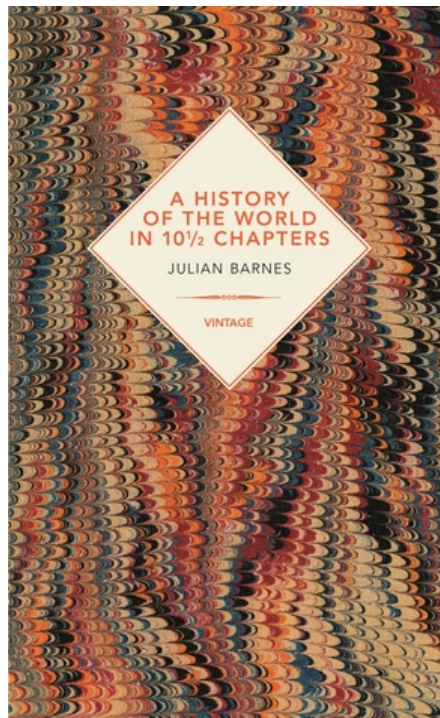




A History of the World in 10½ Chapters

Julian Barnes

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Beginning with an unlikely stowaway's account of life on board Noah's Ark, *A History of the World in 10½ Chapters* presents a surprising, subversive, fictional history of earth told from several kaleidoscopic perspectives. Noah disembarks from his ark but he and his Voyage are not forgotten: they are revisited in on other centuries and other climes - by a Victorian spinster mourning her father, by an American astronaut on an obsessive personal mission. We journey to the Titanic, to the Amazon, to the raft of the *Medusa*, and to an ecclesiastical court in medieval France where a bizarre case is about to begin...

This is no ordinary history, but something stranger, a challenge and a delight for the reader's imagination. Ambitious yet accessible, witty and playfully serious, this is the work of a brilliant novelist.

A History of the World in 10½ Chapters Details

Date : Published November 27th 1990 by Vintage (first published 1989)

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Author : Julian Barnes

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From Reader Review A History of the World in 10½ Chapters for online ebook

Lizzy says

A History of the World in 10½ Chapters was not what I expected, but that happens a lot to me when reading Julian Barnes. I like surprises, and enjoyed the book. My problem is frequently uncontrolled expectations. I had a similar feeling reading Flaubert's Parrot, if I remember correctly since I read both years ago.

It is highly entertaining and the choice of narrator in each fragment is a feat of imagination. Always true with Barnes' writings. The story grew on me as I read on, at the same time as the narrator grows in exuberance and vitality. Wonderfully constructed and wittily told, *Barnes'* work show the full spectrum of his interests.

But I think I still prefer his short-stories.

Kelly says

I originally assumed, based on its title, that A History of the World in 10 1/2 chapters was actually a history of the world in 10 1/2 chapters. I thought it would be a quirky, ultra-condensed version of all recorded history. And it IS quirky. But it's actually a series of history-themed short stories.

I had it on my wishlist based on the rave reviews from Amazon, claiming that the book is pure genius. A top review calls it a "sardonic, original, and mischievous mind on a tear." Too bad it bored me so much.

With a postmodern approach, the book is clever and experimental...but clever and experimental doesn't automatically mean good. It's the type of read where every once and a while I would think "That's a neat description," or "What a creative take," and a couple times I chuckled, but I was never hooked. The highlight of the book is probably its first chapter, where Barnes tells the story of Noah's Ark from a wood worm's point of view. Another stand-out is an account of a shipwreck, followed by a chapter beginning with the question, "How do you turn catastrophe into art?"

Kristen says

These 10.5 stories cover an eclectic range of topics: Noah's Ark, animal trials, nuclear disaster, shipwrecks, moon landings, and much more. A history of the world, you might say. The connections between the stories are largely thematic (boats, apocalypse, decay, pairs, sorting), and it's a really well executed example of this format. (Surely David Mitchell has read this, yes?) *A History* is usually classed as a comic novel, and while it wasn't farcical or zany, it had an nice understated wit.

I particularly enjoyed the "Shipwreck" chapter, which recounted the story of the real wreck of the Medusa, followed by a discussion of a famous French painting based on that event. I ironically seem to enjoy reading about paintings more than I enjoy looking at them, but I appreciated that the book included a foldout color reproduction of the painting so you could follow along with the analysis. This chapter is where Barnes offers some of his most moving reflections on life, as seen through art:

There is no formal response to the painting's main surge, just as there is no response to most human feelings. Not merely hope, but any burdensome yearning: ambition, hatred, love (especially love) -- how rarely do our emotions meet the object they seem to deserve? How hopelessly we signal; how dark the sky; how big the waves. We are all lost at sea, washed between hope and despair, hailing something that may never come to rescue us.

Nicole says

I had forgotten how great this book is. It's better than I remember. I think Barnes is best with short pieces that interact with each other. This is probably the best of the things of his that I've read; I also really enjoyed Pulse, and I think in the same way.

It was also interesting reading this in conjunction with Not Wanted on the Voyage, which I suspect Barnes had read (there's an all-caps use of the phrase which I think is a reference). This treatment is still in the realm of critique, but the critique is different, and it seems both kinder and also broader and less specific. I think I agree more with Findley, but find Barnes a better read, even the chapter on shipwreck. Anyway, this goes up a star, Arthur and George goes down one.

Angie says

Julian Barnes became one of my favs after reading this book.

Each chapter reads as a sperate story but connected by a religious theme in each, albeit a skewed and revisionist view of various religions.

Chapter one starts the book with a hilarious re-telling of Noah's ark by a stowaway...a woodworm. Apparently the unicorn was tossed overboard because Noah became jealous of it's um...horn. Chapter 3 revisits the woodworms as they are being tried for heresey after infesting the Bishop's throne, causing the leg to fall off, hence throwing the poor man to the floor and causing him to fall into a "state of imbecility."

And so it goes....

Kirstie says

Ok, the first chapter of the book entitled "The Stowaway" is one of the most brilliant things i've ever read. If there ever was a more intriguing hypothetical account of Noah's Ark, I haven't read it.

