The present perfect in past time contexts : a diachronic study of English

The Present Perfect in Past Time Contexts: A Diachronic Study of English

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Abstract

Throughout the history, English has developed a category of the present perfect that can be considered prototypical when compared to the same categories in other typologically similar languages. Although the present perfect in Standard British English has not reached the final stage of acquiring preterit semantics, data from diachronic corpora provides evidence that the English present perfect had the potential to follow a similar path of grammaticalization like the German *Perfekt*, for instance. This paper presents an investigation of data collected from several diachronic English corpora and employs a usage-based approach to elicit the mechanisms underlying the incipient semantic shift of the present perfect. It is argued that a functional overlap with verbs in the simple past at an early stage of its evolution and later movement towards perfective past tense, though not attested on a large scale, reflect developments in certain pragmatic contexts, in particular with topicalized temporal adverbials. It is claimed that in passages where new information becomes crucial, alongside the completion of the action, temporal properties of the 'hot news' perfects tend to be foregrounded.

Key words

Present perfect; preterit; variation; semantics; usage-based approach; past time adverbials; ambiguous contexts

1. Introduction

It is generally accepted that in standard varieties of Present-Day English the present perfect cannot be used with definite past time adverbials like *yesterday*, *last year, ago*, etc. (Bybee et al. 1994: 61–62, Burgos 2004; in Klein (1992) this constraint is termed as the "present perfect puzzle"; for a more detailed account of the definite temporal adverbial constraint see Werner 2014: 74–79, 184, 344 and elsewhere). In contrast, the German *Perfekt* does not have any restrictions[1] in similar situations (cf. Leiss 1992). A brief comparison of the diachronic developments of the construction made up of the possessive verb (*have*) and past participle of a verb, a progenitor of the contemporary present perfect, in these languages shows that although these constructions have a similar morphological makeup, they developed diverging semantic properties (Bybee et al. 1994: 68–105).

It has become common to analyze the evolution of the perfect as starting from the combination of lexically independent units, one of which in the course of time loses its denotative meaning and evolves into a grammatical marker, thus resulting in the creation of a true perfect (anterior) that at later stages tends to acquire perfective or preterital semantics along the cline resultative>anterior>perfective/simple past (Bybee et al. 1994: 105). According to Bybee et al. (1994), semantically both perfective and simple past express completed past actions; however, they differ in that the semantic content of the simple past is 'more general since it can also be used to signal past time for situations viewed imperfectively' (Bybee et al. 1994: 85).

In Standard British English the *aoristic drift*, a process when the present perfect '"invades" the domain of simple past tenses, and eventually replaces them' (Schaden 2012: 263), has never manifested itself full-scale (cf., Burgos 2004). Yet, scattered examples in Present-Day English prompt researchers to suggest that uses of the present perfect with definite past time adverbials might have always been available throughout the history of the language (Elsness 1997: 289–294; Williams 2006: 17; Walker 2011: 83–84;[2] interestingly, the world atlas of varieties of English shows that levelling of the difference between the present perfect and the simple past is pervasive or obligatory in Bahamian, Indian, Malaysian and Hong Kong English varieties, whereas concerning varieties of English on the British Isles this feature is extremely rare – see Kortmann, Lunkenheimer, Ehret 2020). Therefore, if the language in question does display contexts where the present perfect exhibits a tendency towards acquiring perfective semantics (though in a restricted range of specific pragmatic contexts), a question arises as to how this becomes possible. The aim of the present study, thus, is to contribute to the investigation of mechanisms that can trigger change and lead to semantic transformations of the present perfect.

It is well known that from the early periods of its existence the perfect in English was represented by two forms: the *have*-perfect and the *be*-perfect, the former used with transitive verbs and the latter with intransitive ones (competition between the two forms in the history of English is analyzed in Kytö 1997; the discussion of the possibility of evolutionary forces at work in the transition from the *be*-perfect to the *have*-perfect is given in Okuda, Hosaka, and Sasahara 2023). However, by the 19th century the *have*-perfect had replaced the *be*-perfect, though some argue that the *be*-perfect in present-day varieties of English 'should best be assessed as a "revitalized" structure that is both conservative and innovative' (Werner 2016: 287). This view is supported by the fact that both transitive ("I'm made the right choices") and intransitive ("I think they're gone a bit out") uses of the *be*-perfect can be found in contemporary English varieties (Werner 2016: 274, 278). Nevertheless, following McFadden and Alexiadou (2006) and McFadden (2017), it is assumed that the *be*-perfect is a copular construction built around a stative resultative participle with no other readings that can be found with the *have*-perfect. This implies that the *be*-perfect may be less likely to be involved in the *aoristic drift* to a similar extent as the *have*-perfect. Therefore, for the reasons of the *be*-perfect possessing the state-resultant semantics and subsiding in its use by Late Modern English, the paper focuses on the analysis of the use of only the *have*-perfect with definite past time adverbials.

It is worth noting that similar processes of the use of the present perfect with definite past time adverbials are observed in other varieties of English, for example American and Australian, as well as non-native ones. Such usage in these varieties has drawn the attention of many researchers (Ritz, Engel 2008, Elsness 2009, Davydova 2011, Yao 2015, Skala 2018, to name a few). However, these studies lack one important aspect, i.e. diachronic data without which "...it is impossible to assert whether modern specimens of the constructions are simply a continuation of this usage or whether they have re-emerged" (Hundt and Smith 2009: 58). Thus, potential research in this area can unfold in several directions: synchronic study of each variety, diachronic study of each variety, comparison of diachronic and synchronic developments in multiple varieties (e.g., British, American, Australian). The present study bridges the existing gap in regard to studies based on diachronic corpora and thus focuses solely on the diachronic data in British English. The data was taken from diachronic corpora belonging to three main periods of English: Old English, Middle English and Modern English (both Early and Late Modern English). Present-Day English was excluded from the research because of the existence of multiple studies on the topic.

The main research question of the study is to explain why at definite stages of its development in certain contexts the present perfect started to be used with definite past time adverbials. Though the aoristic drift of the English present perfect never reached its final point, i.e. preterital semantics (like in German, especially its southern dialects, or Romance languages), the analysis of what triggers the incipient aoristicization will, it is hoped, shed light on what could be the driving force behind this process. Special attention will be paid to the so called ambiguous contexts, where the form *have+PP* becomes ambiguous between two temporal specifications (past tense and present perfect) and acquires perfective semantics.

