“…my insides were like a house…”

A Study of Body and Space
in Mercè Rodoreda’s La Plaça del Diamant

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The title of this thesis is a citation from the English translation of *La Plaça del Diamant: In Diamond Square*, page 138.

Abbreviations

*LPD*  
*La Plaça del Diamant* (original version in Catalan)

*DS*  
*In Diamond Square* (English translation of *LPD*)
Abstract

The present thesis is a study of how body and space interrelate in the novel *La Plaça del Diamant* (1962) by the Catalan writer Mercè Rodoreda (1908-1983). I will in the following argue that these relations are important effects of the literary form of *LPD* and study how they produce a certain form of subjectivity. The analysis is generated by the following questions: how are the textual differences, translations, transitions and cancellations between the domains of body and space made readable by *LPD*?

Centering on these questions, what will be studied more specifically in *LPD* is:

- The practice of naming (and re-naming) and its implications for subject formation
- The construction of bodily perception through spatial signs
- The aesthetic strategies used for the inscription of a female experience and corporeality
- Stylistic aspects of fragmentation
- The Diamond Square as threshold chronotope and producer of a subject in crisis

The analysis is underpinned by a materialistic, feminist and critical theory, in which the literary text is seen as a discursive act that generates certain conditions for a subject to take form. The method of study consists in a deconstructive and performative reading of *LPD*, based on the view on the literary text as an event between aesthetic and socio-historical elements that materialize (and question) the conditions of subject formation. Previous research has argued that the main character of *LPD* undergoes a progressive development during the course of the story – that she in the beginning is naïve and passive to then become a free and active subject in the end. I will however try to formulate an alternative reading of Rodoreda’s novel; a reading that will question Western-liberal accounts of subjects as freely choosing, autonomous agents and instead search for the formal and discursive conditions of *LPD* that render certain subjects legible.

The emphasis is to study how the novel deconstructs and challenges a homogeneous notion of the subject – through its use of various stylistic, narrative and symbolic devices – and how it thus problematizes the very concept of identity.
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Introduction

[...] I, com d’esma, vaig posar-me a caminar i les paretsem duien que no els passos, i vaig ficar-me a la plaça del Diamant [...]

[...] And, instinctively, I started walking and it was the walls around me that carried me along and not my footsteps, and I got to Diamond Square [...] (my translation)

– La Plaça del Diamant

The citation above comes from the novel La Plaça del Diamant (1962) by the Catalan author Mercè Rodoreda (1908-1983), written during the author’s exile in Geneva from the dictator Francisco Franco’s régime in Spain. The story evolves around the life and impressions of Natàlia/Colometa, who is the first person narrator as well as the main character of the novel, during the harsh period of the Civil War (1936-39) in the city of Barcelona. Through a text where various spaces and objects abound and that repeatedly emphasize the way Natàlia’s body interferes with these and, as it were, applies human features to them, LPD produces a kind of subjectivity that seems hard to discern without addressing and investigating the textual relationships between body and space.

The passage cited above hints at this peculiar dialectic, in which Natàlia depends on the surrounding space for developing agency, perception and self-knowledge in the story: it is not her footsteps that make her move, it is the very walls around her. In a similar way, the key scenes of the story – the turning points of Natàlia’s life – are depicted through a language that continuously puts emphasis on Natàlia’s body in relation to the spaces and objects around it. For instance, she is renamed by her future husband on Diamond Square; the war is described as a bodily and urban experience of dirtiness and starvation; Natàlia’s psychic and physical breakdowns are represented through a body that clashes or merges into certain spaces and objects; she carves her name ‘Colometa’ on the door of her former home, and so on.

This stage-setting and positioning of Natàlia’s body by and in the text works not only to “reveal” her body and personality, since spaces and objects not only help her to discover and experience her own corporeality and desire, they also seem to censor and violate those very experiences, by brusquely turning her into a mere object in the décor of the story’s

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settings. In these and other similar tensions, produced by various literary strategies in LPD, a problematical representation of a subject emerges. Further, it is not only Natàlia who is formed into subjectivity in the story; LPD also forces its reader to occupy a specific position in relation to the text. The different aesthetic strategies employed by Rodoreda (inner monologue, the colloquial Catalan language style) thus also seem to have a function for the body-space relations by outlining a literary space for the reader to relate to.

In order to understand how these literary devices in the construction of subjectivity of LPD function and relate to one another, I will in this study analyze the novel with the aim of finding where, how and when space and body interact. Because these relations that structure the production of subjectivity in LPD raise important questions about the subject: about its contingency and its linguistic, political and historical substance. How is a subject produced? (And I use the word produced because that is exactly how the text forms the character Natàlia; she is produced by the spaces around her and by the very text itself) Do we already have an original or in some sense “natural” body and identity which exist before and independently from the spaces around us – and which may be hidden and must therefore be “deciphered” or “discovered” – or is it the very spaces that always surround us that make us experience and perform our selves through our bodies and our ideological and gendered positions in these spaces? What risks do we have to face then, with our own bodies, in order to become subjects in a particular place with its specific relations of power?

Various subject positions are formed in the different spaces of LPD: Natàlia is given a gendered position by the urban and domestic spaces around her, social and ideological positions are performed in the Barcelona of the Civil War in the story, Rodoreda writes the novel from an exiled location, to name a few. Can a study of these spaces that are mediated by LPD say something about the constraints and possibilities of the subject that take form in and through them?

Debates concerning the representation of subjectivity in the novel (and in other texts by Rodoreda) are carried out in the scholarly reception of Rodoreda’s work. These debates circulate around a question that can be summarized with the question: “Who is Natàlia?” To illustrate this: the character Natàlia is often defined (by the other characters in the story and by the very language of the novel) as being merely a passive body, although from time to time she seems to acquire a more active agency. A common feature in the research on LPD is to argue that Natàlia finally can discover and develop her “true” personality once
she starts making active and more conscious decisions to change her life.\(^2\) The tendency amongst the scholars reading *LPD* is to emphasize that Natàlia, through gradually acting less passive, in the end of the story attains a more or less ideal female subjectivity, which is denoted with adjectives such as “free”, “independent”, “conscious”, “mature”, and so on.\(^3\) An active agency – a freedom of choice – thus seems to be the very precondition for becoming a subject at all. But is it really all that simple?

It is certainly quite unsettling to read about such a passive character as Natàlia, whose actions, experiences and thoughts are to such large extent exposed, constrained and conditioned by the spaces, people and objects around her. Why is this kind of passivity of a literary character so uncomfortable and worrisome for us contemporary readers? And why is the passivity of Natàlia continuously read as the *opposite* to activity and subjectivity? Apparently, the problematic of the subject (and of its formation) can be found both in the novel itself and in its reception – and it will also be the main topic of this essay. However, the emphasis in the view of the subject will here be somewhat different from the one conveyed by the scholars indicated above. Is it really so, that subjectivity only can develop through a bodily agency in the Western sense, namely, through the ability to make the decision to act before performing the act, through actively and freely choosing between different options or through merely wishing for a change? Isn’t submission, dependency and obedience (two important ingredients in Natàlia’s life) in fact also fundamental parts of subjects? Do not subjects always also yield to laws and norms, without necessarily breaking with or even challenging them? Indeed, as Michel Foucault informs us about\(^4\), the subject is someone that acts, but it is also an *effect* of a discursive order; an effect produced in the matrix of specific power vectors with a certain set of rules and at a particular time in history.

Thus I think – and this is one of my hypotheses – that in order to study how *LPD* constructs subjectivity, the complex agency of Natàlia should be analyzed with a dialectic perspective on the text as a *producer* of subjectivity and by taking into account Foucault’s

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idea that has been usefully rearticulated in relation to gender by Judith Butler in *Bodies That Matter*:

[...] agency denoted by the performativity of “sex” will be directly counter to any notion of a voluntarist subject who exists quite apart from the regulatory norms which he/she opposes. The paradox of subjectivation (*assujetissement*) is precisely that the subject who would resist such norms is itself enabled, if not produced by such norms.5

In *LPD*, the subject continuously resists being defined in any fixed category, it is passive and active, conscious and unconscious, bodies and spaces are sometimes designated as objects, sometimes as subjects. There is in fact only one thing that is more or less constant in how subjectivity is constructed by the text: it is made visible in the relationships between body and space. The literary construction of subjectivity in *LPD* thus demands a method of reading that does not fall into a mere choosing between dualities in the understanding of Natàlia’s identity and agency (active or passive, mature or immature, naïve or intelligent), nor poses the relation body-space as unilateral, causal or merely discursive, but that instead embraces the paradoxes of the subject and critically examines the linguistic, discursive, as well as ideological, rules through which it is made readable by the text. Because, as I will argue throughout the study, it is precisely the readability that makes literary subjects possible at all.

Before discussing the theoretical framework and method of this study in greater depth, however, I will in the following give a brief description of Rodoreda’s biography and the historical situation in which *LPD* was published, as well as discussing the academic reception of the novel.

*Mercè Rodoreda, an Exiled Author*

Mercè Rodoreda was born 1908 in Barcelona and died 1983 in Girona, Catalonia. *LPD* became a best seller in Catalonia in the 1960’s, even though the censorship of the Catalan language and culture that was imposed after the Civil War was still partly operating. Her literary work remained quite unnoticed by the international public and academic reception during most of the 20th Century, since the censorship generally complicated the circulation and reception of Catalan literature abroad. Today, however, Rodoreda is acclaimed in Spain and internationally as one of the most important writers in the Catalan language.

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Mercè Rodoreda grew up in Barcelona and had to leave school at the age of 10 to help her family at home, which had a precarious financial situation. She married at the age of 20 with an uncle from her mother’s side of the family and had a son. In 1930 she started publishing literary texts and collaborated in various magazines, such as *Clarisme, La Revista* and *Mirador*, for which she wrote short stories, stories for children, poems, editorial reports and interviews. In 1935 she started working at the “Comisariat de Propaganda de la Generalitat”, where she revised Catalan texts, and at the organization “Lletres Catalanes”. Through both these places she was introduced to the literary and intellectual ambience of the pre-war Barcelona and became acquainted with authors such as Anna Murià and Armand Obiols (pseudonym for Joan Prat). In 1936, the Spanish Civil War erupted and changed things drastically for the people living in the city; for Rodoreda, it became much more difficult to continue writing in Catalan. In 1937 she separated from her husband and when the fascist’s won the war in 1939 she saw herself obliged to leave her son in Barcelona and flee the country, together with several other writers and intellectuals who opposed Franco’s régime. In the company of Joan Prat – with whom she had initiated a relationship – she survived the Second World War by travelling around in France, hiding in abandoned farms and in the outskirts of cities like Limoges, Paris and Bordeaux. In 1941 Prat was captured, tortured and sent to a labor camp, but could join Rodoreda again in 1946, who had spent those five years struggling to survive as a factory worker. The couple subsequently moved to Geneva in 1954, since Prat got a job as translator at the headquarters of UN. There, in the Swiss capital in 1962, she wrote *La Plaça del Diamant*. After Prat’s death in 1972 she returned to live permanently in Catalonia, and in 1980 – two years before her death – she received the prestigious Price of Honor of Catalan Literature (“Premi d’Honor de les Lletres Catalanes”) – as the first woman ever to receive it.

Rodoreda’s work is thus marked by war and exile, and in a letter to her friend Anna Murià she mentions that writing became a way to cope with those experiences:

I have sewn blouses for nine francs and I have been very hungry. I have met interesting people and the jacket I wear is a heritage from a Russian Jewish woman who committed suicide with Veronal. I left one of my ovaries in Limoges [...] but what I won’t leave in France is my energy and my youth…Above all, I want to write, I need to write…all those useless, demoralizing years weigh heavy on me, but I will have my vengeance. I will make them useful, stimulating…

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7 Ibid.
8 Letter from Rodoreda to Murià (Bordeaux, 19 November 1945), published in parts in "Mercè, o la vida dolorosa" (pp.17-27) in *Catalan Review* (1987:2), pp.21-22: "He fet bruses de confecció a nou francs i he passat multa gana. He
Rodoreda was one amongst many authors and intellectuals in Spain who had to flee the country during the Civil War and live in exile for several years. Although she did not participate in any organized political activities or parties, she had worked for left-wing magazines and thus her mother urged her to leave Barcelona, knowing that even the sheer act of writing in Catalan was reason enough to be persecuted by the Spanish Nationalists. The project of making Spain into a homogeneous and united nation was the main ingredient in Francoist nationalist ideology, which led to violent censorships of Catalan, Basque and other minority languages spoken throughout the Spanish peninsula, as the historian Daniele Conversi has remarked in her book about Catalan and Basque nationalisms. Referring to this text, Eva Bru-Dominguez comments that

The Catalan language was as the time, and arguably remains, one of the core values of Catalan national identity (Conversi 1997:162). The regime’s project to eliminate separatism thus entailed the eradication of the language, banning it from the public space and severely penalizing its use.

This nationalist project, which was carried out as most intensively during the first years of the dictatorship, was to such large extent successful in its repression and persecution of Catalan that it almost resulted in a total destruction of the language: it disappeared from the public space and was relocated mainly to the domestic sphere. A small part of Catalan art and literature was accepted by the regime, but only once it had passed the rigid control of the censors, which would only allow the dissemination of a few classics, folklore art or texts conveying Spanish and Franco-friendly notions. Spanish departments at universities across the world have carefully studied the Spanish and Catalan literary and poetic activity that nevertheless flourished in this period and which often was produced abroad; an example is the research on the group of modernist writers in “Generación 27”, of which the poets Rafael Alberti, Federico García Lorca, Rosa Chacel and Miguel Hernandez, amongst others, were members. A big part of the research on Spanish exile literature is however

9. The ideology propagated by Franco was deeply entrenched in Falangist ideology; based on the Jacobin idea of a common language, race and culture as essential prerequisites for nation-building. It also adopted and imported the Nazi and Fascist vision of creating a strong unitary nation-state. See Conversi, Daniele, The Basques, the Catalans and Spain, London: Hurst & Company 1997, pp. 109-140.
12. The group was the result of an artistic and literary movement in Spain around the year 1927, developed around avant-garde ideas and highly influenced by the realism of Lorca, Alberti, Buñuel and Dalí. See Ramoneda, Arturo M., Antología Poética de la Generación del 27, Madrid: Castilia 1990.
focused on the men of the group and their literary works – the writing women (who had big importance for the Spanish modernist movement) have been systematically marginalized from both the Spanish and Catalan literary canon and from the research on Spanish and Catalan literature in general. For this reason I think it is important to study a writer who has been doubly marginalized: as a woman and as belonging to the Catalan minority.

The biggest part of Rodoreda’s work is written during and after her exile and is distinguished by the short stories Vint-i-dos contes (1958) and La Meva Christina i altres contes (1967) and the novels El Carrer de les Camèlies (1966) Aloma (1969), La Plaça del Diamant (1962), Mirall Trencat (1974), Quanta, Quanta Guerra…(1980) and La Mort i la Primavera (1986). She also published a few works of poetry and drama. In this study I will focus solely on LPD, a novel that was originally entitled Colometa, but that was given the title La Plaça del Diamant, on suggestion by Rodoreda’s editor. Buendía Gómez remarks that Rodoreda reached a much larger public with LPD, both in Catalan and in the over forty languages her work is translated into. LPD is also one of the most studied texts of Rodoreda’s work and its literary technique has for instance been compared with Virginia Woolf’s style of writing.

Perspectives of Gender and History
The focus of the research on LPD is the narrative style and the symbols of the novel, in addition to the many biographical studies that search to explain the novel through reference to Rodoreda’s life. These studies are mainly carried out by scholars from the academic fields of feminist and gender theory, but also by researchers that instead of – or in addition to – analyzing the figuration of the female in the novel gives more attention to the socio-historical context of Rodoreda’s fiction outlined by the Civil War and its effects in Catalonia of the Post War period. In the following, I will give a short overview of the studies on LPD that I have used in the analysis, and portray a scholarly debate going on around a certain problem of the novel and its interpretation. This study will not “choose side” in this debate – I will here only briefly outline its features since it can contrast and explain my own method of reading LPD.

