



Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski"
Faculty of Classical and Modern Philology
Department of English and American Studies

Kiril Romanov Hadzhikosev

Center and Periphery in British and American Modernism: James Joyce, Jean Rhys, Djuna Barnes, Thomas Wolfe

PhD Abbreviation

Supervisor:

Prof. Madeleine Danova

Sofia 2025

Table of Contents

Introduction.....2

Chapter 1. Center and Periphery in Modernism from a (Non-)Post-Modernist Perspective.....11

Chapter 2. Politics of Space: The Modernist Artistic Condition.....16

Chapter 3. Deconstructing Conmee: Mediating between Center and Periphery through Operators, Bodies, and Excess in the “Wandering Rocks” chapter of James Joyce’s *Ulysses*.....18

Chapter 4. Decentralizing Anna Morgan’s Agency in Jean Rhys’s *Voyage in the Dark*.....23

Chapter 5. Djuna Barnes Narrating the Peripheralized Body in *Nightwood*.....28

Chapter 6. Recuperating a Peripheralized Wolfe: Life-in-Death and The Power of Bad Writing.....33

Conclusion.....37

Works Cited.....41

Contributions.....43

Publications.....46

The dissertation, *Center and Periphery in British and American Modernism: James Joyce, Jean Rhys, Djuna Barnes, Thomas Wolfe*, investigates the unique artistic position of modernist authors at the beginning of the 20th century through the lens of space (cultural, linguistic, socio-political) and language (identity, subjectivity, truth). While modernism is an international phenomenon, the dissertation argues that the authors also pay special attention to the influence of the local on human thought and the particular (or different) in this space. The urban environment, for example, which is “increasingly characterized by a multiplicity, mobility, and diversity of social exchange among bodies, machines, commodities, information, and signage” (Kalaidjian et al 2005: 9), creates the conditions for an unprecedented sociocultural spectacle. In this context, the study examines modernist authors’ approaches to a dynamically changing world in which traditional categories and ways of thinking were breaking down, giving rise to the need for new wholes. This is done through a detailed analysis of the works of James Joyce, Jean Rhys, Djuna Barnes, and Thomas Wolfe.

There are several key aspects which the dissertation takes into account and uses as tools to analyze the modernist artistic paradigm. For instance, the study introduces an apophatic approach to reading modernist texts, emphasizing the importance of understanding subjectivity, identity, language, and being through engaging in analyzing what remains beyond the scope of language to signify and determine. In these lines of thought it highlights the “excess of signification” in modernist works, exploring aspects that go beyond language and logic. For instance modernist authors refuse the prospect of an easy translation of an emotion into a signified (cf. Barthes 1985: 273). The concept of the “excess of signification” is used to deconstruct the center-periphery dichotomy. Although one of the main claims is that the periphery is a construct of the center, the periphery cannot be reduced to the ontological foundations of the center – it always “exceeds” it in one way or another.

This “excess” is presented as a key aspect of postmodernism. It establishes modernism as a precursor to post-modernism, showing how modernist authors anticipated many post-structuralist ideas (such as those of space and identity). This is achieved by a critical exploration of the body as a key site of knowledge, focusing on its relationship to power and social norms and also how the interrelationship between power and social norms is being inscribed onto its territory. But the body-power relationship is reinterpreted by modernists by shifting the focus of power dynamics from the objective to the subjective, examining how individuals internalize and

challenge official narratives. In doing so the study highlights the ethical dimension of otherness, dissociating it from powerlessness and seeing it as a valuable perspective for critique. Being other does not mean being powerless. This distinction is used as a valuable critical perspective through which to rethink the relationship between center and periphery.

Within this analytical framework the concepts of the “unthought” and the “cut” are introduced, demonstrating how modernist literature disrupts traditional modes of thought. The dissertation provides a nuanced re-evaluation of the selected authors, exploring both their similarities and differences in their approaches. Finally, the study underscores modernism’s role in the democratization and diversification of literary approaches, encouraging readers to rethink the relationship between text and context.

Before we proceed, however, some terms need further explication.

One such term is “excess of signification”. The excess of signification can be defined as that which destabilizes the symbolic order by surpassing the structured, iterable system of meaning. Within the context of post-structuralism and semiotics, signification operates within a network of *différance* (Derrida), where meaning emerges through difference and deferral. However, excess marks the point at which this system encounters its own limit—where meaning either proliferates uncontrollably or escapes articulation altogether.

This excess is inherently linked to the real (Lacan), the unthought (Heidegger), and the outside of language (Blanchot, Foucault). It is the remainder that resists assimilation into the logos, the law, and the structured possibility of repetition. Derrida’s notion of supplementarity suggests that every system of signification harbors an inherent instability, as meaning both depends on and exceeds the structural play of signs. The supplement is both necessary and in excess—at once completing and undoing the structure.

Excess of signification is also closely tied to *jouissance* (Lacan, Kristeva), where meaning is overwhelmed by an affective or corporeal intensity that exceeds linguistic containment. This links it to the semiotic *khôra* (Kristeva), the pre-symbolic space of rhythmic, bodily expression that precedes and disrupts the symbolic order. Similarly, in Deleuze’s philosophy, excess manifests in the line of flight, deterritorializing signification and opening onto the unstructured, the unthinkable.

The surplus of meaning or affect that eludes, disrupts, or exceeds structured signification, resisting incorporation into the symbolic order and pointing toward the unthought, the real, or the indeterminate outside of language.

A second term is that of the cataphatic-apophatic limit of determination (here the limit signals an analysis of the internal limits of signification in the form of a spectrum). The cataphatic-apophatic spectrum of determination refers to the continuum along which the possibility of thought and definition unfolds – ranging from the affirmation of meaning (cataphatic determination) to its negation and withdrawal (apophatic indeterminacy). Within this spectrum, signification does not operate as a fixed structure but as a dynamic process, oscillating between articulation and erasure, presence and absence, determinacy and excess.

At one pole, cataphatic determination seeks to define, structure, and stabilize meaning through predication and conceptualization. At the other, apophatic negation unsettles these determinations, revealing the insufficiency of language and pointing toward what remains unsayable, indeterminate, or beyond thought. However, these are not static opposites but interdependent forces within a fluid spectrum, where meaning is constantly shaped and unmade.

What lies beyond this spectrum is the excess of signification – a surplus that neither cataphatic assertion nor apophatic negation can fully encompass. This excess manifests as a destabilizing force, akin to *différance* (Derrida), the real (Lacan), or the unthought (Heidegger), disrupting the process of determination and exposing the horizon of what cannot be fully conceptualized.

Thus, the cataphatic-apophatic spectrum of determination can be defined as a dynamic field in which meaning emerges through the interplay of affirmation and negation, extending from structured determination to the point where signification destabilizes, giving way to an excess that exceeds thought and definition.

The third term which requires explication is that of the “cut.” The cut acts as a rupture or interruption within the fluid, ongoing interaction between the cataphatic and apophatic dimensions. The cut introduces a discontinuity or break that disrupts the spectrum of determination, revealing the event that is neither fully predictable nor contained within the logic of the symbolic order.

In this context, the cut acts as both a moment of distinction and a threshold. It marks the point at which meaning is no longer stabilized or fully captured by either affirmation (cataphatic

determination) or negation (what might be thought of as an apophatic withdrawal). Instead, the cut exposes the excess – the dimension of meaning that is not reducible to structured signification, revealing the unthinkable, the real, or the unthought.

The cut is, therefore, a dynamic point of potentiality, one that signals the opening up of possibilities, a rupture that cannot be fully calculated or predicted. It introduces the metaphysics of the event into the fabric of meaning – an unpredictable force that disrupts the established patterns of the symbolic order. The cut does not simply create a boundary but rather enacts a transformation in the conceptual infrastructure itself, introducing an openness and flux into what was previously determined.

Thus, the cut can be defined as a rupture within the dynamic interplay of cataphatic and apophatic determination that introduces incalculable potentiality, opening up the structure to the event and revealing the excess of meaning that transcends the boundaries of signification, symbolizing both disruption and transformation within the conceptual order.

These contributions collectively showcase the dissertation's novel approach to modernist literature, moving beyond conventional readings and highlighting the complex interplay of power, language, and identity in the works of these four key authors.

The introduction to the dissertation, *Center and Periphery in British and American Modernism: James Joyce, Jean Rhys, Djuna Barnes, Thomas Wolfe*, lays the groundwork for the study by outlining its central themes, objectives, and theoretical framework. It addresses the unique artistic and historical context in which modernist authors found themselves, particularly concerning the concepts of space, language, and identity. The introduction also emphasizes the link between modernist and post-modernist thought and the importance of understanding modernism to grasp contemporary perspectives on truth and power.

One of the core objectives of this chapter are to examine the artistic condition of modernist authors at the start of the 20th century. The modernist sensibility envisioned the function and aesthetics of the novel from a perspective which would become after the Second World War conducive of the post-modernist vigorous deconstruction of metaphysics of presence, phallogocentrism, the figure of the author, the role of the reader, the relation between fiction and reality, culture and technology (cf. Barthes 1989: 49-55; Foucault 1984: 102; Lyotard 1979; Jameson 1991; Baudrillard 1981). It acknowledges modernism as an international

phenomenon, yet one that was also deeply affected by local and particular factors such as space and language. Within this context, the chapter explores how modernist writers grappled with the effects of the urban environment, which served as a stage for an unprecedented socio-cultural spectacle. For modernists, however, language is not a given, but becomes a construct that can be used to deconstruct the concepts of the self and the other, which in turn are intertwined with notions of center and periphery. In juxtaposing language and space, modernist authors re-examined the practical and theoretical framework of a stable center in order to introduce inconsistencies and discrepancies within a logocentric totality. The center is associated with stability, as well as presence, or in other words, with an immanent logocentric totality that encompasses the periphery. Rather than seeing the center as fixed and hierarchical, however, modernist authors explored how relationships and assemblages formed by what exceeds the logocentric hierarchical structure deconstruct the very concept of identity and subjectivity. It is in this internal dynamic, open to the other and even to everything that lies outside it, that we can trace the ways in which modernists present the center and the periphery as an assemblage of relations and effects, rather than as a stable unit encompassing everything.

Modernist literature, in that sense, acted as a driving force of social change by embodying and giving aesthetic form to social dissent. This dissent was rapidly being deterritorialized based on unacknowledged rules and codes, making it a key focus of the study. As such, deconstruction of essentialism becomes a key aspect which is explored in the dissertation. Modernist authors initiated a polyvalent interrogation into essentialism, metaphysics of production, social production, subjectivity, identity, and logocentric discourse by engaging into an exploration of difference. Difference, as a core concept, is viewed, in this respect, not as a source of conflict, but as the foundation for a more positive dialectic. Modernist authors, influenced by the urban environment, saw difference as a way to understand the other as an individual being, rather than as a negative repetition of the same. This perspective anticipates later humanistic thought.

