

# Pronominal and adverbial clitics in Old English : Evidence from Beowulf (Part 2)

著者 (英)	Yasuko Suzuki
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# Pronominal and adverbial clitics in Old English:

Evidence from *Beowulf*

Part II

Yasuko Suzuki

## Abstract

In Part I, after the introduction in section 1, section 2 illustrated prosodic deficiency and distributional anomaly of sentential clitics with Serbo-Croatian examples. Section 3 illustrated the structure of Germanic alliterative verse and showed how to interpret stress encoded in the metrical structure. In section 4, after the definition of pronominal and adverbial clitics in Old English, section 4.1 examined the distributional patterns of these pronouns and adverbs in *Beowulf*: they tend to occur in a sequence in a specific order and some of the pronouns show the phenomenon of clitic climbing. In Part II, section 4.2 examines the stress and distribution of pronouns and short adverbs in *Beowulf*. As Kuhn (1933) and Pintzuk (1991, 1996, 1999) point out, most pronouns and a number of short sentential adverbs are unstressed in clause-early position, which suggests, together with the evidence presented in Part I, that these pronouns and short adverbs are sentential clitics. On the other hand, many of the stressed counterparts are apparently under emphasis. That is, they tend to occur in clause-late position and especially in the pre-verbal position. Also, stressed pronouns are often accompanied by appositive phrases. Further, the first and the second person pronouns are more often stressed than the third person pronouns due to a greater degree of discourse prominence. Finally, section 5 summarizes the findings of the present work.

**Keywords:** clitics, pronouns, adverbs, Old English, *Beowulf*

## 4. Pronominal and adverbial clitics in *Beowulf* (continued)

### 4.2. Stress and distribution of pronouns and short adverbs

In *Beowulf* the only phonological evidence for the clitic status of pronouns and short adverbs is that they occur in metrically unstressed position. However, lack of stress is generally a necessary but not a sufficient condition for cliticness. Otherwise, there is no evidence for phonological reduction or phonologically distinct clitic forms as opposed to full forms of pronouns and adverbs. Concerning the stress and distribution of pronouns and short adverbs,

some earlier scholars have observed the contrast between clause-early and unstressed vs. clause-late and stressed and have claimed that clause-early unstressed pronouns and adverbs are clitics.

Based on his observation on *Beowulf* and other early Germanic alliterative poetry, Kuhn (1933) proposed two laws on the stress and distribution of what he calls ‘sentence particles’, i.e. conjunctions, pronouns, adverbs, and other words that are unstressed and belong to the entire clause rather than to its part (cf. Kuhn 1933: 5-6). His first law states that they occur in the first drop of the clause, either clause-initially or, when the clause begins with a lift, after the first stressed word (cf. Kuhn 1933: 8). Sentence particles may not occur in more than one drop in a clause or after the first lift when the clause begins with a drop, i.e. in the second drop (cf. Kuhn 1933: 9). As implied by the first law, sentence particles may be preceded by one stress only. This means that sentence particles do not occur after a complex element, i.e. elements that consist of a demonstrative and a noun, which makes a drop and a lift, compounds, which make two lifts, and other longer elements that form more than one lift. Kuhn’s second law states that clause-initial drops must accommodate at least one sentence particle (cf. Kuhn 1933: 43). Kuhn’s sentence particles, when they are stressed, are exempt from these two laws (cf. Kuhn 1933: 10, 50). His laws represent archaic features of early Germanic and are more faithfully observed by early Old English poetry such as *Beowulf* than other early Germanic poems. On the other hand, violation of the laws represents innovative features, which reflects the fact that clause-initial clustering of sentence particles gradually declined. In addition, the second position in early Germanic was originally after the first word and shifted towards second position after the first constituent, which may be more than one word (cf. Kuhn 1933: 93). Later metrists such as Bliss (1967) and Kendall (1983, 1991) treat Kuhn’s two laws as metrical conventions and use them as a basis for their metrical analysis, which, as Hatcheson (1993) aptly claimed, was never Kuhn’s intention nor is justified.

