

ALREADY, STILL and YET

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Several writers have suggested that already, still and yet are related. This article is the result of an attempt to discern their underlying lexical system in the light of Guillaumean theory. After a brief description of the system, which appears to be quite a simple one, the various uses of the adverbs are reviewed in some detail to see if the proposed system can provide an adequate explanation of them.

The Problem

According to the most recent of the major grammars of English, the three adverbs that go to make up the title of the present article¹ constitute a distinct group of time relationship adjuncts (Quirk *et al.*, 1972:498). Hornby (1961:67) suggests that *already*, *still* and *yet* 'are naturally linked' and Traugott and Waterhouse (1969:302) make certain observations along these lines.² Such views seem to imply that the relations between these adverbs are somehow systematic and not merely a chance by-product of the contexts in which they happen to occur. Remarks of this sort can then be taken as an invitation to reflect on usage with a view to discerning an underlying lexical system. That is to say, we shall try to present one of those 'small, clear sub-systems' with which semantic analysis, in the opinion of Bierwisch (Lyons 1971:184), must start.

It may help to clarify the as yet little known point of view adopted here, a Guillaumean one, if we briefly examine how it differs from that of the Traugott and Waterhouse article on *already* and *yet*, the most detailed study of usage that has come to hand so far. These authors first try to show that *already* and *yet* 'form a suppletion set matching *some—any*, etc.' (p. 287) by examining usage in affirmative, negative and interrogative contexts. The rest of the paper, questioning the view that *already* and *yet* are 'really adverbs of time', argues that they form a 'set of aspect-markers' and concludes that '*already* should be specified as the realization of a feature or set of features associated with PERFECT' (p. 302).

These conclusions follow from the theoretical bases of the study only 'If we omit the special usages' (p. 288) in sentences like *He hasn't gone already*, which is 'usually emphatically stressed' and 'is available with *will* = future' and 'with [+ specific] time adverbs'. The authors also point out certain special uses of *yet*:

yet = *still* as in *It's early yet*; *yet* = *still* = *nevertheless* as in *Yet he went*; *yet* = *some time in the future* as in *He's bound to turn up one of these days yet*; *yet* = *even* associated with comparatives as in *A yet more difficult problem*; and the *yet*'s in *All is not clear as yet*, *To introduce yet another problem*.

As in the case of *already*, we are told that 'None of these will be discussed in the course of this paper' (p. 288). This decision to leave out certain uses strikes one as questionable, as though only those facts that support the hypotheses to be proven were admissible. It

probably stems from the fact that in a transformational generative approach the word, as a linguistic form, is of little significance, a view which permits and even encourages the analyst to concentrate on the word's functions and to neglect its nature. As a result the authors are at some pains to show that in certain uses *already* and *yet* form a 'suppletion set' but no attempt is made to show either what the two have in common to permit them to form a 'set' in the first place, nor what feature of meaning differentiates them, one from the other, and so allows them to 'supplete'. Indeed, their very nature as adverbs of time is not merely neglected but replaced by a function—that of 'marking aspect' (as though an adverb could not, among other things, mark aspect, and as though aspect were not a matter of time). And even this one function is dealt with solely in terms of the grammarian's abstractions—'a feature or set of features associated with PERFECT'—with no attempt to tell us what the 'feature(s)' are in terms of our intuitive knowledge as speakers of English. Finally, neglect of the word as a linguistic unit opens the way to proposing the existence of two *already*'s (and presumably as many *yet*'s as the description of usage requires) notwithstanding the speaker's impression that *already* is one word with a number of uses.

In a Guillaumean approach, on the other hand, the word plays a crucial role (cf. Hirtle, 1973). Before assuming some function in a sentence, a word exists as a *unit of potentiality*, that is as a permanent possibility of associating a complex mental representation (the *meaning*) with a physical means of expression (the *sign*, in a pre-Saussurian, common language, sense). This meaning-construct of a word like *already*, always the same for a given speaker, constitutes a potential of which only one possibility emerges into consciousness at a time—that required in the particular context where the word is being used. This approach implies the strong claim that all of a word's contextual senses, observed 'intuitively' by introspection, are consequences of, and so can be traced back to, its hidden potential meaning.³ It follows that the linguist's task is to discern this underlying meaning in order to account for the uses he has observed; in more general terms, he must attempt to describe language as a potential (here termed *tongue*, a use close to that found in the expression *the mother tongue*) and thereby provide an explanation for language as actualized in sentences (here called *discourse*).

It is in *tongue*, not in *discourse*, that the system must be sought because in *discourse* only one possibility, one item of the system can be actualized at a time. From a Guillaumean point of view, a language system is both coherent and operational: it offers the possibility of a single mental operation, the successive moments of which provide the meaning of the respective items. This conception leads Guillaume to remark that 'as an altogether general thesis, a system always has a BEFORE and an AFTER' (1971:18). This remark is valuable here because it foreshadows the sort of system to be sought: we should look for indications as to the chronological order in which items are engendered by the mental operation constituting their system.

The system in tongue

If *already*, *still* and *yet* do form a system, it would appear to be based on their respective lexical meanings since in most uses they have similar grammatical functions. So for present needs we do not have to consider the grammatical meaning of these words.⁴

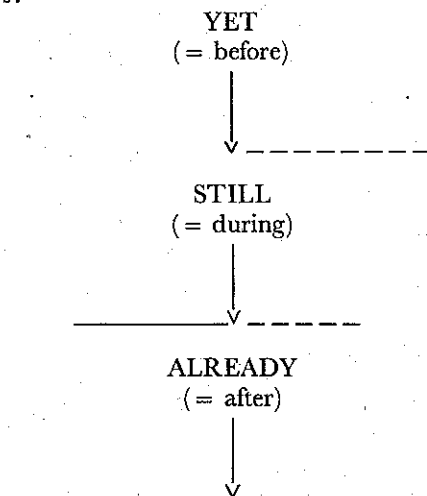
Perhaps the best place to start is with a sentence like *He is here* and ring the various changes on it. To the meaning that the state 'being here' exists, the introduction of *still*—

He is still here—adds a suggestion of the state continuing, persisting in time. This suggestion of no change at the point of time referred to in the sentence (implying thereby the existence of the state before that point) is not far removed from the spatial sense of *still*, 'not moving', as in *He lay still*.

