

Amnesty International Group 22 Pasadena/Caltech News

Volume XXV Number 9, September 2017

UPCOMING EVENTS

Thursday, September 28, 7:30 PM. Monthly Meeting. We meet at the Caltech Y, Tyson House, 505 S. Wilson Ave., Pasadena. (This is just south of the corner with San Pasqual. Signs will be posted.) We will be planning our activities for the coming months. Please join us! Refreshments provided.

Tuesday, October 10, 7:30–9:00 PM. Letter writing meeting at Caltech Athenaeum, corner of Hill and California in Pasadena. This informal gathering is a great way for newcomers to get acquainted with Amnesty.

Sunday, October 15, 6:30 PM. Rights Readers Human Rights Book Discussion Group. This month we read a novel, *“The Noise of Time”* by Julian Barnes.



Next Rights Readers Meeting

**Sunday, October 15
6:30 PM**

**Vroman's Bookstore
695 E Colorado Blvd.
Pasadena**

The Noise of Time

by Julian Barnes

BOOK REVIEW

By Alex Preston, Jan. 17, 2016, The Guardian. *The Noise of Time* review – Julian Barnes's masterpiece -- Shostakovich's battle with his conscience is explored in a magnificent fictionalised retelling of the composer's life under Stalin.

COORDINATOR'S CORNER

Hi everyone

It is now officially fall, my favorite season! Time to snuggle under the covers with the kitty katters and take long walks in the (hopefully) cooler weather to come....

Is anyone going to the Western Regional Conference? It's being held in Tempe, Arizona, November 4, at ASU (Arizona State University). For more info:

<https://www.amnestyusa.org/take-action/events/regional-conferences/western/>

Action for September: for the Rohingya people of Myanmar (formerly Burma) who are being forced out of their land by the Myanmar military. I'm sure we've all seen the news about the burning of villages, rape and murder of civilians, etc. Take action here to ask Congress to condemn the violence:

<https://act.amnestyusa.org/page/14245/action/1>

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Kathy

GROUP 22 SEPTEMBER LETTER COUNT

Urgent Actions	14
POC	2
Total	16



“The breadth of a whole life within the pages of a slim book”: Dmitri Shostakovich in 1950. Photograph: Sovfoto/UIIG via Getty Images

Julian Barnes's last novel, the Man Booker-winning *The Sense of an Ending* (2011), engaged in subtle and sustained dialogue with the book whose title it pilfered, Frank Kermode's brilliant 1967 work of narrative theory, also called *The Sense of an Ending*. Barnes's latest, *The Noise of Time*, borrows its title from Osip Mandelstam's memoirs, and again the earlier work casts interesting light upon Barnes's project. Mandelstam was one of Stalin's most outspoken critics, his fate sealed with the words of his 1933 Stalin Epigram. He was exiled in the Great Terror and died in a Vladivostok transit camp in 1938. The subject of *The Noise in Time* is not the brave, doomed Mandelstam, though, but a rarer genius, one whose art continued to flourish despite the oppressive attentions of the Soviet authorities: Dmitri Shostakovich.

The Noise of Time initially appears to be the latest addition to a hybrid literary form with which we are increasingly familiar – the fictional biography. Recent

examples range from Colm Tóibín's *The Master* (which presented a repressed and unhappy Henry James) to Nuala O'Connor's excellent *Miss Emily* (which gave us a wilful and tormented Emily Dickinson). As with all great novels, though – and make no mistake, this is a great novel, Barnes's masterpiece – the particular and intimate details of the life under consideration beget questions of universal significance: the operation of power upon art, the limits of courage and endurance, the sometimes intolerable demands of personal integrity and conscience.

This novel, like its predecessor, gives us the breadth of a whole life within the pages of a slim book, written in an intimately close third person. The reader visits the composer during three critical moments in his life, the decades between skipped over with extraordinary panache, a bravura performance of Italo Calvino's maxim that "time takes no time in a story". We first meet Shostakovich as "a man standing by a lift, at his feet a small case containing cigarettes, underwear and tooth powder; standing there and waiting to be taken away". A damning *Pravda* editorial, probably penned by Stalin, has denounced the composer's *Lady Macbeth of the Mtsensk District* as "non-political and confusing" because it "tickled the perverted taste of the bourgeois with its fidgety, neurotic music". Shostakovich waits for his first "Conversation with Power" – interrogation by the NKVD – and, presumably, exile or worse.

