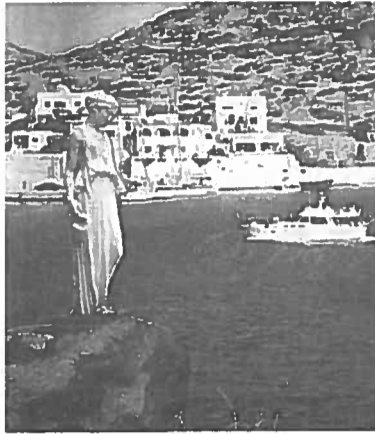


Straight From the Heart

Romance and Poetry from Patty Apostolides

PATTY APOSTOLIDES



LIPSI'S DAUGHTER

Lipsi's Daughter

By Patty Apostolides

iUniverse, Inc., 299 pages,
\$18.95 paperback

PATTY APOSTOLIDES

Candlelit Journey

Poetry from the Heart



Candlelit Journey: Poetry from the Heart

By Patty Apostolides

iUniverse, Inc., 91 pages,
\$11.95 paperback

By Aphrodite Matsakis
Special to The National Herald

Reading Patty Apostolides' romance novel, "Lipsi's Daughter," is like taking a trip to a shimmering Greek island where even the presence of topless beaches has not corrupted its clear blue skies or its strong communal bonds. Indeed, the heroine, Ipatia, is like a fresh island breeze. While other young women her age are busy manipulating men into marrying them, Ipatia is an open-hearted hard working young woman who loves her donkey Kitso and her goats as much as she does her English books and medical journals. Unlike the more citified women who attempt to transform themselves into Western style supermodels and try to cultivate a hyper-sexualized "come-hither" look, Ipatia wears her hair in a bun and black mourning clothes for her parents who died when she was a child. Even when her traditional grandfather urges her to take off the black, she refuses, so deep is her love and respect for her parents.

Ipatia is pure, not only in a sexual sense, but in her sincerity and in the depth of her loyalty to those whom she loves and to the spiritual values of her faith. Even more profoundly, she is loyal to herself — her intellect and her emotions. Similar to her namesake, a famous female mathematician and philosopher named Ipatia who lived in Alexandria around the year 400 or so, the Ipatia from Lipsi loves learning and wants a university education. Unlike other village girls, she shuns marriage, arranged or otherwise. She wants more for herself — until she meets Tony, the handsome son of a shipping magnate. It's love at first sight, for both Tony and Ipatia. Yet Ipatia is not willing to forsake her plans to go to school or her grandfather's strict teachings about relationships with men. Tony awakens her sexuality, but she warns him not to kiss her.

Those unfamiliar with the romance genre often mistakenly assume that in romance novels, the heroine is a spineless beauty who lives only for love and that the hero's only assets are his looks and his sexuality. However, in true romance novels, the heroine is a self-confident woman who is able to stand on her own two feet and has a rich life independent of the man she adores. Ipatia is such a heroine. Although she longs to be with Tony, she has strong and satisfying



Patty Apostolides, author of the novel, "Lipsi's Daughter," and the poetry book, "Candlelit Journey: Poetry from the Heart," resides in Maryland with her husband and son. She was born in Piraeus, Greece and immigrated to the U.S. when she was about five years old. She and her four sisters grew up in Cleveland, Ohio.

relationships with relatives and friends of all ages and finds fulfillment in her studies and her music. On occasion, she wishes she had more curves, but basically she is content with her body and doesn't think much about it. Similarly Tony, a former university economics professor, has friends and solid interests outside of his ever-deepening attraction to Ipatia. Both Ipatia and Tony are good-hearted people who strive to be emotionally honest and live up to their ideals.

Meeting Tony, however, challenges Ipatia's ideal of remaining a modest village girl who wishes to avoid contact with the opposite sex. In her dream life she sees herself marrying and being physically close to Tony. These dreams unsettle her, but they also elate her.

Tony is conflicted. He wants to be a good son, but he is reluctant to follow his father's wish that he become more involved in the family business and marry a wealthy heiress to help promote it. Meeting the unmaterialistic Ipatia only complicates Tony's internal conflicts, as does his father's failing health.

Although "Lipsi's Daughter" is a romance, it is not erotic romance. Indeed, Apostolides' aim is to "bring sweet romance back, with moral and values, without the graphic details seen in certain categories of romance." In "Lipsi's Daughter" there are no sex scenes. Yet Eros drives the plot, an Eros so strong that it survives the ongoing pressures Tony's family puts upon

him to marry for money; Ipatia's fear of romantic involvement, lest she lose her beloved as she lost her parents; and Ipatia's leaving Greece to attend college in the U.S. where she is pursued by men who consider her exotic and alluring.

Tony and Ipatia's romance is innocent, yet engaging. Even though one anticipates a happy ending (for that is what romance novels promise — a happy ending), following the trail of the two lovers as they wade through the labyrinth of their lives until they finally land in one another's arms, is full of adventure and delight. The characters are sufficiently developed and realistic so that the reader can become emotionally involved with them.

