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The Conservative North – the Phonological Makeup of Northern English Features

1. Introduction

The Northern dialect of English has always been enshrouded in the air of mystery and secrecy, which has become its distinctive trait well established in the literature and accepted as a badge of the whole area. This is not without a reason, particularly when one considers its historical and geographical background where at every step the North has seemed to defy clear categorization, challenging anyone who would wish to pigeonhole it or confine it within some rigid framework of dialectal description. The previous study of the English Northern dialect[1] has already shown one facet of the North, focusing on the fluidity of its borders as observed in the traditional and modern understanding of what is regarded as the Northern dialect[2] and on its innovative character revealing itself in the radical morphological and syntactic features introduced in the Northern region. The image painted in that analysis is of the dialect which appears revolutionary and influential in its own right, affecting other varieties and thus occupying a position of a linguistic trendsetter ahead of its

[1] Agnieszka Kocel-Duraj, "The innovative North – the morphosyntactic makeup of Northern English features," Świat *i Słowo* 34 (2020), pp. 377–394.

[2] Ibid., pp. 377–379.

time. Yet, taking into account the volatile nature of the Northern spirit, one cannot yet consider this picture complete and any assertions that the North is linguistically innovative need to be juxtaposed with another set of characteristics showing a different side to the Northern variety. This is undeniable that much as one can find the image of a morphologically innovative trendsetter compelling, they should not neglect the fact that the legendary distinctiveness of the whole Northern region is partly rooted in its attachment to tradition and conservative values, cultivated by such linguistic organizations as the Yorkshire Dialect Society, the Lancashire Dialect Society, or the Northumbrian Language Society to mention just a few. What adds a different dimension to this sentimental attachment is strong affinity for the traditional speech with its colourful features and unmistaken melody, which in many cases has been preserved for centuries in a little if not hardly changed form, making the variety as much phonologically conservative as morphologically innovative. This utterly different side of the Northern dialect again raises questions about its true identity and nature, becoming therefore the main point of interest in the following study focused on the analysis of particular phonetic features with the aim of showing that in addition to being morphologically and syntactically innovative the North proves to be phonologically and phonetically traditional and highly conservative. The following analysis will thus concentrate on the examination of historical continuities observed both in the case of vowels and consonants, taking into account the retention of [U], lack of diphthongization, lack of palatalization, rhoticity, and preservation of the cluster [xw]. The analysis will involve textual examples from modern times backwards.

2. Phonological and Phonetic Makeup of the North

2.1 Vowels

The most important features of the North, making it distinct from the South, may be observed in the divergent system of vowels, which are represented on a dialectal map by means of isoglosses. The most prominent isogloss, separating the North from the South, is what Wells calls the FOOT-STRUT split, i.e. the 'Wash-Shropshire line' running from the Wash, south

of Birmingham, to the Welsh border,[3] and accounting for discrepancies between such pronunciations as [ʌp] and [ʊp] in *up* or [ˈrʌnɪŋ] and [ˈrʊnɪŋ] in *running away.* While the Northerners will share the same sound [ʊ] in the case of both lexical sets: *foot* and *strut/up/running*, the Southerners will use there [ʊ] and [ʌ] respectively; the Northern tendency has been presented in (1) below:

(1)(a) […] "It's Not Grim **Oop** North"
(Northern ModE[4])

(b) […] Now then, Maggie, no **running** [ˈrʊnɪn] away.
("Learning to milk," recording of Margaret Cumming born in 1886, ModE, Dent, dialect of Dentdale in the West Riding of Yorkshire[5])

The examples above show that the words *running* and *up,* which have the sound [ʌ] in Standard English,[6] are pronounced with [ʊ], sometimes spelt „oo", in the North. Such a contrast was first noted in the middle of the 17th century when short /u/ developed two allophones: [ɣ] and [ʊ], the former lowered to [ʌ] in the latter half of the same century.[7] This was an example of a phonemic split creating a contrast between two allophones of /u/, [ɣ] and [ʊ], which began functioning as separate phonemes, /ʌ/ and /ʊ/.[8] The absence of [ʌ] in the Northern examples might be explained by the lack of the lowering and consequently of the phonemic split or by the dialect's failure to develop the allophone [ɣ]. All in all, "[b]y the middle of the eighteenth century the 'unsplit' /u/ was already recognised as a northern characteristic."[9]

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[3] John Cecil Wells, *Accents of English.* Vols. 1-3 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982), p. 349.

[4] *London Midweek*, 3rd February 1997.

[5] Bertil Hedevind, *The Dialect of Dentdale in the West Riding of Yorkshire* (Uppsala: *Studia Anglistica Upsaliensia,* PhD Diss., 1967), p. 272, line 2.

[6] John Cecil Wells, *Longman Pronunciation Dictionary* (Harlow: Pearson Education Limited, 2000), pp. 663, 817.

[7] Jerzy Wełna, *A Diachronic Grammar of English.* Part One. *Phonology* (Warszawa: Państwowe Wydawnictwo Naukowe, 1978), pp. 213, 234.

[8] Manfred Görlach, *Introduction to Early Modern English* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), p. 66.

[9] Joan Beal, "English dialects in the North of England: phonology," in: *Varieties of English. The British Isles.* Vol. 1, eds. Bernd Kortmann and Clive Upton (Berlin: Mouton de Gruyer, 2008), p. 131.

