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***Taking Back the Thread: Myth Revision in Rodoreda's "Secret" Odyssey Poems***

**Nicole Altamirano**

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# TAKING BACK THE THREAD: MYTH REVISION IN RODOREDA'S "SECRET" ODYSSEY POEMS

NICOLE ALTAMIRANO

## ABSTRACT

While Mercè Rodoreda is frequently recognized as the most famous novelist in Catalan, her poetry remains virtually unexplored. Written after the Civil War led Rodoreda to flee her Catalanian homeland for France in 1939, the poems of *Món d'Ulisses* do not focus on the eponymous hero's longing to return home; rather, the poet shifts viewpoint to that of the women Ulysses leaves behind. By enabling them to tell their own version of the Mediterranean epic, concentrating on their private experience of exile, their expressions of absence, anger, and isolation, Rodoreda reevaluates and revises classical myths of the feminine in a testament to women's experience of loss.

In Montserrat Roig's novel *L'hora violeta*, Natàlia looks up from reading *The Odyssey* on an unnamed Mediterranean island and comments to her married lover:

"Jordi, ¿saps una cosa? M'agradaria sentir-hi els plors de Circe, la bruixa, a qui els historiadors han titllat de dolenta perquè convertia els homes en animals... Ja sé el que penses, estimat: que jo sóc meitat Calipso meitat Penèlope. Què vols que t'hi digui... Tu no ets Ulisses, ¿hi estàs d'acord?" (23-4). Yet even when the book was published in 1980, one did not need to look to the future to hear the laments of Ulysses's women, for more than thirty years prior Mercè Rodoreda had provided a revisionist female perspective on these and other events, and in Catalan, no less.

While Mercè Rodoreda is frequently recognized as the most famous novelist in Catalan, with her reputation as a short story writer not far behind, her poetry remains virtually unexplored, despite its recent rescue from obscurity with the release of the anthology *Agonia de llum. La poesia secreta de Mercè Rodoreda*, in 2002. Though best known for the novels and stories she wrote during the second half of the century, Rodoreda had already published five books before going into exile in 1939.<sup>1</sup> In fact, her literary career was in full swing in the 1930s, aligned with the avant-garde Sabadell Group that

<sup>1</sup> *Sóc una dona honrada?* (1932), *Del que hom no pot fugir* (1934), *Un dia en la vida d'un home* (1934), *Crim* (1936), and *Aloma* (1938), the last of which won the prestigious Premi Crexells. Despite her early success, later in life Rodoreda eventually rejected all of these works except *Aloma*, which she heavily revised and republished in 1968.

included such iconoclasts as Armand Obiols, Joan Oliver, and Francesc Trabal.<sup>2</sup>

That Rodoreda should have been a poet should come as no shock. Carme Arnau, in her seminal study on the narrative of Rodoreda, uses the awkward term "poeticitat" rather than "lirisme" to refer to a constant in her work, beginning with *Aloma* in 1938 (*Introducció a la narrativa* 76). Monsterrat Roig, meanwhile, observes that "en els seus mots, en els seus gestos, en les seves mirades concentra, tan mateix, un apassionant alè poètic. Poesia en ella mateixa i en la seva obra" (*Retrats paral·lels* 168). Furthermore, it is telling that when asked, by Roig, what is most important in making a good novel, Rodoreda, while responding first that the novel should combine the real and the unreal, then proclaims: "ha d'ésser poètica" (170).

Yet despite the omnipresent "poeticness" of the author and her work, the revelation of her poetry is somewhat surprising, in part due to the circumstances in which much of the writing would have taken place, or more specifically, Rodoreda's own assertions about her years after the Civil War and World War II. Inmaculada de la Fuente sums up Rodoreda's early exile period as "un paréntesis robado a la vida... [cuando] la escritura ha huido" (394). Among the reasons for this reported silence is the persecution of the Catalan language; Rodoreda, after all, famously described to Roig the prospect of writing as an exile in her mother tongue as "el mateix que voler que floreixin flors al Pol Nord" (168). Aside from the difficulty of day-to-day survival that may have been a factor which prevented her from pursuing her art, in addition, Rodoreda cites a persistent numbness in her hand that kept her from writing for a time. Roig concludes that "durant els anys de la postguerra es veu incapacitada per escriure una sola línia" (172). However, as Elizabeth Rhodes points out, Roig herself seems to doubt the veracity of what Rodoreda reveals to her (184).<sup>3</sup>

Despite the fact that the 1940s have been depicted as a void in the author's literary production, Rodoreda was writing and publishing poetry at the time, and in Catalan. Her poems appeared during this period in numerous journals.<sup>4</sup> She won the Jocs Florals de la Llengua Catalana for her poetry three times in a row, in 1947 in London, 1948 in Paris, and 1949 in Montevideo, and she was the first woman to be awarded the title of *Mestre en gai saber*. Nevertheless, apart from the

<sup>2</sup> This group of intellectuals received the support of Josep Carner, who later went on to advise and support Rodoreda in her poetic endeavors.

