

Jonas <> Pinocchio

The Urth list — 7 messages, 5 voices, 25 Sep 2002

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Michael Andre-Driussi — 25 Sep 2002, 20:17

Jerry Friedman and Roy Lackey disagree with my casting Jonas as wanting to become fully bio. I guess I should have preped my statement with qualifiers, since while I believe "Jonas Pinocchio" is a possible reading, and may be required for some, I myself do not hold it too tightly, preferring Tin Man and Tin Soldier.

Since I was responding to the posts of others, it seems I should have written something like "Such a reading would seem to require that Jonas = Pinocchio, whereas 98% of the time we talk of Jonas = Tin Man and/or Jonas = Steadfast Tin Soldier. OTOH, if Jonas = Pinocchio, then Miles represents his wish come true, in contrast to Jonas = Tin Man, where Miles represents the opposite of his wish, a cruel torment which is then furthered by the knowledge that Jolenta has already died."

Jerry wrote:

Can we

imagine a prosthetic-bearing bio in love with a chem wanting to become fully a chem?

Putting aside the "doing it for Love" angle . . . Uh, would that be the horde of boys who play at being robots? Represented in animation by Fry, the 20th century guy in "Futurama," who tells Bender he wanted a robot friend (or to be a robot?) since he was five years old; and Fry has fantasies about being a robot? Andy Warhol's phrase "I want to be a machine"? All the starry-eyed singularity adventurists who long to be "uploaded"?

This is hard to imagine?

(Jerry asked for the source of Steadfast Tin Soldier: Hans Christian Andersen.)

But then Roy goes further, into his "lusty robot" kick:

All the more reason to wonder what he wanted with Jolenta.

Again, Roy, you seem to be saying that Love is impossible without, er, compatible sexual interface devices. I mentioned this before, I don't recall that you answered: Is Love impossible for Jonas because he is a robot, or is it impossible because his beloved is a bio, or is non-sexual Love simply impossible?

=mantis=

Jerry Friedman — 25 Sep 2002, 21:13 · follows Michael Andre-Driussi

--- Michael Andre-Driussi <mantis at siriusfiction.com> wrote:

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I like that version better, although my version wouldn't say that Jonas equaled any other literary character. Maybe a matter of taste in interpretation.

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There's a big difference between fantasizing and going to a surgeon.

In one sense, I have to agree with you, since I gather there are people who have limbs amputated for sexual reasons. (Cf. another sf Wolfe.) Not that there's anything wrong with that, but it's got to be the very very tail of the bell curve. As Roy pointed out, Jonas hasn't always wanted to be biological--far from it--so I really can't see him wanting something so drastic to get closer to Jolenta.

All the starry-eyed singularity adventists who long to be "uploaded"?

Whole different thing. As far as I can tell, they imagine it's going to be like being a bio human, only better, or like being a demigod.

This is hard to imagine?

Still.

(Jerry asked for the source of Steadfast Tin Soldier: Hans Christian Andersen.)

Thanks! I'll check it out. Andersen was a very small part of my childhood.

But then Roy goes further, into his "lusty robot" kick:

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non-sexual
Love simply impossible?

Here I agree with you even if I have to disagree with Roy. ObNewSun: the bit where Severian mentions women who desire (love?) men who are impotent save with men like themselves, and men who desire women whose legs are locked with paralysis. I don't remember whether the context of this had to do with Jonas and Jolenta.

Jerry Friedman

Alice K. Turner — 26 Sep 2002, 02:36 · follows Jerry Friedman

Maybe a little background on the Tin Woodman, for those who are familiar mainly with the movie or the first book only. We know that Wolfe knows the Baum books well, through "Eyeflash" and references elsewhere. Baum wrote 13 books in this series (and it was continued by other writers, but that is irrelevant). Among them was -The Tin Woodman of Oz-, which recounts the story of the TW (Nick Chopper) and his brother, the Tin Soldier (Captain Fyter), and which I think influenced Wolfe without the least doubt, when he conceived of Jonas. ((I think he intended the reference to be humorously picked up by those in the know.))

