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The Architecture of the Grave in Early Middle English Verse

Helen Appleton

A short rhyming lyric on death found in Latin and English versions on fol. 47^v of Cambridge, Trinity College, MS B.14.39 (323), a late thirteenth-century manuscript containing many such lyrics, neatly contrasts the dwelling places of life with those of death:¹

Cum sit gleba tibi turris,
Tuus puteus conclauis,
Pellis et guttur album
Erit cibus vermium.
Quid habent tunc de proprio
Hii monarchie lucro?

Unde anglice sic dicitur:

Wen þe turuf is þi tuur
Ant þi put is þi bour,
þi wel ant þi wite þrote
Ssulen wormes to note.
Wat helpit þe þenne
Al þe worilde wne?²

When the glebe is your tower and a pit your chamber, skin and white throat will be worms' food. What will these possess of their own wealth of the kingdom then?

Wherefore it is said in English thus:³

¹ The lyric is no. 6456 in *The DIMEV: An Open-Access, Digital Edition of the Index of Middle English Verse*, ed. by Linne R. Mooney, Daniel W. Mosser, and Elizabeth Solopova, with Deborah Thorpe and David Hill Radcliffe, <http://www.dimev.net> [accessed February 2017]. Future references to the *DIMEV* are given in parenthesis. Ralph Hanna III dates the manuscript s. xiii^{ex} and places it in Worcestershire: 'Reconsidering the Auchinleck Manuscript', in *New Directions in Later Medieval Manuscript Studies*, ed. by Derek Pearsall (Woodbridge: York Medieval Press, 2000), pp. 91–102. Karl Reichl dates the MS 1255–60, from Herefordshire or Worcestershire: *Religiöse Dichtung im englischen Hochmittelalter: Untersuchung und Edition der Handschrift B.14.39 des Trinity College in Cambridge* (München: Fink, 1973), pp. 48–46, 49–54. See also M. R. James, *The Western Manuscripts in the Library of Trinity College, Cambridge: A Descriptive Catalogue* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1900), p. 444.

² *Religiöse Dichtung*, ed. by Reichl, p. 444.

³ Translation of the Latin by Thomas Gibson Duncan, *A Companion to the Middle English Lyric* (Woodbridge:

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When the turf is your tower and your pit is your bower, your skin and your white throat
shall be of benefit to worms. What help to you then is all of the world's joy?

These paired lyrics depict the architecture of life transformed into that of the grave; this image of the grave as an unsettling transformation of the built spaces of its occupant's life is found in several early medieval death lyrics, and can be traced back to Old English material.⁴ They also exemplify the use of architectural representation to depict the grave in a *contemptus mundi* tradition, warning against worldliness by reminding the reader that worldly wealth, as symbolised by architecture suggestive of courtly status, is transitory and cannot save the body from corruption.

These paired lyrics also illustrate how the 'grave-as-house' tradition could be adapted to echo contemporary fashions, ensuring the greatest possible cultural resonance. These lyrics, as Duncan Thomas notes, are not simple translations of each other: the English lyric is a more sophisticated rendering than the Latin in terms of its architectural imagery.⁵ While the Latin speaks more generally of a *turris* and a *conclave*, the built space of the English text is loaded with romance resonances. As Thomas observes, the use of *bour* in the English lyric, 'Wen þe turuf', in conjunction with the white skin and throat, conventional signs of aristocratic female beauty, suggest that its addressee is a high-status lady.⁶ The contrast between courtly status and post-mortem decay is made more acute by the implied figure of a beautiful woman. Assonance and alliteration are employed in the English lyric to link the features of the castle and the grave more closely than in the Latin, intensifying their connection. The commonplaces of romance have been drawn into this depiction of the grave to present a culturally resonant image of post-mortem decay that warns against the sin of worldliness by revealing the transitory nature of material wealth. In this way 'Wen þe turuf' exemplifies a pattern of adaptation, influence, and convergence that can be traced in the architectural representation of the grave in early Middle English lyrics.

The artful brevity of the representation of the grave as an architectural space in 'Wen þe turuf' draws on a well-established tradition that can be traced back to the Anglo-Saxon period.⁷ This study will track the origins, development, and adaptation of this kind of grave-as-house imagery in early Middle English lyrics on death to argue for its pervasive cultural resonance. Social shifts and an increasing emphasis on the sin of worldliness reconfigure the design of the grave from the basic domestic architecture of the house, seen in twelfth-century texts such as the Worcester *Soul's Address to the Body* fragments, into the high-status courtly dwelling of 'Wen þe turuf', drawing on the *contemptus mundi* tradition popular in Middle English death lyrics. Yet throughout the period, the perverted domestic architecture of the grave is used to induce fear; it remains a hellish image associated with eschatological

Brewer, 2005), pp. 205, n. 33. Translations are my own unless otherwise stated.

⁴ This article focuses on the broad category of death lyrics. Many of the texts discussed belong to the Soul-and-Body genre, whose complexities are far beyond the scope of this piece. The authoritative study is that of Théodor Batiouchkof, 'Le débat de l'âme et du corps', *Romania*, 20 (1891), 1–55, 513–78. See also Rudolph Willard, 'The Address of the Soul to the Body', *Proceedings of the Modern Language Association*, 50 (1935), 957–83.

⁵ Duncan, *Middle English Lyric*, p. 205.

⁶ Duncan, *Middle English Lyric*, p. 205. See *Middle English Dictionary*, ed. by Sherman M. Kuhn, Hans Kurath and Robert E. Lewis (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1952–2001), <http://quod.lib.umich> [accessed February 2017], s.v. *Bour*: 'Sense 1 (a) A dwelling, house, mansion, cottage; (b) a shelter, den; (c) a bower. Sense 2 (a) An inner room; esp., a bedroom; (b) a lady's chamber; also, a suite for ladies, the women's quarters'.

⁷ Eleanor K. Heningham, 'Old English Precursors of the Worcester Fragments', *Proceedings of the Modern Language Association*, 55 (1940), 291–307.

themes. These associations make grave-as-house imagery an extremely effective and widely understood warning against sin; the success of ‘Wen þe turuf’ as a prompt for contemplation depends on the strength of these cultural resonances, which allow its architectural metaphor to stimulate consideration of broader themes.⁸

That the grave is conceptually a house because it is a dwelling is an ancient idea in Christian thought: Psalm 48.12 condemns the rich with the verse ‘et sepulchra eorum domus illorum in aeternum’ (‘and their sepulchres shall be their houses for ever’). The concept of grave-as-house is reflected iconographically in the architectural record; several house-shaped shrines and grave markers survive from the early medieval period, such as the Fordwich stone of c. 1100, which is a skeuomorph of a house, complete with pillars and a tiled roof.⁹ The textual record provides further evidence, such as the house-shaped shrine of St Chad, described in Bede’s *Historia Ecclesiastica* iv.3, and the house-shaped chrismal of Ældhelm’s *Aenigmata* 55.¹⁰ Douglas Moffat has drawn attention to archaeological evidence of house-like burials in early Anglo-Saxon England.¹¹ These house-shaped graves suggest that the image of grave-as-house was a cultural commonplace appropriated by these poems and given an unpleasant nature in order to evoke terror. The horror in these death lyrics is derived primarily from the body’s imagined awareness of its post-mortem environment, perverting conventionally comforting domesticity. In these poems the occupant of the grave is consistently addressed in the second person, blurring distinctions between body and reader. The house of the grave ceases to be a neutral image, and, through the experiences of its occupant, which echo the suffering of the sinful soul in hell, it becomes a frightening image of the reader’s own future.

