ANALYSIS OF POINT OF VIEW IN THE NOVELS OF KURT VONNEGUT, JR., AS APPLIED TO ORAL INTERPRETATION

THESIS

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This study analyzes the novels of Kurt Vonnegut, Jr. from the aspect of point of view. Point of view refers to the reflective mind through which a reader perceives the story. Traditionally, the narrator delivers his narrative in either first or third person point of view, but Vonnegut frequently mixes points of view. Mixed point of view presents a particular challenge to the oral interpreter and the adapter/director of readers theatre scripts. The narrator and the narrative structure are discussed, as well as numerous innovative narrative techniques. Suggestions are made for script adaptations and production direction featuring the narrative structure and point of view.
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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

During the late nineteenth century when Henry James began writing critical essays and novel prefaces discussing the importance of the narrator in storytelling, modern literary critics began to concern themselves with point of view, a heretofore seldom studied element of narrative structure. Before James, critics had paid little attention to the narrator except to view him as a necessary device to supply expository information and description. After James's writing about point of view and his experimentations with it, the importance of the narrator was established and other writers and critics began to focus on point of view. At that time, chapters on point of view began to appear in "how-to-write-a-novel" handbooks. In 1921, Percy Lubbock published The Craft of Fiction, the first book to focus predominantly on the question of point of view. Lubbock defines point of view as "the question of the relation in which the narrator stands to the story" and proclaims, "The whole intricate question of method, in the craft of fiction, I take to be governed by the question of point of view." Lubbock is to this day regarded in literary circles as a chief source for the study of point of view. In 1925, fiction writer Edith
Wharton commented, "It should be the story-teller's first care to choose his reflecting mind deliberately as one would choose a building site."  

Point of view has maintained the position of a major consideration in literary criticism. Modern writers continue to experiment with the point of view in narration, and, meanwhile, modern critics continue to study point of view. In 1967, Wayne C. Booth, in an article entitled "Distance and Point of View," held that point of view was indeed a very important consideration to a writer and that it was a question which required further study. As recently as 1972, C. Hugh Holman, editor of the revised Handbook to Literature, referred to the "concern with point of view in current criticism and the experimentation with point of view by many current novelists."  

Thrall and Hibbard further contend that point of view is important to the reader as a map to the discovery of meaning in a piece of literature: "... Point of view has often been considered the technical aspect of fiction which leads the critic most readily into the problems and the meanings of a novel or a short story." As an author reveals his story through the mind and voice of a narrator, the meaning or theme of a fictional writing is necessarily colored by the prejudices, attitudes, and frame of reference of that narrator. The reader sees only through the eyes of the storyteller. Mark Schorer regards the study of point of
view in literature as a necessary "means toward the positive definition of a theme." 7

Point of view also bears great importance to the structure of a novel. The type of narrator the author elects to use determines a majority of the supporting elements in the writing which build to explain the theme. Robert Scholes writes, "Point of view is the primary way he [the novelist] controls and shapes his materials. Once made, his choice of point of view and the mode of language appropriate to it will influence his presentation of character, incident, and every other thing represented." 8 Thus, in choosing the person or persons to narrate the story, the author is making one of the key decisions in structuring his novel. One critic likens the author's choice of point of view to the poet's choice of verse form, 9 a vital preliminary decision.

Another substantial function point of view serves is to determine the spatial relationships between the narrator and the characters, the narrator and the author, and the story and the reader. The first person narrator will naturally be spatially nearer the action than the third person omniscient narrator who is removed from the action. Brooks and Warren, in Understanding Fiction, discuss focus of narration and how this affects the distance between the fictional characters and the author. 10 Expounding further on the concept of space and distances, W. J. Harvey links point of view with the author's control of aesthetic distance within a novel or short story. 11
Because the primary concern of the oral interpreter is to be true to the literature, point of view must be an important consideration in the analysis and subsequent preparation of a selection for oral presentation. Since literary critics seem to agree that point of view determines the theme, structure, and spatial relationships in modern fiction, the student of oral interpretation must discover the point of view of a work and develop his reading with the aid of these findings. Most oral interpretation textbooks include brief comments concerning point of view and its importance to the analysis of a reading; however, few go into depth with their discussion. In the textbooks which contain these sections, the vast majority of the authors agree that point of view is a matter which should be of deep concern to the oral reader. Robert Beloof writes of the importance of point of view to the oral interpreter: "The influences deriving from the character of the narrator touch every aspect of the work of art, great and small, and bear both immediately and eventually on every insight that is to be derived from re-creating the story in the voice and body."¹² Because Aggerott and Bowen consider narration and point of view so vital to the presentation of literature, in their text, Communicative Reading, they find essential the "detailed study of the narrative positions and thoughtful consideration of how to communicate them in the production."¹³ In one of the
most recently published oral interpretation textbooks, Chester Long emphasizes the necessity of the reader's accurate interpretation of the narrator, claiming, "Nothing can be seen clearly or satisfactorily until the performer has focused his image on the kind of person the narrator gives the illusion of being." At Northwestern University where the Oral Interpretation Department is noted for stressing detailed literary analysis, four distinguished professors have published articles and textbooks citing the critical nature of point of view to the oral interpretation process. Charlotte Lee, author of *Oral Interpretation*, refers to point of view as "the major controlling factor in any narrative." Wallace Bacon considers the choice of point of view "crucial," noting that "the 'same' plot told from two different points of view becomes two quite different actions." Lee Roloff places point of view at the top of his "hierarchic list" of analytical concerns regarding the literature. Lilla Heston, who has studied point of view and the interpreter of literature in depth, writes, "Study of the narrator will help the interpreter to define the novel's structure, as well as its point of view, and will also force him to ask the kinds of concrete and specific questions which must always be a preliminary to his performance." Heston mentions the importance of point of view in interpreting the structure of a selection. As structure is important to the literary critic, so it is for the oral
interpreter. Structure communicates not only the author's meaning to a reader but also the author's style of writing. In order to accurately present the literature, the reader must be aware of the author's style and perform the literature in such a way as to relate this style to the audience. Louise Scrivner maintains that the reader must understand the point of view and, therefore, the narrator in order to "adjust his oral style to the author's written style." Lee upholds Scrivner's theories concerning style and extends them to include additional structural elements: "Point of view helps dictate organization, selection of details, type of imagery and style of writing." In addition to defining structure for the oral reader, point of view defines spatial relationships for the reader. Point of view, via the narrator, clues the reader to "the relationship he will take to his audience." The amount of aesthetic distance he must maintain with his audience, therefore, is determined within the selection and is evident in the author's use of point of view. Does the narrator speak to the audience? Is the narrator aware of the presence of an audience? Mattingly and Grimes contend that point of view and shifts in point of view affect the speaker-audience relationship in the degrees of openness and closure. Openness and closure refer to the narrator's awareness and treatment of his audience. Point of view also reveals the narrator's relationships with the other characters in the story. Is
the reader one of the characters? Is he the protagonist? Is he the author? Before the reader can truly present the literature, he must answer these questions. The answers to these questions are to be found in the analysis of the author's use of point of view.

In adapting literature for group oral interpretation, the adapter must also seriously consider point of view. The adaptation of a prose selection for presentation as readers theatre is a process which requires careful study of the whole body of literature in order to be true to the material and its performance. Coger and White, in *Readers Theatre Handbook*, consider point of view "the guiding factor" in the adaptation process. Point of view, for example, necessarily dictates who will speak the lines of narration. The adapter must avoid altering the original point of view established by the author; this error could result in a loss of the author's intended meaning for the literature. Point of view also determines the temporal mode of the story. The adapter must be conscious of his aspect of point of view so that he will write his script in the proper tense.

Because point of view, the narrator, and tense are so important to narrative structure, Robert Breen created a new form of group interpretation, Chamber Theatre. Chamber Theatre focuses on narration. The adapter of literature for Chamber Theatre must employ the narrator as a major element of the script. He must also retain the original temporal
mode. Chamber Theatre, in essence, was founded on point of view.

The director of a group interpretation performance must also consider point of view in the staging of a production. The narrator's relationship to the other characters in the script is determined by the focus of narration. As previously discussed, this influences the interpreter's reading of a selection; it also affects the director's positioning of his readers. When the narrator is the protagonist, the blocking should indicate his personal involvement. When the narrator is totally removed from the drama of a novel or short story, the direction must reflect this. The narrator-audience relationship which the point of view establishes should also be defined by the blocking. The omniscient narrator may focus on the audience and react with them. On the other hand, the narrator who is the main character of a story and who is unaware of a listening audience may elect to use only on-stage focus. To determine the positioning of readers and the proper choice of focus, the director is obliged to rely upon the author's choice of point of view.

Among the great number of contemporary writers who are experimenting with point of view is Kurt Vonnegut, Jr. Vonnegut has been contributing to the American fiction scene for nearly a quarter of a century. His first novel, *Player Piano*, was published in paperback form in 1952. Since that time, Vonnegut has published six additional novels, two
collections of short stories, two plays, and, most recently, a collection of essays. In the past decade, Vonnegut has acquired more and more followers. During this time, critics have come to recognize him for his influence on the trends in contemporary American fiction.

On November 11, 1922, Kurt Vonnegut, Jr. was born in Indianapolis to Edith and Kurt Vonnegut. The youngest of three children, he was referred to by members of the family as "K," reports an old family friend. Kurt Vonnegut, Sr. was a rather successful architect; in several of his prefaces, the young Vonnegut attributes his use of "Jr." to his desire to avoid being confused with his equally notable father. Edith Leiber Vonnegut was the daughter of a millionaire. The Leibers and the Vonneguts had in common their German heritage; both families had immigrated to the United States early in the nineteenth century. The eldest of the Vonnegut children was Bernard. Bernard now holds a Ph.D. from Massachusetts Institute of Technology. The middle child was Alice.

Vonnegut lived in Indianapolis until he left home for college. In high school, he was editor of his school paper, the first daily high school newspaper in the United States. W. T. Lhamon, Jr. described him as "the 98-pound weakling to whom a high school coach once awarded a Charles Atlas course." When Vonnegut left home to attend college, he chose Cornell University. At his father's urging to choose
a practical field of study, he enrolled as a biochemistry major. He continued to write, however, and edited a column for the Cornell Daily Sun. The Daily Sun was a private enterprise separate from the university. Vonnegut used his column to express and publish his pacifist views during a time when war was spreading throughout Europe. With the United States involvement in World War II, Vonnegut joined the Army and left Cornell.

Vonnegut served with the United States Army in Europe as a battalion scout. In 1944, he was summoned home to be with his mother on Mother's Day. Edith Vonnegut had been under considerable emotional strain; the family finances were in poor shape; she had tried to earn money by writing short stories, but had failed miserably; she was torn by the war between the Germans, with whom she had relatives fighting, and the Allies, for whom her son fought. The night before Vonnegut arrived home, she took her own life. One year later Vonnegut was taken prisoner by the Germans and transferred to Dresden as part of a prisoner work group. His group was assigned to work in a factory which manufactured a vitamin enriched malt syrup for pregnant women. Vonnegut was in Dresden on February 13, 1945, when the British Royal Air Force bombed this nonstrategic town. He took shelter in the coolness of a meat lock underneath a slaughterhouse; it was this shelter which saved his life. This experience provided the substance for several of his
After World War II, Vonnegut returned to the United States. He resumed his education as an anthropology major; however, he did not complete a degree. He married a girl whom he had known since kindergarten and took a job with General Electric working in public relations in Schenectady, New York. While working for General Electric, he also lived in Alpus, New York, where he served as a member of the volunteer fire department. In *God Bless You, Mr. Rosewater*, a volunteer fire department is one of the central elements. Vonnegut disliked his role as a company man. In 1949, he left General Electric to concentrate on writing. During the next few years, while writing, Vonnegut taught English in private schools. Today, Vonnegut is living in Manhattan with his wife and six children, three of whom are the children of his sister, adopted upon her death. Vonnegut has just finished a two-year term guest lecturing at Harvard; he is currently teaching at City College in New York.

In 1952, Vonnegut published *Player Piano*. This book received little critical attention. The reviews it did receive were not favorable. Because this novel concerned the utopian town of Ilium, modeled after Schenectady, and a socially functional group of people, reviewers labeled this book as a poor imitation of *Brave New World* and *1984*. Vonnegut was finding the writing profession less than financially
solvent. He began writing stories for magazines to earn his living. These, too, were frowned upon by literary critics. In 1959, he published *The Sirens of Titan*. It was this book which established Vonnegut as a paperback writer, which provided a reasonable income. With this novel, however, critics labeled Vonnegut a science fiction writer, a stigma which all but extinguished his chances of ever being recognized as a serious writer. *Mother Night*, his second novel, and *Canary in a Cathouse*, a collection of short stories, both published in 1961, went critically unnoticed. The publication of *Cat's Cradle*, 1963, was met with popular interest and favorable reviews. Vonnegut had found a following. The younger generation was adopting him. His earlier works were in demand, and publishing houses reprinted the early works in boxed sets. *God Bless You, Mr. Rosewater*, 1965, and *Welcome to the Monkey House*, another collection of short stories, 1968, received even more favorable reviews. Vonnegut was establishing himself. In 1969, he published his most serious work, *Slaughterhouse-Five*. It received rave reviews and remained on the best-seller lists for months. Collections of critical essays were beginning to include sections on Vonnegut. The best of the essays focusing on Vonnegut were collected for *The Vonnegut Statement*. His novels were becoming required reading for English courses in colleges and universities across the nation. Dissertations were being written on him. In 1972, for his fiftieth
birthday, Vonnegut published *Breakfast of Champions*. It hit best-seller lists in record time.