As is suggested by William Sherzer, the main problem discussed in the studies of Rodoreda’s work is how to solve the apparent antagonisms between the feminist and socio-

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15 Ibid.
historical aspects in, and approaches to, the texts.\(^1\)\(^8\) Bru-Domínguez also notes in her dissertation about corporeality in Rodoreda’s fiction that: “The debate over the location of Rodoreda’s literary corpus has been conditioned by divergent ideological positions over feminist and historicist scholarly practices.”\(^1\)\(^9\) In short, this debate concerns the differing opinions about the fundamental meaning of the various symbols, metaphors and characters that appear in the fiction of Rodoreda. The feminist “side” claim that they represent a female experience of Otherness – exile, marginality, exclusion from the patriarchal Symbolic system, re-appropriation of the semiotic;\(^2\)\(^0\) – while other more history-concerned scholars maintain that Rodoreda’s work cannot fully be understood without reading it as part of a specific moment in Catalan history and identity construction, marked by the Civil War and its consequences: the political exiles of Republican and other Franco-critical Catalans and the banning of the Catalan language.

Joan Ramon Resina vindicates for example this latter stance, arguing that LPD plays an important part in the ideological project to “[…] re-territorialize the lost language of a community.”\(^2\)\(^1\) The Catalan scholar Enric Bou has also emphasized the importance of the historical period for the novel through referring to Gilles Deleuze’s and Félix Guattari’s theories about minor literatures:

> Rehuyendo la censura o por decisión de no dejarse ahogar en un mar de datos y fechas, sus grandes novelas pueden ser leídas en clave histórica y política, después de obligar al lector a un ejercicio de desmontaje.\(^2\)\(^2\)

The notion is here that LPD makes a certain context of the war readable through the formal aspects and usage of the Catalan language, and thus the historical circumstances are not merely reflected in the text but are, as it were, important parts of it. Resina will be used as reference in this study in the discussions of LPD as discursive act – especially in the last part of the analysis, where LPD is studied in relation to Deleuze’s and Guattari’s reading of minor literatures.

\(^1\)\(^8\) Sherzer, William M., ”‘La Plaza del Diamante’: Historical vs. Sexual Discourse”, (pp. 133-139) in Revista Hispánica Moderna, June 2000:1, Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press.
\(^1\)\(^9\) Bru-Domínguez, p. 18.
\(^2\)\(^0\) Bergmann, Emilie, ”‘Flowers at the North Pole: Mercè Rodoreda and the Female Imagination in Exile” (pp.83-99) and Fayad, Mona, ”The Process of Becoming: Egendering the Subject in Mercè Rodoreda and Virginia Woolf” (pp.119-129) in Catalan Review (1987:2); Scarlett, Elizabeth, Under Construction. The Body in Spanish Novels, Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia 1994; Carbonell, Neus, La Plaça Del Diamant de Mercé Rodoreda, Barcelona: Empúries 1994.
\(^2\)\(^1\) See Joan Ramon Resina’s article ”The Link in Consciousness: Time and Community in Rodoreda’s La Plaça Del Diamant” (pp.225-246) in Catalan Review (1987:2).
\(^2\)\(^2\) Bou, Enric, “Mercè Rodoreda: La Condición de una Mirada” in Revista Turia, Teruel: Instituto de Estudios Tur-olenses, digital publication: http://www.ieturolenses.org/revista_turia/index.php/actualidad_turia/merce-rododera-la-condicion-de-una-mirada Accessed on October 25, 2015: “By her wish to avoid the censorship or by deciding not to drown in a sea of facts and dates, her [Rodoreda’s] greatest novels can be read in historical and political terms, after forcing the reader into an exercise of disassembly.” (my translation)
This thesis will however to a larger extent than Resina and Bou’s analyses involve perspectives on gender, because the assignation of the Civil War and the historical period in LPD is continuously linked and dependent on the inscription of a working class woman’s voice and body. The feminist readings of Rodoreda, which emerged and intensified in academia around the 1980’s and 90’s, are not a uniform group with altogether similar ideas about how the female position is figured in the texts; they constitute rather a multitude of voices inquiring into the gendered positions and the articulation of the female in Rodoredan fiction. In more recent readings of Rodoreda there are for instance several attempts to combine a feminist with a historical interpretational model. Josep-Anton Fernández comments in Catalan Review that the key problem of LPD in particular is “[…] the relationship between Natàlia’s experience and the historical context, and the relevance of this relationship in terms of gender and subjectivity.” Bru-Dominguez takes the emphasis on gender a step further, not through interpreting the characters’ (psychological) experiences in Rodoreda’s literary work, but through analyzing the symbolic and narrative figuration of corporeality. In her dissertation from 2013, which I have used as reference on many occasions in the analysis, she studies Rodoreda’s novels El Carrer de les Camèlies, Mirall Trencat and La Mort i la Primavera through inquiring into the socio-historical, political, cultural and geographical mechanisms that have given form to the literary representations of the (female) body in Catalonia (1890-1960). She writes:

This book takes the view that an analysis of corporeality demands an interdisciplinary approach which facilitates the location of the body in relational terms; that is to say, that the sexed body be considered in the social, political and geographical context that determines it.

Bru-Dominguez further gives valuable accounts of the artistic movements Modernisme and Noucentisme in Catalonia, of their representations of the female body and of spatiality; something which has been largely overlooked in previous research on Rodoreda. The main aspects of Bru-Dominguez’s research that I have found useful is thus her object of study (corporeality and spatiality in Rodoreda and specific political, cultural and social situations in Catalonia) and the feminist purposes of her readings.

In addition to Bru-Dominguez and Resina I have also used insights from scholars such as J.W Albrecht, Patricia Lunn, Mona Fayad, Emilie Bergmann and María Roca Mussons,


24 Bru-Dominguez, p. 6.
who have studied the gendered body, spatiality and aspects of subjectivity in Rodoreda’s work from feminist, psychoanalytical, narrative or comparative perspectives.

What most of the feminist critique and the more history-inclined research around the novel have in common is however the constant focus on searching to explain the identity of the character and narrator Natàlia. In order to describe my own method of study this is a crucial point to make: the feminist and the historical readings, despite their apparent opposition, in fact mirror each other more than they differ – at least from a methodological point of view. Most of the scholars studying LPD aim at interpreting the story on a metaphysical and hermeneutic level: they are trying to pin down the “meaning” of story. A question posed by Sherzer summarizes this inclination quite neatly: “Is this a text about historical and political phenomena, a text about politics of gender, or both?”25 (my emphasis) The question at stake in these discussions is thus what the novel is really about, a problem that in my view seems quite impossible to solve. Are literary stories not always more or less problematic, paradoxical and complex? Is it not possible to accept that the story of LPD, as Sherzer claimed, is about politics of gender and about the historical context – and about a lot else at the same time? As I will discuss further in the next section, shifting focus from the what to the how of the text allow for a critical study that problematizes and identifies the textual, discursive and ideological representations of body and space in LPD, which produce a certain effect – not essence – of subjectivity.

Discourses, Subjects

The focus on the literary form as producer of subjectivity is enabled with, amongst others, Michel Foucault’s and Judith Butler’s theories on discourse and subjectivation. What lie at heart in their theoretical projects – and which have been further developed in various areas of enunciative discourse analysis26, gender and postcolonial studies – are discussions of the performative27 and operative features of language, rendering an understanding of texts as speech acts and situations possible. Instead of regarding language and texts hermeneutically as that which represent or “code” for an already existing reality, experience or gender (which presupposes a speaking subject as a unified source of meaning) they turn to the

25 Sherzer, p. 135.
27 ‘Performative’ will in this study be understood with Judith Butler’s notion of the term, which in turn is influenced by John L. Austin’s speech acts theories: Butler (1993), p. 13: “Within speech act theory, a performative is that discursive practice that enacts or produces that which it names.”
concept of discourse in order to study how language and texts, in their specific places and times of circulation and usage, both produce and unsettle terms for subjectivity, gender and meaning. These terms are grounded in the specific use of language and its relations to other linguistic practices, which enable (or disable) the readers to search for the meaning of the text in their different ways.

The concept of discourse varies depending on the field where it is used or studied. Here, it will be understood to be: “[…] a linguistically encoded practice of positioning oneself and others and creating discursive relationships within a play of polyphonic voices,” 28 as Johannes Angermüller has formulated it. Hence, it is not a specific literary text per se that constitutes a discourse, rather, the level of discourse appears with the novel’s participation in a discursive situation, in its social and political relations with other texts and linguistic practices. For instance, in and after Archeology of Knowledge, Foucault posed the question of discourse in relation to its quality of event; rather than of epistemological/linguistic rule in a closed and abstract system of signs (langue):

[…] a language (langue) is still a system for possible statements, a finite body of rules that authorizes an infinite number of performances. The field of discursive events, on the other hand, is a grouping that is always finite and limited at any moment to the linguistic sequences that has been formulated […] The question posed by language analysis of some discursive fact or other is always: according to what rules has a particular statement been made, and consequently according to what rules could other statements be made? The description of the events of discourse poses a quite different question: how is it that one particular statement appeared rather than another? […] 29

Foucault thus uses the concept of ‘formation discursive’ (in French) to denote the rules of language practices through which symbolic forms mobilize different contexts. These formations are constituted through enunciations of utterances in unfinished processes and through an open system of elements, determined by the parameters of discourse: the speaker, the one addressed, the moment of the speech act and the place of it. 30 These parameters will be given attention in the analysis of the relations between body and space, of how they are formed in LPD through its literary form and discursive gesture. Thus, what mainly will be used from Foucault’s theories are his ideas about subject formation in discursive practices, not mainly his conclusions about the subject. Because, as Foucault also emphasizes, each text is a particular case and situation and thus the subject emerging from it will always be specific to that case; it cannot be reduced to any universal or homogenous descrip-

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28 Angermüller, p. 4.
tion or definition. In discourse, the subject designates rather the position or variable that is addressed by and produced in and through the workings of ideology of each situation of enunciation – the subject’s very constitution is a constant negotiation between instances of power, gender and other social, economical and aesthetical relations. As Butler writes: “This subjectivation, or assujettissement, is not only a subordination but a securing and maintaining, a putting into place of a subject […]”31 Hence, the subject is formed through being posited and addressed in a certain manner, it is dependent on its position in the social hierarchy and on the material that both designates and constitutes it. And that material is precisely, as Louis Althusser maintains, ideology itself:

I shall suggest that ideology ‘acts’ or ‘functions’ in such a way that it ‘recruits’ subjects among the individuals (it recruits them all), or transforms the individuals into subjects (it transforms them all) by that very precise operation that I have called interpellation or hailing, and which can be imagined along the lines of the most commonplace everyday police (or other) hailing: ‘Hey, you there!’32

He further suggests, as Ulf Olsson has discussed, that becoming a subject has nothing to do with finding one’s “true” personality or becoming fully free to act as one pleases, it rather indicates a process of “[…] repeatedly and endlessly enter an already defined function.”33 Relations of power/discourse thus condition the agency of the subject, which problematizes the notion that Natália only becomes a subject once she starts making individual and “free” choices. Because, as Butler writes: “[…] the account of agency conditioned by those very regimes of discourse/power cannot be conflated with voluntarism or individualism, much less with consumerism, and in no way presupposes a choosing subject […].”34 In this study, the discussion around how subjectivity is formed in LPD will depart from this kind of materialist35 and non-essentialist notion on subject formation, regarding it as a phenomena conditioned and enabled by discursive and ideologically marked practices.

The materialist feminist position of this study appears with these considerations. It will be visible in the quite detailed analysis of the concrete literary language and style of LPD and in the search for how it both contests and forms gendered subject positions in and through the text. A contingent and gendered subject can be discerned in the configurations of the relationships between body and space by studying LPD and its scholarly reception as

31 Butler (1993), p. 34.
34 Butler (1993), s. 15.
35 Materialism here refers to Karl Marx’s notion of ‘historical materialism’ as it is discussed in the preface to A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy (1859), ed. Maurice Dobb, London: International Publishers 1979: “In the social production of their existence, men inevitably enter into definite relations, which are independent of their will, namely relations of production appropriate to a given stage in the development of their material forces of production.”
discursive acts that gain meaning and importance not only by what they say, but how they say it. However, although literature always is part of a socio-historical situation with certain norms and discourses, I will also direct attention to the ability or inclination of the literary text to work against the conditions of discourse, enabling new ways of perception, which in LPD emerges in the particular textual production and displacement of bodies in the spaces of marriage, war and crisis. Literature can perhaps, as Anders Johansson has argued, in this way be understood as a drama that performs that very dialectic between text and elements of “reality”:

The point is in any case to abandon the notion of literature as a hierarchical relationship between the text, on the one hand, and “experience”, “history”, “gender”, on the other, in advantage for a notion of literature as a situation, a drama in the meeting between these components. 36

The relationship between body and space is not only a central theme in the story in LPD; it also functions in certain ways for the formal and discursive aspects of the novel, enacting and staging the drama Johansson describes.

Body as Border, Space as Situation

LPD relates a story of a character that realizes herself but also struggles against her positions as subject, as many scholars already have noted. My emphasis will however be to ask how the text produce and enable this particular subjectivity and the way Natália comes to perceive and perform it (experiences of Otherness, displacement, pain, passivity). More specifically, in what ways are her acquirements and/or lack of agency dependent on the spaces she traverses – spaces marked by specific socio-political situations – and how is that dependency formed textually? If one moves away from the view of the choosing subject as the premise for agency, then what can be deduced about the image of subjectivity in LPD by studying the literary construction of spatiality and corporeality and its production of different premises of subjectivity? So far, this theoretical perspective has quite seldom been used in the studies of Rodoreda’s works, with the important exceptions of Bru-Dominguez and Resina. Thus, this study can be seen as a continuation and rereading of their considerations and can hopefully contribute with a new perspective on how LPD problematizes subjectivity through its literary techniques.

As for the structure of the study, the analysis is divided into sections of topics, according to their respective significance for the construction of subjectivity in LPD. I am aware that every part of the text in reality stand in a complex relation to each other and to the discursive elements of the event outlined by the novel, which I will emphasize in the ending discussions of each chapter of the study, but the division may serve as a critical tool, helping to problematize the understanding of the text and to show in a clear fashion the findings of the analysis. In the first section I will focus on the ritual of naming and how the renaming of Natàlia in the first chapter of LPD enables and hints at how the processes of subjectivation will operate throughout the text. In the second section I study the textual formation of vision and smell in LPD, with a special attention to how these bodily senses are constructed through spatial signs and indicate a subjectivity where the body is both censored but also constantly focalized and threatened. The third section will include an analysis of how the female is inscribed and given form in LPD and how gendered positions materialize in the text by translations and transitions between bodies and urban/domestic spaces. In the fourth part of the analysis I will analyze LPD from a slightly broader perspective by discussing different literary techniques of fragmentation used by Rodoreda, and how this leads to a representation of a heterogeneous and space-dependent subject.

In the fifth and last section I will conclude the analysis with a discussion of the threshold spaces that emerge in LPD and how they, especially the Diamond Square, make experiences of the Spanish Civil War and the following crisis and renaissance of Catalan identity readable. Bru-Domínguez emphasizes that corporeality in Rodoreda is mainly formed through techniques of assigning the body, on the one hand, as signifying surface, and on the other hand as a material limit or border\textsuperscript{37} – I will also center on these notions, but give slightly more attention to the latter form, since the body in LPD continuously appears and disappears in and through spaces which can be characterized as thresholds.

Before moving on to the analysis, however, there is a technical problem concerning the translation of LPD and the grammatical use of subject in Catalan that needs to be addressed.

\textit{Problems of Translation}

I have read LPD in the original Catalan version for the study; thus the citations in the main text of the thesis will appear in original, while the English translations are added in the

\textsuperscript{37} Bru-Domínguez, p. 6.
footnotes. A reason for doing this is that there are several passages where the English translation does not convey what I am underlining or analyzing, which for instance can be different words or phrases with a certain epistemological and linguistic significance in Catalan, but not in English. In fact, there is a problem regarding the English translation of LPD: after having read the Catalan and English versions of it, I have found some important differences between them. One example is the names of the characters: Colometa has for instance been translated into Pidgey, Quimet to Joe and Mateu to Matthew, which indicates the concern of the English editor in making the novel attractive on the Anglo-Saxon market.

