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**THE PROBLEM OF PLOT DYNAMICS IN KATE CHOPIN’S NOVELS<sup>7</sup>****Ibodullayeva Zilola Jamshid qizi**

Doctoral student

Uzbekistan State World Languages University

Tashkent, Uzbekistan

Tel: +998 99 634 10 99

ORCID ID: 0009-0004-9463-7113

**ABSTRACT**

This article is devoted to analyzing plot dynamics in Kate Chopin’s novels “The Awakening” (1899) and “At Fault” (1890). It explores how, in late 19th-century American literature, traditional event-centered narratives gradually began to be replaced by plots focused on depicting the characters’ inner lives. The aim of the study is to determine how Chopin develops the plot through psychological portrayal and how inner experiences, such as stream-of-consciousness, function within the narrative. The research tasks include identifying the stages of plot transformation, analyzing internal conflict and the process of self-discovery, and examining the interaction between external events and subjective experience. The study employs narratological, psychoanalytic, and hermeneutic approaches as its main methods. The findings indicate that *The Story of an Hour* retains plot elements based on external events, but the development of these events is centered on the moral principles and psychological states of the characters. In “The Awakening”, the plot is entirely centered on stream-of-consciousness, with the protagonist’s psychological growth serving as the driving force that shapes the unfolding of events. In conclusion, Chopin’s novels demonstrate a significant shift from portraying specific events to a paradigm focused on representing the characters’ inner worlds, highlighting her contribution to modern literature.

**KEYWORDS**

Plot dynamics, psychological narrative, internal consciousness, narratology, Kate Chopin, “The Awakening”, “At Fault”, subjectivity.

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## KEYT SHOPEN ROMANLARIDA SYUJET DINAMIKASI MASALASI

Ibodullayeva Zilola Jamshid qizi

Tayanch doktorant

O‘zbekiston davlat jahon tillari universiteti

Toshkent, O‘zbekiston

Tel: +998 99 634 10 99

ORCID ID: 0009-0004-9463-7113

## ANNOTATSIYA

## KALIT SO‘ZLAR

Ushbu maqola Keyt Shopenning “Uyg‘onish” (1899) va “At Fault” (1890) romanlaridagi syujet dinamikasini tahlil qilishga bag‘ishlangan. Unda XIX asr oxiri Amerika adabiyotida an’anaviy voqeaga asoslangan syujetlar o‘rnini qanday qilib asta-sekin qahramonlarning ichki dunyosini tasvirlashga yo‘naltirilgan syujetlar egallay boshlagani tadqiq etiladi. Tadqiqotning maqsadi Shopenning psixologik tasvir orqali syujetni qay tarzda rivojlantirganini hamda ong oqimi kabi ichki kechinmalarning asar bayonida qanday vazifa bajarganini aniqlashdan iborat. Tadqiqot vazifalariga syujet transformatsiyasi bosqichlarini aniqlash, ichki ziddiyat va o‘z-o‘zini anglash jarayonini tahlil qilish, shuningdek, tashqi voqealar va subyektiv kechinmalar o‘rtasidagi o‘zaro munosabatni o‘rganish kiradi. Tadqiqotda asosiy metodlar sifatida narratologik, psixoanalitik va germenevtik yondashuvlardan foydalanilgan. Natijalar shuni ko‘rsatadiki, “Bir soatlik voqea”da tashqi hodisalarga asoslangan syujet unsurlari saqlanib qolgan, biroq bu voqealar rivoji qahramonlarning axloqiy prinsiplari va psixologik holatiga tayanadi. “Uyg‘onish”da esa syujet butunlay ong oqimiga asoslangan bo‘lib, bosh qahramonning ruhiy kamoloti voqealar rivojini belgilovchi asosiy harakatlantiruvchi kuch sifatida namoyon bo‘ladi. Xulosa qilib aytganda, Shopen romanlari muayyan voqealarni tasvirlashdan qahramonlarning ichki dunyosini aks ettirishga yo‘naltirilgan paradigмага o‘tishni yaqqol namoyon etib, yozuvchining zamonaviy adabiyotga qo‘shgan hissasini ko‘rsatib beradi.

