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Art and Aesthetic Experience between Care and Therapy: Paradigms, Practices, and Reflections

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Abstract

This article investigates contemporary aesthetic theory through three paradigms — exclusivist, reductionist, and transcendental — to reconsider the philosophical meaning of art in relation to aesthetic experience. The discussion begins with the definition of art in the exclusivist perspective, which separates artistic ontology from aesthetic experience (Danto (1981)), continues with the reductionist approach that seeks continuity with ordinary experience (Dewey (2005), neuroscience), and culminates in the transcendental paradigm (Kant (2000), Jauss (1982)), which emphasizes aesthetic experience as a reflection on conditions of meaning. A central focus is placed on the category of care within aesthetics: art as both an opportunity for the cultivation of common meaning and a potential therapeutic resource. By distinguishing between curatorial art and therapeutic art, the paper highlights how works of art may act both as mediators of shared cultural values and as tools for individual elaboration of trauma and life-experience. Through an analysis of Marco Bellocchio's films, particularly Sorelle Mai and Marx può aspettare, the article explores how autobiographical cinema intersects with processes of elaboration and healing. Ultimately, the article proposes that the idea of care should be considered a central aesthetic category, capable of articulating both communal and individual dimensions of experience.

Keywords: Aesthetics-Care – Therapy - Aesthetic experience – Bioaesthetics - Film and philosophy

Rethinking Aesthetics Today

Philosophical research on art seems to have unfolded into three main strands in recent decades: we could define these three paradigms as exclusivist, reductionist, and transcendental. If I speak of paradigms, referring loosely to the way in which the historian of science Thomas Kuhn uses this term, it is because they are three different ways of thinking about the meaning of art for human life. We cannot exclude the possibility that the questions and problems highlighted by one of these paradigms also reappear in the others. If this happens, however, the tendency is to bring such a question or such a problem back to the criteria already set in view of a philosophically satisfactory investigation of the artistic phenomenon. The consequence is that in this way, more or less intentionally, the possibility of hybridization with a way of thinking different from the one adopted is neutralized. We cannot, however, exclude the possibility that in the work of individual thinkers we may find traces of exclusivism, reductionism, or transcendentalism, even when these thinkers profess a different philosophical creed. These are theoretical models that should be taken as litmus tests to identify the general outlines of a given inquiry into the philosophical meaning of art.

The terms that give name to the aforementioned paradigms — that is, exclusion, reduction, and transcendental (i.e., the condition of possibility of a phenomenon) — refer to the relationship that each of these lines of thought on art establishes with the general question of the aesthetic experience we have of a work of art. It is a common opinion that works of art are connected to the aesthetic experience of those who enjoy them, and, for some thinkers, of those who produce them. But to what extent is such correlation relevant for the definition of the philosophical meaning of art? This is the point of view that I propose to adopt in order to establish the orientation that a given style of thought takes in relation to the phenomenon of art. Exclusivism tends to deny the philosophical relevance of aesthetic experience in view of the understanding of art. The paradigmatic case of this tendency is undoubtedly found in the philosophy of art of Arthur C. Danto[1]. Danto chooses as the subtitle of his best-known essay on the subject, The Transfiguration of the Commonplace, precisely the definition "A Philosophy of Art." This means that it is not an aesthetics. Aesthetics has to do, in fact, with the feelings and emotions that a work of art arouses in us; consequently, it deals with the sensible qualities of works. Danto, on the other hand, is interested in providing a rigorous definition of a work of art, for which purpose the necessary and sufficient conditions must be established in order to say that something is a work of art. We are in the field of ontology, and the status of an object as art is defined by its relational properties, not by its sensible qualities. It is therefore an inquiry that adopts logical, not aesthetic, criteria for the definition of art. Let us not forget that "aesthetics" derives from the Greek *aisthesis*, which means sensation, perception. Danto's position gradually softened: I am thinking in particular of his last essay, *What Art Is*. Yet the principle remains valid that the main purpose of a philosophical inquiry con-

sists in providing a satisfactory definition of art, even independently of the emotions and feelings that a work of art may arouse. Correlation with aesthetic experience is therefore, in principle, a non-essential feature of the work in view of the search for a rigorous definition of art[2].

