

# Let's talk about war

(dictionary definitions)

Well,  
This is not a poem  
this is an essay  
this is a scientific paper  
on a simple body presence  
in every single word  
in each of the characters

## Introduction

Hello characters,  
how are you?  
Have you ever thought about yourselves?  
Have you ever made relationship between you  
and the characters from a book  
or from a theater show  
or from a dance piece?  
From a movie?

Have you ever understood what the Webster says about you:  
“peculiar quality, or the sum of qualities, by which a  
person or a thing is distinguished from others; the stamp  
impressed by nature, education, or habit; that which a  
person or thing really is; nature; disposition”?

Does it speak to you – anything – dear characters?  
Does it say to you: “each of you is a distinction,  
each of you makes a difference”?  
Do you know each of you is special?  
Is there any of you that could be expelled right now?  
Les ty?  
Or  
et tr?  
Or  
es ry?

Maybe it depends on your “nature, education, habit”?

Anyway,  
I will not bother you anymore,  
dear characters,  
I will use you

to talk about inhibition (*this is an ode to Joao Fideiro*)  
1. The act of inhibiting, or the state of being inhibited;  
restraint; prohibition; embargo. [1913 Webster]

2. (Physiol.) Stopping or checking of an already present action; restraining of the function of an organ, or an agent, such as a digestive fluid or enzyme, etc.; as, the inhibition of the respiratory centre by the pneumogastric nerve; the inhibition of reflexes, etc. [1913 Webster]"

Embargo?

The inhibition of reflexes?

Stopping of an already present action?

Which one do you prefer, my audience?

## Second part - Contextualisation

I am naked  
it is cold  
there are two heaters close to me  
one is heating my right ankle  
so warm! I can not stand it!  
the other one is blowing into my lower back  
I am not moving  
I should not move  
if I move everyone will see that  
I should not disturb their concentration  
I should stay still  
my skin is itching around my nose  
I would really love to scratch it  
I should not move  
I should remain still  
they are laughing  
are they laughing at me?  
they are saying MOOI MOOI  
*Dit is so mooi*  
they like my positions  
they ask me where am I from  
I say *from Serbia*  
they react very strongly  
I see strong emotions on their faces  
they ask me was is hard for me  
they whisper *there was a war*

I am not just an object  
a body objectified for their recreation  
a body that is undertaking a cheap labour

I am also an object coming from Serbia

I should not move  
keep it still  
the leg is sleeping  
breathe into it  
breathe  
breathe  
I can not breathe  
it is too warm  
ok, then think about something,  
something else

How many reflexes are inhibited right now in me?  
How many thoughts are stopped on their way to become actions?

And what if I go crazy right now and start moving like a mad woman?  
What if I say to them - "no, I can not do this anymore, it is too much!  
I am an academic citizen!  
I am a professional artist!  
I am 30 years old!  
I can not!"?  
What if I start doing something very private  
something I would do only if I would be alone and naked?

Breathe  
you don't have any worries  
everything is good  
if something happens  
they will understand you  
everyone knows it is not easy  
maybe they will not pay you  
but that is the worst that can happen  
and if you go crazy  
they will take you to the doctor  
and everything will be fine  
someone is always there  
don't worry  
do your best  
for sure there are things you can enjoy in

Why are they laughing?  
Are they laughing at me?

### **Third part – History Lesson**

1993.  
Embargo  
waiting in a line

to buy bread  
to buy cigarettes for my father and my mother  
to buy cooking oil  
to buy bread  
to buy bread  
warm bread  
we will buy more loafs of bread  
and put them in a freezer  
and tomorrow  
and day after tomorrow  
and day after tomorrow  
we will have bread  
and I will not have to wait in the line for three days  
water is coming in the cistern  
we should hurry up  
to fill in our buckets

2000.

I would like to travel  
to my Croatia  
it is also my country  
before the war I was there every summer  
in my grandma's house on beautiful island Hvar

I have to wait in a line  
from 2, 3 in the morning until  
5 in the afternoon  
maybe I will make it  
and maybe they will give me a visa  
I will travel, I will see it finally!  
after so long time

I am crossing the border  
somewhere close to Makarska  
friend and me  
we are crying from happiness  
and emotional excitement  
we are hugging each other  
like we won a lottery

2008.

I am applying for a visa to go to Berlin  
to live there for 3 months  
it is not possible longer, if I would like to live there longer  
I need to ask for a residence permit and I need to have a reason to live there  
an official reason  
I am waiting in a line  
a man in a uniform is telling to people  
to stay behind a marked line  
it is raining  
people want to move  
but they have to wait



*What doesn't kill you, makes you stronger*  
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### **Fifth part – Art does make a difference**

I am modelling in a beautiful studio  
it is an artist's place  
where people really take care  
if the body suffers  
they see it  
and tell me to give it a break  
I don't feel tired  
I am inventing new poses  
asymmetrical and very inspiring  
I am observing the body while posing  
I am aware of the situation  
the body becomes a playground  
a territory unknown and enormous in size  
to explore it  
to create it

I am not bored  
I am enjoying each and single situation  
sometimes it is hard  
but I am performing  
and I know what is my job as a performer

when I am in a position for a longer time  
I observe things around me  
I see floor, bleeds on the wall, cables,  
carpets, angles of the space, rugged surfaces,  
forgotten things, little bugs...

