

Peter Frase's *Four Futures*, Malka Older's *Infomocracy*, and Some Futures for the Humanities (with maybe a little Shakespeare thrown in)

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Peter Frase's *Four Futures* (2016) combines literary criticism, futurism, and political theory.¹ Using science fiction novels that imagine the future as templates or theoretical lenses, Frase suggests four possible pathways for the world after what we have to acknowledge, regardless of our political beliefs, as the endpoint or maturity late capitalism (wages and growth have plateau'd or even stagnated, despite the longest economic expansion in history; populations are dropping; living standards and life expectancies rose all over the world during the twentieth century but now seem to be falling again and are expected to fall further with the ravages of climate change).

Frase further frames his four futures around our current energy crisis, a crisis unlike the oil crisis of the last century but a crisis of politics, climate, and automation: we consume ever more energy but the way we make it destroys the living standards we want and the habitat we need, which makes us expend more

¹ Peter Frase, *Four Futures: Life After Capitalism* (London: Verso, 2016).

energy to maintain what we have, even as automation and market efficiencies threaten jobs and consolidate wealth among the already-wealthy. The Four Futures Frase imagines comprise two scenarios: one of abundance, in which we solve the energy crisis (and have unlimited goods and good), and one of scarcity, in which energy and natural resources remain sought-after and finite, and have to be shared out according to some sort of political calculus or negotiation. On top of these two scenarios – abundance and scarcity – Frase overlays political regimes of either hierarchy or egalitarianism, giving us four imagined futures: communism (abundance plus egalitarianism – think the world of *Star Trek*, powered by the replicator), rentism (abundance plus hierarchy – we have lots of stuff, but you have to pay for it, with bodily or personal data that you license or rent out or sell if necessary; Frase’s model is Charles Stross’s whimsical dystopia *Accelerando* (2005), but we could also perhaps include something you’re more likely to be familiar with right now – the South Korean Oscar-winning film, *Parasite* [2019]), socialism (scarcity plus egalitarianism – think of the flooded or derelict but vibrant and communitarian “three Californias” of Kim Stanley Robinson [1984-1990]), exterminism (scarcity plus hierarchy, think of *The Hunger Games* (2008), *The Maze Runner* (2009), or any number of other young adult novels and films going

back all the way to the blockbuster 1970s energy crisis movies *Soylent Green* or *Logan's Run*).²

There's no mention of Shakespeare or of the humanities in Frase's book, but I wondered what would happen if I layered Frase's approach over my own ongoing interest in what I've called "books at the end of the world," the persistence of materialized texts and cultural artefacts and, well, Shakespeare, in dystopian or apocalyptic fiction, the exterminist model that has dominated and dominates our visions of the future even before our climate emergency, so that's what I'm going to do.

The association between books, literary or exegetical hermeneutics, and end-times derives from the original text that gives us the word "apocalypse": the Biblical book of Revelation (Greek Apocalypsis) with its many self-referential descriptions of the "book of life," "the book in the hand of the angel," "the little book," "the book sealed with seven seals" (King James Bible, 1611; modern translations more accurately give "scroll" rather than book). The closing injunction of Revelation couples books with the threat of plague and the value and fragility of both oral and written testimony:

² Charles Stross, *Accelerando* (London and New York: Orbit/Ace, 2005); *Parasite*, dir. Bong Joon-ho (Barunson E&A, 2019); Kim Stanley Robinson, *Three Californias* (1984-1990; repr. New York: Tor, 2020); Suzanne Collins, *The Hunger Games* trilogy (New York: Scholastic, 2008-2010); James Dashner, *The Maze Runner* (New York: Delacorte, 2009); *Soylent Green*, dir. Richard Fleischer (MGM, 1973); *Logan's Run*, dir. Michael Anderson (UA, 1976).

If any man shall add unto these things, God shall add unto him the plagues that are written in this book: And if any man shall take away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part out of the book of life, and out of the holy city, and from the things which are written in this book. He which testifieth these things saith, Surely I come quickly. Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus.³

The last sentences provide an injunction against editing or altering the book itself: Revelation is to be itself the last book, literally the last book, the last word, and the last letter, the alpha and the omega.

