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RUDY RUCKER QUANTUM WETWARE

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STRANGER SCRIPTS
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QUANTUM WETWARE



RUDY RUCKER

Rudolf von Bitter Rucker was born March 22, 1946 in Louisville KY. He attended Swarthmore, earning a BA in mathematics in 1967, and did graduate work at Rutgers, studying mathematical logic and set theory, and getting a Master's in 1969 and a PhD in 1973.

*Rucker's novels include **Spacetime Donuts** (1978); **White Light** (1980); the Ware series, which includes Philip K. Dick Award winners **Software** (1982) and **Wetware** (1988), plus **Freeware** (1997) and **Realware** (2000); **The Sex Sphere** (1983); **Master of Space and Time** (1984); **The Secret of Life** (1985); **The Hollow Earth** (1990); **The Hacker and the Ants** (1994); illustrated novel **Saucer Wisdom** (1999); **Spaceland** (2002); **As Above, So Below: A Novel of Peter Bruegel** (2002); **Frek and the Elixir** (2004);*

Mathematicians in Love (2006); *Postsingular* (2007) and sequel *Hylozoic* (2009); and *Jim and the Flims* (2011). He published his latest novel, *Turing and Burroughs* (2012), through his own Transreal Books. *The Big Aha* is forthcoming.

His story collections include *The Fifty-Seventh Franz Kafka* (1983), *Transreal!* (1991), *Gnar!* (2000), *Mad Professor* (2006), and the two-volume *Complete Stories* (2012). His poetry has been collected in *Light Fuse and Get Away* (1983), and he has written about his own life in '60s memoir *All the Visions* (1991) and autobiography *Nested Scrolls* (2011).

Rucker has written many non-fiction books on math, science, philosophy, and computer science, including *Geometry, Relativity, and the Fourth Dimension* (1977), *Infinity and the Mind* (1982), *Mind Tools* (1987), essay collection *Seek!* (1999), and *The Lifebox, the Seashell, and the Soul* (2005). He's also written textbooks and monographs. As editor, he produced *Mathenauts: Tales of Mathematical Wonder* (1987) and co-edited *Semiotext(e)SF* (1988) with Peter Lamborn Wilson & Robert Anton Wilson.

Rucker taught at the State University of New York in Geneseo until 1978, then went to the University of Heidelberg for two years on a grant, returning to spend two years teaching college in Virginia. From 1982-86 he wrote full time, then took a position at San Jose State University, where he developed an interest in computer science. He taught there until his retirement in 2004. In California he became involved with cyberculture magazine *Mondo 2000*, and in 1992 co-wrote *Mondo 2000: A User's Guide to the New Edge* with editors R.U. Sirius & Queen Mu. From 2006 to 2012, he published 13 issues of the SF webzine, FLURB.

Rucker lives with his wife, Sylvia Bogsch, married 1967. They have three adult children and five grandchildren.

“**Nested Scrolls** came about because I'd always wanted to write an autobiography, but I kept putting it off. Then I had to go to the hospital. I had a vein burst in my brain – I could have died. It's what they used to call apoplexy. I'd just finished writing a story with Bruce Sterling. Bruce is a very opinionated person, and usually about two thirds of the way through collaborating we end up arguing about what we're doing. After I got out of the hospital I jokingly told Bruce, 'See, you almost killed me, by making me so angry.' He said, 'Well, if you would just accept that I'm always right, you wouldn't have this problem.'

“I realized I could have died, and I thought, 'If you are ever going to write your autobiography, you ought to do it now.' I wrote **Nested Scrolls** fairly quickly, in about five months. Then I set it aside and got into a novel, **Jim and the Flims**. I thought, 'OK, I'm going to go back and look at that autobiography and make sure I wasn't just out of it when I wrote it.' I was still recuperating when I worked on it. But the book looked pretty good, and I polished it some more. I didn't want it to be exhaustive – Isaac Asimov did these exhaustive autobiographies that were interesting, but I didn't want to do that kind of thing. I wanted it to be more like I was taking a car trip with somebody, telling them stories while we're going along.

