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REVISITING *A HISTORY OF THE WORLD IN 10 ½ CHAPTERS* – ABOUT TWO EXPLANATIONS OF EVERYTHING AND THE UNRELIABLE NARRATOR

The paper offers a reading of the novel *A History of the World in 10 ½ Chapters* by Julian Barnes introducing current theoretical frameworks dealing with the relationship of history and fiction from the perspective of the second decade of the 21st century. Although the novel explicitly deals with the issue of history, it was often insufficiently addressed in the critical analyses of Barnes's work as well as in the treatment of history in fiction, especially in terms of the analysis of structure and the treatment of time explained as the experience of the present. Considering the processes Mark Currie defines as crucial for understanding the relationship of time in fiction, time-space compression, archive fever and accelerated recontextualization, the paper offers an insight how those function in the novel from the standpoint that the late XX century fiction is no longer considered to be a part of our 'contemporary' setting.

Keywords: *A History of the World in 10 ½ Chapters* (novel), Julian Barnes, historiographic metafiction, accelerated recontextualization, archive fever

1. Understanding the postmodernist concerns with history and fiction: transitions into the Millennium

In their deliberation on the relationship of history and literature in the literary works produced in the last two decades of the XX century, most of the recent critical studieselaborate on the concepts of Linda Hutcheon and Frederic Jameson in a context that constitutes a radical cultural change of the twenty years that followed year 2000. The assumptions of the late XX century that the end of the Cold War brought the ultimate domination of the capitalist cultural model and that it constituted the end of history, clearly required a re-evaluation and recontextualization with the persistence of history symbolized in 9/11 and with the acceleration of the changes materialized in world-wide crises. Pollard and Schoene (2018) go as far as to claim that "the final two decades of the twentieth century no longer constitute an integral part of what we call the contemporary" (1). In addition to the crises that contradicted the idea of the end of history, they emphasize the immense effects of the widespread technological advancement that constitute this difference placing the inhabitants of everyday of the XXI century into the category of the 'supermoderns'. They question the ability of the present digital natives or even of the digital nomads (those

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born before the Internet) to accurately remember the "bygone world that did not have the internet, email, social networking, wifi or the mobile phone" (POLLARD AND SCHOENE 2018:1). This assumption inevitably calls for a re-examination of the questions related to the accessibility of any past experience, expecting modulation of the records under the influence of the new media which result in the distortions of memory. Consequently, the literary production of the late XX century becomes open for a new interpretation which would focus on it as a hint or an announcement of the emergent phenomena pointing to the present, rather than a reflection of the end of an era. In considering the potential for predicting change of literature of any given period, Pollard and Schoene point out that "Literature not only records but also anticipates and projects change" (1), since they believe it to be much more responsive to the social and cultural context than either historiography of critical theory. Therefore, literature is considered to be the site of competing discourses – always marked by the processes of inclusion or exclusion, and encompassing political and cultural domains, but also the matters concerning technology and nation, "positioning literature as both *within* and *of* them rather than as a mere repertoire of cultural objects produced by them" (POLLARD AND SCHOENE 2018: 2). Although they recognize that the period of the 1980s to the 2000s is marked by a sometimes unwilling immersion of the literary production in a set of new contexts, what makes that period extraordinary is not the mere recognition of the world changing under the influence of new technologies, but rather the "the unprecedented totality and speed with which it penetrates and revolutionises the culture" (2). This 'totality and speed' invites the question whether the tension of the competing discourses, or simply the competing stories narrating different experiences, can still be maintained or is the availability of technology simultaneously introducing the silencing of all the incongruent voices. This is the context which calls for the revisiting of the narratives of the late XX century in general and especially Barnes's *A History of the World in 10 ½ Chapters*.

Juxtaposing the notions of 'nation' and 'society', Pollard and Schoene reach into the post WWII period, describing it as the onset of the time of the end of security which is to culminate in the present-day time of general surveillance and insecurity. It represented a context for the introduction of the state-sanctioned discourse on the concept of 'nation' aimed at countering the more organically generated concept of 'society'. The opposition of the two may be observed as crucial in the defining of the underlying discourses which need to be taken into account when discussing Barnes's treatment of the processes of generating and recording data we interpret as history and its presentation in the form of a narrative. In this context, 'nation' is a notion described as "the superimposed collective imaginary that subsumes the broad kaleidoscopic spectrum of differences among individuals, groups and communities under one all-encompassing matrix" (POLLARD AND SCHOENE 2018: 3) it depends on the maintaining a concept of totalizing collective identity which does not facilitate or accept history as a multitude of voices. On the other hand, 'society' is an open concept, described as an 'ever-changing configuration' of different communities representing the lived experience of the present in the present moment and in recording those experiences as fragments of heterogenous collective experience, susceptible to transformations and diversifications (4). If we accept that literature may be interpreted as a "vehicle for experiencing, processing and shaping the contemporary"

