

Since when is the Present Tense ruled out with *SINCE!**

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This article proposes to investigate the set of parameters which allow the optional choice of the Present Tense in English (see ex. (1)), over the expected Present Perfect (see ex. (2)):

- (1) Of course it's all none of my business, but I **feel** happier since I've seen her.
(1871) G. Eliot, *Middlemarch*, p.825.
- (2) "I **have felt** happier since I have known that I am going, for I have been a looker-on long enough."
<http://www.ancestralheroes.com/massachusetts/4103/alden-leonard-case>

Quite remarkably, the distinct preference of English for the Present Perfect (see exx. (2), (3d)–(4d)) in such contexts sets it apart from what appears to be the standard tense of choice in numerous other languages,¹ where the Present Tense is the norm to denote a state of affairs prevailing at the moment of speech and starting at some definite point in time, as in exx. (3a–c), or extending over a given time-span, as in exx. (4a–c):²

- (3)
- (a) [Fr.] Je t'attends depuis hier.
 - (b) [Sp.] Te espero desde ahier.
 - (c) [G.] Ich warte auf dich seit gestern.
 - (d) [E.] I've been waiting for you since yesterday.

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¹ Only Germanic and Roman languages are quoted here, but the same feature also applies to Japanese, for instance (see McCawley, 1971: 105). For want of a systematic survey of world languages, I cannot at this stage single out English as a truly isolated case.

² Which may itself be definite, as is the case here, or indefinite, e.g. *longtemps/mucho tiempo*, etc

- (4)
(a) [Fr.] Je t'attends depuis trois jours.
(b) [Sp.] Te espero desde hace tres días.
(c) [G.] Ich warte seit drei Tagen auf dich.
(d) [E.] I've been waiting for you for (*since) three days.

Indeed, the Perfect is so firmly established as the norm in Present-Day English that the Present Tense is sometimes used in works of fiction as an expedient way of manifesting imperfect mastery of the English language, see ex. (5):

- (5) My good father **is dead** since many years. He, too, was permitted to see France before to die.
(1853) W.M. Thackeray, *The Newcomes*, ch.3.

There are, however, instances of systematic use of the Present Tense in non-British varieties, where one may presume possible influence from substratum languages.

This is probably the case in Indian English (see exx. (5,6)):

- (6) I **am doing** it since six months.
Kachru (1983: 35)

- (7) I **am living** here since twenty years.
Goffin (1934) [cited in Kircher (1935: 249)]

and quite certainly so in Gaelic-influenced varieties, such as Irish English (see exx. (8) to (13)):

- (8)
Tá sí ag obair ó mhaidin
BE+ nonpast SHE AT WORKING FROM MORNING
[Irish English]: She's working since morning.
[Standard English]: She's been working since morning.
Harris (1984: 319)

- (9) I am sitting here waiting for you for the last hour
Joyce (1910: 85)

For Joyce (1910: 85), ex. (9) is typical of Irish English, where “the present progressive form accompanied by a temporal adverbial expression is much used, corresponding to the literary present perfect.” His formulation should not be construed, however, as an indication that this particular use of the Present Tense in Irish English is in any way restricted to the Progressive (see for instance exx. (10) to (13)):

- (10) Most of the staff **are here a long time** and know each other inside out.
The Racing Post, February 12, 2010
- (11) I'm not in this [caravan] long...
Filppula (1999: 90)
- (12) We only **know** each other a couple of months.
(1962) Edna O'Brien, *Girl with Green Eyes*, 125.
- (13) Okay right well I think Matt ... Matt ... is a really really really sweet guy. I mean he really is. He would never ever do anything to hurt anybody and I **know** him since primary school and I have never known Matt to say a bad thing about anybody
ICE-Ireland /S1A-018\$B/

The same characteristics are also true of Hebridean English (see exx. (14,15):

- (14) I'm a widower now for six years.
(15) I'm over sixty years a crofter now.
Sabban (1982: 59)

Foreign influence is sometimes invoked in the case of older English texts, and nowhere more significantly so than in Bible translations, where stilted renditions often preserve original grammatical features such as verbal tenses. Smith (1907: 454–455) thus quotes several examples where the present tense in the Wycliff version matches a present tense in the Latin Vulgate, upon which it was based. Interestingly, the Tyndale Bible, based directly on the Hebrew and Greek texts, is not so systematically conservative in this respect, at least where the use of tenses is concerned:³