The remainder of the paper is structured as follows: Section 2 gives a literature review. Section 3 elaborates the theoretical framework employed in the research. Section 4 describes the corpora used in the study, and explains past time contexts and research methodology. Section 5 presents the selected results of the corpora searches. Section 6 discusses the findings. Section 7 provides the conclusions of the research and gives directions for further studies.

2. Literature Review

As has been mentioned above, according to various studies the present perfect in Present-Day English can occur with past time adverbials 'in written English as well as spontaneous spoken English' (Miller 2004: 234; Rastall 1999: 80; Trudgill 1984: 42). Moreover, that this usage is restricted mainly to spoken English is supported by evidence from the British National Corpus (cf., e.g. Hundt and Smith 2009: 55–57).

However, this specific use of the present perfect has also been attested in the history of English, though usually no quantitative data is provided to illustrate this usage. Thus, Elsness refers to Visser, who cites scattered examples of the

present perfect with past time adverbials from Shakespeare and authors of Early and Late Modern English. He discards Visser's idea of afterthought as the main cause of such usage and supports his other explanation 'that such combinations of verb form and specifier were less objectionable in earlier Modern English' (Elsness 1997: 251). Rissanen (1999) also mentions that in Early Modern English unlike the Present-Day British English "...the perfect can be used with an adverbial of time linking the action with the past" (Rissanen 1999: 225). Denison (1993: 352) claims that in Middle English the present perfect (*have*-perfect forms) was interchangeable with the simple past because, firstly, in certain contexts it was commuting with the simple past and, secondly, it was combinable with past time adverbials. Unfortunately, only scarce data from diachronic corpora is presented to support the claim. In Fischer and van der Wurff (2006) it is stated that 'the preterite and the perfect were variants for a while within the tense system (though no doubt the variation was governed by certain semantic or pragmatic principles – whose nature still awaits full investigation)' (Fischer and van der Wurff 2006: 139). Schwenter notes that in Middle English the present perfect "... moved steadily into the past, first to situations initiated in the past but continuing to the present, and then to situations...that are purely past but retain a flavor of relevance to the discourse situation", though no examples were found of the present perfect "with temporal adverbs locating the situation at a definite point in the past" (Schwenter 1994: 1010).

Thus, taking the above into consideration, the key contribution of this research is twofold: 1) it addresses the main research question based on the data extracted from diachronic corpora pertaining to three main periods of English; 2) it presents an attempt to apply contemporary theoretical approaches to the issues in question to shed light on mechanisms of grammatical change in time.

3. Theoretical framework

The Janus-like[3] nature of the present perfect poses many questions for which it is difficult to give a definitive answer: Should the category be viewed as aspect, tense or something else? Can its readings be reduced to one (e.g. resultative) meaning with others derived therefrom or should we instead talk about independence and irreducibility of each separate meaning? Do pragmatic components of the present perfect underlie its grammatical nature or is it a result of the interplay of verbal semantics and contexts in which the present perfect is used? Questions of this kind can multiply, so this study will focus on the problem of the temporal-aspectual characterization of the English present perfect.

Many arguments have been put forward in favor of the English perfect as being either aspectual or temporal. Most of the reasons in support of either stance eventually show deficiencies, however (cf. Werner 2014: 51). Viewing the perfect as aspect narrows it down to aspectual characteristics, such as completion and result. But as McCoard (1978) notes, neither completion nor result is intrinsic to the perfect. Other scholars approach the nature of the perfect from a negative definition of its properties when compared to the simple past, stating that the

language would hardly tolerate duplication of tense properties expressed by two categories even with minor functional differentiations (Michaelis 2006).

Approaching the perfect as a tense leads to even more intricate questions that are left without answers. The approach according to which the present perfect is regarded as a secondary past tense compared to the primary past tense expressed by the simple past ignores its connection with the moment of speech or, in other terms, its current relevance (the Extended-Now theory in McCoard 1978; the current relevance theory in Lindstedt 2000; informational relevance theory in Portner 2019). All these logical impasses have prompted other scholars to view the present perfect as a separate category, a phase, or orientation (cf. Werner 2014). Drawing a conclusion from this two-headed Janus analogy, Rizt was right to note that "the perfect...is the shapeshifter of tense-aspect categories, changing and adapting its meaning to fit in a given system and to serve the communicative goals of speakers" (Rizt 2012: 904). In a similar vein, Wynne (2000) views the present perfect as a multilayered category, consisting of the level of the deictic and aphragmatic aspects, the situation and viewpoint aspect level and the pragmatic level (Wynne 2000: 218). The author also notes, correctly, that "verbal structures can never be regarded in isolation...but must be seen in the context of the interplay between their aspectual and semantic values..." (Wynne 2000: 175–176). Following this view, the present perfect in this study will be regarded as the category combining both aspectual and temporal properties, in the first place. This approach will demonstrate how the above interplay works in certain pragmatic contexts throughout the evolution of the present perfect in the English language.

When analyzing examples with the present perfect, I employ the basic tenets of the usage-based approach to language, which views all abstract grammar rules as induced from concrete usage events. Firstly, what makes this approach useful in application to language variation and change is that in the usage-based model of grammar 'there is a close connection between lexical and grammatical knowledge' (Diessel 2017: 3). In other words, the development of the structure, which is regarded as a complex linguistic sign, involves associations with a network of units from lexicalized structures at the bottom to highly abstract representations at the top (Diessel 2017: 5). Secondly, syntactic structures emerge as a result of users' experience with lexical tokens and are prone to change in certain communicative contexts that lead to semantic reinterpretation of particular grammatical structures. Thus, when a grammatical structure is used in an ambiguous communicative environment, it can develop a new meaning that will be able to compete with the existing one and even replace it. It is this structural ambiguity that plays a crucial role in reanalysis. Denison (2017) illustrates several cases of this phenomenon, one of which deals with the semantic and syntactic transition of the prepositional verb *run over* to a phrasal verb in Late Modern English. The verb *run* in the meaning of 'a rapid movement of a person or a vehicle' collocates with an *over*-phrase to indicate a path (Denison 2017: 315). In potentially ambiguous contexts *over* can indicate either a trajectory of movement towards a target (its initial meaning) or "a resultative adverbial particle describing the trajectory of the victim out of upright position", i.e. "...injure with a vehicle...": "a young woman with a child in her arms endeavour'd to stop the horses; I called to her to let them

go, as I saw she would be run over else" (example taken from Denison 2017: 315). It was convincingly shown that a potential structural ambiguity is represented by the context where the prepositional phrase is used in the passive. The semantic role of Patient would encourage a new reading, with the reanalysis of the passive to a phrasal verb structure that afterwards could be used in the active as well (Denison 2017: 315–316). This view on ambiguous contexts as an important environment for a semantic change of a grammatical construction is adopted in the present study on the use of the present perfect in past time contexts. Thus, the theoretical approach of reanalysis in ambiguous contexts can help explain a drift of the *have*-perfect from anterior to perfective past tense, a process which, as this study will demonstrate, was incipient in the history of the language, but did not gain momentum.