The introduction of *already* into our sentence, *He is already here*, does not stress the prolongation of the event's existence in time as does *still*, but rather brings out the fact that 'he was not here before but has arrived' (Traugott and Waterhouse, 1969: 298); in other words that its preparation phase, its coming-into-being, is over and left behind. In qualifying the present state as the outcome of a foregone preparation, *already* expresses a sense fairly close to that of its etymon, M. E. *al redy*. Thus both adverbs serve to emphasize the existence of the 'being here', but from different points of view: where *still* evokes it as something persisting in time, *already* depicts its existence as a result, an aftermath.

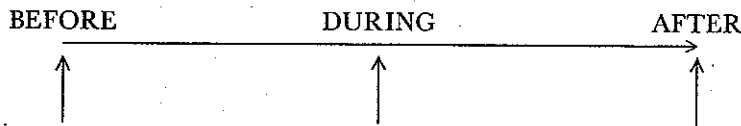
When we turn to *yet* the picture is quite different, if only because *yet* cannot be introduced into the sentence⁵ unless it is made negative or interrogative: *He is not here yet*. The negative sentence without *yet* indicates that the subject is absent at the moment of speaking; with the adverb, the sentence brings out the further suggestion that he is expected, that his presence is seen as a subsequent possibility. As Traugott and Waterhouse (1959: 292) point out, a sentence of this sort 'carries the implication that the speaker (or hearer) expects that the proposition will in fact soon be true'. That is to say, *yet* qualifies the state of absence as preparatory, as foreshadowing something else.

Observations of this sort⁶ and theoretical considerations like those mentioned above lead us to propose that each of these adverbs indicates a particular point of view from which to regard the event. Where *still* brings out the very nature of the event's existence—persistence in time—*already* presents this existence as an aftermath and *yet* evokes the event's non-existence as a precursor. More abstractly, the sign *yet* is associated in tongue with an impression of being BEFORE, *still* with an impression of being WITHIN or DURING, *already* with an impression of being AFTER. These impressions, which constitute the potential meanings engendered by the lexical system, can be represented schematically as follows:



(A broken line represents something in prospect and so to be realized, a solid line something left behind and so realized.)

Of interest here is the fact that these three 'positional' meanings can be engendered in one movement of thought. Indeed, there is an element of necessity here since no one of these positions can be thought on its own without at least an implicit reference to the others: 'afterness' implies what precedes, 'beforeness' what follows, and 'duringness' or 'withinness' something outside, before or after. This unity of the underlying movement of thought permits us to postulate the existence of a small lexical system made up of a single mental operation which, intercepted at successive points, gives rise to the corresponding potential meanings. In a diagram.



For a Guillaumean this system is but one more illustration of 'an important constructive principle' of language, namely 'the capacity, the possibility the mind has of cutting into its own operations in order to get a profile of them' (Guillaume, 1973:225). But before any such system can be accepted as reflecting something in the hidden reality of English it must be cross-examined before the court of usage.

Usage in discourse

a) *With Verbs*

One of the most obvious effects in discourse is brought out by Hornby (1954:103) when he suggests that the following pairs of sentences are equivalent:

- 1a. When the thief was caught, he had *already* disposed of the stolen goods.
- 1b. The thief was caught *after* he had disposed of the stolen goods.
- 2a. When the thief was caught he had not *yet* disposed of the stolen goods.
- 2b. The thief was caught *before* he had disposed of the stolen goods.

To these we might add:

- 3a. When the thief was caught he was *still* disposing of the stolen goods.
- 3b. The thief was caught *while* disposing of the stolen goods.

The lexical correspondences brought out here are a direct consequence of the position of each adverb in the system proposed above.

One of the most striking facts of usage was alluded to above: whereas *still* is often found in both negative and affirmative sentences, the other two adverbs are restricted in usage, *already* being infrequent in negative, *yet* in affirmative contexts. Each of these possibilities and constraints becomes comprehensible in the light of the adverb's position in the system.

Deriving its meaning from a position of interiority, *still* indicates 'the continuance of a previous action or condition' (OED) in an affirmative sentence like *He still recognizes us*; in a negative sentence *still* evokes the event's non-existence as persisting and in so doing gives it a sort of positive status, for example *He still doesn't recognize us*. That is to say, 'Still' can precede negation, but normally cannot lie within the scope of clause negation except in

questions' (Quirk *et al.*, 1972:499). However the use of temporal *still* does suffer certain restrictions, namely with an affirmative verb in the perfect as we shall see.

Already is seldom found in negative sentences because a position after necessarily presupposes the existence of something that went before; if the existence of this foregone element is denied, as through negation, then no position after is possible. On the other hand whenever the negative sentence presents the event as probably existing, *already* can be used because the implied existence of the event offers a point of reference to establish a position after. Thus in *He's not here already!* or in *He hasn't recognized us already!* the expressive effect, evoked by special sentence stress, is one of surprise at an actual situation. The negation serves here to evoke what had been expected, in contrast with what is believed to be the real situation.

Other examples in the negative, but with a different nuance, will help to bring out the meaning of *already*. The sentence *He can speak already* would be quite ordinary to refer to some child having recently acquired the ability to speak, just as the negative sentence with special stress would express surprise at the same situation. However **He can't speak already* with normal stress would be a most unusual sentence since it evokes the inability to speak as succeeding the ability to speak, and so would hardly be used except perhaps to describe one of the advanced stages of an illness which entails loss of speech. Similarly in *He doesn't love her already* Traugott and Waterhouse (1969:292) see a possible use in the situation where 'he married her a week ago and has already fallen out of love with her',⁷ where, that is, the subject is depicted as having formerly loved but no longer loving. These and other nuances arising from the use of *already* in negative sentences all appear to be based on its potential meaning, the impression of being in the aftermath.

