

**The De-realized Self in Tim O'Brien's
*In the Lake of the Woods.***

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Abstract

Since war has become the foreign policy to solve international crises, and since violent occurrences of all sorts, natural catastrophes, killing, abuse and rape are threatening the world with unseen wounds affecting it physically, emotionally and mentally. Trauma and mental disorders have taken the interest of psychiatry, psychoanalysis, sociology and literature. Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), in particular, has managed to create a pedagogic (scholastic) bond between literature and psychology to reach a full understanding of this mental disorder and to cure what has been considered a phenomenon of trauma. The present paper attempts to apply Cathy Caruth's reading of Post Traumatic Stress Disorder in her book: *Trauma: Exploration in Memory* (1995) on Tim O'Brien's novel *In the Lake of the Woods* (1994). The novel traces the psychological references of the traumatized John Wade's unusual war experience that goes beyond the range of human awareness and renders him to be in a devastating mental haze.

Keywords: My Lai; massacre; Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD); Trauma, Flies; John Wade.

1. Introduction

The paper attempts a psychological reading and analysis of John Wade's character in Tim O'Brien's novel *In the Lake of The Woods* (1994) in terms of Cathy Caruth's psychological exploration of the traumatized persona. The heinous ghostlike flashbacks that haunt the protagonist twenty years after the mass killing of Thuan Yan in Vietnam (1968) defines the very nature of the PTSD, and not only suggest an explanation of what might possibly have happened to John Wade's wife in the lake of the woods, but also and most importantly unveil the unsaid of the traumatized man's history that yearns to be de-realized.

Cathy Caruth(1995) Defines PTSD as

A response sometimes delayed, to an overwhelming event or events, which takes the form of repeated, intrusive hallucinations , dreams , thoughts or behaviors stemming from the event, along with numbing that have begun during or after the experience , and possibly

also increased arousal to (and avoidance of) stimuli recalling the event(p.4).

The above definition suggests that the nature of the mental disorder lies in the reception of an event or events that might not be fully comprehended at the time, but rather belatedly. This delay and incompleteness of knowing and seeing overwhelming occurrences of repeated intrusive effects on the one who experiences them and their persevering return that remain true to the event, are what constitute trauma. Therefore, and according to Cathy Caruth (1995), to understand PTSD as a pathological symptom, one should take into consideration that it is not so much a symptom of the unconscious and displacement of meaning, as it is a symptom of history. In other words, the traumatized carries within himself, or he becomes the symptom of history he cannot entirely possess (p.5).

2. Discussion

Tim O'Brien's novel's *In the Lake of the Woods* that reads as a *detective story* is composed of three main sections. The three sections help to reconstruct the protagonist's traumatic experience. The first section is made of flashbacks, dreams and information about John Wade. In this section that is made of scattered sixteen chapters John Wade is presented as politician and sorcerer. He arrives and his wife, Kathy, in September 1986 at the Lake of the Woods, a place near the Canadian borders to escape a political scandal that has caused his defeat in the primary for the U.S. senate. He is discovered to have participated in a mass killing in My Lai, one of the sub hamlets of Thuan Yan, during the Vietnam war (1968). Soon after their arrival, his wife mysteriously disappears leaving him a primary suspect in the investigations that follow. Before long, John Wade, too, vanishes leaving the story with an open end. The second section is entitled 'Evidence' which is made of seven chapters. This section provides interviews, testimonies of real or fictional people, data collected from books of psychology and history, court material records of Peers Commission to investigate My Lai massacre as well as descriptions of personal possessions of John Wade. This section gives all the evidences that attest John Wade a psychologically troubled man, yet it does not state that he is the murderer of his wife. Such a thing is left to the reader to decide. The third section is entitled 'Hypothesis' and is made of Eight chapters. It talks about different scenarios of what might have happened to Kathy. One scenario suggests the possibility of her running away with a secret lover. The other shows the possibility of getting lost or drowning in the lake. Another depicts Wade killing her by pouring boiling water over her and then drowning her body and the boat in the lake. Among these entire hypotheses, the truth remains a mystery to the end.

Anthony L. (Tony) Carbo, John Wade's campaign manager says: "show me a politician, I'll show you unhappy childhood" (O'Brien, 1994, p.29). Part of the impossible history that Wade carries within himself could be traced back to his childhood. He is born to alcoholic father who used to ridicule and tease him by calling him names: "John had all kinds of extra names. I remember his father used to call him Little Merlin, or Little Houdini, and that Jiggling John one. Maybe he got used to it. Maybe he felt — maybe it sort helped to call himself Sorcerer. I hope so" (O'Brien, 1994, p.265).