4. Corpora and research methodology

Functional and semantic properties of the present perfect were investigated on the basis of several diachronic corpora: *the York-Toronto-Helsinki Parsed Corpus of Old English Prose* (YCOE) for Old English (a 1.5 million word syntactically-annotated corpus of prose texts from 750 to 1150), *the Penn-Helsinki Parsed Corpus of Middle English* (PPCME2) for Middle English (1.2 million words of running prose texts from 1150 to 1500), *the Penn-Helsinki Parsed Corpus of Early Modern English* (over 1.7 million words from 1500 to 1710), *the Parsed Corpus of Early English Correspondence* for Early Modern English (approximately 2.2 million words, from 4,970 letters from c. 1410 to 1695) and the *Corpus of Late Modern English Texts* (CLMET 3.0) for Late Modern English (approximately 34 million words of running texts, from 1710 to 1920). The syntactic annotation (parsing) of these corpora allows us to search for various syntactic structures, in particular the possessive verb *have* with past participle.

   The corpora that contain works of the epistolary genre are of primary importance. It has been argued that private letters contain more colloquialisms than other text types (Jacobs and Jucker 1995: 8). In mirroring social relations between the sender and the addressee, personal letters are closer to informal spoken genres than other forms of writing (Kytö and Romaine 2008: 229-230). Since in Present-Day English the present perfect with past time adverbials can be found in the spoken register, it is natural to assume that the movement towards perfective past tense may have started in informal spoken language and thus may find it manifestation in genres reflecting such registers.

   When collecting the data in each corpus, I conducted a search of all the instances where the present perfect was used. The search was performed automatically with the help of the *CorpusStudio* search application program (Komen 2009), designed to execute such operations on syntactically annotated corpora through Xquery searches in XML versions. When creating a query, it is possible to indicate the number of main clauses ("IP-MAT") and subclauses ("IP-SUB"). In this study queries were made to include a sentence with the grammatical structure, as well as a preceding and a following context. Overall, an output passage can have

more than a hundred words in total and three sentences, one of which comprises the relevant grammatical construction (*have+PP*) with intervening material between auxiliary and past participle. Then, out of all the retrieved contexts from each of the above corpora I manually collected those examples where the present perfect was used in past time contexts.

Numerous studies have focused on past time contexts, addressing in particular the question of what constitutes the default past time in temporal grammaticalization and which forms of the grammatical tense categories (e.g. the preterit or the present perfect) are used to express perfective past tense (Schwenter and Torres Cacoullos 2008; Dahl 1985; McCoard 1978). It appears that definite past time adverbials, certain temporal clauses, and connective adverbials should disfavor the present perfect on the grounds that temporal anchoring to another past action or situation disrupts the current relevance interpretation of the action or eliminates any possibility of a focus on the results (Schwenter and Torres Cacoullos 2008: 16 *et passim*). I distinguish between overt and covert past time contexts, the former represented by the use of any definite past time adverbial such as *yesterday, ago*, *last week* (*month, year etc.*), and the latter by various temporal clauses with verbs in past form. Only overt past time contexts were analyzed in this study.

Another type of past time contexts viewed in this study includes the syntactic environment, where two homogenous predicates are coordinated by the conjunction *and*. Following de Vos (2005), I distinguish between ordinary coordination (OCo) and two types of pseudo-coordination, namely, scene-setting coordination (SceCo) and contiguous coordination (ConCo), as illustrated in:

(1)   Caesar <u>went</u> across the Rubicon <u>and</u> he <u>conquered</u> Gaul.

(2)   Caesar <u>went</u> to Gaul and <u>devastated</u> it.

(3)   Caesar saluted his legions before...he <u>went</u> and <u>addressed</u> them.
      (taken from de Vos 2005: 1 et passim)

Unlike examples of ordinary coordination (1) where verbs can be used in different tenses, the two types of pseudo-coordination are subject to the Law of Coordination of Likes (LCL). The LCL prescribes the use of both verbs in a verbal string of the pseudo-coordination with exactly the same morphological specification and shared tense, aspect and modality (de Vos 2005: 44-46). Consequently, one of the goals will be to detect contexts similar to (1), (2) and (3) with *have+PP*, and identify whether the types of coordination allow for the use of different tenses (ordinary coordination) or appear to be part of the pseudo-coordination with the same tense specification.

It should be pointed out that the total number of tokens extracted from the corpora and subjected to analysis is not large and, at first sight, may seem to lack representativeness. However, when dealing with diachronic development, even a small sample of examples that retrospectively fit in with the hypothesis of the developmental line of a certain change should be employed rather than ruled

out from the analysis (cf. Kohnen 2014). Moreover, since the present perfect and preterit are not interchangeable in all contexts, as is the case with the German *Perfekt* and preterit, where it is feasible to attest when and how this variation started (cf. Dentler 1997), a diachronic study of the evolution of the present perfect in English should aim to trace tendencies that contribute to our understanding of language mechanisms lurking behind the possible *aoristic drift*.

5. Findings

5.1 Old English

The corpus search for examples of *habban+PP* with temporal adverbials of definite past time in the YCOE yielded no results. However, in *Old English Syntax* Mitchell observes that the construction of *have* with the past participle overlaps in certain contexts with preterits (Mitchell 1985: 291). Not much attention is given to the analysis of this observation apart from indicating the contexts and instances that exemplify such usage, viz., in parallel or connected sentences that are taken from various parts of the same or different texts, as shown in (4) and (5).[4]

(4a) *ÆCHom i.158.32*
    þin   geleafa ðe   **gehælde**
    your   faith   you-Acc   healed
    'your faith **healed** you'

(4b) *ÆCHom i.152.23*
    þin   geleafa **hæfð**   ðe   **gehæled**
    your   faith   has   you-Acc   healed
    'your faith **has healed** you'

and in the same sentences within one text:

(5a) *Bede 132.24*
    Ono   hwæt   þu nu **hafast** þurh   Godes gife   þinra feonda   hond
    If   what   you now have   through God's gift   your   of enemies   hands
    beswicade ... & þu þurh   his sylene &   gife þæm   rice   **onfenge**...
    escaped ...   and you through his bounty and gift the-Dat.Sg. kingdom obtained ...
    'Well now, you **have escaped** the hands of the enemies through the gift of God... and you **have obtained** through his bounty and gift the kingdom...'.

