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## IN DEFENCE OF LYDGATE: LYDGATE'S USE OF BINOMIALS IN HIS *TROY BOOK* (PART 1)

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### Abstract

Section 1 provides a very brief introduction to Lydgate, who was probably the most prolific English poet. He was also fond of rhetoric and frequently employed binomials. A short definition of binomials is given in section 2. Section 3 looks at the relation of binomials and multinomials, section 4 at the density and function of binomials, section 5 at previous research, and section 6 sketches formal features of binomials (especially structure, word-classes, alliteration). Section 7 discusses the etymological structure of binomials (native word + native word, loan-word + loan-word, native word + loan-word, loan-word + native word), and the so-called translation theory. Section 8 deals with the semantic structure of binomials, i.e. the semantic relation between the two words that make up a binomial. The main relations are synonymy, antonymy, and complementarity – the latter has many subgroups.

### 1. Introduction

With ca. 140,000 lines of verse, John Lydgate (ca. 1370 – ca. 1451)<sup>1</sup> has the distinction of being the most prolific English poet.<sup>2</sup> He was very popular and successful in his own time, and he even enjoyed the patronage of the English kings. Lydgate admired and emulated Chaucer, but from our point of view could not equal him. Later his

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<sup>1</sup> In his title, Pearsall (1997) gives 1371–1449 as Lydgate's dates. By profession Lydgate was a monk, and he spent much of his life in the abbey of Bury St. Edmunds.

<sup>2</sup> On Lydgate see, e.g. Schirmer (1961), Renoir (1967), Pearsall (1970).

reputation waned, and he is often regarded as ephemeral and second-rate. Nevertheless, his poetry is interesting from a linguistic, stylistic and cultural point of view, and probably more typical of the average learned poet than Chaucer's poems.<sup>3</sup>

Like many poets in the Middle Ages (including Chaucer) and beyond, Lydgate thought that rhetoric was an essential part of poetry. He stresses the importance of rhetoric and eloquence several times, e.g. when talking about the author of his source for the *Troy Book*, Guido delle Colonne (Guido de Columnis, ca. 1210 – ca. 1287):<sup>4</sup>

For he enlvmyneth by crafte & cadence  
This noble story with many fresche colour  
Of rethorik, and many riche flour  
Of eloquence to make it sownde bet (Prologue 362–365)

'Because he embellishes<sup>5</sup> with art and rhythm  
This noble story with so many fresh colours  
of rhetoric,<sup>6</sup> and many a rich flower  
of eloquence, to make it sound better'

Rhetoric helps to achieve a weighty style, a *copia verborum*, and binomials are a means of achieving this. Here I concentrate on Lydgate's use of binomials in his *Troy Book* (*crafte and cadence* being one example of a binomial), which comprises ca. 30,000 lines of verse, more precisely iambic pentameters in rhyming couplets. It was commissioned by King Henry V, when he was still a prince (he reigned 1413–1422), and Lydgate composed it between 1412 and 1420. Following his source, Lydgate deals not only with the Trojan War itself, but also with its prehistory, starting with Jason's quest for the golden fleece.

Like many English poets, authors and translators, including Chaucer a little earlier and Caxton a little later, Lydgate was very fond of binomials and used them as a means of achieving stylistic and rhetorical embellishment. Because a complete list and study of the binomials in the *Troy Book* could easily fill a separate monograph, I have undertaken an exploratory study and analyzed the Prologue (384 lines) as well as the first part of Book I (722 lines), based on the edition by Bergen (1906–1910). Thus my analysis is based on 1106 lines of the verse. A list of binomials in these verses is given in the Appendix I (in Part 2).<sup>7</sup>

<sup>3</sup> On the changing reputation of Lydgate see, e.g. Renoir (1967: 1–31).

<sup>4</sup> Most studies of Lydgate also deal with his use of rhetoric see, e.g. Tilgner (1936); Edwards (1998: 10 ff.) in the introduction to his (partial) edition; furthermore the literature given in the references. The quotations from Lydgate are from the edition by Bergen (1906–1910); the translations are my own.

<sup>5</sup> See *MED*, s.v. *enlūminen*. This verb was apparently first used by Chaucer and then by Lydgate.

<sup>6</sup> A translation of *colores rhetorici* (Book I).

<sup>7</sup> The following abbreviations are used: Pr. = Prologue; I = Book I.

## 2. Preliminary definition of binomials

Binomials are usually defined as pairs of words that belong to the same word-class, are situated at the same syntactic level, are connected by a coordinating conjunction, and have some semantic relation.<sup>8</sup> A few examples from the beginning of the Prologue of the *Troy Book* are (here given in a slightly modernized spelling): *power and might*, *war and strife*, *pride and presumption*, *hot and dry*. A distinction can be made between formally typical binomials such as those just mentioned, and less typical ones; see further § 6.1 below.

Unfortunately there is no standard terminology for the phenomenon under discussion here; other terms which have been used are, for example, word-pairs (also: tautologic word-pairs, repetitive word-pairs), doublets, twin formulae, hendiadys, double synonyms.<sup>9</sup> But only a clear and consistent terminology and definition allows us to distinguish binomials in our sense from similar but distinct phenomena, although there is certainly a core area of undisputed binomials, and a marginal area where binomials shade off into lists and other rhetorical figures. I regard terms such as tautologic or repetitive word-pairs, twin formulae, double synonyms as less suitable, because not all binomials (word-pairs) are tautologic or repetitive, nor are all of them formulaic or synonymous; therefore I prefer the term binomials.

## 3. Binomials and multinomials

In addition to binomials there are also multinomials, that is sequences of three or more words, e.g. trinomials, quadrinomials, etc. Two examples of trinomials are 'fraud, negligence, or sloth' (*withoute fraude, necgligence, or slowthe*, Pr.: 204), and 'crooked, lame & blind' (*he was croked, lame, & blynde*, I: 121). On the whole Lydgate uses multinomials much more sparingly than binomials. In the 1106 verses analyzed here, there are 180 binomials,<sup>10</sup> but only 22 multinomials. Among the multinomials, the trinomials are most frequent with 15 instances.

