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## Review of The Catch Pen

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cowboy, whose individual and collective history has been recorded and analyzed as sign and symbol.

As he is rendered and represented in poetry and music, literature and film, the "cowboy" is a member of a group that shares material, verbal and kinetic forms learned primarily through informal mechanisms. In addition, as the majority of these essays demonstrate, the characters in cowboy lore tend to be simplistic and stereotyped. These contributors recognize that stereotypes are powerful devices, however, helping to control social action and to create expectations concerning an individual's role and behaviors for him/herself and society.

In so eclectic an overview, the profound differences in folkloric genres performed by cowboys and their curators is readily apparent. Meanwhile, the editors assert, the myth of the cowboy continues to grow. In keeping with its potential to yield insights into broader areas of plains and western culture and relations within and between regional cowboy cultures this traditional resource remains open to future conference proceedings and collaborative celebration.

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*The Catch Pen.* Ed. Len Ainsworth and Kenneth R. Davis. Lubbock: The Ranching Heritage Center, 1991. Introduction, index. xi + 233 pp. \$7.95.

Folklore is but one facet of the human phenomenon we call culture. In the West, the study of cowboys as "folk," that is, as learners, knowers, performers, observers, and teachers of folklore is increasingly grounded in a wider study of general ethnography and cowboy culture. Clearly, such a wider study is precisely the aim of organizers and participants in the National Cowboy Symposium and Celebration, a selection of whose efforts have been gathered into *The Catch Pen*. Here, editors Ainsworth and Davis have assembled twenty-five artifacts of lived and living Texas folklore in evidence of the continuing existence of the