



Paula Vogel (Michigan Modern Dramatists)

Joanna Mansbridge

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Paula Vogel's plays, including the Pulitzer-prizewinning *How I Learned to Drive*, initiate a conversation with contemporary culture, staging vexed issues like domestic violence, pornography, and AIDS. She does not write "about" these concerns, but instead examines how they have become framed as "issues"—as sensationalized topics—focusing on the histories and discourses that have defined them and the bodies that bear their meanings. Mobilizing campy humor, keen insight, and nonlinear structure, her plays defamiliarize the identities and issues that have been fixed as "just the way things are." Vogel crafts collage-like playworlds that are comprised of fragments of history and culture, and that are simultaneously inclusive and alienating, familiar and strange, funny and disturbing. At the center of these playworlds are female characters negotiating with the images and discourses that circumscribe their lives and bodies.

In this, the first book-length study of Vogel and her work, Joanna Mansbridge explores how Vogel's plays speak back to the canon, responding to and rewriting works by William Shakespeare, Edward Albee, Sam Shepard, and David Mamet, rearranging their plots, revising their conflicts, and recasting their dramatis personae. The book examines the theories shaping the playwright and her plays, the production and reception of her work, and the aesthetic structure of each play, grounding the work in cultural materialist, feminist and queer theory, and theater and performance studies scholarship.

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