The Morpho-syntactic Alternations of Old English Verbs of Inaction

ANA ELVIRA OJANGUREN LÓPEZ*
Universidad de La Rioja (Spain)

ABSTRACT

The aim of this article is to describe the morpho-syntactic alternations of Old English verbs of inaction. The method includes the analysis of the syntactic constructions in which verbs of inaction are found and of the alternations themselves, which are described as to argumenthood, morphological case, prepositional government and structural complexity. Two types of alternation are identified on the basis of the affected argument. The dative alternation and the reflexive alternation involve both the first and the second argument, whereas the nominalisation alternation and the genitive alternation are restricted to the second argument. The main conclusions are that the alternations found with inaction verbs consist of two alternants that show different degrees of semantic and syntactic integration, and that the consistent distribution of alternations justifies the classification of the set of classes of inaction proposed in this article.

KEYWORDS
Verbal classes; Alternations; Syntactic constructions; Old English.

1. AIMS AND SCOPE

This article is a study in Old English semantics and syntax from a functional perspective. As such, it focuses on the relation between semantics and syntax by giving pride of place to the former. The research reported in this article draws on the framework of verb classes and

alternations (Levin, 1993) as well as on subsequent work in the organisation and classification of the Old English verbal lexicon. As in the framework of verb classes and alternations, the meaning components of Old English verbs restrict their grammatical behaviour and, conversely, the grammatical behaviour of verbs justifies verbal classes and sets of verbal classes, which constitute a principled hierarchical organisation upon which the lexicon of Old English can be described and explained.

Against this background, this article aims at answering the following research question: What are the morpho-syntactic alternations in which the Old English verbs belonging to the set of verbal classes of inaction are found? This question raises two secondary queries: (i) What is the function of the morpho-syntactic alternations found in the verbs that belong to the set of classes of inaction in Old English? And (ii) Do such morpho-syntactic alternations justify the classes of verbs that can be distinguished within the set of verbal classes of inaction?

This article has scope over the set of verbal classes of inaction in Old English. This set consists of the following verbal classes: *Fail* verbs, *End* verbs, *Try* verbs, *Hinder* verbs, *Refrain* verbs, *Prevent* verbs and *Forbid* verbs.

The article is organised as follows. Section 2 reviews previous research on the framework of verbal classes and alternations and its application to Old English. Section 3 presents the method of research, including steps of analysis, sources and data. Section 4 analyses the syntactic constructions of Old English verbs of inaction. The analysis focuses on matrix vs. linked predications, semantic roles, argument types, the status of the verbal form and the first argument of the linked predication. Section 5 presents the morpho-syntactic alternations in which each verb from the classes in question is found. Section 6 engages in explanatory matters, including the role of alternations, variation and the consistency of verbal classes. Section 7 draws the main conclusions of this work.

2. BACKGROUND

In the framework of verb classes and alternations (Levin, 1993: 1), class membership is defined on the basis of the syntactic behaviour of verbs in such a way that morpho-syntactic alternations in the realisation of arguments determine the class to which a certain verb belongs. The semantics of the verb, in turn, restricts the range of syntactic configurations in which it can appear. From the point of view of argument realization, the number and form of the arguments and adjuncts of a verb is restricted by the meaning component of the verb in question. From the perspective of class membership, "verbs that fall into classes according to shared behavior would be expected to show shared meaning components" (Levin, 1993: 5). For example, verbs whose meaning components include both contact and motion are found in the conative alternation, in which the object of the transitive variant corresponds to the

prepositional phrase governed by *at* or *on* in the intransitive variant. The use of the verb in the intransitive variant conveys an attempted action that may or may not reach its logical end. Alternations, therefore, must be sensitive to the meaning components of verbs (Levin, 1993: 10).

The framework of verb classes and alternations has been applied to Old English throughout a series of studies that aim at organising the verbal lexicon of this historical stage of English on a principled grammatical basis. This includes, among others, verbs of feeling (García Pacheco, 2013), verbs of existence (García Pacheco, 2013), verbs of rejoice (Martín Arista, 2020a), end verbs (Author, 2020), try verbs (Author, 2021) verbs of increasing (Lacalle Palacios, 2021a), verbs of depriving (Lacalle Palacios, 2021b) and aspects of some specific constructions (Martín Arista & Author, 2018; Martín Arista, 2020b, 2021). The works cited above share the main theoretical underpinnings of the framework of verb classes and alternations, namely that meaning components restrict grammatical behaviour and that verbal classes must be defined on the basis of common meaning components and morpho-syntactic realisations. This article intends to be a contribution to this avenue of research.

3. METHOD, SOURCES AND DATA

The first step of the methodology pursued in this research is the selection of the relevant verbs and the identification of the meaning components compatible with the verbal classes under analysis. To begin with, an initial inventory of verbs of inaction in Old English is proposed. For doing this, the online version of *Thesaurus of Old English* (Roberts & Kay, 1995) has been searched for the lexical dimensions put forward by Faber and Mairal (1999), including the subdimensions that convey the meaning of not doing something. Then, a provisional inventory of verbal classes and verbs has been gathered, which has been checked against the meaning definitions and citations provided by the Clark Hall-Merritt and Bosworth-Toller Old English dictionaries, and, when available, against the ones given by the *Dictionary of Old English* (Healey, 2016). The final inventory of verbal classes and verbs comprises *Fail* verbs (*forsittan* 'fail, neglect'; *ofergīman* 'fail, neglect, disregard'; *oferhebban* 'fail, neglect, omit'; and *(ge)trucian* 'fail, disappoint'), *End* verbs (*āblinnan* 'end, cease, stop'; *blinnan* 'end, cease, desist'; *geblinnan* 'cease, desist'; and *oflinnan* 'end, cease, stop, desist'), *Try* verbs (*(ge)cneordlǣcan* 'try, endeavour'; *(ge)fandian* 'try, attempt'; *fundian* 'try, endeavour, strive'; *hīgian* 'try, strive'; *onginnan* 'try, attempt, endeavour'; and *(ge)tilian* 'try, attempt, strive'), *Hinder* verbs (*forbēodan* 'hinder, restrain'; *forstandan* 'hinder'; *for(e)stemman* 'hinder'; *forwiernan* 'hinder, restrain'; *gehremman* 'hinder, impede'; and *hremman* 'hinder, impede'), *Refrain* verbs (*āgǣlan* 'refrain, hold'; *āhabban* 'refrain, abstain, restrain'; *bewerian* 'refrain, restrain'; *fæstan* 'refrain, fast, abstain'; *forberan* 'refrain, abstain, forbear'; *forgān* 'refrain, abstain'; *forhabban* 'refrain, restrain, abstain'; *gefæstan* 'refrain,

abstain, fast'; *ofersittan* 'refrain, abstain, forbear'; and *(ge)mīdlian* 'refrain, restrain'), *Prevent* verbs (*āgǣlan* 'prevent, hold detain'; *belēan* 'prevent, dissuade'; *forfōn* 'prevent, arrest'; *forhabban* 'prevent, retain, keep', *for(e)sacan* 'prevent, oppose'; and *gǣlan* 'prevent, impede') and *Forbid* verbs (*bewerian* 'forbid'; *forbēodan* 'forbid, prohibit'; *forwiernan* 'forbid, prohibit'; and *tōcweðan* 'forbid, prohibit'). Even though Faber and Mairal (1999) do not distinguish *Prevent* verbs from *Forbid* verbs, they give rise to two different verbal classes if their morpho-syntactic realisations are considered, as is shown in Section 5.

