

## Chaucer's rhymes as evidence of changes in pronunciation

Until the invention of sound recording, the evidence for change in pronunciation has been indirect, through written texts. One useful source of evidence is rhyme in verse. We assume that the poet makes a true pair of rhymes (though we cannot always be sure of this), and then compare the vowels of the rhyming pair with the vowels of their originals in OE, ON or OF. If they are different, we then have evidence of a probable change of pronunciation. There are three possibilities:

1. Words from which the rhyming pair derive also rhymed, and have not changed significantly eg *wyght/knyght* from OE *wiht/cniht*.
2. Words from which the rhyming pair derive also rhymed, but the pronunciation of both words has changed; therefore an identical sound change has taken place, eg *breeth/beeth* from OE *bræþ/hæþ*.
3. The words from which the rhyming pair derive did not rhyme; therefore one or more sound changes have taken place to cause the words to "fall together" and rhyme, eg *brist/list* from OE *breost/hlystan*.

The comparison of Chaucer's rhyming pairs with their MnE reflexes will produce, in many of them, evidence of continuing sound change. As an example, we can examine the 81 pairs of rhymes of the opening 162 lines of Chaucer's *Prologue to The Canterbury Tales*, beginning

Whan that Aueryll with his shoures **soote**  
The droghte of march hath perced to the **roote** ...

The principal changes are in the vowels, but there are some consonant developments too. There are also some interesting changes in the stress pattern of some words from ME to MnE, so that identical words no longer rhyme in present-day English. The loss of inflections will affect the contrast between some OE words and their ME reflexes.

## The data (From the Hengwrt MS ed N F Blake 1980)

<i>lines</i>	<i>rhyming pair</i>	55/56	degree/be	111/112	bracer/bokeler
1/2	soote/rootte	57/58	Belmarye/Satalye	113/114	daggere/spere
3/4	lycour/flour	59/60	See/bee	115/116	sheene/greene
5/6	breeth/heeth	61/62	fiftene/Tramyssene	117/118	gesse/prioressse
7/8	sonne/yronne	63/64	foo/also	119/120	coy/Loy
9/10	melodye/iye	65/66	Palatye/Turkye	121/122	Eglentyne/dyuyne
11/12	corages/pilgrymages	67/68	prys/wys	123/124	semely/fetisly
13/14	strondes/londes	69/70	mayde/sayde	125/126	Bowe/vnknowe
15/16	ende/wende	71/72	wight/knyght	127/128	withalle/falle
17/18	seke/seeke	73/74	array/gay	129/130	deepe/keepe
19/20	day/lay	75/76	gypoun/haubergeon	131/132	brist/list
21/22	pilgrymage/corage	77/78	viage/pilgrymage	133/134	cleene/seene
23/24	hostelrye/compaignye	79/80	squyer/bachiler	135/136	draghte/raghte
25/26	yfalle/alle	81/82	presse/gesse	137/138	desport/port
27/28	ryde/wyde	83/84	lengthe/strengthe	139/140	chiere/manere
29/30	beste/reste	85/86	chiuachye/Picardy	141/142	
31/32	euerichoon/anoon	87/88	space/grace		reuerence/conscience
33/34	ryse/deuyse	89/90	meede/reede	143/144	pitous/mous
35/36	space/pace	91/92	day/May	145/146	bledde/fedde
37/38	resoun/condicioun	93/94	wyde/ryde	147/148	breed/deed
39/40	me/degree	95/96	endite/write	149/150	smerte ( <i>v</i> )/herte
41/42	inne/bigynne	97/98	nyghtertale/ nyghtyngale	151/152	was/glas
43/44	man/bigan	99/100	seruysable/table	153/154	reed/forheed
45/46	chiualrye/curteisye	101/102	namo/so	155/156	trowe/vndergrowe
47/48	werre/ferre	103/104	greene/keene	157/158	war/bar
49/50	hethenesse/ worthynesse	105/106	thriftily/yemanly	159/160	greene/sheene
51/52	wonne/bigonne	107/108	lowe/bowe	161/162	A/omnia
53/54	Pruce/Ruce	109/110	visage/vsage		

