

## Prosodic Features of Old English Preterite-Present Verbs : Evidence from Beowulf

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<https://doi.org/10.15017/1303767>

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出版情報 : 英語英文学論叢. 51, pp.1-26, 2001-01. 九州大学英語英文学研究会  
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# Prosodic Features of Old English Preterite-Present Verbs : Evidence from *Beowulf*

Toshiya Tanaka

## 1. *Problem*

In attempting to describe the nature of Old English preterite-present verbs in a recent new standard handbook, Hogg (1992: 162) makes the following statement:

The preterite-present verbs were originally strong verbs but in Germanic, perhaps sometimes even earlier, the preterite came to acquire a present tense meaning. This then formed a new preterite with a dental suffix. ... They are especially important for later periods, for it is from these verbs that we get the present-day core modal verbs ... But there is an important difference between Old English and present-day English, for whilst today modal verbs are syntactically defined, in Old English the parallel verbs were morphologically defined.

It is quite obvious that OE preterite-presents are definable in terms of their morphological characteristics, i.e., the erstwhile preterite morphology (or the Indo-European perfect morphology) for the present tense and the (historically new) dental preterite. No other category of a verb has this set of morphological characteristics.

We can then wonder whether or not OE preterite-presents are definable in terms of other features as well. It seems evident that they cannot be demarcated from other groups of verbs by means of their syntactic characteristics. Although an auxiliary-like usage is a characteristic of preterite-presents, they also show a main-verb usage:

- (1) preterite-presents in an auxiliary-like use (collocated with an infinitive)
- a. *pearf* for ‘need to’  
ic swiðe ne *pearf* hinsið *behlehhan*. *Guthlac* 1356 (cf. Visser 1963-73: 1423; etc.) ‘I indeed need not exult over death’ ‘I indeed don’t need to exult over death’
  - b. *sceal* for ‘should, ought to’  
and we *sceolan gehyhtan* on Godes þa gehalgodan cyricean *BlHom* X.111.8-9 (cf. Traugott 1992: 173; etc.) ‘and we must trust in the hallowed church of God’
  - c. *mæg* for ‘can, may’  
ðæt hwæðre *mæg* gastlice *ongyten beon* *Bede* (Miller) 80, 27 (cf. Visser 1963-73: §1656) ‘that, however, can be spiritually perceived’
- (2) preterite-presents in a main-verb use (not collocated with an infinitive)
- a. *pearf* for ‘need’  
ponne ne *ðorfte* he no maran fultomes ponne his selfes *Bo* 26.59.30 (cf. Warner 1993: 98; etc.) ‘then he would need no more help than himself’
  - b. *sceal* for ‘owe’  
& gif hwa oðrum *sceole* borh oððe bote æt woruldlicum þingum, gelæste hit him georne *LawICn* 17.3 (Warner 1993: 98; etc.) ‘and if somebody owes to another man debt or compensation concerning worldly things, (he) is supposed to pay it to him earnestly’
  - c. *mæg* for ‘have power’  
peos seolf *mæg* wið ælces cynnes untrumnyse ðe eagan eigliað. *Med3* 37 114.20 (cf. Denison 1993: 305; etc.) ‘This salve has power against every kind of infirmities which afflict eyes’

Furthermore, some non-preterite-present verbs can be patterned with an infinitive complement, e.g., *willan*, *beon*, *habban*:

- (3) Elpendes hyd *wile drincan* wætan, gelice an spynges deð. *Or* 230, 26 (cf. Visser 1963-73: 1682; Traugott 1989: 39; etc.) ‘an elephant's hide will drink water as a sponge does’
- (4) us *nys to cweðanne* pæt ge unclæne syndon *ÆLS* I 10, 133 (cf. Visser 1963-73: §1372; Denison 1993: 317; etc.) ‘it is not (necessary) for us to say that you are unclean’
- (5) Uton we forþon gepencean hwylc handlean we him forþ *to berenne habban* *BlHom* 91, 13 (cf. Denison 1993: 316; etc.) ‘Let us therefore think which requital we have to bring him’

It also seems difficult or even impossible to define preterite-presents semantically. Some of the preterite-presents could express modality, but verbs expressing modality are not restricted to preterite-presents. Those examples given in (3)-(5) are interpretable as expressing some kind of modality. Another semantic criterion, if any, should be ‘stativity’, cf. Prokosch (1939: 188), Warner (1993: 143). I also think that preterite-presents historically go back to stative verbs (see Tanaka 2000), but this characteristic cannot discern preterite-presents from other groups of verbs, for there are many non-preterite-presents which can be construed as stative in meaning, e.g., *behōfian* ‘have need of’, *iersian* ‘be angry’, *latian* ‘be slow, sluggish, torpid’, *lufian* ‘love’, *scamian* ‘be ashamed’, *unrōtsian* ‘be sad’, *wacian* ‘be awake’, etc.<sup>1)</sup>

Given that no syntactic or semantic feature can distinguish preterite-presents from others, is there not any phonological feature that especially characterises preterite-presents? We may wonder, for instance, whether or not OE preterite-presents exhibit any prosodic feature which is denied to other categories of verbs (i.e., strong, weak, anomalous verbs). This is not so easy a question as to be answered without an empirical

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1) Cf. Wright and Wright (1925: 288f.). These examples are all Class 2 weak verbs, but they are sufficient to show that stative verbs are not limited to preterite-presents.

investigation. The aim of this paper is to approach this problem by making an empirical investigation into the text of *Beowulf*.

## **2. Prosodic Features of Preterite-Present Verbs**

Alliterative verse enables us to know something of the OE stress pattern. This section empirically investigates into the prosodic features of OE preterite-present verbs by means of the text of *Beowulf*.