In order to draw the scope of an implicit humanistic scope, the ontological links between modernism and post-modernism are drawn to the foreground, arguing that modernist literature laid the groundwork for the post-modernist deconstruction of metaphysics of presence. Many of the narrative techniques used by post-modern authors can already be found in modernist works. For instance the modernists present a metaphysics of the event that “transcends” the structure of the event. If the structure of the event acts as a signifier lending stability to the real, the subject,

or the future, the metaphysics of the event, on the other hand, reconfigures origins in such a way so as to ultimately resist retrospective analysis (cf. Derrida 2000: 543) or, put otherwise, to inscribe the event within the phantasm of the image, thus drawing closer focus on how a critique against the socio-cultural architecture of dichotomies was launched by modernist authors. Not only this but both movements engaged with textuality and the critique of metaphysics which make the exploration of modernist lines of thought of special importance to contemporary research on identity politics and subjectivity. Resisting the urge to reconstruct a centre or an unchanging identity is one of the main ways in which modernists foreground the dynamic presence and power of the periphery. As such the study highlights that post-modernism underscores the ontological foundations of modernism.

Modernism already prefigures much of the strategies employed by post-modernist authors to destabilize the conceptual infrastructure upon which the metaphysics of presence and production is based. For instance, the importance of the unwritten, the infinitely written, and the impossibly written figures as a prominent aesthetic in modernist textuality. These concepts are seen as embodiments of acts of resistance that make their way into the socio-aesthetic body of the post-modern age. Modernism thinks of revolution (or the reversal of the center-periphery dichotomy) as a form of textuality that recognizes the infinite possibilities of the subject to remain divided within itself. The problem of revolution – which this dissertation recognizes as intimately intertwined with the problem of the “immobile” center about which the periphery “revolves” – in modernist literature could be said to reside on the plane of writing and enunciation within the context of what is possible to write (to say in written form) and what is no longer possible to write (or what remains beyond the purely scriptible) (cf. Barthes 1974: 34). The idea of engaging with a text whose desire is to tell everything while acknowledging the infinite possibilities of the subject remaining divided becomes thus central to exploring issues concerning history and the division of the self.

The study considers the question of history as marked by internal divisions and non-self-equality, arguing that modernist writing engages with the present through overwriting or underwriting the past. This involves engaging with history actively, while maintaining a relative distance from it.

This strategy of destabilizing the center-periphery dichotomy becomes especially potent when considered within the context of the apophatic mode of interrogating the ontology

grounding official narratives. The apophatic approach to knowledge is taken as a method in which emphasis is placed on what cannot be said or expressed through language. This approach rests on the idea that there are aspects of reality or experience that cannot be precisely defined or explained because they transcend the limitations of language and conceptual thinking. In this sense the apophatic mode is a mode of determining a being that is correlated with an excess of signification that remains beyond writing. Modernist authors recognized the power of not naming things, which is different from remaining silent about them. This approach highlights the limits of language and the importance of what remains unsaid. This approach to the *name*¹ can be used to build a powerful set of methodological tools that can be used to deconstruct the center. The name already, in one way or another, indicates the presence of death where death is denied in its material reflection (Derrida 1985: 7). The praxis of death, of engaging with this inescapable objective limit, is already conceived in the early 20th century as always marked by the Other, by the other that encompasses it in its totality and makes death different from itself. The name, thus bound up with absence, death, the other and the periphery, forms the basis of the techniques, modalities and ontologies through which modernism challenges our notions of the world and of being as depicted by the notion of centre.

Ultimately the deconstructed center necessitates a comparative paradigm shift. In order to identify the topics and fields where modernist literature broke with its inherited codes of signification one needs to trace a shift in the paradigm through which the perception of what held the world together was fundamentally changed during the 1910s-1930s. This can be achieved by incorporating post-modernist approaches to analyzing the center-periphery dichotomy in British and American modernism. The dissertation states that this inclusion is seen as necessary for a comprehensive understanding of modernist literature and its legacy.

The post-modernist perspective includes a discussion of discourse rather than text. This approach seeks to understand the metaphysics of the event, rather than just its structure, in

¹ According to Jacques Derrida, the deconstruction of the “name” questions its traditional functions and the stability of its meaning. In the classical philosophical tradition, the name is often seen as a bearer of identity directly linked to its referent (e.g., proper names are considered designations of specific entities). Derrida shows, however, that this relation is not so unambiguous, and that the name is always subject to the play of difference (*différance*). Within the notion of the trace, the name is neither fully present nor fully absent. It always points to something that happened before it and to possible future uses. It should also be noted that in the classical philosophical tradition the name claims uniqueness, especially the proper name, but in order to function as a sign it must be repeatable. It is this duality (the *aporia* of uniqueness and repetition) that calls into question traditional ideas of names as stable and unique.

modernist works. Some of the key concepts thus employed are, for instance, the metaphysics of the event which focuses on the non-essentialistic being of the other. The other, within this analytical paradigm, is seen as an incalculable event, and no totality based on language can exhaust the metaphysics of the other. Modernist literature dramatizes how the structure of the event – an oxymoron in itself which more or less signifies the recognition of the insufficiencies and inherent contradictions in Enlightenment humanism identified by modernist literature – already recognizes the face of the other as “infinitely foreign” and as “situated on another plane than language” (Levinas 1969: 194, 155) but fails to include the metaphysics of the other. Modernist literature thus not only dramatizes how the structure of the event reveals the insufficiencies in Enlightenment humanism but also provides a map of alterity rather than just traces of identity. The structure of the event is not only grounded in absence, but also predicated on lack, the abyss, and the foreign. Within this context, the other becomes immanent to the structure of the center.

As such, modernism acts as an attempt to reformulate the metaphysics of the center, envisioning a post-modernist condition where the center lacks an essence. This involves conceiving of the center as a moving, dialogical, or abstract entity. The modernist discourse is, in practice, a realization that this dynamic or dialogism of the already moving center and the autonomous periphery is based on a deeper “crisis” (cf. Kristeva 1982: 208), on a perpetual apocalypse which reveals that there are neither centers nor peripheries, but only assemblages and effects (they cannot be destroyed or replaced; their disintegration or different connectivity simply leads to the formation of other machines², which actualize them but do not change their content). Ultimately, this notion of the apocalypse (in the etymological sense of the word as meaning “revelation”) as a permanent end, a permanent unveiling or discovery, leads to a kind of literature – namely modernist literature – which provides the framework for deconstructing various dichotomies, leading not to their reversal, but to their deterritorialization in post-

² In the context of their collaborative work, for Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari the machine is not a specific mechanism or object, but a process of coupling between heterogeneous elements. It is not based on a stable identity, but functions through flows, connections and discontinuities. The Deleuzian “machine” does not operate according to mechanical determinism, but according to the principle of becoming (devenir). This means that it does not follow a pre-established plan, but transforms itself through various connections and mutations. Machines therefore always exist in interconnections - there are no closed, self-sufficient machines. Each machine connects to another to produce new functions and meanings. In *A Thousand Plateaus*, Deleuze and Guattari introduce the idea of abstract machines, and it is as such that they are considered in this dissertation - non-linear, non-physical constructions that organize flows of desires, meanings, and social forces. (For example, capitalism can be understood as an abstract machine that reconfigures social and economic relations.)

modernist thought. Of course, we are still far from the anti-essentialism of the postmodern era, from the denial of the essence of the centre and the periphery, but in high literary modernism we can already see their “reversal” (the centre can also be a periphery, just as the periphery can just as well become the centre), which takes the form of a historiographical (instead of historical) or autobiographical (instead of biographical) narrative. As such, modernist literature is seen as prefiguring post-modernist interrogations into subjectivity, autonomy, ontology, identity, and language.

Within this context, the introduction posits the idea of “crisis” as a central concept to the modernist experience, which signifies the continuous shift of the center and the rifts within it introduced by the periphery. The notion of “crisis” is perceived as a lens of difference, as a lens of thinking the same and the other, which had been internalized and deterritorialized by modernist authors. As such, the concept of the center becomes invested with a non-essentialistic concept of difference, one where sexual, class, social, racial, national, and biological differences were seen as problematic. Essentially, the modernist view of difference is focused on relationality and transformation, rather than agency and self-identity.

This ultimately leads to the identification of the cataphatic-apophatic limit of modernist interrogation. The cataphatic approach to knowledge, unlike the apophatic approach, uses positive statements that define or describe what exists. The cataphatic approach aims to formulate knowledge in clear and concrete terms that explain or define things, phenomena, or concepts. This approach seeks to reveal and explain reality through positive, constructive categories and through objective expressions of facts that can be understood and described. In other words, it is defined by a movement “from fact to essence” (Ricoeur 1967: 91) which is a territorial movement as much as a linguistic movement. In its discursive effects such mode of reasoning is rationally positive and ontologically in the affirmative: it not only moves from fact to essence but – and this is extremely important to keep in mind when discussing the ontosophic coupling of center and periphery, axiomatics and alterity – in arrogating the right to know and represent the particular as the one (cf. Derrida 2009: 46), creates facts out of essences which are then distributed across the whole phenomenological field of particularities with all the power of legislative institutions.

This limit highlights the limitations of a kind of thinking predicated on the “either-or” dichotomy. This limit is seen as a way of understanding the relationship between language and

being and the event. In other words, the event (in the form of “either-or...” and so on *ad infinitum*) cannot be fully captured by the possibilities and even the desire of the cataphatic approach to exhaust being. The modernist discourse is viewed as an event with the text (thus signaling its “withness”), it is with the being of imperialist discourse and yet beyond it (in an apophatic way), which causes changes that cannot be explained by the context or the structure itself.

The dissertation seeks to bring the literary artifacts of these modernist authors closer to contemporary culture by analyzing their perception of a world based on difference. This suggests that the themes and concerns of modernist literature remain relevant to contemporary society. The dissertation suggests that revisiting modernist literature is essential for understanding current perspectives on truth, agency, and subjectivity, including post-truth politics. This demonstrates the ongoing relevance of modernist thought to contemporary issues; hence its attempt to shift the focus of analysis of power dynamics from an objective analysis of center and periphery onto the subjective plane as it has been represented in modernist literature.

The dissertation focuses on the works of these four authors, specifically James Joyce’s *Ulysses*, Jean Rhys’s *Voyage in the Dark*, Djuna Barnes’s *Nightwood*, and Thomas Wolfe’s *Look Homeward, Angel*. These texts are used to outline a larger theoretical analysis of a shift in the perception of what held the world together during the 1910s-1930s.

In conclusion, the introduction to this dissertation frames a comprehensive study of modernism through the lens of the center-periphery dichotomy, emphasizing its impact on literature, society and culture. It establishes a theoretical foundation, outlines its objectives and introduces the methodological approach that will be used in the dissertation. It highlights that modernist literature engaged with the questions of power, identity, and alterity, which are still relevant today, and that it also prefigured post-modernist thought. The introduction also notes that the study will use the works of James Joyce, Jean Rhys, Djuna Barnes, and Thomas Wolfe to explore these themes in depth, with the goal of contributing to a deeper understanding of modernist literature and its legacy.