## Pairs of words whose pronunciation has not changed significantly

These pairs of words provide no evidence for sound changes from OE to ME. The fact that the MnE reflexes of many of them are now pronounced differently is evidence of later changes, such as the shift of long vowels between the late 14th to the early 17th centuries (the “Great Vowel Shift” - see section 16.5), for example lines 1/2, 27/28, 33/34, 67/68, 103/104.

<i>lines</i>	<i>source words</i>	<i>rhyming pair</i>	<i>MnE reflexes</i>
1/2	OE swōt/OE rōt	soote/root	<i>obsolete</i> /root
3/4	OF licour/AF flur	lycour/flour	liquor/flower
7/8	OE sunne/OE gerunnen	sonne/yronne	sun/run
15/16	OE ende/OE wendap	ende/wende	end/wend
27/28	OE rīdan/OE wīd	ryde/wyde	ride/wide
29/30	OE betst/OE rest	beste/reste	best/rest
33/34	OE rīsan/OF deviser	ryse/deuyse	rise/devise
35/36	OF space/OF pas	space/pace	space/pace
39/40	OE mē/OF degré	me/degree	me/degree
41/42	OE in/OE beginnan	inne/bigynne	in/begin
43/44	OE mann/OE begann	man/bigan	man/began
49/50	OE hāpen + -ness/ OE weorþ + -y + -ness	hethenesse/worthynesse	heathen-ness/ worthiness
51/52	OE gewonnen/OE begunnen	wonne/bigonne	won/begun
61/62	OE fiftȳne/-	fiftene/Tramysse	fifteen/-
63/64	OE fāh/OE alswā	foo/also	foe/also
67/68	OF prīs/OE wīs	prys/wys	prize/wise
71/72	OE wiht/OE cniht	wight/knyght	wight/knight
73/74	AF arai/OF gai	array/gay	array/gay
81/82	OF presse/ <i>uncertain</i>	presse/gesse	press/guess
83/84	OE lengþu/OE strengþu	lengthe/strengthe	length/strength
87/88	OF espace/OF grace	space/grace	space/grace
91/92	OE dæg/OF mai	day/May	day/May
93/94	OE wīd/OE rīdan	wyde/ryde	wide/ride
95/96	AF endīter/OE wītan	endite/write	indict/write
103/104	OE grēne/OE cēne	greene/keene	green/keen
115/116	OE scēne/OE grēne	sheene/greene	sheen/green
117/118	<i>uncertain</i> /OF prioresse	gesse/prioresse	guess/prioress
119/120	OF coi/OF St Eloi	coy/Loy	coy/-
137/138	OF desport/OF port	desport/port	<i>both obsolete</i>
139/140	OF chiere/AF manere	chiere/manere	cheer <i>obs</i> /manner
143/144	AF pitous/OE mūs	pitous/mous	piteous/mouse
159/160	OE grēne/OE scēne	greene/sheene	green/sheen
161/162		A/omnia ( <i>Latin</i> = all)	

## Pairs of words showing identical sound changes

- Shift of OE long [æ:] to [ɛ:]

5/6 OE br̄æþ/OE hæþ **breeth/heeth** breath/heath

- OE short [æ] merged with [a]

19/20 OE dæg/OE læg **day/lay** day/lay  
 69/70 OE mægden/OE sægde **mayde/sayde** maid/said  
 151/152 OE wæs/OE glæs **was/glas** was/glass  
 157/158 OE wær/OE bær **war/bar** aware/bore

- Smoothing of OE diphthongs:

25/26 OE f(e)allen/OE (e)all **yfalle/alle** fallen/all  
 127/128 OE wip + (e)all/OE f(e)allan **withalle/falle** withal/fall  
 147/148 OE brēad/OE deað **breed/deed** bread/dead  
 153/154 OE reað/OE forheafod **reed/forheed** red/forehead

- OE long [ɑ:] rounded and shifted to [ɔ:] in Southern and Midland dialects:

63/64 OE fah/OE alswā **foo/also** foe/also  
 101/102 OE nā + mā/OE swā **namo/so** *obs/so*

- Shortening of long vowels followed by a double consonant:

145/146 OE blēdde /OE fēdde **bledde/fedde** bled/fed

## Pairs of words whose source words did not rhyme

These pairs provide evidence that one or both words have changed in pronunciation, so that they fell together in the ME period.

97/98 ON nattarþel/OE nihtegala **nyghtertale/nyghtyngale** *obs/nightingal*  
 135/136 ON drahttr/OE rāhte **draghte/raghte** *obs/obs*

17/18 OE sēcan/OE sēoc **seke/seeke** seek/sick  
 47/48 AF werre/OE fyrra **werre/ferre** war/farrer (*obs*)  
 55/56 OF degré/OE bēon **degree/be** degree/be  
 59/60 OE sǣ/OE gebeon **See/bee** sea/been  
 89/90 OE mǣd/OE reað **meede/reede** mead/red  
 111/112 OF brasseur/OE bocler **bracer/bokeler** bracer *obs/buckler*  
 129/130 OE dēop/OE cēpan **deepe/keepe** deep/keep  
 133/134 OE clāne/OE gesewen **cleene/seene** clean/seen  
 149/150 OE smært/OE heorte **smerte (v)/herte** smart/heart

9/10 OF melodie/OE eage **melodyc/iye** melody/eye  
 123/124 ON soemiligr/OE fetis + ly **semely/fetisly** *seemly/obs*  
 131/132 OE brēost/OE hlystan **brist/list** *breast/obs*

31/32 OE æfre + ælc + an/ OE on an **euerichoon/anoon** everyone/anon  
 107/108 OE lāh/OE boga **lowe/bowe** low/bow  
 125/126 OE boga/OE uncnawen **Bowe/vnknowe** Bow/unknown  
 155/156 OE treowian/OE under + growen **trowe/vndergrowe** *trow obs/undergrown*

## Commentary

We can examine the data more closely by grouping the pairs into sets according to the spelling of the vowel of the rhyming syllable. Vowel letters may represent more than one vowel sound, though this kind of ambiguity is much less common in Chaucer's than in present-day English spelling:

### Letter <i> or <y>

Letter <i> represented both the short [ɪ] and long [i:] pronunciation of the vowel in ME, as in OE. The spelling of the same vowels with letter <y> was very common, as it is a larger and therefore clearer letter in manuscript writing. The rhymes illustrate different sources of the ME vowels:

#### short [ɪ]

<i>lines</i>	<i>ME</i>	<i>source</i>	<i>MnE</i>
41/42	<b>inne/bigynne</b>	OE in/OE beginnan	in/begin

The vowels have remained unchanged from OE to MnE.

131/132	<b>brist/list</b>	OE brēost/OE hlystan	breast/ <i>obs</i> ( <i>pleasure</i> )
---------	-------------------	----------------------	--

In another manuscript, the rhymes are spelt *brēst/lest*, which indicates dialectal variation. In the dialect using *brist/list*, the long [e:ɔ] of OE *brēost* has been smoothed to [e:], shortened to [e] and then raised to [ɪ], and the short [y] of *hlystan* has unrounded, so that different OE vowels [e:] and [y] have fallen together in ME.

#### long [i:]

71/72	<b>wight/knyght</b>	OE wiht/OE cniht	wight/knight
-------	---------------------	------------------	--------------

The OE vowels were short, but the MnE pronunciation with the diphthong [aɪ] shows that the short vowel [ɪ] lengthened in ME to [i:] before [çt] (in South Midland and Southern dialects), because only long vowels were affected in the subsequent Great Vowel Shift.

