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***HISTORY HELPLESSLY REVISITED:  
KURT VONNEGUT'S FICTIONAL "TIMEQUAKE"<sup>1</sup>***

**Keywords:** *time as an other; trips back in time; forcibly-induced, helpless anamnesis; ne varietur temporality; temporal-ontological paradoxes; suspended free will; alternate history; atom bomb; Communism and Nazism; uchronia vs. utopia*

**Abstract:** *If we extend Zygmunt Bauman's assumption that death is the absolute other of being, standing beyond the reach of human communication, then temporality, too, appears as an other, which can never be caught "red-handed" in its actions. Therefore it may rather be defined through what it is not, as St. Augustine realized, and we never pass by it in an indifferent mood. The cultural topos of traveling back in time is one of the modern forms of deconstructing obsessive temporality. Kurt Vonnegut's last but one book, Timequake, belongs to this sub-genre (whose classic remains Twain's A Connecticut Yankee...); here intentionality and especially agency, present in many other similar fictions, are utterly absent, as the frame story presents a case of forcibly-induced, helpless anamnesis: only the déjà-vu variant of the multiverse is granted existence. In Vonnegut's metafiction imaginary events intertwine with the author-narrator's personal, social and ideological reflections, in which the critique of the current Western society is reinforced by the idealist vision of a faultless communist world. Setting out from Karl Popper's statements about the perilous attraction of Utopianism, I emphasize at the end of this paper the alternation between uchronia and utopia in Vonnegut's thought.*

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<sup>1</sup> A version of this paper was presented as a plenary speech at the International Conference of the English Department, University of Bucharest, in June 2009 (editors' note).