

# Coming Home Again: American Family Drama and the Figure of the Prodigal

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## Main content

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Coming Home Again: American Family Drama and the Figure of the Prodigal. By GEOFFREY S. PROEHL. Cranbury, NJ: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press; London: Associated University Presses. 1997. 221 pp. 32.50 [pounds sterling]; \$36.

Tennessee Williams once remarked that he had never met a 'writer of consequence who did not have a difficult familial background'. In *Coming Home Again: American Family Drama and the Figure of the Prodigal*, Geoffrey S. Proehl seeks to contextualize this premium on autobiographical expression within what he rightly regards as the highly conventionalized forms of mainstream American drama. To this end, he devotes most of his book to a detailed examination of a particular paradigm: the departure and return of the prodigal, a parable that 'provides a way of shaping biographical materials, while the truth claims of biography simultaneously suggest an escape from fiction and convention' (p. 48).

Beginning with an overview of the history and functions of the prodigal stage drunkard, Proehl proceeds to an examination of the paradigm's typical characters. The biblical figure of the prodigal son is often recast in American drama as a husband, introducing...

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Coming Home Again doesn't sanctify the image of the mother, but instead aims to truly capture the full-bodied personhood of the woman Lee put on the page. October 23, 2020 | Rating: 3.5/4 | Full Review... Carlos Aguilar. RogerEbert.com. Top Critic. Moving family drama about a young man who discovers the healing power of caregiving. October 26, 2020 | Rating: 4.5/5 | Full Review... Frederic and Mary Ann Brussat. Spirituality & Practice. Coming Home Again, along with telling an excellent heart-breaking story of loss, is designed to make you feel and empathize-not just from the story and acting but also from its cinematography. October 25, 2020 |

Rating: 7.5/10 | Full Review... Alan Ng. Geoffrey S. Proehl, *Coming Home Again: American Family Drama and the Figure of the Prodigal* (Madison, NJ: Farleigh Dickinson University Press, 1997, £32.50). Pp. 221. ISBN 0 8386 3547 4. Add to cart £20.00 Added to cart An error has occurred, please try again later. Check if you have access via personal or institutional login. Log in Register. Volume 33, Issue 1. April 1999 , pp. 89-200. Geoffrey S. Proehl, *Coming Home Again: American Family Drama and the Figure of the Prodigal* (Madison, NJ: Farleigh Dickinson University Press, 1997, £32.50). Pp. 221. ISBN 0 8386 3547 4. "Coming Home Again" is co-written by Wang and the real Chang-rae Lee from his moving 1995 *New Yorker* essay. The movie transplants that piece's late-1980s period to present-day San Francisco, the now-gentrified hub to the Bay Area tech bubble that has all but engulfed the city's multicultural foundation. Chang-rae has abandoned his life as a writer in New York to care for his mother, now bedridden with cancer and unable to so much as lift herself out of bed while her husband works as a psychiatrist. Chang-rae is bitter about leaving behind his East Coast life — one far more westernized and remo