

The Image Of Nature In Modern And Postmodern Instrumental Music: A Dramaturgical Aspect

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Abstract: The article examines the image of nature in instrumental music of Modernism and Postmodernism from the perspective of dramaturgical organization. The relevance of the research is determined by contemporary transformations in musical thinking and cultural paradigms, as well as by the growing ecological awareness that encourages reconsideration of the relationship between humans, nature, and artistic expression. In this context, the image of nature is interpreted not merely as a thematic or illustrative element, but as a structural factor influencing the organization of musical time, form, and sound processes. The aim of the study is to provide a comprehensive interpretation of the image of nature in instrumental music of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries as a specific

dramaturgical factor shaping the internal logic of musical development. The methodological framework combines musicological, cultural, semiotic, and hermeneutic approaches, including intonational analysis, structural dramaturgical interpretation, and intertextual analysis. These methods allow for identifying the transformation of artistic thinking from the organically processual dramaturgy typical of Modernism to the fragmented, collage-based, and intertextual strategies characteristic of Postmodernism. The scientific novelty of the research lies in substantiating the role of the image of nature as a system-forming element of musical dramaturgy rather than merely a semantic or descriptive component. It is demonstrated that in Modernist music nature functions as an organizing principle of continuous development, reflecting analogies with natural processes such as growth and transformation. In contrast, Postmodernist practices reinterpret nature as a cultural construct, often manifested through stylistic play, quotation, and soundscape-oriented strategies. The study concludes that the evolution of the image of nature reflects broader shifts in musical thinking from organic unity to multiplicity and conceptual openness. The dramaturgical interpretation of natural imagery provides new perspectives for understanding the interaction between intonational semantics, musical form, and cultural context in contemporary instrumental music

Keywords: instrumental music, musical modernism, musical postmodernism, musical dramaturgy, intonation semantics, musical thinking, timbre-textural processes, musical time and form, intertextuality.

Introduction

The relevance of studying the image of nature in modern and postmodern instrumental music is due to a complex of interrelated factors within the landscape of musical thinking evolution in the 20th–21st centuries and broader cultural and philosophical transformations associated with changing ideas about the interaction of man and the world. In modern humanitarian discourse, the problem of nature ceases to be considered exclusively as an aesthetic or descriptive phenomenon and acquires the status of a fundamental category that determines the method of artistic mastery of reality. In this context, musical art, as one of the most abstract and at the same time sensually saturated forms of culture, is particularly sensitive to changes in the interpretation of the natural principle.

Turning to modern instrumental music allows identifying a specific type of artistic thinking in which nature appears not only as an object of image, but as an internal principle of organizing musical matter, which determines the logic of form shaping, intonation development, and timbre-textural processes. Namely during this period, a reorientation from the classical-romantic model of thematic conflict to procedural dramaturgy occurs, which reproduces natural phenomena as continuous, fluid, and multi-vector processes. At the same time, in postmodern music, a radical rethinking of this tradition is observed: the image of nature loses its ontological stability and turns into an object of reflection, stylistic play, or conceptual construction (Rehfeldt et al., 2021). Thus, the study of this issue enables tracing profound changes in the ways of musical thinking, reflecting broader trends in cultural development.

This topic becomes particularly relevant in the context of modern ecological and anthropological crisis, when the issue of human-nature interaction goes beyond the boundaries of scientific or philosophical discourse and becomes the subject of artistic interpretation. In this sense, music acts not only as a form of aesthetic experience, but also as a specific means of actualizing existential experience associated with the feeling of loss of harmony between man and the natural environment. Instrumental music, devoid of verbal text, is capable of conveying these states particularly subtly through intonation, timbre, and dynamic structures, which makes it an important object of musicological analysis.

Moreover, the relevance of study is determined by the need to rethink the dramaturgical principles of organizing a musical work in the context of modern theoretical approaches. The image of nature acts in this case not only as a semantic element, but as a factor that directly affects the type of musical dramaturgy – from organic-processual in modernity to fragmentary-collage in postmodernity.

The analysis of these changes allows clarifying the idea of the nature of musical time, the interaction of stable and mobile structures, and the relationship between integrity and discreteness in musical thinking.

An important aspect of relevance is also the insufficient development of this problem in modern musicology, especially in the aspect of comparative analysis of modernist and postmodernist strategies of nature representation. Despite the significant number of studies devoted to individual composers or stylistic trends, the issue of the image of nature as a dramaturgical factor that determines the internal logic of a musical work requires further systematic comprehension.

