

# Cultural Daily

Independent Voices, New Perspectives

## Karla Huston: Three Poems

Karla Huston · Tuesday, April 30th, 2024

### A Woman Lighting a Cigarette

after Paul Hortovsky

She does it with the filter tip  
held between the first  
knuckles of her first  
two fingers, bringing it  
slowly to her mouth,  
pads to lips, fire to tip.  
She changes to her other hand  
to smoke it, tap it  
like a wand. She holds  
her cigarette like a teacup.

A man lighting a cigarette  
holds it in the vee  
of those same fingers  
where he cups it  
for the first inhale.  
It'll stay there  
for the duration or he'll  
move it up a bit  
but not as far as the  
woman. A man holds  
his cigarette like a fist.

\*

### What a Poem Needs

A poem needs a velocity  
of verbs, a keening of nouns.  
A poem needs a reader  
to breathe it, to exhale

the secret of the dark, of light

A poem needs a river,  
needs streams of smooth  
stones, needs a confession  
of snowflakes, needs a wisdom  
of owls sheltered in a cedar

A poem needs trees, empty  
of leaves, winds—sharp north  
where doves hang  
like gray ghosts, one red  
cardinal pinned to a branch

\*

## I Hold My Pen like Taylor Swift

between my middle and index finger  
which, I might add, is an acceptable  
alternative pen hold. I also use  
fountain pens. I learned cursive  
in fourth grade where we were never  
allowed to fill our pens on our desks,  
even though there was a bottle slot.  
No teacher wanted to clean India Ink  
off the floor. Taylor Swift writes  
love songs to new and old lovers.  
I write poetry the best I can  
though my poor poems won't appear  
on the latest *Billboard 100* chart.  
Taylor Swift has had many lovers.  
I had one, but I have many pens,  
and almost as many bottles of ink.  
Taylor Swift wears red lipstick  
with cat's-eye liner. I can't tell you  
the name of any of her hit songs.  
It's a safe bet she's read  
none of my poems.

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