The second methodological step is the compilation of the corpus of analysis. All the fragments analysed in this work have been retrieved from the *Dictionary of Old English Corpus* (Healey, Price Wilkin & Xiang, 2004). The selection of the fragments of the verbs beginning with the letters A-I is directly based on *the Dictionary of Old English* as far as inflectional forms and meaning components are concerned. This guarantees that the verb conveys the relevant meaning components. The selection of the fragments of the verbs beginning with the letters L-Y has been guided by the syntactically parsed *York-Toronto-Helsinki Corpus of Parsed Old English Prose* (Taylor, Warner, Pintzuk & Beths, 2003). It must be borne in mind, in this respect, that this corpus is annotated for part of speech and syntax but is unlemmatised. It is not possible, therefore, to automatically retrieve all the inflections of a given verb. To address this issue, a preliminary inventory of inflections per verb based on the grammatically canonical paradigms of Old English (Campbell, 1987) has been gathered. For example, the canonical inflectional forms of *(ge)trucian* 'fail' include *trucige, trucast, trucað, trucaþ, truciað, truciaþ, trucigen, truca, trucode, trucodest, trucodon, trucoden, trucian, to trucianne, truciende, trucod; getrucige, getrucast, getrucað, getrucaþ, getruciað, getruciaþ, getrucigen, getruca, getrucode, getrucodest, getrucodon, getrucoden, getrucian, to getrucianne, getruciende,* and *getrucod*. Out of these provisional forms, the following are attestated in the *Dictionary of Old English Corpus*: *trucað, trucaþ, trucedon, trucheð, truciað, trucige, trucode*. With these premises, The corpus gathers 418 fragments, which can be broken down by verb as follows: *āblinnan* (17), *āgǣlan* (4), *āhabban* (12), *ætstandan* (16), *belēan* (6), *bewerian* (30), *blinnan* (13), *(ge)cneordlǣcan* (3), *(ge)fandian* (2), *fæstan* (26), *forbēodan* (63), *forberan* (11), *foresacan* (5), *for(e)stemnan* (1), *forfōn* (1), *forgān* (9), *forhabban* (24), *forsittan* (7), *forstandan* (2), *forwiernan* (22), *fundian* (14), *geblinnan* (3), *gefæstan* (6), *gehremman* (1), *hīgian* (21), *hremman* (8), *linnan* (2), *(ge)mīdlian* (6), *oferāhebban* (2), *oferhealdan* (2), *ofergīman* (2), *oferhebban* (2), *ofersittan* (3), *oflinnan* (3), *onginnan* (26), *oðstillan* (1), *(ge)tilian* (17), *tōcweðan* (4), *wandian* (17) and *(ge)trucian* (4). All the fragments have been provided with translations from the following available editions: Bately (1980), Cockayne (1864), Cook and Hargrove (1904), Gardner (1911), Godden and Irvine (2009), Langefeld (1985), McCann (1969), Miller (1890a, 1890b, 1890c), Scragg (1992), Skeat (1874, 1966), Stone (2015), Sweet (1958) and Thorpe (1844, 1846).

The third methodological step of this research is the analysis of the relation between semantics and syntax. This specifically includes the analysis of the syntactic constructions in which the verbs are found (matrix vs. linked predications, semantic roles, argument types, and the status of the verbal form and the first argument of the linked predication) and the morpho-syntactic realisations that constitute recurrent contrasts and can, therefore, be analysed as entailing alternations. This part of the analysis is concerned with morphological case and prepositional government mainly. This allows us to reach conclusions regarding verbal class membership as well as semantic integration and syntactic tightness.

4. SYNTACTIC CONSTRUCTIONS

Evidence has been found in the corpus for the following classes of inaction verbs: *Fail* verbs, *End* verbs, *Try* verbs, *Hinder* verbs, *Refrain* verbs, *Prevent* verbs and *Forbid* verbs. The morpho-syntactic constructions in which the verbs from these classes can be found are described in this section.

Verbs from the *Fail* class include *forsittan, ofergīman, oferhebban* and *(ge)trucian*. They are found in simplex predications and are transitive, as can be seen in (1). They do not passivise.

(1) Intransitive construction
[ÆCHom II, 3 007000 (23.128)]
*Ne **trucað** heora nan ana ðurh unmihte […]*

Ne	***trucað***	*heora*	*nan*
not-NEG	fail-PRS.3SG	he-GEN.3PL	none-NOM.3SG
ana	*ðurh*	*unmihte*	
alone-NOM.3SG	thorugh-PREP	weakness-DAT.SG	

'Not one of them fails alone through weakness […]'

Members of the class of *End* verbs include *āblinnan, blinnan, geblinnan* and *oflinnan*. They are intransitive. They appear in complex predications that comprise a non-finite or a finite form of the verb. The two types of linked predication are illustrated in (2a) and (2b), respectively. In (2a), the inflected infinitive *to myngyenne* 'to care' shares the first argument with the verb of the matrix predication, *ne ablynnon* 'let us not cease'. In (2b), the first argument of the matrix predication verb (*ne ablynnan* 'not to cease') is also shared with the verbs of the linked predications (*cwemon* 'we may please' and *tynan* 'to annoy'). It must be pointed out that the first argument (*we* 'we') is explicit in the first linked predication but null

in the second linked predication either because the former comprises a finite form of the verb whereas the latter presents a non-finite form of the verb, or because the two linked predications give rise to a coordinate subject construction in which the second subject is omitted: *þæt we Gode cwemon, & deofol tynan, dæges & nihtes* 'that we may please God and annoy the devil day and nignt'.

(2) Intransitive construction
a. [ChrodR 1 79.39]
*[…] ne **ablynnon** ge to myngyenne þa eow betæhtan sceap.*

ne	*ablynnon*	*ge*	*to myngyenne*
not-NEG	cease-INF	you-NOM.2PL	take care-INF.INFL
þa	*eow*	*betæhtan*	*sceap*
that-ACC.PL	you-ACC.PL	commit-INF	sheep-ACC.PL

'[…] do not cease to take care of the sheep.'

b. [HomS 14 141]
*Ne **ablinnan** we, manna bearn, þæt we Gode cwemon, & deofol tynan, dæges & nihtes.*

Ne	*ablinnan*	*we*	*manna*
not-NEG	cease-INF	I-NOM.1PL	man-GEN.PL
bearn	*þæt*	*we*	*Gode*
child-NOM.PL	that-CONJ	I-NOM.1PL	God-ACC.SG
cwemon	*&*	*deofol*	*tynan*
please-PRS.1PL.SUBJV	and-CONJ	devil-ACC.SG	annoy-PRS.1PL.SUBJV
dæges	*&*	*nihtes*	
day-GEN.SG	and-CONJ	night-GEN.SG	

'Let us, the children of men, not cease to please God and annoy the devil day and night.'

The class of *Try* verbs comprises the verbs *(ge)cneordlǣcan, (ge)fandian, fundian, hīgian, onginnan* and *(ge)tilian*. These verbs are intransitive. They are typically found in complex predications that comprise linked predications with non-finite and finite verbal forms. For instance, the inflected infinitive *to cumanne* 'to come' in (3a) and the lexical verb *willon* 'will' in (3b) (on which, in turn, the uninflected infinitive *genimon* 'to take' depends)

appear in the linked predications. Both in (3a) and (3b) the first argument is shared by the matrix predication and the linked predication, although the first argument of the linked verb (*ealla gesceafta* 'all creatures') is not explicit in (3a) and is fully expressed in (3b), in which the relative *þa* 'who' (literally, a demonstrative meaning 'those') is co-referential with the personal pronoun *hie* 'they', both inflected for the nominative and agreeing in number with their respective verbs.

(3) Intransitive construction

a. [Bo 35.98.2]

*Forðæmþe ealla <gesceafta> gecyndelice hiora agnum willum **fundiað** to cumanne to gode [...].*

Forðæmþe	*ealla*	*gesceafta*	*gecyndelice*
for-CONJ	all-NOM.PL	creature-NOM.PL	naturally-ADV
hiora	*agnum*	*willum*	***fundiað***
he-GEN.3PL	own-DAT.SG	will-DAT.SG	endeavour-PRS.3PL
to cumanne	*to*	*gode*	
come-INF.INFL	to-PREP	good-DAT.SG	

'For all creatures naturally of their own will endeavour to come to good […].'

b. [HomS 26 206]

*[...] from feower endum þære eorþan eall middangeard mid awergdum gastum gefylled, þa **fundiaþ** þæt hie willon genimon myccle herehyþ manna saula [...].*

from	*feower*	*endum*	*þære*
from-PREP	four-DAT.PL	end-DAT.PL	the-GEN.SG
eorþan	*eall*	*middangeard*	*mid*
earth-GEN.SG	all-NOM.SG	world-NOM.SG	with-PREP
awergdum	*gastum*	*gefylled*	*þa*
evil-DAT.PL	spirit-DAT.PL	fill-PST.PTCP	who-REL
fundiaþ	*þæt*	*hie*	*willon*
strive-PRS.3PL	that-CONJ	he-NOM.3PL	will-PRS.3PL.SUBJV
genimon	*myccle*	*herehyþ*	*manna*
seize-INF	great-ACC.SG	pillage-ACC.SG	man-GEN.PL
saula			
soul-GEN.PL			

'[…] the entire world will be filled with evil spirits from the four ends of the earth who will strive to seize a great pillage of men's souls […].'

The class of *Hinder* verbs can be broken down into *forbēodan, forstandan, for(e)stemman, forwiernan, gehremman* and *hremman*. These verbs are transitive and occur in simplex predications. They do not passivise. An instance with the verb *gehremman* 'to hinder' is presented in (4).