Thus, the relevance of the topic is determined by a combination of historical-stylistic, theoretical, and socio-cultural factors, which makes it important both for the development of modern musicology and for a broader understanding of the role of musical art in the formation of new models of interaction between man and the world.

The aim of this study is a comprehensive understanding of the image of nature in modern and postmodern instrumental music as a specific dramaturgical factor that determines the internal logic of musical form unfolding, the nature of intonation development, and the type of sound structures interaction. Within the framework of the set goal, it was planned to identify the features of the transformation of artistic thinking from the modernist model of organic-processual dramaturgy to the postmodernist strategies of fragmentation, collage and intertextuality, as well as to clarify the role of natural images as meaning-making centers of the musical text. Special attention is paid to the analysis of the relationship between the intonation-semantic level of music and its structural-dramaturgical organization, which allows considering nature not only as an object of image, but as a principle of musical thinking.

The methodological basis of the study represents a combination of musicological, cultural, and semiotic approaches, which provide a multidimensional understanding of the problem. The hermeneutic method allows interpreting the musical text as an open system of meanings, in which the image of nature is actualized in the process of performing and listening experience. Intonation analysis is aimed at identifying the specifics of musical language, through which natural imagery is implemented, in particular, the features of the mode-harmonic organization, rhythmic structure, and timbre-textural processes. The structural-dramaturgical approach enables a study of the principles of form shaping, in particular, the ratio of processuality and discreteness, integrity and fragmentation in the music of different stylistic eras. At the same time, the involvement of cultural and intertextual analysis allows considering a musical work in the broader context of artistic and philosophical ideas about nature, which change in historical perspectives.

The scientific novelty of the study lies in considering the image of nature in the instrumental music of modern and postmodern times as a system-forming element of musical dramaturgy, and not only as a thematic or illustrative component. The paper substantiates the provision about direct influence of natural imagery on the type of organization of musical time and form, determining the specificity of intonation development and structural transformations. An interpretation of modernist music is proposed as one that tends towards an organic-processual model of dramaturgy, in which the musical material unfolds by analogy with natural processes, while in postmodernist music the principles of fragmentation, stylistic play, and deconstruction of the image of nature dominate. Thus, the study expands the idea of relationship between the semantics of a musical text and its dramatic organization, opening up new prospects for the analysis of modern musical thinking.

2. the concept of nature' image in the instrumental music within modern and postmodern discourse

The image of nature in the instrumental music of modern and postmodern times is one of the

key problems of contemporary musicological discourse, since namely in this plane the profound transformations of artistic thinking of the 20th–21st centuries, associated with changing ideas about the relationship between man, nature, and artistic reality, are manifested in the most concentrated scale. In this context, the image of nature appears not only as a thematic or illustrative element, but as a complex intonation-semantic complex that directly affects the type of organization of musical form, dramaturgy, and sound matter. It is about a gradual transition from the symbolist-intonation model of representing the natural world, inherent in the aesthetics of modernity, to conceptual-reflexive, intertextual, and deconstructive strategies of its comprehension in the postmodern artistic space.

Music of Modern era is characterized by striving to create a holistic, integrated image of nature, which functions as a metaphor for universal existence and at the same time as a projection of the subject's inner world. In this sense, the natural principle is not opposed to man, but, on the contrary, is thought of as organically connected with him, which is reflected in the corresponding principles of intonation organization of musical material (Pedelty, 2013). The image of nature here acquires the status of a kind of "acoustic ontology", within which sound structures reproduce not the external signs of natural phenomena, but their internal dynamics, rhythm, and energy (Gilmurray, 2018). That is why, in modernist music, there is a tendency to dissolve traditional thematics in a continuous flow of sound formation, where the musical form ceases to be a rigidly defined construction and acquires the features of an open, procedurally developed system.

In this context, the image of nature appears as a determining factor in the formation of a specific type of musical dramaturgy, which can be described as procedural-organic. Its essence lies in the rejection of classical-romantic model of conflict development, based on the opposition of thematic spheres, and the transition to the evolutionary principle of the development of musical material. Here, dramaturgy is built by analogy with natural processes - growth, differentiation, transformation, where each subsequent stage is not a negation of the previous one, but its internal continuation. Intonation structures lose their clearly defined functional certainty and acquire the properties of flexible, mobile formations capable of constant modification.

