1.1 INTRODUCTION

It seems to be generally accepted that Thomas Deloney (1543?-1600) was the first English fiction writer to introduce non-standard features in his prose writings.1 The beginnings of a tradition for their use in English literature had started about two centuries earlier with Chaucer and the Wakefield Master as is well known. In the 16th and 17th centuries, apart from cant and slang, the southwestern variety was most often represented in drama and poetry, probably because it was the one audiences were most familiar with, but Northern, Scottish, Irish and Welsh traits also appeared in poems and plays. Even if very often we must admit that this “imitated dialect” is just a literary convention, a stage dialect, in some cases it also provides us with information about real dialect features currently used at the time and thus it is a valuable source for historical dialectologists. As Wakelin (1972: 36) points out, the comments about dialect forms that 16th and 17th c. scholars made “ should be read in conjunction with the imitated dialect of literature of the same period”.

The purpose of this paper is to analyse from a linguistic point of view some of the northern dialect2 features which appear in Deloney’s *Thomas of Reading* (c. 1600) in an attempt to gather more information about the linguistic situation at the end of the sixteenth century and also assess this aspect of Deloney’s production.

1.2.1 PREVIOUS STUDIES ON DELONEY’S NON STANDARD LANGUAGE: TORSTEN DAHL’S INQUIRY INTO ASPECTS OF THE LANGUAGE OF THOMAS DELONEY (1959)

Scholarly studies about Deloney did not really begin till 1912 with the publication of Mann’s edition of his works and became more numerous once again after Lawlis produced a new edition of his novels in 1961. Between these two events scholars worked mostly on the literary aspects of his works and cases it also provides us with information about real dialect features currently used at the time and thus it is a valuable source for historical dialectologists. As Wakelin (1972: 36) points out, the comments about dialect forms that 16th and 17th c. scholars made “ should be read in conjunction with the imitated dialect of literature of the same period”.

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prose fiction and ballads. Since then, research has continued on this part of Deloney’s production⁴, together with its socio-historical contents⁵, a few studies have treated his sources⁶ or his influence on later writers⁷, but just a handful have been devoted to his style⁸ and language⁹.

As regards Deloney’s use of non standard forms scholars have for the most part restricted themselves to general remarks about the realistic qualities of his dialogue. At most, mention has been made of the existence of passages in which southern and northern traits are represented. The presence of Italian and French characters whose foreign origin is shown by means of deviant spellings has also been remarked upon. In some cases these comments have not even included all the non standard varieties used by Deloney.

Only Dahl (1959: 41-43) has treated the non standard features in Deloney’s novels with a bit more detail. He tried to develop Mann’s early allegation (1912: 511) that “the dialect [of Jack of Newbury’s prospective father in law] is of course only the conventional corruption of speech used by Elizabethan writers to represent dialects, e.g. by Shakespeare in Lear. But in Thomas of Reading Deloney makes a real attempt at northern English”.

Dahl did not proceed beyond some general statements about a few of the dialect traits. Basically he just enumerated some of the deviant spellings and classified them as indicative of a southern or northern pronunciation. We have to take into account that at the time he wrote this paper he really did not have the means to carry out a more detailed analysis.

Some of his comments can be argued against. For instance, he asserted that: “we should note that Cutbert of Kendal, who refers to ‘my country man Hodgekins’ …, speaks ordinary English. Nor is Hodgekins’s opponent, Wallis, according to Mann “none other than the hero of Scottish history” …, characterized through linguistic peculiarities” (Dahl1951: 42). This is not completely true:

1. Wallis’s origins are suggested by means of some lexical traits. For instance, he is the only character to use the Scottish expression “the valewof a plack or a bawby” (VIII 309).
2. We find phonological and lexical peculiarities in the speeches of Cuthbert of Kendal that point to his northern origin:
   a. He uses northern sale (V 290) for soul 10.
   b. He (II 278) shares with Hodgekins (IV 286) and Wallis (VIII 310), and apparently also with the Smith (VIII 308), the expression foul evil ¹¹, associated with the north.
   c. His speeches are very colloquial, more so than those of the other clothiers, apart from Hodgekins’s. He is the only one to use expressions such as young giglot (II

