The Prodigal Daughter: An Edition of an Anonymous Text

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The Prodigal Daughter: An Edition of an Anonymous Text

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of English at Virginia Commonwealth University.

by

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Director: Dr. Catherine Ingrassia, Professor & Chair, Department of English

Virginia Commonwealth University
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Abstract

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By Paige Deans, Master of English

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of English at Virginia Commonwealth University.
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The Prodigal Daughter (1736) is a poem that, on the surface, appears to be an approachable text that was likely geared towards a children’s audience during New England’s first Great Awakening, within the approachable format of a chapbook. However, when explored further, The Prodigal Daughter reveals a complicated textual history during a time of theological and social revival in New England. This thesis considers the historical context of The Prodigal Daughter’s narrative, as well as the poem’s publication history. The text’s transmission is carefully examined and encapsulated in this edition—giving the reader a transcription that is the result of collating twenty-eight surviving witnesses of The Prodigal Daughter. This thesis serves as a critical edition of The Prodigal Daughter, with an introduction which includes a careful consideration of gendered theology, homiletics, the literary marketplace, and the role of the devil in the female conversion narrative during New England’s first Great Awakening.
An Introduction to the Prodigal Daughter:

During the Great Awakening in New England, theology and religious literature highlighted the importance of an emotional conversion experience that was validated not simply through biblical teachings, but a revived spirit—a “new light.” Evangelical writers such as Jonathan Edwards explored the role of the conversion experience within the rapidly changing Evangelical sphere, as “such blessed Instances” in which “the Spirit of God in his Dealing with the Souls of Men, in order to convince sinners, and restore them to his favour and his image.”\(^1\)

Within New England’s literary marketplace, the conversion narrative was applied in fictionalized forms, allowing theological messages to reach readerships outside the confines of homiletics. A fictionalized example of this type of emotional conversion narrative can be found in *The Prodigal Daughter* (1736), an anonymously authored poem accompanied by six woodcut illustrations.

Over the course of sixteen pages, *The Prodigal Daughter* depicts the downfall of a sinful daughter, who is resistant to her parents and their attempts to set her on an appropriate path for a young woman during the eighteenth century—though, one could argue their efforts are corrective as opposed to preventative, as they spoil their daughter seemingly to the point of no return. The devil appears, taking advantage of the young daughter’s disobedient spirit. The “proud and disobedient Daughter” is receptive to the influence, “because her Parents would not support her in all her extravagance,” and “bargained with the Devil to poison them.”\(^2\) While the

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\(^1\) See Jonathan Edward’s *A Faithful Narrative of the Surprising Work of God in the Conversion of Hundreds of Souls in Northampton*, 1738.

\(^2\) See *The Prodigal Daughter*, title page. For a more general consideration of religious iconography in printed visual images and illustrations in early America, see Barbara Lacey’s *From Sacred to Secular: Visual Images in Early American Publications.*
devil convinces the young daughter to plot against her parents, an angel of God intervenes and warns her parents of “their Daughter’s Design.” Following an emotional confrontation with her parents, the young daughter falls unconscious into a trance so deep that her parents believe her to be dead, as described in lines 165-170:

all the Arts that e’er they could contrive
They could not bring her Spirits to revive.
Four days they kept her, when they did prepare
To lay her Body in the Dust.

The poem doesn’t explicitly state that her “Trance” is the result of the devil’s power over her, but during this four-day trance, she has visions of a hell-like landscape, and eventually encounters a God-type figure who facilitates her ultimate redemption and conversion to the faith of her parents. During her time in the “Regions of eternal Night,” the young daughter is subjected to “briery Woods” and “Briars” which “tore [her] Flesh,” alluding to the violent acts, such as the forced adornment of the crown of thorns, to which Jesus Christ was subjected in the Gospels of Matthew, Mark, and John.³ The story takes the initial shape of a devil possession narrative, only to ultimately utilize the devil’s presence in the narrative as a point of conversion for the “disobedient” young daughter, complete with imagery of a Christ-like “death” and a physical resurrection. The text is significant not simply as a perceived example of children’s literature during the Great Awakening in New England, but also as a possible cautionary tale to both parents and young women. It also serves as an example of the theological focus on a dramatic

³ See Matthew 27:29, Mark 15:17, and John 19:2-5, KJV.
conversion experience during the literature of the Great Awakening, the role of homiletics as a source of inspiration in New England’s literary marketplace, and the significance of the devil’s influence in female conversion narratives.

The Prodigal Daughter was first published in 1736 in Boston, by printer Thomas Fleet (1685-1758) at Heart and Crown in Cornhill. According to historian E. Jennifer Monaghan, The Prodigal Daughter was first advertised in 1736 by Fleet in his own newspaper, the Boston Evening-Post as a “small book in easy Verse, very suitable for Children.” Monaghan also notes that the illustrations were created by Peter Fleet, and potentially his sons, Pompey and Caesar Fleet, who were enslaved printers in Thomas Fleet’s shop. While there is no surviving copy of this first edition, The Prodigal Daughter had a long transmission history over the course of the eighteenth century—with versions of the text being published by various printers throughout New England, and even London and Glasgow, up until the beginning of the nineteenth century. According to d’Atle Welch’s A Bibliography of American Children’s Books, at least 29 editions

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4 See E. Jennifer Monaghan’s Learning to Read and Write in Colonial America (2006) for an in-depth study of the Fleet family, and the role of the enslaved family, Peter, Pompey, and Caesar who labored in their print shop. According to historian J. L. Bell, he notes that Monaghan attributes the illustrations to Pompey Fleet, but instead proposes the idea that Pompey was too young to do such work at the time of the first and second publication of The Prodigal Daughter, so it was likely his father, Peter. It also seems significant that a text regarding poison would involve the labor of enslaved illustrators, as there was a general anxiety amongst slave owners over being poisoned by their slaves during this period—for more on this, see Walter C. Rucker’s The River Flows On: Black Resistance, Culture, and Identity Formation in Early America (2008) and Diana Paton’s Paton, Diana. "Witchcraft, poison, law, and Atlantic slavery." The William and Mary Quarterly 69, no. 2 (2012). For a reference to the woodcuts, created by Peter or Pompey Fleet, see Hamilton’s Early American Book Illustrators and Wood Engravers, 1670-1870: a Catalogue of a Collection of American Books, Illustrated for the Most Part with Woodcuts and Wood Engravings in the Princeton University Library (1958) which includes a reference entry to a first edition printed in 1736—however, the earliest copy found is housed at AAS, printed in Boston by Thomas Fleet in 1742.  

5 ECCO holds seven additional publications of “The Prodigal Daughter”, with variance in titles and attributions—dating from 1750 to 1800.
of *The Prodigal Daughter* were published before 1821, making it notable due to its long publication run, despite having no attributed author and being circulated by numerous printers.⁶ While some scholars consider *The Prodigal Daughter* within the scope of a children’s narrative, as the original advertisement by Fleet would encourage, the poem’s narrative itself exists in a strange gray area. On one hand, the publication format of a chapbook, along with the woodcut illustrations, makes it approachable to a younger audience. On the other, the poem deals with essential, but complex, ideas about an ideal relationship between parent and child, as well as sinner and God. *The Prodigal Daughter* functions both as a possession and conversion narrative, as it relays the disobedience of a young daughter against her parents, leaving her susceptible to the influence of the devil—leading to a tragic damnation, eventual redemption, and both a physical and spiritual resurrection. The poem’s publication in the midst of the Great Awakening is significant, as it exemplifies Evangelical preoccupation with inherent sinfulness as not simply a human trait, but a feminized construct.

