The major influence on English of the old stress-shift in the Germanic languages

(Especiallv on alliteration and monosyllabism)

Joo Hyon Kim *

1. Preface

The Germanic languages which became differentiated from Indo-Germanic (or Indo-European) are characterized by a strong expiratory stress on the first syllable of the word, for in native Germanic words the root is strongly stressed and it is the first syllable, except in the case of unstressed prefixes. This characteristic feature, peculiar to the Germanic language group, began to appear when it became differentiated. Before differentiation, the position of accent (a pitch accent instead of the stress accent) was movable in the Indo-European languages.

The characteristic feature of adopting a strong stress accent on the first syllable of the word has had a far-reaching influence upon the growth of the Germanic languages. Among them, English is one of the representative languages that have been greatly influenced by that characteristic feature. Otto Jespersen claims a far-reaching influence of the stress-shift on the English language as follows:

* Professor of English

> I have no hesitation in saying that the old strees-shift has left its indelible mark on the structure of the language and has influenced it more than any other phonetic change (except perhaps disappearance of so many weak e's about 1400)[1]

It is needless to remark here in detail how the general principle of laying a strong stress on the first syllable in Old English has brought about grammatical simplification of the language through the decay of inflections, only to transform a language of synthetic expression into an analytical one. This phenomenon is now regarded as a development of the language caused by the adoption of a strong stress on the first syllable of the word, and it is actually one of the great assets which the language now possesses.

That above-mentioned general principle of placing a strong stress on the first syllable is mainly responsible for the loss of inflections as aptly claimed by Albert C. Baugh, who says,

> "It(English) shows the adoption of a strong stress accent on the first or the root syllable of most words(This is obscured somewhat in Modern English by the large number of words borrowed from Latin), a feature of great importance in all the Teutonic languages, since it is chiefly responsible for the progressive decay of inflections in these languages."[2];

but some German scholars like Wilhelm Horn and Lorenz Morsbach insist on their own views regarding the loss of inflections. Professor Horn asserts that the decay of inflectional endings has resulted from the decline of their function, and that inflections will remain undestroyed even if a strong stress is put on the root syllable, as long as inflectional endings are functioning. [3]

Professor Morsbach also claims that the inflectional endings disappear only when a more effective device of expression, i.e. the analytical expression, comes into being, and that the destruction of inflections was already in process even in the early stages of the Indo-European languages, while the effect of accent is only secondary. [4]

However, Professor Henry Bradley strongly protests against such views, pointing out,

> "The fallacy of the notion sometimes maintained that phonetic change does

1. *Growth and structure of the English language*, 9th edition, by Otto Jespersen, Donald Moore, 1938, § 26
2. *A History of the English language*, by A. Baugh, Reutledge, 1956, p. 60
3. W. Horn: *Sprachkörper und Sprachfunktion*, Leipzig, 1923 (山本忠雄訳・英語の形態と機能・研究社 昭和9年 p. 27)
4. L. Morsbach: *Grammatisches und psychologisches Geschlecht im Englischen*, 2, Aufl, Berlin, 1926 (中島文雄訳・『英語の史的考察』・研究社 昭和8年pp. 40—41)

not destroy inflections till they have already become useless." [5]

I do not wish to criticize their respective views here, but what I can say as far as the loss of inflection is concerned is that the responsibility for the progressive decay of inflections on the part of a strong stress accent on the first or the root syllable of the word cannot be denied. For example, OE *sunne* (nominative), *sunu* (nominative as well as accusative), and *scipe* (dative) are respectively sun, son, and ship in Modern English; this is good evidence to show that every short vowel ending in Old English has dropped off as a result of the phonetic change called "Dropping of Sounds."

If we read Chaucer's Canterbury Tales, we will find a great many disyllabic words which have now become monosyllabic through dropping of short vowel endings, affected by the position of a strong stress accent on the first syllable of the word. [6]

In this way, the complicated inflectional eadings are now almost absent from English of today and it is now richly endowed with monosyllables. Thus English has come to share some characteristics of the Chinese language, which consists only of monosyllables with no inflection. As an example showing how English is approaching Chinese, English of today has a considerable number of such expressions as a loaf of bread, a pair of gloves, a piece of gold, etc,, in which Old English is lacking.[7] while Chinese has a host of similar expressions using 'bēibànci' (or zhù shù cí)[8] a kind of Numerative [9] peculiar to that language, such as yí kūai miān bāo, yī shuāng Xiézi, yī zhāng zhǐ, yī pǐ mǎ, yī jià féijī, etc. [10]

Anyone who has some knowledge of Chinese can easily make a long list of such expressions as above. This is one of the interesting facts which evidence that

5. *Thc Making of English*, by H. Bradley, Macmillan, 1951, P. 24.
6. According to my examination, fifteen disyllables in the opening ten lines of the prologue of the Canterbury Tales have now been reduced to monosyllables: soote, perced, roote, bathed, swete, croppes, yonge, sonne, halfe, (y)-ronne, smale, fowles, maken, slepen, ye,
7. In OE "bread" signifies 'morsel of food, or originally 'piece', and this word displaced OE "half" before 1200. Such an expression as 'paire gloves' appears in Langland's Piers Plowman, C-text VII 251. An expression such as 'a piece of' is found in Piers Plowman and Hamlet: Ne no pece of bakoun (*Piers Plowman* B-text. VI. 304) What a piece of worke is a man! (*Hamlet* 2. 2.315) But in OE texts it is expressed as follows: Se me beag forgeaf on *pæm siexhund* wæs *smætes goldes*, gescyred sceatta scillingrime. (He gave me a ring in which there was reckoned to be six hundred pieces of pure gold counted by shillings) (Widsith, 90–91)
8. bēibànci(陪伴詞), zhùshùcí(助數詞)
9. A handbook of Present-day English, by E. Kruisinga, Groningen, 1931, § 818
10. yí kūai mıān bāo (a loaf of bread), yī shuāng xiézi (a pair of shoes) yī zhāng zhǐ (a sheet of paper) yī pǐ mǎ (a horse) yī jià féijī (an airplane)

the English language is becoming grammatically isolating. In fact, English has remarkably transformed itself by adopting the strong stress accent on the first syllable of the word, with the result of presenting us with a most peculiar appearance.

Therefore, it may be said that the prominent feature of a st ong stress accent on the first syllable of the word in the Germanic languages is a problem of great importance. What I attempt here is a survey of how alliteration and monosyllabism, brought about under the influence of a strong stress accent on the first syllable of English words (native), have acted so important a part not only in the English language but also in English literature.

2. Alliteration

(A) The old stress-shift in the Germanic languages and the development of alliteration.

As already remarked in the preface, the adoption of a strong expiratory stress on the first syllable——the old stress-shift from the movable pitch accent in the Into-European languages to the stress accent fixed on the first or the root syllable of the word in the Germanic languages——had a great influence on the growth of the Germanic languages. In particular, one of the characteristic features developed through the influence of the stress-shift is the alliteration common to the Germanic languages. The alliteration thus developed has long played a characteristic role not only in language itself but also in literature, and its activities are still important. For instance, all of the old verses now extant in the Germanic languages are composed by means of alliteration. When a question arises why alliteration played so important a role in OE versification, my answer is that a strong expiratory stress on the first syllable——the first part of the word, which is psychologically of greatest value as the root syllable——makes such a strong impression on the hearer's mind that the old *scops* came to make use of this effect in order to make their verses more impressive by welding the line together by means of the same consonant or different vowel sounds in the first syllable pronounced with strongest stress. In this manner, alliteration became greatly instrumental in the *scops*' versifying. The alliteration referred to in this article is the traditional one, which

is restricted in scope to alliteration of the same sounds in the first syllable pronounced with strongest stress.

Some scholars like Chalmers or Morris define alliteration in a broad sense, including identical sounds in an unstressed syllable, [1] but such views cannot be supported here, since they are contrary to my view, which insists that alliteration is a product of the adoption of the strongest stress on the root syllable of the word in the Germanic languages.

(B) The function of alliteration in Old English

(a) OE alliterative verse

On the preceding page, I have remarked that all of the oldest lays extant in the Germanic languages are composed in alliterative metre. The *Heliand* is known as the longest German poem in alliterative verse, and other representative alliterative verses now extant are the *Genesis* in old Saxon, the *Muspilli* and *Hildebrandslied* in Old High German, and *Beowulf*, the *Battle* of *Brunanburh*, the *Dream of the Rood*, and the *Wanderer* in Old English.

