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METAMODERNISM AS A RECONSTRUCTION OF THE DISRUPTED UNITY OF BEING

The study argues that Ukrainian metamodernism extends beyond an aesthetic and literary tendency, emerging as an ontological system aimed at restoring the integrity of being fractured by postmodern deconstruction, which, among other manifestations, has materialized in the dissolution of large-scale state systems and the global restructuring of the world, and further intensified by the experience of war. The problem addressed by the study is that existing metamodernist scholarship is predominantly descriptive, focusing on the aesthetic features of the movement, such as oscillation, hyper-self-reflexivity, and New Sincerity, without providing a comprehensive metaphysical grounding for the phenomenon. The aim of this study is to construct an ontological conception of metamodernism as a reconstructive cultural paradigm capable of demonstrating, through cosmological models, theoretical sources, and contemporary Ukrainian texts by Serhiy Zhadan and Yurii Izdryk, how the fragmentation of being generates an impulse toward the reassembly of the lyrical subject, artistic spatiotemporality, the historical mosaic, and sacred meaning into a new, dynamically sustained unity.

Particular attention is paid to the fundamental distinction between metamodernism and previous cultural paradigms. Whereas Romanticism, Realism, Modernism, and Postmodernism successively negated one another (following O. Shynkarenko's typology as trust in the visible, trust in the invisible, and total skepticism), metamodernism asserts a simultaneous affirmation of the entire spectrum of reality, neither rejecting nor simply reproducing previous worldviews, but building upon them. The study seeks to show that metamodernism is the only literary movement that does not abolish the preceding paradigm, but rather preserves it in a state of productive interaction according to the logic of "both-and, and at the same time neither". The analysis establishes that the classical ontological triad (heaven – earth – the beyond) is complicated by a fourth dimension = hyperreality, a simulacrum of peace against the backdrop of war, while the lyrical subject emerges as a meta-subject, mediating between the profane and the sacred, the frontline and the home front, the archaic and eternal, and the present.

The study concludes that the metamodern paradigm provides a productive analytical framework for interpreting texts generated by an unstable and traumatizing reality, as it enables the hybridization of mythopoetic thinking with reflective contemporaneity without sacrificing the sincerity of artistic expression. The proposed model also opens up prospects for further testing on materials from other literatures shaped by prolonged historical ruptures, including those emerging from the Yugoslav Wars, Middle Eastern conflicts, and postcolonial contexts.

Key words: *metamodernism, ontology, meta-subject, re-cognition, semioptics.*

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МЕТАМОДЕРНІЗМ У ВИМІРІ РЕКОНСТРУКЦІЇ ПОРУШЕНОЇ ЄДНОСТІ БУТТЯ

Стаття ґрунтується на ідеї, що український метамодернізм виходить за межі естетично-літературної тенденції, актуалізуючись як онтологічна система, покликана відновити цілісність буття, розхристану постмодерною деконструкцією (що, крім усього, втілилася у розпаді великих державних систем і глобальній перебудові світу) та поглиблену досвідом війни. Проблема дослідження полягає в тому, що наявні метамодерні студії є переважно дескриптивними і просто описують естетичні риси напряму, такі як осциляція, гіперсаморефлексія, нова щирість, не пропонуючи цілісного метафізичного обґрунтування цього явища. Метою розвідки є побудова онтологічної концепції метамодернізму як реконструктивної культурної парадигми, здатної на матеріалі космологічних моделей, теоретичних джерел і сучасних українських текстів (С. Жадан, Ю. Іздрик) показати, як фрагментація буття породжує імпульс до перезбирання ліричного суб'єкта, художнього

