

THE SEMANTICS OF MIDDLE ENGLISH COMPOSITE PREDICATES¹

1. INTRODUCTION. AIMS AND SCOPE

The goal of this paper is to classify the Composite Predicates² formed with the light verbs *maken*, *don*, *haven*, *taken*, *yeven* and *nimen* extracted from the Middle English section of the *Helsinki Corpus of English Texts, Diachronic and Dialectal*,³ on the basis of the semantic content they express. After describing the main semantic groups into which the Composite Predicates in our data may be subdivided, the prevailing semantic categories with each light verb studied are analysed. Finally, Composite Predicates which consist of the same deverbal object and different light verb are considered.

Composite Predicates (henceforth, CPs), are structures which consist of a verb phrase followed by a nominal object. The syntactically main verb, usually *do*, *have*, *give*, *make* or *take*, is partially delexicalized and has accordingly been called a light or support verb. It acts as a basis to which the grammatical features of tense, person and number are attached. The nominal object carries the lexical content, acting as a non-verbal predicate. Sentence (1) below contains an example of a prototypical Present-Day English CP, *have a look*:

(1) He told me to *have a look* at the report.

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² The term *Composite Predicate* ultimately goes back to Cattel (1984) and has been more recently adopted by Akimoto and Brinton (1999a), Matsumoto (1999), Kytö (1999) and Tanabe (1999).

³ Further information on the Helsinki Corpus may be found in Kytö (1993) and in Rissanen, Kytö and Palander—Collin (1993).

Different semantic classifications of Present-Day English CPs have been put forward by Nickel (1968: 8), Akimoto (1990), Stein (1991), Dixon (1991: 354 ff.) or Quirk and Stein (1991).

Stein (1991: 23) establishes the following semantic groups for CPs with *give*, *have* and *take*: perception, mental activity, verbal activity, consumption, bodily care, contact activity, physical action, involuntary reaction, potentially voluntary reaction and voluntary reaction, while Quirk and Stein (1991: 198—9) replace voluntary reaction with tentative action.

Nickel (1968: 8) distinguishes six semantic subclasses of nouns which combine with *give*, *have*, *make* and *take*. These are nouns denoting movement or rest, vision, the action of speaking, sounds, the action of cleaning and, finally, nouns denoting the action of drinking. Claridge (2000: 142 ff.) has classified the nouns that enter in combinations with light verbs into the following categories: entity, state, verbal activity, concrete activity, abstract activity and mental/emotional process.

Focusing on the semantics of the deverbals rather than on the combinations themselves, Akimoto (1990) differentiates several semantic categories of nouns with which *give*, *have*, *make* and *take* tend to combine.

In view of the data extracted from the ME section of the *Helsinki Corpus*, we propose the following tentative classification of Middle English (henceforth, ME) CPs, based on the dominant semantic categories in our data (groups with more than ten tokens). Due to the difficulties in establishing watertight compartments, it may be possible to ascribe some of the combinations to more than one group, and in addition, subgroups have been distinguished within some categories.

1. FEELINGS AND EMOTIONS. This group consists of structures which express the entertaining of a certain sentiment, being in a particular frame of mind, experiencing a certain sensation or emotion.
2. OFFENSIVE ACTION. CPs which express a hostile action, an action which implies some sort of physical or psychological damage make up this group.

3. MENTAL ACTION. A wide number of combinations indicate the action or process of thinking, some sort of mental action or activity in general. The deverbals in this group can be further subdivided into nouns which express an action of guarding, of paying careful attention, care, or regard, deverbals which express the mental action of trusting, confiding, relying on a person or thing, and deverbals which express the formation of an opinion or notion concerning something by exercising the mind upon it.
4. SPEECH. CPs which express an action which involves the uttering or pronouncing of words or articulating sounds also occur in our data.
5. REDRESS. The reparation, amendment or correction of an error or fault is the semantic content indicated by a number of the structures analysed.
6. JUDGEMENT. Some of the units in our data indicate the action of taking legal steps to establish a claim or obtain judicial remedy, a legal process, or the taking of a judicial decision.
7. ENDEARMENT. A notable part of the structures recorded express the manifestation of good disposition or some sort of affection for someone or something.
8. MOTION. A subset of CPs refers to actions which involve changing place or position, the process of moving.
9. AGREEMENT. Combinations which denote the action of coming to an accord or an arrangement between two or more persons as to a course of action, a mutual understanding, a covenant, or treaty also occur in our data.
10. HOMAGE. CPs that indicate the acknowledgement of respect, reverence, dutiful respect, or honour, estimation or appreciation make up this subgroup.
11. TRADE. Several structures indicate the action of carrying on trade, buying and selling, of having commercial dealings with someone.

2. ANALYSIS OF THE DATA

After describing the major categories in our data, we next review the type of actions expressed by each of the light verbs analysed in this paper. For each verb, the groups are presented in order of decreasing frequency of occurrence.