(4) Transitive construction
[ÆLS (Sebastian) 256]
*Þa com Sebastianus and se sacerd Policarpus æft to Chromatie, and gemetton hine untrumne, and cwædon þæt he sum þing hæfde untobrocen, þe his hæle **hremde** þurh reðe wiglunga.*

Þa	*com*	*Sebastianus*	*and*
then-CON	come-PST.3SG	Sebastian-NOM.SG	and-CONJ
se	*sacerd*	*Policarpus*	*æft*
the-NOM.SG	priest-NOM.SG	Polycarp-NOM.SG	again-ADV
to	*Chromatie*	*and*	*gemetton*
to-PREP	Cromatius-DAT.SG	and-CONJ	find-PST.3PL
hine	*untrumne*	*and*	*cwædon*
he-ACC.3SG	sick-ACC.SG	and-CONJ	say-PST.3PL
þæt	*he*	*sum*	*þing*
that-CONJ	he-NOM.3SG	some-ACC.SG	thing-ACC.SG
hæfde	*untobrocen*	*þe*	*his*
have-PST.3SG	unbreak-PST.PTCP	which-REL	he-GEN.SG
hæle	***hremde***	*þurh*	*reðe*
healing-GEN.SG	hinder-PST.3SG	through-PREP	cruel-ACC.PL
wiglunga			
spell-ACC.PL			

'Then came Sebastian and the priest Polycarp again to Chromatius, and found him sick, and said that he had something unbroken which hindered his healing through cruel spells.'

The class of *Refrain* verbs consists of *āgǣlan, āhabban, bewerian, fæstan, forberan, forgān, forhabban, gefæstan, ofersittan* and *(ge)mīdlian*. These verbs are reflexive. In (5), for

instance, the accusative masculine personal pronoun *hine* 'him' is co-referential with the nominative masculine noun *man* 'one'.

(5) Reflexive construction
[HomM 13 (Verc 21) 71]
*Þæt seofoðe mægen þære sawle ys þæt se man hine **forhæbbe** fram yrre & fram hatheortnesse.*

Þæt	*seofoðe*	*mægen*	*þære*
that-	seven-NUM	strength-NOM.SG	the-GEN-SG
sawle	*ys*	*þæt*	*se*
soul-GEN.SG	be-PRS.3SG	that-CONJ	the-Nom.SG
man	*hine*	***forhæbbe***	*fram*
one-NOM.SG	he-ACC.SG.REFL	refrain-PRS.3SG.SUBJ.	from-PREP
yrre	*&*	*fram*	*hatheortnesse*
anger-DAT.SG	and-CONJ	from-PREP	rage-DAT.SG

'That seventh strength of the soul is that one refrain from anger and from rage.'

The class of *Prevent* verbs includes *āgǣlan, belēan, forfōn, forhabban, for(e)sacan* and *gǣlan*. These verbs are found in complex predications displaying a linked predication whose first argument is not shared with the verb of the matrix predication. An instance in point is showed in (6a). Notice the omission of the linked predication, which is co-referential with the Theme of the concessive clause: *& he willnode [þæt he moste mid him sweltan]ᵢ, þeah se bisscop him [þæt]ᵢ swiðe **beloh*** 'He desired to perish with them, although the bishop dissuaded him from that.' Prevent verbs can be inflected for non-finite as well as finite forms and can be passivised, as in (6b).

(6)
a. Transitive construction
[Bede 5 (B) 17.456.7]
*He willnode þeah se bisscop him swiðe **beloh**.*

He	*willnode*	*þeah*	*se*
he-NOM.3SG	desire-PST.3SG	yet-CONJ	the-NOM.3SG
bisscop	*him*	*swiðe*	***beloh***
bishop-NOM.3SG	he-DAT.3SG	greatly-ADV	dissuade-PST.3SG

'He desired to perish with them, although the bishop dissuaded him from that.'

b. Passive construction
[Bede 4 17.300.29]
*Ne meahte he hwæðre from þære þegnunge beon **bewered** godspel to lærenne.*

Ne	*meahte*	*he*	*hwæðre*
not-NEG	may-PST.3SG	he-NOM.3SG	still-ADV
from	*þære*	*þegnunge*	*beon*
from-PREP	the-DAT.SG	service-DAT.SG	be-INF
bewered	*godspel*	*to lærenne*	
prevent-PST.PTCP	gospel-ACC.SG	learn-INF.INFL	

'[…] still he could not be prevented from the service of teaching the gospel.'

The verbs *bewerian, forbēodan, forwiernan* and *tōcweðan* can be classified as *Forbid* verbs. They are found in complex predications in which the first argument is not shared by the matrix and the linked verb. As they are transitive, *Forbid* verbs can passivise in such a way that *forbēodan* and *forwiernan* preserve the dative case in the passive. This is the case with (7a), in which the morphological case of the second argument of the corresponding active (the dative) is kept in *ðæm sacerde,* which agrees in number and person with the passive verb *wæs … forboden* 'was forbidden'. While the verbal form in (7a) is finite, (7b) shows a non-finite form, the inflected infinitive *to etanne* 'to eat'.

(7)
a. Passive construction (case-preserving)
[CP 18.139.24]
*Suiðe ryhte wæs ðæm sacerde **forboden** ðæt he his heafod sceare […].*

Suiðe	*ryhte*	*wæs*	*ðæm*
greatly-ADV	reason-DAT.SG	be-PST.3SG	the-DAT.SG
sacerde	***forboden***	*ðæt*	*he*
priest-DAT.SG	forbid-PST.PTCP	that-CONJ	he-NOM.3SG
his	*heafod*	*sceare*	
he-GEN.3SG	head-ACC.SG	shave-PST.3SG.SUBJV	

'The priest was with good reason forbidden to shave his head […].'

b. Transitive construction

[Bede 1 16.80.7]

*[…] seo æ monig þing **bewereð** to etanne, swa swa unclæne […].*

seo	*æ*	*monig*	*þing*
the-NOM.3SG	law-NOM.3SG	many-ACC.PL	thing- ACC.PL
bewereð	*to etanne*	*swa swa*	*unclæne*
prohibit-PRS.3SG	eat-INF.INFL	as-CONJ	unclean-NOM.PL

'[…] the law prohibits the eating of many things as unclean […]".

The data from the corpus indicate that polysemy necessarily results in a certain degree of overlapping between the verbal classes just described. Although verbal classes are not completely discreet, it is possible to distinguish class membership on the grounds of grammatical behaviour. For example, the *Refrain* verb *āgǣlan* is reflexive, while it takes an oblique argument as a *Forbid* verb. The same can be said of *forhabban*. As a *Prevent* verb, it appears in complex predications in which the first argument is not shared, whereas as a *Refrain* verb it is found in reflexive constructions, as can be seen in (8).

(8) Reflexive construction

[ÆHom 20 44]

*[…] and sume eunuchi synd ðe hi sylfe **forhabbað** fram hæmede for heofonan rices myrhðe.*

and	*sume*	*eunuchi*	*synd*
and-CONJ	some-NOM.PL	eunuch-NOM.PL	be-PRS.3PL
ðe	*hi*	*sylfe*	***forhabbað***
who-REL	he-NOM.3PL	himself-ACC.SG	refrain-PRS.3SG
fram	*hæmede*	*for*	*heofonan*
from-PREP	intercourse-DAT.SG	for-PREP	heaven-GEN.SG
rices	*myrhðe*		
kingdom-GEN.SG	love-DAT.SG		

'[…] and there are some eunuchs who **restrain** themselves from intercourse for love of the kingdom of heavens.'

As a *Forbid* verb, *bewerian* is transitive and can passivise, as is shown in (9), whereas the *Refrain* verb *bewerian* is reflexive.

(9) Passive construction
[HomS 40.3 (Verc 10) 35]
*Ða we wæron **bewerede** þæs hiofoncundan rices.*

Ða	*we*	*wæron*	***bewerede***
then-ADV	I-NOM.1PL	be-PST.1PL	forbid-PST.PTCP
þæs	*hiofoncundan*	*rices*	
that-GEN.SG	heaven-GEN.SG	realm-GEN.SG	

'[…] then we were kept away from that heavenly realm, […].

Finally, *forwiernan* as a *Hinder* verb is found in simplex predications, such as (10a), whereas as a *Forbid* verb it partakes in complex predications that do not share the first argument of the matrix predication and the linked predication, as is the case with (10b). In (10b), the first argument of the matrix predication is *se ilca* 'the same', while the first argument of the linked predication is *heo* 'she'.