Sadly, the rest of the chapters are not as amazing. They are worth reading and interesting. They are engaging and inventive. But, they still aren't 5/5 stars good. I'm a tough critic. This is a solid 4 star work with some real five star moments. Barnes proves he's a creative thinker and able to delve into some important events in the history of both events and concepts (i.e. love, mental illness, and heaven for instance). At times he is wry and at other times he is completely serious and should be taken even more seriously for it. There are great

historical accounts of the world based on true paintings and events and then more personal accounts that still seem just as valid for an understanding of the world's history.

While the chapters are vastly different in terms of the topic and theme, time period, perspective, and setting, Barnes has an apt way of providing a distinguishing link between all of them, as if underneath it all deep within our sub conscious is naturally our own origins. In the meantime, Barnes is going to help us explain our own sense of survival and reaction to terrorism in "Franklin Hughes." He writes about the agony of waiting for death and hope in addition to how humans turn catastrophes into art in "Shipwreck." He analyzes sexism, mysticism, WWII paranoia, and psychosis in "The Survivor." He tells of a story of one man misunderstanding another based on culture and race in "Upstream!" and celebrates as well as criticizes love in "Parenthesis." He shows us the fallibility of religion in "The Wars of Religion" and of heaven itself in "The Dream." He is ever aware of the immense shortcomings in both humanity and history. It is my opinion that he is just as brutal as he is forgiving.

You will learn from this book and you will too investigate deeper thought into human events of the past. It will make you wonder which aspects of history really are true and it will help you re-examine those you thought could be true. He deconstructs history, and myth, and with the greatness of his writing, reminds us of what good there actually is in our species.

Memorable Quotes:

pg. 4 "It wasn't a nature reserve, that Ark of ours; at times it was more like a prison ship."

...

"They were chosen, they endured, they survived: It's normal for them to gloss over the awkward episodes, to have convenient lapses of memory. But I am not constrained in that way. I was never chosen. In fact like several other species, I was specifically not chosen. I was a stowaway."

...

"When I recall the Voyage, I feel no sense of obligation, gratitude puts no smear of Vaseline on my lens. My account you can trust."

pg. 6 "We weren't in any way to blame (you don't really believe that story about the serpent, do you? -it was just Adam's black propaganda), and yet the consequences for us were equally severe: every species wiped out except for a single breeding pair, and that couple consigned to the high seas under the charge of an old rogue with a drink problem who was already into his seventh century of life."

...

"Did you imagine that in the vicinity of Noah's palace (Oh, he wasn't poor, that Noah) there dwelt a convenient example of every species on earth? Come, come. No, they were obliged to advertise, and then select the best pair that presented itself. Since they didn't want to cause a universal panic, they announced a competition for twosomes-a sort of beauty contest.."

pg. 12 "I don't know how best to break this to you, but Noah was not a nice man. I realize this idea is embarrassing, since you are all descended from him; still, there it is. He was a monster, a puffed-up patriarch who spent half his day grovelling to his God and the other half taking it out on us. He had a gopher-wood staff with which...well, some of the animals carry the stripes to this day. It's amazing what fear can do..."

pg. 16 "Once, in a gale, Ham's wife lost her footing near the rail and was about to go overboard. The unicorn-who had deck privileges as a result of popular lobbying-galloped across and struck his horn through

her trailing cloak, pinning it to the desk. Fine thanks he got for his valour; the Noahs had him casseroleed one Embarkation Sunday. I can vouch for that. I spoke personally to the carrier hawk who delivered a warm pot to Shem's ark."

pg. 19 "Again-I am reporting what the birds said...And the birds said Noah didn't know what he was doing-he was all bluster and prayer. It wasn't difficult, what he had to do, was it? "

pg. 25 "If you think I am being contentious, it is probably because your species-I hope you don't mind my saying this-is so hopelessly dogmatic. You believe what you want to believe, and you go on believing it. But then, of course, you all have Noah's genes. No doubt this also accounts for the fact that you are often strangely incurious."

pg. 27 "God said...He was creating for us the rainbow. The rainbow! Ha! It's a very pretty thing, to be sure, and the first one he produced for us, an iridescent semi-circle with a paler sibling beside it, the pair of them glittering in an indigo sky, certainly made a lot of us look up from our grazing. You could see the idea behind it: as the rain gave reluctant way to the sun, this flamboyant symbol would remind us each time that the rain wasn't going to carry on and turn into a Flood. But even so. It wasn't much of a deal. And was it legally enforceable? Try getting a rainbow to stand up in court."

pg. 30 "He just couldn't handle the responsibility. He made some bad navigational decisions, he lost four of his eight ships and about a third of the species entrusted to him-he'd have been court-marshalled if there'd been anyone to sit on the bench. And for all his bluster, he felt guilty about losing half the Ark. Guilt. immaturity, the constant struggle to hold down a job beyond your capabilities-it makes a powerful combination, one which would have had the same ruinous effect on most members of your species. You could even argue, I suppose, that God drove Noah to drink."

pg. 83 "But her Dad said you could tell from the antlers that the reindeer pulling the sleigh were stags. At first she only felt disappointed, but later resentment grew. Father Christmas ran an all-male team. Typical. Absolutely bloody typical, she thought."

pg. 103 "The mind just got carried away. Never knew when to stop. But then the mind never does. It's the same with these nightmares"

pg. 104 "Everything was connected, the weapons and the nightmares. That's why they'd had to break the cycle. Start making things simple again. Begin at the beginning. People said you couldn't turn the clock back, but you could. The future was in the past."

