

# Comparison and Gradation in Indo-European



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## 12 West Germanic

### 1 Introduction

This chapter presents an overview of gradation and comparison in West Germanic languages, focusing on the oldest attested stages. In particular, we will cover Old High German (OHG), Old Low German (OLG, including Old Saxon/OS and Old Low Franconian/OLFr, sometimes also referred to as Old Dutch), Old English (OE), and Old Frisian (OFri). Table 1 summarizes the investigated corpus.

The data for OHG (750–1050 AD) consist of evidence from the three largest classical OHG texts: the OHG translations of Isidor's *De fide catholica* (around 800) and Tatian's gospel harmony (around 830), both prose texts based on Latin originals, as well as the poetic text of the gospel book by Otfrid von Weißenburg (between 863 and 871). In the case of *Isidor*, the entire text was checked manually for comparisons and the results compared to a corpus search on *Referenzkorpus Altdeutsch*. Of the OHG *Tatian*, chapters 1–55 were checked manually (approx. a quarter of the entire text) and the remaining text was investigated via corpus search on *Referenzkorpus Altdeutsch*, especially for comparatives. The data for *Otfrid* was partly drawn from Wunder (1965: 175–180) and partly gathered by corpus search on *Referenzkorpus Altdeutsch*. (For individual phenomena, additional data was collected from the late OHG works of Notker using the *Titus* corpus.)

For OLG (800–1200 AD), a corpus analysis was conducted using *Referenzkorpus Altdeutsch* for the longest OLG text, the *Heliand* (around 830), as well as the *Genesis* (around 870) and two minor OLG texts, viz. the OS confession (late 10<sup>th</sup> c.) and the interlinear OLFr psalm translation (9<sup>th</sup>/10<sup>th</sup> c.).

The OE period is usually reckoned as 450–1150 AD, but the earliest texts date from the second half of the 7<sup>th</sup> century, and those that are substantial enough to be useful for present purposes date from the 9<sup>th</sup> century onward. The OE texts used for this chapter are a subset of those in the York-Toronto-Helsinki Parsed Corpus of Old English Prose (YCOE; Taylor et al 2003), specifically those dating to before 950 (belonging to periods o1 and o2 in the original Helsinki corpus). In addition, data are drawn from the autochthonous epic poem *Beowulf*, usually dated by linguists to the early 8<sup>th</sup> century (Fulk 1992; Neidorf 2016), using the version in the York Corpus of Old English Poetry (Pintzuk & Plug 2001). All these texts have been morphologically annotated and syntactically parsed, and the results presented here are based on corpus searches.

OFri is attested substantially later than the other languages considered in this chapter (1200–1550 AD). The data for the section on OFri are mostly drawn from two of the earliest manuscripts: the First Rürstring Manuscript (around 1300) and the Second Hunsingo Manuscript (H2; around 1325–1350). Both manuscripts contain prose sources written after 1200, and these are overwhelmingly legal texts, e.g. the

*Seventeen Statutes* and *Twenty-four Land-laws*, which is found in both the Rüstring and Hunsingo manuscripts (see Bremmer 2009: 6–15). These texts are available as part of the Fryske Akademy’s Integrated Scientific Frisian Language Database, and have been morphologically annotated and lemmatized; results presented in this chapter are based on a corpus search.

**Table 1:** Investigated corpus of West Germanic

Language	Text	Date	Text type/genre
OHG	Isidor	around 800	prose text, theological treatise, translation from Latin
	Tatian	around 830	prose text, bible texts, translation from Latin
OLG	Otfrid	863 – 871	poetic text, based on bible
	Heliant	around 830 <sup>1</sup>	poetic text, based on bible /gospel harmony in alliterative verse
	Genesis	around 870	poetic text, based on bible
	Old Saxon (OS) confession	late 10 <sup>th</sup> c.	prose, formula for confession; (based on older Franconian formula) <sup>2</sup>
	Old Low Franconian (OLFr) psalms	9 <sup>th</sup> /10 <sup>th</sup> c.	interlinear psalm translation from Latin
OE	o1 and o2 prose texts	800–950	prose texts, various, mostly translations from Latin
	Beowulf	before 725?	poetic text in alliterative verse, autochthonous
OFri	First Rüstring Manuscript	around 1300	prose texts, legal (mostly statutes), autochthonous
	Second Hunsingo Manuscript	around 1325–1350	prose texts, legal (mostly statutes), autochthonous

The remainder of this chapter is divided into four sections, dealing with OHG (sect. 2), OLG (sect. 3), OE (sect. 4), and OFri (sect. 5) respectively, followed by a short synopsis.

Additional examples to this chapter are available at <https://gitlab.uzh.ch/paul.widmer/mhiet-vol1-gradation>.

<sup>1</sup> Ms. M second half of 9<sup>th</sup> century (partly fragmentary), ms. C second half of 10<sup>th</sup> century (largely complete).

<sup>2</sup> Copy of an edited translation of a (lost) Franconian confession formula. The OS confession shows some characteristic extensions and abridgements compared to other adaptations of this formula (see Masser 1992: 467).

## 2 Old High German

### 2.1 Similitive

#### 2.1.1 Type 1-3: standard marker (STM) is flag, parameter marker (PM) is E (verb/adjective)

##### 2.1.1.1 Type 1-3-1 flag is case

Only occasionally, a kind of similitive is expressed in OHG using an adjective meaning ‘same’/‘similar’, cf. (1).<sup>3</sup> The equivalent of the standard of comparison appears in dative case. Note, however, that this does not constitute a genuine instance of comparative case; rather, the dative is governed by the particular adjective (cf. also Modern German *gleich einem Adler* ‘like an eagle’) – it never occurs in comparison constructions with ordinary adjectives (unlike dative as proper equative case e. g. in Icelandic).

(1) (secundum autem simile est huic.)

<i>Thaz</i>	<i>aftera</i>	<i>ist</i>	<i>gilih</i>	<i>thesemo</i>
ART.NOM	latter.NOM	be.PRS.3SG	same	this.DAT
CPREE			PM	STAND.STM

‘The latter is identical to this.’ (Tatian 209.21 f.)

#### 2.1.2 Type 1-6: standard marker (STM) is particle, parameter marker (PM) is free morpheme

This type constitutes one of the most typical patterns in OHG similitives (besides type 1-8). The standard marker most commonly consists of the comparison particle *sô* (see also Schrodts 2004: 168; DWB 1: 248, Jäger 2018: 61 f., 76, 82), cf. (2), less often of strengthened forms on the basis of *sô* and another element (originally part of the superordinate clause, see sect. 2.1.6): *sôsô*, cf. (3), *sô selp sô*, cf. (4), (*sô*) *samasô*, *solih sô*, and (especially since Late OHG) *alsô*, cf. (5). As a parameter marker, most commonly the homophonous manner/degree demonstrative *sô* is used, cf. (2) and (3), occasionally *sus*, cf. (4), later also strengthened forms, especially *alsô*, cf. (5). As in many languages, the parameter marker is optional in OHG similitives. If it is missing, type 1-8 results (see sect. 2.1.4).

<sup>3</sup> Depending on the analysis, this may be taken to constitute a kind of parameter marker or to be the parameter itself with the parameter marker being unexpressed, in which case these constructions would instead constitute instances of type 1-4-1.

- (2) (ut sit sicut magister eius)

*thaz só sí só sín meistar*  
 that so be.PRS.SBJV.3SG as his.NOM master.NOM  
 PM [CPREE] STM STAND  
 ‘that he is like his master’ (Tatian 78.22)

- (3) (in quo enim iudicio iudicaveritis, iudicabimini.)

*sósó ír in tuome tuoment, só*  
 as 2PL.NOM in judgement.DAT judge.PRS.2PL thus  
 STM —————STAND————— PM  
*uuerdet ir gituomte.*  
 become.PRS.2PL 2PL.NOM judge.PTCP.PRS.NOM  
 —————CPREE—————  
 ‘As you judge in your judgement so will you be judged’ (Tatian 71.18 f.)

- (4) (Christus enim ex patre ita emicuit ut splendor e lumine)

*Christus auur sus quham fona fater ziuuaare*  
 Christ.NOM however so come.PST.3SG from father.DAT indeed  
 CPREE- PM —————-CPREE—————  
*so selp so dhiu berahtrnissi fona sunnun*  
 as ART radiance.NOM from sun.DAT  
 STM —————STAND—————  
 ‘Christ came thus from heaven as the light from the sun.’ (Isidor 2.5)

- (5)
- Also uuára zenémenne íst. uuío boetius in primo libro*

as true to=take.INF be.PRS.3SG how B.NOM in first book.ABL  
 STM —————STAND—————  
*uuás incusans fortunam [...] álso íst*  
 be.PST.3SG blame.PTCP.PRS fortune.ACC thus be.PRS.3SG  
 ————— PM —————CPREE—————  
*hîer in tertio libro uuára zetûonne ...*  
 here in third book.ABL true to=do-INF  
 —————

‘As it can be realised how, in the first book, Boethius was blaming fortune, so it can here, in the third book, be realised ...’ (Notker Boeth. 181.27–29)

### 2.1.3 Type 1-7: standard marker (STM) is particle, parameter marker (PM) is E (verb/ adjective)

It is only with an adjective meaning ‘same’/‘similar’ that a kind of construction of this type is rarely attested, cf. (6). As with the type described under 2.1.1.1, the adjective

‘same’/‘similar’ may be taken to constitute a kind of parameter marker, as assumed here, or to be the parameter itself with the parameter marker being unexpressed, in which case these constructions would constitute instances of type 1-8. As generally in similatives, the standard marker is typically *sô*.

- (6) (Ecce adam factus est quasi unus ex nobis)

<i>See adam ist</i>	<i>dhiu chilihho</i>	<i>uuordan</i>	<i>so</i>
ITJ A.NOM	be.PRS.3SG ART	same	become.PTCP.PST as
	CPREE	PM	STM
<i>einhuuelih unser</i>			
anyone.NOM	1PL.POSS.GEN		
┌—————STAND—————┐			

‘Behold, Adam has become identical to/the same as one of us.’ (Isidor 4.5)

### 2.1.4 Type 1-8: standard marker (STM) is particle, parameter marker (PM) is not expressed

This type constitutes one of the most typical patterns in OHG similatives (besides type 1-6). Again, the standard marker most commonly consists of the comparison particle *sô*, cf. (7), less often of strengthened forms on the basis of *sô* and another element (originally part of the superordinate clause): *sôsô*, cf. (8), *solih sô*, cf. (9), (*sô*) *samasô*, cf. (9), *sô selp sô*, cf. (10), and (especially since Late OHG) *alsô*, cf. (11), see also Jäger (2018: 65–74). As is typical of similatives in many languages, the parameter marker is optional in similatives in OHG and is missing in this particular type (when it is present, type 1-6 results).

- (7) (Exsurgens autem Ioseph a somno fecit sicut præcepit ei angelus domini)

<i>arstantanti</i>	<i>thô ioseph</i>	<i>fon slafe</i>	<i>t&amp;a</i>	<i>só</i>
get.up.PTCP.PRS	then J.NOM	from sleep.DAT	do.PST.3SG	as
			CPREE	STM
<i>imo</i>	<i>gibôt</i>	<i>truhtines engil</i>		
he.DAT	tell.PST.3SG	god.GEN angel.NOM		
┌—————STAND—————┐				

‘Joseph then got up from sleep and did as God’s angel told him.’ (Tatian 35.1f.)

- (8) (Orantes autem nolite multum loqui sicut ethnici)

<i>Betonte</i>	<i>nicur&amp;</i>	<i>filu</i>	<i>sprehan</i>	<i>sósó</i>
pray.PTCP.PRS	NEG=shall.IMP.PL	much	speak.INF	as
		┌—————CPREE—————┐		STM

*thie heidanon mán.*  
 ART heathen man.NOM.PL  
 ────────────STAND───────────

‘While praying, you should not speak a lot, as the heathens do.’ (Tatian 67.23f.)

- (9) (Et thronus eius sicut sol in conspectu meo et sicut luna perfecta in eternum)

*Endi sn hohsetli ist solih so sunna azs*  
 and his.NOM throne.NOM be.PRS.3SG like sun.NOM to  
 CPREE STM STAND  
*minera antuuerdin endi in æuuin so sam so*  
 1SG.POSS.DAT presence.DAT and in eternity.DAT.PL like  
 STM

*foluuassan mano*  
 full.NOM moon.NOM  
 STAND

‘And his throne is such as the sun in my presence and in eternity as the full moon’ (Isidor 9.1)

- (10) (Ecce et me sicut et te fecit deus)

*See endi mih deda got so selp so dhih*  
 ITJ and 1SG.ACC make.PST.3SG god.NOM as 2PL.ACC  
 CPREE STM STAND

‘Behold, God created me as (he created) you.’ (Isidor 3.10)

- (11) (Iustitia tua sicut montes domine)

*Din reht trûhten ist also bérga.*  
 2SG.POSS.NOM justice.NOM Lord.NOM be.PRS.3SG like mountain.NOM.PL  
 CPREE STM STAND

‘Your justice, Lord, is like the mountains.’ (Notker Ps. 35.7)

### 2.1.5 Types not included in the questionnaire

Hypothetic (irrealis/counterfactual) comparisons, a general subtype of similatives (and equatives), which combines comparison with conditional semantics (‘as if’), are formally identical to canonical similatives (and equatives) in OHG with respect to the types of standard markers being used, viz. *sô* and strengthened forms of *sô* such as *sô selp sô* etc., cf. (12), see also Behaghel (1923–32, III: 623), Jäger (2018: 92–94). Only subjunctive mood marks them as hypothetical.



- (12) *Tho détt er selb so er uuólti. ioh*  
 then do.PST.3SG he.NOM as he.NOM want.PST.SBJV.3SG and  
 STM  
*rúmor fáran scolti*  
 further go.INF shall.PST.SBJV.3SG  
 ‘Then, he pretended as if he wanted to and was going to walk further.’ (Otfrid V. 10.3)

Very rarely, similarity is also marked by means of word formation, e. g. compounding with *eban* ‘equally/similar’, cf. (13). Note that the dative case of the equivalent of the standard of comparison in this example does not constitute genuine comparative case (which does not appear in OHG in similatives or equatives, but only in comparatives); rather, it is governed by the compound verb (similar to case government by the adjective ‘same’/‘similar’ discussed under type 1-3-1).

- (13) (Et profecti praedicauerunt ubique domino cooperante)  
*Inti farenti predigotun íógiuuar trohtine*  
 and go.PTCP.PRS.NOM preach.PST.3PL everywhere Lord.DAT  
 [CPREE] STAND.STM  
*ebanuúirkentemo*  
 equal.effect.PTCP.PRS.DAT  
 PM.PAR  
 ‘and on the way, they preached like the Lord.’ (Tatian 342.16 f.)