But the main problem of the English translation appears in the passages where body and space interact, which are the very sites of the novel that are studied in this essay. Mainly, the difference between the Catalan and the English versions here springs from the different uses of the moving body/subject in relation to the surrounding space, but also from the very grammatical function of the subject in these two languages. For example, as J. W Albrecht and Patricia Lunn notes in their article “A Note on the Language of La Plaça del Diamant”:

In Catalan, as in many other languages, the category ‘subject’ is not a semantic category; rather, ‘subject’ is a purely syntactic category. Entities are categorized as subjects if they govern verb agreement; the semantic nature of the relationship between subject noun and its verb is irrelevant to this categorization. All kinds of entities bearing all kinds of relationships to verbal situations are included in the subject category. Therefore, when analyzing what is given the role of a subject in LPD, one must, as Albrecht and Lunn indicate, not confuse the syntactic role of subject with the semantic role of agent. However, Albrecht and Lunn are solely interested to study the sites in the text where Natàlia plays the semantic role of agent, while I rather believe that an important part of how subjectivity is produced by LPD also includes the fact that objects and spaces are given the syntactic (and thus at the same time the semantic) role of subject in the text. This can for instance be discerned in the citation from LPD in the beginning of the introduction: Natàlia is guided forward by the walls, not by her footsteps: “[…] els pares em duien que no els passos[…]” Here it is the walls which govern verb agreement. The English translation, however, does not highlight Natàlia’s dependency on space as much as the original does, instead it says: “[…] I started walking and followed the walls rather than my foot-

39 Rodoreda, LPD, p. 249.
steps […] Here, Natàlia is the subject governing the verb; she followed the walls. Thus, the inclination of DS is to deprive spaces and objects their ability of performing as subjects to instead give the role of subject to Natàlia. If this means that Anglo-Saxon language and culture is more prone than its Latin counterparts to stress autonomy and free will as the bases of human agency, is not something for this thesis to answer. The difference is here merely mentioned to explain why I chose to translate the citation in the introduction myself and why the citations from LPD are kept in the original.

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The Practice of Naming

The ultimate linguistic sign of Natàlia’s body and subjectivity – her name – is brutally changed by Quimet during their first meeting on the Diamond Square of Barcelona in the first chapter of LPD. A central aspect of this chapter is the violent capturing – but also production – of Natàlia’s body, by the space around her and by the renaming (and thus objectification) forced upon her. Through this situation of naming, Natàlia’s body and experience materialize before the reader in a certain linguistic shape and according to specific discursive rules. In this chapter I will search for and discuss these rules and their functions.

The public and urban space that Quimet and Natàlia move through is here described in detail; “Tot com un decoració.”41 (“All like a stage set”42), with sentences including words like “streets” and “square” at the same time as bodily aspects are related: “[…] però així que el vent m’havia sortit per la boca la cinta tornava a fer-me el martiri.”43 The dance on Diamond Square is ended with a passage of text where Quimet renames Natàlia to Colometa:

[…] quan estarem ben sols, tota la gent desada a dintre de les cases i els carrers buits, vostè i jo ballare mun vals de punta a la plaça del Diamant… volta que volta… Colometa. Me’l vaig mirar molt amoïnada i li vaig dir que em deia Natàlia i quan li vaig dir que em deia Natàlia encara riu I va dir que jo només em podia dir un nom: Colometa. Va ser quan vaig arrancar a córrer i ell corria al meu darrera, no se m’espaniti… i que no veu que no pot anar tota sola pels carrers, que me la robarien? 44

Apparently, the act of renaming is closely related to Natàlia’s body and the space outlined by the Diamond Square. In fact, it is the very square that leads to the introduction of the new name into the text: “[…] vostè I jo ballare mun vals de punta a la plaça del Diamant … volta que volta… Colometa.”45 Diamond Square is a public space in the city, a place where young people go to socialize, dance and to find a partner. In LPD the square also works as the space where Natàlia’s subjectivity starts taking form, a subjectivity that is strangely dependent on the scenery around her body. When Quimet for the first time calls her by the nickname Colometa she protests, but he only laughs and states her new name again, and the repetition of her name is exactly what establishes her new role in the story,

41 Rodoreda, LPD, p. 21.
42 Rodoreda, DS, p. 3.
43 Rodoreda, LPD, p. 20. DS, p 2: “[...] but the moment I started rushing and getting out of breath, the elastic sliced into me again.”
44 Rodoreda, LPD, p. 22. DS, p. 4: “[...] when we were all alone, and everyone was in bed and the streets empty, he said, you and I will dance a dawn waltz in Diamond Square… round and round… Pidgey. I looked at him taken aback and told him my name was Natalia and when I said my name was Natalia he laughed again and said there could be only one name for me: Pidgey. That was when I broke into a run and he chased me, don’t be scared… don’t you see you can’t walk down these streets by yourself, somebody will steal you from me?” (Colometa has been translated to Pidgey in the English version of the novel, probably to preserve its similarity to the word pigeon, which in Catalan is ‘colom’).
45 Ibid. “[...] Diamond Square… round and round… Pidgey.”
as subordinate to certain rules of society and to the wishes of Quimet – the man she will marry.

Colometa, the new name of Natàlia, forces her body to change drastically: the petticoat ties her body as if she was tied to a frond of asparagus fern by a wire: “[…] i la cinta de goma a la cintura estrenyent, estrenyent, com si estigués lligada en una branqueta d’esparraguera amb un filferro.” The immediate response to the re-naming is a strong bodily experience of being tied to, or trapped in, the décor of the Diamond Square and the streets around it. But Natàlia also tries to resist being renamed by running away from Quimet and from Diamond Square. Paradoxically then, the body of Natàlia starts running at the same time as it is tied by the elastic in her dress, as trying to get away from the power of Quimet that, nonetheless, starts operating over her. The relationship between body and space in LPD starts to reveal itself through this act of renaming and the reaction of Natàlia: the reader learns that her body does not have any stable limits but rather is invaded, changed and censured, by the other characters and by the text itself. The act of renaming can be said to be the culmination of this contradictory situation of Natàlia: it does not only delimit her by placing her in a certain position in the social and sexual hierarchy, it is also the very process that makes the character of Colometa possible in the text; it is a violent indication of how the subject is produced in and through acts of language. The slightly new subject position Natàlia is made to occupy will now be recognized and indicated with her new name Colometa. As Butler writes in Excitable Speech (1997): “The act of recognition becomes an act of constitution: the address animates the subject into existence.”

Referring to both John L. Austin and Althusser in her theory of the speech act described in Excitable Speech (1997), Butler tries to bridge their different views on the speaking subject and its relation to interpellation. She suggests that this could be done by giving an account of the subject as constituted through the address of the Other but that then becomes a subject that itself is able to address others (the subject acquires agency). This notion of the importance of naming in subject formation already began to take form in Bodies That Matter, where Butler writes:

To have a name is to be positioned within the Symbolic, the idealized domain of kinship, a set of relations structured through sanction and taboo, which is governed by the law of the father and the

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46 Rodoreda, LPD p. 22. DS, p. 4: “[…] stuck there with the elastic cutting deep into my waist lika a piece of wire tying me to a frond of asparagus fern.”
48 Ibid: “At first, it appears that the Austinian notion of an illocutionary utterance is incompatible with an Althussian notion of interpellation. For Austin, the subject who speaks precedes the speech in question. For Althusser, the speech act that brings the subject into linguistic existence precedes the subject in question.”
prohibition against incest. For Lacan, names, which emblematize and institute this paternal law, sustain the integrity of the body. [...] the paternal law produces versions of bodily integrity; the name, which installs gender and kinship, works as a politically invested and investing performative.\textsuperscript{50} Thus, Butler emphasizes the importance of interpellation, of naming, in the formation of subjectivity. This should however not be seen as a process where an already existing subject “takes on” the mask of the name and of identity or is imposed with it by an external power that acts upon it unilaterally. Rather, the act of naming produces the subject, by placing it in a social time and space, by making it available for address and for enabling it to address others from that position.

Butler’s view is useful for the understanding of how the process of subjectivation works through interpellation and other discursive acts on the level of the story, but it should be underlined that her aims are somewhat different from the one’s of this thesis. Because Natàlia is, as it were, not an individual/human being that becomes a subject, but rather a literary character that embodies a certain literary figure (the figure of the Female, the Silent, the Oppressed, the Resistant, for instance) – a figure that sets subjects into play in the text. I want to emphasize here that the approach of this study foremost is motivated by the specific question of how subjectivity is produced and constructed by literary (artistic) language and its discursive gestures – not language or discourse in general, which is Butlers approach.

Reading the first chapter of LPD in this perspective, the renaming of Natàlia can be read as a forming of the subject positions in the story, as the setting of conditions for those positions and for how they relate to one another. Quimet’s renaming forces Natàlia to reveal herself as a subject in relation to the particular address directed towards her. But she is however not described as wholly passive in this violent renaming by Quimet – because even though she is forced into a certain subject position by the power exerted by Quimet, the gaining of that same position is what opens up a possibility for an agency of (bodily) resistance. And this agency of Natàlia is in the first chapter introduced and presented through a discursive effect that is persistent throughout the whole text, namely, the representation of linguistic violence as closely connected to, sometimes even equal to, physical violence. Natàlia’s response to Quimet’s renaming is only vaguely made in words, but it is on the other hand forcefully expressed through her bodily reaction: she runs. And the running makes the elastic of her dress – that which were holding her trapped – to break. This can be read as the very moment of transition between one imprisoning subject position to

\textsuperscript{50} Butler (1993), p. 72.
another; Natàlia runs from being defined by the conventions represented by her tight dress, only to end up in the controlling arms of Quimet and the patriarchal and matrimonial norms he represents. Because, as the rest of the story continuously will confirm, the price for becoming Colometa is the very security and welfare of Natàlia’s own body. As if she predicts what is at stake in her subjectivation, then, the running becomes a kind of self-protection.

Another aspect of the text that relates to the violence of language and the act of naming can be found in the narrative form of the first chapter, where the novel’s discourse breaks with the narrative voice: the first person narration of Natàlia is violently occupied by the voice of Quimet. It is his voice that ends the chapter: “I en Quimet, al cap d’anys, encara ho explicava com si fos una cosa que ens acabés de passer, se li va trencar la cinta de goma i corria com el vent…”51 (my emphasis). The objectification and silencing of Natàlia’s body is thus twofold: Quimet gives her a new name and it is with his voice and language that the story about how they met would be related in the future. The running body of Natàlia is in this passage transformed into the meeting and the subsequent marriage between Quimet and Colometa by the narrating words of Quimet. Thus, Natàlia’s life and subjectivity is being changed both linguistically – her body gets a new indicating word attached to it – and in its content: the first person narrative voice (which belongs to Natàlia) relates the memory scene of this chapter as a running away from Quimet, while this gets translated by Quimet’s discourse to be the significant moment of their first meeting, that which brought them together. The body-space relationship here seems to result from a tension between distance and proximity produced by the different narrative voices. The power, over the language that narrates the memory, and over Natàlia’s body, is in the end of the chapter shifted over to Quimet, a shift that, as the citation above shows, is to be found in the very language and which in fact is denoted with the name of the place where Quimet’s power over Natàlia starts and develops: Diamond Square. The objectification and violation of Natàlia’s body (in order to make her become Colometa), and the initiating inscription of it in the text, is thus in this first chapter both enabled and constrained by this particular urban space.

Interestingly enough, it is also the very Diamond Square that will – when Natàlia returns to it in the end of the novel – outline the stage and possibility for her dramatic trans-

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51 Rodoreda, LPD, p. 23, DS, p. 5: “And, years later, Joe still told the story as if it had happened yesterday, her elastic snapped and she ran like the wind…” (my emphasis).
formation of her old name and self, something that I will discuss further in the last part of the analysis.

Bodily Perception and Resistance

It is not only Quimet’s power of naming that shapes the subjectivity of Natàlia, another important ingredient in the textual construction of subjectivity in *LPD* is Natàlia’s own perception of her environment: how she perceives the spaces and objects surrounding her. There are different features of how this perception is made readable in *LPD*; discursive characteristics that not only set the rules for her body’s relation to its surrounding, but that also hint at how she discovers those very rules of subjectivation. As I will discuss in the following, these features mainly appear in how the text displays the bodily senses of vision and smell. There are also several objects that repeatedly appear in *LPD*, specific things that attract Natàlia’s attention and thus stand out among the other objects in the space descriptions. These are for instance the shop windows with its objects, the doors and walls that Natàlia bumps into and the surfaces of various objects. These objects suggest, I think, something about Natàlia’s relation to the spaces around her.

Vision

The dolls that Natàlia observes in the shop windows are an example of objects that she is especially attracted to. They reappear several times in the novel and dolls are also recurring symbols in the whole literary work of Rodoreda. In her analysis of the construction of corporeality in Rodoreda’s works Bru-Domínguez argues that Rodoreda’s texts often employ some of the strategies deployed in turn-of-the-century Catalan visual arts in the construction of (bourgeois) femininity. She writes: “References to lifeless dolls certainly abound in Rodoreda’s fiction, a feature that might be indicative of an interest to explore the boundaries between the body-as-object and the body-as-flesh.” and goes on to read the symbol of the dolls both as influence and critique of the representation of the female body in the art movement Modernisme. The dolls in Rodoreda’s fiction can according to Bru-

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52 Bru-Domínguez, p. 44.
53 Bru-Domínguez, p. 42.
54 Modernisme was a Catalan art movement that rejected aesthetic and literary conventions and was influenced by Art Nouveau, Pre-Raphaelitism, Impressionism and Symbolism. It mainly found expression in architecture, the plastic and visual arts and literature and had as a main characteristic the enthusiasm for industrialization, progress and modernity. For further reading, see Maria Angel Heras’ article “Between the Woman and the Fairy: Feminine Representations in Catalan Modernisme” (pp. 193-215) in *Actes del novè colloqui d’estudis Catalans a Nord-America*, eds. Bover, A., Lloret, M.R. and Vidal-Tibbits, M., Barcelona: Publicacions de l’Abadia de Montserrat 2001.
Domínguez be regarded as a problematization of how the female body was modeled in the public sphere in Catalonia during the turn of the century. The fast industrialization of the Catalan territory and the following expansion of the publishing industry in the period between 1870-1900 led to a growth in demand for commercial posters and fine illustrations. The image of women that appeared in modernista art was, according to Bru-Domínguez, “[…] generally constructed as a virginal and ethereal being, a desexualized woman devoid of any sense of temporality […]”, and this female figure then became the very emblem of a whole program of modernization and commercialism. María Angels Heras has however noted, as Bru-Domínguez points out, that the figure of the female in Modernisme is not as homogenous as one might think. In fact, while the female body there seems to be represented as lacking historicity, being noble and sacrificial, she is also illustrated as a liminal being that is both (sexually) attractive and frightening. The symbolic charge of the dolls in LPD is in this way an illustrative example of how Rodoreda, through her literary work, plays with the dichotomies of a historical period and cultural situation in Catalonia in which the female body was appropriated and modeled by the terms of a commercialized, modern and fast changing public space.

The dolls convey this reification of the female body, as Bru-Domínguez suggests, but only partly, I will here argue that it also can be read in Natalia’s sensory perception, since it is through her way of watching the dolls that they are assigned their particular features in the text. A passage of text in the novel that opens up for an understanding of this appears in chapter twelve, when Natàlia is looking at the dolls in the shop windows. The description of the dolls is full of words of body parts like “necks”, “bulging waists”, “flesh” and “knees” and ends with the following lines:

Sempre allí, bufones a dintre de l’aparador, esperant que les compressin i se les enduguessin.
Les nines sempre allí, amb la cara de porcelana i la carn de pasta, al costat dels espolsadors, dels picamatalassos, de les camusses de pell i de les camusses imitació de pell: tot a la casa dels hules.  

The dolls are parts of the scenery of the story, of Barcelona with its streets and shops and economic system – they are essentially commodities – but strangely, they are at the same

55 For example, the female body is in Rodoreda’s novel Mirall Trencat (Barcelona: Club Editor 1974), similarly as in LPD, represented as objectified by a male gaze through being described as a doll. See also the short story “La Sala de les Nines” (The Doll’s Room) in Rodoreda, M. La Meva Christina i Altres Contes, Barcelona: Hermes Editora General 2001.
56 Bru-Domínguez, p. 39.
57 Ibid.
58 Rodoreda, LPD, p. 82, DS, p. 56: “They always looked sweet in the window waiting for somebody to come and buy them. The doll’s porcelain faces and pate flesh were always there next to the dusters, carpet-beaters, leather and imitation leather chammy. All for sale at the emporium!”
time attributed human agency and translated into a (female) bodily sphere through the lens of Natàlia’s narration. Thus it seems that we cannot study the dolls and their symbolism without also studying how Natàlia’s ambiguous type of vision works in and for the text. The dolls are described as always looking sweet, waiting for someone to buy them, as if they were living subjects, to then quickly be objectified again: they were not only waiting for someone to come and buy them, they were also “next to the dusters, carpet-beaters, leather and imitation leather chammy.” Natàlia’s perception of the dolls as subjects is violently contrasted with the listing of objects, and it further incorporates the fantastic and imaginary into the realist, colloquial language style. This juxtaposing and listing of the commodities in the shop window, as well as the mix of the fantastic and the realistic, constructs the vision of Natàlia: she does not perceive the shop window as a homogenous whole but focuses instead on one thing at a time.

