

ПОЭТИКА ЗАРУБЕЖНОЙ ЛИТЕРАТУРЫ



УДК 8111.111-31. ББК Ш33(4Вел)64-3+Ш33(7Сое)64-3.
ГРНТИ 17.07.29. Код ВАК 5.9.2

TRAUMA AND ITS REFLECTION IN JUVENILE NARRATORS' SPEECH IN E. DONOGHUE'S *ROOM*, M. SACKS'S *ALL THE LOST THINGS*, AND D. F. WALLACE'S *INFINITE JEST*

Natalia N. Nikolina

Ural Federal University named after the first President of Russia B. N. Yeltsin
(Ekaterinburg, Russia)

ORCID ID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-8187-6829>

Violetta A. Kaiavo

Ural Federal University named after the first President of Russia B. N. Yeltsin
(Ekaterinburg, Russia)

ORCID ID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-3416-798X>

Abstract. This article is devoted to the topic of trauma and its reflection in the speech of children and teenagers in modern English-language literary works. Referring to the works of Russian and foreign researchers, the authors consider the concept of trauma in general and in literary studies in particular, as well as its rise and development. An increasing interest in literature about the theme of childhood and the depiction of children's world is highlighted, as well as the fact that writers choose juveniles that solve adult problems as narrators. The methods that the authors use are as follows: sociological, cultural-historical and social, as well as the method of linguistic analysis. The collection of material was carried out by the method of continuous sampling.

The authors find out how writers portray trauma in juveniles through their speech and worldview. Modern Irish and American novels are analyzed where the narrators are children and teenagers who have experienced some psychological and physical traumas: *Room* by E. Donoghue (2010), *All the Lost Things* by M. Sacks (2019), and *Infinite Jest* by D. F. Wallace (1996). As a result of the analysis of the speech of two child narrators aged 5 and 7 and a 17–18-year-old teenage narrator, the following features of the childhood trauma reflection are revealed: 1) the use of the opposition “inside” and “outside” which both determine the physical location of the characters, and their mental state; 2) Open ending and only a hint of the narrators overcoming their trauma. The process of experiencing trauma by a juvenile narrator is observed, but growing up and the consequences of traumas are not shown, which is the novelty of this approach to describing trauma.

Keywords: English language novel; trauma; trauma literature; child narrator; teenage narrator

Acknowledgments: The research funding from the Ural Institute of Humanities UrFU (“My first grant” Program) is gratefully acknowledged.

For citation: Nikolina, N. N., Kaiavo, V. A. (2023). Trauma and its Reflection in Juvenile Narrators' Speech in E. Donoghue's *Room*, M. Sacks's *All the Lost Things*, and D. F. Wallace's *Infinite Jest*. In *Philological Class*. Vol. 28. No. 3, pp. 235–247.

**ОТРАЖЕНИЕ ТРАВМЫ В РЕЧИ РАССКАЗЧИКОВ-ДЕТЕЙ
В РОМАНАХ «КОМНАТА» Э. ДОНОХЬЮ, «ВСЕ ПОТЕРЯННЫЕ ВЕЩИ» М. САКС
И «БЕСКОНЕЧНАЯ ШУТКА» Д. Ф. УОЛЛЕСА**

Николина Н. Н.

Уральский федеральный университет имени первого Президента РФ Б. Н. Ельцина
(Екатеринбург, Россия)

ORCID ID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-8187-6829>

SPIN-код: 5003-9377

Каяво В. А.

Уральский федеральный университет имени первого Президента РФ Б. Н. Ельцина
(Екатеринбург, Россия)

ORCID ID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-3416-798X>

SPIN-код: 1067-0866

А н н о т а ц и я . Данная статья посвящена теме травмы и ее изображению в речи детей и подростков в современных англоязычных произведениях. Обращаясь к работам отечественных и зарубежных исследователей, авторы рассматривают понятие травмы вообще и в литературоведческих исследованиях в частности, его возникновение и развитие. Параллельно отмечается увеличивающийся в литературе интерес к теме детства и изображению детского мира, а также тот факт, что писатели выбирают детей и подростков, которым приходится решать «недетские» проблемы, в качестве рассказчиков. Используются социологический, культурно-исторический и социальный методы, а также метод лингвистического анализа, сбор материала осуществлялся методом сплошной выборки.

Авторы выясняют, как писатели изображают переживание травмы детьми и подростками через их речь и мировосприятие. Для этого анализируются современные американские и ирландские романы, где рассказчиками являются дети и подростки, пережившие некие психологические и физические травматические события. Это романы *Room* Э. Донохью (2010), *All the Lost Things* М. Сакс (2019) и *Infinite Jest* Д. Ф. Уоллеса (1996). В результате анализа речи двух рассказчиков-детей 5 и 7 лет и рассказчика-подростка 17–18 лет выявляются следующие общие особенности изображения детской травмы в художественных произведениях: во-первых, использование противопоставления «inside» и «outside» определяющее как физическое местонахождение персонажей, так и их психическое состояние. Во-вторых, открытый финал и только намек на преодоление рассказчиками травмы. Во всех произведениях наблюдается только процесс переживания травмы рассказчиком-ребенком (-подростком), но не показаны взросление и последствия травмы в будущем, в чем заключается новизна такого подхода к описанию травмы у детей и подростков.

Ключевые слова: англоязычный роман; травма; литература о травме; рассказчик-ребенок; рассказчик-подросток

Благодарности: исследование выполнено при финансовой поддержке Уральского гуманитарного института УрФУ (программа «Мой первый грант»).

Для цитирования: Николина, Н. Н. Отражение травмы в речи рассказчиков-детей в романах «Комната» Э. Донохью, «Все потерянные вещи» М. Сакс и «Бесконечная шутка» Д. Ф. Уоллеса / Н. Н. Николина, В. А. Каяво. – Текст : непосредственный // Филологический класс. – 2023. – Т. 28, № 3. – С. 235–247.