As Rosemary Woolf notes, the earliest depiction of the grave as an architectural space in English literature is found in Old English prose.¹² Homily IX in the late tenth-century Vercelli Book describes five likenesses of hell.¹³ The fourth likeness is the grave:

⁸ Heningham, ‘Precursors of the Worcester Fragments’.

⁹ Anon., ‘Proceedings at Meetings of the Royal Archaeological Institute’, *Archaeological Journal*, 86 (1929), 258–60, fig. 7. A fragment of a similar monument survives in St Mark’s, Lincoln: Paul Everson and David Stocker, *Corpus of Anglo-Saxon Stone Sculpture in England: Lincolnshire* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), p. 284. For a discussion of house-shaped shrines in Anglo-Saxon England see Leslie Webster, ‘A Recently Discovered Anglo-Carolingian Chrismary’, in *Matter of Faith: An Interdisciplinary Study of Relics and Relic Veneration in the Medieval Period*, ed. by James Robinson, Lloyd De Beer, and Anna Harnden (London: The British Museum, 2014), pp. 66–74. Hogbacks have also been interpreted as evoking houses, although their relationship to gravesites is debated. See Howard Williams, ‘Hogbacks: the Materiality of Solid Spaces’, in *Early Medieval Stone Monuments: Materiality, Biography, Landscape*, ed. by H. Williams, J. Kirton and M. Gondek (Woodbridge: Boydell and Brewer, 2015), pp. 241–68; ‘“Clumsy and Illogical”? Reconsidering the West Kirby Hogback’, *The Antiquaries Journal*, 96 (2016), 69–100; ‘Citations in Stone: The Material World of Hogbacks’, *European Journal of Archaeology*, 19 (2016), 497–518.

¹⁰ Bede, *Bede’s Ecclesiastical History of the English People*, ed. by Bertram Colgrave and R. A. B. Mynors (Oxford: Clarendon, 1969), pp. 346–47. Aldhelm, *Aldhelmi Opera*, ed. by Rudolf Ehwald, *Monumenta Germaniae Historica, Auctores Antiquissimi*, 15, 2 vols (Berlin: Weidmann, 1913–19), 1 (1913), 122.

¹¹ Douglas Moffat, ‘The Grave in Early Middle English Verse: Metaphor and Archaeology’, *Florilegium*, 6 (1984), 96–102.

¹² Rosemary Woolf, *The English Religious Lyric in the Middle Ages* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1968), p. 83.

¹³ The homily’s textual history is complex: see *The Vercelli Homilies and Related Texts*, ed. by Donald Scragg, Early English Text Society, o. s., 300 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992), pp. 151–57. The image of grave-as-house is also found in versions of the text in Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Bodley 340 and Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Hatton 115.

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Ðonne is ðære feorðan helle onlicnes byrgen nemned, for þan þæs huses hrof bið
[gehnæg]led þe him onufan ðam breostum siteð ... Hafað him þonne syððan þry gebeddan,
þæt is þonne groot & molde & wyrmas. (ll. 101–06)¹⁴

The fourth likeness of hell is named the grave, for the roof of that house, which sits over his breast, bows down ... He then has three bedfellows, that is grit and earth and worms.

The grave is imagined as a house whose roof presses on the chest of its occupant and offers no protection from the depredations of the worms. The claustrophobic imagery echoes the typical representation of hell in Old English texts as a narrow space full of torments.¹⁵ J. E. Cross identified a Latin parallel to this section of the homily in the tenth-century *Catechesis Celtica*.¹⁶ However, as Charles Wright has noted, the image of grave-as-house is unparalleled — it may be an Anglo-Saxon innovation, perhaps influenced by Job 17.13: ‘si sustinero infernus domus mea est in tenebris stravi lectulum meum’ (‘if I wait, hell is my house: and I have made my bed in darkness’).¹⁷ This image of grave-as-house with hellish associations is picked up and developed by successive generations of English writers, who employ the image to encourage contemplation and contrition.

The short alliterative poem *The Grave* (DIMEV 5543), copied in a late twelfth-century hand on f. 170^r of Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Bodley 343, has attracted critical praise for its macabre style; the poem offers a witty presentation of the grave as an architectural perversion of the dwelling-places of life.¹⁸ The speaker of *The Grave* employs an unsettlingly measured tone to deliver an elaborate metaphorical description of the grave, stating: ‘ðe was bold ʒebyld er þe iboren were’ (‘for you a house was built before you were born’, l. 1). This house is not a happy home:

Ne bið no þin hus healice itinbred,
Hit bið unheh and lah þonne þu list þerinne;
Ðe helewæges beoð læge, sidwæges unhege,
þe rof bið ibyld þire broste ful neh.
Swa ðu scealt on molde wunien ful calde,
Dimme & deorcæ þet den fulæt on honde,
Dureleas is þæt hus & dearc hit is wiðinnen
Ðær þu bist feste bidytt, & dæð hefð þa cæge.
Ladlic is þet eorð hus & grim inne to wunnien,
Ðær þu sceat wunine & wurmes þe to deled.
Ðus ðu bist ileʒd & ladæst þine fronden;

¹⁴ *Vercelli Homilies*, ed. by Scragg, p. 168. See also Charles D. Wright, *The Irish Tradition in Old English Literature* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993).

¹⁵ For example, the devil in Cynewulf’s *Elene* claims to have been confined by God in an ‘engan ham’ (‘narrow home’, l. 920a), and in *Juliana* comes from one (l. 323a); hell is described by Satan as an ‘ænga styde’ (‘narrow place’, l. 356a) in *Genesis B*. All Old English poetry is cited from *The Anglo-Saxon Poetic Records: A Collective Edition*, ed. by George P. Krapp and Elliot van Kirk Dobbie, 6 vols (New York: Columbia University Press, 1931–53).

¹⁶ J. E. Cross, ‘The Literate Anglo-Saxon — on Sources and Disseminations’, *Proceedings of the British Academy*, 58 (1972), 67–100 (pp. 73 n. 4, 95, text given in 95 n. 5).

¹⁷ Hell and the grave are also equated in the poem *Christ and Satan* which describes hell as a ‘grim græfhus’ (‘grim grave-house’, l. 707a).