(5b) *ÆCHom i. 316.26*
    Annania, deofol **bepæhte** þine heortan, &   þu **hæfst alogen** þam   halgan gast.
    Ananias, devil   deceived your heart,   and you have lied   the-Dat.Sg.Holy Spirit
    'Ananias, the devil **has deceived** your heart, and you **have lied** to the Holy Spirit.

Overall, the data reveals that *habban+PP* can be used in coordinate sentences. In fact, it can be coordinated with verbs in various tenses. Table 1 shows frequencies of the construction and tenses with which it can be used in coordinate sentences in Old English.

Table 1. Frequencies in coordinate sentences with *habban+PP* in Old English

habban+PP			
Total number of occurrences	27		
Occurrences per hundred thousand words	1.8		
	with present tense	with past tense	with *habban+PP*
Total number of occurrences	14	9	4
Occurrences per hundred thousand words	0.93	0.6	0.26

It can be seen from Table 1 that *habban+PP* in coordinate sentences is used only 27 times. In 9 instances the construction in coordinate sentences was attested with past tenses, which will be the focus of further analysis. Thus, the investigation of contexts similar to 5a-5b will aim at finding out whether the use of *habban+PP* in coordinate sentences with preterits could indicate that in those 9 instances the construction was evolving into perfective past tense.

Overall, the construction *habban+PP* in the *YCOE* was used only in ordinary coordination.

(6)　[coaelive,ÆLS_[Thomas]:229.7679, 7680]

and	cwæð,	Min	Drihten	sylf	**com**	hider	swa
and	said,	My	Lord	himself	came	here	so

swa	scinende	liget,	and	**hæfð**	eow	**gehæled**
so	shining	light	and	has	you	healed

'and said 'My Lord **came** here himself as shining light and **has saved** us'

In (6) there are two events. The first event is represented by a punctual motion verb that in contexts with an indeterminate time reference can be used to convey anterior meaning. Moreover, *habban+PP* is used as a second conjunct that summarizes Christ's actions, surpassing time and referring to eternity. Such usage is called 'overarching timelessness' (see Drinka 2017: 231).

(7) [cowulf, WHom_6:188.367]

Hit	gewearð	ymbe xl daga þæs þe	he	of	deaðe	**aras**	þæt	him
It	happened	about xl days after that	he	of	death	arose	that	him-Dat.Sg.

com	of	heofonum	ongean	mycel	engla	werod,	&	he	mid	þam	werede
came	of	heaven	against	many	of angels	army	and	he	with	that	army

to heofonum	**ferde**,	&	ðærto	**gerymed**	**hæfð**	us	eallum	rihtne weg
to heaven	went	and	thereto	cleared	has	to us	all	right weg

'It happened about 40 days after he **arose** from the dead that a huge army of angels **came** to him from heaven and he with that army **went** to heaven and thereto **cleared** the right way to all of us'

In (7) *hæfð gerymed* can also be interpreted to show a follow-up event with a persistent effect. More importantly, similarly to (6), it is the verbal semantics of the preterits that makes it possible to functionally interact with the *habban+PP*. In the data from the *YCOE*, the preterits are represented by the verbs with punctual semantics, which emphasize their completion. It is the aspectual characteristics that are highlighted by both the construction and the preterit, as well as the ability of the preterit to underscore completion of the event rather than merely indexing a past action.

(8) [cowulf, WHom_6:182.363–366]

&	þæt	wæs	swutol þæs	ðriddan	dæges,	þa	he	of	deaðe	**aras**...	Ac	he
and	that	was	clear of that	third	day,	when	he	of	death	arose...	But	he

alysde	us	þurh	his	deað	of	ecan	deaðe	&	**geswutelode**
redeemed	us	through	his	death	from	eternal	death	and	showed

mid	his	æriste	þæt	he	**hæfð**	us	**gerymed**	rihtne	weg	to
with	his	resurrection	that	he	has	to us	opened	right	way	to

ecan	life;	&	he	raðe	eft	þa	gyt	þæt	furðor	**geswutelode**.
eternal	life;	and	he	directly	afterwards	then	yet	that	further	showed

'and that was clearly on the third day that he **arose** from the dead...But through his death he **redeemed** us from eternal death and **demonstrated** by his resurrection that he **has opened** us the right way to eternal life; and soon afterwards he then yet **showed** that further'

What complicates the interpretation of *hæfð gerymed* in (8) is that the construction is used not as part of a conjunct but in the clause subordinated to the one with the past time predicate. Contexts similar to (8) can be instantiated by the use of prefixed verbs such as *aras*, *alysde*, *geswutelode*. Among scholars there seems to be agreement as to the fact that Old English prefixes could bring in *Aktionsart* properties to the action expressed by preterital verbs. Thus, Quirk and Wrenn (1960) note that all the prefixes play the role of perfectivisers in Old English verbal semantics. The same conclusion has been drawn with respect to the prefix *ge-* that served as a clear marker of the perfective aspect or, following the terminology of Bybee et al. (1994), functioned as a *bounder-based perfective* (Bybee et al. 1994; Dahl 1985: 81–85; Wischer and Habermann 2004). It should be noted, however,

that *ge-* and similar aspectual restrictors do not automatically transfer the verb to another grammatical category, but they, rather, change only the *Aktionsart* characteristics of the whole situation, i.e. the event is viewed as bounded with the focus put on its terminal final phase.

Another type of instance is represented by examples of asyndetic coordination where two independent clauses can have either similar or different subjects. The *habban+PP* construction is found there together with preterits.

