

SOUNDSCAPE ECOLOGY AND POSTHUMANIST MUSIC PRACTICE: AN APPROACH TOWARDS ECOLOGICAL HEALING

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Abstract: The world is gradually awakening to the severity of contemporary ecological crises. Among these, noise pollution has emerged as a silent yet devastating threat, damaging the environment since the dawn of industrial modernity. The replacement of human labour with heavy machinery, the expansion of large-scale technological installations, and the transition from agricultural ecosystems to highly industrialized landscapes have introduced a new and troubling dimension to ecological degradation. These developments have not only inflicted profound harm on natural ecosystems but have also alienated humanity from the very sounds of nature that once nurtured calmness, relaxation, healing, and an intimate sense of connection with the natural world. Today, people have become more accustomed to the noise of factories and vehicles than to the harmonious acoustic environment of nature. The pursuit of technological advancement and economic gain—whether through deforestation, industrial emissions damaging the ozone layer, or the relentless acceleration of scientific intervention—continues to exacerbate ecological decline. This study proposes soundscape ecology as a crucial corrective lens for addressing the current ecological crisis. It argues that the lyrical heritage of

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musicality carries significant potential for ecological restoration, and it highlights the need for posthuman music practices that centre the well-being of the environment. In doing so, it calls for a renewed music-literary consciousness that rekindles humanity's connection with nature.

Keywords: Ecological Crises, Technology, Music, Literary Music, Marginalized, Healing, Posthumanism.

1. Introduction

In the contemporary world, global attention gravitates toward technological advancement, economic expansion, political stability and the exploitation of natural resources. Yet, despite a growing awareness of ecological crises, the dominant motivation behind this pursuit remains profoundly anthropocentric. This human-centered orientation fuels the replacement of agricultural ecosystems with industrial and mechanized structures, driven by the installation of heavy machinery and large-scale technological interventions that deplete the earth's natural reserves. In their study of Chinese literature and ecological crises, Riccardo Moratto, Nicoletta Pesaro and Di Kai Chao (2022) identify this pattern as a fundamentally anthropocentric mode of existence—one that consistently denies the intrinsic worth of other beings. They argue that humanity must abandon the illusion of being the sole ruling species whose inventions justify domination. Instead, anthropocentrism must be critically examined, particularly through the pattern of Chinese ecocritical essays, poetry and drama (xviii–xix).

Sound serves as a powerful medium that awakens our conscious, subconscious, and emotional faculties—even in darkness or spaces beyond our visual reach (Bianchi and Manzo, 129). In this sense, music becomes a vital force that nurtures ecological awareness and strengthens our capacity for resilience. However, despite this richness of sound ecology of awakening, Jim Reeves's hymn "This World Is Not My Home," published in Albert E. Brumley's *Church Gospel Songs and Hymns* (1983), reflects an escapist ideology often associated with Christian

theology – an outlook interpreted as devaluing care for creation. Lynn White (1967) famously critiqued this Western theological and cultural trajectory as occidental, condemning the expansion of labour-saving devices and heavy machinery that have accelerated ecological decline (1204). However, such a portrayal does not reflect the full scope of Christian ecological thought. From an Eastern and African hermeneutical perspective, Christian theology affirms its responsibility toward creation from the very beginning. The first book of the Sacred Scripture presents Adam as a guardian and caretaker of the earth (Genesis 2:15), indicating that ecological concern is embedded in the theological core rather than external to it. Thus, contemporary eco-theological (Kavusa 2019) and eco-missional (Lakawa 2023) approaches are indispensable for understanding Christianity’s engagement with present ecological challenges.

Similar efforts to confront environmental crises can be found across the world’s major religions. Bikku Bikku (2025) notes that influential figures from various religious and spiritual traditions increasingly frame climate change as a moral and ethical responsibility within their respective belief systems (2). Within this broader discourse, this study underscores the vital relevance of soundscape ecology as a promising avenue for ecological renewal. The lyrical heritage of musicality, in particular, offers profound possibilities for addressing contemporary ecological dysfunctions. It supports the development of posthuman music practices that centre ecological well-being and foster a music-literary sensibility through which humanity’s lost bond with nature can be restored. The central aim of this study is to cultivate an integrated worldview – one that does not elevate humanity above the natural world but reunites humans with it, thereby resisting the recurrence of anthropocentric frameworks.