2.1. *DON*—CPS

Don—CPs tend to fall into the following semantic subgroups in our data:

2.1.1. OFFENSIVE ACTION

This is the most numerous category. It contains combinations with deverbals such as *bismer*, *damage*, *despite*, *disease*, *guilerie*, *harm*, *hurt*, *inconvenience*, *justice*, *loth*, *offense*, *outrake*, *peine*, *persecucioun*, *punishment*, *qued*, *sanchip*, *scathe*, *shame*, *shond*, *sorwe*, *unese*, *unresoun*, *unright*, *vengeaunce*, *vileinie*, *wene*, *wo*, *wough*, *wrake*, *wreche* or *wrong*.

Sentence (160) below contains a CP which belongs to this semantic group, *don offense*:

(2) (^ (\Tercia mulier.) ^) Ye false traitours! Vnto God ye *do grett*
offens, To sle and mordere yong children þat in þer cradelle
slumber! (ME4: CMDIGBY, 106)¹

2.1.2. REDRESS

Combinations with nouns such as *almesdede*, *amend*, *amendment*, *alms*, *andetnyse*, *charite*, *dedbote*, *lak*, *penaunce*, *penitence*, *remedie*, *sacrifice*, *shrift*, or *reowsunge*, as in (161) below, occur:

¹ All the examples quoted have been extracted from the ME section of the *Helsinki Corpus*. Each quotation contains information on the subperiod to which it belongs, namely ME1 (from 1150 to 1250), ME2 (from 1250 to 1350), ME3 (from 1350 to 1420) or ME4 (from 1420 to 1500), the abbreviated title of the text from which it has been extracted and the page number where it can be found. The full titles of the texts as well as more information on them may be found in Kytö (1993).

- (3) Be þare þe Hælend on his godspelle cwæð, ‘*Doð reowsunge*, for þam ðe heofene rice neahlæcð’. (ME1: CMBODLE, 42)

2.1.3. ENDEARMENT

CPs with *ese*, *esinesse*, *favour*, *godnesse*, *god*, *grace*, *kindnesse*, *love*, *merci*, *milce*, *plesauce*, *thanking* or *thanks* belong to this category, exemplified with *don ese* in sentence (162) below:

- (4) Sche is agreyd to speke wyth me, and sche hopythe to *doo me ease*, as sche saythe. (ME4: CMPRIV, 441)

2.1.4. HOMAGE

Combinations with *buxomnesse*, *feute*, *homage*, *honour*, *manred*, *worship* or *reverence*, as in example (163) below, make up this subgroup.

- (5) For certes, namoore *reverence* shal be *doon* there to a kyng than to a knave. (ME3: CTPROS, 291 C.2)

2.2. HAVEN—CPS

CPs usually belong to the semantic fields which follow.

2.2.1. FEELINGS AND EMOTIONS

This is the most numerous group with *haven*. Akimoto (1990: 869) also distinguishes this category of nouns in combination with *haven* as a light verb, and Tanabe (1999: 105) points out the tendency of *haven* to combine with nouns expressing emotions.

Different feelings and emotions, such as pleasure, as in *haven liking* in (6), scorn, as in *haven disdein* in (7) or suffering, as in *haven care* in (8), may be expressed with *haven*—CPS:

- (6) Ah þunched ham softe & habbeð mare delit þrin; þen ei oðer *habbe* i *licunge* of þe worlt. (ME1: CMHALI, 131)

- (7) Certes, wel oghte a man *have desdayn* of synne and withdrawe hym from that thraldom and vileynye. (ME3: CMCTPROS, 290 C.2)

(8) (^Mercy.^) I *haue moche care* for yow, my own frende. (ME4: CMMANKIN, 163)

Abhominacioun, affecioun, appetite, aue, blisse, comfort, compassioun, charite, deth, defaut, deinte, delectacioun, delice, deliting, desire, despite, devocioun, disport, drede, drednesse, embethanc, enclinaunce, envie, favour, feeling, fere, fervour, game, gladnesse, grevaunce, grure, hevinesse, jelsie, joy, liking, longing, love, loving, lust, merci, merveille, milce, mirth, morning, nede, nith, ofthinking, onde, ore, overhohe, peine, pite, pleie, plesaunce, pride, reuth, reuthnes, scorn, shame, sorinesse, sorwe, swetenesse, tene, torment, tribulacioun, win, wleatunge, wo, wough, wonder, wrong, yerning and zele also belong to this category.

2.2.2. MENTAL ACTION

This is a numerous class which includes units that may express belief, as in *haven confidence* in (9) below, attention, as in *haven hed* in (10), or opinion, as in *haven estimacioun* in (11) below:

(9) The preste, *hauyng confidens* in hys promysse, was wel content, (ME4: CMKEMPE, I 57)

(10) uor he ne *heþ* none *hede* of longe ryote of tales y–slyked / ne y–rymed. (ME2: CMAYENBI, I 99)

(11) "Thou *hast*," quod sche, "the ryght *estimacion* of this?". (ME3: CMBOETH, 447 C.1)

Also in this category are CPs formed with belief, *businessse*, confidence, cure, deliberacioun, diligence, dreme, durstinesse, feith, forthinking, hope, ileve, keping, knouing, knouleche, knouleching, kunning, meditacioun, memorie, mind, mistrouing, opinioun, penaunce, premeditacioun, remorse, repentaunce, regard, suspect, suspecioun, sweuening, thought, trust, understanding, ward and witing.

2.2.3. MOTION

Fal, *cours*, *passage*, *climbing*, or *fare*, as in (170) below, are nouns which express an action which involves movement and which have been found in combination with *haven* in our corpus.