In this vein, it is interesting to address to the article by Kusiak (2025), in which the author proposes the concept of Expressive circles originated primarily in inspirations taken from the movement in art called Surrealism and from music composed by Hanna Kulenty (*musique surréaliste*). There are also parallels to other concepts (unism in music, surconventional deconstruction of the musical material) or to other composers (in particular, Witold Lutosławski). The essential elements of Expressive circles are the musical theme's distinctive shape and progression throughout the song. The term escalation, as well as the intimate relationship that emerges when thinking about architectonics and the way the narrative is told, are also significant because one has a great impact over the other. The common denominator of all assumptions is the principle of returns, which is visible on various levels.. Regarding the musical subject, it is extremely crucial to compose it well for the goals of Expressive circles. It should be pretty straightforward, using short themes rather than extended words. The motifs should also be melodically or rhythmically different, both independently and in relation to one another. The introductory motif and the theme's conclusion are particularly important. The entire theme should also be composed in such a way that it is possible to return straight and seamlessly from the finish to the beginning motifs. This allows for continuous looping, which is a defining property of circular form, and circular form serves as the foundation for the whole concept of Expressive circles. It is also important to consider how the musical topic develops throughout the piece. This development is primarily accomplished by the use of multiple suspensions,

loops, returns, and permutations, as well as the ongoing evolution of the melodic and rhythmic framework. The theme is not just simply looped while maintaining the same shape, but each successive

repetition builds upon the previous one narratively and expressively. Always starting from an initial point - which Kusiak (2025) calls the position of balance - circles of increasing circumference emerge with ever more far-reaching developments and transformations of the theme. These eventually lead back to the same point from which the development started. From there, the entire process can start all over again and escalate (see Figure 1).

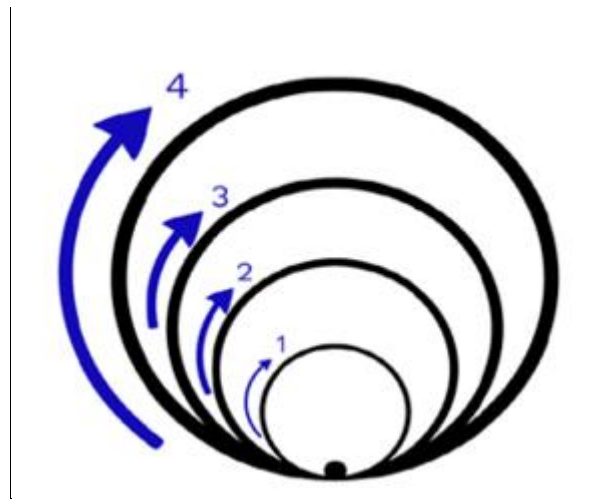


Fig.1. Graphical representation of Expressive circles by Kusiak (2025)

Source: Kusiak (2025)

In order to conceptualize the dramaturgical organization of the image of nature, we can adapt the theoretical model of “expressive circles” mentioned above, which actually proposes circular patterns of musical development as structural principles. Within the framework of the present research, these circular dramaturgical types are interpreted metaphorically as models of natural processes. The closed structure corresponds to cyclical representations of nature, typical of early modernist thinking; the open structure reflects processual and evolutionary models characteristic of mature modernism; while the inverted structure correlates with postmodern strategies of fragmentation, quotation, and conceptual reinterpretation of natural imagery (see Figure 2). The model adapts the concept of expressive circles to represent the transformation of natural imagery from cyclic organic structures of early modernism to processual developmental forms of late modernism and fragmented intertextual dramaturgy of postmodern music.

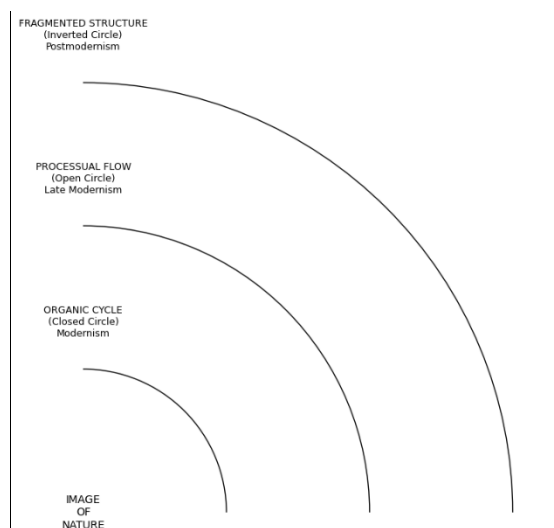


Fig.2. Circular dramaturgical model of the image of nature in modern and postmodern instrumental music

Source: developed by the authors

In this framework, the development of natural imagery is interpreted as a sequence of concentric dramaturgical layers. The inner circle represents the organic cyclic model typical of early modernism, where musical development reflects natural continuity and renewal. The intermediate circle corresponds to processual forms characteristic of mature modernism, emphasizing fluid temporal structures and evolutionary transformation. The outer circle represents postmodern dramaturgy, marked by fragmentation, intertextuality, and conceptual reinterpretation of natural imagery.