### 2.1. Facts

Old Germanic alliterative verse reveals the following stress hierarchy among various categories, which originates in Kuhn's (1933) investigation and which is recapitulated by Bliss (1958: 6) as follows:

(6)

a. Stressed Elements (Satzteile)

Stressed elements bear a metrical stress irrespective of the position they occupy in the verse-clause: they include nouns, infinitives, participles, adjectives and certain adverbs.

b. Particles (Satzpartikeln)

Particles normally stand either before or after the first stressed element (that is, in the first thesis of the verse-clause), and in this position they are unstressed; if they are displaced from this position they acquire a positional stress, and are treated in all respects like stressed elements: they include finite verbs, certain adverbs, certain pronouns, and conjunctions.

c. Proclitics (Satzteilpartikeln)

Proclitics normally stand immediately before the stressed element with which they are most closely connected, and are then unstressed; but like particles, if they are displaced they acquire a positional stress and are treated like stressed elements: they include prepositions, certain pronouns, and articles.

In addition to this, an 'auxiliary' is normally considered to bear no met-

rical stress, cf. Bliss (1958: 9 and 21). Cable's (1991: 22) newer version of stress hierarchy clearly describes this:

(7) Hierarchy of Stress

I. Ictus-bearing categories

A. Always stressed: Adjectives, Nouns, Infinitives, Particles

B. Demotable: Lexical Adverbs, Finite Lexical Verbs

II. Nonictus-bearing categories (but promotable)

Pronouns, Auxiliaries, Conjunctions, Prepositions, Articles

Concerning OE preterite-present verbs, as briefly mentioned in Section 1 above, there are two types of usage, i.e., a main-verb use and an auxiliary-like use. A preterite-present verb in a main-verb use should, according to (6b) above, be regarded as a particle (*Satzpartikel*). It is expected to bear no stress under the normal circumstances. Below are this sort of examples from *Beowulf*, where the bold faces indicate the alliteration, where the scansion follows the method of Bliss (1958), and where the cases of a preterite-present verb collocated with no overt infinitive are all treated as a main-verb use:

(8) Preterite-present verbs in a main-verb use and bearing no metrical stress

a. wāt (Class I)

ˊ x | ˊ x      x x x x    ˊ x | ˊ

**d**ǣda **D**ēmend, ne *wiston* hīe **D**rihten God *Beo* 181 (See also 274b, 646b, 681a, 764b; 2650b [secondary stress].)

b. āh/g (Class I)

ˊ | x    ˊ      ~ ~      x x    ˊ x | x ˊ

**e**ald ond **e**orlscipe; hē *āh* **e**alra geweald *Beo* 1727 (cf. Bliss 1958: 14; see also 487b and 2252b)

c. dēag/h (Class II)

The nine instances of this verb in *Beowulf* are all stressed, see (9c) below.

## d. can(n) (Class III)

´ ˘ ˘ | ´ x      x x x ´ ˘ ˘ | ´

**Deniga frēan;**    *cūpe hē duguðe pēaw.* *Beo* 359 (See also 2062b.)

## e. an(n) (Class III)

All the seven examples of this verb in *Beowulf* (503a, 960b, 1225b, 2855b, 2874b; with *ge-*: 346b, 1661a) bear a metrical stress, see (9e).

## f. pearf (Class III)

There is no instance for this in *Beowulf* (the only main verb usage of *pearf* is found on 2363b, see [9f] below).

## g. dearr (Class III)

There is no instance for this in *Beowulf*.

## h. sceal (Class IV)

´ : x ´ x      x      x      ´ | ˘ x

**wiggeweorpad;**    *unc sceal worm fela* *Beo* 1783 (there is no dependent infinitive; see also 2255a and 2659b.)

## i. -man (Class IV)

x x xxx ´ x x      x x ´ x | ´

*onmunde* *ūsic mārða,*    *ond mē pās māðmas geaf,* *Beo* 2640 (*-munde* is accidentally alliterated, since otherwise the scansion would violate Kuhn's law<sup>2)</sup>, see Bliss 1958: 16f.; see also the examples of *geman* on 758a and 2606a.)

## j. geneah (Class V)

There is no occurrence of this verb in *Beowulf*.

## k. mæg (Class V)

There is no instance for this in *Beowulf*.

## l. mōt (Class VI)

There is no instance for this in *Beowulf*.

As (6b) decrees at the same time, however, there are cases where they

2) Kuhn's Law of Particles: "if there are several particles, they must not be distributed between both the possible positions [i.e., before and after the first stressed element]; nor may they be placed before the second stressed element if the first is preceded by a proclitic or an unstressed prefix" (Bliss 1958: 15).

bear a positional stress. Below are such instances:

(9) Preterite-present verbs in a main-verb use and bearing a positional stress

a. wāt (Class I)

x x     ' x | '     ' x | x ' x

sēcean wynlēas wīc     wiste pē geornor *Beo* 821 (cf. Bliss 1958: 13; see also 272b, 798a, 1331b, 2339b, 2519b, 2656b, 2725b [alliterated], 169b, 246b, 252a, 288b, 715b, 878b, 1309b, 1367b, 1830b, 1863b, 2410b [unalliterated]; with *ge-* prefix: 1350b, an alliterated instance.)

b. āh/g (Class I)

x '     - - | '     ' x | ' x

wið *Ē*otena bearn     āgan mōston *Beo* 1088 (See also 31b, 522b, 533b and 2608b, in all of which the verb does not alliterate.)

c. dēag/h (Class II)

x x x     ' x x     ' x | ' x

sē pe ēow wēlhwyrcra     wilna dohte *Beo* 1344 (See also 369b, 526b, 573b, 589b, 1660b, 1821b, 1839b and 2031b; in all the instances this verb is placed at the end of the *b*-verse; 589 appears to be an instance of 'cross/traverse alliteration' and in all the other examples the verb does not alliterate.)

d. can(n) (Class III)

x x x ' x     ' : ' x x

Ic hine *e*ūðe     cnihtwesende *Beo* 372 (cf. Bliss 1958: 14; see also 119b, 162b, 180b, 392b, 418b, 1180b, 1233b, 1355b, 1377b, 1739b, 2012b, 2070b and 3067b; 418 appears to be an instance of 'cross/traverse alliteration' but the verb is placed at the end of the *b*-verse; and in all the other examples, except for 372, the verb is unalliterated.)

