

## **“As the Book Says” and Similar Expressions in Middle English Alliterative Verse**

Yasuyo Moriya  
English Language Program  
International Christian University

This essay examines the formulaic expression, “as the book says” in Middle English (ME) alliterative verse. Occupying the entire second half-line and being free from the alliteration constraint in its final metrical beat, the clause provides a useful device to meet the metrical requirements as well as to increase the credibility of the source from which the poet adapted the story. Various examples that include “as the book says” and similar expressions suggest that the underlying structure of recurring phrases in the first half-line is lexical while that in the second half-line is syntactic. The ME alliterative poets do not rely on prefabricated phrases but use similar collocation patterns in order to increase repetitive mode in alliterative verse.

This essay examines the role of the phrase “as the book says” and similar expressions that appear in the second half-line of Middle English (ME) alliterative verse. Though lexical items vary from line to line, the collocation pattern, namely what kinds of words appear in what order, is almost fixed as seen in the following examples:

- A 17      That was the athill Alexsandire, as the buke tellis,  
A 35      Thus ware thai breued for the best, as the buke tellis;  
A 278     In the first compas I ken, as me the claus tellis,

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This collocation pattern of “*as* + Noun + Verb” can be found in every major alliterative poem of the fourteenth century. The phrase should be a useful device to meet metrical requirements because the second beat of the second half-line, which is the line-final beat at the same time, is free from the alliteration constraint. In other words, the line-final stressed syllable does not need to alliterate, and allows the poet to repeat the same verb in the line-final position. This leads to the idea that the expression, “as the book says,” occupying the second half-line, is habitual and may function as a syntactic formula. The second half-line, according to Cable, Duggan, and Putter and Stokes, is governed by strict metrical rules. Determining what collocations are possible and how lexical elements may vary, as Ringbom argues, will reveal a special function of such phrases.

It was Oakden who first commented on the use of “tags” that seem to fill out the lines according to metrical necessities. He argues that these tags may be a direct cause of similar expressions especially in the second half-line. Hartle (23) explains that these “tags” may not be lexically identical but share a basic pattern of both form and meaning, which establishes a more than casual relationship between them. The poets are concerned about the metrical correctness and rely on the repetitious use of similar forms. In this sense common terms to denote such a metrical syntactic pattern, such as “tags,” “clichés,” “fillers,” or even “unnecessary repetition” may not be adequate (Moriya, “Oakden”). More recently scholars, as seen in the articles by Schaefer and by Smith, for instance, have acknowledged the significance of similar collocations of words and common meaning.

Oakden in Part IV (381-91) lists seven common “tags.” The following is the list of these recurring tags with two examples from those that Oakden himself uses:

- (1) The use of an infinitive in the second half-line, preceded by a word beginning with the required alliterative sound:

*Agas* 115 Longe legges and large, and lele for to schewe.

*J* 641 Kesten ded vpon ded was deil to byholde

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(2) — *men of armes*

MA 1537 Fyfty thosaunde on felde of ferse men of armez,

MA 1710 Fifty thosandez of folke of ferse men of armez,

(3) — *of deeds*

Ages 528 And gud Sir Gy de Burgoyne, full gracyous of dedis;

Ages 616 And Sir Sampson hysselfe full savage of his dedys,

(4) *that . . . in erthe*

MA 219 Fore he was demyd the doughtyeste that duellyde in erthe.

MA 3443 For the doughtyeste that euer was duelland in erthe;

(5) *to . . . the soothe / as I tell*

MA 3556 Forthy I merkede ouer thees mowntes to mene the the sothe.

G 26 Ay watz Arthur the hendest, as I haf herde telle.

(6) *as the book says, etc.*

A 881 Sone eftir in a seson, as the duke sais,

Pat 60 I schal wysse yow therwyth as holy wryt telles.

(7) *on bent, etc.*

MA 1067 that here are brochede on bente and brittened with thi handez,

W 156 The thirde banere one bent es of blee whitte,

Among these seven tags, the sixth pattern, namely the phrase “as the book says” and similar expressions, are special because these phrases occupy the entire half-line. In explanation of these seven tags, Oakden shows many examples for certain patterns while only a few for others. Furthermore, even if he offers several examples, they tend to be taken from limited sources. This essay solicits as many as examples from the major alliterative poems of the fourteenth century in order to provide a comprehensive view of how this phrase is used under the constraints of alliterative meter.<sup>i</sup>

