

MATEUSZ NAPOROWSKI

GASTON BACHELARD'S *THE POETICS OF SPACE*
AND METAMODERNISM

INTRODUCTION

Gaston Bachelard's 1958 book *The Poetics of Space* remains a bottomless well for philosophical thought almost 70 years after its publication. The time of its release bears importance in that, in hindsight, the post-World War II cultural sensibilities were on a downward trajectory, going toward what we now deem postmodernism. Irrespective of one's favorable or unfavorable outlook on then-persistent deconstruction, solipsism, and general skepticism, that cultural moment still echoes, having left a mark on contemporary thought. But so did Bachelard's seminal work, which offered the readership a genre-defying and complex – quite in the postmodern vein – phenomenological study of spaces and human's role in establishing a relationship with one's surroundings. Serendipitously, this particular work from Bachelard's oeuvre represents his departure from philosophy of science for the sake of advocating the importance of imagination and intimacy, while at the same time revoking the then-present notion of the psychoanalytical search for and finding of, as Jacques Ehrmann writes, "the origin of the image ... outside the image itself, depriving the critic of a genuine intimacy with the poetic image and/or imagination."¹ This deprivation appears congruent with postmodernism's impending "ubiquity of detachment" challenged by the phenomenological approach underlining emotional endowment in the times

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¹ Jacques EHRMANN, "Introduction to Gaston Bachelard," *MLN* 81, no. 5 (1996): 576, <https://doi.org/10.2307/2907980>.

when scientific objectivity had to deal with growing skepticism.² Thus, Bachelard's preoccupation with subjectivity and simultaneous resistance to fixed meanings in the experienced objects and spaces – as expressed in *Poetics* – allows us to proleptically consider his thought as in dialogue with the aforementioned components associated with postmodernism. Not incidentally, John R. Stilgoe wrote in 1994 that Bachelard's work “resonates in an era suffused by television and video games, fluorescent lighting and plastic floors ... mak[ing] its readers dissatisfied with much contemporary structure and landscape.”³

Although Bachelard's thought overtly contributes to phenomenology, it should not come as a surprise that his illuminating investigations have proven their applicability in studies covering diverse contexts – to name but a few recent ones: Matilda Dahl, Pierre Guillet de Monthoux, and Jenny Helin's “The Poetic Teaching Space: Gaston Bachelard and a Third Realm in Management Education,” which is concerned with inventing space for deep thinking and community building;⁴ Jolyon G. R. Pruszinski's “Interpreting Literary Ecologies and Extending Spheres of Concern: A Note on Bachelard's *The Poetics of Space* for Eco-Theology,” in which preoccupations with ecology and spirituality meet the Bachelardian space;⁵ or Andrew Edgar's “Football and the Poetics of Space,” which demonstrates how “‘love of space’ is manifested in the embodied experience of playing and watching football.”⁶ Similarly accentuating contemporaneity of the above approaches, the present article aims to align Bachelard's *Poetics* with the recent cultural paradigm – metamodernism – since both areas aim to productively reframe our position in the contemporary world and, as Alexandra Dumitrescu writes, strive for “the self that explores itself and connects with *the other*.”⁷

² Fabjan EGGERS and Sonja PYYKKÖ, “Intimacy, Detachment, and the (Post-)Postmodern Novel: Imagining Distance in Contemporary American Fiction,” *American Literatures* 2, no. 1 (2022): 5.

³ John R. STILGOE, Foreword to the 1994 edition, *The Poetics of Space*, by Gaston Bachelard, trans. Maria Jolas (Boston: Beacon Press, 1994), ix–x.

⁴ Matilda DAHL, Pierre Guillet de MONTHOUX, and Jenny HELIN, “The Poetic Teaching Space: Gaston Bachelard and a Third Realm in Management Education,” *Culture and Organization* 28, no. 3–4 (2022): 362–77, <https://doi.org/10.1080/14759551.2021.2007917>.

⁵ Jolyon G. R. PRUSZINSKI, “Interpreting Literary Ecologies and Extending Spheres of Concern: A Note on Bachelard's *The Poetics of Space* for Eco-Theology,” *Religions* 12, no. 10 (2021): 891, <https://doi.org/10.3390/rel12100891>.

⁶ Andrew EDGAR, “Football and the Poetics of Space,” *Sport, Ethics and Philosophy* 9, no. 2 (2015), 153–65, <https://doi.org/10.1080/17511321.2015.1043179>.