e. an(n) (Class III)

x x x x x ' x     x x x ' x | ' :

forpon pe hē ne *ū*pe     pæt ænig oðer man *Beo* 503 (cf. Bliss 1958: p. 19, fn. 2; see also 960b, 1225b, 2855b [alliterated] and 2874b [unalliterated]; with *ge-*: 346b, 1661a [alliterated])

f. *pearf* (Class III)

x x ' x x      ' x | ' x

Nealles **Hetware**      **hrēmge** *porf(t)on Beo* 2363

g. *dearr* (Class III)

' x x | '      ' | x x ' x

fela-sinnigne *secg*;      *sēc gif pū dyrre. Beo* 1379 (there is no dependent infinitive)

h. *sceal* (Class IV)

' | x ' x      x x x ' | ' x

**folc** ond **rīce**,      **ponne** **ðū forð** *scyle*, *Beo* 1179 (there is no dependent infinitive; see also 455b, 1855b, 2585b and 2816b, in all of which the verb is placed at the end of the *b*-verse and unalliterated.)

i. *-man* (Class IV)

x x x x ' x      ' ~ ~ | ' x

hwæpre he *gemunde*,      **mægenes** **streng**e, *Beo* 1270 (see also 179b, 265b, 870a, 1129b, 1141b, 1185b, 1220b, 1259b, 1290b, 1701b, 2042b, 2114b, 2391b, 2431b, 2488b [unalliterated], 659a, 2633a, 2678a [related to double alliteration in *a*-verse], 1465a [alliterated].)

j. *geneah* (Class V)

There is no occurrence of this verb in *Beowulf*.

k. *mæg* (Class V)

' x | ' x      x x ' x | ' ' x

**mæres** **pēodnes**,      **ðær** **hīe meah**ton swā. *Beo* 797 (cf. Bliss 1958: 21; there is no dependent infinitive; see also 762b, 797b, 2091 [alliterated], 754b [unalliterated].)

l. *mōt* (Class VI)

x      x x ' x      x || ' | x ' x

**Heald** pū nū, **hrūse**,      nū **hæleð** ne *mōstan*, *Beo* 2247 (cf. Bliss 1958: 41; there is no dependent infinitive; see also 603b, 1177b, 1387b, 1487b, in all of which *mōt* is placed at the end of the *b*-verse and unalliterated)

Auxiliary-like uses must also be examined. Below are examples where no stress is placed on the relevant finite verbs:

(10) Preterite-present verbs in an auxiliary-like use and bearing no stress

a. wāt (Class I)

There is no auxiliary-like instance of this verb in *Beowulf*.

b. āh/g (Class I)

There is no auxiliary-like instance of this verb in *Beowulf*.

c. can(n) (Class III)

All the 6 examples of the auxiliary-like *cann* in *Beowulf* (50b, 90b, 182b, 1445b, 1746b, 2372a) bear a metrical stress, see (14) below.

d. pearf (Class III)

ˊ x | x ˊ x: - x x x x x ˊ :x ˊ x

landes ond locenra bēaga - ne *ðorfte* him ðā lēan oðwitan *Beo*  
2995

e. dearr (Class III)

There is no instance for this in *Beowulf*.

f. sceal (Class IV)

ˊ x | x ˊ x x x ˊ | ˊ x

bēagas gebohte: pā *sceall* brond fretan, *Beo* 3014 (see also 20a, 271b, 805b, 819b, 832b, 1060b, 1172b, 1328b, 1443a, 1534b, 1706b, 1707b, 1862a, 2069b, 2166b, 2341b, 2408b, 2442b, 2508b, 2589a, 2590b, 2666b, 2708b, 2804a, 2884a, 3010b, 3018a, 3021b, 3077a, 3114b.)

g. mæg (Class V)

ˊ x | ˊ x x x x x ˊ | ˊ x

lēoda peafe! Ne *mæg* ic hēr leng wesan *Beo* 2801 (see also 190b, 930b, 1150b, 1365a, 1484a, 1659a, 1700a, 1837b, 2032a, 2047a, 2260b, 2291a, 2547b, 2609a, 2855a, 2864a, 2971a, 3079a.)

h. mōt (Class VI)

x x x x ˊ x x x x ˊ :x ˊ

Nū gē *mōton* gangan in ēowrum *gūðgetāwum*, *Beo* 395 (see also 431a)

However, examples where the relevant modal bears a stress are also found. As Bliss (1958: 21f.) points out, *mæg*, *mōt* and *dearr* sometimes functionally alliterate:

(11) stress-bearing *mæg*

## a. (with alliteration)

x x x ' x x ' | ' x

pēah pe [ne] *meahte* on mere drifan *Beo* 1130 (See also 967a, 1082a, 1130a, 1508a; cf. Bliss 1958: 21)

## b. (without alliteration)

' x|x ' x x x ' x | ' x

āða on unriht. Ic ðæs ealles *mæg* *Beo* 2739 (there is a dependent infinitive *habban* on the *b*-verse of the next line; see also 207a, 243b, 277b, 308b, 313b, 462b, 478b, 511b, 542b, 571b, 648b, 656b, 680b, 780b, 941b, 942b, 1032b, 1078b, 1140b, 1156b, 1341a, 1350b, 1378b, 1446b, 1454b, 1496b, 1504b, 1515b, 1561b, 1733b, 1822b, 1877b, 1911b, 1919b, 2340b, 2373b, 2448b, 2464b, 2466b, 2520b, 2530b, 2600b, 2621b, 2654b, 2673b, 2683b, 2749b, 2764b, 2770b, 2870b, 2877b, 2904b, 2954b, 3064b, 3162b.)

(12) stress-bearing *mōt*

## a. (with alliteration)

x x x ' x x ' | ' x

pæt hīe ne *mōste*, pā *Metod nolde*, *Beo* 706 (there is an infinitive *bregdan* on the *b*-verse of the next line; see also 735a<sup>3</sup>, 2124a, 2797a; cf. Bliss 1958: 22.)