Both brothers were in love with a girl named Nimmie Amee who had rather a thing for metal. As various body parts were chopped off or blown away and replaced with tin by Ku-Klip the Tinsmith she was more and more attracted. Both men liked their new bodies too, as they gradually became more and more artificial: "brilliant and durable" (TW 207) and "a great improvement on their meat bodies" (223). Ku-Klip made a Frankensteinian monster-man (Chopfy) of the brothers' cast-off parts, but he was not a success--awkward, whiny and always hungry. At any rate, the brothers, who had each been incapacitated by rust long enough to lose track of Nimmie Amee, go off to find her to ask her to choose between them and find that she is married--to whom? To Chopfy, of course--Ku-Klip had given him one tin arm, which excited her fetish. And she thinks she'll keep him, since she has spent a good deal of time training him to be a good husband. This is rather an amusing scene.

The point, re Jonas, is that both brothers are extremely grateful to be made entirely of metal (each had gone through a period where they were part tin, part meat), and look down on Chopfy, made of their old parts.

Also, just for fun, you should look up Terry Bisson's short-short "They're Made Out of Meat" on the web--it's been illegally copied everywhere (almost literally) and there is an amusing illustrated version at Seeing Eye Theater.

-alga

Roy C. Lackey — 26 Sep 2002, 06:36 · follows Alice K. Turner

mantis wrote:
But then Roy goes further, into his "lusty robot" kick:

All the more reason to wonder what he wanted with Jolenta.

Again, Roy, you seem to be saying that Love is impossible without, er, compatible sexual interface devices. I mentioned this before, I don't recall that you answered: Is Love impossible for Jonas because he is a robot, or is it impossible because his beloved is a bio, or is non-sexual Love simply impossible?

The answer to both of the first two questions is: yes, for the obvious lack of "compatible sexual interface devices", but it is the third question, I believe, that most concerns you, and others. For me, the third question doesn't even arise with regard to Jonas and Jolenta.

What you are calling "Love" was not Love; it was unadulterated Lust, as far as Jonas is concerned. Neither is even an issue for Jolenta; she wouldn't look at him twice, even if he paid her. She felt nothing at all for him.

Jolenta was an artificially enhanced, stereotypical sexpot--and nothing more. She was, with the glamour cast on her by Talos, literally the most desirable woman on the planet. By design, no man could resist her sexual allure. Jonas, perhaps because of his biological replacement parts, proved no exception.

Jonas laid eyes on Jolenta exactly twice in his life. The second time was just after he and Sev had been captured on the grounds of the House Absolute. He caught sight of her, started to call her name, and was knocked senseless before he finished the first syllable. That was all that happened, and the last time he saw her. The first time he saw her was on the road just outside the Piteous Gate. Jolenta was afraid of the imposing gate and moved close to Talos for protection. When he ignored her, she then took the stirrup strap of Jonas's merychip. Her "fear made her press the side of one full breast against the thigh of the man on the merychip". It was Lust at first touch, as well as at first sight. He made a passing query to Talos about "why this lady, the loveliest I've ever seen, is walking in the dust". Jolenta took offence, rebuked him in two sentences, and moved away. Jonas blushed. Then he started to tell his "bean" story, was interrupted by Talos, then said to Jolenta, "May I continue, most marvelous of women?" That single question was the only thing he ever said to her in his life. Her two-sentence rebuke, above, was the only thing she ever said to him. What I have related in this paragraph is a summation of the entirety of their relationship.

There was, in effect, no relationship between Jonas and Jolenta outside of Jonas's head. There was no basis in their common history for even a Platonic relationship, none at all. Jonas, illogical as it may be for an android, lusted after Jolenta just as Sev and every other man who saw her did, and that's all it was. Lust, not Love.

