

BE vs. HAVE in the perfect of mutative intransitive verbs:

A study on the Middle English translation of *Paris and Vienne*^{*1)}

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1. Introduction

The present study explores perfect forms in Late Middle English, with a particular focus on Caxton's translation of *Paris and Vienne* (*Paris*, hereafter). The perfect form in Present-day English is straightforward, consisting of the combination of HAVE and a past participle. In earlier days, by contrast, English employed a two-way system, where either BE or HAVE was combined with a past participle, as in other European languages today such as French and German. In Old and Middle English, the BE-perfect was typically used with mutative intransitive verbs (e.g. BE *come* instead of HAVE *come*).

Since the major shift from the BE-perfect to HAVE-perfect occurred in the Late Modern English period, in some measure under the influence of prescriptivism (cf. Rydén & Brorström 1987: 209-211; Anderwald 2012: 39-41; and Yáñez-Bouza 2018: 42-43),²⁾ most previous studies on the perfect investigate this later period. Far fewer studies are available on the perfect in Early Modern English, though some research exists (e.g. Kytö 1994; Hundt & Iyeiri 2025). Even fewer studies address the perfect in Middle English, though some works are available (see Section 2.1). Indeed, the BE-perfect remains dominant in Middle English, but variation between the BE-perfect and HAVE-perfect is already encountered in this period (cf. Mustanoja 1960: 499-503). Hence, the examination of perfect forms in Middle English is crucial in understanding the initial stage of the expansion of the HAVE-perfect in English.

Among the limited number of previous studies on Middle English perfect forms, Huber's (2019) research is extensive, drawing on the *Corpus of Middle English Prose and Verse*. However, it examines solely the verbs CLIMB, CREEP, LEAP, RUN, RIDE, SAIL, SWIM, and WALK, notably excluding typical mutative intransitive verbs such as COME and GO. By contrast, the present study concentrates on a single text in the fifteenth century, i.e. Caxton's translation of *Paris*, but provides a more comprehensive analysis of mutative intransitive verbs that appear within it. Furthermore, this research

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2) Anderwald (2012: 39-41) and Yáñez-Bouza (2018: 42-43) argue that grammarians in the eighteenth century were not necessarily critical of the use of the BE-perfect, whereas in the nineteenth century, the older perfect form was clearly subject to criticism.

extends its scope to the probable source text in French and sees if Caxton's choice between the BE-perfect and HAVE-perfect was influenced by the original text in French. This is a new perspective, at least to the best of our knowledge, not extensively discussed in previous studies on Middle English perfect forms.

This study is structured as follows. Section 2 provides a survey of previous studies on the perfect of Middle English and offers a short description of Caxton's translation of *Paris*. Section 3, which is the main part of this study, explores the use of the BE-perfect and HAVE-perfect in *Paris*, discussing several probable factors that may have influenced their choice. This section also examines the relationship between Caxton's *Paris* and some French versions. Finally, Section 4 presents a brief summary of the findings in this study.

2. Methodological preliminaries

2.1 The perfect in Middle English: some previous studies

The verbs investigated in this study are mutative intransitive verbs, which indicate a change of state or location. Kytö (1997) classifies them into the following types: “verbs indicating motion (e.g. *arrive, come, go, pass, ride*), process or change (e.g. *alter, change, improve, turn*), happening (e.g. *befall, chance, hap(pen)*), appearing or originating (e.g. *appear, arise, become, begin*) and finishing or disappearing (e.g. *cease, decay, decline, expire, die*)” (p. 27). The two-way system of the perfect, which goes back to the Old English period,³⁾ persists through the history of English. It is only in the Later Modern English period that a major shift from the BE-perfect to HAVE-perfect took place. According to Rydén & Brorström (1987: 196), HAVE accounted for only about 20% of the perfect constructions of relevant verbs around 1700, whereas the HAVE-perfect achieved a “paradigmatic majority” in the “first few decades of the 19th century”. Kytö's (1997: 32-35) statistics indicate a slightly larger proportion to the HAVE-perfect, but still demonstrate that the use of HAVE exceeded 50% only in the eighteenth century. For this reason, most studies on the competition between the BE-perfect and the HAVE-perfect focus on the Modern English period, particularly on the Late Modern English period (e.g. Rydén & Brorström 1987; Straaijer 2010).

