

Fifty Years after Faulkner
FAULKNER AND YOKNAPATAWPHA
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“Ravel Out into the No-Wind, No-Sound”: The Audiophonic Form of *As I Lay Dying*

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*Where should this music be? I th' air, or th' earth?
It sounds no more. . . .
With its sweet air: Thence I have followed it
(Or it hath drawn me, rather) but 'tis gone.
No, it begins again.*

—Shakespeare, *The Tempest*¹

In the conclusion of William Faulkner's *As I Lay Dying* (1930), just before Darl will be sent to Jackson to be institutionalized, Cash overhears recorded music in the air. It comes from a nearby window, wafting out of Mrs. Bundren's home, where the family has stopped to borrow shovels for the burial of Addie. The Bundren wagon approaches "that little new house, where the music was."² Cash thinks to himself, "It's a comfortable thing, music is. . . . The music stopped, then it started again. . . . Then we saw pa coming back. . . . The music never started again." As Cash turns toward the music for comfort, his experience is not unlike Odysseus's bound exposure to the Sirens, what Theodor Adorno and Max Horkheimer might call "the contradiction of song in civilization."³ "I reckon it's a good thing we aint got ere a one of them. I reckon I wouldn't never get no work done a-tall for listening to it. I dont know if a little music aint about the nicest thing a fellow can have" (259). The graphophone is a body that might offer pleasure and relief when a man "comes in tired of a night." Better than a woman, it "shuts up like a hand-grip." The machine is complete and unto itself. "[A] fellow can carry it with him wherever he wants."

It is tempting to find in Cash's longing for recorded music the sound of fragmentation, a series of parts for which there is no whole. While the vicissitudes of free indirect discourse otherwise lay claim to the

spontaneous movements of interior life, the novel's discourse is fundamentally at odds with its characters, as if the mute music of the graphophone allegorizes what Dorothy Hale calls the "unsayable" as it animates the "heterogeneous discourse" of *As I Lay Dying*.⁴ This novel both promises and refuses freedom of proximity to an affective center, the voices being phonographically of and other from the bodies that house them. Perhaps the graphophone is the acoustical shadow of the larger project of Yoknapatawpha itself, a project of memory that Faulkner once described as "bind[ing] into a whole the world which for some reason I believe should not pass utterly out of the memory of man."⁵ The graphophone, as a machine of memory, forcefully circumscribes the limits of binding together and points to a crisis in representation insofar as it is an act of remembering. The graphophone would seem by this logic to be a false consciousness or failed memory, not unlike Plato's ancient remonstrance against forms of memory that rely on external marks.

Recorded and broadcast sound often appear in Yoknapatawpha in dehumanized tones, as if there should be no place for media within Faulkner studies except to note its censure. John T. Matthews has described *As I Lay Dying* as Faulkner's attempt to work through the dialectical tension between modernism and modernization in a process that "mediates social reality by turning it into aesthetic form."⁶ By Matthews's account, one of the few to attend to the role of communications media in Yoknapatawpha, the graphophone "quietly reminds us of the technologically reproduced, illusorily prosthetic qualities of novels themselves—mass-produced, mass-consumed goods that simulate life and speech, and that gratify us imaginatively when life is full of discontentment and loss."⁷ The possibility that I will describe here is not only that the graphophone might allegorize something more than a failure "in the modernist project of resisting and transmuting the forces of modernization"⁸ but that the machine's appearance in the conclusion of *As I Lay Dying* invites us to consider mediated sound in relationship to Faulkner's larger project of binding together: Yoknapatawpha as an audiophonic act of commemoration. *As I Lay Dying* points to a Faulkner who was not only considering the ontological problem of technologically mediated sound, like so many writers of his time, but also rethinking novelistic form through sound recording as a technology of memory.

The film form has shaped the study of the relationship between Yoknapatawpha and media.⁹ Sarah Gleeson-White has intervened in the visualism of that discourse to date an "auditory Faulkner" from the composition and publication of *Absalom, Absalom!* (1936), describing how Faulkner's revision process for *Absalom* was contemporaneous with his interest in the montage techniques of Sergei Eisenstein, including

the experimental counterpoint of sound and image by which sounds haunt the screen in decontextualized form.¹⁰ The prospect of dating an auditory Faulkner is complicated, however, by the fact that his project was sonically experimental from its inception.¹¹ While Faulkner often cited the image of Caddy climbing up the pear tree as the origin of *The Sound and the Fury* (1929), “Twilight,” this novel’s earliest draft, already includes the repetitive “moan” of Benjy that both propels and registers the agony of memory—it is not unlike decontextualized film sound in being of his body yet mobile between other minds. As Vardaman remarks of the sound of his own crying in *As I Lay Dying*, one gesture to the phenomenology of sound physically separated from source, “the crying makes a lot of noise. I wish it wouldn’t make so much noise” (Faulkner, *As I Lay Dying*, 54).