The second paradigm is broader and more differentiated than the first: within it we find entirely autonomous and distinct research approaches. Defining it as reductionist has no derogatory intent. The question is whether aesthetic experience can literally be reduced to the logics and meaning of ordinary experience, that is, whether aesthetic experience is in total continuity with ordinary experience. John Dewey hints at such a form of reductionism, without explicitly discussing it and without developing its consequences[3]. The fact remains that, for Dewey, one must begin with what he calls "esthetic in the raw". Even a walk in the city can be aesthetically significant. Note that the walk is aesthetically relevant not so much for its immediate pleasantness as for the opportunity it offers the individual to orient themselves in the world. In this perspective, the aesthetic seems to correspond to a core of meaning necessary to the process of any type of experience. At the same time, there would also seem to be experiences — works of art, but at this point also walks taken for the sheer pleasure of visiting a place — that present particularly accentuated aesthetic features. The question remains open whether this is a simple intensification of traits already found in ordinary experience, or whether we are faced with exemplary occasions that allow us to reflect on the conditions of meaning of experience. It is evident that in Dewey there coexist a primary aesthetic, the spontaneous core of meaning present in every experience, and a secondary aesthetic, the reflective attitude connected to certain exemplary experiences. The question is not entirely idle: at stake is the very meaning of aesthetic experience itself. In the first case, the so-called aesthetic experiences would in reality be cultural constructs that serve only to highlight aesthetic features present to varying degrees, but not of a different quality, in every experience. In the second case, aesthetic experience is a real occasion for reflective verification of the conditions under which experience in general takes place: this marks the passage to a plane of experience not entirely disconnected from the ordinary plane, but distinct from it. It is as if the individual, without stepping outside reality to look at it from the outside, observed the experience they are having from a different perspective. Emilio Garroni would speak of a "looking-through" experience. The expression reformulates Wittgenstein's concept of *durchschauen*: the hyphen that links verb and preposition thus conveys the synthetic character of the operation.

An interesting case of the reduction of the aesthetic to ordinary experience is offered today by neuroscience. I do not think that neuroscience expresses an explicit and intentional reductionist program; rather, I believe it to be an epistemological presupposition from which this line of research cannot free itself when dealing with aesthetic experience. Let us take the case of suspense, analyzed by Vittorio Gallese and Michele

Guerra in The Empathic Screen with regard to cinema. The hypothesis maintained is that the spectator, when watching a scene full of suspense, for example a victim who is unknowingly about to be reached by a murderer, activates a mechanism of "embodied simulation" which makes them feel empathy for the character. Presumably the same mechanism would be activated in a scene that occurs in real life: a passerby sees another passerby crossing the street without noticing that a car is approaching at high speed. The embodied simulation thus activated and the empathy generated would be, in principle, the same: there would then be total homogeneity between real experience and cinematic experience. The point is whether it is possible to reduce a film in its entirety to the scenes in which the aforementioned mechanism and other analogous ones are activated. Cinematic experience would thus end up being only a collection of moments of embodied simulation. Remaining with noir as an example, films would be only experiences of fear, but would never become experiences of fear: the narrative could never aspire to show us the meaning of our experience and reveal the significance that feelings such as fear have in our lives.

The third paradigm, the transcendental one, which refers back to Kant and the Critique of the Power of Judgment, instead maintains that aesthetic experience precisely has to do with making possible the exercise of reflection on the conditions of meaning of ordinary experience[4]. I am not referring to the mere functioning of the mental and perceptual processes that give body to human experience: I am referring to the fact that this very functioning entails posing questions of meaning about reality. Thus, perception organizes the visual field according to the relation between figure and ground; however, the figure is also the externalization of single specific traits of the inner image through which the mind of the perceiver elaborates experience. It therefore lends itself to numerous interpretations, once its concrete existence is fixed on a material support (painting, sculpture, film, etc.), taking into account both the point of view of the producer and that of the receiver. In this way, the figure synthesizes the organization of the perceptual field with the arising of an instance of meaning within experience.

