

Dr. Shapiro's moving, touching poem "Visit to the Radiologist" is interlaced with the battle of eros—sensuality, sexuality, the life force-- and thanatos—aging, disease, mortality. You feel her yearning for life, to be valued, loved, treated as a human even as she goes for a fearful, life threatening cancer needle biopsy. One can't help but be pricked with curiosity about the relationship between reality and appearance in this poem. Radiologists deal with "images" and we wonder what image Dr. Shapiro, is trying to project to the reader—as a poet, as a human being. We also wonder who the real intended reader is.

Clearly she is a person of substance, a desirable lovely woman inside and out. And she knows this. She knows how smart she is—smart enough to learn about football, and metastasis, and even smarter, to create the image that allows her to appear "feminine" and to let her male dates, her male doctor, think she is "too smart." She is protecting them even as she asks them to protect her.

Yet there is some part addressed in the poem that feels that who she is at her core reality of self, might not be considered "enough"—either to her "dates" or her "date" with the Doctor. So, she tries to add to her "natural" self with external trappings and images. The younger woman puts on mascara and eye liner and high heels. The "older" woman puts on lipstick and dresses in sensible clothes to appear a person of substance.

Yet, since Dr. Shapiro clearly is a person of substance, why does she have to create an image to prove this to a date? To a Doctor? To the universe? Is it because her body may be tricking her? She may look "natural" but isn't she afraid that underneath her external image of "ok" the radiologist might discover there is more than lies on the outside--an image finding cancer cells invading her, belying her substance? Is she trying to prove to herself that she is ok, that the outside image of substance might someone mirror an inside image of wholeness? Is she trying to prove not only to the doctor, but to herself that she still cares. That she still wants to fight for life?

Is she feeling the same fear and vulnerability as a young girl going out on a date? The young girl that needs to impress and "be chosen" with her sexy sway, high heels, liner and mascara for bedroom eyes.

Is she trying to trick the cancer cells—could you really invade someone this pretty, this person of substance? Is she trying to impress the radiologist with the external image? Can you really tear through a body that looks this substantive, this cute, this adorable? Please like me. Please choose me. Please don't hurt me. Please care about me.

And what about impressing the universe, God? Isn't she really knowing that once the mascara, high heels, sensible clothes are removed, she is really just a naked vulnerable little girl pleading with her "heavenly" "father"? Please choose me as your beloved, your Shekinah, your feminine energy, your "adorable" Sabbath bride. Love me. Let me live.

And in the intimate act of the male Doctor/date plunging his "needle" into her bedroom eyes, her soul, her bone, in the act of seeking union with the sacred divine, she cries out in yearning and desire, in eros—to her dates, to her Doctor, to the universe, to God, --for immortality of the body just beyond reach—save me, love me, choose me.

A cry all at the same time, inner and outer, of ecstasy and pain and hurt and longing, an aging body in a young heart and soul, with bedroom eyes, pleading for and proclaiming to the reader—her dates, her Doctor, her self, the universe--her love for life.