## b. (without alliteration)

' |x ' x ' ' x | ' x

lufen ālicgean; londrihtes *mōt* *Beo* 2886 (there is an infinitive *hweorfan* on 2888a; see also 168b, 186b, 347b, 365b, 442b, 894b, 961b, 1088b, 1628b, 1671b, 1875b, 1939b, 1998b, 2038b, 2241a, 2504b, 2574a, 2827b, 2984b, 3053b, 3100b)

- 3) Bliss (1958: 22) gives only three examples where *mōt* alliterates. But obviously, *mōt* participates in the double alliteration in 735a, see the scansion by Kendall (1991: 254), etc:

(i) x x ' ' x ' x ' x

pæt hē mā *mōste* manna cynnes *Beo* 735

(13) stress-bearing *dearr*

a. (with alliteration)

x x x ' x ' | x ' x

Nænig pæt **dorste** dēor genēpan *Beo* 1933 (cf. Bliss 1958: 22; see also 2848a)

b. (without alliteration)

' x | ' x x x ' x | '

grimre gūðe, gif ðū **Grendles dearst** *Beo* 527 (there is an infinitive *bīdan* on the *b*-verse of the next line; see also 684b, 1462b, 1468b and 2735b, in all of which *dearr* is placed at the end of the *b*-verse.)

There are also instances of *cann*, *pearf* and *sceal* where the modal is stressed but does not alliterate:

(14) stress-bearing *cann* (without alliteration)

' x x | ' ' | x ' x

murnende **mōd**. Men ne *cunnon* *Beo* 50 (there is an infinitive *secgan* on the *a*-verse of the next line; see also 90b, 182b, 1445b, 1746b, 2372a.)

(15) stress-bearing *pearf* (without alliteration)

x x x ' : x ' x | ' x

oððe in **Swiorice** sēcean *purfe* *Beo* 2495 (See also 157b, 445b, 450b, 595b, 1026b, 1071b, 1674b, 2006a, 2741a, 2874a; in all of which the modal is unalliterated and placed at the end of the half line.)

(16) stress-bearing *sceal* (without alliteration)

x x x ' : x ' x x ' x | '

pæt nāron **ealdgwyrt**, pæt hē āna *scyle* *Beo* 2657 (there is an infinitive *prōwian* on the *b*-verse of the next line; see also 10b, 24b, 41b, 85b, 183b<sup>4</sup>, 230b, 251b, 280b, 287b, 384b, 440b, 424b, 438b, 588b, 601b, 636b, 683b, 691b, 704b, 910b, 965b, 977b, 1004a, 1034b, 1067b, 1070b, 1106b, 1260b, 1305b, 1386a, 1449b, 1464b, 1637b, 1798b, 2056b,

2257b, 2275b, 2400b, 2421b, 2498b, 2525b, 2535b, 2627b, 2918b, 2963b, 2974b, 3068b, 3108b, 3176b; there is no alliterated instance of *sceal*, cf. Bliss 1958: 21.)

The data so far presented are gathered up in the following table:

			[-s]	[+s, -al]	[+al]	Total
Class I	(ge-)wāt	M	6	11	9	26
		A	0	0	0	0
	ah/g	M	3	4	1	8
		A	0	0	0	0
Class II	dēag/h	M	0	9	0	9
Class III	can(n)	M	2	13	1	16
		A	0	6	0	6
	(ge-)an(n)	M	0	1	6	7
		pearf	M	0	1	0
	dearr	A	1	11	0	12
		M	0	1	0	1
		A	0	5	2	7
		M	3	5	0	8
Class IV	sceal	A	31	50	0	81
		M	3	15	5	23
Class V	(ge-)neah	M	0	0	0	0
		M	0	1	4	5
		A	19	56	5	80
Class VI	mot	M	0	5	0	5
		A	2	22	4	28
Total		M	17	66	26	109
		A	53	150	11	214

Preterite-Present Verbs in *Beowulf*

Table 1

- 
- 4) For the anomaly of the verse 183b, see the discussions in Bliss (1958: 77f.), Kendall (1991: 92, 98), etc, where it is indisputable that the final *sceal* constitutes a lift.

where M and A stand for main-verb and auxiliary-like uses, respectively, where the features [-s], [+s, -al] and [+al] represent the cases in which the verb is unstressed (and unalliterated), stressed but unalliterated, (stressed and) alliterated, respectively, and where the feature [+al] counts in all the functionally alliterated instances but counts out the cases of accidental alliteration and of the 'cross/traverse' alliteration where the verb at issue occupies the second arsis/lift of the *b*-verse.

## 2.2. Interpretation

The data presented above reveals, first of all, that preterit-present verbs can bear a (primary) stress in alliterative verse, irrepectively of their status (i.e., main verbs/'particles' or auxiliaries/'proclitics'). Bliss's (1958: 69) following observation explains our present concern:

The nature of the words which form the verse is no guide: no discrimination can be made between words which are stressed elements by nature and those which are stressed elements only by position, since a particle or even a proclitic, when displaced from its normal position in the first thesis of the verse clause, is treated in all respects as a stressed element.

Table 1 above shows that 15.6% of the main verb use and 24.8% of the auxiliary-like use are unstressed examples.

A salient difference between main-verb and auxiliary-like usage lies in the fact that preterite-present verbs in the former use fairly frequently alliterate while those in the latter use seldom do. Table 1 clearly shows this. There are 109 tokens of main-verb uses of preterite-present verbs in *Beowulf* and the alliterated examples are 26 out of the whole 109 examples (23.9%; or 28.3%, i.e., 26 out of the 92 stressed examples). As for auxiliary-like uses, there are only 11 alliterated tokens out of the whole 214 instances or the 161 stressed instances (i.e., 5.1% or 6.8%).

Now we are bound to be faced with the issue of whether preterite-present verbs have their own prosodic peculiarities, notably distinct from

other verbs. The answer seems negative. In what follows, this is demonstrated.