Chapter 1 of the dissertation, “Center and Periphery in Modernism from a (Non-)Post-Modernist Perspective,” explores the concept of the center-periphery dichotomy in early 20th-century modernist literature, examining it through both modernist and post-modernist lenses.

Modernist authors sought not to privilege the center or stable metaphysical objects of contemplation, but rather to re-evaluate the center and periphery based on the relationships and assemblages they form. The concept of the assemblage is a multidimensional one that links desire to behavior, where desire is not subjectivized but is perceived in its machinic modality (cf. Buchanan 2020: 56, 62). Assemblage is a set of conditions that actualize reality by linking the dimension of content to that of expression (cf. Buchanan 2020: 132). Hence the spatial, social, and political relationships within the context of the center and periphery, metropolis and colony, were seen as destabilized and hence heavily impacted on modernist authors and their work. They moved away from principles of repetition found in realist and naturalist literature, instead embracing difference as a foundation for their works.

Difference, within this context, is seen as drawing the infrastructure of a more positive dialectic. They aimed to account for the other not as a mere image or repetition of the same, but as an individual being. This approach anticipates later humanisms by recognizing the importance of the other in shaping identity and understanding the world.

Presenting a stark critique of various dichotomies, the modernist interrogation of space and language laid the groundwork for the post-modernist deconstruction of metaphysics of presence, the figure of the author, and the relationship between fiction and reality. As such, modernist literature becomes a driving force of social change, catalyzing profound transformations in how social dissent was embodied and aesthetically represented. This dissent was seen and is analyzed as a response to the unacknowledged rules and codes that were rapidly deterritorializing and dehumanizing society. The modernist movement was essentially a search for a new way of expression, of a new socio-aesthetic form, or a literature that was no longer possible. This literature that was deemed no longer possible grounded modernists' perception of justice and thus opened up the possibility to deconstruct the center as a signifier of stability, presence, power, and the sovereign. As such this activity aimed to challenge pre-conceived notions about the world and being.

The question thus becomes one of ontological foundations. Post-modernism highlights the ontological foundations of modernism, revealing the critique launched against the socio-cultural architecture that kept differences in place based on various dichotomies. Authors like Joyce, Rhys, Barnes, and Wolfe approached the problem of center and periphery from a dialogical perspective, exploring it through the perspective of what post-modern theory would

term affect, agency, and post-truth politics. In literary modernism we can trace the beginning of these contemporary issues.

The notion of crisis becomes, thus, a central issue. As a continuous shift of the center and the continual rifts within the center introduced by the purported periphery his perspective sees the center-periphery dichotomy not as fixed, but as a dynamic, evolving relationship. It becomes a dynamic totality, where no fixed places and hence identities are possible. Identity in this context becomes fluid, as there are no fixed linguistic and cultural territories to construct or axiomatize it. Hence the analysis of the relationship between center and periphery moves beyond a simple unilateral definition. The definition itself is variable, and its mode of formulation is perceived as a dialogical event. This concept of the definition as multilateral challenges the idea that the subaltern is either silent or not, and the other is either listening or not. The focus shifts to how grand narratives are internalized and centralized by the subject through psychological and linguistic mechanisms but also how they cannot exhaust the possibility of an event that could radically change our notions of identity.

High modernists had already envisioned a departure from the project of mastering a system, anticipating the post-structuralist turn. We already see the post-modernist radical scepticism in the modernist era. This radical scepticism (which is very far from Nietzschean nihilism) towards official narratives and the possibility of writing literature is analyzed from an apophatic perspective, which recognizes the limits of language and the importance of what remains unsaid. This approach acknowledges the impossibility of fully capturing an experience or idea and seeks meaning in what exceeds the limits of language. For modernist authors, the possibility of justice manifests itself in the moments when the unspoken takes over and becomes a counterbalance to humanity's logocentric desire to reproduce itself in a solely technological (which does not necessarily mean machine-like) way (see Heidegger 1998: 197). Within this nexus point we can see how the gap between the aesthetics of modernism and the metaphysics of post-modernism is bridged (post-modernism still tries to humanize the machine by questioning the foundations of art, e.g. French anti-art of the 60s and 70s).

The methodology employed by modernist authors produces a fragmented world. This calls for a need to address the modernist artistic condition from a polylateral perspective which presents an assemblage of different aspects, moving away from a singular, unified view. This approach is not meant to present a map to navigate the philosophical problem of the center and

the periphery, but rather traces the gaps, flows and excesses that have shaped the modernist canon. Hence the need to navigate through the parallaxic vision, which implies that in its methodology the dissertation draws on both structuralist and post-structuralist methods of analyzing the center-periphery dichotomy.

The non-post-modernist approach analyses the center-periphery dichotomy from a geopolitico-logical perspective. This approach examines political power based on socio-economic conditions and the historical organization of knowledge, as well as how narratives shape our understanding of identity, subjectivity, and history. But it also acknowledges that the terms “center” and “periphery” have different connotations and denotations before and after the Second World War. Consequently, we need to account for the linguistic evolution of terms associated with socio-economic issues and consider how the focus of literary criticism has shifted to a large extent from a discussion of space, voice, and privacy to an investigation of the ontological and epistemic implications of power, ideology, and hegemony in the post-modern age. Modernist authors were increasingly aware of the ideological and practical aspects of maintaining the law within the metropolitan center and the colonies. This implies that we need to see how language is not just a tool for communication but also a medium for power relations.

For this reason, the chapter introduces the concept of the metaphysics of the event, contrasting it with the structure of the event. It should be noted that this is not only the introduction of another dichotomy within the theoretical study of centre and periphery, but also a way of problematizing the relationship between the language used by the author and the possibility of a language that makes justice possible. The structure of the event acts as a signifier that lends stability, as a sign in the literature that gives stability to the assemblage in its various manifestations or expressions. In this way, the effects of the possible can be defined and therefore politicized. The metaphysics of the event, on the other hand, allows for a deeper exploration of the meaning and implications of the event within the structure. This perspective sees the event as modally distinct from being, which even “exceeds” the literary event, but is in close relation to the impossibility of literature. The event in literature is centered by the author’s exercise of hegemonic power. From a structuralist perspective the author’s enunciative position serves as a central element connecting disparate narratives. The authorial figure is identified as a site of complete understanding of the work and its being. As such the author becomes a

metaphysical center and the creative gesture of the artist is highlighted as a way of building worlds that connect to the real, functioning as a kind of signifying machine.

But the modernist way of thinking dramatized the dialogization of the image of the text and the figure of the author to adapt to the changing socio-cultural and political environment. The limits of the cataphatic-apophatic modernist interrogation into being are predicated on the “unthought” or the uncodifiable and the irreducible. There is always already something beyond or above signification which disturbs even the metaphysical grounding of the author as an authorial figure. For that reason the democratic quality of literary activity is seen as residing in the idea that there are no fixed centers or peripheries, no fixed measure according to which to calculate the authorial presence and total absorption of signification or the absolute deterritorialization of the signifier (cf. Derrida 1992: 23). Literature serves as a ground to rethink the role of the individual as an institutionalized periphery.

The historical context profoundly influenced the modernist way of thinking and its themes. WWI challenged existing ideologies and the concept of a stable center. The chapter points out that modernist literature reacted to the growing concern with the meaning of history and the role of the individual in social life (and hence of the author) during this time period. After the Great War the focus shifted from discussing space, voice, and privacy to the investigation of the ontological foundations of power and ideology. Hence, from a contemporary perspective, the current take on truth, agency, subjectivity, and the corporatization of the university can only be understood by revisiting the modernist period.

To conclude, chapter 1 of the dissertation frames the central concerns of the study, positioning the center-periphery dichotomy as a key site of analysis within modernist literature. It establishes the theoretical and methodological groundwork for exploring how modernist authors grappled with questions of power, identity, and alterity, setting the stage for the more focused analyses of individual authors and texts in the subsequent chapters. It highlights how modernist authors were becoming ever more aware of the ideological and practical aspects of maintaining the law within the metropolitan center and in the colonies. In responding to the effects of imperialism, modernist literature sought new ways of conceptualizing power beyond a simple confrontation between center and periphery. More than a simple confrontation between the powerful and the powerless, this chapter emphasizes the linguistic character of the shift in perspectives on power during the modernist period.

Chapter 2 of the dissertation, titled “Politics of Space: The Modernist Artistic Condition,” delves into the complex relationship between space, power, and artistic expression in modernist literature. It aims to navigate the different perspectives offered by structuralist and post-structuralist methods of critical analysis. The chapter explores how modernist authors grappled with the concepts of center and periphery, and how their work prefigures the larger deterritorializations of these concepts in the post-modernist period. The chapter presents a fragmented approach to the modernist artistic condition, addressing it from multiple angles, rather than offering a singular, unified perspective.

In adopting the parallax vision, one can examine the center-periphery dichotomy using both structuralist and post-structuralist methods of analysis. This approach acknowledges that the meanings and implications of the terms “center” and “periphery” have changed over time, particularly after the two World Wars. This allows for a multi-faceted view of how these concepts operate within modernist texts. Not only this. This fragmentation reflects the pluralization of ontologies and the loss of epistemic orientation experienced during the inter-war period. In serving as a meta-dramatization of the crisis and multiplicity that modernist authors were grappling with, this view avoids offering a singular “map” for navigating the philosophical problem of center and periphery, and instead traces the gaps and flows that continue to shape the modernist canon.

The modernist artistic condition becomes a distinct territory of the human condition, which exists beyond the traditional ontologies and political structures of center and periphery. Within this framework of thinking and working, modernists sought to understand the rules that govern the identification and interrogation of the self and the other within this space. The way in which the fixed meanings and power structures associated with these terms are broken down and destabilized already has a profound impact on how we conduct politics and how the other is seen as other. Modernist authors were already pushing against the boundaries of traditional power dynamics and spatial organization that are grounded on classical ontology and metaphysics. This implies that the deterritorialization of knowledge, inscribed in modernist and post-modernist art, not only leads to the fragmentation and relativization of concepts such as center and periphery, but also profoundly impacts how we perceive the individual within this deconstructed spatial category.

Modernists felt that the individual was profoundly suffering from disorientation. This meta-narrative reconstruction of the loss of metaphysical orientation so poignantly felt by modernists not only attempts to address a diversity of topics connected to transcendental homelessness but also seeks to see how this metaphysical disorientation is connected to the plurality and diversity of human artistic activity. Modernist authors refuse the prospect of an easy translation of an emotion into a signified (cf. Barthes 1985: 273). Even though we can postulate an inter-systemic translation between theory and praxis, between modernism and post-modernism, structuralism and post-structuralism this chapter introduces the idea of “losing something” in translation – not interlinguistic translation, but intersystemic translation (between entities and concepts). This “tool” is used to interpret the traumatic modernist experience of self-alienation as well as the post-modernist condition of transcendental homelessness.

