

Summary

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The image and its representations in Grażyna Pstrokońska-Nawratil's works

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The author of the doctoral dissertation set the works of Grażyna Pstrokońska-Nawratil (born 1947) as a research goal while writing her master's thesis (*Wybrane cechy stylu indywidualnego Grażyny Pstrokońskiej-Nawratil na przykładzie „Reportaży”/Selected features of Grażyna Pstrokońska-Nawratil's individual style on the example of “Reportages” – 2015*) concerning three titled reportages created until then: *Niedziela Palmowa w Nazareth/Palm Sunday in Nazareth*, *ICE-LAND. Tęczowe mosty nad Dettifoss/ICE-LAND. The rainbow bridges over Dettifoss* and *Figury na piasku/Figures on the sand*. This doctoral dissertation is focused on other sixteen works by Pstrokońska-Nawratil from the years 1979-2020 (*Le soleil, Muszelki/The little mussels, ...como el sol e la mar..., Strumyk i słońko/The streamlet and the sun, AoTeaRoa, Landmannalaugar Sonata, Lasy deszczowe/ The rainforests, W zenicie słońca/At the zenith of the sun, ...el condor..., Magnificat MM, Assisi, Ptaki na horyzoncie zmierzchu (Madrygał)/Birds on the horizon of dusk (Madrigal), Ring of Tara, Słowik i kamień/The Nightingale and the stone, Triptych “Galaktikos” and La vetrata*), and the key concept appearing in the context of their scientific interpretation is **the image** rich in semantic fields.

The ambiguity of the image is the starting point for the considerations undertaken in the first chapter of the dissertation, and more specifically in subchapter I.1. The image is considered here from various perspectives, but for the author of the dissertation the most important of them is the anthropological perspective, as well as the way of defining image in the context of the psychology of perception, acoustics (psychoacoustics), philosophy and history of art. Hans Belting in his work *Anthropology of Images*¹ states that the image

¹H. Belting, *Anthropology of Images. Picture, Medium, Body*, trad. T. Dunlap, Princeton 2014.

The author of dissertation used the polish edition of this book (H. Belting, *Antropologia obrazu. Szkice do nauki o obrazie*, trad.. M. Bryl, Kraków 2007).

can be both an internal and an external. Following this observation it can be assumed that in Pstrokońska-Nawratil's compositions external images are all these objects which are available to the sense of sight, while internal images are both personal ideas about the former, as well as the entirety of mental experiences (including those related to the religious sphere) which are inaccessible to the eyes and other senses. In the composer's pieces, both of these types of image (external and internal) receive their new sonic shape, and the transformation of these images into the sound matter of the composition takes different forms depending on what features they are characterized by.

The author of the dissertation decided to distinguish the following categories of external and internal images functioning in Pstrokońska-Nawratil's compositions as auditory (sound) images:

1) **images of a work of art**, the transformation of which into music has the features of ekphrasis (broadly discussed in chapter II),

2) **images of nature** (i.e. external nature) which are strongly related to the idea of *Ecomusic* created by the composer herself (broadly discussed in chapters III and IV),

3) **images of human and images of his spiritual values** (i.e. internal nature) which are strongly inspired by the St. Francis' attitude,

4) **images of culture** which are most often combined with images of nature (external, in the sense of nature) and are revealed in the *Reportages* cycle (broadly discussed in chapter V),

5) **dreamlike (imaginative) images**, which contain the above-mentioned types of images – especially 2) and 3) – and are associated with the use of musical means that allow for the sound reflection of their unreality or transience (discussed extensively in chapter IV).

The types of images presented above differ from each other both in terms of their *a priori* properties and the way in which Pstrokońska-Nawratil transforms them into auditory images (using a term taken from acoustics). However, one aspect remains common to all these types of image – and that is compatibility with the research concepts discussed in subchapter I.1 and their synthesis carried out by the author of the dissertation in subchapter I.2. Among these concepts, the theory of Rudolf Arnheim, included in his work *Myślenie wzrokowe/Visual Thinking* stands out in particular, because it shows the author's original approach to the relationship between the image and the experience represented by this image. Arnheim distinguishes three functions of images: the icon, the symbol and the sign, and the allocation of these functions depends on the difference in the level of abstraction between the image and the depicted experience. And so:

1) **the icon** is characterized by a higher level of abstraction than the experience it depicts,

2) **the symbol** is characterized by a lower level of abstraction than the experience it depicts,

3) **the sign** can only be read correctly thanks to knowledge of the cultural context.

As a result of personal reflection on Arheim's concept, the author of dissertation comes to the conclusion that in the compositions of Pstrokońska-Nawratil selected for analysis:

1) the function of the icon is connected with the sound imaging of a work of art or with the sound imaging of nature,

2) the function of the symbol is connected with the sound image of a human and the sound image of spiritual values close to him,

3) the function of the sign is related to the sound imaging of cultural elements,

4) oneiric images, depending on the sphere they concern, may take on the function of an icon or a symbol in the form of sound.