Vonnegut was established. He had escaped that stigma attached to paperback writers; he had disproved the label of science fiction writer. Charles Samuels writes, "If a writer moves so completely from being unnoticeable to being unimpeachable, his rise becomes a chapter in social history." The *New York Times Book Review* devoted a front page story to him. Granville Hicks compares Vonnegut's humor to that of Mark Twain and Jonathan Swift. Robert Scholes expresses much the same regard for Vonnegut when he says, "Kurt Vonnegut, Jr. is a vulgar sentimentalist--a quality he shares with Dickens, for instance. He is also a crude humorist--a quality he shares with Mark Twain." As time passes and critics continue to evaluate Vonnegut, their praise for him grows. In 1966 when *New Republic* featured an article reviewing all of Vonnegut's works, C. D. B. Bryan termed him "the most readable and amusing of the new satirists." Otto Friedrich noted that in 1969, after the publication of *Slaughterhouse-Five*, Vonnegut became "one of the most popular ornaments of contemporary fiction." And most recently, in 1974, John Skow referred to him as "the most distinctive voice in recent American fiction." Kurt Vonnegut, Jr. has finally come into his own. Scholes, a leading critic of Vonnegut, explains this novelist's success, stating, "The truth of Vonnegut's vision requires its fiction. . . . Art,
as Picasso has said, is a lie that makes us realize the truth. Kurt Vonnegut, Jr. is a true artist.35

The purpose of this thesis is to examine point of view as it is employed in the novels of Kurt Vonnegut, Jr. Once the point of view is determined and the narrative techniques are analyzed, application will be made to oral interpretation. Suggestions will be made for individual interpretation as well as script adaptation, and performance direction for group interpretation will be given.
NOTES


2 Lubbock, p. 251.


6 Holman, p. 409.


9 Friedman, p. 132.


20. Lee, p. 221.


32 Bryan, p. 21.


34 John Skow, "Raisin d'Etre," Time, 3 June 1974, p. 177.

CHAPTER II

FIRST PERSON POINT OF VIEW

Introduction

The first of the two fundamental approaches to narrative structure is that of first person point of view. Using first person point of view, the author relates his tale through a narrator who refers to himself with the informal "I." The reader is presented with the characters and events of the story as this narrator, necessarily a character in and of himself, perceives them. Each impression and each piece of information is filtered to the reader through the mind of the narrator. While he may or may not be a part of the story he is relating, he permeates the scene so intensely with his attitudes and beliefs that the reader must be conscious of his existence. Because the reader is aware of the narrator, it is important that the oral interpreter understand the character of the first person narrator and how he perceives the story. The oral interpreter should also analyze the devices employed by the author to bring this first person narrator to life and to give him credence.

Coger and White, Readers Theatre Handbook, divide first person point of view into three categories.¹ The first of these categories is first person narration by a major
character. The main character, or protagonist, relates his story to the reader as he sees it. The other characters are, therefore, presented to the reader as the main character sees them. He cannot see into the minds of the other characters; he can reveal only what he has witnessed, felt, or heard to be true. J. D. Salinger's character Holden Caulfield, of Catcher in the Rye, is an excellent example of first person narration by a major character. The second category that Coger and White name is narration by a minor character. This character is only a minor participant in the action but is in a position to witness all of the occurrences and to report them to the reader. Again, the reader is allowed to view the events and characters of the story only as another character perceives them. This narrator is likely to be less vividly characterized by the author, but he makes his presence felt by the reader. Ken Kesey provides readers with an example of this type of narrator in the person of Chief Bromden in One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest. The third and final category of first person narration is in the use of a nonparticipant who witnesses the action. This narrator is not likely to be characterized by the author to any extent, but he is still the determining factor in the way the story is presented to the reader. In this instance, also, the interpreter increases his understanding of the literature through careful study and analysis of the narrator. To illustrate this category of point of view,
Coger and White cite the example of the narration in William Faulkner's short story *A Rose for Emily.*

Of the three categories of first person point of view, the first two are the most commonly used. Using the protagonist as narrator allows the author to create a particularly strong character. This character then presents the audience with his world. The narrator establishes a close relationship with his audience by addressing it directly. The feeling which the author creates is as if the narrator is confiding in an audience composed of genuinely interested, personal friends; such is the mood Vonnegut establishes in his novel *Mother Night.* Narrative by a minor character is used less frequently than narration by a major character, but it can be used very effectively. The minor character is involved in the action and, therefore, has an interest in the happenings. He also has the advantage of possessing a fair degree of objectivity. He is not pleading his case, as is the protagonist. He, too, is close to the audience. Vonnegut employs this type of narration in *Cat's Cradle.* Narrative by a nonparticipant observer is used very infrequently; Vonnegut does not employ this narrative form in any of his novels. When he does use a first person narrator, however, he exercises his imagination in the use of narrative devices which give credence to his characters. His use of first person narration in the two aforementioned novels is effective, chiefly because the narrators seem real. These
two novels provide the reader, especially the oral interpreter, with an interesting study of perspective and of narrative structure and devices.

**Mother Night**

Vonnegut's initial attempt at the use of first person point of view in a novel came with the writing of *Mother Night* in 1969. The book was written during Vonnegut's paperback writing era and, therefore, received no critical reviews upon publication. It underwent a second printing in 1966 and was received relatively favorably by critics. It is not one of his more popular or widely read novels, but it is well structured, and the character of the narrator is well rounded. The plot is action packed and spans a period of approximately two decades, the years 1941-1961. It is a spy story unlike other spy stories. Rather than enumerate the exciting intricacies of espionage activity, Vonnegut concentrates on the psychological ramifications of the protagonist's role as a double agent. In the Introduction to the 1966 edition of the novel, Vonnegut states the moral of the story for the reader: "We are what we pretend to be, so we must be careful about what we pretend to be."³ Neither the author nor the narrator seems to make moral judgments concerning the involved parties of the story, and certainly they do not verbalize them. Vonnegut creates for the reader a group of people, each with a neurotic personality; the book is a compilation of character studies.
Mother Night begins in Israel in 1961. Howard W. Campbell, Jr. is incarcerated in an Israeli prison, being held for crimes he committed against the Jewish people during World War II. The book is structured in forty-five chapters and is contrived as though it were a true story written by Howard W. Campbell, Jr. and edited by Kurt Vonnegut, Jr. The actual title page reading Mother Night appears; it is followed by the Preface and Editor's Note. The book then includes a false title page reading The Confessions of Howard W. Campbell, Jr. The story is told as a series of recollections. Campbell narrates the events surrounding and comprising this life of espionage to his reading audience as an experienced raconteur would tell stories to an assemblage of listeners.

Campbell was an American living in Germany at the outbreak of World War II. He was a successful playwright married to a popular German actress. He was recruited by the American government to operate as a spy because of a radio show which he broadcasted. On the radio program, he delivered violently anti-Semitic editorials, and, through a pattern of coughs, stutters, or throat clearings, he delivered coded information to other American agents. Because of the nature of his editorials, he gained much favor with highly placed Nazi officials, and he accepted a position of authority with the government propaganda bureau and was responsible for shaping the attitudes of the German people.
After the war, Campbell, recently widowed, returned to the United States to live as a recluse. It is in New York that he meets and becomes friends with George Kraft, secretly a Russian agent. Campbell becomes involved with members of various right wing political organizations who are as bizarre as any of Vonnegut's characters. One is a dentist who claims to be able to prove degeneracy on the part of Negroes and Jews by the structure of their jaws and by their teeth; another is a priest who was defrocked for reciting prejudiced and inhumane prayers; another is a Negro, the "Black Fuehrer of Harlem," who was imprisoned in 1942 for being a Japanese spy. These men bring Campbell's supposedly deceased wife to him. Campbell later learns that she is, in fact, his wife's younger sister. When a government agent informs him that she, along with Kraft, is a Russian agent, Campbell confronts them. She kills herself, and Kraft is taken to jail by American agents. Campbell surrenders himself to a Jewish doctor and his mother, both of whom had been prisoners at Auschwitz. They call some Zionist friends who turn Campbell over to the Israeli government.

Chapter Forty-five, the last chapter of *Mother Night*, is written in present tense by Campbell as he awaits trial. He informs the readers of what has become of other characters involved in the story. He sets the scene for his trial, naming those people who have journeyed to Israel to see him
rightfully punished. He receives his mail which includes a letter from the American agent who initially contacted him to engage in espionage. As he reads the letter, he learns that the agent will testify on his behalf. Because this precludes the government's punishing him, he decides to hang himself for crimes committed against himself. He ends his confessions, "Goodbye, cruel world! Auf Wiedersehen?"

In analyzing the structure of a novel for a study of point of view, the reader or oral interpreter must begin with the character of the narrator, particularly when the author has chosen to narrate the novel in the first person. Coger and White speak of the necessity of this type of analysis when they write, "The director (of Readers Theatre) must understand the precise nature of the narrator in order to guide the reader/actor playing this role. Directly proportionate to the degree of emotional involvement is the narrator's activity in the story." In the case of *Mother Night*, the character of the protagonist, Howard W. Campbell, Jr., must be analyzed.

Campbell was born in America, but he moved to Germany at age eleven with his parents. Fluent in German, he became a playwright using the German language. He married Helga Noth, a German actress, and they were deeply, in fact, totally in love until the time of her disappearance during World War II. Campbell discloses this biographic information
from his prison cell in 1961. At the time Campbell actually narrates the story, he is forty-eight years of age. This is the character of the narrator with which the oral interpreter must concern himself. Campbell is tired; he has surrendered himself to the Zionists and has been sent to Israel. Repeatedly throughout the novel, he expresses his greatest desire as having been to hear someone call out "olly-olly-ox-in-free" and, thus, release him from his life of hide-and-seek. He calls himself a "nationless person,"\(^5\) meaning that he feels allegiance to neither the Americans nor the Nazis. His only allegiance seems to have been to his wife and, after her disappearance, to her memory. He served as a spy for the Americans, not out of a sense of loyalty or duty but out of a somewhat perverted inclination to do the unusual. He never professes to be a hero, although he expresses very subtly the wish that others could know of his heroic espionage activities. When he does make friends with his neighbor, Kraft, he tells him the truth; this act is responsible for his identity and existence becoming known to all.

Vonnegut's point with the character of Campbell is that he is neither a hero nor a villain. In fact, he has two personalities: One is the ardent anti-Semite who, by virtue of his broadcasts, inspired Nazis and provided dubious Germans with encouragement to believe that genocide was right; the other is an American agent who risked his life delivering coded information for the Allied forces. Campbell himself
cannot distinguish between his two personalities, but he believes in and trusts the Campbell who lived in a "nation of two" with Helga Noth. In the chapter titled "Purgatory," which introduces his life in New York, he turns himself over to the Zionists for judgment. When he learns that he will again be protected from punishment and subsequent absolution of guilt, he determines to kill himself, thereby punishing himself.

The oral interpreter must be aware of two main things: first, that Campbell is tired, tired of running, tired of hiding, and tired of living with guilt; and second, that neither Vonnegut nor Campbell passes judgment concerning his character. If the reader were to interpret the character as a person who felt a great deal of joie de vivre and who feared death, the story would not make sense. Campbell desires punishment. He relates the tale very calmly from his prison cell the day before his trial is to begin. It is also important that the interpreter not make judgments concerning the character of Campbell. To do so would defeat the author's purpose by distorting the intended moral: "We are what we pretend to be . . . ." The crime against himself for which he commits suicide is the crime of not being true to a single personality because of trying to be the personality called for by the situation of the moment. Howard W. Campbell, Jr. is a complex character, and proper interpretation
of the character is necessary to the communication of the meaning of the novel.

Temporal mode is an important consideration in analyzing narrative structure with respect to point of view. Coger and White note that tense dictates the degree of emotional intensity on the part of the narrator. The fact that Howard W. Campbell, Jr. is tired and wants only to be freed from a life of hide-and-seek depends on the telling of events in past tense. The narrator's level of emotional involvement is low, and it increases only at the conclusion of the novel when he receives the letter which will free him, and he makes the decision to hang himself.

The use of tense is inconsistent. Vonnegut begins the novel in present tense with Campbell in the process of writing his confessions from prison. Campbell's confessions, then, are written in past tense. Vonnegut does not select a date, the beginning of World War II, for example, and proceed forward. He begins the novel in 1961, then has Campbell recall to the end of the war, then to his childhood, then to the beginning of the war, to New York again, and so on. The confessions are told as an older man might reminisce. When a thought occurs to him which he feels he must explain in more detail, he backtracks; then, he returns to the dominant recollection. Campbell is telling about his secret life in New York and how it led to his apprehension and imprisonment, but to explain his life in New York, he must also tell about
his life with Helga, how he became a spy, and how he became involved with George Kraft and the political right-wingers in New York. Consequently, the story is not told in any sort of chronological order.

Vonnegut's choice not to follow chronological order poses a problem for the interpreter; he must not lose his audience to the erratic time sequence. Using one reader to present Howard W. Campbell, Jr., 1961, as the narrator, is advisable; other readers could be used for Campbell during World War II, and Campbell in the 1950's. The narrator-Campbell can supply consistency and continuity; he can move the audience through time. With the use of other readers to portray Campbell at the various times in his life and to deliver the dialogue, the audience should be able to distinguish.