- (16) Luke 15:28–29
[Latin Vulgate] (28) indignatus est autem et nolebat introire pater ergo illius egressus coepit rogare illum (29) at ille respondens dixit patri suo ecce **tot annis servio tibi** et numquam mandatum tuum praeterii et numquam dedisti mihi hedum ut cum amicis meis epularer
- [(1395) Wycliff] (28) And he was wrooth, and wolde not come in. Therfor his fadir wente out, and bigan to preye hym. (29) And he answerde to his fadir, and seide, Lo! **so many 3eeris Y serue thee**, and Y neuer brak thi comaundement; and thou neuer 3af to me a kidde, that Y with my freendis schulde haue ete.

³ The King James Version is perhaps more erratic than the Tyndale, and fluctuates somewhat between a conservative approach, shown here in Luke 15:29, and a more emancipated approach, shown for instance in John 14:9 (Wycliff: *So long tyme Y am with you, and han ye not knowun me?* / KJV: *Haue I bin so long time with you, and yet hast thou not knowen me?*)

[(1534) Tyndale Bible] (28) And he was angry and wolde not goo in. Then came his father out and entreated him. (29) He answered and sayde to his father: Loo these many yeares **have I done** the service nether brake at eny tyme thy commaundment and yet gavest thou me never soo moche as a kyd to make mery wt my lovers.

[(1611) King James Version] (28) And he was angry, and would not go in: therefore came his father out, and intreated him. (29) And he answering said to his father, Lo, these many years **do I serve** thee, neither transgressed I at any time thy commandment: and yet thou never gavest me a kid, that I might make merry with my friends

Literal and servile though the use of tenses in Bible translations may appear to modern eyes, it would be wrong to view the choice of the Present Tense in the examples above as a mere foreign calque verging on the border of ungrammaticality. Rather, the turn is best viewed as the preservation in formal contexts of a long-established ability of the Present Tense to express retrospective reference, see ex. (17):

(17) Min wif **is** for manegum wintrum untrum
My wife is for many winters sick
'My wife has been sick for many winters'

Ælfric, *Saints lives*, 474, 43 [in Visser 1984: 738]

Though it still thrives in the Irish and Hebridean varieties, the exact structure displayed in (17) does not appear to have survived beyond Elizabethan English (see ex. (18)):

(18) How **does** your honour for this many a day?

(1604) Shakespeare, *Hamlet* iii. i. 93

Note, however, that a postposed, verb phrase modifying adverbial in a Perfect phrase like (19) may be shifted to adjective-modifying position, as in ex. (20), thus allowing the copula in the Present Tense to offer a pragmatically equivalent alternative to the Perfect:

(19) Class war **has been** dead for a long time.

(20) Class war **is** long dead.⁴

Instances are easy to come by and readily acceptable, see exx. (21,22):

⁴ E.g. *Class war is long dead in Oxford town, Mr Brown*. [*The Independent*, May 28, 1980]

(21) Even in the worst rains, the monsters only just manage to drool—the rainpipes feeding them **are centuries out of repair**, running crazed over slates and beneath eaves...

T. Pynchon, *Gravity's Rainbow*, 83.

(22) Mickey Cohen's bodyguard **was a month out of work** (...).

J. Ellroy, *L.A. Confidential*, 10.

The semantic spectrum of the 'be *TIME ADV* dead' type is in fact especially rich and worthy of interest if one considers that the present-day strictly stative interpretation of *be dead*, shown in exx. (20) and (23) was historically preceded by a stage where the phrase had eventive denotation, see ex. (24):

(23) I acquired a Canon Scoopic 16 (the grey version) not too long ago, and the internal battery **is long since dead**.⁵

<http://www.cinematography.com/index.php?showtopic=44487>

(24) We then fell to cards till dark, and then I went home with Mrs. Jem, and meeting Mr. Hawly got him to bear me company to Chancery Lane, where I spoke with Mr. Calthrop, he told me that Sir James Calthrop **was⁶ lately dead**, but that he would write to his Lady, that the money may be speedily paid.

(1660) S. Pepys, *Diaries*, Jan. 3rd.