### 2.1.6 Formal means of expressing similatives

In similatives, as in other types of comparison in OHG, the standard may be phrasal (e. g. NP, PP, AdvP, etc.) or clausal (sentential). All standard markers in similatives occur with both syntactic types of standards, cf. Jäger (2018: 79 f.). The typical standard marker and parameter marker is *sô* which goes back to modal uses of the instrumental case of the PIE pronominal stem *\*swe/swo-* (cf. Pokorny 1959, I: 882–884; DWB 1: 248; LIPP 2: 736, 763 f.). The pattern of *sô ... sô* regularly found in similatives constitutes a correlative construction (see also Desportes 2008), which is typical for European languages (cf. Haspelmath/Buchholz 1998). The parameter marker, however, is optional in similatives, as is the case in many other languages. Another cross-linguistically typical feature of similatives also found in OHG is the grammaticalization in this type of comparison of new standard markers by strengthening or reinforcement, i. e. univerbation of the original standard marker with a commonly adjacent element that is originally part of the superordinate/matrix clause (see Grimm 1884: 295, Behaghel 1923–32, III: 67, 292; DWB 16: 1370; Jäger 2018: 370 f.) and is typically of the following type:

- parameter marker: *sôsô*<sup>4</sup>
- item with identity semantics ('same', 'similar' etc.): (*sô*) *selb sô*, *sama sô* (> *same*)
- intensifier ('quite', 'completely', 'fully' etc.): *alsô* < adverbial *al* 'fully' + *sô* 'as/like' (> *als*)

This reanalysis of frequently adjacent matrix-clause internal elements and original standard marker (particle) as a new particle typically starts in similatives because here no parameter intervenes between the two. Besides univerbation, the original standard marker may also be dropped so that only the originally matrix-internal element remains as the new standard marker. The common grammaticalization of new standard markers in similatives contributes to the typical directionality of the semantic/syntactic shift of standard markers (particles) from similatives to equatives to comparatives (Comparative Cycle, cf. section 2.7).

## 2.2 Equative

### 2.2.1 Type 2-6: standard marker (STM) is particle, parameter marker (PM) is free morpheme

This type constitutes the prevalent pattern of equatives in OHG. As in similatives, the standard marker is most commonly the particle *sô* (see Schrodtt 2004: 168; DWB 1: 248, Jäger 2018: 76, 82), illustrated in (14). Very occasionally also strengthened forms of the standard marker are attested such as *sôsô*, *samasô*, or late OHG *alsô* (see sect. 2.1.6), cf. (15). All standard markers generally occur with phrasal as well as with clausal standards. The parameter marker is also *sô*, cf. (14) and (15). Later on in diachronic development, the strengthened form *alsô* occurs in this function as well.

- (14) (& dabit illi quot hab& necessarios)
- |             |              |            |           |              |           |                 |                 |
|-------------|--------------|------------|-----------|--------------|-----------|-----------------|-----------------|
| <i>inti</i> | <i>gibit</i> | <i>imo</i> | <i>sô</i> | <i>manag</i> | <i>so</i> | <i>her</i>      | <i>bitharf.</i> |
| and         | give.PRS.3SG | him        | as        | much         | as        | he              | need.PRS.3SG    |
|             |              |            | PM        | PAR          | STM       | —————STAND————— |                 |

'and gives him as much as he needs' (Tatian 72.28 f.)

<sup>4</sup> Note that *sôsô*, just like its cognates in other West Germanic languages discussed below (*swāswā* etc.), does not constitute an instance of reduplication or reiteration, but the combination of two categorially/functionally distinct elements: a parameter marker and a standard marker.

- (15) (et sicut honus grave, gravate sunt super me)  
*siû sint ûfen mir so suâre . also suâre*  
 they be.PRS.3PL upon 1SG.DAT as heavy.NOM.PL as heavy  
 CPREE PM PAR STM STAND  
*burdi*  
 burden.NOM.PL  
 ‘They are upon me as heavy as a heavy burden’ (Notker Ps. 37.5)

Only exceptionally, the usual comparative standard marker *thanne* is used in equatives including negation or multiples, and thus, as a whole, referring to inequality, cf. (16); see also AWB (2: 161), Behaghel (1923–32, III: 276), Jäger (2018: 75).

- (16) *uuânda ôuh sêlbez taz sâng . nôte stîgen sôl [...]*  
 because also itself ART song.NOM necessarily rise.INF shall.PRS.3SG  
  
*ze demo âhtodên bûohstâbe . dér zuûalt liutet . tânne*  
 to ART eighth tone.DAT REL.NOM twice sound.PRS.3SG than  
 CPREE PM STM  
*dér bûohstâb . ze demo iz ânafieng*  
 ART tone.NOM at REL.DAT it start.PST.3SG  
 STAND  
 ‘Because the melody itself should necessarily rise [...] to the eighth tone which is twice as high as the tone at which it started’ (Notker Mus. IV.16)

### 2.2.2 Type 2-10: standard marker (STM) and standard (STAND) are not expressed, parameter marker (PM) is free morpheme

This type is evidenced in so-called contextual equatives in OHG, as in many languages. Here, the standard (and accordingly the standard marker) remains unexpressed but can be deduced from the context, cf. (17).

- (17) *níst ther er gihórti . so fronisg*  
 NEG=be.PRS.3SG REL.NOM before/earlier hear.PST.3SG as glorious.ACC  
 PM PAR  
*árunti*  
 message.ACC  
 CPREE  
 ‘No-one has ever heard a message as glorious [as this one]’ (Otfried I.12.10)

Furthermore, examples consisting of parameter marker and parameter with a consecutive/consequent clause might be subsumed under this type, cf. (18). The parameter marker in both kinds of constructions is again usually *sô*.

- (18) (Sepulchrum autem eius in tantum est gloriosum, ut ...)  
*Sn grab ist auur so drado ęruirdhic, dhazs*  
 his grave.NOM be.PRS.3SG however as very honorable.NOM that  
 CPREE PM ————PAR—————  
*uuir ...*  
 1PL.NOM  
 ‘His grave, however, is so very honorable that we ...’ (Isidor 9.11)

### 2.2.3 Types not included in the questionnaire

Very rarely, another type is attested that is semantically equivalent to an equative, cf. (19).<sup>5</sup> The standard of comparison is marked by the usual equative particle *sô*. However, there is no parameter or parameter marker in the superordinate clause. Instead, the parameter occurs within the standard and appears in superlative form signaling the highest possible degree on the respective scale. The standard clause typically includes a modal predicate ‘to be able to’. The construction is thus equivalent to ‘as ... as X could’. It is attested until Early New High German (ENHG), cf. Behaghel (1923–32, III: 292 f.), DWB (16: 1370 f.), and Jäger (2018: 64 f., 134 f., 175 f.).

- (19) *in thaz crûci man nan nágalta sô sie tho*  
 in ART cross.ACC one he.ACC nail.PST.3SG as they there  
 —————CPREE————— STM ———STAND (incl. PAR)  
*fástôs móhtun.*  
 tightest can.PST.3PL  
 —————  
 ‘They nailed him to the cross as tightly as they could.’ (Otfrid IV.27.18)

### 2.2.4 Formal means of expressing equatives

On the etymology of the standard marker (particle *sô*) and the parameter marker (*sô*), and on the origin of the strengthened standard markers, see sect. 2.1.6 above.

<sup>5</sup> These constructions are also referred to as potentiality equatives (see sect. 5.2.3).

## 2.3 Comparative

### 2.3.1 Type 3-1: standard marker (STM) is flag, parameter marker (PM) is bound morpheme

#### 2.3.1.1 Type 3-1-1: flag is case

In OHG, this type is quite common. The parameter is marked by the inflectional comparative suffix *-ir/-ôr-*, the standard is marked by comparative case, viz. dative, cf. (20); see also Grimm (1897: 909 f.), DWB (1: 248–259), Behaghel (1923–32, III: 651 f.), Schrodtt (2004: 38), Jäger (2018: 46–60). This pattern was (like type 3-5, discussed in sect. 2.3.4) inherited from Proto-Germanic, cf. Small (1929), Behaghel (1923–32, III: 119).<sup>6</sup> As case-marking is restricted on grammatical grounds to standards consisting of NPs, the distribution of this type is limited. Furthermore, marking of the standard by comparative case seems to be licensed only when the comparative case ‘overwrites’ structural case, i. e. nominative or accusative, cf. Jäger (2016).<sup>7</sup> In view of these distributional restrictions of comparative dative, it is quite noteworthy that its share among comparative constructions in the three classical OHG texts *Isidor*, *Tatian*, and *Otfrid* amounts to 40 % of all comparatives on average with a slight diachronic decrease (50 % in *Isidor*, 41 % in *Tatian*, 29 % in *Otfrid*). Comparative case is thus clearly more frequent in OHG than in the closely related languages of OFri or OLG, for instance, and is also preserved longer than in OE, cf. Small (1929: 30, 80, 83). While comparative case is thus clearly an inherited feature rather than loan-syntactic influence from Latin, the Latin source text in translations might have a certain stabilizing effect in so far as no examples of comparative dative in the translatory texts of *Isidor* and *Tatian* occur without a comparative ablative in the Latin original. On the other hand, a number of instances of comparative case in the original are rendered in OHG with a comparative particle (type 3-5) rather than comparative case. Note, however, that Notker, for instance, uses comparative dative in several instances to translate a Latin construction involving a preposition, cf. (21). Particularly common in OHG are comparative constructions with *êr* (an adverbial short comparative form, cf. sect. 2.3.6) and dative. These can largely be argued to constitute transparent comparatives in OHG, cf. Lühr (2011: 14). Thus, instead of comparative case dative the standard alternatively occurs marked by the particle *thanne* (cf. sect. 2.3.4). However, already in OHG *êr* in this construction is beginning to be grammaticalized into a preposition ‘before’ governing dative, cf. Jäger (2018: 47–49).

<sup>6</sup> Schrodtt (2004: 38) also mentions the option of genitive as comparative case in OHG. The example he gives, however, involves a partitive genitive, not comparative case: (maior vestrum) *iuuer mera* ‘higher of/among you’ (*Tatian* 243.21). Other potential cases in fact involve adverbial genitive on a measure phrase, expressing the equivalent of ‘greater by’.

<sup>7</sup> On the other hand, a restriction to instances with a presupposition that the respective gradable property applies to the standard already to a high degree, i. e. a semantics of ‘even more ... than’, as suggested by Panagl (1975) for Latin and Krisch (1988: 58) for Old Norse, does not seem to hold in OHG, cf. Jäger (2016).

- (20) (ut esset deo subiectus, ceteris creaturis praelatus)

*dhazs ir chihoric uuari gote endi furiro*  
 that he.NOM obedient be.PST.SBJV.3SG god.DAT and higher  
 CPREE PAR.PM  
*uuari andrem gotes chiscaftim*  
 be.PST.SBJV.3SG other.DAT god.GEN creature.DAT.PL  
 ───────────STAND.STM──────────

‘that he was obedient to God and higher than the other creatures of God’ (Isidor 5.9)

- (21) (super nivem dealbor)

*wízero snêwe*  
 whiter snow.DAT  
 PAR.PM STAND.STM

‘whiter than snow’ (Notker Ps. 50.9)

### 2.3.2 Type 3-3: standard marker (STM) is flag, parameter marker (PM) is E (verb/ adjective)

#### 2.3.2.1 Type 3-3-1: flag is case

Rarely, a construction of this type is found in OHG with a verb meaning ‘surpass’ (typically formed by compounding with *ubar* ‘above/over’) whose direct object constitutes the equivalent of the standard, cf. (22) and (23). Note, however, that the grammatical case of the latter (accusative) is not an instance of comparative case but ordinary object case governed by the verb. Optionally, the equivalent of the parameter is expressed in the form of a partitive NP, cf. (23).

- (22) *Thiu uuóla iz állaz ubarmág*  
 REL.NOM well it all.ACC surpass.PRS.3SG  
 CPREE ───STAND.STM─── PM

‘that well surpasses it all’ (Otfrid IV.31.33)

- (23) *ih háben inan giáforot . ioh súntono*  
 1SG have.PRS.1SG he.ACC imitate.PTCP.PST and sin.GEN.PL  
 CPREE STAND.STM PAR  
*ubarkóborot*  
 surpass.PTCP.PST  
 PM

‘I have imitated him and surpassed him with respect to sins’ (Otfrid IV.31.30)

### 2.3.3 Type 3-4: standard marker (STM) is flag, parameter marker (PM) is not expressed

#### 2.3.3.1 Type 3-4-2: flag is adposition

There are some rare loan syntactic occurrences of this type in OHG where Latin prepositions such as *super* or *prae* are translated as *ubar* ‘above/over’ marking the standard of comparison while the parameter marker is not expressed, cf. (24).

(24) (qui amat filium aut filiam super me)

<i>thiethar</i>	<i>minnot</i>	<i>sun</i>	<i>odo</i>	<i>tohter</i>	<i>ubar</i>
REL.NOM=PTCL	love.PRS.3SG	SON.ACC	or	daughter.ACC	above
			CPREE		STM

*mih*

1SG.ACC

STAND

‘whoever loves his son or daughter more than me’ (Tatian 80.13 f.)

### 2.3.4 Type 3-5: standard marker (STM) is particle, parameter marker (PM) is bound morpheme

In OHG, this type constitutes the main pattern used in comparatives. The parameter marker consists of the inflectional suffix *-ir/-ôr-*, the standard marker is the particle *thanne*, cf. (25); see also Behaghel (1923–32, III: 626 f., 632), Schrodtt (2004: 155). In the three longest classical OHG texts, this pattern is used in 60 % of comparatives on average, and increases diachronically (*Isidor* 50 %, *Tatian* 59 %, *Otfrid* 71 %), cf. Jäger (2018: 40).

(25) (Nonne uos magis plures estis illis.)

<i>Eno</i>	<i>nibirut</i>	<i>ir</i>	<i>furirun</i>	<i>thanne</i>	<i>sie</i>	<i>sîn</i>
Q	NEG=be.PRS.2PL	2PL.NOM	further	than	they	be.PRS.SBJV.3PL
		CPREE	PAR.PM	STM	┌———STAND.STM———┐	

‘Aren’t you worth more than they are?’ (Tatian 70.17)

Note that what is sometimes referred to as the comparative of minority/inferiority, cf. (26), is expressed by the same linguistic means as the comparative of majority/superiority, cf. (25), i. e. there is no formal difference between the two in OHG.

(26) (Minuisti eum paulo minus a deo)

<i>Dhu</i>	<i>chiminnerodes</i>	<i>inan</i>	<i>liuzelu</i>	<i>minnerun</i>	<i>dhanne</i>	<i>got</i>
2SG.NOM	lower.PST.2SG	he.ACC	slightly	less.ACC	than	god.ACC
		CPREE		PAR.PM	STM	STAND

‘You made him slightly lower than God.’ (Isidor 5.3)

Particularly common in OHG are comparative constructions with *êr thanne* (*êr* being a short adverbial comparative form, see sect. 2.3.6), which constitute a special case insofar as this expression is beginning to be grammaticalized, with bleaching of the comparative semantics and partly loss of the original standard marker *thanne*, into a temporal subjunction/complementizer cf. Behaghel (1923–32, III: 628), Jäger (2018: 43–46). (Compare also the incipient grammaticalization of *êr* with phrasal standards in dative case into a temporal preposition as discussed in sect. 2.3.1.1).

### 2.3.5 Type 3-9: standard marker (STM) and standard (STAND) are not expressed, parameter marker (PM) is bound morpheme

This type is evidenced in OHG in the form of so-called contextual comparatives, where the standard is inferred from the context, as illustrated in (27).

