

JAMA MICHALICA

I want to go back to that café Florianska Street
where the puppets live. Through the wrought
iron gate, to Michael's Cave, with the signatures
scrawled on the wall and framed napkins of
artists' doodles.

Not listening, you confessed, to lore
your teacher once taught in this place of art
you lowered your young eyes
as one would fold the corner of a page
to mark for later reading.
At our table, sweet cream washed the *ciastko*
and settled on white plates.

Later you borrowed my book,
read, with friends, a poem each in English
then passed it on.
It was my turn to look away.
At the end of the dark hallway four students
strummed and sang "Go Down Moses" in your
language, all of us far from the disco's throb in
the Community Room.

Pani, I want to go back to that cobblestone street
and the cafe with the air of a burnished
polonaise. I want to speak hushed breath-stops
of your language to those wooden women and
men, ask them about you, see their eyelids
flutter, lips moisten, and red paint turn to rouge
after a hundred years.