One question is how far multinomials arise as combinations of binomials and how far they are simply created as lists. The sequence in I: 71–73 (quoted in § 4 below), for example, is arranged in three pairs of words, each pair connected by *and*; this makes it look like a sequence of three binomials. Similarly, the sequence of adjectives in I: 282–284 (also quoted in § 4 below) looks like a string of three binomials rather than a list; but the borderline between multinomials and lists is not always easy to

<sup>8</sup> See, e.g. Malkiel (1959: 113), Kopaczyk, Sauer (2017); Sauer, Schwan (2017a: 84).

<sup>9</sup> On the other hand, the use of the term binomials by some scholars differs from the one used here.

<sup>10</sup> The number refers to types, i.e. different binomials; the number of tokens is just slightly larger, because most binomials in the Prologue occur just once; those that occur twice are: (a) among the adjectives (or substantivized adjectives): 'high and low' (Pr.: 112, 182); 'new and new' (Pr.: 214, 253: *newe and newe* [initially they have been used as adjectives, the second time – as adverbs]); (b) among the verbs: 'searched out and sought' (Pr.: 163, 318).

draw, and each case has to be judged on its own merits. The epithets enumerated in I: 459–460 look rather like a list:

For of þin age, þi witte, þi prouidence,  
þi knyȝtly hert, þi manly excellence ...

‘Because of your age, your wit, your providence,  
Your knightly heart, your manly excellence ...’

Moreover some words occur as elements of binomials as well as of multinomials, e.g. *sloth* is part of the binomial ‘sloth and idleness’ (*slouthe and ydelnesse*, Pr.: 83) and of the trinomial ‘fraud, negligence, or sloth’ (*withouthe fraude, necgligence, or slowthe*, Pr.: 204).

#### 4. Density and function of binomials

The Prologue (384 lines) contains 50 binomials, i.e. on average one binomial every 7.6 lines. Book I (lines 1–722) contains 130 binomials, i.e. on average one binomial every 5.5 lines. Taken together, the first 1106 lines contain 180 binomials, i.e. on average one binomial occurs every 6.1 lines. This is, of course, only an average. Sometimes there are many lines without any binomials: for example, there are no binomials in I: 589–632, i.e. for 33 lines. But sometimes there are also clusters of binomials, i.e. sequences of binomials in successive lines, e.g. in I: 71–73 (when describing the Myrmidons), or in I: 282–286 (when describing the bulls that guarded the ram with the golden fleece):

Whiche for **wisdam & prudent aduertence,**  
**Besy labour and wilful diligence,**  
By **for-seynge and discrecioun** (I: 71–73)

‘which due to wisdom and prudent attention to the future,  
busy labour and strong-minded diligence,  
foresight and discretion’

With brazen feet, **ramegous and wylde,**  
And ther-with-al ful **fel and dispitous,**  
and of nature **wood and furious,**  
To **hurte and sleen** euere of o desire  
Out of whos mouthe **leuene & wylde fire** (I: 282–286)<sup>11</sup>

‘with brazen feet, furious and wild,  
and also very ferocious and spiteful  
and by nature mad and wild,  
always desiring to hurt and slay,  
out of whose mouths came lightning and raging fire’

<sup>11</sup> *ramegous* ‘wild’ (cf. *MED*, s.v. *ramāgeous*); *fel* ‘fierce, wicked, evil’, of an animal: ‘ferocious’ (cf. *MED*, s.v. *fel*); *leuene* ‘lightning, flash of light’ (cf. *MED*, s.v. *lēven*).

The first passage contains three binomials in three successive lines, all consisting of nouns; the second passage contains five binomials in five successive lines, three adjectival ones, followed by one verbal and one substantival binomial.

The questions when and why such sequences or clusters of binomials (and multinomials) are employed require an answer. As seen from the examples just given it would seem that Lydgate used them mainly for descriptions (of persons, but also of animals; see also the multinomial I: 459–462, quoted in § 3 above). We believe it is not very easy to give a single answer to these questions. However, the analysis of a greater amount of examples might probably be helpful.<sup>12</sup>

## 5. Previous research and recent tendencies

The term “binomials” was apparently coined by Malkiel (1959). Research on word-pairs is, however, much older. The first scholar to deal with this topic was Jacob Grimm (although he did not use any specific terminology): in an article of 1816 he claimed that binomials in Germanic legal language and in Germanic alliterative poetry had the same origin. Although this claim was considerably modified by later research, Grimm thus initiated two strands of research, namely on binomials in legal language and on binomials in alliterative poetry. Research on binomials in Middle English poetry and prose has, however, remained relatively scarce on the whole.<sup>13</sup> The only published monograph devoted to binomials in a Middle English literary text apparently is Leisi (1947), who provides a very subtle semantic analysis of the binomials in Caxton's *Eneydos*. Koskenniemi (1968) gives an analysis of binomials in several Old English and Early Middle English texts.

Moreover, much of twentieth-century criticism has a decidedly negative attitude towards binomials.<sup>14</sup> Even Leisi (1947) in his introduction calls binomials an anomaly, which is definitely not true, if only for the reason that they are very numerous, and in a way he also contradicts himself by proceeding to give a very detailed and subtle semantic analysis of binomials. Gustafsson (1975: 12–13) concentrates on binomials in Modern English, but she singles out Lydgate as one of those who have taken the use of double synonyms to excess. With him it has become a mannerism, and one can hardly distinguish any valid semantic or psychological reason behind most of Lydgate's binomials; she also speaks of Lydgate's “unnecessary repetitions of words and ideas” and characterizes his style as “heavy and clumsy”. Although Lydgate certainly is no second Chaucer, Gustafsson's criticism is definitely too harsh; most of Lydgate's binomials can be analyzed semantically, and not

<sup>12</sup> Schenk (2017) analyzes several ME romances with regard to this question.

<sup>13</sup> See, e.g. Oakden (1930–1935) and Koskenniemi (1968). Koskenniemi deals with binomials in some Early Middle prose texts, but her analysis is not as detailed as Leisi's. Oakden deals with Middle English alliterative poetry, but because he did not have the term binomials (or a similar term), he does not distinguish between binomials in our terms and other alliterative phrases.