To clarify the initial process of the expansion of the HAVE-perfect, it is essential to examine earlier periods, particularly the Late Middle English period, when the HAVE-perfect was already on the increase, though still restricted in frequency. Mustanoja (1960: 499-503) remarks that the use of the HAVE-perfect rose constantly during the Middle English period, though the BE-perfect was still the dominant construction for mutative intransitive verbs in Late Middle and Early Modern English. He also remarks that the use of HAVE tends to be more common than usual when durative meaning is involved or when adverbs of time, place, or manner are available. Additionally, the HAVE-perfect tends to be observed in hypothetical environments and in perfect infinitives, according to him. This overall description is largely supported by Fischer (1992: 260-262), who also notes the encroachment of HAVE in Middle English into the contexts where BE had traditionally been employed as the auxiliary of the perfect in earlier days. The shift towards the HAVE-perfect appears, therefore, to have been an ongoing

3) Whether the combination of BE/HAVE and past participles had already acquired the status of a perfect in Old English has been disputed. Most researchers seem to agree, though, that the constructions in Old English can already be regarded as perfects. See Mustanoja (1960: 499) and Wischer (2004) among others.

process already in Middle English.

Apart from these general references, however, research into Middle English perfect forms remains relatively restricted. Kytö's (1997) statistics are relevant because they include Late Middle English data as part of a broader argument on the development of perfect forms from Late Middle English through Modern English. Her analysis of ME3 (1350-1420) and ME4 (1420-1500) in the *Helsinki Corpus* shows: the HAVE-perfect of mutative intransitive verbs counts 22% in ME3 and 28% in ME4.⁴⁾ Kytö (1997: 45-47) also shows that the proportion of the HAVE-perfect for COME and GO is slightly lower in comparison to other relevant verbs. Furthermore, she tests various syntactic environments which, Rydén & Brorström (1987: 183-195) consider, are favourable for the use of the HAVE-perfect in Late Modern English, showing that pluperfects, perfect infinitives, and the presence of complements are indeed in favour of the HAVE-perfect in Middle English as well. For perfect -ing forms, negation, and durative, iterative, conditional/optative uses, however, her Middle English data lack sufficient examples to draw firm conclusions from (pp. 52-63).

Having all these linguistic conditions in mind, McFadden & Alexiadou (2006, 2010), who are mainly concerned with Middle to Early Modern English, argue that counterfactuality is the key factor that promotes the use of HAVE as the perfect auxiliary.⁵⁾ Exploring the *York-Toronto-Helsinki Corpus of Old English Prose*, the *Penn-Helsinki Parsed Corpus of Middle English* (2nd edition), and the *Penn-Helsinki Parsed Corpus of Early Modern English*, McFadden & Alexiadou (2006) consider that other proposed factors are either “dependent on the counterfactual effect, or significantly weaker in comparison” (p. 237). The later research by McFadden & Alexiadou (2010) is a development from this. This time examining their own selection of texts from Middle and Early Modern English, they claim that the BE-perfect “was a copular construction built around a stative resultative participle” (p. 421) and in this sense differs from the HAVE-perfect, which was essentially associated with counterfactuality.

Finally, Huber (2019) also addresses the counterfactual effect alongside additional factors. Examining a larger dataset drawn from the *Corpus of Middle English Prose and Verse*, she focuses on possible factors affecting the choice between the BE- and HAVE-perfects in Middle English: dates (ME2 (1250-1350), ME3 (1350-1420), ME4 (1420-1500)), counterfactuality, aktionsart (process, change of location), and tense (present, past, infinitive). In addition to the gradual expansion of the HAVE-perfect from ME2 to ME4, she demonstrates that the HAVE-perfect tends to be selected in counterfactual and “process” environments. She also shows that the proportion of the HAVE-perfect is larger in the past tense than in the present tense, and even larger when the perfect form occurs in the infinitive. As mentioned in the Introduction (Section 1), however, her research is based on the verbs CLIMB, CREEP, LEAP, RUN, RIDE, SAIL, SWIM, and WALK only, which collectively provide 257 examples in the corpus. Common and typical mutative intransitive verbs such as COME and GO are absent from the list. This may be the reason why the proportion of the HAVE-perfect is exceptionally high for Middle English in this research: the 257 examples of the perfect comprise 105 examples of the BE-perfect and 152

4) Kytö (1997) also provides statistics based on intransitive verbs in general, which include not only mutative verbs but also stative verbs such as REST and STAY: 27% for the HAVE-perfect in ME3 and 32% for the HAVE-perfect in ME4. Stative verbs are more inclined to occur in the HAVE-perfect than mutative intransitive verbs, according to her statistics (pp. 32-35).

