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Presented by:

Dyhia OUALIT.

ThaninaDJELID.

Supervised by:

Mrs.Fatima

BENSIDHOUM.

Board of Examiners:

Chair:Ms. ABDELLI Fatima, MAA, University Mouloud MAMMARI of Tizi-Ouzou.

Examiner:Mrs. BENSAFI Hassiba, MAA, University Mouloud MAMMARI of Tizi-Ouzou.

Supervisor:Mrs. BENSIDHOUM Fatima, MAA, University Mouloud MAMMARI of Tizi-Ouzou.

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Laboratoire de Domiciliation du Mastère: Etudes des Langues et Cultures Etrangères.

Dedications

I dedicate this work to:

My father and mother

My brothers and friends

Our supervisor and teachers

For their support and love

Dyhia

I dedicate this work to:

My father and mother

My brothers

All my friends and family

My dear Dyhia

Our supervisor and teachers

Thanina

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Abstract

This research paper is a comparative study of Theodore Dreiser's Sister Carrie (1900) and Kate Chopin's The Awakening (1899). To achieve our work, we have widened the scope of our investigation within a theoretical frame. For this matter, we have relied on some concepts of Northrop Frye's theory of Romance as exposed in his book Anatomy of Criticism (1957). In the first chapter, we have studied the two works in terms of characterization. In doing so, we have drawn both the similarities and the differences between the characters from Frye's concepts; innocent youth, and the contemplative adventure. In our dissertation, we showed how the two heroines are portrayed as being innocent at the beginning of the novel and how progressively both lost their innocence in quest for their dreams. In the second chapter, we have considered the plot of both novels; we have studied the similarities of the two works in terms of plot, in the framework of quest, antagonism and tragic ending. Regarding quest, both antagonists seek ambition; Carrie lusts after money and fame, and Edna pursues individuality. The society being the antagonist in each work troubled their search for their quest. We have also shown how both authors paradoxically portrayed the tragic ending of both their protagonists. Edna committed suicide while Carrie ended in a miserable state, brooding on her own loneliness. At last, we have come to the conclusion that both Chopin's and Dreiser's novels are susceptible to fit the characteristics of romance, and followed the same plot according to Northrop Frye's theory.

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I. Introduction

In the late nineteenth century, and the early decades of the twentieth century the American society witnessed great changes that shaped this era, either industrially or artistically. At the level of industry, the American landscape changed from agricultural to industrial and urbanized society. In the artistic field, Naturalism rose as the most prominent movement that came as a reaction to the classical writings of Transcendentalism and Romanticism. It is used to portray the growth of society and the new atmosphere of this period. This shift is depicted in the *Cultural Dictionary* as follows:

Naturalism is a movement in literature and an approach to philosophy. Literary and artistic naturalism aims to accuracy and objectivity and cultivates realistic and even sordid portrayals of people and their environment. Philosophical naturalism, which is often identified with materialism, holds that minds, spirits, and ideas are fundamentally material¹.

Naturalism reflected the century of science that came out with new themes that dominated American fiction. The emergence of this movement can be seen through some figures and works like Stephen Crane's *Maggie; A Girl of The Street*; *The Red Badge of Courage* (1895); Frank Norris's *Mc Teague* (1899); Edith Wharton's *The House of Mirth* (1905); Upton Sinclair's *The Jungle* (1906), and many others.

This new generation of authors based their writings on realistic events, with the influence of the French novelist Emile Zola's *The Experimental Novel* (1880); also the biologist Charles Darwin and his Evolution theory and natural selection which speculate that all species evolved through ages to generate new ones in order to adapt to their environment. Darwin assumes that humans and apes have a common ancestor. Moreover, the influences of Frederick Nietzsche's work *The Will to Power* is undeniable. In this work, Nietzsche sets his ideas and thoughts about the main driving force in human's achievements and ambitions. Accordingly, "the Muckrakers"², as the Naturalist authors were called, were more creative

and audacious with the themes they treated. This was due to the modernization of society which, in turn, shaped the new moral values that were clearly pictured by these authors.

Among the naturalist American writers, Theodore Dreiser (1871-1945) appeared as a distinctive author who gained a universal reputation by his works; *Sister Carrie* (1900), *Jennie Gerhardt* (1911), *The Financier* (1912), *The Titan* (1914), *The Genius* (1915) and the *American Tragedy* (1925). The main characters in most of his novels succeed in attaining their objectives despite the lack of morals. Dreiser's thematic ideas are inspired from the social changes of urbanization that called for regression of the rigid moral values. When *Sister Carrie* was published, strong reactions came from the public who was shocked by its sexual boldness and stark realism.

Regional writers also took part in portraying society, to give a real picture from all societal classes. As a naturalist woman writer, Kate Chopin (1851-1904) emerged and was recognized as an eminent southern writer who was largely influenced by the Creole culture. In Louisiana, she practiced her talent as a writer beginning with short stories based on local life, sketches and novels like; *The Cadian Ball* (1892), *The Story of an Hour* (1894), *The Storm* (1898), *At Fault* (1890), and *The Awakening* (1899).

In this present work, our interest will be on Theodore Dreiser's *Sister Carrie* (1900) And Kate Chopin's *The Awakening* (1899). The two authors mirrored the actual life in America in the late nineteenth century through realistic depictions. Dreiser in *Sister Carrie* broke out the conventional literary tradition by his presentation of the dramatic changing that society was undergoing in its different aspects. As for Chopin's *The Awakening*, Edna Pontellier's morals change and the desire for freedom and self-independence created in her a new autonomous woman. This was controversial to the dominant values and cause conflicts with her family and her environment, which at the end led to her collapse.

The choice of the two authors is made in relation to the two authors' backgrounds and to the fact that they both follow the same plot in their works. In addition, both authors had received harsh criticism at the publication of their novels. They conceived similarly the quest of the two main characters. They are also cognate in the way they cope with the cloistering society they lived in.

1. Review of the Literature

The two novels received a great bulk of criticism. Critics have been adamant about the books being too extravagant due to the themes judged too inappropriate and unwholesome in the late 19th century. Theodore Dreiser's *Sister Carrie* (1900) has been studied from different angles. Stuart P. Sherman, on behalf of many other New Humanists, couched his dissatisfaction with Dreiser's work and compared it to "the howl of an atavistic animalism."³ Because of the book's sexual content, Stuart P. Sherman rejects Dreiser's social determinism, and the somber realistic depictions made by him. He agrees nonetheless at some points that humans may be selfish and brutal at times, but he asserts that they are not as described in the novel, but they are rather civilized and capable to reprimand those animalistic urges and pulsions. He asserts that:

"By thus eliminating distinctively human motives and making animal instincts in supreme factors in human life. Mr. Dreiser reduces the problem of the novelist to the lowest possible terms. I find myself unable to go with those who admire the powerful reality of his art while deploring the puerility of his philosophy."⁴

Many other critics such as Trilling and Arnold Bennett estimated that the novel is too raw in its depictions of real life, and Dreiser's writing style has been qualified as vulgar by many reviewers that called the book squalid, "neither a pleasant nor edifying English."⁵ Dreiser's pessimistic and realistic determinism in *Sister Carrie* is not well perceived by critics neither. *The Toledo Blade*, a daily newspaper in Toledo, Ohio, in which it is reported that the novel "is a faithful portraiture of the conditions it represents [...] but it is too realistic, too somber to be

altogether pleasing.”⁶ Concerning the writing style Bennett even went to assert that “Dreiser simply does not know how to write, never did know never wanted to know.”⁷

Despite the fact that the book did not make the expected effect, it received nonetheless many positive reviews, most notably from Dreiser’s supporters like Alfred Kazin, H.L. Mencken, M.Lydon and many others that praised the novel.

While Alfred Kazin characterizes Dreiser as “stronger than all the others of his time, and at the same time more poignant; greater than the world he has described, but as significant as the people in it.”⁸ Lazar Ziff remarks that Dreiser “succeeded beyond any of his predecessors or successors in producing a great American business novel.”⁹ As for L.H. Mencken, he declares that “not that Dreiser actually belongs to this rug muffin company far from it indeed. There is in him, hidden deep-down, a great instinctive artist, and hence the makings of an aristocrat.”¹⁰ Mencken paid tribute to Dreiser’s originality and courage, as it was not evident back then to portray reality as it was without offending anyone, and face the challenges that implicate making such a big move in the American literature, that so far only aimed to honor God and nature.

As far as Kate Chopin’s novel *The Awakening* (1899) is concerned, it has also been criticized at its release. Even though *The Awakening* has been advertised and awaited, critics such as Francis Porcher reactions were immediate. Porcher acknowledged his disappointment on Chopin’s novel from a content point of view, compared to her previous works as a Regionalist, realist and a local color writer, that were appreciated among writers. The sexual content of the book disgusted him. He pointed out “*The Awakening* leaves one sick of human nature.”¹¹

According to Porcher, the publication of this novel tarnished her reputation as a woman writer. Additionally, Porcher writes in the May 4, 1899 issue of the book “because we admire Kate Chopin’s other works immensely and delight in her ever-growing fame[...]one of us

dislike to acknowledge a wish that she had not written her novel.”¹² Moreover, many other conservative critics condemned Kate Chopin for her lenient behavior towards her main character’s actions, some even accused her of condoning Edna’s behavior, and stated that the book would have been accepted if she disciplined her or took position against her. Holland notes that: “the awakening of a respectable woman to her sensual nature might have been acceptable in 1899 if the author had condemned her.”¹³ As a result, the book is banned, especially for the youth because it is believed that, unlike other literary works at that time, that were considered healthy, *The Awakening* did not fit the standards of writing in the late nineteenth century. W.D Howells affirms that: “certain facts of life which are not usually talked before young people and especially young ladies.”¹⁴

However, critics did in fact, recognize and salute Kate Chopin unique and alluring style of writing within a decade after she died. In 1915, Fred Lewis Pattee declared, “some of Chopin's work is equal to the best that has been produced in France or even in America. She displayed what may be described as a native aptitude for narration amounting almost to genius.”¹⁵ Years later, in 1969, the book is studied from a feminist point of view that gave a new perspective to the book. It is now considered canonical due to the great interest raised around the transcendent New Woman and studied in English classrooms. Bernard Koloski in his preface of anthology stated that *The Awakening* is “one of the most often taught of all American novels.”¹⁶

Despite having received a lot of criticism as far as the plot and characters are concerned, no study to our best knowledge, have joined the two works in a comparative study or analysis in terms of Romance. There are however many studies that brought them up together in the study of the two main characters Edna Pontellier and Carrie Meeber in the light of The New Woman for instance by Ada Brathen . Our task in the present research paper is to shed light on

the study of Romance as developed in both works, generating further perspectives on the novels.

2. Issue and Working Hypothesis

The above review of the literature gives us a small glimpse for the critique that have been made on Theodore Dreiser's *Sister Carrie* and Kate Chopin's *The Awakening*. It is therefore evident that the books have been studied separately and from different perspectives. They have nonetheless, never been gathered in a romance study.

Through our reading of the two literary works, we have noticed an obvious resemblance between the two main characters that crave self-fulfillment, realization and hanker after dreams or wishes which are opposed by their respective societies. This fact has led us to consider a comparative study to explain the quest romance which is the "nearest of all literary forms to wish fulfillment dream"¹⁷. Thus, our problematic centers around the way in which we can read both works as romance; in other words, how and what aspects of romance can be used with *The Awakening* and *Sister Carrie*.

In our procedure, we will put to use some of romance's concepts. In order to prove the relevance of our issue, we shall rely on Northrop Frye's archetypal criticism, 'Mythos of summer, Romance'. We will employ it, as part of the analysis of both main characters' quest, as it is elaborated in his book *Anatomy of Criticism* (1957). Moreover, this theory also fits our work in terms of the characters' analysis. In our view, the similarities and the affinities shared between the two works make it a suitable subject for comparison; indeed, the selection of this theory as a relevant one is due to the fact that its components fit the aim of our study in both novels.

3. Methodological Outline

At the methodological level, this dissertation will follow the IMRAD method. Our work starts with the introduction where we have given a general overview of the topic, referred to

the naturalist movement, since it was the prominent movement at that time. we have mentioned the purpose of the study, followed with the review of the literature, of some reviews and studies made on Theodore Dreiser's *Sister Carrie* and Kate Chopin's *The Awakening*.

In the Methods section, we will introduce and explain Northrop Frye's theory of romance, as it is prior mentioned in his book *Anatomy of criticism* (1957). Then, we will provide brief summaries of the two novels under study. In the Results section, we will highlight the essential points of our investigation and answer the issue we have raised in the introduction.

