

## UPCOMING EVENTS

**Thursday, December 3, 7:30 PM.** Monthly Meeting. Caltech Y is located off San Pasqual between Hill and Holliston, south side. You will see two curving walls forming a gate to a path--our building is just beyond. Help us plan future actions on Sudan, the 'War on Terror', death penalty and more.

**Saturday December 12, 8AM to 2PM at Café Culture** 1359 N. Altadena Drive, Pasadena 91107, 626-398-8654. Letter writing marathon for International Human Rights Day. Drop by and help us write letters and postcards and enjoy Café Culture's great food and drink!

**Sunday December 20, 6:30PM.** *Rights Readers Human Rights Book Discussion Group.* See coordinator's column regarding change of location. This month we read "Amulet" by Roberto Bolaño.

## COORDINATOR'S CORNER

Hi everyone,

Hope you are enjoying the crisp fall weather!

We are having our 5<sup>th</sup> annual Global letter writing marathon Saturday Dec 12<sup>th</sup> from 8AM to 2 PM at Café Culture in Pasadena. Come join us as we write letters and postcards and enjoy Café Culture's great food, drink, and warm hospitality! This event replaces our usual "2<sup>nd</sup> Tuesday" of the month letter writing meeting.

Some of Group 22's members attended the Western Regional Conference in San Francisco in early November. Robert and I were unable to go due to a last minute work situation I couldn't get out of! Read Lucas and Joyce's thoughts on the conference later in this newsletter.

Also note that we are not meeting at Vroman's bookstore for our December book group as they are using our meeting space for Christmas merchandise! The meeting will be at a private home. Contact Lucas Kamp for more information at 626-795-1785 or go to our website at: <http://www.its.caltech.edu/~aigp22/>.

Enjoy the holidays!

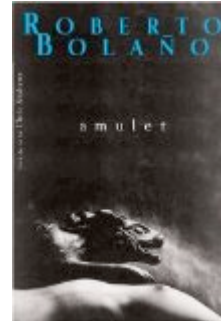
Con cariño,  
Kathy

## RIGHTS READERS

Human Rights Book Discussion Group

Keep up with Rights Readers at <http://rightsreaders.blogspot.com>

Next Rights Readers meeting:  
Sunday, December 20, 6:30 PM



**Amulet** by Roberto Bolaño

### Author Biography

Roberto Bolaño was born in Chile on April 28, 1953. For much of his life he lived a nomadic existence, living in Chile, Mexico, El Salvador, France and Spain. During the 1970s, he formed an avant-garde group called infrarealism with other writers and poets in Mexico where he lived after leaving Chile when it fell under military dictatorship. He returned to Chile in 1972 but left again the next year when General Augusto Pinochet came to power.

In the early eighties, he finally settled in the small town of Blanes, near Gerona in Northern Spain, where he died on July 15, 2003 of liver disease while awaiting a transplant. He is survived by his Spanish wife and his son and daughter.

Bolaño received some of the Hispanic world's highest literary awards, including the 1999 Romulo Gallegos Prize (Venezuelan) for his novel *Los detectives salvajes*, which was published in English as *The Savage Detectives* in 2007.

Six weeks before he died, his fellow Latin American novelists hailed him as the most important figure of his generation at an international conference he attended in Seville. In 2004 he was honored by the First Conference of Latin American Authors as "the most important literary discovery of our time."



He completed 12 novels during his life, published various poetry collections and left behind an almost completed 1,000 page novel, *2666*, about the unsolved murders of 300 women in Mexico over the past 10 years. *2666* (1100 pages at publication) was published posthumously in 2004. It is currently being translated into English by Natasha Wimmer, who also translated *The Savage Detectives*.

### Book Review

By David Flusfeder

Published: 6:00AM BST 28 Aug 2009

The Chilean poet, novelist and provocateur Roberto Bolaño died in Spain in 2003. He was 50 years old and had already gathered a wide readership in the Spanish-speaking world. Death, though, can be a great career move. The response to the 2007 publication in the United States of his 1998 novel *The Savage Detectives*, followed by *2666*, which was almost finished at the time of his death, has brought him into the international literary front rank. Both are large books, celebrations of poetry and a battered kind of urban heroism, written in Bolaño's beguiling combination of concision and wordiness. But now, with the success of those, his smaller books are being translated into English for the first time.

Bolaño's work is a roman-fleuve: characters and situations recur throughout his writings, and time is a watery element that the characters drift through. *Amulet* has its origin in a 10-page episode in *The Savage Detectives*. That novel was centred on two provocative young poets living in Mexico City in 1976: Ulises Lima and the author's alter-ego, Arturo Bolaño. In one of the most striking episodes, a woman, Auxilio Lacoutre, "the mother of Mexican poetry" (and a "mother" is, in this context, a woman who sweeps and shops and listens and adores), is in a fourth-floor lavatory cubicle when the army occupies the campus of the Mexico City Universidad. She is stuck there for 12 days. In the original episode, the emphasis was on Auxilio's physical predicament. She drank water from the tap, ate loo paper and lived in a state of fear and heightened memory.

In *Amulet*, the emphasis is on the remembering rather than the predicament.