2. Philosophy of Musicality: Enriching Society and Awakening the Minds

Music, as both an art and a science, serves as a transformative force that enriches societies and awakens human consciousness. Music is an art, sonorous, that inescapably moves through ages

and times, which is not limited to linguistic community, but rather quintessentially in a shared art form (Parker, 66). The study of music psychology and music education reveals that learning, teaching, and performance go beyond technical mastery—they are processes of cultivating communication, creativity, and cultural sensitivity. True musical education emerges through meaningful interactions among educators, learners and practitioners, fostering the holistic growth of both individuals and communities. Traditionally, music teachers were viewed as moral and aesthetic role models whose guidance could shape students' lives. However, in the era of artificial intelligence, the function of music and musical education is rapidly evolving. Digital music is no longer limited to entertainment or performance; it becomes a participatory act that invites audiences into shared social and ethical engagement. As Bitchell notes, music provokes listeners into active participants who assume social responsibility rather than passive spectatorship (Bitchell, 132). In this sense, music education develops not just skill but cultural competence—preparing individuals to contribute meaningfully to society. Musicality, therefore, stands at the intersection of psychology, education and ethics, nurturing both the intellect and the heart.

At the same time, humanity faces growing ecological crises driven by industrial pollution, warfare, deforestation and other human-made devastations that threaten the future of life on Earth. Against this backdrop, music re-emerges as a vital force for ecological consciousness. Through poetry, song and performance, traditional musical forms have long inspired communities to reflect upon and care for the natural world. In Chinese philosophy, Jing Wang (2021) interprets *qi* as the breath of life—a dynamic energy that connects the cosmos and humanity. The philosophy of *qi-sound* envisions music as a manifestation of this cosmic vitality, where sound becomes both creative energy and ethical expression (17). The integration of *qi-sound* and *qi-philosophy* is one of the vital areas to awaken the minds of the world. According to *qi-philosophy*, the cosmos and humans are inextricably linked, echoing and producing oneness. Thus, *qi-philosophy* is a living philosophy that drives sound creativity in the

form of actions (20). By uniting *qi-sound* and *qi-philosophy*, Wang presents a way of thinking that blends creativity, spirituality and ecological responsibility. This integration of sound and life-essence reminds us that music is not merely art—it is a living philosophy capable of reawakening human harmony with nature (38).

Throughout history, sound has been used as a tool of awakening and participation. The ringing of bells, beating of drums, or blowing of trumpets served not just as public signals but as invitations to gather, to reflect, and to act together. These sounds transcended performance; they were calls to consciousness and community. In this sense, musical projection and performance embody invitation rather than mere presentation—they summon humanity to participate in the rhythm of life and to renew the bond between people and the environment.

In contemporary society, electronic and digital soundscapes can continue this tradition in new forms. Through sound art and conceptual music, technology becomes a medium for ecological communication. Such sounds can project messages that deepen the listener’s awareness of the relationship between humans and nature—a relationship often obscured by modern industrial life. As Wang notes, language itself is a form of sound art, and even non-linguistic sound can convey meaning beyond words (Wang, 85). Musicality expressed through body, rhythm, and voice thus becomes a universal language for cultivating ecological empathy.

Ultimately, the philosophy of musicality invites us to rediscover our interconnectedness with all forms of life. It emphasizes that music is not an isolated human creation but a resonance of the living world. The ecological and spiritual dimensions of music remind us that caring for the planet is not a marginal concern but a moral and artistic imperative shared across all cultures and religions. Far from being a temporary or aesthetic pursuit, musicality is a way of being—an ethical vibration that harmonizes human creativity with the rhythms of nature. Through this harmony, society is enriched, and the human

mind is awakened to its role as custodian of both sound and life.

3. The Woes of Ecology and the Impact of Scientific Discoveries

In the modern world, human ears have grown more attuned to the sounds of factories, vehicles, and machinery than to the subtle rhythms of nature—the birdsong, the rustle of leaves, and the gentle flow of water—that historically fostered calmness, relaxation, healing, and a profound connection between humanity and the environment. This shift is symptomatic of a broader ecological crisis driven by technological overreach, industrialization, and economic exploitation. While technological advancements themselves are not inherently harmful, their misuse—ranging from atomic bombings to deforestation and industrial pollution—has led to severe disruption of ecological systems. The replacement of natural landscapes with urban and industrial infrastructure, coupled with economic pursuits that prioritize short-term gain over long-term sustainability, has contributed to environmental degradation on an unprecedented scale.

