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# Contraction in Old English *Beowulf*\*

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## Abstract

This paper discusses contracted forms or what Zwicky (1977) terms ‘simple clitics’ that are found in the Old English alliterative verse *Beowulf*. The most frequent is cliticization of the negative particle to the following verb, e.g. *næs* ‘not-was’ (< *ne wæs*), *nis* ‘not-is’ (< *ne is*), *noelde* ‘not-would’ (< *ne wolde*). Other examples include the verb-pronoun sequence *wēn ic* ‘think-I’ (< *wēne ic*), and the conjunction-particle sequence *þætte* ‘that-which’ (< *þæt þe*) (cf. Klaeber 1950, Campbell 1959, Brunner 1965).

The elements that may become simple clitics, i.e. the negative particle *ne*, the subject pronoun *ic*, and the relative particle *þe*, consistently occur in a metrically unstressed position. This fact indicates that lack of stress is a necessary condition for cliticization. In parallel with clitic phenomena in Present-day English, contraction in *Beowulf* tends to be observed with high frequency collocations and is subject to phonotactic factors (cf. Zwicky 1970, 1977, Selkirk 1984, Kaisse 1985, Bybee 2001). For example, the negative particle *ne* is cliticized to auxiliaries and auxiliary-like verbs that begin with a vowel, *h*, or *w*. Although there is some indication that full forms are more often stressed than the corresponding contracted forms (cf. Jack 1999), the factors which distinguish between the two are not entirely clear.

**Keywords:** contraction, clitics, negative particle, Old English, *Beowulf*

## 1. Introduction

Although we do not know for sure how the written forms are pronounced in Old English, the orthography shows that there were contraction phenomena in Old English similar to those in Present-day English such as *isn’t* (< *is not*), *he’s* (< *he is*), and *wanna* (< *want to*). This paper discusses contracted forms or what Zwicky (1977) calls ‘simple clitics’ that are found in the Old English alliterative verse *Beowulf* such as *næs* ‘wasn’t’ from *ne wæs* ‘not was’. Most of the contracted forms occur in a metrically unstressed position. In parallel with clitic phenomena in

Present-day English, contraction in *Beowulf* tends to be observed with high frequency collocations and is conditioned by the phonotactic factor of avoiding hiatus. The data show that some of the full forms are more often stressed than the corresponding contracted forms as Jack (1999) suggests, but the conditioning factors that distinguish between the two are not always clear.

In what follows, section 2 will discuss various conditioning factors that govern cliticization in Present-day English as background information. Section 3 will discuss phonological cliticization in *Beowulf*, i.e. the negative particle *ne* cliticized to the following finite verb (section 3.1), contraction of the verb-pronoun collocation *wēn' ic* 'think-I' (< *wēne ic*) (section 3.2), and contraction of the conjunction-particle collocation *þætte* 'that-which' (< *þæt þe*) (section 3.3). The appendix will illustrate structure of Germanic alliterative verse in which *Beowulf* is composed and show how information on stress is extracted from verse structure.

## 2. Contraction in Present-day English

In Present-day English various grammatical words undergo phonological reduction and many are cliticized to the preceding word in casual speech. Examples include (i) the negative adverb as in *I don't know*, *They aren't ready*, *I haven't seen him for ages*, *Can't you swim?*, (ii) auxiliaries as in *Where's the station?*, *She'd like to talk to you*, (iii) pronouns as in *Let's go for a walk*, *I saw'm* (< *them*), and (iv) *to* as in *I wanna go*, *I'm supposta go* (cf. Zwicky 1970, 1977: 10-12, 26-29, Baker 1971, Klavans 1982: 19-23, Postal and Pullum 1978, 1982, Selkirk 1984: 383-406, Kaisse 1985: 39-73, Pullum 1997, Hock 1991: 87, Swan 2005: 120-122, 303, Dixon 2007 among others). The reduced elements are simple clitics in Zwicky's (1977: 6, 26-29) terms in that they occur in the same position as the corresponding full forms with the exception of *not*, e.g. *Do you not know?* vs. *Don't you know?*

Cliticization in English is subject to various conditioning factors, i.e. phonological, lexical, frequency, and possibly syntactic, as discussed in earlier literature (cf. Zwicky 1970, 1977, Selkirk 1984, Kaisse 1985, Bybee 2001 among others). Lack of stress is a necessary condition for cliticization. That is, when the same grammatical words are under focus or receive contrastive stress, they occur in the corresponding strong forms and are not cliticized. In addition, cliticization does not occur in phrase-final position where they receive positional stress e.g. *Yes, you are*/\**you're* (cf. Selkirk 1984: 366, 400, Swan 2005: 120-121).