This says more about her than about the objects, as Resina suggests: “She [Natàlia] relates to things, humanizes them and is in turn given meaning by them, historicized by her attachment to their transitory character.” Hence, what many scholars have psychoanalyzed as the docility or passivity of Natàlia is illusory; in fact, the literary technique of Ródoreda – which is similar to how the nouveau roman depicts reality as perceptions in the mind of a literary character or narrator – forms a character whose “[...] foremost activity will be to structure sensory data, which will never impose itself upon a passive mind.”, as Resina further puts it. According to Peter Brooks, forms of fiction that appeared after Realism shifted the focus from the attention to the objects of the gaze and for knowing, to develop a concern that is more directed towards the very process of observing, “[...] to its limits, and to the problematic place of the observer and the treacherousness of seeing.” This shift can be seen in LPD; what is at stake in the description of the dolls is not the dolls themselves, but the way Natàlia perceives them. The oscillations between the descriptions of the dolls as subjects and bodies on one hand, and as mere lifeless objects in the décor of the space on the other – is similar to how Natàlia herself appears in the text: sometimes as subject and sometimes as object. As the dolls, then, Natàlia is dependent of the rules and norms of society and she has a certain function in the text and in the discourse of LPD – she is an object in a larger structure – but at the same time, she wins her individuality by a gaze that projects subjectivity and thus meaning to the lifeless things around her.

59 Ródoreda, DS, p. 56.
60 Resina, p. 235.
61 Ibid., p. 234.
In chapter thirty-nine, another relation between body and space also seems to arise through Natàlia’s way of seeing. It is when she goes to the first private meeting with the grocer Antoni, taking her time: “[...] caminava d’esma i perdia el temps mirant-me a tots els vidres dels aparadors i em veia passar a dintre dels vidres, on tot era més fosc i més lluent.”63 The reflection of Natàlia’s body in the shop windows functions for the text as a description of the place she moves through; as an indication of a limit between two dimensions of the public space: between the streets on one hand and the shops with their window spaces on the other. The world in the shop windows is “darker and shinier” than the world of the streets: it is the world of commodities, commercial and the shiny promise of happiness. The reflected image of Natàlia’s body, the image of her female body, becomes both the very sign of this world of commodities in the text, but it also functions as that which resists being swallowed into that same world, since it is a mere reflection. And the reflection is marked upon the urban space, revealing her body as image on and of the city, as if observing and reading the city one can also observe and read the body.

The narrative voice of Natàlia reveals in this passage a body that both observes and is looked at – a body that gazes, and at the same time the object towards which this gaze is directed. As Brooks writes concerning the representation of body and seeing in Gustave Flaubert’s *Emma Bovary*: “There is always a relation of desire between watcher and watched [...]”64 Natàlia’s body is not fragmented in the same way as Emma’s – *Emma Bovary* is a realistic novel, while Rodoreda’s novel move within literary discourse traditions that develop as reactions to the ideals of Realism (Modernisme and Noucentisme)65 – but both texts’ attitudes towards the body have a common focal point, namely, their representations of an incoherent body through the acts of seeing, desiring and being-looked-at. However, the aesthetic and textual means shaping this theme are very different in these two novels: the body of Emma is described in fragmented detail, she is the object of (male) gazes and is shaped according to their conditions, whereas Natàlia mainly is described in terms of the spaces surrounding her body – spaces which nevertheless are structured by patriarchal norms. There are over all very few descriptions of the character’s bodies in *LPD*, detailed words for body parts are most commonly used to describe the spaces and things around (or inside) the bodies of the characters.

63 Rodoreda, *LPD*, p. 203, *DS*, p. 161: “I walked in fits and starts and wasted time staring at myself in all the shop windows and watching myself walk in them, where everything was darker and shinier.”
64 Brooks, s. 92.
65 Bru-Domínguez discusses how Rodoreda’s literature both asserts and subverts the aesthetics of the female form and regulatory representations of womanhood of the artistic movements Modernisme and Noucentisme. See chapter 2 in *Beyond Containment* (2013), pp. 31-67.
The description of space seems thus in *LPD* to be the very condition for the subject’s ability of seeing and desiring. Natàlia’s vision is fixed on the urban and domestic spaces surrounding her, but it is also those spaces that make her see at all. As Mona Fayad remarks: “The lesson which Natàlia has learned well is to see herself, not as the mirror reflects her […] but rather, as one with the objects around her.” Hence, Natàlia’s watching of her reflection in the windows can be read as a wish to know and identify herself, and this identification occurs in a very concrete space, where the “I” may be discovered but at the same time continuously is unsettled and detached: the mirror space. According to Foucault, the mirror is characterized precisely as a space – a space that linger between what he calls utopias and heterotopias, he writes:

The mirror is, after all, a utopia, since it is a placeless place. In the mirror, I see myself there where I am not, in an unreal, virtual space that opens up behind the surface; I am over there, there where I am not, a sort of shadow that gives my own visibility to myself, that enables me to see myself there where I am absent: such is the utopia of the mirror. But it is also a heterotopia in so far as the mirror does exist in reality, where it exerts a sort of counteraction on the position that I occupy. From the standpoint of the mirror I discover my absence from the place where I am since I see myself over there.

Foucault explains the spaces of heterotopias in the text ”Des espaces Autres” (1967) which was the underlying text for a lecture he held that year in March. He contrasts the heterotopias against the utopias, remarking that the utopia is an unreal space that presents society in a perfected form or upside down, while the heterotopia is a real space, locatable in every civilization but outlines ” […] counter-sites, a kind of effectively enacted utopia in which the real sites, all the other real sites that can be found within the culture, are simultaneously represented, contested, and inverted.” Foucault gives some examples of heterotopic spaces: they can for instance be spaces like festivals, museums, libraries, prisons or graveyards. The term hetero- in ‘heterotopia’ thus indicates and highlights the fundamental property of these spaces to be radically different from the space they speak about or intend to represent.

The window/mirror in *LPD* can be read as a space in this sense – both as a utopic space that produces an illusory reflection or image of the subject and at the same time as a heterotopic space that constitutes the very possibility and premise for the subject to appear in the text. Natàlia’s subject position is thus both continuously displaced (produced as illu-

66 Fayad, p. 121.
68 Ibid.
sion and as impossible to locate) but is also textually materialized through the window reflection. Butler suggests further that a mirror does precisely not represent the body standing before it, rather, it produces that very body “[...] as its delirious effect – a delirium, by the way, which we are compelled to live.”69. Natàlia’s observation of the windows and of her reflection in them is therefore not a process of a discovery or representation of her true or “hidden” identity, rather, it is a process in which the “I” of Natàlia is formed, altered and unsettled in the text. Because, according to Butler, that which constitutes the process of identification is precisely the impossibility to fix the “I”:

Identification is constantly figured as a desired event or accomplishment, but one which finally is never achieved; identification is the phantasmatic staging of the event. In this sense, identifications belong to the imaginary; they are phantasmatic efforts of alignment, loyalty, ambiguous and cross-corporeal cohabitation; they unsettle the “I”; they are the sedimentation of the “we” in the constitution of any “I”, the structuring presence of alterity in the very formulation of the “I”.

Natàlia’s subject position in the text thus appears in the crucibles between dream and reality, utopia and dystopia, through her peculiar relation to the shop window and the illusory identification they cause with the reflection of her walking body in their “darker and shinier” world.

It is furthermore not only the character of Natàlia walking the streets or through the houses in the story that is enabled to see through the spaces around her, but also, and at the same time, the text produces – through the narrative voice of Natàlia – another position of gazing from which she writes and observes the scene in her memory and the body appearing and being remembered in it, and which moreover forms the lens for guiding and directing the reader’s gaze throughout the story. As the Natàlia walking in the street creates, watches and desires the reflecting image of her body in the “darker and shinier” world of the shop window, she also looks back at the scene through her narrating voice, creating and reconstructing her body through relating a memory. And the memory of her body is expressed precisely as a projection on, and effect of, the surrounding space. Thus, as the shop windows work to both form and unsettle the “I” of Natàlia, the very text, through its narrative style of general and colloquial Catalan, produces an effect of distance and illusory identification between reader and narrator: it questions the very “I” of Natàlia, and of the reader. Because the novelistic form works precisely not in the same way as spoken language does – there is so to speak no real Natàlia who is talking directly to the reader, there is no mind (either of Natàlia or the author) that we as readers are “allowed” into through

reading the text – and the difference between what the text *imitates* through its literary stylization and what it actually is, produces this effect of distance.

With Butler’s notion of identification and the discursive formation of bodies present, this stylistic use of the first person narrative form of *LPD* thus highlights its own radical difference from a human body and mind rather than allowing for a decipherment of Natàlia’s identity or psyche: the text is merely language. But at the same time, the narrative style embodies the materiality of language, it is the very medium through which a body and subjectivity can be formed and grasped at all. As Butler writes: “Language and materiality are fully embedded in each other, chiasmic in their interdependency, but never fully collapsed into one another, i.e., reduced to one another, and yet neither fully ever exceeds the other.”

The narrative style of *LPD* thus works as an exploration of the aesthetic limits and possibilities of language to materialize as body, as subjectivity.

*Vision as Resistance*

Another peculiar space that Natàlia focuses with her gaze is the house of her employers, which is related throughout chapter eighteen. This chapter discloses the functions of the economic relations between the employers and Natàlia and its implications in her subject formation: in the house, her position as a working class woman crystallizes in relation to the employers’ power to exploit her.

This relation of domination and subordination is coined precisely in terms of how Natàlia perceives the house and its objects. For instance, in the ending part of the preceding chapter, her employers explain the work conditions, how much they will pay her, how decently they are known to pay and so on. But in the last sentence of the chapter, the employer’s mother in law says that before anything, she will show Natàlia the house: “[…] per comencar, m’ensenyaria la casa.”

Hence, teaching Natàlia the rules of her employment does not only imply to tell and settle the (economic) contract, it also comprises showing her (by naming and pointing out) the rooms, doors, corridors and furniture of the house and the routines of the family members in relation to these – and is thus letting her know some of the social rules and norms of the private life of a Catalan bourgeois family. But to ensure the lower position of Natàlia in the hierarchy, she speaks to her in a certain manner. For instance, when Natàlia tells her that Quimet would fall in love with the wooden chest

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71 Rodoreda, *LPD*, p. 104.
in the hall if he could see it, she points at the painting on the lid of the chest, and asks Natàlia:

¿Sap què representa?
- No senyora.

Al bel mig de la tapa hi havia un noi i una noia, només els caps, amb uns nassos molt grossos i els llavis de negret, que es miraven; i la senyora va dir, representa l’eterna question, i va afegir, l’amor. I el nen va riure.72

The mother in law demonstrates that she belongs to a higher class than Natàlia by pointing at the painting of the young, black couple (‘llavis de negret’ means literally ‘negro lips’ but has in DS been translated into ‘fleshy lips’), stating her interpretation of it as a universal law and indicating the colonialist and bourgeois legacy conveyed by the artifacts in the house. The consequence of asking Natàlia if she knows what the painting represents is that it forcefully makes her utter the words that prove her unfamiliarity with the codes of the bourgeois class – that she has never had access to their education, privileges or possessions and therefore never will be a part of their community. She is thus forced to speak from a position of submission and exclusion, which in the very moment of utterance produces, reinforces and ensures that position in the text. Furthermore, the house owner will, later in the story, with indifference to the misery and poverty of Natàlia deny her to continue working for him since he knew that her husband had been fighting against the Francoists in the war: “[…] I va dir que jo era roja, i va dir […] una persona com vostè més aviat ens compromet […] i la senyora em va acompanyar, i quan vam ser al peu del sortidor es va aturar i va dir que li havia sortit el blau […]”73 Thus, she is not seen as an individual with her own personal needs, but only spoken to and treated according to her position in the social and political order. This type of interpellation will be what at once produces and constitutes her subject position – as Butler writes:

Interpellation is an act of speech whose “content” is neither true nor false; it does not have description as it primary task. Its purpose is to indicate and establish a subject in subjection, to produce its social contours in space and time.74

In contrast to her employers, however, Natàlia interprets nearly nothing at all. On the contrary, she perceives only the materiality of objects and people, their transitory positions and appearances in the house and thus escapes the type of vision expressed

72 Rodoreda, LPD, p. 107, DS, p. 78: “‘Do you know what this portrays?’ / ‘No, madam.’ / A boy and girl were in the centre of the lid, I mean their heads, big noses and fleshy lips, were, and they were looking at each other. The lady said: ‘It portrays the eternal question, in other words, “love”.’ And the boy laughed.”

73 Rodoreda, LPD, p. 180, DS, p. 143: “And he said I was a red and he said, don’t you see, a person like you can get us into trouble […] and madame came to show me out and when we reached the fountain, she stopped and said he’d become a fascist […]”

74 Butler (1997), pp.33-34.
by her employer. The lady of the house interprets, directs and explains routines and functions, while Natàlia does something quite different; her project is not explanatory, she is fascinated by the materiality and the position of the things she sees, not their function or meaning. The lady of the house imposes her ideas on space, while Natàlia is imposed by space – she is projected as a consequence of space. And that consequence is one of displacement\(^{75}\) – a process that complicates the readability of both body and space in this chapter through repeatedly lifting them out of context (for instance the sudden textual shifts in their denotation as object or subject, active or passive and the fast change of topic and focus). These displacements mainly appear in Natàlia’s fragmented and irregular perception, which will however in certain occasions narrow down to focus on one particular object, as in for instance the following passage:

> De seguida vaig veure una caixa durada de dalt a baix, durada i blava, amb escuts de colors tot al voltant de baix i, a la tapa, alçada enlaire, una Santa Eulàlia tota decantada, amb un lliri de Sant Antoni en una mà, i un drac a prop amb la cua cargolada per damunt d’una muntanya sense arbres, amb la boca oberta de bat a bat, amb tres llengües de foc com tres flamarades. Una caixa de núvia, va dir la senyora, gòtica.\(^{76}\)

Many scholars interpret this kind of perception as the passivity and immaturity of the main character; a passivity that she in the end of the novel has “grown out” of and instead become active, mature and free. I would however not denote this kind of perception as unintelligent or naive, as Albrecht and Lunn has interpreted Natàlia to be\(^{77}\), rather, this chapter shows Natalia’s particular type of agency as subject – an agency that is both constrained by and opposed to the relations of power that she, whether she likes it or not, is entangled in.

Because in a situation of oppression, resistance is enabled by the subject’s deeply sensorial awareness of the oppression, as Gloria Anzaldúa accentuates. In *Borderlands/La Frontera* (1987)\(^{78}\) Anzaldúa writes about the relations between resistance, agency and oppression, underlining that someone who is oppressed is always already resisting the pres-

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\(^{75}\) Psychoanalytical concept used and problematized by Butler. Displacement is the constitutive lack in the subject, or the impossibility of locating the subject, since it [the subject] is constituted through a continuous process, rather than being something substantial. In psychoanalytical terms it indicates the stage when the Self has entered into the symbolic and perceives the surrounding as radically Other than itself. But it can also denote, in speech acts theory, the result of an enunciation that transforms the symbolic itself and can thus be compared with a shift of position. See *Bodies That Matter*, p. 114: “There is no relation of radical exteriority between "position" and "enunciation"; certain claims extend the boundaries of the symbolic itself, produce a displacement within and of the symbolic, temporalizing the entire vocabulary of ‘position’ and ‘structural place’.”

\(^{76}\) Rodoreda, *LPD*, p. 108, *DS*, p. 79: “[...] I clapped my eyes on a chest that was blue and gilt from top to bottom, with coloured coats-of-arms round the base. On the carved relief on the lid, St Eulalia, a lily of St Anthony in one hand, stood beside a dragon whose tail curled above a bare mountain, its gaping mouth spouting three tongues of fire, like three flames. A Gothic trousseau chest, madam said.”