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The basic collocation pattern can be postulated as follows: Both the noun and the verb can lexically vary while other words such as dative pronouns or modal auxiliaries can be added providing that they would be unstressed and not receive metrical stress. Though Oakden uses the verb, “say,” in his template, “tell” is much more frequent:

Second Half Line → *as* + NOUN + VERB

The following examples are composed in the structure of “as the book tells.” The collocation pattern of this structure is that “the book” and “tells” occupy the second half-line in that particular order. The alliteration pattern is shown in brackets after each example. If the line does not alliterate in the basic [aaax] pattern, it is marked with an asterisk:

A 17	That was the athill Alexsandire, <u>as the buke tellis</u> ,	[a-a-b-t]*
A 35	Thus ware thai breued for the best, <u>as the buke tellis</u> ;	[b-b-b-t]
A 203	Thare thai wrate tham I-wis, <u>as the buke tellis</u> ,	[w-w-b-t]*
A 699	Bo3es him vp to a brenke, <u>as the buke tellis</u> ,	[b-b-b-t]
A 1242	Ane Beritinus, a berne, <u>as the buke tellis</u> ,	[b-b-b-t]
A 1430	Was Balaan the bald berne, <u>as the boke tellis</u> ,	[b-b-b-t]
A 1615	And thai meruailed tham mekill, <u>as the buke tellis</u> ,	[m-m-b-t]*
A 1668	3it bedis he him, the bald kyng, <u>as the buke tellis</u> ;	[b-b-b-t]
A 1691	Ane Ardromacius, a gome, <u>as the buke tellis</u> .	[a-g-b-t]*
PPB P. 101	To bynde and vnbynde, <u>as the boke telleth</u> ,	[b-b-b-t]
T 167	These balfull bestes were, <u>as the boke tellus</u> ,	[b-b-b-t]
A 916	The son of ane Cerastis, <u>as the buke witnes</u> .	[s-s-b-w]*

The collocation pattern is a noun followed by a verb though the reverse order is quite possible as seen in many other lines. It is noteworthy that the base expression is frequent in *The Wars of Alexander* but not so in others. Another significant point is that alliteration in these lines is sometimes corrupt. The ME alliterative line typically alliterates in the first three stressed syllables. The line remains alliterative if the first two stressed syllables alliterate with each other,

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and this is the case for A 17, A 203, A 1615, and A 916. Line 1691 sounds quite deviated due to the lack of alliteration.

All of the three elements—*as*, the noun, and the verb—may be replaced by other lexical items. The following is the case in which a different noun is used in the same structure. Let us consider such a case as one-step replacement. Examples can be found in most of the poems:<sup>ii</sup>

<i>MA</i> 274	Couerd it of comons, <u>as cronicles telles.</u>	[k-k-k-t]
<i>MA</i> 3218	Thane this comlyche Kyng, <u>as cronycles tellys,</u>	[k-k-k-t]
<i>G</i> 643	that Cryst ka3t on the croys, <u>as the crede tellez;</u>	[k-k-k-t]
<i>Pat</i> 60	I schal wysse yow therwyth <u>as holy wryt telles.</u>	[w-w-w-t]
<i>PPB</i> 1.128	Ac tho that worche wel, <u>as holiwritt telleth,</u>	[w-w-w-t]
<i>A</i> 1439	And qua sa leddirs had nane, <u>as the lyne tellis,</u>	[l-n-l-t]*
<i>Ages</i> 306	Sir Ectore was everous <u>als the storye telles,</u>	[e-e-s-t]*
<i>Ages</i> 423	In the Olde Testament <u>as the storye tellis,</u>	[o-t-s-t]*
<i>J</i> 826	With the ston o[f] a staf[-slyng] <u>as the storyj telleth</u>	[s-s-s-t]
<i>T</i> 922	This stone full of strenght, <u>as the story tellus,</u>	[s-s-s-t]
<i>T</i> 286	To this Journey with Jason, <u>as the gest tellus:</u>	[j-j-j-t]
<i>A</i> 144	And quen he come to that kith, <u>as the chance tellis,</u>	[k-k-tʃ-t]*
<i>A</i> 885	Litill kyngis thar come, <u>as the clause tellis,</u>	[k-k-k-t]
<i>A</i> 1613	Thare was comen with him kyngis, <u>as the clause tellis,</u>	[k-k-k-t]
<i>A</i> 200	All the sawis of thaire Syre, <u>as Siraphis tald,</u>	[s-s-s-t]
<i>MA</i> 4346	Into Bretayne the Brode, <u>as the Bruytte tellys.</u>	[b-b-b-t]
<i>MA</i> 3552	And has wroghte hire with childe, <u>as wittnesse tellis.</u>	[w-tʃ-w-t]*
<i>A</i> 725	For it was wont,” quod the wee, “ <u>as wyse men tellis,</u>	[w-w-w-t]
<i>MA</i> 279	Ilkane ayere aftyre other, <u>as awlde men telles;</u>	[a-o-a-t] <sup>iii</sup>
<i>MA</i> 1251	He drawes into douce Fraunce, <u>as Duchemen tellez,</u>	[d-d-d-t]
<i>G</i> 272	Bot if thou be so bold <u>as alle burnez tellen,</u>	[b-b-b-t]
<i>WW</i> 26	Fro he can jangle <u>als a jaye and japes telle,</u>	[j-j-j-t]
<i>T</i> 1027	One Telamon trewly, <u>as the text sayse,</u>	[t-t-t-s]
<i>T</i> 923	Is erdan& in Jude, <u>as Isoder sais:</u>	[e-j-i-s]
<i>A</i> 881	Sone eftir in a seson, <u>as the duke sais,</u>	[s-s-d-s]*
<i>T</i> 154	Beyonde the terage of Troy <u>as the trety sayse,</u>	[t-t-t-s]