pg. 125 "How do you turn catastrophe into art? Nowadays, the process is automatic. A nuclear plant explodes? We'll have it on the London stage within a year. A president is assassinated? You can have the book or the film or the filmed book or the booked film. War? Send in the novelists. A series of gruesome murders? Listen for the tramp of the poets. We have to understand it, of course, this catastrophe; to understand it, we have to imagine it, so we need the imaginative arts. But we also need to justify it and forgive it, this catastrophe, however minimally. Why did it happen, this mad act of Nature, this crazed human moment? Well, at least it produced art. Perhaps, in the end, that's what catastrophe is *for*"

pg. 137 "How hopelessly we signal; how dark the sky, how big the waves. We are all lost at sea, washed between hope and despair, hailing something that may never come to rescue us. Catastrophe has become art; but this is no reducing process. It is freeing, enlarging, explaining. Catastrophe has become art: that is, after all, what it is for."

pg. 134 "There always appear to be two explanations of everything. That is why we have been given free will, in order that we may choose the correct one."

pg. 205 "Also I think cities make people lie to one another."

pg. 226 "It would be comforting if love were an energy source which continued to glow after our deaths. Early television sets, when you turned them off, used to leave a blob of light in the middle of the screen, which slowly diminished from the size of a florin to an expiring speck...Is love meant to glow on like this for a while after the set has been switched off?

pg. 227 "I love you. For a start, we'd better put these words on a high shelf; in a square box behind glass which we have to break with our elbow; in the bank. We shouldn't leave them lying around the house like a tube of Vitamin C...These are grand words; we must make sure we deserve them."

pg. 134 "Perhaps love is essential because it's unnecessary."

pg. 235 "A medical textbook doesn't immediately disenchant us; here the heart is mapped like the London underground. Aorta, left and right pulmonary arteries and veins, left and right subclavian arteries, left and right coronary arteries, left and right carotid arteries...it looks elegant, purposeful, a confident network of pumping tubes. Here the blood runs on time, you think."

pg. 238 "But I can tell you why to love. The history of the world becomes brutally self important without love. Our random mutation is essential because it's unnecessary. Love won't change the history of the world...but it will do something much more important: teach us to stand up to history, to ignore its chin-out strut. I don't accept your terms, love says; sorry, you don't impress, and by the way what a silly uniform you're wearing. "

pg. 239 "How you cuddle in the dark governs how you see the history of the world. It's as simple as that.

We get scared by history we allow ourselves to be bullied by dates."

pg. 304 "And scholarly people, they tend to last as long as anyone. They like sitting around reading all the books there are. And then they love arguing about them. Some of these arguments-she casts an eye to the heavens-go on for millennium after millennium. It just seems to keep them young, for some reason, arguing about books."

Riku Sayuj says

This 'History' turned out to be very different from what my expectations were. In fact, it just marginally qualifies as a novel, but then I thought the same about Flaubert's Parrot too, so you might discount the opinion - both have been booker shortlists after all.

It is highly entertaining and the choice of narrator in each fragment is a feat of imagination. Barnes' obsession with history and its telling comes out in this book too, but this time not as a doubting narrator doggedly working against stacked odds but as exuberant narrators who gain vitality from the very fact of their inconsequentiality to the story. The underlying motifs and themes connecting these seemingly disparate stories and speakers is probably what prompts Pamuk to dub it as a major work of post-modernism.

Wonderfully constructed and wittily told, this book shows fans the full range of the author's interests.

Catriona (LittleBookOwl) says

I read most of this! A few chapters I stopped reading half-way through because I wasn't enjoying them as much. I decided to DNF as this is a book I had to study last year and no longer /need/ to finish it... and honestly I don't have any desire to revisit the chapters I stopped partway through.

Haje says

The book is basically what it says on the cover: Ten-and-a-half short chapters, which together cover a lot of ground. It is not, as you may be led to believe, a book about history, however.

Rather, it is one of those books that somewhat reminds me of those Official Soundtrack albums they keep releasing: “Music composed for, and inspired by, X”. The stories are, in fact, all fiction. But rather than being history, they cleverly become part of history. Or they will do – for anyone who reads the book. It is also obviously inspired by history, in a way that no other book I have ever read is.

10.5 chapters is a strange book by many accounts. It uses very distinct narrative structures from chapter to chapter, and each chapter can be read as a short story – as it stands very well on itself. The clever bit is how the stories actually intertwine and play off each other.

The first chapter is about Noah’s Ark, seen from the perspective of a creature that managed to sneak on board – a highly blasphemous, but also thought-provoking and profound tale of survival, and the idiocy of religion in general.

Then, in rapid succession, Barnes covers some seriously deep issues. There is a story about a woman who loses her mind and sets sail for the open sea, an in-depth analysis of Géricault’s 1819 painting The Raft of the Medusa, a story about a group of Jews trying to escape Germany just before the second world war, and a most profound philosophical work on the mechanics and philosophy of Love.

Throughout this eclectic mixture of profoundness, Julian Barnes manages to keep his readers on the edge of their chairs: Without getting overly pretentious and without ever getting heavy-handed, he illustrates several points: Proficiency in a handful of distinct styles, different narratives, inspiring and fresh thoughts on a handful of topics, a few giggles (both through content and through the cheekiness inherent in some of the writing styles).

All in all, A History of the world in 10.5 chapters has only one grievous flaw: The fact that it is not the history of the world in 99.5 chapters. I would have loved to read more stories. Follow the author through more explorations, and hear more of his ideas.

The only consolation is that Julian Barnes has written a handful of other novels, all of which have instantly been awarded a one-way ticket to the top of my “to read” list. And if you have any sense – move 10.5 chapters to near the top of yours as well. Trust me, it is worth it.

Hippo dari Hongkong says

Melunasi utang ripiu

Terus terang buku ini sepertinya akan menjadi buku terahir yang dibaca bareng oleh "Durjana Book Club" setelah meronggeng bareng dalam buku Ronggeng Dukuh Paruk dan dan berromantis ria sekaligus curcol habis2an dibuku The Wednesday Letters dan setelah konferens sambil tereak2, sikut sana sikut sini, ledek sana ledek sini dengan diiringi puisi dengan daya setrum 1000 volt dari sang Malaikat Berbulu ahirnya diputuskan baca buku ini. Oh, how I miss the moment ketika kaum durjana saling mendurjanai sesamanya, huhuhu

Satu lagi alasan buat ngeberesin ripyunya yaitu ketika sedang ngalor ngidul lewat tengah malam dirumah Tinkerbelle tiba2 topiknya nyampe ke buku ini dan langsung membuat seorang sekretaris club curhat melongo ketika disuruh membaca sebuah Bab dibuku ini. Begitulah asal usulnya.