⁸ See Rollins 1935 and 1936, Reuter 1961 (both about euphuistic traits in his prose) and Wada 1986.
¹⁰ Lawlis (1961: 383) initially thought that “Hodgkins … apparently is the speaker” but a few years later (Id 1967: 576 n.30) he indicated that the word could be Cuthbert’s although “Hodgkins or Martin[of Byram] could be speaking up for him”. A reading of the paragraph in question and the linguistic evidence I am presenting convince me that Cuthbert is the speaker.
¹¹¹The Smith uses foul ill where ill may be a variant of evil. The Oxford English Dictionary hereinafter OED shows as its earliest and only citation for foul evil one in E. Topsell, *The history of four-footed beasts* (1607). Evil as illness, complaint, appears in other compounds such as yelow euyl, i.e. jaundice, or as falling euyl/euyl i.e erysipelas. Mann (1912: 552) mentions a citation from Dekker’s *Workers for the Armourers* (1609) which suggests there was some kind of relationship between foul evil and the north: “Diseases now as common and as hurtful to them as the Foul Euil to a Northern Man, or the Pox to a French man”

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277), puling [baggage] (II 279), lobcocke (V 288), draggletail (V 291; OED’s first citation is from a 1705 text) or tallow face. (V 291) apparently more widespread at the time but today associated with the north and East Anglia. The words bonny Lasse and lassy (OED’s first citation for lassy is from an 1802 text and for the spelling lassie from a 1724 one) he sings in one of his “country Ligges” (V 289) are in common use in the north and the Midlands nowadays but not in the south.

2. DELONEY’S LINGUISTIC BACKGROUND.

So very little is known about Deloney’s life that really we can only guess at what his reasons to use dialect forms were or as to how he learnt about them. A silk-weaver by trade, of French descent, he seems to have received a good education, as indicated by his translations from Latin and French. He also appears to have been a keen reader of contemporary literature and very interested in drama. Due to his profession he travelled through the country and learnt about customs and traditions that he would later include in his writings. This may also have been the way in which he gained a first hand knowledge of regional varieties spoken at the time. His descriptions of London, Newbury, Reading or Westminster, as well as other places in southern England and East Anglia, show that he must have known them very well.

Scholars have traced his indebtedness in writing his ballads and novels to books on the history of England, geography and natural history, to Shakespeare, to euphuistic works like Fortescue’s The Forest, to ballads and pamphlets and to contemporary drama and jest books. These last two sources are the most important as regards his dialect passages:

(a) Collections of jests and jest-biographies such as A Hundred Merry Tales, Westward for Smelts, The Life of Long Meg of West Minster, Wits, Fits and Fancies and Merry Tales, Wittie Questions and Quicke Answeres contain stories Deloney made use of in his novels. Deloney adapts them to suit his narrative purposes using drama techniques but in such a way that as Lawlis (1961: XVII) points out: “…the dialogue is far superior to that of the jestbooks: it rivals the dialogue in the better comedies of the London stage”.

Dialect is basically used for comic purposes in jest books. However, in Deloney it also individualizes and makes stand out minor characters. Indeed the south-western variety of Jack of Newbury’s father in law has a comic intentionality, but the northern traits in T. R. are sometimes just a means of characterization. The story of Hodgekins of Halifax would become just another episode in the novel if some of the characters involved in it did not have linguistic peculiarities.

(b) As Baker (1934: 191) points out, Deloney “made an intelligent study of the methods employed on the contemporary stage”. So much so that some chapters in his novels could easily be turned into plays and this is what happened at a later date when other writers, like Dekker, used them as sources for their own works. Therefore it does not seem farfetched to think that Deloney would also imitate its use of dialect. Northern traits were used first used in drama around this time. Nathaniel Woodes introduced them in his morality The Conflict of Conscience, printed in 1581. A few years later we find them in Munday’s et al. Sir John Old Castle and in Robert Greene’s The Scottish History of James IV.

