Makale Bilgisi: Danacı, S. (2022). Julian Barnes'ın *the Noise of Time* Adlı Eserinde Hafızanın İşlevi ve Travmayla Başa Çıkmak. DEÜ Edebiyat Fakültesi Dergisi, Cilt: 9, Sayı: 2, ss. 267-283.	**Article Info:** Danacı, S. (2022). Function of Memory and Coping With Trauma in Julian Barnes's *the Noise of Time*. DEU Journal of Humanities, Volume: 9, Issue: 2, pp. 267-283.
Kategori: Araştırma Makalesi	**Category:** Research Article
Gönderildiği Tarih: 21.04.2022	**Date Submitted:** 21.04.2022
Kabul Edildiği Tarih: 05.09.2022	**Date Accepted:** 05.09.2022

FUNCTION OF MEMORY AND COPING WITH TRAUMA IN JULIAN BARNES'S *THE NOISE OF TIME*

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ABSTRACT

In *the Noise of Time*, Julian Barnes portrays the life of the Russian composer, Dmitri Shostakovich through his three traumatic encounters with the Soviet regime. These three events, namely Shostakovich's opera being criticised by Pravda, the regime's propaganda agency; his being forced by Stalin to attend a conference in New York and support the Soviet regime; and finally, the composer's becoming a member of the Soviet party under the political pressure, cause irredeemable scars in Shostakovich's mind. With each traumatic experience, the traces of the previous incident re-emerge and lead Shostakovich to a both physical and psychological downfall by haunting the composer's mind. Throughout the novel, Shostakovich pursues a self-conflict regarding the anxiety he suffers by remembering fragments from his childhood, youth, and recent past. Through this process, his music and the ironic attitude he assumes towards the events around him serve the composer in overcoming the difficult times he goes through. Irony helps him to keep his sanity under the political oppression, and his music helps him not to lose his hope for the future in the time of an oppressive regime that threatens his career, his family, his physical and psychological condition. In his novel, Barnes explores an individual's, especially an artist's despair, his struggle for survival and for preserving his hope by shedding a light on Shostakovich's mind. In this respect, this article aims to discuss how memory functions in recounting the traumatic experiences of Shostakovich in Julian Barnes's *the Noise of Time* and how his art, along with his inclination to irony, helps the artist survive in the time of oppression.

Keywords; *The Noise of Time*, Julian Barnes, Dmitri Shostakovich, memory, trauma, irony

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JULIAN BARNES'IN *THE NOISE OF TIME* ADLI ESERİNDE HAFIZANIN İŞLEVİ VE TRAVMAYLA BAŞA ÇIKMAK

ÖZ

Julian Barnes *the Noise of Time* isimli romanında Rus besteci Dmitri Shostakovich'in yaşamını Sovyet rejimiyle olan üç travmatik deneyimi üzerinden anlatmaktadır. Shostakovich'in operasının rejimin propaganda aracı olan Pravda adlı gazete tarafından eleştirilmesi, Stalin'in emriyle New York'taki bir konferansa katılıp Sovyet rejimini desteklemeye zorlanması ve son olarak bestecinin politik baskıyla Sovyet partiye üye olması olarak özetlenebilecek bu üç olay Shostakovich'in benliğinde telafisi mümkün olmayan yaralar açar. Her bir travmatik deneyim ile bir önceki olayın izleri tekrar ortaya çıkar ve Shostakovich'in zihnini meşgul ederek besteciyi hem fiziksel hem de ruhsal olarak bir çöküşe sürükler. Roman boyunca Shostakovich çocukluğundan, gençliğinden ve yakın geçmişinden kesitler hatırlayarak yaşadığı kaygılar üzerine bir içsel çatışma sürdürür. Bu süreçte müziği ve çevresindeki olaylara karşı takındığı ironik tutumu besteciye geçirdiği zor zamanları atlatmada destek olur. İroni, içinde bulunduğu politik baskı karşısında akıl sağlığını korumasında; müziği ise kariyerini, ailesini, fiziksel ve ruhsal durumunu tehdit eden baskıcı rejim döneminde geleceği dair umudunu korumasında Shostakovich'e yardım eder. Bu romanında Barnes, Shostakovich'in zihnine ışık tutarak bir bireyin, özellikle de bir sanatçının, baskı karşısındaki çaresizliğini, hayatta kalma çabasını ve umudunu yitirmeme mücadelesini incelemektedir. Bu bakımdan bu makale, Julian Barnes'ın *the Noise of Time* adlı romanında hafızanın Shostakovich'in travmatik deneyimlerinin aktarılmasında nasıl bir işlev gördüğünü ve ironiye olan yatkınlığının yanı sıra Shostakovich'in sanatının baskıcı rejim altında hayatta kalmasına nasıl yardımcı olduğunu incelemeyi amaçlamaktadır.