Yet characterizes its event as somehow a precursor, thus suggesting a prospective accomplishment of some sort since the very notion of anteriority implies that of posteriority. Thus *yet* is used for the most part in negative sentences like *He is not here yet*, where the subject's absence is depicted as a prelude to his prospective presence. However if the event's reality is declared to be present and not in the offing the impression of the event as a forerunner of something does not arise so *yet* is not used in affirmative sentences like *He is here*.

Yet is also found in contexts with negating adverbs like *hardly*, *barely* and *scarcely*, as in *He is hardly old enough yet*. These adverbs evoke a position at the threshold leading into the event, a position from which the event itself can be depicted by *yet* as prospective. Thus the example invites some such remark as 'So we'd better wait for a bit', where the impression of the present situation being merely a prelude comes out clearly. In an example like *linguistic evidence has yet yielded but a scanty return to the historian of culture* (Webster's, s.v. *yet*) the negativizing element is provided by (*but a*) *scanty*; the use of *yet* here indicates that the present situation is seen as a forerunner and so implies that the author has hopes of a better return in the future.

The negativizing element may be contained in a clause expressing the notion through which the speaker regards the situation. Thus while **He is here yet* is, as we have just seen, unacceptable because present actualization presages nothing, *I doubt that he is here yet* is quite acceptable because the 'being here' is viewed as probably not existing, this non-existence being seen as a prelude to the eventual existence of the event. It is the verb *doubt* which expresses the medium through which the speaker mentally views the situation, providing a sort of notional lens or viewing idea which colours what is seen through it.

Similar viewing ideas have the same effect as *to doubt*, whereas viewing ideas which tend to affirm the existence of the event do not take *yet* because there is no room for the impression of being before. Thus one might say *I don't think that he is here yet*, but not **I think that he is here yet*. Similarly in *It is improbable that he is here yet* the speaker views the being here in terms of its non-existence and so can imply that its existence is prospective; with *probable* the situation would be viewed in terms of the event's existence, which does not imply anything in the offing, and so *yet* would not be used. Like remarks could be made of the following expressions with viewing ideas that tend to negativize:

I deny that he is here yet.
 There is little hope that he is here yet.
 It is unlikely that he is here yet.
 I don't believe that he is here yet.
 I don't know if he is here yet.

The corresponding viewing ideas that evoke the event in terms of its existence (*I affirm*, *There is hope*, etc.) would not take *yet*.

Turning now to interrogative contexts, we can note a difference of usage between two types of question in English, '*wh*-questions, which elicit information on particular parts of a sentence' and 'questions which seek a *yes* or *no* response in relation to the validity of (normally) an entire predication' (Quirk *et al.*, 1972:52). In the first type, where the existence (or non-existence) of the event is not questioned, usage follows much the same lines as in non-questions: *already* in affirmative contexts (e.g. *What has been done already?*), *yet* in negative contexts (e.g. *What hasn't been done yet?*) and *still* in both (e.g. *What still hasn't been done? What is still to be done?*). A revealing point of usage here is that one has difficulty imagining a context in which these adverbs may be used with interrogative *when*. This restriction in usage is not surprising when viewed in the light of the system here proposed because the speaker cannot in the same language act represent the event both as temporally situated by means of *yet*, *still* or *already* and as not temporally situated by means of interrogative *when*.

Of more interest for us, however, are questions of the *yes/no* type because *already* and *yet*, like *still*, are found in both negative and affirmative sentences:

Is he here yet (already)?
 Isn't he here already (yet)?

This trait of usage arises from the nature of the *yes/no* question, whose role is to query the very existence of the event. That is to say, the speaker neither denies nor affirms the event's existence but views it as hypothetical, the field of the hypothetical extending from the point where the event is seen to have practically no chance of existing to that where its existence is almost certain. It is precisely on the speaker's estimate of these chances of existence that the choice of *already* or *yet* depends. Where the speaker sees the event as probable, as having a good chance of existing, *already* will be used because, by suggesting that the event is seen from a position after, it presupposes the event's coming-into-existence. Where the event is seen as merely possible, as one whose chances of existing do not outweigh its chances of not existing, *yet* will be chosen because it evokes a prior vantage point from which the event cannot be seen as actually existing.

Various grammarians have commented on the expressive effects in discourse resulting from choosing one or other of the positions. Eckersley (1960:272), for example, remarks that '*already* can be used if you expect an answer, "yes" as in *What! Have you finished your work already?* Here *yet* would not be used because the event's existence, though presented as hypothetical through the question form, is probable, in fact all but assured in the eyes of the speaker (cf. *What!*), and so the possibility of a prior position is excluded. Similarly, the OED describes *yet* in questions as 'nearly = "already", but not expressing surprise as that word would in a question'. The suggestion of surprise arises with the use of *already* precisely because the speaker has had some hint that the event has come into existence sooner than anticipated. That is to say, in *I didn't expect you until four o'clock. Is it four already?* (Eckersley, 1961:272) *already* indicates that the acceding to the state *is* is over, left behind, and so can give rise to the expressive effects of earlier than expected, of surprise, etc.⁸ In like fashion, on seeing a guest putting on his overcoat one might say *Are you leaving already?*, taking for granted that such is the case, but implying, perhaps only by way of politeness, that the guest was expected (and so welcome) to stay longer.

Yet, on the other hand, is used 'in questions implying a negation' according to Jespersen (1954: VII, 96), that is, in cases where the speaker views the event's chances of existence as slight. Thus the sceptic might say to the inveterate purchaser of sweepstake tickets *Have you won the sweepstake yet?* or to the incurable smoker *Have you given up smoking yet?* (To use *already* in such contexts, the speaker would require some definite hint that the unlikely event had occurred.) *Yet* may also be used in questions which do not imply 'whether the answer is negative or positive' (Quirk *et al*, 1972:499), that is, where the chances of the event's existence are felt to be approximately equivalent to those of its non-existence, in which case the event is still seen as merely possible but not probable. Such questions aim at eliciting information, as in *Has the paper come yet?* A question like *Have you finished your homework yet?* illustrates this variation within the field of the possible: it might be uttered as a means of eliciting an admission that the homework is not done, the speaker counting on a negative answer, or merely as a request for information, neither a negative nor an affirmative answer being presupposed.