There are quite a few disagreements, however, as to the nature of the process and its geographical distribution. Wells[10] asserts that there was no phonemic split "in broad accents of the north of England," while Drummond[11] claims that there exists a certain variant of the STRUT vowel, observed in higher social classes, where it is pronounced somewhere in between the vowel in FOOT and in STRUT. This observation seems to go back to the divergent opinions of Kirkby[12] and Kenrick,[13] who disagreed about the phonetic realisation of the sound, arguing that the unsplit northern phoneme resembled more /ʊ/ or /ʌ/ respectively. Chambers and Trudgill,[14] on the other hand, emphasize the occurrence of varied pronunciation of [ʊ] and [ʌ] in the transition zone between the North and the South where speakers resort to mixed lects or fudged lects in different circumstances, while Wells explains the presence of [ʌ] in FOOT words, invoking examples of hypercorrected speech.[15] The variation may as well result from a more careful speech where [ʊ] could be realised as [ə] by some speakers, notably by women,[16] which is also confirmed by Watt and Milroy .[17] Additionally, this schwa-like vowel in STRUT may also be a direct product of the RP influence, which has triggered slow diffusion of the phonemic split northwards, recorded in the *English Dialect App* study,[18] though the analysis has been carried out on limited data, mostly including the results from the examination of young people who generally are more prone to be affected by the RP pronunciation. Considering all the changes, one may observe that "realisations of the FOOT-STRUT vowel vary from

[10] John Cecil Wells, *Accents of English,* vol. 1: *An introduction* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982), p. 197.

[11] Rob Drummond, "The Manchester Polish strut: Dialect acquisition in a second language," *Journal of English Linguistics* 41(1) (2012), p. 71.

[12] John Kirkby, *A New English Grammar* (Menston: Scolar Press reprint no. 297, 1746 [1971]).

[13] William Kenrick, *A New Dictionary of the English Language* (London: J. and F. Rivington, 1773).

[14] Jack. K. Chambers and Peter Trudgill, *Dialectology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980 [1998]), pp. 110–113.

[15] John Cecil Wells (1982), p. 132.

[16] Gerard J.Docherty and Paul Foulkes, "Derby and Newcastle: Instrumental phonetics and variationist studies," in: *Urban Voices: Accent Studies in the British Isles*, eds. Paul Foulkes and Gerard J. Docherty (London: Arnold, 1999), pp. 47–71.

[17] Dominic Watt and Lesley Milroy, "Patterns of variation and change in three Newcastle vowels: is this dialect levelling?," in: *Urban Voices: Accent Studies in the British Isles*, eds. Paul Foulkes and Gerard J. Docherty (London: Arnold, 1999), p. 28.

[18] Adrian Leemann, Marie-José Kolly and David Britain, "The English Dialects App: The creation of a crowdsourced dialect corpus," *Ampersand* 5 (2018), pp. 1–17.

[ʊ] in the lower North and central Lancashire to something more like [ɣ] in Tyneside and Northumberland,"[19] which means that despite the fluidity of the borders delineating the area where the phonemic split is present, the specific pronunciation of the vowels in STRUT and FOOT still remains a salient feature of most of the northern region, making it almost a staple association people share when they think of the North.

Interestingly, since before the 17th century there was generally no distinction between the STRUT and FOOT vowels, both in the Middle and Old English period all such words were pronounced with /u/, irrespective of the dialect, which is reflected in the spelling in the examples coming from *The Helsinki Corpus* (HC)[20] below:

(2)(a) And stei **up** in a littel stunt […] (line 1240)
(*Cursor Mundi,* ME, the date of the manuscript: c. 1350–1420, Northern, HC)

(b) Þo aros **up** ure lord and tok Þane wynd and to see; […] (line 185–186)
(*Kentish Sermons,* EME, c. 1250–1350, Kentish, HC)

(c) […] vel scua leht æteawde **upp** Þæm. (line 334)
(*Rushworth Gospels,* LOE, c. 950–1050, Mercian, HC)

(d) […] gif gie girioson mið criste ða ðe **vpp** […] (line 180)
(*Durham Ritual*, LOE, c. 950–1050, Northumbrian, HC)

(e) […] siðÞan sunne **up** on morgentid […] (line 11–12)
(*Battle of Brunanburh,* OE, c. 850–950, West Saxon, HC)

A similar pronunciation to that of the 17th-century and older dialects can now be found merely in the case of some Northern varieties in the form of lowered [U], where the retention of traditional speech may be perceived not only in terms of an inoperative linguistic process such as the phonemic split discussed above, but also from a sociolinguistic perspective, where the preservation of the traditional way of pronouncing words often appears congruent with the preservation of traditional values themselves.

[19] Joan Beal (2008), p. 131.
[20] *The Helsinki Corpus* (HC) (Helsinki: University of Helsinki, 2011).

Moreover, the above characteristic is represented by one of the isoglosses delineating a kind of invisible boundary perceived as "constituting major phonological divisions between northern and southern England."[21] Surprisingly, those isoglosses have turned out remarkably stable throughout the modern times, providing some rationale for Trudgill's modern dialect areas division.[22] As Knowles[23] suggests, these lines also mark the extent of the 'Londonisation' process taking place at around the same time as the phonological changes described above. This resistance to standardization and levelling shows the general stability of the Northern dialect, which retains many archaic features, confirming its phonologically conservative nature. Its tendency towards preservation of 'the old' may be accounted for by referring to certain psychological and sociological aspects, classified as the environmental factors.[24] This would be observed, for example, in the strong feelings of regional identity, "positive images of Northern accents in terms of hospitality and openness" and the fact that such archaisms are perceived as cultural artefacts defining the whole community.[25] The retention of the old features agrees thus with people's perception of the conservative phonetic system as constituting the Northern linguistic heritage, hence their replication, adoption and preservation may seem more natural to the Northern native speakers than their change.

While the Wash-Shropshire line discussed above tends to define the North as a vast, historically consistent territory, by no means can the isogloss be treated as a marker of a homogeneous area. As Wakelin[26] suggests, there are bundles of old isoglosses running from "the mouth of the Humber and passing (roughly) along the Ouse and Wharfe valleys and out of Lancashire via the Lune and Ribble valleys" which could be rightly taken as a proper boundary defining the modern Northern territory. Wakelin justifies this view, showing that the isoglosses separating Southern Lancashire and the West Riding from Northern Lancashire, thus the Midlands from the North,

[21] Martin F. Wakelin, *English Dialects. An Introduction* (London: The Athlone Press, 1977), p. 86.

