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A NEW SOURCE OF EIGHTEENTH-CENTURY DEVONSHIRE DIALECT LITERATURE: EVIDENCE FROM 'A DIALOGUE ABOUT THE HAIRY MAN' (C.1785)

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ABSTRACT. This paper analyses the language employed in 'A Dialogue about the Hairy Man', an anonymous obscure text published in a newspaper in 1785, as a new source of dialectal information in Devonshire. In doing so, it seeks to contribute to the ongoing research on the analysis of dialect writing in the literature of the eighteenth century. Thus, I examine and quantify all respellings that could point at non-standard language developments in terms of phonology, while also identifying morphological and lexical items that could have been documented at later dates before the consideration of this text. I expect to provide an early exposition of dialectal forms inscribed in the linguistic repertoire of Devonshire during a period where information is scarce and fragmentary. The fact that the forms documented by antiquarians during the nineteenth century are already found here could broaden our knowledge with regards to their history and resilience throughout time.

Keywords: Devonshire, diachrony, dialect, linguistics, morphology, phonology.

UNA NUEVA FUENTE DE LITERATURA DIALECTAL DE DEVONSHIRE EN EL SIGLO XVIII: INFORMACIÓN EN 'A DIALOGUE ABOUT THE HAIRY MAN' (C.1785)

RESUMEN. Este artículo analiza el lenguaje en 'A Dialogue about the Hairy Man,' un texto anónimo publicado en un periódico de 1785, como una fuente novedosa de información dialectal en Devonshire. Este artículo busca contribuir a la investigación interesada en el análisis de escritura dialectal en la literatura del siglo XVIII. Así pues, se examinan y cuantifican reescrituras que pueden indicar un desarrollo del lenguaje no estándar en términos fonológicos, mientras que también se identifican ítems morfológicos y léxicos que podrían haber sido documentados más tarde antes de considerar este texto. Como resultado, se espera proveer una exposición preliminar de las formas dialectales inscritas en el repertorio lingüístico de Devonshire durante un período donde la información es escasa y fragmentaria. El hecho de que formas documentadas por anticuarios del siglo XIX puedan ser encontradas ya aquí podría ampliar nuestro conocimiento en lo que respecta a su historia y resistencia al paso del tiempo.

Palabras clave: Devonshire, dialecto, diacronía, lingüística, morfología, fonología.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Dialect writing finds its most recognisable precedent in the fourteenth century, when Chaucer's (c.1343-1400) illustration of Northern voices in *The Canterbury Tales* (c.1400) marked an early attempt at providing a conscious rendering of what was understood as a non-standard variety of English. In 1950, Summer Ives had already compared this work to the attempts of Edmund Spenser (1552-1599) and William Shakespeare (1564-1616) as the premature exponents of dialect writing. Ives's dissertation becomes a fundamental cornerstone where dialect in writing is viewed as a literary artifact employed by an author to represent "a speech that is restricted regionally, socially, or both", within which he may attempt to attain "scientific accuracy by representing all the grammatical, lexical, and phonetic peculiarities that he has observed" (137). Blake's revision of English literature against this backdrop provides a thorough examination of how dialect was employed throughout history. He argues that dialect writing can serve a significant number of purposes, such as introducing a rural character or "indicate class", while at the same time being at risk of becoming a caricature "as though such people [were] mangling the language in an attempt to speak in a standard manner" (13).

Literature of this kind experienced an upsurge during the Industrial Revolution. Royle explains that labour demand occasioned by growingly industrialised towns and cities, especially from 1830 onwards (73) where roads and railways were sufficiently established to provide a constant flux of workers, brought together

people from different parts of the country. Dialect awareness became a direct result of this internal migration, as contact between different dialectal speakers caused what Agha considers "voicing contrasts" (39). As Beal declares, "[t]ravel brings speakers of different dialects and languages together, increasing their awareness of these differences, and opening the way to mutual influence" (8). This situation was largely represented in literature, which resorted once again to dialect to mark the discrepancies between characters hailing from different social backgrounds. As a matter of fact, Vicinus observes that "[t]he rise of the dialect for conscious literary purposes coincided with the rise of antiquarianism", since it became "an interest that was rapidly becoming respectable" (186).

Nowadays, scholars dedicated to historical sociolinguistics have married information extracted from monographs procured by these antiquarians worried with recording non-standard English forms with literary works where dialect writing supplies a primary source of information on non-standard linguistic traits. From this angle, Shorrocks understands that there are two types of literary representations: *dialect literature* (DL) and *literary dialects* (LD). The former is mostly produced by native speakers, "aimed essentially, though not exclusively, at a nonstandard-dialect-speaking readership" (386); the latter are created generally by non-natives with "a general readership" in mind (386). Whilst this distinction has been mostly accepted in the study of dialectal works, some argue they should be rather envisioned as "dimensions" based on the "intended audience" and the "proportion of the text…in nonstandard writing" (Honeybone and Maguire 8).

In this regard, the focus of attention has been often placed on Northern English varieties given the vast number of written records available for both types of representation, especially during the nineteenth century. Testament to the success of these analyses can be seen in the works of Beal (2004), Beal and Cooper (2015), Cooper (2013), Honeybone and Maguire (2020) and Ruano-García (2022). However, this situation leaves many other unexplored scenarios where essential material could shed light on the history of other dialects. Such is the case of Devonshire.

In this paper I analyse a new source of evidence of dialect writing in Devonshire during the nineteenth century that had apparently been overlooked by antiquarians at the time, the anonymous 'A Dialogue about the Hairy Man' (c.1785). For this purpose, I quantify and examine all phonological, morphological and lexical forms available in the text with a view to understanding what forms of Devonshire speech were already salient at the moment of publication, some of which could already antedate previous attestations. Due to the brevity of the text, there is little in terms of qualitative material that can be analysed, yet I provide a few comments on minor details that can be observed in the author's choice of character names. Finally, this paper also holds that provincial newspapers may be essential in the retrieval of unknown texts where employment of non-standard forms could shed light on dialect writing practices in areas on which little has been written so far.