Anahtar Sözcükler; *The Noise of Time*, Julian Barnes, Dmitri Shostakovich, hafıza, travma, ironi

1. INTRODUCTION

In his twelfth novel[1], *The Noise of Time* (2016), Julian Barnes (1946-) portrays the life of the Russian composer, Dmitri Shostakovich (1906-1975). An example of fictional biography, the novel is named after Osip Mandelstam's memoir, *the Noise of Time* (1925) in which Mandelstam recalls his troubling years under the Soviet regime (Preston, 2016, n.p). Much like the central issue of Mandelstam's account, Barnes's novel concentrates on how the political suppression operates under Stalin's regime. However, unlike Mandelstam, who died in a concentration camp in 1938, Shostakovich suffered from the political oppression which manifested itself in the form of psychological violence and this violence caused a permanent feeling of anxiety the composer endured all his life. Based on the three traumatic events in Shostakovich's life in a retrospective manner, the novel delves into the issues such as anxiety feeding on memory and trauma, the perception of the past constructed through

[1] The ordering excludes his novels published under the penname, Dan Kavanagh.

memory and time, and struggling with trauma and anxiety via art and irony. In *Nothing to be Frightened of*, Barnes quotes Stravinsky, whom Shostakovich admired deeply, in order to expound his perspective towards the significance of memory in storytelling / life-telling: "I wonder if memory is true, and I know that it cannot be, but that one lives by memory nonetheless and not by truth" (Barnes, 2008, p. 228). The novel, though told by the third-person narrator, gives an insight into the mind of Shostakovich and grants a narrative authority to the subject persona of the fictional biography, a chance to tell his own story based on his past memories. As Denk asserts, "[the novel] doesn't just tell the composer's story; it presumes to channel him" (2016, n.p). Through reflecting these traumatic events from Shostakovich's perspective, Barnes attempts to form a sense of empathy with him and gives his own "version of the truth" about the composer's turbulent life (BBC Newsnight, 2016, 25:33). Thus, he creates a protagonist that feeds on both fact (Shostakovich as a historic figure) and fiction (Shostakovich in Barnes's creation). As Childs also adverts, "what [Barnes] appears to aim for in his fiction is less objectivity than an effect closer to truth" (2011, p. 2). In this light, this article aims to discuss how Barnes reflects the anxiety and humiliation Shostakovich endures, how memory functions in recounting these traumatic experiences, and how his art, along with his ironic attitude, helps the artist to survive in the time of oppression.

2. The Day Stalin Decided to go to the Opera[2]: The Act of Remembering

The novel is composed of three chapters, portraying Dmitri Shostakovich's lifetime of sixty-eight years by invoking the memories from his childhood, teenage years, and adulthood. Correspondingly in these chapters, three major incidents in three distinct years in Shostakovich's life – with twelve-year leap between each – constitute the bulk of the novel; his opera being disapproved by Stalin in 1936 in "On the Landing," his attending the conference in New York in 1948 in "On the Plane," and his involuntarily becoming a member of the party in 1960 in "In the Car." These three chapters shed light on Shostakovich's life as he deals with the political oppression of the party. As White suggests,

> [the novel] is a narrative in which nothing much happens: a man waits for a lift; a man sits on a plane; a man sits in a car. All the action takes place in Shostakovich's head; in each of these three sections we find him at a moment of reflection amid a larger crisis, the 'skittering' of

[2] "… the leap year of 1936 began, and on its twenty-sixth day Stalin decided to go to the opera" (Barnes, 2016, p. 38).