Vonnegut's inconsistent use of tense allows him to employ the device of foreshadowing. Because the narrator is reflecting upon the events of the story, he is aware of their outcome. He knows, for example, the dual identities of George Kraft and the woman who, in the 1950's, professes to be Helga Noth. When Campbell introduces George Kraft, he tells the audience of his true identity. "My neighbor was a foxy old man named George Kraft. That was only one of his names. The real name of this old man was Colonel Iona Patapov. This antique sonofabitch was a Russian agent, had been operating continuously in America since 1935. I didn't
know that." Campbell continues to tell of their friendship and daily amusements. It is several chapters later before Vonnegut unfolds Kraft's plot to kidnap Campbell, to take him to Russia, and to expose him as a war criminal. Before Campbell relates Kraft's story, he alerts the readers, "He then told me what was supposed to be the story of his life, none of it true." It is interesting to note, however, that Campbell does not warn the readers of Helga's true identity until he is well into her story. He informs the reader through progressive scenes of dialogue that "Helga" is actually Resi Noth, Helga's younger sister, but he does not tell the audience that she, too, is a Russian agent. He subtly foreshadows that fact late in the novel when he says, "She wept for joy. For real joy? Who knows." Finally, through dialogue, he informs the audience of Resi's espionage activities.

The use of foreshadowing heightens anticipation and increases audience interest; the interpreter and script adapter must be aware of the importance of foreshadowing. If the reader were to give away the real character of Resi Noth too soon, he would spoil the author's desired effect for surprise. Vonnegut surely had a purpose in revealing Kraft's identity and holding back information about Resi; the audience is amused by Kraft, but it falls in love with Resi, as did Campbell. The adapter must be conscious of Vonnegut's use of foreshadowing so that he does not cut it.
The insinuation that Resi's tears might not be sincere stimulates interest and prepares the audience for the revelation of Resi's character. The early notification of Kraft's identity allows the audience to scrutinize the man and analyze his actions.

The key aspect of point of view which determines the impressions the reader/audience receives is that of narrative perspective. The perspective is the angle of vision by which the reader perceives all characters and events. According to Wallace Bacon, "It is the particular perspective which selects the details and which directs the way in which the details are made to coalesce." In the novel Mother Night, Campbell supplies the perspective. The reader sees Campbell as he sees himself, for example. Campbell devotes a chapter to the dentist who led a right-wing political organization for the purpose of contrasting himself with the man.

Why should I have honored him with such a full dress biography? . . . In order to contrast with myself a race-baiter who is ignorant and insane. I am neither ignorant nor insane. . . . Those whose orders I carried out in Germany were as ignorant and insane as Dr. Jones. I knew it. . . . God help me, I carried out their instructions anyway.

Campbell's defense of his own sanity is the only information by which the reader can know his character. Audience acceptance of his sanity rests on the data he provides. The reader is in the same situation concerning other characters. The protagonist describes the other characters and colors the reader's response to them; he furnishes the visual picture.
When Campbell refers to his father, and he does so only briefly, he introduces him by telling the reader about a book his father kept to look at privately; the book was filled with pictures of nude, mutilated bodies of World War I. Needless to say, the reader's impression of Campbell's father is not a favorable one. When he describes a postwar encounter with his government contact, he steers the audience's view of the agent: "He was bald, had put on weight. Colonel Frank Wirtanen had the impudent, pink-baby look that victory and an American combat uniform seemed to produce in so many older men." Again, the impression created is less than favorable. The case of Resi Noth is different, however. Campbell is infatuated with Resi; because he likes her, the reader sympathizes with her. She is a Russian agent, assigned to aid in capturing Campbell; yet, he presents her as a lovely, misguided young woman. The oral interpreter of Mother Night must interpret the characters as Campbell sees them.

The first person narrative perspective also imposes certain limitations; for example, the first person narrator cannot see into the minds of other characters, and he can only relate those events which he witnesses or in which he takes part. The director must remember this limitation when he is adapting and staging a production. At one point in Mother Night, Campbell is slipped a note instructing him to meet with Colonel Wirtanen. When he asks who passed the note, Wirtanen replies, "You can ask, but you must surely
know I won't tell you." The audience, along with Campbell, never knows. A similar occurrence takes place when Campbell is attacked and knocked unconscious; he reports the events following the attack as Resi told him they happened. He cannot know them himself. He tells the reader what the attacker said, adding "... he said to me, though I could not hear them." If the script adapter omitted such references as these, the audience would more than likely be inclined to question the veracity of Campbell and of his report. One other similar instance occurs near the end of the book; Campbell overhears a conversation from the outside of a doorway. For the scene to be staged with Campbell focusing on the characters, the production would contradict the literature. The narrator would necessarily use audience focus or look in an opposing direction to the scene. These minor details support the credulity of the first person report, and the interpreter must not overlook them.

The believability of this story is an overriding concern of Vonnegut. In addition to being consistent by means of strict adherence to perspective in point of view, he uses several structural devices to heighten the sense of reality attached to the novel. The edition of Mother Night which is in print is the 1966 edition. In this edition, Vonnegut includes an introduction in which he states the moral of the story, discusses Dresden, and tells some family anecdotes; it is written very much in the Vonnegut fashion. Immediately
following the introduction is an editor's note which is signed "Kurt Vonnegut, Jr." He discusses "Campbell's book" and "Campbell's confession." He refers to the original manuscript, and of corrections he says, "I have corrected some spelling, removed some exclamation points, and all the italics are mine." He tells of editorial deletions of certain passages and of legal hassles. To be brief, Vonnegut has gone to great lengths to give the book the appearance of being Campbell's actual, personal account of his life. 

Mother Night is titled within The Confessions of Howard W. Campbell, Jr. and is dedicated, presumably by Campbell, to Mata Hari. A good script adaptation will include a portion of the editor's note, as it is unique and quite convincing.

Another technique Vonnegut uses to give the illusion of reality in Mother Night, as well as in other of his novels, is citing reference material from other sources. These sources may or may not be factual; in Mother Night, they are not. Most of Campbell's "factual" data find their origin in a research project funded by the fictional "Haifa Institute for the Documentation of War Criminals." Often Campbell will supply the reader with some information and then add that he was furnished with the facts by the Haifa Institute. As far as sources are concerned, he cites Life, an article by a Mr. Ian Westlake whose history Vonnegut invents, and a poem by William Blake. In addition to these outside sources, some of Campbell's own writings appear: poems, with the
German and English translations, part of his novel (edited for the sake of prudence by Vonnegut), and a manuscript from one of his radio broadcasts. Vonnegut also uses several letters. Such extraneous material as these writings supplies supporting evidence as to the existence of one Howard W. Campbell, Jr. The adapter is wise to include these sources in a script of *Mother Night*. The article from *The White Christian Minuteman* might be read by one of the interpreters who also reads lines of a right-wing politico. Campbell's broadcast could well be read by the character of Campbell, *World War II*. Campbell, *World War II*, could also read the German translations of the poem, while Campbell, 1961, could read the English.

One further consideration which must be made by an oral interpreter in a study of point of view is that of spatial relationships. Point of view determines the relationships between the narrator and the author, the narrator and the other characters, and the narrator and the audience. In *Mother Night*, the relationship between narrator and author is clearly established; Vonnegut establishes that role in his Editor's Note. Campbell mentions the need for an editor on several occasions in the book. The intrusion of the editor is evident in only one segment of the novel, the reprint of a chapter of Campbell's book recounting his private life with his wife. Several series of ellipses deleting some indelicately graphic descriptions represent the presence of
the editor/author. Vonnegut's authorial involvement in the novel is at a near minimum.

The narrator's relationships with the other characters in *Mother Night* are not strong. The narrator is disillusioned with most of the characters; he stands aloof from the bizarre minor characters. While he has been close to Wirtanen, Kraft, and Resi, they have all disappointed him. He has trusted only Helga, and she is never physically present in the story; she is present only in Campbell's memory. 

Campbell, 1961, would never be too close to the action. He would be nearest it as he watches himself, enacted by other readers, interacting with Kraft and Resi, as these scenes take place when his emotional involvement is the greatest.

Campbell's strongest relationship is with his audience. Howard W. Campbell, Jr. is recording his confessions to be presented to a broad reading audience; providing them with the truth of his existence is his primary goal. He is, therefore, very aware of an audience. For the most part, he addresses the audience directly. He begins Chapter Seven, the autobiographical chapter formally and straightforwardly:

"I, Howard W. Campbell, Jr., was born in Schenectady, New York, on February 6, 1912." This strongly indicates the need to use audience focus. Similar direct references are common. Much later in the novel, Campbell, more than ever aware of his audience, shields them from abusive language. Rather than record an obscene word, he alludes, very
concretely, to the word as "the most offensive compound word in the English language." He avoids offending his audience. Campbell also frequently addresses his audience directly, via the use of asides. He will interrupt dialogue to clarify or to comment on the situation. An example of his use of asides is found in Chapter Eighteen when he comments, "When I call this unit a Nazi daydream, incidentally, I am suffering an attack of schizophrenia--because the idea of the Free American Corps began with me." He interrupts dialogue between Campbell, 1950's, and Resi, to comment, "It was a coward's lie. I am not an old man." Campbell is confiding in his audience; he is being honest with them. He, at this point, is psychologically much closer to the audience than to the other characters, and the staging must reflect this closeness by placing him spatially and/or focally nearer the audience. One other technique Vonnegut uses with Campbell is to have him address one specific audience member. After telling the audience about his best friend, Campbell breaks away from the general audience and addresses the friend individually. A director could use the narrator effectively by having him visually scan the audience looking for Heinz and having him address the audience with an air of confidence, intimating that Heinz is out there somewhere; his focus would be above the heads of the audience.

Vonnegut has used a number of techniques to make Campbell real to the audience. One of the major tasks of the
oral interpreter of *Mother Night* is to communicate this sense of actuality. A complete study of the point of view methods used in *Mother Night* provides a solid base on which the interpreter can build. If he uses for his interpretations the techniques Vonnegut employed in his writing, the chances are very good that the performance will be successful. The audience should leave the performance hall with the feeling that they knew Howard W. Campbell, Jr. and that his existence was as real as the existence of the person walking in front of them.

**Cat's Cradle**

*Cat's Cradle*, published in 1963, was the book which established Vonnegut as a serious novelist. His first books had been dismissed as science fiction, and while the subject of *Cat's Cradle* is a holocaust brought on by irresponsible scientists, critics recognized the novel as a creditable effort. Vonnegut also criticizes or, rather, ridicules religion in the book. The theme of the novel is humankind, treated with Vonnegut humor.

*Cat's Cradle* is Vonnegut's version of the end of the world. Like *Mother Night*, the story is narrated by a writer whose name is John; he begins the book with the words, "Call me Jonah." The narrator is, of course, likening himself to the narrator of *Moby Dick*. The novel is divided into one hundred twenty-seven chapters, each chapter averaging one and one-fourth pages in length. It spans a period of
approximately two years. As one of the world's last survivors, John is reflecting upon the peculiar events which brought about the holocaust. John was doing research for a novel which he intended to write. The novel was titled, The Day the World Ended, and was to be about Dr. Felix Hoenikker, the father of the atom bomb. The novel was to be a humanistic approach rather than scientific, and, consequently, John attempted unsuccessfully to contact Hoenikker's children. A year passed before John traveled to Ilium, New York, to the Research Laboratory of the General Forge and Foundry Company, the company for which Hoenikker had worked. As John tours the lab, Vonnegut takes stabs at science and the destructiveness of many inventions. John learns about Hoenikker and his three children: Newt, a midget; Angela, an extremely tall and homely woman; and Frank, a quiet but scientifically inclined young man.

In Chapter Forty, the scene shifts, and John is flying to the Caribbean island of San Lorenzo to do a magazine story on a Dr. Albert Schweitzer-type man. Frank Hoenikker is also living in San Lorenzo. San Lorenzo is an impoverished and worthless island run by a militaristic regime of two: Papa Monzano, the President, and Frank Hoenikker. San Lorenzeans practice the religion Bokononism. Bokononism provided the means for Vonnegut to exercise his imagination, inventing words and teachings, and to fault conventional
religions. The Books of Bokonon contain "foma," harmless untruths which make living more bearable. Angela and Newt have journeyed to San Lorenzo also, for the purpose of seeing their brother Frank. Each has in his possession a thermos jug containing a sliver of ice-nine. Ice-nine was invented by their father and freezes water on contact; misuse of ice-nine can and does freeze all of the water on earth and thus brings on the holocaust. Papa Monzano is dying and chooses to commit suicide, using ice-nine. There is an earthquake and his frozen corpse slides off a cliff into a waterfall which flows into the Caribbean; thus, the world becomes one large ice cube, as first the waterfall, then the stream, and all the water on earth is frozen. The peasants of San Lorenzo die because they follow Bokonon's instructions to touch the ground and then touch their fingers to their lips. John, Newt, Frank, and an American couple are the only survivors on the island, possibly the only survivors in the world.

For Cat's Cradle, Vonnegut uses first person narration by a minor character. John is a participant in most of the action, and the story does seem to follow him. John explains his role, however, in the brief opening chapter; he says he was compelled by forces unknown to be at given places at given times and that his duty is to record what took place. The first line, "Call me Jonah," is, of course, an allusion to Melville's Moby Dick. It is Jonah who narrates the tale
of the great white whale, and it is interesting to note that Coger and White use *Moby Dick* as their illustration of first person point of view narrated by a character who is a minor participant in the action.\(^{21}\)

In his dissertation written on Vonnegut, David H. Goldsmith points up the objectivity of the narrator.\(^{22}\) John reports the events of the novel much as a journalist would. When he records the customs of Bokononism and the writings of Bokonon, he seems unaware of the puns; his sense of humor does not intrude. For example, Bokononists practice Boko-maru, a religious ritual which entails two people lying on their backs and pressing their bare feet together, sole to sole. If an oral reader points up the pun, he will be contradicting the character of the narrator. His emotional involvement is considerably less than might be expected of a main character; his concerns are neither with his own emotions nor with those of the other characters. He remains politely aloof except for a brief romantic attachment to a beautiful island girl; his only noticeable display of emotion is in response to her death. The oral interpreter will benefit by recognizing his objectivity and affecting it with strong reliance on the techniques of paralanguage.

