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**KATHERINE ANNE PORTER' S FOUR "FAILURES":
THEIR ILLUSIONS AND DEFECTS**

ABSTRACT

After reviewing the American South in the first half of the twentieth century, we try to understand Katherine Anne Porter as a Southern woman writer. Carrying a Southern character, she produced short stories dealing with the negative side of life. She peoples her (four) stories with characters who are unaware of their illusions and defects and shows their results. On the other hand, it is easier to bar the negations than solve them, according to her. For this, she advises us to criticize ourselves. When we find a wrong, we should be courageous to eliminate it.

Keywords: Katherine Anne Porter, The South,
Short Story, Illusion, Defect

**KATHERINE ANNE PORTER' IN DÖRT "BAŞARISIZ KARAKTERİ":
YANLIŞ GÖRÜŞLERİ, KUSUR VE EKSİKLİKLERİ**

ÖZET

Yirminci yüzyılın ilk yarısında Amerikan Güney'ine kısaca göz attıktan sonra, Katherine Anne Porter'ı Güneyli kadın bir yazar olarak anlamaya çalıştık. Güneyli özelliklerini taşıdığı için yazar, yaşamın olumsuz tarafını irdeleyen öyküler üretmiştir. Öykülerinde kendi yanlış görüşleri, kusur ve eksikliklerinin farkında olmayan karakterler vardır ve yazar bunların sonuçlarını gösterir. Öte yandan, ona göre, olumsuzlukları önlemek onları çözmekten daha kolaydır. Bunun için, kendimizi eleştirmemizi, bir yanlış bulduğumuzda onu yok etme konusunda cesaretli olmamızı önerir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Katherine Anne Porter, Güney, Öykü,
Yanlış Görüş, Kusur, Eksiklik



1. INTRODUCTION (GİRİŞ)

After the First World War, there were many fundamental social and economic changes and developments which would soon transform American life. The war ended but left people with many financial and spiritual problems. Industrialization, which the South met with doubt, gained rapidness. America was no longer a country of agriculture and agriculture came to mean "commerce of agriculture". Mechanisation secured comfort and economy of time but it also caused unemployment. New roads, bridges and railways were built. Networks of communication spread. Slavery had been abolished (1865) and the Blacks started to gain respectable positions gradually in social and economic spheres. Women entered politics and art and they defended equal rights and equal opportunities with men. Businessmen, rich merchants and tourists coming from the North, made an impact on the culture of the South. The economy of the South, which was greatly based on cotton and tobacco struggled not to be defeated by the new and dominant course, capitalism. The government supported every individual enterprise and it became the prevalent order. Defeated in the Civil War (1861-1865), the South would be defeated again by the Northern wealth, technological achievements and industrialization, as the North accepted modernization and succeeded in following the process of improvement. Businessmen coming from the North did not come to the South to help organize the developments but to take full advantage of these developments. Finding opportunity in unemployment, these businessmen got the unemployed to work for lower wages in the working places they planted there. Buying the products cheaply and selling them expensively, they prospered. Unemployment brought about poverty, and, smuggling and other guilts increased. Some blacks were obliged to immigrate to the West and to the North. These were also the times for freedom of sex and workers' acts.

All these changes shattered public complacency about traditional understanding of religion and other spiritual values. There were decreases and deteriorations in spiritual values and less and less people went to church. Many people found not much consolation for their problems in religion. Norms of Victorian cast of mind and morality began to change for worse. After the First World War, many people were inclined to excessive luxury and entertainment in order to forget the catastrophes and casualties of war. The passion for earning more money, getting more real estate and becoming successful in every material field became American habits doing away with the spiritual values. Adopting a materialistic point of view towards life, Americans respected only the rich and the socially powerful. This new society altered traditional family life substantially and the roles of husband as the "ruler" and wife as the "angel" began to be discussed. The people, mainly the youth, who could not reconcile the new phenomena with the old values, experienced aimlessness, lack of self-confidence, restlessness, failure, hopelessness and they felt the necessity of the search for identity.

In the South, which was known for its conservatism, all these changes were supported by some, but repudiated by the majority. Especially, the families having old and honorable histories, reacted against them with discontentment. They thought that in addition to their financial possessions, the traditional and ethic existence died away, too. Urbanization and industrialization, according to these Americans, caused wickedness. They declared that the Southern character could not approve of materialism and the new man of success. Having extolled an agrarian and gentle frame of mind, aristocratic families were very much devoted to their soil, history, nobility, dignity, heroic deeds and honour. They cherished nature as a sacred



place. They did not want to disregard their past and traditions even if they were out of fashion. They met the changes as humiliating, annoying and detestable. While they were trying to be satisfied with their exalting and flushing stories, the North made fun of them. In fact, the Northerners were not wrong in their sarcasm because the people who could not harmonize their past with their present, at least could not understand the necessity of it, were doomed to failure; people who cannot balance values and realities can be regarded as failures in a way.

