

# New Female Archetypes in Literature: The Cases of Sister Carrie And Oyimtilla

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**Abstract:** This article explores the emergence and transformation of the "New Woman" archetype in literature through a comparative analysis of Theodore Dreiser's *Sister Carrie* and Zulfiyakhanim Qurolboy Qizi's *Oyimtilla*. Both novels portray female protagonists—Caroline Meeber and Nilufar—who challenge traditional gender roles and strive for independence, self-realization, and agency within their respective societies. While *Sister Carrie* reflects the socio-economic dynamics of early 20th-century America, *Oyimtilla* engages with the evolving identity of women in a post-Soviet Uzbek context. By examining the cultural, historical, and ideological frameworks shaping these characters, the study highlights how the figure of the New Woman functions as a symbol of change, resistance, and empowerment across different literary traditions.

**Keywords:** New Woman, female archetypes, gender roles, *Sister Carrie*, *Oyimtilla*, American literature, Uzbek literature, comparative analysis, women in literature, literary representation.

**Introduction:** The representation of women in literature has undergone a profound transformation over the past centuries, reflecting broader social, cultural, and ideological shifts. Among the most significant developments is the emergence of the "New Woman" archetype—a literary figure that challenges traditional gender roles and seeks autonomy, intellectual freedom, and self-expression. This archetype first gained prominence in late 19th- and early 20th-century Western literature and has since evolved across different cultural contexts.

This study offers a comparative exploration of two novels—*Sister Carrie* by American author Theodore Dreiser and *Oyimtilla* by Uzbek writer Zulfiyakhanim Qurolboy Qizi—that exemplify this transformation. While *Sister Carrie* presents the story of Caroline Meeber navigating the capitalist urban landscape of early 20th-century America, *Oyimtilla* introduces Nilufar, a modern Uzbek woman redefining her identity in a post-Soviet society. Despite their differing cultural and historical settings, both protagonists embody the spirit of the New Woman through their pursuit of independence, personal growth, and resistance to societal expectations.

By examining these characters and their respective environments, this paper aims to highlight the ways in which literature reflects and shapes evolving notions of womanhood. The comparative approach not only emphasizes the universality of the New Woman figure but also reveals how specific cultural narratives influence her representation and significance.

## Literature Review

The concept of the "New Woman" has been a subject of scholarly interest since the late 19th century, particularly in studies of gender and literary representation. Coined during the fin de siècle period, the term describes a generation of women who resisted the constraints of domesticity, demanded educational and professional opportunities, and asserted their right to personal and sexual freedom. Literary critics such as Elaine Showalter and Sandra Gilbert have explored how the New Woman archetype emerged in response to patriarchal narratives and became a central figure in feminist literary discourse.

In American literature, *Sister Carrie* (1900) by Theodore Dreiser is often cited as a seminal text that illustrates the New Woman's complex position within capitalist society. Critics have highlighted how Carrie Meeber's

journey from small-town girl to urban actress symbolizes both the possibilities and perils of female ambition in a rapidly modernizing world. According to Donald Pizer (1991), Dreiser portrays Carrie not as a moral lesson but as a realistic character shaped by her environment and desires, which marked a departure from moralistic depictions of women in earlier literature.

Zulfiyakhanim Qurolboy Qizi's *Oyimtilla* contributes to this discourse by introducing a protagonist, Nilufar, who redefines femininity in a contemporary Uzbek context. While few academic sources exist on *Oyimtilla* specifically, it resonates with the broader trend of post-Soviet literature seeking to renegotiate gender roles and national identity.

Thus, this study fills a gap in literary scholarship by offering a cross-cultural comparison of female archetypes in *Sister Carrie* and *Oyimtilla*, situating both within their socio-historical and ideological frameworks.

## METHODOLOGY

This study employs a comparative literary analysis approach to examine the representation of the New Woman archetype in *Sister Carrie* by Theodore Dreiser and *Oyimtilla* by Zulfiyakhanim Qurolboy Qizi. The analysis is grounded in feminist literary theory and contextualized within the respective historical, social, and cultural backgrounds of early 20th-century America and post-Soviet Uzbekistan.

Primary sources for the study include the full texts of both novels, with close reading techniques used to explore character development, narrative structure, and thematic content related to gender roles, female autonomy, and societal expectations. Particular attention is given to the protagonists—Caroline Meeber and Nilufar—as case studies for understanding how literary female figures negotiate power, identity, and independence.

Secondary sources include scholarly articles, literary critiques, and historical texts that provide insight into the socio-political environments influencing each novel. American feminist criticism, such as the works of Elaine Showalter and Sandra Gilbert, supports the analysis of *Sister Carrie*, while Central Asian gender studies and Uzbek literary scholarship inform the reading of *Oyimtilla*.