Nah karena bacanya udah lumayan lama plus bukunya minjem jadi rada2 sedikit lupa. Benang merah nya pokoknya nanti ujungnya nyambung lagi ke si ulat sotoy, perahu ama aer. dengan kata lain kita akan selalu merasa... basah ;))

bab 1

Mendekonstruksi Nuh sedemikian rupa dari sudut pandang seekor ulat kayu yang jelas2 terlihat dongkol kepada Nuh karena tidak dimasukkan ke dalam golongan hewan yang harus diselamatkan dari bencana air bah. Beda dengan kudaniil, dihalaman satu aja kudaniil disebut sebagai hewan yang harus diselamatkan. kesimpulan dari bab 1 yaitu.. kudaniil >>> keren

"wejangan" ulat sotoy kepada umat manusia

mengabaikan hal2 buruk membuat kalian lebih ringan meneruskan langkah. Tapi mengabaikan hal2 buruk membuat kalian akhirnya percaya bahwa hal-hal buruk tak pernah terjadi.

Bab 2

Kalo tidak salah tentang catatan pengadilan antara masyarakat melawan ulat. entah nyata ato tidak yang pasti bener2 absurd

Bab 3

Maap, lupa lagi tentang apa :D

bab 4

gak ngerti.. intinya tentang fabulasi lah. Suatu kondisi dimana seseorang mengarang cerita untuk menutupi fakta-fakta yang tidak diketahuinya atau tidak ingin diterima kebenarannya. Dia pertahankan sedikit fakta nyata dan merajut cerita baru disekelilingnya. hmm.. sekali ato dua kali mungkin kita pernah mengalami hal ini ;-)

Bab 5

Keren, menganalisa lukisan legendaris The Raft of the Medusa karya Théodore Géricault. terus terang sebagai orang bego yang samasekali tidak tahu bagaimana cara mengapresiasi sebuah lukisan serasa mendapat pencerahan ketika membaca bab ini. lukisan yang mencoba merekonstruksi kisah 15 awak kapal fregat Prancis yang tenggelam di laut Mauritania pada tahun 1816. Awalnya ada 147 awak yang ada di rakit darurat yang dibuat sesaat setelah kapal tenggelam, namun setelah terkatung2 selama 13 hari nyaris tanpa makanan dan minuman hanya 15 dari mereka yang selamat setelah melewati hari2 yang mengerikan dilautan dengan saling membunuh untuk mendapatkan makanan dan minuman. satu kata untuk bab tentang lukisan ini.. menakutkan

bab 6

Nona Ferguson berkunjung ke gunung tempat bahtera Nuh mendarat di gunung ararat dalam rangka "berdamai" dengan arwah ayahnya, kolonel Ferguson

bab 7

tentang laki2 yang selamat dari musibah Titanic gara2 dia make baju cewe kalo gak salah. trus ada cerita tentang orang yang pernah ditelan ikan paus. plus kisah tentang pengungsi yahudi yang menumpang kapal St Louise yang ditolak berlabuh disana sini sehingga harus terkatung2 selama 40 hari 40 malam.

mitos tidak mengarahkan kita mundur kesuatu peristiwa asli yang telah disadur sepanjang perjalanan mengarungi memori kolektif; justru mengarahkan kita maju ke sesuatu yang akan terjadi, yang pasti terjadi. Mitos akan menjadi realita, betapapun skeptisnya kita.

bab 8

bab favorit

kisah yng berupa surat2 yang dipenuhi dengan rasa cinta dari seorang bintang film bernama charlie kepada pippa kekasihnya (setidaknya itu anggapan si charlie). surat2 awal charlie selalu diawali dengan kalimat standar orang yang lagi dimabuk cinta.. "sayang.." Sayangku... hai cantik. pips sayang, pippa tercinta dan tentu saja diakhiri dengan kalimat... "dengan cinta charlie"

disini kita akan mengetahui suka dukanya seorang charlie yang sedang melakukan syuting pelem di sebuah hutan yang jauh dari peradaban di kawasan amerika latin. tapi lama2 sadar ato tidak kita akan mengetahui kalo surat2 cinta charlie ini akan semakin pendek saja dari hari kehari. disini pembaca bisa secara bebas menarik kesimpulan apa saja tentang alasan kenapa surat2 charlie untuk kekasihnya ini semakin pendek dan padat isinya. puncaknya pada dua ato tiga surat terakhir yang bikin hahahihi. charlie menulis begini...

Telegram

ANGKAT TELEPON KEPARAT ATAU HUBUNGI AKU PIPPA TITIK CHARLIE

Surat ke 15 (pake pos kilat)

Dengar sundal, kenapa kau tak keluar saja dari hidupku, pergi sana keluar saja ENYAH. kau selalu bikin rusak kan, itu bakat hebatmu, bikin rusak. bla.. bla.. bla...

Telegram terakhir

BALIK LONDON SENIN LIMA BELAS TITIK HARAP PINDAH DAN BERKEMAS DARI FLAT SEBELUM SEPULUH TITIK RINGGALKAN KUNCI TITIK SELASAI TITIK

Duuuh, charlie, kasian amat si lo, hahahaha

Parenthesis

kalimat "*I love you*"

sang pengarang membayangkan seluruh dunia membuat keputusan bersama yang menyatakan bahwa frasa tersebut harus selalu terdengar seperti sesuatu yang harus diperjuangkan, diupayakan, sehingga berharga. Frasa yang agung dan kita harus memastikan kita layak mengucapkannya.