The discussion section will be constituted of two chapters. In the first chapter, we will deal with the characters in both *Sister Carrie* and *The Awakening*. We will make a fastidious comparison and analysis of the two authors' works in terms of characterization in relation to romance, making an appeal to Frye's theory. In the second chapter, we will analyze the plot of both works. We will show to which extent the quest of the main characters is like the quest romance of Frye's theory. Finally, we will conclude with a summary of important points that relate and differentiate the two works.

Endnotes

¹New Dictionary of Cultural Literacy, 3rd ed., s.v. "Naturalism," accessed April 06th, 2017. <https://www.amazon.fr/New-Dictionary-Cultural-Literacy-American/dp/0618226478>

²Linda Alchin. "Muckrakers" (siteseen limited 2014) <http://www.american-historama.org/1881-1913-maturation-era/muckrakers.htm>

³Pizer Donald. "The Novels of Theodore Dreiser: A Critical Study" (Minneapolis:University of Minnesota Press,1976).

⁴Sherman P Stuart. "On Contemporary Literature" (New York: Holt, 1917), 94.

⁵Pizer Donald. "The Novels of Theodore Dreiser: A Critical Study" (Minneapolis:University of Minnesota Press,1976).

⁶Hillstorm Kevin, Hillstorm Collier Laurie. "The Industrial Revolution in America" (Santa Barbara: ABC-CILIO,2005), 227.

⁷Sherman P Stuart. "On Contemporary Literature" (New York: Holt, 1917), 98.

⁸Kazin Alfred. "On Native Grounds: An Interpretation of Modern American Prose Literature" (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1970), 89.

⁹Hillstorm Kevin, Hillstorm Collier Laurie. "The Industrial Revolution in America" (Santa Barbara : ABC-CILIO,2005), 227.

¹⁰Mencken Henry Louis. "A Book of Prefaces" (New York: Knopf, 1917), 94.

¹¹Culley Margaret. "New Essays on The Awakening" (New York, New Rochelle, Melbourne, Sydney, Cambridge University Press, 1940),7.

¹²Ibid, 7.

¹³Sprinkle Russ. "Kate Chopin's The Awakening: A critical Perception" (Bowling Green State University, 1988), 4.

¹⁴Ibid, 4.

¹⁵Pattee Fred Lewis. "A History of American Literature" (Harvard University Press, 1870),364.

¹⁶Toth Emily. "Kate Chopin" (New York: William Marrow and Company INC, 1990), 340.

¹⁷Northrop Frye. *Anatomy of Criticism* (London: Princeton University Press, 1975), 18.

II. Methods and Materials

1. Method

In this research, we will rely on Northrop Frye's theory of Romance which is presented in his book *Anatomy of Criticism* (1957). In doing so, we shall focus on some aspects of this theory like the quest of characters in both novels, *Sister Carrie* (1900) and *The Awakening* (1899).

In *Anatomy of Criticism* Frye devotes the third essay among the four ones to the theory of myths, where we find the mythos of summer, in which he establishes the structure of Romance and defines it as the "nearest of all literary forms to wish fulfillment dream."¹⁸

Romance has its origins in late classical times; it first emerged in Greece and went through many changes across time. It first started as the chivalric romance in the Middle-Ages, afterwards, the aristocratic romance in the Renaissance, then, the bourgeois romance in the eighteenth century, and finally, the revolutionary romance in contemporary Russia¹⁹.

Romance has a proletarian element, which is never satisfied with its various incarnations, which point out that no matter how great a change may take place in society, "Romance will turn up again, as hungry as ever, looking for new hopes and desires to feed on"²⁰. For a long time, the childlike quality of Romance marked by extraordinarily persistent nostalgia, its search for some kind of imaginative golden age in time and space²¹.

Northrop Frye develops six phases in the structure of romance; the first one is "the myth of the birth of the hero."²² It means that the hero has some features that make him different from the others. The newborn infant may be rescued from or by animals. This myth is often associated with a flood, the regular symbol of the beginning and the end of a cycle.²³ The second one is "the innocent youth of the hero."²⁴ In this step, the hero eclipses by his parents, surrounded by youthful companions, it is a word of magic and desirable law. The hero sees the possibility of realizing his dreams.²⁵ The third one is "the normal quest theme."²⁶ In this

phase, the hero assists his major adventures after a series of irrelevant ones and he must defeat all the barriers and dangers to fulfill his dreams. The fourth phase deals with “the maintaining of the integrity of the innocent world against the attacks of the enemy.”²⁷ This phase resembles the fourth phase of comedy in which “the happier society is more or less visible throughout the action instead of emerging only in the last few moments.”²⁸ In the fifth phase, the movement of the natural cycle has usually a prominent place. It has a similar world of the second phase except that the fifth is contemplative.²⁹ The last phase is the one of comedy and romance. In comedy, it shows the comic society divided into small units or individuals; in Romance, it marks the end of movement from active to contemplative adventure.³⁰

In our study, we will focus particularly on some aspects of Frye’s theory of romance which are the second, the third and the sixth phases which are the innocent youth of the hero, the normal quest theme, and the contemplative adventure where the hero is no longer active. To Frye, adventures are essential elements on which the plot is based. It follows up a series of minor events where the hero goes through many perilous adventures conducting to major ones which are the elements that give literary form to the romance, the quest.³¹

According to Frye, the quest undergoes three main stages; the first stage is the perilous journey and the preliminary minor adventures; the second one is the crucial struggle between the hero and his hidden enemy, at the end of the conflict, one of them must die. The last stage is the exaltation of the hero which refers to the hero’s recognition. In Greek terms, the conflict is referred to as the ‘agon’, death struggle as ‘pathos’, and the recognition of the hero as the ‘anagorisis’. Frye adds the conflict as the basic theme of romance that assumes two opposing characters, the protagonist and the antagonist.³²

In addition to this, Frye denotes that “the quest-romance is the search of the libido or desiring self for a fulfillment that will deliver it from the anxieties of reality but will still contain that reality.”³³ This represents moral neutrality of the intermediate world of nature.

The quest-romance is also the victory of fertility over the wasted land; fertility here means food and drink, bread and wine, body and blood, the union of male and female. Moreover, the central form of the quest-romance is the dragon killing theme, which is the danger that faces the hero in his adventures. There are also “the quest for buried treasure”³⁴ themes; it represents the mythopoeic romance which reflects wealth, power and wisdom.

Frye affirms that there are no “subtlety and complexity”³⁵ in the structure of romance. The characters can be ideals if they are for the quest and villains if they are against. The character is servant or friend of the hero.³⁶

2. Materials

a. Summary of Theodore Dreiser’s *Sister Carrie* (1900)

Sister Carrie opens with the protagonist Caroline Meeber (Carrie), eighteen years old from middle-class family. She takes a train to Chicago leaving Columbia city, in hope of getting a job and better living conditions. In the train, she met Charles Drouet a very good looking and wealthy salesman who takes her address. When arriving in Chicago, she first installs in her sister’s flat and leaves it after to live with Drouet. Once with him, she has a comfortable and better life.

A love story is born when Drouet introduces Carrie to his friend George Hurstwood who is a manager in a bar-restaurant named ‘Hannah and Hogg’s’ and a father of two children. Hurstwood often visits Carrie when Drouet is out of town. When Drouet discovers the affair, he tells Carrie about Hurstwood being married; Carrie breaks up her relationship with him. She also separates with Drouet who moves out. Hurstwood remains in serious troubles with his wife Julia, after she has discovered his betrayal. One night, Hurstwood robs the safe of ‘Hannah and Hogg’s’ after much hesitation at first, but ends up taking the money and flees to Montreal. He lies to Carrie to get her go with him and marry her by getting a new

identity, and changes his name into Wheeler. Hurstwood afterwards, gives back the stolen money and left a short sum to himself.

After a while, Hurstwood and Carrie move to New York City. There, Hurstwood finds a work at first but loses it. He could not find another because of the bad economic conditions. Hurstwood remains jobless, a situation that makes Carrie fed up, since she is the one that covers all of his needs. Carrie moves into a fancy place with another actress when she finds her acting work and left Hurstwood who ends up homeless. Carrie at the end becomes a very well-known actress; she appears in all celebrity papers. She gets all whatever she wants concerning the material objects and reaches her dreams, but despite all this wealth, she remains and feels awfully lonely. Hurstwood ends up killing himself by turning on the gas and inhaling it.

b. Summary of Kate Chopin's *The Awakening* (1899):

Kate Chopin's *The Awakening* (1899) relates the story of Edna Pontellier in her awakening process, in a quest for self-delivery and salvation from the social restriction of the late 19th century. The events begin at Grand Isle during summer break. Edna's awakening process starts at the sea, where she learns how to swim for the first time, implicating her becoming more conscious about herself and the universe surrounding her. From that point, learning how to swim worked as an eye opener for her. She becomes more lucid, and her appetite for learning grows bigger with days. She wants to make a change within herself getting inspired by Creole women such as Madame Ratignolle's mannerism and Mademoiselle Reisz's independence. Furthermore, Robert Lebrun, who would be the son of the owners of the cottage she stays in, represents her desires, as she sees in him all the things she lacks in her marriage with Leonce Pontellier. Her love for him makes her leave her obligations as a wife and a mother and most importantly as a respectable woman. Edna goes

against the social norms in order to satisfy her desires by leaving her home and children and having affairs with other men.

Edna's attempt to escape the society's obligations failed when she finally understands that she cannot do so, without generating irretrievable consequences. She is constrained to reason that she will never be fully satisfied with her life, as it is nothing like she pictures it after Robert leaves her for good. As a result, she chooses death over life as a last attempt to free her soul from the society that was imprisoning her.

3. Biographies of the two Authors

Theodore Dreiser

Theodore Herman Dreiser was born in 1871 in Terre Haute, Indiana. He was the twelfth of thirteen children. He graduated from high school and attended Indiana University and later on abandoned his studies. Years later he debuted his writing career as a journalist for the Chicago News Paper and then the *ST Louis Globe-Democrat* newspaper. His novel *Sister Carrie* (1900) marked the beginning of his literary career. Dreiser is originally known as a novelist but he also wrote short stories and poems. He published his first collection *Free and Other Stories* in 1918, constituted of eleven short stories and his poem "*The Aspirant*" in 1929. He was nominated to the Nobel Prize in Literature in 1930 but did not get it. The subject of his works focuses on Naturalism; Dreiser has the tendency to finish his novels with happy endings, and his main characters most of the time succeed at their aspirations, despite the unorthodox ways used to get to them. Among Dreiser's other famous works *An American Tragedy* (1925).

Kate Chopin

She was born Catherine O'Flaherty in St Louis in 1850, as a child she grew up surrounded by women which influenced her upbringing. Chopin attended a St. Louis Catholic girl's school, Academy of the Sacred Heart, from ages five to eighteen, where she learned

from nuns to talk out her opinion openly. Later, she marries Oscar Chopin with whom she had six children. When he died she took charge of his business in Couleville, an unusual behavior from a widowed woman at that time that has been qualified of unladylike. She began her literary career writing short stories for both adults and children that are published in popular literary magazines like *Vogue*. Later, she is inclined to a different literary genre which is realistic fiction. She was known as a regional local color writer; she wrote *Bayou Folks* (1890), a short story collection, and in 1894 she wrote her first novel *At Fault* followed five years later by *The Awakening* (1899) which for most was the novel that signed the end of her career as a writer; due to the negative reviews the novel received.

Endnotes

¹⁸Northrop Frye. *Anatomy of Criticism* (London: Princeton University Press, 1957), 186.

¹⁹*Ibid.*

²⁰*Ibid.*

²¹*Ibid.*

²²*Ibid*, 198.

²³*Ibid*, 189.

²⁴*Ibid*, 199.

²⁵*Ibid*, 200.

²⁶*Ibid*,

²⁷*Ibid*,202.

²⁸*Ibid*, 200,201.

²⁹*Ibid*,202.

³⁰*Ibid.*

³¹*Ibid*,187.

³²*Ibid.*

³³*Ibid*,193.

³⁴*Ibid.*

³⁵*Ibid*,195.

³⁶*Ibid.*

III. Results

The aim of this research is to study and examine Theodore Dreiser's *Sister Carrie* and Kate Chopin's *The Awakening* as romance. This study has permitted us to show that both novels can be approached from Northrop Frye's 'Mythos of Summer: Romance' which we have employed in the study of the two novels in terms of characterization and plot. It has also permitted us to show that the two works gave prominence to the characteristics of romance which are epitomized not only in the two main characters' quest but also in the two novels as a whole.

