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Lexical Doublets (Binomials) in Sermons from Late Medieval England

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Abstract The article examines the use of synonymous binomials in sermons produced in England in the fifteenth century. It discusses sermons in English, Latin, and macaronic. English and macaronic sermons use such binomials for rhetorical ornamentation; Latin ones do so too, though to a lesser extent.

Keywords sermons, bilingual, doublets

The frequency and variety of such phrases as "last will and testament" or "to have and to hold" has in recent decades attracted a good deal of scholarly attention. Scholars of English language and literature have analyzed binomials in prose and poetry ranging from *Beowulf* to the twenty-first century, and late-medieval works have received special attention, especially in translations from the French, such as Caxton or Hoccleve.[1] What has been lacking is attention to *sermons* produced in England during the late fourteenth and fifteenth century, a gap which the present essay will attempt to fill. It will not discuss the large variety of binomials – synonymous (as above), antonymous ("night and day"), and other kinds – but be limited to synonymous binomials or "tautological word pairs," which I will call "lexical doublets." These are syntactic structures in which two (or occasionally more) synonyms, usually of the same word class (nouns, adjectives, or verbs), are linked by such connectives as *and* or *or* (in English) or corresponding words in Latin (*et*, *vel*, *nec*, *sive*, or *aut*). I will, therefore, deal only with such phrases as "last will and testament," "safe and sound," or "to have and to hold."

Sermons made and preached in fifteenth-century England have been preserved either in Latin, or in English, or in a macaronic mixture; and in a very few instances the same sermon is extant in both languages. In the following I will deal with these different environments separately and consider where such lexical doublets appear, to what extent, and for what purpose. I begin with sermons whose text is preserved in English only. A recently edited fif-

1 See the bibliography in Hans Sauer 2017: 77–78, to which should be added Inna Koskenniemi 1968). – Sesterhenn 2016 deals with such "doublets" as "pig/pork". I am grateful to Prof. Sauer for several pointers and offprints.

teenth-century text on *Inimici mei* is typical in this respect.[2] It asks for Christ's help to "*spede and forþer* vs" and continues that "experiens *schewit and teches* us." God's word is "*more perthyng and scharpur*" than any sword. When it comes to the seven deadly sins, it speaks repeatedly of "*slewth and ydylnes*" and of "*auarise and couatis*," and so forth. Its approximately 4000 words contain at least 31 lexical doublets appearing in 37 instances.[3] A similar case is the "Nunnery Sermon" studied and edited by O'Mara; its 2424 words contain 20 doublets appearing in 22 instances.[4] Yet another text of this kind is a sermon by the Benedictine Hugh Legat, edited by D. M. Grisdale.[5] In its 660 lines I find over 50 doublets in 66 instances.

Such use of lexical doublets appears not only in individually preserved sermons as those just mentioned but also in entire sermon cycles. For instance, in the dominical cycle edited by Stephen Morrison, sermon 42 (on *Caritas perfecta est*) contains, in about 2250 words, eight lexical doublets in 11 instances,[6] and sermon 59 (on Luke 14:1–11) likewise, in its 2294 words, contains a dozen (with one doublet occurring twice).[7] Similarly, in *The Adent and Nativity Sermons from a Fifteenth-Century Revision of John Mirk's Festial* edited by Susan Powell, Sermon 1, in 1828 words, contains at least eight lexical doublets.[8]

2 Wenzel 2021a.

3 By "instances" I refer to the actual appearances of a doublet; a given doublet may appear more than once. Different word forms are counted as separate items (here: *auarise* and *auerus*).

4 V. M. O'Mara 1994: 197–221. I have counted several instances that contain different word forms (such as singular vs. plural) separately.

5 Grisdale 1939: 1–21. See also the entry on "Legat, Hugh" by James Tait, revised by James G. Clark, in the electronic *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*.