I love you: subjek, kata kerja, obyek; kalimat tanpa embel-embel, tak tergoyahkan. Subyeknya adalah satu kata pendek. menyiratkan penghapusan diri sang pecinta. Kata kerjanya lebih panjang tapi tak kabur. suatu momen demonstratif ketika lidah dengan gelisah menjentik langit-langit mulut untuk melepas bunyi huruf hidup. Obyeknya, seperti subyeknya, tak punya konsonan dan dicapai dengan mendorong bibir kedepan seperti hendak mencium. "I love you" betapa serius, betapa berat, betapa sarat bunyinya.

Ich Lieb Dich: bisikan larut malam, serak-serak basah, dengan rima yang menyenangkan antara subyek dan obyek

Je t'aime: prosedur yang berbeda, dengan subyek dan obyek tampil di depan. sehingga bunyi huruf hidup

yang memuja dan panjang itu dapat dinikmati sepenuhnya.

Ti amo: mungkin terdengar seperti makanan penggugah selera, rapi penuh kepastian struktural antara subyek dan kata kerja, pelaku dan perbuatannya, tergabung dalam kata yang sama.

Ya tebya lyublyu: obyek sekali lagi berada dalam posisi yang menyenangkan, posisi kedua, tapi kali ini -- walaupun ditandai rima antara subyek dan obyek -- menyiratkan kesulitan, halangan yang harus diatasi.

hahaha

beraaaaaaaat boow! sumpaaaaaah! gw gak nyampe kesono mikirnya :D

konon kabarnya ada beberapa paragraf di bab ini yang dibacakan didepan altar sebagai "janji setia" sebuah perkawinan. wah, ampe segitunya. entah paragraf yang mana tp gw berani taruhan pasti bukan paragraf yang menceritakan kelakuan "durjana" anjing laut jantan yang mengawini setiap betina yang ditemuinya ditepi pantai

Udah ah, ripyu ini dipersembahkan buat para durjana, Lita, pria sunsilk, dan tentu saja sang sekretaris klub curhat.

Mohon maaf kalo ada yang bingung baca ripyu yang awut2an yang gak jelas juntrungannya ini

Catatan: meski satu klub, tidak semua durjana menyukai buku ini. sang durjanawati memberi 4 bintang sementara sang durjanawan tidak sanggup meneruskan buku ini alias nyerah karena pusing sendiri katanya, hahaha. Gapapa, itu gunanya gudrid, kita bisa saling berbagi dan bisa melihat kenapa seseorang bisa sangat mencintai/membenci sebuah buku yang sama.

kapan yah kaum durjana baca bareng lagi

sejarah bukanlah apa yang terjadi. sejarah hanyalah apa yng dituturkan sejarawan kepada kita. Ada pola, rencana, gerakan, ekspansi, barisan demokrasi; sejarah adalah sulaman, aliran kejadian, narasi rumit, berkaitan, terjelaskan. satu cerita bagus yang berujung pada cerita yang lain.

sejarah sangat pintar menemukan hal-ihwal. Kita berusaha menutupinya, tapi sejarah tidak melupakannya. Waktu berpihak kepada sejarah; waktu dan ilmu. Betapapun kerasnya kita hapus pikiran semula, sejarah selalu menemukan cara untuk membacanya.

hasil dari konferensi fiktif subuh-subuh ahirnya dewan durjana memutuskan kalau buku ini dijadikan bacaan bareng kaum durjana bulan ini

tar yah, kudu nyari dulu ke toko buku, blom punya soalnya :D
abis nyontreng *kalo gak ketiduran* lah nyarinya

Moira Fogarty says

I've had 'A History of the World in 10½ Chapters' on my "to read" list for almost 15 years, but kept putting it off. Now I know why I was dithering. Despite the glowing commendations of university professors and English literature elitists, I simply could not warm to the text, clever though it was.

A loosely connected series of 10 1/2 short stories, art reviews, re-imagined histories, personal ramblings, epistolary travelogues and personal anecdotes, this is the epitome of post-modern fiction. Julian Barnes ties together his mish-mash of tales with the recurrence of woodworm & reindeer, pilgrimage & shipwreck, doubt & faith.

Eclectic and unorthodox, this will not suit every taste. Let me say up front, if you like linear plot development, THIS IS NOT FOR YOU.

Settings include Mount Ararat (where the Ark made landfall), the moon, heaven, a jungle, a monastery, and a French courthouse. My main obstacles to enjoyment were the arrogant, foolish and misogynistic male narrators (complemented by the delusional, judgmental female narrators) and the author's struggles with religious belief and Biblical history.

The voices are mostly male, including: a worm, an academic, a lawyer, an actor, an astronaut and the author himself. The story about the egotistical academic and the psychology of self-interest made me cringe and nearly put down the book altogether. In a similar way, the stories told from Barnes' own point of view felt highly self-indulgent, like intellectual masturbation.

I did like the piece on Gericault's "Scene of Shipwreck" which looked at the wreck of the Medusa and told the story of the boat, the survivors, the artist and the process. Nice bit of art analysis. I also thought the concluding story about the difficulties of making Heaven satisfactory was a fun little thought-experiment.

Putting on my feminist glasses, I have to suggest that the women in the book - an insane cat-lady obsessed with her ex-boyfriend, a religious fanatic obsessed with her dead father, a deceitful and narcissistic astronaut's wife - are all utterly despicable and essentially defined by their relationship to significant men in their lives. Loathsome.

If you want something similar, only better, try the following...

- 1) Retelling of Noah's Ark - Timothy Findley's 'Not Wanted on the Voyage'
- 2) Funny fake legal trials - Ian Frazier's 'Coyote V. Acme'
- 3) Bold, multilingual Victorian-era female explorers who brave exotic lands - Elizabeth Peters' 'Crocodile on the Sandbank'
- 4) Crazy American astronauts - Stephen King's short story "I Am the Doorway" in the collection 'Night Shift'

Beka Adamashvili says

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Hadrian says

The Ship of Fools - Hieronymus Bosch, c. 1500

A set of deliciously intertwined stories. A wry humor on the nature of existence and history, and how adrift we are on it, and a poke in the eye of dogma and 'history' as a lie.

