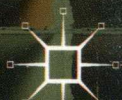


Afterlife and Narrative in Contemporary Fiction

Alice Bennett

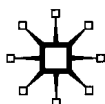


Afterlife and Narrative in Contemporary Fiction

Alice Bennett



palgrave
macmillan



© Alice Bennett 2012

All rights reserved. No reproduction, copy or transmission of this publication may be made without written permission.

No portion of this publication may be reproduced, copied or transmitted save with written permission or in accordance with the provisions of the Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1988, or under the terms of any licence permitting limited copying issued by the Copyright Licensing Agency, Saffron House, 6–10 Kirby Street, London EC1N 8TS.

Any person who does any unauthorized act in relation to this publication may be liable to criminal prosecution and civil claims for damages.

The author has asserted her right to be identified as the author of this work in accordance with the Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1988.

First published 2012 by
PALGRAVE MACMILLAN

Palgrave Macmillan in the UK is an imprint of Macmillan Publishers Limited, registered in England, company number 785998, of Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire RG21 6XS.

Palgrave Macmillan in the US is a division of St Martin's Press LLC, 175 Fifth Avenue, New York, NY 10010.

Palgrave Macmillan is the global academic imprint of the above companies and has companies and representatives throughout the world.

Palgrave® and Macmillan® are registered trademarks in the United States, the United Kingdom, Europe and other countries.

ISBN 978-0-230-36424-0

This book is printed on paper suitable for recycling and made from fully managed and sustained forest sources. Logging, pulping and manufacturing processes are expected to conform to the environmental regulations of the country of origin.

A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library.

A catalog record for this book is available from the Library of Congress.

10	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1
21	20	19	18	17	16	15	14	13	12

Printed and bound in Great Britain by
CPI Antony Rowe, Chippenham and Eastbourne

Afterlife and Narrative in Contemporary Fiction

Acknowledgements

Quotations from Alice Notley's 'Close to Me and Closer . . . (the Language of Heaven)' from *Close to Me and Closer . . . (The Language of Heaven) and Desamere* (1995) are reprinted with permission of the author, and of Litmus Press.

A shorter version of Chapter 4 appeared as 'Anticipated Returns: Purgatory, Exchange and Narrative After Life' in the *Oxford Literary Review* 31.1 (July 2009). Chapter 5 appeared in a different version as 'Unquiet Spirits: Death Writing in Contemporary Fiction' *Textual Practice* 23.3 (June 2009).

Contents

<i>Acknowledgements</i>	vi
1 Afterlife Now	1
2 Dead Endings: Making Meaning from the Afterlife	22
3 Killing Time: Narrating Eternity	47
4 After Effects: Purgatory, Prolepsis and the Past Tense	72
5 Plotting Murder: Genre, Plot and the Dead Narrator	98
6 Ghostwords: Mind-Reading and the Dead Narrator	117
7 Death Writing: Person and the Dead Narrator	148
8 Here, There and Hereafter: Fictional Afterlife Worlds	167
9 After Life Writing	192
<i>Appendix: Chronology of Primary Texts</i>	199
<i>Notes</i>	204
<i>Bibliography</i>	214
<i>Index</i>	223

1

Afterlife Now

Only poetry can hold the . . . depths . . . of heaven . . .
in one still place. The only way on earth . . . we might
say what we know . . . in the all-at-once way . . . that
we know it.

‘Close to me and Closer . . . (The Language of Heaven)’

Life after death is a fiction. It imagines a world other than our own: a dream or a nightmare, taking place in unmappable landscapes peopled by unfamiliar beings. It is an object of speculation and imagination, but also a product of half-recollected experience, unreliable testimony and retold stories. Fiction is also a kind of life after death and, in contemporary culture, the afterlife finds its most pervasive and diverse manifestations in the forms of narrative fiction.

In secular, western cultures today, with belief in some form of an afterlife by no means standard,¹ literary engagement with life after death has entered a new and abundant phase. Simultaneously, a movement towards less prescriptive theological positions on certain aspects of the afterlife has relegated some of the more specific architecture of heaven and hell to the level of human fictions,² thereby opening up a field for thinking abstract concepts in the human terms of narrative fiction. Fictional engagement with the afterlife has, historically, combined elements from different religious and folk traditions, as well as addressing the immediate cultural and social concerns of the living. Afterlives accumulate new details depending on present concerns, and their form and function changes with the times. The things that the times currently demand from our afterlives are things that narrative fiction best supplies. After the afterlife has stopped being an item of faith for

many, the logic, architecture, and, most of all, the narrative strategies associated with various aspects of life after death have been retained and repurposed by narrative fictions. Life after death has become an arena for exploration of fictional processes and formal conventions.

