

STYLISTIC DEVICES OF INDIRECT ACTUALIZATION OF THE CONCEPT OF TRAUMA IN ELIZABETH STROUT'S NOVEL "OLIVE KITTERIDGE"

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Summary

The article is devoted to the analysis of stylistic devices used for the indirect actualization of the concept of TRAUMA in Elizabeth Strout's novel "Olive Kitteridge". The focus of the research is on metaphors, similes, personifications, epithets, metonymies, oxymorons, and other stylistic means by which the author conveys the psycho-emotional state of the characters. Particular attention is paid to the descriptions of bodily reactions, somatic manifestations, emotional outbursts, and the interaction between humans and nature. This mode of actualizing the concept of TRAUMA reveals the inner pain and psychological crises experienced by the characters. Through the use of artistic tropes, Elizabeth Strout succeeds in depicting the dynamics of emotional traumatization: from physical pain to the loss of identity, from fear to alienation. The detailing of psychosomatic symptoms, behavioral disturbances, and associations with natural processes creates a profound depiction of psychological suffering. The indirect actualization of traumatic experience through stylistic devices in the novel enhances its artistic effect, allowing the reader to immerse themselves in the inner world of the characters and perceive the multidimensionality of their experiences. The article demonstrates that stylistic devices function not only as aesthetic elements within the novel but also as significant tools for the cognitive representation of psychological trauma. The analysis confirms that traumatic experience in "Olive Kitteridge" is embodied through multilayered linguistic structures that require a comprehensive interpretative approach.

Key words: emotional trauma, cognitive linguistics, stylistic devices, metaphor, somatic symptoms, psycho-emotional state, indirect representation.

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1. Introduction

In contemporary research, the phenomenon of trauma is examined within an interdisciplinary context – at the intersection of psychology, literary studies, psychoanalysis, and sociology. Scholars such as Cathy Caruth, Dominick LaCapra, and Kalí Tal have analyzed trauma through narrative structures and collective memory, emphasizing the importance of literature as a medium for recording traumatic experience (*Berger, 1997*). Within the psychoanalytic paradigm, Philip M. Bromberg proposed a relational model of trauma experience, focusing on the phenomenon of dissociation in post-traumatic states (*Bromberg, 1993*). The biological mechanisms of post-traumatic disorders were presented in the research of Dennis S. Charney, who concentrated on physiological changes in the body under severe stress (*Charney, 1993*). The issue of individualism and its impact on the social adaptation of individuals with traumatic experience was initiated in the works of Louis Dumont (*Dumont, 1986*). Meanwhile, Susan Guaccero, analyzing the character of Olive Kitteridge, offers a psychoanalytic interpretation of the space of personal ruptures and transformations (*Guaccero, 2010*).

Literary representations of trauma in American prose of the post-9/11 period have been thoroughly studied by Rae-Lee Kruger (*Kruger, 2016*), while age-related changes and aging as components of traumatic experience are explored in the work of Jelena Šesnić (*Šesnić, 2019*). The psychosomatic consequences of traumatic events have been systematized in a meta-analytic review by M. L. Pacella and co-authors (*Pacella et al., 2013*).

Particular attention is also given to the study by Arie Y. Shalev, who analyzes the connection between post-traumatic stress disorder and depression in victims of psychological trauma (*Shalev et al., 1998*). The philosophical aspects of the search for meaning in life and the impact of traumatic experience on the psyche are explored in the works of Rollo May (*May, 2009*) and Erich Fromm (*Fromm & Anderson, 2013*).

The issue of psycho-emotional trauma in Elizabeth Strout's novel "Olive Kitteridge" is actively discussed in contemporary scholarly research. In particular, Qiu Minghui analyzes the manifestations of the protagonist's traumatic experience, exploring aspects such as the symptoms of trauma, their causes, and the possibilities for recovery (*Qiu Minghui, 2023: 166–167*). The novelty of the topic in this article lies in its focus on the indirect stylistic actualization of the concept of TRAUMA in "Olive Kitteridge", which has not yet received systematic analysis within Ukrainian linguistics. The relevance of this study is determined by the growing interest in the investigation of cognitive mechanisms of trauma verbalization and the role of literary tropes in representing complex psycho-emotional states of characters.