27/28	<b>ryde/wyde</b>	OE rīdan/ wīd	ride/wide
-------	------------------	---------------	-----------

Both OE vowels were long, and the ME rhyme is a result of the reduction of the OE inflection <-an> to <-e>.

33/34	<b>ryse/deuyse</b>	OE rīsan/OE deviser	rise/devise
67/68	<b>prys/wys</b>	OE prīs/OE wīs	prize/wise
95/96	<b>endite/write</b>	AF endīte(r)/OE wītan	indict/write

These pairs illustrate the assimilation of French vowels of similar pronunciation into ME.

9/10	<b>melodye/iye</b>	OF melodie/OE ēage	melody/eye
23/24	<b>hostelrye/compaigny</b>	OF (h)ostelerie/OE compai(g)nie	hostelry/company
45/46	<b>chialrye/curteisye</b>	OF chevalerie/OE curtesie	chivalry/courtesy
57/58	<b>Belmarye/Satalye</b>		
65/66	<b>Palatye/Turkye</b>		
85/86	<b>chiuachye/Picardye</b>	OF chevauchie/-	<i>obs</i> (= <i>expedition</i> )/-

105/106	<b>thriftily/yemanly</b>	ON þrifa + -y + -ly/ OE g(e)ong + mann + -lic	thriftily/yeomanly
123/124	<b>semely/fetisly</b>	ON soemiligr/OF fetis + ly	seemly/ <i>obs</i>

These rhymes on a final [i:] syllable, spelt <y> or <ye>, are very common, and derive from either the OF reduction of a Latin final <ia>, or from the ME reduction of the OE adverbial suffix <-lic>, which have fallen together. In MnE this suffix is unstressed and the vowel cannot define the rhyme

121/122	<b>Eglentyne/dyuyne</b>	F eglantine/OF devin(e)	eglantine/divine
---------	-------------------------	-------------------------	------------------

French words assimilated into ME naturally are affected by subsequent sound changes, in this case [i:] to [ai] in the Great Vowel Shift.

### Letter <e> or digraph <ee>

The doubling of vowel letters in ME writing indicated a long vowel, although this was not consistently used. In addition, two distinct long front vowels developed in ME, close [e:] and open [ɛ:] (see section 6.1.4.4), which were both spelt with <e> or <ee> in Chaucer's time. To complicate matters for us, there were dialectal variations in the pronunciation of words with these two front vowels. It was not until the 15th century that scribes began to use <ea> for the open vowel, to distinguish it from the close vowel spelt <ee>.

Both vowels, [e:] and [ɛ:], began to change in the Great Vowel Shift, and eventually fell together to [i:] in many words. All words spelt with <ee> therefore in present-day English are pronounced [i:] (eg *meet*) (unless followed by <r>, when the vowel becomes a diphthong in dialects that do not pronounce the <r>, eg *deer*). Many words spelt with <ea> are also pronounced with [i:] (eg *meat*), but individual words spelt <ea> vary considerably because of later sound changes - [ɜ:] (*heard*), [ɑ:] (*heart*), [ɛ] (*head*), [ɛɪ] (*break*), and [ɪə] (*ear*).

### short [e]

15/16	<b>ende/wende</b>	OE ende/OE wendan	end/wend
29/30	<b>beste/reste</b>	OE betst/OE rest	best/rest
49/50	<b>hethenese/worthyne</b>	OE hǣþen + ness/OE	heathen-
	<b>sse</b>	w(e)orþ + -y + -nes	ness/worthiness
83/84	<b>lengthe/strengthe</b>	OE lengþu/OE strengþu	length/strength

The short OE [e] has remained unchanged in ME and MnE.