Lack of stress is not a sufficient condition for cliticization. As an additional factor, not all the words that belong to the same grammatical category may be cliticized. For example, auxilia-

ry reduction as given above affects only eight forms, i.e. *am*, *are*, *is*, *has*, *had*, *have*, *will*, and *would* (cf. Zwicky 1970, Selkirk 1984: 400-401, Kaisse 1985: 42, Swan 2005: 143). These eight forms cannot be defined by general grammatical features such as tense or number. The reason why these forms undergo reduction may be in part high frequency of these forms and in part phonology. That is, vowel-initial forms and forms that begin with ‘weak’ consonants such as *h* and *w* are more readily contracted with the preceding word than forms that begin with ‘strong’ consonants that resist reduction, e.g. *do* and *shall*. In general *h* and glides show a strong tendency to be lost (cf. Hock 1991: 132, Lavoie 2001: 39-40). In English the initial *h* drops in auxiliaries as well as in unstressed pronouns such as *him*, *his*, and *her* (cf. Zwicky 1970: 326-327). According to Zwicky (1970: 326-327), *w*-loss is less extensive and affects only auxiliaries *will*, *would*, *was*, and *were* beside the second element of compounds such as *toward* and *Greenwich*. As will be shown shortly, the vowel-initial forms with or without consonant loss are subject to reduction when they are preceded by a vowel-final word because hiatus is unstable in general and tends to be eliminated (cf. Hock 1991: 127-128). Section 3.1 below will show that negative contraction in Old English has similar phonological conditioning.

There are also restrictions on which words can serve as the host, i.e. the word to which a clitic is prosodically attached to. As has been pointed out in earlier literature, frequent collocations are more susceptible to reduction (cf. Selkirk 1984: 359-360 and Bybee 2001: 9, 11, 60-62, 157-166). For example, *not* is cliticized only to auxiliaries, but not to other words, e.g. *Do you not/\*youn’t know?* This fact suggests not only that frequent words are likely to undergo reduction but also that frequent collocations are more likely to be affected by contraction because *not* follows an auxiliary more often than other elements.

Similarly, according to Postal and Pullum (1978: 2), the reduction of *to* is triggered only by seven common verbs, i.e. *suppose*, *use*, *want*, *have*, *ought*, *got*, and *go*. Therefore, *to* does not cliticize to other verbs as in *I propose to/\*proposta go* (cf. also Kaisse 1985: 59).

Restrictions on the host are more complex in the case of auxiliary reduction, which are in part frequency and in part phonology. In this respect the following three groups of auxiliaries must be distinguished in the decreasing order of susceptibility to reduction: (i) *is* and *has*; (ii) *would* and *had*; (iii) *will*, *have*, *are*, and *am* (cf. Zwicky 1970: 328 and Kaisse 1985: 42, 44). According to Zwicky (1970), *is* and *has* may reduce after pronouns (e.g. *She’s gone*, *Who’s gone?*), lexical nouns (e.g. *Mary’s gone*, *John’s gone*), or noun phrases (e.g. *Neither Kelly nor John’s gone*, *The woman I told you about’s gone*). The second group *would* and *had* may be reduced only after a vowel, as in *He’d go*, *Who’d go?*, *Mary’d go*, *Anyone who knows Sue’d go*, but not after a con-

sonant, as in *\*John'd go* (cf. Zwicky 1970: 331). This phonotactic restriction has the effect of preventing *d*-final consonant clusters that result from contraction. The third group mentioned above, i.e. *will*, *have*, *are*, and *am*, may be reduced only after some pronouns (e.g. *I've got it*, *The people who've got it don't want it*, *You'll be upset*, *Who'll be upset?*), but not after a lexical noun or a complex element even when the auxiliary is directly preceded by a pronoun (e.g. *\*Lou'll be upset*, *\*John and I've got it*) (cf. Zwicky 1970: 331, Selkirk 1984: 404, Kaisse 1985: 44, 55). As Bybee (2001: 61) notes, the fact that auxiliary reduction is most extensive after pronouns follows from high frequency of pronoun-auxiliary sequence.

Auxiliary reduction is further conditioned by syntactic processes such as movement and deletion where the moved element or the gap is adjacent to the auxiliary. First, although *is* and *has* may cliticize to any subject as just shown, they do not cliticize to the non-subject that directly precedes them by movement, e.g. *Speaking tonight is/\*'s our star reporter* (cf. Zwicky 1970, Selkirk 1984: 405-406, Kaisse 1985: 46-52, 105-107). In addition, auxiliaries directly followed by a gap are not subject to cliticization, e.g. *I wonder where the party is/\*'s tonight* (cf. Zwicky 1970, Baker 1971, Selkirk 1984: 401, Kaisse 1985: 40-41). There was a controversy as to whether these examples should be analyzed in terms of syntax or phonology. That is, while Baker (1971) argues that forms that cannot be cliticized receive low stress (cf. also Selkirk 1984), Zwicky (1970) and Kaisse (1985) claim that they must be defined syntactically. Obviously taking the syntactic side, Blockley (1988, 1990) claims for Old English that lack of contraction marks some sort of syntactic deviation such as unexpressed element or deviation from the normal order. Following Fulk (1992) and Jack (1999), I will show below in section 3 that this assumption is untenable.

