

Claudius

The Urth list — 3 messages, 3 voices, 16 Jul 1998

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Alex David Groce — 16 Jul 1998, 16:04

Has there been any discussion on the list (sorry, I'm new and haven't had time to exhaustively browse the archives) of similarities between Severian and Claudius, both the historical emperor and the charming narrator of the two Robert Graves novels?

I'd have to refer to the books to recall the whole correlation, but major points include the unlikely lamed emperor, the prophetic implications of the first chapter, their wives' names (though Severian's Valeria is no Valeria Messalina), and perhaps even the apparently catastrophic "renewals" (Severian's flood, Claudius' prediction of the dire reign of Nero).

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

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CRCulver — 17 Jul 1998, 03:56 · follows Alex David Groce

Alex:

< Has there been any discussion on the list (sorry, I'm new and haven't had time to exhaustively browse the archives) of similarities between Severian and Claudius, both the historical emperor and the charming narrator of the two Robert Graves novels?>

The point that comes to mind first is that both Claudius and Severian plan to write a manuscript they believe no one will read and get rid of it in a lead coffer.

Christopher R. Culver <crculver at aol.com>
<http://members.aol.com/crculver/index.html>

Charles Dye — 18 Jul 1998, 12:36 · follows CRCulver

CRCulver at aol.com writes:

Alex:

< Has there been any discussion on the list (sorry, I'm new and haven't had time to exhaustively browse the archives) of similarities between Severian and Claudius, both the historical emperor and the charming narrator of the two Robert Graves novels?>

The point that comes to mind first is that both Claudius and Severian plan to write a manuscript they believe no one will read and get rid of it in a lead coffer.

The dead giveaway, for me anyhow, was the scene where Severian produces one of 'his' aes in the era of Typhon:

He examined it, bit it, and gave it back to me. "Gold all right. Looks a trifle like you, 'cept he seems to have got himself cut up. Don't suppose you noticed."

"No," I said. "I never thought of it."

Hadelin nodded and pushed back his chair. "A man doesn't shave himself sidewise. See you in the morning, sieur, madame."

Compare with a scene from "Claudius the God" chapter 6 :

It pleased my vanity to have my head on the coins.... Portraits on coins, however, are always disappointing because they are executed in profile, and it comes as a shock, when one sees it in a portrait, that one really looks like that to people standing beside one. For one's full face, because of the familiarity that mirrors give it, a certain toleration and even affection is felt; but I must say that when I first saw the model that the mint-masters were striking for me I grew angry and asked whether it was intended to be a caricature.

Robert Graves once did a translation of "The Lives of the Twelve Caesars" in which each Emperor's chapter was illustrated with the appropriate aureus.

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