(27) (u&amp;us melius est)

<i>thaz</i>	<i>alta</i>	<i>ist</i>	<i>bezira</i>
ART	old.NOM	be.PRS.3SG	better
CPREE			PAR.PM

‘The old one is better [than the new one]’ (Tatian 92.20)

### 2.3.6 Formal means of expressing comparatives

The parameter marker in OHG comparatives is the comparative morpheme *-ir-/-ôr-*, which is added to adjectival/adverbial stems. The former corresponds to the zero-grade *\*-is-* of PIE *\*-ies-*; the latter goes back to a new formation *\*-ôz-* in Germanic. The distribution of the two comparative morphemes is conditioned by morphological and partly also areal factors, cf. Braune/Heidermanns (2018: 312f., 319). Adjectives consisting of several syllables, formed by derivation or composition, generally take *-ôr-*, e. g. *sâlig* ‘blessed’ – *sâligôro* ‘more blessed’. With primary adjectives the choice of the comparative morpheme depends on their inflection class: *ja*-stems always show *-ir-*, e. g. *reini* ‘pure’ – *reiniro* ‘purer’, *a*-stems tend to allow both morphemes, e. g. *hoh* ‘high’ – *hohiro/hohôro* ‘higher’. Besides these morphological factors, the adjectival comparative morpheme *-ôr-* is a typical feature of Upper German. De-adjectival adverbs generally take the *-ôr-* suffix, even if the adjective always takes *-ir-*, e. g. *reinôr*



‘more purely’. A couple of adjectives/adverbs show suppletive comparative forms, viz. *guot* ‘good’ – *bezziro* ‘better’, *ubil* ‘bad’ – *wirsiro* ‘worse’, *mihhil* ‘big’ – *mêro/mêiro* ‘bigger/more’, *luzzil* ‘little’ – *minniro* ‘smaller/less’, cf. Braune/Heidermanns (2018: 312f., 315f.). In adverbial use, these also show short forms such as *baz*, *wirs* etc. Similar short forms of adverbial comparatives are *êr* ‘earlier’ and *sîd* ‘later’, which, however, develop new regular comparative forms, cf. Braune/Heidermanns (2018: 320).

Regarding marking of the standard of comparison, one option inherited from Proto-Germanic is the dative as comparative case. While this is still quite frequent in OHG, it is becoming markedly rarer in Middle High German (MHG) and dies out in ENHG around 1400 AD, cf. Small (1929), Jäger (2018: 40, 101f.).

Most commonly, however, the standard is marked by a particle, viz. OHG *thanne*, which goes back to PGmc *\*þan-nai*, i. e. a demonstrative + locative particle (Schmidt 1962: 95f.; EWA 2: 530).<sup>8</sup> The grammaticalization of elements with ablative, dative, or locative case/semantics or the respective functional prepositions into standard markers constitutes a common grammaticalization path in the languages of the world, cf. Heine/Kuteva (2002: 30f., 103, 201). Thus, the types discussed in 2.3.1.1 and 2.3.4 are linked diachronically.

## 2.4 Superlative

### 2.4.1 Type 4-1: standard marker (STM) is flag, parameter marker (PM) is bound morpheme

#### 2.4.1.1 Type 4-1-1: flag is case

In OHG superlative constructions, the parameter is marked by the inflectional suffix *-ist/-ôst-*, cf. Braune/Heidermanns (2018: 314). In superlative constructions, there is no proper standard of comparison as in similatives, equatives, or comparatives specifying an entity that the comparee is compared to. Rather, the equivalent of the standard – if it is expressed – specifies the set of entities among which the comparee has the relevant property to the highest degree. What is expressed is thus ‘the most ... among/of’ rather than ‘the most ... compared to’. The comparee is part of the ‘standard’. Accordingly, linguistic marking employs the typical means of expressing partitivity in the respective language. In OHG, one major means is partitive genitive, cf. (28). Note that this partitive case, which is generally available in partitive constructions, not only with superlatives, has to be distinguished from genuine comparative case, which marks a true standard of comparison (in OHG the dative, see sect. 2.3.1.1). Thus, in (28) for instance, the genitive expresses ‘the youngest of all’, not ‘compared to all’.

<sup>8</sup> Behaghel (1923–32, I: 241; III: 119) and Jensen (1934: 124) assume ablative case (= comparative case with directional semantics ‘from there’) of the demonstrative *\*þa-*, and Lühr (1982: 563) instrumental case of measurement, another typical comparative case.

(28) (Si quis uult primus esse)

*Oba uuer uulli uurista uuesan ther ist*  
 if anyone want.PRS.3SG furthest be.INF this be.PRS.3SG  
 CPREE

*allero iungisto*  
 all.GEN.PL youngest  
 STAND.STM PAR.PM

‘If anyone wants to be the highest/furthest, he is the youngest of all’ (Tatian 151.18)

Note that what is sometimes referred to as the superlative of minority/inferiority, cf. (29), is marked in exactly the same way as the superlative of majority/superiority, cf. (28), i. e. there is no linguistic difference (just as with comparatives of minority/inferiority and majority/superiority, see sect. 2.3.4). Again, the genitive is not a comparative case but an ordinary partitive case (‘the smallest of all roots’, not ‘compared to all roots’).

(29) (minimum quidem est omnibus holeribus)

*thaz ist minnista allero uuvrzo*  
 this be.PRS.3SG smallest all.GEN.PL root.GEN.PL  
 CPREE PAR.PM STAND.STM

‘That is the smallest of all roots’ (Tatian 109.19 f.)

#### 2.4.1.2 Type 4-1-2: flag is adposition

Besides the genitive, another major means of marking partitivity also employed in superlatives in OHG to mark the set of relevant entities is prepositions such as *untar* ‘under/among’ or *in* ‘in/among’, cf. (30) and (31). The parameter is marked by the usual superlative suffix. Again, what is sometimes referred to as the superlative of minority/inferiority, cf. (31), shows no formal linguistic difference from the superlative of majority/superiority in OHG, cf. (30).

(30) (qui uoluerit Inter uos primus esse. erit uester seruus)

*therdar uuolle untar íu eristo uuesan.*  
 REL.NOM=PTCL want.PRS.SBJV.3SG under 2PL.DAT first be.INF  
 CPREE STM STAND PAR.PM

*uuese íuuuer scalc*  
 be.IMP 2SG.POSS servant.NOM

‘He who wants to be the first among you should be your servant’ (Tatian 185.4 f.)

- (31) (nequaquam minima és In principibus Iuda)
- |                 |               |               |             |            |                 |           |              |  |
|-----------------|---------------|---------------|-------------|------------|-----------------|-----------|--------------|--|
| <i>nio</i>      | <i>In</i>     | <i>altere</i> | <i>bist</i> | <i>thu</i> | <i>minnista</i> | <i>in</i> | <i>then</i>  |  |
| never           | in            | age.DAT       | be.PRS.2SG  | 2SG.NOM    | smallest        | in        | ART.DAT.PL   |  |
|                 |               |               |             | CPREE      | PAR.PM          | STM       | ┌───STAND──┐ |  |
| <i>heriston</i> | <i>Iudeno</i> |               |             |            |                 |           |              |  |
| highest.DAT.PL  | jew.GEN.PL    |               |             |            |                 |           |              |  |

‘Not at all are you the smallest among the Jewish rulers’ (Tatian 39.27 f.)

#### 2.4.2 Type 4-9: standard marker (STM) and standard (STAND) are not expressed, parameter marker (PM) is bound morpheme

With this type, the set among which the comparee bears the relevant property to the highest degree is not expressed but only contextually given, as illustrated in (32).<sup>9</sup> The parameter is marked by the usual suffix.

- (32) (hoc est primum & maximum mandatum)
- |             |            |             |               |             |               |                 |  |
|-------------|------------|-------------|---------------|-------------|---------------|-----------------|--|
| <i>thiz</i> | <i>ist</i> | <i>thaz</i> | <i>êrista</i> | <i>Inti</i> | <i>meista</i> | <i>bibot</i>    |  |
| this        | be.PRS.3SG | ART         | highest       | and         | biggest       | commandment.NOM |  |
|             |            |             | PAR.PM        |             | PAR.PM        | CPREE           |  |

‘This is the highest and biggest commandment’ (Tatian 209.20 f.)

#### 2.4.3 Formal means of expressing superlatives

The inflectional superlative suffix *-ist-/-ôst-* is derived from PIE *\*-isto-*. Regarding the distribution of the two variants of the suffix, the same conditions hold as for the comparative (see sect. 2.3.6), although the variant with /ô/ is somewhat more widespread than in the comparative, cf. Braune/Heidermanns (2018: 314). On the other hand, superlative forms of adverbs, unlike comparative forms, also show the variant with /i/, cf. Braune/Heidermanns (2018: 320). Some adjectives/adverbs show suppletion, viz. *guot* ‘good’ – *bezzisto* ‘best’, *ubil* ‘bad’ – *wirsisto* ‘worst’, *mihhil* ‘big’ – *meisto* ‘biggest/most’, *luzzil* ‘little’ – *minnisto* ‘smallest/least’, cf. Braune/Heidermanns (2018: 314–316). Some adverbial superlatives are used in combination with the prepositions *az* ‘at’ or *zi* ‘to’, e. g. *az/zi êrist* ‘(at) first’, cf. Braune/Heidermanns (2018: 320).

<sup>9</sup> In (32), two parameters are conjoined.

## 2.5 Elative

### 2.5.1 Type 5-10: standard marker (STM) and standard (STAND) are not expressed, parameter marker (PM) is free morpheme

In OHG, the elative does not constitute a grammatical category in its own right. The equivalent of elative semantics is expressed lexically by various free morphemes, notably adverbs such as *thrâto* ‘very’, cf. (33), *filu* ‘much/very’, cf. (34), or *fasto* ‘firmly/very’, cf. (35).

- (33) (erat quippe magnus ualde)

<i>her</i>	<i>uuas</i>	<i>thrato</i>	<i>Michil</i>
he	be.PST.3SG	very	big
CPREE		PM	PAR

‘It was very big’ (Tatian 323.27)

- (34) *Uuig uuas ofto mânegaz . ioh filu*  
 battle.NOM be.PST.3SG often numerous.NOM and much  
 CPREE PM

*mânagfaltaz*  
 big/different.NOM  
 PAR

‘There were often numerous and very big battles.’ (Otfrid I.20.21)

- (35) *thaz múat si fasto héime*  
 ART mind.NOM be.PRS.SBJV.3SG firmly at.home  
 CPREE PM PAR

‘The mind should be very much at home’ (Otfrid II.21.7)

### 2.5.2 Types not included in the questionnaire

The equivalent of elative semantics can also be expressed by means of word formation (composition or derivation) for instance with *ur* ‘beyond’, *ein* ‘one’, *filu* ‘much/very’, *ubar* ‘over/above’, etc.; consider for instance *urmâri* ‘very/widely known’, *wîtmâri* ‘widely known’, *einmâri* ‘unique, extraordinary’ (lit. ‘once known’), *filelieb* ‘very nice’, *ubarlût* ‘(very) loud’.

## 2.6 Excessive

### 2.6.1 Type 6-10: standard marker (STM) and standard (STAND) are not expressed, parameter marker (PM) is free morpheme

In OHG, the excessive is expressed with the particle *zi* ‘too’ in front of the parameter, cf. (36).<sup>10</sup> The most common type is *zi filu* ‘too much’, cf. DWB (32, 158, s. v. *zu*), Erdmann (1874–1876: 73 footn.).

- (36) *ni uuis zi dúmpmuati*  
 NEG be.IMP too stupid  
 [CPREE] PM PAR  
 ‘Don’t be too stupid’ (Otfrid I.3.29)

### 2.6.2 Types not included in the questionnaire

The equivalent of excessive semantics can also be expressed by word formation, e. g. composition with *ubar* ‘over/above’: *ubarâz(i)/uberfuora* ‘gluttony/excessive eating’, *ubersprâhhe* ‘boastful’ (lit. ‘over-eloquent’), *ubarmuoti/ubarwâne* ‘arrogant’ (lit. ‘over-minded’). The distinction from the elative (see sect. 2.5.2) is somewhat fuzzy with these formations and depends on the context.

### 2.6.3 Formal means of expressing excessives

The combination of the particle derived from the PGmc local adverb/preposition *\*tō/\*ti/\*te* (from PIE *\*dó*; LIPP 2: 148 f.) together with an adjective/adverb as a means of expressing excessive semantics is a trait common to the West Germanic languages, cf. DWB (32, 158, s. v. *zu*).

## 2.7 Further remarks

In the history of German (as in that of many other languages, cf. Jäger 2018: 370–397), one may observe a repeated, step-wise development in the same direction, viz. a shift of standard markers (comparison particles) from similatives to equatives to comparatives, referred to as the Comparative Cycle (Jäger 2010, 2018: 359–370). It can first be observed for the standard marker *alsō* (*alse* > *als*). *Alsō* starts to occur in similatives

<sup>10</sup> This type is, however, not attested in *Isidor* or *Tatian*.

in (Late) OHG and constitutes the main pattern for this type of comparison in MHG. By that time, it is already occasionally used in equatives and very exceptionally in comparatives. In equatives, it becomes the main standard marker during 15<sup>th</sup> century ENHG superseding *sô*, and its use in comparatives increases. In the latter it constitutes the main pattern since 17<sup>th</sup> century NHG, superseding *dann/denn*.<sup>11</sup>

The same shift is then repeated with the standard marker *wie* (< OHG *wîo* ‘how’ < PGmc *\*hwê* < instrumental case of the PIE interrogative/indefinite *\*kʷo-*, cf. DWB 29: 1448, LIPP 2: 463–464; it is thus the *wh*-equivalent of *sô*).<sup>12</sup> At first used very occasionally in MHG similatives, it becomes the main pattern in that function and surpasses *als(o)* in 16<sup>th</sup> century ENHG, during which period it also starts to occur in equatives. In the latter type of comparisons, it becomes the main pattern only in 19<sup>th</sup> century NHG and since that time is also increasingly used in comparatives, in which it represents the main pattern in most present-day High German dialects (cf. Lipold 1983, Jäger 2018: 291), while the standard language has preserved *als*.

## 3 Old Low German

### 3.1 Similative

#### 3.1.1 Type 1-3: standard marker (STM) is flag, parameter marker (PM) is E (verb/adjective)

##### 3.1.1.1 Type 1-3-1: flag is case

Very occasionally, a kind of similative is expressed in OLG using an adjective meaning ‘same’/‘similar’, cf. (37). The equivalent of the standard of comparison appears in the dative case (see also Cordes & Holthausen 1973: 234). As in OHG this does not constitute a true instance of comparative case but rather a dative governed by the particular adjective (see also sect. 2.1.1.1).

<sup>11</sup> A relic of the similative/equative use of *als* is found in its fossilised use in hypothetical comparisons, a subtype of similatives/equatives. In contrast to OHG (sect. 2.1.5) and MHG, the ENHG period sees hypothetical comparisons develop distinct types that are formally different from ordinary similatives: In hypothetical comparisons introduced by mere *als*, verb-first order replaces the usual verb-final order of similatives. Furthermore, specific complex elements introducing the standard develop (such as *als ob*, *als wenn*, later *wie wenn*), which make explicit the semantics of similative + conditional.

<sup>12</sup> While all comparison particles throughout the history of German are attested with phrasal as well as with clausal standards, *wie* – due to its origin as an interrogative/relative adverb – is originally restricted to clausal standards, and only (rarely) occurs with phrasal standards since the 16<sup>th</sup> century.

- (37) *nīs hebanrīki gelīc sulīcaro lōgnun*  
 NEG=be.PRS.3SG heavenly.kingdom similar such flame.DAT  
 CPREE PM ┌───STAND.STM───┐  
 ‘The heavenly kingdom is not similar to/like such flame.’ (Genesis 559 f.)