In sum, various cliticization phenomena in English presuppose lack of stress. In addition, they are governed by lexical, phonotactic, and frequency conditions on both clitics and their hosts. Section 3 will show that contraction in Old English have similar properties.

### 3. Contraction in Old English *Beowulf*

As in Present-day English just discussed, the necessary condition for cliticization in Old English is lack of stress: the negative particle *ne*, the subject pronoun *ic*, and the relative particle *þe* are consistently unstressed. On the other hand, hosts are exempt from this prosodic requirement and thus may be stressed although most are unstressed as well. For interpretation of phrasal stress in alliterative verse, see the Appendix below. Also, contraction affects frequent words

and expressions, especially those that involve hiatus with or without loss of initial weak consonants.

### 3.1. Negative particle *ne* preceding the finite verb

In Old English there are a number of contracted lexicalized forms of *ne* and the following adverb or pronominal, e.g. *nānig* (< *ne ānig*) ‘no, no one’, *nān* (< *ne ān*) ‘none’, *nefne* (< *ne efne*) ‘unless, except’, *nāfre* (< *ne āfre*) ‘never’, *nealles* (< *nealles*) ‘not at all’ (cf. Klaeber 1950: 378-379, Campbell 1959: §265, Mitchell 1985: 176-178, 478).

Besides these contracted forms, the negative adverb *ne* consistently precedes the finite verb (cf. Hock 1985: 71, Mitchell 1985: 661, Traugott 1992: 267). Many of them are procliticized to the following verb (cf. Klaeber 1950, Campbell 1959: §§265, 354, 469, Brunner 1969: §§417 Anm. 1b, 420, 427, 428 Anm. 2, Mitchell 1985: 478, Fulk 1992: 122-140, Traugott 1992: 268). Cliticization of the negative particle to the following verb is the most frequent among contraction phenomena found in *Beowulf*. Like *not* contraction in Present-day English, *ne* contracts with only particular verb forms, typically auxiliaries. In (1) are given such contracted forms with line numbers in which they occur.<sup>1</sup>

(1) a. *bēon/wesan* ‘to be’

<i>nīs</i>	<	<i>ne is</i>	3SG.PRES.IND.	249, 1361, 1372, 2458, 2532
<i>næs</i>	<	<i>ne wæs</i>	1/3SG.PRET.IND.	134, 1299, 1455, 1463, 1575, 1921, 1929, 2141, 2180, 2192, 2415, 2432, 2493, 2555, 2591, 2687, 2733, 2771, 2845, 2967, 2975, 3126 (22 times)
<i>nāere</i>	<	<i>ne wāere</i>	3SG.PRET.OPT.	860, 1167
<i>nāeron</i>	<	<i>ne wāeron</i>	3PL.PRET.IND.	2657

b. *willan* ‘will’

<i>nelle</i>	<	<i>ne welle</i>	1SG.PRES.IND.	679, 2524
<i>nolde</i>	<	<i>ne wolde</i>	1/3SG.PRET.IND.	706, 791, 803, 812, 967, 1523, 2518

c. *witan* ‘to know’

<i>nāt</i>	<	<i>ne wāt</i>	1/3SG.PRES.IND.	274, 681
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d. *āgan* ‘to possess, have’

<i>nāh</i>	<	<i>ne āh</i>	1SG.PRES.IND.	2252
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e. *habban* ‘to have’

*næbben* < *ne hæbben* 3PL.PRES.OPT. 1850

As shown, the hosts of *ne*-cliticization involve two non-auxiliaries, i.e. ‘to know’ in (1c) and ‘to possess’ in (1d). Considering the fact that *not* cliticizes only to auxiliaries in Present-day English, this fact appears odd. However, both *witan* and *āgan* belong to the preterite-present class, which is a small class of verbs that consists mainly of ‘pre-modals’ i.e. those verbs that develop into modals in Present-day English, such as *cunnan* ‘know, be able to’, *\*mōtan* ‘may, must’, and *\*sculan* ‘shall, must’ (cf. Campbell 1959: §767, Brunner 1969: §§418-425, Lightfoot 1979: 101, Hogg 1992: 162). Although these two verbs are used as a main verb in the examples given below and have not survived to develop into modal auxiliaries, their meaning is comparable to auxiliaries and thus they are good candidates for a host. In addition, according to Harkness (1991: 101), only *āh* and *wāt* among non-auxiliaries occur in second position, which is typical of light auxiliaries such as *wæs*. This distributional pattern together with their class affiliation suggests that these two verbs are comparable to auxiliaries.

