

**(Photo)autobiographical writing: memory and construction of the
self in Peter Beard's photo diaries**

**La escritura (foto)autobiográfica: memoria y construcción del Yo en
los fotodiaros de Peter Beard**

Mar Marcos Molano

Universidad Complutense de Madrid

mmarcos@ucm.es

Abstract:

The (photographic) diary is the perfect affirmation of the photographer as an individual in his will to appear naked before others. When this happens, we witness the total identification of the photographer-narrator with the model and with the observer. It is the "autobiographical (photo) pact" where exploration with language is pushed to the limit, as the inner adventure cannot be expressed with limited writing.

This is how Peter Beard conceives his work, a personal commitment that is as much the cause of the photo as its object. A work of introspection in which underlies the taste for contemplation and the need to treasure memories, maximized by the photographic language through the self-portrait and the collage technique. The result is a collection of photographs of the memory of his intimacy that, piled up in his photo diaries, are but the basis of a personal story that wants to be told, perhaps also to be remembered.

Resumen:

El diario (fotográfico) es la perfecta afirmación del fotógrafo como individuo en su voluntad de aparecer desnudo ante los demás. Cuando esto ocurre, asistimos a la total identificación del fotógrafo-narrador con el modelo y con el observador. Es el "pacto (foto) autobiográfico" donde la exploración con el lenguaje es llevada al límite, en tanto que la aventura interior no puede ser expresada con una escritura limitada. En este proceso se comprueba cómo la dificultad de la fotografía es enfocar lo que la memoria selecciona para crear una narración de lo que finalmente se ha de desvelar apilándolo en el aparente caos de la creación artística: fotografías sin aparente conexión pero que determinarán una línea de significación de imágenes que nacen con el ánimo de ser recordadas.

Si el diario (literario) documenta y describe el estado de ánimo del sujeto, la paradoja del diario (fotográfico) es que se nutre solo de una de las dimensiones de la comunicación, la del fotógrafo-autor, en tanto que el observador es él mismo y dispone de antemano de la información que ofrece en su obra. ¿Acaso el fotodiario se realiza para no ser visto? Resulta difícil concebir esta idea: toda creación artística tiene la necesidad de llegar a un observador. Es por esta razón que hay en el fotodiario una necesidad de descubrir al otro la idea que uno tiene de sí mismo, porque en la descripción en primera persona del Yo que realiza el fotógrafo-narrador en el acto fotográfico, incluso en la más objetiva y parecida al

documento, se esconde un Yo de la ficción, un sujeto fotógrafo-narrador de lo real, que pasa a ser personaje-modelo de lo (foto) relatado. Desde este punto de vista, el fotodiario es la evidencia de una vida construida, sometida a una forma narrativa completa que, a través del montaje de las fotografías, encuentra el ritmo de un relato (visual y escrito). Visto así, el diálogo que surge del fotodiario tiene lugar, precisamente, para que otros lo escuchen. Para que otros lo recuerden. Y aunque restringido por las imposiciones de su condición referencial, nada impide que podamos verlo y leerlo como un álbum de imágenes que muestra los trasuntos de un Yo protagonista, núcleo en torno al cual se despliegan el resto de los elementos. Esto pone manifiesto la perspectiva de fotodiario que nos interesa: aquella cuya esencia no es mostrar al Yo que se “autorreferencia”, sino al Yo que se “narra” a sí mismo. Una mirada en la que prevalece la virtualidad creativa por encima de la referencial, una virtualidad de *poiesis* antes que de *mimesis*.

Por esta razón hemos elegido la obra de Peter Beard, porque consideramos que concibe su trabajo artístico como un compromiso personal que es tanto la causa de la foto como su objeto. Un trabajo de introspección en el que subyace el gusto por contemplarse y la necesidad de atesorar recuerdos, maximizado por el lenguaje fotográfico a través del autorretrato y de la técnica del *collage*. Porque, aunque trabajara para los servicios de conservación de la vida salvaje, tomando muestras y realizando fotografías, para Beard el fin último de estas imágenes no era su carácter referencial, sino su sentido artístico en tanto que material para nutrir sus *collages*. Necesitaba expresarse y lo hizo, más que con su cámara, con sus manos. Huía de la falsedad fotográfica por lo que su cámara pasó a ser una herramienta para crear “elementos-imágenes”, con los que construir fascinantes *fotocollages* que acogen en su interior materiales de naturaleza heterogénea como autorretratos fotográficos o retratos pictóricos, objetos inertes o partes disecadas de animales..., mezclados con la escritura en forma de anotaciones o pensamientos del propio autor intervenidos de sangre, la de animales, incluso la suya propia. El resultado es una colección de fotografías de la memoria de su intimidad que, apiladas en sus fotodiaros, no son sino la base de una historia personal que desea ser contada, quizá también para ser recordada.

