The Education of Joseph Prince: Reading Adolescent Culture in Eighteenth-Century New England

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Abstract
Among the earliest extant manuscripts composed by a New England adolescent, Prince's commonplace book both confirms and modifies existing studies of the transition from childhood to adulthood in early America. Unlike the night-walking youths who appear in revisionist scholarship, Prince never was haled before the Plymouth County court to answer charges of "frolicking" with his cronies. Instead, this dutiful scion of a wealthy and politically powerful southeastern Massachusetts clan spent most of his free time perusing the books in his father's extensive library. Yet the very act of reading held subversive potential. While his parents sought to hone his religious sensibilities and prepare him for a career as a gentleman planter and civil magistrate, Prince devoted a considerable amount of time to reading books that his elders may well have considered frivolous—and in a few cases, illicit. These included sensational accounts of portentous celestial wonders, arcane astrological treatises, and bawdy jestbooks containing salacious epigrams. Chronicling the education of an early-eighteenth-century farm boy, Prince's commonplace book simultaneously illustrates the process through which adults in provincial New England attempted to socialize their children and discloses the subtly rebellious acts of reading through which young people resisted such efforts.

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V. I. Lenin noted the positive role of the English bourgeois school of political economy as one of the sources of Marxism. Adam Smith (1723—90) was one of the most prominent representatives of English classical political economy. In his estimation they were passionate protagonists of education, self-government and freedom. They defended the cause of the popular masses.