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Drunk and Disorderly: Alcoholism in William Faulkner's *Sanctuary*

After one year from the ratification of this article the manufacture, sale, or transportation of intoxicating liquors within, the importation thereof into, or the exportation thereof from the United States and all territory subject to the jurisdiction thereof for beverage purposes is hereby prohibited.

—*Constitution of the United States*, Amendment Eighteen, Section 1

Elegance, *esprit*, culture? Virginia has no art, no literature, no philosophy, no mind or aspiration of her own. Her education has sunk to the Baptist seminary level . . . Urbanity, *politesse*, chivalry? Go to! It was in Virginia that they invented the device of searching for contraband whiskey in women's underwear.

—Henry Louis Mencken ("The Sahara of the Bozart" 159-60)

THE DRAMATIC EVENTS IN WILLIAM FAULKNER'S *SANCTUARY* BETRAY A region under the siege of corruption, as pervasive violence precludes any hope of orderly reconciliation between entrenched power and those subject to it. The world of novel has been described as a "wasteland" (Blotner 269) whose moral, social, and political decay rots everything from church to brothel. Situating this wasteland in a specific context, François Pitavy remarks, "prohibition so saturates the narrative that it comes to inform it—to control its very writing. From subject matter, prohibition becomes a governing concept ordering the narrative—at once what is told and what must remain untold" (47). Lost in the novel's sensational violence is the fact that *Sanctuary*, as Pitavy claims, *is* very much about Prohibition. The circumstances informing the central plot rely on outward signifiers of Prohibition, placing the novel as one set in and responding to the milieu propagated by the Eighteenth Amendment (also known as the Volstead Act). Essential to *Sanctuary*'s contextual frame is not only the culture of gangster bootlegging and societal corruption but the very act of drinking itself, for nearly everyone in the novel imbibes prodigiously. In the cases of Temple Drake and Gowan Stevens, two characters whose alcoholic benders resonate across the novel's entire social spectrum, such egregious overconsumption warns of how Prohibition complicates what were once stable, though problematic, gender, class, and race structures in the South. Their

catastrophic imbibing reflects Prohibition's legislative impotence both as a means to regulate drinking and, more importantly, to address what "progressive"¹ reformers deemed a moral problem. Faulkner uses booze in a way that does more than point to the obvious failures of the Volstead Act, however. By characterizing alcohol consumption in its ugly reality (which is to say *alcoholically*), Faulkner challenges long held cultural precepts that celebrated drinking as a badge of honor, instead using consumption and its consequences to critique his fictional town of Jefferson's troubling response to the destabilizing of Southern social hegemony. Indeed, the pervasive consumption of prohibited alcohol effectively undermines the antiquated Southern form traditionally prescribed to white men and women of estimable social class. In the end, the categorical fluidity and ironic subversion of Gowan's "gentleman" and Temple's "lady" identities prove that, in Faulkner's Jefferson, the only thing more ubiquitous than bootlegged liquor is hypocrisy.

Faulkner's *oeuvre* is populated by many notorious drinkers whose thirst for booze eventually becomes their undoing—Jason Compson, Sr., and Uncle Maury from *The Sound and the Fury* serve as examples. What makes Temple's and Gowan's descent into alcoholism² significant is the fallout their addictions precipitate *vis-à-vis* Southern social relations and the problematic intersection of broader socio-political forces present in the Volstead-era South, suggesting that the region is in fact "diseased," a useful metaphor when considering that Gowan Stevens and Temple Drake drink alcoholically. More importantly, the novel gives insight into the evolving ways that drinking registered in the national consciousness at the time of its publication, particularly in light of Prohibition's obvious failures to legislate morality and cure America of its pandemic of alcoholic overconsumption. Thus, it proves no accident that Gowan's and Temple's spectacular drinking binges coincide with the Volstead era,

¹I use the term "progressive" in reference to a broader set of beliefs that challenged the status quo. In hindsight, Prohibition is understood for the legislative disaster that it was, though it emerged in large part as the result of various progressive social and political forces that advocated for, among other things, women's suffrage. I address this in more detail later in the essay.

²I am not interested in characterizing alcoholism with any prevailing, unified definition (if one even exists), so influential addiction specialist E. M. Jellinek's appropriately vague classification suffices. Jellinek defines alcoholism as "any use of alcoholic beverages that causes any damage to the individual or society or both" (35).

showing how gender, class, and race identities evolve (forcefully, in this case) when confronted with the powerful, unseen influences driving Prohibition.

