

**MSC 2020****International Scientific and Practical Conference «MAN. SOCIETY.  
COMMUNICATION»****THE NOTION “SENSE OF NATURE” IN RUSSIAN LITERATURE:  
METHODOLOGICAL ASPECTS, ARTISTIC PRACTICE**

Lyudmila Gurlenova (a)\*

\*Corresponding author

(a) Pitirim Sorokin Syktyvkar State University, Syktyvkar, Russian Federation  
GurlenovaLV@syktsu.ru**Abstract**

The research is based on the material of works in Philology, Philosophy, Theory and History of culture of the XIX-XX centuries and on Russian literature. This article is relevant as there is a demand in complex interdisciplinary approach to studying the portrayal of nature which can be successfully carried out by the use of methodological support of the notion “sense of nature”. This notion is characterized as an intellectually-artistic module which conveys a naturphilosophical view and the artistic individuality of the writer. The goal of the article is to study methodological aspects of the above-mentioned notion. The article focuses on its multifunctional character and universality of a research strategy regarding the literature and culture of different eras. Forms of artistic implementation of the sense of nature are reviewed on the corpus of works of Russian literature of the XX century. The historical and literary, typological, and structural methods used in the research allow conducting a complex study of vast theoretical material and literary texts. The results are the following: the conducted research has enabled to clarify the characteristics of the notion “sense of nature” and relevant forms of its realization in the literary text. It is concluded that the notion “sense of nature” possesses the system of informative aspects and settings towards the artistic practice which allows characterizing the reflection of nature in the literary text as integrity of philosophical, aesthetic, social, natural science ideas and the artistic individuality of the author.

2357-1330 © 2021 Published by European Publisher.

*Keywords:* Artistic naturphilosophy, portrayal of nature, sense of nature

## **1. Introduction**

In the nineteenth century, in the European scientific community, and then in Russia, the tasks of a wide study of nature and the involvement of the masses in this process for the formation of new perceptions of nature in society are formed. Among them is the recognition by man of the dominant role of nature in planetary life.

### **1.1. The origin of the notion "sense of nature"**

An important role in the emergence and development of the notion "sense of nature" was played by German philosophers. Schiller (1957) in his article "On Naive and Sentimental Poetry" (1796) gives a prototype of this concept, claiming that love of nature is natural for man, it is generated by his aesthetic experiences and moral sense, and poets are primarily expressors of love for nature.

Studies of such a universal object in human life as nature quickly acquired an integrative character: they combined the methodology of philosophical knowledge, natural sciences, art history, theory and history of literature, etc. The role of mediator between German philosophy and Russian science was fulfilled by A. Humboldt. He, according to Savodnik (1911), introduced the notion "sense of nature." A significant influence on Russian literature and philosophy was also exerted by the works of J.-J. Rousseau, as his own scientific works – first of all, "Discourse on the Sciences and Arts" (1750), and his novel "Julie, or the New Heloise" (1761), which can be called a natural philosophical treatise.

### **1.2. The historical aspect in the study of the sense of nature**

In 1890, Alfred Biese's work, "The Development of the Feeling for Nature," was published in Russian. In it, historical forms of the sense of nature from antiquity to the 19th century are presented on a large scale. Separate chapters of this work are devoted to the poetry of nature by Shakespeare, Goethe, the sense of nature of Byron, Shelley, Hugo, landscape in painting, portrayal of nature by travelers-discoverers, writers of the era of humanism, sentimentalism, romanticism. The author quotes dozens of works, builds a picture of the evolutionary change in the notion "sense of nature", concluding that it develops in parallel to the general cultural process (Biese, 1890). At the same time, an excursion into the historical development of the sense of nature on the basis of Russian literature was made by K. K. Arsenyev in his work "Critical Studies in Russian Literature" (1888), a little later, a fundamental study of V. F. Savodnik, "The Feeling of Nature in the Poetry of Pushkin, Lermontov and Tyutchev" (1911), was published. The works of these scientists contributed to the formation and development in culture of the notion "sense of nature."

## **2. Problem Statement**

The research objective of this article is to analyze the notion "sense of nature" as an interdisciplinary complex that includes various aspects of comprehension (understanding) of nature and possible means of its artistic image using the terminological apparatus corresponding to the issue.