[22] Peter Trudgill, *The Dialects of England.* 2nd Edition (Oxford: Blackwell, 1999), pp. 33, 67.

[23] Gerry Knowles, *A Cultural History of the English Language* (London: Edward Arnold, 1997).

[24] Nikolaus Ritt, "The spread of Scandinavian third person plural pronouns in English: optimisation, adaptation and evolutionary stability," in: *Language Contact in the History of English.* 2nd, revised edition, eds. Dieter Kastovsky and Arthur Mettinger (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 2003), pp. 295–297.

[25] Katie Wales, *Northern English. A Cultural and Social History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), p. 166.

[26] Martin F. Wakelin (1977), p. 102.

correspond to the ancient division between Mercia and Northumbria. His observations also reveal striking similarities to Trudgill's traditional dialect areas division.[27] What is true, however, is the fact that the FOOT-STRUT split is considered the most stereotypical in the Northern speech as a whole, while the remaining characteristics, some of them analysed below, seem more likely to distinguish the Northern varieties from each other.

One of such characteristics is a line dividing North-Midland [u:] and Southern [aU], as in *now* ([nu:] vs. [naU]) and *out* ([u:t] vs. [aUt]). The lack of diphthongization used to be typical of the area north of the Humber and North Lancashire,[28] but this feature receded in the late 20th century,[29] being now found in the speech of older, working-class, male speakers of Tyneside and Northumberland, as is exemplified in the excerpts below:

(3)(a) Put them **out** [u:t] the road.
(recording of a fifty-year-old speaker from Tyneside, ModE, dialect of Northumberland – Geordie[30])

(b) Aw hope that thoo's not turnin cowardly **noo** [nu:] [...]
(song commemorating the Durham strike of 1844, ModE, dialect of Durham[31])

As can be observed in (3), the words *now* and *out*, pronounced with the diphthong [aU] in RP,[32] have long [u:] in the North, sometimes spelt „oo",[33] although some speakers nowadays may also pronounce the words with [Eu].[34] The lack of diphthongization was caused by the Northern Fronting of [o:] in Middle English, which is sometimes evidenced in the spellings „u", „ui" and „uy", "resulting from the influence of French orthographic

[27] Peter Trudgill (1999), pp. 33, 67.
[28] Martin F. Wakelin (1977), p. 88.
[29] Joan Beal (2008), p. 134.
[30] Arthur Hughes, Peter Trudgill, and Dominic Watt, *English Accents and Dialects. An Introduction to Social and Regional Varieties of English in the British Isles* (London: Hodder Education, 2005), pp. 124–125, lines 6–7.
[31] Margaret Schlauch, *The English Language in Modern Times (since 1400)* (Warszawa: Państwowe Wydawnictwo Naukowe, 1959), p. 162, line 3.
[32] John Cecil Wells (2000), pp. 520, 542.
[33] Margaret Schlauch (1959), p. 160.
[34] Joan Beal (2008), p. 134.

practices in the representation of a high front rounded vowel."[35] Since, in fact, the Northern Fronting did not trigger any merger of the existing phonemes, there was no need to introduce changes in the spelling system, which accounted for the variation between „o" and „u" used by Northern scribes to represent the new phoneme, the choice depending on the minim strokes shapes of neighbouring letters.[36] Whatever its representation, however, fronted [o:] prevented the diphthongization of [u:] during the Great Vowel Shift (15 c.), as according to Luick's 'push chain' theory there was no factor to trigger such a change.[37] These discrepancies in the vowel development are shown in the examples below:

(4)(a) Oi'm tellin' yo' true,
Oi can find folk **enow** […]
(ModE, Lancashire dialect[38])

(b) […] so **now**, most of all, in fore-seeing the abatement of his honour […] (line 51–52)
(John Hayward, *Annals of the First Four Years of the Reign of Queen Elizabeth,* EModE, c. 1570–1640, Southern British standard, HC)

(c) […] many of the bestes that **now** be comen hyther to your court […] (line 57–58)
(William Caxton, *History of Reynard the Fox,* LME, c. 1420–1500, East Midland, HC)

(d) **Nu** ar yee bath in rest and pees […] (line 642)
(*Cursor Mundi,* ME, the date of the manuscript: c. 1350–1420, Northern, HC)

(e) […] swa we **nu** heræfter secgæn […] (line 18)
(*Bodley Homilies,* EME, c. 1150–1250, Southern, HC)

(f) **Nu** scylun hergan hefaenricaes uard […] (line 1)
(*Caedmon's Hymn*, OE, c. 600–1100, Northumbrian[39])

[35] Derek Britton, "Northern fronting and the north Lincolnshire merger of the reflexes of ME /u:/ and ME /o:/," *Language Science* 24 (2002), p. 223.

[36] Ibid., p. 223.

[37] April M.S. McMahon, *Understanding language change* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), p. 31.

[38] *Oldham Weaver* in Elizabeth Gaskell, *Mary Barton* (London: Penguin, 1848 [1994]), p. 32, lines 19–20.

[39] *The Anglo-Saxon Minor Poems*, Anglo-Saxon Poetry, Literature Online, Chadwyck-Healey (1992).

