# North-East Yorkshire speech
# in the late seventeenth century:
# a phonological and orthographical evaluation
# of an anonymous printed broadside[1]

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ABSTRACT

For years, it has been traditionally contended that George Meriton's *A Yorkshire Dialogue* (1683) represents the first dialectally valuable historical document for the linguistic evaluation of Yorkshire speech. Not only has it been commonly regarded as the forerunner of Yorkshire dialect poetry, but also as the foremost written record where Yorkshire regionalisms may be attested in the Early Modern period. Nevertheless, in 1673 Stephen Bulkby issued at York an anonymous dialect broadside entitled "A Yorkshire Dialogue Between an Awd Wife, a Lass, and a Butcher." Linguistically ignored as it has been, this specimen is of particular interest for the domain of historical dialectology: on the one hand, it illuminates the linguistic history of the county at the time and supports the linguistic data yielded by Meriton's piece; on the other, it marks the beginnings of Yorkshire dialect literature. This paper seeks to examine selected features of north-east Yorkshire phonology as evidenced by non-standard spellings in this late seventeenth-century broadsheet. Furthermore, it endeavours to offer a diachronic framework so as to bridge the gap between Rolle's speech and Marshall's eighteenth-century provincialisms.

KEYWORDS: north-east Yorkshire speech, dialect phonology, Early Modern English dialectology, dialect literature, popular dialogues

## 1. Introduction

Among the six traditional northern English counties, the area of Yorkshire has received a notorious amount of linguistic attention. The foundation of its regional dialect society, the oldest in the

country, in 1897 gave way to the compilation of abundant dialect material where linguistic traits proper to the county are exhaustively studied: glossaries rich in regional lexis or monographs on the local varieties of speech which provide valuable linguistic data from older periods.[2] In parallel with the vast majority of English counties, Yorkshire's records of speech and regional vocabulary date mainly from the nineteenth century. Not many specimens are available from previous stages and what little has been preserved springs, for the most part, from early glossaries as well as from stylised literary renderings of dialect traits in drama, fiction and poetry.[3] Needless to say, a great many deal of such seventeenth and eighteenth-century renditions disclose features which are also proper to other northern counties and do not mirror Yorkshire linguistic nuances in particular.[4] However, as is well-known, Yorkshire is the site of a wealthy dialect poetry tradition which reaches back to the seventeenth century. The volume and variety of its vernacular compositions largely exceed those of neighbouring areas at the time that they testify to a remarkable oral tradition which has apparently kept them from any kind of standard homogeneity.[5] The dialect information contained in them is, undoubtedly, far more reliable than those regionalisms used for literary purposes.

The increasing archaeological and antiquarian interest in regional lexis shown by works like John Ray's *A Collection of English Words not Generally Used* (1674) went hand in hand with the emergence of dialect literature. Traditionally speaking, it has been argued that George Meriton's *A Yorkshire Dialogue* (1683) represents the first

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[2] Just to name a few, Wright's *English Dialect Dictionary* – EDD hereinafter – (1981 [1898-1905]) gathered Marshall (1796 [1788]) and Nicholson (1889) on the dialect of the East Riding; Atkinson (1868, 1876), Blakeborough (1898), Oxlee (1845) on the North Riding variety; and Addy (1888), Hutton (1781) as regards the West Riding. The appearance of these works came side by side with the growing development of dialect literature and the consolidation of vernacular-writing traditions.

[3] Best (1857 [1641]) *Rural Economy in Yorkshire in 1641. Being the Farming and Account Books of Henry Best, of Elmswell, in the East Riding of the County of York* is one of the earliest sources for the study of Yorkshire dialect lexis. See García-Bermejo and Montgomery (2001: 358n2) for a summary of the earliest sources on Yorkshire dialects.

[4] Among the literary works which contain dialect passages apparently suggestive of Yorkshire speech in the eighteenth century, we should refer to Henry Carey's ballad-opera *A Wonder, or An Honest Yorkshireman* (1736) whose song "An Honest Yorkshireman" has been reprinted in several dialect anthologies.

[5] See Moorman (1916-1917: xix-xlii) for a brief and detailed account of the most relevant Yorkshire dialect specimens up to the turn of the twentieth century.

instance of proper dialect writing as regards Yorkshire speech and a seminal contribution to English dialect poetry. Nevertheless, Meriton's piece was preceded by a slightly earlier anonymous broadside issued at York in 1673 and reprinted by Rev. Walter W. Skeat in 1896: "A Yorkshire Dialogue between an Awd Wife, a Lass, and a Butcher".[6] As is true of the 1683 piece, this ballad reflects a literary transcription of the linguistic details of the north-east by a supposed native to the area.[7]

## 2. The 1673 broadside: editions and formal characteristics

As far as is known, the anonymous "A Yorkshire Dialogue between an Awd Wife, a Lass, and a Butcher" was originally issued at York by Stephen Bulkby and preserved in a transcript by Sir Frederic Madden. Rev. Walter W. Skeat rescued it from oblivion and edited it for the first time in *Nine Specimens of English Dialects* (1896) for the English Dialect Society.[8] Skeat added a glossary where regional words are explained and standard orthographical equivalents are provided for many of the alterations intended to suggest dialect sounds. Some errors as regards spelling and punctuation also seem to be corrected from the original.

