

Action and Attitude in the Progressive Universe

– a diachronic study of letters and novels
in Early and Late Modern English



'sometimes when I am teaching, and sewing I'd far rather be reading or writing'

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CONTENTS

	<i>page</i>
List of tables, figures and text codes	
1. INTRODUCTION	1
1.1 The progressive in Present-day English	1
1.2 Hypothesis and its theoretical background	2
1.3 Scope and structure of the thesis	3
2. THE PROGRESSIVE IN HISTORY	5
2.1 The progressive – a misnomer?	5
2.2 Old English	5
2.3 Middle English	8
2.4 Early Modern English/Modern English	10
2.4.1 The gerundial influence – the origin of the aspectual progressive?	10
2.4.2 The modal progressive	12
2.4.3 <i>be going to</i>	15
2.4.4 Further extensions of the progressive paradigm	16
3. MATERIAL AND FILEMAKING	19
3.1 A gender-specific corpus	19
3.1.1 The letters	19
3.1.2 The novels	21
3.2 Advantages and limitations of the corpus	25
3.3 The file	25
3.4 Sampling: defining progressive predicators and excluding categories	25
3.5 <i>be going to</i>	30
4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION	32
4.1 General results and classification	32
4.1.1 Action and attitude subclassified: a matter of base and space	34

4.1.2	On the non-use of the notion of ‘aspect’ in Early Modern English	38
4.2	The action-focussed progressive	39
4.2.1	The period I letters	40
4.2.2	The period I novels	41
4.2.3	Action-focussed progressives compared diachronically	43
4.2.4	Verbs of action in period II	44
4.2.5	Verbs of motion in period II	46
4.2.6	Stance verbs in period II	47
4.2.7	Combinations with non-personal subjects in period II	49
4.2.8	Conclusion	50
4.3	The attitude-focussed progressive	51
4.3.1	The experiential progressive in period I	53
4.3.2	The interpretative progressive in period I	55
4.3.3	The habitual progressive in period I	56
4.3.4	The conditional, hypothetical and counterfactual progressive in period I	58
4.3.5	Attitude-focussed progressives compared diachronically	60
4.3.6	The experiential progressive in period II	60
4.3.7	The interpretative progressive in period II	62
4.3.8	Experiential and interpretative progressives indicating gradual processes in period II	66
4.3.9	The habitual progressive in period II	67
4.3.10	The conditional, hypothetical and counterfactual progressive in period II	69
4.4	Progressive forms with future reference	72
4.4.1	The progressive futurate in period I	74
4.4.2	<i>be going to</i> in period I	75
4.4.3	Modals combining with the progressive in period I	76
4.4.4	The progressive futurate in period II	76
4.4.5	<i>be going to</i> in period II	78
4.4.6	Modals combining with the progressive in period II	79
4.5	Summary of the attitude-focussed progressive	80

5. SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION	83
5.1 General summary	83
5.2 Concluding remarks	88
Bibliography	90
Endnotes	93

TABLES

Table 4.1:	General distribution of progressive verb phrases in period I and period II, subdivided by genres	32
Table 4.2:	Frequency of progressives per 1,000 words for letters and novels in period I and period II	33
Table 4.3	Action-focussed progressive in period I and period II across the genres of letters and novels	39
Table 4.4	Action focussed progressives with framing effect in period I and period II across genres	44
Table 4.5	Temporal adverbial modification of action-focussed progressives in period I and period II across genres	44
Table 4.6	Stance verbs in the action-focussed subset of period II	47
Table 4.7	Attitude-focussed progressives across the genres of letters and novels in period I and period II	51
Table 4.8	Attitude-focussed progressives inclusive and exclusive of future-referring progressive forms	52
Table 4.9	Experiential (Ex.) /interpretative (Int.) and other attitude-focussed progressives according to genres and periods	53
Table 4.10	Distribution of future-referring forms realized by the progressive proper (pp), be going to (bgt) and modal + infinitive progressive (m)	73

FIGURES

Figure 2.1:	The diachronic development of the progressive function and meaning	15
Figure 4.1:	The mental spaces of the progressive	35

TEXT CODES

ICMP	Pix, Mary. 1696. <i>The Inhumane Cardinal</i> . Delmar and New York: Scholars' Facsimiles and Reprint
JECB	Brontë, Charlotte. 1847. <i>Jane Eyre</i> . London: Penguin Classics
LDO	Osborne, Dorothy. 1928. <i>The Letters of Dorothy Osborne to William Temple</i> . Edited by G.C. Moore Smith. Oxford: Clarendon Press
LLCB	Barker, Juliet. 1998. <i>The Brontës: A Life in Letters</i> . Woodstock & New York: The Overlook Press, Peter Mayer Publishers, Inc.
OAB	Behn, Aphra. 1992. <i>Oroonoko, The Rover and Other Works</i> . Edited by Janet Todd. London: Penguin Classics

The English verb system has two sets of paradigm: the non-progressive and the progressive. A progressive verb phrase is marked by a form of the auxiliary *to be* + the present participle of the main verb. This construction has no formal parallel in any other Germanic language, so from a contrastive point of view it amounts to an idiosyncrasy, which may represent a challenge to many foreign learners of English. As for myself, the manner in which the progressive operates in the language remained an obscure issue until I enrolled on an English Foundation Course, where I finally gained some basic knowledge about the meaning and function of the construction, as it emerges in Present-day English grammar books.

1.1 The progressive in Present-day English

In contemporary grammar books the concept of ‘temporal aspect’ is frequently presented as being part and parcel of a functional definition and description of the progressive. Indeed, the very notion of ‘aspect’ is explicitly mentioned in all the headings of the sections on the progressive in Quirk et al. (1985:197), Huddleston and Pullum (2002:162) and Biber et al. (1999:460).

The bulk of Quirk et al.’s account, named *Progressive Aspect* (1985:197), is devoted to the discrimination between dynamic and stative situation types and the relevance of this division for the use and non-use of the progressive, a form defined as indicating ‘a happening in PROGRESS at a given time’ (1985:197). More precisely, a progressive verb phrase normally encompasses the semantic components of ‘duration’, ‘temporariness’ and ‘incompletion’, ‘not all of which need be present in a given instance’ (1985:198). Instances not sufficiently conforming to the given criteria are interpreted and classified in terms of special uses, as a kind of deviation from the main rules. For instance, the affective-emotional effect of a progressive collocating with an adverbial of frequency is defined as resulting in a loss of its original semantic component of temporariness (1985:199), and the ‘pretending’ effect of the progressive form of *to be* is explained as a reinterpretation of a stative situation type as dynamic (1985:200). The temporal framing effect of the progressive is described in some detail (1985:209f), as well as the perfective progressive (1985:210ff). The future-referring function of the form is commented on in a separate section on future time (1985:215).

Huddleston and Pullum’s approach to the meaning and use of the progressive, entitled *Progressive Aspectuality* (2002:162) appears to be quite comparable to that of Quirk et al.,

although it is less comprehensive and differently structured. As the title suggests, the temporal-aspectual character of the construction is largely in focus throughout the description of its diverse applications. However, unlike Quirk et al. this book has a separate section on *Non-aspectual uses of the progressive* (2002:171f), dealing with the progressive futurate¹ and the modal auxiliary *will* + progressive infinitive. In Biber et al., in a section simply called *Aspect* (1999:460), the method of Corpus Linguistics is employed for the elaboration of a presentation of the progressive and its statistical frequency in terms of genres, dialects, tenses and types of verb. The statistics are followed up by a discussion of the semantic categories of verb found to occur in the progressive (2002:470ff), comprising among others verbs referring to activities and physical events, stance, communication acts and mental and perceptual states and activities.

1.2 Hypothesis and its theoretical background

Equipped with knowledge of the progressive based on the approaches referred to above, I endeavoured to see if my construal of the construction and its applications in the English language would fit the examples I encountered in the textbooks. To some extent, usage confirmed theory; nevertheless, somehow the map did not always seem to agree with the land. Frustrated as well as intrigued by this fact, I began to realize that there must be more to the progressive than temporal aspect and a few specialised uses. This vague conception was to induce the topic for the present thesis, whose purpose is to capture to some extent what the progressive is actually **employed to do**. A radical description of the semantics and applications of the progressive needs to take into account the history of the construction, which can be traced back to Old English. In order for the investigation to have a sufficiently practical bearing on the situation prevailing in Present-day English, the progressive's development in Early and Late Modern English will be its main focus of attention. This era witnessed an unprecedented increase of the form, which in my opinion is closely linked to alterations in its function and meanings during the centuries subsequent to Middle English. Rydén (1997:422) describes the diachronic development of the progressive meaning in Modern English (ca 1500 onwards) in terms of an increasing semantic dualism:

The split [of the progressive meaning: KL] into one largely obligatory action-focussed facet and one optional attitude-focussed facet has become increasingly explicit in standardized British English in the course of the modern period.

What Rydén refers to as ‘action-focussed facet’ corresponds to the aspectual use of the progressive, whereas the ‘attitude-focussed facet’ equals what Wright (1994, 1995) refers to as ‘the modal progressive’, a term implying that the progressive is a linguistic resource available for speaker subjectivity, not only for the expression of temporal aspect.

Based on these theories, my hypothesis is that the growing versatility and the diachronic increase of the progressive derive from changes in its pragmatic, semantic and syntactic properties during the centuries of (late Middle English and) Modern English. Essential to these changes are Rydén’s (1997:422) semantic split, creating, as it were, two concurrent lines of development of the construction.

1.3 Scope and structure of the thesis

In the present thesis, Rydén’s two semantic facets will constitute the main categories to be analysed, and his terminology will be applied throughout. Two periods will be investigated, namely the mid- to late 17th century and the early to mid-19th century. Both periods will be described in terms of frequency of the progressive and its semantic and functional properties, including, where appropriate, its collocations and subjects. For each category, a quantitative and qualitative comparison will be made between the two periods and genres. Thus, the investigation is at the same time a synchronic and a diachronic study.

The thesis is structured in the following way. After a brief discussion questioning the appropriateness of the current terminology applied to the progressive, chapter 2 introduces the construction in a historical perspective. Subsequent to an outline of its history from Old English onwards, emphasis is on the Early Modern English/Modern English period. A discussion of theories relevant to the investigation is incorporated in this chapter, the most important ones being Nehls (1988), Elsness (1994), Wright (1994) and Rydén (1997). Included is also a section on the history of the semi-auxiliary *be going to*. Chapter 3 presents the material of the investigation, a personally collected corpus comprising the genres of letters and novels, as well as the authors of the selected works. A description of the Filemaker pro program and the criteria pertaining to sampling is also provided. The future-referring expression *be going to* is part of the corpus, the reason for which is stated in the last section of chapter 3.

Chapter 4 presents and analyses the results of the investigation. Initially, crude numbers and relative frequencies are furnished, followed by definitions of the parameters ‘action in progress’ and ‘attitude’, which are key concepts in the identification and description of action-focussed and attitude-focussed progressives respectively. These two categories are

treated individually in separate sections, where distributional facts in the form of tables and examples from the two time periods are compared systematically. In this analysis, diachronic changes with respect to features such as verb type, subject type, collocations, framing effect and adverbial modification are mapped according to need, and related to the distributional evidence provided in the tables. Future forms are treated separately, still as part of the attitude-focussed progressives. The findings are summed up in a final section for each of the two main categories (4.2.8 and 4.5 respectively). A general summary and conclusion is provided in chapter 5, including some final reflections on further research and the current status of the construction.

2 THE PROGRESSIVE IN HISTORY

2.1 The progressive – a misnomer?

The longitudinal development of the English progressive has been subject to many studies during the last decades. Its origin(s), formal features and functions have been mapped in order to account for its application, at separate synchronic stages as well as in a diachronic perspective (Elsness 1994:6). Until recently, scholarly opinions have emphasized the importance of the progressive's role in the evolution of the category of temporal aspect, one protagonist of this view being Nehls, with his article from 1988. However, even Nehls prefers to rename the *be+ing* construction, habitually termed 'the progressive', as 'the expanded form' (Nehls 1988:179), because 'several Old, Middle and Early Modern English uses of the EF [= expanded form, KL] have nothing to do with the function "action in progress" that is implied by the term PF [= progressive form, KL]'. Indeed, there are a number of alternative labels currently circulating, among them 'the continuous', 'the definite' and 'the subjective' verb form, in spite of an apparently general consensus on the appropriateness of the designation 'the progressive' in Present-day English. A new approach has been attempted by Rydén in his theory on the semantic 'dynamicness' of the construction (1997:421). According to Rydén, the progressive meaning is essentially bipartite, with one action-focussed and one attitude-focussed facet (1997:420). Moreover, the stability of its panchronic² function as an 'intensifier or focalizer' (Rydén 1997:422) is pointed out.

The wealth of variation in the terminology employed for the naming of the *be+ing* construction is as intriguing as its history. The diversity of the designations mentioned in the previous paragraph appears to reflect a similar diversity of functions and meanings. In this respect, it seems peculiar that the term currently prevailing should be 'the progressive', a notion which strictly speaking comprises its temporal-aspectual use only, ie what is referred to as the action-focussed facet in Rydén (1997), and thus leaving out the attitude-focussed facet (Ryden 1997). In the present thesis, for the sake of convenience, 'the progressive' will continue to be used as a general designation, but only with a feeling of serious doubt as to its appropriateness.

2.2 Old English (ca 450 – 1100)

The verbal construction *to be* + present participle existed in Old English as well as in the contemporary Germanic languages (Mossé 1938:21ff and Nickel 1966:75ff in Nehls 1988:179). The construction died out in all of its cognate languages, surviving as an

idiomatic feature of English only. Formally, the Old English construction consisted of a finite form of the verbs *beon/wesan* (occasionally *weorþan*) + the present participle of a lexical verb normally taking the suffix *-ende*. As regards the origin of the rudimentary form of the progressive, scholarly opinions differ. The question is whether it was a genuine Germanic construction or a loan from Medieval Latin, since Old English translations from that language display a higher frequency of the form than do original Old English texts. Given the existence of parallel constructions in other Germanic languages, it seems unreasonable to ascribe the origin of the English progressive to the corresponding Latin construction. However, Latin may have exerted an important influence on its ability to survive, a view advocated by Scheffer (1975:132 in Eftevåg 2000:8).

Another view is held by Mitchell (1985:279 in Eftevåg 2000:9), who explains the progressive as a result of the syntactic blend of several Old English constructions formally equivalent to the progressive. As the use of *-ende* is not a verbal ending in all cases, these constructions are sometimes ambiguous, and sometimes classifiable, such as in the examples provided below, which are taken from Mitchell (1985:279-280 in Eftevåg 2000:9). They illustrate the following constructions: *be*+ predicative noun in [1], *be*+ adjective in [2] and finally an extraposed participle in [3].

[1] hie **wæron ehtende** cristenra monna
 they were persecutors of Christian men

[2] hie **wæron blissiende**
 they were happy

[3] he **wæs on temple lærende** his discipulas
 he was in the temple, teaching his disciples

Functionally, the Old English progressive is said to have been a mere stylistic variant of the simple form (Nickel 1966:238ff in Nehls 1988:180), used optionally for the purpose of emphasizing the verbal action. According to Crystal's *Dictionary of Linguistics and Phonetics* (2003:440), the concept 'stylistics' is primarily defined as

[a] branch of LINGUISTICS which studies the features of **SITUATIONally distinctive** [boldface mine, KL] uses (VARIETIES) of LANGUAGE, and

tries to establish principles capable of accounting for the particular choices made by individual and social groups in their use of language.

The notion ‘situationally distinctive’ seems to be crucial to this definition. Applied to the theory that the progressive form was used as a stylistic variant in Old English, the above definition implies that the construction was a device available to the speakers and writers of the language for the encoding of their individual communicational purposes in particular situations. The form frequently occurred together with activity verbs (Nehls 1974:175f in Nehls 1988:184), which are often key indicators of the course of events in a story. Thus, the form seems to have the function of directing the reader’s or listener’s attention towards the content of the verbal element of the clause. According to Crystal (1996:48), this element ‘plays a central role in clause structure’ and ‘is the most **obligatory** of all the clause elements’. Provided that this appreciation of the verbal element is correct, it is perhaps hardly surprising that precisely the verb, of all sentence elements, should develop a second paradigm consisting of expanded forms. In this connection, attention is drawn to the physical length of the progressive form. The ‘prolongation’ of its formal expression tends to render it more conspicuous. Taylor (2002:46) explains this phenomenon, which he refers to as ‘iconicity of quantity’, in the following way: ‘The length of an expression may ... correlate with the complexity of conceptual content’. Examples [4]–[7] below are instances of Old English progressives.

[4] þæt scip **wæs** ealne weg **yrnende** under segle. (Elsness 1994:7)³
that ship was all way running under sail.

[5] On þæm dagum on Tracia þæm londe **wæron** twegen cynigas ymb þæt rice **winnende**, þa wæron gebroþor. (Wårvik 1990:562)
In those days in the land of Tracia two kings were fighting for the kingdom; they were Brothers.

[6] Ond hie þā ymb þā gatu **feohtende wæron**, oþ þæt... (Barber 2000:162)
And then they went on fighting around the gates, until...

[7] hio **þyrstende wæs** ... mannes blodes (Bækken 1999)
she thirsting was ... (for) man’s blood

In the above examples the progressive form appears to have a demonstrative value, pointing out important items in a storyline for the readers to pay attention to. Moreover, and especially in example [7], the form functions as a dramatic enhancer, which perhaps also applies to [5] and [6]. Admittedly, these examples display applications of the *be+ing* form comparable to the temporal-aspectual use of the progressive in Present-day English. However, this is most likely fortuitous, since Old English texts did not show any consistency (Nehls 1988:180) in using the progressive in contexts such as those represented in examples [4] to [7].

On the other hand, the progressive form was sometimes used for the expression of stative meanings and in imperative sentences in Old English, as illustrated in [8] and [9] respectively:

[8] þæt seo ea **biþ flowende** ofer eal Ægypta land (Elsness 1994:7)

that this river is flowing over all Egyptian's land

[9] ne **beo þu forgitende** þinre efenþeowa (Recktenwald 1976:105)

don't you be forgetting your fellow servants

Sentences such as [8], containing geographical, encyclopedic information probably use the progressive for didactic reasons, pointing out and emphasizing certain facts worth knowing for potential readers and listeners. The imperative utterance in [9] may also convey didactic undertones, of a moral nature in this case. At least, the inherent function of an imperative is to express an order, and according to Raith (1951:106) in Nehls (1988:180) and Mustanoja (1960:591) in Nehls (1988:180), the progressive serves to add an 'intensifying function' to imperatives in Old English.

2.3 Middle English (ca 1100 – 1500)

The Middle English period is actually marked by a stagnation in the use of the progressive form. Nehls explains this development as a result of the fact that 'the Old English literary tradition was replaced by that of French and Latin after the Norman Conquest of 1066.' (Nehls 1988:180). The drop is substantially more dramatic in the dialects of the Midlands and the South than what is evidenced in Northern documents (Nehls 1974:136ff in Nehls 1988:180).

As far as function is concerned, the *be+ing* construction lived on in Middle English without diverging significantly from the Old English tradition, remaining largely confined to activity verbs. As such, it is particularly frequent in sub-clauses, often with an apparent framing-effect, as illustrated in [10] below. The construction is still used for the expression of timeless situations or stative utterances, an instance of which is provided in [11], which might also be characterized as an early instance of the habitual progressive. Equally, the occurrence of imperative progressives remains quite stable, as exemplified in [12]. Examples [10]–[12] are taken from *The Cambridge History of the English Language*.

[10] Polidamas.../Brought hym [the horse) full bainly to þe bold Troiell,/ þat **was fightand** on fote in þe felle stoure. (Volume II 1992:254)

Polidamas...brought it very quickly to the bold Troilus, who was fighting on foot in the fierce battle.

[11] Aristotill sais þat þe bees **are fightande** agaynes hym þat will drawe þaire hony fra thaym (Volume II 1992:255)

Aristotle says that the bees are fighting against him who wants to steal their honey from them

[12] John, **be** thou here **abydand**, ... (Volume II 1992:255)

John, be here obeying, ...

From a formal point of view, the present participle of the progressive form underwent an inflectional change towards the end of the Middle English period. According to Nehls (1988:180f), the ending of the present participle changed from *-ende* to *-inge*, most likely under the influence of the verbal noun, which had ‘ended almost exclusively in *-ing(e)* since the 13th century in the South and in the Midlands’. This influence seems to have been mutual, as the verbal noun in its turn assumed certain verbal properties from the present participle form, and came to be classified as a gerund. The importance of this merger is evidenced by an incipient increase in the frequency of the progressive construction, and this increase has continued unabatedly ever since (Elsness 1994:5).

