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Our Technological Past and Future: From Predigital to Postdigital Apocalypses

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Our Technological Past and Future: From Predigital to Postdigital Apocalypses

Michael J. Paulus, Jr., Seattle Pacific University
Transhumanism and the Church Conference
Birmingham, Ala., September 25, 2015



Technology and Time

- “**Hard**” artifacts
(hammer, book, computer)
- “**Soft**” applied specialized knowledge
(carpentry, publishing, coding)
- Our past memories, future expectations, present experiences



Artifacts from Pompeii

Technology as Revelation

- Part of the “**Book of Nature**” or natural revelation
- A technological metaphor from Psalm 19 – the words of the skies and the words of the Law



Moses Breaking the Tablets of the Law

The Apocalyptic Imagination

Trinity College
Library, Dublin

- circa 18th c.
- circa 20th c.
- as the Jedi Archives



The End of the Library

A dimly lit, grand library with rows of tables and chairs, a large staircase, and a circular window in the background. The scene is atmospheric and somewhat somber, with a blueish tint. The tables are arranged in rows, and the chairs are simple wooden chairs. A large staircase is visible on the right side, and a circular window or archway is in the background, showing two figures standing on a ledge. The overall mood is quiet and contemplative.

- An archive of memory and knowledge
- A sign and site of anticipation
- An infrastructure for attention and action

Apocalypses



Apocalypse ride at Six
Flags (2013); scenes
from *Oblivion* (2013) and
After the Dark (2013)