According to my count of the alliterative lines of the Anglo-Saxon poems, some 30,000 lines are still extant; among them, Beowulf is by far the longest alliterative poem, and besides the 3182 lines of *Beowulf*, there are 2936 lines of *Genesis* in the Junius Manuscript, 1722 lines of *Andreas* and 1321 lines of *Elene* in the Vercelli Book, and also 1664 lines of *Christ* and 1379 lines of *Guthlac* in the text of the Exeter Book. All of them are religious poems of more than one thousand lines except *Beowulf*, the most famous heroic poem.

The above fact clearly shows that in Old English alliteration was an essential part of versification as it was in other Germanic languages. The alliterative poetry flourished in England from A.D. 700 to 1500, and though it died out in Germany about the middle of the ninth century, it continued to flourish even longer in Iceland and in Scandinavia. Here I am to make a brief survey of how alliteration could play so essential a part in versification.

1. Mia Schwarz; (Heinrich Spies ed.) *Alliteration im englischen Kulturleben neuerer Zeit*, Greifswald, 1923 (前島儀一郎譯・『頭韻と近代英國文化』研究社 昭和8年 pp. 2-3)

When we read *Beowulf* or other OE poems, we find that every line of verse is linked together by means of alliteration, i.e. the pair of half-lines into which each line is divided are welded together by the agreement of the first sound [1] of the stressed syllable of certain words within the line. The types of binding the line together can be classified as follows:

Type A. *a x* || *a x*

a stands for the stressed syllables which bear the alliterating sound (i.e. the stave), and *x* for the stressed syllables which do not bear the stave, and || stands for caesura. In this case it should be remembered that the stave can fall only on a syllable which bears the main stress of the word.

Type B. *x a* || *a x*

Type C. *a a* || *a x*

The following Caedmon's Hymn (West Saxon Version) will sufficiently show how the alliterating sounds can weld the line itself together producing impressive as well as musical effect by repeating the same sounds.

Nu (we) sculon *h*érigean || *h*éofonrìces wéard,
*M*éotòdes *m*éahte || and his *m*ódgeþànc,
*W*éorc *w*úldorfæder, || swa he *w*úndra gehwàs,
*é*ce drihten, || *ó*r onstéalde,
He ærest sceop || *é*orþan béarnum
*h*éofon to *h*rófe, || *h*álig scýppend;
Þa *m*íddangèard || *m*áncỳnnes wéard,
*é*ce drýten, || æfter téode
*f*írum fóldan, || *f*réa ælmìghtig.

In the above hymn, the alliterating sounds are indicated by italic type. These OE standard types of alliteration shown above are just the same as the regular types of the Germanic alliteration. A few examples from the *Heliand* (Old Saxon), the longest German poem in alliterative form, and the *Hildebrandslied* (Old High German) will be enough to show that they are identical with the OE types:

1. Only consonants that have the same point and manner of articulation can form alliteration, no distinction is made between voiced and voiceless consonants; but clusters like *sp, st, sk* are each regarded as single sounds, and do not alliterate with *s*. As to vowels, all of the vowels alliterate with each other.

thia *í*dis anthéttea || *áð*alknòsles uuíf. (Heliand 273)[2]

The nam he thea bók and *h*ánd || endian is *h*úgi tháhta. (ibid. 235)[3]

*St*róm and *st*ámno. || *str*ídium féridun. (ibid 2915)[4]

*H*íldibrant enti *H*áþubrant, || untar *h*érium túem. (Hildebrandslied, Ⅱ. 3)[5]

The following two oldest examples of alliteration will show us how their types of alliteration are in conformity with those mentioned above. One example is from Edda (Old Norse) and the other is a line inscribed in the Runic letters on one of the golden horns of the 4th century A.D., discovered near Gallehus, Denmark.

Þa var *gr*únd *gr*óin || *gr*áenum lauki (Vǫluspá, St. 4, 1.4)[6]

EK HlewagastiR *H*óltijaR || *h*órna táwido[7]

As shown above in Cædmon's Hymn, the *Heliand*, and the *Heldebrandslied*, words which bear a stave are generally nouns, adjectives, and the finite verb, but nouns and adjectives usually take precedence over the finite verb in alliteration, and words like pronouns, prepositions and conjunctions cannot bear a stave even if they are stressed. The examplified Cædmon's Hymn consists of nine lines of regular types, but irregular types can be also found in many alliterative verses, some of them are considered accidental, but some are regarded as special artistic devices employed in order to enhance the alliterative effect. The enjambment of alliteration[8] is considered accidental, even though it occurs often, for aliteration is not devised to join lines together as rhyme does; although crossed (or transverse) alliteration as we see in the opening line of *Beowulf*[9] is considered to be an elaborate artistic form as suggested by B. Q. Morgan in his "Zur Lehre von der Alliteration in der westgermanischen Dichtung."[10]

(b) The development of synonyms in OE poetry.

2. The lady answered, the lady from the noble family. (translated by the writer)
3. Then he took the books in his hand and meditated. (〃)
4. The stream rippled alongside the boat when the battle was going on (〃)
5. Heldebrand and Hathubrand, between two forces. (〃)
6. Thus the ground was covered with green grass.
7. I, Hlewagastir of Holt, made the horn.
8. This is the carrying over of a non-alliterating stressed letter of the 2nd half line as the alliterating letter to the following line. Example:
   Nō hē *þ*one gifstōl grētan *m*oste
   *Maþ*um for Metode····· (Beowulf. 168-169)
9. Hwæt, wē *Gār-D*ena in *gēard*agum
10. A Heusler, *Deutsche Versgeschichte*, Berlin, 1925, §132
    FR. Klaeber: Beowulf, 3.ed. Heath, 1936. p. ixx

The fact that OE poetry had a large stock of synonyms is worthy of note. In fact, the use of alliteration, which requires a host of synonyms beginning with various sounds in order to make possible varied alliteration, was a powerful incentive to the development of synonyms in OE.

The following synonyms or synonymous compounds meaning 'warrior' will be enough to show how a large stock of synonyms was available to the formation of alliterative verses in OE. 'Warrior' was expressed in OE not only by such synonyms as *beorn*, *freca*, *mæcg*, *magu*, *rinc*, *wiga*, etc., but also by a large number of synonymous compounds formed by combining these words with any word having relation to war, army, spear, or sword:

æsc-wiga,	beado-rinc,	fierd-rinc,	folc-wiga,
gār-wiga,	gūþ-beorn,	gūþ-freca,	gūþ-rinc,
gūþ-wiga,	heaþo-rinc,	here-mæcg,	here-rinc,
hild-freca,	hilde-mæcg,	hilde-rinc,	lind-wiga,
magu-rinc,	magu-þegn,	ord-wiga,	ōret-mæcga,
rand-wiga,	scield-wiga,	sweord-freca,	wæpen-wiga,
wig-freca, etc.			

Besides these compounds we can still find more compounds like æsc-berend, feohtling, fēþe-compa, gār-berend, gūþ-fremmend, gūþ-fruma, gūþ-gelāca, here-wōsa, here-wulf, hild-stapa, hilde-hlemma, hilde-wulf, lind-hæbbende, rand-hæbbende, searo-hæbbende, segn-berend, sweord-genīþla, sweord-wīgend, þēod-guma, wæl-wulf, wig-fruma etc. In this way, other synonymous compounds could be readily formed when needed —like lagu-fæsten, lagu-flōd, lagu-strēam, sæ-holm and sæ-weg for sea, and ȳþ-bord, ȳþ-lid, ȳþ-naca, sæ-naca, sæ-flota and sæ-bāt for ship.

Such a surprisingly large number of synonymous compounds as those above was formed to meet the occasion by Anglo-Saxon poets to satisfy the exacting demands of alliteration. In addition to such synonymous compounds, they were also fond of producing a host of more enigmatic compounds called Kennings such as hran-rād, swan-rād for sea, brim-hengest, brim-wudu, mere-hengest, sæ-mearh, sæ-wudu, ȳþ-mearh for ship, and wyn-candel, weder-candel, for sun. The existence of Kennings is a characteristic feature of OE poetry, and this feature reveals the special

fondness of Anglo-Saxons for riddles.

The Kenning is a kind of metaphorical description, for *hran-rād* is an enigma which requires our imagination for the solution of its meaning,but lagu-strēam and sæ-holm are quite self-evident, though some of them are unnecessarily redundant in meaning. These compounds, whether self-explaining or enigmatic, were employed by the *scops* in their poems as synonyms even though each of them generally provided a different image, and in fact, they may be said to have enriched the poetic vocabulary of Old English.