⁷ Alexandra DUMITRESCU, “What Is Metamodernism and Why Bother? Meditations on Metamodernism as a Period Term and as a Mode,” *Electronic Book Review*, December 4, 2016,

The beginning of the twenty-first century generally marks the beginning of the metamodern epoch. After the postmodern intellectual system and sensibility allegedly exhausted themselves and lost relevance,⁸ new critical developments emerged (among them altermodernism, digimodernism, or trans-postmodernism). In 2010, the appearance of Timotheus Vermeulen and Robin van den Akker's seminal essay "Notes on Metamodernism" catalyzed the broader audience's interest in metamodernism. The two scholars articulate our cultural moment in the following way:

New generations of artists increasingly abandon the aesthetic precepts of deconstruction, parataxis, and pastiche in favor of *aesth-ethical* notions of reconstruction, myth, and metaxis. These trends and tendencies can no longer be explained in terms of the postmodern. They express a (often guarded) hopefulness and (at times feigned) sincerity that hint at another structure of feeling, intimating another discourse. History, it seems, is moving rapidly beyond its all too hastily proclaimed end.⁹

In their view, the list of characteristics, or strategies, encapsulates also: (1) following Raoul Eshelman, "performatism as the willful self-deceit to believe in – or identify with, or solve – something in spite of itself"; (2) oscillation between "a modern enthusiasm and a postmodern irony, between hope and melancholy, between naïveté and knowingness, empathy and apathy, unity and plurality, totality and fragmentation, purity and ambiguity," understood specifically as "a pendulum swinging between 2, 3, 5, 10, innumerable poles"; (3) Jörg Heiser's reconstructive Romantic Conceptualism evidenced by artworks prioritizing affective and sentimental approach.

These methods and modes of expression pertaining to the contemporary structure of feeling can be traced in Bachelard's *Poetics*, though naturally formulated in different configurations and context. The putative congruity of Bachelard's and metamodern lines of thought serve as a point of departure for the present article, in which I read Bachelard's *Poetics* in relation to metamodernism by tracing within in selected components of the contemporary paradigm in order to accentuate the French philosopher's reverberation in our present cultural moment. The study of his main area of interest –

accessed August 15, 2025, <https://electronicbookreview.com/essay/what-is-metamodernism-and-why-bother-meditations-on-metamodernism-as-a-period-term-and-as-a-mode>.

⁸ Tawfiq YOUSEF, "Modernism, Postmodernism, and Metamodernism: A Critique," *International Journal of Language and Literature* 5, no. 1 (2017): 34.

⁹ Timotheus VERMEULEN and Robin van den AKKER, "Notes on Metamodernism," *Journal of Aesthetics & Culture* 2, no. 1 (2010), <https://doi.org/10.3402/jac.v2i0.5677>.

space – paired with the oscillation between the opposing categories of doubt and naivety, as well as detachment and affect, will evidence “a kind of informed naivety, a pragmatic idealism,” which underlines his thought, offering us a model for engaging with today’s cultural production. What will emerge as a result is the possibility of deploying Bachelard’s concept of the poetic imagination and his notion of the self – both of which “cannot be enclosed in a conceptual framework”¹⁰ – as compatible with the now sought-after reworking of postmodernism’s axioms, or – echoing Jason Ananda Josephson Storm’s “the negation of the negation”¹¹ – redirecting them against themselves.

That is not to claim, of course, that Bachelard is a proto-/pre- metamodernist; rather, the metamodern orientation and theoretical moves, when applied to *Poetics*, will allow us to see Bachelard’s thought as strongly resonating with our dwelling in the current metamodern moment. In turn, we will be presented with a position whose adoption may open up productive ways of being in and engaging with the contemporary world.

1. THE SPACE OF THE METAMODERN

Before discussing the particularities of Bachelard’s thought, it is imperative first to turn our attention to his main area of interest – space – and outline its representation in *Poetics* as seen through the metamodern lens. As Bachelard wrote, “these investigations would deserve to be called topophilia. They seek to determine the human value of the sorts of space that may be grasped, that may be defended against adverse forces, the space we love.”¹² In this orientation, we can identify the neoromantic “oscillating between attempt and failure”¹³ in that, on the one hand, the subject personalizes space, subjects it through their “intimate being”;¹⁴ but, on the other hand, as Bachelard informs us, “[s]pace that has been seized upon by the imagination cannot remain indifferent space subject to the measures and estimates of the

¹⁰ Zbigniew KOTOWICZ, *Gaston Bachelard: A Philosophy of the Surreal* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2016), 87.

¹¹ Jason Ananda JOSEPHSON STORM, *Metamodernism: The Future of Theory* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2021), 6.

¹² Gaston BACHELARD, introduction to *The Poetics of Space*, trans. Maria Jolas (Boston: Beacon Press, 1994), xxxv.