Auxilio suffers from the blessing of being able to "remember" the future as well as the past. There are feverish prophecies about literary destinies: "For Marcel Proust, a desperate and prolonged period of oblivion shall begin in the year 2033... Jorge Luis Borges shall be read underground in the year 2045... Louis-Ferdinand Céline shall enter Purgatory in the year 2094... Witold Gombrowicz shall enjoy great prestige in the environs of the Rio de la Plata around the year 2098... Max Jacob shall cease to be read, that is to say his last reader shall die, in the year 2059."

There is an endearing bookishness to all of Bolaño's work. My favourite of his novels is *Nazi Literature in the Americas* (already published in the Americas and to be released here next year), an entirely fabricated, very funny, but straight-faced biographical dictionary of invented 20th-century poets and novelists.

One message throughout Bolaño's work is that literature matters. The reason for his public contempt for writers he saw as mediocre (he attacked, for example, the work of Isabel Allende every chance he got) is that they are betrayers of the highest purpose. Time is likely to tell, anyway. "The truth is, young poets usually end up as old, failed journalists," Auxilio tells us. But, in young poets, heartfelt passion is equivalent to a kind of heroism, and adolescent verbal facility equates to a physical potency.

Arturo Bolaño rescues a friend from "The King of the Rent Boys" with a borrowed knife and a fearless attitude. Sitting in her lavatory cubicle, remembering the brief heroic boys, the artist who goes mad, the poets who sacrificed their gifts for establishment positions, Auxilio is "choked by the brilliance and sadness of youth". We hear of characters who had the bad luck to attract the Muse when they were young, which they will inevitably betray. The outlaw poet becomes a corrupt hack: "The chubby little guy who, with the passage of time, had become a greasy, fat, obsequious man."

It seems likely that Bolaño's posthumous fame will last. He wrote his long, beautifully balanced, digressive sentences with a precise sense of possibility and truth. It also seems likely that he knew he was going to die young. Such fervency is only possible when the author can feel exempt from the decrepitude of moral value that comes with age.

<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/culture/books/bookreviews/6106109/Amulet-by-Roberto-Bolano-tr-by-Chris-Andrews.html>

## **REPORT ON WESTERN REGIONAL CONFERENCE**

**From Lucas Kamp and Joyce Wolf**

On Mon, 9 Nov 2009, Joyce Wolf wrote:

Hi all,

Here are some notes from the 2009 Western Regional in San Francisco.

At the start of the Plenary on Sat morning, I was disappointed to hear that Banafsheh Akhlaghi, our Western Regional Director, would not attend because of illness. I remembered what an inspiring speaker she was at last year's conference and had been looking forward to hearing her talk again. [Note: On Nov 20, AI Western Regional Office announced that Banafsheh is no longer our Regional Director but has moved on to new opportunities in human rights work.]

Larry Cox established the conference theme ("Free and Equal in Dignity and Rights") by reminding us of the risks AI took in the past by venturing into new areas. AI's work against torture and the death penalty and violence against women is the result of decisions made after much debate. So the new Demand Dignity campaign with its emphasis on ending poverty is really right in the AI tradition of taking on whatever new human rights issues that need to be tackled. He was very persuasive - pretty much had me convinced!

The panel on Iran included Esha Momeni, the CSU Northridge student who was detained in Iran last year. She gave a very dramatic narrative of her time in Evin Prison in Tehran, describing what it was like to be blindfolded and led through a maze of corridors to be interrogated over and over again. Once she heard gunshots and was reminded of the mass executions of 1988 in which her uncle was killed, even though she knew that in Iran executions are carried out by hanging. "They kill us the way they want us to live, in silence, breathless, suspended." The audience gave her a standing ovation.

Also notable was a panel about national security that featured a former CIA man and a former US military interrogator. Torture isn't useful, they said, speaking from experience. They repeated, "Intelligence is not evidence."

The death penalty panel included a man who was released after 17 years on Florida's Death Row. The actual murderer had confessed on tape before the trial, but the prosecution withheld the tape. "You can release an innocent man from prison, but you cannot release an innocent man from the grave!"

The Demand Dignity panel revealed some surprising statistics about maternal mortality in the U.S. After declining steadily until the late 1980s, it is now back up to 1970 levels. One possible cause is that more women are sick at the start of their pregnancies because they have not been able to afford treatment.

Regards, Joyce

On Tues, 10 Nov 2009, Lucas Kamp wrote:

I only have a few tidbits to add to Joyce's account.

One is from the same National Security panel that she attended. The former CIA operative made what I thought was a memorable quotation: "The FBI catches bank robbers, the CIA robs banks."

In the same panel, the comment was made that Brandon Mayfield, the Oregon lawyer who was falsely arrested by the FBI for the Madrid terror bombings on the basis of fallacious fingerprint identifications, was paid \$2 million compensation for improper imprisonment for 2 weeks. Based on this rate, what should we pay those falsely imprisoned in Guantanamo for 8 years?!