In parallel with auxiliary reduction in Present-day English, the negative particle *ne* is contracted with verb forms that begin with a vowel (e.g. *is* and *āh*), *h* (e.g. *hæbben*), or *w* (e.g. *wæs* and *wolde*) (cf. Jack 1999: 142). As already stated in section 2 above, contraction of hiatus and loss of *h* and *w* are frequent phonological processes in general. This tendency is also observed elsewhere in Old English. Thus, the hiatus that results from juxtaposition of the vowel-final stem and the vowel-initial ending is contracted, e.g. *dōn* (< *\*dō-an*) ‘to do’. Contraction of hiatus after the loss of *h* and *w* affects also the stem-suffix sequences in Pre-Old English and thus part of the general phonological processes: e.g. *sēon* (< *\*seohan*) ‘to see’, *rēon* (< *\*rēowun*) ‘they rowed’ (cf. Campbell 1959: §§234-239, Brunner 1965: §§127-135).

In *ne*-contraction in *Beowulf*, the most frequent is cliticization of *ne* to the verb ‘to be’ (cf. (1a) above). Including twenty-two occurrences of *næs*, there are thirty examples in *Beowulf*. Among them five instances of *nis* lack the corresponding uncontracted forms, e.g. (2) below.<sup>2</sup>

- (2) *nis*    *pæt seldguma*,  
           not-is that hall-retainer  
*wæpnum geweorðad*,  
           weapons exalted  
           ‘that is not a hall-retainer exalted with weapons’

249b-250a

All the five examples of *nīs* are clause-initial and unstressed. Lack of the corresponding uncontracted form *ne is/ys* may be attributed to the tendency to avoid hiatus as already stated. In contrast, the alternate form for *is*, i.e. *bið*, which is used ‘in generic and gnomic statements’ according to Klaeber (1950: 324), is not affected by contraction with the negative particle in *Beowulf*. There are five examples of *ne bið/byð* (lines 660, 949, 1940, 2277, and 2541), all of which are clause-initial and unstressed as the contracted example given in (2). The contrast between the contracted *nīs* and the uncontracted *ne bið* is in part frequency, in part phonological, and possibly also semantic. In terms of frequency, there are forty occurrences of *is/ys* but only twelve occurrences of *bið/byð* in *Beowulf* (cf. Klaeber 1950: 323, 324 and Bessinger and Smith 1969: 21, 27, 139, 282). Phonologically, the sequence *ne is* has hiatus that is to be avoided, while the sequence *ne bið* does not.

In parallel with *nīs*, the contracted form *næs* from *ne wæs* is clause-initial and unstressed in all the twenty-two examples given in (1a) above: e.g. (3).

- (3)    *næs*      him feor þanon                      1921b  
          not-was him far    thence  
          ‘it was not far from there for him’

The corresponding uncontracted sequence *ne wæs* is also found twelve times, as in (4).

- (4)    *pēah*    him lēof *ne wæs*.                      2467b  
          though him dear not was  
          ‘though he was not dear to him’

Three of the twelve examples of the uncontracted *ne wæs*, i.e. 2332 and 2682 as well as 2467 given in (4), are clause-final and line-final, i.e. in the fourth lift, while the rest, i.e. nine examples, are clause-initial and unstressed as the contracted *næs*: 83, 716, 734, 756, 889, 1304, 1471, 2506, and 2586. That is, only uncontracted forms are stressed and this difference in stress status between the contracted and uncontracted forms is to be expected (cf. Jack 1999: 141 for a similar tendency in Old English verse in general). Among unstressed forms, the difference between lack and presence of contraction is not necessarily clear. Thus there is a minimal pair of *ne wæs* and *næs* as given in (5).



- (5) *Ne wæs þæt forma sīð,*  
not was that first time  
þæt hē Hrōþgāres hām gesōhte; 716b-717  
that he Hrothgar's home sought  
'that was not the first time that he sought Hrothgar's home'
- næs þæt forma sīð,*  
not-was that first time  
þæt hit ellenweorc æfnan scolde. 1463b-1464  
that it courageous-deed perform was-to  
'that was not the first time that it was to perform a courageous deed'

For the interpretation of the examples in (5), see further below.

While *wæs* is frequent enough to yield some generalization, other forms are small in number. There are also three examples of cliticization of *ne* to other *w*-initial forms of 'to be' including those given in (6) (cf. also (1a) above).