(g) **Nu** sculon herigean heofonrices weard […] (line 1)
(*Caedmon's Hymn,* OE, c. 600–1100, West Saxon[40])

The change of long [u:] began to be recorded in spelling in the non-Northern dialects from the 15th century onwards. Before that date all the varieties used the same [u:] which, after the Great Vowel Shift, was preserved only in the Northern areas. Although the Modern Northern dialects show the same spellings as the South, the lack of diphthongization in the word *enow* is evidenced through its rhyme with *true*, pronounced with [u:],[41] and despite the fact that nowadays the feature is becoming recessive, there are some words in which for reasons of local identity the pronunciation has undergone lexicalization, which is evident in the spelling of Northumbrian *Toon*, and the pronunciation of *brown*, *down*, *out* (all pronounced with [u:]).[42]

A similar lack of diphthongization is proved by two other isoglosses representing the variation [ʊ ~ aʊ] and [ɪ ~ aɪ], found in the area between the line running from "the mouth of the Humber through YWR [West Riding of Yorkshire; A.K.D], north-west to central La[ncashire; A.K.D]" and the line "following the southern county boundary of Y[orkshire; A.K.D]" and then "the boundary between Y and La up to central La," both variants being much further south than the [u: ~ aʊ] isogloss.[43] This boundary accounts for such discrepancies in pronunciation as in *found* ([fʊnd] vs. [faʊnd]), *pound* ([pʊnd] vs. [paʊnd]) and *find* ([fɪnd] vs. [faɪnd]); see (5) below:

(5)(a) […] he's *nobbut* about eight stone five **pound** [pʊnd] […]
("Sports at Dent Fair," recording of George Raw born in 1892, ModE, Dent, dialect of Dentdale in the West Riding of Yorkshire[44])

(b) […] and we couldn't **find** [fɪnd] out because […]
("The cow that sucked herself," recording of Margaret

[40] Ibid.
[41] John Cecil Wells (2000), p. 797.
[42] Joan Beal, "From Geordie Ridley to Viz: popular literature in Tyneside English," *Language and Literature* 9 (2000), pp. 343–359.
[43] Martin F. Wakelin (1977), p. 90.
[44] Bertil Hedevind (1967), p. 295, line 15.

Cummings born in 1886, ModE, Dent, dialect of Dentdale in the West Riding of Yorkshire[45])

(c) Edad! they're as good lost as **fund**.
(ModE, Lancashire dialect[46])

The words *pound, find* and *found,* containing the diphthong [aʊ] or [aɪ] in RP,[47] are pronounced with short [ʊ] or [ɪ] in the North, which is proved by the transcription given by Hedevind, sometimes also evidenced in the spelling. This discrepancy goes back to the lengthening before voiced homorganic clusters, a process taking place in the Old English period, probably in the 9th century, when all vowels became long before "a liquid or nasal consonant followed by a homorganic voiced sound."[48] Since in the North the vowels mentioned did not undergo the process of diphthongization during the Great Vowel Shift, they must have been re-shortened in Middle English, retaining the reduced quantity until the present day in the area mentioned.[49] This twofold vowel development is reflected in the examples below:

6)(a) […] and if it be **funden** Þat Þay cun […] (line 63)
(*Dan Jon Gaytryge's Sermon,* LME, the date of the manuscript: c. 1420–1500, Northern, HC)

(b) […] upon the payne of the Valure **found** contarie […] (line 166)
(*Statutes*, LME, c.1420-1500, East Midland, HC)

(c) In bethleem sal he **funden** be. (line 685)
(*Cursor Mundi,* ME, the date of the manuscript: c. 1350–1420, Northern, HC)

(d) Of schup hi gunne **funde** […] (line 133)
(*King Horn,* EME, c. 1250–1350, Southern, HC)

(e) Wære hie Þær **fundon**, wuldor gesawon […] (line 290)
(*Exodus*, LOE, c. 950–1050, West Saxon, HC)

[45] Ibid., p. 274, lines 31–32.
[46] *Oldham Weaver* in Elizabeth Gaskell, *Mary Barton* (London: Penguin, 1848 [1994]), p. 32, line 42.
[47] John Cecil Wells (2000), pp. 292, 597.
[48] Alistair Campbell, *Old English Grammar* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1959), p. 120.
[49] Bertil Hedevind (1967), pp. 96, 139.

(f) […] Cyne ðas wisan ðus **fundene** mid […] (line 10)
(*Documents 2*, OE, c. 850–950, Kentish, HC)

As is demonstrated in (6), despite the Old English pre-homorganic cluster lengthening, [u:], and analogously [i:], must have been made short again in the North before the Great Vowel Shift, thus hindering the process of diphthongization and providing two variants of, e.g., the past participle *found* in the South and *funden* in the North. This might have occurred as a result of analogy, considering that shortening did not usually take place before such clusters as *–mb*, *-ld* and *–nd*.[50] Examples from Northumbrian have not been adduced here due to their absence in the corpus; however, on the basis of the analysis of the later texts and comparing the word forms present in West Saxon and Kentish, one can assume that *fund* with a short vowel must have been also used in Northumbrian.

2.2. Consonants

So far the analysis has concentrated merely on the distinct qualities and quantities of vowels found in the North, but the phonetic differences heard in this region go far beyond the system of vowels, affecting consonants to a similar degree. One of such instances is palatalization which in the Old English period gave rise to the affricates [tʃ] and [dʒ] and the fricative [ʃ].[51] This change, however, did not take place in the Danelaw as Old Norse and, consequently, Scandinavian languages did not undergo such a process. As a result, the majority of today's Northern dialects exhibit some non-palatalized forms, being either Old Norse borrowings or English words partially assimilated to the Norse phonology.[52] This lack of palatalization is prominent in the examples below:

(7)(a) T' trees at (is) growing about here, is **birk** [bÈɾk], plane-tree […] ("Questions answered," recording of Florence Raw born in 1906, ModE, Dent, dialect of Dentdale in the West Riding of Yorkshire[53])

[50] Jerzy Wełna (1978), p. 151.
[51] Ibid., pp. 53–54.
[52] Bertil Hedevind (1967), p. 200.
[53] Ibid., p. 280, line 16.