- (12) Na for þam þt þe deofel *hæfde* æni... *fare* to ure Hælende oðer his mæð wære þt he him ahwær on neawste come, 3if he hit for ure lufe |P98 ne 3eðafede. (ME1: CMBODLE, 96—98)

2.2.4. SPEECH

Communicacioun, langage, speche, word or *talking*, as in (171) below, are examples of this category.

- (13) Thei graunted his peticioun, and broute him forth to þe castel of Flynt, where þe duk and he *had* but a smal *talkyng*, and þan rydyn to þe castell of Chestir. (ME4: CMCAPCHR, 213)

2.3. *MAKEN*—CPS

Deverbals from the semantic fields which follow have been recorded forming CPs with *maken* in ME.

2.3.1. SPEECH

A variety of *maken*—CPS indicate the production or articulation of sounds. This is the case with *declaracioun*, in (172) below, as well as with *answere, avaunt, bere, bost, compleint, crie, lesing, mencion, mind, mon, morne, morning, notice, pleint, preier, proclamacioun, prophecie, protestacioun, questioun, rehersaille, relacioun, rem, replicacioun, sermoun, site, song, sorwe, weilawei* or *warning*.

- (14) Wherefore me semeth conveyent, syth that I speke of the ascendent, to *make* of it speciall *declaracioun*. (ME3: CMASTRO, 670 C2)

2.3.2. OFFENSIVE ACTION

Deverbals in this subgroup include *breking, care, faisithe, manace, wasting*, or, as in (173) below, *perturbacioun* and *troubling*:

- (15) he scholde be more feblid & more *perturbacioun* or *troblyng* schulde *be made* in hym. ME3: CMPHLEBO, 47)

A number of CPs expresses the action of contending in battle, of striving for victory or struggling. This is the case with *afray, conquest, debate*,

defense, enarminges, justes, resistence, strife, werre or *assault*, as in the following example:

(16) And also þe friday folwyng in þe same Woke of Estarne, in þe same 3er of owre lord þe kyng xvj=e=, Thomas Bradle, John Spaldyng, William Schyngilwode, preest, & Richard langeford, with other mo vne-knowen, in þe feld of Stebenythe, vp-on þe land of John 3ereld by-syde Schordych, with force & armes, bowes & arwes, swerdes & bokelers & other wepene, & þere *asawt madyn* to þe sone of John 3ereld and to þe 3omen of Schordych. (ME3: CMDOCU3, 233)

2.3.3. AGREEMENT

Accord, alliaunce, appointment, bargain, bond, composicioun, conspiracie, convencioun, covenaut, covin, forme, saughte, treue or foreward, as in (175) below, frequently occur in our data.

(17) the seide Bysshop Dean and Chapter that tyme beyng hadde lycence to enclose the cimitary ther as hit more pleynty apperyth yn a *composicion* ther of *made*. (ME4: CMDOCU4, 84)

2.3.4. JUDGEMENT

Maken combines with nouns such as arbitrement, award, dom, jugement, proces, rightfulness, serche, testament, sute, or statut and ordinaunce, as in (176).

(18) Also þat þer schal non wardeins *make* non newe *statut*... ne newe *ordinance* with-oute assent of alle þe bretherhede, & þat it be don on on of þe foure dayes afor seid. (ME3: CMDOCU3, 53)

2.3.5. REDRESS

Combinations with alms, amendes, amendment, aseth, offring, offrende, reformacioun, relief, restitucioun, sacrifice, shrift or penitence, illustrated in (177) below, belong to this subgroup.

(19) þe blake cros limpeð to þeo þe *makieði* þe worlt hare *penitence* for ladliche sunnen. (ME1: CMANCRE, 30)

2.3.6. TRADE

Alienacioun, dispense, feffment, fyn, marchaundie, paiement, raunson, sale, transmutacioun, yielding and assessing and levy, as in (178) below, form CPs in combination with *maken*.

(20) *assessyng* and *levy was made* amonge the sayde Bysshoppis tenantis of ij dymes. (ME4: CMDOCU4, 81)

2.3.7. MOTION

Coming, departing, haste, lepis, pilgrimage, stiring, wei, or, as in (179) below, *breid*, express actions which involve movement in combination with *maken*.

(21) And ate laste I *make abreid*, Caste up myn hed and loke aboute, Riht as a man that were in doute And wot nocht wher he schal become. (ME3: CMGOWER, I 317)

2.3.8. MENTAL ACTION

This category gathers deverbals such as *comparisoun, disencioun, division, eleccioun, estimacioun, force, strength, thought* or *bepenchinge* and *memorie*, reflected in (180) below.

(22) þet is to alle guode herten / þet eche daye zueteliche be zoþe loue *makeþ memorie* / and *bepenchinge* of his passion. (ME2: CMAYENBI, I 112)

2.4. TAKEN—CPS

Taken favours combinations with deverbals belonging to the following semantic subgroups.