The focus of analysis thus shifts from the objective forms of center and periphery to the subjective plane. This focus on the subjective seeks to understand how it is dramatized in high modernist art. Within this assemblage of aspects we cannot trace a linear argument. Modernist artistic products are not linear in nature but supralinear. There is a focus on gaps and excesses in this respect. This focus on the unsaid and the unrepresented, under the paradigm of the apophatic approach to knowledge, highlights the limits of language and the importance of considering what lies beyond established structures – the other, absolute alterity, infinity, the future, responsibility, justice. The fragmented and multifaceted nature of the modernist experience is mirrored in the theoretical approach of the chapter which does not provide a map for navigating the philosophical problem of center and periphery but rather traces the gaps, flows, and excesses that have made and continue to make the modernist canon. In determining being (a proper ontological act) one engages in a cataphatic determination of its elements. This is a mode of fitting the other within a system of knowledge. This system predetermines in essence what is known and what remains beyond the scope of knowledge (the apophatic territory). In tracing the possibilities, contradictions and failures of the positive apophatic approach of modernist interrogation to naming and overcoming crisis, the modernist artistic condition serves as an assemblage which can be used to interrogate being and art from a polylateral position. This approach involves considering the multiple perspectives and facets of the modernist experience rather than settling on a single interpretation.

In conclusion, chapter 2 serves as a bridge between the theoretical foundations laid out in chapter 1 and the specific textual analyses that follow. It frames the modernist artistic condition as a site of intense struggle over the meaning and organization of space, power, and identity. By adopting a fragmented and polylateral methodology, the chapter highlights the plurality of perspectives in modernism, its challenge to established norms and its prefiguration of post-modernist thought through what is identified as the cataphatic-apophatic limit of modernist interrogation of being and classical ontology and metaphysics. The chapter's emphasis on concepts such as deterritorialization, loss of metaphysical orientation, cataphatics, apophatics, and the crisis within the center provides a theoretical framework for the subsequent chapters. It also underscores the idea that the modernist literary project was not only an aesthetic endeavour but also a deeply political and philosophical one. The chapter traces how modernist literature engaged with questions of power, ideology and hegemony while it was also aware of its own limitations.

Chapter 3, titled "Deconstructing Conmee: Mediating between Center and Periphery through Operators, Bodies, and Excess in the "Wandering Rocks" chapter of James Joyce's *Ulysses*," focuses on a detailed analysis of a seemingly minor character, Father Conmee, within the tenth episode of James Joyce's *Ulysses*. This chapter explores how Conmee's actions and representations mediate the complex relationship between the center and periphery within the novel, using the concepts of operators, bodies, and excess of signification. The chapter argues that Father Conmee is not simply a representative of the Catholic Church but a complex figure who embodies the dynamics of power, control, and resistance in colonial Dublin. It examines how Conmee's presence and actions reveal the workings of both the imperial and religious structures and their inherent contradictions.

In order to deconstruct Father Conmee's character we need to move beyond a simplistic interpretation of him as merely a representative of the Roman Catholic Church in colonial Ireland. His seemingly peripheral status sheds light on the nature of power and authority as a mediator between the center and the periphery, between imperial presence and colonial subversion in *Ulysses*. His seemingly peripheral status can be used to analyze the nature of power as that which makes the connection between centre and periphery, between imperial presence and colonialism in *Ulysses*. In order to see how Father Conmee embodies different

aspects of the imperial regime in the form of Catholic presence I have used the concept of the “operator” to describe the various bodies and mechanisms that constitute Father Conmee’s world and how it functions to organize and to seemingly displace the colonial subject. These operators include the body of the father (his spiritual authority), the body of Catholic discourse (clothing, gestures, paraphernalia), and the body of the watch (a time-measuring machine). The analysis of these “bodies” reveals how they operate from within a context that is predicated fundamentally on the excess of signification, meaning that they cannot be reduced to a single meaning, and how they contribute to the complex dynamics of power and resistance in *Ulysses*.

Bodies, both human and mechanical, function in excess of signification, producing meanings beyond their intended purpose. The concept of “excess” can be used to analyze how these bodies challenge and destabilize the established order and official narratives and also how they are predicated on a conception of otherness that remains fundamentally anterior to the Catholic discourse. Also, this excess is based on an almost pragmatic concept of otherness, which is seen as fundamentally different from the absolute otherness of God in Catholic discourse. In this respect, the physical body, conceived as a pre-theoretical and pre-linguistic entity, points to an active trace of excess that survives and disseminates disjunctively across official discourses and the organization of space even after the body had been homogenized through the logos. This excess serves as a form of resistance to the totalizing forces of the center. The chapter contends that the excess or residue of signification escapes the totalizing modalities of institutions predicated on writing as the ground of power.

The colonial subject inhabits the lacunae between the Catholic discourse and what exceeds its reterritorializing mechanisms. The body, however, is both organized but also displaced by the regime of signification employed by the state and the church. As such, in order to operate on a foreign territory, physical and metaphysical, colonial power resolves to the “mediation” of power through figures like Conmee. This “presence,” however, is not and cannot be totalizing for something always already escapes its reterritorializing principles. The resistance to power, in this respect, manifests in the everyday lives of Dublin’s citizens, knowingly and unknowingly. In order to interrogate this conflict, the analysis takes into account how different historical paradigms and official narratives converge on the same body, as a kind of operator, so as to “ontologize the event” which implies the careful orchestration of all incalculable elements within the same (i.e. religious or state) system.

This implies that Father Conmee can be interpreted as operating within the same chronotope. His religious discourse, based as it is on a presumed unity of space and time, constitutes a unity which acts or should, rather, act as a metaphysical center organizing the divergent spatio-temporal odysseys of Dublin citizenry. However, this unity is disrupted by its imposed dislocation from without, i.e. the various “other” chronotopes of colonial subjects. This incommensurability between the colonial supra-chronotope and the religious master chronotope highlights the inherent instability of the latter. Within this analytical framework, the chapter also analyses how the chronotope of the religious discourse is simultaneously decentered by the presence of its periphery – the “anti”-forces represented by the physical, chemical, and cosmological.

Thus we can see how Father Conmee, through his actions and discourse, embodies and projects a metaphysical center, and how this center is constantly undermined by the excess and alterity present in the narrative. The analysis of Father Conmee’s character is used to explore the nature of the center and its relationship to the periphery, and how modernist literature uses different ontological frameworks to destabilize these concepts. The peripheralized other functions as a figure of being that unravels the singular and the irreplaceable in an improper apocalyptic gesture.

What is improper is always already positioned “without” the conceptual territory of absolute ontologies, in this case, Father Conmee’s religious discourse. The apocalypse, as an unraveling or unconcealment of the absolute event, is predicated also on the concept of the unwritten, or the infinitely or impossibly written. This acts as a theoretical possibility for modernist textuality. It posits that in the theoretical possibility of the unwritten, modernist textuality embodies acts of resistance.

Father Conmee, however, should not be viewed solely as a representative of Catholic “presence” in colonial Dublin. Instead, he is a complex figure who embodies the intricate power dynamics within the city. Father Conmee, as an operator, performs parallel semiotic functions. In this respect, on a meta-diegetic level, Joyce’s writing introduces a parallel semiotic function that undermines Conmee’s spatiotemporal symbolism by using capitalization – specifically within the context of the word “very.” The word “very,” in the context of the reverend’s title, suggests that this word is not just an intensifier, but also an indication of a specific ecclesiastical title. This subtle detail demonstrates the way Joyce uses writing to undermine the authority of the church.

This highlights the tension between the written and the spoken, and between the actual and the possible, but also between acts of power and acts of resistance. Accordingly, Father Conmee is presented as a complex symbol within an internal semiotic dynamic. This dynamic allows the reader to trace the mechanisms of the center, revealing its power and also its inability to fully achieve it. Conmee becomes a signifier of internal semiotic dynamics, illustrating how power is exercised, while also revealing the center's failure to attain total power. He is a figure who embodies both the presence of absolute knowledge and its absence. Thereby the contradictions in his theological reasoning are exposed, which seeks to establish indivisible knowledge while simultaneously being determined by an internal division.

From this perspective, Father Conmee's discourse on absolute indivisible knowledge is, at the same time, *a priori*, determined by an internal division. This division attests to a qualitative assessment of the unconditional, or of absolute space and time, of absolute justice and the radical event. Joyce, by establishing parallels between various "presences," creates a conceptual space to negotiate the politics of ontotheological discourse. This discourse is marked internally by the presence of a totality haunted by its residual other. Joyce breaks the conventional linear conception of time and space. By freeing the "body" of reading and writing from classical determinations, Joyce opens up the possibility for a different understanding of time and space, center and periphery, and, by extension, being. Thus we can see how Joyce's *Ulysses*, in this respect, challenges traditional ways of reading literature. It encourages readers to become active participants, "technicians of the soul," by engaging with the text's heterogeneous multiplicities. Joyce entices readers to "work on" the text, and become readers of the corpus.

It should be noted that the textual fabric of *Ulysses* includes many cuts that reveal the impossibility of logic to exhaust the possibilities of the event (as co-being or being-with the other and the same at the same time). These cuts serve as a backdrop against which the monologic utterances of official narratives are differentiated. Joyce conceived of excess and residue of signification not as something beyond language, but as predicated upon a syntactic co-presence of mutually conflicting truths.

The chapter argues that, in *Ulysses*, alterity becomes inoperable because it cannot be conceived of without being codified. It goes on to state that no place in the narrative can be attributed peripheral status. Thus, no single keyword can be singled out to serve as a guide to

analyze its metaphysics. Everything in *Ulysses* can serve as an operator to differentiate a larger “truth” embodied in its narrative body.

Thus, we can see Joyce’s reading of metaphysics as a writing of, on and through bodies and machines, non-dialectical materialism and their relation to theological eschatology. *Ulysses* dramatizes the relationship between bodies of empowerment and disempowerment in colonial Ireland, and how they challenge the codes of colonial being. This strategy is based on the materialist openness to the external implicit in the non-serviam gesture is a precondition for the religious community. Consequently, Father Conmee’s discourse must be determined by an internal division in order to reterritorialize what exceeds its ontological boundaries. To Father Conmee the other acts as a simulacrum of the same.

Humor, however, acts as a strategy that defies reterritorialization. Humour, thus interpreted, is capable of self-division across the textual field and is readily susceptible to deconstruction but the only way it can be deconstructed is by assuming that it always exists on someone else’s territory. The humour, which Dublin citizenry use in their appropriation of Father Conmee’s religious discourse, exposes the logical mechanicity of the religious discourse, and the way it implies a moral paralysis based on a specific conception of time. The chapter notes that the people of Dublin defy Father Conmee's authority with humour and ruse, thus identifying humour as a subversive strategy in the novel.

Father Conmee’s presence is interpreted as signifying a moral topos and an aggregate of force, an infinitesimal revealing and operating machine. Names in the novel stand in for power and force, they reference actual beings transformed into “paper beings” with their own politics of signification. Father Conmee, in this respect, as a machine, makes visible the numerous peculiarities of life in an imperial colony. He is seen as an “operator” of a “body” (the church) moving through the streets of Dublin which “operates” on other operators, the bodies of colonial subject. Within this context, the very materiality of the text reveals the disturbances of superstructures of signification. Despite the initial impression of being entirely deciphered by the official narrative, the various sites of resistance dominate the episode. A residue of signification survives and is disseminated after dying in a sacrificial practice. This is a revelation that occurs in and through the concept of the incalculable event.