6 Morrison 2012: 237–244. The doublets are: *lufe and charite* (occurring twice, lines 23 and 160–161); *souereyne and principall* (73), *lord and quene* (88), *vertu and myȝte* (96), *debate and stryfe* (or the reverse, three times, 126, 140, 147); *lordschipe and powere* (149); *sey and commende* (161); *rotid and growndid* (192).

7 Morrison 2012: 348–354. They are: *norisschiþe and fedythe* (twice, in lines 35 and 36); *procedythe and commyþe frome* (41); *ȝiftis or presentis* (57–58); *vsed and ocupyed* (62); *rehersithe and seythe* (65); *pite and compassion* (98); *necessite and nede* (99); *his neyȝbor or his evencristen* (110–111); *miseri and wrechednesse* (111); *nurture and gentilnes* (134); *tolde and nomberd* (152).

8 Powell 2009: 3–7. The doublets are: *so cruel and so yrus* (line 13); *pride and hyghnes of hert* (30–31); *ydulnes and slowth* (33–34); *confusyon and schame* (47); *stones and roches* (64); *hullus and mowntayns* (68); *playne and euen* (69); *ȝonyng and galpyng* (107).

The same phenonomen occurs also in fully macaronic sermons, that is, texts that frequently change from Latin to English and back.[9] Thus, a Passion Sunday sermon (W-154)[10] of about 6000 words contains nearly 30 doublets, in Latin (e.g., *statu vel gradu, ciuitas seu villa*), English (e.g., *shame and vylenye, care and sorow*), and macaronic (e.g., *miseriam et myschef, wylus et subtilitatibus*).[11] Similarly, a Good Friday sermon edited by Holly Johnson peppers its nearly 7500 words with almost 60 doublets in nearly 70 instances.[12]

Before turning to Latin sermons a few words must be said about the difficulty in deciding whether a given binomial structure is in fact a lexical doublet whose components are complete synonyms. Clearly, the phrase *uva et botros* is a lexical doublet in this sense since both terms mean "grape(s)." But what about *iudicio et iusticia*? Separately the two terms, "judgment" and "justice," are not synonymous; but in this context the writer or speaker seemingly took them as such. There are a number of features that can help to decide the question. Often the conjunctions *sive* and *vel* that unite the two terms may indicate that the second term is in some fashion synonymous with the first, as for instance in n*ovum testamentum sive nova lex* or (*in*) *apice vel summitate*, though this alone is not a foolproof sign. Then there are doublets that derive from Scripture, such as *honor et gloria* or *montes et colles* or *pauperes et egenos*; or are reminiscent of prayer: *regunt et gubernant*. Next, for the medieval writer the two terms may indeed have been synonymous whereas for us they are not necessarily so. A good example is *natura et complexio* (*hominis*): for us, a person's temperament or humoral makeup is not necessarily the same as his or her nature or character. And finally, the two terms linked may not be synonymous in isolation, but their context makes them nearly so. Examples are: *predicare aut dicere, principes et capitanei, secant et amputant*, or *secta aut religio ficta*.

Keeping all this in mind and allowing that there will be borderline cases, it is clear that Latin sermons of the period do contain lexical doublets. Thus, a sermon by John Felton (died 1434; sermon FE-37) holds in about 2400 words

9 By "fully macaronic sermons" I refer to those discussed and classified as "Type C sermons" in Wenzel 1994: 28–30 and *passim*.

10 The sigla used here and in the following (W-, FE-, M-, etc.) refer to sermon collections discussed in Wenzel 2005.

11 *Quem teipsum facis* (W–154), edited and translated in Wenzel 1994: 308–345.