The unhappy childhood that John Wade's mother Eleanor K. Wade talks about in the above testimony has created inside him a desire to be someone else, to possess another identity, and to master tricks and illusions that seem impossible and supernatural. In other words, to be a sorcerer is to possess the ability to change a reality he hates and cannot control into another reality that he can control and where he is loved and appreciated by his father. This has been the ultimate goal of his childhood. Yet, the horrible death of his father, who has committed a suicide when John is only fourteen, has turned over his childhood desire:

What John felt that night, and for many nights afterward, was the desire to kill. At the funeral he wanted to kill everybody who was crying and everybody who wasn't. He wanted to take a hammer and crawl into the casket and kill his father for dying. But he was helpless. He didn't know where to start (O'Brien, 1994, p.14).

John's desire to kill everybody even his dead father is what Barbara Kowalczyk considers a disintegration which generally affects victims of psychological trauma (2014, p.3). It is also what Judith Herman delineates as a "kind of fragmentation, whereby trauma tears apart a complex system of self-protection that normally functions in an integrated fashion" (1994, p.34). Though such repulsive killing desire shows him as a devastated child that has just lost his father, it is part of the impossible history the young Wade carries within him.

After the death of his father, his wish to be a sorcerer increased even more:

In the weeks that followed, because he was young and full of grief, he tried to pretend that his father was not truly dead. He would talk to him in his imagination, carrying on whole conversations about baseball and school and girls. Late at night, in bed, he'd cradle his pillow and pretend it was his father, feeling the closeness. "Don't be dead," he'd say, and his father would wink and say, "Well, hey, keep talking," and then for a long while they'd discuss the right way to hit a baseball, It was pretending, but the pretending helped (O'Brien, 1994, p.14).

Part of the tricks and illusions John Wade learned to be a sorcerer is the trick of pretending. Pretending that his father is still alive and healthy discussing baseball with him is his trick to overcome his grief over his loss. It depicts his inner wish that the death of his father could have never happened, so it did not happen. In his imagination, he turns his father's death into a loss game where he "would go back in his memory over all the places his father might be ... and in this way he would spend many hours looking for his father,...as if in search of a lost nickel" (O'Brien, 1994, p.15).

On the 16th of March 1968 at 7:30 the chopper that carries John Wade and Charlie Company lands in the sub hamlet of Thuan Yan Known by the U.S army maps as My Lai 4 and Known by John Wade as the My Lai massacre; an event which is most violent and unnatural. Historically, the My Lai Massacre, also called the Pinkville Massacre, was 4-hours brutal mass raping, maiming, and killing of 504 unarmed villagers of 17 pregnant women, old men and 210 children under the age of 13 by more than 100 US soldiers of Charlie Company (Mahini, Barth and Morrow, 2018). John Wade, who is ever haunted by the horrible mass killing, gives an account of it through one of his ghostlike flashbacks that keep on haunting him:

Simpson was killing children. PFC Weatherby was killing whatever he could kill. A row of corpses lay in the pink-to-purple sunshine along the trail —teenagers and old women and two babies and a young boy. Most were dead, some were almost dead. The dead lay very still. The almost- dead did twitching things until PFC Weatherby had occasion to reload and make them fully dead. (O'Brien, 1994, p.107).

The unprecedented knowledge described in the above passage represents Wade's second trauma. As his childhood trauma represented by the death of his father has torn apart his whole system of self-protection and led him to seek tricks and illusions to ease his grief, similarly, his war trauma has led to series of spatial (there and here), temporal (then and now) and emotional raptures. Because he could not fully comprehend and psychologically deal with the shocking slaughter at My Lai in which he himself is a participant, Wade remains traumatized by the overflowing knowledge all the more so as his motivational drive makes him the very agent of successive attempts to rearrange or repress the fact. Thus, he tends to make a pact with himself: by lending the event a convenient signification, he temporarily displaces the unprecedented knowledge of the massacre in the background of his consciousness. Such a repeated act of banishing the sudden devastating otherness, that he has unconsciously created, sets him apart and engenders a division of his self (kowalczyk, 2014,

p.3). Pushing the horrible event to the very back of his consciousness is one of his childhood tricks to ease grief, “Long ago, as a kid, he’d learned the secret of making his mind into a blackboard. Erase the bad stuff. Draw in pretty new pictures” (O’Brien, 1994, p.133). Yet, displacing painful experiences to the background of the consciousness, according to Lois Tyson (2006) does not eliminate them, but rather gives them force by making them the organizers of the current experience (p.13). Thus, John Wade unconsciously empowers his violent experience of My Lai and without admitting it to himself behave in certain ways that would help him to play out his conflicted repressed feelings and emotions about that experience and make them the controller of his present life. The same could be said about the death of his father. One of the so many visions that keep on haunting Wade is the image of the old man with the hoe that he has, mistakenly, killed in Vietnam thinking the hoe is a rifle:

It was not a rifle. It was a small wooden hoe. The hoe he would always remember. In the ordinary hours after the war, at the breakfast table or in the babble of some dreary statehouse hearing, John Wade would sometimes look up to see the wooden hoe spinning like a baton in the morning sunlight. He would see the old man shuffling past the bamboo fence, the skinny legs, the erect posture and the wire glasses, the hoe suddenly sailing up high and doing its quick twinkling spin and coming down uncaught (O’Brien, 1994, p.109).

Imagining the old man or his hoe is part of the spatial, temporal and emotional raptures his war trauma has created. Pushing away his killing of the old man with hoe to the back of his memory does not eliminate the act of killing. On the contrary, John Wade empowers the old man with the hoe to live forever, and to be the organizer of his present life. This would explain why the hoe would visit him in a flashback while he is in his official meetings or even when he is having his breakfast. The man and his hoe have assumed a powerful position that can control both his personal and business life, a position that is unconsciously enabled by the traumatized himself.

One of the ways John Wade tends to play out his repressed feeling is forgetfulness, that is to say, to forget what has happened and to consider it as it never happened. Therefore, in the process of forgetting My Lai Massacre, Wade turns to his act of magic that would bring out the old sorcerer inside him. Making use of the fact that almost everyone in Charlie Company knows him as the sorcerer and no one remembers his true name, in his second tour in Vietnam 1969,

He went to the files and dug out a thick folder of morning reports for Charlie Company. Over the next two hours he made the necessary changes, mostly retyping, some scissors work, removing his name

from each document and carefully tidying up the numbers. In a way it helped ease the guilt.... Around midnight he began the more difficult task of reassigning himself to Alpha Company. He went back to the day of his arrival in— country, doing the math in reserve, adding his name to the muster rolls, promoting himself, awarding the appropriate medals on the appropriate dates. The illusion, he realized, would not be perfect. None ever was. But still it seemed a nifty piece of work. (O'Brien, 1994, p. 269).

Removing his name from Charlie Company, adding it to Alpha Company and awarding himself medals are the old childhood tricks he taught himself to “Erase the bad stuff. Draw in pretty new pictures” (O'Brien, 1994, p.133). By doing so, he does not only eliminate his presence and participation in My Lai Massacre but also deny and dismiss his unprecedented knowledge of the hideous experience of the mass killing. The act of old painful violent experience removal, denial and discharge define the very nature of PTSD.

Forgetfulness and avoidance of the stimuli are not the only fixations John Wade would resort to it to master his memory of pain. Images of mirrors, flies and snakes, the old man with a hoe represent his other fixations and contrarily define his traumatic disorder. Going back to his childhood, John would spend hours practicing his moves in front of the old stand-up mirror in their house basement. He has learned the tricks of changing silk scarves colors or copper pennies into white mice, “In the mirror, where miracles happened, John was no longer a lonely little kid. He had sovereignty over the world.... Everything was possible, even happiness” (O'Brien, 1994, p.65). Most importantly, the mirror has enabled him, as a child, to read his father's mind and to reach to his love and affection even after his death, “In the mirror, where John Wade mostly lived, he could read his father's mind. Simple affection, for instance. ‘Love you, cowboy,’ his father would think” (O'Brien, 1994, p.65). In the years to follow, the mirrors would move to live in his head and in time of need he would resort to them to create his imaginary world where everything is good and happy. Years later, on his way to My Lai and right before the massacre, and for a few seconds he “shut his eyes and retreated behind the mirror in his head, pretending to be elsewhere” (O'Brien, 1994, p.105).

A comprehensive reading of *In the Lake of the Woods* shows that war is a place of magic similar to the mirror in John Wade's head where magical things and miracles happen. As he uses his imagination to change his mother's scarves into colors, war's arena is a place where he can use his imagination as an agent of obliteration to erase

his participation in the hideous crime of My Lai not only from the official files but from his consciousness.