By comparing these two texts within a shared framework of feminist theory and cultural criticism, the methodology allows for a nuanced understanding of how the New Woman archetype is adapted and transformed across different literary traditions. This approach not only highlights the universal aspects of

female resistance and self-realization but also reveals the culturally specific expressions of womanhood in American and Uzbek narratives.

## DISCUSSION

The protagonists of *Sister Carrie* and *Oyimtilla*, though separated by geography, history, and cultural context, share striking similarities in their rejection of traditional female roles and their pursuit of personal agency. Both Caroline Meeber and Nilufar challenge the expectations imposed upon them by patriarchal societies, embodying the archetype of the New Woman in distinct yet comparable ways.

In *Sister Carrie*, Dreiser presents Caroline as a young woman who escapes the constraints of small-town life in pursuit of independence and success in the urban landscape of Chicago. Carrie's transformation from a factory worker to a stage actress reflects not only her personal ambition but also the broader changes in gender dynamics during America's industrial age. Her relationships with Drouet and Hurstwood are significant not because they define her, but because they catalyze her realization that economic and emotional dependence do not equate to fulfillment. As her success grows, Carrie becomes less reliant on male support, asserting control over her life and career—hallmarks of the New Woman ideal.

Conversely, Nilufar in *Oyimtilla* emerges within the complex post-Soviet Uzbek society, where women are caught between lingering traditional expectations and the modern push for gender equality. Unlike Carrie, Nilufar's struggle is not just for individual success but also for redefining the role of women within her family and community. Her journey involves questioning cultural norms, confronting societal pressure to conform, and seeking intellectual and emotional freedom. Nilufar's character is shaped by the tensions of a society in transition, and her assertiveness and resilience reflect a localized version of the New Woman archetype—rooted in Uzbek values yet aspiring toward global notions of equality and selfhood.

While Carrie's narrative is framed within the capitalist, consumer-driven American Dream, Nilufar's is embedded in a postcolonial reality where identity, nationhood, and gender are renegotiated. Yet, both narratives underline the agency of women who refuse to be confined by convention. This comparison reveals that despite cultural differences, literature serves as a powerful space for reimagining womanhood and projecting female empowerment.

## Comparative Analysis

The comparison between *Sister Carrie* and *Oyimtilla* reveals how the archetype of the New Woman

functions across different cultural and historical landscapes, adapting to the unique social challenges and ideological frameworks of each setting. While both novels center on female protagonists who strive for autonomy and redefine traditional gender expectations, the manner in which this transformation unfolds is shaped by their distinct environments.

In *Sister Carrie*, the New Woman is portrayed within the context of American urbanization, industrial capitalism, and the evolving social fabric of the early 20th century. Caroline Meeber's ascent from poverty to fame mirrors the American Dream but also critiques it, highlighting the emptiness of material success when unaccompanied by emotional or spiritual fulfillment. Her independence is achieved primarily through economic means, and her story underscores the shifting roles of women in the public and private spheres during a period of rapid modernization.

In contrast, *Oyimtilla* situates its protagonist Nilufar within a post-Soviet Uzbek society, where the legacy of Soviet gender policies, Islamic cultural revival, and traditional family structures coexist in tension. Unlike Carrie, whose liberation is rooted in urban consumer culture, Nilufar's journey toward self-realization is deeply tied to questions of national identity, moral values, and the reinterpretation of womanhood in a transitioning society. Her resistance is more internal, moral, and communal, reflecting a broader struggle of Central Asian women to assert their voices while remaining culturally grounded.

## CONCLUSION

The comparative study of *Sister Carrie* and *Oyimtilla* illustrates how the archetype of the New Woman transcends national and cultural boundaries, while also adapting to the unique social, political, and ideological environments of each society. Both Caroline Meeber and Nilufar challenge traditional expectations of womanhood, seeking personal autonomy, intellectual freedom, and self-definition in the face of societal constraints.

Theodore Dreiser presents a New Woman shaped by the forces of industrial capitalism and urban modernity, emphasizing survival and ambition within an indifferent society. In contrast, Zulfiyakhanim Qurolboy Qizi portrays a protagonist whose development is grounded in ethical reflection and cultural awareness, highlighting a more spiritually and communally rooted version of the New Woman in post-Soviet Uzbekistan.

This study not only contributes to the understanding of gender roles in American and Uzbek literature but also reinforces the importance of cross-cultural literary analysis in revealing the universal and diverse expressions of women's struggles and empowerment

in literature.

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