

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

Neeley Gossett

A Thesis Submitted to the
University of North Carolina at Wilmington in Partial Fulfillment
Of the Requirements for the Degree of
Master of Art

Department of English

University of North Carolina at Wilmington

2006

Approved by

Advisory Committee

Chair

Accepted By

Dean, Graduate School

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT.....	iii
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.....	iv
DEDICATION.....	v
INTRODUCTION.....	1
THE INTERTEXTUAL USE OF THORNTON WILDER.....	10
AN AMERICAN INTERPRETATION OF BUNRAKU.....	37
WORKSCITED.....	39

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.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to thank my advisor and committee chair Lewis Walker for his guidance and encouragement. I would also like to acknowledge and thank my thesis committee members, Barbara Waxman and Meghan Sweeney.

Special thanks to my family, Keith and Claudia Gossett, Bill and Jane Sawyer, Martha Cochran, Annie Wright, and Tiffany Vansant.

Thanks to Heather Brown, Melinda Hollis, Matt Driscoll, Jay Whittaker, Johannah Stevens, Liz Pierce, and to all of my other wonderful friends and colleagues, and the faculty at the University of North Carolina Wilmington.

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.

