

Introduction

SOMEWHERE BETWEEN the ages of six and eighteen months, we have been told, the typical infant is held up to a mirror by a parent or caretaker and encouraged to identify with its reflection. This identification creates something that did not previously exist: a self. But since the child is sunk in “nursling dependence” and is little more than a disorganized mass of motor responses, this identification is impossible to sustain.¹ As soon as the mirror asserts its exteriority, the infant self begins to disintegrate. Only by overcoming the otherness of its newly emergent rival can the child reassemble the pieces. And because the subject’s identity will continue to be propped upon external images, its battle-to-the-death with its own mirror image is only the first installment in a life-long war between itself and everything else. This rivalry makes similarity even harder to tolerate than alterity, since the more an external object resembles the subject, the more it undercuts the latter’s claim to be unique and autonomous. Sometimes all that it takes to get the war machine up and running is a whiff of likeness.²

However, the notion that we cannot be ourselves unless we are different from everyone else is relatively new. From Plato until the end of the sixteenth century, resemblance, not difference, was the organizing principle of the universe. As Foucault observes in *The Order of Things*, the “earth echo[ed] the sky, faces [saw] themselves reflected in the stars, and plants [held] within their stems the secrets that were of use to man.”³ Not all of these echoes and reflections were as egalitarian as this passage suggests. Christian analogies subordinate our world to a higher world and institute hierarchical and nonreciprocal relationships within it. They are also divinely authored and bound within the covers of two already-written volumes: the Bible and the Book of Nature. Platonic analogies work in a similar way; the earth is a pale reflection or a degraded copy of the Realm of Ideas. But in Ovid’s *Metamorphoses*, every phenomenal form rhymes with many others. These rhymes also teach us that we should “revere” all creatures and “keep [them] safe,” because everything emerges from the same

“flesh” and has the same ontological weight.⁴ We also relate to *ourselves* analogically. We do not have an “identity” because we are constantly changing, but we also do not break into a million pieces because each of our “shapes” resembles the others. Analogy works differently in *The Metamorphoses* than it does in Christianity and Platonism because Ovid makes room for death. “Nature, ever renewing the world, creates new forms from old ones endlessly,” he writes in Book XV (258).⁵

Analogy has a similar status in Leonardo’s paintings, drawings, and writings, and his analogies differ from Christian and Platonic analogies for the same reason Ovid’s do: because he saw death as an indispensable part of life. Leonardo was fascinated by the aging process and dissected and drew many corpses. He also repeats one of Ovid’s central claims: that everything derives from the same flesh. These correspondences connect us to both ourselves and others, promoting transformation rather than stasis, equality rather than hierarchy, and an “unfinished universality” rather than a closed order.⁶

Descartes’s *Meditations* dramatizes the end of this way of thinking and the emergence of what Heidegger calls “representation.”⁷ The world ceased to be a book that man must learn to read and became a picture constructed by his look. The human subject also stopped tracing the similarities between himself and other beings; he strove to be unique, freestanding, and identical to himself. Descartes tried to reach these goals by retreating to his “stove-heated room,” purging his mind of all thoughts that might have originated elsewhere, and making himself the foundation of his knowledge and being.⁸ But far from consolidating his identity, this experiment atomized it. “But what then am I?” the philosopher asks in a famous passage from the *Meditations*. “A thing which thinks. What is a thing which thinks? It is a thing which doubts, understands, [conceives], affirms, denies, wills, refuses, which also imagines and feels.”⁹ Unnerved by his own heterogeneity, Descartes abandoned his claim to be the origin of his thoughts and restored God to that position.