We start with Noah's Ark, and dance around human history from there - mad astronauts, cannibalism, and the legal defense of woodworms. All the pieces matter.

Algernon says

The history of the world? Just voices echoing in the dark; images that burn for a few centuries then fade; stories, old stories that sometimes seem to overlap; strange links, impertinent connections. We lie here in our hospital bed of the present (what nice clean sheets we get nowadays) with the bubble of daily news drip-fed into our arm. We think we know who we are, though we don't quite know why we're here, or how long we shall be forced to stay. And while we fret and writhe in bandaged uncertainty - are we a voluntary patient? - we fabulate. We make up a story to cover the facts we don't know or can't accept; we keep a few true facts and spin a new story around them. Our panic and our pain are only eased by soothing fabrications; we call it history.

Julian Barnes provides an unconventional, subjective treatise on history, not as a science but as a collection of mostly unreliable fables. As an intellectual exercise I found his account often brilliant in its 'impertinent connections' and irreverent look at historical and biblical figures. As a collection of loosely linked short stories I must confess it often failed to keep me interested and invested in the characters; I usually read one chapter and put the book aside for a few days in order to explore other literary projects I had going on. This is part of the reason I hesitated more than a month about how to be honest about my experience without potentially turning future readers off from what could arguably be described as a masterpiece.

Everything is connected, even the parts we don't like, especially the parts we don't like.

Using a technique that has some similarities with David Mitchell or Italo Calvino, the ten chapters may appear at first glance random and irrelevant to the grand vision alluded to in the title, but the common maritime themes and repetead motifs accumulate in time and somehow gear together like one of those antique clockwork mechanisms. Briefly the journey offered will transport the reader from the patriarch Noah dealing with stowaways on his Ark to the sinking of the Titanic, from the deck of a research ship in the Antarctic to the wastelands of Chernobyl, from a nameless crater on the moon to the wooden throne of a medieval Bishop in France, from a tourist cruiser in the Egeean to the cetacean that swallowed Jonah, from the snowy peaks of Mount Ararat to the destitute survivors of the Medusa raft. A game of six degrees of separation will try to link a lost Amazonian tribe with the fate of William Huskisson (look him up: *Death*

froze him as an instructive cameo about the nature of progress.). Need another example? Here's a connection between Noah and Father Christmas: *She was a girl who believed what she was told, and the reindeer flew. She must have seen them first on a Christmas card. Six, eight, ten of them, harnessed side by side. She always imagined that each pair was man and wife, a happy couple, like the animals that went into the Ark. As for the Rudolf's Red Nose? Why, Chernobyl of course.*

History repeats itself, the first time as tragedy, the second time as farce

The element of humour, of satire and bufoonery, of challenging established myths and too rigid thinking modes, is one of the constant threads woven from story to story (*What was Jonah doing inside the whale in the first place? It's a fishy story, as you might expect.*). It goes hand in hand with tragedy, as the quote above states, and it doesn't try to belittle the real issues touched upon, like terrorism, or racism, or ecological disasters. But it might provide the detachment and the strength needed to look at these heavy issues from beyond the easy prepackaged ideas of political or religious dogma.

By far my two favorite chapters are the non-fiction ones:

Shipwreck is an essay on the human condition, expressed through a lengthy commentary on the significance and importance of Théodore Géricault's masterpiece *Le Radeau de la Méduse*. I've seen it a couple of times - a giant darkish painting on a wall in the Louvre, but it turns out I was in need of a professional critic in order to really 'look' at it in the proper way:

We don't just imagine the ferocious miseries on that fatal machine, we don't just become the sufferers. They become us. And the picture's secret lies in the pattern of its energy. Look at it one more time: at the violent waterspout building up through those muscular backs as they reach for the speck of the rescuing vessel. All that straining - to what end? There is no formal response to the painting's main surge, just as there is no response to most human feelings. Not merely hope, but any burdensome yearning: ambition, hatred, love (especially love) - how rarely do our emotions meet the object they seem to deserve? How hopelessly we signal; how dark the sky; how big the waves. We are all lost at sea, washed between hope and despair, hailing something that may never come to rescue us.

To balance this bleak outlook of the soul lost in a sea of indifference and ultimate destitution, Barnes gives us the half chapter **Parenthesis** where he breaks out of the story and addresses the audience directly, using a couple of quotes in a way not so different from what we do around here on goodreads when we want to stress a point:

What will survive of us is love.

Philip Larkin - *An Arundel Tomb*

The mystery of what a couple is, exactly, is almost the only true remaining mystery left to us, and when we have come to the end of it there will be no more need for literature - or for love for that matter.

Mavis Gallant

As a commentary on all the effort that went into the rest of the stories, I found this accolade well worth the price of admission and the most memorable moment of the whole journey, turning the perspective from the global to the personal, the only real level at which we can experience the world, and the only level at which we can finally find a sheltering shore from the Deluge. In one final wacky analogy, we are offered the connection between Noah's Ark and Love:

Trusting virgins were told that love was the promised land, an Ark on which two might escape the Flood. It may be an ark, but one on which anthropophagy is rife; an ark skippered by some crazy greybeard who beats you round the head with his gopher-wood stave, and might pitch you overboard at any moment.

So we must be careful of our hearts, and treat the sentiment with the respect and reverence it deserves, as apparently our survival, both as a species and as individuals can be reduced to our capacity for love, our willingness to build up and preserve instead of consume and destroy:

I Love You. For a start, we'd better put these words on a high shelf; in a square box behind glass which we have to break with our elbow; in the bank. We shouldn't leave them lying around the house like a tube of vitamin C. If the words come too easily to hand, we'll use them without thought; we won't be able to resist. Oh, we say we won't, but we will. We'll get drunk, or lonely, or - likeliest of all - plain damn hopeful. And there are the words gone, used up, grubbied.[...] These are grand words; we must make sure we deserve them.

As it often happens since I started writing longer reviews and taking notes during reading (bookmarking on ebooks works great) , I realize I begin to appreciate the effort of the author and the quality of the presentation more as I dissect it and try to put my impressions in order. I believe a second reading might convince me to give the maximum number of stars and my current lukewarm reaction may be the result of outside stress and disorderly living - which stopped me from giving the book the full attention it deserves.