The retention of some of the conceptual and structural parts of the afterlife in the context of consciously fictive narratives suggests a convergence of concerns about telling stories and imagining life after death. Writing about the afterlife invokes debates about the processes of writing about life and shifts their grounds to a new location that is never of this world, but is both uncannily and comfortingly familiar. However, the inheritance that contemporary fictional afterlives are interrogating is as much a part of a literary tradition of writing about this world as of a religious and philosophical tradition of writing about the other world. In an important sense, modern narratives are writing afterlife by situating themselves after writing about life.

Why should narrative fiction, then, and particularly the novel and its realist and post-realist legacy, be so well suited to talking about these profoundly un-lifelike ideas? What are the capacities and conventions of narrative fiction that make an investigation of the afterlife so readily an investigation of these features as well? This book's central claim is that contemporary narrative fiction has found itself with a strange and unexpected affinity for the afterlife. In some ways, thinking about the afterlife has always had a narrative strand that attempts to convert something unthinkable into terms that can be conceptualised. Storytelling is one way in which these unthinkable concepts can be explored. However, there are also strands of narrative – and the conventions of the novel most particularly – that resonate with the unnatural and un-lifelike aspects of the afterlife, and it is these which are also exposed in modern fictions of life after death.

After the Death of Alice Bennett

Fiction's and the afterlife's uncanny qualities came together for me in a children's book which was published while I was researching this project. Entitled *After the Death of Alice Bennett* (2007), the novel's coincidences were hyperbolically stranger than fiction. The book, by Rowland Molony, is about a boy who believes he is receiving text messages from beyond the grave, after the death of his mother. So, what did I discover while reading 'after' my own death? Firstly, that the afterlife continues to have an emotional urgency and cultural resonance, which is shaped by tradition, but has been transformed by the qualities of

modern experience. This leads into the first activity performed in this book – and mainly in this chapter, and in the chronology of primary texts in the appendix – of identifying and describing common features of afterlives in modern fiction, and suggesting a genealogy for them in the history of afterlife thought. My experience of reading my own death is, apparently, not all that uncommon, as contemporary existence can be characterised by its post-consciousness – its consciousness of its status as after. Every reminder of post-modernity, of the post-historical, the post-human (and so on, eternally) is a reminder of the presence, already, now, of our own afterlives. This is more than a *memento mori*: many of the established conceptual frameworks we use rely on us thinking of ourselves as already dead, yet still living.

The bulk of this book is devoted to exploring these conceptual frameworks in the forms of experimental narrative fiction, looking at the way narrative techniques and conventions are shown to embed ideas about the afterlife in fiction. The chapters proceed according to narrative techniques, but these are also explorations of particular issues in the traditions of life after death, and of contemporary interests in the afterlife. The first of these functions begins in this introduction, and requires an explanation of how contemporary representations of the afterlife should be situated in the context of current thought about life after death, as well as how they emerge out of a tradition of writing about the afterlife. The field here is huge, so my intention is to trace a small number of significant and representative features to, firstly, offer a necessarily brief contextual framework for some of the theological issues that bear on the subject matter, and, secondly, to give a sense of some of the literary context for the texts considered.

Last things

Life and death are an oppositional binary that begins to multiply to form a set of complex systems with the addition of the afterlife. In the same way, within traditional Catholic eschatology, the four last things of death, judgement, heaven and hell form an apparently solid foundational matrix for thinking about life and afterlife. However, this four-square explanatory structure has been disturbed from its origins, as the addition of heaven, hell and judgement to death ought to undermine the finality and significance of death. How can it be a last thing if there is so much after it? Similarly, the fraught temporal gap between death and judgement – the judgement that occurs immediately post-mortem and at the end of all time – marks off different theological

positions and, again, adds more time after these 'last things'. Beliefs that explicitly continue life and time after the death of the individual include both purgatory and reincarnation. Both of these present their own particular attractions to modern fictional afterlives.

