

CONTINUOUS TENSES FUNCTIONING IN THE SONG LYRICS BY STING

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In accordance with English grammar rules, the Continuous tenses (also known as Progressive) express the action that is still in process (either in Present, Past or Future). Respectively, the structure of this form, which includes the modal verb 'to be' in all of its personal or tense variations, would significantly increase the philosophical content of Present / Past / Future Continuous construction in a literary work. As a matter of fact, it becomes an expression of a speaker's self-consciousness, the best way to show the subtle movements of one's soul; on the other hand, it allows chaining one's empirical experiences, observations or reflections to create the individual worldview.

The Continuous forms (as well as the Perfect Continuous closely related to them), albeit positioned as the markers of a process itself or its duration, actually indicate the point moment of speech – just when an action is being perceived and interpreted in a speaker's consciousness. In particular, upon studying the song lyrics by Sting, in which the Present Continuous is the dominant among other Continuous and Perfect Continuous forms, it is essential to outline what kind of action is shown in progress, in order to affirm it as a key point in development of the plot or boosting the dramatic intonation of a narration. This function appears to be a highlight when examined in juxtaposition of various verb tense forms within a single sentence, and furthermore in one or several stanzas (in songs such as "They Dance Alone," "When the Angels Fall," "Big Lie Small World," "After the Rain Has Fallen"). Apart from this, the catenation of Continuous or Perfect Continuous verbs (for instance, in "Fill Her Up," "The Night the Pugilist Learned How to Dance," "Sacred Love") contributes to creation of meditative or dreamy atmosphere, which factor allows approving the discussed tense form as the means to express the speaker's internal world in a song text.

Overall, the studies of the Continuous tense forms in the song lyrics by Sting make possible to confirm that this group stands for the embodiment of diverse philosophical concepts, preliminarily revealed by the specialists in cognitive linguistics and poetic speech theory, – immediacy, transiency, inconsistency, and variability of internal movements in a speaker's mind. Therefore, what these concepts would have in common, while functioning in a poetic work, is their ability to display 'being-now-and-here,' through which the new, purely authorial vision of an archetypal image is being created in a song.

Key words: Continuous tenses, Perfect Continuous tenses, poetry, Sting's lyrics, narration, dramatic intonation, 'being-now-and-here'.

Науменко Н. В. Функції часів групи Continuous у пісенній ліриці Стінга. Згідно з правилами англійської граматики, часові форми Continuous (відомі також як Progressive) виражають дію об'єкта як процес, котрий триває, тривав або триватиме у певний момент або проміжок часу. Відповідно побудова цієї форми, яка передбачає використання модального дієслова «бути» у всіх особових або часових варіаціях, значною мірою зумовлює філософічність конструкції Present / Past / Future Continuous у літературному творі: з одного боку, вона стає проявом самосвідомості ліричного оповідача, найкращим способом показати внутрішні порухи його душі, а з другого – нанизуванням або чергуванням його емпіричних переживань, спостережень або роздумів, із яких твориться особлива картина світу.

Зауважено, що форми Continuous та пов'язані з ними Perfect Continuous, хоча й позиціонуються як визначники тривалості процесу, насправді виражають дію в точковий момент мовлення, саме тоді, коли відбувається її сприйняття та перетворення у свідомості ліричного оповідача. Зокрема, у пісенній ліриці Стінга, де з усієї сукупності зазначених часових форм домінують Present Continuous, важливо звернути увагу на те, яку саме дію показано у процесі, з метою виявити її роль у розвитку ліро-епічного сюжету пісні або посиленні драматизму оповіді. Акцентовано, що особливо виразною ця функція виявляється в зіставленні різних форм дієслів у межах одного речення, а надалі й однієї або кількох строф (у піснях "They Dance Alone," "When the Angels Fall," "Big Lie Small World," "After the Rain Has Fallen"). Нанизування дієслів у тривалих або перфектно-тривалих часах (наприклад, у творах "Fill Her Up," "The Night the Pugilist Learned How to Dance," "Sacred Love") сприяє створенню атмосфери роздуму, мрії, що й уможливорює кваліфікувати зазначену часову форму як чинник реалізації внутрішнього світу оповідача в пісенному тексті.