2.4.1. MENTAL ACTION

This category includes combinations with deverbals such as *avis, avisement, conseil, cure, direccioun, force, gome, hed, high, kep, red, repentaunce, regard, tent, thought, witnesse, yeme* or *attendaunce*, illustrated in (181) below:

(23) And all for lacke of our maysters and nouryces all wrapped in neclygence *taketh* none *attendaunce* to us. (ME4: CMINNOCE, 6)

2.4.2. FEELINGS AND EMOTIONS

Care, compassioun, conscience, displesure, displesaunce, herte, joy, lust, merci, mon, pite, shame, sorwe or talent express feelings in combination with taken, whether pleasure, as is the case with taken lust, or suffering, as in taken displesure, in (182) below:

(24) Also I praye yow feele my lady off Norffolkys dysposicion to me wardys, and whethyre she *toke* any *dysplesure* at my langage, ore mokkyd ore dysdeyned my wordys whyche I hadd to hyre. (ME4: CMPRIV, 449)

2.4.3. MOTION

Taken in combination with *gate*, *pilgrimage*, *sauf passage*, *viage*, *wei* or *trace*, as in the following sample, denotes actions in this category.

(25) Alisaunder and Candace To chaumber *token* her *trace*, (ME2: CMALISAU, I 422)

2.4.4. REDRESS

CPs with *bote*, *discipline*, *penaunce*, *shrift* or *right*, as in (184) below, enter into this category.

(26) Bute ðu *neme riht* of ðe seluen of ðe misdades ðe ðu mis–dest, mid fasten, oððer mid wake. (ME1: CMVICES1, 125)

2.4.5. AGREEMENT

This group includes combinations with *appointment*, *treue*, *accord*, *agrement* or *forme*, shown in the following sample:

(27) So þat þer was bituene hom . god *fourme inome* . Hou sir edward mi...te best . out of warde come. (ME2: CMROBGLO, 756)

2.5. YEVEN—CPS

Most *yeven*—CPs in our data belong to the following semantic classes:

2.5.1. ENDEARMENT

Aid, benisoun, blessinge, grace, greting, hereword, love, merci, ore, pardoun, queming, thanking, thanks, and comfort and delite, which occur in (28) below, combine with *yeven* in our data.

(28) [^20.^] That is, he [P383 *gafe* thaim *comforte* and *delite* in his worde. and swa he toke thaim fra corrupcioun of thought. that has na sauoure in swete thyng. and of this. (ME4: CMROLLPS, 383—384)

2.5.2. SPEECH

Answer, answering, grone, hete, malisoun, song, voice, warning, word, or speche, as in (29) below, belong to this category.

(29) he said, "nai, nai goddote, Moght i not be sua light o fote." Wit þis *gaue* ysaac a *grane*. (ME3: CMCURSOR, 220)

2.5.3. OFFENSIVE ACTION

With *yeven*, deverbals in this subgroup express the action of striking a blow (cf. Akimoto 1990: 869) as is the case with *buffet*, *clout*, *deth*, *stroke*, *tripet* or *dint*, in (30) below.

(30) So harde *dent* he hire ...*af*, þe brein cleuede on is staf. (ME2: CMBEVIS, 81)

Nouns such as *accusing*, *bale* or *mischauunce* also belong to this category.

2.5.4. MENTAL ACTION

The units in this subgroup may express opinion, as is the case of *yeven assent* in (31) below, belief, as in *yeven truth* in (32) or attention, as in *yeven force* in (33):

(31) The king therto *yaf* his *assent*, Demetrius was put in hold, Wherof that Perseus was bold. (ME3: CMGOWER, I 175)

(32) Alswa in þis commandemente es forbodun to *gyffe trouthe* till socerye or till dyuynynge... by sternys, or by dremys, or by any swylke thynges. (ME4: CMROLLTR, 10)

(33) ...yf þou forgete or ouersytttes Tyme of housel, þat þou weyl wytes, lytel *fors* of hym þou *zyues*, þou louest hym nat þat þou by lyues, And ouer alle þyng he loueþ þe beste, And þou ne wylt, a nyztys geste, lete hym herber yn hys hous. (ME3: CMHANSYN, 320)

Other deverbals in this subgroup include *attendaunce*, *credence*, *entent*, *feith*, *kep*, *regard* or *tent*.

2.5.5. JUDGEMENT

Jugement, *dom*, *right*, *sentence* or *veredict* belong to this subgroup. The multiple deverbals *dom* and *sentence* in (34) below exemplify this semantic subtype:

(34) (^Phariseus^) Herke sere prophete we all 3ow pray to *gyff* trewe *dom* and just *sentence* Vpon þis woman which þis same day In synfull advowtery hath don offense. (ME4: CMLUDUS, 206)

2.5.6. HOMAGE

Servise, *glorie*, *honour*, *laude*, *worship* or *truage*, as in (35) below, form *yeven*—CPs in ME:

(35) Horn makede Arnoldin þare King, after king Aylmare, Of al westernesse, For his meoknesse. þe king and his homage 3euen Arnoldin *trewage*. (ME2: CMHORN, 68)

3. DEVERBALS COMBINED WITH SEVERAL LIGHT VERBS

The previous classification of CPs has evinced that the same deverbals may be combined with more than one light verb and that the resulting CPs may be synonymous or different in meaning. We now concentrate on CPs formed with the same deverbals but different light verb in our data, to unveil systematic similarities and differences in meaning that are obtained between them.

