CARNIVALIZATION OF REALITY THROUGH NONSENSE IN DOUGLAS ADAMS’ THE HITCHHIKER’S GUIDE TO THE GALAXY: A DECONSTRUCTION STUDY

AN UNDERGRADUATE THESIS

Presented as Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of Sarjana Sastra in English Letters

By

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ENGLISH LETTERS STUDY PROGRAMME
DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH LETTERS
FACULTY OF LETTERS
SANATA DHARMA UNIVERSITY
YOGYAKARTA
2010
PLAGIAT MERUPAKAN TINDAKAN TIDAK TERPUJI

A Sarjana Sastra Undergraduate Thesis

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Dr. Praptomo Baryadi Isodarus, M.Hum
There’s more to life than books, you know…

but not much more, not much more

The Smiths – “Handsome Devil”
to mates, to kin, and to caffeine for giving a scruffy lass a chance (:}

PLAGIAT MERUPAKAN TINDAKAN TIDAK TERPUJI
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

First of all, I would like to express my gratitude to the Almighty for the life I have been granted. I would also like to express my deepest gratitude to my advisor, Ms. Maria Ananta, S.S., M.Ed for her kindness and guidance to help me finish this thesis, as well as my co-advisor, M. Luluk Artika W., S.S., for her invaluable advise to improve this thesis.

My everlasting gratitude goes to my mother, father, and sister, as well as my grandparents, uncles, aunts, and cousins for their support and affection thus far. A person is nothing without friends to share joy and woe with, hence I sincerely thank everyone from the groups Nervous and Brilliant at Breakfast and the communities DeadMediaFM, House of Natural Fiber, Indiepop Rising Club, and Studio DG, including Argha Mahendra, Budi Prakosa, Desiree Aditya, Irfan Sylvanto, Marcello Vishnoe, Muhammad Ridho, Mumu Najib, Radian Kanugroho, Ramii, Silvia Faradila, Sutanto Effendi, Arkham Kurniadi, and many more. I thank everyone at Wisma Bahasa, Mas Bagus, Mbak Sisca, Mbak Tatiek, Mas Agung, Pak Adrian Coen, Angga, Fajar, Gde, Laily, Prima, Ronnie, Wayan, Yuan, Mas Djanu, Mas Sugeng, and the others for being more than just colleagues but also friends and mentors. I also thank my former classmates from the English Letters Department’s class of 2004 and from SMA Kolese Gonzaga.

I especially thank Risky Budiman, who has opened a whole new world for me, jammed to obscure pop songs with me, and incidentally, been a very important part of my life. Thank you for everything and let us grow old together.
No less deserving of gratitude are all the lecturers and the secretariat staff members of the English Letters Department, the Faculty of Letters, Sanata Dharma University for the invaluable knowledge and assistance. Finally, I would like to thank every author whose writings I have read, every artist whose songs I have listened, every acquaintance who has wished me well, and everyone else whom I cannot mention by name.

Eka Jayani Ayuningtyas Niandita
LEMBAR PERNYATAAN PERSETUJUAN
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Eka Jayani Ayuningtyas Niandita
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ABSTRACT


This thesis is a deconstruction study on the novel The Hitchhiker’s Guide to the Galaxy. The novel is chosen because of the high amount of nonsense contained in it. This study intends to prove that nonsense in literature is not really meaningless or purposeless, but may serve as a particular device – in this case, a device of carnivalization. Carnivalesque or carnivalization is a concept in culture which subverts everything official or conventional, but unlike other forms of subversion or rebellion, is distinguished by its comic nature. Thus, this study aims to discover how reality is carnivalized through the means of nonsense in the novel.

Three problems are formulated in this study, namely to identify the instances of nonsense in the novel, to discover the binary oppositions from the instances of nonsense, and to identify how the binary oppositions in the novel carnivalize the idea of reality.

The object of this study is a novel by Douglas Adams, The Hitchhiker’s Guide to the Galaxy. Library research is used as the method, while post-structuralism is used as the approach of this study. After the topic was chosen and the research questions were formulated, the writer gathered related studies and theories. Gurewitch and Kronenberger’s theories of nonsense, Saussure and Derrida’s theories of binary opposition, Bakhtin’s theory of carnivalization and Derrida’s theory of deconstruction were used to analyze the novel. As the final step in the research, the findings of the analysis were written in this thesis.

The first part of the analysis examines the instances of nonsense in the novel, which can be classified into three types: the inversion of received ideas, the nonsequitur and the juxtaposition of incongruous contexts. The second part of the analysis examines three prominent pairs of binary opposition derived from the instances of nonsense in the first part, namely human/alien, fact/fabrication, and nature/science. The final part of the analysis examines how the idea of reality is carnivalized in this novel, namely when the hierarchies in the aforementioned binary oppositions are inverted and the values or meanings in each opposition are questioned.
ABSTRAK


Topik ini diferminusikan dalam tiga masalah, yakni mengidentifikasi contoh-contoh nonsense dalam novel, menemukan oposisi-oposisi biner dari contoh-contoh nonsense tersebut, dan mengidentifikasi bagaimana oposisi-oposisi biner tersebut mengkarnivalisasi gagasan akan realita.


CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

A. Background of the Study

Gurewitch in Comedy: The Irrational Vision describes how the renowned psychoanalyst Sigmund Freud views nonsense as something that can restore the joys derived from freedom in our infancy, beaten in efficiency only by alcohol.

Nonsense is not the only restorative of the joys of infantile freedom. Actually the most efficient, Freud observes, is alcohol (Gurewitch, 1975: 109).

With this implicit comparison, this notion undoubtedly suggests that reading nonsense literature is a milder version of drinking liquor, one might note with amusement. Despite that – or perhaps because of that – nonsense literature has existed for centuries. Nonsense literature, also known as literary nonsense, is described as a genre “associated with wit techniques and wit motives” and “bedeviled by a certain lack of clarity and a certain confusion of priorities” (Gurewitch, 1975: 109). Some examples of notable nonsense writers hail back from the Victorian era, such as Lewis Carroll and Edward Lear, followed by newer writers, including Douglas Adams, the author of The Hitchhiker’s Guide to the Galaxy.

Published in 1979, The Hitchhiker’s Guide to the Galaxy is the first novel of the five-novel Hitchhiker “trilogy”, loosely adapted from BBC Radio 4 series by the same title. The novel has garnered major achievements: it made Adams the first British author after Ian Fleming who had three books in both the New York Times and the Publishers’ Weekly bestseller lists in 1982; it was the quickest book
to win a Golden Pan for 1,000,000 paperback sales in 1984, with Adams as the youngest author to win the award, and it reached number 24 in the Waterstone’s Books/Channel Four’s “One Hundred Greatest Books of the Century” list in 1996 (http://www.douglasadams.com/dna/bio.html).

The novel follows the adventures of Arthur Dent, the only remaining Earthman after Earth is destroyed to make way for a hyperspace bypass, who was rescued by Ford Prefect, his friend from another galaxy. Regarding the genre, the novel is described as a “gently clever comedy science fiction” which Adams invented “to combine the fun of science fiction with a satire on society” (http://www.guardian.co.uk/books/2008/jun/09/douglasadams). Indeed, the appeal of this novel lies in its unusual content which is funny, full of wit and dry humour; the adjective dry, when referring to humour, is defined in *Oxford Advanced Learner’s Dictionary* as “pretending to be serious” (Hornby, 1995: 359). Robert McFarlane in *The Observer* discusses Adams’ works as follows.

Few recent writers have had such an infectious prose style as Adams. With his fondness for paradox, his galactic perspective on things and his wonderful way with meaningful nonsense (“The ships hung in the sky in much the same way that bricks don’t”), his are the books which have launched a trillion quips (http://www.guardian.co.uk/books/2001/aug/12/sciencefictionfantasyandhorror.douglasadams).

Abound with nonsense, this work lends itself as the perfect object of study. However, is all that nonsense really nonsense, a random piece of text with no meaning or purpose whatsoever? McFarlane hints otherwise in his article, writing that Adams “had serious satirical points to make about the dogmatisms of their respective ages” (http://www.guardian.co.uk/books/2001/aug/12/sciencefictionfantasyandhorror.douglasadams). This is the time to adopt the
theory of deconstruction, in which texts might not “mean what they say” (Chandler, 2002: 233). The procedures of deconstruction which are often used in literary criticism include identifying and subverting the hierarchy in the binary oppositions found in the text (Abrams, 1999: 58). This theory corresponds well with what is known as carnivalization, a literary mode that subverts and liberates the assumptions of the hegemony though humour and chaos (Honeycutt, 1994: 2). Thus, it is possible that as the carnivalization is dismantled, it would reveal that the work which seems crazily out of touch with reality, featuring literally alien setting and characters, in fact describes none other than reality.

For that reason, the writer chooses this topic for the study, with Douglas Adams’ *The Hitchhiker’s Guide to the Galaxy* as the object of the study. The writer seeks to analyze how reality is carnivalized in *The Hitchhiker’s Guide to the Galaxy* through nonsense as the device, by means of deconstruction procedures, namely identifying and subverting binary oppositions to find the meaning of the text.

B. Problem Formulation

1. What instances of nonsense are shown in Douglas Adams’ *The Hitchhiker’s Guide to the Galaxy*?

2. What binary oppositions can be drawn from the instances of nonsense in the novel?

3. How do the nonsense and binary oppositions carnivalize the idea of reality?
C. Objectives of the Study

This study aims to answer the questions in the problem formulation. The first objective of the study is to identify the instances of nonsense in Douglas Adams’ *The Hitchhiker’s Guide to the Galaxy*. The second objective is to discover the binary oppositions out of the instances of nonsense in the novel. The third objective is to identify how the nonsense and binary oppositions in the novel carnivalize the idea of reality.

D. Definition of Terms

1. Nonsense

Nonsense literature, also known as literary nonsense, is described in *Comedy: the Irrational Vision* as a genre “associated with wit techniques and wit motives” and “bedeviled by a certain lack of clarity and a certain confusion of priorities” (Gurewitch, 1975: 109).

2. Binary Opposition

Binary opposition is defined as “Pairs of mutually-exclusive signifiers in a paradigm set representing categories which are logically opposed” (Chandler, 2002: 224), or “a pair of terms differentiated by their opposition to one another” (http://www.sou.edu/English/IDTC/Terms/terms.htm), such as light/dark and alive/dead.

3. Carnivalization

*Carnival* refers to the condition in which “hierarchies are turned on their heads, opposites are mingled, the sacred is profaned… Everything authoritative,
rigid or serious is subverted, loosened and mocked” (Selden, et al, 1997: 43). carnivalization is “the term Bakhtin uses to describe the shaping effect of Carnival on literary genres” (1997: 43). The adjective carnivalesque “refers to all those cultural and literary practices which draw upon popular-festive energies to relativise or even to overturn the authority of the discourses of power and authority” (Dentith, 2000: 190).
CHAPTER II

THEORETICAL REVIEW

A. Review of Related Studies

1. Michelle Sala’s “Lear’s Nonsense beyond Children Literature”

The first related study is a paper entitled “Lear's Nonsense beyond Children Literature” by Michelle Sala. The object of study is Edward Lear’s nonsense short stories, *The Story of the Four Little Children Who Went Round the World* and *The History of the Seven Families of the Lake Pipple-Popple*. Lear is known as one of the first authors of nonsense literature.

Carroll has often been considered as the initiator of this kind of literature - Nonsense Literature - and as the best writer of prose nonsense. But some years before Carroll, another English writer was experimenting in the same field: Edward Lear (http://www.nonsenselit.org/Lear/m_sala.html).

This study uses Greimas’ theory of narrative levels. According to Greimas, there are two narrative levels in all literary texts: a surface structure, such as the plot, the characters, the language, and a deep structure, such as the motivations. All narrative texts are characterized in their deep structure by a basic opposition between contradictory elements. The reactions between those opposing elements result in the series of events in the surface structure (in http://www.nonsenselit.org/Lear/m_sala.html).

As a result of this study, Sala discovers that the surface structure, or the way the story is presented, is “over-detailed”. Lear’s nonsense stories are “strongly characterized” by “wit, humor, derived form 'topsy-turvy' inversions or contradictory combinations of words, neologisms, distortion of language and
alliteration” (http://www.nonsenselit.org/Lear/m_sala.html). Meanwhile, the deep structure is blurred. Unlike most children stories that feature Good/Evil opposition, there is no clearly discernible opposition in Lear’s stories. Even if Good and Evil can be found in the deep structure, they are not in opposition.

