Snow
Crash
As with all utopias & dystopias, *Snow Crash* is an allegory/parable is about the (then) present when it was written (1988-91), and not about a real or imagined future.
What is *Snow Crash* about?

- Globalization & its consequences
- *Fin de siècle* capitalism
- The fragmentation of states and transformation of sovereignty
- The end of Authority and centralized regulation
- The “Information Revolution” of the 1980s
- The rise and spread of infections and hysterias
- Commodification of everything, including the body
- World War in a world without states
Background/context
Globalization involves

Compression of space and time

Hyperindividualism, consumption, the body

Disruption of social hierarchies

Broadening & deepening of capitalism

Self-regulation & self-discipline
“There’s only four things we do better than anyone else:

- music
- movies
- microcode (software)
- high-speed pizza delivery” (p. 2).

“Now a Burbclave, that’s the place to live. A city-state with its own constitution, a border, laws, cops, everything” (p. 6).
Raven is a “nuclear power”

The United States hardly exists

There are only “sovereign” franchulates & individuals
Privatization & “sovereignization” of everything

Everything is for sale, everything is a commodity
But who makes the rules?  
What are the rules?  
Are there any rules?  

And what if someone tries to harm or control everyone else?
Information is the ultimate currency

What is it?
From where does it come?
What is its value?
Who controls information controls the world
HP-35, 1972, $395
TI SR-50, 1973, $150
HP 11C, 1982, $135
HP 10S, 2007, $15

HP 35S, 2007, $60

$400 (1972$) = $1,933 (2005$)
$15 (2005$) = $3.10 (1972$)
"When I have a programmer working under me who is working with that information, he is wielding enormous power. Information is going into his brain. And it’s staying there. It travels with him when he goes home at night. It gets all tangled up into his dreams, for Christ’s sake. He talks to his wife about it. And, goddam it, he doesn’t have any right to that information. If I was running a car factory, I wouldn’t let workers drive the cars home or borrow tools. But that’s what I do at five o’clock each day, all over the world, when my hackers go home from work” (L. Bob Rife, p. 116)
Snow Crash is biological and informational. It is a nuclear bomb in an informational “world war.”

(It is also related, of course, to HIV/AIDS.)
What does World War look like in a world without nation-states?

Reality

“Good Guys” want you to control yourself: Hiro Protagonist, Y.T. Mr. Lee, Ng, Uncle Enzo

Metaverse

“Bad Guys” want to control you: L. Bob Rife, Reverend Wayne, Raven, the Feds
Snow Crash leads us to the second half of the course and quarter

- Construction & organization of the global economy and global political economy
- The dialectics of globalization
- Global regulation from above and below (including international law)
- Civil societies, social movements and social change
- What are we to do?