The distinction between *already* and *yet* comes out even more clearly with questions in the negative. Thus whereas *Haven't you finished your work yet?* calls for a negative answer, *Haven't you finished your work already?* implies that the speaker expects an affirmative response. In the same vein, Traugott and Waterhouse (1969:288) go so far as to remark that *Hasn't he gone already?* 'is conceptually neither negative nor interrogative, but means something like *Surely he has gone already!*', the existence of the event being considered as almost certain, that is, as highly probable; but *Hasn't he gone yet?* 'is both negative and interrogative' since it suggests that there is little chance that the going has occurred. Thus here (as in affirmative questions) where the event's existence is presented as hypothetical, both *yet* and *already* may occur, the expressive effect on the level of discourse being conditioned by the potential meaning in the system on the level of tongue: *yet* evokes a position before and so characterizes the event as merely possible, *already* a position after so that the event is felt to be probable.

Another context in which the event's existence is neither affirmed nor denied but presented as merely hypothetical is that of *if*-clauses. As Traugott and Waterhouse (1969:289) point out, in the sentence *Do you know that he is gone already?* we cannot substitute *yet*. The reason for this is that the event ('being gone') is presented by *know that* as

existing, and so *yet*, which would evoke it as merely prospective, is not used; but *already*, declaring an aftermath and so presupposing the event's coming-into-existence, is quite appropriate here. (The situation is similar to that of the affirmative statement *I know that he is gone already*, where *yet* cannot be used.) The use of *if* in the question would indicate that the event's existence is seen as hypothetical: within the field of the hypothetical, when the event is seen as merely possible, as having only a fifty-fifty chance or less of existence, *yet* may be used (*Do you know if he is gone yet?*); if the speaker sizes up the event's existence as probable, *already* may be used (*Do you know if he is gone already?*). Similarly in a clause like *If they haven't seen us . . .* either *yet* or *already* may be used depending on how the speaker judges the event's chances of existence.

Affirmative contexts provide the next area of usage to be examined. *Already* being so commonly used here because of its position in the system, we shall examine cases where it is not used. Traugott and Waterhouse (1969:296) point out that *already* does not occur in 'generic sentences' like **Oil already floats on water* and **Metal is already hard* and make the following revealing comment:

. . . *already* implies some change of state; e.g. *John already floats* means not that John is floating but that he can float and there was a time when he couldn't. It is significant in this connection that *already* can occur only in those copula sentences that allow *become* or some similar inchoative.

That is to say, *already* depicts a state as after its coming-into-being, as subsequent to its beginning. Because of the generic reference in the above starred examples no beginning (or end) is implied and so no position after can be evoked, with the result that *already* is not used. But if one can imagine some fanciful situation in which the state is considered not to exist, then the above examples might be possible: for example if someone believing that oil is heavier than water expresses his intention to invent an oil that will float on water, one might conceivably reply *But oil already floats on water*. This explanation also accounts for sentences like *This is the answer* which, though not generic in reference, would not be found with *already* because one has difficulty imagining a situation involving a coming-into-being of the answer which would permit the speaker to see its actual existence as an aftermath.

Contrary to what is generally observed of usage, *yet* may occur in certain affirmative contexts. The first such context is exemplified by the following . . . *had developed a great civilization while yet pagans* (Webster's). The suggestion here is 'before becoming Christians', indicating that paganism was seen by the writer as a precursor, an impression calling for the use of *yet*. Similarly in . . . *riches were still respectable, the rise of a millionaire was yet a romance* (Ibid.) *yet* suggests that the situation 'being a romance' is going to change, whereas *still* here brings out the complementary aspect of whatever precedes change by evoking the continuance of the old situation; thus very similar expressive effects are achieved in discourse by the use of different means made available by the system in tongue. The sentence *Animals yet thrive at the bottom* (Ibid.) is apparently of the same sort: present thriving is seen as foreshadowing imminent extinction. On the other hand it may be a case of usage from another dialect (cf. note 5 above) with no suggestion that the thriving is soon to be ended. Only a more extended context could clarify the point.

Yet may also be used in affirmative contexts when 'followed by an infinitive referring to the future' (OED). In the light of the system proposed above, this possibility of usage is

anything but surprising since, as pointed out elsewhere (Hirtle, 1975: 20f.), the infinitive provides the most virtual possible image of the event and so lends itself readily to a view of the event in prospect, as seen from a position before its actualization. In this respect, the term 'future' in the above citation should be taken not in the restricted sense of 'beyond the present' but in a more general sense of 'beyond any point in time', as is shown by the following examples:

None of them had been completely finished, the painting and papering being yet to be done (OED)

... could feel in the soft air the flowers that were yet to show themselves (Webster's).

A clear illustration of the role of *yet* is provided by a sentence like *It is yet to be seen*. The effect of evoking a position before is to suggest that whatever *it* refers to has not so far been seen and so may give rise to suggestions such as 'I'll believe it when I see it' or 'It may soon be seen' depending on the situation. With *still* (*It is still to be seen*) on the other hand, we are situated within and so the possibility, advisability, etc. of seeing is presented as continuing to exist, so we might use the sentence to refer to, for example, a quaint custom or an exhibition or play that has been showing for some time. Our sentence might even be possible with *already* to suggest that the movement into the state of 'being visible' is recent, that the possibility of viewing has only just been acquired, and so could occur, for example, once some newly discovered archaeological site is opened to the public. The reader will not have failed to notice that the sentence with *yet* may also express much the same nuance as that described for *still*, a fact which is most revealing. Involved here is the relationship between the possibility (a condition) and its actualization (a consequence): the existence of a possibility necessarily implies the subsequence of its actualization so that the presence (expressed by *still*) of the potentiality entails the prospect (evoked by *yet*) of the realization.

