

Decoding "Tracking Song"

The Urth list — 2 messages, 2 voices, 24 Oct 1997

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John Bishop — 24 Oct 1997, 09:57

I looked up "cim" in the OED and the OED supplement; there is a "cime", an alternate spelling for "cyme", which is a technical term for a particular kind of bud ("a head of unexpanded leaves"). This doesn't fit.

Here's the Cim name quote (p 199 of the 1980 Timescape pb edition of IODDAOSAOS):

When I was born my father wished to name me
Seven Snows, which is a common name for girls
among our people. But I was born while he
was away in his boat; and before he returned,
my mother had left her bed and seen the Cim
blowing from tree to tree like a soft star in
the air, and completed the naming.

Re-reading that passage I am struck by the way it
carries hints of meaning in all the phrases: the other
name, the boat, the implied customs of naming, the
relations between the sexes in her people.

It's also not clear what the Cim could be: is this
a single thing or a stuff? The best real parallel
I've seen is the floating dandelion-like seeds of
some trees, which in the spring sometimes float in
clouds from their parent trees. That's a bit star-
like, but not like "a star".

Re Nashhwonk: yes, the description of the fight makes
the "chair" sound much more like moose antlers (it
can cover his head) or elk antlers (many sharp points).
I concede. North America it is.

The tone of the interactions between the narrator and
the Nashhwonk named Mankiller (and where else have
we seen _that_ concept? This too is no accident!)
is interesting--the moose is confident and friendly;
it's a surprise when he dies, as you expect him to
continue after such an introduction.

-John

Jim Jordan — 30 Oct 1997, 01:29 · follows John Bishop

Here's the Cim name quote (p 199 of the 1980 Timescape pb edition of IODDAOSAOS):

When I was born my father wished to name me
Seven Snows, which is a common name for girls
among our people. But I was born while he
was away in his boat; and before he returned,
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the air, and completed the naming.

I have nothing to go on except the passage itself, but I figured that cim is snow. Notice that the naming is "completed," which implies (possibly) that the mother did not completely change the father's desires.

Nutria