

Final Written Report

Professional Development Grant

“Mobility and Masculinity in Faulkner’s *Sanctuary*”

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This final report addresses the results of a professional research project funded by an ATU Professional Development Grant. This report follows the instructions provided in the Guidelines for Professional Development Grants.

A. Title Page (see above)

B. Restatement of Professional Enhancement Opportunity

Abstract of conference paper presented:

In William Faulkner's *Sanctuary*, gender is both represented and problematized through modes of transportation, specifically the train and the automobile. Each moves bodies through space, but the automobile typically, at least in the era of the narrative, with greater speed, and, simultaneously, granting the driver greater control, both traits aligned with masculinity. In the opening scene of the novel, Horace Benbow, the upper class lawyer who cannot drive and has hitchhiked his way, unintentionally, to the old Frenchman's Place--a rural, criminal space inhabited by bootleggers (significantly to escape his controlling wife)--comes face to face with the murderous Popeye, and they spend four hours completely immobile, squatting across a static pool of water, occasionally hearing the sounds of automobiles passing by on the highway—a feminine scenario on many levels. That night, Horace hitches another ride, this time to his sister's home in Jefferson, a town conveniently on the way to the delivery truck's final destination with a load of liquor, Memphis. For the rest of the novel, Horace either travels by train, a more passive mode than the automobile, or is driven, primarily by his

controlling sister's chauffeur. Popeye, on the other hand, is repeatedly shown speeding along his illicit way in cars aligned with modernity, masculinity and criminality.

When Popeye later drives to Memphis, he takes with him the young coed he has just raped, Temple Drake. Already marked as sexually transgressive because of her regular joyrides with the town boys in Oxford, Temple winds up in Popeye's power in part because she leaps from a train, and then into a car belonging to a young man of her class, Gowan Stevens, who insists in spite of his perpetual drunkenness that he's been educated to drink like a gentleman at the University of Virginia. Proof of his failed masculinity (and class) is his repeated passing out, his crashing of his roadster on the way to buy moonshine at Popeye's lair, and his abandonment of Temple to her future rape, kidnapping, and imprisonment in a Memphis whorehouse as Popeye's kept woman.

One thing that complicates a simplistic association of trains with the feminized, upper class, and ultimately defeated Benbow, and likewise the association of cars with the gun-toting, car-driving, and ultimately executed gangster Popeye, is the added dimension of private and public space surrounding them. Both trains and cars are always already phallic, but the spaces Horace inhabits on his travels are public spaces that include the lower classes (the corrupt politician Clarence Snopes among them). Before Horace leaves home he argues with his stepdaughter Little Belle, insisting that the beau she has picked up on the train is incontrovertibly unacceptable if for no other reason than her having found him on a train. Clearly, although Gowan's inability to control either his liquor or his car diminishes his claim to masculinity, a car offers at least a semi-private space that, as a result, is also a sexualized space, if an illicit one. Temple's riding with boys in cars has ruined her reputation because of that fact. Those boys, frustrated that she

does not live up to her reputation, scrawl her name in a public restroom at the train depot, and then show it to Gowan, planting in his mind an excuse to later abandon her. Once he does, Temple never again has private space, neither toilet nor bedroom nor car. We see her finally on public display in the courtroom, reciting a male-authored, perjured script over which she has no control, and then immobile on a park bench under her rigid father's surveillance.

#### C. Brief Review of Professional Enhancement Opportunity

I attended the American Literature Association conference in San Francisco, CA, and presented my paper there. I flew out of Little Rock on May 25, and returned on May 30, 2016.

#### D. Summary of Experiences

My primary teaching area within literature is modern American, and within that, the literature of the American South. The author I teach most often is William Faulkner (and my scholarly work on Faulkner contributes to that teaching). Not only did I receive positive feedback on my paper, including comments on my ideas for extending this paper, I was also able to attend numerous other panels relevant to my teaching and scholarship.

#### E. Conclusions and Recommendations

I am working on a publishable-length essay of which this paper is a part. Without the funds I received from the ATU Professional Grant, I would not have been able to attend the conference.