2. THE DIALECT OF DEVONSHIRE: MAIN LINGUISTIC FEATURES

The nineteenth century was a fruitful period for antiquarians who wished to document and record non-standard forms before the on-going process of dialect levelling obliterated what were regarded as pure English voices. In this regard, there are some interesting monographs published at the time that deal with the dialect of Devonshire. Their number is less voluminous than those considering the North, which can possibly be explained by the fact that the dialect is comparatively (and apparently) less distinctive, and fewer literary works were published. Other reasons, such as indifference towards the county, the restricted publication scope of its dialect, and overall lack of knowledge can also be behind this absence of material. The contents of the works discussed in this section are arguably relevant to understanding the linguistic items that set Devonshire apart. I have limited my overview of Devonshire's main linguistic features to those documented by John Bowring (1792-1872), Richard Pearse Chope (1862-1938) and Sarah Hewett since I deemed they were the most comprehensive.

Bowring delivered a speech in 1866 regarding the dialect of the county to be addressed at the Devonshire Association for the Advancement of Science, Literature and Art, a confederation of antiquarians who sought to preserve knowledge related to Devon. This speech was preceded by a well-informed introduction touching on the matter of languages in general, their ancestry and evolution. It was titled "Language, with special reference to the Devonian Dialects" and tried to prove the cultural relevance of Devon speech. In this regard, Bowring traced the history of English, pointing to "irregularities" noticed in dialects, such as those located in Devon. Thus, Bowring alluded to traits such as non-finite *be*, e.g. *I be* "I am", *thou be* "thou are", which was previously noted by Halliwell-Phillips (1846); pronoun exchange, which he describes as "confound[ing] the nominative with the accusative" (Bowring 26); and the regularisation of irregular verbs, as in *drawed* 'drew'. In this way, Bowring refers to a few other phenomena occurring in the speech of Devon, which are summarised in Table 1.

Table 1. Morphological, lexical, and phonological traits identified by Bowring (27).

Morphology/Lexis	Phonology
an't, ban't "I have not, am not"	"*O* is turned into *a*", e.g. *stap* "stop"
aye zure "yes"	"French *u* is used for the *oo*", e.g. *stule* "stool"
cass'n, cassn't "I cannot"	"*Y* supersedes *h*", e.g. *yeth* 'heath', *yeard* "heard"
whay "stop"	"*Y* is prefixed to a vowel", e.g. *yemmers* "embers"
I zim "it appears to me"	"*V* constantly supplants *f*", e.g. *vardin* "farthing"
if a za be "in that case"	"*Ps* replaces *sp*", e.g. *crips* "crisps"
lookee de zee "attend to me"	"*D* in most cases…stands instead of *th*", e.g. *dred* "thread"
thak, thakka, thik, thikka "that here, this there"	"*Ea* is pronounced *ai*", e.g. *main* "mean"
	"Initial *a* is often dropped", e.g. *'prentice* "apprentice" *gee* "go"

Closer to the end of the century, Chope's *The Dialect of Hartland* (1891) contains a detailed collection of pronunciation remarks, glossaries and local customs. He compiles a list of around 700 words used at the time of publication in Hartland (North Devon) and adjoining localities. Words such as *eems* "as" and *nif* "if" are examples of Chope's work. When considering phonological phenomena such as metathesis in Devonshire, Chope observes that this feature is commonly heard in Hartland, e.g., *gurt* "great" or *purty* "pretty" albeit with some exceptions: instances "containing the letter *u*" like *urn* "run" are not possible in North Devon, in Chope's opinion, since in such cases "we merely change the *u* into short *i*" (5), therefore *crist* "crust", *rin* "run". Moreover, words with *e* seem to undergo a process of diphthongisation whereby *e* becomes *ai*, like in *braid* "bread" or *raid* "red", but not *burd* or *urd*, as Elworthy noted for West Somerset. In addition, Chope enumerates the following linguistic attributes in Devonshire:

(1) "Devonshire *oo* or *u*, which seems to replace generally three…English vowels…the *u* in 'bull', the *oo* in 'fool' and the eu in 'new'" (9). In line with this, he also refers to Devonshire *oo* instead of standard 'ow' as in *boo* 'bow'.

(2) The exceptional nature of long *a*, which behaves differently from "literary *a*, or diphthongal *a*" in that "in such words as 'mane', [it] is produced by a vowel fracture" (10).

(3) "the *o* sound" found in words like "bold, vower", or, for example, "gold, cold", is pronounced half-way between long *o* and *ou* (10).

(4) "the *oi* sound in 'boy,' which seems to lie between the ordinary *oi* and long *i*" (11).

Hewett's *The Peasant Speech of Devon* (1892) not only provides a careful glimpse at the state of the dialect in this county but also gives an outsider perspective. This monograph contemplates linguistic and folkloric information aimed at educating the foreigner who is interested in visiting Devonshire and knowing about its people. Hewett devotes much time to commenting on the good-natured country folk that populate this area and its parishes, while also suppling information on the amicable character of the people and their tender personality. Hewett's description of the dialect contains a series of remarks and comments regarding, in first place, vowel sounds. She enumerates the following:

(1) "'oo' takes the sound of the modified German 'ü'" (e.g. *büte* "boot") (1).

(2) "when 'oo' is followed by 'r', the second 'o' is changed into 'a'" (e.g. *doar* "door"); or that 'view' was pronounced as *vü* (1).

(3) Voicing of initial fricatives is a common feature, as in *vather* "father", while referring to instances of devoicing, e.g. *fery* "very" (2)

(4) "'H' before 'e' is sometimes changed into 'y'" (2)

Briefly, interest in the dialect of Devonshire during the nineteenth century was not as substantial as with other areas of England, yet this does not mean antiquarians did not dedicate time to learning its characteristics and writing about them. There was a public for these monographs, and the three works described here are just an example of the prolix scholarship carried out at the time to document non-standard forms that could have been forgotten otherwise.