At the end of 2021, The New Yorker published an essay by a literary critic Parul Sehgal entitled *The Case Against the Trauma Plot*, in which the author argues that modern literature is turning into “a new literature, that of testimony” [Sehgal 2022]. Sehgal emphasizes that modern heroes no longer look into the future – they turn into the past and look inside themselves, and trauma “has become synonymous with backstory”, and at the same time, such a “backstory” is a demonstration of

modern courage and stoicism [Sehgal 2022]. The author points out that the emergence of such literature is natural and conditioned by the influence of historical events, but life is by definition traumatic, and we are more inclined to perceive any event as a trauma and do not manage to get “the pleasures of not knowing” about suffering [Sehgal 2022].

Here we may agree with Sehgal: the majority of novels today are about traumatic experiences, and the appearance of most of

them is of a commercial nature and happens due to the influence of fashion. However, this does not mean that works devoted to this topic do not deserve scholarly attention. In the works of the late 20th – early 21st centuries, devoted to the topic of trauma, the focus is on the child as a main character or narrator: children and teenagers face adult problems, the victims of which they become because of adults' fault. Addressing childhood trauma is especially relevant since modern children's images embody society's anxieties; it may also have an educational function [Kiprina 2011: 156–157]. Studying the ways in which trauma is depicted, as well as identifying and studying the characteristics of children's narratives is of particular interest to researchers.

Interest to the topic of trauma began to develop after World War II as a response to the pivotal events of the 20th century and as a reflection of social relations, the main characteristics of which were cruelty and “extreme forms of violence” [Nadal, Calvo 2014: 1]. In modern criticism, the period of the second half of the 20th – early 21st centuries is called “the age of trauma” or “a catastrophic age” [ibid.]. With the development of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) by the American Psychiatric Association in 1980, trauma has become a key interpretive category of our time [Sütterlin, 2020: 11]. It is noted that since the 1990s, “trauma as not only a personal but also a cultural phenomenon has come increasingly to the fore in academic study” [Costello-Sullivan 2018: 6].

Cathy Caruth and Shoshana Felman are reported to be among the first specialists who, in the early 1990s, drew attention to the concept of traumatic experience in literature. Earlier, trauma was considered a complex concept that could only be addressed in an interdisciplinary manner. Researchers turn directly to literature to study the phenomenon of trauma because literature is the evidence of unspoken human experience; it allows the reader to see and hear things that a character does not know or does not remember; in particular, it relates to the historical events that affect their fate [Caruth 1996: 3; Marder 2006: 3]. Moreover, language, as such, is directly related to trauma. It is noted that, for example, testimony conveying traumatic experience is strikingly different from other ways of using a language: a person testifies in the first person,

thereby expressing a truth which they “bear the responsibility” for [Felman, Laub 1992: 3; Marder 2006: 4], and it makes the speaker vulnerable and lonely, and his position – even risky.

In modern English-language novels devoted to the topic of trauma, the authors' attention focuses not only on how certain situations that can have a strong emotional and psychological impact on people are experienced by adults, but also by children and teenagers. As S. V. Kiprina writes, in addition to the children's literature itself (for child readers), which performs entertaining and educational functions, there is literature about children, which is not intended for this readership at all: “... the child, at the will of the author, solves ‘adult’ issues, and the problems stated in such works are philosophical, global, eternal for all generations and at all times” [Kiprina 2011: 153]. Probably, the appeal to the theme of childhood and the linked with it themes of traumas and experiences has become natural in the changing historical and social reality. Children become observers, victims – and creators – of evil in a world that obeys only the laws of adults.

Within the framework of this study, the depiction of the experiences of young characters (children and teenagers) of various traumatic situations in modern English-language works of fiction for an adult audience was examined in detail. The authors set themselves the task of finding out how the speech and worldview of such characters are depicted, as well as to determine how the authors create speech images of children and teenagers experiencing trauma. In the course of the work, common features were identified in the depiction of trauma experiences by children and teenagers in works of art. To do this, we analyzed novels of American and Irish authors written over the past 30 years, in which the narrators are little children and teenagers. The novels, despite the fact that they are separated by a considerable time distance, were chosen for analysis, as they are united, firstly, by the theme of trauma and its experience, secondly, by the presence of child and teenage narrators, thirdly, by the markers of speech of the narrators, which is a reflection of traumatic experience. Children's images are presented in the novels *Room* by E. Donoghue (2010) and *All the Lost Things* by M. Sacks (2019), in which the narrators are a boy and a

girl of 5 and 7 years old, respectively. The image of a teenager is analyzed in D. F. Wallace's novel *Infinite Jest* (1996), where the narration is conducted on behalf of various characters, including on behalf of a teenager, which explains the choice of this piece of fiction. It is important to note that in our work, the results of the analysis of the narrators' speech will be presented not in chronological order (from an earlier work to a more modern one), but according to the increase in the age of the narrators. The study used sociological, cultural-historical and social methods, as well as the method of linguistic analysis, the collection of material was carried out by the method of continuous sampling.

Emma Donoghue's novel *Room* (2010) is, at first glance, a typical thriller story about a young woman and her child who were imprisoned by a maniac for several years. During the time spent in captivity in one room (hence the name – Room), the woman gives birth to a son, Jack. He is the narrator and the protagonist of the novel. The author focuses her attention on the boy, trying to imagine how a child could survive a life of imprisonment and isolation from other people.

The author of the novel was faced with the task of creating an image of a child experiencing the consequences of some traumatic event. In the case of Jack, we are talking about two different traumatic situations. The first one is living in Room: locked up in a small enclosed space. The second one is life outside Room, the process of adapting to life in society. At the same time, the first situation is considered traumatic from an objective point of view, or from the point of view of all the people Jack meets after escaping from the Room, or from the point of view of the reader, but not the narrator himself.