Scholars disagree in their interpretation of the contribution that the verbal and the nominal element in the CP makes to the structure as a whole. In this sense, Live (1973: 31) has noted that

The first part is almost devoid of lexical meaning but embodies the associated grammatical information, being the bearer of the inflectional endings (thus indicating tense, number and person). The second part carries the lexical load, conveying verb—like meaning, although its form is not that of a verb;¹

The role played by the verbal element in the CP structure has been limited to that of a “copula” with a transitive value (Curme 1935: 69). Jespersen (1942: 117) calls it a “light verb”, and points out that it serves as a basis “to which the marks of person and tense are attached”, and Halliday (1967: 60) maintains that it only indicates “that there is a process involved”.

Likewise, Renský (1964: 290) emphasises the “relative semantic emptiness or total absence of the finite verb”, which Müller (1978: 9) qualifies as “inhaltsarmen”, or poor in content. Cattell (1984: 2) argues that the verbal element is “semantically very ‘light’[...]” and it is used “to mean very little more than a verbal action occurred [...]” and it does “only a little more than provide the verb—function and carry the signification of tense and number”.

Sciullo and Rosen (1990) seem to share this view and consider these verbs to be “(semi)light” or “empty”. Kytö (1999: 168), Brinton and Akimoto (1999a: 2), and Tanabe (1999: 98), follow Quirk *et al.* (1985: 750), who describe the verbal element as being one of “general meaning”, thus agreeing with Algeo (1995: 204).²

¹ Live (1973: 33) goes on to state that the light verb “bears considerable resemblance to an auxiliary. It is weakly stressed, while the deverbal gets secondary or even primary stress. Its characteristic lexical meaning is eroded [...]” Hiltunen (1999: 136), who follows Koskenniemi (1977), agrees with the identification between the verb in CPs and copular verbs.

² Algeo (1995: 204) affirms that the verb is semantically general while the object is semantically specific.

In contrast, the nominal element, referred to as “deverbal object” (Live 1973), “eventive object” (Quirk *et al.* 1985: 750),¹ or “agentive object” (Matsumoto 1999: 60), is thought to be “the really important idea [...]” (Jespersen 1942: 117), and so “the action is spelt out [...]” in it (Cattell 1984: 2), and it carries the bulk of the meaning (Hiltunen 1999: 136).

Although the commonest belief is that the semantic load of the combination falls on the nominal object while the verb is practically devoid of meaning, some scholars are of a different opinion. Wierzbicka (1982: 759)² and Dixon (1991: 340, 346—354)³ emphasise the semantic contribution of the CP to the sentence as a whole and Stein (1991: 15) rejects “the idea of *have, give, take* being mere ‘connectives’ or ‘light’ verbs. [...] Each of the verbs *have, give, take*, etc. brings its specific meaning to the particular construction [...]”

In this sense, the perusal of our data has revealed that, even though it is true that some stylistic or emphatic meaning difference may be involved, pairs consisting of the same deverbals but different light verb are often synonymous. This is the case with combinations of *maken* and *taken* with nouns from the semantic category *agreement*, such as *maken treue* and *taken treue*⁴ in (36) and (37) below:

(36) it ys expressely ageinis the *trieux* and appointment *made* & take betwix (youre Rea)mes landes and subgiettes of the oon parties. (ME4: CMDOCU4, 268)

(37) þis 3ere, aboute seynt Donstones day and feste, Edward kyng of Engelond *toke trewes* wip þe kyng of Fraunce, in hope of pees. (ME3: CMPOLYCH, VIII 351)

¹ Quirk *et al.* (1985: 750) refer to it as *eventive object*. It “is semantically an extension of the verb and bears the major part of the meaning”. Algeo (1995: 204) and Kytö (1999: 168) follow Quirk *et al.* (1985).

² Wierzbicka (1982: 759) maintains that “the have a V construction is agentive, experiencer—oriented, antidurative, atelic, and reiterative”.

³ According to Dixon (1991: 340) “each of HAVE A, GIVE A and TAKE A adds a special semantic element to the basic sentence”.

⁴ *MED treue* 6. Peace, amity, accord; used esp. of relations between God and man; a covenant; an accommodation, a settlement; also, a reconciliation; taken (maken).

Synonymous CPs result from deverbals denoting mental actions, such as *attendaunce*¹ combined with *taken* and *yeven*, or *force*² in combination with *maken*, *taken* or *yeven*, as in (38), (39) and (40) below:

(38) I *take* no *force* though I have both theire hedis: for he slew my brothir, a good knyght and a trew. (ME4: CMMALORY, 48)

(39) Sche, takyng lityl heed of her wordys, let it passyn forth as sche had *mad* no *fors* tyl he wolde comyn & preyin for grace hys–self. (ME4: CMKEMPE, I 222)

(40) (^New Gyse.^) I *gyff* no *force*, by Sent Tanne! (^Nowadays.^) Leppe about lyuely! þou art a wyght man. (ME4: CMMANKIN, 156)

The same is true with other deverbals, such as *repentaunce*³ in combination with *haven* and *taken*, or *taken* and *yeven* combined with *kep*⁴ or, as illustrated in (41) and (42) below, with *tent*:⁵

(41) The fooles þat faithe is fallen fra *Take tente* to me now, or ye ga. (ME4: CMYORK, 69)

(42) Y rede 3ow alle, 3eueþ gode *tent*, whederward þat Pers ys went. (ME3: CMHANSYN, 192)

Verbal actions may be expressed by CPs formed with different light verbs. *Don preier* and *maken preier*,⁶ are synonymous expressions, as is the case with *maken answeere* and *yeven answeere*, in (43) and (44):

(43) Not wolnyng other wise yanne as before trete ner conclude / but yf yay haue other in commandement from yaire soueraines /

¹ *MED attendaunce* 1(a) The act of paying attention, concentrating, or devoting oneself; *maken*, *taken*, *yeven*.