The minor character narrator is not nearly as extensively characterized as is a protagonist. The reader knows Campbell's history from childhood to death; the reader knows of John's life only over a two-year period, and that is
defined only as it is peripheral to the lives of the other characters. He is a writer by profession; he was a Christian, but is now a Brokononist by faith. His last name is never given, but the reader learns that it is a peculiar German name. Vonnegut, perhaps? John is also a Hoosier. The above is the extent of the information provided concerning the narrator. There is no mention of his background; description of his appearance is totally neglected. The oral interpreter studying the character of the narrator might conclude that Vonnegut intends John to be as unobtrusive as possible. If this is the case, the reader should be advised to underplay the role, to keep the narrator in the background. His chief purpose in the novel, and he recognizes it, is to have John serve as a vehicle to communicate the facts concerning the end of the world. To spotlight the narrator, as would be necessary in *Mother Night*, could only detract from the performance of *Cat's Cradle*.

John delivers his account in past tense. He is writing his book from San Lorenzo, as one of the world's last survivors. He writes the first three and one-half chapters in present tense. In these initial chapters, he introduces himself and Bokononism, explaining the latter minimally. He then begins to discuss Newt Hoenikker and a letter he wrote to Newt asking for information about Dr. Hoenikker; there begins his account of the complete and true story of the end of the world. This story is easier for the reader
to follow and, consequently, easier for the oral interpreter to adapt, as the narration is chronological. John begins with his letter to Newt and from there proceeds in an orderly sequence. The only retrogressions occur when another character is asked to recall facts concerning either Dr. Hoenikker's or his own past. The director should be conscious of the tense. A production of *Cat's Cradle* might begin with the narrator positioned on a stool, spotlighted from out of darkness. As he recounts his tale, he can walk about setting the stage as each event occurs. If the director establishes one part of the stage as Ilium and another as San Lorenzo, John should be placed in the San Lorenzo area for the beginning of the production.

Vonnegut's use of past tense to recount the holocaust allows him the use of two narrative techniques; both techniques depend on present tense interjections by the narrator which are comments directed to the audience. The first use of present tense involves the simple concept of looking back. John often says, "Had I been a Bokononist then . . .," and explains a Bokononist concept. As Vonnegut has coined his own terms for Bokononist experiences and rituals, he uses present tense to break away from the action and explain these terms to the reader. The director of a Readers Theatre production of *Cat's Cradle* could "freeze" all of the characters except John and have him shift to direct eye contact with the audience.
The second technique is one Vonnegut used in *Mother Night*, foreshadowing. John is reflecting upon the events of the previous two years, and he attempts to prepare the reader somewhat for the dismal conclusion. When he describes an inseparable couple traveling to San Lorenzo, he labels their relationship a "duprass," a concept very like the "nation of two" in *Mother Night*. He explains that members of a duprass usually die within a week of each other; of this particular couple he adds, "When it came time for the Mintons to die, they did it within the same second." The foreshadowing becomes increasingly ominous near the end of the novel. John has been asked to succeed Papa Monzano. Dreaming of what a Utopian country he would rule, he concludes, "Fata Morgana. Mirage!" The most threatening piece of foreshadowing comes even later when he is listing the people present at a formal ceremony. As an afterthought, he writes, "Dead--almost all dead now." Here the tone of the novel changes, becoming heavier and more foreboding. The mood is important to the effect of the novel, and, therefore, the adapter must search for and retain the lines which do foreshadow the holocaust.

To analyze the perspective of the novel, the reader basically can only study John's descriptions of other characters. He speaks very little of himself. When he does refer to himself, it is usually when he is a part of a group; the reader does see, however, that he is in love with Mona
Aamons. He reveals his feelings as he describes her; his perspective is obviously clouded by his feelings.

Her dress was white and Greek. She wore flat sandals on her small brown feet. Her pale gold hair was lank and long. Her hips were a lyre. Oh God. She was the one beautiful girl in San Lorenzo. She was the national treasure.

His opinion of Mona is clearly established; he has gone so far as to paragraph each sentence describing her. His descriptions of Angela and Frank are much less flattering. Of Frank, he saw a photograph of "... a narrow-shouldered, fox-face, immature young man. His eyes were close together; they had circles under them ... He had a wiry pompadour, a sort of cube of hair ... "27 John repeatedly refers to Angela as a "horsey-faced platinum blond." As in the case of Campbell in Mother Night, the narrator's descriptions in Cat's Cradle are somewhat negative, except in picturing the woman he loved.

Vonnegut is careful to maintain the first person point of view perspective; he is consistent in his use of point of view for Cat's Cradle. Recognizing that a first person narrator is necessarily limited in vision, he allows John to draw on other sources, as did Campbell. The first use of another source comes very early in the novel when Newt replies to a letter John wrote him. Newt's reply supplies personal information concerning Dr. Hoenikker at home and Newt's personal responses to his father. In Ilium, John interviewed
people who had worked with Hoenikker. The entire description of him, in fact, came from other sources. For information concerning San Lorenzo and Bokonon, Vonnegut has John refer to various books and magazines. The most interesting scene, however, is the one in which the Hoenikker children recount the day of their father's death, the day they came to possess ice-nine. John functions only as an observer. The Hoenikker children had blocked the day from their memories and had to piece bits of information together; their perspectives had been muddied and had to be cleared. John only comments. The use of these sources in any script adapted for production is essential; again, the sources provide supporting material for John and allow him to fill in the blanks his limited perspective necessitates. In editing *Cat's Cradle* for length, the adapter must avoid cutting John's references to his primary sources, as they heighten believability.

Vonnegut uses two structural devices other than his "invented" books, such as the one the narrator was writing, in *Cat's Cradle* which create problems for the oral interpreter. The first is in the use of one hundred twenty-seven chapters. Each of the chapters is titled. The first question the director/adapter must answer is "Whose titles are they?" Is the presence of each chapter title an intrusion by Vonnegut, or are they John's titles for his book? Will the adapter choose simply to overlook chapter divisions and
proceed with the narrative? The decision is his; probably deletion would be the simplest approach. An alternative might be to use slides projecting the chapter titles, but editing of chapters will cause problems, as chapter titles are numbered. The other problem with structure is in the reprint of Bokononist calypsos, poems explaining Bokononist teachings, paralleled probably to the Psalms. The words of the calypsos are Bokonon's; John presents them to the audience. John often prefaces a Bokononist calypso with the words, "Bokonon invites us to sing with him . . ." The director might silhouette Bokonon on a deserted wing of the stage and have him chant the calypso quietly with John. This should be effective in establishing the mood of the strange religion on a Caribbean island and in highlighting the point of view, Bokonon through John.

Finally, there is the consideration of spatial relationships. The relationship of the author to the narrator is made more interesting because of the chapter titles, intrusions by Vonnegut. The other interesting intrusion on the part of Vonnegut occurs when John is studying a tombstone. The history of the tombstone is that the purchaser was a German immigrant who settled in Indiana; the last name on the monument was John's. The tale of a German family settling in Indiana is, of course, from Vonnegut's family history, and the funny name which was not Americanized could well be "Vonnegut." Therefore, the question
necessarily arises, as surely Vonnegut intended it to: Is John really Kurt Vonnegut, Jr.? There is no answer. The Readers Theatre director can, however, improve his production by including the tombstone scene. An effective use of lighting will enhance the mood of *déjà-vu*. Since this incident propels John to journey to San Lorenzo, the director can easily justify its inclusion. No definitive answer can be given concerning Vonnegut's relationships with the author, but the slight authorial intrusions are, if anything, typically Vonnegut.

The narrator's relationship to the other characters is distant. He remains aloof. The staging would be similar to that of *Mother Night* in that the narrator should not be particularly near the action. Two readers might be used for the narrator, one to read lines of narration and one to interact with the characters and perform dialogue. The character-narrator would be positioned with the other characters, while the straight narrator would travel within the action and use audience focus.

The significant relationship, again, is with the audience. He addresses the audience directly, as did Campbell. He begins his account of Bokononism directing his audience to "Listen." More importantly, however, John establishes a very personal relationship with his audience. He addresses them in the plural first person, "we." The use of "we" and "us" constitutes a sense of identification between the
audience and the narrator. He says, "I mean to examine all strong hints as to what on earth we, collectively, have been up to." When he mentions Bokonon's calypso, he again uses the "we" form, saying, "As Bokonon invites us to sing along with him . . . ." Having informed his audience of Bokononist rituals and customs, he has established a common bond. He uses the bond for private jokes or comments to the audience. Having interviewed a woman who expresses ideas parallel to those of Bokonon, the narrator says to his audience, "Miss Faust was ripe for Bokononism." The narrator's feeling of closeness to the audience is important. Eye contact will establish the closeness as well as any technique. Direct audience focus will draw them into the novel. A director must be conscious of the relationship and use it to the advantage of the production.

A production of *Cat's Cradle* must pay attention to dominant themes. The director must design the production to fault science and religion. The identification between John and the audience is an important persuasive technique; if the audience likes the narrator, they are more inclined to believe as he wants them to and, therefore, as Vonnegut wants them to believe. The credulity of this bizarre story is important also, and, again, Vonnegut's adherence to first person perspective heightens it. Point of view must be an important concern of the oral interpreter.
Conclusion

The two novels, *Mother Night* and *Cat's Cradle*, were written during the mid years of Vonnegut's novel writing period. He uses first person point of view very effectively and consistently. He selects a narrator and proceeds to present his story through the mind of that first person narrator. He maintains his narrator's perspective, and he maneuvers within the limitations imposed by the use of first person. Vonnegut's creative genius went to work to devise narrative techniques which would bridge the gaps necessitated by the first person limitations; he used primary sources, such as documentary evidence and fictional novels. He uses tense to increase anticipation and interest via foreshadowing. Mechanically, Vonnegut's attempts at first person narration are successful.

The level of credibility attainable is probably a key factor in Vonnegut's choice of using a first person narrator. Both stories, the Campbell spy story and the story of the ice-nine holocaust, are not only highly unlikely, but frankly, very unbelievable. By using first person point of view, Vonnegut makes the reader believe in the protagonist and, therefore, in his story. The reader can believe in the protagonist for two reasons. First, Vonnegut is consistent in his use of first person; the characters tell only what they can know; they do not fabricate. Second, Vonnegut develops a very strong narrator/audience relationship. Using
the persuasive technique of identification with both Camp-
bell and John, Vonnegut wins for them the favor of his
readers. The audience likes the narrators and is, there-
fore, more inclined to believe their tales.

The oral interpreter owes Vonnegut a truthful interpre-
tation of his writings. Vonnegut focuses on the narrator in
these two novels, and it is the interpreter's duty to do the
same. The reader and director must study the novel, paying
close attention to the narrator. The adaptation should be
designed to present the story from the narrator's perspec-
tive. The narrator's character should be studied and fully
developed. Finally, the correct relationships must be deter-
mined and established. The Readers Theatre audience should
receive from a production of *Mother Night* or *Cat's Cradle* the
same feeling and emotional response that Vonnegut intended
to give the silent reader. This feeling can best be attained
through careful study of point of view.
NOTES


2 Ibid.


4 Coger and White, pp. 72-73.

5 Vonnegut, Mother Night, p. 17.

6 Coger and White, p. 73.

7 Vonnegut, Mother Night, p. 48.

8 Ibid., p. 49.

9 Ibid., p. 126.


11 Vonnegut, Mother Night, p. 61.

12 Ibid., p. 135.

13 Ibid., p. 152.

14 Ibid., p. 111.

15 Ibid., p. x.

16 Ibid., p. 31.

17 Ibid., p. 180.

18 Ibid., p. 77.

19 Ibid., p. 160.

21 Coger and White, p. 49.


23 Vonnegut, Cat's Cradle, p. 65.

24 Ibid., p. 144.


26 Ibid., p. 98.

27 Ibid., p. 60.

28 Ibid., p. 11.

29 Ibid., p. 13.

30 Ibid., p. 68.

31 Ibid., p. 44.
CHAPTER III

THIRD PERSON POINT OF VIEW

Introduction

The second basic approach to point of view is the use of a third person narrator. The third person narrator reports events as he witnesses them, and he reports them from outside the action. The third person narrator has no character, except that which can be drawn from the tone of the writing and the word choice. This narrator has one duty and that is to record events as they happen and, occasionally, thoughts as they occur to the other characters. This approach to narration generally requires less of the author as he can tell a story very simply with little regard to the narrator's perspective. It is possible for the third person narrator to see into the minds of the characters, thus releasing the author from worries about limited vision; therefore, the author is not in a position to worry as greatly with credibility. The third person narrator gives less biased accounts than the first person narrator and has less reason to mislead or to lie to the audience. This narrator can, and often does, function as would the author of a fictional novel.
Coger and White separate third person narration into three categories, also. The first type of third person narrator is the omniscient narrator. The omniscient narrator can see into the minds of all of the characters in the novels. He reflects their thoughts, responses, and emotions to the audience. The omniscient narrator knows things the characters participating in the action do not; for example, he may explain why a particular event occurred, an explanation unknown to the participants in the story. To be brief, the omniscient narrator is a controlling and an all-seeing god figure in the story. Go Tell It On the Mountain, by James Baldwin, is told by an omniscient narrator.

The second type of third person narrator has limited omniscience. This narrator is removed from the action, but he is involved with his story to the extent that he favors one character, generally the main character and, therefore, empathizes with him. He is omniscient only where one character is concerned. He can see things that the first person narrator cannot—the death of the character or the future, for example—but the only mind he can read or conscience he can reflect is that of the main character. Kafka uses a third person narrator with limited omniscience in his short story "The Metamorphosis."

