

Author describes an Eastern view of American Old West experience

By Elizabeth Barrett

Realism in literature has been outmoded during the last three-quarters of the century, according to Henry Nash Smith, author and noted American Studies scholar.

Smith, visiting distinguished professor for UNL's Great Plains Studies Center this week, is author of *Virgin Land: The American West as Symbol and Growth*.

"I'm interested in fantasies rather than historical reporting," he said. "My book is not about what happened in the West but about attitudes toward it."

Smith said his book focuses on how the West was built on fantasies and erroneous concepts.

In the 1900's some thought of the area as "The Great American Desert." Realtors then described the area as "God's Country" in advertisements.

Information for the book was taken from magazines and newspapers published in the East during the nineteenth century, he said.

"There was enormous interest from Easterners looking towards the West for the future 'manifest destiny,'" Smith explained. "Those who wrote about the West were Easterners who had never been there."

"I didn't write about the West but about what Eastern people thought of that remote land."

Smith was born in Dallas, Tex., in 1906. He earned his undergraduate degree at Southern Methodist University where he wrote for the *Southwest Review*, a literary magazine comparable to UNL's *Prairie Schooner*.

Smith later taught at S.M.U. and earned his doctor of philosophy at Harvard University. Before joining the

University of California at Berkeley faculty in 1953, he taught at the University of Texas and University of California.

While at Berkeley, Smith became literary editor of the Mark Twain estate. As "custodian" of Twain's unpublished manuscripts, he rummaged through Twain's writing for publishable material, he said.

"I was the consultant to the trustees in charge of the estate and recommended fair fees for reprint rights," he said. Smith left the job to his assistant in 1964.

According to Smith, there is a myth about Twain not wanting his manuscripts published until after his death.

"Twain was a wonderful tall-tale expert," Smith said. "He often made the most preposterous statements. He even authorized publication of some of his manuscripts while still alive."

However, about nine of 15 of Twain's unpublished manuscripts now are being published, according to Smith.

Smith said Twain helped develop a myth which has influenced American society and behavior.

"The public confuses the real image of Twain and distorts in their imaginations what really happens in his stories," he said.

An example, Smith said, is the famous Rockwell painting of Tom Sawyer and Huckleberry Finn white-washing a picket fence. The work is inaccurate, he said.

"In the original edition of *Tom Sawyer*, Twain approved book illustrations which depicted Tom white-washing a long, horizontal fence not picket and without Huck Finn," Smith said.

Smith's latest work is being readied for publication this fall, he said. The book deals with 19th century authors and their relations with their audiences.

"These writers had difficulties," Smith said. "They wanted to write for high-brow society, but the money was in middle-brow society. They were trying to break out of this clamp."

shop, Ballroom.
7:30 p.m. - Inter-Varsity Christian Fellowship, Room 202.
Booths: 1A- Chi Phi.

union calendar

8:30-12:30 a.m. - Speech Communication - Cornhusker Debate Tournament, Rooms 337-343, 216-232, North Conference Room, South Conference Room, Auditorium.

10:30 a.m. - Chancellor's office, Room 203.

11:45 a.m. - Bellevue Christian Academy, Centennial Room.

12:30 p.m. - Muslim Student Association, Room 337.

2 p.m. - Chancellor's office, Room 203.

3 p.m. - Fees Allocation Board, Room 216.

3:30 p.m. - Teaching & Learning Center, Room 242.

3:30 p.m. - UPC Performing Arts - dance work-

short stuff

The Malone Community Center needs a ballet instructor on Tuesday from 3 p.m. to 5 p.m. Salary is \$3 an hour. For more information, contact the Community Involvement Service, 472-2454.

Any agriculture major wanting to run for the Agricultural College advisory board should submit applications by Friday at the ASUN office.

The UNI French club will meet today at 3:30 in Brannigan's basement.

daily nebraskan

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Lie down and be counted.

Public Notice of ASUN Spring Election Filing

Deadlines: The ASUN spring election will be March 15, 1978.

All candidates seeking executive, senate, or advisory board positions are required to file with the ASUN secretary in the ASUN office, 334 Nebraska Union, by 4 p.m., February 24th 1978.

All student parties must file a party statement of intent with the ASUN secretary in the ASUN office by 4 p.m., February 24th, 1978.

All candidates and/or parties must file financial forms with the ASUN secretary in the ASUN office by 4 p.m. March 15, 1978.

Filing forms, financial forms, and other information about the spring election will be available in the ASUN office, 334 Nebraska Union, beginning February 10, 1978.

PERSONALITIES

TODAY! F.A.D.C.

(Friday afternoon disco club)

Dance and get 2-fers on all tap beer. 4-7

Be there by 7 and beat the cover charge!

9th & P across from the Hilton

SHeldon Art Gallery, 12th & R

FILM-MAKERS' SHOWCASE THE FILMS OF LES BLANK

Blank is a great sociologist as well as a fine film-maker. Because he shoots from the inside of a social group, his camera is never an intruder: people react to it like a friend. We trust his images because the people in this film trust him.

Blank's films typically combine striking cinematography, brilliant editing, and lots of glorious music. In fact, although music is ostensibly the "subject" of his films, its real function is as a metaphor—a Taoist center around which everything else flows.

Wednesday, Thursday, Friday, & Saturday February 22, 23, 24, & 25

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