2.4 Early Modern English (ca 1500 – 1700) / Modern English (ca 1500 – 1900)

The Modern English period was an era of unprecedented increase and semantic development of the progressive form and paradigm. In the written medium, which unfortunately constitutes the only field of study available to historical linguistic investigations, new manifestations of literary production were emerging. Due to the rapidly increasing literacy in the 16th and 17th centuries (cf section 3.1.1), letter writing was growing more and more popular, gradually evolving towards a genre of its own. The Restoration comedy ensured the continuation of the drama, and the early 18th century saw the birth of the novel. These genres are basically the most important written media in which the development of the progressive is evidenced in Early Modern English. After a period of stagnation in Middle English as described in section 2.3, the frequency of the construction increases markedly from approximately 1500 onwards. According to Dennis (1940:855ff in Elsness 1994:8), its occurrence may have multiplied ten to twenty times since that date. These findings corroborate the results of the investigation made by Elsness into the giant Helsinki Corpus. His figures ‘suggest that the frequency of the progressive may have multiplied by as much as ten over the past 400 years’ (Elsness 1994:10). Behind these figures is a development which many scholars traditionally have taken to be an increasing tendency for the expression of an action in progress to collocate with the expanded verb form (cf section 2.1). If this is the case, the history of the progressive is equivalent to (and restricted to) a mere process of grammaticalization⁴ of the form, working along different evolutionary stages towards its eventual position as a formal indicator of the imperfective aspect of an action. As was briefly mentioned in section 2.1, the progressive meaning can be divided into two main subcategories, the action-focussed (aspectual) use and the attitude-focussed (modal) use. The development of the two will be treated in sections 2.4.1 and 2.4.2 respectively.

2.4.1 The gerundial influence – the origin of the aspectual progressive?

According to Nehls (1988:179), Raith (1951) was the first linguist to investigate the progressive in terms of its role in the evolution of aspect. Prior to this, however, Jespersen (1932) had noted the possible significance of some gerundial constructions for the development of the aspectual function of the progressive form. These constructions typically consisted of the gerund of activity verbs such as *hunting*, *fishing* and *birding*, and of verbs of motion such as *come* and *go*, preceded most commonly by the preposition *on*, eventually the remnant *a*, as in *he’s a hunting*. The gerundial construction thus coincided strikingly with the

progressive form of activity verbs. This phenomenon is illustrated by examples [13]–[17]. Objects of transitive verbs were often expressed in *of*-phrases, as in [17].

[13] ... and as I entryd ynto the castell yarde, the judgys **were a rysynge**, and they, seyng me comynge, sat downe agayne. (Elsness 1994:12)

[14] - He's **a-birding**, sweet Sir John. (Nehls 1988:184)

[15] ... the Milke-mayd whilst she **is in milking** shal do nothing rashly or sodainly about the Cowe, which may affright or amase her, but... (Elsness 1994:13)

[16] My lord of Cornwall **is a-coming** over, ... (Nehls 1988:184)

[17] ...and after dinner came two Cauelliers, and a Moore being one of their slaues to the watering place, where our men **were filling of** the Caske, and asked whether... (Elsness 1994:14)

As is evidenced in [17] there was a tendency for the preposition in front of the gerund to be left out. According to Nehls (1988:185), Jespersen sees this trend as a stage in a unidirectional process, ending up with the preposition being dropped altogether, and a structure formally identical with the progressive. In Jespersen's view, this development took place independently of the progressive, subsequently leading to a formal merger of the two. This theory is rejected by Nehls (1988:184f), who, pointing to the fact that the gerundial preposition still lives on in many dialects, stresses the **interaction** between the two concurring structures in Early Modern English:

The *be a-doing* construction always expressed an action in progress. As the EF [expanded form, KL] and this construction are very similar from the formal point of view and as they fulfilled in many cases the same function - from OE times onwards the majority of EFF [expanded forms, KL] has occurred with activity verbs (cf. Nehls 1974: 175f.) -, the *be a-doing* construction exerted a decisive influence on the EF in restricting its function to the expression of an action in progress.

The formal similarities between the two structures seem indisputable. However, Nehls' claim that the progressive and the gerundial often filled the 'same function' way back to Old English

might be more questionable in view of his own characterization of the Old English progressive as a ‘stylistic variant of the NEF [non-expanded form, KL]’ (Nehls 1988:180). If Nehls means to say that Old English progressives collocating with activity verbs were encoded for the expression of an action in progress, his claim emerges as an anticipation of the most important feature of the aspectual function of the progressive form. It is probably more correct that the gerundial construction served to express an ‘action in progress’, whereas (in my view) Early English progressives collocating with activity verbs did not, because this use was merely stylistically motivated. On the whole, Nehls appears to regard **any** collocation of the progressive form with activity verbs from Old English onwards as an expression of ‘action in progress’, the only difference from Late Modern/Present-day English being that its use was not obligatory and was therefore subject to choice (Nehls 1988:180ff). If this were the case, it is far from easy to account for the **inconsistency** of the progressive’s collocation with activity verbs in Early English (ca 450 – 1770), ie the speakers’ motivation for using the form in selected situations only (cf section 2.2). Nor is it easy to explain its occurrence in stative and imperative utterances.

The temporal-aspectual influence that the gerundial construction exerted on the progressive form in Early Modern English is more likely to be an innovation rather than a reinforcement of an already existing function. On the other hand, the ‘action in progress’ meaning of the gerundial construction has prevailed since Old English (Elsness 1994:8 and Nehls 1988:184), which is illustrated by the following example:

[18] ...3yrstandæ3 ic **was on huntun3e** ... (Elsness 1994:7)

According to Elsness the meaning of this construction was not very different from that of the modern (aspectual, KL) progressive, so that the above sentence translates as ...*yesterday I was hunting* Given the semantic stability of the gerundial construction from a diachronic point of view (Elsness 1994:7f), it should be reasonable to ascribe the origin of the modern aspectual meaning of the progressive to the influence of that construction. Therefore, the aspectual meaning, or the action-focussed facet of the progressive seems to be an **offshoot** of its stylistic root meaning, and not to be originally inherent in it.

2.4.2 The modal progressive

As was mentioned in the introduction to the present chapter, one of the terms currently used for the designation of the *be+ ing* form is the ‘subjective’ verb form (Wright 1994,1995; Rydén 1997; Smitterberg 2000). In section 2.2 the original Old English function of the progressive form was described in terms of ‘situationally distinctive’ (Crystal 2003:440) uses. It will also be recalled that in the same section the Old English version of the progressive form was described as having ‘the function of directing the reader’s or listener’s attention towards the content of the verbal element of the clause’, thus acting as a kind of speaker’s verbal facility or pragmatic device.

Somehow and at some point during the subsequent centuries, speakers’ focus of attention seems to have been shifted from the emphasized factual content expressed by the progressive verb phrase on to their own assessment or interpretation of it. This is what Wright (1994:467) refers to as part of ‘a gradual semantic-pragmatic process of subjectivisation’ of the verb phrase⁵ in Early Modern English. In her article *The mystery of the modal progressive* (1994), Wright examines this function of the construction as it is evidenced in Early Modern English intimate letters and above all in prose comedy from 1670 to 1710. In this connection, it should be pointed out that Wright very appropriately deposits a caveat as to the question of whether we are actually dealing ‘with a diachronic movement towards subjectivity’ (*pace* Traugott 1982 in Wright 1994). As is well known, and suggested in 2.4, the written mode hardly ever equals the real, oral language, and consequently it may well be that ‘this trend [ie the apparently increasing subjectivity, KL] merely manifests a growing tendency for writers to put into written form things that they have always and easily said’ (Wright 1994:467). So, the modal resources of the progressive seem to have been functionally compatible with the nature of the new literary genres emerging in Early Modern English (cf section 2.4).

The following examples illustrate occurrences of the modal progressive in Early Modern English, all of which have been taken from Wright (1994). From a semantic point of view, they convey a sense of the speaker’s own attitude to and interpretation of the experience depicted by the progressive, the effect being ‘to provide a verbal window on the soul’ of the speaker (Wright 1994:480).

[19] Daughter, daughter, don’t call names. You **are always abusing** my pleasures, which is what no mortal will bear. Trash, lumber, sad stuff, are the titles you give to my favourite amusements. (Wright 1994:471)

[20] Let me perish first, and from this hour avoid all sight and speech, and if I can, all thought of that pernicious Beauty. Ha! but what is my distraction doing? I **am wildly talking** to myself, and some ill chance might have directed malicious Ears this way. (Wright 1994:476)

[21] No, I'll give you your Revenge another time, when you are not so indifferent; you **are thinking** of something else now, and play too negligently. (Wright 1994:477)

[22] Sir James **is evyr choppyng** at me when my modyr is present, with syche wordys as he thynkys wrathe me. (Wright 1994:479)

[23] Thou **art alwayes figuring** diseases in me (Wright 1994:479)

According to Wright (1994:472), modal progressive forms in Early Modern English are typically realized by cognitive verbs, ie verbs of saying and thinking, frequently with the lexical support of adverbials. Moreover, they preferentially occur in the present tense in main clauses, combining with a 1st person subject. The above quoted sentences largely meet these criteria, all of which contribute to a modal interpretation of the progressive predicators, whose semantic content does ‘not describe an activity so much as comment upon it’, (Wright 1994:477). That being said, none of the above features are indispensable for a progressive verb phrase to emerge as modal. Following Wright, the importance of this matrix of features is weakening as the Early Modern English decades wear on (Wright 1994:472). Consequently, a modal interpretation of a progressive need not be defined in terms of verb type, ie cognitive or stative verbs which ‘normally resist collocation in the progressive’ (Ljung 1977 in Wright 1994:468). The modal use of the progressive is said to be ‘extremely common in Present-day English’, as in the well-known phrase *I'm not drinking, I'm driving*, (Wright, 1994:468f). Obviously, this utterance is not intended to be literally interpreted, but to be taken as an excuse for refusing alcoholic beverages. To be sure, the two activity verbs *drinking* and *driving* may suggest an aspectual reading out of context, but pragmatically considered, the phrase does not ‘serve a primarily aspectual function’ (Wright 1995:470), and should be decoded accordingly. In Rydén’s words, there are ‘no absolute boundaries between the two facets [ie of the progressive form, KL], since any realization of the progressive includes, in various amalgams, both “agency” and “attitude” ‘ (1997:421).

An attempt to illustrate the diachronic development of the progressive function and meaning is provided in figure 2.1. The illustration is based on a synthesis of the theories of Nehls (1988), Wright (1994) and Rydén (1997). The circle surrounding the year 1500 is meant to suggest that the progressive meaning most probably underwent a split roughly around this date, that the incipient changes took place in the years preceding 1500, and that the increasing subjectivisation of the verb phrase and the influence of the gerundial construction on the progressive were gathering momentum in the course of Early Modern English. The figure is not intended as an indicator of the increasing frequency but of the changing semantic and pragmatic nature of the construction.

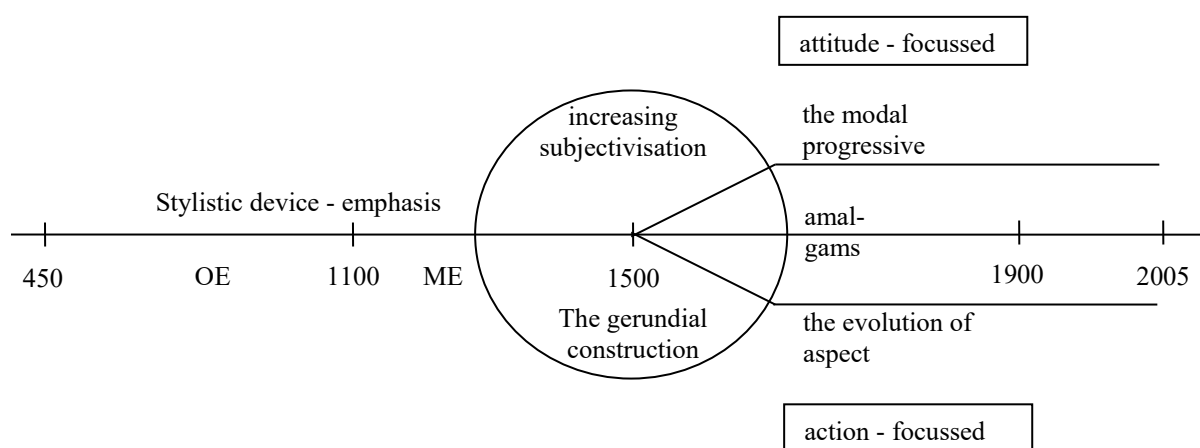


Figure 2.1 The diachronic development of the progressive function and meaning

2.4.3 *be going to*

In Elsness (1994:13) the use of *be going to* as a future-referring auxiliary displays a very marked increase during the second part of the 17th century. The *be going to* + infinitive construction was originally an expression in which *to go* was seen as a lexical verb of motion and the following infinitive as an adverbial of purpose. Thus, the following example from Shakespeare could be paraphrased *I am going in order to visit the prisoner*.

[24] I **am going to** visit the prisoner.
Fare you well. (Nehls 1988:182)

Traugott (1995:34ff) regards the transformation of the lexical *be going* + adverbial of purpose into a semi-auxiliary + infinitive as an example of ‘subjectification in grammaticalisation’⁶. In

addition to its anticipatory effect, ‘its association with intention and planned, likely eventhood suggests that it is also **modalized** [boldface mine, KL] even though it has no modal verb in its history’(Traugott 1995:35). It looks as if the ‘purposiveness’ implied by the original adverbial has been gradually assumed by the progressive verb phrase *be going to* in the course of history, leaving the infinitive phrase with its purely objective, propositional meaning. A conspicuously early instance (1482) of the construction encoded as a semi-auxiliary is provided below:

[25] Thys onhappy sowle ... **was goyng to** be brougte into helle for the synne and onleful lustys of her body. (Traugott 1994:34)

Not unexpectedly, this process of subjectification is running parallel with the development of the central modals and the progressive proper (Wright 1994:467 and Elsness 1994:18). The construction attains its formal status as an auxiliary towards the end of the 18th century.

2.4.4 Further extentions of the progressive paradigm

Complex progressive verb forms are beginning to appear in Early Modern English. They are perfect structures as illustrated in example [26], and combinations with modal auxiliaries exemplified in [27] and [28], all of which are quotations from Shakespeare.

[26] Friar not I; I **have been drinking** hard all night, ... (Nehls 1988:182)

[27] The door is open, sir; there lies your way; You **may be jogging** whiles your boots are green; (Nehls 1988:182)

[28] ... but you **must be tittle-tattling** before all our guests? (Nehls 1988:182)

Nehls (1988:182) notes that ‘Shakespeare’s use of the EF [expanded form, KL] is very flexible and appears very modern’. If Shakespeare is verifiably avant-garde in using complex progressive forms as compared to his contemporaries, could his idiolect be seen as a measure of the historical lag between the natural language and its average written manifestations of the day, (cf Wright 1994:467 and section 2.4.2 of the present thesis)? This issue will be further commented on in section 4.4.3.

Passive progressive structures were also developing during this period, two examples of which are given in [29] and [30], dating from ca 1600 and the end of the 18th century respectively.

[29] Also in what Coast or part of heauen, the Sunne, Moone, or any other starre **is** at any time **being mounted** aboute the Horizon, as whether it bee Southeast or Northeast, ... (Elsness 1994:15)

[30] Sir Guy Carlton **was** four hours **being examined**. (Nehls 1988:187)

In spite of the passive progressive occurring as early as the early 17th century in example [29], it was not regularized until the end of the 18th century. Prior to this date, active structures with passive meaning had been used for centuries. According to Nehls (1988:186), the possibility of expressing the passive of action, such as in *the King was being dressed*, was lost in English in the 12th century when the Old English auxiliary *weorþan* fell into disuse. The semantic vacuum thus created was subsequently filled by dint of active sentences, as in [31] and [32]:

[31] ...great preparations **are making** to send forces to Guernsey and Jersey,... (Nehls 1988:187)

[32] Yesterday, when the King **was dressing**, he was seized with a convulsion fit ... (Nehls 1988:187)

In [31], the reader's logical inference is enough to ensure a passive interpretation, but if the subject was animate, as in [32], problems of ambiguity would inevitably arise. The problem was eventually solved, thanks to the introduction of the passive progressive. Nevertheless, its use was demoted by the stigmatisation of prescriptive linguists until the middle of the 19th century.

The progressive form of *to be* as a copular was late to develop. The first instance known to have appeared in literature was penned by Keats in 1820, and is rendered in [33]. As is pointed out by Nehls (1988:188), this usage developed on structural analogy with the passive progressive paradigm, as 'the past participle can often be employed as an adjective'. Originally employed for the predication of personal properties (see also example [34] from

1871), the progressive of copular *to be* was probably used for the expression of epistemic or tentative modality, ie the speaker's subjective assessment of their own or other people's personal features. In Present-day English these structures are normally interpreted as expressing an attitude of 'pretence' in the subject (Quirk 1985:202).

[33] You will be glad to hear ... how diligent I have been, and **am being**. (Nehls 1988:188)

[34] One who studies **is not being** a fool. (Nehls 1988:188)

3 MATERIAL AND FILEMAKING

As the present study is intended to investigate aspects of the increasing occurrence of the progressive verbal form during Early and Late Modern English, two separate periods of time have been selected for this purpose. The Early Modern English texts date from the second half of the 17th century, which is well into the era reckoned to be crucial to the rise of the progressive (Elsness 1994:9), whereas the Late Modern English texts belong to the first two decades of the Victorian period, ie the early/mid 19th century, when, according to Nehls (1988:188) 'the EF [=expanded form: KL] became obligatory for the expression of the "Actual Present" and the "Scheme of Incidence".' The said periods will henceforth be termed period I and period II respectively.

3.1 A gender-specific corpus

In addition to one collection of letters from each of the two periods in question, my corpus comprises two novels from the 17th century and approximately 210 pages of a novel from the 19th century. In order to avoid too many variables in a diachronic study of comparatively limited scope and volume, works by female writers exclusively will be analysed. In this gender-specific option sociolinguistic considerations have also been taken into account, which will be further elaborated on in the following sections.

3.1.1 The letters

As is well known, the 17th century was a period of increasing literacy, not least among people of the aristocracy. Many gentlewomen would have the opportunity and leisure to practise extensive correspondence through letter-writing, obviously their only means of communication beyond face-to-face encounters. Dorothy Osborne (1627 – 1695), the author of the letters selected for period I of my corpus, was one of them. Resident in Chicksands Priory, Bedfordshire, she addressed more than 70 letters to her future husband during their courtship from 1652 to 1654. Entitled *The letters of Dorothy Osborne to William Temple*, her collection has been published by several editors through the years, among them the present version by G.C. Smith in 1928. Dorothy Osborne proves to be an acute observer of human relations, direct and outspoken in her expression.

Frankness is a label no less befitting the famous author of the letters from period II, Charlotte Brontë (1816 – 1855). A unique author of novels, she was also a brilliant and prolific writer of letters, several of which are included in Juliet Barker's epistolary anthology

The Brontës: A Life in Letters; they actually constitute half the book. Unlike Dorothy Osborne's letters they are directed to various addressees ranging from intimate friends to celebrities like William M. Thackeray. Moreover, they cover a considerably longer timespan; indeed, the first letter reproduced was written when Charlotte was a 13-year-old girl, whereas the last one virtually stems from her deathbed. During her entire life she was resident in the small hamlet of Haworth situated on the Yorkshire moors, where the bulk of her correspondence is dated.

In spite of the diverging circumstances surrounding the production of the two letter collections, there are certain characteristics pertaining to letters as such, which render this genre suitable for a synchronic and diachronic study of the progressive. Being primarily a feature of conversational and colloquial language (Arnaud 1998:128), the progressive is likely to be relatively frequent in informal letters, particularly when addressed to people with whom the author has an intimate relationship. Dorothy Osborne's fiancé is certainly representative in this respect; owing to the diversity of Charlotte Brontë's addressees and the timespan of her production, the relative frequency of the progressive in her writings may swing accordingly. Distant relationships and formality of style are said to demote the use of the progressive, which is attested by Table 3 in Arnaud (1998:141), revealing markedly decreasing densities of the progressive with decreasing degrees of intimacy. The frequency in the Brontë collection is likely to reflect this assumption.

Be that as it may, letters are more often than not close to the spoken mode, I daresay even as close to modern surreptitious⁷ tape recordings by sociolinguists as may have been possible in the days of Dorothy Osborne and Charlotte Brontë, ie they may be reckoned as a veritable primary source. Of course, at the time when they were written, these letters were never intended for strangers to read, let alone for publishing. Nevertheless, they were 'considered so important that they were carefully, and sometimes abusively, preserved by addressees, particularly when the senders were people of some significance' (Arnaud 1998:125). This is precisely what happened to the letters of Charlotte Brontë to her much admired and beloved professor Constantin Héger in Brussels. Torn to pieces and thrown in the waste paper basket by the teacher, who did not reciprocate his former pupil's infatuation, they were carefully picked up and mended by his *Madame* as potential future evidence of a relationship between the two. This habit of preserving letters seems to have been well known to Charlotte's later husband Arthur B. Nicholls, who branded his wife's letters 'dangerous as lucifer matches' (LLCB, 394), demanding her friend Ellen Nussey to destroy all she wrote to

her. His misgivings concerning the whereabouts of her letters have certainly been justified, considering the large number of letters preserved after his wife.

In his giant variationist study of the progressive in the private letters of 22 literary personalities of the 19th century, Arnaud finds his female writers' use of the form almost consistently to exceed that of their male counterparts. His huge corpus of 10 million words and 22 000 coded occurrences should allow for generalizations respecting women being avant-garde in using this 'warmer existential form'(Arnaud 1998:123) . Not only is it a characteristic of the spoken language, but also an expression of spontaneity and enthusiasm, and notable for its subjective force. According to Storms (1964) in Scheffer (1975:31) the progressive form 'imparts a subjective element to the speaker's statement; it is expressive of man's emotional side, of one's personal involvement, it is affective, warm and human' (Arnaud 1998:146, note 18). A testimony of Charlotte Brontë's adherence to such communicative principles is strikingly salient in the following complaint addressed to her bosom friend E. Nussey: 'Men don't seem to understand making letters a vehicle of communication – they always seem to think us uncautious'(LLCB 394), and on a later occasion: 'He [her husband, KL] says women are most rash in letter-writing – they think only of the trustworthiness of their immediate friend' (LLCB 394).

