

**DIRJAN, Liljana**



**Liljana Dirjan**, a native of Skopje, Macedonia, graduated in philology from the Cyril and Methodius University and is currently editor-in-chief of the magazine *Woman* and a founder of the Macedonian Independent Writers' Collaborative. She has held fellowships from the Gulbenkian Foundation of Paris and the French government for study in contemporary art, language and Armenian literature. Her books include *Natural Occurrence*, 1981, *Net Weight*, 1985, *Wormwood Field*, 1990, and *Heavy Silk*, 1997.

**Liljana Dirjan**, rođena u Skopju, Makedonija, diplomirala je filologiju na univerzitetu Cirila i Metoda, trenutno je glavna urednica časopisa *Žena*. Ustanovila je Nezavisno makedonsko društvo pisaca. Dobila je stipendije pariške fondacije Gulbenkian i francuske vlade za studij suvremene umjetnosti, jezika i jermenske književnosti. Njene najznačajnije knjige su *Prirodna pojava* (1981), *Živa mera* (1985), *Pelin pole* (*Pelin-polje*, 1990), i *Teška svila* (1997).

## LILJANA DIRJAN

### The Balkans

I sit opposite this world  
spring – summer 1993  
barefoot and neglected  
abandoned nursery  
broken bricks, shattered door  
curtains fluttering in the wind  
broken  
I scare away my new poems  
don't let them near  
to lick salt from my palm

## Tea in Asia

*For Kate*

I'd just finished reading *Flight from Byzantium*  
when Brodsky opened the Bosphorus gate for me  
turquoise and emeralds poured from the horn  
and the rust from the tankers, the stench and the stink  
crowds of people, frog-like mosques  
their minarets like earth-sky  
missiles  
smells of lamb kebab, suet, baked sesame and chick-peas  
in the streets where dust and sweat  
day by day swirl poverty and life  
calico turbans, Edirne linen, Bursa silk  
henna and saffron, coal and smoke  
piss and turds and flies  
and HABDAL HABDAL  
said in passing, while jostling  
and gold, loads of gold  
and "bir bardak çai" from the shops  
and men's moustachioed faces  
and just as I finished reading *A Room and a Half*  
in this room and a half you rang up and said:  
"I leave for Cappadocia tomorrow"  
leaving me the tea you brought for me from Kathmandu  
and I said: »You'll have tea in Asia again«  
and so I mixed the two worlds in a gulp  
(brothers of a mother and sons of a father)  
of which only the nomads remain  
true relatives

## The old testament, again

*Sixty kilograms of pure love, net femininity.*

Jehuda Amichai

A woman's cheek grazes kisses  
on only one side of a man's face  
instant by instant, slowly, inch by inch  
after such a long, almost unbearable absence  
(as if outside the ears, the civilizations, the climates have  
changed)

in the darkness of the corridor  
the woman's face sniffs the man's face  
rambles along the hilly nose, the barren chin  
along the brocade of the skin, to the springs of the eyes,  
into the forest of the eyebrows  
(salt, salt) then nibbles yellow camomile in the alley of the  
left ear  
(to Jericho, the ladder, the Leviathan, down to the Styx)  
suddenly the wind from the tundra shakes her legs  
and she loses touch with the ground  
Mongolian tea – hot oil  
Huns and Avars, hanging gardens  
night day, day night  
(the unbearable absence)  
to the tongue – a mast and a knot  
(sailors on the deck pulling ropes of cannabis)  
in the middle of the seeeeaaaa  
and jasmine drops on the floor of the World  
Down below  
all biblical beasts coupled  
silent, their eyes wet  
lie by their feet

## Home blues

Between

- a glass of water, please
- slice the bread
- where are my socks

she left her body invisibly  
in the kitchen the cutlery and plates still tinkling  
a voice said the food was not salty enough  
the wardrobe screeched in the next room  
the radio splattered news, visits of delegations  
then light music trickled  
it was a hot summer day outside  
she turned back  
to see in disbelief how tight her stripped off skin was  
and how transparent the silken epidermis  
and those tiny freckles like red - brown spikes  
that gave her the look of a trout  
then stepped further back  
almost in reach of the front door  
desiring to leave all her words and her skin behind  
but once outside, seized by the light  
she felt sorry, very sorry  
that where she was heading  
she couldn't say aloud  
the names of the colours

## About the same, again

Yes, I write poems  
on electricity bills, on telephone impulses  
on water meters and late in the evening  
when my son is asleep and my husband out  
I write without paper before me  
in the dark chamber of the bedroom  
hearing the barking of the pack  
and the neighbours' nocturnal quarrel  
I leave some lines for my dreams  
whole stories dipped in thick resin  
from dark pine and pale birch  
I drip drop by drop  
filling vials, coffee spoons, pipettes  
and in the morning  
take on the shape of a tear-drop  
a perfect little masterpiece  
pre-ocean  
living water  
the start of the sweat of the day

*Translated by Zoran Ančevski, Dragi Mihajlovski*