

The prosodic status of clitics in early Old English: A metrical approach

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I take Old English alliterative verse as a test-case for using metrical data as a source for the historical prosodic status of phonological clitics in early Germanic. The empirical basis of this study comes from the poem *Genesis A* (composed c. 700; Fulk 1992), scanned according to the *word-foot theory* of alliterative verse (Russom 1987, 2017). This scansion system distinguishes several levels of prominence, including ‘light’, low-stress metrical words and even ‘lighter’, wholly extrametrical words. I annotate all low-stress elements in the test-corpus using this system, as well as indicating any available prosodic hosts for prosodic clitics to attach to. This gives a metrical basis for phonological interpretation of each element or class of elements: their prosodic independence, their potential adhesion with a preceding or following stressed host word, and the probable existence of at least two classes of clitics which differ in their behaviour. This approach builds on earlier work by Whitman (1993), who established the likelihood of different classes of clitics in Old English, and suggested that enclisis is more common than usually assumed by scholars of Old English. I bring the study of these problems forward by employing a more rigorous metrical framework for scansion, by broadening the empirical scope beyond *Beowulf* (which has tended to dominate Old English metrical-prosodic studies), and by interpreting the metrical data through the lens of more recent work on clitics and cliticization in general (e.g. Anderson 2005, Himmelmann 2014).

Keywords: Clitics, Old English, Alliterative Verse

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