² *MED force* 10b *don* (*haven*, *maken*, *taken*, *yeven*), to pay attention to (something).

³ *MED repentaunce* (a) Repentance, penitence, sorrow for sin or wrongdoing; contrition; also person.; *ben in* (of), *haven* (*taken*).

⁴ *MED kep* 1(a); *taken* (*nimen*, *yeven*), to take notice, take heed;(b) *yeven*, keep track of (sth.); 2(b) *yeven to* (*unto*), to be concerned about (sth.), have concern for, bother about. 3(a) *yeven on*, protect (sth.).

⁵ *MED tent(e* 2, 1(a); *taken* (*nimen*, *yeven*), to take notice, take heed;(b) *yeven*, keep track of (sth.); 2(b) *yeven to* (*unto*), to be concerned about (sth.), have concern for, bother about. 3(a) *yeven on*, protect (sth.);

⁶ *MED preier* 2a(e) *maken* (*don*, *bidden*, *seien*), to say (one's) prayer(s) or devotions; pray; holden *preieres* upon, senden *preieres* on, say prayers over (a sacrificial animal); *MED answeere* 1 A reply to an inquiry or request; *maken*, *yeven* (*ayain*), to reply, give an explanation;

The *answar* may be wel *maad* yat til yai be ful thorough wiy vs / yat yay shal no thyng haue but were. (ME3: CMOFFIC3, 121)

- (44) Butt iff þatt Drihhtin be wiþþ himm All opennlike onn erþe. & ure Laferrd Jesu Crist Himm *zaff anndswere* & se33de. (ME1: CMORM, II 225)

Actions which fall into the semantic category *homage*,¹ such as *don honour* and *maken honour* or *don homage* in (45) and *maken homage* in (46) below, provide further examples of synonymous CPs:

- (45) [{}HOMAGE{}] Whan a freman schall *do* his *homage* to his chef lord þat he halt of his chef tenement, he schal holden his handys togedyr. (ME4: CMREYNES, 145)

- (46) Certys he dede grete outrage, To *make* þe deuy1 so moche *omage*. (ME3: CMHANSYN, 8)

In the semantic category *redress*, *don amendes* and *maken amendes*, as in (47) and (48) below, or combinations of the deverbal *shrift* with the light verbs *don*, *maken* and *taken* in (49), (50) and (51), are further examples of semantically equivalent CPs²

- (47) by men of Cipres. þerfore kyng Richard chasede þe kyng of |PVIII,109 þe lond, þat wolde nou3t *doo amendes*, from citee to citee, for to þe kyng zalde hym to kyng Richard. (ME3: CMPOLYCH, VIII 108—109)

- (48) he haue restored of alle maner |P57 dettes touching þe breþerhede, & *make amendes* of his trespas, vp þe ordinance of þe foure wardeyns. (ME3: CMDOCU3, 56—57)

¹ *MED homage* 2 In phrases: (a) beren (don, maken, yelden, yeven), to acknowledge one's allegiance (to sb.), pay homage; also fig. *MED honour* 1(b) beren (don), beren (don, yelden, yeven) to, yeven unto, to honor (sb. or sth.); don, perform (one's) devotions, worship.

² *MED amendes* 1 (a) Reparation, retribution, amends (as for an offense or crime, or for harm done); don, maken, paien, make amends, compensate; — often with of phrase. *MED shrift* 1 a) Confession to a priest, auricular confession; also person; in (o, of, with) mouth; wind, oral confession; soth (sothfast, verrei); haven on herte, to intend to confess; maken o (of) mouth; Penance imposed by the priest after confession; chiefly in phr. as to take, nim shrift; to do shrift; to give shrift. *MED shrift* 2(a) An instance or act of confession to a priest; to his, at his confession; (b) don (rehearsen, sheuen, tellen), to make (one's) confession; [...] *maken*, make (one's) confession; also, make (one's) confession (to God); *MED nimen* 7b nim shrift, confess one's sins, receive penance from a confessor, do penance for sin.