Thus, Joyce introduces a different conception of time and humanism by placing death in intimate relation with life. The Christian discourse on the revelation of the final truth does not

lay the ground for meta-semiotic activity. Reading signs as metaphysical signifiers chained to other signifiers disrupts the “domesticity of the Logos” (Derrida 1981: 35) and opens the ground for an apophatic reading of the sign. We can see how Joyce dislocates the center and modernizes the theological phantasm of life after death by reading it as an image or simulacrum. Father Conmee ultimately fails to metaphysically reset his watch. Life, in and through the concept of the event, cannot be thought of as peripheral to the logos, humor is the source that rejects the logocentric discourse of Christian orthodoxy. The necessary humor, the chapter explains, with which one needs to read Conmee’s resetting of the watch points to its logical mechanicity.

In conclusion, chapter 3 offers an in-depth analysis of Father Conmee as a complex figure who embodies the contradictions and tensions inherent in colonial Dublin. By exploring the concepts of operators, bodies, and excess of signification, the chapter demonstrates how Joyce disrupts traditional power dynamics and explores the fluidity of meaning within *Ulysses*. It shows how the center (represented by Conmee and the church) is constantly undermined by its inherent instability and the presence of the periphery and its uncontrollable energies. The chapter argues that Father Conmee’s “peripheralized” status reveals a great deal about the center, especially about its instability and inherent contradictions, and that Conmee embodies the operations of colonial power while also highlighting its shortcomings. The chapter shows how Joyce's work disrupts the notions of time and space and invites readers to engage with the text in a non-linear and active way. Through its detailed analysis of a single character and a single episode, Chapter 3 reveals the broader themes and methods of the dissertation as a whole and prepares the reader for the subsequent analyses of other modernist authors.

Chapter 4 of the dissertation, titled “Decentralizing Anna Morgan’s Agency in Jean Rhys’s *Voyage in the Dark*,” explores the impact of cultural and social displacement on the protagonist, Anna Morgan, as she moves from Dominica to England. The chapter analyses how Anna's experiences, coupled with the patriarchal society she encounters in England, result in a profound sense of self-alienation and her perception of being “other” to the phallogocentric order of the time. It examines how objectification and societal expectations diminish Anna’s autonomy, eventually leading to her tragic downfall.

Anna’s move from Dominica to England, as a form of *relocation*, leads to a sense of *dislocation* and alienation, which profoundly affects how she views her identity and how she

interprets her agency. This displacement is not merely geographical but also cultural, social, and psychological, contributing to her feeling of being an outsider in English society.

The role of the patriarchal society in England plays a crucial part in diminishing Anna's agency. This society imposes expectations on women, restricting their autonomy and subjecting them to objectification. Anna's experiences are not just personal but reflective of the systemic inequalities and power imbalances of the time.

For instance, Anna is constantly subjected to the gaze and expectations of others, particularly men, which reduces her to an object rather than a subject within a foreign discourse. This objectification is a key factor in her loss of autonomy and her tragic descent. Her experiences underscore the way societal norms and power structures can strip individuals of their agency and self-determination.

In order to explore in depth this problem, the chapter introduces the concept of "metaphysical murder" in relation to the forced abortion Anna is expected to undergo. This concept suggests that the abortion is not just a physical act but a symbolic annihilation of Anna's being and her potential for motherhood. It signifies the devaluation of her existence and her role as a woman in a patriarchal society. Within this context, Anna is portrayed as a "supplement" to the prevailing phallogocentric order³. Her being, her body, are seen as additions to the existing power structure rather than as having inherent value. Her existence is dependent on and defined by the patriarchal system, highlighting the structural inequalities of the time.

These structural inequalities are based on the "ontologized" (or Oedipalized according to Deleuze and Guattari's terminology) way of thinking. Her otherness can be exploited, which means that it can be used and discarded under the sign of the 'other', i.e. as a waste, a surplus, an addition or as something without value. Within this paradigm of thinking, in the rational technoscientific worldview, difference appears as a sign of excess that can be deterritorialized through technical means of thinking (see Heidegger 1998: 240), i.e. through a *teknē* that manifests all the properties of masculine rationality. In *Voyage in the Dark*, it is the technology (signifying in this case rationality, segregation, hierarchy, optimization) of abortion that leads to the metaphysical demise of the protagonist.

³ The phallogocentric order, according to Jacques Derrida, is a concept that refers to the dominance of masculine, patriarchal, and logical thinking in the Western philosophical tradition. The term combines "phallus" (a symbol of masculine power and identity) and "centrality," which expresses the idea that in many philosophical, cultural, and social structures, masculine perspective and power are placed at the center of human understanding of the world and knowledge of being.

These structural inequalities are predicated on categorical thinking which is, however, permeable in nature. Despite the rigid architecture this frame of thinking produces, the very permeability or openness of the structure already challenges the rigid binary oppositions it had established. The notion of the “other” can always be changed, retold in a different manner, or even forgotten. In other words, the other can always become the same and vice versa – that which does not bring change or introduce difference into the system, thus being part of it, does not pose an existential threat to the established order. In revealing how these categories are not fixed but fluid, the analysis shows that these categories are not only constructed but also possess the power to determine life and death.

Anna is not entirely viewed as a victim, however. Anna’s experience in and through her body of the self-other relationship is tied to the absolutely apophatic. Absolute apophatics does not obey the logic of the cataphatic-apophatic dialectic (therefore it is non-logical). It highlights that in the novel, Anna’s “I am not” is always in relation to the cataphatic “I am,” which means that a minimal idealization takes place (cf. Žižek 2020: 285). And it is this mechanism of idealization that absolute apophatics challenges. Anna Morgan, *after* the end of the novel, seems to “transcend” the order and the law, and it is this ellipsis that marks what remains to be written, that is, the impossible literature or justice as such.

While undermining absolute apophatics, which is radically ungrounded on the cataphatic-apophatic interrelation, this way of thinking nevertheless points to the apophatic structure of the utterance as having subversive qualities. However, this interaction between the spoken and the unspoken is ultimately seen as implying the impossibility of absolute autonomy (absolute apophatics is impossible) and reveals the limitations of using language to express and contain being, since linguistic expression itself is grounded in the principles of the cataphatic-apophatic model, which itself functions as a repetition of law, name, or logos. The law, in order to be violated (i.e., negated *a posteriori* by an apophatic gesture that says “I am not what the law says I am”), must be repeated initially in its affirmation, and it is this repetition of the law that prevents its displacement from the structure of the apophatic principle. In other words, the violation of the law does not lead to its obliteration but, on the contrary, contributes to its functioning as such – a law whose affirmative nature is based on its opposite, what it is not, namely its absence.

Anna’s move from Dominica to England is not just a change in geographical location, but a transition from one cultural context to another which also implies a linguistic and hence an

ontological translation. This shift significantly contributes to her sense of alienation. She becomes an outsider in English society, struggling to navigate new norms and expectations. The experience of displacement is not merely external but deeply internal, impacting her sense of self.

Anna's sense of alienation is thus predicated on a linguistic translation. Anna's agency is systematically diminished by the patriarchal social norms she encounters but this is visible in the language she and others use. She is consistently and linguistically objectified by those around her, especially by men. On both occasions, when asked if she is pregnant, Anna is described as "miserable" (68) or "not looking well" (71), and in both instances not feeling well and the problem of having a child is connected to economic matters: Ethel says "But of course I don't really care a damn about them. Why should I? I can earn my own living. I'm a masseuse – I'm a Swedish masseuse" (68) and Laurie asks bluntly "Did he give you any money?" (72). This objectification through language limits her ability to act independently, and she is often subjected to the whims and desires of others, such as Walter, who has explicit control over her through money and social power.

Within the power dynamic that Anna is caught in, it is not possible for her to define herself in her own terms. Instead, her identity is constructed and imposed by others. When Joe asks Anna why she associates with Laurie and remarks – "Don't you know she's a tart?" (79) – he is using language to deny her agency and to locate her identity by means of her body and sexuality. This demonstrates the way language and knowledge are used by others to define and control her. Her attempt at self-determination is challenged by the fixed identities and expectations placed upon her by others.

Not only language, but also economic issues play part as well. Anna's interactions are often defined by the exchange of money and the exploitation of desire. The chapter explains that her sexual appeal and her body become commodities that can be used and disposed of by men in the phallogocentric order which exemplifies the way her relationships are reduced to transactional exchanges. Anna's metaphysical position as a human subordinate to Walter, as well as her physical ability to reproduce life and thus perpetuate the structure, figure productively in the novel, that is, within the general paradigm of economic transaction and social capital. This shows that her value is measured by her capacity to produce social capital within this male-dominated framework.

These two factors, the linguistic and the economic, lead to the conception of forced abortion as an act of “metaphysical murder.” This act goes beyond the physical to include also the concept of a symbolic killing of Anna’s potential motherhood and an assertion of the patriarchal order’s power over her body and her life. This act is not just about ending a pregnancy but about erasing Anna's agency and denying her the possibility of self-creation. It also demonstrates the way in which the phallogocentric order determines who has the right to life and who does not, rendering Anna's and the fetus’s lives as supplements to the system.

Within this context, Anna figures as a supplement to the phallogocentric order, which means that her existence is seen as extra to the main structure, rather than integral to it. Her body and her potential for reproduction are perceived as additions to the existing male-dominated system. The concept of the supplement here suggests that Anna and her life are not essential but rather secondary to a system that prioritizes male agency and control. This interpretation of Anna as a supplement highlights her lack of autonomy and her position as an outsider within the prevailing social structure.

What is rejected here is the essentialistic standpoint. The other is seen as not possessing a fixed identity but rather as a fluid category which is always already based on the categorical thinking of the imperial masters. Identities are socially constructed and constantly shaped by power relations. It is this constructed nature that the chapter argues gives categories the power to determine life and death. The chapter provides a strong critique of phallogocentrism, which is the dominance of male perspectives and values. It argues that this system not only oppressed women at the time but also denied the value of otherness and difference. The analysis exposes the way phallogocentric structures operate to control and diminish female agency.

The experiences of Anna Morgan point to the trauma associated with objectification, displacement, and the denial of agency. These are presented as the effects of the patriarchal and colonial systems, but also as personal issues relating to the body. The tragic events that unfold are not simply the consequence of an individual’s choices but reflect larger societal injustices and also the category of the body which always, in one way or another, defies ontological grounding. In order to do this, the chapter makes the argument that the body becomes a battleground between self and the symbolic order, which seeks to define and control it. Her experiences show how the body can be both a site of oppression and a source of resistance, as

she struggles to maintain her sense of self within a system that seeks to reduce her to a mere object.

Voyage in the Dark itself, as a modernist text possessing a textual body, rejects traditional narrative conventions. The novel does not aim to offer simple answers or a neat resolution, but rather to explore complex themes and to challenge readers to confront difficult questions. It is this very absence of resolution that acts to challenge the idea of the “end,” which might offer a “transcendental end” or a stable center for the reader. In doing this, the novel points to a “semiotics of alterity” or a semiotics of the peripheralized body that highlights the somatic excesses of bodies and how those bodies signify something else that is beyond language.

