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The early Middle English reflexes of Germanic *ik 'I': unpacking the changes

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The early Middle English reflexes of Germanic *ik* 'I': Unpacking the changes[1]

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The phonological shape of the PDE first-person nominative singular pronoun 'I' is assumed to have a simple history. The final consonant of WGmc ***ik** 'palatalises' (i.e. fronts and assibilates), and later drops, yielding [iː], which develops through the Great Vowel Shift into something like [ai]. However, the late Old English and early Middle English evidence indicates that such a simple narrative does not match the attested data. Rather, there are significant temporal, geographical and variational aspects, including complex lexical diffusion. The *Linguistic Atlas of Early Middle English, Corpus of Tagged of Texts* contains 145 texts that include one or more variants of the pronoun 'I'. Between them, they exemplify an intricate history. In this article we unpack the changes that have brought about the attested complexity. As a basis we use the etymology of this item created for the recently published *Corpus of Narrative Etymologies* (*CoNE*), which itself interfaces with its accompanying *Corpus of Changes* (*CC*). The history of this small grammatical word ultimately needs to be considered against the wider background of velar palatalisation in general and in relation to the reflexes of other commonly occurring items of a similar structure. But the changes visible in 'I' seem not to be fully replicated in any of them, and here we confine ourselves to its particular and apparently unique history.

Keywords: Old and Middle English, first-person pronoun, palatalisation, lenition

Here is the most general form of the schema of Darwinian explanation. The task of getting from the early time when there wasn't any *x* to the time when there was lots of *x* is completed by a finite series of steps in which it becomes less and less clear that 'there still isn't any *x* here, not really' through to a series of 'debatable' steps until we eventually find ourselves on steps where it is really quite obvious that 'of course there is *x*, lots of *x*'. We never draw any lines.   Dennett (1995: 200)

1. Introduction

Over twenty years of working with *A Linguistic Atlas of Early Middle English* (LAEME), and examining huge numbers of variant spellings, we have learned two important lessons:

(a) You must never ask *when* a Middle English sound change occurred, but *when*, *where*;
(b) You must never expect a single or simple answer to either question.

As an illustration, consider the inventories of forms for the first person singular nominative pronoun attested in four different scribal systems[2] in the LAEME Corpus of Tagged Texts (CTT):

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on the etymology of 'I', and to Niki Ritt, Donka Minkova and an anonymous reviewer for useful comments and suggestions. For clarity of reference, we place the one-letter pronoun under discussion between single inverted commas (rather than italicising it). Except for this, and for standard punctuation, we employ inverted commas only to mark *litterae.* Our notational system uses the antique and medieval theory of *littera.* The conventions (established by Michael Benskin (1997: 1 n. 1; 2001: 194 n. 4) for the standard definitions in the theory are: *littera* is the abstract or superordinate notion of the letter, and (when referred to independently of manuscript citation), *litterae* are enclosed in single inverted commas. *Figura* is the shape of a *littera*. Manuscript *figurae* are here enclosed in angle brackets or are italicised when combined as whole words or longer. *Potestates* are sound values and are represented by IPA symbols in phonetic brackets. As additional conventions, glosses are in small capitals, etymological categories are starred bold. Dates are given as they appear in LAEME, viz: C = century, a = first half, b = second half, a1 = first quarter, a2 = second quarter, b1 = third quarter, b2 = last quarter.

[2] For our observations on Middle English language, we are dependent on the largely accidental sample of surviving manuscript texts. Medieval scribes may be original authors or, much more commonly, copyists of contemporary or earlier texts, which (more often than not) may themselves no longer survive. When we refer to a 'scribal system' we mean that system of writing that is associated with a particular scribe, whose spellings may thereby also be associable with a particular time or place.

Forms

   i. *I* (2) attested only before following consonant;[3]
  ii. *ich* (5) attested only before following consonant;
 iii. *ic* (4) found before following consonant (2) or following vowel (2);
 iv. *ic* (6), *hic* (4), *ih* (4), *ig* (4), *hy* (4), *y* (2), *hi* (1), *yg* (1) *yh* (1).

Division of forms in iv according to following element C, ‘h’ or V:

   C: *hy* (4), *ic* (3), *ih* (3), *hic* (2), *y* (2), *hi* (1), *yg* (1) *yh* (1)
   ‘h’: *hic* (1), *ic* (1), *ig* (1), *ih* (1)
   V: *ig* (3), *ic* (2), *hic* (1)

Key

   i. Oxford, Bodleian Library, Laud Misc 636, fols. 88v-91v, Final Contin-
      uation of the Peterborough Chronicle. Peterborough, 1154;
  ii. Cambridge, Trinity College B.14.52, hand C, pp. 153–154: Trinity
      Homilies xxxiv. W Berkshire, C12b2;
 iii. London, British Library, Cotton Cleopatra C.vi, corrections by hand B
      (presumed author of *Ancrene Riwle*). S Shropshire, C13a2;
 iv. London, British Library, Royal 2.F.viii, fol. 1v, lyric. W Wiltshire, C13b2.