¹⁸ Douglas D. Short, ‘Aesthetics and Unpleasantness: Classical Rhetoric in the Medieval English Lyric *The Grave*’, *Studia Neophilologica*, 48 (1976), 291–99 (p. 292); Woolf, *The English Religious Lyric*, p. 83. The final three lines of *The Grave* appear to be an addition: see Eve Siebert, ‘A Possible Source for the Addition to the Grave’, *American Notes & Queries*, 19 (2006), 8–16. Bodley 343 is a twelfth-century manuscript containing Old English homilies. See *Old English Homilies from Ms Bodley 343*, ed. by Susan Irvine, Early English Text Society, o. s., 302 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993).

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Nefst ðu nenne freond þe þe wylle faren to.
Ðæt efre wile lokien hu þe þæt hus þe likie
Ðæt æfre undon ðe wule ða dure
... & þe æfter lihten,
For sone þu bist ladlic & lad to iseonne. (ll. 7–22)¹⁹

And now your house is not built high; it is short and low, when you lie within it; the end-walls are low, the side-walls not high, the roof is built very near to your breast. So you shall dwell in the earth, very cold. Dim and dark, that den will quickly become foul, door-less is the house and dark inside, where you are shut fast, and death has the key. That earth house is hateful and grim to dwell within, there you shall dwell and worms shall tear you apart. Thus you will be laid, and hateful to your friends. You will not have any friend who will go to you. That will ever ask how you like that house, that will ever undo that door for you, ... and afterwards deliver you, for immediately you will be loathsome and hateful to behold.

The Grave contrasts the fundamentally unpleasant house to be occupied by the body with the idealised spaces of life: the house of the grave is not ‘healice itinbred’ (‘built high’), rather it is ‘unheh’ (‘un-high’).²⁰ The negative prefix emphasises the perversion of idealised domestic space. Its low roof is explicitly designed to crush the body, oppressing rather than protecting: ‘Swa ðu scealt on molde wunien ful calde’ (‘so you shall dwell in the earth, very cold’, l. 5). The dark and inescapable house, which no friend will ever enter, extends the image of containment; the world is indifferent to the body’s feelings, in implicit contrast to the way in which visitors interact with the domestic spaces of the living.²¹ As Eleanor Heningham notes, the image recalls Vercelli IX, implicitly presenting a hellish space, but its terror has been increased through the poet’s indulgent amplification of the basic metaphor.²²

A further probable echo of hellish space is to be found in the paradoxical image of the ‘dureleas’ house which has a key, held by death. The house is ‘dureleas’ as it has no way of ingress or egress during the life of the world, but that it has a key, held by death, can be read as an oblique reference to the bodily resurrection at Doomsday when the graves will be opened by God, recalling Revelation 1.18: ‘et ecce sum vivens in saecula saeculorum et habeo claves mortis et inferni’ (‘and behold, I am living for ever and ever and have the keys of death and of hell’).²³ In his commentary on Revelation, *Explanatio Apocalypsis*, Bede interprets this image as denoting not only God’s mastery over death, but also the power of the church in the forgiveness of sins:

¹⁹ *Middle English Debate Poetry*, ed. by John W. Conlee (East Lansing, MI: Colleagues Press, 1991), p. 5. The ellipses mark a lacuna in the manuscript at l. 21.

²⁰ For a discussion of the use of the word *heahgetimbru* to describe heaven in Old English texts, see Hannah M. Bailey, ‘*Heahgetimbru*: A Reassessment of *Christ III* ll. 972–976’, *Notes & Queries*, n. s., 63 (2016), 346–51, although the usage here is more similar to *heahtimber* in *The Gifts of Men* l. 45.

²¹ The image of the body as loathsome to its former friends occurs elsewhere; cf. Blickling Homily X: *The Blickling Homilies of the Tenth Century: From the Marquis of Lothian’s Unique Ms. A.D. 971*, ed. by Richard Morris, Early English Text Society, o. s., 18 (London: Trübner, 1874–80), p. 111, but the playful expansion discussing the friends’ lack of solicitude is unique to *The Grave* (although Blickling Homily VIII lists the flattery of friends in its *ubi sunt* passage: *Blickling Homilies*, ed. by Morris, p. 99).

²² Heningham, ‘Precursors of the Worcester Fragments’, p. 305.

²³ On the image of hell as a locked space, see also the above article by Daniel Thomas.

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Non solum, inquit, mortem resurrectione devici; sed et ejusdem mortis habeo dominium. Quod etiam Ecclesiae Spiritum sanctum insufflando tribuit. *Quorum*, inquit, *dimiseritis peccata, dimittuntur eis*, et caetera.²⁴

Not only, he says, have I overcome death by my resurrection, but I have dominion over death itself. He shares this as well with the Church by breathing onto it the Holy Spirit, saying, *Whose sins you shall forgive, they are forgiven, and whose sins you shall retain, they are retained.*²⁵

The keys' association with sin, resurrection and judgement suggests an implicit moral purpose to *The Grave*: the fate of the body, trapped in a hellish space, reminds the reader of the extent of Christ's power. This leads to contemplation of the fate of the soul and the necessity of appealing to Christ for salvation, an idea developed in later treatments of the grave-as-house image.

The Grave constructs the grave as a likeness of hell in order to remind its reader both of inevitable bodily decay, and of the fate of the sinful soul. The repeated use of second person pronouns means that, as Douglas Short observes, 'the audience find themselves to be as much the focus of the poem as the grave itself'.²⁶ The image of death holding the key prompts the reader to recall the bodily resurrection, when graves will open, but the poem's distant and indifferent tone does not suggest the ultimate destination of the grave's occupant; rather it implies the inexorable nature of Judgement. Although the poem's addressee is clearly a body, *The Grave*, like 'Wen the turuf', is not, as Louise Dudley points out, a Soul-and-Body text: both poems' unidentified speakers adopt a tone unlike that of the vituperative soul in Soul-and-Body material.²⁷ While Soul-and-Body poems tend to dwell on the fate of the wicked, as Dudley notes: 'The power of "The Grave" lies in the fact that it is describing the fate of everyone, saint as well as sinner'.²⁸ Confronted with the universal future dwelling place of the grave, rendered unsettlingly immediate through the poem's fluid tenses, combined with oblique references to Judgement and uncertainty about the body's identity or fate, the discomfited reader must then question the state of their own soul.

The more explicit moralising of another early Middle English text, the Worcester *Soul's Address to the Body* fragments, suggests that eschatological associations are what the doorless house in *The Grave* is intended to evoke. In 1837 Sir Thomas Phillipps came upon fragments of a manuscript containing Ælfric's *Grammar* and early Middle English poetry, which had been copied in the early-thirteenth century by the Tremulous Hand of Worcester.²⁹ Phillipps's discovery was rebound as Worcester, Cathedral Library, MS F. 174, where the seven fragments of *The Soul's Address to the Body* (A-G) are now found on fols 63^v–66^v. These fragments are assumed to be the remains of a complete poem spoken by a sinful soul to its body; as in the earlier Old English poems *Soul and Body I* and *II*, only the soul speaks, berating its mute body.³⁰ The soul is typically accusatory and anguished, in marked contrast to

²⁴ Bede, *Explanatio Apocalypsis*, in *Patrologiae cursus completus: Series Latina*, ed. by Jacques-Paul Migne, 221 vols (Paris: Migne, 1844–65), xciii (1850), col. 137a.