145/146	<b>bledde/fedde</b>	OE bledde <i>f̄r</i> bledan/ bled/fed OE fedde <i>f̄r</i> fedan	
---------	---------------------	---	--

The long [e:] of OE bledde and fedde had shortened in early ME because it came before a double consonant (see section 5.4.6.1). They continue to rhyme, but the pronunciation is different.

149/150	<b>smerte (v) / herte</b>	OE smart/OE heorte	smart/heart
---------	---------------------------	--------------------	-------------

Two different OE diphthongs have smoothed and fallen together. Today's RP pronunciation [ɑ:] is the result of a later sound change.

47/48	<b>werre/ferre</b>	AF werre/OE feorra <i>f̄r</i> feor	war/farrer ( <i>obs</i> )
-------	--------------------	------------------------------------	---------------------------

The OE short diphthong of *feorra* has smoothed and fallen together with the vowel of the French *werre*.

### long close [e:]

103/104/115	<b>greene/kene/sheene</b>	OE grēne/cēne/scēne	green/keen/sheen
-------------	---------------------------	---------------------	------------------

The long OE [e:] remains unchanged in ME, and later shifts to [i:].

17/18	<b>seke/seeke</b>	OE sēcan/OE sēoc	seek/sick
129/130	<b>deepe/keepe</b>	OE dēop/OE cēpan	deep/keep

Both pairs of rhyming words in ME derive from a smoothed OE diphthong and an unchanged pure vowel. It is not known why the long vowel of ME *seeke*, meaning *sick*, shortened and changed to short [ɪ], while the word meaning *seek* underwent the regular change to [i:].

39/40/56	<b>me/degree/be</b>	OE mē/OF degré/OE bēon	me/degree/been
----------	---------------------	---------------------------	----------------

OE and OF long [e:] remain in ME, but change during the Great Vowel Shift.

### long open [ɛ:]

5/6	<b>breeth/heeth</b>	OE brǣþ/OE hǣþ	breath/heath
89/90	<b>meede/reede</b>	OE mǣd/OE rēad	mead/red
147/148	<b>wastel-breed/deed</b>	OE brēad/OE dēad	bread/dead
153/154	<b>reed/forheed</b>	OE rēad/OE forhēafod	red/forehead

This group of ME rhymes is evidence for the shifting and falling together of the vowels of OE long [æ:] and [ɛ:ə], spelt <æ> and <ea>. Notice the variant spellings and pronunciations of the words as they have developed into MnE.

79/80	<b>squyer/bachiler</b>	OF esquier/OF bachelor	(e)squire/bachelor
113/114	<b>daggere/spere</b>	OE dag + -ere/OE spere	dagger/spear
111/112	<b>bracer/bokeler</b>	OF brasseur/OF bocler	bracer <i>obs</i> /buckler
139/140	<b>chiere/manere</b>	OF chiere/AF manere	cheer <i>obs</i> = <i>face</i> / <i>manner</i>

The rhyme *daggere/spere* tells us that the stress was on the second syllable in *dag`gere* in ME, and has since shifted to the first syllable. The short OE vowel of *spere* lengthened in early ME to *spēre* because it was in an open syllable of a two syllable word (see section 6.4.1.12), and later shifted to the [i:] or [ɪə] of *spear*. Therefore *dagger* and *spear* no longer rhyme. The other words are all of OF origin, and similarly show that the final syllables carried stress when first taken into ME, and so could rhyme.

141/142	<b>reuerence/conscience</b>	OF reverence/ OF conscience	reverence/ conscience
---------	-----------------------------	--------------------------------	-----------------------

is another pair of words from the French, rhyming because the last syllables carried stress.