- (49) Eft we findeð on ða hali writt ðat ðe cniht ðe weapne berð unlawliche, ne chapmann ðe beið and selð mid unri[*h*]twisnesse, ne muzen neure soðe *scrifte don*, ðare [*h*]wile ðe hie ðese wike befeleð. (ME1: CMVICES1, 121)
- (50) *Schrift* schal beon ofte i *maket*. for þi is i þe sawter. (ME1: CMANCRE, 165)
- (51) '*Nimeð scrifte* of ʒewer sennes, hit neiheð heuene riche'. (ME1: CMVICES1, 121)

Haven, *maken* and *yeven* may be combined with various deverbals to express actions included in the group *judgement*. This is the case with structures such as or *dom*¹ with *yeven* and *maken*, or *maken sute*² and *haven sute* in (52) and (53) below. The resulting CPs are once again equivalent in meaning:

- (52) and I can nought beleue þat in þis cas þe same John myght by yowr lawe any swich *sute haue* ageyn me as yowr lettre specifieth. (ME4: CMOFFIC4, 6)
- (53) þe entent of þe seyð Walter in a *sute* þat he *made* ageyn þe seyð Priour of a voweson of þe chyrche of Sprouston (ME4: CMOFFIC4, 12)

Synonymous structures with *don* and *yeven* and the same deverbals from the category *endearment* have been recorded. By means of example, see *don* and *yeven* combined with *grace*³ in (54) and (55) below:

- (54) For as bi þe lawes of emperoures, whan a gret lord haþ no child, he may chese a pore mannes sone, ʒif he wole, and make of hym his eir bi adopcioun, þat is to seye bi auowerie, so þat men holdeþ it as for his sone and auowed to bere his heritage. þis *grace dide* vs God þe fadre, nouzt for oure deseruyng, as seynt Poule seiþ. (ME4: CMVICES4, 100)
- (55) he schal haue eueri wyke of þe box to his sustinance xiiij d, til god ʒiue hym *grace* of recouerance, he to preye & bidde for alle breþeren & alle cristne. (ME3: CMDOCU3, 54)

¹ *MED dom* 2 (a) A judicial decision, a sentence at law; right, wrong; *yeven* (*maken*), to pass sentence.

² *MED sute* 6aLaw. (a) A lawsuit; a legal action undertaken to redress a wrong; *haven* (*taken*) *ayen*, *taken ayenes*, to bring a lawsuit against (sb.); *maken* (*seuen*), bring a lawsuit.

³ *MED grace* 4(c) *don*, *yeven to*, to grant (sb.) a favor, do a favor.

Synonymity between pairs of CPs with the same deverbal but different light verb in the subgroup labelled *fight*¹ is attested by structures such as *don bataille*, *yeven bataille* and *taken bataille*, or, as exemplified in (56) and (57) below, *haven werre* and *maken werre*:

(56) Afftir the deth of Uther regned Arthure, hys son, which *had* grete *warre* in hys dayes for to gete all Inglonde into hys honde. (ME4: CMMALORY, 44)

(57) Alle so hyt ys accordyd that hangyng thys presentte trefte and appoyntement noo maner of *warre* shalle be *made* by–twyne hem ande the oste of oure soverayne lorde the Kyng of Inglonde. (ME4: CMGREGOR, 120)

Differences in meaning between combinations consisting of the same deverbal but different light verb are often due to the fact that different semantic connotations of the deverbal involved intervene in each combination. This is the case with pairs such as *haven memorie*² vs. *maken memorie*³ or *don bote*⁴ vs. *taken bote*,⁵ exemplified in (58) through (61) below:

(58) Worschypfull souerence, I haue wretyn here The gloryuse remembrance of my nobyll condycyon. To *haue* remos and *memory* of mysylff þus wretyn yt ys, To defende me from all superstycyus charmys. (ME4: CMMANKIN, 164)

(59) For euery messe *makeþ memorye* Of soules þat are yn purgatorye. (ME3: CMHANSYN, 321)

¹ *MED werre* 1b d *haven werre*(s, wage war(s); holden, engage in warfare, carry on war; *maintenen werre*(s, carry on or manage a war (wars) [see also *maintenen v. 6.(b)*]; also, pay for or sustain a war; *maken* (a), *usen*, make war, wage (a) war. *MED bataille* 1(b); (b) *don* (fongen, taken), engage in combat; [...] 2a(a) *yeven a*, engage (an enemy). *MED taken* 37b(a) join battle, engage in combat, make war.

² *MED memorie* 2(a) Memory or recollection (of sb. or sth.); awareness or consciousness (of sb. or sth.); state of mind [quot.: Orch.Syon]; [...] (c) *haven*, to remember (sth.); intend (to do sth.).

³ *MED memorie* (a) A memorial; deed, edifice, etc., in commemoration of somebody or something; also, keepsake, commemorative gift or token [quot.: ?a1439]; reminder [quot.: ?c1425]; for (a, the), in, into the, as a memorial (to sb. or sth.), in memory or commemoration (of sb. or sth.); *maken of*, to commemorate (sb. or sth.).

⁴ *MED niman* 7(b) to make amends for one's sin.

⁵ *MED bote* 1(a) *don*, do (sb.) good, aid, be profitable to.

