

Mateusz Naporowski

<https://orcid.org/0000-0001-9675-7507>

University of Silesia in Katowice

mateusz.naporowski@us.edu.pl

<https://doi.org/10.35765/pk.2026.5302.06>

City and Identity in Postmodern and Metamodern Architextures

ABSTRACT

This article focuses on the intersection of literature and architecture. The first section analyzes J.G. Ballard's *High-Rise* (1975) and Italo Calvino's *Invisible Cities* (1972)—postmodern narratives of collapse that obliterate the real—the unreal boundary, and where identities dissolve under the pressure of compressed and elusive cities. The second section demonstrates how John Trefry's experimental novel *Massive* (2024) enacts a passage to a metamodern modality in the context of cities, as it links temporalities and emphasizes ethical concerns. To this end, the novel utilizes digitality to repurpose postmodern fragmentation and advocates for the reader's participation in the text's meaning-making. The article argues that the metamodern novel's conceptualization of the city complicates its architexture and the process of identity formation.

KEYWORDS: city, identity, postmodernism, metamodernism, architextures

STRESZCZENIE

Miasto i tożsamość w postmodernistycznych i metamodernistycznych architekstach

Artykuł koncentruje się na przecięciu literatury i architektury. Pierwsza część analizuje *Wieżowiec* J.G. Ballarda (1975) oraz *Niewidzialne miasta* Italo Calvina (1972) – postmodernistyczne narracje upadku, które zacierają granicę między realnym a nierealnym oraz ukazują rozpad tożsamości pod wpływem skondensowanych i nieuchwytnych miast. Druga część pokazuje, w jaki sposób eksperymentalna powieść Johna Trefry'ego *Massive* (2024) realizuje przejście do modalności metamodernistycznej w kontekście miasta, łącząc temporalności i kładąc nacisk na kwestie etyczne. W tym celu wykorzystuje cyfrowość, przekształcając postmodernistyczną fragmentację, oraz zachęca czytelnika do aktywnego udziału w konstruowaniu znaczenia tekstu. Artykuł dowodzi, że metamodernistyczna konceptualizacja miasta komplikuje jego tekstową architekturę oraz proces kształtowania tożsamości.

SŁOWA KLUCZE: miasto, tożsamość, postmodernizm, metamodernizm, architeksty

Suggested citation: Naporowski, M. (2026). City and Identity in Postmodern and Metamodern Architextures. © ⓘ *Perspectives on Culture*, 2(53), pp. 93–104. <https://doi.org/10.35765/pk.2026.5302.06>

Submitted: 13.12.2025

Accepted: 06.05.2026

Introduction

The literary portrayals of places, architecture, cities, and other environments we might envision offer us insights not only into the imaginaries of a given time and place, but also into the social, aesthetic, and political configurations that exist in, influence, and are contingent on spaces, shapes, and surfaces that comprise our everyday reality.

Many novels emergent from the postmodern and metamodern paradigms offer us intriguing, though different, representations of human entanglements with both buildings' materiality and the construct of the city. As we will shortly see, the postmodern conceptualizations often focus on disruption, while the metamodern emphasize connection between the self and the built environment. Since, as N. Katherine Hayles and Todd Gannon inform us, "[l]iterary studies was one of the major vectors through which postmodernism and deconstruction entered the North American scene, and architecture was foremost among the applied fields in which interpretations of deconstruction reached material instantiation" (2007, p. 100), it is crucial to address how the construction of readers' and characters' identities is influenced by architecture within the metamodern paradigm. Such an interdisciplinary perspective on the subject's conditioning, on the one hand, evokes the context-dependence of postmodernism, where "everything exists as part of a large system and nothing can be properly understood apart from the system it belongs to" (Dember, 2024, p. 31); on the other hand, however, metamodernism intimates another, albeit related, modality regarding the textual-architectural shaping of the human—one in which the self reckoning with (architectural and textual) instability figures as a response to the postmodern spatial disorientation.

