

tree of smoke by denis johnson

Tree of Smoke by Denis Johnson: A Deep Dive into a Vietnam War Epic

Tree of smoke by Denis Johnson is a novel that has captured the imaginations of readers and critics alike since its publication in 2007. Known for his lyrical prose and complex characters, Johnson delivers a sprawling narrative set against the backdrop of the Vietnam War, weaving a tapestry of espionage, moral ambiguity, and human frailty. This book stands out not only as a profound war novel but also as a literary exploration of chaos and redemption. If you're intrigued by Vietnam War fiction, psychological drama, or nuanced storytelling, "Tree of Smoke" offers a rich and rewarding experience.

Understanding the Context of Tree of Smoke by Denis Johnson

Before diving into the intricacies of the novel, it's important to grasp the historical and literary context in which "Tree of Smoke" is set. The Vietnam War remains one of the most controversial and complex conflicts in American history, and it has inspired countless works of literature and film. Denis Johnson's take on the war is neither purely political nor purely historical; instead, it's deeply human, focusing on the chaos and confusion experienced by soldiers and civilians alike.

The Vietnam War as a Literary Setting

The Vietnam War has often been depicted through the lens of trauma, political dissent, and the psychological toll on veterans. Johnson's novel differs in that it does not simply recount events but delves into the murky world of intelligence operations, psychological warfare, and the blurred lines between good and evil. This approach offers readers a fresh perspective on a well-trodden subject, making "Tree of Smoke" a standout work in the genre of Vietnam War literature.

Denis Johnson's Writing Style and Influence

Denis Johnson is widely celebrated for his poetic language and ability to inhabit the minds of troubled characters. His earlier work, such as the critically acclaimed short story collection "Jesus' Son," showcases his talent for capturing the rawness of human experience. In "Tree of Smoke," Johnson expands his scope, employing a complex narrative structure and multiple viewpoints to explore the disorienting nature of war. His prose is both beautiful and unsettling, perfectly matching the novel's themes of uncertainty and moral ambiguity.

Plot Overview and Key Characters

At its core, "Tree of Smoke" follows the story of William "Skip" Sands, a young and idealistic

intelligence officer who becomes embroiled in the shadowy world of CIA operations in Vietnam. The novel spans several years and locations, including Vietnam, the United States, and the Philippines, painting a broad picture of the war's impact on individuals and institutions.

William “Skip” Sands: The Central Figure

Skip Sands is a complex protagonist whose journey from naivety to disillusionment mirrors the larger narrative of the war. As he becomes more entrenched in intelligence work, Sands confronts moral dilemmas, personal loss, and the limits of loyalty. His relationship with his uncle, Colonel Francis Xavier Sands, a legendary figure in psychological operations, adds layers to the story, highlighting themes of family, authority, and madness.

Supporting Characters That Enrich the Narrative

The novel features a cast of richly drawn characters, each representing different facets of the war experience:

- **Colonel Francis Xavier Sands:** A charismatic but deeply troubled man whose ideas about psychological warfare drive much of the CIA's activity in Vietnam.
- **Harp McPherson:** A pilot whose tragic fate underscores the senseless violence of the conflict.
- **James Houston:** An intelligence analyst whose perspective adds depth to the story's examination of espionage and deception.

These characters interact in ways that reveal the complexities of war beyond the battlefield, exploring themes of loyalty, betrayal, and the search for meaning.

Thematic Exploration in *Tree of Smoke* by Denis Johnson

What truly sets “*Tree of Smoke*” apart is its rich thematic content. Johnson does not simply tell a war story; he probes deeply into the psychological and philosophical questions that arise from conflict.

The Fog of War and Moral Ambiguity

One of the novel's central themes is the “fog of war,” both literal and metaphorical. The title itself—“*Tree of Smoke*”—evokes the idea of something elusive and obscured. Throughout the book, characters grapple with unclear motives, shifting alliances, and the challenge of discerning truth from deception. Johnson effectively captures the moral ambiguity inherent in intelligence work and

warfare, where clear distinctions between right and wrong often dissolve.

Identity, Madness, and Redemption

Many characters in “Tree of Smoke” are haunted by madness or existential uncertainty. Colonel Sands’ descent into instability reflects the psychological toll of the war, while Skip’s journey suggests the possibility of redemption and personal growth despite chaos. Johnson’s exploration of identity is nuanced, showing how war can fracture and reshape one’s sense of self.