The consequences of this anthropocentric activity are visible and measurable. The decline of bird populations, driven by environmental pollution, changes in agricultural practices and chemical waste, illustrates the broader disruption of ecological balance (Richard, 2). Trees, essential for air purification, climate regulation and soil stabilization, face relentless threats from logging, urbanization and industrial development. This destruction compromises not only ecosystems but also human well-being, as the interdependent networks of life that sustain humans are eroded. Natural disasters such as tsunamis, earthquakes and floods can be understood, in part, as responses of a mistreated ecosystem—an expression of the imbalance caused by human neglect. In this sense, harming the natural world is akin to harming humanity itself.

The symbolic and practical significance of trees underscores this connection. Trees are living beings with a remarkable capacity for interaction with their surroundings. Astrid Møller-Olsen (2022) notes that trees possess instinctual

bodily recognition: their upright trunks evoke human posture, their branching structures resemble limbs, and the textures of their bark parallel human skin (4). Trees occupy a singular space in the environment, rooted yet responsive to wind, soil and air, providing sustenance and shelter for countless species. This enduring presence, combined with their role in supporting ecological life, highlights the importance of trees not only as biological entities but also as cultural and emotional touchstones for humanity.

The longing for nature’s sounds—the hum of birds, the whisper of leaves and the murmur of water—reflects a deeper human need for ecological healing and connection. Eric S. Nelson (2020) critiques Western approaches to nature, contrasting them with Daoist ecological philosophy. Western ecological discourse often emphasizes argumentation, scientific classification and instrumental control over natural systems, whereas classical Chinese thought approaches nature through illustrative cases, experiential practices and imaginative interpretation. Western classifications tend to frame Daoism as a form of naturalism, yet early Daoist “naturalism” differs significantly from the pragmatic and scientific notions embedded in modern global discourse (8–10).

Nelson emphasizes the importance of recognizing these differences to avoid conceptual confusion. In Western thought, “nature” derives from the Latin *natura*, from *nascere*—“to be born”—implying a defined, objectified and often utilitarian understanding of the natural world. In contrast, the Chinese term *Sheng* (life) encompasses birth, growth and continuous generation. Daoist *ziran* describes a self-generating, self-organizing natural reality—an ongoing process of transformation rather than a static entity (10). This perspective advocates for two complementary approaches to ecological care: first, non-interference, allowing natural systems to sustain themselves without human disruption; and second, mindful intervention that nourishes rather than harms, supporting self-sustaining ecosystems while respecting the intrinsic value of all species (40–41).

From a practical standpoint, the Daoist model emphasizes biodiversity, ecological balance and the autonomy of environmental systems. Animals, plants and entire ecosystems should be allowed to flourish according to their natural rhythms, with humans acting as participants and caretakers rather than dominators. This philosophy contrasts sharply with anthropocentric practices that prioritize human utility over ecological integrity. By embracing this approach, humanity can foster sustainable, self-replicating environmental systems that maintain both ecological health and aesthetic harmony.

In contemporary society, the language of nature—the subtle cues and interconnections long ignored—has been largely supplanted by mechanical noise and industrial soundscapes. The transformation from an agricultural to an industrial world has diminished, to a certain extent, humanity's capacity to perceive, appreciate and respond to natural processes. Yet ecological philosophy, lyrical heritage and sound-based engagement with the environment remain powerful tools for reconnecting humans with nature. Recognizing and responding to the needs of the ecosystem—through both traditional ecological wisdom and modern interpretive frameworks—offers pathways to repair the harm caused by technological misuse, industrialization and economic exploitation.

4. Musical Heritage: The Language of Nature's Beauty in Lyrical Literacy

The concept of *qingjing* in Chinese literary theory, developed as early as the third century, illustrates the deep interconnection between human emotion and the natural environment. Scholars interpret *qingjing* in two primary ways. First, it represents a lyrical fusion of language and landscape, where words carry emotional resonance while reflecting the environment. Second, it embodies the fragile, impermanent beauty of nature—a beauty that science alone cannot restore, but that poetry, art, and storytelling can help preserve and heal (Moratto et al., xvi). This dual understanding highlights the significance of lyrical heritage in fostering ecological awareness and cultural responsibility. Ecological

consciousness in literature emerged more prominently in the 1990s when poets began questioning the authenticity of “nature poetry” in the face of accelerating environmental degradation and climate change (Perez, 661). In Chinese thought, heaven and earth are never opposites; rather, they complement and sustain one another (Slote, 14). Poetry and musical creations serve as vehicles for expressing this interconnectedness, reminding humanity of its ethical and aesthetic responsibilities toward the environment. Through metaphorical language, literature makes the unseen visible, inspiring awareness and engagement with ecological realities (Stahlschmidt, 93).