<sup>14</sup> See also Sauer, Schwan (2017a: 86–88).

all of them are synonymous; some even encapsulate in a few words the medieval world picture (see further section 8 below and section 14 in Part 2). Why much of twentieth-century scholarship was biased against binomials is difficult to tell. Perhaps one reason is a generally negative attitude towards rhetoric. But, as shown above, Lydgate thought very highly of rhetoric and assumed that rhetoric was very important to embellish literary texts, and he is probably more typical of the average poet than Chaucer is (although Chaucer also made frequent use of rhetoric). It should also be borne in mind that rhetoric belonged to the basic education in the Middle Ages: it was taught as the second of the seven liberal arts, following immediately upon grammar.<sup>15</sup>

Critical attitudes are changing, however, and a number of books and articles concentrating on binomials have been published recently.<sup>16</sup> One reason for a more positive attitude towards binomials is the realization that a considerable part of language consists of prefabricated phrases that are frequently used and re-used. Formulaic binomials belong to these prefabricated phrases. But not all binomials are prefabricated and formulaic; they can also be created on the spur of the moment. This interplay between formulaicity and creativity makes them all the more interesting.

One of the aims of the present article is to approach Lydgate's binomials in a less biased way. It will be seen that his binomials show a rich semantic diversity, and that occasionally he even addresses both a learned and a less learned audience (see section 14 in Part 2).<sup>17</sup>

## 6. Formal features of binomials

### 6.1. Basic and extended structures; inclusions and exclusions

The basic structure of binomials consists of "word + word", as in *memory and reason*, *behold and see*. The basic structure can be extended in various ways, e.g. by adding articles, adjectives, etc. to nouns, as in *of humble herte and lowe entencioun* (Pr.: 381); *The firste mevyng and cause original* (Pr.: 327). It can also be reduced by omitting the conjunction, or it can be split, e.g. by putting one adjective before the noun and the other after the noun, as in *the bitter wyrdys scharpe* (Pr.: 50), and occasionally there are combinations of extension and reduction, as in the example just quoted, or in *The mighty lorde, the god armypotent* (Pr.: 4). Combinations like the one just quoted could either be analyzed as an extended substantival binomial,

<sup>15</sup> Grammar, rhetoric, dialectic formed the trivium, arithmetic, geometry, music, astronomy formed the quadrivium. Isidore of Seville's very influential *Etymologiae* begins by discussing the seven liberal arts, before moving on to other topics, such as medicine, law, theology (the Bible, etc.). The grammar and rhetoric that were taught were, of course, Latin grammar and Latin rhetoric, but rhetorical figures and strategies could be easily adapted to English; for Latin rhetoric in Old English, see Knappe (1996).

<sup>16</sup> See, e.g. Kopaczyk, Sauer (2017, with extensive bibliography).

<sup>17</sup> Tilgner (1936) also tries to give a more balanced view of Lydgate and his use of rhetoric.

or as a combination of the nominal (substantival) binomial “lord – god” with the adjectival binomial “mighty – armipotent”;<sup>18</sup> cf., e.g. also *of humble herte and lowe entention* (‘heart – intention’, combined with ‘humble – low’).<sup>19</sup> Here I have analyzed them primarily as (extended) substantival binomials.

But of course a line between binomials and non-binomials must be drawn somewhere. Since binomials are usually short, I have excluded longer phrases, e.g. *þe dirke deceyt, þe cloudy fals engyn*, and I have also excluded prepositional phrases where one element is subordinated to the other, e.g. *fro lond to londe* (I: 538). *Inward and outward* is a frequently attested and formulaic binomial, with its two elements in an antonymic relation (it does not occur in the verses analyzed here, however), but Lydgate's *Inwarde in herte nor outwarde in schewyng* (I: 175) seems to be too long for a binomial. But there will always be marginal and disputed cases. I have included binomials consisting of names (especially personal names),<sup>20</sup> because they usually also have a semantic relation: *Dite and Dares* (‘Dictys Cretensis and Dares Phrygius’) were in the Middle Ages regarded as the two authorities on (and even eye-witnesses of) the Trojan War, and as more reliable than Homer. *Polynece and Ethiocles* (‘Polyneikes and Etheokles’) were the two mythical brothers (sons of Oedipus) who fought about the rulership of Thebes and killed each other eventually. Latin and French (*As in latyn and in frensche*, Pr.: 115) were the two languages that were written and spoken during the Middle English period in England in addition to English.

## 6.2. Word-classes

By far the most frequent word-class is the class of nouns, i.e. binomials consisting of two nouns: of the 50 binomials in the Prologue, more than half, i.e. 33, are expressed by nouns. Binomials of adjectives are rarer (12 examples), and binomials consisting of verbs are still rarer (4 examples); there is just one example of an adverbial binomial. We have a similar relation in Book I: of the 130 binomials, more than half, namely 80, are substantival, 25 are adjectival, 18 are verbal, and 7 consist of adverbs.

Usually the word-class of a word is clear, but there are also a few problematic cases.<sup>21</sup> For example, past participles are primarily verbal forms, but they can also be used as adjectives. If they are coordinated with genuine adjectives, I have classified them as adjectives, e.g. ‘burnt and choleric’ (*brent and coleryk*, Pr.: 10). Adjectives can be used as nouns. Thus “high and low” are used as adjectives in ‘of high or low estate’ (*of hize or lowe estate*, Pr.: 182), but as nouns in ‘to high and low’ (*to hyze and lowe*, Pr.: 112); in order not to tear them apart, in both instances I have classified them as adjectives. The *-ing* form can function as present participle, deverbal noun

<sup>18</sup> *The mighty lorde, the god army potent* also contains a mini-chiasm: the two adjectives are at the outside, and the two nouns are at the inside.

<sup>19</sup> Whether *armipotent* was originally a word-play based on *omnipotent*, would have to be investigated.

<sup>20</sup> As does Mollin (2014).

<sup>21</sup> Cf., e.g. Sauer, Schwan (2017a: 92).

or gerund (as gerund it has also a substantival function); if an *-ing* form is coordinated with a noun, it has been classified as a noun (substantive; cf., e.g. Pr.: 74).