Good and Evil, if they can be found somewhere in the deep structure, are not in opposition: they are instead perfectly interchangeable, both viable ways to deal with the world (http://www.nonsenselit.org/Lear/m_sala.html).

Without opposition, there is no possible hierarchical relationship. In conclusion, the nonsense in Lear’s works is “a free play of words and strange events on the surface structure, caused by the lack of meaningful opposition in the deep structure” (http://www.nonsenselit.org/Lear/m_sala.html). Sala also mentions other readings that identify Bakhtin’s concept of “carnival” in Lear’s works, which “celebrated temporary liberation from the prevailing truth and the established order; it marked the suspension of all hierarchical rank, privileges, norms, and prohibitions” (http://www.nonsenselit.org/Lear/m_sala.html).

2. Oky Febianto’s “A Deconstruction Study of Dickens’ Canon in A Christmas Carol”

The second related study is an English Letters undergraduate thesis by Oky Febianto. The object of study is Charles Dickens’ novel A Christmas Carol. The theories used in this study include Derrida’s theory of deconstruction, Hope, Louck and Hoot’s theory of capitalism, and Gibson’s theory of representation. This study uses Socio-historical approach, which considers the background of this novel in the Victorian period, in which there was considerable poverty among the common people (Febianto, 2006: 17).
Febianto examines the surface and depth representations to deconstruct the supposed canon of this novel as a Christmas story into what is actually a capitalistic story. As the result, the surface representation provides the canon of the novel, namely that “love, sympathy, morality, and sincerity based on Christian teachings” are the “most important things” in life rather than money (Febianto, 2006: 61). However, the depth representation shows that the novel “is a capitalistic story”, in which money has the most important role in all the characters’ life (2006: 62).

Both studies above have some similarities with this study. The first study is a deconstruction study, as seen in its characteristic examination of surface structure and deep structure, which turn out to be contradictory. It also examines a work of nonsense literature as the object of study. The second study is also a deconstruction study that examines the surface representation and depth representation of a literary work.

However, there are also some differences between these related studies and this study. This study combines deconstruction with the theory of carnivalization, which has not yet been used in the studies above. Unlike the related studies, the surface and depth structures or representations do not become focus and are not presented in detail in this study, although they are actually featured in the discussion of binary oppositions, which reflects the surface representation, and the dismantling of carnivalization, which reflects the deep representation. Therefore, this study develops the topic with new insights.
B. Review of Related Theories

1. Theories on Nonsense

   The word *nonsense* is defined in *Oxford Advanced Learner’s Dictionary* as “spoken or written words that have no meaning or make no sense; foolish talks, ideas, etc” (Hornby, 1995: 787). In literature, nonsense literature, also known as literary nonsense, is described as a literary genre that is “bedeviled by a certain lack of clarity and a certain confusion of priorities” (Gurewitch, 1975: 109).

   Literary nonsense often becomes part of comedy. Freud describes wit and nonsense as the two comic forces that allow us to “gambol on the green fields of lawlessness” (Gurewitch, 1975: 44). According to Freud, “Only wit and nonsense are the comic powers that grant us a therapeutic reprieve from our bondage to civilization’s rules and scruples” (1975: 52). Because of its “frequent levity and irreverence”, the art of comedy can temporarily nullify the superego, which exhausts us with feelings of guilt. Therefore, people’s satisfactions of comedy may be derived from their discontents of civilization, especially the discontents produced by legality and morality (1975: 51-52).

   Nonsense can be used in various ways to achieve its effects. As one of those ways, nonsense can be used to neutralize satire, so that “our mental delight in detecting idiocy is subordinated to the joys of unreason” (Gurewitch, 1975: 118). Discovering somebody else’s idiocy brings delight to human beings, and as described above, nonsense or unreason does, too. Since the former is not regarded as a good thing and might bring anxiety or guilt, the delight from detecting idiocy is attributed to the delight from nonsense. Louis Kronenberger describes three
techniques of nonsense literature, based on his study on Oscar Wilde’s comedy: the inversion of received ideas, the nonsequitur, and the juxtaposition of incongruous contexts (Gurewitch, 1975: 118-120).

The first technique is “the preposterous inversion of received ideas” (Gurewitch, 1975: 118). It is revealed through words or actions of the characters that reflect a sense of values which is completely against the normally received sense of values. The inversion of received ideas is exemplified by Kronenberger when Lady Bracknell asks the question “Now to minor matters. Are your parents living?” to Jack. Normally, the matter of parents is regarded as a major matter. Therefore, to regard it as a minor matter like Lady Bracknell does is a preposterous inversion of a received idea.

The second technique is “the ludicrous nonsequitur” (Gurewitch, 1975: 119). The word nonsequitur itself is a Latin expression meaning “a statement that does not follow in a logical way from the previous one; a piece of false reasoning” (Hornby, 1995: 747). The technique of nonsequitur is described further below.

The second, the ludicrous nonsequitur (which is as likely to be built on ridiculous premises as to collapse into silly conclusions), is the technique that provides the principal nonsense savor of the comedy—in the form of crackpot opinions, zany observations, lunatic repartees, foolishly fey quips, and mad bons mots (Gurewitch, 1975: 119).

This technique takes the form of utterances that are “marvelously infatuated with illogic” or “unreason”. It is exemplified by Kronenberger through Miss Prism and Canon Chasuble’s reactions to Jack’s statement about his brother’s death due to severe chill. Miss Prism states her hope that the death can be a lesson to Jack’s brother, while Canon Chasuble relates Jack’s brother’s wish to be buried in Paris
to his lack of serious state of mind. It is extremely illogical and unreasonable to expect dead men to learn a lesson and to describe Paris cemeteries as a place for people lacking serious state of mind.

The third technique is “the crazy juxtaposition of incongruous contexts” (Gurewitch, 1975: 119). The word *juxtaposition* is defined in *Oxford Advanced Learner’s Dictionary* as “the placement of people or things next to each other or very close together, especially to show a contrast” (Hornby, 1995: 646).

In an absurd juxtaposition, emphasis is not on a jolting advance from a possibly sound premise to an obviously cracked deduction, but on a collision of two weirdly incompatible worlds (Gurewitch, 1975: 118). For example, Lady Bracknell is outraged upon discovering that Jack, who is proposing her daughter, was found in a handbag as a baby. She considers it as “a contempt for the ordinary decencies of family life” comparable to the French Revolution (Gurewitch, 1975: 120), and rejects him. However, Jack turns out to be her nephew. This is a collision between Lady Bracknell’s accusation to Jack of threatening the decencies of family life and her actual family ties with Jack.

Kronenberger’s three techniques of nonsense above have their own difference and similarity. The difference between the inversion, nonsequitur, and juxtaposition lies on the focus of each technique. The inversion focuses on a thing or an idea which is too far different from what we always regard as how it should be. The nonsequitur focuses on the disparity in a cause and effect relationship. The juxtaposition, although sometimes seemingly similar to the nonsequitur, is not always about cause and effect relationships; it focuses on the disparity between two things or ideas which are placed together, which may or may not
have a causal relationship. The similarity is that these techniques all show at least two concepts or two things which are either not connected or connected in the inappropriate way. Thus, these techniques of nonsense echo Gurewitch’s statement that nonsense “exposes erroneous fantasies or strategies of unification by clarifying the real disconnections between things” (1975: 113).

2. Theories on Binary Opposition

Binary opposition is a “pair of mutually-exclusive signifiers in a paradigm set representing categories which are logically opposed” (Chandler, 2002: 224), or “a pair of terms differentiated by their opposition to one another” (http://www.sou.edu/English/IDTC/Terms/terms.htm). This concept originated from Saussure’s structuralist theory. As discussed by Fogarty, Saussure defines binary opposition as the “means by which the units of language have value or meaning; each unit is defined against what it is not” (http://www.litencyc.com/php/sttopics.php?rec=true&UID=122). For instance, we can understand the meaning of bad when it is contrasted with its opposition, good.

Jacques Derrida develops Saussure’s theory on binary opposition by proposing the idea of hierarchy. In Western culture, people tend to think in terms of opposition, so binary opposition serves as the foundation of their thought. Furthermore, in each binary opposition, one term has a positive or higher value, while the other term has a negative or worse value, as explained below.

Western philosophy, writes Derrida, has analyzed the world in terms of binary oppositions: mind vs. body, good vs. evil, man vs. woman, presence vs. absence. Each of these pairs is organized hierarchically: the first term is seen as higher or better than the second (Rivkin and Ryan, 2004: 343).
Although the concept of binary opposition originates from structuralism, it can still be employed in various other approaches. As discussed by Chandler in his article, binary opposition might also be used in post-structuralist deconstruction process. However, post-structuralists believe that hierarchy in binary opposition cannot be established, and that the opposition itself cannot function as a stable foundation of meaning, as described below.

Poststructuralists insist that no hierarchy of meanings can ever be established and no solid underlying structural foundation can ever be located. ... Other deconstructionists have also exposed culturally-embedded conceptual oppositions in which the initial term is privileged, leaving 'term B' negatively 'marked'. Radical deconstruction is not simply a reversal of the values given in an opposition but a demonstration of the instability of the opposition (Chandler, 2002: 233).

3. Theory on Carnivalization

Carnivalization is one of the key concepts coined by Mikhail Bakhtin, a Russian literary theorist, which form his theory of the novel. In A Reader’s Guide to Contemporary Literary Theory, Selden defines carnivalization as “the term Bakhtin uses to describe the shaping effect of Carnival on literary genres” (1997: 43), while Carnival itself is described as follows.

Hierarchies are turned on their heads (fools become wise, kings become beggars); opposites are mingled (fact and fantasy, heaven and hell); the sacred is profaned. The ‘jolly relativity’ of all things is proclaimed. Everything authoritative, rigid or serious is subverted, loosened and mocked (Selden, et al, 1997: 43).

Meanwhile, Leitch describes Bakhtin’s carnivalesque, the adjective form of carnivalization, as follows.

The carnivalesque—an idea first introduced in Rabelais and His World (written in the 1930s and 1940s, published 1965)—is Bakhtin’s term for those forms of unofficial culture (the early novel among them) that resist
official culture, political oppression, and totalitarian order through laughter, parody, and “grotesque realism” (Leitch, 2001: 1187).

Selden also mentions that Bakhtin’s carnivalization “has important applications both to particular texts and to the history of literary genres” (1997: 43). Furthermore, the novel is described as the literary text on which carnivalization can be significantly applied.

In the modern world this carnivalized antitradition appears most significantly in the novel. Just as the public ritual of carnival inverts values in order to question them, so may the novel call closed meanings into question (Guerin, et al, 2005: 364).

Based on the explanations above, carnivalization involves elements like laughter, parody, “grotesque realism”, and more importantly, the subversion of hierarchies and the mingling of opposites in a novel. While the closed meaning of the novel itself, which another article describes as “totalised, fixed and closed meaning” (http://www.squidoo.com/postmodernist_techniques_in_fiction), refers to relations between elements in the novel which are clear-cut, perfectly sensible, and able to explain each other completely. A clear example of closed meaning can be found in the typical ending of detective fiction, when the murderer is finally discovered and all the apparently unintelligible clues and events become intelligible to the reader (http://www.goodessaywords.com/2010/02/narrative-closure-and-postmodernist.html).

Meanwhile, an example of early carnivalization is found in the Menippean satire, in which earthly inequalities are dissolved in the underworld. Emperors lose their crowns and become equal with beggars. Another example is found in Dostoevsky’s novel Bobok. In this novel, the dead enjoy a few months’ period
when they are released from all the obligations and laws of normal existence before losing their earthly consciousness completely. One of the characters proposes everyone to tell the truth “just for fun”, as on earth it is “impossible to live without lying” (Selden, et al, 1997: 43-44).