The last class of third person narrator is that of the objective observer. The narrator reports only what is discernible from witnessing the action of the story. This type
of narration is usually very descriptive in structure and, in instances where characters are involved, frequently contains great amounts of dialogue. Since the narrator does not convey the other characters' thoughts and does not draw conclusions, the "eye-witness" report is the most journalistic approach to point of view in literature. Hemingway's short story "The Killers" fits into this category, and one might note that it is written almost entirely as dialogue.¹

Vonnegut employs only one class of third person point of view in his novels, and that is the omniscient narrator. He uses third person point of view in Player Piano and later in The Sirens of Titan. The student of point of view might find it interesting to observe that these two novels are the first two he wrote. The narration in Player Piano is very uncomplicated and is, in fact, quite simple. He uses few narrative devices and does not worry with the problems of perspective, characterization of the narrator, and tense, such problems as are associated with first person point of view. His intended message is blatently stated for the reader, and it is significant that Player Piano is his least popular novel. The Sirens of Titan, Vonnegut's second novel, written seven years later, is also narrated by an omniscient storyteller. The narrator of this novel obviously emphasizes strongly with the main character, but he sees into the minds of numerous other characters, thereby avoiding the classification of limited omniscience. In this second book,
Vonnegut begins to use more structural devices, and the narrator/audience relationship begins to develop more interesting angles for analysis.

**Player Piano**

*Player Piano*, Vonnegut's first novel, was published in 1952, the year that he left his employment with General Electric in Schenectady. The story is placed in the future, at a time when there is no war, and a person with a respectable social position has at least one Ph.D. Society is totally mechanized, and extravagant conveniences are had by all. Those people with low I.Q.'s are not permitted to continue their educations and, therefore, are forced to take menial socialized jobs in either the army or the Reconstruction and Reclamation Corps; the "socialized jobs" are in reality nothing more than makework jobs. Machines have taken jobs from the people, and the people plan to revolt. Paul Proteus, the main character of the novel, is one of the leading supervisors of the Ilium Works, the plant maintaining the machines which, in their turn, maintain Ilium. Dr. Proteus is a discontented member of the intelligentsia, discontented because he feels guilt for having propagated machines which have made human beings worthless and, for all practical purposes, obsolete. At the close of the novel, Dr. Proteus has joined the bourgeois revolutionaries in a futile attempt to overthrow the machines.
The narrative structure of the novel is very basic and deviates from the norm only minimally. Chapter I begins, "Ilium, New York, is divided into three parts," an obvious drawing from Caesar's account of the Gallic Wars; from there the narrator proceeds to set the scene. He describes the setting, establishes the approximate place in time, and introduces most of the book's main characters. There is a scant amount of dialogue sandwiched by virtual loaves of exposition. Chapter I unfortunately sets the pace for the entire novel; a fact which creates problems, especially for the oral interpreter. *Player Piano* is Vonnegut's longest novel, and the length is attributable to the verbose, wordy narrative and not to a particularly complicated plot structure. The silent reading becomes monotonous, and the reader is likely to feel bogged down and somewhat bored.

The adapter/director who chooses to perform *Player Piano* has a rather difficult task before him. The first step will necessarily be editing the book and deleting bulks of cumbersome narration in the hope of maintaining audience interest. Large amounts of description and whole scenes can be cut out. The adapter must be careful only to retain information which is essential to the communication of the author's storyline and intended meaning. Certain scenes which will add to audience interest and to the aesthetic dimensions of the novel will be discussed later in this section.
Having edited his script, the adapter/director is faced with the difficult decisions associated with the assignment of lines. Because *Player Piano* contains so much narration, the script adapter will be forced to use his imagination to avoid giving the great majority of lines to the narrator. An audience may become bored with hearing the voice of one reader for long periods of time. The solution, of course, is to divide the lines of narration among more than one reader. The adapter/director must then decide what approach to the division of narration will be most effective for a particular piece of literature.

While the simplest solution might be to use two narrators, the wise director will surely recognize that a more communicative and a more aesthetically appealing approach is available for use in the adaptation of *Player Piano*. Since the narrative voice of the book is omniscient, the narrator necessarily verbalizes the innermost thoughts and feelings of several characters. Why not, then, allow those characters to read the lines describing their own thoughts and feelings? Wayne Booth justified the interpretive practice of allowing a character to carry his own narration when he wrote, "We should remind ourselves that any sustained inside view, of whatever depth, temporarily turns the character whose mind is shown into a narrator." Therefore, when Vonnegut writes into a novel a lengthy paragraph or sections of narrative using third person narration, the adapter/director is perfectly
justified in dividing the lines between the narrator and the
color being described. In the first chapter of *Player
Piano*, the narrator describes Paul Proteus at length. The
description of Proteus's fantasies will be much more concrete
and exciting to the audience if he shares in the narration.
The following description is written into *Player Piano* as
one narrative paragraph, but it could be divided thus:

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**Narrator:** At the door, in the old part of the building
once more, Paul paused for a moment to listen
to the music of Building 58. He had had it
in the back of his mind for years to get a
composer to do something with it—the Building 58 Suite.

**Paul:** It was wild and Latin music, hectic rhythms,
fading in and out of phase, kaleidoscopic sound.

**Narrator:** He tried to separate and identify the themes.

**Paul:** There! The lathe groups, the tenors: "Furr-azz-ow-ow-ow-ow-ak! Ting! Furr-azz-ow-ow..." The welders, the baritones:
"Vaaaaaa-zuzip! Vaaaaaa-zuzip!" And with
the basement as a resonating chamber, the
punch presses, the basses: "Aw-grumph! tonka-tonka. Aw-grumph! tonka-tonka..."

**Narrator:** It was exciting music, and Paul, flushed, his
vague anxieties gone, gave himself over to it.

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Because Paul and the narrator are working together to com-
municate an idea, the staging and focus should reflect the
psychological nearness to and dependence on one another. The
director might position the two readers physically close to-
gether, or he might use focus, having the omniscient narrator
look directly at Paul and having Paul focus off-stage,
visualizing Building 58.
Another scene in this novel which will benefit greatly from the technique of using a character to carry his own narration is the Chapter XXIX dream scene. In this scene, Dr. Proteus is in a drugged state. He is waking to be questioned by the revolutionaries who have kidnapped him, but, in his stupor, the dream and the actual questioning blend. The omniscient narrator can reflect Proteus's hazy, euphoric thoughts, or Proteus can be allowed to disclose his own thoughts. This scene might be best performed by several readers: the narrator, to deliver fairly objective observations of the action taking place in the story; Paul, to deliver the lines of narration describing his dream; a reader, to deliver the lines Paul hears himself saying; and the other readers, to enact the actual happenings. The scene might begin in this manner:

**Narrator:** Doctor Paul Proteus, to all practical purposes Mr. Paul Proteus, dreamed of nothing but pleasant things under the benign drug, and spoke simultaneously, without reflection but truthfully, on whatever subject was brought to his attention. The talking he did, the answering of questions, went on as though it were being done by a person hired to represent him, while Paul personally gave his attention to entertaining phantasmagoria within the privacy of his closed eyelids.

**Voice:** "Did you really get fired, or was it a pretense?" said the voice.

**Character of Paul:** "Pretense. Supposed to get into the Ghost Shirt Society and find out what they're up to. Only I quit, and they don't know that yet."
Narrator: Paul chuckled. And in his dream, Paul danced powerfully, gracefully, to the hectic rhythms of the Building 58 Suite.

Paul: "Furrazz-ow-ow-ow-ow-ow-ak! ting!" went the lathe group three, and Paul leapt and spun among the machines, while, pink amid the gray machines in the building's center, Anita lay invitingly in a rainbow-colored nest of control wires. Her part in the dance called for her only to lie there motionless, while Paul approached and fled, approached and fled in frenzied, random action.

Again, the narrator's concern is with the character whose subconscious he is reflecting. The narrator of Player Piano cares little for the audience and devotes his attentions to the characters of the story. The adapter/director will reflect this relationship in staging the scene. Possibly the director of Player Piano will allow the narrator to stand with the characters and be present for the inquisition.

Vonnegut does experiment somewhat with narrative technique in this book. Perhaps the best developed technique he uses is in having two storylines which never intersect. The main storyline, of course, tells the tale of Dr. Proteus and his internal conflicts. The second major storyline is totally unrelated to the first. The Shah of Bratpuhr is visiting the United States and is being guided around the country by a nervous public relations man. Vonnegut uses the Shah to pass judgment on this mechanized society. Because the Shah is from another culture and presumably does not comprehend American life, he can very accidentally supply
enlightening comments, probably the editorial opinions of Vonnegut. In Chapter XVII, the Shah visits a typical American home. The guide points out all of the time-saving conveniences which equip the house, allowing the citizen to "get fun out of life," to live. The Shah asks the woman what she does to get so much fun out of life, and she responds, "Oh, television. Watch that a lot, don't we, Ed?" By the end of the chapter, the family has fought, and the reader recognizes how miserable the people are. The Shah leaves the scene crying cheerfully, "Brahounal! Brahouna, Takaru." The reader has already been told the translation: "Live! Live, slave." The Shah and Dr. Proteus come close to meeting only once, near the end of the novel, as the Shah's limousine drives through Ilium during the riots.

Any production of Player Piano must include the Shah and his companions. The Shah supplies not only the editorial comments of the author but also the comic relief. As one chapter ends, Paul Proteus might be emotionally torn between two worlds; as the next begins, there is an entire shift of scene to the Shah; then, back to Paul. The director must be cautious never to let the Shah and Paul Proteus occupy the same stage area nor to let them be in-scene simultaneously until the time of the riots. At that time, the two companies of characters, the Shah's and Paul's, should approach meeting; the director should encourage the audience to anticipate such a meeting, but, then, he should have the Shah pass and
go out of scene, thereby allowing the script to present, accurately, the structure Vonnegut intended *Player Piano* to have.

The only deviation from conventional third person narration which can be found in the narrative structure of *Player Piano* is in the inclusion of one scene which is written in play form. Chapter XXI describes a tradition which is part of the Meadows, a retreat for aspiring engineers and managers. The tradition is an assembly which features a morality play; the play supports the virtues of the system and the malevolence of the radicals. The "play" includes stage directions and information at the beginning, establishing the time, place, etc. In this scene, Vonnegut again provides comic relief, as the play is very melodramatic, and the reader is fully aware of the satire Vonnegut intends. The direction of the scene must establish the play form. A stage manager might be used to read the introductory setting of time and place and the stage directions; this reader might use his script very obtrusively to represent the manuscript of the play from which the directions derive. The other readers enacting play characters probably would not use scripts; instead, they would memorize their lines and employ on-stage focus very definitively.

Of Vonnegut's novels, *Player Piano* would probably be the least effective as a Readers Theatre production. An entertaining production of *Player Piano* would depend most
heavily upon a good script adaptation. The novel is relatively long and would be difficult to adapt, but with the use of characters sharing narration, with the narrator, and with the inclusion of the Shah and the "play," one possibly could adapt an interesting script. The oral interpreter will also find some humorous scenes in the novel which can be used effectively, and without much difficulty, for individual readings.

The Sirens of Titan

The Sirens of Titan, Vonnegut's second novel, is more imaginative than the first, and it is chiefly this novel which was responsible for his being labeled a science-fiction writer. The Sirens of Titan deals with space travel and life on other planets, but the characters are very human. The story is set in the future, somewhere "between the Second World War and the Third Great Depression." The main characters are Winston Niles Rumfoord, a Kennedy-type aristocrat, who is caught in a time warp during space travel and who materializes and dematerializes at given intervals, Malachi Constant, the richest man on Earth, and Beatrice Rumfoord, married first to Winston Niles Rumfoord and later, in outer space, to Malachi Constant. Rumfoord, because he is caught in a chrono-synclastic infundibulum, can live all moments at once and can, therefore, see into the future. He tells Malachi Constant in the first chapter that he (Malachi) will
marry Beatrice, have a son, and eventually live on Titan, a moon of Saturn. The bulk of the novel explains how these events come to pass. Malachi will marry Beatrice and live on Mars, where Beatrice will bear him a son named Chrono. He will then be trapped in the underground caves of Mercury and then return to Earth to be recognized as the prophet of a new religion, The Church of God The Utterly Indifferent. Finally, he will leave Earth with Beatrice and Chrono to meet Rumfoord on Titan. Once on Titan, Rumfoord explains the purpose of all he, Constant, Beatrice, and Chrono have done. They have brought a spaceship part for a Tralfamadorian who was stranded on Titan thousands of years before. All of Earthling civilization was manipulated for thousands of years to bring the part to Salo, the mechanical creature from Tralfamadore.

The Sirens of Titan is almost as long as Player Piano, but the plot structure is more complex. The story moves from location to location and tells story upon story. The Martians wage war with Earth, using only old Spanish-American War weapons and Springfield rifles. On Mercury, Malachi, who at the time is using his Martian name Unk, lives with thousands of amoeba-like creatures called harmoniums which love music. On Earth, Unk is a prophet, and the symbol of evil is Malachi Constant; in this portion of the novel, the religion, the outcome of the war, and Beatrice's and Chrono's arrival on Earth are explained. Finally on Titan, Salo's
story is told. One problem the oral interpreter must face is quickly recognized: how to cut so much information to a reasonable length for production. It would be impossible to remove an entire section, as all are necessary to Constant's eventual arrival on Titan. The safest approach to cutting would be to exclude the stories peripheral to the central purpose of transporting Malachi from planet to planet. Various minor characters are discussed at length, and their histories can be cut. A script for group interpretation could focus only on the main storyline.

