



THE UNIVERSITY OF ARIZONA
COLLEGE OF SOCIAL & BEHAVIORAL SCIENCES

Center for Middle Eastern Studies

Fulbright-Hays Group Projects Abroad: Balkan Borderlands

Curriculum Project or Presentation Title:

Perspectives on War and Survival: Contemporary Bosnian Poetry

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Course or Audience:

Higher Education: lower division literature and humanities courses

Overview:

This curriculum unit is designed to expose students to poetry, specifically, the creation of poetry in the context of war, specifically, the Bosnian Wars of 1992-1996. This unit explores poetry not exclusively as an aesthetic event subject to the standard procedures of explication but as an existential one. Poems are first and foremost expressions of individual consciousness, as each poem tracks closely to a single human voice. Accordingly, the presented poems will be framed as acts of creativity and self-articulation conjured in a context of destruction and the cheapening of human life. Students will be asked to consider the possibilities of poetry as a refuge, and in some cases, what Damir Arsenijević has labeled a “sanity strategy to survive the war” and a symbolic reconfiguring of a collapsed universe.¹

The provided lesson introduces students to sources illuminating the general historical and cultural context of the break up the former Yugoslavia, the ethno-nationalism that fueled the particular brutality of the wars in Bosnia, and daily-life during the siege of the Bosnian capital, Sarajevo. Some faculty and instructional contexts might necessitate appreciation and analysis of the poems in their own right; indeed, many approaches to poetry appreciation claim poems are self-contained and provide all the necessary elements for appreciation on their own terms. The curriculum can be adapted to accommodate a more formalist approach. However, most students - most readers - will find their sympathetic imaginations sufficiently limited as to benefit from exposure to the facts, images, sounds, and testimonies that will make the Balkan crisis more vivid, thus providing more intellectual and emotive context for student dialog with the poems presented in this unit.

The brevity of poems and the reliance of verse on impactful imagery and stylistic effects renders it a meaningful forum for exploring war.

Student Learning Outcomes:

- *Identify poetic forms and conventions.*
- *Analyze poetry with respect to form and conventions.*
- *Explore war poetry as a genre of historical poetry and identify its themes and conventions.*
- *Examine the historical circumstances pertaining to the break-up of the former Yugoslavia and the resulting wars, particularly in Bosnia.*
- *Describe life in the Bosnian capital Sarajevo during the siege from 1992-1996.*
- *Analyze war poems written during the Bosnian conflict and during the siege of Sarajevo with respect to themes of war poetry and standard poetic forms and conventions.*

¹ *Damir Arsenijević, Forgotten Future: The Politics of Poetry in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Baden-Baden: Nomos, 2010: 114.*

Procedures/Lesson Sequence:

The lesson sequence described below can and should be adapted for different instructional contexts. Curriculum emphasizing general poetry study, war poetry, war and genocide, modern European history, etc. may emphasize different preparatory components of the lesson as needed. Links to resources mentioned in the lesson sequence can be found in the corresponding lesson step the of “materials” section.

Step #1: Poetry Appreciation

- View Stephen Burt’s TED talk, “Why People Need Poetry.” One of the principle ideas conveyed by Burt is the idea that poems can bring to light our actual feelings, introduce us to feelings we have not hitherto experienced, and, importantly, suggest the feelings inherent in others. This offers an ideal opportunity for a general discussion of the difference between sympathy and empathy.
- Distribute to students excerpts from Neel Burton’s “Empathy vs. Sympathy” (if more conducive to time management, assign excerpts prior to class).
- Facilitate a discussion asking students to differentiate between sympathy and empathy, highlighting the conceptual difference between the concepts but also the prospective desirability and limitations of each. Inquire whether students agree with Burt’s argument that poetry is necessary because it has the power to provide access to someone else’s consciousness. **Possible formative assessment: the best definition.** Using Poll Everywhere, create a “cluster” response question asking for definitions and/or examples for both sympathy and empathy. Use responses to clarify definitions.

Step #2: How to Read and Analyze a Poem

- Task out in class for group discussion Edward Hirsch’s “How To Read A Poem.” The article contains the following sections:
 - Getting Started: Prior Assumptions
 - Reading a Poem Aloud
 - The Line
 - Starting the Conversation
 - Text and Context
 - Embrace Ambiguity

Possible formative assessment: Have each group puzzle through an assigned section and offer a two minute micro-presentation to the class concerning the strategy suggested by Hirsch.

