3
Non-Vowel Phonology

3.1 CH-ING

The discussion of the nature and extent of obstruent affricativization in pre-[i] contexts in items (famously) such as tune and tutor, which was of such concern to eighteenth-century observers, continues with almost as much intensity in the nineteenth. While the general term CH-ING seems to have been the invention of Cooley (1861: liv footnote 64), almost all observers have some (usually extended) comment to make on this phenomenon. Batchelor (1809: 67–8) illustrates the phenomenon through continuous speech examples such as: I wish you would and Are the fis your own?, observing how ‘the omission of h in wish and fish, is so far supplied by the following initial y, that the defect would not be perceived in common conversation. In the following instances, it will be obvious that the contact of the contiguous words, presents instantly the idea of usher, glazier, notcher, badger and ledger, especially of the accent be laid upon the words which precede your. Tell us your will; Glaze your window; ‘Tis not your horse; So bad yourself; He led your nag’. While he admits that d, t, s or z plus (y) consonant ‘makes a hissing combination’, ‘this hissing is considerably diminished if the distance between d, t etc and the teeth is increased’. Indeed, affricativization of the dentals seems to be at very best a rare phenomenon: if d and t are produced in this soft manner the ‘rushing of the breath will scarcely be perceived and the (y) will be pronounced as slurred as possible so the hissing will be entirely lost’. The use of [tʃ]and [dʒ] onsets for items like tune and duel, he places at the door of Sheridan as a usage he, like Stephen Jones,257 condemns (1809: 92): ‘This mode of pronouncing u (yuw) after d, t and s, is common in Ireland and some parts of England, and has at least the merits of regularity, though it obtains no reputation among polite speakers’. We have already noted how Batchelor sees the need for a new graph ‘not only to distinguish the difference between (i) and (y), but also to give some other mark to distinguish the initial y of the pronoun you (yuw) from a still more short and feeble sound of the same kind, which is the initial of the long u when it follows any of the consonants in the same syllable; but more particularly when it follows d, t, or s’. His Tabular View of Various Ways of pronouncing the long u after the Consonants suggests a binary contrast between long oo [uː] forms and (yuw) types only, and he proclaims that

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‘on the whole, the pronunciation of the third columns, viz, *doo, dooil, sooil, sootur,* and *toon,* will be esteemed to deviate less from the polite standard than the provincialisms of either Mr. Sheridan or of Bedfordshire’, while ‘in *dew* and *tune,* the (y) is so very slightly pronounced, that its entire omission would be scarcely noticed by an ordinary observer; but, to effect this, it is necessary to pronounce the *d* and *t* more softly than in other cases’. It is very difficult to know what Batchelor means, in this context, by ‘more softly’, and we can only conjecture that it may well relate to the ‘feeble whisper’ he associates with word final obstruents and pre-(y) environments (1809: 67): ‘The consonants (*t* and *d*), like the other mutes, are followed at the end of words by the unaccented *u* (*u*), spoken in a feeble whisper, as *bat* (*batu,*), *mud* (*mudu,*): now when these letters are followed by (y), as in *your,* the tongue is placed in the proper position to sound (y), before the imprisoned breath is liberated; and the rushing of the breath through the narrow passage causes a perceptible sibilation, which is in fact a (y) forcibly pronounced’. Batchelor seems to be arguing that in *due* and *tune,* the level of fricativization is relatively low, [dju-] types are best pronounced as [du] or even [dəu], a shape which, he seems to suggest is nearer the ‘standard’ [dju] than what for him is the provincial [dʒu]. Perhaps we might even interpret his preferred form as some kind of compromise, fudged candidate.

Like Batchelor, Smart (1836: xxix) uses continuous speech examples to demonstrate the fricative effect of obstruents in long *u,* as well as in *iate, ion,* and *ious* contexts:

Let any English mouth fluently pronounce the phrase *I’ll meet you* without accent or emphasis on *you,* and there will be heard, in the transition from the *t* in *meet,* to the *y* in *you,* a slight interposed sound of the vocal *sh* … The cause is, that the speaker having to touch the upper gum with the tongue in sounding *t* or *d,* and then to utter the *y* lightly, is more negligent in the transition than he would be if the word you were accented or emphatic; and the sound *sh* or *zh* in consequence slides in.

He goes on to argue that this is, in fact, the practice of ‘the best and most careful speakers’ who demure from the ‘pure’ *d* and *t* in such cases. Smart proposes that items such as *nation,* *nauseate* and many others were originally *nā-te-yum* and *nāwse-yāte* and now have, ‘in English mouths’, a tendency to be pronounced *nā-shūn,* *nāwsh-yāte.* He is far from convinced as to the propriety of such renderings and, as is his custom, proposes a compromise, middle way (1836: xxix):

Admitting the tendency, then, to these corruptions, the question occurs, is a speaker justified in yielding to this tendency? In many words, it cannot be doubted that he must yield to it, if he wishes to escape the ridiculous effect of pronouncing as nobody else pronounces; in other instances, he may decidedly adopt the more regular sounds; but in the majority of cases his best course will be neither to yield decidedly to the practice, nor very carefully to avoid it, this being one of the cases in which the extreme either way has a bad effect.