The Apocalypse of John, Chapter 10

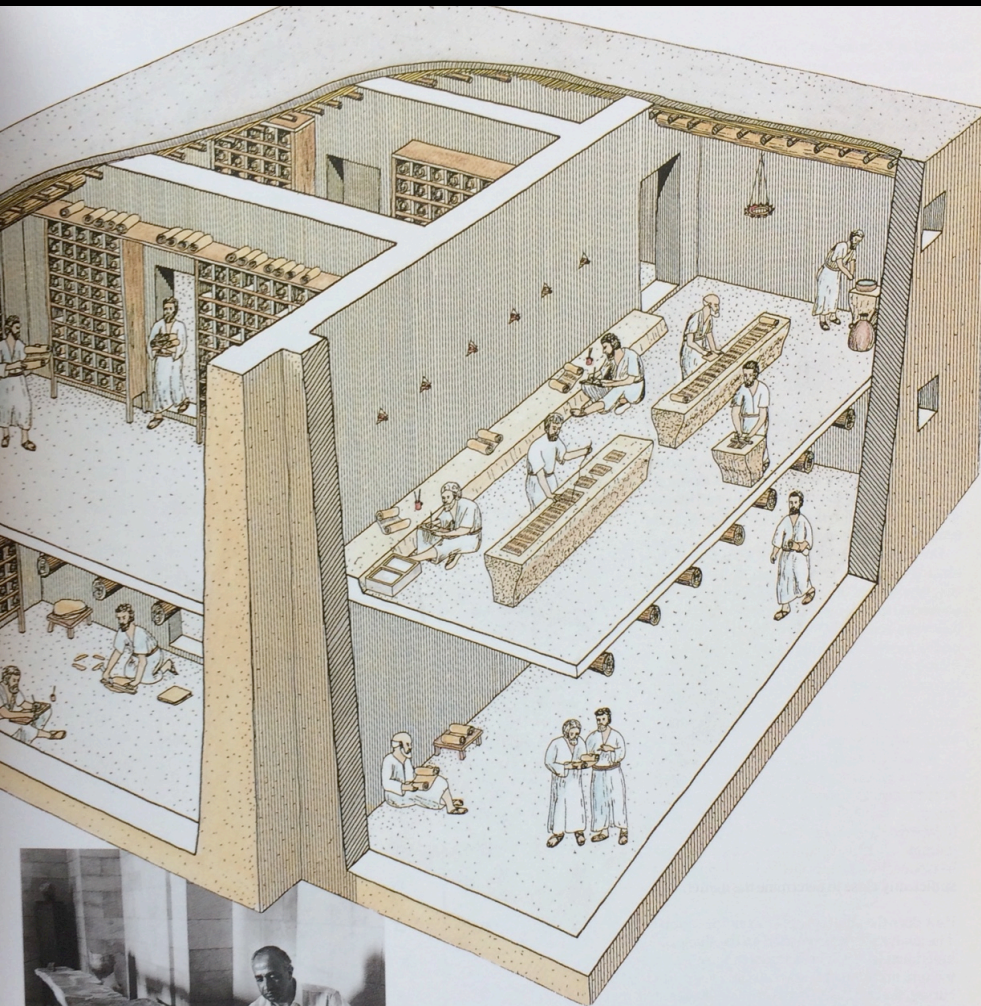


The Apocalyptic Dead Sea Scrolls Library



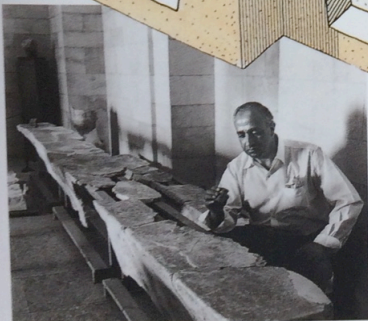
Settlement and Caves at Khirbet Qumran

The Apocalyptic Dead Sea Scrolls Library

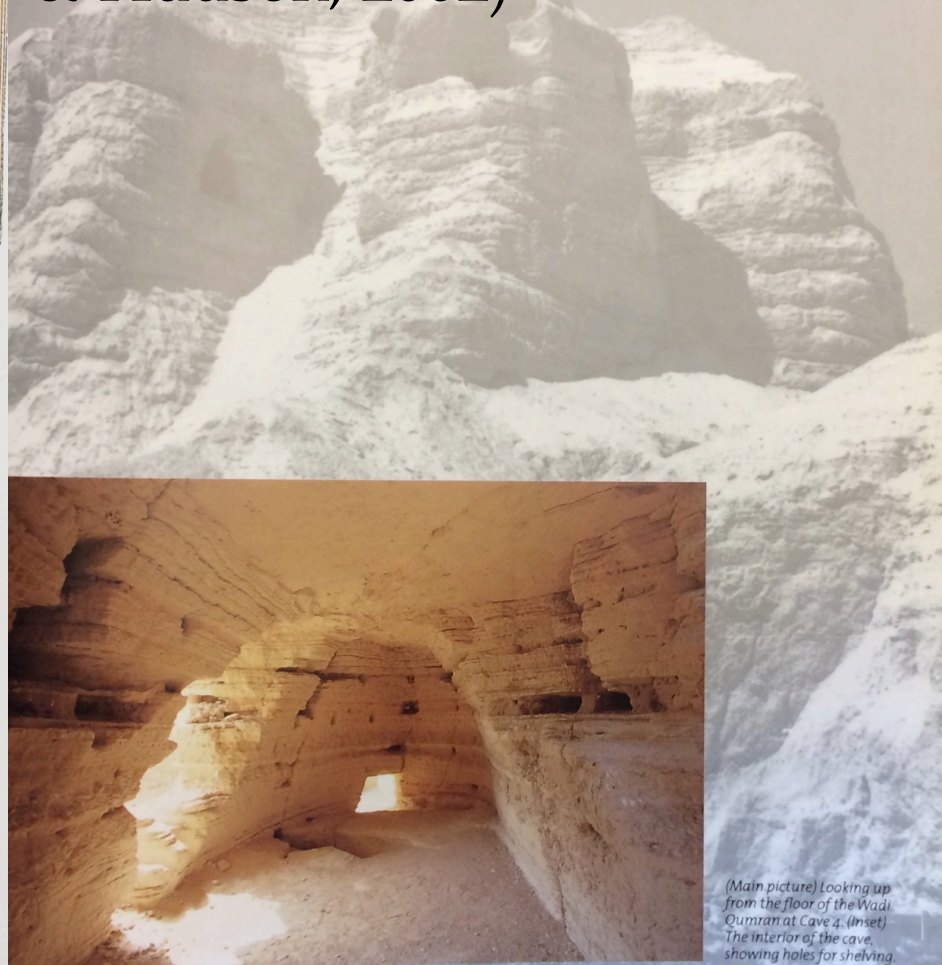


(Above) A reconstruction of the manuscript production process that may have occurred at Qumran.