It is clear that the texts listed in i. to iv. are scattered across the country from Peterborough in the East Midlands to Shropshire in the West Midlands with Berkshire and Wiltshire in between and to the south. It is also apparent that the forms, *ich* and *I*, generally associated with later Middle English, in fact occur earlier than apparently more conservative or archaic ones; and that (iv) displays spellings ranging from classical Old English to more ‘modern’ types, including some unexpected ‘outliers’. The usual assumption is that the Old English first person singular nominative pronoun ‘was *ic*’. But in fact, the following apparently non-canonical forms are already attested (albeit rarely) in Old English texts: *ich, ih, ig* and *ī*.[4] The *ich* and *ig*

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[3] We assume here that whether the word following the ‘I’ pronoun begins with C, ‘h’ or V can potentially affect its phonetic realisation: specifically forms of the pronoun lacking a final consonant are likely to have arisen first in contexts where the following word begins with C and the retention of final consonant in the pronoun is more likely when followed by a word with initial V or ‘h’.

[4] The macron does not occur in the texts but is a standard editorial convention to indicate likely vowel length. *ī*-forms are very rare in Old English. *OED* quotes one example from the Cambridge Psalter (*c.*1000) and one late Old English instance from the Salisbury Psalter (*c.*1100).

spellings are unlikely to represent the same phonetic objects in Old English as they do Middle English, as the argumentation of this article will demonstrate. These non-canonical spellings therefore suggest a much more complicated phonological history than is found in any standard handbook, and show something of the dangers of reification – the imagining of a monolithic or unitary 'Old English'.

2. Palatalisation and its sequelae

The examples in Section 1 indicate the orthographic complexity of this item over the Old English and early Middle English periods. But what are the phonological developments that presumably underlie the complexity? The phonological shape of the modern English first person nominative singular pronoun 'I' is standardly assumed to have a simple history. The final consonant of WGmc *ik 'palatalises' (i.e. fronts and assibilates), and later the palatalised consonant drops, yielding [iː], which develops through the Great Vowel Shift into something like [ai]. The Old English and early Middle English evidence, however, indicates that such a simple narrative does not match all the attested data. Firstly, there are significant temporal, geographical and variational particularities. Secondly, we want to challenge the simple assumption that it is the assibiliated consonant [tʃ] that 'drops'. We believe that the evidence suggests two distinct lines of descent from WGmc *ik.

2.1. Narrative etymologies

The standard, 'dictionary' model of an etymology is a list of presumed cognates, with protoforms for salient levels of temporal resolution, and a minimum of explicit historical narrative. In contrast with this, a narrative etymology unpacks and makes explicit the narrative that brings each particular attested form into existence. Each etymology is a step-by-step history of the form it labels. The Corpus of Narrative Etymologies (*CoNE*) offers a radically different approach to the concept. Etymologies are still sets of forms, but they are organised as a sequence of episodes in time, not a set of static correspondences.

> Our procedure is to start from a tag represented by one or more text-forms in LAEME CTT (e.g. $sit/v), and project an ancestor or etymon at a par-

ticular temporal level. We then create a sequence in which each successive change is marked and named and assigned a phonological structure. The conceptual framework is essentially 'Darwinian': the underlying model (or metaphor) is a population of variants moving through time, with innovation and differential selection of particular variants making up the event landscape that defines the narrative.   (*CoNE*, '*CoNE* Documents', 'Introduction', sect. 3.2)

2.1.1. *Old English narrative etymology[5] of 'I'*

General shape of our etymologies:

||*reconstructed input form ((change)) > ***resulting reconstructed form** > [phonetic substance underlying OE citation form] > *OE citation form*

Pathway A ***ik**

1 ((VP)) > [itʃ] > *ic*
2 ((FKPW)) > [ic] > *ic*
            ↓
        3 ***ic** ((FKPW)) > [iç] > *ic, ih*
                        ↓
                    4 [iç] ((CHFX)) > *ich*
                        ↓
                    5 ***iç** ((FKPW)) > [ih] > *ih*
                            ↓
                        6 ***ih** ((FHD)) > ***i** ((MWC)) > [iː] > *ī*
                                        ↓
                                    7 [iː] (([LS])) > *ig*

Pathway B ***ik** > [ik] > *ic*

Key to the changes
((VP)) = Velar Palatalisation
((FKPW)) = Final k-Palatalisation and Weakening.
((FHD2)) = Final h-Deletion
((MWC)) = Monosyllabic Word Constraint
((CHFX)) = 'ch' for [x]
(([LS])) = Litteral Substitution

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[5] For the concept of narrative etymology and the methodology and changes illustrated here see further *CoNE*, s.v. '*CoNE* Documents' and then 'Introduction'. Cf also '*CoNE* Documents' and then 'Template Description'. The conventions used here are those of *CoNE*, where capital letters in double parentheses indicate the initialism of a particular change, which is live-linked to its description in the Corpus of Changes database to be found in *CoNE* s.v. The *CC*. Brackets within parentheses, as with (([LS])), indicate a descriptive code which is not categorisable as a change. Such codes are found in *CoNE* s.v. Special Codes.

2.2. The changes in detail

2.2.1. *Velar Palatalisation*

At first sight, *k > [ʧ] before or after front vowels *i(:), *e(:) and the palatal approximant *j (we will not here be considering voiced velars). ((VP)) accounts for the palatals in, for instance, *cild* CHILD. ((VP)) must precede i-umlaut since the new 'secondary' front vowels from that change have preceding velars: KIN < *kun-jɑ- vs CHIN < *kinn-i.