Дослідження функції часів Continuous у пісенній ліриці Стінга дає підстави висновувати, що ця група виступає втіленням розмаїтих філософських концептів – безпосередності, минулості, мінливості, варіативності внутрішніх порухів душі ліричного героя, які виокремлюють фахівці з когнітивної лінгвістики та теорії поетичного мовлення. Спільним знаменником для них можна ствердити «буття-тут-і-зараз», крізь призму якого в пісні формується нове, суто авторське бачення архетипного образу.

Ключові слова: часи групи Continuous, часи групи Perfect Continuous, поезія, лірика Стінга, оповідь, драматична інтонація, «буття-тут-і-зараз».

Defining the problem and argumentation of the topicality of the consideration. “Every breath you take, every move you make, every bond you break, every step you take – I’ll be watching you.” This opening stanza from “Every Breath You Take,” released in 1983 as a part of The Police’s Opus Magnum, “Synchronicity,” sets up a paradigm of this research – functioning of Continuous tenses in Sting’s song lyrics, particularly in combination with other tense forms. Initially, a question would emerge about the song quoted, ‘Why just Future Continuous but not Future Simple? Should it have been caused by some prosodic restrictions?’ It would be hard to find a specific answer because of the sentence structure resembling the Conditional I – the homogeneous Simple Present predicates in an auxiliary clause to be followed by the Future Simple (*I will watch you*, or *I’ll watch you*) in the main one. On the other hand, the Future Continuous structure does not only match with a five-syllable line of the couplet, but also outlines the fact that the speaker – an abandoned lover – tends to watch his addressee ‘now-and-here.’

Upon reflecting over a tense as a grammar category, in particular the Continuous paradigm, a Moroccan linguist Mubarak Abdessalami put it in tally with notions of Tension and Time, simultaneously. “For us, humans, time is two poles, a past that is tormenting and an insecure far future that is worrying. We are in the middle torn apart between the sufferings and regrets of the past and the terrifying threats and worries of the future. The present continuous, thus, is the only real tense capable of describing what we are doing right now and what we are planning to do in the near future. It is capable of sharing it instantly” [5, 10]. As for L. Romain and his co-authors who studied verb tense and aspect from the viewpoint of a learner’s experience, “the progressive is somewhere between the simple and the perfect in terms of immediacy: it is part of the speaker’s immediate scope but is unbounded...” [14, 257].

Paradoxically, but the tense indicated as ‘Continuous,’ which term would imply a recurrent and long-lasting action, is used to describe an event happening right at the moment of speech. Whenever used in a literary work, especially in combination with a Simple or Perfect form, Continuous tenses appear to reflect a philosophy of ‘being-now-and-here,’ indicated someplace by the auxiliaries ‘now,’ ‘right now,’ ‘at the moment,’ ‘currently,’ ‘at midnight,’ ‘at that time,’ ‘from 5 till 7,’ ‘tonight’ and others.

Philosophical content of this tense form, in correlation with the notion of poetry itself as ‘the record of the best and happiest moments of the happiest and the best minds’ (P. B. Shelley), can be supported with the following quote, “We are aware of evanescent visitations of thought and feeling, sometimes associated with place of person, sometimes regarding our own mind alone, and always arising unforeseen and departing unbidden, but elevating and delightful beyond all expression” [15, 207].

Analysis of recent research and publications. During the last decades, the functions of verb tenses in English have been studied predominantly in terms of didactics, in other words – how to use them in everyday speech and differ from other tense forms [9, 3].

Mohamad Ma’mor and Hamidah Yamat, the Malaysian specialists in EFL, came up with an idea to use

game module named ‘Son, Mummy and the -ing Cat’ in teaching students to comprehend and use the Continuous tenses in sentence building. In their works, they describe the method like this, “The ‘son’ signifies auxiliary verbs, ‘mummy’ signifies the main verb while ‘cat’ signifies the -ing participle. The module was based on a simple analogy on which the ‘mummy’ (main verb) could go out alone thus forming the concept of a complete sentence with an object and a main verb (e.g. *They cry*). There is a condition for the ‘son’ (auxiliary verb) to tag along where they must bring the ‘cat’ (-ing participle) thus forming a complete present continuous tense sentence (*They are crying*)” [11, 2834]. As a result, by having had the focused teaching material such as “Son, Mummy and the -ing Cat,” teachers will not only be able to mask grammar-focused activity to a novel methodic paradigm that could integrate all English learners to generate the correct foreign-language sentences [11, 2836–2837], but also elevate the students’ motivation to learn far more complex grammar rules.

