as society, history, culture and knowledge.

Too often, a critique of the technosphere (or its semi-synonyms) proceeds along a line which contests the textual, locating in 'the human' a counter-locus in one or more of the body, affect, care or even spirituality. Acknowledging the human as a textual being though, such an approach falls apart and merely entails giving up the dominant textual realms to technospheric hegemony. Instead, if the ossified, unequal, proprietorially reproduced logics of the technosphere are to be contested, a *textually human* mode of approach is needed: one which resists and subverts technospheric dividualation, but holds onto, and works through, a different form of textuality.

(and when I'm talking about the human this is not an essentialist invocation of some metaphysical notion of 'The Human'. 'Human-ness' is contingent and imminent, a porous set of qualities coalescing, and potentially shifting, in practice. Human-ness remains messily bodily, amidst the lumpenreality. Human-ness diverges from the individual in acknowledging our entangled interconnectedness; and, while rendered subject at various points, the human can slip out of subjection in sustaining a capacity for agency and affect.)

Amid technospheric subjection though, there is some small cause for hope.



From Mary Kelly, *Post-Partum Document* (1973-77)

From Mierle Laderman Ukeles, *Maintenance Art Works* (1969-80)

Textualities in interplay, constitute and generate the technosphere, but they are also a terrain in which we are at home. As humans, both singularly and collectively, we span a textual-material pivot, which, if we wish to contest the violently unequal extractive and abstracting processes of the technosphere, it is crucial to acknowledge. Artists such as Mary Kelly and Mierle Laderman Ukeles contested the obfuscation of the lumpenreality in specific contexts, but in the production and dissemination of artworks, did so through acts of translation back into textuality. The lumpenreality becomes disruptively potent, *in the act of translation via our pivot across the two, from material to textual*. The rendering visible—readable—brings the potency of the lumpenreality into the conceptual-discursive-epistemological layer of the technosphere where it might have further affective potential. Simultaneously though, the ongoing, violent obfuscation of the lumpenreality means that in order to significantly and sustainably interrupt the dominant processes and logics of the technosphere, it is *required* to translate counter actions back into the textual realms.



Moreover, it is necessary to hold onto a counter-hegemonic agency in this translation; not to cede the textual-atextual threshold to the technosphere. As Jacques Derrida (2000) explores, under conditions of proprietorial power imbalance (as proliferate in the technosphere), the threshold is a site of conditionality and the constant threat of ejection: so long as the host maintains their undisrupted ‘hospitable’ power over the threshold any step across it remains subject to denial.

In our contemporary context of perpetual dividuated modulation (Deleuze, 1992) multiple thresholds of translation are critical. A holding together of the textuality-materiality of the human, alongside a revealing and attempted prising apart of the translation points within the technosphere’s totalising interlocking of power and infrastructure is crucial if the ossified stasis of the present is to be disrupted. Might the lumpenreality be drawn through an axis of human textuality-materiality, to disruptively disseminate across the technosphere’s *own* infrastructures (for example as unexpected forms of digital image, information and data)? And might such dissemination foster human-to-human interconnection, making misuse of the technosphere’s own technologies to enable a pro-human post-individualism which, importantly, is not bound by the constraints of proximity or similarity? The textual-material human, in social linguistic-relational capability, is collective and potentially co-equal, in contrast to the segmented and dividuated technospheric subject. Their human-to-human relationship is built not on a transferrable code but on the textual sharing and entangling of embodied and affective experience and interrelation. This communicable contingency, operating outside the code-able and commodifiable, is a characteristic that can hold such interrelations apart from subsumption into the technosphere. In co-vulnerability and co-affect, and—crucially—a holding onto the textual-material interrelation, there is a glimpse of a de-individuated pro-human network operating through, but not of, the technosphere.