часопростору, історичної мозаїки й сакрального сенсу в нову динамічно утримувану єдність. Особливу увагу приділено принциповій відмінності метамодернізму від попередніх культурних парадигм. Якщо романтизм, реалізм, модернізм і постмодернізм послідовно заперечували один одного (за типологією О. Шинкаренка: довіра до видимого, довіра до невидимого, тотальний скепсис), то метамодернізм постулює одночасну віру в увесь спектр реальності, не заперечуючи, а надбудовуючи попередні світоглядні коди. Обстоюється теза, що метамодернізм є єдиним літературним напрямом, який не скасовує попередню парадигму, утримуючи її у стані продуктивної взаємодії за логікою «і-і, і водночас ні». У результаті аналізу встановлено, що класична онтологічна тріада (небо – земля – потойбіччя) ускладнюється четвертим виміром – гіперреальністю, симулякром миру на тлі війни, а ліричний суб'єкт постає як мета-су'бєкт = медатор між профанним і сакральним, лінією фронту і тилом, архаїчним вічним і теперішнім. Робиться висновок, що метамодерна парадигма є продуктивним інструментарієм для прочитання текстів, породжених нестабільною реальністю, що травмує, оскільки уможливлює гібридизацію міфомислення з рефлексивною сучасністю без втрати щирості художнього висловлювання. Окреслено перспективу перевірки запропонованої моделі на матеріалі інших літератур тривалого розриву (югославські війни, близькосхідні конфлікти, постколоніальні тексти).

Ключові слова: *метамодернізм, онтологія, мета-су'бєкт, ре-когніція, семіоптика.*

Problem statement. The postmodern thirst for deconstruction, embodied in "the dismantling of grand narratives, the semantic dispersal of the sign, intertextuality, and play unfolding on various levels of the textual whole, along with a totalizing irony", on Ukrainian ground, paralleled the collapse of the Soviet Union (Пастух, 2024). In a world undergoing continuous destruction and reconstruction of the familiar parameters, Ukrainian postmodernism began to play with the fragments of a disintegrating reality, transforming them into new textual forms and alternative modes of representation. As Tamara Hundorova observes, these innovations produced a variety of textual realities, including the grotesque (Volodymyr Dibrova, Les Podervianskyi, Bohdan Zholdak), the carnivalesque (Yurii Andrukhovych, Viktor Neborak, Oleksandr Irvanets), the feminist (Oksana Zabuzhko), the apocalyptic (Yurko Izdryk, Taras Prokhasko), the pop-cultural (Serhii Zhadan), and the popular (Yurii Vynnychuk) (Гундорова, 2013: 323). The experience of the 2014 war to the present has led to an inverse process, necessitating the reassembly of those fragments and the restoration of a coherent narrative thread. Faced with a reality shattered by violence, displacement, polyphonization, and the axiological contradictions of historical continuity, Ukrainian literature increasingly turns toward mending the broken threads of mutual experience. Metamodernism emerged as a remarkably fitting framework for a collapsing ontology. Rather than resisting fragmentation, it offered a way of organizing its remnants into a new, provisional coherence, the only literary trend seeking integration rather than opposition or negation.

The analysis of the main studies and publications. Despite the considerable scholarly attention metamodernism has received as a literary trend, it still requires further theoretical conceptualization and has yet to be examined in relation to the theory of being. Taras Pastukh mentions that "a landmark text of metamodernism is generally considered to be American writer David Foster Wallace's novel *Infinite Jest*, published in 1996. However, the discussion of metamodernism in its distinctive configurations began with the 2010 essay "Notes on Metamodernism" by Dutch cultural theorist Timotheus Vermeulen and philosopher and information technology scholar Robin van den Akker. The two authors subsequently invited British literary scholar Alison Gibbons to join them, and in 2017 they published the collective volume *Metamodernism: Historicity, Affect, and Depth after Postmodernism*" (Пастух, 2024). On the Ukrainian ground, although the collection of papers "Metamodernism in Literature and Literary Studies: "Mirror in the Mirror": Proceedings of the All-Ukrainian Scientific and Pedagogical Professional Development Programme, April 14–May 25, 2025" is useful as a survey of contemporary applications of metamodernism, it does not provide a sufficiently coherent theoretical foundation for the concept. As a conference proceedings volume, it brings together short contributions by numerous scholars examining a wide range of texts, rather than developing a shared theoretical framework. Several offerings, for instance, the analysis of Tracy Letts's *August: Osage County* by Yuliia Vyshnytska do not engage substantively with metamodernist categories, relying instead on postmodernist or thematic approaches. The texts also represent disparate national literatures and genres, without a unifying methodology that would explain why metamodernism, rather than a practical scholarly paradigm, is applicable to them. Moreover, the volume offers no substantial introductory or concluding synthesis that identifies common features across the individual case studies. As a result, metamodernism functions throughout the collection primarily as a flexible analytical label rather than as a clearly defined and theoretically grounded concept (Вишницька, 2025: 22–25).

