

Notes to accompany the original pronunciation (OP) transcription of Troilus and Cressida

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1 The transcription is a mixture of phonetic transcription and traditional orthography. I have transcribed phonetically only those elements of Early Modern English (EME) pronunciation which are clearly different from today. It should be treated as an aide-memoire for actors to identify those sounds which will be pronounced differently from the ones they are used to.

2 Before looking at the transcription itself, please note some general points:

2.1 The general level of articulation in EME was more casual and rapid than we would expect on a stage today. The elisions shown in texts (usually by apostrophes, as in *i'th*) are a familiar indication of this – as well as Hamletian recommendations like ‘speak the speech ... trippingly upon the tongue’ or ‘no mouthing’. The result is that some lines can move very fast. Compare the difference in timing between the modern pronunciation of *lay thy finger on thy lips*, with each *thy* given a full diphthong, and the OP version, where the two words are very short [thɪ]. Swearing phrases are another example, such as *by my troth* [bɪ mɪ], not [baɪ maɪ]. (The OP version of *Romeo* was 10 minutes shorter than the modern version.)

My transcription therefore portrays a generally colloquial style, in which:

- unstressed *and* would be pronounced [ən]
- unstressed *as* as [əz]
- unstressed *being* as [bɪn]
- unstressed *for* as [fəɪ]
- unstressed *he* as [ɪ] (often represented by 'a in the text)
- unstressed *I* as [ə]
- unstressed *my* as [mɪ]
- unstressed *mine* as [mɪn], *thine* as [θɪn]
- unstressed *must* as [məs] - I've left the [t] in, in the transcript, to make it easier to read, but it can be omitted at any time
- unstressed *of* as [əv] or [ə] - feel free to drop the [v] at any time
- unstressed *or* as [əɪ] - I've left it as a more fully articulated [o:ɪ] in the transcript, to make it easier to read, but it can always be reduced
- unstressed *them* as [əm]
- unstressed *thou* as [θə]
- unstressed *thee* and *thy* as [θɪ]
- unstressed *to* has no rounding: [tə].
- initial [h] in unstressed *him*, *her*, etc would be dropped: [ɪm, əɪ]. (See further below.)
- consonants would be dropped, especially at the ends of words: *frien(d)s*, *men(d)s*, *han(d)s*, *woulds(t) thou*, *clo(th)es*, *em(p)ty*, *gran(d)sire*, *as(k)ed*, *foun(d)st*, *tem(p)t*, etc.; I've left them in the transcription, but feel free to drop them
- medial consonants are dropped in some commonly occurring words (and the omissions are shown in the transcription): the exclamation *heavens* would usually be [henz]; *seven* and *eleven* were usually [sen] and [elen]; *devil* was [di:l]; *hither* and *thither* were often [hiəɪ] and [θiəɪ]
- especially in the prose passages, medial vowels would be dropped: *unworthiest*, [unwo:θɪst], *delivery* [delɪvɪɪ], *leavening* [levnɪn], *magnan'mous*, *ven'mous*, *everyb'dy*
- vowels sometimes run together, as in *th'unworthiest*.

Most of these features are still used today, in everyday colloquial conversation; what is different is that we are not used to hearing such casual pronunciations in poetry on stage. A formal declamatory style would also have been used in EME, so it is up to you how much you

vary the colloquial principle, by giving a normally unstressed word a bit more stress. But in general, there should be no attempt made to articulate every consonant precisely.

In singing, vowels and consonants have a fuller value, so I have not shown the usual reduced forms of words in Pandarus's songs.

2.2 I have paid careful attention to the demands of the metre, in poetic lines, so that if one of the above words occurs in a stressed syllable, I have left it with a fuller value. For example, the metre in the following line technically goes like this:

Wherein he puts alms for oblivion

It's up to you how you say this - whether keeping *for* strong or leaving it unstressed [fə.ɹ] and emphasising *alms* instead. I've therefore left such words in their normal modern spelling.

A number of words had a different stress pattern compared to today. You'll usually sense this from the place of the word in the metrical line. Examples include *canonize*, *advertized*, *gallantry*. In longer words where there is an unfamiliar stress pattern, I have underlined the strong syllables.

2.3 There are some general features which account for much of the auditory 'feel' of the pronunciation, and these are used by all characters.

2.3.1 Chief amongst these is the pronunciation of an *-r* sound after vowels (as in *car*). This sound was not the same as the *r*- before vowels (as in *red*), so I have given it a slightly different symbol, [ɹ]. It is a sound which was beginning to disappear from some people's pronunciation in EME, but most people probably still used it, with varying degrees of strength. Some people would have pronounced it very strongly, in a way which is closest to West Country accents today; others would have pronounced it quite weakly, with just a hint of [ɹ] resonance. These alternatives can be used as character-notes – I would expect older or lower-class characters, such as Thersites, to have a stronger [ɹ] than the younger upper-class characters, who would be in the van of pronunciation change (new tuners of accent). In my transcription, I have transcribed everyone in the same way, leaving it up to the director to decide how much attention to pay to these nuances.