The Ukrainian philologists Olena Popova and Yulia Lazutkina study the Continuous form through the prism of the combination of tense and aspect, therefore advocating it as extremely helpful in creating the poetic discourse: “The most appropriate approach is considering the category of aspect to be blended with the category of tense, that is expressed through the Continuous model «to be + Ving». This form can have numerous meanings including the duration of an action, its repetition, simultaneousness, a planned action, an intention to do something, etc. So, the Continuous tense is polysemantic” [13, 61].

L. Romain et al. asserted that “...a progressive... denotes an event that is viewed internally, i.e., the event is seen as ongoing by the speaker, which may thus require contextual backup that anchors the relationship between speaker and event” [14, 258]. It is possible to apply this statement to studying the functions of Continuous tenses, along with all the others, in poetic language as the best way to express the internal experience of a person.

Therefore, having weighed up all the opinions cited, we can confirm that Continuous as a purely linguistic term, as well as its derivative Continuity, within the framework of studying a poetic work should become a symbolic synonym to Lasting, on which Martin Heidegger wrote: “Poetry is existing through Word and in Word. What would emerge then? Something Lasting. However, is anything Lasting able to emerge? Isn’t it what has always been there? No! <...> The simple must be wrested from complexity, the measure must be set before the immeasurable. Thence what supports and rules through Being as a whole must come into the open. Being must be opened so that Existing can appear” [8, 41].

Setting the goals and tasks of the article. The goals of this article are to elucidate the cases of Continuous (as well as Perfect Continuous) tenses usage by Sting, upon analyzing the song lyrics written in different periods of his career, in accordance with accepted grammar norms and possible deviations from them, and therefore to assert their role in composing the lyrical narration. The main tasks to achieve these goals are to observe

the frequency of Continuous / Perfect Continuous verbs occurrence in Sting's lyrics, regarding his individual poetic style at different career periods, to study them in combination with other tense forms (both in a single sentence and in a stanza), and to reveal their functions beyond those inscribed in grammar rules.

The outline of the main research material. Neither a prose piece nor the most rationally composed exercise seems to be compared to a verse work in terms of studying and comprehending English grammar structures of various levels of complexity. In fact, the most frequently repeated prosodic elements intrinsic to poetry, for instance alliterations, assonances, anaphora and epiphora, temporhythm and rhyme, display the mnemonic properties. This is why they would allow applying a song text to learning a certain lexical or grammar topic, as the dynamic illustration of a linguistic phenomenon – both in studying a single poetic work and juxtaposition of quotations from different texts.

Prior to exploring the functions of Continuous (also known as Progressive) tenses in Sting's works, it would be necessary to outline the main principles of their usage. Apparently, the **Present Continuous** comprises the biggest number of situations to be used [1, 28]: 1) to express an action going on at the present moment or at time of speaking (*She is making a cup of tea*); 2) to express an action in its progress going on at the present period of time, not necessarily at the time of speaking (*Irma is losing weight*); 3) to express a continuous action going on at the present time with another action referring to the present time (*What does he do when he is not teaching?*); 4) to express a planned future action, mostly with the verbs denoting motion (*Are the children going to the Zoo next weekend?*). Interesting in terms of semantics are two more cases – temporary situations (*He's working as a cleaner until he finds a better job*) and annoying or surprising habits (*She is always taking my towel*).

Respectively, the Present Continuous form is used in Sting's works most frequently. The array of the following examples relate to **the first** of the rules listed above:

*Old battery's **running** down, it ran for years and years...* (“When the World Is Running Down, You Make the Best of What's Still Around,” 1980. 1)

*I think they're **working** far too much / For the redundancy of touch...* (“Straight to Your Heart,” 1987. 1)

*But perhaps a dream **is dreaming** us...* (“When the Angels Fall,” 1991. 1)

*Do I hate to make a choice / My options **are decreasing** mostly rapidly...* (“Seven Days,” 1993. 1)

*And if I'm **falling**, I'm **falling** like a stone...* (“You Still Touch Me,” 1996. 1)

*Now the daylight's **returning***

And if one sentence is true

*All these pages **are burning***

And all that's left is you... (“A Book of My Life,” 2003. 1)