3.1. LINGUISTIC ANALYSIS

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12Roberts 1957 treats this aspect in detail.
13Deloney may have actually read these collections or made use of orally transmitted material. There is no doubt that he was well acquainted with the jestbooks of his time. See about this subject especially Pätzold 1972. We must not forget the fact that he himself translated Des Périers’ collection from the French as The Mirrour of Mirth and Pleasant Conceits. See about this Hassell 1955 and Reuter 1982.
Deloney tried to suggest the northern origins of four characters in T. R.: two clothiers, Hodgekins of Halifax (west Yorkshire) and Cuthbert of Kendal (south Westmoreland, present day Cumbria), a smith from the Halifax area and a thief, Wallis (who, as we have seen, may have been a Scots). Basically he does so by means of deviant spellings which imply a pronunciation different from that of the other characters. In a few occasions he recurs to well known forms which at the time must have already become traditionally associated with the north and therefore easily understood by his readers. *Giff* <if>, *cragge, sall* <shall>, *wald* <would>, *sick* <such> (Hodgekins (IV 286, VIII 311) and the Smith (VIII 308)) had been repeatedly used in the literary representation of northern speech since Chaucer. Deloney chose to ignore dialect syntax and morphology and kept dialect lexis to a minimum.

3.2 PHONOLOGICAL ANALYSIS.

I will attempt to show that the pronunciations underlying Deloney’s variant spellings were currently used in the north in the late sixteenth c. When possible, it will be indicated whether contemporary scholars considered such traits as northern. Information as regards the traces of these pronunciations and spellings in the north of England in our days has been included in footnotes. Information has been gathered about the previous existence of the deviant spellings in Middle English texts, where their presence was not a literary convention, and, when possible, in The Linguistic Atlas of Late Medieval English (McIntosh et al. 1986; hereinafter LALME). Most of them, now traditionally considered Scottish, are in fact attested in northern, midland and even southern texts in the Middle English and late Middle English periods.

3.2.1 EARLY MODERN ENGLISH /i/ - NORTHERN EARLY MODERN ENGLISH /ai/ < ME iµ MAI (HODGEKINS (IV 286 ELSEWHERE MI)).

*Mai* probably represents a pronunciation with /ai/. The process of diphthongization of ME iµ had been fully achieved in northern English in Deloney’s days, whereas in southern English it was still at the /i/ stage\(^\text{15}\). Both Alexander Gill (1619) and Simon Daines (1640) equate Northern ME iµ and Southern ME ai. OED gives a citation of *mai* from the northern *Cursor Mundi* (c 1340). Woods used a similar variant, *may*, in *Conflict of Conscience* (1581).

3.2.2 EARLY MODERN ENGLISH /UU/ - NORTHERN EARLY MODERN ENGLISH /AU/ < ME U# FAULE (HODGEKINS (IV 286; ELSEWHERE FOULE)).

In Deloney’s days <au> could stand for /au, Au/ and also may be for /Åu, Å/, frequent from the very beginning of the 17th c. (Dobson 1968: §235 ff). OED does not record any such spelling for *foul*.\(^\text{16}\) Given the context in which it appears, “the faule eule”, a confusion with a dialect form of *fall* is possible. ME U# had undergone a series of changes since 1400, to /UU/ in the 1500s, to /UU/ in the 16th and 17th centuries, not culminating in /au/ till the 18th c.\(^\text{17}\) For Gill in 1619 /au/ for /u:/ was a typical northern feature (Danielsson I: 15 & II: 102). The diphthongization took place in the north much earlier than in the south, as attested by the orthoepists, although not “north of a line running...”

\(^\text{14}\) It could just be the adjective *sick* i.e. *Mentally affected or weak* and not the northern form of *such*. The Smith says: “Are you sick fules? what the deell doo you meane to breake your crags?” (VIII 308)


\(^\text{16}\) OED considers *faule* a frequent form of *fall* and EDD of *fold* (i.e farm yard) also. An indicator of the confusion existing about the word underlying this spelling is the fact that OED records Robert Anderson’s *Cumberland Ballads* (1802) *faul yeat*, as a variant of *fall gate* whereas EDD recording the very same citation considers it stands for *fold gate*.


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from southern Cumbria to the Humber estuary” (Wells 1982: §3.1.1) which leaves Hodgekins of Halifax and Deloney on the safe side.

3.2.3 OE A+ NG: NORTHERN

**SALE** (Cuthbert, V 290), **SAUL** (Hodgekins (IV 286)) ELSEWHERE IN THE TEXT SOULE) **SEA**, **GAE**. (Hodgekins (IV 286); ELSEWHERE SO AND GO).