The examination of *The Prodigal Daughter*’s textual apparatus itself presents a few complications—not only due to the nature of the first edition as a ghost copy, but due to the imperfect nature of the surviving second edition printed in 1742 by Thomas Fleet, currently housed by the American Antiquarian Society in Worcester, Massachusetts. *The Prodigal Daughter* reappears again in New England following the Awakening, and eventually the Middle Colonies, with twenty-eight editions produced by various printers spanning from 1758 to 1819. Though the textual contents of *The Prodigal Daughter* remain largely consistent in its various printings throughout the eighteenth century, the illustrations differ between the later additions. While there are variants between the twenty-eight witnesses collated for this edition, they are

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⁶ See d’Ate Welch’s *A Bibliography of American Children’s Books printed Prior to 1821*
largely composed of changing woodcuts, accidentals and format changes—for example, in 1758, Zechariah Fowle significantly alters the compositions of the woodcuts while maintaining similar imagery, while the copy printed in London, England, in 1775 by an unknown printer omitted the illustrations altogether. Due to the significance of the poem’s narrative and origin within the context of the Great Awakening, the earliest surviving copy, printed in 1742, is used as the copy text, while missing characters or lines from that copy text are supplemented from the editions following in the immediate chronology.  

According to The Prodigal Daughter’s full title, the poem is based upon “the substance of a sermon preached on this occasion by the Reverend Mr. Williams, from Luke 15:24.” While any written sermon matching this account remains undiscovered, it is probable that the oral sermon on which The Prodigal Daughter is based was delivered by the Reverend Stephen Williams—a Harvard-educated minister whose journal entries link him not only to a history of public sermons during the years approaching the first Great Awakening, but also mark him present for formative Evangelical sermons such as Jonathan Edwards’ “Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God” (1741). Those familiar with the passage of scripture utilized by Reverend

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7 For this edition, the illustrations from the earliest surviving copy (Fleet, 1742) is used. Digital copies provided by AAS. For a more detailed chronology of The Prodigal Daughter’s publication history, see textual notes and chronology Appendix II.  
8 The Prodigal Daughter: Or a strange and wonderful Relation, shewing how a Gentleman of a vast Estate in Bristol, had a proud and disobedient Daughter who because her Parents would not support her in all her Extravagance, bargained with the Devil to poison them. How an Angel informed her Parents of their Daughter’s Design. How she lay in a Trance four Days, and when she was put into the Grave, she came to Life again and related the wonderful Things she saw in the other World. Likewise the Substance of a Sermon preached on this Occasion by the Reverend Mr. Williams, from Luke [chapter] 15 [verse] 24, title page.  
Williams’s sermon may recognize it as “the Parable of the Prodigal Son,” in which a son insists upon an early inheritance, only to gamble it away to be the point of destitution—and, upon returning home to the father he scorned, is welcomed with a feast and immediately forgiven.\(^\text{10}\)

This biblical inspiration for *The Prodigal Daughter* is important to consider in greater detail, as it reveals a significant amount not only about the interpretations of biblical parables in early New England, but also about the applications of sermons. Since the poem is based upon a sermon, which is paraphrased briefly on the final page of the document, which was in turn based upon “the Parable of the Prodigal Son.” This connection does a few things. First, it proposes a tangible transmission of a delivered sermon, or even a printed sermon. The implementation of a sermon that may have been more abstract in its delivery, through the approachable narrative of the poem, would have allowed this text to be applied as an efficient rendition of the sermon’s prime concepts. Second, it does something extremely interesting with gender in regards to its potential application. The “Parable of the Prodigal Son,” tells the story of a father and his two sons, one of whom insists upon receiving his “portion of the goods that falleth” to him—or, his inheritance of his father’s estate. He then goes “into a far country, and there he wasted his goods with riotous living.” After squandering his inheritance, he finds himself totally impoverished, about to “die for hunger.” He returns home, apologetic to his father, ready to explain that he was “no more worthy” to be called a son, hoping to be considered as one of his servants so that he may have “bread enough.” In a prominently cited moment of forgiveness, his father “had compassion,”—for he had believed his son to be dead, but was “alive again,” and what was thought to be lost was found.\(^\text{11}\) In the story of *The Prodigal Daughter*, the major themes are

\(^{10}\) See Appendix II, containing the full parable of Luke 15:1-24
paralleled—first the disobedience and betrayal marks a dangerous disregard for familial wellbeing; second, the fall of the daughter facilitates a dramatic resurrection and conversion, which mirrors the redemptive end of Luke 15.

The dramatic tendencies of homiletics during the first Great Awakening are reflected in the nature of the poem through the contents of the narrative, and through its origin. The Prodigal Daughter illustrates a theatrical example of feminine sin and vulnerability to Satan, followed by the young daughter’s eventual redemption—but equally as dramatic as the narrative is the origin and transmission of the text itself. The text’s history is mobile, active—an act in and of itself. In a way, The Prodigal Daughter represents not only the religious musings of illustrated chapbook’s author, but the impact of homiletics on the literary marketplace of the first Great Awakening. The transition of the story—first a biblical parable, which inspired a sermon that in turn produced The Prodigal Daughter—as well as the continual republication of the poem, suggests that the concerns within The Prodigal Daughter were prevalent during the time of its publication. The sensational nature of conversion during the Awakening is mirrored in the poem, as the extreme circumstances of the young daughter’s possession and conversion replicates the dramatic, distinct template of being spiritually reborn to achieve salvation.

Despite having no attributed author, the audience can assume the following based on the full title of the text: The Reverend Williams preached (either publically, to a specific congregation, or in written form) a sermon concerning Luke 15, or the Parable of the Prodigal

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Son; the anonymous author of *The Prodigal Daughter* was present for, or had access to a written rendition of, the Reverend Williams’ sermon, which inspired this fictionalized narrative. By applying the assumedly oral sermon to narrative form for a new purpose, the author is enacting a form of revision—in that they adopted the content of the sermon and Luke 15 by proxy, and reapplied it to a new medium, allowing the sermon a sort of re-awakening through an easily mobilized narrative. The publication format of a chapbook meant that the poem would have been more approachable to lower-class readers. According to historian Barbara Lacey, chapbooks were often illustrated, and sometimes “mixed secular and religious elements in varying proportions.” In regards to the market for chapbooks, Lacey notes that “although chapbooks were popular in their day, they were held in low regard by the more privileged,” due to their often times “questionable morality and their dangerous tendency to unleash a reader’s imagination.” 13 This is important to consider within the context of *The Prodigal Daughter’s* cited source material, and also the period in which is maintained popularity. Since *The Prodigal Daughter* was based upon the contents of a sermon which cited Luke 15, the religious inspiration is most certainly prevalent as a theme throughout the chapbook—but the liberties it takes in the interpretation and allegorizing of this parable aligns with Lacey’s explanation of a chapbook’s possible negative connotations with upper-class readers. On the other hand, the format of a chapbook would allow the poem to be marketed at a relatively low price, and the theatrical nature of the narrative would attract a reader’s attention—making it easily accessible for audiences who might not have the funds or educational background to read more complex theological works.