5) Molencki (2004) maintains that first instances of the counterfactual pluperfect are attested in Early Middle English, though its “isolated instances” (p. 51) can already be found in Old English.

examples of the HAVE-perfect (p. 156).

2.2 Caxton's translation of *Paris and Vienne*

Like Uchida & Iyeiri (2023, 2024), the present research forms part of our larger project on the language of Caxton's *Paris*, more specifically on the language in Leeu's edition of the same text (1492). This idyllic short romance has its roots in Catalan or Provençal culture. Although it also has a group of longer versions, it was the shorter variation that “may legitimately be called an Early Modern European bestseller” (Pairet 2021: 121), being translated into Italian, English, and Dutch in the fifteenth century, and subsequently into about a dozen vernacular languages in the sixteenth. The medium of its expansion was the newly invented or introduced technology of printing.⁶⁾ Paul Needham, then at Pierpont Morgan Library, summarizes the story as follows:

The romance relates the love affair between Paris, a lowly knight, and Vienne, only child of the Dauphin du Viennois. Although Vienne swore she would marry no other than Paris, the Dauphin forbade the match. Paris performed many gallant deeds out of love for Vienne, and finally, after he rescued her father from a prison in Alexandria, where he was held by the Sultan of Babylon, the two lovers were united. (Needham 1974: Section 44)

Gheraert Leeu, a printer based in Antwerp, reprinted Caxton's 1485 English translation right after Caxton's death in 1492. Leeu's English text is of special significance, since a French version—in addition to a Dutch one—of the same story had been published by the printer in 1487. In reproducing Caxton's English translation, Leeu used the woodcut illustrations that decorated his French version, to make his production different from Caxton's original, and more appealing to his new market: England.

As shown in the preceding subsection, the time when Caxton translated *Paris* and Leeu reproduced the English text is approximately the end of the fifteenth century, when the BE-perfect was still the dominant construction for mutative intransitive verbs, although the initial signs of the shift towards the HAVE counterpart have been reported to be observable in existing studies. In the following section, we will study the examples of two competing perfect forms collected from Leeu's *Paris* and discuss what factors that have been reported in the literature are likely to be in play there. For our comparative analyses, we will primarily consult Le Roy's French text printed in Lyon (c. 1480), which Hellenga (2010: 74) considers to be the source of Caxton's translation. In addition, the slightly newer French version printed by Leeu (1487) and the manuscript version edited by Babbi (1992) will also be mentioned when necessary.⁷⁾

3. The BE- and HAVE-perfect forms in Leeu's print of *Paris*

3.1 Examples with mutative intransitive verbs

We chose thirteen intransitive verbs and collected 58 examples of the perfect from *Paris*, of which 47 are with BE (81%), 11 with HAVE (19%). About a half (43%) of the examples are those with the verb COME; these occur exclusively in the BE-perfect. The observed proportion is generally consistent with

6) See also Leach (1957: x-xii) and Léglu (2010: 144).

7) For more details about the materials, see Uchida & Iyeiri (2023, 2024).

Kytö's figures cited in Section 2.1: 22% with HAVE in ME3 (1350-1420) and 28% in ME4 (1420-1500) in the *Helsinki Corpus*, and the verb COME tends to lag behind in the gradual large-scale shift towards the HAVE-perfect. Table 1 shows the overall distribution of the auxiliary choices observed in Leeu's print.

Table 1 Instances of the BE- and HAVE-perfect forms in *Paris*

Participial form	BE-perfect	HAVE-perfect	Subtotal
abyden	1	4	5
appyered	0	2	2
arriued, arryued	3	0	3
become, by come	3	0	3
byfallen	1	0	1
come, comen	25	0	25
departed	7	0	7
decreced	1	0	1
fallen	0	1	1
fledde	1	1	2
goon	1	1	2
retorned	2	2	4
rysen	2	0	2