¹³ VERMEULEN and van den AKKER, “Notes on Metamodernism.”

¹⁴ BACHELARD, introduction to *The Poetics of Space*, xxxvi.

surveyor.”¹⁵ Partially maintaining its otherness and independence, the Bachelardian space is thus concomitant with the metamodern space in that in the relationship with the subject the two sides are “seen in their interconnectedness rather than in their order of importance.”¹⁶ Though successful communing with space is possible, it transpires as a ceaseless, indefinite attempt to do so. In effect, the failure of a sort is innate to this endeavor; there is no dominant in such a relationship, only oscillation between active participation and limited resistance between the subject and a given space. To follow Dumitrescu’s metaphor, it is “a palace or house under continuous construction.”¹⁷ The ambiguity found in images of space determines, as Eileen Rizo-Patron notes, “the urgency to work through such images – *weighing* them in our hearts to resolve their ambivalences within ourselves,”¹⁸ even though they eventually may prove unresolvable. Such motivated navigation between two opposite forces is reminiscent of Andre Furlani’s view of metamodernism as “contrasts absorbed into a larger harmony,”¹⁹ but in Bachelard it never reaches the point of conclusion. This striving for unattainable harmony is then perhaps best understood in terms of *as if* epistemology, meaning willful and conscious self-deception informed by a modern naïveté as well as postmodern skepticism.²⁰ Exposing this metamodern-like commitment to an impossible possibility, a given space thus requires to be emotionally pursued *as if* the deed could ever be completed.

In this way, space in Bachelard’s view situates itself in the “between” category, exemplifying (and, by extension, anticipating) “the tension, no, the double-bind, of a modern desire for *sens* and a postmodern doubt about the sense of it all.”²¹ While experiencing space, the Bachelardian subject is suspended between the void of prior unfamiliarity and the illusion of comprehension to come. This process could also be defined as, in Edward S. Casey’s words, “the antithesis between the continuity of duration as sheer becoming,

¹⁵ BACHELARD, xxxvi.

¹⁶ Alexandra DUMITRESCU, “Interconnections in Blakean and Metamodern Space,” *Double Dialogues* 7 (2007), <https://doubledialogues.com/article/interconnections-in-blakean-and-metamodern-space>.

¹⁷ DUMITRESCU, “Interconnections.”

¹⁸ Eileen RIZO-PATRON, “Bachelard’s Hermeneutics: Between Psychoanalysis and Phenomenology,” in *Adventures in Phenomenology: Gaston Bachelard*, ed. Eileen Rizo-Patron, Edward S. Casey, and Jason Wirth (Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 2017), 112.

¹⁹ Andre FURLANI, *Guy Davenport: Postmodern and After* (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 2007), 158.

²⁰ VERMEULEN and van den AKKER, “Notes on Metamodernism.”

²¹ VERMEULEN and van den AKKER, “Notes on Metamodernism.”

a kind of gapless becoming on the one hand, and on the other, the discontinuity introduced by the instant conceived as a mere point, a cut, an interval, and so on.”²² Also, from the specifically metamodern standpoint, by escaping the postmodern skepticisms toward meaning, the subject acknowledges the unavoidability of those skepticisms within the metamodern discourse and then professes that “they must be worked through”²³ despite the impossibility of “beneficial results waiting at the other end.”²⁴ Still, this is not to be understood as a complete repudiation of the possibility of positive results to be derived from such a phenomenological endeavor. Rather, for Bachelard, as well as for metamodernism, what is of utmost importance regarding the self’s positioning in between the prior spatial inexperience and the future comprehension, is the undertaken effort.

Furthermore, Bachelard underlines the importance of openness, writing that “[o]ne must be receptive, receptive to the image at the moment it appears.”²⁵ In his view, the images of spaces one encounters (understood as those evoked by memories, poetry, daydreaming) can, as his example of a house, “give mankind proofs or illusions of stability,”²⁶ thereby establishing order, yet only seemingly. This faculty, however, is neither permanent nor prerequisite, since that lived space might also signify “[c]enters of boredom, centers of solitude, centers of daydream group[ing] together to constitute the oneiric house which is more lasting than the scattered memories of our birth-place.”²⁷ It is indeterminate (“the oneiric house,” impossibly, suggests the unreal as more real than the real), ever susceptible to the ebb and flow of our inner lives. Thus, once again, we find ourselves in the space akin to that of the metamodern moment, which “exposes itself through a-topic metaxis.” By further pondering the house in Bachelard’s *Poetics*, indeed, one is exposed to the study of “a place (topos) that is no (a) place”; “at once a place and not a place, a territory without boundaries, a position without parameters.”²⁸ The paradox embedded in this definition determines precisely the metamodern spatial impossible possibility that the Bachelardian subject occupies.