> his mind represented by short bursts of text that flit between memories and the present. (2016, n.p).

The novel focuses less on the actual events, and more on the inner conflicts of the composer and how he feels insecure and hopeless faced with the political propaganda against his career and his moral and artistic integrity. According to Mcalpin, "[t]he novel's largely sympathetic portrait undercuts criticism of the composer's capitulations to power by showing a man whose self-deprecations were harsher than those of his detractors" (2016, n.p). Indeed, although the major source of his anxiety is the psychological oppression the party forces on him, it is also Shostakovich's gradually declining self-esteem that mentally tortures him and triggers his anxiety.

The first chapter, "On the Landing" opens with the assessment, "[a]ll he knew was that this was the worst time" (Barnes, 2016, p. 7), a sentence which is to be restated in the beginnings of the following chapters as well. Shostakovich is standing by the lift in his building with a cigarette in his hand and a suitcase filled with clothes. The reason of this curious waiting is elucidated soon after. In the year of 1936, Shostakovich stages his opera, Lady Macbeth of Mtsenk, which is critically acclaimed until one day Stalin decides to see his opera and leaves in the midst of it. Two days later at the train station, Shostakovich reads an article in Pravda, the party's propaganda agency, which imputes his opera being "[m]uddle instead of music," claiming that

> 'The composer apparently never considered the problem of what the Soviet audience looks for and expects in music.' That was enough to take away his membership of the Union of Composers. 'The danger of this trend to Soviet music is clear.' That was enough to take away his ability to compose and perform. And finally: 'It is a game of clever ingenuity that may end very badly.' That was enough to take away his life (Barnes, 2016, pp. 26-28).

This review, which hints the total destruction of his career and threatens his life, is quite reflective of the regime's power to menace its subjects and torment their consciousness. Shostakovich's first encounter with the power, thus, takes place in 1936, which leads to the first of many terrors and traumas in his life. According to Giller,

> a traumatic event or situation creates psychological trauma when it overwhelms the individual's ability to cope, and leaves that person fearing death, annihilation, mutilation, or psychosis … The circumstances of the event commonly include abuse of power, betrayal of trust, entrapment, helplessness, pain, confusion, and/or loss (1999, n.p.).

It is, indeed, the despair and fear in the face of the power's threats that constitute Shostakovich's trauma and draw him to anxiety. Once fallen into the vindictive claws of the power, Shostakovich's music is stigmatised in the country and interdicted from performance. Unable to pursue his art, labelled as a formalist, and accused of being an enemy of the people, Shostakovich soon faces an investigation related to the so-called attempt of assassination against Stalin, which becomes his first physical encounter with the power and what it is capable of doing. Luckily, he is left free upon the sudden interrogation of his interrogator, "[h]is arrester arrested" (Barnes, 2016, p. 50). However, due to these constant threats and backlash, Shostakovich is no longer a man at ease, and he becomes haunted for life by the possible future menace. The source of his distress leads to an anxious state of mind, forcing Shostakovich to live his life on the edge. Thus, troubled by the thought of getting arrested in the middle of the night, Shostakovich begins on his night vigils outside his apartment in order to assure the security of his wife and child at the moment of arrest. He thinks that this is the worst thing that could happen to him without having the slightest idea that things will go worse, and that he will have to restate the opening assessment again. These night vigils continue for weeks until Shostakovich realises that no one is coming for him although the men of the party come to his neighbourhood nearly every night to arrest someone. However, the constant waiting leaves a permanent scar in his mind, thus leading to a restless and anxious mental state.