OE **a#** remained as such in the north, and joined ME **a#** of other origins, but became ME **a#4** in the south. In Deloney’s days it had become /æ/. /E/, and in the north also /ɛ/, i.e., /E/19. The identity of ME **a#** and ME **a#4** is recorded by the 1600s in northern speech and northern orthoepists also attest before the 17th c. that of ME **a#4** and ME **a#** /ɪ:/ i.e. Gill (1619) indicates (Daniellson1972: 1.15 & II.102; Dobson1968: 1.146) that EDG-Ind. was current in the north in words with OE **a#**.

**Sea** 19 was common in the north and Scotland in the 16th c. There is just one citation for it in OED, in the Scottish Legend of the Bishop of St. Andrews (1583). Gae is found as early as the 10th c. in the Lindisfarne Gospels (950) and it has come to be a traditional form in the representation of Scottish and northern English20. OED gives us a few 16th c. citations, all from Scottish texts.

It may well be that Deloney was following a literary tradition when using the spelling **sale** for **soul** and was indeed trying to represent the current northern pronunciation of the word with **soul**. A variant with /au/ or /∧/ was common in the north at the time (Dobson1968: §172). It resulted from ME **a#** being raised through the influence of a following **o** which was then absorbed and the resulting late ME **U#** experienced the same developments we have discussed earlier21. OED indicates that **sale** existed in the 15th and 16th centuries but offers only one citation from Cursor Mundi (c 1340). We know of its presence in A Hundred Merry Tales (1526, among Deloney’s sources; Blakel1981: 56) as a northern form. LALME (II.256) records a few instances of this spelling in northern and north Midland texts. OED mentions the existence of **saul** since the 14th c. and considers it Scottish and northern since the 16th. It also records forms such as **sawl** since the 14th c. or **sawle** between the 13th and the 16th. In the ME period it is located in East Midland, West Midland, South West Midland, South Eastern, South Western and northern texts, as well as in Chaucer’s The Reeve’s Tale, in the speech of one of the northern students. LALME (IV 257) records it frequently in the north, north Midlands and East Anglia. From the 16th c. onwards the only OED citations are from Scottish texts.

3.2.4 OE A+ NG: NORTHERN LANG (IV 286; ELSEWHERE LONG)

Lang represents a variant descended from OE a lengthened before the group -ng which remained as **a#** in the north, and was shortened again in ME22. The citations in OED correspond mostly to Scottish texts, but there are also some from northern, south West Midlands, south East Midlands and

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18In Dobson’s opinion (1968: §§98 ff). Among others see also Kniezsa 1983 for a full discussion of the development of ME **a#** in the north and Kobs1966: 208ff. The diphthongs and monophthongs resulting from what Wells (1982: § 3.1.5) calls the Long Mid Mergers seem to have displaced in this case “the traditional-dialect vowel, which (in words deriving from northern Middle English /æ:/) is a front diphthong [æʊ]” (ibid.: § 4.4.4).

19In Mann’s edition **saec**. We also have **maec** for Lawtie’s **mays** in this same paragraph, a possible “regularization” on the part of the printer. In Mann’s edition there is also **movere** for **more** twice in the same sentence where Cuthbert of Kendal’s uses **sale** (V 290). About the important role played by printers and editors as regards literary dialects see Blake 1989. EDG-Ind. records as variants descended from the form with OE **a#**: “[saol]” in *ne Yks. +sələ, sələ, nw Yks., snw Yks +sía, sía, e. Yks +sələ, m Yks., nn Yks +sələ, sm Yks +sələ; “[saA]” in *e. Cum. +sələ, w.Cum +sələ, n. &e. Wm. +sələ, s.Wm., n. Yks +sələ, nw, nw & snw Yks, nw Lan.; and “[@#B]” in *me. & s. Nbh., n.s. Dar. Rydland (1982: §§5.6, 9.10, etc.) confirms the existence of such pronunciations nowadays in South East Cumbria. SED (IX.10.7) only recorded a variant pronunciation of **a** in the north, [səu] in Yks.