4. Theory on Deconstruction

Regarding the background, Guerin states that “deconstruction arises out of the structuralism of Roland Barthes as a reaction against the certainties of structuralism” (Guerin, et al, 2005: 377). According to Derrida, deconstruction cannot be easily defined or classified, whether as a “set of rules and transposable procedures”, analysis, an act or an operation (in Coyle, et al, 1990: 781). However, Barry in Beginning Theory tries to describe deconstruction as the process of deconstructing the text, which is “often referred to as ‘reading against the grain’ or ‘reading the text against itself’ with the purpose of knowing the text as it cannot know itself” (2002: 71). Meanwhile, Culler defines deconstruction as follows.

Deconstruction is most simply defined as a critique of the hierarchical oppositions that have structured Western thought: inside/outside, mind/body, literal/metaphorical, speech/writing, presence/absence, nature/culture, form/meaning (Culler, 1997: 122).

Deconstruction views all texts as “open-ended constructs” that are always changing, and that “meaning can only point to an indefinite number of other meanings” (Guerin, et al, 2005: 377), as described further below.

Deconstruction views texts as subversively undermining an apparent or surface meaning, and it denies any final explication or statement of meaning. It questions the presence of any objective structure or content in a text. Instead of alarm or dismay at their discoveries, the practitioners of deconstruction celebrate the text’s self-destruction, that inevitable seed of
its own internal contradiction, as a never-ending free play of language (Guerin, et al, 2005: 377).

Unlike formalism, deconstruction does not aim to discover one ultimate meaning. The objective of deconstruction is to show the disunity which underlies the text’s apparent unity (Barry, 2002: 72).

The practice of deconstruction involves “textual harassment” or “oppositional reading”, namely to read with the aim of unmasking internal contradictions or inconsistencies in the text (Barry, 2002: 72), or in Guerin’s term, “taking apart any meaning to reveal contradictory structures hidden within” (Guerin, et al, 2005: 377). Thus, deconstruction does not mean to destroy, but rather to give “different structure and functioning” (Culler, 1997: 122).

In this study, the deconstruction process is done by finding apparent binary oppositions on the surface of the novel, and then showing how those oppositions carnivalize reality after deeper analysis. As explained above, to carnivalize means to subvert hierarchies and mingle opposites. By demonstrating carnivalization through the binary oppositions in the literary work, the writer demonstrates that the oppositions themselves are contradictory and interchangeable, thus showing the disunity and contradictions in the work.

C. Theoretical Framework

This part will discuss the contribution of the theories above to answer the formulated questions. The theories on nonsense by Gurewitch and Kronenberger will be used to answer the first question about the instances of nonsense in the novel. The theories on binary opposition by Saussure and Derrida will be used to
answer the second question about the binary oppositions that can be drawn from the nonsense in the novel. The theory on carnivalization by Bakhtin will be used to answer the third question about how the nonsense and binary oppositions carnivalize the idea of reality in the novel. Lastly, the theory on deconstruction by Derrida, Culler, and Barry will be used as the procedure to guide the process of answering the second and third questions.
CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

A. Object of the Study

The object of this study is a novel entitled *The Hitchhiker’s Guide to the Galaxy* by British author Douglas Adams. *The Hitchhiker’s Guide to the Galaxy* started out as a radio series aired by BBC Radio 4 in 1978, with Adams as the script writer. The script is loosely adapted into novel and published in 1979 by Pan Publisher. It is the first of the five-book *Hitchhiker* “trilogy”, followed by four other books (http://www.bbc.co.uk/arts/books/author/adams).

The novel tells the story of Arthur Dent, the sole remaining Earthman after Earth is destroyed to make way for a hyperspace bypass. He was rescued by his friend Ford Prefect, who turned out to be from another planet and worked as a researcher for the encyclopaedia *The Hitchhiker’s Guide to the Galaxy*. After surviving the Earth’s destruction by hitchhiking on a passing spaceship, they were coincidentally saved by Ford’s distant cousin, Zaphod Beeblebrox. Then they went through a bizarre intergalactic adventure. In one of the reviews, the novel is described as a “gently clever comedy science fiction” that Adams invented “to combine the fun of science fiction with a satire on society” (http://www.guardian.co.uk/books/2008/jun/09/douglasadams).

The novel has garnered major achievements. It made Adams the first British author after Ian Fleming who had three books in the *New York Times* and the *Publishers’ Weekly* bestseller lists in 1982; it was the quickest book to win a

B. Approach of the Study

Post-structuralism is used as the approach of the study. As the name suggests, this approach is related to structuralism, an approach that focuses how meaning is produced out of underlying structures (Culler, 1997: 119-120). However, post-structuralism does not oppose structuralism; it just clarifies that meaning is not produced only from the structures, but highly inter-related with other factors, especially the subjects, as explained by Culler below.

In fact, post-structuralism does not demonstrate the inadequacies or errors of structuralism so much as turn away from the project of working out what makes cultural phenomena intelligible and emphasize instead a critique of knowledge, totality, and the subject. It treats each of these as a problematical effect. The structures of the systems of signification do not exist independently of the subject, as objects of knowledge, but are structures for subjects, who are entangled with the forces that produce them (Culler, 1997: 121).

One of the post-structuralist procedures is to describe “how texts create meaning by violating any conventions that structural analysis locates” (1997: 121). Post-
structuralists believe that it is impossible to describe a complete or coherent signifying system because “systems are always changing” (1997: 121).

This approach is chosen because it is strongly related to the topic of this study. It is inseparable from deconstruction, one of the theories used in this study. Barry describes deconstruction as “applied post-structuralism” (2002: 70), Culler states that “post-structuralism also designates above all deconstruction and the work of Jacques Derrida” (1997: 122), while Guerin, et al states that Poststructuralism and deconstruction are virtually synonymous.

Deconstruction arises out of the structuralism of Roland Barthes as a reaction against the certainties of structuralism (2005: 377).

Post-structuralism is not only related to deconstruction, but also related to carnivalization, another theory used in this study. As discussed by Honeycutt, Toril Moi uses Bakhtin’s concept of carnival from Rabelais and His World to assert that “The power of laughter can be just as subversive, as when carnival turns the old hierarchies upside-down, erasing old differences, producing new and unstable ones” (Moi in Honeycutt, 1994: 2). Honeycutt also describes how “Some poststructuralist thinkers have also cited Bakhtin's influence in their works” (1994: 2). Thus, post-structuralism is the most suitable approach for this study.

C. Method of the Study

Library research is used as the method to collect the data for this study. The primary data source is the novel The Hitchhiker’s Guide to the Galaxy by Douglas Adams. The secondary data is comprised of sources related to the theories and approach: Gurewitch, Freud, and Kronenberger’s theories on
nonsense were taken from Gurewitch’s *Comedy: The Irrational Vision*; Saussure and Derrida’s theory on binary opposition was taken from Chandler’s article at his *Semiotics for Beginners* website, Fogarty’s article at *The Literary Encyclopedia* website, and Rivkin and Ryan’s *Literary Theory: An Anthology*; Bakhtin’s theory on carnivalization was taken from Guerin’s *A Handbook of Critical Approaches to Literature*, Selden’s *A Reader’s Guide to Contemporary Literary Theory*, and Leitch’s *The Norton Anthology of Theory and Criticism*; Derrida’s theory on deconstruction was taken from Guerin’s *A Handbook of Critical Approaches to Literature*, Culler’s *Literary Theory: A Very Short Introduction*, and Barry’s *Beginning Theory*, and the explanation on post-structuralism approach was taken from Culler, Guerin, and Barry’s aforementioned works as well as Honeycutt’s article at his website.

To complete this study, the writer took several steps, namely reading the novel as the object of study, formulating the research questions, gathering related studies and theories, and applying the aforementioned theories to each of the questions in the form of analysis.
A. Instances of Nonsense in *The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy*

This part examines the instances of nonsense in Douglas Adams’ *The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy* based on Kronenberger’s techniques of nonsense, namely the inversion of received ideas, the nonsequitur, and the juxtaposition of incongruous contexts (Gurewitch, 1975: 118-119).

1. Inversion of Received Ideas

Inversion of received ideas is the first technique of nonsense in literature. Based on Kronenberger’s theory, this technique creates nonsense by depicting a sense of values which is completely against the normally received sense of values (in Gurewitch, 1975: 118). This novel contains a number of inversions of received ideas, which are presented through the narrator’s descriptions, the characters’ utterances, the events and objects in the novel.

As the first example of inversion of received ideas, Earth and human beings inhabiting the Earth are described as totally insignificant in the novel. *The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy*, which is depicted in the novel as the most popular encyclopaedia in the galaxy, describes the Earth in only one word, “harmless” (2005: 62). After 15 years of research, the entry is expanded into two words, “mostly harmless” (2005: 62). While the novel’s omniscient narrator describes the Earth as “utterly insignificant” and humans inhabiting the Earth as
“primitive”, “ape-descended life forms”, which are by no means flattering descriptions.

Far out in the uncharted backwaters of the unfashionable end of the western spiral arm of the Galaxy lays a small unregarded yellow sun. Orbiting this at a distance of roughly ninety-two million miles is an utterly insignificant little blue green planet whose ape-descended life forms are so amazingly primitive that they still think digital watches are a pretty neat idea (Adams, 2005: 1).

Based on Kronenberger’s theory, those descriptions can be described as nonsense because the ideas depicted there invert the ideas normally received by the readers, that humans are the most (and the only) intelligent beings in the universe, and that Earth is a special place as the only planet inhabited by intelligent beings.

As the second example of inversion, poetry is described as a scary tool of torture. A character from a tribe called the Azagoths recites a poem which was so bad that it made four of the audience “die of internal haemorrhaging” while the poet’s intestine “leapt straight up through his neck and throttled his brain” (2005: 64). Another race called the Vogons even use poetry as a threat. When the captain of a Vogon ship finds some hitchhikers aboard, he threatens to read them his poetry before throwing them out, “I have sent out a search party, and as soon that they find you I will put you off the ship. If you’re very lucky I might read you some of my poetry first” (2005: 57). Poetry appreciation is triggered by machine. The Vogons strap their prisoners to special chairs and strap electrodes to their temples, connected to electronic equipment such as “imagery intensifiers, rhythmic modulators, alliterative residulators and simile dumpers” (2005: 65). The hitchhikers captured by the Vogon are tortured by the poetry reading.
The Vogon began to read - a fetid little passage of his own devising. "Oh fretted gruntbuggly ..." he began. Spasms wracked Ford's body - this was worse than ever he'd been prepared for. "... thy micturations are to me -As plurdled gabbleblotchits on a lurgid bee." "Aaaaaarrrggggghhhhh!" went Ford Prefect, wrenching his head back as lumps of pain thumped through it (2005: 65).

Based on Kronenberger’s theory, the descriptions of the characters’ views and habits related to poetry are nonsense because they invert the views and habits normally received by the readers, that poetry is a form of literature, which is part of human culture and civilization, and that poetry appreciation is done voluntarily by close reading and paying attention.

As the third example of inversion, the latest technology is described as bringing more trouble than help for the characters in the novel. For example, the novel depicts Marvin, a robot “with the new Genuine People Personalities feature” (2005: 94). Marvin is in fact paranoid and neurotic; it “hate[s] humans so much” (2005: 119), keeps complaining, and often refuses to do orders from its owners, Trillian and Zaphod.

In the corner, the robot's head swung up sharply, but then wobbled about imperceptibly. It pulled itself up to its feet as if it was about five pounds heavier that it actually was, and made what an outside observer would have thought was a heroic effort to cross the room. It stopped in front of Trillian and seemed to stare through her left shoulder. "I think you ought to know I'm feeling very depressed," it said. Its voice was low and hopeless. "Oh God," muttered Zaphod and slumped into a seat. "Well," said Trillian in a bright compassionate tone, "here's something to occupy you and keep your mind off things." "It won't work," droned Marvin, "I have an exceptionally large mind" (2005: 91).

The novel also depicts Eddie, an over-friendly spaceship computer that chats too much. When Zaphod, one of the spaceship crews, wants to ask for
information, the computer responses with small talk such as "Hi there!" and “I want you to know that whatever your problem, I am here to help you solve it” (2005: 100-101), which makes Zaphod irritated. On the other hand, when the spaceship is being attacked by a missile and they need evasive action, the computer cannot give any solution and makes another small talk instead.

"Computer, what evasive action can we take?"
"Er, none I'm afraid, guys," said the computer.
"... or something," said Zaphod, "... er ..." he said.
"There seems to be something jamming my guidance system," explained the computer brightly, "impact minus forty-five seconds. Please call me Eddie if it will help you to relax" (2005: 127).