John Wade's denial of the impossible history he carries within himself, represented by the early death of his father and My Lai Massacre, allows the application of the notion concerning "happening-truth" and "story-truth". Marjorie Worthington explains the matter by saying that happening truth is the actual non-abstract account of what happened. The story truth, on the other hand, is the philosophical meaning behind an event. The story-truth can be more vivid and direct, truer than a reality-based account. This notion is enforced through the book's three sections of narration, Evidence, and Hypothesis as well as through the footnotes that reflect the narrator's personal and editorial comments. It is also consolidated through the technique of depicting the same scene more than once with different information in each telling. For example, Wade recalls several times the incident during the My Lai Massacre in which he shoots and kills a fellow soldier named Private PFC Weatherby. In one recollection, he huddles in fear at the bottom of a ravine and accidentally shoots Weatherby when the later startles him. In the other telling, Wade is shocked into catatonia which is a state of immobility and behavioral abnormality for witnessing the cold-blooded killing committed by Weatherby and others. This later telling makes the shooting seem more like an intentional act. But out of the two tellings, the ultimate truth of the situation — particularly the motive for shooting — remains indeterminable, as Wade himself is not sure why he has shot Weatherby and is even able to convince himself that he could not have done that (2009, pp. 121-122). Still the act of shooting is part of the impossible history he carries within himself as PTSD persona.

Throughout his novel, Tim O'Brien makes use of imagery, particularly of the flies and snakes, to contemplate the second psychological symptom of PTSD that is 'Latency'. According to John Berger images actually replace experience and conjure up the appearance of something that was particularly absent during violent occurrences (1972, p.10). Historically and religiously, the flies known as 'Beelzebub' or 'Lord of the Flies' stands for the actual and symbolic representation of the devil. In the history of modern literary works, William Golding's novel *Lord of the Flies* (1954) employs the image of 'Beelzebub' represented by the head of a sow offered by the lost school boys on a deserted island to the 'Beast' or the devil they believe it haunts the island. Golding applies the Flies or lord of the flies to stand for the potential evil that lies within the human soul and heart. Similarly, O'Brien uses the flies in his novel as the actual and symbolic representative of the devil to discuss a more complicated

psychological issue. To understand this, we need to go back to the day of My Lai Massacre. John Wade describes the evil to happen in My Lai by saying that “The air was wrong. The smells were wrong, and the thin rosy sunlight and how the men seemed wrapped inside themselves... [was] pure wrongness” (O’Brien, 1994, pp.104-105). When the actual systematic shooting of the My Lai villagers starts to happen, he begins to describe the scene, “There were flies now—a low droning buzz that swelled up from somewhere deep inside the village” (O’Brien, 1994, p.108). It is the buzz of the flies that announces the coming of the ‘Lord of the Flies’ or ‘Beelzebub’ to represent “not madness... [but] sin” (O’Brien, 1994, p.,107). Shortly after being, the traumatized by the massive killing John Wade finds himself at the bottom of a ravine. The ravine is a place where the bodies of the dead villagers are heaped over and covered with blood and flies. Apparently, the ravine in this novel is the place of the ‘Lord of the Flies’. It is where John Wade gets infected by evil and shoots his fellow soldier PFC Weatherby. Leaving the village after the end of mass killing, Wade and all the other members of Charlie Company sit in silence listening to the “ the buzz [that] had gone into his head. Flies he thought” (O’Brien, 1994, p.204).

Having internalized their buzzing and evil, the traumatized John Wade is haunted by the image of the flies covering the corpses of My Lai villagers, and is visited by feelings of rage accompanied by “furious buzzing noise” (O’Brien, 1994, p.51) in his head. The best scene that represents the combinations of the buzz of the flies and rage is where John Wade kills his house plants. In the house near the Lake of the Woods where he and his wife retreat after his scandalous defeat in the primary for the U.S senate, and a few hours just before Kathy’s mysterious disappearance, John recalls hearing the buzz of the flies as he pours a boiling water on the plants of the house:

Other things, though, he remembered only dimly. Getting out of bed that night. It had been late—that much he knew—but the wee-hour glide lifted him above ordinary time. He remembered the steam, the amps under his skin. He remembered a savage buzzing sound — “Kill Jesus,” he was saying. He couldn’t stop. And so he boiled a bog green geranium near the fireplace, then a dwarf cactus, then several others he couldn’t name (O’Brien, 1994, p.131).

