

## **Negators in Contrastive Constructions in Old English**

## Abstract

The purpose of this article is to find out the factors that explain the variation among the different negators in contrastive constructions, *X (and) not Y* and *not X but Y*, in Old English prose and glosses. An attempt is also made to answer the question why such structures are used, and why they are more common in some texts than in others. The data consists of a select corpus. The results indicate that in early West Saxon the negators in such constructions are mainly *nalles* and *næs*, while the negator *na* occurs less frequently. The exclusive use of the negator *na* by Ælfric simplifies the system of negators in late West Saxon. Contrastive constructions are mainly employed as rhetorical means for emphasis. They are favoured in texts that are intended to influence people. The results suggest that the variation is partly genre-based, and partly diachronic.

Keywords: negation, Old English, contrastive construction, variation, rhetorical

## 1. Introduction

In Old English (OE), there are several negators, such as *ne*, *na*, *næs* and *nalles*, that can be translated by ‘not’. Various grammatical rules on their use indicate that they are not interchangeable in a clause. For example, the particle *ne* ‘not’ is with high consistency placed immediately before a finite verb form in which position it negates the whole clause. Supporting his conclusion with numerous examples Mitchell (1985: §§1616, 1622) states that the adverb *nalles* ‘not’, ‘not at all’ is used in poetry to negate one of two alternative words (other than verbs) or phrases, whereas in prose, especially in Ælfric, the negator in such instances is usually the adverb *na* ‘not’, as in *na lichamlice ac gastlice* ‘not bodily, but spiritually’ (ÆCHom II 154.156),<sup>1</sup> or sometimes *nalles*, as in *nalæs mid anes mannes geþeahhte ac mid gesægene unrim geleaffulra witeana* ‘not on the authority of a single person, but from the statements of numberless faithful witnesses’ (Bede 4.25; translation Miller). Constructions of this kind in which the two halves of the coordinated pair are symmetrical seem to be common in various languages.<sup>2</sup> In this article, such instances are referred to as negative contrastive constructions.

Since recent research into negation in OE prose has mainly focussed on the adverb *ne* and sentential negation (for example, van Kemenade 1999, Ohkado 2005, Ogura 2008, van Bergen 2008a and b), contrastive constructions in which negation is subclausal have not

<sup>1</sup> The short titles of the OE texts follow those in Healey & Venezky 1980. In the text, citations are given in the spelling of the editions used, but no diacritical marks are included. Punctuation follows that of the editors.

<sup>2</sup> Closest to Old English are Old High German (OHG), Late OHG and Early Middle High German, (see LaBrum 1982: 214, 242–247). Comparisons of such constructions in modern languages are included in von Klopp 1994. LaBrum (1982: 180–190) refers to the continuity of negative contrastive constructions from OE to Modern English.

been studied in detail. LaBrum (1982) analyses ‘contrastives’ in her dissertation, but her OE data is meagre. Mitchell provides copious examples of the negators *na* and *nalles* negating one of two alternatives, both in prose and poetry, but he does not include quantitative data on the distribution of these negators in his study. Nor do these studies answer the question why contrastive constructions are favoured in some texts.

The purpose of this article is to expand the study of OE negation to subclausal units and uncover the factors that explain the variation among different negators in contrastive constructions in OE prose and glosses. This variation includes syntactic structures in such constructions. I also test Mitchell’s generalization on the use of *na* and *nalles* in contrastive constructions with quantitative data, and make an attempt to answer the question why such structures are used in prose and why they are more common in some texts than in others. The negators included are the following: *na*, ‘not’, *næs*, and *nalles* ‘not’, ‘not at all’.

This article is organized as follows. Section 2 introduces the corpus used. Section 3 introduces the negators *na*, *nalles* and *næs*. Section 4 provides an overview of the contrastive constructions in OE prose. Section 5 discusses the distribution of the negators, including their relative frequency and their diachronic, dialectal and idiolectal breakdown. Section 6 deals with such constructions as rhetorical means; two special devices, antimetabole and anaphora are introduced. Section 7 discusses the distribution of the types of negative contrastive constructions across grammatical categories. Attention is also paid to the occurrence of ellipsis. Section 8 provides a concise summary of the findings.

## 2. Corpus

The article is a descriptive and quantitative analysis of the data based on a select corpus of 19 texts. These are continuous texts, both prose and glosses (see Table 1).<sup>3</sup> No poetry is included. The texts were selected as representative of the various text types, dialects and periods of OE (Table 1). The data were collected manually from the editions indicated in the references. The citations follow the spellings of *The Dictionary of Old English Corpus* (DOEC). *The Helsinki Corpus of English Texts* (HC) has been consulted as to period, prototypical text category and text type (see Kytö 1996). The size of my corpus, 641,323 OE words, covers about one fifth of DOEC.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> From *The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* (A), only pre-950 entries are included.

<sup>4</sup> The corpus is somewhat larger than the OE part of HC (413,250 OE words) which is a compilation of samples of prose, glosses and poetry (see Kytö 1996).