(Left) Joseph Saad sits at a reconstructed plaster table in the Palestine Archaeological Museum.

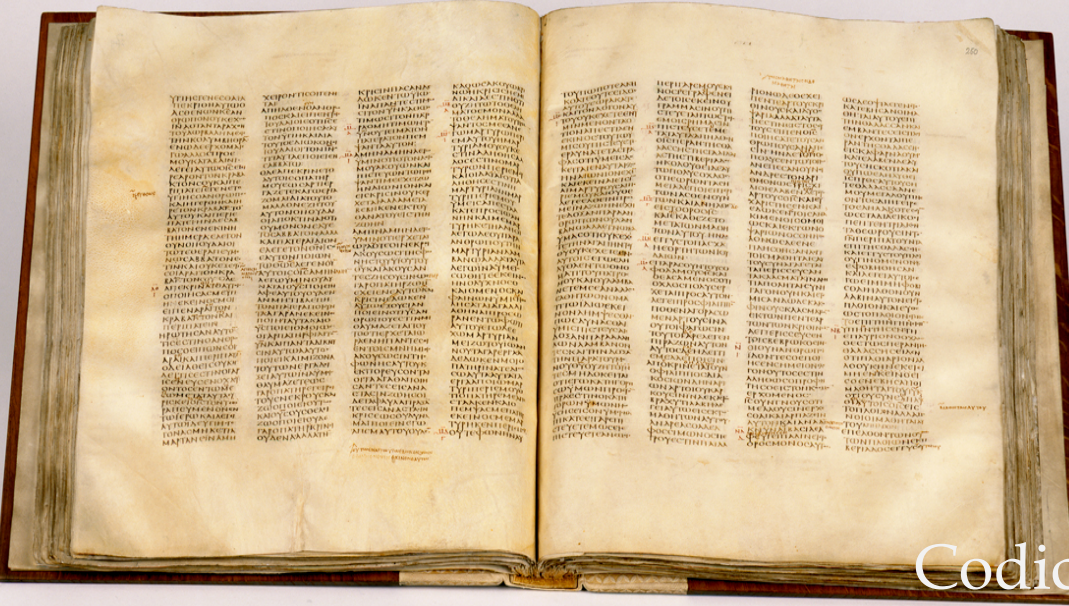


Pages from *The Complete World of the Dead Sea Scrolls* (Thames & Hudson, 2002)



(Main picture) Looking up from the floor of the Wadi Qumran at Cave 4. (Inset) The interior of the cave, showing holes for shelving.

The Christian Apocalyptic Library



Codices Sinaiticus and Amiatinus

The New Jerusalem



Tapestry of the Apocalypse

“But with regard to the material world, we can at least go so far as this—we can perceive that events are brought about not by insulated interpositions of Divine power, exerted in each particular case, but by the establishment of general laws.”

W. WHEWELL: *Bridgewater Treatise*.

“To conclude, therefore, let no man out of a weak conceit of sobriety, or an ill-applied moderation, think or maintain, that a man can search too far or be too well studied in the book of God’s word, or in the book of God’s works; divinity or philosophy; but rather let men endeavour an endless progress or proficience in both.”

BACON: *Advancement of Learning*.

Down, Bromley, Kent,
October 1st, 1859.

ON
THE ORIGIN OF SPECIES

BY MEANS OF NATURAL SELECTION,

OR THE
PRESERVATION OF FAVOURED RACES IN THE STRUGGLE
FOR LIFE.