While Kuhn’s definition on the position of sentential clitics is a significant contribution, as will be discussed below, his definition of ‘sentence particles’ requires some modification (cf. Suzuki 2001). The problem is that Kuhn includes in this category all the words that are unstressed in the clause-initial drop including lexical verbs and vocatives, which are obviously not clitics. Conjunctions are also included although they have no freedom in distribution in contrast to pronouns and adverbs. That is, his definition of sentence particles or clitics lacks independent justification. Clitics in Old English must be a more restrictive group of words than Kuhn posited. Other than part of finite verbs, which are not discussed in this paper, pronouns

and short adverbs are shown to be clitics.

Much later, Pintzuk (1991, 1996, 1999) independently noticed the same correlation between the stress and distribution of pronouns and adverbs in *Beowulf*. That is, they are unstressed and occur preceding the first stress of the clause (cf. Pintzuk 1999: 129).<sup>1</sup> On the other hand, those pronouns and adverbs that occur later in the clause are more often stressed than not. Concerning the shift in the position for clitics, again like Kuhn (1933), Pintzuk (1999: 175) noticed that, while the stressed topic consists of one word in *Beowulf*, in later Old English the topic preceding clitic pronouns are often complex, as given in (31) (cf. Pintzuk 1991: 265-266, 1999: 175; also Koopman 1996).

- (31) þas drohtunge & þis liif þu scealt gesettan Bede 64.21-22  
 this conduct and this life you-NOM. shall establish  
 ‘you shall establish this conduct and this life’  
 (Example from Pintzuk 1999: 175, (105))

Kuhn-Pintzuk’s observation is in fact born out in *Beowulf* as will be shown for pronouns in section 4.2.1 and for short adverbs in section 4.2.2 below. The fact that most pronouns and many of short adverbs are unstressed in clause-early position suggests, together with other distributional patterns discussed in section 4.1 in Part I, that they are clitics. The following sections also discuss the exceptional cases of stressed examples and of unstressed clause-late examples, which neither Kuhn (1933) nor Pintzuk (1991, 1996, 1999) did. For many of the stressed pronouns, there is evidence such as their distribution and appositive elaboration that indicates that they are under emphasis.

#### 4.2.1. Pronouns

Of 1,099 personal pronouns and unambiguous demonstrative pronouns, 1,066 are unstressed while only thirty-three are stressed. Most unstressed pronouns occur in clause-early position, preceding any stressed word except for the finite verb (cf. 688a in (19b) in Part I). There are eleven unstressed pronouns that occur later in the clause. Five of them directly follow the clause-initial stressed word, which is not a finite verb, as in (32a).

- (32) a. After a clause-initial lexical word

Sóna þæt gesáwon snóttre céorlas, 1591  
 at-once that-ACC. saw wise men  
 ‘at once the wise men saw that’

Also *hwe* in 180b in (19b) in Part I and *ic* in 274b, 532b, and 1997b

- b. After a lexical word and a light verb

Hyge wæs him hínfūs, 755a  
 heart was him-DAT. eager-to-get-away  
 ‘his heart was eager to get away’

Also *mē* in 316b and 473a

In three examples given in (32b) an unstressed finite verb intervenes between the clause-initial stressed word and an unstressed pronoun. Further, in two other examples given in (33), the unstressed pronoun follows one longer element; in 1554b in a main clause and in 2592b in a subordinate clause excluding the conjunction.

- (33)

wítig Dríhten,  
 wise Lord  
 róðera Ræðend hit on rýht gescéd  
 heavens Ruler it-ACC. on right decided  
 ŷðelíce, 1554b-1556a  
 easily

‘the wise Lord, Ruler of the Heavens, decided it with right, easily’

þæt ðā āglæcean hȳ éft gemétton. 2592  
 that the warriors them-ACC. again met

‘that they came together again, dreadful foes’

Clause-late occurrences of unstressed pronouns in (33) may be accounted for as follows. In 1555b, if the object pronoun were clause-initial instead, which is the more common position, the grammatical relation would be obscured due to the long intervening subject that occupies two verses. The object pronoun thus follows the nominal subject rather than precedes it. In 2592b

the unstressed pronoun is reciprocal (accusative plural; cf. Klaeber 1950: 352), referring to the preceding subject that stands for Beowulf and the dragon (cf. Klaeber 1950: 298). Since pronouns are typically anaphoric rather than cataphoric, the reflexive *hȳ* is placed after the nominal subject and not before it.