Table 1. The corpus

Text and text type	Dialect	Word counts
Document		
<i>Charters (Robertson)</i>	Anglian/Kentish/early & late WS	25,638
History		
<i>Anglo-Saxon Chronicle (A)*</i>	Early WS	14,551
<i>Bede's Ecclesiastical History</i>	Early WS with Anglian elements	80,521
<i>The Old English Orosius</i>	Early WS	51,110
Religious treatise		
<i>Cura Pastoralis</i>	Early WS	67,835
Preface		
<i>Preface to Cura Pastoralis</i>	Early WS	874
<i>Preface to Genesis</i>	Late WS	1,383
<i>On the Old and New Testament**</i>	Late WS	10,182
Bible		
<i>The Vespasian Psalter</i>	Early Anglian	32,347
<i>The West Saxon Gospel of St. Matthew</i>	Late WS	20,436
<i>The Lindisfarne Gospel of St. Matthew</i>	Late Anglian	21,327
<i>The Rushworth Gospel of St. Matthew</i>	Late Anglian	19,628
Homily		
<i>Blickling Homilies</i>	Late WS with Anglian elements	44,918
<i>Homilies of Wulfstan</i>	Late WS	28,194
<i>Ælfric's Catholic Homilies II</i>	Late WS	97,702
Biography: life of saint		
<i>Gregory's Dialogues (C)</i>	Late WS with Mercian elements	91,488
<i>Gregory's Dialogues (H)</i>	Late WS/unknown***	25,229
<i>The Life of St. Chad</i>	Late WS with Mercian elements	2,649
Science: astronomy		
<i>De Temporibus Anni</i>	Late WS	5,311
	Sum total	641,323

\*only pre-950 entries included

\*\* *ÆLet4* (SigewardZ)

\*\*\* LWS (YCOE); the reviser's dialect of OE (Yerkes 1982:10)

Approximately one third of the texts are early West Saxon and two thirds late West Saxon. The scarcity of non-West Saxon (Anglian and Kentish) data is well-known. In the present study, the Anglian material comprises the glosses of the *Lindisfarne Gospel of St. Matthew*, the *Rushworth Gospel of St. Matthew*, the *Vespasian Psalter* and a selection of documents, both early and late, in the *Charters* (ChRob). The early West Saxon (eWS) period is represented by the *Old English Orosius*, *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* MS A, *Gregory's Pastoral Care* MS H, and King Alfred's *Preface to Gregory's Pastoral Care*.

The late WS period is represented by the *Gospel of St. Matthew*, the *Homilies of Wulfstan*, *Ælfric's Catholic Homilies II*, *De Temporibus Anni*, *Preface to Genesis* and his

treatise *On the Old and New Testament* (Ælet4 (SigewardZ)). *The Life of St. Chad* and *Gregory's Dialogues* MS C represent late West Saxon with Mercian elements (CoRD 2017). Bede's *Ecclesiastical History*, and *The Blickling Homilies* also contain numerous Anglian elements (Campbell 1959: §17, Schabram 1965: 73ff., CoRD 2017). In order to widen the non-West Saxon portion of the corpus, I have included three Anglian glosses, even though syntactically they are hardly compatible with the other texts.

It is well known that a single text is often compiled of several manuscripts which may date back to different periods of OE. This implies that conclusions pertaining to the date and dialect of a text become difficult to draw. MS C and MS H of *Gregory's Dialogues* offer a good example of such difficulties. Nevertheless, by analyzing various instances of contrastive constructions in a text we may learn how the negators were used in such constructions.

MS H of *Gregory's Dialogues* covers part of MS C. Wærferth translated Pope Gregory the Great's *Dialogi* sometime between the early 870s and early 890s, whereas the revision of the translation, MS H, took place between 950 and 1050, probably in Worcester, by an anonymous scribe. The two versions represent different dialects. MS C follows Wærferth's original translation, whereas there seems to be no consensus on the reviser's dialect. MS H is categorized as WS/X, i.e. West Saxon with the element X referring to 'unkown' in HC (CoRD 2017). Yerkes refers to the reviser's own idiom and 'to his dialect of Old English' (Yerkes 1982: 10), but MS H has also been regarded as West Saxon (YCOE). According to Yerkes, many of the changes the reviser made bring the wording of his translation closer to the Latin of Gregory (Yerkes 1982: 9–10).

Since comparisons between MS C and MS H must be based on the existing texts, we should take a look at the dates of the existing manuscripts. MS C (Corpus Christi College, Cambridge 322) is a copy from the eleventh century of Wærferth's OE translation, which dates back to King Alfred's time (MS C: Ker s. xi<sup>2</sup>), while MS H (Bodleian, Hatton 76, fols. 1–54) is an eleventh century copy of a revised version of the original (MS H: Ker s. xi<sup>1</sup>; Yerkes 1982: 9–11). Thus, both manuscripts date from approximately the same period. There is also MS O (Cotton Otho C.i, vol.2, fols. 1–137); however, this was badly damaged in the fire in the Cottonian Library in 1731. It is claimed to represent Wærferth's text even better than MS C, with regard to both vocabulary and grammatical forms (Harting 1937: 282, 292). MS O also comes from the same period as the two manuscripts (MS O: Ker s. xi<sup>1</sup> in, xi<sup>1</sup> med). Yerkes states that the first two books of the translation of MS O were copied by a scribe at the beginning of the eleventh century, perhaps in the

South-West, whereas ‘another scribe copied the last two books at Worcester about forty years later, in the middle of the century’ (Yerkes 1979: xvi).