The aim of the study is to identify and analyze the indirect stylistic devices (metaphors, comparisons, personifications, epithets, metonymies, and other tropes) that represent the concept of TRAUMA in the novel "Olive Kitteridge".

To achieve this aim, the following objectives are set:

- to identify the main stylistic mechanisms of the indirect actualization of traumatic experience;
- to trace the cognitive nature of stylistic devices in the context of literary text;
- to analyze the semantics (the meaning of words or described situations related to physical or emotional pain) and pragmatics (the way in which images influence the reader) of images associated with bodily and emotional suffering.

The methodological basis of the study includes methods of cognitive analysis, contextual analysis, as well as elements of stylistic and semantic analysis. The logic of the presentation of the material is based on a sequential analysis of the literary text with a focus on identifying the stylistic devices through which the traumatic experience of the characters is represented in the novel.

2. Stylistic Devices for Representing Trauma

Stylistic devices play a crucial role in language and literature, enabling the conveyance of complex emotional and psychological states, particularly those associated with traumatic experiences. The use of such devices as *metaphors, personifications, comparisons, and other tropes* helps to immerse the reader more deeply into the inner world of Elizabeth Strout's novels, making the characters' experiences more tangible and comprehensible (*Kuzebna, Usyk, 2021*).

The metaphor, as one of the most powerful stylistic devices, allows the transfer of properties from one object to another, creating new shades of meaning (*Kobzar, 2014*). In the context of portraying trauma, **metaphors** can emphasize the intensity of pain, the sense of isolation, or the internal conflict of a character on both physical and abstract levels.

Other stylistic devices, such as *personification*, allow the attribution of human characteristics to inanimate objects or abstract concepts, which can emphasize the depth of emotional experiences. For example, the description of one heroine's state as "*the soul exhausted*

by suffering while the body continues to exist” conveys the rift between physical existence and emotional exhaustion.

For example, **the comparison of a woman to a Christmas tree** – which is cut down to be admired for a short time and then discarded – may symbolize **the objectification and devaluation of the individual**. The Christmas tree becomes a symbol of short-lived relationships, where beauty is used for temporary satisfaction and later devalued and thrown away: *For a moment she felt baffled that people did this to trees (Christmas trees) ...in a few weeks the tree would be stripped, taken down, hauled out onto the sidewalk with tinsel still sticking to it* (Ch. 3, p. 65). The comparison of a person to an object also reflects an awareness of the loss of control over one’s life and isolation, as illustrated by the image: *Transparent plastic capsule that rose off the ground* (Ch. 5, p. 119).

The words of others can evoke feelings of confusion and an inability to think clearly: *The woman with the long gray hair has really shaken Olive up: Seismic spells itself across her fog-colored mind* (Ch. 9, p. 222). Healthy, harmonious relationships can act as a trigger that initiates a traumatic reaction: *To love and to be loved is the most important thing in life. those words could cause such an exacerbation of the silent dread in Kevin* (Ch. 2, p. 51).

In the novels about Olive Kitteridge, there is a recurring idea that **life** consists of alternating **big and little bursts**: *Olive’s private view is that life depends on what she thinks of as big bursts and little bursts* (Ch. 4, p. 83). The **loss** of a loved one (death) is associated with **hell**: *Then, I’m in hell* (Ch. 13, p. 318).

In relationships, there may be a sense of coldness, a lack of emotional support, and even the presence of hostility: *He was leaning back in his chair watching her. There was no pocket of warmth* (Ch. 3, p. 68). Despite **outward friendliness (a smile)**, it is entirely possible to maintain **distance** or not truly seek close contact with others: *someone who brushed past people even when she was smiling* (Ch. 12, p. 244).

By focusing on descriptions of the physical body, a wide range of emotions, feelings, and experiences can be conveyed. Through the **body**, the author reveals sudden and intense emotional reactions and their speed: *the flash went through her; another flush of heat rows through her* (Ch. 3, p. 65); the unexpected surge of fear: *Ripple of terror went through him* (Ch. 5, p. 109). After receiving shocking news, such as a husband’s betrayal, the entire body – including the joints – can become unstable and lose its internal cohesion: *Her joints have become loosened* (Ch. 9, p. 212).