### 3.1.2 Type 1-6: standard marker (STM) is particle, parameter marker (PM) is free morpheme

This type represents the second most typical pattern in OLG similatives. In OS, the standard marker almost always consists of the comparison particle *sô*, cf. (38) and (41). Very occasionally, strengthened forms occur (as in OHG, see sect. 2.1.2), viz. *sô samo sô*, cf. (39), or *al sô*, cf. (40). As a parameter marker, too, *sô* is predominant, cf. (38), (39) and (40), but we also find *sulik*, cf. (41) (see Behaghel 1897: 315). In the OLFr psalms, there is only one potential example of this type, using *alsô* as standard marker and parameter marker, cf. (42).

- (38) *sô mi thes uundar thunkit, huuô it sô*  
 therefore 1SG.DAT that.GEN miracle.NOM seem.PRS.3SG how it so  
 PM  
*giuuerðan mugī sô thu mid thînun*  
 happen.INF may.PRS.SBJV.3SG as 2SG.NOM with 2SG.POSS.DAT.PL  
 ┌───CPREE───┐ STM ┌───STAND───┐  
*uuordun gisprikis.*  
 word.DAT.PL say.INF  
 └───┘  
 ‘Therefore it seems a wonder to me if it might happen as you say with your words.’ (Heliand 157 f.)

- (39) *Sô samo sô that crûd endi thie thorn that*  
 as ART.NOM weed.NOM AND ART.NOM thorn.NOM ART.ACC  
 STM ┌───STAND───┐  
*corn antfâhat, uueriat in thena uuastom,*  
 corn.ACC seize.PRS.3PL inhibit.PRS.3PL he.DAT ART.ACC growth.ACC  
 └───┘  
*sô duot thie uuelo manne*  
 as do.PRS.3SG ART.NOM wealth.NOM man.DAT  
 PM ┌───CPREE───┐  
 ‘Just as the weeds and the thorn entangle the corn and inhibit its growth: so does wealth to a man.’ (Heliand 2522 f.)

- (40) *al sô* [C: *sô*] *git hîr an Iordanes strôme fiscos*  
 as 2DU here at J.GEN stream.DAT fish.ACC.PL  
 STM ————— STAND —————  
*fâhat, sô sculun git noh friho*  
 catch.PRS.2PL thus shall.PRS.2.PL 2DU henceforth man.GEN.PL  
 ————— PM ————— CPREE —————  
*barn halon te incun handun*  
 children.ACC.PL fetch.INF to 2DU.POSS.DAT hand.DAT.PL

‘As you catch fish here in the Jordan river, so shall you henceforth fetch the children of man with your hands’ (Heliand 1159–1161)

- (41) *ac cumid fan alloro bâmo gehuilicumu sulic*  
 but come.PRS.3SG from all.GEN.PL tree.GEN.PL each.DAT such.NOM  
 PM  
*uuastom te thesero, uueroldi sô im fan is*  
 growth.NOM to this.DAT world.DAT as he.DAT from he.GEN  
 CPREE STM ————— STAND —————  
*uurteon gedregid, ettha berht ettha bittar.*  
 root.DAT.PL determine.PRS.3SG either brilliant or bitter

‘But from every tree only such fruit comes to this world as is determined by its roots, either good fruit or bitter.’ (Heliand 1748–1750)

- (42) (sicut viventes sic in ira absorbet eos)  
*Also libbende also an abulge farsuuelgit sia.*  
 like living.being.NOM.PL so in rage.DAT devour.PRS.3SG they.DAT  
 STM STAND PM CPREE  
 ‘Like living beings, thus he devours them in his rage’ (OLFr psalms 57.10)

### 3.1.3 Type 1-8: standard marker (STM) is particle, parameter marker (PM) is not expressed

This type constitutes the most typical pattern in OLG similatives (three times as common as the second most common type 1-6, cf. sect. 3.1.2, in *Genesis* and *Heliand* with  $n = 3$  vs. 1 and 125 vs. 41; more than twenty times as common in OLFr psalms with  $n = 24$  vs. 1; however less common than type 1-6 in the OS confession with  $n = 4$  vs. 9). Again, the standard marker most commonly consists of the comparison particle *sô*, cf. (43), less often of strengthened forms such as *al sô*, cf. (44) or *sô samo sô*, cf. (45) (see also Cordes & Holthausen 1973: 252; Behaghel 1897: 316 f.). This type occurs commonly with clausal standards, but also with phrasal standards, i. e. mere noun



phrases, prepositional phrases, adverb phrases etc. As typical of similatives in many languages, the parameter marker is optional in similatives in OLG and is missing in this particular type.

- (43) *godes engilos forð sîdodun te Sodoma, sô*  
 god.GEN angel.NOM.PL forth go.PST.3PL to S.DAT as  
 ───────────────────CPREE────────────────── STM  
*im selbo gebôd uualdand mid is uuordo*  
 they.DAT himself command.PST.3SG Lord.NOM with he.GEN word.INS  
 ───────────────────STAND──────────────────  
 ‘God’s angels went away to Sodom, as the Lord himself had ordered them to  
 with his word’ (Genesis 835–837)

- (44) *endi alât ûs [...] managoro mênschildio, al sô*  
 and release.IMP 1PL.DAT manifold.GEN sin.PL.GEN as  
 ───────────────────CPREE────────────────── STM  
*uue ôðrum mannum dôan*  
 1PL.NOM other.DAT.PL man.DAT.PL do.SBJV.PRS.1PL  
 ───────────────────STAND──────────────────  
 ‘and absolve us from manifold sins, as we do other people’ (Heliand 1608 f.)

- (45) *that gi iuuua fîund skulun minneon an*  
 that 2PL.NOM 2PL.POSS.ACC.PL foe.ACC.PL shall.PRS.2PL love.INF in  
 ───────────────────CPREE──────────────────  
*iuuomu môde, sô samo sô gi iuuua*  
 2PL.POSS.DAT mind.DAT as 2PL.NOM 2PL.POSS.ACC.PL  
 ─────────── STM ───────────STAND──────────  
*mâgos dôt*  
 kin.ACC.PL do.PRS.2PL  
 ───────────  
 ‘that you shall love your enemies in your mind just as you do your kin’ (Heliand  
 1454 f.)

### 3.1.4 Formal means of expressing similatives

The formal means used in OLG similatives and their etymology correspond to those in OHG, cf. sect. 2.1.6.

## 3.2 Equative

### 3.2.1 Type 2-6: standard marker (STM) is particle, parameter marker (PM) is free morpheme

This type constitutes the typical pattern of equatives in OLG. The standard marker (comparison particle) is almost always the particle *sô*, cf. (46). The standard may be phrasal or clausal. Very occasionally, strengthened forms of the standard marker are also attested, viz. *al sô*, cf. (47), and *sô samo sô*, cf. (48). The parameter marker in all of these cases consists of the homophonous demonstrative adverb *sô*.<sup>13</sup> Another construction that could arguably be subsumed under type 2-6, viz. *than lang the* ('as long as'), is illustrated in (49). Inasmuch as these may be considered transparent equatives (alternatively one may analyse them as grammaticalized expressions introducing temporal clauses), the parameter marker here is *than*, which otherwise occurs as a standard marker in comparatives (see sect. 3.3.3), but also in parallel constructions in front of the parameter in comparatives (see (59), sect. 3.3.3). (Following Small (1929:84–88), it could arguably be analysed as a fossilised instrumental case form of the demonstrative, cf. sect. 4.3.1.1. on OE. Synchronically, in OLG, it corresponds to accusative singular or dative singular/plural forms of the demonstrative, however, rather than to the instrumental, cf. Galleé (1993: 238 f.)) In examples like the one in (49), the relative particle *the* is used as the potential standard marker. (Note that in many languages, similitive/equative standard markers are also used as or diachronically developed into relative particles, testifying to the similarity of comparisons and relative constructions.)

- (46) *sô fast bist thu sô felis the hardo.*  
 so firm be.PRS.2SG 2SG.NOM as rock.NOM ART.NOM hard.NOM  
 PM PAR CPREE STM STAND  
 'You are as firm as a hard rock' (Heliand 3068)

- (47) *Hie uuas an is dâdion gelïc, an is*  
 he be.PST.3SG in he.GEN deed.DAT.PL similar in he.GEN  
 CPREE  
*ansunion [...] sô bereht endi sô blïði all sô*  
 look.DAT.PL so radiant and so bright as  
 PM PAR PM PAR STM

<sup>13</sup> On the basis of equatives such as *sô lango sô* ('as long as') new subordinations may be grammaticalized so that it may be difficult to decide the status of these constructions. In fact, in *Genesis* this kind of construction constitutes the only potential evidence for equatives (*thar siu standan scal [...] te êuandage, sô lango sô thius erða lêbot* 'She shall stand there [...] until eternity, as long as the earth exists' Genesis 921–923).





sions with *êr* + dative. Note, however, that in cases with original phrasal standard of comparison, the comparative form *êr* ‘earlier’ can be argued to be in the process of being grammaticalized into a preposition ‘before’ governing dative (as in OHG, see sect. 2.3.1.1), cf. (53).<sup>14</sup>

- (53) *that he an theru suartan naht êr*  
 that he.NOM in ART.DAT black.DAT night.DAT before/earlier  
 PAR.PM  
*hanocrâdi is hêrron scoldi thrîuuo farlôgnien*  
 cockcrow.DAT he.GEN lord.ACC shall.PST.SBJV.3SG three.times deny.INF  
 STAND  
 ‘that he would deny his Lord three times during this black night before the cock-  
 crow’ (Heliand 4998–5000)

### 3.3.1.2 Type 3-1-2: flag is adposition

There are some rare loan syntactic occurrences of a construction of this type in OLG, cf. (54). The Latin preposition *super* is translated as *ouir/ouer* ‘above/over’ marking the standard of comparison. The parameter marker is the usual comparative suffix (see sect. 3.3.3).

- (54) (et dulciora super mel et favum)  
*in suottera ouer honog in rata.*  
 and sweeter over honey.ACC and honeycomb.ACC  
 PAR.PM STM —————STAND—————  
 ‘and sweeter than honey and honeycomb’ (OLFr psalms 18.11)

### 3.3.2 Type 3-4: standard marker (STM) is flag, parameter marker (PM) is not expressed

#### 3.3.2.1 Type 3-4-2: flag is adposition

There is one loan syntactic occurrence of a kind of construction of this type in OLG (viz. in the OLFr psalms) where the Latin preposition *super* is translated as *ouir* ‘above/over’ marking the standard of comparison while the parameter marker is not expressed (adjective is in the positive form), cf. (55).

<sup>14</sup> With original clausal standards, *êr* is undergoing grammaticalization into a subjunction, see sect. 3.3.3.

- (55) (Desiderabilia super aurum et lapidem pretiosum multum)  
*Begerlika ouir golt in stein durlikin uilo*  
 desirable over gold.ACC and stone.ACC precious.ACC many  
 PAR STM ————— STAND —————  
 ‘more desirable than gold and many precious stones’ (OLFr psalms 18.11)

### 3.3.3 Type 3-5: standard marker (STM) is particle, parameter marker (PM) is bound morpheme

This type represents the main pattern used in OLG comparatives. The parameter marker consists of the inflectional suffix *-ir-/-er-/-ar-/-or-/-r-*, on adverbs also *-ur-* (Galleé 1993: 230–233; Cordes & Holthausen 1973: 37). The suffix *-ir-* is less widely attested in OLG than in OHG. It only occurs with the adjectives *ald* (‘old’) – *aldirō*, *eng* (‘narrow’) – *engira*, *lang* (‘long’) – *lengira*, *mildi* (‘mild’) – *mildira*, *spâhi* (‘wise’) – *spâhira*, and in *furdirō* (‘greater’), cf. Fulk (2018: 220), Cordes & Holthausen (1899: 136). Regarding the other comparative suffixes, one and the same adjective may show varying forms (for example *liof* ‘dear’ – *liobora/-ara/-era*, see Cordes & Holthausen 1899: 137; Cordes & Holthausen 1973: 161; Galleé 1993: 230 f.), and there is even variation among different manuscripts of the same text: Galleé (1993: 231) notes that manuscript C of *Heliand* favours *-er-*, whereas manuscript M favours *-or-*. The choice of the comparative suffix is, however, also partly conditioned by the inflection class of the adjective in so far as *ja*-stems usually take *-er-*.

The most common standard marker is the particle *than(na)*, as in (56) and (57) (see also Cordes & Holthausen 1973: 252). It is used both with phrasal and (less frequently) with clausal standards.<sup>15</sup> A particularly common construction of this type is one including the parameter *êr* ‘earlier’, cf. (57).<sup>16</sup> On the basis of this comparative construction, *êr* (*than*) is arguably beginning to be grammaticalized into a temporal subjunction/complementizer (see also sect. 2.3.4). The fact that *êr* also occurs without *than* in a few cases or with a doubled parameter *êr* in the preceding clause (*êr ... êr than ... Heliand* 3612 and 4346) could be interpreted as supporting this assumption (see also Behaghel 1897: 311 f.).<sup>17</sup>

<sup>15</sup> In the OS confession, *than* is the only STM used; in *Heliand*, it is by far the most common one (occurring in 30 of 38 comparatives of this type); in *Genesis*, two of the four comparatives of this type contain *than*.

<sup>16</sup> It occurs especially in *Heliand* (21 of 30 instances of the comparative with *than*).

<sup>17</sup> This assumption is also reinforced by Behaghel, whose edition of *Heliand* inserts punctuation and line breaks before *êr than* which are, however, not in the original manuscripts.

- (56) *ak sind im lâri uuord leoboron* [C: *liobara*]  
 yet be.PRS.3PL they.DAT empty word.NOM.PL dearer.NOM.PL  
 CPREE- PAR.PM  
*mikilu, umbitharbi thing, thanna theotgodes*  
 much useless thing.NOM.PL than almighty.god.GEN  
 -CPREE STM  
*uuerc endi uilleo*  
 work.NOM.PL and will.NOM  
 ————STAND—————  
 ‘Yet empty words and useless things are much dearer to them than the work and will of the almighty God.’ (Heliand 1727–1729)

- (57) *Ic mag iu thoh gitellien, huilic hêr tēcan*  
 1SG.NOM can.PRS.1SG 2PL.DAT yet tell.INF which here sign.NOM.PL  
*biforan giuuerðad uuunderlîc êr than* [*than* missing in M]  
 before happen.PRS.3PL wonderous before/earlier than  
 PAR.PM STM  
*he an these uuerold kume an themu*  
 he.NOM in this.DAT world.DAT come.PRS.SBJV.3SG at ART.DAT  
 ————STAND—————  
*mâreon daga*  
 bright.DAT day.DAT  
 ——————

‘Yet I may tell you what wonderous signs shall happen here before (lit. earlier than) he will come to this world on that famous day.’ (Heliand 4308–4310)

Besides *than*, *biûtan/bûtan/bôtan* occasionally functions as a standard marker in OLG (twice in *Genesis*, 7 times in *Heliand*), cf. (58) (see Behaghel 1897: 51). However, it is restricted to negated contexts ‘no more than’, ‘none other than’, and is often equivalent to ‘except’. Very rarely (3 times in *Heliand*), *newan/nevan* occurs instead in the same kind of contexts (3 times in *Heliand* in the younger ms. C instead of *biûtan/bûtan*), as is also illustrated in (58). The relative particle *the/thie* is also very rarely used as a standard marker in these comparatives as illustrated in (59) (see also Behaghel 1984, 289; Sehr 1966: 592), underlining the close relation between comparisons and relative constructions.