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13 See Barbara Lacey’s *From Sacred to Secular: Visual Images in Early American Publications*, p. 55.
With the historical context surrounding *The Prodigal Daughter* and its preoccupations with devil possession in mind, it is important to consider not simply the female Evangelical audience to which it may have been geared, but the potential author as well. Book sellers Thomas Fleet and his sons, Thomas Jr and John Fleet, could have produced the narrative as a product of hearing the sermon off which the narrative is based. This access to theological discourse in print would have been present for any literate member of the community that was able to afford an octavo-bound book at the Heart and Crown, but ability to print such a narrative under the name of a female author may have been less likely—making it possible that the author of *The Prodigal Daughter* could have easily been a woman, writing anonymously. Due to the lack of textual evidence surrounding the poem’s origins, the role of the author must be considered with a lens of speculation, though the poem contains themes that would be largely relevant to a female audience—something a female author might have been more inclined to write about. That said, the republication of the text over the course of the eighteen-century in New England, particularly in its correspondence with the religious movements of the First Great Awakening, makes it a valuable representation of eighteenth-century constructs of sin, while the role of the devil frames the poem as a cautionary tale.

Though the poem opens with a warning to “every wicked graceless Child”, and the general themes of disrespect for parental authority would be applicable to all young children, the focus upon material vanity and the appearance of the devil as a suitor and seducer genders the poem’s message to a certain extent. The cited source material for *The Prodigal Daughter*, the Parable of the Prodigal Son in Luke 15, unpacks relevant concerns for a male audience such as irresponsible handling of familial wealth, and a refusal to fulfill expected leadership roles. According to historian Lisa Wilson, young men in the eighteenth century made decisions about
their future “within the context of family imperatives” and that parents “throughout the colonial period wanted their sons to find careers that pleased them and fitted the family’s notion of an appropriate profession.”14 If *The Prodigal Daughter* was written with a general youth audience in mind, the author might have included more male-centric concerns, similar to Luke 15. Instead, *The Prodigal Daughter* flips the biblical parable to focus on the young daughter’s vanity, disobedience, and susceptibility to the devil, disguised as a gentlemanly caller. The continual republication of *The Prodigal Daughter* over the course of the eighteen-century in New England, particularly in the tumultuous, ever changing theological climate following the first Great Awakening suggests the possibility that the text performed efficiently as a cautionary tale to encourage ideal behavior.

The dominant role of Satan in the Awakening’s female conversion narratives reanimates the devil—not simply as a tempter of mankind, but as tormentor of women. While the conversion experience necessitated a need for a profession of belief in God’s saving power and a denouncement of Satan for both men and women, the intimate role of Satan in the conversion narratives of the Awakening’s female converts suggests an association between the feminine soul and a vulnerability to Satan. In her discussion of the conversion experience, and how it often varied by gender, historian Susan Juster notes that “the element of personal distress engendered by the unmediated confrontations with deity and devil around which these narratives revolve was often more severe for women converts than for men.”15 This is exhibited in other female conversion narratives of the era, in which the female sinner experiences agonizing encounters with the devil. Often times, these encounters involve painful physical torment, emotional

15 See Susan Juster’s *Disorderly Women*, p. 62.
distress, personal loss, or even possession—during which the devil convinces the women to commit acts of sin or doubt the divine power of their God.\textsuperscript{16}

Bearing this attributed history of \textit{The Prodigal Daughter} in mind, this active targeting of a female figure by the devil reveals theological thought in the years approaching New England’s Awakening. In \textit{Disorderly Women}, Susan Juster discusses the “sharp and distinct associations” of certain “categories of sin and the gender of the offender,” noting that, “women were far more likely to be disciplined for sexual misconduct and sins against the family/household.”\textsuperscript{17} \textit{The Prodigal Daughter} presents these concerns through its condemnation of the young daughter’s vanity, a sin which manifests itself through constant and unrepentant disobedience to her parents. Elizabeth Reis expands on this idea as it functions within the historical moment of the first Great Awakening, as she explains that in eighteenth-century New England encounters with the devil “differ markedly” based on gender, and while both genders “pushed the devil aside,” most “women’s sense of their nature remained more pessimistic right through to the Great Awakening and beyond.” The difference lies in the inward, self-conscious conditioning that women experienced in their relationship with these theological constructs of gendered sin. Reis goes on to explain that “men tended to blame their sins for corrupting their souls” where as “women more often blamed their corrupt souls—their essence—for producing sinful behavior.”\textsuperscript{18} The idea that the “feminine” soul was more impressionable or susceptible to the devil’s spiritual attacks was commonplace, which is exhibited in the young daughter’s tendency towards “sinful”

\textsuperscript{16} For more female conversion narratives that involve encounters with the devil, see: \textit{The Life and Character of Miss Susanna Anthony} (though published in 1796, describes her personal account of conversion and encounters with Satan during the time of the Great Awakening); \textit{The World of Hannah Heaton: The Autobiography of an Eighteenth-Century Connecticut Farm Woman}, ed. Barbara Lacey.
\textsuperscript{17} See Susan Juster, \textit{Disorderly Women}, p. 106
\textsuperscript{18} See Reis’s \textit{Damned Women}, p. 165.
behavior. This theme of betrayal against the family and home is something that would, as Juster points out, be familiar and foreboding to female audiences during the Great Awakening. The act of betrayal against her parents is set in motion shortly after a visitation by the devil, where he finds the young daughter confined to her chambers in plain clothes—a state caused by her parents implementing discipline.

The emphasis placed on the daughter’s materialistic nature early in the poem functions not only to establish her specifically feminine sinfulness, but to display the rearing tactics of her parents. As Barbara Lacey points out, the young daughter “can be seen as vain and disobedient” not because she is “inherently evil,” but “because her parents have spoiled her.” 19 While the poem initially implies that the daughter was allotted a certain amount of luxury, as her father was the owner “of a vast Estate” (6), the daughter’s eventual “sinful Course” (13) was not attributed solely to her parents’ lack of discipline. They did eventually take action in an attempt to right their daughter’s crooked path—but, the events that follow seem to imply that it was too little too late, and that the only hope for the young daughter was divine intervention. Though their “tender Kindness” paved way for her “Ruin” (16), the daughter’s parents implemented discipline upon realizing the degree to which their daughter “fix’d her whole Delight in Vanity” (12). Instead of repenting, the daughter’s unyielding pride sealed her fate, leaving her “ruin’d Soul and Body” (39), allowing her to be easily swayed by the devil’s coercion. The young daughter’s susceptibility to the devil reflects a supposed spiritual weakness, emphasized through her vanity. The poem’s author takes care to highlight this vanity, particularly in the form of expectations to be “cloth’d in costly rich Array” (9), a physical desire which detracts from the corrective efforts

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19 See Barbara Lacey’s *From Sacred to Secular: Visual Images in Early American Publications,* p. 62.
enforced by her parents—a desire which paves the way for her seeming demise at the devil’s hand, and eventual redemption through a conversion experience.