Helle says

(3.5) Despite a lukewarm entry into this collection, I ended up marvelling, once again, at Barnes's ingenuity, insight and sense of humour. And at his prose, which in this collection takes on many different guises – from encyclopedic to shift, from dull (mostly in the beginning) to dramatic (increasingly). When I say collection, I mean collection – of mostly short stories, some which are bordering on essays – and most emphatically not a novel, although the book claims to be one. It is even less a novel than Flaubert's Parrot.

All the chapters are connected, however. The unifying theme is Noah's Ark, which seems surprising coming from the self-acclaimed atheist, Julian Barnes. But of course it's the story, or potential stories, behind the myth of the ark which propel(s) this work, some of which are based on historical facts or a genuine work of art (Géricault's The Raft of the Medusa) and some which are pure fiction. One or two are downright outlandish and quite delightful.

(The Raft of the Medusa, 1819)

Julian Barnes is always intelligent and good company, and this book is no exception. He narrates, and he philosophizes, he digresses and he merges. He manages to spread himself over a wide array of topics – from Noah's Ark to the hijacking of a cruise ship, musings on the Medusa, Jonah in the belly of the whale, a filmmaker's crazy adventure in Venezuela, a hike up a mountain, and an American astronaut's epiphany after landing on the Moon. And a bit more, including a lengthy advice column-cum-essay on why we must believe in love, by a first person narrator who, we are told, may or may not be Julian Barnes. It is assumed we will wonder about it.

As per usual he connects the threads of the various narratives through the use of a repeated leitmotif, in this book by interpreting and imagining Hegel's/Marx's thought: *History repeats itself, the first time as tragedy, the second time as farce* . Another leitmotif is woodworms. It works most of the time.

Mark says

No, I am apparently in a minority of one but overall I find this book irritating. There are some wonderful moments and one chapter in particular, ' Parenthesis', is a joy from start to finish (24 pages long) but other chapters are tediously over written, and at times obscure, with occasional nuggets but little to detain, satisfy or inspire. Can appreciate that some ideas are well crafted, and much of the writing flows, but the topics covered are dull and uninteresting and , in my case, rarely capture the attention or the sympathy of the reader.

So I wondered , are the following ideas fair commentary , or accurate, or mere attention grabbing :

“Should love be taught in school? First term: friendship; second term: tenderness; third term: passion. Why not? They teach kids how to cook and mend cars and fuck one another without getting pregnant...”

“Show me the tyrants who have been great lovers. By which I don’t mean great fuckers; we all know about power as an aphrodisiac (an auto-aphrodisiac too). Even our democratic hero Kennedy serviced women like an assembly-line worker spraying car bodies”

But, being Julian Barnes, there are other ideas that are arresting, concisely expressed and beautifully crafted :

“How do you turn catastrophe into art? Nowadays the process is automatic...We have to understand it, of course, this catastrophe; to understand it, we have to imagine it, so we need the imaginative arts”

“...how rarely do our emotions meet the object they seem to deserve? How hopelessly we signal; how dark the sky; how big the waves”

"History isn't what happened. History is just what historians tell us"

"The past is a distant, receding coastline," he wrote, "and we are all in the same boat. Along the stern rail there is a line of telescopes; each brings the shore into focus at a given distance. If the boat is becalmed, one of the telescopes will be in continual use; it will seem to tell the whole, the unchanging truth. But this is an illusion; and as the boat sets off again, we return to our normal activity: scurrying from one telescope to another, seeing the sharpness fade in one, waiting for the blur to clear in another. And when the blur does clear, we imagine that we have made it do so all by ourselves."

Brian says

The Prologue

Before I met all of you wonderful Goodreaders I was at the mercy of my paltry few well-read friends for recommendations of new authors and books. Derek Crim, childhood friend and fellow bookish enthusiast has offered up some winners: Chabon before “Kavalier and Clay”; O’Brian’s Aubrey-Maturin series; Kurlansky’s non-fiction. In August of 2006 he gifted me a copy of this Barnes novel. Immediately upon completion of its reading it became one of my life-important books.

The Beginning

This novel is told in 11 parts, these 10 ½ Chapters; a finely knitted tapestry of events that aren't connected, are connected, will be connected. There are illustrations of the Marx/Hegel maxim *History repeats itself, the first time as tragedy, the second time as farce*. Barnes is certain of the beautiful absurdities of life: the events that should never have happened – but when they do, the results could be funny, harrowing, enlightening, tragic. In Barnes words:

How do you turn catastrophe into art? Nowadays the process is automatic. A nuclear plant explodes? We'll have a play on the London stage within a year. A President is assassinated? You can have the book or the film or the filmed book or the booked film. War? Send in the novelists. We have to understand it, of course, this catastrophe; to understand it, we need the imaginative arts. But we also need to justify it and forgive it, this catastrophe, however minimally... Well, at least it produced art. Perhaps, in the end, that's what catastrophe is *for*.

How much fiction needs to be writ to build a truth? How many truths discovered to create a fiction? This art, these stories: sung, seen, read are critical to living.

The Middle

"Shipwreck", this chapter of 28 pages, has become like a vital organ to me. It can – and should – be read separately from the rest of the book. It is connected, but its specific tonality connecting history, art and this book itself is a masterpiece. The physical book itself is split in half with colored plate depicting Théodore Géricault's masterpiece *Le Radeau de la Méduse*. The book cleaves into two parts: what you've read to this point, what remains. But for me it is also a dividing line in my life. Where I came from before reading this section, and what has happened to me afterwards.

A year after finishing this book I am in Paris with my wife. We visit the Louvre; I enter one of its many labyrinthine rooms, clueless where we are. *The Raft of the Medusa* hangs on the left wall, in all of its 18 feet by 24 feet splendor. Have you ever seen a work of art that has brought you to tears? Then you will understand how it affected me. I spent 30 minutes sitting before it, recalling Barnes's prose, marveling at its visceral impact.