Of particular note is the use of *than* before the parameter in the superordinate clause in all of these cases. In *Referenzkorpus Altdeutsch*, it is agnostically annotated as “*than* in Negativsätzen in Verbindung mit dem Komparativ” (*‘than* in negated clauses in combination with the comparative’), taking up a formulation by Sehr (1966: 549), who translates *than mêt the* as ‘ebensowenig’ (‘just as little’); see also Cordes & Holthausen (1973: 252). At any rate, it is clearly not the standard marker *than*. According to Behaghel (1897: 154), *than* functions as an adverb here that refers anaphorically

to the comparee. For *than* in the same kind of construction in OE comparatives, Small (1929: 88–96) assumes, however, that *than* in front of the parameter constitutes an old comparative (instrumental) case form of the demonstrative meaning ‘than that’, which refers cataphorically to the standard (see discussion of (96), sect. 4.3.1.1). Note that the same kind of construction as in (59) with *than*-parameter-*the* is also used in OLG equatives, where *than* seems to function rather as a parameter marker (cf. (49), sect. 3.2.1). The occurrence of the same kind of construction in comparatives could be taken as evidence for an incipient shift of markers from equatives to comparatives, especially given the restriction to negated comparatives (Comparative Cycle, see sect. 2.7/3.7). Generally, *than* + parameter (*than mêt* etc.) appears to be incompatible with the use of *than* as a standard marker.

- (58) *Ne skulun gi geuuâdeas than mêt*  
 NEG shall.PRS.2PL 2PL.NOM clothing.GEN.PL than more  
 PAR.PM  
*erlos êgan, bûtan [C: newan] sô gi than an*  
 noble.NOM.PL possess.INF than/except as 2PL.NOM then on  
 STM —————STAND—————  
*hebbean*  
 have.PRS.SBJV.2PL  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 ‘You shall own no more clothes, noble ones, than those which you wear’  
 (Heliand 1855 f.)

- (59) *ni mugun iuuua uerk mikil biholan*  
 NEG may.PRS.3PL your deed.NOM.PL big.NOM.PL hide.PTCP.PST  
 CPREE  
*uuerðan mid huilicogi gi sea hugi cûðeat*  
 become.INF with which 2PL.NOM they.ACC mind.INS show.PRS.2PL  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
*than mêt the thiu burg ni mag thiu an*  
 than more PTCL ART TOWN.NOM NEG can.PRS.3SG REL.NOM on  
 PAR.PM STM —————STAND—————  
*berge stâð hōh holmklību biholen*  
 mountain.DAT stand.PRS.3SG high.NOM rock.NOM hide.PTCP.PST  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
*uuerðen*  
 become.INF  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 ‘Your big deeds cannot be hidden with which you disclose your minds any  
 more than the town may be hidden that is situated on a mountain, a high rock.’  
 (Heliand 1395 f.)



### 3.3.4 Type 3-9: standard marker (STM) and standard (STAND) are not expressed, parameter marker (PM) is bound morpheme

This type is attested in OLG in contextual comparatives, i. e. those where the standard is inferred from the context, as in (60).

- (60) *that uuas thiū uuirsa giburd, kuman fan Kaina*  
 that be.PST.3SG ART worse birth.NOM come.PTCP.PST from K.DAT  
 PAR.PM CPREE  
 ‘That was the worse lineage, stemming from Kain’ (Genesis 711)

### 3.3.5 Formal means of expressing comparatives

The parameter marker in OLG comparatives consists of the bound comparative morpheme *-ir- (-er-)/ar-/-or-/-r-*, on adverbs also *-ur-* (see Galleé 1993: 230–233; Cordes & Holthausen 1973: 37). On the distribution of these variants see sect. 3.3.3. Regarding etymology cf. sect. 2.3.6 on the corresponding OHG comparative morpheme. Similarly, a couple of adjectives show suppletive comparative forms, e. g. *gôd* ‘good’ – *betara* ‘better’, *ubil* ‘bad’ – *wirsa* ‘worse’, *luttill* ‘little/ few’ – *minnera* ‘less’ (Galleé 1993: 232f.). A few other adjectives/adverbs have short comparative forms, e. g. *lango* ‘long’ – *leng* ‘longer’. Furthermore, Galleé (1993: 233) lists the following irregular adverbial comparative forms: *bet* ‘better’, *hald* ‘(much) more’, *lês* ‘less’, *leng* ‘longer’, *mêr* ‘more’, *wirs* ‘worse’, *êr* ‘earlier’, *sith* ‘later’, new comparative *siðor*.

On the etymology of the standard marker *than* see sect. 2.3.6. The less frequently used standard marker *biûtan/bûtan* derives from *bî + ûtan* ‘separate from, except, without’ (cf. Sehr 1966: 67, EWA I: 139). *Newan* represents a combination of the negative particle and *hwanne* (< PGmc *\*hwan-nai*, i. e. interrogative/indefinite + locative particle, cf. Schmidt 1962: 95f., or modal instrumental/emphatic particle, cf. LIPP 2: 60f.), which besides the temporal meaning ‘when’ could also have a modal meaning ‘how’. Etymologically, *wan* thus represents the wh-counterpart of *than*.

## 3.4 Superlative

### 3.4.1 Type 4-1: standard marker (STM) is flag, parameter marker (PM) is bound morpheme

#### 3.4.1.1 Type 4-1-1: flag is case

In OLG superlative constructions, the parameter is marked by the inflectional suffix *-ist-/-ôst-* (see Galleé 1993: 231–233; Cordes & Holthausen 1973: 39). As in OHG (sect. 2.4.1.1) the ‘standard’, or rather the set of which the comparee possesses the relevant

property to the highest degree, is marked by the usual means expressing partitivity including partitive genitive (not a genuine comparative case), cf. (61).

- (61) *he im uuâri allaro barno liobost*  
 he.NOM he.DAT be.PST.SBJV.3SG all.GEN.PL child.GEN.PL dearest  
 CPREE ————STAND.STM——— PAR.PM

‘He was dearest to him of all children’ (Heliand 993)

### 3.4.1.2 Type 4-1-2: flag is adposition

Another means of marking partitivity, though only applied very rarely in OLG superlatives (once in *Heliand*), is the preposition *undar* ‘under/among’, cf. (62). The parameter is marked by the usual superlative suffix.

- (62) *huilic thar rîki man undar themu folcskepi furista*  
 which PTCL rich.NOM man.NOM under ART.DAT folk.DAT highest  
 —————CPREE————— STM ———STAND.STM——— PAR.PM

*uuâri*

be.PST.SBJV.3SG

‘which rich man was the highest among the people’ (Heliand 3554 f.)

### 3.4.3 Type 4-9: standard marker (STM) and standard (STAND) are not expressed, parameter marker (PM) is bound morpheme

The ‘standard’ in superlatives may also be inferred from the context, which is only rarely attested in OLG (twice in *Heliand*), cf. (63). The parameter is again marked by the usual superlative suffix.

- (63) *that than the lazto dag liudiun nâhid*  
 that then ART.NOM last.NOM day.NOM people.DAT approach.PRS.3SG  
 PAR.PM CPREE

‘that then, the last day is approaching to the people’ (Heliand 4335)

### 3.4.4 Formal means of expressing superlatives

On the etymology of the superlative suffix see sect. 2.4.3. Some OLG adjectives/adverbs show suppletive superlative forms, e. g. *guot* ‘good’ – *bezt/betst/best* ‘best’, *luttill* ‘less/few’ – *minnist* ‘fewest’, *mikil* ‘big’ – *mêst/mêsta* ‘biggest’ (see Galleé 1993: 232 f.)

### 3.5 Elative

#### 3.5.1 Type 5-10: standard marker (STM) and standard (STAND) are not expressed, parameter marker (PM) is free morpheme

As in OHG, the elative does not constitute a grammatical category in OLG. The semantic equivalent is usually expressed lexically by various free morphemes, notably adverbs such as *swiðo* ‘severely/very’, cf. (64), *tulgo* ‘much/very’, cf. (65), *filu* ‘much/very’, cf. (66), *hardo* ‘firmly/very’, cf. (67), or *unmet* ‘immeasurably’, cf. (68) (see also Behaghel 1897: 154).

- (64) *thar sie uualdand god suwiðo theoliko thiggean*  
 there they.NOM might.wielding.ACC god.ACC very humbly beg.INF  
 PM PAR

*scoldun*

shall.PST.3PL

‘where they should beg the almighty God very humbly’ (Heliand 98 f.)

- (65) *Habda im sô bihalden hêlag barn godes*  
 have.PST.3SG he.DAT so keep.PTCP.PST holy.NOM child.NOM god.GEN  
*uuord endi uuîsdôm ende allaro giuuitteo mêst,*  
 word.ACC and wisdom.ACC and all.GEN.PL wit.GEN.PL most.ACC  
*tulgo spâhan hugi*  
 very wise.ACC thought.ACC  
 PM PAR CPREE

‘He had kept it to himself, God’s holy child, the word and wisdom and all his great wit, his very wise mind.’ (Heliand 847–849)

- (66) *endi im sagda filu langsamna râd.*  
 and they.DAT say.PST.3SG very long-lasting.ACC counsel.ACC  
 PM PAR CPREE

‘and told them very long-lasting counsel’ (Heliand 4527)

- (67) *“that habad sô bidernid”, quað he,*  
 that.ACC have.PRS.3SG so conceal.PTCP.PST say.PST.3SG he.NOM  
*“drohtin the gôdo jak sô hardo farholen*  
 Lord ART good.NOM and so very conceal.PTCP.PST  
 PM PAR

*himilríkies fader*

heavenly.kingdom.GEN father.NOM

‘‘The good Lord has kept it so secret,’’ he said, ‘‘the father of the heavenly kingdom has so very much concealed it’’ (Heliand 4296 f.)

- (68) *ferid unmet grôt hungar hetigrim ōbar*  
 travel.PRS.3SG immeasurable big.NOM hunger.NOM grim.NOM over  
 PM PAR CPREE  
*heliðo barn, metigêdeono mêst*  
 man.GEN.PL child.ACC.PL famine.GEN.PL greatest.NOM

‘An immeasurably big and grim hunger comes over the children of men, the greatest famine.’ (Heliand 4329–4331)

### 3.5.2 Types not included in the questionnaire

Elativ semantics may also be expressed by word formation in OLG, viz. composition with e. g. *filu* ‘much’, cf. (69), *bar* ‘bare’, cf. (70), *ên* ‘single/one’, cf. (71). Rauch (1992: 187) furthermore mentions the possibility of intensification by the prefix *gi-/ge-*, cf. *wirdig* ‘valuable’ – *giwirdig* ‘precious’.

- (69) *Than was thar ên giuittig man,*  
 then be.PST.3SG there one.NOM wise.NOM man.NOM  
 CPREE  
*frôd endi filuuûs*  
 experienced.NOM and much.wise.NOM  
 PM.PAR

‘There was a wise man there, experienced and very wise’ (Heliand 569 f.)

- (70) *Thô, sprak imu ên thero manno angegin ōbar*  
 there say.PST.3SG he.DAT one ART.GEN.PL man.GEN.PL opposite over  
  
*bord skipes baruuirðig gumo, Petrus the*  
 board.ACC ship.GEN bare.worthy.NOM man.NOM P.NOM ART.NOM  
 PM.PAR CPREE  
*gôdo*  
 good.NOM

‘Then, one of the men spoke to him from upon the ship, a most worthy man, Peter the good’ (Heliand 2931 f.)



### 3.7 Further remarks

As in High German (see sect. 2.7) there is evidence for the Comparative Cycle in the further development of Low German, i. e. a shift of standard markers (comparison particles) from similatives to equatives to comparatives. This development, however, takes place at a much slower pace than in High German. Thus, *than* > *dann* > *denn* represents the main pattern of standard marking also in Middle Low German (MLG) comparatives and is still preserved in a few present-day Low German dialects (cf. Lipold 1983). However, the standard marker *also* > *as*, which first succeeded the earlier standard marker *so* in similatives, became the main standard marker used in equatives, too, in MLG. It is considered typical of Low German (in contrast to High German) equatives until today. In most Low German varieties it has subsequently also become the main standard marker in comparatives so that *as* largely constitutes a uniform comparison particle in similatives, equatives and comparatives in present-day Low German, cf. Appel (2007: 125–127), Lindow et al. (1998: 300), and Sass (2002: 33, 243, 430). Only recently, *wie* and its Low German counterpart *wo/wu* (< ‘how’) are also used in similatives, equatives and in some Low German dialects occasionally already in comparatives, repeating the shift observed for *also/as* (cf. Jäger 2018: 316, 337).

Likewise, there is evidence for the Comparative Cycle in Dutch (see Jäger 2018: 377–380), which continues OLFr: *als(o)* took over as the main standard marker in similatives and equatives in Middle Dutch. During the 14<sup>th</sup>/15<sup>th</sup> century, the first, rare, attestations of *also* in comparatives are found. In the latter type of comparisons it largely superseded *dan* (< *than*) during the 16<sup>th</sup> century (cf. van der Horst 2008: 728). Due to conservative-normative pressure, however, *dan* became the usual standard marker in comparatives again since the 18<sup>th</sup> century (van der Horst 2008: 1442, Hubers/de Hoop 2013: 90). While *dan* represents a kind of shibboleth for correct standard Dutch today, *als/as* is widely used in comparatives in present-day dialects, especially in Southern varieties (cf. SAND 2005: 13, map 15b).

## 4 Old English

### 4.1 Similative

#### 4.1.1 Type 1-3: standard marker (STM) is flag, parameter marker (PM) is E (verb/ adjective)

##### 4.1.1.1 Type 1-3-1: flag is case

As in OHG and OLG, OE may make use of an adjective *gelic* or *anlic* meaning ‘same’/‘similar’ (assumed here, as above, to be the parameter marker) together with dative case to form a similative, as in (74) (cf. Mitchell 1985, I: 569–570, Nevanlinna

1993: 140, and references cited there). The adjective *anlic*, as in (75), is very rare in this use in early OE.

- (74) *on his life* & *on his gelærednesse* *he* *wæs*  
 in his life.DAT and in his learnedness.DAT he.NOM be.PST.3SG  
 CPREE  
*his foregengum* *gelic*  
 his predecessors.PL.DAT similar  
 STAND.STM PM  
 ‘In his life and in his learning he was similar to his predecessors.’ (cobede, Bede\_3:12.194.1.1951)
- (75) *þis* *is* *swiðe riht racu ...* & *swiðe anlic*  
 this.NOM be.PRS.3SG very right tale.NOM and very similar  
 CPREE PM  
*þæm þe þu ær reahtes*  
 that.DAT REL 2SG.NOM before tell.PST.2SG  
 STAND.STM  
 ‘This is a very good telling, and very similar to the one you previously told’ (coboeth, Bo:38.123.4.2449)

#### 4.1.2 Type 1-6: standard marker (STM) is particle, parameter marker (PM) is free morpheme

The most commonly occurring similitive construction in OE involves *swā* ‘so’ both as standard marker and as parameter marker, as in (76). The same structure may occur with different standard markers (strengthened forms of *swā*), such as *efne* (or *emne*) *swā*, as in (77), and *gelice swā*, as in (78). The unverbated form *ealswā* is not attested in the pre-950 texts in the YCOE, but is found in later texts such as the works of Wulfstan, as in (76) (see Mitchell 1985, II: 652 and references cited there). We also find *swilc/swelc*, which also occurs as a parameter marker, as in (80).