The Role of Storytelling and Memory

Another compelling theme is the way stories are told and remembered. The novel’s fragmented narrative structure mimics the way memories surface and fade, especially in traumatic circumstances. Johnson seems to suggest that understanding war requires piecing together disparate stories, each incomplete on its own but collectively offering a fuller picture.

Why Tree of Smoke Resonates Today

Though set in the Vietnam War era, “Tree of Smoke” holds relevance for contemporary readers interested in the nature of conflict, intelligence, and human resilience.

Insight into Intelligence and Psychological Warfare

The novel’s focus on CIA operations and psychological tactics provides a rare glimpse into the shadowy world of espionage during wartime. This aspect appeals to readers fascinated by history, politics, and the ethics of covert operations. Johnson’s nuanced portrayal avoids glamorization, instead revealing the often destructive consequences of such strategies.

A Reflection on War’s Human Cost

Beyond politics and strategy, “Tree of Smoke” is ultimately about people—soldiers, agents, civilians—caught in the whirlwind of war. The emotional depth and psychological insight Johnson offers make it a poignant meditation on loss, trauma, and the search for meaning amidst chaos.

Literary Merit and Awards

“Tree of Smoke” received critical acclaim, including being shortlisted for the National Book Award and winning the National Book Critics Circle Award for Fiction. Its reputation as a literary masterpiece of war fiction continues to grow, making it a must-read for those interested in both history and

literature.

Tips for Reading and Appreciating *Tree of Smoke* by Denis Johnson

Given its complexity and length, “*Tree of Smoke*” can be a challenging read, but certain approaches can enhance your experience.

- **Take your time:** The novel’s intricate plot and numerous characters benefit from a patient, thoughtful reading pace.
- **Keep historical context in mind:** Familiarity with the Vietnam War’s timeline and major events can deepen your understanding of the story.
- **Reflect on themes:** Consider how Johnson’s themes of ambiguity, identity, and memory resonate beyond the specific setting.
- **Discuss with others:** Engaging in book clubs or online forums can offer new perspectives and insights.

For readers willing to immerse themselves fully, “*Tree of Smoke*” offers a richly rewarding journey through one of the most turbulent periods of modern history.

Denis Johnson’s “*Tree of Smoke*” remains a towering achievement in American literature, blending historical detail with profound psychological insight. Its portrayal of the Vietnam War, intelligence operations, and the human experience of conflict continues to captivate and challenge readers. Whether you are a fan of war novels, literary fiction, or historical narratives, this book offers a unique, unforgettable experience that lingers long after the final page.

Frequently Asked Questions

What is the central theme of 'Tree of Smoke' by Denis Johnson?

The central theme of 'Tree of Smoke' is the moral ambiguity and psychological complexities of the Vietnam War, exploring the impact of conflict on both soldiers and civilians.

Who is the main protagonist in 'Tree of Smoke' and what role

does he play?

The main protagonist is Skip Sands, an intelligence officer whose experiences and moral struggles provide a lens into the chaotic and often surreal nature of the Vietnam War.

How does Denis Johnson portray the Vietnam War in 'Tree of Smoke'?

Denis Johnson portrays the Vietnam War as a disorienting and morally complex conflict, emphasizing the psychological toll on individuals and the often ambiguous nature of truth and loyalty.

What narrative style does Denis Johnson use in 'Tree of Smoke'?

Johnson employs a fragmented and multi-perspective narrative style, blending realism with surreal and introspective passages to capture the confusion and emotional intensity of war.

How does 'Tree of Smoke' address the theme of espionage and intelligence operations?

The novel delves deeply into espionage, depicting the murky world of intelligence gathering, misinformation, and the ethical dilemmas faced by operatives like Skip Sands.

What is the significance of the title 'Tree of Smoke' in Denis Johnson's novel?

The title 'Tree of Smoke' symbolizes the elusive and pervasive nature of war and deception, reflecting the unclear and shifting realities experienced by the characters throughout the Vietnam conflict.