Sujet dinamikasi, psixologik hikoya, ichki ong, narrotologiya, Keyt Shopen, Uyg‘onish, Gunoh, subyektivlik.

## ПРОБЛЕМА ДИНАМИКИ СЮЖЕТА В РОМАНАХ КЕЙТ ШОПЕН

Ибодуллаева Зилола Жамшид кизи

Базовый докторант, УзГУМЯ

Ташкент, Узбекистан

Тел: +998 99 634 10 99

ORCID ID: 0009-0004-9463-7113

АННОТАЦИЯ	КЛЮЧЕВЫЕ СЛОВА
<p>Настоящая статья посвящена анализу динамики сюжета в романах Кейт Шопен «Пробуждение» (1899) и «По вине» (1890). В ней исследуется, как в американской литературе конца XIX века традиционное событийно-ориентированное повествование постепенно уступает место сюжетам, сосредоточенным на изображении внутренней жизни персонажей. Цель исследования – определить роль психологического портретирования в построении сюжетов в романах Шопен, а также сделать выводы об особенностях функционирования в структуре романного повествования внутренних переживаний, в частности, потока сознания. В задачи исследования входит выявление этапов трансформации сюжета, анализ внутреннего конфликта и процесса самопознания, а также изучение взаимодействия внешних событий и субъективных переживаний. В качестве основных методов исследования применяются нарратологический, психоаналитический и герменевтический подходы. Результаты показывают, что роман «По вине» сохраняет сюжетные элементы, основанные на внешних событиях, однако развитие этих событий определяется моральными принципами и психологическим состоянием героев. В «Пробуждении» сюжет полностью строится на потоке сознания: здесь психологическое развитие главной героини выступает движущей силой, формирующей ход событий. В заключение следует отметить, что романы Шопен демонстрируют значительный сдвиг от изображения конкретных событий к парадигме, ориентированной на репрезентацию внутреннего мира персонажей, что подтверждает её вклад в становление модернистской литературы.</p>	<p>Динамика сюжета, психологическое повествование, внутреннее сознание, нарратология, Кейт Шопен, «Пробуждение», «По вине», субъективность.</p>

## INTRODUCTION

Kate Chopin's novels "The Awakening" (1899) and "At Fault" (1890) occupy a central position in late nineteenth-century American literature, not only for their narrative engagement with social and moral concerns but also for their pioneering psychological depth. In "The Awakening", Edna Pontellier undergoes a profound internal transformation, navigating societal expectations, personal desires, and moral dilemmas, with her psychological development driving the narrative and shaping plot dynamics. Margraf states: "*Edna's awakening is finally a recognition of desires and possibilities for which she has neither adequate social language nor psychological preparation*" (Margraf E., 2005, 90). Another scholar Wolf claims: "*Edna's progressive self-awareness initiates a process of psychological emancipation in which personal desire increasingly conflicts with socially prescribed femininity*" (Wolff., 1973, 14). In contrast, "At Fault" presents a story in which external events and social transgressions interact with the characters' moral consciousness, illustrating Chopin's early exploration of ethical reflection and psychological complexity within a more traditional plot framework. Regarding this Beer capitulates: "*At Fault demonstrates Chopin working within a relatively conventional narrative framework, where social circumstances and moral decisions determine character development.*" (Beer J., 2008, 29). Whilst Spangler argues: "*In At Fault, Chopin explores questions of moral responsibility through external action and social conflict rather than through the intense inward analysis characteristic of her later work.*" (Spangler G., 1970, 156).

The topicality of this study derives from growing scholarly interest in Chopin's nuanced portrayal of consciousness and moral psychology within the cultural transformations of late nineteenth-century America. Scholars such as Rebecca Dickson (1999), Pearl L. Brown (1991), Margaret W. Kelley (1994), and Nabil Al-Shalabi (2015) emphasize Chopin's sophisticated narrative control, ethical complexity, and psychological depth, demonstrating that character consciousness frequently supersedes event-driven plotting.