(b) […] **kirk** [kÈRk] yard.
("Looking after the church," recording of George Raw born in 1892, ModE, Dent, dialect of Dentdale in the West Riding of Yorkshire[54])

(c) […] and go as far as Scotcherville **Brig** [bRig] and back.
("Sports at Dent Fair," recording of George Raw born in 1892, ModE, Dent, dialect of Dentdale in the West Riding of Yorkshire[55])

(d) […] he wasn't **sic** [sIk] a bad sort of a lad […]
("The Welsh lad," recording of Margaret Cummings born in 1886, ModE, Dent, dialect of Dentdale in the West Riding of Yorkshire[56])

(e) […] nivver did hullet, herrensue, or miredrum, mak **sic** a noise before.
(LNE, 1785, dialect of Westmoreland[57])

(f) And Ise flaid to come nar, she macks **sike** wark.
(LNE, 1683, dialect of the northern parts of Yorkshire[58])

In (7), *beech, church, bridge* and *such,* which have the palatalized consonants [tS] and [dZ] in RP,[59] show a tendency to retain the non-palatalized sounds [k] and [g] in the North. The fact that these forms have been preserved in the Northern dialect since the Old English times can be proved on the basis of the word *such* in the examples below:

(8)(a) […] For **swylke** caas es ryuely reseruede till hym seluen.
(line 217–218)
(*Dan Jon Gaytryge's Sermon,* LME, the date of the manuscript: c. 1420–1500, Northern, HC)

[54] Ibid. p. 289, line 16.
[55] Ibid., p. 294, lines 2-3.
[56] Bertil Hedevind (1967), p. 275, line 47.
[57] De Worfat, *A Bran New Wark* in William W. Skeat, *English Dialects from the Eighth Century to the Present Day* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1911 [1973], p. 117, lines 9–10.
[58] George Meriton, *George Meriton's A Yorkshire Dialogue (1683)* (Yorkshire Dialect Society, 1959), line 7.
[59] John Cecil Wells (2000), pp. 72, 98, 140, 747.

(b) […] the subtyl knoweleche of **suche** thynges as dayly ben […] (line 5)
(William Caxton, *History of Reynard the Fox,* LME, 1420–1500, East Midland, HC)

(c) "Whare hastou **swilk** water puruaid?" (line 421)
(*Northern Homily Cycle,* ME, c. 1350–1420, Northern, HC)

(d) […] gigegnað him **svoelce** moder arwyrðo […] (line 323)
(*Durham Ritual,* LOE, 950–1050, Northumbrian, HC)

(e) […] hælend wæs onginnende **suelce** wintra ðrittih […] (line 611)
(*Lindisfarne Gospels,* LOE, 950–1050, Northumbrian, HC)

(f) […] **swilce** Scittisc eac, werig, wiges sæd. (line 16–17)
(*Battle of Brunanburh,* OE, 850–950, West Saxon, HC)

As demonstrated in (7–8), from the Old English period onwards the Northern dialect has shown a preference for non-palatalized forms, neglecting "the neighbourhood of front vowels" and "an intervening liquid," usually triggering palatalization.[60] Although the spelling of the Northumbrian examples does not provide clear evidence for the process, the lack of palatalization in that dialect can be assumed on the basis of similar data from Northern Middle English, where the non-palatalized forms of *such* are indicated by the <k> spellings. Interestingly, one can also notice here some alternation among the non-palatalized variants, *suelc/suoelc/swilk/swylk* and *sic*. Although, the former were common in Northumbrian and Northern Middle English, today's Northern dialects seem to favour more the dialectal form *sic*, a reduced version of *swilk*, according to the OED.[61]

There are also a few other consonantal features common in the North which, as opposed to the change discussed earlier, seem to be typical not of the whole region in general but only of its particular areas. Yet, similarly to the processes already mentioned, they still provide important evidence for the analysis of the historical continuity of the dialect, proving its invariability and phonological consistency.

[60] Jerzy Wełna (1978), p. 53.
[61] *Oxford English Dictionary* (OED) (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2020).

One of such features is the retention of [r] in Northumberland, Cumbria, North Lancashire and Yorkshire.[62] Wells also records its presence "along the coast of (…) Humberside, and Lincolnshire."[63] It appears very often as the alveolar tap [ɾ], a rival to the Southern post-alveolar approximant [R], although in Northumberland and the Northern county of Durham the phoneme may be realized as the voiced uvular fricative [ʁ], the so-called 'Northumbrian Burr,' intensively studied by Påhlsson.[64] The fact that these features are still present in the Northern dialects is proved by the examples below:

(9)(a) […] it was just a day out from **Durham** [ˈdUʁ@m] County […]
(recording of a fifty-year-old speaker from Tyneside, ModE, dialect of Northumberland –Geordie[65])

(b) […] to **scrub** [skrUb] it out to make […]
("Cleaning the church," recording of Florence Raw born in 1906, ModE, Dent, dialect of Dentdale in the West Riding of Yorkshire[66])

(c) […] a glass o' **water** [watɽ] and biscuits […]
("Questions answered," recording of George Raw born in 1892, ModE, Dent, dialect of Dentdale in the West Riding of Yorkshire[67])

(d) […] and they **weren't** [waɾnt] wakened up.
("The cow that sucked herself," recording of Margaret Cummings born in 1886, ModE, Dent, dialect of Dentdale in the West Riding of Yorkshire[68])

(e) […] a pot or two to **drink** [dɾiŋk] […]
("Yarns," recording of Thomas Stenton born in 1875, ModE, Dent, dialect of Dentdale in the West Riding of Yorkshire[69])

[62] Peter Trudgill (1999), pp. 38–39.
[63] John Cecil Wells (1982), p. 368.
[64] Christer Påhlsson, *The Northumbrian Burr* (Lund: C.W.K. Gleerup, 1972).
[65] Arthur Hughes, Peter Trudgill, and Dominic Watt (2005), p. 125, lines 38-39.
[66] Bertil Hedevind (1967), p. 277, line 25.
[67] Ibid., p. 280, line 15.
[68] Ibid, p. 274, lines 37–38.
[69] Ibid., p. 281, line 10.