Chapter 4 of the dissertation uses Jean Rhys’s *Voyage in the Dark* to reveal the devastating effects of cultural displacement, patriarchal oppression, and the denial of agency on Anna Morgan. The chapter introduces the concept of “metaphysical murder” to underline the profound impact of societal structures on individual lives. It also emphasizes the permeable nature of categories and challenges the reader to see that these are not fixed but rather constructed and fluid concepts. By analyzing Anna’s experiences, the chapter provides insight into the power of phallogocentric systems and their capacity to diminish the individual. It also points to the importance of understanding the body and the self as a site of conflict, where societal forces and the drive for self-expression collide. The chapter concludes by suggesting that the novel’s engagement with apophatic discourse further highlights its modernist rejection of conventional narratives and its exploration of themes that extend beyond language itself.

Chapter 5 of the dissertation, titled “Djuna Barnes Narrating the Peripheralized Body in *Nightwood*,” delves into the complex relationship between subjectivity, identity, language, and space in Djuna Barnes’s novel *Nightwood*, with a particular focus on the characters of Nikka and Robin Vote. The chapter examines how a “technoscientific discourse” that prioritizes productivity is challenged by a “non-discourse” (or “anti-discourse”) which functions as an apophatic meditation on the instabilities and gaps of a phallogocentric order. This non-discourse, articulated through the body, seeks to undermine the conventional ways in which identity is constructed and communicated. The chapter also investigates how Barnes presents alternative modes of narrating otherness, challenging traditional notions of the body, desire, and identity.

One of the key aspects in interrogating space and its relation to identity and the body is found in the peripheralized body. The body becomes a site of internal conflict and a means of challenging the dominant phallogocentric order. The body, in this respect, becomes a space or a territory where social and psychological tensions are acted out, particularly for characters like Nikka, whose body is made hyper-visible and yet denied autonomy. Particularly in its peripheralized position, the body is thus seen as a powerful tool for disrupting traditional narratives.

The four aspects of human experience, namely subjectivity, identity, language, and space, are interconnected and they function within the social and cultural context of the novel. In *Nightwood* we can see how subjectivity and identity are not fixed but are fluid and performative. Not only that but language and space are key components in the construction and negotiation of these aspects. The spatial element of the text shows how characters are situated both within and outside of the dominant cultural framework.

This conceptual territory is visible in the contrast between technoscientific discourse and apophatic non-discourse. Technoscientific discourse is defined by its emphasis on productivity while the apophatic non-discourse operates as a mediation between productivity and its outside, namely non-productivity, the periphery, or alterity. The technoscientific discourse is shown to be unable to account for the complexities and gaps of the phallogocentric order, while the apophatic discourse seeks to articulate what cannot be said or represented within the existing framework. The non-discourse, in this respect, is associated with silence, absence, and the semiotic body.

The “non-discourse” in *Nightwood* is characterized as a form of apophatic meditation. This implies that it understands the other and communicates alterity through negation and silence, focusing on what is not (or what is in excess or beyond the scope of cataphatic mediation) rather than what is. The other is in excess or beyond the reach of cataphatic mediation, but through the unnamed, its position becomes qualitatively autonomous. The unnamed (through negation or silence) becomes a strategy that gives apophatic discourse a particular belonging to the external, to the peripheral, but in a way that acknowledges the indivisible identity of the external or peripheral as such. In other words, not everything that lies “on the outside” of logos can be “divided” (analyzed or dissected) by means of the logos, reason, or language. The apophatic approach allows the text to explore the limits of language and the gaps in the phallogocentric order. This approach is central to how the novel challenges

traditional notions of identity and being which are associated with the phallogocentric order of the same. This order is characterized by a reliance on male perspectives, language, and the control of meaning. The novel aims to disrupt this order by highlighting its instabilities, complexities, and gaps, and by providing alternative modes of expression. This challenge to the phallogocentric order is central to the novel's exploration of alterity and otherness.

Barnes's novel seeks to create alternative ways of narrating otherness, which is often excluded or marginalized by the phallogocentric order. In this case, the ethical moment is in the act of telling, in what it includes in itself and what it consciously or not excludes as a possibility from its body. There are, therefore, certain conditions through which alterity is articulated. One of these conditions is the body as a surface, which is itself always already other to language without being reducible to the linguistic modus. Instead of simply presenting the perspective of the other, the novel explores the very conditions of otherness itself. This involves challenging traditional forms of representation and creating spaces for marginalized voices and experiences. Within this context the body acts a site of conflict between being and signification. The characters' bodies are not simply physical entities but are also spaces where social and cultural power dynamics are played out. The chapter suggests that in *Nightwood*, the body becomes the space where the struggle between self-expression and societal control becomes most apparent.

Nikka's body becomes a site of spectacle. The descriptions of his body are exaggerated and theatrical, suggesting that it functions as a spectacle. His body is filled with "denaturalized" sexual desire, disrupting normative categories of gender and sexuality. Nikka's body is not presented as an authentic expression of self but as a constructed performance which, however, acknowledges the possibility of agency through silence (Nikka has no direct speech in the novel, his presence is in the form of narration by Dr. O'Connor), but mostly through problematizing hetero- and homonormative conceptual modes.

A double writing is present on Nikka's body. On the one hand it is covered in tattoos, but on the other it is present in the form of a narrative delivered by another character. By externalizing and controlling aspects of Nikka's identity by inscribing the discourse of the other onto Nikka's body, the audience, writing through voyeurism, suppresses aspects of the self that would otherwise lead to an inwardly passive deconstruction. By objectifying and "writing" on Nikka's body, spectators at the centre of the empire construct a sense of self, of subjectivity, even of belonging to a superior race, based on difference (rejection or repulsion of the other) and

internalized repetition (the homoerotic nature of his ontotheological conceptuality (see Derrida 1986: 223)).

Nikka's body becomes a tension-filled territory in Dr. O'Connor's description of it. O'Connor's descriptions are seen as a means of controlling Nikka by denying him ontological autonomy and reducing his body to a means of self-pleasuring for O'Connor himself. This praxis is referred to as an "intellectual masturbation." O'Connor's monologues are considered to be a way to contain and define what might otherwise be viewed as excess, thus maintaining the status quo. On the other hand, however, they enable the surplus to come out of silence and to acquire a semiotic form that actualizes it in its materiality and takes it out of the field of the virtual or the merely possible. The paradox is that Nikka's body is as present in O'Connor's account of it as it is absent. It is this presence in the form of absence, or absence in the form of presence, that enables Nikka's body to be read as autonomous. But it is also this ambivalence that lends the narrative produced by O'Connor a particular ethical prism, which boils down to O'Connor allowing Nikka a certain "otherness" or a certain territory where otherness itself is acknowledged with a positive, i.e. an active sign. Symptoms of this kind of ethics are manifest in the form of intellectual voyeurism and intellectual masturbation (equating philosophy to perversion a la Deleuze).

Like Nikka's body, Robin's silence and absence challenge the phallogocentric order by not providing a fixed, definable identity. This strategy of employing silence and absence is a way of resisting being assimilated into the dominant culture. Robin Vote, like Anna Morgan in the previous chapter, also embodies the power of silence and absence. The protagonist has almost no direct speech and is virtually absent for most of the novel's development. Her "presence" takes the form of narration or dialogue led by other characters. Hence the focus of this chapter in investigating the ways in which the subaltern, or marginalized individual, can speak without speaking. The chapter argues that the subaltern often speaks in echoes, and that their voice is not always directly accessible. The democratic subject is still a latent possibility (see Lowi in Ferguson 2021: 46-47). The question of whether others can truly speak in their own voice, which is independent of the dominant system, becomes a question of the body, and the semiotic body (see Kristeva 1984: 25) in *Nightwood* is a way for the subordinate to be heard, even in the absence of conventional language.

Language, thus, becomes a key tool in the construction of power and the maintenance of the phallogocentric order. The novel challenges traditional uses of language by demonstrating its inadequacy in expressing the complexities of human experience. The characters' struggles with language are shown to reflect the broader challenges of communicating and expressing otherness within a system that seeks to control meaning.

This linguistic conflict is highlighted in the concept of "narrative infringement." Barnes uses "narrative infringement" through O'Connor's soliloquies as a way to parody and challenge the cataphatic aspect of epistemology, disrupting any possibility for conclusive answers. It explains that the way language is used in *Nightwood* is not to explore and describe but to effect and reflect on the body, which always remains in excess of language. This disruption of traditional narrative structure highlights the novel's rejection of conventional forms and its exploration of alternative modes of expression.

These alternative modes of expression are found on the territory of the peripheralized body. In *Nightwood*, the body functions as a kind of text. Nikka's body is literally covered with inscriptions, such as "vine work" and "a terse account in early monkish script," that can be "read." This literal inscription of language on the body underscores the idea that the body is never a neutral entity, but is always a site of cultural and social inscription.

The politics of cultural and social inscription is analyzed through the perspective of the gaze and voyeurism. The voyeuristic gaze that is often associated with traditional modes of representation, including the gaze of the author. Even Deleuze and Guattari's schizoanalysis, despite its attempt to deterritorialize desire, is implicated in a certain form of voyeurism, by means of its emphasis on the body. This critique serves as a caution against simply reducing otherness to a visual or representational spectacle.

This analysis implies a rejection of idealized identity. Barnes challenges the concept of a unified, idealized identity, which the text associates with the phallogocentric order. Instead, it promotes a vision of identity as fragmented, multiple, and always in process. By rejecting a fixed idea of the self, associated with a metaphysical center, the novel opens up space for a more complex understanding of human experience and which can accommodate to a peripheralized mode of being-in-the-world.

This peripheralized mode of being is underscored by the importance of the incalculable and the uncodifiable within the text. The apophatic discourse within the novel is shown to be a

means of engaging with what cannot be fully captured or expressed by language. This embrace of the incalculable is a key feature of the novel's modernist sensibility. Within this context the body figures as a revolutionary site. The chapter makes the point that the novel challenges the traditional view of the body reducing it to a tool of constant and perpetual reproductivity, but as a site of resistance. The text argues that the body, especially in its peripheralized state, has the power to disrupt and unsettle the dominant social and cultural order. The text is concerned with the way bodies are made "visible" within a "political naturalization of desiring-production."

This highlights the limits of language in particular and ontology in general. The limits of language are stressed as a means of fully representing or expressing the truth of human experience. It demonstrates that there is always a gap between language and being, and that this gap is particularly apparent in the representation of otherness. Barnes's use of silence, absence, and fragmented narratives all underscore the inability of language to capture the fullness of human experience. This creates the infrastructure of the phantasm in the novel. Nikka's body dramatizes how "attraction and repulsion can coexist within a mutable, i.e. scriptible, whole." In doing so, the chapter explains that the body functions as a site that reveals the "metaphysics of the phantasm" which is something the modernist text attempts to bring to light through characters like Nikka.

