

ANALYSIS

“Virgin Violeta” (1924)

Katherine Anne Porter

(1890-1980)

“‘Virgin Violeta’ is a more successful story [than “The Martyr”], largely because Miss Porter is more concerned with the characters and because her descriptions are more vivid and her meaning more evident. The title is particularly useful in understanding the story.... Her titles ‘almost invariably summarize symbolically the state of affairs she deals with in her story.’

Violeta (the color violet is emblematic of gravity and chastity), a fifteen-year-old Mexican girl of good family who has been carefully sheltered by family and by the Sisters of the convent, sat listening to her cousin Carlos and her sister Blanca read poetry. Violeta was painfully aware of her shyness and of her unattractive clothes, and jealous of her more elegantly dressed, more experienced sister, Bianca, reading the poem, ‘This torment of love which is in my heart: / I know that I suffer it, but I do not know why,’ seemed anxious to keep the lines for herself, lines which underscore Violeta’s emotions; for she is tormented by love for Carlos.

In a religious picture hanging over Violeta’s head, the Virgin ‘with enameled face set in a detached simper, forehead bald of eyebrows, extended one hand remotely over the tonsured head of the saint, who groveled in a wooden posture of ecstasy.’ Before his final conversion, Loyola would spend hours thinking of ways to win the favors of a lady, followed by the intense periods of spiritual desires. During a vision he saw the Virgin and Son and felt loathing for all his former carnal desires and vowed never again to yield to them. Carlos stared at the picture, and Violeta noted his ‘furry, golden eyebrows,’ his beautiful mouth and chin. Mamacita, like a drowsy cat roused from her sleep, reminded Carlos that he must depart at a reasonable hour; and then she ‘relapsed into a shallow nap, as a cat rises from the rug, turns, and lies down again.

Violeta watched the two readers with ‘no native wisdom,’ for at the convent she was taught ‘modesty, chastity, silence, obedience’ and a smattering of French, music, and arithmetic. She saw her life beginning in the future, unrolling ‘like a long gay carpet for her to walk upon.’ The carpet makes her think of a wedding, of coming from the church; but she does not visualize a bridegroom. As befits a virgin, she immediately reminds herself that she did not mean a wedding, she was thinking of a festival; she wants to read about life and love, to be free to read Carlos’ poetry without hindrance, without hiding the poems in her missal. One particular poem appealed to her schoolgirl-romantic notions, a poem about ‘the ghosts of nuns returning to the old square before their ruined convent, dancing in the moonlight with the shades of lovers forbidden them in life; treading with bared feet on broken glass as a penance for their loves.’ Violeta, dreaming of life, thought the poem was written for her, that she was one of the nuns; for her notion of love is an idealization of the sacred love of the Virgin.

She saw Carlos through tear-filled eyes, and his face appeared soft, as if he had tears on his cheeks. She felt as she often did in church, ‘enclosed in a cage too small.’ Silently confessing her love for Carlos, she blushed and prayed to the Virgin. When Carlos went with her to search for his new volume of poetry, she was frightened by the sound of his walk, and stopped in the nun room, in the moonlight. His hand touched her; she saw his eyebrows hover and swoop as he kissed her. She drew away, and Carlos put his hand over her mouth to keep her from calling out. She felt intensely ill for this was not love as she had dreamed it. She threatened to tell her mother, but he insisted it was only a brotherly kiss. She felt she had made a mistake, blushed, and said ‘I thought—a kiss—meant—meant--’ But Carlos could not help her, merely said she was young ‘like a little new-born calf.’ They returned to the others, but Violeta felt her shame, felt she had acted immodestly. The conflict in her mind over the meaning of love was preordained by her sheltered home life and by the teachings of the nuns. Carlos as worldly Loyola was not part of her immature dream.