“That's one of the difficulties in writing an autobiography. Your life isn't really a linear string of events, because everything reminds you of something else, and everything branches out. It's like a fractal, or a bush, and then you try to turn it into a straight line. So it's tricky, and you want to keep moving – you're skating on the surface, and you don't want to fall in and just wallow in this endless amount of detail. I did organize the book linearly, because that's what people want. Actually, David Hartwell advised me to put in lots of dates, and always mention the date when something was happening. That's useful. In Virginia Woolf's journals, she doesn't always have the dates of when things were happening, and that's confusing.

“First PS Publishing said they would publish it in England, and then Tor said, 'If they're publishing it, we might as well publish it too, because we can use their layout.' I was happy to get the book out. I thought, 'This is the one that will break me out into the mainstream. It isn't a science fiction book, it's a memoir. I'm not just a science fiction person, I'm a mathematician, a computer scientist. Maybe we'll get a review in the *Times*.' That didn't happen, but I'm glad I got it out there.

“I've been fortunate to meet a number of my heroes over the years. I met the famous logician Kurt Gödel when I was in grad school. That was a big deal. He's the smartest man I ever met, and just an amazing person. He knew what I was going to say before I said it. I only spent a couple of hours with him, but that was such an important event for me, like seeing the guru in his cave.

“I also got to meet Allen Ginsberg around 1982. We were at the Jack Kerouac School of Disembodied Poetics (at the Naropa Institute). The Beats were always there, Ginsberg and Burroughs and Corso. I was teaching a course on the philosophy of mathematics, but I always wanted to be a beatnik writer, or a beatnik science fiction writer, so I was thrilled to meet these guys. As soon as I met Allen, I told him I was a writer and I said, 'Can I get your blessing?' Like in a myth, where you meet the old writer, the old guru, and you say, 'I need your blessing.' He was into it, and right away he slapped his hand down on the top of my head and said, 'Bless you.' I got to give Burroughs a copy of **White Light**. He said it looked 'far out.' That made me happy.

“Robert Sheckley had always been a big hero of mine, too. He was the first science fiction writer who I really connected with at a deep level – I was about 13, in 1959. I liked science fiction a lot in any case. Like anybody in those times, I liked Asimov, I liked Heinlein. But Sheckley spoke to me more than anyone else. There are two aspects of his work that I have tried to emulate. There's satire and humor in it, but you aren't just going for laughs. There's also a feeling that he's writing about real people he knows, himself or his family, his friends – that's something I came to call transrealism. I like to root my novels in my actual experience. I met Sheckley a couple of times in the 1980s and it was a big deal for me. He had a friend with a connection to Timothy Leary, and Leary had this idea that he wanted to host a TV show, sort of like *Nova* with Carl Sagan. It could have been an interesting show, covering various modern topics. Sheckley and I went over to Leary's house to have a story conference, and that was kind of wild. Leary was a very charming man. At that point, around 1987, I was working as a computer scientist in Silicon Valley, and I had this special circuit board you could put into your PC computer, and it would show the kind of graphics I was interested in. They were sort of psychedelic images, called cellular automata, and Tim thought they were great. He would mention cellular automata sometimes after that.

“Certainly when I started writing, I didn't quite grasp what a long row it is to hoe, if you want to be a writer for your whole life.