*Can you explain what's **ailing** me?..* (“If It's Love,” 2021. 1)

“Inside” (2003) gives an instance to **the second rule**:

*Outside the rain **keeps falling***

*Outside the drums **are calling***

Outside the flood won't wait

*Outside they're **hammering** down the gate... (1)*
The third rule can be epitomized by songs “I Burn for You” (1982):

Stars will fall from dark skies

*As ancient rocks **are turning**... (1)*

and “Valparaiso” (1996):

Chase the Dog Star over the sea

*Home where my true love **is waiting** for me... (1)*

Close to **the fourth rule** appear the following fragments from the more mature verses by Sting:

Fifteen miles down the track

*Tell them I'm **coming** back...* (“Twenty-Five to Midnight,” 1996. 1)

I can't stop thinking about you,

I can't stop wanting you this way.

I can't face living without you,

*That's why I'm **searching** night and day...* (“I Can't Stop Thinking about You,” 2016. 1)

I'll have to work another night shift,

*I **won't be coming** home tonight,*

You don't have to worry where the time slips,

Only by the night I come to life (“Night Shift,” 2018. 1).

Some cases of the Continuous forms in Sting's works are idioms somehow modified by an author – for instance “Today it's raining dogs and cats,” instead of “cats and dogs,” to picture a ‘world upside-down’ from which all humans are hoped to come wiser (“One Fine Day,” 2016). Alongside, the contracted forms of the Present Continuous verbs, together with full ones (‘I'm coming,’ ‘they're hammering,’ ‘what's ailing’), outline the intonations of everyday speech in the majority of cases.

What is remarkable about the **Past Continuous** in general is that, apart from denoting the actions going on at a definite moment or a period of time in the past, its forms of motional verbs express an action which was future with regard to the past [1, 29–30]. The other occasion to use this tense for is the Polite English, for instance “*Were you looking for anything in particular?*”; “*I was thinking – would you mind to swap seats?*” and so on. In Sting's works, the Past Continuous is not as frequent as the Present one, but it is possible to find some examples in song texts kept in Simple Past narrative tense and therefore belonging to the genre of poetic novella or somewhat a parable:

He said he'd heard God's message on the radio

*It **was going** to rain forever and he'd told him to go...* (“Rock Steady,” 1987. 1)

*...though the million stars **were shining***

My heart was lost on the distant planet... (“Mad about You,” 1991. 1)

...every blade of singing grass

***was calling** out your name*

and that our love would always last... (“I Was Brought to My Senses,” 1996. 1)

*She told him she **was never coming** home...* (“Never Coming Home,” 2003. 1)

Well, I'd waltz with a broomstick and if I was caught,

*I'd pretend I **was sweeping or practicing** sport...*

(“The Night the Pugilist Learned How to Dance,” 2013. 1)

*I was walking home last evening,
When perhaps I should have ran,
From a darkening of shadows,
In the shape of a man... ("The Hills on the Border,"
2021. 1)*

Finally yet importantly, the function of the **Future Continuous** is to express an action going on at a definite moment or during a period of time in the future [1, 31], with collocations like 'this time tomorrow,' 'by this time next year' for identifiers. According to some scientists, the Future Continuous is capable of replacing the Simple Future in present-day English, particularly in poetic works [13, 65]; however, there are only two works by Sting in which the discussed tense form is used in this function. The first one is "Every Breath You Take" ("I'll be watching you" for a refrain); the second one is "The Bells of St. Thomas" (2021) where not simply Future Continuous, but Future-Continuous-in-the-Past is used:

She says, 'Are you hungry? You look underfed.'

'No, I'd better be going, I'll have coffee instead' (1)

Jane Lawson in one of her blogs observed that "the Present Continuous tense can be used when we are telling a narrative story in the past or present. It makes the story more dramatic. We also use it like this when we are talking about the plot of a film, a book or a play" [10], what is usually called 'an advanced use.' Many of Sting's verses written in different years represent the poet's brilliant manner to operate with this means to make a narration as much compelling or poignant. It is possible to exemplify with an array of songs from the album "Brand New Day" (1999). First sample is the initial stanza from the fourth song "After the Rain Has Fallen":

*The palace guards are all sleeping
Their fires burn into the night
There's a threat of rain on the dark horizon
And all that's left is a quarter moon of light (1)*

Evidently, this fragment is told in Simple Present narrative tense represented by three key verbs (burn, is, [is] left) indicating the recurrent action or state. The fourth verb outlines the extraordinary situation – the guards are sleeping instead of keeping the vigil diligently, – meantime setting up the expectation horizon of a crime (the apparition of a thief). Was it really so or not, the fact of 'sleeping guardians' makes a dramatic contrast to the further plot line developing as the alternation of direct and indirect speech with the Simple Past for the main tense form: "The woman makes the fateful decision to leave her world and her arranged marriage and run off with the thief. Whether they do or not is unclear, but the liberating music suggests so" [7, 92].