There are three areas that represent the major threads I want to trace through the history of the afterlife in this introductory tour through heavens and hells: the distinction between communal and individual experiences; the place of embodiment and physical experience of the afterlife (as opposed to the psychological, subjective or soul-experiences); and, finally, the relationship between people in this world and the other world, which, in the case of medieval Christianity, was so complicated by the addition of purgatory.

The place of the individual in these creation-scale systems is reflected in microcosms of small groups and forced communities, often involving some shared institution with rules and an ordering logic. The story of different models for communities in the afterlife begins as early as Zoroastrian ideas of life after death, in an underworld in which people were enclosed within single cells or boxes. Alice K. Turner describes, in *The History of Hell* (1993), how this was recorded in a descent narrative of the ninth century (18). She connects these boxes to the tradition in Byzantine art for depicting people in isolation in hell, with barriers separating them. In contrast, she argues, 'chaotic and crowded' piles of naked bodies consistently characterise western depictions of the damned. Turner describes hell as 'oddly fleshy, with tortures that hurt and an atmosphere that is, particularly during some of Hell's history, excessively gross' (3). Her story of the evolution of hell tends to make heavens sound rather dull by comparison, with the riotous depictions of hell offering titillating pleasure in graphic renderings of sin and punishment but, at the same time, casting their audience in the role of the saved in heaven, enjoying the pleasure the saved were said to derive from watching the torments of the damned.³ This has some very serious consequences for any modern representation of afterlives, when our best ambitions for ourselves as human beings are codified as universal human rights. When there are hells in contemporary literature, the reader is cast into a position of disapproval, outside both heaven and hell, rather than taking pleasure in suffering from the satisfied position of one of the saved. The conflict between human rights and the afterlife (even heaven, which denies us our human right to marriage and family life, not to mention the right to freedom of conscience and religious practice) summarises the essential conflict that runs through the hope for the afterlife and our hopes for

ourselves as human beings: is heaven defined by being something alien to human values, or the sum of the best of human values?

Hells can be imagined in these two conflicting ways too, with supernatural horrors or a revelation of the worst of humanity left to our own devices. In the second category, the two aspects of hell mentioned above – the fleshy hells that developed into the seventeenth century's Baroque 'Jesuit overcrowding' (Turner, 1993: 173) and the Dantesque meticulous ordering and accounting for souls, with each sinner filed tidily within their appropriate circle – represent the poles of the worst possible outcomes for living in the world, and within a human social order. There are few hells that see the damned neither crowded out by the presence of other people's bodies nor oppressed by the equivalent of state powers, either as in a horrifically overpopulated earthly city (hell always lacks a proper sewage system) or catalogued and controlled by an oppressive power with the intention of causing maximum suffering to each individual. Both poles are ultimately united in contemporary fiction in images of the city, the school, the hospital, the (refugee or displaced persons) camp, and, most overwhelmingly in the twentieth century, the concentration camp and the hotel.

Increasing urbanisation added a new layer to depictions of overcrowded hells, but some of the benefits of urbanisation and urban institutions were also translated into ideas about heaven. The imagery of feudal relationships and jewelled castles in the Middle-English *Pearl* poem were, by the nineteenth century, transformed into urban streetscapes. For instance, the New York City preacher Thomas DeWitt Talmage described heaven in 1892 as a 'great metropolis' with 'boulevards of gold and amber and sapphire' (qtd. in McDannell and Lang, 1988: 279). In a time of urban expansion and, more importantly, town planning and brand new cityscapes, is it any wonder that hopes for the afterlife were tied up with the hopes invested and embodied in modern cities? The bestseller in mid-century America was Elizabeth Stuart Phelps's *The Gates Ajar* (1868)⁴ which appealed to the nineteenth century's interests in death, spiritualism, and family life, as well as to a specifically post-Civil War concern for the fate of dead loved ones. The heaven described in *The Gates Ajar* and actually visited in Phelps's sequel, *Beyond the Gates* (1883), was largely pastoral, with the dead living in woodland cottages housing family groups and complete with pets, pianos, and audiences with famous figures from history. Coleen McDannell and Bernard Lang, in *Heaven: A History* (1988), conclude their analysis of this moment of Victorian religious feeling with the observation that, 'It was the home,

and not the church, which writers described as the 'antitype' of heaven' (272). Even the Victorian home is a house of many mansions, built for an extended family even more extended by resurrection.