By CHARLES DARWIN, M.A.,

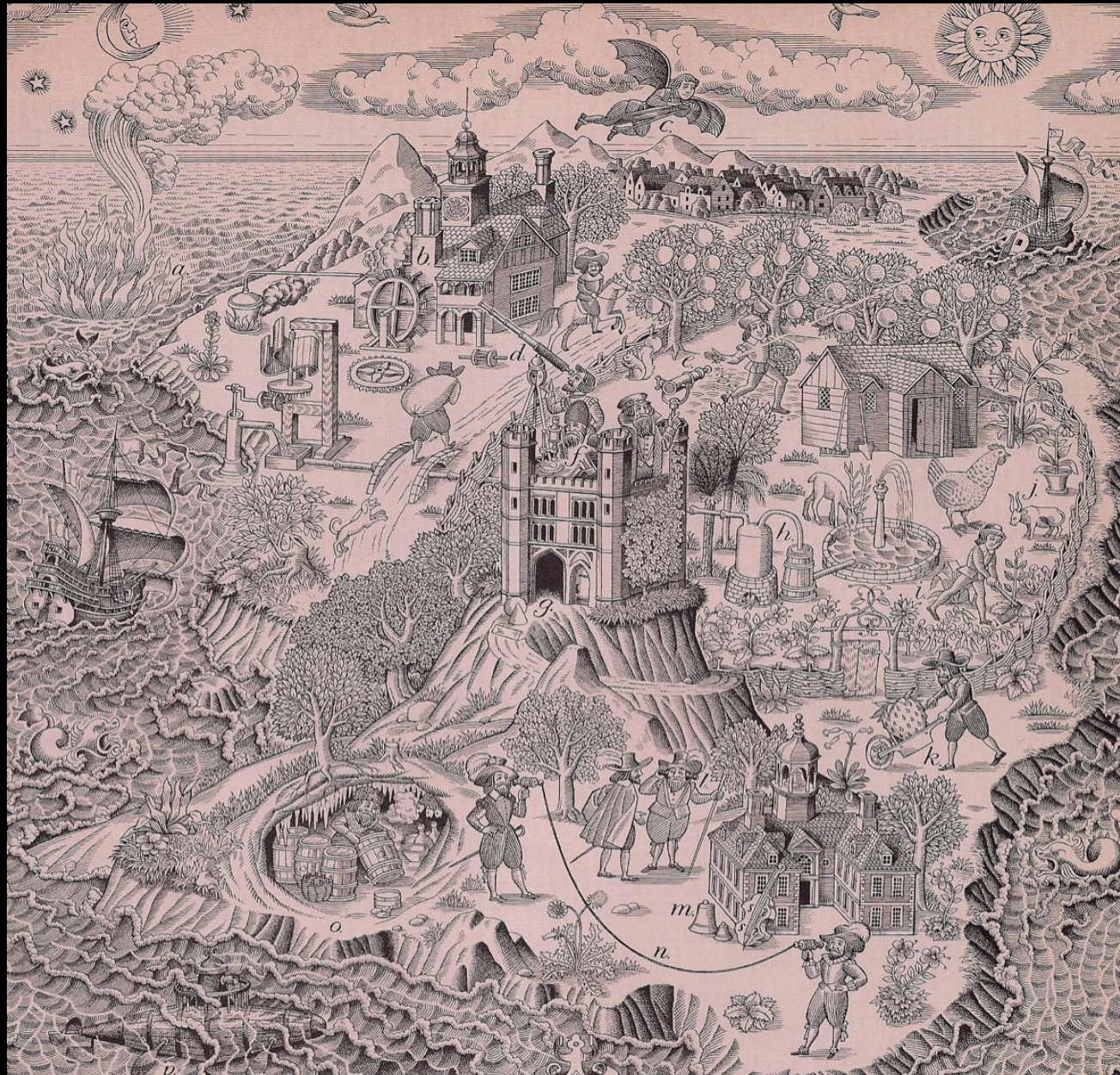
FELLOW OF THE ROYAL, GEOLOGICAL, LINNÆAN, ETC., SOCIETIES;
AUTHOR OF ‘JOURNAL OF RESEARCHES DURING H. M. S. BEAGLE’S VOYAGE
ROUND THE WORLD.’