- (6) *þēah þe hē his mǣgum nǣre*  
though that he his kinsmen not-were  
ārfæst æt ecga gelācum. 1167b-1168a  
merciful at of-swords play  
'though he had not been merciful to his kinsmen in the play of swords'
- þæt nǣron ealdgewyrht,* 2657a  
that not-were desert-for-former-deeds  
'that they were not desert for former deeds'

As shown, *nǣre* in 1167b is in the fourth lift while *nǣron* in 2657a is unstressed. Whether the contracted forms are stressed or not reflects the stress status of the verb forms. That is, *nǣre* is stressed because disyllabic forms are more stressable than monosyllabic forms in general (cf. Selkirk 1984: 351-358). As already mentioned, hosts may be stressed although not the clitics.

Other than the verb 'to be', two auxiliaries, i.e. 'will' and 'to have', serve as the host of *ne*-cliticization in *Beowulf*. Of nine contracted forms with 'will' (cf. (1b) above), three are clause-ini-

tial and unstressed as in 2518b in (7), while six are clause-final and in the non-alliterating lift as in 706b in (7).

- (7)    *pā    Metod nolde,                      706b*  
          since Lord   not-would  
          ‘since the Lord would not’
- ‘*Nolde*    ic sweord beran,            2518b
- not-would I   sword   bear  
          ‘I would not bear a sword’

In contrast, there is only one example of uncontracted *ne wolde* given in (8).

- (8)    *gibbe ne wolde                      154b*  
          peace not wanted  
          ‘he did not want peace’

As shown, the verb is in the fourth lift.

With *habban* ‘to have’ there is one example of contracted negative form given in (9).

- (9)    *pæt þe    Sæ-Gēatas                      sēlran *næbben*                      1850*  
          that which   Sea-Geats                      better not-have  
          ‘that the Sea-Geats would not have the better...’

Otherwise, there is no negative form of *habban* in *Beowulf* and thus no uncontracted form.

In addition to some auxiliaries, *ne* is cliticized to non-auxiliaries in three examples in *Beowulf*, i.e. ‘to know’ (cf. (1c) above) and ‘to possess’ (cf. (1d) above). In (10) are given verses 274b and 681a with the contracted *nāt* and 1331b with the uncontracted *ne wāt*.

- (10)   *sceaðona   ic nāt                      hwylc,                      274b*  
          of-enemies I   not-know which  
          ‘I do not know which of the enemies’

*nāt*      *hē* *pāra*      *gōda*,      681a  
 not-know he of-those of-advantages  
 ‘he does not know those advantages’

ic *ne* *wāt*      *hwæder*      1331b  
 I not know whither  
 ‘I do not know whither...’

The contracted verb *nāt* is in the fourth lift in 274b, but is unstressed in 681a (cf. Appendix for the stress status of *nāt*). On the other hand, the uncontracted verb in 1331b is in the third lift. Again, the uncontracted form bears stronger stress than the corresponding contracted forms.

The negative contracted form *nāt* also occurs as the first element of the pronominal compound *nāt-hwylc* ‘some, certain; lit. not-know-which’, which may be used as an adjective or a noun. This fact suggests that *nāt* had been lexicalized in Old English. Among the various contracted negative verb forms *nāt* is the only one that has evidence for lexicalization.

The second case of the contracted non-auxiliary is given in (11) with ‘to possess’.

(11) *Nāh*,      *hwā* *sweord* *wege*      2252b  
 not-have who sword would-carry  
 ‘I have no one who would carry the sword’

As shown, the negative verb occurs in the verse-initial drop and thus is unstressed. In *Beowulf* there is no corresponding uncontracted form.

There have been proposals as to the conditions that govern the choice between the contracted and the corresponding uncontracted forms. As already mentioned, some of the uncontracted forms bear stronger stress than the contracted forms and in fact stress is one of the factors that Jack (1999: 141) claims that govern contraction (also Fulk 1992: 122). Although lack of stress on hosts is not a necessary condition, contraction as a weakening process is more likely to occur when hosts and not just clitics are unstressed. However, as already noted, many of the contracted and the corresponding uncontracted forms cannot be distinguished in terms of stress alone.

Iyeiri (1995, 2001: 180-184) examines the use of contraction in Middle English verse and argues that uncontracted forms are used for emphasis. Her examples with uncontracted forms in-

volve negative imperative and double negation and thus the assumption appears reasonable. Iyeiri's assumption conforms to the observation that some uncontracted forms bear stronger stress than contracted forms. Unfortunately, however, at least in *Beowulf* there is no clear indication that uncontracted forms are consistently used for emphasis.