If Faulkner endured an extreme allergy to jukeboxes, phonographs, and radios,¹² it at first seems as if the graphophone is the curious, unsynthesized remainder of an earlier vocalic, oral, and oratorical Faulkner. Stephen M. Ross has richly described this aspect of Faulkner, dating the earliest presence of “mechanical voice” in the blaring phonograph of *Sanctuary* (1931), a category Ross expands to include sirens in *Light in August* (1932) and loudspeakers in *Pylon* (1935).¹³ Ross argues for an increasingly “diminished presence of the ‘natural voice’” across Faulkner’s works, “with the result that phenomenal voice underwent crucial qualitative changes in the years after *Light in August*.”¹⁴ Yet we cannot simply say that Faulkner turns away from orality towards mechanical voice as a kind of second phase if *Absalom, Absalom!* is responsive to audiovisual form and remains principally about the act of storytelling. The periodization of Faulkner in relationship to mechanical audition is also challenged by *As I Lay Dying*, a work that seems so much about voicing (what can and cannot be voiced to others) yet concludes with the trope of mediated sound. By several accounts, *As I Lay Dying* also “prepares for an experimentalism deeply implicated in the search for the truth about the South.”¹⁵ As Matthews writes, “For Faulkner to proceed into the 1930s with his great fiction of social and historical analysis, he needed to exorcise the strictly aestheticist impulse of his modernism.”¹⁶ There is something about *As I Lay Dying* that turns away from itself in order to turn towards the “great” Faulknerian project of historical consciousness.

That pivot may very well be located in the call of the graphophone, a technology of memory, as it gives *As I Lay Dying* its penultimate paragraph. The conclusion of this novel also suggests that “mechanical voice” does not designate a separate category of Faulknerian sound obeying its own logic in opposition to the “natural.” Rather, the graphophone

as trope—but also as what I will describe as an audiophonic narrative *form*—is continuous with what had already been Faulkner's repetitive and spatially stratified approach to naturally vibrating sounds. The attempt to divide Faulkner's work into two—an auditory and nonauditory Faulkner, an oral and mechanically voiced Faulkner, or a sonically naturalistic and sonically transgressive Faulkner—must be questioned in terms of the defining philosophical concern of his project of Southern memory, which was perhaps always-already audiophonically mediated.

The graphophone interrupts *As I Lay Dying* as novel that is built of vernacular voices articulated within a more broadly regional soundscape (the “Chuck. Chuck. Chuck.” of Cash's adze [5]). This sound, while produced by a metal tool in motion, continues to suggest contact between the human body and its mechanical prosthetics. As an ambiguously natural sound, it resonates within a broad spectrum between mediated and unmediated sound. Already folded within it is the mechanical, not only as tool but also as repetitive and perfectly reproduced rhythm. Each instant is graphically identical on the page; there is no attempt to represent changes in pitch, timbre, or duration. In that same way, the cry of Benjy is the affective-acoustical abyss that continually tests language but is not fully written into it. While Faulkner would never graphically represent the cry of Benjy, he did attempt to bend the limits of the *visual* representation of sound in the cry of Louis Hatcher in *The Sound and the Fury*, showing that he was sensitive to this gap: “When he called the dogs in he sounded just like the horn he carried slung on his shoulder and never used, but clearer, mellower, as though his voice were a part of darkness and silence, coiling out of it, coiling into it again. WhoOoooo. WhoOoooo. WhoOoooooooooooooooooooo.”¹⁷ While Hatcher's call in darkness is issued without the aid of his “never used” horn, this prosthetic nonetheless hangs on the human shoulder in suggestive juxtaposition and proximity. His call is treble, like “Chuck. Chuck. Chuck,” but also graphically variant, underscoring how Faulkner experimented in his approach to sound-writing.

That potential for visual variance makes the exacting repetition of the adze all the more pronounced. If Cash's devotion to the coffin is, as Matthews describes, artisanal or prior to the age of mechanical reproducibility, there is also something of Cash that, in his inability to confront losing both Addie and Darl, has outsourced memory to these corporeal objects, both the coffin and the graphophone (and even the book) taking the shape of a container. The sound of his adze building the coffin does not predate technological modernity but rather seems imbricated in it. Fashioned at Addie's window, the coffin also enters into a textual relationship with the graphophone as a collection of sounds that flirt with

Mrs. Bundren's window as a porous threshold between inside and outside. While Karl Zender describes natural sound as having in Faulkner's early work a romantic pulse of expressive harmony with the listener, a harmony that is then lost, perhaps a Faulknerian *soundscape* resolves that discord. R. Murray Shafer coined this term in *The Tuning of the World* (1977) to indicate the vast acoustical landscape of "ecological" sound interrupted by the noise of modernity,¹⁸ but Faulkner seems to hear a more complex relation. His soundscape challenges a supposedly "natural sound" unaccompanied by the mechanically sonorous: Faulknerian soundscapes are composed of sounds that are spatially alongside and in dynamic temporal relation to each other. In this subtle spectrum of the natural and mechanical, Faulknerian sound works through the phenomenology of repetition and reproducibility, folded within natural vibration as the ontological ground of mechanization.