This piece has not run into many editions. Actually, only F.W. Moorman, and W.J. Halliday & A.S. Umpleby included it in their verse anthologies: in *Yorkshire Dialect Poems (1673-1915) and Traditional Poems* printed for the Yorkshire Dialect Society in London (1916-1917), and in *The White Rose Garland of Yorkshire Dialect Verse*

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[6] Fox (2000: 71) comments on the existence of "Several specimens of dialect poetry [...] by an anonymous author of the late seventeenth century and never printed." He makes specific reference to 'A Lancashire Tale' and to "(a dialogue written in a Yorkshire dialect which is followed by a 'Clavis' explaining pronunciation and listing a glossary of 436 words" (Folger Library MS, V.a. 308). Wales (2006: 94-95) relates this broadside with the popular genre of the 'bucolic dialogue' which apparently stemmed from the 15th century pageant plays from the Wakefield area.

[7] To my knowledge, no linguistic analysis or thorough evaluation has been made of this literary piece. Cowling (1915) refers to the specimen in his attempt to shed light upon the historical background of Hackness speech and draw evidence which may sustain his own theories. Craigie (1938: 84), Blake (1981: 109), Jewell (1994: 201) and Görlach (1999: 511) date the first *Yorkshire Dialogue* to 1673; no linguistic comments are made, though. McArthur (1992) localises the poem to the area of Northallerton although he calls into question the linguistic accuracy of the features depicted. Wales (2006: 95) makes a brief and rather vague comment on the phonetic distinctiveness of the vowel sounds represented: "The vowels are markedly northern: *Mack heast an' gang* ('Make haste and go')." See also Wales (2002).

[8] This is the edition used for this paper; see Bibliography.

and *Local and Folk-Lore Rhymes* printed in London in 1949, respectively. Explanatory glosses to some of the words used in the poem are also appended, although they provide no further lexical or geographical information. In what follows, Skeat's edition is referred to as A, Moorman's version as B, and Halliday & Umpleby's reprint as C.

Differences among A, B and C arise mainly in terms of dialect spellings. As illustrated in the ensuing discussion, there are some orthographical modifications which very much deserve to be commented and balanced inasmuch as they evidence possible misprints or inaccurate renderings of regional pronunciations. Indeed, B tends to regularise orthography on the basis of a unified spelling system for "those writers who belong to one and the same dialect area" (Moorman 1916-1917: viii). It is, therefore, obvious that certain irregularities are emended as to the representation of the same sounds, even more so as B is not aimed at the philologist but intentionally addressed to a wider audience of native speakers of broad Yorkshire. In parallel, C admits to the possible linguistic inaccuracy of the variety represented in view of its unobservant care for phonetic transcription or absolute faithfulness to genuine sounds. Furthermore, it acknowledges B's gigantic labour of spelling normalisation to the extent that it is strictly respected all through the poem.

As is true of the literary genre of the ballad, this dialogue pictures a farming episode in an unaffected poetic style. The 'awd wife,' the lass and the butcher speak straightforwardly about an ox which has been gored by a bullock and has, consequently, broken his leg and fallen into the "Swine-trough." Their plain speech very well responds to the intimate and rustic canvas in which the seventy lines of the poem develop. In addition, the rhyming scheme of octosyllabic couplets points to a familiar and simple tone aided by the use of lexis specific to the central motif.

## 3. Linguistic analysis: a phonological and orthographical survey

Traditional literary attempts to render dialect speech in writing have always faced the problem of orthographical coherence. The large amount of linguistic differences between local and regional varieties makes any effort of transcription bound to contain errors. Besides, the absence of in-depth dialect treatises from the period has led linguists into notably hypothetical statements as uncertainty results

with regard to the sounds intended. Yet, it is obvious that the alteration of traditional orthography in order to portray local pronunciations is the principal source of evidence we can resort to, at least for an approximate realisation of what the linguistic panorama was centuries ago.

Spelling methods in this broadsheet are fairly coherent and not too much altered by second hands. On the whole, there is a remarkable orthographical consistency in the representation of each sound by a different symbol. This good phonetic notation is only apparently blurred by the fluctuation between the sequences <ea>, <ae>, <a> and <ay> for ME /a:/, and <u>, <eu> and <ua> for ME /o:/.[9]

In the following analysis, ME vowels and consonants will be presented in the traditional alphabetical order. Words gathered for discussion are classified according to their vowel and consonant etymology, and arranged into groups as regards their spelling and Present-day English (PdE) pronunciation according to Received Pronunciation (RP) standards. Rhymes are in some cases indicated with a view to supporting our discussion.

*3.1. Short vowels*

3.1.1. ME /a/, /a:/

Words spelt <e>; RP /æ/: *breckons* (x1) 'brackens'
This spelling gives a hint of the development of ME /a/ into an [e]-sound in some areas of Yks. when followed by a voiceless velar plosive.[10] EDG (§24) indicates that "a in the combination a + k has gen. had the normal development, but it has become e in parts of w.

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[9] Generally accepted abbreviations for the name of English counties will be used. See Wright's *English Dialect Dictionary* (1981[1898-1905]) (EDD). Wright's *English Dialect Grammar* (1981[1905]) will be referred to as EDG or EDG-In (Index). Likewise, references to Orton *et al.*'s *Survey of English Dialects* (1963) are made as SED. The *Oxford English Dictionary* is named OED. Conventional abbreviations for Old English, Middle English, Old Norse and Old French are also used: OE, ME, ON and OF respectively.

[10] [e]-sounds are also collected in Yks. for words with similar phonetic contexts such as *make* or *take*; see EDG-In.

and sw. Yks. (...) Examples are *back*, *black*, *slack*, etc."[11] Dobson (1968: §59 n2) explains this pronunciation in the light of a phonetic levelling between ME /a/ and ME /e/. OED records <e>-spellings for the standard *bracken* in Sc. and northern texts from the eighteenth to the nineteenth century.

