

I spent the most amount of time listening closely to the sounds of the atmosphere in the early morning, before work, walking down the gravel path from the greenwood parking lot. In doing this assignment, I tried to be more attentive of the sounds around me at several times throughout the day, especially to see how things changed. The mornings walking to work, however, especially stuck out for the ability to see how the world woke up. On February 17th, I spent time outside from 6:30-6:50 am and listened to the birds and watched the sunrise. I work in the dining hall from 7-9 two days out of the week, and I enjoy the peace that the early morning provides (the soundscape changes drastically after I get to work). On the days that are warmer with less clouds, the birds usually start chirping earlier (such as today).

On this day I walked outside and heard mostly birds chirping and cawing and whistling to each other- short chirps and extended songs, like “chirpidee chirpidee chirpidee chirp” Maybe a chickadee. A few crows, calling to each other, responsively, in different high or low notes. One bird had a raspy trill, like a rattle more than a croak. I think I heard a robin: “wee weee weededewededewe” (it’s hard to write bird songs in english). I hear the birds that have been here through the winter. Finches, cardinals, and the crows that perch by my apartment. It is getting warmer and brighter outside, and they know it too. Hearing wind through the trees is interesting, as a surrounding sound, white noise, experienced through trees brushing against one another. Wooshing and wisping by. Down the path and down the stairs, the rest of campus starts to wake up. Car horns honk, engines turn over and crawl up the hill to the construction site. Rhythmic steady beeps from the construction site. The two sides of the woods and the parking lot are a split in the world. On one side the biophony, on the other, the anthrophony. A slow murmur that, as the day goes on, will grow into a roar.

The conglomerations of noises make music. Repetitive sounds that carry themes and meaning with them. The theme of the campus is cars; alarms, horns, sirens, engines to carry people around. The predominant noise from this side of the world is mechanical motion. Most students have not gotten out of their dorms yet. The theme of the forest is morning: waking up, taking deep breaths to start the day, saying hello to neighbors and friends. (who do the birds talk to? I don’t know. Maybe to me!). Thoreau, in “Sounds” mentions the joy and bloom of the present moment, and this way of thinking presses me to be more attentive to the sounds around me, at any point in time. The instantaneous ray of light that Thoreau describes, being lost once the shades are closed, is interpreted to me as any kind of stimulation that we experience. All the information we process at any given moment- all the noises in the morning, all the people running around in mid-day (a reflection of this assignment, that it is very hard to find a place with absolute silence). The symphony of stimulation, and the way our brain interprets it, being a kind of music.

A lowly humming, machinery from a building, voices a-running.
On the other side, over hills the birds still sing, bright forests alight.
Wide open spaces- for flight, or talking, jumping- tree to lovely tree.
On the mall students, unaware of their waltzing, spin round together
A kind of dancing, the daily activities of the world divine.

(Thursday 2/12, 1:56 PM)

**During the christian season of Lent of 2025, or, spring cleaning, my friend Jack Kearney took it upon himself to stop wearing earbuds, as they took him away from the outside world. He told me that seeing and hearing birds were interpreted as a sign of god, which called him back into beautiful creation.



 Sunrise soundscape.mp3

Pictures and audio, from my phone- which is broken- taken on this spectacular event.