Yet, modern musical interpretations of this poetic legacy often fall short of realizing its transformative potential. To reconnect with the natural world, contemporary culture must adapt the lyrical heritage of classical literature to modern contexts. Sinophone literature, rooted in Confucian teachings, emphasizes humanity’s moral and ethical relationship with nature. Confucian eco-ethics presents a systematic, holistic vision of the universe, where human conduct is inseparable from the well-being of the environment (Li and Wei, 4). Traditional Chinese classics reinforce this view, granting nature a sacred status and asserting humanity’s duty to maintain harmony (Lu, 92). Eco-poetry and eco-fiction further critique anthropocentrism, highlighting the destructive consequences of human domination over the natural world. For example, Fatma Gamze Erkan (2024) examines J.G. Ballard’s *The Drought* (1964), portraying a decaying ecosystem shaped by mechanical and human intervention (172). Such narratives demonstrate how industrialization and technological exploitation distort the natural rhythms, silencing the ecological “music” that once guided harmonious coexistence.

Yet, literature and music provide spaces to revive these lost connections. Greenery, pastures, and pastoral imagery often symbolize calm and spiritual restoration. In Christian texts, such as Psalm 23:1, sheep grazing under divine care illustrate the intertwined relationship between humans, nature, and the sacred. Eastern traditions – Buddhism, Confucianism, Daoism – similarly emphasize ecological harmony, stewardship, and ethical

coexistence. Across these cultural contexts, literature and music operate as mediums to explore interconnectivity and guide responsible living.

Poets actively reinterpret and transform language to restore its ecological and aesthetic significance. Through creative reimagination, ordinary events in nature are elevated to demonstrate both beauty and ecological insight. For instance, the idiom “dragonflies skim the water surface” portrays the species’ reproductive behavior while celebrating its elegance and ecological significance. By emphasizing the dragonflies’ contribution to the ecosystem, poets challenge anthropocentric assumptions and encourage appreciation for the autonomous intelligence and transformative power of non-human life (Xu and Morrato, 75). Such lyrical imagery embodies wisdom and inspires a renewed understanding of humanity’s place within the broader ecological web. However, human activities—industrialization, urbanization and neglect—disrupt nature’s rhythms, eroding ecological awareness. Recognizing humans as one among many interconnected species, poetic ecological consciousness fosters empathy, cooperation and sustainable engagement, bridging the gap between human actions and the natural world’s balance. Moreover, it lays the groundwork for posthumanist practices, where listening to nature, soundscapes and musical expressions can enhance emotional resilience, self-empowerment and transformative engagement with the environment.

5. Posthumanist Music in the Medically Marginalized World

The COVID-19 pandemic marked one of the most devastating periods in human history, challenging global health, social interaction, economic stability, and emotional resilience. Travel bans, lockdowns, and isolation disrupted human relationships and mental health. Amid these crises, digital technologies emerged as vital tools for maintaining connection, care, and healing. Through music, media, and digital platforms, humanity found ways to remain emotionally and spiritually united, transforming isolation into a shared experience of resilience and hope. During the pandemic, electronic media were not only

channels of information but also therapeutic tools. Programs that used music, virtual performances, and sound-based therapy provided psychological relief and improved well-being. Digital therapy, as Mahmood et al. note, became one of the most effective responses to the pandemic’s mental health crisis (Mahmood et al., 157). Songs, dramas, and online interactions created virtual spaces of care and belonging. Music became medicine—healing emotional wounds and helping people rediscover a sense of community.

A personal experience illustrates this: one of my colleagues hospitalized during COVID-19 could not meet his family in person. Yet, through a simple phone call, he found healing and hope. Seeing his loved ones virtually became a form of therapy. Surrounded by the greenery of the hospital environment, the warmth of sunlight, and the natural sounds outside his window, he experienced peace amid uncertainty. The soundscape of nature—chirping birds, rustling leaves, and flowing air—helped regulate his emotions and aided his recovery. In this way, posthumanist healing—integrating digital connection, sound, and ecology—challenged the traditional view of isolation and revealed that technology, nature, and music can coexist as agents of restoration.

Historically, diseases such as leprosy and AIDS marginalized their sufferers. In ancient societies, leprosy was seen as a curse, and patients were ostracized, considered impure before the divine (Hakim, 219-220). Similarly, during the AIDS epidemic, fear and stigma isolated patients even from family and friends, leading to loneliness and psychological suffering. Risse (646) observes that this social alienation often worsened patients’ conditions, resulting in slow emotional decline. However, in the posthuman era—an age shaped by artificial intelligence, robotics, and digital sound—music therapy has redefined medical care. As de Aguiar (726-727) explains, music has evolved from being a “tool for feeling” to “the tool for healing.” Music stimulates brain activity, fosters connection with nature, and provides a therapeutic release. The rhythms of life—though not always regular or metronomic—reflect harmony within nature itself.