### 3.1.2. ME /a + l + cons./

(i) Words spelt <au>, <aw>
   a. Words formerly containing ME /a + l + consonant (except /d/)/; RP /ɔː/: *bawks* (x1) (+*boakes* x1) 'balks', *rannel-bawke* (: *tawke*) (x1) 'rannel-balk', *gaults* (x1) 'galts', *tawke* (: *rannel-bawke*) (x1) 'talk'
   b. Words formerly containing northern ME /a + ld/, RP /əʊ/: *awd* (x6) 'old', *awde* (x1) 'old', *hauds* (x1) 'holds', *hawd* (x3) 'hold'
As is well-known, these two groups of words clearly represent an '/l/-vocalisation' process.[12] Spellings reveal a rounded [ɔː]-sound being apparently well widespread in the north-eastern areas of Yks. by 1673, at the time that ME /l/ was not retained after its vocalisation. Interestingly, *Gaults* might suggest that the liquid was actually kept, albeit the sound intended. Likewise, B and C transcribe *galts*. All editions may, therefore, mistakenly reproduce the sound in writing: *gautes* is documented in Best (1642) 141, and *gawts* in Meriton (1684) (EDD).[13]

(ii) Words spelt <e>; RP /ɔː/: *helterfull* (x1) 'halterfull'
The [e]-sound suggested by <e> points to the change of ME /a/ into a mid-front vowel when followed by /l/ plus a voiceless alveolar plosive. According to EDG (§39), this strictly affects *halter* and morphological derivatives in the areas of Sc., n. sw. & s. Nhb., n. Dur., m. Cum., Lin., and sw. Yks. In fact, OED collects <e>-spellings for *halter* in the north of England during the fifteenth and sixteenth

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[11] It seems, then, likely that ME /a/ in northern *bracken* did not undergo open-vowel lengthening. As a matter of fact, this shortened regional form was apparently perceived by southern speakers as a plural similar to *children* (OED). EDG (§23) considers the development of /a/ into [e] as characteristic also of Sc. and northern dialects in words such as *after*, *path*, *shadow*, etc.

[12] See Dobson (1968: §235), Brook (1975: §4.3) or Ekwall (1981: §42-§44), among others, about this process and the emergence of an [Oː]-sound.

[13] B and C change <oa> in *boakes* into the regular digraph <au>. It seems, thus, a misprint for the rest of the samples affected by '/l/-vocalisation' are regularly represented in A by means of <au> or <aw>.

centuries. As regards Yks. speech, it seems likely that this change was also operative in the variety represented: SED (I.3.17) records an [ɛ]-pronunciation for *halter* in almost all the Yks. localities surveyed.

### 3.1.3. ME /a + ŋg/

Words spelt <a>; RP /ɒ/: *lang* (: *gang*) (x1) 'long'
An ancient dialect trait stereotypical of northern English dialects as this is, the [a]-pronunciation suggested by the <a>-spelling was apparently common in ne. Yks at this time.[14] EDG (§32) records [a]-sounds for *long* in ne., nnw., snw., e., nm., m. & se. Yks. Besides, the rhyming couplet between *lang* and *gang* supports our assumptions about this traditional feature. Also, Morris (1901: 18) accounts for this back unrounded vowel in east Yks.: "thus, *among*, *long*, *strong*, *wrong* are sounded *amang*, *lang*, *strang*, *wrang*."

### 3.1.4. Early ME /e + ŋg/ (< ON /ę + ŋg/)

Words spelt <i>; RP /æ/: *hing* (x1) 'hang'
Contrary to the standard *hang* /æ/, the high-front sound represented by <i> testifies to the development of the northern variant *hing* as descendant of ON *hęngja*. The original ON /ę/ remained in early ME northern and north Midland dialects until a raised [ɪ] arose (Dobson 1968: §76n4). OED collects indeed <i>-spellings for *hang* in northern and north Midland texts from the thirteenth century. Surprisingly, EDG-In records no [ɪ]-pronunciation in northern speech. However, it is likely that raising did in fact take place in Yks.: in 1440 *York. Myst.* xxxvi 77 we read "ʒa, late hym hyng!" (OED).

### 3.1.5. ME /e+r/

Words spelt <ar>; RP /ɜ:/: *hard* (x1) 'heard', *wharnes* (: *harnes*) (x1) 'querns'
The use of <ar> in words that formerly had ME /er/ demonstrates that the levelling between ME /ar/ and ME /er/ under [aɹ] was fairly operative by the second half of the seventeenth century. These two words were possibly pronounced with [a:] although there is no clear spelling indicator as to whether [ɹ] was still retained or already lost (Dean 1961: §127). Nevertheless, EDG-In collects [ɪə] for *heard* in almost the totality of Yks., although Morris (1911: 57) comments that "The *e*-sound when followed by *r* is changed into long *a* in some

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[14] See Trudgill (1990: 20-22) about the northern and Scottish [a]-sound for southern -*ong* – [ɒ] – words.

words: for instance *serve*, *certainly*, *discern* are pronounced *sarve*, *sartainly*, *disarn*."