Siguiendo la línea marcada, acometeremos la lectura de los fotodiaros de Peter Beard superando la atracción de lo informativo y revisando sus diarios con una mirada ficcional, en la medida que el Yo emplea las mismas estrategias para crearse, tanto en un texto de ficción como en un texto factual. Para ello, hemos llevado a cabo una selección de cuatro imágenes de Beard centrada en su trabajo como foto-diariasta que, aun siendo una parte de su obra, es también muy extensa. A partir de estas imágenes queremos demostrar cómo se construye la memoria del Yo; cómo se construye la memoria del artista a través de su presencia en la imagen y cómo la imagen cede un lugar al observador para el necesario diálogo de reconstrucción del Yo.

Palabras clave: Peter Beard; fotodiaros, *fotocollages*, foto autobiográfica; memoria visual.

Keywords: Peter Beard; Photo diaries, Photocollages, Autobiographical Photo; Visual Memory.

The life of the dead is placed in the memory of the living

Cicero

1. Introduction

"I am happy to have spent my life producing documents that have no meaning" (Beard in Edwards and Aronson, 2020, p. 72). Peter Beard was not a photographer, nor a documentarian, but an artist-collector for whom the photo is nothing more than the starting point, a sort of catalyst for what he himself considers his authentic work: his photo diaries. Beard's diaries are unique and personal notebooks made on the basis of photographic collage and disrupted with all kinds of natural materials. In the photo diaries Beard composes, expresses, denounces..., joins and separates worlds, sews images and letters with the excitement that provokes passionate writing: "I have always liked to write on the photos, it seems the thought of that moment" (Beard in Edwards and Aronson, 2020, p. 715). The photo diaries constitute his artistic heritage as well as meaningful (photo-biographical) documents.

His passion for photo-journaling begins at the age of ten, in South Carolina, when he began cutting the mane of horses and sticking it into a small notebook. Later, near Savannah, where his father bought a house, he would take photographs of crocodiles in the swamp and, on them, glued pieces of skin that he would add to his notebook. Also beetles, moths, pieces of tree trunks, feathers, algae, mud... "Everything that seemed to me worthy of passing to posterity" (Beard in Edwards and Aronson, 2020, p. 708).

He made his first trip to Africa in 1955, first to South Africa and Botswana, then to Madagascar and Kenya. The photographs he took at that time are "the fruit of chance (...) sometimes there is no better than miscalculating the exposure. Taking pictures is like collecting stones, they look much more beautiful when you discover them: wet, multicolored and piled one on top of the other in a totally random way" (Beard in Edwards and Aronson, 2020, p. 709).

His relationship with Africa was always controversial. He was an advocate of controlled hunting for ecosystem control, confronting both poachers and animal

advocates. Is for this reason that his work is a reaction to what he sees, being the elephants the metaphor for the destruction of the ecosystem: thousands of them died after destroying their own habitat and depleting resources. His photographs show aerial views of migrating herds of elephants, thousands of them dying of hunger and thirst, destruction of millions of hectares of habitat and misguided conservation policies. Later, he would go on to document, always clandestinely, hippos and crocodiles. And, even unwittingly, his photographs, as well as the texts and quotations that accompany them, are combined to offer a sentimental glimpse of African wildlife.

When one looks at Peter Beard's photographs, the true artist appears in them, always looking beyond, collecting everything, creating bonds... Far from a documentary commitment, his work is the result of another commitment: the one of showing and demonstrating, not only of capturing unexpected moments, but of creating connections to narrate the consequences of devastation.

Beard rushes through photo after photo, page after page, not waiting to see if any secrets are revealed. He quotes his friend Francis Bacon, paraphrasing Balzac: fate is the greatest of artists. Beard causes accidents and leaves the autopsies to us (Edwards and Aronson, 2020, p. 72).

However, although he worked for wildlife conservation services, taking samples and making photographs, for Beard the ultimate purpose of these images was not their documentary nature, but their artistic sense as material to feed his collages. He needed to express himself, and he did so with his hands through the technique of collage, rather than with his camera.

In fact, he never considered himself a photographer, or at least not a photographer in the common sense of the word. He shunned photographic fakery, too preoccupied with technology, and so the camera became a tool for creating "image-elements", photographic fragments that he cut out, stuck, rewrote and stained with blood "better than any ink or paint" (Beard in Edwards and Aronson, 2020. p. 715) of himself or animals' blood, to produce the artistic work: monumental *photocollages* not devoid of criticism of the artistic establishment.