LONDON:
JOHN MURRAY, ALBEMARLE STREET.
1859.

The Modern Apocalyptic Imagination

The New Atlantis
(1627):

“The end of our foundation is the knowledge of causes, and secret motions of things; and the enlarging of the bounds of human empire, to the effecting of all things possible.”



The Last Man (1826) and *The Time Machine* (1895)

THE LAST MAN.

BY

THE AUTHOR OF FRANKENSTEIN.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

Let no man seek
Henceforth to be foretold what shall befall
Him or his children. MURDOX.

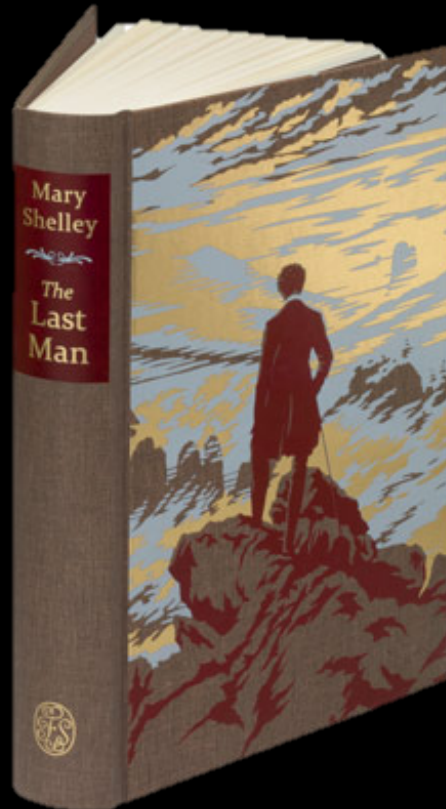
VOL. I.

LONDON:

HENRY COLBURN, NEW BURLINGTON STREET.

1826.

Title page of
1st ed.;
Folio Society
ed.



The Time Machine



H. G. Wells

Cover of 1st
ed.; panel
from Classics
Illustrated
Time Machine
(1956)