Vonnegut uses several more narrative devices in *The Sirens of Titan* than he used in *Player Piano*. Rather than filling the novel with expository narrative, Vonnegut uses a technique which is new to him with *The Sirens of Titan*. He uses what Goldsmith terms "non-narrative materials to advance the plot and develop character and mood." This is what is referred to in Chapter II as the use of primary sources. Rather than explain chrono-synclastic infundibula with a paragraph of conventional narrative, he refers readers to *A Child's Cyclopedia of Wonders and Things to Do*. All of the facts about Mars are reported as they appear in Winston Niles Rumfoord's *Pocket History of Mars*. While the books are, of course, simply Vonnegut's creations, Vonnegut blends his fiction with fact to give even these bizarre events traces of credibility. He affects this blend of fact and fiction in Chapter VII when he writes, "It has been said
that Earthling civilization, so far, has created ten thousand wars but only three intelligent commentaries on war—the commentaries of Thucydides, of Julius Caesar, and of Winston Niles Rumfoord.\textsuperscript{11} He also uses letters a great deal. When Malachi has had his memory cleaned out on Mars, he finds a letter addressed to himself. The letter supplies the information concerning his life on Mars and facts about the Martian army. It is signed "Unk," which is, of course, Malachi's Martian name. The book includes other letters, but the letter from Unk to himself is the most significant. Vonnegut's use of nonnarrative devices solves many of the script adapter's problems. Rather than being forced to deal with lengthy passages of conventional narrative, the adapter may include the nonnarrative passages and assign the lines to various readers.

Vonnegut makes use of a few other interesting narrative devices in \textit{The Sirens of Titan}. One passage of interest is the dedication which appears just before the text of Chapter I. Vonnegut writes, "All persons, places, and events in this book are real. Certain speeches and thoughts are necessarily constructions by the author. No names have been changed to protect the innocent, since God Almighty protects the innocent as a matter of Heavenly routine."\textsuperscript{12} This quotation is so saturated with Vonnegut's flavor that its inclusion in a group interpretation production seems to be essential. The passage could be used very effectively to
introduce the production. With the stage still in darkness, a voice, live or recorded, could be projected from behind the audience; gradually, then, the lights could come up.

A similar technique Vonnegut uses is beginning each chapter with a relevant quotation. In and of itself, this practice is not too extraordinary, but the quotations Vonnegut uses are quotations of the characters. Each chapter ends a scene, and the reader has the feeling of beginning a new episode as he begins the next chapter. Inclusion of these quotations in a Readers Theatre would serve a twofold purpose: first, it would add variety and flavor by giving another reader lines at a point separating the narrative, and second, and more important, it would point up structure. Hopefully, the audience would get the same feeling of beginning a new episode. One chapter in the last section of the novel begins with quotations from several different sources, from books written by the characters of the novel.

Vonnegut uses foreshadowing in *The Sirens of Titan*, but not for the same reasons as he uses it in *Mother Night*. In *Mother Night*, the narrator foreshadows to prepare the audience for what is to come, but in *The Sirens of Titan*, the chief purpose of foreshadowing is to reflect the omniscience of the narrator. The novel is told primarily in past tense, with the narrator recalling the events for a reading audience. What the narrator actually does, as compared to foreshadowing, is to summarize or to outline events and then to
expound upon them. He does this very significantly twice in the novel. In the first chapter, he sketches an outline of events as to what will happen to Malachi; he then spends the rest of the book supplying subpoints and details. The second time he outlines events for the audience is in the epilogue to the novel. He summarizes very briefly what happens to each of the main characters, but then he takes several pages to recount the story as it happened. The script adapter could use the brief summary to end the production, but to do so would cause the literature to suffer. The details which are supplied in the epilogue are poignant and can supply a touching ending. The summary does emphasize the omniscient position of the narrator and should not be excluded.

The most noteworthy narrative technique Vonnegut employs in *The Sirens of Titan* involves the spatial relationships which are established, and most particularly, the narrator/audience relationship. The narrator in *The Sirens of Titan* is naturally close to the other characters, since he is omniscient and discloses their thoughts. He is closest to Malachi/Unk, and Unk is the main character and the one with whom he begins and ends his narrative. The important factor, however, is embodied in the style and manner in which he addresses the audience. Chapter I begins by establishing the scene, but the establishing of the scene is directed to an audience; the tone is that of a parent telling a story to a child or of a teacher addressing a group of students:
Everyone knows now how to find the meaning of life within himself. But mankind wasn't always so lucky. Less than a century ago men and women did not have easy access to the puzzle boxes within them. . . . What were people like in olden times, with their souls as yet unexplored? The following is a true story from the Nightmare Ages, falling roughly, give or take a few years, between the Second World War and the Third Great Depression.  

This introduction illustrates the narrator's concern for the audience; he is obviously relating to an audience to educate them as to the facts of a particular time. Vonnegut allows the narrator to interrupt the narrative at different points within the novel for clarification. On one occasion, he pauses in his account to say, "It is worth stopping the narrative at this point to say that this cock-and-bull story told to Beatrice is one of the few known instances of Winston Niles Rumfoord's having told a lie. This much of Rumfoord's story was true . . . ." He uses the same technique of direct address later when he says, "Let it be emphasized here that . . . ." Each of these asides increases the narrator's closeness to and concern for his audience. He begins the epilogue very conversationally saying, "There isn't much more to tell."  

_The Sirens of Titan_ marks the beginning of Vonnegut's love affair with his audience, and the wise adapter/director will emphasize the importance Vonnegut begins to place on his reader. The narrator of _The Sirens of Titan_ draws the audience into the story. They are observers, but the narrator considers them important enough to address them directly.
and to tell the story for them. Audience focus is important in this production, and particularly in the scenes aimed at the audience. The narrator will move with the characters, will observe them, and will possibly supply them with props, but his attention and, therefore, focus must always return to the audience.

The Sirens of Titan is an interesting novel. The occurrences are of another world, but the characters are very real to the reader. The novel does not offer too much opportunity for the single reader due to the complicated plot structure, but it is a very adaptable novel for Readers Theatre performance. Certainly there are many ways of producing such a novel in a form suitable for oral interpretation. Probably the literature would benefit most from being performed as a full-scale production, as it lends itself to the use of media. The basis for a successful production, however, is a good script adaptation which is representative of the novel, and point of view is a fundamental guide for a representative adaptation.

Conclusion

Vonnegut uses third person narration in his first two novels. His first novel, Player Piano, is laboriously written and slowly read. The use of point of view is representative of Vonnegut at his most conventional. His only deviation from the norm is found in the use of dramatic form to present a play. The narrator is relating a tale, but is
unconcerned with those who might be listening; the narrator's concern is with the characters. The novel requires of a script adapter a great amount of cutting and an even greater amount of narrative revision to make the verbose descriptions pleasing to audit. The script adapter of *Player Piano* must apply himself strenuously to develop a script warranting production. Of Vonnegut's novels, this one is perhaps least suited to presentation through the various media of group interpretation.

*The Sirens of Titan* is written after *Player Piano*. The writer is more confident, more sure of himself; he is more daring in his use of point of view. It is in this novel that Vonnegut begins to use the technique of nonnarrative. Foremost, however, is the fact that this novel marks Vonnegut's initial approach to his audience through his narrator. The narrator relates to the audience; he communicates with them. The narrator encourages the audience to become actively involved listeners. *The Sirens of Titan* would be difficult to produce, but an imaginative director could produce it effectively.

Vonnegut does not excel in his use of third person point of view. He appears to use it to develop his writing technique. The improvement from *Player Piano* to *The Sirens of Titan* is abundantly evident, and his exercise of creative imagination increases. Vonnegut's writing is much more
Vonnegutian when it strays from the norm, and third person point of view is perhaps too conventional to accommodate Vonnegut's imagination.
NOTES


5Ibid., p. 270.

6Ibid., p. 160.

7Ibid., p. 63.


11Ibid., p. 165.

12Ibid., p. 6.

13Ibid., pp. 7-8.

14Ibid., pp. 58-59.

15Ibid., p. 239.

CHAPTER IV

MIXED POINT OF VIEW

Introduction

Coger and White, in accordance with most of the literary critics cited in Chapter I, separate point of view into two main categories, first person and third person; the authors of Readers Theatre Handbook then break down those two categories into three subdivisions each. On first consideration, these six groups would seem sufficiently extensive for use in classifying novels according to point of view. Vonnegut, however, seems to have found that these types of point of view, taken individually, are not sufficiently encompassing to meet his needs in narrating a novel. Consequently, Vonnegut chooses to commit a Jamesian gaucherie; he mixes points of view.

From the time Henry James began calling attention to point of view, through Percy Lubbock's essays on the subject, and within all of the "how-to-write-a-novel" handbooks, the key word concerning the effective use of point of view has been consistency. Literary critics, in large part, evaluate the use of point of view in a work of literature paying attention exclusively to consistency. A writer is advised, in the how-to-write handbooks, to select an angle
of vision and be constant. Norman Friedman writes, "Consistency . . . is all, for consistency--within however large and diverse and complex a frame--signifies that the parts have been adjusted to the whole, the means to the end, and hence that the maximum effect has been rendered."¹ In addition to giving to a writing a feeling of wholeness, as Friedman implies, Wayne C. Booth looks to consistent use of point of view to heighten the level of believability a reader assigns a novel or short story. In discussing the qualities which should be sought in all literary works, Booth says, "Point-of-view should always be used 'consistently', because otherwise the realistic illusion will be destroyed."² Therefore, in deciding to violate the iron-clad law of consistency and to employ the technique of mixing points of view, Vonnegut chooses to stand up to a long-established and deep-rooted concept of literary tradition.

Vonnegut uses mixed point of view in three of his novels, his most recent three. In God Bless You, Mr. Rosewater, he uses primarily a third person omniscient narrator; because this narrator breaks scene to deliver a first person interjection, however, the book cannot be categorized as third person omniscient. Slaughterhouse-Five mixes point of view in a more complex way; Billy Pilgrim's story is told by an omniscient narrator, but the first and last chapters, along with a very few single-sentence comments, are presented in first person. Finally, Breakfast of Champions, Vonnegut's
latest novel, is written with a very unorthodox use of point of view. The first two-thirds of the novel is delivered by a first person omniscient narrator who is an objective observer to the action; the concluding third of the novel is narrated by an omniscient minor participant in the action who becomes increasingly central to the plot.

Why does Vonnegut mix points of view, particularly when the practice is against the better judgment of literary critics? He does so for various reasons, reasons which contradict the opinions of authorities. He does so in Slaughterhouse-Five to heighten the illusion of reality rather than to subvert it, as Booth would expect. Furthermore, contrary to the opinion of Wayne Booth, Vonnegut's use of mixed point of view is well planned and thoroughly calculated and, subsequently, adds to the feeling of wholeness that the novels Slaughterhouse-Five and Breakfast of Champions afford the reader. Last, Vonnegut is greatly concerned with the way his literature affects his readers, with how they relate to what he writes. The use of first person allows him to establish greater rapport with his audience, while the use of narrative omniscience frees him from the shackles of first person and increases the angle of vision open to the narrative. The narrators who are products of Vonnegut's use of mixed point of view have the advantage of being able to relate directly and openly to the audience and to express the knowledge their omniscience makes possible. One
additional reason the author might choose to go against critically accepted standards of literary usage is quite simple: Vonnegut is a literary rebel.

God Bless You, Mr. Rosewater

Vonnegut first used mixed point of view in God Bless You, Mr. Rosewater, published in 1965. God Bless You, Mr. Rosewater received generally favorable critical reviews. The book is written with a touch of black humor and a great deal of satire, but the message is very much to the point. Black humor seldom offers solutions, but instead presents the reader with a humorous view of a hopeless situation. Vonnegut, however, has a solution; he asks simply that one love his fellow man uncritically, because in this day and age, as Kilgore Trout phrases it, "... people need all the uncritical love they can get."³

God Bless You, Mr. Rosewater is the story of Eliot Rosewater and his fortune, which is kept in the Rosewater Foundation for tax purposes. Rosewater is an alcoholic millionaire obsessed by volunteer fire departments. He leaves his lovely wife and plush home to live in squalor in the town of Rosewater, county seat of Rosewater County. The citizens of Rosewater are, by and large, scum; they are lunatics, alcoholics, and whores. In the way Vonnegut creates all his characters, they are, for the reader, lovable. Eliot becomes a "godfather" to these people, answering their questions, solving their problems, and being their friend.
There is a second storyline in the novel concerning the East Coast Rosewaters and Normal Mushari, a young lawyer. Mushari hopes to prove the heirless Eliot insane, in which case the fortune would change hands and pass to the East Coast Rosewaters; Mushari plans to make his name and fortune in the process.

The two groups of characters come together in the conclusion when Eliot has suffered a nervous breakdown and is in a mental hospital. Eliot has requested that his father, Senator Rosewater, summon Kilgore Trout, a would-be novelist and writer of science fiction. Trout has the solution to Eliot's problems. Trout suggests that Eliot explain his time spent in Rosewater as an experiment in loving useless people, as machines are making humans increasingly more useless. When Eliot recalls that he is being named as the father in fifty-seven false paternity suits, he has his own solution to the problem of the fortune which he detests. He settles with the East Coast Rosewaters, accepts the children named in the paternity suits as his heirs, and, therefore, breaks down the fortune.

*God Bless You, Mr. Rosewater* is probably the best suited of Vonnegut's novels for presentation in an oral interpretive form. The plot is not overly complex, and the narrative progresses easily. Vonnegut uses a great deal of dialogue in this novel, more than in any of his other novels. The characters are delightful; their characterization alone would interest an audience. Large portions may be cut
without hurting the natural progression of the story, thus facilitating the problem of editing for the script adapter. The narrator, furthermore, establishes a very close relationship with the audience, made even closer by the first person interjection occurring in the middle of the novel.