Metamodernism thus effects two interrelated transformations regarding architectural¹ practices. Firstly—as in Hayles and Gannon's cultural shift—it assumes "a renewed emphasis on the materiality of surfaces, an effect closely related (...) to the deep penetration of digital technologies into the practices of architecture and the conditions of production for contemporary electronic and print literature" (2007, p. 101). The digital sphere then rearticulates materiality by allowing for the emergence of more open and complex architectures, with which we are invited to engage. Secondly, the city in the metamodern novel instantiates the dynamic of existing nowhere and everywhere at the same time (Hallila & Sandbacka, 2024, p. 8), while foregrounding interconnectivity, affect, and the reader's participation in the textual production. Such a paradoxical positioning reflects the characteristics of cyberspace (Hallila & Sandbacka, 2024, p. 8), which likewise mobilizes the metamodern self through its spaciousness, as it offers, rather than imposes, a seemingly infinite number of ways of engaging with it.

1 I use the term 'architecture' meaning the architecture of the text *and* the architecture in the text.

Moreover, the city in the metamodern novel concretizes an “attempt to negotiate between such opposite poles as culture and nature, the finite and the infinite, the commonplace and the ethereal, a formal structure, and a formalist unstructuring (as opposed to deconstruction)” (Vermeulen & Robin van den Akker, 2010). Similarly, Alexandra Dumitrescu, theorizing the metamodern through poetry, contends that “[t]he beauty that the poetic voice perceives” can be found “even in the city landscape” (2016). Whereas the waning of historicity and the materialization of capitalist desire through new buildings (such as the Bonaventure), imposing their totality, produced hypercrowds as a characteristic condition of the postmodern dwelling (Jameson, 1991, p. 40), the metamodern city can be associated with the digital shift (Hallila & Sandbacka, 2024, p. 8) and networked society. The postmodern city, described by Fredric Jameson as “a strange new hallucinatory exhilaration,” suspended the subject in the eternal present, as it “has deteriorated or disintegrated to a degree surely still inconceivable in the early years of the twentieth century” (1991, p. 33). In metamodernism, this condition got superseded by architecture’s “unsuccessful negotiations” (Vermeulen & van dan Akker, 2010) and a desire to link past, present, and future—instead of compressing these temporalities—while appealing to a sense of self that aims for authenticity, depth, and meaningful relations (Dumitrescu, 2016).

In light of these paradigmatic shifts, this article argues that the metamodern novel’s conceptualization of the city complicates the text’s construction and identity formation. In doing so, it deploys aesthetic fragmentation afforded by digital technology not as a marker of postmodern habitat but as an expression of metamodern resignification of this practice. To illustrate these reorientations, I analyze two representative texts of postmodern fiction—Italo Calvino’s *Invisible Cities* and J. G. Ballard’s *High-Rise*—in which identity, architecture, and cities, variously collapse. After outlining the specificity of postmodern spaces these novels exemplify, in the second part, I turn to John Trefry’s contemporary experimental novel *Massive*, which, as I aim to show, surpasses the negative connotations of literary spaces evidenced by the postmodern writers’ texts, and expresses metamodern qualities instead.

The inquiry’s locus lies in the three novels’ portrayals of buildings that condense and comprise urban spaces, and in the books’ physical dimension in relation to their respective in-text architectural constructions—a skyscraper, whole cities, and barely identifiable concrete masses. I aim to substantiate the metamodern emphasis on the co-dependence of the subject and the city regarding their formation processes by approaching the book as a city. Tracing but one possible passage from the postmodern to the metamodern modality in the context of architecture, the article aligns with postclassical literary urban studies by bringing into dialog current (metamodern) notions: the renewed interest in materiality, (post-)digitality, and the emphasis on reader-dweller’s engagement, all of which signify the “return to the real” (Ameel, 2023, p. 6).