- For curricular units requiring more advanced immersion into poetic form and conventions, introduce students to Charles Bernstein’s “Poem Profiler.” The Profiler is available in both long and short forms (links to both are available in the “materials” section, and it provides students with a series of analytical categories to develop the requisite vocabulary for explicating a poem on a more detailed level than the guidelines provided by Hirsch might allow. I suggest utilizing the short form of the Poem Profiler and deploying it in a comparative exercise of two poems at the end of the lesson). I have routinely used this introductory strategy with two well-anthologized war poems: 1) Randall Jarrell’s “The Death of the Ball Turret Gunner” and Wilfred Owen’s “Dulce et Decorum Est.” Links for both poems have been provided in the materials section -- consider using the audio recitation feature if students are reticent about reading the poems aloud.
- The Learning Center has developed an in-depth worksheet that provides a step-by-step guide to explication. The value of the worksheet is that includes embedded vocabulary definitions, which is particularly useful for online iterations of this curriculum. **Possible formative and summative assessments:** Consider assigning the worksheet with one of the aforementioned poems as a follow-up exercise to assess comprehension -- or, assign with one the forthcoming Bosnian war poems as part of a summative assessment leading to a final, essay analysis.

Step #3: Introduction to War Poetry

- Students will arrive at this unit with various conceptions of and exposure to war poetry as a subgenre. An important point to convey early in this unit is that perspectives on war through verse

are as varied as people impacted by conflicts. Many students will have some exposure to the subgenre via studying WWI poetry, particularly given the ongoing centenary celebrations. This may orient students toward assumptions that war poetry pertains to issues of soldiering. **Possible formative assessment:** consider a brainstorming activity in which students formulate as many “perspective positions” as possible as pertains to war in terms of role and attitude (i.e., soldier, defector, partisan, resistor, commander/captain, politician, civilian, women, children, etc.; patriotism, duty, doubt, survival, retribution, religious zeal, remorse, etc.). The general thrust of the activity is expand war poetry’s purview beyond the category of the heroic/patriotic soldier. Convicted by the Hague for war crimes, the Bosnian-Serb leader Radovan Karadzic was also a well-known poet, and his poems exude the ethno-nationalist fervor at the heart of the Bosnian genocide. His example would certainly expand students’ conceptions of the parameters of war poetry (link to Karadzic’s poems are included in materials, step #5).

- Have students peruse before the class lesson or during the “War Poetry” entry from *The Princeton Encyclopedia of Poetry and Poetics*. An URL to the PDF file for this article is included in the materials section. The article provides a historical overview of war poetry from ancient literatures to the present day. Have students note transformations in the purpose of war poetry over the millennia, particularly with respect to the following: 1) ever-increasing diversity of perspective; 2) changes in the nature of warfare itself; 3) transformation of the role and public perception of the soldier.
- A useful preparatory exercise addressing the expansion of war poetry’s perspective comes from consideration of Adrienne Rich’s “The School Among the Ruins” (included as a linked PDF file in the materials section). In the Bosnian War Poetry section of this module, we will be introduced to Senida Čeljo, whose poetry during the siege of Sarajevo speaks eloquently and desperately to the sadness she feels over the interruption of her education (hence, her future); Rich’s poem might make for a useful comparison. **Possible formative assessment:** use either Bernstein’s Poetry Profiler or the TLC “How to Analyze a Poem” worksheet to explicate Rich’s poem. Alternatively, divide students into two groups. One group should be responsible for the theme of normalcy -- daily life at school. The other should be responsible for the theme of rupture to normalcy. Have each group rotate through members, asking each to place a word on a whiteboard or poster board words and phrases that Rich deploys to indicate this dichotomized world.