This outline glosses over much controversy and complication, including the relationship of velar fronting to the associated assibilation. The problematic issue is the nature of the palatalisation itself. None of the major handbooks (except Wright & Wright 1925) treat this as a single change. Rather than using 'palatalisation' as a shorthand for the whole set of processes (as for instance in Lass 1994), they call it 'palatalisation and assibilation' (Hogg 1992) or 'fronting and assibilation' (Campbell 1959). They thus separate the fronting of *k from the development of the fricative release. Hogg argues that *k reaches [ʧ] via a stop stage *[c] (sect. 7.15–43); see also Section 2.2.2. For most of his treatment Hogg uses only the term "palatalization"; not until the last section does he mention that some of the palatalised stops were assibilated.

We assume then that there were two stages in those palatalisations whose outputs have sibilant releases. We take the palatalisation + assibilation cluster as 'unitary' for the sake of our etymology, but with the background assumption that there was at least one 'intermediate stage' that we need to reconstruct. Thus *k > [ʧ] is a shorthand for (probably) at least *k > *c > [ʧ]. (For fuller treatment of this change see *CoNE* s.v. The *CC* and then ((VP)).)

2.2.2. *Final k-Palatalisation and Weakening.*

Word- or morpheme-finally, all or part of the following palatalisation and lenition sequence can occur immediately after a front vowel: [k] > [c] > [ç] > [h].[6] There is some possibility in principle that the second position of

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[6] We use the synonymous terms 'lenition' and 'weakening' in the way they are standardly used in historical discourse. Lenition is primarily an increase of airflow (either periodic or non-periodic) through the vocal tract at the location of a consonantal stricture, potentially leading over time to the loss of that stricture. (See the taxonomy and exemplification in Lass 1984: sect. 8.3 and the more detailed discussion of the final stages of lenition clines

this type of pathway may be occupied either by an aspirated or affricated stop, which are known possibilities in the lenition hierarchy (Lass 1984: 178), but we find no compelling evidence for this more complete form of the development in Old or Middle English. The beginning of the pathway is just sketched in this representation: given the [c] and the ultimate source in historical *k, it clearly must include the palatalisation subrule of ((VP)), q.v. We omit this here for clarity of representation. (See further *CoNE* s.v. The *CC* and then ((FKPW)).)

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in Lass 1976: ch.6, both of which attempt, in the course of theoretical discussion, a precise definition of what is denoted by the standard usage.) There are two types of phenomena that are customarily classified as lenitions: opening of articulation (e.g. stop > fricative > approximant) and induction of periodic airflow (i.e. voiceless > voiced). A segment once voiced can of course lenite further by opening of articulation. The same historical category may undergo multiple lenitions over time, leading eventually to two final stages: loss of supraglottal articulation, leaving a laryngeal residue like [h], and finally zero. The loss of supraglottal articulation may be referred to in the literature by at least two possible names. Lass (1976: 155) uses 'deoralisation'; the common term nowadays (as in Lavoie 2009 to take a recent example), is 'debuccalisation'. Multiple lenitions may occur over time in the same position; the mechanism is opening of articulation, either producing a voiceless segment, or the voicing of a voiceless segment followed by opening of articulation. For examples from Indo-European, Dravidian and Uralic of complete and incomplete traversals of the cline, including the voicing series (not considered here), see Lass (1976: 159–163). For recent examples of the traditional usage see e.g. Fortson (2010: 187, 317) on Anatolian and Celtic. Fortson also uses lenition in a rather rarer traditional sense in Anatolian studies to mean degemination as well. This is entirely in keeping with the notion of lenition as increase of trans-oral airflow.

These definitions, in particular that of spirantisation of stops, have been put up for reconsideration in a thoughtful paper by Lavoie (2009). This is an important and challenging paper, which raises a number of issues that are too subtle phonetically to be incorporated into historical discourse. Other points need more debate than we have room for here. It is worth noting, however, that the traditional historical sense of lenition is not in terms, as Lavoie largely puts it, of the strength or weakness of particular consonants as inherent properties, but rather of properties of airflow which the consonantal articulations conduce to. In particular, we do not agree with Lavoie in thinking that aspiration is strengthening; it is in fact deleting a portion of a stop so that the airstream starts earlier. By our (classical) definition this is lenition. We are grateful to two of our reviewers for raising the issue of stress in regard to the lenition sequence. Weakening and complete loss of final *k is largely (though not completely) confined in Old and Middle English to the first person singular nominative and accusative pronoun (OE *ic* and *mec*) and to the derivational suffix *-ly* (OE *-līc*). These items are all candidates for prosodic weakness. It is possible that consonant weakening and loss was originally confined to forms in low stress positions. In historical investigation, however, without access to evidence at utterance level, this idea is untestable. Against it here is the evidence of stressed forms with final *-h* in Cambridge, Emmanuel College (see sect. 3.3.5).

2.2.3. *Final h-Deletion*

[h] deletes in final position. This can occur in both weak and strong syllables. Final [h] will always be the output of an earlier lenition sequence (as in the familiar 'aspiration' of final /s/ in many Spanish dialects). (For further examples see *CoNE* s.v. The *CC* and then ((FHD2)). This change is labelled 2 in *CoNE* because it occurs in OE and ME. *CoNE* ((FHD1)) deals with an earlier (PrOE) deletion of [h].)