Care as an Aesthetic Category

In the previous paragraphs three possible orientations of contemporary aesthetics were distinguished. I do not exclude that there may be others: I have only tried to highlight some lines of research that have contributed to articulating the contemporary debate on aesthetic experience. On the one hand, one orientation denies the philosophical value of the aesthetic for the understanding of art; on the other hand, the two remaining orientations recognize its importance, but according to different theoretical perspectives. Having made these premises, we must ask ourselves which of these paradigms are available to include within themselves the idea of care, making it one of their categories of pertinence, if not even a fundamental category. It seems to me that

I can say with relative certainty that a paradigm aimed at excluding aesthetic experience from the horizon of a philosophical understanding of art would have difficulty dealing with the idea of care. Whether or not a work of art has a therapeutic power can only be verified in the experience we have of it: a reference to aesthetic experience thus becomes indispensable for speaking of care through art. This is not to say that aesthetic experience is in itself an experience of care: rather, the point is that it is in the experience of the work of art that we can find the nuclei of a therapeutic action of art. This last remark can help us to make a distinction between the reductionist paradigm and the transcendental one with regard to the possible inclusion of the category of care within them. Once it is made clear that placing at the center the healing power of the work of art entails particular attention to the experience we have of it, we must clarify what we mean by aesthetic experience. From this point of view, a discussion of the therapeutic valences of art may prove even necessary from a heuristic standpoint: it helps us, in fact, to discover aspects of aesthetic experience that would otherwise remain unknown, and to clarify better what we mean when we speak of aesthetic experience. It goes without saying that aesthetic experience can in no way and under no circumstances be assimilated to pharmacological therapy: any reference to the *pharmakon* in the philosophical field can only be taken in a metaphorical sense. The therapeutic action of art manifests itself rather at other levels: it concerns the psyche or the soul, if we wish to use an ancient term laden with significance for philosophy. Its effects are not seen so much in the treatment of a symptom or a diagnosed pathology, but rather in the ability to re-establish the conditions for a flourishing of life. From this point of view, art accompanies therapeutic practice properly speaking. Borrowing an image from the world of computing, one could say that the idea of care through art stands to psychological or psychoanalytic therapy as the software of a computer stands to its hardware: hardware is the material basis of the computer's functioning, but this does not predetermine in advance all the possible uses of the device, which instead pertain to the software. The concept of the flourishing of life precisely points to the idea of a care of the software of our life, if I may put it this way: it concerns the possibility of devising strategies, finding solutions, and undertaking actions that foster the pursuit of happiness on the part of the individual. Flourishing does not so much concern life itself, exposed to a series of natural accidents and random contingencies, as it does the form that we decide to give to life itself.

A "soft" idea of care seems to align more with the transcendental paradigm of aesthetic experience than with the reductionist one. The reductionist paradigm in fact postulates the principle that aesthetic experience is identical to ordinary experience, except for an intensification of its characteristic features. Consequently, the feeling of suspense is entirely homogeneous with the anguish we feel in an actual situation of danger; the same applies to joy, pain, excitement, melancholy, and so on. An artistic therapy should therefore intervene directly on the symptom, whereas the hypothesis

maintained here is that it accompanies the "hard" therapy — recognition, diagnosis, and treatment of the symptom — but does not replace it. Artistic therapy rather presents itself as a correlate of proper therapy: this is to say that an appropriately guided aesthetic experience can not only facilitate the therapeutic process but can also anticipate it. The work of art in fact sets up a virtual play space, in which the relational dynamics between patient and therapist can be accelerated and enhanced. Art therapy is by now an established fact of psychotherapeutic practice; here, however, we also refer to more extreme experiments, such as *Memofilm*, conceived by Giuseppe Bertolucci and realized by Eugenio Melloni in collaboration with the Sant'Orsola Hospital of Bologna.

The idea behind *Memofilm* is that Alzheimer's patients can benefit from involvement in the making of a short film that has them as protagonists, recalling episodes, people, and significant places from their life. Relatives and friends are usually involved in the film, contributing to the construction of the script of the story and participating in the narration. The film is subsequently shown to the patient involved, who thus becomes the "model spectator", the recipient around whom the narrative plot has been built. An actual improvement in the condition of some patients was observed, with the partial recovery of specific vital functions, following the repeated viewing of the film dedicated to them. This shows how the construction of a device — not understood in a material sense — aimed at an aesthetic experience, the viewing of a film, can indirectly produce effects in the therapeutic path of a patient. Let us also bear in mind that we are speaking here of patients affected by degenerative diseases concerning the cognitive aspects of the mind: an artistic intervention can thus also facilitate therapeutic processes that go beyond the strictly psychological level. What interests me is whether it is possible to rethink the experience of the work of art in general from this perspective: is there an intrinsically therapeutic core within aesthetic experience? And if so, can we then say that the idea of care rightfully belongs to the categories proper to aesthetics?