In America nowhere criticized itself as much as the South from the 1920s on. Some intellectual circles of the South, like the *Agrarians* and some other writers of the first post-war period, stated their negative attitude towards the present and they defended the idea that the past could prevail over the present. They showed religion as a remedy to solve the problems. Some others, like Thomas Wolfe, Flannery O'Connor and Walker Percy became aware of the illusion of the people and admired the modern Americans living in the South. William Faulkner, as a genius, told objectively the past and present of the South, as well as those of the North. Katherine Anne Porter (1890-1980) is one of these writers, and she too, reflected her past, childhood, upbringing in the South along with a Southern environment and the present state of affairs in her short stories. As Jan Nordby Gretlund said: "[It] is a fact that Katherine Anne Porter was as emotionally involved with the South as William Faulkner and Eudora Welty. Her love for her South is reflected in her writing" (Gretlund, 1981)¹. Such subjects like the noble families, black servants and the conservative values of the South support this idea and indeed, much of her short fiction reflects aspects of her own life. As a Southerner, she was brought up with the stories of Civil War and its aftermaths and she paid much importance to the past. She grew up in a period in which the changes and developments were brought into the South and approved by some Southerners and the old order still existed, and the conflicts between the two were seen obviously. She, too, experienced the conflict between being a traditional Southerner and a modern woman writer all her life, because the old orthodox convictions hindered a woman artist. Not that she idealized the past but emphasized that we cannot escape from it and it is still effective on our lives. According to Porter, the Southern past is real and never a myth; on the other hand, she tries to be as much objective as possible.

2. RESEARCH SIGNIFICANCE (ÇALIŞMANIN ÖNEMİ)

The significance of the study comes from the fact that it helps us see our own illusions and defects in our real lives and be aware of the importance of this matter.

3. KATHERINE ANNE PORTER'S FOUR "FAILURES": THEIR ILLUSIONS AND DEFECTS (KATHERINE ANNE PORTER'İN DÖRT "BAŞARISIZ KARAKTERİ": YANLIŞ GÖRÜŞLERİ, KUSUR VE EKSİKLİKLERİ)

Choosing writing as a way of life, Porter travelled through Europe, Mexico and other parts of the United States. They were these experiences that made possible for Porter to expand her experience and surpass being a regional writer. She succeeded in being a universal writer, like Faulkner. Again, like him, she sometimes found the defects of the South. Like many of her modernist contemporaries, she claimed that it was wrong to commit oneself to the past and that past

¹ Jan Nordby Gretlund, "Katherine Anne Porter and the South: A Corrective", in *The Mississippi Quarterly*, 1981, Mississippi State University, Vol.:34, No:4, Fall 1981, pp:441.



had to be reconciled with the present but she could not tell concretely how this would be achieved. Here, we must remember her womanhood. Within herself, she could not reconcile her personality as a woman and as a writer with the cultural structure of the South in the twentieth century. She neither became a Southern *belle*, nor was able to free herself completely from her past as a writer. Perhaps it was this inner conflict that drove her to produce such praiseworthy short stories and to reach a secure position in the canon of twentieth century American short story. Although not all her short stories are about the South, we can see the Southern ways and Southern traces in the characters. The experiences told in her short fiction are either Southern or resemble those of the Southerners'.

With a negative point of view towards life - that it is not perfect -, as many Southerners at that time, and having had a difficult life herself, Porter depicts unhappy or failed characters in her short fiction. Like her, her characters too, have conflicts within themselves. Many of them are unhappy because of their "inner incapacibilities". Louis Auchincloss comments on some of them as follows:

Her characters cannot communicate because they reject communication. They have decided in advance what is due them in the way of honors, friendship and love, and they have predefined the friends and lovers as persons who must supply their needs. They are not looking for human beings but for fantasies. Consequently, they must reject, even hate the persons who seem to offer friendship or love. But their plight is not really pitiable. Selfishness and egotism are not pitiable. (Auchincloss, 1965)².