With such a tremendously large stock of synonyms or synonymous compounds, the *scops* preferred to give exuberant descriptions that could produce artistic as well as emotional effects by heaping synonyms on synonyms.

In this manner, the development of synonyms in OE poetry was absolutely required in order to facilitate the use of alliteration.

(C) The decline of alliterative verse and the shift of alliterative function.

As was stated above, alliteration played an essential part in versification in OE, but it also played an important role in prose, as we see in Wulfstan's homilies; for example:

"In mordre and on mane, in susle and on sare, in wean and on wyrmslitum, betweonan deadum and deoflum, in bryne and on biternesse..." [1]

After the Norman conquest, this distinctive alliterative feature of OE came to be somewhat ignored due to the introduction of end-rhyme from the continent. The following passage from the Proverbs of Alfred, which is supposed to have been written down about 1150, will show a phase in the shift from alliterative verse to rhymed:

Wymmon is word-wop
and haveþ tunge to swift,
þeyh heo well wolde,
ne may heo hi nowiht welde. [2]

1. Wulfstan, *Homilies*, ed. by Napier, P. 187.
2. *The Proverbs of Alfred*, Il. 281-4.

However, a verse form in which alliteration and end-rhyme were used together continued to exist among some poets even in the 13th century.

The following passage from the lyric 'Annot and Johon' is one of the good specimens of such a form:

I chot a burde in a bour ase beryl so bryht,
ase saphyr in selver semly on syht,
ase iaspe þe gentil þat lemep wiþ lyht,
ase gernet in golde and ruby well ryht,
ase onycle he ys on yholden on hyht,
ase diamaund þe dere in day when he is dyht.[3]

In fact, the native poets especially in the West-Midlands loved their traditional alliterative verse, and above all the vogue of rhythmical alliterative prose in the western counties during the first half of the 13th century[4] was good evidence which proves the predilection of prose writers for the recovery of the native stock against the foreign elements.

Consequently, about the middle of the 14th century, the unrimed alliterative verse suddenly revived from its nearly forgotten state, and during the latter half of the century, a host of alliterative poems appeared, of which some of the representative ones are: *The parlement of the Thre Ages* (1350), *Wynnere and Wastoure* (1350), *Joseph of Arimathie* (1350), *Morte Arthure* (1350-1400), *Piers Plowman* (1362-1398), *The Gest Historiale of the Destruction of Troy* (1350-1400), *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* (1360-1400), *Pearl* (1360-1400), etc.

This alliterative revival is a movement of great importance which must be considered here. The movement may be accounted for in different ways, but Kenneth Sisam has aptly pointed out the cause, saying "Adaptability made easier the diffusion of alliterative verse, but its revival was not due to a deliberate choice on practical grounds. It was a phase of a larger movement, which may be described as a weakening of foreign and learned influences, and a recovery of the native stock. And the metrical

3. *English Lyrics of the 13th century*, ed. by C. Brown, Oxford, 1953, p. 136.
4. Some of the examples now extant are "On Lofsong of Ure Lefdi" (vid.R. Morris:*Old English Homilies*, First series, London, 1867. pp·205-207), On wel swuþe God Ureisun of God Almihti (*ibid.*, pp. 200-203), On. Lafsong of Ure Lauerde (*ibid*, pp. 209-217), The Wohunge of Ure Lauerd (*ibid.*, pp. 268-287)., etc.

form is only the most obvious of the old-fashioned elements that reappeared. In spirit, too, the authors of the alliterative school have many points of kinship with the Old English poets" [5]

In fact, the preference for alliteration was a psychological revolt on the part of the authors of the alliterative school against the overwhelming foreign influences, which had practically overshadowed the native elements. With the alliterative revival, they could enjoy once again the traditional native elements by adapting their verses to the old fashioned exuberant metrical form. This alliterative revival, though it was again overshadowed by the use of end-rhyme by Gower and Chaucer in the latter part of the 14th century, was a matter of great significance.

One of the outstanding features of alliteration employed in the 13th and 14th-century verses is a license both in form and in function different from the principles of OE alliterative verse. Unlike the three types of OE alliterative verse mentioned in (B), some lines of ME alliterative verse are linked together by four (or sometimes more than four) alliterating syllables as shown in the first and second lines of the preceding example from the Proverbs of Alfred, or as we see in the opening line of Langland's *Piers Plowman* (Text C) which reads:

"In a somere seyson when softe was þe sonne."

In alliterative lines which are welded together by four or more alliterating syllables, the function of alliteration is of course not only to link together a line but also to emphasize important words in the line, and this emphasis on important words regarded as the secondary function of alliteration became more important than its primary function, which on the contrary was weakened gradually by the use of end-rhymes as we see in the following examples:

Lenten ys come wiþ love to toune,
Wiþ blosmen and wiþ briddes roune,
Þat al þis blisse bryngeþ.
Dayeseyes in þis dales,
Notes suete of nyhtegales,
Vch foul song singeþ.

5. *Fourteenth Century Verse and Prose*, ed. by K. Sisam, Oxford, 1937, p. XIX-XX (Introduction)

Þe prestelcoc him pretep oo,
Away is huere wynter wo,
When woderoue springep
Þis foules singep ferly fele,
And wlytep on huere wynter wele,
Þat al þe wode ryngep.
(Lenten Is Come with Love to Town 1-12) [6]

My blysse, my bale, ȝe han ben bope,
Bot much þe bygger ȝet watȝ my mon;
Fro þou watȝ wroken fro vch a wope,
I wyste neuer quere my perle watȝ gon.
Now I hit se, now lepeȝ my lope;
And, quen we be departed, we wern at on;
God forbede we be now wrope,
We meten so selden by stok oper ston.
Þaȝ cortaysly ȝe carp con,
I am bot mol and manereȝ mysse;
Bot Crystes mersy, and Mary, and Ion,
Þise arn þe grounde of alle my blysse.
(The Pearl ‖ 373-384) [7]

In the above verses, alliteration, though remaining, was actually subservient to rhyme; but in the following example from Sir Gawayne and the Green Knight, the alliterative primary function is fairly well preserved because the end-rhyme is not used except for an added tag of rhyme at the end of a rhymeless series:

The brygge watȝ brayde doun, and þe brode ȝateȝ
Vnbarred and born open vpon bope halue.
Þe burne blessed hym bilyue, and þe bredeȝ passed;
Prayses þe porter bifore þe prynce kneled,

6. *English Lyrics of the 13th century*, ed. by Carleton Brown, Oxford, 1953, P.145.
7. Sisam, ed. op. cit., pp. 59-60.

Gef hym God and goud day, þat Gawayn He saue,
and went on his way with his wyȝe one,
Þat schulde teche hym to tourne to þat tene place
Þer þe ruful race he schulde resayue.
⋮
Þay were on a hille ful haȝe,
Þe quyte snaw lay bisyde;
Þe burne þat rod hym by
Bede his mayster abide.

(The Testing of Sir Gawayne 1-22) [8]

The continuance of the alliterative primary function during the later stage of the fourteenth century is rather exceptional, for in those days, poets preferred the use of end-rhyme, the object of which is to join lines together into couplets or strophes of various forms instead of welding the line itself together as in the alliterative verse; therfore, alliteration was almost forgotten by some poets like Gower and Chaucer, as we see in the opening lines of Chaucer's Prologue to the *Canterbury Tales*, or in some lines of Gower's *Ceix and Alceone:*

Whan that Aprille with his shoures soote
The droghte of March hath perced to the roote,
And bathed every veyne in swich licour,
Of which vertu engendred is the flour;

(prologue 1-4) [9]

This finde I write in Poesie:
Ceix the king of Trocinie
Hadde Alceone to his wif,
Which as hire oghne hertes lif
Him loveth; and he hadde also
a brother, which was cleped tho
Dedalion, and he per cas

8. Sisam, ed. *op. cit.*, P.46.
9. *The Poetical Works of Chaucer*, ed. by F. Robinson, Cambridge Edition, p. 19.

Fro kinde of man forschape was
Into a goshauk of liknesses;
(Ceix and Alceone 1-9) [10]

In the above examples, alliteration is utterly forgotten, and in fact, 'rum-ram-ruf' [11] is no longer expected, but the love of alliteration is sometimes vividly revealed even by Chaucer, who contributed so much to the diffusion of rhyming verse.

