

Castaway with Spoilers

The Urth list — 2 messages, 2 voices, 07 Feb 2003

<https://urth.darkrealm.vip/thread/urth/3835>

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cilluff1 at optonline.net — 07 Feb 2003, 19:39

Blattid writes, prompted by Mantis' gender comment:

<<> So we are all in agreement that the narrator is female?

Huh?!? Sputter!?!

You know, the question of what sex (or age, or race, or any other physical characteristic) of the narrator never came up in my mind. Not once. In two readings less than two days apart ...

So, uh, any particular reason for thinking this? (I don't think the "I love you" is intended that way...)>>

I read it as a man, but the passage that tipped me that way really can go either way: "...I was sick of talking to the other guys in the crew. I'd been talking to them ever since I signed on, and I knew what they were going to say and the games they wanted to play and what all their jokes were."

I had read "the other guys in the crew" as modifying the narrator, making the narrator male, but it just as easily could refer to the stranded gent. The "the games they wanted to play" line though does have sexual connotations to it, although that doesn't necessarily make the narrator female. I also thought her bawdy jokes of "was it as good for you as it was for her..." seemed like a "guy thing" to say, but I guess that is sexist of me and there's no reason a woman couldn't say that.

I do however like idea of the narrator being female -- she is the antithesis of the Gaia, a nice duality. She is the embodiment of the white world, anti-nature (White Goddess? I've never read that but it makes you think...), where not only do they not have trees but they try to make the stranded gent forget about leaves entirely. He speaks to her, just as he spoke to Gaia, because she is the embodiment of this anti-nature. She would like to know how to make him see the trees and hear the birds, but She cannot do that anymore.

Incidentally, I do agree that the earth is "the" castaway as well the stranded gent, which is why I've described him (clumsily) as the stranded gent. Note that the title actually isn't "The Castaway," it is simply "Castaway" -- it refers to both earth and the man, so there is not any singular "the" castaway, and it also lets the word act as a verb -- the story is about how we castaway earth and nature, first on the planet itself, and then by pounding its memory out of this last natural man, a man whom we also castaway as having a "blown" mind. Note also that all that white "suck[ed] the color out of everything except blood. Only it never sucked the color out of him, and that made him special to me." Well, if he's alive, and has blood, why SHOULD it suck the color out of him? Also, why should that be special to her -- because she and everyone else no longer have blood or color.

- Shell

James Jordan — 08 Feb 2003, 19:53 · follows cilluff1 at optonline.net

I took the narrator as female, because of the "games the other guys play" passage. And I agree that it works thematically. Also it "felt" as if the narrator was especially interested in the "woman" on the planet, which seems in a way more appropriate for a woman. (E.g. "What was this other woman like?") Also, the fact that the man was so interested in talking with the narrator, after years of talking only to another "woman," indicated to me that the narrator was female. He was used to talking to a woman.

The "I love you" was said by the stranded man to the old woman, over and over, and seemed to comfort her.

I speculate that Atrothers is an alpha primitive before the word "troth," and would mean "unmarried ones" -- another image of sterility.

Obert means "otter."

Yarmouth is a river's name:

For example, the river Yar was first mentioned by the ancient Greek geographer Ptolemy, in the second century A.D. The word is believed to stem from an old, pre-English, Celtic word "gar," meaning something like "shout" or "cry," and probably referring to the loud sounds made by rushing water at the Yar's mouth, when tides were changing.

- English River Names, as reviewed (scroll down a ways) at:

<http://www.amazon.com/exec/obidos/tg/cm/member-reviews/-/A2CRUETJKX1WA5/1/ref%3Dcm%5Fcr%5Fauth/103-6356536-1614238>

Interesting that both of the man's companions had water names. First the Otter died, and then the River died.

Anyway, what I found.

Nutria