McDannell and Lang also offer some analysis of the systems in place in these heavens for souls whose needs were not met within the home, and had to be institutionalised. They give multiple examples of both preaching and religious novels that posit the idea of children being educated in heaven, and suggest that the efforts in favour of free schooling for all children were responsible for similar concerns in heaven (268). Phelps, for instance, describes how many of the souls in heaven 'seemed to be students, thronging what we should call below colleges, seminaries or schools of art, or music or sciences' (195). McDannell and Lang also cite descriptions from preaching that included prisons, sanitariums and hospitals, presumably reflecting similar nineteenth-century interests in public health, healthcare institutions, and the model of sin as disease. We can draw a direct line (in this example and many others) from Phelps to today's bestseller of the afterlife, Alice Sebold's *The Lovely Bones* (2002), whose dead narrator is spending eternity in the playground of a perfect high school, and who recovers from the trauma of her murder through talking therapy and something approaching a support group.

Of all the possible institutions of the afterlife, the concentration camp has been most often approached as an avatar of the inferno,⁵ but the hotel is an equally common contemporary trope that has received far less critical attention. The hotel has been a particularly potent and multivalent symbol because of its potential to represent any aspect of the afterlife: its temporary nature becomes a symbol of purgatory, or the *bardo* between reincarnations; its (literally) *unheimlich* qualities are exploited to full effect in the original hotel hell, Sartre's *No Exit* (1946), while, in Wyndham Lewis's *Monstre Gai* (1955) the fulfilment of all desires in the form of a perfect hotel – the angelically named Phanuel Hotel – becomes a model for one kind of heaven. The hotel continues to be a common image in more recent afterlives like Ali Smith's *Hotel World* (2001), D.M. Thomas's *The White Hotel* (1981) or Julian Barnes's *A History of the World in 10½ Chapters* (1989).

In an essay on Lewis's *The Human Age* (an uncompleted tetralogy, of which *Monstre Gai* is the second book) entitled 'Visions of Hell' (1966), J.G. Ballard describes how these institutional hells were completely altered by the events of the Second World War. Ballard's mid-century perception of the hotel and the death camp – both of which appear in the post-war books of Lewis's work, *Monstre Gai* and *Malin Fiesta* – favours

a change in this sense of the institutional afterlife, once post-war consciousness had adapted to fully comprehend the implications of recent history:

A valid hell is one from which there is a possibility of redemption, even if this is never reached, the dungeons of an architecture of grace whose spires point to some kind of heaven. The institutional hells of the present century are reached with one-way tickets, marked Nagasaki and Buchenwald, worlds of terminal horror even more final than the grave. (140)

In Ballard's reading, a hell in which the inferno rages for all without judgement is the end of the line for hell: the concept becomes invalid when there is nothing to imagine beyond indiscriminate torture. There is no ticket out of these hells, not because of eternity, but because there is no equivalent heaven. These horrifically real hells involve organisation and efficiency without the logic which was always coupled to these measures in the hells that follow Dante. George Steiner, in *In Bluebeard's Castle* (1971), actually suggests that hell's dematerialisation into metaphor was *responsible* for the death camps, that the 'ambiguous afterlife of religious feeling in Western culture' was to blame: 'To have neither Heaven nor Hell is to be intolerably deprived and alone in a world gone flat. Of the two, Hell proved the easier to recreate' (48). Fictional afterlives then appear as a kind of inoculation against this possibility. In order to live, daily, imagining there's no heaven, it may be that we need to imagine and recreate other possibilities for the afterlife in fiction to prevent them materialising on earth.

In 'Visions of Hell', Ballard assesses the particular architecture of Lewis's work in terms of the organisational structures of consumer culture and totalitarian violence: the spaces are 'layered like a department store, the presiding bureaucracy of demons and supernal gauleiters would satisfy the most narrow-minded fundamentalist' (140). Modernity's golden boulevards have their equivalent in the layers of an infernal department store, which skilfully combines imagery of the perambulatory tour of hell and the layered complex of organised and categorised spaces that makes up the afterlife.