(9) [Cecilia]:262.7265–7266]

Ge	**habbað**	**gecampod**	swiðe	godne	campdom,	eowerne	ryne	ge	**gefyldon**
You	have	fought	very	good	fight,	your	course	you	completed

'You **have fought** a very good fight, you **have completed** your course'

The extract in (9) is taken from Ælfric's Lives of Saints, where in the form of an alliterative verse the author provides a translation of a Latin source about the life of Saint Cecilia. No doubt, a parallel use of the two grammatical forms may be dictated by the need for rhythm and positions within the alliterative lines. However, the Latin original in both cases contains two synthetic perfects, viz. certamen bonum *certavistis* (*fought* a good fight) and cursum *consummastis* (*completed* a course), which points to the semantics of completion. The verbal prefix ge-, therefore, is used to convey the basic *Aktionsart* quality of the bounded, telic action, facilitating the functional overlap with the aspectual characteristics of the *habban+PP*.

(10) [Eugenia]:415.445–446]

Min	modor	Claudia,	me	**hæfð**	**gebroht**	min	hælend	Crist	to his halgena
My	mother	Claudia,	me	has	brought	my	Saviour	Christ	to his saints

blysse,	and	minne	fæder	**gelogode**	on	that	heahfædera	getele
bliss	and	my	father	placed	on	that	of patriarchs	number

'My mother Claudia, my Saviour Christ **has brought** me to the bliss of His saints, and **has placed** my father among the number of the patriarchs'

In (10), *hæfð gebroht* is used to underline the significance of remaining in a state of bliss, a state which is caused by Christ. The prefixed verb is used to emphasize the terminal part and completion of the action that put the protagonist's father in a certain position.

(11) [coaelhom, ÆHom_21:47.3102–3103]

þis	folc	**hæfð**	**gesyngod**,	and	hi	sylfe	**worhton**	him	agotenne	god of golde
this	people	has	sinned,	and	they	themselves	worked	them	poured out	god of gold

nu	iu
now	formerly

'this people **has sinned**, and just now they **created** themselves a god made of gold'

Example (11) should seem not so strikingly different to Present-Day English. It makes it possible to view the first situation as showing a result that ensues from a previous action, i.e. a creation of a golden god. The eventuality in the second sentence thus serves as a background action if we consider the depiction of the sin as arising from a sinful act of creating the golden calf.

5.2 Middle English

There is consensus that by the Middle English period the present perfect had already been developed, especially its resultative meaning (Carey 1994; Detges 2000). The corpus data shows that examples similar to (6)-(11) can still be found in the corpus of Middle English prose texts, which is consistent with layering, a basic principle of grammaticalization denoting a persistence of older meanings as new ones develop (cf., e.g. Hopper 1991: 22 *et passim*).

Middle English tends to demonstrate the same functional and semantic overlap of the preterit and *have+past participle* as the one observed in Old English:

(12) [cmearlps][17.653]6.[17.654–655]

Þe sorwes of helle **encompassed** me, þe trappes of deþ   **han taken** me.

'The sorrows of hell **encompassed** me, the bridles of death **have taken** me'.

The Middle English translator of the Latin Psalter[5] uses both the preterit *encump-assed* and the perfect *han taken* to convey the Latin perfect active verbs *circum-dederunt* and *praeoccupaverunt*. As in instances from Old English, the two forms display the same functions.

The tendency of the parallel use of preterits and *have+past participle* manifests itself in contexts similar to those observed for Old English, where the *habban+PP* construction could precede or be followed by preterits in temporally indeterminate contexts. Like in Old English, examples from Middle English can describe acts of God that are connected to the moment of speech:

(13) [cmotest][1,20G.48–49]

And God **made** of nouġt grete whallis, and ech lyuynge soule and mouable, whiche the watris **han brouġt** forth in to her kyndis; and God **made** of nouġt ech volatile bi his kynde.

'And God **created** great whales out of nothing, and each living and moving soul, which the waters **have brought** forth in their kinds, and God **created** each winged bird in its kind.'

Another avenue for investigating the semantics of the perfect is its use in so-called 'narrative passages' where the preterits prevail (cf., e.g. Mustanoja 2016: 506–507 on historical perfect in Middle English; for the narrative perfect in Present-Day English see Walker 2011). The perfect is quite frequently attested in such contexts in many Middle English prose texts. Fischer (1992: 259) notes that the present perfect can be found in narrative past-time contexts along with the preterit; it re-

mains, however, unknown whether the perfect here had a special function or not. Because examples of this kind are often met in poetry, such cases are explained by the influence of rhyme and meter. The same view is shared by Mustanoja (2016), where the use of the present perfect instead of the preterit is thought to be "...often due simply to metrical considerations" (Mustanoja 2016: 507).

However, it has been assumed that the use of the present perfect in narrative passages serves the purpose of intensification of the narrative vividness (Ritz and Engel 2008). In such contexts, the present perfect retains its anterior semantics and acquires the new function of highlighting the most salient part of the narration. This semantics of the present perfect helps to bring the narrated events closer to the moment of speech, turning the interlocutors of a conversation into the witnesses of these events. In other words, the present perfect here functions similarly to the *praesens historicum*:

(14) [cmmalory][31.1000, 1001, 1002]

So with that **there com** a messyngere **and tolde** how **there was comyn** into theyre londis people that **were** lawles, as well as Sarezynes a fourty thousande, **and *have brente and slayne*** all the people that they may com by withoute mercy, **and *have leyde*** sege unto the castell Wandesborow.

'With that **there came** a messenger **and told** how **there were come** into their lands people that **were** lawless as well as Saracens, a forty thousand, **and have burnt and slain** all the people that they may come by, without mercy, **and have laid** siege on the castle of Wandesborow'.

In the passage above, the author narrates a story about a messenger who witnessed the invasion of Saracens, and told others about it. The background information of the invasion is conveyed through the consistent use of preterits, whereas when the author turns to narrating about the dreadful acts committed by the invaders, he foregrounds these events with the perfects, which make the story more vivid. This use of the perfect is similar to what Ritz and Engel (2008) demonstrate for modern spoken Australian English, where the present perfect can be used in a similar way as the narrative present simple for introducing a narrative tone. Moreover, in the narrative use of the present perfect most of the verbs express either activity or accomplishment, (similarly for Australian, see Ritz and Engel 2008: 152–156), which enhances the effect of placing the addressee in the middle of the situation: in (14) the verbs *burn*, *slay*, *lay siege* are used to evoke certain emotions from the addressee who did not witness the atrocities caused by Saracens but whose sympathy the author is trying to evoke by putting them in the midst of the events and thus making these events relatable to them.