This dynamic meaning, prevalent up to the early Modern English period, proceeded from the ability of *be* in *to be dead* to serve as an ingressive copula,⁷ so that its actual meaning was 'to die, to have died,'⁸ see ex. (25):

(25) Ic am uor þe iuaid / þær fore ic wene beon dæd
I am hated on thy account / therefore I expect to die

(c.1205) Laȝamon, *Brut*, 175

The BE–Perfect in ME appears to have bypassed the past participle form *deide* (from *deȝen* 'to die,' a Scandinavian borrowing) in favour of the much older adjective *dēad*,⁹ which thus came to be reanalysed as a functional participle. It is only with the later demise of the BE–Perfect –the norm with mutative intransitives– and its replacement by the HAVE–Perfect –hitherto restricted to transitives– that the truly participial form *died* superseded the adjective-cum-participle *dead*. Fossilised traces of

⁵ See Bourdin (2008) for an in-depth description of *since* and the *ten years since* type.

⁶ The reader will kindly allow the Preterite *was* in this instance of reported speech on the grounds that it correlates with a Present Tense in the implicit original instance of direct speech.

⁷ The following example shows an earlier instance of *be* in a transitional (here passival) meaning:
Ponne wæron ealle þa dura betyneda / then were all the doors closed [(c890-899) *Orosius*, 59.10 ; in Fryd, 2009: 278].

⁸ See Stoffel (1888: 98-100).

⁹ The adjective *dēad* is attested in the earliest OE texts, while the verb *deȝen* is an early ME borrowing from Old Norse.

the former usage are readily available up to the early Modern English period, see exx. (24), and (26):

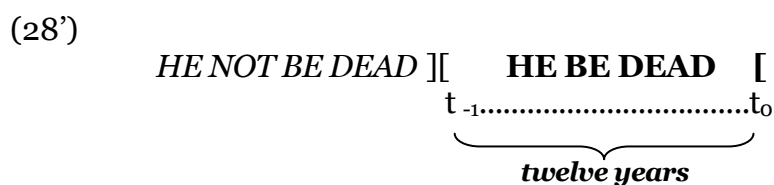
- (26) This then is the fact stated briefly. A lodger of mine **is lately dead** (...).
 (1796) Matthew Lewis, *The Monk*, ch. 9.

There is every reason to believe that the survival of a dynamic perfectal meaning in the case of *be dead* owes much to the lexical salience of the phrase, which must have contributed to a form of grammatical ossification. The now archaic, eventive interpretation, of exx. (24) to (26), where *dead* has participial status, has given way, however, to a purely stative sense, where *dead* can be regarded as strictly adjectival (see exx. (19,22), and (27,28)):

- (27) He is *dead but thirty years*, and one asks how a great society could have tolerated him? Would we bear him now?
 (1855) W.M. Thackeray, *The Four Georges (George the Fourth)*

- (28) He's **twelve years dead** and I'll bury him as a policeman.
 J. Ellroy, *L.A. Confidential*, 18.

Adjectival though they may be, phrases such as *out of repair*, *out of work*, or *dead* are no ordinary statives: an object is, by definition, initially fully functional until such time as it falls into disrepair; employment is not eternal (!) and having been hired, one may some day lose one's job; just as having been born, one some day ceases to live... In other words, these are predicates whose situational existence is contingent upon a change of state, and therefore congruent with the assessment of the temporal distance between the state's inception and the moment of reference. Figure (28') shows a formal representation of ex. (28), with t_{-1} identifying the state's moment of inception (i.e. the subject's last breath):



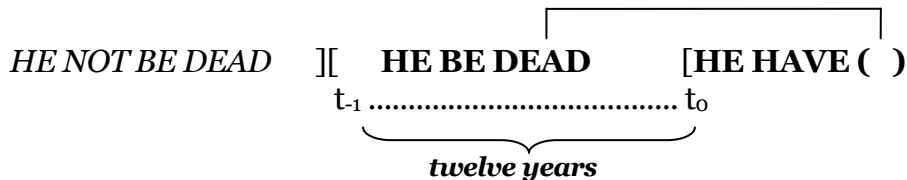
Because ex. (28) is not about defining types of 'deadness'¹⁰ but about linking the present and the past, the Present Tense can be regarded as a pragmatic alternative to the Perfect. For the sake of comparison, ex. (29) followed by its formal representation in (29')