Chapter 5 of the dissertation uses Djuna Barnes's *Nightwood* to explore how the body, language, and space can be used to challenge dominant cultural norms and power structures. The chapter shows how the novel employs apophatic meditation to explore the limits of language and the instabilities of the phallogocentric order. By analyzing the characters of Nikka and, in part, of Robin, the chapter reveals alternative modes of narrating otherness and challenges the way in which identity and subjectivity are constructed. The chapter concludes by suggesting that, by presenting otherness as a way of being beyond the capacity of reason to differentiate between two different states, the text offers a radical and uncanny interpretation of the human condition, and an exploration of the ways the self becomes an other. The chapter thus demonstrates how Barnes uses the body as a site of resistance and as a means of subverting traditional narratives.

Chapter 6 of the dissertation, "Recuperating a Peripheralized Wolfe: Life-in-Death and The Power of Bad Writing," examines the reasons for Thomas Wolfe's fall from critical grace, particularly focusing on how his writing style and thematic concerns were perceived in relation

to modernist ideals. The chapter aims to re-evaluate Wolfe's work, arguing that his perceived flaws can be seen as a strength and that his unique approach to writing offers valuable insights into the human condition. The chapter seeks to deperipheralize Wolfe by reinterpreting his artistic vision as a form of democratic and imaginative thinking.

The chapter begins by discussing Wolfe's decline in critical reputation can be partly explained within the context of various views that his writing was often considered "bad" within the literary territory of high modernism. Wolfe's work was marginalized due to his perceived failure to meet the criteria of modernist aesthetics, which often prioritized formal innovation and a sense of detachment. While these aspects are present in Wolfe's work, their actualization is often as a form of imitation of the great novelists or poets such as Joyce or Eliot, for example.

Wolfe's belief in the "perfect artistic figure" and the "perfectibility of the artist" contributed to his critical downfall due to an excessive romantic vision which was held to be out-of-date within the modernist context. His work is seen as overly focused on the artist's own experience and as lacking the necessary detachment or objectivity characteristic of high modernism. Wolfe's focus on the artist was perceived as self-indulgent and to some extent contrary to the modernist emphasis on impersonality and formal experimentation.

Wolfe's perceived "bad writing," however, can be viewed from a positive perspective. His writings' "formlessness" or lack of conventional structure, his "juvenile fascination with the artistic figure" and his excessive style can be seen as a positive aspect which opens up his work to new modes of reading modernism. This re-evaluation suggests that Wolfe's "bad writing" challenges the rigid formal conventions of high modernism and offers a more democratic and imaginative approach to art.

Wolfe's struggle to achieve "absolute self-equality" would make the artist a solitary figure unconditionally self-present. Wolfe struggled to present a figure that was free from the dialogism of the other, a struggle which is contrasted with Joyce, who never fell for the ideal of "complete rarefication." The other for Joyce always figures as an "impossible possibility" that opens his characters to the notion of the subject who never completes his process of change or growth. Idealizing structures are always in the process of construction, but also of disintegration in Joyce.

Wolfe's focus on the artist as a solitary figure is also seen as contributing to his marginalization because it goes against the modernist tenet that the self is socially constructed.

Wolfe's humanism or excessive romanticism is thus seen as immobilized by the "cataphatic-apophatic limits of traditional ontotheological discourse," making his writing seem dated in relation to other modernist authors. Unlike other modernists who embraced the apophatic, Wolfe was unable to fully move beyond the limits of traditional discourse. High modernism embraces the potential of apophatic discourse to destabilize the Enlightenment ideal of identity and integrity. This limitation is presented as another reason why Wolfe was often considered to be a less accomplished modernist than other writers. In contrast to authors like Joyce for instance, Wolfe does not maintain a sense of detachment or objectivity, his works are intimately tied to his own experiences and emotions. This lack of detachment (or alienation) is seen as a departure from the high modernist aesthetic, which often prioritized the author's removal from the text. Unlike Wolfe, Joyce is portrayed as an author who did not seek to achieve "absolute self-equality" or to transcend the dialogism of the other. Joyce's work is seen as engaging with the world from a position of contingency and self-awareness, while Wolfe is seen as striving for a state of absolute self-presence. Joyce is presented as an author who was always conscious of the ontotheological limits of the self and language, while Wolfe sought to overcome these limits not through radical apophatic experimentation but through the conventional structures of art.

There is an ongoing emphasis on pure experience in Wolfe's art and especially in his bildungsroman *Look Homeward, Angel*. Wolfe's work is characterized by a yearning for a "pure experience and expression" that communicates absolute truth and presence. Unlike many other modernist authors who sought to deconstruct the concept of truth, Wolfe sought to find a pure, unadulterated form of expression. This desire is what made Wolfe's modernism "ill-formed."

Thus we can see how Wolfe's writing is underpinned by a deep faith in "artistic discourse," suggesting a belief in a paratextual element beyond the text. This paratext is thought to have knowledge prior to language and metaphysics, revealing an almost religious belief in the power of art to reveal the truth. This idea contrasts with more self-conscious and ironic approaches to artistic creation that were often favored by modernist writers. To some extent, then, we can note how Wolfe's humanism is "immobilized" by traditional ontotheological discourse. This immobility highlights his inability to move beyond a binary understanding of the world, a binary in which he is always seeking a transcendent unity. This is presented as a shortcoming in relation to the more nuanced and flexible approaches taken by other modernist authors, such as Joyce, Barnes, and Rhys.

Unlike Wolfe, Barnes and Rhys were aware of the “illogical and immoral semiotic procedures immanent to a logocentric system which seeks to appropriate the other.” Barnes and Rhys are depicted as authors who understood that the other must be approached in terms of its own alterity. To some extent, then, we can speculate that Wolfe did not possess the same kind of self-awareness of the “phantasmatic quality” of a discourse that is based on a concept of alterity that does not need or desire an other. Unlike Joyce, Barnes, and Rhys, Wolfe did not approach his own writing from a position of critical self-reflection and was therefore unable to transcend the pitfalls of logocentric thinking.

This does not mean that we cannot re-evaluate Wolfe’s work from a more positive perspective. The chapter seeks to recuperate Wolfe’s writing, highlighting that his work has imaginative and democratic potential. By focusing on the power of the artist and the “bad writing” which he produces, Wolfe presents a vision of art that challenges the elitism of high modernist aesthetics and offers a more accessible and inclusive approach to artistic creation. There is this immanent necessity re-reading Wolfe’s work not as a failure of modernism, but as a distinct and valuable contribution to the literary landscape. By re-evaluating Wolfe’s work from a new perspective, the chapter argues that we can discover a unique form of modernist expression.

Wolfe thus becomes an alternative modernist. Wolfe can be seen as a modernist author, even if his work is not aligned with the dominant paradigms of high modernism. His work offers an alternative perspective on modernism, one that is more focused on the human experience and less concerned with formal experimentation. This repositioning of Wolfe is a key part of the chapter’s aim to “deperipheralize” him. This includes how we can see his vision of the future as immanently imaginative and democratic. Wolfe’s writing should be re-evaluated in terms of its ability to offer a vision of a possible future which is, at its core, “imaginative and democratic”. This re-evaluation seeks to move past the elitist connotations of high modernism and find democratic and open forms of writing.

There is an ethical aspect to this. Wolfe’s humanism, even though it can be seen as flawed, is a profoundly important element of his work and allows for a “fuller expression of the human spirit.” Unlike many other modernists who were often accused of being detached and cynical, Wolfe is presented as an author with a deep and unwavering belief in the power of the human spirit. Wolfe’s characters long for the possibility of establishing justice between people

and long for a form of “axiomatics which houses different forms of alterity.” This search for justice in Wolfe’s work is contrasted with the often more fragmented and ambivalent views of justice in other modernist authors. Wolfe’s humanism is understood in terms of his desire to resurrect the creative impulses of the individual. Wolfe’s work is seen as a force which can help individuals find their own creative powers, implying that art is not just about producing something, but also about enabling others to create. This perspective is embodied in the concept of “life-in-death,” arguing that this is a key theme in Wolfe’s work. Wolfe’s works are seen to explore death not as an end, but as a continuous presence or effect within the experience of life. This theme challenges the modernist notion of death as something to be overcome or transcended, and instead seeks to portray the intermingling of life and death.

To conclude, chapter 6 of the dissertation seeks to recover Thomas Wolfe from his peripheral status within the modernist canon, arguing that his perceived flaws, such as his idealism, his “bad writing,” and his focus on the artist figure, can be seen as strengths. By re-interpreting Wolfe’s work as a form of “democratic” and “imaginative” thinking, the chapter argues that his writing is not only a valuable contribution to modernist literature, but also offers a unique perspective on the human condition. It suggests that by re-reading Wolfe’s work, it is possible to challenge the rigid formal conventions of high modernism and to discover a mode of writing that is both more accessible and more inclusive. This re-evaluation is crucial to the dissertation’s broader goal of demonstrating how modernist literature, in all of its various forms, laid the groundwork for post-modernist deconstructions of the center-periphery dichotomy.

The conclusion of the dissertation, summarized in the final section, revolves around the idea that analyzing intellectual and artistic geography requires consideration of the relationship between the text and the context, and what remains beyond or in excess of signification or semiotics. The dissertation aims to demythologize preconceived notions about the centre and the periphery by reformulating their relations against themselves, denying the absolute autonomy of any term, category, or set of rules over a specific discourse. The overall aim is to trace the shift in perspective and possibilities for interrogating power structures, from managing space to the discursive field, and from sovereignty and violence to the exhaustion of reason, all from an apophatic standpoint. The study emphasizes the importance of understanding how modernist

literature laid the groundwork for postmodernist deconstruction of the centre-periphery dichotomy.

This can be achieved through the perspective of what has been identified as the apophatic dialectic. The dissertation uses the concept of apophatics (understanding reality by what it is not) as a central lens through which to analyse modernist literature. This approach is considered a “centrifugal moment” within official discourses, highlighting silence, negation, and the incalculable as crucial elements. It emphasizes the resistance of an-oedipal desire to define and control identity formations tied to patriarchal or Oedipal structures that rely on absolute knowledge. Modernist authors used the apophatic approach to determining being and life as a strategy to undermine the belief that everything must be spoken.

Not only this, but we need to emphasize the importance of what remains “in excess of signification.” This excess is the space where traditional logic and structure break down and where the “unthought” makes itself present in the text. This concept is fundamental to the dissertation’s analysis of how modernist authors challenged conventional ideas of the centre and periphery. From this perspective we can analyze how the periphery is seen as a construct of the centre. However, this constructed infrastructure provides a space from which alterity can be conceived in a democratic way. Moving away from rigid definitions and affirmations of the phallogocentric order allows for a more open and inclusive space for alternative forms of expression, especially those historically marginalized. It stresses that modernist authors recognized language as leaving its own negative traces within presence and within the concept of totality.

This leads us to a perception of what might be called the rejection of transcendence in modernist literature. In arguing against a traditional view of transcendence and instead embracing the “unthought” we can suggest that the modernist approach to being and human identity is not to transcend the limits of the ordinary or mundane but to account for the impossibility of the transcendental to encompass all logics.

