

RUDY RUCKER'S SOFTWARE: A POSTMODERNSCIENCE FICTION**Dr Chougule Ramesh**

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Abstract:

Rudy Rucker's SOFTWARE attempts to explore everyone's' intense desire to become immortal. The said fiction is postmodern in its treatment of the sad effect of technology on the human being's life and in its use of machine language. Rudy Rucker has given a vision of the future and an ethos dear to the digital underground. As a postmodern fiction, it deals with plurality of subjects/themes. Hence it is wrong to stick to the fiction and dark future due to technology. It highlights various facets of the postmodernism and the way intermingling of human beings and science/technology is being taken place in the futuristic settings. Therefore, this fiction can also be called as a futuristic piece of postmodern science fiction. It highlights the post-human, cybernetic organism composed of mechanical and biological components and the evolution of robots into boppers and latter's attempts to become one with humans in order to be the God or semi-God.

Keywords: Cyberpunk, Sci.Fi., Cybernetic, Robots, etc.

A mathematician, a hacker, a thinker and cybernetic philosopher, Rudy Rucker is no doubt the zaniest. Besides William Gibson, Rudy Rucker is regarded as the founder of the Cyberpunk School of science fiction – a postmodern genre of Sci. Fi. As a postmodern science fiction author, he has acquired mastery in blending high-tech with low life. Cyberpunk science fiction represents technological body and in doing so represents our culture as being on the threshold of a major mutation of the liberal mind/body system of categories. The mutation of the mind/body system is represented as a by-product of the evolution of technology. The relationship between human body and technology is typically seen as postmodern. Cyberpunk science fiction demonstrates the breakdown of boundaries between artificial and real, natural and technological, human organ and machine- the very centre to the post modernistic thought of Baudrillard. In this connection Hollinger writes, *Cyberpunk can be situated among a growing (although still relatively small) number of Science Fiction projects which can be identified as anti-humanist.* (p.204) While science fiction frequently problematizes the opposition between the natural and the artificial, the human and the machine, it generally sustains them in such a way that the humans securely ensconced in its privileged place at the centre of things. Cyberpunk, however, is *about the breakdown of these oppositions.* (Veronica Hollingar, 204-205) Being one of the founders of cyberpunk science fiction, Rudy Rucker uses recent development in information and technology and its effect on the human beings. The present research paper intends to explore Rudy Rucker's Philip K. Dick award winning fiction entitled *SOFTWARE* as a postmodern science fiction.

Published in 1982, Rucker's *Software* is about the post-humanism, about cybernetic organism composed of mechanical and biological components and the evolution of robots into boppers and latter's attempt to become one with humans in order to become God or semi-God. The fictionist introduces a new technologically evolved species called boppers living on the Moon. The

old scientist, Cobb Anderson is the cause behind the birth of robots whom he taught how to evolve free will. As a result the robots evolve their free wills by natural selection and lead a revolt against

the human beings in 2001. Consequently all boppers are exiled to the moon. They have created their own species and have tried to rule the earth.

Cobb Anderson is lured to the Moon with the promise of immortality by his own technologically evolved copy called Cobb₂. Here we cannot distinguish between the one original creator of robots Cobb Anderson and his copy Cobb₂. The machine of Cobb₂ comes on the Earth in order to lure humans to Moon. The big boppers including Ralph Numbers want to bring everyone, human and bopper, together in a single consciousness. They want the total transmigration of the human mind into the machine, an inevitable outcome of technologically enhanced evolution. Bruce Sterling attributes this attempt of boppers as centre to cyberpunk Science Fiction: *Certain central themes spring up repeatedly in cyberpunk. The theme of body invasion, prosthetic limbs, implanted circuitry, cosmetic surgery, generic alteration, the even more powerful theme of mind invasion, brain-computer interfaces, artificial intelligence, neurochemistry, techniques radically redefining the nature of humanity, the nature of the self.* (Bruce sterling, xiii.)

Ralph Numbers hires some boppers to bring the humans on the earth in order to transfer human personality into the machine and achieve supernatural mobility and omniscience. The Big Bopper wants transmigration – a process of chemical translation which literally transfers the content of the human brain from a physical body into a live robot.

Cobb Anderson, a seventy year old scientist has no money to replace his second hand kidney and recollects *his first robots and how they had learned to hop...* (Rudy Rucker, 14). The mechanical copy of Cobb Anderson assures Cobb immortality if the latter comes to Moon: *We want to make you immortal, Dr. Anderson. After all, you did for us, it is the least we can do.* (Rudy Rucker, 16). The mixture of man and machine is one of characteristic features of postmodernism and the mechanical body of Cobb is indistinguishable from Cobb Anderson. Ralph Numbers is the robot produced by Cobb Anderson. The Big Boppers use wired killers in order to steal human brain whereas the small boppers are not willing to submit to Big Bopper's wishes. Ralph Numbers is bent on turning Cobb Anderson into a piece of software in the big bopper's memory bank. Just like human being, the robots and boppers are running their human organs' business on Moon. The worlds - the world of boppers and the world of human are linked by the spaceship called MEX. Boppers are living in hard vacuum of city called Disky and running factories of circuit cards, memory chips, sheet metals and alike. The human beings also use to go to Moon and have business with boppers. There is a single dome containing human's hotels and offices, only human settlement on Moon. Every bopper/machine enjoys ten months life and everyone *struggles to build a scion, a copy of itself* (Rudy Rucker, 30). Ralph creates his own copy thirty six times and the only thing he needs is the memory stored in human brain. The human memory is restored into the robots. Ralph Numbers succeeds in preserving Anderson's software.