²⁵ Bede, *Commentary on Revelation*, trans. by Faith Wallis (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2013), p. 115. The quotation is from John 20.23.

²⁶ Short, 'Aesthetics and Unpleasantness', p. 295.

²⁷ Louise Dudley, 'The Grave', *Modern Philology*, 11 (1914), 429–42.

²⁸ Dudley, 'The Grave', p. 439.

²⁹ See Christine Franzen, *The Tremulous Hand of Worcester: A Study of Old English in the Thirteenth Century* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991).

³⁰ *The Old English Soul and Body*, ed. by Douglas Moffat (Cambridge: Brewer, 1990). The body is also mute in

the distanced voice of *The Grave*. The Worcester *Soul's Address* is generally dated to the latter half of the twelfth century and, like *The Grave*, makes use of the image of the grave as a doorless house.³¹ Several of the fragments describe the grave as a dark, constricting house, using, as Heningham highlights, lines identical to those of *The Grave*.³² Two fragments describe the grave as a 'durelease huse' (B l. 40b, E l. 8b), but whereas *The Grave* distils the terror to simple architectural details, the *Soul's Address* uses architecture as part of a wider-ranging diatribe, making explicit that which must be understood by the reader of *The Grave*. These two twelfth-century poems establish a pattern repeated in the thirteenth-century death lyrics discussed below: broader discussions of sin and death employing architectural representation allow for the production of pithy works such as *The Grave* and 'Wen þe turuf' by ensuring that the image of grave-as-house conjures certain associations for the medieval reader, allowing even brief texts to impart a weighty moral message.

Fragment C describes the grave occupied by the body in lines almost identical to those of *The Grave* (ll. 29–31), but here the image is a clear contrast with the house of life, and relates directly to the body's uncharitable behaviour:

Noldest þu on þine huse herborwen þeo wrecchen,
 ne mihten heo under þine roue none reste finden;
 noldest þu nefre helpen þam orlease wrecchen,
 ac þu sete on þine benche underleid mid þie bolstre,
 þu wurþe cneow ofer cneow ne icneowe þu þe sulfen
 þet þu scoldest mid wurmen wunien in eorþan.
 Nu þu hauest neowe hus, inne beþrunge;
 lowe beoþ þe helewewes, unheiȝe beoþ þe sidwoves,
 þin rof liiþ on þine breoste ful neih. (C, ll. 23–31)

You did not wish to harbour wretches in your house, nor might they find any rest under your roof; you would never help the poor wretches, but you sat on your bench, underlain with your bolster, you crossed knee over knee, you did not know yourself that you should dwell with the worms in the earth. Now you have a new house, hemmed in inside; the end walls are low, the side walls are un-high, your roof lies very close on your breast.

The constricting architecture appears to be a punishment for the enjoyment of worldly comforts while others suffered, harking back to the image of the grave as a likeness of hell in Vercelli IX. The repeated sounds of 'cneow ofer cneow ne icneowe þu þe sulfen' intimately connect the body's behaviour to its fate in its 'neowe hus'. Similarly, the reference to the 'durelease huse' in l. 40 of Fragment B comes after a condemnation of the greed of the body: whereas the spiritual state of the occupant in *The Grave* is unknown, that of the Worcester fragments is explicitly sinful.

The other use of the phrase 'durelease huse' in the Worcester *Soul's Address* supports reading this image as related to Judgement. Fragment E states:

the fragmentary Soul-and-Body poem in the Trinity S. Andrea homily (*DIMEV* 186). See Kathryn Wymer, 'A Poetic Fragment on the Soul's Address to the Body in the Trinity Homilies', *Notes & Queries*, 55 (2008), 399–400.

³¹ *The Soul's Address to the Body: The Worcester Fragments*, ed. by Douglas Moffat (East Lansing, MI: Colleagues Press 1987), p. 25. Quotations are from this edition. The fragments' sequence has been debated. See Douglas Moffat, 'The Worcester *Soul's Address to the Body*: An Examination of Fragment Order', *Papers on Language and Literature*, 20 (1984), 123–40.

³² Heningham, 'Precursors of the Worcester Fragments', pp. 304–05. The relationship between the two texts (mutual dependence or direct borrowing) has been the subject of critical debate. See Dudley, 'The Grave'.

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Nu þu bist bihuded on alre horde fulest,
On deope seaþe, on durelease hus.
Þu scalt rotien and brostnian, þine bon beoþ bedæled
of þære wæde þe heo weren to iwunede;
brekeþ liþ from liþe, liggeþ þe bon stille,
oþ ure drihten eft of deaþe heo aræreþ,
so he alle men deþ þonne domesdai cumeþ.
Þonne scalt þu, erming, up arisen,
imeten þine morþdeden, þeo þe murie weren,
seoruhful and sorimod so þin lif wrouhte. (E, ll. 7–16)

Now you are concealed in the foulest of hoards, in a deep pit, in a door-less house. You shall rot and decay, your bones will be separated from the clothes to which they were accustomed; limb will break from limb, the bones will lie still, until our Lord raises them again from death, as he will do to all men when Doomsday comes. Then you shall, wretch, rise up, sorrowful and sad-minded, meet/measure your deadly sins, which were pleasing to you when wrought in your life.

The body is reminded by the soul that they shall be reunited by Christ at Doomsday. Later in Fragment E the image of the grave closed by death until God opens it is made more explicit:

Nu þu bist afursed from alle þine freonden;
nu is þin muþ forscuttet for deaþ hine haueþ fordutted,
ne biþ he ne nammare undon ær cume þæs heiȝe kings dom.
Þonne hit biþ isene so hit on psalme seiþ:
reddituri sunt de factis propriis rationem,
Þonne sculen þeo soule seggen hore deden
wisliche þurh wisdom, for drihten hit wot;
þonne heo onfoþ hore dom of drihtenes muþe,
Also hit is awriten of drihtenes muþe:
ite maledicti in ignem eternum.
Þonne sculen wit siþien to alre seoruwe mest,
faren mid feondes in þet eche fur,
beornen þer efre, ende nis þer nefre,
et qui bona egerunt ibunt in uitam eternam,
þonne sculen þeo goden mid gode siþian,
echelice wunien in alre wuldre mest [...]’ (E, ll. 37–52)

Now you are removed from all of your friends; now your mouth is stopped up, because death has obstructed it; it will not be opened any more until the judgement of the high king comes. Then it will be seen, as it says in the psalm: *they shall give an account of their own deeds*, then the souls shall recount their deeds wisely through wisdom, for the Lord knows it; then they receive their judgement from the Lord’s mouth, moreover it is written from the Lord’s mouth: *depart from me, you cursed, into everlasting fire*. Then we two shall journey to the greatest of all sorrows, travel with fiends into the eternal fire, burn there ever after, there will never be an end, *and those who have done good works will depart into everlasting life*; then the good shall journey with God, eternally dwell in the greatest of all glories [...]