While the circular model illustrated in Figure 2 outlines the general dramaturgical logic underlying the transformation of natural imagery, its analytical interpretation requires further structural clarification. To provide a more detailed characterization of the identified dramaturgical types, Table 1 presents their core parameters in a comparative format. This structured representation makes it possible to reveal the internal relationships between cyclic, processual, and fragmented dramaturgical principles and to demonstrate their stylistic correspondence to modernist and postmodern musical thinking.

Table 1 - Dramaturgical Models of the Image of Nature in Modern and Postmodern Instrumental Music

<i>Dramaturgical Model</i>	<i>Type of Expressive Circle</i>	<i>Representation of Nature</i>	<i>Musical Time Organization</i>	<i>Structural Features</i>	<i>Stylistic Context</i>	<i>Representative Compositional Tendencies</i>
Organic Cycle	Close Circle	Nature as a cyclic and self-renewing process	Circular, returning	Continuity, repetition, renewal	Early Modernism	Flowing textures, modal harmony, gradual thematic transformation
Processual Flow	Open Circle	Nature as continuous evolution and transformation	Linear-processual	Development without strict return	Mature / Late Modernism	Fluid forms, expanding textures, flexible rhythmic structures
Fragmented Structure	Inverted Circle	Nature as a cultural construct and symbolic	Discontinuous	Montage, collage, segmentation	Postmodernism	Quotation, stylistic plurality, intertextuality

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Source: developed by the authors

It is important to emphasize that such organization of musical fabric is directly related to the rethinking of the category of musical time. In the classical-romantic tradition time was conceived as a linearly directed process leading to a climax and a denouement, in modernist music it acquires the features of “duration” (*durée*), where the emphasis is shifted from the result to the process of formation itself. This determines a specific form of dramatic development, in which there are no sharp contrasts and conflicts, but instead smooth transitions, variability, and constant transformation of the material dominate. Thus, the image of nature is implemented not only at the level of semantics, but also as a structural principle of the organization of musical time and form.

At the same time, in the postmodern context, a radical change in the artistic paradigm is taking place, leading to a significant rethinking of the image of nature. While modernism strove for integrity, organicity, and intonational unity, postmodernism is characterized by a plurality of meanings, fragmentation, and ironic distance from any universal models. In this case, nature ceases to be perceived as a direct ontological reality and is transformed into a symbolic construct that exists in the space of cultural codes, allusions, and quotes (Heile, 2021). Thus, the image of nature acquires a secondary, mediated character, becoming an object of reflection, stylistic play, or deconstruction.

These changes directly affect the nature of musical dramaturgy, which in postmodernism loses its procedural integrity and acquires features of discreteness, collage, and montage. Instead of continuous development, a structure arises consisting of separate, often stylistically contrasting fragments, the interaction of which is not subject to a single logic of formation. In this context, the image of nature may appear in the form of a quotation, stylization, or ironic allusion, which emphasizes its conditional, culturally constructed character. Thus, while in modernity nature acts as a source of organic unity of musical thinking, in postmodernity it becomes one of the elements of a symbolic game, devoid of a stable semantic center.

3 problematics of the image of nature in musicology: ecomusicology

The consideration of the image of nature in the instrumental music of modern and postmodern times allows revealing not only the evolution of artistic means, but also profound changes in the very nature of musical thinking. In this process, there is a transition from an intonation-organic model, striving for integrity and internal coherence, to an open, multiple system, in which meaning is formed in the process of interaction of heterogeneous elements (Titon, 2013). That is why the image of nature appears as one of the key indicators of these transformations, reflecting the change of the cultural paradigm and new ways of understanding the interaction of man and the world in the music of the 20th–21st centuries.