The last example of the unstressed clause-late pronouns is given in (34), where the pronoun *him* in 2775a occurs at the beginning of the infinitival phrase, which is preceded by another that shares the same finite verb, i.e. *gefrægn* in 2773a.

- |      |            |        |         |        |         |       |          |      |
|------|------------|--------|---------|--------|---------|-------|----------|------|
| (34) | Đā         | ic     | on      | hlæwe  | gefrægn | hórd  | rēafian, | 2773 |
|      | then       | I      | in      | mound  | heard   | hoard | plunder  |      |
|      | éald       | énta   | gewèorc | āne    | mánnan, |       |          | 2774 |
|      | old        | giants | work    | one    | man     |       |          |      |
|      | <i>him</i> | on     | hēarm   | hládon | hūnan   | ond   | díscas   | 2775 |
|      | him-DAT.   | in     | bosom   | load   | cups    | and   | plates   |      |
|      | sýlfes     | dóme;  |         |        |         |       |          | 2776 |
|      | self       | choice |         |        |         |       |          |      |
- ‘then I heard that one man in the mound pillaged the hoard, the old work of giants, loaded in his bosom cups and plates at his own desire’

In (34) the unstressed pronoun is at the beginning of the second infinitival phrase to which it belongs and cannot occur earlier than it does due to the presence of the first.

As has been shown, clause-late unstressed pronouns in *Beowulf* appear to be reasonable deviations. Similarly, stressed pronouns show certain patterns.

Of thirty-three stressed pronouns, eleven are genitive with or without the head noun in the same clause, as in (35).

- |      |         |        |           |       |           |
|------|---------|--------|-----------|-------|-----------|
| (35) | Nū      | ic     | ēower     | scéal |           |
|      | now     | I-NOM. | your-GEN. | must  |           |
|      | frúmcyn | wítan, |           |       | 251b-252a |
|      | lineage | know   |           |       |           |
- ‘now I must learn your lineage’

Ic on éarde bād  
 I in land waited  
mælgescéafta, hēold mīn téla, 2736b-2737b  
 time-allotment held mine-GEN. well  
 ‘in my land I waited what fate brought me, held my own well’

þonne mīn scéaceð  
 when my-GEN. departs  
līf of līce. 2742b-2743a  
 life from body  
 ‘when life goes from my body’

In 251b *þower* modifies *frumcyn* ‘lineage’ in the next verse and in 2742b *mīn* modifies *līf* ‘life’ in 2743a. In 2737b, on the other hand, the pronoun *mīn* refers back to *mælgescæfta* ‘time-allotment, fate’ in the previous verse. Genitive pronouns are stressed in these examples presumably because they are comparable to full NPs.

Eleven of the stressed pronouns occur directly preceding the main verb, which is the basic position for the object in an SOV language, e.g. (36) below and also 2742b in (35) above. Pronouns in this position are stressed because they are comparable to the nominal object.

(36) Hine hālig Gód  
 him-ACC. holy god  
 for ārstáfum ūs onsénde,  
 by grace us-DAT. sent  
 tō Wést-Dénum, þæs ic wēn hǣbbe,  
 to West-Danes as I expectation have  
 wið Gréndles grýre. 381b-384a  
 against Grendel’s terror  
 ‘Holy God of His grace has sent him to us West-Danes, as I hope, against the terror of Grendel’

þæt ic hē sōhte, 417b

that I-NOM. you-DAT. sought

‘that I should seek you’

‘For gewýrhtum þū, wīne mīn Bēowulf,

for deeds-done you-NOM. friend my Beowulf

and for ārstáfum ūsic sōhtest. 457-458

and for favors us-ACC. sought

‘for deeds done, my friend Beowulf, and for past favors you have sought us’

In the above examples, pronouns fill the alliterating lift, which indicates that they receive strong stress (cf. section 3 in Part I). Note, in the first example in (36), the contrast between the clause-initial unstressed *hine* in 381b and the alliterating *ūs* in pre-verbal position in 382b. The stressed *ūs* but not the unstressed *hine* is accompanied by the appositive *tō West-Denum* in 383a, which suggests that there is more attention to the indirect object than the direct object. Further, in (36), the pre-verbal alliterating pronouns are either first or second person. See below for further discussions on the relationship between stress and the persons of pronouns.