The young daughter’s need to wear fine clothes speaks to the “youthful pleasure” that she seeks to protect against her parents’ attempts to humble her. She declares to her mother that she’ll “take [her] Pleasure” (31) while she can—which leads her mother to fear that their daughter has been “ruin’d Soul and Body” (39). The sensational satisfaction connected with this vanity emphasizes this materialism as worldly. This would be contrary to Evangelical ideals at the time, in which the only sensational experience should be one’s connection with God, while bodily adornment or desire for excess could to damnation, especially in the case of a female sinner. This material need exhibited in The Prodigal Daughter implies that the daughter’s attachment to material things is fueled by an emotional need that would have been considered contrary to the priorities of a young, Christ-following woman—as her materialism reaches a point of idolatry. While The Prodigal Daughter doesn’t explicitly apply this terminology, the themes of material extravagance suggest the misdirected energies of the young daughter in the narrative, as she “fix’d her whole Delight in Vanity” (12). After being confined to her chambers and humbled with plain “Russet Grey” clothes, the young daughter is easily swayed by the Devil, who “in her Room did then appear, In Shape and Person like a Gentleman” as he “took her by the Hand,” convincing her to poison her parents, so that she might be “reveng’d on them” for their acts of discipline.

In this first encounter, the devil appears in visually in rich clothing—seemingly evoking a figure of means with an intent to sway. The devil uses soothing language as he comforts her, calling her a “fair Creature,” and asking “why do you lament? / Why is your Heart thus fill’d with Discontent?” (60–65). The daughter explains that her parents were “cruel to her,” to which
the devil offers up his plot as a solution to the daughter’s humbled state (see fig. 3). The “Gentleman” devil is placed in the foreground of the illustration, imposing physically over the young daughter, creating a closed composition in which she appears thoroughly entrapped and engaged. As Lacey notes in her reading of this image, the devil is “dashingly dressed” with a “well-turned calf, indicating he is sexually attractive.” The significance of the devil’s presented wealth should be considered in relation to the description of the young daughter’s family and their apparent wealth. The well-dressed devil would pique the interest of the young daughter, who values “fine clothes” and material status symbols seemingly more than anything. In this illustration, however, the daughter’s clothing contains none of the detail displayed on the Gentleman devil—while her dress is a simple, a singular tone, and lacking in decoration, the Gentleman devil’s coat buttons are included, as is the sword on his hip, his walking stick, and his heeled shoes. This attention to small detail is a difficult technicality for a woodcut to perform, which speaks to the importance of this moment within the narrative. Satan uses the imagery of fine clothes to incite the young daughter’s vanity, and further pull her towards the path of disobedience. The young daughter is shown with her hand upon her cheek, seemingly wooed by the devil’s wiles. The dark background, paired with the bright foreground, guides the eye towards the figure of the devil—implying the physical movement of the young daughter as she follows him.

This image represents the moment that the young daughter falls prey to Satan—an event made inevitable in the narrative due to the daughter’s characterized vanity and determined sinfulness. Early in the poem, the author makes a point about the daughter’s total disregard for

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20 See Barbara Lacey’s *From Sacred to Secular: Visual Images in Early American Publications*, p. 59.
biblical standards, as “Each sinful Course to her did pleasant seem, and of the holy Scriptures made a Game” (13). The young daughter’s blatant refusal of scriptural ideals for women during the Great Awakening indicates an active choice in her engagement with the devil. The young daughter’s proximity to the devil was not only physical, as shown in the illustration, but spiritual. While the young daughter is readily disobedient to her parents prior to the devil’s intervention, the devil’s presence in the narrative furthers her derailment. The devil proposes his plot to her, stating that “if you’ll be rul’d by me / Reveng’d upon them you certainly shall be. / Seem to be humble, tell them you’ll repent. / And soon you’ find their Heart for to relent” (68-71). The devil poses the agreement to which the daughter enters is not written as a dramatic, singular physical possession event—but instead, more of a pact that later results in a physical trance following the discovery of her plot to poison her parents as revenge against their discipline.

According to historian Carol Karlsen’s *Devil in the Shape of a Woman*, the gendered nature of possession narratives in the Great Awakening is considered “mostly young or female” as a result of “resistance to the Lord rather than resistance to the devil.” 21 This resistance is a notable in *The Prodigal Daughter*, as vanity and disobedience are active decisions on the part of daughter. The young daughter isn’t disobedient due the devil’s influence—rather, her determined sinfulness and manipulation of her parents’ leniency towards her behavior makes her a prime target for the devil’s intervention. The layers of fault attributed to the daughter are important to note in this instance, as the daughter’s first real mistake is not insisting upon her sinful behavior, but being female in the first place. As Richard Godbeer explains, the connection of all women to Eve’s initial sin, which spurred the eviction of humanity from the Garden of Eden, was

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something Puritan ministers “reminded their congregations” towards the end of the seventeenth century—and a concept that continued to hold weight into the Great Awakening. Godbeer writes that “all women, pastors warned, had inherited from their first mother that dangerous blend of vulnerability and power,” giving the social image of women as inherently more susceptible to the devil and his influence.\textsuperscript{22}

As \textit{The Prodigal Daughter} progresses, the young daughter, described as a “wicked Wretch, quite void of grace and shame” attempts to act upon her plans with the devil to poison her parents and release herself from their discipline.\textsuperscript{23} An opponent for Satan’s involvement appears at this point in the narrative, as an Angel of God intervenes to inform the young daughter’s parents of her designs to kill them (see fig. 4). Of the images in this text, this illustrated moment is the most difficult to discern visually throughout all editions of the text, regardless of the print house. The figure of the angel—who encompasses the bulk of the composition—appears to the young daughter’s parents in the middle of the night. It seems that the parents are shown in bed, on the left-hand side of the frame—identified by two, nondescript faces turned slightly upward, indicating a line of sight between the angel and the parents. In this moment, the angel bears the news of their daughter’s betrayal and intentions—allowing them to defend themselves against their daughter’s enactment of the devil’s plan. Though the bulk of the image is extremely dark and overwhelmed by inked surface area, the highlights included upon the angel’s torso and the details of the wings indicate the importance of the angel’s role within the narrative itself.

\textsuperscript{22} See Richard Godbeer, \textit{The Salem Witch Hunt: A Brief History with Documents}, p. 11
\textsuperscript{23} See \textit{The Prodigal Daughter}, p. 6
Here, the role of God, or a divine agent of God, presents a clear shift in the narrative. The devil is not the only supernatural figure involved in the young daughter’s story. The intervention of an angel of God implies a divine investment in the young daughter’s soul, despite her deliberate collusion with Satan. By sending a warning to her parents, which ultimately saves them from death by their daughter’s hand, the unseen God figure presents the opportunity for the young daughter’s eventual redemption and conversion. This transition is a token of the conversion narrative during the first Great Awakening, as Juster explains:

God and his archenemy, Satan, became very real figures in the conversion narratives of the Great Awakening, where they lend these texts a vivid theatrical quality not found in early-eighteenth-century narratives. As representations of God and the devil became more literal, the sinner [themselves] became more of an actor in the drama of salvation.24

The narrative’s “theatrical” emphasis on the gendered nature of the young daughter’s sinfulness sets the stage for Satan’s employment of her vulnerable nature—echoing the established association between femininity and Satan, presenting in this case not a witch, but a damned daughter. Through the pitting of God against Satan in The Prodigal Daughter, this conflict allows it to function as both a possession narrative and conversion narrative, allotting the responsibility of the young daughter’s salvation to her own eventual appeal for forgiveness.