### 6.3. Connecting conjunctions

By far the most frequent conjunction connecting the elements of binomials (and multinomials) is *and*: in the Prologue, 47 binomials are connected with *and*. All the other connecting conjunctions are much rarer, namely *or*, *nor*, *ne*. As mentioned above, there are also a few cases of reduced structures where the conjunction has been omitted.

### 6.4. Alliteration

Some binomials alliterate; this can be regarded as an additional embellishment, but also as an additional strengthening of the binomial. Although alliteration goes back to the Germanic tradition, in Middle English, including Lydgate, loan-words (from French or Latin) also take part in alliterations. In the Prologue there are just four examples of alliterating binomials, namely: 'pride and presumption' (*pride and presumpcioun*, Pr.: 72); 'dim and dark' (*dyn and dirk*, Pr.: 60); 'searched out and sought' (*cerched out and souzt*, Pr.: 163; cf. Pr.: 318); 'craft and cadence' (*craftē & cadence*, Pr.: 362); and 'Dictys and Dares' (*Dite and Dares*, Pr.: 356) among the names. In Book I there are just seven alliterating binomials: 'branches and boughs' (*braunchis and ... bowis*, I: 634); 'holt and heath' (*holt and heth*, I: 644); 'manhood and might' (*of manhood and of myzt*, I: 99); 'mind and memory' (*mind & memorial*, I: 113); 'sorrow and sin' (*sorowe and synne*, I: 240); 'blossom and bud' (*blosme and budde*, I: 40); 'conceal and close' (*was conceled & closed*, I: 225). Thus among the 180 binomials chosen for consideration, only eleven are clear examples of alliteration, i.e. 6.1%.

This of course also raises the question of how far alliteration happened by chance and how far it was used intentionally – a question that I shall not try to answer in the present article. Some binomials alliterate in spelling but probably not in pronunciation: 'circle and constellation' (*cercle and constellacioun*, I: 692); 'countenance and cheer' (*countenaunce and chere*, I: 425); 'gentillesse and wise governance' (*gentiles and wyse gouernaunce*, I: 155). I have also not counted the two binomials where the same word is repeated, probably for intensification: 'new and new' (*newe and newe*, Pr.: 214, 253); 'more and more' (*more & more*, I: 208). But even if those were taken into consideration, the overall picture would not change much. Rhyming binomials are generally rare and none occur in the Prologue and in Book I.

## 7. Etymological structures and the translation theory

Due to the massive influx of French loan-words (the French words often going back to Latin), Middle English developed a mixed Germanic-Romance vocabulary. In order to keep the present analysis relatively simple, I only distinguish between

native words (Germanic words) and loan-words (Romance vocabulary). I count Old Norse words (i.e. Germanic) among the native ones, leaving the distinction of French and Latin words (Romance loan-words) out of the scope of my research. The etymology of some words is still unclear, e.g. that of *lack*, but because *lack* is apparently of Germanic rather than of Romance origin (cf. *MED*, s.v. *lak*), I have also included it among the native words.<sup>22</sup> Even so we get four groups, namely N + N (native word + native word), L + L (loan-word + loan-word), N + L (native word + loan-word) and L + N (loan-word + native word). Among the 50 binomials in the Prologue, there are 14 instances of N + N, 14 instances of L + L, 15 instances of N + L, and eight instances of L + N, i.e. binomials belonging to the first three groups are, roughly speaking, equally frequent, whereas binomials belonging to the fourth group are slightly rarer. On a different count one could say, however, that 37 binomials contain at least one loan-word, and only 14 binomials consist exclusively of native words. The distribution in Book I is similar: there are 44 instances of N + N, 36 instances of L + L, 36 instances of N + L, but only 12 instances of L + N. The instances in the Prologue are:

1. N + N = native word + native word: (a) nouns: 'beginning and root' (*gynnyng and rote*, Pr.: 328); 'crop and root' (*crop and rote*, Pr.: 229); 'lord – god' (*The mighty lorde, the god armyopotent*, Pr.: 4); 'sloth and idleness' (*sluthe and ydelnesse*, Pr.: 83); 'well and spring' (*of kny3thood welle and spryng*, Pr.: 96); (b) adjectives: 'bitter – sharp' (*the bitter wyrdys sharpe*, Pr.: 50); 'dim and dark' (*dyn and dirk*, Pr.: 60); 'high and low' (*to hyze and lowe*, Pr.: 112; cf. Pr.: 182); 'hot and dry' (*hoot and drye*, Pr.: 8); 'new and new' (*newe and newe assayes*, Pr.: 214; cf. Pr.: 253); (c) verbs: 'behold and see' (*beholde and se*, Pr.: 369); 'imp and set' (*hath ymped in and set*, Pr.: 366); 'read or see' (*rede or se*, Pr.: 379); (d) adverbs: 'true and well' (*write trewe and wel*, Pr.: 314).
2. L + L = loan-word + loan-word: (a) nouns: 'contest and strife' (*of contek and of strif*, Pr.: 21); 'honour and glory' (*the honour and the glorie*, Pr.: 215); 'joy and dainty' (*Ioye and gret deynte*, Pr.: 79); 'Latin and French' (*As in latyn and in frensche*, Pr.: 115); 'moving and cause' (*The firste mevyng and cause original*, Pr.: 327; see § 14 in Part 2); 'Parcae and furies' (*parchas and furies infernal*, Pr.: 51); 'pride and presumption' (*pride and presumpcioun*, Pr.: 72); 'ruin and destruction' (*the rueyne and destruccioun*, Pr.: 224); 'siege and destruction' (*The sege also and the destruccioun*, Pr.: 107); 'singularity and affection' (*singulerte and false affeccioun*, Pr.: 289); 'sovereign and patron' (*souereyn and patrown*, Pr.: 7); 'war and strife' (*were and stryf*, Pr.: 18); 'city – Ilion' (*Of the cite and noble Yllyoun*, Pr.: 342); 'Ditys and Dares' (*Dite and Dares*, Pr.: 356); 'Polyneikes and Etheokles' (*Polynece and Ethiocles*, Pr.: 231).
3. N + L = native word + loan-word: (a) nouns: 'bidding and plesance' (*byddyng fully and plesaunce*, Pr.: 74); 'craft and cadence' (*by Crafte and cadence*, Pr.: 362);

<sup>22</sup> *Lack* comes apparently from an unrecorded Old English \**lac* or is a borrowing into Middle English from Middle Dutch.