2. Conceptual framework and methodology

The object of this work is the photographic diaries of Peter Beard, in which we discover a taste for the practice of photcollage as a container for other photographic techniques such as portraiture, landscape or wildlife photography. These collages contain materials of a heterogeneous nature such as photographic self-portraits or pictorial portraits, inert objects or stuffed animal parts, mixed with writing in the form of annotations or thoughts of the author himself, printed both on the photographs and outside them, on the sheets that make up his albums.

Although the study of these photo diaries could approach the analysis of the literary diary in terms of their introspective and exploratory languages, the main objective of this research is diverted to try to show how the photographic diary constructs the memory of the self, insofar as photography is capable of constructing memory.

Starting from generalized appreciations on how photography constructs memory by activating memories with its images and inoculating memory precisely on what we want to be remembered, we delve into how the photo diary is the sample of the photographer's need to construct his life with narrative intention, with the purpose of activating a story that will be remembered.

For this purpose, we have made a careful selection of four of Beard's images. This selection focuses on his work as a photojournalist, which, although it is only a part of his oeuvre, is also very extensive. From these four images we want to demonstrate:

1. How the memory of the Self is constructed through the objects, collected and exhibited in the collages.
2. How the memory of the artist is constructed through his inexorable presence in the image (thanks to the technique of the self-portrait).
3. How the image yields a place to the observer for the necessary dialogue of reconstruction of the Self in the space outside the image.

2.1. Photography and the construction of memory

If we start from the idea that one of the great concerns of photography is reflection on itself, the photographic act becomes, firstly, a reconstruction of the real, carried out by the photographer to create an image and, secondly, a (re)construction of that image in another, carried out by the observer when transforming the initial image according to his own gaze. Seen in this way, every photographic action has two paths: first, to stop time —fixing the content of the real—, and then to re-establish it —reconstructing the set of elements— through experience.

It will have been understood that there is not, on the one hand, the image, a unique, inert and stable material, and, on the other, the gaze, like a ray of moving sunlight that comes to animate the page of a large open book. To look is not to receive, but to order the visible, to organize the experience. The image receives its meaning from the gaze, as writing from reading (Debray, 1994, p. 38).

It is in this sense that photography invites us to construct memory by activating with its images the memories "not of what is no longer, but only and without any doubt, of what has already been" (Barthes, 1990, p. 149). Debray (1994) already warned that true immortality is not found in the referent that decays and corrupts but, in the photograph, which shows the energetic and stainless referent. The photographer, whether he wants to or not, biographies history,

the real life is in a fictitious image, not the real body (...). Between the represented and his representation there is a transfer of soul. This is not a simple stone metaphor of the disappeared but a real metonymy, a sublimated but still physical prolongation of his flesh. The image is the good quality live, vitaminized, stainless, reliable. In short, reliable (Debray, 1994, p. 24).

This undeniable dimension of photography not only makes it possible to collect memories, but also to perpetuate them in time, turning them into the personal history of the person who collects them. Seen in this way, photography is shown

to have an extraordinary capacity to inject memory insofar as it allows us to show only what we want, to conserve only what we must, and to make invisible all that we do not want to be remembered.

(...) the consideration of photography as memory (...) will not cease to aspire to collect visual memories as proof that what has been is still alive in an ethereal but undeniable present. By posing before that mirror with memory, a mechanical memory without the pathologies or afflictions that afflict memory, every person, every event is fixed forever. It becomes history (Sánchez Moreno, 2011, p. 38).

Behind every photograph there is a photographer who captures the image and who also acts as an "organizer of memory", establishing which memories he wants us to perpetuate and which to lose in the bewilderment of the oblivion of the unphotographed. Or not archived.

The concept of the snapshot is called into question insofar as the photographer constructs what he wants to be remembered and how it should be remembered, causing every photograph to acquire the dimension of staging by building the most convenient personal memory —"the best way to demonstrate that photographs are means of shaping an interested memory lies in the procedures followed to collect and share that memory" (Sánchez Moreno, 2011, p. 40)—, and, by organizing it in a notebook, he abandons his spontaneous condition and exposes his results. The text that accompanies the images "proposes an itinerary of meaning in which we must believe" (Sánchez Moreno, 2011, p. 41) that adheres to the image and endows it with the complete symbolic content. Photography frames what memory selects and, aware of the meaning produced by the photographic act itself, a narrative is created of what is finally to be unveiled, piled up in the apparent chaos of artistic creation. Photographs with no apparent connection but that determine a line of significance of images that refuse to be forgotten.