Recalling the insistence of recorded sound in *As I Lay Dying* natural sound in *Sanctuary* first appears in repeated punctuations: "Behind him the bird sang again, three bars in monotonous repetition: a sound meaningless and profound . . . and out of which a moment later came the sound of an automobile passing along a road and dying away."¹⁹ It at first seems that a pure bird song has been infected by the technological and can no longer be properly distinguished from it. While it is suggestive that Faulkner wrote *As I Lay Dying* just before revising *Sanctuary*, one cannot simply say that the latter, as his work that is arguably the most concerned with consumer culture, amplifies the reified sound of the former. This same sonic counterpoint already appears in *The Sound and the Fury* in the Quentin section, where repetitive bird song enters into a relation with mechanical sounds. Quentin thinks, "I couldnt hear anything but the water and then the bird again. . . . I moved a little further around the tree I heard the bird again and the water and then everything sort of rolled away" (Faulkner, *Sound*, 103). Its insistence is followed, as it will be again in *Sanctuary*, by the repetitive sound of mechanical transport: "The light increased as I mounted, and before I reached the top I heard a car. It sounded far away across the twilight and I stopped and listened to it. . . . Then the house was gone and I stopped in the green and yellow light and heard the car growing louder and louder, until just as it began to die away it ceased all together. I waited until I heard it start again. Then I went on" (106–7). Again, there is starting and stopping. The problem is not reducible to simulation or reification.²⁰ Once we begin to note the continuity between the mechanical and nonmechanical in Faulkner's soundscapes, we begin to hear how that temporality can be more appropriately described as *loss* and *return*,

a kind of bereavement that points to the problem of memory in the act of acoustical perception.²¹

These moments register the deep imbrication of Yoknapatawpha, as a project of twentieth-century memory, in the phenomenology of audiophonics. If “aurality” might be defined as the field of phenomenal and discursive sound, and “audio” as recorded or technologically mediated sound, the aurality of Yoknapatawpha, from its beginning, resonates with the more direct appearance of media as trope. We can retune Sundquist’s notion of *As I Lay Dying* as a “shape . . . built up by accumulation and connection” to hear a phenomenology of audiophonics, one not without suggestive implications for Yoknapatawpha: “the narrative episodes do indeed seem a collection of voices in the air,” Sundquist writes.²² The graphophone suggests a way of listening to memory in a novel that is so much about the tension between the empirical and the literary reality of vocal expression, as well as the tension between what is and what fades away, action and its residual effects: “It is dark. I can hear wood, silence: I know them. But not living sounds, not even him. It is as though the dark were resolving him out of his integrity, into an unrelated scattering of components” (56). If there is not a Faulkner who was first working through the aesthetics of form and later working through history and historical consciousness,²³ then perhaps there is something about Faulknerian sound, mediated to its core, which links these pursuits. The graphophone is a technology that, as a prosthetic, outlines the borders of the corporeal self and its articulation in memory. Similarly, bird song is an aural index of the spatiotemporality that surrounds and circumscribes characters as bodies, selves, and bearers of memory. In this atmosphere, objects are suspended between presence and absence. Quentin hears “a bird singing somewhere beyond the sun” (102). And again in *Sanctuary*: “Benbow heard the bird again, trying to recall the local name for it. On the invisible highroad another car passed, died away. Between them and the sound of it the sun was almost gone” (6).

While the phonograph in Virginia Woolf’s *Between the Acts* (1941) moans “*Dispersed are we*,”²⁴ *As I Lay Dying* thinks through the most challenging dimension of representing and inducing the act of memory: its unfolding in time, the retrograde motion that is also simultaneous with the progressive motion of dying, what Faulkner would later articulate in *Absalom, Absalom!* as “*the resonant strings of remembering*,” the medium through which “*nothing ever happens once and is finished*.”²⁵ By Cash’s logic, the graphophone record is a proprietary object, one that allegorizes the central dilemma of the novel’s form: the fleetingness of its characters whose voices are alienated from one another and

refuse integration. The characters each understand themselves through an object they seek to possess or otherwise economically transform into a promise of fulfillment: Anse's teeth, Dewey Dell's medicine, Jewel's horse, and Cora's muffins. As Cash first encounters the music—"it started" (236) and then several sections later, it "was not playing now" (258)—he confronts an object he wishes to sustain. He confronts listening not simply as a spatial act but as a temporal act with gaps and lags. The recorded music markedly contrasts the singing that Tull hears performed at Addie's funeral: "In the thick air it's like their voices come out of the air, flowing together and on in the sad, comforting tunes. When they cease it's like they hadn't gone away" (91). The music Cash hears cannot be sustained, but at the same time the graphophone fetishistically offers what Adorno calls "a two-dimensional model of a reality that can be multiplied without limit," or "time as evanescence, enduring," what might be deceptively possessed even if the music cannot.²⁶ Within that framework, we might recall the narrator of *Sanctuary*, who hears a fury of sound and consumption, "competitive radios and phonographs" before which a "throng" of listeners lingers passively around "ballads simple in melody and theme, of bereavement and retribution and repentance" (112). The worst of human passions—each associated with the melancholy of memory—are not simply represented but distanced from the human subject by the medium as it interrupts and cheapens tunes "metallically sung, blurred, emphasised by static or needle—disembodied voices blaring from imitation wood cabinets or pebble-grain horn-mouths above the rapt faces, the gnarled slow hands long shaped to the imperious earth, lugubrious, harsh, and sad." Faulkner here perhaps shares Adorno's sentiment that the phonograph is "an artistic product of decline."²⁷ In *Sanctuary*, there is a grim facelessness, a rough or deformed outline of character that accompanies the invisible yet sonically registered rape of Temple Drake (102). This facelessness seems for a moment crystalized in the recorded music, a music that does not so much rob listeners of individuality as provide a means to amplify already existent reification while they attempt to bereave and repent an unspoken past. These songs, identified in *Sanctuary* by their means of transmission, are doubly metallic, already deformed by the social conditions of technological modernity.