In the first chapter, we have engaged in a comparative study of Dreiser's *Sister Carrie* and Chopin's *The Awakening* main characters Edna Pontellier and Carrie Meeber, where we pointed out the similarities and the differences shared by both protagonists. In this procedure, we have relied on Frye's key concepts: 'innocent youth', and 'the contemplative adventure' or 'the end of movement where the hero is no longer active'. This study has shown that both protagonists are in a quest for an ideal, however, Carrie's quest is more materialistic compared with Edna's, which is rather spiritual. For the sake of attaining their aspirations, Carrie and Edna engaged in a journey of adventures through which both characters experienced hardship. Both writers portrayed their main characters as being innocent, but as the novels progress Dreiser and Chopin's protagonists lost their innocence. In this section, we have also shown the role each secondary character played in the life of both protagonists, and how they contributed in the pursuit of their quest, in the light of Frye's theory, as mentioned above.

Through our work, we have portrayed the secondary characters that contributed in the two heroines' journey in quest of their self-fulfillment, and the influence each one of them made on Carrie and Edna. On the one hand, Carrie Meeber is helped by two men. Charles Drouet introduces her to the theatre where she explores her talent as an actress and George

Hurstwood helped Carrie to achieve wealth and upgrade in social class. Bob Ames is the third character portrayed by the author to represent what Frye calls ‘spirit of nature’. Ames is somehow the voice of reason to Carrie. Edna, On the other hand, meets three characters that were a part of her awakening process. Robert Lebrun promoted her emotional awakening. Mademoiselle Reisz, a close friend of Edna, provoked her artistic awakening by her music that awakens Edna’s inspirations. Alcee Arobin is the third character who satisfies Edna’s sexual awakening. Moreover, Madame Ratignolle reminds Edna about her children and their future reputation, if she does not stop her illicit relationships with men. Doctor Mandelet advises Edna to change her behavior towards her family and society.

In the second chapter, as a sequel to the first one, we have analyzed the two novels in terms of plot; we have shown how the two novels embody the archetype of romance according to Northrop Frye. We have followed the scheme of struggle, ritual death and recognition. We have analyzed the two novels repartition of events and we found out that the two works can effectively be approached from some concept of romance. The two heroines embarked in a journey of adventures and struggle in a quest for an ideal. Although different, the two main characters’ ambition to succeed is strong. Throughout their journey both characters faced an enemy which is the society they lived in. The antagonist is the same in the two novels, although it had a different impact on the protagonists. In Carrie’s case, her obsession turned her into a materialistic woman. Carrie’s hunger for success has driven her to ignore the upbringing she received and all morals in order to satisfy her greed. On the other hand, Edna Pontellier’s wish to be independent leads her to leave her duties as a mother and wife to pursue her desires far from the conventional way of living in the late nineteenth century. The main protagonists leading a battle against the society knew eventually a tragic ending.

As a conclusion, this research has proven that Theodore Dreiser's *Sister Carrie* and Kate Chopin's *The Awakening* can be read and approached as romance due to the multiple similarities encountered concerning the characterization as we have seen all along our work. We have also proven that the theory we have chosen fits our study in terms of plot as well.

IV. Discussion

This part of the discussion will be divided into two main chapters. In the first chapter we will shed light on the main and secondary characters of the two works in relation to romance; whereas, in the second chapter we will focus on the study of the plot of the two works, making an appeal to Frye's theory.

1. The Study of Characterization

In this chapter, we are going to analyze the main characters in *Sister Carrie* (1900) by Theodore Dreiser and *The Awakening* (1899) by Kate Chopin in the light of Frye's theory of Romance. In doing so, we will proceed by two phases which are among the six phases of romance. In this analysis, we are going to focus on the second phase which is 'the innocent youth of the hero', and the last phase where 'the hero is no longer active'.

We start with Theodore Dreiser's *Sister Carrie* where all the events revolve around the main character Caroline Meeber (Carrie), and other secondary characters that are Charles Drouet and George Hurstwood. The two latter characters exert a significant influence on the protagonist. Thanks to them, Carrie has been able to reach her aspirations in becoming rich and famous. At the end of the novel, two other characters get into Carrie's life; Bob Ames and Mrs. Vance who in turn made great changes in her vision about life and the real meaning of happiness. Northrop Frye makes a distinction between two types of characters just like in the two literary works where we can find the characters who assist the two heroines. He states that:

The characterization of romance follows its general dialectic structure, which means that subtlety and complexity are not much favored. Characters tend to be either for or against the quest. If they assist it they are idealized as simply gallant or pure; if they obstruct it they are caricatured as simply villainous or cowardly.³⁷

As for Kate Chopin, in her novel *The Awakening*, the main character Edna Pontellier is in a quest for self-discovery. Throughout her journey, she meets other characters like Robert Lebrun, Mademoiselle Reisz and Alcee Arobin whose role is to assist her. These characters

are the source of Edna's inspiration either emotionally or artistically and physically. Chopin, though unintentionally, makes use of two characters, Madame Ratignolle and Doctor Mandelet, as the wise voice of the author, what Frye calls "The Spirit of Nature"³⁸. It comes at the end of the story to give advice to the main character, and through it, we understand the morality of the novel. Frye explains that the characters of this spirit represent "partly the moral neutrality of the intermediate world of nature and partly a world of mystery which is glimpsed but never seen, and which retreats when approached."³⁹

As far as 'the innocent youth of the hero' phase is concerned, in which the hero is characterized by an innocent youth and an optimistic vision of life, just like the two heroines Carrie and Edna with their great ambitions and innocence see the realization of their dreams possible to achieve. In Dreiser's novel, Carrie is first described as an innocent, timid, and beautiful country girl of eighteen years old. She lives in a poor and numbered family. These conditions did not permit her to have a comfortable life; in contrast, it urges her to travel from her mother's countryside in Wisconsin into the urban Chicago city. Carrie has great dreams like having a noble job and better living conditions. Thus, she boards a train for Chicago and takes only a few dollars in her purse. Dreiser describes her as follows:

When Caroline Meeber boarded the afternoon train for Chicago her total outfit consisted of a small trunk, which was checked in the baggage car, a cheap imitation alligator skin satchel holding some minor details of the toilet, a small lunch in a paper box and a yellow leather snap purse, containing her ticket, a scrap of paper with her sister's address in Van Buren Street, and four dollars in money. It was in August, 1889. She was eighteen years of age, bright, timid, **and full of the illusions of ignorance and youth.**⁴⁰(emphasis added)

Carrie's innocence and beauty attracted a salesman, in the train, whose name is Charles Drouet. Carrie's desire for wealth and ambition to gain money grows when she has looked through the train's window and thought about what Chicago might be; in addition, when she first saw Drouet's allure: "His clothes were of an impressive character, the suit being cut off a striped and crossed pattern of brown wool, very popular at that time."⁴¹

Drouet's good appearance and kindness left a good impression on Carrie who enters in a conversation with him. She ended up giving him her sister Minnie's address where she intends to stay. As Dreiser claims "when a girl leaves her home at eighteen, she does one of two things. Either she falls into saving hands and becomes better, or she rapidly assumes the cosmopolitan standard of virtue and becomes worse."⁴²

Once in Chicago, Carrie's brightness and beauty increase especially when she tries to imitate the Chicago girls. She is timid and very innocent in her manners. The author portrays her as an "innocence", that of a child whose "timidity born of uncertainty, and with a something childlike in her large eyes which captured the fancy of this starched and conventional poser among men."⁴³ Carrie's timidity and lack of experience also appear when she seeks for a job in the great stores and shoe factories "She had never done this thing before and lacked courage."⁴⁴ Carrie's inexperience does not help her to find a job at the very first moments but she soon manages to get one in a shoe factory. At work, she has found hard conditions which prevented her to continue, particularly after getting sick. In Chicago, Carrie recognizes the difference between the underdeveloped towns and the flourishing ones, she is attracted by the fancy clothing and her desire for material possession gets bigger more and more. She feels the need of finding another job and being a part of the highest class.

In Minnie's home, life seems to be more difficult, it is a modest house where Carrie spends her first days in Chicago. Even though she is beside her sister, the atmosphere is exactly the contrast of her dreams and hopes in the great civilized metropolis. In Carrie's disappointment and despairing state, just when she is on the fringe of returning home, Charles Drouet interferes and convinces her to go and live with him in his apartment. Carrie's great aspiration and desire to have a better life and possess good clothes and appearance steered her to leave all behind her. She forgets her virtue and morality and craves only for money and wealth. In fact, this shows how Carrie falls gradually from her innocence, when she accepts

“two soft, green, handsome- ten dollar bills”⁴⁵ offered by Drouet. Therefore, Carrie is no more the old Carrie, she is now the elegant Drouet’s mistress. As we read in what follows:

In Carrie, as in how many of our worldlings do they not, instinct and reason, desire and understanding warred for the mastery. In Carrie, as in how many of our worldlings are they not, instinct and desire were yet in part the victors. She followed whither her craving led. She was as yet more drawn than she drew.⁴⁶

Like *Sister Carrie*, the title of *the Awakening* in itself surrounds the diligence and the awakening of the main character Edna Pontellier who is portrayed as heedless and careless about her sentiments due to the oppression of her society and its moral codes. This ceased when she finally perceives herself as an individual with aspirations and innate desires.

Like Carrie, Edna Pontellier is portrayed before her marriage as a reserved young girl who suffers from a lack of affection with her family, especially after her mother died when she was a little girl. Edna rarely had a friend, and if she ever had one, she would be like her because most of her society’s girls had received the same education “even as a child she had lived her own small life all within herself.”⁴⁷ Kate Chopin describes Edna’s three lovers when she was in her teens. The first was a cavalry officer who comes to her father in Kentucky. Edna was very happy with his presence, but he does not notice her existence. The second was a young gentleman who used to visit a young lady from their adjoining farm and whom he married afterwards. The third was a great tragedian to whom Edna developed emotions, but her relationship was hopeless just like the other ones.

From her marriage with Leonce, Edna Pontellier is described as a woman who fulfills her duties as a wife and a mother of two children. Over time, she neglects her role as a “mother-woman”⁴⁸, she does not seem to idolize her children or worship her husband. Edna is displeased with her situation because of the husband who considers her as a personal property who serves in housework and keeps the children. Leonce is portrayed as an individual who takes care of his personal property and his material belongings. With his conventional attitudes and his position as a patriarch, he considers Edna among his

possessions, since women were perceived as a property which belongs to their father first, and then to their husband after marriage. Consequently, Kate Chopin describes him “as one looks at a valuable piece of personal property which has suffered some damage.”⁴⁹ Leonce does not consider Edna as his beloved; instead as a little child. Edna, in her turn, has no affection towards him and she considers their marriage as an accident. So, she sometimes cries alone at night in their front porch; as we read in what follows:

The tears came so fast to Mrs. Pontellier’s eyes that the damp sleeve of her peignoir no longer served to dry them. She was holding the back of her chair with one hand; her loose sleeve had slipped almost to the shoulder of her uplifted arm.⁵⁰

In Grand Isle, Edna Pontellier discovers herself as being different from the other Creole women. She does not speak freely as the others do; she rather speaks with reservation and limitation. She is not like Madame Ratignolle who is forthright and speaks spontaneously at any subject with male and female characters, the narrator states that:

A characteristic which distinguished them and which impressed Mrs. Pontellier most forcibly was their entire absence of prudery. Their freedom of expression was at first incomprehensible to her, though she had no difficulty in reconciling it with a lofty chastity which in the Creole woman seems to be inborn and unmistakable.⁵¹

Edna is influenced by the education of her own society. Being held back by societal constraints Edna feels like she is living a life assigned to her rather than living it in her own terms. Once in Grand Isle, she discovers another new way of expression; this is with the contribution of Madame Ratignolle who is described as Edna’s best friend to whom she reveals all her inward thoughts.

