

Noyel seems ready for film

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Hunter's Trap
(C.W. Smith, \$22.50,
Texas Christian
University Press).

All over the country, university presses are beginning to look more and more like trade publishers. In addition to scholarly works and books of regional history and culture, they've become more involved in producing popular books of general interest.

Now that those kinds of books have proven successful, the university presses are venturing into an area once viewed as no man's — and woman's — land. That area is fiction — and not just short story collections, which have been done by university presses for years. The novel has now become fair game for these ambitious presses.

A good example would be Dallas writer C.W. Smith's *Hunter's Trap*, published this fall by TCU Press of Fort Worth. This tale of betrayal and violence, set in El Paso and Juarez, Mexico, during the Depression years with 1920s flashback in Dallas and



Judyth
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thereabouts, could just as easily have come from a New York house, as did several of Smith's other novels.

Wilbur Smythe, the novel's protagonist, is on a mis-

sion. In the early pages, the reader learns a little of what he has planned to do, but not why. As the novel unfolds in flashbacks, the plan and its evolution become clearer, but never transparent.

This is not a pleasant story to read; Smith piles on psychological injury, the quest for revenge and personality twists, until the reader feels thrust down into the dark abyss with the characters. It's a highly visual plot that seems already scripted for the screen, in the nature of "Cape Fear", "The Grifters" and other such film works.

Smith is expert in illustrating the fine line between the good person and the one whose life is overrun by evil, the single act that can tip the balance, the clash of cultures that often lies at the heart of violence.

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