Not only does the computer fail to help or give solution, but it also sings “You’ll Never Walk Alone” in such an emergency situation. As a result, Zaphod “screamed at it to shut up” (2005: 129). Based on Kronenberger’s theory, the descriptions of troublesome technology are nonsense because the ideas depicted there invert the normally received and more sensible ideas that the latest technology is created to help people and make people’s life easier.

As the fourth example of inversion, the novel depicts a scene of a news program on the radio, and according to the narrator, “the news was always heavily edited to fit the rhythms of the music” (2005: 97) instead of the contrary. Although this might seem a trivial example, based on Kronenberger’s theory, this description is also an instance of nonsense because the idea depicted there inverts the normally received and more sensible idea that the news is the most important thing in a news program and the music is secondary, thus the music should be edited to fit the news.
As the fifth example of inversion, the novel describes a planet called Magrathea, which does business in custom-made planets industry. Customers can order their own planets to suit their wish at a high price. Magrathea even provides a catalogue for prospective customers, which includes bizarre planets such as planets knee deep in fish, planets with purple sea, tiny yellow and green pebbles, and planets with “five hundred entirely naked women dropped out of the sky on parachutes” (2005: 187).

And thus were created the conditions for a staggering new form of specialist industry: custom-made luxury planet building. The home of this industry was the planet Magrathea, where hyperspatial engineers sucked matter through white holes in space to form it into dream planets - gold planets, platinum planets, soft rubber planets with lots of earthquakes - all lovingly made to meet the exacting standards that the Galaxy's richest men naturally came to expect (2005: 116).

Based on Kronenberger’s theory, the descriptions of custom-made planet building business are nonsense because the idea depicted there, that planets and their contents can be made at will, inverts the normally received idea that planets are natural objects created through a very long natural process.

As the sixth example of inversion, humans are described as inferior to dolphins and mice in the novel. Dolphins are the second most intelligent beings on Earth. As a proof, they knew about the Earth’s destruction in advance and tried to warn humans, but the humans did not get their message. The dolphins finally saved themselves before the Earth was destroyed.

Curiously enough, the dolphins had long known of the impending destruction of the planet Earth and had made many attempts to alert mankind of the danger; but most of their communications were misinterpreted as amusing attempts to punch footballs or whistle for tidbits, so they eventually gave up and left the Earth by their own means shortly before the Vogons arrived (2005:156).
Meanwhile, mice are the most intelligent beings on Earth. Humans have always thought that they use mice for their experiments, but in fact it is the mice that use humans for their experiments, as described in the following quote.

In fact there was only one species on the planet more intelligent than dolphins, and they spent a lot of their time in behavioural research laboratories running round inside wheels and conducting frighteningly elegant and subtle experiments on man. The fact that once again man completely misinterpreted this relationship was entirely according to these creatures' plans (2005: 156-157).

Based on Kronenberger’s theory, the descriptions of animals being superior to humans are nonsense because the idea depicted there inverts the normally received idea that humans are the most intelligent beings on Earth and more superior to animals.

2. Nonsequitur

Nonsequitur, which means “a piece of false reasoning” (Hornby, 1995: 747), is the second technique of nonsense in literature. This technique creates nonsense by depicting ideas based on ridiculous premises, which then collapse into silly conclusions (in Gurewitch, 1975: 118).

The first example of nonsequitur is the massive success and popularity of an encyclopaedia entitled *Hitchhiker’s Guide to the Galaxy* because it has the text “Don’t Panic” on its cover. According to the narrator, although the encyclopaedia has many errors, omissions, and is “at least wildly inaccurate”, it “scores over the older, more pedestrian work in two important respects. First, it is slightly cheaper; and secondly it has the words *Don’t Panic* inscribed in large friendly letters on its cover” (2005:3). Related to Kronenberger’s theory, the idea of the encyclopaedia’s popularity for its cover is based on the ridiculous premise
that people would prefer a faulty encyclopaedia just for the soothing text on its cover. That premise is ridiculous because an encyclopaedia aims to provide information. Its success or popularity depends on its informative content, not a trivial factor such as text on the cover, which does not provide any significant help to the readers. The fact that the faulty encyclopaedia *Hitchhiker’s Guide to the Galaxy* is popular for the words *Don’t Panic* on its cover is the silly conclusion resulting from a ridiculous premise, thus creating nonsense.

The second example of nonsequitur is Ford Prefect’s speech to Arthur Dent when Arthur rejects his command to drink beer at lunchtime, namely “Time is an illusion. Lunchtime doubly so” (2005: 23). Related to Kronenberger’s theory, Ford Prefect’s idea is based on a ridiculous premise about what constitutes an illusion and what does not. That premise is ridiculous because the passing of time is something that can be felt by everyone and has impact on everyone, while lunchtime is a common part of human routine everywhere and thus is not an illusion. Ford Prefect’s comment about time and lunchtime being illusion is the silly conclusion resulting from the ridiculous premise, thus creating nonsense.

The third example of nonsequitur is the exaggerated descriptions of the value and functions of towel, an ordinary household object. The most popular encyclopaedia in the galaxy, *The Hitchhiker’s Guide to the Galaxy*, defines towel as “the most massively useful thing an interstellar hitch hiker can have” (2005: 26). According to the encyclopaedia, the towel is very useful because other people will automatically regard any person with a towel highly and be willing to lend him or her anything.
More importantly, a towel has immense psychological value. For some reason, if a strag (strag: non-hitch hiker) discovers that a hitch hiker has his towel with him, he will automatically assume that he is also in possession of a toothbrush, face flannel, soap, tin of biscuits, flask, compass, map, ball of string, gnat spray, wet weather gear, space suit etc., etc. Furthermore, the strag will then happily lend the hitch hiker any of these or a dozen other items that the hitch hiker might accidentally have "lost" (2005: 27).

Related to Kronenberger’s theory, the encyclopaedia’s descriptions of the value and functions of towel are based on the ridiculous premise that people would “automatically assume” that someone with a towel also has other items. The premise is ridiculous because possessing a simple household item does not guarantee possession of other items, except there is a proof otherwise. Even then, the possession of a towel or other objects would not make people happily lend their things to strangers. Thus, the encyclopaedia’s exaggerated descriptions are the silly conclusion resulting from a ridiculous premise, which creates nonsense.

The fourth example of nonsequitur is the speech of the characters of philosophers. A super computer is built to find the ultimate answer to life, and the philosophers protest against it in fear that it actually finds the answer and thus makes them jobless. The philosophers’ speech is a series of non-sequiturs. When they enter the room, they bawl “We demand that you can’t keep us out!” (2005: 171). When asked about their identity, the leader answers “And I demand that I am Vroomfondel!”; his colleague then says that they are “Philosophers”, which Vroomfondel quickly finishes with “Though we may not be”, while “waving a warning finger at the programmers” (2005: 171). When asked about their demands, they give incoherent and contradictory response, as quoted below.

"What we demand is solid facts!"
"No we don't!" exclaimed Majikthise in irritation. "That is precisely what we don't demand!"

Scarcely pausing for breath, Vroomfondel shouted, "We don't demand solid facts! What we demand is a total absence of solid facts. I demand that I may or may not be Vroomfondel!" (2005: 171)

When asked about the problem, they also give unclear and contradictory response, namely "Demarcation, that's the problem!" and "We demand ... that demarcation may or may not be the problem!" (2005: 172). Related to Kronenberger’s theory, the philosophers’ speech is based on the ridiculous and unreasonable premise that they must always demand and contradict anything. The premise is ridiculous and unreasonable because to demand means to ask for something that has not been obtained. In fact, the philosopher is “firmly inside the room and no further attempts were being made to stop him” (2005: 171), so there is no need to demand not to be kept out. While a person’s name is something that he or she already has, so there is no need for Vroomfondel to demand his name, either. Moreover, Vroomfondel’s demand of solid facts is negated by Majikthise and then followed by Vroomfondel’s demand of absence of solid facts. The phrase “may or may not” contradicts itself and gives no information about the problem of Vroomfondel’s name or the problem of demarcation. Thus, the philosopher’s speech is the silly result of the ridiculous premise, which creates nonsense.

The fifth example of nonsequitur is the characters’ action of asking for an answer without knowing the question. These characters, some “hyperintelligent pan-dimensional beings” (2005: 164), build a super computer to find the meaning of life. They ask the computer to give the ultimate answer to “Life, the Universe,
and Everything” (2005: 170). Only when the computer gives the answer “Forty-two” to their descendants seven million years later do they realize they do not know the question. Another computer, the Earth, is built to find the ultimate question. It is destroyed shortly before the task is completed ten million years later, and finally they make up the question themselves.

Related to Kronenberger’s theory, the pan-dimensional beings’ action is based on the ridiculous premise that an answer is necessary while the question is not. The premise is ridiculous because any answer requires a question as the prerequisite. To understand the answer, one must understand the question first. Making up the question at random is also ridiculous because it would not shed light on the answer, thus losing the whole point. After seventeen million years’ hard work and two super computers, nobody would get any benefit at all. Thus, the pan-dimensional beings’ action is the silly conclusion resulting from a ridiculous premise, which creates nonsense.

3. Juxtaposition of Incongruous Contexts

Juxtaposition, which means “the placement of people or things next to each other or very close together, especially to show a contrast” (Hornby, 1995: 646), is the third technique of nonsense in literature. This technique creates nonsense by placing together a premise and a deduction which do not match each other or placing two incompatible worlds together, thus forming what Kronenberger calls “crazy” or “absurd” juxtaposition (in Gurewitch, 1975: 118-119). This novel contains some examples of juxtaposition.
The first example of juxtaposition is between the destruction of Arthur Dent’s house by the local government and the destruction of Earth by the Galaxy’s civil service. Early in the story, Arthur Dent’s house is knocked down by the local government to build a bypass. The government staff ignores Arthur’s protest, stating the plan has been displayed in the local planning office for nine months, albeit “in the bottom of a locked filing cabinet stuck in a disused lavatory with a sign on the door saying ‘Beware of the Leopard’” (2005: 9). Later, the Earth is destroyed by the Vogons, who are in charge of the Galaxy’s civil service, to build a hyperspace bypass. The Vogons ignore Earthlings’ protest, stating the plan has been displayed in the “local planning department on Alpha Centauri for fifty of your Earth years” (2005: 35). Juxtaposition refers to the placement together of highly contrasting people or things, which may or may not have a cause-and-effect relationship. Here the focus lies on the incompatibility of the two people or things placed together.

In this case, the nonsense is created through juxtaposition between two worlds which are incompatible in size and scope. The destruction of a private property to accommodate a public facility is regarded as relatively normal when it occurs in a small scale, such as a person’s house, as experienced by Arthur Dent in the novel. However, it becomes absurd when the same event occurs in such a massive scale, namely to a whole planet and all humans in it, as experienced by the Earth and its inhabitants in the novel. Thus, in this case, the common ground is the event itself, namely the destruction of a private or minor property to
accommodate a public facility, while the juxtaposition is shown by comparing, or “placing together”, a house (Arthur Dent’s house) and a planet (the Earth).

The second example of juxtaposition is between the characteristics, the position, and the power of the President of the Galactic Government. The elected President, Zaphod Beeblebrox, is described as a charming, adventure-loving man with criminal tendency, yet without any responsibility or leadership qualities. Naturally, people are confused how he could be elected. However, the actual power is held by six unknown people, while “the President and the Government have virtually no power at all” (2005: 38). The President’s job is “not to wield power but to draw attention away from it” (2005: 40).

The President in particular is very much a figurehead - he wields no real power whatsoever. He is apparently chosen by the government, but the qualities he is required to display are not those of leadership but those of finely judged outrage. For this reason the President is always a controversial choice, always an infuriating but fascinating character. His job is not to wield power but to draw attention away from it. On those criteria Zaphod Beeblebrox is one of the most successful Presidents the Galaxy has ever had - he has already spent two of his ten Presidential years in prison for fraud (2005: 38).