Step #4: Bosnia and the Siege of Sarajevo

- Clearly, most curriculum maps for 100-200 level humanities courses will NOT have extended carve out time for detailed exploration of the Balkan Wars of the 1990s. What follows are a host of suggested preparatory materials for faculty wishing to provide some historical context for the poems presented in Step #5. Though the poems can be appreciated aesthetically in their own right, historical context adds an added dimension to help engender empathetic connection.
- Assign the BBC’s “Balkans War: A Brief Guide,” the History Channel’s “Bosnian Genocide,” and “CHRONOLOGY: What Happened During the War in Bosnia.” Supplement with an in-class viewing of Radio Free Europe’s “The Bosnian War and the Dayton Accords Explained.” The provided synopsis offers a concrete, linear narrative of the conflicts and identifies belligerents, key issues, and analysis of the religio-ethnic dimensions of the conflict. Students should be able to:
 - Identify the former Yugoslavia on a map.
 - Identify the constituent republics of the former Yugoslavia.
 - Describe the ethnic makeup of Croatia, Bosnia, and Serbia -- and tie ethnic identity to religious affiliation.
 - Explain why Bosnia’s diverse ethnic makeup (while situated between the more homogenous Serbian and Croatian states) laid the foundations for the ensuing conflict.
 - Three fundamentally conflicting political currents:
 - Serb desire/efforts to create a “Greater Serbia”
 - Croat efforts toward “Greater Croatia”
 - Muslim efforts toward autonomy and Bosnian territorial integrity
 - Describe the involvement of the United Nations in mediating the conflict both in terms of its successes and failures.

- Describe the tactics utilized predominantly by Serbian forces to prosecute its ethno-nationalistic agenda within Bosnia.
- Having established a basic chronology, students may still need exposure to a “relatable anchor” as to make the human impact of the conflict more tangible. Souad Mahmuljin was a child when the conflict began. Eventually, Mahmuljin and members of his family - after an extended and occasionally terrifying episode of internal displacement within Bosnia and Croatia - resettle as refugees in Phoenix, Arizona. Shelly Ortiz, a Glendale Community College student, produced and directed a short documentary film concerning Mahmuljin’s experiences of the conflict and his life as a refugee in the U.S. Consider viewing this documentary with students as a way of personalizing the information students have taken on board in this part of the curriculum (see materials for Vimeo link).
- Along with the ethnic cleansing perpetrated by the Army of Republika Srpska, the Siege of Sarajevo serves as touchstone for understanding the particular brutality of the Balkan wars. The poetry featured in Step #5 is principally drawn from Sarajevans who endured the terror and privations of the siege. There are several tremendous resources for understanding the scope and dimensions of the siege and the toll it took on Sarajevans.
 - The BBC’s *Sarajevo 1992-1995: Looking Back After 20 Years* offers an interactive timeline map that embeds statistics, maps, and photos in each chronologically ordered slide. Paired with Radio Free Europe’s photo montage, *The Siege of Sarajevo*, these resources provide a visual catalog of life during the siege. These resources offer an opportunity to engage in visual analysis as a means of conveying historical content. Consider the following procedure:
 - **Possible formative assessment:** Divide the class into three to five groups. The Radio Free Europe photo montage presents 15 photographs. Divide the photographs among the groups accordingly. For each of the photographs, have the groups compose a verbal **description** of the photograph. Encourage them not to analyze or make assumptions but rather describe in detail what the photograph presents. Once the description component has been completed, ask the groups to engage in broader **reflection**. Ask them to compare the emotional and interpretive reactions each photo evokes in each group participant, linking the reaction to a formal element. Have each group speak to their assigned images, sharing what they “see” and what they “feel.” Having moved through all 15 photographs, facilitate a group conversation about what the photographic record (which is limited and curated) communicates about the siege, taking note of broad themes and questions the photos evoke.
 - There are a host of documentaries chronicling the Siege of Sarajevo. In addition of being of various production quality, there is the issue of editorial perspective. Many available “documentaries” go beyond application of a subjective lens and into outright propaganda and revisionism -- a complicated subject itself. Among the best documentaries on the Siege of Sarajevo that attempt to remain firmly within a journalistic framework include:
 - *Al-Jazeera’s Veterans: Siege of Sarajevo.* The first 14 minutes provide a compelling overview of the siege within the broader context of the Balkan wars. The second half of the documentary focuses more on existing divisions within the city in the post-Dayton Accords era and soldiers’ reflections on the conflict and the siege. See “materials” for URL.
 - *Radio Free Europe’s 20 Years After The Start Of The Siege, A Return To Sarajevo* provides an excellent overview of the siege while focusing mostly on the testimony of survivors, whose reflections help viewers understand with greater intimacy the struggles for daily survival during the siege. The final 12 minutes of the documentary focus mostly on how limitations of Dayton’s ability to resolve ethnic divisions in Bosnia and the resulting political gridlock. See “materials” for URL.
 - **Possible formative assessment:** each of the documentaries and resources presented in this step offer significant opportunities for reflection. For any video clips presented in class, I recommend, at least, utilizing the “exit slip” strategy. Dozens of “exit slip”

templates are available via a Google search. Find a template that seems most workable given the course format and class size. After administering and then reviewing the submitted templates, utilize class discussion to address fuzziest points and misconceptions. One-minute essays are also useful for gauging students' learning experiences with respect to this challenging content.