The above extract shows that John Wade as if he is haunted by certain superpower that dominates his mind and urges him to do evil. David J. Piwinski suggests that the image of the flies or lord of the flies is the manifestation of his spiritual evil and inner demons that he cannot ignore (2000, p.201).Unexpectedly, Kathy’s disappearance happens at the very same night of burning his house plants. Since

image actually restores experience and summons the appearance of something that was particularly not in attendance during violent occurrences, “Gradually it became evident that an image could outlast what it represented” (Berger, 1972, p.10). In John Wade’s experience, reimagining and reconfiguring the images of his war trauma is a necessary procedure through which his actual war experience continues to exist inside himself. When John Wade moves to the Lake of the Woods, he makes it a kind of Vietnam and when Kathy gets lost in the wilderness, she is made into Vietnam. Reimagining the flies buzz is a necessary re-enacting operation of the Vietnam experience to clean him of that heavy impossible history he carries within. Just like omitting his name from the official files of Charlie Company, he tries to erase his war experience in Vietnam by hiding it within the vast sameness of the north woods and of himself as indistinct from Kathy. Young suggests that when Kathy is lost in the wilderness, she is in John; that is, in Vietnam, rather than escaping from John. Significantly, Vietnam is the one thing that John Wade cannot erase, though he has succeeded in erasing Kathy. John appears to have erased Kathy and perhaps re-discovered her and himself by placing her in the context of Vietnam. The northern forest landscape becomes a kind of equivalent Vietnam, a place where one’s identity is erased and a self is de-realized (p.136-137). This would explain why he compares their love to pair of snakes along a trail near Pinkville, “but in his mind’s eye he could see a man and a woman swallowing each other up like that pair of snakes... first the tails, then the heads, both of them finally disappearing for ever inside each other” (O’Brien, 1994, p.76). Though the two snakes, like the flies, stand for the violent and shocking experience of his life, they make their first appearance in John Wade’s love letter to Kathy. The two snakes represent the circle of hunger, a cycle that never stops running and never ends or ends only by ending each other, a long process of love and war to erase his identity and that of Kathy in the sameness of themselves and the northern forest.

Tracing the successive two chapters entitled “The Nature of the Beast” and “Hypothesis”, one can notice that the idea of getting rid of the impossible history carried within the traumatized John Wade dominates the two chapters. The chapter “The Nature of the Beast” flashes back to Vietnam, describing it as a place of fear and death where the senses, especially sight that captures light and darkness, bright colors, dreams or nightmares, govern, “At one point it occurred to him that the weight of this day would ultimately prove too much, that sooner or later he would have to lighten the load... And then later still, snagged in the sunlight, he gave himself over to forgetfulness” (O’Brien, 1994, p. 108). “The Nature of the Beast” is followed by

“Hypothesis” that begins with the assumption that Kathy drowned, “Maybe she was skimming along, moving fast...and then came a cracking sound, a quick jolt, and she felt herself being picked up and carried—a moment of incredible lightness, and unburdening, a soaring sensation” (O’Brien, 1994, p. 111). The word “unburdening” corresponds to the word in the previous chapter “lighten the load”. Paradoxically, as William Young suggests, John Wade can only “lighten the load” by only making his married life a kind of Vietnam filled with lights and darkness, gliding movements and abrupt sounds. The “cracking sounds” and the “quick jolt” in the above extract evoke Vietnam just as in the later “Hypothesis” chapter that continues the story of Kathy’s disappearance, where Kathy is “flunked by” four islands calls to mind military associations. (p.138). The presence of Vietnam is so strong in those chapters maybe as a way to replay the Vietnam experience and most importantly to help John Wade lighten his heavy load of memories that he longs to disremember.

Sigmund Freud and Cathy Caruth affirm that trauma is the movement from violent experience to its repression to its return. Yet, what is truly striking about the violent experience is not the period of forgetting and denying its existence, but rather the fact that the victim experiencing it is never fully conscious of the harm it inflicts on him during the accident itself. He would get away apparently unharmed, and the experience of trauma, the fact of latency, would thus seem to consist in the inherent latency within the experience itself. Therefore, the historical power of trauma becomes fully evident only in connection with another place, in another time (1995, pp8-9). Applying that on John Wade, his war trauma represented by My Lai Massacre happened in the 1968 Vietnam escalates and becomes powerful only when he experiences it in connection with another place (in the states) , in another time (twenty years later). The horrible effects of the experience are associated with his first trauma happened in his childhood represented by the suicide of his father. Wades’ hallucinatory reminiscence before vanishing into the Lake of the Woods and never coming back confirms the association:

Yet he could not stop returning. All night long he revised the village of Thuan Yan, always with a fresh eye, witness to the tumbings and spinnings of those who had reached their fictitious point of no return. Relatively speaking, he decided, these frazzle-eyed citizens were never quite dead, otherwise they would surely stop dying. Same –same for his father. Proof of the loop. The fucker kept hanging himself. (O’Brien, 1994, p.283).

