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Hilary Sideris is the author of two chapbooks, *The Orange Juice is Over* (Finishing Line Press, 2008) and *Baby* (Pudding House Press, 2009). Some of her poems appear in *Pomegranate Seeds: Anthology of Greek-American Poetry* edited by Dean Kostos (Sheridan Press, 2008).

Hilary Sideris
Review of *Passion Maps* by Adrienne Kalfopoulou
Red Hen Press, 2009

The poems in *Passion Maps*, Adrienne Kalfopoulou's second collection, take us across landscapes of harsh beauty and raw sensuality, a material world where luxury is within reach---but never far from loss and rage. In the childhood poem, "Guerilla Lessons," the speaker, newly arrived from Greece, is being promised a bicycle, but cannot stop weeping. The promised bicycle, like the many other goods and services readily available in the speaker's new land---from air conditioning to Botox injections and neck-firming cream on sale at Origins---suggest both the speaker's uneasy conversion to consumerism and her fear of losing touch with her homeland, the "ripe olive, pulp on the tongue, the tomato's swimming seeds red as young wine" ("Ground"), the villages where "chamomile and blood poppies grow," where, not long ago, "blacksmiths, weavers, /farmers... gathered in the village square..." ("Yassir")

The weeping child who wears “a Caldor-bought/winter coat/at the dinner table,” has moved into a house in Connecticut which her mother decorates “in Persian carpets, rich/kilims, heavy curtains,” while her father, a professional soldier, trains the Doberman: “She barked and barked/and barked through that first winter/so he bought a collar/that sent short shocks into/her throat, and the bark/faded to a whimper.” (“Guerilla Lessons”) However fortunate this immigrant family may appear, we cannot help but hear the child’s cry in the Doberman’s whimper.

In “Mother Tongue,” the speaker recalls her mother’s silence in the face of her father’s violence as “the pact she kept,” how she “hardly breathed seeing him beat the anger out of me.” While the father reckons the number of Germans he killed in Greece at the dinner table, wishing aloud that “he had shot more,” (“Numbers in War”) her mother wonders why the girl can’t appreciate how hard her father “worked all his life/in dangerous places ‘for us’ so we could have/what we have.” (“Are You Listening?”) But the comforts of a Connecticut home can’t erase the family’s brutal legacy.

Kalfopoulou’s poems range in form and diction from tight 14-line lyrics packed with vivid images (“Last Rites,” “Ritual”) to looser poems whose lines expand to the page’s edge, sprawling like the suburban malls of “Looks and Wants”: “I keep looking for the right sunglasses---oval-shaped by Ralph the saleswoman says look good...” Likewise, the poems venture far beyond the poet’s own immigrant experience, to speak in the voices of many women of this and the last century – Balkan refugees who once had their own homes but now clean the homes of others (“Balkan Voices”); a young

Bulgarian woman who leaves her children behind and emigrates to Greece, believing “it was possible to hope” to return to her homeland and “make a life” (“The Border”); a mail-order bride in 1920’s Greece who sails to America, leaving behind ‘a place my children will never know’ (“Brides”); even Cinderella, who, in Kalfopoulou’s rendering of the tale, loses out to her tougher stepsister, who insists the glass slipper is hers and “and pushes hard enough.” (“Glass”).

Any poet who takes on history runs the risk of slipping into exposition, as Kalfopoulou does when she informs us that Omar Khayyam, “the Sufi poet (c. 1047-c. 1122)/was given a book/by a judge of the high court...”, and that Columbus believed “he had found India as he sailed/ counterclockwise (to avoid/ Ottoman ships---the known world)...” Yet in Kalfopoulou’s most powerful poems the names and dates seem unimportant, the stories timeless, mythic. In “Belated” a visitor to a Greek village drowns because none of the natives thinks to warn him of the danger they’ve internalized. The poem’s stunning imagery, combined with the subjunctive mood of the repeated phrase, “had they known,” make us feel the truth of this senseless yet inevitable loss. Where such beauty enchants us, death can’t be far off.

The life might have been saved had they known
the danger, the waters sapphire in gorgeous lagoons

deep, the currents invisible, had they known
the swimmer better, to warn him of the nets and

winds, that weather is fickle and the islanders
too wedded to their own survival to know how

to warn the innocent man of things they take for granted.