Other than the above two patterns of stressed pronouns, some clause-early second person singular pronouns are stressed, e.g. *þē* in 426 below.

(37) Ic þē nū ðā, 426

I-NOM. you-DAT. now then

brēgo Bēorht-Dena, bíddan wílle, 427

lord Bright-Danes ask will

éodor Scýldinga, ānre bēne, 428

protector Scyldings one request

þæt ðū mē ne forwýrne, wīgendra hlēo, 429

that you me not refuse warriors shelter

frēowine fólca, 430

noble-friend nation

‘Therefore, lord of the Bright-Danes, protector of the Scyldings, I will make a request of you, refuge of warriors, fair friend of nations’



- (39) sæmran æt sæcce.      *Þū*      *þē*      sélf háfast  
 weaker at fighting      you-NOM. you-DAT. self have  
dædum gefrémed,      953-954a  
 deeds brought-about  
 ‘...weaker in fighting. With your deeds you yourself have made sure’

The causal relationship between the stress on a pronoun and the stressability of other elements in the same verse is not at once obvious. That is, one possibility is that the pronoun is stressed because the verse in which it occurs consists of weakly stressable elements only. Alternatively, because there is emphasis on the pronoun, it cooccurs with weakly stressable elements in the same verse so that it may receive stress. As already shown, examination of the sentences and the context suggests that the second possibility is more plausible than the first in the examples discussed above. That is, the stressed pronouns in (37) and (38) are accompanied by appositive phrases. On the other hand, the unstressed pronouns in (39) are not, as expected. Further, in terms of the position in a verse, pronouns are typically unstressed in verse-initial position but fill a non-alliterating lift in verse-final position, which presumably reflects phrasal prosody. The verse-medial position could either be strong or weak positions depending on what other elements occur in the given verse.

In addition to the examples already discussed, there are two other alliterating pronouns given in (40), which lack an explicit indication for emphasis.

- (40) Dýs dōgor þū      *geþýld* háfa  
 this day you-NOM.      patience have  
wæana gehwýlces,      1395-1396a  
 woes every  
 ‘this day have patience in every woe’

- Hrōðgār máþelode      *hím*      on ándsware:      1840  
 Hroðgar spoke      him-DAT. in answer  
 ‘Hroðgar spoke to him in answer’



b. After a complex element

Done sīðfæt *hím* snoðtere céorlas  
 that adventure him-DAT. wise men  
 lǣthwōn lōgon, 202-203a  
 very-little blamed  
 ‘very little did wise men blame him for that adventure’

c. After more than one element

Ðā se ðēoden *méc* ðīne lífe  
 then the king me-ACC. your life  
 hēalsode hrēohmōd, 2131-2132a  
 implored troubled-in-mind  
 ‘then the king, sore-hearted, implored me by your life’

Donne sægdon *hæt* sæliþende, 377  
 then said that-ACC. seafarers  
 ‘then seafarers used to say that’

‘Hwæt sýndon *gē* séarohæbbendra, 237  
 what are you-NOM. armor-bearers  
 ‘what are you bearers of armor’

Pronouns in (42) lack clear indication for emphasis and appear to receive stress by position. In contrast to the examples already discussed, the stressed pronouns in (42) are in similar contexts. That is, they typically follow two words or elements, i.e. a compound in (42a), a complex element in (42b), a conjunction and one complex element or a light element and a finite verb in (42c). In contrast to the unstressed pronouns after a simplex word in (32) above, a compound is comparable to a complex element, as given in (42a). As a possible interpretation for the examples in (42a, b), the pronoun is placed after the initial focused element and gets stress by position. In the direct question in 237 in (42c), the given order of the pronoun is the only possibility and may receive stress by position.

In sum, while more than 99% of the clause-early pronouns are unstressed, only 40% of clause-late pronouns are unstressed. Clause-early unstressed pronouns are sentential clitics. As

has been shown, pronouns show a higher ratio of being stressed the later they occur in the clause. Further, among clause-late pronouns, eight out of eleven unstressed pronouns occur after one word with or without a light verb intervening.