I even brought one of my friends  
to one of the sessions  
she is a dancer and a choreographer  
she is observing  
drawers are drawing  
I am posing  
the clock is ringing every 5 minutes  
she is amazed  
everything is like a performance  
she got inspired  
there is a magical concentration in the room  
everyone is working hard on it  
and the silence is also working

## **Sixth part – Art was always (t)here – History Lesson n.2**

1999.  
It was bombing and all public institutions were closed  
I was very happy not to go to the school  
anyway I wanted to leave the school  
it didn't have sense for me anymore  
I was reading Nietzsche and Heidegger  
and writing about symbolism of the element of *fire* in the philosophy of Heraclitus  
my ending exam for the high school  
I was also painting a lot  
and reading and writing poetry too  
I remember I even got an award for poetry  
and I went to the Belgrade City Parliament  
to receive it  
it was award in money, 100 Euro,  
equal to one month of average income in Serbia at that time  
the mayor was giving me the award in front of the cameras of the *Studio B*  
the last television that was not bombed  
and everyone saw me with my *Mohawk*-punk haircut on the news  
few times a day  
it was during bombing warning  
so we couldn't do it in the Parliament  
because of danger that bombs could kill us

so we did it in the building close to the Parliament  
I didn't care  
I was just thinking how I will buy many books from my award  
and the philosophy dictionary  
and the *Grubin* sandals  
which I was observing in a shop window for a long time

it was spring and the earth was very happy to host us  
being so generous in plants and herbs and trees and grasses  
everything was blooming

I found my happiness in being a child again  
not having social obligations  
and floating around with my own *ferry*

sometimes I would join the demos against the bombing  
with friends I did anti-war actions  
yet we were telling people  
"it is not about this war  
it is about any war  
don't be blind"

I was happy, I was truly happy  
to be  
to just be

I was developing myself as a human being and as an artist  
because there was so much silence  
and stillness  
and time  
so much time  
passing slowly  
and gently

nothing was happening  
just waiting for the war to be over

2000.

I went to Bosnia and Herzegovina  
my first crossing of the border was a trauma  
I was crying all the time  
friend and me  
we were hitch-hiking for a *hard-core* concert in Banja Luka  
there were still so many signs of the war  
we were picked up by Muslims, Croatians, Serbs  
we saw different faces of the war  
and actually first time I realised that there was a real war going on  
I was crying for days after



when I think about it now  
it was an experience similar in its strength to the one which, according to a legend,  
Buddha had when he went first time outside of his shrine  
facing his personal ignorance

2001.

I am in Mostar  
the city that is one of the most affected by the war  
the city divided into two sides  
one Croatian  
one Muslim  
according to my passport  
I am Serbian  
I was participating on Mostar Intercultural Festival  
organised by local people from many different organisations  
and squatters mainly from Spain and France  
festival was big and lasted 2 weeks  
everyday there were at least five different venues with different programs non-stop  
art and diverse (inter)cultural programs  
I was performing and having an exhibition  
there were not so many people from Serbia, just a few of us  
we were sleeping on the floor of big gyms in schools  
it was 40 degrees in the air  
I was sleeping in the school which was in the street that used to be a front-line between  
Croats and Muslims during the war  
most of the buildings along that street were still destroyed and filled up with bullet holes in  
the walls  
people said that during the war there were always dead bodies along that street and  
nobody could move them for safety reasons, they were staying there for days, to rotten  
this street is still dividing Mostar

the remains of the destroyed houses and buildings  
were turned into festival venues  
we were dancing and sharing our art in these places  
it was an amazing atmosphere  
so friendly and warm and so full of sense  
in some moments of rest I was waking up from that dream and realising  
that we are standing in the middle of the war zone  
just few years ago  
now in the middle of a wounded city  
a wounded country  
former Yugoslavia

my body was non-stop convulsed with different emotions coming from layers and layers  
of this situation  
my art that I was making until that moment has suddenly lost its sense  
I was just one of the everyone who were there just to be

What could I been said? What could I been done?  
There was no reason to speak  
just to hug everyone and everything and to dance together

smiling and drinking *loza*  
and saying out loudly "Viva pozitivna"

### **Seventh part - Reflection**

What do you want to know about the war?

*It was not my war  
neither war of the majority of people*

How long will I be marked with this war?  
(How long will I be affected with the marking of myself by someone else's ideas about ex-Yugoslavian war?)

How long will my body be *objectified* with the imaginations and opinions about the place of my origin?  
(How long will I feel objectified with someone else's opinion?)

How long will I be an exotic example of a human kind?  
(How long will I use the benefits of being exotic?)

How long will I be an Eastern woman?  
(How long will I be affected with the culture I am coming from?)

Can my art depart from these notions?  
(Can I just make art? Is there a *pure art* to be made?)

Will you allow me to create something that is above all the wars?  
(Is it possible to forget?)

Something that is above my gender and above my origin?  
(Can I create something less anthropocentric?)

Should I change my name? Should I change my passport? Should I change my accent?  
Should I colour my hair blond? Should I take off my tattoos?  
(Do I care at all?)

I mean,

What about the bleeds on the wall in the studio  
and what about cables that are lying on the floor peacefully?

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