(f) Ise nut **farr**, ist Cow Cawv'd that's a goodin […]
(LNE, 1683, the dialect of the northern parts of Yorkshire[70])

The examples in (9) show the extent of rhoticity in the Northern region and its allophonic representations, inferred on the basis of the transcriptions and peculiar spelling with double <rr>. Unfortunately, the feature is becoming recessive also in the more conservative areas, especially in larger cities such as Newcastle or the City of Manchester, and even the Northumbrian burr, being "a source of pride to Northumbrians," functions now more "as a party-trick," disappearing from the everyday speech.[71] Still, the fact that rhoticity has been preserved for so long in some parts of the North points to a historical continuity of this feature, taking into account its non-prevocalic loss in Standard English in the 17th–18th centuries.[72] Before this date, [r] was pronounced in all dialects although its articulation is difficult to prove on the basis of textual evidence, considering that <r> appeared in all spellings even if it was not pronounced. Surprisingly, in the 15th-century Southern dialect, there were a few words like *passell* 'parcel' (found in *Cely Papers*) omitting <r> in the spelling, which might point to some relation between <r> present in the written form and its actual pronunciation.[73] Following this reasoning, one can assume that [r] was likely to be articulated in all the examples below:

(10)(a) […] duke in the **water** after lapwynches and dokys […]
(line 548–549)
(William Caxton, *History of Reynard the Fox,,* LME,
c. 1420–1500, East Midland, HC)

(b) […] in heuen and in erthe, in **water** and in ayere […]
(line 9–10)
(*Dan Jon Gaytryge's Sermon,* LME, the date of the manuscript:
c. 1420–1500, Northern, HC)

(c) […] ðin Þæt **wæter** fotum minum ne saldest […] (1474)
(*Lindisfarne Gospels,* LOE, c. 950–1050, Northumbrian, HC)

[70] George Meriton (1959), line 30.
[71] Joan Beal (2008), p. 140.
[72] Jerzy Wełna, *A Brief Outline of the History of English* (Warszawa: Wydawnictwa Uniwersytetu Warszawskiego, 2003), p. 55.
[73] Henry Cecil Wyld, *A History of Modern Colloquial English* (3rd ed.) (Oxford: Blackwell, 1936), pp. 298–300.

(d) Ac ða Þæt **wæter** wæs ahebbad fela furlanga from Þæm […] (line 1401)
(Chronicle MS A Early, OE, c. 850–950, West Saxon, HC)

Analysing Wyld's example and the spellings in (10), one can assume that generally [r] was articulated in all the dialects throughout Medieval English. In Early New English, "in the South of England the consonant was considerably weakened," later changing into a trill when prevocalic and into a post-alveolar approximant when final or before another consonant.[74] Yet, such reasoning is not without flaws, considering Dobson's argumentation[75] about the assimilation of [r] to the following sound, the result of which was its loss in the spelling. This might explain a small number of Wyld's examples illustrating the loss of the final <r>, taking into account that in such a position there was no context to trigger assimilation. Whatever the explanation, however, the examples in (9) prove that while in Late New English non-prevocalic [r] was eliminated from Standard English pronunciation, no such process took place in the North which has retained a high degree of rhoticity in some areas until the present day.

The last of the points proving the phonological and phonetic consistency of the Northern dialect to be discussed in this study is the pronunciation [xw] of the cluster <wh>, an Old English feature preserved in today's Northumberland[76] and occasionally also in North Durham and West Cumberland.[77] The grapheme <h> functions here as a diacritic signalling voicelessness of the sound [w].[78] The existence of aspirated [xw] in the present-day North is confirmed by the example below:

(11)(a) An' **Hwaat** Mair […]
("An' Hwaat's Mair," ModE, dialect of Northumberland[79])

As can be observed in (11), the initial cluster <wh>, which is pronounced [w] as in [wQt] in RP,[80] appears as a sequence [xw], sometimes

[74] Jerzy Wełna (1978), p. 230.
[75] E.J. Dobson, *English Pronunciation 1500–1700.* 2 Volumes (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1968), pp. 992–993.
[76] Peter Trudgill (1999), p 38.
[77] Martin F. Wakelin (1977), p. 97.
[78] Alistair Campbell (1959), p. 21.
[79] *An' Hwaat's Mair* in Roland Bibby, *Bogles, Brownies and Brags* (Northumbrian Language Society, 1996), p. 49.
[80] John Cecil Wells (2000), p. 847.

also represented in the spelling by the digraph <hw> in Northumberland. The archaism of this feature is proved by the fact that in most of the dialects [x] was lost at the end of Old English or at the beginning of Middle English period, with parts of the North and Scotland retaining it throughout the latter period. Before this date, however, [xw] appeared in all the dialects, as is demonstrated below:

(12)(a) "**Qui** has Þou don me sli tresum?" (line 615)
(*Cursor Mundi,* ME, the date of the manuscript: c. 1350–1420, Northern, HC)

(b) **Why** that assembled was this compaignye […] (line 437)
(Chaucer, *General Prologue to the Canterbury Tales,* ME, c. 1350–1420, East Midland, HC)

(c) […] cuoeðendum we gesungun iuh mið **hwistlum** […] (line 1417)
(*Lindisfarne Gospels,* LOE, c. 950–1050, Northumbrian, HC)

(d) […] **Hwæt** is Þæt ðonne? (line 284)
HwæÞer we scylen biddan Þone godcundan […] (line 310)
(*Alfred's Boethius,* OE, c. 850–950, West Saxon, HC)

(e) **HweÞræ** Þer fusæ fearran kwomu […] (line 8)
(*Ruthwell Cross,* OE, c. 850, Northumbrian, HC)

