

Formulaic Expressions in *The Romance of Duke Rowlande and of Sir Ottuell of Spayne*

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Summary

The objective of this paper is to make a general survey of formulaic expressions occurring in a twelve-line (one stanza) tail-rhyme romance in the Middle Ages. In this genre of literature, we can identify the presence of many types of formulaic expressions including conventional word pairs, adverbial phrases and particular small words standing at rhyme position. The existence of such formulaic expressions helps the lay people with less education and sensitivity in the Middle Ages to follow and make out the flow of a narrative. We find these linguistic and stylistic expressions are very important constituents of the language of a tail-rhyme romance which flourished in the fourteenth century England, especially in the North and North Midland.

0. Our present paper aims at making a general survey of formulaic expressions appearing in a popular tail-rhyme romance in the Middle Ages. The tail-rhyme romance taken up here in this paper for examination and analysis is *The Romance of Duke Rowlande and of Sir Ottuell of Spayne* which is considered to be composed toward the end of the fourteenth century¹, and the dialect of the original poem is Northern². The frequent appearance of the formulaic phrase 'mickle of might' attests to it. The location of the manuscript of this romance has not been decidedly identified. We wish only to give a summary by Sidney J. Herrtage: '(this poem) is an English version of the French romance of "Otinel," edited in 1859 for the series of *Les Anciens Poètes de la France*, by MM. Guessard and Michelant, from the same MS. in the Vatican Library, which contains the romance of *Fierabras*. Only one other MS. of the poem is known to be in existence, and is preserved in the library of Sir T. Phillips, No. 8345. These two versions³ differ in several minor points, one for instance as to the time of year when Otuel arrives on his message to Charles.'⁴

This romance is one of the so-called 'Charlemagne' romances, is discussed frequently in parallel with *The Sege of Melayne*, another twelve-line tail-rhyme romance. Sidney J. Herrtage includes and edits these two romances in one volume (Early English Text Society E.S. 35) .

This poem, a twelve-line tail-rhyme romance, consists

of four-stress couplets combined by a recurrent three-stress tail-rhyme line. It is made up of 1,596 lines in all, a little shorter than the length of an average tail-rhyme romance.

It would be necessary to give an outline of this story: 'While Charles and his douzeperes are enjoying themselves, Otuel, a Saracen knight, arrives with a message from the Sultan to Garcy, calling on Charles to forsake Christianity and become his vassal. Directed by Naymes he makes his way into the king's presence. He boasts of the success of the Saracens, and of his own prowess. Sir Estut, in a rage, tries to kill him, but is himself slain by Otuel. By the persuasion of Charles and Roland, the Saracen gives up his sword and delivers his message. He afterwards challenges Roland to single combat, which the latter accepts. After mass the next morning they arm for the fight, Belesant, the daughter of Charles, assisting Otuel. The fight is carried on with varied success: Roland tries to convert Otuel, but in vain. A dove settles on the Saracen's helmet, and Otuel, looking on it as a sign from heaven, agrees to become Christian. He is baptized, and Belesant is betrothed to him. Otuel proposes an expedition against his uncle Garcy, which the French agree to. On the 1st April the army starts, and arrives near Attale. Roland, Oliver, and Ogier ride out of the camp, and meet four Saracen kings, three of whom they slay: the fourth, Clariell, is taken prisoner, but the Saracens coming up, the French knights are obliged to let him go.

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Overpowered by numbers, Roland and Oliver have to fly, but Ogier is taken prisoner, and given in charge to Clariell's mistress. Otuel meets Roland and Oliver flying. They turn on the Saracens, whom they defeat with great slaughter. Otuel and Clariell agree to fight the next day. After a fierce fight the Saracen is killed. Roland is wounded in a duel with Sir Barlott, but is saved by Otuel. A general battle, during which Ogier escapes, ensues, ending in the utter rout of the Saracens. Ogier captures Garcy, and the poem ends with the wedding of Otuel and Belesant.⁵

Most of tail-rhyme romances were composed within the East Midland district, or at least upon its borders, and share many characteristics of theme, style and language. These tail-rhyme romances are often comparable with alliterative romances which were prosperous in the West Midland district during the same period and a little later.

Whereas the alliterative romances are unmistakably aristocratic in character, however, the tail-rhyme romances are as clearly more popular: they are the work of traveling minstrels, intended for a mixed audience. Many of the peculiarities of style and convention to be found in these romances are to be explained by the circumstances for which they were composed, and the modern reader must learn to adapt himself before he can expect to appreciate them to the full. In particular, a general slowness, repetitiveness, and discursiveness must be accepted and even relished. These romances were not composed for quiet reading in a study, but for recitation, often in the disturbed atmosphere of, perhaps, a village inn, to a mixed audience of no more than average intelligence; the minstrel was therefore bound to hold up the progress of his story with what seems to be mere padding, so as to give the important events time to sink in; he was well advised to repeat the most vital points two or three times.⁶

Two features of the tail-rhyme romances which would be helpful both to minstrel and to audience are the standardization of vocabulary, even in works written at the opposite ends of the East Midlands, and the use of conventional groups of rhymes. This standardization would help the minstrel in the

composition of the romances and above all in its recitation: the standard vocabulary would eliminate the necessity of memorizing rare epithets, and the occurrence of the first of a group of rhyme words would automatically remind the minstrel of the framework of the rest of the stanza. Similarly, the same features would help the audience to follow the story: the standardization of the vocabulary would mean that all the words used would be familiar, and the standard rhyme-groups would give the audience due warning of what was to come.⁷