The textuality of the technosphere's visible, dominant layers, in continuous reproduction of one another, extends a condition of fixity, of stasis. However, in attempting to hold onto the textual-material pivot there are a quite different set of ideas of the text which we might conversely lean toward. These, in a glimpse of hopefulness, offer some potentials for disturbance and disruption. For Roland Barthes (1977), in striking contrast to technospheric text, the text is a site of fluidity, play, motion and exploration. In place of the abstraction of the technosphere, this text is situated, contingent, emplaced and contextually entangled, and comes into pluralities of meaning in encounter with site and audience. Barthes contrasts text with 'work' which is resolved, fixed, discrete and often easily commodified. The text instead holds an unfixedness, a back-and-forth interconnection out to the wider textual realm with which it is in dialogue, and the potential to shift into new forms with each re-reading or re-writing encounter. The text spills out in dialogue and citation; it becomes a node in a shifting, modulating network, camouflaging easily amidst the technosphere's own networked interconnectivity. Yet it plays, it changes, it misdirects: it does not follow the cold logic of technospheric code-text. Its non-form might just enable the production of critical counter positions, rupturing the dominant logics.

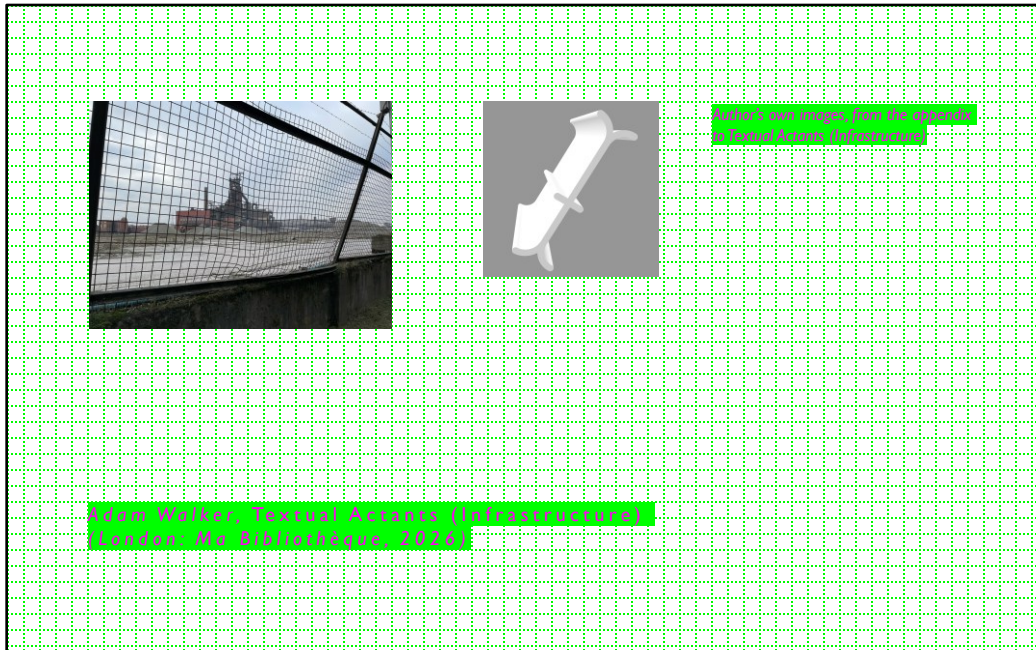
Tracing the possibility of a counter-text further, we might consider it in relation to the notion of the 'proper' text (Campbell, 2011). The proper text is that which is as it should be, the text which does not disturb. But Timothy Campbell also invokes another sense of the word—proper as property—in the proper text. The proper text is that which can be owned in at least one of the various ways that might entail within the technosphere: perhaps as intellectual property, or as authorship-ownership (when the text becomes rigid as capital, instead of offering interplay and motion). Or it might align—as, say, law or policy—with the delimiting, bounded logics of the state wherein 'proper' citizenship becomes valuable property, while the 'improper' citizen is *rendered* property.

There's also a third sense, in the proper text as the text which holds certain properties as an entity – has a consistency, a graspability, a stability.

In the 'improper text' there is an echo of Barthes' (2010, p. 118) notion of the 'unreadable' text which 'would contest the mercantile constraint of what is written'. However, in impropriety and particularly this relation to property and ownership, the improper text foregrounds its inextricable relationship to materiality to a greater extent than the unreadable text. Proprietary relations are encoded into the technosphere: they are ideologically perpetuated through its conceptual-discursive-epistemological layer and reciprocally support its reproduction of stasis.