A further possibility is that contracted or uncontracted forms are imposed by the metrical structure (cf. Fulk 1992: 122-140 and Jack 1999: 134-135, 139, 140-141). Among the examples discussed above, the negative verb in 2467b *þēah him lēof ne wæs* in (4) may not be contracted because, if the contracted form *næs* were used instead, there would be two successive lifts in verse-final position, which does not conform to the canonical metrical types proposed by Sievers (1885, 1893) (cf. Appendix for metrical types). Further, in 1331b *ic ne wāt hwæder* in (10) the uncontracted (*ne*) *wāt* occurs in an alliterating lift and replacing this form with the corresponding contracted form *nāt* would yield a different effect on alliteration. These examples may suggest that contraction is governed by meter. However, in the data Jack gives (1999: 152) only about one fifth of the relevant forms, i.e. 75 out of 412, can be attributed to the metrical requirements while in Fulk's (1992: 128) count there are only three examples in *Beowulf* where the use of contraction is determined by meter, i.e. 798a, 1331b, and 2467b. Among the examples that are allegedly governed by the metrical structure, the uncontracted forms in the alliterating lift such as *ne wāt* in 1331b just mentioned are susceptible to an alternative interpretation (also 798a). That is, it may be that, because the verb is under emphasis, it is not contracted and is placed in an alliterating lift. In addition, the assumption presupposes that verse composition is restricted in conformity with the two-lift two-drop requirement and Sievers's (1885, 1893) five metrical types, which, although commonly accepted, requires justification. Once this presupposition is not warranted, the potential verse \**þēah him lēof næs* (cf. 2467b) with two successive lifts in verse-final position is by no means to be avoided (cf. Suzuki 2006-7).

As a totally different approach, Blockley (1988, 1990) claims that uncontracted forms in *Beowulf* mark deviation from the unmarked sentence structure as opposed to contracted forms that are used only in 'complete' sentences. The minimal pair in (5) above does appear to suggest that contracted and uncontracted forms are in free variation. However, according to Blockley (1988: 439-440, 1990: 480-482), the uncontracted form in 716b indicates that the clause in which it occurs is semantically related to the clause that begins later in line 718 not given here although the latter clause lacks lexical indication for that relationship.

In addition to Jack's (1999: 137-138) criticism on the alleged causal relationship just mentioned, Blockley's assumption on the syntactic function of contraction is untenable for the fol-

lowing reasons. First, contraction is optional in Present-day English except for the fixed expressions such as *let's*. Similarly, it is reasonable to assume that contraction is optional in Old English in general. For Old English poetic texts, Blockley (1988: 431) observes that some consistently use either contracted forms or uncontracted forms only although most texts show the mixture of both. As support of her assumption that contraction is not optional in Old English, she claims that multiple copies of the same text does not show variation in the use of contraction although variations exist in other respects. For example, the two copies of *Soul and Body* both have the contracted *nīs* and the Paris Psalter and the vernacular Benedictine Office in Junius both have the uncontracted *ne wylt/wilt*. However, with respect to these two forms, Bessinger and Smith (1979) has no uncontracted *ne is/ys* or contracted *nylt/nilt*. The lack of certain contracted or uncontracted forms suggest that contraction of these particular forms is obligatory or impossible irrespective of any properties of the sentence in which they occur. That is, *ne* and *is/ys* are consistently contracted not only in *Beowulf* but also in Old English poetry in general (cf. also Jack 1999: 139). In contrast, *ne* and *wylt/wilt* cannot be contracted although other forms of *willan* such as *wolde* may be affected by *ne*-cliticization (cf. (1b)). Notice that, as shown in section 2 above, not all the inflected forms of one lexical item behave the same way in contraction in Present-day English. Therefore, the evidence that Blockley presents does not imply that contraction is obligatory.

Second, the fact that contraction is blocked in the clauses affected by syntactic processes does not imply that application of such processes must be indicated in some way. In addition, in Present-day English, the auxiliary is adjacent to the moved element or the gap in cases where contraction is blocked (cf. section 2 above; also Kaisse 1985: 40). The examples that Blockley (1988, 1990) discusses involve not only negative auxiliaries that are not adjacent to the targets of syntactic processes but also those as in (5) that occur in a different clause (although related according to Blockley) from the clause with a suppressed conjunction. Although her inspiration comes from contraction phenomena in Present-day English, her analysis of the minimal pair in (5) above has no parallel in Present-day English (cf. also Fulk 1992: 138-139).

Furthermore, in Old English word order is free and any argument including the subject and the object may be unexpressed. Since flexibility in syntactic structure is part of speakers' knowledge, it is a question as to marking such deviation is necessary. And finally, there is no logical connection between lack of contraction and deviation from the unmarked sentence structure. There is also no logical reason why only negative sentences with contractable verbs must be marked for such deviation as Fulk (1992: 139) aptly notes.