- 'death nor age' (*deth nor age*, Pr.: 257); 'heart – intention' (*of humble herte and lowe entencioun*, Pr.: 381); 'kings and dukes' (*of kynges and of dukes*, Pr.: 337); 'land or navy' (*by lond or by navie*, Pr.: 329); 'lack or price' (with *lak or prys*, Pr.: 188); 'ships – victuals' (*Of her schippes nor of her vitaille*, Pr.: 333); (b) adjectives: 'bright and clear' (*More bryzt and clere*, Pr.: 170); 'burnt and choleric' (*brent and coleryk*, Pr.: 10); 'dreary – piteous' (*the drery pitus fate*, Pr.: 105); 'fresh and gay' (*fresche & gay*, Pr.: 276); 'manful and virtuous' (*manful and virtuous*, Pr.: 90); 'quick and feigned' (*quyk & no thing feynt*, Pr.: 255).
4. L + N = loan-word + native word: (a) nouns: 'colour and hue' (*of colour and of hewe*, Pr.: 254); 'labour and business' (*her labour and her besynesse*, Pr.: 205); 'manners and name' (*of maneris and of name*, Pr.: 100); 'nature and kind' (*nature and kynde*, Pr.: 51); 'power and might' (*the power and þe myzt*, Pr.: 2); (b) adjectives: 'pale and wan' (*pale and wan*, Pr.: 132); (c) verbs: 'enacted and gilded' (*they enacted and gilte*, Pr.: 198); 'searched out and sought' (*cerched out and souzt*, Pr.: 163; cf. Pr.: 318).

Binomials belonging to our fourth group, i.e. those consisting of L + N (i.e. of loan-word + native word) have turned out to be of particular interest from the point of view of translation theory, which claims that a recently introduced loan-word was explained by a native word or an older-established loan-word. Such cases do exist (cf., e.g. Sauer, Schwan 2017b: 186–187), but they are comparatively rare and I have found no convincing examples in the material from Lydgate under consideration here. The verb *enact*, for example, was borrowed into English in the early fifteenth century and Lydgate was apparently among its earliest users. Therefore one could think that *enact*, here 'to record (in literary form)', might need an explanation, but *gilt* lit. 'gilded, decorated with gold' in the binomial *enacted and gilte* (Pr.: 198) – here in the special meaning 'enriched the language' – is not really an explanation or a synonym of *enact*; *enact* is more general and refers to a more basic level of language, whereas *gilden* 'to gild, to enrich (a language)' is more specific and once more refers to the rhetorical embellishment of language.<sup>23</sup>

Similarly *aduertence* is a relatively late loan-word, first attested in Chaucer; it is, however, not coupled with a native word, but with *inspectioun*, which is also a relatively late loan-word.<sup>24</sup> Moreover, the combination of L + N is the smallest group in the Prologue as well as in Book I. Apparently the binomial 'beginning and root' (*gynnyng and rote*, Pr.: 328) is an explanation of the binomial 'first moving and original cause' (*firste mevyng and cause original*, Pr.: 327), but here an entire binomial explains another (preceding) binomial (see § 14 in Part 2). The translation theory thus at best explains a small minority of the Middle English binomials in general and of Lydgate's binomials in particular.

<sup>23</sup> On the meanings of these verbs see *MED*, s.v. *enacten* and *gilten* v.2. Moreover, *gilten* itself was also a relatively new formation.

<sup>24</sup> *Inspectioun* is apparently first recorded in Gower, i.e. roughly contemporary with Chaucer.

## 8. Semantic structures

The semantic structure of binomials, i.e. the semantic relation between their elements, presents even more difficulties for analysis and classification. Leisi (1947) provides a very detailed analysis, but this makes it often difficult to see the wood for the trees, i.e. to discern larger groups or categories, and Leisi excludes antonyms, anyway. Gustafsson (1975: 117) states that the semantic part of her work “is much more tentative and experimental”. Nevertheless three broad groups can be distinguished, namely synonyms, antonyms, and complementary pairs. All of these have their problems, however. For example it is not easy to define what exactly synonyms are, and how to distinguish them from tautologies. Some scholars use the term near-synonyms, but this only highlights the problem and does not really solve it. I have classified as complementary those binomials that are neither clearly synonymous nor clearly antonymous. Complementarity has, however, many subgroups and several binomials fit into more than one subgroup. A general problem with semantic analysis is that words can only be defined with the help of other words; a more specific problem is that many words are polysemous and synonymous (or antonymous) with other words in only one (or some) of their meanings, but not all. The context is also often important for the semantic analysis. A nice example from Lydgate is the adjective *green*: In the binomial ‘green and fresh’ (*grene and fresche*, I: 141) it refers to the blossoming of a plant and has a literal and positive meaning, but a few lines later, in the binomial ‘green and tender’ (*grene and tender*, I: 166), referring to Iason as a child or boy, it has the transferred meaning ‘young, immature’ (cf. *MED*, s.v. *grene*).<sup>25</sup>

In the following analysis, all binomials from the Prologue have been taken into account, but from Book I only the more striking examples. According to my analysis and classification, of the fifty different binomials which Lydgate uses in the Prologue to his *Troy Book*, 27 are complementary, 17 are synonymous, and 7 are antonymous. Gustafsson's (1975: 12–13) criticism quoted above (see § 5), namely that there is no “valid semantic or psychological reason behind most of Lydgate's binomials” is certainly not justified.<sup>26</sup> On a general level, Lydgate was very fond of rhetoric, and on a more specific level, most of his binomials can be analyzed semantically and classified into larger and smaller semantic groups; the same groups can be discerned in many other texts (see, e.g. Sauer, Schwan 2017b: 187–194). Some of his binomials were apparently formulaic (see § 13 in Part 2). At least in one case Lydgate first uses a binomial with a very learned background (*firste mevyng and cause original*, Pr.: 327), and follows this up with a binomial that expresses the same idea in much simpler and probably more popular terms (*gynnyng and rote*, Pr.: 328) – both binomials referring to the causes of the Trojan War (see also § 14

<sup>25</sup> Although Lydgate goes to great lengths to tell us that Iason even as a boy had many virtues and was liked by everybody (cf. I: 147–180).