Despite the fact that Jack is not aware of the wrongness and all the consequences of his and his mother's life in Room, such conditions still affect his worldview: it certainly differs from the worldview of other children. E. Donoghue creates the image of a child with limited life experience. In Room, this is expressed in the names of objects (furniture, dishes, plants) which Jack regularly interacts with, they are perceived by the main character as alive:

"... to look at **Watch**, he says 07:14" [Donoghue 2010: 5] (hereinafter quoted from Donoghue E. Room. London: Picador, 2010).

"Bouncy Ball loves to get lost in Labyrinth ..." [17].

Such a perception can be explained both by a childish tendency to personification, which is noted by researchers of children's thinking and speech [Chebotareva, Kostylev 1996], and by Jack's life in a limited space. He, deprived of communication with other children, endows objects with human characteristics, perceiving them not only as toys, but also as playmates. Moreover, the things in Room are presented in a single copy. Jack perceives them not only as animate, but also unique, "being unaware that many objects of the same kind exist out in the world" [Rubik 2014: 221].

Jack is also convinced of the unreality of the world and people outside Room. He believes that everything that is not in Room is Outer Space:

"Because it's on the outside."

"In Outer Space? I wish it was inside so I can play with it" [9].

The boy also thinks that everything he sees on TV is unreal, only he and his mother are real:

"I thought the word for us was real. The persons in TV are made just of colors" [16].

"Women aren't real like Ma is, and girls and boys not either" [22].

Jack takes the unreality of what he sees on TV literally: he thinks that what is shown does not exist. The realization of the opposite confuses him:

"How can TV be pictures of real things?"

"I think about them all floating around in Outside Space outside the walls <...> I can't breathe right, ..." [76].

He is forced to remind himself that everything outside Room is real, but begins to doubt his own reality: if everything outside is real, but only he and mother are not outside, then are they real?

"... I have to remember they're real, they're actually happening in Outside all together. It makes my head tired. And people too, firefighters teachers burglars babies saints soccer players and all sorts, they're all really in Outside. I'm not there, though, me and Ma, we're the only ones not there. Are we still real?" [88].

For Jack, life outside Room is more traumatic, where he does not understand anything, where there are so many different rules, things and people, where he cannot be with his mother all the time. E. Donoghue, describing Jack's life outside Room, shows in

various ways what changes his perception of the world is undergoing.

One of these ways is to depict the hostility of the world in the perception of the boy. This is shown in the scene, in the first hours of Jack being outside. In these examples, he is not an agent, but a recipient of the action:

"The ground breaks my feet smash my knee hits me in the face..." [175].

"Suddenly arghhhhhh the street bangs me in the tummy hands face..." [178].

The feeling of hostility does not leave Jack later, when he and his mother get to the hospital. Although both of them are safe, Jack is still scared by a large number of strangers and things:

"Persons not friends of mine watching at me with invisible rays zap, I put my face against Ma" [222].

The surrounding objects are still active figures, and Jack is the recipient:

"...and one of them stabs me in the tummy, one table I mean" [133].

After Jack and his mother leave Room, we observe the process of the boy's adaptation to the surrounding world and society. For example, Jack begins to realize the multiplicity of subjects of the same class, which does not happen immediately. For a long time, Jack constantly compares new items with those that were in Room:

"... on the ground. It's not like Floor, it's all hard and shivery" [112].

"I'm watching the shiny bit in the middle, it's like Mirror but tiny" [114].

We can say, on one hand, he is aware of the similarity of new objects and objects from Room, but, on the other, for Jack these similarities are not enough to classify objects as belonging to the same class. In some cases, it is unclear whether Jack even realizes that the new items are not the same items from Room, only with their appearance changed for some reason:

"<...> in Bed but it's shrunk <...> and the Duvet's lost her white..." [128].

Comparisons of new objects and objects from Room sometimes carry a clearly negative assessment. To Jack, accustomed to the uniformity of Room, the different arrangement of the outside world seems to be wrong and confusing:

"Ma sits down in a chair that's not our chairs and lets me in her lap. I try to rock but it's not Rocker. Everything's wrong" [120].

"The glasses are invisible like ours but the plates are blue, that's disgusting" [133].

Outside Room, Jack does not understand that someone is addressing him or talking about him. In Room, it was always clear to him that his mother was addressing him, because there were no other people there. The problem also lies in the fact that in such situations he is not always called by his name: other nominations that may be applicable to him are used. At first, Jack wonders if people are talking to him, then he constantly explains to himself that they are talking to him or talking about him, or his mother does it:

"Who's sweetie? His eyes are looking at my eyes, it's me that's the sweetie" [109].

"Well, buddy, you're some kind of hero. That's me he means" [133].

"How's my favorite grandson?"

"That's you, Ma tells me" [161].

Orientation in space and time is not easy for the boy, because he is used to the confined space of Room and a schedule:

"Ma asks, 'Is that why he keeps banging into things?'" [137].

"In Outside the time's all mixed up" [148].

It is important to note Jack's perception of Outside. Contrasting, on one hand, Outside and Room, Jack, at the same time, perceives them in a similar way, which is not surprising. Room is an enclosed space, and the boy has never known others. Accordingly, distinguishing Room and Outside, Jack still believes that the latter is also a kind of enclosed space that you can enter, and not something limitless and diverse:

"That's ridiculous, Ma was never in Outside" [65].

"Is France in Outside?" [196].

Continuous changes in the world around him also confuse Jack, since everything in Room was stable:

"The world is always changing brightness and hotness and soundness, I never know how it's going to be the next minute" [201].

The boy notes a huge amount of everything in Outside, and it amazes him:

"Outsiders are not like us, they've got a million of things and different kinds of each thing..." [198].

"There's hundreds of different foreign ways to talk, that makes me dizzy" [234].

As for the feeling of unreality of the surrounding world and surrounding people, we

see that Jack's doubts persist and are not resolved until the very end: at first, getting used to the idea that everything outside Room is real, he then has to realize that this is not always the case.