But there is also another modernity—one that looks back to Ovid and Leonardo, instead of Descartes, and that emphasizes kinship, instead of separation. In 1758 Emanuel Swedenborg published *Heaven and Hell*, a book that offers a modified version of the Great Chain of Being.¹⁰ Swedenborg argues that there are three levels of meaning in the Bible, corresponding to three worlds—one natural, one spiritual, and one celestial—and that many other analogies are contained within these overarching correspondences.¹¹ *Heaven and Hell* was an enormously influential book, which helped to shape Balzac’s account of society in *The Human Comedy*¹² and inspired many other nineteenth-century authors, including Alphonse-Louis Constant, Charles Baudelaire, and Ralph

Waldo Emerson.¹³ As Emerson notes, there are also striking similarities between Swedenborg's correspondences and Fourier's Universal Analogies.¹⁴

Similarity also reappeared in a number of other nineteenth-century venues, including Darwin's evolutionary theory and Walt Whitman's *Leaves of Grass*. Like Ovid's and Leonardo's analogies, Whitman's extend to the farthest reaches of space and time, and connect even the most categorically disparate of things. "A vast similitude interlocks all, / " he exults. "All spheres, grown, ungrown, small, large, suns, moons, planets, / All distances of place however wide, / All distances of time, all inanimate forms, / All souls, all living bodies though they be ever so different, or in different worlds, / All gaseous, watery, vegetable, mineral processes, the fishes, the brutes, / All nations, colors, barbarisms, civilizations, languages, / All identities that have existed or may exist on this globe, or any globe, / All lives and deaths, all of the past, present, future."¹⁵

Darwin also sees analogies everywhere he looks, and his analogies are even closer to those described by Ovid and Leonardo. Not only do they span vast distances in time and space, they also do so through corporeal links. Every being bears a physical resemblance to many others, and all beings derive from the same flesh. "Throughout whole classes various structures are formed on the same pattern, and at an embryonic age the species closely resemble each other," Darwin writes near the end of *The Origin of Species*. "Therefore I cannot doubt that the theory of descent with modification embraces all the members of the same class. . . . Analogy would lead me one step further, namely, to the belief that . . . all the organic beings which have ever lived on this earth have descended from some one primordial form."¹⁶

Fourier, Balzac, and Baudelaire were interested in correspondences because they saw them as the basis for an ideal social order.¹⁷ Several of the other nineteenth-century writers who were attracted to analogies also saw them as a blueprint for, or a vehicle of, social transformation. Although most of the anger that has been directed against Darwin has been motivated by the challenges that his theory of evolution poses to the biblical story of creation, his primary target was slavery¹⁸ rather than Christianity, and when we look at the title of the penultimate chapter in *The Origin of Species*—"Mutual Affinities of Organic Beings"—we can see the political work that analogy is asked to do. Whitman did not support the abolitionist movement, and he swung back and forth between "the antislavery rhetoric of the American Revolution" and the "anti-Negro phobia of his age."¹⁹ However, it would be difficult to imagine a more comprehensive repudiation of social hierarchy and privilege than his inclusion in the totality described above of "all identities that have existed or may exist on this globe, or any globe."

In spite of the fact that it has been discredited by Russian formalism, Saussurean semiotics, structuralism, post-structuralism, and most of the Frankfurt School writers, analogy has also been embraced by an impressive group of later writers and artists. Rainer Maria Rilke, Lou Andreas-Salomé, Aby Warburg, Marcel Proust, Paul Valéry, Wilhelm Jensen, Walter Benjamin, Maurice Merleau-Ponty, James Agee, Roland Barthes, W. G. Sebald, Jean-Luc Godard, Gerhard Richter, James Coleman, and Terrence Malick all privilege similarity above all other relationships. A number of these figures also think of it as a kind of “flesh,” and see this ontological kinship as the starting point for another kind of human relationality. Analogy has lived on in this way because it is the structure of Being, and it gleams with promise because it does indeed have the power to save us.