This inescapably bleak view of a world in which human beings have surpassed our own previously imagined depictions of the utmost evil is worth reading in the context of Gnostic theology, which ultimately conflates earth with hell. The concept of an impersonal God, and one who has no involvement in or responsibility for the evils of the world,

is obviously an attractive one for moderns trying to reconcile the existence of a loving deity with the historical reality of genocide or the atomic bomb. Turner describes the Gnostic view of hell as 'curiously modern' in its lack of egregious violence and 'lurid imaginings' (48), and the theological basis seems to me just as modern as this failure of imagination after the 'terminal horror' of Hiroshima or the Holocaust. For similar reasons, a painting like Hieronymus Bosch's *The Garden of Earthly Delights* also has this same 'curiously modern' edge. One way of coping with the contemporary prospect of a hell, post-terminal horror, is combining the senseless suffering of mass death and the accretion of an almost unbearable level of meaning. In the example of Bosch, the minute semiotics of hell's conventions are grossly inflated to the point of complete meaninglessness: there is every possibility that a bird-headed depiction of Satan with a cauldron for a hat and pots for shoes would have a very specific significance in afterlife-logic, but the combination of this potential meaning (just out of reach of decoding) and the surface arbitrariness forms a very modern sensibility about the afterlife, despite the painting's origins in the sixteenth century.⁶

Ballard's argument is, essentially, for a move from the details, mechanics and maps of the afterlife to a model for heaven or hell which – as with Ballard's championing of science fiction's 'inner-space' – comes from inside the individual. There has been a change from the institutionalised hell to the hell imagined as internal: 'Hell is out of fashion – institutional hells at any rate. The populated infernos of the twentieth century are private affairs, the gaps between the bars are the sutures of one's own skull' (140). We probably only need to go back to Marlowe's *Dr Faustus* or the experiences of Milton's Satan to suggest that this is not a revolution unique to twentieth-century thought, and this is a thread that surfaces from out of institutionally organised afterlives over and over again. After hell, for instance, became filled with the torments of simply being human in the presence of other human beings (overcrowding, waste, decay: all the messy business of embodiment), rather than supernatural monsters or devils actively torturing the damned, then the next step in an afterlife characterised by the possibilities for man's inhumanity to man in the absence of God would be a turn to the possibilities for self-torture. This is matched by the neat possibility of virtue being its own reward in heaven. Ballard goes on to advance the position that 'the hells that face us now' (the piece was originally published in 1966) do not take on the mechanics of the bureaucracy of punishment through an institution, but deal with 'the very dimensions of time and space, the phenomenology of the universe, the fact of our own consciousness' (144). These are always the

issues at stake in narrating the other world as it is manifested in other places and other laws of time and space.

Both the internal, subjective sense of an afterlife that is determined only by the state of the individual, and the idea of the Gnostic hell on earth conform to another strand in the history of the afterlife, which can be described as an oscillation between the most explicit and the most cryptic or abstract senses of life after death. McDannell and Lang call these poles the anthropocentric and the theocentric forms of the afterlife, making use of 'convenient theological jargon' on the subject (353). Since the belief in an anthropocentric afterlife does not necessarily denote an absence of God (although there are some influences from Buddhism and other non-theist beliefs) it is important to define McDannell and Lang's terms further: they suggest that anthropocentric heavens stem from ancient ancestor worship and the natural desire to undo the personal losses of death, while theocentric heavens emphasise the supernatural status of heaven by removing the emotional awareness of loss, thereby directing every sense towards the presence of God. *Heaven: A History* describes itself as a work on the 'social and cultural history of heaven' (xii), which leads its authors to a natural emphasis on the interpersonal relations in the afterlife: the community of saints; the models of medieval courtly love, which imagined a heavenly court based on values of romantic love; the Renaissance rediscovery of the Ciceronian reunion motif and the classical descent narrative, prompting meetings with dead friends and famous people in literary imaginings of the afterlife; and the Victorians' heaven of home and the family group (355–6). Conversely, the history of the theocentric heaven is traced from the teachings of early Christians, as McDannell and Lang argue that Jesus, St Paul and St John of Patmos remodelled the heaven taught by the Pharisees according to two basic ideas: 'the priority of orientation toward God with direct experience of the divine, and the rejection of ordinary society structured by kinship, marriage and concomitant family concerns' (44). For me, the story of the afterlife told here is one of its contested ownership between, loosely, mass culture and the theologians. There is compelling drama in this conflict between the investment of the best hopes of human beings in the sum total of human and divine love, and the concept of perfection in an order that is other than everything human. There has been an ever-present problem with identifying the contents of the afterlife: too little information and the afterlife becomes abstract and irrelevant to the lives of ordinary people; too much, and heaven becomes mawkish and ridiculous, while hell becomes pantomime or pornography.