I've published 35 books now, and I'm working on my 36th, **The Big Aha**, my 21st novel. It just goes on and on. If I'm going to write a novel, there are a number of things that go into it. First, there has to be a place I want to go that attracts me. Some scene, or something about the world, or some event. At the beginning it's like I'm standing at the edge of a wilderness. There's this mountain that I see in the distance, and I think, 'I want to get there.' But don't really know how I'm going to get there through the wilderness or how I'm going to get back. I like to have the characters clear in my mind. As I said, I sometimes model my characters on people I know. I used this trick more when I was younger. I'd say, this character is going to be like my father – like the character Cobb Anderson in the Ware series. Or the character Sta Hi; he was modeled on a guy I knew, the younger brother of a friend of mine. It's that transreal thing. Am I writing science fiction or am writing I beatnik novels about my own life? The virtue of modeling your characters on other people is that then they're not smooth, they're sort of irregular. They're not like dolls. It's one of the weaknesses in generic golden age novels, the way characters are very interchangeable. They might say, 'Well, let's give this guy a limp' to differentiate him. But what else?

'I've run out of people to use for my characters, or they're tired of me doing that, so now I tend to invent my characters more than before. But I think about them, I sketch out background stories for them, I work that out. I've also, over the years, started planning my novels more. I find it very hard to write outlines. Because, again, I can see one or two peaks I'm trying to reach, and there's the woods in between, and I don't really know what I'm going to hit in the woods. Is there going to be a canyon, is there going to be a river? So I can't exhaustively describe the outline. Sometimes when you're trying to sell a book to a publisher and you haven't written it, they like to see an outline. But the outlines, when I've written them, I've never viewed them as being chiseled in stone. If I have an outline, when I finish a chapter, I'll go ahead and revise the rest of the outline to fit. Frankly I think that, if a novel's worth writing, then it's in principle impossible to write an accurate outline of it in advance. The story's like a living thing: it's growing, and you need to stay open to new possibilities. When you work at the limits of your abilities, you can't possibly know what you're doing. And if you do know, you're not pushing hard enough.

'The other thing I do when writing a novel is to work out some conceptual ideas. Maybe more so than many SF writers. I did, after all, get a PhD in mathematics. I worked as a computer scientist, so I have a really scientific frame of mind. I want to have crazy ideas in my novels, but I want them to have internal logic. I want it all to hang together. Whenever I make something happen, I want to figure out – how does that fit into my theory of, like, how the hyperjump to another place in space works, or how travel to a parallel world works? I'm always working on the theory as well as the story, going back and forth between the two. You might think that would be limiting, but it's not. When I work out the theory, there will be little aspects of it that suggest new things that could happen, things I might not have thought of otherwise.

'Like the book that I'm working on now, **The Big Aha**. There's a certain theory of telepathy based on quantum mechanics, that you could in a sense merge your brain function with someone else's. That works, but there's a catch in that when you separate back into two people, you can't really remember the experience. That's something I haven't really seen other writers do with telepathy. It's sort of like, if you see somebody in a dream, and you have these memories about it, but they're surreal, not accurate. Or when you have a deep, romantic conversation with somebody, and later you don't necessarily remember the words, but you remember the feelings. I call it 'oblivious link' or 'oblivious teep.'

'I like to call telepathy 'teep.' When I'm working on a book I like to invent a language for it – short, easy slang words. Language is like a rock tumbler, when you tumble rocks to make them into gemstones. Every existing word has been smoothed over the years by everybody using it over and over. You don't want to have a slang word that's awkward or hard to say. I'll think, 'What's the word sound like? What does it remind people of?' Like in the Ware tetralogy, I called the robots the 'boppers.' I liked the sound of that, and it hooks into be-bop and bopping. While I'm working on a book, I'll keep a document of notes that ends up being as long as the novel. Paul Di Filippo can't believe that I do that. When I don't necessarily want to work on my novel, I'll work on the notes. I have all the PDFs of the notes posted online. One last trick that I've started using for writing is that I sometimes make paintings that are connected with the book. Like if I can't imagine what'll happen in a coming chapter, I might make a fairly spontaneous painting of a scene that could fit into my book. It's relaxing to work with the paints, they're so non-digital. Not like sitting at a keyboard. I've had a couple of shows in the Borderlands Books cafe, and now and then I even sell a painting. I like looking at them.