2.3.2 The loss of *-g* in the *-ing* ending of words was another general feature, as in *grinding* [græɪndɪn]. Here too there was no suggestion of any class distinction, whether upper-class (as in *huntin'*, *shootin' an' fishin'*) or lower-class. It's also dropped in *nothing*, *something*, etc.

2.3.3 Another noticeable consonant feature was the use of *wh-* instead of *w-* in such words as *why* and *wheat*. Modern RP speakers pronounce *whales* and *Wales* in the same way. In EME, they would be different. Many present-day speakers still make this distinction (I do, for instance), but it was widespread in EME, so I have transcribed them as [hw] and [w] respectively.

Initial [h] in a stressed syllable can be dropped without qualm. There was no feeling of sloppiness or uneducatedness attached to the dropping of *h*, as there is today. I've left it in the transcription of most characters, but it can be dropped if it makes a word or line flow better (e.g. in *beholders*). The exception is Thersites. Because *h*-dropping was probably commoner in London than elsewhere, it can be used for lower-class characters as a means of helping convey the social divide to modern ears.

2.3.4 A very noticeable feature was the way some modern diphthongs were pronounced as pure vowels. In Modern English, words like *say*, *go*, *fear*, *tour*, and *where* have two audible elements, which in transcription could be shown as [seɪ], [gəʊ], [fiəɹ], [tuəɹ], and [wɛəɹ], respectively. In EME these were long vowels: [se:], [go:], [fi:ɹ], [tu:ɹ], and [wɛ:ɹ]. You can hear some of these pronunciations in modern dialects, of course.

2.3.5 The remaining diphthongs stay diphthongs, but they have a different quality, and this is perhaps the most noticeable vowel feature of all in EME. In Modern English, *lie*, *now*, and *joy* would be [laɪ], [nəʊ], and [jɔɪ], respectively. In EME the first part of the diphthong is articulated in the centre of the mouth, with the sound that we usually hear in *the* or in the last vowel of *sofa*: [ləɪ], [nəʊ], [jəɪ]. This last one is especially distinctive, when it occurs, and is the source of many puns which we've lost these days. In this play, it is important as the vowel of *Troy* and *Troilus*.

I have used the [əɪ] transcription also at the ends of words, in such cases as *lively*, *ready*, *happy*, *quality*, and so on. In most such cases, the diphthong is in an unstressed syllable, and should be sounded very weak and quick – just a hint of [ə] on the vowel. Although this was probably a bit old-fashioned in 1600, the quality has to be there.

2.3.5 The vowel of Modern English RP *cup*, *love*, *thus*, etc is quite open, and is usually today transcribed with the symbol [ʌ]. In EME, the sound was much more central and further back (there are different opinions about how much), and I have shown this by using the symbol [ɣ]. The suggested quality is close to the sound of present-day Northern *cup* [kʊp] but without the lip-rounding. Or, approaching it from another direction, it is a bit like [ə], but further back in the mouth.

2.3.6 Notes on the other vowels

Other short vowels

- The [ɪ] in such words as *sit*, *kin*, *whipped*, etc is the same as today.
- The [e] in such words as *set*, *well*, *fresh*, etc. is the same as today.
- The [a] in such words as *man*, *hand*, *manner*, etc. is similar to today, but more like the northern [a] than the frontier sound in RP. This is also the sound used in such words as *many* and *any* – and in these cases, where the modern spelling is with *a*, I have used the [a] symbol, to indicate the difference.
- The [ɒ] in such words as *hot*, *not*, *long*, etc. is similar to today, but a little more open and not so rounded - more like the American pronunciation than the British, or a shortened version of the [ɑ:] in RP *bath*.

The same sound is also used after [w], in such words as *what*, *want*, *watch*, and I have drawn attention to this by replacing the conventional *a* spelling with a different symbol: [hwat, want], etc.

- The [ʊ] in such words as *put*, *foot*, etc. is the same as today. Note also that in the suffix *-hood*, it is replaced by [ə], as in *falsehood*, etc.
- The unstressed vowel [ə], in such words as *the* and *a* is the same as today.

Other long vowels

- The [u:] in such words as *shoe*, *do*, *true*, etc. is the same as a conservative RP today (i.e. lacking the young trend to turn this sound into a diphthong and make it further forward in the mouth, so that *two* comes out as 'tyoo'). But note: several words with this vowel today had a short one in EME, such as *fool* [fʊl], *conclude* (as in some modern Scots accents), *turpitude*, *tooth* [tʊθ] (as in some modern Welsh accents), *proof*, etc. Note the pun in *thou full dish of fool*.
- The [ɑ:] in such words as *laugh*, *staff*, *car*, *heart* is further forward, and has been transcribed as [a:]. This is an important point to get right, as otherwise accents will sound very like RP. The vowel is short in *father* [fæθər] and *rather*. After [w], the vowel stays open, and also it is not lip-rounded: *warm* is [wɑ:ɪm], a bit like in some modern American accents. In a few words with a different history, such as *daughter*, it is longer, [ɑ:].
- The [ɔ:] in such words as *saw*, *law*, *all*, *brawls*, etc. is similar to today, but a little more open.
- The long vowel in such words as *bird*, *heard*, *person*, *mercy*, etc. had a pronunciation which was a bit more open than today - as heard in some dialect usage as 'ma:rcy me!'. This vowel

quality I have transcribed with [ɐ]. (This is a difference with the *Romeo* transcription, where I didn't use this symbol.) Note that it's the first vowel of *Thersites*.

