Old English

• OE had the following diphthongs:

/<u>æ(:)a/</u> /e(:)o/

• They were all lost early on in ME as a result of the following monophthongisation processes:

OE /\alpha:\(\alpha\) \rightarrow \frac{\alpha:}{\pi}
OE /\alpha\(\alpha\) \rightarrow \frac{\pi}{\pi}: \rightarrow \frac{\pi}{

Middle English

There are three major sources of diphthongs in ME:

- vocalisation
- ME breaking
- borrowings

vocalisation of [j] and [γ, w] in syllable codas, giving [i] and [u]

CHANGE EXAMPLES

OE /ej/ \rightarrow eME /ei/ OE rezn \rightarrow ME rein 'rain'

OE /ay/ \rightarrow eME /aw/ \rightarrow /au/ OE drazan \rightarrow ME drawen 'draw'

OE /ay/ \rightarrow eME /5y/ \rightarrow ME /5u/ OE $bl\bar{a}wan$ \rightarrow ME blowe 'blow'

ME breaking: insertion of a glide before [x] and [ç]

 $x (BACK context) \rightarrow ux$ $\varphi (FRONT context) \rightarrow i\varphi$

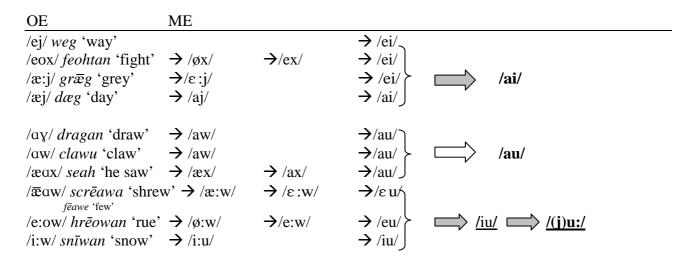
CHANGE EXAMPLES

OE [ox] \rightarrow ME [oux] = /oux/

OE [eç] \rightarrow ME [eix] = /eix/

OE feohtan \rightarrow feizten 'fight'

The rise of ME diphthongs





Phonological effects:

- 1) the addition of new diphthongs;
- 2) [γ] vanishes completely;
- 3) [j, w] no longer occur in codas.

French borrowings

/oi/ joie 'joy'
/ui/ puint 'point' (oi, ui remained distinct till the mid-16th c.)

• The resulting system

iu eu ou au ai oi ui