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**LETTERS FROM THE  
HORSE LATITUDES**

C. W. Smith, Texas Christian Univ.,  
\$19.95 (206p) ISBN 0-87565-131-3

This atmospheric collection of 11 short stories roams the American Southwest and Mexico, providing an amiable mix of coming-of-age yarns and tales of cultural friction. In "Child Guidance," a tourist in

Mexico watches a young boy stumble uneasily toward maturity. In "The Plantation Club," a jazz tale finds its way into an unusual place: a down-and-out club on the Texas-Mexican border. In the title story, perhaps the best tale here, a young man who fled to Canada to avoid serving in Vietnam seeks to understand his experiences of playing at war as a child and then of training at a Marine Corps base in San Diego while at the same time struggling to communicate with his father. Some of the stories end too quickly, as if Smith (*Thin Men of Haddam*) were pressing for a conclusion, but his elegant language, along with his knack for choice detail, ably carries most of the tales here. (Oct.)