But I do not mean to suggest that Jacques Lacan is *wrong*. Although we are linked to each other through reversible and ontologically equalizing similarities, these similarities have no social efficacy unless they are acknowledged, and there is something within us that does not want to provide such acknowledgment. As Lacan helps us to see, this resistant force is the desire awakened in us by the impossible-to-satisfy demand that humanism makes upon us: the demand to be an “individual.”²⁰ Since this aspiration cannot be satisfied as long as there are other beings, it turns them into rivals and enemies. It also gives us a dystopic view of our own multiplicity; when we fail to coincide with the mirrors in which we seek to find ourselves, we feel as if we are falling into “bits” and “pieces.”²¹

Finitude is the most capacious and enabling of the attributes we share with others, because unlike the particular way in which each of us looks, thinks, walks, and speaks, that connects us to a few other beings, it connects us to *every* other being. Since finitude marks the point where we end and others begin, spatially and temporally, it is also what makes room for them—and acknowledging these limits allows us to experience the expansiveness for which we yearn, because it gives us a powerful sense of our emplacement within a larger Whole. Unfortunately, though, finitude is the most narcissistically injurious of all of the qualities we share with others, and therefore the one we are most likely to see in them, and deny in ourselves. Our refusal to acknowledge that we are limited beings has devastating and often fatal consequences for others.

Ovid spells all of this out for us in *The Metamorphoses*, through the story of Orpheus and Eurydice. Shortly after her marriage to Orpheus, we read in Book X, Eurydice is bitten by a poisonous snake and dies. Orpheus descends to Hades to plead for her life, but when he arrives, he seems less interested in her than in conquering death. He is so eloquent that the gods of the underworld

allow him to take Eurydice back to earth, provided that he not look at her during their return journey. He walks ahead as they travel, so as to avoid violating this prohibition, but as they approach their destination, he is overwhelmed by the desire to see her and turns around. Eurydice is immediately transported back to Hades, and Orpheus is terrified by her sudden disappearance, which makes death real to him. He attempts to rid himself of his mortality by feminizing it, and since this projection renders women repugnant to him, he transfers his desire to young men. Orpheus also retreats to nature and uses his music to overcome it.²² But Ovid gives this story a redemptive coda. At the beginning of Book XI of *The Metamorphoses*, Orpheus is killed and dismembered by a group of women, who resent his misogyny, and death transforms him. When he arrives in Hades, he sees again what he has seen before, but now he sees it differently. He also looks for Eurydice, and when he finds her, clasps her “tightly in his loving arms” and acknowledges her ontological equality. Sometimes they stroll “side by side” through Hades. At other times she walks ahead and he follows, or he walks ahead and she follows (182–183).

I did not choose this example at random. The first part of the myth has a firm hold on the Western imagination. It was allegorically assimilated by paganism, Christianity, courtly love, Neoplatonism, humanism, romanticism, modernism,²³ and even postmodernism.²⁴ It provides the storyline for the first three operas,²⁵ and many nineteenth-century artists painted scenes from it, including Eugène Delacroix, Camille Corot, Gustave Moreau, and Jean Delville.²⁶ The myth was the launching pad for Jean Cocteau’s *Orphic Trilogy*, two of Balanchine’s ballets, for one of which Isamu Noguchi designed the sets and costumes, and a number of Max Beckmann’s lithographs.²⁷ Although it may seem to have little or nothing to do with our contemporary world, John Ashbery, Muriel Rukeyser, Margaret Atwood, and Adrienne Rich have all written poems about it,²⁸ and it still forms a central—albeit unacknowledged—part of our psychic reality.

As the myth journeyed through time, Eurydice’s second death stopped mattering; what was important about Orpheus’s backward look was the threat it posed to *him*. For Boethius, this threat was spiritual; the musician represented the “higher powers of the soul” and his wife, the “earthbound passions.” For the Christian Ovidians, it was moral; Orpheus was “a type of Christ, overcoming death,” and Eurydice a signifier for the world, the devil, and/or the flesh. When the myth was interpreted in this last way, Eurydice’s death became a “fortunate loss”—something that had to happen in order for Orpheus to succeed in his mission.²⁹ And although many later writers saw Orpheus as the prototypical artist, rather than as a Christ-figure or a virtuous man, they continued to

stress the danger to him of looking at her. Maurice Blanchot presents one of the many variations on this last theme in “The Gaze of Orpheus.” Eurydice is “the profoundly dark point towards which art, desire, death, and the night all seem to lead.”³⁰ Orpheus cannot create without approaching her, but he must do so without looking at her, because if he turns around to face her, his work will be ruined.