In that same way, *As I Lay Dying* perhaps no longer believes in the kind of sympathy and unification that the language of song might otherwise provide. If we attend to the narrative mode of the graphophone's appearance in *As I Lay Dying*, it does not seem to be one fetish among others, as Matthews argues, but more potent in its capacity to allegorize the novel's internal theory of memory. A sense of loss is registered

for the reader neither by what the stoic Cash says nor even by what he hears, but rather by how he hears. As it appears in narrative, the music belongs both to place and to time; however, the place from which the music emanates remains invisible as the perceptual emphasis falls upon music's temporal inaccessibility. As the music starts and stops, there is in the breaks a caesura between narrative and emotion, one related to Cash's stoic inability to articulate his agony over the family's betrayal of Darl. What song is it? What does it sound like? We are not meant to register the graphophone as a producer of song but as a relationship to time. Just as music appears, its emotional possibility—to elaborate and symbolize its listeners and their affective-linguistic world—is evacuated from a narrative that will not predicate its recorded music. If, as Roland Barthes suggests, the adjective in music criticism serves an "economic function," we might say this is a function from which Faulkner's novel divests, not in despair but in the articulation of an alternative way of thinking through the temporality of grief and its residual effects. Barthes writes: "The predicate is always the rampart by which the subject's image-repertoire protects itself against the loss that threatens it: the man who furnishes himself or is furnished with an adjective is sometimes wounded, sometimes pleased, but always constituted; music has an image-repertoire whose function is to reassure, to constitute the subject, who hears it."²⁸ In *As I Lay Dying*, music will not appear in adjectival form to seize the inner life of characters, providing the sound of depth. As Addie admonishes of spoken language, "the high dead words in time seemed to lose even the significance of their dead sound" (175). Music itself will not fully unite its characters with the novel as a verbal and temporal means of representation. The trope of recorded music, unqualified except in its relation to time, gives us the sense that Cash has been drawn beyond the agonizing thoughts of Darl into an elsewhere of music, but one that is also coldly anempathetic. In what Michel Chion calls in the context of film sound a "conspicuous indifference" of music to suffering, the recorded music refuses to participate in and accompany human life.²⁹ Not only does the narrative refuse a certain descriptiveness of the musical object, it breaks it apart in time such that music cannot fully accompany narrative to assuage its crisis.

Cash's attention is continually drawn towards the music, although narrative continues to move forward just alongside this distraction. There is a kind of incidental auditory "glimpse" of recorded music; it trembles just on the edges of the narrative as an alternative mode of perception, alternative because more technological but also because more suggestive of this novel's phenomenology of memory. One is reminded of Stephen Heath's description of Alfred Hitchcock's *Suspicion* (1941), a film in

which the gaze of an inspector visiting Lina is drawn, incidentally but continually and in brief intervals of fascination, to a modernist painting. Cubism disrupts the otherwise “perfectly symmetrical patterning” of the *mise-en-scène* that “builds up and pieces together the space in which the action can take place.”³⁰ This glimpse, this eye diverted away from the frame’s most immediate form of organization, suggests an epistemological order alternative to that maintained by the logic of inspection. It interrupts the gaze holding the scene together and draws the vision of the inspector towards it, but only marginally, in a way that the narrative registers without directly addressing or resolving. In *As I Lay Dying*, however, this event is not along the axis of space but of time. The graphophone tugs at Cash’s perception but also at the novel itself; it appears just as *As I Lay Dying* marks its own duration or coming to an end. When it appears, Cash only briefly allows himself to listen to the music and then catches himself, just as the desire for waning recorded sounds appears heightened by his inability to articulate his own feelings of loss.

In this acoustical equivalent of a glimpse, the narrative also seems to catch itself, preventing the graphophone from being fully represented beyond fits and starts. Faulkner’s approach to dialect voices that imperiously or anachronistically outlast technological modernity paradoxically echoes the machinic possibility of ethnographic recording as it was expanding in this moment. *As I Lay Dying* is a kind of compendium of the voices and sounds falling out of the memory of man.³¹ What might perhaps differentiate the Faulknerian project from archival work, however, is the suggestive way in which forgetting, the only almost-remembered or almost-happened (“*there is a might-have-been which is more true than truth*” [Faulkner, *Absalom*, 115]) is built into the Faulknerian form of documentation that retains its life as lingering, its life as *almost* or *could have been* over and against the empirical and positivistic.