### **3. Research Questions**

The speed of formation of the notion “sense of nature” in Russia testifies to the typological nature of this process and, therefore, to its sufficient independence as an object of study for Russian science.

#### **3.1. The development in Russia of the notion "sense of nature"**

Domestic studies, addressed to various aspects of natural philosophy and their reflection in art, appear at the beginning of the 19th century. They did not yet use the notion "sense of nature", but the problem of human understanding of nature and the reflection of this process in art is claimed.

Most of the questions related to understanding nature were posed by Russian writers. They expressed thoughts about the impact of nature on the national character and aesthetic ideas (N.M. Karamzin – in the 1810-1820s, V.G. Belinsky – in the 1840s), about the necessity and need for knowing nature (И. А. Чаадаев – 1820s). Significantly strengthened the aesthetic aspect of natural-philosophical problems A.I. Herzen (1840s). Already in the 1860s in pedagogical science the question was raised of the purposeful education of the sense of nature in children (К. Д. Ушинский), which was reflected in numerous works for children in literature from the late 19th and early 20th centuries. In the twentieth century the notion "sense of nature" was perceived as relevant by various sciences; literature and fiction made a great contribution to its development. This material has only been studied to a very small extent.

#### **3.2. The notion "sense of nature" as a system**

Another problematic field of study is the characterization of the content-formal core of the notion “sense of nature,” describing it as a system designed to interpret a literary text.

### **4. Purpose of the Study**

For modern scholars of the theme of nature in literary works, the notion "sense of nature" can serve as a tool for a comprehensive analysis of the image of nature. Therefore, the purpose of this article is to reveal the analytical potential of the study of the theme of nature in the literature on the basis of this conceptual complex.

### **5. Research Methods**

The study used a complex of methods corresponding to its subject: analysis of works on the philosophy of nature, theory and history of culture, typological, structural, historical and literary methods. The material involved allowed us to correctly systematize the aspects of the analysis of the formal-meaningful field “nature” and determined a sufficient degree of reliability of observations and conclusions.

### **6. Findings**

The totality of the studied works allows us to isolate the most important components of the notion "sense of nature" and generalize them in the form of a system.

## 6.1. Contribution of literary studies

The works of Arsenyev (1888) and Savodnik (1911) became the methodological basis for the study of the notion “sense of nature”. The book of Savodnik can be called an encyclopedia of observations on the forms of understanding and depicting nature (by the latter he mainly understands landscape). He was one of the first to express the idea that it is in Russian literature that the sense of nature plays a prominent role, bearing in mind the strength of Russian man’s connections with nature and his openness to aesthetic emotions (Savodnik, 1911, pp. 3-4). Determining the typical qualities of the landscape within the framework of various literary trends, he introduces the names of the landscapes depending on their scale, subject of the image, the prevailing point of view, etc., draws conclusions about the nature of nature paintings, natural motifs and images in different artistic systems. In the above-mentioned works, the notion "sense of nature" is not given a complete and systematic definition, therefore, terminological inconsistency is often encountered in them.

In the twentieth century quite a large number of studies are published on the understanding and artistic depiction of nature in Russian literature. Most of them were published in the 1960-1990s. Among them are the monographs by T. Ya. Grinfeld "Nature in the Art World of Mikhail Prishvin", N.V. Kozhukhovskaya “Evolution of the feeling of nature in Russian prose of the 19th century”, L.V. Gurlenova “Sense of Nature in Russian Prose of the 1920-1930s” and the book by M. N. Epstein, which characterizes sustainable natural motifs and images (Epstein, 1990). Later, such studies become smaller, but by the middle of the second decade of the XXI century interest in an almost lost scientific topic is reviving again. This is due not only to the aggravation of environmental issues, but also to the return to literature of its important social functions. Among the studies of this period, the collective work “Semantics of the Garden and the Forest in Russian Literature and Folklore” (Smirnova & Raikova, 2017) is noteworthy; the latest works of literature are analyzed in it; the monograph by O. A. Bogdanova “Manor and dacha in Russian literature of the XIX-XXI centuries: topic, dynamics, mythology” is close in focus to this work. Based on the material of Japanese culture, a large-scale work of Russian scientists “Understanding Nature in Japanese Culture” was published (Mescheryakov, 2017), which analyzes the understanding of nature in poetry, religion, cinema, and discusses the role of the forest in national culture.