### 3.1.6. ME /i/

Words spelt <e>; RP /ɪ/: *smedy* (: *already*) (x1) 'smithy'

The process of vowel lowering – ME /i/ > [e] – which affects *smedy* is considered by Dobson (1968: §80) as characteristic of northern and south-western dialects. EDG (§68) refers to it as proper to Sc., n.Nhb., n.Cum., Dor. and w.Som. Although this lowered pronunciation is not recorded by EDG in any area of Yks., the rhyming couplet between *smedy* and *already* might suggest that both words had already the same vowel sound – [e] – in the variety represented by 1673.[15]

### 3.1.7. ME /o/

Words spelt <yu>; RP /ʌ/: *yune-head* (x1) 'oven-head'

This is an interesting sample of analysis which is strictly characteristic of the dialect represented in older times: "The old pronunciation of 'oven' was *yewn*; it is still occasionally heard." (Morris 1911: 63). The [jɪy-] pronunciation we assume for *yune* arose from a falling diphthong becoming rising (EDG: §248). However, this does not seem to be a direct phonetic process.[16]

Although the etymology of PdE *oven* goes back to OE *ofen*, it is possible that a lengthened variant *ōfen* might have existed. In fact, Kolb (1966: 76) traces the origin of this word to OE *ŏfen* in his account of northern English sounds. As is well-known, ME /o:/ was fronted in northern speech to a half-close centralised rounded vowel [ø:] which developed into an [y:]-sound. By partial unrounding of the vowel, a diphthong [ɪy] arose (Dean 1961: §§84-87). A stress shift possibly gave way to the emergence of the rising diphthong

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[15] Wright (EDG: §45) recognises that "It seems to be a lowered form of i, which I sometimes appreciate as a kind of e sound and at other times as a kind of mixed vowel ə". As a matter of fact, Kolb (1966: 67, 69) records several instances of [ə] in Yks.: he gathers it in the north-western locality of Bedale for *brimming*; also in Bedale and Melsonby, in the North-west too, for *squirrel*. See also Morris (1901: 9) about *ready* and *steady* which become "*riddy*, and [...] *stiddy*." Furthermore, he claims that "The Yorkshire form *stiddy*, too, is interesting, for there is literary authority for it as early as from 1200-1250" (10).

[16] No explanation is given by EDG or Morris (1911) about the exact phonetic reasons which triggered the emergence of a falling diphthong which became later rising. Cowling (1915) and Moorman (1916), on the contrary, account for this process. See nn 17, 18.

mentioned and the development of an initial [j] as a result: * [íy] > [ɪý] > [jɪý].[17] Whereas EDG-In and Morris (1911: 63) identify the archaic pronunciation of *oven* with "[jiun]" in ne.Yks, Kolb (1966: 77) recognises a lengthened variant – "[jiu:n]" – in some localities of eastern and northern Yks, as Cowling (1915: §161) and Moorman (1916: 68) do for Hackness and the North and East Ridings respectively.[18] Yet, it seems likely that an [ɪʊ]-sound for ME /oː/ had not developed by this time. Indeed, the modern differentiation between the centring diphthongs [ɪə] and [ɪʊ] was not even established (Dean 1961: §89).

Should our hypothesis be true, the development of ME /oː/ in ne.Yks reached also a diphthongal stage – [ɪy] – in words which did not necessarily reveal the emergence of a rising diphthong by means of a stress shift, i.e. *blude*, *fule*, *tuke*, *luke*, *midden-pule*, *rude* or *tue* (see 3.2.4 below).

### 3.1.8. ME /o + r/
Words spelt <oa>; RP /ɔː/: *moarne* (x1) 'morn'
The digraph <oa> appears to indicate a levelling of ME /o+r/ and ME /ɔː/. Unfortunately, the significance of this cannot be evaluated fully because of the limited lexical pool we count on. Besides, standard spelling sequences are used for representing *horn*, i.e. *broad-*

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[17] Cowling (1915: §161) does also consider stress shift as a possible origin for this pronunciation. Indeed, he resorts to our particular sample in order to illustrate the ascendancy of this form. Nevertheless, his phonological hypothesis seems rather fuzzy as he does not apparently acknowledge unrounding of the [y:]-sound or even its emergence. He claims that "ME *ō* occurs as ju: (from **íu**, by stress-shifting in an initial diphthong) in **ju:n** [...] *oven*, where medial *v* became *u* after a back vowel [**oven** > **öuen** > ɛuən > **iuən** > **ju:n**]."

[18] Kolb's map shows that this lengthened pronunciation is recorded in the localities of Melsonby, in the North; Skelton, Borrowby, Helmsley, Rillington and Easingwold, in the East and mid-East; in Pateley Bridge, in the mid-West; and in Nafferton, Newbald and Welwick, in the South-east. With the exception of Pateley-Bridge, the development of an [ɪʊ]-type diphthong is common to the East of the county. Hence, it is probable that the isogloss running between western and eastern Yks. as regards the pronunciation of *oven* could be somehow outlined by the end of the seventeenth century. Moorman (1916: 68) argues that "*jūn* (pronounced yoon) [...] is the commonest Yorkshire form, and is heard in many parts of the North and East Ridings, and in the West Riding as far west as the Washburn Valley". However, he regards this, alongside other ten traditional Yks. forms, as a descendant of seventeenth-century *uvn*. Although no comment is provided about the approximate ascendancy of [j]-forms, it appears likely that Moorman dates them later in time, failing thus to recognise the written evidence supplied by our broadsheet.

*horn'd*, which reveals nothing about the quality or length of the vowel.[19] However, Dean (1961: 117) demonstrates that [ʊə] is common in the northern area of Yks. in words descending from ME /o+rn/. His suggestion, albeit similar scanty evidence, also reveals this phonetic levelling for *moarn(e)*. Furthermore, Cowling (1915: §118) argues that this process was likely to have operated fully by 1673 in the light of the digraph used: "The change probably took place before 1673, for the Yorkshire Dialogue of that date spells 'morn' as *moarne*. This Early Modern $\bar{ɔ}$ has developed, like ME $\bar{ɔ}$, to **u˙ə**."