*"When I was four I thought everything in TV was just TV, then I was five and Ma unlied about lots of it being pictures of real and **Outside being totally real**. Now I'm in **Outside** but it turns out lots of it isn't real at all"* [208].

In general, the distrust and misunderstanding of the world that he experiences only when he is in Outside persists and then, Jack still has a lot to learn:

*"When I was four I didn't know about the world, or I thought it was only stories. Then Ma told me about it for real and I thought I knowed everything. **But now I'm in the world all the time, I actually don't know much, I'm always confused**"* [235].

In the novel *All the Lost Things*, the narrator is seven-year-old Dolly. Dolly's father kills her mother during an argument and goes on the run, telling his daughter that they are going on a trip. The girl either forgets about what happened (which can be considered as a psychological defense mechanism), or intentionally suppresses her memories.

Of particular importance for understanding the feelings and emotions of the girl is her interaction with her favorite toy – the horse Clemesta. Through this material object the emotions of the narrator are shown:

*"I just held her against my chest. **Her heart was angry and pounding**"* [Sacks 2019: 150]. (hereinafter quoted from Sacks M. *All the Lost Things*. New York; Boston; London: Little, Brown and Company, 2019).

Dolly's dialogues with Clemesta are also important. After leaving with her father, Dolly initially believes him that they went on a trip, while mother just stayed at home. However, over time, she realizes that her father is deceiving her. Her doubts are presented to the reader indirectly, like Clemesta's thought, in the form of dialogues between her and Dolly:

*"Dolly, **I don't like this**," Clemesta said. 'Not one bit.'*

*'Stop it,' I said. 'You're **spoiling my adventure** with Dad with all your **NAGGING** and **GLOOMINESS**.'*

*'**I don't think it's an adventure**,' she said"* [83].

Suppressed memories of the mother's murder also begin to return to Dolly, this is

shown through her interaction with Clemesta, as if she, and not Dolly, remembers what happened:

"Clemesta looked at me and rolled her eyes. <...>

*She shook her head. 'No. **I think I remember what it is. And it's something bad**.'*" [76].

It can be assumed that Dolly deliberately does not want to remember the consequences of the tragic quarrel of her parents, since everything happened, in fact, because of her. She provoked that quarrel, during which the father killed the mother. Dolly's guilt is revealed only at the end of the novel, when Dolly's father is arrested and she talks to the police. So, the reader understands that Dolly deliberately does not remember the whole truth, since what happened is her fault:

*"Dolly,' Clemesta said. 'I think that's only part of the story. And **I think you're not remembering the rest on purpose**.'*" [97].

"Imagine if you had brain-wipers. They could wipe away all the things you didn't want to remember."

*"Dolly,' she said. '**You can't keep saying you don't know. It won't make it go away**.'*" [151].

After analyzing the novels *Room* and *All the Lost Things*, we can identify a number of characteristics and common features in the depiction of children's traumatic experiences. We see how young children (5 and 7 years old) live traumatic situations (life in isolation with subsequent adaptation to society and the murder of mother by father). However, we observe them for a relatively short period of time. In E. Donoghue's novel, all the described events take less than a year: the novel begins when Jack turns 5, but by the end of the novel he is not yet 6; the novel by M. Sacks describes a week in Dolly's life.

In both stories, of course, there is a dynamic, the development of the story of the characters. For example, we see the process of Jack's adaptation to the world Outside, he gradually learns more about the world, gets used to its oddities and rules, interaction with people.

The reader can also see the emotional resolution of the characters' inner conflicts. Jack visits Room again at the end of the novel, as he still misses it, and he still does not really like life outside of it. However, when Jack sees Room again, he does not recognize it, it seems to him that it has become smaller, darker (alt-

hough, it is just that he himself is used to large spaces and light), he says that now it is not Room. He says goodbye to everything left in Room and to it and says the following:

"I look back one more time. It's like a crater, a hole where something happened" [241].

This allows the reader to assume that Jack has embarked on the path of liberation from his attachment to Room and will be able to forget it and find happiness outside of it.

By the end of the novel, Dolly, after her father's confession of her mother's murder, as well as his arrest, remembers exactly what happened. Her reaction to the confession confirms the assumption that she deliberately suppressed her memories of what happened:

"Doll, Mom is dead."

<...>

'DON'T SAY THAT!' I yelled. 'It isn't true.'

'It is, Dolly.'

'NO! No, it isn't!'" [182].

Despite everything, she eventually forgives her father, which resolves her inner conflict:

"I LOVE YOU. I love you even though you are bad" [188].

We understand that maybe Dolly will be able to overcome everything that happened in the future. Significant in this sense is Dolly's farewell to Clemesta, since now that Dolly has remembered everything that was suppressed, she has no need for the toy (it was on her that the girl shifted all the bad memories). The farewell contains a hint of a positive development of events:

"Clemesta," I said. "You can go now if you have to. I'll be okay." [195].

The finale also confirms Dolly's fears that what happened was her fault:

"My words were all poison and they had killed Mom and sent Dad to prison and smashed our whole lives into millions of pieces that wouldn't ever be fixed. I couldn't take them back and I couldn't ever say them again" [194].

However, we do not know if she will be able to forgive herself. We do not see a complete resolution of this inner conflict, respectively, we do not know whether Dolly will be able, as a result, to completely overcome the consequences of the traumatic event.

David Foster Wallace's *Infinite Jest* (1996) presents a plot that can be divided into three parts: one of them is about the patients of "Ennet House Drug and Alcohol Recovery House" and their struggle with drug addic-

tion; the second is devoted to students at the Enfield Tennis Academy (ETA), who also suffer from addiction, but not only to drugs; they are obsessed with sport, fame, and study. Family relationships, stress, and mental state are also of particular concern to young tennis players. In the third plot line, government agents and Quebec separatists are looking for the "Infinite Jest" film: everyone who starts watching it cannot stop and eventually dies of exhaustion, and therefore the latter want to get the master copy of this film in order to use it as a weapon of mass defeat and carry out a coup d'état. The film was created by the founder of the above-mentioned tennis academy, Dr. James O. Incandenza, who "eliminated his own map" before the events of the plot – committed suicide. The novel is polyphonic: the narrative includes a variety of voices and points of view. Each character has a special story and gets a chance to share it.