His father and the My Lai villagers never stop dying. They keep on dying and visiting him on a continuous torture. Yet the culmination

of John Wade's psychological deterioration could be found in the ghostlike vision that combines both the mourners of his father's funeral and My Lai's dead villagers, "[He] stared into the dark and found himself at his father's funeral — fourteen years old, a new black necktie pinching tight — except the funeral was being conducted in bright sunlight along an irrigation ditch at Tuan Yan" (O'Brien, 1994, p.42). The two traumas in Wade's life keep on being fused until they disappear in each other like he and Kathy swallow each other the way the two snakes swallow each other.

3. Conclusion

Considering Cathy Caruth's psychological reading of the Post Traumatic Stress Disorder, the following points can thus be concluded: First, as persona of PTSD, John Wade's Life is a nonstop struggle to return to Death. Surviving the death of his father and My Lai Massacre in Vietnam does not only represent what he knows, but rather what he does not know of his traumatic past.

Second, John Wade's peculiar encounter with the historical phenomenon called PTSD, in which the overwhelming events of the past repeatedly possess him in intrusive images and thoughts, becomes a central characteristic of his experience. What is striking in his particular experience is that its' insistent reenactments of the past do not simply serve as a manifestation of an event, but also, bear witness to a past that was never fully experienced as it occurred. Trauma in John Wade's case does not simply serve as a record of his past but register the force of the violent experience that is not yet fully owned.

Finally, one the most salient aspect of the traumatic recollection is that it is not a memory. The images of the traumatic reenactment remain accurate, but inaccessible to the conscious recall. That is to say, John Wade's traumatic reliving seems like an awaking memory, yet returns only in a form of a dream or flashbacks. The mirrors, the images of the flies, the snakes and the old man with the a hoe have turned his life not only an everlasting cycle of visiting the hard experience, but rather a continues cycle of leaving its site. Revisiting the village of Thuan Yan is the point of no return in his life. To him, the My Lai villagers and his father are not fully dead, but they keep on dying as he keeps on watching their continues everlasting dearth. He is stuck in a permanent war of secret missions, terrors, longing and regrets and where an indispensable part of his self is de-realized. Hence, unlike creating a second self by venturing inward, John through his final disappearance in to the lakes of the woods, seeks to re-landscape his de-realized self by pursuing a new self or following an extreme outward course.

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الذات الضائعة في رواية بحيرة الغابة ل تيم اوبراين

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خلاصة البحث

حين امتدت الحروب السياسة المتبعة لحل جميع المشاكل الدولية وحين امسى العنف بكل اشكاله من الكوارث الطبيعية ,والقتل والاستغلال والاعتصاب الضاهرة التي تهدد العالم بجروح خفية انهكته جسدياً وعاطفياً وعقلياً اصبحت الصدمة والمشاكل النفسية الشغل الشاغل لعلوم النفس والتحليل النفسي والاجتماع والادب كافة حيث انشأ الاضطراب النفسي المعروف بأسم اضطراب مابعد الصدمة علاقة ثقافية تعليمية ما بين الادب وعلم النفس ساهمت في ايجاد فهم عميق لهذا الاضطراب والتوصل الى علاج شاف لما اعتبر علمياً ظاهرة في علوم الصدمة. يتناول البحث الحالي قراءة كاثي كاروث النفسية لأضطراب مابعد الصدمة في كتابها الموسوم *الصدمة: سير في الذاكرة* (١٩٩٤) ويقوم بتطبيقها على شخصية المضطرب جون ويد في رواية تيم اوبراين *في بحيرة الغابة* (١٩٩٤). حيث ان تجربة بطل الرواية في الحرب تجربة فريدة تجاوزت حدود الوعي الانساني وادخلته في دوامة من الصراع النفسي.

الجميل المفتاحية: ماي لاي، المذبحة، اضطراب مابعد الصدمة، الصدمة، الذباب، جون ويد