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Replacing the noun that conforms to the alliteration sound is a useful device though several lines, marked with an asterisk above, show only two stressed syllables alliterating. An interesting case is A 881 in which the verb “sais” does alliterate with the first two metrical beats. The poets deliberately use these varying devices in order to avoid the monotonous repetition of regular alliteration (Kane, 80). As Smith (93) claims, “a framework of modulation between norm and deviation, linked to literary salience, lies at the heart of alliterative verse-practice.”

Another one-step replacement is adding a dative pronoun to the base:

A 597      This barne, quen he borne was, as me the boke tellis,  
[b-b-b-t]

Adding a dative pronoun to the base structure can be considered a one-step replacement. If a noun other than “book” is used in order to alliterate in the base pattern as seen in the following lines, the line undergoes a two-step change:

MA 3501    For he es in this empire, as hathell men me telles,      [e-h-h-t]  
A 278      In the first compas I ken, as me the claus tellis,      [k-k-k-t]  
A 437      Thai ere thus mekill to mene, as me my mynd tellis. [m-m-m-t]  
J 108      And alle thre ben bot one as eldres vs tellen      [a-o-e-t]  
MA 2399    The lordchipe es louely, as ledes me telles.      [l-l-l-t]  
MA 2876    In the Vale of Iosephate, as gestes vs telles,      [v-j-j-t]\*  
MA 3006    Gas in at the gayneste, as gydes hym telles,      [g-g-g-t]  
MA 3200    And this roye ryall, as romawns vs tellis,      [r-r-r-t]  
WW 293    The more colde es to come, als me a clerke tolde." [k-k-k-t]

The following lines also have a dative pronoun, but the collocation pattern is reversed to a verb plus a noun in addition to the replacement of the word “book,” which can be considered three-step replacement:

A 1485      The ni3t eftir the note, as tellis me the writtes,      [n-n-t-w]\*  
T 1619      In that Cite for sothe, as saith vs the story,      [s-s-s-s]

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A 709 Vnethis werped he that worde, the writt me recordis, [w-w-w-r]

Another two-step replacement is the line that contains a different noun and a different verb in the base collocation pattern:

<i>Ages</i> 240	And lepis upe one the lefte syde <u>als the laghe askes</u> .	[l-l-l-a]
<i>G</i> 1327	And didden hem derely vndo <u>as the dede askez</u> ;	[d-d-d-a]
<i>A</i> 1500	Raueste all on a raw, <u>as 3oure rewill askis</u> .	[r-r-r-a]
<i>G</i> 530	And wynter wyndez a3ayn, <u>as the worlde askez</u> ,	[w-w-w-a]
<i>MA</i> 2187	Wirke nowe thi wirchipe, <u>as the worlde askes</u> ,	[w-w-w-a]
<i>MA</i> 2385	Gud Sir Cador at Came, <u>as his kynde askes</u> .	[k-k-k-a]
<i>PPB</i> p.19	Worchyng and wandryng, <u>as the worlde asketh</u> .	[w-w-w-a]
<i>PPB</i> p.120	To tilie and to trauaile, <u>as trewe lyf asketh</u> .	[t-t-t-a]
<i>G</i> 1999	the day dryuez to the derk, <u>as Dry3tyn biddez</u> ;	[d-d-d-d-b]
<i>MA</i> 1590	And kend hym to the constable, <u>alls the Kynge byddez</u> ;	[k-k-k-b]
<i>MA</i> 1617	Now bownes the Bretons, als the Kynge byddez,	[b-b-k-b]*
<i>C</i> 843	That we may lere hym of lof, <u>as oure lyst biddez</u> ,	[l-l-l-b]
<i>A</i> 608	And he wald-e3ed was, <u>as the writt schewys</u> ,	[w-w-w-ʃ]
<i>J</i> 970	To be lord ouer that lond <u>as this letres speketh</u>	[l-l-l-s]
<i>T</i> 416	All thies Japes ho enioynit <u>as Gentils beleued</u> ,	[j-j-j-b]