2.2. The (photographic) diary and the Self memory construction

"The authentic diary is a diary written exclusively for the use of the one who writes it" (Picard, 2006, p. 116). Perhaps for this reason the diary is fragmentary

in its structure, abbreviated in its writing, and ontologically narcissistic. The nature of the diary presents such ambiguity that its final considerations as to whether or not it can be considered literature are diffuse, unwarranted, and incomplete (Picard, 2006).

Nevertheless, the diary documents the subject's state of mind, describing it. The great paradox of the (photographic) diary is that it is nourished by only one of the dimensions of communication, that of the photographer-author, while the observer is himself and has the information provided beforehand. Is the photo diary made so as not to be seen? It is difficult to conceive the idea that any creation, materialized in any way whatsoever, cannot reach the reach of others:

What I consider an autobiographical fact implies above all the "will to", to tell your life for or by others, or to narrate oneself, for and by oneself, it is often also a search for identity. In any case, the author always appears in the first person, whatever form the autobiography takes (Ferrer in De Diego, 2011, p. 64).

That is why there is in the photo diary a need to discover to the other the idea that one has of oneself, because in the first-person description of the I that the photographer-narrator makes in the photographic act, even in the most objective and document-like, there is hidden an I of fiction, a photographer-narrator subject of the real, who becomes a character-model of the (photo) narrated. Paul de Man (1991) goes further, understanding the diary as a rhetorical figure that makes the text a fictional text once the I turns to the pages, a fictional text in which no correspondence with reality can be found. This is how an I emerges which, as the central element of the text, frees the diary from the bonds of objectivity.

From this point of view, the photo diary is the evidence of a constructed life, subjected to a complete and complex narrative form that, through the assembly of photographs, finds the rhythm of a story (visual and written). Seen in this way, the dialogue that emerges from the photo diary takes place precisely so that others may listen to it: "(...) no one who carries a diary has renounced that it may be read by the one who finds it" (Trapiello, 1998, p. 28). In another sense, being

conditioned by the impositions derived from the everyday, the diary makes clear its referential condition. This does not imply that we cannot consider it as an account of experiences and see it and read it as an album of images that shows the outlines of a protagonist I, the core around which the rest of the elements unfold. This conception strengthens the possibility of a reading beyond the purely referential, which, as such, only aspires to be a personal and private exercise:

(...) from the Self are constructed the rest of the narrative elements that allow this interpretation of diaristic writing: the space, the characters, the tone, the narrative atmosphere, etc. The diary incapable of delving into them will only offer a referential reading, of a documentary and historical nature, of the diaristic entries. (Luque, 2018, p. 96)

The photo diary perspective that interests us is one whose essence is not to show the Self that "self-refers", but the Self that "narrates" itself. A gaze in which the creative virtuality prevails over the referential, a virtuality of *poiesis* rather than *mimesis*. The Self that builds the story through the days, using photographs not as mimesis, but as poetics, articulating a narrative -often based on the self-portrait-, with which to show his daily life, which allows us to know and understand his environment at the same time:

As a linguistic product of a self-consciousness, the diary is by no means a document about the way an individual limits himself to note in a neutral way how he finds himself in the world; quite the contrary: as a confession centered on himself, the diary is the image filtered through a particular temperament, the project of an idea, more unconscious than conscious, that the self has of himself (Picard, 2006, p. 116).

It is here where we see the great implication of the pact between author and reader-observer, since it is very common for the latter to interpret the diary as a form that narrates facts that have a clear mimesis with reality, even if it is disguised as pure fiction. Therefore, the photo diary will respect the autobiographical pact, to the extent that there is this identity between author-narrator-characters and it is read as true by the observer, leaving room for fiction

through the self-construction of the Self, being precisely in this development of identity where the literalness of the text should be interpreted.

The interest in the value of the individual increases as he describes his relationship with the world "serves as a document about the world, about how an individual perceives the world and how he perceives himself in the world" (Picard, 2006, p. 117). It is the autobiographical pact, where the photographer pushes the exploration of language to the limit with the conviction that his inner adventure must be expressed without restraint: "Since this writing knows no rules or limits, the diary can be open to anything. The diarist can integrate into his diary laundry bills, newspaper clippings, fragments (...) in the end, everything" (Didier in Luque, 2016, p. 292). It is at this point where photographs act as ferments that build the identity of the Self, above the mimetic and reproductive character of every photograph, conferring it the order and structure that the Self of the author-model-narrator requires - "the most ironic relationship of art with respect to reality would be incomprehensible if art did not disorder and reorder our relationship with the real" (Ricoeur, 2000, p. 195)-and that, showing the character behind the photographer himself, provokes a displacement between the real and the fictional where memory comes into play:

Not a memory of punctual data, but an evocative one, according to which the subject remembers the performance of the self. In this process, however, the evoked I is not exactly the same I that it was in the performance, but by evoking, the I of the evoked performance is modified. (Castilla in Luque, 2018, pp. 105-106).