Even Sev recognized it. Just before Jonas was knocked senseless, he wrote: "When Jolenta was nearly opposite us, she turned her head. To me, at that moment, it seemed she must have winded his desire, as among the mountains certain unclean spirits are said to be attracted by the odor of meat that has been cast upon a fire for them." (II, chap. 14)

-Roy

James Wynn — 26 Sep 2002, 18:43 · follows Roy C. Lackey

Regarding Alga's background on the Tin Woodman:

Ok. Now I have brand new interest in the sequels to "The Wizard of Oz", but I still don't see more than a superficial connection to Jonas. Jolenta was "in love" with a man who was **entirely** synthetic...ah! Perhaps you're saying she was in love with Baldanders "right-arm man"! Nice flag, that links Jolenta to Nimmie Amee. But still, she was rejected by him. And she never loved his artificiality. If Baldanders or Jonas would or could have maintained her beauty products she would have loved either of them as much.

But the big thing is that ...Jonas **becomes** human, right? He doesn't repair the robot parts. He repairs the human prosthetics to the point of growing a whole body. He becomes the human Miles. This surely was his intent when going to be "repaired". Is it not generally agreed that

Jonas left Severian and became Miles? I searched the list on this and didn't find anything to the contrary.

The Tin Woodman may have been an *inspiration* to Wolfe's images of synthetic people, but can the connection be drawn any more tightly?

-- Crush

Roy C. Lackey — 26 Sep 2002, 19:42 · follows James Wynn

Crush writes:

But the big thing is that ...Jonas *becomes* human, right? He doesn't repair the robot parts. He repairs the human prosthetics to the point of growing a whole body. He becomes the human Miles. This surely was his intent when going to be "repaired". Is it not generally agreed that Jonas left Severian and became Miles? I searched the list on this and didn't find anything to the contrary.

No, I don't think there is general agreement on that point. On 9/6/02 mantis wrote:

Jonas steps into the mirrors after speaking of being repaired. When next we see him, he is fully biological. I have often speculated that in Yesod his biological prosthetics were expanded into a full biological body into which the Jonas-software was integrated . . . along with the biological software that was present-yet-dormant in the prosthetics, now full-blown in the reconstructed bio body.

(A somewhat cleaner version is that the Jonas-spirit was drawn from Yesod by the Claw to ride the body of the anonymous dead soldier.)

In any event, two personalities in one body.

As I argued in an earlier post, Jonas hoped to be repaired so as to return to his original android state, not become a bio. So I prefer the "cleaner version" mantis outlined above. He expanded on it yesterday:

I guess it all resolves this way:
since Severian heard the utterance and saw Jonas go into the mirror, the Claw heard it too, so that later on at that point in Severian's life when he really needed a friend, yet all there was at hand was a corpse, then the Claw drew down the Jonas software from the borderland between Briah and Yesod, installed it in the reanimated corpse, and thereby solved two wishes with one snappy miracle.

I don't think there was _anything_ of Jonas in that dead soldier before Sev, in his fevered delirium, put it there.

-Roy

Alice K. Turner — 27 Sep 2002, 02:20 · follows Roy C. Lackey

Crush cried:

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I don't think it's tight. But consider an author's thinking: A Tin Soldier (and I think he *was* thinking of Andersen's tin soldier too, thank you, mantis). What about a Tin Sailor? The Baum Tin Soldier likes being Tin more than meat--so will my Tin Sailor--but we'll reverse the process of repair. A Tin Soldier in love? My Tin Sailor will be too, but of course with the most artificial woman he can possibly find (Anderson's soldier loved a paper doll--make of that what you will). And that, in a curious writerly way, leads to the invention of Jolenta who is created by another metal man (the original mythical Talos was made of bronze). If you think about it, Jolenta doesn't have an important plot role, though GW has given her some nice small scenes; my guess is that he conceived her after dreaming up Jonas and developed her role after that to make some points about Talos and Sev, killing her off fairly quickly. Sev thinks she might have been in love with Talos--like Nimmie Amee, attracted to metal. So perhaps Talos was the trigger--but I think Jonas

Now we don't know for sure about the Miles identification--I wouldn't make too much of that. Unless you have a really good theory about Inire's mirrors.Or Sev's projections.

-alga