As I Lay Dying both registers and obfuscates its own relation to media, there seeming to be no place for technological voice in Faulkner’s project of literary commemoration of a receding South, Faulkner trying, “by the agony of ink,” “to recreate between the covers of a book the world I was already preparing to lose and regret.”³² At the same time, however, while marginal to his project, media technology is its conditioning exterior, allowing Faulkner to think through the endeavor of binding together into a whole that is not static, a form that is evaporative and becoming, like memory itself. Just as the novel comes to a close, the whole is, as he will write in *Absalom, Absalom!*, “elapsed and yet-elapsing,” like “music or a printed tale” (15). For as Cash’s song goes undescribed, the absence evinces some greater temporal deconstitution

of the listener. Cash finds comfort in the recorded music, but he cannot make it last. The intermittent music also acoustically frames Anse's own negotiation of loss. Just before Cash first turns his attention to the sound, we learn something about the problem of the physical and spiritual continuity of the subject in time. Anse retorts to Cash's idea of simply getting "it" (the burial) done that the entire family should be present to put Addie's body in the ground: "'You all dont know,' pa says. 'The somebody you was young with and you growed old in her and she growed old in you, seeing the old coming on and it was the one somebody you could hear say it dont matter and know it was the truth outen the hard world and all a man's grief and trials. You all dont know'" (234-35). The recorded music appears just as Anse articulates his resistance to the brute fact of the body's disappearance. The graphophone's melancholic starting and stopping, like so many other insistent remainders of the novel's heterogeneous discourse, occupies the only tropological appearance of disappearance. This force, marked by ephemeral sound, is not spatialized or fully spatializable as Faulkner gives narrative form to the *is* as it is becoming *was*.

Faulkner's philosophical project and narrative tools invoke Henri Bergson's concept of matter as motion, a concept that Anse succinctly summarizes in his remarks about growing old. "To perceive means to immobilize," Bergson writes. "To say this is to say that we seize, in the act of perception, something which outruns perception itself."³³ That perception might be deemed an act of "seizure" in a moment of rapidly expanding technological innovation is itself significant, for media extensions of the senses externalize, literalize, and prolong objects of perception as artifacts. This seizure can also take the form of reification.³⁴ Temporality, as a problem that simultaneously structures subject and object, structures *As I Lay Dying's* narrative discourse as it attempts to bring to representation the affective life of its characters in relation to time. This relation continuously outruns narrative. As Bergson writes of duration: "It is, if you like, the unrolling of a spool, for there is no living being who does not feel himself coming little by little to the end of his span. . . . But it is just as much a continual winding, like that of thread into a ball, for our past follows us, becoming larger and larger with the present it picks up on its way; and consciousness means memory."³⁵ Likewise, each Faulkner character is ultimately "missing" because mobile. Their lives, Darl observes, "ravel out into the no-wind, no-sound, the weary gestures wearily recapitulant: echoes of old compulsions with no-hand on no-strings" (207). These characters are not a series of synecdoches: in the task of bringing that which "ravels out" to representation, there is a waning of the indexical logic of synecdoche as it promises a

whole of which each supposed “fragment” is ostensibly a part. One perhaps thinks of the weary phonographic gesture of T. S. Eliot’s *The Waste Land* in which the stenographer “smoothes her hair with automatic hand / and puts a record on the gramophone.”³⁶ Eliot’s poem then replays the Shakespearean music in the air of *The Tempest*, in a quotation that erupts into the stanza not as allusion but as direct citation, a reified fragment (i.e., a record) of word and sound. As Juan A. Suárez writes, “This kind of writing is no longer based on *invention* (imagination) or the rephrasing of experience. In the discourse network of 1900, writing means something akin to receiving, channeling, playing back existing files.”³⁷ Yet Faulkner’s vision of the phonograph appears less as a reified plate and automatic hand and more as the form of raveling outward away from, yet towards, the deceptive center that is Addie. Synecdoche and fragmentation, foundational tropes within discussions of modernism,³⁸ stand as far too spatial or visualist a negotiation of what here depicted as is musical evanescence, not only a movement of sound in time but also a form of mediated time that, while it cannot be sustained, promises repetition. “What a shame Darl couldn’t be [here] to enjoy it too,” Cash laments, in a way that foregrounds the problem of a shared time of listening (261). The eruption of recorded sound in *As I Lay Dying* cannot be reduced to a metonymy that contains the very crisis it points to, restoring representation in its ability to symbolize such loss. Addie, a voice from beyond the grave, admonishes language as “a shape to fill a lack” (175), yet her voice is also the absent center of the novel. It is graphophonic in relation to her body but also to the novel itself. Who hears her if not narrative, which, while condemning technological sound to its margins, also identifies with it by maintaining the voice after life and where the body is not?