Meanwhile, in our corpus there is one example that can point to the process of the present perfect drifting along the way to perfective past tense:

(15) [cminnoce][3.37–39]

whan the good Lorde askyd of Jeremye, Quid tu vides, Jeremia? he answered and sayd Virgam vigilantem ego video, "A waken rodde I see," sayd Jeremye. Truely thys waken rodde *oftentymes* **hath troubled** me *in my childehode...*

> when the good Lord asked Jeremias 'What do you see, Jeremias?', he answered and said 'I see a watching rod', 'A waking rod I see, said Jeremias. Truly this waking rod **has oftentimes troubled** me **in my childhood**...".

The experiential present perfect in (15), which 'indicates that a given situation has held at least once during some time in the past leading up to the present' (Comrie 1976: 58), is used with a temporal adverb that refers to a past time, *in my childehode*. However, in (15) the current relevance can still remain persistent through the reference to the topic of the passage – *a waken rode* (*a waking rod*) that connects the past events in the childhood with the present experience, especially if we take into account that the sermon was written for the boy bishop who is supposed to refer to his bitter punishment at school, i.e. being beaten by a rod. No other examples with definite past time adverbials have been detected in the Middle English corpus.

5.3 Early Modern English

In contrast to Old and Middle English, the data from Early Modern English provides instances where the present perfect can be seen in contexts that relate to definite past time reference. Most examples come from the corpus of *Early English Correspondence* represented by personal letters dating from as early as the beginning of the 15ᵗʰ century and up to the end of the 17ᵗʰ century. In both the *Penn-Helsinki Parsed Corpus of Early Modern English* and *The Parsed Corpus of Early English Correspondence* there are instances of the present perfect with overt past time specification marked by various adverbials of definite past time, as illustrated in Table 2.

Table 2. Adverbials of definite past time with the present perfect in Early Modern English

Adverbials	*yesterday*	*past date of the week (month)*	*this other day*	*this (last) night*	*ago*
Total number of occurrences	13	12	1	3	7
Occurrences per hundred thousand words	0.3	0.3	0.02	0.07	0.17

Though the data shows a low frequency of cases of the present perfect with the adverbials of definite past time, it clearly indicates that around half of the examples refer to a close past via such adverbials as *yesterday*, *this (last) night*, *this other day*, *last week*.

(16) [Paston, I, 315.105.3164]

> I **haue send** to Ser Thomas Howys <u>yesterday</u> Richard Call, for the matere of my lady of Bedfford...

Moreover, specification of a close past time in the same sentence can be used alongside a reference to the exact time when the event took place as in (17):

(17) [Leycest, 5.002.10]

> Sir, I **have this night**, **at j a clok**, received your letter...

As for *ago*, the corpus data shows that seven instances appear with either additional definite past time indicators of various degrees of remoteness (18, 19) or with indefinite indicators (20, 21):

(18) [Browne,77.008.179]

> I **have read** of the same in the transactions **about a yeare ago...**

(19) [Marvell,337.011.307]

> As for Hartlib, who was Sir Johns eagerest Sollicitor, he **hath a moneth ago shot** the pit.

In (18) and (19) *ago* is extended through the definite past time indicators *year* and *month*.

(20) [Fleming,217.080.1290]

> As touching Cumberland, for which I haue an Equal Concerne my Mothers Country! I **haue dispatch'd** Papers **som time agoe** to my dear friend & Brother Mr Blenner-hassat;

(21) [Oxinde, I,291.164.2946]

> ...my Letters **have spooke** for me **long agoe.**

In (20) and (21) *ago* is used with indefinite extensions like *some time* or *long*. Moreover, *ago* is found in the similar sentence with an extra indefinite temporal adverb *off late*:

(22) [Wyatt,159.026.898]

> And thei **long ago and off late have instanced** on Radulpho Balyon to come be theire chieff.

The adverb *off late* in (22), which is equivalent to *lately,* requires the use of the present perfect. Joined with *long ago* through the coordinate conjunction *and*, it contributes to the overall meaning of reference to both remote and immediate or recent past time with no definite anchoring.

5.4 Late Modern English

In the *Corpus of Late Modern English Texts,* the following past time adverbials were detected: *yesterday*, *last night*, *ago* with examples of the present perfect. The data on the use of the present perfect with these adverbials is presented in Table 3.

Table 3. Adverbials of definite past time with the present perfect in Late Modern English

Adverbials	*yesterday*	*this (last) night*	*ago*
Total number of occurrences	8	11	76
Occurrences per hundred thousand words	0.02	0.03	0.22

The data on the use of the present perfect with adverbials of definite past time in various genres is presented in Tables 4 and 5.

Table 4. The use of present perfect with *yesterday* and *this (last) night* in various genres

Adverbials	*yesterday*		*this (last) night*	
Genres	Fiction	Letters	Fiction	Letters
Total number of occurrences	2	6	7	4
Occurrences per hundred thousand words	0.012	0.27	0.044	0.18

Table 5. The use of present perfect with *ago* in various genres

Adverbial	*ago*					
Genres	Letters	Fiction	Non-fiction	Drama	Treatises	Other
Total number of occurrences	11	30	11	2	16	6
Occurrences per hundred thousand words	0.5	0.18	0.23	0.14	0.34	0.10

It can be seen from Tables 4 and 5 that the genre of *Letters*, by and large representing informal English close to spoken usage, displays the majority of cases where the present perfect is used with adverbials of definite past time:

(23) [CLMET3_1_2_123, The journal of Sir Walter Scott]

   Mr. Coleridge **has yesterday transferred** to me the treasures of the Quarterly Review;

(24) [CLMET3_1_2_110, LET, Letters, 1780-96, Burns, Robert]

> Many thanks to you, my dear sir, for your present: it is a book of the utmost importance to me. I **have yesterday begun** my anecdotes, etc., for your work.

6. Discussion

The absence of examples of definite past time adverbials with *habban+PP* in Old English can be accounted for by the low level of the grammaticalization of the construction. According to Carey (1994), Detges (2000), and Schwenter (1994), the construction was only developing anterior[6] semantics during that period.

However, examples (5a) and (5b) can serve as evidence of synchronic variation between the present perfect construction and preterit. This, in turn, could be ascribed to different stylistic values of the two categories related to 'register or to some other sociolinguistic variable' (Macleod 2012: 227). Analysis of instances with *habban+PP* in various types of coordinate sentences, presented in Section 5.1, revealed that there is no sufficient evidence to claim that the construction in such contexts could be interpreted as being perfective past tense. Thus, with ordinary coordination the construction does not refer to the past but, on the contrary, demonstrates persistent effects that are relevant to the moment of speech (examples 7, 8, 9). This implies that the construction in these contexts can foreground such aspectual properties as completeness of an action.