²² Edward S. CASEY, “The Difference an Instant Makes: Bachelard’s Brilliant Breakthrough,” in *Adventures in Phenomenology: Gaston Bachelard*, ed. Edward S. Casey, Eileen Rizo-Patron, and Jason Wirth (Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 2017), 20.

²³ JOSEPHSON STORM, *Metamodernism*, 4.

²⁴ JOSEPHSON STORM, 4.

²⁵ BACHELARD, Introduction to *The Poetics of Space*, xv.

²⁶ BACHELARD, *The Poetics of Space*, 17.

²⁷ BACHELARD, 17.

²⁸ VERMEULEN and van den AKKER, “Notes on Metamodernism.”

To expand on this point, one can juxtapose this atopolis, for example, with Yi-Fu Tuan's contradistinction elucidated in his *Space and Place*, namely that space is an unknown, transitory area one is not familiar with, which may pose a threat or evoke uncertainty, whereas place is its opposite, signifying safety and pause. The transformation takes place once we get more familiar with a given space and, importantly, "endow it with value."²⁹ In this aspect, Bachelard's representations of (no-)place appears to overturn this straightforward transition by allowing for – in an almost postmodern manner – a plurality of options to co-exist, and, by doing so, preventing hierarchical organization both of the elements constituting one's spatial experience and the space–place binary. In a word, the emotional dimension informs and is informed by the experienced space/place regardless of where the accent falls on the emotional spectrum at any given moment.

Simultaneously, regarding the supposed order, "a situation that lies between mental disorder and reason"³⁰ is created, another in-between area. This, too, is reflected in the metamodern discourse. For Vermeulen and Van den Akker, "if the modern suggests a temporal ordering, and the postmodern implies a spatial disordering, then the metamodern should be understood as a spacetime that is both – neither ordered and disordered."³¹ This state may be an example of the principle of theories overlapping, where contraries (mental disorder and reason) act "as a vital engine that keeps the world spinning and developing."³² To determine whether this viewpoint blurs or sharpens the outline of Bachelard's thought is of secondary importance; crucially, by navigating those opposites, his philosophy emphasizes systematic effort and attempt despite the free flow and instability of states of forces. For Bachelard, (the image of) space, in Jean-Luc Nancy's fitting words, "is above all the *there* of a *beyond*. It is not at all its 'representation': it is a thinking-there, thinking as the effectivity of a *place opening itself to presence*."³³ Once this (reciprocal) openness as a means of moving beyond the impositions and confines of post/modernism is established, "the integration of the individual

²⁹ Yi-Fu TUAN, *Space and Place: The Perspective of Experience* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1977), 6.

³⁰ BACHELARD, *The Poetics of Space*, 175–76.

³¹ VERMEULEN and van den AKKER, "Notes on Metamodernism."

³² DUMITRESCU, "Interconnections in Blakean and Metamodern Space."

³³ Jean-Luc NANCY, *The Ground of the Image*, trans. Jeff Fort (New York: Fordham University Press, 2005), 125.

I into the outer worlds”³⁴ that the Bachelardian subject undergoes merits closer analysis.

2. DOUBT AND NAIVETY

Communing with space, as Bachelard delineates it in his *Poetics*, appears to inherently entail that feeling perhaps synonymous with the postmodern – doubt. In 1992, Zygmunt Bauman aptly remarked that “doubt will never stop haunting our knowledge,”³⁵ and it is exactly this sentiment that informs Bachelard’s cognizance. Scrutinizing a certain mobility of dreams within us, he writes:

Indeed, at times dreams go back so far into an undefined, dateless past that clear memories of our childhood home appear to be detached from us. Such dreams unsettle our daydreaming and we reach a point where we begin to doubt that we ever lived where we lived. Our past is situated elsewhere, and both time and place are impregnated with a sense of unreality. It is as though we sojourned in a limbo of being.³⁶

Thus, under certain circumstances, doubt can be inscribed in the spatio-temporal experience of the past, which may have negative consequences in the form of disrupting one’s integrity. Elsewhere, Bachelard expresses a sort of liberating doubt (and, importantly for the later analysis, the merit of detachment) regarding the causality of the poetic image:

I receive the message of this extraordinary image, and for a brief instant, by detaching me from my life, it transforms me into an imagining being. It is in such moments of reading as this that, little by little, I have come to doubt not only the psychoanalytical origin of the image, but all psychological causality of the poetic image as well. Poetry, in its paradoxes, may be counter-causal, which is yet another way of being of the world, of being engaged in the dialectics of the passions.³⁷

³⁴ Y. O. SHABANOVA, “Metamodernism Man in the Worldview Dimension of New Cultural Paradigm,” *Anthropological Problems in the History of Philosophy*, no. 18 (2020): 126, <https://doi.org/10.15802/ampr.v0i18.221402>.