My discussion on the differences of the negative contrastive constructions in MS C and MS H is based on Hecht’s edition of Gregory’s *Dialogues*, in which he gives the readings of both manuscripts. Hecht also gives the variants of MS O at the bottom of the page in his edition when they are available.

### 3. *The three negators*

The element *n-*, common to OE negators, goes back to the particle *ne*, from the older *ni*, ‘not’ (IE *\*ne*, related to IE *\*me*, Gothic *ni*, Old Saxon, Old High German, Old Frisian *ne*, *ni*, Holthausen 1934: s.v. *ne*). After elision of the vowel, the particle *ne* becomes a kind of negative prefix *n-*, attached to some adverbs, pronouns, conjunctions and verbs, provided they begin with a vowel or *h-* or *w-* followed by a vowel (Campbell 1959: §265, and §469; Hogg 1992: 187–188).

With the negator *na*, occasionally also spelt *no*, amalgamation of the prefix *n-* with *a* or *o*, ‘ever’, gives *na* and *no*, ‘never’, which, after the loss of its temporal meaning by the OE period (Einenkel 1916: 79), becomes the adverb ‘not’ or ‘no’ (cf. OS, OHG *neo*, *nio*, OF *na*, *no*, Holthausen 1934: s.v. *na*; Wright & Wright 1961: 69). *Nalles/nales* may represent two roots: (i) *nealles* < *ne* + *ealles*, ‘not’, ‘not at all’, Latin *nequaquam*, *neque omnino*, and (ii) *nalæs*, *-as*, *-es* < *na* + *læs* ‘less’ (Holthausen 1934: s.v. *nealles*, *nales*). In this article, the form *nalles* is used to represent the spellings *nalas*, *nalæs*, *nales*, *nallas*, *nallæs*, *nalles*, and *nals*. The negator *næs* ‘not’, which is a homonym of the contracted verb form *næs* < *ne* + *wæs* ‘was not’, has been considered either a combination of *ne* + *gese/gise*, literally ‘not yes’ (GK: s.v. *næs*), or a grammaticalization of the contracted verb form *næs*, but it has also been regarded as a shortened form of the adverb *nalles* (Grimm 1890: 698).

### 4. *Contrastive constructions*

There are four types of negative contrastive constructions in OE prose depending on the position of the negator and the conjoining conjunction.

Type (i): *X not Y*

Type (ii): *X and not Y*

Type (iii): *X but not Y*

Type (iv): *not X but Y*

The types are exemplified by the following instances in which the negator *na* introduces a constituent contrasted with a parallel positive one. Type (iii) is rare in OE and is represented below by example (3) which comes from outside my corpus.

- (1) forþan þe Columban was **abbod na biscop**. (ChronA (Bately) 565.14)  
‘because Columba was an abbot, not a bishop’.
- (2) Se ðe reaflac lufað. he bið **glida and na culfre**. (ÆCHom II 24.184)  
‘He who loves rapine is a kite, and not a dove’.
- (3) **mid mannum** hit is uneapelic **ac na mid Gode**. (Mk (WSCp) 10.27)  
Apud homines impossibile est, sed non apud Deum.  
‘With men it is impossible, but not with God’.<sup>5</sup>
- (4) Soðlice hit is swa swa we ær cwædon cristes lichama and his blod. **na lichamlice. ac gastlice**. (ÆCHom II 154.156)  
‘Truly it is, as we before said, Christ’s body and his blood, not bodily but spiritually’.

The instances quoted above are examples of antithesis in which two opposing ideas, one of which is negated, are coordinated in order to achieve a contrasting effect. The examples indicate that the position of the contrastive negation differs. In examples (1) and (2) the negator introduces a sentence element which gives prominence to the assertion preceding it. In example (3), which closely follows the Latin word order, and in (4), in which the hypothetical alternative of the antithesis, *na lichamlice*, is placed first, the focus is at the end of the clause. The examples also show that the structures vary. Occasionally, contrasted elements are coordinated by means of *ac* ‘but’ (3 and 4), or *and* ‘and’ (2), while in example (1) the coordination is asyndetic. The elements which indicate the foci of the contrastive negation are various clause constituents, such as adverbs (*na lichamlice ac gastlice*), prepositional phrases (*mid mannum ac na mid Gode*), or noun phrases (*glida and na culfre*, and *abbod na biscop*). Negation is subclausal in each example above, in other words, the scope of negation, the stretch of language over which the negator *na* has semantic influence (Quirk & al. 1985: 10.64; Huddleston and Pullum 2010: 811), is confined to the phrases *na lichamlice*, *na mid Gode*, *na culfre*, and *na biscop*.

I limit my discussion to instances in which the negators *na*, *nalles* and *næs* are used to negate one of two alternative words (other than finite forms of verbs) or phrases. Constructions in which a negator is used with contrasted propositions, as in example (5), are not included.

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<sup>5</sup> The PDE translations are mine unless otherwise indicated. The Latin text of the West Saxon Gospel passages is from the Vulgate version (1969). For the *Psalter*, the Latin text cited is from the DOEC. The translations of the passages from Ælfric’s *Homilies* are from Thorpe 1844–46.