3. THE WRITING OF THE DEVONSHIRE DIALECT: ANTECEDENTS TO THE NINETEENTH CENTURY

Little has been written on the dialectal heritage of this county during the eighteenth century, with the sole exception of Ruano-García's commentary on exceptional lexical forms observed in the obscure manuscript *Horae Subsecivae* (1777-78). Here he observes "a remarkable amount of material representative of the dialects of Devonshire, Gloucestershire and Exmoor" (215). Devonshire forms, he notes, amounted to 634 lexical items gathered in this manuscript (4), largely surpassing all thirty other contemplated dialectal areas. In other words, Ruano-García's analysis indicates that Devonshire words localised in the *Horae Subsecivae* manuscript constitute 43.8% of all lexical forms in this document (217). This shows to what extent Devonshire was considered a region with a profound dialectal depth worthy of being documented by early antiquarians.

During this century, however, examples of dialect writing were meagre in Devonshire. The most comprehensive bibliographic list of dialect writing belongs to Joseph Wright's (1855-1930) *English Dialect Dictionary* (1898-1905) (*EDD*), where he enumerates all sources from every county of England available to him for the compilation of his dictionary. Wright's massive work has served many scholars devoted to the study of dialect in historical contexts represented in literature, thanks to which extraordinarily insightful analyses can be carried through. However, whilst Wright records a reasonable number of literary representations of the Devonshire dialect, those belonging to the eighteenth century are largely confined to two examples, one in prose and another one in verse.

The famous 'An Exmoor Scolding' was published in 1727 in Andrew Brice's (1690-1773) *Weekly Journal*, then again in June's issue of *The Gentleman's* Magazine. It was supplemented in July with another dialogue, 'An Exmoor Courtship'. They are the primal example when addressing any type of literary representation of the dialect of Devonshire in this century. These texts, often contemplated as a single work, consist of dialogues between two sisters, Wilmot Moreman and Thomasin Moreman, set against a prototypical pastoral setting that reinforces the sense of rurality and rusticity that demarcates the tone of a conventional DL work. The merger of common countrified speakers, the dialect and the setting where the action takes place help the reader view the Moreman sisters as "icon[s] of a persona linked with a way of life" (Johnstone 297). However, the purpose of this text did not go beyond the entertainment of the newspaper's readers, or, as Walter William Skeat (1835-1912) explains, they were written "in the first instance, merely to amuse" (vii). The

publication of these domestic dialogues, written thoroughly in the dialect of Exmoor (North Devonshire), however, urged the need for a glossary to explain the language employed, one which was compiled by the anonymous "Devoniensis" and published in *The Gentleman's Magazine* in August of the same year. This glossary was augmented in later editions of the dialogues, becoming an essential companion for the readership of this sort of literature. Briefly, 'An Exmoor Scolding' and 'An Exmoor Courtship' have been our sole primary source with regards to dialect literature in Devonshire in the eighteenth century in prose.

'The Royal Visit to Exeter' (1795) is the other exceptional dialectal composition during this time, written in verse. This belated rhyming letter, or poetical epistle, recounts the regal passage of George III through Exeter, from the standpoint of a rural character who wishes to narrate the event to "dear Zester Nan…to tell thee every thing outright, The whole that I've azeed" (467). This work was in fact composed by John Wolcot (1738-1819) under the pseudonym Peter Pindar. Thus, the dialectal voice who narrates the event belongs to some John Ploughshare, "a farmer of Morton Hampstead, in the Country of Devon", as is stated on the title page. The main purpose of this dialectal epistle resides in describing the fascination experienced by provincial people, maintaining drole and humorous overtones all along, which coincides with Vicinus's understanding that, at least in the beginning, this sort of dialectal writings was used "almost exclusively for comic and satiric poems" (185).

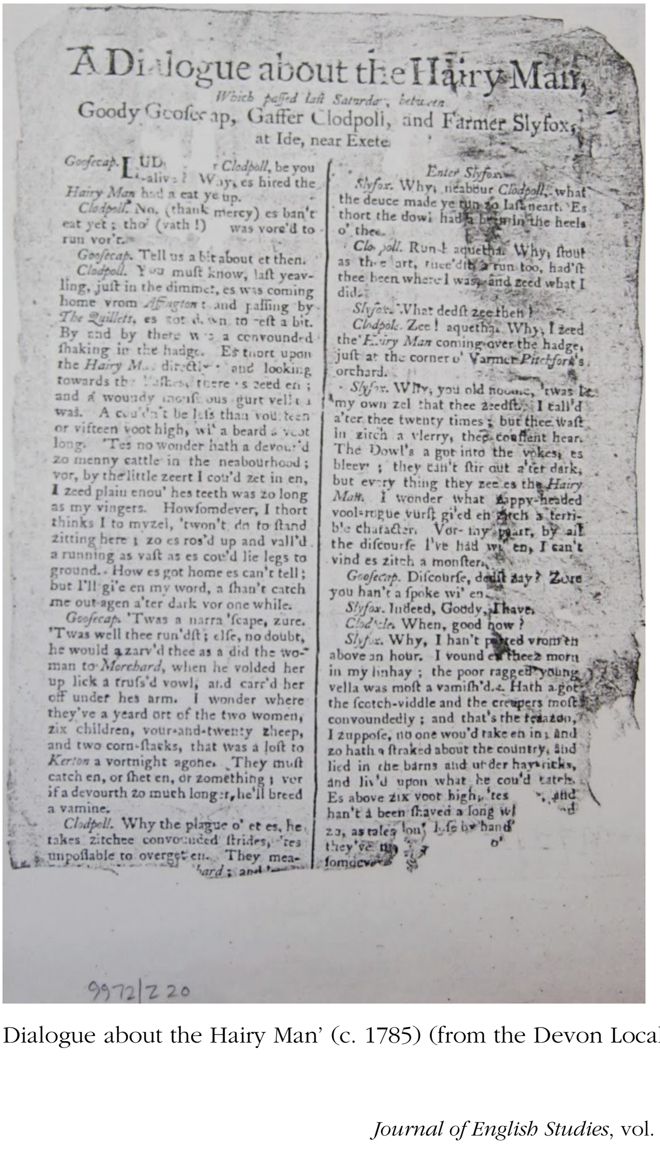
Thus, 'An Exmoor Scolding' and 'An Exmoor Courtship' along with 'The Royal Visit to Exeter' constituted all dialect writing available in Devonshire during the eighteenth century until now. They were the sole sources of information with regards to dialectal forms representative of phonological, morphological, and lexical Devonshire features. The monographs considered above, published over a hundred years later, documented some of the traits that were already employed by the authors of these works. However, my research has retrieved another example of DL published in the eighteenth century that had been seemingly overlooked even by contemporary antiquarians and that went unnoticed by Joseph Wright: the anonymous 'A Dialogue about the Hairy Man'.