Madame Ratignolle, as she is portrayed by the narrator, is a perfect wife who is pleased with the norms of her society. She worships her husband and she is too careful about her children. Unlike Madame Ratignolle, Edna is not an ideal mother; she does not seem to give much importance to her children. In this context Chopin argues:

If one of her little Pontellier boys took a tumble whilst at play, he was not apt to rush crying to his mother’s arms for comfort; he would more likely pick himself up, wipe the water out his eyes and the sand out of his mouth, and go on playing.⁵²

Indeed, this shows her lack of feelings and affection because, in turn, she was deprived of tenderness when she was a little child. Edna did not live long with her mother, and she did not know much of a love interaction with her family. That is why she has no emotions to offer her children. She is raised by her older and emotionless sister Margaret, who occupied their mother's position and looked after her little sisters though she was young too. The narrator clearly denotes this when she says:

She was not accustomed to an outward and spoken expression of affection, either in herself or in others. She and her younger sister, Janet, had quarreled a good deal through force of unfortunate habit. Her older sister, Margaret, was matronly and dignified, probably from having assumed matronly and house-wifely responsibilities too early in life, their mother having died when they were quite young. Margaret was not effusive; she was practical.⁵³

Leonce has noticed Edna's demeanor with her children; thus, he becomes more conscious of her unwariness. Edna is not like the ordinary women of that time who look keenly after their children. She has not the sense of responsibility toward them, and she sometimes forgets that she is a mother of two children. Leonce wonders of who would keep the children if it is not their mother. Chopin writes about Leonce:

He reproached his wife with her inattention, her habitual neglect of the children. If it was not a mother's place to look after children, whose on earth was it, he himself had his hands full with his brokerage business. He could not be in two places at once; making a living for his family on the street, and staying at home to see that no harm befell them.⁵⁴

a. The Characters that Assisted the Two Heroines in their Quest:

Just like we have said before, According to Frye's theory of romance, there are two types of characters, those who assist the hero in his quest and those who obstruct it. In Dreiser's work, there are only those characters who helped the heroine in her quest who are Drouet and Hurstwood. To Begin with, Drouet appears as the first character who helps Carrie in her quest for material objects. After he introduces her to the theater where she discovers her talent as an actress, she soon enters the world of wealth and celebrity. The second character is George Hurstwood who is introduced to Carrie by Drouet. Hurstwood is portrayed as a rich

man who belongs to the high class. He works as the manager of the bar-restaurant Hannah and Hogg's. He is well known and well respected by all his acquaintances. Hurstwood's clever mind and good appearance attracted the protagonist who falls in his charm. Carrie's innocence is also shown, when she believes Hurstwood's love. The writer describes Hurstwood's falling in love as follows:

His passion has gotten to that stage now where it was no longer colored with reason. He did not trouble over little barriers of this sort in the face of so much loveliness. He would accept the situation with its difficulties he would not try to answer the objections which cold truth thrust upon him.⁵⁵

He makes her believe in his love and faithfulness. Carrie accepts to flee with him, but she is still ignorant about his state as being a married man and a father of two children. Dreiser writes: "there had been so much enthusiasm engendered that she was believing herself deeply in love. She sighed as she thought of her handsome adorer. Yes, she would get ready by Saturday. She would go and they would be happy."⁵⁶

In a big city like Chicago, everybody's interest is making a fortune and enjoying the pleasures of life, Drouet is one of them "Here was a type of the traveling canvasser for a manufacturing house, a class which at that time was first being dubbed by the slang of the day "drummers."⁵⁷ Drouet is portrayed as a perverse man who makes superficial affairs with women. He usually makes acquaintances with women, just for chasing pleasures and seeking their admiration. This is the case with Carrie who suddenly finds herself in an illegal state, being a mistress to Drouet, a matter which has created a dilemma with her cravings and moral codes. On the one hand, Carrie enjoys her comfortable situation, her new clothes, and pleased how Drouet takes her on the new luxurious places. On the other hand, her consciousness does not stop brooding on her moral values and her illegitimate affair with Drouet. Her rocking chair is her only refuge in the evenings. In front of the window, she stays gazing the glows of light where she flows on her own longings and deeds which create a conflict between her desires and the reality. Northrop Frye writes about the hero in Romance "Hence every typical

character in Romance tends to have his moral opposite confronting him, like black and white pieces in a chess game”⁵⁸. Dreiser describes Carrie when she is in this state facing her interior monologue:

“No” she would think. “What else could I do? I was so bad off. Where could I have gone? Not home again_ oh, I did not want to go there. I was in danger of being hungry. I had no clothes. Didn’t I try?” “Remember how men look upon what you have done,” said the voice. “I have nice clothes,” she would hum to herself in spirit, drowning the urgent voice. “They make me look so nice. I am safe. The world is not so bad now. It is not so dreadful_ what have I done?”⁵⁹

Her thoughts and inner voice characterize Carrie’s days when she was living in Drouet’s small flat. This is just the case with reference to romance theory where the hero suffers from inner conflicts and moral opposition that confront him all along his journey. In *Sister Carrie*, Dreiser has portrayed the main character as the victim of the materialist society. Carrie is obliged to react the way she does otherwise she would be molted in the streets and would suffer from starvation. The author does not indict his character in making her guilty. He alternatively defends his heroine and faces the charge to the circumstances of the society. He depicts Carrie as being conducted by her fate. The writer makes us know that Carrie’s actions are no longer controlled. Her deeds are justified by her destiny, first with Drouet, then with Hurstwood in Chicago and New York.

As it is mentioned before, the second character who assists the heroine in her quest is George Hurstwood who falls under Carrie’s charm and beauty. His encounter with Carrie calls for radical changes in both characters. The writer asserts:

Hurstwood was attracted by Carrie. He never for a moment concealed the fact from himself. He troubled himself not at all about Drouet’s priority or individuality. He was merely floating those gossamer threads of thought, which like the spider’s, he hoped would lay hold somewhere. He did not know, he could not guess, what the result would be.⁶⁰

Hurstwood, as he is portrayed by Dreiser, is a successful manager who by his hard work has achieved his social status. He has a well-equipped house in the north side near Lincoln Park. There, we can find his wife Julia, and his two children Jessica and George Jr. Despite his

wealth and his high position, Hurstwood feels enormous lack of love with his wife who seems to give more interest in his fortune and wealth; therefore, he is attracted by the small lady with the large eyes whom he promised to marry.

Dreiser provides an opposing description of the two men who assisted the heroine in her quest. Drouet is too keen to his appearance, and his dream consists only in belonging to the bourgeois class; “Drouet, for one, was lured as much by his longing for pleasure as by his desire to shine among his betters”⁶¹, Whereas Hurstwood, besides to his good allure and kindness, he is astute and clever “Hurstwood was an interesting character after his kind. He was shrewd and clever in many little things and capable of creating a good impression.”⁶²

In his work, Drouet is charged to find a young lady actress to give a theatrical performance. Having no choice, he proposes it to Carrie who soon enters the world of acting where she exerts her talent for the first time. This is just the beginning of the talented young lady who gradually becomes a celebrity. Accordingly, Drouet represents the first person to promote her rise, he becomes the first supporter to her; he encourages her constantly, and he even becomes interested to marry her. Meanwhile, Carrie is in love with the manager who in his turn sees her skill. Their secret meetings come to an end as soon as Carrie finds out Hurstwood’s being married and when Mrs. Hurstwood knows about her husband’s betrayal she; eventually got divorced and took most of Hurstwood’s fortune. Consequently, Hurstwood in need steals the bar-restaurant’s safe. He does so and lies to Carrie to get her with him and takes direction to Montreal. Consequently, Dreiser comments on Hurstwood that he becomes a man of action. Once in Canada, the couple marries under the false name Wheeler. Soon, Hurstwood gives back most of the money he robbed from the safe to have his conscious at ease and travels to New York.

In fact, New York is the turning point of both characters who by their fate exchange their social positions. Carrie as a poor girl attains the high class and becomes renowned and

prospering in her career as an actress; while Hurstwood is deprived of his social status and loses all his wealth and pride as a decent man. The author argues: “For another thing, Hurstwood missed the celebrities those well dressed, elite individuals who lend grace to the average bars and bring news from far off and exclusive circles.”⁶³

Eventhough Hurstwood does all his best to retrieve his position and restore his old incumbency, the lack of work opportunities that characterized New York City at that time precluded him to advance. Actually, journals were the only refuge to forget his angst. Dreiser asserts:

Hurstwood seemed more apathetic than ever. He saw her off mornings to rehearsals and the like with the utmost calm. He read and read. Several times he found himself staring at an item but thinking of something else.⁶⁴

Hurstwood constantly remembers the old days he spent in Chicago; he yearns for them and to Hannah and Hogg’s. He wonders of what his children and friends have become. Dreiser portrays Hurstwood:

He was unconscious of just how much this habit had gotten hold of him until one day he found his lips repeating an old answer he had made to one of his friends. They were in Hannah and Hogg’s. It was as if he stood in the door of his elegant little office, comfortably dressed, talking to Sagar Morrison about the value of some South Chicago real estate in which the latter was about to invest.⁶⁵

The situation continues to worsen; even Carrie could not help it. She is exhausted from the same reactions that come from Hurstwood, particularly after she tastes the wealth and the luxurious life with him. Carrie after her meeting with Mrs. Vance, a neighboring fashionable lady who belongs to the high class, starts to realize a better life and position. With Mrs. Vance, Carrie sojourns all the famous places in New York, like Broadway. This takes her from routine and passivity. So she feels the need for having a job, which she soon acquired in a chorus line.

Gradually, Carrie gets much more experience with her working act; she becomes a celebrity and appears in the front page of all newspapers and magazines. She becomes the most discussed subject and is desired by almost all men and actors; the author comments:

He liked Carrie, and said so, publicly, adding however that she was merely pretty, good-natured and lucky. This cut like a knife. The "Herald," getting up an entertainment for the benefit of its free ice fund, did her the honor to beg her to appear, along with other celebrities, for nothing. She was visited by a young author who had a play which he thought she could produce.⁶⁶

Carrie becomes a famous actress, her fortune gets bigger and she becomes independent, Carrie visits all the places she dreams of such as Waldorf hotel; thus, at the end, she feels no need for money. Indeed, Carrie in her wealthy position forgets all about Hurstwood and Drouet, and even her sister Minnie and all her family. She sees the present better and more privileged than the awful past.

Paradoxically, Hurstwood with his new pathetic position remained alone with no work and no home; he is relying on others to get his necessities. He hardly believes in his new state, his ignorance of the changes prevents him from getting a humble job to survive with, he still sees himself as the well-known manager. In addition, his physical weakness prevents him to be accepted in all the companies and saloons where he postulated for a job. His moral, intellectual and social position degraded with the coming days with no solutions. Indeed, Hurstwood crumble is due to his individual pride which led him to end as a wretched beggar who lost hope in life. The writer states:

He was beginning to find, in his wretched clothing and meager state of body, that people took him for a chronic type of bum and beggar. Police hustled him along, restaurant and lodging-house keepers turned him out promptly the moment he had his due, pedestrians waved him off. He found it more and more difficult to get anything from anybody.⁶⁷

Hurstwood experienced the bitterness of the huge city, it is the opposite which he lived and witnessed in his old days in Chicago. He has no more courage to face all this "Hurstwood put his hands, red from cold, down in his pockets. Tears came into his eyes."⁶⁸

Just like the case with Carrie, Edna Pontellier meets Robert Lebrun who is described as the first person to promote her rise. The latter devotes himself to women every summer at Grand Isle especially married ones. This time, his intentions with Edna are different from the previous ones because he has feelings for her. The protagonist feels the same, towards him;

for the first time she is sure of her feelings. Eventhough she has no physical contact with him, Robert Lebrun invades her mind and heart. Edna develops a sensual relationship with Robert; she discovers what was lacking in her marriage with Leonce who treats her as an object, not as a wife. With Robert Lebrun, she realizes her position as a human being and a woman with desires, Chopin writes: “in short Mrs. Pontellier was beginning to realize her position in the universe as a human being and to recognize her relation as an individual in the world within and around her.”⁶⁹

Like Drouet in *Sister Carrie*, who is the first who helped Carrie in her quest to achieve her dreams, Robert Lebrun is the man who assists Edna in her quest for self-realization and freedom. Robert is portrayed by the writer as being handsome and younger than Edna. He is somehow the first who awakens the main character’s emotions. Edna spends most of her time with him in the sea in secrecy, when everyone is in ignorance about her relationship. In addition, the sea where they swim awakens her sensuality with its warm and “sensuous”⁷⁰ water of the Mexican Gulf. With him, she enjoys her days and feels the perfect happiness; she is not used to these feelings with her husband or somebody else. In the sea, Edna wishes to swim off shore and reach a place that no woman has attained before in the ocean “she wanted to swim far out, where no woman had swum before.”⁷¹ She wants to do things that no woman did before. This shows her difference from the other women and the beginning of her awakening.

