

A Theory of Lipstick
by Karla Huston
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Review by Zvi A. Sesling

Last year I review a poetry chapbook by Ms. Huston and Cathryn Cofell. This year Ms. Huston is flying solo and proving what a good poet she is on her own.

In the title poem it is beware men and women you will learn more about lipstick than you ever wanted to know, from lip plumper and bee stung devil's candy to alizarin crimson and lead – to men who kiss women wearing lipstick to fruit pigments. It's almost TMI.

But O it is fun. Huston as we learned can be fun with a lesson.

She can also be funny in a serious poem as in *The Girl With God On Her Pants*. It opens

I almost said "in" her pants/but this isn't that kind of poem/and she isn't that kind of girl.

As you read this one you learn that a good girl is chased by a hungry boy and the hunger is nothing less than the ultimate main course.

There is also *Sway* which begins:

The cruelest thing I did to my dog
wasn't to ignore his barking for water
when his tongue hung like a deflated balloon

Huston is also capable of wonderful descriptions such as:

- his dark eyes like Greek olives, moist with desire
- pecking at her dreams like a chicken
- Were you always a shadow of a shadow, imitation of an imitation, a chameleon in sheep's clothing?
- When I think of you, I think of earworms
- old woman skin that hangs like the hide of withered peaches

Huston is a sort of Mort Sahl or Dick Cavett. A Nancy Griffin or Chelsea Handler. She makes you laugh but at the same time she telling truths and you realize, not that you have been had, but instead that you have learned something, which raises that age old question about poetry – does it entertain or teach or both. Huston would fall into that last category, both.