Based on Kronenberger’s theory, the nonsense is created through juxtaposition between the premise and deduction. The premise is that a government system exists to govern the people, thus the government body and staff hold power over the people. The deduction, namely creating non-functional government and obscuring the authority from the people, drastically mismatches with the premise. In this case, the common ground is the President of the Galaxy, namely the character Zaphod Beeblebrox, while the juxtaposition is shown by
comparing, or “placing together”, the supposed function of the “President” title itself and the actual functions or characteristics displayed by the President.

The **third example of juxtaposition** is between the Vogon’s nature and their position in the government. Vogons are described as a primitive species who are “bad tempered, bureaucratic, officious and callous” (2005: 52-53). Yet they are also described as forming the backbone of the Galactic Civil Service.

Within a few short Vog years every last Vogon had migrated to the Megabrantis cluster, the political hub of the Galaxy and now formed the immensely powerful backbone of the Galactic Civil Service. They have attempted to acquire learning, they have attempted to acquire style and social grace, but in most respects the modern Vogon is little different from his primitive forebears (2005: 46).

Based on Kronenberger’s theory, the nonsense is created through **juxtaposition between the premise and deduction**. The premise is that Civil Service is a body that deals with and is responsible for people’s affairs and well-being; therefore it requires staff members that are smart, pleasant, and caring. The deduction, namely the Vogons’ success in the Galactic Civil Service, is incongruous and does not match the premise. The common ground lies in the figure of the Vogons, while the juxtaposition is shown by placing together the Vogon’s occupation in the Civil Service and their primitive characteristics.

The **fourth example of juxtaposition** is between the ideas about the Babel fish as a proof of God’s existence and as a proof of God’s non-existence. The Babel fish, a creature that enables someone to understand any language when stuck in his or her ear, becomes the indicator of God’s existence or non-existence. According to God, He exists because of faith, while proof denies faith. However, the extraordinary usefulness of Babel fish is a proof of God’s existence, which
denies faith and thus indicates God’s non-existence. This convoluted notion is presented in the following quotation.

"Now it is such a bizarrely improbable coincidence that anything so mindbogglingly useful could have evolved purely by chance that some thinkers have chosen to see it as the final and clinching proof of the non-existence of God.

"The argument goes something like this: ‘I refuse to prove that I exist,’ says God, ‘for proof denies faith, and without faith I am nothing.’

"‘But,’ says Man, ‘The Babel fish is a dead giveaway, isn’t it? It could not have evolved by chance. It proves you exist, and so therefore, by your own arguments, you don’t. QED.’

"‘Oh dear,’ says God, ‘I hadn’t thought of that,’ and promptly vanished in a puff of logic.

"‘Oh, that was easy,’ says Man, and for an encore goes on to prove that black is white and gets himself killed on the next zebra crossing (2005: 59).

Based on Kronenberger’s theory, the nonsense is created through a very absurd juxtaposition between the premise and deduction. The premise is that God exists because of faith, meaning that God’s existence cannot be absolutely proven. While asking for proof might indicate lack of faith, faith does not necessarily require lack of proof (and vice versa). The deduction, that a hint of proof nullifies faith and thus nullifies God’s existence, is incongruous and does not match the premise.

The fifth example of juxtaposition is the complexity of a machine called The Infinite Improbability Drive and the simplicity of creating it. This machine is capable of doing virtually improbable things, including saving Arthur and Ford, who are floating in space without oxygen “at an improbability level of two to the power of two hundred and seventy-six thousand to one against” or \(1 : 2^{2^{67,709}}\) (2005: 84). It is created by “working out exactly how improbable it is [to make the
machine], feeding that figure into the finite improbability generator, giving it a fresh cup of really hot tea ... and turn it on!” (2005: 87).

Based on Kronenberger’s theory, the nonsense is created through **juxtaposition between the premise and deduction**. The premise is that something improbable means something that cannot be done. If it is decided as “improbable” to make a machine, it means the machine cannot be made. Improbability is a condition, not a figure or a unit that can be fed into any generator. The deduction, that a complex and supposedly “improbable” machine can be made by feeding the improbability figure into it, does not match the premise.

The **sixth example of juxtaposition** is between the language in Arthur’s galaxy and the language in another distant galaxy. Stressed with the bizarre things he has experienced so far, Arthur mutters “I seem to be having tremendous difficulty with my lifestyle” to himself. At that exact moment, a “freak wormhole” (2005: 195) opens up and carries his words far back in time and space to a distant Galaxy, to the midst of two warring tribes. In their language, Arthur’s words are the most dreadful insult imaginable and cause terrible war for centuries.

A dreadful silence fell across the conference table as the commander of the Vl'hurgs, resplendent in his black jewelled battle shorts, gazed levelly at the G'Gugyuntt leader squatting opposite him in a cloud of green sweet-smelling steam, and, with a million sleek and horribly beweaponed star cruisers poised to unleash electric death at his single word of command, challenged the vile creature to take back what it had said about his mother. The creature stirred in his sickly broiling vapour, and at that very moment the words **I seem to be having tremendous difficulty with my lifestyle** drifted across the conference table. Unfortunately, in the Vl'hurg tongue this was the most dreadful insult imaginable, and there was nothing for it but to wage terrible war for centuries (2005: 195-196).
Thousands years later, they realize the mistake and jointly attack our Galaxy, but “due to a terrible miscalculation of scale the entire battle fleet was accidentally swallowed by a small dog” (2005: 196).

Based on Kronenberger’s theory, the nonsense is created through juxtaposition between two extremely incompatible worlds: our galaxy and the other galaxy. The juxtaposition is absurd because not only are the two worlds extremely different in size, but also different in language. Indeed there is nothing unusual or wrong with different languages and different worlds. What is unusual in this instance is that Arthur’s utterance in English “I seem to be having tremendous difficulty with my lifestyle” can precisely translate as “the most dreadful insult imaginable” in Vl'hurg language, and that the “freak wormhole” should open precisely at that moment to transmit Arthur’s utterance to the Vl'hurg and G'Gugvuntt people (2005: 196). Thus, in this case, the common ground is Arthur’s utterance “I seem to be having tremendous difficulty with my lifestyle”, and the juxtaposition lies between its meaning in English (as intended by Arthur) and its meaning in Vl'hurg language (as understood by the Vl'hurg and G'Gugvuntt people).

B. Binary Oppositions from Nonsense in *The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy*

This part examines the binary oppositions that can be drawn from the nonsense in the novel as discussed above, based on Saussure’s theory on binary opposition and Derrida’s theory on hierarchy in binary opposition.
1. Human / Alien

The first binary opposition that figures prominently in the novel is the opposition of human and alien. As a noun, human refers to “a man, woman, or child; a person”, and as an adjective, it refers to “of or characteristic of people, contrasted with God, animals, or machines” (Hornby, 1995: 581-582). As a noun, alien refers to “a being from another world”, and as an adjective, it refers to “foreign, not familiar, strange” (Hornby, 1995: 28). This novel contains some examples of the human / alien opposition.

The most basic example of human / alien opposition can be seen in the physical appearance. In this novel, human is represented by Arthur Dent, a thirty-year-old, dark-haired man (2005: 4) who generally resembles other humans physically. While the aliens are represented by many characters with various physical appearances, ranging from familiar to totally alien. Some of them are described as “humanoid” (2005: 40), meaning that they possess human features with slight differences, such as Ford Prefect and Slartibartfast. Some others partly resemble humans with noticeable differences, such as Zaphod Beeblebrox, who has human features “except for the extra head and third arm” (2005: 42), and Eccentrica Gallumbits, “the triple-breasted whore of Eroticon 6” (2005: 61). Others do not resemble any imaginable creature at all, such as the Vogons, robots, creatures described as “reptiloid”, “slyph-like”, and “octopoid”, and the Hooloovoo or “a super-intelligent shade of the color blue” (2005: 39).

The next example of human / alien opposition can be seen in the culture, which includes arts and language. In human culture, poetry is commonly seen as
a form of art and a token of civilization, so poetry is expected to be analyzed and appreciated with the mind’s sensitivity. It is shown when Arthur tries to analyze the Vogon’s poetry using humans’ poetry appreciation method.

"Oh ... and er ... interesting rhythmic devices too," continued Arthur, "which seemed to counterpoint the ... er ... er ..." He floundered. Ford leaped to his rescue, hazarding "counterpoint the surrealism of the underlying metaphor of the ... er ..." He floundered too, but Arthur was ready again.

"... humanity of the ..."
"Vogonity," Ford hissed at him.
"Ah yes, Vogonity (sorry) of the poet's compassionate soul" (2005: 65).

While in the alien culture, as represented by the Vogons, poetry is just a facade of culture; as described by the novel’s narrator, the Vogons’ “attempts at composition had been part of bludgeoning insistence that they be accepted as a properly evolved and cultured race” (2005: 65). To them, it is not important whether the appreciation is done with a set of machine instead of the mind, by force instead of voluntarily. This opposition between human and alien view of poetry is the source of nonsense about poetry in the second example of inversion of received idea in the first part above.

In human culture, language is a means of communication, which is commonly used to describe reality and is governed by syntax and semantics. Conversations are done with cooperative principle, so all speakers are expected to cooperate with one another. As exemplified by Arthur Dent and Mr. Prosser’s conversation below, in which Arthur tries to prevent Mr. Prosser from bulldozing his house while Mr. Prosser tries to persuade Arthur otherwise, they talk about the same topic, and each of their utterance is related to the previous utterance, even though they are actually having a serious disagreement.
"Come off it, Mr Dent," he said, "you can't win you know. You can't lie in front of the bulldozer indefinitely." He tried to make his eyes blaze fiercely but they just wouldn't do it. Arthur lay in the mud and squelched at him.

"I'm game," he said, "we'll see who rusts first."

"I'm afraid you're going to have to accept it," said Mr Prosser gripping his fur hat and rolling it round the top of his head, "this bypass has got to be built and it's going to be built!" (2005: 7)

While in the alien culture, language does not necessarily correspond to reality and might not contain discernible syntax and semantics. Conversations might violate the maxims of the cooperative principle haphazardly. This opposition is the source of Ford Prefect’s nonsense comment about lunchtime as an illusion in the second example of nonsequitur, the nonsense of the philosophers’ contradictory statements in the fourth example of nonsequitur, and the nonsense about Arthur’s harmless utterance having a completely different meaning in another galaxy in the sixth example of juxtaposition.

Lastly, the human / alien opposition can also be seen in the ways of thinking depicted in the novel. In human logic, orderly and coherent thinking is normally encouraged, while in alien logic, orderly and coherent thinking is not necessarily encouraged. Such thinking process even escapes the supposedly “hyperintelligent” beings capable of creating “a stupendous super computer” (2005: 170). This opposition is the source of nonsense about the confusion over “the answer to the Ultimate Question of Life, the Universe, and Everything” (2005: 177) which they do not know the question, as shown in the fifth example of nonsequitur.

In human way of thinking, things are expected to function according to their designated or common purpose. For instance, as shown in the excerpt about
Arthur’s morning routine below, it is taken for granted that the toothpaste and toothbrush are used to brush one’s teeth, the mirror is used to see one’s reflection, the towel is used to dry oneself, the fridge is used to store food, and so on.

He woke up blearily, got up, wandered blearily round his room, opened a window, saw a bulldozer, found his slippers, and stomped off to the bathroom to wash.

Toothpaste on the brush - so. Scrub.

Shaving mirror - pointing at the ceiling. He adjusted it. For a moment it reflected a second bulldozer through the bathroom window. Properly adjusted, it reflected Arthur Dent’s bristles. He shaved them off, washed, dried, and stomped off to the kitchen to find something pleasant to put in his mouth.


While in the alien way of thinking, either things are not expected to function according to their designated purpose, or the things’ purpose differs from the one commonly known by the humans. This opposition is the source of nonsense about the higher priority of the background music over the news itself in a news broadcast program in the fourth example of inversion, the higher priority of a soothing short text over the content itself in an encyclopaedia in the first example of nonsequitur, the far-fetched assumptions about towels’ life-saving functions in the third example of nonsequitur, the discrepancy between the President’s high position and his responsibility in the second example of juxtaposition, and the discrepancy between the Vogons’ position and their callous nature in the third example of juxtaposition.