The final dynamic I want to offer for the history of the afterlife is related to this oscillation between human values and divine (implicitly non-human) values, and involves processes by which the concepts of the afterlife have the potential to leach into the world of the living. The border here is particularly thin between the world and purgatory which, like reincarnation, can be most easily associated with relationships of intercession or merit-making between the dead and the living. In the same way, heaven and hell are better fitted to concerns about the points at which individuals meet social institutions. Where hell and heaven are largely spatial ideas, purgatory's conceptual framework is a temporal one, and it occupies a position most genuinely after life: time goes on there – after a fashion – which is the supplement to and copy of life time; the dead go there immediately after death rather than having to wait for judgement and the end of time entirely; its logic is the human logic of debt and repayment, and so on.

The first aspect of purgatory to note is that it has long been recognised as the best fit for the properties of narrative. Even if hell might be the most lurid and compelling, purgatory is easier to narrate. In *Génie du christianisme* (1826), written after his reconversion back to Catholicism, Chateaubriand commented on the affinities between purgatory and certain aspects of its representation in art:

It must be confessed that the doctrine of purgatory offers Christian poets a type of the marvellous unknown to antiquity. There is nothing more favourable to the muses than this place of purification, situated between sorrow and joy, which implies the union of confused feelings of happiness and misfortune. The gradation of these souls in their sufferings – more or less happy, more or less brilliant – according to past sins and according to their proximity to the double eternities of pleasure or pain, could supply topics for art. Purgatory surpasses heaven and hell in poetry because it presents a future missing from the primary locations of the afterlife. (II: IV: xv, my translation)⁷

Some of the features of purgatory that Chateaubriand identifies here are not unique to this aspect of the afterlife. For instance, the satisfaction that comes from allotting punishments that uniquely fit the crime is equally possible through hell or reincarnation (as in the karmic return of Will Self's *How the Dead Live*, when the narrator is reincarnated as her own granddaughter, and forced to live with the next-generation consequences of her failed parenting). However, the other element expressed

here is purgatory's unique placement in the light of the possibility of both development and endings. Those features vital for narrative – the passage of time and the occurrence of changes within that time – cannot be found in heaven or hell.

This is in contrast with another prevailing narrative trope in modern fiction, the descent narrative, which Rachel Falconer has identified in *Hell in Literature* (2005) as a story for the living; a metaphor for self-renewal and reversal – for leaving hell behind. The texts considered in this book will often see travel through afterlives, but this is travel experienced by the dead. The appropriate punishments of hell, exemplified by the Dantean *contrapasso*, are static images arrayed in a fixed system through which the living traveller journeys. More interesting (from the perspective of a plot following the dead in the afterlife) are the processes of reincarnation or purgatorial experiences. Karma is a punishment with a plot; a story about how people deal with the cosmic consequences of their actions and continue living in different, transformed ways. The focus of this book, and its overarching interest in narrative processes, is shored up by modern fiction's recurrent interest in purgatorial or reincarnatory afterlives.

In *The Persistence of Purgatory* (1995), Richard K. Fenn makes an argument for the importance of the temporality of purgatory to our lives, right up to the present day, and suggests that the relationship between purgatory and life is one of the most complex of all the relations between life and afterlife. It is also the most preoccupied with narrative properties. Fenn argues that purgatory changed our notions of time, and that the modern sense of urgency and responsibility about time – manifested in worries about lateness, making time and killing time and, of course, deadlines – comes directly from our continued investment in purgatorial thinking.

In *The Birth of Purgatory* (1981), Jacques Le Goff teases out many of the conceptual reconfigurations that had to occur in order for the doctrine of purgatory to truly take hold, including advances in cartography, theories of justice, and new techniques in finance and accounting. These came together in a new understanding of space, and particularly of time, that made purgatory's relations with the world into something revolutionary. According to Le Goff, not only did purgatory destabilise the idea of a boundary between life and death, it also 'became an annex of the earth and extended the time of life and of memory' (233). The relations between the dead and the living became more complicated, with suffrages offered by the living and visitations coming from the dead to walk the earth. With this complexity, argues Le Goff, came