(10) Transitive construction
a. [Solil 1 41.4]
*Toðæcce me **forwyrnde** ælcre leornunga.*

Toðæcce	*me*	***forwyrnde***	*ælcre*
tooth-ache-NOM.SG	I-ACC.1SG	hinder-PST.3SG	all-ACC.SG
leornunga			
learning-ACC.SG			

'Tooth-ache hindered me from all learning.'

b. [Bo 21.49.22]
*Se ilca **forwyrnð** þæræ sæ þæt heo ne mot þone þeorscwold oferstæppan þære eorþan.*

Se	*ilca*	***forwyrnð***	*þæræ*
the-NOM.SG	same-NOM.SG	forbid-PRS.3SG	the-DAT.SG
sæ	*þæt*	*heo*	*ne*

sea-DAT.SG	that-CONJ	she-NOM.3SG	not-NEG
mot	*þone*	*þeorscwold*	*oferstæppan*
may-PRS.3SG	the-ACC.SG	threshold-ACC.SG	overstep-INF
þære	*eorþan*		
the-GEN.SG	earth-GEN.SG		

'The same warns the sea that it may not overstep the threshold of the earth […].'

The descriptive criteria used in this section allow us to determine the class membership of the verbs of inaction in a principled manner and to justify the existence of the classes themselves. Once the meaning components and the morpho-syntactic constructions have been analysed, we turn to the morpho-syntactic alternations in which Old English inaction verbs take part.

5. MORPHO-SYNTACTIC ALTERNATIONS

The alternations that have been found in the corpus can affect the first and the second argument. The dative alternation and the reflexive alternation involve both the first and the second argument, whereas the nominalisation alternation and the genitive alternation are restricted to the second argument. These alternations are presented in the remainder of this section.

The dative alternation holds between nominative and dative case-marked first arguments of passives. The first argument of the passive is a Patient, while the Theme can be realised either as a dependent clause introduced by *ðæt* and staging a finite form of the verb; or as a dative governed by preposition, such as *from þære þegnunge* 'from the service' in (11).

(11) Passive construction
[Bede 4 17.300.29]
*Ne meahte he hwæðre from þære þegnunge beon **bewered** godspel to lærenne.*

Ne	*meahte*	*he*	*hwæðre*
not-NEG	may-PST.3SG	he-NOM.3SG	still-ADV
from	*þære*	*þegnunge*	*beon*
from-PREP	the-DAT.SG	service-DAT.SG	be-INF
bewered	*godspel*	*to lærenne*	
forbid-PST.PTCP	gospel-ACC.SG	learn-INF.INFL	

[…] still he could not be prevented from the service of teaching the gospel.

The verbs *forbēodan* and *forwiernan* alternate the passive that does not preserve case with case-preserving passives in which the dative case is kept.

As regards *forbēodan,* (12a) presents the active counterpart with an accusative (*no þine tunecan* 'no tunic') and a dative argument (*him* 'to him'). (12b) is a passive that does not preserve case: its first argument is inflected for the nominative (*seo hreohnys* 'the rough weather'). Example (12c) can be described as a passive that keeps the dative case of the Patient, so that the linked predication (*ðæt he offrige Gode hlaf* 'to offer bread to God') is the Theme of the matrix predication, whose first argument is the dative *him* ('they').

(12)
a. Transitive construction
[Lk (WSCp) 6.29]
*[…] þam þe ðin reaf nymþ, ne **forbeod** him no þine tunecan.*

þam	*þe*	*ðin*	*reaf*
that-DAT.SG	who-REL	you-GEN.SG	cloak-ACC.SG
nymþ	*ne*	***forbeod***	*him*
take-PRS.3SG	not-NEG	forbid-PRS.2SG	he-DAT.3SG
no	*þine*	*tunecan*	
not-NEG	you-GEN.2SG	tunic-ACC.SG	

'[…] from one who takes away your cloak do not withhold your tunic either.'

b. Passive construction
[Lch I (Herb) 171.2]
*[…] seo hreohnys byð **forboden**.*

seo	*hreohnys*	*byð*	***forboden***
the-NOM.SG	tempest-NOM.SG	be-PRS.3SG	forbid-PST.PTCP

'[…] the rough weather will be countermanded.'

c. Passive construction (case-preserving)
[CP 11.73.15]
*Sua hwelc ðonne sua ðissa uncysta hwelcre underðieded bið, him bið **forboden** ðæt he offrige Gode hlaf.*

Sua	*hwelc*	*ðonne*	*sua*
So-CONJ	whoever-NOM.SG	then-CONJ	as-CONJ
ðissa	*uncysta*	*hwelcre*	*underðieded*
this-GEN.PL	vice-ACC.PL	whichever-GEN.PL	subject-PST.PTCP
bið	*him*	*bið*	***forboden***
be-PRS.3SG	he-DAT.3SG	be-PRS.3SG	forbid-PST.PTCP
ðæt	*he*	*offrige*	*Gode*
that-CONJ	he-NOM.3SG	offer	God-DAT.SG
hlaf			
bread-ACC.SG			

'Whoever, then, is subject to one of these vices is forbidden to offer bread to God.'

The dative alternation can also be found with the verb *forwiernan*. In (13a), the Patient argument is case-marked dative. The dative case is preserved in the passive in (13b). In this example, the Patient (*hire gecyndes* 'its nature') is inflected for the genitive because the dative has been selected by the first argument (*hire* 'her') and is no longer available.

(13)
a. Transitive construction
[ÆCHom II, 11 103.376]
*Ac se halga wer him **forwyrnde**.*

Ac	*se*	*halga*	*wer*
but-CONJ	the-NOM.SG	holy-NOM.SG	man-NOM.SG
him	***forwyrnde***		
he-DAT.3SG	forbid-PST.3SG		

'But the holy man restrained him.'

b. Passive construction (case-preserving)
[Bo 34.93.16]
*[…] sio bið ælcum men gecynde, & hwilum þeah hire bið **forwerned** hire gecyndes þurh þæs monnes willan.*

Sio	*bið*	*ælcum*	*men*
she-NOM.3SG	be-PRS.3SG	all-DAT.PL	man-DAT.PL

gecynde	*&*	*hwilum*	*þeah*
natural-ACC.SG	and-CONJ	sometimes-ADV	yet-CONJ
hire	*bið*	***forwerned***	*hire*
she-DAT.SG	be-PRS.3SG	forbid-PST.PTCP	she-GEN.SG
gecyndes	*þurh*	*þæs*	*monnes*
nature-GEN.SG	through-PREP	the-GEN.SG	man-GEN.SG
willan			
will-ACC.SG			

'[…] It is natural to all men, and yet sometimes it is prevented from its nature by the person's will.'

Turning to the reflexive alternation, some verbs in the corpus take an accusative pronoun that is co-referential with the first argument. Although the personal pronouns used reflexively in Old English vary between the accusative and the dative case, the inaction verbs analysed in this article consistently select the accusative.

The verb *āgǣlan* alternates between an oblique argument in the genitive without preposition, such as *weorca* 'of the works' in (14a), and a reflexive accusative and a Theme genitive, like *Godes þeowdomes* 'of God's service' in (14b).

(14) Reflexive construction
a. [HomU 9 (Verc 4) 118]
*[…] næs hio næfre weorca **agæled**.*

Næs	*Hio*	*næfre*	*weorca*
be-PST.3SG.NEG	she-GEN.3SG	never-ADV	work-GEN.PL
agæled			
prevent-PST.PTCP			

'[…] She was never hindered of works.'

b. [HomS 8 154]
*[…] on þon he us bysene onstealde þæt nænig mon ne sceal lufian ne ne geman his gesibbes, gif he hine ærost **agælde** Godes þeowdomes.*

On	*þon*	*He*	*us*
by-PREP	that-INS.SG	he-NOM.3SG	I-ACC.1PL
bysene	*onstealde*	*þæt*	*nænig*
example-ACC.SG	establish-PST.3SG	that-CONJ	any-NOM.SG
mon	*ne*	*sceal*	*lufian*
one-NOM.SG	not-NEG	should-PRS.2SG	love-INF
ne ne	*geman*	*his*	*gesibbes*
neither-NEG	attend-INF	he-GEN.3SG	relative-GEN.SG
gif	*he*	*hine*	*ærost*
if-CONJ	he-NOM.3SG	he-ACC.SG	first-SUPERL
agælde	*Godes*	*þeowdomes*	
prevent-PST.3SG	God-GEN.SG	service-GEN.SG	

'[…] By this, He has instructed us that no one should love or attend to relatives if it should in any way hinder the service of God.'

The verb *fæstan* is also be found in the reflexive alternation. In (15a), the matrix clause is not reflexive and has a genitive Theme (*metes* 'from food'). In (15b), there is a reflexive accusative (*hie selfe* 'himself') and a genitive Theme (*ðæs hlafes ryhtwisnesse* 'from the bread of righteousness').

(15)
a. Transitive construction
[Alc 509]
*Ac se **fæsteð** swyðe wel metes, se þe hine sylfne eac fram yfele weorcan […]*.