The author depicts a state of health in which the character is psychologically exhausted by suffering, while the body continues to exist: *Only soul poor. The body bangs on* (Ch. 13, p. 335). **The black mass** moving inside the body symbolizes anxiety or a depressive state: *Something stunned and fat and black moves through her* (Ch. 4, p. 86).

The absence of expression on the face serves as a reaction to severe trauma, shock, or distress: *Anita’s face got blank, like she couldn’t find the expression to put on it* (Ch. 10, p. 238). **Fear-related emotions** are also conveyed through facial expressions: *A small motion of fear seemed to pass over the face* (Ch. 1, p. 9). The eyes similarly reflect emotional exhaustion and depression: *Her eyes weren’t quite right* (Ch. 10, p. 230); *bleary in his eyes* (Ch. 3, p. 70). **The eyes, as a link to the outside world**, in moments of acute stress, illustrate a blurring of boundaries between reality and internal experiences: *Everything became blurry, not just her eyes* (Ch. 12, p. 286).

The physical manifestation of anxiety can resemble paralysis, where the body – specifically **the limbs and face** – reacts faster than the mind: *Hot tingles shot through Winnie’s arm and fingers* (Ch. 10, p. 244); *even her nose and chin tingled* (Ch. 7, p. 167). The skin

responds to anxiety through the appearance of perspiration: *Harmon felt a sprinkle of perspiration arrive on his forehead* (Ch. 5, p. 107).

The heart, being the first to react among all parts of the body, experiences emotional pain and expresses empathy: *Oh, it broke her heart* (Ch. 7, p. 160), as well as conveying tension: *her heart pumping ferociously* (Ch. 11, p. 286).

The stomach reflects the suddenness and sharpness of pain, indicating the psychosomatic connection between emotions and bodily sensations: *A pinprick of heat started up in her stomach* (Ch. 12, p. 303).

Clothing details can exert psychological pressure on the characters: *The darkness of the man's coat seemed to press against her head* (Ch. 3, p. 63).

Another group of stylistic devices is connected with **nature and the environment**, where the inner state of the characters resonates with the surrounding world, for instance, with the external emptiness and coldness of nature: *природи the streetlamps pale in the dark, cold* (Ch. 3, p. 70).

The parallelism between nature and the emotional state of the heroine creates a sense of emptiness, change, and inevitability: *That tulips died, the trees turned red, the leaves fell off, the trees were bare, snow came* (Ch. 8, p. 184); or, conversely, conveys a feeling of safety: *all these receded like a shoreline as he walked through the safety of his pharmacy* (Ch. 1, p. 2).

A turning point in a character's life can be a moment of heroism or empathy, when the character emerges from their own state of trauma: *staring into her open eyes in the swirling salt-filled water, with the sun flashing through each wave, he thought he would like this moment to be forever* (Ch. 2, p. 56).

Nature maintains a connection with **childhood memories and past experiences** through the scents of flowers and grass, and the contemplation of familiar places: *The salt air filled his nose, the wild rugosa bushes with their white blossoms brought him a vague confusion; a sense of sad ignorance seemed cloaked in their white petals* (Ch. 2, p. 36); *Relief came, arriving as a sensation beneath his ribs, like a gentle lapping of the water's edge at low tide, a comforting quiescence* (Ch. 2, p. 38); *And yet gazing back at the sun-sliced bay, he noted how familiar it felt; he had not expected that* (Ch. 2, p. 36).

Visiting familiar places (a forest, patches of flowers) helps to calm down and escape anxiety: *The woods were there, and that's all he wanted, to lie on the pine needles, touch the thin, ripping bark of a cedar tree, have the hackmatack needles above his head, the wild lilies of the valley with their green, open leaves near him. The hidden white starflowers, the wild violets; his mother had shown him all these* (Ch. 2, pp. 38–39).