- (76) *þa wolde he don ymbe hine swa swa*  
 then want.PST.3SG he.NOM do.INF about him.ACC so so  
 CPREE PM STM  
*he ymbe manigne cuman ær dyde*  
 he.NOM about many.ACC visitor.ACC before do.PST.3SG  
 STAND  
 ‘then he wanted to treat him as he had treated many previous visitors’ (coboeth, Bo:16.371.669)

- (77) *efne swa se wind swiþor slogon þone*  
 even so ART.NOM wind.NOM stronger beat.PST.3PL ART.ACC  
 STM ————— STAND —————  
*leg swa bræc he swiþor ongean þæm*  
 flame.ACC so break.PST.3SG he.NOM stronger against ART.DAT  
 ————— PM ————— CPREE —————  
*winde*  
 wind.DAT  
 —————

‘Just as the wind beat the flame more strongly, the flame fought more strongly against the wind’ (coblick,LS\_17.1\_[MartinMor[BiHom\_17]]:221.175.2825)

- (78) *swa he þa mid soðe gefylde, gelice swa he*  
 so he.NOM then with truth.DAT fill.PST.3SG similar so he.NOM  
 PM ————— CPREE ————— STM —————  
*ær þa þrowunge dyde*  
 before ART.ACC passion.ACC do.PST.3SG  
 ————— STAND —————

‘He filled them with truth, just as he did before the passion’ (coblick,HomS\_8\_[BiHom\_2]:17.34.211)

- (79) *And witodlice ealswa flod com hwilum ær*  
 and truly as flood.NOM come.PST.3SG for-a-time before  
 STM ————— STAND —————  
*for synnum, swa cymð eac for synnum fyr*  
 for sin.DAT.PL so come.PRS.3SG also for sin.DAT.PL fire.NOM  
 ————— PM ————— CPREE —————  
*ofer mancynn*  
 over mankind.ACC  
 —————

‘And truly, just as the flood came before (to punish us) for our sins, now the fire is coming (to punish us) for our sins.’ (cowulf,WHom\_3:752)

- (80) *Suelc ðæt folc bið, suelc bið se*  
 as ART.NOM people.NOM be.PRS.3SG so be.PRS.3SG ART.NOM  
 STM STAND PM CPREE  
*sacerd*  
 priest.NOM

‘As the people are, so is the priest’ (cocura,CP:18.133.5.899)





- (83) *hi forðferdon ælc æfter oðrum, emne swa*  
 they.NOM die.PST.3PL one.NOM after other.DAT even so  
 ───────────────────CPREE────────────────── STM  
*hi ær genemde & awritene wæron*  
 they.NOM before name.PTCP.PST and written.PTCP.PST be.PST.PL  
 ───────────────────STAND──────────────────  
 ‘they died one after another, just as they had been named and written down’  
 (cogregdC,GDPref\_and\_4\_[C]:27.298.18.4422)

- (84) *Emne hit bið gelice swa man mid wætere*  
 even it.NOM be.PRS.3SG similar so man.NOM with water.DAT  
 CPREE STM ───────────STAND──────────  
*þone weallendan wylm agiote*  
 ART.ACC surging.ACC.WK flame.ACC quench.PRS.SBJV.SG  
 ───────────────────────────────────  
 ‘It is just like putting out a surging flame with water’ (coverhom,HomS\_40.3\_ [ScraggVerc\_10]:129.1462)

- (85) *ealle cyrican belimpað to anre, ealswa*  
 all.NOM churches.NOM belong.PRS.3PL to one.DAT as  
 STM  
*we ær cwedan*  
 we.NOM before say.PST.PL  
 ───────────STAND──────────  
 ‘All churches belong to one, as we said before’ (cowulf,WHom\_18:124.1493)

- (86) *& hof his honda upp swaswa he foroft*  
 and lift.PST.3SG his hands.ACC up as he.NOM very.often  
 ───────────────────CPREE────────────────── STM ───────────  
*gewunade þet he dyde*  
 used that he.NOM do.PST.3SG  
 ───────────STAND──────────  
 ‘and lifted his hands up, as was his custom’ (cochad,LS\_3\_[Chad]:108.69)

#### 4.1.5 Types not included in the questionnaire

OE hypothetical comparisons, as in OHG, behave like normal similatives and equatives: the standard marker is typically *swā* or a strengthened form of *swā*, and the hypothetical nature of the comparison is marked by the use of the subjunctive mode in the standard clause. See also Mitchell (1985, II: 696–701). (87) is an example with *efne/emne swā*.

- (87) *þa geecte he þær to þæt word þines*  
 then add.PST.3SG he.NOM there to ART.SG word.SG 2SG.POSS.GEN  
 ───────────────────────────────────CPREE──────────────────────────────────  
*mūðes, emne swa he openlice cwæde*  
 mouth.GEN even as he.NOM openly say.PRS.SBJV.SG  
 ─── STM ───────────────────STAND──────────────────  
 ‘then he added the words “of your mouth”, as if he were to openly say: ...’  
 (cogregdC,GD\_2\_[C]:16.139.7.1671)

Word-formation can also be used to form specific similatives: for instance, compounds with *efen-* are relatively frequent, e. g. *efenbliðe* ‘similarly happy’, as in (88).

- (88) *Ne wepað git me na swa ic dead sy,*  
 NEG weep.IMP.PL 2DU.NOM 1SG.ACC not so 1SG.NOM dead be  
*ac bið me efenbliðe*  
 but be.IMP.PL 1SG.DAT even.happy  
 [CPREE] STAND.STM PM.PAR  
 ‘Do not weep for me now that I am dead, but be happy, like me’ (comart3,Mart\_5\_  
 [Kotzor]:Ja21,A.16.204 and comart3,Mart\_5\_[Kotzor]:Ja21,A.16.205)

#### 4.1.6 Formal means of expressing similatives

The main standard and parameter marker, *swā*, is cognate with the forms found in OHG, OLG, and OFri, and ultimately descended from the PIE pronominal stem *\*swe/swo-* (OED Online s. v. *so*, LIPP 2: 763 f.). The observations made in section 2.1.6 for OHG also hold true here: other forms are recruited as reinforcement and undergo grammaticalization.

## 4.2 Equative

### 4.2.1 Type 2-6: standard marker (STM) is particle, parameter marker (PM) is free morpheme

This is the typical pattern for equatives in OE. Usually the particle/adverb *swā* is both parameter marker and standard marker, as in (89); cf. Mitchell (1985, II: 654–656). Just as with similatives, other standard markers are also found: for instance, a double *swā* *swā*, as in (90), or *swelc(e)* as either PM or STM (cf. Mitchell 1985, II: 675–680).

- (89) *swa swiðe swa þa neowan Cristnan*  
 so much so ART.NOM.PL new.NOM.PL.WK Christians.NOM  
 PM PAR STM —————STAND—————  
*þa get hit neoman meahton*  
 then yet it.ACC take.INF may.PST.PL

‘to the extent to which the new Christians were capable of it’  
 (cobede,Bede\_3:16.226.26.2325)

- (90) & *Leden him wæs swa cuð & swa gemimor*  
 and Latin.NOM he.DAT be.PST.3SG so known and so thorough  
 CPREE PM PAR PM PAR  
*swa swa Englisc*  
 so so English  
 STM STAND

‘and Latin was as thoroughly familiar to him as English’  
 (cobede,Bede\_5:18.464.29.4689)

#### 4.2.2 Type 2-10: standard marker (STM) and standard (STAND) are not expressed, parameter marker (PM) is free morpheme

The standard can be unexpressed in contextual equatives in OE (Mitchell 1985, II: 652–654), as in the other early West Germanic languages, cf. (91). This type also includes instances with a consecutive/consequent clause, as in (92).

- (91) *be þam life swa haliges fæder*  
 of ART.DAT life.DAT so holy.GEN father.GEN  
 PM PAR CPREE

‘of the life of such a holy father’ (cogregdC,GD\_2\_[C]:3.110.26.1267)

- (92) *ðonne sume yfele menn swa gerade*  
 when some.PL.NOM evil.PL.NOM.STR men.NOM so disposed  
 —————CPREE————— PM PAR  
*beoð ðæt hie ne magon godum monnum derian*  
 be.PRS.PL that they.NOM NEG may.PRS.PL good.DAT men.DAT harm.INF  
 ‘When some evil men are so disposed that they cannot harm good men’  
 (cocura,CP:47.363.15.2461)

### 4.2.3 Types not included in the questionnaire

Mitchell (1985, II: 666–671, 680) deals with another type involving *swā* or *swelce* as the particle marking the standard, but without a parameter or parameter marker in the main clause (see also sect. 2.2.3 and 3.2.3). The parameter is a superlative form found within the standard clause, and it most often occurs with a form of the verb *magan* ‘to be able to’ (Mitchell 1985, II: 669–671). An example is given in (93). According to Mitchell (1985), this construction is most typically found in legal and instructional texts.

- (93) *þæt hie simle gegripen þæs licendan*  
 that they.NOM always grasp.PRS.SBJV.3PL ART.GEN lying.GEN.SG.WK  
 ───────────────────────────────────CPREE──────────────────────────────────  
*feos swa hie mæst mehten*  
 treasure.GEN so they.NOM most might.PST.SBJV.PL  
 ─── STM ─── PAR.PM STAND  
 ‘that they should get hold of the treasure lying around as best they could’  
 (coorosiu,Or\_6:5.137.19.2894)

See Mitchell (1985: II, 687–695) for examples of other, more controversial and/or less well attested constructions that may express equative semantics.

### 4.2.4 Formal means of expressing equatives

The etymology of *swā* is dealt with in sect. 4.1.6 above.

## 4.3 Comparative

### 4.3.1 Type 3-1: standard marker (STM) is flag, parameter marker (PM) is bound morpheme

#### 4.3.1.1 Type 3-1-1 flag is case

The use of the dative as case of comparison (i. e. standard marker) is relatively common in OE. In comparative constructions, it occurs with a parameter marked by the comparative suffix *-r*. Small (1929: 38–55) studies the poetic occurrences of comparative dative and finds that overall it is used in 50 of 112 instances where it would have been possible (45%), including (94). As for prose, the comparative dative is used in 55% of possible instances in the OE translation of Bede’s Ecclesiastical History (15 of 27, including example (95)), but no more than 27% of the time in any other text, and the two best-known OE prose writers of late (post-950) OE – Wulfstan and Ælfric – do not

use it at all (Small 1929: 56–83). Mitchell (1985, I: 571–572) provides a concise summary of Small’s findings.

- (94) *þæt þe Sægeatas selran næbben*  
 that you.DAT Sea-Geats.NOM better NEG=have.PRS.SBJV.3PL  
 STAND.STM PAR.PM  
 ‘that the Sea-Geats have no one better than you (to choose as king)’  
 (cobeowul,57.1845.1529)

- (95) *Wæs þis gefeoht wælgimre & strengre eallum*  
 was this.NOM fight.NOM crueller and stronger all.DAT.PL  
 ───CPREE─── PAR.PM PAR.PM ─STAND.STM─  
*þam ærgedonum*  
 ART.DAT.PL before.done.DAT.PL  
 ───────────  
 ‘This battle was greater and more destructive than all those that came before’  
 (cobede,Bede\_1:9.46.21.410)

Small (1929: 84–88) argues, *contra* earlier writers starting with Grimm, that there are no convincing examples of genitive serving as case of comparison in OE (nor in other Old Germanic languages, cf. sect. 2.3.1.1 for OHG): the few examples that have been adduced all involve nominalization of the comparative adjective and (possessive) modification by a genitive (Small 1929: 84–88; cf. also Mitchell 1985, II: 646–647). In these cases we are thus dealing with a case that expresses comparatives, but only coincidentally so, as a byproduct of a more generally available structure (genitive possession marking). By contrast, the instrumental preserves what Small (1929: 88–96) views as a genuine use as case of comparison, though this is limited to forms of the demonstrative pronoun *se* ‘that’ and only in negative clauses (e. g. (96)), leading Small to conclude that it is not productive. Examples like (96) can be analysed as involving a clause introduced by the relative particle *þe* (orthographic variant: *ðe*) to which the instrumental demonstrative, meaning ‘than that’, refers cataphorically; it would thus be a sort of bipartite standard. (Cf. also Mitchell 1985, II: 638–644, 681–687, and the discussion of *than mēr* in sect. 3.3.3 on OLG above.)

- (96) *ac him þæt no ne derede ðon ma ðe*  
 but he.ACC that.NOM NEG NEG harmed that.INS more PTCL  
 CPREE STAND.STM PAR.PM (STM)  
*ceald wæter*  
 cold.NOM water.NOM  
 (STAND)  
 ‘but that did not harm him any more than cold water’ (comart3,Mart\_5\_[Kotzor]:My8,B.9.778)

### 4.3.2 Type 3-3: standard marker (STM) is flag, parameter marker (PM) is E (verb/ adjective)

#### 4.3.2.1 Type 3-3-1: flag is case

As in OHG, a verb with the prefix *ofer-* meaning ‘surpass’ can serve as a parameter marker in OE, as in (97). In all instances the case is that which an ordinary object would take (i. e. there is no true comparative case here, and hence no grammaticalized standard marker).

- (97) *þæt hi ... hæfden ðone cræft þæt hi*  
 that they.NOM have.PST.SBJV.3PL ART.ACC strength.ACC that they.ACC  
 STAND.STM
- mon ne meahte oferswiðan*  
 man.NOM NEG could.PST.3SG surpass.INF  
 CPREE PM  
 ‘that they had such strength that no one could surpass them’  
 (coboeth,Bo:39.134.2.2656)

### 4.3.3 Type 3-4: standard marker (STM) is flag, parameter marker (PM) is not expressed

#### 4.3.3.1 Type 3-4-2: flag is adposition

As in OHG, OE translations from Latin sometimes have the preposition *ofer* marking the standard of comparison, with no expressed parameter marker, as in (98) (cf. Mitchell 1985, II: 646).

- (98) (et super nivem dealbabor)  
*and eac ofer snawe self scinende*  
 and also over snow.DAT self shining  
 STM STAND CPREE PAR  
 ‘and I will be washed whiter than snow’ (Kentish Psalm 50: 8)

### 4.3.4 Type 3-5: standard marker (STM) is particle, parameter marker (PM) is bound morpheme

The most common way of forming comparatives in OE is the comparative form of the adjective in *-(V)r-* as parameter (and parameter marker) together with the standard marker *þonne* (or an orthographic variant), as in (99). This is true both for comparatives of majority/superiority, such as (99), and comparatives of minority/inferiority, as in (100). See Mitchell (1985, II: 618–635). In example (101), *betera* is the regular

comparative derived from the adjective *bet*, but functions as part of the suppletive paradigm of the adjective *gōd* ‘good’, just as in present-day English.

