

“Tis the Eye of Childhood ...”

Suniti Namjoshi

“L’oeil de l’enfance” extrait de Saint Suniti et le dragon

i) Elle a renoncé à l’orgueil, mais la peur qui l’a rend magnifique, est-ce qu’elle cherche à la cacher?

ii) Elle s’imagine la Conquérante sans peur face à la Mort ...

iii) Ensuite elle se met à la recherche de la peur. Ce n’était pas un chevreuil blanc qui l’amène au forêt, mais quelque chose liquide et transparente qui l’amène sur les surfaces de la route dures comme la roche parmi la foule. La peur saute dans son corps. Ses yeux se transforment en verre. Si la peur se cristalliserait totalement, elle en sera morte. La peur doit se mélanger avec son sang. Elle laisse la peur couler librement. Elle vivra. Alors, qui doit elle chasser? Comment tuer?

iv) Peut-être la peur n’est pas tuable, une bête mythique et immortelle ... Peut-être cette quête est une quête manquée? Ce n’est pas son devoir de la tuer. Elle a vue un dragon couché à ses pieds. Même si la peur n’est qu’une grande bête, elle n’est pas forcée de la tuer. Au contraire. Elle caresse le dragon. Rien ne se passe. Bien que grand et sans forme, il n’est pas visqueux. Est-il mort? Quelle absurdité qu’elle, une sainte, une femme, monte les côtes pour poser un drapeau sur le corps du dragon. Elle refuse de le faire. D’ailleurs, il respire encore. Mais doit-elle le tuer pour mettre fin à ses souffrances? Elle caresse les côtes et le dragon gémit: Aide-moi. Elle regard le dragon se soulever. Le dragon a mis bas. Elle se trouve grouillant parmi de petits dragons.

v) On ne croit pas à l’histoire que Suniti raconte sur la mort du dragon qui s’effondrait du dedans, glorifié par sa descendance. On dit qu’elle mente.

vi) Suniti se haussait les épaules. Ça arrive parfois, qu’on ne nous croit pas. Ils disaient que le dragon survécut: elle disait que le dragon mourut. Il n’y avait pas de contradiction. Elle enterait la vérité en vers nouveaux. Qu’ils y creusent. Ensuite elle injectait les bébés dragons d’une anesthésie. Ils ont gélé tout de suite en forme de cailloux qu’elle a mis dans un sac imperméable et a posé dans une fente dans son sein gauche qu’elle ouvrait d’un

couteau. Elle examinait sa conscience alors. Est-ce que l'acte était bien exécuté? Un dragon craignant toujours les saints et les citoyens, elle avait assuré la sécurité des saints et des citoyens. Cela méritait un médail. Mais le ciel n'offrait que des pommes. Elle en croquait une. Elle pensait que dans certaines circonstances, les policiers et les politiciens en valent plus que les saints.

i) Sir Suniti and the Fearful Dragon

She mocks herself.

She has done her best to cast out pride.

But this gorgeous fear

(which makes *her* gorgeous)

– was this the Fear she sought to hide?

ii) She imagines herself facing Death

If I could face Death unafraid,

then surely I would be a Conquering Maid?

iii)

Afterwards she set out to find her fear. It was not a white hart, luring her with beauty, but transparent and fluid. And it did not lead her into a forest among benign trees, but onto rock hard pavements, crowded with people. And there it took fright. It leaped into her body. Liquid panic slithered through her, invaded the most remote and tiny capillaries. Her eyes turned to glass; she knew that if anyone touched her, their fingers would freeze, or she would freeze. She felt alert and a little sick. But the fear was turning into crystals now. If it crystallised, she would die of it. The fear must be made to mix with her blood, take colour from it.

She made herself breathe. She allowed the fear to flow freely. When at last she was convinced she would continue to live, she looked about her. Fear was home safe. Now who should she hunt? How kill?

iv)

"Perhaps fear is unkillable," she announced ponderously. "Perhaps it's a mythical and immortal beast." Perhaps – and with this thought her

vi)

Suniti shrugged. She had done her best to give evidence, even to the point of open confession; she had not been believed. It happened sometimes. They had said the dragon survived. She had said the dragon died. There was no contradiction. She would bury the truth in a new jingle. Let them dig for it.

No one sober in spring. Pluck each dragon seedling.
Gather them up in a green salad-bowl.
They squeak and they shriek, they pule and they howl;
But pat them and pet them, feed them on cake.
Fool the little darlings. Make no mistake.
When the dragons are grown they'll quickly devour
The life in your veins, the bliss in your bower.
Then stroke them and strike them, kiss them Good Bye.
Dragons must sleep if dragons won't die.

With that Suniti staggered to her feet, loaded a syringe and anaesthetised the dragon babies one by one. The effect was instantaneous. They froze without protest and turned into pebbles. It was as though she had managed to freeze-dry them. They could not sprout without careful watering. Concentrating hard she slit her left breast and tucked them away in a waterproof bag.

Then she examined her conscience. The deed was done. But had it been well done? A full grown dragon was in constant danger from passing saints and brave civilians. She had ensured the safety of saints and dragons, also of civilians. A medal was in order. She glanced at the sky, but the tree overhead proffered only apples. She munched an apple. It occurred to her that police and politicians might outrank saints under certain conditions.