

# Counting Days, Recounting Instants

Fatoş Üstek

*The incident that I met you grew out of being a coincidence, once I was there to meet you again, for the second time. Our initial encounter was impregnating moments to come, and change our lives for good. From the perspective of now, what we have lived and shared is a long story without a certain beginning. That is, I cannot - even though I have tried, allocate when it was exactly that we silently joined our lives to gather and share... I am now writing you in the absence of your presence. A loss? It always is.*

A compilation, of a certain genre, medium or objects is an attempt to phrase and value. Collections of books, stamps, music, stones or photographs fall into the category of compilations as a gathering of any sort, can never represent the whole, but the idea and the feeling of the selected group of things. A photography album of a family, brings together key moments of births, celebrations, and moments that may seem to be irrelevant or obscure in retrospect; moreover it gratifies a social portrait, a representation of the time that the family resides. An album, at times, may serve as an evidence, a cultural asset to be facilitated for common use; and at times stays within the family that is portrayed to serve for generations to come as a reference and locus of belonging.

*It was the morning in which I woke up to sounds, your youngest collected fresh eggs from the hens with screaming joy, she was very young and flabbergasted by the whole experience of observing an egg being brought to life. It was indeed astonishing to see how her face changed when that same egg got scrambled for her breakfast. I did not have the words, but eyes to understand how hurt she was with the incident. Do you perhaps think that is what fired her unruly persona, that years later I would print her wild correlation on photography paper...*

An album can be referred as a micro collection, which collates and makes visible instances that are marked as significant. The moments that are chosen over the ones that are not, request an idea of the personal identity and social conditioning. Photography as a document of gestures and modes of being inserts itself as a portrait, at times even in the absence of any subject, thus it portrays the scene and the feeling of the time it has frozen in a frame. On the other hand, no portrait talks truly about the subject, but the subject's relationship with the world that surrounds him or her.

*Was it that day, after an enduring ride in your car, when we gave a break to stretch our legs you told me about your days in the army? The bridging posture, as you told me was an act of balance. I may not be remembering this right. That day, with its wonders of watching nature through the car windows, your enthusiasm to be among the mountains, the whole family being rammed in four cubic meters with songs. Was it that day, I asked you to teach me how to stand up and lean back, stretching your core, your backbones? It is hazy now, though the picture suggests we may have engaged in perfecting that pose.*

Through the recent studies on the phenomenology of perception and nature of memory, instances that is experienced and recalled in an aftermath do not comply towards the same image. There is a shift, a change or perhaps a transformation that solely takes place as the subject forms and reforms himself/herself through time and space. In other words, the experience of an event depends on the psycho-somatic condition of the subject that varies through time and cumulation of other experiences. A photographic documentation of that incident, initially is a framing, a contextualisation of the event, that may immediately differ from the experience, let alone serve to fixate its sensual value. At times where photographic documentation is consulted to evoke the memory of the event, that memory might not correlate with the recalling of the subject: memory as a flux of correlations, changes and reinvents itself according to the currencies of the present and the modus operandi of the subject. Thus a photo documentation becomes an object, an object of attention that is solidified through time, open to interpretations, however not to change.

*That summer I visited your summer house is still resonant in my memory, I somehow cannot forget the light that cut through the creases of the polycarbonate roof. Your wife was constantly blabbering about something, that I guess was the amount of food she had to cook for the young members of your family, who tend to eat a lot after a day in the sun running up and down the hills, joining nature as it were. Would it be right to suggest that not everyone - though the food was great, was happy with roots on scrambled eggs?*

Every picture has its inner dialogue. It converses with the moment it documents and the subjects it portrays, but also the scene that it frames and captures.

*I did grow up with rituals too, perhaps not as strongly pronounced as yours. Rather, mine were discreet to name them as a pre-set behaviorisms. I did enjoy the glory of Sunday morning walks, collecting peppers to dry on a line, and afternoon naps. Perhaps, you would not necessarily call these a pattern of life. We never talked about these in detail, as I could only express through the images, you through gestures. Would you call this a new language, a composite of two worlds that communicate ideas and feelings through different manifestations? I do sometimes ponder, if it would be all different where the words stood the same for us all.*

Images are coded surfaces. A river with many streams, each detail correlates to a code through the unison with other details. The image shows what it has, but also beyond. There, we can talk about the meta-language of images, that symbolisms arrive in the midst of the linguistic constellations and their determination of meaning as given sets of encounters. The meta-language does not necessarily correspond to the objectification of the image, on the contrary, it dilutes and diverges the meaning cluster. Such as the metaphorical and the actual joined in a picture-plane.

*Do all roads lead to where they do, whence covered in snow, blocked with rain, dried up in sunshine? That winter, I was not feeling well. My recently broken heart needed healing, and time was of no resource. I found the escape to visiting you in the midst of a harsh winter. I remember your warning on the piercing cold that I might not ease with. What would snow do to a heart that is bestowed in the leave of a beloved, I*

wondered while packing my thermal clothing. That winter, my eyes like the lenses of my camera came to a still. I could not run, I knew, but I could stop for a moment and gaze out to the rounded white hills, onto the slowly marching crowds of your village back to their warm homes. I did long for the Island, the most during those days of freezing silence.

Images are abstractions of the real, they present a composition that supersedes the factuality of the instance, complying to the precursors of what may seemingly may be judged through the filters of truth. A documentation of a moment, may not only embrace what is beyond the lens, but also the narrative that flows through the mind of the photographer behind. A moment, differentiated from all other moments sequentially lined up, is marked by the heightened awareness and sensuality of its observer, merged with the desire to capture with the fear of the fleeting successors not to match the intensity of the sensations. The real is an impossibility to grasp, in a picture and perhaps in life larger than an image we can only talk about the realms, facts, truisms.

*“You can watch seasons through market stalls”, once you said to me, or rather that is what I interpreted when we were walking along the aisles of the open air market in your neighbouring village. It was eve of summer, the dew was still in the air, and less apples were available than the last year. The composition of fruits marked their individuation on the stands, it was as plain and complex as it could be, instead of bulks being available for fellow residents, there were seldom pieces of produce. An apple or two with fennel roots were what we ended up bringing back home. I traced, but could not picture the faces of the farmers. It felt too much to bare, too hard point the camera.*

An album, is an edited series of photographs that is most commonly brought together through a sense of chronological passing of time. Amidst the intentions of producing a perfect representation, an album is an incomplete compilation. Its incompleteness do not source from the fact that sensations or background narratives are at times impossible to represent, but the fact that its maker is a subject that follows his/her own threads. It is also incomplete as the social, sensual qualities brought together are irreversible: one may never go back in time to seize the plausible complete picture. An album, however is a

representation of an era, without the intention of being so, is a social document that opens up as the main narrative closes onto itself; that is the family members wither away and the images stay on with new words and things to say.

*For an immersive reader; this text is written in the memory of the pictures from the compilation presented in this book. Neither the narrative nor the inner dialogues correspond to the actual experiences, in other words it is a fiction within a certain reality, a reality within fiction.*

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