The feature of the tail-rhyme romances which offers most difficulty to the modern reader is the tail-rhyme line itself, which is at times almost meaningless and nearly always seems to interrupt the flow of the narrative; yet this too plays its part in helping both the minstrel and the audience. The use of standardized tail-rhyme lines naturally facilitates composition and recitation; but it also offers unparalleled opportunities for inserting passing remarks which will, as it were, direct the attention of the audience. The minstrel can frequently remind his audience of details which might be forgotten -- a name, a date, a circumstance, any feature which is vital to the understanding of the story.⁸

1. There are several patterns of rhyme schemes of tail-rhyme stanza (i.e. short couplets, heroic couplets, six-line tail-rhyme, seven-line tail-rhyme (rhyme-royal), etc.). The most popular rhyme scheme in twelve-lined stanzas runs as follows: *aab ccb ddb eeb*. Every third line contains only three feet, the others four each. The one which is employed in *Rowlande and Ottuell* (henceforth thus shortened for the full title) runs as follows: *aab aab ccb ccb*. This rhyme scheme, however, sometimes breaks down: i.e. stanzas 59 (*aab aab ccb ddb*), 83 (*aab ccb ddb ddb*), 125 (*aab aab ccb ddb*) and 126 (*aab ccb ddb ddb*). In many twelve-line tail-rhyme romances, some breaking-downs of the rhyme-scheme are often observed.

This romance is divided, naturally enough in this rhyme-scheme, into four triplets; in each triplet the first two lines have four stresses each, the third (so-called 'tail-rhyme line') has only three stresses.

In tail-rhyme romances, generally speaking, so-called formulaic expressions are used in large quantities. These linguistic techniques help the reader or listener to make out the flow of a narrative. The audience of romances in the Middle Ages were not so well-informed or educated, and therefore the frequent and quantitative use of popular formulaic expressions was essential to the traveling minstrels. In particular, such expressions are very outstanding in tail-rhyme lines, that is, at b-line. Examples from *Rowlande and Ottuell* are: *game and glee, dale and down, blood and bone, night and day, far and near, fierce and fell, (with) might and main, (fair of) flesh and fell, mild of mode, seemly (/selly) to see, doughty under shield, worthily in weed, lovesome under ðine, without ween (/delay)*, etc. We find that stereotyped alliterative expressions are in particular favoured at this position. Needless to say, these banal expressions occur also at non-b-line.

2. Before entering into the main items of formulaic expressions, the following is worthy of attention: that is, with hardly any exceptions, a tail-rhyme romance consisting of twelve-line stanzas begins with a calling or appealing to the listeners or readers at one time, and with an invocation or prayer to God, Christ or Mary. Here in our romance runs as follows:

Lordynges, þat bene hende and Free,
Herkyngs alle hedir-wardes to mee,
Gif þat it be 3our will. (1-4)

'Lordings, who are hend and free' is very common in tail-rhyme romances. 'Lordings' (= 'Sirs, Gentlemen') are frequent as a form of address in Middle English poetry at large. The pattern 'hearken to me' is also stereotyped.

And, our romance ends with an invocation or benediction to Jesus Christ :

And Iesus Criste þat boghte vs dere,
Brynge vs to thi Blissess sere!
Amen, par charite! (1594-96)

It is customary for the writer or storyteller to

call upon the divine being for protection, or for the utmost happiness, i.e. bliss. These kinds of major units of sentences surround the front part and the hind part of an individual romance.

3. In all the tail-rhyme romances, there appear a few or several or many references to the classical sources on which each individual story is based. Such a reference is intended to make the audience sure the plausibility of a story a minstrel narrates. This statement is also true of this romance:

Als þe cronykills vs gan say, 15 (b)
And forthir in Romance als 3e mon here; 37
Als þe bukes gan vs saye --- 381 (b)
þe boke vs telles Soo. 942 (b)
One bukes as we rede. 1419 (b)

As seen from line 37, we find that this romance has its root in French ('in Romance'). Of much notice is that such references to the classical sources occur at b-line in most cases. It seems that the audience expected the appearance of such formulaic expressions at proper intervals within each individual romance. In narrating romances in front of the lay people, it was essential for the minstrels to insert such references or old pieces of information between new pieces of information. In addition to these three key words ('chronicle', 'romance' and 'book') in these contexts, there are some more similar words such as 'rime', 'gest', 'story', 'tale', 'French', etc.

In particular, the phrase or collocation 'in romance' occurs most frequently in tail-rhyme romances at large. 'In romance' generally means 'in a French language' in the literature of this genre, because most English romances are based upon French originals. This formulaic type of expressions is one of the major patterns of expression in tail-rhyme romances at large. These conventional references mostly occupy a whole line, and are situated in the latter half of a poetic line in some:

And Certis, als the bookes gane telle, 1501

The existence of an epistemic adverb 'certes' intensifies further the plausibility of a narrative. 'Certes' (<OF *certes*) is used chiefly in poetry or archaic prose to confirm a statement. This formula (1501) expressing the plausibility of a narrative may be rightly called a 'rhyme sentence'.

There are many types of protestations of the truth of a narrative in tail-rhyme romances. In our corpus appears a sole example:

pat dare I Sauely saye. 1158 (b)

In some cases, such protestation functions as a rhyme clause, and in other it occurs in the former half of a poetic line. Other examples of the similar category include: 'as I say you', 'as you may hear', 'I pray thee', 'I warn thee', etc., though these instances do not chance to appear in our present corpus.