To cite a few examples from the Knight's Tales:—

Ther *sh*yveren *sh*aftes upon *sh*eeldes thikke;
He feeleth thurgh the herte-spoon the prikke.
Up *sp*ryngen *sp*eres twenty foot on highte;
Out goon the *s*werdes as the *s*ilver brighte;
The helmes they *to*hewen and *to*shrede;
Out *b*rest the *b*lood with *st*ierne *st*remes rede;
With *m*ighty *m*aces the bones they tobreste.
He *th*urgh the *th*ikkeste of the *th*rong gan *th*reste;
Ther *st*omblen *st*eedes *st*ronge, and doun gooth al.
(2605-2613)

With *h*ooly *h*erte and with an *h*eigh corage (2213)
But *s*odeynly she *s*augh a *s*ighte queynte (2333)
With pitous *h*erte and *h*eigh devocioun (2371)
Of *f*aire, yonge, *f*resshe Venus *f*ree (2386)
That in the *b*ataille *b*lowen *b*lody sounes (2511) [12]

As shown in the above few examples, Chaucer himself loved to use alliteration in his poems on such occasions as demanded realistic or emotional effect, or as required to draw the reader's attention.

Of course, in such cases, alliteration is no longer a medium of welding the line

10. Sisam, ed. *op. cit.*, pp. 131-132.
11. *The Parson's prologue* (Fragment X(group 1) 43)
12. F. Robinson, od. *op. cit.*, P.50.

itself together but a mere artistic device.

The shift of alliterative function from the joining of the line itself together to a mere artistic device is quite worthy of note.

However, in spite of such a functional shift, the love of alliteration has never left the English language, and it has survived not only in modern poetry but also in alliterative word combinations. Today, the use of alliteration has spread into various fields, about which I will remark in (E).

Edmund Spenser also imitated Chaucer's technique of using alliteration in his famous *Faerie* Queene. To cite a few examples:

*H*igh *h*eaven behold the *t*edious *t*oyle, ye for me take, (canto XI,9)
Then *w*ith his *w*aving *w*ings displayed *w*yde (ibid., 154)
Thd *st*eely head *st*ucke fast *st*ill in his flesh (ibid., 190)
A gushing river of *b*lacke *g*oarie *b*lood (ibid., 193)
A *f*lake of *f*ire, that *f*lashing in his beard (ibid, 229) [13]

Besides Spenser, John Lyly favored the use of alliteration in order to enhance the effect of his pedantically decorated euphuistic style. One or two examples from Endimion will suffice to show his technique:

.....with the name of *w*avering, *w*axing and *w*aning (Endimion, 1.1.)
.....to have neither *r*ule, nor *r*eason (ibid, 1.2)
.....nor *c*ounsel of the *w*isest, nor *c*ompany of the *w*orthiest (ibid. 1.2)

This last quotation shows a perfect example of crossed alliteration used consciously to draw the reader's attention. Shakespeare also made sparing use of alliteration on some occasions to bring about special effects which will be mentioned in (D).

After Shakespeare, alliteration was used more sparingly but with great effect in modern verse and prose. Particularly, it is noteworthy that the Authorized Version has a good supply of alliterative idiomatic phrases. In fact, numerous alliterative phrases that we find both in modern verse and prose or in everyday speech can be traced back to the Bible. To cite a few examples:

13. *The Faerie Queene*, book 1. ed. by Winstanley, Cambridge, 1949, p. 183.

To break bread..... (Mark. 14-22)
Clear as crystal..... (Rev.22-1)
To find favour..... (Luke 1-30)
Highways and hedges..... (Luke 14-23)
Pearl of great price..... (Matt. 13-46)
Prince of peace..... (Isaiah 9-6)
Safe and sound..... (Luke 15-27)
Still as a stone..... (Exodus 15-16)
Stocks and stones..... (Jeremiah 3-9)
Tale that is told..... (Psalms 90-9)
Weak as water..... (Ezekiel 7-17)
Wander in the wilderness..... (numbers 14-33)
On the wings of the wind..... (Psalms 17-10)

On this occasion, it will not be useless to recall to our mind Bunyan's famous book bearing the alliterative title, Pilgrim's Progress, and opening with the following:

As I *w*alked through the *w*ilderness of this *w*orld

In the 18th century alliteration was rather out of favour with poets under the influence of Pseudo-classicism. However, it did not completely die out; James Thomson and Edward Young of that century favored alliteration. To cite a few examples from Thomson's last masterpiece, 'The castle of Indolence,' Canto 1:

For, though sometimes it makes thee *w*eep and *w*ail. (*The Land of Indolence* I,6)
Looso life, unruly *p*assions, and diseases *p*ale. (*ibid.* I.9)
Than whom a *f*riend more *f*ell is no where *f*ound. (ibid II. 4)
Where never yet was *c*reeping *c*reature seen (ibid III. 5)
A *s*able, *s*ilent, *s*olemn forest stood (ibid V. 2)
Beneath a specious palm, the *w*icked *w*ight (ibid VII. 7)

Such a love of alliteration sprang from his romantic spirit. The love of alliteration was further rekindled in the Romantic poets of the nineteenth century. Coleridge's famous alliterative lines such as

The fair breeze blew, the white foam flew,
The furrow followed free [14]

are always fresh in our memory.

The love of alliteration became more ardent among some Victorian poets—Alfred Tennyson, Robert Browning, D.G. Rossetti, William Morris and A.C. Swinburne. The 19th-century poets knew well how to enjoy the tradition of alliteration—a precious inheritance of the English language. Especially among those poets, Tennyson and Swinburne elaborately employed a host of alliterations and alliterative phrases in their poems. One will notice the musical effect of alliteration in the following examples from Tennyson:

The *s*ound of streams that *s*wift or *s*low
*D*raw *d*own Aeonian hills (In Memoriam 35)

And those *w*ild eyes that *w*atch the *w*ave
In *r*oarings *r*ound the coral *r*eef (ibid. 36)

In the following some opening lines of Swinburne's "Atalanta in Calydon," one will also notice his artful use of apt alliteration:

*M*aiden, and *m*istress of the *m*onths and stars
Now *f*olded in the *f*lowerless *f*ields of heaven,
*G*oddess whom all *g*ods love with threefold heart,
Being treble in thy *d*ivided *d*eity.
A light for *d*ead men and *d*ark hours, a foot
Swift on the *h*ills as morning, and a *h*and
To all things *f*ierce and *f*leet that *r*oar and *r*ange
Mortal, with gentler shafts than *s*now or *s*leep.

His peoms are especially rich in alliterative phrases, and moreover even crossed alliterations are artfully employed. William Morris' "Sigurd the Volsung" is so full of alliteration that this epic deliberately reminds the reader of the Old Norse peotry, even though alliteration used here is deprived of its original function of welding the line itself together. Rudyard Kipling was also fond of the use of alliteration; the

14. S.T. Coleridge: *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner*, Part 2.

following few examples from his poems are enough to show impressive as well as onomatopoetic effects:

But there is *n*either East *n*or West,
*B*order, nor *B*reed, nor *B*irth,
When two *st*rong men *st*and and *f*ace to
*F*ace, tho' they come from the *e*nds of the *e*arth! (A ballad of East and West)

They have taken the Oath of the *B*rother-in-
*B*lood on *f*ire and *f*resh-cut sod,
On the *h*ilt and *h*aft of the Khyber knife, and (ibid)

I was chokin' mad with thirst,
An' the man that spied me first
Was our good old *g*rinnin' *g*runtin' *G*unga Din
'*E* lifted up my '*e*ad. (Gunga Din)

The fervent love of alliteration in the Victorian age was not limited only to poetry but extended even to prose: De Quincey, Charles Dickens, Charles Kingsley, Charlotte Brontë, Oscar Wilde and Rudyard Kipling particularly favoured alliteration. They employed it for the purpose of enhancing impressive, picturesque or musical effect, or sometimes merely for such purpose of ridicule as Thackeray's 'faint fashionable fiddle-faddle and feeble court slipslop' mentioned by Jespersen.[15]

The following are some examples from De Quincey, Charles Dickens and Oscar wilde:

At last, with the sense that all was lost, *f*emale *f*orms,
and the *f*eatures that were *w*orth all the *w*orld to me,
and but a moment allowed, (Confessions of an English Opium Eater)

.....and its pillow was *w*et with *w*asted tears.
*S*adly, *s*adly, the *s*un rose; it rose upon no *s*adder
*s*ight than the man of good *a*bilities and good
*e*motions,..... (A Tale of Two Cities, Chapter 5)

Here they come, *f*ast, *f*ierce, and *f*urious! It was the

15. Jespersen, *op. cit.*, § 56.

*r*ush and *r*oar of *r*ain that he typified,
and it stopped him. (ibid. Chapter 6)

She has all the *f*ragrance and *f*reedom of a *f*lower (an ideal husband 1-1)

And just as out of the *s*ordid *s*entimental
amours of the *s*illy wife of a *s*mall country doctor
in the *s*qualid village of Yonville-l' Abboye,
near Rouen, Gustave Flaubert was able to *c*reate a *c*lassic, and
*m*ake a *m*asterpiece of style (The Critic as Artist)

Especially, Oscar Wilde loved alliteration so much that he used it as abundantly as possible in De Profundis. To cite an example:

I was a *p*risoner and a *p*auper; in *m*usic or in *m*arble; thing.....
.....that might *b*ring *b*alm to the *b*ruised heart, and *p*eace to the soul in *p*ain.