The injunction against future writing, editing, and publishing has not stopped writers from creating their own apocalypses, however. Arguably the first apocalyptic novel, Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley's *The Last Man* (1826), centers, like Emily St. John Mandel's *Station Eleven* (2011), around an outbreak of plague and ends with a world covered in water and the hero adrift in a small boat with his books, traveling from one library to another, and writing a book about what he's

³ King James Bible (1611), Rev. 22: 18-20. Cited from the EEBO-TCP Project: <https://quod.lib.umich.edu/cgi/k/kjv/kjv-idx?type=DIV1&byte=5379593>.

experienced, including his comments on others' books.⁴ Eighty years after Shelley's book, Jack London published *The Scarlet Plague* (1915), another novel that figures the end of the world through mass contagion. It stars an English Professor who spent his life teaching students "about books other men had written" (Ch. 2) as the last man who mourns "the things of our vanished world...art, and books, and poetry" (Ch. 5). He tries to tell his grandsons about the wonders of civilization:

I have stored many books. In them is great wisdom. Also, with them, I have placed a key to the alphabet, so that one who knows picture-writing may also know print. Some day men will read again; and then, if no accident has befallen my cave, they will know that Professor James Howard Smith once lived and saved for them the knowledge of the ancients.

His grandsons, however, remain unconvinced.

Moving into the later twentieth-century, Stephen King's *The Stand* (first published in the 1970s and updated in the 1990s) includes an epilogue in which the loss of literacy indicates that civilization will never recover from the pandemic influenza that has destroyed it.⁵ Here is King's deaf-mute character Nick Andros

⁴ Mary Shelley, *The Last Man* (London: Henry Colburn, 1826; repr. Project Gutenberg, 2006 <https://www.gutenberg.org/cache/epub/18247/pg18247.html>); Emily St. John Mandel, *Station Eleven* (London: Picador, 2014).

⁵ Stephen King, *The Stand* (New York: Doubleday, 1978; rev. and repr. 1990).

rhapsodizing in both fear and joy about the post-disaster library: “The books were free now. The ideas were free. Sometimes that thought exhilarated him. Sometimes it frightened him” (80). Justin Cronin’s *The Passage* puns on “passage” meaning transit but also passages of prose in the novels that the child Soo finds boxed up in what was the library, and the passages from the “Book of Sara” and the “Book of Auntie” within Cronin’s novel.⁶ “Shakespeare” exists in that novel as a marker of civilization but also of its destruction. The character who discovers the vampire plague is called Jonas *Lear* and his first wife, now dead, is a Shakespearean. Shakespeare is also a meta-textual or extra-diegetic easter egg for those in the know (Cronin’s a Harvard-educated former English professor from Rice University). The full horror of the passage to vampirism in Cronin’s novel is evoked through the dead children’s bodies that Zander finds in the library, suggests Cronin in an interview, where he explicitly admonishes his readers: “Never forget: books will save you.”

Many of these novels figure the end of books, art, and commentary about them (which is what we do) as emblems for irrevocable and otherworldly changes to the physical environment, including outbreaks of disease and drought (often, paradoxically, coupled with flood and fire). Such fiction has been called “cli-fi” – climate-change fiction, or post-apocalyptic dystopian stories about what will

⁶ Justin Cronin, *The Passage* (New York: Ballantyne, 2010).

happen at the end of the world. Octavia Butler's Books of the Living and of the Earthseed religion in the *Parable of the Sower* (1993) and *Parable of the Talents* (1998) is evoked through physical detail and bookish heft, cloth and cardboard and binding; the book explains the doctrine of Heraclitean change or adaptation that provides the only means of survival in a blighted desert world.⁷ In Margaret Atwood's *Oryx and Crake* (2003), the first novel of her Maddaddam trilogy, the character Jimmy (later known to us as Snowman, a Hamlet-figure) maintains, post-collapse, in his memory the library of "moldering paper" that formed Jimmy's refuge in college.⁸ "Who was it who'd said that all art was completely useless? ... The more obsolete a book was, the more eagerly Jimmy would add it to his inner collection." Snowman's mental collection includes Macbeth's line "out, out, brief candle."

For King's Nick and Atwood's Jimmy, words, lines, books connote boundlessness and expansive potential, but the unnamed Boy of Cormac McCarthy's apocalyptic picaresque *The Road* "rage[s]" "in the charred ruins of a library."⁹ Surrounded by "blackened books" in a pool of water, he recalls only his fury "at the lies arranged in their thousands row by row." And what's interesting to me is that unlike Shelley's or London's heroes, who can communicate their

⁷ Octavia Butler, *Parable of the Sower* (Four Walls Eight Windows, 1993); *Parable of the Talents* (New York: Seven Stories Press, 1998).