When Edna’s love affair becomes apparent, Robert Lebrun left Grand Isle for Mexico where he decides to make his fortune. In fact, this denotes Robert as a traditional man who runs after money in order to be well respected in the society like Drouet, besides his fear of engaging in an affair with a married woman. EdnaPontellier remains alone and starts to exercise and experience her desires and willingness. Just after Robert’s going, Edna feels a big emotional hole. Chopin describes Edna:

Robert's going had some way taken the brightness, the color, the meaning out of everything. The conditions of her life were in no way changed, but her whole existence was dulled, like a faded garment which seems to be no longer worth wearing. She sought him everywhere in others whom she induced to talk about him.⁷²

Accordingly, her husband Leonce notices a change in her behavior; the author notes that "He thought it very discouraging that his wife, who was the sole object of his existence, evinced so little interest in things which concerned him, and valued so little his conversation."⁷³ She starts to forget about her duties in society and disobeys her husband who is too keen about society's traditions. Similarly to Carrie, Edna Pontellier is portrayed as an innocent woman that gradually falls from innocence, the author writes:

Edna had once told Madame Ratignolle that she would never sacrifice herself for her children [...] I would give up the unessential; I would give my life for my children, but I wouldn't give myself. I can't make it more clear; it's only something which I am beginning to comprehend, which is revealing itself to me.⁷⁴

Edna Pontellier wants to be free from the social boundaries. In her journey to the self-discovery, she first lives the pure platonic feelings with Robert. Then, when she returns to New Orleans, she finds refuge in the artistic side and rediscovers her painting talent. Like Carrie who has inspiration every time she listens to her neighbor's piano, Edna feels the same when she hears Mademoiselle Reisz plays. The latter is a close friend to the main character; she is the second character who helps the protagonist in her quest. Mademoiselle Reisz is the complete opposite of Adele Ratignolle who is the second nearest friend to Edna. Reisz does not care much about the societal traditions; she, in contrast, devotes all of her time for herself and her passion for music. She encourages Edna in doing her sketch, and to cultivate her own creativity by owning a "soul that dares and defies"⁷⁵. Indeed, the lifestyle of Mademoiselle Reisz is what Edna wishes and wants to have. Edna is taken by her non-married happy state, and she hopes if she one day be independent of the patriarchal domination and the social codes. She finally wonders of how she could be successful in her talented career just like Mademoiselle Reisz. Kate Chopin wrote about Edna:

A thousand emotions have swept through me to-night. I don't comprehend half of them. Don't mind what I'm saying; I am just thinking aloud. I wonder if I shall ever be stirred again as Mademoiselle Reisz's playing moved me tonight. I wonder if any night on earth will ever again be like this one. It is like a night in a dream. The people about me are like some uncanny, half-human beings.⁷⁶

Edna finds in Reisz's music some sort of feelings that conduct her to the discovery of her true self "A certain light was beginning to dawn dimly within her, the light which, showing the way forbids it."⁷⁷ Moreover, Mademoiselle Reisz is one of the few characters who understand Edna's desire for freedom and independence from the conventional society; she is the only refuge to Edna, when she feels exhausted and bored. Accordingly, she is the only one who knows about Robert and Edna's love affair, therefore, she allows Edna to read the letters written by Robert Lebrun who used to write letters and send them to Mademoiselle Reitz because she is a friend of him. Robert expresses his emotions and feelings towards the protagonist in the letters which Reisz receives.

In order to satisfy her ever-growing consciousness, Edna Pontellier does not stop her journey in exercising her artwork; instead, she extends to the physical relationships with Alcee Arobin, a cheerful and fashionable man from the upper social class. Arobin is portrayed by the author as a womanizer. He has the reputation of being a philanderer. He goes from one woman to another. Despite Edna's love for Robert Lebrun, she makes an illicit relationship with Arobin who satisfies her physically, while Robert is out in Mexico. Actually, Edna does it in the purpose of pure pleasure. Consequently, she breaks the social norms of the conventional woman imposed by society and left behind her role as a wife and a mother. Furthermore, she has made a great step for her autonomy and her social freedom. As commented in the *American Literature Novel* "Edna is awakened not by her need for perfect sex but by her desire for independence, for a life free of the shackles of marriage and children"⁷⁸. It is the first time she explores her physical awakening on her repressed sexuality "it was the first kiss of life to which her nature had really responded."⁷⁹ Indeed, this leads the

protagonist to understand her own desires and her nature first as a woman and second as a human being who is endowed with innate needs.

Relying on her artistic talent, like Carrie, Edna becomes an independent woman who earns her own income; she moves to a new small house 'the pigeon-house' where she feels the total freedom that her old home lacked. She sometimes engages in self-reflection far from all the social duties, Edna spends her time in doing her own pleasures such as painting. In the pigeon house, she spends her first night with Alcee Arobin. She soon notices the difference between him and her beloved Robert Lebrun. In fact, Edna feels a physical attraction towards Arobin without involving any feelings though "she has said over and over to herself; to-day it is Arobin; to-morrow it will be someone else."⁸⁰ Despite her newly acquired independence, she does not help but thinking of Robert Lebrun; he owned her heart and mind even though he is far away from her; for this she acknowledges:

Thinking of Robert's words, the pressure of his arms and the feeling of his lips upon her own [...] his expression of love had already given him to her part. When she thought that he was there at hand, waiting for her, she grew with the intoxication of expectancy [...] she would awaken him with a kiss. She hoped he would be asleep that she might arouse him with her caresses.⁸¹

Like Carrie, Edna is no longer the woman she used to be; she is now following her instincts and desires and puts away the social duties. She does not care about her husband Leonce or about her children.

In her novel, Kate Chopin uses three characters who contributed to the protagonist's awakening and her evolution as a lucid human being. Starting from Robert Lebrun, who represents the romantic object, he is the first who awakens Edna emotionally. He makes Edna feel new sensations which push her to contemplate in her true self as a woman. Then, Mademoiselle Reisz encourages the main character in her artistic work and with the wages of the latter; she ultimately makes herself independent financially. Mademoiselle Reisz represents a perfect image of a happy independent woman who inspires Edna to be like her. The protagonist continues her quest finely with Alcee Arobin with whom she fulfills her

physical needs and who represents to her a sexual object. Actually, she is no more guided by the society's obligations; every step she makes toward herself gives her more power to be liberated. Chopin notes:

There was with her a feeling of having descended the social scale, with a corresponding sense of having risen in the spiritual. Every step which she took toward relieving herself from obligations added to strength and expansion as an individual.⁸²

b. The Characters that Represent the Spirit of Nature

Similarly to *The Awakening*, at the approximate end of *Sister Carrie*, Dreiser portrays a new character under the name of Bob Ames, who is Mrs. Vance's cousin. He is described as the "old wise man"⁸³ who gives advice to the main character. Dreiser comments about Ames:

Such characters are, more or less, children of nature, who can be brought to serve the hero, [...] as servants or friends of the hero, they impact the mysterious rapport with nature that so often marks the central figure of romance.⁸⁴

Carrie is attracted by this man; she has found in him what she could not find either in Drouet or Hurstwood. "He seemed wiser than Hurstwood, saner and wiser than Drouet. He seemed innocent and clean, and she thought that he was exceedingly pleasant."⁸⁵ After conversing with him, she recognizes that the literature she has read is so poor; and she absolutely knows nothing about the world. She learns that being a part of the high class is among his last worries, and money is not the synonym of happiness. Ames explains:

I shouldn't care to be rich' he told her as the dinner proceeded, and the supply of food warmed up his sympathies 'not rich enough to spend my money this way'. "Oh, wouldn't you?" said Carrie, the, to her, new attitude forcing itself distinctly upon her for the first time. "No" he said. "What good would it do? A man doesn't need this sort of thing to be happy."⁸⁶

Ames is the only wise voice among the other characters, though he is still young with, his philosophy about life is so wise. In fact, in this point, *Sister Carrie* differs from the traditional romances where wisdom is presented by an old man who has many experience in life.

Moreover, Dreiser considers Ames as an original thinker "besides Carrie and Ames, but the latter was too much of an original thinker to have much regard for conversation."⁸⁷

Northrop Frye considers such character as the “spirit of nature”⁸⁸ who makes great influence on the protagonist; he opens her eyes to the world and its philosophy and claims that wealth and success in love are not everything; “if a man doesn’t make knowledge of his object, he’s very likely to fail. He didn’t fail in anything but love and fortune, and that isn’t everything.”⁸⁹

Ames awakens in Carrie the desire to read and learn more; he helps her look at things differently and encourages her to change her acting role from comedy to tragedy. ““It’s in your eyes and mouth,” he went on. “I remember thinking, the first time I saw you, that your mouth looked as if you were about to cry.”⁹⁰ He convinces her that she will do great and reassures her that happiness depends on herself “your happiness is within yourself wholly if you will only believe it.”⁹¹

Indeed, Dreiser, at the end of the novel, draws a parallel rise and fall of his two characters. Carrie continues shining and rising among the celebrities. Hurstwood becomes old and gradually loses his physical and mental powers. The third character Drouet remains the same from the beginning until the end of the story. He is described as the flat character.

Furthermore, in Hurstwood desperate state, he decides to put an end to his life by turning on the gas, while Carrie sits in her rocking chair reading Balzac’s novel *Père Goriot* that Ames requested her to read, and which causes her to contemplate her life as a fallen woman after her success in making a fortune and luxurious living. The writer comments:

In her comfortable chamber at the Waldorf, Carrie was reading, at this time, “*Père Goriot*,” which Ames’s had commended to her. It was so strong, and Ames’s mere commendation had so aroused her interest, that she caught nearly the full sympathetic significance of it. For the first time it was being borne in upon her how silly and worthless had been her earlier reading, as a whole.⁹²

Actually, she feels pitiful about the sad end of the protagonist Goriot whose end is just like the one of Hurstwood, but she seems careless and forgets all about Hurstwood. Despite her wealth and fortune, Carrie remains unsatisfied with her fate, and she is now moving from

action to contemplation because she is no longer active; she is rather still looking for something else which she does not know or understand.

In Kate Chopin's work, the 'Spirit of Nature' is represented through the two characters Adele Ratignolle and Doctor Mandelet. Adele Ratignolle is represented all along the novel; meanwhile, Doctor Mandelet appears only at the end of the novel to advise the protagonist.

Starting with Edna's friend, Madame Ratignolle is portrayed as possessing the more feminine and matronly figure, and she is seen as the best example of the ideal Creole woman. Ratignolle symbolizes how women are supposed to be and behave in such a community, she devotes her time to her children and husband and performs her domestic duties; in which, she finds pleasure. In fact, she is the epitome of the perfect wife, and she is just the contrary of Edna Pontellier. Madame Ratignolle is very conservative in values, whereas Edna wants to attain social liberty by ignoring her responsibilities. Throughout her friendship with Adele Ratignolle, Edna learns the freedom of expression about some matters like love, pregnancy and childbirth affairs. Madame Ratignolle is the first to whom Edna Pontellier confesses her childhood and youngest dreams, and the times she was in love in her adolescence. She also tells her about her marriage with Leonce as being a pure accident. The wise voice of Madame Ratignolle appears when she advises Edna not to spend so much time alone with Arobin because people are gossiping about them. She also reminds Edna about her duties towards her husband and children, and the impact her acts can have on them and their future reputation "Think of the children, Edna, oh think of the children remember them."⁹³ She tells of the impossibility of her relationship with Robert Lebrun since she is a married woman.

In addition to Madame Ratignolle, Doctor Mandelet is the second character that Chopin uses as the voice of the spirit. He is described as the Pontellier's family physician. He is a fairly enlightened man who recognizes Edna's unpleasant state with her roles in society and

suspects about the existence of Edna's love relationship with another man. Doctor Mandelet, despite his awareness of Edna's secret affair, keeps it to himself. He is aware of the Pontellier's future reputation. When Leonce tells the Doctor about Edna's unconventional behavior, he advises him to let her alone. In fact, Doctor Mandelet has understood Edna and helps her with his advice to control her behavior with her surroundings and her society.

At the end of the novel, Edna Pontellier breaks up with Robert Lebrun. When she goes to help Madame Ratignolle deliver her baby, she asks Robert to wait for her. While she returns to the pigeon-house, Robert has already gone and left behind a good-bye note "I love you. Good-bye _because I love you."⁹⁴ Edna has felt a painful heartache and felt devastated by the information.