Additional Resources

Tree of Smoke by Denis Johnson: A Deep Dive into the Vietnam War's Psychological Landscape

tree of smoke by denis johnson stands as a formidable work in contemporary American literature, offering a nuanced and harrowing portrayal of the Vietnam War era. Published in 2007, this sprawling novel delves into the complexities of espionage, morality, and the psychological turmoil faced by those entangled in one of the most contentious conflicts in modern history. Denis Johnson, already acclaimed for his evocative prose and darkly poetic storytelling, stretches the boundaries of historical fiction with *Tree of Smoke*, weaving a narrative that is as intellectually challenging as it is emotionally raw.

The novel's title itself evokes a certain mysticism and ambiguity, reflecting the elusive nature of truth and memory in wartime. As an investigative exploration into the moral ambiguities of war, the book has attracted both critical praise and scholarly attention, making it a significant subject for literary analysis and historical reflection.

In-depth Analysis of Tree of Smoke by Denis Johnson

Tree of Smoke is not a conventional war novel. Unlike straightforward historical accounts or linear narratives, Johnson crafts a labyrinthine saga centered around the character of Colonel Francis X. Sands, a CIA operative deeply involved in psychological operations during the Vietnam War. The novel's structure mirrors the chaos and disorientation of the conflict itself, presenting multiple perspectives and fragmented timelines that challenge readers to piece together a broader understanding of the war's impact.

One of the defining features of *Tree of Smoke* is its exploration of espionage and intelligence work. The narrative delves into the inner workings of the CIA, revealing the murky ethics of covert operations and the often-blurred lines between heroism and manipulation. This focus on intelligence gathering and psychological warfare situates the novel within a distinct niche of war literature that interrogates not just battlefield heroics but the unseen battles waged behind the scenes.

Character Complexity and Psychological Depth

Denis Johnson excels in character development throughout *Tree of Smoke*, particularly in his portrayal of Sands, who embodies the contradictions and moral uncertainties of the war. Sands is both idealistic and flawed, a man caught between his patriotic duty and the increasingly surreal nature of his assignments. His relationships—with his uncle, his colleagues, and several Vietnamese characters—add layers of emotional resonance and cultural tension to the narrative.

The novel also features secondary characters such as Skip Sands, Francis's nephew, whose own journey intersects with themes of innocence lost and the elusive search for meaning in a chaotic world. These characters are not merely individuals but symbolic representations of the war's broader psychological toll on American society and the Vietnamese people alike.

Historical Context and Authenticity

Tree of Smoke is grounded in meticulous historical research, lending authenticity to its depiction of the Vietnam War. Johnson's attention to detail is evident in his vivid portrayal of military operations, the bureaucratic dysfunction of the CIA, and the complex geopolitical dynamics of Southeast Asia during the 1960s and 1970s. This commitment to historical accuracy enhances the novel's credibility and provides readers with an immersive experience that goes beyond fiction.

The novel also highlights lesser-known aspects of the war, such as the use of psychological operations (psyops) and the intricate network of intelligence activities, which are often overshadowed in mainstream war narratives. By bringing these elements to the forefront, Johnson challenges readers to reconsider preconceived notions about the Vietnam War and its legacy.

Thematic Exploration: Morality and Ambiguity

A central theme in *Tree of Smoke* is the moral ambiguity that permeates the characters' actions and

the war itself. Johnson resists simplistic dichotomies of good versus evil, instead presenting a world where motives are often unclear, and ethical boundaries are continually tested. This thematic complexity is reflected in the novel's title, which suggests a vision obscured by layers of confusion and uncertainty.

The novel interrogates the concept of patriotism and the cost of blind allegiance, as characters grapple with the consequences of their choices. The psychological strain of war, including trauma and disillusionment, is portrayed with unflinching honesty, making *Tree of Smoke* a profound meditation on the human condition amid conflict.

Comparative Perspectives and Literary Significance

When placed alongside other seminal Vietnam War novels—such as Tim O'Brien's *The Things They Carried* or Michael Herr's *Dispatches*—*Tree of Smoke* distinguishes itself through its dense narrative style and its focus on intelligence work rather than frontline combat. While O'Brien and Herr offer visceral depictions of soldierly experience, Johnson's novel broadens the lens to include the shadowy realms of espionage and psychological manipulation.

This approach has drawn both praise and criticism. Some readers appreciate the novel's ambition and intellectual rigor, while others find its sprawling structure and complex prose challenging. Nevertheless, *Tree of Smoke*'s literary significance is underscored by its receipt of the National Book Award in 2007, cementing Denis Johnson's status as a masterful chronicler of American experience.