Postmodern Spaces: Spatiotemporal Dissolve

In J.G. Ballard's *High-Rise*, the residents of the eponymous high-rise fight for survival, as accidents and failing infrastructure lead the striated community to violent re-primitivization. The forty-story, self-sufficient, luxurious building, erected amidst London's "decaying nineteenth-century terraced houses and empty factories" (Ballard, 1977, p. 9), incentivizes and reflects the gradual collapse of order, social norms, and stable identities. Discussing Ballard's dystopias, Jameson posits that "they have reached (...) a level of technology advanced enough to depict advanced technology in decline" (1991, p. 385), a plight that *High-Rise* actualizes through the building's and the residents' gradual deterioration. The seeming idyll of cocktail parties, pools, and a built-in supermarket is quickly revealed to be nothing but an attractive façade. The spaces, the surrounding area, and Dr. Laing's—the protagonist's—impressions of them, are telling:

As usual, though, the dimensions of the forty-storey block made his head reel. Lowering his eyes to the tiled floor, he steadied himself against the door pillar. The immense volume of open space that separated the building from the neighbouring high-rise a quarter of a mile away unsettled his sense of balance. At times he felt that he was living in the gondola of a ferris wheel permanently suspended three hundred feet above the ground. Nonetheless, Laing was still exhilarated by the high-rise, one of five identical units in the development project and the first to be completed and occupied. Together they were set in a mile-square area of abandoned dockland and warehousing along the north bank of the river. The five high-rises stood on the eastern perimeter of the project, looking out across an ornamental lake—at present an empty concrete basin surrounded by parking-lots and construction equipment (Ballard, 1977, pp. 8–9).

The building's vertigo-inducing placement, the Ferris wheel simile, the sense of exhilaration, and the multiple copies of the same building typify the particularity of the depthless and illusory postmodern urbanism. Jameson also discusses its populist aspect as evident in the lack of impulse "to insert a different, a distinct, an elevated, a new Utopian language into the tawdry and commercial sign system of the surrounding city," yielding to imitation instead (1991, p. 39). Laing, living in "one of five identical units in the development project and the first to be completed and occupied", falls victim to the false sense of novelty. This quality figures as, to borrow Walter Benjamin's words, "the origin of the illusion inseparable from the images produced by the collective unconscious" (1997, p. 37). These elements are linked through the building's construction, which brings the inhabitants' latent impulses to the surface and exposes their sense of inadequacy. Accordingly, "the concrete landscape of the project" signifies "an architecture designed for war, on the unconscious level if no other" (1977, p. 10); as the building's failings and random deaths mount throughout

the novel, the illusion shatters, giving rise to the inhabitants' subsequent ascent to the upper floors.

In light of the escalating chaos, Laing's sense of Ferris wheel-like suspension and exhilaration despite this very affective displacement is symptomatic of Jameson's alienation in the postmodern present. It "comes before the subject with heightened intensity, bearing a mysterious charge of affect, here described in the negative terms of anxiety and loss of reality, but which one could just as well imagine in the positive terms of euphoria, a high, an intoxicatory or hallucinogenic intensity" (1991, pp. 27–28). Indeed, Laing "found something alienating" in the high-rise's construction (Ballard, 1997, p. 10); "[t]he spectacular view always made [him] aware of his ambivalent feelings for this concrete landscape," since "this was an environment built, not for man, but for man's absence" (Ballard, 1997, p. 29). These contradictory states, as the novel's progression suggests, inevitably catalyze the dissolution of the self under the high-rise's influence. The residents proceed to obsessively capture their surroundings on Polaroid, condensing spaces and temporalities by mediating their lived experience; the upward motion becomes paramount; and a co-tenant becomes an Other. Also, in his relationship with Charlotte Melville, Laing's "affection and concern (...) seemed callous rather than tender, precisely because these emotions were unconnected with the realities of the world around them" (Ballard, 1977, p. 45). Hence, identity formation in the high-rise is governed—as other areas of the characters' reality—by the paradoxical logic of absence and euphoric immediacy, in which neither element grants stability; the residents, as David Harvey puts it, are "alienated individuals in fragmented spaces caught in an ephemera of unpatterned incidents" (1990, p. 315). Conditioned in this way, the residents inevitably submit to the building's impositions.

