CHAPTER TWENTY-ONE
EXTRAPOSITION AND PRONOMINAL AGREEMENT

21.1 TERMINOLOGY

In his *Studies in Semitic Syntax* G. Khan distinguishes between 'extraposition' and 'pronominal agreement'. Extraposition is 'the syntactic construction in which a noun or nominal phrase stands isolated at the front of a clause without any immediate formal connection to the predication (...). The grammatical relation of nominal in the predication is usually indicated vicariously by means of a coreferential resumptive pronoun.'¹ Pronominal agreement is 'a construction where a noun or nominal phrase whose grammatical relation is indicated by its case inflection or by an adjoining relational particle is accompanied in the same clause by a coreferential pronoun agreeing with it in number, gender, person, and grammatical relation (...). Unlike extraposed nominals, nominals which are accompanied by such "agreement pronouns" are not restricted to initial position but may occur anywhere in the clause – the front, the interior, or the end.²

Accordingly, pronominal agreement differs from extraposition in that the nominal stands inside the predication whereas in extraposition it is isolated from the predication and is referred to by the coreferential pronoun. In traditional grammars the extraposition construction is often called 'casus pendens' or 'nominative absolute'.³ In

¹ Khan, *Studies in Semitic Syntax*, xxvi; cf. Muraoka, *Emphatic*, 93 on Biblical Hebrew: 'Quite frequently a noun or a pronoun, or its equivalent, is placed at the head of a sentence, syntactically independent of the sentence which follows (...). The extraposed or fronted sentence part is usually resumed later by means of a pronominal element.' See also Nöldeke, *Grammatik*, § 317; Duval, *Traité*, § 376 ('Il est rare que le nom, mis ainsi en tête de la phrase, ne soit pas repris par le suffixe'); Goldenberg, "Tautological Infinitive", 37.

² Khan, *Studies in Semitic Syntax*, xxvi-xxvii; see also idem, 'Object Markers and Agreement Pronouns', 468.

³ Cf. Joōn–Muraoka, *Grammar*, § 156a: 'A noun or a pronoun is often placed at the head of a clause in such a way as to stand aloof from what follows, and then resumed by means of a retrospective pronoun. The noun is thus suspended, so to speak,
extraposition the co-referential pronoun is always resumptive, while in pronominal agreement it may be either resumptive or anticipatory.

21.2 EXTRAPOSITION

Extraposition is well attested in Syr. A classification can be made according to the form of the extraposited element or according to the grammatical function of the resumptive element.

A. Form of the extraposited element

(a) Pronoun:

37:8 ἐπεῖ οὗτος ὁ υἱὸς σαρκὸς ἦν Ἰερεμίας: 'Because he too—he has himself in mind'.

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hence it is termed *casus pendentis* and ibid., 552 n. 1: ‘In contemporary general linguistics it is customary to discuss these issues in terms of “topic” and “comment” or similar ideas’. For the ‘nominative absolute’, see e.g. Brockelmann, *Grammatik*, § 220: ‘Die dominierende Vorstellung tritt als sog. absoluter Nominativ oft an die Spitze des Satzes und erhält ihre grammatische Beziehung durch ein rückweisendes Pron. (...) seltener fehlt die Rückweisung’.

6 In other structures too is used to introduce a fronted element, e.g.

16:11 καὶ ἠλπίσα τῷ αὐτῷ καὶ ἐορᾷ σε Ἡσαΐας: 'And as to one—if he were to harden his neck, it would be amazing'.
38:1 καὶ ἔδωκεν αὐτῷ καὶ ἐορᾷ σε Ἡσαΐας, 'Because also him—God has created him'.
49:10 ἐξεκοίμησεν αὐτόν καὶ ἐορᾷ τὸν οἶκον τῆς σοφίας καὶ τῆς ἔργων, 'And also the Twelve Prophets—may their bones shine beneath them—who cured Israel'.
7 The analysis of this example is difficult. If we take the second as a subject pronoun, we can parse this clause as:

[MVL D<CT>][P<CT>][HW<Ep>][B-NPCH<CO>][HW<Sp>][MTR<PC>]

If, however, we take it as a schematizing or emphatic particle (cf. § 24.3), the first as is not resumed by an element in the main clause, and its interpretation as a fronted element can be questioned. In that case the analysis

[MVL D<CT>][P<CT>][HW<Sp>][B-NPCH<CO>][HW<Ep>][MTR<PC>]

is possible as well. The second is absent from 7a1.