In modern English-language musicology, the problematics of the image of nature in instrumental music of the modern and postmodern eras is understood not only as a question of thematics or programmatics, but much more broadly – as a problem of intonational semantics, acoustic representation of the environment, ecological sensitivity of musical form and transformation of dramaturgical models in the 20th–21st centuries (Cramer, 2009). One of the methodologically defining texts in this field is the work of Aaron S. Allen, in which the researcher substantiates the very possibility of ecomusicology as a separate analytical perspective. The author’s main idea is that the ecological crisis should be considered not only as a consequence of technological or economic errors, but also as a crisis of culture, and, therefore, musicology is able to make its own contribution to its understanding through attention to the communicative, emotional, and social power of music. For the theme of the image of nature in instrumental music, this position is fundamental, since it transfers the analysis from the level

of external “landscape” to the level of cultural models of listening, within which nature ceases to be only the subject of the image and appears as a factor that determines the ways of organizing musical

time, sound space and dramaturgy itself. From this perspective, modernist and postmodernist compositions about nature can be interpreted as forms of cultural reflection on the environment, and not as purely decorative or illustrative constructions (Allen, 2011).

The further development of this methodological line is traced in the collective work edited by Aaron S. Allen and Kevin Dove, which is defined by the publisher as the first systematic study of the complex set of approaches that constitute ecomusicology; it is especially important that the book brings together twenty-two studies from anthropology, ecology, history, musicology, psychology, and performance studies. Its main idea is not simply to expand the subject matter of musicology, but to radically revise the subject field of the discipline itself: music is considered here as a practice that is always at the intersection of culture, society, and the natural environment. For the stated topic, this is of particular importance, since it allows analyzing the image of nature in modern and postmodern instrumental music not in isolation, but as a result of the interaction of compositional technique, cultural ideas about landscape, changed listening practices, and new modes of reception. It is in this perspective that the dramaturgical aspect of the image of nature acquires expanded meaning: it is no longer reduced to the development of thematic complexes, but also encompasses the ecology of performance, the acoustic model of the environment, and the symbolic modes of incorporating nature into musical form. In this regard, the work of Allen and Dove is an important theoretical basis for contrasting modernist organicity and postmodern fragmentation as two different ways of thinking about nature musically (Allen & Dawe, 2016).

Extremely significant for the study of nature as an acoustic and dramatic phenomenon is the classic text by R. Murray Schafer, who proposed considering the sound environment as an independent object of analytical attention and introduced the very idea of soundscape into scientific and artistic circulation. The main idea of this work is that the surrounding sound world is not background neutrality, but has its own structure, aesthetics, and history, therefore it requires both classification and education of auditory sensitivity. It is significant that the author does not limit himself to a theoretical description, but offers “soundwalks” as a practice of disciplined listening to the environment. For the topic of the image of nature in modern and postmodern instrumental music, this position is extremely productive, since it allows shifting the emphasis from the representation of nature to its acoustic presence. In other words, in Schafer’s perspective, a musical work can be analyzed as an organization of the auditory environment, where the natural is no longer simply imitated, but is structurally built into compositional thinking. It is from this point of view that postmodernist and post-avant-garde practices related to field recordings, noise textures, spatiality, and ecological audibility, can be considered as a natural continuation of the modernist search for new sound matter, but within a different dramaturgical logic – not teleological, but environmental-processual (Schafer, 1993).

While the previous works form a general theoretical field, Simon Trezise’s book on Claude Debussy’s “*La mer*” directly introduces the researcher to the musicological analysis of the modernist image of nature. The very structure of the analytical section – “material and immaterial music”, “rhythm and rhythmicised time”, “motif and symphonic process” – demonstrates that nature in Debussy is treated not as an external program, but as a factor in the formation of the musical matter itself. The main idea of this study is that the marine element in “*La mer*” is implemented through a special type of musical process, where rhythm, motivic work, textural fluidity, and orchestral coloration form a model of “immaterial” music that evades rigid symphonic teleology. For the topic of the dramatic aspect of the image of nature, this is especially important, since Trezise actually shows that

the natural image in a modernist work is not superimposed on the form from the outside, but creates its own form – fluid, phased, transformational. Namely in this type of dramaturgy, where musical time is likened to a wave or atmospheric process, the key feature of modernism is revealed: the rejection of

conflict-thematic architectonics in favor of procedural formation, in which nature is transformed into the structural equivalent of compositional thinking (Treize, 1994).