The participles that exclusively occur with BE are *arriued* (*arryued*), *become* (*by come*), *byfallen*, *comen* (*come*), *departed*, *decreced*, and *rysen*, among which the verb COME is well known to have survived in the BE-perfect to the latest stage (cf. Rydén & Brorström 1987: 61-62; Kytö 1997: 66; and McFadden & Alexiadou 2006, to name a few). In contrast, *appyered* and *fallen* are found only with HAVE. The verb APPEAR is reported in Hundt & Iyeiri (2025) to be among the first verbs that more or less completed the shift towards the HAVE-perfect by the Early Modern English period, and FALL is reported to be also progressive, compared to other relevant mutative verbs such as RISE or RETURN. Those participles that show variation in our data are: *abyden*, *fledde*, *goon*, and *retorned*. In the following subsection, we will examine the co-text of the examples of these ambivalent verbs.

3.2 Potential factors behind variation in English

Following the approach employed in Kytö (1997), which is mostly in line with Mustanoja's (1960) and Rydén & Brorström's (1987) descriptions, we will first consider the three factors which potentially promote the use of the HAVE-perfect: pluperfect, perfect infinitive, and cooccurrence of adverbials (or more strictly, complements). We will also pay attention to the existence of modal elements and semantic counterfactuality, as do McFadden & Alexiadou (2006). Although our data are limited in number, they offer significant insights to add to the existing research on the two competing perfect forms in Middle English.

Now we will examine the examples with the four verbs that show variation in *Paris*. First, the participle *abyden* was found in five instances as shown in (1)-(5):

- (1) For of eche partye **were** abyden thre knightes moch stronge & puissaunte. (b3r-b)

- (2) And parys made countenaunce for to **haue** abyden in braband for the loue of edward. (b4r-b)
- (3) I **haue** so longe abyden to knowe who he was that so swetely played in his instrumentes so nygh vnto me (b5v-a)
- (4) for if he **had** abyden lenger in prison he had be dede for hunger. (c7v-a)
- (5) WHan the sone of the duck of bourgoyne **had** abyden longe tyme in his countree (d4v-a)

In the sole case with the auxiliary BE, (1), it is to be noted that the structure is inverted and the clausal subject follows the predicate, focusing on the resultative state of the subject referents existing in the scene. The HAVE form in (2) occurs as a perfect infinitive, in the context implying counterfactuality (*countenaunce*); those in (4) and (5) are in the pluperfect, comprising subordinate clauses which imply conditionality (4) and precedence in time (5), respectively. In (3), meanwhile, the meaning of the verb is not really mutative or physical. With the aid of the accompanying adverbial *so longe*, the perfect form emphasizes the duration (cf. Mustanoja 1960, as cited in 2.1).

The participle *fledde* yielded two examples, as shown in (6) and (7):

- (6) The foteman demaunded euery man yf they had seen two damoiselles whiche **were** fledde fro the daulphins courte (c4r-ab)
- (7) in sayeng these word she wolde **haue** fledde for fere oute of the prison. by cause she herde the moure so speke: (e7r-a)

In the latter case, the HAVE-perfect is located right after a modal (*wolde*), where some counterfactuality is involved. The case of the BE-perfect in (6) is worth attention, as the adverbial phrase *fro the daulphins courte* accompanies it. This example, however, does not need to be considered as a potential counterexample, since the adverbial is rather an adjunct, than a complement (cf. Rydén & Brorström 1987, as cited in Section 2.1).

Examples (8) and (9) are cases of the perfect with the participle *goon*. The verb GO, as well as COME, has been shown to have continued to appear in the BE-perfect form to the latest stages (Kytö 1997: 45-47).

- (8) It is not longe sythe ye **were** goon in to braband (b7v-a)
- (9) he supposed to **haue** goon oute of his witte: (c4r-a)

Here again, the example of the HAVE-perfect (9) is found in an infinitival co-text which semantically involves counterfactual supposition. The meaning of the verb GO here is figurative, necessitating the following complement *oute of his witte*. The example of the BE-perfect in (8), on the other hand, is a typical case of GO indicating a motion.⁸⁾

The four examples with *retorned* are shown in (10)-(13):

- (10) and whan they had songe & wold **haue** retorned thyder as they were come fro (a4r-a)
- (11) and whan parys saw that thei wold **haue** retorned / he fewtred his spere (b3v-a)

8) It may also be the case that this choice of the auxiliary verb was triggered under the influence of the French original, as we will discuss in the following subsection.