### 3.1.9. ME /u/

Words spelt <ou>; RP /ʌ/: *oumar* (x1) (< OF *umbre*) 'umber'
As is true of words such as *cum* or *wurrye* (see 3.6 below), the digraph <ou> might point to an [ʊ]-pronunciation suggestive of the failure of ME /u/ to unround and lower into /ʌ/. This gave way to a widespread distribution of [ʊ]-forms in northern dialects (Wells 1982: §4.4.2). The introduction of <ou> as a means to represent this sound may give a hint of the author's etymological awareness as regards this sample.[20] Indeed, the French sequence is kept in B and C as shown by *owmar*. OED also collects <ou>-spellings in renderings of dialectal speech for the standard *umber*.

### *3.2. Long vowels*

### 3.2.1. ME /a:/

Although the words here under discussion do not all stem from the same etymologycal source, they are considered together as they share the same development in ne.Yks. A distinction as regards spellings is made.

(i) Words spelt <ea>
 a. OE /a:/; RP /əʊ/: *deaugh* (x1) 'dough', *gea* (x1) (+*go* x1) 'go', *heame* (x1) 'home'
 b. OF /a/ lengthened; RP /eɪ/: *heast* (x1) (+*haest* x1) 'haste'

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[19] B and C changed, perhaps mistakenly, *moarne* into *morn*.
[20] See Scragg (1974: 79-80), among others, about the origin of this spelling.

(ii) Words spelt <a>
    a. OE /a:/; RP /əʊ/, /wʌn/: *na* (x1) 'no', *rape* (x1) 'rope', *sa* (x1) 'so', *yelk ane* (x1) (+*ilk yean* x1) 'each one'
    b. ON /a:/; Sc. /əʊ/, /e/ ( RP /ɒ/): *fra* (x3) (+*fre* x2) 'from'

(iii) Words spelt <ae>
OF /a/ lengthened; RP /eɪ/: *aebles* (x1) 'ables', *haest* (x1) (+*heast* x1) 'haste'

(iv) Words spelt <ay>
OE /a/ lengthened; RP /u:/: *wayem-tow* (x1) 'womb-tow'

(v) Words spelt <y->
OE /a:/ in initial position; RP /wʌn/: *ilk yean* (x1) (+ *yelk ane* x1) 'each one'

It is clear from the above that the orthographical representation of ME /a:/ is varied and apparently misleading in this broadsheet. We observe that words with ME /a:/ stemmed from lengthening of OE /a/ and OF /a/ are transcribed according to <ae>, <ea> or <ay> – *aebles*, *heast*, *haest*, *wayem-tow* –, whereas those which descend from OE /a:/ and ON /a:/ are more regularly represented with <a> or <ea>. Indeed, there seems to be a preference for these two sequences, being <a> the most frequent. In the light of the corrections made in B and C, it might be interestingly concluded that both <a> and <ea> are the symbols which more closely represent the phonetic reflexes of ME /a:/ in ne.Yks.[21] It is, therefore, probable that the digraphs <ae> and <ay> – *aebles*, *haest* and *wayem* – are misprints of other sequences.
    Too much has been written about the northern lack of rounding – OE /a:/ > ME /a:/ – and the subsequent development of ME /a:/ in

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[21] B and C reveal, on the one hand, an orthographical normalisation by means of the digraph <ea>: *deaugh* is replaced by *deagh*; *haest* is printed as *heast*; and *wayem* is accordingly changed into *weam*. Also, *aebles* is changed for *aibles*; *fra* is substituted by *frae/f'rae* except once; and *fre* by *frae* as well. Both *ilk yean* and *yelk ane* are represented as *ilkane*, at the time that *sa* is substituted by *sae*. We observe that <ae> was not regarded as a suitable sequence for representing *ables*, that the inconsistent symbolisation of *one* is regularised by means of <a>-spellings, and also that *sae*, *frae/f'rae* must be printing mistakes for <ea>.

northern dialects.[22] It is a common assumption that a centring diphthong [ɪə] arose in ne.Yks (Dean 1961: §50). In view of its orthographical representation, it is probable that <a>-spellings stand for another type of sound. Indeed, <ea>-sequences reveal that the developments of ME /a:/ and ME /ɛ:/ were levelled already by 1673 under the diphthong mentioned. Thus, words spelt with <a> "must reflect the ancestors of the non-traditional forms that are so common today," namely [ɛə] (Dean 1961: §44). As far as *yean* in concerned, a pronunciantion [jɪən] seems to be indicated. Although not considered as traditional in Yks., the existence of [j]-forms indicates that they date back at least to the second half of the seventeenth century.

3.2.2. ME /a: + r/ (< ON /a/ lengthened)
Words spelt <ay>; RP /ɔ:/: *swayr* (x1) (< ON *svara*) 'sware', 'swore' [23]
The reflex of northern ME /a:/ in *swayr* seemingly indicates an intermediate stage in the emergence of the centring diphthongs [ɛə] and, less possibly, [ɪə]. The digraph <ay> probably reflects the phonetic ancestor of modern non-traditional forms too. In fact, B and C emend this sequence and *swayr* appears as *sware*. As a result, it is thus likely that ME /a:+r/ had reached an [ɛ:]-type sound round the second half of the seventeenth century, later developing into [ɛə] through the vocalisation of /r/. It is rather difficult to determine if [ə] could have developed at this time, since <ayr> or <ar>-spellings reveal nothing about that. EDG-In records [eə] in e. & se. Yks. for *swore*.

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[22] About the development of northern ME /a:/ see EDG (§121), Wyld (1956: 194-196), Dobson (1968, vol. 2: §98-§100), Wakelin (1977: 107-108) and García-Bermejo (2008), among others. Rydland (1992) gives a detailed description of [ea]-diphthongs in northern English. For a full and thorough description of this process in Yks. speech, consult Dean (1961: §33-§60). Morris (1911: 60) supplies some hints about the reflexes of ME /a:/ in eastern Yks. words such as *who*, *so*, *two*, etc. Also, Kolb (1966: 137-151) outlines this development in words like *spade*, *gable*, *grave*, *bacon*, etc.

