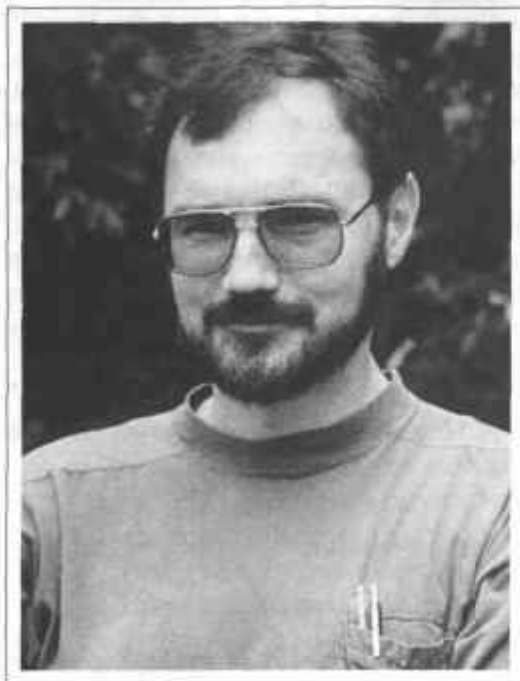


NOVAK, Boris A.



Boris A. Novak, born in Belgrade in 1953, is a Slovene poet, playwright, translator and essayist. He worked as a dramaturg in the Slovene National Theatre in Ljubljana, as editor of children's books for various publishing houses, and now teaches at the University of Ljubljana. During the struggle for democratization he edited the controversial magazine *Nova revija*. In 1991 he was a visiting professor of poetry at the University of Tennessee at Chattanooga in the U.S. From 1991 to 1996 he was President of the Slovene P.E.N., and from 1994 to 2000 Chairman of the Writers for Peace Committee of International P.E.N. He has published 50 books, mostly poetry. He also writes for children and translates French, English and American poetry. His poems have been translated into several languages, and he has received numerous awards.

Boris A. Novak, rojen leta 1953 v Beogradu, je slovenski pesnik, dramatik in esejist. Zaposlen je bil kot dramaturg v Slovenskem narodnem gledališču v Ljubljani in kot urednik za otroško literaturo pri različnih založbah. Trenutno poučuje na ljubljanski univerzi. V času boja za demokratizacijo je urejal kontroverzno *Novo revijo*. Leta 1991 je kot gostujoči profesor predaval na University of Tennessee v Chattanooga v Združenih državah Amerike. Med leti 1991 in 1996 je bil predsednik slovenskega centra P.E.N., od leta 1994 do 2000 pa predsednik mirovnega komiteja pri mednarodnem P.E.N. Izdal je petdeset knjig, od tega največ poezije. Piše tudi za otroke in prevaja poezijo iz francoščine, angleščine in južnoslovanskih jezikov. Njegove pesmi so prevedene v številne jezike, prejel pa je tudi precej uglednih nagrad.

BORIS A. NOVAK

Brothers

(a ballad)

- Who's there? - Me. - Who are you?
- Don't you know me? Your brother.
- That's not you. I can't open the door.
Your voice makes me shudder.

- My voice is hoarse because of a storm.
I have trudged through snow and cold.
- Your eyes are full of wrath,
and your face looks very old.

- I am running from great terror.
Once you've seen blood flowing,
your eyes get bloodshot, glowing
with the fear of dying.

- You're a shadow of yourself,
my brother. What are you talking about?
- Someone came to my door, Death's scout,
the way I come to yours,

and said: Your dogs are poisoned.
No longer is your little boy alive.
Dead are your mother, daughter, wife.
I have killed them. For you to remember.

For you're no longer you. You're me.
Damned forever, you will bear my face
as long as lives the human race.
At the end of my eternal wandering,

my brother, I have found my way
to your door. Look, your son is alive
no longer. Nor your mother, daughter, wife.
I have killed them. For you to remember.

All your blood is poisoned.
You're no longer you, my brother.
All you still are is me, Defeat.
Damned forever, you will bear my face
as long as lives the human race ...

Black hole

(a ballad)

Never has the page before me
been so white and empty.
Silent with grief, I am running from the wound
where the world trembles and is rent asunder.
The air is already full of words,
which fall on paper like black soot.
Yet silence is even deadlier.
That's why with my knees I write a dusty trace
of prayer, which is swallowed by the evening ...

The heart, intoxicated by the winds,
has been broken among the faces
of the gods, to whom it was sacrificed
for food, in an abyss where this fast epoch
was born and is now ending,
bloody, sole, and ours; and nothing
will there ever be again, only unrest

which shuts the lids of so many eyes ...
I am being sucked into a black hole; and the cloth

is bloody ... There is someone who
can cut fateful lines into the forehead,
our gift to the day, with complete composure.
Someone who pulls fragile vases of
bodies from God's hands and crumbles them in his fist.
And there is someone who through a telescope
is catching the eyes of children, still full of stars,
to kill the open, growing look! ...
But on the other side of war: market, ice, derision ...