Instead, the poem "Big Lie Small World," the third from the same album, is built entirely on the Simple Past narrative tense, with not only the Past Continuous, but also the Present Continuous added. The latter form, together with an adverb 'always,' is expressing the speaker's irritation about his mates who do not wish to stop by and soothe him: "I make out like Casanova, // Friends are always coming over" (1). The emergence of the second Continuous verb, illustrating the simultaneousness of two actions, appears to be the first step to the counterpoint, just like in "After the Rain Has Fallen":

*I had to intercept this letter
Telling you that I was better
I raced to catch the postman's van
He was leaving as I ran... (1)*

"The continuous tense is always begging to be interrupted," as Caroline Nelson noticed [12]. According to the text of "Big Lie Small World," the speaker had no chance to take his letter back in time; this fact adds more dramatic intonation to the episode. Hence there came another reason to boost his anger – the opulence of his former girlfriend's house beside which he should have been waiting for the postman. Afterwards, he "winds up feeling so desperate and frightened when he sees the boyfriend and the postman that he hits them both, grabs the letter, and flees. This rather extreme reaction makes for a somewhat unbelievable scenario, but Sting makes a great song out of it nonetheless" [7, 91]. Anyway, it is a space for a listener / a reader to think over why the aforementioned actions ('leaving' and 'running') were combined through the Past Continuous tense: had the postman had delayed for a little bit more, i. e. had he not had left, this incredible story would not have occurred.

Conversely, the song "They Dance Alone" (1987) begins from the moving scene – lonely women dance cueca (the Chilean folk dance that is traditionally done in pair), holding the photographs of their fathers, sons and husbands; this is what Sting would call 'the only form of protest they're allowed':

*Why are there women here dancing on their own?
Why is there this sadness in their eyes?
Why are the soldiers here
Their faces fixed like stone?
I can't see what it is that they despise... (1)*

The lines of Pan Flutes (alluding to South American folk music) and drums (echoing like distant shots) make up the sonic background for the narration:

*They're dancing with the missing
They're dancing with the dead
They dance with the invisible ones
Their anguish is unsaid
They're dancing with their fathers
They're dancing with their sons
They're dancing with their husbands
They dance alone
They dance alone (1).*

Remarkable is the fact that the verb 'are dancing' is mostly used in the Present Continuous form, whereas two lines, the third "They dance with the invisible ones" and the last "They dance alone," turn back to the Simple Present. It means that the dance is highlighted as the leading motif for the entire song, connecting the visible 'dancing now-and-here' and the archetypal 'dancing forever' to thereafter interpret a dance as an act of creation.

Philosophical content of the Present Continuous tense form is apparent in "Fill Her Up" – the eighth track from "Brand New Day" album, especially in its free-verse part displaying a speaker's dream (or 'epiphany,' as C. Gable named it [7, 95]):

*And as I head through the woods on the way back
The evening sun is slanting through the pine trees
real pretty
It's like I walked into a glade of heaven*

*And there's music playing
This money is cold in my hand
And a voice somewhere is saying
"Why would you wanna take that stolen thing
And what real happiness can it bring?"* (1)

Hence it would be possible to affirm the Continuous form as the indicator of an implicit temporary situation – the speaker is dreaming until he commits a daring act, which is quite similar to “After the Rain Has Fallen.”

