

Snow Crash: Neal Stephenson's Fusions of Human and Computer

Lagos the “gargoyle:” a dangerous and endangered researcher! Note how he dies. Transmission of his knowledge to Juanita (who passes it to Hiro Protagonist). Also connection to L. Bob Rife (to be revealed).

Snow Crash Human-Computer Virus:

--infects hackers in the Metaverse, exposure to binary code? Metaverse connection to physical body: Da5id

--Real world physical manifestations: **Falabalas**—infected programmers, blood extraction.

Distribution of glass vials in briefcases. **Attacks DNA in nucleus of brain cells**—changes the way the brain cells function: (See Ng's explanation to Y. T., Ch. 31 p. 239)

Revd Wayne's Pearly Gates → nonsense speech.

--Note: L. Bob Rife's claim to understand the “babble” of the Asian refugees on the Raft (Ch. 27 p. 207)

Raven: Metaverse and Real life: nuclear bomb on motorcycle, deliverer of Snow Crash, leads “Orthos” takeover of old Russian nuclear sub! Potentially devastating, apocalyptic invasion of “America” via West Coast and Metaverse. (TROKK, Raft, Los Angeles)

--fusion of primitive and high tech. Foil to Hiro in use of ancient weaponry/martial arts. Parallel understanding of powers they work with.

Mythical/Religious Background ← → Computer Distribution of Information:

Sumeria: clay tablets distribute *me* (rules for society)

* History of Religions:

Asherah (See Ch. 30, pp. 227-28): associated with serpents and Eve

Asherah cults—viral transmission of religion → glossolalia → oral transmission of viral cult-religions

Sumeria: **Enki's semen** → water → flow of information in society

Enki vs. Asherah: Enki vs. Asherah—or her analog: Asherah makes Enki sick: Ch. 33 pp. 252-55.

Hiro's interpretation of Enki as a hacker, and this story as about “the operating system of society” (Ch. 33 p. 258)

Sumerian goddess Innana—tricks Enki into delivering *me* he wanted to withhold, and brings about “perfect execution of *me*” → improvement in processing codes/information!

Binary opposition: dualistic perspective of creation, universe, sexuality

Connected to **Binary code of computer chip processors: On/Off**

Snakes and Viruses:

Ophidian and herpes = words for “snake”

Snake coiled around tree: associated with herpes simplex virus

Note analogies of Edenic tree with *brainstem*

Book-based religions: Hebrew, Early Christianity: inoculations against Asherah cults (See Ch. 30 pp. 227-34)

Garden of Eden story: Eve as representative of an Ophidian Asherah deity (snake goddess)

Language: medium for control and dispersal of information

Sumerian language (see Ch. 27 p. 210): long stream of short syllables, *supposedly* not related to other human languages (Stephenson's convenient application of archaeology to SF?)

--Concept of powerful metaphorical languages: Ch. 36, pp. 277-78): Powerful languages are "better at metaphor." Sumerian= "extremely potent"

→Connected to development of Computer Programming Languages (BASIC, C, FORTRAN, PEARL, etc.) : Allow humans more control over machines—improve human ability to operate with machine language—Ch. 36 p. 278)

→**Metaverse:** universe created by language of hackers. **Words as metaphors** for real things with power to create.

→**Hackers vs. Programmers:** Note the difference btw **Hiro's total understanding** of how the Metaverse works, vs. **Y. T.'s mom in Fedland** and her fragmented access to only small pieces of code, her lack of understanding of what she's doing.

Glossolalia or **xenoglossy:** "speaking in tongues" or apparently nonsense syllables

(Xenoglossy=means of spreading religion to foreign cultures through a language barrier, via glossolalia) (See Ch. 27: p. 206): "a **neurological phenomenon** that is merely *exploited* in religious rituals"

--Viral transmission—epidemic analogies

Glossolalia's power: Edenic language? Magical language?

Nam-shub: Sumerian for "speech with magical force" (Ch. 27 p. 210)

Tower of Babel→Unusual interpretation: NOT a huge tower—just a Babylonian ziggurat with "heavens" painted on ceiling. Abandonment of tower→dispersal/separation/multiplication of human languages. "A second fall" from Eden→ re communication

Nam-shub of Enki→ supposedly leads to "Babel/Infocalypse"→divergence of languages (Ch. 28, p. 218)

Both a story about Sumerian god Enki AND an incantation. Was Enki a real person with powerful language skills? Destruction of a unified, integrated language system

Overarching Themes:

Original Unity→**Fragmentation** (Tower of Babel AND world of Snow Crash with fragments of former governments and multiple corporate powers)

Original Language—direct control of machine—and "brainstem" language—lower order language. Operating Systems developed as "higher" brain functions to free us from mechanization.

Monopolist attempt to return world to single, mechanized order→L. Bob Rife, Raft, Snow Crash

Control over access to information and dispersal of it: Role of individual "hacker" compromised and threatened by monopolist power. Freedom of Information.

Cyberpunk hacker heroism: Y. T. and Hiro Protagonist