In English-language studies of late modernism and the postmodern border, Owen Burton's article on Einoujani Rautavaara's "Cantus Arcticus" is particularly representative. The author explicitly states that his aim is to reassess this work in the context of the composer's complex stylistic development and to rethink the connection between Finnish nature, culture and modernist writing techniques. The main idea of the study is that "Cantus Arcticus" should not be interpreted as a simple "landscape" work, nor as a compromise example of accessible writing; instead, it synthesizes three vectors important to Rautavaara – modernism, Finnishness, and mysticism. Of particular value for our problematics is Burton's conclusion that landscape and nature shape the work from the subjective position of the composer, combining with the experience of serialism and aleatoricism. Thus, nature here is not an idyllic backdrop, but a dramatic environment in which the documentary acoustics of bird voices interact with the orchestral fabric, generating a new type of form – on the border between national landscape, modernist technique, and existential metaphysics. That is why Burton's article is extremely important for understanding how, in the second half of the twentieth century, the image of nature moves from symbolist organicity to complex inter-style, culturally mediated dramaturgy (Burton, 2022).

Another important vector of contemporary English-language studies is represented by the work of Tore Størvold, who analyzes ocean aesthetics in the context of modern music and, in particular, John Luther Adams's orchestral work *Become Ocean*. The author notes that he explores the relationship between musical aesthetics and new ideas about the underwater world in an era of unprecedented threats to the ocean, and also raises the question of what music and musicology can contribute to the broader interdisciplinary studies known as blue humanities. The main idea of this study is that the contemporary image of the ocean in music can no longer be considered within the framework of romantic metaphors of the elements or impressionistic acoustic illusion; instead, it is formed through the bodily experience of immersion, through sonorous and compositional devices that appeal to the materiality of the underwater environment and the ecological vulnerability of the sea. For our topic, it is especially important that in such a perspective the dramaturgy of the image of nature acquires not a linear, but an immersive character: the musical process is organized as a gradual "flooding" of the listener's perception, as the experience of a massive, almost spontaneous sound wave. In a postmodern or post-postmodern context, this indicates a change in the very nature of musical representation: instead of depicting nature, we have a modeling of the experience of being inside it, which significantly enriches the idea of dramatic possibilities inherent in modern instrumental music (Størvold, 2025).

Finally, an important article for understanding the latest compositional strategies is Carolyn Philpott's publication on the responses of four composers to Antarctica and climate change in the 21st century. The author emphasizes that composers have long been attracted to this continent, but only at the end of the 20th century did they have the opportunity to work directly with its environment and its unique soundscapes. The main idea of the study is that contemporary music related to nature is increasingly formed not on the basis of an abstract "picture of nature", but as a response to a specific ecological place, its sound and political context, in particular, to the problem of climate change. For the stated topic, this is crucial, since it demonstrates a fundamental shift from modernist metaphorization of nature to postmodern and post-postmodern site-specific dramaturgy, in which composition unfolds as a form of documentation, acoustic testimony, or ecological commentary (Rychter, 2019). Thus, nature

in contemporary instrumental and electroacoustic music is no longer a neutral aesthetic resource: it becomes an ethical and political interlocutor, and the dramaturgy of the work begins to depend on the real sound environment, its fragility and historical vulnerability. This is the fundamental difference

between the latest approaches and modernist natural history and, at the same time, their continuity in terms of attention to the acoustic matter of the world itself (Philpott, 2016).

Thus, English-language research on this issue gives grounds to argue that the image of nature in modern and postmodern instrumental music should be considered simultaneously from several analytical perspectives: as an intonational-semantic complex, as a model of dramatic development, as a form of ecological sensitivity, and as a way of culturally redefining the very concept of the natural. It is the combination of ecomusicological theory, analysis of orchestral color, soundscape approach, and specific studies of Debussy, Rautavaara, John Luther Adams, and composers of the Antarctic Circle that allows revealing how the music of the 20th–21st centuries transitions from a symbolist-organic model of nature to a spatial-ecological, immersive, and conceptually complex dramaturgy (Allen & Dawe, 2016; Trezise, 1994).

Indicative in this regard are the above-mentioned orchestral and piano works of Claude Debussy, in which nature appears not as an object of image, but as a principle of sound organization. For example, in “Reflets dans l’eau” or “La mer” the composer achieves the effect of a “sound environment” in which timbre, harmonic, and rhythmic parameters interact according to the principle of natural variability. The harmonic language, built on modal structures, whole-tone and pentatonic complexes, creates a feeling of unstable tonal gravity, which corresponds to the image of the water element as a constantly changing, fluid environment. In this case, the dramaturgy does not unfold as a linear process, but rather as a network of interconnected sound events that arise and disappear like natural phenomena Akpor et al. (2026).