Any discussion of alcohol as it relates to *Sanctuary's* rendering of the South's encounter with disruptive social forces must begin with the most obvious problem drinker, Gowan Stevens. Gowan is a minor character; his presence accounts for barely one quarter of the text, and, on the surface, he is merely the catalyst responsible for Temple's encounter with Popeye. Initially, his actions seem, if affected, non-threatening. We first see Gowan when he courts Horace's widowed sister, Narcissa, at the country home she shares with Miss Jenny. Gowan is described as wearing "flannels and a blue coat; a broad, plumpish young man with a swaggering air, vaguely collegiate" (Faulkner, *Sanctuary* 24). Faulkner continues:

Stevens came in, with his sleek head, his plump, assured face. Miss Jenny gave him her hand and he bent fatly and kissed it.

"Getting younger and prettier every day," he said. "I was just telling Narcissa that if you'd just get up out of that chair and be my girl, she wouldn't have a chance." . . .

"How do you do, sir," Stevens said. He gave Benbow's hand a quick, hard, high, close grip. (25)

Horace Benbow is not impressed by what he perceives to be a disingenuous display of sincerity, remarking to Jenny, "The Virginia gentleman one, who told us at supper that night about how they had taught him to drink like a gentleman. Put a beetle in alcohol, and you have a scarab; put a Mississippian in alcohol, and you have a gentleman—" (26-27). From his costumed appearance to his overly polite demeanor, Gowan makes it difficult for Horace and Jenny to take him seriously as a suitor to Narcissa, let alone as the gentleman he purports to be. Also, note Horace's cynicism regarding Gowan's gentlemanly signifier: alcohol. Horace recognizes the irony in how Gowan's "Virginia gentleman" façade³ requires the boozed prop by which he is so quick to

³Gowan's ideal gentleman has historical precedent. Bertram Wyatt-Brown cites the tenets of Southern honor as combining equal parts appearance, behavior, self-identification, and perception by others. He assigns three basic components to honor: the inner conviction of self-worth, the claim of that self-assessment before the public, and the public's reaction to it (14). Acting honorably (I equate "honorably" with "gentlemanly") required that the individual perform appropriately in the public domain, externally demonstrating his honor from within. The gentleman's act of societal recognition required the dynamic interaction between two parties: the gentleman was validated as such only by another person's confirmation. According to Kenneth

identify himself.

Gowan's contradictory behavior exposes a fragile connection between white Southern masculinity and alcohol consumption. His drinking is distinct from that of the other characters, speaking to the myriad ways that Prohibition reconfigured how certain demographics conveyed social class characteristics through illicit consumption. John W. Crowley states that although consumption declined in the 1930s, "it likely increased among young and educated city dwellers, in whose sophisticated circles heavy drinking was not merely tolerated, but actively encouraged" (40). Gowan might qualify as one of these "educated city dwellers," a clear indicator of how social class informed the perception of how one drank. Crowley highlights a difference in the class dynamics of consumption during Prohibition: "Simply because it became illicit, drinking possessed a singular importance; drinking in defiance of Prohibition was a sign of solidarity with the rising generation's resistance to what it called 'puritanism' and to what it considered to be the oppression of bourgeois American life" (37). Although Gowan's consumption can hardly be classified as an overt act of insubordination, its performative value remains essential to the cavalier gentleman persona imbued with a privileged sense of masculinity.

As the "Virginia gentleman" character continues to materialize, the glaring paradox between Gowan's performed identity and his actual behavior emerges. His interaction with the townspeople in his pursuit of liquor highlights testy class divisions. In order to procure liquor for the following day's baseball game, Gowan solicits three men. He meets resistance here:

"They cant seem to make good liquor down here like they do up at school," Gowan said.

"Where you from?" the third said.

"Virgin—oh, Jefferson. I went to school at Virginia. Teach you how to drink, there." (Faulkner, *Sanctuary* 32)

Greenberg, persons of honor "project themselves through how they look and what they say. They are treated honorably when their projections are respected and accepted as true. The central issue to men in such a culture is not the nature of some underlying reality but the *acceptance of their projections*" (7, emphasis added). The public role in affirming honor cannot be overstated in the case of Gowan Stevens, for it is in his performative gesture for public affirmation that Faulkner shows the irony of his so-called "gentlemanly" self.

The tension mounts after Gowan's first drink:

"Good God," [Gowan] said, "how do you fellows drink this stuff?"

"We dont drink rotgut at Virginia," Doc said. Gowan turned in the seat and looked at him.

"Shut up, Doc," the third said. "Dont mind him," he said. "He's had a bellyache all night."

"Son bitch," Doc said.

"Did you call me that?" Gowan said. (33)

A college education (specifically, a Virginia one) distinguishes Gowan from the three men in ways that give Doc "a bellyache all night." Gowan's class privilege automatically grants him access to the Temple Drakes of Jefferson, while their appeal to her begins and ends with hitched rides.