12 Johnson 2012: 144–238. Again, doublets occur in Latin, English, and macaronic.

half a dozen possible doublets, such as love made Christ "*incarnari et nasci*,"[13] and his much longer sermon, on *Amice, ascende superius* (Luce 14:10), contains, in over 4200 words, about 14 doublets. The same proportions can be found in some other sermons by Felton, but there are others that hold a much smaller number of lexical doublets, often no more than one or two. The same is true of other Latin sermon collections of the late fourteenth and the fifteenth centuries. In the partial cycle of Sunday sermons that are derived from Philip Repingdon's sermon commentary (*Sermones super evangelia dominicalia*)[14] a Latin sermon of about 2800 words (M-37) holds only three doublets (in five instances), of which one is taken over from Repingdon.[15] In another sermon (M-9) of about the same length, seven phrases may be considered to be doublets (in eight instances), of which two come from Repingdon.[16]

A somewhat richer yield can be found in a manuscript from much later in the century (A=Cambridge, University Library, MS Ii.3.8).[17] In a sermon directed to the clergy (A-42), of about 3700 words, I count 17 doublets appearing in over 20 instances.[18] What is remarkable in this case is that the

13 I have also counted the following as lexical doublets: *tepidi et infirmi in fide, in prosperitate et deliciis, ligat pedes anime et involvit, via puritatis et castitatis, misericordie et pietatis, pene et tribulacionis*; the synonymity of some of them may be open to discussion. The sermon has been edited by Fletcher 1991: 164–171, with the cited doublets at lines 15, 20-21, 58, 193, 207, and 229; reprinted with translation in Fletcher 1998: 100–113.

14 Collection M in Manchester, John Rylands Library, MS Latin 367; see Wenzel 2004: 199–202; and Wenzel 2021b: 68–83.

15 The five instances are: *practicacionem et exercitacionem, practicauit et se exercitauit* (both in Repingdon), *confortati et corroborati, corroborati et confortati*, and *domus et mansio*. The sermon has been edited in Wenzel 2021b: 171–179, with translation at 73–83.

16 They are: *lauabant et purificabant, laudare et honorare, zelo et amore, iusticia et iudicium, iusticiam et iudicium, misericordia et miseracionem, compuccio siue contricio* (Repingdon), *sciente et vidente* (Repingdon).

17 See Wenzel 2005: 175–181 and 409–414.

18 The instances are: *distinxionem et diuersitatem, missi et ordinati, ministrorum et discipulorum, cure et solicitudinis ecclesiastice, facti estis et positi, segacem* [sic] *et discretam, sagacem et discretam, oculos et speculatores, deficiunt et debilitantur, prelatus uel sacerdos, exemplum et spectaculum, inspectis et consideratis, viri spirituales et ecclesiastici, socerdotes* [sic] *et clerici, prelato et predicatori, intercedant et orent, pastores et sacerdotes, sacerdotum et ministrorum Ecclesie, sacerdotes et pastores animarum, sacerdotis et pastoris, pastores uel sacerdotes*. The sermon has been translated in Wenzel 2008: 255–269.

preacher should almost regularly employ a lexical doublet when referring to *pastores* or *sacerdotes*. Thus even in the last instance cited in the footnote, he writes *pastores uel sacerdotes* where his quoted source, Gregory to Great, has only *pastores*.

Worcester Cathedral Library MS F.10 is a fifteenth-century codex into which a large number of scribes have entered 167 sermons.[19] Many of them are in Latin only, a good number macaronic, and three in English (edited by Grisdale). Again, the Latin sermons have some lexical doublets, though not many. Thus, a sermon for monastic visitation (W-130) has in its approximately 2800 words no more than eight possible doublets.[20] Similarly, a sermon for St Patrick (W-62) has in approximately 1400 words but five doublets.[21]

Other collections of the period show the same: that writers of Latin sermons used lexical doublets, but less so than did writers of English or macaronic texts. This usage can, finally, be found as well in a few sermons that have been preserved in both Latin and English. A good example is *Dic ut lapides ist1 panes fiant* ("Command that these stones be made bread," Matthew 4:3).[22] The English text, probably written near the end of the fifteenth century, translates part of a Latin sermon on the same thema written by Robert Holcot, OP (died probably in 1349).[23] It speaks of the moral decay of mankind from the golden age through the ages of silver, bronze, and iron, and finally to the current age of stone. Of the second and third ages the sermon declares:

19 See Wenzel 2005: 151–158 and 607–625.

20 They are: *reuocet et reducat; facundus et eloquens; infirmitatis et insufficiencie; transtulit et transduxit; precipitanter et premature; circumspectis et prouidis; diligens et sollicitus; ferrum vel gladius*. The sermon can be found edited in Wenzel 2015: 89–101, and translated in Wenzel 2008: 270–282.