Step #5: Bosnian War Poetry

- Have students peruse before the class lesson or during the “Bosnian Poetry” entry from *The Princeton Encyclopedia of Poetry and Poetics*. (see materials, Step #5). This encyclopedia entry is brief and provides a general historical context for the themes and sources of Bosnian poetry, as well as a catalog of the most prominent Bosnian poets.
- A simple but moving poem to facilitate an atmosphere conducive to discussing Bosnian war poetry is “Here We Don’t Live to Just Live” by Mak Dizdar (17 October 1917 – 14 July 1971). Though composed before the Balkan wars, the poem is inscribed on the memorial commemorating Tuzla’s Kapija massacre, in which 71 individuals celebrating Youth Day (May 25th, 1995) were killed by the Army of Republika Srpska.
 - **Possible formative assessment:** I have provided the poem in both English and Bosnian (Addendum #1). Sometimes students resist poetry for fear of being unable to grasp the poem’s intended meaning (see step #1 for How to Read a Poem). One way to overcome this resistance is through the use of linguistic puzzle play. Provide students with the the Bosnian version of the poem and the lexicon provided. Ask students to use the lexicon to reconstruct the poem in English, asking them to consider making translation decisions to achieve some sense of parallelism in the sentence structures. The vocabulary provided should be sufficient for students to reconstruct the poem. Having reconstructed the poem, provide them with the translation included in Addendum #1. Ask students to ponder the final sentences. How does Dizdar see the relationship between life and death, and what does this suggest about how conflict is socially framed in the Balkans?
- Addendum #2 includes 7 poems by Senida Čeljo, a resident of Sarajevo who lived and suffered through the siege. Have students read her biographical statement. My recommendation is task students into groups and assign each group one poem to explicate. Depending on time resources, the explication can be basic (theme and mood, use of specific words to convey both, and connections made between the poems and the documentaries on the siege viewed in class or in preparation for class). Conversely, you may wish to have students utilize Bernstein’s Poem Profiler (short form) or TLC’s How to Analyze a Poem for a more extended, structured analysis (See Materials, Step #2). **Possible formative assessment:** A set of discussion questions have been formulated for Čeljo’s poems that can be used for either individual groups or general group discussion (see Addendum #3).
- Čeljo’s poetry comes from the perspective a civilian impacted by the horrors of war. Her poems speak to an interior world. Other Bosnian poets have taken different perspectives to the siege and have tried to chronicle the major events of the conflict in verse, such as living under the threat of sniper fire and the challenges of everyday citizens who volunteer to serve as sentries for the city. Poet Marko Vešović (b. 1945) is one such poet. Have students navigate to UniVerse: A United Nations of Poetry; several of Vešović’s poems are published there (see materials for link). In the same groups as suggested for the previous step, task out three poems published there (multiple groups can work on the same poem). UniVerse has provided instructional prompts for the poem “Signature” (“Potpis” in Bosnian). The discussion questions are useful. Consider using the “enclosed” poem writing prompt. Another useful source of Bosnian War Poetry is the Goran Simic page hosted by Voices Education (see Materials, Step Five). Simic is a preeminent Bosnian poet whose war poems have garnered him an impressive reputation in Europe. His personal website also contains a selected collection of his poems (see Materials, Step Five). **Possible formative assessments:** Consider having students complete an exit slip concerning Čeljo’s, Simic’s, Vešović’s poems. Here are three questions that might be included in the exit slip:
 - If you were to meet any of the poets featured in this unit, what three questions would you ask?
 - If you could have chosen another title for one of Čeljo’s poems, what would that title