To answer these questions it is necessary to refer to a model of aesthetic experience that already prefigures, in some measure, an idea of care. It seems to me that Hans Robert Jauss' theory of aesthetic experience goes in this direction, in particular his brief essay concerning an apology of the aesthetic experience[5]. The essay begins from a critical reconsideration of one of the main notions of aesthetics: that of pleasure. For while, on the one hand, aesthetics has from the outset been concerned to distinguish aesthetic pleasure from mere sensory pleasure, on the other hand, pleasure is without doubt one of the hallmarks of a successful aesthetic experience. Jauss contests the point of view of Theodor W. Adorno, who, especially when it comes to modern art, considers aesthetic pleasure a purely subjective experience, even susceptible of "gastronomic" overtones[6]. The etymology of *Genuss* — the term used by Jauss to designate aesthetic pleasure — instead refers to an experience of sharing: it is the enjoyment of

common pastures in mountain communities. The *Genosse* are the companions, in the sense of those who share the use of a good. This way of conceiving the relation of the subject, or rather of the subjects, with the object has as its consequence that the thing experienced is not seen as an object of use or consumption, but as the source of an enjoyment which in turn produces lasting effects in the experience of the recipients. Bringing these considerations back to the field of art, it is as if the work of art operated a change in the attitude that the recipient has towards their own experience: the latter no longer has as its aim uti, use, utility, but frui, disinterested enjoyment, free, shared, and we might add careful, attentive, accurate, full of care, of something.

The work of art leads us to cultivate a care for the world. In aesthetic experience, in fact, sensitivity, which Jauss names with the Greek term *aisthesis*, is not limited to perceiving this or that object, to being impressed or affected by it. Aesthetic perception — an expression that does not indicate a special sensitivity, but rather a form of education of the senses — is an occasion to broaden perspective and at the same time to push one's gaze deeper. Sensitivity thus becomes allied with the productive moment of constructing a habitable and recognizable space: the moment of *aisthesis* spontaneously extends into the moment of *poiesis*, which in Greek is both the fabrication of objects and artistic creation, and for Jauss must be understood also and above all as production of meaning, which removes from the world its original character of estrangement and renders it familiar to us. Aesthetic perception thus produces an intimate interpenetration with the object of experience, without this entailing an indistinct fusion of subject and object: on the contrary, aesthetic experience thus becomes the process of redefining the norms, customs, and habits that accompany our being in the world. In other words, aesthetic experience culminates in the critical examination of the rules of common life, that is, in the prefiguration of new rules. Jauss defines this moment of synthesis and of explicitation of the meaning of aesthetic experience as *katharsis*, taking the term from Aristotle's Poetics. In characterizing the concept of *katharsis*, Jauss actually draws both on the Poetics and on Kant's Critique of the Power of Judgment: his conception in fact refers to the possibility of re-establishing a horizon of common meaning through the exercise of taste. The Aristotelian idea of "purification" of the passions, in particular of pity (*eleos*) and terror (*phobos*), seems to resolve itself completely into the Kant's (2000) idea of a common sense. Things are not exactly so: the intertwining of the cathartic effect of aesthetic experience and the vindication of the exemplary character of judgments of taste can help us better understand the therapeutic value of art.

Aesthetic Experience: Care or Therapy?

From Hans Robert Jauss' theoretical proposal we can infer the idea that aesthetic experience is a form of care for the world, entrusted both to the producers and to the recipients of works of art. Re-establishing a horizon of common meaning in fact means

laying the foundations for the reconstitution of a community that shares a project of caring for the world, a common dwelling that is mutually responsible. The question is how such a process can also have a therapeutic effect on the individual recipient. One might settle it by saying that therapy is ultimately a care of the self, analogous to the care for the world of which aesthetic experience is the medium; equally, one might say that re-establishing a horizon of common meaning amounts to carrying out a kind of therapy of the world. The play of references, however, risks dissolving into easy slogans if we lose sight of our initial purpose: to define the contours and limits of the idea of aesthetic therapy. At this point we can better understand one point: any aesthetic therapy does not directly concern the health and well-being of the individual, but rather the definition of the conditions of meaning that make possible or promote a genuine therapeutic process. It then becomes clear that the care of the self that derives from this aesthetic therapy must be thought of in analogy with the care of the world, because both concern the possibility of expanding or strengthening existing relational networks between different subjects, or of establishing new ones.