Back in the 17th century Dorothy Osborne's opinions on the accomplishment of letter-writing seem to have been on a par with those of Charlotte Brontë. In 1653 she wrote to her sweetheart: 'all Letters mee thinks should bee free and Easy **as ones discourse** [boldface mine, KL] , not studded, as an Oration, nor made up of hard words like a Charme'(LDO 90) . So, if we are to take her word for it, Dorothy Osborne's epistles faithfully reflect her daily colloquial usage, which, as it were, is manifest in the idiosyncratic style of her long, pensive tirades and her rather capricious orthography. Moreover, she seems to have frequently conversed with people from lower social classes, probably receiving linguistic impulses for adoption into her own usage. Thus, Arnaud's claim that the increase of the progressive was a change from below (Arnaud 1998:141) should be an important incentive for choosing women's writing as a corpus for this gender-specific study. Scholars seem to agree that women are more open to linguistic novelties than are men, because their social networks tend to comprise more heterogeneous groups of people (Arnaud 1998:142f).

3.1.2 The novels

Far away from Dorothy Osborne's domestic circle of relatives and friends in Chicksands Priory lies the South American state of Surinam, a major scene in one of the two 17th century

novels of my corpus. In this country, a Lord Willoughby established a colony built up by the labour of slaves brutally uprooted and imported from Africa.

During the 1660s the brave⁸ Aphra Johnson (1640 – 1689), better known as Aphra Behn, visited this colony, where she according to her own claim met and befriended the African Prince Oroonoko, who had been lured into slavery by an English slave trader. He is supposed to have told her the story of his relationship in Africa with an exceptionally graceful young girl, Imoinda, whom he, as if by providence, met again and married in Surinam. This is the background for the novel *Oroonoko*, which is reported to be a true story. It was issued in 1688, only a year prior to the death of the author.

Born in Canterbury, Kent, Aphra Behn was primarily a writer of Restoration comedies. However, according to the literary historian Barnard, posterity has primarily focussed attention on her 'prose narratives which are clearly stepping stones from the Elizabethan short tale to the novel as we know it today. The best remembered of these is *Oroonoko*' (Barnard 1995:63). This exotic tale, in which Behn to a certain extent plays the part of an onlooker, seems to be faithfully communicated to its readers by dint of episodes witnessed by the author herself, complemented by the hero's own account, imparted to her during her stay in Surinam. On these grounds, a number of pragmatic devices are likely to be found in the story, an assumption which was decisive in selecting this novel for the present study. The progressive, and particularly when modally encoded, is in Wright's wording 'used to focus on an experience from the point of view of the subject (or narrator)' (Wright 1994:468). Moreover, the naissant novel as such should be an appropriate genre for the investigation of this speaker-based (Wright 1994:470) form, since, again according to Barnard (1995:74), '[a]t some point "I will tell you a story" became "I will tell you a story about certain characters living in a certain society".' Finally, to complement the linguistic support for this view, attention is drawn to Rydén's claim that the progressive 'implies situational/attitudinal immediacy and awareness' (Rydén 1997:421).

Owing to the modest length of the novels of the day, another 17th century author, Mary Pix (1666 - 1709), was chosen to complete the period I part of the corpus. Born in Nettlebed, Oxfordshire, Pix sustained herself as a poet, a playwright and a novelist almost until her death. Unlike her predecessor Aphra Behn, she debuted with a 'Novel, Written by a Gentlewoman, for the Entertainment of the Sex', a dedication conspicuously located on the title-page of the book, most probably a genuine one, originating from the author herself.⁹ Entitled *The Inhumane Cardinal, or Innocence Betrayed*, the novel deals with the seduction of a young girl by a substantially older man through the arrangements of an influential woman

offering the girl a deceptive friendship and subsequently coaxing her victim into sheer disaster for the benefit of her own influence. In addition to the objective of relating a story to a specifically defined audience, Pix obviously also sees herself fit for the role of an overt moralizer. Having duly depicted the deplorable plight of her heroine in the conclusion of the novel, she goes on to address a solemn warning to her readers: 'her [ie Melora, the heroine's, KL] hard Fate may fright all from Entertaining Motions of a Marriage, how specious soever they appear; till they have taken the Advice and Consent of those whom God and Nature have appointed their Governors and Directors' (ICMP 237). However doubtful the feminist value of the above quoted opinion, it evidently reflects a communicative incentive of the author, which is probably applicable to the novel as a whole. This presumption is supported by Constance Clark, the author of the introduction to the present 1984 facsimile issue. She writes: '*The Inhumane Cardinal*... claims to be historical. It was a popular device of the fiction of the time to **enhance reader interest** [boldface mine, KL] in a story by placing it in a factual context' (Introduction p. x). Thus, Pix assumes the position of a reliable historian as well as that of an entertaining relator of moral core truths.

It should be emphasized that the frequency of the progressive as evidenced in the written language of the 17th century remains sparse in spite of its relative increase. This fact merely renders a critical evaluation of available material all the more necessary, however.

The novel employed for the representation of period II, Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre*, does not purport to be a true story. However, it explicitly bears the mark of an autobiography, and apart from the interspersed of a few philosophical and pondering digressions, it is composed in an uninhibited, narrative style throughout. This kind of style is repeatedly made manifest each time Brontë exits from the storyline, nudging her audience directly through declarations like the famous quote: 'Reader, I married him.' (JECB 498). From the very beginning, describing the underprivileged orphan Jane's plight in a manor household, the author seeks her readers' understanding and sympathy for her heroine. One means of attaining this end is the way in which the author focusses on the mental and emotional experience of the protagonist. According to *The Routledge history of literature in English: Britain and Ireland*, 'they [the Brontë sisters, KL] provided a basis for which psychological exploration became a key component in the development of the genre of the novel'. In this respect, the experiential progressive has proven to constitute a suitable pragmatic tool, providing, as it were, 'a verbal window on the soul of the speaker', (Wright 1994:480), who in this case is identical with the protagonist.

Jane Eyre grows in confidence, serenity and intellectual and social skills through her years at Lowood boarding-school, and eventually in the position of a governess and teacher, until her marriage to her master. Again, from a pragmatic point of view, the frequent use of a subjective, situation-oriented device such as the progressive seems quite likely. Furthermore, the author's ethnical background may have contributed to the formation of her linguistic patterns. Charlotte Brontë was the daughter of an Irish clergyman, undoubtedly her most influential model both linguistically and otherwise, as she lost her mother as a toddler. The nature of the Celtic influence on Northern English dialects is described by Arnaud as being 'often due to expressions copied from Irish or Gaelic and perceived as shibboleths'(Arnaud 1998:128). This influence on her language may have been reinforced by the geographical fact that she was herself a Northerner, cf section 3.1.1.

Notable is also the biographical feature that the young Charlotte did not receive any formal education until the age of 15, when she attended Roe Head School for a few months. In a letter-like piece of writing named *The history of the Year* (LLCB11), the 13-year-old Charlotte offers the following situation report:

the Book is an hundred and twenty years old it **is** at this moment **lying** Before me while I write this I am in the kitchen of the parsonage house Hawarth Taby the servent **is washing** up after Breakfast and Anne my youngest Sister (Maria was my eldest) **is kneeling** on a chair looking at some cakes whiche Tabby **has been Baking** for us. Emily is in the parlour brushing it papa and Branwell are gone to Keighly Aunt is up stairs in her Room and **I am siting** by the table **writing** this in the kitchen. [boldface mine, KL]

Abounding in progressives, including even a double one in the last sentence, this passage equals a sample of verbatim recording of the girl's own speech as it must have sounded at this stage of her development. Of course, it is difficult to ascertain its representativeness, nevertheless, the passage may act as a genuine example of her usage prior to the intrusion on her style by influential educated people of the kind that made Arnaud conclude that 'it was not the use of the progressive that was considered vulgar, but using too many of them'(1998:128). Thus, any comparatively low frequencies in her novels may be partly explained by this sociolinguistic factor, and not only as a result of a change in the relative proportions of dialogue and narrative passages in fiction, as is suggested by Smitterberg in his study of 19th century genre variation (Smitterberg 2000:287). The point is that his results reveal a substantial drop in the use of the progressive in late 19th century novels.

3.2 Advantages and limitations of the corpus

Based on criteria pertaining to gender and communicative ambitions of their authors, the works of this corpus were principally collected in accordance with personal taste, which simply makes the material more interesting to work with. An attractive corpus may also provide the student with some of the stamina it takes to accomplish a long-term task. For this particular thesis, where the analysis of the diverse functions of the progressive is a major issue, evaluating examples in a wider context is essential to the understanding of the semantics of the form. This is particularly important in dealing with the phenomenon of the modal progressive.

On the other hand, there is the obvious drawback of the modest corpus volume. Since this fact makes generalizations somewhat difficult, a comparison with previous and more comprehensive studies on similar topics may be made if considered necessary, prior to drawing any conclusions.

Finally, during the perusal of fascinating texts in search of grammatical phenomena, tokens may sometimes be overlooked. However, a certain amount of practice and routine proved to enhance alertness towards the specific forms in focus.

3.3 The file

All examples identified were recorded in a Filemaker Pro database and analysed with a view to characteristics estimated relevant to the implementation of the present thesis. Central to this analysis is a description of the verb: present or past tense, future forms including *be going to* and progressives combining with modals. A distinction has been made between verb types such as verbs of action, motion, communication, private verbs and verbs denoting transition. Properties related to the distinction between the aspectual and modal use of the progressive are stated according to their respective mental spaces, cf section 4.1.1. Qualifiers of the progressive such as adjuncts and subclauses are described where appropriate. Moreover, a specification on the status of the subject is provided for each token, ie data pertaining to person, number, kind of identity (human, animal, concrete or abstract non-animate). In the thesis, the progressive forms contained in the examples used have been highlighted in boldface.

3.4 Sampling: defining progressive predicators and excluding categories.

As previously indicated, in this thesis it is the **use** to which the progressive is put during the Early and Late Modern English periods that defines and delimits the objectives of the

investigation. Focus will be on the quantitative and qualitative development of its rise during a period of ca 200 years. More precisely, the action-focussed as well as the attitude-focussed application of this dynamic form (Rydén 1997:420f) will be measured and described both synchronically and diachronically. Concerning the method and definitions pertaining to this analysis reference is made to section 4.1 and its subsections. Under scrutiny in the present section are the criteria used for the formal identification of the progressive forms included in the corpus. As a corollary, a survey of some excluded categories, such as possible misinterpretations or borderline cases, will also be furnished.

In the search for the progressive, a wide, not too formalistic definition was applied. An absolute requirement, however, was for the progressive verb phrase to contain a finite form, or to emerge as an elliptical version of the progressive. Thus, from a syntactic point of view, the verb phrase invariably functions as a predicator. In the majority of the examples a finite form of the auxiliary *to be* + the present participle of a lexical verb realize the progressive verb phrase. This is illustrated in [1] and [2].

[1] my Br. and Mr.Gibson **were talking** by the fyre, and I satt by, but as noe part of the company.(LDO 108,14)

[2] My doctor called the next day; he said the headache from which I **was suffering** arose from inertness in the liver - (LLCB 341,5)

Another variety of the examples included consists of a central modal auxiliary + a nonfinite progressive form, two of which are rendered below. In example [3] *shall* expresses future time, in [4] *must* expresses modal necessity.

[3] I **shall be sending** you all I heare (LDO 154,5)

[4] ‘It is hardly likely master would laugh, I should think, Miss, when he was in such danger: you **must have been dreaming**.’ (JECB 177,4)

Central modals are pure auxiliaries, acting in the above instances as premodifiers of an infinitive progressive in [3] and a perfect progressive in [4]. Other modals in the corpus premodifying progressive forms are ‘marginal’, such as *dare*, *need*, *ought to* and *used to*, and ‘modal idioms’ such as *had better* and *would rather* are also included (Quirk 1985:137). The

latter two types of modals are 'weaker' in modal force than the former, exhibiting certain main verb features. Nevertheless, they are immediate premodifiers of non-finite progressive verb phrases, thus they constitute finite progressive forms together with the said non-finite progressive verb phrases. The marginal modals and the modal idioms are therefore included in the present corpus; one marginal modal being provided in [5] and a modal idiom in [6].

[5] and it seems as if I **ought to be working** and **braving** the rough realities of the world as other people do - (LLCB 120,10)

[6] sometimes when I am teaching, and sewing I'd far **rather be reading** or **writing** - (LLCB 49,30)

Due to their particular modal value, these examples should be useful to the discussion of the modal progressive. The same probably also applies to the following catenative construction:

[7] She **appeared to be cross-questioning** me; attempting to draw from me information unawares:(JECB 177,13)

Notwithstanding its indisputable lexical properties, the finite catenative verb *appeared* in example [7] is used to premodify the progressive infinitive phrase *to be cross-questioning*, and is therefore to be classified as a progressive form.

On semantic analogy with catenative constructions, the 'passive only' construction *to be said to be* + *-ing* is interpreted as a progressive predicator in this corpus, provided, of course, that the passive premodifier of the verb phrase contains a finite auxiliary. One example is provided in [8].

[8] Mr T[aylor] **is said to be getting on** well in India - (LLCB 360,13)

Another category of progressive predicator diverging from the standard pattern of a finite form of *to be* + present participle is elliptical structures, ie an elliptical progressive predicator realized by the present participle alone. According to Crystal (1996:190f), '[i]t is part of the definition of ellipsis that it should be absolutely obvious what the omitted words are'. He states that '[t]he principle of being able to work out exactly what the omitted words are, by

looking at the context, is called the principle of **recoverability**'. The first kind of recoverability mentioned by Crystal is 'textual recoverability', two examples of which are provided below.

[9] 'tis the infusion of steell, and makes mee soe horridly sick that every day at ten a clock
I **am makeing** my will, and **takeing** leave of all my freind's, (LDO 23,27-28)

[10] my natural tendency in moments of this sort is to get through the struggle alone - to
think that one **is burdening** and **racking** others - makes all worse. (LLCB 315,19)

These are both obvious instances of the coordination of an elliptical verb phrase with a preceding full verb phrase, so that the latter 'shares' its finite verb with the former. In the next example the omitted auxiliary seems to be recoverable from the situation ('situational recoverability'), in which the speaker has just been asked the question 'What have you been doing during my absence?'

[11] 'Nothing particular; **teaching** Adèle as usual.'(JECB 204,26)

In order to recover the omitted auxiliary in the next example, speaker and addressee must use their knowledge of grammar:

[12] We are all separated now, and **winning** our bread amongst strangers as we can -
(LLCB 92,21)

The auxiliary of the elliptical predicator *winning* cannot be directly recovered in this sentence. Unlike the elliptical form *racking* in example [10], this predicator has no preceding verb to 'share' auxiliary with; the verb form *are* in the clause *we are all separated* obviously functions as a copular. Thus, the interlocutors are presumed to know that the missing word is the auxiliary *are*, which is an instance of a phenomenon that Crystal refers to as 'structural recoverability' (Crystal 1996:191). To the extent that the words omitted from an elliptical clause are recoverable, the propositional meaning of such clauses will always be intact. For this reason they have been included in this file. Coordinated elliptical forms have not been counted as separate instances of progressives, however.

To conclude the survey of categories recorded, mention must be made of two special verbs, *to ail* and *to want*. The progressive variety of the former is not always easily distinguishable from *is* + present participle used adjectivally, ie as a subject predicative. In example [13] the sequence *were ailing* has been identified as a past progressive.

[13] it was Mr Lloyd, an apothecary, sometimes called in by Mrs Reed when the servants **were ailing**: (JECB 26,21)

The difference between its progressive and predicative use is probably best explained in terms of paraphrases. The progressive interpretation of the predicator in [13] is that the servants were *suffering from some illness*, whereas a predicative (adjectival) paraphrase might have motivated the substitution of *poorly* for *ailing*. This adjectival paraphrase may surely fit [13], but as a progressive interpretation seems just as reasonable, it is included in the corpus.

With respect to the latter verb, *to want*, it is the nature of the subject that determines which interpretation is to be applied. Thus, a present participle of this verb used together with a finite auxiliary and acting as predicator of an animate subject, will be interpreted as a progressive form:

[14] for my own part I **am** as yet '**wanting** a situation - like a housemaid out of place'
(LLCB 64,5)

Semantically, this predicator will then be interpreted as meaning *need, lack*. Together with inanimate subjects, however, the participle is used adjectivally, functioning as a subject predicative. One example is provided in [15].

[15] Yet still either a favourable opportunity **was wanting**, or his fears how Louvisa might receive a Declaration of Love prevented him; (ICMP 134,8)

The subject predicative **wanting** bears the meaning of being *non-existent*, and is consequently not to be classified as the main verb of a progressive verb phrase.

Many of the other participles turned out to be elements of non-finite adverbial subclauses. One example:

[16] 'It gets late,' said Mrs Fairfax, **entering** in rustling state. (JECB 189,9)

Whereas the above example clearly contains a present participle functioning as the verb of a non-finite adverbial clause, the syntactic function of other present participles seems less clear:

[17] - but while Matha was ill she **was** to her, more than a Mother – more than a Sister **watching – nursing – cherishing** her – so tenderly, so unweariedly – (LLCB 109,23)

Here the excessively oral style, abounding in dashes, may mask an underlying progressive structure. Given the fact that the participles are postmodified by two adjuncts, such a classification might be possible. On the other hand, the verbal form *was* seems to function as a copular verb complemented by the subject predicative *more than a Mother – more than a Sister*, so the above utterance is most probably an example of a structural confusion, and has to be disqualified from the file – due to lack of interpretability.

As mentioned earlier in this section, all examples to be recorded were to contain a finite progressive verb phrase, or to be an ellipsis of one. In consequence, non-finite exclamatory sentences containing infinitive progressives as in [18] were excluded:

[18] ‘How sad **to be lying** now on a sickbed and to be in danger of dying! ...’ (JECB 92,12)

3.5 *be going to*

In spite of its function as a semi-auxiliary formally established at the end of the 18th century for the expression of (near) intentional/anticipatory future meaning, *be going to* is included in the corpus for the following reason.

Some examples from the 17th century may still be ambiguous between the semi-auxiliary + infinitive and a progressive verb phrase containing *to go* functioning as a verb of motion followed by an adverbial of purpose. A potentially ambiguous instance is rendered below:

[19] Your fellow servant upon the news you sent her **is going to Looke out** her Captain. (LDO 28,4)

Near future and future in the past may also be expressed by the present and past progressive respectively. In this investigation, the relative rates of the latter expressions may be compared to that of the semi-auxiliary, both synchronically and diachronically. In this context, a central issue could be to which extent *be going to* as a marker of future temporality may have

increased in frequency at the expense of the present and past progressive forms used with future reference.

Instances using the gerundial construction are included, the reason for which may be inferred from the treatment of this form in section 2.4.1.

4 RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The following sections will take a closer look at the progressive verb phrases in the sentences recorded from the corpus and presented in chapter 3. The analysis of the material is intended to be a diachronic study throughout, paying special attention to the evolution of the semantic and pragmatic functions of the progressive construction during the centuries of Early and Late Modern English and to the related increasing frequency of the construction. In terms of numbers, the latter feature will be illustrated by comparing results from each of the two periods and genres involved in the investigation, cf section 3.1. In the following tables, the two novels from period I will be treated as one single entity, unless otherwise stated.

4.1 General results and classification

In sum, the corpus yielded 518 tokens of the progressive, including the semi-auxiliary *be going to* and a few other varieties of the construction as defined in section 3.4. The distribution of crude numbers according to periods and across the two genres is illustrated in table 4.1.

Table 4.1: General distribution of progressive verb phrases in period I and period II, subdivided by genres

Genre	Period I	Period II	Total
Letters	60	193	253
Novels	52	213	265
Total	112	406	518

The table shows that the total number of progressives in the letters approximates the corresponding number in the novels. Moreover, for each period considered separately, the number of progressives is fairly equally distributed in each of the genres. These proportions should offer a well-balanced range of examples for the illustration of the diachronic and genre-related phenomena to be described.

For the sake of a more accurate comparison, the crude numbers were converted into frequency rates per 1,000 words. The total approximate number of words for each work was calculated on the basis of a word count of about eight pages, randomly selected from the beginning, the middle and the end of each work, multiplying the average number of words of these pages by the total number of pages in the work. The results, which are displayed in table 4.2, include frequency rates per 1,000 words calculated on the basis of the said numbers, plus general frequency rates for the two genres together in each of the two periods.

Table 4.2: Frequency of progressives per 1,000 words for letters and novels in period I and period II

	Period I		Period II	
	Tokens/words	Frequency	Tokens/words	Frequency
Letters	60/73,260	0.82	193/91,260	2.11
Novels	52/65,767	0.79	213/91,104	2.34
Average		0.81		2.23

Strikingly, in both periods there is only a marginal difference in the frequency of progressives between the two genres. Moreover, the total occurrence of progressive forms as evidenced in the present corpus has very nearly tripled from period I to period II, ie over a timespan of 150 – 200 years. This result is hardly surprising, although perhaps slightly below expectation compared to the estimates of Dennis (1940) and Elsness (1994) referred to in section 2.4, which display a comparatively higher rise in the frequency of the construction. However, a general increase from 0.81 to 2.23 progressives per 1,000 words during the said timespan should be significant enough for the corpus to constitute a substantial point of departure for an approach to the **reasons** behind the progress of the progressive in Early and Late Modern English.