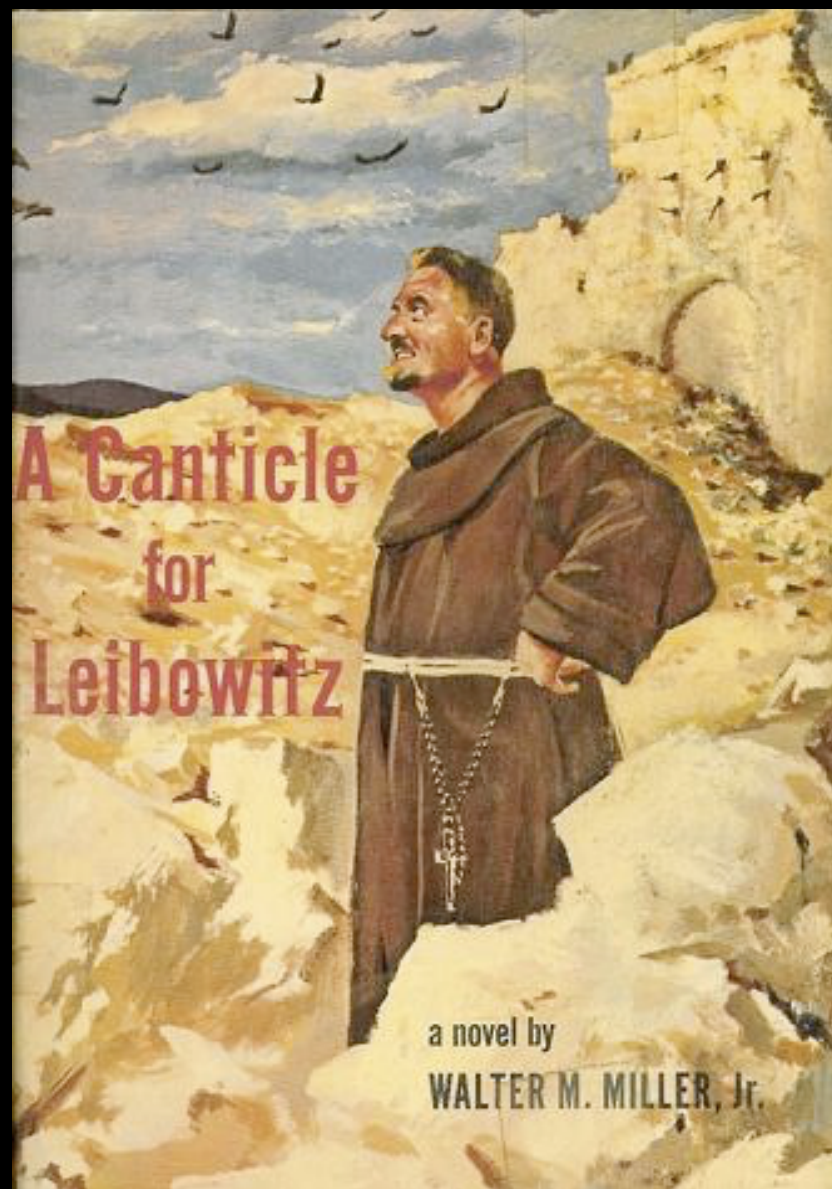
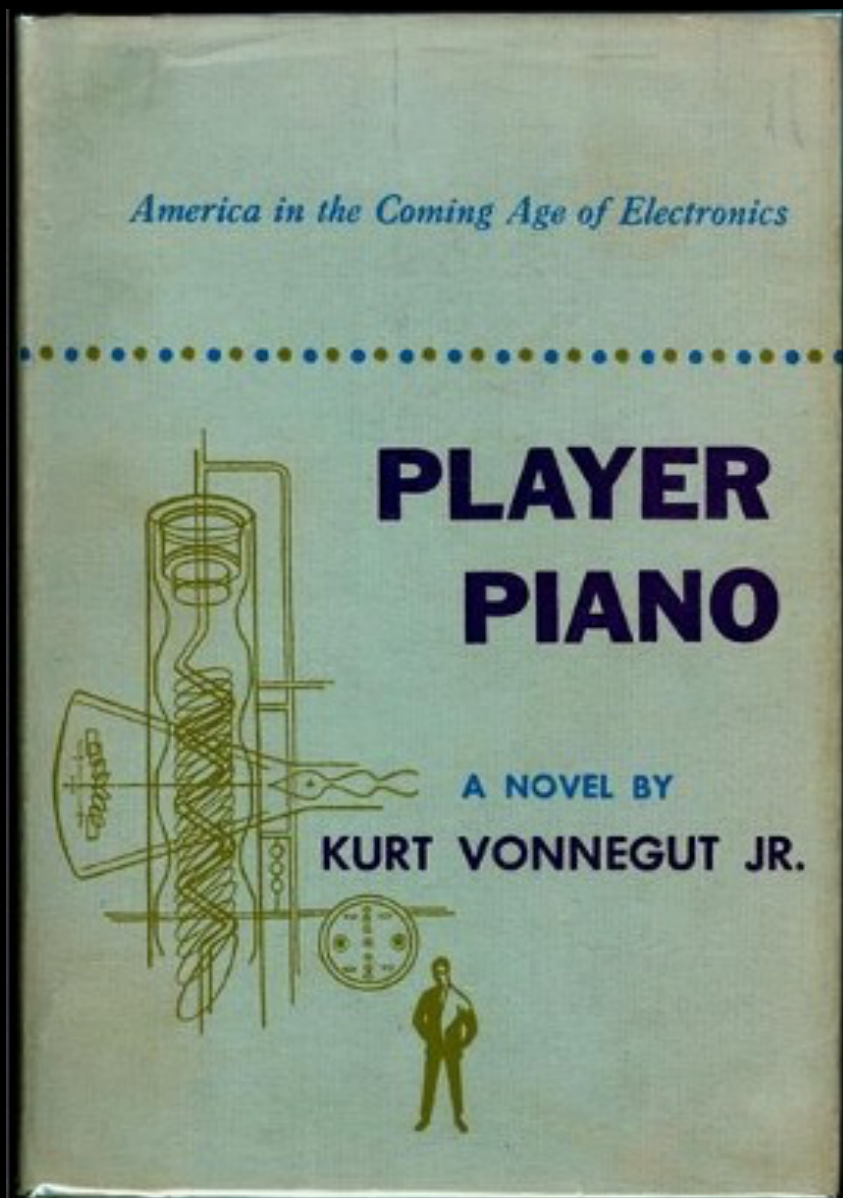
Brave New World (1931) and Nineteen Eighty-Four (1941)