2.2.4. *Monosyllabic Word Constraint*

Short vowels lengthen if final in monosyllabic words. This is one of the major changes defining the split (probably no younger than the second century) between East (Gothic) and Northwest Germanic. Thus the historical final vowel in Go *þu* is short, as is the IE and PGmc state (cf. L *tu*), but OE and all the other NWGmc dialects have [uː]. This remains in effect as a well-formedness condition throughout NWGmc in most cases to the present, except in languages, such as Yiddish, that have lost distinctive length. At the level of individual utterances, the final long vowels of grammatical words in positions of low prosodic stress may of course shorten and even produce cliticised forms in PDE dialects. In ME this could also happen, but unless an original vowel has been neutralised (see *CoNE* s.v. The *CC* and then ((WVN))) or is actually lost (see *CoNE* s.v. The *CC* and then ((CF))), such shortenings are not discernible from the spellings.

The pronoun 'I' is here a special case because the long vowel is derived later during Old English and Middle English. It must have been [iː] at some point in the Middle English reflexes ancestral to Present Day English /ai/ (via the Great Vowel Shift). After deletion of the final consonant (Protoform *ik), [iː] would result from the automatic action of this ancient surface filter. Since *k deletes via the standard lenition sequence [k] > [c] > [ç] > [h] > ∅, it is arguable instead that compensatory lengthening took place during the course of the operation of the lenition. In the first instance the lengthening (whether via this change or via compensatory lengthening) would have had to take place in prosodically strong contexts as Old English does not have long vowels in unstressed syllables. Later, [iː] could be subject to shortening in prosodically weak stressed positions (see *CoNE*, s.v. The *CC* and then ((LSS))) and possible cliticisation. (See further *CoNE* s.v. The *CC* and then ((MWC)).)

2.2.5. *'ch' for [x]*

Medial or final [x], normally spelled 'h' in OE, appears sporadically as 'ch', presumably from early influence of Latin spellings of Greek loans with 'χ'. Note that while 'ch' served as a rare alternate to usual 'h' for [x] in early Gmc, it is now the typical representation across Gmc (German, Dutch, Scots). It continues as a device in later spelling traditions, as in representations of northern speech in Victorian fiction, e.g. *nicht* for NIGHT. (See further *CoNE* s.v. The *CC* and then ((CHFX)).)

2.2.6. *Litteral Substitution*

Many early Middle English writing systems display considerable complexity. Phonetic and orthographic remappings between Old English and Middle English led to the availability, in a text community of multilingual scribes, of multiple orthographic variants to realise certain sounds. Conversely, multiple sounds could be mapped onto a single *littera* (see further Laing 1999; Laing & Lass 2003, 2009). In *CoNE*, we use the code ([LS]) as a catchall term to indicate non-traditional use of a *littera* as the result of the presence of one or more Litteral Substitution Sets in a scribe's system. A proper subset of literal substitution is traditionally referred to as 'inverse spelling' or 'backspelling'. (See further *CoNE* s.v. Special Codes and then ([LS]).)

2.3. Notes to the Old English etymology

Pathway A
(a) Our [ic] reconstruction of *ic* (Fork 2) and our [ih] reconstruction of *ih* (Fork 5) are uncertain since both spellings have alternative interpretations as shown in the etymology.
(b) Fork 6 and 7 forms are rare.
(c) *ich* and *ih* spellings are confined to Northumbrian. Given the paucity pre-1300 of surviving Middle English texts associated with the North, it seems extremely unlikely that Nth *ich*, or *ih* were the direct ancestors of any attested Middle English form.[7] Note also that Nth *ich* is equally

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[7] Donka Minkova (pers. comm.) points out that there are 64 instances of *ich* in the Old English Corpus, mostly to be found in the late Charters. The fact that such spellings are

unlikely to have represented [itʃ] – see discussion under Section 2.2.5.

(d) Rare OE *ig* we take to be a spelling for [iː]. Coda vocalisation of final [j] in words like *dreorig* SORROWFUL yields the alternative spelling *dreori*. The assumption is that final [ij] > [ii] = [iː].[8] Therefore the sequence *ig* can represent [iː] by inverse spelling (Litteral Substitution).

(e) Note that the Anglian accusative form *mec* shows loss of [tʃ] in West-Saxon, via a lenition sequence parallel to the development of *ic* shown in Forks 6 and 7 (see further Campbell 1959: sect. 452, 702 and *CoNE*, Grammel-only items, /P11~me/).

The above observations lead us to assume therefore that the OE *ic* spelling (with whatever phonetic implication) is the most likely predecessor of all early Middle English forms.

Pathway B

(a) No **ik* spelling is attested in Old English, but earlier ON or ON-influenced [ik] is required to account for early Middle English developments (see sect. 3).

(b) Whether any particular Northumbrian or Mercian *ic*-attestations were pronounced [ik] is unknowable. But as 'c' in Old English was the normal spelling for [k], we prefer to use attested *ic* as endpoint of this fork rather than invoking unattested **ik*.