As was stated in section 1.2, my hypothesis is that the reasons for the rising frequency of the progressive in Early and Late Modern English are closely related to the development of its pragmatic, semantic and syntactic properties during the said period. Central to a description of this development is what happened to the construction during and after the differentiation process of the stylistically motivated progressive of Old and Middle English into one modal, or attitude-focussed and one action-focussed facet in Early Modern English (Wright 1994, 1995; Rydén 1997:420). In this connection, prior to the discussion of the actual findings, it seems necessary to define and delimit the parameters of ‘action in progress’ and ‘attitude’, and their relevance for the construal of the functions of the progressive. These definitions will be furnished in section 4.1.1, followed by a brief section on the non-use of the designation of ‘aspect’ in the treatment of the period I action-focussed progressives. The action-focussed progressive will be treated in sections 4.2. – 4.2.7, with a conclusion in 4.2.8, whereas the modal or attitude-focussed progressive is the theme of sections 4.3 – 4.3.10. Progressive forms with future time reference will be the subject of sections 4.4. – 4.4.6, and finally a summary of the attitude-focussed progressive is provided in 4.5.

4.1.1 Action and attitude subclassified: a matter of base and space

During the process of sorting the progressive verb phrases according to their properties in terms of action-focussed versus attitude-focussed situation types, many of the examples turned out to cause problems of classification. The most tricky issue was how to arrive at an accurate definition of an action-focussed progressive. Several of the examples appeared to contain predicators denoting an action in progress, and yet, a closer examination did not bring out any genuine action-focussed meaning after all. The following set of utterances is provided to illustrate this. Example [1] was easy to classify, whereas [2]–[3] turned out to be more of a challenge.

[1] Mary **is playing** on the piano. (LLCB 57,1)

[2] If I can but feel that I'm **giving** satisfaction, and if at the same time I can keep my health, I shall, I hope, be moderately happy. (LLCB 89,11)

[3] 'Never mind it, at present: I **shall be coming** down before tea-time: I'll make it myself.'
(JECB 178,13)

The progressive verb phrase *is playing* in example [1] is a straightforward expression of an action in progress with an implicit concrete time reference (eg *now, at present*). In [2], however, the verb phrase '*m giving*' forms part of a hypothetical statement offering a special perspective on a situation of an atemporal nature. So in spite of the fact that the main verb *to give* is normally classified as dynamic, it obviously cannot be interpreted as expressing a concrete action in progress, given the hypothetical context. The progressive verb phrase in [3] has future time reference, which, from a logical point of view, is connected with uncertainty as to its fulfilment in terms of an action in progress. The latter two examples therefore appeared to call for definitions beyond the description of an action in progress, and since this also applied to several other tokens, the need for a superordinate taxonomy soon became obvious. Subsequent to a scrutiny of the examples causing classification problems, the solution presented itself in the form of the theory of 'mental spaces', defined by Taylor (2002:590) in the following manner:

Mental spaces. A conceived situation, populated with elements and relations between them. A mental space may be assumed to be **veridical** [boldface

mine, KL], that is, it is taken to be an accurate model of (some fragment of) reality. Mental spaces can also be hypothetical, fictional, or counterfactual, or may represent the desires or hopes of a speaker. A *would-be actor* is an actor only in the mental space of the person's conception of themselves.

Since the action-focussed progressive basically describes a 'happening IN PROGRESS at a given time' (Quirk et al. 1985:197), this facet was assigned to the kind of mental space designated as 'veridical' in the above definition. Taylor (2002:74) also refers to a veridical space as a 'base space'. Consequently, example [1] above belongs to a 'veridical base space' in this taxonomy. As a corollary, the modal or attitude-focussed progressives, including examples such as [2] and [3], will necessarily have to be classified as 'non-veridical'. These tokens were assigned to miscellaneous 'off-base' mental spaces, more or less 'elevated' above the veridical temporal axis constituting the base space, which is, as previously stated, the locus of the action-focussed progressives. As a logical implication of this theory, one may say that the semantic content of the progressives belonging to the veridical base space is inherently objective, as compared to the meaning of the progressives located in the non-veridical mental spaces, whose content is more or less subjectively coloured. An attempt to illustrate the mental spaces of the progressive resulted in figure 4.1 below, where the veridical action-focussed progressives belong on the solid horizontal line, and the various types of attitude-focussed progressives are listed upwards by decreasing degree of veridicality. Progressives with future time reference belong on, and perhaps sometimes above the dotted line.

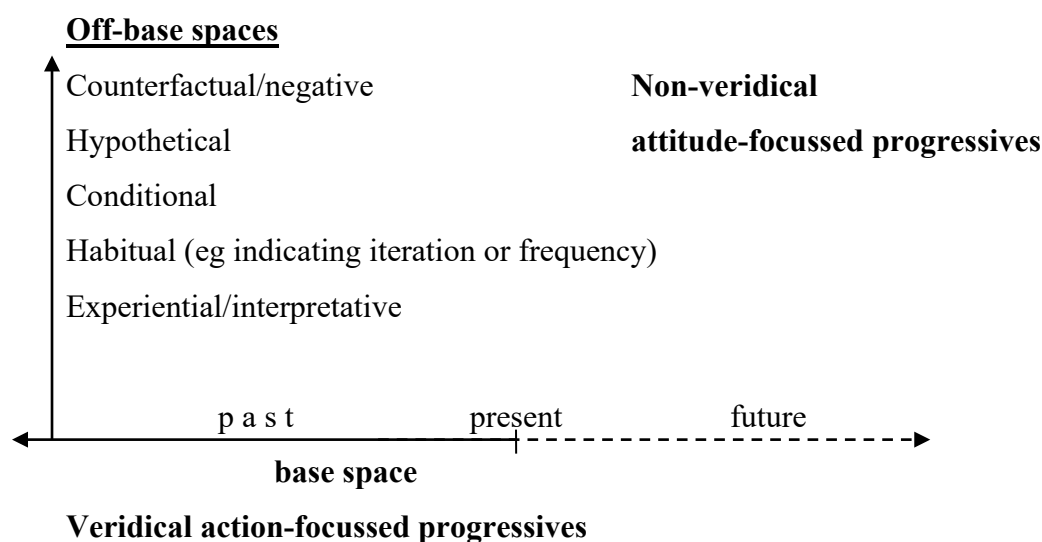


Figure 4.1: The mental spaces of the progressive

The list of non-veridical mental spaces is based on results from the analysis of the present corpus, and does not purport to be exhaustive in general terms. It may be inferred from figure 4.1 that the experiential and interpretative progressive utterances come closest to the action-focussed facet of the progressive meaning, constituting a kind of intermediate type between the veridical and non-veridical progressives. In a number of recent studies the notions of experiential and interpretative progressives seem to be employed interchangeably, cf Wright (1994:471, 475f), Wright (1995:156), Smitterberg (2000:110). However, Wright (1995:159) herself contends that ‘[f]irst-hand experience can be expressed by a first-person subject, whereas, if predicated of second or third person, experience can only be offered by a speaker as inferred, interpreted, or evaluated’. Following this argumentation, in the present thesis only clauses with 1st person subjects are classified as experiential, leaving the designation of interpretative for the rest of the progressives belonging to this mental space. Moreover, the various non-veridical spaces may combine to characterize one single progressive verb phrase, on a par with the ‘various amalgams’ of agency and attitude described by Rydén (1997:421), cf also Wright (1995:165).

Some instances of the above-mentioned types of attitude-focussed progressives are provided below. Examples [4] and [5] are instances of the experiential and interpretative progressives respectively, [6] combines the habitual with the counterfactual mental space, whereas [7] is at the same time hypothetical, counterfactual and experiential.

- [4] I **have been reckoning** up how many faults you lay to my charge in your last letter, and I finde I am severe, unjust, unmercifull and unkinde; (LDO 50,31)
- [5] At one moment she affected to inquire after her old school-acquaintance the next she **was detailing** anecdotes of High Life. (LLCB 38,19)
- [6] ‘...Now, mine continually rove away: when I **should be listening** to Miss Scatcherd, and **collecting** all she says with assiduity, often I lose the very sound of her voice; I fall into a sort of dream. ...’ (JECB 67,27-28)
- [7] One would think it were I that had heard the three Sermons, and **were tryeing** to make a fourth (LDO 46,4)

It may look as if the experiential and the interpretative progressives belong to the domain of action rather than that of attitude, only with a kind of modal gloss on them. However, their attitudinal properties are strongly emphasized by Wright (1995:156) in the following characterization:

[T]he experiential meaning of the progressive is arguably non-aspectual; it is not always or directly apprehendable in truth-conditional terms, and is not even temporally salient. It focusses not on an event in time, but on the (speaking) subject's consciousness of being inside an event, state, activity, looking out.

To this could be added, at least as far as the present corpus is concerned, that modal or non-veridical progressives occasionally collocate with modals, the subjunctive mood and figures of speech such as simile¹⁰, hyperbole (deliberate exaggeration), irony, personification and indeed, with metaphor, the latter feature being particularly salient in the period II subset of the corpus. Taking metaphor into account in the assessment of the attitude-focussed progressives is relevant as many of these forms completely or partially derive their modal force or interpretational nature from their collocation with a metaphor. Traditionally, the idea of metaphor is primarily associated with and restricted to of its function as a literary device. This thesis, however, follows Taylor's (2002:11) wider definition, stating that '[m]etaphor reflects our ability to think of (or "construe") one thing in terms of something else'. This mental process involves, according to Lakov (in Taylor 2002:488) 'a mapping relation between two domains' called the 'source domain' and the 'target domain'. For instance, in example [135] of the present chapter the source domain of the predication *is burning with eagerness* is 'physical process' (in this case the process of combustion), which is mapped on to the domain of 'emotions', which is the target domain. This example, as well as several of the other occurrences of progressives in the corpus collocating with metaphor are strikingly compatible with the theory of Taylor (2002:491) who observes that '[o]verwhelmingly, the source domain is concrete, and can be experienced or perceived "directly", while the target domain is more abstract or concerns **"subjective" experience** [boldface mine, KL]'. This description undeniably matches the definition of the attitude-focussed progressives as outlined above, and that of the action-focussed progressives for that matter. In addition to their collocations with metaphor and the other figures of speech listed above, non-veridical progressives sometimes occur in sentences explicitly referring to fiction, paintings, dreams, imagination, hallucinations and the like.

4.1.2 On the non-use of the notion of ‘aspect’ in Early Modern English

In a treatment of the action-focussed progressive as it emerges in Early and Late Modern English, the evolution of aspect is a central issue, cf section 2.4.1. However, the notion of aspect is going to be used sparingly in this thesis, the reasons for which will be set out in this sub-section.

In Present-day English the action-focussed facet of the progressive construction is often defined in terms of ‘continuous aspect’, expressing meanings basically pertaining to action in progress, duration, temporal framing and iteration, many of which may overlap. According to Wright (1995:155), the ‘interpretation of the progressive as aspect in Modern English concerns the temporal organization and linear dissection of situation types’, and in many cases, the choice between a progressive and a simple form may convey crucial interpretational differences, such as in the sentence pair *Yesterday I read a book/ Yesterday I was reading a book*, displaying perfective and continuous aspect respectively, with the latter logically involving a sense of **incompletion**.

In a diachronic perspective, however, this obligatory discrimination between continuous and perfective aspect for the expression of important factual differences appears to be a relative newcomer. In Nehls (1988:186), it is stated that ‘Standard English has had the grammatical category of “Aspect” since the middle of the 19th century’. Consequently, the evolution of aspect was a process stretching over a period of several centuries, triggered by the formal merger of the progressive construction and the gerundial prepositional phrases at the end of the Middle English period, cf section 2.3. Therefore, the concept of temporal aspect will not be used for the general characterization of action-focussed progressives in the present chapter, at least not for period I. To be sure, several of the examples recorded display a usage which **on the surface** looks identical to expressions of the temporal-aspectual progressive, the framing effect seemingly being particularly salient in this respect. Such usage is illustrated by the progressives in examples [8]–[10], all of which have an apparent framing effect.

[8] and when I came downe to the Stables, I found him come, had sett up his horse, and **was sweeping** the Stable in great Order. (LDO 28,29)

[9] While he **was speaking**, he suffered his people to dress him for the field; (OAB 100,1)

[10] When they **were walking** homewards, his Introducer told him, that the time he had limited for his Kinsman’s stay, was almost expir’d; (ICMP 47,4)

Undeniably, the synsemantic features of the above instances are formally identical to those evinced in corresponding modern usage. Nevertheless, according to Nehls (1988:181) Early Modern English progressives are said to be a ‘functional variant’ of simple forms. Thus, their application is, as from Old English onwards, situationally distinctive (cf section 2.2), and frequently collocating with activity verbs. An activity going on in a particular situation tends to have a certain duration, so the aspectual **appearances** of the Early Modern English action-focussed progressives above are probably not so inexplicable after all. Finally, the persistent irregularity in their use at this historical stage seems to preclude the existence of a fully-fledged aspectual progressive in Early English.

4.2 The action-focussed progressive

Based on the cognitive criteria detailed in section 4.1.1, the action-focussed progressives were identified for further quantification with respect to genres and periods. Table 4.3 shows proportions and percentages of this type of progressive verb phrase for each period, as distributed across genres, including genre-related differences for each period expressed in percentage points.

Table 4.3: Action-focussed progressives in period I and period II across the genres of letters and novels

	Period I		Period II	
	action-foc./total	%	action-foc./total	%
Letters	8/60	13.3	58/193	30.1
Novels	24/52	46.2	81/213	38.0
Difference		32.9		7.9

The most interesting feature of table 4.3 is the great synchronic difference between the figures for letters and novels in period I, as compared to period II, in which the corresponding difference has been substantially reduced, dropping from 32,9 to 7.9 percentage points during the intervening years. Whatever the reasons for this reduction, it is very likely to indicate a ‘stylistic levelling’ between the two genres in a diachronic perspective. The following analysis is, among other things, intended to assess the background and nature of the relative increase of action-focussed progressives in letters, and the corresponding relative decrease in the novels, along with a semantic classification of the action-focussed situation types occurring in each period. The extent and function of adverbial modification of the progressive verb phrases will

also be accounted for. The evolution of aspect as well as the general increasing frequency of the progressive will be considered in relation to the above-mentioned linguistic features.

4.2.1 The period I letters

As indicated in section 4.1.1, the semantics of the action-focussed progressive verb phrases is essentially objective, concrete and ‘down-to-earth’ by nature, which also applies to the lexical realization of the said verb phrases. More often than not, these verbs denote cardinal, very basic features of human behaviour, such as verbs of action (including perception), motion or saying (speech acts), and particularly so in the material from period I, in which these are virtually the only kinds of verb represented in the action-focussed subset of the corpus. The letters are clearly dominated by verbs of action, and since the number of action-focussed tokens in this part of the corpus is so modest, all the eight examples (cf table 4.3) are rendered in examples [11]–[18] below.

[11] and when I came downe to the Stables, I found him come, had sett up his horse, and **was sweeping** the Stable in great Order. (LDO 28,29)

[12] at this instant you are I beleeeve more asleep then I, and doe not soe much as dream that I **am writeing** to you. (LDO 37,10)

[13] I **was lookeing** tother day in a book of his where hee Translates Pipeur, a Piper and twenty words more that are as false as this. (LDO 91,27)

[14] Tis but an howr since you went, and I **am writeing** to you already, is not this kinde? (LDO 129,25)

[15] **goeing a hunting** I think he **was**, but he stayed to tell me I was his Valentine, (LDO 149,26)

[16] I rememberd to have seene B. there, and had occasion to looke up into the Gallery where hee sate to answer a very civill Salute given mee from thence by Mr Freeman, and saw B. in a great whisper with another that sat next him and **pointing** to mee. (LDO 152,32)

[17] my Br. and Mr.Gibson **were talking** by the fyre, and I satt by, but as noe part of the company. (LDO 108,14)

[18] till her Eyes will give her leave to looke out better; they **are mending**, and she hopes to bee at London before the end of this next Terme, (LDO 10,14)

The progressives in [11]–[13] all focus on the action performed by the subject of the sentence in a particular situation. Example [11] seems to have some kind of temporal framing effect, and the adverbial qualifiers *at this instant* and *tother day* occurring in [12] and [13] respectively add a temporal meaning to the action-focussed quality of the progressives they modify, since they are temporal adverbials fixing the action expressed by the progressives to a concrete point in time. The progressive verb phrase *am writing* in [14] is qualified by the adverbial *already*, denoting and emphasizing the fact of an action being in progress. The gerundial construction in [15] is highlighted by partial fronting, as such probably setting the scene or background for what is implied by the ensuing clause. The verb of action in example [16], although veridical enough, is at best an elliptical progressive, and surely the most marginal token of the corpus. Nevertheless, the lack of auxiliary is most probably ascribable to the sometimes casual language of the author, and if that is the case, it could be classified as an embryonic example of the iterative¹¹ effect of the progressive. The action expressed by the progressive form in [17] is perhaps concurrent with the situation referred to in the following clause, and more so than its background. Since the predicator relating to the subject *I* in the second clause is realized by a simple past form, the progressive in the first clause may also have been used for contrastive emphasis, underlining the author’s sense of insignificance in relation to the gentlemen referred to. As regards the non-agentive situation type in the last instance, example [18], it was on the brink of being assigned to the subset of the attitude-focussed progressives, as it appears to imply some kind of assessment of a situation. However, a scrutiny of the larger context reveals a veridical situation implying a gradual process (observable healing).

4.2.2 The period I novels

As was mentioned in the introduction to this section, table 4.3 displays a very marked difference between the relative percentages of action-focussed progressives in the letters and the novels belonging to period I. Those found in the letters were for the most part realized by verbs of action, a few of them with a slight framing effect, and with a low occurrence of

temporal adverbial modification. In the period I novels, on the other hand, the corresponding progressive tokens are far more frequently modified by temporal adverbials conveying a sense of duration or ongoingness, such as *still, already, so long, just, the remainder of that Day*, etc. In the sentences where these indicators of duration are absent, this function is fulfilled by subordinating conjunctions such as *while, whilst, when* and *as*, all of which may convey this durative meaning. In sum, more than 60% (15/24) of the progressives have a rather explicit framing effect (cf table 4.4 in section 4.2.3), largely as a result of the presence of the said adverbials and conjunctions expressing duration, and where the framing effect is absent, the presence of these two features still frequently provides a durative temporal perspective to the overall meaning of the sentences. The type of verbs represented in this genre are verbs of action and motion occurring in approximately equal proportions, in addition to a smaller group of verbs of saying. Examples of action-focussed progressives with durative meaning in the 17th century novels are provided below. With the exception of [26]–[28] all of these instances contain progressives occurring in a context conveying a framing effect. The progressive *was writing* in [19] seems to have a slight framing effect added to it since it functions as a kind of background for the momentary events and actions implied by the main clause following the semi-colon. In [20]–[21] the framing effect is conveyed by dint of temporal adverbial qualifiers, and through conjunctions denoting duration in [22]–[25]. The progressives in [26]–[28] are rendered unambiguously durative by means of adverbial modification alone.

[19] The prince **was writing**, though not to Isabella; he heard Bileront stir and turning with a furious Aspect, ask'd who was there! (ICMP 179,23)

[20] he opposed himself against some who **were** already **opening** the door, (OAB 95,7)

[21] she, not knowing anybody was there, ran to get it in again, and bolted on those who **were just speaking** of her. (OAB 111,14)

[22] and while he **was** so **doing**, he had intelligence brought him, (OAB 84,6)

[23] Now whilst this **had been acting** in the House, the Ladies who were gone to take their evening Walk, were not free from their surprize; (ICMP 31,16)

- [24] it gave him the opportunity, one day, when the prince **was a-hunting**, to wait on a man of quality, (OAB 84,9)
- [25] as the Prince, having all his things Embark'd **was walking** on the shore, he felt somebody take him by the Cloak, (ICMP 119,19)
- [26] The ladies **were still dancing**, (OAB 92,21)
- [27] that out of respect to the Princess Isabella, with your own hand, you **had been** most part of the night **writing**. (ICMP 196,15)
- [28] Lovisa **had**, the remainder of that Day, **been discoursing** with her Uncle of her resolution (ICMP 199,7)

Textually, the above instances of the progressive seem to have one characteristic in common: they play an important part in the description of the scenes and course of events in the storyline. Considering the fact that these stories were written in the heyday of the Restoration comedy by authors who basically worked as playwrights, it seems only natural for the stylistics of the drama to show off in the novel genre. Moreover, this function of the progressive may be traced back to Old English narratives, as described in section 2.2. In the novels of Mary Pix and Aphra Behn, the need for a pragmatic indicator of the changing scenes probably explains the relatively high proportion of action-focussed progressives. Conversely, the corresponding low proportion in the letters of Dorothy Osborne is most probably due to psychological and social factors, which is also evidenced in their high proportion of attitude-focussed progressives.

4.2.3 Action-focussed progressives compared diachronically

The most conspicuous change emerging after a brief survey of the action-focussed progressives in period II is a drastic drop in the occurrence of progressive clauses with a more or less obvious framing effect. Table 4.4 shows these reductions.