At the end of the novel, we notice that the heroine of Kate Chopin is just like the paradigm of romantic hero in romances where the protagonist is no longer active. Chopin describes Edna's return to Grand Isle, where she first met with Robert Lebrun. She thinks about her children, her husband, and her soul and how she has failed as a self-independent woman in a society dominated by conventional codes. She realizes that she cannot return to her earlier life with her husband and cannot hurt her children, if she goes with Robert Lebrun. Thus, she swims further and further and finally, she drowns herself. At the moment of her death, childhood thoughts were revealed; thus, Kate Chopin writes:

She looked into the distance, and the old terror flamed up for an instant, then sank again. Edna heard her father's voice and her sister Margaret's. She heard the barking of an old dog that was chained to the sycamore tree. The spurs of the cavalry officer clanged as he walked across the porch. There was the hum bees, and the musky odor of pinks filled the air.⁹⁵

As a conclusion to the character's analysis of *Sister Carrie* and *The Awakening*, we can say that both Carrie and Edna achieved their dreams and desires. Carrie has become very rich and famous, but she does not feel satisfied. She realizes the shallowness of her state as a wealthy and famed person. She remains unhappy despite the fact that she attains celebrity and the high class in society. As for Edna Pontellier, who becomes emotionally elevated and

physically satisfied does not end well either. Her fulfillment is in the detriment of her social status as a respectable married woman. Her fulfillment is temporary and that is why her death is significant, she cannot live and face her conventional society. As for the two characters who helped Carrie in her quest, Drouet, remains fixed in his state, and he does not make any efforts to change his life and his position. Hurstwood changes his position from the manager to the ex-manager and into a beggar and puts an end to his life. Like Carrie, Edna's quest is brought about by three characters, Robert Lebrun who awakens her sensuality, Mademoiselle Reisz who awakens her artistic talent, while Alcee Arobin awakens her physically. The spirit of nature is presented by Dreiser through the young character Bob Ames, whereas in *The Awakening*, Kate Chopin presents two characters Madame Ratignolle and Doctor Mendelet as the wise voice of the novel.

Endnotes

³⁷Northrop Frye. *Anatomy of Criticism* (London: Princeton University Press, 1957), 186.

³⁸Ibid, 195.

³⁹Ibid,196.

⁴⁰Theodore Dreiser. *Carrie Sister* (New York: Double Day Page and Company, 1900),03.

⁴¹Ibid,05

⁴²Ibid, 03, 04.

⁴³Ibid, 105.

⁴⁴Ibid,18.

⁴⁵Ibid, 62.

⁴⁶Ibid, 73,74.

⁴⁷Kate Chopin. *The Awakening* (New York: Barnes and Noble Classics, 2008), 18.

⁴⁸Ibid,12

⁴⁹Ibid,07.

⁵⁰Ibid,10.

⁵¹Ibid, 24

⁵²Ibid, 12.

⁵³Ibid,21.

⁵⁴Ibid,10.

⁵⁵Theodore Dreiser. *Sister Carrie* (New York: Double Day Page and Company, 1900),209.

⁵⁶Ibid, 210

⁵⁷Ibid, 05.

⁵⁸Northrop Frye. *Anatomy of Criticism* (London: Princeton University Press, 1957), 195.

⁵⁹Theodore Dreiser. *Sister Carrie* (New York: Double Day Page and Company, 1900),91.

⁶⁰Ibid,106,107.

⁶¹Ibid, 47.

⁶²Ibid, 43.

⁶³Ibid,309.

⁶⁴Ibid,431.

⁶⁵Ibid, 459.

⁶⁶Ibid, 457,458.

⁶⁷ Theodore Dreiser. *Sister Carrie* (New York: Double Day Page and Company, 1900), 491, 492.

⁶⁸Ibid,492

⁶⁹Kate Chopin. *The Awakening* (New York: Barnes and Noble classics, 2008), 17.

⁷⁰Ibid,18.

⁷¹Ibid, 32.

⁷²Ibid,50.

⁷³Ibid,09.

⁷⁴Ibid,08.

⁷⁵Ibid,33.

⁷⁶Ibid,17.

⁷⁷Boris Ford. *The New Pelican Guide to English Literature: American Literature London:* Penguin books, 1967), 220.

⁷⁸Kate Chopin. *The Awakening* (New York: Barnes and Noble classics, 2008),97.

⁷⁹ Ibid,75.

⁸⁰Ibid,80.

⁸¹Ibid,81.

⁸²Ibid, 94.

⁸³Northrop Frye. *Anatomy of Criticism* (London: Princeton University Press, 1957), 195.

⁸⁴Ibid,197.

⁸⁵Theodore Dreiser. *Sister Carrie* (New York: Double Day Page and Company, 1900), 335,336.

⁸⁶Ibid.

⁸⁷Ibid,481.

⁸⁸Northrop Frye. *Anatomy of Criticism* (London: Princeton University Press, 1957), 196.

⁸⁹Theodore Dreiser. *Sister Carrie* (New York: Double Day Page and Company, 1900), 482.

⁹⁰Ibid,484.

⁹¹Ibid, 482.

⁹²Ibid, 495.

⁹³Kate Chopin. *The Awakening* (New York: Barnes and Noble classics, 2008), 115.

⁹⁴Ibid, 117.

⁹⁵Ibid, 121.

2. The Study of Plot

This part of the research is devoted to the analysis of the romance aspect, in terms of plot, in Theodor Dreiser's *Sister Carrie* and Kate Chopin's *The Awakening*. As we have already explained in the Methods and Materials section, Frye makes a distinction of six phases in the Mythos of Summer: Romance. This chapter is based essentially on the third phase that is called 'the normal quest theme'.

a. Quest

According to Frye, the essential element of the plot is the adventure which would be a series of endless events if there are no quests, "the essential element in the plot of romance, he maintains, is adventure, and what gives shape to the adventure, thus preventing it from becoming a series of endless repetitions, is the quest."⁹⁶ Moreover, quest-romance is a search for libido or desire of self-fulfillment that will deliver it from the anxieties of reality. In this part of the study, we will try to apply this concept, and analyze both main characters quest.

The themes in both novels are closer to reality in a sense that both of the authors got inspired by real-life situations to write their novels, therefore, they are an example of a naturalist text. In *Sister Carrie*, Theodore Dreiser portrays the reality of the population in general and women's lives in particular in an industrialized city, and the struggles they undergo to get a position within a hegemonic society. He reveals to which extent people are ready to go against the ethics in order to upgrade in social class. All the more, Dreiser portrays the changes that are occurring within American society, due to the constant development of the industry. In doing so, Dreiser demonstrates to the reader, principally through his main character Carrie, a country girl driven by her desire for material wealth, what a woman does for a living in big cities, and how far she is ready to go to realize her dreams.

Therefore, it is evident that throughout the novel, Dreiser interprets the general atmosphere that reigned in America back in the late 19th century, and what actually led to

such drastic transition in the lives of the American population, and how money and social class contributed in this shift. In *Sister Carrie* we read:

In 1889 Chicago had the peculiar qualifications of growth which made such adventuresome pilgrimages even on the part of young girls plausible. Its many and growing commercial opportunities gave it widespread fame, which made of it a giant magnet, drawing to itself, from all quarters, the hopeful and the hopeless - those who had their fortune yet to make and those whose fortunes and affairs had reached a disastrous climax elsewhere.⁹⁷

Actually, Dreiser's sense of observation helped him figure out the changing that was occurring in that period and knew how to reproduce it in his novel, defying the moral codes of the late 19th century. It is important, however, to fathom that the developing capitalist economy in America urged country people to move to towns for better living conditions, and more working opportunities. Consequently, this resulted in the emergence of social classes, dividing the population into two groups, the wealthy and the poor. Dreiser portrays American capitalism's both dramatic and comic aspects through his characters and the encounters they faced throughout the novel.

It is known that Dreiser is openly influenced by Spencer Herbert and Darwin's Evolution Theory and used their conjectures to demonstrate the ideas of social determinism and the "survival of the fittest"⁹⁸ in his fiction. This is the case with Carrie who tries to fit in a society she does not belong to. In short, Darwin explores the idea of how human beings are affected by the animalistic remnants that undeniably exist in each one of us. Dreiser's novel reflects the base instincts through his characters, in taking decisions, sometimes far from reason, and this in the way they behave and the means they use to obtain what they want. This is shown in the following passage:

Our civilization is still in a middle stage, scarcely beast, in that it is no longer wholly guided by instinct; scarcely human, in that it is not yet wholly guided by reason. On the tiger, no responsibility rests. We see him aligned by nature with the forces of life - he is born into their keeping and without thought, he is protected. We see a man far removed from the lairs of the jungles, his innate instincts dulled by too near an approach to free-will, his free-will not sufficiently developed to replace his instincts and afford him perfect guidance.⁹⁹

Moreover, in all quest romance stories, the hero leaves the safety of home and undertakes a quest through a perilous ascension and goes through ordeals that test the protagonist's faith. In the late 19th century, American women aspired to a more unconventional way of living far from their already assigned role in society. It is the case with Carrie, who leaves her hometown seeking a better life. At the beginning of the novel, Dreiser portrays Carrie as a dreamful young woman on a train heading to Chicago, Dreiser describes the way she is dressed and the luggage she carries, which consists in a satchel and a purse. Dreiser also emphasizes the fact that her manners and her behavior are unspoiled. We read it as follows:

In the intuitive graces she was still crude. She could scarcely toss her head gracefully. Her hands were almost ineffectual for the same reason. The feet, though small, were set flatly. And yet she was interested in her charms, quick to understand the keener pleasures of life, ambitious to gain in material things. A half-equipped little knight she was, venturing to reconnoitre the mysterious city and dreaming wild dreams of some vague, far-off supremacy which should make it prey and subject, the proper penitent, groveling at a woman's slipper.¹⁰⁰

This phase is known from Frye's point of view as 'the innocent youth'. Frye argues that in romance this insight is: "most familiar to us from the story of Adam and Eve in Eden before the fall"¹⁰¹ this is the part where the hero is depicted as an innocent almost ignorant human being, which is the case with Carrie Meeber in the opening chapters:

Quest, literature based on a journey, a road of trials in which hero hears a call and leaves his home alone or in the company of others, to search out a treasure. Along the way he undergoes trials, receives aid, fights enemies and may even die, and, if he succeeds in attaining the treasure sought, may change who and what he is.¹⁰²

Throughout her journey, Carrie confronts difficulties that test her morals. From the beginning of the novel when she meets Drouet on the train, her first temptation appears when he gives her money which she accepts, without thinking twice about it. This is a starting point of her fall from innocence and her road to trial, as we read:

Some of it she now held in her hand, two soft, green ten-dollar bills, and she felt that she was immensely better off for the having of them. It was something that was a power in itself. One of her order of mind would have been content to be cast away upon a desert island with a bundle of money, and only the long strain of starvation would have taught her that in some cases it could have no value dreiser.¹⁰³

The real struggle starts when she leaves her sister, to live with Drouet. Carrie finds herself in an unknown world, where she must go through a series of tests in order to find her purpose, and eventually reach her goals in life. According to Frye, in all romance stories this phase is known as the 'perilous journey', it is, indeed, an important phase through which the protagonist must go in order to achieve a successful quest. Each time a problem is faced it teaches the hero a lesson and the latter grows in confidence. Frye writes:

The complete form of the romance is clearly the successful quest, and such a completed form has three main stages: the stage of the perilous journey and the preliminary minor adventures; the crucial struggle, usually some kind of battle in which either the hero or his foe, or both, must die; and the exaltation of the hero.¹⁰⁴

Carrie is left alone in an unfamiliar world where she gradually lost herself to a continuous series of mistakes in a quest of "the wish-fulfillment dream"¹⁰⁵, finding herself in a strange world Carrie progressively lost her innocence, it is maintained in the that:

The central action of all quest stories is the peril-filled journey the heroes must undertake to reach their goals [...]but the hardships heroes must face, do not fully begin until they have left their familiar surroundings and crossed into a mysterious world. In this new world, they must survive a series of ordeals, traveling a hard and dangerous path sometimes called "the road of trials" to win the prize they seek.¹⁰⁶

Once in Chicago, Carrie assumes that wealth, fashion and pleasure are the most important things in life. For this, she does the most improbable things a woman can do in late nineteenth century America, like living with a man out of marriage. Dreiser writes: "She realized in a dim way how much the city held_wealth, fashion, ease_ every adornment for women, and she longed for dress and beauty with a whole and fulsome heart."¹⁰⁷ Carrie's greed and weak morals lead her to make the wrong choices that prefigured her unhappiness at the end of the novel. Moreover, Carrie uses the men she meets and takes advantage of their wealth to achieve her purposes, and not hesitate to throw them away if she no longer needs them as she does with Drouet after she meets Hurstwood, a more affluent man than Drouet. Dreiser writes "When a man, however passively, becomes an obstacle to the fulfillment of a woman's desires, he becomes an odious thing in her eyes, - or will, given time enough."¹⁰⁸

Unlike Edna, Carrie reaches the dream she longed for so long. After going through a perilous journey of adventures and trials, she finally defeats the social restrictions. She becomes rich and famous but at the price of her own happiness. What she thinks would make her happy turns out to be the source of her misery and loneliness. This phase is most commonly known in Frye's *Anatomy of Criticism* as 'the exaltation or death of the hero'. It is the part where the protagonist reaches a state of happiness and is elevated in rank and power, as it is the case with Carrie, who rose in importance and wealth. Dreiser writes:

The little actress was in fine feather. She was realizing now what it was to be petted. For once she was admired, the sought-for. The independence of success now made its first faint showing. With the tables turned, she was looking down, rather than up, to her lover.¹⁰⁹

Dreiser describes Carrie, at the beginning of the novel, as an innocent and ambitious young woman; however, she gradually falls into the trap of the lavish lifestyle wealthy people lead. On her quest for fame and wealth, Carrie, like Edna Pontellier, in their pursuit of self-fulfillment, lives a wicked life. At the end of the novel, she is portrayed as spiritually dead in her rocking chair although she apparently reached her ultimate goal.