2.4. Summary and prospect

It will be clear from the above that *ich* and *ig* in Old English do not represent the same thing as early Middle English *ich* and *ig*, *yg* (cited in sect. 1). Middle English *ch* may, to be sure, still represent [x] or its palatal congener [ç], in e.g. rare *hech* HIGH and more frequently before [t], in e.g. *richt* RIGHT.[9] But most characteristically it represents a palatoalveolar affricate

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confined in Old English not only regionally but also to this particular text type may perhaps further support our position on the lack of continuity in these spellings into Middle English.
[8] For the distinction between nonsyllabic high vowels and approximants or 'frictionless continuants', and its relevance to the early history of English see Hogg (1992: sect. 2.75–2.77).
[9] The scholarly tradition assumes without comment that early English had an '*ich/ach* rule' as in modern German. But lack of palatalisation after front vowels in Yiddish, Swiss German, Dutch, Afrikaans and Scots suggests that this was not necessarily the case for historical **x*, but that palatals could have appeared only as reflexes of palatal stops. In other words, in Germanic it is not necessary for a velar (or uvular) fricative to palatalise in a front environment.

[tʃ], following French orthographic practice. It seems most likely therefore that the OE 'I'-variant with the phonological shape [itʃ] (spelled *ic*) continued into Middle English but was respelled *ich*. There is no *a priori* reason to suppose that any *ich* attestation of 'I' in the LAEME CTT represents [ix] or [iç] in Middle English, although each scribal system would have to be examined in its own right to confirm this assumption.

Caroline 'g' in Middle English is characteristically used for [g] or [dʒ] (usually non-initial) while surviving insular 'ᵹ' and its later development 'ʒ' are deployed for [j] and dorsal fricatives. Any 'g' in LAEME CTT not combined in a 'gh' cluster most characteristically represents a stop, with its next most common use being for [dʒ]. 'g' occasionally continues to be employed for [j] in some scribal systems, but the LAEME spellings *ig*, *yg* for 'I' are very unlikely to represent [ij], especially as there is no historical phonological reason to postulate such a development in this item. In the absence of any Middle English parallels, we also discount the possibility that *ig* continues as a spelling for [iː] via Litteral Substitution. As will become apparent in our discussion in Section 4, these spellings have to be assessed in relation to the entire writing systems of the two scribes who employ them.

3. Middle English developments

We assume, then, that the Old English inputs represented by *ic* descend into early Middle English in two main forms, one palatalised [itʃ] and one unpalatalised [ik]. The etymological narrative that thereafter produces the wide range of early Middle English forms is derived partly through the repetition of changes[10] that occurred in Old English and partly through changes that belong to Middle English only.

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[10] Unlike the characteristic handbook model, we allow changes to be recursive or to 'recycle'. Final k-Palatalization and Weakening is a clear example of a change that iterates by operating on its own output (see the Old English etymology in sect. 2.1 and the Middle English etymology in sect. 3.1). Such iteration is unproblematic in synchronic derivational item-and-process grammars of a certain kind, and is even less problematic here. Sound changes are events that occur in real time, and there is no principled limit to the number of times a change can recur. Each iteration is simply another occurrence of the change in real time, in this case happening to take its previous output as input.

3.1. Introductory remarks

Because of the sheer variety of early Middle English spellings, we restrict our etymology to exemplary types rather than exhaustive listings of attested forms as we did for the Old English etymology. The 'usual' Old English spelling *ic* continues to be widespread in LAEME CTT. It does not feature in our etymology here because its phonetic value is ambiguous between the two realisations [itʃ] and [ik], unless one assesses individually each scribal system in which it appears.

3.1.1. *Middle English narrative etymology of 'I'*

Pathway A [itʃ] ((ORPC)) > *ich*
Pathway B

1 [ik] > *ik, icc*
   ↓
2 [ik] ((FKPW)) > [ic] ((FKPW)) > [iç] > *?ihc*
                                        ↓
                        3 [iç] ((FKPW)) > [ih] > *ih*
                                                   ↓
                                  4 [ih] ((FHD)), ((MWC)) > [iː] > *I, i, y*

Key to the changes:
((ORPC)) = Orthographic Remapping of Palatal c.
((FKPW)) = Final k-Palatalisation and Weakening.
((FHD)) = Final h-Deletion
((MWC)) = Monosyllabic Word Constraint

3.2. The changes in detail

All changes except ((ORPC)) have been treated in Sections 2.2.2–2.2.4

3.2.1. *Orthographic Remapping of Palatal c*

OE *c* represented both velar and palatal reflexes of {*k}. When palatal, after the operation of Velar Palatalisation, OE *c* is traditionally taken to represent the affricate [tʃ]. This is commonly respelled in ME using 'h' as a diacritic following French orthographic practice for indicating [tʃ]. The results in ME are most commonly *ch* for [tʃ]. and *cch* for the historical geminate [ttʃ].] (< OE *cc*); but there is also some non-historical alternation between the two. (See *CoNE* s.v. The *CC* and then ((ORPC)).) Reversed *hc* is also found sporadically (see further sect. 3.3.2).