Kim Duff notes that "Ballard emphasizes the structure of the building as significant to identity formation" to the point that "Laing is unable to consider his life outside of the high rise" (2014, p. 69). This echoes Jameson's reading of the *Bonaventure* as obliterating the line between the interior and the outside—here, the literal ascent through the building evinces the influence of its materiality on Laing's self. Similarly, Jonathan Davies espouses the novel's textual architecture with the high-rise, pointing out that it is "constructed from discrete blocks of character-perspective in an ascending arrangement, through which Ballard melds form and content" (2017, p. 5). This interdisciplinary merger renders Laing's journey—prompted by the class-based warfare—as an ironic counterpoint to the supposed elevation of status. The text's architecture catalyzes the collapse of his identity by gradually distancing him from the social terrain. In this respect, Michel de Certeau, writing about the World Trade Center, sees physical elevation as a kind of loss, though in a positive light:

One's body is no longer clasped by the streets that turn and return it according to an anonymous law; nor is it possessed, whether as player or played, by the rumble of so many differences (...). When one goes up there, he leaves behind the mass that carries off and mixes up in itself any identity of authors or spectators. (...). [The elevation] transforms the bewitching world by which one was 'possessed' into a text that lies before one's eyes. It allows one to read it, to be a solar Eye, looking down like a god. The exaltation of a scopic and gnostic drive: the fiction of knowledge is related to this lust to be a viewpoint and nothing more (1988, p. 92).

Laing's elevation stems from his desire to reach the position of the wealthiest, upper stratum. However, when he finally finds himself on the top floor, his "new-found freedom" appears as a result of the uprooting from a fixed identity, not an achieved goal. Having stripped himself of previous markers, Laing is left with a kind of *carte blanche* that allows him "to think again of the medical school" (Ballard, 1977, p. 204). In those moments after reaching the peak, he "seek[s] out a new immediacy at the level of desire" (Davies, 2017, p. 2)—he senses "the real excitements to come," which actually anticipate "the baleful persistence of the past" (Jameson, 1991, p. 321), that is the events in the high-rise. "Feeling these gather within him, Laing leaned against the railing" (Ballard, 1977, p. 204) like de Certeau's exalted, though empty, god-like voyeur. In his final act, Laing notices a power failure and commotion in a neighboring high-rise—a paroxysm of postmodern dwelling within "the apartment block [that] was a small vertical city" (Ballard, 1977, p. 9), which illustrates temporal flattening and a resulting homogenization of space. A similar process can be observed in Calvino's *Invisible Cities*, although related to ontological instability.

Referring to Calvino's book, Sarah Edwards points to the codependence of literature and architecture, writing that "the imaginative construction of cities through conversation and literary works is vital to their realisation in architectural form" (2012, p. 169). Calvino's postmodern text constructs whole cities through prose poems that recount Marco Polo's visits to fifty-five fantastical cities. Whereas Ballard's city compressed into a building "accentuate[d] volatility and ephemerality" (Harvey, 1990, p. 285) and foregrounded the fleeting euphoria of an alienated individual, Calvino's cities embrace the postmodern condition in that they obscure the real—the unreal division, hinging on indeterminacy and incongruence. Brian McHale likens Calvino's spaces to Michel Foucault's heterotopia—a state in which "things are 'laid,' 'placed,' 'arranged' in sites so very different from one another that it is impossible to find a place of residence for them, to define a common locus beneath them all" (Foucault, as cited in McHale, 1987, p. 44). Sharing this view, Sambit Panigrahi points out that the cities' architectures "typify the inseparable integration of the city's past with its present which itself is reckoned as a unifying temporal totality" (2017, p. 84), in this way reiterating Jameson's diagnosis.