(7) then the question of attribution of the stories chosen to be assembled as 'a history' becomes actualized with every subsequent diversification of the traditional "group identities rooted in gender, sexuality, race and ethnicity" (4). Thus, a history compiled as a collection of seemingly unrelated fragments told from different points of view, from different points in time bearing different levels of significance to the points of time from which those are interpreted, adhering to different genre conventions, when revisited from the volatile perspective of the 21st century becomes a commentary on the contemporary, too, questioning the current timescapes, the presence or the absence of the conflicting voices, their intensity or silences.

2. *A History of the World in 10 ½ Chapters*: between historiographic metafiction and the boundaries of genre

Offering a comprehensive account of the typology and poetics of postmodernist historical fiction, Ansgar Nünning (1997) considers the position taken by Brian McHale: "if literary historical 'objects' such as postmodernism are constructed, not given or found, then the issue of *how* such objects are constructed…becomes crucial" (NÜNNING 1997:219) as the point of departure in discussion on postmodernist historical fiction. It should be noted that McHale's interpretations of postmodernist historical fiction, as well as Nünning's and Hutcheon's, must be considered as belonging to the context of the late XX century, the context still acknowledging the end of history as coinciding with the end of the Cold War and not yet anticipating the totality and the speed of technological change producing the contemporary everyday reality despite the anticipations projected in the literature of the 1980s. Nünning problematizes the concept of Hutcheon's historiographic metafiction being used as a template for defining postmodernism, interpreting it as one of the many competing narratives of postmodernism and inviting the remapping of both the fields of metafictions and of postmodernist historical fiction (219). What is more, Nünning sees identification of postmodernist historical fiction with historiographic metafiction as "an unwarranted assumption of homogeneity" (219). In addition, he explains McHale's position on the postmodernist historical novel as being revisionist; firstly, with respect to the content of historical record, its interpretation and the resulting 'orthodox' version of the past (220); secondly, with respect to the conventions of historical fiction. This is particularly important regarding the constraints in treatment of historical facts in the traditional historical novel against which Nünning positions the tendency of postmodernist fiction to "foreground the seam between fiction and historical reality" (221). Decentering the manner of presenting history as well as transformation of realist conventions along with the innovations of form are among the major features of historical fictions of postmodernism. Accentuating historiographic metafiction as addressing problems of writing history "explicitly in metafictional comments" (224), Nünning focuses on the idea of the metahistorical novel as defined by Schabert and Foley describing it as directed towards "the continuity of the past in the present, the interplay between different time levels, on forms of historical consciousness, and on the recuperation of history" (224). The metahistorical novel is, thus, perceived as a text that emphasizes "the process of historical reconstruction" and the role of the consciousness of the protagonist, or the narrator, in the structuring and the perception of the past (224). This approach introduces into the relationship of histo-

ry and fiction the processes linked to the experience of time, particularly the experience of the present in the technologically advanced and highly mediated, globalized environments. What is more, it must be acknowledged that metahistorical novels do not aim to represent a "historical world" by reconstructing it on the level of events and characters, but consider the "appropriation, revision and transmission of history" (224) and the relevance of these processes in the present as set up in the fictional narrative universe. In contemporary literature, the narrative of, for example, *Last Orders* by Graham Swift or *My Name is Red* by Orhan Pamuk correspond to the pattern of metahistorical novel. On the other hand, historiographic metafiction, as it is defined by Hutcheon, affects the boundaries of historiography and fiction which is in the first place evident in the postmodern tendency to manipulate documentary data, or the factual historical records. Hutcheon's concept draws on reintroducing historical context as paramount, yet Nünning emphasizes that it simultaneously brings about questioning of the validity and purpose of historical knowledge. By juxtaposing "documentary historical actuality" with "formalist self-reflexivity and parody" (NÜNNING 1997: 226) Hutcheon contends that in postmodern context history is to be taken as a reference to past reality and as a discursive practice, which allows for the critical approach to the reference. It is contrasted with the traditional historical novel where history is interpreted as a collection of facts established outside the fictional universe and generally unquestionable and unquestioned. Regardless of the approach, we may conclude that the postmodernist historical novel puts history in the spotlight as a process that unfolds continuously, that the process itself is contingent on the context and current variables, but what is most important, that the access to history is never direct, but rather mediated through narratives constructed by human consciousness assuming a particular point of view, and influenced by the processes of remembering, interpretation and recording.