Gowan's identity as gentleman means that he must defend this constructed persona, particularly when his masculinity is challenged. Despite obtaining the requisite liquor, Gowan stays with the townies who remain sober, as he continues the charade of gentlemanly drinking: "Have another, gentlemen,' he said, filling his glass again. The others helped themselves *moderately*. 'Up at school they consider it better to go down than to hedge,' he said. They watched him drink that one. They saw his nostrils bead suddenly with sweat" (33, emphasis added). By consuming at least three strong drinks, Gowan puts his personal safety at risk. By now, though, he is too deeply invested to stop. When Doc attempts to cut him off, Gowan resists: "'Watch this.' He poured into the glass. They watched the liquor rise. 'Look out, fellow,' the third said. Gowan filled the glass level full and lifted it and emptied it steadily" (34). This leads to a blackout from which he awakens in frightful condition the next morning: "Then his abdominal muscles completed the retch upon which he had lost consciousness and he heaved himself up and sprawled into the foot of the car, banging his head on the door . . . I passed out, he thought in a kind of rage, I passed out. *I passed out*" (35). The damage done to his manhood⁴ cannot be overstated, since the act of

⁴For a deeper discussion of the shifting valences of white masculinity in modernist fiction, see Greg Forter's *Gender, Race, and Mourning in American Modernism*. Forter contends that a modern(ist) sense of loss shifted conceptual understandings of white masculinity, as white men reacted to their changing (and increasingly destabilized) place in the capitalist market. Gowan's Virginia gentleman fuses performativity, social class, and gender in a way that remains at odds with how white men project their masculine

drinking functions as the performative signifier of his brand of white masculinity distilled at Virginia. More specific to this identity than the drinking itself is the manner in which he portrays the act, for the Virginia gentleman must not only drink liquor but also demonstrate that he is not beholden to the limits of alcohol tolerance. If Gowan cannot satisfy the criteria of a whiskey-drinking gentleman, then his identity rings false, undercutting the performance in a manner that exposes the boastful construction of his masculinity. Touching on the relationship between performance and gender, Susan Zieger states, "Lying emasculates the male protagonist . . . since a southern man's honor was supposed to be based on his truthfulness" (129). Thus, Gowan's inability to hold liquor, which belies his suggestion to the contrary, points to the flimsy foundation of his pronounced identity as an honorable Southern gentleman.

Gowan's white masculinity avails itself as a signifier of his social currency, since his identity depends on others accepting his race and class as superior. The irony in what Jay Watson identifies to be this act of "performing" whiteness is that, rather than instantiating his supposedly high societal standing through gentlemanly drinking, Gowan inadvertently remakes himself into a threat to both his personal well-being and, consequently, to Temple's. The danger posed by his alcoholic drinking does more than merely compromise their safety, however. Speaking to race-class performativity, Watson writes that for whiteness to be made visible—dislocating its racial familiarity as something neutral, given, understood—it must "turn from the formation to the performance . . . of social subjects and groups that don't seem to get their whiteness right. Such performances, whether inadvertent or deliberately subversive, have the potential to expose and disrupt the operation of normative whiteness" (9). During his drunken negotiation through Jefferson's bootlegging underworld, Gowan repeatedly demonstrates an inability to "get [his] whiteness right," revealing his Virginia gentleman role as a mere performance. But the race and class fallout from his performing whiteness deserves pause, since Gowan casts himself as something (or someone) entirely different from his intended persona. Marked as racially distinct from "hegemonic whiteness," those identified as "white trash" embody both a race and a conceptual sub-category to the norm, becoming, in Annalee Newitz and Matt

identity in the novel.

Wray's words, "something that must be discarded, expelled, and disposed of in order for whiteness to achieve and maintain social dominance" (Watson 9). On the surface, Gowan eludes this classification, but his disastrous performance represents a racial aberration that works against white normativity, ironically casting him as white trash rather than as a gentleman. Compounding Gowan's failed performance is the historical reality that the "Virginia gentleman" has long ceased to exist,⁵ let alone occupy cultural prominence in the South. Now, the consequences of Gowan's performance come into clearer focus, rendering visible one of Prohibition's "untold" moments. He consumes anachronistically—performing the antiquated ritual of his white gentlemanly forbearers—and his fall from the ranks of gentleman⁶ to perhaps the lowest rank of whiteness (white trash) exposes his class identity as a false construct. Illicit consumption renders class, gender, and race flexible rather than static, and Temple's endangerment at the hands of a "gentleman" who behaves like "trash" underscores these categorical fluidities. Gowan's drunken odyssey highlights Faulkner's critique of how the "progressive" measure of Prohibition, ironically, proved disastrous to the very class