Why, with my knees, do I write the dusty trace of prayer?
I know that I, too, am part of this war,
however safe on the margin of the Earth.
Words are swallowed by ever greater shadows,
and I am being sucked into a black hole.

(end of 1994, after visiting besieged Sarajevo)

Translated by Evald Flisar

Keeping Awake

I wake over the deep whiteness of the paper,
I wake over the whiteness of unfolded sheets,
I wake over the spread dream where the bread
is getting stale and the last supper draws nearer,

I wake over the child and his dreaming mother,
like sailors through the night we hold each other
with both hands, while our steps are ticktacking
up and down the bedroom with no bottom,

but I am tired, I am so tired,
I wake over refugees pouring from the world's wound,
from the incurable abyss of the heart,
my head is getting heavy, and it will only get worse,

I wake over my absent self,
lost and dead, I am now someone else,
who still carries the body of my former
self, the body no longer fitting me,

I wake and wake, for I am the master of insomnia,
my only share of eternity,

I am tired to death, and it will only get worse.

*Translated by Irena Zorko Novak
and Boris A. Novak*

BORIS A. NOVAK

Bratje

(balada)

– Kdo trka? – Jaz. – Kdo si ti?
– Me ne poznaš? Jaz sem tvoj brat.
– To ni tvoj glas. To nisi ti.
Ne morem ti odpreti vrat.

– Moj glas je hripav od nevihte.
Prišel sem skozi sneg in mraz.
– Tvoje oči so polne ihte
in spremenjen je tvoj obraz.

– Bežim od strašnega strahu.
Ko enkrat vidiš teči kri,
se od predsmrtnega potu
s krvjo pobarvajo oči.

– Ti sebi nisi več enak,
moj brat. O čem sploh govoriš?
– Nekdo je stopil na moj prag
kot jaz na tvoj, kot smrtni piš,

in rekel: Tvoja psa sta zastrupljena.
In mrtev je tvoj mali sin.
In mrtva mati, hči in žena.
Jaz sem jih ubil. Tebi v spomin.

Ker ti več nisi ti. Ti si jaz.
Na vekov veke boš preklet
po svetu nosil moj obraz ...
Na koncu večnih blodnih let

sem se dokopal tvojih vrat,
moj brat. Glej, mrtev je tvoj sin.
In mrtva mati, hči in žena.
Jaz sem jih ubil. Tebi v spomin.

Vsa tvoja kri je zastrupljena.
In ti več nisi ti, moj brat.
Ti si samo še jaz, Poraz.
Na vekov veke boš preklet
po svetu nosil tuj obraz ...

Črna luknja

(balada)

Še nikdar ni bil list pred mano
tako globoko bel in prazen.
Bolestno nem, bežim pred rano,
kjer svet drhti in gre narazen.
V zraku je že toliko besed,
ki padajo kot saje na papir.
A molk je smrtno bolj porazen.
Zato s koleni pišem sipko sled
molitve, ki izginja v večer ...

Bilo je, vseh vetrov pijano,
srce, razbito med obraze
bogov, ki jim je žrtvovano
za hrano, dno, kjer se je blazen
spočel in se končuje hitri vek,
krvav, edini, naš: in nič nikjer
nikoli več ne bo, samo nemir,
ki zaloputne luč nešteti vek ...
Sesa me črna luknja; sredi sukna

kri ... Je nekdo, ki zmore zbrano
zarezati usodne raze

v čelo, dnevu darovano.
Nekdo, ki jemlje krhke vase
teles iz božjih rok v svojo pest.
In je nekdo, ki skozi daljnogled
lovi oči otrok, še polne zvezd,
da bi ubil odprt, rastoč pogled! ...
A onstran vojne: trg, posmeh in led ...

Čemu s kolena pišem sipko sled?
Vem: tudi jaz sem del te vojne,
čeprav na varnem robu zemlje.
Besede so vse bolj osojne
in črna luknja me že jemlje.

(po obisku obleganega Sarajeva, konec leta 1994)

Bedenje

Bedim nad globoko belino papirja,
bedim nad belino razgrnjenih rjuh,
bedim nad pogrnenim snom, kjer se kruh
suši in se bliža poslednja večerja,

bedim nad otrokom in ženo, ki sanja,
mornarji dotikanja se oberoč
držimo drug drugega, tiktakajoč
s koraki po spalnici, ki je brezdanja,

a jaz sem utrujen, tako sem utrujen,
bedim nad begunci iz rane sveta,
iz nezaceljivega brezna srca,
in glava mi pada, in vse bo še huje,

bedim nad odsotnostjo samega sebe,
zgubljenega, mrtvega, zdaj sem nekdo
popolnoma drug, ki še nosi telo
nekdanjega sebe, telo, ki me grebe,

bedim in bedim, ker sem mojster nespečnosti,
edinega mojega deleža večnosti,

na smrt sem utrujen, in vse bo še huje.