*MA* 1617 shows irregular alliteration. If the phrase “the Kynge byddez” were reversed to “byddez the Kynge,” the alliteration would be a regular [b-b-b-k]. The *Morte Arthure* poet sometimes uses irregular patterns in a deliberate manner again to avoid a monotonous rhythm.

Other replacement patterns, though not very frequent, are as follows:

Replacement of “as” (one-step replacement):

*PPB* 5.491 And al for the best, as I bileue, what euere the boke telleth,  
[b-b-b-t]

Replacement of “book” and without “as” (two-step replacement):

*A* 940 Than comes Alexander in that cas, the cronaclis tellis,

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[k-a-k-k-t]\*

Replacement of “as,” “book,” and “tell” (three-step replacement):

*PPB* 1.072      That such wise wordes, of holy writ shewed;      [w-w-w-] ]  
*A* 1592      This title, Tetragramaton, for so the text tellis.      [t-t-t-t]

There is a significant difference regarding the common positions for “tell” and “say.” “Tell” tends to appear at the line conclusion receiving full metrical stress whereas “say” often appears before or after the first beat of the line. In such cases the verb “say” does not receive metrical stress and is realized as a metrical offbeat. In the following examples, “says” does not seem to be a metrical beat except for *E* 277:

*A* 80      Sais, "3are the now 3apely, or 3ild vp thi rewme;      [3-3-3-r]  
*A* 893      For sais 3our lord, the lefe hen, that laide hir first egg,  
[l-l-l-e]  
*E* 277      For as he says in his sothe psalmyde writtes:      [s-s-s-w]  
*MA* 554      "Bee estyre," sais the Emperour, "I ettyll my selfen      [e-e-e-s]  
*MA* 1566      Sir Knyghte," sais the Conquerour, "so me Criste helpe,  
[k-k-k-h]  
*MA* 1692      "Sir Kyng," sais Sir Clegys, "full knyghttly thow askez;  
[k-k-k-a]  
*Pat* 65      'Rys radly,' He says, 'and rayke forth euen;      [r-r-r-e]  
*T* 830      Sais, " Jason, this Jorney is no ioye in,      [j-j-j-i]  
*WW* 325      Sayse, "this es spedles speche to speken thies wordes.  
[s-s-s-w]  
*WW* 457      Says, "Blynnes, beryns, of youre brethe and of youre brode  
                   worde,      [b-b-b-b-w]

When the phrase, “the book says,” appears in places other than the line end, “says” does not receive metrical stress, which shows a significant difference from the line in which the phrase occupies the entire second half-line:

*A* 192      The buke sais, of blake stane, all the bode ouyre,      [b-b-b-o]

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A 1080	Of ilka bild, <u>sais the buke</u> , barred was the 3atis,	[b-b-b-3]
A 1371	And band hire, <u>as the buke sais</u> , bigly to-gedire,	[b-b-b-g]
A 1376	Than was the wallis, <u>sais the writt</u> , of the wale touris.	[w-w-w-t]
A 1712	First a ball, <u>says the buke</u> , the barne with to play,	[b-b-b-p]
C 657	For sothely, <u>as says the wryt</u> , he wern of sadde elde,	[s-s-s-e]

In order for both “book” and “says” receive metrical stress and function as metrical beats, the phrase must appear in the second half-line.