¹⁰ The appraisal of a given occurrence of a predicate in terms of gradience relative to an organising centre, e.g. *moribund* vs *quite dead*, is not what is at stake here. For such a perspective, see Culioli ([1982] 1999: 54-55), and Groussier (2000: 166): "A notional domain is constructed around a typical occurrence called the organizing centre. The definition of the typical occurrence fits exactly the definition of the notion, which means that it includes all of the defining properties [of] the notion and only those."

offer a transposition of (28) into the Perfect:

(29) He's been dead for twelve years.

(29')



A characteristic feature of the Standard English Perfect is that the rightmost boundary of the anterior interval is not disconnected from the moment of speech, as would be the case with the Preterite, but is actually co-indexed with it. In the particular context of irreversible reference intrinsically denoted by *being dead*, the logical entailment is that the state of affairs extends over and beyond t_0 . If one replaces *be dead* by another stative eventuality, though this time one compatible with transitory status, such as *be a clerk for x time* (see exx. (30,31)):

(30) He was a clerk for twelve years.

(31) He's been a clerk for twelve years.

one finds that the Preterite of (30) forces a counterfactual interpretation for any time interval extending beyond the rightmost boundary, while (31) is compatible *both* with the continuance of the state of affairs beyond t_0 (*he has been a clerk up to now and still is one right now*), and with an experiential interpretation (e.g. *he has been a clerk for twelve years, and a lorry driver for a couple of years. But right now he works in a restaurant.*)

In the conception defended here of the English Perfect, auxiliary *have* operates as a semantically bleached operator preserving from its former meaning of possession the notion that the grammatical subject is *with* something. *Have* thus allows the speaker to credit the subject with the stock of projections of the predicate effectuated upon the anterior time interval abutting on the moment of speech.

For Jespersen (1931: 47) the perfect is “a kind of present tense, and serves to connect the present time with the past. This is done in two ways: first the perfect is a *retrospective present*, which looks upon a present state as a result of what has happened in the past; and second the perfect is an *inclusive present* which speaks of a state that is continued from the past into the present time.” In the formulation of Bryan (1936: 366), “the speaker looks back upon some continuous stretch of the past and within this he places the action or the state.” It is this very property of inclusiveness of the NOW–time in the Perfect as opposed to the disconnection of the THEN–time in the Preterite which led McCoard (1978: 123–163, and *passim*) to formulate his concept of an *extended*–now Perfect (usually XNOW, or XN for short).

In the formalisations of exx. (28) and (29), the boundaries t_{-1} and t_0 enable the calculation of the size of the temporal interval upon which the predicate is projected.

The rightmost boundary *t₀* is shown to be aspectually open, as dictated by the irreversible nature of the state in question.

The word *since* is by far the most frequently used in reference to the inception boundary. It finds its origin in the Middle English word *sithence* (later contracted to *sins*), an adverbial form of *sithen*, itself derived from the Old English word *siððan* ‘after that,’ (viz. *sið* ‘after’ + *ðan*, from *ðam*, a weakened dative form of *ðæt*).

Some rival forms in prepositional usage are shown in exx. (32,33,34):

- (32) And ek I **knowe**, of long tyme agone
His thewes goode, and that he is not nyce
And I also know his virtues of long time past, and that he is not a fool
(c1380) Chaucer, *Troilus and Criseyde*, II 722–3

- (33) Take me out of these streets, where the whole town **knows** me from a child.
(1850) C. Dickens, *David Copperfield*, Ch. XXII, 168b [Poutsma (1926²: 271)]

- (34) (...) the masses are indifferent to Governments which, to them, from time immemorial **exist** only to plunder them.
The Nation, May 30, 1914, 336 [Kirchner (1935: 252)]

It has been perhaps rashly suggested that a causal implication could be invoked to justify the combination of a *since* prepositional phrase and the Present Tense. Thus, van Draat (1912: 161), commenting on a small selection of examples, from which (35) is extracted, proposes that the present tense is found “When the preposition *since* occurs with causal force, so that a state is described that obtains now, owing to the event indicated by *since*.”¹¹

- (35) “I speak freely to you, my old Friend; ever since her Sickness, Things that gave me the quickest Joy before, **turn** now to a certain Anxiety”
(1711) J. A. Steele, *The lucubrations of Isaac Bickerstaff, esq.* (vol. 2), *The Tatler*, n^o95, 232

Alas, the impossibility in (35) of commuting *since* with any unequivocally causal alternative such as *seeing as*, or *considering that* renders van Draat’s claim untenable.¹² Such is not the case in a true causal context such as (36):

- (36) Since you don’t like meat so much, why don’t you order fish?