- (12) After parys sawe that the fayr vyenne **was** retorned in to hyr first estate wherof he was moch joyyous (d2r-b)
- (13) and the frere sayd to hyr / Madame we **been** retorned for to knowe your god answer and your entencyon (e6v-a)

In each of the first two examples, the HAVE-perfect follows the auxiliary *wold* and hence takes the infinitival form. They both occur in *whan*-clauses, which fact, at first sight, may appear to be of some significance. When we turn our attention to the subsequent example, (12), which is in the BE-perfect form, however, we cannot help noticing the apparent inconsistency: it occurs in a structure which is syntactically parallel to that of (11). We address this point in the following subsection.

All in all, the examples of the HAVE-perfect do occur with some of the features pointed out in existing studies—in the infinitival forms (2, 7, 9, 10, and 11), sometimes right after modal elements (7, 10, and 11); some in the pluperfect (4 and 5); some with adverbials expressing duration (3 and 4) or a complement representing the resultative state (9). It is also noteworthy that all the examples of the BE-perfect, on the other hand, are in finite forms.

3.3 Potential influence from the French source(s)

The present-day French language has both “BE”-perfect and “HAVE”-perfect. The perfect constructions with ÊTRE (“be”) and AVOIR (“have”) were “created” between the sixth and eighth centuries (Marchello-Nizia 1999: 97) and go back to Latin (Buridant 2000: 277). Although most mutative intransitive verbs took ÊTRE for the perfect structure in Middle French, some are also found with AVOIR (Marchello-Nizia 1999: 107). As in English,⁹ there have been complications involving the perfect, passive, and reflexive constructions throughout the language’s history, and distinction between examples of the present perfect and those of the reflexive structure in the past tense is not always clear-cut. In this study, therefore, we do not enter the discussion on the choice of AVOIR or ÊTRE, as auxiliary verbs in the perfect constructions. We simply focus on which of the auxiliary verbs is present in the corresponding French expressions and whether the variation in the English version shows any sign of potential influence from the French counterpart. In the examples to follow, the base forms of the auxiliaries and the tense or aspect of the relevant verb phrases are shown in pairs of square brackets.

Let us first look at the corresponding French passages of our English examples with the participle *abyden*. Those in (14), (16), (18), (20), and (22) correspond to the English counterparts (1)-(5), repeated here as (15), (17), (19), (21), and (23), for ease of comparison.

- (14) Car dune chascune partie **estoient** [ÊTRE] demoures [pluperfect] trois cheualiers moult fors et moult puissans (b7v-a)
- (15) = (1)
For of eche partye **were** abyden thre knightes moch stronge & puissaunte.
- (16) Et paris se prioit de faire coutenances **¶** en brebam pour lamour de edouard¹⁰ (c1v-a)
- (17) = (2)

9) For the heavy functional load of BE and structural ambiguity in BE constructions, see Rydén & Brorström (1987: 198).

10) Leeu’s 1487 edition of *Paris* has this: *Et paris faisoit contenance de demourer en brabant pour lamour de edouard* (b5v-b), with the verb DEMOURER in its infinitival form.

And parys made countenance for to **haue** abyden in braband for the loue of edward.

(18) Helas **iay** [AVOIR] tant demeure [compound past] de scauoir celui qui si doucement menoit les instrumens (c3r-b)

(19) = (3)

I **haue** so longe abyden to knowe who he was that so swetely played in his instrumentes so nygh vnto me

(20) car sil **eut** [AVOIR] demore [anterior past] plus guieres en prison il fut mort de fain (e3v-a)

(21) = (4)

for if he **had** abyden lenger in prison he had be dede for hunger.

(22) QUant le filz au duc de borgongne **eut** [AVOIR] demeure [anterior past] lespace dung grand temps en son pays (f3r-a)

(23) = (5)

WHan the sone of the duck of bourgoyne **had** abyden longe tyme in his countree

French counterparts to (6) and (7) with the participle *fledde* are shown in (24) and (26), again accompanied by repeated English examples:

(24) celui homme demandoit a tout homme se auoit point veu passer deux damoysselles qui sen **estaient** [ÊTRE] fuictes [pluperfect] de la court du dauphin (d6v-a)

(25) = (6)

The foteman demaunded euery man yf they had seen two damoiselles whiche **were** fledde fro the daulphins courte

(26) Et en disant cestes parolles sen **vouloit** [VOULOIR (modal)] fuir [infinitive] de la prison (h2v-b)

(27) = (7)

in sayeng these word she wolde **haue** fledde for fere oute of the prison.