³⁵ Zygmunt BAUMAN, *Intimations of Postmodernity* (London: Routledge, 1992), 140.

³⁶ BACHELARD, *The Poetics of Space*, 57–58.

³⁷ BACHELARD, 168.

In this way, he embraces counter-causality; that is, he refutes rationality, “hypostatizing the rational to extremely subjective immersion in the abyss of the irrational,”³⁸ which must not be read exclusively as embracing the chaos or discarding it, but instead as an attempt to reconstruct man both from within, “engaged in the dialectics of the passions,” and by exterior means, with the help of cultural products – poetry, in this case. It may thus be said that Bachelard expresses naivety while remaining conscious of the duality of doubt. Essentially, the above quotations communicate that doubt does not necessarily pertain to the negative, but, as in Storm’s philosophy, “can be made to doubt itself, and when cleansed of its negative dogmatism and lingering longing for lost certainties it can show us the way toward humble, emancipatory knowledge.”³⁹ Indeed, Bachelard’s project surely might be utilized to revitalize knowledge about oneself and prompt self-assertion (“the poetic image is under the sign of a new being. This new being is happy man”⁴⁰). It is so especially if we consider Jean-Francois Lyotard’s remark that “knowledge ceases to be an end in itself, it loses its ‘use-value,’”⁴¹ which could be effectively countered by Bachelard’s deeply humanistic thought. Paradoxically, however, the focus on the subjective perception professed in the *Poetics* aligns with the postmodern claim that “all knowledge is relative to an individual’s standpoint.”⁴² Eventually, both sentiments about doubt in relation to (self-)knowledge can and do co-exist in the Bachelardian subject’s enactment of what Storm calls “zetetic abduction”: a reciprocal, open-ended relation performed between the subject and the environment they inhabit.⁴³ Bachelard’s subject, in their attempt to cognize, transcends the doubt–certainty binary, eventually embracing the metamodern both-neither dynamic.⁴⁴

In order to further explicate the process of repurposing doubt as we have come to understand it in the postmodern (as a challenge posed to meaning),

³⁸ SHABANOVA, “Metamodernism Man in the Worldview Dimension of New Cultural Paradigm,” 125.

³⁹ JOSEPHSON STORM, *Metamodernism*, 4.

⁴⁰ BACHELARD, introduction to *The Poetics of Space*, xxix.

⁴¹ Jean-Francois LYOTARD, *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge*, trans. Geoff Bennington and Brian Massumi (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1979), 5.

⁴² JOSEPHSON STORM, *Metamodernism*, 213.

⁴³ Michael KLEINEBERG, “Piaget as Metamodernist,” *Metamodern Theory & Praxis* 1, no. 1 (2024), 33–34.

⁴⁴ VERMEULEN and van den AKKER, “Notes on Metamodernism.”

one can turn to the informative passage from Bachelard's "Corrationalism and The Problematic," in which we read:

The necessary isolation of the subject confronted with a new idea ... do[es] not take place in a general rupture that places the thinking being in the midst of a universal doubt, which would be strictly incommunicable. It requires instead, for each notion, confronted with each object, an appropriate doubt, an *applied doubt*.⁴⁵

Here, Bachelard, apparently aware that "nothing is completely immune from doubt,"⁴⁶ does not try to altogether reject it, which would be redundant, but differentiates – utilizing "unstructuring (as opposed to deconstruction)"⁴⁷ – between the universal, destructive, and the appropriate doubt that, in the context of *Poetics*, emerges upon the encounter with a new image of space. If we understand the former as the specifically postmodern doubt, attacking meaning, and the latter as the "natural," necessary undercurrent of perception, then it will not come as a surprise that in the same text Bachelard presents us with the possibility of "constructive reflection," writing that "the world destroyed by universal doubt could only give way, through constructive reflection, to a *fortuitous* world."⁴⁸ This (prophetic in retrospect) hypothesis echoes the recent incentive to move beyond the postmodern mode and get closer to the metamodern one, which further underlines his thought as a useful perspective in discussions about our current cultural moment.

