

DIARIES AMONG DIARIES

DIARI TRA DIARI | DIARIES AMONG DIARIES
(FROM INTROSPECTION TO THE POLITICAL ACT)

KEEPING A DIARY

An accumulation technique. The 'sense' lies in the whole, and it may be understood only after completion.

(From the 'Diario' by Piero Morganti, 22 December 1990)

By 'keeping a diary' I mean the way in which a trace of one's life may be kept day by day.

The diary is developed in a linear fashion, over time, forming a discourse made up of fragments. It is often rooted in a form of obsession or the fear of letting things go, the desire to withhold them, to accumulate them, in the need to register them and lastly to document and archive one's own existential time.

KEEPING IT TO YOURSELF

The diary as proof of existence.

(From the 'Diario' by Piero Morganti, 6 June 1994)

In the diary, one remains in contact with oneself, one speaks in the midst of an introspective dialogue that aids self-reflection.

Diaries are not conceived for an audience; they have no interlocutor. The diary by its very nature originates in order to remain secret. It is self-fuelling, and is conceived to be an end unto itself, to the point in some cases of being two things at the same time: a form of implosion and a form of expression. For example, I'm thinking here of that by Oreste Fernando Nannetti, written on the wall with his belt while he was a patient in the psychiatric hospital of Volterra prior to the implementation of the Basaglia law.

KINDS OF DIARY

There's the monochord diary that reflects the obsessions and monomania of its author (Pavese, Barbellion); there's the emergency-valve diary in which the diarist vents his repressions within an intimate space (Renard); there's the public diary, a private pretext to display the vanity and commitment of its author (Vittorini, Gide); there's the diary-document and the diary that constitutes the phase of aesthetic reflection of an artist, and lastly there's

the rhapsodic diary, meaning the repertoire and everyday control of individual ideas of reality.

(From the 'Diario' by Piero Morganti, 31 January 1968)

Diaries may, for example, be channels of testimony, of memory or tools of reasoning, of knowledge and analysis, like those of historians, anthropologists, scientists, town-planners and archaeologists...

There's a literary genre called diary-keeping which concerns the writings of men and women, young adults and children, writers, scholars, politicians, artists musicians, thinkers, prisoners... including (to name but a few): the diaries of Henri-Frederic Amiel, Sibilla Aleramo, Hanna Arendt, Barbellion, Charles Baudelaire, Bernard Berenson, Cesare Brandi, Bertold Brecht, Arrigo Cajumi, Aldo Carpi, Carlo Cassola, Giovanni Comisso, Marina Cvetaeva, Fabrizio De Andrè, Edmond & Jules De Goucourt, Eugene Delacroix, Giuseppe Dessì, Fedor Dostoiewskij, Jan Fabre, Gustave Flaubert, Anne Frank, Max Frisch, Andrè Gide, Wolfgang Goethe, Witold Gombrowicz, Dag Hammarskiöld, Peter Handke, Keith Haring, Ety Hillesum, Victor Hugo, Henry James, Joseph Joubert, Franz Kafka, Soren Kierkegaard, Paul Klee, Giacomo Leopardi, György Lukacs, Julie Manet, Klaus Mann, Katherine Mansfield, Matilde Manzioni, Piero Manzioni, Herman Melville, Eugenio Montale, Marino Moretti, Guido Morselli, Valsav Nijinsky, Anais Nin, Cesare Pavese, Giaime Pintor, Sylvia Plath, Jacopo da Pontormo, Vasco Pratolini, Giuseppe Prezzolini, Jules Renard, Rainer Maria Rilke, Lalla Romano, Amelia Rosselli, Oliver Sacks, Vittorio Sereni, Ardengo Soffici, Stendhal, Apolinnaria Suslova, Lev Tolstoj, Nicolò Tommaseo, Leone Trozkij, Ann Truitt, Paul Valery, Elio Vittorini, Richard Wagner, Andy Warhol, Virginia Woolf and Valerio Zurlini.

STEPPING OUT OF ONE'S OWN INTIMACY

The writer – even the most reluctant of diarists – always plays to an imaginary audience.

(From the 'Diario' by Piero Morganti, 2 January 1986)

Does a diary once placed on show maintain its nature as a diary?

Does a diary that becomes a form of self-representation still remain a diary?

The writers of diaries may be split into two categories: those who write for themselves and those who write for others.

There's a moment in which the solitary writer senses the importance of his own reflections and, at the same time, senses the need for a shared discourse in order to penetrate the very heart of reality.

Ultimately, it's a system by which to be positioned outside of life and of history, to think of oneself in relation to the world. From hiding oneself to showing oneself. From self-exclusion to participation.

ARTWORK-DIARY

I think of the diary like I do of the sculptures of Fausto Melotti: traces of signs and movements in space.

(From the 'Diario' by Piero Morganti, 14 March 1987)

Is it possible to consider the diary an expressive, creative language?

The diary form in art wishes to open up, to be exposed, exhibited. The diary as I understand it here may be expressed through any form of language and may take on any medium: that of a literary work, or a visual, musical, cinematographic, photographic or video work and so on.

It's a matter of works that require quite a long time for completion, or may even concern the entire body of works of the artist, covering a whole lifetime.

I think of some artwork-diaries as the attempt to grasp time, painting one number after the other in the 'Details' of Roman Opalka; painting the story of her own life in the concentration camp in 'Leben oder Theater?' by Charlotte Salomon; the effort to place personal history alongside historical memory in the cataloguing of personal annotations and historic documents in 'Kulturgeschichte' (1880-1983) by Hanne Darboven; visualising reiterated time by painting the same glass every day in 'Tag um Tag ist guter Tag' by Peter Dreher; painting a date every day and coupling it with a newspaper article in the attempt to register personal time and that of history that runs alongside it in the 'Date Paintings' of On Kawara; gathering all the meaningful images in one's own existence that pass before one's eyes in order to turn it into an atlas useful for pictorial creation in the 'Atlas' by Gerard Richter; documenting, in all its intimacy, through a photographic chronicle of her own world made up of personal relations, in 'In my life' by Nan Goldin; without throwing anything away, obsessively collecting all the traces of one's own existence in the 'Diaries' of Dieter Roth; the transcription of one's own thought that runs alongside the unfolding of the work in the texts of Pinot Gallizio; documenting the actions that underline the strong link between art and life in five performances, each lasting a year in the life of Tehching Hsieh.

STANDING ONE NEXT TO ANOTHER

What may arise from the encounter between two diary writers? Nothing more than a crossing of diary pages.

(From the 'Diario' by Piero Morganti, 9 October 1988)

There are diaries that encourage us to look around, that urgently seek interlocutors. Almost as if the diary form were transformed into an epistolary genre. In a certain sense we can say that the form passes from that of the monologue to that of the dialogue. Not a diary, but a diary alongside another diary. Trying to draw nearer with one's own diary to another diary, with one's own interiority to another interiority, out of closeness, relation, likeness or even out of contrast.

And so little by little, through assonance or dissonance, a set of diaries is formed, a plurality of individual forms. All at the same time, one next to the other yet without englobing one another, without prevaricating, but coexisting in a form of co-presence.

A MILITANT GESTURE

We should all be diarists.

(From the 'Diario' by Piero Morganti, August 1988)

If by keeping a diary we mean cultivating an intimate and personal space, if by placing one diary next to another we mean feeling part of a collectivity while maintaining our own singularity free in all of us, if we think that every individual in society should live according to his/her own inclinations and that for some these are expressed in taking charge of a space of solitude and depth, perhaps then we might go so far as to say that keeping a diary and introducing it to a community of diaries might paradoxically become a political act.