Our next encounter with Shostakovich is after the war, on a propaganda tour of the US. His visit is prompted by his second "Conversation with Power", this time a telephone call from Stalin himself that recalls a similar call in Vasily Grossman's *Life and Fate* (a novel that echoes within *The Noise of Time*). Restored to the party's good books by the success of his patriotic "Leningrad" Symphony, Shostakovich is delivering a series of speeches denouncing his own work and, particularly, that of Stravinsky, whom he likes and admires. He reads his speech in a "muttered monotone", hoping the words will be taken for what they are – dictations from the state. In the audience, though, is Nicolas Nabokov (Vladimir's cousin and in the pay of the CIA), who forces Shostakovich to reiterate his endorsement of the views of Zhdanov, the man "who had persecuted him since 1936, who had banned him and derided him and threatened him, who had compared his music to that of a road drill and a mobile gas chamber". It is a moment of abject, torturous humiliation for the composer.

The third section of the novel gives us an elderly Shostakovich, sitting in the back of a chauffeur-driven car, made bitter by the inexhaustible demands of the party, even now that Stalin's terror has given way to the reign of "Nikita the Corncob". Shostakovich describes himself as a hunchback, "morally, spiritually", a man shattered in body and spirit: "He could not live with himself. It was just a

phrase, but an exact one. Under the pressure of Power, the self cracks and splits." We witness his "final, most ruinous Conversation with Power", when the oleaginous functionary Pospelov forces him to join the party and take up a position entirely within the fold, as chairman of the Russian Federation Union of Composers. Shostakovich succinctly diagnoses his own greatest fault: "He had lived too long."

Around halfway through the novel there is a passage that operates as a kind of appeal to the reader, and also a statement about what kind of book this is: "There were those who understood a little better, who supported you, and yet at the same time were disappointed in you. Who did not grasp the one simple fact about the Soviet Union: that it was impossible to tell the truth here and live. Who imagined they knew how Power operated and wanted you to fight it as they believed they would do in your position. In other words, they wanted your blood." Here we sense the ghost of Osip Mandelstam, providing a heroic vision of what might have been for Shostakovich – an early death, lauded by some, forgotten by most. Instead, we get the old man, churning out bombastic, grandiloquent public music and composing his masterpieces – his late string quartets – in private, all the while knowing that "music is not like Chinese eggs: it does not improve by being kept underground for years and years".

Throughout *The Noise of Time*, I kept thinking of JM Coetzee (not a writer I'd have associated Barnes with before). Most obviously Coetzee's underrated fictional biography of Dostoevsky, *The Master of Petersburg*, but more often and more interestingly, *Disgrace*. In that novel, the hero, David Lurie, is offered an easy way out of a tawdry fix at the beginning of the book; instead, driven by a stubborn sense of personal integrity, he subjects himself to untold privations until the novel's extraordinary, quasi-religious ending.

Shostakovich, like Lurie, understands that his torments have ancient roots: "He knew his Bible well. So he was familiar with the notion of sin; also with its public mechanism. The offence, the priest's judgment on the matter, the act of contrition, the forgiveness. Though there were occasions when the sin was too great and not even a priest could forgive it." Every morning, in lieu of a prayer, he recites to himself a poem by Evtushenko – "But time has a way of demonstrating / The most stubborn are the most intelligent... I shall therefore pursue my career / By trying not to pursue one."

The composer's decline into ill health, the withering of his spirit, his hope that "death would liberate his music... from his life" – Barnes presents Shostakovich's final downward spiral with a kind of ruthless inevitability (and inevitability is, as Susan Snyder says, the signal note of tragedy). Alexei Tolstoy wrote in *Pravda* of Shostakovich's Fifth

Symphony: "Here the personality submerges itself in the great epoch that surrounds it, and begins to resonate with the epoch." Barnes has achieved a similar feat with a period of history, and a place, that despite their remoteness, are rendered in exquisite, intimate detail. He has given us a novel that is powerfully affecting, a condensed masterpiece that traces the lifelong battle of one man's conscience, one man's art, with the insupportable exigencies of totalitarianism.

<https://www.theguardian.com/books/2016/jan/17/the-noise-of-time-julian-barnes-review-dmitri-shostakovich>

ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Julian Barnes was born in Leicester, England on January 19, 1946. He was educated at the City of London School from 1957 to 1964 and at Magdalen College, Oxford, from which he graduated in modern languages (with honours) in 1968.