The very clause 'I will tell you the truth' is observed in our tail-rhyme romance:

Now, lordynges, for to rede 3ou righte
Thies kynges names what þai highte,
Pe soothe I will 3ou tell. 781-83 (b)

Line 783 is not a mere protestation of the truth of a story, but bears the true meaning itself of the sentence.

4. Furthermore, there are instances of adverbial phrases expressive of the protestations of a narrative. In tail-rhyme romances, there are many types of protestations with the sense of 'certainly, truly, indeed'. This is also true of our tail-rhyme romance in question:

þay armede hym wele *with-owtten fayle*, 409
þe Bretons come *with-owtten faile*, 715
By thowsande tale *with-owtten dowtte* 701
to wete *with-owtten wene*, 1110 (b)

Such prepositional phrases as 'without ~' with the sense of 'truly, indeed' occur ubiquitously irrespective of the difference of the rhyme sche-

mes in tail-rhyme romances. These phrases of protestation tend to stand at rhyme position almost exclusively. Whether the word 'doubt' occurs or the word 'fail' occurs depends upon the rhyme mate standing before or after the word form in question. The heavy alliterative line (as seen in 1110) is also recurrent. This is also what the audience expected.

It seems that these types of phrases were very convenient and helpful both to romance writer and to minstrel. They must have felt it necessary to put this kind of padding at proper intervals within a single poem or story. The 'witout ~' phrase appears frequently in Chaucer's poetical works as well.

On the other hand, the very popular adverbial phrase of protestation 'for sooth' never appears at rhyme position :

Sir Estut of logres *for soothe* he highte, 152
A stroke to Rowlande *for soothe* he glade 554
For soothe þay mon alle dy." 1026 (b)
For soothe he hade bene slayne. 1335 (b)
For soothe alle foure in fere." 1377 (b)

Of much interest is that all the three instances appearing at head position occur at b-line. In Chaucer as well, the phrase 'for sooth' appears both at head position and internally, never standing at rhyme position.

5. The formulas expressive of prayer or supplication also occur frequently in our present corpus:

& sayde: "naye, *als mot I the.*" 184
And sche sayde, : "zee, *als mot I thee!*" 641
kyngre Clariell sayde, "*als mot I the,* 793
he said þan: "Clariell, *als mote Þou thee,* 1321

The general meaning of this type of formula is more or less 'indeed, truly, surely', with hardly any substantial meaning. These kinds of formulas are more repetitive in the latter half of a poetic line than in the form of a whole line. In Chaucer as well, this kind of formula is recurrent throughout his poetical works. It is true that this formula has little or no literal meaning, but it seems to have been a

very convenient and useful linguistic tool for the composition of a poetic line in tail-rhyme romances. The word 'thee' (<OE *Þion, Þéon*) as a verb ('to thrive, prosper') is used in particular as asseveration or imprecation throughout Middle English poetry. Chaucer also uses this word in the similar context :

By God, men may in olde bookes rede
Of many a man moore of auctorite
Than evere Caton was, *so moot I thee*,
NPT 2974-76
The child seyde, "*Also moote I thee*,
Tomorwe wol I meete with thee,
Whan I have my armoure; Sir Thopas
817-19

We rightly expect Chaucer's passage (L.D.Benson glosses: as I may prosper (I swear)⁹), because this poem is obviously a parody of tail-rhyme romances. Here as elsewhere, Chaucer borrows expressions from tail-rhyme romances. The language in tail-rhyme romances enriches the poetic language of Chaucer.

At a single word level, several words of the similar meaning of protestation occur in our present corpus:

And ane hawberke *sekerly*, 353
"Feghte one, dere Sone, *hardely*, 446
he schall be sauede nowe, *pardee*." 953

'Pardie' (<OF *par dé*) (a form of oath = 'By God') with the meaning of 'verily, certainly, assuredly, indeed' is used as asseverations in most cases in tail-rhyme romances as in other genres of Middle English literature. Sometimes, this adverb or interjection appears as a two-word collocation ('par deu', 'per dee', etc.)

6. In tail-rhyme romances as in other types of romances, there is tremendous quantity of prepositional phrases (e.g. 'without ~') expressing the agility of motion ('quickly, soon, immediately'). It is true of our present corpus as well :

And owte of Spayne there come *in hye*

56, 133, 242, 253, 532, 600 (b) ,
608, 712, 919, 1029 (b) , 1153,
1216, 1447

Sayd: "send owte Rowlande *withowtten hone* 341
And vn-to sir Rowlande saide he *in haste*: 581
& one þay lepe *with-owte lettynge* 605
To berye þam *withowtten lett*, 1181, 1384

The obsolete noun 'hie (/hy)' is used chiefly in the phrase 'in hie' with the meaning of 'in haste, quickly, soon', and often added merely for rime's sake. This is precisely true of our present corpus as well. The word 'hone' (= 'delay, tarrying') is used chiefly in the phrase 'without (/but) ~', often functioning as a convenient metrical tag. Line 341 is recorded as the fourth citation in OED.

Now and then, this formula appears in the form of a full line:

With-owtten more delaye. 384 (b)

The following is similar in meaning:

Within a littill stounde: 1062 (b)

These two instances are so-called 'old information', appropriate for occurring at b-line (three-foot line).