Thus, familiar nature and its scents transport the character back to childhood memories, evoking a specific psychological state and possibly initiating the process of repressed traumatic memory.

Emotional experiences can resemble a **storm** that has not yet subsided: *The tide is still out on that one, she thinks* (Ch. 9, p. 216). Water symbolizes a muted emotional state, as if she is detached from reality: *By God, we do, Olive thinks. But she is stunned in her underwater way* (Ch. 4, p. 74).

The character's behavior in a state of despair is compared to that of an animal: *She wept at times with such noise the dog whimpered and trembled* (Ch. 8, p. 176).

In such descriptions, there is a contrast between the outward beauty of nature and the inner painful sensations, suppressed emotions, or feelings repressed since childhood.

The details of nature serve as a means of conveying the intensity of emotional memories, as descriptions of the natural world are interrupted by brief, poignant statements that reveal the

depth of pain, as if the trauma “breaks through” the usual flow of thought: *But the house, the trees tangled with woodbine, the surprise of a lady's sleeper in the midst of pine needles, the open leaves of the wild lilies of the valley - he missed it. He missed his mother* (Ch. 2, p. 53).

Dissociation in the characters – the process of complete immersion into an activity to avoid pain – is compared to submersion under water, where the connection with the surrounding world is lost: *She didn't know what she played, couldn't have said, but she was inside the music* (Ch. 3, p. 70); *it was like trying to make sense of music and God and why the ocean was deep. (Long ago Angie had known not to try to make sense of these things, the way other people tried to do.)* (Ch. 3, p. 64).

The stylistic device of **metonymy** is used to describe a general state of malaise: *Her legs feel swollen, not good* (Ch. 4, p. 88), or to convey a state of concentration and tension: *He had to listen with half an ear as his filled prescriptions, to make sure Mrs. Granger was not at the cash register dismissing a complaint* (Ch. 2, p. 3).

A **comparison** describes **tremor** (a physical manifestation of anxiety) as resembling the devil: *Her foot bounced like the devil* (Ch. 13, p. 333), while bodily manifestations of tension caused by internal stress are likened to a puppet: *A nervous fellow, though, Simon had been, his whole body jerking around like a puppet pulled by strings* (Ch. 2, p. 35).

The physical sensation of **sudden fright** (a sudden awareness of guilt or shame), its intensity and unexpectedness, can regress **an adult character back into a childlike state**: *She feels a jolt of panic, as if she herself have just been caught smoking in the woods* (Ch. 4, p. 84).

In the first book, there is a comparison of **men to animals**, which affects future relationship patterns through early childhood trauma related to sexuality: *There are some men in the world that when they lie down beside a woman, they are no different from dogs* (Ch. 12, p. 300).

A character suffering from **anorexia** is compared to a **spider and a seagull** to emphasize physical exhaustion: *Her legs as skinny as spider legs* (Ch. 5, p. 103), and to highlight physical fragility: *Her hand looked like the claw of a seagull* (Ch. 5, p. 116).

The feeling of **recurring painful experiences** is compared to the sky: *for Angie time was a big and round as the sky* (Ch. 3, p. 64). Emotional burden is compared to a massive boulder: *Something had been lifted like a boulder* (Ch. 5, p. 109). To intensify the depiction of pain, a heart attack is compared to a person sitting heavily on his chest: *квітці like someone had sat hard on his chest* (Ch. 7, p. 154).

The use of **personification** to convey fear, inner unrest, and emotional agitation gives these feelings human characteristics: *a soft ache beating on her breastbone for a moment, like a wind inside her* (Ch. 4, p. 78). Fatigue and disappointment, as well as a **sense of hopelessness** in the characters, are depicted as **contagious infections**: *Crazy breeds crazy* (Ch. 2, p. 49). **Sadness** is described as a **stain** that travels: *He felt the stain of some sadness make its way from her to him* (Ch. 2, p. 44). The body experiences **an emotional reaction** during communication, resembling **the prick of a needle**: *A sense of umbrage pricked him, then left* (Ch. 2, p. 38).

Loneliness is depicted as a killer, a threat to life: *She knows that loneliness can kill people – in the different ways can actually make you die* (Ch. 4, p. 83).