Bogdanova (2018a, 2018b) is also the author of a series of articles on the motivation of “affirming the earth” in the literature of post-revolutionary time. This, in essence, refers to the “sense of the earth” as a kind of “sense of nature,” reflecting the fundamental spiritual qualities of the Russian people in the era of crisis. Articles about the natural complex in fiction have recently been actively published in a number of scientific journals, which reflects the relevance of this topic in modern science. It should be noted that classical approaches to the topic are returning to the scientific sphere: for example, geocultural (Andreeva, 2020), semiotic – aimed at studying the natural plant code in the literature (Boyeva, 2020), and poetical (Aristova, 2017), philosophical (Kovtun, 2017), problematic and thematic (Dvortsova, 2019). The interest in the heritage of philosophers who have had a significant impact on the understanding of nature in literature is reviving – Vl. Soloviev, P. Florensky, S. Bulgakov (Kazin, 2019), to the concepts of N. Fedorov, K. Tsiolkovsky, V. Vernadsky, etc. These and other studies confirm that the theme of nature returns to the circle of relevant scientific research.

## **6.2. Sense of nature as a research model**

The studied works allow us to conclude that the notion “sense of nature” synthesizes the understanding of the natural environment, i.e., the worldview and sensory perception, which determines the artist’s artistic and creative attitudes.

The worldview aspect of writers who are actively working with the theme of nature is usually multifaceted. 1. First of all, it is necessary to take into account the philosophical views of the writer on nature (materialistic, idealistic). 2. Worldviews on understanding the role of man and nature in the world are important: the focus of discussions in Russian literature was anthropocentrism and pantheism. 3. In literary texts, writers are interested in various scientific approaches - the mechanistic one, in which nature is understood as a mechanical union of parts, or organic ("organic", "naturalistic"), offering to understand nature as a living whole. 4. The discussion on the religious foundations of understanding nature, primarily Christian and pagan, was widely reflected in fiction. 5. To characterize the writer's view of nature, it is also important to clarify the prevailing "option" of the image: philosophical, aesthetic, ethical, social or environmental.

## **6.3. Research tactics**

To make a conclusion about the pattern of understanding of nature by a specific writer, it is necessary, first of all, to analyze the arguments included in the text, which are either an independent fragment of the text in the form of a miniature or an integral element of the description of nature. They can represent the position of the author or reflect the clash of points of view of various characters of the work, forming an independent intellectual (“mental”) plot. Most often, these points of view supplement and deepen the author’s position, and at the same time, there are often contradictory ones that enter into conflict with it (works by V. Arsenyev, L. Leonov, M. Prishvin, S. Klychkov, etc.). The meaning of such a polylogue is that the writers discovered for themselves the incompleteness of their contemporary scientific knowledge of nature.

An understanding of nature can also be realized in its descriptions and in the narrative of it. For example, in L. Leonov’s story “Locust” in nature descriptions, the author focuses on images of stunted vegetation, the scarcity of natural forms, motives for the destructiveness of natural forces and phenomena, which testifies to the understanding of nature by the author in the spirit of radical anthropocentrism as an imperfect environment that needs to be corrected by man (Gurlenova, 2016). It should be noted that the writer can refer to the image of nature not only as independent, but also functional and instrumental and give the picture of nature or the narrative as a whole any meaning that is important to him, for example: socio-political (a blizzard motif is able to express the idea of spontaneity, uncontrollability of life Russia); or socio-psychological, aimed at characterizing the type of Russian people (V. Sorokin's novel “Snowstorm”).

## **6.4. Artistic practices**

Let us note the most characteristic artistic practices implemented in descriptions of nature.

One of the developed practices of this kind is the visuality of a plastic, pictorial type. Interest in it can be found in a number of writers: L. Leonov, M. Prishvin, S. Klychkov, K. Paustovsky, V. Arsenyev, in the early prose of B. Pasternak, in A. Vesely, A. Serafimovich, M. Sholokhov, V. Rasputin, V. Astafyev, Yu. Bondarev and others. This artistic practice was accepted by Russian Soviet literature from the traditions of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries; it was active in the 1920s and 1930s; resumed in the second half of the 1950s, remained in demand until the 1990s. At the turn of the XX-XXI centuries this form of describing nature underwent changes in connection with a change in the leading literary movements, but nevertheless remained in that layer of Russian literature, which remained continuously connected with the realistic method.