The story begins with a first-person narration of one of the main characters, Hal Incandenza, a 17-year-old prodigy and gifted tennis player who suffers from drug addiction. In fact, the first chapter of the novel – "Year of Glad" – is the actual ending of the plot. The first and subsequent chapters reveal the major traumatic events that affected Hal's mental state: at the age of 5, he ate a piece of mold, which may have damaged his psyche; at the age of 13, he survived his father's suicide. He guesses about the numerous infidelities of his mother, Avril, and is heavily dependent on her opinion, but at the same time suffers from her own control and excessive love, which, in fact, is insincere.

Hal is under the control of doctors and various commissions. He had previously experienced forced drug withdrawal, which was accompanied by changes in the way other people saw him, the way he behaved, and the way he perceived the world around him.

In "Year of Glad" chapter, Hal is being interviewed by the members of the Administration at the University of Arizona. He is trying to stay «neutral», but he should not try to show something like a smile, which is not explained: *"I believe I appear neutral, [...] though I've been coached to err on the side of neutrality and not attempt what would feel to me like a pleasant expression or smile [...] I am seated in an office, surrounded by heads and bodies. [...] I am in here"* [Wallace 2009: 18–19] (hereinafter,

quotes from the novel by D. F. Wallace are cited from the edition of Wallace D. F., *Infinite Jest*. Little, Brown and Company, 2009). Passive voice use indicates that Hal is not independent. His perception of reality is inadequate: he sees not people around him but heads and bodies. As Baskin notes, the phrase “*I am in here*” is significant: we can understand that he is **in** the room, but why to emphasize this? [Baskin 2019: 47–48]. Perhaps Hal also means that he is **inside** of something else, for example, his body or mind, and he carefully considers all movements of his body as if it does not belong to him: “*I am debating whether to risk scratching the right side of my jaw*” [20].

Moreover, Charles Tavis, ETA director and Avril’s half-brother, is in charge of Hal’s answers. Hal is constantly silent, and we learn about what is happening to him only through the remarks of other people: “*Hal just seemed to... well, grimace. Is he in pain? Are you in pain, son?*” [23]. Tavis seems to ignore the anxiety of the Admission’s staff, Hal’s condition and calls his grimaces “a facial tic”.

Interestingly, while people around Hal cannot understand what is happening to him, he is noticing literally everything – the room decor, the smell, the appearance of the commission members – with incredible accuracy. Despite his outward strangeness and even incapacity, his brain is working intensively, and his senses are heightened. During a conversation in “Year of Glad” chapter, Hal thinks about the commission member’s use of words, although he himself does not utter a sound: “*The coach [...] is telling C.T. that the whole application-interface process [...] is probably best accentuated by letting the applicant speak up for himself. [...] I presume it’s probably facilitate that the tennis coach mistook for accentuate...*” [24].

Control of the body becomes tremendously painful for Hal, and he starts to panic: “*My chest bumps like a dryer with shoes in it. [...] I expend energy on remaining utterly silent in my chair [...] People have promised to get me through this*” [28]. Hal is suffering, and it is clear that he is present at the interview against his will.

The climax is the scene where Tavis is asked to leave since he hinders Hal from speaking, and the Admissions board gives the floor to Hal, hoping to hear why a student with genius abilities passed the exams so poorly and why he should be accepted into the university. Hal states that this is the end, and

he cannot understand if he can rush out of the room because he is not sure that this is what those present will see: “*This is not working out. It strikes me that EXIT signs would look to a native speaker of Latin like red-lit signs that say HE LEAVES. I would yield to the urge to bolt for the door ahead of them if I could know that bolting for the door is what the men in this room would see. [...] I am alone among administrative heads*” [30].

In this passage, Hal again returns to “heads”: he does not perceive those around him as something whole, and his suppression of the desire to leave also shows that he is not at peace with his own body [Baskin 2019: 51–52].

Hal stays in the room and gives (what seems at first) a measured speech, emphasizing his feelings. It is interrupted by a recollection of his childhood, specifically the time when he ate a piece of mold when he was 5, and Hal tells the Admissions members: “Call it something I ate” [33], which is a likely hint that his current condition and the situation that happened some time ago are connected.

Some words in Hal’s speech are italicized and repeated: for example, showing the importance of the word «*read*» for Hal and the action it defines. It is important for Hal to indicate that he is a thinking and inquisitive person: “*I have an intricate history. Experiences and feelings. I’m complex. [...] ‘I read,’ I say. I study and read. I bet I’ve read everything you’ve read*” [36].

After some time, it becomes clear that it was Hal’s internal monologue, and in reality he was making animal, inhuman sounds: “*‘Undescribable.’ [...] ‘Like an animal.’*” [37–40]. The deans’ shouts occur simultaneously with Hal’s statements – and the deans do not hear them. He seems to tell them that everything is in order, and he is perceived incorrectly: “*I am not what you see and hear*” [38]. Hal’s inner self tries to break free, but it does not happen: Hal speaks only “inside” of his own self and does not realize that his appearance and behavior are terrifying, and the connection with the outside world through speech is lost. This is also seen long before the events of Chapter 1, where Hal seeks help for a friend who has his forehead stuck to a window. Hal is worried, but people see him as cheerful: “*Troeltsch is with him now, but he’s in a bad way; I said, [...] ‘We are in route,’ Kenkle said, ‘but why the hilarity?’ [...] Your face is a hilarity-face. It’s working hilariously*” [1768].