This representational tendency entails certain repercussions for individual and collective identities existing and attempting to form in the cities. Representative examples of the cities' lack of "internal articulation or even clear external boundaries" (McHale, 1987, p. 43) include the following: Isidora is "a city where the buildings have spiral staircases encrusted with spiral seashells, where perfect telescopes and violins are made"; but with all its riches, it is a combination of the real and the unreal, or a city of what is (not) and what could (not) have been: "The dreamed-of city contained him as a young man; he arrives at Isidora in his old age" (Calvino, 1974, p. 8). Zaira, through its architecture, disrupts temporal continuity, thereby erasing the importance of memory, which supports the process of self-identification (Danilova & Bakshutova, 2021, p. 143)—the city "does not tell its past, but contains it (...) written in the corners of the streets, the gratings of the windows, the banisters of the steps" (Calvino, 1974, p. 11). Tamara likewise eludes certainty, functioning as a "thick coating of signs" that is impossible to penetrate and thus anchor oneself in—"[y]our gaze scans the streets as if they were written pages (...) [but] you are only recording the names with which she defines herself and all her parts" (Calvino, 1974, p. 14). Focusing on the inhabitants' experiences yields still more difficulties regarding one's identity as shaped by the city: "[E]ach man bears in his mind a city made only of differences" and "has nothing but doubts" about its features (Calvino, 1974, p. 34); and as a collective, "the people who move through the streets are all strangers," craving to but unable to connect (Calvino, 1974, p. 51), which reveals the cities' ability to other. Thus, both the novel's ontological status and the possibilities it intimates "are already present in this instant, wrapped one within the other, confined, crammed, inextricable" (Calvino, 1974, p. 163)—they break the boundary between the real and the unreal down, problematizing the fixity and formation of the inhabitants' and the visitors' identities.

High-Rise's and *Invisible Cities'* chapters form architextural models, connecting the textual construction to the presented in-text worlds. It is also worth noting how, on a physical plane, they accommodate within their, respectively, 197 and 160 pages of text whole cities, compacted into an urban unit or encapsulated within the span of a few pages. Trefry's monolithic, 764-page (though actually unpaginated) *Massive* departs from these deconstructivist, postmodern literary architectures not simply through its length, but through its mode of spatial/urban construction. The accumulation and expansion, rather than compression, inform its (re)constructivist, metamodern model.

Metamodern Reorientation in *Massive*

Massive concerns, among other topics, the Russian poet Osip Mandelstam's exile to Voronezh, his wife Nadia, the poet Anna Akhmatova, the atrocities of

the fictional totalitarian state ADA, and, most importantly, architecture. On every page, we face three uneven columns of text that can be read either in succession, from top to bottom, or, as is the common practice, from left to right; the lines sometimes connect, forcing us to adjust our chosen pathway. The narrative's elusiveness makes reading *Massive* reminiscent of *Finnegans Wake*—evoked by the word “riverrun” (Trefry, 2024)—as its stream-of-consciousness, associative flow primarily produces a sense of disorientation. It also lacks periods that would separate sentences (or allow us to form them in the first place), randomly changes points of view, and operates on the reader's openness to endure, as A.V. Marraccini puts it, “the raw feed of the consequences before the form exists quite yet” (2024). Foregrounding textual fragmentation and non-linear reading strategies, *Massive* functions as ergodic literature, setting up its own rules of reading and requiring “nontrivial effort” from its readers(-users) (Aarseth, 1997, p. 1) (see fig. 1).

