



**The Photobook:**  
A History volume III  
Martin Parr and Gerry Badger

**Cannibalizing Photography**  
Representing and Re-Representing the Medium

*As the sheer weight of images accumulated across the twentieth century, the task of making sense of the relationship of photographs to history became deeply fraught. In addition, the capture in historical consciousness caused by the Second World War caused many European artists to examine the ways images can both aid and disable the construction of history, memory, and identity. Hence the volubility and enigmatic character of archival subjects in art.*  
David Company



Christian Patterson  
**Redheaded Peckerwood**

Christian Patterson spent five years photographing in Nebraska during January, tracing the route of Charles Starkweather's two-month killing spree of 1957-58, when he was accompanied by his fourteen-year-old girlfriend, Caril Ann Fugate. Once Patterson had made his atmospheric action shots, he then found actual crime-scene photographs in archives and recorded other documentary materials. He also fabricated 'vernacular' images, different in style and intent from his own pictures, and threw everything together to make a free-associative narrative of this notorious episode in American crime mythology.

The result was not just a blurring of the boundaries between then and now, or between fiction and non-fiction, but a profound demonstration of photography's ineffability – and also its power to resurrect a past event and make it relevant for a contemporary audience. Patterson's collaging technique, mixing disparate genres of pictures from different periods and adding re-creations of documentary material, makes for a far-from-straightforward narrative. Indeed, as in all good photo books, we are asked to make our own narrative sense of the story.

*Redheaded Peckerwood* is a very contemporary updating of what might be termed the elliptical narrative photo book. Patterson uses every facet of the bookmaking craft to underline a tale that, like all historical stories, we interpret through secondary rather than primary media. The book is a creative reinterpretation of an event that has already been famously reinterpreted in Terrence Malick's film *Badlands* (1973), and indeed Patterson does much to clear away that accretion to bring us 'closer' to the 'original' event. But above all, *Redheaded Peckerwood* is a complex and challenging commentary on the photographic medium itself.