His internal monologue is filled with information, and if at first it is logical and harmonious, then gradually Hal's thoughts become chaotic. For example, in the final chapters (so, before the events of the first), Hal thinks simultaneously about things that are not related to each other: discussions about the etymology of the word "blizzard" are interspersed with memories of his mother and her infidelities, as well as thoughts about the sounds of movement in the academy: "...The condensed O.E.D., [...] defined blizzard as 'A furious blast of frost-wind [...]. Orin alleged in Y.T.M.P. that when he took the Moms's car in the morning he sometimes observed the smeared prints of nude human feet [...] There was heavy foot-traffic in the third-floor hall above me'" [1816]. However, there are no discourse markers, which also makes Hal's thought process incoherent. Before this, during the period of Hal's drug abuse, we could only see what he said out loud in conversations with other people, so, probably, drugs suppressed obsessive thinking. His speech is literate and full of information, but it is superfluous and inappropriate too. In "Year of Glad" chapter, Tavis succinctly describes Hal's problem: "*He has some trouble communicating, he's communicatively challenged*" [41].

For example, an episode of a conversation between 10-year-old Hal and his father is quite indicative: the boy perceives information literally, and understanding figurative meanings and connotations is difficult. Moreover, both are interrupting each other, and Hal is not answering the questions directly. Hal does not understand what the problem is: "*Is Himself [James Incandenza's nickname] still having this hallucination I never speak? [...] I can't just sit here watching you think I'm mute [...] And are you hearing me talking, Dad? It speaks. It accepts soda and defines implore and converses with you*" [70–75].

This is probably why James dresses up as a "professional conversationalist": he is trying to figure out whether Hal behaves this way with him only or if his mother, Avril, is to blame for his behavior. In addition, in conversations with his father or older brother, Hal's silence is shown with ellipses. The author demonstrates that Hal has difficulty answering (or does not understand how to answer) personal questions: «*You were who found him? Not the Moms?*

...
...
...

'Listen, may I ask why this sudden interest after four years 216 days, and with two years of that not even once even calling?'" [507].

Hal also refers to himself as "it", as if he does not identify himself as an animate person. Returning to the internal monologue of "Year of Glad" chapter, Hal does not speak out loud, but no longer has problems with self-identification and speaks about himself, starting each sentence with the pronoun "I".

Bell & Dowling, as well as Baskin, note that one of Wallace's narrative strategies in *Infinite Jest* is the use of the "Inside/Outside" or "inner and outer" opposition [Bell, Dowling 2005: 212; Baskin 2019: 48]. Researchers note that in Chapter 1 Hal uses the words "in" and "inside" several times. For Hal, the inner world is safe: he does not bottle up his emotions and speaks in it. Drug abuse is also an escape from reality for Hal, and he is more attracted to the conditions in which he does it: "*Hal likes to get high in secret, but a bigger secret is that he's as attached to the secrecy as he is to getting high*" [110].

In the outside world, Hal is emotionally cold and incapable of frank conversations, and his speech – if there is any – is filled with either unnecessary information or lies and omissions. This can also be seen when Hal describes to his older brother Orin how he discovered their father's corpse.

Hal is ironic about his older brother's unexpected interest in those events (by the way, Orin was absent from his father's funeral); he tends to change the subject or end the conversation. He still shares the details of the tragedy in some detail and describes his treatment with a trauma- and grief-therapist, but does not talk about them completely or distorts some facts. For example, as Hal says, the scene of James's death, whose head exploded in a microwave oven, needed to be reconstructed [513–516]. However, in "Year of Glad", Hal talks about how he himself, his fellow student John Wayne, and Don Gately dug up James's head: "*I think of John N. R. Wayne, [...] standing watch in a mask as Donald Gately and I dig up my father's head*" [46], that is, the explosion was not the same as Hal describes it.

Hal is severely traumatized, and he says about it straightforwardly: "*Trauma seems to have been the consensus. [...] O., it got worse and worse. I dropped weight. I couldn't sleep*" [513–517]. Nevertheless, when he describes to Orin his therapy with a grief-specialist, we under-

stand that he perceived it not as help but as a need to “please” that grief-therapist: “I *couldn’t figure out some way to satisfy this grief-pro*” [519]. Hal read many books on the topic of grief and loss and talked to a specialist about common symptoms of depression instead of talking about his own pain, thereby suppressing it.

In *Infinite Jest* there is another example of narration from the point of view of an under-aged, but in African-American vernacular English. The novel’s shift from standard English to vernacular language highlights the novel’s story of Clenette, who is concerned about her half-sister Wardine, who is a victim of domestic violence. By the way, Clenette herself is expecting a child: she is concerned about what is happening but avoids talking about herself; her speech is full of repeated sentences about the same events, which demonstrates her anxiety. David Foster Wallace does not make any direct references to trauma in Clenette’s speech, only through isolated details, but we understand that her pregnancy is likely to be the result of violence. We learn about Clenette’s fate only from episodes that appear later in the novel: she ends up in the Ennet House (which also implies that she suffers from drug addiction); however, we learn nothing about the fate of her child, as well as the fate of Wardine.

Summing up, we can make the following conclusion. In the novel *Room*, E. Donoghue creates the image of a child who has experienced and is getting through a traumatic event – this is a long stay in a confined space without interaction with the outside world and adaptation to normal life after escape. The author depicts the peculiarities of Jack’s perception of the world caused by being in the confined space through his attitude to objects as unique, animate, and confidence in the unreality of the external world. As for the image of the adaptation process, the writer depicts in detail what difficulties the boy is dealing with. This is a hostile perception of the surrounding world, awareness of the existence of many objects of the same class, getting used to the appeals of other people, orientation in time and space, awareness of the variability and diversity of the surrounding world, the distinction between the real and the unreal.

The novel *All the Lost Things* shows the child’s experience of the murder of her mother by her father and the realization of her partial

guilt. The narrator suppresses the memories of the murder, most likely intentionally, and not only because of the activation of the protective mechanism of the psyche. However, memories come back to her, which is shown indirectly through dialogues with the toy.