- *have been and why?*
- *Is there a single aspect of the siege of Sarajevo or the Bosnian wars in general that you are more curious about having read the assigned poems?*
- *Think about the concepts of sympathy and empathy. To what extent do these poems engender sympathetic or empathetic responses in the reader? One but not the other? Why?*
- **Possible summative assessments:** *Having completed this lesson, or relevant parts given course parameters, a possible summative assessment might include a detailed analysis or explication of one or more of the poems covered in this unit. Possible prompts include:*
 - *Select between 2-4 images of the siege of Sarajevo. Explain how one or more of the poems read this unit help us achieve a better emotional and/or intellectual understanding of the selected photographs. Incorporating additional art forms might engender a broader discussion of survival and creativity and appeal to students with different aesthetic interests.*
 - *Have students select an image of the siege of Sarajevo or the Bosnian wars that addresses a topic or perspective on war that they find intriguing. Have them then construct a poem that speaks to the image and would help an outsider develop an informed response to its message. Consider troping the form of a poem assigned in the unit to provide a foundational structure for the newly created poem.*
 - *Conduct a formal explication of a single poem covered this unit using Bernstein's poem profiler.*
 - *Conduct a broader search of Bosnian war poetry to explore comparative perspective positions. Students might want to explore the soldiers' perspective, international poets reacting to the genocide in Bosnia, or even potentially the poems of Radovan Karadzic, the Bosnian-Serb leader who has been sentenced to 40-years in prison by the Hague for war crimes -- which would offer an interesting study of poetry and nationalism.*
 - *Disassemble one of the poems assigned in this unit and reassemble them in a micro-essay to express the main ideas of the selected poem.*

Assessment:

Assessment options have been indicated in each of the curricular steps outlined in the section above.

Materials:

- **Step #1**
 - Stephen Burt's TED Talk, "[Why People Need Poetry](https://www.ted.com/talks/stephen_burt_why_people_need_poetry/transcript)"
https://www.ted.com/talks/stephen_burt_why_people_need_poetry/transcript
 - Neel Burton's "[Empathy vs. Sympathy](https://www.psychologytoday.com/blog/hide-and-seek/201505/empathy-vs-sympathy)" in *Psychology Today*
<https://www.psychologytoday.com/blog/hide-and-seek/201505/empathy-vs-sympathy>
- **Step #2:**
 - [Charles Bernstein's Poem Profiler \(long form\)](http://writing.upenn.edu/library/Bernstein-Charles_Poem-Profiler.html):
http://writing.upenn.edu/library/Bernstein-Charles_Poem-Profiler.html
 - [Charles Bernstein's Poem Profiler \(short form\)](http://www.writing.upenn.edu/library/Bernstein-Charles_Poem-Profiler_EZ.html):
http://www.writing.upenn.edu/library/Bernstein-Charles_Poem-Profiler_EZ.html
 - [The Learning Center: How to Analyze a Poem \(PDF available\)](https://www.vaniercollege.qc.ca/tlc/tipsheets/reading-and-analyzing/how-to-analyze-a-poem.pdf)
<https://www.vaniercollege.qc.ca/tlc/tipsheets/reading-and-analyzing/how-to-analyze-a-poem.pdf>
 - [Randall Jarrell's "The Death of the Ball Turret Gunner"](https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poems/57860/the-death-of-the-ball-turret-gunner):
<https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poems/57860/the-death-of-the-ball-turret-gunner>
 - [Wilfred Owen's "Dulce et Decorum Est"](https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poems/46560/dulce-et-decorum-est):
<https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poems/46560/dulce-et-decorum-est>
- **Step #3**
 - "War Poetry" entry from *The Princeton Encyclopedia of Poetry and Poetics* (PDF file). Note: this article is available online via Credo, which is included under current MCCCDC library digital subscriptions.
 - Adrienne Rich's "The School Among Ruins" (PDF File). The poem is available via the Englewood Review website: <http://englewoodreview.org/adrienne-rich-the-school-among-the-ruins-poem/>
- **Step #4**
 - [BBC's Balkans War: A Brief Guide](http://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-17632399) <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-17632399>
 - History Channel's [Bosnian Genocide](http://www.history.com/topics/bosnian-genocide) <http://www.history.com/topics/bosnian-genocide>
 - [Chronology: What Happened During the War in Bosnia](https://www.reuters.com/article/idUSL21644464)
<https://www.reuters.com/article/idUSL21644464>
 - [Radio Free Europe's The Bosnian War and the Dayton Accords Explained](https://www.rferl.org/a/bosnian-war-explained/27375116.html)
<https://www.rferl.org/a/bosnian-war-explained/27375116.html>
 - [Suad Mahmuljin Documentary on Vimeo](https://vimeo.com/196130676)
<https://vimeo.com/196130676>
 - [BBC's Sarajevo 1992-1995: Looking Back After 20 Years](http://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-17617775)
<http://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-17617775>
 - [Radio Free Europe's The Siege of Sarajevo](https://www.rferl.org/a/twenty-five-years-on-from-the-siege-of-sarajevo/28407397.html) <https://www.rferl.org/a/twenty-five-years-on-from-the-siege-of-sarajevo/28407397.html>
 - [Radio Free Europe's documentary, 20 Years After the Start of The Siege: A Return to Sarajevo](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HIJ7ICVWISM)
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HIJ7ICVWISM>
 - [Al-Jazeera's Veterans: Siege of Sarajevo](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tnaG0PiBPbw&t=564s)
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tnaG0PiBPbw&t=564s>
- **Step #5**
 - "Bosnian Poetry" entry from *The Princeton Encyclopedia of Poetry and Poetics* (PDF file). Note: this article is available online via Credo, which is included under current MCCCDC library digital subscriptions.
 - [UniVerse: A United Nations of Poetry / Marko Vešović Page](http://www.universeofpoetry.org/bosnia_p2.shtml#teach1)
http://www.universeofpoetry.org/bosnia_p2.shtml#teach1
 - [Voices Education: The Poetry of Goran Simic](http://voiceseducation.org/content/goran) <http://voiceseducation.org/content/goran>