Blanca had found the book, and Violeta's reactions demonstrate Miss Porter's great indebtedness to Joyce's *Dubliners*: 'Violeta wished to cry in real earnest now. It was the last blow that Blanca should have found the book. A kiss meant nothing at all, and Carlos had walked away as if he had forgotten her. It was all mixed up with the white rivers of moonlight and the smell of warm fruit and a cold dampness on her lips that made a tiny smacking sound. She trembled and leaned over until her forehead touched manacita's lap. She could not look up, ever, ever again.'

Carlos, planning a trip to Paris, kissed Blanca as he was leaving; and then, as his mouth swooped to kiss Violeta, she saw only his macaw-like eyes and screamed uncontrollably. Later, manacita tried to be comforting, but Violeta's world had 'melted together in a confusion and misery that could not be explained, because it was all changed and uncertain.' She could not read Carlos's poetry that summer, she even drew caricatures of him, and she quarreled on more equal terms with her sister. She could not settle the question which was in her mind; and, when she had to return to the convent in the fall, she wept and complained, for, she declared, there was 'nothing to be learned there.'

Violeta is in her sensitivity a prototype of the character of Miranda, and in her shyness she is a prototype of Elsa, the plain Swiss girl in *Ship of Fools*, who, paralyzed with fear, cannot dance with the Cuban student. The controlled images such as the furry eyebrows, the drowsing cat-like mother, the young lovers observed by the inexperienced waiting-to-be, afraid-to-be-loved Violeta, the emblematic picture of the Virgin and the groveling Loyola, and the tension in the closed room are subtly intermingled."

George Hendrick
Katherine Anne Porter
(Twayne 1965) 36-38

"On her first visit to Mexico City she had met the Nicaraguan poet Saloman de la Selva, and had listened with disgust to his story of the mean and deliberate seduction of a young girl. As with 'Maria Concepcion' her final version contained much more than the original story. She drew on her knowledge of the life style of the aristocratic Spanish upper class and the story became another in her series of 'fragments, each touching some phase of a versatile national temperament, which is a complication of simplicities'."

Joan Givner
Katherine Anne Porter: A Life
(Simon and Schuster 1982) 171-72

"This story explores the conditioning necessary to produce a feminine stereotype and illustrates its effect on emerging womanhood.... It is Porter's only attempt to focus on female puberty. In the Miranda stories, published in 1935-1936, Porter created a cycle of initiation stories from early childhood to preadolescence, but *curiously* [?] wrote nothing about the experience many people would think most significant in human growth: the emotional reaction to the first sexual contact with the opposite sex. This early story of Porter's fills that gap.... [There is no "gap": she had already written "Virgin Violeta" (1924) *before* she wrote the Miranda stories. This Feminist critic is so self-centered that she finds Porter's procedure "curious" only because she did not read "Virgin Violeta" until *after* she had read the Miranda stories. The "gap" that is filled here is in her own head.]

Violeta is a romantic idealist who believes she will turn into the swan she wishes to be... One is reminded of Miranda's romantic wish to be like the belles of her family... In addition, Violeta and Miranda both come from societies which revere ideal womanhood and place their women on pedestals. They share a puritanically rigid religious training and convent schooling which they hate. Violeta feels trapped by church and school, as does Miranda... The literal struggle is between Blanca and Violeta for beauty and male attention. On a deeper plane, however, theirs is a struggle between chastity and passion and, ultimately, between woman as sacred object and woman as person. Blanca, the older sister, as her name suggests, the 'white' one, a pale beauty who 'blooms like a lily' and, as she has been taught, 'conducts herself like one.' Dressed in gray with only the yellow embroidery of her shawl to relieve the paleness of her image, Blanca is a porcelain piece set on a shelf. She is to be admired, but not touched....