<sup>3</sup> For more on Rodoreda's misrepresentation of her exile experience, see Davies (217) and Rhodes.

<sup>4</sup> *Adam International Review*, *La Nostra Revista*, *La Nova Catalunya*, *La Humanitat*, *Ressorgiment*, *Germanor*, and *Revista de Catalunya*.

introductory analysis in the aforementioned anthology, to date there is but one critical study of Rodoreda's poetry, by Nancy Bundy. Although in her biography of the author, Carme Arnau declares that "Mercè no sembla trobar en la poesia la veu personal que caracteritzarà la seva prosa" (64), cloaked behind the personae of the mythical female figures she adopts are in fact intensely personal voices crying out for recognition.<sup>5</sup>

In Rodoreda's short story "Paràlisi," the protagonist defines herself as follows: "Sóc catalana... Sí? Mediterrània. Sirenes i dofins i molts Ulisses" (*Obres completes* 3 343). Indeed, for Rodoreda as well as for her Catalan contemporaries, *The Odyssey* formed part of their cultural and poetic legacy.<sup>6</sup> Whereas there is only one hero in the eponymous epic, the numerous and often expendable women, whose path he crosses on his way to more important endeavors, frequently blend together. Yet in summing up Catalan identity, linking it to the Homeric text as she does here, Rodoreda cuts down its hero first by placing him on the same level as the sirens and dolphins through polysyndeton and then by multiplying him, thus robbing him of the singularity that would have made him epic in the first place.

Homer's hero would seem to be at the forefront of Rodoreda's *Món d'Ulisses* as well, a series of poems written after the Civil War made it necessary for her to flee her Catalan homeland for France in 1939. However, the title of the collection is somewhat misleading, for Rodoreda chooses not to concentrate on the male protagonist's longing to return home. Instead, she shifts the viewpoint to that of the women Ulysses leaves behind, thereby enabling them to tell their own version of the Mediterranean epic, one that echoes the poet's preoccupations with loss, frustration, and solitude.

The circumstances in which *Món d'Ulisses* came to fruition involved the author finding herself in Paris in the late 1940s after leaving behind a son and a marriage of convenience to her much older uncle; she had escaped war-torn Spain with fellow Catalan writer Armand Obiols, who deserted a wife and child of his own. Though Rodoreda and Obiols remained together until his death in 1971, their affair caused a scandal within the Catalan intellectual community in France, the poet being looked down upon for her role as "the other

5 Among those not discussed here are poems about Anticlea, Nausicaa, and Ophelia, to name a few.

6 With regards to the influence of Homer's text around this time in particular, it is worth noting that Riba's first Catalan translation of *The Odyssey* came out 1919 and his "definitive" version was published in 1948. For an elaboration on the concept such Catalan poets as J.V. Foix and Carles Riba had of themselves as Mediterranean (i.e. Italian/Roman and Greek), thus bypassing the problematic Spanish tradition, see Rosenthal.



woman." It is within this context that she composed the sonnet "Plany de Calipso," in 1946:

Jo veig la teva terra nua i roent, deserta,  
vora la mar en fúria sota un penya-segat,  
el teu palau de pedra com una boca oberta  
i l'erm on brunz la vespa i on famejà el ramat.

Jo sóc allò que es deixa, allò que fuig i passa:  
l'oreig entre les fulles, l'estel que ha desistit,  
el doll que riu i plora i aquella tendra massa  
dels xuclaments que aturen un instant més la nit.

T'he volgut meu per sempre, cansat de mar i onada,  
segur en la meua carn, corba i mel exaltada,  
estranger que t'entornes cap a la teua mort.

