

The Representation of Race and Empire in Dennis Johnson's *Train Dreams*

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Abstract- *The article focuses on how the book deals with the indigenous cosmologies to demonstrate how metaphysical insecurities that are present throughout much of Johnson's fiction pose a threat to the very idea of American nationhood, or as the novella's title parodies, the "American Dream," in this setting. The transcontinental railroads and the colonial property regimes that those railroads both sought and opened up are what I refer to as the narrative infrastructures supporting the account of how the American frontier became a nation-state. Train Dreams unsettles these narrative infrastructures. The study examines Johnson's disquieting ideas about property, empire, and finally race in three main sections. These interpretations demonstrate how the novella arrives at an indigenous critique of the United States as a settler colonial state.*

Indexed Terms- *Frontiers, Fortune, Empire, Emotion, Endemic Critique.*

I. INTRODUCTION

Denise Johnson's *Train Dreams* was originally published in Paris. Johnson's *Train Dreams*, David Foster Wallace's *The Pale King*, Karen Russell's *Swamplandia* (see Flood). The article claims Johnson is infusing *Train Dreams* with his dreamy story. Structural – if never obvious, political implications in the border context of concern. Especially in the survey of environmental crises and indigenous cosmology books, the metaphysical uncertainty common to many of Johnson's novels calls this into question in this context. The very concept of American citizenship itself. The title of the novella is a parody of "The American Dream." What some critics have pointed out is found in many standard American literary novels - by James Fenimore Cooper, Nathaniel Hawthorne, Laura Ingalls Wilder

to Cormac McCarthy, Annie Prue and Ron Powers - Building on the Myth of Borders and Their Diversity Incarnation (see, for example, Fussell; Busby et al.; Mogen). In this literary history in general. The purpose of the article is to expand the discussion of the "disturbing" nature of Johnson's work. Johnson's work has hitherto only meant the word emotionally.

Johnson's story certainly hasn't followed a smooth narrative path building costs. The last transcontinental railroad opened at the turn of the 20th century. The settler and his pocket on the frontier of the American West in his 20th-century tradition. American frontier literature - perhaps most famously Willa Cather's *My Ántonia* (1918) - interferes with their literature. Progressive and expansionist self-confidence, short outdated segments and 'disturbances' Reality (cf. Ostwalt 102-103). The result is a "blurry quality" that reads like a "waking dream". The drug-addicted narrator of Johnson's critically acclaimed collection of short stories is *Jesus Son* (1992), as described in his *Critique* (185-186) by Robert McClure Smith in 2001.

The narrative infrastructures that support the story of the American frontier becoming a nation-state are unsettled in *Train Dreams*. the colonial property regimes that were both pursued and opened by the transcontinental railroads. With this term, I draw on Lieven Ameen's separation of 'story' from 'account' in arranging and framework settings. According to his explanation, "Story can be understood as the mentally constructed event (or sequence of events) a narrator has in mind," which captures a general sense of the underlying narrative without being bound by the specifics of the plot; Narrative, on the other hand, is defined as "the actual recounting of these events in question" or as "the infrastructure foundations of a story as plotted across landscape and page" (Ameen

321). The title of Johnson's novella captures this conflict between the solid infrastructural line (the plot and railroad combined into a narrative infrastructure) and the proliferation of ideological fiction around this central line (less concrete but equally impactful stories or myths). The infrastructural lynchpin of settler colonial expansion is the rooted, material train; Johnson's novella unsettles existing mythologies of the American West by targeting and re-plotting the narrative infrastructures of property and railroad, as well as America's self-identification as a nation-state, recasting the US as a settler colonial—or indeed, settler imperial—power. There are also the dreams of the frontier, the storied imaginaries of profit and power that the train's geographic and symbolic mobility enables.

It is needed to conclude by proposing that the topography of *Prepare Dreams* goes a few ways to unsettling this unused account and infrastructural course of action as well—in portion by addressing its originality. For illustration, all through the novella the wolves both yell and move over the settlement line that isolated up Ktunaxa region within the nineteenth century, but that within the twenty-first moreover marks the solidifying edge of the recently arranged American—though still pioneer colonial—nation. This borderline is the center of the novella's penultimate scene in which, in the blink of an eye sometime recently Grainier's passing, Johnson's hero is caught by a sudden and unique wave of sexual want.

Even though he is celibate for the larger part of the novel, this impossible-to-miss flush of excitement is best depicted as Grainier being 'in heat however, Grandin also runs the risk of dangerous claustrophobia in his analysis of this reading. A return to the original conduit of the frontier, the transcontinental railroad—which, as *Train Dreams* itself dramatizes, has genocidal consequences—is the only alternative to the narrative infrastructure of Trump's wall if the United States is confined either to its xenophobic and bordered future or its settler imperial past. Byrd outlines this analytic slip in her indigenous critique of colonialism, in which a commitment to liberal values and multicultural politics accidentally erases America's settler-colonial origins and continued status. She says that this liberal

paradigm risks forcing "struggles for social justice for queers, racial minorities, and immigrants into complicity with settler colonialism" (xvii) because of its impulsively counteractive rejection of Trump's strengthened borders.

Train Dreams does not dramatize the full complexities of Byrd's indigenous criticism, so I am not suggesting that it does so. However, as I have argued throughout this article, it does disturb the frontier myth that is the foundation of the modern settler state. I have argued that Johnson's elusive incorporation of indigenous stories into his rewriting of the frontier is most significant for this unsettling effect, and similar processes are at work in this paragraph's conclusion. *Train Dreams* begins to plot a course through the enclosing pressures of the transcontinental railway and the US-Mexico border wall, two narrative infrastructures that currently structure and delimit political debate when we read these into the text. Grandin may have made a mistake by suggesting that the transition from the frontier to the hardened border and from the transcontinental railroad to the border wall is a narrative progression in American mythology, with the latter evoking the former but remaining distinct from it.

In contrast, *Train Dreams*' dreamlike narrative, which cycles and blends the frontier myth rather than straightening it out into a linear sequence, helps us to see that the two are connected, supported by the same settler colonial logics of white supremacy, spatial re-territorialization, and the elimination of excess populations (Lloyd & Wolfe 110). Johnson's short, dreamlike novella is profoundly political because of the unsettling narrative infrastructures on the frontier and the larger stories of property, empire, and race they sustain: by addressing squeezing inquiries of environment calamity and native bringing home, and growing recently empowered story frameworks that work with as opposed to close down roads to an appropriately decolonizing hostile to imperialism, *Train Dreams* brings a lot to the table for us in the fierce political climates of the twenty-first century.

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