Her narcissism has reached a point where 'she really didn't think of anything but the way she had her hair fixed or whether people thought she was pretty.' One suspects she values Carlos because his attentions to her affirm her beauty and desirability. Significantly, it is Blanca who is the real virgin in this story, and much of her value lies in her remoteness.... Like the 'enameled' Virgin Mary, Blanca is chaste and pure, a model before which Carlos genuflects. She is also bloodless. In addition, the allusion to Ignatius Loyola invokes the idea of discipline, since he originated the rigorous spiritual exercises practiced by those who followed him. In families like Violeta's, particularly in courtship rituals, discipline is practiced rigidly. Porter's ironic point, of course, is that this rigor was intended for virgins and celibate saints, not for lovers or those who would marry.

In contrast, Violeta has not yet learned to control her emotions; she is passionate, the color of her personality running to violets, at the deepest edges of the spectrum.... Distressed by the thick-soled brown sandals and dark blue clothes she must wear, she longs to dress in bright blue dresses, to have red poppies in her hair, and to dance gaily down the carpet of life in utter disregard of any restraint or restriction.... In many ways, Violeta is a typical adolescent. Extremely self-conscious and emotionally quixotic, she moons about and has romantic daydreams in which she is the sought-after prize who will be claimed by the true prince.... Her simmering sexuality is sublimated into a passionate attachment to Carlos's sentimental love poems, through which she can simultaneously nurture her desire for her prince and her idealized image of love. The trouble with idealized dreams like Violeta's is...they conflict sharply with the reality of the physical world. In fairy tales, the climax in the relationship between the prince and his princess is at best a very asexual kiss....

Her sense of oppression is symbolized in the gaily-colored 'parrots in the markets, stuffed into tiny wicker cages so that they bulged through the withes, gasping and panting, waiting for someone to come and rescue them'.... The huge carpet she sees unrolled before her becomes the ceremonial carpet used for a large wedding service.... The passionate Violeta is not, like Blanca, an enameled virgin. She does, however, see herself as a nun—but a nun who has sinned by loving, after the image in one of Carlos's poems. She takes it to church with her... Her tears are an emotional release from repression of sexual desire that surfaces as she reads about chaste nuns who should not but nevertheless have loved. The titillation inherent in that image of forbidden pleasure for Violeta is only enhanced by her masochistic pleasure in the nuns' punishment: 'Dancing with bare feet / On broken glass in the cobbled street.' She finds the words 'thrilling' and she 'shake[s] all over' when she reads it, finally seeing herself as one of these nuns...

Without ever having sinned sexually, Violeta feels she is guilty, and the story carefully exposes the seeds of repression and guilt that are Violeta's response to the standard of modesty and chastity held up before her. She self-consciously assumes that everyone can see her sexual thoughts... It is easy enough to see that the combination of romantic illusion, repressed sexual energy, a sense of guilt, and a desire for punishment for secret sins sets Violeta up for her disillusioning encounter with Carlos in the climax of the story. Contrary to what Violeta thinks, Carlos is very aware of her burgeoning womanhood. Far from being unconscious of her, he either deliberately avoids looking at Violeta by gazing at the picture of the Virgin or uses it as a ruse to watch her, since the picture hangs over her head.... In a darkened room he kisses her by surprise.... Unfortunately, Carlos's behavior impresses on her the shame rather than the thrill...

She is reminded of Pepe, the macaw, and we are reminded of Violeta's earlier image of herself as a parrot in a confining cage.... It is clear not only that Violeta is caught in a trap, but that she is too weak, both physically and psychologically, to defend herself.... Carlos is male, older, and authoritative. It doesn't occur to her to seize the advantage; she feels complete vulnerability. What she is too narcissistic to recognize is that Carlos has taken advantage of her and will do so again by shifting blame for the situation to her. When she chides him for kissing her, he derides her foolish assumption that he has given her anything other than a 'brotherly kiss,' thus destroying any possibility of her taking pleasure in the thought that he has been attracted to her. He then heaps insult onto her injury with a cruel 'Shame on you, Violeta.' Not only is she not attractive enough for him to desire; if he toys with her, she must bear the blame and the shame to boot. He concludes the damage by becoming cold and overbearing when she expresses her sense of guilt.... In Violeta's world, someone's saying you are an immodest girl is tantamount to being one.