Indeed, Porter delineates most of the characters as lacking the capability of contact with others. They cannot confess their feelings and thoughts even to themselves. For they are conceited, they cannot grasp the true nature of their *psyche*. Some of them establish their relationships with their environments on wrong foundations and some going still further, fix wrong ways for themselves in life. They want to shape life and people as their egos wish them to be. In "Flowering Judas"(1930), which is undoubtedly her most well known and most anthologized story, conflict between denying one's heritage and his/her present situation and the difficulty in communication is told. The setting is Mexico and before the Mexican Revolution (1920). Laura, the heroine, is the daughter of a conservative American family and comes to Mexico to participate in the Revolution to bring justice there. She means to make the Revolution her personal experience and she is stipulated for enjoying the world there. She lives by teaching English to the children and thinks helps the Revolution come true. For example, she carries the prisoners food, cigarettes and drugs - if they are addicted. As a romantic, she wants to have thrill and to develop herself, but she meets with disappointment and trouble. She becomes aware that the leader of the Revolution, Braggioni, does not have the required features of leadership, like self-denial. He is fond of luxury and believes it is his right to behave as he wishes because he is under such a responsibility. He is married but has affairs with other women. He is adventageous to the utmost degree and likes everything useful and profitable. He works for the people but despises

² Louis Auchincloss, "Katherine Anne Porter" in *Pioneers & Caretakers: A Study of 9 American Women Novelists*, University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis, 1965, pp:146-147.



them and loves only himself. Laura, even if she does not like, feels obliged to listen to his playing the guitar, because he is the leader.

Even Braggioni's wife, disappoints Laura. She is at top of the Feminist Group for driving Mexican women to defend their rights but her name is given neither as a woman nor as a person in the story. As a paradox, she does not present her individuality. We cannot find anything as regards to her authority, independence or courage so that she washes Braggioni's feet when he comes home. Although she knows his affairs, she does not speak to him or try to divorce, but only cries for nights.

Laura, again, does not feel close to the children, moreover she dislikes them. She sees everybody, even whom she knows, as strangers. She does not set a close relationship with anybody -she has apathy- and is always alone, consequently. Despite being disturbed by her situation, she does not complain and does not try to give another way to her life. She comes from a religious family and she has inclination to religion, which the Revolution minimizes its place in life. So, while working for the Revolution, she contradicts with herself. The life that she craved for or dreamed, is not actualized: "she cannot help feeling that she has been betrayed irreparably by the disunion between her way of living and her feeling of what life should be, and at times she is almost contented to rest in this sense of grievance as a private store of consolation. Sometimes she wishes to run away, but she stays" (Porter, 1935)³.

Laura lacks the capability of acting: she has inertia and this is her way of defending or preserving herself in the alien environment. Keeping everything as it is, she feels secure. In fact, she does not prefer to return home, because she was bored there. She also has an inclination to refuse any changes. For example, she refuses the love of Eugenio, a Mexican young man, whom she loves and who is very suitable for her. As a duty, she takes some food and soporific medicine to Eugenio when he is prisoned. The next day, it is heard that he has committed suicide having all the pills. Laura knows, if not confesses, that she has driven him to death by not telling her love to him obviously.

A symbolic dream manifests her subconscious. Eugenio calls her, but when she wants to touch his hand, he escapes. She follows him, aware that they are going to death, but she is not afraid. He gives her the flowers of a Judas tree. She sees that his hands are withered branches and eyes are without light. She again is not afraid and eats the flowers with appetite. He blames her with murder upon this because the flowers are his flesh and blood. She awakens repeating "no". Assuming that flowers symbolize love and women, it can be said that through this dream Laura becomes aware of her womanhood, her crave for integrating with it, love and compassion, which she always repressed. In other words, she attempts to be whole with her womanhood while eating them. Not giving a chance to Eugenio, she wrongs both him and herself. She sees him as a threat and denies her existence of love, which is central for it. When we deal with the Judas tree in the Christian context, we see that it represents "betrayal" and one of the disciples, betraying Jesus Christ is Judas. So, her eating the flowers implies her self-betrayal. Act of eating which means integration, proves that she is a "Judas", too.

Her contradictory situation can be exemplified in that she dislikes and is afraid of machines. The machine and flower imagery epitomizes her dilemma. Mechanization and modernity which are thought

³ Katherine Anne Porter, *Flowering Judas and Other Stories*, The Modern Library-Random House, New York, 1935, pp:142.



to be brought by the Revolution are contrary to femininity and purity symbolized by flower. Laura works for the Revolution, but she is also eager to experience her womanhood. She prefers working for the Revolution, though.