For the reasons stated so far, Blockley's assumption on the syntactic function of contraction must be rejected. As an alternative to Blockley's approach, Jack (1999: 146-151) argues that contraction may have a discourse function, i.e. uncontracted forms mark topic shift or contrast while contracted forms mark continuity or lack of contrast. That is, in his discussions of the minimal pair given in (5) along with other examples, the uncontracted form in 716 marks the topic shift from Grendel's approach in the preceding sentence not given here. On the other hand, the contracted form in 1463 is used in the context of telling about a particular sword. Since discontinuity or contrast must receive more emphasis than continuity or lack of contrast, Jack's assumption on the pragmatic function of uncontracted forms is both reasonable and in accordance with the fact that contracted forms are less often stressed than the corresponding uncontracted forms. However, as Jack himself admits, there are unclear examples. Therefore, I leave open the question as to what extent the discourse function is relevant to the use of contraction.

In sum, the negative particle *ne* is cliticized to auxiliaries and some of auxiliary-like verbs, all of which begin with a vowel (e.g. *is* and *āh*), *h* (e.g. *hæbben*), or *w* (e.g. *wæs* and *wolde*) in parallel with auxiliary reduction in Present-day English. There is difference in stress among different contracted forms, e.g. *nīs* and *næs* in a drop vs. *noīde* and *nāt* in a non-alliterating lift. This distinct stress status reflects stressability of each verb and is not part of the conditioning factor for cliticization. The necessary condition of lack of stress applies only to the clitics but not the hosts although most hosts are unstressed. On the other hand, there is some evidence that the uncontracted sequences tend to be more often stressed than the corresponding contracted forms. An additional possibility is that lack of contraction indicates emphasis (cf. Iyeiri 1995, 2001) or the pragmatic function of marking topic shift or contrast (cf. Jack 1999). The proposal that the metrical structure governs contraction is yet to be proved. Blockley's (1988, 1990) assumption on the syntactic function of contraction must be rejected. As a result, in at least some examples in *Beowulf* contraction appears optional.

### 3.2. Subject pronoun following the finite verb

The subject pronoun *ic* cliticizes to the preceding verb *wēne* in two examples, as in (12).

- (12) *Wēn'* *ic* þæt gē for *wlenco*, ...  
 suppose I that you from pride  
 ... *Hrōðgār sōhton.* 338-339  
 Hrothgar sought  
 'I suppose that you sought Hrothgar from pride'  
 Also 442

The contraction affects only this particular sequence of the verb and the pronoun. Again it has the effect of removing hiatus created by the sequence.

There are also two examples of the uncontracted *wēne ic*, as in (13).

- (13) *Donne wēne ic* tō þē *wyrsan* geþingea, 525  
 therefore expect I to you worse outcomes  
 'therefore I expect the worse outcomes for you'
- wēne ic* þæt hē mid *gōde* *gyldan* wille 1184  
 think I that he with gifts pay will  
 'I think that he will pay with gifts'

Again there seems to be no clear difference between the contracted and uncontracted forms. In three of the four examples i.e. two contracted and one uncontracted forms, the verb is clause-initial, while only 525 in (13) is verb-second. The verb alliterates in two contracted and one uncontracted forms including 338 in (12) and 525 in (13); only in 1184 in (13) the verb does not alliterate. Contraction is expected to occur more often in conversation than in narrative. However, again there is no difference in the text types: all the four contracted and uncontracted forms are used in a quoted discourse.

While contraction of *wēne ic* has the phonotactic effect of removing hiatus, the opposite order of the same words, i.e. *ic wēne*, does not form hiatus and thus is not affected by contraction as expected. Nor is contraction observed with other vowel-final verbs that form hiatus together with the following pronoun, e.g. *hæbbe ic*. The fact that contraction of verb-pronoun sequence only affects *wēne ic* may suggest that this sequence is a frequent collocation in conversation in general unless it is an arbitrary lexical restriction.

### 3.3. Relative particle *be* after the complementizer *bæt*

As the third example, the relative marker *þe* is cliticized to the preceding conjunction *þæt*. The initial consonant of *þe* is assimilated to the preceding word-final consonant of *þæt*. There are five examples of the contracted *þætte* including the one given in (14).

- (14) *þætte* *Grendel* *wan*  
that-which Grendel contended  
*hwīle* *wið* *Hrōþgār*, 151b-152a  
a-long-time with Hrothgar  
‘that Grendel contended for a long time with Hrothgar’  
Also 858, 1256, 1942, 2924

On the other hand, the uncontracted sequence *paet pe* is found in two examples, i.e. 1846 and 1850 in (9) given above. All the contracted and uncontracted forms occur in a metrically unstressed position, thus no difference in terms of stress between the two.