⁸ Margaret Atwood, *Oryx and Crake* (London: Bloomsbury, 2003)

⁹ Cormac McCarthy, *The Road* (New York: Doubleday, 2006, repr. 2007), 157-8.

thoughts about books in speech or writing to another human being (lit crit, in other words) and thus find a kind of glooming peace, King's, Atwood's, and McCarthy's heroes are doomed to solipsistic reverie about the books they read: the books, like the worlds in which they live, are dead. (side-note: any Shakespearean aspects of McCarthy's novel are "accidental" Shakespeares – artefacts of a single student essay comparing *The Road* to *Macbeth* that has, in the manner of student essays, been uploaded and downloaded and slightly tinkered with on various websites with names such as "grade saver.")

Dystopian and utopian futures present books, film, and lit or film criticism about them in multiple and unpredictable ways. Captain Handsome in Jeannette Winterson's *The Stone Gods* (2007), cherishes his book of poetry; the book *The Stone Gods* is itself present as a meta-text throughout the novel, and the journals of the historical Captain Cook also appear as anchors to unite the future and the past, much as the graphic novel named *Station Eleven* and drawn by Miranda Carroll unites seemingly disparate characters and plotlines in Mandel's novel of the same name.¹⁰ In that novel, the performed presence of Shakespearean texts and the ongoing metacritical discussions among its characters of both high and low forms of cultural productions (Western classical music, *Star Trek*, Shakespeare, the curation of found or abandoned or now-useless objects such as credit cards or jet

¹⁰ Jeannette Winterson, *The Stone Gods* (London: Hamish Hamilton, 2007).

engines) likewise creates communities that are both forced and unforced, chosen and unchosen, contingent and yet sustaining.

Station Eleven takes us back and forth across time and terrain through the voyages of Kirsten Raymonde, a performer in the *Lear* production that opens the novel, with the Traveling Symphony, a troupe of Shakespearean actors who perform Shakespeare and classical music under harsh, survivalist conditions. The word “collapse” is used to describe Arthur’s physical breakdown, the economic stasis that leaves enormous illuminated container ships stranded off the coast of Malaysia, and the complete loss of civilization in the aftermath of a pandemic named the Georgia flu that decimates the world’s population. Philip Smith writes of *Station Eleven* that it “reflects the ways in which Shakespeare's works grapple not only with the fragility of civilization but also with the fragility of text and performance.”¹¹ *Station Eleven* is bookended by Miranda’s own graphic novel, also called “Station Eleven,” and the Biblical book of Revelation. Both books inspire Tyler/The Prophet, a murdering minister of doom (and Arthur’s only son) and, like Shakespeare’s *Tempest*, point to the dangers as well as the blessings of the humanities and of Shakespeare.

¹¹ Philip Smith, “Shakespeare, Survival, and the Seeds of Civilization in Emily St. John Mandel’s *Station Eleven*,” *Extrapolation* 57.1 (2016).

The humanities—literary and cultural criticism, philosophy, belles-lettres -- in *Station Eleven*, *The Passage*, and other exterminist fantasies both the extent of civilization’s collapse and our realization that for human beings to persist as recognizably such, mere “survival is insufficient,” in the refrain from *Star Trek: Voyager* that Mandel’s novel *Station Eleven* repeats as painted text on the caravans and tattooed words on the arm of Kirsten Raymonde, the child-actor who comes of age in this post-apocalyptic world – a world in which Shakespeare survives, scrappily.