Fig. 1. An excerpt from *Massive*

the rumor of the heavyatmosphere is snowfall is drifting &
persistence of Gould's damp, hollowness, continuous) unilaterally
petrel, the Hlenavidet smothering the in the atmosphere
Forest tempest petrel suffocation of the but is falling on a
is waffling toward regolith, mobile platform ambulatory
extinction, tollgates are rolling & on the roadway kerb
toward disembarking autotransports are & a railing in draping
stopping further & tendrils conical fabric of an ellipse
further from the dissipating in citycenter, the central
planning chessboard archways over the of posterobellic
spreadsheets & hedgerow handcurl of flowcharts rationalizing
the perpetuation of conflagration tawny unfolding crises in the
chaotic & rapid gushing of earthcloud machinations of
urbanization, without nominally mossgreen significant insight the

Source: private correspondence with the author.

What might appear as a radical example of postmodern literary aesthetics can in fact be a contemporary reappropriation of this mode's characteristics. The text's fragmentation illustrates this move by figuring not as a result or a final condition of the in-text world, but as a point of departure for the reader's participation in the search for meaning. Stemming from *Massive's* ergodicity, this approach is inextricably linked to a digital, or rather, following Spencer Jordan's suggestion, “postdigital” paradigm—“a more open and fluid negotiation between

the digital and the non-digital” (2024, p. 23)—that, partly due to its oscillatory dynamic, aligns with metamodernism (Jordan, 2024, p. 147). Trefry, himself an architect, wrote his book in big blocks of text in a notepad and then—in a sort of postdigital revision of William Burroughs’s the cut-up technique—reshuffled them. (The font, too, is custom-made.) Sharing Marraccini’s vocabulary—of the “feed” preceding the form—Mike Corrao comments that “this pre-novel form takes on an interesting aesthetic”, while the prose “reads as a kind of data feed / as if someone has tapped into the surveillance network / and begun siphoning this information off into a .txt file on their hard drive” (2020). Though Corrao commented on a digital text-in-progress, his descriptions remain relevant, as the text’s final (so to speak), physical form concretizes those formal qualities: the pillars of data-text on the book’s pages inevitably emphasize the tension between its traditional print form and digital means of production, thereby repudiating the book-as-object’s transparency and heightening the reader’s awareness about and engagement with its architectural dimension.

Significantly, this movement beyond indeterminacy and toward “an affectivity reinforced by the novel’s non-digital materiality” (Jordan, 2024, pp. 186–187) arises out of fragmentation, instead of succumbing into it. Trefry achieves this by treating the book as architecture. Compelled by “the idea of not just a book that you can enter at any point but a book whose pages you can enter at any point” (Trefry & Corrao, 2024), he turns the reader from a passive observer of collapse and obscurity (as in *High-Rise* and *Invisible Cities*) to an active participant in the text’s (re)construction. If, in Trefry’s words, “[t]here is nothing there, but everything is there” (Trefry & Corrao, 2024), then *Massive*’s supposed essence is neither contained within its frame nor withheld from cognition; it depends on the reader’s exploration of its spaces (or a decline to do so). This position shows—and perhaps requires from us—what Alison Gibbons calls a metamodern “will and ability to process intensities so that we can articulate meaningful emotional reactions or cognitive responses to today’s social situation in which another affective modality has substituted yesterday’s fragmented and fragmenting euphoria” (2017, p. 85). Put differently, our receptivity to *Massive*’s architectural spaces can effect productive transformations.

The accretion of data-text uncovers historical material, emphasizing the continuity between the past (visible in the subject matter) and the present (signaled by the interpolation of the digital and intertextual references to more recent works). Yet, as Harvey informs us, “memory of the past is also about hope for the future” (1996, p. 305). Such a linkage, rather than a compression, of temporalities evinces through the novel’s “distinctive spatiality along a draf-tangle toward its collapse into singularity or along the aspiration of endlessness to a vantage point that is unachievable” (Trefry, 2024). While reading, then, we assume the metamodern both/neither position of being simultaneously everywhere and nowhere (Hallila & Sandbacka, 2024, p. 8). Expressing

Mandelstam's 1933–1938 through an infinite amount of configurations, *Massive* solidifies metamodernism's "constant fluctuation between memory and oblivion, between perpetuation and erasure, between extremes determining the attitude to the past" (Danilova & Bakshutova, 2021, p. 141).