In the human way of thinking, planet Earth belongs to its inhabitants, human beings, who are most probably the only intelligent beings. Thus, human beings are superior to the other creatures. It can be seen in Arthur’s utter disbelief when Slartibartfast tells him about the mice as the ones who have paid for and run
the Earth: "Look, sorry - are we talking about the little white furry things with the cheese fixation and women standing on tables screaming in early sixties sit coms?" (2005: 163). In the alien way of thinking depicted in the novel, there are so many intelligent beings beside humans. Even on Earth, humans are not superior to other creatures, ignorant about many things, beaten by dolphins, and manipulated as experiment objects by mice. The Earth is insignificant and is not even a planet; it is a computer program run by mice. This opposition is the source of nonsense about the derisive description of Earth and human beings in the first and sixth example of inversion of received idea.

2. Fact / Fabrication

The next binary opposition that figures prominently in the novel is the opposition of fact and fabrication. Fact refers to “a thing that is known or can be proved to have happened, to be true or to exist” (Hornby, 1995: 414), while fabrication refers to “invented false information, false account of events, etc” (Hornby, 1995: 413). This novel contains some examples of the fact / fabrication opposition, both when we examine the notions in the novel in particular and when we examine the novel as a whole in general.

In particular, the fact / fabrication opposition can be seen in many notions, such as the notion about Earth and humans, about illusion, and about the Galactic government. In the notion about Earth and humans, the fact is that the Earth is only a programmed computer and its inhabitants, the humans, are part of the program, as known by the pan-dimensional beings as the initiators of the Earth’s creation, the mice as the Earth’s commissioners and programmers, and
Magrathean people including Slartibartfast as the designers. It is described briefly in Slartibartfast explanations to Arthur, "Earthman, the planet you lived on was commissioned, paid for, and run by mice" (2005: 163), followed by "You see, Earthman, they really are particularly clever hyperintelligent pan-dimensional beings. Your planet and people have formed the matrix of an organic computer running a ten-million-year research programme..." (2005: 164-165). As one of the many computers and custom-made planets in the Galaxy, Earth is therefore not significant.

The fabrication made by the Earth’s programmers is that the Earth is a planet and humans are the only intelligent life forms; this fabrication has been propagated to and believed by the Earth inhabitants or the humans themselves all along. Thus, as the only planet with intelligent life, the Earth is important. The Earth’s inhabitants hardly even considers the existence of intelligent life outside their planet; the example can be seen in people’s reaction to Ford Prefect whenever he feels homesick and says he is “looking for flying saucers” (2005: 11); the novel’s narrator describes that “everyone would laugh” (2005: 11), thus showing that human beings do not take the possibility of flying saucers’ existence seriously. However, the writers of the encyclopaedia The Hitchhiker’s Guide to the Galaxy writes based on the fact instead of the fabrication believed by the Earth’s inhabitants. This explains the nonsense about the Earth and humans’ insignificance in the first example of inversion of received idea.

In the notion about illusion, fact is represented by lunchtime, an idea known by most people; Oxford Advanced Dictionary defines lunchtime as “a time
around the middle of the day when lunch is normally eaten” and lunch itself as “a meal eaten in the middle of the day” (Hornby, 1995: 702). In reality, most people do have meal at a time around the middle of the day, so it can be concluded that lunchtime is a fact. The fabrication is represented by Ford’s quip that “lunchtime [is] doubly [an illusion]”. Based on the definition, illusion can be regarded similar to fabrication; Oxford Advanced Dictionary defines it as “a false idea, belief, or impression” or “a thing that a person wrongly believes to exist” (1995: 592). The funny part of Ford’s quip can be caught if we relate the opposition between fact and fabrication, namely because Ford labels a fact (lunchtime) as a fabrication (an illusion). This is the source of Ford Prefect’s nonsense about lunchtime being an illusion in the second example of nonsequitur.

In the notion about the Galactic government, the fact is that the President and the government of the Galaxy have no power at all, as known by the six anonymous people who hold the power. The President and government staff’s job is not to wield power, but rather to draw attention away from it, as described in the quotation below.

The President in particular is very much a figurehead - he wields no real power whatsoever. He is apparently chosen by the government, but the qualities he is required to display are not those of leadership but those of finely judged outrage. For this reason the President is always a controversial choice, always an infuriating but fascinating character. His job is not to wield power but to draw attention away from it (2005: 38).

The fabrication made by those six anonymous people is that the President and the government do have the power to govern the Galaxy, as believed by most citizens of the Galaxy. For that reason, everyone in the Galaxy is shocked to find
Zaphod Beeblebrox running for Presidency and regards it as a proof of the Galaxy’s madness to elect Zaphod as the President.

It was for the sake of this day that he had first decided to run for the Presidency, a decision which had sent waves of astonishment throughout the Imperial Galaxy - Zaphod Beeblebrox? President? Not the Zaphod Beeblebrox? Not the President? Many had seen it as a clinching proof that the whole of known creation had finally gone bananas (2005: 38).

This opposition between fact and fabrication about the government explains the nonsense about the discrepancy between Zaphod’s characteristics, position, and power in the second example of juxtaposition.

3. Nature / Science

The last prominent binary opposition in the novel is the opposition of nature and science. Nature refers to “the whole universe and every created, not artificial, thing” (Hornby, 1995: 774). While science is defined as “the study of the structure and behaviour of the physical and natural world and society, especially through observation and experiment” (Hornby, 1995: 1060), or in this context, focused on the application and the results of such study. This novel contains some examples of the nature / science opposition.

Firstly, the nature / science opposition can be seen in the lifestyle depicted in the novel. Science is shown through the characters’ high dependency on sophisticated technology, such as computers and robots. They create computers and robots to navigate a spaceship, to work as a servant in the spaceship, to accompany and talk to the passengers. They have a machine that provides drink based on each person’s nutritional needs, which works as follows: “When the Drink button was pressed it made an instant but highly detailed examination of the
subject's taste buds, a spectroscopic analysis of the subject's metabolism and then sent tiny experimental signals down the neural pathways to the taste centres of the subject's brain to see what was likely to go down well” (2005: 123). They even have the technology to make doors open and close automatically while showing pleasure, as described in the following quotation.

"All the doors in this spaceship have a cheerful and sunny disposition. It is their pleasure to open for you, and their satisfaction to close again with the knowledge of a job well done.”

As the door closed behind them it became apparent that it did indeed have a satisfied sigh-like quality to it. "Hummmmommmyummmmommnlnm ah!" it said (2005: 94).

They even make a computer to find “the answer to the Ultimate Question of Life, the Universe, and Everything” (2005: 173) and then another computer to find the Ultimate Question, namely the Earth, as shown in Slartibartfast’s explanation to Arthur: “Your planet and people have formed the matrix of an organic computer running a ten-million-year research programme” (2005: 165). No wonder most people “secretly believe” that the Galaxy “is handled by a computer” (2005: 38), which is related to the nonsense about Zaphod’s lack of power despite his position as the Galactic President in the second example of juxtaposition. However, the abundance of technology is not always useful for them. It in fact becomes the source of nonsense about the ridiculously dysfunctional and troublesome technology in the third example of inversion of received idea.

Meanwhile, nature is shown through the characters of the philosophers in the novel. These characters, who describe themselves as the “representatives of the Amalgamated Union of Philosophers, Sages, Luminaries and Other Thinking
Persons” (2005: 171-172), are the proof that there are still some living creatures who are willing to use their mind and think deeply. Their work includes thinking to search for the Ultimate Truth, which they describe rather comically in their statement, “Under law the Quest for Ultimate Truth is quite clearly the inalienable prerogative of your working thinkers” (2005: 172). Therefore, they protest against the Deep Thought, a computer that aims to find the Ultimate Answer to Life and the Universe, because it is going to replace their role to discover the answer to life and universe. However, they are described as seriously inefficient and self-contradictory, so they cannot achieve their aims. This is the source of nonsense about the philosophers’ weird protest in the fourth example of nonsequitur.

Secondly, the nature / science opposition can also be seen in the universe’s phenomenon such as creation, life and death. Science is shown through creation, life and death as the results of scientific inventions. For instance, rather than coincidences or fate, some important occurrences related to people’s life and death turn out to be caused by the Infinite Improbability Drive, a machine that can create practically improbable conditions. Arthur and Ford are picked up by a spaceship’s Infinite Improbability Drive shortly before they die from lack of oxygen. It saves their life, but temporarily subjects them to very bizarre conditions. Then, rather than organic bodies created through a long process, here planets are depicted as things that can be purchased and even custom-made to suit the customers’ taste. The geographical objects are designed out of the designers’ whim as if they were sculptures; Slartibartfast, one of the planet designers, says, “Doing the coastlines was always my favourite. Used to have endless fun doing
the little bits in fjords” (2005: 153). This is the source of nonsense about custom-made planet business and planet catalogues in the fifth example of inversion of received idea.

While nature is shown through creation and life as the results of natural process. The first example is the Galaxy as a natural creation. The Galaxy depicted in this novel has existed for a very long time. Nobody knows who made it and everyone can only guess, so the creation of the Galaxy is part of natural phenomenon. The next example is family life. Some characters are depicted as having family members or relatives. Ford is Zaphod’s “semicousin” (2005: 106), while the young Vogon guard who kicks out Arthur and Ford mentions his aunt in his statement, “My aunt said that spaceship guard was a good career for a young Vogon” (2005: 71). The existence of family suggests some form of marriage and reproduction, which are part of the natural attempt to survive.

The last example is evolution, a natural phenomenon in the creation process. Some creatures are depicted as having undergone evolution, for example the Babel fish. Its evolution is regarded so amazing that it triggers debates about the existence of God, as shown in the encyclopaedia’s entry of Babel fish: “It is such a bizarrely improbable coincidence that anything so mindbogglingly useful could have evolved purely by chance” (2005: 59). This is the source of nonsense about the Babel fish as the proof of God’s existence and non-existence in the fourth example of juxtaposition. However, the Vogons do not undergo evolution, as shown in the narrator’s explanation about them: “It was as if the forces of evolution had simply given up on them there and then” (2005: 45). The narrator’s
amazement that the Vogons do survive despite their lack of evolution, as shown in the statement “They never evolved again; they should never have survived” (2005: 45), implies that other creatures did undergo evolution. This explains the nonsense about the Vogons’ ill nature despite their position, as shown in the third example of juxtaposition.

C. Carnivalization of Reality in *The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy*

This part examines how the binary oppositions discussed above carnivalize reality based on Bakhtin’s theory on carnivalization. As described by Selden and Guerin in their books, carnivalization involves the inversion of hierarchies (Selden, et al, 1997: 43) as well as the questioning of values or meanings (Guerin, et al, 2005: 364). Hierarchy itself means seeing the first term as higher as or better than the second term in an opposition (Rivkin and Ryan, 2004: 343).

1. The Inversion of Human / Alien Hierarchy

The hierarchy in this novel is an inversion of the hierarchy in reality. In reality, *human* is clearly the more valued or the better term, and *alien* is the less valued or the worse term. This hierarchy is shown in the common belief that humans are the only intelligent beings and that humans are the most superior beings among all creatures. Such belief can be seen in the novel’s narrator’s statement that “man had always assumed that he was more intelligent than dolphins because he had achieved so much - the wheel, New York, wars and so on” (2005: 156). Furthermore, in real life, the existence of any extraterrestrial
intelligent life is still disputed. Even if there are theories about aliens, their intelligence or capacity is still doubted. It is clear in people’s minds that human is more valued and superior to aliens.

In the novel, however, alien is the more valued term and human is the less valued term. This hierarchy is shown in at least two points. Firstly, the various alien characters are clearly more knowledgeable and powerful than Arthur Dent, the human character. The mice, which turn out not to be mere animals but “the protrusion into our dimension of vast hyper intelligent pan-dimensional beings” instead, commission and control the Earth before its premature destruction (2005: 164). The alien characters Slartibartfast and his friends from Magrathea create and design planets, including the Earth (2005: 162).

Even other alien characters like Ford Prefect and Zaphod, who are not as powerful as the mice or the Magratheans, are still more knowledgeable than Arthur; they know about many planets, vehicles, and creatures in the Galaxy, including the Earth itself. Zaphod once “gate-crashed a party” on Earth (2005: 108), while Ford “knew how to flag flying saucers down and get lifts from them”, including how to get a lift to the Earth (2005: 12). On the contrary, Arthur does not know about anything outside the Earth. Therefore, the alien characters know how to react to various conditions while Arthur does not know how to react to all conditions he encounters outside the Earth. When Arthur and Ford face the destruction of the Earth, Arthur does not know what to do, but Ford saves their lives by hitching a lift on a spaceship, as shown in their conversation below.