In contrast to *þæt þe* that is more often contracted than not, other forms of the demonstrative *þæt*, e.g. *þā* (acc.sg.f., nom./acc.pl.), *þæs* (gen.sg.m./n.), and *þāem* (dat.sg.m./n., dat.pl.), and the relative particle *þe* are not contracted. Cliticization of *þe* seems to be governed mainly by frequency but possibly also by phonotactics. According to Bessinger and Smith (1969: 234-237), in *Beowulf* the form *þæt* is used 216 times as a conjunction excluding the contracted *þætte* or the compound *oðþæt* etc. and 125 times as a demonstrative pronoun, i.e. in total 341 times. On the other hand, *þā*, *þæs* and *þāem*, for example, occurs 63, 69, and 38 times, respectively (cf. Bessinger and Smith 1969: 231-234). That is, *þæt* is far more frequent than the other inflected forms and thus, following what has been claimed so far, is more likely to be contracted. Phonotactically, the initial consonant of the relative marker *þe* is phonetically similar to the final consonant of *þæt* and thus the particle is readily absorbed into the preceding word.

## 4. Conclusions

This paper has shown that the three cliticization phenomena in Old English *Beowulf* are subject to similar phonological, lexical, and frequency conditions as observed in contraction phenomena in Present-day English. That is, frequent collocations such as the negative particle-auxiliary sequence readily undergo reduction. In addition, reduction is restricted in such a way as to



produce phonotactically preferable sequences, especially hiatus with or without loss of weak consonants tends to be removed. As Jack (1999) claims for Old English verse in general, there is some indication, e.g. in contraction of *ne wæs*, that stress governs the choice between the contracted and the corresponding full forms, but the evidence from *Beowulf* is not decisive.

## NOTES

- \* I am grateful to two anonymous reviewers for comments on an earlier version of this paper.
- 1 The data given in (1) and other parts of this section are based on Klaeber's (1950) glossary and Bessinger and Smith (1969).
- 2 Examples from Old English *Beowulf* are taken from Klaeber's (1950) edition. The number refers to the line number and a and b after the line number represent the a-verse and the b-verse, respectively. Alliteration is marked by the underline. For the structure of alliterative verse in which *Beowulf* is composed, see the Appendix below.

## Appendix: Structure of Germanic alliterative verse and phrasal stress

According to the traditional metrical analysis (cf. Sievers 1885, 1893, Bliss 1962, 1967, Russom 1987, Cable 1991, Hutcheson 1995, Suzuki 1996 among others), one verse consists of two stressed positions or lifts and two unstressed positions or drops. Two verses or halflines form a long line by means of alliteration. That is, the first lift of the second halfline alliterates with at least one of the two lifts of the first halfline, usually either only the first or both. The second lift of the second halfline may not alliterate. For example, in line 102 given in (i) the lifts are filled by the stressed syllable of the four content words as indicated by the acute accent. The two words that fill the lifts in the a-verse, i.e. *grímma gæst*, both begin with the same consonant as the word that fills the first lift of the b-verse, i.e. *Grendel*, as indicated by the underline.

- (i) wæs se grímma gæst      Gréndel háten      102  
       was the grim    spirit      Grendel called  
       'the grim spirit was called Grendel'

According to Sievers (1885, 1893), there are five possible arrangements of two lifts and two drops: SWSW, WSWs, WSSW, SSWW, and SWWS with S and W representing metrically strong and weak positions, respectively.

The metrical structure as just discussed reflects natural stress. As shown in the example above, the stressed syllables of the content words fill metrically stressed positions while grammatical words such as

*wæs* and *se* as well as the unstressed syllables of the content words typically form metrically unstressed positions.

The metrical structure distinguishes at least three levels of stress: alliterating lifts, non-alliterating lifts, and drops in the order of decreasing stress levels. The pattern of alliteration is either double alliteration or trochee in the a-verse (e.g. (i) above) and is always trochee in the b-verse. Therefore, the non-alliterating lift is typically filled by the content word or the stressable element that follows the alliterating element, for example by the verb *hāten* in the b-verse in (i) above. Less obvious is the stress status of the verb *nāt* in *ſceaðona ic nāt hwylc* 274b in (10). Following Suzuki (1996: 500), who analyzes this verse as Type A, i.e. a succession of two trochees, I interpret the verb as filling the fourth lift. However, other possible analyses do not affect the claim in this paper.

Among various deviations from the canonical pattern just discussed, a number of clause-initial a-verses have only one lift. That is, the first lift is suppressed and the second lift alliterates, e.g. 681a in (10) and 1184a in (13). For justification of one-lift verses, see Bliss (1967), Hoover (1985), Suzuki (1996), and Suzuki (2006-7).

As another prominent feature of alliterative verse, drops may accommodate more than one syllable although lifts are typically filled by one stressed syllable only. In the example given in (i) above the first drop consists of two words and syllables, i.e. *wæs se*, and the other three drops consist of one syllable only. Drops may consist of more than two syllables, maximum six in *Beowulf*. Polysyllabic drops tend to occur early in the verse, while the verse-final drop usually consists of one unstressed syllable only.

For more details on verse structure, see the references given above.

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