21 They are: *magni et magnifici; mira et inaudita; contigere vel tangere; ymnis et canticis; signum et miraculum*.

22 Bennett 2011: 282.

23 See Wenzel 2017. The quoted text, taken from MS F, is at 84–85.

Holcot	English version
Secundum seculum quod successit fuit argenteum. Tunc incepit cupiditas **pululari** in terra, *fraus et calliditas* crescere. Tunc inceperunt homines vendere et mercari. Tunc excogitauerunt pondera et mensuras.	The secund tyme folowyde þat he cawlyd syluer tyme. Þan began covetyse to **burge and sprynge** yn euery contrey. Þen they began to sell and to bye and wyn and made weytys and mesures.
Tunc prostrauerunt arbores et fecerunt naues, nec aliquis fuit **contentus** in propria terra morari sed vltra mare oportuit extranea comparare quibus posset domi compatriotas decipere. Tunc inceperunt homines rimare, sepire, fossare, et quilibet incepit se diuidere ab alio et claudere et murare se.	Also, they ffellyd downe grete trees and made schyppus, all for ther was no man than **content or plesyd** to reste yn hys own countrey but 'yend' þe sey, merchaundyse to make.
Et tunc inceperunt primo meum et tuum, et ante illud tempus ista duo verba non fuerunt. Sed istis duobus verbis surgit totum **bellum** quod est in mundo. Et illud fuit seculum argenteum peius quam aureum quod precessit. Post illud adhuc sequebatur peius seculum, quia sicud peius est es quam argentum, sic tercium seculum quam duo alia.	Than began þese to pronownse of *meus et tuus*, þat ys to sey 'thys ys myn' and 'þys ys thyne', of the whiche too wordys rysyth all dyuysion, **bateil and stryfte** yn all þe world. And þerfor that tyme myȝt wele be cawled the syluer worlde þat was wers than þe goldyn tyme beforne.

Holcot	English version
Et istud tercium seculum vocabatur ereum, nam tunc ingenium crescere cepit in malo, *calliditas et dolus* creuerunt in habundancia in tantum quod homines non timuerunt iniurias et doles **committere**, immo ausi sunt facinora deffendere per cautelas et subtilitates loquele, videlicet tunc inceperunt **placitatores** et cetera.	But aftur that folowyde a wers tyme þat he cawlyd brasyn tyme, for, lyke as brase ys wors þan syluer, þan mannus wytt begane to growe ynto evyll sotylte and malyse and encresyd ynto boldnesse yn so myche þat men fferyd not to **commyt or doo** inguryese, wrongys and hurtus but the were bold to defend ther evyll deedys be grete wysdom and sotell eloquens and feire speche. Þen began **pletyngys and cawsys** yn lawe.
Tunc cogitauerunt homines per eloquenciam defendere *iniustum et iniusticiam*, et per ingeniosa verba iusticiam **expugnare**.	Also they began to defend vnryghtwysnes and ryȝtwysnes to **oppougne and opprese** be witty wordys.
Et ideo bene potuit vocari seculum ereum. Es inter metalla magne est firmitatis et *strepitum et sonitum causans*, qui iam resonat et pululat vbique. Et videte per quem modum malicia creuit primo in seculo argenteo et iniquitas cerpsit et latuit, quia clam fiebant et verecundabantur homines iniusticias publice facere, sed iam in seculo ereo, quod est tempus tercium, facere publice non verentur....	And þerfore yt myȝt wel be cawled brasyn tyme, for amonge all maner metalle ys of gret sownde whiche sygnyfyth þe **clamor and noyse** of pleters of cawsys þat nowe spredyn yn eure countre of þe world, and þerfor that myȝt wele be cawld þe brasyn world.