(60) hit falleþ þe kyng of fraunce bittrore þen þe sote, bote he þe rapere þer-of welle *do bote*, wel sore hit shal hym rewe. (ME2: CMPOEMH, 13)

(61) and for þene mon þet hit er ahte. and þazet *nime bote* to criste. (ME1: CMLAMBET, 31)

More revealing seem the differences that are obtained between combinations with certain nouns grouped under the headings *endearment*, *offensive action* and *feeling*. The same deverbal combined with *don* or *yeven* tends to express an action, whether positive or negative, hostile or beneficial, performed by an agentive subject, and whose recipient is different from its agent, while when combined with *haven* or *taken*, the subject tends to be an experiencer subject.¹

The above made remark is supported by pairs such as *haven comfort* and *yeven comfort*² in (62) and (63) below, or *don despite* and *haven despite*³ in (64) and (65):

(62) yf þu woldist verily trostyn in me & no-thing dowtyn, þu maist *han gret comfort* in þi-self & mythist comfortyn al thy felaschep wher 3e ben now alle in gret drede & heuynes. (ME4: CMKEMPE, I 230)

(63) Seint Eadmund him *3af comfort*: ant tolde him 3wat it were. (ME2: CMSELEG, 437)

(64) Than had the kynge and all the barownes grete mervayle that Balyne had done that aventure; many knyghtes *had grete despite* at hym. (ME4: CMMALORY, 47)

(65) Daud þan said, "drichtin for-bede þat þou suld thinc to do suilk a dede, Or euer him *do despit* or scam, þat drichtin smerld has in his nam". (ME3: CMCURSOR, 446)

¹ Note, however, that combinations of *don* and *taken* with *vengeance*, *MED vengeance* 1(d) taken (don, nimen, yeven), exact retribution, carry out revenge, are synonymous.

² *MED comfort* (a) Pleasure, delight, gratification; cacchen, haven, enjoy (sth.); don, amuse (sb.).

³ *MED despite* 3 An act designed to humiliate, insult, or harm someone; humiliation, insult, injury, outrage, or an instance of it; don, to humiliate, insult, or injure (sb.), disparage (sth.), commit an outrage. 4 (a) Injured feeling, resentment, grudging; haven in, haven of (at), holden of, to feel resentful about, bear a grudge against.

Combinations of *sorwe*¹ with *don*, *haven*, *maken* and *taken* occur in (66) through (69) below:

(66) And þer he *dyde* myche *sowrrov* for he myzt not synke. (ME4: CMSIEGE, 91)

(67) Sire, i schal al one, Wiþute more ymone, Wiþ mi swerd wel eþe Bringe hem þre to deþe." þe kyng aros a moreze, þat *hadde* muchel *sorze*. (ME2: CMHORN, 38)

(68) On boþe half þe mayne gentes Wen[{n{]ten hom to her tentes, And token rest al forto amorowe, *Makande* wel grete *sorowe* For her lordes, for her ken, |PI,223 þat layen yslawe in þe fen. (ME2: CMALISAU, I 222—223)

(69) And as the booke seyth, whan sir Launcelot was departed she *toke* suche *sorow* that she deyde within a fourtenyte. (ME4: CMMALORY, 204)

The preceding examples show that while the combination with *maken* expresses an action in the category *speech*, the structure with *don* falls into the field of *hostile actions*. The compounds with *haven* and *taken* denote *feelings* and *emotions*.

4. CONCLUSION

The analysis of the semantics of CPs has exposed the most salient semantic contents expressed by CPs in ME. The different light verbs have been seen to favour combinations from certain semantic fields, which hints at the verb's capability to impose restrictions on the range of nouns with which it may combine (cf. Akimoto 1990; Hiltunen 1999: 146). In addition, our survey has evinced the semantic weakness of the light verbs studied, as attested by a number of synonymous combinations of the same deverbial with different verbal elements. Finally, our enquiry has brought to light the existence of predictable differences in meaning between CPs consisting of the same light verb and different deverbial noun.

¹ **MED** *sorwe* 1(d) an expression of sorrow, lamentation, weeping; [...] lamentation; *maken*, to lament, mourn. 1(g) *haven* (up, to be (very) sad, suffer (great) grief; [...] *nimen* (taken), become sad, be sad. 2(d) (d) harm, damage, injury; also, an injury; *don* (*maken*), to do harm, cause trouble.

In our opinion, those cases of synonymous CPs with the same object but which differ in their verbal element evince the decrease in the lexical meaning of the verbal predicate. It is true that the verb tends to carry a general actional meaning but it may be the case the lexical load provided by the verbal element may be a heavier or lighter one depending on each particular combination. Therefore, there is likely to be a gradient in the semantic load of the verbal elements of CPs.¹

The following Table visually summarises the semantic categories which prevail in our data. The semantic categories are listed in order of decreasing frequency in the global corpus. Numbered cells indicate semantic categories which predominate with each light verb. The number in the cells represents the order of frequency, from highest to lowest, with which they appear with a given light verb.

TABLE 1: CPS: SEMANTIC CLASSIFICATION

	DON	<i>HAVEN</i>	<i>MAKEN</i>	<i>TAKEN</i>	<i>YEVEN</i>
FEELINGS AND EMOTIONS	—	1	—	2	—
OFFENSIVE ACTION	1	—	8	—	2
MENTAL ACTION	—	2	7	1	3
SPEECH	—	4	1	—	4
REDRESS	2	—	4	3	—
JUDGEMENT	—	—	3	—	5
ENDEARMENT	3	—	—	—	1
MOTION	—	3	6	4	—

¹ Algeo (1995: 206) is of the opinion that “semantic generality or specificity is, to be sure, a continuum. Yet it is possible to recognize degrees along that cline”.

AGREEMENT	—	—	2	5	—
HOMAGE	4	—	—	—	6
TRADE	—	—	5	—	—

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