After graduation, he worked as a lexicographer for the Oxford English Dictionary supplement for three years. In 1977, Barnes

began working as a reviewer and literary editor for the *New Statesman* and the *New Review*. From 1979 to 1986 he worked as a television critic, first for the *New Statesman* and then for the *Observer*.

Barnes has received several awards and honours for his writing, including the 2011 Man Booker Prize for *The Sense of an Ending*. Three additional novels were shortlisted for the Man Booker Prize (*Flaubert's Parrot* 1984, *England, England* 1998, and *Arthur & George* 2005). Barnes's other awards include the Somerset Maugham Award (*Metroland* 1981), Geoffrey Faber Memorial Prize (FP 1985); Prix Médicis (FP 1986); E. M. Forster Award (American Academy and Institute of Arts and Letters, 1986); Gutenberg Prize (1987); Grinzane Cavour Prize (Italy, 1988); and the Prix Femina (*Talking It Over* 1992). Barnes was made a Chevalier de l'Ordre des Arts et des Lettres in 1988, Officier de l'Ordre des Arts et des Lettres in 1995 and Commandeur de l'Ordre des Arts et des Lettres in 2004. In 1993 he was awarded the Shakespeare Prize by the FVS Foundation and in 2004 won the Austrian State Prize for European Literature. In 2011 he was awarded the David Cohen Prize for Literature. Awarded biennially, the prize honours a lifetime's achievement in literature for a writer in the English language who is a citizen of the United Kingdom or the Republic of Ireland. He received the Sunday Times Award for Literary Excellence in 2013 and the 2015 Zinklar Award at the first annual Blixen Ceremony in Copenhagen. In 2016, the American Academy of Arts & Letters elected Barnes as an honorary foreign member. Also in 2016, Barnes was

selected as the second recipient of the Siegfried Lenz Prize for his outstanding contributions as a European narrator and essayist. On 25 January 2017, the French President appointed Julian Barnes to the rank of Officier in the Ordre National de la Légion d'Honneur. The citation from the French Ambassador in London, Sylvie Bermann, reads: "Through this award, France wants to recognize your immense talent and your contribution to raising the profile of French culture abroad, as well as your love of France."

Julian Barnes has written numerous novels, short stories, and essays. He has also translated a book by French author Alphonse Daudet and a collection of German cartoons by Volker Kriegel. His writing has earned him considerable respect as an author who deals with the themes of history, reality, truth and love.

Barnes lives in London.

SECURITY WITH HUMAN RIGHTS

By Robert Adams

Yemen: US-made bomb kills and maims children in deadly strike on residential homes
AIUSA press release issued September 21, 2017

The bomb that destroyed a residential building in Yemen's capital last month, killing 16 civilians and injuring 17 more – including five-year-old Buthaina whose photograph went viral in the aftermath of the strike – was made in the USA, Amnesty International reveals today.

Amnesty International's arms expert analyzed remnants of the weapon found it bore clear markings that matched US-made components commonly used in laser-guided air-dropped bombs.

The 25 August air strike hit a cluster of houses in Sana'a, severely damaging three of them, and killing seven children including all five of Buthaina's brothers and sisters. Eight other children were injured, amongst them was two-year-old Sam Bassim al-Hamdani, who lost both his parents.

"We can now conclusively say that the bomb that killed Buthaina's parents and siblings, and other civilians, was made in the USA," said Lynn Maalouf, Research director for the Middle East at Amnesty International.

"There simply is no explanation the USA or other countries such as the UK and France can give to justify the continued flow of weapons to the Saudi Arabia-led coalition for use in the conflict in Yemen. It has time and time again committed serious violations of international law, including war crimes,

over the past 30 months, with devastating consequences for the civilian population.”

After examining photographic evidence provided by a local journalist who dug out the remaining fragments of the weapon at the site, Amnesty International’s arms expert was able to positively identify the data plate from a US-made MAU-169L/B computer control group. It is a part used in several types of laser-guided air-dropped bombs.

According to the Defense Security Cooperation Agency, in 2015 the US government authorized the sale of 2,800 guided bombs to Saudi Arabia that were equipped with the MAU-169L/B computer control group, including GBU-48, GBU-54, and GBU-56 guided bombs.