20EDG-Ind. records “[gəːl]” in *c. & m. Cum., Wm. but w. Wm. +ga, snw. Yks., n. Lan., +gə, ga, nw Lan., “[geə]” in *m. Yks., “[gə#]” in *sc. Nbh., and “[giə]” in *s. Sc. Nowadays such pronunciations seem to have disappeared, SED (VIII.7.9, VIII.6.2 (a)) records others descended from the southern form and only some with /ə:/ in *La., We., Cu., and *[A] in *Yks. Rydland (1982: §3.9, 7.10a) confirms the existence of variants with /ə:/.

21Unfortunately SED did not record **soul** in the north and whereas we find confirmation of the pronunciation suggested by **saule** in EDD such as not the case for **sale**. In EDG-Ind. “[səʊl]” appears in parts of Sc. and in sw. Nbh., Wm., nw, sw & sw Yks +soul, em. Lan., +səl, se Lan., s. Lan +soul, Glo. +səlul, se. Ken., [sʌul] in parts of Sc. and in nw. Der. and w. Wil; “[sə#]” appears in parts of Sc.

22See about this northern trait among others Wakelin 1977: 90-91, Brook 1975: §§2.85, 4.72, Id 1978: 64, Trudgill 1990: 19ff. Dobson1968: §71 notes that the orthoepists only record o in **long**.
southern ones up to the 17th c. when we find it as a northern literary dialect feature in R. Brathwait’s
*A Strappado for the devil* (1615). Chaucer had been the first one to use it as a northern trait in *The
Reeve’s Tale* spelt länge. From the 18th c. onwards it has become a traditional form to represent the
speech of Scottish or northern characters.

3.2.5 ME o5# - EARLY MODERN NORTHERN ENGLISH /yː /: *GUD, G UDE* (THE SMITH VIII 308) AND
HODGEKINS (IV 286); ELSEWHERE GOOD), *FULE* (THE SMITH VIII 308; ELSEWHERE FOOLE.)

In Deloney’s *days good* could be pronounced with /uː/; the normal development of ME o5# and
with /u/ by early shortening of ME o5# to identity with ME u& or by later shortening of /uː/ < ME
o5#24. In the North words with ME o5#25 were also pronounced with /yː/ and /iu/. It seems likely
that /yː/ /iu/ were respectively the sounds underlying these spellings, although for a reader not
familiar with the northern dialect *gud* could stand for a common southern pronunciation.

OED shows citations for *gud* and *gude* mostly from Scottish texts but also from others written in
southern, midland and northern dialects. The earliest examples of *gud* appear in *King Alisaundar*
(13.) and in Hampole’s Northumbrian poem *Prick of Conscience* (1340), which also has *gude*. As
shown in LALME (II: 279-84 and IV: 187) *gud* and *gude* are attested in Scotland and northern
England and there is the odd case here and there in the Midlands and East Anglia. The situation
seems to change in the 16th c., both spellings apparently becoming a convention to indicate a
northern or Scottish pronunciation. We find *gud* in W. Bullein’s *Dialogue Against the Pestilence*
(1564-78) where it marks the speech of “a beggar from Redesdale (Northumberland)” and it also
indicates a northern or Scottish pronunciation in William Warner’s *Albions England* (1589); Giles Du
Wes in *An Introductione for to lerne to rede, to pronounce and to speke French trewyly* (c 1532) says
“Ye shall pronounce … v after the Skottes, as in this worde *gud*”. This seems to imply that such a
spelling was generally identified with a variant /gyː d/. Holinshed (1577-86) uses *gude* in a sentence
by a Scottish character and Nathaniel Woodes tries to show a Scottish or northern pronunciation
with “Ye shall pronounce … v after the Skottes, as in this worde *gud*”. This could be pronounced with /uː/
by early shortening of ME o5# to identity with ME u& or by later shortening of /uː/ < ME
o5#. In the North words with ME o5# were also pronounced with /yː/ and /iu/. It seems likely
that /yː/ /iu/ were respectively the sounds underlying these spellings, although for a reader not
familiar with the northern dialect *gud* could stand for a common southern pronunciation.

As the centuries have gone by *gud, gude* and *fule* have become part of the traditional literary
dialect spellings to indicate a northern or Scottish pronunciation.