Explicit cues to the emphasis on pronouns are the appositive vocatives and the placement in the pre-verbal position. When one of these conditions is met, pronouns tend to fill an alliterating lift. Context may suggest emphasis on pronouns, but is susceptible to different interpretations and thus is not decisive. Also, pronouns tend to be stressed when other elements in the same verse are less stressable. However, this arrangement is likely to follow from the emphasis on pronouns rather than vice versa.

An additional factor that determines stress on pronouns is the person as already mentioned. Among thirty-three stressed pronouns, eighteen including nine possessives are first person, twelve are second person, two are third person, and one is a demonstrative. The higher ratio of the first and the second person pronouns than the third is presumably because they are more discourse prominent. In terms of number, singular pronouns are more stressable than plural pronouns, i.e. twenty-four vs. nine.

#### 4.2.2. Adverbs

Like pronouns, short sentential adverbs show the pattern of clause-early and unstressed vs. clause-late and stressed. In *Beowulf* the most frequent adverb is *þā* ‘then’. Of 199 occurrences of the adverb *þā* excluding those in idioms, 192 are unstressed and they all occur preceding the first stressed word, e.g. 415a and 2707a in (16), 1590b in (17), 28a and 688a in (19), 340a in (21), 118a and 1280b in (25), 2773a in (34), 2131a in (42c) above.<sup>2</sup> On the other hand, among examples of the stressed *þā*, six fill a non-alliterating lift directly following the clause-initial verb, as in (43).

- (43) Ymbēode þā ídes Hélminga 620  
 went-round then woman Helmings  
 ‘then the woman of the Helmings went about’

There is only one example of the clause-late *þā* used on its own and this *þā* is stressed, as shown in (44).

- (44)                      næs      mid      Géatum ðá  
                                  was-not among Geats      then  
                                  sincmāðþum sétra      on swéordes háð;                      2192b-2193  
                                  treasures      better      in sword's form  
                                  'there was not then among the Geats a better treasure in sword's kind'

While *þā* is typically used for a temporal sequence of events and actions, the stressed *þā* in (44) means that what is described in this sentence is contemporaneous with the events in the surrounding context. More specifically, in the context in which the sentence in (44) occurs, the sword mentioned here is brought in and given to Beowulf and this sentence describes the superiority of that sword. The adverb *þā* thus means 'at that time' rather than 'thereupon' and this less common use may be the reason for the clause-late position of and the stress on the adverb.

Other short adverbs are less frequent than *þā* but show a similar correlation between stress and distribution. Table 1 shows the stress and distribution of eight short adverbs in *Beowulf*. 'Clause-early' adverbs are those preceded by no stress except for a finite verb while 'clause-late' adverbs are preceded by at least one stress other than the finite verb if any. The numbers in the parentheses of the 'clause-early stressed' adverbs in the third column refer to those that are followed only by a finite verb in the same clause and thus may also be interpreted as 'clause-late', e.g. 400b and 900b in (45) below. 'Clause-late' adverbs are consistently stressed. For examples, see 2032a in (18), 435a and 1671a in (24b), and 525a in (30) for *þonne*, 2089a in (19a), 1470b in (24a), and 118a and 1280b in (25) for *þær*.<sup>2</sup>

Table 1: Stress and distribution of short adverbs

Adverbs	Clause-early		Clause-late	Total
	Unstressed	Stressed		
<i>þā</i> 'then'	192	6	1	199
<i>þær</i> 'there'	70	3 (2)	8	81
<i>æ̅r</i> 'before'	11	14 (8)	17	42
<i>þonne</i> 'then'	20	0	1	21
<i>nū</i> 'now'	30	1 (1)	2	33
<i>swā</i> 'so'	28	0	8	36
<i>siððan</i> 'afterwards'	4	8	8	20
<i>swylce</i> 'also'	14	0	1	15
Total	369	32	46	447

The ratio of occurring unstressed in clause-early position varies depending on the adverbs. Other than the eight adverbs in the table above, a number of adverbs are not frequent enough so that judgement of their clitic status is difficult.

Two of the adverbs in the table, i.e. *ǣr* and *sýððan*, show especially a high ratio of being stressed. As one notable pattern, adverbs in the pre-verbal position fill an alliterating lift, as in (45).