[23] From an etymologycal perspective, PdE *swore* descends from OE /o:/. However, dialect forms with <a> might hardly stem from a rounded sound in ME. The ON etymologycal counterpart *svara* developed into *sware* with the meaning 'to answer.' It is somehow possible that the spelling variants with <a> might be related with the ON stem, even more so as the meaning is not here clearly defined: "For when a hard in what a twittar/ Yar poor Owse lay, he took his Flayle,/ An' hang't by th' Swypple on a nayle./ An teuk a Mell fra th' top o' th' Wharnes,/ An' *swayr* hee' d ding yar Owse i' th' Harnes" (36-40) [italics mine].

3.2.4. ME /oː/

(i) Words spelt <u(e)>; RP /ʌ/, /uː/, /ʊ/: *blude* (x3) 'blood', *fule* (x2) 'fool', *tuke* (x3) (+*teuk* x1) 'took', *luke* (x3) 'look', *midden-pule* (x1) 'midden-pool', *rude* (x1) 'rood', *tue* (x1) 'too'

(ii) Words spelt <eu>; RP /ʊ/, /uː/: *teuk* (x1) (+*tuke* x3) 'took', *teuth* (x1) 'tooth'

As it was previously outlined, ME /oː/ was fronted in northern dialects to a half-close centralised rounded vowel [øː] which developed into an [yː]-sound.[24] The [ɪy] diphthong which arose by partial unrounding of the vowel seems to be the sound intended by the words of these two groups. In terms of orthography, the poem resorts to two different sequences in order to render this sound. Obviously, <eu> is more clearly suggestive of a closing diphthong [ɪʊ], whereas <u> hardly points to it.[25] However, the latter is far more numerous and consistently used than the former. It is quite possible that the author showed a preference for the somehow archaic French spelling <u> due mainly to the similarity between the reflex of French /ū/ and that of ME /oː/ in the dialect.[26] Contrarily,

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[24] See Orton (1928-1929) for an alternative theory on the path of development of ME /oː/. He claims that the immediately preceding stage in the emergence of modern diphthongs – "[iu], [iə]" – is "[íu]". Cowling (1915: §159) acknowledges the complicated path of change of this ME monophthong in northern and eastern Yorkshire varieties. In fact, he provides a rather complex and debatable explanation: "I believe ME *ǫ* in North and East Yorkshire to have been a rounded diphthong, like the sound ·ü [...] Starting from *oː*, the development of an *u*-glide would give *ou* as in Modern English. This *ou* was fronted, and the diphthong became the mixed lax rounded *öü*, afterwards partially unrounded to ·ü."

[25] Although the centring [ɪə] has been the ultimate development of ME /oː/ in ne.Yks., it seems probable that it had not emerged by the second half of the seventeenth century as indicated by our evidence. Morris (1911: 61) shows that it was already widespread by the turn of the twentieth century: "*Oo* becomes *eea*, e.g. (look) *leeak*, (crook) *creeak*, (took) *teeak*, (fool) *feeal*, (soon) *seean*." Likewise, SED (V.8.11) records [ɪə]-pronunciations for *cool* in the East of Yks.

[26] Dean (1961: §70-§90) gives a full descriptive account of the development of ME /oː/, French /ū/ and ME /eu/ in northern Yks.

B and C alternate the standard <oo> with the digraph <eu>; <u> is only used for *blude*. [27]

(iii) Words spelt <ua>; RP /uː/, /ʊ/: *dua* (x1) 'do', *fuat* (: *to it*) (x1) 'foot'

The use of <ua> for *foot* as an orthographical transcription of the development of ME /oː/ is possibly a poetic device used to respect the rhyme scheme of the ballad. In fact, <ua> hardly stands for any of the reflexes of the long monophthong in ne.Yks. The author apparently attempts to represent a south-western sound, thus rhyming *fuat* with *to it*. However, A shows a misleading and actually mistaken rendering of such pronunciation, since <ua> might point to a kind of [ʊə]-diphthong and not to an [ʊɪ]-sound. This is the reason why B and C substitute this for *fooit*.

Also, the digraph <ua> for *do* seems to be a misprint. First, no pronunciation of a diphthong with an approximately close starting-point [ʊ], which might be descendant of an [ʊə]-type sound, is recorded by EDG-In.[28] Second, B and C change, also mistakenly, this sequence for the standard spelling *do*. *Dua* does not, therefore, really suggest a pronunciation which might have ever existed in this area.

3.2.5. ME /oː + r/

Words spelt <ee>; RP /ɔː/: *lear-deers* (: *Steers*) (x1) 'doors'

The course of evolution of ME /oː + r/ may have been slightly different in view of the evidence collected. The spelling sequence <ee> indicates an [iː]-type sound which might also emerge from the development we have assumed for ME /oː/. It is likely that the [yː] which descended from [øː] was totally unrounded before /r/, thus easing the development of a falling diphthong *[ɪɪ] (< [íy] < [yː]) which would later become [ɪə]. Hence, the developments of ME /oː + r/ and ME /eː + r/ were apparently levelled under this sound – *steers* : *lear-deers*. Although our samples are very few, our hypothesis is backed with the data collected by EDG-In where the pronunciation

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[27] Preference for <oo>-spellings is evident as it is used in *fool*, *pool*, *rood*, *too* and *tooth*; <eu> is used consistently for *teuk* and *leuk*. Whatever the reasons for the orthographical emendations of B and C might have been, the literary transcription of ne.Yks. speech is not faithful as regards these words with <oo>. See EDG-In.