- (5) **nales na for þæm þe** hio mid forheriunge swa gebismrad wære swa Babylonia wæs; **ac** heo for hie cristendome nu giet is gescild (Or 2 4.44.12)  
 ‘not because it has been humbled by assault as Babylon was, but it is still protected by its Cristian faith.’ (translation Godden 2016)

The constructions examined in this article represent four types. In types (i–iii) the two halves are coordinated either *asyndetically* or *syndetically* by the conjunction *and* or *ac*. In type (iv) in which the negative element of the antithesis comes first, the coordination is *syndetic*. In this function, the conjunction *ac* may be translated by ‘but rather’, ‘but instead’, or ‘on the contrary’, rather than simply by ‘but’ (DOE s.v. *ac*).

The notion of contrast will be taken as a general term referring to a ‘state of being strikingly different from something else in juxtaposition or close association’ (OD, s.v. *contrast*). Thus it covers the categories of opposition (true/false), antonymy (high/low) and complementaries (male/female) (Lyons 1993: 279; see also Mettinger 1994: *passim*). Contrast which refers to relations between items in a clause is closely related to the notion of focus, namely the point which receives some prominence in the clause (Molnár 2002: 148; Repp 2010: 1335).

The choice of the negator can stem from two types of factors. On the one hand, it may be caused by structural (internal) factors, such as the immediate syntactic environment in which the negator occurs. On the other hand, the factors can be extra-structural (external) or contextual-situational, in which case variation may be genre-based, diachronic and diatopic (Rydén 1977: 12–13).

### ***5. Distribution of the negators***

The distribution of the negators in contrastive constructions in my corpus is shown in Table 2. There are 135 occurrences altogether. The frequencies are mainly in agreement with Mitchell’s conclusions, when he states that in clauses in which ‘one of two alternative words (other than finite verbs) or phrases is negated, *na/no* is usual in the prose ..., but *nalles* sometimes serves’ (Mitchell 1985: §1622). Since *nalles* is relatively common in my corpus, his generalization with regard to the use of the negators *na* and *nalles* in prose calls for some commentary.



Table 2. Negators in contrastive constructions; absolute numbers

Text*	na**	nalles***	næs	nalles na***	næs na	Total
CP	0	9	10	2	1	22
Or	0	2	0	0	1	3
Bede	0	19	0	0	0	19
GD(C)	1	5	0	4	0	10
VP(Kuhn)	0	3	0	0	0	3
Chron(A)	2	0	0	0	0	2
Ch(Rob)	1	0	0	0	1	2
WHom	0	0	0	0	1	1
GD(H)	5	0	0	0	0	5
Mt(Ru)	1	1	0	0	0	2
Mt(WSCp)	1	0	1	0	0	2
BIHom	0	0	2	0	4	6
ÆCHom	54	0	0	0	0	54
ÆGenPref	1	0	0	0	0	1
ÆHeptPref	3	0	0	0	0	3
Total	69	39	13	6	8	135

\* Only those texts are listed here where instances occur

\*\*both *na* and *no*

\*\*\**nalles* refers to the spellings *nalas*, *nalæs*, *nales*, *nallas*, *nallæs*, *nalles*, *nals*

Altogether, there are 69 instances of the negator *na*. But the frequency of *nalles* is also high (39 instances), which is mainly due its numerous occurrences in Bede's *Ecclesiastical History*. It becomes considerably higher if Mitchell's categorization of negators is followed; according to him *næs* and the different spellings of *nalles* can be taken together for syntactic reasons (Mitchell 1985: §1620). Taken together, the occurrences of the two negators would narrow the difference between *na* (69 instances) and *nalles/næs* (52 instances) even more, if the constructions *nalles na* and *næs na* (14 instances) were included in the count. To conclude, there is no significant difference between the frequencies of *na* and *nalles/næs* in contrastive constructions in my corpus.

However, there is variation among the negators in terms of their occurrences in the texts studied. More than 90% of all the instances of *na* in contrastive constructions come from late West Saxon, predominantly from Ælfric, whereas the bulk of the occurrences of *nalles/næs* come from early West Saxon texts. There are also instances of both *na* and *nalles/næs* in Anglian texts, but the frequencies are low.

The quantities shown in Table 2 can be compared by using ratios.<sup>6</sup> The frequency of contrastive constructions per 1,000 words is roughly the same in both late West Saxon (0.25) and early West Saxon texts (0.22). In the Anglian material the ratio is considerably lower (less than 0.01). On the one hand, the frequency of the negator *na* per 1,000 words is significantly higher in late West Saxon (0.20) than in early West Saxon texts (0.01). On the other hand, the frequency of *nalles/næs* is significantly higher in early West Saxon (0.21) than in late West Saxon texts (0.05). The frequencies suggest that the variation among the negators in contrastive constructions in my corpus may be explained, at least partly, by the date of the text.

Part of the high percentage of *na* in late West Saxon texts is also due to the large size of the sample drawn from Ælfric, who seems to resort to *na* regularly in contrastive constructions. Table 2 indicates that the translator of Bede's *Ecclesiastical History* prefers *nalles* exclusively.

The two versions of Gregory's *Dialogues* call for a closer examination. There are five instances of contrastive constructions that are shared by the manuscripts. In MS H, *na* is used exclusively (exx. (6b), (7b), and GD(H) 28.28, 33.4, and 125.9)<sup>7</sup>, whereas in MS C, the negator is either *nalles* (ex. (6a) and GD(C) 33.3) or the construction *nalles na* (ex. (7a), and GD(C) 28.28, and 125.10). The negator *na* only occurs once in a contrastive construction in MS C.