Ara voldria ésser lleó que juga i mata  
o l'olivera inmòbil en son furor retort,  
però al pit m'agonitza un escorpí escarlata. (*Agonia* 85)

One may recall that Homer's epic poem is told from two points of view. The reader experiences the voice of the omniscient narrator and of Ulysses himself, recounting the various obstacles, many of them female, of the protagonist as he winds his way back to his homeland. Calypso is one such obstacle. By the time Homer introduces the reader to the nymph in *The Odyssey*, she has managed to keep Ulysses on her lush island grotto and away from his wife for close to a decade. However as he eventually tires of her and yearns to move on, he is portrayed as an unwilling captive. The above poem tells of what happens after Ulysses deserts Calypso. It is a part of the story we have not heard, an account in her own words, one in which Rodoreda reimagines the nymph heretofore mythologized near the point of abstraction. The poet endows her with her individual expression of loss, filling in the gap left by the canonical text and reinterpreting the Calypso episode by shifting the focus away from Ulysses's teary-eyed if questionable despondence to that of the goddess he abandons.

The poetic voice establishes a strong presence immediately by beginning the sonnet with the pronoun "jo" followed by "veig." Here she asserts herself as subject, effectively inscribing herself into the classical work on and in her own terms. It is her own perspective on her experience as what Nancy Bundy refers to as a "figurative exile... suffering from [Ulysses's] absence," (26) as opposed to the "literal" exile of the epic hero. In addition, the initial immediacy and intensity of the lament are brought to light by the use of the present tense, also differing from Homer's episode, which is relayed in the past and thus

has rendered Calypso an anecdote, one more memory among others. In the opening stanza, the goddess sees, in essence, what she has been left for. She surveys what awaits Ulysses in Ithaca, what has become of his homeland, and it stands in sharp contrast to everything she could and did offer him on her Edenic island. In returning to his country, he has chosen the barrenness, desolation and devastation of a land that has withered in his absence.

Having constituted herself against the traditional male gaze, the nymph reiterates herself as the subject by beginning the next stanza once again with "jo," this time followed by "sóc." Nonetheless, the poetic voice weakens here, faltering in its despair. Indeed, Calypso's declaration of existence and incipient self-fashioning is undermined by the fact that she defines herself in relation to Ulysses. Her very being hinges upon her former lover. She is "allò que es deixa," that which is left, by a man for his wife. The goddess is that which remains after Ulysses is long gone, both from her grotto and later from the ravaged earth to which he returns. She is dejected and alone on her island, eternal prisoner of absence. Furthermore, her powerlessness is accentuated by the use of the passive voice which emphasizes her inability to change her situation.

A letter Rodoreda wrote to her friend Anna Murià just months before this poem was published in 1947, when Obiol's wife had come back into his life, sheds light on the internalization of this metaphorical exile, and its reverberations for the poem are apparent: "Ni escric, ni faig res; no em puc treure del cap ells dos junts, tendres, palpitants, després d'aquest buit de temps, retorcats. Tota jo sóc un infern. I no puc fer res, Anna, res. Ell m'estima, però a ella també. I hauré de viure d'engrundes, jo, que ho he tingut tot" (*Cartes* 94). Rodoreda follows up later by asserting that Obiols must have seen in her simply a woman with whom to spend his time in exile, being less complicated than the alternative of arranging for his family to relocate (97). Critic Abraham Mohino i Balet reads the letter as "la queixa de la dona que es veu a si mateixa com un trànsit en el camí del protagonista, un mer instrument del destí" (*Agonia* 20); here the Calypso connection is clear, highlighting the feelings of frustration and helplessness of dealing with loss along with the preoccupation with the little that remains after an affair, the little in both cases being a broken woman.

Rodoreda's Calypso goes on to expand the definition of herself by reverting to nature, ever-changing and yet constant, cycling through life. She sees herself as a star whose time has ended, as has hers with Ulysses. She maintains she is still vibrant, all the while betraying her desperation. In an allusion to the Homeric depiction, the poet uses the sexual imagery of the honeysuckle to reference the pair's final night of love-making after the nymph concedes defeat and is forced to let Ulysses go.

In the third stanza Calypso makes a case for herself as wife and lover, as she does in *The Odyssey*. She focuses more overtly on her sensuality, knowing the mortal Penelope to be no competition for the beauty and talents of the goddess. It is important to keep in mind that Ulysses ended up on the nymph's island because she rescued him from a watery death, protecting him in the safety of her grotto for years to come, and yet he proves himself ungrateful. He remains a mystery to her, a stranger, for she is unable to comprehend the protagonist's rationale for passing up immortality in favor of returning to a land plagued by chaos and hardship and a woman far inferior to her in every apparent way.