59/60	<b>see/bee</b>	OE sǣ/OE (ge)bēon	sea/been
133/134	<b>cleene/scene</b>	OE clǣne/OE (ge)sewen	clean/seen

These pairs of rhymes present a problem. We expect the long vowels of OE *sǣ* and *clǣne* to shift to long open <e>, [ɛ:], and those of *gebeon* and *gesewen* to shift to long close <e>, [e:], and Chaucer does not usually rhyme the two vowels. Without further evidence, we cannot decide for certain, but it is very likely that there were variant dialectal pronunciations of the words current in London, so either the close or the open forms would be acceptable. In fact, this variation between close and open long <e> continued through into the 18th century, and can be seen in rhyming variations in all the poetry of the intervening period (see section 19.4.3 on John Dryden’s rhymes). Notice how the standard spelling today, <ea> or <ee>, reflects the different origins of the words.

## Letter <a>

The OE low back long vowel [ɑ:] shifted to [ɔ:] in early ME in Southern and Midland dialects (see section 6.1.4.8), but this was not part of a general movement of long vowels, like the later Great Vowel Shift which began in the 15th century. No other vowel shifted to take its place, but there were two other sources which eventually supplied words containing the vowel:

- the adoption of French words like *corage* (*courage*), *espace* (*space*), *pas* (*pace*), *grace*, *table*.
- the lengthening of short vowels in open syllables (see section 6.1.4.9), like OE *bacan*/ME *bāken*, OE *nama*/ME *nāme*, OE *tacan*/ME *tāken*.

### short [a]

25/26	<b>yfalle/alle</b>	OE f(e)allen/OE (e)all	fallen/all
43/44	<b>man/bigān</b>	OE mann/OE began	man/began
127/128	<b>withalle/falle</b>	OE (e)all/OE f(e)allan	withal/fall
151/152	<b>was/glas</b>	OE wæs/OE glæs	was/glass
157/158	<b>war/bar</b>	OE wær/OE bær	aware/bore

ME short <a> in these words derives from OE <a>, <æ> or <ea>. There are no examples in the data of the many words of French origin containing short [a], like *amuse*, *cattle*, *grammar*, *manner*, *tax* etc.

### long [ɑ:]

97/98	<b>nyghtertale/nyghtyngale</b>	ON nǫttarþel/ OE nihtegala	<i>obs</i> /nightingale
135/136	<b>draghte/raghte</b>	ON drahttr/OE rǣhte	<i>obs</i> / <i>obs</i>

The data gives one example of the lengthening of OE short [a] to ME long [ɑ:] in an open syllable - OE *nihtegala*/ME *nyghtyngāle*/MnE *nightingale*.

11/12	<b>corages/pilgrimages</b>	OF corage/OF pilgrinatge	courage/pilgrimage
77/78	<b>viage/pilgrimage</b>	OF voiage/OF pilgrinatge	voyage/pilgrimage
35/36/88	<b>space/pace/grace</b>	OF espace/OF pas/ OF grace	space/pace/grace
99/100	<b>seruysable/table</b>	OF servisable/OF table	serviceable/table
109/110	<b>visage/vsage</b>	OF visage/OF usage	visage/usage

Notice that the stress pattern of these French words in Chaucer's English has since changed. Suffixes like <-age> and <-able> are now reduced in stress and vowel quality.



## Letter <o> or digraph <oo>

### short [o]

13/14	<b>strondes/londes</b>	OE strand/OE land	strand(s)/land(s)
-------	------------------------	-------------------	-------------------

The question put by this pair of ME rhymes is, why do both OE and Modern English have the same form, which is different from Chaucer's ME? Briefly, the vowel lengthened before [nd] in late OE (see section 5.4.6.1), *strānd/lānd*, then shifted to [ɔ:] in Southern and Midland dialects, *strōnd/lōnd*, in which they then shortened again to *strond/lond*. Eventually the Northern *strand/land* forms replaced *strond/lond*.

137/138	<b>desport/port</b>	OF de(s)port/OF port	<i>obs/obs</i>
---------	---------------------	----------------------	----------------

A pair of words from the French. The [r] was pronounced (and still is in rhotic dialects of English), and MnE RP pronunciation as [ɔ:] did not begin to develop until the 18th century.