Yet, temporal–*since* is not so thoroughly estranged from its causal twin as might appear at first glance. It too functions as a subordinator indicating that the propositional content contained in the subordinated clause precedes and conditions

¹¹ It is a natural trend for conjuncts expressing a relationship of posteriority between two events to evolve from temporal reference (i.e. consecution) to causal reference (i.e. consequence). The latter evolution in the case of English *since* did not take place at the expense of the former temporal sense. Such was not the case with Old French conjunct *puis que*, which evolved in the course of time from a purely temporal sense, to a modern exclusively causal sense, with the two morphemes coalescing into *puisque*. See Imbs 1956.

¹² Cotte (1987: 93) also rejects the idea of the preservation of a causal component in combinations of *since* with present tense in the main clause.

the validity of that contained in the main clause. But the resemblance stops here as temporal–*since* only addresses time-bound events in a relation of *consecution*, while causal–*since* is at home with the expression of *consequence* within logical relationships.

Because temporal–*since*¹³ points to an event whose prior actualisation plays a conditional rôle in the subsequent state of affairs, the rightmost boundary of this initial event must be viewed as aspectually closed if the verb type is telic. This is illustrated in exx. (37) and (38):

- (37) The best resources I have discovered that demonstrate to me for the first time how to clearly maximize my keywords is a book called “Get to #1 on Google in Easy Steps”. **Since I read** this book, I understand how to use keywords, and can optimize sites for keywords.

<http://ezinearticles.com/?Website-Writing---It-Doesnt-Take-a-Marketing-Genius-to-Attract-Your-Target-Market-To-Your-Website&id=5718668>

- (38) Since **I’ve read** this book I understand so many things, some large and some small, that made absolutely no sense to me before.

<http://www.ballard-boys.com/2010/07/read-this-book-immediately.html>

In (37), the event *read this book* sees both left and right boundaries conjoined to form a discrete whole and the time interval thus compressed into a point is disconnected from t_0 .

The *since*–Perfect type shown in (38) is less productive: the rightmost boundary of the eventuality *read this book* is still closed, but this time the event is seen in terms of a resultant state (i.e. there remains no more reading to be done and the subject is now apprised of the book’s contents).

While in (37) the punctual eventuality *I read this book* may commute with a definite past time adverbial such as *last week* –and thus stands as a temporal locator marking the inception point of *I understand*– the Perfect phrase *I’ve read this book* in (38) generates a resultant state bearing on the subject *I*, who is now apprised of the book’s contents, and the state *I understand* is conceived to hold coextensively to the interval validating that resultant state.

Interestingly, the resultative Perfect *I’ve understood* in the main clause of (37’) offers an alternative to the Present of (37):

- (37’) **Since I read** this book, I’ve **understood** how to use keywords.

But the sequence of two Perfects makes for a clumsy combination in (38’) where it allows a singulative resultative interpretation, while not excluding an iterative meaning:

- (38’) **Since I’ve read** this book I’ve **understood** so many things that made absolutely no sense to me before.

¹³ Be it as a conjunct or a preposition, or as an adverb if the event is only implied.

The iterative interpretation is, however, the only interpretation in (39), where a class of occurrences is implied, in which each instance of reading is subsequently matched with a further instance of understanding...:

- (39) (...) in the many years since I **have read** the book, I **have understood** it better, and now I consider it to be revolutionary.
<http://allfinancialmatters.com/2006/09/14/how-to-determine-if-you-are-wealthy/>

With atelic eventualities, the *since*-clause is preferentially in the Perfect, at least in Standard Present-Day English, but the Present is quite often an acceptable variant, see exx. (40,41) for typical illustrations:

- (40) I haven't seen any fireworks **since we live here**. It is illegal in Eire –thank heavens.

