PATRIMONY, SOLITUDE AND OBLIGATION: PRODIGAL SONS AND ABSENT FATHERS
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ABSTRACT

As a contribution to the verifiable moment that autobiographical explorations of the father are undergoing in the first two decades of the 21st century, my paper focuses on four authors whose relational memoirs "go beyond the subject." In particular, I focus on a comparative analysis of three hybrid texts - Paul Auster's The Invention of Solitude (1982), Philip Roth's Patrimony (1991), and Richard Rodriguez's Days of Obligation: an Argument with my Mexican Father (1992) - and I include a parallel reading of Dutch author Henri J. M. Nouwen's spiritual journey The Return of the Prodigal Son (1992). My transnational, transethnic reading of these very disparate versions of what has been called "patremoir" (Andre Gerard, 2012) or "patriography" (Couser, 2011) will explore how these authors mix their own portrait with the extended portrait of their (real or metaphoric) father, applying different myths, borrowing forms and strategies from literary antecedents, transgressing norms of familial secrecy and privacy, but - in the end - paying homage to their paternal legacy.

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KEYWORDS
"Patriography"; Philip Roth; Richard Rodriguez; Paul Auster

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