This state of waiting is where Barnes incorporates the function of memory into the narrative. What Shostakovich remembers, how he remembers it, what kind of an impact this memory has on his mentality are crucial factors to make sense of his traumatic experiences and his state of mind throughout the novel. While waiting by the lift, Shostakovich tries to remember the beginning of his impasse, yet struggles to pinpoint an exact moment:

> It had all begun, very precisely, he told his mind, on the morning of the 28th of January 1936, at Arkhangelsk railway station. No, his

> mind responded, nothing begins just like that, on a certain date at a certain place. It all began in many places, and at many times, some even before you were born, in foreign countries, and in the minds of others (Barnes, 2016, p. 9).

From the very beginning, then, the act of remembering projects Shostakovich's confused and nervous reaction to his trauma. The memory of a past-time event is immediately negated by how the mind perceives, interprets, and reconstructs the past and that exact memory. Accordingly, Barnes, through Shostakovich, questions the origin from which certain events that have dire effect on one's life occur. His fame, his opera, the very existence of Stalin, or even Shakespeare are inspected in Shostakovich's mind as the reasons of his downfall (Barnes, 2016, p. 18). This confusion in the act of remembering is directly related to the physical and mental condition in which Shostakovich finds himself. In the case of such traumatic stress, as Hunt suggests, "there is a fundamental rift or breakdown of psychological functioning (memory, behaviour, emotion) which occurs as a result of an unbearably intense experience that is life threatening to the self or others" (2010, p. 7). Likewise, while contemplating on his humiliation in the society and the possibility of his arrest, Shostakovich's mind occasionally shifts to other memories from his past rather than focusing on his situation. These fluctuations demonstrate how his mind is affected and disoriented by the traumatic event which, in return, affects and disorients what he remembers and how he remembers it. Once terrorised by a horrifying incident, Shostakovich's memory oscillates between his childhood, his relationship with his mother, his lovers from his youth, and the very traumatic event itself. Thus, the focus of his remembrance often wavers throughout the novel. As Stavans articulates, "[r]emembering is not a return to the past but the adaptation of a past event to the circumstances of the present" (1998, p. 84). The fact that Shostakovich recalls his past in the course of the recent aggravating events underpins the prevailing mood he has assumed in similar situations before. Other events from his past intervene in his contemplation on this certain traumatic event.

These interruptions do not only function as distractions from the specific memory and reflect the character's unstable state of mind, but they also elucidate Shostakovich's personality and personal history, contributing to the understanding process of his disposition and explain why he reacts to his current situation the way he does. Here, Barnes digs deeper into Shostakovich's memory and reveals that he has always been inclined to nervous tension and disquietude:

> [H]is underlying condition was one of high anxiety. He was a thorough-going neurotic. No, again it was worse than that: he was a hysteric. Where did such a temperament come from? Not from his father; nor from his mother. Well, there was no escaping one's temperament. That too was part of one's destiny (Barnes, 2016, p. 33).

This contemplation on the source of his current anxiety indicates that the recent traumatic experience leads Shostakovich, as "the remembering self," to relate his condition to a past memory and a past version of himself, as "the remembered self" (Neisser and Fivush, 1994, p. 1). Accordingly, the anxious disposition of Shostakovich is grounded on an earlier past as it seems to be triggered with the recent incidents, and it is displayed in his pessimistic superstition: "1936: he had always been superstitious about leap years. Like many people, he believed that they brought bad luck" (Barnes, 2016, p. 20). The fact that he has always been apt to think worse of things contributes to the upcoming turmoil in his life. Therefore, Barnes calls forth what the external terror could do to what is already there. Shostakovich's inherent predisposition which lacks self-confidence is provoked by the threats from the Soviet regime, hence, transforming him into a frightened and vulnerable man.