The constructions also differ. The coordination is asyndetic in MS C, which is in line with the structure of the source text, *diabulus ... non monachus* (6a), while in MS H (6b) it is syndetic.

(6a) ne sæde ic hit ær, þæt he wære **deofol nalles munuc?** (GD(C) 29.16)  
numquid non dixi, quod diabulus essit iste, non monachus? (Moricca)

(6b) hu, ne sæde ic hit ær, þæt he wære **deofol & na munuc?** (GD(H) 29.12)  
'Didn't I say before, that he was a devil (and) not a monk'.

The structure of the translation of MS C agrees with that of the source text in example (7a) in that the negation comes in the first half of the coordinated pair. The reviser altered the construction by placing the negation in the second half in MS H.

<sup>6</sup> For the word counts, see Table 1.

<sup>7</sup> Cf. also numbers 359, 426, 1744, 1961, and 2206 in Yerkes (1979).

- (7a) Witodlice se halga wer Benedictus ongan þis wundor tellan **nalles na his agnum geearnungum, ac Maures hyrsumnysse þæs munuces.** (GD(C) 115.32)  
vir autem venerabilis Benedictus hoc non suis meritis sed obaedientiae illius deputare coepit. (Moricca)
- (7b) Se arwurða wer Benedictus þa ongann tellan þis wundor **to Maures hyrsumnysse, na to his agenum geearnungum.** (GD(H) 115.29)  
‘The venerable man Benedict then began to attribute this wonder to the obedience of Maurus, not to his own merits’.

Hecht also includes the variants of MS O, if they are available, at the bottom of the page in his edition of *Gregory’s Dialogues*, which makes it possible to compare MS C with MS O on the lexeme level. Comparing these variants, it appears that there are passages in which the two manuscripts share the negator *nalles* and the construction *nalles na*.<sup>8</sup>

Relying on the dating of the OE texts represented in Table 1, some conclusions may be drawn from the examples presented above. The discussion indicates that the variation between the negators *na* and *nalles/næs (na)* in contrastive constructions depends on several factors. In my corpus, the negator *nalles/næs* or the double negative construction *nalles/næs na*, mainly occurs in those texts, both West Saxon and Anglian, that go back to King Alfred’s time, whereas the bulk of the occurrences of *na* date back to late West Saxon period. However, the differences between the early and late texts are not absolute. There are early West Saxon examples of *na* negating one of two alternatives, and there are also instances of the negator *nalles/næs (na)* in the same function in late West Saxon texts.

It can be concluded that the variation between *na* and *nalles/ næs* may, at least partly, be explained by the date of the text. However, one has to keep in mind the fact that a single text is often compiled of several manuscripts and by various scribes. The text may also reflect the scribe’s personal preferences in the use of negators.

Pooled together, variation among the negators *na* and *nalles/ næs (na)* is, at least partly, diachronic. The exclusive use of *na* by Ælfric indicates that it is also idiolectal. No conclusions related to diatopic variation can be made, due to the scarcity of Anglian examples.

## 6. *Contrasted constructions as rhetorical means*

Negative contrastive constructions, especially those of the type *not X but Y*, are typically employed as rhetorical means to give prominence to the words and phrases that the author

<sup>8</sup> Cf. the following instances: (i) MS(C) 29.18 *nalles/O nales*; (ii) MS C 33.3 *nalles/O nallæs*; (iii) MS(C) 90.30 *nalæs/O nalles*; (iv) MS (C) 125.10 *nalæs na/O nalles no*.

considers important. Instead of stating simply that the holy Judas wrote a letter, Ælfric chooses a detour and reminds his audience of two apostles, i.e. the lost Judas and the holy Judas, and of their relationship to the Saviour in example (8). By placing the hypothetical alternative in the first half of the construction he emphasizes the correct alternative, which comes in the second half introduced by the adversative particle *ac*, ‘but instead’, or ‘on the contrary’. Repetition of words and recurring grammatical structures in the two halves of the antithesis enhance the intended contrast between the paired oppositions (cf. Fahnestock 2002: 50).

- (8) Iudas se apostol awrat anne pistol, **na se forlorena Iudas** þe ðone Hælend belæwde, **ac se halga Iudas** þe him æfre folgode. (ÆLet4 (SigewardZ) 935)  
 ‘Judas the apostle wrote a letter, not the lost Judas who betrayed the Saviour, but instead the holy Judas who always followed him’.

Repetition and other rhetorical devices are favoured in texts that are intended to influence people. In my corpus the texts which represent various text types (Table 1) include *Cura Pastoralis*, Bede’s *Ecclesiastical History*, Gregory’s *Dialogues* and Ælfric’s *Homilies*. The numerous occurrences of contrastive constructions in Bede’s *Ecclesiastical History* indicate that it is not only a historical account of events, but also an instructive and didactic text which introduces and promotes the writer’s religious views by employing rhetorical devices. A comparison of the OE translation with the source text of Bede’s *Ecclesiastical History* indicates that the structures of the OE translation follow the Latin source closely (e.g. Bede 76.13, 82.17, 82.30, etc.).