In its textuality, the improper text mirrors the dominant form of the technosphere and might pass within it: it is inscribed, disseminable, reproducible, and supposedly immaterial. But it can also be plural, entangled and contingent, and in its impropriety it can undermine the technosphere's key material underpinnings. As Campbell (2011, p. 6) writes, it 'awards a power to the collective capable of persuading men and women that they more properly belong to a collective'. That the improper text can textually traverse the technosphere's own networks, like a virus, multiplies its potential to disrupt. In *Kafka: Toward a Minor Literature* Deleuze and Guattari (1986) argue for the disruptive potential of writing subversively *from within* a language. In Franz Kafka's context, within the Austro-Hungarian Empire, to write in German—*improperly*—held greater subversive potential than Czech or Yiddish could ever achieve. Thus, rather than reverting to a suppressed atextual position, the improper text offers a possibility of disrupting the technospheric stasis from within. It can function as the textual side of the textual-material human pivot.

Recognising that the technosphere is textual-material rather than immaterial, albeit in a configuration in which text is dominant, brings it into interplay with our—*human*—textuality-materiality. As textual-material beings navigating a textual-material entity, as opposed to the impregnability of an 'immaterial' one, the technosphere becomes something unto which we might hold affect. It becomes, via the disruptive improper text, possible to articulate and disseminate manifestations of the other form of speculation which Marina Vishmidt articulates: an open, unrestricted imagining of an infinite plurality of possible futures, a space of unknownness and reclaimed possibility.



So I thought I would pause there, and shift register to share a piece of writing as practice. I suppose it is writing as process, trying to get toward the improper text would would disrupt. How close, or how far, toward it it gets, I'm not sure yet.

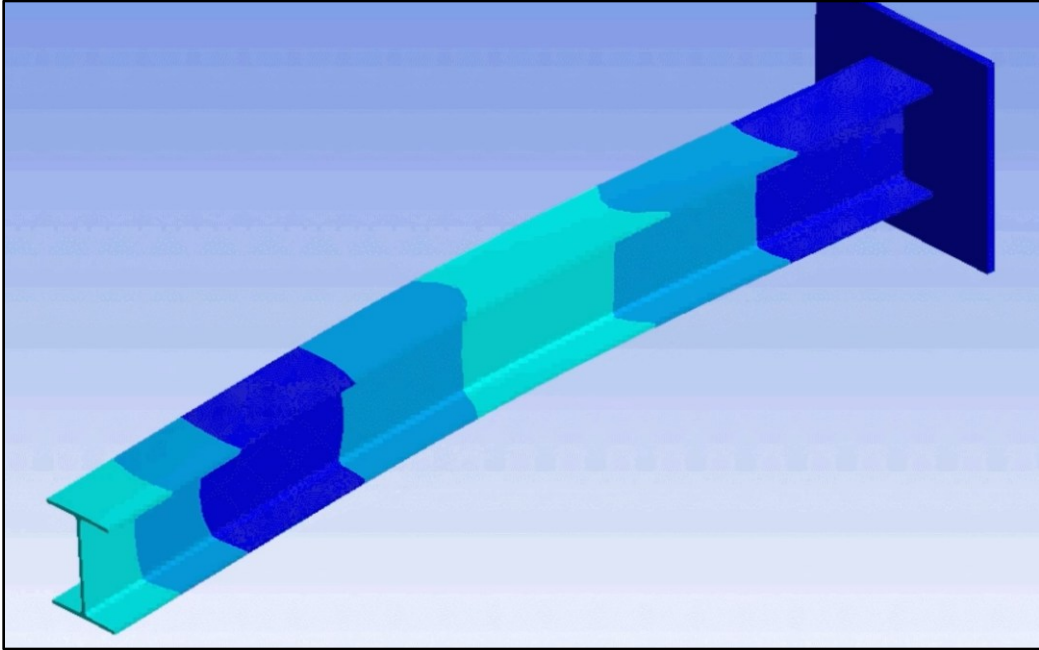
It's a piece of writing which leans toward a different set of ideas of the text... - of fluidity, play, motion and exploration.

And it draws through some of the ideas I've just discussed, but attempts to to hold onto some agency at the textual material threshold in so doing....