In D. F. Wallace’s *Infinite Jest*, the manifestation of trauma in Hal’s speech is expressed through silence and avoidance of communication, through suppression of memories, distortion of facts about traumatic events, or their fragmentation. In addition, Wallace’s silence about the future fate of Hal (also Clenette and Wardine) enhances the impact on the reader’s emotions.

It is important to note that during the drug abuse period of his life, Hal experiences problems with communication and self-identity. The author uses ellipses in dialogues in which the character takes part and puts information into his speech that does not correspond to the topic of dialogues. Hal thus distances himself from the traumatic influences of the world and shows distrust of it. A. K. Nikulina, discussing the opposition of speech and silence in *Infinite Jest*, notes that Hal’s silence signifies his spiritual progress. Language is something that deprives a person of the opportunity to realize his own self in the outside world [Nikulina 2020: 242]. It is also interesting that S. de Bourcier, in an article on the syntax of D. F. Wallace, notes that complex structures and confusing language in his prose are attributes of dependent characters, and the simplification of speech to sentences containing only the subject, predicate, and monosyllabic words is a symptom of their recovery [de Bourcier 2017: 4]. We support these findings: Hal quits drugs, and this marks a positive change in his life.

On the other hand, Hal’s silence (his speech not only becomes simpler but also disappears) and his loss of control over his own body means that the distance between him and the outside world only increases. He becomes more emotional, opens up and is able to talk about his feelings, but this only happens in the form of an internal monologue. Hal ends up probably in a mental hospital, strapped to a bed, and this is not the first time this happens: “It is **a special ambulance**, [...] some kind of **psychiatric M.D. on board**. [...] At the only other emergency room **I have ever been in, almost exactly one year back**” [44]. Can we hope that Hal

will recognize and overcome his trauma and that he will take control over his body and speech again, but consciously? Wallace does not provide an answer.

In Donoghue's *Room*, Sacks's *All the Lost Things*, and Wallace's *Infinite Jest*, linguistic features of juvenile narrators' speech are associated with intractable psychological issues. In these novels, the characters, as they are narrators too, are mainly presented through their speech, and authorial voices are minimized in order to demonstrate the depth of their trauma. After analyzing the features of speech and worldview of the narrators of the selected works, we identified the following general features of the image of the traumatic experience of juveniles.

Firstly, it is the use of juxtaposition of "inside" and "outside" in the speech of the child and teenage narrators (Jack from the novel *Room* and Hal from the novel *Infinite Jest*), while both their physical and mental "location" is meant. Characters tend to run away from the hostile outside world, hide there or return as they are comfortable there and all the surrounding objects are familiar to them;

or characters can completely go inside themselves, while losing the ability to communicate verbally.

Secondly, in all novels, the narrators' overcoming of trauma remains questionable. This can be explained by the fact that they either do not realize that they are traumatized (like Jack), or they suppress memories of a traumatic event (like Hal and Dolly). In addition, the works in question describe short periods of time, the characters remain children or teenagers, we do not see them in adulthood. Therefore, we can only observe the process of experiencing trauma by the child narrator, his further development (growing up) and the future are not shown. Readers can only guess what outcome awaits the narrator. The authors focus on depicting how children live traumatic events and their consequences here and now. This, perhaps, is the novelty of their approach and the difference from the works, when childhood trauma is considered only as a motivation for actions or the formation of the personality of an already adult character. In our case, the writers are interested in the trauma itself and its experience by children.

Литература

- Киприна, С. В. Развитие темы детства в английской литературе второй половины XX века / С. В. Киприна // Вестник КГПУ им. В. П. Астафьева. – 2011. – № 1. – С. 153–158.
- Костылев, А. О. Обращение в детской речи / А. О. Костылев // Детская речь как предмет лингвистического изучения : межвуз. сб. науч. тр. – Ленинград : ЛГПИ, 1987. – С. 69–76.
- Никулина, А. К. «Вырваться за пределы языка»: речь и молчание в романе Д. Ф. Уоллеса «Бесконечная шутка» / А. К. Никулина // Вестник Томского государственного университета. Филология. – 2020. – № 63. – С. 235–249.
- Чеботарева, И. М. Олицетворение в детской речи : автореф. дис. ... канд. филол. наук / И. М. Чеботарева. – Белгород, 1996. – 16 с.
- Baskin, J. *Ordinary Unhappiness* / J. Baskin. – Stanford, California : Stanford University Press, 2019. – 197 p.
- Bell, R. H. *A Reader's Companion to Infinite Jest* / R. H. Bell, W. C. Dowling. – Xlibris, 2005. – 318 p.
- Caruth, C. *Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative and History* / C. Caruth. – Baltimore, London : The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996. – 154 p.
- Costello-Sullivan, K. "Stories Are a Different Kind of True". *Narrative and the Space of Recovery in Emma Donoghue's Room* / K. Costello-Sullivan // *Trauma and Recovery in the Twenty-First-Century Irish Novel*. – Syracuse, New York : Syracuse University Press, 2018. – P. 92–109.
- de Bourcier, S. 'They All Sound Like David Foster Wallace': Syntax and Narrative in *Infinite Jest*, Brief Interviews with Hideous Men, Oblivion and The Pale King / S. de Bourcier // *Orbit: A Journal of American Literature*. – 2017. – Vol. 5, no. 1. – P. 1–30. – DOI: <https://doi.org/10.16995/orbit.207>.
- Donoghue, E. *Room* / E. Donoghue. – London : Picador, 2010. – 401 p.
- Felman, S. *Testimony: Crises of Witnessing in Literature, Psychoanalysis, and History* / S. Felman, D. Laub. – New York : Routledge, 1992. – 283 p.
- Marder, E. *Trauma and Literary Studies: Some "Enabling Questions"* / E. Marder // *Reading On: A Journal of Theory and Criticism*. – 2006. – Vol. 1, no. 1. – P. 1–6.
- Nadal, M. *Trauma in Contemporary Literature: Narrative and Representation* / M. Nadal, M. Calvo – New York : Routledge, 2014. – 260 p.