Then, the corresponding passages to the examples (8) and (9) with the participle *goon* are presented as (28) and (30):

(28) il nya guieres que vous **estiez** [ÊTRE] allez [pluperfect] en brebam (c6v-a)

(29) = (8)

It is not longe sythe ye **were** goon in to braband

(30) et que le dauphin le sceut il **cuyda** [CUIDIER (modal)] perdre [infinitive] tout son sens et fut toute sa court moult fort troublee¹¹⁾ (d6r-b)

(31) = (9)

11) The text of the manuscript version, transcribed by Babbi, has an expression closer to the English edition: *il cuyda* [CUIDIER (modal)] *yssir* (“go out”) [infinitive] *hors du sens* (“out of sense”) (Babbi 1992: 95).

he supposed to **haue** goon oute of his witte:

Finally, four passages for (10)–(13) with the participle *retorned* are (32), (34), (36), and (38):

(32) Et quant ilz eurent chante et quilz sen **vouloient** [VOULOIR (modal)] retourner [infinitive] (a3v-b)

(33) = (10)
and whan they had songe & wold **haue** retorned thyder as they were come fro

(34) Et paris quant il issit du champ et vit quil fust tout seul qui sen **vouloit** [VOULOIR (modal)] venir [infinitive], il baissa sa lance (b6r-b)

(35) = (11)
and whan parys saw that thei wold **haue** retorned / he fewtred his spere

(36) Apres tout cecy paris va veoir que la belle vienne **estoit** [ÊTRE] retournee [pluperfect] en son premier estat (e8r-b)

(37) = (12)
After parys sawe that the fayr vyenne **was** retorned in to hyr first estate

(38) Et alors lui dit le frere Madame nous aultres **sommes** [ÊTRE] retournez [compound past] pour scauoir vostre bonne response (h2r-ab)

(39) = (13)
and the frere sayd to hyr / Madame we **been** retorned for to knowe your god answer and your entencyon

It may sound too simplistic but as a matter of fact, in every example where the English instance appears with the auxiliary verb *BE*, the French counterpart presents itself with *ÊTRE*. In most other cases the French counterparts are with *AVOIR*, while some are in the constructions with the modals *VOULOIR* or *CUIDIER*,¹²⁾ which in those days constituted (as *VOULOIR* in Modern French) periphrastic constructions (Ménard 1988: 136–137), and therefore required the following verbal phrases to be in their infinitival forms.¹³⁾ It is worth pointing out that in these cases with modals, the English version consistently employs *WOULD* or other modal elements followed by the *HAVE*-perfect form.¹⁴⁾

12) Buridant (2000: 294) uses the terms “semi auxiliaires ou auxiliaires lexicaux”.

13) The verb *CUIDIER* was often used to express “almost/nearly (do)”;¹²⁾ *VOULOIR* in the sense of “be about to (do)” (Ménard 1988: 132). Our examples (26), (30), (32), and (34) may potentially be examples of these cases, expressing the probable or hypothetical future of the past, with or without implications of anticipation or volition (Ménard 1988: 136–137). Brunot (1966: 492) explicitly notes that *CUIDIER* expresses that the enunciated thing did not happen (“il exprime que la chose énoncée n’a pas lieu”). According to Ménard (1988), these uses of *CUIDIER* and *VOULOIR* persisted until the sixteenth century. Fleischman (1982: 77), in her analysis of Modern French, points to a linguistic “regionalism” that speakers of standard continental French would recognize when encountering instances where *VOULOIR* + infinitive is used as an equivalent of the *GO*-future. The regional variation includes Burgundy, the Lyon region, and Belgium (pp. 144–145), which are precisely the areas where our printers should probably have acquired, translated, and printed the text of *Paris*.

14) It is also noticeable that in each of the three examples with *VOULOIR* (26), (32), and (34), the main verb is accompanied by *s’en*, which supposedly focuses on the inchoative aspect of the action or process described, with a nuance of ↗

To summarize our scrutiny into the cases where both the BE- and HAVE-perfect forms coexist, there emerge rather simple patterns:

- Pluperfect with ÊTRE > Past perfect with BE (1, 6, 8, 12)
- Anterior past with AVOIR > Past perfect with HAVE (4, 5)
- Modal + infinitive > Modal + HAVE-perfect (7, 9, 10, 11)
- In direct speeches,
 - Compound past with ÊTRE > Present perfect with BE (13)
 - Compound past with AVOIR > Present perfect with HAVE (3)

With this general scheme in mind, the apparently mysterious inconsistency found in (11) and (12) could be explained. They may just reflect the parallel structures in the original.