One may also find plenty of alliterative synonymous phrases in their works——for example:

time and tide (Dickens: A Tale of Two Cities)
dig and delve (ibid.)
worn and wasted (ibid.)
wheel and whirl (Wilde: The Harlot's House)
Kith and Kin (Kipling: Edgehill Fight)

So far I have mentioned the shift of alliterative function from the OE period through the ME period and up to the end of the 19th century by giving examples from poetry and prose by famous writers who especially favored alliteration. To make a long story short, the traditional alliterative function of welding the line itself together as in OE poetry was weakened by the introduction of rhyme, whose function is to join lines together into couplets or strophes of various forms; and in the ME period, though in the remote western counties it still continued to flourish even until as late as the 14th century, it was gradually overshadowed, and consequently became alienated from its traditional form and function. In the Modern English period, the original function of alliteration was completely lost and instead it came to function as a

euphuistic, or emphatic or marking device during the 16th century, but was not much favored under the influence of pseudo-classicism during the 17th and 18th centuries.

However, the love of alliteration did not die out completely before the 19th century, when it again flourished for the sake of impressive, picturesque as well as euphonious effects. Indeed, the love of alliteration has not left the English language even in the 20th century, about which I will remark in the conclusion of this article.

(D) Alliteration in Shakespeare's works

Shakespeare is not exempt from the fashionable device of alliteration popular in his day. He aptly employs the device throughout his entire work for manifold purposes, though Professor R. M. Alden says:

> "Alliteration does not appear in Shakespeare's verse according to any plan or with any frequently conspicuous effect. It often, however, adds to the beauty or expressiveness of the lines." [1]

However, our'myriad-minded Shakespeare' [2] was able to devise an artistic technique, taking advantage of "apt alliteration's artful aid,"[3] to produce the best alliterative effect so that he could turn his work "into something rich and strange."[4]

First of all, his profuse use of alliterative phrases or compounds is worthy of note. Anyone who is familiar with his work will notice this fact. Above all, compound epithets are picturesque, impressive and pithy. The following are some examples:

full-fraught (Gen. 3.1. 70), fertile-fresh (wiv. 5. 5. 72), sweet-savour'd (Err. 2.2. 119), fair-faced (Ado. 2.3. 61), mirth-moving (LLL 2.1. 71) fancy-free (MND. 2.1. 164), saint-seducing (Rom. 1. 1. 220), fiery-footed (Rom, 3.2.1), tempest-tossed (Rom. 3.5. 138) honey-heavy (Rom. 2.1. 230), trumpet-tongued (Mac. 1.7. 19), blood-bolter'd (Mac. 4.1. 123) lily-liver'd (Mac. 5.3. 15) grass-green (Ham. 4.5. 31), wonder-wounded (Ham. 5.1. 280), wave-worn (Tp.2.1. 130), tongue-tied (Sonn. LXVI) ripe-red (Ven. 1103), heavy-hanging (Lucr. 1493), sober-sad (Lucr. 1542) [5]

1. *A Shakespeare Handbook*,, ed. by R. M. Alden, Crofts, 1925, p. 205.
2. Coleridge; *Biographia Literaria*, § 15.
3. Churchill: *The prophecy of Famine*, 86
4. The Tempest, 1. 2. 401.

Among numerous compound words, onomatopoetic and metaphorical ones are conspicuously effective, for instance, snip-snap (LLL. 5.1. 62) skimble-skamble (IH4. 3.1. 154) tiddle-taddle (H5.4.1.71) pibble-pabble (H5.4.1.71), lily-lips (MND. 5.1.337), February face (Ado.5.4.41), alabaster arms (R3·4.3.11), painted pomp (AYL.2.1.3.), midsummer madness (Tw.N. 3.4.61), fresh female (Rom. 1.2.29), and such reduplicated meanings as self-same (Mer.V. 1.1.140), foolish-fond (Lr.4.7.59) are quite emphatic. When we read such a passage from Macbeth as "After life's fitful fever he sleeps well" (3.2.23), the compound "fitful fever" reflected in the alliterative 'f' sound reminds us of the spasmodic feverish state caused by fear and affliction which the agonizing Macbeth is suffering; and in another example from the famous passage from 'As You Like It'—"His youthful hose, well saved, a world too wide For his shrunk shank." (2.7. 160-1), the compound 'shrunk shank' with its onomatopoetic effect can body forth in imagery a skinny long leg in a wide hose like a leg of a scarecrow. Another type of impressive

5. The numbering of acts, scenes, and lines follows that of the Cambridge Shakespeare of Clerk and Wright as reproduced in the Globe edition, and abbreviations of titles of plays and poems quoted in this paper are:
Ado—Much ado about nothing,
Ant—Anthony & Cleopatra
AYL—As you Like It
Cæs—Julius Caesar
Err—The comedy of Errors
Gen—The two gentlemen from Verona
IH4—The first part of King Henry IV
H5—King Henry V
2H4—The Second Part of King Henry VI
Ham—Hamlet
LLL—Love's Labor's Lost
Lr—King Lear
Lucr—The Rape of Lucrece
Mac—Macbeth
Mer. V—The merchant of Venice
MND—A Midsummer Night's Dream
Oth—Othello
R3—King Rechard III
Rom—Romeo & Juliet
Shr—The Taming of the Shrew
Tp—The Tempest
Ven—Venus & Adonis
Wiv—The Merry Wives of Windsor
Sonn—Sonnets
Tw. N—Twelfth Night
Wint—The Winter's Tale

compounds are those in which the cardinal number 'twenty' is used instead of adjective 'many', such as twenty torches (Cæs, 1.3.17) twenty times (Oth. 5.2.64), twenty trenched (Mac. 3.4. 27). Besides alliterative compounds, we also find a host of other alliterative phrases in Shakespeare's work. To cite a few examples:

die a dry death (Tp.1.1. 70), as blue as bilberry (Wiv. 5.5.49), wonders of the world (Gent. 1.1. 5) meddle or make (Ado. 3.3. 55), care killed a cat(Ado. 5.1. 132), dances and delight (MND. 2.1. 254), a woman of the world (AYL. 5.3.4), slish and slash(Shr. 4.3.90), rosemary and rue (Wint. 4.4. 73), carve a capon (1H4, 2.4. 500) a penny in purse (1H4.5. 1.33), pitch and pay (H5. 2.3. 51), wild and wasteful(H5.3.1. 14), storms of state (R3,4.2. 21), powerfully and potently (Ham.2.2. 201), proof and precedent (Lr.2.3. 13) etc.

Another type of interesting alliterative phrases are those which are composed of synonymous elements; they are generally impressive and powerful though tautological. Such phrases are:

Wild and wanton(Mer. V. 5.1. 72), secure and safe (Shr. 5.2. 151) old and antique (Tw. N. 2.4. 3.), repose and rest (Rom. 2.2. 123) fury and fierce (Cæs. 3.1. 263), peak and pine (Mac. 1.3.23), form and feature (Ham.3.1. 167) etc.

Yet, on the contrary, some phrases are composed of antonymous elements; for example, sweet and sour (Oth. 4.3. 96), heaven and hell (Ham. 2.2. 611), delight and dole (Ham. 1.2.13).

Though Shakespeare's plays and poems are so rich in alliterative lines, he never overused alliteration pedantically as the euphuists of his day did, but his apt use of it served to heighten not only impressive but also euphonic effects.