24 See Juster’s Disorderly Women, p. 47. Note that in brackets, “himself” was changed to “themselves” for the incorporation of the quote, as Juster uses the masculine pronoun to refer to mankind, or sinners in general—and then goes on to discuss female roles.
There is a marked, maternal theme throughout the text, as well. The moments during which the young daughter’s pride is condemned emphasize the disrespect she exhibits towards her parents. However, a large portion of young daughter’s personal conflict within the narrative rides upon the mother’s emotional response. When the young daughter’s Devil-inspired plan is discovered by her parents, her mother addresses her daughter directly through a thirteen-line lamentation at her daughter’s sin, citing the “bitter Pains, my Child I did you bear” (156) and “Whole Days and Nights” which she “did in sorrow spend, to bring you up now to my Discontent” (158-9). This speech from her mother causes the young daughter to “swoon” and “drop down at her Feet” (166) into a trance which keeps her unconscious for four days—by which time they decide her dead, and proceed to perform a funeral and burial for their daughter. In this moment, *The Prodigal Daughter* differs most vastly from its cited inspiration of Luke 15—despite the daughter’s entreaties, her parents offer no immediate forgiveness.

However, it is this contention between the two female characters that points towards the text’s potential function and audience—the shredding of maternal affection, and the abandonment of feminine connection at the hand of gendered sin that could speak poignantly to a female audience. The young daughter’s trance, a reaction to her mother’s distress and disappointment, functions as a consequence not only of the daughter’s sin, but her parents’ initial negligence in her upbringing. Her parents tend to her with “all the Arts that e’er they could contrive, / They could not bring her Spirits to revive” (167-8)—leaving all to believe her dead. While the young daughter is experiencing a vision of hell, God, and eventually heaven, her parents are grieving. Here, the text implies a dual warning: first, that young women, such as the poem’s young daughter will be disavowed from maternal care and ultimately damned at
expense of their vanity; second, that parents should avoid indulging their daughters in material goods and instead implement discipline to keep them on a godly path.

The text emphasizes the dangers of vanity as a likely pitfall for the devil’s influence, causing this text to function almost as a cautionary tale geared towards young women. To fully translate the redemptive content of the sermon and scripture upon which it was based, the poem closes with the young daughter’s physical resurrection and dramatic conversion. Upon being buried, her parents hear their “Prodigal daughter” moan from the coffin, “yet alive,” and alluding both a figurative and physical resurrection. She recounts her time in “the Regions of eternal Night” and her ultimate vision of God, which leads to her salvation. Her conversion experience is embodied in the physical resurrection, a moment that is captured in illustrated form (see fig. 1 & fig. 6). This illustration depicts the young daughter, rising up from her coffin—a literal resurrection in tandem of with her spiritual redemption, solidifying the text as a conversion narrative, surpassing possession. Shown in close proximity on the left side of the image is the young daughter’s mother—whose inclusion in this image solidifies the importance of her role, her sense of betrayal, and ultimately the importance of her forgiveness.

In the middle-ground of the image is “the worthy Minister” (199), who corroborates the legitimacy of the young daughter’s vision and redemption, marking her freed from the influence of Satan. The table underneath her coffin uplifts her, as she herself lifts up her body. The placement of the coffin on the table, as opposed to the ground, emphasizes the idea that the moment in which the young daughter awakens from her trance is a miraculous spectacle to be observed—giving her audience an immediate view of her physical and spiritual resurrection. The body language of both the minister and mother reveals their shock at the daughter’s resurrection. The minister appears to have his hand placed over his heart and the other outward
in non-verbal exclamation. The presence of the book, assumedly the bible, in his outwardly extended hand reinforces the place of this image in the timeline of the narrative, in which he was likely performing a eulogy—or, a sermon warning others of the error of the young daughter’s ways which led to her demise. The mother, who is pressed towards the far left corner of the frame, holds a handkerchief to her face—likely an illustrative tactic to reinforce her grief due to her daughter’s downfall. The placement of the handkerchief in this moment, however, seems to be over her mouth—perhaps to conceal her astonishment at her daughter’s miraculous resurrection.

This image is the only illustration that appears twice within The Prodigal Daughter—first on the title page, and finally towards the end of the narrative as the young daughter is resurrected. The repetition of the image signals two things: first, the significance of this moment in the narrative, as it depicts the young daughter’s moment of redemption after her fall to sin and Satan; second, it indicates the tactics of the printer and the likelihood that the recycling of this specific image was chosen in favor of the time consuming process of creating an additional woodcut. This could have been influenced by financial concerns, as a way of saving on additional labor, but it seems likely that the image was repeated to summarize the moment of the narrative’s resolution. While the young daughter is indeed redeemed by the end of the narrative, her encounter with the devil serves as an example of how not to behave—a step in her conversion experience that could have been avoided. Had she simply adhered to her parents’ will and obeyed what was seen during the Great Awakening as scripture-based expectations for young women’s behavior, none of this would have happened. The poem emphasizes humility and dedication to the domestic, familial sphere, presented as the ideal behavior to which the young daughter can adhere.
The Prodigal Daughter: An Edition

The Prodigal Daughter:

Or a strange and wonderful Relation,

shewing how a Gentleman of a vast Estate in Bristol, had a proud
and disobedient Daughter, who because her Parents would not
support her in all her Extravagance, bargained with the Devil to
poison them.²⁵ How an Angel informed her Parents of their
Daughter’s Design. How she lay in a Trance four Days,
and when she was put into the Grave, she came to Life again and
related the wonderful Things she saw in the other World. Like-
wise the Substance of a Sermon preached on this Occasion by the
Reverend Mr. Williams, from Luke 15.24.

²⁵ According to historian Walter C. Rucker, death by poisoning was a topic of concern for white
slave owners, noting that “as early as the 1720s, white colonists viewed the use of poison as one
of the more dangerous forms of slave resistance.”
Fig. 1 The young daughter is resurrected, *The Prodigal Daughter*, Boston, 1742. AAS.

Fig. 2. Likely a figurative representation of the perceived war between God and the devil. *The Prodigal Daughter*, Boston, 1742. AAS.
THE Prodigal Daughter,

OR, THE

Disobedient LADY Reclaim’d, &.  

LET every wicked graceless Child attend,
And listen to these Lines that here are pen’d
God Grant it to may all a Warning be,
To love their Parents and shun bad Company,
No further off than Bristol now of late,
A Gentleman liv’d of a vast Estate,
Whom he most tenderly did love so dear.
They kept her cloath’d in costly rich Array,
And the Child grew up, for Truth they say,
Her Heart in Pride was lifted up so high,
She fix’d her whole Delight in Vanity.
Each sinful Course course to her did pleasant seem,

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26 According to Isaiah Thomas’ “The History of Printing in America” Thomas Fleet Jr. and his brother John Fleet succeeded their home print and bookselling business in 1758—making the first copy of The Prodigal Daughter in 1742, selected here as copy-text, probably published by Thomas Fleet, their father—while the following publications of the text were likely published by the brothers as they continued the business through the Revolutionary war and the Siege of Boston (April 19, 1775-March 17, 1776).

27 This usage of “graceless” seems to function as a synonym for “godlessness” or “wickedness,” especially when considering the focus upon “grace” as a necessary focus in the conversion process during the time of the first Great Awakening—though historian Patricia Bonomi notes that the “battle” between secular reason and “innate grace was in one sense as old as Christianity itself” during this period. Within the context of this poem, to be graceless was to be unchristian.