³³ See Helen Appleton and Francis Leneghan, ‘Introduction: The Psalms in Anglo-Saxon and Anglo-Norman England’, *English Studies*, 98 (2017), 1–4.

Here the soul echoes the idea found in *The Grave* that friends abandon the body. The first Latin phrase, which comes not from a psalm but from the Athanasian Creed, authorises the preceding image of Doomsday.³³ At this point the body will be released from the grave and reunited with its wicked soul to face eternal damnation, while the good, as another line from the Athanasian Creed assures, go to eternal glory. The eschatology here renders explicit that which is implicit in *The Grave*.

Few later depictions of the architecture of the grave can match the panache of *The Grave*, but many texts share and develop the Worcester fragments' explicit association of grave-as-house imagery with worldly wealth and eschatological contemplation. Death lyrics placing emphasis on the consequences of worldliness were popular in the thirteenth century. One such is *The Latemest Day* (DIMEV 5640), a piece in monorhyming quatrains found in differing versions in four thirteenth-century manuscripts. The poem has been connected to the Worcester fragments and makes connections between grave-as-house imagery and eschatology.³⁴ In each of its manuscripts *Latemest Day* is preceded by the poem *When I Think on Doomsday* (DIMEV 6339), suggesting eschatological associations, and it concludes with an instruction to live right as 'mou we quemen crist at þe stronke dome' ('we must please Christ at the mighty judgement', l. 100). But although the poem employs architectural imagery for the grave of a wealthy man, it takes little interest in the buildings occupied in life, breaking the interconnection of the two spaces seen in the twelfth-century poems. To find the origins of 'Wen the turuf's equation of high-status dwellings to the grave, we must first explore the introduction of courtly architecture to the death lyric in an extremely influential twelfth-century Anglo-Latin Soul-and-Body poem, the *Visio Philiberti*.

The *Visio Philiberti*, which appears to be a free reworking of the *Royal Debate* (an earlier Anglo-Latin Soul-and-Body text), is preserved in many English and continental manuscripts, and was adapted into several vernaculars, but there is critical consensus that it is of English origin.³⁵ The *Visio Philiberti* is a complex text; David Baker and Neil Cartlidge have identified 188 manuscripts containing various versions, and suggest many more remain to be identified.³⁶ Unsurprisingly, there is no authoritative edition.³⁷ The discussion below focuses on the text

³⁴ Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Digby 86; Oxford, Jesus College, MS 29, Part II; Cambridge, Trinity College, MS B.14.39; London, British Library, MS Cotton Caligula A.IX, 247. The Digby text has been edited by Edmund Stengel: *Codicem Manu Scriptum Digby 86: In Bibliotheca Bodleiana Asservatum* (Halle an der Saale: Orphanotrophen, 1871), pp. 98–101; the Caligula text and Jesus texts by Richard Morris: *An Old English Miscellany Containing a Bestiary, Kentish Sermons, Proverbs of Alfred, Religious Poems of the Thirteenth Century, from Manuscripts in the British Museum, Bodleian Library, Jesus College Library, etc.*, Early English Text Society, o. s., 49 (London: Trübner, 1872), pp. 168–85; and the Trinity and Caligula texts by Carleton Brown: *English Lyrics of the XIIIth Century* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1932), pp. 46–54. The text is cited from Brown's edition. Heningham ('Precursors of the Worcester Fragments', p. 293) thinks the poem is 'little more than a condensed version of The Worcester Fragments'; Moffat (*Soul's Address to the Body*, pp. 41–42) is more sceptical.

³⁵ On its relation to the *Royal Debate* see: Eleanor K. Heningham, *An Early Latin Debate of the Body and Soul Preserved in Ms. Royal 7 A.iii in the British Museum* (New York: [published by the author], 1939), pp. 25–43. On provenance see: *The Latin Poems Commonly Attributed to Walter Mapes*, ed. by Thomas Wright (London: Camden Society, 1841), p. 95; Robert W. Ackerman, 'The Debate of the Body and the Soul and Parochial Christianity', *Speculum*, 37 (1962), 541–65, (p. 543); Woolf, *The English Religious Lyric*, p. 91. On adaptations: Neil Cartlidge, 'In the Silence of a Midwinter Night: A Re-Evaluation of the *Visio Philiberti*', *Medium Ævum*, 75 (2006), 24–45.

³⁶ David P. Baker and Neil Cartlidge, 'Manuscripts of the Medieval Latin Debate between Body and Soul ('*Visio Philiberti*')', *Notes & Queries*, 61 (2014), 196–201. Although the poem has been attributed to both Walter Mapes and Robert Grosseteste, neither attribution is currently in favour.

³⁷ The most numerous version (131 manuscripts) has been edited by Wright, *Latin Poems*, pp. 95–106; other versions by Édélestand Du Ménil, *Poésies populaires latines antérieures au douzième siècle* (Paris: Brockhaus et Avenarius, 1843), pp. 217–30; Theodor Georg von Karajan, *Frühlingsgabe für Freunde älterer Literatur* (Wien: Ritter von

edited by Thomas Wright, which appears to represent an early version. The *Visio Philiberti* narrates a vision received on a winter's night of a debate between a soul and its body. The chief innovation of the *Visio Philiberti* and its source the *Royal Debate*, in comparison to earlier Soul-and-Body material, is that the body actively participates in a dialogue with the soul, offering its own perspective on the grave.

The romance inflection to the architecture of the grave in 'Wen the turuf' is a distinct and clever innovation, but the use of courtly buildings to represent the transitory nature of worldly power was firmly established by the thirteenth century, influenced by the use of such architecture in the *ubi sunt* section of the *Visio Philiberti*.³⁸ The poem also contains grave-as-house imagery, but the two traditions are not explicitly connected: the grave encourages contemplation of sin through its hellish associations; the *contemptus mundi* imagery associated with architecture reinforces the contrast between the spaces of life and death. *Visio Philiberti* has a distinctly courtly air; as Cartlidge notes, 'the Soul's complaint against the Body is presented specifically in terms of a scenario that is distinctly and recognisably feudal'.³⁹ Architectural lexis is not found in the *Royal Debate*, but is key to conveying the elevated status of the deceased in the *Visio Philiberti*. In the poem's *ubi sunt* passage, the soul addresses the body, saying:

non es nunc in turribus de petris quadratis,
sed nec in palatio magnæ largitatis;
nunc jaces in feretro parvæ quantitatis,
reponenda tumulo qui minimo est satis!
Quid valent palatia, pulcræ vel quid ædes?
vix nunc tuus tumulus septem capit pedes. (ll. 17–22)⁴⁰

You are not now in towers of squared stone, nor in your lavish palace; now you lie on a small bier, to be put in a tomb which just satisfies! Of what use are your palaces or beautiful house? your tomb now scarcely occupies seven feet.