The novelty of this study lies in examining the transformation of plot through psychological and moral representation in Chopin's novels. While "At Fault" retains conventional elements of external-event-centered plotting, it simultaneously foreshadows the introspective focus that "The Awakening" fully realizes through stream-of-consciousness, internal reflection, and moral self-awareness. By analyzing the interplay between external circumstances and internal experience in both novels, this study elucidates Chopin's innovative reconfiguration of narrative, wherein the inner life becomes central to plot development.

The main objectives of the study are:

- To analyze the stages of psychological and emotional development of Chopin's protagonists across "At Fault" and "The Awakening";
- To identify how Chopin uses narrative techniques, spatial structuring, symbolism, and interiority to manifest characters' psychological states;
- To explore how the characters' moral reflection and self-awareness transform conventional plot structures in her fiction;
- To situate Chopin's literary strategies within the broader framework of late nineteenth-century American literature, considering cultural notions of individual consciousness, morality, and autonomy.

This study contributes to literary scholarship by providing a focused psychological reading of Chopin's narrative approach, demonstrating the shift from event-centered storytelling to a paradigm privileging inner consciousness. By foregrounding the characters' internal experiences, it underscores Chopin's enduring influence on the development of modern American narrative fiction.

### METHODS

This study uses an interdisciplinary approach combining narratology, psychoanalytic, and hermeneutic analysis. Key passages from "At Fault" and "The Awakening" are closely read to examine the psychological development of characters, especially Edna Pontellier. Each excerpt illustrates stages of inner growth, moral reflection, or emotional awakening. Scholarly interpretations and comparative studies provide contextual support. The focus is on narrative perspective, internal monologue, and emotional subtext, analyzing how Chopin's techniques reveal characters' consciousness and shape plot through their inner experiences.

### RESULTS

In "At Fault", the moral and emotional distance of the protagonist, Armand, is evident from the opening chapters. He is described as "*a young man who had never questioned the conventions of his social world*" (Chopin K., 1890, 12). This statement illustrates Armand's initial adherence to social norms and his limited self-awareness. The extract "*He felt that duty was above desire, and that his inclinations must always be tempered by propriety*" (Chopin K., 1890, 14) highlights the early formation of a moral framework that constrains emotional expression. According to Spangler, "*such restraint reflects an internalized social superego typical of nineteenth-century male protagonists, where moral consciousness suppresses personal desire*" (Spangler G., 1970, 251).

The tension between social expectation and inner feeling is clear when Armand encounters situations that challenge his ethical views: "*He could not help feeling a curious stir of excitement, though he knew it was wrong*" (Chopin K., 1890, 33). This is interpreted as the emergence of the unconscious, where suppressed

desire conflicts with socially imposed morality. Armand's growing awareness of personal choice and responsibility signals the first stage of his psychological development.

By contrast, in "The Awakening", Edna Pontellier's psychological evolution is more pronounced and intensive. From the beginning, her emotional unrest is evident: "*She was beginning to realize her individuality, and the thought of it filled her with a strange sense of unrest*" (Chopin K., 1899, 9). This early recognition of self-differentiation marks "*the onset of internal conflict between social expectation and personal desire*" (Margraf, 2005, 97).

Edna's awakening to her inner life is further illustrated in her interactions with the sea: "*She felt like some new being, with power to choose, to act, to live*" (Chopin K., 1899, 45). Beer notes that "*the sea symbolizes both liberation and the psychological space in which Edna explores her desires*", emphasizing the intimate link between environment and consciousness (Beer J. 2008, 112). Her growing autonomy is reflected in actions such as declaring, "*I will never ask for anything again—I will do as I please*" (Chopin K., 1899, 67), which represents a "*cognitive shift from passive conformity to self-directed action*" (Mou, 2011, 107).