28 Bristol County, Massachusetts, created from Plymouth colony in June 1685, named for Bristol, England (Encyclopædia Britannica, inc.)
And of the holy Scriptures made a Game:

At length her parents did begin to see,

Their tender Kindness would her Ruin be.\(^{29}\)

Her Mother thus to her began to speak,

*My Child, this Course you run my Heart will break;*

*The tender Love which we to you have shown,*

*I fear, will cause our tender Hearts to groan.*

*Come, come, my Child this course of Time refrain,*

*And serve the Lord now in your youthful Prime;*

*For if in that your wicked course you run,*

*Your Soul and Body both will be undone.*

Laughing and scoffing at her Mother, she

*Said, Pray now, trouble your self with me,*

*Why do you talk to me of Heaven’s Joys,*

*My youthful pleasures all for to destroy?*

*I am not certain what I shall possess,*

*After that I’ve resign’d my vital Breath,*

*I nothing for another World do care,*

*Therefore I’ll take my Pleasure while I’m here.*

The Mother said, my Child, how do you know,

---

\(^{29}\) For more on parental roles and childrearing tactics in colonial New England, see See Laurel Ulrich’s *Good Wives*, in which she explains that “tender nature and open expressions of affection gave way to firm discipline and pious rule-making as the children grew. Parents reinforced their own authority with frequent reminders of the correcting power of God” (155).
How soon your Pride into the Dust will go? or
Young as well as Old to Death bow down,
And you must die, God only knows how soon. 35
She from her Mother in a Passion went,
Filling her aged Heart with Discontent,
She wrung her Hands to her Husband,
She’s ruin’d Soul and Body I’m afraid.
Her Father said, her Pride I will pull down,
Money to spend no more, I’ll give her none,
I’ll make her humble before I have done,
Or else forever I will her disown.

All Night she from her Father’s House did stray
Next Morning she came Home by break of Day, 45
Her Father he did ask her where she’d been?
She straitway answer’d, What was that to him.
He said, your haughty Pride I will pull down,
Money to spend of me you shall have none,
She said if you deny me what I crave, 50
I’ll sell my Soul, but Money I will have.
Her Father stript her of her rich Array,
And then he drest her in a Russet Grey,  
And to her Chamber he did her confine, 
With Bread and Water fed her for some Time. 

Altho’ their Hearts for her did ake full sore, 
This Course they took her Soule for to restore, 
But all in vain, she wanted Heaven’s Grace, 
And Sin within her heart had taken place. 

One night in her Room she musing was, 60
The Devil in her Room did then appear, 
In Shape and Person like a Gentleman, 
And seemingly he took her by the Hand. 

He said, fair Creature, why do you lament? 
Why is your Heart thus fill’d with Discontent? 65
She said my Parents cruel are to me, 
And keep me here to starve in Misery. 
The Devil said, if you’ll be rul’d by me, 
Reveng’d on them you certainly shall be.

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30 A coarse woolen cloth of a reddish-brown or subdued colour, formerly used for clothing especially by country people and the poor; a kind or make of this (OED).
31 Variant spelling of “ache” utilized in eighteenth century English (OED).
32 In this context, “want” does not express desire for “grace,” but a lack of it, and likely a need for it.
33 The question mark here is inserted from the copy-text’s original semi-colon, according to a change in a later 1770 printing from Newport, Rhode Island. This emendation is meant to clarify this line as a question.
Seem to be humble, tell them you’l repent.
And soon you’ find their Hearts for to relent.
And when your Father he doth use you kind,
An Opportunity you soon will find,
Poison your Father and your Mother too,
There’s none will know who ‘twas the Fact did do.

Fig. 3. The devil appears to the young daughter. *The Prodigal Daughter*, Boston, 1742. AAS.

This wicked Wretch,\(^{34}\) quite void of Grace & Shame
She seem’d to be well pleased at the same;

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\(^{34}\) Vile, sorry, or despicable person; one of opprobrious or reprehensible character; a mean or contemptible creature. (*OED*).
Said, I’m resolv’d your Counsel for to take,
And be reveng’d for what they’ve done of late.
Where do you live, pray tell me where to come
That I may tell you when the Job is done,
He said, my Name is Satan, and I dwell in the dark
Regions of the burning Hell.
At first she seem’d to be something surpriz’d
But want of Grace so blinded had her Eyes,
she said, well Sir, if you the Devil be,
I’ll take the Counsel which you gave to me.
But mind what Wonders God doth every Hour,
His Mercies are above the Devil’s Power,
He will his Servants keep both Night and Day,
From the devouring subtle Serpent’s Prey.
Next Day when she her Father’s Face did see,
She instantly did fall upon her Knee,
Saying, Father now my wicked Heart relents,
And for my Sins I heartily repent.
Her Father then with Tears did her embrace,
Saying, I’m bles’d for this small spark of Grace,
That Heaven hath my Child bestow’d on thee,

35 The serpent, ‘more subtil than any beast of the field’, that tempted Eve (Gen. iii. 1–5); the Tempter, the Devil, Satan (OED).
No more I’ll use you with such Cruelty.

Unto her Mother then straitway he goes,
And told to her the blest and happy News,
Her Mother was rejoic’d then for her Part,
Not knowing the Mischief she had in her Heart.  

But the Almighty her Designs did know,
And ‘twas his blessed Will it should be so,
That other Graceless Children they might see,
All Things are done by Heaven’s great Decree.
The Poison strong she privately had bought,
And only then the fatal Time she sought,
To work the fall of these her Parents dear,
Who’d brought her up with tender Love and Care.
One Night her Parents sleeping were in Bed,
Nothing but troubled Dreams run in their Head,
At length an Angel did to them appear,
Saying, *Awake, and unto me give Ear.*  

_A Messenger I’m sent by Heaven kind,
To let you know your Deaths are both design’d.
Your Graceless Child whom you do love so dear,
She for your precious Lives hath laid a Snare._

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36 An injury inflicted by a person or other agent; an offence committed by a person; an evil arising out of or existing in certain conditions (*OED*). In this context, “Mischief” can be alluding to the influence of Satan within the narrative.
To poison you the Devil tempts her so,

She hath no Power from the Snare to go,

But God such Care doth of his Servants take,

Those that believe on Him he’ll not forsake.

You must not use her cruel nor severe,

For tho’ these Things to you I do declare,

It is to show you what the Lord can do,

He soon can turn her Heart, you’ll find it so.

Fig. 4. The angel of God appears to the parents, warning them of their daughter’s design. *The Prodigal Daughter*, Boston, 1742. AAS.
Pray to the Lord his Grace for to send down,

And like the Prodigal\(^{37}\) she will return,

The fatted Calf\(^{38}\) with Joy you’ll kill that day,

The Angels shall rejoice in Heaven high,

Because a wretched Sinner doth repent,

Who in Vice and Sin her Time hath all misspent.

This pious Couple then awoke we hear,

And soon the Angel he did disappear.

They to each other did the Vision tell,

And from this Time we’ll mark her Actions well

And if this Vision unto pass must come,

I’ll praise the Lord for such great Favours done.

Next Morning she rose early as we hear,

And for her Parents Breakfast did prepare,

And in the same she put the Poison strong,

And brought it unto them when she had done.

Her Father took the Victuals which she brought\(^{39}\)

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\(^{37}\) Referencing the Parable of the Prodigal Son in the Gospel of Luke: “Of a person: that has lived a reckless or extravagant life away from home, but subsequently made a repentant return. Also more generally and fig.: that has gone astray; errant, wayward; wandering. Frequently in prodigal son (also daughter, child), with allusion to Luke 15:11–32” (OED).