Pros and Cons of *Tree of Smoke*

- **Pros:** Rich character development, historically informed narrative, profound thematic depth, and stylistic innovation.
- **Cons:** Dense and occasionally convoluted storytelling, which can be demanding for readers unfamiliar with Vietnam War history or Johnson's prose style.

The Legacy of *Tree of Smoke* in Contemporary Literature

Tree of Smoke by Denis Johnson occupies a unique space in war literature, blending historical insight with literary artistry. Its unvarnished portrayal of the psychological and moral complexity of war continues to resonate with contemporary readers and scholars. The novel's emphasis on the intangible aspects of conflict—memory, perception, and ideology—offers valuable perspectives for understanding not only the Vietnam War but the broader human experience of warfare.

Moreover, Johnson's work has influenced subsequent generations of writers who seek to explore the

intersections of history, psychology, and narrative form. *Tree of Smoke*'s challenging yet rewarding reading experience invites ongoing discussion about the role of fiction in grappling with historical trauma and ethical ambiguity.

In examining *Tree of Smoke* by Denis Johnson, one encounters a literary endeavor that refuses easy answers, compelling readers to confront the shadows cast by war and the elusive nature of truth. This novel remains a vital contribution to the canon of American war literature, inviting reflection on the costs of conflict and the enduring quest for meaning amid chaos.

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tree of smoke by denis johnson: [Tree of Smoke](#) Denis Johnson, 2007-09-04 Once upon a time there was a war . . . and a young American who thought of himself as the Quiet American and the Ugly American, and who wished to be neither, who wanted instead to be the Wise American, or the Good American, but who eventually came to witness himself as the Real American and finally as simply the Fucking American. That's me. This is the story of Skip Sands—spy-in-training, engaged in Psychological Operations against the Vietcong—and the disasters that befall him thanks to his famous uncle, a war hero known in intelligence circles simply as the Colonel. This is also the story of the Houston brothers, Bill and James, young men who drift out of the Arizona desert into a war in which the line between disinformation and delusion has blurred away. In its vision of human folly, and its gritty, sympathetic portraits of men and women desperate for an end to their loneliness, whether in sex or death or by the grace of God, this is a story like nothing in our literature. *Tree of Smoke* is Denis Johnson's first full-length novel in nine years, and his most gripping, beautiful, and powerful work to date. *Tree of Smoke* is the 2007 National Book Award Winner for Fiction.

tree of smoke by denis johnson: Tree of Smoke Denis Johnson, 2016-02-11 *Tree of Smoke* – the name given to a ‘psy op’ that might or might not be hypothetical and might or might not be officially sanctioned – is Denis Johnson’s most gripping, visionary and ambitious work to date. Set in south-east Asia and the US, and spanning two decades, it ostensibly tells the story of Skip Sands, a CIA spy who may or may not be engaged in psychological operations against the Viet Cong -- but also takes the reader on a surreal yet vivid journey, dipping in and out of characters’ lives to reveal fundamental truths at the heart of the human condition. ‘A Catch-22 for our times’ Alan Warner, Books of the Year, Observer ‘The God I want to believe in has a voice and a sense of humour like Denis Johnson's’ Jonathan Franzen ‘An epic of drenched sensuality and absurdly chewable dialogue, as though Don DeLillo and Joseph Heller had collaborated on a Vietnam war novel’ Steven Poole, Books of the Year, New Statesman

tree of smoke by denis johnson: Tree of Smoke Denis Johnson, 2008 Describing a world where almost everyone is lost or looking for something, where disinformation is the ultimate weapon and disillusion the most insidious enemy, and where war is another way to self-destruction, Johnson takes the reader on a surreal yet vivid journey, revealing the fundamental truths at the heart of the human condition.