Further illustration of the fact that interiority of the condition necessarily implies posteriority of the consequence is provided by Quirk *et al.* (1972: 499) in a context where *yet* and *still* 'come close in meaning': *I have yet to meet him* and *I have still to meet him*. As always, *yet* evokes a position before and so makes explicit the fact that the meeting is prospective, thereby suggesting something like 'I do not know him'. *Still*, on the other hand, by expressing a position within, puts a slight emphasis on *have* as a conditioning obligation: 'Both of the sentences mean "It remains for me to meet him" but the sentence with *still* implies an obligation that remains to be fulfilled and that is likely to be fulfilled' (Quirk *et al.*, 1972: 500).

In other contexts the nuance separating *yet* and *still* is hardly perceptible: compare *I can see him yet* and *I can still see him* (Quirk *et al.*, 1972: 499). In the light of the underlying system, we can see that *yet* evokes a position before the limit (of, say, my memory span) so that the sentence suggests 'I have not forgotten him so far'. The use of *still* brings out the persistence of being able to remember and so suggests 'I can remember him as before' without hinting at a possible change. A confirmation of this explanation is offered by the fact that if *see* is taken in the sense of 'visit', a sense which does not imply a limit in the offing, then *yet* would not be used in the sentence. Similarly for the pair *There's plenty of time yet* / *There's still plenty of time* (Quirk *et al.*, 1972: 499), the former evokes the situation as before the end of the allotted time, suggesting 'Time has not run out'; the latter suggests

'Time continues to be plentiful' and so has a more reassuring tone (cf. *Don't worry! There's still plenty of time*).

In *That's where he may be* each of the adverbs may occur. With *already* the sentence would express the possibility that the 'being there' has started, that the subject is after his arrival there. With *still* it would express the possibility that the person continues to be where he was formerly known to be. And with *yet* it would express the possibility of the subject being there at some subsequent time: his being there would be presented as purely prospective.⁹ Thus each adverb characterizes the event according to its meaning derived from the underlying system.

Another example to illustrate this use of *yet* in affirmative contexts is *He will write the exam yet*, where the writing of the exam is declared to be somewhere in the future, *yet* stressing the fact that the subject is now anterior to it. Of course the sentence without the adverb would also express a future event with the subject prior to the writing, but then it would merely express the probability, in the eyes of the speaker, of the action eventually taking place. With the adverb the sentence has the added suggestion 'in spite of difficulty or momentary failure to do so' because in emphasizing that the event does not exist at the moment the sentence almost seems to imply that it might have. The use of *still* here (*He will still write the exam*) brings out a nuance not far from that of the adversative use (to be discussed below): in spite of indications to the contrary, the probability (expressed by *will*) of his writing the exam at some time in the future persists. *Already* would not be used in this sentence even though it is affirmative because of the simple infinitive expressing an action, a representation which offers no possibility of adopting an after-position, neither the auxiliary nor the infinitive evoking anything but a view of an event to be actualized. However, given a view of the action which provides for some accomplished portion offering the possibility of a posterior position, then *already* may be used,¹⁰ for example: *He will already be writing the exam when we get there*.

With participles, *yet* is again most common with a lexical negation as in *patches of yet unreclaimed forest* and *The children in their yet undeveloped strength* (OED). Here it is the prospect of reclaimed forest and of developed strength which gives the writer the impression that the situation depicted is merely a precursor. Similarly for a case where the lexical context rather than a negation permits *yet* to evoke a prior position: *Earnest as her father was in watching the yet-living, he had eyes and ears for all that concerned the dead* (OED). Here there is the rather lugubrious suggestion that the father (or the writer) viewed people in their unhappy role as corpses-to-be, a suggestion brought out by *yet* characterizing the living as being merely in a preliminary phase. In the following example, what lies in prospect is brought out explicitly so that what has been accomplished so far is seen as a forerunner: *'Blanch' is to consist of five thousand lines, and only eleven hundred are yet written* (OED). With *already* the participle's event is evoked as left behind, either as a whole, e.g. *Already-fractured portions of the Earth's crust* (OED), or in part, e.g. *The first dim rudiments and already-budding germs of a nobler Era* (OED), depending on the participle. And *still* is frequently found in the sense 'now as before' in combination with participles, for example *The still-existing Company of Merchants of Carlisle* (OED). Once again the various uses in discourse appear as consequences of the conditioning system in tongue.

The relationship of the three adverbs with the perfect—or more precisely the *transcendent aspect*—merits a brief comment. As has been shown in considerable detail elsewhere (Hirtle, 1975, *passim*), a verb of the form *He has seen* always evokes an event

retrospectively, from a position in its transcendence or aftermath. This permits us to see why the use of *already* with the transcendent aspect as in *He has seen the film already* has been characterized as 'largely redundant' (Traugott and Waterhouse, 1969:298): the impression of posteriority evoked lexically by *already* is like that evoked grammatically by means of the aspect of the verb.

It is noteworthy that temporal *still* is not used with an affirmative verb in the transcendent, so that the following is not found: **He has still seen the film.*¹¹ This restriction arises from a clash between the meanings involved: where *still* expresses a position within the continuance of what went before, the transcendent aspect declares a position after, beyond the end of what went before. That is to say, one cannot reconcile the position of interiority expressed lexically by *still* with the position of posteriority expressed grammatically by the transcendent aspect, and so the use of *still* is refused here. On the other hand, *still* may be used with the transcendent aspect in the negative, as in *You still haven't asked Mr. Kreton about moving that thing, have you?* (Ota, 1963:89), because it can characterize the non-existence of the aftermath as a continuance of what went before.