[28] EDG-In gathers [fʊət] in e.Dor, [fʊɪt] in sw. & ms. Yks., whereas [fɪət] is recorded in ne., e., m. & se. Yks. Likewise, [dɪə] is collected in ne., e. & nnw. Yks; [dɪʊ] appears to be common in sm., sw. Yks.

[dɪə(r)] is recorded in ne., e. & m.Yks.[29] Also, SED (V.1.8) collects [ɪə] for *door* in the north-eastern localities of Skelton and Egton. B and C respect this spelling, which might also be indicative of the process and sound we account for.

### 3.3. Diphthongs

ME /ai/ ( ME /ei/)
Words spelt <ae>; RP /e/: *agaen* (x1) 'again', *gaen* (x1) 'gain'
As is true of the development of ME /a:/ (< OE /a:/) in northern dialects, a great deal of attention has also received that of ME /ai/. It is commonly accepted that ME /ai/ and ME /a:/ merged in their developments and were levelled under an [ɛ:]-type sound (Dobson 1968: §§225-226). However, Dean (1961: §§67-69) convincingly argues that this generalised process of levelling did not actually take place in northern Yks. dialects owing mainly to the earlier monophthongisation of ME /ai/. As a matter of fact, he claims that it is probable that by the time [ɛə] (< ME /a:/) was raised to [eə] > [ɪə], [aə] (< ME /ai/) was raised to [æə]>[ɛə]. This might be the pronunciation intended by *agaen* and *gaen*. It should be recalled that <ae>-spellings must rather be misprints of <ea>: in B and C we find *agean* and the standard form *gain*.

### 3.4. Consonants

As far as consonant traits are concerned, the broadsheet displays a clearly more restricted series of dialectalisms which may shed light upon the historical linguistic scene of ne.Yks. We shall mention only a few. First, the evidence provided by <wh>-spellings in words such as *wharnes* and *whyes* (x1) 'query' suggest that ME /kw/ was superseded by [hw], [ʍ]-pronunciations (Dobson 1968, vol. 2: §414), or even [w] (Morris 1911: 61). Second, *syke* (x1) 'such' demonstrates that the area was also characteristic for unpalatalised consonants.

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[29] The modern centring diphthong could have arisen from *[ɪɪ] as a result of the vocalisation and later loss of /r/ and not as part of the development of the vowel. It is interesting to remark that Dean (1961: §90) concludes, in the light of certain rhymes between ME /ɛ: + r/ and ME /o:+r/ in Meriton's poem – *deaur*: *feare*, etc. –, that an [ɪə]-pronunciation was becoming widespread at this time. Indeed, he stresses that "Meriton could not anticipate a development of the future. It may be that [ɪy] became [ɪə] before *r* in advance of its development to [ɪə] in other positions." However, the spelling <ee> hardly suggests that such centring diphthong was beginning to be heard by 1673. See also Cowling (1915: §159).

Third, samples such as *ge* (x1) 'give' reveal a process of vocalisation of /v/ through assimilation in final position, giving way to a different pronunciation (EDG: §279, EDG-In). Also, vowel-less spellings, namely *th'* (x28), for the definite article point to a process of definite article reduction which seems common to Yks. and Lan. dialects (Jones 2002).[30] Finally, <y->-spellings in *yune-head*, *ilk yean*, *yelk ane* indicate that a '/j/-formation' process was also operative.[31]

### 3.5. Further evidence

Side by side with the linguistic information provided by the orthographical evidence and rhymes above discussed, we must also account for other rhyming couplets which do also highlight phonological traits of ne.Yks.:

· *hurn* : *burn* reveals that ME /ir/ and ME /ur/ were levelled under an [əɹ]-type sound (Dean 1961: §121-§122).

· *swine-trough*: *cameril-hough* gives an indication of a voiceless fricative [-f] for ME /-χ/ in *hough*. In fact, SED (V.6.3) records [-f] for *dough* in the eastern localities of Egton and Newbald.

### 3.6. Miscellaneous traits

Table 1 shows other phonological features which are also common to other northern counties or simply point to non-standard pronunciations not specifically distinctive of the variety under discussion. The sounds suggested are indicated.

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[30] A uses *th'* (x28) beside the standard *the* (x7), whereas B and C change *th'* for *t'* (x32) and the standard *the* is used three times. Although both *th'* and *t'* are clear markers of this process of definite article reduction, the pronunciation suggested might be distinct depending on the phonetic environment in which they occur. See Jones (2002, 2007) and Page-Verhoeff (2005).

[31] Apart from these features, we also observe other aspects which are not so much interesting and do not actually yield relevant linguistic data about Yks. On the contrary, they are rather widespread and are considered as generally regional. Among them, we may refer to the loss of initial, intermediate or final consonants: ME /b/ (*cameril-hough* x1 'cambrel-hough', *oumar*), ME /d/ (*an'* x14 'and', *len* x1 'lend'), ME /v/ (*e'en* x5 'even', *ne'er* x1 'never', *o'* x9 'of'), ME /ð/ (*wi'* x1 'with'), ME /n/ (*i'* x7 'in'), ME /h/ (*'im* x1 'him'). Common to some northern and Midland dialects, we record that medial ME /ð/ became [d]: *smedy* (EDG: §315).

