

DOSSIER LITERARI



WILLA CATHER 2023

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1. LA MEVA ÀNTONIA

Cap a finals d'agost els Cutter anaren uns quants dies a Omaha i deixaren l'Àntonia encarregada de la casa. Des de l'escàndol de la noia sueca, en Wick Cutter no aconseguia mai que la seva dona sortís de Black Hawk sense ell.

L'endemà que els Cutter se n'anessin, l'Àntonia va venir a veure'ns. L'àvia s'adonà que semblava amoïnada i torbada.

—Tens alguna cosa al cap, Àntonia —digué ansiosament.

—Sí, senyora Burden. No vaig poder dormir gaire ahir a la nit. —Dubtà, i després ens explicà l'estrany capteniment del senyor Cutter abans d'anar-se'n. Havia posat tota la plata en una cistella i l'havia col·locada sota el llit, amb una capsa de papers que li va dir que eren molt valuosos. Li feu prometre que, mentre ell fos fora, no dormiria fora de casa ni sortiria al vespre fins tard. Li va prohibir estrictament demanar a cap de les noies que coneixia que es quedessin a passar la nit amb ella. Ella estaria perfectament segura, va dir, perquè justament havia instal·lat un pany Yale nou a la porta principal.

En Cutter havia estat tan insistent en aquests detalls que ara estava neguitosa si es quedava allí sola. No li havia agradat la manera com tornava a entrar a la cuina a donar-li instruccions ni com la mirava.

—Tinc la sensació que ja torna a provar de fer de les seves i que intentarà espantar-me no sé com.

L'àvia es posà neguitosa de seguida.

—No crec que sigui bo que t'hi quedis, si et sents així. Suposo que tampoc seria escaient que deixessis el lloc abandonat, després de donar la teva paraula. Potser en Jim estaria disposat a anar-hi a dormir i tu podries venir aquí a passar les nits. Jo em sentiria més segura, sabent que ets sota el meu sostre. Em sembla que en Jim podria vigilar la plata i les factures velles d'usurer tan bé com tu.

L'Àntonia es va girar cap a mi impacient.

—Ei, ¿ho faries, Jim? Et faria el meu llit per a tu. És una cambra molt bonica i el llit és ben bé al costat de la finestra. Jo ahir a la nit tenia por de deixar la finestra oberta.

M'agradava el meu dormitori i no m'agradava la casa dels Cutter en cap circumstància; però la Tony semblava tan amoïnada que vaig consentir a provar-ho. Vaig descobrir que allí dormia tan bé com a qualsevol lloc i, quan al matí vaig arribar a casa, la Tony em tenia un bon esmorzar esperant-me. Després de les pregàries s'assegué a taula amb nosaltres i era com en els vells temps al camp.

La tercera nit que vaig passar a cals Cutter em vaig despertar de sobte amb la impressió que havia sentit obrir i tancar una porta. Però tot estava en silenci i devia tornar a adormir-me immediatament.

El següent que vaig notar era que algú s'asseia a l'espona del llit. Només estava mig despert, però vaig decidir que podia agafar la plata dels Cutter, fos qui fos. Potser si jo no em movia, ho trobaria i sortiria sense molestar-me. Vaig retenir l'alè i vaig estar-me absolutament immòbil. Una mà es tancà delicadament sobre la meva espatlla i al mateix moment vaig sentir alguna cosa peluda i perfumada de colònia fregant-me la cara. Si l'habitació s'hagués inundat de sobte de llum elèctrica, no podria haver vist més clarament el detestable rostre barbut que sabia que s'inclinava damunt meu.

(Willa Cather. *La meva Àntonia*. Vic: 2012. Llibre 2, cap. XV. Trad. inèdita: Miquel Casacuberta)

Versió original

MY ÁNTONIA

Late in August the Cutters went to Omaha for a few days, leaving Antonia in charge of the house. Since the scandal about the Swedish girl, Wick Cutter could never get his wife to stir out of Black Hawk without him.

The day after the Cutters left, Antonia came over to see us. Grandmother noticed that she seemed troubled and distracted. "You've got something on your mind, Antonia," she said anxiously.

"Yes, Mrs. Burden. I couldn't sleep much last night." She hesitated, and then told us how strangely Mr. Cutter had behaved before he went away. He put all the silver in a basket and placed it under her bed, and with it a box of papers which he told her were valuable. He made her promise that she would not sleep away from the house, or be out late in the evening, while he was gone. He strictly forbade her to ask any of the girls she knew to stay with her at night. She would be perfectly safe, he said, as he had just put a new Yale lock on the front door.

