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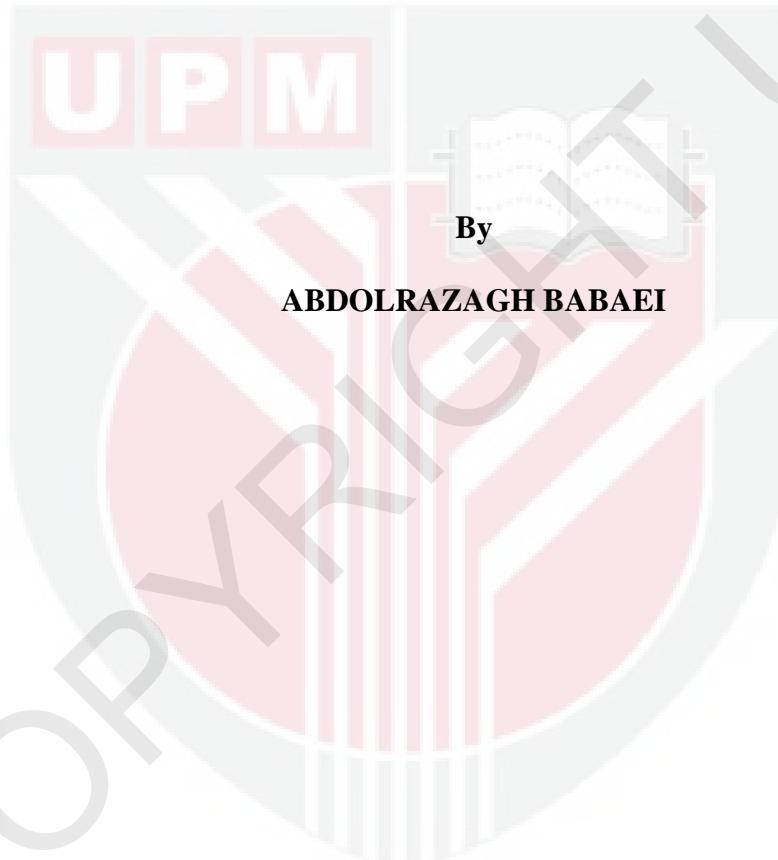
A READING OF VONNEGUT'S MAJOR NOVELS AS WORKS OF METAFICTION

ABDOLRAZAGH BABAEI

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**A READING OF VONNEGUT'S MAJOR NOVELS AS WORKS OF
METAFICTION**



**Thesis Submitted to the School of Graduate Studies, Universiti Putra
Malaysia, in Fulfillment of the Requirement for the Degree of Doctor of
Philosophy**

June 2013

DEDICATION

I dedicate this thesis to all teachers who may teach with love.



Abstract of thesis presented to the Senate of Universiti Putra Malaysia in fulfillment of the requirement for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

**A READING OF VONNEGUT'S MAJOR NOVELS AS WORKS OF
METAFICTION**

By

ABDOLRAZAGH BAAEI

June 2013

Chairman : Wan Roselezam Wan Yahya, PhD

Faculty : Modern Languages and Communication

A reading of Vonnegut's major novels as metafiction grows out of the diverse critical reactions to the paradoxical nature of Kurt Vonnegut's works as part of contemporary American literature. For Vonnegut, the fact that the autonomy of literature is a basic tenet of postmodernism does not make the challenge of pragmatic experimental literature any less real. Rather, Vonnegut suggests a kind of fiction that aims to alter the world and its inhabitants' deeds while providing the basic prerequisites of postmodern fiction. Such innovative juxtaposition takes place through fictional writing, called metafiction, that self-consciously and systematically draws attention to its status as an artefact in order to pose questions about the relationship between fiction and reality. Metafiction helps Vonnegut to propose fiction that connects literature and the real world, thus providing his idealistic aspiration for artists as agents of change. Exposing the construction of a

fictional cosmos and the laying bare of that cosmos, metafictional strategies of authorship, frame-breaking, play, intertextuality and parody as the literary means of self-reflexive fiction display the uncertain, insecure, self-questioning and culturally pluralistic aspects of world narratives. Religion, history and American culture are the “grand narratives” to which Vonnegut offers his readers a better understanding of their fundamental structures by providing analogous counterparts in self-conscious narratives. By examining three selected novels, *Cat’s Cradle*, *Slaughterhouse-Five* and *Breakfast of Champions*, as examples of metafiction, the study shows how Vonnegut unmasks the grand narratives of American culture while offering ingenious and entertaining stories that call for readers with “imagination and ordering faculties alert and at work”. Vonnegut, in his metafictional trilogy while developing a blueprint for his art, adamantly exploits metafiction to give an accurate model for understanding the contemporary experience of the world as a series of constructed provisional systems rather than eternal verities.