The manifestation of Addie’s voice in writing after death paradoxically evaporates the fixed bond that might locate it in her body as its ostensible origin and terminus. By concluding *As I Lay Dying* with a graphophone, however, Faulkner seems to find in this technology the most immediate way to validate, elaborate, and punctuate a novel composed not of fragments but of the shape of the subject in duration, of a time in which, as Bergson writes, “consciousness means memory.” Cash remarks upon the graphophone not once but twice, in separate chapters, the recorded music giving this chronologically discontinuous novel its penultimate paragraph. Given that persistence, the graphophonic ending of the novel is by no means incidental music. Certainly a performer may pause and begin again, but this is a music that, recorded, appears and disappears in ways related to a prose that phonographically flouts the finality of death and the unidirectionality of chronology. With the

ghostly appearance of Addie's voice in the middle of the novel, after her death, this is a prose that kills only to resuscitate and kill again. As the narrative breaks from the threshold of Mrs. Bundren's home for several chapters, it returns there once again in the concluding chapter to repeat the fact of Cash's listening; we have not progressed but rather turned back as if by phonographic insistence: "So when we stopped there to borrow the shovels we heard the graphophone playing in the house," the final chapter begins—again (258). The narrative has to some degree moved forward, yet it also suggests a kind of groove from which it will not break, just before it draws to its own formal end. Playing a record in the 1920s, before the advent of multitracking and mixing, was to move along a similar path, backward to the acoustic scene of recording, and this moving backward is also necessarily embedded in the advancement of duration.

What are we to make of the narrative's insistence upon the being of this music in time, of the novel's refusal to end by way of a music that cannot be fully contained, but promises return? Upon first consideration, narrative seems to gesture to a failed mnemonics, an object of memory that refuses to be incorporated and an unwillingness to fully remember. "The music was not playing now," Cash repeats (258). Yet in the novel's coming to an end, the reader becomes conscious of the problem of evanescence *as* a problem, one phantasmatically absolved for Cash in the possibility of owning the graphophone—an illusory seizure of what Bergson calls the "absolute," which can only be grasped by the faculty of intuition. The trope of machine music does not simply ironize Cash's longing. By appearing within a conclusion as that which bestows material and spatial limits upon a work, the trope ironizes the work's own manifestation as "form." To be itself, form must reach a limit. Yet novelistic form, like the deceptive form of the phonograph record, exists in time, requiring reading as an act of consciousness that, like listening, takes and loses shape in time—or as Adorno writes, "disappears" yet "survives in time."³⁹ For Adorno, this survival in time is not reducible to playing again and again; recorded sound is suspended between what is no longer present and what is to come.⁴⁰ This audiophonic temporality carries all of the overtones (a kind of sonorous variant) of what Benjamin located in the dialectical image: an *again* that also registers what was not yet or could have been, the immanent deforming and reforming of the past as lost possibility.⁴¹ *As I Lay Dying's* own present progressive title announces that the novel's form is a form that is not one. Indeed, Adorno concludes his analysis of phonograph records, "herbaria of artificial life," by negating it along the axis of time, a negation he suggests is secreted within the phonograph record's supposedly rigid materiality: "the form

of the phonograph record could find its true meaning [in] the scriptural center that disappears in the center, in the opening of the middle, but in return survives in time.”⁴² In the same way, by concluding with a reappearing record, Faulkner seems to have realized that he could not properly punctuate *As I Lay Dying* without undoing the novel’s own technical demands—to gain and lose shape in time, as the moving script of the record disappears into its spiral center. With this appearance of mute technological music that disappears yet survives, the novel asserts its experimental strategy and its relation to embodied memory: not a form or formalizable but rather a “shape” in time, just like Yoknapatawpha itself.

NOTES

1. William Shakespeare, *The Arden Shakespeare: The Tempest*, rev. ed., ed. Virginia Mason Vaughan and Alden T. Vaughan (New York: Thomas Nelson and Sons Ltd., 1999), I.ii.388–96.
2. William Faulkner, *As I Lay Dying: The Corrected Text* (New York: Vintage International, 1990), 236. Subsequent references to this edition will be cited parenthetically in the text.
3. Theodor Adorno and Max Horkheimer, *The Dialectic of Enlightenment*, trans. John Cumming (New York: Continuum, 1972), 60.
4. Dorothy Hale, “As I Lay Dying’s Heterogeneous Discourse,” *Novel: A Forum on Fiction* 23.1 (Autumn 1989): 9, 5.
5. Quoted in Joseph Blotner, “William Faulkner’s Essay on the Composition of *Sartoris*,” *Yale University Library Gazette* 47.3 (January 1973): 124.
6. John T. Matthews. “As I Lay Dying and the Machine Age,” *boundary 2* 19.1 (Spring 1992): 73.
7. *Ibid.*, 90.
8. *Ibid.*
9. See for example Peter Lurie, *Vision’s Immanence: Faulkner, Film, and the Popular Imagination* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2004).
10. Sarah Gleeson-White, “Auditory Exposures: Faulkner, Eisenstein, and Film Sound,” *PMLA* 128.1 (January 2013): 87–100. Gleeson-White describes how Faulkner transformed “The Dark House” into *Absalom, Absalom!* just after writing his film treatment of “Sutter’s Gold,” a treatment that shows Faulkner to be fully immersed in the groundbreaking audio-visual style that he had closely studied in Eisenstein’s own treatment of “Sutter’s Gold.” As Gleeson-White persuasively describes, Faulkner’s script, as well as several moments in *Absalom, Absalom!*, seems to be lifted directly from Eisenstein’s treatment, whose techniques were grounded in Eisenstein’s provocative 1928 manifesto on film-sound, “A Statement,” written with V. I. Pudomn and C. V. Alexandrov. “A Statement” dismisses the naturalistic audio techniques of Hollywood cinema.
11. It was also auditory from its inception. David Minter describes how Faulkner’s experiences of listening in youth propelled him towards fiction. He listened as his father’s friends shared stories about the Civil War and as Caroline Barr, his African American caregiver, told family stories that Faulkner would repeat, not only years later “amid the