Calypso does not succeed in staving off time, and the moment comes for Ulysses to leave. She believes she is left with nothing, and the once defiant goddess recedes into the shadows of absence. The poet ends the sonnet with that which Calypso wishes she were, i.e., that which she is not (12). If only she were like Ulysses, compared to a lion several times in Homer's text (73, 105, 256, 331). If only she were a man, able to engage and disengage with a lover without experiencing the profound sense of loss that plagues her. In her longing to be a tree, "inmòbil en son furor retort," one might find echoes of another aforementioned well-known nymph who escaped her own romantic dilemma by transforming into a laurel. Yet, unlike Daphne, Calypso receives no such help from the gods. The more obvious allusion found in the olive tree, of course, is to the marriage bed of Ulysses and Penelope, responsible for the couple's ultimate reunion and a symbol of the steadfastness of their love and their unbreakable bond. In short, Calypso cannot compete. Instead she is left with a scorpion in her heart to remind her of the pain, resentment, and disillusionment that accompany her loss.

Having dealt with the vanquished, Rodoreda moves on to the supposed victor in the dispute over who merits the love of an epic hero: Penelope. While it may be tempting to revert to the tidy triangular analogy that Mohino i Balet delineates of Ulysses as Obiols, his wife as Penelope, and Rodoreda as Calypso (19–20), such an interpretation is reductive, and the reality of Rodoreda's poetry is much more layered. In addition, if one were to engage in looking to the poet's personal life to provide an entrance into the poem called "Penèlope," the year and half that Obiols spent separated from Rodoreda after World War II, having been forced into a work camp, could be taken into account and would thus blur the lines of the traditional love triangle. Regardless, as Kathryn Everly confirms, the author is concerned with "dismantling monolithic discourse..., embracing the possibility of multiple histories by retelling canonical tales, inserting a female point of view into historical discourse, and rewriting previously unchallenged



stereotypes" (18). It is clear that Rodoreda, like Natàlia from Roig's *L'hora violeta*, is dissatisfied with the Homeric categories of female abstractions. The problematization of the character of Odysseus's long-suffering wife, as another intensely personal experience of absence, further challenges the limitation of the roles laid out by the patriarchy:

Penèlope

Em compta el temps la marinada amarga,  
la mar amb son abominable crit!  
La mel dintre la gerra s'ha espessit  
i els brots que vas deixar fan ombra llarga.

Oh xaragall lluent! La seda blanca  
serà la lluna de la meva nit;  
l'arbre caírat, capçal del nostre llit,  
estén encar un pensament de branca.

Esquerpa, sola tota fel i espina,  
faig i desfaig l'absurda teranyina,  
aranya al-lucinada del no-res.

Un deix d'amor arran de llavi puja  
i mor com una llàgrima de pluja  
al viu del darrer pètal que ha malmès. (*Agonia* 84)

Perhaps the most immediate difference between the two tales of loss is found in the title. Unlike her goddess counterpart, Ulysses's wife does not lament anything outright. As opposed to openly bemoaning her alienation, Penelope's protest is subtler, quieter. While we do locate a bitterness reminiscent of Calypso's, in this case overtly mentioned in the opening line, the poem lacks the initial strong presence of the female subject. Rodoreda initiates the poem with the woman as (indirect) object ("Em compta"), and it is not Penelope who is bitter, but rather the sea breeze. Penelope is not the one doing the crying, as is Calypso; rather, it is the sea. The poet chooses not to have Ulysses's spouse directly describe the effect of his absence on her. Instead she reverts to images of the hearth, implicitly an extension of the wife. She mentions what has become of the honey in the jar. While the nectar of the goddess does not expire, Penelope's is showing its age, a metaphor for her waning sexuality. The conversion of the buds her husband once planted into full-grown trees marks the passage of time. It alludes, as well, to the couple's son Telemachus, who has reached adulthood in his father's absence, the result of which is the shadow of Penelope's impending remarriage. Alongside the repressed resentment in the poem, we find hints of nostalgia absent in Calypso's version.



The bed that causes the nymph such anguish is a source of comfort for the wife, despite the fact that she has to sleep in it alone.