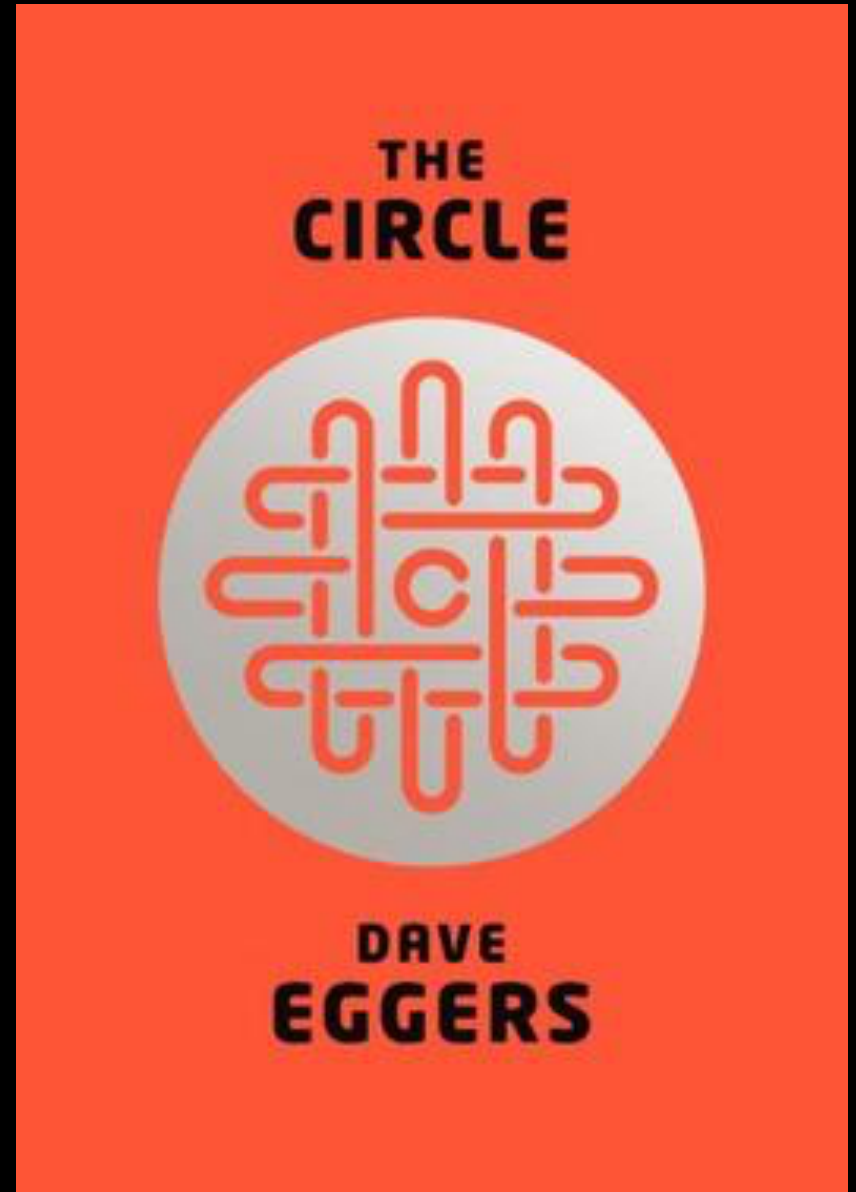
1st edition covers and scenes from the film *Nineteen Eighty Four* (1984)