In addition, Sting's skills in chaining the Continuous verbs to create the atmosphere of a dream in a song text can be epitomized by the stanza from “The Night the Pugilist Learned How to Dance” (the Broadway musical “The Last Ship”, 2013):

*It's a three-minute round and you're back in yr corner,
You're licking yr wounds just like little Jack Horner,
Don't let your guard down try a jab with your right,
Or you're losing on points by the end of the night,
Then a miracle happens, and everyone's screaming,
You're pinching yourself just in case you're still dreaming,
You've taken the initiative, you've taken your chance,
It's the night when this pugilist finally learned how to dance* (1)

In terms of speech style, it is possible to confirm that any ‘refined’ native speaker of English, such as Sting, is so well knowledgeable about the linguistic norms that a temporal deviation from them would not be a drawback of his poem, but a kind of figure. It can be, namely, a double negation (“*She don't need a diamond ring*” in “She's Too Good for Me,” 1993); using the odd form in a modal verb clause (“...*should have ran*” instead of “*run*” in “The Hills on the Border,” 2021); omission of modals, particularly a ‘clipped Continuous’ [16, 32], like in “...*That's a real diamond she be wearing*” instead of “*she'll be wearing*” (“Fill Her Up,” 1999).

As Olena Popova and Yulia Lazutkina stated, “... *modern poets often deliberately omit spelling and grammatical rules, emphasizing 'down-to-earth' nature of the poetry that used to be considered a high ideal. This 'down-to-earth' nature causes simplifying of the grammatical structure as well, that is why the Continuous tense is used less frequently than Simple tense, and the Perfect Continuous tense can be seen less frequently than the Perfect tenses*” [13, 63].

This contradiction between the ‘down-to-earth’ style and profound philosophical content is observed in the following stanza from “When the Angels Fall” (1991):

*Take your father's cross
Gently from the wall
A shadow still remaining
See the churches fall
In mighty arcs of sound
And all that they're containing* (1)

Both of the deviations from grammar norms are connected with the Continuous tense usage. First, missing is the modal *is* or its contracted modification 's, conceptual for this tense paradigm; it becomes more evident in listening to the original where the third line is paused (*A shadow // still remaining*); however, in this case, ‘s grows into the integrate part of ‘still’ as the permanent indicator of continuity. The second part of the stanza represents a rare kind of inversion: in terms of normal

English word order, it should have sounded like ‘See the churches *and all that they're containing* fall in mighty arcs of sound.’ We tend to decipher the concept ‘all that [the churches] are containing,’ placed at the end of the phrase, as not just utensils, altars, icons, frescoes and so on, but also some non-material notions, like spirituality, religiosity and, what is more important, hope. Eventually, it is to mention that the Continuous verbs make up several rich rhyming pairs (*sleeping – keeping, remaining – containing*) and thus carry the significant substantial load of the entire song.

‘Being-now-and-there’ in Sting's poems can be revealed either through the Continuous tenses themselves or in Complex Object constructions. According to the rule, the action following the verbs of senses (*to see, to hear, to feel, to watch*) is indicated by the Continuous verb when being in process. This feature can be exemplified by the quotes from Sting's works:

...and you'll only see me walking by the light of the moon (“Moon over Bourbon Street,” 1985)

See me walking down Fifth Avenue... (“Englishman in New York,” 1987)

*So high above the worlds tonight
The angels watch us sleeping...* (“When the Angels Fall,” 1991)

Then we can watch the galaxies growing... (“Send Your Love,” 2003)

You hear a church bell chiming... (“If It's Love,” 2021)

Far more interesting are Complex Objects in both Simple and Continuous forms included into the same poem (“August Winds,” 2013):

I watch them [fishing boats. – N. N.] drown into the night,

*Beneath the August moon...
...something in the season's change,
Will find me wandering here... (1)*

The **Perfect Continuous** tenses, albeit usually studied as the separate group to outline the importance of a process described, would be possible to juxtapose to those **Continuous** in order to reveal the correlations between ‘the process’ and ‘the duration,’ respectively. As M. Kochergan noted, the category of Tense is closely connected to the category of Performance (“результативність”) that characterizes the presence or the absence of a result to some fact happened before the moment of speech [2, 224]. Taking into consideration Continuity as a tense marker, the category of Performance would express the notion of ‘remaining in the process of doing something’ and, consequently, experiencing some feelings of it.