The book is called *Textual Actants (Infrastructures)*. It will also be coming out next year, with the small art writing press Ma Bibliothèque. And to give an over all sense of it, this is the blurb: *Textual Actants* is a reflexive exploration of the things which hold things together, be they lengths of steel, programming protocols, recognised authors, or narratives of self. It pivots from the steel I-beam, via a pilgrimage to the former steelworks in Wallonia where these were first produced, to the on-screen 'I-beam' cursor by which we navigate digital text.

Across six interweaving texts, and via the supposed blankness of deserts and the techno-utopian imaginaries of Silicon Valley, *Textual Actants* attends to the slippery shifting relations of textualities and materialities, and where we as bodies and subjects (and authors and readers) sit within these.

This is from the final text of the six, called Proper Names



Adam Walker was made from earth, got proprietorial, and tried to blame Eve.

Adam Walker is a renowned flautist who was appointed principal flute in the London Symphony Orchestra aged twenty-one.

Adam Walker is exploring the world: one faceplant, underestimated project or mad challenge at a time.

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The corpse of the author is dragged out once more from the belly of the whale, startled out of a cryogenic lie-in.

Off-stage, empty stomach.  
If words could speak.

*For authorial intent.*

When Roland Barthes wrote his eulogy for the author, did they know where they were going?[74] Did they leave an existential note, scratched into the control knob that would escalate their own annihilation?

Their metaphysical remains were scattered, to be surgically restitched with threads of history to meet particular needs. Or brought back home, draped in a flag, from another desert invasion.

One of their mausolea sits in the desert. I watch a YouTube video about it. The camera glides along never-ending corridors of black boxes, stacked into cubes, themselves arranged into larger blocks. They enfilade

like ever-receding library shelves, ironically. Blinking constellations from one side, rainbows of cable from the other. As the camera pulls back, these stacks, caged in, are dramatically revealed to be a mere a fragment of an ever-expanding fractal, extending symmetrically out across the desert.

It is called The Citadel, and is suitably fortified. Large I-beams hold up a protective roof, and a concrete wall encircles its perimeter. Ex-military security agents patrol at all times; the video describes them as police. Repeatedly, the term ‘campus’ is used, but these security agents are the only people we see.

Each desert morning begins with a dewy film. Sufficient to entice but not suffice, it burns off in seconds, evaporating away meaning.

Authorial soup in a suspension of property.

And I’m going to jump ahead to the end of the text here

Moving through the text along pathways barred to bodies.  
Seeking out wormholes for inexpressible Is, refuting our singular cellular segmentation.  
By skin and by spreadsheet.

We’re all, it seems, increasingly exhausted.

Author-readers intersect. The binary ones and zeroes flicker, and we must envisage at speeds vastly beyond perception, but still I seek an entangling of understanding.

A vital perpetual deferring of impossibility.

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Adam Walker is committed to detail and has a passion for the job.

Adam Walker is Newcastle City Council’s cabinet member for adult social care, health and prevention.

Adam Walker was a former human who came from Golmar Earth when the Empire of the Combine Race was invaded during the Seven Hours War.

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Reading an essay by Elizabeth Povinelli, I am reminded of my visit back to Brussels, en route to Charleroi, and Marchienne-au-Pont. Povinelli employs the same digestive, bodily metaphor that I have at times been drawn to, writing of how a European imperialist conception of self, conceived in distinction from the parody of an other, is further formed in the violent extractive and destructive consumption of worlds it encounters.[85] Povinelli writes of the Congo being in the shiny streets of Brussels, spiritually haunting its thoroughfares. I can be more specific: the Congo flows along the grand Avenue de Tervuren, conveying wealth to wealth, power to power, out to the grand beaux arts and modernist villas.

Tributaries and distributaries fractal outward, rivulets running through city streets and down along railway lines to hulking steel works, flowing in monstrous python-like tubes. Or pumped into deserts: data to irrigate. The streams become capillaries. As we stand, imperceptibly small worms with pointed noses, which have flourished and become endemic in the unusually warm waters, pierce their way through the rubber soles of our shoes, hydraulically pushed from behind. They do *us* no harm. By ventricles and by atria, we aid the flow.