Amnesty International is calling for the immediate implementation of a comprehensive embargo to ensure that no party to the conflict in Yemen is supplied with weapons, munitions, military equipment and technology that can be used in the conflict. An independent, impartial inquiry into reported violations is urgently needed and all those responsible for crimes under international law must be brought to justice in fair trials.

Lives devastated forever

*“She had five siblings to play with. Now she has none,”
Ali al-Raymi*

The Saudi Arabia-led coalition launched the devastating attacks at around 2AM in Faj Attan, a residential area in Yemen’s capital Sana’a.

Ali al-Raymi, 32, lost his brother Mohamed al-Raymi along with his sister-in-law and his five nieces and nephews aged between two and 10 years. His niece, five-year-old Buthaina, was the sole survivor.

He told Amnesty International:

“When you ask her ‘what do you want?’, she says ‘I want to go home’... She thinks that if she goes home, she will find them [her family] there... She had five siblings to play with. Now she has none... What kind of sorrow and pain could she be feeling in her heart?”

The Saudi Arabia-led coalition has [admitted](#) to carrying out the devastating attack, but maintains that the civilian casualties were the result of a “technical error”. The coalition claims it targeted a “legitimate military objective,” which belonged to the Huthi-Saleh forces.

According to local residents, one of the buildings in the area was frequented by a Huthi-aligned individual. Amnesty International was not able to confirm his identity, role or whether he was present at the time of the attack.

However, even if there were military objectives in the vicinity, international humanitarian law prohibits disproportionate attacks, including those expected to kill or injure civilians.

The Saudi Arabia-led coalition spokesperson also said that the incident had been referred to the coalition’s Joint Incidents Assessment Team (JIAT) for further investigations. To date, [Amnesty International](#) is not aware of any members of the coalition taking concrete steps to investigate, take disciplinary measures against or prosecute officers suspected of criminal responsibility for war crimes.

“The coalition’s complete disregard for civilian lives, as well as their lack of commitment to effective investigations, highlights the need for an independent international inquiry to look into alleged violations of international law,” said Lynn Maalouf.

“It is shameful that instead of holding the coalition accountable for their actions in Yemen, key allies including the USA and the UK have continued to supply it with huge quantities of arms.”

DEATH PENALTY NEWS

By Stevi Carroll

Ohio Executes

Governor John Kasich resumed Ohio’s executions in July of this year. September 13th Gary Otte was executed for the murders he committed 25 years ago.

One concern Mr. Otte and his attorney had about his execution was the drugs that would be used. According to an article on the Death Penalty Information website, one of Mr. Otte’s lawyers, Carol Wright, said he “exhibited ‘abnormal’ chest and stomach movements when he was injected with the execution drug, midazolam, showing signs of struggling for air and what she described as ‘air hunger’.” When she tried to leave the witness room to call to alert a federal judge about this possible problem, her exit from the room was delayed for several minutes and by the time she was able to contact a judge, Mr. Otte was dead. A spokesperson for the prison said that they were following “proper security protocol, and once [Wright’s] identity and intention was verified she was given permission to exit the room.” Journalists who witnessed the execution said they did not see any apparent breathing problems and the death was not prolonged.

Another concern for this execution was Mr. Otte’s age at the time he committed these murders. He was 20 years old. In August of this year, a Kentucky trial court found that the brain

development and maturation of people aged from 18-20 is similar to those of people under 18 and, therefore, the death penalty for people under the age of 21 when they commit their crimes is unconstitutionally cruel and unusual.

Prior to his execution, Mr. Otte apologized to the relatives of Robert Wasikowski and Sharon Kostura, his victims, and sang the hymn "The Greatest Thing." His lawyer, Vickie Werneke, said he was at peace.

Mr. Otte's final words were "Father, forgive them for they know not what they're doing."

The state of Ohio has 24 executions scheduled between now and 2020.

"Capital punishment is the most premeditated of murders." Albert Camus

Recent Exonerations

Victor Rosario

State: MA Date of Exoneration: 9/8/2017
In 1983, Victor Rosario falsely confessed to setting a fire that killed eight people in Lowell, Massachusetts and was sentenced to life in prison. He was exonerated in 2017 based on evidence that the critical parts of the confession were fabricated by police and that the fire was an accident.