Carlos's assurance that his kiss meant nothing, his derision and the burden of shame he heaps on her leave Violeta unbearably frustrated. When he comes to wish her goodnight, the sight of his face bearing down on her literally forces her to the wall. She screams hysterically, finally releasing her pent-up desire, anxiety, and frustration.... Violeta denies and represses her sexual nature which has left her so vulnerable, even more deeply than before.... She is left with 'brooding' questions and with her major conflict unresolved: her attraction to 'fascinating' young men threatens her modesty, her principal claim to worth... Instead of rescuing her from her cage, Carlos has ruined her self-esteem and destroyed her hope for the future. In the end, she has completely reversed herself; she hates Carlos, his poetry, and the convent altogether, recognizing that there is 'nothing to be learned' in an institution that teaches modesty, chastity, silence, and obedience.... While she fails to see, as Miranda eventually does, that she must be the agent of her own freedom, she has taken the first step toward personal integrity by recognizing sharply that her happiness cannot be invested in another person."

Jane Krause DeMouy
Katherine Anne Porter's Women: The Eye of Her Fiction
(U Texas 1983) 30-36

"'Virgin Violeta' is based on Salomon de la Selva's account of seducing a friend's young daughter. Porter noted, 'Salomon is uneasy because I told a friend of his I detested his attitude toward love and women—"If Salomon met the Virgin Mary, he would introduce himself as the Holy Ghost," I said'."

Thomas F. Walsh
"The Making of 'Flowering Judas'"
Journal of Modern Literature 12 (March 1985) 107-30

"'Virgin Violeta'...grew out of events in the Mexican cultural renaissance, although it anticipates some of the themes to be developed later in the Miranda cycle. In some respects it continues the theme of idealized love that is presented in 'The Martyr.' In this story, however, the conflict is centered within a single character, the adolescent Violeta, and the opposition to idealized love is sensual love, another version of the disparity between truth and appearance....

For the story she drew upon her knowledge of the aristocratic Spanish upper class. While the ironic conflict between the idealized and the sensual remains the most important theme of the story, she presents as secondary themes the disservice of the Catholic Church in fostering an unrealistic view of love, a subject Porter took up in several essays, and the paternalism of the Church and the Mexican society that promotes sexism, a feminist theme much a part of the cultural revolution and one she hinted at in 'Maria Concepcion.' In 'Virgin Violeta' also is an enlargement of animal imagery present in 'The Martyr.'

Violeta, who is a prototype of Miranda and several characters in *Ship of Fools* (as Blanca is the prototype of Miranda's older sister Maria in 'The Old Order' and *Old Mortality*), is nearly fifteen years old and enjoying a romantic, idealized view of love, encouraged by the Church's adulation of the Virgin and fostered by Violeta's reading of her cousin Carlos' sentimental love poems. Violeta imagines a perfect future, a perpetual festival, in which she would be a virgin princess adored by fascinating young men and most of all by Carlos. There is no place for carnality in Violeta's dream, and when she sees hints of it, such as the moisture on Carlos' underlip, she is disturbed without knowing why. She is also disturbed by the sensual playfulness between Blanca and Carlos.

Violeta's ideal is visualized in the painting 'Pious Interview between the Most Holy Virgin Queen of Heaven and Her Faithful Servant St. Ignatius Loyola,' in which the saint grovels before the Virgin in a wooden posture of ecstasy. The conflict within Violeta is between her idealized view of love and her own awakening sensuality, which she represses. She is confused because she cannot understand 'why things that happen outside of people were so different from what she felt inside of her.' Moreover, the 'something inside her' feels as if it is 'enclosed in a cage too small for it,' and it is the Church which is the 'terrible, huge cage' that seems 'too small.'