'For **Turing and Burroughs**.... When I moved to California in 1986, I started working at San Jose State, and before that I'd been a mathematician with a specialty in mathematical logic. At San Jose State, I retooled and started teaching computer science instead. I got to be pretty knowledgeable about computers, and I worked there about 20 years, so I was riding the Silicon Valley wave, from about 1986 to 2006. That was exciting. I even dropped out of teaching for a couple of years, and I worked at Autodesk, writing software for them. I helped write the software to accompany James Gleick's book **Chaos: Making a New Science**.

'One of the big figures in computer science is Alan Turing. He's a legendary figure. He created the idea of what's called the Turing machine, which is a simple abstraction of a computer, and he was able to prove interesting theorems. As a sort of daily example, when you're on your computer and you're waiting for it to finish doing something, you'll see a wait icon, like an hourglass or a progress bar, or something like that, and the progress bar isn't always accurate. Turing showed that even in principle, it's impossible to write a program to predict how long the wait is going to be, which is strange. A given computation can't really know everything about what the other computations will do. In a roundabout way, this connects with the remark I made earlier, about it being impossible to predict where your novel is going to go.

'During his life Turing had a way of switching subjects. He helped to design and build some of the first electronic computers, and he was involved with a code-breaking effort in WWII, cracking the German Enigma code. Near the end of his life, he was interested in biocomputation, and he was looking into how certain mixtures of chemicals will produce patterns, such as the ones you see in the coats of

animals. He wrote a paper, 'The Chemical Basis of Morphogenesis', where he did this immense calculation, and the output was a single black spot, like you'd see on the back of a cow. This great mathematician, working on it for months, doing a lot of the computations by hand, all these differential equations, and he gets this irregular black spot and he's glad. That makes me love Turing so much.

'Something that makes Turing especially of interest to the wider public is that he was an unabashed homosexual. He had the kind of personality that many mathematicians and computer scientists do, somewhat socially unaware. He'd say whatever he thought, so he'd just tell people, 'I'm a homosexual. Would you like to have sex with me tonight?' In the 1950s in England! That was not done.

'He got in trouble. It's a long story but he ended up getting busted. He hired a guy to have sex with him, and then the guy stole something from his house, so Turing went to the police and said, 'This man stole something.' They said, 'Why did you ask this raffish, lower-social-strata person into your house?' Turing said, 'To have sex with him. And we did this, and this, and this.' The authorities made him take these treatments – they had this crazy idea that they should give him female hormones, and that would reduce his sexual desire. It made him start growing breasts. They were the same sort of hormones a transsexual would take. He became despondent, and apparently he killed himself. He was really big on the movie *Snow White*, with the poison apple. He used to dance down the hall and sing songs from the movie, and he was found dead with an apple that had cyanide on it. They concluded that he put cyanide on the apple and then bit it. Just for a weird way to kill himself.

'I've always had a theory that the British equivalent of the CIA, MI5, murdered Turing. This was the Cold War period. They were incredibly paranoid about homosexuals knowing state secrets, because homosexuals could be blackmailed. (Though again, Turing probably wouldn't have cared. He would tell anybody that he was homosexual.) Turing had promised as part of his parole not to have sex with anyone in England, but he'd go on vacation to Greece, or to Scandinavia, and have boyfriends there. Sometimes the boyfriends would visit him in England, and he would debate to himself what the restriction meant, against having sex in England, if the person wasn't English.

Interview continues after ad.

'The setup in my book **Turing and Burroughs** is that Turing has a guy visiting him from Greece, and they're about to have sex, but the vice squad is sneaking around watching Turing. He's in a hotel with this boyfriend, and the cops send up a pot of tea with cyanide in it. Turing's boyfriend drinks it and he dies. So then Turing says, 'They're out to kill me. I have to run. But what I'll do is put this guy in my bed, in my house, and I'll leave. But before I do that, we'll switch faces.' From there we're getting into science fiction. The idea of growing faces wasn't completely unlikely, given that Turing did those experiments in morphogenesis. So he gets a bit of skin from his nose and his boyfriend's nose, and grows two faces in the oven, and puts his face on the guy's, and the guy's on his. Then he flees to Tangier.