"How did we get here?" he asked, shivering slightly.
"We hitched a lift," said Ford.
"Excuse me?" said Arthur. "Are you trying to tell me that we just stuck out our thumbs and some green bug-eyed monster stuck his head out and said, Hi fellas, hop right in. I can take you as far as the Basingstoke roundabout?"

"Well," said Ford, "the Thumb's an electronic sub-etha signalling device, the roundabout's at Barnard's Star six light years away, but otherwise, that's more or less right" (2005: 49-50).

When Ford, Zaphod, and Arthur encounter a strange planet, both Ford and Zaphod debate about whether it is a famous planet called Magrathea. Zaphod believes it is Magrathea, identifying the planet’s suns as Magrathea’s “twin suns of Soulianis and Rahm” (2005: 119), but Ford believes that Magrathea is only “a myth, a fairy story, it's what parents tell their kids about at night if they want them to grow up to become economists” (2005: 117). Even so, their debate shows that both of them are knowledgeable about it. On the other hand, Arthur does not know anything about Magrathea and thus cannot follow what is going on.

All this Magrathea business seemed totally incomprehensible to Arthur. He edged up to Trillian and asked her what was going on (2005: 119).

Secondly, throughout the adventures in the novel, Arthur Dent hardly does anything useful or significant. He escapes the Earth’s destruction only because his alien friend, Ford, takes him, as shown in Ford’s statement: “I saved him when his planet blew up” (2005: 106). They escape death of asphyxiation in space because they get picked up by a machine called the Infinite Improbability Drive in Zaphod’s spaceship. They escape the mice, who try to take out and dissect Arthur’s brain, because a police ship lands on Magrathea, thus creating distraction; and they escape the police because Marvin, their robot, makes the police’s oxygen-supplying computer commit suicide, as described below.
"That ship?" said Ford in sudden excitement. "What happened to it? Do you know?"

"It hated me because I talked to it."

"You talked to it?" exclaimed Ford. "What do you mean you talked to it?"

"Simple. I got very bored and depressed, so I went and plugged myself in to its external computer feed. I talked to the computer at great length and explained my view of the Universe to it," said Marvin.

"And what happened?" pressed Ford.


It is quite clear that despite being a major character, Arthur is nowhere near a hero figure. Instead, he is sometimes depicted as clueless, thus being the target of the alien characters’ ridicule. In response to the mice’s proposal to take out his brain and replace it with “a simple one”, Arthur only echoes the mice’s words by wailing “A simple one!” (2005: 202), which shows his inability to express his strong objection eloquently. Zaphod then teases Arthur by saying “You'd just have to program it to say What? and I don't understand and Where's the tea? - who'd know the difference?” (2005: 202); Arthur responds by crying “What?”, thus confirming Zaphod’s teasing about Arthur’s extreme lack of eloquence, namely that he can only say three things. These examples show that alien is higher than human in the hierarchy in this novel, and thus, the hierarchy in the human / alien opposition is subverted in this novel.

Besides inverting the hierarchy, carnivalization also questions the values in the human / alien opposition. In this case, the values are questioned by pointing out the weakness of people or human nature. In this novel, there are some qualities that are attributed to and presented as alien, but actually represent none other than human characteristics. At first, for instance, we laugh at Marvin the Paranoid Android’s blatant angst and self-pity, the Vogons’ bureaucracy, and the
philosophers’ self-contradicting arguments, labelling them as “aliens” and labelling ourselves as “humans”, two completely different units in the human / alien opposition.

However, after further thought, it is clear that despite the “alien” label, we as the readers are able to find the humour in those descriptions only because we are too familiar with them. Although they are indeed presented in an exaggerated manner, we are actually able to laugh at these alien characters and characteristics because we recognize them exactly from our own life, namely the human life. Perhaps we have seen or experienced the excessive angst or self-pity of people who always tell those around them about their problems, although they do not really have a strong reason to complain. Perhaps we feel exasperated with the government’s complicated bureaucracy, or the so-called experts who debate about supposedly important issues incoherently and inefficiently. When we read about the qualities of Marvin the Paranoid Android, the Vogons, or the philosophers respectively, we are reminded of those feelings and experience. It is our human experience that allows us to recognize and react to those characteristics. Thus, these characteristics become a kind of trap for the unsuspecting readers. It turns out that these supposedly “alien” characteristics do not really refer to the aliens but more to the humans, after all.
2. The Inversion of Fact / Fabrication Hierarchy

The hierarchy in this novel is an inversion of the hierarchy in reality. In reality, fact is the more valued term and fabrication is the less valued term. This hierarchy is shown in the society’s strong preference of truth over falsehood; truth is seen as positive and falsehood is seen as negative. For example, in law, giving false information is legally punishable under some circumstances. In medical field, the urge to lie constantly is considered as a pathological illness, which is described by Dike in the journal Psychiatric Times as “commonly referred to as pseudologia phantastica (or pseudologia fantastica)” and characterized by “has been recognized and written about in the psychiatric literature for more than a century” (http://www.psychiatrictimes.com/display/article/10168/1162950); yet the urge to tell the truth constantly is never considered as an illness.

In most religions, giving false information or lying is considered a sin. Christianity forbids lying through the verse of Revelation 21:8 in the Bible: “But the fearful, and unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone” (http://bibleresources.bible.com/passagesearchresults.php?passage1=Revelation+21%3A8). While Islam forbids lying through the verse of Surah 51: 10 in the Koran: “Cursed be the liars, Who are in a gulf (of ignorance) neglectful” (http://discoveringislam.org/quran-in-english/quran_51.htm). The acceptable practice of fabrication is highly restricted to the domains of entertainment, for example in fictional literature, films, some television shows, and so on.
In the novel, however, fabrication is the more valued term and fact is the less valued term. This hierarchy is shown in the success of fabrications in this novel. The fabrication about the Earth as a planet inhabited by humans as the only intelligent beings prevails even after the Earth is destroyed. Arthur Dent, Ford Prefect, Zaphod Beeblebrox, and most other characters do not know the fact about the Earth until Slartibartfast tells Arthur so. It can be seen in Ford’s statements to Zaphod about the Earth, such as “I saved him when his planet blew up” (2005: 106) and “You don't mean to say you've been on that miserable planet as well do you?” (2005: 107), which clearly refer to the Earth as a planet instead of a computer. It can also be seen in Arthur’s reaction when Slartibartfast tells him that Arthur’s belief about the Earth as a planet turns out to be just a fabrication. Even after Slartibartfast tells him, Arthur still hardly believes in the fact about the Earth as a computer, which can be seen in his response in the quotation below.

"Earthman, the planet you lived on was commissioned, paid for, and run by mice. It was destroyed five minutes before the completion of the purpose for which it was built, and we've got to build another one."

Only one word registered with Arthur.

"Mice?" he said.

"Indeed Earthman."

"Look, sorry - are we talking about the little white furry things with the cheese fixation and women standing on tables screaming in early sixties sit coms?" (2005: 163)

The fabrication about the power of the President and the Government of the Galaxy prevails throughout the story, since the Galaxy citizens still do not know the fact about their President and Government’s lack of power. It is shown in the statement “Very very few people realize that the President and the Government have virtually no power at all” (2005: 38), and the fact that Zaphod
Beeblebrox’s decision to run for Presidency is described as “a decision which had sent waves of astonishment throughout the Imperial Galaxy – Zaphod Beeblebrox? President? Not the Zaphod Beeblebrox? Not the President?” (2005: 37). It clearly shows that the Galaxy citizens still regard the President as a powerful figure, which explains their astonishment when an incompetent figure such as Zaphod runs for Presidency.

These examples imply that fabrications are acceptable, because they can help you to achieve your ends and will not be discovered. Furthermore, the fact that people are reading and probably have purchased or borrowed this novel means that they enjoy reading a work of fabrication. These examples show that fabrication is higher than fact in the hierarchy in this novel, and thus, the hierarchy in the fact / fabrication opposition is subverted in this novel.

Besides inverting the hierarchy, carnivalization also questions values and meanings in the fact / fabrication opposition. In this case, it is not done by pointing out the weakness of human nature like the human / alien opposition above, but rather the weakness of language. The fact / fabrication opposition in this novel shows that language is not adequate to describe the objective reality.

What is described as the reality in the novel is different from the reality in the world we live in. In the world of the novel, reality includes intergalactic lifestyle, the Earth as a computer, and humans as a clueless species who are inferior to mice, dolphins, and many other creatures. While in the world that we live in, reality includes no intergalactic lifestyle, the Earth as a significant planet, and humans as the most superior species.
In the novel, the humans have previously thought that intergalactic lifestyle was inexistent, that the Earth was a planet, and that they were the most intelligent species but it turns out that the thought is mere fabrication; such is the reality faced by the characters. Up until Slartibartfast’s revelation, Arthur Dent believes in the same things that we believe, and does not believe in the things that we do not believe.

Therefore, if the supposed “reality” in the novel can turn out to be a fabrication or interpretation, the same thing might easily happen to reality in the world that we live in. That is, it is possible that what we currently perceive as reality turns out to be a fabrication, just like in the novel. There is no way to discover whether what we perceive as reality is the actual, objective reality or fabrication. Right now, we might actually be experiencing the same condition as Arthur and the humans in the novel. We might be deceived by some aliens without us realizing it; what we regard as the facts turn out to be the fabrication that they created. Thus, as illustrated by this example, language seems capable of describing reality as perceived by the speakers, but describing the objective reality is beyond the capacity of language.

3. The Inversion of Nature / Science Hierarchy

The hierarchy in this novel is an inversion of the hierarchy in reality. In reality, nature is the more valued term and science is the less valued term. This hierarchy is shown in human’s dependency on nature, human’s vulnerability when facing natural phenomenon, and admiration of nature. Despite the advanced technology and scientific development, humans still highly depend on nature; if
the nature is destroyed, we are the ones who get the negative impact, as exemplified by our fear of global warming and climate change. We are vulnerable when facing phenomenon such as overpopulation, climate condition like drought and resultant famine, natural disasters like floods, hurricanes, and earthquakes, and our technology can only help a little. Then, our admiration of nature is shown in the “green” or “back to nature” movements: the country air is favoured as being fresher and cleaner than city air; organic food is favoured as healthier and thus costs more than non-organic food, which is grown with pesticide and other chemicals. It is clear that nature still triumph over science in real life.

In the novel, however, science is the more valued term and nature is the less valued term. This hierarchy is shown in at least two points. Firstly, all kinds of problems seem to be manageable by scientific inventions in this novel, from philosophical matters to practical, everyday matters. As the example of philosophical matter, a computer called Deep Thought is created to find “the Answer to the Great Question” of “Life, the Universe, and Everything” (2005: 180). As the example of practical matters, computers and robots are made to open and close the doors, do calculations, make drinks, and serve the characters. The doors in Zaphod’s spaceship are described in this statement: “All the doors in this spaceship have a cheerful and sunny disposition. It is their pleasure to open for you, and their satisfaction to close again with the knowledge of a job well done” (2005: 94), while the Nutri-Matic drink machine is described as follows: “When the Drink button was pressed it made an instant but highly detailed examination of the subject's taste buds, a spectroscopic analysis of the subject's metabolism and
then sent tiny experimental signals down the neural pathways to the taste centres of the subject's brain to see what was likely to go down well” (2005: 123). Although they are not always efficient, those scientific inventions exist in abundance and the characters are used to depending on them.

**Secondly**, the characters can easily escape the nature through scientific inventions. Unlike in reality, the degree of the characters’ dependency on nature is very low. They have adequate transportation system for intergalactic travel, so when one planet is destroyed or insufficient to support their life, they can move to another place in a relatively easy way, either by their own spaceship or by hitching a ride. Arthur Dent and Ford Prefect escape the Earth’s destruction by hitching a ride on a Vogon spaceship. Ford Prefect’s own father moved to a neighbouring planet, Betelgeuse Five, after his own planet, Betelgeuse Seven, was destroyed in a disaster (2005: 47).