Since "hostile space is hardly mentioned in [*Poetics*'] pages," Bachelard's investigations of space are, unfortunately, drastically limited; further on, he states that "the space of hatred and combat can only be studied in the context of impassioned subject matter and apocalyptic images."⁴⁹ Though in this prioritization naivety marks its presence most visibly, it is also perceptible on the level of the poetic expression which, significantly, allows us to "feel a poetic power rising *naively* within us. After the original reverberation, we are able to experience resonances, *sentimental* repercussions, reminders of our past."⁵⁰ In *Intuition of the Instant*, Bachelard outright pronounces: "A being

⁴⁵ Gaston BACHELARD, "Corrationalism and the Problematic," *Radical Philosophy*, no. 173 (2012): 27, <https://www.radicalphilosophy.com/article/corrationalism-and-the-problematic>.

⁴⁶ JOSEPHSON STORM, *Metamodernism*, 211.

⁴⁷ VERMEULEN and van den AKKER, "Notes on Metamodernism."

⁴⁸ BACHELARD, "Corrationalism and the Problematic," 27.

⁴⁹ BACHELARD, introduction to *The Poetics of Space*, xxxvi.

⁵⁰ BACHELARD, xxiii.

that offers itself to life, in its passion for novelty, is itself inclined to welcome the present as a promise of the future. The greatest of all forces is the power of naivete."⁵¹ Indeed, the poetic imagination in relation to space outlined in his book solidifies that earlier stance and allows us to see the merit of naivety needed to successfully – in a metamodern manner – “reconstruct the world from an object that [one] transforms magically through his care of it,”⁵² despite and through the doubt that is inseparable from such an endeavor. In effect, it may be asserted that the Bachelardian subject, negotiating between the poles of postmodern doubt and modern naivety, advocates for the latter while opening a space for impulsive action and instability – “the *advantage* of welcoming spontaneity.”⁵³

3. DETACHMENT AND AFFECT

Of note are also the fluctuations of detachment and affect, which intrinsically inform the experience of the Bachelardian subject. Its “constant becoming”⁵⁴ is characterized by shortening of the distance between one’s self and images detached from it by means of affective investment. In shaping such instances, significantly, it is not only the aforementioned openness that is needed but also, as Bachelard calls it, an “activity of poetic spatiality,”⁵⁵ that is striving to imbue space with value and derive value from our lived experience. In his view, however, this affectivity does not necessarily have to be positive for the mutual enrichment to occur: “Indeed, whatever the affectivity that colors a given space, whether sad or ponderous, once it is poetically expressed, the sadness is diminished, the ponderousness lightened. Poetic space, because it is expressed, assumes values of expansion.”⁵⁶ Moreover, the simultaneity of contradictory affects within lived experience is its “metaphysical necessity”; as Bachelard states: “A felt synthesis of contraries: such is the lived instant.”⁵⁷ In this respect, he embraces the metamodern

⁵¹ Gaston BACHELARD, *Intuition of the Instant*, trans. Eileen Rizo-Patron (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 2013), 38.

⁵² BACHELARD, *The Poetics of Space*, 70.

⁵³ BACHELARD, 72.

⁵⁴ Edward K. KAPLAN, “Gaston Bachelard’s Philosophy of Imagination: An Introduction,” *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 33, no. 1 (1972): 3.

⁵⁵ BACHELARD, *The Poetics of Space*, 202.

⁵⁶ BACHELARD, 201.

⁵⁷ BACHELARD, *Intuition of the Instant*, 56.

notion of the self not through oscillation, but through synthesis and integration. Self-expressing through these processes, the Bachelardian subject presents itself in terms of its complexity, while “a holistic perspective becomes available only after each facet [of the individual experience] has been admired, internalized, understood.”⁵⁸

In light of the above, in Bachelard’s approach, we can also detect what Alison Gibbons theorizes as reemerging in today’s cultural landscape, that is “a hermeneutics of the self, a will and ability to process intensities so that we can articulate meaningful emotional reactions or cognitive responses to today’s social situation.”⁵⁹ In such an undertaking, then, one can find a remedy to, as Jeremy F. Lane informs us, Bachelard’s “here and now” characterized by the loss of affect, a disjunction “of the relationship between the minds and bodies of human subjects and the objects of their everyday environment” attributed to the general process of modernization.⁶⁰ Hence, the Bachelardian affect-informed subject strives for expression so as to “rediscover integrating powers and restore images to their entirety,”⁶¹ thereby turning to “a reinvigoration of the sincere and authentic”⁶² advocated by metamodernism. Nevertheless, in the process, the subject’s expression – to follow Fredric Jameson’s later observation on the waning of affect in the postmodern – inevitably entails separation that occurs within the self.⁶³

This separation, or, in other words, detachment of the self within the self is explicit in Bachelard’s *Poetics*, for example, in the following passage concerned with the ability of imagination: “By the swiftness of its actions, the imagination separates us from the past as well as from reality; it faces the future.”⁶⁴ Having this orientation, in Bachelard’s phenomenology, the subject does not outright reject or negate the past (as they probably would, had they reflected purely the postmodern stance), but “gather[s] from this image that all past states are thus integrally preserved ... in such a way that it is the

⁵⁸ DUMITRESCU, “What Is Metamodernism?”