The lexical doublets in the English text, here bold-faced, all translate single words in the Latin source, also bold-faced. The exception is "**clamor and noyse**," which translates a doublet in the Latin text, "*strepitum et sonitum*." The Latin text contains some further doublets, here printed in italics ("*fraus et calliditas*,"

etc.), which are not reproduced in the English translation. The quoted English text of 261 words therefore contains seven English lexical doublets.[24]

Another English sermon with a Latin version is Richard Alkerton's (incomplete) *Sermon for Easter Week*, preached in 1406.[25] In it, again, several single terms in the Latin yield doublets in the English text:

sacculus	a bagge or a scrippe (line 90)
ingurgitacio	engruttynge eþer vnmesurable filling (109)
mouent	meeuen or steren (130)
priuacio luminis	priuacion of liȝt or putting awey of liȝt (134)
continue	contynuely eþer wiþoute ceessinge (207)
debilem	feeble eþer leþi (219)
ignoranciam	ignoraunce or vnkunnyng (226)
sacietatem	plentee and fulnesse (231)
delectacionibus	þe lustis and þe lykyngis (274)
regnum	a revme or a kyngdome (285)

At the same time, the Latin version also contains a few doublets of its own, such as "*daungeriis et periculis*"[26] and perhaps two or three others.

It would therefore seem – not astonishingly – that using doublets, while not entirely unpracticed by Latin sermon writers, was predominantly practiced by authors who wrote, or at least thought, in their vernacular.[27]

Why did they do so? One can think of several specific purposes, such as to create a sense of totality: *arando et colendo* or *montes et colles*. Or else – and this much more frequently – to explain or illustrate one term with another: *advocatus vel consolato*r or *allidet eas et frangit eas*. The latter would have been true of many macaronic doublets in which the English amounts to a

24 I have excluded two borderline cases: "sotylte and malyse" and "sotell eloquens and feire speche." The entire text of the translation contains 33 possible doublets in about 2470 words.

25 Edited and discussed in O'Mara 1994: 21–80.

26 At the beginning of the sermon, which is not preserved in the English version.

27 A curious case is the Latin translation of Wimbledon's (English) Sermon: The Latin has about 70 lexical doublets while the English has none. See the discussion in Wenzel 2019: 178–181.

translation of the Latin: *malicia and wickidnesse* or *dust et pulueres*.[28] But more generally lexical doublets surely serve as devices to enrich and decorate the writer's message rhetorically. They are thus part of the florid style characteristic of some fifteenth-century writings in England.[29] But here again, in contrast to English texts Latin sermons are more restrained. A fine example is a monastic sermon for the Assumption, which begins with a high flourish:

> The most pious ruler of the heavenly empire, seeing that human nature which, with the lamp of its reason as it were extinguished, was foully blackened with the stain of manifold sin, was, in the Egypt of our wretched habitation, frequently wandering from the straight path of truth off through the desert and trackless regions of heresies and errors – like a good shepherd planned to bring back his sheep that he had redeemed to the fold of the Catholic truth.[30]

But the entire sermon, of 1900 words, contains at best only half a dozen lexical doublets.[31]

The desire for rhetorical effectiveness brings us to the question: what about Wyclif and his followers? Their professed soberness in theological discourse would prevent them from decorating their words with gaudy colors. A few of the *English Wycliffite Sermons* I have checked have, indeed, no genuine lexical doublets at all.[32] On the other hand, Wyclif's own early

28 For further discussion of macaronic doublets see Wenzel, 1994: 86–87.

29 For a discussion of this style especially in sermons see Wenzel 1999: 80 ff.; reprinted Wenzel 2015b: 219 ff. For the "aureate diction" of English poetry see John Norton–Smith 1966: 192–195. For Lydgate's use of doublets see Hans Sauer 2019.