Laura is a young woman, who does not know her authentic self and who is incapable of appreciating realities. She represses her feelings and does not allow sources of love, that life offers, to feed her. She does not attempt to change her present situation, for instance she does not think of leaving Mexico, which she dislikes for another place. She works with the Revolutionaries although she is not forced and they are not very much interested in her. They do not appreciate her activities as a volunteer. She at last sees lots of evil in Mexico and lives in many contradictions but cannot resolve them, though she has possibilities. She discovers that she has lost her power to love by substituting her own tradition for another. Her failure springs from her inertia, inarticulateness and her lack of courage. Apart from these, she is anxious rather than hopeful for her future; that shows the senselessness and monotony of her loveless life.

Porter depicts another idealistic young American protagonist in a remote culture like Laura in the novelette named "The Leaning Tower" (1941), whose setting is Berlin, 1931. Charles Upton is a naïve painter from Texas, who was informed many years ago by a friend that Germany was very favourable for artists and as a romantic like Laura, goes there hopefully. The ambience is again a political one, as in Laura's case. An amateur painter and inexperienced in life, he aims at getting materials and style for his art and at having experience. His friend said that even the streets in Berlin glistened but Charles sees there foggy and full of old castles which indicates gloom, according to him. He finds it joyless and dull. Like Laura, he comes with exaggerated expectations but he meets with negations since he comes to Germany. The impacts of First World War are still visible on Germans. Most of the people look at the shop-windows with eagerness because they are unemployed and without money. In those years, a great deal of Germans have prejudice against foreigners and support Nazism which was gaining power. Because of their defeat in the war and the aftermaths, the Germans dislike Americans. They see them as rich and happy. Unlike Laura's milieu, his is hostile and menacing. Some Germans are jealous of Americans and some hate them like one of the landladies, whose pension Charles is examining for rent. She has a plaster replica of The Leaning Tower of Pisa and upon his breaking it, she implies that like all Americans, he is clumsy and barbarian. He reaches the idea about the landladies in a very short time that: "They were smiling foxes, famished wolves, slovenly house cats, mere tigers, hyenas, furies, harpies; and sometimes worst of all they were sodden melancholy human beings..." (Porter, 1944)⁴. He also regards the Germans as bigoted and ignorant. The scars left by the war and duel are still cherished by the Germans which Charles contempts. He claims that this point of view should be discarded and he caricaturizes them in his drawings.

The German experience is full of disappointments and desperation for Charles. In Germany, where he comes willingly, he begins to feel lonely soon because of his ignorance of people's cast of mind and because of being a stranger to their culture. He is not aware that the criticizing and underestimating glances are especially for him. When he goes to a pub with his friends, who are also staying in a pension, he hears their discussion about race and war and decides not to drink

⁴ Katherine Anne Porter, *The Leaning Tower and Other Stories*, Harcourt, Brace and Company, New York, 1944, pp:162.



more because he feels insecure. What he is aware of is "what he had never known before, an infernal desolation of the spirit, the chill and the knowledge of death in him" (Porter, 1944)⁵. His ideals have driven him to wrong places and now he feels awkward. He understands that he has much to learn but does not know where to begin. Germany, where he has come with great expectations, has not given him anything yet, on the contrary, it has confused his mind and threatened his life. More than disappointment and loneliness, he undergoes bitterness, but does not seem to take a lesson. Nonetheless, he tries to be calm and positive. He perceives his existence in Germany as a mistake but persuades himself that it is not, and that Germany is the right place for him, although he cannot find what he has aimed at.

Like in "Flowering Judas", Porter here too, employs a symbol. The Leaning Tower of Pisa has a symbolic meaning in the story. In appearance, it is a solid building made of marble and notable for its sturdiness, but because its foundations are weak, it has leaned. Moreover, in the story, it (the replica) breaks in Charles' hands for it is fragile. In this context, Joan Givner refers to the illusions of the characters in Porter's fiction in general; the Leaning Tower is "as fragile and insubstantial as the dreams of paradise of all the characters"⁶. Both Laura and Charles set out "to reach paradise" but for their aims are not grounded in substantial foundations, they collapse. Like Laura, he stays where he is not wanted, that is his contradiction, and like her he has inertia. He is incapable of perceiving his reality and disregards the indifference and hostility of the people. Charles' experiences represent how his ideals are limited and they cannot motivate him to attempt a change as in the case of Laura. He only understands that he is wrong but again like Laura, he is not able to direct himself to any other reasonable way. He has not a dream or plan about future as a young man: "instinctively inferred, that he can do nothing about the awful imminent future" (Liberman, 1971)⁷. On the other hand, unlike Laura, he carries a false hope for his future which is his illusion. His lack of courage, like Laura, causes his failure.