Definitely, the Self evoked by the self-portrait narrated in the photo diary is not the real Self, but its self-construction; it is not a reproduction of the subject, but a textual and self-representational creation that functions according to the interests of the constructed diary.

Following the marked line, we will undertake the reading of Peter Beard's photo diaries overcoming the attraction of the informative to, from it, look at a non-documentary reading —that which tries to avoid the forms of reading fiction (Gracia, 2004)— and review his diaries with a fictional gaze, to the extent that the

Self uses the same strategies to create itself, both in a fictional text and in a factual text:

There are few spaces better devised for the construction of a subject (...) as the diaristic modality. Here individuality becomes aware of itself from the first moment and it could even be affirmed that diaristic writing is the pure example of trope, as it is constituted as a rhetorical game what in principle should not be published and finally is published, what seems to be written for oneself and finally is written for a third party. (Luque, 2016, p. 281).

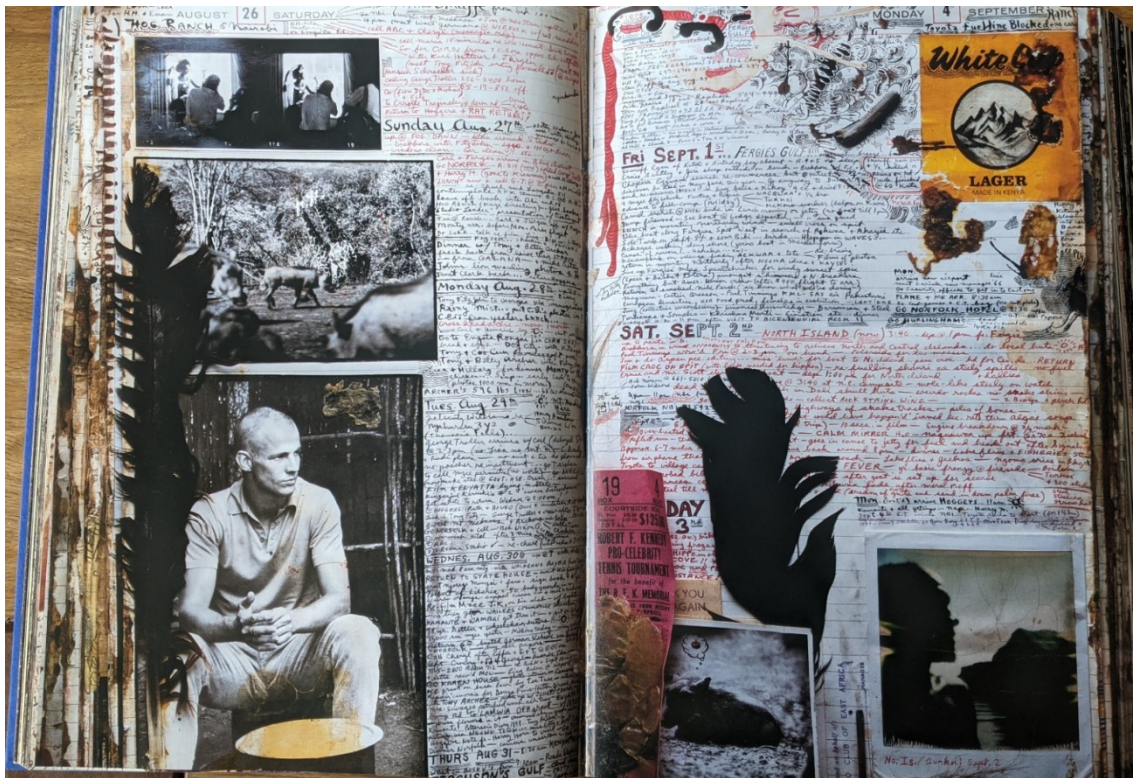
3. Beard's diaries as a construction of the Self

Obsessed by autobiographical writing as a display of the Self, with photography as a staging of moments to be remembered, and with collecting as a need to treasure moments considering the vain and fleeting nature of events, Peter Beard's diaries recycle the most diverse objects: a clipping of 2 frames from a contact sheet of what looks like an indoor studio fashion shoot with the model Imán; a photograph of rhinos and giraffes; a photo of Beard himself in prison; beer labels; tickets to the tennis tournament at Kennedy Memorial Stadium, a photo of a fachocho puppy and a Polaroid showing rocks that, backlit, evoke a human profile in the foreground with the sea behind. And bird feathers (F1).