The examples in (12) show that the cluster <wh> was pronounced [xw] in all the dialects of Old English, as evidenced by the spelling <hw>. Later on, at the end of Old English or at the beginning of Middle English period, [xw] probably changed into the voiceless labio-velar spirant [ʍ] in the non-Northern dialects, which also influenced the spelling of the sound, now rendered as „wh". By the end of Middle English [ʍ] changed into [w], losing, thus, its main function of signalling the interrogative meaning.[81] This process, however, did not apply in the Northern areas, e.g. Durham, resulting in the preservation of "a heavily aspirated initial [w]," rendered as <qu> in many Middle English Northern texts.[82] The correspondence between <hw> and <qu> is confirmed by Erickson, showing that both

[81] Jacek Fisiak, *A Short Grammar of Middle English* (2004), pp. 58–59.
[82] Martin F. Wakelin, *The Archeology of English* (Bath: The Bath Press, 1988). pp. 92–93.

clusters of sounds are "similarly formed in the mouth," with the first segments being "voiceless velar fricatives, represented phonetically by [x]."[83] As has been demonstrated in (11), this feature is still present in some Northern dialects, providing for the historical continuity of the Old English characteristics and once again proving the conservative nature of the North.

The reasons for the preservation of old consonantal features discussed above may be analyzed from various perspectives. The preserved aspiration of [xw], for instance, may be partially explained by means of the parameters of iconicity and transparency pointing to the fact that such a phonetic feature marks the interrogative quality of the question words. It also confirms the importance of bi-uniqueness since the aspiration allows for differentiation between words spelled with initial <hw>, or <wh>, and those spelled with <w>, leading to different native speakers' intuitions about their underlying representations and the absence of any ambiguities in this respect.

On the other hand, the lack of palatalization discussed earlier could be understood as a product of the Scandinavian influence during which Northumbrian borrowed words with non-palatalized [sk]. This came "as the result of non-code switching linguistic interference,"[84] occurring too late for the Southern Old English palatalization to take effect. The lack of palatalized segments in other lexical items could be then an example of analogy based on the Scandinavian borrowings. This incorporation of the non-palatalized forms into the system is similar to the adoption of the Scandinavian pronouns discussed in the previous article.[85] Both elements entered the Anglo-Saxon use through the sufficient replication and successful adaptation of their structures triggered by the language contact.

The idea of language contact can also account for retention of [xw], considering the vicinity of Scotland where the cluster is still often pronounced with aspiration.[86] Similarly, the preserved rhoticity can be an outcome of the Scottish[87] or, in the case of the Northumbrian Burr, Norman

[83] K. Erickson, "Northern Middle English *qu-* and Scandinavian *hv-*: a study," *Massachusetts Studies in English* 3 (1971), p. 50.

[84] Péter Koczóh, "On English (sk-) words of Old Scandinavian origin," *English in Function* 4(1) (1986), p. 138.

[85] Agnieszka Kocel-Duraj (2020), pp. 379–381.

[86] Alan Cruttenden Gimson, *Gimson's Pronunciation of English*. 6th edition. Revised ed. (London: Arnold, 1962), pp. 214–215.

[87] Hugh Jones, *Accidence of the English Tongue* (Menston: Scolar, 1724 [1967]).

French[88] influences, although it is often understood as a sociological issue implying willingness to distinguish one community from the other (Yorkshire [r] versus Northumbrian Burr).[89]

2.3. Vowels and Consonants – general remarks

All these features and the analysis carried out in this study prove that for various sociolinguistic reasons the Northern dialect has preserved most of its phonetic traits from the Old English times, revealing historical continuities of various Northern vowels and consonants, which is observed in the retention of [U], lack of diphthongization and palatalization, preservation of aspirated [xw] and high rhoticity, all proving phonological consistency and conservatism of the Northern variety. Due to the strong processes of standardization and the RP influence, however, some of the features mentioned are now becoming recessive. It refers both to vowels and consonants, although according to Gimson, the latter are usually considered more stable as their articulation is easier to define, which helps in a more adequate transmission of the sounds across generations.[90] On the other hand, following Wells, one cannot disagree that vowels cover areas larger than consonants so their recession appears slower, especially that vowels often allow for a different broad, intermediate and RP variation.[91] Whatever the point of view, it is still undeniable that for the last centuries we have been observing a steady evanescence of local varieties with their regionally-tinged speech and the process of dialect levelling resulting in the demise of regional features in favour of more standard ones popularly acknowledged as coming from RP.[92] This is, however, quite surprising, considering that in the 1980s merely 3 to 5 per cent of the British people used the standard,[93] which may point to the steady decline of the non-regional accent itself. On the other hand, what has been gaining ground in recent years is Estuary English, comprising a mixture of RP and local London features, which has begun to affect other varieties, including the

[88] John Adams, *The Pronunciation of the English Language Vindicated: Appendixes on the Dialects of all Languages* (Menston: Scolar, 1799 [1968]).

[89] John Cecil Wells (1982), pp. 100, 367.

[90] Alan Cruttenden Gimson (1962), p. 66.

[91] John Cecil Wells (1982), p. 353.

[92] Clive Upton and John D. A. Widdowson, *An Atlas of English Dialects*. 2nd edition. (New York: Routledge, 2006), pp. 1–9.

[93] David Crystal, *The Stories of English* (London: Penguin, 2004), p. 472.

Northern ones, and thus has been causing changes in the sociolinguistic picture of the area. According to Wales,[94] so far there have been two trends observed in the Northern urban speech, with one representing a twofold tendency described as "a 'pushing outwards', so to speak, by the upwardly mobile middle-classes towards RP; yet at the same time a 'pulling back' into a kind of speech which acts as a regional 'norm'" and another presented as "a 'pulling inwards' by the young working classes especially at the core of a city or large town, with close ties and little occupational mobility, to the focused 'community norms' [...] with an apparent tendency also to 'push outwards' to the external influence of not RP but Estuary English [...]." The new sociolinguistic picture created by both trends unfortunately depicts a gradient fading of many of the conservative features, which are being pushed further northwards from the salient boundary dividing the North from the North Midlands and making room for completely new or more commonly used variants, with a possible outcome being that of a new Northern speech looming on the horizon in the near future.