Whereas Calypso's lament starts out strong and gradually fades away into nothingness, Penelope gains momentum as the poem goes on, and a presence emerges. For example, while the repeated "jo" drops out of Calypso's lament, in contrast, Penelope goes from object to subject, revealing herself as "jo" in the third stanza. It is in her growing resentment that she finds herself and defines herself. Similarly to Calypso, Penelope sees herself in terms of absence. She recognizes the futility of the attempt at agency comprised of the repeated weaving and unweaving of the burial shroud.<sup>7</sup> As Gilbert and Gubar point out, "Ariadne, Penelope and...[other] women have used their loom, thread and needles both to defend themselves and silently to speak of themselves" (642), and the image presented of this in the third stanza is perhaps the most striking in the poem. By calling herself "aranya al·lucinada del no-res," Rodoreda's Penelope shares a commonality with Calypso in that her existence seemingly depends on Ulysses. Without him, she is nothing, a non-being, an absence to his presence, bringing to mind the contention of Simone de Beauvoir that woman is socially constructed as inessential. This image is furthered by another that once again recalls the lament of Calypso, with the aftertaste ("deix") aligned with the nymph as "allò que es deixa." Penelope too expresses her disillusionment with her lack of existence, and her retreat into nostalgia is not enough to sustain her. The last line of the poem expresses as much, for while there may still be a trace of a love long gone to remind her why she spends her life waiting, that trace ultimately vanishes and the reader is left with an image, once again, of a ruined woman.

Though these reimagined women proclaim that they are left nothing, the reader, on the other hand, is left with the testimony of those who refuse to be forgotten. In *Món d'Ulisses*, Mercè Rodoreda deconstructs the traditional female myths, problematizing the stereotypically sensual nymph and patient wife. She blurs the lines between seductress and spouse, thus breaking down the long-established categories of the feminine. In the end, despite Calypso's and Penelope's claim of non-being, of non-existence, the "Là je n'est: There I, a subject, is not" (166) of Cixous and Clément's *Newly Born Woman* (*La Jeune Née*), the poems themselves constitute a new version of the epic, one comprised of individual female expressions of the anger, bitterness, and loss that accompany their metaphorical exile.

While Homer's Ulysses mentions an encounter with Ariadne in

<sup>7</sup> This covert and subversive feat brings to mind Natàlia's silent act of protest when she violently shakes her husband's pigeon eggs in *La plaça del diamant*.

the underworld on his journey back to Ithaca,<sup>8</sup> Rodoreda focuses on the better-known version of the Ariadne myth in which the goddess's fate resembles that of her aforementioned Mediterranean sisters. In this account, Ariadne gives Theseus the key he will need to escape the famed labyrinth after he kills her half-brother, in exchange for a promise from Theseus that he will take her away from Crete and make her his wife; however, after fleeing with her to the island of Naxos, Theseus deserts Ariadne while she sleeps. Though in the traditional myth, mention is made of King Minos's daughter abandoning herself to sorrow, Rodoreda fleshes out the psyche of the woman scorned:

Submarina claror, nit breu, esquinc de seda,  
genio fugaç i somnis, neu dura de les dents,  
el sol neix desesmat i et taca la mà freda,  
l'alba espadada encela els òpals defallents.

Set àngels i set roses i set estrelles blanques  
vetllaran, trist amor, el teu son enllacat;  
per retrobar més purs els cànids ulls que tanques  
sagnant de tu suscitò el dolç fantasma amat.

I quan vindràs al fons de la cova encisada  
on l'aigua acerba crema l'arrel més obstinada,  
el serpent adormit en el llot del meu cor,

madeixa que embullà l'ungla ardent de la ira,  
pel laberint llacós de la innombrable espiga  
ablamarà els magentes i els verds pigallats d'or. (*Agonia* 146)

In her essay "Sorties," Cixous singles out Ariadne, "the anti-Ulysses," for "advancing into emptiness, into the unknown...She takes her leap without a line" (75); Cixous recalls, referring to her flight from Crete to be with the man with whom she fell in love at first sight, the man for whom she gave up her home and her family. Yet soon Ariadne wishes she had a line after all, the one she gave to the man who would betray her. In the poem above, time and place fold in on themselves through surreal imagery that underscores the mindset of the devastated princess. Ariadne is experiencing the paradoxical "submarine clarity" reflective of the somnolent state in which she finds herself when she realizes Theseus has abandoned her in the night. She is brought back immediately to pulling of silk, "esquinc de seda" (1),

8 "I saw...Ariadne, the beautiful daughter of malignant Minos. Theseus at one time was bringing her from Crete to the high ground of sacred Athens, but got no joy of her, since before that Artemis killed her in sea-washed Dia, when Dionysos bore witness against her" (176).

representative of her lover's lifeline. He is alive, after all, thanks to Ariadne's ingenuity by way of the silk thread she supplied him to protect him from the fate of those who had come before. Yet whereas she enabled him to escape the labyrinth, now he has escaped her, the "fleeting knee" (2) of the first line referencing his flight as well as reminding Ariadne of the brevity of her dreams of happiness.