\(^{38}\) In the parable of the Prodigal Son, the father welcomes his son home by preparing a feast with a fatted calf, “23 And bring the fat calf, and kill him, and let us eat, and be merry: 24 For this my son was dead, and is alive again: and he was lost, but he is found. And they began to be merry.” Luke 15: 23-24, King James Version. Another possible translation that might have been used during the time of the Great Awakening is the 1599 Geneva Bible.

\(^{39}\) Whatever is normally required, or may naturally be used, for consumption in order to support life; food or provisions of any kind (OED).
And down the same unto the Dog he sat,
Who ate the food and instantly did die,
The case was plain she could it not deny.
They call’d her there the Sight for to behold,
Which when she saw, her spirits soon run cold,
She cry’d, the Devil hath me now deceiv’d
I’ve mist my aim, for which I’m sorely griev’d
Her mother cry’d, hard is the fate of me,
I’ve been a tender mother unto thee,
And can you seek to take my life away,
O graceless child! What will become of thee?
With bitter Pains, my Child I did you bear,\(^40\)
I taught you how the Lord of Life to fear,
Whole Days and Nights I did in sorrow spend,
To bring you up now to my Discontent.
Quite void of Grace you in your Sins do run,
You slight my Counsel after all I’ve done,
Instead of Obedience which you ought to pay,
Your Parents lives you’re seeking to betray.

\(^{40}\) Allusion to childbirth and physical labor, in addition to the continual labor of childrearing.
When thus she heard her tender Mother speak,

she in a swoon did drop down at her Feet,

And all the Arts that e’er they could contrive, 41

41 “Arts” here is likely it is referring to healing practices or medicinal craft— in that it is a “practical pursuit or trade of a skilled nature, a craft; an activity that can be achieved or mastered by the application of specialist skills; (also) any one of the useful arts” (OED).
They could not bring her Spirits to revive.

Four days they kept her, when they did prepare,

To lay her Body in the Dust we hear, 170

At her Funeral a Sermon then was preach’d, 175

All other wicked Children for to teach.

How they should fear their tender Parents kind,

Their Words observe, their Counsel for to mind,

And then their Days will be long in this Land,

All Things shall prosper which they take in Hand.

So close this Reverend Divine did lay,

This Charge,⁴² that many wept that there did stay

To hear the sermon, and her parents dear,

Were overwhelm’d with sorrow, grief, and care, 180

The Sermon being over and quite done,

To lay her body in the dust they came,

But suddenly they bitter groans did hear,

Which much surprised all that then were there.

At length they did observe the dismal sound, 185

Come from the body just laid in the ground.

The coffin then they did draw up again,

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⁴² A precept, injunction, mandate, order” (OED) as relayed by “this Reverend Divine”; also possibly referring to the definition of “Charge” as an emotional burden, or “anything burdensome; a source of trouble or inconvenience” (OED).
And in a fright they opened the same.

When soon they found that she was yet alive,

Her mother seeing that she did survive,

Did praise the Lord in hopes she would have time,

And would repent of all her heinous Crimes.

She in her coffin then was carried home,

And when unto her father’s house she’d come,

She in the coffin sat and did admire

Her winding sheet, and then she did desire,

Fig. 6. The young daughter is resurrected, *The Prodigal Daughter*, Boston, 1742. AAS.

The worthy Minister for to sit down,
And she would tell him Wonders which were

Unto her, since her Soule had took its Flight,

She had seen the Regions of eternal Night.

She said, when first my Soul did hence depart

For to relate the Story grieves my Heart,

I handed was to lonesome wild Deserts,

And briery\(^{43}\) Woods which dismal were and dark.

The Briars tore my Flesh, the Gore did run,\(^{44}\)

I call’d for Mercy, but I could find none.

I at length a little Glimpse of Light did spy,

And heard a Voice which unto me did cry:

\[\text{Now sinful Soul observe and you shall see,}\]
\[\text{How precious does that Light appear to thee,}\]
\[\text{But in Regions of eternal Night,}\]
\[\text{You never must expect for to see Light.}\]

\[\text{Now hasten to that Light which does appear,}\]
\[\text{And there your Sentence}^{45}\text{ you shall quickly hear.}\]

\[\text{I hearing this did hasten then along,}\]
\[\text{At length unto a spacious Gate I came.}\]
\[\text{I knock’d aloud, but no one Answer made,}\]

---

\(^{43}\) Full of or consisting of thorns or briers; brambly, thorny \((OED)\).

\(^{44}\) Possible allusion to crown of thorns as used in Christ’s execution in the Gospels of Matthew, Mark, and John. See Matthew 27:29, Mark 15:17, and John 19:2-5, KJV.

\(^{45}\) To pronounce sentence upon; to condemn to a punishment \((OED)\).
At length one to me did appear and said,

What want you here? I answer’d, to come in.

He ask’d my Name, then shut the Gate again.

He staid a while, then to the Door did come,

He said, be gone for you there is no Room.

For we have no such graceless Wretches here,

That disobey their tender Parents dear.

I sorely wept, and to the Man thus said,

Am I the first that Parents disobey’d?

If all be cast to Hell who thus do sin,

Few at this Gate I fear will enter in.

He said but you have been a Sinner wild,

In things besides a disobedient Child,

Swearing and Whoring, Sabbath breaking too,

There be gone, for here’s no Rest for you.

I said, Sir hear me, and remember pray,

How holy David he did run astray,

The Man whose Heart once with the Lord did join,

Adultery and Murder was his Crime,

He said, like David, you did not return,

---

46 David, biblical Israelite king and the first monarch of all Israelite tribes.
47 Alluding to 2 Samuel 11 & 12; 1 Kings 1 & 2: in which David seduces Bathsheba, wife of Uriah the Hittite; Bathsheba becomes pregnant, and David has Uriah killed, allowing him to marry Bathsheba.
For he in Ashes did his Sins did mourn,
And God is merciful you well do know, 240
Free to forgive all those that humble so.

I still my Case with him pursued to plead,
And told him, Sir, in Scripture I did read,
How Mary Magdalen,48 who here doth rest,
At once with many Devils was possest.49 245
Go, silly Woman, he did answer then,
Had you so much lamented for your Sin,
And Mercy at your Saviour’s Feet implor’d,
For all your Sins, he had your Soul restor’d.

I said in Person she her Saviour saw 250
He said, you may behold him every Day.

He ne’er leaves those that in his Mercy Trust,
He’s always with the Pious Good and Just,
In Holy Scripture he doth there appear,
Read the Apostles, and you’ll find him there, 255
You must believe, if that you sav’d will be,
That Christ for Sinners died upon a Tree,
Then save me Lord, I to him did reply,

48 Mary Magdalene, disciple of Jesus who was plagued by demons.
49 Alluding to Luke 8:2 and Mark 16:9 in which Jesus cures Mary Magdalen of seven demons which possessed her.
For I believe that Christ did for me die,
Lord, let my Soul return from whence it came,
And I will honour thy most holy Name.