This ultimately leads to the perception of modern times as grounded on crisis. The modernist experience of space and being is revolving around a notion of crisis that acts as another name for the depotentialization and destabilization of the centre-periphery dichotomy. This crisis cannot be renamed, substituted, or reconciled, and takes on various textual and philosophical dimensions. Hence, the crisis is considered intrinsic to the modernist experience.

In order to tackle this problematic, the dissertation stresses the relation between language and the body, questioning the naturalness of the scripting process which lends visibility to the body. It explores how unreadability and the apophatic moment can embrace the chaotic nature of being-in-the-world. It also investigates how the body acts as a site of knowledge and an “objective corrective” to the abstractions of reason. The body as a site of knowledge is posited as a challenge to the purely differential and rational ways of understanding the world.

This leads to the necessary perception of the world, human identity, and being as grounded on democratization and diversification. Modernism sought to democratize and diversify various issues such as centre and periphery, axiomatics and alterity. Modernist literature emphasizes the need to understand the shifting essence of the centre and periphery within literary and non-literary contexts. It also acknowledges the dissolution of academic authority and the shift towards inclusivity in reading cultural material.

This would not be possible without the identification of what has been termed as the “cut.” The study references the “unthought” and the “cut” as critical elements in understanding how modernist literature deconstructs the centre. In arguing that the “unthought” cuts violently through classical ontology during the process of truth production, we can see how the apophatic cut marks the conceptual architecture as an inauthentic word by infecting it with humor, thus deforming the context. The concept of logocentrism, which is the belief in reason and language as foundations of knowledge and meaning, is thus destabilized from within. But the loss of a transcendental home established by the logos should not be mourned, for in there we can find the possibility for justice.

The modernist authors are shown to have prioritized silence and negation as important elements in their works. By doing this they challenged the idea that everything must be spoken. The authors used silence to challenge traditional systems of meaning.

The dissertation concludes that modernist authors initiated a shift in the understanding of the centre-periphery dichotomy. They saw the centre not as a stable entity but as something moving, dialogical, and abstract, failing to function as intended. Modernist literature is shown to have dramatized the effects of biopolitics and necropolitics and the role that these play in managing and depicting space. The study suggests that the focus has shifted from discussing space and voice to investigating the ontological foundations of power and hegemony.

Modernist literature, in this respect, laid the groundwork for the postmodernist deconstruction of the centre-periphery dichotomy. It emphasizes that many narrative techniques used by post-modern authors are already found in modernist works. For instance, the modernist view of difference is seen as a source of irreducible otherness in post-modernist dialectic. It underlines that modernist authors recognized that the center cannot exhaust all the possibilities of the other. This recognition of alterity is seen as a foundational element of both the modernist and the post-modernist projects.

Otherness should be dissociated from powerlessness. To be other does not mean to lack the power to act authentically. Rather, in remaining excluded from the social body and resisting being reduced to its structure, the other positions one's self as a form of alterity in relation to all that is considered to be properly human.

Within this context, a necessary focus is drawn on language. Modernist authors recognized that names, centers, and axioms should be able to be easily displaced, changed and intertextualized. The name itself is seen as carrying its own failure, lack and internal divide. This suggests a critique of systems of thought that attempt to fix meaning and identity. The authors recognize that names carry the significance of an authoritarian mindset.

In summary, the dissertation's conclusion brings together its key themes and arguments to underscore the significance of modernist literature in shaping a new understanding of power, identity, and the nature of reality. By employing an apophatic approach, focusing on the excess of signification, and challenging preconceived notions about the centre and the periphery, the study argues that modernist authors laid the groundwork for postmodernist thought and contributed to a more open and inclusive way of understanding the world. The study shows how modernist texts dramatize the view of the human condition where the sense of self is also predicated on the sense of the other.

Works cited

- Barthes, R. (1974). *S/Z* (R. Miller, Trans.). Hill and Wang.
- Barthes, R. (1985). *The responsibility of forms: Critical essays on music, art, and representation* (R. Howard, Trans.). Hill and Wang.
- Barthes, R. (1989). *The rustle of language*. University of California Press.
- Baudrillard, J. (1981). *Simulacra and simulation*. University of Michigan Press.
- Buchanan, I. (2020). *Assemblage theory and method*. Bloomsbury Publishing.
- Derrida, J. (1981). *Dissemination*. The Athlone Press.
- Derrida, J. (1985). *The ear of the other: Otobiography, transference, translation* (P. Kamuf, Trans.; C. V. McDonald, Ed.). Schocken Books.
- Derrida, J. (1986). *Glas*. University of Nebraska Press.
- Derrida, J. (1992). Passions: “An oblique offering” (D. Wood, Trans.). In D. Wood (Ed.), *Derrida: A critical reader* (pp. 5–35). Basil Blackwell.
- Derrida, J. (2000). The deconstruction of actuality: An interview with Jacques Derrida. In M. McQuillan (Ed.), *Deconstruction: A reader* (pp. 527–553). Edinburgh University Press.
- Derrida, J. (2009). *The beast and the sovereign* (Vol. 1). University of Chicago Press.
- Ferguson, K. (Ed.). (2021). *The big no*. University of Minnesota Press.
- Foucault, M. (1986). What is an author. In P. Rabinow (Ed.), *The Foucault reader* (pp. 101–123). Peregrine.
- Heidegger, M. (1998). *Pathmarks* (F. A. Capuzzi, et al., Trans.; W. McNeill, Ed.). Cambridge University Press.
- Levinas, E. (1969). *Totality and infinity: An essay on exteriority*. Duquesne University Press.
- Jameson, F. (1991). *Postmodernism, or, the cultural logic of late capitalism*. Duke University Press.
- Kalaidjian, W. B., et al. (2005). *The Cambridge companion to American modernism*. Cambridge University Press.
- Kristeva, J. (1982). *Powers of horror: An essay on abjection* (L. S. Roudiez, Trans.). Columbia University Press.
- Kristeva, J. (1984). *Revolution in poetic language* (Leon S. Roudiez Trans.). New York: Columbia University Press.

Lyotard, J.-F. (1984). *The postmodern condition: A report on knowledge*. University of Minnesota Press.

Rhys, J. (1985). *The complete novels: Voyage in the dark, Quartet, After leaving Mr. Mackenzie, Good morning, midnight, Wide Sargasso Sea*. Norton.

Ricoeur, P. (1967). *Husserl: An analysis of his phenomenology* (E. G. Ballard & L. E. Embree, Trans.). Northwestern University Press.

Žižek, S. (2020). *Sex and the failed absolute*. Bloomsbury Academic.

Contributions

The dissertation's main contributions revolve around its analysis of how modernist literature challenged and destabilized traditional understandings of the center-periphery dichotomy. It achieves this through a variety of approaches, all centered on a detailed study of the works of James Joyce, Jean Rhys, Djuna Barnes, and Thomas Wolfe.

1. **Apophatic Approach to Modernist Texts:** The dissertation introduces an apophatic mode of analysis. This means understanding and interpreting reality through what it is not, rather than what it is. This is a key contribution, as it allows for a deeper understanding of the silences, negations and incalculable aspects of the modernist texts. The study uses this approach to challenge the dominance of cataphatic (affirmative) modes of thought and discourse.
2. **Emphasis on the “Excess of Signification”:** A core contribution of this dissertation lies in its focus on what remains “in excess of signification.” This refers to the aspects of experience, meaning, and being that cannot be fully captured or contained by language, logic or traditional systems of thought. This concept is presented as central to understanding how modernist authors undermined established norms and systems of power.
3. **Deconstructing the Center and the Periphery:** The study challenges the notion of the centre as a stable entity, portraying it instead as something moving, dialogical, and abstract, which is not working as it was intended. The claim that the periphery is a construct of the center, but one that cannot be reduced to a cataphatic-apophatic approach to otherness, highlights the constructed and idealistic nature of the center-periphery dichotomy, questioning their supposed stability and challenging the idea of a fixed and unchanging ontotheology.
4. **The Body as a Site of Knowledge:** The dissertation considers the body as a key site of knowledge, and an “objective corrective” to the abstractions of reason. It focuses on the ways in which modernist authors, particularly women authors like Rhys and Barnes, explored the relationship between the body and power, and the social and political implications of this relationship for body representations. In addition, the

- study analyses the way in which language and the body (as a territory that enables and functions through an “other” language) are intertwined in modernist texts.
5. Rethinking Power Dynamics: The study shifts the focus of analysis of power dynamics from the “objective” plane to the subjective plane. It examines how disciplinary structures and official narratives are internalized by individuals, and how modernist texts represent characters who challenge or reinterpret the law. It also investigates how power functions through the management of space, the construction of discourse, and the use of violence.
 6. The Ethical Dimension of Otherness: The dissertation makes a contribution by dissociating otherness from powerlessness, and highlights the value of the other as a position from which to explore the inconsistencies and anti-democratic regimes of thought informing official narratives. The study concludes that to be other does not mean to lack agency or power but instead signifies a position from which the ethical and moral inconsistencies established by the center-periphery (and the self-other) dichotomy can be examined.
 7. Focus on the Cut: The dissertation introduces the concept of the “cut” as a way of understanding how modernist literature disrupts traditional modes of thought. It argues that these cuts, formed during the process of truth production, deform the context and challenge the idea of a smooth, continuous narrative or system of meaning.
 8. Re-evaluation of Authors: The dissertation provides a nuanced analysis of each of the authors it explores. It offers new perspectives on Joyce, Rhys, and Barnes as key figures in the modernist project of deconstructing the centre. While it acknowledges the value of Wolfe’s writing, it also shows how his work differs from that of the others because of his tendency towards cataphatic ways of thinking, although the dissertation also presents a re-evaluation of his writing as being imaginative and democratic.
 9. Democratization and Diversification: The dissertation underscores modernism’s attempt at democratizing and diversifying various theoretical issues and approaches to literature. It also shows how modernist texts challenge the reader and invite them to rethink their understanding of the relationship between the text and context.

In summary, the dissertation makes a contribution to the study of modernism by offering a unique perspective rooted in an apophatic approach, an emphasis on the excess of signification, and a critical engagement with power structures, the body and the complex notion of the other. By doing so, the dissertation also manages to demonstrate the continuing relevance of modernist literature for understanding contemporary cultural and political issues.

Publications

Spaces of Terror, Times of Desire – Joyce’s Postcolonial Project in the “Circe” Episode of *Ulysses*, *Joyce Studies in Italy* 24 (1), 2023.

Deconstructing Colonial Metaphors in Virginia Woolf’s “The Waves”, *XVIII Scientific Conference of Sofia University “St. Kliment Ohridski”*, 2022.

Semioethical Questions in Literary Modernism: Stephen Dedalus and the Issue of History and Identity, *Cross-Disciplinary and Cross-Cultural Awareness: Essays in Honor of Madeleine Danova*. St. Kliment Ohridski University Press, 2023.

Politics and Phantasmatics of Paratextuality (*in print*)