- [simic](#)
- [Goran Simic Professional Website with selected poems](#)
<http://goransimic.com/poems.htm>
- [The poetry of Karadzic, Bosnian-Serb War Criminal](#)
<http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/shows/karadzic/radovan/poems.html>
- *Addendum #1: Here We Don't Live Just to Live by Mak Dizdar (including Bosnian version and brief lexicon)*
- *Addendum #2: Seven Poems by Senida Čeljo, including biographical statement*
- *Addendum #3: Discussion questions for Seven Poems by Senida Čeljo*

Technology:

No advanced technology beyond a standard instructor station is required for this lesson. Per the lesson procedures, a number of documentary resources have been provided, many of which are best deployed in the classroom for collective viewing and discussion.

Adaptations:

The curriculum steps listed under “Procedures / Lesson Sequence” have been designed to provide faculty with maximum flexibility. Faculty interested in deploying this content in a literature class with an emphasis on formal poetry analysis may choose to focus on steps 1-3 & 5. Instructional environments that have bandwidth to allow (and competencies that necessitate) more robust historical context should avail themselves of step 4. Each step serves as a resource guide, and faculty can select those materials most conducive to facilitating authentic learning in their respective instructional environments).

Reflections:

This curriculum has not yet been administered in an instructional setting, but it will receive its first trial run in mid-October 2017.

Original Bosnian versions of Senida Čeljo's poems will be included in the next iteration of this lesson, and I will present the Bosnian versions in the same format as I did for Mak Dizdar's poem (for those faculty wishing students to recreate the poems in English using the provided lexicon).

Addendum #1

Here We Don't Live Just to Live by Mak Dizdar

Original Bosnian	English Translation
<p>Ovdje se ne živi samo da bi se živjelo. Ovdje se ne živi samo da bi se umiralo. Ovdje se i umire da bi se živjelo</p>	<p><i>Here one does not live just to live. Here one does not live just die. Here one dies just to live</i></p>

Bosnian Vocabulary

Se = One

Ne = no/not (negation)

živjeti = to live / živi = third person singular / živjelo (technically, "living" but best translated as "to live")

da bi = in order to

Samo = only/just

umrijeti = to die / umire = third person singular

Ovdje = here

Addendum #2
Seven Poems by Senida Čeljo

Biographical Statement:

Senida Čeljo was born on September 8, 1970, in Sarajevo, Bosnia and Herzegovina. She attended the comprehensive school and had just begun study at Faculty of Philosophy, department English language and literature, when the war began in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Before the war she lived as each young person lives, going to school, entertaining with peers and travelling. She admired the poetry of Walt Whitman, as well as Pablo Neruda and Juan Ramón Jiménez. The war stopped her youth, and her mind was full of different emotions like fear, sadness, anger and disappointment. Sarajevo, the capital of Bosnia and Herzegovina, came under siege and was subjected to daily shelling and sniper attacks from the Army of the Republika Srpska. The siege lasted from April 6, 1992 to February 29, 1996, the longest siege in modern history-- a year longer even than the Siege of Leningrad during World War Two. The city was without supplies, including food and medicine, as well as water, electricity, and heating fuel. Many people whom she knew were killed.