According to Schwenter and Torres Cacoullos (2008: 31–32 et passim), general compatibility with adverbs like *yesterday* and the like should not be taken as a specific criterion for observing the change from perfect to perfective past tense. Instead, wider usage in indefinite past reference would have to be observed. However, if the preterit in any given language is capable of conveying anterior meaning, its variation with the present perfect in such contexts would indicate that we are dealing with a temporally indefinite reference rather than a past one. Hence, in such contexts the present perfect retains its anterior semantics, whereas the preterit may function as anterior.

The combinatory use of the preterit and the *habban+PP* construction in one syntagm in Old English becomes possible when aspectual features of both categories are foregrounded. In (6), for example, functionally, the Old English punctual verb *com* in a temporally indefinite context can display anterior meaning, which facilitates an overlap between the two verbal forms. The Old English data suggests that a functional overlap with preterits occurs in sentences with ordinary coordination, which represent temporally indefinite contexts. In such contexts the construction retains its aspectual characteristics and refers to completed actions. So do preterits that highlight their aspectual properties through *Aktionsart* features, i.e. lexical aspect of verbs (telic, bounded actions as in examples 6, 7, 11), and morphological features (perfectivising prefixes, viz. *ge-* as in examples 8, 9, 10). Overall, alternation of the present perfect with the preterit, based on aspectual properties of these two categories, is in line with the the results of the analysis of the present perfect in Samaná English, where the data

quite accurately captures this aspect of the diachrony of English (Tagliamonte 2000: 347–348).

Middle English continues the tendency described for the Old English period. Thus, in (12) both verbs reveal aspectual properties through their *Aktionsart* in the case of the preterit and the semantics of completion in the case of the *have+PP*. The variability in translation of the same "Latin perfects" in different Middle English versions of the Psalter in example (12) demonstrates that the functional demarcation line between the preterit and the present perfect was not yet clearly drawn. Thus, in Richard Rolle's Psalter (between 1290 and 1349) we observe the use of the *have*-perfect in both cases: *has vmgifen me* and *has occupid me*, where the perfect forms indicate that the author follows the Latin original. Unlike Richard Rolle's Psalter, in the Early Version of the Psalter only preterits are attested: *wenten aboute me*; *befor ocupieden me*.

The perfect in (13) stands not at the end of the passage to emphasize the crucial nature of the completed action, but rather highlights one of the events that has been performed by the divine power. It is still possible to interpret this example as something going beyond the domain of past time, therefore, relating the events to eternity. In this respect, it is the preterit *made* that acquires the overarching function of indicating timelessness, which is achieved through its verbal semantics. Thus, both *made* and *han brouġt* anchor the completed events in the timeless sphere, enabling the narrator to refer them to the moment of speech, i.e. to the present time, and therefore justifying the use of the present perfect.

Variation between the preterit and present perfect as seen in (13) slowly disappears when distinction between perfective and imperfective verbs wanes along with morpho-lexical aspect gradually becoming obsolete. For instance, already in Tyndale's Bible (16th c.) and later in the King James Bible (17th c.) we observe the use of the preterit alone in the same passage from the Genesis as in (13): *created* and *brought*.

A new tendency for Middle English was an increasing use of *have+past participle* in past time narrative passages. This use, however, does not indicate that the construction has evolved into perfective past tense. As a rule, the present perfect in narrative passages stands alone with no temporal anchoring, which is suggestive of its capability of being linked to the moment of speech and functioning similarly to *praesens historicum*.

Overall, the data of the use of adverbials in the corpus of Middle English texts supports Bauer's findings[7] (1970: 143) that, by and large, the use of adverbials with the present perfect in Middle English is remarkably similar to Present-Day English.

Thus far, none of the contexts (6–15) from the Old and Middle English corpora can be said to point to any signs of the *aoristic drift* of the present perfect.

It is the data from Early and Late Modern English that shows that the present perfect indeed had a tendency to a shift towards perfective past tense. Thus, examples (16), (17) are characterized by one common feature, i.e. they represent ambiguous contexts. On the one hand, the speaker conveys some crucial information about what has been done. On the other hand, the addresser simultaneously underpins the time when the event was completed. Here, the present perfect is used in its recent and/or 'hot news' meaning referring to an immediate action.

The 'hot news' perfect is defined as a perfect describing a recent situation that conveys new significant and newsworthy information to the addressee (McCawley 1971; Schwenter 1994; Depraetere 1996). The 'hot news' perfect is considered unstable in time and is thought to have developed into perfective past tense.

Alongside from English, similar trends can be observed in other world Englishes, like East African English or Singapore English (Davydova 2011: 231–234, 253–256; see also the world atlas of varieties of English – Kortmann, Lunkenheimer, Ehret 2020) and in Spanish where this shift may be triggered by the use of the present perfect in its 'hot news' meaning. It is in this type of ambiguous contexts that both the past action and a completed one are emphasized (Schwenter 1994: 1019–1021). The data from Tables 2, 3, 4 and 5 confirm the hypothesis put forward in Schwenter (1994) that the vital role in the shift of anterior to perfective past tense is played by 'hot news' contexts.

Thus, the corpus data suggests that in Early and Late Modern English the present perfect started to move towards perfective past tense. However, this applies under two major conditions: first, the present perfect should be used in its 'hot news' meaning, and second, such usage is mainly restricted to colloquial registers, e.g. personal letters (see data in Tables 2, 4 and 5). This observation finds additional support in similar examples traced in dialectal usage of the present perfect in past time contexts in Present-Day English (Wright 1905: 298; Trudgill 1984). However, Standard English during this period exhibits quite a consistent use of the present perfect similar to the one we know for Present-Day English.

Historically, the present perfect first develops the resultative meaning, and it is this meaning that constitutes its core aspectual properties. The 'hot news' meaning of the present perfect develops later in the history of English (cf. Carey 1994), and it, when used in ambiguous contexts, may on the one hand indicate the completed action, but, on the other hand, tolerate 'tense-like' functions, i.e. deictic past time reference. It is argued, therefore, that in contexts where the present perfect is used in is used in the 'hot news' meaning its temporal properties may be foregrounded, especially with topicalized adverbials. The present perfect thus starts evolving into perfective past tense, losing its connection with the moment of speech.