\(^{77}\) Albrecht & Lunn, p. 59-60.

sure of that which oppresses her: the oppressed subject develops an active resistance, but the oppressed and the resistant side of the self move in wholly different logics of sense. María Lugones has given a clarifying account of these Anzaldúan ideas:

Oppression is not to be understood as an accomplished fact. To understand it as accomplished renders resistance impossible. […] The one resisting and the one oppressed exist within very different logics, within very different worlds of sense. […] Resistance and liberation are alive always within multiplicitious meaning. As one de-emphasizes agency, the subject appears multiplicitious; at once terrorized and resistant; at once paralyzed in stasis and brooding her own liberation. […] The terrorized self that feels the possibility and the terror of resistance is conceptually quite different from the one who is under someone else’s control and thus gives up her ability to choose, accepting to serve instead. To feel the terror is already an activity against the sense of those who exercise control over and against her.79 (my emphasis)

Natàlia’s way of sensing escapes from being read as agency in a Western-liberal sense because she has no intentions and no plans to act in a certain status-quo-way before she acts. What is at stake here, I suggest, is thus not to ask whether Natàlia is an active or passive subject, but instead to discern different language uses in LPD – ways in which Natàlia’s agency is fashioned stylistically in the novel – that produce subject positions for her to embody and through which her resistance becomes readable. In the example of chapter eighteen, the discourse of her employers reduces her to passivity and naivety – their oppression and interpellation produces her as alien, as someone who is conceptually and culturally outside of the dominant culture – while the narrative voice generates Natàlia as someone who is more than a victim. Natàlia’s subjectivity is thus being labeled in multiple ways and belongs to different conceptual domains. This dialectic is materialized in the text through Natàlia’s perception and thus complicates and plays with the reader’s perspective on her character. As Lugones continues: “Even though every move she makes will have a status-quo interpretation that reads her as an alien, an outlaw, reduced, her meaning co-opted in the direction of servility or incompetence, those interpretations do not hold her captive. She cannot act, but she is active […]”.80

To read Natàlia’s “passive” type of perception as resistance and activity is further enabled with Butler’s and Foucault’s theories on critique and power. In her essay about Foucault’s concept of critique, Butler argues for instance that resistance does not well up from some voluntary freedom of choice, and that practices of resistance are forms of “art”, that is, forms of stylization and repetition: “[…] there is no possibility of accepting or refusing

80 Lugones, p.91.
a rule without a self who is stylized in response to the ethical demand upon it.”

Further, Foucault suggests that relations of power do not only have repressive or prohibiting functions, and importantly, they do not stem from a unified or singular source of power. Rather, as he argues in relation to his historical analyses of discursive formations of sexuality and desire, power nowadays works through a multitude of connections, circular linkages and negotiations between different discourses and institutions in the society of global capitalism. In order to understand how subjects are constituted and come to grasp themselves and the world of today then, it is the productive effectiveness of those power relations that should be analyzed. Resistance should thus be regarded, not as an answer to a direct prohibition uttered by a sovereign power, which only function is to say “no” – and not either as radically different or exterior to the power it opposes – but rather as a practice that from the start is integrated in the very field of power relations; formed and conditioned by its workings. As Foucault stresses:

[… the representation of power has remained under the spell of monarchy. In political thought and analysis, we still have not cut off the head of the king […] it is utterly incongruous with the new methods of power whose operation is not ensured by right but by technique, not by law but by normalization, not by punishment but by control, methods that are employed on all levels and in forms that go beyond the state and its apparatus. […] Where there is power there is resistance […]”

These processes of power operate in and through the body, and precisely therefore, the resistance of the subject starts there. Natália’s perception in this chapter shows that her subject position, as well as her resistance, functions precisely in terms of being exterior to something else, excluded from or on the margins to objects and spaces – a position that makes her at once fascinated but also tortured by limits. Yet, the text also makes it possible for objects, spaces and other people to transgress and invade her bodily limits, to divide, shape and direct her body. As was the case in the renaming of Natália in the first chapter, what is negotiated and put at risk in the process of subjectivation is the security and integrity of her body. It is thus through bodily expressions and actions that she resists her subjectivation: she runs, she screams, she senses in a certain way, she touches her face and focuses on certain spaces and objects. Her resistance is in this way always carried out in relation to the address directed at her in a space marked by certain ideological and social circumstances.

83 Ibid., pp. 88-89, 95.
These circumstances against which Natàlia’s resistance appears could arguably be read in connection to a certain moment in Catalan history: several passages in LPD indicate that the body, similarly as the Catalan language, belonged to the forbidden realm in the Spain of the Civil War period with its strict Catholic norms; it is assigned as taboo, as something that is not socially, politically nor religiously accepted to explicitly speak, write or even think about. Bru-Domínguez emphasizes that it was mainly the symbolic function of the Catalan language that the Franco aimed at abolishing: he knew that a censorship would threaten the very bases of Catalan identity.\textsuperscript{84} And just as the symbolic function of language is crucial in the construction of nation identity and border-making, so does the body – how it is fashioned and perceived – work as a sign and symbol in these processes, as Bru-Domínguez makes evident in her studies on how the body was formulated and stylized in Spain and Catalonia before and during Rodoreda’s literary production. The resistance of Natàlia thus appears in response to that political and social order censoring her body, but which also – and quite contradictory – continuously direct its attention and energy to that same body, for instance through repeatedly putting it at risk of being injured in the process of subjectivation, not least by the consequences of war and patriarchal domination. See for example Natàlia’s description of her pregnancy: “Jo, estava així.”\textsuperscript{85} The linguistic and bodily censorships of the Civil War period in Spain and Catalonia are thus incorporated in Natàlia’s very agency as literary character and in her voice as narrator – or rather, it is her agency and voice in the text that in fact enables a reading of these contexts.

Yet at the same time, the language of LPD makes it very difficult to define or locate her body and agency (and that of the other characters), as is evident in chapter eighteen, since it is repeatedly displaced and disappears in the labyrinth-like house and its décor. This produces difficulties in reading how subjectivity is constructed in LPD, because if the subject, as Foucault stresses, is a variable or position that can be studied as emerging in the arrangement of a discursive order, then it seems that LPD does not produce any locatable subject at all; that the novel in fact works differently than discourse – or, at least, it offers resistance towards reading it as such. Rather than forming a subject through traditionally positing or indicating a body or a speaking Subject, LPD produces subjectivity by transposing the censoring processes into the very literary language, thus re-using the tool of Francoist domination to highlight and criticize its cruel efficiency. For censorship not only works as prohibition; it rather denotes a process of maintaining and controlling the field of

\textsuperscript{84} Bru-Domínguez, pp. 151-152.

\textsuperscript{85} Rodoreda, LPD, p. 71, DS, p. 47: “Well, I was, at last.”
the speakable, of orchestrating what kind of speech will become intelligible as a speech of a subject. As Butler remarks in *Excitable Speech*: “Understood as foreclosure, censorship produces discursive regimes through the *production* of the unspeakable […] Agency becomes possible on the condition of such a foreclosure.”86 (my emphasis)

This figure of a censored body in *LPD* – which formulates resistance through a withdrawal of form – can, I think, be compared with the literary figure of silence; a figure that Olsson have studied:

The silent figure withdraws from, or resists, form; becomes an Unknown, which, if the circulation of language and therefore of power is to remain, must be made to speak […] In its withdrawal from form, the silent figure provokes a linguistic violence that is practiced in general, but which, in confronting silence, is enhanced and concentrated […] 87

Natàlia can be read as a figure of bodily censorship, but also of silence: a figure that consists in the withdrawal of form and is enabled by – however contradictory it may seem – the literary form. The dialectic relation between body and space in *LPD* here becomes evident: through displacing bodily words it works against being read as discourse, but at the same time as that figure of a censored body is inscribed, it takes on a certain literary form, a linguistic guise of spatial words in a narrative style of inner monologue and observation of surroundings, which grounds the very construction of corporeality in *LPD*. It is in terms of this dialectic that the resistance of the novel itself, towards the fascist, totalitarian and patriarchal censorship and domination, can be read.

*Smell*

Apart from vision, the sense of smell is also important for the construction of subjectivity in *LPD*. Different odors invade and deteriorate the body of Natàlia, in a similar manner that the objects she sees have the ability to break into her body. Natàlia repeatedly perceives the smells of dirt, of her children and the pigeons, of food and flowers. Her nose is one of the very few body parts that can be found in the text and that she recognizes and touches. In the last chapter, before she carves her name on the door and lets out the final scream, the smells are strongly emphasized and incorporate memories into the text:

86 Butler (1997), p. 139.
87 Olsson, p. 6.
flors de paper [...] I l’olor del mar tan forta [...] I l’olor dels nens quan eren petits, de llet i de saliva, de llet encara bona i de llet enviada agra.\textsuperscript{88}

Shortly after this passage something extraordinary happens: Natàlia describes her own body, “I em vaig tocar la cara i era la meva cara amb la meva pell i amb el meu nas i amb la meva volta de la galta […]\textsuperscript{89}” The nose and the sense of smelling is focalized both as that which brings memories to Natàlia and to the text but also as that which constructs Natàlia’s perception of herself as subject. Her transformation in the end of the novel is thus not a mere shift from being passive to active, but rather a shift in how she realizes herself and her own body. Her subjectivity and corporeality are throughout the text denoted as mechanic or instinctive; as one with the objects around her; as a thing that can be invaded and manipulated – something that for instance the repeated use of the expressions ‘com d’esma’ and ‘d’esma’\textsuperscript{90} (‘mechanically’ or ‘instinctively’ in English) indicates. But in the end she does not move instinctively, ‘d’esma’, any longer, instead, she deliberately touches her face and the body of Antoni – for the first time she recognizes her body as precisely that – as body – and not as an objectified, violated and censored effect of space. The change in the end of the novel is thus that the strong textual focus on spaces and objects is turned towards the body: the last chapter is suddenly filled with words of body parts, making it possible to read the subject through bodily signs. Hence, she has not so much become a freely choosing subject, independent from that which forms her – her subjectivity will never be “free” from its assignation, but the assignation might change.

This far I have studied how vision is made into the main bodily sense in \textit{LPD}, but also that of smell, and how they, through the relationship body space, make Natàlia’s experiences to materialize in the text. This bodily and spatial perception has however on many occasions shown to be regulated by the conditions that make her subject role and position specifically to be a \textit{female} one, a role with which the protagonist in different ways struggles. I will thus move on to this topic in the following section, in order to study how the female positions and conditions are formed textually in \textit{LPD} and discuss how they work in the construction of a gendered subjectivity.

\textsuperscript{88} Rodoreda, \textit{LPD}, pp. 246-247, \textit{DS}, pp. 199-200: “And while I was thinking those thoughts, the smell and the stench began […] the smell of our terrace with and without pigeons and the stench of bleach, a stench I really discovered when I got married. And the smell of our blood heralding the smell of death. And the smell of sulphur from the rockets and bangers that time in Diamond Square and the paper smell of paper roses […] And the smell of the sea that was so strong […] And the smell of small kids, of milk and dribble, of milk that was fresh and milk that had gone sour.”

\textsuperscript{89} Rodoreda, \textit{LPD}, p. 248, \textit{DS}, p. 201: “And I touched my face and it was my face, my skin and my nose and the curve of my cheek […]”

\textsuperscript{90} See an example of how the word is used in the citation from \textit{LPD} in the introduction chapter of this thesis.
Inscribing and Dividing the Female Body

Regarding the production of female subjectivity in \textit{LPD}, the textual and formal interrelations between body and space stands out as particularly important. I will here discuss some features of these relations where a gendered body both produces, and is the effect of, the surrounding urban and domestic spaces.

A passage in the eighth chapter of the novel shows how the body, in particular the female bodily pain, directly influences the topography of the city. Natàlia describes her fear of wedding nights and giving birth to a child:

\begin{quote}
I jo sempre havia tingut molta por de morir partida. Les dones, deien, moren partides… La fei-na ja comença quan es casen. I si no s’han ben partit, la llevadora les acaba de partir amb ganivet o a cops de vidre d’ampolla i ja queden així per sempre, o estripades o cosides, i per això les casades es cansen més aviat quan han d’estar una estona dretes. I els senyors que ho saben, si el tramvia va massa ple, i n’hi ha unes quantes que han d’estar dretes, s’aixeixen i les fan seure i, els que no ho saben, es queden asseguts.\footnote{Rodoreda, \textit{LPD}, p. 63, DS, pp. 39-40: And I’d always been really afraid of being split open and dying. Women, people would say, die split asunder… You start to suffer the day you marry. And if you’re not properly split open, the midwife will complete the job with a knife or a bit of a broken bottle and then you stay like that for ever, gutted or sewn up, and that’s why married women get tired so quickly if they have to stand up for any length of time. And that’s why gentlemen who are in the know stand up when the tram is packed and women are standing, and insist they sit down, and gentlemen who aren’t remain seated. “}
\end{quote}

Once again, the body is referred to in close relation to space, here in particular to urban space. In this passage, the female body is described as split in half and sewn up after marriage and birth giving and with the ability to make men in the crowded trams to act in certain ways. The symbolic charge of the phallic knife and the splitting of the female body are important in this example from the text, and interestingly, they produce the qualities of urban space. As Bru-Domínguez notes about Henri Lefèbvre’s notion of spatiality:

\begin{quote}
Whereas most critics would agree with the view that history in \textit{La Plaça del Diamant} is subtly mapped out onto the urban and domestic environment, no consideration has been given to the role of the body, to recall Henri Lefèbvre’s concept, as the producer of that very space.\footnote{Bru-Domínguez, p. 86.}
\end{quote}

Many critics in fact interpret the lack of historical data and the detailed description of urban and domestic spaces in \textit{LPD} as a representation of “[…] the various emotional and mental stages experienced by Rodoreda’s female protagonists […]\footnote{Ibid., p. 85.} and that it forces the reader into mentally reconstructing the city where, and the historical time in which, the story unfolds. But, as Bru-Domínguez also suggests, the detailed spatial descriptions in \textit{LPD} are not only narrative effects figuring the protagonist’s psyche or the Civil War peri-
In Catalonia, they also function as important literary devices in the production and negotiation of female subjectivity.

In this passage of the text, one of these techniques is the frequency of the Catalan adjective ‘partida’ (also appearing in the text as ‘partides’, ‘partit’ and ‘partir’), which is the semantic sign that structures the memory narration of the tram and the behaviors of the people travelling through the city. The word ‘partida’ (feminine form of ‘partido’), which in English means something like ‘split in (two) parts’ or ‘divided’, comes from the Latin verb ‘partiri’ (to divide). The English translation does not fully convey the centrality of division that the Catalan text expresses here, since ‘partida’ is translated into ‘split open’. Natàlia literally fears to be divided, not split open, because she has heard that women die in a divided state after marriage (sexual intercourse) and childbirth. The theme of division can also be noted in the last part of the citation where the tram-travelling men are divided into the ones who know about this “feminine” condition of being split in half and the ones who do not, leading to different behaviors which form the urban space.

Thus, a subject here appears through sudden linguistic transitions between intimate female body aspects and the urban space. Natàlia’s body can only be read or “known” for the reader in close connection to the urban space and its inhabitants, and conversely, the description of the city is produced in terms of her body, making it possible to read the Barcelona of the story through bodily signs. But what is it, more precisely, that enable this readability in this particular passage of text? I suggest that it partly is enabled and sustained by the symbol of the knife, since the knife here functions as a channel between the domains of body and urban space, between the individual and the collective, but has also a similar dividing function as the word ‘partida’. In this passage, the knife is denoted as that which “completes the job” of cutting the female body after marriage and childbirth, and in the last chapter of the novel Natàlia will use a kitchen knife to carve ‘Colometa’ on the entrance door to her former home. The knife is thus figured both as that which – in the hands of external powers – invades, delimits and manipulates the female body, but at the same time as a way for Natàlia to handle her depression and leave her old name (and subject position) behind through the specific act of writing. Like a sharp pen carves words onto a paper to form female conditions, the knife in LPD sketches the contours of a subjugated female body – a

body that nevertheless takes this tool of domination in her own hands to transform its purpose and use.