Anatoly Denysenko in his short article *"Vermeulen, van den Akker, and Turner's Metamodernism"* of 2026

briefly traces the genealogy and theoretical foundations of metamodernism from Plato's concept of *metaxis* to Vermeulen and van den Akker's 2010 essay "Notes on Metamodernism" and Luke Turner's 2011 manifesto. He conceptualizes metamodernism as an oscillation between modernist sincerity and enthusiasm, on the one hand, and postmodernist irony and skepticism, on the other. To illustrate this "structure of feeling", Denysenko draws on examples from contemporary culture, including the films of Wes Anderson, the music of Lana Del Rey, and *Everything Everywhere All at Once*. The essay also serves as a preface to Maksym Nestelieiev's book on metamodernism (Денисенко, 2026).

Maksym Nestelieiev's research, titled "Metamodernism: Between Outdated Irony and New Sincerity", offers a comprehensive study that traces the evolution of the concept of metamodernism in chronological order through the work of key European and North American theorists (Нестелєєв, 2026). Though exhaustive in scope, it lacks an integrative summary and fails to present a unifying theoretical structure. Nor does it relate metamodernism to a metaphysical system, a dimension that not only feels urgently relevant but also follows almost logically from the premises the concept itself advances.

A.Yu. Savina's article, *"Fiction as Cult in the Age of Metamodernism",* largely echoes established doctrines of metamodernist philosophy, such as the oscillation between sincerity and irony, self-reflexivity, and the ideas articulated in Luke Turner's manifesto (Савина, 2023: 230–235). Its main distinctive contribution is the comparison of "author-text-reader" dynamics with the structures of ancient cult.

The article "Shared Pain, the War and Identity: Peculiarities of Ukrainian Literary Metamodernism" (2023) by Tetiana Grebeniuk analyzes how the Russian-Ukrainian war has shaped the national specificity of Ukrainian metamodernism, highlighting key features such as oscillation, hyper-self-reflexivity, and the return of metanarratives. Although Ukraine's distinct historical circumstances, including decolonization, war, and collective trauma, shape its cultural output, the study finds that broader metamodernist features, especially the "longing for togetherness" and a focus on communal bonds and shared experience, continue to define Ukrainian literary metamodernism (Гребенюк, 2023: 30–58).

While existing scholarship has examined metamodernism's aesthetic features, it has yet to establish a coherent ontological foundation. The study frames metamodernism as a philosophical reaction to the disintegration of being, contending that its core drive lies in rebuilding coherence from the debris of a fractured reality.

Statement of the task. This study seeks to formulate an ontological conception of metamodernism as a reconstructive cultural paradigm and to show, through an analysis of cosmological models, metamodernist theory, and contemporary Ukrainian literary texts, how the fragmentation of being, produced by postmodernity and intensified by war, generates an impulse to reassemble the literary subject, the chronotopic dimension, history, and sacred meaning into a new, dynamically sustained coherence.