If the account of the semantic evolution of the present perfect presented in this study makes sense, then one question that is bound to arise in this connection is why the change to preterital semantics did not take place in English, or in other words, what acted as a barrier preventing a further spread of perfective past tense and changing of the English present perfect into the past tense similar to what has happened in German or Romance languages? In this regard, it would be necessary to, firstly, ascertain whether there has been an increase in the rate of examples proving that the aoristicization process in Present-Day English over the past decades is still underway or whether this process remains a marginal phenomenon with no crucial implications for further development along the grammaticalization cline. Secondly, if we have sufficient evidence showing no upward tendency, that would mean that we are dealing with a failed linguistic change. In that case, it would be fruitful to analyze it in terms of what is suggested in Postma 2010: "...failed changes are L2 innovations supported by peripheral rules

rather than by core grammar, which are subsequently accommodated and modified by L1 adopters and turned into a successful change" (Postma 2010: 269). Such failed changes, which are of sociolinguistic nature, accompany a successful change and embrace "...off-grammatical variants that die out after a while" (Postma 2010: 299-300; cf. also Walker 2011: 83 – the emergence (or rather the re-emergence) of the narrative perfect in British English) "...is due to a vastly greater access of working class Englishes to public consumption..."). Typological parallels in other languages will certainly be an advantage to such an approach.

7. Conclusion

The investigation of the functional and semantic properties of the present perfect and its competition with the preterit in the history of English demonstrates that although the present perfect does not deviate from its development along the grammaticalization cline in Standard British English, specific contexts, which are attributed to spoken register, provide evidence to support the incipient movement of the present perfect towards perfective past tense. Although the frequencies of the present perfect with adverbials of definite past time were not high and show marginal usage, which is expected since the major change in the semantics of the present perfect has not even occurred so far, the figures indicate that in informal spoken registers (recall the genre of *Letters* in Late Modern English) the present perfect had a potential to drift towards preterital semantics.

Starting from the Old English period when the *habban+PP* construction was in the process of formation, the resultative construction – a progenitor of the present perfect – possessed both aspectual and temporal properties. The construction shared aspectual properties with those of the preterit, which, due to its morpho-semantic properties, was able to express the completed bound events similarly to the *habban+PP* construction. This made it possible for the preterit and *habban+PP* to be employed in sentences with the coordinate conjunction *and* with no definite temporal indication. This tendency continued in Middle English. In Early and Late Modern English, however, the present perfect started to shift gradually to perfective past tense when the present perfect competed with the preterit by foregrounding temporal properties. These developments occurred in the contexts where such changes were facilitated by contextual ambiguity and semantic congruity of the two categories.

Another conclusion is that starting from Middle English the present perfect was frequently employed in strings with preterits in narrative passages. However, in such instances the present perfect retained its anterior semantics and acquired a specific functional role similar to that of the *praesens historicum* used to enhance vividness of narration.

Directions for future studies may include the investigation and comparison of similar trends in the development of the present perfect in languages where it has become a past tense like German, on the one hand, and other varieties of English like American English, on the other hand. Further research also needs to be based on diachronic corpora such as the *Referenzkorpus Mittelhochdeutsch* (*Refer-*

ence corpus of Middle High German) and the *Referenzkorpus Frühneuhochdeutsch* (*Reference corpus of Early New High German*) for German and the *Corpus of Historical American English* (COHA) for American English. It also remains to be examined to what extent the *be*-perfect was involved in the transition towards perfective past tense in Early Modern English. And finally, the major question that follows from the hypothesis suggested in this study is what inhibited the present perfect in its gradual shift towards perfective past tense. It could be worthwhile to look at this phenomenon from the perspective of a failed linguistic change, though at present we do not have enough methodological tools to make accurate predictions as for the future development of the semantic change of the present perfect in English and its worldwide varieties. The destiny (or rather fate?) of the English present perfect remains to be seen.

Acknowledgements

Notes

[1]   German and English are contrasted here as the most obvious cases with respect to the ability of the present perfect to combine with definite past time adverbials. As for other Germanic languages, the situation is not always so clear-cut: Yiddish does not have the inflected preterit, instead forms with *have* or *be + past participle* are used to build the past tense; a somewhat similar situation is in Afrikaans, whereas the Scandinavian languages, overall, pattern with English, though inferential perfects allow past time adverbials (Larsson 2009: 84–87); in Dutch the present perfect can be used with definite past time adverbials (Korrel 1993: 2 and elsewhere), however, it is not preferred for telling a story, unlike German (Swart 2007: 2304–2305).

[2]   In Walker (2017), though, it is tentatively concluded that the present perfect with definite past time adverbials might be an intermediate stage in the evolution of the present perfect towards aorist, the idea supported in the present study.

[3]   The two-headed Janus analogy was introduced in Slobin 1994: 124 and since used in Werner 2014: 56, Michaelis 2002: 10, Ritz 2012: 904. Similar ideas were expressed by Jesperson 1931: 47 – "The perfect... serves to connect the present time with the past" – and Lindstedt 2000: 379, where the perfect is described on its evolution path as "...still having its tail in resultative, or pushing its head towards new aspectual, temporal or evidential meanings".

[4]   The sentence in 5(b) is cited also in Denison (1993) as an example of what the author calls 'commutation' or parallelism between the present perfect and the simple past in Old English. See also Walker 2012: 83. Other examples, starting from (6), are taken from *the York-Toronto-Helsinki Parsed Corpus of Old English Prose* (YCOE).

[5]   The text belongs to the M2 period in the corpus, 1350.

[6]   This study does not tackle quite a debatable problem of how to differentiate the resultant state construction from the perfect-anterior for the Old English *habban+PP* construction (cf., e.g. Johannsen 2016). What is important here is that the analysis of the *YCOE* has yielded no instances of *habban+PP* with definite past time adverbials.

However, even in Johannsen (2016), who holds the opinion that "...unambiguous perfect uses were in the great majority" (Johannsen 2016: 34), there are no examples of *habban+PP* with definite past time adverbials.

7   Building on Bauer's research, McCoard suggests that the inconsistent use of the Middle English present perfect as compared to the Present-Day perfect may indicate an influence of the French language (McCoard 1978: 250–251 et passim). However, unsettled functional boundaries between the perfect and preterit are seen in other vernacular texts that have no evidence of French influence (cf., Fischer 1992: 257).

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