In terms of genre conventions and postmodernist historical fiction, Nünning concludes that as with most of the postmodernist literary production, it dominantly mixes and blurs the traditional genres generating new forms, and some works even resist genre classification. In this respect, *A History of the World in 10 ½ Chapters* is interpreted as an example of the "wide range of mutations" (234) resulting from the blurring of the boundaries of genre and hybridization. As an assemblage of different approaches of the representation of past in fiction, Nünning considers the novel "a paradigm example of postmodernist historical fiction" (234). Demonstrating already in the title an intentional diversion from objectivity, continuity and totality, Barnes focuses on the "incommensurability between an experience and any recording of it" (234), which is related to the concepts structuring the experience of the present relevant for the contemporary context, the archival fever and the accelerated recontextualization, which will be addressed in the section that follows. As an example of the discrepancies between different formats of recording of an event, Nünning offers the chapter dedicated to the shipwreck of the *Medusa*. He explains that in the essay on the painting by Gericault we may observe the artistic and the historiographic representations as mediated forms through which we are accessing the past, yet neither of which could be taken for the "transparent reflection or a reliable account of any historical event" (235). Additionally, this example emphasizes the role and the influence of the conventions of representation which are related to the particular medium in the production of a specif-

ic record which at a later point becomes accepted as a part of the collective memory of the event. The conventions in this example clearly participate in the record that for the sake of complying to the form sacrifices the data that does not fit. Barnes indirectly warns the reader by pointing to our inability to find "the way ahead" (BARNES 1989:242) without recognizable patterns that would lead to hopeful conclusions, whether those be rigid and set as the rules of composition in Gericault or loose and arbitrary as fabulation, filling in the blanks in the silences we are unable to access.

3. History as timescapes, fragments and the "explanations of everything"

Although the work of Julian Barnes remains in the focus of the contemporary scholarship, *History of the World in 10 ½ Chapters* appears to be one of the works that has not received the attention it deserves. Daniel Lea (2007) considers it "strangely neglected text…[which seems]… to have become increasingly marginalised within criticism of Barnes's work" (380) although "[u]ntil the publication of *Arthur and George* in 2005 … it was considered by many to be Barnes's defining output and a landmark in British postmodern writing" (381). *History of the World* … is explicitly dealing with the issues of representing past in postmodernist fiction as explained by Nünning: it is involved both with the focus of the metahistorical novel – the interplay of present and past, and with the issues of historiographic metafiction confronting the assumed historical document with the approach of self-reflexivity and parody. In addition, Lea emphasizes that the novel is "the most explicit example of recent British writing's engagement with the politics of history-telling" (381). In terms of form, the novel is an example of how hybrid literary genres are generated with the idea of exposing the "discursive forms through which history is produced and received" (LEA 2007:381). This issue is often clouded by the debate on whether the text in terms of genre fits the definition of the novel, or it is rather a collection of short stories. However, the treatment of the topic of history is the obvious focus of the novel, which should be taken as a constitutive element or an overarching frame for the interpretation of the text rendering the genre 'fitting' discussions obsolete. The formal features of the text can and should be observed as a result of the perspective of the recording time and the structuring of those records as versions of history reflecting the dominant politics of history-telling. Lea refers to Steven Connor claiming that the formal features of the novel reflect the "incommensurability between the subject and the form" (381) and interprets the fragmentary narrative as a subversion for the homogenized historical discourse promoting the monolithic image of the past claiming the right to supply 'the history' of the world. Instead, Barnes breaks the timeline and emulates stacking of anecdotal narratives told by most unlikely and unreliable narrators sharing the idea of survival. Such composition asks direct questions about the validity of a source, preference of the perspective, change of context, asks whether there is more to know and what is most important, what it signifies in the present. Barnes's history is based upon fragmentation, discontinuity and contingency and it highlights that *any* history is composed on the same principles. In the arbitrariness of the sequencing of the stories and the links created by loose associations between them, Barnes avoids the imposition of a single unifying trope, or idea, in order to problematize the interpretation.