Eurydice has also been marginalized in other ways. In an important humanist reworking of the myth, Angelo Poliziano’s *Orfeo*, she dies offstage, while fleeing Aristaeus, an unwanted suitor, and Orpheus turns around to look at her while boasting of his triumph over death. Act 5 begins with his “woeful dirge” for the “great loss” of Eurydice, but after a few sentences he renounces—and then denounces—heterosexuality, urging “the married man . . . to seek divorce, and all to flee the company of women.”³¹ And in many of its retellings, the myth is reduced to the scene in which Orpheus retreats to a *locus amoenus*, and plays music for a nonhuman audience. (This scene is much older than the scenes with Eurydice,³² but its meaning shifted when she was added to the myth, since it was structured thereafter by her absence.) The only part of the coda that is a regular component in later versions of the myth is the one that can be used to sharpen the gender antimony: the scene in which Orpheus is killed and dismembered.³³

Fascinatingly, though, the entire story is present in Leonardo’s work, and he (like Ovid) uses the second half to undo the first. He designed an “Orpheus machine” for a production of Poliziano’s *Orfeo* that allows the encounter between the musician and the gods of the underworld to be staged—but rather than carrying Orpheus down to Hades, it lifts Pluto and Prosperina up into the world.³⁴ Leonardo also levels the opposition between life and death in *The Last Supper*, this time by restaging the scene in which Orpheus is killed and dismembered. The painting portrays Christ’s final meal before his Crucifixion, during which he anticipates his death and invites his disciples to tear his body apart by introducing them to the sacrament.³⁵ *The Last Supper* also references this scene in another way: because the fresco does not adhere tightly to the wall on which it was painted, it has been “decomposing” ever since the artist stopped working on it. And in another important painting, *Virgin and Child with Saint Anne*, Leonardo reprises the most sublime part of Ovid’s story; he links three human figures and a lamb to each other through a series of reversible and democratizing analogies.

Ovid’s coda resurfaced again in the period between the first version of Nietzsche’s *The Gay Science* (1882) and the posthumous publication of Freud’s *Moses and Monotheism* (1939). When it did, it opened the door to some vitally

important questions: What is a woman? What is a man? How do they—and how *should* they—relate to each other? Is our yearning for wholeness merely a remnant of our infantile narcissism or does it refer to something real? If there is a Whole, what is it, and why do we feel so estranged from it? Some surprising and profoundly enabling answers were given to these questions. The second part of Ovid's story also appears in the work of three contemporary artists, who address many of the same issues and raise the stakes even higher: Terrence Malick, James Coleman, and Gerhard Richter.

Although I will have more to say about Leonardo in the penultimate chapter of this book, and Ovid will be a constant point of reference, the first four chapters are primarily devoted to the years between 1882 and 1939, and the last three to the years between 1965 and 2003.³⁶ The earlier of these periods could have been the starting point for a very different history than the one in which we find ourselves, and the works discussed in chapters 5–7 reactivate this unrealized potential. I will therefore be talking not only about *what was* but also about *what might have been and could yet be*.

LIKE THE CENTURY in which Leonardo painted, drew, and wrote, the years between *The Gay Science* and *Moses and Monotheism* were a time of waning belief in the Christian narrative, and as its sun set, Western man felt the chill of the approaching night. One of the most famous representatives of this new secularism—Nietzsche—tried to overcome his finitude through will, but the only way he could accomplish this was by affirming what he wanted to transcend. The other—Freud—attempted to reconcile himself to his limits through reason, but he also could not stop wishing for *more*. However, reason was not the psychoanalyst's first, or even last, line of defense. Before mobilizing this mental faculty, he did what Orpheus did: he put a female surrogate in his place. Like Orpheus, he also concealed this crime behind a different account of gender—one based on corporeal variation instead of finitude, and castration instead of murder.