An interesting use found in American English deserves mention here. It involves the use of *already* and *yet* with verbs in the simple past, as in *I paid for this book already. I didn't pay for this book yet*; British English would use the transcendent here: *I have paid for this book already, I haven't paid for this book yet*. With the transcendent the role of the adverb is to characterize the position of the auxiliary *have* in time, to make explicit the fact that *have's* place in time (= the present of speech) is either after (*already*) or before (*yet*) the paying. In the American usage it is as if the adverbs characterized the position in time implied (but not here made explicit) by my act of language—the present of speech—as either after or before the paying. Thus where British usage requires a grammatical representation of the place in time characterized by these adverbs, American usage accepts them even when the place in time is left implicit. However, this usage would appear to have certain restrictions. Thus a sentence like *He knew the answer already* does not exhibit this sort of expressive effect—implicit reference to the present of speech—probably because the verb expresses an event with slow cadence. This shows that a more searching analysis is required but it can hardly be undertaken until a detailed study of this usage in American English is available.

b) *With Other Parts of Speech*

We shall now try to trace this same conditioning influence of the system in uses with parts of speech other than the verb. There is an occasional adjectival usage with substantives, as in *In the yet non-existence of language* (OED), where *yet* evokes the non-existence as a precursor, thereby implying the eventual existence of language. In the next example, the existence of the ruler is presented as foreshadowing his non-existence: *the yet ruler, but not for long* (Webster's). This can be contrasted with the use of *still* in *The then and still owners of that happy periodical* (OED), where the continuing existence of the owners is brought out. The use of *already* in some such context would suggest recent coming into existence.

We come now to one of the most revealing problems, that of use with adjectives following the copula. Langendoen (1969:7) mentions that according to a number of speakers **It's late yet* sounds 'odd' compared with the quite acceptable use of *yet* in an affirmative context, *It's early yet*. To these we might add:

It's late already *It's early already.
 *It's still late. It's still early

This apparent confusion of possibilities and constraints, which at first sight seems to conflict with our explanation, can be sorted out only if we keep clearly in mind the underlying system as we examine the adjectives involved.

The key to the problem is that the adjectives appear to exist in pairs and that the relation between the normal lexical meanings of the two adjectives involves an order in time, a notional chronology, to use Guillaume's term. Thus *early* generally calls to mind a period preceding that evoked by *late*, *early* implying something like 'so far not late', and *late* 'no longer early'. The notional chronology involved in this small lexical system can be depicted in a figure as follows:



The manner in which this notional chronology fits in with the meanings of our three adverbs, either clashing or synchronizing with them, will explain the apparent vagaries of usage noted above.

First of all, it is not surprising to find *It is late already* because here *already* makes explicit the position evoked by *late*: that of an aftermath. What surprises is that *already* should be refused in its normal affirmative context, **It's early already*, but a moment's reflexion on the notional chronology involved will reveal why: one cannot normally represent *early* (= a position before) as coming after (= *already*). That is to say, the two positions priority/posteriority evoked respectively by *early* and *already* are mutually exclusive and so the example as such is not possible.

Another noteworthy use is that of *yet* in an affirmative context: *It's early yet*. Here the position expressed by *early* accords with that expressed by *yet* so that the adverb helps to emphasize the impression conveyed by *early*. Thus *yet* is used here for exactly the same reason that it is used in most negative contexts—because it characterizes something as a prelude—and so the example is equivalent to *It's not late yet*. Furthermore, we can now see why the sentence **It's late yet* is considered odd: there is a conflict of impressions between *yet*, evoking something as a forerunner, and *late*, which in the lexical system of *early/late* can be seen only as an aftermath. Likewise, notwithstanding the negative context, the example **It's not early yet* sounds odd because *not early* can imply only the post-position (= late), whereas *yet* would characterize it as a prior position.

The case of *still* is somewhat similar. It expresses the continuance of the state in *It's still early*. To emphasize that the state is going on without attaining its term, one might say *It's still not late*, *not late* implying 'early'. But in **It's still late* or **It's still not early* the element of going-on-as-before expressed by *still* enters into conflict with the aftermath position (= change-from-what-went-on-before) expressed by *late* and *not early* and so the examples strike one as dubious.¹²

Thus all these odd examples involve a clash of impressions between the lexical meanings of different words. Now it might be objected here that some of these starred examples are not absolutely impossible and indeed, as so often happens with borderline

cases, when one imagines some exceptional situation they would seem to be possible. For example, it is not inconceivable that for children *late* might refer to the period up to midnight and *early* to the period after midnight, in which case it would not be impossible to say just after midnight *It's early already*. Or again, given some fanciful time machine permitting one to go back up the flow of time, a sentence like *It's still not early* might be possible. What is noteworthy here is that such unlikely situations involve a reversal of the notional chronology that normally holds between *early* and *late*, and so they help to confirm the explanation offered for the use of the adverbs. This may well explain why some of Langendoen's informants (1969: 7) felt they 'could say' *It's late yet*. Whatever may be the situational context they imagined which would give rise to the sentence, they subsequently found the usage 'odd' when compared with *It's early yet*. That is to say, when confronted with the *early/late* system they would not accept to situate *late* in a prior position by means of *yet*.

Traugott and Waterhouse (1969: 296ff.) mention some similar examples:

The apples are already red.	(Cf. *The apples are already green).
He is already old.	*He is already young.
He is not yet old.	He is still young.
He is already tall.	*He is already small.
*He is still tall.	He is still small.

A brief examination of the adjectives involved here reveals that the same notional chronology would seem to hold between them:

<u>BEFORE</u>	<u>AFTER</u>
green	red (= ripe)
young	old
small	tall

and the same possibilities of usage would appear to be offered:

The apples are green yet/still green/ripe already.
 He is young yet/still young/old already.
 He is small yet/still small/tall already.

The various odd or unacceptable examples here would involve the same lexical clashes discussed above. Thus only in some Alice-in-Wonderland situation would one say *He is already small* because only there can one become small after being tall.