tree of smoke by denis johnson: The Solitary Journey Home Harrison Fletcher Dietzman, 2011

tree of smoke by denis johnson: The Encyclopedia of Contemporary American Fiction, 2 Volumes Patrick O'Donnell, Stephen J. Burn, Lesley Larkin, 2022-03-01 Neue Perspektiven und aufschlussreiche Erörterungen der zeitgenössischen amerikanischen Belletristik Mit der Encyclopedia of Contemporary American Fiction: 1980-2020 präsentiert ein Team renommierter Geisteswissenschaftler eine umfassende zielgerichtete Sammlung von Beiträgen zu einigen der bedeutendsten und einflussreichsten Autoren und literarischen Themen der letzten vier Jahrzehnte. In aktuellen Beiträgen bekannter und neuer Autoren werden so unterschiedliche Themen wie Multikulturalismus, zeitgenössische Regionalismen, Realismus nach dem Poststrukturalismus, indigene Erzählungen, Globalismus und Big Data im Kontext der amerikanischen Belletristik der letzten 40 Jahre betrachtet. Die Enzyklopädie bietet einen Überblick über die amerikanische Belletristik zur Jahrtausendwende sowie einen Ausblick auf die Zukunft. In diesem Werk findet sich eine ausgewogene Mischung aus Analyse, Zusammenfassung und Kritik für eine erhellende Betrachtung der enthaltenen Themen. Außerdem enthält das Werk: * Eine spannende Mischung von Beiträgen bekannter und aufstrebender Autoren aus aller Welt, in denen zentrale aktuelle Themen der amerikanischen Belletristik diskutiert werden * Eine gezielte kritische Betrachtung von Autoren und Themen, die für die amerikanische Belletristik von wesentlicher Bedeutung sind * Themen, in denen sich die Energie und die Tendenzen in der zeitgenössischen amerikanischen Belletristik in den vierzig Jahren zwischen 1980 und 2020 widerspiegeln Die Encyclopedia of Contemporary American Fiction: 1980-2020 ist ein unverzichtbares Nachschlagewerk für Studierende und Doktoranden in den Bereichen amerikanische Literatur, Englisch, kreatives Schreiben und Belletristik. Darüber hinaus darf das Werk in den Bibliotheken von Geisteswissenschaftlern nicht fehlen, die nach einer maßgeblichen Sammlung von Beiträgen bekannter und neuerer Autoren der zeitgenössischen Belletristik suchen.

tree of smoke by denis johnson: The Covert Sphere Timothy Melley, 2012-11-15 In December 2010 the U.S. Embassy in Kabul acknowledged that it was providing major funding for thirteen episodes of Eagle Four—a new Afghani television melodrama based loosely on the blockbuster U.S. series 24. According to an embassy spokesperson, Eagle Four was part of a strategy aimed at transforming public suspicion of security forces into something like awed respect. Why would a wartime government spend valuable resources on a melodrama of covert operations? The answer, according to Timothy Melley, is not simply that fiction has real political effects but that, since the Cold War, fiction has become integral to the growth of national security as a concept and a transformation of democracy. In *The Covert Sphere*, Melley links this cultural shift to the birth of the national security state in 1947. As the United States developed a vast infrastructure of clandestine organizations, it shielded policy from the public sphere and gave rise to a new cultural imaginary, the covert sphere. One of the surprising consequences of state secrecy is that citizens must rely substantially on fiction to know, or imagine, their nation's foreign policy. The potent combination of institutional secrecy and public fascination with the secret work of the state was instrumental in fostering the culture of suspicion and uncertainty that has plagued American society ever since—and, Melley argues, that would eventually find its fullest expression in postmodernism. *The Covert Sphere* traces these consequences from the Korean War through the War on Terror, examining how a regime of psychological operations and covert action has made the conflation of reality and fiction a central feature of both U.S. foreign policy and American culture. Melley interweaves Cold War history with political theory and original readings of films, television dramas, and popular entertainments—from *The Manchurian Candidate* through *24*—as well as influential writing by Margaret Atwood, Robert Coover, Don DeLillo, Joan Didion, E. L. Doctorow, Michael Herr, Denis Johnson, Norman Mailer, Tim O'Brien, and many others.

tree of smoke by denis johnson: The Evil Hours David J. Morris, 2015-01-20 “An essential book” on PTSD, an all-too-common condition in both military veterans and civilians (The New York Times Book Review). Post-traumatic stress disorder afflicts as many as 30 percent of those who have experienced twenty-first-century combat—but it is not confined to soldiers. Countless ordinary Americans also suffer from PTSD, following incidences of abuse, crime, natural disasters, accidents,

or other trauma—yet in many cases their symptoms are still shrouded in mystery, secrecy, and shame. This “compulsively readable” study takes an in-depth look at the subject (Los Angeles Times). Written by a war correspondent and former Marine with firsthand experience of this disorder, and drawing on interviews with individuals living with PTSD, it forays into the scientific, literary, and cultural history of the illness. Using a rich blend of reporting and memoir, *The Evil Hours* is a moving work that will speak not only to those with the condition and to their loved ones, but also to all of us struggling to make sense of an anxious and uncertain time.

