

Poetry Porch: Poetry

Twin Bakery

By George Kalogeris

I passed it on the way to my father's store:
That pastry-shop run by those aloof, soft-spoken,
Armenian brothers. And felt at home whenever

The summer sidewalk was honey-glazed with sweetness,
As if the aromas had wafted to me from the oven
Door of our kitchen. That little bakery.

A block from my father's corner grocery.
Their shimmering storefront windows. I saw myself
Reflected against a background filled with fruit,

And then another stacked with pastry. As if
I stood before a mirror. Or twin mirrors,
Telling me *I* was the thing on display, in all

The ripeness and delicacy of youth denied
Those immigrants behind the counter. Yet only
The circular window of our washer machine

Was mesmerizing enough for me to flatten
My childhood nose against its vibrant glass.
O sudsy portal, through which I saw the whirlpool:

Over and over the clothes kept falling all over
Themselves, the shirts and pants, the blouses and socks,
The undershirts and underwear, as if

The load of family stuff would never stop churning—
Until it was totally drenched, and wrung, and rinsed.
Not even Noah's Ark, when the flood subsided

On Ararat, could jolt to a thudding halt
As abruptly as that ancient washer machine.
And then the little dripping hatch swung open.

Now it's my mother, holding up one of my father's
Aprons, dangling it by the shoulder straps
As she examines the cotton bib for the slightest

Trace of all the bloody butchery blotches.
And once, when I entered the bakery and asked
For those powdered almond cookies that to us

Were *kourembiéthes*, the twin brothers were puzzled.
Immaculate their aprons. Impeccable
The timing: "Ah, you mean *khourábia*!"