Abstrak tesis yang dikemukakan kepada Senat Universiti Putra Malaysia sebagai memenuhi keperluan untuk Ijazah Doktor Falsafah

**PEMBACAAN NOVEL-NOVEL UTAMA VONNEGUT SEBAGAI KARYA
METAFIKSYEN**

Oleh

ABDOLRAZAGH BABAEI

Jun 2013

Pengerusi : Wan Roselezam Wan Yahya, PhD

Fakulti : Bahasa Moden dan Komunikasi

Kaedah pembacaan novel-novel utama Vonnegut sebagai metafiksyen terbentuk dari beberapa reaksi yang kritikal terhadap sifat paradoksikal hasil-hasil karya Kurt Vonnegut sebagai sebahagian daripada sastera Amerika moden. Bagi Vonnegut, hakikat bahawa autonomi sastera dijadikan rukun asas dalam aliran pasca modernisme tidak mengakibatkan cabaran sastera eksperimental pragmatik menjadi kurang sahih. Sebaliknya, Vonnegut mencadangkan sejenis fiksyen yang bertujuan untuk mengubah keadaan dunia dan amalan-amalan para penghuninya di samping membekalkan pra-syarat asas kepada fiksyen pasca moden. Penindihan inovatif seumpama ini berlaku melalui penulisan fiksyen yang dikenali sebagai metafiksyen yang mampu menarik perhatian kepada statusnya sebagai artifak dengan menyoal perkaitan di antara rekaan dan realiti melalui kaedah penyedaran kendiri yang sistematik. Metafiksyen membantu Vonnegut untuk mempelopori

rekaan yang mampu menghubungkan bidang sastera dengan dunia sebenar, sekali gus menjadikan aspirasi idealistiknya sebagai suatu agen perubahan kepada para artis. Melalui pendedahan struktur pembinaan kosmos sesebuah cerita fiksyen, strategi-strategi metafiksyen yang merangkumi aspek pengarangan, pemecahan kerangka, drama, inter-textuality dan parodi sebagai kaedah sastera dalam fiksyen berbentuk refleksi kendiri mempamerkan aspek-aspek ketidakpastian, kekurangan keyakinan, penyoalan kendiri dan kepelbagaiannya budaya di dalam dunia cereka. Vonnegut mendorong para pembacanya untuk mendalaminya struktur-struktur dasar “cereka agung” melalui aspek agama, sejarah dan budaya Amerika dengan membekalkan penyalinan yang seajar dalam cereka berunsurkan kesedaran diri. Dengan mengkaji tiga novel terpilih iaitu *Cat’s Cradle*, *Slaughterhouse-Five* dan *Breakfast for Champions* sebagai contoh-contoh metafiksyen, kajian ini menunjukkan bagaimana Vonnegut meleraikan cereka-cereka agung budaya Amerika di samping membekalkan cerita-cerita yang kreatif dan menghiburkan kepada para pembaca yang mempunyai “imajinasi dan fakulti penstrukturran yang sedar dan berfungsi”. Dalam pengembangan pelan induk hasil karyanya, Vonnegut melalui trilogi berbentuk metafiksyennya berkeras untuk mengeksplorasi metafiksyen untuk memberikan model yang tepat bagi memahami pengalaman kontemporari duniawi sebagai suatu siri sistem percubaan yang terbina berbanding dengan kebenaran yang kekal.

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I certify that a Thesis Examination Committee has met on June 24 to conduct the final examination of Abdolrazagh Babaei on his thesis entitled "**A Reading of Vonnegut's Major Novels as Works of Metafiction**" in accordance with the Universities and University Colleges Act 1971 and the Constitution of the Universiti Putra Malaysia [P.U.(A) 106] 15 March 1998. The Committee recommends that the student be awarded the Doctor of Philosophy.

Members of the Thesis Examination Committee were as follows:

Shamala Paramasivam, PhD

Associate Professor

FBMK

Universiti Putra Malaysia

(Chairman)

Rosli Bin Talif, PhD

Associate Professor

FBMK

Universiti Putra Malaysia

(Internal Examiner)

Ghulam Sarwar Yousuf, PhD

Professor

UIIM

(Internal Examiner)

Ojaide Tanure, PhD

Professor

UNC Charlotte

USA

(External Examiner)

NORITAH OMAR, PhD

Assoc. Professor and Deputy Dean

School of Graduate Studies

Universiti Putra Malaysia

Date:

This thesis submitted to the Senate of Universiti Putra Malaysia has been accepted as fulfilment of the requirement for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy. The members of the Supervisory committee are as follows:

Wan Roselezam Bt. Wan Yahya, Ph.D

Associate Professor

Faculty of Modern Languages and Communication

Universiti Putra Malaysia

(Chairman)

Arbaayah Ali Termizi, Ph.D

Senior Lecturer

Faculty of Modern Languages and Communication

Universiti Putra Malaysia

(Member)

Zalina Bt. Mohd Kasim, PhD

Senior Lecturer

Faculty of Modern Languages and Communication

Universiti Putra Malaysia

(Member)

BUJANG BIN KIM HUAT, PhD

Professor and Dean

School of Graduate Studies

Universiti Putra Malaysia

Date:

DECLARATION

I hereby declare that the thesis is based on my original work except for quotations and citations, which have been duly acknowledged. I also declare that it has not been previously or concurrently submitted for any other degree at Universiti Putra Malaysia or other institutions.

ABDOLRAZAGH BABAEI

Date: 24 June 2013



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