- (99) *se wæs betera ðonne ic*  
 ART.NOM be.PST.3SG better than 1SG.NOM  
 CPREE PAR.PM STM STAND  
 ‘he was better than me’ (cobeowul,16.465.391)

- (100) *Onð ic sperlicor mid wordum sægde þonne*  
 and 1SG.NOM more.sparingly with word.DAT.PL say.PST.1SG than  
 PAR.PM CPREE STM  
*hie mid dædum gedon wærun*  
 they.NOM with deed.DAT.PL do.PTCP.PST be.PST.3PL  
 STAND  
 ‘and I have described things more sparingly with words than they were actually done’ (coalex,Alex:4.3.16)

#### 4.3.5 Type 3-6: standard marker (STM) is particle, parameter marker (PM) is free morpheme

It is often stated (e. g. by Kytö 1996) that the free morpheme PM, corresponding to present-day English *more* X (*than* ...), is an innovation in the Middle English period. González Díaz (2003, 2006, 2008), however, has shown that this type can be found during the Old English period (picking up earlier suggestions by Knüpfner 1921 and Mitchell 1985, I: 84–85). Before 950 these are incredibly rare, though: (101) is one of only three examples of a free PM from this period that González Díaz (2006) is able to find in the Helsinki Corpus, as against ten from the period 950–1050. (Interestingly, the H version of Gregory’s Dialogues has *beteran* ‘better’ here rather than *ma gode*.) The particle *mā* ‘more’ is not the only PM found with this construction: *bet* (lit. ‘well’; the adverbial stem corresponding to *better*) is also found (see 4.3.7), though this particle dies out in Middle English.<sup>18</sup>

<sup>18</sup> González Díaz (2006) suggests that *swiðor* (lit. ‘more severely’) also functions as a PM. However, the two examples of this construction she gives from OE both involve an adjective that is inflected with the comparative morpheme (bound PM). Moreover, one case is taken from an interlinear gloss (*Rushworth*) and in the other case (cocathom1,+ACHom\_I,\_34:471.191.6834) *swiðor* occurs some distance from the adjective. This suggests to us that *swiðor* is not a true PM.



- (101) *þæt hi syn sylfe ma gode þonne oðre men*  
 that they.NOM are self more good than other.NOM.PL men.NOM  
 CPREE PM PAR STM STAND  
 ‘that they themselves are better [literally ‘more good’] than other men’  
 (cogregdC,GD\_2\_[C]:23.151.21.1809)

#### 4.3.6 Type 3-9: standard marker (STM) and standard (STAND) are not expressed, parameter marker (PM) is bound morpheme

Type 3-9 is found in OE with the bound PM *-r-* when the standard can be inferred from context, as in (102).

- (102) *He gesette under him gingran casere*  
 he.NOM set.PST.3SG under he.DAT younger.ACC.WK emperor.ACC  
 PAR.PM CPREE  
 ‘He placed under him a younger emperor’ (coorosiu,Or\_6:30.146.20.3087)

#### 4.3.7 Type 3-10: standard marker (STM) and standard (STAND) are not expressed, parameter marker (PM) is free morpheme

Like type 3-6, this type is found in OE, as in (103), but is incredibly rare, especially before 950 (González Díaz 2003, 2006, 2008).

- (103) *Ne fleah he ðy rice ðy his ænig*  
 NEG flee.PST.3SG he.NOM ART.INS kingdom.ACC ART.INS his any.NOM  
 CPREE  
*monn bet wyrðe wære*  
 man.NOM more worthy be.PST.SBJV.3SG  
 PM PAR  
 ‘He did not abandon the kingdom because any man was more worthy of it’  
 (cocura,CP:3.33.16.155)

#### 4.3.8 Formal means of expressing comparatives

On the bound comparative morpheme as parameter marker, see the corresponding sections 2.3.6 and 3.3.5 above for OHG and OLG. The form of the main comparative morpheme in OE is a puzzle with no satisfactory solution (Hogg & Fulker 2011: 175–176): From PGmc *\*-ōz-* we would expect *-ar-* by regular sound change, but this is not attested. Instead we find *-r-*, with apparently obligatory syncope of the vowel – which

is otherwise unheard of for historically long vowels. A restricted, apparently lexically idiosyncratic, set of adjectives form their comparative and superlative with a reflex of PGmc *\*-iz-* (cf. the form *betera* ‘better’ above’); here *-r-* is the expected reflex in many contexts due to syncope of short vowels. Analogy to these frequently-occurring adjectives (Campbell 1959) may be the best explanation of the lack of *a* in this morpheme.

The free parameter markers *mā* and *bet* grammaticalize as PMs from lexical adverbs. According to González Díaz (2003, 2006, 2008), the key bridging context is the construction with *bēon* ‘be’ or *weorðan* ‘become’ plus past or present participle, e. g. *ðu bist ma gegladod* ‘you are more gladdened’. Verbal participles could not take adjectival inflection, and hence intensification was only possible using a (free) adverb. These constructions with adverbs were then ambiguous between the verbal reading and the adjectival reading (in which the adverb serves as a parameter marker for the adjective). The periphrastic comparative with *more* is sometimes suggested to be a borrowing from Latin or French, but González Díaz argues convincingly against both these possibilities, although the influence of these languages may have played a facilitating role in the later spread of periphrastic comparison.

The etymology of the standard marker *þonne* corresponds to that of *thanne*, see sect. 2.3.6.

## 4.4 Superlative

### 4.4.1 Type 4-1: standard marker (STM) is flag, parameter marker (PM) is bound morpheme

#### 4.4.1.1 Type 4-1-1: flag is case

The parameter marker in OE superlative constructions is the inflectional suffix *-ist-*/*-ōst-*, as in the other early West Germanic languages (cf. Hogg & Fulk 2011: 174–183; Ringe & Taylor 2014: 120); in OE, *-ist-* is found with a few high-frequency adjectives, and *-ōst-* elsewhere. As discussed for OHG above, superlatives have no true standard of comparison, but the equivalent of the standard is a partitive genitive (Mitchell 1985, I: 83, 559–560). A superlative of majority/superiority is given in (104), and a superlative of minority/inferiority in (105). With adjectives derived from adverbs, a superlative suffix *-mēst* is attested, as in (106).

- (104) & *Seleucus hæfde ealle þa æðelestan*  
 and S.NOM have.PST.3SG all.ACC ART.ACC.PL noblest.ACC.WK  
 PAR.PM  
*men Alexandres heres*  
 man.ACC.PL A.GEN army.GEN  
 CPREE STAND.STM  
 ‘and Seleucus had all the noblest men of Alexander’s army’ (coorosiu,Or\_3:  
 11.77.30.1525)

- (105) *ara me ungesæligost ealra wifa*  
 forgive 1SG.ACC unhappiest all.GEN.PL woman.GEN.PL  
 PAR.PM STAND.STM  
 ‘Forgive me, the unhappiest of all women’ (coblick,HomS\_26\_[BIHom\_7]:  
 89.120.1144)

- (106) *þæt he ealra Norðmonna norþmest bude*  
 that he all.GEN.PL Northman.GEN.PL northmost lived  
 STAND.STM PAR.PM  
 ‘that he lived the furthest north of all Northmen’ (coorosiu,Or\_1:1.13.29.222)

#### 4.4.1.2 Type 4-1-2: flag is adposition

With OE superlatives the set of relevant entities can also be specified by a prepositional phrase, as in (107), rather than a partitive genitive, although this option seems to be rare.

- (107) & *he hire cyþde þæt heo wæs seo*  
 and he.NOM her.DAT say.PST.3SG that she.NOM be.PST.3SG ART.NOM  
 CPREE  
*eadgeste ofer eall wifa cynn*  
 happiest.NOM.WK over all woman.GEN.PL kind.DAT  
 PAR.PM STM —————STAND—————  
 ‘and he told her that she was the most blessed of all women’ (coblick,HomU 18\_  
 [BIHom\_1]:13.173.153)

#### 4.4.2 Type 4-2: standard marker (STM) is flag, parameter marker (PM) is free morpheme

##### 4.4.2.1 Type 4-2-2: flag is adposition

Mitchell (1985, I: 84) suggests that (108) is an early example of a periphrastic adjectival superlative. However, participles like the one in this example are ambiguous between

a verbal and an adjectival reading (see sect. 4.3.8 above), and hence this example is not conclusive. We do not know of any unambiguous examples, and thus cannot decide with confidence whether type 4-2-2 was a possibility in (early) OE.

- (108) & *wæs betst gelæred on Angelcynne*  
 and be.PST.3SG best learned in Angle.kin.DAT  
 [CPREE] PM STM STAND  
 ‘and (he) was the most learned among the Angles’ (cobede, BedePref:2.16.157)

#### 4.4.3 Type 4-9: standard marker (STM) and standard (STAND) are not expressed, parameter marker (PM) is bound morpheme

The set of relevant entities in OE superlatives may be left out entirely, as in (109), in which case it must be inferred from context.

- (109) & ... *þu me eart se leofesta*  
 and 2SG.NOM 1SG.DAT be.PRS.2SG ART.NOM dearest.NOM.WK  
 CPREE PAR.PM  
*freond*  
 friend.NOM  
 ‘and you are my dearest friend’ (coalex, Alex:2.1.5)

#### 4.4.4 Formal means of expressing superlatives

The origin and behaviour of the OE superlative suffixes is identical to that of OHG and OLG. The suffix *-mēst* mentioned in 4.4.1.1 is derived, according to Hogg & Fulk (2011: 181–183), from a reanalysis of adjectives ending in *-ma* (e.g. *forma* ‘first’, *meduma* ‘middling’) to which the normal superlative suffix had been added: the *m* was analysed as part of the suffix. Orthographic evidence suggests that confusion with *māest* ‘most’ was prevalent, especially in later texts, and so this word probably exerted some analogical pull.

## 4.5 Elative

### 4.5.1 Type 5-10: standard marker (STM) and standard (STAND) are not expressed, parameter marker (PM) is free morpheme

Like the other Old West Germanic languages, OE does not have a formally distinct grammatical category of elative. Various lexical items convey the conceptual content of elativity, in particular adverbs such as *swīþe* ‘very’, as in (110), *ful* ‘fully’/‘very’, as in (111), and *wel* ‘well’/‘very’, as in (112); see Peltola (1971), Mitchell (1985, I: 481–482), Peters (1993) and Méndez-Naya (2003; 2017: 254–255). Elative items can be iterated (as in (113)) and may co-occur with one another (Méndez-Naya 2017).

- (110) *bið se slæp to fæst ... bona swiðe neah*  
 is ART.NOM sleep.NOM too fast killer.NOM very near  
 CPREE PM PAR  
 ‘The sleep is too sound, the killer (is) very near’ (cobeowul,54.1741.1441)

- (111) *of þære adle cymð ful oft wæter*  
 from ART.DAT disease.DAT come.PRS.3SG very often water.NOM  
 PM PAR  
*bolla*  
 bowl.NOM  
 ‘Dropsy very often results from that disease’ (colaece,Lch\_II\_[2]:19.1.6.2398)

- (112) & *þær wæron eac fyr wel monigo onæled*  
 and there be.PST.3PL also fire.NOM.PL well many light.PTCP.PST  
 PM PAR  
 ‘and there were also very many fires lit’ (coalex,Alex:30.1.364)

- (113) *swiðe swiðe swete to bealcettenne*  
 very very sweet to belch.INF  
 PM PM PAR  
 ‘very very sweet to belch’ (coboeth,Bo:22.51.2.929)

#### 4.5.2 Types not included in the questionnaire

Certain derivational prefixes, such as *ofer-* (which can also be used for the excessive; see sect. 4.6.2), *for-*, *fræ-*, *heah-*, and *or-*<sup>19</sup> (Lenker 2008: 249–256 and references cited there), are used to express relative semantics, as in (114) and (115).

- (114) *geald*                      *þone*      *guðræs*              *Geata*      *dryhten...*  
 paid                              ART.ACC    assault.ACC      Geat.GEN.PL    lord.NOM  
*Iofore*    *ond*    *Wulfe*    *mid*    *ofermaðmum*  
 1SG.DAT    and    W.DAT    with    over.treasure.DAT.PL  
 ‘The lord of the Geats paid Eofor and Wulf for the assault with a lot of treasure’  
 (cobeowul,92.2991.2418)

- (115) *oððe*                      *hit*      *nan*    *god*    *nis ...*                      *oððe*    *þeah*  
 or                              it.NOM    no      good    NEG=be.PRS.3SG    or      though  
*forlytel*    *god*    *wið*      *eow*      *to*    *metane*  
 very.little    good    against    you.ACC    to    measure.INF  
 ‘Either it is no good compared to you, or it is very little good’  
 (coboeth,Bo:13.29.3.496)

### 4.6 Excessive

#### 4.6.1 Type 6-10: standard marker (STM) and standard (STAND) are not expressed, parameter marker (PM) is free morpheme

The OE excessive construction involves *tō* ‘too’ preceding the parameter (Mitchell 1985, I: 484), as in (116). The adverb *ungemetlice* ‘immoderately’ is also often used with excessive meaning, most commonly in combination with *tō*, as in (117).

- (116) *wæs*                      *þæt*              *gewin*              *to*    *strang*  
 be.PST.3SG    ART.NOM    strife.NOM    too    strong  
    ———CPREE———    PM    PAR

‘That strife was too strong’ (cobeowul,7.129.104)

<sup>19</sup> Despite appearances, *ofer-* and *or-* are not related: the latter is historically derived from PGmc \*uz- ‘out’, and its non-relative meaning is ‘original’ (cf. modern German *ur-* ‘original’).

- (117) & *bið* *hwilum* *to ungemetlice smeðe, hwilum*  
 and be.PRS.3SG sometimes too immoderately smooth sometimes  
 PM PAR  
*to ungemetlice reðe*  
 too immoderately severe  
 PM PAR  
 ‘and is sometimes too excessively smooth, sometimes too excessively severe’  
 (cocura,CP:19.143.4.965)

#### 4.6.2 Types not included in the questionnaire

As in OLG, in OE there are examples of excessives with a clausal ‘standard’ expressing the relevance of the excessive degree, such as (118) (see Mitchell 1985, II: 476–477).

- (118) *þa þeoda ... wæren to swiðe hie*  
 ART.NOM.PL people.NOM.PL be.PST.SBJV.PL too greatly they.ACC  
 ───CPREE─── PM PAR  
*gestrongade þæt hie mon leng ne*  
 strengthen.PTCP.PST that they.ACC one.NOM long NEG  
 ───────────────────STAND──────────────────  
*mehte ... oferswiþan*  
 could.PST.3SG overcome.INF  
 ───────────  
 ‘the peoples ... were too powerful for anyone to overcome them ... for long’  
 (coorosiu,Or\_6:35.153.18.3255)

OE also frequently indicates excessive semantics morphologically through word-formation, in particular using the prefix *ofer-* ‘over’, as in (119).

- (119) *þa oferhygdlican gedyrstignesne þæs*  
 the.NOM over.proud.NOM.WK presumption.NOM ART.GEN  
*elreordgan kyninges*  
 barbarian.GEN.WK king.GEN  
 ‘the over-arrogant presumption of the barbarian king’ (coalex,Alex:24.24.293)

#### 4.6.3 Formal means of expressing excessives

The excessive particle *tō* is common to all the West Germanic languages. Downs (1939) and Mitchell (1968: 191–198; 1985, I: 484–485) argue that this particle grammaticalized from the preposition in the bridging context of negative understatements. These

authors observe that, in negative contexts such as ‘Don’t be *to* X’ in the early West Germanic languages, ‘*tō* X’ usually had the reading ‘X at all’, and suggest that *tō* + adjective originally meant ‘to the point of X-ness’, with the excessive semantics developing from here (presumably through pragmatic inference). Whether or not this explanation is correct, it is hard to doubt that there is some connection between the preposition and the excessive particle.

## 4.7 Further remarks

As in High and Low German (see sect. 2.7 and 3.7), there is evidence for developments according to the Comparative Cycle in the history of English, although somewhat less markedly (cf. Jäger 2018: 373–375). Thus, the strengthened form *ealswā* > *as* has superseded the original standard marker *swā* in similatives as well as in equatives. Since early Middle English, it is also attested in comparatives (cf. Small 1924: 43; OED with examples from 1300 to the 20<sup>th</sup> c.). Today, however, the use of *as* in comparatives is restricted to certain regional varieties of English (Scottish English, Irish English, Yorkshire English, some American-English varieties, cf. Small 1929: 22; OED), whereas the standard language preserves the archaic standard marker *than* (< *þonne*).