<sup>26</sup> To be fair, a semantic analysis of ME texts is now much easier than it was formerly. A great help is the *MED*, which thanks to the University of Michigan is also available electronically for free.

in Part 2). Perhaps Lydgate had a learned and a less learned audience or readership in mind, when he coined this sequence of two binomials. Below I present some examples from Book I in addition to the binomials from the Prologue, arranged according to semantic groups.

### 8.1. Synonyms

Synonyms are often defined as words having a similar meaning, which can be exchangeable at least in some contexts. They often have the same denotation, but different connotations, i.e. a different stylistic value. Some scholars, such as Leisi (1947), use the term *tautology* or *tautologies*. Strictly speaking, tautologic words have exactly the same meaning, but it is often said that true tautology is rare, and it seems to me that Leisi actually means synonymy when he speaks of tautology. In the following list, I do not try to distinguish between synonymy and tautology, but subsume both under synonymy. Relatively clear cases of synonymy, i.e. of binomials the elements of which are synonymous, are:

#### 1. Nouns:

- ‘beginning and root’ (*gynnyng and rote*, Pr.: 328); ‘root’ is here used metaphorically, i.e. ‘the basis, origin’; cf. *MED*, s.v. *rôte* (4); *gynnyng and rote* is set parallel to ‘first moving – cause original’ (see § 14 in Part 2);
- ‘colour and hue’ (*of colour and of hewe*, Pr.: 254); *MED*, s.v. *heu* – since *hewe* also means ‘colour’, both words can be regarded as tautologic;
- ‘contest and strife’ (*of contek and of strif*, Pr.: 21; *contek* ‘discord, strife’);
- ‘joy and dainty’ (*Ioye and gret deynte*, Pr.: 79): both *joy* and *dainty* can mean ‘delight, pleasure’ in ME; cf. *MED*, s.v. *deintē*;
- ‘labour and business’ (*her labour and her besynesse*, Pr.: 205); both can mean ‘work’; cf. *MED*, s.v. *bisynesse*;
- ‘moving – cause’ (*The firste mevyng and cause original*, Pr.: 327); as a parallel binomial there follows ‘beginning and root’ (*gynnyng and rote*, Pr.: 328); for a discussion see § 14 in Part 2;
- ‘power and might’ (*the power and the myzt*, Pr.: 2);
- ‘nature and kind’ (*nature and kynde*, Pr.: 160); in one of its meanings, *kind* was a synonym of *nature*, *natural*; cf. *MED*, s.v. *kīnde*;
- ‘ruin and destruction’ (*the rueyne and distruccioun*, Pr.: 224); they are synonymous in some of their meanings; they would, of course, also fit under the heading ‘generally negative concepts’, see 8.3. (3) below;
- ‘sloth and idleness’ (*The cursyd vice of slouthe and ydelnesse*, Pr.: 83); sloth (*acedia*) was regarded as one of the seven deadly sins,<sup>27</sup> and *idleness* was apparently used as a synonym of sloth; cf. *MED*, s.v. *sleuthe*, *īdelnes(se)*;
- ‘well and spring’ (*welle & spryng*, Pr.: 96); here used metaphorically: *of knyzt-hood welle and spryng*, i.e. ‘origin’.

<sup>27</sup> See, e.g. the “The Parson’s tale” (section on *Accidia*) in Chaucer’s *Canterbury Tales*.

## 2. Adjectives:

- 'bright and clear' (*More bryzt and clere*, Pr.: 170);
- 'dim & dark' (*dyn and dirk*, Pr.: 60); dark is probably darker than dim; the spelling <dyn> is not mentioned by *MED*, s.v. *dim*;
- 'pale and wan' (*pale and wan*, Pr.: 132); roughly synonymous in their meaning 'whitish' (*pale*) and 'whitish gray' (*wan*);
- 'new and new' (*new and new assayes*, Pr.: 214); repetition of a word could be taken as true tautology, but the repetition probably serves as intensification.

## 3. Verbs:

- 'behold and see' (*beholde and se*, Pr.: 369); cf. *MED*, s.v. *bihōlden*; s.v. *sēn* v. (1);
- 'grafted and set' (*hath ymped in and set*, Pr.: 366); cf. *MED*, s.v. *impen*, where this passage is quoted: originally *impen* meant 'to graft', then also 'to insert (into a narrative)'; *imp* is perhaps a bit more specific, and *set* (*MED*, s.v. *setten*) a bit more general;
- 'search and seek' (*cerched out and souzt*, Pr.: 163; *serched oute and souzt*, Pr.: 318; cf. *MED*, s.v. *sēchen*, *serchen*).

Some examples from Book I are: (1) nouns: 'advertence and inspection' (I: 671); 'branches and boughs' (I: 634); 'charms and enchantments' (*hir charmys and hir enchauntementys*, I: 136); 'cheer and countenance', 'countenance and cheer' (I: 174, 425); 'ground and root' (I: 357); 'freedom and largesse' (I: 438 – one of the meanings of ME *fredam* was 'generosity'); (2) adjectives: 'pale and wan' (*pale and wan*, I: 46).

## 8.2. Antonyms

Antonyms are usually defined as words with an opposite meaning. They have several subgroups, but in the context of binomials it is more important to note that antonymous binomials often express a higher unity, and that they are usually more concrete than the higher unity, e.g. *high and low* (Pr.: 112, 182) referring to 'all levels of society', or 'crop and root' (*crop and rote*, Pr.: 229) not only 'top and bottom', but also 'the entire plant, the totality, perfection'.

## 1. Nouns:

- 'crop and root' (*crop and rote*, Pr.: 229); often used and formulaic in ME; see *MED*, s.v. *crop*;
- 'land or navy' (*by lond or by navie*, Pr.: 329); 'from everywhere';
- 'lack or price' (*with lak or prys*, Pr.: 188); *lak* 'deficiency'; *pris* 'price, benefit, worth'.