Analogically, in the other novel but within the same context, Kate Chopin exposes the same issue as Dreiser, which is gender inequality and social restrictions that characterized the 19th century. Relying on her own experience as a woman, Kate Chopin speaks out the desires of women that did not dare at that time, or at least a few dared to claim them out loud. In fact, it is obvious to readers and many critics like Lazar Ziff that Kate Chopin can relate to her main character Edna in many aspects. Like Kate Chopin, Edna Pontellier pays the price for defying the societal rules, Wyatt wrote:

She learned that her society would not tolerate her questionings. Her tortured silence as the new century arrived was a loss to American letters of the order of the untimely deaths of Crane and Norris. She was alive when the twentieth century began, but she had been struck mute by a society fearful in the face of an uncertain dawn.¹¹⁰

Unlike Carrie who yearns to material things and struggles to achieve wealth, Edna perceives her quest in personal, emotional and sexual realizations. Indeed the nature or goal of their quest is different.

Kate Chopin begins her novel with a caged parrot cursing at Mr. Pontellier, this is undeniably a strong symbol, that represents Edna's figurative imprisonment and unspoken feelings, and American women's entrapment in social constraints that hinder them to be independent. Edna's awakening process and self-realization begin at Grand Isle during summer, whilst in the beach with Robert Lebrun, the man with whom she would later on fall in love. Edna discovers within herself emotions that so far she thinks she lost and passion that no longer exists in her couple. Chopin writes:

She could only realize that she herself her present self was in some way different from the other self. That she was seeing with different eyes and making the acquaintance of new conditions in herself that colored and changed her environment, she did not yet suspect.¹¹¹

In Grand Isle, Edna meets people within the Creole society that leave a good impression on her, as she admires them, especially Madame Ratignolle, who is Edna's closest friend. Madame Ratignolle's openness and confidence aspires her to be a more sociable woman rather than the reserved woman she is. Ironically, Madame Ratignolle boisterously reminds Edna of her duties as a wife and mother. That is the reason why she turns to Mademoiselle Reisz, who lives a solitary life through art and passion. She is foremostly a loner rather than a woman who devotes herself to her family. Mademoiselle Reisz dedicates her time to herself and music, instead of focusing on society's expectations.

Whilst on vacation, Edna begins to prioritize herself over her family. Edna is overwhelmed with that feeling but she likes it, and instead of questioning herself back to reason, she lets that feeling control her. These strange feelings first appear when she hears Reisz' playing piano. Chopin pictures her state as follows:

She waited for the material pictures which she thought would gather and blaze before her imagination. She waited in vain. She saw no pictures of solitude, of

hope, of longing, or of despair. But the very passions themselves were aroused within her soul, swaying it, lashing it, as the waves daily beat upon her splendid body. She trembled, she was choking, and the tears blinded her.¹¹²

Furthermore, at Grand Isle Edna Pontellier spends a lot of time with Robert Lebrun, they end up hanging out all summer and eventually fall in love with each other. During their multiple conversations, Edna discovers within herself passion and joy for life, feelings revived by Robert. However, Robert is known to be a charming companion to the married women, his sweet talks are charming and amusing but are never to take seriously, as he does with Madame Ratignolle:

Meanwhile Robert, addressing Mrs. Pontellier, continued to tell of his one-time hopeless passion for Madame Ratignolle; of sleepless nights, of consuming flames till the very sea sizzled when he took his daily plunge. While the lady at the needle kept up a little running, contemptuous comment: "Blagueur--farceur--grosbete, va!"¹¹³

With Edna, things are different, Robert bears true feelings for her and it is reciprocal. Edna Pontellier never really loved her husband; she married him out of obligation, so it is not a surprise for her to feel something towards another man than her husband. The life of the mother-woman fails to satisfy her, so she uses Robert to compensate the emptiness inside her. Edna and Robert's relationship grows bigger and stronger over the days they spend at Grand Isle while on vacation.

He never assumed this seriocomic tone when alone with Mrs. Pontellier. She never knew precisely what to make of it; at that moment it was impossible for her to guess how much of it was jest and what proportion was earnest. It was understood that he had often spoken words of love to Madame Ratignolle, without any thought of being taken seriously. Mrs. Pontellier was glad he had not assumed a similar role toward herself. It would have been unacceptable and annoying.¹¹⁴

In this part of the novel, the protagonist is described as an ordinary young woman, spending her summer with her family. Edna is portrayed as a passive lady who seems to serve her life instead of living it. The way she views life drastically changes thanks to Creole people she meets at Grand Isle. This is, however, a turning point in her life that would later on gradually lead her to turn from a respectable woman to an irresponsible one. Because of her yearning for the wish-fulfillment dream and becoming a self-defined individual, Edna

Pontellier, like Sister Carrie, lost herself in a continuous flow of bad decisions, which prefigures her tragic ending by the end of the novel.

b. Antagonism

In all romance stories, protagonists come along with antagonists with whom they would confront in a crucial struggle where one of them or both must perish. In this sequel, we will try to analyze antagonism in both novels. In doing so, we will try to apply another concept of Frye's romance which is the 'conflict' or the 'agon' in its greek term. The antagonist in both novels is not a person, as we used to have in romance stories, but rather a whole community. Society in both novels is the antagonist and it affects the protagonists in different ways.

To begin with Dreiser's *Sister Carrie*, when Carrie moves to Chicago, she has not figured out yet what her plans would be for the future; however, Dreiser gives us an early description of Carrie, foreshadowing her behavior later on in the novel. This is what we read in the opening chapters:

Curiously she could not hold the money in hand without feeling some relief. Even after all her depressing conclusions she could sweep away thought about a matter and then the twenty dollars seemed wonderful and delightful thing. Ah, money, money, money. What a thing it was to have. How plenty of it would clear away all these troubles.¹¹⁵

Early in the novel, Dreiser points out Carrie's attraction towards material things. She soon shows signs of love towards luxurious possessions. She seems to set up her goal as for to become wealthy and upgrading in social classes from working class to middle class we read that in what follows: "dress goods, stationery, and jewelry. Each separate counter was a showplace of dazzling interest and attraction."¹¹⁶

Once in Chicago, Carrie starts doing small jobs to pay rent to her sister Minnie, but her convictions get bigger as she discovers the luxurious life rich people lead. Carrie soon forgets her morals when she, out of marriage, moves in with Drouet, a rich businessman she meets on the train and whom she barely knows. He makes her live the fancy life she always dreams of.

Carrie gets the bug of acting when she plays a role in a local theater production, from there; she starts to crave for money and fame.

Soon after, her lover Drouet introduces her to Hurstwood, another rich man, Carrie is smitten with him and the other way round, and they immediately start seeing each other behind Drouet's back. Hurstwood is a rich man and Carrie is not indifferent to that. Carrie adores money, for that, she is willing to do everything it takes to earn some eventhough it is in an immoral way. As we read in what follows:

Money] was something that was power in itself. One of [Carrie's] order of mind would have been content to be cast away upon a desert island with a bundle of money, and only the long strain of starvation would have taught her that in some cases it could have no value. Even then she would have had no conception of the relative value of the thing; her one thought would, undoubtedly, have concerned the pity of having so much power and the inability to use it.¹¹⁷

Furthermore, society back in the 1900s America is divided into social classes. Big cities like Chicago have known an important growth in the industry and economy. This is why people were moving there for work opportunities, as it is the case with Carrie. Before she arrives to Chicago, Carrie is a naive and a simple young woman, but she is soon absorbed by the town and discovers within herself the love for material things and money. Carrie is staggered by this life and wants to be a part of it. For this, she goes against the upbringing she received and her morals as a woman. She is attracted by fancy clothes and expensive jewelry. Carrie works herself off to get at the top of the social class. She thinks that being rich is the key to happiness; little does she know that none of her wealth is enough to fill her loneliness and sadness.

Antagonism in *Sister Carrie* is the society in a sense that before she arrives to Chicago, Carrie leads a normal life. She only starts noticing the differences between social classes once in Chicago. She deeply believes that being wealthy would permit her to fit in and make her happy. However, her wealth works against her only to make her miserable and lonely at the end of the novel. This is expressed in the following passage:

In the light of the world's attitude toward woman and her duties, the nature of Carrie's mental state deserves consideration. Actions such as hers are measured by an arbitrary scale. Society possesses a conventional standard whereby it judges all things. All men should be good, all women virtuous. Wherefore, villain, hast thou failed!¹¹⁸

Carrie's long and perilous journey in a quest for wealth makes her go against the codes of the society she lives in. While she is supposed to behave like an educated woman, she acts the opposite, which leads to her hopeless state at the end and this despite the fact that she realizes her dream as a wealthy and a famous actress.

As for Kate Chopin, in *The Awakening*, the antagonist is, as in Dreiser's *Sister Carrie*, the society; but it influences the protagonists of the two novels in a different way. Like other married women of 19th century America, Edna Pontellier was an upright woman who keeps her household. It is after going on vacation to Grand Isle with her husband, that her awakening process has taken place and drastically changes her. After returning home, Edna is no longer the woman she used to be. Her change has a great deal to do with the Creole people she met at Grand Isle like Madame Ratignolle.

This change is due mainly to her relationship with Robert Lebrun, who prefers to cut it short and run away to Mexico, rather than getting involved in an affair with a married woman. In addition, American society back in the 19th century was a pretty reserved one, where everyone must follow strict rules in order to live in harmony. Edna's new mentality does not seem to match with that society, as she follows her own desires. Edna does not care much about society.

Moreover, the social restrictions somehow stop Edna's inner and true self from showing up for so long. For years, she feels as if she is not herself and playing the role of a woman she is not. With her ever-growing awareness, she feels now alive more than ever and does not want to hold it back anymore. This is shown in the passage below:

Every step she took toward relieving herself of obligations added to her strength and expansion as an individual. She began to look with her own eyes; to see and to

apprehend the deeper undercurrents of life. No longer was she content to "feed upon opinion" when her own soul had invited her.¹¹⁹

Edna starts ignoring her social obligations as a woman and her responsibilities as a wife and a mother. The more Edna distances herself from society and its demands, the happier she felt as an individual. Edna is aware that she is going against society, which would condemn her as a terrible human being, however, she does not consider herself as a bad person. We can read it in this following passage:

One of these days, she said, "I'm going to pull myself together for a while and think--try to determine what character of a woman I am; for, candidly, I don't know. By all the codes which I am acquainted with, I am a devilishly wicked specimen of the sex. But some way I can't convince myself that I am. I must think about it."¹²⁰

This break from her social assigned role pleases Edna, until she realizes that society does not work that way. Her withdrawal from the society catches her off guard when she finally understands that she cannot be with Robert, her lover, because of the social ethics that expect from her to be a faithful woman. From that point, she starts compensating what she misses with another man. She leaves her children and home to devote herself doing what she likes, especially when her husband and children are out of town that Edna feels the pleasure of freedom and individuality. In this context, Chopin writes: "when Edna was at last alone, she breathed a big, genuine sigh of relief. A feeling that was unfamiliar but very delicious came over her."¹²¹

Nature and society are the two strongest forces attempting to shape Edna Pontellier into the woman they want her to be, preventing her from being independent. But through her suicide, Edna is finally able to escape their grasp. Her husband Leonce Pontellier and the society somehow own her, in a way that they force her to be submissive, to tend house, adore her children and keep up appearances. As for Raoul and Etienne, her children, she feels as they are imprisoning her body, constantly reminding her of the torture of childbirth that nature requires of her. Nature keeps Edna loving her children and declaring that she would give up

almost everything for them, but it is her desire for individuality and self-definition that triumphs and lead her to her deathly awakening.

