

Not my Best Side

U. A. Fanthorpe

I

Not my best side, I'm afraid.
The artist didn't give me a chance to
Pose properly, and as you can see,
Poor chap, he had this obsession with
5 Triangles, so he left off two of my
Feet. I didn't comment at the time
(What, after all, are two feet
To a monster?) but afterwards
I was sorry for the bad publicity.
10 Why, I said to myself, should my conqueror
Be so ostentatiously beardless, and ride
A horse with a deformed neck and square hoofs?
Why should my victim be so
Unattractive as to be inedible,
15 And why should she have me literally
On a string? I don't mind dying
Ritually, since I always rise again,
But I should have liked a little more blood
To show they were taking me seriously.

II

20 It's hard for a girl to be sure if
She wants to be rescued. I mean, I quite
Took to the dragon. It's nice to be
Liked, if you know what I mean. He was
So nicely physical, with his claws
25 And lovely green skin, and that sexy tail,
And the way he looked at me,
He made me feel he was all ready to
Eat me. And any girl enjoys that.
So when this boy turned up, wearing machinery,
30 On a really dangerous horse, to be honest
I didn't much fancy him. I mean,

What was he like underneath the hardware?
He might have acne, blackheads or even
Bad breath for all I could tell, but the dragon--
35 Well, you could see all his equipment
At a glance. Still, what could I do?
The dragon got himself beaten by the boy,
And a girl's got to think of her future.

III

I have diplomas in Dragon
Management and Virgin Reclamation.
40 My horse is the latest model, with
Automatic transmission and built-in
Obsolescence. My spear is custom-built,
And my prototype armour
45 Still on the secret list. You can't
Do better than me at the moment.
I'm qualified and equipped to the
Eyebrow. So why be difficult?
Don't you want to be killed and/or rescued
50 In the most contemporary way? Don't
You want to carry out the roles
That sociology and myth have designed for you?
Don't you realize that, by being choosy,
You are endangering job prospects
55 In the spear- and horse-building industries?
What, in any case, does it matter what
You want? You're in my way.



St George and the Dragon

Uccello (1397-1435)
National Gallery, London

Looking at Point-of-View: Three Perspectives for One Poem

1. Look at the painting closely. Based on your knowledge of myth and legend, what are some initial inferences you can draw concerning the figures depicted in the painting? In other words, what are some of the characteristics you assume each character embodies?
4. Once you have heard the responses from the other groups, please answer the following question: Why is the knight interested most in maintaining the paradigm represented in the painting?

The Maiden / The Dragon / The Knight?

Now read your stanza and then answer the following questions:

2. In what ways does your speaker reinforce or affirm the assumptions you made about him/her/it?
3. In what ways does your speaker reject or go against the assumptions you made about him/her/it?

Homework: Taking all of "Not My Best Side" into consideration, along with the comments of your classmates, write a short response (1 page or so) in which you discuss one of the main ideas in this poem. Specifically discuss how the different points of view are significant in expressing this idea. For this assignment, your first sentence needs to be your thesis statement.

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