Physical and emotional gestures in "The Awakening" serve as indicators of inner change. Edna's act of walking alone through the city, described as "*She strode on, conscious of the beating of her heart, aware of the quickened pace of her blood*" (Chopin K., 1899, 78), externalizes her internal struggle and excitement. Dickson interprets such somatic expressions as "*a narrative strategy to reveal psychological awakening*" (Dickson R., 1999, 40).

The progression of self-awareness is also marked by Edna's evolving relationships. Her reflection that "*I have loved you, Robert, but I am learning to love myself first*" (Chopin K., 1899, 121) demonstrates the emergence of self-prioritization, a core aspect of individuation. Similarly, her growing artistic pursuits, noted in the sentence "*She threw herself into painting with a passion that seemed to awaken her soul*" (Chopin K., 1899, 98), signal the "*integration of creative expression with psychological liberation*" (Sullivan R & Smith S., 1973, 68).

Another dimension of psychological depth in "At Fault" is Thérèse Lafirme's confrontation with duty versus personal desire. Although Chopin does not offer direct speech as freely quoted in later works, the narrative clearly shows Thérèse's conflict when she "*felt vaguely that in many cases it might be a blessing...conceding that it must not infrequently be a necessity*" (Chopin K., 1899, 7), an internal reflection marking her moral hesitation between self-interest and social expectation. "At Fault" explores the tension between emotional autonomy and societal norms, especially in light of her Catholic upbringing and post-Reconstruction ideals. This psychological struggle, often expressed through Thérèse's silent deliberation and

moral restraint, points to Chopin's early attempt to depict a woman's inner negotiation between personal authenticity and community duty — a theme that will be much more fully realized in her later work.

In “The Awakening”, Edna Pontellier's quest for autonomous identity is explicitly articulated in her own evolving ideas about belonging and self-possession. As Edna herself reflects, in a statement now iconic in literary criticism, “*but whatever came, she had resolved never again to belong to another than herself*” (Chopin K., “The Awakening”, 1899), encapsulating her psychological shift toward self-ownership and separation from defined social roles. This marks a clear turn from communal identification toward solitude as a conscious choice, a move that Chopin uses to dramatize psychological transformation. Edna's experience of solitude — where she begins to embody her inner life separated from prescribed roles — intensifies throughout the novel, becoming both a source of liberation and existential tension, and revealing the complex ways Chopin aligns psychological self-discovery with narrative progression.

By the novel's conclusion, Edna's psychological and emotional self-realization is fully developed, though it remains intertwined with vulnerability and societal constraints: “*Her body quivered with excitement and fear, yet she felt more herself than ever*” (Chopin K., 1899, 142). Kelley emphasizes that “*Chopin's narrative presents growth as both liberation and conflict, showing the inseparability of empowerment and emotional risk.*”(Kelley A., 1994, 338)

Comparing both novels, “At Fault” demonstrates an early stage of psychological consciousness, constrained by moral and social obligations, whereas “The Awakening” depicts a fully realized interiority where the protagonist's inner life shapes narrative structure. Gale notes that “*this shift exemplifies Chopin's move from conventional plot-centered storytelling to an emphasis on subjective experience and psychological complexity*”(Gale R., 2024, 56).

## DISCUSSION

It is possible to interpret Edna Pontellier's psychological development in “The Awakening” and the moral consciousness of Armand in “At Fault” as reflective of Chopin's broader contribution to late nineteenth-century American literature. Chopin presents characters with nuanced inner lives, emphasizing the tension between social expectation and personal desire, in contrast to conventional narratives that prioritized plot or moral instruction. In “At Fault”, Thérèse Lafirme and Armand navigate moral and emotional dilemmas, showing early exploration of conscience and autonomy, whereas in “The Awakening”, Edna's journey represents a full interior awakening, with her self-realization driving both narrative and plot. Chopin's attention to the inner workings of consciousness anticipates the later literary focus on psychological realism and subjectivity.