Presentation of the main material. According to cultural paradigms, at any given historical stage of development, human beings perceive the world as a particular cosmological structure. The levels of the world order, designated differently across diverse civilizational, religious, and philosophical frameworks, generally correspond to the principle of symbolic trinity, embodying the sky (God or gods), the earth (humans), and the underworld (the space of the dead). Alexandra Dumitrescu (2014) interprets metamodernism as "a state of the world that seeks to restore lost interconnections" (Dumitrescu, 2014). Maksym Nestelieiev, who reconstructs metamodern theories diachronically, analyzing the concepts and architecture of metamodernism through the works of its "undisputed authorities", identifies three fundamental aspects of metamodernism through Dumitrescu's paradigm of thought: a) "Connectionism as a way of thinking". This is a way to study human mental processes and cognition using mathematical models. The central principle of connectionism is that mental phenomena can be described as interconnected networks of simple and often homogeneous units (Нестелєєв, 2026: 82); b) "Bootstrapping as a way of identifying connections". That is, a method of repetition and self-sustenance without external influence (Нестелєєв, 2026: 82); c) "The principle of superimposing theory" (Нестелєєв, 2026: 82).

The process of shaping contemporary Ukrainian literary texts is gradually moving away from the postmodern metanarrative as a "world 'without truths, standards, or ideals' (Zygmunt Bauman)" (Нестелєєв, 2026: 49), gravitating instead toward the metamodern theological "third way" proposed by Huts L. Gonzales, a certain connection between Holy Scripture and "the people who actually wrote the text" (Нестелєєв, 2026: 51), as well as toward a metacontext and an impulse located "within" history and "between" epochs (Нестелєєв, 2026: 52).

According to the Cypriot researcher Mary Koutselini (2006), "the main feature being open-endedness, which transcends the deterministic closed system of physical reality and supports change, interaction and transaction"; it also entails a shift in the way we think

about human relationships with the world, a shift that goes beyond a sequential, quantitatively measured understanding of the universe and promotes an experience of a network of relationships in which the human being has a central voice (Koutselini, 2006: 4).

The metamodern paradigm of the contemporary Ukrainian poetic text "synthesizes" "the new complexity of the world" (Нестелєєв, 2026: 55), combining certain elements of indigenous culture, national constants, a religious and philosophical foundation, geographical codes, temporal coordinates, and so forth, thereby creating a hybrid artistic unity. Moyo Okediji relates the essence of metamodernism to the ontological dimension of "re-cognition", or "semi-optics", the latter term ("*Gk.* 'meaning' + 'vision'") being linked to the theory of the "cultural crossroads (sited from Нестелєєв, 2026: 58).

A contemporary literary work, understood as a product of cultural genesis and as a structural-semantic system, models artistic space on the basis of a mythological-religious framework, appealing to comprehensible ontological coordinates such as being, non-being, death, and possession-loss (of one's own space, time, identity, etc.). The classical ontological trinity characteristic of most philosophical and religious models undergoes structural complication in the worldview of contemporary human beings. Thus, with the development of digitalization, the matrix of the human world incorporates a fourth world, which is hyperreality, a simulation that becomes a "pure simulacrum", a simulation transformed into an autonomous reality represented by virtual space, a meta-world, and a digital experience in which interaction is perceived as sufficiently complete to modify one's emotional and behavioral patterns in much the same way as the "real" terrestrial dimension.

Furthermore, the integral Ukrainian locus becomes fragmented into a military space (the front, the immediate space of war) and a "simulacrum of peace" (a meta-peace topos, the hyperreality of the home front, with its cafés, beauty salons, barbershops, supermarkets, freshly laundered bed linen, hot showers, and so forth). In *Simulacra and Simulation*, Jean Baudrillard speaks of the "substitution of signs of the real for the real" (Бодріяр, 2004: 7): "The aim, then, will always be the murderous power of images, murderous for the real, murderous for their own model, just as Byzantine icons could be murderous for divine identity. This murderous power is countered by the power of representation as a dialectical force, a visible and intelligible mediation of the Real" (Бодріяр, 2004: 11). At the same time, the military space, as a state situated between being and non-being (a liminal, borderline dimension devoid of the urban walls that separate the individual from nature and from the world in its "raw", unprocessed form) returns human beings to primordial forms of communication with the sky, the forest, the earth, animals, and so forth, thereby activating archetypal and mythological patterns of thought. This process entails a symbolization of nature characteristic of the Old Slavic worldview, both in its Christian and pre-Christian dimensions.