Let us take *bīdan*, *drēogan*, *bindan*, *beran*, *gifan*, *faran*, *hātan* as samples from each class of strong verbs, *fremman*, *habban*, *scēawian* from each class of weak verbs and *wil(l)e* from anomalous verbs<sup>5)</sup>. Below all the examples of these verbs in *Beowulf* are analysed in terms of the features [-s]/[+s, -al]/[+al] and M/A (where A stands for the uses of the verb collocated with non-finite verbal forms, such as infinitives and participles, and where M stands for all the other uses of the verb).

(17) *bīdan* (Strong I) as M

a. M, [-s]: No example.

b. M, [+s, -al]:    ˊ | x    ˊ    ˊ    ˊ    ˊ    x | ˊ  
                   hēah ond horngēap;    heaðowylma bād *Beo* 82 (See also 87b, 301b, 310b, 400b, 528b, 1268b, 1313b, 1882b, 2568b and 2736b)

c. M, [+al]:    x    x    x    ˊ    ˊ x    ˊ    x |    ˊ    x  
                   pæt hīe in bēorsele    *bīdan* woldon *Beo* 482 (See also 709a, 1494a and 2308a.)

(18) *drēogan* (Strong II)

a. M, [-s]: No example.

b. M, [+s, -al]:    x    x    ˊ |    ˊ x    ˊ    x : ˊ    x  
                   pē hīe ær *drugon*    aldorlēase *Beo* 15 (See also 131b, 422b, 589a, 798b, 831b, 1782b, 1858b, 1966b and 2360b; 589a is involved in cross/traverse alliteration, but the relevant verb alliterates with the second lift of the *b*-verse)

c. M, [+al]:    ˊ    ˊ    ˊ |    ˊ    x    x    x    ˊ x | x ˊ  
                   drihtscype *drēogan*;    pær hē dōme forlēas *Beo* 1470 (See also 2179a and 2726b.)

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5) Each verb is selected more or less randomly except that those verbs which appear less than ten times in *Beowulf* are excluded here.

(19) *findan* (Strong III)

- a. M, [-s]: x x x ' x ' x x | x '  
*Fand* pā ðær inne æpelinga gedriht *Beo* 118 (See also 3033a.)
- b. M, [+s, -al]: ' x | ' x ' ' x | '  
heardran hǣle, healðegnas *fand!* *Beo* 719 (See also 870b, 1267b, 1415b, 1486b, 2136b, 2270b, 2294b and 2789b.)
- c. M, [+al]: ' x | ' x ' x x | '  
*fīndan* mihte; *fiftȳna* sum *Beo* 207 (See also 1156b, 1378b, 1838a, 2373b, 2870b and 3162b.)

(20) *beran* (Strong IV)

- a. M, [-s]: x x x ' ' x x x ' x | '  
*Bær* pā sēo brimwylf, pā hēo tō botme cōm, *Beo* 1506
- b. M, [+s, -al]: ' | x x ' x x x ' | ' x  
hēah ofer hēafod, lēton holm *beran*, *Beo* 48 (See also 213b, 291b, 296b, 495a, 711b, 846b, 1192a, 1405b, 1635b, 1647b, 1807b, 1889b, 1920a, 1982b, 2021b, 2048b, 2055b, 2152a, 2244a, 2281b, 2365a, 2518b, 2539b, 2661b, 2686b, 2754b, 2850b, 2988b, 3124b and 3135b.)
- c. M, [+al]: ' | x x ' x ' x | ' x  
*beran* ofer bolcan beorhte randas, *Beo* 231 (See also 448a, 896b and 1024a.)

(21) *gifan* (Strong V)

- a. M, [-s]: x x ' | x ' ' x | x ' x  
*geaf* mē sine ond symbel, sibbe gemunde; *Beo* 2431 (See also 2632a.)
- b. M, [+s, -al]: ' ' | ' ' x x ' x | '  
brēosthord blōdrēow; nalas bēagas *geaf* *Beo* 1719  
(See also 64b, 1678b, 2146b, 2173b, 2635b, 2640b, 2865b, 2919b, 2972b, 3009b and 3034b.)
- c. M, [+al]: ' x | x ' x x x ' | ' x  
*geafon* on gārsecg; him wæs gēomor sefa, *Beo* 49 (for the

elision of the vowel in the second syllable of *gēomor*, see the discussion in Bliss 1952: 52; see also 1948a.)

(22) *faran* (Strong VI)

a. M, [-s]: No example.

b. M, [+s, -al]:    ́ x | ́ x    x ́ | ́ x

**hūðe hrēmig    tō hām *faran*** *Beo* 124 (See also 1404b,  
1805a, 1895b, 1908b, 2308b, 2551b and 2945b.)

c. M, [+al]: x    x ́ | ́ x    ́    x | ́    x

                  on geflit *faran*    fealwe mēaras *Beo* 865 (See also 2915a.)

(23) *hātan* (Strong VII)<sup>6)</sup>

a. M, [-s]:    ́ x|x    ́    x    x x x ́ | ́    x

**wicga ond wāpna;    hēt hine wēl brūcan** *Beo* 1045 (See also  
1868a, 2802a, 2812b, in all of which *hātan* is collocated with an acc.  
plus inf. construction.)

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6) As Bliss (1958: 22) terms it “quasi-auxiliary”, the use of *hātan* directly in combination with an infinitive (or a participle) is classified as A here, while all the other uses are treated as M. Despite Bliss, however, examples of *hātan* + an (overt) accusative nominal + an infinitive are regarded as M in (23), to the extent that the accusative nominal semantically plays a role of the subject of the infinitive, although such instances as the following are still regarded as A, since the accusative nominal is considered to be an object of the infinitive rather than of *hātan*:

(i) ond gehealdan hēt *hildegeatwe* *Beo* 674

(lit.) ‘and to-guard ordered war-gear’

‘and [Beowulf] ordered [an attendant] to guard the war-gear’

(For similar examples, see 198b, 1035a, 1053b, 1114a, 1807a, 1808b, 1920a, 2152a, 2190a, 2337a, 2892a, 3095b)

The following instance is a passive construction whose active counterpart would be the type of construction given in (i) above, and thus is viewed as A in (23):

(ii) Ða wæs hāten hrete Heort innanweard folmum gefrætwod; *Beo* 991-2a

(lit.) ‘then was ordered quickly Heorot (NOM) within (by) hands (DAT) decorated (p.p.)’

