

FSH REVIEW 2016 1

This is a well-written piece about the difficulty for some women of limiting the number of children they conceive, in this case because of the religious convictions of the husband. My main difficulty is that it is certainly not a 55 word story (although it has more of that flavor), and it is hard to know if it is really a poem. Perhaps we can call it a prose poem? (here is a definition, which might help: "a piece of writing in prose having obvious poetic qualities, including intensity, compactness, prominent rhythms, and imagery"). It is intense and compact, with a few vivid images, although it is not rhythmically written. In any case, with a few minor suggestions above, I would be in favor of accepting this work.

Comments to Author:

This is a poignant prose poem that indeed makes the reader as well as the narrator cry. Its understated language is part of its strengths. I especially love the title and the last two lines.

I have just a few minor suggestions that might improve the piece:

- 1) Line "She says refusing..." The writing switches from past to present tense. It would be more consistent and more powerful to put the entire piece in present tense.**
- 2) Line "I can't use that..." "said" should be "says"**
- 3) Patient voice/use of contractions: If this is indeed how the patient spoke, then fine. But you could capture the cadence of someone from another country by avoiding contractions, which sound more colloquial.**
- 4) Line "She says refusing..." The use of "his/their" is awkward and unpoetic. I think you might be getting at the idea that it is more his interpretation of their religion that dominates their lives, but I would either cut "his" or figure out a better way to convey this.**
- 5) Line "She is thin..." Although most readers of FSH work in medical settings, some may not; and perhaps some non-physicians may not know what Ella refers to. It is possible to figure it out from the context, but it would help if you made it clearer, perhaps "... and can use the contraceptive Ella for emergencies."**

Thank you for bringing attention to this issue which affects many women in immigrant communities (and elsewhere). Many family docs will recognize this scenario and your poem will evoke both empathy and reflection.