'I wrote the story as a standalone in 2006, and read it in San Francisco. They have a monthly reading series there, SF in SF. Jeremy Lassen of Night Shade Books was there and he said, 'If you ever turn this into a novel, I'll publish it.' I kept that in the back of my mind, and at some point I couldn't think of what else to do, so I wrote a sequel story about Turing in Tangier, and ran that story in my webzine *FLURB*. Turing meets up with William Burroughs, and he intensifies the biotech to the point where you can actually turn your body into a huge slug that slimes around. It's vintage 1950s style mutant invasion science fiction! Once you've changed, your touch has the ability to turn other people into slugs, and it's contagious. The slugs have telepathy, and they can have sex like slugs do – they hang from the ceiling on a rope of mucus, and slime around each other. Turing and Burroughs do this in a bedroom in Burroughs's parents house, and Bill's mother walks in on them. Great scene. You can see videos of slug sex on YouTube. I had a lot of fun writing those early chapters, so I expanded them out to a novel.

'I'm a huge Burroughs fan. I always liked his attitude, so completely in your face, no compromise. He was openly homosexual, just: 'This is what I like.' In your face. And funny about it. And the same with the drugs. I've studied Burroughs's letters very closely over the years, so I wrote some of the chapters in the framework of letters from Burroughs. I think it came out as quite a nice novel. But the publishers didn't want to touch **Turing and Burroughs**. Maybe they thought it was too outrageous.

'It's funny. I see books reviewed in the *Times*, and they're outrageous, and nobody cares. Then I write what I think isn't really all that outrageous a book, even holding back a little, and people say, 'No, that's too much.' Jeremy at Night Shade would have liked to publish it, but by that time, Night Shade was sort of going down. My whole life as a writer, which started about 35 years ago, every year somebody says, 'This is the worst year in publishing.' This year, it actually is, because there aren't any bookstores. Borders is gone, Barnes and Noble is going.

'My agent sent the book to a number of people, but they all said, 'This is well written, but we don't want it.' Finally, I decided I'd just have to self-publish. It's a little strange as an older writer – the younger writers don't feel embarrassed about self-publishing. Once you accept it, there are a lot of nice things about publishing yourself. It's a psychological step to take, and there's the matter of how you do it. I've got a couple of books with the specialty house E-Reads, which is not quite self-publishing – they do all the work, and they do a nice job, they're doing a good service.

'But I'm a computer guy, so I can figure this stuff out myself. If you do an e-book through a big publisher, you might get a royalty something like 10% of the retail price. The e-books and print-on-demand books that I do through E-Reads, their royalty rate is better than a big house, but once all the intermediaries take their cuts, I'm still only getting something in the range of 20% of the retail price. So I thought, if I'm self-publishing, it'd be nice to get something more like 35% through Amazon, or maybe even get 100% for the e-books I can sell directly off my own site using an order fulfillment service –like E-Junkie. I spent seven months figuring all this out. There's the

writing skill, the computer skill, and the marketing skill. Marketing is my weak point. I'm not the most sociable person. I do tweet, and Facebook, and I blog, but they really eat time. For a writer, it's always good to find ways to waste time, other than getting incredibly drunk and stoned. Social networks are a less personally destructive way to waste time.

“There was another angle in my getting into self-publishing. There was a book I admired very much, published in 1970, called **Be Not Content** by William J. Craddock. He wrote this book when he was 21, and it was the first book by an acidhead. This was before the Merry Pranksters, really early. It's just a fascinating book. He had this great humor. I'd lost my paperback copy of the book – you know how you loan a book to somebody and then you forget who it was – but then I found out the paperbacks of the book were quite expensive, like over \$100.