Not all adjective pairs, however, are based on a notional chronology rooted in their lexical meanings. For example, a pair like *clean/dirty* does not appear to be bound by a particular order in our experience so that there are no constraints imposed by this aspect of the word's meaning and usage responds to the give and take of the particular situation. Thus *His hands are still clean* and *His hands are dirty already* might be said of a youngster playing in the mud, whereas *His hands are still dirty* and *His hands are clean already* would be appropriate when he is washing his hands. On the other hand, though *warm* in itself evokes no position, when applied to a corpse it does suggest a prior position (before the corpse has become cold) and so permits the expression a *yet-warm corpse* (OED).

The use of *still* and *yet* with adjectives in the superlative provides interesting expressive effects. Here again we find *yet* in a context without any explicit negation. Compare:

This is the best performance.
 This is the best performance yet.
 This is still the best performance.

While the first sentence merely discerns the best among a total number of performances, the second, thanks to *yet*, tells us that the best at the moment is a forerunner of other performances and so suggests that an even better performance may be in the offing. In the third sentence the element of continued existence brought in by *still* gives the suggestion that what was formerly considered to be best maintains its top position in spite of more recent performances. That is to say, where *still* brings out a comparison with the past *yet* evokes the comparison with future performances. There is a somewhat similar nuance between the following:

the oldest still found.
 the oldest yet found.

With *still* the suggestion is that the possibility of finding other such objects of equal antiquity continues to exist, but with *yet* the most ancient object found so far is depicted as a prelude, implying the possibility of eventually finding even older ones. Again the effects of discourse resulting from the use of *still* and *yet* can be seen to arise from their respective positions of 'within' and 'before'.

With comparatives, both *still* and *yet* are found. In *He came closer still* (Poutsma, 1928:428), *yet* might have been used with little shift of nuance, just as in *My sandals were worse yet* (OED) *still* might have occurred. The fact that the two adverbs here produce very similar expressive nuances would appear to arise from the very nature of the comparative, which involves a movement carrying the quality expressed by the adjective to a further degree. Now this movement can be characterized in two ways: 1) as involving the persistence of the same quality, a characteristic expressed by *still*; 2) as leading to (and so prior to) a further degree of the quality, this being expressed by *yet*. Thus in the examples given above, *still* expresses the fact that the closeness and the badness continue to exist at a greater degree; *yet* evokes the very moment which necessarily precedes being closer or worse. In such cases, it amounts to six of one and half a dozen of the other on the level of discourse, that is, the same thing seen from two different angles since both of these aspects are necessarily involved in the comparative. However, a more careful examination of usage with the comparative may reveal contexts where one or the other is more appropriate.

Something similar is exemplified by uses with *another*, as in *still another example of cultural misunderstanding* (Webster's). Here the addition of one example is characterized by *still* as more of the same, as a continuation of the series; *yet* here would evoke the very operation of adding which results in the extended series. Since both elements are necessarily present in the extending of a series there is little to choose on the level of sense between the two expressions. On the other hand, in an expression like *again and yet again* we would not use *still* because the notion of repetition underlying *again* expresses a new beginning rather than a continuation and so calls for *yet*.

c) *With Syntactic Groups*

A curious slang use in American English finds its place here:

today you can buy one off a showroom floor—and with a discount, yet.

... writes a book about them. With pictures, yet. (Webster's)¹³

The role of *yet* here is to underline the fact that what one would normally find (buying off a showroom floor, writing a book) is only a start, a prelude to the unexpected additional element (a discount, pictures). In this respect it should be noted that *yet* characterizes, not the substantives *discount* and *pictures*; but the relation of the *with*-phrase to the rest. Thus *yet*, in characterizing the relation between the two parts from the viewpoint of anteriority, presents the second as the result of a going beyond the first and so gives rise to the sense 'on top of everything else'. Without *yet* one would get the impression that the additional detail is set off less, is part of the original plan rather than an unexpected supplement.

In the final use to be examined here—variously termed 'sentence adverb', 'conjunct', 'conjunctive adverb', 'quasi-conjunction' and 'half-conjunction'—the meaning of *still* and *yet* are applied to a relationship: they characterize the notional link between two parts of a sentence or even two sentences, but they do not express a grammatical relationship. As Sweet says (1955: 143), 'half-conjunctions connect logically only, not formally also, as full conjunctions do'. *Still* and *yet* here have an adversative or concessive sense, expressing 'the unexpected, surprising nature of what is being said in view of what was said before that' (Quirk *et al.*, 1972: 674). That is to say, thanks to the 'temporal succession implied in the conjuncts *still, yet*' (Greenbaum, 1969: 72), the adversative relationship between a preceding and a succeeding notion is brought out.¹⁴

Though the two are 'nearly equivalent' in this use, *still*, according to the OED, 'indicates mainly that the fact or condition remains unaltered by the adverse one', another suggestion of continuance arising from its position of interiority in the system. *Yet*, on the other hand, 'usually expresses some degree of surprise at it as something unexpected', a value that arises from the evoking of a prior position: the second element is seen as something different or new, as lying beyond the field of the first element. That is to say, where *still* characterizes the relationship as continuation in spite of an intervening element, *yet* specifies it as a movement from one element to another, from an already established position to a new one.

In many cases, either of the two may be used with only a slight shift in nuance because contexts of this sort often involve both the persistence of one notion and the contrast with an intervening notion. Thus in *Your arguments are very weighty; still they do not convince me* (Poutsma, 1929: 595) the suggestion is that no matter how weighty the arguments may have been, the fact remains that I am not now convinced; with *yet* the sentence would deliver much the same message by implying that the first element, not achieving the expected result, places us before the unexpected outcome. However, in a context like the following, where the impression of maintaining some idea that has already been introduced (cf. 'the point, the thing we've been trying to get at') dominates to the point of excluding any possibility of seeing it as a new idea, *yet* could hardly be substituted for *still*:

'If you mean would I accept him if he asked me to marry him, yes I would. I'd jump into his arms.'

'Well, I'm not sure I'd advise that. I don't want to seem personal, but you're on the solid side and he's kind of flimsy. You might fracture something. *Still*, the point, the thing we've been trying to get at, is that your views on the subject of centre-aisleing coincide with his, so that's all right ...'