Ac	*se*	***fæsteð***	*swyðe*
for-CONJ	that-NOM.SG	abstain-PRS.3SG	very-ADV
wel	*metes*	*se*	*þe*
well-ADV	food-GEN.SG	that- NOM.SG	who-REL
hine	*sylfne*	*eac*	*eac*
he-ACC.3SG	himself-ACC.3SG	also-ADV	both-ADV
fram	*yfele*	*weorcan*	
from-PREP	evil-DAT.PL	act-DAT.PL	

'For that person abstains well from food who also both abstains from bad acts […].'

b. Reflexive construction

[CP 18.137.21]

*[…] ðæt hie selfe ne **fæsten** ðæs hlafes ryhtwisnesse.*

ðæt	*hie*	*selfe*	*ne*
that-CONJ	he-NOM.3PL	self-NOM.PL.REFL	not-NEG
fæsten	*ðæs*	*hlafes*	*ryhtwisnesse*
abstain-PRS.3PL	the-GEN.SG	bread-GEN.SG	righteousness-GEN.SG

'[…] they themselves abstain from the bread of righteousness.'

The verb *forhabban* takes a reflexive accusative and a dative Theme. For example, (16a) presents the prepositional dative Theme *fram unalyfedlicum styrungum* 'from unallowed excitements'; while (16b) shows a reflexive accusative (*hi sylfe* 'herself') and a Theme realized by the prepositional dative *fram hire were* 'from her husband'.

(16)

a. Intransitive construction (argument-adjunct)

[ÆCHom II, 44 328.44]

*God is and halwendlic to **forhæbbenne** fram unalyfedlicum styrungum and for ði hæfð ælc cristen sawul mædenes naman.*

God	*is*	*And*	*halwendlic*
good-NOM.SG	be-PRS.3SG	and-CONJ	salutary-NOM.SG
*to **forhæbbenne***	*fram*	*unalyfedlicum*	*styrungum*
abstain-INF.INFL	from-PREP	unallowed-DAT.PL	excitement-DAT.PL

'If it be good and salutary to abstain from unallowed excitements, and therefore every Christian soul have the name of maiden.'

b. Reflexive construction

[GD 1 (C) 10.72.7]

*[…] þa wearð heo mid hire lichaman luste oferswiðed, swa þæt heo ne mihte hi sylfe **forhabban** fram hire were.*

þa	*wearð*	*heo*
then-ADV	become-PST.3SG	she-NOM.3SG
mid	*hire*	*lichaman*

with-PREP	she-GEN.3SG	carnal-DAT.SG
luste	*oferswiðed*	*swa*
lust-DAT.SG	overcome-PST.PTCP	so-CONJ
þæt	*heo*	*ne*
that-CONJ	she-NOM.3SG	not-NEG
mihte	*hi*	*sylfe*
might-PST.3SG.SUBJV	she-ACC.SG	self-ACC.SG.REFL
forhabban	*fram*	*hire*
abstain-INF	from-PREP	she-GEN.SG
were		
husband-DAT.SG		

'And the night before this solemnity, overcome with carnal pleasure, she could not abstain from her husband.'

The verb *āhabban* is always reflexive. It may take either the accusative pronoun that is co-referential with the first argument, such *hine* 'himself' as in (17a); or the reflexive pronoun and a dative Theme governed by preposition, like *from wiifum* 'from wives' in (17b).

(17) Reflexive construction
a. [Bede 1 16.82.30]
*[…] se ðe hine **ahabban** ne mæg, hæbbe his wiif.*

se	*ðe*	*hine*	***ahabban***
that-NOM.SG	who-REL	he-ACC.3SG	abstain-INF
ne	*mæg*	*hæbbe*	*his*
not-NEG	can-PRS.3SG	have-PRS.3SG.SUBJV	he-GEN.3SG
wiif			
wife-ACC.SG			

'[…] he who cannot contain, let him have his wife.'

b. Reflexive construction
[Bede 1 16.64.25]
*Gif þonne hwylce preostas & Godes þeowas […], þa ðe heo from wiifum **ahabban** ne mæge, nimen heom wiif.*

Gif	*Þonne*	*hwylce*	*preostas*
if-CONJ	then-ADV	any-NOM.PL	priest-NOM.PL
&	*Godes*	*þeowas*	*þa*
and-CONJ	God-GEN.SG	servant-NOM.PL	that-NOM.PL
ðe	*Heo*	*from*	*wiifum*
who-REL	he-ACC.SG.REFL	from-PREP	wife-DAT.PL
ahabban	*Ne*	*mæge*	*nimen*
abstain-INF	not-NEG	may-PRS.3SG.SUBJV	take-PRS.3PL.SUBJV
heom	*Wiif*		
he-DAT.PL	wife-ACC.PL		

'If then any priests and servants of God, […], cannot live without wives, let them take to them wives.'

There are two types of nominalisation alternation. Both can be described as a complex predication with a linked predication with a finite form of the verb, on the one hand, and a simplex predication with a noun phrase that entails a verbal predication, on the other hand. When a noun phrase entails a verbal predication, the noun is morphologically related to a verb. In the first type of nominalisation alternation, the noun phrase is in the accusative. This is the case with the verbs *forbēodan* and *forhabban*. For instance, in (18a) *ðæt gefeoht* 'the war', which is morphologically related to the strong verb base *gefeohtan* 'to fight', is inflected for the accusative, while in (18b) the second argumental position is taken up by the linked predication *þæt se seoca on ælcne sæl æt and wæt þicge* 'that the sick man may receive food and drink at any time'. The same happens in (18c), which contains the noun *spræce* 'speech', a derivative of the strong verb base *sprecan* 'to speak'. In (18d), instead, we find the linked predication *þæt hig ne sprecon faken* 'that they do not speak foolishness'.

(18) Nominalisation (accusative noun phrase)
a. [Or 3 10.75.28]
[…] þeh þe heora biscopas from hiora godum sæden þæt hie ðæt gefeoht **forbuden**.

þeh þe	*heora*	*biscopas*	*from*
although-ADV	he-GEN.3PL	bishop-NOM.PL	from-PREP
hiora	*godum*	*sæden*	*þæt*
he-GEN.3PL	god-DAT.PL	say-PST.3PL	that-CONJ
hie	*ðæt*	*gefeoht*	**forbuden**
he-NOM.3PL	the-ACC.SG	war-ACC.SG	forbid-PST.PTCP

'[…] although their priests told them from their gods that they (the gods) forbade the war.'

b. [ChrodR 1 38.9]
*And nelle we na **forbeodan** þæt se seoca on ælcne sæl æt and wæt þicge, […].*

And	*Nelle*	*We*	*na*
and-CONJ	wish-PRS.1PL.NEG	I-NOM.1PL	not-NEG
forbeodan	*Þæt*	*Se*	*seoca*
forbid-INF	that-CONJ	the-NOM.SG	sick-NOM.SG
on	*ælcne*	*Sæl*	*æt*
on-PREP	any-ACC.SG	time-ACC.SG	food-ACC.SG
and	*Wæt*	*Þicge*	
and-CONJ	water-ACC.SG	take-PRS.3SG.SUBJV	

'And we do not wish to forbid that the sick man may receive food and drink at any time […].'

c. [CP 38.279.25]
*Ðæt ðonne tacnað ðætte ðæs modes ryhtwisnes bið toflowen, ðe nele **forhabban** ða ungemetgodan spræce.*

Ðæt	*ðonne*	*Tacnað*	*ðætte*
that-NOM.SG	then-CONJ	indicate-PRS.3SG	that-CONJ
ðæs	*modes*	*ryhtwisnes*	*bið*
the-GEN.SG	mind-GEN.SG	virtue-NOM.SG	be-PRS.3SG
toflowen	*ðe*	*nele*	***forhabban***
disperse-PST.PTCP	which-REL	will-PRS.3SG.NEG	refrain-INF
ða	*ungemetgodan*	*spræce*	
the-ACC.SG	excessive-ACC.SG	speech-ACC.SG	

'That signifies that the virtue of the mind which will never refrain from loquacity is dispersed.'

d. [PsGlI 33.14]
*Forbeod ł **forhafa** ł bewere tungan þine fram yfle weleras þine þæt hig ne sprecon faken.*

Forbeod	*ł*	***forhafa***	*ł*
forbid-IMP.SG	and-CONJ	restrain-IMP.SG	and-CONJ
bewere	*tungan*	*þine*	*fram*
keep- IMP.SG	tongue-ACC.SG	you-GEN.SG	from-PREP
yfle	*weleras*	*þine*	*þæt*
evil-DAT.SG	lip-ACC.SG	you-GEN.SG	that-CONJ
hig	*ne*	*sprecon*	*faken*
he-NOM.3PL	not-NEG	speak-PRS.3PL.SUBJV	guile-ACC.PL

'Keep thy tongue from evil, and thy lips from speaking guile.'