The difference between a therapeutic approach and what I would broadly define as a "curatorial" approach lies in the different emphasis placed on the various phases of the process: an aesthetic experience aimed at the horizon of common meaning will place emphasis above all on the intersubjective dynamics that emerge from the work of art; conversely, an experience aimed at self-care will emphasize above all the way in which the individual reconstructs lines of convergence between the self and others. From this alternative emerge two distinct, and both legitimate, lines of artistic practice. On the one hand, there are works of art that aim to reconnect us with a horizon of common meaning, placing us in a position to reflect on the great questions of life, history, and human experience. On the other hand, there are works that aim instead to offer individual pathways, showing in this way the possible forms of coexistence and cooperation — but also incompatibility and conflict — between different singularities and the world. Here we find one of the innovative elements of Jauss' aesthetics. It carries us beyond the dialectic between classical art, which founds a world of shared values, and modern art, which favors a critical and reflective attitude, towards a new kind of dialectic, which sees a dialogue between a "curatorial" art, which emphasizes the possibility of pointing to a horizon of common meaning, and a "therapeutic" art, which emphasizes instead the way in which a singularity can concretely realize a meaningful form of life.

It goes without saying that by meaningful form of life we mean a way of living capable of inscribing itself within a horizon shared with other forms of life, making the search for meaning in experience both a moment of definition of one's own identity and, at the same time, a moment of inclusion of the other within one's own vital sphere. With regard to aesthetic experience, Jauss speaks of an experience of the self realized through the experience of the other. This principle should not be understood merely as

the imagination's capacity to compare different lives and experiences in order to draw out their common traits. It must also be understood as the definition of contexts and the activation of processes in which self-affirmation can converge with and even establish relations of exchange that include the other. For simplicity's sake, the logics underlying the two identified lines — curatorial and therapeutic — could be defined respectively as a top-down logic and a bottom-up logic. Starting from an exemplary case, the curatorial work of art indicates a universal horizon of meaning, in which all could or should recognize themselves, while maintaining their own singularity. By contrast, a therapeutic work of art indicates how a singularity can or must construct a path that leads it to inscribe its own form of life exemplarily within a broader horizon of meaning.

If curatorial art directly addresses the conditions of meaning of experience in general and is therefore closer to the transcendental plane of experience, therapeutic art remains on the level of a pragmatics of the strategies and means by which a singular experience acquires a broader meaning. The assumption is that this concrete work of ascending from the contingency of a singular experience to its conditions of possibility intercepts a therapeutic need: that of having with the world structured and stable, but also flexible and adaptable, relations of exchange. Consequently, a curatorial work of art will emphasize above all certain characteristic features of aesthetic experience, such as the impartiality of taste and the ability to formulate disinterested judgments. Conversely, a therapeutic work of art attaches particular importance to the ability of works of art in general to present themselves as "strange tools," as Alva Noë has recently argued[7]. Artistic artifacts, in fact, do not assume responsibility for a specific vital function, but allow us to look at a form of life as a whole, adopting a reflective attitude and manifesting a reinforcing intention.

In light of what has been said so far, it becomes clear that a therapeutic line of art does not concern only the implementation of artistic practices directly involved in actual therapeutic processes. A therapeutic instance, in the sense I have tried to sketch above, can therefore also pertain to artistic experimentation tout court. I would like to attempt to outline the contours of this second possibility starting from some brief considerations on the work of the Italian director Marco Bellocchio. I will consider the director's more recent production, although I will make some references to his early films and in particular to his debut I pugni in tasca. I will also focus on the autobiographical strand of this director's production. A large part of Bellocchio's films are full of significant autobiographical references, starting from his very first film. The director's work has always been characterized by a cyclical return to his "family romance." Even the period I consider here is inaugurated by a film, L'ora di religione, which again refers to certain details concerning the director's family, even though it transfigures them in a fictional narrative. The story of his family, moreover, provides Bellocchio with something close to an exemplary representation of certain aspects of Italian society that he is particularly interested in narrating: the pathologi-

cal and pathogenic character of the bourgeois family environment; the relationship with religion. This results in an evident connection with the director's other films, both those dealing with contemporary Italian history—Buongiorno, notte; Vincere and beyond—and those dealing with Italian society in general, without specific biographical or autobiographical references. I cannot go into this aspect further here, but it would be interesting to investigate the hidden link between these two strands of the director's production.