4. 'A DIALOGUE ABOUT THE HAIRY MAN': HYPOTHETICAL SOURCE AND CONTENTS

Dialect representations in periodicals seemed to have been common practice during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Periodicals published outside London abounded at the time, and although most regional and provincial editions were short-lived and usually lasted "less than a year" (Hobbs 224), their success was unparalleled by those printed in the metropolis since they were considered more 'national' than London publications, whilst capturing regional distinctiveness (225). In fact, Hobbs reasons that any type of study within the literary or historical sphere would largely benefit from the information contained in their pages due to their being more representative of the sociocultural context they were inscribed in. This

aligns with what Fries indicates when he points out that a language "different from that of London newspapers" could be whittled out from those publications (61). Consequently, the discovery of 'A Dialogue about the Hairy Man' could provide new insight on how the dialect of Devonshire was understood and represented during the eighteenth century.

Published in Devonshire circa 1785, the origin of this dialogue is debatable. Since the only copy available is preserved in the Devon Local Archives, we have access to a very limited amount of data. Due to bad preservation, this work is only a one-page fragment, the rest of which appears to have been torn or destroyed. The current state of the dialogue is shown in Fig. 1 below.



A Di[illegible]logue about the Hairy Man,

Which paſſed laſt Saturday, between

Goody Geoſecap, Gaffer Clodpoll, and Farmer Slyfox,

at Ide, near Exete[illegible]

Gooſecap. LUD[illegible] *Clodpoll*, be you alive? Why, es hired the *Hairy Man* had a eat ye up.

Clodpoll. No, (thank mercy) es ban't eat yet; tho' (vath!) [illegible] was vore'd to run vor't.

Gooſecap. Tell us a bit about et then.

Clodpoll. You muſt know, laſt yeavling, juſt in the dimmet, es was coming home vrom *Affington*: and paſſing by *The Quillets*, es [illegible] down to reſt a bit. By and by there [illegible] a convounded ſhaking in the hadge. Es thort upon the *Hairy M*[illegible] dire[illegible] and looking towards th[illegible] there [illegible] zeed en; and a woundy monſtrous gurt vell[illegible] was. A cou'dn't be leſs than vou[illegible]teen or vifteen voot high, wi' a beard [illegible] voot long. 'Tes no wonder hath a devour'd zo menny cattle in the neabourhood; vor, by the little zeert I cou'd zet in en, I zeed plain enou' hes teeth was zo long as my vingers. Howſomdever, I thort thinks I to myzel, 'twon't do to ſtand zitting here; zo es ros'd up and vall'd a running as vaſt as es cou'd lie legs to ground. How es got home es can't tell; but I'll gi'e en my word, a ſhan't catch me out agen a'ter dark vor one while.

Gooſecap. 'Twas a narra 'ſcape, zure. 'Twas well thee run'dſt; elſe, no doubt, he would a zarv'd thee as a did the woman to *Morchard*, when he volded her up lick a truſs'd vowl, and carr'd her off under hes arm. I wonder where they've a yeard ort of the two women, zix children, vour-and-twenty zheep, and two corn-ſtacks, that was a loſt to *Kerton* a vortnight agone. They muſt catch en, or ſhet en, or zomething; vor if a devourth zo much longer, he'll breed a vamine.

Clodpoll. Why the plague o' et es, he takes zitchee convounded ſtrides, 'tes unpoſſable to overget en. They mea[illegible] *[illegible]hard*; and [illegible]

Enter Slyfox.

Slyfox. Why, neabour *Clodpoll*, what the deuce made ye run zo laſt neart. Es thort the dowl had a be[illegible] in the heels o' thee.

Clodpoll. Run! aquetha. Why, ſtout as thee art, thee'dſt a run too, had'ſt thee been where I was, and zeed what I did.

Slyfox. What dedſt zee then?

Clodpoll. Zee! aquetha. Why, I zeed the *Hairy Man* coming over the hadge, juſt at the corner o' Varmer *Pitchfork*'s orchard.

Slyfox. Why, you old noodle, 'twas [illegible] my own zel that thee zeedſt. I call'd a'ter thee twenty times; but thee waſt in zitch a vlerry, thee couſ'ent hear. The Dowl's a got into the vokes, es bleeve; they can't ſtir out a'ter dark, but every thing they zee es the *Hairy Man*. I wonder what [illegible]-headed vool-rogue vurſt gi'ed en zitch a terrible character. Vor my part, by all the diſcourſe I've had wi' en, I can't vind es zitch a monſter.

Gooſecap. Diſcourſe, dedſt zay? Zure you han't a ſpoke wi' en.

Slyfox. Indeed, Goody, I have.

Clodpole. When, good now?

Slyfox. Why, I han't p[illegible]ed vrom en above an hour. I vound e[illegible] theez morn in my linhay; the poor ragged young vella was moſt a vamiſh'd. Hath a got the ſcotch-viddle and the creepers moſt convoundedly; and that's the reazon, I zuppoſe, no one wou'd take en in; and zo hath a ſtraked about the country, and lied in the barns and under hay-ricks, and liv'd upon what he cou'd catch. Es above zix voot high, 'tes [illegible], and han't a been ſhaved a long wi[illegible] [illegible]d zo, as tales [illegible] [illegible] by hand [illegible] o' they've [illegible] ſomdever [illegible]

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Figure 1. 'A Dialogue about the Hairy Man' (c. 1785) (from the Devon Local Archives).