<http://gwirrel.blogspot.com/2009/11/5th-november-bonfire-night.html>

- (40') I haven't seen any fireworks **since we've lived here**.

- (41) You've been doing that **since I know you**.

[F26-44 G.fllway/Dublin][Kallen (1989: 21)]

- (41') You've been doing that **since I've known you**.

The perceptible Irish English ring evinced by exx. (40,41) (see also exx. (12,13)), ought, however, to be toned down by the consideration that a type such as (41) is also massively present worldwide in all guises of other than formal English, a fact which speaks volume for the hypothesis of some level of remanence of a superstratal feature rather than in favour a calque of the Gaelic substratum.

The last remaining type, and by far the most productive, because at home in Standard as well as in regional varieties of English, is that shown in ex. (42):

- (42) **Ever since I can remember**, the Irish have deafened the world by appeals to history

Academy, November 2, 1901, 413b, [van Draat (1903: 385)]

The suggestion has been made that modal verbs in the present offer an alternative to periphrastic semi-auxiliaries in the Perfect, and that they are “evidently used to avoid clumsy constructions” (van Draat, 1912: 161). It is indeed the case that the type shown in (42) is more frequent than that of (43):

- (43) The last time the Dolphins were in the super bowl I wasn't even alive. I was born the month after. But **ever since I've been able to remember** I've always been a Dolphin fan, which is why I'm so angry about what's been happening lately.
<http://www.fohguild.org/forums/sports/41410-nfl-2010-offseason-draft-82.html>

Interestingly, the simple Present Tense offers yet another alternative, as in ex. (44) :

- (44) **Ever since I remember** there's been a peregrine on that cliff.
British National Corpus, CKF 1801

This possibility, however, is not available to all atelic eventualities but, rather, only to pure state verbs (see also ex. (40)) and not to activities, such as (45'):

- (45) I have been passionate about fitness **ever since I can walk** and have been helping people reach their health and fitness goals for several years.
<http://www.bloofitness.com/personal-training>

(45') ??I have been passionate about fitness **ever since I walk**.

- (46) I have been in love with fishing ever since **I've been able to walk** and hold a cane pole.
<http://www.carolinareels.com/about.html>

This collection of *since*-predicates in the Present would not be complete without an account of a surprising type shown in exx. (47,48):

- (47) He puts down the phone. "Hey," he says, his face bursting with with a huge grin. "National Lampoon wants to put me on the cover of the next issue, I'm such a big fan of National Lampoon **since I'm a kid**."
<http://www.nytimes.com/1993/08/15/style/bubbrother.html>

- (48) FMA is really the one to blame for my addiction to animes. I mean I like watching animes ever **since I'm a kid**. I had been watching cartoons like Sailormoon and Voltes 5 on TV when I was in my elementary days. I was even a big fan of Cardcaptor Sakura when they aired it. And I really like Samurai X (Rurouni Kenshin) even now. But liking an anime and getting addicted to it are two different things. They're totally different. And it's FMA which made that clear to me.
http://misformendokusai.multiply.com/journal/item/15?&item_id=15&view:replies=revers
e

The 'since I'm a kid' phrase of exx. (47-48) is indeed odd in terms of temporal reference in that it points to a remote and *obsolete* state of affairs: the subject is no longer a kid... In this respect, and in view of its set morphological structure (i.e. the type appears to admit of no variation outside of the 1Sg form of the verb –either full or reduced), there are solid grounds for treating this Present Tense of *Be* as morphologically opaque, and subsequently reanalysed as a variant of the Preterite.

As in the case of the *since*-clause, the choice of tenses in the main clause is closely dependent on Aktionsart. The telic eventuality of exx. (49a–d) provides a powerful example of applicable constraints:

(49a) Since then I've **sold** my car and bought another one.

(49b) Since then I've **sold** my car and bought another one the very same day quite a number of times.

(49c) *Since then I **sell** my car and buy another one.

(49d) Since then I **sell** my car and buy another one whenever I'm in the mood.