It appears that Ælfric, who was acquainted with Latin literature, also knew how to employ various rhetorical means in his homilies. The special devices include antimetabole and anaphora. Antimetabole refers to a figure of speech that ‘reverses the relative position of a pair of key terms in parallel phrases’ (Fahnestock 2002: 123). In other words, antimetabole involves repetition of words or ideas in reverse order. In example (9), the two parallel phrases are symmetrical in that the phrase of the first half, *fram deaðe to life* is repeated in a reverse form, *na fram life to deaðe*, in the second half. In such a construction the first half typically consists of an assumed but mistaken relationship which may be held by the audience addressed, while the second half reveals that this widely held belief is not correct and that the reverse is the case (Fahnestock 2002: 150).

- (9) We sind asende to gecigenne mancynn **fram deaðe to life**. **na** to scufenne **fram life to deaðe**. (ÆCHom II 283.128)  
 ‘We are sent to call mankind from death to life, not to drive [mankind] from life to death’.

Tupper (1897: 71–72) points to idiolectal variation among the homilies. He concludes that antimetaboles are frequent in Ælfric’s *Homilies*, less frequent in Wulfstan’s *Homilies* and completely absent from the *Blickling Homilies*.

As a rhetorical device, anaphora refers to ‘repetition of a word or expression at the beginning of successive phrases, clauses, sentences, or verses especially for rhetorical or poetic effect’ (M-W, s.v. *anaphora*). The recurring negators and phrases contribute to heighten the contrast in example (10).

- (10) þeos halige ðrynnys hylt us. and ealle gesceafta; **Na hwiltidum se fæder. ne hwiltidum se sunu. ne hwiltidum se halga gast. ac** swa swa hi ðry sind **an god untodæledlic.** swa is eac heora hydræden untodæledlic ofer us. and ofer eallum gesceaftum. þe ðære anre godcundnysse hyrsumiað. (ÆCHom II 211.169)  
 ‘This Holy Trinity preserves us and all creatures: not sometimes the Father, nor sometimes the Son, nor sometimes the Holy Ghost, but as those three are one God indivisible, so also is indivisible their guardianship over us and over all creatures that obey one Godhead’.

Tupper (1897: 57–63) gives examples of the use of anaphora as a rhetorical device in various homilies and Boethius’ *De Consolatione Philosophiae*. He considers both anaphora and antimetabole rhetorical devices of prose.

## 7. Types of negative contrastive constructions

### *Distribution of types*

Table 3 shows the distribution of contrastive negation across grammatical categories in my corpus. Approximately two-thirds of the occurrences of contrastive constructions (89 instances) are of either the type *X not Y*, or *X and not Y*. Asyndetic coordination is preferred (68 instances). If there is a conjunction between the coordinated phrases it is regularly *and*.

Table 3. Distribution of the forms of contrastive negation across grammatical categories

Form of contrastive negation	Grammatical category					Total
	AdjP	ADVP	TO INF	NP	PP	
X not Y	4	3	2	30	29	68
X and not Y	1	1	1	15	3	21
X but not Y	0	0	0	0	0	0
not X but Y	2	11	0	8	25	46
Total	7	15	3	53	57	135

The type *X but not Y* is rare and is not represented in my corpus (see example (3) above). Approximately one-third (46 instances) of all the occurrences are of the type *not X but Y*.

The types *X not Y* and *not X but Y* are similar as to the high frequency of prepositional phrases they contain. But there are also significant differences relating to the frequencies of noun phrases and adverb phrases which imply that the two types mainly occur as different sentence constituents in a clause. For example, adverb phrases and prepositional phrases mainly occur as adverbials, whereas noun phrases are often employed as subjects, objects or subject complements in a clause. Since omission of words and phrases by ellipsis is fairly common in contrastive constructions, I start by examining elliptical structures before studying the constructions in detail.

### *Elliptical structures*

As noted above, repetition of words or phrases is often employed as a rhetorical means in contrasted constructions. However, repetition may occasionally be considered redundant. In example (11), the head noun *pleoh*, which is recoverable from the preceding context, has been omitted by ellipsis in the second half of the coordinated pair in which the genitive form *min* stands independently for the noun phrase (*na min [pleoh]*). Ellipsis in adjective phrases includes example (12) in which the adjective *ægen* has been omitted in the second half of the construction (*nalles ure [ægen]* ‘their own, not our own’). The omission of redundant elements highlights the focus of the clause in (13), in which the ellipted phrase *him to hlaforde* is recoverable from the first half of the construction.

- (11) & hit bið ðonne **his pleoh na min**. (ÆGenPref 117)  
‘And then it will be his peril and not mine’.
- (12) **hiera ægen** we him sellað, **nalles ure**. (CP 335.17)  
‘we give them their own, not ours’. (translation Sweet)
- (13) for ðan hi habbað nu. **þone hetolan deofol. him to hlaforde. na ðone lifigendan crist**. (ÆCHom II 144.208)  
‘therefore have they now the hateful devil for their Lord, not the Living Christ’.

There seem to be two reasons for omitting words or phrases in contrastive constructions in OE, as well as at later stages of English and many other languages, including Latin. On the one hand, ellipsis is employed to avoid repetition. On the other hand, the omission of redundant elements also highlights the focus of the clause.

*X not Y, X and not Y*

Table 3 indicates that the noun phrase is the most frequent grammatical category in constructions of the types *X not Y* and *X and not Y*. Such constructions occur most frequently as subject complements (examples (1),(2), (14) and also CP 405.15; Bede 75.13, etc.), or objects (examples (15), and ÆCHom II 251.58, ÆCHom II 272.15, Mt(WSCp) 12.7, etc.), less often as subjects (16) or as other sentence elements in my corpus.