Since the 1980s the theme of nature began to develop actively in the visual arts (ecoart, including land art) in order to demonstrate the picturesque beauty of nature in order to restore human relations with the natural environment. These forms are widely used in education and enlightenment projects, which was demonstrated in the reports of foreign and domestic participants of the international symposium "RELATE NORTH – 2019: Tradition and innovation in Art and Design Education" (Syktyvkar), organized on the platform of universities in the Arctic region. The reports reflected the ideas of environmental aesthetics and ethics, which are an integral part of the notion "sense of nature".

Such a form of modern culture, as intertextuality, is a harmonious fit into the tasks of the artistic image of nature, a special type of dialogical interaction with other works of culture and art, sciences, which allows you to connect additional meanings, expand and deepen the picture of the world depicted. In traditional literature, this form is used sparingly, preference is given to biblical and mythological pretexts. The image of nature retains its independent significance, without becoming the object of an artistic game. However, when describing the natural environment in the latest literature, the authors quite actively turn to the "alien" text. With its help, an extensive subtext is created, covering various areas of national and world culture, which expands the interpretation of the text. Thus, the theme of nature, as it were, is blocked by other thematic layers, ceasing to be an independent option.

Mythologization of the motif-shaped complex of images of nature is also a developed artistic practice. It was in demand throughout the entire twentieth century, especially in the 1920-1930s and in the 1960-1970s. (S. Klychkov, L. Leonov, V. Rasputin, Ch. Aitmatov, Yu. Rytkeu, etc.), remains relevant today. Mythological images and plots were perceived as keys to a stable picture of the world, with which modernity was compared at the time of the collapse of the traditional way of life. Etiological, cosmological, totemic and eschatological myths were therefore of the greatest interest.

## **7. Conclusion**

The study was conducted on the basis of Russian literature. It allows to draw the following conclusions.

### **7.1. The notion "sense of nature" as a product of interdisciplinary study**

The notion "sense of nature" was formed in humanitarian and natural-scientific works in the 19th century, later it was in demand by philology, art history and other sciences. The formation, development

and consolidation of this concept was facilitated by the artistic practice of writers of the 19th and 20th centuries.

## 7.2. The research model of the notion "sense of nature"

Based on the materials studied, the article proposes a model of the notion "sense of nature" for use in the study of natural topics in the literature. The proposed model allows for the implementation of a systematic, comprehensive study of the natural component in the work of a writer today.

## 7.3. Artistic practices

The artistic practices that are characteristic of the literature of the twentieth and the beginning of the twenty-first centuries are described, a conclusion is made about the preservation in modern literature of the artistic experience of depicting the nature of the classical era along with the experimental practices of modern culture.

