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Winter 2002

Review of *Gathering Remnants: A Tribute to the Working Cowboy* Photographs by Kendall Nelson

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Leacock, J. C., "Review of *Gathering Remnants: A Tribute to the Working Cowboy* Photographs by Kendall Nelson" (2002). *Great Plains Quarterly*. 2340.

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Gathering Remnants: A Tribute to the Working Cowboy. Photographs by Kendall Nelson. Text by Felicitas Funke-Riehle. Foreword by Clint Eastwood. Introduction by Gretel Ehrlich. Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2001. Photographs, list of plates. 111 pp. \$80.00.

About five years ago, Kendall Nelson, then a segment producer for Fox Television in Los Angeles, was invited to photograph cowboys on a large ranch in Texas. Coming from a photographic and artistic background, with degrees from San Francisco State and Brooks Institute of Photography in Santa Barbara, Nelson jumped at the chance. At first she was only visually interested in the opportunity, but in no time found herself captured by the culture as well. What started out as a week at the ranch lengthened to a month. "I fell in love with it," she says. "I knew I would photograph cowboys from then on." For the next four years Nelson and her dog Jake traveled to some of the more remote areas of the West, seeking out ranches that still found it necessary to do things the old way. "Part of the experience was finding the ranches that were really traditional," says Nelson. She followed these cowboys along with their chuckwagon and remuda of horses with her cameras, dog, a borrowed horse, and a tent. Typically, Nelson would spend anywhere from three days to three weeks at a time camping, eating, riding, and living with the cowboys. Rising before dawn, the cowboys would ride as much as twenty miles at a stretch to gather the cattle in order to brand, castrate, inoculate, and tag the calves. As with the drovers of yesteryear, they would use only their ropes and reatas to drag the calves to a sagebrush fire in which the glowing brands waited.

The black-and-white photographs in this book are beautiful, dramatic, often stark images that capture the life of the working buckaroo, from big sky scenics of cowboys and cattle on the Plains, to simple but telling details, such as well-worn hands resting on a saddle horn.

The print quality is exceptional. Each image is accompanied by Felicitas Funke-Riehle's straightforward, idyllic prose. Clint Eastwood provides a short but poetic foreword, followed by a wonderfully fitting and descriptive introduction by Gretel Ehrlich.

Kendall Nelson has gathered for us a series of moments, remnants if you will, of the cowboy, the vaquero, the buckaroo, that easily could be from our distant past. The beauty of these moments, perhaps, lies in their being from our present, proof that the American Cowboy, though threatened by modernization and rampant growth, still lives and works in the vast open spaces of the American West.

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