The humanities are also what we need to remain recognizably human to each other. Jeff VanderMeer’s science-fiction dystopian horror novel *Annihilation* (2014) shapes its entire narrative through spookily and inhumanly materialized text that cannot be identified or critiqued or interpreted (all the writing was literally removed from the recent film adaptation).¹² In the novel, Area X houses a sentient plant-like or fungus-like organism that writes incantatory, Biblical-sounding cursive script in dense foliage on the wall of a structure that is both a lighthouse and a tunnel. The team of women who investigate Area X find clues about the missing prior expeditions from a heap of moldering journals that the film replaces with gruesome and graphic home video recordings. The unreliable narrator, the

¹² Jeff VanderMeer, *Annihilation* (New York: Farrar, Strauss, & Giroux, 2014); *Annihilation*, dir. Alex Garland (Paramount: 2018).

biologist, draws beautiful and detailed illustrations of avian life on the remote island where she recovers from her expedition. The characters' inability to discuss the writing and the drawings and the journals that they find – their inability even to be successfully debriefed if they make it out of Area X – their loss of lit crit, of expressive language about the expressive languages of writing and drawing – bolsters the unfathomable and occult horror of Area X for both intra-diegetic characters and extra-diegetic readers.

So: so far I have Shakespeare, or even lit crit – talking about books and art and music – persisting only in the devastated, exterminist future world of *Station Eleven*. Can that be right? YA books are more, well, cheerful. Late twentieth- and early-twenty-first-century young adult exterminist dystopias identify the end of the world with the end of books, art, literature, and talking about them, and our gradual recovery from that dystopia as something enabled through and by art and its free discussion. In Lois Lowry's *The Giver* (1993) the child nominated as the Receiver is the only person allowed to read books beyond textbooks and rulebooks.¹³ Allyson Condie's *Matched* trilogy (2008-2011) imagines a future world in which only a sacred One Hundred art works of each genre – poem, painting, song, story have been preserved (teen reviewers of the book almost invariably call it a

¹³ Lois Lowry, *The Giver* (New York: Houghton Mifflin, 1993).

“*Romeo-and-Juliet-story*”).¹⁴ And despite its omission from the film adaptations, readers of Suzanne Collins’ *Hunger Games* cherish the Book of Knowledge with its pressed, drawn, and described plants and plant-lore, and the book draws many of its characters’ names (Coriolanus, Lavinia) from Shakespeare.¹⁵ These novels tend to figure books and other archaic media (printed books in Ray Bradbury’s *Fahrenheit 451* (1953), scraps of handwritten paper in *Matched*, the personalized scrapbook in the *Hunger Games*) as emblems of freedom and rebellion from tyranny.¹⁶ In these YA novels, books, art, and the humanities persist and enable that rebellion.

Neal Stephenson’s hard space-opera door-stopper *Seveneves* gives us the humanities and human creativity as impenetrable code (literally and figuratively) that we need to crack in order to survive as a species.¹⁷ Literally: one character uses books’ capacity for the most secure forms of cryptography. The cost of shooting these books (which are hard-copy flight manuals) into space, another character calculates, exceeds the cost of every “Gutenberg Bible” on earth. This is the novel’s exterminist phase (the moon has broken into multiple pieces and the

¹⁴ Allyson Condie, *Matched* trilogy (New York: Dutton,

¹⁵ Duane, “Shakespeare in the Hunger Games?” *Shakespeare Geek* blog, September 24, 2012, <https://www.shakespearegeek.com/2012/09/shakespeare-in-hunger-games.html>, last accessed June 22, 2021.

¹⁶ Ray Bradbury, *Fahrenheit 451* (New York: Ballantine, 1953).

¹⁷ Neal Stephenson, *Seveneves* (New York: William Morrow, 2015).

consequent meteor shower burns dead all life on the surface of the earth) except as a way to thwart our own worst human impulses.

Later on in the enormous saga, however (five to seven thousand years and much gene-editing later), all humans are living in space in what seems like a post-scarcity world: one half of the humans (Blue) live in space in a humanistic or what Stephenson calls “Amistic” world of abundance, egalitarianism, secular, mildly capitalist world with amazing metallurgical and engineering innovations but deliberately limited digital communication. Amistics, from the Amish, is Stephenson’s coinage for a wilfull refusal of certain kinds of technology, in this case electronic media. The other half of the remaining human races (Red) lives in a hierarchical, authoritarian, shamanic and paranoid society. The two halves are deeply suspicious of each other, though not (until late in the novel) actively at war. It turns out that the Blue side drastically underestimated the technological abilities of the Red side – in fact their tech far outpaces and also the power of spiritual or pseudo-religious motivation and of political propaganda.