Unlike "Flowering Judas" and "The Leaning Tower", Porter delineates married people in "Rope" (1925) and in "The Cracked Looking-Glass" (1935). Focusing her attention on male and female relationships, she draws attention to how some personal illusions and defects cause marital unhappiness. In "Rope", in which a young couple is expounded, how a little conflict transforms itself into a big quarrel because of prejudice is designated. The couple, whose names are not mentioned, comes to a farm for holiday. The story opens when they get into a verbal conflict about a "twenty-four-yard coil of rope" which is symbolic for their relationship. When the husband returns from shopping, the wife sees that he has forgotten to buy coffee, though she wrote it in the shopping list and he has bought "instead" the rope, which is unnecessary then and occupying much place, according to her. She has prejudice and claims that he has forgotten coffee because he does not like it, which is only a wrong judgment. He has bought it thinking that one day it becomes necessary, but she sees it as a "blot on the landscape". She precedes her criticism: when he puts it on the eggs, they break while returning

⁵ Katherine Anne Porter, *Ibid*, Harcourt, Brace and Company, New York, 1944, pp:245.

⁶ Joan Givner, *Katherine Anne Porter: A Life*, The University of Georgia Press, Athens, 1991, pp:320.

⁷ Myron M. Liberman, *Katherine Anne Porter's Fiction*, Wayne State University Press, Detroit-Michigan, 1971, pp:98.



home and now she has to cook them although she does not want to. Bored, he puts the rope on the upper shelf but she says that there is no place for it in the kitchen, nor anywhere in the house, which has seven rooms. He resents and gets angry: "And what did she take him for, a three-year-old idiot? The whole trouble with her was she needed something weaker than she was to heckle and tyrannize over" (Porter, 1935)⁸. This time, the husband does wrong to her; he says that he wants to have many children, upon whom she can try her anger and in this way he can have some rest. She cries but he thinks that the rope is the cause. In fact, she wants her every wish to be realized and that she wants to be the only authority -that is egotism-, though she does not think of tyrannizing. Here, we see that neither of them has any respect for the other's tastes and interests.

She does not have confidence in him, either. While he was working in town, she thought that he was having an affair - that was not true - and now it comes into the agenda. Moreover, she makes him furious when she says that the days she spent alone in the farm when he was absent are the happiest ones in the last four years. In fact, she wants to emphasize her delight in the loneliness, in which she could have time to prepare the house for him. While going back to the town to exchange the rope for something else and to buy coffee, without telling her, he remembers her buying useless things and when he asks the reason she answers that it is only because of her wish. However, his wife makes trouble out of a piece of rope, which he has only wanted and he feels hurt. Upon his returning, she meets him with a warm interest, but there is again something to be annoyed: he is taking the rope back and says that he has forgotten to change it for something another. This time she asks why he has wanted to change what he liked so much. That is/means she accepts the rope and his wishes. It also designates her love to him.

Lack of communication and misunderstanding are the significant points of the story. Along with it, we see that the couple is offending each other, but in fact, they do not desire this and that they misunderstand each other. In addition, they cannot express themselves in right words. She, as model of a selfish wife, despises her husband's interests and proves her intolerance. Another defect that both of them have is their talking from one subject to another including old matters. When they talk about them again, they see that the matters have not been resolved yet. All the defects reveal their failure in maintaining their marriage and their secret anger. Like many other characters in Porter's fiction, they do not possess the capability of self-criticism; they only put the blame on others or things. As a result they make themselves and the other unhappy.

More romantic than the wife in "Rope", is Rosaleen O'Toole and her husband Dennis in "The Cracked Looking-Glass", a novelette (1935). They are Irish and living in a small town, Connecticut, America. Rosaleen is a romantic to the utmost degree and Dennis is just the reverse; he is reasonable and prudent. Unlike in "Rope", there is not a scene of dispute here. They love and respect each other, despite the monotony of the marriage. Dennis is an old man, thirty years older than her. She has married him when he was a headwaiter in New York. They have had an active social life then but now they do not, so all the time she misses the old days. She is obsessed with her dreams and imagines a better life for herself. She is the slave of self-deception and of an idealized view of love that ignores another reality. She always deals with things that do not exist now. She, like Laura,