Table 4.4: Action-focussed progressives with framing effect in period I and period II across genres

	Period I		Period II	
	Framing/total	%	Framing/total	%
Letters	3/8	38	10/58	17
Novels	15/24	63	22/81	27

There is a corresponding reduction in the frequency of adverbial modification. Thus, the progressive as evidenced in this part of the literary and epistolary production of Charlotte Brontë as compared to the 17th century part of the corpus has not only grown in frequency; it also appears to have grown into a more independent construction. The development of temporal adverbial modification is shown in table 4.5.

Table 4.5: Temporal adverbial modification of action-focussed progressives in period I and period II across genres

	Period I		Period II	
	T.mod./total	%	T.mod./total	%
Letters	3/8	38	16/58	28
Novels	10/24	42	19/81	23

Not unexpectedly, in the period II part of the corpus, the verbs of action remain among the dominating verb types in the action-focussed subset of progressives. In the two genres as a whole they make up nearly half the tokens. Verbs of motion are still quite numerous in the period II novel, although their proportion has been drastically reduced as compared to their period I counterparts. There is a decrease in the action-focussed progressives referring to speech acts, and an increase in the proportion of non-human subjects such as vehicles, animals and meteorological phenomena. However, the major innovation in the 19th century part of the action-focussed subset of the corpus is the advent of stance verbs¹². They amount to 33 out of 139 tokens, which is quite significant, given the fact that in period I there is none. In the following, the two genres of period II will be treated as a whole. This has been considered appropriate since there is an approximately even distribution of action-focussed progressives in the two genres (cf table 4.1), and also because they originate from the same author.

4.2.4 Verbs of action in period II

As a corollary of the rising frequency of the progressive from period I to period II (cf table 4.2), the range of verbs collocating with the form has grown in extent as well as in sophistication.

Thus, the action-focussed subset in period II comprises verbs whose semantics and formal properties are more specialized and varied. As far as the verbs of action are concerned, they comprise for instance private¹³ verbs and verbs referring to accomplishments and domestic activities, occasionally in the form of phrasal verbs. Examples [39]–[48] are provided in order to illustrate some of these collocational features. Various domestic activities and accomplishments are described by the progressive instances in [39]–[43] and [48]; [44]–[45] are both instances of private verbs, [46] represents the category of phrasal verbs, and finally [47] may be placed at the intersection of the categories of accomplishments and private verbs.

[39] Abbot, too, **was sewing** in another room, (JECB 28,11)

[40] the younger ones, together with the younger ladies, **were playing** billiards in the billiard-room. (JECB 214,3)

[41] I try to concentrate my attention on these netting-needles, on the meshes of the purse I **am forming** - (JECB 197,29)

[42] Acton **was sewing**, (LLCB 213,21)

[43] Mr W **has been writing** an urgent invitation to papa entreating him to come and spend a week here. (LLCB 91,34)

[44] In another second I **was embracing** and **kissing** her rapturously: (JECB 105,3)

[45] she **was** already **snoring**, before I had finished undressing. (JECB 102,31)

[46] I looked at her narrowly as she emerged from the book-closet; she **was** just **putting back** her handkerchief into her pocket, and the trace of a tear glistened on her thin cheek. (JECB 65,10)

[47] I went in, quite alone (...), wandered about the aisles where a few old women **were saying** their prayers, till vespers begun. (LLCB 116,29)

[48] On reaching the bed-room, we heard the voice of Miss Scatcherd: she **was examining** drawers; (JECB 86,12)

Several of the above sentences contain progressives independently implying an action in progress, ie without the lexical support of adverbials or introductory conjunctions adding to the sense of ongoingness. This semantic independence of the progressive verb phrase, which is particularly salient in examples [39]–[43], probably also applies to example [44], since the adverbial *In another second*, does not denote duration but a starting point for the activity referred to. In [45] the progressive is modified by the adverbial *already*, denoting duration. Thus, it has an explicit framing effect, as is the case with [46], in which the progressive in the coordinated main clause is modified by the adverbial *just*. The progressives in [47] and [48] both have a clear framing effect, lexically unsupported but contextually obvious.

4.2.5 Verbs of motion in period II

The list of verbs employed for the realization of progressives denoting motion also displays an increasing and far more differentiated range of variety than its 17th century counterpart. In the examples below, [49]–[52] display a selection of the more sophisticated type, all of which occur in a more or less explicit framing environment, whereas the rudimentary, basic verbs of motion represented by [53]–[57] independently express the meaning of ongoingness.

[49] She was gone into the village on some errand, when as she **was descending** the steep street her foot slipped on the ice, (LLCB 42,19)

[50] thank you Madam said I with extreme cordiality, and **was marching** from the room - when she recalled me (LLCB 90,10)

[51] We **were ascending** the avenue when he thus paused; the hall was before us. (JECB 162,10)

[52] I **was passing** the back parlour, or teacher's sitting-room, the door of which was half open, to go to the kitchen, when some one ran out: - (JECB 104,30)

[53] We **had been wandering**, indeed, in the leafless shrubbery an hour in the morning; (JECB 13,1)

[54] he **was going** to a poor woman in labour. (LLCB 340,8)

[55] ‘Where **are** you **going** now, Mrs Fairfax?’ for she was moving away. (JECB 122,2)

[56] ‘They’**re coming**, ma’am,’ (JECB 189,15)

[57] The din was on the causeway: a horse **was coming**; (JECB 128,11)

4.2.6 Stance verbs in period II

As previously mentioned, the verbs of stance make up a substantial proportion of the action-focussed progressives in the period II part of the corpus. In Early English the verbs of stance occasionally occur in the progressive together with inanimate subjects denoting famous buildings and monumental geographical items, indicating their location¹⁴. Thus, the progressive was a pragmatic device used for emphatic purposes, cf section 2.2. In Modern English, by contrast, the progressive of these verbs expresses a **temporary** state, position or posture, which they invariably do in the present corpus, more often than not collocating with human subjects. This application of the progressive is most probably a fairly recent development, and it is perhaps not unreasonable to conjecture that it may have developed from the frequent collocation of the progressive with adverbials denoting limited duration, as described in the above paragraphs on action-focussed progressives in period I. According to Quirk et al. (1985:206), the corresponding simple forms of the verbs of stance will generally denote a permanent situation.

In the present corpus, where the verbs of stance occur in the 19th century subset exclusively, there is a genre-related unevenness in their distribution, which is illustrated in table 4.5.

Table 4.6: Stance verbs in the action-focussed subset of period II

Letters		Novel	
Stance verbs/total	%	Stance verbs/total	%
20/58	34.5	13/81	16

The reason why the bulk of this kind of progressive occurs in the letters of Charlotte Brontë most probably has to be sought in her biography. Many of the letters she wrote are addressed to intimate friends and relatives, containing situation reports, including information on her place of residence, when away from home. Generally speaking, stance verbs in the progressive

appear to express personal involvement on the part of the speaker in the subjects these verbal forms refer to, whether that be people, animals or inanimate items. The most common verbs of stance used by Charlotte Brontë are *lie*, *sit*, *stand*, *stay* and *wait*, most of which combine with personal subjects. However, *lie* occurs four times, and then together with inanimate subjects only. The following examples all refer to temporary states, positions or postures. In examples [61], [62] and [68] the progressives are supported by temporal adverbials. Examples [58]–[65] contain human subjects, whereas the subjects in [66]–[68] are non-human. The tokens in [58]–[60] occur in clauses involving temporal framing.

[58] One afternoon (I had then been three weeks at Lowood), as I **was sitting** with a slate in my hand, puzzling over a sum in long division, my eyes, raised in abstraction to the window, caught sight of a figure just passing: (JECB 73,5)

[59] I saw her again for a few minutes the next morning at Lowton, while I **was waiting** for the coach. (JECB 107,25)

[60] I pointed out this circumstance to Mrs Fairfax, who **was standing** at the window with me:- (JECB 192,14)

[61] Last Saturday night he **had been sitting** an hour in the parlour with Papa; and as he went away, I heard Papa say to him - (LLCB 81,20)

[62] - they **have been staying** above a month with Uncle Fennel at Crosstone - (LLCB 65,25)

[63] and Branwell **is standing** before her laughing at her vivacity. (LLCB 57,3)

[64] Sir James Kay Shuttleworth **is residing** near Windermere at a house called ‘The Briery’ - (LLCB 300,9)

[65] Thackeray **was standing** on the hearthrug, looking anything but happy. (LLCB 323,5)

[66] Mrs Fairfax had just written a letter which **was waiting** to be posted, (JECB 126,33)

[67] When we got back, it was after moon-rise: a pony, which we knew to be the surgeon's, **was standing** at the garden door. (JECB 92,1)

[68] the Book is an hundred and twenty years old it **is** at this moment **lying** Before me while I write this (LLCB 11,16)

4.2.7 Combinations with non-personal subjects in period II

As was mentioned in section 4.2.3, there is a considerable growth in the type of progressives referring to non-personal subjects in period II. In addition to the subject types represented in examples [66]–[68] above, these progressive predicators often combine with subjects denoting phenomena pertaining to nature, the weather in particular. Logically, they tend to be non-agentive, except when they take subjects referring to animals. Some instances of progressives with non-personal subjects are provided in examples [69]–[78] below, of which examples [73]–[78] refer to meteorological phenomena.

[69] Not a moment could be lost: the very sheets **were kindling**. (JECB 168,32)

[70] A post-chaise **was approaching**. (JECB 214,20)

[71] a North-of England spirit, called a 'Gytrash', which, in the form of a horse, mule or large dog, haunted solitary ways, and sometimes came upon belated travellers, as this horse **was** now **coming** upon me, (JECB 128,22)

[72] During the last three weeks that hideous operation called 'A Thorough Clean' **has been going on** in the house - it is now nearly completed (LLCB 91,9)

[73] However, more genial weather **is coming** now (LLCB 112,34)

[74] if you saw him now, sitting muffled at the fireside, shrinking before the east wind (which for some days **has been blowing** wild and keen over our cold hills), (LLCB 211,23)

[75] '... you'll catch the fever if you stop out when the dew **is falling**.' (JECB 93,6)

[76] Daylight began to forsake the red-room; it was past four o'clock, and the beclouded afternoon **was tending** to drear twilight. (JECB 23,21)

[77] Yet distant and soft the night-breeze **is blowing**, (JECB 30,3)

[78] Something of daylight still lingered, and the moon **was waxing** bright: (JECB 129,31)

Another type of non-personal subject on the increase in period II is the grammatical subjects of passive sentences. A non-personal object in an active sentence will always result in a correspondingly non-personal grammatical subject in its passive counterpart, and even if the active object is a person, the passive subject will logically be non-agentive as a result of the inherent semantic meaning of a passive structure. The evolution of passive progressive structures was outlined in section 2.4.4, and it will be recalled that such structures were exceedingly rare until the 18th century. Two passive progressive sentences are provided below, both of which are introduced by the conjunction *while*, entailing a framing effect.

[79] While the direction **was being executed**, the lady consulted moved slowly up the room. (JECB 57,20)

[80] -Emily's large house-dog which lay at the side of her dying-bed, and followed her funeral to the vault, lying in the pew couched at our feet while the burial service **was being read** - (LLCB 240,2)

4.2.8 Conclusion

In her article on the history of the *be+ing* construction in the years around 1800, Strang (1982:446) notes that 'the change in subject type and in range of verbs suggest that the functional centre [of the progressive, KL] is shifting from activity to something in which temporal considerations are more important'. These observations neatly corroborate and sum up some of the findings pertaining to the present study of the action-focussed progressive. The period I tokens of the corpus are limited to an elementary range of verb types, whose subjects are nearly universally human. The expansion in the variety of subject and verb types documented in the treatment of period II may, following Strang, be interpreted as part of a functional change and semantic extension of the action-focussed progressive into a marker of temporality. As regards the evolution of temporal aspect in particular, the drastic reduction in

the occurrence of durative temporal adverbial qualifiers and temporal framing in period II as compared to period I should be an indication that the progressive is turning into a temporal-aspectual marker in its own right. This view is equally supported by Strang (1982:446), who claims that ‘[p]rogressively the construction grows in independence, conveying **by itself** [boldface mine, KL] the notion of contextual embedding and dispensing with the structural indices of it’. Additionally, the influence exerted by the gerundial construction, documented by Nehls (1988:184) and repeatedly referred to in the present thesis, has generally speaking played a fortifying part in this process. The corpus of this investigation does not contain sufficient concrete evidence for any such conclusion, however.

4.3 The attitude-focussed progressive

As is illustrated in figure 4.1, the attitude-focussed progressives in the present corpus are defined as belonging to diverse mental spaces. Unlike the veridical action-focussed progressive in the base space, the attitude-focussed progressive is more or less non-veridical, ie it cannot be construed as ‘an accurate model of reality’ (Taylor 2002:590). This is because it belongs to the subjective level of comment, generalization, uncertainty, hypothetical statement etc. According to this definition, it follows that progressives with future reference equally belong to this category. Future forms included, the attitude-focussed subset of the corpus amounts to 347 tokens distributed as displayed in table 4.7.

Table 4.7 : Attitude-focussed progressives across the genres of letters and novels in period I and period II

	Period I		Period II	
	Att/total	%	att/total	%
Letters	52/60	86.7	135/193	69.9
Novels	28/52	53.8	132/213	62.0

Evidently, the attitude-focussed progressives constitute the majority of the corpus. On a par with the action-focussed progressives presented in table 4.3, the attitude-focussed progressives are unequally distributed between the genres of letters and novels in period I and evince a substantial levelling of distribution in period II. Moreover, the relatively high number of attitude-focussed progressives in each of the periods may suggest an over-occurrence of this facet in the corpus as a whole, the explanation for which is most probably complex. Firstly, letters obviously easily lend themselves to subjectivity of expression, which is **the** salient feature of the modal or attitude-focussed progressive (Wright 1995). The autobiographical

point of view in Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre* may equally contribute to the over-occurrence. Secondly and more importantly, however, the above-mentioned inclusion of all future-referring progressive forms into the attitude-focussed subset of the corpus certainly contributes substantially to these high figures. Since future forms are going to be treated separately in section 4.4 and its subsections, it seems appropriate to make an assessment of the number of attitude-focussed tokens exclusive of future-referring progressive forms. These figures are shown in table 4.8 below. It will be recalled that the occurrences of the semi-auxiliary *be going to* are included in the future category, cf section 3.5.

Table 4.8: Attitude-focussed progressives inclusive and exclusive of future-referring progressive forms

	Period I		Period II	
	Total attitude	Non-future	Total attitude	Non-future
Letters	52	30	135	91
Novels	28	20	132	105

In sum, there are 246 non-future attitude-focussed progressives to be dealt with in the present corpus. This number virtually makes up half of the tokens of the corpus as a whole, ie 48% (246/518). As was pointed out in section 4.1, several of the progressives belonging to this facet are notable for their complexity of characteristics. Thus, specific syntactic and semantic features, listed in the last paragraph of section 4.1.1, may coincide with these progressives, adding to their complexity. Additionally, two or more mental spaces may combine to qualify one single situation type, as was illustrated in examples [4]–[7] in this chapter. It would therefore have been rather impracticable to make a classificatory table showing the distribution of the attitude-focussed progressives according to mental spaces, and certainly beyond the scope of the present thesis. Nevertheless, an investigation of manually made lists revealed that the bulk of these tokens belong to the class of the experiential/interpretational progressives, although some of the tokens are far from clear-cut. The proportions of these progressives are exhibited in table 4.9, together with the proportions of the tokens belonging to the remaining non-future mental spaces. These have simply been designated as ‘others’ in the table.

Table 4.9: Experiential (Ex.) /interpretative (Int.) and other attitude-focussed progressives according to genres and periods

	Period I		Period II	
	Ex.&Int./total	Others/total	Ex.&Int./total	Others/total
Letters	20/30 (67%)	10/30 (33%)	62/91 (68%)	29/91 (32%)
Novels	10/20 (50%)	10/20 (50%)	81/105 (77%)	24/105 (23%)

The table shows that the proportions of experiential/interpretative progressives in the letters are very stable diachronically. The novels, by contrast, display an increase from 50% in period I to 77% in period II, which is most likely an expression of the development of this genre in the direction of psychological exploration, cf section 3.1.2. In the following description, examples from the two genres will be dealt with together in the analysis of each period. This practice will be followed since due consideration will have to be given to the versatility of the attitude-focussed facet of the progressive, a characteristic sometimes verging on the erratic. Thus, a variety of subgroups existing within this facet will have to be treated separately, and if a discrimination were to be made between the two genres, the results of the analysis would most probably have been rendered intractable. In the present approach, the tokens will as far as possible be classified and explained in order of increasing degree of non-veridicality, cf section 4.1.1 and figure 4.1. According to this figure, the experiential/interpretative progressive comes closest to the veridical base space of the action-focussed progressive, in spite of the fact that it ‘is not even temporally salient’ (Wright 1995:156).

4.3.1 The experiential progressive in period I

According to the definition of the experiential progressives set out in section 4.1.1, they invariably contain a 1st person subject. Wright (1994:472, 1995:158f) lists 1st person subjects as one characteristic in a matrix of features to look for in the diagnosis of modal progressive sentences in the 17th century, cf section 2.4.2. Instances of period I experiential progressives are provided in examples [81]–[90] below.

[81] O mee now I **am speaking** of Religion lett mee aske you is not his name Bagshaw (LDO 142,12)

[82] when do you think of comeing back againe? I **am askeing** that before you are at your Journy’s Ende (LDO 152,11)

- [83] fye upon't, I shall grow too good now, I **am takeing** care to know how Your Worship slept to night, (LDO 185,5)
- [84] I **was** only **considering** my owne ill humor Last night, I had not heard from you in a week & more; (LDO 161,24)
- [85] I **was wondring** how you cam by an acquaintance there (LDO 95,17)
- [86] I **have bin studdieng** how Tom C. might come by his intelligence and I verily beleeve he has it from my Cousin (LDO 97,22)
- [87] I **have bin thinking** of sending you my Picture till I could come my self, (LDO 106,7)
- [88] Cruel Man, thus to interrupt the Peace I **am striving** for! (ICMP 190,8)
- [89] I **am comeing** into my preaching vaine againe, what think you? (LDO 142,18)
- [90] it has undone mee I'me sure in Killing an Old Knight that I **have bin wayteing** for this seven yeare, (LDO 22,10)

The progressive verb phrases in [81]–[87] are realized by private verbs, ie verbs of saying or verbs denoting other kinds¹⁵ of cognitive activity. The presence of this verb type equally belongs to Wright's criteria, cf section 2.4.2. Present tense, as exemplified in [81]–[83] is also listed by Wright, and in these three utterances, the speaker simply comments upon her own cognitive activity. The past tenses in [84] and [85] provide the utterances with a tentative attitude, which is probably also the case with the present perfect forms in [86] and [87]. The predicator *am striving* in [88], following an emotional outburst of the speaker, is arguably reminiscent of Wright's (1994:480) 'verbal window on the soul of a speaker'. In [89] the progressive verb phrase *am comeing* emerges as part of a metaphor, referring to the intellectual and perhaps also the emotional mood of the subject, and finally the present perfect progressive predicator in example [90] is not to be interpreted literally as a verb of stance but rather as a long-term mental and social attitude of the speaker.

4.3.2 The interpretative progressive in period I

As far as the 17th century novels are concerned, they contain one single clearly experiential progressive, rendered in example [88] above. The interpretative progressive, by contrast, is richly represented in this part of the corpus, which is only natural given the fact that these novels are written by omniscient narrators. As to the types of verb realizing the interpretative progressives, they do not differ significantly from those found in the experiential utterances above, although they appear to be slightly more diverse. Examples [91]–[100], which represent both letters and novels, illustrate the 17th century use of the interpretative progressive.

[91] insomuch that, even in the presence of the old king, they **were extolling** her, and **heightening**, if possible, the beauties they had found in her; (OAB 82,27)

[92] his Seranades; several of which were perform'd before Cordelia knew from whom, or so much as guessed her mother **was consenting**. (ICMP 64,22)

[93] and I that know him as well as hee do's himselfe cannot but give my selfe the recreation (somtmes) of confounding him and distroyeng all that his buisy head **had bin working** on since the last conference; (LDO 68,3)

[94] there I spent the latter end of the sommer and at my comeing home, found that a Gentlman (whoe has some Estate in this Country) **had bin treating** with my Brother, and it yet goes on faire and softly. (LDO 7,31)

[95] this is too true both in respect of this fellows hast that **is bawling** at mee for my letter, and of my fathers delays, (LDO 160,35)

[96] yet still Emilius **was harping** on this (to him) ungrateful string, count Lodowick's coming. (ICMP 128,11)

[97] her heart **was bursting** within, (OAB 87,35)

[98] there is a person in the World is in Love with you. In love with you! Oh weak Expression! added she vehemently; **is dying** for you; (ICMP 12,25)

[99] 'tis an illustrious Lover, **is giving** that deserved Ornament to thy charming Picture.
(ICMP 12,13)

[100] but I thank God an imagination took him one morning that hee **was falleing** into a
dropsy, (LDO 43,34)

All of the interpretative progressives in examples [91]–[96] express some kind of utterance or other cognitive activity, and provide information on the speakers' assessment of the various subjects' mental, expressive or communicational activities. Moreover, they are realized by verbs which may be characterized as 'richly expressive' (Wright 1995:160), in particular the verb phrases *were extolling* and *heightening* in [91], *is bawling* in [95] and the metaphoric *was harping* in [96]. Similarly, the emotionally flavoured progressives in [97]–[98] coincide with metaphors, and the apparently concrete expression *is giving* in [99] actually collocates with the explicit description of a picture, cf section 4.1.1, last paragraph. In [100] the progressive *was falling* does not depict somebody falling down somewhere but is employed for the description of some male person suffering from the ailment of oedema, and must therefore be characterized as collocating with a metaphor.