### short [u]

7/8	<b>sonne/yronne</b>	OE sunne/OE (ge)runnen	sun/run
51/52	<b>wonne/bigonne</b>	OE wunnen/OE begunnen	won/begun

The use of letter <o> for <u> when the vowel was short was widely adopted by scribes who were used to writing Latin and French. It helped to distinguish the vowel from the consonants written with <u> (for [v]) or <uu> (for [w]). The MnE RP pronunciation with [ʌ] is a much later 18th century development.

### long [ɔ:]

31/32	<b>euerichoon/anoon</b>	OE <i>ǣfre + ǣlc + ān</i> /OE <i>on</i>	everyone/anon
		<i>ān</i>	
63/64	<b>foo/also</b>	OE <i>fāh</i> /OE <i>alswā</i>	foe/also
101/102	<b>namo/so</b>	OE <i>nā + mā</i> /OE <i>swā</i>	<i>obs = no more/so</i>

These rhyming words demonstrate the shift of OE [ɑ:] to [ɔ:] in this dialect.

### long [o:]

1/2	<b>soote/roote</b>	OE <i>swōt</i> /OE <i>rōt</i>	sweet/root
-----	--------------------	-------------------------------	------------

OE long [o:] remained unchanged in ME. (MnE *sweet* derives from OE *swēte*, an alternative to OE *swōt*, which gave Chaucer's *soote*.)

## Letter <u> or digraph <ou>

The <ou> spelling for the long vowel [u:] was widely, though not consistently, adopted in ME, and is a further example of the influence of French spelling. The short vowel [u] was still spelt as before with letter <u>. The data we are examining only gives four pairs of rhymes spelt with <u> or <ou>, and all represent the long vowel:

3/4	lycour/flour	OF licour/AF flur	liquor/flower
37/38	resoun/condicioun	OF resoun/OF condicion	reason/condition
143/144	pitous/mous	AF pitous/OE mūs	piteous/mouse

There is only one OE word in this set, but it demonstrates the adoption of the French spelling of [uː].

## New ME diphthongs

The former OE diphthongs had changed to pure vowels by the early ME period (see section 6.1.4.5), but others began to develop in early ME. Some of them are found in the data from Chaucer:

### Digraphs <ay> or <ai>

69/70	mayde/sayde	OE mægden/OE sægde	maid/said
19/20/91/92	day/May/lay	OE dæg/OE mai/OE læg	day/May/lay
73/74	array/gay	AF arai/OE gai	array/gay

These pairs show two sources of the diphthong [ai], firstly from a sound change in OE words with <æg>, [æj], and secondly from French words already containing the diphthong.

### Digraphs <oy> or <oi>

119/120	coy/seint Loy	OF coi/OE St Eloi	coy/-
---------	---------------	-------------------	-------

Only words of French origin contained this diphthong.

### Digraphs <ow> or <ou>

107/108/125/126	lowe/bowe/ vnknowe	OE ľah/OE boga/ un- + OE cnāwen	low/bow/unknown
155/156	trowe/ vndergrowe	OE trēowian/ OE under + growen	trow ( <i>obs</i> )/undergrown

These rhymes illustrate only some of the OE sources of this diphthong, which later developed in different ways in the ME dialects.

Other new ME diphthongs, none of which occur in the chosen data, were:

### Digraphs <eu> or <ew>

dew	OE deaw	dew
blew	OE bleow	blew
steward	OE stiweard	steward
blew	OF bleu	blue

### Digraphs <au> or <aw>

clawe	OE clawu	claw
hawek	OE hafoc	hawk
awen	OE agen	own
faute	OF faute	fault

### Digraph <ui>

This was pronounced [ui] and written either <ui> or <oi>, eg

poisen	OF puison	poison
--------	-----------	--------

The diphthong spelt <ui> did not fall together with <oi> until much later, in the early 17th century.