Contemporary Ukrainian literary tradition, shaped by the *Zeitgeist* = the spirit of the age, is crossing ontological boundaries, entering into a dialogue with the Christian God, Jesus Christ, and the Virgin Mary, while also appealing to affective-symbolic forms, chthonic forces, ancestral power, and the power of nature. In doing so, it demonstrates the dialectics of the lyrical subject and its spiritual transformation under the pressure of the deformation of a previously comprehensible everyday reality. "A sign is capable of leading to the depth of meaning, a sign is capable of being exchanged for meaning, and something guarantees this exchange, of course, God", writes Baudrillard (Бодріяр, 2004: 12). The turn toward the sacred and the archaic can be understood as an attempt to restore an ontological foundation, a metamodern *re-cognition* of one's cultural codes in circumstances where secular and rational cognitive strategies prove incapable of fully assimilating trauma, thanatological concerns, and existential threat. The lyrical subject thus transforms into what Stanley Horner, using his own terminology, calls a *metaSubject* (as sited from Нестелєєв, 2026: 60), emerging as a mediator between the profane and the sacred, between the historical present and the mythological dimension of timelessness.

The mythopoetics of the contemporary Ukrainian text structures Ancient Greek and Old Slavic mythological images, the biblical code and folkloric plots, religious symbols, numerical symbolism, as well as a significant phonosphere and an olfactory-visual palette. At the same time, this cultural layering may be further complicated by allusions to earlier pre-Christian civilizations. For example, Serhii Zhadan's prose-poetry collection *Mesopotamia* (2014) constructs a play between the actual ancient locus situated between the two rivers, the Tigris and the Euphrates, the cradle of civilization, and the recognizable city of Kharkiv, located between the Lopan and Kharkiv rivers, a particular land "between rivers". This makes it possible to conceptualize the city as an autonomous civilizational phenomenon (or quasi-civilizational structure), endowed with its own mythopoetic system and distinctive chronotope, *memoria collectiva*, while articulating the dialectical tension between past and future, love and separation, life and death, youthful-

ness and maturity, retrospection and anticipation of what is to come.

According to Alison Gibbons, "metamodernist works often contain references to everyday realities, including the use of brand names" (as sited from Нестелєєв, 2026: 142). This is extensively represented in Zhadan's work, in an expanded form that spills over into semiotic constants (*Big Mac*, *Amsterdam*, *Ford*, *Pepsi*, *Ethiopia*, *Templars*), as well as in Izdryk's work (*Red Hot Chili Peppers*, *Sirius*, "the Land of Oz"[1], "neither horse nor Oleh"[2], *jihad*, "mad Jedi", *hip-hop*, *General Motors Electric*, "gender mothers").

From the perspective of metamodernist theory, Maksym Nestelieiev argues that "there is no single metamodernism; rather, there are metamodernisms" (Нестелєєв, 2026: 13). Metamodernism defines the human condition as a permanent oscillation between opposing poles: sincerity and irony, hope and melancholy, construction and deconstruction, engagement and detachment, cognitive positioning and affect, corporeality and spirituality. The prefix "meta-", in the Platonic sense, is understood as meaning "between", "with", and "beyond".

In 2017, Alison Gibbons stressed the deepening of interartistic interaction among literature, visual practices, and digital technologies, thereby expanding the possibilities of artistic communication and representation (as cited in Нестелєєв, 2026: 136–137). For example, Serhii Zhadan's new 2026 book, *Hymns of the Baroque Wars*, is supplemented with illustrations by the author. Zhadan accompanies his poems with these illustrations on his official Facebook page and also uses them as media installations during his performances:

Metamodernism exposes the struggle between the inner and the outer. Oleh Shynkarenko proposes a typology of historical and cultural paradigms based on the criterion of an artist's trust in reality, which can be presented as a sequential evolution of epistemological orientations: a) *Romanticism* and *Realism* are characterized by trust exclusively in what can be empirically verified, that is, visually apprehended (representative figures include Childe Harold and Mr. Pickwick); b) *Modernism*, by contrast, declares trust in the invisible, in that which lies beyond empirical givenness (the illustrative examples being Malevich, Hitler, and Stalin); c) *Postmodernism* demonstrates total epistemological skepticism, rejecting trust as such (Beckett provides a telling example); d) *Metamodernism*, by contrast, postulates simultaneous trust in the entire spectrum of reality, both visible and invisible, without an exclusive commitment to any single ontological position (illustrated by Wes Anderson) (sited from Нестелєєв, 2026: 298). In his *Metamodernist Manifesto*, the concept of metamodernity is rooted in three foundational claims about the structure of being: 1) the taxonomic boundary between the serious and the comic is considered to have been lost as no phenomenon of reality can any longer be regarded as *a priori* excluded from the sphere of ironic or humorous interpretation; 2) the essential characteristics of objects are understood as fundamentally indeterminate, since no phenomenon possesses such a clear and fixed ontological definition that it can be described in terms of absolute certainty or unambiguousness; 3) things are understood as lacking stable localization

Публикация Сергій Жадан [офіційна сторінка]



Pic. 1. Publication dated August 10, 2026. (Жадан, 2026)



Pic. 2. Publication dated August 26, 2026. (Жадан, 2026)

[1] A double allusion to Lewis Carroll's Alice's Adventures in Wonderland and L. Frank Baum's The Wonderful Wizard of Oz. Moreover, the expression "the Land of Oz" may be directly associated with Australia, which Australians themselves informally refer to as "Oz".

[2] An allusion to "The Song of the Prophetic Oleg".

as no object exists in a state of ultimate completion or permanent attachment to "its" place, indicating the fundamental mobility and fluidity of ontological coordinates (sited from Нестелєєв, 2026: 299). Metamodernism moves for the sake of movement, striving to accomplish something despite its inevitable failure; it endlessly searches for the truth that it never expects to find (Vermeulen, 2010).

Thus, metamodernism is best understood as a cultural model dedicated to bridging divides. Its lyrical self combines idealism with pragmatism, confronts the decline of traditional religious and humanist certainties while assuming responsibility for creating meaning, recognizes the interconnectedness of phenomena, embraces social contradictions, and adopts a "both–and" mode of thinking.

Metamodern spirituality and existential aesthetics are especially well-placed to honor esoteric and spiritual practices from both Eastern and Western lineages, integrate evolutionary science such as Darwinism, and still leave room for the potential insights offered by mysticism.

The conclusion and investigation perspectives. The synthesis of the foregoing allows us to conclude that metamodernism emerges as a cultural-philosophical strategy for reconstructing ontological wholeness disrupted by postmodern fragmentation. The analysis of theoretical works enables us to define metamodernism as a paradigm whose central principle is a continuous pendulum-like oscillation between poles of meaning, achieved through the logic of "both-and-and neither". If postmodernity is characterised by deconstruction and the weakening of historicity, depth, and affectivity, then metamodernism integrates the gains of postmodern critique while in parallel aiming to restore foundational code, meaningfulness, and emotional engagement. For the contemporary Ukrainian literary text, this can be brought through the superimposition of pre-Christian, Christian, and postmodern brand codes, which form the architecture of reality and create a palimpsest-like structure of meanings that preserves cultural signs in a dynamic state of productive interaction. Thus, the metamodern paradigm proves to be a productive interpretive toolkit for reading texts born of the traumatic experience of augmented reality, as it enables the hybridisation of archaic foundational myth-thinking with reflexive modernity without losing the sincerity and authenticity of artistic expression. The lyrical subject is no stable center of enunciation but a spatial being of consciousness that holds together contradictions such as yesterday and today, the city at peace and the city shattered by war, the archaic and the digital, the sacred and the