(Wodehouse, 1965: 76)

Though *still* and *yet* are thus practically interchangeable in many contexts where they occur in the adversative use, there is one context where *still* is not found, namely, where there is ellipsis. Thus, in *They did not like the music, yet applauded vigorously* (Greenbaum, 1969: 34) *still* cannot replace *yet* unless the subject is repeated. This trait of usage, which may at first sight appear to be arbitrary and unmotivated, would appear to be a direct consequence of the underlying system. The elided element—generally the subject (cf. Greenbaum, 1969: 26)—is, of course, some element that has already been evoked but whose repetition is avoided for reasons of style. However its elision leaves implicit precisely that element which is common to both parts of the sentence and which, therefore, provides the basis of the impression of persistence or continuity expressed by *still*. If the carry-over element is left implicit, then no impression of a carry-over or continuation can be made explicit and so we do not find *still* here. On the other hand, *yet* in such contexts is well suited to the role of bringing out the transition involved in moving from one element to a new one (in the above example, from 'not liking the music' to 'applauding vigorously').

In the same vein, Poutsma (1929: 596) points out that '*Still* is never used in contracted sentences' as in *one of the most generous yet whimsical men in the kingdom*. Here the element that the two adjectives have in common—the substantive to which both are incident—is not repeated and so, because there is no impression of continuity, *still* cannot be used; but *yet* is well suited to characterize the relationship as involving a movement from one notional position to a new one. Similar remarks could be made of the following example: *He drove quickly yet safely* (Quirk *et al.*, 1972: 595); *still* might be used only if the elision were avoided: *He drove quickly: still he drove safely*.

Conclusion

Our examination of the main areas of usage has shown that the various restrictions and possibilities of usage appear to be determined by the potential meaning proposed for each adverb. By the same token, since these meanings—'before', 'during', 'after'—necessarily imply an order, we are able to discern the relationships between them and so reconstitute their system. This result is significant for several reasons.

In the first place, a view of the mental system in tongue provides a theoretical vantage point from which to examine new facts in familiar areas of usage and new problems such as the expression *as yet* (involving the meaning of *as*) or the history of the system (particularly interesting in view of the fact that *yet* and *still* were used differently in Early Modern English). In this respect the theory presented here resembles those of other sciences in that, far from being based on an exclusion of certain facts of usage as was the Traugott and Waterhouse hypothesis, it constitutes an invitation to submit any and all pertinent data as a test of its validity. Secondly, the proposed system permits us to account for the various expressive effects and nuances, sometimes of an extreme subtlety, that these words give rise to. That is to say, it permits us not only to see more clearly in many cases what the speaker intuitively senses to be their value in a particular sentence, but also to understand how this value can arise and so to account for the impression that each of these is a single word. Finally the proposed system can be considered a step forward because it completes and confirms the remarks of grammarians referred to in the opening paragraph, and at the same time provides yet another application of Guillaume's general theory of language.

NOTES

1. This article has benefited considerably from the comments and discussion of colleagues and students, and particularly from the insights of Mrs. Christine Tessier, Miss Jacqueline Travers and Mr. Lionel Boisvert.
2. The implication in Morrissey (1973) that *still* and *anymore* (sic) are systematically related does not appear to be borne out by the facts of discourse.
3. This holds for a given dialect with its different registers. However, nothing guarantees that a word's underlying meaning-potential is identical in different dialects.
4. However it might be noted that the findings of this article are perfectly consistent with Guillaume's approach to grammatical meaning, and in particular with his theory of the parts of speech.
5. We are here concerned with contemporary usage in England and North America. Concerning *yet*, Fowler (1965:24) remarks that in 'its old sense of "now as before", "still" has lasted longer in Scotland and Ireland than in England. To a Scotsman or an Irishman the natural meaning of "Is it raining yet?" is "Is it still raining?". To an Englishman it is "Has it yet begun to rain?".' This difference of meaning in identical contexts indicates that *yet* does not have the same potential meaning in the two cases. Consequently, Scottish and Irish merit a study in their own right since any attempt to assimilate their usage to that of England and North America would take for granted identity of meaning in tongue.
6. See Quirk *et al.*, (1972:499) for other examples.
7. The authors also mention as a possible interpretation of the sentence the 'denial of the proposition *He loves her already*'. In this interpretation the use of *already* is to be understood as an echo of its use in the original proposition, and so as already accounted for by above comments on affirmative sentences.
8. It might be pointed out that in Martin (1971, p. 265) the impression of *précocité* is considered to be the underlying meaning of *déjà* rather than, as is done here for *already*, an expressive effect of a more abstract potential meaning.
9. Here as elsewhere the meaning of the sentence may change with the position of the adverb: compare *That's where he may yet be* and *That's where he may be yet*. This question merits a careful examination in the light of Guillaume's theory of the parts of speech, and particularly the regime of *incidence*, that is, the different ways of applying the meaning of a word to its support in the sentence (cf. Guillaume, 1971, and Hirtle, 1969).
10. The problem here, basically one of *cadence* (the tempo at which the event is felt to unroll in time), merits a far more extensive examination than can be granted it in the present article.
11. The sentence would, of course, be possible with concessive *still* (= 'nevertheless'), which is discussed below. We do find temporal *still* with *have got*, as in *He has still got a cold*, but then this verb is known to be different from others in the transcendent aspect and so merits a study on its own.
12. With adversative *still*, the two sentences would, of course, be quite acceptable.
13. Though this use is not found in all North American dialects it is readily understood, unlike the Scottish and Irish usage mentioned by Fowler (cf. n. 5). This suggests that it involves a novel way of exploiting a common system, rather than a different system, and so can be appropriately treated here.
14. The fact that *already* has no such use suggests that its position in the underlying system is somehow incompatible with the expression of the adversative relationship, as though the opposition between what precedes and what follows cannot be evoked from a position after because this position allows for nothing prospective or following.

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