On the other hand, there are many cases where a single word expresses the agility of motion :

To kyng Charles full *hastilye*, 59, 350, 1306, 1315
& I schall tell 3ow *tyte*: -- 204
to arme hym wele Þay were full *snelle*, 403
sir Garpy come girdande *suythe*, 901

Generally, these verbs of the agility of motion are strengthened by an adverb of intensification ('full') (59, 1306, 1315, 403). The adverb 'tite' (<ON *titt* 'frequently, often') is used both in prose and verse. Furthermore, this adverb is frequently combined with a small word 'as', thus functioning as a rhyme phrase as seen in :

Þan seyde Lybeaus *also tyte*, *Lybeaus Des-*
conus 784

The word in question is registered as the third citation in OED. This adverb is naturally seen in Northern and North-midland romances.

The adverb 'snell' (<OE *snel(l)*, ON *snjallr*) was originally used as an adjective of quick motion, and in ME frequently as a general epithet of commendation.

Its use as an adverb (= 'quickly, promptly, swiftly') begins with c1300 (*Cursor Mundi*). The word exhibits a great variety of meanings in the Scandinavian languages. This adverb is also combined by an adverb of intensification ('as', 'so' and 'full') very frequently in order to perfect the meter and rhythm.

The adverb 'swithe' (<OE *swiðe*) originally qualified a finite verb or a participle, which meant 'forcibly; extremely, excessively'. And in ME, the meaning changed into the agility of motion ('quickly, immediately, at once'). In this case as well, this adverb is frequently combined by an adverb of intensification ('as', 'so' and 'full'). Chaucer uses this adverb 18 times, of which 15 times are followed by an adverb of intensification ('as', 'so' and 'full'). And 13 times are used as a rhyme word. In Chaucer as in tail-rhyme romances, this adverb basically functions as a rhyme word.

7. In *Rowland and Ottuell* as in other tail-rhyme romances, occur many kinds of similes which seem essential to and stylistically useful for the smooth flow of a narrative:

þe Sara3ene stirte vp *breme as bare*. 166,
802
And 3it he cried *breme als bore*: 1237
he come als *breme als any bore* 1396
And *ferde als a wilde lyoun*, 173
And stert vp *fers als any lyoun*, 470
So thikke þaire dynttis to-gedir pelyde,
thaire armours hewenn lay in te felde,
Als floure þat strewede were. 502-04
Als lely like was hir coloure,
Hir rode *rede als rose floure*,
In lere þat rynnnes righte. 619-21 (b)
"What?" sayde þat lady *white als fame*, 967

He was *lyghte als lefe one tree*. 996 (b)

The assonant simile '*breme as boar*' is very common in romances. 'Breme' (<OE *bróeme* ('celebrated, famous')) was 'more decidedly northern in ME. use, (and) is at present unexplained.'¹⁰ This adjective means 'fierce, furious, raging' when used of beasts, and in particular used as an epithet of the boar. The simile 'fierce as a lion' is not infrequent. A lady's facial colour is often like a 'flower, lily', and her complexion is 'red as rose flower'. A heroine in romance is also often 'white as foam'. The alliterative simile '*light as leaf on tree*' is very popular as well. Heroines are often expressed figuratively with the use of such beautiful similes as 'white as swan (/snow / whale's bone / lily / flower)', '*bright (/red) as blossom on brier*' or red as *rose*. Heroes such as knights or other warriors in battlefield are almost always qualified metaphorically with the use of such wild beasts as 'wild as a boar'. These linguistic phenomena are quite common not only in tail-rhyme romances at large, but also in other types of romances. Alliterative collocations tend to be preferred. This kind of figure of speech seems naturally to have been welcomed by the masses with less erudition and imagination.

8. The frequent occurrence of stereotyped alliterative phrases in tail-rhyme romances is a major linguistic characteristic :

And Semely appon Sille. 9 (b)
Pat Selly was to see." 150 (b)
Perse, seemly one to see, 212
lepe on a stede seemly to see, 1210
þat doghety vnder schelde; 369 (b)
Sqwyers doghety vndir schelde, 679
þat doghety was of dede. 1560 (b)
In to a Medowe Semely to sighte, 382
þe kyng toke þat brighte in boure 622
þe prouynce worthily in with wone 707
Pat worthily were in wede; 714 (b)
And worthily vndir wede, 861 (b)
cf. & worthily was þaire wede. 720
Pat lofesome vnder lyne, 846 (b)

the lady lufsome vnder lyne 1279
 Was comely one to calle; 1011 (b)
 Full Grymly in his gere. 1443 (b)
 Þat seemly was to see. 1587 (b)