“I blogged about that. That's another thing about blogging: people come to you with scraps of information. Somebody knew Craddock's widow. She lived in Santa Cruz, which is not all that far from where I live. So I got in touch with her, and I got her to sign a contract for me to publish the book. At that point I learned it's not very hard to do an e-book. While I was learning the ropes, I encapsulated my knowledge in a little e-book called **How to Make an E-Book**. So that was my first dip into the realm of self-publishing. Craddock's book was more work, because I didn't have an electronic copy, so I had to scan it and do the OCR thing. But I had some good OCR software, so this actually wasn't nearly as hard as I thought it would be. It took about a month.

“And then I thought, well, as long as I can make e-books.... It's like I was building a fallout shelter: I'm going to have safety here. It was looking as if I might not be able to sell **Turing & Burroughs**, but I was learning how to publish it myself. Before I got to that, I decided to publish my **Complete Stories**, like as a test run. Some people said, ‘How do you know it's your *complete* stories?’ I said, ‘I'm going to upload a new version every couple of years.’ It doesn't mean I'm never going to write another story! A comprehensive story collection is a hard type of book to sell to a publisher. They aren't going to pay you anything for it, so you might as well do it yourself. Then I thought, ‘I'm going to learn how to do a print book, too.’ That was a lot harder. I had to learn how to use InDesign and, speaking as computer professional, this was the hardest software I ever learned to use. Harder than assembly language, harder than the C++ debugger, at least for me. But I finally got over the hump, and at this point, producing another book as an e-book and a paperback should be pretty easy for me, assuming I haven't forgotten everything I learned over those seven months that it cost me. But the process was interesting. Again, it was a way of avoiding writing.

“By the time I'd finished learning how to self-publish, I realized I wasn't going to be able to sell **Turing & Burroughs**. It had been floating around out there, and nobody was making an offer. I thought, ‘Okay, I'll do it myself.’ It's a meager cash stream, but it's steady, and it lasts for a while. and, as I mentioned, you can sell e-books direct by yourself. I have a site called Transreal Books. I'm a publisher. I've already made about as much off **Turing & Burroughs** as I would have gotten as an advance from Tor. I'm selling fewer copies, but I earn a lot more per book.

“Crowdfunding also intrigues me. I've heard about Tim Pratt doing Kickstarters, and again as an old school writer, I have trouble wrapping my mind around that – spare-changing people. Tim told me the amount of money he got, though, so I might. People like my four Ware novels, and I could do a Kickstarter for a fifth one.

“Just recently, I got a nice piece of money from the Institute for the Future to write a short story called ‘Apricot Lane’ for them about an aspect of the future, about what's going to happen when all objects are networked. They're paying me, again, about as much as Tor would give me for a novel, just to write this short story, and then they're going to release it under Creative Commons, and it's going to be on **BoingBoing**. That's the other thing that happens these days, you can get paid for speaking, or for commissioned projects. It's like the way bands make money from appearances rather than selling CDs – it's a personality thing.

“Collaborating is one thing you see in science fiction that you don't see much in mainstream literature. A literary person might say it's because we're writing worthless crap, that we're like house painters, but I don't know why that should be true. Jazz and rock music have people collaborating a lot. I've really enjoyed my collaborations, because when you're a writer you're alone a lot of the time. I wrote four surfing & SF stories with Marc Laidlaw a while back, but he's not writing fiction as much anymore – he's into game design these days. I've written maybe seven stories with Bruce Sterling, one with Terry Bisson, two with John Shirley, and six with Paul Di Filippo. My latest story with Paul, ‘Yubba Vines’, will be in *Asimov's* in July.