## References

- Andreeva, V. G. (2020). *Obraz usad'by i rodnoj zemli v povestnykh i romanakh A.I. Ertelya* [The image of homestead and native land in A.I. Ertel's stories and novels]. *Novyj filologicheskij vestnik* [New philological Bulletin], 1, 107-119. [http://slovorggu.ru/2020\\_1/52.pdf](http://slovorggu.ru/2020_1/52.pdf)
- Aristova (Tinnikova), A. S. (2017). *Obraz prirodnoj stihii v knige M. A. Voloshina «Neopalimaya kupina»* [The image of the force of nature in M. A. Voloshin's book "Burning Bush"]. *New philological Bulletin*, 3, 123-135. [http://slovorggu.ru/2017\\_3/42.pdf](http://slovorggu.ru/2017_3/42.pdf)
- Arsen'yev, K. K. (1888). *Kriticheskie etyudy po russkoj literature. V 2 chastjah. Chast' 1* [Critical sketches on Russian literature. In 2 volume. Volume 1]. Stasyulevich's Publ.
- Biese, A. (1890). *Istoricheskoe razvitie chuvstva prirody* [The Development of the Feeling for Nature]. Russkoe bogatstvo Publishing House.
- Bogdanova, O. A. (2018a). *Motiv «utverzheniya zemli» v russkoj literature 1917-1920-h gg. Stat'ya pervaya* [The motif of "statement of land" in Russian literature of 1917-1920-s. The first article]. *New philological Bulletin*, 2, 128-137. [http://slovorggu.ru/2018\\_2/45.pdf](http://slovorggu.ru/2018_2/45.pdf)
- Bogdanova, O. A. (2018b). *Motiv «utverzheniya zemli» v russkoj literature 1917-1920-h gg. Stat'ya vtoraya* [The motif of "statement of land" in Russian literature of 1917-1920-s. The second article]. *New philological Bulletin*, 4, 144-153. [http://slovorggu.ru/2018\\_4/47.pdf](http://slovorggu.ru/2018_4/47.pdf)
- Boyeva, G. N. (2020). *Klyuchi k cvetochnomu shifru v mirovoj literature XIX – nachala XX veka* [The keys to the floral code in the world literature of XIX - beginning XX century]. *Russkaya literatura* [Russian literature], 1, 211-213. [http://lib2.pushkinskijdom.ru/Media/Default/PDF/RusLiteratura/PJI\\_1\\_2020.pdf](http://lib2.pushkinskijdom.ru/Media/Default/PDF/RusLiteratura/PJI_1_2020.pdf)
- Dvortsova, N. P. (2019). *Sibirskij syuzhet v sud'be i tvorcestve M. M. Prishvina* [Syberian plot in M. M. Prishvin's life and work]. *New philological Bulletin*, 1, 166-176. [http://slovorggu.ru/2019\\_1/48.pdf](http://slovorggu.ru/2019_1/48.pdf)
- Epstein, M. N. (1990). *«Priroda, mir, tajnik vselennoj...»: Sistema pejzaznyh obrazov v russkoj poezii* ["Nature, world, hiding place of the Universe..." System of landscape images in Russian poetry]. Vysshaya shkola Publ. <https://litmy.ru/knigi/kultura/129804-priroda-mir-tajnik-vselennoj-sistema-pejzaznyh-obrazov-v-russkoj-poezii.html>
- Gurlenova, L. V. (2016). *«Remont zemli»: tekhnokraticeskaya utopiya v russkoj literature 1920-1930-h godov* ["Renovation of land": technocratic utopia in Russian literature of 1920-1930-s]. *Rusistika. Zhurnal Instituta rossijskikh issledovanij. Chungbukskij Nacional'nyj Universitet* [Rusistika. Journal of Institute for Russian Studies. Chungbuk National University], 1, 175-191.

- Kazin, A. L. (2019). Kosmicheskij dar v russoj literature i filosofii. Opyt mezhdisciplinarnogo issledovaniya [Space gift in Russian literature and philosophy. Experience of interdisciplinary research]. *New philological Bulletin*, 2, 223-234. [http://slovorggu.ru/2019\\_2/49.pdf](http://slovorggu.ru/2019_2/49.pdf)
- Kovtun, N. V. (2017). Master – prorok – Premudrost' v povesti A. Bitova «Chelovek v pejzazhe» [Master – prophet – Wisdom in A. Bitov's story "A Man in Landscape"]. *Syberian Journal of Philology*, 4, 114-122. <https://cyberleninka.ru/article/n/master-prorok-premudrost-v-povesti-a-bitova-chelovek-v-peyzazhe/viewer>
- Mescheryakov, A. M. (2017). *Osmyslenie prirody v yaponskoj kul'ture* [Understanding of nature in Japanese culture]. Delo Publ.
- Savodnik, V. F. (1911). *Chuvstvo prirody v poezii Pushkina, Lermontova i Tyutcheva* [Sense of nature in the poetry of Pushkin, Lermontov, and Tyutchev]. Pechatnya S. P. Yakovleva Publ. [https://rusneb.ru/catalog/000199\\_000009\\_003784412/viewer/](https://rusneb.ru/catalog/000199_000009_003784412/viewer/)
- Schiller, Fr. (1957). *Polnoe sobranie sochinenij: v 7 t. Tom 6* [Complete works: In 7 vol. Volume 6]. Goslitizdat Publ.: [https://imwerden.de/pdf/shiller\\_ss\\_v\\_7\\_tt\\_tom6\\_1957\\_text.pdf](https://imwerden.de/pdf/shiller_ss_v_7_tt_tom6_1957_text.pdf)
- Smirnova, A. I., & Raikova, I. N. (2017). *Semantika sada i lesa v russoj literature i fol'klоре* [Semantics of the garden and forest in Russian literature and folklore]. Moscow State Pedagogical University Publ.