When Carlos steals a kiss in the sunroom, Violeta is 'sharply hurt, as if she had collided with a chair in the dark' and becomes sick as she always does when she is 'called up to explain things to Mother

Superior.' When Carlos leaves the family gathering and starts to give Violeta a perfunctory goodbye kiss, she screams uncontrollably. Because she cannot 'settle the questions brooding in her mind,' Violeta, like her literary descendant Miranda in *Old Mortality*, rejects both the ideal and the real. She makes ugly caricatures of Carlos and leaves the convent, declaring there is 'nothing to be learned there.'

Porter's use of animal imagery is related to her belief that if one cannot see both similarity to and difference from animals, then a painful unhappiness or utter confusion will result. Violeta's identification of Carlos with cats (he has 'furry golden eyebrows') and birds of prey (he is like a macaw) points out her sensing the animal appeal of Carlos and also the danger he is to her romantic ideal. Violeta herself is described in animal images; Carlos tells her she is young 'like a little newborn calf'; she has 'the silence and watchfulness of a young wild animal, but no native wisdom'; and after her final hysteria, she whimpers 'like a puppy.' But Violeta cannot recognize her animal nature, even when she sees herself before the "loathsome" Carlos, 'almost as if his face were a mirror,' an image Porter will use later. The recognition must be denied, the awakening sensuality repressed and the ideal rejected. The ironic voice vibrates with thematic paradoxes."

Darlene Harbour Unrue
Understanding Katherine Anne Porter
(U South Carolina 1988) 31-34

"'Virgin Violeta' describes erotic awakenings in an adolescent girl. Violeta, almost fifteen years old, is a fragile, lovely flower; a virgin, convent educated, now beginning to blossom into young womanhood. Because 'Virgin Violeta' is more a character sketch than a story, very little happens in the narrative, and Violeta is intended as rather a gentle caricature than a heroine. The charm of this sketch lies in contemplation of Violeta's erotic yearnings which she passionately *feels* but does not quite *understand*. The essential conflict in the narrative is in the mind of Violeta herself; she burns to be ravished, but she is profoundly afraid of sex.

The implied criticism of the Catholic Church and the cult of virginity is kept quietly in the background, as unobtrusive as the 'small painting on the white-paneled wall... 'Pious Interview between the Most Holy Virgin Queen of Heaven and Her Faithful Servant St. Ignatius Loyola'...there was nothing to stare at.' It is altogether fitting that she makes 'ugly caricatures of her cousin Carlos' after her unnerving experience with him (amounting to nothing more than a stolen kiss); she is herself a caricature. The 'violet' virgin, all too close to the 'violated' virgin in our uneasy linguistic consciousness, is framed gently by a master caricaturist. If Porter had been a painter instead of a writer of tales and sketches, this sketch might be called 'Portrait of the Virgin'."

James T. F. Tanner
The Texas Legacy of Katherine Anne Porter
(U North Texas 1991) 139-40

"Porter here establishes a tension between Catholicism and the innate, primitive self... What people do with their primitive urges in a premodern society structured by traditions that openly recognize and indeed celebrate such feelings is one problem; what they do with these emotions in a modern society structured to repress and deny them is quite another.... Those who...embrace these dark forces risk suffering damaging neuroses.... No longer a powerful unifying force within the community, as it was in 'Maria Concepcion,' carnival joy resides in 'Virgin Violeta' merely in falsely romantic daydreams of wonder and beauty. These dreams...are as dangerous and illusory as those structuring modern culture....

Violeta's dilemma centers on her confusion about how to handle her quickly developing feelings of love and desires for romance in light of her strict Catholic education. At the convent she learned 'modesty, chastity, silence, obedience, with a little French and music and some arithmetic,' but such teachings say little about her surging inner life. Violeta thus remains torn and confused 'because she could not understand why the things that happen outside of people were so different from what she felt inside of her....and all the time she was certain there was something simply tremendously exciting waiting for her outside the convent'.... She...lacks...an openness to the 'native wisdom' of her sexuality....

