

A Soul in 2 Gigabytes of RAM

The Urth list — 1 messages, 1 voices, 27 Feb 2001

<https://urth.darkrealm.vip/thread/urth/2569>

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Talarican — 27 Feb 2001, 17:44

Some reflections on the robots of 5HC

Much has been written about the soul Mr. Million, the purely electronic cyborg "simulation", clearly exhibits. Indeed the simulation seems to have more of a soul (filled primarily with regrets, it would seem) than Maitre or the other living members of the Cave Canem clan put together. I think the inclination of all Urthlings was to ascribe this at least in part to the unconventional method by which it was originally programmed; it is in effect a simplified bitmap of an actual person's mental synapses. And of course a goodly portion of the regrets would accrue from the fact that the person simulated was brain-fried to death by the process which mapped those synapses.

However, I notice a curious phenomenon near the end of "Fifth Head": Number Five writes that his robotic guards at the prison camp in the Tattered Mountains would listen to his stories of Mr. Million and occasionally respond by sneaking him gifts of sweets and extra food. How do the 'stalking machines' fit into this scheme? On this evidence, they seem to have souls also. Why? Is the software technology of those backwater worlds, on which reel-to-reel tape recorders are used *, so sophisticated that programmers can give stalking robots artificial souls without "simulation"? Or is "simulation" perhaps commonly utilized as a programming shortcut by the authorities and the powerful on a world where human life is cheaper than dirt, i.e. the 'stalking machines' are themselves simulations of some hapless condemned criminals or slaves? Could this explain occasional cases of robot guards going berserk, as Number Five relates?

I have to wonder, too, if the submission of 'Number One' to simulation-with-extreme-prejudice was, er, entirely voluntary? I get the impression that this sort of simulation is done clandestinely, or at least in a very questionable manner, perhaps under the rubric of euthenasia. I suppose these ten-nine unbound simulators and similar equipment are actually ostensibly manufactured and sold with the "understanding" (wink, wink, nudge, nudge) that they will be programmed by perhaps less authentic and more conventional and kludgy methods that don't involve killing the simulatee. If true simulations by particle beam examination of the brain are done in "back alleys", is it a stretch to suppose that this procedure might be forced on a simulatee, perhaps in order to dispose of an inconvenient personage while preserving useful memories?

If Maitre (Number Four) assassinated Number Two, is it unreasonable to suppose that the scanning process, by which Mr. Million (Number Three) came to be, represented the assassination of Number One by Number Two? ** Mr. Millions' one allusion to the occasion, as related by Number Five ("Until today I had always thought they lied"), could possibly be construed as lingering bitterness.

* Reel-to-reel?! aw come on! When 5HC was written, 8-track tape was in vogue! Now THAT would have been a hoot!

** The person simulated by Mr. Million was by his admission Number Five's "great grandfather",

which means two more generations of clones, Maitre, and his father whom he killed, transpired. And, cf. Tante Jeannine's remark that the simulator itself must be included in the "count" in order for Five to be the correct number for the narrator.

On the subject of the Cave Canem "family tree", here's another IAQ: what was the question "Dr. Marsch" was leading up to asking Maitre, referring to the progenitor of the series of clones, which Number Five interrupted with his insults about "Marsch's" supposed Annese origin?