“What I'm working on nowadays is a novel called **The Big Aha**. It's set in Louisville KY, where I grew up, and I'm enjoying that. If you stay in Louisville, then all the people around you are people you've known your whole life, and you can pretty much say anything to them. Nobody cares. I've been visiting Louisville lately, and it's strange. I'm pretty close to done with the novel now, maybe 85 percent of the way. I enjoy writing books about genomics and the biotech revolution. I think that's going to be one of the really big technologies of the 21st century. We're still just barely wading into that. I don't think it's unreasonable to suppose that in a century or so, lots of our devices won't be manufactured machines anymore. They could be plants and animals that have been designed to behave in ways that we consider useful. Even things like a knife or a glass, it's easy enough to imagine plants growing such things for us. Primitive peoples drink out of coconut shells, but we could tweak it so it's more what we like. And for communication devices, there's all this interest in squid skin – that would be a great visual display. Electric eels send out electromagnetic pulses, so that could be the basis of wireless communication.

“I wrote a book a few years ago called **Frek and the Elixir**, set in 3003, where everything was biotech. I wanted to come back to a world like that. In **The Big Aha**, I wanted to have a book where the technology is all live things. It's not set too far into the future, more like 2100. I was born in 1946, so the Summer of Love was the year I graduated from college. I really like that period. It was over so quickly. It was getting really good, and suddenly it was over. I wanted to have a story where something like that was happening, but I didn't want it to be based on drugs. By now everyone has ossified opinions about drugs – they're for them or they're against them. It sort

of closes the imagination.

“I wanted to have something to give people a cosmic experience. I thought, ‘I’ll use quantum mechanics.’ As a science fiction writer, there are various nebulous bogosity-generator tools I can use. Something about quantum mechanics that interests me is that there are two modes in quantum mechanics. You can think of the world as evolving in a smooth wavelike pattern, but then as soon as you start measuring things, you find a choppy discrete pattern. It’s what they call the quantum collapse, the collapse of the wave function. In my own mind, I feel like there’s a pulse, where I’ll sort of merge into the place around me and then snap back. Say it’s a nice day, and you’re not really verbalizing to yourself, you’re not really forming opinions in your mind, you’re not doing anything consciously. And then you snap back and you think, ‘There’s so-and-so, I have to ask them for something; it’s such-and-such o’clock, I have to get in the car and go somewhere.’ There are two modes, and I call them the cosmic mode and the robotic mode. It’s almost like sonar – you ping out with the cosmic mode and you pull back with the robotic mode.

“The gimmick in **The Big Aha** is that people get quantum wetware. Wetware’s already an intriguing word – it’s what’s going on in your body, your DNA, your chemicals. Then you make it quantum, so you can consciously control how rapidly you do the oscillations between the cosmic mode and robotic mode. So my characters are party people – they just wedge their minds open to the cosmic, and they’re cosmic all the time. It’s like they’re acidheads, but they’re not taking any drugs, and they can teep each other. And instead of mechanical technology, it’s all biological, so instead of a car you have a road spider, and you ride on its back. The animals you create can have quantum wetware as well. You can get in the vibe with them, and make them change their form, and so the world becomes more spacey.

“Then, of course, you always need something bad to happen in a novel. It’s always good to have an alien invasion. So there are these things like mouths sticking into our world from another dimension, and they’re eating people. I call it **The Big Aha** because people always have the dream of getting the Big Aha! The big vision beyond the white light. My characters are seeking that. There’s also the Zen idea: ‘I was looking for enlightenment but it was here all along.’ Just for a moment, you feel it – the big aha.

“I’m not sure who’s going to publish this novel. I’m putting a little more sex in it than I used to do for my Tor books. David Hartwell once said to me, ‘If you’re talking about the 13-year-old audience, there are some 13-year-olds who are very interested in sex, and some who aren’t. And you can guess which group is the one that reads science fiction.’ But the book isn’t really about sex. I’m having a lot of fun with it. I do like the classic tropes of SF – I call them the ‘power chords.’ That’s how I thought of cyberpunk, as a way of taking the classic SF things, like alien invasions, telepathy, giant ants, and making them rock a little harder. That’s what I’m doing in **The Big Aha**. If I don’t find a publisher, I’m confident I can self publish it. We’ll see how it goes.”

–Rudy Rucker

“Davenport Cliffs” by Rudy Rucker; <www.rudyrucker.com/paintings>

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