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*“They would not change for the faultless style of the Queen herself”:
Style-shifting, “Yorkshiremen”, and enregistered nineteenth-century Yorkshire dialect*

There has been a relatively stable enregistered repertoire of dialect features indexically linked with Yorkshire since at least the nineteenth century (Beal 2009). This repertoire can be observed in dialect literature and literary dialect, dialect dictionaries and glossaries, travel writing, and articles in popular magazines. These sources also include metalinguistic commentary which serves as evidence for third-order indexical awareness (Johnstone *et al.* 2006) of the social values associated with Yorkshire dialect by historical audiences (Cooper 2013). However, within this commentary there are patterns of discourse which show that Yorkshire dialect was not only associated with place, but with a particular social type of speaker, referred to as the “Yorkshireman”.

In this paper I draw on Agha’s (2003) concept of enregisterment to highlight how this historical discourse contributed to the emergence of a characterological figure (Johnstone 2017) that was explicitly associated with the enregistered Yorkshire repertoire, as well as additional social values including “broad” dialect, independence, and having a “forceful” character. This figure is male, engages in either agricultural or industrial labour, and was perceived not to style shift. Yet, alongside this perception there is also evidence that “Yorkshiremen” were indeed capable of style-shifting and we see commentary illustrating notions that there were different styles of Yorkshire dialect which were more or less appropriate in certain contexts. Ultimately, I show that the “Yorkshireman” is the most well-defined characterological figure in historical discourse relating to Yorkshire dialect speakers. I also address the ways in which the social values associated with “Yorkshiremen” contributed to the perception that they actively avoided style-shifting, and how this became enregistered as part of the Yorkshire identity.

References

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