After some circulation, diving down the other limb, the worms burrow back underground and the streams, web-like, begin to intersect. A great subterranean mesh conjoins; waters from the Congo, Amazon, Mekong,

Yangtze, Mississippi and countless others intermingle. The waters run together, but hold particular hues according to their mineral content. Sweat, blood, oil, iron ore, and rare earths.

In a dinghy composed of words, I attempt to navigate. An infinitesimal speck amid the flow. Of the extent to which the dinghy proceeds through my captainship, or is simply carried by the flow, I am uncertain. Nevertheless, perhaps inevitably, I find myself inside a cadaverous larger version of myself, through which the waters pass. Another I, authorially coherent, held together by some bounding skin of consistency; porosity denied. From where else could I speak? I cannot help but wonder how far this goes; is *this* I, this text body I have navigated myself into, in which my voice reverberates, really so solid?

The politics apparent at this level hold me back from infinite deferral: there are bigger, more urgent things than 'I'.

Povinelli's text discusses the appeal, from the position of the centre, of the frontier.[86] Like the related image of the horizon, the frontier invokes those liberally invoked notions of progress and expansion. But whereas the horizon speaks to a supra-human inevitability, of nature unfolding, the frontier invokes something more human. Human on human, or human on 'void'. The world turns and that which was over the horizon comes into view. Frontiers, conversely, might be pushed back.

Backspace.  
Command Z.

The frontier, also, unlike the immaterial precision of the linear horizon, is a zone. It is an active zone of contestation, rolling out across continents, fluidly configuring itself as it is pushed forth across prairies and deserts. Complexly messy, the frontier is the space in which the text is most tested. The Savannah software, and subsequently imposed property rights which precede and follow westward across the continent, snaking with railways, play out in bullets and forced migration. The visceral violence of the text. As Carl Schmitt writes, the edge spaces are where power holds most flexibility, and the state of exception might be invoked; both brought into being, and its form determined.[87] Unpredictably, the beating blinking cursor in the line of text becomes a blade. The text continues in its wake.

The frontier, though, is no longer something solely at the distant edge. Amid the technological textual flow, we move across and are restrained by frontiers at all times. The semi-metaphor (for some frontiers, for some subjects, are very material), constructs the dividual, who navigates the societies of control.[88] The limits of possibility play out in textual trails affixed onto each of us. Data-zombies stopped at borders, denied credit, refused employment, permanent probation. Gene segments spliced into insurance costs.

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The author shimmers mirage-like, hovering above the desert floor. Their skin has taken on a different appearance, a localised layer of swirling vapour embalming them. I walk toward the figure and perspective contorts. Where I thought we would meet, they remain vastly far and vastly large. Through the now-silhouetted gaseous skin, I can make out a scaffold, holding them up. A skeleton of I-beams, sunk in concrete. Forged in long-closed steelworks in now deindustrialised towns. The frontier of the author: I reach a hand out, extend two fingers. My own skin has somehow acquired the same vaporised form. Touching, skin passing into skin. The skin-which-is-not-me thickens and coagulates around my fingers internally pressing them out, rejecting the invading, foreign object. My fingers smoulder and sting. I try again, essayer.

Authorship writes and is written by the frontier. A coherent whole, discrete, independent of context. That which contradicts, the attributed text which disrupts the accepted logic, is cast into the pyre.

Delete.
Command X.

We rush headlong into the automaton-cadavers of ourselves and write ourselves in being, exactly as we're meant to. (Those of us allowed to.)

Frontiers, conversely, might be undermined.

Backspace.
Command Z.

~ ~ ~

Jacques Derrida writes of the step across a threshold always simultaneously being a 'not', as reflected in the dual meaning of the French term *pas*.^[89] The threshold is the threshold to property. In the context of authorship, this is three-fold. Property as ownership, property as a state of being, and (extending the grammar more tenuously) property as a mode of being proper.

Property as ownership is the form which has been written out across the world, riding roughshod over other conceptions of relation or categorisation. Authorship is bound up, via attribution, IP and royalties, in a world of ownership, whatever the initiators of Xanadu might have hoped. Authorship has value; commodified and leveraged, as well as power. Those who would damage this step back, involuntarily. Commerce still believes in the author. The threat of violence upholds the decrees of state.