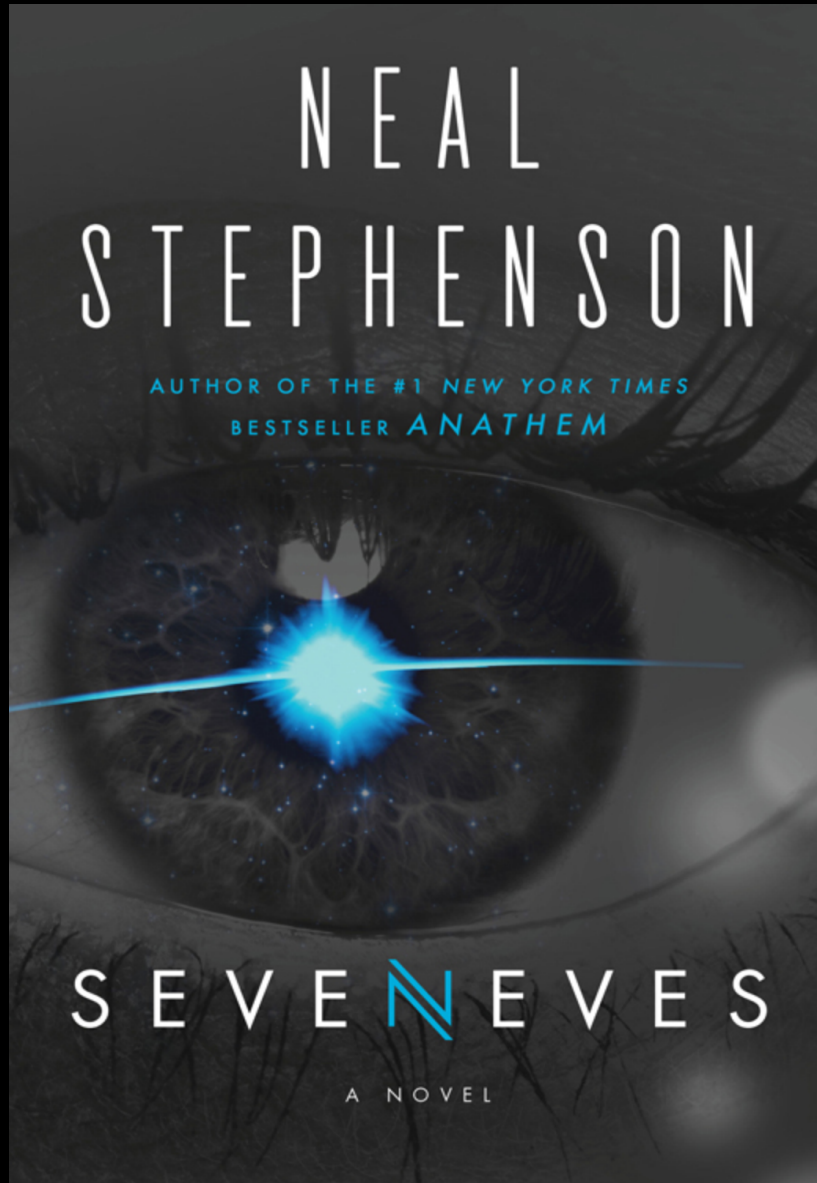
Player Piano (1952) and A Canticle for Leibowitz (1960)



Ready Player One (2011) and *The Circle* (2013)



Seveneves (2015)



Beyond Babel