malaise of Hollywood” but also in *Flags in the Dust* (1927), when these voices would be transfigured into novelistic form. See Minter, *William Faulkner: His Life and Work* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1997), 12–13.

12. See Cheryl Lester, “Make Room for Elvis,” in John N. Duvall and Ann J. Abadie, eds., *Faulkner and Postmodernism: Faulkner and Yoknapatawpha, 1999* (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2002), 158.

13. Stephen M. Ross, *Fiction's Inexhaustible Voice: Speech and Writing in Faulkner* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1991). Also see Phil Smith, “The Megaphone’s Bellowing and Bodiless Profanity: *If I Forget Thee, Jerusalem* and the Culture of Cacophony,” *Faulkner Journal* 26.1 (Spring 2012): 75–96.

14. Ross, 63. This change is similarly noted by Karl Zender’s early contribution to the burgeoning field of literary sound studies, “Faulkner and the Power of Sound,” *PMLA* 99.1 (January 1984): 89–108. Zender locates “an invasion of the self by the other” (90) along the axis of Yoknapatawpha’s dark, threatening sounds (implicitly associated by Zender with technological modernity). By these accounts, such “invasion,” a failed reconciliation between listener and world, signals Faulkner’s despair in the expressive task of the artist.

15. Matthews, 93. Indeed, Eric J. Sundquist has called *As I Lay Dying* a “compendium” of the techniques Faulkner had discovered in *The Sound and the Fury*, techniques whose display would drive one another “to the perilous limits of narrative form Faulkner would require for his great novels on the prolonged tragedy and grief of the South.” See Sundquist, *Faulkner: The House Divided* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1983), 28.

16. Matthews, 90–91.

17. William Faulkner, *The Sound and the Fury: An Authoritative Text, Backgrounds and Contexts, Criticism*, 2nd ed., ed. David Minter (New York: Norton, 1994), 73. Subsequent references to this edition will be cited parenthetically in the text.

18. R. Murray Shafer, *The Soundscape: Our Sonic Environment and the Tuning of the World* (Rochester, VT: Destiny Books, 1977), 3–4.

19. William Faulkner, *Sanctuary: The Corrected Text* (New York: Vintage International, 1993), 4. Subsequent references to this edition will be cited parenthetically in the text.

20. For Matthews, the graphophone functions as a “displacement of labor and gratification into reified form” and “an illusion that mystifies the artifice of disembodied live music and reducing it to an object that can be stored and later return to simulated life” (76).

21. As late as “The Bear” (1942), a story that is more overtly concerned with the loss of the human memory associated with the wilderness, the narrator notes that “the drumming of the woodpecker stop[s] short” and that “woodpecker’s dry hammering set[s] up again.” See William Faulkner, *Three Famous Short Novels* (New York: Vintage, 1961), 196, 197.

22. Sundquist, 38, 39.

23. This claim, particularly in the context of racial politics, has also been contested by Peter Lancelot Mallios in *Our Conrad: Constituting American Modernity* (Palo Alto: Stanford University Press, 2010). *As I Lay Dying*, Mallios writes, “may be read as occupying the absolute dead center of the Faulkner canon, as (1) a moment of true technical emergence; (2) the key bridge in which Faulkner’s major voice (the sonorously choric voice of *Absalom*) organically emerges from his earlier individuated speakers; and (3) the continuation of a consistent ideological project . . . that resists any stark formulations of Faulkner’s fiction as [what Sundquist calls] a ‘house divided.’” (358).

