Reference Materials for Pills Cluster: **VISIONS**

ACTIVISM: *Make it happen by all means necessary.*

Activism is literally taking action to instigate social change; this can take place in a myriad of ways and in a variety of forms. As a practice of, or orientation toward, taking action, activism often implies the context of a social or political movement. The key concern here is 'how to change the world' through social, political, economic or environmental change at individual, collective or social movements level. It is a broad term. Expressions of activism take a range of forms, e.g. online, through a plurality of social media platforms, internet channels, mailing lists and various open-and closed-access distributions. Activism spans a range of practices and orientations, from the professional sector (activism industry) dominated by not-for-profit, charitable and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) working across the political, social, environmental, institutional and economic agendas, to semi-illegal, disobedient, insurrectionist movements. What all forms of activism have in common is that they gather around specific issues – for instance some with an anthropocentric focus (e.g. AIDS, pro-life anti-abortionists, anti-war, fathers' rights, feminism, anti-poverty) others with a more biocentric focus (e.g. animal rights, environmentalists, anti-nuclear power). Although activism emphasizes collective action, an individual and his or her actions may be considered "activist" depending on their relationship to larger struggles (e.g. Occupy movement, Extinction Rebellion).

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DYSTOPIA: *Enter a place so dreadful that it exists only in a gloomy future.*

Dystopia should always be considered in relation to utopia - the imagined perfect society and its opposite - indeed Margaret Atwood even made up a word 'ustopia' by combining them because for her each contains a latent version of the other. Both belong to the speculative spectrum: from utopia to dystopia and vice versa. They hold an ambiguous relation to each other: consider how the Panopticon was for Bentham an ideal (utopian) solution to social problems, and a dystopian apparatus of control for Foucault. If we take the utopian ('good place') and dystopian ('bad place') as the two sides of the same coin, their power to produce imaginative futures function as a way to remind us, or warn us, of the possibilities and dangers embedded in societal changes. This is why we can think in terms of 'critical utopia' (a positive utopia that is aware of its own limitations) and 'critical dystopia' (a negative utopia that is aware of the utopian within). In short, critique is necessary to both modes of imagining futures insofar as they are both attempting to trigger society responses or reactions by mapping the challenges or opportunities that the present may face. In science fiction, critical dystopias are often deployed to address current technological changes, and their impact on human lives. While the 20th century is signposted by classic dystopian fiction - Forster's The Machine Stops (1909), Zamyatin's We (1924), Huxley's Brave New World (1932), Orwell's 1984 (1949) – maybe the 21st century is when dystopia morphs into the now, with dystopia no longer a cautionary tale about the future but a something that is here already – see for instance a recent academic conference (Birkbeck University, London, May 2017) titled Dystopia Now and the fact that Post Apocalyptic Fiction now populates our Current Affairs section (written on a blackboard outside a New York bookstore in 2016). Dystopian cultural artefacts (literature, film, television, video games etc) concern the future only superficially. In truth they are concerned with the now. In this sense we can see dystopia as a way to trigger the collective imaginary, tackle social issues especially around issues emerging from techno-scientific progress. Way more than a future-looking literary genre, dystopia is a powerful (deforming) lens to observe our present. Dystopia is already here, right now, only it is taking place somewhere else. Climate change induced catastrophes are already here not in a distant future, and so are planetary pandemics. One person's future is another person's dystopia.

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Reference Materials for Pills Cluster: **VISIONS**

HETEROTOPIA: *Enter a place that exists here and now, only over there rather than here.*

Heterotopia, or more often heterotopias, is a concept elaborated by French philosopher Michel Foucault to describe places whose function is to suspend, neutralize or invert the contexts they belong to (social, cultural, political etc.). Foucault defined heterotopias in a lecture he gave to a group of architects in 1986 entitled "Of Other Spaces" - which is translation of the term heterotopias (from the Greek hetero = other, and topos= places). It is useful to read hetero-topias alongside u-topias (nowhere spaces) and also dys-topias (bad spaces). Heterotopias can be described as 'other spaces' or spaces of otherness, for instance, asylums, brothels, prisons, holiday resorts, hospices, gardens, cemeteries, care homes, theatre, museum, cinema, libraries, fairgrounds…). While a utopia is an idealized or perfect society (or part of society) without a real place or time, heterotopias, on the other hand, are real places that are "a kind of effectively enacted utopia." in this sense heterotopias are 'situated utopias' somewhere tangible and real, and with a specific time: a sort of counter-spaces that are real but outside all the other ordinary spaces. Medicine defines the heterotopia as the spatial displacement of normal tissue, in other words a site in which biological material is out of place. This peculiar medical deviation inspired Foucault to draw parallels with the social world and apply the notion to the workings of social institutions and practices. Heterotopias retain an imaginative-practical appeal: as spaces in-between they can become the sites of activation of counter-practices – see for instance the pirate heterotopia of Hakim Bey's (aka P.L. Wilson) "Temporary Autonomous Zone", an experimental, non-hierarchical social space existing outside of formal networks of discipline and control.

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UTOPIA: *Enter a place so ideal that it exists nowhere.*

The word utopia comes from Thomas More's Utopia (1518) - an imaginary island whose literal meaning is "no place". A similar title is found in another classic of utopian literature: Erewhon (Nowhere) by Samuel Butler. A utopia is the description of an imaginary world outside of our space or our time, or in any case, outside historical and geographical space and time. It is the description of a world constituted on principles different than those at work in the real world. For French philosopher Raymond Ruyer there is a connection between utopia and scientific method. Both the creation of utopias and scientific invention imply a break with habitual conventions. Both suppose the capacity to detach from the known and to gain a different perspective, a sort of overflight, (or absolute survey) that allows one to grasp from above the connections across things. Ruyer describes the utopian mode as a mind exercise to evince what he calls the "adjacent possible" in an act of creativity. Here utopia becomes a companion of reason. While reason engages in discerning the fundamental from the accidental, utopian mode of thinking integrates this by fostering the imagination of what could be – contingent modes, another possible world not realised but possible. See the fiction by H.G. Wells, J. Swift, S. Butler, A. Huxley.

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