

Reference Materials for Pills Cluster: **STORIES**

FICTION: Fictionalize - fiction is not the opposite of real, fiction creates reality.

A fiction is a deliberately fabricated account of something. It can also be a literary work based on imagination rather than on fact, like a novel or short story. It comes from the Latin *fictio*, *fictionem*, (“fashioning, feigning”), from *ingere* (“to form, mold, shape, devise, feign” and originally also originally “to knead, form out of clay,”). There is a very physical tactile quality to the act of shaping, fabricating, and inventing things with human imagination. According to philosopher Simon O’Sullivan, fiction is nothing but the name we give to an alternative logic that has the capacity to produce alternative worlds. Fiction is the creation of a gap-space (of storytelling yes, but also of boredom) where creativity can be kickstarted. O’Sullivan makes two important points: first, that fiction is not opposed to reality, but productive of it. It has the power to produce what is not there yet. By naming it, in the first instance. Why? Because reality is always already a construction of narratives, exactly like the conventional definition of fiction. The second point is that fiction has always to do with futurity, it always addresses something that is not here, something yet to come. This is why it is often speculative. For instance, writer Margaret Atwood defines speculative fiction as literature that deals with possibilities in a society which have not yet been enacted but are latent. In this sense we can say that fiction (science fiction, speculative fiction etc) is not about the future per se, rather it is a machine that by distorting, stretching, and obliquely modifying the present, invites new ways of thinking of what is possible. This is also why it is so popular with designers – see design fiction.

READINGS

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MYTHOPOESIS: Mythologize – create a collectively shared system of beliefs.

Mythopoesis literally concerns the making of myth. Mythopoesis is the use of fiction as a method to build worlds, and create artificial myths in a range of media including literature, science-fiction and film. The practice of myth-making is ancient as humankind, as myths traverse the history of humanity, myths are the collectively shared stories that bring (and keep) people together. Contemporary examples of mythopoesis are the universes created by writers such as Tolkien, the Harry Potter saga, but also Pokémon and the British TV dystopian series Black Mirror. Mythopoesis, like fiction, has a futurity aspect to it: it can be seen as a practice that uses imagination to transform it. It is the making of narratives that can go on reshaping the world, like a transformative traction on reality that may express a specific relation between philosophy and fiction. This power of myths to enact reality, to bring worlds, to call forth, is what O’Sullivan articulates in his mythopoetic reading of Deleuze’s notion of a “people-yet-to-come”, people (humans and nonhuman) and subjectivity for the different worlds in the making.

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PREDICTION: Predict - use data from the past to extract future patterns.

What we call prediction is the deduction of a probable future based on past events. It is the logical and linear projection based on what has happened before. Therefore, if we follow Deleuze’s argument concerning the virtual and the actual, it cannot give rise to anything new, as by new we intend genuine invention, direction without destination, movement without prediction. Put differently, prediction concerns the imaginable future, but only insofar as it is based on a direct extrapolation from the past. It cannot anticipate the new. Prediction is thus

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a feature of deterministic cosmologies, it pertains to a linear universe. While in everyday life we clearly need a minimum of prediction to operate and to account for the span of outcomes of our present actions, an understanding remains that the future is open, unknown and, therefore, unpredictable. The tension here is between the future as an open horizon (and the degree of uncertainty that necessarily comes with it) and the fact that it also tends to be, so to speak, 'pre-determined' as the necessary product of what came earlier.

Prediction is fundamental to the temporal activities of thinking. In our current technocratic regime it is prediction (rather than probability) that pertains to the automatic operation of the new generation of artificial intelligence machines, involving forward-looking evaluation of data, recursive operations and the elaboration of predictive models with the purpose of commercial profit or surveillance. Given a suitable model that can predict individual behavior, a company or government can exploit that model to manipulate the behaviour of large groups of individuals. Historically the prediction of human behaviour has been the goal of governance and social sciences search for methods of intervention and control. The sort of disciplinary practices analysed by Foucault can be described as a tool to systematically yield, thus predict, population behaviour. Not only is prediction and control integrally linked. They are both rooted in technological thinking. Together with pre-emption and prevention, prediction pertains to governance dreams of controlling the future by ensuring the patterned repetition of sanitized pasts. Anchored to the need to reproduce the known and the self-same, any orientation based on prediction is fundamentally reactive rather than active, inherently conservative rather than creative, linearly derivative rather than innovative. To avoid this impasse imagined futures must shift beyond prediction and embrace the unpredictable.

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SIMULATION: Simulate – a parallel reality awaits.

The philosopher of simulation remains Jean Baudrillard whose 1983 *Simulations* has found its way even in the Wachowskis's movie *The Matrix*. The French philosopher uses simulation to indicate the cultural modes of representation that "simulate" reality as in television, computer cyberspace, and virtual reality. He distinguishes three different orders of simulacra: first, the pre-modern or Renaissance paradigm in which the simulacrum is the counterfeit of the real and images are still recognized as an illusion (imitation); then, the industrial paradigm (from the industrial revolution onwards), with its relentless reproduction and proliferation of copies through mass production and redundancy (duplication) and through which the distinction between image and reproduction begins to break down; to the post-modern era, from the 80s onwards when we have entered what Baudrillard called the third era of the simulacrum, where the representation precedes and determines the real. Signs become unhinged from their meaning and fluctuate in an inter-exchangeable way. There is no longer a distinction between reality and representation, there is only the simulacrum. Everything is simulation. It can be argued that one of the most acute examples of simulation is found in the military sphere (Mackay 2015) where technological simulation is an integral part of training operations, allowing for war itself to be turned into a media spectacle. Simulation evokes deception and decoy (again in military camouflaging) through a surface resemblance so that something appears to be what is not (see also the trompe l'oeil style in art). Crucially, simulation is present in the history of computing where simulation concerns experiments performed on a model that purports to reveal how the real system in the real-world works. Here we come full circle with Baudrillard definition: the computer model comes to signify a set of abstract operational principles that far from representing an existing reality has the only purpose to determine it.

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