The terrible war had an enormous impact on her poetry. By the 1996, like all citizens of Sarajevo who lived in almost complete isolation from the outside world, Senida started to work at the primary school, working in the shelters, actively maintaining the famous Bosnian spirit of rebelliousness. Reading and poetry were means of survival, not entertainment. Reading widely and creating her own world of poetry, which was her way of escape, she was free to show her weakness, fear, and despair.

Today she still lives in Sarajevo with her husband and two children and teaches at High Economic School. Her life aim is to promote the values of peace and diversity among her students and community.

<p><i>Insanity</i> Lost humans in a great abyss, suffering and tears. The future is uncertain and dimmed, unhappy creatures in a big whirlwind.</p> <p>Sadness and grief -- There is no exit, no relief. What remains from this miserable life? Ruins, blood, and strife.</p> <p>A sister without her brother, a woman without a husband, a son without his mother!</p> <p>What strange fates! Insanity dominates!</p>	<p><i>Persecution</i> Terrible thoughts persecute me, an unpleasant shiver through my body spreads. The same questions are always in my head. What are we? Who are we? Or have we already been?</p> <p>Terrible nightmares persecute me. My heart trembles more and more. Blue dawns are so distant, and my soul so longs them.</p> <p>Terrible people persecute me: Those who hide their faces from us. What can our future be if their word is the last?</p>
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<p><i>Consolation</i> There must be a breach! Consolation has given life to my heart. The war will pass, but by that time, who will be dead and who will be alive?</p> <p>These four walls weigh on me, suffocate me. I need real life. I need air. But my chances for survival are low. Less consolation, less hope.</p> <p>This will pass away like all things always pass. But there is so little life left. Comfort as deception occurs, And I start to pray, but I know the whole world is deaf.</p>	<p><i>The Storm's Scream</i> Can you hear the scream of storm? It comes so easily. Can you feel the thunder rolling through the cloudy sky, the boom of its misery and the brilliancy of the lightning strike?</p> <p>It's too... too dark. Everything coming now is distress. I can only hear screams. They killed our morning twilights; They killed our dreams.</p>
<p><i>Waiting</i> The spring offers only gloom, and the winter was not much better. Though flowers are colourful in full bloom, my soul is so tired and full of dark matter. Waiting is so depressing.</p> <p>My thoughts swarm less; there are no more feelings and melancholy. This heavy waiting is so lonely. It turns around like a merry-go-round in the eddy of life, here where I am, underground.</p>	<p><i>Short Prayer for Him</i> Don't let him feel pain, dread, and death. Dear God! He can still live. He is so young.</p> <p>Don't let him see neither your punishment nor blood. Neither my tears nor my fear. Dear God!</p>
<p><i>A Prayer for You</i> When evil forces begin to roar and death seems closer than ever before, then my thoughts are with you and dear Lord.</p> <p>In that moment, in that time, I only whisper my wishes. My heart cries:</p>	

<p>Let me have you, let you live, and let peace always surround us.</p>	
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<p>When the strange forces of war and hell calm down, when your voice wakes me up from my slumbering mind, I give thanks to Dear God, for my wishes were realised.</p>	
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Addendum # 3

Discussion Questions for 7 poems by Senida Čeljo

1. What is the overall mood conveyed collectively by Čeljo's poems? Which specific words and images create this impact?
2. Relationships figure prominently in several of Čeljo's poems? How does she conceptualize relationships with respect to the siege's impact?
3. Define the term "lament." Can any of Čeljo's poems be described as a poetic lament?
4. Time appears as a type of character in the poems. How so? How would you describe this character?
5. Čeljo's feelings are often personified as natural forces. Why do you think she utilizes imagery of nature to express her internal landscapes?
6. To whom do you think "A Prayer for You" is addressed?
7. Based on the information you have received concerning the Siege of Sarajevo, how can Čeljo's poems be described as poetry of a siege?