

An Acoustic Community: Soundscapes and Community Building in *The Sound and the Fury*

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Abstract: Among the thematic researches on the late William Faulkner, the auditory exploitation of various points has been on the forefront of attention and increasingly generative. In delving into the question of hearing of, Sarah Gleeson-White and John T. Mathews have respectively tapped into the auditory experiments in *Absalom, Absalom!* and *As I Lay Dying*. The distinct Faulknerian sonic qualities, however, could actually be pushed back to *The Sound and the Fury*. Harkened to properly combine the acoustic that could be built upon the orchestration of the sounds from the previous cacophony. Based on the overall acoustic, an inclusive community is built.

Keywords: Faulkner; Acoustic community; Soundscape; *The Sound and the Fury*

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1. Introduction

The pricked-up ears have been there in Faulkner's critical cabinet, progressively at the forefront of attention and becoming fruitful. Sarah Gleeson-White, for example, has said emphatically that "*Absalom, Absalom!*" "proves a problematic and hence valuable entry into the investigation of modern aural culture ^[1]." Similarly, John T. Mathews claims that the phonograph in *As I Lay Dying* obliged Faulkner to probe into "the writer's mechanical replication tool ^[2]."

However, Faulkner's particular sonic features may be traced back at least to *The Sound and the Fury*. It is usually assumed that Faulkner took the title from *Macbeth*'s famous soliloquy. However, the inclusion of the word "the" from the original phrase "Life's..., full of sound and fury" makes a tiny change ^[3]. What are the "Sound" and "Fury"? Could this little change indicate Faulkner's concentration on the sonic exploitation of this scene? What has defined the Faulknerian soundscape herein; how has he developed them, and thus, what Faulkner has represented via the diverse soundscapes in the early twentieth century, when contextualized with the significance of noises echoing throughout the whole novel?

The word "soundscape" will be presented here in order to comprehend the auditory surroundings. R. Murray Schafer, a Canadian composer and environmentalist, defined "soundscape" as a sound or combination of sounds from the environment, with three key pillars: "keynote" denoting the "key or tonality of a particular composition," "signals" denoting the "foreground sounds," and "soundmark" denoting a "community sound that is unique...in that community ^[4]." Schafer subsequently asserted that he would "propose that the ideal community may likewise be characterized advantageously along acoustic lines ^[4]" after lauding "the acoustic community." Indeed, a self-sustaining community, as described by Fernand Tönnies as one that "means true, permanent living together ^[5]," might be created based on the acoustic rather than the geographic, political, or kindred factors.

2. From the cacophony to the orchestration: The sorrow inherent in the sounds

The Sound and the Fury's curtain-raiser and conclusion are both noises. The abrupt appearance of a call from “the golfers—Here, caddie—switched” from the interior narration to the external world that Benjy lived ^[6]. And critics tended to see Benjy’s torture-tainted scream as a tangible sign of Caddy’s death. Not only the slobbering, his nearly nonsensical voices for others, but also other sounds that studded his part, denoted the aches and despair. Benjy, after all, had unrivalled synesthesia, as he stated, “I could sense the cold ^[6].” The representative ones could be those residing in the end of his narration, when switches from different spots of time have been sprinkled by the sounds that Benjy heard, as Benjy stated:

I could hear the clock, and I could hear Caddy standing behind me, and I could hear the roof. It’s still raining, Caddy said. I hate rain. I hate everything. And then her head came into my lap and she was crying, holding me, and I began to cry. Then I looked at the fire again and the bright, smooth shapes went again ^[6].

“The fact that they are ubiquitously there suggests the possibility of a deep and influence” on behavior and moods, according to Schafer ^[4]. Though the specific qualities and how they were received have not been depicted here, the very intrusion of these “keynotes”—the ticktock of the clock, the sound of Caddy moving, and the sound of rain falling on the roof—that set the tonality were enveloping Benjy’s recollection of the night when some changes, or some certain loss of Caddy, with the loss of her virginity—were enveloping Benjy’s recollection of the tortures Benjy felt in recalling them were wafted by the repetitions of natural soundscapes, such as raindrops, and soundscapes of life, such as Jason’s snuffling.

Actually, as irrational and mental as Benjy was, he could capture the deepest pains, which forced him to speak out the shadows hanging in his heart, which were not dwarfed by Quentin’s. However, his inability to converse with others limited his expressions due to his intellectual incapacity. Hearing, as Schafer points out, “cannot be shut off at will ^[4].” As a result of this, Marshall McLuhan stated, “Terror is the usual condition of any oral civilization, for everything influences everything all of the time ^[7].” Hearing, as opposed to seeing, without the earlids, tends to be more passive, because listeners have less options in terms of what and how may be caught aurally, as Fu Yanxiu points out.

Benjy’s weakness and incapacity are frequently mentioned in his narrative, and it is this immanent passiveness that works in accordance with them. The “all time and injustice and sorrow” ^[6] were embedded in the auditory world Benjy created for himself. This explains Benjy’s acoustic environment narration’s irregularity or disorder, as exemplified by Benjy getting practically any sound he could recall.

The ticktocks of the watch also tormented Quentin, not for the precise time he signaled but for the irreversible flow of time that he tried but failed to stop. Quentin recognized he was “in time” when he “heard the watch” at the start of his narrative, locked in the “mausoleum of all hope and desire ^[6].” Yuan Xiuping has argued that Benjy looked to be oblivious of time, apparently lost in his temporal vision while viewing it as his biggest foe ^[8] for Quentin’s tortures.