3.3. Commentary on the Middle English developments

3.3.1. *The pathways*

Pathway A of our Middle English etymology is the unchanged descent of Old English velar palatalisation but with a characteristically Middle English, French-influenced spelling as described above in Section 3.2.1 The term orthographic remapping denotes the redeployment of a *littera* or *litterae* for previously unused representative purposes, in this case 'ch' for [tʃ]. Thus Pathway A of our Middle English etymology maps onto Pathway A Fork 1 of our Old English etymology. As indicated in Section 2.4, we consider it unlikely (but not impossible) that any particular early Middle English reflex in *ich* was descended from OE (Nth) *ich* representing [ix].

Pathway B of our Middle English etymology, with [ik] as input, has the possibility of mapping not only onto Pathway B of our Old English etymology but also onto Forks 2–7 of Pathway A. See Fork 1 and Forks 2 to 4 respectively.

Fork 1 shows the spread of 'k' to represent [k], a usage rare in Old English but increasingly employed during the Middle English period, especially in front vowel environments. Spellings in *ik*(-) or rare *ick*- are confined in LAEME CTT to texts associated with the North or the North East Midlands. We will however suggest in Section 4.1 that [ik] pronunciations may have had a much wider distribution in early Middle English times. The *icc* spelling belongs uniquely to the *Ormulum*. This may be taken unequivocally to represent [ik] because Orm always uses '(c)ch' for [(t)tʃ]. The double 'c' is a diacritic representation – Orm's typical strategy for indicating a preceding short vowel.

Forks 2 to 4 show further iterations of Final k-Palatalisation and Weakening. This is a sequence of processes moving down a lenition cline, each output weaker than the preceding. No text language undergoing this process necessarily goes more than one step down the hierarchy, but of course it is equally possible to go all the way to zero, via Final h-Deletion. The entire ((FKPW)) and ((FHD)) sequence looks like this:

k > c > ç > h > ∅

3.3.2. *Excursus on ihc*

The [iç] = *ihc* stage is marked by ?. If this spelling occurred just once or twice one might consider the 'hc' to be a scribal error for 'ch'. But it is

found in the LAEME CTT in no fewer than 18 texts ranging discontinuously across the country from the South West to Suffolk. It appears in all phonetic environments (i.e. before C, 'h' and V), though no single text has it in all three contexts. Admittedly it is always in small numbers and almost always beside multiple other spellings, but this is a normal type of distribution: innovative forms occur in small numbers when they arise. Later they may diffuse or fail to diffuse in any text language. In this case we postulate that 'hc' was a further deployment of the common Middle English practice of using 'h' as a diacritic for fricativeness. Here it is placed to the left of the marked segment since the right hand side ('ch') was reserved for representing [tʃ]. It seems that a number of scribes, very probably independently of one another, all arrived at the same solution. We further postulate that the [iç] pronunciation, thus represented, never developed beyond a minority and interim variant. We nevertheless feel that there is good reason to posit it, given its distribution and its arguable role in the lenition cline. The assumption that *ihc* represents [iç] gains some support from the presence of the spelling *rihcte* RIGHT (once beside numerous spellings in *-iht*) in the work of Scribe B of Cambridge, Trinity College B.14.52 (335) (C12b2) who also has *ihc* twice for 'I' beside usual *ich* (presumably in the latter case for [itʃ] not [iç]).[11]

3.3.3. *Excursus on* ih

It might be supposed that the [ih] = *ih* stage ought also to have been marked by ?. There was ambiguity in relation to this variant built in to our Old English etymology in Section 2.1. In Old English initial 'h' spelled [h] so the spelling *ih* could in principle imply [ih] as part of the lenition cline from [ik]. But *ih* could also be a 'normal' spelling for [iç], given that the dorsal fricatives are standardly spelled with 'h' in Old English. The prob-

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[11] The only other text in LAEME CTT to show a similar spelling for a reflex of OE *-iht* is London, British Library, Cotton Cleopatra C. vi, Hand A (C13a2), viz *nihcte* NIGHT (beside numerous spellings in *-icht*). This text, however, shows only *ich* (and *ic* once) for 'I'. Elsewhere in LAEME CTT 'hc' spellings occur only in the word EVEREACH and only once each in three texts all from different regions and none of which show *ihc* for 'I'. It might seem that these *hc*-spellings are more likely to be errors for 'ch' representing [tʃ], but it is in fact not impossible that they too could be adaptations representing [ç]. For the argument that EACH can be a natural member of the set that displays the lenition series (at least as far as [h] and therefore including [ç]) see sect. 3.3.5.

lem is that if there is lenition in Old English, there is no way to distinguish what the intention of a given final *-h* spelling is. This difficulty to a certain extent continues into early Middle English. Firstly, in many texts there is variable deletion of initial 'h' with inverse spellings in unhistorical initial 'h' indicating that 'h' itself (in initial position at least) can be a null character. Secondly, because there are some texts that continue the spelling *-iht* in forms like *niht* and *riht* as well as using 'h' both initially and finally for other reflexes of Gmc *x. Nevertheless, in spite of all these potential ambiguities, there are texts that appear likely to indicate the realisation [ih], as we will see below (sect. 3.3.5).