The second chapter, "On the Plane," begins with the same assessment "[a]ll he knew was that this was the worst time" (Barnes, 2016, p. 61). It deals with a more direct encounter of Shostakovich with the power, that is, his phone call with Stalin himself. In 1948, twelve years after the first encounter, Stalin phones Shostakovich asking him to attend the peace conference in New York on behalf of the Soviet Russia. Despite his attempts to excuse himself from representing the power, Shostakovich is forced to attend the conference anyway. His experience in the conference becomes the second major event to reinforce Shostakovich's anxiety and predicament: "He was treated well; it was a public success – and also the greatest humiliation of his life. He felt nothing but self-disgust and self-contempt" (Barnes, 2016, p. 67). In the conference, Shostakovich is handed a load of paper which glorifies the Soviet Russia and Soviet music. The climax of the conference occurs when Nikolas Nabokov asks Shostakovich if he endorses the practices of the Soviet government and its convictions towards the musical and political stance of Stravinsky. Shostakovich, who pretends to approve the attitude of the power by reading the paper in a dull and robotic manner, hoping that the audience would grasp the irony in his tone, denounces the work of Stravinsky, a composer whom Shostakovich considers as the most important composer of the century and whose picture he keeps in his drawer (Barnes, 2016, p. 132).

This denouncement becomes the second major source of trauma in his life. As Nayebpour argues,

> [Shostakovich] experiences two kinds of trauma at the same time. On the one hand, … he is personally deeply involved in the traumatic situations – his friends are disappearing one by one, he is (in)directly threatened by Power, he is forced to act in an unreal way, etc. – and, on the other hand, he is increasingly haunted by the nature of his own (re)actions against Power (2017, pp. 4-5).

Different from his first encounter with the Power, Shostakovich, in the second incident, suffers from both the political oppression and his own inner conscious. This new traumatic experience resuscitates the remnants of the first encounter. According to Tulving, this is how memory operates in an individual's mind: "[t]he act of remembering a personally experienced event, that is, consciously recollecting it, is characterized by a distinctive, unique awareness of reexperiencing here and now something that happened before, at another time and in another place" (1993, p. 68). Although he becomes an involuntary apparatus of the power in the conference, unlike the first incident in which he was regarded as the enemy of the people, the terror and anxiety that both events evoke in Shostakovich's mind are the same. It can be observed that whenever Shostakovich undergoes a new traumatic experience, his past traumas are reawakened due to the same repercussions they bear.

3. Coping with Trauma

Throughout the novel, and especially in the second chapter, Shostakovich depends on irony to underline his tethered condition for people to understand. Barnes through Shostakovich – or rather Shostakovich through Barnes – lays bare the tragedy of living under Soviet regime in an ironic manner:

> Power: 'Look, we have made the Revolution!'
>
> Citizen Second Oboe: 'Yes, it's a wonderful revolution, of course… But I just wonder, from time to time … I might be completely wrong, of course, but was it absolutely necessary to shoot all those engineers, generals, scientists, musicologists? To send millions to the camps, to

> use slave labour and work it to death, to make everyone terrified, to extort false confessions in the name of the Revolution? … I'm just wondering, you understand.'
>
> Power: 'Yes, yes, I see your point. I'm sure you're right. But let's leave it for now. We'll make that change next time round.' (Barnes, 2016, p. 83).

This ironic attitude is displayed not only in Shostakovich's narration but also in his music. As Lezard aptly puts it, Shostakovich's Fifth Symphony, which was "presented as a kind of atonement for the opera that bothered Stalin so much, was itself a mockery of triumph rather than a celebration of it" (2017, n.p). Correspondingly, it can be argued that irony is born out of Shostakovich's need to express himself, and it infuses into almost every part of his life. While commenting on the conference in New York, he remembers what happened between two leap years that paved the way to his forced mission. During the Second World War, when Soviet Russia was invaded by Germany, Shostakovich was appointed as the composer of his country. Ironically, once the enemy of the people, Shostakovich becomes the voice of his nation. What is more, the wartime allows him to find a peace of mind since he admits that "[i]n the twelve years between 1936 and 1948, he had never felt safer than during the Great Patriotic War. A disaster to the rescue, as they say. Millions upon millions died, but at least suffering became more general, and in that lay his temporary salvation" (Barnes, 2016, p. 67). Indeed, Shostakovich feels safe when his country is in total chaos, when the war threatens not only his life, but everyone's. Throughout this period, he is expected to be the face and the voice of his nation, the renewed Russian society which is associated with the Soviet spirit. However, Shostakovich stands in the middle of this renewal, both as a transitional and a contradictory figure, since he considers himself Russian although he is regarded by the power as the voice of the Soviet:

> To be Russian was to be pessimistic; to be Soviet was to be optimistic. That was why the words Soviet Russia were a contradiction in terms. Power had never understood this. It thought that if you killed off enough of the population, and fed the rest a diet of propaganda and terror, then optimism would result (Barnes, 2016, p. 71).

In-betweenness prevails over Shostakovich's mind and his very existence in the world he inhabits, and this in-betweenness allows him to hold a critical and ironical stance towards the political agenda of the Soviet rule. Irony, which is seen as unnatural for a young man to adopt in "an ideal world" (Barnes, 2016, p. 85), becomes the utmost means Shostakovich can adopt in his attitude in order to endure the difficult times. For him, "irony becomes a defence of the self and the soul; it lets you breathe on a day-to-day basis" (Barnes, 2016, p. 173). However, it is in fact the best irony can do, helping him get through the day. It does not secure the safety of his family or himself, it only provides him with a temporary loophole.

The third chapter is where it becomes clear that even irony cannot ease Shostakovich's mind and help him recover from the following trauma. It revolves around Shostakovich's memories about being forced to become a party member. It is the final traumatic event in Shostakovich's life, and perhaps the most dramatic one, since until now, he has rejected to be a member of the party that kills people despite his numerous compromises all his life, but now he must compromise once more and accepts the party membership. This final encounter with the power has a vital importance in understanding his anxiety, in that, it occurs after the death of Stalin, who has been at the centre of Shostakovich's fear of the power. As Volkov propounds,

> [i]n Shostakovich's life and work his relationship with Stalin was a decisive factor. In a country in which the ruler has total sovereignty over the fate of his subjects, Stalin infected severe trials and public humiliations on Shostakovich; yet almost simultaneously he rewarded him with the highest titles and honors (1984, p. xxxi).

It is also this erratic attitude of Stalin towards Shostakovich that creates such a traumatic impact on the composer. Thus, even after the focus of the fear disappears, the gist of the feeling remains. Not Stalin himself but the memory of him terrorises Shostakovich now. A ghost that is remembered becomes the source of the final trauma. Despite all his efforts to reject the party, participation is not voluntary, but an obligation for him. Compared to the other traumatic experiences, becoming a party member damages Shostakovich's self-esteem more, since being a member of the party that kills is fundamentally the very thing he despises. And now even irony cannot compensate this action, since one can join the party honestly or cynically, but not ironically (Barnes, 2016, p. 175). The pressure of the Power disturbs him to such an extent that the anxiety displays physical effects in the form of tics and gestures. After joining the party, these tics are triggered whenever Shostakovich appears in public (Barnes, 2016, p. 168). Now an old man, he

suffers from the lifelong psychological torture, which manifests itself in his gestures, displaying a mental state at a permanent unease.

The attitude Shostakovich assumes in the last chapter regarding his life, his personality, and the world outside implies a change of direction in his anxiety towards depression. Old age brings with itself a sense of weariness and reluctance towards life in his case. Baldwin, Chiu, Katona, and Graham list the following symptoms as the prevalent indicators of depression in old age: "Loss of confidence or self-esteem," "[i]nappropriate and excessive guilt," "[r]ecurrent thoughts of death," and "[s]leep disturbance." (2002, p. 8). These symptoms also apply to Shostakovich's situation. Accordingly, his lack of self-esteem, his constant self-criticism, the feeling of guilt for living too long, contemplating on death which seems to him overdue, his worsening health which he deliberately contributes by drinking and smoking, the absence of joy of life, they all indicate a depressed state of mind in the later part of Shostakovich's life. The strife of a man for survival under constant threat and psychological terror gives way to an old man's pessimistic contemplation on how he will be remembered:

> Those who knew him, knew him. Those who had ears could hear his music. But how did he seem to those who didn't know him, to the young who sought to understand the way the world worked? How could they not judge him? And how would he now appear to his younger self, standing by the roadside as a haunted face in an official car swept past? Perhaps this was one of the tragedies life plots for us: it is our destiny to become in old age what in youth we would have most despised (Barnes, 2016, p. 162).

