PUPPETS, POLITICS, AND POSTMODERNITY:
PAULA VOGEL SPEAKS THROUGH THEATER HISTORY

Neeley Gossett

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Approved by

Advisory Committee

_____________________________                          _____________________________
Chair

_____________________________
Accepted By

_____________________________
Dean, Graduate School
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ABSTRACT

Throughout her career, contemporary playwright Paula Vogel has purposefully incorporated literary and theater history within her plays in order to comment on contemporary social and political issues. In the introduction to her 2004 play The Long Christmas Ride Home, Vogel acknowledges her intertextual use of three of Thornton Wilder’s plays, The Happy Journey to Trenton and Camden, The Pullman Car Hiawatha, and The Long Christmas Dinner. She also cites traditional Japanese Bunraku Theater as the model on which the puppets in her play are based.

This thesis will explore Vogel’s use of literary and theater history within The Long Christmas Ride Home, and specifically investigate her intertextual use of the Thornton Wilder’s works and Bunraku puppetry. By collecting metanarratives stemming from both Wilder and traditional Japanese puppet theater, Vogel is able to convey her current social agenda to her readers. Including these texts and techniques also allows the playwright to incorporate presentational style and postmodern concept within The Long Christmas Ride Home.
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DEDICATION

Because Paula Vogel writes The Long Christmas Ride Home for her brother Carl, I thought it would be appropriate to dedicate this thesis to my brother Boyd Gossett. He is my friend, my dramaturge, my editor, and my best and worst critic.