Again, as was the case in the renaming of Natàlia in the first chapter, physical and linguistic violence are closely intertwined in the process of her subjectivation. Because the knife is not only a mediator between body and space, it is also a weapon, a symbol for danger and revenge. Natàlia is forced into a subject position that she experiences as violent: the typical life situations of a Catalan working class woman during the Civil War in Barcelona is figured as something dangerous – especially dangerous for the body. Spaces, objects and other people invade or cut the female body, forcing a form upon it, and so the war is not only described as an invasion of territories but also, and foremost, as an intrusion of and attack on female bodies. The violence mediated by the knife is further connected to the violence of language use itself, as it is used in the hands of Natàlia to write, and because of the knife’s characteristic of being a literary and linguistic sign. Olsson has suggested that the violence of language is due to its ability of giving form to “[…] both its referent and its addressee, as well as (and then not the least) to its speaker.”\(^{95}\) The violence, he underlines, is not an inherent feature of language as such but appears as the effect of linguistic usage and circulation. The knife can in this way be read as a tool for writing, as a symbolic and linguistic device – for Natàlia in the story, for the reader and for the narrative style – which enables the process of textually materializing a female condition and corporeality.

The knife thus has a double function: it both divides and reconciles, at once injures and cures, it cuts and shapes the female body in the story but it also serves for Natàlia in order to carve and attach letters and words onto spaces. When she carves ‘Colometa’ on the door the knife fulfills its function perfectly: it conveys and fixes a body on the space through the production of a word, but through the same gesture it destroys the very subject it intends to denote: there is no Colometa any longer. The name disappears from the text and the story and Natàlia is called Natàlia again. After the inscription on the door, she crosses over the street and starts a new life. Thus, this linguistic production and destruction is what seems to be compulsory for Natàlia in order to handle the memories of her old life and develop a new subject position: through using language she has to objectify her old self and make it a part of the décor. In a certain important sense then, Natàlia surrenders in the end completely to what has been her destiny so far, to be recognized as object and have an agency conditioned by spaces. Only when she has discovered these rules of her subjec-

\(^{95}\) Olsson, p. 5.
tivation, and when they are completely implemented in the characterization of her agency in the text, is she able to manipulate them for her own benefit: she “writes off” her name on space, now gaining agency through becoming the one who has the ability to objectify – instead of being the one objectified.

The word ‘partida’ and the knife also work as that which blends and reverses dichotomies between symbols of femininity and masculinity (the midwife is for instance the one holding the knife), between body and space, memory and reality; challenging their very division and opposition. For instance, two patriarchal symbols (the knife and the piece of broken bottle) are juxtaposed to a, if not the, symbol for motherhood and femininity: the act of giving birth. Hence, the word ‘partida’ and the knife not only illustrate Natàlia’s fear for marriage and birth giving in the story, but are also the very linguistic signs that in fact divides the text into its fragmented form by juxtaposing traditionally opposed symbols of gender. In the next chapter I will analyze further the aspects of this literary style of fragmentation and juxtaposition.

Something that further characterizes the construction of female subjectivity in LPD is the figuration of the female body as a censured, shameful and liminal space, which connects to the censorship of the body that I have discussed earlier. Natàlia sits for instance on the beach, pregnant and tired, looking out over the sea while Quimet laughs at her:

Es reia de mi, perquè es veu que feia riure, amb un ventre que no era meu. I mirava les onades que venien i s’en tornaven, sempre igual, sempre igual [...] Asseguda de cara al mar, de vegades gris, de vegades verd, més que tot blau, aquella estesa d’aigua que es movia i vivia, d’aigua que enraonava, se me’n duia el pensament i em deixava buida.96

This passage of text shows how the pregnancy of Natàlia (the ultimate symbol for the female reproductive body) is described by reference to the environment. The sea itself gets attributed with bodily adjectives, not the body of Natàlia. The sea lives, moves and talks, while her big belly is described as a thing that is external to her body. The view of the sea makes her feel empty, while the meeting with other people on the beach makes her embarrassed and nervous since Quimet tells them: “[…] ja va plena.”97 This tension between an empty and a full, bursting body is produced by the text: in the memory narration of Natàlia the pregnancy is described in terms of the environment or by the voice of Quimet, while

96 Rodoreda, LPD, p. 73, DS, p. 48: "He laughed at me, because I was laughable with that belly that seemed as if it didn’t belong to me. I watched the waves coming and going, always the same, the same… […] Sat looking out at the sea that was sometimes grey, sometimes green, blue more than anything else, that expanse of moving, living, water, water that talked, my thoughts drained away and I was left empty.”
97 Rodoreda, LPD, p. 73. DS, p. 49: "[…] she’s fit to burst."
she herself is silent: “[…] I en Quimet si em veia massa estona callada em preguntava, ¿què, còm va la vida?”

Peter Brooks suggests that in modern literature, the body is represented with a greater openness than before, with less reticence. But in Rodoreda’s novel, one of the most carnal and crucial moments of the female body – pregnancy – is left without any detailed description of the body and is instead displayed as something that is not, or at least should not be, mentioned. It is just hinted at by a “shameful” narrative voice through reference to the surrounding space and through the voice and words of Quimet, which, as discussed earlier, make a context of the bodily censorship in the Franco-ruled Spain readable. Just as Natàlia handles her embarrassment over the pregnancy on the beach with silence, the text handles the representation of her pregnant body with an ambiguous un-clarity and un-explicitness: the text passages are not connected in causality and Natàlia’s body is both described as empty and “fit to burst”. And since the “censored” body in this passage appears precisely in terms of the surrounding space, I suggest that it is in the function of the beach and the shoreline in the text that corporeality, at least traces of it, can be discerned.

The beach and the shoreline are thresholds in the sense that they are limit or transit zones between different spaces, and their function in LPD is not only to outline the scenery for the story, but also to construct Natàlia’s peculiar experience of pregnancy. In fact, the chronotope of the threshold is a recurring literary device in the construction of subjectivity in LPD. According to Mikhail Bakhtin, the threshold chronotope has the following function in literature:

The word "threshold" itself already has a metaphorical meaning in everyday usage (together with its literal meaning), and is connected with the breaking point of a life, the moment of crisis, the decision that changes a life (or the indecisiveness that fails to change a life, the fear to step over the threshold). In literature, the chronotope of the threshold is always metaphorical and symbolic, sometimes openly but more often implicitly.

A recurring figuration produced by LPD is precisely this kind of representation of a female body and subjectivity that are in liminal states or situations of crisis and exception (pregnancy, war, starvation, numbness, trauma) but with a language that describes the exception and the limit as something ordinary; something of every-day life. The main literary device that make this readable in LPD is the formulation of body and space and their interrela-

98 Rodoreda, LPD, p. 73, DS, p. 49: “And when Joe saw I was silent for too long he’d ask, what’s up with you?”
tions: the body is depicted as displaced, as alienated from and outside space in an exiled and liminal zone, but it is at the same time denoted as that which from the start produces and inhabits space. The latter is a recurring literary technique of Rodoreda, as Bru-Domínguez remarks in relation to the novel *El Carrer del les Camèlies*:

In *El Carrer de les Camèlies* […] the Barcelona of the 1940’s to mid-1950’s is presented as a characterless urban space lacking in cultural and historical specificity. In fact, the city’s most emblematic buildings and avenues are never depicted in their wholeness but are only brought to the reader’s mind through one recognizable feature, be it the Liceu’s clock or the famous lime trees that line La Rambla de Catalunya. However […] it is in the relationship that Rodoreda establishes between the body of woman and the space she inhabits that the cultural, historical and gendered nuances saturating each of these locations truly emerge.101

That which produces these two different modes of making a female body and its relation to space readable in *LPD* (a body alienated from but also inhabiting space) consists in original literary techniques, which encompasses both fragmentation and re-composition. And since the examples from the text regarding the relationships body-space I have discussed so far are all formed through these literary techniques, I will in the following analyze the form of *LPD* more in depth and with a wider perspective on the novel.

**Fragmentation and (re)Composition**

*LPD* is a novel that elaborates upon the effects of war on human bodies in every day life. The unsettling passivity of Natàlia and her dependency on the spaces around her are made readable in a setting that is to a large extent influenced by the consequences of war: violence, poverty and starvation. War smashes life into pieces for the inhabitants of Barcelona in the story, it breaks the traditional links between people, spaces and objects, it reverses causalities, inhibits experiences and censors the Catalan language. The war is however formed in *LPD* as an ambiguous situation: it engenders highly rationalized and organized activities, but has at the same time a fundamentally irrational and disorganized feature due to its consequences of chaos, pain and death. The war will for instance organize Quimet and his friends into activity when they enroll for the Republican army, it will make Natàlia sign up for a job, systematically earn some money and to follow a strict routine day by day – but it will at the same time throw Natàlia and her children into misery, it will cause chaos in the city due to the bombings and lack of provisions and it will kill many of the characters: Mateu, Cintet, Quimet and the father of Natàlia.

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101 Bru-Dominguez, p. 119.
The war thus plays an important role in how subjectivity is formed by LPD, through its often direct implication in the descriptions of bodies and spaces, and it further seems to become legible and grasped through the particular formal aspects that structure LPD. I will in the following analyze some literary techniques used by Rodoreda that render the complex interrelations between war and subjectivity, body and space readable in LPD.

In her study, Bru-Domínguez emphasizes the influence of surrealist techniques in Rodoreda’s texts, which, she argues, can be discerned in the symbols in LPD, like the dolls, or in the representation of female corporeality in the whole corpus of Rodoreda’s literary and poetic work. I suggest that the surrealist influence primarily can be read in the very linguistic and literary form of LPD; that the surrealist aspects of the symbols, the narration and the assignment of the female in fact are effects of the text’s reformulation of surrealist and modernist aesthetic techniques. According to Elza Adamowicz, the collage was coined as a general aesthetic principle in the surrealist art movement, which would eventually be used in the production of both pictorial as well as verbal artworks. The collage is a part of an aesthetic project that emphasizes the interrelation of technique and subjectivity in artistic expression; it is a dialectical structure that, according to André Breton, eradicates the “distance” that was commonly conceived between life and art – between the domain of everyday life-objects and that of the work of art – and through juxtaposing them would produce effects of disorientation and thus problematize how subjectivity is transformed through new modes of perception in modernity. Influences of two of the most essential aspects of surrealism – automatism (spontaneous verbal flow) and the collage – can surely be discerned in LPD: in the narrative form, which is a mimesis of spontaneous colloquial speech, in the repeated use of the ‘i’ (‘and’ in English), in the elliptical language and in the short chapters that are ordered as if they were random images appearing in Natàlia’s memory. However, surrealist techniques of collage and automatism were coined mainly in relation to the visual arts and cinema, and thus the traces or influences of them that Bru-Domínguez sees in LPD must be reconsidered and problematized. LPD is not a collage in the sense that it combines different materials by for example introducing letters or newspaper texts into the novel, but, as I will discuss in the following, it could be seen to work with linguistic and literary techniques of fragmentation and re-composition.

In fact, the little word ‘i’ is a specifically important linguistic device in LPD in this respect; it enables the narrative to resemble spontaneous speech and structures the text into a

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102 Bru-Domínguez, p. 150.
complex literary form. The language of the following citation from chapter forty-two in LPD, full of ‘i’s, is characteristic for the novel’s metonymical structure:

Vam anar a mirar aparadors al carrer Gran. Hi vam arribar caminant molt a poc a poc i quan hi vam ser la Rita em va mirar i em va dir que tenia els ulls espantats. I li vaig dir que tenia manies. I vam mirar aparadors i tot tant me feia… I la Rita va voler travessar, quan vam arribar al capdavall, per pujar per l’altra banda. I quan tenia el peu posat damunt la pedra del cantell de l’acerà, tot el món se’m va ennuïlar i vaig veure els llums blaus, almenys una dotzena ben bona, co mun mar de taques blaves que se’m gronxès davant. I vaig caure. I em van haver d’accompanyar a casa. 104

No less than eleven sentences in the last part of this chapter start with the word ‘i’. It is a linguistic style that runs throughout the novel, but it is as most noticeable in the text where crucial clashes between body and space take place; where the relationships between body and space is of outmost importance for Natàlia’s subject formation. This is not at all obvious at a first glance. But if read with attention one can discern that when body and space most intensively interact in the text are different moments of crisis: the mental collapses of Natàlia, the interruption of the narrative voice, the sudden change in rhythm of the text, the seemingly random order of and relation between the chapters, the out-of-breath colloquial narrative form caused by the repetition of the ‘i’s, and so on.

The ‘i’ plays an important role in constructing these moments of crisis in LPD, and it gives a certain effect of a subject, which the citation from the novel above exemplifies. William Gass notes in his original essay “And” (1986) that the preposition ‘and’ originally suggested opposition: “[…] the idea of fronting or facing a boundary […] a standing of something next to but over and against something else […]” 105, but that it functions as a quite neutral conjunction today. Gass lists many different uses and functions of ‘and’, of which some are particularly interesting for my analysis here. For example, the function of ‘and’ in a logical, rational text is similar to the comma; it suggests that all elements that are listed are related in some kind of dependency: they form a pattern. 106 The ‘and’ thus works as that which separates qualities between (interrelated) elements, something that can indeed be observed in the language of LPD, where all sentences that starts with an ‘i’ at least have in common that they start with ‘i’ and that they in some way relate to the life of the character/narrator Natàlia.

104 Rodoreda, LPD, pp. 219-220, DS, p. 175: “We went window-shopping down High Street. We walked very slowly and when we got there Rita looked at me and said my eyes looked really scared. And I said I was seeing things. And we window-shopped and it made no difference… And Rita wanted to cross over when we reached the bottom and walk back up the other side. And when I stepped on the edge of the kerb, the whole world seemed to cloud over and I saw blue lights, a good dozen at least, like a sea of blue blobs swirling in front of my eyes. And I fell down. And they had to carry me home.”
106 Ibid., p. 165.
Then there are the ‘ands’ that, according to Gass, are less logical and more ambiguous. There is the ‘and’ that works as an addition, adding for example different actions one after the other after but according to no clear pattern. Addition normally implies a sum, as Gass reminds us about, but when it comes to the addition of actions, the sum is less obvious than with numbers: one action has to end before the next one starts. The ‘i’ in LPD functions in this strange way, it adds Natàlia’s different actions and thoughts one after the other, often without a clear causality (similar to James Joyce’s *stream of consciousness* in Ulysses), as if they are placed one on top of the other. The “sum” becomes the continuous charging of the text and an expectation in the reader that it will culminate or collapse into a conclusion, a final remark, a summation, a pause or the like. However, the culmination(s) of LPD is precisely the lack of conclusion and pause, the text instead continues adding the ‘i’’s until the very end, leading to a feeling of aggravation, as Gass characterizes it\(^{107}\), of motion and extension. Hemingway’s language-use is, according to Gass, an example of this: “These ‘ands’ condense or skip. They insist upon the suddenness of everything, the disappearance of time, the collision of distant spaces.”\(^{108}\)

This is an important part of the linguistic construction of crisis and war in LPD – the critical situations in the story are shaped, as in the citation above, through the repetition and accumulation of the ‘i’, leading to a speeded-up, exasperated narrative voice that relates the atrocities of a life that has been shattered to pieces. But at the same time, the narrative voice in LPD tries to recollect the pieces of that same life, over-using the ‘i’ as if it would help to sew together the fragments of memories and thus give back meaning to Natàlia’s life and to the text itself. Apparently then, the ‘i’ is in LPD used both as conjunction (bringing elements together) and inter-punctuation (that which separates). As Resina rightfully remarks: “*La Plaça del Diamant* is a novel concerned with connections, with their frustration and reestablishment.”\(^{109}\) And what is both separated but linked with the ‘i’’s in these critical instances of LPD is continuously the relations between body and space: the killing of bodies in the squares, Natàlia’s clashing into and touching of walls, her body’s collapse in the street, the embodied narrative voice relating the scenery of the story, and so on.

Another important insight of Gass about ‘and’ is the metaphorical function the word has for poetic and literary language. These are the irrational, lyrical ‘ands’ that for instance

\(^{107}\) Ibid., p. 166.
\(^{108}\) Ibid., p 170.
\(^{109}\) Resina, p. 242.
add “‘salt to sensation or affection to a mitered joint’”\textsuperscript{110}. In the citation above there is for example the sentence “And we window-shopped and it made no difference… […] And when I stepped on the edge of the kerb, the whole world seemed to cloud over and I saw blue lights […]”. The ‘ands’ here does not merely bind or separate things, they rather work metaphorically as that which merges actions, thoughts and words from different conceptual spheres to each other. As Emilie Bergmann writes about the literary language of Rodoreda: “In an interview published after her [Rodoreda’s] death in 1983, she mentioned her fondness for Poe and Lovecraft as masters of the fantastic, in the context of her juxtaposition of hallucination and dream with realistic description.”\textsuperscript{111} The tiny word ‘i’ thus also functions in the literary language of Rodoreda to combine a fantastic narrative with a, as Bergmann identifies it, “[…] colloquial style imitative of spoken Catalan.”\textsuperscript{112} However, this imitation of spoken Catalan cannot only be seen as a way to produce realistic depiction – because using that type of first person voice, as Bergmann notes, “[…] while publication of written Catalan was suppressed, is a transposition of speech into the forbidden realm.”\textsuperscript{113} Hence, the frequent use of ‘i’ juxtaposes metaphorically that which normally is opposed or dichotomized in other discourses: the allowed/forbidden and the imaginary/realistic.