The novel ends with the promise of peace, however, as both Red and Blue engage in commentary by and about these cultures’ greatest literary production—the great video epic about the original founders, the “Seven Eves” of the book’s title, unifies humans (or what are now called humans) as they watch, rewatch, argue about, and worship the epic, and reunite with two other sets of survivors

from the earth (one set survived in caves, the other in the Mariana Trenches, the first through extreme survivalism, the latter through gene-editing to breathe water). As a reviewer notes, however, this peace on New Earth depends upon, basically, rebuilding capitalism again, but with better technology: this is why it's a fantasy. It contains no Shakespeare.

What about all the Shakespeare and the humanities in the abundant egalitarian *Star Trek* society, which Frase characterizes as imagined post-scarcity communism? In addition to the regular Shakespearean outbursts of Shatner and Stewart (both trained, as you probably know, as Shakespearean actors and both having got their first big breaks FROM Shakespeare), which invariably serve to shore up essentialist notions of "the human" (as many have argued before me), there's another moment in *The Next Generation* where one sees a possible place for Shakespeare, as a monomyth.

In an influential response in *Critical Inquiry*, Wai-Chee Dimock discusses the citational practices of science fiction, specifically of episode 102 of the utopian, technocratic, futuristic television franchise, *Star Trek: The Next Generation*.¹⁸ This episode features a culture, the Tamarians, that communicates only through citation, through short phrases that connote entire myths to the

¹⁸ Wai Chee Dimock, "Low Epic," *Critical Inquiry* 39.3 (2013): 614-631, doi: 10.1086/670048. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/10.1086/670048>.

Tamarians but that remain opaque to outsiders who do not know the underlying tales. Many, including Dimock, note that the episode cites the epic of Gilgamesh, condensing the huge myth into a short phrase in the practice Dimock terms "low epic." Few, however, have observed that the Federation officers finally understand the Tamarians through Shakespeare, whose *Romeo and Juliet* is described as the closest human analogue to Tamarian communication: counselor Deanna Troy argues that the phrase "Juliet on her balcony" connotes to twenty-fourth century humans "romance," but would prove meaningless to aliens who knew nothing of Shakespeare. This is what Kathleen McCluskie has called "attenuated" Shakespeare and others have called "traces" or "remains" or even "accidental" Shakespeare— scattered references, images, motifs, connotations that are deeply meaningful to those embedded within an interpretive community but meaningless or even frustrating to those without.¹⁹

And remember, *Star Trek* is Frase's "best case" scenario: abundance and egalitarianism. Art and literature, and talking about art and literature, are hobbies for scientists or artisans, not vocations or ways of life. Sharon O'Dair has suggested that if Shakespeare survives the climate emergency, if we want Shakespeare to survive the climate emergency, if we ourselves want to survive the

¹⁹ Katherine McCluskie, "Afterword," *Shakespeare on the Global Stage: Performance and Festivity in the Olympic Year*, ed. Paul Prescott and Erin Sullivan (London and New York: Bloomsbury Arden, 2015), pp. 323-338; Julian Yates, "Accidental Shakespeare," *Shakespeare Studies* 34 (2006), 90-122.

climate emergency, we need to imagine Shakespeares more like the ragged wandering company in *Station Eleven* than the glossy professional upscale production with which that book begins: no more jet-setting, trading places, time to wind down the neoliberal Shakespeare industrial-complex.²⁰ Is there another model, beyond the exterminism and extremity of *Station Eleven*?

Frase isn't the only political theorist to use science fiction rather than futurism to look ahead: Malka Older's recent political science/science fiction near-future utopia-/dystopia trilogy *Infomocracy* seems at first to enshrine a benevolent technocratic world of "micro-democracy" of transparent surveillance and knowledge.²¹ In "micro-democracy" as she imagines it, centenals (units of 100,000 people) self-determine the kind of government they want and self-organize every ten years after an election. There is a majority centenal – the so-called super-majority – but also hundreds or even thousands of single micro-democratic units. Electioneering is simplified by a giant bureaucracy of transparent surveillance and knowledge dissemination called Information (capital I), which has cameras and feeds on every street corner all over the world and transparently layers fact-checked information over everything we see, read, or experience (so you can see

²⁰ Sharon O'Dair, "the great globe itself...shall dissolve": Art after the Apocalypse," in *Shakespeare and Global Appropriation*, ed. Christy Desmet, Sujata Iyengar, and Miriam Jacobson (New York and London: Routledge, 2020), 15-24.