In Sting's works, the Past and, moreover, the Future of the group are completely absent, whereas there are few usages of the Present Perfect Continuous. Interesting is the fact that the chunk of them is contained in the single song, which is “Sacred Love” from the 2003 album with the same name:

*I've been thinking 'bout religion
I've been thinking 'bout the things that we believe
I've been thinking 'bout the Bible
I've been thinking 'bout Adam and Eve
I've been thinking 'bout the garden
I've been thinking 'bout the tree of knowledge, and
the tree of life*

*I've been thinking 'bout forbidden fruit
I've been thinking 'bout a man and his wife (1)*

From the first sight, this stanza represents the essence of the speaker's reflections through chaining the religious concepts with eightfold repetition 'I've been thinking' and marvelous rhyme sequences (*believe – Eve, tree of life – a man and his wife*). Besides, the content of this fragment includes some notions of English lexicology (the usage of an archaic construction *'bout* instead of *about*) and prosody: correlations between rhyming patterns within a single verse work; a spare verse (холостий вірш) and its role in the temporhythm of the text; generic specifications of a verse work. Therefore, it would be expedient to confirm that this song, upon starting as a love story, gradually grows into a philosophical tribute to Renaissance and Baroque epochs when the scientific treatises were written in verses [3, 32] and saturated with Biblical images. Along with that, what would best show the speaker's oscillations from pain to pleasure of 'remaining in the process' is the Present Perfect Continuous form – starting with "I've been walking" in "Dead Man's Rope" and ending with "I've been searching" and "I've been thinking" in "Sacred Love."

Conclusions and directions for further research in this area. The Continuous (Progressive) tenses, whose initial function is to indicate an action happening in the very moment of speech (present, past, or future), reveal the larger semantic potentials, while being included in a literary work, specifically – in song lyrics by Sting. Primarily, they show the 'continuity' of a sophisticated process concentrated within a small period of time, which, in turn, boosts the dramatic sounding of a story told. Thenceforth, a correspondent function is 'immediacy' in its various meanings, either the absence of a medium to convey a message or the necessity to act in a blink of an eye, the lack of delay. In terms of narratology, the Continuous tense would therefore show a speaker's attempt to emphasize the certain action as the crucial for the plot development.

Subsequently, the Continuous tenses in literature appear to be an embodiment of Heidegger's philosophy of 'Lasting,' in other words – 'being-now-and-here'; both of these concepts would highlight the essence of poetry as it is, particularly the moment when a poem is being created.

Given that the majority of Sting's verses represent the lyro-epic kind of literature, it was important to analyze the functions and connotations of the Continuous tenses in his works, regarding the prevalence of narrative tenses – Simple Past and Simple Present. Apparently, some of Sting's solo albums ("The Dream of the Blue Turtles," 1985; "Ten Summoner's Tales," 1993) have few usages of Continuous verbs; along with that, the Perfect Continuous are presented sporadically and only in their Present form. On the contrary, the Continuous seem to be in parity with the Simple, interweaving in compelling plots, in albums "Brand New Day" (1999) and "Sacred Love" (2003): this fact would be interesting in the light of *fin de siècle* worldview, whose distinctive trait is a poet's tendency to evolve the transient moment into the unity of three temporal dimensions of being.

Wherever a Continuous form occurs in a text, it will surely attract a reader's or a listener's attention to the situation depicted and thence let them set their own notions of how the story would go. It is far more evident if one Continuous verb is surrounded by an array of Simple forms within a small fragment of a text (a quatrain, a stanza etc.), namely in "Heavy Cloud No Rain," "I Was Brought to My Senses," "Big Lie Small World," "After the Rain Has Fallen" and many others. On the contrary, the catenation of the Continuous and someplace the Perfect Continuous verbs in "They Dance Alone," "Dead Man's Rope" and "Sacred Love" would be interpreted as an endeavor to survey a speaker's empiric experience (constant observation, movement or thinking) in gradual creating the new connotations of some archetypal images, respectively a Dance, a Journey and a Religion.

Another remarkable property of the Continuous verbs in Sting's poems is that they display the slightest motions of a speaker's dreams or visions ("Fill Her Up," "The Night the Pugilist Learned How to Dance"), which fact would be a proof for the Continuous form as the best way to express immediacy, as the specialists in cognitive linguistics state.

The perspective trends of further research would include the study of other rarely used and thenceforth archaic grammar structures and lexical massifs in Sting's song lyrics, regarding the stages of his style development, the musical arrangements of the texts, and the principles to create an image of a speaker or a narrator. In turn, this work would be essential in learning of English for specific purposes by students of either philological or non-philological specializations.

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