

Ana Doina – Two Poems

Blessed be

the memory of Uncle Jovi,
master of pickles and holder
of the secret family recipe
handed down from father to son.

And blessed be cheerful and coquettish
Aunt Mina, Jovi's big sister,
and wife of watchmaker Raul, the charmer,
who knew how to preserve the sweet
taste of cherries in syrups and jams.

We looked for them after the war,
searched the lists of the missing and the dead,
the deportation rosters, camp records
but all that was left of them
was the gold ruby ring Raul gave
his niece on her wedding day, when we last
met, spring of '42.

Although

after Yalta,
and the hastily manufactured
Communist Revolution
the streets were left unlit,
and forsaken century-old
buildings, darkened with grime,

although in squalid
government-funded houses
a chorus of housewives
lamented the lack of cold cuts
and the scarcity of money
while peasants sold wilted dill
in gloomy open markets,

although rum was plentiful,
sugar and soap rationed,
the Bible prohibited,
legendary churches demolished,
monuments to Stalin and Lenin

built in their stead, the menacing
Russkies armed to the gills
with rifles and tanks
forever at the border,

although banished words
like *sir* and *madam*
were replaced by *comrades*,
curfew imposed,
all meetings after midnight
outlawed,

music was still played
and people fell in love,
had children, divorced,
just as in any other
part of the world.

Ana Doina is a Romanian-born American writer living in New Jersey. Due to political pressure and social restriction she left Romania during the Ceausescu regime. Her poems have been published in numerous print and online magazines, and anthologies, like *War, Literature, and the Arts*, *Pinyon Poetry*, *Visions International*, *North American Review*, *Rattle*, *California Quarterly*, *Paterson Review*, *Crab Orchard Review*, *Collateral*, *First Literary Review—East*, *American Diaspora*, *Red White and Blue*, *One hundred poets against the war*, and the textbook *Teaching Literature in the Twenty-First Century*. One of her poems won Honorable Mention in the Anna Davidson Rosenberg Awards for Poems on the Jewish Experience contest in 2007, and two of her poems were nominated for 2002, and 2004 Pushcart Prize.