Rubik, M. Out of the Dungeon, into the World: Aspects of the Prison Novel in Emma Donoghue's Room / M. Rubik // How to Do Things with Narrative: Cognitive and Diachronic Perspectives / ed. by J. Alber, G. Olson. – Berlin ; Boston : De Gruyter, 2017. – P. 219–240.

Sacks, M. All the Lost Things / M. Sacks. – New York ; Boston ; London : Little, Brown and Company, 2019. – 288 p.

Sehgal, P. The Case Against the Trauma Plot / P. Sehgal. – Text : electronic // The New Yorker. – 2022. – URL: <https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2022/01/03/the-case-against-the-trauma-plot> (mode of access: 22.02.2023).

Sütterlin, N. A. History of trauma theory / N. A. Sütterlin // The Routledge Companion to Literature and Trauma / ed. C. Davis, H. Meretoja. – London ; New York : Routledge, 2020. – P. 11–22.

Wallace, D. F. Infinite Jest / D. F. Wallace. – New York : Little, Brown and Company, 2009. – 2253 p.

References

Baskin, J. (2019). *Ordinary Unhappiness*. Stanford, California, Stanford University Press. 197 p.

Bell, R. H., Dowling, W. C. (2005). *A Reader's Companion to Infinite Jest*. Xlibris. 318 p.

Caruth, C. (1996). *Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative and History*. Baltimore, London, The Johns Hopkins University Press. 154 p.

Chebotareva, I. M. (1996). *Olitsetvorenje v detskoj rechi* [Personification in Children's Speech]. Avtoref. dis. ... kand. filol. nauk. Belgorod. 16 p.

Costello-Sullivan, K. (2018). "Stories Are a Different Kind of True". Narrative and the Space of Recovery in Emma Donoghue's Room. In *Trauma and Recovery in the Twenty-First-Century Irish Novel*. Syracuse, New York, Syracuse University Press, pp. 92–109.

de Bourcier, S. (2017). 'They All Sound Like David Foster Wallace': Syntax and Narrative in Infinite Jest, Brief Interviews with Hideous Men, Oblivion and The Pale King. In *Orbit: A Journal of American Literature*. Vol. 5. No. 1, pp. 1–30. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.16995/orbit.207>.

Donoghue, E. (2010). *Room*. London, Picador. 401 p.

Felman, S., Laub, D. (1992). *Testimony: Crises of Witnessing in Literature, Psychoanalysis, and History*. New York, Routledge. 283 p.

Kiprina, S. V. (2011). Razvitie temy detstva v angliiskoi literature vtoroi poloviny XX veka [The Development of the Childhood Theme in English Literature in the Second Half of the 20th Century]. In *Vestnik KGPU im. V. P. Astafeva*. No. 1, pp. 153–158.

Kostylev, A. O. (1987). Obrashchenie v detskoj rechi [Addressing in Children's Speech]. In *Detskaya rech' kak predmet lingvisticheskogo izucheniya: mezhvuz. sb. nauch. tr.* Leningrad, LGPI, pp. 69–76.

Marder, E. (2006). Trauma and Literary Studies: Some "Enabling Questions". In *Reading On: A Journal of Theory and Criticism*. Vol. 1. No. 1., pp. 1–6.

Nadal, M., Calvo, M. (2014). *Trauma in Contemporary Literature: Narrative and Representation*. New York, Routledge. 260 p.

Nikulina, A. K. (2020). «Vyrvat'sya za predely yazyka»: rech' i molchanie v romane D. F. Uollesa «Beskonechnaya shutka» ["To Run Against the Boundaries of Language": Speech and Silence in David Foster Wallace's Infinite Jest]. In *Vestnik Tomskogo gosudarstvennogo universiteta. Filologiya*. No. 63, pp. 235–249.

Rubik, M. (2017). Out of the dungeon, into the world: Aspects of the prison novel in Emma Donoghue's Room. In Alber, J., Olson, G. (Eds.). *How to Do Things with Narrative: Cognitive and Diachronic Perspectives*. Berlin, Boston, De Gruyter, pp. 219–240.

Sacks, M. (2019). *All the Lost Things*. New York, Boston, London, Little, Brown and Company. 288 p.

Sehgal, P. (2022). The Case Against the Trauma Plot. In *The New Yorker*. URL: <https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2022/01/03/the-case-against-the-trauma-plot> (mode of access: 22.02.2023).

Sütterlin, N. A. (2020). History of trauma theory. In Davis, C., Meretoja, H. (Eds.). *The Routledge Companion to Literature and Trauma*. London, New York, Routledge, pp. 11–22.

Wallace, D. F. (2009). *Infinite Jest*. New York, Little, Brown and Company. 2253 p.

Данные об авторах

Николина Наталия Николаевна – старший преподаватель кафедры германской филологии, Уральский федеральный университет им. первого Президента России Б. Н. Ельцина (Екатеринбург, Россия). Адрес: 620000, Россия, г. Екатеринбург, пр-т Ленина, 51.

E-mail: nickolyasya@yandex.ru.

Authors' information

Nikulina Natalia Nikolaevna – Senior Lecturer of Department of Germanic Philology, Ural Federal University named after the first President of Russia B. N. Yeltsin (Ekaterinburg, Russia).

Каяво Виолетта Александровна – старший преподаватель кафедры германской филологии, Уральский федеральный университет им. первого Президента России Б. Н. Ельцина (Екатеринбург, Россия).
Адрес: 620000, Россия, г. Екатеринбург, пр-т Ленина, 51.
E-mail: kaiavo.violetta@urfu.ru.

Kaiavo Violetta Alexandrovna – Senior Lecturer of Department of Germanic Philology, Ural Federal University named after the first President of Russia B. N. Yeltsin (Ekaterinburg, Russia).

Дата поступления: 23.04.2023; дата публикации: 31.10.2023

Date of receipt: 23.04.2023; date of publication: 31.10.2023