Epithets convey the grim aesthetics of death: both terrifying and lyrical: *The tender unknowingness* (Ch. 7, p. 158), waves reflecting the emotional storm within, epithets: *Winnie sat in a chair and watched the ocean, choppy and gray* (Ch. 10, p. 247). Internal disdain and the feeling of self-disgust: *it seemed to telling her he was a slob, pathetic, not a shred of dignity* (Ch. 2, p. 42).

Thus, the conceptualization of TRAUMA, the depiction of the characters' traumatic experiences, is achieved through stylistic devices in the novel "Olive Kitteridge". Through metaphors, personifications, comparisons, and other literary techniques, the author conveys the multidimensional nature of emotional and physical suffering. The indirect representation of psycho-emotional states enhances the emotional impact of the text and facilitates a deeper immersion for the reader into the inner world of the characters.

3. The Role of Specific Figures of Speech in Representing Traumatic States

The use of tropes adds drama and multi-layered meaning to the psychological experiences in the work. **Hyperbole** is used to represent emotional states of shock, such as: *Made you breathless, really* (Ch. 7, p. 154), and the intensity of pain, like *caused a blister the size of a big marble to appear on her sole* (Ch. 4, p. 81).

The author uses **ellipsis** to describe sudden loss, an emotional blow, when the enjoyment of beauty in the world fades due to the betrayal of a loved one: *The loveliness of all things – all gone* (Ch. 7, p. 168).

Neologisms enhance the philosophical aspect of vulnerability and the fragility of life, while the **oxymoron** combines the harshness of the reality of death with the poetic beauty seen by the observer: *The tender unknowingness, the goneness of his flung-wide arms, his belly showing* (Ch. 7, p. 158).

Emotional transference, trauma linked to past experiences, is described through **allegory**: *there was a water terror that had to do with her mother* (Ch. 3, p. 63).

Elizabeth Strout uses **antithesis** to convey complex emotions and inner conflict through sincere, emotionally charged statements: *. I haven't wanted to be this way, but so help me, I have loved my son* (Ch. 4, p. 87).

In the first book, there is an **allusion** to Shakespeare, reflecting the bitter acceptance of old age: *Seven stages of life? Is that what Shakespeare said? Why, old age alone had seven stages!* (Ch. 11, p. 280).

Thus, hyperbole, ellipsis, oxymoron, allegory, antithesis, and allusion are essential for Elizabeth Strout in conveying emotional depth, internal contradictions, and the philosophical dimension of her characters' suffering.

4. Conclusions

The conducted research shows how important stylistic devices of indirect actualization are for depicting the psycho-emotional states of the characters in Elizabeth Strout's novel "Olive Kitteridge". Metaphors, comparisons, personifications, epithets, and hyperboles are the most frequently used tools that, through imagery and bodily associations, allow for the portrayal of complex emotional reactions of the body, somatic manifestations of anxiety, fear, pain, and feelings of loneliness. Metaphors and comparisons deepen the emotional experience, personifications animate internal states, epithets sharpen the emotional tone, and hyperboles convey the extraordinary intensity of traumatic feelings.

The bodily manifestations of psycho-emotional states are reduced to descriptions of the face and eyes (lack of expression, blurred vision), hands, legs, and joints (tremor, paralysis, tingling), heart (emotional pain, rapid heartbeat), stomach (sudden sharp pain), and skin (sweating due to anxiety). Through these bodily symptoms, the novel conveys shock, anxiety, fear, emotional oppression, and internal exhaustion.

Another important role in the representation of traumatic experiences is played by the descriptions of nature and the environment. The parallelism between changes in nature and the emotional state of the characters enhances themes of loneliness, loss, desolation, or, conversely, the search for protection. Nature becomes a trigger for childhood memories and repressed traumatic experiences.

Thus, the work traces a coherent system of stylistic strategies aimed at the cognitive and artistic understanding of traumatic experiences. Promising directions for further research include a more detailed analysis of the cognitive models of traumatic experience representation in Elizabeth Strout's novel "Olive, Again".

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