The expressions of the highest frequency are 'seemly to see', 'worthily in wede' and 'doughty of deed'. These types of banal expressions generally belong to the so-called old information, with hardly any substantial meaning. Naturally enough, they occur at b-line in most cases. These formulas express a physical beauty of a heroine, outwardly well-looking in a martial armour, and a bravery of warriors in battlefield. The substantive 'line' in these contexts means 'clothes', used in ME. poetry as a mere expletive. The formula 'lovesome under line' occurs in *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, *Sir Tristram*, etc., including *Rowland and Ottuell*. Line 846 is the last citation in OED. 'Lovesome lady' is a common collocation. In Chaucer, Criseyde is referred to as 'O lufsom lady bryght' (TC. V 465). A harshly-sounding formula 'grimly in gear' is also repetitive in tail-rhyme romances. 'Worthily' as an adjective (a variant of *worthly* (adj.) after *worthy*) is used only in late ME, and that it is used primarily as alliterative poems (e.g. *Sir Gawain and Green Knight*, *Pearl*, *William of Palerne*, *Morte Arthure*, *Anturs of Arthur*, etc.). We find that the obsolete adjective 'worthily' is a very limited word of usage. When used in tail-rhyme romances, it never fails to be used in such a stereotyped formulas as 'worthily under wede'. The substantive 'wede' ('garment, dress, apparel') is used in ME poetry in the expletive phrase 'in (/under) weed', usually appended to an adjective, as 'worth(l)y, wight, wise'. In tail-rhyme romances, this substantive occurs very often (e.g. *Amis and Amiloun*, *Emare*, *Torrent of Portyngale*, *Sir Degrevant*, etc.). We find that this formula is also preferred very much.

The substantive 'sille' in 'Semely appon Sille' is originally 'a large beam or piece of squared timber' (*obs.*), and in ME poetry sometimes used in the sense of 'floor'¹¹. The word in question (line 9) is quoted as the sixth citation in OED. This formula is quite a rare alliterative expression throughout the

whole ME poetical works.

9. The type of expression such as 'mickle of might' is quite repetitive in tail-rhyme romances :

The Messangere was *mekill of pride*, 61, 392
 Of Cristen men *mekill of myghte*, 143
 Belesent, *brighte of blee*; 393 (b) , 521
 Þat *brighteste* was of *hewe*, 414 (b)
 Þe kynge tuke his doghetir *faire of face* 614,
 1072
 þat es so *mylde of mode*, 645 (b) (of a lady)
 For Clariell dede was *stronge of mode*, 1346

These formulas express a physical strength of a male member engaging in battle, a physical beauty of a heroine, mental quality of a hero's or heroine's character, etc. All the seven formulas listed above occur very frequently in other tail-rhyme romances as well.

The similar type of formula 'of mickle might' is also repetitive :

This noble kynge of *grete powere* 38, 209
 A lorde of *grete bountee*: 153 (b) , 239
 This noble kynge of *grete pouste* 214
 And a man of *mekill myghte*; 515, 955
 Þat lady of *grete renoun*; 735 (b) , 1206
 lordes Þat weren of *mekill pride* 1285
 A man of *mekill pryce*, 1470 (b)

Such substantives as 'power', 'pousty', 'might', 'bounty', 'renoun', 'pride', 'price', etc. are in particular preferred. A heavy alliterative formula 'a man of mickle might' tends to occur frequently in tail-rhyme romances. The substantive 'poustie (/pousté)' (<OF *poesté*, *pousté*, 'power, strength, might, authority') is used also in a major romance *Guy of Warwick* ('An erl of *gret pouste*') .

A simpler type of formula 'of might' also occurs not infrequently :

he was a kynge of *myghte*." 348 (b)
 kynge Balsame, a *mane of myghte*, 784
 Þat moste es man of *myghte*. 885 (b)

Sayd: "Sen we hafe gettyn tis kyng *of price*, 866
thies two knyghtes *of renoun*. 1002

The laudatory adjectival phrase 'of price' is frequent in ME poetry at large. Chaucer also uses this phrase in Sir Thopas :

Men speken of romances *of prys*,
Of Horn child and of Ypotys,
Of Beves and sir Gy,
Of sir Lybeux and Pleyndamour --
But sir Thopas, he bereth the flour
Of roial chivalry! (897-902)

He makes a parody of tail-rhyme romances prevalent in the North and North Midland in those days. The phrase 'romances of price', though usually good in meaning, is cynical enough in Chaucer's context. He teaches us that this phrase is used at rhyme position.

Furthermore, the prepositional phrase 'with ~' is also repetitive:

þe Sara3ene ansuerde *with mekill myghte*;
268, 484, 1084, 1429
thankede þam *with mylde mode*, 875
& rescchewsede hym *with honour*. 1536 (b)

The phrases of relatively high frequency are 'with might', 'with mode', 'with honour', 'with pride', etc. In particular, the phrase 'with mickle might' tends to be in particular preferred.

10. In tail-rhyme romances, word pairs, in particular copulated with a similar meaning, occur ubiquitously, and that at rhyme position:

And herkyns nowe of *gamen & glee*, 5, 33 (b)
þat was sir Cherloles *gut & fine*, 14, 849 (b)
With his dusperes *doghety and dym* 16
Solde þam *ille and wickedly* 20
þat were holden *felle & fiers* 41, 862
þat es full noble & *felle & fere*, 89
þat was bothe *ferse and felle* 407, 786 (b)
My selfe was þer in *Batelle & faughte*, 148
With 3our *boste & 3our pryde?* 261 (b)