This dialectal conversation appears to have been published in a newspaper in Exeter in broadsheet format. Whilst Exeter was home to several periodical publications at the time, the date of publication attributed by the Devon Local Archives helps us confine the number of possible newspapers to only two. The first possible periodical is *The Old Exeter Journal or Weekly Advertised* (1773-1787), previously known as *The Exeter Post-Master or the Loyal Mercury*. The name of this periodical was continually changed by its proprietor, Andrew Brice, who was also responsible for the publication of 'An Exmoor Scolding' (originally 'An Exmoor Scholding') in 1727. The second possible publication is *Trewman's Exeter Flying-Post or Plymouth and Cornish Advertiser*, a title that originated from *The Exeter Mercury or West Country Advertiser* (1770-1848). This periodical belonged to Robert Trewman (1738/1739-1802) and William Andrews, who defected Brice's *Exeter's Post-Master*. As it stands, in both of these newspapers, dialect publications could have been well received, thus reinforcing my hypothesis that 'A Dialogue about the Hairy Man' may have been published in either of them.

The contents of the story are simple yet effective at presenting a casual encounter between rural characters to the reader. The plot revolves around a conversation held by Goody Goosecap, Gaffer Clodpoll and Farmer Slyfox at Ide "last Saturday". As can be appreciated, the names are freighted with clear self-referential personality traits intended to clue the reader into the naivety and illiterate nature of Goosecap and Clodpoll as opposed to the wily and cunning attitude of Slyfox. The encounter is replete with comedic overtones, as Clodpoll retells to Goosecap his encounter with a so-called "hairy man". This apparently folkloric figure appears to be a monstruous entity that "couldn't be less than vourteen or vifteen voot high, wi' a beard a voot long. 'Tes no wonder hath a devour'd zo menny cattle in the neabourhood; vor, by the little zeert I cou'd zet in en, I zeed plain enou' hes teeth was zo long as my vingers".[1] In this sense, the story seems to draw on local mythology and superstitions, even when any trace of the supernatural is discredited by the intermission of Farmer Slyfox. Having heard Clodpoll's tale, he claims the confrontation bore nothing otherworldly, since the only creature Clodpoll could have met at night was Slyfox himself. Whether this punchline should be considered the climax or culmination of the narration may never be known, as the page is torn midsentence during one of Slyfox's interventions. It could be assumed that this conversation attempts to depict a case of small talk performed by modest and ignorant peasants, making conscious use of dialect speech to reinforce a consistent characterisation of countryside speakers. Such employment presents itself quite conveniently for our analysis of pre-nineteenth-century Devonshire forms in the literary medium, specifically newspapers.

[1] "It is no wonder he has devoured so many cattle in the neighbourhood; for, by the little sight I could set on him, I saw plain enough his teeth were as long as my fingers."

5. ANALYSIS

The following analysis of the dialectal forms employed in 'A Dialogue about the Hairy Man' (c.1785) is principally quantitative. This is so because the poor state of the document does not allow one to delve any further into the possible complexities of the story and draw conclusions as to the metacommentary or social message it may have contained. In fact, there is little beyond the naming of the characters and the folkloric mythological beast known as "the Hairy Man" that can tell anything specific about the people of Devonshire, beyond a preference for the bucolic stage and uneducated characters who are the main dialectal speakers. Additionally, it could be hypothesised that the nature of the choice of names is indicative of subliminal commentary on the leisurely and easy-going temperament of Goody Goosecap and Gaffer Clodpoll, both referring to people with soft-hearted or gambling dispositions, respectively. This sets a contrast with Farmer Slyfox, since his first name denotes labour and occupation. Thus, the reader is presented with a set of characters that could portray the archetypical characterological stock of Devonshire types: kind, idle, crafty, generally unsophisticated, and superstitious.

This analysis focuses on the frequency of phonological, morphological, and lexical features retrieved from the available material to identify its most recurrent items. In that regard, these items are expected to coincide with the principal traits of Devonshire speech that were documented in the monographs over a hundred years later in the nineteenth century, and which can be consulted in sec. 2. The methodology observed for this analysis draws from that applied to the research conducted by Cooper (2013) and Schintu (2022), which has proved to be adequate for this sort of study. In essence, the software *Corpus Presenter 2023* has been fed a transcription of the newspaper page containing 'A Dialogue about the Hairy Man' to produce a wordlist alongside the number of tokens for each type listed and their frequencies. Manual winnowing was necessary for disambiguation and discarding instances of Standard English. Via an Excel spreadsheet, the classification obtained in this wordlist was divided into three different linguistic levels: phonology, morphology and lexis. The tables shown below address each level and present the number of types and tokens for each linguistic phenomenon, arranged from highest to lowest number of tokens.

5.1. Phonology

Table 2 displays all phonological forms that are signalled by means of respellings.

As can be appreciated, there is an obvious emphasis on the voicing of initial fricatives. This is the most distinctive form noticed in the available text.[2] This is a common trait in the West Country, especially the areas which abut on Devonshire

[2] This phenomenon has also been noted in other languages within the Germanic family, where "phonetically voiced fricatives in word-initial position as well as in intervocalic position" are fairly common (Beckman, Jessen and Ringen 233), and which can be dated as far back as the Middle English (ME) period.

(i.e., Cornwall on the West and Somerset/Dorset on the East). In 'A Dialogue about the Hairy Man', voicing of initial fricatives occurs sixty-one times in forms where <v> an <z> point to the voiced [v] and [z] instead of /f/ and /s/, respectively. Examples from the text include *vingers* "fingers", *volded* "folded", *zitch* "such" and *zitting* "sitting". All things considered, voicing of initial fricatives amounts to 78.20% of all non-standard phonological features.

Table 2. List of phonological items in 'A Dialogue about the Hairy Man' (c.1785).