The narrative progresses easily and surely because Vonnegut makes his greatest use of nonnarrative in this novel. To explain any history or to supply any factual information, Vonnegut uses his primary sources. In almost every chapter there is reference to another source. The Rosewater family history is reported in a letter written by Eliot Rosewater and addressed to his heirs; similar letters appear supplying information throughout the novel. Additional data comes to the reader in the form of nonnarrative, i.e., a speech reprint and an excerpt from a newspaper article complete with advertisement; the Rosewater law, and passages from novels by Kilgore Trout, Eliot Rosewater, and an aspiring writer named Ulm, furnish further supplemental information. One other interesting use of nonnarrative is found in Chapter Thirteen; the fire-bombings of Dresden are described in an excerpt from The Bombing of Germany by Hans Rumpf. Whether or not Rumpf and his book are imaginative creations of Vonnegut is never made clear to the reader; the narrator treats the book very factually, and the quotation from the book recounting the bombings is quite realistic. The reader believes the description and has no reason to doubt the validity of the source.
The extensive use of nonnarrative makes the novel particularly suited to oral presentation. The narration need not be divided among readers because the use of nonnarrative supplies the variety needed for performance. The straight narrative is usually brief and is written in an interesting style. Each piece of nonnarrative is written in a different style and is entertaining in its difference. The letter written by Eliot Rosewater is written in a style vastly different from that of the letter written by a servant of the East Coast Rosewaters. The speech is written as a speech, and the Rosewater law is written in legal style. The passages from Kilgor Trout's novels are written as only Vonnegut can write for Trout.

Vonnegut uses traditional narrative in this novel in two ways: the narrator verifies facts, and the narrator elaborates on subjects which are only mentioned in the dialogue. Because the narrator serves as a sort of go-between for the audience and the characters, he is psychologically close to both. The narrator empathizes strongly with Eliot, and the reader cannot help but love the crazy alcoholic. The narrator does not like Mushari nor the Senator, and again, the reader is aware of this dislike. The narrator himself is a friend to the audience because, through his verifications and elaboration, he shows his interest in the audience.

The narrator serves as a verifier repeatedly throughout the novel. He confirms or denies a statement and then explains
the circumstances surrounding the fact. His ability to serve as verifier is derived from his omniscience. The first time he confirms a statement, he refers to a statement made by Eliot concerning Kilgore Trout. The narrator interjects, "This was true. Trout, the author of eighty-seven paperback books, was a very poor man, and unknown outside the science-fiction field. He was sixty-six years old when Eliot spoke so warmly of him." Eliot then resumes his lament. In this same scene, the narrator serves as elaborator when Eliot Rosewater speaks of Trout's novel 2BRO2B. He says, "This was the title of a book by Trout, a title which, upon examination, turned out to be the famous question posed by Hamlet." Vonnegut uses the phrase, "It was true," or "This was true," repeatedly to preface narrative comments. He denies certain statements of fact in much the same way. When Eliot Rosewater is telling a group of volunteer firemen about his experiences as a volunteer fireman, the narrator interrupts to say, "This was bunk about Eliot having been a fireman. The closest he had ever come to that was during his annual childhood visits to Rosewater County . . . ." The narrator then allows Eliot to continue. The narrator interrupts the progression of events only to supply information necessary for the reader to understand the true story. When at the conclusion of a telephone conversation Eliot invites someone over and tells him the dogs only bite when the firehorn goes off, the narrator interrupts to tell the story of the firehorn and an anecdote concerning it.
These interruptions and asides are chiefly responsible for the close relationship achieved between the audience and the narrator. The narrator is vitally interested in the action taking place between the characters; therefore, he would be positioned near the action. He would be involved enough to supply props, set the stage, etc. His focus would be onstage and directed toward the action, but when he speaks and addresses the audience, his focus must be directed toward the audience. The director should have the characters freeze, thereby directing audience attention to the narrator and keeping the characters unaware.

The one technique which draws the audience closer to the narrator than any other is the single first person interjection. The narrator describes Eliot reading from a novel he had begun years before. Vonnegut employs nonnarrative, using a passage Eliot is reading from the novel; the passage contains the grafitti written on Heaven's gates. The narrator unexpectedly interrupts saying, "My own contribution . . ." and then recites the doggerel he would inscribe. The novel then resumes with Eliot's novel. The narrator's outburst is unexpected and uncontrolled. The reader feels as if the narrator has become so engrossed in the progression of the tale that he feels compelled to express his opinion to his friends. It is likely that the audience member or reader is thinking of the grafitti he might inscribe, and the narrator's outbreak forms an additional bond between them.
Vonnegut's use of tense in *God Bless You, Mr. Rosewater* is fairly conventional. The book is narrated in past tense by an omniscient narrator. At one point in the narrative, the narrator uses tense to establish his omniscience. "His black telephone was about to ring. Eliot would awake and answer it by the third ring. He would say what he said to every caller no matter what the hour." Eliot then says, "This is the Rosewater Foundation. How can we help you?" During the narrator's lines, the reader delivering Eliot's lines might pantomime waking and answering the telephone. Then, at the moment, he would interrupt the narration to read Eliot's line.

The most interesting use Vonnegut makes of time in *God Bless You, Mr. Rosewater* is in the last chapter. Eliot has envisioned the firebombing of Indianapolis at the end of the preceding chapter. The last chapter begins as Eliot is regaining consciousness. One year has passed and he is in a sanitorium. The next day he is to appear at a court hearing which will establish the state of his mental health. The narrator informs the reader of the past year's happenings as Eliot remembers them in fragments. The narrator's omniscience is solely with Eliot at this point, and the perspective is Eliot's. Vonnegut chooses to use this method in the last chapter to arouse interest and to provide a surprise ending. The director of a production of *God Bless You, Mr. Rosewater* might use lighting very effectively for the final scene. The lights could become very bright for the bombing of
Indianapolis; at the end of that scene, there might be a blackout, symbolic of Eliot's mental blackout and communicating the passage of time. When the lights come up for the final scene, house lights could probably be used also. The readers would be in place for the final scene.

*God Bless You, Mr. Rosewater* could be a very effective production. A fairly large number of readers would be required, and particularly strong readers would be needed to read the parts of Eliot Rosewater and the narrator. Lighting and a minimal number of props might be used, but costuming would be unnecessary. The script adapter should enjoy adapting this novel because Vonnegut uses great amounts of dialogue, extremely humorous characters, and lively narration.

**Slaughterhouse-Five**

*Slaughterhouse-Five*, published in 1969, is Vonegut's best selling novel, and the novel which has been best received by critics. It was nominated for the National Book Award, and it is the only one of his books which has been made into a movie. It is an autobiographical novel in that it is the story of a young American soldier who is present at the bombing of Dresden. Billy Pilgrim is the protagonist of the story, and he has come "unstuck" in time.

The novel has three main storylines: Billy's wartime experiences, his life on the imaginary planet of Tralfamadore, and his life in the sixties. Billy first comes
unstuck in time during World War II. Because of his ability to travel in time, Billy can live all of the moments of his life at once, or he can live any given moment whenever he chooses. He relives his birth and his death many times. The novel is filled with Vonnegut's philosophies about life, about war, and about death. The book has no easy-to-follow plot, but the philosophies of the book are what is important. Vonnegut deals with the way Billy and, therefore, himself learn to cope with the horrors of the Dresden bombing. His answer is the one offered by the Tralfamadorians. "Ignore the awful times and concentrate on the good ones."  

_Slaughterhouse-Five_ is narrated by an omniscient first person narrator. Vonnegut narrates the first and last chapters of the novel in direct first person. John Somer describes the two first person chapters as "what appear to be preface and epilogue." The middle of the book, Chapters II through IX, tells the story of Billy Pilgrim. Raymond Olderman discusses the narrator in Chapter I and says, "...the voice of the narrator in the first chapter is decidedly and openly Vonnegut." Vonnegut discusses having returned to Dresden to research the bombing, and he mentions reuniting with an old war buddy to reminisce in preparation for writing the novel. He ends the book with a chapter discussing the Kennedy and King assassinations and the war in Viet Nam. He talks about Billy Pilgrim and Tralfamadore. He discusses Tralfamadorean philosophy saying, "Still--if I am going to
spend an eternity visiting this moment and that, I'm grateful that so many of those moments are nice." The very last paragraphs describe Billy Pilgrim reliving his favorite moment.

In addition to narrating the first and last chapters in first person, Vonnegut makes three first person interjections within the Billy Pilgrim story. The first time he brings himself into the story is when Billy's wife is talking to him about the war. He thinks of something, and the narrator says, "It would make a good epitaph for Billy Pilgrim—and for me too." Here, the narrator is, of course, emphasizing lines of similarity between Billy and himself. The other two authorial interjections associate Billy and Vonnegut even more closely. They refer to Vonnegut's presence in the prisoner of war camp and, later in Dresden. He tells the reader that he was there with Billy; in one scene he says, "That was I. That was me. That was the author of this book." When Billy first sees Dresden, the narrator says, "Somebody behind him in the boxcar said, 'Oz'. That was I. That was me. The only other city I'd ever seen was Indianapolis, Indiana." Every other line of narration in the novel is delivered in third person. The narrator is omniscient in that he sees into the minds of not only Billy Pilgrim but the other characters as well.

Why Vonnegut chooses to use a first person omniscient approach in narrating this novel is open to conjecture.
Somer does, however, mention several advantages which accrue as a result of the mixing of points of view. First, Vonnegut establishes himself as a "comrade-in-arms" with Billy Pilgrim in that he shares in Billy's war experiences. Second, Somersays that the reference to the mutual epitaph unites Billy and Vonnegut spiritually. Finally, Vonnegut eases the real world into Billy's fictive world.\(^\text{16}\) Vonnegut allows the narrator to distinguish Billy's time-travel from his hallucinations and daydreams, thereby encouraging the reader to accept the time-travel as fact and to believe in it. One thing is certain, Vonnegut's use of mixed point of view in \textit{Slaughterhouse-Five} is effective. The effectiveness may stem from the fact that the first person omniscient narrator identifies himself as the author. The author is the only being, other than the Creator, who could plausibly function in the capacity of a first person omniscient being.

\textit{Slaughterhouse-Five} is laden with narration. In adapting a script of the novel, the adapter is again faced with the problem of how to make so much narration interesting to the listener. While Vonnegut's style is not boring and is phrased in a manner which is pleasant to hear, the adapter must be aware that an audience will tire of listening to one reader. How then does he divide the lines of narration? One solution would be to divide the lines between Billy Pilgrim and two narrators, one narrator who reads lines describing observable action and one who reads lines of authorial
interjection, philosophy, and comment. Billy can read the lines describing his own thoughts, thereby carrying his own narration. The novel is filled with the saying "So it goes." Every time death is mentioned, the authorial interjection "So it goes" follows. This line then would be assigned to the author/narrator. The observer/narrator can also read lines of minor characters, thereby necessitating the use of fewer readers.

The novel can be performed by four readers: Billy Pilgrim, the two narrators, and a woman reader to deliver the lines of the female characters. It could be produced very effectively as Chamber Theatre. If a director did choose to perform the novel as Chamber Theatre, he might allow only the two narrators the use of scripts. Billy Pilgrim and the female reader would have their lines memorized. The observer/narrator would free himself of his script when he moved to read the "in-scene" lines of any character. The author/narrator could be seated on a stool, and he might want to use a readers stand. To have him placed on a level behind and above the action would emphasize his omniscience. A spotlight could be used to focus on him from out of blackness for the opening monologue, the section cut from Chapter I.

To perform *Slaughterhouse-Five* as a Chamber Theatre production would also serve to symbolize the novel-within-a-novel structure of the book.
The most difficult problem facing the script adapter is the element of time-travel. The book has three storylines occurring simultaneously, and the adapter must be careful not to lose any of the storylines. The two most difficult stories to keep moving are the World War II story and the 1960's events. Billy's wartime experiences are broken up by progressions and regressions in time. He arrives in Germany, is separated from his company, is taken prisoner, and is sent to Dresden. In editing, the adapter must be very careful not to delete any passages which may be referred to later. Furthermore, because Billy must travel from point to point in a logical fashion, the adapter must be careful not to delete a necessary train trip, stopover, etc. In the 1960's, Billy is in his home; his daughter is visiting him and harassing him. The adapter must be careful to keep this plot moving cohesively, editing carefully to avoid deleting data vital to the progression of events. The Tralfamadore storyline is less difficult to maintain. When the narrator explains Billy's time-traveling, he flashes about in time. While the adapter may choose to edit much of this portion of the book, the flavor of the time-travel must be retained; this section can very easily be condensed by permitting the narrators merely to refer to various moments Billy visits in time. If the adapter outlines the plots before he edits the novel, it will ease his task of cutting.
Slaughterhouse-Five is the first novel in which Vonnegut makes use of drawings. He includes three drawings: two full-page sketches and one small reproduction of a poster. The two large drawings are of the tombstones engraved with the epitaph suitable to both Vonnegut and Billy and of a woman's bust bearing a locket engraved with Billy's philosophy of life. The poster could be read by the observer/narrator, but the two large drawings have to be seen by the audience. The director, therefore, might choose to use either an overhead projector or slides to present the drawings to the audience. One particularly effective approach could be to project the pictures on the wall at the level of the author/narrator, as they are the author's drawings.