Structurally, the novel is a sequence of ten short texts joined by the idea of surviv-

al, and it is often interpreted as a model of Darwinian thinking, however, it openly subverts the concept of the 'survival of the fittest' positioning the survival not as an accomplishment of an individual (or species), but rather as a chance, random event, which precisely undermines the idea of merit as its condition. Within this structure the crises or disasters that create the tension of the events do not represent a selection of crucial conflicts recognized along any particular linear timeline. The events that constitute chapter narratives bear with them a sense of uncertainty; they simply produce survivors who take precedence in storytelling that the reader has a choice to either trust or to question. In addition to being open to doubt, most of the events are susceptible to the processes characteristic for the experience of time in highly mediated environments – time-space compression, archive fever and accelerated recontextualization as introduced by Mark Currie in his study *About Time* (CURRIE 2007). Barnes here toys with the idea of history seen as an assemblage made of puzzle pieces that never fit perfectly together that he would present in a more explicit form in his novel *England, England* (1999). In *History of the World*… the ten chapters are the puzzle pieces intended to leave gaps, silences defined by the noise that surrounds them which are constitutive of the story as much as the voices being heard. Mitchum Huehls discussing the historical fiction and the XXI century contexts points out that "the goal is not to understand history historically, but to use history to understand the present historically, to produce a strong sense of historicity, that is, 'a perception of the present as history'" (2017:141). As Barnes's broken chronology testifies, the most important for understanding history is to understand that the concept of linear teleological relationship of events which anticipates a chain of events leading to a pre-determined outcome is a faulty one. *A History of the World* …implies seeing past and history as a series of accidental *nows* creating a contingency that opens the interpretation of the present as imagined from the future-accidental-history or the past-yet-to-come (HUEHLS 2017:145). The concepts of time in contemporary cultural theory described by Currie emphasize this relationship and reflect the change in the experience of the present, which is one of the most powerful features of the novel. While the time-space compression refers to the reducing of time required to cover space which results in the "compression of time horizons" (CURRIE 2007:9) it indirectly communicates that "the present is all there is" and that it is shared on a global scale (9). The gaps between the pieces of puzzle in the modelling of time-space point to another inevitability derived from Heidegger – namely, the present is always already contaminated by "the spatiotemporally absent" (CURRIE 2007:10). There are traces of the past in the present which govern our understanding of the present inviting the process of accelerated recontextualization, the positioning of an item, artifact, notion, or even historical figure in a present, new, context. Oftentimes it leads to conclusions that we choose to be the truth, however unsubstantiated, because we choose to ignore the gaps in our puzzle. The link between chapter 6, "The Mountain", and chapter 9, "Project Ararat" precisely points to it. Miss Amanda Fergusson, a 19th century Englishwoman in search of traces of God's presence on Earth, stays alone in a cave up in the mountain Ararat, and she dies there. Her travel companion wonders about the real outcome of the journey, re-evaluating the events – "The question she was avoiding was whether Miss Fergusson might not have been the instrument of her own precipitation, in order to achieve or confirm whatever it was she wanted to achieve or confirm" (BARNES 1989:141). In her pursuit for her version of the

truth, the one in which she needed to discover "divine intent, benevolent order and rigorous justice" (124), for Miss Fergusson there was no room for the truth of her late atheist father who could see "only chaos, hazard and malice" (124) and as she explained to her companion "there were two explanations of everything, that each required the exercise of faith, and that we had been given free will in order that we might choose between them" (BARNES 1989: 141). Her death and her posed remains in the cave, in the future-to-come in the following century will participate in a process of abductive reasoning - a trace from the past that crashed into the present of the two Americans looking for the Ark. At their third and last attempt in search of any evidence of the presence of remains of the mythic voyage in the deluge, the skeleton of Miss Fergusson becomes an artefact – "We found Noah" (BARNES 1989: 227). When, being both man of science and man of faith, one of them expresses his doubts about the origin of the bones because they appear too well preserved, we are offered an explanation which invites us to accept the gaps in reasoning and believe the miracles of Christian myth so that the idea about divine intent could be perpetuated and despite the pieces of the puzzle that would not fit the project Ararat continues.