The spatiotemporal complexification outlined above supports Trefry's use of the city not to expose social disintegration (*High-Rise*) or challenge the real–the unreal division (*Invisible Cities*), but to address ethical concerns. This ethical dominant, to extend McHale's (1987) concept, is especially noticeable in the novel's preoccupations with cities and their parts; for example, the expansion of concrete threatens environmental depletion: "petrel is waffling toward extinction, toward disembarking stopping further & further from the city-center (...) flowcharts rationalizing the perpetuation of unfolding crises in the chaotic & rapid machinations of urbanization"; and the disconnection from the social sphere is mourned: "heart, slow, so stubbornly heavier and heavier, heavy, to the bottom, regardless of its vacancy or dereliction merely for the consideration of more productive civic intentions or altruism for the desperation of rural migrants, these urban housing complexes are appearing with massive proliferation" (Trefry, 2024). Thus, the un-hierarchical and non-linear movement through *Massive's* topographies encourages the reader to view the text as a place where "the consciousness is traveling through each stratum & interconnection of the identity framework" (Trefry, 2024), or, per Dumitrescu, "where the self exists and defines itself in relation to *the other*, where everything—from humans to complex systems such as the ecological and the microscopic—is interrelated" (2016).

Conclusion

Demonstrating a passage from the postmodern to the metamodern at the intersection of literature and architecture, the article shows the specificity of postmodern and metamodern architectures and their place in the process of identity formation. Ballard's and Calvino's postmodern novels emphasize predicaments of the postmodern condition by exposing individual and collective disintegration, and foreground indeterminacy, alienation, the ability to other, and spatiotemporal compression. Conversely, Trefry's metamodern approach reveals a resignification of postmodern aesthetics facilitated by the (post)digital, an emphasis on the reader-user's meaning-making, affective receptivity, and a negotiation between the finite and the infinite or the natural and the man-made. *Massive* also complicates its architectural construction—the search for connection, where "each grain is the whole" (Trefry, 2024), replaces the postmodern collapse. Our contemporary understanding of urban experience emphasizes the significance of not only dwelling in the city but also responding

to it, participating in its ongoing reconfiguration, and recognizing it as an agent of identity construction. “[E]xpand[ing] along an axis of responding to suffering” (Marraccini, 2024), the city thus emerges as a terrain for ethical revitalization, a structure whose ‘readability’ shapes and is mediated by literature.

REFERENCES

- Aarseth, Espen J. (1997). *Cybertext: Perspectives on Ergodic Literature*. Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press.
- Ameel, L. (2023). Literary Urban Studies: An Introduction. In L. Ameel (Ed.), *The Routledge Companion to Literary Urban Studies* (pp. 1–10). London and New York: Routledge.
- Ballard, J.G. (1977). *High-Rise*. New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston.
- Benjamin, W. (1997). Baudelaire, or the Streets of Paris. In N. Leach (Ed.), *Rethinking Architecture: A Reader in Cultural Theory* (pp. 36–37). London and New York: Routledge.
- Calvino, I. (1974). *Invisible Cities* (W. Weaver, Trans.). San Diego and New York: Harcourt Brace & Company.
- Corrao, M. (2020, October 5). *Pre-Articulation: On John Trefry's Unfinished Massive* | Part 1. ActionBooks. Retrieved from: <https://actionbooks.org/2020/10/pre-articulation-on-john-trefrys-unfinished-massive-part-1-by-mike-corrao/> (access: 05.12.2025).
- Danilova, E. & Bakshutova, D. (2021). *Metamodernism: The Phenomenon of Memory as Part of an Architectural Concept*. DOI: 10.2991/assehr.k.211125.162.
- Davies, J. (2017). *Transition, abstraction and perverse concreteness in J.G. Ballard's High-Rise*. *TextualPractice*, pp. 1–21. DOI: 10.1080/0950236X.2017.1301546.
- de Certeau, M. (1988). *The Practice of Everyday Life* (S. Rendall, Trans.). Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press.
- Dember, G. (2024). *Say Hello to Metamodernism!* Boise, ID: Exact Rush Publishing.
- Dumitrescu, A. (2016, December 4). What is Metamodernism and Why Bother? Meditations on Metamodernism as a Period Term and as a Mode. *Electronic Book Review*. Retrieved from: <https://electronicbookreview.com/essay/what-is-metamodernism-and-why-bother-meditations-on-metamodernism-as-a-period-term-and-as-a-mode/>
- Duff, K. (2014). *Contemporary British Literature and Urban Space: After Thatcher*. London and New York: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Edwards, S. (2012). Anonymous encounters: the structuring of space in post-modern narratives of the city. In S. Edwards & J. Charley (Eds.), *Writing the Modern City: Literature, Architecture, Modernity* (pp. 167–177). London and New York: Routledge.

