

The Bible as Literature: Portfolio III



Rembrandt: *The Return of the Prodigal Son*

Prodigal:

adj.

1. Rashly or wastefully extravagant
2. Giving or given in abundance; lavish or profuse.

n.

One who is given to wasteful luxury or extravagance.

Origin:

Medieval Latin *prōdigālis* - wasteful, from Latin *prōdigus* - lavish, from *prōdigere* - to squander, from *pro* + *agere* - to drive

Parable:

n.

1. A short allegorical story designed to illustrate or teach some truth, religious principle, or moral lesson.
2. A statement or comment that conveys a meaning indirectly by the use of comparison, analogy, or the like.

Origin:

Late Latin *parabola* - comparison, parable, word < Greek *parabolē* - comparison, equivalent to *para* + *bolē* - a throwing

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For your final portfolio (which is also your final), you will need to choose from **one** of the following two three-page writing assignments, each of which is based upon Luke 15:11-32, otherwise known as “The Parable of the Return of the Prodigal Son.” Before you begin, you should do the following three things to prepare.

1. Carefully reread the parable, and write down your feelings, thoughts, and questions about the story as you do so. You may want to do this a few times, to engage in some free writing, and to perhaps discuss your ideas, however tentative at this point, with a friend.
2. Spend a good amount of time considering the original context of the story, both within the wider gospel itself (or the gospels taken together in their entirety), and within the immediate context of Luke’s account where this parable is actually presented by Jesus. For instance, don’t forget that Jesus had two groups of people before him when he spoke, as this is **crucially** important.
3. Have a look at the list of words below, which is meant to be a seedbed of ideas (Themes? Motifs? Ideas? Concepts? Hypotheses? Beliefs? Autobiography?) for your writing. feel free to add some of your own. I suggest that you look for associations and provocative meanings here throughout your writing process. You should also keep the first two portfolios that you have written, and all that we have read and discussed in class in mind.

Seedbed of Terms

prodigality, prodigious, prodigy, offense, scandal, giving, taking, receiving, demanding, commanding, commending, patience, passive, passion, allowance, allowing, inheritance, inheriting, wealth, separation, alienation, suffering, family, individual, communal, communication, common, uncommon, intimate, glory, abasement, mercy, charity, old vs. young, distance, intimacy, foreign, domestic, home, duty, rights, gift, acceptance, rejection, gratuitous, gracious, grace, laws, order, creating, wisdom, willing, knowing, feeling, drawing toward, driving away, approach, address, correspondence, reunion, despair, joy, atonement, substitution, conciliation, reconciliation, forgiving, forgetting, repentance, apology, explanation, account, prayer, contemplation, reflection, weeping, need, want, desire, imagination, memory, love, granting, feast, witness, indirect, parabolic, hyperbolic, exceptions, exceptional, justice, fairness, surprise, contradiction, paradox, ambiguity, meaning, repetition, sameness, difference, old vs. new, life, death, lost, found, rebirth, truth, beauty, goodness, fullness, emptiness.

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Option One: Dialogue and Appropriation (Three Pages)

Please construct an imaginary dialogue, taking place among the three principal characters of the parable, picking up where the story ends in Luke. Use a structural method of dialogue that feels most comfortable to you, and which is in keeping with your goals. Think about your audience and purpose, write concisely and in manner that moves the plot/story forward, and communicate something essential about the character of each dialogue participant. This should **NOT** be a causal conversation. Instead, there should be some conflict evident throughout. This conflict need not be aggressive or angry, though you may make it as heated as is appropriate and in keeping with your goals. However, it should show that the positions of your characters are substantial, meaningful, and worthy of consideration by all concerned. If you feel more comfortable, you can imagine a scenario in which one or all of these characters are women. You may also choose a more modern setting if doing so would be at all helpful to you.

Option Two: Correspondence and Appropriation (Three Pages)

By drawing on your own family experience(s), please assume the voices of the principal characters of the parable, and craft a one-page letter by each, following these guidelines:

Letter #1

Written by the father, and addressed to both sons.

Letter #2

Written by the older brother, and addressed to the younger brother.

Letter #3

Written by the younger brother, and addressed to the father

Once again, if you feel more comfortable doing so, you can imagine a scenario in which one or all of these characters are women, or consider and engage a more modern setting for these “correspondences,” if doing so would be at all helpful to you.

Due: December 13th, at 11:30, in Coburn Hall 100

IMPORTANT: if you would like extra credit, you may complete both of these options.