Features and examples (N words = 592) - Phonology			Types	Tokens
Voicing of initial fricatives	<v>, <z>	*voot* "foot", *vourteen* "fourteen", zure "sure"	39	61
STRUT: ME /u/	<i>, <e>, <a>	*zitch* "such", *shet* "shut", *zarch* "such"	4	6
<gh> replaced with <r>		*thort* "thought", *neart* "night"	2	4
DRESS: ME /ɛ/	<a>	*badge* "hedge"	1	2
FACE: ME /a:/	<a>	*vath* "faith"	1	1
NURSE: ME /ɛr/	<ur>	*vurst* "first"	1	1
PRICE: ME /i:/	<ea>	*neart* "night"	1	1
<h> replaced with <y>		*yeard* "heard"	1	1
Metathesis		*gurt* "great"	1	1
Total			**51**	**78**

The rest of the traits identified are comparatively less pronounced. The STRUT vowel seems to be a conventional event in Devonshire speech. Indicative of a standard /ʌ/ pronunciation in Present-Day English (PdE), the STRUT vowel is an evolution from different Middle English (ME) vowels such as /o:/, /ɔ/ and /u/. Wells indicates that "[i]n much west-country speech the question arises whether there is any phonemic opposition between the STRUT vowel and the weak [ə]" (348). This affirmation is in turn substantiated by Upton and Widdowson, who report that [i]-sounds can be located "in Devon and Cornwall, recorded in the *Dialect Grammar*" (15). In fact, the data obtained from our analysis of this text supports this statement, since there are three instances where an alternative to the STRUT vowel is signalled by means of <i>: *zitch* "such" employed twice, and *zitchee* once, whose meaning can also be discussed to be "such", or "such a". Alternative spellings to mark an alternative pronunciation involve <e> and <a>, as can be appreciated in the examples given in Table 2. Any of these spellings seems to point to a fronted vowel instead of the standard open-mid back vowel /ʌ/.

The digraph <gh> is substituted by <r>, pointing at an [r]-sound where no sound is expected in the standard. Historically, the digraph <gh> indicated the presence of the voiceless velar fricative [x]. Changes in spelling such as substituting <gh> for <f> to indicate the presence of the voiceless bilabial fricative sound have also been widely attested in other areas of the West Country: *thoft* "thought" is documented in

the *English Dialect Dictionary*, occurring in Devonshire in *Longman's Mag* (1901), as well as in Cornwall (s.v. *think*, v.). As a matter of fact, Bowring, when elaborating on the matter of pronoun exchange in Devon, provides an example where this word occurs: "Her axed about 'en; her telled she her shuddn't du't; and *thof* her zed her hath" (26, my emphasis).[3] On this matter, Richard Weymouth (1822-1902) also indicates that "in Devonshire we have *auft* for *ought*, and *sife* for *sigh*. But in many instances for the guttural...an *r* is substituted; of course pronounced with well reverted tongue" (39), in turn alluding to the retroflex quality of [r] in Devonshire, which is amply documented amongst the findings of the *Survey of English Dialects* (*SED*). In 'A Dialogue about the Hairy Man', the anonymous author chose to insert <r> whenever <gh> occurred, with the sole exceptions of "high" and *vortnight* "fornight", said by Farmer Slyfox, which curiously makes a contrast with the example given in Table 2, *neart* 'night', said by Gaffer Clodpoll. That *vortneart* is not given as the alternative pronunciation points to two hypotheses: either the author chose not to overdo respellings or chose to represent the speech of each character with different dialectal traits.

Subsequent dialectal forms are limited to only one appearance. These include non-standard vowel developments in DRESS, FACE, NURSE and PRICE. Respellings in DRESS could indicate that the vowel in Devonshire could have been closer to cardinal 4 than 3, marked by the spelling <a>. FACE is also represented with <a>, although in this instance it underlines a probable retention of a pre-diphthongised vowel occurring in ME, therefore the sound [a] replaces the standard /eɪ/ in PdE in *vath* "faith". In NURSE, the spelling <u> could indicate that the sound was no longer centralised, but perhaps closer to cardinal 8. The non-standard realisation of PRICE in *neart* indicates the diphthong has retained the alternative Anglian form in Old English (OE), *neaht* (whereas the standard OE is *niht*). In fact, this attestation in 'A Dialogue about the Hairy Man' could have antedated earlier attestations of *neart* documented in the *EDD*, where two examples are given: one dated in 1892 in Hewett's monograph, another one unrecorded localised to West Somerset and Northwest Devon in the following example: "This yur ruze must ha' kom zinze laste neart" (s.v. *rose*, v. 1).[4]

The grapheme <y> replaces <h>, pointing at an [j]-sound. This occurs once, as observed in the example given in Table 2. Indeed, Weymouth remarks on this feature and provides the following explanation "*e* sometimes assumes a kindred semi-vowel to precede it, while *u* absorbs its preceding semivowel. Thus, *here* becomes *yur*; *hearing*, *yurring*" (38). There are later attestations of this trait occurring elsewhere in the West Country, also in Devon: *a-yeard* is noted in West Somerset in 1808 (s.v. *censure*, sb. 1), in Devon in 1889 (s.v. *discourse*, sb. 2). Variations of this word have also been spotted in Lancashire, such as *yherd* and *yerd* in 1885 and 1895, respectively (s.v. *hear*, v. 2). That we encounter an early example in 'A Dialogue about the Hairy Man' could be indicative of its ample distribution, as was noted by Weymouth, but

[3] "She asked about him; she told her she shouldn't do it; and thought she said she has."
[4] "This rose of yours must have flourished since last night."

also Chope, who indicates that in Devonshire "we say *yet* for 'heat'" (9), and Hewett when she includes *yurdles* "hurdles" (151) in her glossary.

Lastly, while the case of metathesis is limited to only one example, it seems to have been a common linguistic trait of Devonshire speech, as it appears documented by Weymouth and also in Hewett's monograph, although it is also recorded in many other areas of the country.

5.2. Morphology

The morphological information is substantially scantier than phonology. Table 3 displays the two features documented.