⁵⁹ ALISON GIBBONS, “Metamodern Affect,” in *Metamodernism: Historicity, Affect, and Depth after Postmodernism*, ed. Robin van den Akker, Alison Gibbons, and Timotheus Vermeulen (London: Rowman & Littlefield, 2017), 85.

⁶⁰ JEREMY F. LANE, “Towards a Poetics of Consumerism Gaston Bachelard’s ‘Material Imagination’ and Narratives of Post-War Modernisation,” *French Cultural Studies*, 17, no. 1 (2006), 24.

⁶¹ GASTON BACHELARD, *Earth and Reveries of Repose*, trans. Mary McAllester Jones (Dallas: Dallas Institute Publications, 2011), 218.

⁶² YOUSEF, *Modernism, Postmodernism, and Metamodernism*, 39.

⁶³ FREDRIC JAMESON, *Postmodernism, or, The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1990), 11.

⁶⁴ BACHELARD, introduction to *The Poetics of Space*, xxxiv.

past itself that impels [them] towards the future.”⁶⁵ Thus, though a certain detachment (of the self from its past) must occur for a being’s enrichment, it precisely negates the usual negative sense in which it is often (mis)understood. Furthermore, regarding the detachment from (and the evident reattachment to) the past, in the metamodern, correspondingly, the shape the past takes marks its potential for future transformation.⁶⁶ The reattachment to our past to come is evident, for example, in reliving memories of our former dwelling-places through daydreams,⁶⁷ which allows us to productively amend the matter of those memories by means of emotional investment. Here, uniquely, Bachelard as if reestablishes hope and “formulat[es] anew a narrative of longing structured by and conditioned on a belief ... that was long repressed, for a possibility (a ‘better’ future) that was long forgotten.”⁶⁸ (Traces of this repression and forgetfulness find their expression in his frequent refutation of psychology and psychoanalysis in *Poetics*.)

In one final attempt to grasp Bachelard’s attitude as corresponding to the metamodern, one may also consider his view on miniature, which “sincerely detaches me from the surrounding world, and helps me to resist dissolution of the surrounding atmosphere.”⁶⁹ Here, where “values become condensed and enriched,”⁷⁰ detachment again gets reformulated as a major element of one’s re-integration; not as an emotionless escape, but as a remedy for “a crisis of representation,”⁷¹ to draw from the lexicon of the postmodern. Overall, Bachelard’s *Poetics* manifests the contemporary attitude to eventually move from the cynical to the sincere, all the while affirming the necessity of the coexistence of contradictory affects and, by dint of detachment, negating the negation.

⁶⁵ Jean-François PERRAUDIN, “Bachelard’s ‘Non-Bergsonism,’” in *Adventures in Phenomenology: Gaston Bachelard*, ed. Eileen Rizo-Patron, Edward S. Casey, and Jason Wirth (Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 2017), 31.

⁶⁶ See Josh TOTH, “Toni Morrison’s *Beloved* and the Rise of Historioplasmic Metafiction,” in *Metamodernism: Historicity, Affect, and Depth after Postmodernism*, ed. Robin van den Akker, Alison Gibbons, and Timotheus Vermeulen (London: Rowman & Littlefield, 2017), 45.

⁶⁷ BACHELARD, *The Poetics of Space*, 6.

⁶⁸ VERMEULEN and van den AKKER, “Notes on Metamodernism.”

⁶⁹ BACHELARD, *The Poetics of Space*, 161.

⁷⁰ BACHELARD, 150.

⁷¹ Hans BERTENS, *The Idea of the Postmodern: A History* (London: Routledge, 1995), 10.

CONCLUSION

The investigation into the issue of space as it appears in Bachelard – whether physical or imaginary space of artistic products – shows parallels between the topophilic communing with space, dependent on receptiveness to the spatial experience (as opposed to, for example, Foucault’s heterotopias that hinge on difference), and the oscillation between attempt and failure, which underlines the Bachelardian subject’s endeavor. In this way, it exists as a means but without an end (or an end being the means), reflecting the metamodern *as if* epistemological positioning, or, in other words, impossible possibility that stresses the undertaken effort. The space in his understanding can thus be identified as pertaining to the “between” category, oscillating between the modern desire for sense and the postmodern evocation of senselessness. Enacting the a-topic metaxis, the Bachelardian space reflects the indeterminacy and fluctuation of its definitional properties, and, by those means, embraces and overturns the postmodern “negative” dogmatism.