²¹ Malka Older, *The Centenal Cycle (Infomocracy, Null States, State Tectonics)*, New York and London: Tor, 2016-2018).

from someone's public Information who they are, or who they choose to be publicly; you can see if a restaurant menu is lying about the freshness of its fish; you can instantly fact-check a presidential speech). Information is one of the world's largest employers, with teams checking, simultaneously translating (or using AI automatically to translate) all information (lower-case) everywhere. Those who want to make stories out of information – who see patterns before the evidence is there – are diagnosed with “narrative disorders” and prescribed regular doses of fiction – tv/stream or reading – to keep their disorders under control. Nation-states are obsolete, although some, we learn in the second book, *Null States*, including the US and Russia, have chosen to opt-out of micro-democracy and Information, and are called “null states.”

Older's *Infomocracy* seems at first terrifying – hypersurveillance, hypermediation, radical body modification – then idyllic (local control, evidence-based policy if you want it, libertarianism or anarchy if you don't, as you don't, free movement to the government and the people you want to be around) – then dystopian once again, as the election is hacked, we learn that Information has (and has to have) spies and saboteurs, like one of its heroines, Mishima, who necessarily deploys secrecy, not transparency (her narrative disorder is an advantage in this field, we learn, just as spiritual charisma or pattern-recognition skills prove essential in Stephenson's libertarian/neoliberal fantasy *Seveneves*). We learn about

the difficulties that, say people of color have in traveling when they have to cross “sundown” centenals. This world also suffers uncontrolled climate change, with a temperature more than three degrees above normal, because it’s impossible to control emissions without a coordinated global approach, on a micro-democratic level.

But fiction once again saves the world: or at least enables the potential for transformation. Narrative disorders turn out to be essential to preserve the functioning of Information, then to take it down, and then to restore a fuller version of democracy, fueled by multiple human voices that interpret texts and images and the world rather than the sterile, slow, autocratic mega- and micro-phones of Information. In the final volume of the trilogy, Mishima’s narrative disorder allows her to disable the hacks that have destroyed the election and paradoxically to destroy Information (upper-case) and restore multiple voices. Her protégé Maryam – a tech grunt – finds a new career writing interactive fiction for a start-up in Nairobi (one of the joys of these novels are their decentering of the US and their foregrounding of queer women of color all over the world).

We could consider Cory Doctorow’s *Walkaway*, in which renegade bioengineers or biohackers and radical body mod artists and creatives live outlaw-style on the fringes of a rentist society.²² That’s almost as frightening to me as

²² Cory Doctorow, *Walkaway* (New York: Tor, 2017).

Station Eleven (I'm no Robin Hood and see no glamor in being an outlaw or a pirate.) Frase's preferred world is Kim Stanley Robinson's, the world he calls "socialist," since a solution to the energy crisis doesn't seem imminent: everybody has to work hard, and everybody has to do something they don't want to do, but they do it together, and they take turns, and there is time and space for enjoying the natural world, for conversation with other human beings, and – there is a to me climactic, mesmerizing performance of *Macbeth* in a "tiny theatre" – in a "old garage...doubling or even tripling the parts" (271). Kevin, one of the novel's major characters, has never seen a play before and his friend has to coach him on how to watch (and especially how to understand the doubled and triple parts).

Tom Moylan, in a 1995 article in *Utopian Studies*, calls the performance one of several moments of "ritual" or sacredness that punctuate the novel.²³ The performance also coalesces or condenses transformation. It transforms not swords into ploughshares but garages into theatres, petro-civilization to a modified multicultural, multiethnic, multi-gender (within the limits and language of the 1990s, when Robinson was writing) neo-agrarian, hard but meaningful, decades-long struggle for climate justice and for democracy.

²³ Tom Moylan, " 'Utopia Is When Our Lives Matter': Reading Kim Stanley Robinson's Pacific Edge," *Utopian Studies* 6, no. 2 (1995): 1-24, last access June 23, 2021. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/20719409>.

I'd still rather have *Star Trek*. I'd still rather have abundant egalitarianism. I feel tired just thinking about all the work we are going to have to do. But I think it's interesting that of Frase's four futures, the imaginary worlds that include Shakespeare and the humanities are the egalitarian ones, suggesting that Shakespeare and shared acts of creation and interpretation can offer us a kind of abundance even among scarcity.