The following are some examples wonderfully employed for such purposes:

as full of *s*orrows as the *s*ea of *s*ands (Gent. 4.3. 33)
In *m*aiden *m*editation, *f*ancy-*f*ree (MND. 2.1. 163)
Finds *t*ongues in *t*rees, *b*ooks in the running *b*rooks (AYL. 2.1.7)
And *c*hurlish *c*hiding of the *w*inter's *w*ind (AYL. 2.1.7.)
But to be *p*addling *p*alms and *p*inching fingers (Wint. 1.2. 115)
The *c*aterpillars of the *c*ommonwealth (R2. 2.2. 166)

Small herbs have *g*race, *g*reat weeds do *g*row a pace (R3.2.4.13.)
Stands *t*iptoe on the *m*isty *m*ountain *t*ops (Rom. 3.5.10)
My *b*ounty is *b*oundless as the sea (Rom.2.2. 133)
I have a *m*an's *m*ind, but a woman's *m*ight (Cæs. 2.4.8)
For I have neither *w*it, nor *w*ords, nor *w*orth (Cæs. 3.2. 225)
Clouds, *d*ews, and *d*angers come; our *d*eeds are *d*one! (Cæs. 5.3. 64)
Marry, this is *m*iching *m*allecho; it *m*eans *m*ischief (Ham. 3.2. 147)
If she be *f*air and *w*ise, *f*airness and *w*it (Oth. 2.1. 130)
Thou knows't we work by *w*it, and not by *w*itchcraft (Oth. 2.3. 378)
By such *p*oor *p*assion as the *m*aid that *m*ilks (Ant. 4.15.74)
*D*anger *d*eviseth shift; *w*it *w*aits on fear (Ven. 690)
Who buys a *m*inute's *m*irth to *w*ail a *w*eek? (Lucr. 213)
For *m*an have *m*arble, *w*oman *w*axen, *m*inds (Lucr. 1240)
And *w*ith old *w*oes new *w*ail; my dear time's *w*aste (Sonn.xxx)
Some in their *h*awks and *h*ounds, some in their *h*orse (Sonn. xcl)

Crossed alliteration is also employed, though sparingly, for the sake of the marking effect as follows:

*F*ear'd by their *b*reed and *f*amous by their *b*irth (R2. 2.1.52)
Our *d*readful *m*arches to *d*elightful *m*easures (R3. 1.1. 8)

Another device Shakespeare employed in his later plays is an application of alliteration to a run-on line in order to give impression of unbroken thought to the reader when the sense runs on from one line into the next:

....., which *p*arted thence
as *p*earls from *d*iamonds *d*ropp'd. (Lr. 4.3. 23-4)
....., a hand that *k*ings
Have lipp'd, and trembled *k*issing. (Ant. 2.5. 29-30)
....., we have *k*iss'd away
*K*ingdoms and provinces (Ant. 3. 10.7-8)

In order to heighten the euphonic or musical effect, Shakespeare applied a jingling alliteration to his plays for the pleasure the ear takes in jingles: To cite a few examples:

Boy. He says his name is master Fer.

Pistol. Master Fer? I'll fer him, and firk him, and feret him! (H5.4.4. 28-30)

A little more than kin, and less than kind! (Ham. 1.2. 65)

Luciana. What, are you mad, that you do reason so?

Antipholus. Not mad, but mated! how, I do not know. (Err. 3.2. 53-4)

Paris. Younger than she are happy mothers made.

Capulet. And too soon marr'd are those so early made. (Rom. 1.2. 12-13)

O single sol'd jeast, soly singular for the singleness. (Rom. 2.4. 70)

Not on thy sole, but on thy soul, harsh Jew. (Mer.V.4.1. 123)

.....Shall kin with kin and kind with kind confound. (R2. 4.1. 141)

For Suffolk's duke, may he be suffocate. (2H6. 1.1. 124)

In the above examples, jingles like 'sole' and 'soul,' 'Suffolk' and 'suffocate' are in fact plays on words; they may be called alliterative puns. Shakespeare also devised very elaborate jingling alliterative lines by repeating words under grammatically derived forms so that alliterating sounds might be arranged in the a b b a form which had already appeared in OE poetry:-

Thou *p*ure *i*mpiety and *i*mpious *p*urity (Ado. 4. 1, 105)

Better a *w*itty *f*ool than a *f*oolish *w*it. (Tw.N.1.5. 38)

Another conspicuous alliterative device used by the greatest genius to individualize the characters in his plays is quite worthy of note. Generally speaking, he shows a much more elaborate and subtler art in regard to characterization than any other contemporary playwright and his use of alliteration for characterization is of great interest. Let us, then, consider a couple of rustic characters in A Midsummer Night's Dream——Bottom and Quince. Both of them are artisans and belong to the subordinate characters in this comedy, but Shakespeare lets Quince prologize and Bottom play Pyramus——a very important character in their play within the play. Here the greatest genius shows his extraordinary skill not only in making them impressive as well as comic but also in producing a colorful picture of their rusticity. Bottom, the weaver, sings triumphantly, with a loud husky voice, a kind of rustic ballad when he is assigned to play Pyramus:

The *r*aging *r*ocks
And *sh*ivering *sh*ocks
*Sh*all break the locks
Of prison gates;
And Phibbus' car
*Sh*all *sh*ine from far
And *m*ake and *m*ar
The *f*oolish *F*ates (1.2. 33-40)

This ballad, though meaningless, will please the ears of the audience with euphonic and comic as well as rustic effects caused by alliteration; and this rustic effect is more heightened by the rustic appearance of Bottom. Bottom again uses alliteration in playing Pyramus:

Pyramus. But stay, O spite!
But mark, poor knight,
What *d*readful *d*ole is here!
Eyes, do you see?
How can it be?
O, *d*ainty *d*uck! O *d*ear!
•
•
•
•
Approach, ye *F*uries *f*ell!
O Fates, come, come,
Cut *th*read and *th*rum
*Q*uail, *c*rush, con*c*lude and *q*uell!
•
•
•
•
Which is—no, no—which was the fairest dame
That *l*ived, that *l*oved, that *l*iked, *l*ook'd with cheer.
*C*ome, tears, *c*onfound
•
•
•
•
Out, sword, and wound

The *p*ap of *P*yramus!
Ay, that left pap,
Where *h*eart doth *h*op: (Stabs himself) (5.1. 281-304)

Here Bottom makes such apt use of alliteration to heighten the impressively moving effect as to 'make a man look sad', as Theseus says when he hears Bottom speak his part; but at the same time alliteration also produces a comic effect to show off Bottom's comic character. In this play, Quince also uses the following well-known alliterative lines in his prologue:

Whereat, with *b*lade, with *b*loody *b*lameful *b*lade,
He *b*ravely *b*roach'd his *b*oiling *b*loody *b*reast;
And *T*(h)isby, *t*arrying in mulberry shade
His *d*agger *d*rew, and *d*ied..... (5.1. 147-150)

These alliterative lines placed in the mouth of a rustic artisan called Quince are enough to make the scene really comic. In fact, the rustic but comic character of Quince is wonderfully described by his parodying alliteration. This use of alliteration as Jespersen suggests, may serve Shakespeare to 'ridicule some linguistic artifices (alliteraion and bombast) employed in good faith by many of his contemporaries', [6] just as the alliterative lines placed in the mouth of a pedanitc schoolmaster named Holofernes serve to scoff at his contemporaries through the schoolmaster's affected manner when he 'something affects the letters':-

The preyful princess fierced and prick'd a pretty pleasing pricket.....
(LLL. 4. 2.57)

Shakespeare is also successful in individualizing a meditative satirist named Jaques by means of the artful aid of alliteration. The following alliterative passages will show his affected satirical manner of talking:

A fool, a fool! I met a fool i' the forest,
A motley fool; a miserable world!

