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Mick Gidley (ed.), *Writing with Light: Words and Photographs in American Texts* (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 2010, £37.00). Pp. xii + 287. ISBN 978 3 03911 572 3.

This new collection of essays testifies to the varied ongoing interest in examining the relation between photographic and verbal texts. It assembles fourteen essays dealing with a range of topics from the early twentieth century onwards, and its opening piece sets a keynote in demonstrating the complex embedding of photography in American culture. Examining the representations of Josie Marcus, Wyatt Earp's wife, Clive Sinclair demonstrates how photography helped to promote celebrities, male and female. One of the premises shared by all contributors is that the USA is a culture of the image and the focus of the essays falls variously on individual works and writers, and on more general theoretical issues. Among the former are essays on "photobooks," specifically collaborative cross-media volumes like those described in Parr and Badger's definitive history (2004 and 2006). Martin Padget lucidly explains the context of Ansel Adams and Mary Austin's *Taos Pueblo* (1930), arguing that the ethos of the work pre-dates the Depression and bringing out the importance of Adams's fascination with architecture and Austin's with "primitive" folkways. Wright Morris represents the unusual case of a writer and photographer. In examining works like *The Home Place* (1948), Caroline Blinder stresses Morris's fascination with artefacts and his strenuous attempts to resist nostalgia and to negotiate his subjects' privacy. Similarly, Diane Morgan shows how Richard Powers's 1985 novel *Three Farmers on Their Way to a Dance* takes its title from a 1914 photograph by August Sander to investigate how we relate to our past. One of the most successful cross-discipline essays is Neil Campbell's analysis of the relation between the photographer Robert Frank and the writings of Jack Kerouac. Drawing an approximate analogy between fictional and photographic frames, he argues that Frank's composition of moving images converged on Kerouac's attempts to evoke a dynamic process of "scoping." Campbell's foregrounding of cinema here acts as a helpful corrective to the much-repeated analogies between Kerouac's prose and jazz. Other comparisons in this volume include that between Anne Carson and Michael Ondaatje (Katharine Burkett) in their use of the "frozen moments" of photographs.

Until quite recently, the focus of criticism has tended to fall on documentary works, most famously on works like *Let Us Now Praise Famous Men*, and the current volume moves us resolutely away not only from documentary but also from any simple notion of photographic mirroring. Instead, a complex self-consciousness becomes one of the recurring characteristics of the works examined. Shamoon Zamir takes Gerald Vizenor's *The People Named the Chippewa* (1984) as a work which problematizes the cultural work of retrieval through the difficulty of meaningfully contextualizing archival photographs. Other contributors stress the oblique nature of photographs. Eric J. Sandeen shows how Robert Adams's images depict estrangement, homelessness, and a lost frontier culture, while Beth Bennett singles out photographs of Berekumhene from Richard Wright's *Black Power* (1954) as imagistically echoing slavery and showing an "Africa gone wrong." Paul Fusco's

RFK Funeral Train (2000) is Francisca D. Fuentes's subject and one which is constructed as a "memory text" incorporating the discourse of mourning in its use of black. She demonstrates that Fusco turned his camera on the observers of Robert Kennedy's funeral and thereby produced views of the observers. Two essays in this volume engage with general aspects of photography. First, Andrew Stafford gives an excerpt from work in progress when he produces a reading of photographic anthologies, noting sequencing schema and other techniques. Second, Anna Woodhouse applies Susan Sontag's theorizing on photography as a form of intervention to the works of the photojournalist Weegee (Arthur Fellig), whom she sees as an ambivalent artist, simultaneously aware of the exploitative nature of his images and also showing empathy towards his urban subjects. Mick Gidley rounds this collection off with reflections on Edward S. Curtis as the subject not only of his own research projects but also of novels like Alan Cheuse's *To Catch the Lightning* (2008). Here Curtis emerges as a figure difficult in the extreme to contain and in that respect supplying yet another theme for this lively collection, namely "shadow catching."

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