The photographs are placed in the margins to leave the center of the page for a diary writing that goes from 26 August to 3 September, using red and black ink for his notes, some drawings and blood stains. Annotations of all kinds that show in rigorous order the week: what he does, when and where he does it, the people he relates to and the purposes for each of those days. Here he introduces the temporal concept of the calendar as an organizer of the chaos of memory.

This diary page shows Bear's passion for nature and desire to capture the beauty of women, while his gaze settles on the odd page through his portrait which, from prison, seems to recall other moments and evokes his freedom, perhaps in the confines of the image framed in the polaroid on the following page, at which he seems to be looking:

(...) We found the carcass of a suni, a kind of small antelope, in a trap near our tents. We waited for the poacher to show up for his prey. We asked him to tell us where the other traps were, but he refused. I released the suni from the trap and hooked the poacher in it, someone came along later and released him (...). They issued a warrant for my arrest for assault and battery. I was sentenced to a year and a half in jail and to be beaten 12 times with a cane. I was taken to the dungeon in the basement of the courthouse and from there to Kamiti Prison, outside Nairobi. I was the prisoner #41632. (Beard in Edwards and Aronson, 2020, p. 722).

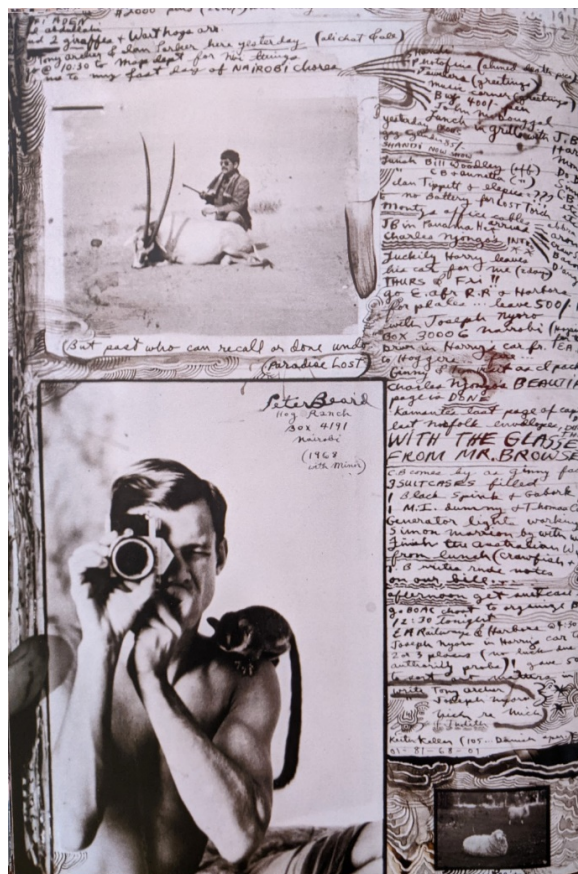


F1. Diary pages with photograph of Beard in Kamiti Prison, Nairobi, 26 August - 4 September, Peter Beard, 1978.

The set of objects —ticket, label, pens—, make us evoke the owner of them, because, although Beard appears on the pages, his status as prisoner places him as the captive. Meanwhile, from the absent space, that which is situated outside the space of the composition and in which the hegemonic gaze situates the

observer, we revalue the objects and relate them to the characteristic writing of the diary in an effort to give meaning to the whole composition. The intimacy of the objects is revealed, their privacy disappears before our gaze and the space of absence is unveiled. That is the point: the interest of the image is not so much in what he tells/shows us but in the spatial game it establishes with the reader/observer. Beard's "Self" is made of the objects he collects.

At other times, the pages are filled with notes in no apparent order or connection (F2): travel notes, telephone numbers, people who have visited him, train timetables... in the form of delirious and chaotic writing. This chaos is ordered thanks to the photography and the dialogue he establishes with his crazy writing.



F2. *But past who can recall or done undo*, Diary Page, 26 April, Peter Beard, 1974.

The top photograph on this page shows a hunter beside an oryx antelope prey, while the text draws attention to the responsibilities of hunting - "Paradise lost", he regrets. The lower photograph shows a self-portrait of a young Beard with a

small galago on his shoulder. The dialogue between the two photographs and the text draws the viewer irremediably into the generated conversation: the hunter has shot his rifle at his prey just as Beard has shot his camera at us, causing that the generated dialogue is brought out of the photograph frame. Who does Beard photograph? Who are we while Beard photographs (us)?