The author of dissertation added also the concepts of impression (the path of impression) and expression (the path of expression) to the previously mentioned connections of images inspiring Pstrokońska-Nawratil with their Arnheim's functions. In general, the compositions having an impressionistic character will be those which musically image the visible world (art, nature), while the compositions having an expressive character will be represented by pieces musically imaging the invisible world (human mental and spiritual condition). In turn, cultural sound images take on the function of Arnheim's signs and do not have one of these paths clearly outlined - just like dreamlike sound images. Finally, the comparison of these two research spheres (Arnheim's functions of the icon, sign and symbol + paths of impression and expression) became the basis for appropriately providing the analytical chapters with the following titles:

1) *Obraz muzyczny jako ikoniczna impresja dzieła sztuki. Inspiracje ekfrazą/Musical image as an iconic impression of a work of art. Inspirations from ekphrasis* (chapter II),

2) *Obraz muzyczny jako ikoniczna impresja natury zewnętrznej – filary „Ekomuzyki” Musical image as an iconic impression of external nature – pillars of “Ecomusic”* (chapter III),

3) *Obraz muzyczny jako ikoniczna impresja natury zewnętrznej – dopełnienie filarów „Ekomuzyki”/Musical image as an iconic impression of external nature – a complement to the pillars of “Ecomusic”* (chapter IV),

4) *Obraz muzyczny jako kulturowy znak/Musical image as a cultural sign* (chapter V).

However, it should be reminded that **in the case of Pstrokońska-Nawratil's compositions a specified piece never features only one type of musical imaging**. Therefore, the assignment of compositions selected as research material to individual subchapters of an analytical thesis is dictated by the fact that it is this, and not another, type of sound image that is dominant in a specific composition or its fragment. The remaining types of sound images usually appear as a background to the leading sound image or coexist with it according to the principle of equal partnership. In addition, sound imaging that takes on the function of symbolic expression in Pstrokońska-Nawratil's pieces rarely appears on its own – most often it is built on sound imaging that is an iconic impression. Therefore, selected research aspects regarding musical images treated as symbolic expressions of spiritual values and the inner nature of human are incorporated into the chapters mentioned above and do not receive a separate chapter in this dissertation.

Subchapter I.3. – “*Myślenie obrazem*” w twórczości Grażyny Pstrokońskiej-Nawratil – w ujęciu ogólnym i estetycznym/“*Thinking with the image*” in the works of Grażyna Pstrokońska-Nawratil – in general and aesthetic aspects – is important for the entire considerations, which directly concerns the creative attitude of the composer from Wrocław. In this *thinking with the image* (a term proposed by the author of the dissertation), a fundamental role is played by the marine element. It functions as a general fascinating inspiration and an object of musical imaging of the nature which takes on a function of an iconic impression, as well as a model for the direct shaping of musical matter (using techniques typical for Pstrokońska-Nawratil such as *waving*, *palindrome scales*, *the method of moving structures* and constructing a musical form based on the *idea of water circles*). We can therefore say that *thinking with the sea*, typical of Pstrokońska-Nawratil (a term used by the composer herself), leads to *thinking with the image*, because she treats both what surrounds her and most of her compositions as images. The culmination of such an artistic attitude is her magnum opus – a cycle of seven *Frescoes* in which music leads the composer and the listener from Giotto's great works to a universal, humanistic message.

The author of the dissertation derives the analytical method used to characterize individual works or their fragments primarily from Arnheim's theory described above. This theory – as mentioned above – deals with three functions of the image resulting from how the depicted experience is placed on the scale of abstraction in relation to its representation created in the human mind. An equally important components of this method are also the considerations of Roman Ingarden and Hans Belting, as well as elements of the theory of ekphrasis proposed by Siglind Bruhn. The path to developing this original analytical concept

is presented in subchapter I.2., and the perceptual process of Pstrokońska-Nawratil's works, shown on the author's original graph, is then used when characterizing various fragments of the composition perceived as sound images on a micro scale or during the general description of works treated as sound images on a macro scale.

Depending on the type of experience that Pstrokońska-Nawratil depicts in her compositions, a specified musical object can become an icon or a symbol, and sometimes even both at the same time. Each decision regarding what function should be indicated in a particular case is based on the author's knowledge resulting from her familiarity with the composer's personal statements – not only those expressed in the texts included in the bibliography for this dissertation, but also verbal ones of a public or private nature. In turn, the sound images that function as Arnheim's cultural signs are interpreted on the basis of information about a given country or region, which the author of the dissertation obtains through individual research or through direct report from Pstrokońska-Nawratil herself.

The general considerations about thinking with images in the composer's work are complemented by subchapters I.3.2 and I.3.3, where the author of the dissertation focuses on colour and light. These are – alongside form, perspective, contour, shape and texture – components of a painting image, which Pstrokońska-Nawratil transforms into musical matter and particularly strongly emphasizes in her compositions. *Thinking with colour* (term proposed by the author of the dissertation) is related to the composer's synesthesia, while *thinking with light* (also a term proposed by the author of the dissertation) is revealed in the sound imaging of visible light (coming from the Sun, Moon and stars) and metaphysical light symbolizing not only God and good (in the context of his expected victory over evil), but also silence, contemplation and finally the beginning of a new world (in an individual understanding).

The doctoral dissertation ends with a bibliography (with separate items containing personal statements by Pstrokońska-Nawratil, other written sources and online sources), a source list of used photos and drawings, a list of phonographic sources, a list of used scores, as well as an annex with a list of the Grażyna Pstrokońska-Nawratil's compositions and a list of diploma theses concerning her, which were written in the years 1991-2020.