⁵For Gowan to identify himself a "gentleman," specifically a Virginia one, shows how out of touch his performance is with chronological reality. Wyatt-Brown notes that "the sobriquet 'Virginia gentleman' . . . had become so commonplace . . . [by] . . . 1812 that it had lost much of its exclusivity. When the Virginia writer Anne Royall traveled through frontier Alabama in 1818, she identified *nearly every fellow countryman as 'gentleman,'* even if he was a tavern-keeper or boatman" (41, emphasis added). Wyatt-Brown summarizes Southern honor: "It established signposts of *appropriate conduct.* It . . . elevated *moderation* and learnedness to virtues of *self-disciplined* community service. Since honor gave meaning to lives, *it existed not as a myth* but as a vital code" (62, emphases added). Gowan possesses none of these attributes. His subversions of gentlemanly conduct all have one thing in common: the overconsumption of alcohol.

⁶Gowan's anachronistic gentleman also has literary precedent in Quentin Compson from *The Sound and the Fury*. Like Gowan, Quentin acts through an outmoded code that once guided white Southern men of high social standing, and, like Gowan, that he acts in accordance to this world view dooms him. What Quentin sees as a blatant violation of the gentlemanly code of honor—cheating at cards—Herbert Head dismisses blithely: "of course a young fellow like you would consider a thing of that sort a lot more serious than you will in five years" (108). Quentin's "duel" with Dalton Ames ends before it even begins: "I knew that he hadnt hit me that he had lied about that for her sake too and that I had just passed out like a girl but even that didnt matter anymore" (162). Quentin's suicide and Gowan's disgrace underscore the consequences of emulating an antebellum figure who represents patriarchy and oppression.

and gender that many Southerners had long regarded as sacred.

Gowan's drinking accurately represents the evolving ways that people consumed alcohol at this time. While his drinking might be understood as a young generation's protest against the conservative ideology informing Prohibition, his imbibing is notable in its frequency and quantity. As he recovers from the previous night, Gowan attempts to make himself sober: "His inside coiled coldly, but he raised the jar and drank, guzzling, choking the stuff down, clapping a cigarette into his mouth to restrain the paroxysm. Almost at once he felt better" (Faulkner, *Sanctuary* 36). Temple's reaction to Gowan's disheveled appearance elicits this venomous response:

"Trying to come over me with your innocent ways. Dont think I spent last night with a couple of your barber-shop jellies for nothing. Dont think I fed them my liquor just because I'm bighearted. You're pretty good, aren't you? Think you can play around all week with any badger-trimmed hick that owns a ford, and fool me on Saturday, dont you? Dont think I didn't see your name where it's written on that lavatory wall. Dont you believe me?" (37-38)

The specifics of Gowan's binge require a closer look. When he meets Temple at the train station, he has consumed no fewer than six (strong) drinks since the night before. Although the narrative initially casts some suspicion on Gowan, his sudden shift in demeanor proves troubling. Gowan's personality change and his relentless pursuit of more liquor reveal what occurs when problem drinkers consume alcohol: they (re)act like the alcoholics they are.⁷ In a novel informed by Prohibition,

⁷See John W. Crowley's *The White Logic* and Susan Zieger's *Inventing the Addict* for a fuller discussion of the shifting conceptual significance of "alcoholism" from the onset of the Temperance Movement through the mid-twentieth century. The implications of Gowan's consumption can only extend to the etymological reaches of how "alcoholism" was understood in the national consciousness at this time. The prevailing concept of "alcoholic" or "problem drinker" in 1930 had yet to assume the medical and rhetorical significance that it later possessed. Benjamin Rush's monumental study *Inquiry into the Effects of Ardent Spirits Upon the Human Body and Mind* (1784) is credited with introducing the disease model of alcoholism, though popular understanding of "disease" underwent interpretive evolution after it was adopted by the Temperance Movement. Temperance advocates argued that alcoholism was a disease of the will, as opposed to the body, and therefore a moral problem (Crowley 4, 24). Not until the Alcoholism Movement from the late 1930s through the 1960s (coinciding with the emergence of Alcoholics Anonymous) was the "disease" aspect of alcoholism understood as a distinct medical problem (144).

Gowan's problem drinking shows that the new social economy rising from illegal liquor holds no place for outdated ideas of cavalier masculinity, especially when the Virginia gentleman consumes recklessly and compromises Temple's safety.