This is only one image among many in a long debate, but its emphasis on architectural representations in a *contemptus mundi* section is a clear precursor to 'Wen þe turuf'.⁴¹ But the grave is not yet a metaphorical castle: here grand architecture is simply contrasted with the narrow grave whose smallness mocks its occupant's ambitions. The image is an old one: as several critics have noted, the E-Text of the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* employs it in its entry on death of King William (1087): 'Se þe wæs ærer rice cyng & maniges landes hlaford, he næfde þa ealles landes buton seofon fotmæl' [He who was previously a powerful king and the lord of many lands he then had nothing of all the land but seven feet of space].⁴² The chronicle's

Möslé's Witwe und Braumüller, 1839), pp. 85–97. The Du Méril text has been translated by Clark Sutherland Northup, 'Dialogus inter Corpus et Animam: A Fragment and a Translation', *Proceedings of the Modern Language Association*, 16 (1901), 503–25. The challenges of editing are discussed by Cartlidge, 'A Re-Evaluation of the *Visio Philiberti*', pp. 24–25.

³⁸ *Ubi sunt* passages are a long-established commonplace of texts concerned with death. See J. E. Cross, 'Ubi sunt Passages in Old English: Sources and Relationships', *Vetenskaps-Societeten i Lund. Arsbok* (1956), 25–44; Claudia Di Sciacca, 'The "Ubi Sunt" Motif and the Soul-and-Body Legend in Old English Homilies: Sources and Relationships', *Journal of English and Germanic Philology*, 105 (2006), 365–87; Woolf, *The English Religious Lyric*, p. 96.

³⁹ Cartlidge, 'A Re-Evaluation of the *Visio Philiberti*', p. 30.

⁴⁰ *Latin Poems*, ed. by Wright, p. 96.

⁴¹ The comparable *ubi sunt* passage of the *Royal Debate* lacks this focus on stonework.

⁴² *The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle: A Collaborative Edition, Ms. E*, ed. by Susan Irvine (Cambridge: Brewer, 2004), p.

rendering is more effective as, like *The Grave* and 'Wen the turuf', it compares like-for-like: here land is contrasted with land. Although the *ubi sunt* passage in the *Visio Philiberti* draws an explicit contrast between the architecture of life and the grave, it compares architecture with space: the paradox of the two alike, yet unlike buildings is not present here.

Later in the *Visio Philiberti* the grave is described as an architectural space. In the version of the text edited by Wright there are two references to grave-as-house. The Soul asks the Body:

Tua domus qualiter tibi modo placet?
tibi nonne summitas super nasum jacet?
excæcantur oculi, lingua tua tacet;
nullum membrum superest quod nunc lucro vacet. (ll. 55–58)⁴³

How does your house please you now? Doesn't its top lie above your nose? Your eyes are blinded, your tongue is silent; no limb is left that might have time for profit.

The Body later responds:

Tamen quando fueram vivens tibi ficta,
ea quæ nunc respicis sunt mihi relictæ,
putredo cum vermibus, et est domus stricta,
quibus sum assidue fortiter afflicta.
Et scio præterea quod sum surrectura
in die novissimo, tecumque passura
pœnas in perpetuum : o mors plusquam dura,
mors interminabilis, fine caritura! (ll. 215–22)⁴⁴

Nevertheless, when I was alive, formed to you, those things which you now see were bequeathed to me: rottenness with worms, and this is a narrow house, by which I am constantly afflicted, and furthermore I know that I will rise on the last day and will suffer with you perpetual punishment. O death, more than cruel! O interminable death, lacking end!

As in the vernacular texts discussed above, the body, afflicted by worms, occupies a 'domus stricta'. The narrow house is again connected to worldliness and Doomsday, suggesting that these bodily torments are a foreshadowing the worldly soul's fate in hell. This image is very much in the same tradition as *The Grave* and the *Soul's Address*; despite the earlier appearance of courtly architecture, the grave remains a house. The introduction of architecture as one of the symbols of the worldliness traditionally seen to lead to the narrow house of the grave and to hell paves the way for the merging of the courtly architecture of the *contemptus mundi* tradition with the image of the grave-as-house in 'Wen þe turuf', but rather than explicitly contrasting the earlier *turribus* and *palatum* of life with the narrow house of the grave, the poet employs the images in parallel. The *Visio Philiberti* represents an intermediate stage of the process between grave-as-house and grave-as-castle.

The material of the *Visio Philiberti* lends itself to reconfiguration, as its manuscript history shows; the contents of the poem are, as Cartlidge notes, 'adaptable, open to reappropriation, and impersonal in a way that made it seem like common cultural property'.⁴⁵ The modification

96. See Heningham, 'Precursors of the Worcester Fragments', p. 305.

⁴³ *Latin Poems*, ed. by Wright, p. 97.

⁴⁴ *Latin Poems*, ed. by Wright, p. 103.

⁴⁵ Cartlidge, 'A Re-Evaluation of the *Visio Philiberti*', p. 37.

of this material in the vernacular shows the extent to which Cartlidge's observation holds true, as the courtly architecture of the *ubi sunt* passage of the *Visio Philiberti*, together with the image of grave-as-house, was appropriated and adapted in thirteenth-century Middle English poems on death such as *Als I Lay in a Winteris Nyt* (DIMEV 605) and *In a Pestri Stude I Stodi* (DIMEV 2462).

Als I Lay in a Winteris Nyt is one of the most affecting Middle English Soul-and-Body debates; Robert Ackerman terms it a 'bleakly powerful homily on the wages of sin and the need for repentance'.⁴⁶ *Als I Lay* survives in seven manuscripts, the earliest of which (Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Laud Misc. 108) is late thirteenth-century.⁴⁷ *Als I Lay* draws on the *Visio Philiberti*, as well as the earlier *Royal Debate* and its Anglo-Norman adaptation *Un Samedi par Nuit*, but employs conventional imagery with delicacy and flair, leading Woolf to describe the debate section as 'probably the cleverest passage in all Middle English lyrics'.⁴⁸ The poem depends on Latin materials, but the vernacular allows for an extra layer of courtliness and worldliness, as both body and soul, freed from the feminine gender dictated by the Latin nouns *anima* and *caro*, can become those of a wealthy knight.

Als I Lay includes a long *ubi sunt* section in which the soul mocks the courtly pleasures once enjoyed by the body, which include castles and towers, employing the architectural imagery found in the *Visio Philiberti* but absent from the *Royal Debate* and *Un Samedi par Nuit*. In *Als I Lay* the grave begins to be represented as a courtly architectural space as the explicitly sepulchral *tumulus* of *Visio Philiberti* is replaced with the more domestic *bour*:

ʒwere beon þi castles and þi toures,
þi chaumbres and þi riche halles
I-peynted with so riche floures,
And þi riche robes alle?
þine cowltes and þi couertoures,
þi cendels and þi riche palles?
Wrechede is nouʒ þi bour!
Tomoruwe þouʒ schaly þer-inne falle! (ll. 25–32)⁴⁹

⁴⁶ Ackerman, 'Debate of the Body and the Soul', p. 565.