The other is on a workshop on the Sri Lanka DP crisis. AI is trying to focus world attention to this problem. One of the organizers of this workshop showed images taken from spacecraft and airplanes, which were used by his group to document bombardments of camps and other abuses. I went up to him afterwards and told him that I'm the business of image processing with NASA and offered to try to help. He seemed interested.

- Lucas

**SUPPORT THE CLOSING OF  
GUANTANAMO!  
BRING GUANTANAMO DETAINEES  
TO JUSTICE!**

End Date: 02/01/2010

The Obama administration is closing GTMO and wants to bring the 911 conspirators to trial in US federal court. It wants to move other detainees to a maximum security federal prison in Illinois. The prison is currently almost empty and could easily be renovated to accommodate detainees safely. The move is supported by Illinois Senators, the Governor and the local Mayor. Senator Lindsey Graham – a Republican has said that the idea that we cannot put detainees in prison in the US “not rational”. But the fear mongering has already started; Mark Kirk has said “The move would make Illinois ground zero in the war on terror”. Closing GTMO is a national security imperative supported by national security and foreign policy experts including General David Petraeus, Secretary of Defense Robert Gates, and five former Secretaries of State from both parties. Support GTMO closure by calling your Senator to support the move of detainees to federal prisons in the US and charge them in US.

**SAMPLE LETTER:**

Dear Senator:

We urge you to support the decision to close Guantanamo and the option of bringing detainees to the maximum security prison in Thompson Illinois. We need to bring those responsible for 911 to justice. We should charge detainees in federal court and move detainees to federal facilities in the United States. Congress should not seek to tie the hands of the administration in carrying out the will of the American people. The US should close the detention facility at Guantanamo which has become an international symbol of human rights abuses.

Only three days ago, the Attorney General announced the transfer of the alleged planners or conspirators in the September 11, 2001 attacks to regular federal courts, which are the same federal courts where the Department of Justice regularly tries and convicts defendants charged with international terrorism crimes. These federal courts have successfully convicted 195 cases since 911, compared to military commissions which have dealt with 3. Why would we want to take

our best tools off the table when we are trying to deal with terrorists?

Guantanamo should be closed and the detainees should be brought to federal detention facilities in the US. The best way to keep the American people safe is to convict those suspected of crimes and detain them in the strongest maximum security prisons in the US.

There is consensus among serious national security and foreign policy experts including General David Petraeus, Secretary of Defense Robert Gates, and five former Secretaries of State from both parties—that closing the Guantánamo Bay detention facility is essential to U.S. counterterrorism efforts and to repairing the standing of the United States as a country committed to human rights and the rule of law.

Many people can and do disagree about the how the detainee cases should be treated, but we should agree that they should be brought to justice. Allowing them to slip through the cracks of partisan politics is not an appropriate way to deal with a crucial national security issue.

Sincerely,

your name and address

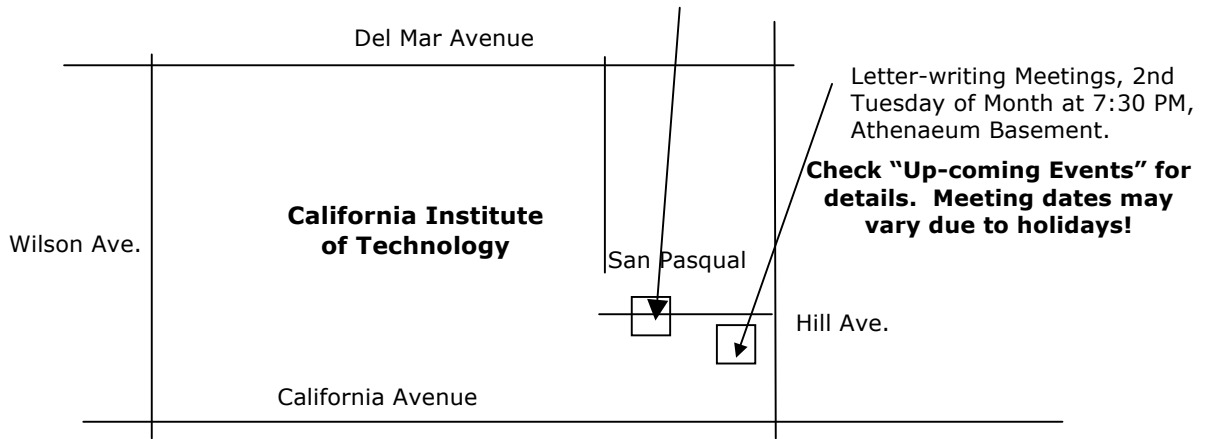
[Note: you can find contact information for California senators Barbara Boxer and Dianne Feinstein at <http://boxer.senate.gov/contact/> and <http://feinstein.senate.gov/>]

**MONTHLY LETTER COUNT**

Sri Lanka Cards	6
UAs	14
Total	20
To add your letters to the total contact <a href="mailto:lwkamp@gmail.com">lwkamp@gmail.com</a> .	

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Monthly Meetings, 4<sup>th</sup> Thursday of Month, 7:30 PM,  
Caltech Y Lounge.



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 5-62  
Pasadena, CA 91125  
[www.its.caltech.edu/~aigp22/](http://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.