For 3oure *boste and 3oure folye*, 1049
Dare warne hym *huntynge & fyschyng* fre, 272
Bothe with *myghte & mayne*." 318 (b) ,
1338 (b) , 1434 (b) , 1478 (with myghte and
with mayne)
Bothe with *Mayne & myghte*. 882 (b)
His helme was bothe *harde and holde*, 415
"God," he said, "þat alle schall *dighte & dele*, 490
þat es so *hardy and* so *wighte*, 514, 972
With *sadde dynttes & sare*. 534 (b)
Drondale felle so *sadde and sare* 550, 571, 1456
With *menske & with myche honoure*, 623
With towrres *heghe & dere*. 630 (b)
Mi Cites *brekes & bristles*: 666 (b)
In dyuerse countres *brode & wyde*, 677
And saughe there powere *stythe & stowtte*
699 (b)
With hert *Egire & throo*. 831 (b) , 1092 (b)
that were halden full *steryn & stoute*, 887
þat alle schall *deme & dighte*. 1269 (b) , 1317 (b)
Broghte hym ane *helme was riche & dere*
1276
Bothe with *traye & tene*. 1290 (b) , 1518 (b)
Bot *stronge strokes & steryn*. 1407
Bothe in *slakes & in slade*, 1418
Full Grisely þay *grone & grenne*, 1423
þe horse was *styffe þuoghe & strange*, 1552
And when this Message es *down & dighte*, 190

We see at a glance that these types of formula are made up of alliteration and assonance in most cases, and that they stand at rhyme position. Much-favoured word pairs throughout tail-rhyme romances are '(with) *might and main*', '*game and glee*', '*hardy and wight*', '*boast and pride*', etc. These word pairs occur frequently irrespective of the differences of dialects. The word pair '(with) *might and main*' occurs at b-line in most cases. Word pairs consisting of 'st-' alliteration occur in tail-rhyme romances of northern dialect. The word pair '*sad and sore*' is used exclusively for the 'dynt' of martial weapons. The tautological word pair '*tray and tene*' (=sorrow and grief) tends to be preferred at rhyme position. The substantive 'tray' (<OE *tre3a*, trouble, pain) (=pain, grief, affliction) is used in particular in

alliterative phrase 'tray and teen', 'teen and tray'. The substantive 'teen' (<OE *téona*, hurt, trouble) ('affliction, trouble, suffering, grief, woe') is used singly very often. The phrase 'done and dight' (= 'ready') is used exclusively at rhyme position.

These popular word pairs tend to occur at b-line than otherwise.

Similar types of word pairs occur frequently in our present corpus:

- þat were faire of *hewe and hide*, 65, 1171, 1230
(b) , 1460
- With white berde *large and lange*, 80, 1308
(b) , 1553
- Faire of *flesche & felle*. 81 (b)
- At *Batayle or at any Semble*, 107, 197
- He distruyes bothe *londe & see*, 215
- Pat weldis bothe *tourre & towun*, 224
- Olyuer þat es *faire and free*, 238, 274, 650, 1590
(b)
- Toures, Sedoyne *ferre & fre*, 211 ('proud, fierce, bold')
- Wyn *Citees & townnes* dere, 527
- Powunce and pleasaunce* I schall gife the, 628
- þe Normandes gude of *blode & bone* 706, 891
(b) , 984 (b) , 1479 (b) , 1534, 1563 (b)
- þat euer made ne *blode ne bone*, 1295
- Pay passede bothe *dales & down*. 744 (b)
- the ferthe was *faire and auenante* 790
- To Iesus criste Pay *crye & lowte*, 884
- he gaffe þam woundes *wyde & wete*, 940
- Pay gafe þaym *wete & wyde*, 1462
- þat hardy were of *hert & hande*, 1004
- And groped hym wele *body & side* 1174
- And Brittenede þam bothe *bake & syde*, 1463
- With Baners *brode & brighte*. 1104 (b)
- For *braynes & blode* in þat stede 1114
- My lemman es bothe *faire & gent*, 1144
- Alphayne thi lemman *white & fre* 1324
- For *Ioly ne for gent*. 1200 (b)
- With mekill *myrthe & Solempnytee* 1211
- thi visage es *crounkilde & waxen olde*, 1252
- Pat *mete ne drynke* scholde done hym gude 1348
- With coloures *noble & fine*. 1353 (b)
- Pay were so *mekill & so vn-ryde*, 1459

With *strengthe & Noblitee*. 1500 (b)

Pat *worthy were & welde*: 1506 (b)

Here again, alliteration tends to be used. The formula 'hew and hide' ('hide' = 'complexion') is used mainly for a physical beauty of a heroine, and the two alliterative formulas 'flesh and fell' and 'blood and bone' are used here and there, referring to a human body. Similar formulas such as 'body and side', 'back and side', 'heart and side' are not so repetitive. The formula 'fair and free' is ubiquitous in tail-rhyme romances, referring to a lady, knight, squire and other warrior at one time, and to an inanimate thing at other. Its range of usage is quite wide. The formula 'large and long' refers to a sword, shield, banner or other weapon. The formulas 'tower and town' and 'dale and down' are also repetitive. The latter is expressive of the geographical features of England. The formula 'wide and wet' refers to an open wound given in battlefield. The formula 'fair and gent' is a representative one referring to a feminine member in tail-rhyme romances. The word 'lemman' is qualified very often by this epithet. It is a word of the heart of tail-rhyme romances.

When used in Chaucer, however, this adjective changes into a cynical meaning:

Al of a knyght was *fair and gent*

In bataille and in tourneyment;

His name was sire Thopas. Sir Thopas 715-17

Fair was this yonge wyf, and therwithal

As any wezele hir body *gent and small*. Mil.T

3233-4

The adjective in The Miller's Tale means 'slender, delicate'. The word pair 'meat and (/ne) drink' occurs in almost all tail-rhyme romances, and what we should bear in mind is that this formula never stands at rhyme position, but occurs chiefly internally, and sometimes at head position. Its inverted word order 'drink and meat' never happens. It is natural that word pairs relating to eating and drinking occur in works, verse or prose. It is unexplained why this word pair never stands at rhyme position.