- (14) Ge sind **þeostru. and na leoht.** (ÆCHom II, 167.217)  
‘Ye are darkness, and not light’.
- (15) Habbon hi **ðone woruldhlasan** þe hi sohton. **na ða ecan mede** þe hi ne rohton.  
(ÆCHom II 329.77)  
‘Let them have the worldly renown that they sought, not the everlasting meed of which they recked not’.
- (16) Forþon **se willa þæs lichoman** bið in synne, **nales þæt saar þære cennisse.**  
uoluptas etenim carnis, non dolor in culpa est. (CM)  
‘For carnal pleasure is sinful, not the pains of childbirth’. (Bede 76.13; translation Miller)

The coordination is asyndetic, if the subject complement is an adjective phrase, as in *Heo wæs ful cweden næs æmetugu* (BlHom 5.5; ‘She was called full, not empty’), and similarly in *wearm, nalles wlaco* (CP 447.2; ‘warm, not lukewarm’), *wilsumlic, nales geneðedlic* (Bede 62.21; ‘voluntary, not compulsory’), and *hwilwendlic, na ece* (ÆCHom II 154.145; ‘temporary, not eternal’).

Various adverbs (17), non-finite clauses (18) or prepositional phrases (19) function as adverbial phrases. In example (17), the inflected infinitives preceded by the element *to*, i.e. *to habbenne*, *to brucenne* and *to sellanne*, express the purpose to which the estate granted by the will may be used, and they also indicate what, according to the will, must not be done (cf. the term adjunct of purpose in Los 2007: 35–38).

- (17) Ac we sceolon **nu** cnucian. and infær biddan to heofenan rice. **na ðonne.**  
(ÆCHom II 332.177)  
‘But we must now knock, and pray for entrance to the kingdom of heaven, not then’.
- (18) Ic Wulfgar an þæs landes æt Collingaburnan ofer minne dæg Æffan hieredæg ...  
& ofer hieredæg to Winteceastre þam niwan hierede **for mine sawle to habbenne & to brucenne & na of þam mynstre to sellanne.** (Ch 1533 (Rob 26.1))  
‘I, Wulfgar, grant the estate at Collingbourne after my death to Æffe for her life time, ... and after her death [it shall pass] to the new community at Winchester, on behalf of my soul, to be held and enjoyed and never given away from the Minster’.  
(translation Robertson)

- (19) Ageten is forhogadnis ofer aldermen heara & bisweocun hie **in ungefoernum & nales in wege**. (PsGIA (Kuhn) 106.39)  
 Effusa est contemptio super principes eorum et seduxerunt eos in inuio et non in uia.  
 ‘Contempt has been shed on their noblemen and they were seduced in the wilderness and not on a path’.

In example (19), the typical repetition of the preposition of the first half in the second half of the coordinated pair makes the construction symmetrical and balanced. Basing her argument on psychology, Fahnestock argues that different grammatical structures in the two halves of a contrastive construction tone down the contrast between the opposites. The positioning of paired opposites side by side, their equal length, cadence and even rhyme are considered equally important (Fahnestock 2002: 50–51).

The basic formula *X and not Y* may also be expanded by an additional coordinated element placed either in the first or the second half of the construction (20). The recurring structures and prepositions make the constructions symmetrical and suitable for rhetorical purposes.

- (20) Ic wille ðurhgan orsorh ðone here **mid rodetacne gewæpnod. na mid readum scylde. oððe mid hefegum helme. oppe heardre byrnan**. (ÆCHom II 289.52)  
 ‘I will fearlessly go through the host, armed with the sign of the rood, not with red shield or with heavy helm, or hard corselet’.

*Refutation of the opposite: not X but Y*

The type *not X but Y* mainly consists of prepositional phrases or adverb phrases that function as adverbials (36 times) in a clause, while the other grammatical categories occur less frequently (Table 3). The coordinated pair consists of two contradictories, i.e. the adverbs *medemlice* ‘incompletely’/*fulfremedlice* ‘perfectly’, and *lichamlice* ‘bodily’/*gastlice* ‘spiritually’, in examples (21) and (22). The formula *na lichamlice ac gastlice* occurs frequently in Ælfric (for examples, see DOEC).

- (21) And to swa hwilcere leode swa we cumað we cunnon ðære gereord **na medemlice ac fulfremedlice**. (ÆCHom II 275.103)  
 ‘And to whatsoever people we come, we know their language, not incompletely but perfectly’.
- (22) Hit wæron ða ylcan ðe we nu offriað **na lichamlice ac gastlice**. (ÆCHom II 155.190)  
 ‘They were the same which we now offer, not bodily but spiritually’.



The intended contrast between the paired opposites is also enhanced by a uniform and balanced structure in prepositional phrases, as in (23) in which the contrast occurs between material (earthly oil) and spiritual (grace).

- (23) Crist is soðlice ealra biscopa biscop. and ealra cyninga cyning. nu is he gesmyrod **na mid eorðlicum ele. ac mid seofonfealdre gife** þæs halgan gastes. (ÆCHom II, 7.166)  
 ‘Christ is [truly] Bishop of all bishops, and of all kings King: He is not anointed with earthly oil, but with the sevenfold grace of the Holy Ghost’.