Freud wrote "Some Psychical Consequences of the Anatomical Distinction between the Sexes," "Female Sexuality," and "Femininity" after undergoing several operations for cancer of the jaw, including one that removed his right upper jaw and palate, seriously impaired his speech and hearing, and left him extraordinarily dependent on his daughter, Anna.³⁷ In these essays he attributes a "small" and "inferior" organ to the mother and the daughter, adduces this "mutilation" as proof of a more general lack, and uses this lack to separate them from each other and provide himself with a limitless supply of love.³⁸ In his last book, *Moses and Monotheism*, Freud returns to the "just so" story he recounts in *Totem*

and *Taboo*,³⁹ and uses it to disguise the myth he has been restaging. It is not the mother who dies and is dismembered, he loudly proclaims; it is the father. And it is not Orpheus who commits this crime. It is Oedipus. We are still living in the shadow of this narrative, with its hidden knife and clitoral “wound.”

Lou Andreas-Salomé responded differently when she was touched by the angel of death. An early encounter with mortality gave her “*the profound feeling of a deeply shared destiny with all things*,” and—because of this—an “indwelling reverence” for everything “that ‘is.’”⁴⁰ Salomé believed that most people are unable to experience this feeling because they have repudiated one of their “partners” and that the goal of analysis should be to reawaken this affect in those who have lost it. She organized her therapeutic practice accordingly. Instead of focusing on her patients’ Oedipal problems, she helped them turn around and claim the one they had left behind—and she did this by occupying the symbolic position of Eurydice.⁴¹ In her memoir, she also turns around to claim the mother *she* had left behind.⁴²

Salomé corresponded with Ovid’s coda in other ways as well. The title of her memoir is *Looking Back*, and retro-vision has a privileged status in her *Freud Journal*, her exchanges with Rilke, and her homage to Freud. She attributes a redemptive power to this kind of looking—the capacity to make the past happen again, in a new way. She also suggests that transformations in a person’s private past can precipitate changes in the historical past. When we turn around and embrace the “partner” we have repudiated, Salomé writes in her *Freud Journal*, “*all the vanished people of the past arise anew*” (193; my emphasis).

Rilke spent many years trying to isolate himself and his poetry from the world because he wanted to be autonomous and because he was terrified of dying. As he notes in a 1912 letter, these were two sides of the same thing: his finitude.⁴³ Eventually, though, he also came to believe that he was part of a larger Whole. “Though we are unaware of our true status, /” he writes in the *Sonnets to Orpheus*, “our actions stem from pure relationship. / Far away, antennas hear antennas / and the empty distances transmit.”⁴⁴ Finitude was the door that opened onto this expanded universe, and the second half of Ovid’s story was the key that unlocked it.

Rilke devoted three poems and a sonnet sequence to the myth of Orpheus and Eurydice, and he used it to work through his relationships with his dead sister and the mother he had cast away. In the first two poems, “Orpheus. Eurydice. Hermes” and *Requiem for a Friend*, he is unable to get past the first half of Ovid’s story, but in the *Sonnets to Orpheus* he finally descends to Hades and takes his sister’s hand. “*Death is the side of life averted from us, unshone upon by us*,” he wrote thereafter. “We must try to achieve the greatest consciousness

of our existence which is at home in *both unbounded realms, inexhaustibly nourished from both*. . . . The true figure of life extends through *both* spheres."⁴⁵

Rilke thought of this totality as a vast, unauthored book, written in the language of analogy.⁴⁶ His task as a poet was to transcribe what his experiences "dictated" to him⁴⁷ so that others could read it and discover that their lives were part of the same volume. In a 1914 letter, Rilke talks about how wonderful it would be to participate in a group reading of Proust's novel, *Swann's Way*, spread out over many evenings, because it would connect the author to the reader, and every reader to every other—not *in spite of* the particularities of their lives but rather *through* them.⁴⁸ The same is true of his own writing, Rilke suggests in a 1925 letter; the completion of the *Duino Elegies* after almost a decade of creative paralysis was "more than just a private event," because all of those "who *for one reason or another* believe themselves cleft apart might draw from this *example of possible continuation a singular comfort*" (my emphasis).⁴⁹