Indeed, the Perfect allows singulative reference in (49a), with attendant resultant states for both coordinated events, but also iterative denotation in (49b). The Present Tense, on the other hand, rejects singulative reference in (49c), and only allows iterative reference in (49d). The latter iterative context with a telic eventuality is a productive type. Ex. (50) provides another occurrence, fortuitously gleaned while 'researching' the lesser literary genres..., it is followed in (50') by a tentative formal representation:

(50) "Well, back in the year 1240, the chap whose job it was to lock up for the night was set upon by some ruffians. Thereafter, he refused to do his duty without a military escort. Every night since, without interruption, the Chief Warder **locks** the three principal gates, then **places** the keys in the Queen's House on the Tower Green. (...)"

Tom Clancy, *Patriot Games*, 118

(50')

$HE \text{ NOT } LOCK \quad] [\quad HE \text{ LOCK} \quad [$
 $t_{-1} \quad []_1 \quad []_2 \quad []_n \quad t_0$

Fig. (50') shows in t_{-1} a locus of change in the state of affairs: the implied cessation of the warder's refusal to perform his duty, represented as a closing boundary, and the beginning of a class of occurrences of locking the gates, shown as an open boundary. These occurrences are projected onto a time interval extending beyond the time boundary t_{-1} and the class of instants making up this interval is differentiated into diurnal or nocturnal instants, with the effect that each occurrence of *night* sees the coextensive validation of the eventuality *WARDER LOCK THE GATES*. Notwithstanding the lesser degree of homogeneity of the time interval thus obtained than that observed with true statives, the feature of regularity and predictability in the generation of occurrences warrants a near-stative status in which the predication can be treated as a *property* of the subject.

Now, replacing the Present Tense in (50) by a Perfect, as in (51):

(51) Every night since the warder **has locked** the gates.

has the effect of reducing the productivity of the class of occurrences of the eventuality to the strict quantizable stock of occurrences present in the abutting time interval, without commitment of any sort in terms of productivity of the eventuality *beyond* t_0 .

It thus appears that, where the eventuality of (50) is given an *intensional* definition, that of (51) is defined by way of its *extensional* output.

It is interesting to note that even in the case of atelic state predicates, the lack of *explicit* commitment expressed by the Perfect on the persistence of the state of affairs beyond t_0 may generate the need for expressive reinforcement, such as is done in (52) by means of the coordination of both Present and Perfect Tenses:

(52) Stan Deardeuff *is and has been* a regional coordinator for the Iowa Mediation Service **since** January 1987.

<http://www.iowamediationservice.com/staff/staff.htm>

The lack of commitment evoked here of the Perfect is also dramatically evidenced by its compatibility with later counterfactual reference. Compare thus ex. (53') with (54'):

(53) He **wears** only black since his mother died.

T. Bynon, *Historical Linguistics*, 61.

(54) He's **worn** only black since his mother died.

(53') *He **wears** only black since his mother died but it's over now and he's wearing colourful clothes again.

(54') He's **worn** only black since his mother died but it's over now and he's wearing colourful clothes again.

The same phenomenon is also present in (55) where, in view of the irreversible characteristics of the predication, the properties of retrospective vision *and* prospective non-commitment attached to the Perfect make (55') an unlikely alternative candidate against the powerful extended–now reference of the Present Tense:

(55) (...) I am almost superannuated here. My old friends (with the exception of a very few) all departed, and I am preparing to follow them, but remain till Monday to be present at 3 Oratorios, 2 Concerts, a Fair, and a Ball. I find I **am not only thinner but taller by an inch since my last visit**. I was obliged to tell every body my name, nobody having the least recollection of visage, or person.

Lord Byron, Letter to Elizabeth Bridget Pigon, June 30th, 1807

(55') *I find I **have been** not only thinner but taller by an inch since my last visit.

At the close of this investigation, the Present Tense in XNOW contexts, whether in the subordinate or the main clause, reveals itself to be not such an ugly duck, after all. If influence from the Gaelic substratum may indeed be invoked to explain its overwhelming distribution in Irish English, this is best viewed as a case of reinforcing influence –by preservation of an autochthonous feature already extant in the English superstratum from the origins. Although, in the course of time, the encroaching expansion of the Perfect came to oust in part the Present from its earlier realm of expression, the latter's survival appears to owe less to the preservation of archaisms or to any form of modern contamination from regional varieties, than to language-internal aspectual and semantic constraints.

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