In terms of narrative, the ten chapters present a sequence of moments in time that function as snapshots of the events designed to become objects of future memory, with a potential to become a record of the past at a later point. The mode of anticipation of memory, or the view on the present as a source of records to be archived, in his book *Archive Fever: A Freudian Impression* (1998) Jacques Derrida names the *archive fever* and it functions in congruence with accelerated recontextualization. Archive fever is not simply a manner of recording a past that would exist even if it were not a part of the archive. Currie interprets Derrida's concept as a process that *produces* the content as much as it records it. According to Lea, *History of the World…*demonstrates the principle where the control of the narrative is a result of privilege and the illusion of historical truthfulness is a consequence of singular or limited perspective materialized in the "monologism of the naratorial voice" (LEA 2007: 383). However, the novel still exhibits a great degree of polyphony in Bakhtinian sense, insisting on competing voices, even when those are literally trapped in silence, where the equal (un)reliability of the narrator(s) is foregrounded and the reader is confronted with the responsibility of choosing whom to believe – whose archive, whose experience, whose truth or fabulation constitutes the reality of the past we choose to prioritize? It is perhaps best illustrated by the narrative in chapter 8, "Upstream!" which overlaps several layers of data produced by archival fever and transformed in accelerated recontextualization but confronted by the two competing and incompatible realities which are on the independent level presented as a fabulated dialogue where one side is completely silent. The perspective of unreliable narrators who narrate their manufactured realities to reinforce their world views is one of the strongest links between the chapters-fragments. In "Upstream!" the story unfolds as a series of letters, snapshots, addressed to a 'darling', a person whom the narrator perceives as his lover. From the first few lines emulating a postcard, the narrator exhibits a strong colonial worldview confronting 'Johnny Walker' with 'local firewater'. This remark functions both as a clue to the setting, as much as a means of self-characterization. It is an account of the film crew's trip to the rainforest in Venezuela told from the perspective of one of the leading actors. The purpose of the trip, or what we learn from the narrator, appears to be working "our way into the re-

ality of a couple of deeply dead Jesuit priests" (BARNES 1989: 162). As the trip unfolds, the narrator presents himself as a frivolous person having little respect either for the person to whom he writes or to the 'tribe' they travel to meet for the purpose of the film project. The 'Indians' are seen as a means to achieving authenticity in a reconstruction of the historical event involving the Jesuit priests, and beyond that they are implicitly observed through the colonial stereotypes as one-dimensional beings, not unlike archive objects: "The girls are pretty, too (don't worry, angel – riddled with diseases)" (165). They build two camps, one for whites and one for Indians because some of the crew "thought they'd get their watches stolen" (165). In the fourth letter we establish the time frame, placing this trip in years after the astronaut's flights into space, since the narrator compares his newly discovered enthusiasm for the simplicity of life he observes in the 'tribe' with the overwhelming experience of space which caused some of the astronauts to turn to religion. Yet, interpreting this remark in the light of the story about the outcome of some specific astronaut's religious enterprises in the search for the Ark, and the fact that the narrator's snapshots remain laced with stereotype "I'm not coming back with a bone through my nose" (166), the reader is to remain cautious. What is more, this letter also offers a hint about the issues in the presupposed relationship of the narrator and the 'listener', mentioning dishonesty on the part of the narrator. In the narrator's discovery that the 'Indians' do not have a name for themselves, nor the name for their language, Barnes directly challenges the homogenizing concept of a nation and society, here "Everyone [is] *contributing*" (167). It also reveals how little the narrator, or anyone, knows about the 'tribe' or even about the event they wish to replicate on film:

> What I'm dying to know is does the tribe remember? Do they have ballads about transporting the two white men dressed as women up to the great watery anaconda to the south, or however they might put it? Or did the white men vanish from the tribe's memory as completely as the tribe vanished for the white man? (BARNES 1989:167)

The story goes on revealing that the 'tribe' does not differentiate between 'acting' and reality, that they believe the actors in priest robes to be the priests themselves, and finally, they participate in the re-enactment of the scene in the fashion that they verbatim repeat the event, capsize the raft and let one of the actors drown. The narrator explains the actions of the Indians to be a consequence of incommensurability between the experience and the records available to the film crew and data that perhaps persisted in the collective memory of the 'tribe':

> Those Jesuits were probably quite big in the Indians' history. Think of that story getting passed down the generations, each time they handed it on it became more colourful and exaggerated. And then we come along, another lot of white men who've also got two chaps in long black skirts with them, who also want to be poled up the river to the Orinoco. (BARNES 1989:180)