The second type of the nominalisation alternation can be described as holding between a complex predication with a finite verbal form and a simplex predication with a noun phrase that entails a verbal predication and is inflected for the genitive case. As in the first type of nominalisation alternation, the noun case-marked genitive is morphologically related to a verb. The following correspondences between genitive nouns and verbs can be identified in (19). Notice that the pairs involve the same verb. In (19a), the genitive noun *weorces* 'work' is morphologically related to *wyrcan* 'to work'; in (19b), *āblinan* selects the linked predication *þæt he him ne þegnode mid gerisenlicum gemetum* 'to serve him by all possible means'. The same is true of (19c), which aligns the genitive noun *ganges* 'entrance', a derivative of the strong verb *gān* 'to go', in contradistinction to (19d), in which the verb *bewerian* takes the linked predication *þæt mon hine menge wið his broðorwiife* 'that someone weds his brother's wife'. In (19e), the genitive plural *leornunga* 'learnings' is related to *lærnan* 'to learn'. In (19f), the verb *forwiernan* takes the linked predication *þæt hi under eowrum þæce mosten in gebugan* 'that they could dwell under a roof'.

(19)
a. Nominalisation (genitive noun phrase)
[LS 17.1 (MartinMor) 277]
*Þa wæs he dagas wel manige mid þære feforadle swiþe gestanden, ah he þeah næfre Godes weorces ne **ablon**.*

Þa	*wæs*	*he*	*dagas*
then-CONJ	be-PST.3SG	he-NOM.3SG	day-ACC.PL
wel	*manige*	*mid*	*þære*
well-ADV	many-ACC.PL	by-PREP	the-DAT.SG
feforadle	*swiþe*	*gestanden*	*ah*
fever-DAT.SG	very-ADV	afflict-PST.PTCP	nevertheless-CONJ

he	*þeah*	*næfre*	*Godes*
he-NOM.3SG	yet-CONJ	never-ADV	God-GEN.SG
weorces	*ne*	***ablon***	
work-GEN.SG	not-NEG	cease-PST.3SG	

'He was afflicted by a fever for many days, yet he never ceased from God's work.'

b. Nominalisation (linked predication)

[GD 2 (C) 1.99.10]

*[…] ne **ablan** Romanus na forþon þæt he him ne þegnode mid gerisenlicum gemetum.*

ne	***ablan***	*Romanus*	*na*
not-NEG	cease-PST.3SG	Romanus-NOM.SG	not-NEG
forþon	*þæt*	*he*	*him*
therefore-ADV	that-CONJ	he-NOM.3SG	he-GEN.3SG
ne	*þegnode*	*mid*	*gerisenlicum*
not-NEG	serve-PST.3SG	with-PREP	honourable-DAT.PL
gemetum			
way-DAT.PL			

'[…] Romanus did not cease to serve Benedict by all the possible means he could.'

c. Nominalisation (genitive noun phrase)

[LS 23 (MaryofEgypt) 463]

*Me witodlice þæt godcunda mægen þæs ganges **bewerede**, and ic sona wæs ut aþrungen fram eallum þam folce.*

Me	*witodlice*	*þæt*	*godcunda*
I-ACC.1SG	certainly-ADV	the-NOM-1SG	divine-NOM.SG
mægen	*þæs*	*ganges*	***bewerede***
power-NOM.SG	the-GEN.SG	going-GEN.SG	forbid-PST.PTCP
and	*ic*	*sona*	*wæs*
and-CONJ	I-NOM.1SG	soon-ADV	be-PST.1SG
ut	*aþrungen*	*fram*	*eallum*
out-PREP	thrust-PST.PTCP	from-PREP	all-DAT.PL
þam	*folce*		
the-DAT.PL	people-DAT.PL		

'But the divine might prevented me from going in, and I was soon thrust out from amid all the people.'

d. Nominalisation (linked predication)
[Bede 1 16.70.18]
*Swelce is eac **bewered** þæt mon hine menge wið his broðorwiife, […].*

Swelce	*is*	*eac*	***bewered***
likewise-ADV	be-PRS.3SG	also-ADV	forbid-PST.PTCP
Þæt	*mon*	*hine*	*menge*
that-CONJ	anyone-NOM.SG	he-ACC.3SG	wed-PRS.3SG.SUBJV
Wið	*his*	*broðorwiife*	
with-PREP	he-GEN.3SG	brother's wife-DAT.SG	

'So also it is forbidden that a man weds his brother's wife, […].'

e. Nominalisation (genitive noun phrase)
[Solil 1 41.4]
*Toðæcce me **forwyrnde** ælcre leornunga.*

Toðæcce	*me*	***forwyrnde***	*ælcre*
tooth-ache-NOM.SG	I-ACC.1SG	hinder-PST.3SG	all-GEN.SG
Leornunga			
learning-GEN.SG			

'Tooth-ache hindered me from all learning.'

f. Nominalisation (linked predication)
[ChristC 1503]
*Þearfum **forwyrndon** þæt hi under eowrum þæce mosten in gebugan.*

Þearfum	***Forwyrndon***	*þæt*	*hi*
needy-DAT.PL	hinder-PST.3PL	that-CONJ	he-NOM.3PL
under	*Eowrum*	*þæce*	*mosten*
under-PREP	you-GEN.PL	roof-DAT.SG	may-PST.3PL.SUBJV
in	*Gebugan*		
in-PREP	dwell-INF		

'They prevented the needy from being allowed to dwell under a roof.'

The verbs that can be found in the genitive alternation are *āblinnan*, *bewerian*, *blinnan* and *forberan*. The genitive alternation is a contrast between morphological case and prepositional government. It comprises the genitive vs. the dative case, on the one hand, and the lack of preposition vs. prepositional government, on the other. In (20a), for instance, the verb takes a nominative first argument (*hi* 'they') and a second argument in the genitive case that is not governed by preposition (*þæs rynes* 'their running'). In (20b), which is also an instance of the verb *bewerian*, the complementation includes the first argument in the nominative (*hi* 'they') and the case-marked dative second argument (*fram þam gewinne* 'from their task'). The second argument is the Theme in (20a) and (20b).

(20) Transitive construction (genitive noun phrase)
a. [ÆLS (Martin) 1060]
Ða ofhreow þam halgan þæs haran frecednyss, and þam hundum bebead þæt hi **ablunnon** *þæs rynes, and þone haran forleton mid fleame ætberstan.*

Ða	*ofhreow*	*þam*	*halgan*
then-CONJ	regret-PST.3SG	the-DAT.SG	saint-DAT.SG
þæs	*haran*	*frecednyss*	*and*
the-GEN.SG	hare-GEN.SG	peril-ACC.SG	and-CONJ
þam	*hundum*	*bebead*	*þæt*
the-DAT.PL	hound-DAT.PL	command-PST.3SG	and-CONJ
hi	***ablunnon***	*þæs*	*ryne*
he-NOM.3PL	cease-PST.3PL	the-GEN.SG	course-GEN.SG

'Then the saint had ruth of the hare's peril, and commanded the hounds to desist from running.'

b. Intransitive construction (argument-adjunct)
[BedeHead 1.10.1]
[He] [...] eac swylce mid trymmendlice ærendgewrite hi gestrangode, þæt hi ne **ablunnen** *fram þam gewinne.*

He	*eac*	*swylce*	*mid*
he-NOM.3SG	also-ADV	likewise-ADV	with-PREP

trymmendlice	*ærendgewrite*	*hi*	*gestrangode*
comforting-ADV	letter-DAT.PL	he-ACC.3PL	encourage-PST.3SG
þæt	*hi*	*ne*	***ablunnen***
that-CONJ	he-NOM.3PL	not-NEG	cease-PST.PTCP
fram	*þam*	*gewinne*	
from-PREP	the-DAT.SG	task-DAT.SG	

'That the holy pope Gregory sent Augustine with monks to preach God's word and faith to the English, and also encouraged them with comforting letters not to give up their task.'

As regards the verb *bewerian*, the first argument in (21a) is case-marked nominative (*þæt godcunda mægen* 'the divine power'), the second argument is a dative (*me* 'me') and the Theme argument is inflected for the genitive (*þæs ganges* 'of the entrance'). (21b) shows an instance with an argument inflected for the dative (*from gife þæs halgan fulwihtes* 'from the grace of Holy Baptism'). Finally, (21c) aligns a nominative first argument (*se byseceop* 'the bishop'), a second argument in the accusative (*þæt* 'that') and a Patient in the dative (*him* 'to him'), which is preserved, as has been shown in the previous section, if the verb passivises.