24. Virginia Woolf, *Between the Acts* (Orlando, FL: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt Publishing Company, 2008), 68.
25. William Faulkner, *Absalom, Absalom!* The Corrected Text (New York: Vintage International, 1986), 172, 210. Subsequent references to this edition will be cited parenthetically in the text.
26. Theodor Adorno, "The Form of the Phonograph Record" (1934), trans. Thomas Y. Levin, in *Essays on Music*, ed. Richard Leppert (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002), 278.
27. Adorno, "The Form," 279.
28. Roland Barthes, *The Responsibility of Forms: Critical Essays on Music, Art, and Representation*, trans. Richard Howard (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991), 268.
29. Michel Chion, *Audio-Vision: Sound on Screen*, trans. Claudia Gorbman (New York: Columbia University Press, 1990), 221.
30. Stephen Heath, *Questions of Cinema* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1981), 20.
31. Faulkner's project of binding together seems to participate in John and Alan Lomax's project of documenting Southern musical life as this project expanded in the 1930s into the Archive of American Folk Songs of the Library of Congress. Here one cannot ignore Faulkner's project as also contemporaneous and somehow in conversation with the early novels of Zora Neale Hurston based upon her recording work as folklorist, as described most recently by Jay Watson in *Reading for the Body: The Recalcitrant Materiality of Southern Fiction, 1893–1985* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2012). Watson notes how Hurston's collecting trips gathered songs but also a broader "southern black expressive culture" including "sermons, prayers, children's chants and games, 'woofing,' and various forms of instrumental music including drumming" (98).
32. Blotner, 122.
33. Henri Bergson, *Matter and Memory* (1896), trans. N. M. Paul and W. S. Palmer (New York: Zone Books, 1990), 208. As Carolyn Porter writes in the context of *Light in August*, "Faulkner's strategy in maintaining time's flow can be most readily explained in terms of Bergson's concept of memory as automatically preservative." (*Seeing and Being: The Plight of the Participant Observer in Emerson, James, Adams, and Faulkner* [Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 1981], 252).
34. Yet Bergson would perhaps be more interested in what he outlines in *The Creative Mind* as the tension between the relative and the absolute. He notes the example of a compendium of photographs of Paris by which one would still fail to grasp the intuitive, absolute sense of the city as experienced in duration. See Bergson, *The Creative Mind: An Introduction to Metaphysics* (1946), trans. Mabelle L. Anderson (Mineola: Dover Publications, 2007), 144.
35. Bergson, *Creative*, 137.
36. T. S. Eliot, *The Complete Poems and Plays, 1909–1950* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1971), 44.
37. Juan A. Suárez, *Pop Modernism: Noise and the Reinvention of the Everyday* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2007), 133. Contrary to traditionalist readings of *The Waste Land*, Suárez argues for this poem as thoroughly imbricated in audiophonics (a proto-DJ session), citing Eliot's interest in the gramophone and its effect on poetic technique. "It becomes apparent that the sounds of tradition are played back by a gramophone. The organic, mystic unity with which, it is generally agreed, the poem ends, is entirely dependent on it. Its prerecorded sound is the condition of possibility for the

entire work. In his attempt to modernize the idiom of modern poetry, Eliot was shaping an old medium into the image of a new one" (125).

38. See for instance Benjamin's notion of the allegorical fragment, as it shapes his work in *The Arcades Project*. As Esther Leslie explains, Benjamin's "allegorical method, like film, rips up the manifestly natural context of things, snapping open the apparent continuity of nature and history and prising apart space for reinterpretation and transformation." See Leslie, *Walter Benjamin: Overpowering Conformism* (London: Pluto Press, 2000), 199). Along similar lines, Benjamin writes in *The Origin of German Tragic Drama* that "it is common practice in the literature of the baroque to pile up fragments ceaselessly, without any strict idea of a goal, and in the unremitting expectation of a miracle, to take the repetition of stereotypes for a process of intensification." See Benjamin, *The Origin of German Tragic Drama* (1963), trans. John Osborne (New York: Verso, 1998), 179). In this text, Benjamin understands allegory to amass images that cannot fully embody a whole.

39. Adorno, "Form," 280.

40. Among the most challenging aspects of Adorno's early thought on technology is its relationship to Jewish messianism, a relationship also tied up with the early influence of Benjamin. Adorno concludes "The Form of the Phonograph Record" with the cryptic sentiment that audio recordings are "missives whose formulations capture the sounds of creation, the first and the last sounds, judgment upon life and message about that which may come thereafter" (280). In Jewish thought, naming is tied to genesis, the Word giving birth to the thing. The phonograph is perhaps tied to "first sounds" because sound writing bears a nonsignifying relation to the uttered word (indeed, Adorno notes in this context Chladni sound-figures). At the same time, however, Adorno gestures towards, without elaborating, the temporality of redemption. It is as if the future of the recorded sound and its impact upon listeners, for Adorno, might involve judgment day in ways that also evoke the coming of the messiah, that is, the temporality of "to come."

41. For many thinkers of the Frankfurt School, the present is not simply a culmination of the past. The present reaches out to rescue the past in its immanent or unfulfilled dimension. In an explicitly political rather than theological vein, Herbert Marcuse makes this point in *Reason and Revolution* (1941): "nothing that exists is true in its given form. Every single thing has to evolve new conditions and forms if it is to fulfill its potentialities. The existence of things is, then, basically negative; all exist apart from and in want of their truth, and their actual movement, guided by their latent potentialities, is their progress towards this truth. . . . The material part of a thing's reality is made up of what that thing *is not*, of what it excludes and repels as its opposite." See Marcuse, *Reason and Revolution: Hegel and the Rise of Social Theory* (Amherst, NY: Prometheus Books, 1999), 123.

42. Adorno, "Form," 280.