Since so much of the story recounted in *Swann's Way* is Oedipal in nature, it's not hard to imagine a group of readers interacting with it in the way Rilke describes. However, the poet's life is representative not because he desires his mother but because he wants to get rid of her, and because by repudiating her he has lost his capacity to love. Women have a "diploma" in this affect, Rilke argues in a 1912 letter, but all that men have ever done is mouth meaningless phrases. Over the centuries, the male subject has become increasingly a-relational, and now a "man of the 'new grain'" has emerged, whose defining attribute is solitude. Since it is neither psychically nor ontologically possible for any of us to be alone, this man is "going to pieces." When this "salutary" process of decomposition is complete, he will finally start learning how to love, and at some point in the future we will witness something that we have not yet seen: the heterosexual couple.⁵⁰

Like Rilke, Nietzsche, Rodin, Cézanne, and Proust are all striking examples of this "man of the 'new grain,'" and the a-relational male subject also occupies an important place in Paul Valéry's writings. Nietzsche, Rodin, and Proust share Rilke's preoccupation with corporeal disintegration, as well. Zarathustra tells his disciples that mankind is "in ruins and scattered about as if on a battle field or a butcher field."⁵¹ One of the most basic principles of Rodin's work is the "repetition and exploitation of fragments, constantly metamorphosed and renewed in context and meaning,"⁵² and in the opening section of *Swann's Way*, a solitary male subject offers a detailed description of the numerous "pieces" into which his ego falls whenever he enters the indeterminate zone between sleeping and waking.⁵³ Like Rilke, Proust seems to find this decomposition

“salutary,” because he treats it as the prelude to an almost unimaginably capacious relationality. In an important passage early in *Swann’s Way*, Marcel describes the process of coming to consciousness as a vertiginous journey not just through his own memories but also through a much larger past (5).

Rilke was in such an acute crisis when he produced this diagnosis of the masculine condition that he had been thinking of seeing a psychoanalyst. But since so many of his contemporaries were afflicted by the same malady, he opted for a different kind of treatment; he decided to conduct his analysis out in the open, through his poetry, so that others could participate in it.⁵⁴ His “self-treatment” was based on the same myth as Salomé’s psychoanalysis—and we can see why he imputes a curative value to it. Ovid’s version of the story can be mapped with uncanny precision onto the history that Rilke recounts in his 1912 letter about masculinity. Orpheus’s repudiation of Eurydice dramatizes man’s inability to love women; his retreat to a remote location symbolizes the latter’s increasing solitude; the dismemberment of his body signifies the salutary disintegration of the male ego; and his descent to Hades and reunion with Eurydice stands for the arrival of the heterosexual couple.

The first part of Ovid’s story also appears in the works of Proust, Valéry, Nietzsche, and Rodin. The narrator of Proust’s *In Search of Lost Time* uses it to punish his grandmother for continuing to exist when he is not present; Valéry wrote three poems about the scene in which Orpheus isolates himself from human companionship;⁵⁵ and Nietzsche’s *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* is an extended dramatization of the same scene. Rodin returned to the myth repeatedly, producing plaster, marble, and/or bronze versions of Orpheus and Eurydice leaving Hades, of Orpheus immediately after losing Eurydice, and of Orpheus being killed by the Ciconian women. A bronze rendition of the second motif echoes a plaster version of the first, in which Eurydice hovers above Orpheus’s lyre. It includes the lyre and her severed hand, testifying to the violence of her removal.⁵⁶ Dorothy M. Kosinski sees this statue as a self-portrait—as “a symbolic embodiment of Rodin and his creative mission” (162).

And Rilke was not the only “man of the ‘new grain’” who drew on Ovid’s coda. Rodin often combined the best parts of one model with the best parts of another, regardless of gender. Proust looks at the past in a way that reanimates it, relying for this purpose on the “miracle of an analogy.”⁵⁷ The coda also appears in the work of two of Rilke’s other contemporaries. It figures prominently in Jensen’s *Gradiva* and in Freud’s interpretation of the novella, and the psychoanalyst continued to correspond with it structurally even after elaborating his theory of sexual difference. His therapeutic practice is based on the act of turning around to look at the past and the belief that this can make the past

happen again, in a new way—and although Freud refers to analogy as a “false connection,”⁵⁸ he cannot proceed without it.