(21)
a. Transitive construction (genitive noun phrase)
[LS 23 (MaryofEgypt) 463]
*Me witodlice þæt godcunda mægen þæs ganges **bewerede**, and ic sona wæs ut aþrungen fram eallum þam folce.*

Me	*witodlice*	*þæt*	*godcunda*
I-DAT.1SG	certainly-ADV	the-NOM-1SG	divine-NOM.SG
mægen	*þæs*	*ganges*	***bewerede***
power-NOM.SG	the-GEN.SG	going-GEN.SG	forbid-PST.PTCP
and	*ic*	*sona*	*wæs*
and-CONJ	I-NOM.1SG	soon-ADV	Be-PST.1SG
ut	*aþrungen*	*fram*	*eallum*
out-PREP	thrust-PST.PTCP	from-PREP	all-DAT.PL
þam	*folce*		
the-DAT.PL	people-DAT.PL		

'But the divine might prevented me from going in, and I was soon thrust out from amid all the people.'

b. Passive construction
[Bede 1 16.76.2]
*Hwelce rehte mæg þonne **bewered** beon from gife þæs halgan fulwihtes.*

Hwelce	*rehte*	*mæg*	*þonne*
what-ACC.SG	reason-ACC.SG	may-PRS.3SG	then-ADV
bewered	*beon*	*from*	*gife*
prohibit-PST.PTCP	be-INF	from-PREP	grace-DAT.SG
þæs	*halgan*	*fulwihtes*	
the-GEN.SG	holy-GEN.SG	baptism-GEN.SG	

'With what reason may then one be prohibited from the grace of Holy Baptism?'

c. Transitive construction (accusative and dative noun phrases)
[Bede 5 17.456.7]
*He willnade ætgædere mid him sweltan, þeah þe se bysceop him þæt swiðe **bewerede**.*

He	*willnade*	*ætgædere*	*mid*
he-NOM.3SG	desire-PST.3SG	together-ADV	with-PREP
him	*sweltan*	*þeah*	*þe*
he-GEN.3SG	die-INF	though-CONJ	who-REL
se	*bysceop*	*him*	*þæt*
the-NOM.SG	bishop	he-DAT.3SG	that-ACC.SG
swiðe	***bewerede***		
greatly-ADV	prohibit-PST.3SG		

'And he desired to die along with them, though the bishop strongly opposed it.'

The verb *blinnan* is also found in the genitive alternation. For instance, (21a) takes a genitive Theme (*þæs* 'that'), while the Theme argument *fram ehtnysse cristenra manna* 'from the persecution of Christians' is inflected for the dative in (21b).

(22) Transitive construction (genitive noun phrase)

a. [Bede 5 18.466.25]

*& he wæs in reogolum cyriclicre gesetnesse se behydegæsta þa to healdenne, & he þæs ne **blon**.*

&	*he*	*wæs*
and-CONJ	he-NOM.3SG	be-PST.3SG
in	*reogolum*	*cyriclicre*
in-PREP	rule-DAT.PL	ecclesiastical-DAT.SG
gesetnesse	*se*	*behydegæsta*
law-DAT.SG	the-NOM.SG	careful-NOM.SG.SUPERL
þa	*to healdenne*	*&*
that-ACC.PL	observe-INF.INFL	and-CONJ
he	*þæs*	*ne*
he-NOM.3SG	that-GEN.SG	not-NEG
blon		
cesase-PST.3SG		

'And he was most careful in observing the rules of ecclesiastical law. And in this he never slackened.'

b. Intransitive construction (argument-adjunct)

[Bede 1 7.40.16]

*[He] […], het þa sona **blinnan** fram ehtnysse cristenra manna.*

He	*het*	*þa*	*sona*
he-NOM.3SG	order-PST.3SG	that-ACC.PL	soon-ADV
blinnan	*fram*	*ehtnysse*	*cristenra*
cease-INF	from-PREP	persecution-DAT.SG	Christians-GEN.PL
manna			
man-GEN.PL			

'[he] […] at once ordered them to cease from the persecution of Christians.'

Finally, the verb *forberan* also takes part in the genitive alternation. As is shown in (23a), the Theme is realised by an argument that is case-marked genitive, whereas in (23b) the Theme is likely to be realised by an argument in the dative without preposition, although

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it must be borne in mind that morphological case is ambiguous here because the ending *-e* is also used for the accusative and the genitive of strong nouns like *tæling* 'blame'.

(23)
a. Transitive construction (genitive noun phrase)
[CP 37.265.1]
*Gif ðonne hwelc mon **forbireð** his synna for ðæm ege anum ðæs wites, ðonne nafað ðæs ondrædendan monnes mod nanne gastes freodom.*

Gif	*ðonne*	*hwelc*	*mon*
if-CONJ	then-CONJ	any-NOM.SG	man-NOM.SG
forbireð	*his*	*synna*	*for*
refrain-PRS.3SG.SUBJV	he-GEN.PL	sin-GEN.PL	from
ðæm	*ege*	*anum*	*ðæs*
the-DAT.SG	fear-DAT.SG	one-DAT.SG	the-GEN.SG
wites	*ðonne*	*nafað*	*ðæs*
punishment-GEN.SG	then-ADV	have-PRS.3SG.NEG	the-GEN.SG
ondrædendan	*monnes*	*mod*	*nanne*
fear-PRS.PTCP.ACC.SG	man-GEN.SG	mind-ACC.SG	no-ACC.SG
gastes	*freodom*		
spirit-GEN.SG	freedom-ACC.SG		

'If, then, any man refrains from his sins merely from fear of punishment, the mind of him who fears has no spiritual freedom.'

b. Intransitive construction (argument-adjunct)
[CP 28.199.4]
*Hie **forberað** æghwelce unryhte tælinge.*

Hie	***forberað***	*æghwelce*	*unryhte*
he-NOM.3PL	abstain-PRS.3PL	all-ACC.SG	unrighteous-ACC.SG
tælinge			
blame-ACC.SG			

'They abstain from all unrighteous blame.'

6. SEEKING EXPLANATION

In order to explain the alternations presented in the previous section, it is necessary, in the first place, to distinguish alternations proper from instances of variation. The basic principle is that alternations are recurrent whereas variation is local and relatively unpredictable. Variation can be illustrated by the dative case inflection, which can be governed by preposition or mark a noun phrase. For instance, the verb *forhabban* selects a non-prepositional dative Theme in (24a), *þam flæscæte* 'from flesh meat', whereas the dative is governed by a preposition in (24b), *fram unalyfedlicum styrungum* 'from unallowed excitements', which complements the same verb.

(24) Transitive construction (dative noun phrase)
a. [BenR 36.61.1]
[…] sona swa hy geedwyrpte beoð and gestrangode, þam flæscæte **forhæbben** *æfter gewunelicum þeawe.*

sona	*swa*	*hy*
soon-ADV	as-CONJ	he-NOM.3PL
geedwyrpte	*beoð*	*and*
recover-PST.PTCP	be-PRS.3PL	and-CONJ
gestrangode	*þam*	*flæscæte*
strengthen-PST.PTCP	the-DAT.SG	flesh-meat-DAT.SG
forhæbben	*æfter*	*gewunelicum*
abstain-PRS.3PL.SUBJV	according to-ADV	usual-DAT.SG
þeawe		
custom-DAT.SG		

'[…] as soon as they are better, let all abstain from flesh meat as usual.'

b. Intransitive construction (argument-adjunct)
[ÆCHom II, 44 328.44]
God is and halwendlic to **forhæbbenne** *fram unalyfedlicum styrungum and for ði hæfð ælc cristen sawul mædenes naman.*

God	*is*	*and*	*halwendlic*
good-NOM.SG	be-PRS.3SG	and-CONJ	salutary-NOM.SG
to ***forhæbbenne***	*fram*	*unalyfedlicum*	*styrungum*
abstain-INF.INFL	from-PREP	unallowed-DAT.PL	excitement-DAT.PL

'If it be good and salutary to abstain from unallowed excitements, and therefore every Christian soul have the name of maiden.'

Instances of variation like the one illustrated in (24) are rather exceptional in the corpus. For example, the verb *forhabban* presents only this case of prepositionally unmarked Theme, out of 24 occurrences analysed.

Leaving these instances of variation aside, the function of alternations as described in this work must be explained. Such explanation is sought on the basis of semantic and syntactic integration. Functional theories of language acknowledge the direct resemblance or *iconicity* (Givón, 1980; Silverstein, 1976) between semantic function and syntactic structure. The Interclausal Relation Hierarchy (Van Valin & LaPolla, 1997: 447) gauges the strength of the bond between the units that take part in a structure. The closer the semantic relation, the tighter the syntactic structure must be. If this principle is applied to the question at stake, it can be stated that the alternations found with inaction verbs consist of two alternants that show different degrees of semantic and syntactic integration.