Additionally, hearing the “echoes of feet in the sad generations” ^[6]; “the sound clattering back into the car” ^[6]; “the float lurching onto the rolling cylinder with a plopping sound and a long jarring noise” ^[6]; and the bees in the orchestra that sounded “like a wind getting up” ^[6]; and the “rasping of crickets” ^[6] has embodied this refusal of time. Although Quentin deafened himself to block out any sonorous waves that could remind him of time, of the indescribable loss he refused to admit, the haunting ripples are obvious from the noises buzzing about him in the befuddling cacophony.

This auditory chaos presented Quentin with noises such as bird whistles, which were “invisible...meaningless and profound, inflexion less, ending as though cut off with a knife, then again, and that sensation of water rapid and tranquil above secret places, felt, not seen, nor heard ^[6].” Quentin’s attempts to reject the sounds were unsuccessful, and they appeared illogically while scattered throughout his monologue, as he realized “meaningless and profound ^[6].”

Jason's sorrowful and passive listening developed in the cacophony lived in the two preceding narrations have been turned in eavesdropping tiny Quentin, most notably. Jason stated after finishing cigar and finished, "I could see the empty keyhole, but I couldn't hear a sound" ^[6] right before Dilsey's part, that "I could see the empty keyhole, but I couldn't hear a sound ^[6]." As a result, Jason had come to the conclusion that Quentin "studied silently." "Perhaps she picked it up at school ^[6]." When such a detail was combined with hearing, it revealed the frequency with which Jason behaved himself in this manner.

To take it a step further, it is the surveillance and punishment wielded by Jason to seemingly reinforce the artefact that will collapse, raising the sorrowful dusts, not the tenderness, care, understandings, or any other emotional connections that are used to strengthen the bonds in the home upon which an initial community shall be laid the first bricks. Especially in light of the feigned listening they did before they found little Quentin had fled from the home later.

He took the knob in his hand and turned it, then stood with it in his hand and his head down slightly, as if listening to something much further away than the dimensioned chamber beyond the door, which he had previously heard. His demeanor was that of someone who pretends to listen in order to delude himself about what he already knows ^[6].

"The motions of listening in order to deceive himself" already spelled out that little Quentin's running away did not emerge for Jason as something he could not foresee but rather as something he could have realized but was reluctant, if not anxious, to accept.

Apparently, none of the Compson brothers' soundscapes could create a genuine and enduring community, and even a community-like life could not be enticed out of them. In this view, the cacophony, as evidenced by the blending of various sounds or the apparent auditory irregularity, corresponds to the listeners' sorrows, tortures, and powerlessness.

3. An inclusive community built on the acoustic amalgamation

Regardless of how depressing *The Sound and the Fury* as a whole may be, the lasting ameliorative affirmation spawned by the momentary Easter sermon has undoubtedly been acknowledged. The stages of this sermon portion could be divided into two categories in terms of the division between white and black rhetoric. However, Ross has argued that the competing tension between the visual and aural attachments can be divided into three categories: the first did not present any aural qualities but visual images of voiceless things; the second presented auditorily delineated sounds while the congregation remained silent; and the third carried readers from description to imitation, as well as listeners from visualized voice to heard voice recorded ^[9].

The churchgoers were first dismayed by Rev. Shegog's physical stature. This accent alienated him from the speech community since he began preaching "like a white man ^[6]." Thus, in stage one, the churchgoers simply responded visually to the level and chilly voice that signified detachment and distance. They were watching Rev. Shegog "as if it were a chimpanzee talking." They began to observe him as if he were a guy walking on a tightrope ^[6]." While the second section included a powerful and sonorous voice that grew different "as day and dark from his prior tone," Rev. Shegog's voice remained distant, while "sinking into their hearts." Until, finally, a woman's single soprano as 'Yes, Jesus' ^[6]."

His "Brethren" became "Brethren en sistuhn!" thanks to Rev. Shegog ^[6]. These affirmative cries, which would be heard throughout the rest of his sermon, signaled a communal acceptance. And the moment Dilsey witnessed a revelation, it was precisely the moment when dichotomic forces, or the noisy clashes of the white and the black, the South and the North, the rural and the urban, or even of the standard and the nonstandard, were in full swing. These acoustic meld with one other in the aggregation of all the accents, sounds, and voices. These listeners used their creative hearing ^[10] because they were "unconcerned with anchoring their identities or communities under a national or racial norm," as Wall put it.

They listened to the noises not as Benjy's passiveness in hearing the environment, as Quentin's struggle with the ticktocks of passing time, or as Jason's soaked in punitive surveillance of the people around him. They just listen to the pluralists in the background noises, appreciate the diversity, and so pry open an all-encompassing community, or at the very least a congregation that is not bound by language, racial, or political boundaries.

When the communion of the speakers and listeners formed, binding everyone in the actions of listening or speaking, Faulkner persuaded his audience to think about dislodging the fixed identity outside of the text. Any individual, the subjects, might slide into the others in this sense, illustrating the fluid meaning of the phrase. Thus, the sorrow-dipped, discordant soundscapes previously established could also be wielded to build a cacophony-embracing, inclusive community.

In a nutshell, with the intelligent ears to capture the auditory elements, Faulkner has already demonstrated in *The Sound and the Fury* the crucially important role of various soundscapes in community building. Not confined to the accent, the natural and living soundscapes have been depicted herein, which reflected the inner worlds of those listening and speaking. Though when drenched in the sorrows or the surveillances of the listeners, the sounds assumed to be the discordant, there still exists the very seed to pullulate into the cacophony-containing community. In this sense, nihilistic and despairing as the sounds could be as heard improperly, when amalgamated together, in such a sonic unification there could emerge an all-embracing community that is still dreamt of by pursuers.

Disclosure statement

The author declares no conflict of interest.

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