Cutter had been so insistent in regard to these details that now she felt uncomfortable about staying there alone. She hadn't liked the way he kept coming into the kitchen to instruct her, or the way he looked at her. "I feel as if he is up to some of his tricks again, and is going to try to scare me, somehow."

Grandmother was apprehensive at once. "I don't think it's right for you to stay there, feeling that way. I suppose it wouldn't be right for you to leave the place alone, either, after giving your word. Maybe Jim would be willing to go over there and sleep, and you could come here nights. I'd feel safer, knowing you were under my own roof. I guess Jim could take care of their silver and old usury notes as well as you could."

Antonia turned to me eagerly. "Oh, would you, Jim? I'd make up my bed nice and fresh for you. It's a real cool room, and the bed's right next the window. I was afraid to leave the window open last night."

I liked my own room, and I didn't like the Cutters' house under any circumstances; but Tony looked so troubled that I consented to try this arrangement. I found that I slept there as well as anywhere, and when I got home in the morning, Tony had a good breakfast waiting for me. After prayers she sat down at the table with us, and it was like old times in the country.

The third night I spent at the Cutters', I awoke suddenly with the impression that I had heard a door open and shut. Everything was still, however, and I must have gone to sleep again immediately.

The next thing I knew, I felt someone sit down on the edge of the bed. I was only half awake, but I decided that he might take the Cutters' silver, whoever he was. Perhaps if I did not move, he would find it and get out without troubling me. I held my breath and lay absolutely still. A hand closed softly on my shoulder, and at the same moment I felt something hairy and cologne-scented brushing my face. If the room had suddenly been flooded with electric light, I couldn't have seen more clearly the detestable bearded countenance that I knew was bending over me.

(Willa Cather. *My Ántonia*. Mineola (NY): Dover, 2011 [1918]. Book 2, chpt. XV)

2. LA MORT S'ADREÇA A L'ARQUEBISBE

El bisbe sentí una ràpida guspira de satisfacció en mirar-se aquell home. Allí dret, amb la seva vestimenta de pells, transmetia la sensació d'uns principis morals, d'unes lleialtats, d'un codi que no és gens fàcil de traduir en paraules però que es percep a l'instant quan dos homes que el segueixen ensopeguen per casualitat. Prengué la mà de l'explorador.

–Feia molt de temps que desitjava conèixer Kit Carson –va dir–, fins i tot des d'abans de venir a Nou Mèxic. He estat esperant que em vinguéssiu a fer una visita a Santa Fe.

L'altre va somriure.

–Jo soc molt apocat, senyor, i sempre tinc por d'endur-me'n un desengany. Però em fa l'efecte que a partir d'ara tot anirà prou bé.

Això va ser el principi d'una llarga amistat.

En el viatge cap al ranxo de Carson, Magdalena fou confiada a la custòdia del pare Vaillant, i el bisbe i l'explorador cavalcaven plegats. Carson va dir que s'havia convertit al catolicisme per una qüestió purament formal, com feien habitualment els americans que es casaven amb noies mexicanes. La seva esposa era una bona dona, i molt devota; però a ell la religió li havia semblat sempre més aviat cosa de dones, fins al darrer viatge a Califòrnia. Hi havia caigut malalt, i els capellans d'una de les missions van tenir cura d'ell.

–Vaig començar a veure les coses amb uns altres ulls, i vaig pensar que algun dia potser arribaria a convertir-me en un catòlic de debò. A mi em van educar amb la creença que els capellans eren tots uns bergants i les monges unes males dones: són les coses que expliquen allà a Missouri. Bona part dels capellans nadius d'aquí confirmen aquestes històries. El nostre *padre* Martínez de Taos és el vell més poca-vergonya que hi hagi hagut mai; té fills i nets escampats per gairebé tots els poblats de per aquí. I el *padre* Lucero d'Arroyo Hondo és un escanyapobres: la pobra gent li han de donar tot el que tenen per poder rebre sepultura cristiana.

(Willa Cather. *La mort s'adreça a l'arquebisbe*. Barcelona: Proa, 1985. Llibre 2, cap. II, p. 72-73. Trad.: Joan Sellent Arús)

Versió original

DEATH COMES FOR THE ARCHBISHOP

The Bishop felt a quick glow of pleasure in looking at the man. As he stood there in his buckskin clothes one felt in him standards, loyalties, a code which is not easily put into words, but which is instantly felt when two men who live by it come together by chance. He took the scout's hand. "I have long wanted to meet Kit Carson," he said, "even before I came to New Mexico. I have been hoping you would pay me a visit at Santa Fé."