Krystal Voss

State: CO Date of Exoneration: 9/8/2017
In 2004, Krystal Voss was sentenced to 20 years in prison for the death of her 17-month-old toddler in Alamosa County, Colorado. She was exonerated in 2017 by medical testimony showing that the boy was not a victim of Shaken Baby Syndrome, but likely died from injuries he suffered in a fall.

Stays of Execution

September

7 Juan Castillo TX

The request was made due to the state of disaster declared by Governor Abbott for 30 Texas counties due to Hurricane Harvey. A concurrent order to set a new execution date of December 14, 2017, was issued as well.

13 Jeffrey A Wogenstahl OH
Stay granted by Ohio Supreme Court May 4, 2016 on motion to vacate execution date and to reopen direct appeal. Rescheduled for April 17, 2019 by Gov. John Kasich on February 10, 2017.

13 Alva Campbell, Jr. OH

Rescheduled for November 15, 2017, by Gov. John Kasich on May 1, 2017.

Execution

September

13 Gary Otte OH
Lethal Injection 3-drug (midazolam)

PRISONER OF CONSCIENCE Narges Mohammadi

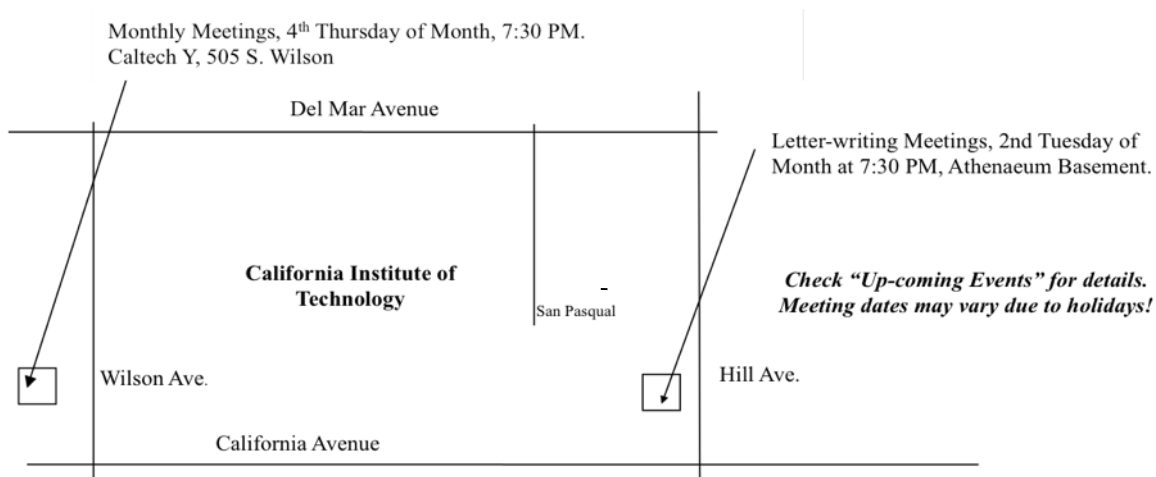
By Joyce Wolf and Alexi Daher

Many thanks to group members Laura and Ted, who staffed an Amnesty table at yesterday's (Sep. 25) Tom Petty concert and obtained 31 signatures on a petition to free Narges.

Our September book selection was *Until We Are Free: My Fight for Human Rights in Iran* by Nobel Peace laureate Shirin Ebadi. Narges was mentioned several times in the book. Stevi moderated our book discussion and messaged a photo to the author's Facebook page, writing, "We just wanted to let you know about how much we appreciate your book and the work you do. Also Narges Mohammadi is our Prisoner of Conscience. We've been writing on her behalf since 2015.."



Narges is one of the focus cases in the major new campaign for human rights defenders in Iran that Amnesty is launching on September 26. We'll look forward to Alexi's updates on this campaign and on other work for Narges by Amnesty groups in Europe.



From the 210 exit on Lake Avenue, head south, turn left on Del Mar
 From the 110 continue on Arroyo Parkway north, turn right on California
 Street parking is generally available.

Amnesty International Group 22
 The Caltech Y
 Mail Code C1-128
 Pasadena, CA 91125
www.its.caltech.edu/~aigp22/
<http://rightsreaders.blogspot.com>



Amnesty International's mission is to undertake research and action focused on preventing and ending grave abuses of the rights to physical and mental integrity, freedom of conscience and expression, and freedom from discrimination, within the context of its work to promote all human rights.