‘then it was quickly ordered that Heorot should be decorated within by hands’

- b. M, [+s, -al]: x x ˘ x | ˘ ˘ x | ˘ x  
wæs se grimma gæst Grendel hāten *Beo* 102 (See also 263b, 293b, 373b, 1786b, 2156b, 2602a and 2806b; the verb in 293b occurs with an acc. plus inf. construction.);
- c. M, [+al]: x ˘ ˘ x ˘ x | ˘ x  
pæt healreced hātan wolde, *Beo* 68 (in which *hātan* is combined with an acc. plus inf. construction.)
- d. A, [-s]: ˘ x | x ˘ x x x ˘ ˘ x  
æpele ond ēacen. Hēt him yðlidan *Beo* 198 (where the accusative nominal *yðlidan gōdne* is considered to be an object of the infinitive *gegyrwan* on the next line, see also 1035a, 1114a, 1807a, 1808b, 1920a, 2152a, 2190a, 2337a, 2892a; and see also 386b, 391a and 3110a, where the verb takes simply an infinitive without an accusative nominal.)
- e. A, [+s, -al]: ˘ x ˘ x x x x ˘ x | ˘  
yrfelāfe, ond pone ænne heht *Beo* 1053 (where the accusative nominal *pone ænne* is considered to be an object of the infinitive *forgyldan*; see also 3095b.)
- f. A, [+al]: x x ˘ x | ˘ ˘ x ˘ x  
ond gehealdan hēt hildegeatwe *Beo* 674 (where the accusative nominal *hildegeatwe* is considered to be an object of the infinitive *gehealdan*, as illustrated in Note 6 [i]; see also 991a, and for this, cf. Note 6 [ii].)

(24) fremman (Weak I)

- a. M, [-s]: No example.
- b. M, [+s, -al]: ˘ x | ˘ x x x x ˘ | ˘ x  
sæcce fremman, pendan þis sweord polað *Beo* 2499  
(See also 1019b, 2134a and 2514a.)
- c. M, [+al]: ˘ | x ˘ x ˘ ˘ | x ˘  
fremeð on folce, feor eal gemon, *Beo* 1701 (See also 101a, 959a, 1003a, 1832b, 2627b, 2800b and 3006a.)

## (25) scēawian (Weak II)

a. M, [-s]: No example.

b. M, [+s, -al]: x x x x ´ x ´ | ´ x x  
 syðþan hie pæs læðan læst scēawedon *Beo* 132 (See also 204b, 840b, 843b, 983b, 1391b, 1413b, 1440b, 1687b, 2285b, 2402b, 2744a, 2748b, 2793b, 3008b, 3032b, 3075b, 3084b and 3104b.)

c. M, [+al]: No example.

## (26) habban (Weak III)

a. M, [-s]: x x x x x ´ x ´ | ´ x x  
 Habbað wē tō pæm mæran micel ærende *Beo* 270 (See 518a, 539a, 1167a and 2361a.)

b. M, [+s, -al]: x x x ´ x | x ´ ´ x| ´ x  
 sē pe his wordes geweald wīde hæfde *Beo* 79 (See also 383b, 554b, 562b, 950b, 1174b, 1395b, 1610b, 1625b, 1849b, 1850b, 2150b, 2523b, 2579b, 2740b and 3000b; 1849 appears to be an instance of ‘cross/traverse’ alliteration, but the relevant verb occupies the second lift of the *b*-verse.)

c. M, [+al]: x ´ ´ x ´ x | x ´ x  
 for herebrōgan habban ne mihte. *Beo* 462 (See also 381a, 446b, 658a, 814a, 1176a, 1202a, 1490a, 1798b, 2158a, 2430a and 3017a.)

d. A, [-s]: x x x ´ x ´ x| ´ x  
 Hæfde se gōda Gēata lēoda *Beo* 205 (there is a past participle, *gecorne*, on the *a*-verse of the next line; see also 408b, 433a, 595a, 665b, 694a, 825a, 828b, 883a, 893a, 1221a, 1550a, 1855a, 2026a, 2301a, 2321a, 2333a, 2381a, 2403a, 2844a, 2952a and 3046a.)

e. A, [+s, -al]: ´ ´ x | ´ ´ x| ´ x  
 synsnædum swealh; sōna hæfde *Beo* 743 (there is a past participle, *gefeormed*, on the *b*-verse of the next line; see also 106b, 117b, 220b, 474b, 804b, 939b, 953b, 975b, 1196b, 1294b, 1340a, 1472b, 1599b, 1928b, 2104b, 2145b, 2265b, 2397b, 2453b, 2630b, 2707b, 2726b, 3074b, 3147b and 3165b.)

f. A, [+al]: No example.

(27) wil(l)e (Anomalous)

a. M, [-s]: x x x ' x x x ' | ' x

Hēo wæs on ofste, wolde ūt panon *Beo* 1292 (where there is no infinitive collocated with the verb or a verb of motion is understood.)

b. M, [+s, -al]: ' x | x ' x x x ' | ' x

sīðe gesunde! Ic tō sǣ wille *Beo* 318 (where there is no infinitive collocated with the verb or a verb of motion is understood; see also 543b, 706b, 967b, 1003b, 1055b, 1371b, 1394b, 2497b, 2766b and 3055b.)

c. M, [+al]: No example.

d. A, [-s]: x xx x ' x ' | ' x x

Wille ic āsecgan sunu Healdenes, *Beo* 344 (See also 664a, 755b, 791a, 796a, 1010a, 1339b, 1546b, 1791a, 1805b, 2294b, 2305a, 2518b, 2524b, 2858a, 2864b and 3171a.)