The other smiled. "I'm right shy, sir, and I'm always afraid of being disappointed. But I guess it will be all right from now on."

This was the beginning of a long friendship.

On their ride back to Carson's ranch, Magdalena was put in Father Vaillant's care, and the Bishop and the scout rode together. Carson said he had become a Catholic merely as a matter of form, as Americans usually did when they married a Mexican girl. His wife was a good woman and very devout; but religion had seemed to him pretty much a woman's affair until his last trip to California. He had been sick out there, and the Fathers at one of the missions took care of him. "I began to see things different, and thought I might some day be a Catholic in earnest. I was brought up to think priests were rascals, and that the nuns were bad women—all the stuff they talk back in Missouri. A good many of the native priests here bear out that story. Our Padre Martinez, at Taos is an old scapegrace, if ever there was one; he's got children and grandchildren in almost every settlement around here. And Padre Lucero at Arroyo Hondo is a miser, takes everything a poor man's got to give him a Christian burial."

(Willa Cather. *Death comes for the archbishop*. London: William Heinemann, 1927. Book 2, chapter XV)

3. EL MEU ENEMIC MORTAL

Una càlida tarda de dissabte, a principis d'abril, vam anar a passejar per la costa. Havia llogat un carruatge baix amb un cotxer negre molt amable. Sostinguda amb el seu braç i el meu, la senyora Henshawe va aconseguir arribar al carrer. Semblava molt més vella i malalta amb l'abric negre de drap i el barret negre de tafetà, que en altre temps havien estat elegants. Ens vam emportar les seves pells i una manta de viatge vella. Era un dia de primavera preciós i temperat. Malauradament, el camí s'allunyava del mar entre corbes. A la fi vam arribar a un promontori pelat que tenia un sol arbre, vell i retorçat, amb el mar que quedava sota nostre.

—Oh, Nellie! —va exclamar—, és com el penya-segat d'*El rei Lear*, el penya-segat de Gloucester, ben bé igual! ¿No ens podem quedar aquí? Estic segura que aquest amable senyor de pell fosca em podrà col·locar sota aquell arbre d'allà i venir a buscar-nos més tard.

(Willa Cather. *El meu enemic mortal*. Barcelona: Edicions de 1984, 2012. Part 2, cap. II, p. 85-86. Trad.: Laura Baena García)

Versió original

MY MORTAL ENEMY

One warm Saturday afternoon, early in April, we went for a drive along the shore. I had hired a low carriage with a kindly Negro driver. Supported on his arm and mine, Mrs. Henshawe managed to get downstairs. She looked much older and more ill in her black broadcloth coat and a black taffeta hat that had once been smart. We took with us her furs and an old steamer blanket. It was a beautiful, soft spring day. The road, unfortunately, kept winding away from the sea. At last we came out on a bare headland, with only one old twisted tree upon it, and the sea beneath.

"Why, Nellie!" she exclaimed, "it's like the cliff in *Lear*, Gloucester's cliff, so it is! Can't we stay here? I believe this nice darkey man would fix me up under the tree there and come back for us later."

(Willa Cather. *My mortal enemy*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1926. Part 2, chapter II)

4. EL PONT D'ALEXANDER

— ¡Que n'és, d'interessant, això que diu! Ponts amb el futur... sovint m'ho dic a mi mateixa. És així com els veig sempre, els ponts d'en Bartley. ¿L'ha vist, el primer pont suspès que construïa al Canadà quan vaig començar a tractar-lo? M'agradaria que algun dia el veiés. Ens vam casar just quan l'havia enllestit i, rigui-se'n si vol, per a mi aquell pont sempre tindrà alguna cosa de nupcial. Travessa el més salvatge dels rius, sempre emboirat i ennuvolat, i tanmateix és delicat com una teranyina penjada del cel. Era realment un pont amb el futur. No cal sinó mirar-lo per adonar-se que va representar el començament d'una gran carrera. Però n'he de tenir una foto. —Va treure una carpeta de darrere d'uns prestatges amb llibres—. Aquí, miri, al turó hi ha la casa de la tieta.

En Wilson agafà la foto.

—En Bartley em va explicar coses de la seva tieta ahir a la nit. Devia ser una persona remarcable.

La Winifred va riure.

—El pont, com pot veure, era gairebé al peu del turó. El terrabastall de les màquines al principi l'amoïnava molt. Però després de conèixer en Bartley va pretendre que li resultava agradable i deia que era bo que et recordin que hi ha coses en marxa al món.

