

Ascians and Ava

The Urth list — 2 messages, 2 voices, 21 Apr 1999

<https://urth.darkrealm.vip/thread/urth/1560>

Exported from an unofficial mirror of a public mailing list. Copyright in each message remains with the person who wrote it. Email addresses are obscured as `user at host`, the form the original archive published. This file was rebuilt from parsed fields rather than retained headers, so it is faithful in content but not byte-exact.

Michael Andre-Driussi — 21 Apr 1999, 14:04

Not so long ago there was talk of how Wolfe "goes Orwell" in the language of the Ascians; and how Wolfe then goes beyond that by strongly suggesting (via translation) that the Ascians get around such rigid mind control and tell stories (i.e., they use language for the "frivolous" reasons rejected by the First Empire, for which the Empire =perhaps= was doomed); that is to say, the Ascians are human, too.

At around the same area of the text, there is the discussion between Severian and postulant Ava. Ava talks about how the pelerines even heal butterflies, etc. . . . yet they don't consider the Ascians human. IIRC.

This comes as something of a surprise to Severian (and I assume to the first time reader, too). And Severian, a torturer-in-recovery, knows that they are human: so this is some kind of sign that Severian has spiritually evolved, etc.

We can side with Ava, and think "Godless communist Ascians are something less than human."

Or we can side with Severian, that the Ascians are human, and cannot be killed in the guilt-free manner that butchers kill cattle or dwarves kill orcs.

But there's a harsher side to the whole exchange. Because even though neither one knows it, the Conciliator has returned to the Order founded in his name, upon his relic, and he has found it quite in error. And the next thing you know, <SHAZAM!> the order has been destroyed on the battlefield, never to rise again.

Just a coincidence?

=mantis=

Alex David Groce — 21 Apr 1999, 23:11 · follows Michael Andre-Driussi

On Apr 21, 2:04pm, Michael Andre-Driussi wrote:

Subject: (urth) Ascians and Ava

Not so long ago there was talk of how Wolfe "goes Orwell" in the language of the Ascians; and how Wolfe then goes beyond that by strongly suggesting (via translation) that the Ascians get around such rigid mind control and tell stories (i.e., they use language for the "frivolous" reasons rejected by the First Empire, for which the Empire =perhaps= was doomed); that is to say, the Ascians are human, too.

At around the same area of the text, there is the discussion between Severian and postulant Ava. Ava talks about how the pelerines even heal butterflies, etc. . . . yet they don't consider the Ascians human. IIRC.

This comes as something of a surprise to Severian (and I assume to the

first time reader, too). And Severian, a torturer-in-recovery, knows that they are human: so this is some kind of sign that Severian has spiritually evolved, etc.

We can side with Ava, and think "Godless communist Ascians are something less than human."

Or we can side with Severian, that the Ascians are human, and cannot be killed in the guilt-free manner that butchers kill cattle or dwarves kill orcs.

But there's a harsher side to the whole exchange. Because even though neither one knows it, the Conciliator has returned to the Order founded in his name, upon his relic, and he has found it quite in error. And the next thing you know, <SHAZAM!> the order has been destroyed on the battlefield, never to rise again.

Just a coincidence?

Hmmm...

Also interesting to note that realizing the Ascians are human doesn't prevent Severian from carrying on the war against them. In fact, it would seem a further justification of the war in one sense--they are human, but surely living stunted lives under the domination of Abaia & co. I'll have to say that despite the recent discussions, and bearing in mind the way the New Sun's arrival must seem to the drowned, the "entropy gang" just doesn't arouse much sympathy in me. Whatever their flaws, the Hieros are good guy enough. The war against the Ascians seems to tie in with the Chestertonian (and older, of course, but he expressed it well) idea that you can only punish a criminal if you respect his humanity enough to view his action as wrong---and that in some cases not to punish is the worst insult to a man of all.

"And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall set you free." - John 8:32

--

Alex David Groce (adgroce at eos.ncsu.edu)
Senior (Computer Science/Multidisciplinary Studies in Technology & Fiction)
'98-99 NCSU AITP Student Chapter President
608 Charleston Road, Apt. 1E (919)-233-7366
<http://www4.ncsu.edu/~adgroce>