The dialectic of naivety and doubt that underlines the Bachelardian subject’s attempt to acquire (self-)knowledge and transform themselves into a happier being, does not disregard doubt in lieu of sought-after certainties. Instead, it acknowledges the inevitably destructive force of doubt and moves beyond it by emphasizing doubt’s equally relevant implication – prompting (self-)knowledge. At the same time, Bachelard advocates for naivety in cognizance, as it further opens the (metamodern) self up to a deeper, more aware feeling and being in the world. As metamodernism today, Bachelard does not simply set doubt and naivety against each other but emphasizes the merit and indispensability of both.

Detachment and affect, similarly, inform one another in the process of extracting value from a given space and investing that space with value. Bachelard stresses the necessity of simultaneity and sees merit in emotional contradictions, which parallels the metamodern sentiment to reassert the emotional involvement’s significance within a lived experience. Paradoxically yet complementarily, detachment is innate to such an endeavor and can exist both as a remedy to the outside’s dissolution and as a catalyst for potential future transformation.

Ultimately, Bachelard, both specifically and generally, emphasizes how certain “negative” – in this case, postmodern – attributes or feelings can be reformulated and, if not produce positive outcomes, then at least help us navigate the ambiguities of our “here and now.” The oscillation between

seemingly opposing poles, synthesis, integration, and the emphasis put on creative powers, reconstruction, and openness, allow for viewing the Bachelardian subject as embodying the metamodern informed naivety/pragmatic idealism.

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GASTON BACHELARD'S *THE POETICS OF SPACE* AND METAMODERNISM

SUMMARY

The aim of the article is to analyze Gaston Bachelard's *The Poetics of Space* in relation to metamodernism. The article posits the compatibility of Bachelard's thought with our present cultural moment and illustrates how the Bachelardian subject, through its communing with space, embodies the contemporary cultural paradigm that emphasizes oscillation, reconstruction, and negation of the negative. Due to the Bachelardian subject's experience of space as simultaneously evoking (modernist) desire for sense and (postmodernist) senselessness, as *atopos* emphasizing effort in light of the inevitable failure, Bachelard's space gets situated in the metamodern "between" category. Then, the oscillation between doubt and naivety, enacted by the subject communing with space and acquiring (self-)knowledge, shows that naivety is indispensable in an attempt to reconstruct being, while doubt can be productively repurposed. Furthermore, the navigation between affect and detachment evidences that the Bachelardian subject is affect-informed, open to contradictions, advocating for rediscovering authenticity in the spatial experience despite the detachment of the self occurring in the process. Instead, this 'negative' detachment figures as a productive force, opening the self up for future transformation.

Keywords: Gaston Bachelard; *The Poetics of Space*; metamodernism; oscillation; spatial experience

POETYKA PRZESTRZENI GASTONA BACHELARDA I METAMODERNIZM

STRESZCZENIE

Celem artykułu jest analiza *Poetyki przestrzeni* Gastona Bachelarda w kontekście metamodernizmu. Artykuł postuluje zgodność myśli Bachelarda z naszą obecną sytuacją kulturową i ilustruje, w jaki sposób bachelardowski podmiot, poprzez obcowanie z przestrzenią, ucieleśnia współczesny paradygmat kulturowy, który kładzie nacisk na oscylację, rekonstrukcję i negację negatywnego. Ze względu na doświadczenie bachelardowskiego podmiotu, który postrzega przestrzeń jako jednocześnie wywołującą (modernistyczne) pragnienie sensu i (postmodernistyczną) bezsensowność, jako *atopos* podkreślający staranie w obliczu nieuchronnej porażki, przestrzeń Bachelarda sytuuje się w metamodernistycznej kategorii „pomiędzy”. Następnie oscylacja między wątpliwością a naiwnością, realizowana przez podmiot obcujący z przestrzenią i zdobywający (samo)wiedzę, pokazuje, że naiwność jest niezbędna dla rekonstrukcji bytu, podczas gdy zwątpienie może zostać produktywnie przetworzone. Co więcej, nawigacja między afektem a dystansem dowodzi, że podmiot Bachelarda kieruje się afektem, jest otwarty na sprzeczności i opowiada się za ponownym odkryciem autentyczności w doświadczeniu przestrzennym pomimo występującego w tym procesie zdystansowania własnego „ja”. Zamiast tego „negatywny” dystans stanowi siłę produktywną, otwierającą własne „ja” na przyszłą transformację.

Słowa kluczowe: Gaston Bachelard; *Poetyka przestrzeni*; metamodernizm; oscylacja; doświadczenie przestrzenne