Table 3. List of morphological items in 'A Dialogue about the Hairy Man' (c.1785).

Features and examples (N words = 592) - Morphology		Types	Tokens
Personal pronouns	*es* "I", *en* "him"	2	19
Regularisation of irregular verbs	*zeed* "saw", *vall'ed* "fell"	2	5
Total		4	24

The pronoun system in Devonshire is known to include *es* "I" and *en* "him", and some other forms that are not used in this text such as *min*, *mun*, and *un*. As a matter of fact, the *EDD* documents several forms of object pronouns that are properly Devonian: *men* and *min* are recorded as "the commonest form of 'them' in North Devon, and the Exmoor district of Somerset, but it is never emphasized" (s.v. *mun*, pron. 1). In turn, Elworthy (1879) also documented instances of *mun* in 'An Exmoor Scolding' (1746), noting that it is the "regular objective plural them of North Devon" (50). Thus, Elworthy (1875) remarks that "[t]here can be no doubt but that in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries it came about that to *hym*, representing both the accusative singular and plural, the terminal inflection *en* was added in the plural to mark the difference" (494). In the text, only *es* is used in its nominative form, while *en*, like *min*, *mun* and *un*, is an object pronoun, as is seen in the text: *there es zeed en* "I saw him". These forms are the most frequent morphological characteristics, amounting to 79.16% in total. It is interesting to note that *es* as "I" is not recorded in the *EDD* but is employed repeatedly throughout 'An Exmoor Scolding', then again in this obscure dialogue. This may be because some appearances of *es* refer to "is" in this text (e.g. *Ee es net zo zart-a-baked nether* "He is not so foolish neither" (299)) rather than to "I". Also, Devonshire speakers tend to use the first-person plural object pronoun 'us' to refer to themselves in the singular.[5] A case of fronting could easily explain *es* as a first-person singular pronoun, though this is purely hypothetical.

[5] This is documented in Chope and Hewett, as can be seen in section 2.

The regularisation of irregular verbs, which is another customary trait of Devonshire English as observed in sec. 2, is found here up to five times. As Anderwald notes, "[s]ome verbs that are (still) strong in the standard today have developed further in the non-standard system and changed conjugation class into the weak verb class", deducing that, by default, English dialects may choose the weak verb class (62). Hewett documents that this process occurred in Devonshire, as she writes that "'ed' is used to form the past tense" (3). In 'A Dialogue about the Hairy Man', this is attested in the verbs "see" and "fall", whose participle forms are given as *seed* and *falled* instead of "seen" and "fallen". Since the text is limited to the only preserved page seen in Fig. 1, I can only rely on these two types to confirm that this phenomenon already existed and was employed as a literary device in the eighteenth century.

Again, the limitations encountered by the preservation of the text hinder further analysis of morphological forms that could very well complement our knowledge of the speech of Devonshire. Considering what is available in its present form, however, we do not believe many other morphological items, revealing or not, could be retrieved.

5.3. Lexis

Progressing to the last part of the analysis, lexis, there are only four items that were worth noting. These are shown in Table 4.

Table 4. List of lexical items in 'A Dialogue about the Hairy Man' (c.1785).

Features and examples (N words = 592) - Lexis		Types	Tokens
Dowl	also *dole* (s.v. *dowl*, sb. 1): a devil	1	2
Dimmet	(s.v. *dimmet*, sb. 1): dusk	1	1
Linhay	(s.v. *linhay*, sb. 1): a cattle house	1	1
Overgetten	(s.v. *overget*, v. 1): overcome	1	1
Total		**4**	**5**

Dowl is the only lexical item that appears more than once in the text, and is always used to refer to the devil or some malignant spirit, as can be deduced from its usage in "Es thort the dowl had a been in the heels o' thee" and "The Dowl's a got into the vokes".[6] The *EDD* (s.v. *devil*, sb. 1) points at two instances where *dowl* has been noted: one in Devoniensis's 'An Exmoor Vocabulary', published in the sixteenth volume of *The Gentleman's Magazine* (1746), and another one in Hewett's monograph. That we find this word in 'A Dialogue about a Hairy Man' adds another attestation before the turn of the century.

[6] "I thought the devil had been on your heels"; "The Devil got into the folks".

In the case of *dimmet*, the *EDD* defines this noun as "dusk, evening, twilight". It is regarded as a truly Devonshire lexical item, with some additional occurrences in Cornwall. It is less frequent in Wiltshire and Dorset. According to the *EDD* and *OED*, the earliest use of *dimmet* in 1746 appears in 'An Exmoor Scolding'. The analysis of 'A Dialogue about the Hairy Man' provides the second earliest occurrence in 1785. Later on, *dimmet* is also listed in Francis Grose's *A Provincial Glossary* in its second edition (1790). All these instances predate any other use of *dimmet* beyond Devonshire's borders. There are several variants noted under the same entry in the *EDD*, such as *dimit*, *dimmit*, *dummet*, *dummut*, and also *dimity* or *dimpsey* as an adjective recorded in Devonshire as well. In addition, Hewett (1892) mentions *dimmits* and *dimpsy*, which she defines as "twilight", e.g., "'Ess sure! I'll be 'ome avore tha dimmits.'" (71, 163), meaning "For sure! I'll be home before dusk".

With regards to *linhay*, the *EDD* lists several forms in Devonshire and adjacent counties of this noun and includes spelling variants such as *linney* in Northwest Devon and *linny* in unspecified areas of this county in the nineteenth century, specifically from 1825 onwards. Isolated cases have been noted in Ireland, yet this lexical item is mostly coupled with Devonshire almost exclusively, with some additional instances in Cornwall, Somerset, and Dorset. Hewett defines *linhay* as "an outbuilding", as in "I've aput the sheep intü tha *linhay*" (98, my emphasis). In the eighteenth century, *linhay* is recorded as early as 1777-78 in the manuscript glossary *Horae Subsecivae*, and up until now there were no other occurrences before 1825. Its presence in this text proves the noun could have been more widespread during this century.