Violeta's emerging desires lead her to dream of a future beyond the confines of the convent when she will be strikingly beautiful and free to do as she pleases. Her dreams express carnival elan. Her new life, she imagines, will be 'like a festival' ... Such carnival joy, she knows, has no place within the convent, and so she feels thwarted by the Church, her secret life imprisoned and stunted.... 'Church was a terrible, huge cage, but it seemed too small.' But if the Church confines her inner life, her 'carnival' dreams distort it, manipulating the generative forces of the self into unrealistic dreams of unending goodness...

Despite her romantic longings for a life outside the Church, Violeta has not denounced Church morality and teachings and indeed is still strongly under their sway....torn by both constraint and longing... From afar Violeta has for some time been secretly smitten with Carlos, her romantic dreams focused on and driven by his youthful beauty and the romantic poetry he writes. When Violeta sees Carlos flirting with Blanca, strong emotions surge within her... She struggles to control her feelings, turning to her Catholic faith for help.... Her feelings of jealousy of her sister and of desire for Carlos still surging, she thinks of clasping her hands over her heart tightly, to quell the slow, burning ache.... When later Carlos, alone with Violeta, flirts with her, taking her hand and kissing her, thus fulfilling her wildest dreams, Violeta cannot respond. In place of romance, Violeta sees in Carlos only lust.... Her shock and discomfort in large part derive from the Church morality that still shapes her perceptions....

After her recovery, Violeta is thoroughly changed. She now understands that both her Catholicism and her youthful romanticism are illusory. Her religious faith represses her inner life while her romantic dreams idealize it. She protests against returning to the convent, declaring that there is 'nothing to be learned there.' Instead of daydreaming happily about Carlos and future romances, as she used to, she now gloomily ponders the nature of life and love, gripped by a disturbing unhappiness... Whatever structure she once had for understanding and accepting her feelings has been destroyed by the explosive forces of her inner self.... Despite her disillusionment and unhappiness, Violeta at the end of the story has in some ways made a significant step toward achieving growth and understanding.... But unlike Maria Concepcion...Violeta achieves neither reconciliation nor happiness. She lacks an enriching community that accepts rather than denies the threatening forces of the self's abyss, and without this community Violeta lives without the means to channel her destructive elements into fruitful and satisfying endeavor.

While still using primitivism as a reference point to judge and analyze, Porter at the same time points to its limits.... The forces of the self here appear more harrowing than nourishing and seem in need of some sort of controlling order [such as Catholicism without illusions].... After her crisis with Carlos, Violeta lacks this sort of control and thus remains unhappy and unsatisfied. For her to achieve wholeness, the story seems to suggest, she must incorporate the insights of primitivism into a larger vision of things acceptable both to the modern world and to the rational mind."

Robert H. Brinkmeyer, Jr.
Katherine Anne Porter's Artistic Development
(Louisiana State 1993) 48-52

"Violeta's awakening sexuality leads her from romantic fantasies of masochistic devotion fed by Carlos's poems, to a terrifying experience of her actual entrapment and victimization within these fantasies.... Violeta, passionate and imaginative, is set against her sister Blanca, whose name suggests both her purity and her docile nullity. Speaking only in whispers and dressed demurely in white, Blanca is one more blank page awaiting the inscription of her male artist/spectator.... Blanca, quiet and obedient, represents passive female identity. She follows the rules of her patriarchal culture. Violeta, by contrast, is unruly, a violator, passionate as purple, speaking out of turn.... On the brink of adolescence, full of ambition and desire, she must be forcibly taught her lack of power and her place.

Violeta has of course already been acculturated to receive this lesson through both the church—she attends a convent school—and literature.... The power of Carlos's text contends with that of the church for Violeta, giving her another version of what it means to be good. The two cultural texts come together in church, when she conceals his poems in her missal, memorizing them during religious service.... Violeta identifies herself with Blanca, the focus and actual passive recipient of Carlos's desire.... [Her] identification with her sister is so complete that she participates in her physical experiences.... For Violeta,

memorizing the poet's text is one with becoming the text. Transformed into the perfect object, she becomes a poem....the perfect image of his desire....