A Voice I heard, which said to me return
But first behold the wretched Place of Doom,
Where the Reward of Sin is justly paid,

I torn’d about, but sadly was dismay’d.
I saw the burning Lake of Misery;
I saw the Man there that first tempted me,
My loving tender Parents for to slay
And he both fierce and grim did look at me.
He told me at last he was sure of me,
said my Saviour’s Blood has set me free,
Then in a hideous Manner he did roar,
Then God my Sense did to me restore,
When thus the Story she to them had told,
She said, put me to Bed, for I am cold,
And call to me my tender Parents dear,
Whom I will love and honour while I am here.
To take the Sacrament she did require,
They gave it then as she did desire,

---

50 Image of Hell, alluding to the Book of Revelation, particularly Revelation 20:14 in which there is a “lake of fire” which is called “the second death” (1599 Geneva Bible).
51 Assumedly referring to Holy Communion, or the Lord’s supper.
And now she is a Christian just and true, 280

No more wicked Vices doth pursue.

I hope this will a good Example be,

Children, your Parents honour and obey,

And then the Lord will bless you here on Earth,

And give you a Crown of Glory after Death. 285

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Fig. 7. Printer’s emblem, indicating The Heart & Crown. The Prodigal Daughter, Boston, 1742. AAS.

The SERMON.

Luke 15. and the first Part of the 24th Verse.

For this my Son was dead, and is alive, he was lost, and is found.
In the Preaching this Sermon, the Reverend M. Williams was pleased on this Occasion to observe,

First, How, when People fall into Sin, they are dead to Grace, and how miserable a Thing it is to be in the State of Damnation, which all those who are in Disobedience to their Parents lawful.

Secondly, What it is to be dead and alive again on returning from Sin, as the Prodigal Son did in which Part he was very largely discoursed on the Rejoicings made in Heaven, for the Sake of a Sinner’s Repentance.

Thirdly and lastly, He explain’d what was meant by those Words, He was lost and is found, viz. That by a Man’s falling into Sin, he is lost to God: by returning to Grace he shall find Mercy at the Throne thereof; and closed the whole with wonderful Mercies of God, in calling this young Lady to Repentance.

FINNIS.

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52 That is to say; namely; to wit: used to introduce an amplification, or more precise or explicit explanation, of a previous statement or word. (Cf. the abbreviated forms vid. adv., videl. adv., and viz. adv. and n.) (OED).
Appendix I: Luke 15

Luke 15: 11-24

11 And he said, A certain man had two sons:

12 And the younger of them said to his father, Father, give me the portion of goods that falleth to me. And he divided unto them his living.

13 And not many days after the younger son gathered all together, and took his journey into a far country, and there wasted his substance with riotous living.

14 And when he had spent all, there arose a mighty famine in that land; and he began to be in want.

15 And he went and joined himself to a citizen of that country; and he sent him into his fields to feed swine.

16 And he would fain have filled his belly with the husks that the swine did eat: and no man gave unto him.

17 And when he came to himself, he said, How many hired servants of my father's have bread enough and to spare, and I perish with hunger!

18 I will arise and go to my father, and will say unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven, and before thee,

19 And am no more worthy to be called thy son: make me as one of thy hired servants.

20 And he arose, and came to his father. But when he was yet a great way off, his father saw him, and had compassion, and ran, and fell on his neck, and kissed him.

53 See the King James Version (KJV).
And the son said unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven, and in thy sight, and am no more worthy to be called thy son.

But the father said to his servants, Bring forth the best robe, and put it on him; and put a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet:

And bring hither the fatted calf, and kill it; and let us eat, and be merry:

For this my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found. And they began to be merry.
Appendix II:

Textual Notes & Chronology:


Chronology of Copies Collated:

v1: 1742 (copy text, referred to in this edition as v1)

v2, 1758 (The New Printing-Office, Boston) [only final 6 pages]

v3, 1763 (Boston, printed and sold by Zechariah Fowle in Back-Street)

v4, 1768 (Printed and sold by T. & J. Fleet at the Heart and Crown in Boston)

v5, 1768 (Printed by John Waterman, Providence, Rhode Island)

v6, 1769 (Printed and sold by T. & J. Fleet at the Heart and Crown in Boston)

v7, 1770 (Printed by Solomon Southwick)

v8, 1771 (Boston, Printed and sold at Isiah Thomas's printing-office near the Mill Bridge)

v9, 1775 (Printing location undetermined)

v10 1775, (Printed in London, England, under a modified title)

v11, 1775 (Printed in Newcastle, England)

v12, 1776 (Danvers, Mass. Printed and sold by E. Russell, next Bell-Tavern)
v13 1776 (Printed and sold by Thomas Fleet] at the Bible and Heart in Cornhill, Boston)

v14 1776 (Printed and sold by Thomas Fleet] at the Bible and Heart in Cornhill, Boston)

v15, 1786 (Printed in Glasgow, Scotland, for the Company of Flying Stationers); v16, 1787
(Printed in Worcester, Mass., by Isaiah Thomas)

v17, 1790 (Printed in Windham, Conn., and sold by John Byrne at the printing office in
Windham)

v18, 1790 (Boston: Printed and sold by Ezekiel Russell, next Liberty-Pole)

v19, 1794, (Boston: Printed and sold by Ezekiel Russell, near Liberty-Pole)

v20, 1795 (Printed and sold Thomas Fleet at the Bible & Heart, Cornhill, Boston)

v21 1797 (Boston: Printed and sold by Ezekiel Russell, next Liberty-Pole)

v22 1799 (New-York: Printed for the travelling booksellers)

v23 1799 (Hartford: Printed for the travelling booksellers)

v24, 1800 (Printed in Newcastle, England)

v25, 1807 (Printed in Boston, by Thomas Fleet)

v26, 1808 (Printed in Providence, RI by David Heaton and sold at his book store Main Street);

v27, 1819 (Printed in Philadelphia by David Dickinson, no. 100, Race street)

v28, 1819 (Printed in Philadelphia by David Dickinson, no. 100, Race street)
**Emendations to the copy text:** Line 17 break; ~, 21 Prime;] ~, 27 destroy?] ~.

65 Discontent?] ~.

**NOTE**—the following were indiscernible in v1. The following versions of the text with surviving corresponding pages were compared, and upon being found in agreement, were used to insert missing/indiscernible characters for this edition:

L 6: A

L 7: And

L 8: Whom

L9: They

L10: And

L 20: , come,

L 24: and scoffing L 25: , Pray Now, L 30: I nothing

L 33: How

L 35: And
L 37: filling

L 59: And

L 69: Reveng’d

LL 148-155: First words of all lines are supplemented by comparison. LL 189-195: First words of all lines are supplemented by comparison. LL 223-236: First words of all lines are supplemented by comparison. LL 244-266: First words of all lines are supplemented by comparison.
Works Cited:


Fleet, Pompey. *The Prodigal Daughter: Or A Strange and Wonderful Relation Shewing, How a Gentleman of a Vast Estate in Bristol, Had a Proud and Disobedient Daughter, Who Because Her Parents Would Not Support Her in All Her Extravagance, Bargained with the Devil to Poison Them. How an Angel Informed Her Parents of Their Daughter's Design. How She Lay in a Trance Four Days, and When She Was Put into the Grave, She Came to Life Again, and Related the Wonderful Things She Saw in the Other World. Likewise the Substance of a Sermon Preached on This Occasion by the Reverend Mr. Williams, from Luke 15.*


Medlicott, Alexander. “In the Wake of Mr. Edwards's ‘Most Awakening’ Sermon at Enfield.”

*Early American Literature*, vol. 15, no. 3, 1980, pp. 217–221.