Similar principles, although in a more expressive form, are implemented in the work of Maurice Ravel, where the image of nature often takes on the features of a stylized, almost decorative construction. In “Jeux d’eau” or “Une barque sur l’océan” there is a combination of virtuoso textural organization with a finely differentiated timbre palette, which allows the composer to model the acoustic image of natural space. The dramaturgy here is also devoid of traditional conflict and is based on variational and ornamental development, where the main principle is not opposition, but flow.

At the same time, another line of interpretation of nature is being formed in modern music – as a force opposing man, or as an element that reveals the dramatic tension of being. The transition to the postmodern stage is accompanied by a radical change in artistic strategies, which directly affects the interpretation of the image of nature. While modern sought to create holistic artistic models, postmodern is characterized by the rejection of a single picture of the world, which is reflected in the fragmentation, stylistic eclecticism, and quotation of musical language. The image of nature in this context loses its ontological certainty and turns into a cultural construct that exists in the space of signs and allusions (Özdemir, 2019).

In the works of composers such as Luciano Berio or Alfred Schnittke, nature can appear as an object of stylistic play, where different historical and cultural codes interact within the framework of a single work. For example, the use of baroque or classical intonations in combination with modern techniques creates an effect of distance, which emphasizes the conventionality of any depiction of nature. The dramaturgy in this case acquires a collage character, where the development of the musical material is determined not by internal logic, but by the principle of juxtaposition of disparate elements.

The work of composers associated with the so-called “ecological” or “soundscape” aesthetic, particularly John Cage and Murray Schaefer, also deserves special attention. In their works, nature is

presented not as a reproduced image, but as a real sound environment incorporated into the musical process. The use of random sounds, noises, and natural acoustic phenomena disrupts the traditional distinction between music and non-music, leading to a rethinking of the very essence of musical art.

Here, drama loses its teleological character and transforms into an open structure in which every moment is self-sufficient (Kramer, 2016).

Thus, the image of nature in instrumental music of modernity and postmodernity appears not only as a thematic and figurative element, but as a principle of organizing the musical time, form, and sound matter. In the modernist tradition, it is associated with the desire for organic integrity and intonational unity, while in postmodernism - with a plurality of meanings, intertextuality, and conceptual openness. The dramaturgical aspect of this problem reveals profound changes in the ways of musical thinking, reflecting the general trends in the development of culture of the 20th-21st centuries, where nature ceases to be only an object of contemplation and becomes an active participant in the artistic process, or rather - its metaphor, sign, concept.

The analytical observations presented above demonstrate that the image of nature manifests itself in diverse compositional strategies corresponding to different dramaturgical models. To summarize the relationship between stylistic context, compositional techniques, and dramaturgical principles, Table 2 systematizes representative examples of musical works and their corresponding types of natural imagery. This synthesis allows for identifying the practical realization of theoretical models within specific musical contexts.

Table 2 - Compositional Realizations of Natural Dramaturgy in Modern and Postmodern Music

<i>Composer</i>	<i>Musical Work / Context</i>	<i>Dramaturgical Model</i>	<i>Type of Nature Representation</i>	<i>Structural Principle</i>
Claude Debussy	<i>La mer, Reflets dans l'eau</i>	Processual Flow	Fluid natural processes (water, light)	Continuous transformation
Maurice Ravel	<i>Jeux d'eau, Une barque sur l'océan</i>	Processual Flow	Stylized acoustic landscapes	Textural evolution
John Cage	Environmental aesthetics	Fragmented Structure	Nature as acoustic environment	Open-form dramaturgy
Alfred Schnittke	Polystylistic works	Fragmented Structure	Nature as intertextual construct	Collage principle
John Luther Adams	Environmental compositions	Processual / Environmental	Nature as immersive soundscape	Spatial dramaturgy

Source: developed by the authors

The synthesis presented in Table 2 highlights how the image of nature in modern and postmodern instrumental music is realized through a variety of compositional strategies, each

reflecting specific dramaturgical principles. In modernist works, as exemplified by Debussy and Ravel, natural imagery functions as an integrative principle that shapes the continuity of musical time, the evolution of thematic material, and the fluidity of timbre-textural structures. The dramaturgy of these compositions emphasizes organic development, gradual transformation, and immersive sound environments, where the natural element is both a metaphor and a structuring force within the musical narrative.