There are small boppers called the Little Kidders who hunt humans and eat their brain alive. The leader of the Little Kidders, Wagstaff opposes the Big Boppers' plan of creating One Consciousness. The struggle between the Big Boppers and Small Boppers on the one hand and Boppers and humans on the other form the themes of the fiction. Cobb Anderson and Sta-Hi leave for Moon and the copy of the Sta-Hi starts to live as the son of Sta-Hi's parents. In cyberpunk science fiction, both humans and machines live together. The double of Sta-Hi disguises as the son of Mooney and leaves with Anderson as the boppers don't want Mooney to suspect about his son's disappearance. Mooney cannot distinguish the machine in disguise of Sta-Hi and the real Sta-Hi, disruption of the border between the real and the copy – a centre of postmodernism.

In cyberpunk science fiction, money has given less importance and information becomes vital. When Cobb and Sta-Hi asks for the payment of lodging on Moon, the bopper replies that *Money is so dull* ... *I prefer a surprise gift. A complex information.* (Rudy Rucker, 57) The hotel

where Cobb and Sta-Hi landed is also a sort of Big Bopper carrying on a different conversation with every guest at once. The Boppers attack humans and eat their brains. Misty from the earth is a kind of prey in the sense that she is kidnapped and got her brain taped. Her brain is restored in a bopper called BEX and another brain is implanted in her body controlled by Big Boppers. She is a sort of *a remote controlled part of the spaceship*. (Rudy Rucker, 16) Though Misty controlled by the machine, her personality is human, she likes *eating and...and other things*. (Rudy Rucker, 61) Sta-Hi realizes the dangers posed by Big Boppers and warns Cobb Anderson but the later is in no mood to listen. Cobb Anderson has a cheap, second hand heart and is waiting for death as he has no money to replace his second had heart. Hence he accepts the invitation of Big Boppers. He wants to enjoy his free will as promised by Big Boppers:

The boppers were going to tape his brain and put him in a robot body. Sta-Hi refuses to follow Cobb and on his way to Earth meets another robot called Tripod, who got a software. Tripod is interested in conjugating with Sta-Hi because, "You got the hardware! And I got the software," he sang happily. "interested in conjugating (Rudy Rucker, 79).

Here machine tries to become human. The mixture of man and machine is characteristic features of postmodern Science Fiction.

The Big Boppers want to extract brain of all fleshers and all the little robots too. Little Kidders notice dangers posed by Big Boppers and so they decide to continue war against Big Boppers. The Big Boppers called GAX asks Sti-Hi to join Big Boppers to become third Earth – based robot bodied agents. Hoverer, Sta-Hi is overcome by the temptation and killed GAX. Meanwhile Cobb loses his consciousness, his software to Big Bopper and returns on Earth as remote robot controlled by Mr. Frostee. We have a Cobb in new body, lost the sensation of eating and drinking since last week. Except the scare on chest, Cobb looked the same even after robot double: ... *Cobb went into the bathroom and examined himself in the mirror. Except for the hole in his chest, he looked the same as ever. He felt the same as ever. But now he was a robot.*" (Rudy Rucker, 97) The humans living on earth are suspicious of robots coming secretly on Earth for routine organ theft. (Rudy Rucker, 93)

The Big Boppers want to send more robots on Earth. The big boppers like Mr. Frostee work towards *human – boppers fusion, a single great mind stretching from person to person all over the world ... simpler being merge again. In this way, we draw ever closer to the one.* (Rudy Rucker, 119) In this way Frostee wants to become a semi-God, an Almighty and omnipotent. However, Cobb fed up by the life in machine, refuses to follow Mr. Foostee and puts fingers on the particular button exploding the Big Machine called Mr. Foostee along with himself. In this way the dreams of Big Boppers are shattered to pieces.

Rudy Rucker seems to point to the dangers posed by technology to the humans. The striking case of human body in the fiction involves the technology of extracting memory patterns/software from human brain and implanting the same in machine and let it live as Big Bopper. Whether this kind of technology is attainable or not, it nonetheless represents the ultimate in ignoring the human body and treating humans as controllable data. For instance Cobb Anderson is promised immortality by the machine if he moves to moon. When he realizes that there is no immortality drug on Moon, he

instead of returning to Earth, prefers to enjoy his life in other robot. His thought patterns /memory/software is extracted from his immortal life in new body but he is manipulated by the Big Boppers. The intension of Big Boppers in extracting software from human brain and implanting

it in other robot is to create One Consciousness uncontrolled. Thus man made machine can completely grasp and manipulate the human mind.

Cobb Anderson soon realizes that he cannot enjoy his free will. In fact his every action is controlled by the machine installed in his box like chest. The truck driving by him is a sort of Big Machine, controls his action. At the end of the fiction he puts his finger on the button in his chest and explodes the Big Machine along with himself, and thus shatters the dream of Big Boppers to create One Consciousness.

To sum up, Rudy Rucker's SOFTWARE is postmodern fiction in its plurality of subject matters, in its near future setting and mingling of humans and machines. The fiction portrays a future when global politics are rife with the corruption of mega-corporations. The increasing rise of technology has led to the increasing isolation of the powerless individual. The fiction is dark prophetic vision of how the future might be.

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