3. Conclusions

The aim of this article was to present another side of the Northern variety to complement the analysis carried out in the previous study[95] which has shown the Northern dialect as morphologically and syntactically innovative, symmetrical and more efficient. This work has focused on the phonetic features and phonological processes occurring in the North, including lack of phonemic split of /u/ and retention of [U], lack of diphthongization and palatalization, as well as preservation of high rhoticity and aspirated [xw]. The list of the six phonetic features examined in over fifty textual examples above is by no means inclusive since for practical reasons it must have been limited to the ones chosen by the author as the most representative, leaving however quite a few worth examining in the future, such as preservation of [a] in the place of Standard English [A:], represented by the 'BATH Broadening line,' variation between Northern [a] and Southern [Q], or lack of phonemicization of [N]. Still, the features presented here seem sufficient to draw certain conclusions as to the phonetic and phonological nature of the Northern dialect which has appeared to be quite immune to

[94] Katie Wales (2006), p. 172.
[95] Agnieszka Kocel-Duraj (2020).

phonological changes, showing strong tendencies towards retention of the old and traditional speech. The mechanism underlying this phenomenon may be analyzed from various perspectives, one of them including approaches promulgated by folk linguistics and perceptional dialectology.[96] This involves looking at many social factors, such as "relationships and interactions between folk beliefs and practice and specialist knowledge," as well as acknowledging "that language attitudes can and sometimes will be influenced by beliefs about language, especially beliefs about the status of a language, culture or the speakers of a language."[97] Analysing the language from the point of view of its speakers and taking into account how they perceive their speech shows that apart from purely phonological processes occurring or failing to occur in a given place and a given time, there might be some more personal aspects which affect the outcome of those processes as well. Many Northerners see their speech as part of the local heritage, identifying the speakers as belonging to a particular social, geographical, ethnical, professional and age group. The fact that pronunciation may be perceived as a badge of identity may partially explain the trends discussed by Wales and people's reluctance towards outside influences. What is interesting, however, is the question why the Northern dialect which shows so much affinity for traditional features observed in the conservative phonology and phonetic patterns at the same time "has always aimed at more avant-garde, efficient, symmetrical and innovative morphological and syntactic paradigms."[98] The answer may in fact lay in the individual's perception of different features, which could make an interesting point for further analysis focused on the speakers' approach towards various linguistic components, trying to pinpoint which characteristics are considered more 'local' and more 'personal' by the language user, becoming thus anchors of dialectal identity, less prone to linguistic changes. Such an analysis could constitute a holistic round-up, completing the final picture of the North as full of paradoxes and escaping any routine examination where both innovative morphosyntactic features as well as traditional and conservative phonological characteristics contribute to its unique character.

[96] Dennis R. Preston, "Introduction," in: *Handbook of perceptual dialectology*, ed. Dennis R. Preston (Amsterdam: John Benjamins, 1999), pp. xxiii–xxxix.

[97] Christopher Montgomery, *Northern English Dialects. A Perceptual Approach* (The University of Sheffield. Ph.D. diss., 2007), p. 38.

[98] Agnieszka Kocel-Duraj (2020), p. 393.

Agnieszka Kocel-Duraj

The Conservative North – the Phonological Makeup of Northern English Features

The Northern English dialect has always been a source of curiosities and many contrasts, boggling the mind of linguists who would wish to confine it within some limits of linguistic definitions. Starting from its Old English forefather, Northumbrian, onwards, the Northern dialect has proved to be both influential and resistant to external influences. Its borders defy clear categorization as understood by clear-cut variables, providing more for a fuzzy and volatile framework of relations among different Northern varieties.[99] This is somewhat justified by the very nature of the Northern speech which seems to be a product of as much the history as the culture and tradition so deeply rooted in the hearts of Northerners. Against the backdrop of folklore and popular myths surrounding the local varieties, the Northern tongue has developed its unique features based on two contrasting linguistic trends in morphology and phonology. Among those, one can observe strong innovative and influential tendencies in the area of morphology[100] and much resistance to changes or external influences in terms of phonology. It seems particularly surprising that the phonological analysis of the Northern dialect will very often appear to be an analysis of the dialect of the past with many characteristics having remained unaltered since the old times and being now a symbol of pride and affinity for a particular social group. The aim of this article is to investigate some of those phonological relics, trying to "establish historical continuities" and relating the today's forms to the past.[101] The analysis will include both vowels and consonants, focusing predominantly on such concepts as the retention of [U], lack of diphthongization, lack of palatalization, rhoticity, and the cluster [xw], and it will involve textual examples from modern times backwards. The results of such a study should present a reliable picture of the Northern dialect, which, despite its morphologically innovative nature proved earlier (see Kocel-Duraj 2020[102]), is characterised by conservative and traditional phonological values, adding colour to the Northerners' speech and ensuring its special status within the English dialectal family.

Keywords: North, Northern English dialect, phonology, phonetics, conservatism, dialectology, linguistic change

Słowa klucze: Północ, dialekt północny, fonologia, fonetyka, konserwatyzm, dialektologia, zmiana językowa

[99] Peter Trudgill, *The Dialects of England.* 2nd Edition (Oxford: Blackwell, 1999).

[100] Agnieszka Kocel-Duraj, "The Innovative North – the Morphosyntactic Makeup of Northern English Features," Świat i Słowo, 34 (2020).

[101] Jenny Cheshire and Dieter Stein, *Taming the Vernacular: From Dialect to Written Standard Language* (London: Longman, 1997), p. 5.

[102] Ibid.