The lexical items that can replace “book” and “tells” are as follows:

BOOK: the gest(es); the lyne; romawns; the storye; the text

the clause; the crede; cronicles; Dry3tyn; holy wryt; the treti

the writtes

Siraphis; the Bruytte; Isoder; Kyng

alle burnez; awlde men; a clerke; Duchemen; the duke; eldres

hathell men; wittnesse; wyse men

the chance ; the dede; gydes; a jaye and japes; his kynde

the laghe; ledes

this letres; oure lyst; my mynd; 3oure rewill; trewe lyf; the worlde

TELLS: askes; byddez; recordis; sayse; shewed; schewys; speketh; tolde

From these variations it is evident that the poet refers to the common source, usually the original source assumed by the poet and the audience, the religious authority, the political authority, or social witnesses. This means that the poet tries to establish the credibility of his tale by referring to the source that is assumed powerful and reliable. This narrator’s use of reporting speech for assurance and insinuation is known as “narrative report of speech acts” (Freeborn, 223; Leech and Short, 257-87). As Fabb (265) asserts, “while the dissociation of the speaker and the attribution of a thought to a third party may be a means of communicating that the thought is untrue, it may also be a means of guaranteeing the truth of the thought.” In the context of ME alliterative verse the reported style

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may have served to strengthen the credibility of the narrative and its circulation in the outer world (Fabb, 263-67).

The examples below are similar to “as the book tells,” but the subject is first-person singular, namely, the speaker himself or herself. The noun is replaced by “I”; yet, the collocation pattern remains in the basic Noun plus Verb pattern, which is a two-step replacement:

<i>T</i> 980	When it turnyt to the tyme <u>as I told ere</u> ,	[t-t-t-e]
<i>T</i> 1416	When the Cite was sesit, <u>as I said ere</u> ,	[s-s-s-e]
<i>T</i> 1716	And touchet his entent, <u>as I telle shall</u> .-	[t-t-t-]
<i>T</i> 1906	Bothe reynit in that Rem, <u>as I red first</u> .	[r-r-r-f]
<i>T</i> 1954	Euyn fairly by fourme, <u>as I firste said</u> .	[f-f-f-s]
<i>T</i> 682	And sent to that semly, <u>as ho said first</u> .	[s-s-s-f]

The following is a further replacement case:

<i>A</i> 24	The wysest wees of the werd, <u>as I in writt fynd</u> .	[w-w-w-f]
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The following lines include the verb “hear” while the subject is the first-person. Oakden lists this pattern as the fifth item of tags, but it may be considered a three-step replacement of the sixth group:

<i>G</i> 26	Ay watz Arthur the hendest, <u>as I haf herde telle</u> .	[a-h-h-t]
<i>G</i> 31	I schal telle hit as-tit, <u>as I in toun herde</u> ,	[t-t-t-h]
<i>G</i> 1144	A hundreth of hunteres, <u>as I haf herde telle</u> ,	[h-h-h-t]
<i>A</i> 366	For may thou hald me this hest, <u>as thou here tellis</u> ,	[h-h-h-t]
<i>PPB</i> p.164	And otherwhile thei aren elles-where, <u>as I here telle</u> .	[o-e-h-t]

Another variation is the phrase of “tell the truth”:

<i>Agas</i> 103	And whate I seghe in my saule <u>the sothe I schall telle</u> .	[s-s-s-t]
<i>Agas</i> 159	Totheles and tenefull, <u>I tell yowe for sothe</u> ;	[t-t-t-s]
<i>Agas</i> 501	And whatt selcouthes he see <u>the sothe scholde he telle</u> .	

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		[s-s-s-t]
<i>Ages</i> 650	I am thi sire and thou my sone, <u>the sothe for to telle</u> ,	[s-s-s-t]
<i>A</i> 463	“To quam has thou the tane till, <u>tell m[e] the sothe?</u> ”	[t-t-t-s]
<i>A</i> 515	Beso3t him quat it sygnified, <u>to tell him the treuthe</u> .	[s-s-t-t]*
<i>A</i> 729	“Sa ma aydeus,” quod that othire man, <u>“thou tellis me treuthe,</u>	[a-o-t-t]*
<i>WW</i> 17	Bot whoso sadly will see <u>and the sothe telle</u> ,	[s-s-s-t]
<i>WW</i> 181	Whitte als the whalles bone, <u>whoso the sothe tellys</u> ,	[w-w-s-t]*
<i>WW</i> 221	"Now certys, lorde," sayde that one, <u>"the sothe for to telle</u> ,	[s-l-s-s-t]
<i>T</i> 517	Ercules of armes, <u>and auntres to telle</u>	[e-a-a-t]
<i>T</i> 526	Will ye suffer me to say, <u>and the sothe telle?</u>	[s-s-s-t]
<i>T</i> 1610	In Ensamble of this Cite, <u>sothely to telle</u> ,	[s-s-s-t]