3.2.6 LOSS OF INTERVOCALIC /V/: *D U LE, E U LE* (HODGEKINS IV 286; ELSEWHERE E U ILS, E U I LL.), *D E EL
(THE SMITH VIII 308; ELSEWHERE D I U E L, D I U E L).

These spellings seem to point to variants in which /ν/, especially in the north, was early vocalized
or lost. There are no citations for *eule* in OED or EDD, nor does LALME (IV: 162-63) record any
similar spellings. We could consider it as representing *evle*, showing a form with vocalic /l/ /v/ as its stressed vowel. However in *T.R. a v* for *v* is consistently found only in intervocalic position. It
appears to be an analogous spelling to those in the previous section and to *dule*. Kökeritz (1953: 188-
89), discussing Shakespeare’s spellings *deule* for *devil* and *eule* for *evil*, mentions the presence of

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23EDD locates it in texts from Sc., N.Cy., Nh., Dur., Lakel., Cum., Wm., Yks., Lan., nw Der. and Wor. In EDG a pronunciation
“[aÆ]” is recorded in parts of Sc. and in Nh., Dur., Cum., Wm., Yks. and Lan. Upton (1994: 248-49) gives [aÆ] for Cu., Yks.,
We., Nh., Dn., La. and Nf.


25See Gerson 1967: §5.4 for a full discussion of the development of ME o5# in the northern dialects. See also among others
&b), VII.8.7 and V.8.4, VI.5.18, VIII.3.2 we find variants of this word which can be traced back to these forms. Wakelin 1977:
88 and Wells: II, §4.4.4, as well as Orton1978: Introd. ME and Anderson: §§3.32, 3.33, 3.35 indicate that the influence of RP is
causing these variants to disappear.

26SED VIII.93 only records one variant of *fool* in the north, [fIVI] in Nb.

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rule for revel in Midsummer’s Night Dream and in King Edward the First (1593) by George Peele. Given the confusion existing between evil and ill, this variant could represent ill and not evil.27

In Deloney’s days devil could be pronounced with /i, e, i :/.28 Although OED specifically indicates that dule is characteristic of Lan. and says that it was common in the 15th and 16th centuries it only records one citation in the northern Destruction of Troy (c 1400). It has become common in the traditional representation of northern dialects.19 /di: l/ would be the form suggested by deel which survived till the 19th c. in Scotland and the north country (see EDD).

3.2.7 NORTHERN /hw/-SOUTHERN /kw/: WHIAT (HODGEKINS 1986; ELSEWHERE QUIET)

Whiat represents a pronunciation with initial /hw/ for /kw/ common in the north since ME times at least.20 The loss of the initial aspirate of /hw/ started as early as the 12th c. in the south and southeast Midlands and was accepted in the standard language towards the end of the 18th c. It has been retained to this day in the far northeast.

OED only records a similar variant, whiet, but offers no citations. Robert Greene had used whayer in Scottish History of James IV (1598) (Blake 1981: 76). Earlier on Woodes had suggested this same trait with the spelling hwick for quick in Conflict of Conscience (1581).

3.3 LEXICAL ANALYSIS

3.3.1 FAUSE LIZAR LOWNES (HODGEKINS,IV 286)

The combination fause lownes, that is, false loons, worthless persons, rogues, is considered “Chiefly Scottish and North. dial.” by OED which presents citations of lown, lowne from Scottish and English texts since 1508.23 OED records just one citation of lizar, with an unclear meaning. “We’ll to the harning drive, when in fresh lizar they get spleet and rive” (1730, W. Starrat in a collection of Scottish poems edited by A. Ramsay). Mann (1912: 553) thinks it stands for lizar but we have found no confirmation of the existence of such a variant for this word. Lawlis (1967: 572) says it may represent leasow, i.e. pasture, meadow, a word for which EDD gives variants such as lisor, lezzar, lezzer, lezzur in Midland and Scottish texts. Deloney tried to make clear the meaning of Hodgekin’s dialect by preceding and following it by paragraphs in which the narrator or another character paraphrased what he said. Related to fause lizar lownes we read: “by the reason of false borderers and other euill minded persons …” (IV 285), “… by theeves your clothes are so often stolne from you, … I think it not amisse to ordaine this death for such malefactors …” (IV: 286).