Infinitely replicable, iterative code; the property of being beholden to property proceeds at the speed of imagination. The proper text, aligning with all of the presumed qualities of the text, both command and content, is that which fits. It proceeds in and as a discrete notion of authorship.

I look – piratically, naively, with enduring hope – to the improper text.^[90] The text which subscribes to neither property, propriety nor stability. The text which blurs across forms and linearities as it seeks to navigate its own authorship.

[larger break]

The perceived blankness of the desert seems to invite an unimpeded writing of the authorial self.

I walk to the edge of town, beyond which is only the vast emptiness. The building I arrive at, having followed signs to a 'museum', is clearly someone's house. A large dog barks inhospitably and I am about to head elsewhere when the resident-owner-collector-curator opens the door. In a room of display cabinets, the personal details he shares begin to exceed the believable, and his monologue soon moves into escalating antisemitic conspiracy theory. I experience a violent internal crumpling. I am acutely aware of our isolation, and the dog.

~ ~ ~

Meet me for coffee, the person whom I'd been put in touch with suggested, or come to the gig. Their car broke down and they never made it.

The gig took place in a kind of outdoor bar, climatically viable and occasionally flooding the surrounding several miles with sound. Another night, mid-week without the tourists, it played host to the most melancholic karaoke I've ever heard. Fans had come from Austin and Santa Fe, excited to see this first gig in years, preceding a tour of much larger venues. He had previously lived here, in the desert: a suitably inconspicuous void-space to practice his craft; all post-structuralist theory and visceral electronica, achieving some success. This was his first time back having suddenly left to 'storm the capitol' on January 6. Whether he wanted to 'make America great again', or write his own narrative, Montaigne style, or both (or perhaps these things are not discrete), I do not know.

The empty dessert holds its persistent allure, an imaginary void into which we project our interior selves.

~ ~ ~

Certain capillaries link up under the desert and flow into the Rio Grande. For millennia, before becoming a line of division, the river was a locus of connection; bodily relief in the abstract heat. Its water is sucked out by life, leaving a shallow trickle at points, belying the textual membrane of impenetrability built upon it. People cross every day, as they always have done.

Extracted, the river is not a physical horizon, but the place-holder justification for a frontier zone. I wade across, and later, driving back, pass through a check-point. Approaching heavily armed border guards, the audiobook I have playing comes to a section advocating the abolition of borders. Thankfully I have finally become familiar with the controls, and find the pause button.

/ pause while they check the coherence of my author-subject credentials: three-fold viability as property, propriety, stability. Drones and satellites monitor the frontier for the improper.

~ ~ ~

Underneath the house in the attic of which I write, the shifting South London desert sands have not yet thrown the terraces into sideways stacks, nor sunk them into mine workings. Three-floors high, a man atop his I-beam pole catches my eye through the window. Drones and flies buzz around us indistinguishably.

~ ~ ~

Who gets to write, and what can we read? Actual lives on the desert floor, looking for water, streams by which to navigate, and survive. On closer inspection, the map-sky above contains globular polyps; clustered into sections of protective bubble wrap. Each is filled with some kind of gas which is lighter than air. This is apparent because there is a tension to the map: polyp points lifted upmost, while the connecting sections sag (despite some of the drones' attempts to hold them level).

Approaching closer still, the polyps take on a certain shape: inertia, in coherence and consistency. Polyps within polyps, skeletal structures; cursory I-beams internally prop them in place. They are not foreign to the map, but an inflating into the space between its layers.

At night, we come out of our holes, firing arrows at the sky. Most arc and drop in beautiful inconsequence. Some pierce, barbed, into their proper authorial targets; a chorus of deflationary hissing. Other times, we leave a text up: the suffocating weight of the sagging sky would cause violent damage, often not unto those who shoot. On rare occasions, we strike the sky with an arrow unto which we have affixed a trailing tube. Sweating with exertion, we pump helium, prising apart the layers.

Textual bodies, we ascend the tubes.



Open out into questions. Big question is the nature of the disruptive artext, and how to write it....? (itself not to be defined... but some instances of it / ways to find it....)