## 2. Adjectives:

- 'high and low' (*of hi3e or lowe estate*, Pr.: 182); also as noun: *hy3e and lowe*, (Pr.: 112; also I: 158, 442);
- 'quick and faint' (*quyk and no thing feynt*, Pr.: 255); cf. *MED*, s.v. *quik* 'living, vigorous, lifelike', and *MED*, s.v. *feint* 'unreliable, feeble'.

## 3. Verbs: —

Some examples from Book I are: (1) nouns: ‘breadth and length’ (*in brede and lenthe*, I: 484); ‘child or man’ (*childe or man*, I: 171); ‘day and night’ (*day and nyzte*, I: 655), but also ‘night – day’ (*nyzt nor day*, I: 473); ‘peace and war’ (*pes and were*, I: 269), but also ‘war and peace’ (*were and pees*, I: 1); (2) adjectives: ‘old and young’ (*old and zonge*, I: 163); (3) verbs: ‘lose or win’ (*have lost or wonne*, I: 344); ‘wake or sleep’ (*wake or wynke*, I: 439); (4) adverbs: ‘near or far’ (*neze or ferre*, I: 658).

### 8.3. Complementary pairs

The words of complementary pairs are semantically related (or have a similar reference), but they are neither synonymous nor antonymous. The following relations occur in the Prologue to Lydgate’s *Troy Book*; some binomials fit into several of the subgroups.

1. More general term followed by more specific term:
  - ‘craft and cadence’ (*by crafte & cadence*, Pr.: 362); both referring to rhetorical skills: *craft* ‘skill, art’; *cadence* ‘rhythm of prose or poetry’; this passage quoted in *MED*, s.v. *cadence*;
  - ‘pride and presumption’ (*pride and presumpcioun*, Pr.: 72); cf. *MED*, s.v. *pr̄sumpcioun* 1; the *MED* explains that in theology presumption or arrogance was regarded as one branch of the deadly sin of pride; in linguistic terms *pride* is the hyperonym, and *presumption* is the hyponym; cf. also “The Parson’s tale” in Chaucer’s *Canterbury Tales*, Section *De Superbia*. Pride and presumption could also be put into the section ‘generally negative concepts’ (section 5 below);
  - ‘city – Ilion’ (*of the cite and noble Yllyoun*, Pr.: 342); city also refers to Ilion, i.e. city and Ilion here have identical reference, namely to Troy.
2. More specific term followed by more general term:
  - ‘war and strife’ (*were and stryf*, Pr.: 18); in some of their meanings *war* and *strife* are synonymous, but I assume that here *war* expresses a more specific concept ‘armed conflict’, whereas *strife* expresses a more general concept ‘discord, hostility, conflict’.<sup>28</sup> From Book I, e.g. ‘gold and treasure’ (*golde & gret tresour*, I: 347).
3. One term is more explicit or stronger than the other:
  - ‘bidding and pleasance’ (*My lordes byddyng fully and plesaunce*, Pr.: 74), i.e. ‘my lord’s command and wish’;
  - ‘death nor age’ (*deth nor age* Pr.: 257); this could also be put among the generally negative concepts;<sup>29</sup>
  - From Book I, e.g. nouns: ‘custom and law’ (*by custom and by lawe*, I: 320); verbs: ‘hurt and slay’ (*hurte and sleen*, I: 285).

<sup>28</sup> In one of its meanings, *strife* was also regarded as a branch of *Superbia* ‘pride’; cf., e.g. “The Parson’s tale” (section on *De Superbia*) in Chaucer’s *Canterbury Tales*.

<sup>29</sup> In Buddhist teaching, death and old age are part of the four evils which are the fate of mankind (i.e. birth, old age, sickness and death).

## 4. Generally positive concepts:

## a) Nouns:

- 'of humble heart and low intention' (*of humble herte and lowe entencioun*, Pr.: 381); this is part of the poet's *captatio benevolentiae* – he asks the reader to correct him if he makes mistakes; the phrase *humble herte* is frequent in Chaucer;
- 'honour and glory' (*the honour and the glorie*, Pr.: 215);
- 'kings and dukes' (*of kynges and of dukes*, Pr 337); also: social hierarchy;
- 'lord – god' (*The mighty lorde, the god armypotent*, Pr.: 4);
- 'manners and name' (*of maneris and of name*, Pr.: 100);
- 'sovereign and patron' (*souereyn and patrown*, Pr.: 7);
- from Book I, e.g. 'azure and gold' (*with asour & with golde*, I: 384).

## b) Adjectives:

- 'fresh and gay' (*fresche & gay*, Pr.: 276); meaning 'new and merry';
- 'manful and virtuous' (*manful and virtuous*, Pr.: 90).

## c) Adverbs:

- 'true and well' (*write trewe and wel*, Pr.: 314).

## 5. Generally negative concepts:

## a) Nouns:

- 'Parcae and infernal furies' (*parchas and furies infernal*, Pr.: 51); the three Parcae allotted the span of life and eventually terminated life; the Furies were avenging demons; obviously a learned poet and a learned audience were needed to distinguish both – Lydgate with his classical learning could probably make this distinction;
- 'pride and presumption' (*pride and presumpcioun*, Pr.: 72); see section 1 above;
- 'singularity and false affection' (*singulerte and false affecciou*, Pr.: 289); cf. *MED*, s.v. *singularitē* 'solitude, unusual behaviour, personal advantage, etc.', and *MED affecciou* 'emotion, desire';
- from Book I, e.g. 'herbs and potions' (*hyr herbes and hir pociouns*, I: 133 – in the context of witchcraft and sorcery).

## b) Adjectives:

- 'bitter – sharp' (*the bitter wyrdys scharpe*, Pr.: 50);
- 'burnt and choleric' (*brent and coleryk*, Pr.: 10); said of Mars; Mars was not actually burned, thus the meaning here is perhaps rather 'ardent, passionate' ('burning love' is a frequent phrase); cf. *MED*, s.v. *brennen* 5a;
- an example from Book I: 'false and envious' (*false and envious*, I: 249).

## 6. Co-hyponyms in a semantic field (other pairs can also be co-hyponyms):

- 'Latin & French' (*as in latyn and in frensche*, Pr.: 115); the two languages written and spoken in Medieval England in addition to English (see Pr.: 114);
- 'read – see' (*rede or se*, Pr.: 379);
- from Book I, e.g. 'chamber and table' (*in chamber and at table*, I: 170); 'crown and sceptre' (*Crovne and septre*, I: 118).