3.3.4. *Spellings with initial 'h'*

Spellings of 'I' with initial 'h' in LAEME CTT (e.g. *hic*, *hich*, *hi*, *hy*) appear to represent a non-phonetic subtype. That is, the initial 'h' does not stand for any phonological material, but is an orthographic reflection of a phonological change. Texts with *h-* spellings typically show both variable loss of historical initial 'h' and variable insertion of non-historical 'h'. *hi* and *hy* for 'I' in our listing for London, British Library, Royal 2.F.viii in Section 1 must be seen in the context of spellings in the same text such as *end-* ~ *hende* END, *abbe* ~ *haue* HAVE, *elle* HELL and *hut* OUT.

3.3.5. *Spellings with final V + 'h'*

The sort of distribution in Section 3.3.4 need not imply that 'h' in final position is also a null character. Given the overall history of English it is clear that the two categories, initial and non-initial [h], have had distinct histories. In some sixteenth- and seventeenth-century London varieties, for instance, [h] was present post-vocalically in words like SIGH and LAUGH, but there was no sign of initial [h]-loss (Lass 1999: sect. 3.5.1).

One text in LAEME CTT strongly suggests the reality of final [h] via the lenition sequence outlined in Section 3.2. Cambridge, Emmanuel College 27, fols. 111v, 162r–163r shows no indication of loss of historical initial 'h' or insertion of non-historical 'h'. It has invariable '-ȝt' in reflexes of Old English '-ht' words, e.g. *almiȝti* ALMIGHTY, *oȝte* OUGHT. It has 'ch' initially and medially for historical [tʃ], e.g. *biþenche* BETHINK, *churiche* CHURCH, *eueriche*, *euereche* EVERY. But in final position it has only *ih*, *yh* for first person singular nominative 'I', as well as *-lih* for -LY, *eh* for EACH, *sueh*

for SUCH.[12] All these items have PrOE **k** with the possibility of Pathway B development to [h]. In 'I' and -LY the lenition sequence thereafter could (and regularly did) complete to zero, as witnessed by modern English forms. The final [h] forms seem to have been a rare and short-lived phenomenon. In EACH, SUCH and -LY they are confined to this one text in early Middle English, and even in 'I' they appear in just four other texts and as minor variants.

4. But what about *ig, yg*?

Two texts in LAEME CTT show spellings of 'I' with final -*g*.

4.1. Cambridge, Trinity College B.14.39 (323), hand A (E Herefordshire, C13b1)

The inventory of forms for the first person singular nominative pronoun in Trinity A is:

ic (26), *i* (9), *hic* (4), *ic* (2), *I* (2), *hi* (1), *ig* (1)

Division according to following element C, 'h' or V:

C: *ic* (16), *i* (9), *hic* (2), *I* (2), *hi* (1) *ig* (1)
'h': *hic* (1)
V: *ic* (10) *hic* (1)

Probable realisations for the first six have been explained in Section 3. It might seem at first as if we could write off the oddest of the lot, *ig*, as a scribal error. There are two reasons not to do this: (i) there is evidence in this text that makes considerable sense of *ig* as part of a characteristic pattern of this scribe's usage; (ii) as indicated above, this is not the only text in which forms in -*g* appear (see sect. 4.2). Both texts belong in the South West Midlands but are sufficiently distant from each other for the spelling to be convergent.

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[12] -*lih*, and possibly also *yh* and *ih*, are candidates for low prosodic stress (see n. 6, above) but *eh* and *sueh* seem likely from their contexts to have been fully stressed: *fram eh vuele þinge me schulde* SHIELD ME FROM EACH EVIL THING; and *Forti dawes mid ywone ilestez sueh tiþinge* FORTY DAYS BY CUSTOM LASTS SUCH AN OCCURRENCE.

Trinity A's writing system is one of a significant minority in LAEME CTT that show variable final devoicing of historical voiced stops. This manifests itself in historically voiced segments being denoted by means of symbols typically associated with voiceless ones, e.g. 't' for [d]. The other consequence is inverse spellings of historically voiceless consonants by means of symbols typically used for voiced ones, e.g. 'd' for [t]. For instance, *hont* HAND and *þad ~ þat* THAT, *hid ~ hit* IT. In the context of our etymology of 'I' it is perhaps more relevant that we find 'g' for [k] and 'c' and 'k' for [g]. For instance: *kinc ~ king* KING, *stronc ~ strong* STRONG.[13] We also find *sinnekis* (THOU) SINNEST and *suneke* (THOU) MAYST SIN (present subjunctive) where the *-k-* would seem to indicate devoicing of earlier stem final [g] of the verb *syngian* TO SIN < *synnig* SINFUL. This distribution might suggest that the inventory for 'I' for this system could well map into only two realisations: [ik] and [iː]. A perfectly plausible interpretation of *ig* is as an inverse spelling for [ik]. But this is not the only possibility; when we examine the evidence of our second text, it suggests an alternative interpretation of *ig* in this text.