Gowan's overtly Southern self-identification—enacted through a specific manner of consumption—marks *Sanctuary's* Volstead South with a particular deviance. While the novel's bootleg economy might have occurred in any region at this time (rum-running culture pervaded big Northern cities as well as rural Southern hamlets⁸), its Southern setting is central to Faulkner's critique of both Prohibition's "progressive" ideological intent and the South's hypocritical profit from it. Faulkner's use of Prohibition shows that (illegal) drinking pressures make for antiquated class, gender, and race prescriptions, as longstanding social-economic relations shift away from a patriarchal structure toward a system predicated on the profitability of bootlegging. As nearly everyone deceitfully benefits from Prohibition (at her Memphis brothel, Miss Reba counts corrupt police officers, judges, and politicians among her loyal clientele, for example), Jefferson's social structure ruptures from within, as booze becomes coveted currency. With Tommy's corpse on display while Ruby Lamar and her lifeless child cling to Lee Goodwin as he awaits trial, the country moonshiners have effectively invaded the city limits. No longer the faceless producers of outlawed liquor, their presence betrays an undesired osmosis between country and city, revealing the new reality born of the Volstead South: insatiable demand for alcohol has rendered social boundaries dangerously permeable, exposing cracks in the crumbling façade of the region's old-fashioned hierarchy. Jefferson descends further into chaos—lawlessness and disorder proliferate while politicians and civic leaders turn a blind eye to the chaos they helped create.

Beyond the disintegration of civic and political foundations, Prohibition also reconfigured how people conceptualized drinking as a social act, something noted by journalist A. J. Liebling:

People whose youth did not coincide with the twenties never had our reverence for strong drink. Older men knew liquor before it became the symbol of a sacred cause. Kids who began drinking after 1933 take it as a matter of course.

⁸For more details on the criminal fallout from Prohibition throughout the country, see Daniel Okrent's excellent social history, *Last Call: The Rise and Fall of Prohibition*.

For us it was a self-righteous pleasure. . . . [By] drinking, we proved to ourselves our freedom as individuals and flouted Congress. We conformed to a popular type of dissent. . . . It was the only period during which a fellow could be smug and slopped concurrently. (175-76)

Were Gowan politically inclined or the least bit self-aware, his drinking might mirror Liebling's. If anything, Gowan's consumption justifies the impetus behind temperance reform: that drinking in excess threatened family stability and, subsequently, the nation itself. The deviant significance of his drinking is compounded by his purported gentlemanliness, as his masculinity becomes subsumed by his drunkenness and represents the (perceived) threat to the bastion of Southern social stability. Zieger traces this threat as it appeared in nineteenth-century temperance narratives: "Such stories made 'intemperance' and 'habitual drunkenness' bywords for the systematic depletion of white, middle-class, masculine subjective dynamism; the 'slavery of drink' metaphor ironically recast white men as figuratively black, disempowered, static, and emasculated" (21). Zieger's point underscores the danger Gowan poses to Temple. Figuratively blackened and emasculated by his habitual drunkenness, Gowan appears less like a gentleman and more like the character frequently described with images of blackness and who represents the most immediate threat to Temple's well-being: the impotent "black" bootlegger, Popeye. The severity of Gowan's alcohol consumption is not the only emasculating signifier at work, however. The Nashville Agrarians argue that Northern industrialization (i.e. "progress") inverts gendered prescriptions of regional production, as "production is a masculine force and consumption is an emasculating one. . . . Masculinity is no longer figured in terms of the paternalistic white Southern gentleman," since he "has become impotent" (Guttman 21). Gowan's figurative blackness and his drinking compound his emasculation, marking him as a perpetual consumer rather than producer.

Gowan's drinking reaches critical mass at the Old Frenchman Place, Lee Goodwin's moonshining hub outside of town. Here, away from the security afforded him within the city limits, the Virginia gentleman holds no social currency. To compensate for this deficit, Gowan escalates his consumption, seeking masculine validation from the moonshiners

with whom he shares the bottle.⁹ The physical confrontation between Gowan and Van embodies the clash of the old and new social guards:

“Think talk bout my—“ Gowan said. He moved, swayed against the chair. It fell over. Gowan blundered into the wall.

“By God, I’ll—” Van said.

“—ginia gentleman; I dont give a—” Gowan said. Goodwin flung him aside with a backhanded blow of his arm, and grasped Van. Gowan fell against the wall. (Faulkner, *Sanctuary* 68)

Humiliated at having failed in his performance, Gowan leaves Temple alone, unable to fend for herself. When he awakens the next morning, as on the previous day, he is still inebriated. He tries to recall details from the night before:

He only remembered that he had passed out some time early in the night, and he thought that he was still drunk. But when he reached the wrecked car and saw the path and followed it to the spring and drank of the cold water, he found that it was a drink he wanted, and he knelt there, bathing his face in the cold water and trying to examine his reflection in the broken surface,¹⁰ whispering Jesus Christ to himself in a kind of despair. He thought about returning to the house for a drink, then he thought of having to face Temple, the men; of Temple there among them.