In the dative alternation, the preservation of the dative case by the first argument indicates a tighter semantic relationship than the loss of the dative case in passivisation. Syntactically, the dative that preserves case is found, as a general rule, in initial position.

In the reflexive alternation, the explicit reflexive marks the maximal degree of semantic integration, namely the co-referentiality of the first and the second argument. From the syntactic point of view, although the reflexive can be inflected for the dative in Old English, the instances from the corpus select the accusative on a regular basis. This can be interpreted as a preference for a direct case (the accusative) over an oblique case (the dative).

In the nominalisation alternation, the nominalisation from a verbal predication is tighter that the linked predication realized as a finite clause, both semantically because the arguments of the verb are looser than the properties of the corresponding deverbal noun; and also syntactically, given that the noun phrase is not governed by preposition, whereas the linked predication with a finite form of the verb is introduced by a complementiser.

In the genitive alternation, the accusative represents the highest degree of semantic and syntactic tightness: the Theme is realised by the second argument, which is inflected for a direct case and is unmarked by preposition. The bare genitive (not governed by preposition), in turn, is tighter than the alternant dative from the syntactic point of view. The dative is governed by preposition whereas the genitive is morphologically unmarked. Semantically, the deverbal noun is tighter than the morphologically unrelated dative, which does not have a verbal predication correlate.

This explanation for the morpho-syntactic alternations of inaction verbs is summarised in Figure 1. The numbers corresponding to the examples in this section have been added next to each alternation.

Alternation	Tighter	Looser
Dative (11-13)	Passive with dative 1st. arg	Passive with nom. 1st arg.
Reflexive (14-17)	Reflexive 2nd. arg	1st arg. only (intransitive)
Nominalisation (18-19)	Nominalisation from verb	Linked predication
Genitive (20-23)	Bare genitive	Dative governed by prep.

Figure 1. The semantic and syntactic integration of alternations.

As can be seen in Figure 1, tighter syntax is characterised by more explicit morphological bonds (such as the presence of the reflexive pronoun), structurally marked morphological bonds (the dative marking of the first argument), nominal coding (the nominalisation, which involves determiners and modifiers), and lack of prepositional government. On the other hand, looser syntax arises if morphological bonds are implicit (as in the absence of the reflexive pronoun), if morphological bonds are unmarked from the structural point of view (as is the case with the nominative subject), if the overall coding is verbal (as complementisers and, sometimes, subjunctive mode are required) and if prepositional government mediates the relation between the verbal predicate and the noun phrase.

The description of alternations as involving clausal junctures and nominal structures adds an extra perspective to the Interclausal Relation Hierarchy (Van Valin & LaPolla, 1997: 447) not only because it widens the scope of the Hierarchy to include non-verbal predications but, above all, because it emphasises the diachronic dimension of the Hierarchy. In the particular case of inaction verbs, the alternation between bare morphological marking and prepositional government as well as the one between morphologically marked and morphologically unmarked first argument correspond to diachronic developments in progress related to the loss of inflection. Other options, such as the expression or the omission of the reflexive and the choice of the nominal or the verbal predication are still available in Present-Day English.

Consider the following example. The genitive alternation has been explained in terms of the strength of the relation between a verb and its arguments. This can be seen in the instances with *bewerian* in (25). The accusative Theme *þæt* 'that' in *se bysceop him þæt swiðe bewerede* 'the bishop strongly prohibited that to him' in (25a) represents the maximal degree of syntactic tightness between the verb and its arguments: a direct case such as the accusative without prepositional government. The genitive Theme *þæs ganges* in *godcunda mægen þæs ganges bewerede* 'the divine might prevented me from going in' in (25b) shows

an intermediate degree of syntactic tightness between the verb and its arguments: an oblique case like the genitive that is not governed by a preposition. The dative Theme in *bewered beon from gife þæs halgan fulwihtes* 'be prohibited from the grace of Holy Baptism' in (25c) constitutes the minimal degree of syntactic tightness between the verb and its arguments: an oblique case such as the dative that, moreover, is governed by a preposition.

(25)

a. Transitive construction (accusative noun phrase)

[Bede 5 17.456.7]

*He willnade ætgædere mid him sweltan, þeah þe se bysceop him þæt swiðe **bewerede**.*

He	*willnade*	*ætgædere*	*mid*
he-NOM.3SG	desire-PST.3SG	together-ADV	with-PREP
him	*sweltan*	*þeah*	*þe*
he-GEN.3SG	die-INF	though-CONJ	who-REL
se	*bysceop*	*him*	*þæt*
the-NOM.SG	bishop	he-GEN.3SG	that-ACC.SG
swiðe	***bewerede***		
greatly-ADV	prohibit-PST.3SG		

'And he desired to die along with them, though the bishop strongly opposed it.'

b. Transitive construction (genitive noun phrase)

[LS 23 (MaryofEgypt) 463]

*Me witodlice þæt godcunda mægen þæs ganges **bewerede**, and ic sona wæs ut aþrungen fram eallum þam folce.*

Me	*witodlice*	*þæt*	*godcunda*
I-ACC.1SG	certainly-ADV	the-NOM-1SG	divine-NOM.SG
mægen	*þæs*	*ganges*	***bewerede***
power-NOM.SG	the-GEN.SG	going-GEN.SG	forbid-PST.PTCP
and	*ic*	*sona*	*wæs*
and-CONJ	I-NOM.1SG	soon-ADV	Be-PST.1SG
ut	*aþrungen*	*fram*	*eallum*
out-PREP	thrust-PST.PTCP	from-PREP	all-DAT.PL
þam	*folce*		
the-DAT.PL	people-DAT.PL		

'But the divine might prevented me from going in, and I was soon thrust out from amid all the people.'

c. Passive construction
[Bede 1 16.76.2]
*Hwelce rehte mæg þonne **bewered** beon from gife þæs halgan fulwihtes.*

Hwelce	*rehte*	*mæg*	*þonne*
what-ACC.SG	reason-ACC.SG	may-PRS.3SG	then-ADV
bewered	*beon*	*from*	*gife*
prohibit-PST.PTCP	be-INF	from-PREP	grace-DAT.SG
þæs	*halgan*	*fulwihtes*	
the-GEN.SG	holy-GEN.SG	baptism-GEN.SG	

'With what reason may then one be prohibited from the grace of Holy Baptism?'

7. CONCLUSION

This article has analysed the syntactic constructions and the morpho-syntactic alternations of Old English verbs of inaction. The following conclusions can be drawn.

The corpus provides evidence for recurrent morpho-syntactic contrasts or alternations that affect the first and the second argument. The dative alternation and the reflexive alternation involve both the first and the second argument, while the nominalisation alternation and the genitive alternation affect the second argument only.

As for function, the alternations found with inaction verbs consist of two alternants that show different degrees of semantic and syntactic integration.

As regards the distribution of the alternations, the nominalisation alternation is found in all the verbal classes under analysis, which, following Levin (1993), can be interpreted as an argument in favour of the inclusion of *Fail* verbs*, End* verbs, *Try* verbs, *Hinder* verbs, *Refrain* verbs, *Prevent* verbs and *Forbid* verbs into the set of verbal classes of inaction. As a set of verbal classes, inaction verbs are not expected to show a unified grammatical behaviour. However, the fact that all of them are found in the nominalisation alternation certainly reinforces the unity of the set of verbs.

As far as the verbal classes that belong in the set of inaction verbs are concerned, it turns out that the consistent realization of the alternations across all verbal classes discussed in this section justifies the classification proposed in this article. *End* verbs, *Forbid* verbs and *Prevent* verbs take part in the genitive alternation; the dative alternation is found in *Forbid* verbs and *Prevent* verbs; and the reflexive alternation occurs in *Refrain* verbs.

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APPENDIX

Inventory of verbs per class from the set of inaction.

Fail verbs
Forsittan
ofergīman
oferhebban
(ge)trucian

End verbs
āblinnan
blinnan
geblinnan
oflinnan

Try verbs
(ge)cneordlǣcan
(ge)fandian
fundian
hīgian
onginnan
(ge)tilian

Hinder verbs
forbēodan
forstandan
for(e)stemman
forwiernan
gehremman
hremman

Refrain verbs
āgǣlan
āhabban
bewerian
fæstan
forberan
forgān
forhabban
gefæstan
ofersittan
(ge)mīdlian

Prevent verbs
āgǣlan
belēan
forfōn
forhabban
for(e)sacan
gǣlan

Forbid verbs
bewerian
forbēodan
forwiernan
tōcweðan