- (45) *sume þǣr bídon,* 400b  
 some there waited  
 ‘some waited there’
- *hē þæs ǣr onðāh –,* 900b  
 he-NOM. that-GEN. before prospered  
 ‘he had prospered from that before’
- þē him se éorðdráca ǣr gewórhte,* 2712  
 that him-DAT. the earth-dragon before made  
 ‘that the earth-dragon caused him before’
- þæt hit sælfíðend sýððan hátan*  
 that it sea-farers afterwards call  
*Beowulfes þíorh,* 2806-2807a  
 Beowulf’s barrow  
 ‘so that sea-travelers later will call it Beowulf’s barrow’

The number of the alliterating pre-verbal occurrences varies depending on the adverbs, e.g. none with *þā* and *þonne*, six out of 81 with *þǣr*, but as many as 25 in both ‘clause-early’ and ‘clause-late’ positions out of 42 with *ǣr*. Alliteration on the pre-verbal adverbs suggests that, like pronouns, the pre-verbal position may be a strong position for adverbs as well. The stressed adverbs in the pre-verbal position may be what Huddleston and Pullum (2002) call VP-oriented adverbs as opposed to clause-oriented adverbs for Present-day English. VP-oriented adverbs occur within a VP and in this respect have less freedom in distribution. Thus, they must be exempted from candidates for sentential clitics. However, the line of demarcation between

these two types is not always clear both in meaning and in distribution. In meaning, both the clause-early *þær*, e.g. 2089a in (19a) and 1470b in (24a), 118a and 1280b in (25), and the pre-verbal *þær*, e.g. 3008b in (45), likewise refer to the place of verbal action. In terms of distribution, the adverb is both ‘clause-early’ and ‘pre-verbal’ in clauses that consist of the finite verb and light elements only, e.g. 400b and 900b in (45) above, although there are a number of examples that are either one of the two.

As a summary, in parallel with pronouns, many of the short adverbs discussed above are unstressed in clause-early position, which suggests that they are clitics, while others are stressed especially in the pre-verbal position.

## 5. Conclusions

I have shown that most pronouns and many short sentential adverbs in Old English *Beowulf* are unstressed in clause-early position. They occur in a specific order clause-initially or, less often, after the clause-initial stressed word. Together with the distributional properties of the order among these unstressed light elements and clitic climbing, the evidence suggests that the unstressed pronouns and short adverbs are sentential clitics. On the other hand, there are scarcely unstressed pronouns that occur later and many of the stressed pronouns and short adverbs appear to be under emphasis. While sentential clitics in Serbo-Croatian has the clause-initial stressed word as the host (cf. section 2), pronominal and adverbial clitics in Old English often occur clause-initially and apparently lack a host. However, provided that prosodic lightness and distributional anomaly are qualifications for clitic status, the language of *Beowulf* shows enough evidence that they are sentential clitics.

### Notes

- 1 In claiming that clitics precede the first stress in *Beowulf*, Pintzuk (1991, 1996, 1999) does not give any discussions or justification for the stress she marks in the texts given. In fact, metrical analysis of alliterative poetry is not always monolithic. More specifically, among the controversial issues, clause-early alliterating verbs as in (i) (cf. also 688a in (19b) in Part I) are unstressed according to Bliss (1967) whom Pintzuk apparently follows (Pintzuk 1999: 134).

- (i) 'Hū *lomp* ēow on *lāde*, 1987a  
how fared you on journey  
'how did you fare on your journey?'

That is, according to Pintzuk's understanding, the verse given in (i) is a one-lift verse as shown. However, the alliterating verbs are stressed in other analyses such as Sievers (1885, 1893), Cable (1974), Hutcheson (1995), Suzuki (1996), and Suzuki (2006-7). Bliss's (1967) justification for the analysis in (i) is his interpretation of Kuhn's laws as metrical conventions, which, as mentioned above, requires discussion. Thus, her claim that most pronouns and adverbs precede the first stress of the clause follows partly from this presupposition. Assuming that the alliterating verb in verses as in (i) is stressed requires an additional qualification on her claim: except for the clause-early finite verb.

- 2 See Part I for examples with the numbers (1) to (30).

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(すずき・やすこ 外国語学部准教授)