. . . I’ll get cleaned up some, he said. And coming back with a car. I’ll decide what to say to her on the way to town; thinking of Temple returning among people who knew him, who might know him. I passed out twice, he said. *I passed out twice*. Jesus Christ, Jesus Christ he whispered, his body writhing inside his disreputable and bloody clothes in an agony of rage and shame. (85)

Louis Palmer sees Gowan’s actions simply as a response to a situation born of unnatural social class interaction: “Stevens seems to get off the easiest because he plays by the rules—he keeps the relations between the classes in the realm of the socially sanctioned, albeit illegal, commerce

⁹This episode shows the gendered specificity that marked shared consumption. Crowley states that the drinking man “enjoys a homosocial intimacy with other men that exists nowhere outside the world of the bottle” (28). Again, Gowan’s masculinity depends on his ability to hold his liquor in the ritual of consumption.

¹⁰This scene suggests an ironic take on the Narcissus myth. Like the mythological figure, Gowan is identified through his consumption; as Narcissus ultimately consumes himself, Gowan’s act of self-consumption requires a mediator (booze). The water’s “broken surface” accurately reflects Gowan’s ragged physical appearance, and seeing himself in such a state causes him to consider “returning to the house for a drink.” For both Narcissus and Gowan, the reactions to their reflections catalyze their demise.

of bootlegging. He is motivated by pure fear, and abandons Drake with no second thought—an inverted white knight” (128). Fear alone, however, does not properly account for the complex circumstances that propel him away. Gowan’s response merits consideration regarding the nature and significance of his consumption. First, the disclosure “that it was a drink he wanted,” speaks to the depth of his drinking problem. Alcohol is neither a weathered prop of cavalier masculinity, nor a signifier of youthful rebellion against conservative legislation. Gowan is an alcoholic whose physiological thirst for liquor disrupts his ability to consider Temple’s safety. That he seeks “to restrain the paroxysm” speaks to the recurring nature of Gowan’s problem, coloring it as pathological rather than circumstantial. Next, his response cracks the veneer of his persona, exposing a young man who barely masks his social insecurities. His primary concern stems from the gossip “among people who knew him,” if his performance as gentleman is not validated. Lori Rotskoff affirms this idea, noting that, “Ironically, the alcoholic’s attempt to ‘drink like a man’ ultimately exposed the original neurosis that prompted it. If they consumed to excess, booze exacerbated the gender insecurities men sought to overcome by drinking in the first place” (78). Finally, this episode further undercuts his masculinity, since his flight stems from the fear of physical confrontation as much as it does from the fear of facing Temple. Reduced to bloody clothes and desperation, Gowan sees flight as the only option. He abandons Temple, revealing his true, “disreputable” self. Gowan becomes the dangerous fusion of the problem drinker and the “inverted white knight,” a woozy caricature long ceasing to be a stronghold of Southern chivalry. In his final act of cowardice, he embodies the stagnant small town South unable to recognize the looming presence of the changing urban one; the “black” big-city bootlegger desecrates the Southern Temple, while the self-defeated gentleman slinks away.

Gowan’s flight affirms the categorical vacuity of “gentleman,” and his retreat exposes Temple to the violence born out of Prohibition’s new social structure. Gowan’s problem drinking and devolution into white trash undercut white masculinity as the legitimate preserver of Southern cultural stasis. Faulkner’s critical use of alcohol does not end as Gowan exits in disgrace, however. In fact, Temple’s devolution from college student to brothel fixture offers an even more dramatic example of how drinking signifies a seismic cultural shift facing the South. Just as young

men consumed differently during Prohibition, women did as well. Public perception of women drinkers underwent a startling transformation at this time, which necessarily affects how Temple is to be perceived as a Southern woman. In the years preceding the Eighteenth Amendment, middle-class women drinkers resisted categorical definition, since they did not consume publicly. Female gender roles were decidedly prudish: propriety reigned and drinking held no place in the realm of middle- or upper-class domesticity (Crowley 10). Temple adheres to the teetotalism expected of women with her social pedigree. The penalty if she were to violate this gendered drinking code is severe, as she confesses to Ruby Lamar, “Buddy—that’s Hubert, my youngest brother—said that if he ever caught me with a drunk man, he’d beat hell out of me” (Faulkner, *Sanctuary* 55). When she sees Gowan on the morning of the baseball game, her repulsed reaction is immediate: “You’re drunk. . . . You pig. You filthy pig” (36). Temple’s preoccupation with Gowan’s drinking continues: “He’s going to drink some more, she thought; he’s getting drunk again. That makes three times today” (51), suggesting that her unease among the bootleggers stems as much from the audacity of Gowan’s consumption as from fear for her personal safety.