(Boolface not in the original). Thus, we could also consider the possibility that lizar might be related to lease, i.e. to tell lies, to leesser, i.e. a destroyer, a loser, to an adjectival use of leisure, or even, in

27 OED indicates that “Although ill is not etymologically related to evil, the two words have from the 12th c. on been synonymous, and ill has often been viewed as a mere variant or reduced form of evil. This esp. in Sc., where v between two vowels early disappeared, and devil ... became deel ... so that evil might have become eiel, hence, in 15th-16th c. Sc., evil, eiel is often found written where ill was the word pronounced”. Probably for this reason in Sc. and the north ill appears in “popular names of diseases or distempers” such as Falling-ill. OED gives us several citations for this use, foode ill in P. Holland, Plutarch’s Philosophic (1663), falling ill from a 1652 poem in J. Watson’s A Choice Collection of Comic and Serious Scoct Poems (1711) and from a 1893 Northumberland glossary, milk ill: As a matter of fact in T.R. together with faule eule and foul evil we also have foule ill, used by the Smith (VIII 308). The closest pronunciation mentioned in EDD is “[eel]” in w. Som., spelt ill. Unfortunately SED did not record any forms of evil and only one of ill in the north, [Çi] in La.

28 About contemporary forms of evil and devil see Dobson §§9 & n2, 10, 11, 75, 326, 334, 400.

29 EDD locates it in 19th c texts of n.Cy, Cum., Wm., Yks and Lan. where apparently it implied [diːl] or [diːɻ]. Such forms seem to have disappeared nowadays. See SED VIII.8.3 and VIII.1.20 which record [diːl, dəEvil, dəɻEvil, dəɪɻ; ɻEvil]. No instances of variant forms of evil appear.

30 Wakelin 1982: 15 says that this pronunciation existed “even as early as late Northumbrian”. See also OED’s statements under “Q” and Wells 1982: §§4:4.9.

31EED records “[hwai-]/” in Sh.I. and Wm. and “[wai-]” in s. Dur., n.e.m.kw. Cum, mw &swn. Yks and n. Lan. SED did not record any forms of this word in the north. However in words like quarrel, queen, quere or quick (SED: IV.4.6, III.13.9, III.1.5, IV.8.6, VI.7.11,12, etc.) we find initial /w/ in Cu., Du., We., La. Yks and Db. and /hw/ in Du. See also Orton1978: Ph212, 222, 223 and Anderson 1987: Map 112. Rydland (1982: 9.16.1a) records /wai-Č/ in Cumbria.

32 In EDD lown appears in texts from Scotland, N.Cy., Nhb., Nhp, and Shr. transcribed as [luːn].
sense, to a combination of lazy, in the north bad, wicked and lither, in Scotland, the north and the West Midlands, idle, lazy, slothful.

3.3.2 Boaring their eyne (Hodgekins (IV 286)

A possible meaning of this expression, not recorded in OED, could be straining their eyes. Eyne is a common form for eyes in the North and west Midlands descended from the weak OE plural. In EDD we find under Bore vb. the expression heard in Stf. To bore one’s eyes out: i.e. To tire the eyes. OED records under Glower a citation from the Scottish W. Guthrie’s Sermons (a 1665) which implies a similar meaning, “Their the poor men stood gazing and glowering out their eyne, to behold the place where he ascended”.

4. Conclusion.

Deloney gives us a truthful representation of northern speech forms at the very end of the sixteenth century. Some of them have come to be considered more representative of Scotland but back in Deloney’s days they were also in use in the north of England. Even taking into account the always conjectural nature of orthographical interpretation, it seems that he is accurate enough in his representation of northern pronounciations. He adds to our knowledge of contemporary dialect lexis. Thomas Deloney gave us meaningful clues about northern English at the turn of the 16th c. Wakelin (1986b: 741) stated that the dialectology of the Early Modern English period “has been largely neglected in our day, since the ‘evidence’ available is regarded as difficult or impossible to evaluate”. A thorough and wide ranging study of the data contained in the drama, poetry and prose of this period is possible. It would contribute to a better knowledge of the Early Modern English non standard varieties.

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