The last comment I have on the use of ‘i’ in LPD is related to psychoanalytic theory. Mona Fayad writes that LPD elaborates on a central issue of contemporary critical discourse, namely, “[…] the process by which the subject is engendered.”\textsuperscript{114} Influenced by Julia Kristeva’s theory about the tension between the symbolic and the semiotic and its importance in literature of women, Fayad argues that the consequence of women’s alienation from the symbolic and of their tendency to allow (but also to reject) the admission of the semiotic leads to a subject in constant shift between the two realms.\textsuperscript{115} A consequence of this is what has been called the “schizophrenic” character of literary texts, which LPD and Woolf’s Mrs. Dalloway are examples of. Fayad then goes on to claim that both these texts “[…] single out a woman who is forced to make choices that appear to decide the whole course of her life, but which in actuality are not choices at all, but simply false alternatives.”\textsuperscript{116} That which textually forms this kind of schizophrenic subject in LPD is, I suggest, not only Natàlia’s situations in the story but also, on the linguistic level, Rodoreda’s

\textsuperscript{110} Gass., p. 167.
\textsuperscript{111} Bergmann, p. 86.
\textsuperscript{112} Ibid., p. 85.
\textsuperscript{113} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{114} Fayad, p. 119.
\textsuperscript{115} Ibid., p. 120.
\textsuperscript{116} Ibid.
use of the word ‘i’ – which in its repetition produces the tense narrative of Otherness, obsession, detachment and restlessness.

In addition to the ‘i’, however, there is still another linguistic feature of LPD that produce the relationship body-space and that plays an important role in this double structure of the text, namely, the use of the ellipsis – or more specifically the aposiopesis, which is a certain type of ellipsis. The aposiopesis is not as often used as the ‘i’ but is still so recurrent throughout the text that it cannot be ignored in a study of the form of LPD. It is written as three dots: “…”, and it appears more often in the end of the chapters than in the beginning, as if Natàlia’s narrative voice becomes more insecure, hazy or imprecise in the transition between chapters and scenes. The aposiopesis is used more frequently in the second half of the novel, reaching a peak in the last chapter where it is used thirty-two times. An example of how Rodoreda uses the aposiopesis can be found in the second chapter: “Quan vaig estar sola vaig mirar el cel i només era negre. I no sé...tot plegat, molt misteriós...”117

Furthermore, the last sentence of the novel ends with an aposiopesis: “Contents…”118

Several scholars have, in relation to their search for Natàlia’s experience and identity, observed the repeated use of the ellipsis in LPD. Arkinstall notes for instance that the repression of sexual abuse and violence in LPD is formed through a “poetics of ellipticism”, indicating a repression of traumatic memories.119 But, more precisely, which qualities of the ellipsis, and more specifically the speech figure of aposiopesis, render Natàlia’s experience readable in this way?

The aposiopesis, which Silvia Montiglio discusses in Silence in the Land of Logos (2000), was initially denoted by ancient Greek orators and rhetoricians as being a practice of incorporating silence into speech, allowing for “[…] a perfect rendering of euphêmia […]”120. In his ideal city, Plato wanted oratory practices of euphêmia, which meant that the orators would be obliged to speak and listen without abusing each other: “Plato dreamt of purifying speech from all unseemly practices: oaths, curses, entreaties, weeping.”121 Euphêmia can thus be understood as a practice of speaking well, a practice that would elude blasphemy or insult through different rhetorical strategies. Montiglio underlines the importance of aposiopesis as one of these strategies – a figure of speech that preserves and

117 Rodoreda, LPD, p. 29, DS, p. 10: “When I was by myself, I looked up at the pitch-black sky. And you know…it was all very misterious…”
118 Rodoreda, LPD, p. 253, DS, p. 206: “Happy…”
119 Bru-Domínguez, p. 150.
121 Ibid., p. 128.
translates euphêmia. Montiglio emphasizes however that the ancient rhetoricians did not make any particular distinction between aposiopesis and the other figures of silence, while in its contemporary definition it is to a larger extent denoted as a special type of silence figure:

[...] an important aspect of aposiopesis in the writer’s perception is the interruption of the sentence. More specific studies of this rhetorical figure tend to define it in the same way as the sudden breaking of a sentence, in opposition of preterition or paraleipsis that merely consist in declaring one’s silence. The three dots that assign the aposiopesis in the last sentence of LPD is of this type – it suddenly interrupts the sentence but there are also slightly different kinds of aposiopeses in LPD that do not break off sentences “in the middle” but rather introduces silent endings of sentences, without omitting any information, as this example shows: “[…] aprenia coses que tot just començava a saber…” In this way, the use of aposiopesis in LPD produces textual tensions between silence and speech, between was is forbidden or inconvenient to say and what is allowed, producing Natàlia’s subject position as constituted in a speech that is covered in and enabled by silence and censorship. A context of censorship and heavily regulated speech thus appears in the very linguistic style of LPD, emerging from the combined use of aposiopesis and the Catalan language, which, as I have discussed above, was a forbidden, censored language by the time of the production and publication of the novel. As Montigilo further writes: “[…] aposiopesis provides the very expression for the forbidden by silencing speech altogether.”

The ellipsis has further a narrative function in literary language. Gérard Genette notes in his narrative study in Figures III that the ellipsis is constructed with the Greek -lipse, which designates the practice of omitting or leaving – of passing things over into silence – in contrast to –lepse (as in for example prolepse and analepse), which indicates the act of assuming something. He further remarks that the ellipsis narrative function often is to indicate a passing or acceleration of time: "[...] the ellipsis, or the leap forward without a return, is evidently not an anachronism, but rather a simple acceleration of narrative time [...] it effects the time. (my translation) There are both explicit and implicit ellipses, where the former are declared indications of temporality in the text, for instance “Three

122 Ibid., p. 132.
123 Ibid.
124 Rodoreda. p.136, DS, p. 105: “[...] or learning things that I’d just cottoned on to…”
127 Ibid., p. 85.
years later”, while the latter, to which the aposiopesis in *LPD* can be said to belong, is the more vague textual presence of a time lapse, which is difficult to locate since it is not declared. In *LPD* the three dots are often used to leave things in the narrative unsaid, producing a slightly chaotic narrative voice that mimes colloquial speech and a dream- or memory-like passing of time. But they also function as to avoid things that are obviously present. Genette further discusses this type of rhetoric figure, which he calls paralipēsis and which, instead of omitting things in the narration like the ellipsis, rather detours something or leaves it aside. Montiglio also remarks that the paralipsis is a declaration of one’s silence, thus indicating that there is something that is not being mentioned. In *LPD*, the war and the pregnancy of Natàlia – elements that are obviously present – are for example left without any detailed description. Instead, as I have written elsewhere, the Civil War in *LPD* is precisely the omitted detailed description of soldiers, battles or political/ideological causes. And similarly, the pregnancy of Natàlia is formed and constituted through a “shameful” and body-censoring narrative. Yet, this does not mean that a body-emphasizing way of describing her pregnancy would be more “true”; there is so to speak no original or “real” experience of pregnancy and war that is “avoided” by the text. These experiences of war and female corporeality are instead formed, for instance by the use of ellipses, as domestic and urban experiences where starving, un-locatable bodies are invaded and extremely dependent on the spaces around them.

The ellipses in *LPD* are further important stylistic devices since they cut up the text, through inserting blank spaces between words, but at the same time link sentences and chapters together. The ellipses enable a juxtaposition of sentences that do not follow in a causal chain of events but that rather inscribe the absurd and fantastic: “I altra vegada la casa dels hules i les nines amb les sabates de xarol...sobretot no veure els llums blaus i travessar sense pressa...no veure els llums blaus...i em van cridar.” Thus, the ellipses in *LPD* does not primarily “point back” at repressed traumatic events in the psyche of Natàlia, as Arkinstall claimed, on the contrary, they *produce* these very experiences through making them materialize before the reader in a certain textual arrangement.

Taken together, the ‘i’, the ellipsis, the short chapters and the sudden changes of topic in *LPD* in different ways produce its novelistic form and make the experiences of a working-class woman during the Spanish Civil War readable in the text. It is the very repetition

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128 Ibid., pp. 139-141.
129 Ibid., pp.92-93 + footnote on page 93.
130 Rodoreda, *LPD*, p. 192. *DS*, p. 154: “And back to the emporium and the dolls with the patent leather shoes…above all I mustn’t see blue lights and not cross in a hurry…must not see blue lights…and someone shouted to me.”
of these formal techniques in LPD that performatively produce a certain subject. Butler writes:

I would suggest that performativity cannot be understood outside of a process of iterability, a regularized and constrained repetition of norms. And this repetition is not performed by a subject; this repetition is what enables a subject and constitutes the temporal condition for the subject.\(^{131}\)

The performative production of a subject is not a singular event, but rather “[…] a ritualized production […]\(^{132}\), as Butler puts it. The subject that appears as the effect of this iterability and repetition of the various formal aspects of LPD cannot be read as having a stable, homogeneous identity or position: it is from the start formed through fragmentation and recomposition, in a textual room that repeatedly suspend and reinstall the limits and constraints for the subject and blurs the limits between (ordinary) life and art. The form of LPD can thus be identified as belonging to a literary tradition and discourse that appeared in the late 19th Century – and which gave rise to aesthetic movements such as modernism and surrealism. Rancière calls these new modes of literature “[…] the new fictional narration: the juxtaposition of sensory micro-events, forming a cross-temporal resonance that contrasts with the former chains of voluntary actions and of their desired and undesired effects.”\(^{133}\) (my emphasis) And the regime that was contrasted with these new fictional forms was, he reminds, that of mimesis:

The moment when art substituted the singularity for the plurality of fine arts, and produces, in order to think it, the discourse that came to be called aesthetics, is the moment when a knot came undone: this knot had tied together a productive nature, a sensible nature and a legislative nature called mimesis or representation.\(^{134}\)

In the following, I will try to analyze this literary form of LPD in the light of the moment in Catalan history in which it was produced. Because through the use of the ‘i’s, the ellipsis and the short chapters in combination with the colloquial style of Catalan, LPD makes a historical situation readable in a certain form and in relation to which a specific subjectivity emerges. I will argue that it is especially the threshold spaces (chronotopes) in LPD, and the way Natàlia acts and perceives herself and the surrounding on them, that convey this context – primarily through their function of inscribing the exceptional and critical situations in Catalonia during and after the Civil War.

\(^{131}\) Butler (1993), p. 95.
\(^{132}\) Ibid.
\(^{134}\) Ibid., p. 7.
Diamond Square: Crisis and Renewal

The spaces given privilege in LPD are the ambiguous and transitive places “in between” the public and domestic areas of Barcelona: the terrace, the staircase, the bourgeois household where Natàlia’s works, the kerb of the street, the entrance doors and thresholds, the beach and the squares. These places are meant for bodies to move through and advance from, but for Natàlia’s body they allow for physical or psychological breakdowns or mark important changes in her life and in the story: she collapses when passing over the kerb of the street, she feels empty when standing pregnant on the sea shoreline, she shakes the pigeon eggs in the loft, she repeatedly touches the drawings on the walls in the staircase, she lets out a scream on the terrace, and so on. The limit spaces are the only places where Natàlia reacts strongly; where she does not seem indifferent or numb to her life situation (as otherwise) but instead is struck by a sudden insight of her sorrow and reacts to it both determinately and desperately. They therefore function as Bakhtin’s threshold chronotopes in the text: metaphorically marking a turning point, a crisis.

I will not analyze all the thresholds appearing in LPD – there is no space for that project here – but instead focus on the threshold space outlined specifically by the Diamond Square and the last chapter of LPD, since I have found that the features in how the square is used in the text and how the last chapter is written around the theme of transgressing limits, can be seen as examples on how also other thresholds function in relation to the body of Natàlia. And in the concluding discussion, as it were, LPD will in itself be seen as a threshold space, a textual room where a certain discursive situation can be read.

The last chapter of LPD is a crucial chapter in the sense that its theme and textual form is one of crossing limits. It relates how Natàlia struggles to cross the street, the limit between her new and old life; the street leading to the area of the city where she once lived with Quimet and their children but that she left after his death to live in the house of her new husband Antoni. This is the moment in which she carves ‘Colometa’ on the door with the knife. The threshold spaces are emphasized in this part of the text one after the other – the kerb stone between the pavement and the street, the tram railway, the door of her old house. The text is furthermore here the very limit of LPD as object: it is the last chapter of the novel. The concentration of textual body-space interrelations in this last chapter thus seems to be an effect of the textual organization around limits and the passing over limits, exemplified by the following passage:

[…] fins arribar a la pedra llarga del cantell i allí em vaig quedar com una fusta per fora, amb totauna puja de coses que del cor m’anaven al cap. Va passar un tramvia [...] i aquell tramvia pot-
What is noticeable here is also the repeated use if the word ‘i’ (‘and’), which as discussed previously forms a critical narrative, pointing towards a limit, conclusion or culmination (that eventually never fully arrives). In the beginning of this last chapter it is the very spaces that make Natàlia move at all and that are assigned agency: the tram make her move and it is the walls rather than her footsteps that make her walk back after the inscription of ‘Colomet’ on the door. In all these descriptions of spaces and crossing over limits, Natàlia’s body is momentarily focused by the text: she touches her face – which I have discussed earlier in connection to how bodily perception is inscribed – she feels that her feet has covered a lot of ground, she perceives different smells, and so on. The pain it implies for Natàlia to cross over the street, go back to Diamond Square and confront her memories is thus constructed in the text precisely through this tension and transgression of the limit between her body and the surrounding space.

The inscription of the _square_ in _LPD_ indicates how that very limit is both installed and transgressed in the text. In chapter thirty-three for instance, a square is suddenly emphasized by the text when Natalia finds out through Mrs Enriqueta that Mateu has been shot to death on a square:

> I jo no sabia res del que passava fins que un dia la senyora Enriqueta va venir a dir-me que sabia del cert que havien afusellat en Mateu al mig d’una plaça i quan li vaig preguntar al mig de quina plaça, perqué no sabia què dir, va dir que al mig d’una plaça, però que no sabia al mig de quina plaça, sí, sí, t’ho pots ben creure, els afusellen tots al mig d’una plaça. I el mal fort no em va sortir de dintre fins al cap de cinc minuts i vaig dir baixet com si l’ànima se m’acabés de morir a dins del cor, això no… això no… Perquè no podia ser que en Mateu l’haguessin afusellat allà al mig d’una plaça, ! no podia ser!

136 Rodoreda, _LPD_, p. 176, _DS_, pp. 140-41: And I hadn’t a clue what was happening until Mrs Enriqueta came one day and told me she knew for certain they’d executed Matthew in the middle of a square and when I asked in the middle of which square, because I was at a loss of words, she said in the middle of a square, but she didn’t know which one, but you can believe me, you really can, they’re shooting them all in the middle of a square. And the pain hit me five minutes later and I said very quietly as if my spirit had just died in my heart…no, no, not that… Because it couldn’t be true that they’d shot Matthew in the middle of a square, wherever it was. It couldn’t be true!

135 Rodoreda, _LPD_, p. 248. _DS_, p. 202: “[…]I reached the long kerbstone where I stood as stiff as a board on the outside, but with a stack of things rushing from my heart to my head. A tram clattered by […] perhaps that tram had watched me running with Joe in hot pursuit, when we scampered like mad mice from Diamond Square. And I felt something irritating my neck like a pea rattling in my eardrum. I felt queasy and closed my eyes and the draught from the tram helped move me on as if my life depended on it. And with my first step I could still see the tram. […] It was as if I was blindly walking above the abyss, thinking every second that I was about to fall, and I crossed to the other side gripping the knife tight […] I had made it to the other side.”
The citation is an example of how the transformation of bodies and the urban spaces are, as it were, throughout the novel made into the two main textual components of the war. The word ‘plaça’ (‘square’) is used four times in the first sentence, as if the importance and horror of the rumor is the place of the shootings, not only the shooting itself. The sentence that follows includes words like “pain” and “heart”, thus creating a strong contrast to the former sentence and introducing the body into the textual image of a city in war. However, the pain caused by the shootings on the square appears in Natàlia’s body, not in the shot soldiers’ bodies, which indicates the inclination of the text to emphasize Natàlia’s own bodily reactions as answer to the surrounding spaces. This, I suggest, is enabled by the fact that the squares, as other spaces in LPD, are not formed as mere physical places in the text, but rather outline a political and social situation.