Lines that have the conjunction “as” in the middle other than the phrase “as the book tells” reveal another special metrical feature. The structure that introduces a subordinate clause in the second half-line is one of the devices that many ME alliterative poets utilize. The conjunction can introduce other types of subordinate clauses:

<i>A</i> 1521	And then he caggis vp on cordis, <u>as</u> curteyns it were,	[k-k-k-w]
<i>Ages</i> 400	Thare he was dede of a drynke, <u>as</u> dole es to here,	[d-d-d-h]
<i>C</i> 1726	By vch fygure, as I fynde, <u>as</u> oure Fader lykes:	[f-f-f-l]
<i>E</i> 316	By Goddes leue, as longe <u>as</u> I my3t lacche water,	[l-l-l-w]
<i>G</i> 73	The best burne ay abof, <u>as</u> hit best semed,	[b-b-b-b-s]
<i>J</i> 54	Cloudes clateren gon <u>as</u> they cleue wolde	[k-k-k-w]
<i>MA</i> 55	In Bretayn the Braddere, <u>as</u> hym beste lykes.	[b-b-b-l]
<i>PPA</i> 5. 71	I mi3e not many day do <u>as</u> a man au3te,	[m-m-m-a]
<i>PPB</i> P. 29	Delited hym in drynke <u>as</u> the deuel wolde,	[d-d-d-w]
<i>T</i> 500	Till it fell hir by fortune, <u>as</u> I fynd here,	[f-f-f-h]
<i>Pat</i> 340	And ther he brakez vp the buyrne <u>as</u> bede hym oure Lorde.	[b-b-b-l]

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These examples suggest that the clause introduced by “as” in the second half-line can be a common structure though lexical combinations in each occasion may differ. This suggests the habitual use of particular collocations of words (Lawrence; Moriya, “Habitual Collocations”). Adding a clause that remains in a different hierarchy level in the grammatical structure may have been a useful device because the syntactic boundary prior to the final beat easily creates a pause. The structure of the alliterative line encourages the poets to build their half-lines around established collocations in a predictable way especially toward the end of the line that is free from the alliteration constraint (Moriya, “Vertical Alliteration”). Turville-Petre’s observation (88) that the underlying structure of the first half-line is lexical while that of the second half-line is syntactic has been demonstrated in the examples provided above. It is indeed amazing that the poets do not rely on ready-made phrases but carefully chose varying sets of words for different lines. Alliterative verse, in other words, is not made up of prefabricated units for composition. But ME alliterative poems utilize similar lexical collocations in a similar metrical context in addition to simple alliteration. These collocation patterns seem to play a more subtle but important role than ready-made phrases. As Turville-Petre asserts, “it is a striking feature of the alliterative style that words are paired and grouped together in a predictable way, and that as a result one line often recalls lines from other poems” (83).

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<sup>i</sup> The corpora used for this analysis and their abbreviations are: Excerpts from *The Wars of Alexander* (A), 2005 lines; *The Parlement of the Thre Ages* (Ages), 661 lines; *Cleanness* (C), 1812 lines; *Saint Erkenwald* (E), 352 lines; *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* (G), 2020 lines; *The Siege of Jerusalem* (J), 1234 lines; *The Alliterative Morte Arthure* (MA), 4346 lines; *Patience* (Pat), 531 lines; Excerpts from *Piers Plowman*, A Text (PPA), 1180 lines; Excerpts from *Piers Plowman*, B Text (PPB), 1030 lines; Excerpts from *The Destruction of Troy* (T), 3531 lines; *Wynnere and Wastoure* (W), 503 lines.

<sup>ii</sup> One of the special features of ME alliterative verse is that the combination of a short adjective and a noun may be flexible regarding the place of alliteration. The compound stress rule, which regards the combination of a short adjective

and a noun as a compound, operates in order to achieve common alliteration patterns. Thus, “holy wryt” in *Pat* 60 and *PPB* 1. 128 behaves as a compound while “wyse men,” “hathell men,” “awlde men”, etc. in examples used later in this essay receive metrical stress where the alliteration sound falls. See Moriya “Natural Speech Rhythm” and “Review of Minkova.”

<sup>iii</sup> Vowels are supposed to alliterate with any vowel or /h/. This line, thus, fulfills the alliteration requirement in a satisfactory manner. The same is true for *T* 923.

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