2.3.7 Some distinctive words

The character names are sometimes different from those usually heard today:

- the *-es* ending is [e:z] not [i:z] in *Ulysses*, *Thersites*, *Achilles*, *Diomedes*
- the vowel in *Ulysses* isn't rounded: it's [yəlisse:s] - like 'yuh-li-sayz'
- the second vowel in *Aeneas* rhymes with *say* not *see*
- *Ajax* can be stressed on either the first or second syllable; the pronunciation is [aje:x], rhyming exactly with *a jakes* - and thus allowing a number of ribald puns (*let Ajax go to him; for whomsoever he be, he is Ajax*, etc)
- *Troilus* has the distinctive [əɪ] vowel, as does *Diomedes*
- I have used a [y] to remind people that words such as *envious* shouldn't have an extra syllable - [envyous] - not 'en - vee - us', etc.
- note the extra vowel in words like *affection* [afecʃion], *pageant* [pagiant], and especially (for this play) *Grecian*.
- note also, in these words, the modern 'sh' sound can be either 'sh' or 's'. I've gone for 's' in almost all cases, as this adds a lot to the old 'feel' of the accent. However, I've left the 'sh' sound in *Grecian* (which would otherwise sound like 'grace-ian'), to help the audience.
- after drops the *f*: [a:təɪ]
- *beshrew* rhymes with *toe* not *too*; similarly, *shrewd* has an [o:] vowel
- *cousin* is [cɒzin]
- *est* (as in *chiefest*) has an [ɪ] vowel, as does the past tense *-ed* ending, when it is pronounced as a separate syllable.
- *fault*, *shoulder* - no [l] - [fɔ:t, sho:deɪ]
- *fellow*, *morrow*, etc. have [ə] at the end (as in the modern nonstandard spellings, such as *fella*).
- *haste*, *taste*, *distaste*, and so on are [hast, tast], etc.
- *hour*, *flower*, etc. have [o:ɪ]
- *loathsome*, *arithmetic*, and a few others with [t] not [th]
- *nature*, *picture*, etc. have no 'ch' in the middle: [ne:təɪ], [pictəɪ]; similarly no *-zh-* in *pleasures*, *displeasure* [plezəɪ], etc.
- *neither*, *either* with a short vowel: [nether, ither], and sometimes the *th* disappears.
- *none*, *one*, *nothing* as [no:n, o:n, no:θɪn]
- *off*, *often* and a few others with a long [ɒ:], as heard in some modern accents [come awff it!]
- *once* as [ɒnce] - no initial [w].
- *other*, *another* as [o:theɪ, ano:theɪ]; it could even be a single syllable: [ɒ:ɪ, andɒ:ɪ]
- *prove*, *move* with a short vowel [prɒve, mɒve].
- *quoth* as [kɒθ] - no [w]; also not in *banquet*, *quality*, *acquainted*, *quondam*, *quoted*, and other loan words from French or Latin.
- *shall* as [shɒl], especially when stressed.
- *woman* as [wo:man] - but *women* as today
- *yea* sounded more like modern *yeah* [ye:]
- the pronoun *ye* was [yə]
- *yes*, *yet*, *yesterday* with an [ɪ] not [e] (compare modern Australian)

Note that in the transcription I use the colon to mark vowel length, as in [e:, o:], etc. This means that when there is a colon as part of the text punctuation (a common feature of the Quarto text), I need to distinguish it. A punctuation colon will always be preceded by a space.

3 Some general points

Don't overestimate the differences. Many lines are almost identical to modern pronunciation, e.g. *This challenge that the gallant Hector sends*.

We know from contemporary accounts that pronunciation was changing rapidly at that time, and that there were several competing pronunciations of words. There was probably a great deal of inconsistency – this was an age when a single pronunciation standard did not exist. The actors may well have said a given word in different pronunciations (just as today, at one moment a person might say *schedule* with a *sh-* and the next with a *sk-*). I have assumed a consistent accent, for each character, but don't be scared of introducing variations reflecting your own regional background..

The pronunciation represented is (my interpretation of) an underlying system for Early Modern English. Its aim is to show the major differences between then and now. It is not an attempt to show the phonetic detail of each sound. Any one of the sounds shown could have been articulated in a variety of subtly different ways – just as today, the sound in, say, *two* can be said with slightly more or slightly less lip rounding, slightly higher or slightly lower in the mouth, and so on. Doubtless at the time the actors (who came from different parts of the country) brought their individual accents to their parts. The same can happen with this production. There should be no effort made to make everyone sound exactly the same.

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