⁴⁷ Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Digby 102; Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Eng. poet. a.1 (Vernon MS); Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Laud misc. 108 (ll. 1–48, 185–642 only); London, British Library, MS Add. 22283 (ll. 1–198 only); London, British Library, MS Add. 37787; London, British Library, MS Royal 18 A.X; Edinburgh, National Library of Scotland, MS Advocates' 19.2.1 (Auchinleck MS). There are numerous editions of the text from these manuscripts, such as: Wilhelm Johannes H. Linow in Wilhelm Johannes H. Linow and Hermann Varnhagen, *De Desputisoun Bitwen þe Bodi and þe Soule nebst der ältesten altfranzösischen Bearbeitung des Streites zwischen Leib und Seele* (1889), pp. 1–112; *Latin Poems*, ed. by Wright, pp. 334–46; *Middle English Debate Poetry*, ed. by Conlee, pp. 20–49. The relationship between the various manuscripts has been analysed by Linow (*Desputisoun*, pp. 5–10). See also J. Justin Brent, 'The Eschatological Cluster — Sayings of St. Bernard, Vision of St. Paul, and Dispute between the Body and the Soul — in Oxford, Bodleian Library, Ms Laud Misc. 108', in *The Texts and Contexts of Oxford, Bodleian Library, Ms Laud Misc. 108: The Shaping of English Vernacular Narrative*, ed. by Kimberly K. Bell and Julie Nelson Couch (Leiden: Brill, 2011), pp. 157–76.

⁴⁸ Linow (*Desputisoun*, pp. 10–13) makes connections to the *Visio Philiberti* and the Anglo-Norman poem, while Heningham (*Early Latin Debate of the Body and Soul*, pp. 25–36) argues for the influence of the *Royal Debate*. See also Ackerman, 'Debate of the Body and the Soul', pp. 543–44. *Un Samedi par Nuit* has been edited by Wright (*Latin Poems*, pp. 321–33) and by Hermann Varnhagen (in Linow and Varnhagen, *Desputisoun*, pp. 115–96). Woolf, *The English Religious Lyric*, pp. 98–102.

⁴⁹ Quotations from the edition of Conlee (*Middle English Debate Poetry*, pp. 20–49, based on MS Laud Misc. 108 (pp. 20–23, 29–49) with material from the Auchinleck MS (pp. 23–29).

Where are your castles and your towers, your chambers and your rich halls painted with such rich flowers, and all of your rich robes? Your quilts and your covers, your costly and expensive fabrics? Your bower is now wretched! Tomorrow you shall fall in there!

The grave in *Als I Lay* is repeatedly characterized as a bower rather than a house, which in the context of the imagery of castles and towers, with which it rhymes, and the identity of the deceased as a knight, constructs the grave as a courtly chamber.⁵⁰ The poem as a whole, as J. Justin Brent notes, displays ‘a persistent concern with the genre of romance’, playing with imagery of courtly lovers and dwelling on the knight’s delight in hunting.⁵¹ Yet this courtly *bour* of seven feet, which has replaced the palace, exhibits the same unpleasant characteristics as the more basic grave houses:

Fram þe palays þat þou I lay,
Wiþ wormes is now y-taken þin in;
Þi bour is bilt wel cold in clay,
Þe rof schal take to þi chin.
Þou þat neuer in all þi liue
Of þis warldes mock miȝtest be sad,
Now schaltow haue at al þi siþe
Bot seuen fet, vnneþe þat. (ll. 77–84)

From the palace in which you lay, with worms you are now taken in; your bower is built very cold in clay, the roof shall touch your chin. You that never in life of all this world’s things might have your fill, now you shall have for all of your journey but seven feet, scarcely that.

The narrator of *Als I Lay* ends the poem with an instruction to repent, made all the more compelling by his physically manifested terror: ‘On ile a her a drope stod | For friȝt and fer þer as I lay’ (‘on every hair a drop of sweat stood, for fright and fear there as I lay’, ll. 611–12). *Als I Lay* concludes with a note of consolation:

Þo þat sunful ben, I rede hem red
To schriuen hem and rewen sore:
Neuere was sunne i-don so gret
Þat Cristes merci ne is wel more. (ll. 621–24)

To those that be sinful, I give the counsel to shrive themselves and regret sorely: there never was a sin done so great that Christ’s mercy is not a greater good.

Repentance, however late, will allow the reader to avoid being dragged to hell like the sinful soul in the poem’s horrifying dénouement.

The transmuted architecture of the grave is a key component of *Als I Lay* but it is not its primary conceit; the poet makes much more of hunting as a symbol of worldliness: the mock-chivalric image of the soul, mounted on a devil, savaged by hellhounds, then flung into the pit by fiends is the culminating horror on which the reader should dwell. For the poet of *Als I Lay*, unlike those of ‘Wen the turuf’ and *The Grave*, architectural imagery is not the most effective way to express the knight’s fall and to induce repentance. Yet the architecture of the grave clearly remained a popular prompt to contrition in the thirteenth century though its capacity to terrify by blurring the comforting domestic spaces of life with the horrors of death, enabling the poet of ‘Wen the turuf’ to produce a text that, like *The Grave*, succinctly taps into broader cultural resonances to provide an effective meditation on sin.

⁵⁰ The poem plays around with the two primary meanings of *bour* and their connotations.

⁵¹ Brent, ‘Eschatological Cluster’, p. 157.

The Architecture of the Grave in Early Middle English Verse

The continued importance of architectural representations of the grave can be seen in *In a Pestri Stude I Stod*, a thirteenth-century Soul-and-Body text which comes closest to the playful imagery of 'Wen the turuf'. *Pestri Stude* survives in three manuscripts: Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Digby 86, Cambridge, Trinity College, MS B.14.39, and London, British Library, MS Harley 2253. In the poem, the unwilling body of a nobleman engages in a dialogue with his scolding, taunting soul. The soul dominates, having a long monologue on the signs of Doomsday, maintaining the grave's association with judgement. Life and its pleasures are connected to buildings, as the soul carps at the body that 'in halle þou were ful kene, þe whil þou were on liue' ('you were quite keen in hall, while you were alive', l. 5).⁵² After an account of the body's deceit and pride the soul berates it with an *ubi sunt* passage:

Bodi, wer beþ þine solers and alle þine toures?
Þine feire cloþes and þine couertoures?
Ful louue shalt þou fallen for alle þine boures.
To Jhesu wille ich callen, he be mi socours. (ll. 45–48)⁵³

Body, where are your chambers and all your towers? Your fair clothes and your coverings?
You shall fall very low for all your bowers. I will call to Jesus, he will be my succour.

The body's immediate reply recognises an exchange of dwelling place:

Wrecche gost, þou vend auei, fare þer þou shalt fare;
Me is wo i-nou, mine sides beþ colde and bare;
Min hous is makd of cleie, þe woues beþ colde and bare;
Pei þou chide niȝt and dai, ne sege ich þe namore. (ll. 49–52)

Wretched ghost, you turn away, go wherever you will go; there is woe enough for me, my sides are cold and bare; my house is made of clay, the walls are cold and bare; though you chide me night and day, I will say no more to you.