Before her kidnaping, Temple occupies a familiar gendered space for young women at the time. Andrew Barr notes that Prohibition’s intent to stigmatize drinking actually caused “a lot of respectable women to take up drinking who had not done so before” (237). Though we do not see Temple imbibe initially, her probation-worthy excursions with flask-toting townies and the threat made by her brother suggest that she is at least an indirect participant in a new drinking culture created in part by Prohibition. Her fear of consequences stemming from further liaisons with drinkers and her disgust at Gowan’s inebriety, however, situate her within the realm of women non-drinkers. Temple remains peripheral to consumption, but any modicum of teetotaler purity disappears after her displacement to Memphis. By the time Benbow finds her, she has undergone a radical transformation. No longer the innocent co-ed forced into the violent urban underworld, the Temple Drake of Memphis consumes alcohol like the prostitutes among whom she now resides, a complete inversion of the pure Southern female regarded so highly by Jefferson’s white upper crust. Temple’s imbibing is nearly as severe as Gowan’s, forcing a categorical reconsideration of her status as

a drinker. In addition, Temple's prostitution reveals how Prohibition further exposed the vulnerable state in which Southern women of privilege existed, especially when forced to confront the reality of the outside world. Temple's victimization is made all the more injurious to the Southern socio-cultural psyche in that her body, much like the illegal booze channeled underground, becomes merely another commodity in the bootlegging network of exchange.

Temple's fall betrays every marker of her class and gender privilege, since women of her pedigree did not publicly consume alcohol before this time. Her descent shows a paradox at a moment when female-driven temperance reform unexpectedly created a visible class of woman drinkers. Women fought vigorously for national Prohibition, citing the need to protect themselves at home. According to Daniel Okrent, temperance reformers

wanted the right to divorce [drunken] men, and to have them arrested for wife beating, and to protect their children from being terrorized by them. To do all these things they needed to change the laws that consigned married women to the status of chattel. And to change the laws, they needed the vote. (15)

The impetus behind temperance reform was progressivism, and other progressive political agendas (particularly suffrage) hitched themselves to the temperance wagon.¹¹ The youthful drinking culture that arose during Prohibition deviated from previous generations of public drinkers in its surprising inclusion of women. Okrent speaks to this change: "A pretty girl—truth be told, virtually any kind of girl—in a drinking establishment was one of the astonishments of Prohibition, a shock both severe and enduring" (211). Because these new drinkers were women, the "progressive" credentials of reform were compromised—how effective could the constitutional outlawing of alcohol be if it impelled women to drink, especially in public?

¹¹The popularity of the Temperance Movement ushered in other such "progressive" platforms seeking political alliance. The inclusion of the Ku Klux Klan, in particular, projects an inherent North-South (and in many ways Progressive-Conservative) polarity within temperance discourse, exposing the fusion of morality and politics: "For many of the racially motivated prohibitionists of the South, whose populist anger was monochromatic but nonetheless real, [Prohibition] was a way to avenge Reconstruction by striking back at the economic and political imperialists of the North" (Okrent 57). Okrent continues, "The Klan, which supported woman suffrage in behalf of Prohibition, in turn supported Prohibition as a weapon against the immigrants" (86).

Before Prohibition, habitual female drinkers were perceived as either masculine or promiscuous, something Crowley notes of Brett Ashley in Ernest Hemingway's *The Sun Also Rises*. In a novel filled with committed drinkers, Brett holds her liquor as well as any of her male counterparts, suggesting that she "might easily be (mis)taken as 'mannish,' especially when she is drinking" (57). Such a portrayal seems no accident on Hemingway's part—Brett's short-cropped hair marks her with an outward masculinity—as the "alcoholic for Hemingway is . . . unwomanly" (57). Temple's transformation dovetails closely with the other category of women drinkers, about which Michelle McClellan states, "the much more familiar stereotype about alcoholic women was that they were heterosexually promiscuous. . . . In addition, the censure of alcoholic women's alleged heterosexual promiscuity . . . conjured the familiar image of the drunken prostitute" (288). Temple's rape destroys the feminine purity that temperance reform and masculine (fraternal) overprotection sought to preserve, as she becomes the fallen version of her former self, desecrated sexually and by a "black" man, no less. The rape precipitates Temple's physical decline once she is transplanted to Memphis, and her recollection of this trauma further clouds the self-perception of her gendered femininity in its aftermath. When she recalls the night spent at the Old Frenchman Place, she explains to Benbow how she imagined herself as a man in the sleepless night preceding the attack, indicating the degree to which she exists outside of herself as a means to cope with the brutality. Thus, her self-medicating with gin and cigarettes ought not to alarm, considering all that she has endured. However, as in the case of Gowan Stevens and his dangerous binge, the frequency and severity of Temple's consumption alludes to something deeper, especially considering the loaded cultural significance ascribed to women drinkers at this time.