This, however, does not hold true with the examples of the verbs APPEAR and FALL, which consistently take the HAVE-perfect form. The French-English pairs are shown below:

- (40) quil lui sembloit que dieu lui **estoit** [ÊTRE] appareu [pluperfect] (e6v-b)
- (41) that hyr semed god **had** appyered to hyr: (d1r-b)
- (42) quil luy sembloit que dieu luy **fut** [ÊTRE] apparu [anterior past] (g5r-b)
- (43) that him semed that god **had** appyered to him (e2v-b)
- (44) par rayson de la pluie qui estoit si forte (d5v-a)
- (45) a Ryuer: whyche was rysen hye by cause of the rayne that **had** fallen (c3v-a)

Both French examples with APPARAÎTRE, (40) and (42), take the ÊTRE-perfect forms. Although the only example of *fallen* (45) does not have a comparable verbal phrase in the French counterpart (44), it is observable that in the translator's English, the two verbs already had an established preference for the HAVE-perfect.

Our observation above is generally in accord with the descriptions and analyses presented in existing studies: the HAVE-perfect does appear in infinitival forms, in the pluperfect, accompanied by complements and/or durative meanings, often implying some degrees of counterfactuality. It is, at the same time, worth repeating that among the examples of the participles that appear with both auxiliaries, there exists certain undeniable parallelism between the auxiliary choices in the English and French texts.

4. Conclusion

In this study we contributed empirical insights into the use of two competing perfect forms in Middle English. This period has received less scholarly attention regarding the gradual shift from the BE-perfect to HAVE-perfect, compared to subsequent stages in the history of English. Through examination

↘ suddenness (Hatcher 1946: 16). The reason why the English equivalents appear in the perfect form remains to be investigated.

of a limited number of examples with mutative intransitive verbs extracted from Caxton's translation, we confirmed that the shift towards the HAVE-perfect was already in progress, displaying lexical variation: some verbs showed a strong preference for HAVE, while others persistently occurred with BE.

We also investigated the potential influence of the French source text, focusing on corresponding verbal phrases. Our English-French parallel data, though limited in number, revealed certain patterns in Caxton's translation, suggesting that some of his choices may have been prompted by the expression he saw in the source text.

There surely remain significant challenges. Tense, aspect (both lexical and grammatical), and voice systems were still unstable around the end of the fifteenth century—and continue to be complex—in both languages, necessitating more detailed and comprehensive investigation.

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BE vs. HAVE in the perfect of mutative intransitive verbs:

A study on the Middle English translation of *Paris and Vienne*

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ABSTRACT

Unlike other European languages such as German or French, Present-day English has only a single form of the perfect: the combination of HAVE and a past participle. In earlier English, however, the auxiliary BE was also used with past participles of some intransitive verbs, particularly those classified as mutative intransitive verbs. Although the major shift to the HAVE-perfect occurred during the Late Modern English period, early occurrences of the HAVE-perfect with mutative intransitive verbs are known to have existed already in the Middle English period. This study investigates examples of BE- and HAVE-perfects extracted from the Middle English romance *Paris and Vienne*, which was translated from French and printed by William Caxton (1485), and subsequently reprinted by Gheraert Leeu (1492). Our choice of this specific text is significant for two reasons: first, the time of its translation and printing coincides with the earliest stage of the shift towards the HAVE-perfect; second, the French source texts from which Caxton translated have been identified and are available for comparative linguistic analysis. This latter perspective makes our study unique, as relatively little research has explored potential influence from the source text on the choice of perfect forms. The distribution of BE- and HAVE-perfect forms in the text revealed patterns largely consistent with existing literature: approximately 80% used BE and 20% used HAVE. The instances of the HAVE-perfect tend to exhibit features previously identified in existing studies. Furthermore, a parallel examination of the English and French texts uncovered certain translation patterns in Caxton's work.

Key Words: Middle English perfect forms, mutative intransitive verbs, syntactic factors, translation, William Caxton, Gheraert Leeu