In a line reminiscent of 'Wen the turuf', the towers and chambers are equated with the body's clay house, whose cold bare sides remind the reader that it is of no protection at all. Here the architectural space of the grave is being directly contrasted to the courtly built spaces of life.

The image of the body's torment within the architecture of the grave as a prolepsis of the fate of the worldly after Judgement becomes explicit as the poem nears its conclusion with the soul's account of the signs of Doomsday. At this point in the Digby manuscript *Pestri Stude* runs into a separate Doomsday poem (*DIMEV* 6339) with, as Conlee notes, no indication of break.⁵⁴ In the Trinity and Harley manuscripts *Pestri Stude* concludes with the soul's return to hell, and the poem reflects on the fate of the body, here from the Harley manuscript text:

Whiles he wes in worlde, he hevede frend ant kyn.
When he is graved under mold, al cold ys hys yn.
The wormes sitteth on ys brest ant eteth of ys chyn.
Ne haveth he frend on erthe that thenketh opon hym. (ll. 101–04)⁵⁵

⁵² Quotations from the edition of Conlee (*Middle English Debate Poetry*, pp. 10–17), based on MS Digby 86, except where indicated. The Harley text has been edited by Susanna Greer Fein: *The Complete Harley 2253 Manuscript*, 3 vols (Kalamazoo, MI: Medieval Institute Publications, 2014), II, art. 22. All three texts are edited in *Religiöse Dichtung*, ed. by Reichl, pp. 339–65.

⁵³ The variant from the Harley manuscript is 'Vader, ant Holy Gost, shild me from helle shoures!' ('Father and Holy Ghost shield me from hell showers', l. 40), rendered more poignant by the ultimate fate of the soul.

⁵⁴ Conlee, *Middle English Debate Poetry*, p. 17, n. 106.

⁵⁵ Cited from *Harley 2253 Manuscript*, ed. by Fein.

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While he was in the world, he had friends and kin. When he is buried underground, all cold is his inn. The worms sit on his breast and eat from his chin. He hasn't a friend on earth who thinks

The depiction of the grave as a cold inn suggests the lodging there is temporary, causing the reader to contemplate the bodily resurrection, described by the soul in Digby manuscript ll. 85–87 (ll. 79–81 in the Harley manuscript text).⁵⁶ The poem continues with a contemplation of the failure of wealth to buy off death, suggesting what we should learn from its earlier lines through commonplace images of the architecture of the grave:

Her we haveth houses of lym ant of ston,
Ant alle we shulen hem leven, everuchon;
Fare we shule to a bour that is oure long hom —
Nouther more ne lasse bote from the hed to ton;
Ther shal rotie ure fleyshe al to the bon.

When the flor is at thy rug, the rof ys at thy neose,
Al this worldes blisse nis nout worth a peose.
Bote yef Jesu Cristes merci among us more were,
To wrothere hele that ever we in londe comen here.

To thin holy halewen, Crist, bring us alle yfere.
Amen. (ll. 118–28)⁵⁷

Here we have houses of lime and of stone, and we will relinquish them all, every one; we will travel to a bower that is our lasting home — neither more nor less than from the head to the toe; there will our flesh rot entirely to the bone. When the floor is at your back, the roof is at your nose, all this world's bliss is not worth a pea. Unless Jesus Christ's mercy be greater among us, we on earth will always come here to an evil outcome. To your holy saints, Christ, bring us all together. Amen.⁵⁸

Here the grave is playfully portrayed as both a long home and a tiny house, reminding the reader of how small the grave will be, and how great the length of time that it must be occupied.⁵⁹ The use of *bour* takes on courtly associations, as in *Als I Lay*, following as it does from images of towers, rich clothes, and stone buildings. *Pestri Stude* concludes with a final reminder of the uselessness of worldly wealth, and an appeal for help to avoid the fate depicted in the poem.⁶⁰ The architectural imagery serves as the finale; the horrors of the grave urge the reader to direct themselves to Christ and join with the voice of the narrator in an appeal to be brought together with the saints.

From the final images of *Pestri Stude* it is a short step to 'Wen the turuf', which relies on a distillation of the longer text's concluding imagery; the courtly architecture lost at

⁵⁶ The Trinity manuscript reads 'Nu he lies in þe graue, he holdet in þarin' ('now he lies in the grave, he remains therein', l. 122): *Religiöse Dichtung*, ed. by Reichl, p. 363.

⁵⁷ The Trinity manuscript is broadly similar but retains a four-line stanza form: *Religiöse Dichtung*, ed. by Reichl, pp. 364–65.

⁵⁸ Translation by Fein.

⁵⁹ Similar images of the churchyard as a 'longe hous' and the grave a 'long home' in Robert Mannyng's *Handlyng Synne* are discussed by Laura Varnam in the article below.

⁶⁰ The same image occurs in a lyric found in Trinity College B.14.39, *Proprietates Mortis* (DIMEV 6383): 'þanne lyd min hus vppe min nose | off al þis world ne gyffe ihic a pese' ('when my house lies above my nose, I don't give a pea for all this world', ll. 21–22). *English Lyrics of the XIIIth Century*, ed. by Brown, p. 130.

death becomes equated with the architecture of the grave to position the lyric firmly in the *contemptus mundi* tradition, aided by the echo of the folly of worldlings in Psalm 48.12. The use of second-person pronouns and the absence of a frame identifying the addressee in ‘Wen the turuf’ draw the reader into the text, as in *The Grave*. Although *bour* next to the image of the beautiful white throat suggests a female addressee, its use for the spaces occupied by knights in *Als I Lay* and *Pestri Stude* would also allow a male figure; the focus on architecture, rather than clothing or hunting contributes to the lyric’s broad resonance. The final lines of ‘Wen the turuf’ recall the expansive treatments of the same theme in the other texts, leading the reader to contemplate all the ways in which wealth will fail to protect the body, and the impossibility of buying one’s way into heaven at Doomsday.

The powerful distortion of the comfort conventionally associated with the home in life ensures the enduring resonance of the grave-as-house image in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. This contrast between the spaces of life and death highlights the transitory and problematic nature of worldly wealth, making grave-as-house an effective image in the *contemptus mundi* tradition. ‘Wen the turuf’ is, like *The Grave*, a condensation of themes found in longer texts, reliant on architectural contrasts to make its point and to encourage the reader, through the horrifying image of a hellish domestic space, to turn away from sin. The poet of ‘Wen the turuf’ trusts that the reader will bring the conventional associations of certain architectural imagery to their interpretation of the text. As Woolf notes in her discussion of the short lyric ‘Nu þu unseli bodi up-on bier list’ (*DIMEV* 3809), ‘one *ubi sunt* question, especially when it contains an evocative touch of romance phraseology, is not necessarily less effective than a whole series’.⁶¹ Indeed, in the case of ‘Wen the turuf’, it is perhaps more so: the act of answering the solitary question posed requires the reader to unpack myriad associations and engage in a thorough contemplative exercise, facilitated by the accumulated resonances of the architecture of the grave.

⁶¹ Woolf, *The English Religious Lyric*, p. 93.