⁸ Katherine Anne Porter, *Flowering Judas and Other Stories*, The Modern Library-Random House, New York, 1935, pp:51.



worships her ideals about love because of an inability to face harsh truths. One day, she dreams her sister in Boston calling her and goes to Boston to learn about her and to have fun. She cannot find her there; what she finds is a young man, intending to flirt with her and this irritates her. She goes to church, seeking the same peace and consolation as in the past, but as Darlene Harbour Unrue points, she "goes to a church, once again as an escape from reality" (Unrue, 1985)⁹ and she cannot find what she looks for. She understands religion not as a way and system to life but as a means of emotional satisfaction. Unfortunately, she cannot find anything in the church, either.

Thinking that she would find joy and thrill in Boston before going, she returns home disappointed. She finds the same old monotony in the house and apart from this; she meets the menacing violence of life in a small town: some gossips of her neighbours that she is dyeing her hair, travelling alone and flirting with young men. She is extremely afflicted and thinks that the life with Dennis is the only possible and secure life for her because his existence will protect her from wickedness outside. She determines to be more compassionate and interested towards him for he is her only support and "wealth" after then. Harry J. Mooney, Jr. interprets her Boston trip as follows: "What Rosaleen has really learned on her trip to Boston is that the only life available to her is the one with Dennis" (Mooney, 1967)¹⁰. For her future life, she sees her boring house as a shelter. She obeys what life has offered her, *if not willingly*. She sees the cracked looking-glass, instead of which she has planned to buy a new one from Boston and which is symbolic in the story, but she has forgotten to buy. When she says this to Dennis, he answers that it is good enough. She, too, agrees with him and her consent signifies the permanency of her imperfect marriage. So, she returns to her life with Dennis however inadequate and aged he is. What is interesting here is that Dennis is not disturbed by its being broken and distorting everything. As an aged man, a change does not mean anything and is not important. Rosaleen wants to keep steps with him on the one hand, and on the other, she wishes change, joy and activity and consequently becomes unhappy. But, in this unhappiness, she finds solace and asks in anxiety: "if anything happened to you, whatever would become of me in this world?" (Porter, 1935)¹¹.

Rosaleen cannot manage to be happy. She always looks for it in entertainment, in the hurly-burly of city-life and in a dynamic social life, which are absent or scarce in the town. Moreover, her husband is frail and is not active, which she desires the reverse. She defines herself only with Dennis. All these make her unhappy, but she has an outlet: she can be contented with Dennis - because he is not a wicked man - and share life with him. As long as she escapes from the bare realities and does not admit her situation, it is certain that she will be insipid.

4. FINDING AND DISCUSSION (BULGU VE TARTIŞMA)

Porter is a Modernist in that she does not offer solution to the different problems she exposes. She only draws attention to their reasons. According to her, it is easier and more reasonable to bar the problems rather than solve them. In the preface of her essay-book **The Days Before**, she speaks related to that point: "For myself, and I was

⁹ Darlene Harbour Unrue, *Truth and Vision in Katherine Anne Porter's Fiction*, The University of Georgia Press, Athens, 1985, pp.123.

¹⁰ Money, Harry J., Jr., 1967, *The Fiction and Criticism of Katherine Anne Porter*, Pittsburgh, University of Pittsburgh Press, pp:44

¹¹ Porter, *Ibid*, pp:219.



not alone, all the conscious and recollected years of my life have been lived to this day under the heavy threat of world catastrophe, and most of the energies of my mind and spirit have been spent in the effort to grasp the meaning of those threats, to trace them to their sources and to understand the logic of this majestic and terrible failure of the life of man in the Western world"¹² (Porter, 1953). As a Modernist, she peoples her stories with unhappy and suffering characters, but as readers we cannot pity them because they do not appeal to us as moderate, reasonable or passionate characters. They do not see their personal weaknesses and maintain their illusions and wrong points of view towards life which is a specific characteristic of the Southerners at that time. They fail to sustain themselves in terms of reality and deceive themselves. They are antipathetic and become failures in psychological and social levels. Even though they understand their problems, they do not accept or try to make any changes.

5. CONCLUSION (SONUÇ)

Porter provides us with a window to life's beautiful but somewhat touching and heartbreaking aspects. She advises us to be more critical about our individual defects and be courageous to correct them. Her fiction will live because of its significant themes on human experience as well as its beauty and charm.

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¹²Porter, Katherine Anne, 1953, The Days Before, London, Harcourt Brace, pp:130.