Slaughterhouse-Five can be produced effectively. It is the one book of Vonnegut's which is probably most representative of the author. It embodies the philosophies and concepts he has been developing in his earlier novels. His writing has matured, and he is handling the subject matter which is most dear to him, the Allied bombing of the open city of Dresden. Billy Pilgrim's story is Kurt Vonnegut, Jr.'s story. If the goal of a director is to introduce an audience to Vonnegut, then he can choose no better novel for that purpose than Slaughterhouse-Five.
Breakfast of Champions

Breakfast of Champions is Vonnegut's most recent novel, published in 1973. It is a collection of Vonnegut's favorite characters from his earlier novels. It is a potpourri of all the whims and fancies of its author. Otto Friedrich reviewed the novel for Time magazine and called it "Ultra-Vonnegut." He says the book is "... marked by melancholy and self-indulgences," but adds that it is also "a true creation." Whether or not the novel is a true creation is debatable, but the fact remains that the public loved it. It hit bestseller lists almost as soon as it was released by the publisher. The novel consists of Vonnegut's comments on everything from mental health to Holiday Inns, and it is illustrated. Vonnegut has included his grafitti-like scribblings, one every few pages, to illustrate his writing. Whatever Breakfast of Champions is, it is definitely Vonnegut.

The plot of the novel is quite uncomplicated. In the preface, Vonnegut writes that the book is written as an indulgence for himself on his fiftieth birthday. He has called upon his favorite characters, and he intends to free them, never to use them in a novel again. The action centers around an arts festival which is to be held in Midland City. Dwayne Hoover, a Pontiac dealer in Midland City, is going insane because of "bad chemicals" which are at work within his body. Eliot Rosewater, the festival sponsor, has invited
Kilgore Trout to be the keynote speaker. Vonnegut intends for Hoover and Trout to meet, and the author plans to be on hand for the meeting. The book is composed chiefly of Vonnegut's comments on everything. Hoover's encounters with fellow residents of Midland City are reported. The reader is taken with Trout on his hitchhiking trip across the country, in addition to which the author supplies synopses of several of Trout's novels and short stories.

The point of view of Breakfast of Champions is interesting to study because it is so unusual. The narrator takes the position of the author in this book even more directly than he did in Slaughterhouse-Five. He begins the novel with a preface explaining the origins of the book; the preface is, of course, written in first person. He writes the first chapters using an omniscient narrator, with the initial first person reference falling in the third chapter, when he says, "I do know who invented Kilgore Trout. I did. I made him snaggle-toothed. . . ." Approximately the first two-thirds of the novel is written by a first person omniscient narrator who is removed from the action. The narrator/author becomes a character in the book when he moves into scene at the bar of the New Midland City Holiday Inn. He merely observes his characters and reflects upon them for a long while, manipulating them at will. He becomes a part of the action when Hoover goes berserk. At that time he says, "Even so, I came out of the riot with a broken watch crystal and what later
turned out to be a broken toe. Somebody jumped backwards to get out of Dwayne's way. He broke my watch crystal, even though I had created him, and he broke my toe." During the last chapter, he meets with Trout, tells Trout he is his Creator, and then frees Trout. The author/narrator disappears from the action.

The spatial relationships in this novel are very interesting. The narrator is close to both the characters and the audience. He addresses the audience directly and is very much aware of their presence. Having explained that the essence of his characters and of himself is an unwavering band of light, he says to the reader, "At the core of each person who reads this book is a band of unwavering light." He brings the reader into the story and associates him with the characters. Initially, he is removed from the action of his characters and is observing them. He is psychologically close to them, as he is omniscient, but he is not as close then as he is at the end of the book. When he frees Trout, he is a part of the action. He tells the audience that he cries as he says goodbye to Trout. To stage Breakfast of Champions, to reflect the spatial relationships, will require careful use of focus and positioning. During the preface, the author/narrator might wander around the stage, readying the set; his focus with respect to the audience would be direct. During the first of the production, when he is removed from action, he should be positioned away from the
characters. He may focus directly on the action, observing the characters. When he moves into the novel, he will also move in-scene; at that time, it would be advisable for him to use off-stage focus when he is interacting with the characters. His audience focus will always be direct.

Another facet of Breakfast of Champions which is interesting to study from the standpoint of the oral interpreter is the elementary style Vonnegut employs in the writing and illustration of the novel. It is written as though it is to be read by a second-grade youth. It is written in the style of Uncle Shelby cartoons. Vonnegut explains the flag, underpants, and the national anthem to his audience. In the same style, he explains the founding of America:

For example, teachers of children in the United States of America wrote this date on the blackboard again and again, and asked the children to memorize it with pride and joy: 1492. The teachers told the children that this was when their continent was discovered by human beings. Actually, millions of human beings were already living full and imaginative lives on the continent in 1492. That was simply the year in which sea pirates began to cheat and rob and kill them.

Here was another piece of evil nonsense which children were taught: that the sea pirates eventually created a government which became a beacon of freedom to human beings everywhere else. There were pictures and statues of this supposed imaginary beacon for children to see. It was sort of an ice-cream cone on fire.

The scribblings Vonnegut uses to illustrate the novel must be included as an integral point of any production of Breakfast of Champions. The director might want to use slides to project the drawings. Because the author/narrator drew
the pictures being shown, he might be given the controls to flash one slide after another. His manipulation of the slide projection would serve to emphasize his role as creator of the slides and of the novel.

The novel should not be difficult to adapt. Large segments of Vonnegut's rambling can be cut without affecting the progression of the plot even slightly. There are portions of this novel which the adapter/director might choose to edit for the sake of prudence, as Vonnegut tends in this novel to be more ribald than in any of his others. This should be one of the easiest of his novels to adapt and to direct. It is best suited to an audience which is already familiar with Vonnegut, as they can appreciate the references to characters from other books. If an audience has been previously exposed to Vonnegut and has already come under his spell, a production of Breakfast of Champions is destined to be a success.

Conclusion

Vonnegut mixes point of view in his last three novels. He began writing and experimenting in his first two novels with third person narration. His next two novels were written in first person. By his last three, Vonnegut is at home enough with his writing and is confident enough with his audience to defy Henry James and the traditionalists and to mix points of view. His mixing of points of view in his
novels is effective, and he seems to be showing critics that consistency is not essential. By mixing points of view, he brings his audience into the literature and establishes a very strong narrator/audience relationship. He heightens credibility in *Slaughterhouse-Five* and *Breakfast of Champions* in that he reveals himself as the author telling one of his own stories.

His last three novels are probably his best three, and are definitely the three best suited to oral interpretation productions. *God Bless You, Mr. Rosewater* would probably be the easiest to adapt, and it would certainly be exciting to direct. *Slaughterhouse-Five* would be ideal to perform as Chamber Theatre and would be useful to acquaint an audience with Vonnegut. *Breakfast of Champions* could be a delightful Readers Theatre production and is perfect for an audience which is already familiar with the author. All three of these novels are excellent choices for eager directors to adapt and to produce; a director can be as creative with Vonnegut as Vonnegut is in his writing.
NOTES


4 Ibid., p. 19.

5 Ibid.

6 Ibid., p. 22.

7 Ibid., p. 77.

8 Ibid., p. 55.


12 Vonnegut, Slaughterhouse-Five, p. 211.

13 Ibid., p. 121.

14 Ibid., p. 125.

15 Ibid., p. 148.

16 Somer, pp. 296-297.


Ibid., p. 274.

Ibid., p. 225.

Ibid., p. 10.
CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION

In the preface to Between Time and Timbuktu, written in 1972, Vonnegut discusses his feelings concerning the filmed productions of his works. Between Time and Timbuktu was filmed for educational television, and Slaughterhouse-Five was produced as a movie. Vonnegut praises the work of the filmmakers and screenplay writers, but he also expresses dissatisfaction with the finished product. He indicates that he feels something is missing, and he explains his dissatisfaction when he says,

I have become an enthusiast for the printed word again. I have to be that, I now understand, because I want to be a character in all of my works. I can do that in print. In a movie, somehow the author always vanishes. Everything of mine which has been filmed so far, has been one character short, and the character is me.

Because the purpose of oral interpretation is to communicate the printed word as it is written, it would seem that the ideal medium for presentation of Vonnegut's writing would be oral interpretation via Chamber Theatre, Readers Theatre, and individual prose reading. The "missing character," the author, is found in the narrative. Film deletes the narration and concentrates on dialogue, whereas in oral interpretation productions, the narration not only is retained
but is of great importance. The narrator is an essential character in any presentation of prose literature. Study of point of view is one effective way of identifying the author in the literature; an illustration of featuring the author as a character in the story can be found in the previously suggested Chamber Theatre performance of *Slaughterhouse-Five*.

Another advantage to presenting Vonnegut's writings using an oral interpretative mode is in the necessary reliance upon audience imagination. Vonnegut faults film, saying that it "... cripples illusions which I have encouraged people to create in their heads. Film doesn't create illusions. It makes them impossible. It is a bullying form of reality like the model rooms in the furniture department of Bloomingdale's." Readers Theatre, also referred to as Theatre of the Mind, and other types of oral interpretation presentations do not stifle an audience's capacity for creativity. Because the use of costuming, props, and scenery is minimized, because typecasting is not necessary, and because bizarre special effects are not used, the audience members are forced to visualize the literature individually, much as one who is reading the printed word would. Readers Theatre and Chamber Theatre do not simply encourage imaginative illusions, they rely upon them. The performing reader supplies the catalyst; the audience member must supply the imagination and, therefore, the visual picture.
Just as oral interpretation performance media are suited to Vonnegut's writings, Vonnegut's writings are suited to oral interpretation. Coger and White list certain criteria which should be sought in material which is being considered for a Readers Theatre production. Those qualities are evocative power, compelling characters, action, enriched language, and wholeness, which are present in large quantities in Vonnegut's novels. While his novels are far from lacking in the areas of evocative power, action, and wholeness, his areas of greatest strength are no doubt language and characters. Vonnegut's use of language is unique in his frequent coining of phrases and of words: in *The Sirens of Titan*, he invents names for outer-space phenomena; in *Cat's Cradle*, he not only invents a religion and an island civilization, but also a language for both; in *Mother Night*, he includes the German versions of the writings of Howard W. Campbell, Jr.; and in *Breakfast of Champions*, he uses language very effectively—the narrative tone is elementary and didactic. As for his ability to create compelling characters, only praise can be voiced. Vonnegut's greatest literary asset is his ability to give life to such bizarre and yet, such truly human characters. To Coger and White's request for compelling characters, Vonnegut can offer Kilgore Trout, Billy Pilgrim, Montana Wildhacker, Eliot Rosewater, Howard W. Campbell, Jr., Winston Niles Rumfoord, Beatrice Rumfoord, and others.
A chronological study of Vonnegut's novels analyzing the use of narration and point of view reveals a stylistic advancement on the part of the author. Vonnegut becomes more liberal in his approach to point of view and in the relationships he establishes with his audience. In his first two novels, Vonnegut uses third person omniscient narration. *Player Piano* is his first and most conventional novel. *The Sirens of Titan* is written in third person also, but Vonnegut begins to use nonnarrative in this book. In his next two novels, he begins using first person narrative. In *Mother Night*, he uses the protagonist as narrator and experiments with perspective; in *Cat's Cradle*, the narrator is an observer. By the time he wrote his latest three novels, he had worked with first and third person points of view; he was ready to experiment with mixing them. *God Bless You, Mr. Rosewater* contains only one first person reference, but *Slaughterhouse-Five* mixes point of view to a greater extent. Two chapters are written entirely in first person, and the text is written in third person with only three first person references. *Breakfast of Champions* is the culmination of Vonnegut's study in point of view. The narrator is a first person omniscient observer who later becomes a first person omniscient narrator who is a minor participant in the action.

The narrative style also progresses with increased authorial involvement and, subsequently, with better
narrator/audience relationships. In *Mother Night*, Vonnegut writes himself into the novel as editor and censors the writings of Howard W. Campbell, Jr.; in *Cat's Cradle*, he includes himself by means of the allusion to the name inscribed on the tombstone. In *God Bless You, Mr. Rosewater* and *Slaughterhouse-Five*, Vonnegut himself, presumably, personifies the first person reference. By the time he wrote *Breakfast of Champions*, his involvement was complete; Vonnegut made himself a participating character in his own novel. As Vonnegut increases the presence of the author, the author/narrator/audience relationships increase. The narrator interacts with his audience and cares how each audience member receives the story. In the first two novels, the third person narrator is relatively unaware of an audience. In the two first person novels, both narrators are writers and are very conscious of an audience. The three mixed point of view novels also contain narrators who address the audience directly. Vonnegut learned his skill by writing; he found his wings as he experimented, thus explaining how his novels progress to evidence a quite liberal literary style.

A study of point of view can be extremely insightful for a student of oral interpretation. Because such a study increases the understanding of literature for any reader, the oral interpreter should employ it to aid not only the individual performer but also the script adapter and the director. More and more frequently contemporary writers are
experimenting with narrative structure and point of view. Lilla Heston recently did a study of point of view on Robbe-Grillet's *Jealousy*. Other modern authors whose writings would benefit from a study of point of view, if being considered for presentation, might include Ken Kesey, Joseph Heller, Joyce Carol Oates, and John Barth. Studies need not be restricted to these authors nor, indeed, to contemporary writers; Faulkner's *As I Lay Dying* and Henry Fielding's *Tom Jones* would both profit from presentation by a director who understands the way in which the authors use point of view.

Vonnegut is an interesting and enlightening contemporary novelist who has a considerable following. He has written seven novels, two plays, two short story collections, and one book containing otherwise unpublished works, i.e. speeches, essays, etc. Studies might be made of his short stories or his nonfiction writings. An oral interpreter who is interested in Vonnegut might choose to compile a lecture recital of Vonnegut's shorter writings. His play *Happy Birthday, Wanda June* could be performed as Readers Theatre, as it is, in fact, a compilation of characters and incidents taken from the novels. There are many aspects of Vonnegut's writings yet to be explored, and Vonnegut is still alive and writing. "And so on."
NOTES


2 Ibid., pp. xv-xvi.


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