That situation can be discerned, I suggest, by studying the main square of the novel: Diamond Square. Maria Roca Mussons has suggested that the square is the framing structure of the two symbolic rebirths of Natàlia in LPD. The first rebirth is during the dance on Diamond Square with Quimet (she is given a new name) and is marked by her passive role, while the second rebirth is when she ends up in the same square after having carved ‘Colometa’ on her old home and is marked, according to Roca Mussons, by Natàlia’s now more active role. Although I don’t agree with Roca Mussons conclusion – that the importance of the square in the text mainly is linked to the representation of the personal rebirths of Natàlia in the story, where the first shows a subjugated, tolerant woman and the second a free and autonomous one – her suggestion that the square is a stage where important trials, crisis and traumas for the subject take place in the text is useful.

Diamond Square seems to be a place in the novel with this type of function. The story’s opening and ending is set there, it is where Natàlia is forced into the role of Colometa but also outlines the space where she manages to leave, or at least to transform, that role: it becomes the scene where Natàlia’s subjectivity is negotiated through acts of language. Because the political charge of squares in urban spaces is the result of processes where individuals speak, and are addressed and treated as, subjects. Rancière remarks for instance how politics in fact emerges in the crucible between language, the collective and the space it inhabits:

[…].Politics is the very conflict over the existence of that space, over the designation of objects as pertaining to the common and of subjects as having the capacity of a common speech. […] Politics occurs when those who ‘have no’ time take the time necessary to front up as inhabitants of a common space

137 Roca Mussons, p. 247.
and demonstrate that their mouths really do emit speech capable of making pronouncements on the common which cannot be reduced to voices signaling pain.  

Diamond Square square is further not only a fictional place in Rodoreda’s literary world – there is also a real square called la Plaça del Diamant located in the neighborhood of Gràcia in Barcelona. This square is particularly known because of its underground brick tunnels, which were built as shelters for the inhabitants of Gràcia during the bombings of Barcelona in March 1938. The Catalan capital was one of the most difficult cities for Franco to conquer: it had a strong anti-Francoist resistance constituted by groups such as the Republicans, the anarchists, several radical leftist organizations and not least by the very population living in Barcelona and the International Brigades. Therefore, the city suffered a harsh punishment: in 1938, with help from Adolf Hitler’s and Benito Mussolini’s armies, Franco’s air forces carried out a systematic and extensive aerial bomb-attack against civilians. After the attack – which caused more than a thousand deaths, amongst which the majority were women and children – the inhabitants of Barcelona came together to build 1400 bomb shelters, often located beneath the many squares of the city. Today, the shelter under Diamond Square is one of the best preserved.

The historical example with the bombings and the resistance of the inhabitants of Barcelona indicates the double function of the urban spaces, such as the squares, in Barcelona during the Civil War. For example: Franco’s troops performed hundreds of mass executions of soldiers on the squares – which in their open and uncovered structure also exposed people to danger during bomb attacks – while at the same time, the squares were the very nucleus of the anti-Francoist resistance, in the form of popular mobilization, bomb shelters for civilians and secret cells underground for the militias. The squares of Barcelona thus hosted and produced a violent and contradictory situation for the bodies moving through them. In addition, after Franco’s conquest of Barcelona in 1939, all Catalan references were erased from public access and hundreds of thousand books in Catalan were burnt on public spaces. As Conversi remarks, this belonged to the Francoist project of homogenizing Spain through brutally imposing a single language, Castilian Spanish – or as they called it, the language of the empire (el idioma del imperio). Catalan was banned even as spoken language in all public institutions and the Catalan cultural and artistic intelligentsia was either murdered, went underground or fled into exile. Thus, once the Catalan language

140 Ibid.  
141 Conversi, p. 111.  
142 Ibid., p. 110.
was censored, “[…] its political importance increased.”143 The repression of the core value of Catalan identity, the Catalan language, on and through the very public spaces of Barcelona also indicates how politically tense the relation between body and space – between subjects and their fast changing surroundings – had become during the Civil War and the dictatorship in Catalonia. Squares may not be threshold spaces always and everywhere, but during this specific time in the history of Barcelona, the squares became liminal, critical spaces for Catalan subjects, since their collective identity and culture repeatedly were attacked and repressed – but also defended and protected – on them.

In *LPD*, this characteristic of the square as critical threshold space is made readable in the textual relationship between Natàlia’s body and her surrounding: she is both utterly threatened by the urban spaces around her and the situations specific to them during the time of the Civil War, but she is also protected and preserved in them, since they are what fundamentally enable her to act as literary character in the first place. The relationships between body and space in *LPD* may therefore be regarded as instances in the text where the political gesture of *LPD* is as most intensified, emerging in the very linguistic and stylistic configuration of the Catalan community and its (violent) history. Resina remarks for instance that the colloquial, individualized and internalized style of the narrative is a medium – not so much of a certain sort of individuality – but rather of Catalan collective life:

The language employed differs noticeably from the literary Catalan used by other writers of her generation; it is a speech that, while shedding the barbarisms common in spontaneous usage, reflects the vocabulary and even grammatical competence of the working and low-middle classes, metropolitan and provincial, of pre-World War II Catalan society […] The narrator’s voice, a highly individualized, socially and generically marked voice, ranges over the spectrum of voices thus becoming the medium for their resonance.144

Resina refers to Josep-Miguel Sobrè’s linguistic study of *LPD*145 in his argumentation, underlining that Rodoreda has not tried to register the specific dialect of the Barcelona neighborhood of the story, but has rather produced a popular and general tone of Catalan that is comprehensible for “[…] the whole Catalan linguistic area […]”146 The reattachment of banned Catalan words to the objects of collective experience, enabled in the text by Natàlia’s continuous fixation of them, thus becomes an effort to regain the lost linguistic identity of the community. This makes the novel into a political project that is, as

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143 Ibid., p. 42.
144 Resina, pp. 230-231.
146 Resina, pp. 230-231.
Resina suggests, “[…] an attempt to reterritorialize language, to return to the community its power of speech.”

As seen, Resina’s discussion circulates around Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari’s concept of deterritorialization and minor literatures. The first characteristic of a minor literature is, according to Deleuze and Guattari, that its language is an effect of deterritorializations. And the crucial differentiating point between minor and major literatures is precisely the representation of individuality:

In “great” literatures […] the question of the individual (familial, conjugal, etc.) tends to be connected to other, no less individual questions, and the social milieu serves as environment or background. […] Minor literature is completely different: because it exists in a narrow space, every individual matter is immediately plugged into the political. Thus the question of the individual becomes even more necessary, indispensible, magnified microscopically, because an entirely different story stirs within it.

The clash between Natàlia’s highly individualized narrative voice and the public and political situations her body participates in when moving through or relating to different spaces make her body into a limit or link in LPD between the domains of the individual and the collective, between private and public, which on a discursive level can be read as effects of the deterritorializations which Catalan identity has suffered in history.

But the novel also outlines a textual room, a territory, for body and space to inhabit in new ways: they are reterritorialized by getting a literary form. Johansson emphasizes the interdependence of these two processes in the reading method of Deleuze:

”[…] every ‘territory’ – a language, a book, a nation, a family, a moral, a gender identity etc. – contains processes of deterritorialization that disrupts the territory, at the same time as the deterritorialization is inseparable from processes of reterritorialization, which move in the opposite direction, towards a higher degree of organization, homogeneity, systematicity and form.”

The reterritorialization of LPD can be read in its participation in processes of renewing Catalan culture and giving a literary shape to their threatened language. Conversi underlines that Catalonia lived through a strong cultural, as well as political, revival during the

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147 Ibid., p. 228.
148 The concept deterritorialization appeared in Deleuze’s & Guattari’s text Anti-Oedipus (1972), where it was denoted as the removal of labor power from particular means of production. More generally though, it describes any process that removes the context from a certain set of relations, rendering these relations “deterritorialized” (i.e. without point of reference or idea).
150 Ibid., p. 16.
151 Johansson, pp. 45-46: ”[…] varje “territorium” – ett språk, en bok, en tolkning, en nation, en familj, en moral, en genusidentitet etc. – innehåller deterritorialiseringar som upplöser territoriet, samtidigt som deterritorialiseringen alltid är oskiljaktigt från reterritorialiseringar, det vill säga rörelser som löper i motsatt riktning, mot ökad organisation, enhetlighet, systematik och form.”
Postwar. The segregation, poverty and decadence reigned during the 1940’s due to Franco’s brutal repression of Catalan culture, but things slowly started to change in the 50’s. In reference to Jaume Rossinyol, Conversi stresses that it was particularly through their constant insistence to preserve the Catalan language that the Catalans succeeded in keeping their culture alive in spite of the repression:

All Catalan political parties, voluntary associations and labour unions joined in their demands for linguistic rights […] Political autonomy – rather than independence – was the limited goal needed for such linguistic rights to become a meaningful reality. This assertive stance was derived from the inner conviction that Catalonia possessed a distinctive high culture with a unique literary and artistic heritage.

According to Conversi then, the fact that the Catalan culture “survived” the dictatorship, more successfully than for example the Basque did, has an explanation in its long and thriving tradition of intellectual and artistic production. Especially, since Catalan was still spoken in the domestic spaces, amongst the bourgeoisie and across the whole Catalan territory (both in the countryside and in the large cities), it worked as a “[…] tool of mass mobilisation […]” As linguistic and artistic project, LPD thus participated in a process of renewing and saving Catalan identity and culture, which in the 1960’s was still a semi-clandestine activity and to a large extent was produced by Catalan authors, intellectuals, artists and politicians who, like Rodoreda, were living in exile.

Conveyed by the inscription of the Diamond Square, this historical and political context indicate how the relation between body and space works in the discourse of LPD: the square is not a mere neutral space where Natàlia moves through, acts upon and eventually is personally “reborn” on; its history is also her history, shaping the terms of her subject position in the text as working class, as Catalan and as woman in a situation of war and crisis. This enables a reading of Natàlia as an embodiment of a multitude of subjects – of the Catalan working class women during the Civil War in Barcelona – who seldom had the opportunity to make their life experiences heard.

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152 Conversi, p. 123.
153 Ibid., p. 124.
154 Ibid., p. 125.
155 Conversi, p. 115-116: “As soon as the yoke of repression was slightly eased, Catalanism gave signs of renewed vitality. Every niche of freedom was exploited by the cultural activists. […] The printing of books in Catalan slowly but steadily increased; output increased from twelve books in 1946, to sixty in 1948 and ninety-six in 1954. In 1960 there were more than 200.”
Summary and Final Remark

The textual body-space relations studied in the different sections of the analysis give form to a subject that is not only an agent acting upon the scene outlined by the spaces around it, but that also gets invaded, produced and constrained by those very spaces. In particular, the spaces represented in LPD include different linguistic, social and political situations (renaming, marriage and war, for example) that condition the terms for how subjectivity is made readable by the novel.

In the first part of the analysis, the renaming of Natàlia in the first chapter of LPD was seen to participate in processes of subject formation, which indicate how the relationships between body and space will come to function through the rest of the text. Natàlia’s body showed to be the main site where these processes of subjectivation occur, since her reactions to the situations in the spaces around her are mainly bodily reactions. This was analyzed with Butler’s notion on the discursive formations of subjects in relation to the operative features of language and thus motivated a further study of how the language and style of LPD produces Natàlia’s bodily agency and “space-dependent” subject positions.

In the second part of the study I discussed how Natalia’s bodily perception (vision and smell) is formed textually and stylistically. With the insights from Bru-Domínguez’ studies on how corporeality in Rodoreda’s work relates to, but also subverts, the figuration of the female body in Catalan Modernisme and Noucentisme, Natàlia’s visual registration of objects and spaces could be analyzed in relation to the symbolic function of the specific objects she focalizes (the dolls, her reflection in the shop window) but also in connection to the narrative style of inner monologue. The argument that Natàlia mainly responds to subjectivating forces through her body was further stated in the study of chapter eighteen in LPD, where the protagonist’s perception of the objects in her employer’s house was read, not as passivity, but as resistance and activity; a resistance that indicates the heterogeneous subject position she is made to occupy in the text – the position of the oppressed but also of the one resisting that very oppression.

In the third part of the analysis, this subject position was further studied in relation to its gendered conditions. Different textual aspects, such as the knife and the word ‘partida’, were studied in this perspective, and showed to have a both dividing and linking function for the relationship between Natàlia’s body and the spaces around her. It was concluded that some of the features of the urban and domestic spaces, and how these are formed stylistically, highly influences how Natàlia’s gender is made readable by the novel.
Thereafter I discussed some of the central aspects of the literary form of *LPD*, such as the word ‘i’ and the aposiopesis. It became clear that these particular details in the style of the novel are crucial in how the relationship between body and space is produced textually; they both fragment the text but also give it form and structure, producing a narrative voice that censors the body and instead applies human features to the surrounding space. The study of these formal aspects further made it possible to read Natàlia as a literary figure of censorship, who both introduces and contests its workings in and through the text.

Lastly, the analysis was concluded with a discussion of the threshold spaces of *LPD*, mainly the Diamond Square, and how it enables a reading of the relationship between body and space on the discursive level of the novel. *LPD* was discussed in the light of the Civil War in Barcelona and the situation for Catalan subjects in that specific historical moment. Deleuze and Guattari’s theories were used in order to study *LPD* as belonging to a minor literature and how it participates in the political and cultural project to renew the Catalan language in response to the repression and censorship it suffered during Franco’s rule in Spain.

In the course of this study I have come across a theoretical problem that have not been possible to address properly, for reasons of space and time. As a final remark, however, it will here be discussed briefly.

It is possible to discern a trend in contemporary cultural discourses, the so-called postmodern discourses, to examine how aspects of displacement condition modern civilization. As Caren Kaplan stresses, “[…] the modern era is fascinated by the experience of distance and estrangement, reproducing these notions through articulations of subjectivity and poetics.”

It should be noted that this study also can be said to be a part of that trend, in its discussion of concepts like space, displacement and exile in order to study how subjectivity is formed through the literary language of *LPD*: Rodoreda is an author whose writing is marked by experiences of exile, Natàlia is a figure of displacement and detachment, always on the go between different spaces and never fully at home in any of them. Moreover, discussions of displacement appear in nearly every contemporary scholarly text about *LPD*. Nevertheless, this practice of theorizing displacement is coupled with certain risks.

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Kaplan cautions for instance that Euro-American discourses tend to render experiences of displacement ahistorical by ripping them from the specific socio-political relations they spring from. As a consequence, they level out and mystify the *differences* that in reality exist between the various types of displacement in modernity (leisure travel, mass migration, exile, nomadism, to name a few). The risk is here, as Kaplan emphasizes, that "[…] a field of social forces becomes represented as a personal experience […]"\(^{157}\) – an experience which in the majority of cases is regarded and represented as belonging to a privileged, white Western subject. The homeless, the refugee, the nomad or the immigrant are used as tropes or metaphors in these discourses on displacement "[…] but rarely as historically recognized producers of critical discourse themselves."\(^{158}\) In this study I have made an attempt to recognize and avoid this risk of reproducing a universalizing Western discourse by questioning the contemporary readings of *LPD* that conceive Natalia’s life story as a reflection of general or universal experiences or identities (experiences of *all* women, *all* Catalans or the like), and instead aiming at investigating how the subject of *LPD*, rather than coding for a universal human condition, is dependent on a specific time and place in Catalan history, with the different social and aesthetic relations and situations characteristic for it.

Nonetheless, for this attempt to be fully achieved I believe more research is needed. For example, I think a reading of *LPD* in the light of the history of Catalan nationalism and Spanish imperialism could clarify certain passages in the novel and its production of subjectivity: a colonial discourse and situation can be discerned in *LPD* (for example in the chapter about the bourgeois household where Natalia works) and thus the discursive analysis of language and space would need to be complemented with a postcolonial perspective.

\(^{157}\) Ibid., p. 2.  
\(^{158}\) Ibid.
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