The End

A few weeks ago my wife and I went to Europe. I made a business excuse to go to Paris; the real reason I wanted to go was to return to see my favorite painting. I also took the opportunity to take this book with me; to re-read it again and to hopefully find new meaning in the totality of the work and especially in my favorite chapter. Seven years yields a lifetime of experience between the readings of a favorite book. The possibility exists that the work can dim in its poignancy and there is sadness in the recognition that the person that was once us does not inhabit the same body as the current iteration of the me. But I have loved reading this book all over again. It has spoken to me in new ways – and reading "Shipwreck" right before sitting in awe of Géricault's genius, all over again.

The Epilogue

I arrived back home last week to a flurry of emails from my friends. Derek was found dead in his hotel room

on Sunday morning. He was a great friend, a caring man and a fellow traveler in the world of the written word. His death is a catastrophe, a life cut short by that horrific disease alcoholism.

Why did I choose to read this book, the greatest of his many recommendations, at this moment in time - might have been actually reading it the moment that Derek passed this veil of tears? Barnes would remind me that I'm asking the wrong question. "Everything is connected, even the parts we don't like, especially the parts we don't like."

Farewell, my friend. I'll see you on the other side.

Jim Fonseca says

This book is a mixed bag and hard to categorize. I'll call it a collection of short stories and essays, some of which are interconnected. For example, the theme of Noah's Ark applies to at least three of the pieces -- a story of the trip in which the Ark is a fleet of filthy prison-like ships under the dubious leadership of a drunken Noah. Then two Irish women go on an expedition to a village on Mt. Ararat. And an astronaut who walked on the moon abandons science for religion and searches the mountain for the Ark. (A story based on the true saga of James Irwin). There are spin-offs of the Ark story such as that of a woman who has just suffered a break up, ends up in a psych ward, and imagines herself in a boat with two paired animals (cats). References to wormwood, a stow-away on the Ark keep cropping up.

Another theme is ships. There are true stories of the ship the St. Louis, loaded with Jewish refugees, turned away from Cuba in 1939. And a true story of a Titanic survivor. There's a story of a speaker on a ship taken over by terrorists who start killing passengers and make the speaker their spokesman.

Another theme is God and the reality (or not) of divine intervention symbolized by the ship on the horizon that may or may not see you lost at sea. (We realize now how unlikely Tom Hank's rescue was in the movie Cast Away because no one would have seen him – no one on deck and no one looking out the portholes of such mechanical monsters.) There's an essay on love and a short story on the boredom of heaven. We even get into art criticism in a story about a shipwreck and the resulting painting: The Raft of the Medusa by Gericault.

Good stuff in an odd package.

Painting of the Ark by Simon de Myle on Wikicommons
Medusa painting from wordpress.com

Kaggelo says

Εμεινα αφωνος με το συγκεκριμενο βιβλίο. Ειμαι εντυπωσιασμενος και καταπληκτος. Δεκα ξεχωριστα διηγηματα και μια παρενθεση, εκπληκτικα τα περισσοτερα, με διαφορετικο

λογοτεχνικο υφος το καθενα, συνθετουν ολα μαζι μια ενιαια ιδεα. Το τελος κυριολεκτικα θα σας παρει το μυαλο. Λιγη υπομονη θελει μονο με την πρωτη ιστορια η οποια ειναι καπως κουραστικη και σαν ιδεα αλλα και στον τροπο αφηγησης, αλλα απο κει κι επειτα το βιβλιο απογειωνεται και συνεχιζει ετσι μεχρι την τελευταια σελιδα. Σπουδαιος αφηγητης και στοχαστης ο Barnes γραφει ενα ιδιοφυες και προκλητικο βιβλιο με τις καταλληλες δοσεις ειρωνιας και σαρκασμου. Χωρις ιχνος διδακτισμου καταφερνει να προβληματισει και να δωσει τροφη για σκεψη πανω στα πιο μεγαλα ζητηματα που εχουν απασχολησει ποτε τον ανθρωπο και πανω στο ιδιο το νοημα της ζωης. Θα απασχολησει για αρκετο καιρο τη σκεψη μου και σιγουρα θα επανελθω για μια δευτερη αναγωση.

Matt says

Turns out the history of the world revolves around fabulation, woodworms, and love. Hard to argue with that. I really enjoyed this book, each of the 10 stories self-contained, but threaded together, with the 1/2 chapter bringing it all together nicely. Witty, educational, philosophical, self-deprecating, all things I was really in the mood for while riding a bike across Quebec.

Favorite lines, and there were many, so just a few now so I can harken back with fondness:

"A painting may be represented as a series of decisions labelled 1 to 8a, but we should understand that these are just the annotations of feeling. We must remember nerves and emotions. The painter isn't carried fluently downstream towards the sunlit pool of that finished image, but is trying to hold a course in an open sea of contrary tides." (p. 135)

The description of the "Scene of Shipwreck" is fantastic, especially the paragraph ending in "Catastrophe has become art: that is, after all, what it is for." (p. 137)

"For the point is this: not that myth refers us back to some original event which has been fancifully transcribed as it is passed through the collective memory; but that it refers us forward to something that will happen, that must happen. Myth will become reality, however sceptical we might be." (p.181)

"Sleep democratizes fear. The terror of a lost shoe or a missed train are as great here as those of guerrilla attack or nuclear war." (p. 226)

"Poets seem to write more easily about love than prose writers. For a start, they own that flexible 'I' (when I say 'I' you will want to know within a paragraph or two whether I mean Julian Barnes or someone invented; a poet can shimmy between the two, getting credit for both deep feeling and objectivity). Then again, poets seem able to turn bad love - selfish, shitty love - into good love poetry. Prose writers lack this power of admirable, dishonest transformation. We can only turn bad love into prose about bad love. So we are envious (and slightly distrustful) when poets talk to us about love." (p. 227)... the discussion shortly thereafter about the phrase 'I love you' is fantastic.