6. Jespersen, *op. cit.*, p. 203.

As I do live by food, I met a fool;
•
•
•
•
'Good morrow, fool', quoth I. 'No, Sir', quoth he,
'Call me not fool till heaven hath sent me fortune!':
And then he drew a dial from his poke,
And, looking on it with lack-lustre eye,
Says very wisely, 'It is ten o'clock:
Thus we may see', quoth he, 'how the world wags':
•
•
•
•
And so, from hour to hour, we ripe and ripe,
And then, from hour to hour, We rot and rot;
And thereby hangs a tale', When I did hear;
The motley fool thus moral on the time, (AYL. 2.7. 12-29)

In the same manner, Falstaff tries to assume an affected air by aptly using alliteration in a friendly conversation with Prince Hal at the Boar's Head Tavern:

Harry, now I do not speak to thee in drink but in tears, not
in *p*leasure but in *p*assion, not in *w*ords only, but in *w*oes also. (1H4.2.4. 457-9)

In this way Shakespeare generally places alliterative lines in the mouth of some comparatively subordinate characters in order to display their rustic or affected manner. In fact, our myriad-minded genius knows how to utilize alliteration for various purposes on each occasion. Here I would like to cite another example from Macbeth. Numerous alliterative lines in this play are put not only in the mouth of the leading characters like Macbeth but also even in the mouth of such subordinate characters as a witch, a porter, or a murderer. But among them, witches use alliteration more effectively than anyone else in this play! Shakespeare puts it purposely in the mouths of witches in order to arouse a subtle or mysterious mood in the mind of the audience for stronger impression like the couplet closing Act I Scene I, uttered by three witches:

*F*air is *f*oul, and *f*oul is *f*air

Hover through the *f*og and *f*ilthy air

This enigmatic expression——"So foul and fair a day I have not seen" (1.3.38) when repeated later by Macbeth embarrassed with the sudden change of weather will enthrall the mind of the audience with an uncanny feeling. Such an uncanny or mysterious feeling is of course produced not only by the calculated ambiguity of the Witches' utterance and the elemental commotion but also by the inexplicable sense of mystery reflected in the impressive alliterating 'f' sound. The following similar example from the Witches' incantatory speeches will also sufficiently evidence Shakespeare's artifice in producing an uncanny mysterious feeling by means of alliteration:

All: Double, double, toil and trouble;
Fire burn and cauldron bubble
Second Witch: Fillet of a fenny snake,
In the cauldron boil and bake.
•
•
•
•
Like a hell-broth boil and bubble.
Third Witch: Scale of dragon, tooth of wolf,
Witches' mummy, maw and gulf
Of the ravin'd salt-sea shark,
Root of hemlock digg'd i' the dark,
•
•
•
•
Nose of Turk and Tartar's lips,
Finger of birth-strangled babe
Ditch-deliver'd by a drab
All: Double, double, toil and trouble;
Fire burn and cauldron bubble. (4.1. 10-36)

3. Monosyllabism

(A) The development of monosyllabism

I have already mentioned in the preface that the complicated inflectional endings of Old English are now almost absent from Modern English and that it is now rich in monosyllables, referring to my examination of the opening ten lines of the prologue of the Canterbury Tales, in which fifteen disyllables have been subsequently reduced to monosyllables through dropping of short vowel endings caused by a strong stress placed on the first syllable of the word. According to my examination of final conso-

A Table of English final consonant clusters

C^1 \ C^2		Stops								Fricatives								Nasals		
		p	b	t	d	č	ǰ	k	g	f	v	θ	ð	s	z	š	ž	m	n	ŋ
Stops	p			X								X		X						
	b				O										O					
	t											X		X						
	d											X			X					
	č			O																
	ǰ				O															
	k			X								X		X						
	g				O										O					
Fricatives	f			X								X		O						
	v				O										O					
	θ			O										O						
	ð				O										O					
	s	X		X				X												
	z				O															
	š			O																
	ž				O															
Nasals	m	X			O					X		X			X					
	n			X	X	X	X	X				X		X	X					
	ŋ				O										O					
Lateral	l	X	X	X	X	X	X	X		X	X	X		X	O	X		X		

Note: o stands for clusters of inflectional forms
x stands for clusters other than inflectional forms.

nant clusters of Present-Day English, the clusters indicating the plurals of substantives, the third person singulars of verbs and the preterites of weak verbs exhaust just one third of all the possible clusters, as the preceding table shows. This clearly shows how the position of a strong stress on the first syllable of the word has played an important part in producing monosyllables through the loss of the complicated inflectional endings of Old English. Of course, these clusters of inflectional forms in the table are those which were not found in the earlier stages of the English language when weak *e* was still preserved.

Another important phenomenon favoring for monosyllables which I wish to add here is the so-called apheresis or aphesis, that is, the loss of an initial syllable, like lone for alone, spy for espy, squire for esquire, etc., through the indistinct pronunciation of non-stressed vowels. We know well that the unstressed OE prefix ge- for the past participle form is now completely lost likewise, though it is still seen fossilized in such a word as *yclept*. Of course, monosyllablism in English has not sprung only from such a phonetic change as above but also through several other sources, but it is needless here to refer to them.

(B) Monosyllabism and polysemy [1]

When we look up English words in the dictionary, we usually notice that monosyllables generally have many various meanings to an extent that polysyllabic words can hardly have. For instance, in the NED, 27 different significations are given to the verb 'bring', 96 to the verb 'make' and 94 to the verb 'go', etc., but what concerns me here most is such a word as has come to belong to various parts of speech through the loss of inflectional endings which served to distinguish different parts of speech in the earlier stages of the language. Such words as 'love', 'bright', and 'dry' are good examples. *Love* is a noun and a verb, *bright* an adjective and an adverb, *dry* an adjective and a verb, according to each context. And while such a word as *long* in one connexion is an adjective, in another an adverb, it may be a verb with an entirely unrelated different meaning because OE 'langian' happened to have become the same form with OE 'lang'

1. The word 'polysemy' is used by Otto Jepersen in his article on "Monosyllabism in English"(Linguistica, 1933) as well as by other coninental linguists.

through the loss of the inflectional ending.

Therefore, as was mentioned above, in Modern English a large number of monosyllabic words have come to be identical in form without any distinction of parts of speech.

Particularly, a host of nouns and verbs have come to be identical in form; consequently, in case of an immediate need of a verb, a corresponding noun can be used readily without any modification just as nouns like cook, dew, dish, land, stone, time, nose, eye, hand, foot, tongue, knee have come to be used as verbs. However, it is noteworthy that in such a manner as above, a great many verbs have been formed from corresponding nouns, native or foreign (mostly monosyllabic), or vice versa. To cite a few examples of verbs formed from foreign nouns: class, cost, dial, line, mess, nurse etc.

This outstanding trait, which makes no distinction between different parts of speech (especially nouns and verbs as seen above), is one of the important characteristics of Present-Day English, and this trait no longer requires the traditional division into several different parts of speech according to the function of inflectional endings which were characteristic of the earlier stages of the language, but it demands a new criterion of classification of words according to their function in the construction of phrases or sentences.

(C) Monosyllabism and Homonyms

Another important trait of Modern English is that it is rich in homonyms, and the majority of them are monosyllables. It is quite easy for us to understand that the more English words become monosyllabic through the loss of inflexions or through other sources, the more they become homonymous or homophonous, for the shorter the word, the more likely is it to find another word of accidentally the same sound such as, 'see, sea,' 'meet, meat', 'son, sun', 'sow, sew', etc.

Besides, in Modern English which has, as remarked in the preceding section, a trait of many-meaning-ness, homonyms like 'long' (not short, to be filled with a strong yearning), 'light' (not dark, not heavy, a bright shining body, or to dismount), 'sound'

(uninjured, a strait, to find out the depth of water, or that which is heard) are numerous, and not only such as these but also innumerable homonymous verbs or nouns formed from corresponding nouns or verbs. It may be said that the incalculably large number of homonyms of English is chiefly caused by monosyllabism.

A great store of homonyms also provides punsters with rich material for their puns. Shakespeare also made use of this rich material in his immortal plays to produce delightful, comic or sometimes very impressive effects. The following few examples will show how the great genius was wonderfully skillful in dealing with homonymous puns:

Hath Romeo slain himself? say thou but 'I',
and the bare vowel, 'I', shall poison more
Than the death-darting eye of cockatrice:
I am not I, if there be such an 'I',
or those eyes shut that make thee answer 'I'.
If he be slain, say 'I', or if not 'No'; (Rom. 3.2. 45-50)

Here Shakespeare attempts to make Juliet give vent to her anxiety in this manner, punning on Ay, Eye, and I.

Clo. Are these, I pray you, wind-instruments?
Ist Mus. Ay, marry, are they, sir.
Clo. O! thereby hangs a tail.
Ist Mus. whereby hangs a tale, sir?
Clo. Marry, sir, by many a wind-instrument that I know.
(Oth. 3.1. 6-10)

Tail-Tale is a kind of bawdy pun of which Shakespeare is very fond. Hour-whore (AYL. 2.7. 26-27) is another good example of this kind.

