
Subject: Silicon souls

Posted by [duntemann.wbst\[1\]](#) on Thu, 30 May 2013 04:30:18 GMT

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Ahhh, souls...one of my favorite topics as a writer. For those who are interested, I've had three pertinent stories in print:

"Ariel" in a hammy collection called TALES OF THE MARVELOUS MACHINE, published by Creative Computing Press. A man who has just lost his wife of many years asks a priest: Can a computer have a soul, and is it moral to "turn him off?"

"Silicon Psalm" in IASFM for February 1981. An intelligent medical life support system is asked by its patient to turn her off and let her die.

"Guardian" in IASFM for September 1980. Was on the Hugo final ballot in 1981. An ancient fighting machine emerges from a swamp after 1700 years and challenges the beliefs of a rural abbot in a ruined future America.

Not many writers have taken this issue by the horns; most cannot disconnect the silliness of organized religion from the serious questions of the nature of spirit and human immortality. Most assume that there cannot be immortal souls without admitting to some kind of almighty God--a connection I find puzzling, and a tribute to the power of pseudochristian brainwashing.

Gaby's spiritual presence after death in Varley's DEMON is one of the few thoughtful explorations of the notion of spirit to appear in recent years.

Also see "Trinity" by Nancy Kress in the current edition of IASFM. Nan is a good friend and I helped her with the project a little. "Trinity" is all the more remarkable considering it came from a rather militant Atheist--Nan is considerably more openminded about the notion of spirit than several (mostly male) writers Whose Names You Would Know, who have poked fun of every serious attempt to consider the possibilities of spirit and

immortality to come up in discussions I've had with them. At worst, their reactions remind me of the poor sap who throws a screaming temper tantrum anytime anybody suggests we think about the possibilities of travelling faster than light.

Pure rationality is necessary, but insufficient to our understanding of the universe and how it works. Just ask Schroedinger's Cat.

--Jeff Duntemann
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