4.2. London, British Library, Royal 2.F.viii, fol. 1v (W Wiltshire, C13b2)

The inventory of forms for the first person singular nominative pronoun in Royal is:

ic (6), *hic* (4), *ih* (4), *ig* (4), *hy* (4), *y* (2), *hi* (1), *yh* (1), *yg* (1)

Division according to following element C, 'h' or V:

C: *hy* (4), *ic* (3), *ih* (3), *hic* (2), *hi* (1), *y* (2), *yg* (1), *yh* (1)
'h': *hic* (1), *ic* (1), *ig* (1), *ih* (1)
V: *ig* (3), *ic* (2), *hic* (1)

Although this writing system also shows some 'g' for [k] (e.g. *þenge* THINK, *þong* THANK), it does not show 'c' or 'k' for [g]. Although the text is very short – just 526 words in total – there are enough possible contexts for us to have expected to see some 'c' or 'k' if devoicing had occurred. Nor

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[13]   This text appears to have a graphotactic constraint on the use of 'k'. Final [k] is always written 'c' whilst 'k' is reserved for [k] before an 'e'. Observe *þinc, þinke, þinge* THING and an apparently Janus-faced *þincge*, while the verbal noun suffix is spelled not only *-ing(e)* but also *-inke, -incke* and *-ingke*.

does the system show devoicing of final [d]. On the contrary, there are some spellings for historical [t] in final position with the expected voiceless stop followed by a voiced one, e.g. *fetd* FEET, *brytd* BRIGHT, *mytd* MIGHT. This might suggest that original [t] was perceived as having some degree of voicing, perhaps because of possible loss of aspiration. As far as the stops are concerned, this scribe appears to be doing something quite different from Trinity A and it seems unlikely that *ig*, *yg* are inverse spellings for [ik] in this system.

There are no examples in this short text of any words (other than 'I') with historical [tʃ]. Four rhyming spellings, however, in a song to the Blessed Virgin, suggest possible voicing of original geminate [ttʃ] to [(d)dʒ]: *wrege* WRETCH(ED) (< OE *wrœcca*); *dregche* TORMENT (< OE *dreccan*); *vezge* FETCH (< OE *feccan*) and *regche* CARE (< OE *reccan*):

Agult ig habbe aweylawey	I have sinned alas
svnwl ig am and wrege	Sinful I am and wretch
by-sy to me suete leuedy	Have regard to me sweet lady
þe no fend me ne dregche	That no fiend may torment me
to nyme bote ig am redy.	I am eager to receive salvation
and let me libbe and amendy	And let me live and make amends
here deed me hvnne vezge.	Before death may fetch me hence.
for mine svnne ig am sory	For my sin I am sorry
þat lyues y ne regche	So that I care not for life.

'g' in wrege wretch(ed) can hardly represent a stop, and in context it seems most likely to represent its next most common use in Middle English, namely [dʒ]. The combination 'gch' in both dregche and regche would seem a plausible scribal strategy to indicate both voice and affrication in an original geminate. The unusual spelling vezge may be a similar strategy. This scribe uses the figura <z> not for 'z' but in contexts where other scribes might use 'ʒ'. The text is so short there are only two relevant examples available: lvzt light where the 'ʒ' has one of its normal functions – [x] – and oze own where it has one of its other normal functions – [ɣ]. In combination with 'g' it would seem to be acting as an unusual diacritic for fricativeness. With such a paucity of data from this very idiosyncratic writing system, it is difficult to come to any very firm conclusions about the implications of ig, yg for the first person singular nominative pronoun, but when we return to the output of Trinity Scribe A, the tentative suggestion that 'g' in these forms could represent [dʒ] gains some support.

4.3. A reason to re-interpret Trinity A?

There are a number of spellings in LAEME CTT of 'g' for historical [tʃ]. These spellings are largely restricted to the South West Midlands, but there is one example in Lincs (*gildre* CHILDREN in London, Dulwich College XXII, *La Estorie del Evangelie* (*c.*1300)). The examples in the South West Midlands are: *cherge* CHURCH on fol. 239v of London, British Library, Cotton Caligula A.ix, *The Owl and the Nightingale* (C13b2);[14] *heouerige* KINGDOM OF HEAVEN (< OE *rīce*) on fol. 247r of the same manuscript by the same hand (*Doomsday*); in the work of scribe D of Cambridge, Trinity College B.14.39 (323) we find *dige* DITCH, *huge* EACH and *sug* SUCH; and in the work of scribe A, beside the *ig* spellings for 'I', we also find *euerruge* and *euerhuge-on* for EVEREACH (ONE) and *ginke* WHOOPING COUGH (cf. OE *cincung* BOISTEROUS LAUGHTER). On the basis of these spellings and those in Royal discussed in Section 4.2, we postulate a minor change of [tʃ] to [dʒ] in early Middle English, which continued into late Middle English at least in the word CHURCH, but apparently did not last. This affricate voicing is the most economical way to account for the set of 'g' spellings including those in the first person singular nominative pronoun.[15]

Abbreviations

Gmc = Germanic
ME = Middle English
Nth = Northumbrian
OE = Old English
PrOE = Proto-Old English
WGmc = West Germanic

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[14] Note too, in later Middle English *cherge*, *chergys* and *churge* for CHURCH recorded in LALME in Somerset, Essex and Oxon respectively.

[15] Cf. also the later (late fourteenth century) development of spellings such as *-lechge*, *-lage* in the word KNOWLEDGE, apparently found earliest in northern texts (see the discussion s.v. knowledge *v.* in *OED3*); and later voiceless and voiced alterations evidenced in e.g. *chawel~jawel* JAW and *chaundise~gaundis* JAUNDICE. We owe these observations to Donka Minkova. For an earlier explanation that suggests these 'g' spellings could possibly be for [tʃ] by a sequence of litteral substitutions, see Laing & Lass (2009: 106).

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