(Willa Cather. *El pont d'Alexander*. Barcelona: Cal Carré, 2021. Cap. 2 p. 22.
Trad.: Núria Sales)

Versió original

ALEXANDER'S BRIDGE

“How interested I am to hear you put it in that way. The bridges into the future—I often say that to myself. Bartley’s bridges always seem to me like that. Have you ever seen his first suspension bridge in Canada, the one he was doing when I first knew him? I hope you will see it sometime. We were married as soon as it was finished, and you will laugh when I tell you that it always has a rather bridal look to me. It is over the wildest river, with mists and clouds always battling about it, and it is as delicate as a cobweb hanging in the sky. It really was a bridge into the future. You have only to look at it to feel that it meant the beginning of a great career. But I have a photograph of it here.” She drew a portfolio from behind a bookcase. “And there, you see, on the hill, is my aunt’s house.”

Wilson took up the photograph. “Bartley was telling me something about your aunt last night. She must have been a delightful person.”

Winifred laughed. “The bridge, you see, was just at the foot of the hill, and the noise of the engines annoyed her very much at first. But after she met Bartley she pretended to like it, and said it was a good thing to be reminded that there were things going on in the world.

(Willa Cather. *Alexander's Bridge*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1912. Chapter II)

5. EL CAS D'EN PAUL

Els seus professors van creure, aquella tarda, que la seva actitud estava simbolitzada en el seu arronsament d'espatlles i el bellugadís clavell roig, i van escometre'l sense pietat. Es va palplantar al seu davant, somrient, els llavis pàl·lids entreoberts damunt les seves dents blanques. (Movia el llavis contínuament i tenia el costum d'alçar les celles, la qual cosa era altiva i alhora summament irritant.) Nois més grans que en Paul haurien desistit i haurien vessat llàgrimes sota aquell bateig de foc, però el seu somriure no va abandonar-lo ni una sola vegada i el seu únic senyal de malestar era el tremolor neguitós dels dits, que jugaven amb els botons de l'abric, i alguna sacsejada ocasional de l'altra mà, amb què sostenia el barret. En Paul sempre somreia, mirava sempre al seu voltant, com si li semblés que la gent l'estigués observant i intentés de detectar alguna cosa. Aquesta expressió conscient, atès que era tan allunyada de l'alegria infantil, normalment era atribuïda a la seva insolència o "perspicàcia".

Mentre l'interrogatori avançava, una de les seves professores va repetir una observació impertinent del noi, i el director li va preguntar si creia que era una manera educada de dirigir-se a una dona. En Paul va arronsar lleugerament les espatlles i va contraure les celles.

"No ho sé", va respondre. "No volia ser educat ni tampoc descortès. Suposo que és la manera que tinc de dir les coses, amb llibertat".

El director, que era un home comprensiu, li va preguntar si no pensava que era millor canviar aquesta manera de fer. En Paul va somriure i va respondre que potser sí. Quan li van dir que podia marxar, es va inclinar amb gràcia i se n'anà. La reverència no era més que una redundància de l'escandalós clavell vermell.

(Willa Cather. *El cas d'en Paul. Un estudi del temperament*. Trad.: JLY. AIDA)

Versió original

PAUL'S CASE

His teachers felt, this afternoon, that his whole attitude was symbolized by his shrug and his flippantly red carnation flower, and they fell upon him without mercy. He stood through it, smiling, his pale lips parted over his white teeth. (His lips were continually twitching, and he had a habit of raising his eyebrows that was contemptuous and irritating to the last degree.) Older boys than Paul had broken down and shed tears under that baptism of fire, but his set smile did not once desert him, and his only sign of discomfort was the nervous trembling of the fingers that toyed with the buttons of his overcoat, and an occasional jerking of the other hand that held his hat. Paul was always smiling, always glancing about him, seeming to feel that people might be watching him and trying to detect something. This conscious expression, since it was as far as possible from boyish mirthfulness, was usually attributed to insolence or "smartness."

As the inquisition proceeded, one of his instructors repeated an impertinent remark of the boy's, and the principal asked him whether he thought that a courteous speech to have made a woman. Paul shrugged his shoulders slightly and his eyebrows twitched.

"I don't know," he replied. "I didn't mean to be polite, or impolite, either. I guess it's a sort of way I have of saying things, regardless."

The principal, who was a sympathetic man, asked him whether he didn't think that a way it would be well to get rid of. Paul grinned and said he guessed so. When he was told that he could go, he bowed gracefully and went out. His bow was but a repetition of the scandalous red carnation.

(Willa Sibert Cather. "Paul's case. A study in temperament". *McClure's Magazine*, 25. May 1905, p. 74-75)