Thanks to this dialogue, the author has managed that the observer becomes part of the meaning of the image insofar as the page needs him to complete such meaning. In Eco's words, posing the figure of the model-observer does not mean waiting for him to exist, but moving the text in order to create it. This is what Beard does: he provokes our contemplation by moving from one image to another, from the bottom to the top of the image. It is as if he intended to offer us the objectivity of his gaze and make us look through the lens of the camera that frames the hunter: "A text does not only rely on a competence: it also contributes to producing it" (Eco, 1993, p. 81).

The chaotic order and apparent meaninglessness of the writing seems to make reference throughout the page to that experience of diary writing known as "I write only for myself" (Rousseau, 1986; Picard, 2006). Nothing could be further from this. The insertion of the photograph takes part to create a narrative that camouflages itself in an exhibitionist game that shows the Self from the inside, that of the self-portrait —Beard—, but also from the outside, that of the portrayed —us—. Once again, the subversion of the page is not to be found in the chaos of the writing, nor in a declared non-documentary need to capture the instant, but in the order proposed by the combination of this writing with the photographs: "What perverse manoeuvre has organized this rupture of space? Is it perhaps the rupture of space, the rupture of consensus, perhaps this game of looking at the one who looks while he/she is looking, rather than the so often called captured 'instant'?" (De Diego, 2011, p. 22).

The page overflows, invading the observer's territory. The photographs, without their unnecessary documentary anchorage, generate an open text that seeks complicity with the reader/observer, who confers on the composition a sense closer to his creative activity than to any intention of the artist. It is in this game of connivances, which transforms the camera lens into a mirror, that it lies the

singularity of the photographic self-portrait. Beard's Self is created through the reflection in the mirror:

That is why the self-portraits of photographers in front of the mirror, taking their own picture, or those who are portrayed with their faces hidden by a camera, making at the same time a portrait of the photographer who perpetuates them, an impregnable game of visible or invisible mirrors, showing the Self or the Other that intermingles in a duplicating maneuver, attract so much attention. (De Diego, 2011, p. 70).

That manoeuvre by which the Self duplicates itself can become evident in the inside space, when the author expresses himself in duplicate, managing for the viewer a disturbing position that forces his gaze to oscillate between the represented Selves.



F3. Jacques H. Lartigue and Francis Bacon, *Diary Page, November 19-20, Peter Beard, 1984.*

In this composition (F3), in addition to crab shells, pieces of pottery, texts, drawings and photographs of a corpse stuck over a photo of airmen, the portraits

of two women are shown, half-hidden between paint brushes. Despite the painfulness of the war context shown by the photograph, the viewer is not attracted by this warlike description, but by the double vision that Beard establishes about himself in an authentic exercise of exhibitionism: a self-portrait (photographic) and a portrait (pictorial) signed by Francis Bacon. Like a mirror image.

Beard met Bacon in 1967, establishing a reciprocally creative relationship between them. Bacon painted 9 portraits of Beard in several triptychs and some single paintings and Beard provided Bacon with some of his best images of the African wilderness. The photographic self-portrait is disruptive, not only because the portrayed Self looks like intimidating us, but because his face appears fragmented into three factions. Beard makes on his own face an incision in two parts to include between them another fragment of his face. The result is a photograph with three flat images that acquire volume thanks to the collage process. In this way, he achieves for photography what Bacon achieves for painting; that is, an expressive study of the disfigurement of the face by decomposing the planes in space.

In the composition, the portrait of Beard -by Beard- dialogues with the portrait of Beard -by Bacon-. In it, Bacon fragments and disfigures the face of the photographer, putting an end to the idea of the Self as a result not only of that fragmentation, but also of the twists and distortions of the spatial axes. However, in the center of this distortion remain (recognizable) features of the portrayed. Actually, the disturbing exercise offered by the composition is that both portraits aim to destabilize our point of view: Beard mutilates his face so that we may proceed to its integration; Bacon shows his figure at the limits of its dissolution, just before the portrayed becomes unrecognizable.

The interest of the page composition is not in the objects or in the contexts, not even in the rupture of space and the game of glances to which it forces the observer, but in the stress caused to us when we look at the individual before he dissolves. Beard's Self is constructed through the rupture and deformation of that represented Self which shows its face, even though:

To show one's face (is) certainly not to show (oneself). And self-portraits are sometimes false self-portraits because the appearance of the face is never a guarantee of anything. Autobiography, false autobiography... Impossibility of writing it because writing one's own autobiography implies placing oneself in an inevitable narrative space, splitting oneself in two. (De Diego, 2011, p. 63)

Writing/photographing a diary/photo diary implies placing oneself in an unavoidable narrative/compositional space that is necessarily accompanied by an exercise of splitting oneself in order to be able to look at oneself from the outside in: The Self of the artist and the Self of the narrator coexist in the account and in the structure that the account acquires. These two selves — the Self that writes and the Self about which the Self writes— find their space of convergence. Thanks to the account, a story is created in which "that Self that narrates completes the narrated Self" (De Diego, 2011, p. 28).