In old age, Shostakovich's mind is occupied with regrets, past humiliations, and self-resentment rather than the suspicion of getting arrested or killed. The fear of being misunderstood in the future is now dominant, and an eagerness to die and end this lifelong anxiety and guilty feeling governs the last chapter. While staying alive was the utmost objective of his earlier life, it turns out to be Shostakovich's ultimate calamity in old age, since being alive brings with it the act of remembering; and remembering is a painful ordeal for the now old Shostakovich. As Nayebpour pinpoints, "[i]n the third part, Shostakovich is more disappointed and in pain than in the first two parts as he unexpectedly finds his past (re)actions cowardly" (2017, p. 3). His memory, thus, comes to be his worst enemy, since it only reminds him of his miserable

and disgraceful version of himself: "He would like to remember only the things he chose … He did remember all those things, but they were often overlaid and intertwined with everything he wanted not to remember. And this impurity, this corruption of memory, tormented him" (Barnes, 2016, p. 168). The disobedience of his own brain and the disjointedness of his memories prevail in the narrative and in how these memories are recounted. His reflecting on the three traumatic encounters with the Power is repeatedly intertwined with his memories from his youth. Commenting on how painful experiences affect one's memory and eventually the person himself/herself, Boutler articulates that when the person, as the subject of the experience, confronts and reflects on the past trauma,

> the subject becomes more than merely an individual reflecting on a particular kind of economy of tragic loss. The disaster … produces some shift in the psyche, in the self, in the interiority of the subject, to the point where the subject finds himself to have become a trace of what he was, a cinder marking the passing of the disaster (2011, p. 9).

As a result of this becoming, Shostakovich compares his current self to his youth, occasionally imagines how his younger version would see and judge him as well as others. This comparison often leads him to loss of confidence, to think of himself as "a dull, mediocre composer" (Barnes, 2016, p. 177) and question his worth as an old man. Barnes, in *Nothing to be Frightened of*, comments on the repercussions of the old age on the way of thinking about death as follows: "I have always mistrusted the idea that old age brings serenity, suspecting that many of the old were just as emotionally tormented as the young" (Barnes, 2008, p. 174). In the novel, this countervailing comparison is carried a step further, and it is claimed that "[t]he self-doubt of the young is nothing compared to the self-doubt of the old" (Barnes, 2016, p. 177). As in the case of Shostakovich, the loss of self-worth and confidence extends as he gets older, and it transforms the concept of death into something anticipated rather than averted. It can be observed at the end of the novel that the psychological oppression Shostakovich suffers at the hands of the regime causes a more catastrophic impact on him than a possibility of death sentence, because living with constant fear of the Power turns out to be the actual punishment. Therefore, in the last chapter, Barnes portrays an old man, depressed not by the thought of the approaching death, but by its persistent belatedness, weary of his existence.

Throughout the novel, it is affirmed that irony becomes a self-defence for Shostakovich to survive and keep sane at the same time. However, while irony provides with him a temporary sense of sanity on a daily basis, his music

becomes his utmost legacy to speak on his behalf in the future, and his only hope to be understood and appreciated by the world free from the burden of his life: "if it still had value – if there were still ears to hear – his music would be … just music. That was all a composer could hope for" (Barnes, 2016, p. 179). Worried about his life, his wife and children, his career, and most importantly, his artistic integrity, Shostakovich counts on the power of music speaking on his behalf and assumes that "[t]hose that have ears will hear" (Barnes, 2016, p. 27). Despite all the accusations and smear campaigns held against him, Shostakovich believes that his music will be the true testimony of his thoughts, and the voice of his mind; "[h]e wrote music for everyone and no one. He wrote music for those who best appreciated the music he wrote, regardless of social origin. He wrote music for the ears that could hear" (Barnes, 2016, p. 92). In a sense, it can be argued that what keeps him going and alive is the music he makes, since it is where he compensates for his guilt for not speaking more, and for the constant fear he feels. As Fairclough also asserts,