(Mellish, 151). Listening to or producing these rhythms can liberate patients from stress and reestablish a sense of balance and peace. The posthumanist approach, therefore, emphasizes harmony not only within the human body but between humans and the environment. The presence of trees, air, sunlight, and earth signifies that life is interconnected, and these natural elements sustain both physical and emotional well-being (Weir, 43).

Yet, an essential question remains: how can such inner peace exist amid the noise of posthuman life, dominated by machinery and technology? Is all sound good for healing? While industrial and mechanical noises may seem disruptive, posthumanist thinking encourages discernment rather than rejection. Every sound carries meaning depending on individual perception. Even forms of music such as death metal or heavy metal—often dismissed as harsh—can offer listeners emotional release and a profound sense of harmony with their internal states. Healing through sound is not about the genre but about the listener's relationship with vibration, rhythm and meaning.

Religious and cultural traditions have long recognized the spiritual power of sound. In Christianity, the wind at Pentecost (Acts 2:2) and the thunder described as the voice of God (Psalms 29:3–4) symbolize divine presence within sound. Similarly, in modern political and cultural settings such as revolutionary China, sound—broadcast through loudspeakers—embodied the voice of authority and unity (Wang, 82–83). The moral lies not in the volume or medium but in the purpose: whether sound is used to build harmony or to dominate. The ethics of sound, in this sense, mirror the ethics of technology in the posthuman world—it depends on how humanity chooses to listen and respond. In posthuman musical practice, healing arises from the convergence of the digital and the natural, the human and the non-human. Electronic music and conceptual sound art create immersive experiences that bridge the divide between isolation and community. Even amid the silence of lockdowns, digital soundscapes offered rest, reflection and renewal. The sounds of virtual choirs, streamed concerts and meditative sound

environments became collective rituals of endurance and connection.

The posthuman world challenges us to redefine music not as a product of human superiority but as an ecological and ethical relationship. Sound becomes a dialogue between machines, nature and humans—a form of musical coexistence that recognizes technological instruments as partners in creativity and healing. In hospitals, therapy centers and online spaces, music’s resonance reminds us that healing transcends the physical; it touches the emotional, social and ecological dimensions of being. Thus, posthumanist music offers a new paradigm for addressing medical and social marginalization. It teaches that healing emerges from interconnectedness—between human emotion, technological mediation and the living environment. The posthuman patient is not isolated but part of an expanded network of care in which sound, silence and digital presence intertwine to create meaning.

6. Conclusion

Human activity has disrupted the once-rich vision of learning from the transformative behaviours of other species—behaviours that could have deepened humanity’s appreciation of the emotions, intelligence and wisdom embedded in the natural world. This estrangement stems from a persistent misconception: the failure to recognize that humans are merely one species among many rather than sovereign rulers of the planet. As a result, humanity has largely forgotten its vocation as steward—called to live in harmony, interdependence, and deep connection with the natural world. Scholars have repeatedly attempted to rebuild this broken relationship with nature, whether by revisiting traditional ecological wisdom or by adopting contemporary forms of communication and technology. Even amid the challenges posed by technological progress, the imperative to reconnect with the ecosystem through meaningful cultural and aesthetic practices remains more urgent than ever.

Recent research shows that music plays a powerful role in fostering resilience among children and youth. Consequently, the

growing field of music-based healing has increasingly influenced educational sectors, shaping communities through the transformative power of musicality (Clark, 156). Within this pursuit, two complementary pathways emerge. First, the lyrical heritage of musicality offers tremendous promise for healing ecological disturbances in the modern world. Second, posthuman musical practices provide transformative avenues for re-establishing harmony between humanity and nature, inspiring a renewed musical-literary dialogue grounded in empathy, reciprocity, and interconnection. The philosophy of musicality, therefore, is not limited to passive listening or aesthetic delight; it calls for an active and participatory engagement capable of cultivating inner awareness and ecological renewal. In this framework, authentic musical experience becomes a transformative encounter—an awakening to the rhythms of coexistence and care that weave all forms of life together. Challenging the deeply entrenched human-centred worldview that has diminished ecological consciousness, this perspective promotes a holistic paradigm in which humanity and nature stand as co-creators in the vast symphony of existence—where balance, respect, and mutual flourishing replace dominance and division.

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