Finally unable to restrain herself, Violeta intimates to Carlos her knowledge of his poems. The confession immediately brings both what she desires and fears, her transformation into an erotic object. When she rises to retrieve his book, the poet follows her down the dark hall... Finally he traps her in the moonlight and kisses her. Although Violeta receives only a kiss, the impact of Carlos's act is equal to a rape; she is, as her name suggests, a virgin violated.... She turns to Carlos expecting 'to sink into a look warm and gentle.' What she confronts instead is the blank gaze of the predator: 'His eyes were bright and shallow... Rather than offering a communion between equals, Carlos seeks to possess and devour.... [His] eyes expose the sadistic desire that underlies his poetry.... Her rapid transformation in the subsequent passages reveal the limitation of her imagination by the texts that have shaped it, as well as Carlos's overt use of those texts to control and punish her for her unruliness, her bold speaking, her apparent desire.... His voice reveals that thinking about her innocence excites him...

Violeta cannot fully understand Carlos's fantasy, the pleasure he takes in imagining her innocence as a blankness, white-washed and eager for inscription. Yet she continues to watch herself as if through his gaze, assuming her cultural position as the one who is looked at and so defined and judged.... Violeta is first astonished by the predatory gleam she finds in Carlos's eye, and then terrified as his words and gaze transform her from 'adorable angel' to 'little whore' or from virgin to 'violated' seductress.... In her own mind, Violeta feels transformed into a round-faced infant by the poet's controlling language and look. To be undesirable, she feels, is to be without value, to not exist, and she suddenly longs 'to run away,' to kill herself.... Carlos enacts a 'misogynist flip' [he hates women?] and again transforms Violeta: 'What did you expect when you came out here alone with me?' he asks, suggesting that she invited the kiss. Suddenly now she sees herself as seductress rather than innocent child—she provoked her own violation.... Violeta is at one moment a sexual innocent and at the next a guilty whore. Her names replicate this polarity, for she is both Virgin and Violated."

Mary Titus

The Ambivalent Art of Katherine Anne Porter
(U Georgia 2005) 59-62, 203

Two of the Feminist critics impose themselves on Violeta much as Carlos does, as predators who take advantage. Like other academic Feminists today, Titus is quick to cry *Rape!*: "Although Violeta receives only a kiss, the impact of Carlos's act is *equal to a rape.*" [Clearly this is a Feminist who has never been raped. Italics added.] These days if Carlos had committed this kiss on an American campus it is likely he would be accused of rape and convicted without due process. Titus says Violeta feels like a "guilty whore." No, what Violeta feels is that "She had behaved like an immodest girl."

Such exaggeration makes the girl sound ridiculous. Violeta exaggerates partly because she is only fifteen years old. Presumably the Feminist critics are somewhat older, yet they are inclined to be just as puritanical about sex as Violeta, for different reasons. Titus seems to be expressing her own revulsion at the idea of being kissed by a man. *Her* hatred of Carlos is expressed in the allegation without evidence that he is "sadistic" and a "misogynist." Titus purports to know him better than Violeta's mother: "Mamacita was wide-awake and smiling, holding Carlos' hands. They kissed."

DeMouy claims that Carlos "has ruined her self-esteem and destroyed her hope for the future." One little kiss? Violeta does not lose her virginity. She is not a melted "snowflake," as pampered Feminist girls are called in the press these days. Her "safe space" is the convent and she hates it. As the story ends, Violeta "quarreled on more equal terms with her sister Blanca, feeling that there was no longer so great a difference of experience to separate them." This is Porter's joke on Blanca, but also humorous evidence of a little *too much* self-esteem in Violeta, adolescent inflation in fact.

Michael Hollister (2018)