Through her awakening process and her new libido, Edna Pontellier thinks she can take charge of her life and master her destiny. She overestimates her power to make a change in her life and takes for granted the society and its norms. By going against society and its strict rules, Edna faces a wall of disappointment and the harsh reality. She finally understands that she could not turn her idealistic look at life into something concrete and eventually kills herself in a last attempt to escape her fate.

c. The Tragic Ending

This stage, as Frye names it, is ‘the anagnorisis’ which is “the recognition of the hero, who has clearly proved himself to be a hero even if he does not survive the conflict.”¹²² In *Sister Carrie*, the ending is characterized with the downfall of the main character Carrie Meeber. At the end of the novel, she is portrayed as being lonely and miserable in her rocking chair despite the fact that she reached her goal which consists in becoming rich. In all romance stories, where the common plot is a basic quest sequence, it is an obligatory passage in the novel where the protagonist and his antagonist confront each other in a final duel and at the end, one of them triumphs over the other.

At the very beginning of the novel, Carrie has no clue as for her plans once in Chicago. Afterwards Carrie wants to become rich when she tastes a more luxurious lifestyle than the modest life she used to have, thanks to Drouet. Carrie seems to find her way when he introduces her to the theatre, a turning point in her life. She finally seems to find her vocation.

As we read in this passage:

Carrie, from now on, was easily the centre of interest. The audience, which had been inclined to feel that nothing could be good, after the first gloomy impression, now went to the other extreme and saw power where it was not. The general feeling reacting on Carrie. She presented her part with some felicity, though nothing like the intensity which had aroused the feeling at the end of the long first act.¹²³

Carrie Meeber's ambition gets bigger, she is a talented actress so she does not find any difficulties raising as a big actress in both Chicago and New York, after Hurstwood sets her up to move to Montreal and afterwards to New York with him. In New York, things does not go as planned for Hurstwood, as a result, he finds himself jobless and under the care of Carrie that supports him financially. Fed up with Hurstwood's inability to find a job, Carrie leaves him to pursue an acting career. Carrie's frustration with Hurstwood becoming a burden, builds up when she finally decides to strike out on her own, it is maintained that:

“Dear George,” he read, crunching the money in one hand. ‘I am going away. I’m not coming back any more. It’s no use trying to keep up the flat. I can’t do it. I wouldn’t mind helping you if I could, but I can’t support us both and pay the rent. I need what little I make to pay for my clothes. I’m leaving twenty dollars. It’s all I have just now. You can do whatever you like with the furniture. I won’t want it.’¹²⁴

In her quest for a lavish life and status, Carrie Meeber does not think that attaining what she longs for would be a curse rather than a blessing. Throughout her journey, Carrie knows failure, but she realizes her ultimate dream and aroses to stardom and finally gains the status she craves for. This is plainly expressed in this passage:

Carrie! Oh Carrie! ever whole in that thou art ever hopeful, know that the light is but now in these his eyes. Tomorrow it shall be melted and dissolved. Tomorrow it shall be on and further on, still leading, still alluring, until thought is not with you and heartaches are no more.¹²⁵

Things are not as she pictures they would be. At this point of the novel, the protagonist either defeats the antagonist or the other way round “the crucial struggle, usually some kind of battle in which either the hero or his foe, or both, must die”¹²⁶ in *Sister Carrie*, Carrie is defeated. By realizing her dream of becoming rich and famous, Carrie thinks she would finally be happy, but the opposite happens. Carrie finds herself alone and miserable, and although Carrie becomes a wealthy celebrity, she feels unhappy. As we read in this passage

Oh, blind strivings of the human heart. Onward, onward it saith, and where beauty leads, there it follows. Whether it be the tinkle of a lone sheep bell o’er some quiet landscape, or the glimmer of beauty in sylvan places, or the show of soul in some passing eyes, the heart knows and makes answer, following. It is when the feet weary in pursuit and hope is vain that the heartaches and the longings rise.¹²⁷

In this ultimate scene, Carrie is described in her rocking chair isolated and lonely. Against all expectations, Carrie's ambition to gain wealth, fame and social status lead to her downfall. Contrarily to what she thinks, money does not bring any satisfaction or joy to her life. Carrie's tragic ending does not involve her being physically dead but rather spiritually dead.

As far as *The Awakening* is concerned, things do not end up well for Edna Pontellier either. At the beginning of the novel, Edna defines herself as a woman a mother and a member of the society. As the story progresses, Edna seems to look for herself as an individual, in a flow of events where she grows to be aware of who she truly wants to be. Constantly following her desires and her will to be an independent woman, Edna like Carrie Meeber live a wicked life that leads her to an inevitable downfall at the end of the novel: "She was flushed and felt intoxicated with the sound of her own voice and the unaccustomed taste of candor. It muddled her like wine, or like a first breath of freedom."¹²⁸

Edna's awakening process begin in the sea, where her efforts to learn how to swim finally pays off, she swims alone experiencing freedom and solitude which she likes, and a place as she calls it "the unlimited in which to lose herself."¹²⁹ She realizes in a glance how easy and natural it feels. Edna is scared and swims back to the security of the shore but that night is a turning point in her life, where she breaks with the conformity of the society to finally be herself. We read this in the following passage:

For the first time, she recognized the symptoms of infatuation which she had felt incipiently as a child, as a girl in her early teens, and later as a young woman. The recognition did not lessen the reality, the poignancy of the revelation by any suggestion or promise of instability.¹³⁰

Furthermore, Edna's coexistence for a defined period of time with Creole society has a lot to do with her shift concerning the way she views life. She gets conscious that her adulthood is a series of events she has not chosen, like getting married and having children, but rather a life that society enforces on her. She feels like she is stuck in an assigned role, like all other women of that era that she no longer wants to play: "She was becoming herself and daily

casting aside that fictitious self which we assume like a garment with which to appear before the world.”¹³¹

In her quest for self-delivery, Edna Pontellier goes against her role as a mother and a wife; she stops pretending and keeping up appearances in an attempt to free herself. This break with society is not without consequences. Her neglect towards her responsibilities backfires and it takes a tragic and unexpected turn of events for Edna. The latter underestimates the influence that society has on people and overestimates her power of willing to change that. At the end of the novel, this is represented with the bird with a broken wing Edna sees as she walks in the shore. This is indeed an equivocal symbolism that highlights both Edna's failure to find freedom and happiness and her rejection to be a submissive woman.

All in all, the study of Kate Chopin's *The Awakening* and Theodore Dreiser's *Sister Carrie* in terms of plot, lead us to the conclusion that both main characters of both novels went through the three stages of romance which are the minor events, the perilous journey, and the exaltation or the death of the hero, to only at the end of the novel achieve their quest of wish-fulfillment and individuality. For Carrie, fame and wealth were not her first wish when she travels to Chicago. She starts liking material possessions when Drouet introduces her to the fancy world that so far, was a mystery for her. Carrie's quest for money and fame takes over her common sense as she goes against morals in order to fulfill her desires. At the end of the novel her efforts to become rich and famous are not made in vain, but at the price of her own happiness, since Dreiser portrays her as being unhappy, despite the apparent fact that she achieved her quest.

As for Edna, her self-realization begin at Grand Isle, she progressively abandons her duties as a mother and a wife to follow her needs; as a result, she ends up asking for more and get lost particularly when Robert Lebrun left her for good. From that point, Edna realizes that

she is not in control anymore, or more accurately she never was. She realized in a dim way that no matter how hard she tries, she will never become totally independent, and as a last attempt to free herself from society's grasp, she drowns herself in the ocean.

Endnotes

⁹⁶Denham, D Robert "Northrop Frye and Critical Method" (Mac Master University, Penn State University Press, 1978), 72.

<http://macblog.mcmaster.ca/fryeblog/critical-method:theory-of-myths.html>

⁹⁷Theodore Dreiser. "Sister Carrie" (New York: Double Day Page and Company, 1900), 15, 16.

⁹⁸Spenser Herbert. "Principles of Biology" (University press of the Pac, 1864), 444.

⁹⁹Theodore Dreiser. "Sister Carrie" (New York: Double Day Page and Company, 1900), 73.

¹⁰⁰Ibid, 04.

¹⁰¹Northrop Frye. "Anatomy of Criticism" (London: Princeton University Press, 1957), 199, 200.

¹⁰²<http://commons.wvc.edu/nhoward/215/course%20Documents/MYTH%20OF%20QUESTF10SF.pdf>

¹⁰³Theodore Dreiser. "Sister Carrie" (New York: Double Day Page and Company, 1900), 62.

¹⁰⁴Northrop Frye. "Anatomy of Criticism" (London: Princeton University Press, 1957), 187.

¹⁰⁵Ibid, 186.

¹⁰⁶Howard, Nancy "The Quest Motif in Literature" (New York: Wenatchee Valley College, 2010), 7 <https://commons.wvc.edu/nhoward/215/Course%20Documents/MYTH%20OF%20QUESTF10SF.pdf>

¹⁰⁷Theodore Dreiser. "Sister Carrie" (New York: Double Day Page and Company, 1900), 23.

¹⁰⁸Ibid, 395.

¹⁰⁹Ibid, 193.

¹¹⁰Neal, Wyatt "Biography of Kate Chopin: A biography of Kate Chopin from Empirezine" (*Domestic Goddesses* site, 1995), 305. <https://archive.vcu.edu/english/engweb/webtexts/hour/katebio.html>

¹¹¹Kate Chopin. "The Awakening" (New York: Barnes and Noble classics, 2008), 45.

¹¹²Ibid, 30.

¹¹³Ibid,15.

¹¹⁴Ibid.

¹¹⁵Theodore Dreiser. "Sister Carrie" (New York: Double Day Page and Company, 1900), 66.

¹¹⁶Ibid, 22.

¹¹⁷Ibid, 62.

¹¹⁸Ibid, 87.

¹¹⁹Kate Chopin. "The Awakening" (New York: Barnes and Noble classics, 2008), 99.

¹²⁰Ibid, 87.

¹²¹Ibid, 77.

¹²²Northrop Frye."Anatomy of Criticism"(London: Princeton University Press, 1957), 187.

¹²³Theodore Dreiser. "Sister Carrie" (New York: Double Day Page and Company, 1900), 178.

¹²⁴Ibid, 439.

¹²⁵Ibid, 487.

¹²⁶Northrop Frye."Anatomy of Criticism"(London: Princeton University Press, 1957), 187.

¹²⁷Theodore Dreiser. "Sister Carrie" (New York: Double Day Page and Company, 1900), 487.

¹²⁸Kate Chopin. "The Awakening" (New York: Barnes and Noble classics, 2008), 23.

¹²⁹Ibid, 28.

¹³⁰Ibid, 50.

¹³¹Ibid, 62.

V. Conclusion

In this paper, we have tried to study Theodore Dreiser's *Sister Carrie* (1900) and Kate Chopin's *The Awakening* (1899), in the light of Northrop Frye's theory of Romance which is clearly explained in his book *Anatomy of Criticism* (1957). We have reached the conclusion that both works can be read as romance, since they both have made propinquities to the notions used in romance.

This dissertation has proved that the two authors meet in many points concerning the quest for desire and self-realization of their main characters. In *Sister Carrie*, Dreiser has portrayed the protagonist as a young girl with ambitions and desires that consist of achieving a better social class, making a fortune and becoming a celebrity. It is the case in Kate Chopin's *The Awakening* where the protagonist Edna Pontellier is described as a young wife with two children and who dreams of self-independence from the conventional society. She explores her desires emotionally, physically and artistically through the contribution of other characters. The two writers present both heroines' journey of the self-discovery and the way they fail at the end of both novels.

The two authors meet in some points but differ in some others. Dreiser and Chopin use the same concepts of Romance theory, they have written about the heroines' quest and journey. Nevertheless, they differ in the way they have developed their protagonist's quest as Romance. Theodore Dreiser explores Romance in relation to the materialistic sphere because the heroine Carrie wants to become rich and own more money and wealth, whereas Kate Chopin's novel, Edna Pontellier hopes to be free from the social duties and codes; thus, Edna presents the spiritual sphere by exercising her artistic, emotional and physical awakening in a society where men are the only dominant power. The two writers also differ in the way and places they portrayed the main characters, Dreiser depicts Carrie in both metropolis cities which are Chicago and New York, while Chopin situates Edna in a regional society in

Louisiana where life is underdeveloped. Despite these differences, the authors' objective is the same; it consists of portraying the life of the individual which is the victim of American society in the late nineteenth century.

In this research paper, we have attempted to study the points that have not been analyzed in the scope of previous works done on this topic. In the light of romance theory by Northrop Frye, we have discussed characterization and plot as romance. Moreover, in an attempt to make Kate Chopin well known to our readership, we have made this comparison with the famous writer Theodore Dreiser. The scope of our research work does not permit us to compare and discuss all the issues that underline *Sister Carrie* and *The Awakening*. Thus, we can say that further studies can be required and developed in this comparison with the same theme, such as Emile Zola Nana (1991).

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