The resulting actions, in accordance with the proposition of Miss Fergusson's that there are two explanations of everything, resembled a re-enactment of "a ceremony" which both for the film crew and for the Indians depended on recontextualization and the archive fever "producing" the event anew, yet the result was a clash generated by the incommen-

surable contexts of the apparently competing versions of history. However, Barnes continues the layering of information that subverts the validity of the narrator's perspective demonstrated by the conspicuous silence from the interlocutor on the other side which ends the chapter in a sequence of enraged telegraphic messages demanding the break-up of the relationship which questions the truth value of the data of the entire chapter (182). The opposing perspectives are not very dissimilar to the stories of the chapter "Survivor", where "entropic inevitability and psychotic instability oppose each other across a space of contested rationality" (LEA 2007: 384). Barnes persists in maintaining the contesting positions in a balance so either is unable to discredit the opposing one explaining that the authority is volatile, "an outcome of accident and contingency" (384) and the historical discourse a consequence of the interplay between the fabulation and facticity. As he dismisses any possible overarching or controlling idea, Barnes also rejects a singular narrative as the source of any truth. The truth, if such a thing is possible, results from "palimpsests of impermanent authorities" (385), the overlapping explanations of everything and the voices of (un)reliable narrators we choose to trust.

4. *History of the world* in the accelerated times

We consider the last twenty years of the XX century as a period of transition, a time when one era ended and something new was on the horizon, however, it should be noted that the same period saw the peak of postmodernism, when it became the most dominant cultural form, as well as its redefinition or recontextualization. Although it is an ongoing debate whether postmodernism gave way to another super-, post- or meta- or it persists along with it, one of the defining features of postmodernism that continues to the present is the temporality specific to this 'mode of production'. Often described as contradictory, it refers to the perception of time as simultaneously accelerating and stalling, a time in which everything is in a process of newly becoming while being already over. Reading anew a novel first published at the peak of postmodernism which deals with the topic of history invites us to consider the nature of transition we now believe the period signified and to divert our attention to the models of experiencing time as a sequence of present moments. Understanding that the "motors of history have stalled" (BOXALL 2018:34) and that the mechanisms of representing reality have grown increasingly inadequate, the novel as genre offers some options in our search for the appropriate form, even if it is only to signal "that where history is supposed to be, where the material foundation of the culture should lie, there is just a kind of emptiness" (BOXALL 2018:36). *A History of the World in 10 ½ Chapters* is a novel that speaks not only of the failure of the self-referentiality and traditional historical protocols to respond to the continuing reality of history that we are currently witnessing, but most emphatically about the contingency of history and of imperfection and subjectivity of our methods of recording the past. There is no way of making an unmediated record of a historical truth, and the past is always a product of a narrative constructed when the moment has passed. In the process of recording, there is also a portion of data that manufactures, or actively produces the event in question positioning it as a future memory or contaminating it with the traces of the past. The "shared assertion of a fantasy of historical completion" (BOXALL 2018:41) of the high postmodernism is undermined by the transitions that we witnessed since the onset of the new

millennium that radically altered the context pushing the late XX century away from the time we recognize as our own, and with it opened new paths for the interpretation of the relationship of history and fiction.

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NOVI OSVRT NA ROMAN ISTORIJA SVETA U 10 ½ POGLAVLJA – O STAVU DA ZA SVE POSTOJE DVA OBJAŠNJENJA I O NEPOUZDANOM PRIPOVEDAČU

Rad predstavlja jedno čitanje romana Džulijana Barnsa *Istorija sveta u 10 ½ poglavlja* iz perspektive druge decenije dvadeset prvog veka i kroz teorijske okvire koji kraj dvadesetog veka više ne smatraju nama savremenim dobom. Iako se roman nedvosmisleno bavi odnosom istorije i fikcije kroz kompleksne predloške beleženja prošlosti i metode njenog predstavljanja i interpretacije, kritičke studije koje se bave ovim tekstom veoma često zanemaruju postupke strukturisanja pripovedanja i povezivanja fragmenata u kontekstu tumačenja iskustva vremena i sadašnjeg trenutka. Pored tumačenja kojim dominiraju principi istoriografske metafikcije, u radu se razmatraju procesi koje Mark Kari (Currie) opisuje kao presudne za razumevanje odnosa iskustva vremena u pripovedanju – kompresija vreme-prostora, arhivska groznica i ubrzana rekontekstualizacija kao pojmovi vezani za iskustvo vremena kao niza sadašnjih trenutaka u okruženju visoko zasićenom elektronskim medijima. Predloženo čitanje romana ilustruje kako se ovi procesi odražavaju na funkcionisanje strukture romana i kako se u kombinaciji sa perspektivom nepouzdanih pripovedača formiraju palimpsesti pripovesti unutar kojih tražimo istorijsku istinu.

Ključne reči: *Istorija sveta u 10 ½ poglavlja* (roman), Džulijan Barns, istoriografska metafikcija, ubrzana rekontekstualizacija, arhivska groznica