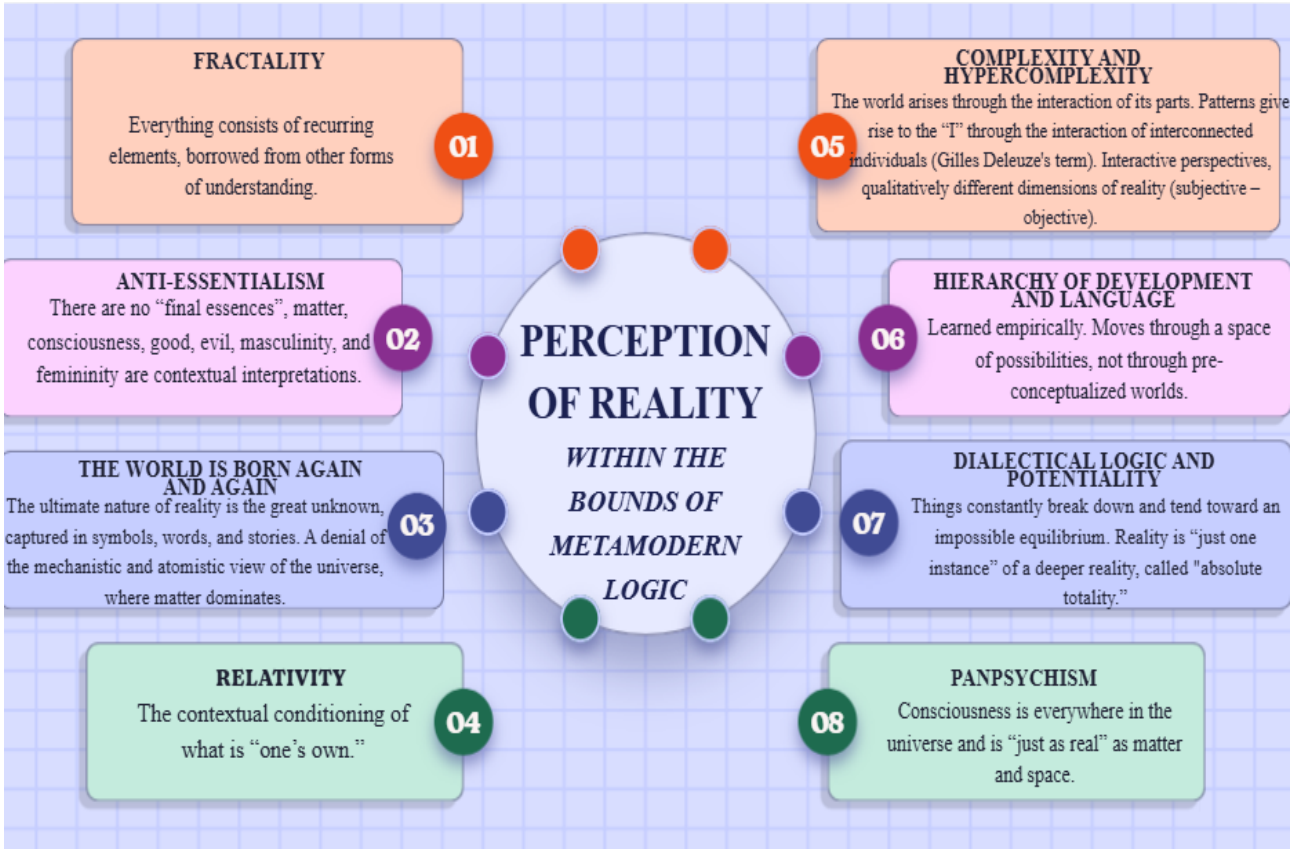


Fig. 1. Metamodern Existential Aesthetics (T.S.)

mundane. Not resolving these tensions, it inhabits them, turning oscillation into its mode of existence. This lyrical subject performs an ontological function of reconstituting being as a system of relations. War exposes an existing condition to be re-composed. The lyrical subject, suspended between front and home, irony and grief, becoming the site of that re-composition. In the chronotopic sense, such a text will hold dual spatiality, layered temporality, and spatial-temporal being of consciousness.

Further work should test whether this model holds across other literatures of prolonged rupture (the Yugoslav Wars, the Middle Eastern conflicts, the post-colonial struggles, etc.).

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