Martin Heidegger and Walter Benjamin also attribute a redemptive power to the act of turning around, and they echo Ovid’s argument in other ways as well. The Heideggerian “turn” is a turn toward finitude, and in one of the philosopher’s most moving descriptions of this act, he quotes extensively from the *Sonnets to Orpheus* and Rilke’s late letters.⁵⁹ The Benjaminian “turn” is also a turn toward analogy.⁶⁰ The present is connected to the past through unauthored correspondences, the philosopher argues in *The Arcades Project* and “On The Concept of History.”⁶¹ These correspondences are revealed to us at moments of danger through objects that are “blasted” out of the “continuum of historical succession” and journey toward us.⁶² They are warnings rather than declarations; they show us not who we are, or who we will be, but rather who we are in the process of becoming.⁶³ They are issued by our predecessors, who want to prevent us from reenacting their mistakes. If we are able to see the parallels between what they did and what we are on the verge of doing, we will not only prevent a new catastrophe from occurring but also change the “character” of the past.⁶⁴

Heidegger and Benjamin help us to see that the story of Orpheus and Eurydice is not just about hetero-relationality; it is about relationality *tout court*. Heidegger also deepens our understanding of finitude, gives us a more complex account of Being, and teaches us to think ontologically about affect. Benjamin shows us that retroactivity is a historical as well as a psychic possibility and that we are therefore dependent upon and answerable to not just our contemporaries but our predecessors and successors as well. However, because neither philosopher makes room for Eurydice, each falters at a crucial point in his argument. Heidegger’s description of the “turn” remains strangely nebulous, and he shifts more and more of the responsibility for performing it onto Being. Benjamin is unable to explain why we are so reluctant to acknowledge the similarities that connect us to our predecessors, how we turn away, or what it would mean to turn back, “awaken the dead, and make whole what has been smashed.”⁶⁵

THE FIRST FOUR CHAPTERS of this book are almost as tightly interwoven as the lives of the figures I discuss in them. The second half of the book is more heterogeneous. Chapter 5 is devoted to Malick’s 1998 film, *The Thin Red Line*, Chapter 6 to Coleman’s “intervention” in the Louvre’s 2003 exhibition of Leonardo’s drawings and manuscripts, and Chapter 7 to the constellation of paintings and photographs through which Richter responded to an urgent historical summons. However, these works also have many things in common. They are all shadowed by war: *The Thin Red Line* by World War II, Coleman’s intervention

in the Leonardo exhibition by the Iraq War, and Richter's paintings and photographic practice by Auschwitz and the "war on terrorism." They also show this violence to be the inevitable result of our refusal to think analogically, characterize finitude as the most capacious and enabling of all analogies, use the first part of the Orpheus and Eurydice story to dramatize the fateful moment when the subject repudiates the first of its "partners," and reverse this deadly act by restaging Ovid's coda. All three artists also correspond with *The Metamorphoses* in another way: they show that we are all flesh of the same flesh, and they arrive at this ontological understanding of kinship through a literal instantiation of the same principle. Finally, each is in passionate dialogue with several of his predecessors—Malick with Salomé, Heidegger, and Rolland; Coleman with Leonardo and Valéry; and Richter with Freud and Benjamin.

In *The Thin Red Line*, Malick explores and ultimately dispenses with a number of the fictions through which we attempt to shield ourselves from our mortality. Although this exploration takes place during the Battle of Guadalcanal, and includes several scenes in which a character tries to "outsource" death, it is primarily focused on fantasies of wholeness. Malick disabuses the captain (Staros) who prays for divine guidance of the notion that God is his copilot, and shows the private (Witt) who goes AWOL on a Melanesian island that it is not the earthly paradise he imagines it to be. He also weans the soldier (Bell) who seeks refuge in memories of his wife away from the fantasy that their love will overcome all obstacles and outlast death. Instead of dismissing these fantasies as simple illusions, however, Malick treats them as misrecognitions of another kind of totality, whose basis is finitude.