4.3.3 The habitual progressive in period I

In examples [81]–[100] the modal force of the attitude-focussed progressives is primarily ensured by these verb phrases alone, sometimes combined with features such as figurative language and expressions of emotion or opinion. Although not 'temporally salient' (Wright 1995:156), these progressives practically all have some kind of concrete time reference, implicit or explicit. This is not the case, however, with the attitude-focussed progressives belonging to the group or mental space of habits and predications referring to general iteration or frequency. The habitual progressives are, as it were, elevated to the level of temporal generalization, thus deriving their modal force from the absence of any specific, concrete time reference. For this reason, they emerge as less veridical than their purely experiential/interpretative counterparts (cf fig.4.1). Moreover, the modality of the habitual progressive is often reinforced under the influence of adverbials of frequency. Smitterberg (1999:112) notes, that 'the collocation of the progressive with an adverbial of the ALWAYS type (eg *always*, *ever*, *constantly*, *all the time*) is usually said to give the utterance a subjective/emotive flavour'. He says, however, that the effect produced by the collocation of

the progressive with the said type of adverbial is sometimes that of ‘general emphasis’ (1999:112) on the verbal action without any further emotional gloss.

In the examples rendered below, several of the progressives are realized by activity verbs such as *make* and *bring*, including fairly neutral verbs of utterance. Concerning the role of verb type in the assessment of the progressive’s functions, Raybould (1957:182) refers to Calver when stressing the importance of keeping semantic and functional features separate.

[O]ne of the faults in dealing with EF [expanded form, KL] has been to allow semantics to get mixed up with the analysis of function. The meanings of the verbs most frequently used in EF may throw light on the question but they certainly do not determine the function.

The above caveats should be taken into consideration during the assessment of the modal function of the attitude-focussed progressive verb phrases provided in examples [101]–[109], because many of these progressives, in spite of being realized by simple, elementary ‘down-to-earth’ verbs, receive their modal force from a context describing habits and other iterative actions and events.

[101] for he scarce eat or slept, nor ever seem’d pleas’d, but when he **was talking** of Cordelia.
(ICMP 35,16)

[102] They told us, by our interpreter, that when any war **was waging**,...these two men were to stand in competition for the generalship, (OAB 124,1)

[103] how hard tis too thinke of ending when I **am writing** to you, but it must bee so, and I must ever bee subject to other peoples occasions, and so never I think master of my owne. (LDO 160,31)

[104] This new accident made him more impatient of liberty, and he **was every day treating** for his and Clemene’s liberty; (OAB 113,10)

[105] ‘tis the infusion of steell, and makes mee soe horridly sick that every day at ten a clock I **am makeing** my will, and **takeing** leave of all my freind’s, (LDO 23,27-28)

[106] I **am combing** and **Curling** and **kissing** this lock all day, and **dreaming** ont all night
(LDO 146,10)

[107] somtimes wee are in Earnest and somtimes in Jest, but alway's **sayeing** somthing, since
my Brother Hary found his Tongue againe. (LDO 64,37)

[108] and that ffolly which wee condemne in an Ambitious man, that's ever **labouring** for
that which is hardly gott and more uncertainly kept, (LDO 115,38)

[109] but then I must borrow it (for tis noe more mine if you like it), because my Br: **is** often
bringing People into my Closet where it hangs to show them Other Pictur's that are
there, (LDO 109,31)

The progressives in [101]–[103] all occur in temporal subclauses introduced by the conjunction *when*, which in these cases may be paraphrased as *every time that*, denoting habits¹⁶. The function of the progressive in [102] is certainly that of habitual iteration, but it also seems to convey a certain sense of dramatic force. Likewise, the verb phrase *am writing* in [103] appears to have slight touch of emotional colouring in addition to its function as an habitual progressive. Examples [104]–[106] are qualified by temporal iterative adverbials denoting regularity of habits. Examples [107]–[109] all contain adverbials of frequency, the first of which is used for general emphasis on the verb of utterance, including perhaps a slight irritation, whereas the latter two express the typically negative attitude towards the frequency of a habit, a function much commented on by Present-day grammarians.

4.3.4 The conditional, hypothetical and counterfactual progressive in period I

Habits and other types of iterative activity, although non-veridical in terms of concrete temporal fixing, still refer to realizable circumstances. Above the habitual progressive are the conditional, hypothetical and counterfactual mental spaces (cf fig.4.1), for which the modal or attitude-focussed progressive constitutes an apt resource of expression. These imaginary situation types are sparsely represented in the present corpus, and many of those occurring coincide with the use of at least one of the syntactic and semantic features mentioned in the last paragraph of section 4.1.1. Amounting to six tokens only, the full list of the 17th century hypothetical and counterfactual progressives is provided in examples [110]–[115] below.

[110] In this time of absence, there happen'd a Contrivance at Sulpitia's, that **was** very near **ruining** all their Designs. (ICMP 62,21)

[111] Melora was amaz'd to behold the lines at her Feet; thinking they **had** still **been discoursing**, (ICMP 112,6)

[112] One would think it were I that had heard the three Sermons, and **were trying** to make a fourth (LDO 46,4)

[113] I'll think of every tender word, and look and Blush, as it **were Acting** o'er again. (ICMP 193,1)

[114] they heard her voice, growling and grumbling, as if she were pleased with something she **was doing**. (OAB 118,28)

[115] look on me, as a Wretch that's **dying**, as one Condemned; (ICMP 191,19)

The progressive in [110] is qualified by the adverbial *near*, which is in its turn premodified by the intensifying adverbial *very*. This adverbial modifier seems to render the sentence counterfactual (their 'Designs' were actually not ruined after all), with the progressive emerging as expressive of an 'on the brink' situation in the past. In [111] the protagonist is transported to the sphere of imagination, or perhaps cognitive hallucination, believing her reading to be part of a real conversation. Example [112] occurs as [5] in section 4.1.1, being classified as combining the experiential, hypothetical and counterfactual mental spaces in one progressive predication. Additionally, this progressive coincides with the subjunctive, an efficient tool for the realization of hypothetical statements. In [113] the progressive coincides with the subjunctive in a subordinate clause of comparison, producing, as it were, a counterfactual effect. The progressive *was doing* in [114] is the predicator of a relative clause embedded in a subclause of comparison in the subjunctive, where it seems to produce a descriptive force. In [115] the progressive collocates with a simile, which provides the utterance with a counterfactual meaning.

4.3.5 Attitude-focussed progressives compared diachronically

As was mentioned in sections 3.1.2 and 4.3, the increasing subjectivity of the 19th century novel with its inherent psychological exploration appears to be one of the reasons for the expansion in this genre of the (modal) progressive during the years between the 17th and the 19th century. There is, moreover, a general differentiation in the verb types occurring in this facet of the progressive, a tendency comparable to and probably also exceeding the corresponding diversification of verb types in the action-focussed subset of the corpus. Since the innovations within the group of attitude-focussed progressive predicators are so numerous and their semantics so diverse, an exhaustive description of the newcomers would be beyond the scope of the present thesis. However, there are certain general tendencies pertaining to the development of sentences with attitude-focussed progressive predicators which should be commented on. Firstly, there is a substantial increase in the rate of non-human subjects in the period II subset, the major innovations being animals, natural phenomena, concrete inanimate objects, and not least, abstract phenomena such as human emotions and ailments. The proportion of these types of subject rises from 10% (8/80) in period I to 19% (51/265) in period II as reckoned within the attitude-focussed subset of the corpus. Secondly, predications describing situation types involving gradual evolution or processes are strikingly more frequent in the 19th century material. These progressives are virtually non-existent in the period I corpus, accounting for 1.3% (1/80) of the attitude-focussed tokens only, whereas in period II the corresponding percentage is 16,9% (45/265).

In accordance with the disposition outlined in section 4.3 this analysis will initially be concerned with the description of experiential and interpretative modal progressives combining with human subjects, followed by an exposition taking a closer look at the above-mentioned innovations. Instances belonging to the remaining mental spaces will ensue in due order.

4.3.6 The experiential progressive in period II

As was the case in period I, experiential progressives in period II are usually realized by private verbs. In the examples provided below the progressive instances contain private verbs exclusively. The utterances in [116]–[119] all contain formally straightforward expressions of personal experience, while [120]–[122] also include a few elliptical forms. The coordination in [120] of the objective action-focussed progressive *was looking* with the subjectively flavoured elliptical progressive *examining* neatly illustrates the difference lexical specialization may constitute, within one single sentence. [121]–[122] provide the reader with graphic details on the intellectual and perceptual activities of the narrator.

[116] I **am trying** hard to like her. (LLCB 89,32)

[117] but just now I **am enjoying** the treat of my friend Ellen's society (LLCB 258,29)

[118] I **was puzzling** to make out the subject of a picture on the wall, when the door opened, and an individual carrying a light entered, (JECB 52,34)

[119] Bessie's presence, compared with the thoughts over which I **had been brooding**, seemed cheerful; (JECB 48,5)

[120] I was still looking at them, and also at intervals **examining** the teachers - (JECB 57,4)

[121] I read these words over and over again: I felt that an explanation belonged to them, and was unable fully to penetrate their import. I **was still pondering** the signification of 'Institution', and **endeavouring** to make out a connection between the first words and the verse of scripture, when the sound of a cough close behind me, made me turn my head. (JECB 59,22)

[122] I **was yet enjoying** the calm prospect and pleasant fresh air, yet **listening** with delight to the cawing of the rooks, yet **surveying** the wide, hoary front of the hall, and **thinking** what a great place it was for one lonely little dame like Mrs Fairfax to inhabit, when that lady appeared at the door. (JECB 115,4)

Sometimes the experiential progressives are enriched by figurative language. In the examples below, the use of metaphor is illustrated in [123]–[124]. The poetry-like instance in [125], in spite of being taken from the letters, bears the mark of literary discourse. [126]–[127] describe a hallucinatory experience, or at least a visual fantasy, of the narrator, and the utterance in [128] appears to be a variation on a well-known proverb.

[123] Before I received your note, I **was nursing** a comfortable and complacent conviction that I had quite made up my mind not to go to London this year. LLCB 316,1)

[124] or rather that she had taken with her the serene atmosphere I **had been breathing** in her vicinity - (JECB 99,5)

[125] & the year is revolving in its richest glow & declaring at the close of every summer day the time I **am losing** will never come again? (LLCB 39,8)

[126] I let down the curtain and went back to the fireside.
In the clear embers I **was tracing** a view not unlike a picture I remembered to have seen of the castle of Heidelberg, on the Rhine; (JECB 136,12)

[127] breaking up by her entrance the fiery mosaic I **had been piecing** together, (LLCB, 136,15)

[128] ‘Justly thought; rightly said, Miss Eyre; and at this moment I **am paving** hell with energy.’ (JECB 156,29)

4.3.7 The interpretative progressive in period II

Whereas the experiential progressives appear to function as predicators in rather self-centred utterances, the interpretative ones focus on the environment of the speaker, in a broad sense. More often than not, they assume the role of commenting on other people’s behaviour. Still, the interpretative progressive is a subjective pragmatic device, expressing the speaker’s attitude to what he or she is talking about. Occasionally, in order for these attitudes to be brought out clearly, the progressive predication is complemented by different kinds of semantic support. In the following instances, [129]–[130] contain examples of interpretative progressives whose full meanings are realized by the complementation of adjuncts. The predicator *is crying* in [131] is most certainly an exaggeration of the real facts (the man was surely not crying in any literal sense of the word), so in this case the speaker’s impression of the subject’s wishes is commented on by means of a hyperbole coinciding with the progressive. The cognitive verb *concluded* in the main clause of the sentence in [132] explicitly ensures the subjectivity of the progressive predicator in the subclause, which is also the case in [133] where the verb *think* carries some of the subjective burden. In [134]–[135] the verbs *feel* and *know* respectively have a similar function, adding to the interpretative force of the progressive predicators proper, both of which are examples of metaphors. In [136] the behaviour of the subject is minutely described by dint of three coordinated progressives, supported by a subclause of comparison. As for the apparently action-focussed progressive in [137], the wider context of the novel reveals that the ‘people’ referred to belong to the imaginary species of elves, and that the question is part of the strategy of a hero in love.

- [129] Branwell **has been conducting** himself very badly lately - (LLCB 160,4)
- [130] and the other, poor thing! **is acting** according to her mother's wish, (LLCB 201,17)
- [131] Mr. Nicholls having finished 'Jane Eyre' **is now crying** out for the 'other book' - (LLCB 263,10)
- [132] I concluded he **was joking** - (LLCB 284,20)
- [133] I think he **was swearing**, but am not certain; however he **was pronouncing** some formula which prevented him from replying to me directly. (JECB 129,11)
- [134] I felt, though I could not have expressed the feeling, that she **was sowing** aversion and unkindness along my future path; (JECB 43,1)
- [135] I know Mrs Ellen **is burning** with eagerness to hear something about WW (LLCB 81, 5)
- [136] Not without cause was this sentiment: Mrs Reed looked frightened; her work had slipped from her knee; she **was lifting** up her hands, **rocking** herself to and fro, and even **twisting** her face as if she would cry. (JECB 46,13)
- [137] 'I thought not. And so you **were waiting** for your people when you sat on that stile?' (JECB 139,22)

Rydén (1997:423f) holds that the modal or attitude-focussed progressive implies a sense of tentativeness, an important feature of the 'dynamicness' designated as the 'panchronic core meaning of the English Progressive' (Rydén 1997). One way of illustrating the interpretative, or more precisely, tentative effect of the modal progressive is by means of a counterexample. In the following extract from *Jane Eyre*, the non-progressive predicator in boldface seems to be employed as part of the hero's verbal tactics in a question directed to the protagonist with the intention of drawing from her a frank admission.

He had been looking two minutes at the fire, and I had been looking the same length of time at him, when, turning suddenly, he caught my gaze, fastened on his physiognomy.

‘You **examine** [boldface mine, KL] me, Miss Eyre, said he: ‘do you think me handsome?’

I should, if I had deliberated, have replied to this question by something conventionally vague and polite; but the answer somehow slipped from my tongue before I was aware: - ‘No, sir.’ (JECB 149:30-37)

Used in a context where the modal progressive might be expected, the above non-progressive predication appears devoid of tentativeness. With its ‘frozen’ (Rydén 1997:421) and arresting effect, it is absolutely not intended for evasion, the effectiveness of which may be inferred from the protagonist’s own description of her reaction to it.

As mentioned in 4.3.5, interpretative progressives also occur as predicators combining with non-human subjects, which is illustrated in examples [138]–[146] below.

[138] I believe in my heart this **is acting** for the best; (LLCB 99,24)

[139] As to ‘Jane Eyre’ and ‘Shirley’, the books **are taking** their chance in the world, (LLCB 264,6)

[140] the woods of Hopton & Heaton Lodge **were clouding** the waters-edge (LLCB 39,18)

[141] the Calder silent but bright **was shooting** among them like a - silver arrow. (LLCB 39,19)

[142] ‘storms of rain’ **are sweeping** over the garden and churchyard; (LLCB 293,12)

[143] Stung to the heart with this reflection I started up & mechanically walked to the window - a sweet August morning **was smiling** without (LLCB 39,11)

[144] the early shadows **were stretching** cool & dim from the hay-stack (LLCB 39,12)

[145] I bent quietly and I trust now the Storm **is blowing** over me - (LLCB 66,26)

[146] The weather I think has not been good lately - or else the beneficial effects of change of air and scene **are evaporating** - (LLCB 332,20)

In [138] the protagonist is making an assessment of her prospects in life, adding a modal force to the utterance through the main clause verb *believe* and the adverbial *for the best*. The subject *the books* in [139] is actually a personification, given the predication *are taking their chance in the world*, which would normally pertain to human subjects. In this case, the imagery alone seems to answer for the modality of the progressive. The progressives in [140]–[144] all very independently depict concrete sceneries of nature, with their value as metaphors ensuring the interpretative/modal force. At first glance, this characterization seems to fit [145] as well, but in this case the subject *the Storm* is obviously to be interpreted symbolically, which can be deduced both from the further context and the fact that it is spelt with a capital first letter. Likewise, the appearances of the proposition in [146] may suggest an interpretation in terms of meteorological phenomena, but the context reveals that this utterance is supposed to be giving plausible reasons for the poor health of the speaker.

Indeed, several of the inanimate subjects combining with the attitude-focussed progressives in Charlotte Brontë’s literary and epistolary production denote or connote painful features of the author’s or the protagonist’s mental and physical feelings. With scrutinizing introspection she examines her pain, which is thus rendered the theme of the utterance. Some of the progressive predicators depicting the effects of this pain are realized by metaphors, such as in examples [147]–[150]. For instance, in [147] the mental disposition of the speaker is described as *sinking* her to the ground, which is of course not to be taken literally, whereas in [149] the metaphor describes the protagonist’s inclination to revolt. The tears referred to in [151], however tormenting they may have been, naturally cannot be hot to the point of scalding one’s cheek, so in this case we are most probably dealing with a hyperbole. The ailments referred to in [152] are described as a sort of physical ‘invaders’ by means of a metaphor, and finally [153] looks like a regular interpretative progressive, commenting on the speaker’s own state of mind.

[147] I can write to you now for I am away from home and relieved, temporarily at least, by change of air and scene from the heavy burden of depression which I confess **has** for nearly 3 months **been sinking** me to the earth. (LLCB 307,14)

[148] When once more alone, I ... endeavoured to bring back with a strict hand such as **had been straying** through imagination’s boundless and trackless waste, into the safe fold of common sense. (JECB 182,34)

[149] the mood of the revolted slave **was** still **bracing** me with its bitter vigour; (JECB 22,6)

[150] The moment Miss Scatterd withdrew after afternoon-school, I ran to Helen, tore it off, and thrust it into the fire: the fury of which she was incapable **had been burning** in my soul all day, (JECB 86,24)

[151] and tears, hot and large, **had** continually **been scalding** my cheek; (JECB 86,25)

[152] - in spite of regular exercise - the old head-aches - and starting wakeful nights **are coming** upon me again - (LLCB 332,21)

[153] while all sorts of doubts and fears **are troubling** my thoughts. (JECB 108,23)

4.3.8 Experiential and interpretative progressives indicating gradual processes in period II

The progressive predicator in [152] above, in addition to describing pains and ailments, implies a sense of gradual process. Within the group of attitude-focussed progressives combining with non-human subjects, some of the tokens belong to this category, several of which deal with the attacks of illnesses, such as in [154]–[156] and the themes of death and *Vita Brevis* as depicted in [157] and [158]. The deterioration of intellectual capacity is the theme of [159], in which the progressive predicator depicts this deterioration through a metaphor. The same kind of figurative language is instantiated in [160], this time as referring to the general political development, and similarly in [161]–[162], in which the gradual approach of evening and darkness is depicted.

[154] When I wrote in such haste to Dr Epps, disease **was making** rapid strides, (LLCB 216,8)

[155] but I suspect now all this **has been coming on** for years: (LLCB 224,27)

[156] ‘... We must all die one day, and the illness which **is removing** me is not painful; it is gentle and gradual: ...’ (JECB 94,34)

[157] it opened clear on my comprehension that Helen Burns **was numbering** her last days in this world, (JECB 92,35)

[158] I know life **is passing** away (LLCB 156,2)

[159] and my faculties **have been rusting** for want of exercise; (LLCB 346,30)

[160] What do you think of the course Politics **are taking**? (LLCB 30,11)

[161] It [the day] **was drawing** to an end now; but the evening was even warm, (JECB 189,7)

[162] It **was verging** on dusk, (JECB 214,13)

Some of the predicators denoting gradual processes have human subjects. Most of these are examples of self-centred utterances, the interpretative progressive in [163] being an exception to this. Again, the progressive verb phrase is realized by a verb which in the given context is a metaphor, suggesting the apparent restoration of the subject's health. A thematic parallel is provided in [164], in this case an experiential progressive. In [165] the progressive is realized by the versatile *get*, denoting a gradually evolving feeling. The experiential progressives in [166]–[167] denote changing attitudes of the heroine, the former realized by a metaphor.

[163] During the mild weather Anne really seemed something better; I began to flatter myself she **was gathering** strength. (LLCB 224,33).

[164] and by whom I need not fear that my invalid weaknesses (which indeed I **am fast overcoming**) will be felt as a burden. (LLCB 343,19)

[165] - come - come I **am getting** really tired of your absence. (LLCB 57,14)

[166] But in other points, as well as this, I **was growing** very lenient to my master: (JECB 212,30)

[167] I **was forgetting** all his faults, for which I had once kept a sharp outlook. JECB 212,31)

4.3.9 The habitual progressive in period II

With respect to the habitual/iterative progressives occurring in the period II subset of the corpus, there is a great increase in the tendency for these progressives to collocate with adverbials indicating frequency. As will be shown in the examples below, this combination more often than not results in an emotive colouring of the utterance. This function of the

construction was earlier demonstrated by means of examples [107]–[109] in the treatment of the period I habitual progressives, where its affective force possibly emerges as less forceful than in their period II counterparts. As is well known, this is one of the few non-aspectual meanings receiving much attention from Present-day English grammarians, and its current development will be further commented on in chapter 5. Some of the 19th century habitual progressives are rendered in examples [168]–[174] below.