30 "Celestis imperii piissimus imperator humanam nuper cernens naturam, extincta quasi sue racionis lampade, sorde multipliciter peccatorum turpiter denigratam in miserabili nostri incolatus Egipto, a recto tramite ueritatis per deserta et inuia heresum et errorum sepius delirare, tamquam bonus pastor suas oues quas redemit ad catholice veritatis ouile reducere disponebat." Sermon *Ascendit aurora* ("Daybreak has arisen," W–4), translated in Wenzel 2008: 182–190.

31 They are: *deserta et inuia*; *heresum et errorum*; *inscius et ignorans*; *mutus pariter et elinguis*; *sapiencie et sciencie*; *solamen et subsidium*.

32 I have examined the Gospel sermons for 17 Trinity (to compare with Morrison's sermon 59, see above, note 7), and for 1 Advent (to compare with Powell's sermon 1, see above, note 8), in Hudson 1983: 287–290 and 326—329.

Latin sermon on "*Distribuit discumbentibus*" (John 6:11) contains such doublets as *nox et tenebre*, *amarum et abiectum*, *dampnificacio et miseria*, and others. Similarly, his later sermon on "*Misereor super turbam*" (Mark 8:2) contains such phrases as *prompte et provide* (*dare egentibus*), *servi et ministri*, *equivocando et extensive loquendo*, and others. The English writings of some his fifteenth-century followers show a mixed picture: Whereas William Taylor's Sermon on 1406 has no genuine synonymous doublets,[33] the (very long) "Egerton Sermon" on *Omnis plantatio* (Mathew 15:13) has, in its first 500 lines alone, some 20 of them.[34]

One may ask what the practice of earlier writers of Latin sermons was. Spot-checking reveals that Latin sermons of the 1330s and 1340s do have occasional lexical doublets, and often the same as those found in later works. Thus, Holcot's long sermon on *Dic ut lapides* mentioned above, written in the 1330s, of approximately 4900 words, contains seven doublets.[35] Richard FitzRalph's sermons, as far as we can tell, hold an even smaller percentage.[36] However, the carefully wrought sermon for St Katherine that he gave in 1338 to the Franciscans at Avignon is very different.[37] In over 7000 words the Latin text holds over 20 doublets, several of them repeated and yielding over 30 instances.[38] Perhaps the difference between the two sermons in this respect is due to FitzRalph's mode of writing: a shorter report vs. the actual sermon written out. On the other hand, we could here see the effect that different audiences (secular clergy vs. Franciscans) and purposes (exhortation vs. praise) had on the preacher's style. In any case, there is evidence that preach-

33 Hudson 1993: 3–23.

34 For instance: *þe stat of clergie or of presthod* (line 22); *greuouse or heuy* (106); *clene and purid* (134); *hoore or harlot* (337); etc.; in Hudson 2001: 2–143.

35 Shorter sermons by Holcot, of roughly 1400 words, that I have examined contain two to five doublets.

36 See for example the sermon he preached in Latin at the provincial council at Drogheda in 1351, edited in Gwynn 1949. The text appears to hold only one doublet, *fur et latro*, repeated several times and in different forms. It is biblical: John 10:1. The doublets in the opening paragraph: (*hortamur*) *ad pugnam et palmam*, *ad cursum et bravium* I would not consider synonymous.

37 The sermon (FI–78) has been translated in Wenzel 2008: 195–219.

38 They include such unquestionably synonymous ones as *debilius siue infirmius*, *scindere seu sectare*, *voluntarie et libere*, etc.

ers decorated some of their Latin sermons with lexical doublets significantly already in the middle of the fourteenth century. N

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