In the second stanza, the repetition of the number seven calls to mind the seven young men and maidens whom Minos picked each year to release weaponless into the labyrinth and sacrifice to the Minotaur, that is until Theseus put a stop to the ritual; thus now they watch over him, his sleep disturbed presumably as a result of his deception of Ariadne. Yet, for the moment she expresses no apparent ill will against the man who left her, focusing instead on trying to conjure up his memory. It seems she is slowly dying of a broken heart, bleeding in fact, having given herself up to grief—very much in line with the traditional legend.

An abrupt change takes place in the poem's tercets, however, for while up until now Ariadne has manifested her pain through a sorrow almost sweet in nature, here she reveals a rage unrepresented in the classical myth. She imagines an alternate scenario in which her lover will return to her, and she declares that he will do so in fact, with sexualized imagery not unlike that of Calypso's grotto, in addition to recalling the labyrinth that defined Theseus's existence. Whereas water is traditionally the giver of life, it now takes it away (10), warning her lost love of the fate that awaits him.

At the heart of Ariadne's interiorized labyrinth is a snake previously stifled by the thread that was her undoing. Theseus will not be able to escape this labyrinth so easily; Ariadne's version is, after all, "of the unnameable spark" (13). Kathleen Glenn reminds us that "men traditionally have assumed that they have a God-given right to bestow names—as when Quimet tells Natália that she can only be called Colometa—and in doing so may be equivalent to taking possession" (110). By declaring the spark within her unable to be named, Ariadne rejects Theseus's adamic possession of her. The implication is that the princess has come to situate herself outside the realm of the patriarchy, with the difficulty of representation manifesting itself in the flashes of colors (magenta, green, gold) in the final line of the poem.

Describing the concept of temporality as it relates to female subjectivity, Kristeva explains "women's time" as a "cosmic time, [that] occasion[s] vertiginous visions and unnameable *jouissance*...[a time] all-encompassing and infinite in imaginary space" (190). While here there is no joy in Ariadne's *jouissance*, in the spark that sets her apart, the term goes far beyond the sexual to incorporate the idea of "total access, total participation" (*The Newly Born Woman* 165), as Betsy



Wing puts it. In this sense, for Ariadne, the time, her time, has come for female self-expression, to take back the thread for herself, one yet to be fully defined.

In "Sorties," the title of which is felicitous for its relevance to the story of Ariadne, Cixous describes Theseus's life as memorialized by Plutarch: "A triumphant career is woven: the crossing of feminine bodies with the thread of a pitiless soul, and a huge territory is accumulated as he passes from woman to woman, ...hecatombs of numberless, loving women" (76). Such an assertion could also easily be used to describe the life of the man who colonizes woman after woman in *The Odyssey*. Yet the common thread Rodoreda weaves for Ariadne, Calypso, Penelope, and other Odyssean female character is one of self-representation; by singling out these iconic and formerly abstract women to tell their own stories of alienation and suffering, Rodoreda gives them a face and a voice, and thus prevents them from fading into nothingness.

Signing off on a letter to another Catalan exile, Josep Carner, Armand Obiols writes in 1948, referring to Rodoreda, "*What shall Cordelia do? Love and be silent?*" (*Agonia* 241). Here the poet's lover includes the line from Shakespeare's *King Lear*, linking her with the king's virtuous and tragic daughter of the play. It is revealing that Obiols, probably unwittingly, misquotes the famous verse, changing it from the decisive statement that appears in the play (i.e. "Love and be silent.") into a question, for it allows us to the answer the question with a resounding *no*. Rodoreda does not remain silent, the cause of death of the heroine in the Shakespearean work. On the contrary, by reevaluating and revising classical myths of the feminine she challenges the traditional suppression of women's voices by the patriarchy, crying out on their behalf.

NICOLE ALTAMIRANO

CLAREMONT MCKENNA COLLEGE

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