The juxtaposition of the phrases *na mid deadum stanum* and *mid lybbendum sawlum* creates a twofold contrast in example (24). On the one hand, there is a contrast between the adjectives *dead* ‘dead’ and *lybbend* ‘living’, and on the other hand, between *stan* ‘stone’, which represents dead matter, and *sawel*, ‘soul’, which refers to the spirit and is living. Similarly, the contrasted pair *na on lybbendum mannum, ac on forðfarenum sawlum* (ÆLet4 (SigewardZ) 1187; ‘not of living men but of departed souls’) consists of twofold elements, namely those of life (*lybbendum*) and death (*forðfarenum*), and also of body (*mannum*) and soul (*sawlum*).

- (24) and se gesibsuma Crist getimbrode ða gastlican cyrcan. **na mid deadum stanum. ac mid lybbendum sawlum.** (ÆCHom II, 337.86)  
 ‘The peaceful Christ constructed the spiritual church, not with dead stones, but with living souls’.

Double negation is occasionally employed for emphasis in early West Saxon texts. The hypothetical alternative is introduced either by the combination *nalles na* (25), or by *næs na* (26), both meaning ‘not at all’, ‘by no means’.

- (25) þa sona wæron ealle þa broþra swiþe geswencte & geunrotsode, **nalæs na for þy dæmme þæs wages fylles [na for þæs wages fylle, MS H], ac for geþræstednysse þæs broðres.** (GD (C) 125.8)  
 contristati omnes et vehementer adflicti, non damno parietis, sed contritione fratris. (Moricca)  
 ‘Then soon all the brothers were very sorry and grieved, not so much for the loss of the wall as for the death of their brother’.
- (26) **Næs na mid golde ne mid godwebbenum hræglum, ac mid godum dædum & halgum** we sceolan beon gefræt wode, gif we þonne willaþ beon on þa swiþran healfe Drihtnes Hælendes Cristes mid soþfæstum sawlum & gecorenum, þa he sendeþ on ece leoht. (BIHom 95.19)  
 ‘Not with gold nor with sumptuous-woven (purple) garments, but with good and holy deeds we must be adorned if we desire then to be on the right hand of the Lord Jesus Christ, along with faithful and chosen souls whom he will send into everlasting life’.  
 (translation Morris)

The double negative constructions *nalles na* and *næs na* also occur in the pattern *nalles na/næs na forþæm þe ... ac forþæm þe* ‘not because ... but because’, see example (5) above, and the pattern *nalles na/næs na þæt an þæt ... ac eac*, ‘not only ... but also’, which are not included.

### 8. Conclusion

The purpose of the article was to uncover the factors that explain variation among the negators *nalles*, *næs* and *na* in contrastive constructions in OE prose and glosses. The discussion was based on a synchronic description of the succeeding stages and a statistical analysis of the data which consisted of a select corpus of 19 texts.

The results indicate that the negator *nalles/næs* or the double negative construction *nalles/næs na* mainly occurs in texts, both West Saxon and Anglian, that date back to King Alfred’s time, whereas the majority of the occurrences of *na* go back to late West Saxon period. The spread of the negator *na* in late West Saxon, especially in Ælfric, simplifies the system of negators.

The texts are not homogenous, probably due to the fact that a single text is usually compiled of various manuscripts covering a large span of time. Thus there are early West Saxon examples of *na* negating one of two alternatives, and there are also instances of the negator *nalles/ næs (na)* in the same function in late West Saxon texts. However, it may be concluded that the variation between *na* and *nalles/næs (na)* is, at least partly, diachronic. Variation is also idiolectal, especially in Ælfric who resorts to the negator *na* exclusively. Due to the scarcity of Anglian material in my corpus, no conclusions on diatopic variation can be drawn.

An attempt was also made to answer the question why contrastive constructions are used and why they are more common in some texts than others. The analysis indicates that constructions of both the types *X not Y* and *X and not Y* in which the sentence element introduced by a negator gives prominence to the assertion preceding it, and the type *not X but Y*, in which the focus is at the end of the clause, are mainly employed as rhetorical means to emphasize the words and phrases that the author considers important. Repetition of words and recurring grammatical structures in the two halves of the construction are used to enhance the intended contrast between the paired oppositions. Occasionally, the authors resort to ellipsis in order to avoid excessive repetition. The constructions are typically based on dichotomies common in religious contexts, for instance, light vs. darkness, temporal vs. eternal, life vs. death, bodily or material vs. spiritual, and worldly

vs. heavenly. In addition to repetition, the rhetorical means include various figures of speech, and special devices, such as anaphora and antimetabole. The proliferation of special devices and figures of speech in Ælfric's *Homilies* points to language contact with Latin.

Contrastive constructions are favoured in texts that are intended to influence people, which implies that variation is also genre-based. An example of such texts is a dialogue during which a master gives a lengthy answer to a short question posed by a disciple, as, for example, in Gregory's *Dialogues*. Contrastive constructions have a didactic function in such conversations. The other texts that are intended to influence people include Ælfric's *Catholic Homilies* and the Latin-based translations of Bede's *Ecclesiastical History* and *Cura Pastoralis* which represent different text types. These translations follow the Latin sources closely. In *De Temporibus Anni*, which is a scientific treatise such rhetorical means are not employed.

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