tree of smoke by denis johnson: The Cambridge History of the American Novel Leonard Cassuto, 2011-03-24 An authoritative and lively account of the development of the genre, by leading experts in the field.

tree of smoke by denis johnson: Writing Wars David F. Eisler, 2022-12-14 Choice Outstanding Academic Title 2024 Senators Bob and Elizabeth Dole Biennial Award for Distinguished Book in Veterans Studies, winner Who writes novels about war? For nearly a century after World War I, the answer was simple: soldiers who had been there. The assumption that a person must have experienced war in the flesh in order to write about it in fiction was taken for granted by writers, reviewers, critics, and even scholars. Contemporary American fiction tells a different story. Less than half of the authors of contemporary war novels are veterans. And that’s hardly the only change. Today’s war novelists focus on the psychological and moral challenges of soldiers coming home rather than the physical danger of combat overseas. They also imagine the consequences of the wars from non-American perspectives in a way that defies the genre’s conventions. To understand why these changes have occurred, David Eisler argues that we must go back nearly fifty years, to the political decision to abolish the draft. The ramifications rippled into the field of cultural production, transforming the foundational characteristics— authorship, content, and form—of the American war fiction genre.

tree of smoke by denis johnson: The Oxford History of the Novel in English Cyrus R. K. Patell, Deborah Lindsay Williams, 2024-03-05 The Oxford History of the Novel in English is a twelve-volume series presenting a comprehensive, global, and up-to-date history of English-language prose fiction, written by a large, international team of scholars. The series is concerned with novels as a whole, not just the 'literary' novel, and each volume includes chapters on the processes of production, distribution, and reception, and on popular fiction and the fictional sub-genres, as well as outlining the work of major novelists, movements, and tendencies. This book offers an account of US fiction during a period demarcated by two traumatic moments: the eve of the entry of the United States into the Second World War and the onset of the Covid-19 pandemic. The aftermath of the Second World War was arguably the high point of US nationalism, but in the years that followed, US writers would increasingly explore the possibility that US democracy was a failure, both at home and abroad. For so many of the writers whose work this volume explores, the idea of nation became suspect as did the idea of national literature as the foundation for US writing. Looking at post-1940s writing, the literary historian might well chart a movement within literary cultures away from nationalism and toward what we would call cosmopolitanism, a perspective that fosters conversations between the occupants of different cultural spaces and that regards difference as an opportunity to be embraced rather than a problem to be solved. During this period, the novel has had significant competition for the US public's attention from other forms of narrative and media: film, television, comic books, videogames, and the internet and the various forms of social media that it spawned. If, however, the novel becomes a residual form during this period, it is by no means archaic. The novel has been reinvigorated over the past eighty years by its encounters with both emergent forms (such as film, television, comic books, and digital media) and the emergent voices typically associated with multiculturalism in the United States.

tree of smoke by denis johnson: A History of American Literature Linda Wagner-Martin, 2013-01-29 A HISTORY OF AMERICAN LITERATURE 1950 TO THE PRESENT Featuring works from notable authors as varied as Salinger and the Beats to Vonnegut, Capote, Morrison, Rich, Walker, Eggers, and DeLillo, *A History of American Literature: 1950 to the Present* offers a comprehensive

analysis of the wide range of literary works produced in the United States over the last six decades and a fascinating survey of the dramatic changes during America's transition from the innocence of the fifties to the harsh realities of the first decade of the new millennium. Author Linda Wagner-Martin - a highly acclaimed authority on all facets of modern American literature - covers major works of drama, poetry, fiction, non-fiction, memoirs, and popular genres such as science fiction and detective novels. Viewing works produced during this fertile literary period from a wide-ranging perspective, Wagner-Martin considers literature in relation to such issues as the politics of civil rights, feminism, sexual preferences, and race- and gender-based marketing. She also places a special emphasis on works produced during the twenty-first century, and writings influenced by recent historic events such as the 9/11 terrorist attacks, Hurricane Katrina, and the global financial crisis. With its careful balance of scholarly precision and accessibility, *A History of American Literature: 1950 to the Present* provides readers of all levels with rich and revealing insights into the diversity of literary forms and influences that characterize postmodern America. "A monumental distillation of an enormous range of material, Wagner-Martin's rich book should be required reading for anyone grappling with making sense of the prolific, broad-spectrum, and diverse writing in the US since 1950." Thadious M. Davis, University of Pennsylvania "Linda Wagner-Martin's history impressively and judiciously surveys all fields of American writing over the past sixty years, taking full account of significant cultural and historical contexts and the major critical commentaries that have helped shape our understanding of developments in the second half of the last century and the dozen years following the millennium. Balanced, informative, and always highly readable there is much here for general readers, students, and specialists alike." Christopher MacGowan, the College of William and Mary