The fact that new standard markers are commonly grammaticalized in similatives is evident in the development of English not only in the case of *ealswā* > *as*, but also with OE *gelic* ... *swā* > 15<sup>th</sup>/16<sup>th</sup> c. *like as*, which formed the basis for the use of simple *like* as a standard marker in similatives since the 16<sup>th</sup> c. (cf. OED).

# 5 Old Frisian

## 5.1 Similative

### 5.1.1 Type 1-3: standard marker (STM) is flag, parameter marker (PM) is E (verb/adjective)

#### 5.1.1.1 Type 1-3-1: flag is case

Similatives with an adjective *lik* meaning ‘same’/‘similar’ and governing the dative case occur rarely in OFri, as in (120).



- (120) *Thes otheres dis. sa werthath se lik*  
 ART.GEN second.GEN day.GEN so become.PRS.3PL they.NOM like  
 PM  
*there selua skipnese*  
 ART.DAT same.DAT.WK shape.DAT  
 STAND.STM  
 ‘On the second day, they take on a similar shape’ (R1, *Fifteen Signs of Doomsday*)

### 5.1.2 Type 1-6: standard marker (STM) is particle, parameter marker (PM) is free morpheme

Like the other early West Germanic languages, OFri has a construction in which the PM is a free morpheme (*alsā* in (121)) and the STM is a particle (*al*)*sā*.

- (121) *mith alsa dena rivchte. alsa mi thi asyga*  
 with so ART.DAT law.DAT as me ART.NOM lawspeaker.NOM  
 PM CPREE STM —————STAND—————  
*delt.*  
 judge.PRS.3SG  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 ‘with that same law as the lawspeaker judges’ (R1, *Dike Statutes of Oterdum*)

### 5.1.3 Type 1-8: standard marker (STM) is particle, parameter marker (PM) is not expressed

The PM can be left out, as in (122).

- (122) *Nu skilu wi frisa halda usera*  
 now should.PRS.1PL we.NOM Frisians.NOM hold.INF our.GEN.PL  
 \_\_\_\_\_CPREE—————  
*aldera kest and kera. and thera*  
 older.GEN.PL choices.ACC and statutes.ACC and ART.GEN.PL  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
*kiniga ieu. alsa hit us thi kinig*  
 king.GEN.PL privileges.ACC so it.ACC 1PL.DAT ART.NOM king.NOM  
 \_\_\_\_\_STM—————  
*kerl an tha fria stole bi fel.*  
 K. in ART.DAT free.DAT.WK court.DAT charge.PST.3SG  
 \_\_\_\_\_STAND—————

‘Now we Frisians should keep the laws and statutes of our forefathers, and the privileges of the kings, as King Charlemagne charged us in the free court’ (R1, *Seventeen Statutes*)

### 5.1.4 Types not included in the questionnaire

Hypothetic comparisons behave like other similatives and equatives, as in OHG. The standard marker is typically *alsā*, and the subjunctive mood is used to mark the hypothetical nature of the comparison, as in (123).

- (123) *so ach hi thet beta mith frethe and mith*  
 so own.SBJV.SG he.NOM that.ACC pay.INF with fine.DAT and with  
 ───────────────────────────────────CPREE──────────────────  
*festa, also hise mith sinre hand*  
 fasting.DAT as he.NOM=her.ACC with REFL.DAT hand.DAT  
 ─── STM ───────────────────STAND──────────  
*forslain hede.*  
 slay.PTCP.PST had  
 ───────────────────

‘Then he should pay for that with a fine and with fasting, as if he had slain her with his own hand’ (*Law of the Magistrates*)

### 5.1.5 Formal means of expressing similatives

On the etymology of *(al)sā*, see section 2.1.6 on the OHG cognate *(al)sō*.

## 5.2 Equative

### 5.2.1 Type 2-6: standard marker (STM) is particle, parameter marker (PM) is free morpheme

OFri equatives are typically formed with *(al)sā* as PM and *(al)sā* as STM, as in (124) and (125).

- (124) *alsa longe sa wi lifde.*  
 so long so 1PL.NOM live.PST.1PL  
 PM PAR STM ─────────STAND──────────  
 ‘as long as we lived’ (R1, *Prologue*)

- (125) *alsa grat fretho. alsa tha othera alsemin.*  
 so great.NOM peace.NOM so ART.NOM.PL others.NOM together  
 PM PAR STM ————— STAND —————  
 ‘as large a peace (=compensation) as the (two) others put together’ (R1, *Ontwijing van de Kerk*)

### 5.2.2 Type 2-10: standard marker (STM) and standard (STAND) are not expressed, parameter marker (PM) is free morpheme

OFri can also leave the standard unexpressed (contextual equatives), as in (126) and (127).

- (126) *Benis biti. alsa felo.*  
 bone.GEN bite.NOM so much  
 CPREE PM PAR  
 ‘A broken bone (is worth) the same amount’ (R1, *Rüstring Fines*)

- (127) *Sa hwersa en mon sa fir on efuchten*  
 so who.NOM=so a.NOM man.NOM so far on attack.PTCP.PST  
 PM PAR  
*werth. thet hine to there flecht makath.*  
 become.PRS.3SG that he.ACC to ART.DAT flight.DAT make.PRS.3SG  
 ‘Whichever man is attacked to such an extent that he flees, ...’ (R1, *Dike Statutes of Oterdum*)

### 5.2.3 Types not included in the questionnaire

The type discussed for OHG under 2.2.3, with an (*al*)*sā*-clause containing a superlative and a modal, also exists for Old Frisian, as in (128). Hoekstra (2014) labels these ‘potentiality equatives’.

- (128) *ende dyn schaed ... toe likyen elck alsma*  
 and ART.ACC damage.ACC to settle.INF each.NOM as=one.NOM  
 STM.STAND-  
*best mey*  
 best may.PRS.3SG  
 PAR -STAND  
 ‘and to pay the damages, everyone as well as he can’ (O II, 153, 33; Hoekstra 2014: 76)



### 5.3.3 Type 3-5: standard marker (STM) is particle, parameter marker (PM) is bound morpheme

This is the usual way of constructing comparatives in OFri. The inflectional comparative suffix *-er/-or*, or just *-r*, is attached to an adjective or adverb stem as PM, with a particle *thā* introducing the standard, as in (130) and (131). Interestingly, in the version of the *Seventeen Statutes* in the slightly later manuscript H2, the equivalent of (131) has *sā* instead of *thā* as STM; this is potentially evidence of an incipient Comparative Cycle (Jäger 2010, 2018; see also sect. 5.7), as this marker associated with similatives and equatives has spread to a comparative context.

- (130) *Thet fereste lith thes thuma thrimene*  
 ART.NOM first.NOM.WK member.NOM ART.GEN thumb.GEN third  
 ───────────────────────────────────CPREE──────────────────  
*diurra tha thera othera fingra eng*  
 more.expensive than the.GEN.PL other.GEN.PL finger.GEN.PL any.NOM  
 PAR.PM STM ───────────────────STAND──────────────────  
 ‘The first member of the thumb is worth a third more than any of the other fingers’ (H1, 19.95)

- (131) *Thet wi frisa ne thuron nene hiri*  
 that 1PL.NOM Frisians.NOM NEG be.allowed.PRS.1PL no.ACC army  
*ferd fara thruch thes kininges bon. ni nen*  
 trip.ACC travel.INF through ART.GEN king.GEN order.ACC nor no.ACC  
*bod thing firor sitta. tha wester to tha fli. and aster to*  
 court.ACC further set.INF than west to ART F. and east to  
 CPREE PAR.PM STM ───────────────────STAND──────────────────  
*there wisura.*  
 ART.DAT W.  
 ───────────────────

‘that by the King’s order we Frisians are not allowed to take an army or hold a court further west than the Fli or further east than the Weser’ (R1, *Seventeen Statutes*)



- (133) *thi wisa salemon ther was allere*  
 ART.NOM wise.NOM.WK S.NOM who.NOM be.PST.3SG all.GEN.PL  
 CPREE STAND.STM  
*ertherskera monna wisest*  
 earthly.GEN.PL.WK man.GEN.PL wisest  
 PAR.PM  
 ‘the wise Solomon, who was wisest of all men on earth’ (H2, *Five Keys of Wisdom*)

#### 5.4.1.2 Type 4-1-2: flag is adposition

With OFri superlatives the set of relevant entities can be specified by a prepositional phrase, as in (134), rather than a partitive genitive, although this option seems to be rare.

- (134) *of tha saxum heran and ridderan tha besta*  
 of ART Saxon.DAT lords.DAT and knights.DAT ART.NOM best.NOM.WK  
 STM ————— STAND ————— PAR.PM  
 ‘the best of the Saxon lords and knights’ (H2, *Fon alra Fresena Fridome (Freedom of all Frisians)*)

#### 5.4.2 Type 4-9: standard marker (STM) and standard (STAND) are not expressed, parameter marker (PM) is bound morpheme

The majority of superlatives in OFri involve contextual recovery of the set of relevant entities, as in (135) and (136). Superlatives of majority/superiority, as in (135), and of minority/inferiority, as in (136), behave the same.

- (135) *thet bad sante willehad. ther erost*  
 that.ACC command.PST.3SG saint.NOM W.NOM REL.NOM first  
 CPREE PAR.PM  
*biscop was to brema*  
 bishop be.PST.3SG to B.DAT  
 ‘Saint Willehad, who was the first bishop of Bremen, commanded that’ (R1, *Synod Law of Rüstring*)
- (136) *Thiu minnaste twilif skillinga.*  
 ART least twelve.NOM shillings.NOM  
 PAR.PM  
 ‘The least (is worth) twelve shillings’ (R1, *General Fines*)

### 5.4.3 Formal means of expressing superlatives

See section 2.4.3. The forms in *-ost-* specifically are found in the two R (Rüstring) manuscripts (Bremmer 2009: 66). Suppletive superlative adjectives include *best* ‘best’, *măst/měst* ‘most’, *wīrst/wěrst* ‘worst’, *lěst/lěrest*, and *min(ne)st* ‘least’; some adverbs also have suppletive superlative forms (see Bremmer 2009: 67).

## 5.5 Elative

### 5.5.1 Type 5-10: standard marker (STM) and standard (STAND) are not expressed, parameter marker (PM) is free morpheme

The elative is expressed in OFri by means of adverbial free morphemes such as *wel* (lit. ‘well’), as in (137), and *ful* (lit. ‘fully’), as in (138).

- (137) *thru ch* *thet.* *thetet* *alter* *is* *thera*  
 through that.ACC that=ART.NOM altar.NOM be.PRS.3SG ART.GEN.PL  
 CPREE  
*erana* *wel* *werth.*  
 honour.GEN.PL well worth  
 PM PAR  
 ‘because the altar is very worthy of its honour’ (R1, *Desecration of the Church*)

- (138) *ful* *scondlik*  
 full shameful  
 PM PAR  
 ‘very shameful’ (B2, *Brocmonna Bref*, 118.19)

## 5.6 Excessive

### 5.6.1 Type 6-10: standard marker (STM) and standard (STAND) are not expressed, parameter marker (PM) is free morpheme

As in OLG, the particle *te* in front of the parameter is the normal expression of the excessive: see the two instances in (139).



- (139) *tha was thiu mente te fir end thi*  
 then be.PST.3SG ART.NOM mint.NOM toofar and ART.NOM  
 CPREE PM PAR  
*penneng te suer*  
 coin.NOM too heavy  
 CPREE PM PAR  
 ‘then the mint was too far away and the currency too expensive’ (H2, *Seventeen Statutes*)

### 5.6.7 Types not included in the questionnaire

OFri excessives can be formed derivationally using the prefix *ur-* ‘over’, as in (140).

- (140) *ief tha thriw liod thing. bi ur mode. and dol*  
 if then three.ACC people.court.ACC by over spirit.DAT and foolish  
*stride ur sitte.*  
 struggle.DAT out sit.PRS.SBJV.3SG  
 ‘if he then misses three court sittings through arrogance and stubbornness’ (R1, *Dike Statutes of Oterdum*)

### 5.6.8 Formal means of expressing excessives

See the corresponding sections 2.6.3 and 4.6.3.

## 5.7 Further remarks

In the history of Frisian, as in that of all other West Germanic languages (cf. sections 2.7/3.7/4.7), there is evidence for the Comparative Cycle, i. e. a shift of parameter markers from similatives to equatives to comparatives. As mentioned in sect. 5.3.3, the similative/equative standard marker *sā* exceptionally occurs as a standard marker in comparatives in later OFri. Furthermore, the strengthened form *alsā* > *as*, which already appears as a standard marker in similatives and partly equatives in OFri and represents the typical standard marker in these types of comparisons today, is also the usual standard marker in comparatives in present-day Frisian (cf. Hoekstra 1995: 107 f.; Taalportal <http://www.taalportaal.org/>).<sup>20</sup>

<sup>20</sup> On similatives/equatives: <http://www.taalportaal.org/taalportaal/topic/pid/topic-13998813333888638>, <http://www.taalportaal.org/taalportaal/topic/pid/topic-13998813333882512>; on comparatives: <http://www.taalportaal.org/taalportaal/topic/pid/topic-13998813332487542>.

## 6 Synopsis: Gradation and comparison in West Germanic

In the Old West Germanic languages, similitives typically contain the particle *sô/swā/sā* as the standard marker, optionally in a correlative construction with the same element as the parameter marker. Occasionally, strengthened forms are attested as standard markers such as *sôsô/swāswā*, *sô sama sô/gelīc swā* and *alsô/ealswā/alsā*, which is partly also found as parameter marker, and eventually succeeds simple *so* as a standard marker in all West Germanic languages. The same standard markers and parameter markers are also evidenced in equatives, which additionally contain a positive form of an adjective/adverb referring to a gradable property as the parameter. Furthermore, in all Old West Germanic languages a type of construction that is semantically equivalent to an equative is found in which the parameter, however, occurs inside the standard and takes a superlative form. The standard typically also contains a modal (e. g. ‘as they best could’ = ‘as well as they could’).

Old West Germanic comparatives typically contain a comparative form of an adjective/adverb referring to a gradable property as the parameter (alternatively a negative indefinite or the adjective ‘other’) including the bound morpheme *-ir-/-ôr-* etc. as a parameter marker. In Old English periphrastic comparative forms are also attested, but very rare. The standard is most frequently marked by the particle *thane/than/ponne/thā*. In several Old West Germanic languages, the standard may alternatively be marked by the dative case in comparative function. This option sooner or later went extinct in all West Germanic languages. Over the course of their later diachronic development, in all West Germanic languages there is evidence to varying degrees for the Comparative Cycle, i. e. the distributional shift of standard markers from similitives to equatives to comparatives (cf. German *als* and *wie*, Frisian *as* etc.).

Superlatives in the Old West Germanic languages are generally formed with the superlative form of an adjective/adverb referring to a gradable property as the parameter, including the bound superlative morpheme *-ist-/-ôst-/-est-* as a parameter marker. In Old English, there are arguably also rare periphrastic superlatives. The set of entities of which the comparee bears the relevant property to the highest degree is marked by typical means of partitivity marking, i. e. by genitive case or local prepositions in West Germanic.

The elative is not a grammatical category in its own right in West Germanic. The corresponding meaning is expressed with the help of adverbs meaning ‘very’ (e. g. *filu*, *ful*, *wel*) or word formation, especially composition. The excessive is marked by the particle *zi/te/tō* in front of the parameter or occasionally by word formation.

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