e. A, [+s, -al]: x ' ' x ' x | ' x

pæt healreced hātan wolde *Beo* 68 (See also 154b<sup>7</sup>, 200b, 346b, 351b, 427b, 446b, 482b, 645b, 679b, 738b, 803b, 812b, 880b, 947b, 979b, 988b, 990b, 1041a, 1049a, 1094b, 1175b, 1181b, 1184b, 1277b, 1314b, 1494a, 1523b, 1576b, 1818b, 1832b, 1852b, 2083b, 2090b, 2148b, 2160b, 2186b, 2308a, 2315b, 2376b, 2512b, 2588b, 2636b, 2729b)

7) The verb in question takes three complements here:

(i) sibbe ne wolde wið manna hwone magesnes Deniga, feorhbealo feorran, fea pingian, *Beo* 154b-6b

'(lit.)(he) not wanted friendship with any man of might of [the] Danes, to-cess-from life-evil, to-settle money'

'he did not want friendship with any man of the Danish force, would not withdraw deadly malice, or settle with wergild'

One is *sibbe* 'friendship', an accusative noun, the others *feorhbealo feorran* 'to withdraw deadly malice' and *fea pingian* 'to settle money', infinitival clauses. This example is regarded as A, due to the combination with overt infinitives.

and 2940b; 2186 appears to be an instance of ‘cross/traverse’ alliteration, but the relevant verb occupies the second lift of the *b*-verse.)

- f. A, [+al]: x x x x ´ x x x ´ x | ´  
 Wēn' ic pæt hē *wille*, gif hē wealdan mōt, *Beo* 442

The data presented in (17) to (27) are charted in the following table:

			[-s]	[+s, -al]	[+al]	Total	
Strong	I	bidan	M	0	11	4	15
	II	drēogan	M	0	10	3	13
	III	findan	M	2	9	7	18
	IV	beran	M	1	31	4	36
	V	gifan	M	2	12	2	16
	VI	faran	M	0	8	2	10
	VII	hātan	M	4	8	1	13
			A	13	2	2	17
Weak	I	fremman	M	0	4	8	12
	II	scēawian	M	0	19	0	19
	III	habban	M	5	16	12	33
			A	22	26	0	48
Anomalous		wil(l)e	M	1	11	0	12
			A	17	45	1	63
-----							
Total			M	15	139	43	197
			A	52	73	3	128

### Non-Preterite-Present Verbs in *Beowulf*

Table 2

A comparison between Table 1 and 2 reveals the following points: 1) in respect both of preterite-presents and of non-preterite-presents, the percentage of unstressed examples is rather low in main-verb uses and relatively high in auxiliary-like uses, whilst the contrast is more remarkable

in non-preterite-presents; 2) the percentage of alliterating examples is rather high in main-verb uses and relatively low in auxiliary-like uses, and the contrast is fairly similar in both types of verbs, see Table 3 below:

		unstressed:	stressed		alliteration:	
					non-alliteration	
Preterite-	M	15.6%:	84.4%	(17: 92)	23.9%:	76.1% (26: 83)
Presents	A	24.8%:	75.2%	(53: 161)	5.1%:	94.9% (11: 203)
Non-Preterite-	M	7.6%:	92.4%	(15: 182)	21.8%:	78.2% (43: 154)
Presents	A	40.6%:	59.4%	(52: 76)	2.3%:	97.7% (3: 125)

Comparison between Preterite-Present  
and Non-Preterite-Present Verbs in *Beowulf*

Table 3

There is one more feature worth testing here. Lehmann (1974: 51) points out that in Germanic alliterative verse finite verbs often occupy the second arsis/lift of the *b*-verse (i.e., they are “frequently placed by poets in the forth, non-alliterating, metrically prominent position in the line”) and suggests that this derives from the IE situation that “finite verbs lost their accent unless they stood initially in an independent clause or in any position in a dependent clause” (*op. cit.*, p.50), which is actually testified in Vedic. Leaving aside the historical origin of the property (i.e., the issue of the extent to which Germanic alliterative verse reflects the Vedic accentual pattern), it seems worth comparing the degrees to which preterite-present and non-preterite-present verbs follow the pattern to occupy “the forth, non-alliterating, metrically prominent position.” Table 4 and 5 below sum up the data from *Beowulf* concerning this feature:

			[+s, -al], occupying the forth lift	whole examples	percentage
Preterite-	I (ge-)wāt	M	10	26	38.5%
	Presents				
	āh/g	M	4	8	50.0%
	II dēag/h	M	9	9	100.0%
	III can(n)	M	13	16	81.3%
		A	5	6	83.3%
	(ge-)an(n)	M	1	7	14.3%
	pearf	M	1	1	100.0%
		A	11	12	91.7%
	dearr	M	1	1	100.0%
		A	5	7	71.4%
	IV sceal	M	5	8	62.5%
		A	48	81	59.3%
	(ge/on-)man	M	14	23	60.9%
	V mæg	M	1	5	20.0%
		A	54	80	67.5%
	VI mōt	M	5	5	100.0%
		A	20	28	71.4%
-----					
Total		M	64	109	58.7%
		A	143	214	66.8%

**Preterite-Present Verbs Occupying  
the Forth Lift in *Beowulf***

Table 4<sup>8)</sup>

8) Relevant examples are what follows.

wāt: 169b, 246b, 288b, 715b, 878b, 1309b, 1367b, 1830b, 1863b and 2410b (there is no example of *gewāt* occupying the forth lift).

āh/g: 31b, 522b, 533b and 2608b.

dēag/h: 369b, 526b, 573b, 589b, 1344b, 1660b, 1821b, 1839b and 2031b.

can(n) (M): 119b, 162b, 180b, 392b, 418b, 1180b, 1233b, 1355b, 1377b, 1739b, 2012b, 2070b and 3067b.