Spatial and environmental motifs play a significant role in reflecting psychological states. In “The Awakening”, the sea and Edna’s home become symbolic arenas where she negotiates freedom, desire, and social constraint: “*She felt like some new being, with power to choose, to act, to live*” (Chopin K., 1899, 45). Such spaces as externalizations of the psyche, where solitude and physical movement mirror internal liberation. Similarly, in “At Fault”, domestic and social spaces frame the tension between duty and desire, revealing how external circumstances both constrain and highlight the inner life. These spatial dynamics allow Chopin to integrate moral reflection and psychological development within narrative form, showing that setting can serve as both stage and mirror for inner consciousness.

Chopin’s narrative techniques further enhance psychological depth. In “The Awakening”, interior monologues, selective focalization, and stream-of-consciousness passages allow intimate access to Edna’s emotions and moral contemplation: “*I have loved you, Robert, but I am learning to love myself first*” (Chopin K., 1899, 121). Such techniques foreground subjective experience, transforming plot from a series of external events into an unfolding of consciousness. In “At Fault”, while the narrative is more conventionally structured, Chopin still emphasizes reflection and moral deliberation, highlighting the early stage of characters’ internalization of societal norms versus personal ethics.

Gendered dimensions are also central to Chopin’s exploration of consciousness and autonomy. In both novels, female protagonists confront societal limitations, seeking self-definition and agency within restrictive cultural frameworks. Edna’s assertion of autonomy, especially her insistence on personal choice, contrasts with the restrained, socially conditioned conduct of Armand and Thérèse in “At Fault”. This contrast demonstrates Chopin’s evolving treatment of women’s interiority and the relationship between self-realization and social constraint, highlighting early feminist undertones in her psychological portrayal.

Chopin’s handling of solitude and emotional risk illustrates the complexity of psychological growth. Edna’s solitude in “The Awakening” is both liberating and destabilizing, allowing her to engage with desire, creativity, and self-awareness while also exposing vulnerability: “*Her body quivered with excitement and fear, yet she felt more herself than ever*” (Chopin K., 1899, 142). The juxtaposition of empowerment and emotional tension exemplifies Chopin’s skill in linking inner experience with narrative structure. In “At Fault”, the moral and psychological reflection occurs largely through internal deliberation, illustrating a precursor to the more radical interiority fully realized in “The Awakening”.

In summary, Chopin’s novels present characters whose inner lives - shaped by desire, moral conscience, and social constraint - drive the narrative. Through the

integration of spatial symbolism, narrative perspective, and psychological insight, Chopin transforms plot from mere sequence of events into a reflection of consciousness and self-realization. The interplay of solitude, autonomy, and moral reflection in “At Fault” and “The Awakening” demonstrates Chopin’s innovative contribution to psychological realism and the literary exploration of female interiority in late nineteenth-century America.

### CONCLUSION

Edna Pontellier’s psychological development in “The Awakening” and the moral and emotional consciousness explored in “At Fault” reveal Chopin’s pioneering approach to portraying inner life in late nineteenth-century American literature. Both novels emphasize that psychological and moral growth is a layered, dynamic process rather than a simple progression from ignorance to awareness. Chopin depicts characters whose self-realization emerges through reflection, emotional risk, and negotiation with societal constraints.

In “At Fault”, the interplay of duty, desire, and moral deliberation demonstrates early stages of internalized consciousness and ethical awareness. In “The Awakening”, Edna’s journey toward autonomy, self-expression, and creative engagement exemplifies the full realization of inner life as a force shaping narrative and character. Spatial symbolism, narrative perspective, and psychological insight combine to transform plot from a series of external events into an exploration of consciousness and identity.

Chopin’s psychological realism, highlighting autonomy, solitude, and moral reflection, anticipates later developments in modern American literature and feminist narrative. The novels show that growth involves both empowerment and vulnerability, and that self-discovery is intimately tied to one’s social, spatial, and symbolic environment. By foregrounding consciousness and internal transformation, Chopin creates enduring models of character development that continue to resonate with contemporary readers and literary scholarship.

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