F4. *I'll write whenever I can, Koobi Fora, Lake Rudolf, Kenya, Peter Beard, 1965.*

Beard writes in his diary while his body is sheltered inside a crocodile (F4). He takes his notes articulating an unknown story, while the image does not allow us to access it. The composition shows the artist and the animal in the center of the composition in a discreetly foreshortened plane. The upper part of the image has been stained with blood, perhaps from Beard himself, perhaps from the animal, perhaps from both, tracing a certainly terrifying drawing.

The margins of the photograph are filled with other smaller photographs: a cheetah, children, a model on a crocodile, an elephant, African landscapes, Beard himself scribbling in his diary..., the composition piles up photographs in the same way as Beard treasures memories from northern Kenya - "I'll write whenever I can. Sincerely, Peter Beard, Kenya. Lake Rudolf, NDF"-as he writes in the photograph itself.

The image lets us see how he writes the pages of his diary, pages that he will later use to elaborate his extraordinary collages. It is the beginning of the process. Beard writes his notes in the blog, the Self who writes begins the account by announcing the interest of the story. This interest is nothing more than to reveal the intimacy, of whom? of the "Self" about whom he writes, making them coexist, as in diary writing, the usual and the exotic: the traditional side of natural landscapes or wildlife with the unusual of a model on a crocodile or Peter Beard himself emerging from the jaws of a crocodile. This narrated "Self" is nothing more than an illusion under construction in the hands of the artist "Self" that emerges when Beard creates his photo collages. In this process he places himself looking from the outside to create the image of himself among dozens of photographs of his exotic existence. "What would be desirable then would not be a smug text, nor a lucid text, but a text of uncertain quotation marks, of floating parentheses, never to close the parenthesis is, with all exactitude, to drift" (Barthes, 2004, p. 143).

In this sense, we could affirm that those dozens of photographs that accompany the main image in the composition, allow Beard to speak of himself through others, of what he was in other times and in other places. Beard's "Self" is created through the others who, split from his own "Self", define him:

Only in the narrative space are the two subjects able to coexist; only narrative conventions restore coherence to those contradictions involved in dealing with the autobiographical narration. At the same time, this narrative space of unfolding and dissimulation serves as a camouflage for the author; it serves as a place where it is possible to lose one's face, which is equivalent to escaping from one's identity. This narrative space ensures, therefore, impunity to the subject (De Diego, 2011, p. 44).

4. Conclusions

What could be nothing more than the annotations of a simple diary, becomes a poetic construction in Beard's work. The photographs are fragmented to be sewn together later through the collage technique, creating the true artistic object: the photo diary. Its margins are filled with symbols, images and quotations that dialogue with the textures created by ink and blood, telling stories between the different planes. To this he adds the most diverse objects: tickets for shows, bird feathers, crab shells, fragments of pottery from a cup, newspaper clippings, chicken wings, lollipop wrapper, cigarette filters... All of this comes together with prodigious naturalness despite its heterogeneous nature, until the desired artistic form is achieved. With it, Beard establishes a dialogue with the observer.

This diary-writing that exhibits the intimate details of the Self who writes involves a process of searching for oneself, often through others, the Others, among the lines and photographs that unfold in the fictional story generated by the narrative of the photo diary. In this sense, Beard's creative process camouflages his autobiography through a fictional story that creates an image of himself that displaces his own. In this process of self-construction, the image we recognize of the Self who writes and photographs leaves the frame to become part of the outside, where the unidirectional tradition of representation has always installed the viewer. However, Beard places us in a complicated position, because, by fracturing the space, he breaks the rules of tradition and makes that the Self who writes and the spectator coincide in the same space, the space of the outside. It is a space for confession, where the intimacy of the artist joins with the

intimacy of the observer, having expelled from this space the narrated Self, the virtuous Self, the fictitious Self.

The photo diary as a form of autobiographical writing powerfully attracts the attention of the observer/reader: knowing private details, even if they are insignificant, seems to be part of a human need; even more nowadays that this form of expression seems to have been democratized and the intimacies of the Other become a *narratable* story and build our own identity. The search for ourselves in others will always be developed in the intricate fiction area.

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