Martial weapons are positioned side by side very often, and these collocations occur at head position at one time, internally at another, and stand at rhyme position in many cases:

Spere and schelde garre brynge me till, 388
 Ouer his *aktone ane hawberke* felle 404
 with *Helme & Haberioun*. 1006 (b) , 1412

The two major collocations 'spear and shield' and 'helm and habergeon' are salient. Here as elsewhere, the effect of alliteration or assonance is aimed at.

The type 'king and queen' is also repetitive in this romance :

With his *lordes and his Duspers*, 40
kyng & Duke there loste Paire lyfe; 1414, 1504,
 1564

The word 'douzepers' (<OF *douze pers*, 'twelve equals (/ peers)') was spelled as two words, but is treated as one word in English at length with a singular implying one of the class. 'In the *Romances*, the twelve peers or paladins of Charlemagne, said to be attached to his person, as being the bravest of his knights.'¹² OED quotes line 16 in this romance as the seventh citation.

Line 806 in *The Sege of Melayne* is quoted as the sixth citation:

Erles, dukes and the **twelve duchepers**,
 Bothe *barouns and bachelors*,
Knyghtis full hevenhande. (806-8)

This is a representative poetical passage which includes a list of warriors in battlefield, and the original meaning of 'douzepers' is expressed clearly. Furthermore, there are triplets and quartets consisting of words of similar category which may be called a 'list' :

Helme & hawberke, schelde & spere, 44
*House & londe, wodde & thyng*e, 232
 Dat was bothe *faire, white, & clere*, 1274
 Brusten bothe *bak, blode, & bone*, 1409

with dynt of *swerde, spere, & knife*, 1415
 token vp *Cite, toun and toure*, 1577

In this category as well, more or less the effect of alliteration is aimed at. In particular, a list of martial weapons form a line. The collocation 'shield and spear' is outstanding in frequency. The substantives 'city' and 'town' are not what we think is considered by modern standard. We may think of them as small town and village.

II. There are many so-called 'inclusive' phrases in our present corpus as well. These types of phrases for 'totality' are positioned, as might be expected, at the latter half of a poetic line :

He weldes Paynym *ferre & nere*, 208, 526, 633
 (b) ,665, 699 (b) , 916, 1102
 Bothe by *dayes and by naghtes*, 146
 Welde France by *nyghte ne day*; 251
 & trauell *nyghte & daye*: 525 (b)
 Ne none of my men *lowed nor still* 124

We have only three examples of an inclusive phrase in our present corpus, but quite a few examples occur throughout tail-rhyme romances. These formulas stand at rhyme position with hardly any exceptions. The formula 'far and near' appears very often in other tail-rhyme romances. The most popular formula 'day and (/or /nor /ne) night' (and *vice versa*) stands at rhyme position almost exclusively. D.S. Brewer says of this formula, 'collocation *day-night* is the most frequently repeated phrase in all the romances.'¹³ This formula is scarcely used in the context of joy or happiness. Either 'day' or 'night' is sometimes changed into the plural, by the necessity of rhyming. The meaning of these 'inclusive' phrases is roughly 'everyone, everything, everywhere, every time, etc.'

The popular phrase 'up and down' occurs at rhyme position :

Bot he rollede his egne both *vp & down*, 172
 He rollede his egne *vp and downn*, 424

OED explains the meaning of this phrase as '(vaguely) to and fro'¹⁴.

12. The description of the passions roused during the fight is given in a stereotyped formula of expression:

Pat he swounede *als he were wede*. 903 (b)
 & ferde *als he wolde wede*. 936 (b) , 1327
 Pay hewede one faste *als Pay were madde*,
 1529

This kind of formula also occurs almost always at rhyme position with a few marked exceptions. Generally, The rhyme word expressing the passion of madness is 'wede', but when the adjective 'mad' is used, its correspondent rhyme fellow ends with '-ad' ('bad', 'hade', 'stadde' (stanza 128)). The verb 'wede' (<OE *wédan*, 'to become mad') is used in the subjunctive mood very often in ME. alliterative poems (e.g. *William of Palerne*, *Cleanness*, *Wars of Alexander*, *Anturs of Arthur*, etc.) .

13. The formulas 'in fere', 'on hight', 'at ~'s need', 'on mold', 'on fold' and 'par charity' appear very frequently at rhyme position without any exceptions:

We schall be felawes all *in fere*, 524, 758,
 824,881, 1377 (b)
 Brayde vp his browes *one hye*. 174 (b)
 Pe Duke Naymes talkes wordes *one highte*,
 265
 And cryed *appon highte* 339 (b)
 I fayle the *at no nede*." 933 (b)
 Pat schulde hafe sauede hym *at his nede*,
 1331
 A Meryere armede knyghte *one molde* 419
 then sayde thies Damesels fre *one folde*, 418
 Forthi, gud sir, *par charyte*, 161
 Amen, par charite! 1596 (b)

The obsolete substantive 'fere' (aphetic form of OE *zefér*) (= 'companionship') is usually used in

the phrase 'in fere' (often written as one word), meaning 'in company, together'. In many cases, this phrase is strengthened by an intensifier 'all' ('all in fere'), meaning 'altogether'. Chaucer also uses this word 'ifere' (mostly in *TC* (2.152, 1037, 3.273; 2.1477 (all ~), 3.746 (all ~), 4.1333 (all ~))). In Chaucer as well, this phrase is strengthened by 'all' very frequently.

