

razors here 'n' there

The Urth list — 1 messages, 1 voices, 29 Oct 1998

<https://urth.darkrealm.vip/thread/urth/1229>

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Tony Ellis — 29 Oct 1998, 13:47

Mantis wrote:

This scene contains much. That the soldier stares into the water like Narcissus is one thing, but that it later turns out he somehow looks like a male form of Jolenta (Severian shows him his face in a mirror and asks him if it is like the one of the most beautiful woman in the world; "Miles" says yes; then Severian tells him Jolenta is dead [ch. 6]) is an additional puzzle piece which I don't think has ever been addressed. (Is the body "Miles" therefore literally the brother of Jolenta?

Severian omits a number of important details from his narrative, but I can't believe he could stumble across a dead soldier who looked like Jolenta's twin brother and not mention the fact. I think the significance of the mirror incident is that -Miles- sees Jolenta's face, not that Severian does. It's a confirmation of Severian's otherwise fantastic mental leap to the conclusion that Miles has been possessed by Jonas: the soldier's sense of self is so slight that when he looks in the mirror all he sees is the object of Jonas's obsession.

In which case it's not Narcissus staring into the water, but Echo - the one who pined away for love of that self-centred little flower.