The very rich people have the option to purchase a planet in Magrathea, a place which operates in planet creation business, with the tagline “Whatever your tastes, Magrathea can cater for you. We are not proud” (2005: 187). From Slartibartfast’s explanation, it can be inferred that the geographical features can be shaped at will; he always makes fjords because he “happen[s] to like them” and “think[s] that they give a lovely baroque feel to a continent” (2005: 193). With the science of designing planets, everything can be customized according to the customers’ wish, including natural phenomenon like the climate, land, vegetation, and so on. Based on the examples above, *science* is higher than *nature* in the
hierarchy in this novel, and thus, the hierarchy in the nature / science opposition is subverted in this novel.

Besides inverting the hierarchy, carnivalization also questions the values in the nature / science opposition. Like in the human / alien opposition, the values are questioned by pointing out the weakness of human nature. If we observe the development in the last few centuries, the fact is that we are getting closer to scientific inventions, while at the same time we are gradually getting away from nature. In other words, we are gradually inverting the hierarchy ourselves by placing higher value on science and lower value on nature. Granted, the actual condition in reality is still far from the comically exaggerated condition depicted in the novel, but our lifestyle is already heading towards that direction in reality.

We as the readers are able to find the humour in the novel’s descriptions only because we are familiar with them. We laugh at the characters’ state of being surrounded by machines and robots or regard it as absurd, while at the same time we are reminded of our tendencies to depend on inventions that can make life easier, more comfortable, or more interesting in real life. For example, more and more young people are addicted to computer games while less people play physical games like hide and seek, tag, or marbles. Some people prefer driving a car or riding a motorcycle to walking even when travelling a short distance. Some people prefer using calculators to doing it themselves even when performing simple calculations. Some students spend hours plagiarizing text off the internet rather than using their own brains to do assignments. Farms, trees and forests are cleared to make space for buildings and roads. Again, it is our aforesaid
experience that allows us to recognize this tendency and recognize that if we
continue with this lifestyle, one day the hierarchy of nature / science will be
inverted into science / nature for real.

Furthermore, we may find the pan-dimensional beings’ outlook as
something humorous, nonsensical or absurd, but again, such outlook is actually
something familiar to us. On one side, we as the readers laugh at the pan-
dimensional beings’ bold attempt to solve all of life’s problems with one
“Ultimate Answer” (2005: 183) spewed out by a computer, which is not a living
creature and cannot be expected to know about life’s problems let alone solve
them; we laugh at the fact that such “hyperintelligent” beings can build “a
stupendous super computer which was so amazingly intelligent” (2005: 166), but
somehow cannot, or would not, think and act to solve the problems themselves.
On the other side, we do recognize the desire to solve many problems at once in
an instant, easy way, from both our occasional thoughts as well as the
phenomenon around us in reality. We are quite familiar with paranormal or
mystical “solutions” that offer instant success in financial, professional, academic,
even romantic life, as well as various forms of business scams that offer extremely
high amount of money and luxuries within a short time without hard work. These
means are just as irrelevant as the pan-dimensional beings’ outlook, which relies
on science and thus relegates nature to second place. The hierarchy of binary
opposition might differ between the novel and reality, but the behaviours are the
same after all.
CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION

This is a deconstruction study which analyzes Douglas Adams’ *The Hitchhiker’s Guide to the Galaxy*. The topic is formulated into three problems, so the findings of the analysis are divided into three parts corresponding to each problem.

Firstly, based on Gurewitch and Kronenberger’s theories, the instances of nonsense in the novel are divided into three, namely the inversion of received ideas, the nonsequitur, and the juxtaposition of incongruous contexts. The inversion of received ideas includes six examples, namely the description of the Earth and human beings as totally insignificant, the description of poetry as a tool of torture, the priority of music over the news in a radio news program, planets as custom-made products, and humans’ inferiority to mice and dolphins. The nonsequitur includes five examples, namely an encyclopaedia’s popularity due to the text “Don’t Panic” on its cover, the character Ford Prefect’s comment that lunchtime is an illusion, towel as a multi-function, extreme useful item, the philosophers’ incoherent, contradictory speech, and the hyper-intelligent beings’ attempt at finding an answer without knowing the question. The juxtaposition of incongruous contexts includes six examples, namely the juxtaposition between the destruction of Arthur Dent’s house and the destruction of Earth, the juxtaposition between Zaphod’s irresponsible characteristic, his position as the President of the Galaxy, and his actual lack of power in the government, the juxtaposition between
the Vogons’ bad-tempered, bureaucratic characteristic and their position in the Galactic Civil Service, the juxtaposition between the ideas about the Babel fish as a proof of God’s existence and as a proof of God’s non-existence, and the juxtaposition between the complexity of a machine called The Infinite Improbability Drive and the simplicity of creating it.

**Secondly**, the analysis derives three prominent pairs of binary oppositions from the instances of nonsense above, namely *human/alien*, *fact/fabrication*, and *nature/science*. This step is also in accordance to the first practice of deconstruction, namely identifying binary oppositions in the text as the surface meaning. The *human/alien* opposition can be seen in the physical appearance, the culture, language, and the ways of thinking in the novel. The opposing views of culture result in the nonsense about poetry in the inversion of received idea, while the opposing views of language are the source of the nonsense comment about lunchtime as an illusion in the nonsequitur, the nonsense of the philosophers’ contradictory statements in the nonsequitur, and the nonsense about Arthur’s harmless utterance taking on a completely different meaning in juxtaposition. The opposing ways of thinking result in the nonsense about the higher priority of the music over the news in a radio program in the inversion, the higher priority of a soothing text over the content in an encyclopaedia in the nonsequitur, the towels’ far-fetched life-saving functions in the nonsequitur, the discrepancy between the President’s high position and his responsibility in the juxtaposition, and the discrepancy between the Vogons’ position and their bad-tempered nature in the
juxtaposition. The opposing ways of thinking also result in the nonsense about the derisive description of Earth and human beings in the inversion of received idea.

The *fact/fabrication* opposition can be seen in the notion about Earth and humans, illusion, the Galactic government, and this novel as a literary work. The fact is that the Earth is only a computer program and the humans are part of the program; the fabrication is that Earth is a planet and humans are intelligent beings, which explains the nonsense about the Earth and humans’ insignificance in the inversion of received idea. Lunchtime is a fact, but it is described as an illusion or a fabrication. The fact is that the President and the government of the Galaxy have no power at all; the fabrication believed by the people is that the President is powerful, which explains the nonsense about the discrepancy between Zaphod’s characteristics, position, and power in the juxtaposition. The newspaper, television, and other non-fictional writings are facts; fictional writings, such as this novel, are fabrication, which enables us to tolerate all the nonsense in it.

The *nature/science* opposition can be seen in the lifestyle, some of the characters, and natural phenomenon such as creation, life and death. Science is shown through the characters’ technology-dependent lifestyle, which results in the nonsense about the troublesome technology in the inversion of received idea and is related to the nonsense about the President’s lack of power in the juxtaposition, since the power is believed to be held by computers. Nature is shown through the philosophers, who do not depend on technology to think, but are also highly inefficient so as to result in the nonsense about their weird protest in the nonsequitur. Science is shown through life-saving “coincidences” and creation by
machines or scientific inventions, which result in the nonsense about custom-made planet business in the inversion of received idea. Nature is shown through creation and life through natural process, such as evolution and family ties, which result in the nonsense about the Babel fish’s evolution as the proof of God’s existence and non-existence in the juxtaposition and the nonsense about the Vogons’ ill nature due to their stunted evolution in the juxtaposition.

**Finally**, the analysis discovers how the binary oppositions in the novel carnivalize reality, namely by inverting the hierarchy in each opposition. This step is also in accordance to the second practice of deconstruction, namely revealing contradictory structures or unmasking internal contradictions, which in this case refers to the elements within the novel that are inconsistent or incompatible with each other, whether they are characters and characterization, dialogues, events in the plot, descriptions of setting, and so on. In reality, the hierarchy is comprised of *human* as the more valued term and *alien* as the less valued term. On the contrary, in the novel, *alien* is depicted as more valued than *human*, which is shown through the alien characters’ superior knowledge, power, and usefulness in the story compared to the human character. This opposition also questions values by presenting typical human characteristics, such as whining, severely bureaucratic, inefficient and incoherent, as alien characteristics.

In reality, *fact* is more valued than *fabrication*. On the contrary, in the novel, *fabrication* is depicted as more valued than *fact*, which is shown in the success of fabrications in this novel, such as the fabrication about the Earth as a planet with intelligent beings and about the Galactic President’s power, as well as
the fact that the readers are reading this novel as a work of fabrication. This opposition also questions meanings by showing language’s inadequacy to describe the objective reality. What is described as reality in the novel is different with reality in the world we live in. There is no way to discover whether what we perceive as reality now is actually reality or fabrication.

In reality, *nature* is more valued than *science*. On the contrary, in the novel, *science* is depicted as more valued than *nature*, which is shown in the fact that all problems seem manageable by scientific inventions, from philosophical matters to everyday matters, and that the characters can easily escape natural phenomena through scientific inventions. This opposition also questions values by showing that we are in the process of inverting the hierarchy ourselves. In reality at the moment, nature is still more valued than science, but human beings are in fact showing more and more tendencies to depend on scientific inventions to manage their problems and even escape natural phenomena, albeit in a relatively small scale.

Thus, reality is carnivalized through the various instances of nonsense in this novel by forming and inverting binary oppositions that also questions values and meanings commonly held or understood by the subjects, or in other words, the readers.
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APPENDIX

Summary of Douglas Adams' *The Hitchhiker’s Guide to the Galaxy*

*The Hitchhiker’s Guide to the Galaxy* was loosely adapted from a BBC radio series. The novel was published in 1979 by Pan Publisher as the first of the five-book *Hitchhiker* “trilogy”, followed by four other books (http://www.bbc.co.uk/arts/books/author/adams). The story begins with contractors arriving at Arthur Dent's house, in order to demolish it to make way for a bypass. His friend, Ford Prefect, arrives while Arthur is lying in front of the bulldozers, to keep them from demolishing it. He tries to explain to Arthur that he is actually from a planet somewhere in the vicinity of Betelgeuse and that the Earth is about to be demolished. The Vogons, an alien race, intend to destroy Earth to make way for a hyperspace bypass.

The two escape by hitching a lift on one of the Vogon demolition ships. When the pair are discovered, they are tortured with a reading of Vogon poetry, the third worst in the known Universe, and then thrown into space. They are, very improbably, picked up by the Heart of Gold, a ship powered by an infinite improbability drive, which has been stolen by Ford's semi-cousin and President of the Galaxy, Zaphod Beeblebrox. Zaphod, accompanied by Trillian and the clinically depressed robot Marvin, are searching for the legendary planet of Magrathea, which is rumoured to have manufactured luxury planets.

In Magrathea, Arthur is separated from the rest of the group and taken into the interior of the planet by a native, Slartibartfast. The others are kidnapped.
Slartibartfast explains to Arthur that the Earth was actually a supercomputer commissioned and paid for by a race of "hyper-intelligent," "pan-dimensional" beings. These creatures had earlier built a supercomputer called Deep Thought to calculate the Answer to the Ultimate Question of Life, the Universe, and Everything. This computer, after seven and a half million years of calculation, had announced that the Answer is in fact 42. Being unsatisfied with the Answer, they set about finding the Question which would give the Answer meaning, whereupon Deep Thought designed the Earth, to calculate it. However, ten million years later, and just five minutes before the completion of the program Earth was designed to execute, the Earth is demolished by the Vogons. Two of these beings, Frankie Mouse and Benjy Mouse, had arrived on Magrathea on the Heart of Gold, in the form of Trillian's pet mice.

The mice realise that a latent version of the question, or something very like it, must exist in Arthur's brain since he is a late-generation organic product of the computer, and offer to buy his brain from him. Arthur declines, and a fight ensues. The mice are about to cut Arthur's head open when klaxons all over the planet are activated, creating a diversion during which Arthur, Ford, Zaphod and Trillian are able to escape. The galactic police arrive on the planet to arrest Zaphod and the group is attacked by two officers who abruptly die when the life support systems in their spacesuits fail: Marvin had been talking to their ship, which was linked to their suits, and as a result it had become so depressed that it committed suicide. The group decides to go to The Restaurant at the End of the Universe for lunch.