'Is he gone' or 'has he gone'? On the usage of *gone* in Jane Austen’s novels and letters

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Why …

- Jane Austen?
  - Not studied much linguistically, considered conservative (different from her contemporaries)
  - Period when ‘have’ overtakes ‘be’
  - ‘be’ & ‘have’ + participle in broader studies

- ‘gone’?
  - ‘be’ resisted longer with ‘come’ & ‘go’
  - Still present in PDE
  - More metaphorical meanings

- Letters & novels?
  - More or less personal, informal and/or manipulated

- Motion situations?
  - Not analysed before in this context

- All ‘gone’ examples, including: “the lodgers almost all gone”?
  - Might throw light on results
Objectives & Hypotheses

- Was Jane Austen conservative?
  - Prob more in letters
- Was she following grammarians?
  - Prob yes
- *Be & Have* used similarly in letters & novels?
  - Prob no, editors’ & publishers’ manipulation
- *Be & Have* used differently in different verbal forms or sentence types?
  - Maybe (based on previous studies)
- Reasons connected to components of motion situations?
  - Most likely yes
Methodology

- Review of literature on Jane Austen’s grammar & be/have structures
- Semantics & syntax of motion (Talmy 2000)
- Corpus: letters & novels (Guttenberg Project)
  - Letters (76,617 words)
    - about 3/4 of collection by her great-nephew (1884)
  - Novels (782,457 words)
    - PERSUASION, NORTHANGER ABBEY, MANSFIELD PARK, EMMA, LADY SUSAN, PRIDE AND PREJUDICE, SENSE AND SENSIBILITY, LOVE AND FREINDSHIP AND OTHER EARLY WORKS
- AntConc programme
Some previous statements

- “In Jane Austen ‘have’ is used with go solely in conditional or infinitive constructions, making her conservatism even stronger” (letters – Rydén & Brorström 1987)
- “Jane Austen ... conservative in her handling of the be/have paradigm”
- “Austen’s preference for ‘be’ as Aux ... represented for her ‘correct’ usage or good grammar”
- “there is a manner of conjugating neuter verbs... with be” (Johnson), “signify some sort of motion or change of place or condition” (Lowth)
- “no significant differences between her letters and novels as regards the be/have paradigm” (novels, Cederlöf 1985)
- “there are some notable linguistic differences between the letters and the fictions” (Page 1972)
- “Jane Austen’s style has its roots ...in the 18th C ...owes ...to Dr. Johnson” (Phillips 1970)
- “variation between ‘be’ and ‘have’ was not an issue among 18th c grammarians” (Tieken-Boon 2014)
- “her grammar as idiosyncratic... her use of be/have ... as conservative should perhaps be revised”
Basic motion situation

The girl has gone (home)
The girl is gone (home)
Corpus Results

- Letters: 49 ‘gone’ (6 have, 1 neither, 42 be)
- Novels: 371 ‘gone’ (98 have, 26 neither, 247 be)
Motion situations in letters - Figure

Non-human Figure:
- Have: ‘the fiat’ (a decree)
- Be: mainly objects people ‘carry’ (a letter, apples, a cough)
Motion situations in letters
- Ground

- Abstract – only ‘have’
- Always present – ‘have’
- All categories – only ‘be’
- Neither ‘have’ nor ‘be’ – no explicit ground

Place 1: definite (gone home)
Place 2: place of action (gone a-shooting)
Place 3: indefinite (gone away)
Place 4: 3 + 2 (gone off to stay at …)
Place 5: 3 + 1 (gone away to bed)
Non-human figure:
- Appreciably more ‘be’ and neither
- Variety (time, a carriage, conditions of the day, my heart, an event, a cake, the worst/best of smth/sb)
Motion situations in novels - Ground

- Only ‘be’ in all categories
- Abstract: ‘have’ appreciably more
- No explicit location: ‘be’ most & more than any
- Place 1 (home) & Place 3 (away): ‘have’ & ‘be’ similar
- Place 2 (a-shooting), Place 4 (off to stay) & Place 5 (off to bed): ‘be’ mainly
Results – verbal forms & conditional sentences

- Letters
- Novels

Out of total 10
Conclusion

- More ‘be’ in letters, but not different from other authors (Kytö 1997), is she more conservative?
- Might have followed grammarians – ‘go’: neuter verb, conjugated with ‘be’
- Editors’ & publishers’ manipulation probably explains increasing ‘have’ in novels
- Both J. Austen & editors were possibly aware of differences in meaning
- Differences in Figure & Ground influencing on choice: ‘be’ or ‘have’
- Motion situation clearly explains differences
  - Metaphorical ground: have
  - No explicit ground: be
  - More complex structures (place 2, 4 & 5): be
  - Depending on Ground (& Figure): ‘neither’ can be interpreted as ‘be’ or ‘have’
- Verbal forms
  - No significant differences between be & have (apart from ‘have been gone’)
- Sentence type (conditional sentences)
  - Different to previous work
Further research ...

- other types of sentence structures in Jane Austen
- other motion verbs in Jane Austen
- ambiguous structures: perfect or passive?
- more metaphorical structures (including *go mad, go wrong, go off*)
- use of ‘gone’ by other contemporary authors in same types of texts (letters & novels)