- Gibbons, A. (2017). Metamodern Affect. In R. van den Akker, A. Gibbons, & T. Vermeulen (Eds.), *Metamodernism: Historicity, Affect, and Depth After Postmodernism* (pp. 83–86). London and New York: Rowman & Littlefield.
- Hallila, M., & Sandbacka, K. (2024). Metamodernism in Contemporary Culture and Literature. *Acta Philologica*, 63, 5–11. DOI: 10.7311/ACTA.63.2025.1
- Harvey, D. (1990). *The Condition of Postmodernity*. Cambridge, MA and Oxford, UK.
- Harvey, D. (1996). *Justice, Nature and the Geography of Difference*. Cambridge, MA: Blackwell Publishers.
- Hayles, N.K., & Gannon, T. (2007). Mood Swings: The Aesthetics of Ambient Emergence. In N. Brooks & J. Toth (Eds.), *The Mourning After: Attending the Wake of Postmodernism* (pp. 99–142). Amsterdam and New York: Rodopi.
- Jameson, F. (1991). *Postmodernism, or, The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism*. Durham: Duke University Press.
- Jordan, S. (2024). *Metamodernism and the Postdigital in the Contemporary Novel*. London: Bloomsbury.
- Marraccini, A.V. (2024, November 20). *Goldfinch/Refusal: Mandelstam, Massive, and Form of the Novel in the Age of Atrocity*. Minor Literature[s]. Retrieved from: <https://minorliteratures.com/2024/11/20/goldfinch-refusal-mandelstam-massive-and-form-of-the-novel-in-the-age-of-atrocity-a-v-marraccini/> (access: 05.12.2025).
- Panigrahi, S. (2017). Postmodern Temporality in Italo Calvino's "Invisible Cities." *Italica*, 94(1), 82–100. Retrieved from: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/44504640>
- Trefry, J. (2024). *Massive*. Lawrence, KS: Inside the Castle.
- Trefry, J. & Corrao, M. (2024, March 14). *On the Inertness of Books – A conversation with John Trefry & Mike Corrao*. Minor Literature[s]. Retrieved from: <https://minorliteratures.com/2024/03/14/on-the-inertness-of-books-a-conversation-with-john-trefry-mike-corrao/> (access: 05.12.2025).
- Vermeulen, T. & van den Akker, R. (2010). Notes on Metamodernism. *Journal of Aesthetics & Culture*, 2(1). DOI: 10.3402/jac.v2i0.5677

Mateusz Naporowski – is a PhD student at the University of Silesia in Katowice, Poland. He is currently writing his dissertation on the contemporary experimental American novel within the context of the metamodern epoch. His research interests include literary theory, postmodern and experimental fiction, as well as metamodernism as a broader cultural paradigm.