tree of smoke by denis johnson: *The Routledge Companion to Experimental Literature* Joe Bray, Alison Gibbons, Brian McHale, 2012 *The Routledge Companion to Experimental Literature* maps this expansive and multifaceted field, with essays on: the history of literary experiment from the beginning of the twentieth century to the present the impact of new media on literature, including multimodal literature, digital fiction and code poetry the development of experimental genres from graphic narratives and found poetry through to gaming and interactive fiction experimental movements from Futurism and Surrealism to Postmodernism, Avant-Pop and Flarf. Shedding new light on often critically neglected terrain, the contributors introduce this vibrant area, define its current state, and offer exciting new perspectives on its future.

tree of smoke by denis johnson: *American Literature* Hans Bertens, Theo D'haen, 2013-11-12 This comprehensive history of American Literature traces its development from the earliest colonial writings of the late 1500s through to the present day. This lively, engaging and highly accessible guide: offers lucid discussions of all major influences and movements such as Puritanism, Transcendentalism, Realism, Naturalism, Modernism and Postmodernism draws on the historical, cultural, and political contexts of key literary texts and authors covers the whole range of American literature: prose, poetry, theatre and experimental literature includes substantial sections on native and ethnic American literatures explains and contextualises major events, terms and figures in American history. This book is essential reading for anyone seeking to situate their reading of American Literature in the appropriate religious, cultural, and political contexts.

tree of smoke by denis johnson: *Thirty Years After* Mark Heberle, 2009-01-14 *Thirty Years After: New Essays on Vietnam War Literature, Film and Art* brings together essays on literature, film and media, representational art, and music of the Vietnam War that were generated by a three-day conference in Honolulu during Veterans Week 2005. This large and extensive volume, the first collection of Vietnam War criticism published since the 1990s, reflects significant cultural and historical changes since then, including U.S.-Vietnamese cultural transactions in the wake of political reconciliation and the Vietnamese diaspora; popular commodification and memorialization of the war in America; and renascent American imperialism. Contributors include well-established and well-published writers and critics like Philip Beidler, Cathey Calloway, Lorrie Goldensohn, Wayne Karlin, Andrew Lam, Jerry Lembcke, Tim O'Brien, John S. Schafer, and Alex Vernon as well as

emerging Vietnam scholars and critics. Among other contributions, the volume provides important quasi-bibliographical essays on canonical American and Vietnamese literature and film, African American Vietnam war narratives, Chicano fiction and poetry, and American Vietnam war art music as well as essays on such subjects as real and digital war memorials, Vietnamese popular war songs, and Vietnamization of the Gulf War. Teachers, scholars, and the general public will find *Thirty Years After* a valuable guide to ongoing critical discussion of the most important event in American history between 1945 and 9/11. I highly recommend this book. Although it is almost a cliché to say the Vietnam War has left deep and lingering scars on American society, *Thirty Years* underscores the still traumatic cultural legacy of this conflict. Attuned to the divergent voices and genres of representation--*Thirty Years* is an indispensable work, not only for literary scholars, but for anyone seeking to understand the enduring impact of the Vietnam War. An impressive work, Mark Herbele is commended for organizing such an insightful and gracefully written set of essays. G. Kurt Piehler, author of *Remembering War the American Way*.

tree of smoke by denis johnson: Cincinnati Magazine, 2009-04 Cincinnati Magazine taps into the DNA of the city, exploring shopping, dining, living, and culture and giving readers a ringside seat on the issues shaping the region.

tree of smoke by denis johnson: The Virginia Quarterly Review, 2018

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