What I am interested in investigating, instead, is that from a certain point onward, in the autobiographical strand of Bellocchio's production, reality seems to take precedence over fiction, though without completely eliminating it. Consequently, the director begins to reflect on how it is possible to reintegrate the expanded time of life into the compressed time of filmic narration. The point is how the intersection of two such heterogeneous temporalities can provide access to an experience of meaning, which the director intends to share with the viewer. Sorelle Mai is exemplary of this search for meaning played out on different but interwoven temporal planes. The film assembles three functional short films that the director had made with the students of the film school he organized every summer in Bobbio, the village of his family's origin. Alongside professional actors, the director—as was his habit—involved relatives and longtime friends to play some roles in the film: the "Mai sisters" who give the film its title are, for example, the director's own sisters. The short films were made in different years, but revolve around a common narrative nucleus: the story of a single mother who struggles to establish herself professionally and is forced for a period to entrust her daughter to her aunts in the provinces. The occasion for showing the passage of real time is provided by the fact that the little girl playing the role of the daughter, Elena Bellocchio, the director's daughter, becomes an adolescent over the course of the film. It is not the first time that a director or an artist has shown the passage of time through photographic or moving images. The original aspect of the staging of *Sorelle Mai* is that the passage of real time, made visible by the biological transformation of the child into an adolescent, is not put at the service of a documentary impulse, but of the construction of a fictional narrative. It is not a foregone choice: representing the real becoming of life on screen always implies an ethical dilemma about the legitimacy of representation. André Bazin argued that representing on screen the real event of death or of sexual intercourse is literally an obscene gesture[8]. Bellocchio does not stage a specific event from his daughter's real life, but rather her becoming over time: it is already a representation of growth, we could say of the blossoming of a life. The images of Elena's life in transformation, insofar as they are the representation of something not reducible to a single event or fact, already contain an element of potential mimesis. But we must ask ourselves what this representation stands for.

My hypothesis is that the presence of Elena's life transforming over the years authorizes us to read the narrated fictional story—the mother's struggle for a difficult pro-

fessional realization; the uncle in perpetual existential and financial crisis—as a mere pretext to allude to something else, to a real story not staged on screen and concerning the director's elaboration of an emotional wound. Elena's transformation testifies to the fact that the director's life has continued, generating new ties and new affections. The director must, however, at a certain point return to a place of origin, both geographical and psychic, to come to terms with the past: part of Bellocchio's filmography could be defined as a kind of constantly evolving personal psychogeography. The characters' stories are mere hooks: they could even be phases of himself or forms of life that the director recognizes he discarded in the course of his real existence. What matters is that the narrative reports a process of elaboration, which is therefore also an experience of making sense of the past. In *Sorelle Mai*, unlike in the more recent Marx può aspettare, the real contents of this process are not addressed, and indeed are concealed by an improbable fictional story. Sorelle Mai focuses on the effects of the process: the becoming of real time that breaks into the time of fictional narrative represents the rupture with a time tied to something unchangeable and negative, seemingly inscribed in the family's history (Mai = "never"). The effect is that life can go on, generating something new.
In Marx può aspettare, by contrast, Bellocchio stages part of the contents of the process of working through trauma, restoring his family story to its true protagonists. It is not surprising that the director needed an intermediate step such as that accomplished in Sorelle Mai. It is not only a matter of the tragic nature of the story told, but above all of the shattering effects produced by retracing this story together with his small family community. This makes something almost miraculous happen in *Marx può aspettare*: Letizia Bellocchio, the director's deaf-mute sister, at the end of the film strives and seems to succeed in articulating a sentence in which she condenses her feelings for the deceased brother who is the subject of the documentary. This is Camillo, Marco's twin brother. Camillo appears as a frivolous young man in contrast to the serious and committed Marco, but in 1968, at twenty-nine years old, he committed suicide, revealing an unease that the rest of the family had not understood. The event is recounted for the first time in a fully documentary film, though also traversed by powerful phenomena of enactment, as has been said. We then understand, in retrospect, the use of fictional narrative in *Sorelle Mai*: the fiction stands for an alterity that is not a mere creation of fantasy. On the contrary, it is literally the director's alter ego: it is his twin, who moreover seems to have chosen the form of life that the director had precisely discarded.

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