[168] sometimes when I **am teaching**, and **sewing** I'd far rather be reading or writing- (LLCB 49,30)

[169] Why **was** I always **suffering**, always brow-beaten, always accused, for ever condemned? (JECB 22,12)

[170] Papa and Aunt **are** continually **adducing** you as an example for me to shape my actions and behavior by (LLCB 27,9)

[171] 'What does Bessie care for me? She **is** always **scolding** me.' (JECB 48,18)

[172] she **was** continually **addressing** to her such phrases as the following:- ... 'Burns, you are standing on the side of your shoe, turn your toes out immediately.' (JECB 64,5)

[173] must I from day to day sit chained to this chair prisoned with in these four bare-walls, while these glorious summer suns **are burning** in heaven (LLCB 39,6)

[174] must I from day to day sit chained to this chair prisoned with in these four bare-walls, while these glorious summer suns are burning in heaven & the year **is revolving** in its richest glow & **declaring** at the close of every summer day... (LLCB 39,7)

The progressives in boldface in [168], of which one is elliptical, function as the predicators of a temporal adverbial subclause. Initiated by the conjunction *when*, meaning *every time that*, it indicates a habit, whose frequency is in its turn restricted by the premodifying temporal adverbial *sometimes*, thus having no specific temporal reference. Considered in isolation, this progressive subclause does not seem to have any emotional colouring. However, if interpreted in relation to its matrix clause, a hypothetical-counterfactual main clause expressing an

apparently unobtainable wish, it assumes a slight flavour of frustration, implying that the speaker would sometimes rather not have to do what she actually has to do. Examples [169]–[172] are all instances of outspoken annoyance or indignation of the speaker faced with the disagreeable situations depicted by the progressives of these utterances. They all contain adverbials of frequency, adding substantially to their affective quality. Examples [173]–[174] form part of the same utterance, a rhetorical question. The plural subject in [173] seems to imply iteration of the going-on expressed by its progressive predicator. Naturally, the author refers to the same sun rising in the sky day by day, although from the way the phenomenon is depicted, one may interpret the author as implying that a fresh, new sun rises in the horizon every day. In this example the progressive seems to be a tool for letter-writing of excellent literary merit. Equally literary or even picturesque is the utterance ensuing in [174], containing one progressive indicating a durative, but annually repeated natural phenomenon, and an elliptical progressive which, apart from indicating iteration, also is an example of personification. So, even if the progressives in these two examples probably do not have any explicit gloss of annoyance attached to them, they certainly do depict a scenery inspiring a feeling of frustration in a school-teacher who would rather be an independent author.

4.3.10 The conditional, hypothetical and counterfactual progressive in period II

The imaginary perspectives referred to in Taylor's definition of mental spaces quoted in 4.1.1 prevail in the following instances, which semantically and logically belong to the mental spaces of conditions and hypotheses. Classifying these tokens has been far from easy, because they are often open to different nuances of interpretations. This is because they express various degrees of condition, and if a condition seems to imply an improbability or impossibility, the utterance in which it occurs tends to be hypothetical. Unfortunately, there are many borderline-cases. However, in this part of the present investigation the most important aim is the mapping of how progressive utterances behave in essentially non-aspectual contexts, and not necessarily whether their implications are strictly realizable or not. Example [175] below is an instance of a purely conditional statement. The progressive lexical verb combines with a modal auxiliary to create a perspective of probability in the contents of the main clause, the condition for which is set out in the preceding subclause. The progressive in example [176], on the other hand, functions as the predicator of a conditional subclause. Part and parcel of a set of apocalyptic propositions, it is hopefully to be classified as a hypothetical statement. The progressives in [177]–[178] are both preceded by the conjunction *as if*, signalling what the behaviour of the subjects is suggestive of. Such utterances are

certainly not veridical but highly hypothetical, equalling a guess. Attention is also drawn to the use of the subjunctive mood in these examples, a feature which adds to their hypothetical quality.

[175] the idea struck me that if she discovered I knew or suspected her guilt, she **would be playing off** some of her malignant pranks on me; (JECB 177,15)

[176] ‘... and if we **were dying** in pain and shame, if scorn smote us on all sides, and hatred crushed us, angels see our tortures ...’ (JECB 82,2)

[177] She looks as if she **were thinking** of something beyond her punishment - beyond her situation: (JECB 62,17)

[178] ‘Missis was, she dared say, glad enough to get rid of such a tiresome, ill-conditioned child, who always looked as if she **were watching** everybody, and **scheming** plots underhand.’ (JECB 33,34)

In Taylor’s (2002:590) definition of mental spaces, some of these entities are defined as representing ‘the desires and hopes of a speaker’. Whether or not such utterances belong to the hypothetical mental space may be open to discussion, but they are certainly not veridical. Their modal force can be derived from the combination of a progressive with a word or expression capable of locating the meaning of the utterance beyond the veridical base space, ie in Taylor’s terms a ‘space builder’ (2002:74). In [179] the verb *hope* in the matrix clause is the carrier of this function; the verbs *think* and *fancy* play a similar role in [180] and [181] respectively.

[179] I hope you **are laughing** heartily. this is not like one of my adventures is it? (LLCB 68,17)

[180] my natural tendency in moments of this sort is to get through the struggle alone - to think that one **is burdening** and **racking** others - makes all worse. (LLCB 315,19)

[181] do not too harshly repress sentiments & feelings excellent in themselves because you fear that some puppy may fancy that you **are letting** them come out to fascinate him – (LLCB 127,20)

Occasionally, non-veridical statements tend to be counterfactual, or are explicitly negative. Example [181] above probably has an implicit touch of this meaning to it. More explicit instances of counterfactual and negative utterances are provided in [182]–[186] below.

[182] and it seems as if I **ought to be working** and **braving** the rough realities of the world as other people do - (LLCB 120,10)

[183] I have given no one a right either to affirm, or hint, in the most distant manner, that I **am ‘publishing’** - (humbug!) (LLCB 185,27)

[184] I read them as a treat on holiday afternoons or by stealth when I **should have been minding** my lessons (LLCB 87,9)

[185] He comes in last: I **am** not **looking** at the arch, yet I see him enter. (JECB 197,27)

[186] I leaned against a gate, and looked into an empty field where no sheep **were feeding**, where the short grass was nipped and blanched. (JECB 47,30)

The classification of [182] as counterfactual is based on the impression that the speaker implies that she is actually not doing what she ought to. The progressive predicators add to the modal force of the marginal auxiliary *ought to*. In [183] the progressive appears to be referring to rumours emphatically disproved by the speaker in the form of inverted commas and the characterization of *humbug* followed by an exclamation mark. In [184] the modal auxiliary *should* is used with a perfect infinitive progressive, to depict a situation which was different from what actually happened, a structure which renders the utterance clearly counterfactual. Moreover, this is an example of a progressive combining the counterfactual with the habitual mental space, since the form occurs in a temporal adverbial subclause introduced by the conjunction *when*, meaning *every time that*. Examples [185]–[186] are straightforwardly negative sentences. In a sense, they are totally, explicitly counterfactual, but then again they seem to imply veridical facts, since there should be no doubt about the direction of the

speaker's gaze in [185], nor about the absence of the sheep referred to in [186]. On the other hand, referring to a non-existing action as being in progress, seems rather peculiar. Therefore, it would perhaps not be logical to classify these progressives as action-focussed either, but I am certainly not sure what to make of them.

4.4 Progressive forms with future reference

As was observed in section 4.1.1, future forms are, from a logical point of view, characterized by uncertainty as to their fulfilment in terms of 'actual ongoingness'. Since actual ongoingness is one of the properties crucial to the definition of a veridical action-focussed progressive, future progressive forms are in this thesis classified as being located invariably in the non-veridical department of Taylor's (2002:590) mental spaces. Thus, the said forms are basically defined as attitude-focussed because of their future-referring properties. Admittedly, future forms as such may vary considerably as to the degree to which they express uncertainty of realization. In this respect, the progressive's inherent suitability for the expression of 'tentativeness' (Rydén 1997:423f) is in itself a resource for the realization of statements with future reference. Future progressives occur in the form of ordinary present and past progressive verb phrases (the progressive futurate, cf chapter 1, note 1), as infinitive progressives combining with future-referring modals or as grammaticalised progressives in the semi-auxiliary *be going to*. To be sure, there are less tentative forms available for the realization of future reference, statements which are quite certain of realization, such as in the sentence *The performance will commence at 8 pm*. In spite of the fact that the events forecasted in such statements normally run their course, logic and general experience suggest that their realization is still subject to uncertainty, firm as they may be.

In her article on the modal progressive Wright (1994:470) introduces the notion of a progressive being 'interpretative rather than aspectual **in truth-conditional terms** [boldface mine, KL]'. Correspondingly, one may say that future forms are predictive or anticipatory in truth-conditional terms, ie they emerge as non-veridical at the time of speaking. Consequently, they seem to belong to the attitude-focussed subset of the present corpus; cf also Traugott's (1995:34ff) description of the development of the future form *be going to* + infinitive as an example of 'subjectification in grammaticalisation' (chapter 2, note 6), a phenomenon described in terms of 'speaker **belief** or speaker **attitude** to what is being said [boldface mine, KL]'.

As may be inferred from table 4.8, there are 101 future-referring progressives in the present corpus, accounting for 19,5% (101/518) of the tokens. They are largely dominated by

present and past tense progressives with future reference, followed by a significant number of utterances using *be going to*. Future forms realized by modal auxiliaries + progressive infinitives make up only a minority of the future time tokens. The distribution of the miscellaneous realizations of future forms is displayed in table 4.10. Present and past tense forms are referred to as ‘progressive proper’.

Table 4.10 Distribution of future-referring forms realized by the progressive proper (pp), *be going to* (bgt) and modal + infinitive progressive (m)

Future form	Period I		Period II	
	Letters	Novels	Letters	Novel
pp/total	16/22 (73%)	6/8 (75%)	18/44 (41%)	19/27 (70%)
bgt/total	2/22 (9%)	2/8 (25%)	21/44 (48%)	6/27 (22%)
m/total	4/22 (18%)	0/8 (0%)	5/44 (11%)	2/27 (8%)

The most interesting results in table 4.10 are the figures pertaining to the diachronic development of *be going to*. As expected (cf Elsness 1994:13), their overall occurrence increases considerably from period I to period II, but exclusively so in the genre of letters. Surprisingly, the figures representing the occurrence of this construction in the novels actually display a slightly decreasing tendency relatively speaking. The possible reasons for this discrepancy will be discussed in connection with the treatment of the occurrences of the form in period II below. As an overall inference, there may at least be no doubt that the *be going to* construction has gained some ground as an indicator of future time at the expense of present and past progressive forms, most probably as part of the ‘gradual semantic-pragmatic process of subjectivisation’ in Early Modern English (Wright 1994:467).

From a semantic point of view, the present and past progressives with future reference are almost invariably realized by verbs of motion, such as *come* and *go*, and the two verbs *marry* and *die*, alternatively a very restricted number of verbs denoting these major existential events. This relative monotony is a feature applying equally to both periods. By contrast, the main verbs of the *be going to* constructions are much more differentiated semantically, so the total range of future verbal forms in period II is by far the most comprehensive one, both in terms of meaning and numbers.

4.4.1 The progressive futurate in period I

Instances of present or past tense progressive forms with future reference are provided in examples [187]–[197]. Taken from both genres of the period I subset of the corpus, they mainly comprise the types of verb referred to in section 4.4.

[187] In earnest now she **is goeing** to sea, but ‘tis to Guarnesey to her freinds there.(LDO 28,5)

[188] inquiring whither the Coach **was going**, he was inform’d to Olympia’s Villa. (ICMP 216,25)

[189] but you are pleased I hope to heer I **am comeing** to you, the next faire winde Expect mee. (LDO 158,12)

[190] but since hee keep’s his horses with him tis an infalible Token that hee **is comeing**. (LDO 129,3)

[191] but there is noe such thing as perfect happynesse in the world, those that have come the neerest it, had many things to wish, and - O mee whither **am I goeing?** (LDO 83,12)

[192] And since I’**m going** to the Land of Peace; (ICMP 201,15)

[193] if you mean to make love to her olde woman this is the best time you can take, for shee **is dying**; this colde weather kils her I think. (LDO 22,8)

[194] hee has often inquired after mee to heare if I **were** not **marryeng**, (LDO 55,24)

[195] My Lady Anne Wentworth I heare **is marryeing** but I cannot Learne to whome (LDO 32,33)

[196] ...,hee **was making** a Purchase of one of the best houses in the County, I know not whither hee go’s on with it,... (LDO 87,5)

[197] my Suffolk Journy was layed aside and that into Kent hastned, I **am begining** it to day (LDO 170,8)

The progressives in [187]–[190] contain verbs of motion with a straightforwardly future reference. Examples [191]–[192] illustrate that future progressives, on a par with other attitude-focussed progressives, may collocate with metaphors. So, whereas the prospect of dying is directly referred to in [193], it is expressed by means of a euphemism in [192]. The anticipatory meaning of *to be dying* will be discussed in greater detail in the treatment of the two corresponding instances in examples [210]–[211] below. The rhetorical question in [191] may be paraphrased as *how are things going to work out for me?* The subjunctive form *were not marrying* in [194], a future negative progressive from a formal point of view, is an example of distancing for the sake of politeness. In [195] the verb *marry* recurs, in this case perhaps slightly modified by the historical present verb form *hear* in the matrix clause, indicating a rumour which is subsequently referred to in the subclause. The context of [196] shows that this is an example of future in the past, whereas [197] is a straightforward example of an activity verb in the progressive with immediate future reference, cf the temporal adverbial *to day*.

4.4.2 *be going to* in period I

In the 17th century, the development of *be going to* as a semi-auxiliary is still in its infancy. As a consequence, some instances may still crop up which are potentially ambiguous between the future-referring expression and a progressive + an adverbial of purpose. One such case was provided in chapter 3, example [19], and is repeated below as [198]. The context of [199] should provide enough clues for the expression to be interpreted as a future-referring form, which is also the case with [200]. As for the utterance rendered in [201], the wider context leads to the same conclusion.

[198] Your fellow servant upon the news you sent her **is going to Looke out** her Captain.
(LDO 28,4)

[199] they begin to stretch and yawne, they **are going to try** if eating and drinking can keep them awake and I am kindly invited to bee of their company. (LDO 37,12)

[200] he swore, that happy man she **was going to name** should die, (OAB 85,23)

[201] ‘ I know, Madam, you have Designs which you would give the World to effect; prove but then indulgent to those dear guilty Wishes I **am going to discover**: (ICMP 3,21)

4.4.3 Modals combining with the progressive in period I

Combinations of the progressive with modal auxiliaries are sparse in period I, and the very few occurrences are restricted to the letters. In 2.4.4 Shakespeare was referred to as being notable for using complex progressive verb phrases, among them progressives combining with modals, which Nehls (1988:182) describes as ‘very modern’. Considering the fact that the period I novelists do not use them almost a century later, Shakespeare’s literary language must indeed have been avant-garde for his day. In Dorothy Osborne’s letters there are three instances of progressives combining with modals with unambiguous future reference, all rendered in [202]–[204] below. Although the progressive in [205] combines with a putative *should*, the wider context reveals that this verb phrase probably also has future reference.

[202] I **shall be sending** you all I heare (LDO 154,5)

[203] but I beleeve by that time his wife has a litle recoverd her sicknesse and the losse of her Childe, hee **will bee comeing** this way. (LDO 52,31)

[204] & perhaps when you have changed you will finde soe litle difference, that you’l **bee calling** for your owne againe. (LDO 75,22)

[205] it is soe like my luck too, that you **should bee goeing** I know not whither againe (LDO 15,7)

4.4.4 The progressive futurate in period II

Proceeding to period II, the present and past progressive forms with future reference do not differ much from the period I subset as to their limited variation. A selection of these forms is provided in examples [206]–[217] below.

[206] ‘**Are** you **going** somewhere, Helen? ...’ (JECB 94,22)

[207] ‘... **Are** you **going** home?’ (JECB 94,22)

[208] ‘But where **are** you **going** to, Helen? ...’ (JECB 95,3)

[209] ‘I believe; I have faith: I **am going** to God.’ (JECB 95,4)

[210] I should not have suspected that it meant she **was dying**; but I knew instantly now:
(JECB 92,34)

[211] ‘I’ve been to see a poor young girl, who, I’m afraid, **is dying**.’ (LLCB 81,23)

[212] Miss Eliza Wooler and Mrs Wooler **are coming** here next Christmas (LLCB 57,6)

[213] he desires me to say that the bridegroom **is coming** (LLCB 14,2)

[214] He stopped in the passage: he tapped: like lightning it flashed on me what **was coming**.
(LLCB 357,16)

[215] we **are expecting** company this afternoon (LLCB 22,23)

[216] She sees no means of obtaining employment she would like in England, so she **is leaving** it. (LLCB 91,1)

[217] A phase of my life **was closing** to-night, a new one **opening** to-morrow; (JECB 104,24)

The progressive forms of the verb *go* in examples [206]–[209], which form part of the same conversation in *Jane Eyre*, illustrate the way in which the verb is used both literally and metaphorically. The protagonist, not realizing that Helen is talking about her imminent death, interprets her friend’s words as meaning that she is going away for a while in examples [206]–[208], which is emphatically denied by the metaphoric use of the verb in [209]. With respect to the explicit use of the verb *die*, it frequently occurs as a present or past progressive form when an anticipatory meaning is intended, which is exemplified in [210]–[211] above. Some people would certainly contend that these two progressives are not encoded as future forms but as regular present and past progressives for the description of the final stages of a gradual process, cf Rydén (1997:423). The question of whether dying should be defined as a more or less momentary event or a long-lasting process depends on each individual’s definition of this final existential event, so I have chosen to let my own opinion prevail in the description of these tokens. The verb *come* in [212] is part of an utterance referring to the concrete planning of a visit, whereas in [213] the same verb occurs in a biblical context, referring metaphorically

to the Day of Judgment. In [214] the construction is used in anticipation of a crucial event in the life of the protagonist. Examples [215]–[216] illustrate literal future forms of the verbs *expect* and *leave* respectively, and finally the two progressives in [217] are clearly metaphoric depictions of the protagonist’s assessment of her future life.

4.4.5 *be going to* in period II

As mentioned in section 4.4, the *be going to* construction dominates the set of future forms in the period II letters, whereas in the novel the form remains modestly represented. There is, in other words, a huge variation in Charlotte Brontë’s application of the semi-auxiliary in her epistolary and literary production, the reasons for which are most probably complex. Above all, stylistic considerations of the author (conscious or sub-conscious) may have played a decisive role in her employment and deployment of the form. The letters, being largely addressed to relatives and friends, use an informal and colloquial register. Given the subjective force this auxiliary has developed in Modern English (Traugott 1995:34ff), it is perhaps hardly surprising that almost half of the future forms in the letters of period II are instances of *be going to*. The issues dealt with may also have been conducive to the frequent occurrence of the construction; the letters are concerned with the planning of journeys, visits to be made, the search for employment and the anticipation tied to these kinds of activity. As regards the number of instances of *be going to* in *Jane Eyre*, it was unexpectedly modest. One possible explanation for this result may be that the author adheres to a more formal and less colloquial register in her literary production. Consequently, the bulk of examples [218]–[226] below, being instances of the semi-auxiliary in period II, are taken from the letters.

[218] They **are going to emigrate** - (LLCB 90,26)

[219] I **was going to say** something about what had passed between me and Mrs Reed; (JECB 49,11)

[220] I **am not going to talk** about my sufferings, (LLCB 398,19)

[221] and I **am going to be** a governess (LLCB 31,6)

[222] Everyone asks me what I **am going to do** now that I am returned home and every one seems to expect that I should immediately commence a school - (LLCB 119,16)

[223] and they **are going to have** a meeting at the Mechanic's Institute (LLCB 263,23)

[224] Who gravely asked you 'whether Miss Brontë **was not going to be married** to her papa's Curate'? (LLCB 152,1)

[225] He had not had one touch of rheumatism - that report was quite groundless - He **was going to die**, however, or something like it, (LLCB 388,26)

[226] 'Oh!' I thought, 'she **is not going to die**; they are mistaken: she could not speak and look so calmly if she were.' (JECB 94,11)

Compared to its corresponding instances from period I, the semi-auxiliary in period II seems to have grown into a slightly more versatile construction during the intervening years. To be sure, it still most frequently combines with verbs of activity and cognition, as illustrated in examples [218]–[220]. However, some of the main verbs of the *be going to* verb phrases belonging to the 19th century are realized by the primary verbs *be*, *do* and *have*, which are exemplified in [221]–[223]. These combinations do not occur in the 17th century, at least not as evidenced in the present corpus. Moreover, negations seem to collocate more often with this semi-auxiliary in period II, such as in [220] and [224], although the latter is obviously an instance of negation for the sake of polite distancing. The main verb *die* appears to be used in an ironical context in example [225], whereas the reflections on the subject rendered in example [226] seem to be conceived in full earnest.