In contrast, postmodern approaches, represented by composers such as Berio, Schnittke, and John Luther Adams, demonstrate the fragmentation, intertextuality, and conceptual reconstruction of natural imagery. Here, nature is often treated as a cultural construct, realized through stylistic quotations, montage, or site-specific acoustic references. The dramaturgy becomes collage-like, emphasizing discrete events and juxtaposition rather than continuous development, while also incorporating ethical and ecological considerations in the conceptualization of sound environments.

The comparative overview illustrates a clear trajectory in musical thinking: from the procedural-organic dramaturgy of modernism, where nature underpins the coherence of musical form, to the fragmented, intertextual dramaturgy of postmodernism, where nature is reinterpreted as a symbol, concept, or performative environment. This evolution reflects broader cultural and philosophical shifts, including changing perceptions of human–nature relationships, increasing ecological awareness, and the expansion of aesthetic paradigms toward multiplicity and openness.

Thus, the analysis confirms that the image of nature functions not merely as an illustrative or programmatic element, but as a central dramaturgical factor that shapes musical time, form, and sound matter. Recognizing these compositional strategies allows for a deeper understanding of the interaction between intonation semantics, formal organization, and cultural context in modern and postmodern instrumental music.

4. conclusion

The analysis of English-language musicological studies allows reaching a fundamentally important conclusion that the image of nature in modern and postmodern instrumental music cannot be adequately understood within the traditional approach, which reduces it to the sphere of programmatic or external sound imitation. Instead, modern scientific thought convincingly demonstrates the need to interpret this phenomenon as a multi-level intonation-semiotic complex that integrates structural, dramaturgical, acoustic, and cultural-ecological aspects of musical thinking.

A comparison of the positions of researchers shows that in the modernist paradigm, the image of nature performs primarily the function of the organizing principle of musical form, being closely related to the procedural logic of development. Nature here is not only “imaged”, but also determines the type of musical time itself, contributing to the formation of a continuous, evolutionary dramaturgy, in which the musical material unfolds by analogy with natural processes – fluidity, transformation, phasing. This approach, vividly represented in studies devoted to Debussy’s music, testifies to the deep integration of natural imagery into the very fabric of musical thinking, where intonation semantics and form-shaping principles are in inseparable unity.

At the same time, in the postmodern and post-postmodern context, there is a significant shift in emphasis, which is associated with a rethinking of the category of nature itself. As ecomusicological research shows, nature ceases to function as a stable aesthetic category and acquires the status of a

culturally constructed, historically variable phenomenon, which is included in complex systems of symbolic interaction. In this case, the image of nature increasingly appears as the result of reflection on the ways of its representation, as a space of intertextual references or as a form of ecological expression.

This leads to the transformation of dramaturgy, which loses its linear, teleological orientation and acquires the features of openness, discreteness, and montage.

It is especially important that contemporary studies focus on changing the very nature of musical material, which increasingly includes elements of the real sound environment. The concept of soundscape, developed by Schafer, as well as its subsequent interpretations, allow considering music as a form of organization of acoustic space, in which natural sounds act not as imitation, but as a direct component of the composition. In this context, the image of nature moves from the plane of symbolic image to the sphere of real sound experience, which significantly changes the nature of musical drama, giving it an environmental, immersive character.

Analysis of research devoted to the work of composers of the second half of the 20th - early 21st centuries, in particular, Rautavaara, John Luther Adams and others, allows identifying a new type of interaction between music and nature, which can be defined as ecologically oriented. Within the framework of this approach, nature appears not only as an aesthetic object, but as an active participant in the artistic process, influencing the choice of sound material, compositional strategies, and methods of organizing musical time. The dramaturgy of such works is often based not on the development of thematic formations, but on the creation of acoustic environments that simulate the experience of being in a natural space.

Thus, the generalization of the results of the analysis allows asserting that the evolution of the image of nature in the instrumental music of modern and postmodern times reflects broader changes in cultural consciousness associated with the transition from an organic, holistic picture of the world to a multiple, fragmented, and reflexive model. In this process, not only the transformation of artistic means takes place, but also the rethinking of the very function of music as a form of communication between man and the world.

The image of nature appears as one of the key indicators of changes in musical thinking of the 20th–21st centuries, allowing identifying the relationship between intonation semantics, dramaturgy, and cultural / historical context. Its study opens up prospects for the further development of musicology, in particular in the direction of integrating ecomusicological, semiotic and analytical approaches, which allow to more fully comprehend the complex nature of modern musical art..

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