Finally, the case of *overgetten* is interesting. While this example is not regularised in 'A Dialogue about the Hairy Man' as many other irregular verbs in the text, the vowel change from [ɒ] to [e] signalled by the change in spelling (<e> instead of <o>), pointing at another non-standard vowel development concerning the fronting of ME /o/, bears a striking resemblance to similar cases occurring in the North of England, where forms such as *a-getten* "gotten" (s.v. *folk*, sb. 2), *getten* "gotten" (s.v. *bargain*, sb. 1) and *forgetten* "forgotten" (s.v. *bought*, sb. 1) are attested in the *EDD* in Lancashire and Yorkshire. Whether this information indicates the phenomenon was shared in some degree between the North and the South West remains to be explored.

All things considered, the findings extracted from the phonological, morphological, and lexical data exhibited so far seem to indicate that 'A Dialogue about the Hairy Man' contained a series of dialect traits that were well-established in Devonshire during the eighteenth century. It also offers new information on words that seemed to have been employed earlier than expected. I explore these findings in detail in section 6.

6. DISCUSSION

Up until this moment, literary artifacts featuring Devonshire dialect in the eighteenth century had been restricted to a limited number of works. These were 'An Exmoor Scolding' and 'An Exmoor Courtship', published in tandem in 1746 in *The Gentleman's Magazine* and the poetical epistle titled 'The Royal Visit to Exeter', penned by John Wolcot in 1795. The first two, which are commonly considered together given the time and medium of publication, were the sole trace of pre-nineteenth-century Devonshire English written in prose, and on them much research and time was conducted and devoted. In fact, the 'Exmoor' dialogues are always regarded as the earliest dialectal landmark in the *EDD* for this region (Wolcot's work is sorely missing in this sense). That 'A Dialogue about a Hairy Man' dismantles this assumption seems to set up a new record of Devonshire dialect in terms of dialect writing since the start of the Industrial Revolution, even earlier if one remembers Vicinus establishes 1725 as a reference point (186).

'A Dialogue about a Hairy Man' is an interesting specimen for two reasons. First, it provides an early literary representation which aims at amusing its readers with a comedic and hilarious misunderstanding among three rural characters. The drily names of these protagonists are concomitant of their rustic and unsophisticated nature: prone to buffoonery, superstitious, and scheming. The story draws on local mythology and folklore, a love for strange and uncanny events that distract the men from their daily toil and menial labour, keeping the tone humorous and relatable. There is little direct metacommentary in the text that can lead us to believe dialect was directly addressed as an indicator of these traits, but its presence throughout the conversation and the topic discussed seems to link Devonshire's rural speech with "figures of personhood...juxtaposed within structures of entextualization" (Agha 39).

The second reason relates to the representation of Devonshire speech. As an overlooked form of dialect literature, following Shorrock's distinction, 'A Dialogue about the Hairy Man' proves that many of the characteristics of the dialect documented during the nineteenth-century antiquarian spree had already occurred in 1785, and were considered to possess enough saliency to be easily recognised by native readers. In terms of phonology, I have found that the voicing of initial fricatives was a potent indicator of a southwestern voice, perhaps the most distinctive of all; non-standard vowel developments involving the STRUT, DRESS, FACE, NURSE and PRICE sets give a better understanding of ME retentions during this period in Devonshire. Yod-insertion and r-insertion in particular situations complete our understanding of linguistic developments in the area during the eighteenth century, allowing us to rely on a new text that can be set against previous knowledge derived from the study of the *Exmoor* dialogues, along with the transposition of <r>, or metathesis, in *gurt* "great". I have discovered that the authors considered in sec. 2, where we give a summary of essential monographs on this topic, place particular emphasis on many of the phonological forms gathered in Table 2.

In terms of morphology, the author of 'A Dialogue about the Hairy Man' was not as profuse and methodical, yet they still give us a few remarkable items that were also noted over the following century. Mainly, the use of non-standard pronouns, which are part of a wider pronoun system in Devonshire, is the most recurrent morphological aspect in the text. *Es* "I" and *en* "him" are employed consistently, corresponding to nineteen out of the twenty-four morphological items collected in the analysis. The rest belongs to the regularisation of irregular verbs, which appeared to be common practice in non-dialectal Englishes, as Anderwald indicates (62). Strangely enough, this phenomenon did not apply to verbs such as *overgetten* 'overgotten', which marks the strong participial ending, instead of a hypothetical *overgetted/overgotted*.

Lexis is perhaps another strong point in this analysis. Whereas usage of rustic vocabulary was not exceptionally plentiful, those words that were used appeal to us because they are early attestations not documented anywhere else. As can be seen above, according to the *EDD Online 4.0*, the earliest recorded appearance of the lexical item *dimmet* is 1746, then again in 1790 by Francis Grose before the turn of the century. Its appearance in 'A Dialogue about the Hairy Man' can be taken as an intermediate point between the two. In turn, *linhay* is recorded in 1777 in the manuscript glossary *Horae Subsecivae* (see Ruano-García). This dialogue proves the existence of another instance before the start of the nineteenth century, which is not recorded in the *EDD* or the *OED*. *Overgetten* seems to undergo the same treatment, even if its area of operation is less constrained to Devonshire–this text situates a conjugated variant of "overget" in an Exeter newspaper, of which there is no registry whatsoever anywhere else. That the author not only inserts this word here as part of one of the rural character's vocabulary, but also indicates by means of a respelling that it is pronounced differently from the standard, leads one to believe they marked another non-standard vowel development involving the fronting of ME /o/.

7. CONCLUSION

All things considered, the inclusion of 'A Dialogue about the Hairy Man' in the record of eighteenth-century dialect literature in Devonshire improves our knowledge of the speech of this area and updates the chronology of some lexical items. This new evidence also proves that provincial newspapers are powerful sources of dialect spread that could elicit insightful conversations on dialect representations in a medium that was made available to all. In fact, as has been proven here, resorting to this sort of publications can unearth obscure texts and revamp previous paradigms, since some of the linguistic items included in forgotten periodical issues and provincial publications could antedate existing records.

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