The implications of Temple's alcoholic drinking are all the more serious given her status as an upper-class woman. Unlike Gowan, whose alcoholic consumption marks his failure at being a "gentleman" and results in a moment of personal disgrace, Temple suffers doubly: her swilling gin not only represses the trauma of her rape and captivity but also anticipates the irreparable physical, emotional, and reputational cost inflicted upon her as a once-proper Southern "lady." The link between alcohol and sex is pronounced here, as Temple's acquired drinking habits coincide with—indeed precipitate—her nymphomania. Recalling

McClellan's aforementioned observation, Temple is now the drunken prostitute defined by drink and sex, and her uncouth participation in each of these expedites her decline from the realm of "proper" Southern womanhood. Popeye's surrogate phallus, Red, becomes Temple's sexual crutch, and their interaction is fueled in part by the gin she copiously consumes. Temple's most sustained bender occurs on the night Red is murdered. She begins drinking, noting after a couple of cocktails that "I'll need it later . . . I'll need more than that" (Faulkner, *Sanctuary* 228). At the bar, her imbibing increases until her spatial awareness becomes confused:

She believed that she had been drunk for some time. She thought that perhaps she had passed out and that it had already happened. She could hear herself saying I hope it has. I hope it has. Then she believed it had and she was overcome by a sense of bereavement and of *physical desire*. She thought, It will never be again, and she sat in a floating swoon of agonised sorrow and *erotic longing*, thinking of Red's body, watching her hand holding the empty bottle over the glass. (237, emphases added)

Finally, Popeye cuts her off: "You've drunk it all" (237). Temple's reaction to Gowan's drunkenness early in the novel—"You're drunk. . . . You filthy pig"—characterizes a different woman entirely from the one she is now. The corn cob claims more than her virginity, both shattering the social class buffer that had separated her from the women with whom she now lives, and, consequently, sparking her uncontrollable appetites for sex and alcohol.

No wonder that, for Temple especially, "It had been a gray day, a gray summer, a gray year" (316). The lawlessness born of Prohibition allows Faulkner to show how Jefferson's hypocritical castigation of drinking has destabilized traditional class, gender, and race categories. Like Gowan and his Virginia gentleman identity, Temple as the chaste, sober inheritor of antiquated Southern tradition appears as nothing more than an anachronism encouraged by the upper-class, white male establishment. What makes Temple's case the more tragic of the two is that she cannot merely exit the scene in disgrace.¹² Prohibition may have

¹²Temple and Gowan reappear in *Sanctuary*'s "sequel," published some twenty years later, *Requiem for a Nun* (1950). Faulkner's complex portrayal of alcoholism in these two characters assumes a new, and perhaps unexpected, dimension. Like its predecessor, *Requiem for a Nun* has dramatic action soaked in alcohol. There is, however, one major exception this time around: neither Temple nor Gowan ingests a single drop. References to alcohol and drinking appear constantly and in explicitly pathologized terms indicative

trumpeted a progressive note for women, but any refuge from Temple's own ordeal remains unavailable. Indeed, the consumption of booze and the desire for sex magnify the long-term consequences of her tribulations, casting her inescapably within the cultural lady/whore binary. In Faulkner's Jefferson, the reality of a world ordered by illegal drinking exposes the hypocrisy of a region that unscrupulously benefits from illegal liquor while also adhering to the "progressive" nature of temperance. The new social economy arising from booze holds no place for Gowan Stevens, whose drinking undercuts his masculine identity as "gentleman." Gowan serves as the ironic (sub)version of his performative self—the mythical cavalier gentleman inherits no social purchase in this South. As a Southern woman from a prominent, male-dominated family, Temple is governed by the social codes mandated by the rest of society, and her alcoholic promiscuity represents the most dangerous threat to white feminine purity left unprotected. If temperance reform (embraced by much of the South) represented a measure of progressive politics, then the novel reveals that this progressivism is a farce, particularly in light of Prohibition's manifest corruption and Jefferson's participation in it.

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of the Sobriety Movement (coinciding with the founding of A.A. in 1935 and its rise in popularity in the 1940s and 1950s). Faulkner's resurrection of Temple and Gowan as the main characters suggests that his literary treatment of drinking required a second look, one focusing on how the *disease* of alcoholism threatens domesticity and, subsequently, social-economic standing in Jefferson's middle class. *Requiem* continues Faulkner's appropriation of drinking as a prism through which to reimagine how longstanding notions of class, gender, and race might be blurred, and how *sobriety*—both the prescriptive anodyne to addiction and a hindrance to meaningful participation in the modern capitalist marketplace—further illuminates the complicated relationship that consumption possesses in the social and economic spheres.

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