4.4.6 Modals combining with the progressive in period II

With a view to the rate of modals combining with a progressive for the signposting of future time, it is evident from table 4.10 that this structure has not increased much, and some of the occurrences tend to be at the same time epistemic¹⁷ and future-referring. According to Taylor (2002:406), '[t]he modals constitute one of the most hotly contested aspects of Modern English', and since the development of the modals in the direction of epistemic modality was gathering momentum already in Early Modern English (Wright 1994:467), their semantic status in the 19th century presumably approximates that of Present-day English. Thus, the assessment of modal root uses versus epistemic uses may be a complicated affair. Some future-referring utterances containing the combination modal + infinitive progressive are provided below in examples [227]–[231].

[227] ‘Never mind it, at present: I **shall be coming down** before tea-time: I’ll make it myself.’ (JECB 178,13)

[228] ‘Yes,’ she said, ‘it is a pretty place; but I fear it **will be getting** out of order, ...’ (JECB 115,13)

[229] I am afraid also that Papa thinks a little too much about his want of money; he says the match would be a degradation – that I **should be throwing** myself away – (LLCB 358,34)

[230] I **may be losing** the purest gem – (LLCB 370,3)

[231] I may be losing the purest gem – and to me far the most precious – life can give – genuine attachment – or I **may be escaping** the yoke of a morose temper – (LLCB 370,5)

Example [227], previously presented as [3], unambiguously illustrates an intentional root use of the modal *shall*. The progressive verb phrase in [228] is the predicator of a nominal subclause functioning as the object of the matrix clause *I fear*. In this case, the progressive seems to derive an additional epistemic force from the evaluating contents of the matrix clause. The utterances in [229]–[231] emerge as epistemic because they assess aspects of possible future situations with respect to their likelihood, apparently on the basis of common sense. They do, however, also have a hypothetical touch to them.

4.5 Summary of the attitude-focussed progressive

The development of the modal or attitude-focussed progressive was most probably triggered by the gradual subjectivisation process taking place in Early Modern English (Wright 1994:467), a process during which the speakers’ focus of attention seems to shift from the verb phrase to their own assessment of its contents. Thus, the attitude-focussed facet of the construction has developed from a stylistic to a subjective-pragmatic resource, although it may, and indeed often does exhibit various degrees of aspectual properties as well, cf. Rydén (1997:421).

Diachronically, the present corpus reveals a considerable levelling of distribution of the attitude-focussed progressive between the two genres of letters and novels, which was ascribed

to the maturation of the novel genre in the direction of a medium for psychological exploration and introspection, approaching the personal register of the letters.

Based on Taylor's (2002:590) theory of mental spaces, the attitude-focussed tokens of the corpus were assigned to various off-base spaces described as experiential/interpretational, habitual, conditional, hypothetical and counterfactual, ranked by decreasing degree of veridicality. Future forms were defined as a particular subgroup among the attitude-focussed progressives, and accordingly treated separately.

The experiential/interpretative progressives proved to be by far the most numerous group, accounting for approximately half the tokens (173/347). In terms of diachronic distribution, their proportions are very stable in the letters, making up 67% and 68% of the non-future tokens in period I and period II respectively. In the novels, on the other hand, the experiential/interpretative progressives display an increase from 50% to 77%. From a semantic point of view, the period I experiential and interpretative progressives are realized by private verbs, sometimes collocating with metaphors and almost invariably combining with human subjects. These features subsist in the corresponding period II subset of progressives, with the addition of several innovations such as a general differentiation of verb types, a substantial increase in the rate of non-human, including inanimate, subjects and predications indicating gradual evolution and processes.

As for the remaining mental spaces, the modal force of the habitual progressives was generally speaking found to reside in the lack of concrete temporal reference and the iterative effect of the construction. In both periods investigated, the habitual progressives were more often than not modified by adverbials of frequency or regularity, with a marked increase in their aptitude to result in a negative emotive colouring of the utterance in period II. The conditional, hypothetical and counterfactual mental spaces were sparsely represented in the corpus, and frequently coinciding with features such as modal auxiliaries, the subjunctive mood, figurative language and illusory perception. Future forms were categorically classified as attitude-focussed, mainly because they are predictive or anticipatory in truth-conditional terms and emerge as non-veridical at the time of speaking. They are largely dominated by present and past tense progressives with future reference, closely followed by a significant number of utterances using the semi-auxiliary *be going to*, the latter displaying an important diachronic increase. Surprisingly however, this development applies to the letters only, the relative rate of the semi-auxiliary remaining virtually unaltered from period I to period II as far as the novels are concerned. Since the *be going to* expression is largely regarded as a feature

of informal language, this unexpected result was ascribed to stylistic considerations of the author. The rate of future progressives using modal auxiliaries is comparatively low.

5. SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

This investigation has addressed the status of the progressive verb form at two historical junctures, focussing on its diachronic development into a marker of temporal aspect on the one side, and a modal instrument on the other. It was postulated that the general increase of the progressive during the centuries of modern English was stimulated by the incipient semantic differentiation of the construction into one action-focussed and one attitude-focussed facet in the infancy of Early Modern English. This increase was subsequently sustained by the further development of these facets, a semantic split defined as becoming ‘increasingly explicit in standardized British English in the course of the modern period’ (Rydén 1997:422).

5.1 General summary

In order for the study of the said semantic dualism to be aptly founded, the history of the progressive was sketched in chapter 2. As regards its use in Old and Middle English, there seems to be a general consensus among scholars that the form was originally a stylistic variant. Thus, its rudimentary function is that of emphasis, or more precisely to direct the readers’ and listeners’ attention towards the content of the verbal element of the sentence for situationally distinctive purposes. Such uses include for instance dramatic enhancement, the transmission of encyclopedic knowledge and moral instruction.

Apart from a slight drop in its occurrence in Middle English, the progressive remains fairly stable in function and frequency until the dawn of Early Modern English. Formally, the participle of the construction takes the ending of the verbal noun at the end of Middle English, a merger regarded as the initial trigger of the subsequent perpetual increase of the form (Elsness 1994:5). This increase was described in 2.4 as gathering momentum in Early Modern English. In this connection, the influence exerted by the gerundial construction on the progressive was pointed out. The formal and semantic similarities of the two constructions and the resulting interaction between them are said to have been the genesis of the progressive’s function as a marker of temporal aspect (Nehls 1988:184ff). As for its non-aspectual uses, the development of the modal or attitude-focussed progressive was described as being triggered by the gradual subjectivisation process taking place in Early Modern English (Wright 1994:467). In this respect, the significance of subjective-pragmatic considerations in the encoding and decoding of the form was emphasized, as well as the importance of contextual interpretation, including the fact that any progressive token comes in a certain semantic amalgam of action and attitude (Ryden 1997:421). The historical evolution of the semi-auxiliary *be going to* was also explained as a feature of subjectivisation. Further

extensions of the progressive paradigm to complex verb phrases such as perfective, modal and passive forms, including the progressive of the copular *to be* were outlined in 2.4.4.

The material for the investigation was presented in chapter 3 as a personally compiled gender-specific corpus. The letters were mainly selected for their colloquial and conversational style, and the novels for their focus on characters, social relations and psychological exploration. As the progressive is considered a feature of subjectivisation, all of the stylistic characteristics listed above were considered as signalling a comparatively frequent use of the construction in the works comprised in the corpus. Using a personal corpus in the search of definite grammatical forms has its particular advantages and drawbacks. On the plus side, the opportunity of contextualizing the tokens was seen as essential, not least in view of the pragmatic properties of the construction investigated. On the minus side is the modest volume of the corpus with its 518 tokens. Recorded in a Filemaker Pro database, the tokens were identified on the basis of a wide definition, hence the inclusion of progressives combining with central and marginal modals, modal idioms and catenative constructions. Elliptical forms were included for their semantic interest, although they were not counted as separate examples. Even the semi-auxiliary *be going to* was subject to sampling, considering its history as a progressive proper followed by an adverbial of purpose, plus its increasingly important role as a marker of future temporality at the expense of the progressive futurate.

Notwithstanding this inclusive sampling strategy, average frequencies revealed for each time period proved to be slightly below results from similar investigations. My results displayed an increase in the frequency of progressives per 1,000 words from 0.81 to 2.23 during a timespan of 150 – 200 years, with only a marginal difference across the individual genres for each period. With respect to crude numbers, there was a similar even distribution of progressives across the genres of letters and novels within each time period.

Prior to the analysis of the numerous sub-categories of progressives contained in the corpus, a superordinate taxonomy for the identification of the two main categories of action-focussed and attitude-focussed progressives was presented. This classificatory system was moulded in Taylor's theory of mental spaces, according to which a mental space may be veridical, or more or less non-veridical. Thus, the action-focussed progressives were classified as belonging to the veridical base space, whereas the attitude-focussed categories were assigned to various non-veridical off-base spaces according to their degree of non-veridicality. All future forms were invariably classified as non-veridical. The collocational features of the attitude-focussed progressive were pointed out, comprising among other things

the use of modals, the subjunctive, figures of speech such as metaphor and simile, including explicit references to pictures or other imaginary representations of reality. With respect to the action-focussed progressive, the notion of ‘aspect’ was discussed in 4.1.2, in which it was defined as a feature of Late Modern/Present-day English only, and not a very felicitous term for the characterization of the Early Modern English action-focussed progressive. The evolution of aspect was still at a very immature stage in the 17th century, which is evidenced by a persistent irregularity of its use during the period in question.

In 4.2 the results pertaining to the action-focussed progressives were presented, revealing a substantial difference in their relative distribution across genres in period I as compared to period II. This alteration in the direction of a more equal distribution of the action-focussed forms in period II was interpreted as a stylistic levelling of the two genres in a diachronic perspective. In the period I letters their proportion is low – 8/60 (13.3%), most probably due to the communicational motivation of the author; the addressee was her fiancé. In Charlotte Brontë’s collection of letters, on the other hand, which comprises several addressees of various degrees of intimacy, the corresponding proportion is 58/193 (30.1%). As for the period I novels, the comparatively ample use of action-focussed progressives (24/52 = 46.2%) may be interpreted as indicative of their function as pragmatic indicators of the changing scenes in the narratives, whereas the autobiographical point of view in the 19th century novel with its psychological exploration may be considered as demoting the use of the action-focussed progressive (81/213 = 38.0%).

Syntactically, the most conspicuous diachronic change was the dramatic reduction from period I to period II in the occurrence of progressives receiving their durative meaning from their collocation with temporal adverbials and subordinating conjunctions. More often than not, this durative meaning proved to result in a framing effect in period I, particularly in the novels (15/24 = 63%). In the 19th century subset of action-focussed progressives the corresponding figures were 22/81 (27%). This drop was taken as indicative of the progressive’s development into a more **independent** marker of durative temporal aspect. As regards the semantics of the action-focussed progressives, the period I tokens were largely realized by fundamental verbs of action, motion and utterance, while the range of verbs was far more differentiated in period II, the verbs of stance being a major newcomer in this respect, amounting to 33/139 tokens (there being none in period I). Another important innovation was the combination of action-focussed progressives with non-human subjects. These innovations seem to have been made possible by dint of the action-focussed progressive’s growing status as an independent marker of durative temporal aspect. Consequently, it would not be

unreasonable to conjecture that the general increase in the occurrence of the action-focussed progressive during the centuries of modern English was prompted by its new independent synsemantic status in the first place, and next, by the resulting ability of the form to collocate with a wider range of verbs and subjects.

In section 4.3 the results relating to the development of the attitude-focussed progressive were presented. Constituting the majority of the corpus, these figures revealed a diachronic levelling of distribution across the genres investigated, similar to that of the results pertaining to the action-focussed set of tokens. The great discrepancy between letters and novels in period I most probably has stylistical implications: the novelists being performers of transactional writing (their livelihood depended on it), they would necessarily have to adhere to a rather formal and impersonal register. The letters of Dorothy Osborne, by contrast, are essentially intimate in style and contents, hence their high proportion of attitude-focussed progressives. According to the classificatory system described in 4.1.1, the attitude-focussed progressives were subdivided by their location in diverse non-veridical mental spaces, the most 'populated' of which was the experiential/interpretative space. Out of the 246 non-future attitude-focussed progressives recorded in the corpus, the experiential/interpretative forms amount to 173 (70.3%) of the tokens. As far as the letters are concerned, a striking feature of these progressives is the fact that they are very stable diachronically, accounting for 67% of the examples in period I and 68% in period II. The corresponding figures for the novels are 50% and 77%. With a view to the terminology applied to these examples, it was considered appropriate, at least for the sake of good order in a numerous subgroup, to discriminate between the notions 'experiential' and 'interpretative', the former applying to first person predications and the latter to second and third person predications.

The main function of the experiential/interpretative progressive is to act as a pragmatic resource available to the speakers for the subjective assessment of an activity, a situation or simply of the utterance they occur in. Thus, the experiential progressives were typically realized by private verbs in both periods, which is rather natural given the fact that the speaker and the grammatical subject of these utterances are invariably identical. Compared with its Early Modern English counterpart, the 19th century subset of experiential progressives proved to be more diversified and specialised in terms of semantics and collocating imagery.

Diachronically speaking, the interpretative progressives emerge as a very interesting category, as these forms convey a wealth of innovations in period II as well as a range of 'richly expressive' (Wright 1995:160) verbal meanings already in period I. In the latter sub-period, they exclusively serve the purpose of commenting on other people's actions, attitudes

and physical or mental condition, frequently collocating with metaphors. In period II this function persists, but, interestingly, often with the complementation of different kinds of semantic support, adding to their modal force. This is presumably a feature of Rydén's increasingly explicit 'semantic split' referred to in chapter 1. The semantics of these progressives is very heterogeneous indeed, collocating with a wealth of figurative language. In this respect, attention is drawn to the possibility that the period II part of the corpus, originating from one of the world's most recognized authors, is not necessarily representative of the usage of the day. On a par with the diachronic development of the action-focused progressives, the interpretative progressives increasingly function as predicators of non-human subjects, such as demonstrative pronouns, concrete objects, abstract notions, meteorological phenomena and physical and not least mental feelings, the latter testifying to Arnaud's (1998:130) theory of the progressive as an apt instrument for the description of emotions and other subjective experience. Predicators denoting the evolution of gradual processes is another innovation of the interpretative category.

Moving on to the habitual/iterative progressive, its modal force was described as residing in the absence of specific temporal reference and the iterative effect of the construction. As regards the collocation of this progressive category with adverbials of frequency or regularity, there is a clear tendency for these adverbials to convey the well-known emotional colouring of annoyance in the 19th century subset of the corpus, whereas their 17th century counterparts often emerge as more neutral. The latter tendency seems to be regaining ground in Present-day English. In this connection, Eftevåg (2000:71) refers to Schopf (1974:26), who states that 'the "affective-emotional" use of the progressive is in the process of taking over the function of expressing ordinary habitual action'. So, history repeats itself, as it were, cyclically.

In both of the periods investigated, the conditional, hypothetical and counterfactual progressives constitute a minority of the tokens. They all belong to markedly non-veridical mental spaces, describing situation types ranging from the probable to the impossible. Moreover, they frequently coincide with modals, the subjunctive, the conjunctions *if* or *as if*, figurative language and expressions of imaginary perception, all of which are features compatible with the modal force of the attitude-focused progressive. In period II the hypothetical meaning is occasionally realized by spacebuilders such as the verbs *hope*, *think* and *fancy*.

Future forms, be it the progressive futurate, infinitives combining with *be going to* or modals combining with progressive infinitives, were invariably defined as attitude-focused,

as they are predictive or anticipatory in truth-conditional terms. The rate of future progressives using modal auxiliaries was relatively low in both periods, whereas the semi-auxiliary *be going to* was found to have gained some ground as a marker of future temporality at the expense of the progressive futurate in a diachronic perspective. However, this increase occurred exclusively in the letters, and this was ascribed to stylistic considerations of the author.

5.2 Concluding remarks

The increase in the frequency of the action-focussed progressive in Modern English was explained above as being basically due to its growing synsemantic independence. In this respect the attitude-focussed progressive seems to have taken a somewhat different course of development, in view of the growing complexity of its collocational features, eg adjuncts, subclauses of comparison and the occurrence of progressives in subclauses embedded in main clauses whose verbal element is realized by cognitive verbs such as *conclude*, *feel*, *know* and *think*. A very frequent use of metaphor and other figurative language is also a characteristic feature of this development, which is documented in sections 4.3.6 to 4.3.9. Nevertheless, these sections also provide evidence for the fact that the attitude-focussed progressive **matches** its action-focussed counterpart in terms of the increasing range of subjects it combines with, plus the growing diversification in its lexical realization. This expansion in type of subjects and verbs is undoubtedly related to the increase in the occurrence of the attitude-focussed progressive over the centuries of Modern English, although it is far from easy to explain how the said expansion came about. It might be down to an analogy effect deriving from the corresponding development of the action-focussed progressive mentioned in 5.1. Considering Rydén's (1997:421) theory on the 'various amalgams' of the progressive meaning, there is probably an interactional relationship between the two facets of the progressive with respect to their diachronic evolution, in addition to their arguably individual developmental tracks. Alternatively, or additionally, the said expansion might be a more direct result of the subjectivisation process of the verb phrase commencing in Early Modern English (Wright 1994:467).

The fact remains, however, that the attitude-focussed progressive has expanded in the language both in terms of frequency, semantic diversity, collocational features and the types of subject predicators belonging to this facet combine with. Thus, it should be reasonable to conclude that the versatility resulting from the semantic split into the two facets of the

construction and the individual evolution of each one of them are decisive factors in an account of the progress of the progressive in Early and Late Modern English.

Due to the limited scope of the present thesis, many questions pertaining to the development of the progressive have not been dealt with. One such issue is the codification of the category of aspect in the 19th century (cf also Rydén 1997:423). In this respect, a mapping of the use of simple forms versus progressive forms for the expression of an action in progress in diverse registers could be informative. As regards the attitude-focussed progressive, there is probably a number of sociolinguistic and psycholinguistic questions still unaccounted for, both in Present-day English and historically. Furthermore, an investigation of the frequent use of metaphor in the attitude-focussed facet of the progressive could be an interesting prospect, not least in the light of the attention the pervasiveness of metaphor in the language receives nowadays (Lakoff and Johnson 2003:3).

With respect to the status of the progressive in Present-day English, a brief overview was given in the introduction, revealing that major grammar books tend to treat the action-focussed progressive as the rule. The attitude-focussed progressive is reduced to the status of being exceptional, in spite of Wright's (1994:468) claim that the subjective use of the construction is 'extremely common' today. One reason for this imbalance may be that the objective action-focussed progressive, being obligatory and subject to fixed rules, is far easier to pin down. The subjectively motivated attitude-focussed progressive, on the other hand, is in principle optional and consequently more evasive by nature. However, provided that Wright's appreciation of the progressive as a modal instrument is correct, chances are that the relative importance attributed to the aspectual character of the construction has grown out of proportions. And in that case, the attitude-focussed progressive should not be ignored to the point of living its life almost incognito.

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ENDNOTES

¹ Huddleston and Pullum's account on non-aspectual uses implies that the 'progressive futurate' is a term for present and past progressive predications with intentional or anticipatory future meaning.

² Panchronic = diachronic + synchronic.

³ For the remaining part of chapter 2, examples are taken from secondary sources.

⁴ Traugott (1995:32) defines grammaticalisation as 'the process whereby lexical items or phrases come through frequent use in certain highly constrained local contexts to be reanalysed as having syntactic and morphological functions, and, once grammaticalised, continue to develop new grammatical functions'.

⁵ Other features of this process mentioned by Wright (1994:467) are the modals becoming increasingly tied up with epistemic modality and the incipient emphatic function of dummy *do*.

⁶ Traugott's (1995:32) own definition: ' "Subjectification in grammaticalisation" is, broadly speaking, the development of a grammatically identifiable expression of speaker belief or speaker attitude to what is said'.

⁷ Clandestine recordings of verbal interaction. Ethical objections are certainly appropriate.

⁸ Aphra Behn acted as a professional spy for England in Holland.

⁹ The issue is a facsimile reproduction of a 1696 print.

¹⁰ *Concise Oxford English Dictionary* (2004) defines the concept of 'simile' as a 'figure of speech involving the comparison of one thing with another thing of a different kind'.

¹¹ In 4.3.3 and 4.3.8 the notion 'iterative' is described as a property pertaining to the habitual progressive, an application of the construction which has no specific, concrete time reference. In the present context the term indicates an act being repeated over an implicitly concrete and limited period (eg a few seconds).

¹² According to Quirk et al. (1985:205f) '[t]he main stance verbs are *live, stand, sit* and *lie*, and they are characterized by their ability to be used both (a) with the nonprogressive to express a permanent state, and (b) with the progressive to express a temporary state'.

¹³ Wright (1994:472) refers to verbs of personal activities as 'private verbs, such as *dispute* and *kiss*'. Cf Quirk et al's (1985:202f) more restricted definition of verbs denoting "'private" states'.

¹⁴ In Bækken (2002:60) the following example occurs, containing a verb of stance collocating with the progressive to indicate permanent location: 'April 1st i went ... to see the roomes of that incomparable Palace of Luxembourg ... one of the most noble, entire and finish's Piles that **is standing** [boldface mine, KL] in any city of the World'.

¹⁵ The predicator *am takeing* in [83] forms part of the idiomatic expression *to take care to know*, meaning *to ask*.

¹⁶ 'Habitual framing' would probably be a suitable term for the description of their function.

¹⁷ Taylor (2002:406) defines the epistemic force of the modals as deriving from 'logic, reasoning and common sense'.