- 
- can(n) (A): 50b, 90b, 182b, 1445b and 1746b.  
an(n): 2874b (there is no instance of *gean* occupying the fourth lift).  
pearf (M): 2363b.  
pearf (A): 157b, 445b, 450b, 595b, 1026b, 1071b, 1674b, 2006a, 2495b, 2741a and 2874a.  
dearr (M): 1379b.  
dearr (A): 527b, 684b, 1462b, 1468b and 2735b.  
sceal (M): 455b, 1179b, 1855b, 2585b and 2816b.  
sceal (A): 10b, 24b, 41b, 85b, 183b, 230b, 251b, 280b, 287b, 384b, 440b, 424b, 438b, 588b, 601b, 636b, 683b, 691b, 704b, 910b, 965b, 977b, 1034b, 1067b, 1070b, 1106b, 1260b, 1305b, 1449b, 1464b, 1637b, 1798b, 2056b, 2257b, 2275b, 2400b, 2421b, 2498b, 2525b, 2535b, 2627b, 2657b, 2918b, 2963b, 2974b, 3068b, 3108b and 3176b.  
(ge-)man: 179b, 265b, 1129b, 1141b, 1185b, 1220b, 1259b, 1290b, 1701b, 2042b, 2114b, 2391b, 2431b and 2488b (there is no instance of *onman* for this).  
mæg (M): 754b  
mæg (A): 243b, 277b, 308b, 313b, 462b, 478b, 511b, 542b, 571b, 648b, 656b, 680b, 780b, 941b, 942b, 1032b, 1078b, 1140b, 1156b, 1350b, 1378b, 1446b, 1454b, 1496b, 1504b, 1515b, 1561b, 1733b, 1822b, 1877b, 1911b, 1919b, 2340b, 2373b, 2448b, 2464b, 2466b, 2520b, 2530b, 2600b, 2621b, 2654b, 2673b, 2683b, 2739b, 2749b, 2764b, 2770b, 2870b, 2877b, 2904b, 2954b, 3064b and 3162b.  
mōt (M): 603b, 1177b, 1387b, 1487b and 2247b.  
mōt (A): 168b, 186b, 347b, 365b, 442b, 894b, 961b, 1088b, 1628b, 1671b, 1875b, 1939b, 1998b, 2038b, 2504b, 2827b, 2886b, 2984b, 3053b and 3100b.

			[+s, -al], occupying the forth lift	whole examples	percentage	
Strong	I	bidan	M	10	15	66.6%
	II	drēogan	M	8	13	61.5%
	III	findan	M	9	18	50.0%
	IV	beran	M	25	36	69.4%
	V	gifan	M	12	16	75.0%
	VI	faran	M	7	10	70.0%
	VII	hātan	M	7	13	53.8%
			A	2	17	11.8%
Weak	I	fremman	M	1	12	8.3%
	II	scēawian	M	18	19	94.7%
	III	habban	M	16	33	48.5%
			A	25	48	52.1%
Anomalous	wil(l)e	M	1	12	8.3%	
		A	41	63	65.1%	
-----						
Total			M	114	197	57.9%
			A	68	128	53.1%

Non-Preterite-Present Verbs Occupying  
the Forth Lift in *Beowulf*

Table 5<sup>9)</sup>

As the total numbers given in Table 4 and 5 indicate, the percentage vacillates between 53.1% and 66.8%, and it does not seem to show a notable difference between preterite-present and non-preterite-present verbs.

9) Relevant examples are given below.

bidan: 87b, 301b, 310b 400b, 528b, 1268b, 1313b, 1882b, 2528b and 2736b.

drēogan: 131b, 422b, 798b, 831b, 1782b, 1858b, 1966b and 2360b.

### 3. Conclusion

This paper has investigated into the data respecting the prosodic features of preterite-present verbs in *Beowulf*. The facts we have observed are that preterite-present verbs can be stressed and thus constitute a lift and that they frequently take up the fourth-lift position. In both of these features, we may say, they are on a par with other types of OE verbs (i.e., strong, weak and anomalous verbs). It follows from this that preterite-present verbs, apart from other types of verbs, can by no means be defined in terms of their prosodic features any more than of their syntactic or semantic characteristics.

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- findan: 719b, 870b, 1267b, 1415b, 1486b, 2136b, 2270b, 2294b and 2789b.  
beran: 48b, 213b, 291b, 296b, 711b, 846b, 1405b, 1635b, 1647b, 1807b, 1889b, 1982b, 2021b, 2048b, 2055b, 2281b, 2518b, 2539b, 2661b, 2686b, 2754b, 2850b, 2988b, 3124b and 3135b.  
gifan: 64b, 1678b, 1719b, 2146b, 2173b, 2635b, 2640b, 2865b, 2919b, 2972b, 3009b and 3034b.  
faran: 124b, 1404b, 1895b, 1908b, 2308b, 2551b and 2945b.  
hātan (M): 102b, 263b, 293b, 373b, 1786b, 2156b and 2806b.  
hātan (M): 1053b and 3095b.  
fremman: 1019b.  
scēawian: 132b, 204b, 840b, 843b, 983b, 1391b, 1413b, 1440b, 1687b, 2285b, 2402b, 2748b, 2793b, 3008b, 3032b, 3075b, 3084b and 3104b.  
habban (M): 79b, 383b, 554b, 562b, 950b, 1174b, 1395b, 1610b, 1625b, 1849b, 1850b, 2150b, 2523b, 2579b, 2740b and 3000b.  
habban (A): 106b, 117b, 220b, 474b, 743b, 804b, 939b, 953b, 975b, 1196b, 1294b, 1472b, 1599b, 1928b, 2104b, 2145b, 2265b, 2397b, 2453b, 2630b, 2707b, 2726b, 3074b, 3147b and 3165b.  
wil(l)e (M): 318b, 543b, 706b, 967b, 1003b, 1055b, 1371b, 1394b, 2497b, 2766b and 3055b.  
wil(l)e (A): 68b, 154b, 200b, 346b, 351b, 427b, 446b, 482b, 645b, 679b, 738b, 803b, 812b, 880b, 947b, 979b, 988b, 990b, 1094b, 1175b, 1181b, 1184b, 1277b, 1314b, 1523b, 1576b, 1818b, 1832b, 1852b, 2083b, 2090b, 2148b, 2160b, 2186b, 2315b, 2376b, 2512b, 2588b, 2636b, 2729b and 2940b.

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