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| *brocken* (x2) [ɒ] 'broken' | *cum* (x4) [ʊ] 'come' | *kepp* (x1) [e] 'keep' |
| *mack* (x2) [a] 'make' | *nat* (x1) [a] 'not' | *nu* (x1) [uː] 'now' |
| *syke* (x1) [ɪ] 'such' | *tack* (x3) [a] 'take' | *than* (x4) [a] 'then' |
| *tongue* (: *hung*) (x1) [ʊ] | *wurrye* (x1) [ʊ] 'worry' | *whan* (x1) [a] 'when' |

*Table 1*

## 4. Conclusion

The discussion offered in this paper renders supporting data to our knowledge of north-eastern Yorkshire phonology in the second half of the seventeenth century. The scarce information which has been provided to date is diachronically widened at the time that other features, like some of those yielded by Meriton's piece, are strongly corroborated by this earlier dialect specimen. The broadsheet does actually furnish written evidence and historical documentations of utmost value to our understanding of north-eastern Yorkshire phonological nuances as those suggested by *yune-head*, *lear-deers*, the levelling between ME /o + r/ and ME /ɔː/ as shown by *moarne*, or the [ɪy]-preceding stage in the emergence of modern [ɪʊ]-diphthongs for words descending from ME /oː/. In parallel, it also adds ample evidence for other traits which highlight the path of change of some ME phonemes in the area like those represented by *cameril-hough, gaen, heast, hing* or *smedy*. On the other hand, a comparative assessment of the non-standard spellings used in three different reprints has lent aid to decide with confidence which sequences do probably respond to misprints or which respond to alien pronunciations – i.e. *fuat* or *fooit* – merely introduced for literary purposes.

In sum, this linguistically ignored broadside displays notoriously valuable information from a period earlier than most of other records of speech hitherto evaluated. It does help us indeed outline more precisely the linguistic ascendancy of the north-eastern Yorkshire variety in order to shed light upon the blurred dialect panorama of Early Modern England.

**'A Yorkshire Dialogue between an Awd Wife, a Lass, and a Butcher' (1673)**

AWD WIFE. Pretha now, Lass, gang into th' hurn,
  An' fetch me heame a Skeel o' burn;
  Na, pretha, Barne, mack heast an' gang;
  I'se marr me deaugh, thou stayes sa lang.
LASS. Wyah, Gom, I'se gea, bad, for me pains,                                5
  You s' ge m'a frundel o' yar grains.
AWD W. My grains, me Barne? marry, not I;
  Me draugh's for th' Gilts and Gaults i' th' Sty:

Than, preetha, luke i' th' Garth, and see
What Owsen in the Stand-hecks be.                          10
LASS. Blukrins! they'l put, I dare not gang,
  Outeen ya'l len ma th' great Leap-stang.
AWD W. Tack th' Frugan, or th' awde Maolyn-shaft.
  Cum tyte agaen, and be not daft.
LASS. Gom, th' Great Bull-segg, he's brocken /lowse,      15
  And he, he's hypt your broad-horn'd Owse;
  An' th' Owse is faln into the Swine-trough,
  I think hee's brocken his Cameril-hough.
AWD W. Whaw, whaw, mi Lass, make haest to th'Smedy,
  Hee's nu ded, for he rowts already;                     20
  Hee's bown; O, how it boakes and stangs,
  His Lisk e'en bumps and bobbs wi' pangs.
  His Weazen-pipe's as dry as dust;
  His Dew-lapp's sweild, he cannot host.
  He beales; tack the Barwhams of o' th' beams,           25
  An' fetch some Breckons fra the clames;
  Fre th' bawks, go fetch ma a wayem-tow;
  My Nowt's e'en wreckend; hee'l not dow.
  Een wellanerin for my Nowte;
  For syke a Musan ne'er was wrought.                     30
  Put the Whyes a-mel yon Stirks an' Steers,
  I' th' Oumar, an' sneck the lear-deers:
  See if Goff *Hyldroth* be gaen hand.
  Thou Helterfull, how dares ta stand?
LASS. Hee'l come belive, or aebles tittar;                35
  For when a hard in what a twittar
  Yar poor Owse lay, he took his Flayle,
  An' hang't by th' Swypple on a nayle.
  An teuk a Mell fra th' top o' th' Wharnes,
  An' swayr hee' d ding yar Owse i' th' Harnes;           40
  Hee stack his Shackfork up i' th' Esins,
  An' tuke his Jerkin of o' th' Gresins:
  Than tuke his Mittans, reacht his Bill,
  An' of o' th' Yune-head tuke a Swill
  Ta kepp th' Owse blude in: Luke is cum.                 45
AWD W: Than reach Thivel or a Strum,
  To stur his Blude; stand nat te tawke,
  Hing th' Reckans up o' th' Rannel-bawke.
  God ya god moarne, Goff: I's e'en fain,
  You'll put me Owse out o' his pain.                     50
BUTCH. Hough-band him, tack thur weevils hine
  Fra th' Rape's end; this is not a Swine
  We kill, where ilk yean hauds a fuat;
  I'se ready now, yelk ane luke tu it.
  Than 'Beef', a God's name, I now cry.                   55
  Stretch out his legs, and let him lye
  Till I cum stick 'im: where's me Swill?

Cum hither, Lass; hawd, hawd, hawd still.
LASS. What mun I dua with Blude? BUTCH. Thou Fule,
  Team't down i' th' Garth, i' th' Midden-pule.          60
  Good Beef, by th' messe; and when 'tis hung,
  I'se roule it down with Teuth an' Tongue,
  An' gobbl't down e'en till I wurrye.
  An' whan nest mell wee mack a Lurrye,
  A peece o' this fre the Kymlin brought          65
  By th' Rude, 'twill be as good as ought.
AWD W. Mawte-hearted Fule, I e'en cud greet
  Ta see me Owse dead at me feet.
  I thank ya, Goff; I'se wype me Eene,
  An' please ya tue. BUTCH. Wyah, Gom *Gree*          70

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