This totality is what Heidegger calls "beings as a whole,"⁸⁶ and there are also many other traces of the philosopher's thought in *The Thin Red Line*. But although the film is close to Heidegger's thought in certain respects, it is distant in others. It privileges wonder rather than anxiety, and women figure prominently both in its narrative and in its phenomenology. Early in the film, Witt talks about his mother's tranquillity at the moment of her death, acknowledges his reluctance to "touch" the mortality he saw "in" her, and expresses the hope that he will be able to meet death in the same way. After trying several times to localize "wholeness" in the Melanesian Islands, he eventually comes to see that it defies localization, because all beings are "features of the same face." As he waits for the Japanese soldiers to shoot him at the end of the film, he experiences the same affects that his mother experienced during the last days of her life—affects that are shown to be enworlding. And although Bell's marriage does not even survive the war, let alone death, Malick nevertheless affirms the soldier's love for his wife in one of the most extraordinary sequences in the film.

James Coleman's "intervention" in the Louvre's 2003 exhibition of Leonardo's work also gave the mother pride of place. In addition to a large number of manuscripts and drawings, the exhibition included the painting that led Freud to conclude that Leonardo, unlike the "normal" male subject, never turned away from his mother: *Virgin and Child with Saint Anne*.⁶⁷ Coleman corresponded with this painting by doing what it does: linking things to each other through their similarities. His intervention had six components—four sets of video editing monitors, a large-screen projection of a series of digital images of *The Last Supper*, and a wall text. The editing monitors displayed digital versions of some Leonardo works that were not included in the show, and these images related to the works they reprised and to the rest of the exhibition through a complex series of analogies. One of these works was Leonardo's design for an Orpheus machine, and several of the others referred to the same myth.

Coleman corresponded with another of Leonardo's paintings through his large-screen projection *The Last Supper*. Each image of this famous—and famously deteriorating—fresco remained on the screen for about a minute and then yielded to another. Since some of these images displayed the whole painting and others only a section or a small detail, it was impossible to say what one was seeing. Coleman used these digital metamorphoses to show that change is internal to the fresco's being, and not an external corruption of its original "essence." He also built decay and expiration into his *own* images, by destroying them when the exhibition ended and by using them to absolutize the concepts of absence and presence. And because his intervention was an "ephemeral memorial"⁶⁸ to Leonardo's work, instead of a lasting monument, it could not be added to the paternal legacy.

Analogy has been the basis of Richter's work ever since he painted his first photo pictures. He has used it to connect photography to painting, figuration to abstraction, art to the world, the past to the present, and what is knowable to what is unknowable. It is closely linked in his mind to photography, both because he regards photography as an analogical medium, and because he sees it as the primary agency through which the past communicates with the present. In the mid-sixties, a group of concentration camp photographs burst out of the continuum of time and landed on Richter's doorstep. They made a demand on him that he couldn't meet: they asked him to acknowledge his kinship both with the emaciated prisoners and with those responsible for their suffering. Richter was unable either to paint these photographs or to ignore them, so he processed them in various ways and put them in the *Atlas*. He also attempted to silence their call through a false analogy: he paired six of them with some pornographic photographs.

Twenty years later, another group of photographs sought Richter out—those documenting the imprisonment and deaths of three German terrorists: Ulrike Meinhof, Gudrun Ensslin, and Andreas Baader. They made a similar demand on him—and he met that demand by painting *October 18, 1977*. Richter was able to respond to this second solicitation because of some striking formal analogies that permitted him first to extend the category of “kin” from his daughter to Meinhof and Ensslin, then to acknowledge the analogies linking *him* to the terrorists and the police, and—finally—to recognize aspects of himself both in the concentration camp inmates and in their captors. He made these acknowledgments publicly, through a series of photographic self-portraits. Since then, this constellation of photographs and paintings has expanded to include Richter’s great abstract triptych, *January, December, and November*; several more self-portraits; and a date etched in black in our own memories: September 11, 2001. Although this last analogy cannot be rationally explained, it is no more mysterious than the others. All of our stories really are part of the same great volume: the Book of Life. And unlike the *logos*, the words in this book do not have to become flesh in order to save us. They *are* flesh.