Its semantically-equivalent word 'bedene' is seen in this romance:

And dynges alle dounne *by-dene*. 1521 (b)

This obsolete adverb is 'a word of constant occurrence in northern ME. verse, but of uncertain origin; its senses runs partly parallel with those of ANON, but it is often used without any appreciable force, as a rime word, or to fill up the measure'¹⁵. This adverb is also strengthened by a small word of intensification ('all') very often. The phrase 'on hight (/high)' has a double meaning (now obsolete) : 1) aloft (174), and 2) aloud (265). Both usages stand basically at rhyme position. Chaucer also uses this phrase (Kn.T. 1784 'And spak thise same wordes al *on highte*:') .

The prepositional phrase 'at one's need' occurs at rhyme position, as might be expected. The similar phrases 'on mold' and 'on fold' generally occur in alliterative poems. In verse, these two phrases occur at rhyme position without any exception. The poetical expression 'on mould' (= 'on the earth') is used usually in heavy alliteration. The phrase of the same meaning, 'on fold' is used basically in alliterative poems (e.g. *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, *William of Palerne*, *Alexander*), but also used in tail-rhyme romances as well (e.g. *Le Bone Florence of Rome*). Line 418 in our present corpus is cited as the eighth example in OED. Both phrases function generally as a mere expletive.

The phrase 'par (/for) charity' (= 'for Christian love') is used exclusively in adjurations. Many tail-rhyme romances end with this phrase¹⁶.

14. At a single word level, two words 'dight' and 'bown' stand very often at rhyme position:

And gaily gan hym *dighte*. 402 (b) , 958, 969
 (b) , 1504, 1564
 & in Batelle ay full *bowun*." 90 (b) , 226, 421,
 472, 776, 1008, 1029 (b) , 1546
 cf. the Sara3ene saide: "I am *redy*." 448

Both 'dight' and 'boun' mean 'ready, prepared' , standing at rhyme position with hardly any exceptions. The obsolete verb 'boun' (<ON *buinn*, an older form of BOUND ppl.a.) is used basically as a past participle in tail-rhyme romances.

15. Furthermore, there are some other popular expressions, phrases and particular words. The sentences 'als I ame knyghte,' (188) and 'Als I am trewe duspere.' (192 (b)) occur when the hero concerned is totally confident of his power of assisting a person in need. The phrase 'to wring one's hands' occurs very often in the context of utter grief. The adjurations such as 'by God and Saint Denis' , 'by that dearly died on tree' , 'by saint drightin' , etc. also occur very often. There are more popular expressions, though we do not mention here.

16. As seen from the above investigation and analysis, we find that in *Rowland and Ottuell*, a typical Medieval English tail-rhyme romance, there are many kinds of popular formulas and conventional expressions. Our present tail-rhyme romance has a rhyme-scheme of *aab aab ccb ccb* with several irregular schemes, and at b-line occur many types of formulas. In other words, so-called old pieces of information are placed here at b-line. New pieces of information are generally positioned at non-b-line.

In our tail-rhyme romance, we find the existence of overflowing popular or common expressions: i.e., references to the classical sources; protestations of the veracity of a narrative; references to the calling of attention of the audience; conventional descriptions which are almost alliterative; other conventional tags or line-fillers; oaths or adjurations which are usually made in dialogues; several kinds of popular similes, etc. In addition, there are a large number of so-called 'word pairs'. Still more, there are some particular

adverbial phrases and small words occurring at rhyme position alone.

We finally find that these different kinds of popular formulas including countless familiar word pairs, adverbial phrases and small words are essential to constituents of the language of popular Medieval English tail-rhyme romances.

Notes

- 1 Fumio Kuriyagawa, *Chusei no Eibungaku to Eigo*, p.194
- 2 Fumio Kuriyagawa, *op. cit.*, p.194
- 3 The other romance is *The Sege of Melayne*.
- 4 Sidney J. Herrtage, *The English Charlemagne Romances*, Patt II, x
- 5 Sidney J. Herrtage, *op. cit.*, xxxv
- 6 A.J. Bliss, *Sir Launfal*, pp.31-2
- 7 A.J. Bliss, *op. cit.*, p.32
- 8 A.J. Bliss, *op. cit.*, p.32
- 9 Larry D. Benson, *The Riverside Chaucer*, p.214
- 10 OED, q.v./ MED, 3b. (a) Of animals: ferocious, savage; **breme as bor (bere)** , fierce as a boar
- 11 OED sill *sb*¹ / MED, sil(le) : (d) the paved floor of a house or hall. The word here is quoted as the last citation.
- 12 OED, q.v. / MED, dousse-per: (a) one of the twelve peers or paladins of Charlemagne. The word here is quoted.
- 13 D.S. Brewer, *Chaucer and Chaucerians*, p.4
- 14 OED, down adv.; Also vaguely in **up and down**, which is often = to and fro
- 15 OED, q.v. / MED, bidene: [Only in N & NM texts...], 2. (a) as a group, one and all, all together; **all (e) bidene**
- 16 *Octovian* (Lincoln 91) , *Sir Eglamour of Artois* (Lincoln) , *Syr Tryamowre* ('for charytee!') , *Ipomadon* ('for charyte')

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4) References:

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