Apostolides chose the island of Lipsi, not only because it is the birthplace of her parents, but because, she explains, "I wanted to write about purity and innocence of youth, about faith and religion and somehow I could not see it happening in today world, in the U.S. The island's tranquil, religious setting was a perfect backdrop to the story and a perfect environment for Ipatia's character." Lipsi is a Dodecanese island located southwest of the island of Patmos and north of the island of Leros. Allegedly, in ancient times, this little piece of paradise was called Calypso and was much larger than the Lipsi of today. Apparently part of the island sunk into the water where divers continue to find archaeological evidence of Lipsi's past. Approximately 700 families reside on the island. Yet it boasts almost 40 churches, most likely because in early Christian times Lipsi was ruled by the monastery of Patmos, where St. John wrote the book of Revelation.

Although Greece is the perfect location for a romance novel, not many writers have Apostolides' intimate knowledge of island life as it was, and as it is today. Readers, both those of Greek origin and those who are not, frequently comment on the book's compelling and authentic description of Lipsi's physical beauty and its people. In one particularly touching scene, the night before Ipatia is scheduled to leave Lipsi in pursuit of a university education, she says goodbye to her goats as she milks them for what, perhaps, might be the last time. She and her grandfather then sit down with a cup of warm fresh goat milk; their parting words to one another are moving and poignant. Apostolides aptly weaves traditional vil-

lage life, with its close personal ties, its hospitality, its belief in "tithi," its various superstitions and its ever-present fear of gossip, into her love story. She also reveals changes in the island as more and more young people (including girls) learn English, go abroad to study and are exposed to computers and other aspects of modern culture.

Apostolides was born in Piraeus, Greece and immigrated to the U.S. when she was about five years old. She and her four sisters grew up in Cleveland, Ohio where they were immersed in Sunday school, Greek school, Greek food and music — the works! She obtained her biology degree from Case Western Reserve University with minors and music and theater. She has co-authored several medical articles and is currently co-authoring a paper on cancer with her husband. Her husband, however, is far more than a professional colleague. She describes him as her soul mate and as the reason she chose the romance genre as her medium of artistic expression.

"I had always wanted to write a novel, but with a busy career schedule ... I could never find the time to write a 300-page manuscript. I wrote poems and articles instead. The opportunity to write a novel presented itself when I became a stay-at-home mother with time on my hands. ... As I wrote, I realized that I needed to decide the genre. I felt that the love in my marriage was a great inspiration for a romance story. So the decision came naturally; it would be a romance novel," she states.

She plans to continue writing romance novels, not only because they compose over 50 percent of the fiction market today, but because she believes that "we were born to love" and that love is an "uplifting positive experience... that brings people together." Her second romance novel, "The Lion and the Nurse," set on the island of Kos, was recently published by iUniverse. For further information on Apostolides' works, visit her web page: www.pattyapostolides.com

The theme of love, as well as the spirit of the Greek islands, also pervade Apostolides' book of poems, "Candlelit Journey: Poetry from the Heart." For this reviewer, it felt as if these poems could have been written by Ipatia, the heroine of "Lipsi's Daughter," some 20 or 30 years down the line, who although hav-

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ing grown in emotional maturity and life experience, had retained her faith in love and life and her reverence and delight in her Greek heritage, the beauties of nature, her family and her own talents and potential. The poems in Section 1, Spiritual Reflections, revolve around the themes of gratitude, the brevity of life, and the love and serenity than can flow from faith in God and Christ. Some of the poems are like prayers. The poems in Section 2, Reflections of Love, are so powerful they might restore even a cynic's faith in the reality and power of love. The poet dedicates several poems to her husband.

In Section 3: Journey through the Seasons of Life and Beyond, Apostolides writes about motherhood, aging, art, music, nature, the loss of family members, and Alzheimer's. In "Environmental Ignorance," "Environmental Dignity, and "Survival of the Fittest," we hear the village girl who grew up on fresh goat's milk and homegrown vegetables lamenting the deterioration of the environment and the corporate pollution of our foods. In Section 4: Greek Reflections, My Roots, the poet celebrates Alexander the Great, Greek Easter, the musician Yianni, the Olympics, the "Petaloudes" (The Butterfly Gar-

den) of Rhodes and last, but definitely not least, the Philoptochos.

I met Apostolides quite by accident at a local book fair. I was listening to the presentation of another author when next to me arrived a lovely woman whose large expressive eyes, thick dark hair and other features instantly made me wonder if she was Greek. With her were her husband and son. As we spoke, I was struck by the sense of peace and unity in the family, as well as by Apostolides' excitement and belief in her works. Like any true writer, she found (and continues to find) fulfillment in the process of writing, as well as in her finished products. I was also struck by her clarity of vision about what matters in life to her, the very values embodied in the heroine Ipatia – personal integrity, spirituality, close caring relationships and respect for all forms of life.

Aphrodite Matsakis, Ph.D. is a counseling psychologist and the author of "Back From the Front: Combat Trauma, Love and The Family" (www.backfromthefront.org). She has also written 13 books on a variety of psychological topics and "Growing Up Greek in St. Louis" (Arcadia Publishing, 1998). Visit www.matsakis.com for further information.