We must be neat; not neat, but cleanly, Captain:
And yet the steer, the heifer, and the calf,
Are all called neat. (Wint. 1. 2. 124-6)

Here Leontes puns on two meanings of Neat. Similarly in the following example, Form is used as a pun on two meanings—'bench' and 'fashion'.

Constard: In manner and form following, sir; all those three:
I was seen with her in the manor house, sitting with her upon the form, and taken following her into the park; which, put together, is in manner and form following. Now, sir, for the manner,——it is the manner of a man to speak to a woman, for the form,——in some form. (LLL. 1. 1. 205-211)

The following is an example of a triple pun on pound 'to beat', pound 'sterling' and pound 'enclosure'.

Proteus: Nay, in that you are astray; 'twere best pound you.
Speed: Nay, sir, less than a pound shall serve me for carrying your letter.
Proteus: You mistake: I mean the pound,——a pinfold.
Speed: From a pound to a pin? Fold it over and over', 'Tis threefold too little for carrying a letter to your lover. (Gen. 1. 1 109-16)

4. Conclusion

It should be remarked here from what I have so far inquired into that both alliteration and monosyllabism——two outstanding phenomena caused mainly by the influence of the old stress-shift——have played important roles which are regarded as some of the most noteworthy characteristic traits of the English language today. Here I would like to add the following, which I have hitherto left unremarked, to complete what I have intended to write.

(A) Alliteration of today

I have already remarked that in Modern English alliteration has completely lost its original form as well as its function of welding the line itself together, and in the 19th century it came to be used merely for the purpose of emphatic, picturesque or euphonic description. However the English people, whose disposition is quite conservative, has never discarded the traditional use of alliteration. In fact, we can still find alliterative expressions in every field——in literary works, political speeches, sermons, proverbs or even in advertisements. But in these cases, alliteration is employed for

impressive, emphatic, euphonic or merely ornamental purposes. Above all, it is very interesting to find a large number of alliterative proverbs still familiar to the English people. To cite some examples:

Council is no command.
An angry man stirreth up strife.
All that glitters is not gold.
You can't judge the horse by the harness.
His bark is worse than his bite.
A fair face may be a foul bargain.
A fair face may hide a foul heart.
Beauty is but a blossom.
The begger's wallet has no bottom.
The belly is a bad advisor.
Above salt there is no savor.
Better buy than borrow.
Better unborn than unbred.
Lock the stable before the horse is stolen.
If you live with a lame person, you will learn to limp.
A clean conscience is a good card.
Fortune favors the brave.
Courtesy costs nothing.
Cowards are cruel.
Out of debt, out of danger.
Delays are dangerous
Difficulty is the daughter of idleness.
When the wine is in, the wit is out.
Duty determines destiny.
Many dishes make many diseases.
Many a mickle makes a muckle.
Lovers live by love as larks live by leeks.

A fair face is half a fortune.
Fair words and wicked deeds deceive wise men and fools.
A fool of forty is a fool indeed.
When fortune begins to frown, friends will be few.
Spare the rod, spoil the child.

Such alliterative proverbs are so numerous that I cannot cite them all here. This large stock is nothing but good evidence to show us how the English people is so conservative as to maintain the traditional love of alliteration. Such a love of alliteration is also found in everyday speech in such stock phrases as 'with might and main,' 'chap and change' 'make or mar', 'fret and fume', 'feed the fishes', 'part and parcel', 'go to rack and ruin', 'safe and sound', 'slow but sure', 'spick and span', 'storm and stress', 'beat about the bush', 'bag and baggage', 'from top to toe', 'rough and ready', and also in such similes as, 'busy as bees', 'bold as brass', 'clear as crystal', 'dead as a door-nail', 'dry as dust', 'meek as a maid', 'cool as a cucumber', 'naked as a needle', 'soft as silk', 'still as a stone' [1]

It is also interesting that lots of alliterative reduplicated symbolic words are still frequently employed in everyday speech. To cite a few examples:-

ding-dong, pitter-patter, snip-snap, fiddle-faddle, mingle-mangle, shilly-shally, topsy-turvy, etc.

Not only in such phrases as cited above but also even in advertisements of merchandise, titles of books and magazines, or newespaper head-lines, alliteration is still much favored by the British and by Americans as well. The following advertisements will be good examples to show how Americans love alliterarion, too.

Bold mesh, billowy bloomers,
brash built-up boots, [2]
cool clean Consulate. [3]

1. Svartengren remarks that about 20% of the English intensifying similes are alliterative. Vid. "Intensifying similes in English" by T. H. Svartengren, Lund, 1918, P. 465
2, 3. Life magazine (Asia Edition), May 29, 1967.

I may say that the deep-rooted love of alliteration will never leave the English language and will remain with the language as long as it exists on earth.

(B) The merits of monosyllabism

As I have remarked in the preceding section 3, chiefly through the loss of the complicated inflectional endings of Old English, Modern English has come to possess an extremely large stock of monosyllables. In English monosyllables, due to the loss of inflection and the idiosyncrasy of polysemy, the definite distinctions between parts of speech can hardly be made unless their function in the construction of phrases or sentences is taken into consideration. Therefore, the demand for word order naturally arises.

When monosyllables are arranged in a fixed word order in a sentence, they can produce a consecutive picture like a movie in the brain of the hearer without troubling him with the complicated inflexional endings whose grammatical functions are here replaced with empty words (they are also mostly monosyllabic) which in their turn direct each of the other words to its proper place in order to facilitate orderly understanding.

This movie-like kinetic picture produced in this manner is generally far more vivid and impressive, and expressive at the same time. This is one of the noteworthy merits of monosyllabism. The following examples will show how pithy and impressive sentences composed of monosyllables are:-

O'er, bog or steep, through strait, rough, dense, or rare,
With head, hands, wings, or feet, pursues his way;
And swims, or sinks, or wades, or creeps, or flies. (Paradise Lost Ⅱ. 948-50)
O world! O Life! O Time!
On whose last steps I climb. (Threnos 1-2)
Might I not say? "Yet even here,
But for one hour, O Love, I strive
To keep so sweet a thing alive;
But I should turn mine ears and hear, (In Memoriam 35. 2)
The sea of Faith
Was once, too, at the full, and round earth's shore

Lay like the folds of a bright girdle furl'd. (Dover Beach 21-23)

It is also very interesting to find a large stock of English proverbs composed of monosyllables. To cite some examples:

A black plum is as sweet as the white.
As a man needs clothes, so a house needs a broom.
Gold shines in the mud.
Cast no dirt into the well that gives you water.
A bird in the hand is worth two in the bush.
Good wine needs no bush.
All is well that ends well.
Pain of mind is worse than pain of body.
A maid that laughs is half taken.
Haste makes waste, and waste makes want.
An old man in a house is a good sign.
A little pot soon hot.

Judging from such merits as above, monosyllabism can be considered to have contributed much to the development of the English language, and especially it is a problem of great interest that English has now become so analytical in its expression that it is gradually moving toward the isolating language in many respects; for instance, it has come to share common traits more and more with an isolating language like Chinese which is monosyllabic, has no inflexion, and whose chief grammatical instrument is word order.

It is really interesting to find that English words most widely used in everyday speech are mostly monosyllables. According to Professor E. L. Thorndike's calculation, 400 words out of the 500 most frequently used words are monosyllabic.[1] But many literary works are also comparatively rich in monosyllables. I have examined the percentage of monosyllables in both prose and verse written by famous poets, novelists and essayists of the 20th century, and found out that in as many works as

1. The Teacher's Word Book, ed. by E. L Thorndike, Teachers College, Columbia Univ., New York, 1931.

I have examined almost every work is comprised of more than 70% monosyllables. The following are some examples:

Their Lovely Betters by W. H. Auden (1907-) 82% [2]
In my Craft or Sullen Art by Dylan Thomas (1914-1953) 84%
Animal Farm by G. Orwell (1903-1950) 70%
Cakes and Ale by S. Maugham (1874-) 73%
A Defence of Nonsense by G. K. Chesterton (1874-1936) 73%
Golden Fruit by A. A. Milne (1882-1956) 78%
The First Detective by V. S. Pritchett (1900-) 73%

Such a high percentage of monosyllables both in everyday speech and in literary works clearly shows how important a role monosyllabism plays in English today.

Monosyllabism, which is considered as one of the most significant traits of the English language, will furthermore bring about far-reaching consequences for this language and can, for ever and ever, never be out of favor with it.

2. The ratio of monosyllables in novels and essays mentioned here is the percentage of monosyllables among the 500 words counted from the opening line of each work