

Black Sun

The Urth list — 3 messages, 3 voices, 10 Sep 2003

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Thomas Bates — 10 Sep 2003, 07:13

In all this talk of the different suns, what about the Black Sun?

In The Sword of the Lictor, when Severian is in Thrax with the sick children, he says that the Conciliator is the Black Sun.

"That night in the jacal it [the Claw] was not brilliant, but it glowed with so deep a blue that the light itself seemed almost a clearer darkness. Of all the names of the Conciliator, the one that is, I believe, least used, and which has always seemed the most puzzling to me, is that of the Black Sun. Since that night, I have felt myself almost to comprehend it." (Volume III, Chapter VIII, TBotNS)

"Black Sun" makes me think of a black hole, but I don't see what that has to do with the Conciliator. Maybe someone else does?

The only thing I can think of is the darkness at the crucifixion of Christ, which is thought to have resulted from an eclipse:

Luke 23:44-45

And it was about the sixth hour, and there was a darkness over all the earth until the ninth hour. And the sun was darkened, and the veil of the temple was rent in the midst.

Mat 27:45

Now from the sixth hour there was darkness over all the land unto the ninth hour.

Andy Robertson — 10 Sep 2003, 06:29 · follows Thomas Bates

I don't know if it is relevant here, but the "Black Sun" is an Asatru/Odinistic mythical image connected to the source of wisdom. Essentially it is the "other side" of the sun - the sun not as a physical thing, but purely as a symbol of mystical knowledge.

There are some Odinistic references in the Sun books (for example Silk is plainly a figure of Odin, with a raven and one eye)

----- Original Message -----

From: "Thomas Bates" <thomasgbates at yahoo.com>

To: <urth at urth.net>

Sent: Wednesday, September 10, 2003 8:13 AM

Subject: (urth) Black Sun

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James Jordan — 10 Sep 2003, 14:42 · follows Andy Robertson

At 02:13 AM 9/10/2003, Thomas Bates wrote:

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Is Odin symbolism already at work in the Severian books? There is Ragnarok, so I guess Wolfe was already employing a bit of Norse imagery. The chapter does not seem to be trading in Norse myth, however, but in the gospel, where Jesus enters the room of the dead girl and raises her.

Some quick notes/thoughts:

1. The darkness on Calvary cannot be intended as an eclipse since it lasts three hours. Rather, it refers back to the three days of darkness of the 9th Egyptian Plague that preceded the 10th, which entailed the death of the Passover Lamb as a way of escaping it. The gospels intend us to understand this as miraculous event.
2. This chapter (3:8) emphasizes Sev's black robe, which appears bright to the girl. Also the darkened shining of the claw. Sev as Conciliator is both black and white sun.
3. Speculating, I would think of hell as outer darkness, the place of judgment, judgment that

comes from God just as much as the light of grace comes from Him. Sev. is clearly mostly the judgment side, as a Torturer. But he manifests the grace-light side also. If the dark Claw somehow signifies judgment, one would see this as a judgment unto resurrection in this chapter, since that, in essence, is what happens. This does fit with the overall narrative: Sev as Black Sun bringing judgment to Urth, and resurrection as New Sun afterwards. But I don't know if that's entirely right, or even on the map.

Nutria