> Barnes's Shostakovich is a man painfully aware of his imperfections as a human being, but one unwavering in his self-belief as a composer. His music is the legacy he clings to even as he more or less writes off his own life as one lived too long." (2016, n.p.).

Despite his failure in protecting his integrity as an individual, he manages to make his music both his way of atonement and the source of his hope for the future:

> What could be put up against the noise of time? Only that music which is inside ourselves – the music of our being – which is transformed by some into real music. Which, over the decades, if it is strong and true and pure enough to drown out the noise of time, is transformed into the whisper of history (Barnes, 2016, p. 125).

The perpetual propaganda of the Soviet government, the threats, the menace, the arrests, the executions, and the so-called nationalistic discourse that shouts down and eliminates every individual sound, all become the general noise of Shostakovich's time. The ultimate break from this noise is through music, art on the whole, since

> [a]rt belongs to everybody and nobody. Art belongs to all time and no time. Art belongs to those who create it and those who savour it. Art no more belongs to the People and the Party than it once belonged to the aristocracy and the patron. Art is the whisper of history, heard above the noise of time (Barnes, 2016, p. 91).

Therefore, Shostakovich's music is the only apparatus that allows him to resist and surmount the harrowing noise which prevails both in the society and in his own mind.

4. CONCLUSION

The novel, which begins with a Russian proverb; "[o]ne to hear/ One to remember/ And one to drink" (Barnes, 2016, n.p.) and continues with the prologue portraying three men at a train station (the one who heard, the one who remembered, and the one who drank), ends with an epilogue that clarifies the significance of these men. They share a bottle of vodka and finally are revealed as the three faces of Shostakovich. As Antakyalıoğlu articulates, "[t]he kind of trauma that is illustrated in these events transforms Shostakovich from the man who hears (the noise of time now and then), to the man who remembers, and finally to the old, crippled beggar who drinks (2018, p. 384). In *the Noise of Time*, then, Barnes tells the story of a man who suffered deeply from the political oppression of his time, often considered suicide, yet could not put it into practice for the fear of losing the control of his own story and took refuge in his music and ironic attitude towards the very power that terrified him. By narrating what he assumes Shostakovich might have reflected on his past, Barnes "[renders] his [Shostakovich's] wounds perceivable, his inner voice audible, his contradictions visible and his music understandable" (Antakyalıoğlu, 2018, p. 385). Rather than portraying Shostakovich in accordance with the historical documents, Barnes, as a novelist, prefers to delve into the composer's mind and claims the right to speak on his behalf. Instead of giving merely the historical facts, Barnes is interested in how Shostakovich might have felt and thought about these events that clearly affected his whole life. In this respect, a retrospective narrative constituted by Shostakovich's intertwined memories provides Barnes with a chance to elucidate the composer's confused and guild ridden mind. Thus, he risks historical and biographical objectivity for the sake of fictionalising the composer to give him a chance to tell his own story through words instead of music. All in all, Barnes, through his version of Dmitri Shostakovich, lays bare how oppression terrorises and traumatises a person, how memory operates when faced with the trauma, and how music becomes a means of survival and an agent of hope in difficult times.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The author declares that there is no conflict of interest regarding this research.

ETHICS COMMITTEE APPROVAL / PARTICIPANT CONSENT

Ethics committee approval is not required for this study. There are no participants in this study.

FINANCIAL SUPPORT

The author did not receive any kind of financial support for this research.

AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS

This research and all its stages were conducted by one author.

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