7. A sequence of actions; cause and result. One would expect a sequence of actions mainly with verbs, but it also occurs with nouns and adjectives; actually there are no verbal binomials expressing a sequence of actions in the Prologue:
- a) Nouns:
    - ‘siege and destruction’ (*The sege also and the destruccioun*, Pr.: 107); the destruction followed the siege.
  - b) Adjectives:
    - ‘dreary – piteous’ (*the drery pitus fate*, Pr.: 105); *dreary* (cf. *MED*, s.v. *dreri*) can mean ‘sad, sorry’, and *piteous* (cf. *MED*, s.v. *pitous*) can mean ‘arousing pity’; then there would be a sequence of states or actions; but this binomial would also fit under generally negative concepts – see 5. above.
8. Other relations:
- ‘hot and dry’ (*Ful hoot and drye of complexioun*, Pr.: 8); hot and dry as the attributes of fire, of summer, and also of Mars; could perhaps also be classified as co-hyponyms.<sup>30</sup>
9. Names – these show again Lydgate’s profound classical learning:
- ‘Dictys and Dares’ (*Dite and Dares*, Pr.: 356); alleged eye-witnesses on the Trojan War; thought of as more reliable than Homer;
  - ‘Polyneikes and Etheokles’ (*Polynece and Ethiocles*, Pr.: 231); two brothers in mythical Greece who killed each other because both wanted to rule Thebes.
10. Relationships that are difficult to classify:
- ‘ships – victuals’ (*Of her schippes nor of her vitaille*, Pr.: 333); cf. *MED*, s.v. *vitaille* ‘food and drink’.

#### 8.4. Semantics of multinomials

Among the multinomials there are apparently fewer semantic groups, but the following certainly occur:

1. Generally positive concepts (persons, things, actions, states and ideas), e.g.:<sup>31</sup>
  - ‘praise and honour and excellence of fame’ (*Laude and honour & excellence of fame*, Pr.: 373);
  - ‘force, might, strength’ (*Of force, of myzt, of strenthe pereles*, I: 554); positive in context;
  - ‘governor, king, warrior’ (*a gouernour, / A noble kyng, a worthi weriour*, I: 263–264);
  - ‘heart, will and thought’ (*with herte, wil, & pouzt*, I: 151);
  - ‘kingdom, land and heritage’ (*The worthi kyngdam and þe riche lande ... / and the eritage*, I: 178–179);
  - ‘worthiness, strength, hardness’ (*for her worthines / For her strenthe and grete hardynes*, I: 65–66; her ‘their’);

<sup>30</sup> ‘hot and dry’ were the attributes of fire; ‘hot and moist’ of air; ‘cold and dry’ of earth; ‘cold and moist’ of water.

<sup>31</sup> See also the Appendix I in Part 2, especially *Multinomials*.

- 'wise, discreet, virtuous' (*Wys, & discrete & also virtuous*, I: 4);
  - 'wise, discreet, sage' (*wis, discret, and sage*, I: 265).
2. Generally negative concepts, e.g.:
    - 'fraud, negligence, or sloth' (*With-out[e] fraude, negligence, or slowthe*, Pr.: 204);
    - 'incantations, sorcery, illusions' (*by incantaciouns, / By sorserye and false il-lucions*, I: 350);
    - 'crooked, lame & blind' (*he was croked, lame, & blynde*, I: 121).
  3. A sort of factual classification of things and phenomena occurring in the world, e.g.:
    - 'beast, fowl, and tree' (*best[e], foule, and tree*, Pr.: 53);
    - 'thunderent, hail, rain' (*With thunder dent and with hail and reyn*, I: 22); this would also fit into the category of generally negative things.

On the whole the multinomials enumerating positive things seem to be more frequent than those enumerating negative things.

### 8.5. Semantic fields and cultural binomials

The binomials (and multinomials) can also be arranged into semantic fields: here I just mention two of them, namely poetry and sins. As indicated above (see § 1) Lydgate often talks about the structure and function of poetry and the role of the poet; this is also reflected in binomials such as 'craft and cadence' (*by crafte & cadence*, Pr.: 362) or 'he has grafted in and set the story' (*He in the story hath ymped in and set*, Pr.: 366); in the latter Lydgate uses an originally agricultural term relating to grafting to describe literary creation and literary technique.

Another semantic field is negative behaviour in general and sins in particular; the following binomials reflect this: 'pride and presumption' (*pride and presumptioun*, Pr.: 72); 'sloth and idleness' (*slouthe and ydelnesse*, Pr.: 83); 'hate and envy' (*of hate and of envie*, I: 190); 'surquidry and pride' (*Of surquedrye or pride*, I: 452); 'venom and hate' (*Ful of venym and of cruel hate*, I: 305); 'singularity and false affection' (*singulerte and false affeccoun*, Pr.: 289). *Pride, sloth and envy* even belong to the seven capital or deadly sins.<sup>32</sup> But whereas *idleness* is apparently a synonym of *sloth* (cf. *MED*, s.v. *ideln[se]*), *presumption* and *surquidry* are branches of *pride*, i.e. semantically speaking hyponyms of *pride*.<sup>33</sup> Lydgate's insistence on sins of course also illustrates the fact that many binomials are culture-bound: although Lydgate tells a very long story about mythical and pagan Greece, his Christian belief and his negative view of sin also informs his narrative; the ancient Greeks of course did not have the Christian concept of sin nor the concept of the seven deadly sins.<sup>34</sup>

<sup>32</sup> The seven deadly sins are (or were): pride (*superbia*), anger (*ira*); envy (*invidia*); sloth (*acedia, acedia*); greed (*avaritia*); gluttony (*gastrimargia, gula*); lechery (*luxuria*). See, e.g. Sauer, Seitschek, Teuber (2016: 184, 238, fn. 17).

<sup>33</sup> See the *MED*, and cf. also "The Parson's tale", the last of Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales*.

<sup>34</sup> At least partly the insistence upon sin goes back to Lydgate's source.

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