The Spellings of Robert Copland and his son William

—The Case of *History of Helyas Knight of the Swan*—

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0. The *History of Helyas Knight of the Swan* was translated by Robert Copland (c.1470-1548) and published in 1512 by Wynkyn de Worde, Caxton's apprentice. Then in about 1560 it was reprinted by William Copland (d. 1569) who likely was Robert Copland's son. A comparison of both editions of *Helyas,* despite the fact that there is only a gap of fifty years between them, shows that the spellings in the later edition are much more modern. The spellings in the 1512 edition essentially are that of Middle English, as is seen in their similarity to Caxton's spellings, although Caxton (1422-91) himself seems to have anticipated the future changes in some respects. As is generally known, this period between Chaucer and Shakespeare is when the Great Vowel Shift (GVS) took place.

The texts I consulted are Caxton's *Prologues & Epilogues* and the volume eight which he added to Higden's *Polychronicon.* Among the books published by William Copland, there are also references to *The Knight of Curteysy and The Fair Lady of Faguell* (? 1556) (*KC*), *The Squire of Low Degree* (? 1560) (*LD*) and *Valentine and Orson* (1555) (*VO*). Additionally, the analysis of the language of *VO* by Arthur Dickson, the editor of the EETS edition is very useful to us.

1. Vowels

< ea > : We know this digraph was "well established by 1520-50" (Görlach: 47).

ME /ɛː/

Caxton (1475-)	Robert (1512)	William (? 1560)
bere [< beran]	bere	beare (*VO bere* more common)
brede [< brēad]	breede	bread (*VO breed* also)
deed(e [< dēad]	deed	dead (*VO deed* also)
deth, (death?) [< dēaþ]	dethe	deathe (*VO deeth* also)
dreme [< drēam]	dreme	dreame (also *VO*)
fere, (feere, feare) [< fǽr]	feere	feare (*VO fere* more common)

feest [OF feste]	feest	feast (*VO feest* also)
grete, (great) [< grēat]	grete	great (also *VO*)
lede [< lǽdan]	lede	leade (*VO lede* also)
leue n. [< lēaf]	leue	leave/ leve (*VO leue* more com.)
plee [OF plaid]	plee	plea
see 'sea' [< sǽ]	see	sea (*VO see, se* also)
slee [< slēan]	sle 8, slee 7	slea 10, sle 2 (*VO slee* also)
speke [< specan]	speke	speake (*VO speke* also)
spere [< spere]	spere	speare (*VO spere* more com.)
Ye 'Yes' [< ġēa]	Ye	Yea (*VO ye* more com.)

However, Caxton already has < ea > in the following words:

encreace, ⁻crease, encrece [AN encreistre]	encrease, ⁻creace	encrease, ⁻creace (*VO* invariably *encrease*)
fayt(t)e(s) 12, feates 2 [< OF fait, fet]	feates 7, fayt(e)(s) 6	feates 7, fait(e) 3, fayte(s) 2 (*VO feate* also)
please, plese [OF plaisir]	please	please (also *VO*)
treate, (trete) [OF traitier, tretier]	treate	treate

ME /e: /   This sound is also represented with < ea >.

dere [< dēore]	dere	deare (rare in *VO*)
erthe [< eorþe]	erthe	earth (also *VO*)
here [< hīran]	here	heare 10, here 4 (*VO here* more com.)
herde pt.	herde 35	heard(e) 31, harde 3, herde 1
yere, yeer [<ġēar]	yere	yere (*VO yeare* also)

Freeborn (2006: 311) says "< ea > words with [ɛ:] shifted to [e:] in the GVS, but were raised further to [i:] in some dialects, so that they came to be pronounced like < ee > words."

< ee / ie > in place of < e >

ME /e: /

frende [< frēond]	frende	freende (*VO friendes* 1)

To represent /e: /, < ie > was taken over from French in the 15th century, though the search results of Helsinki Corpus CE 1 (1500-1570) are *frend*- 97 : *friend*- 22.

kepe [< cēpan]	kepe	keep (*VO kepe* also)
nede [< nēd]	nede	need 4, nede 1 (*VO neade* also)

quene [< cwēn]	quene	queene *(VO quene* also)
shelde [< scēld]	shelde 4	sheelde 2, shield 1
swete [< swēte]	swete	sweet *(VO swete)*
the 'thee' [< þē]	the	thee *(VO the)*
thre [< þrie, þrēo]	thre	three (rare in *VO*)

In *VO* we find such < ie > forms as *field, siege, priest, chiefe, pyeces*, etc.

However, Caxton already has < ee > in the following words:

seen pp.	seen	sene *(VO seene* also)
free, (fre)	fre	free (also *VO*)

"It is clear that in the late 16th century they [/e: /, /ɛ: /, /o: / and /ɔ: /] were still separate phonemes." (Freeborn 2006: 313)

ME /ɛ /

hert 1, herte 1 'hart' [< heorte]	herte 35, hert 1	hert 17, herte 18, harte 1, heart 1 *(VO* hart, herte)
swerde 'sword' [< sweord]	swerde 12, swearde 1	swerd(e) 8, swearde 5 *(VO* swerd, sword)

(cf. WS *swurd, swyrd*, Nhb. *sword*)

ME /ɔ: /

< oa > : We know that this spelling began to be used in the 16th century.

(goote, gheet) [< gāt]	gote 6, goote 1	goat(e 5, gote 2

Goate is found from the 16th century onward *(OED)*. No instances in *VO*.

cote [< OF cote]	cote 1, cootes 1	cote 1, coates 1

However, *approche, broched, coles, oth(e), throte*, etc. have < o >. Compared with < ea > spellings, those with < oa > are much less frequent, which shows that "< oa > is more recent than < ea >" (Görlach: 47).

OE /y /

< ·uy· > appears as early as Caxton, while a few instances of < gu· > in *VO*.

bylde, (buylde)	buylde	buylde
guydyng [OF guide]	guyde	gide / guyde

< i > in place of < y >

children, chyld·	chyldren	children
damoysel, (damoi·)	damoysel(l)(es) 17	damoysel(l)(es) 13, ·oysel(l)s 2, damoisel(les) 2
fyrst [< fyrst]	fyrst	first
fysshe [< fisċ]	fysshe	fishe

hyghe, highe [< hēah]	hygh	highe
yf [< ġif]	yf	if
suster	syster	sister
whych(e, which [< hwilċ]	whiche 267, which 15	which 195, whiche 69

Omission of final < ·e >

anone, anon	anone	anon (*VO anone* also)
one	one	on (?error)
only, onely	onely	only (*VO onely* also)
rennynge	rennynge	renning, rinning
ranne pt. [< rann]	ranne	ran (*VO ronne* also)
sate pt. [< sæt]	sate	sat (*VO sate* also)
sawe pt. [< sæh]	sawe	saw

Addition of final < ·e >

hors, (horse)	hors	horse (*VO hors* also)
son, sonne	sone	sonne (*VO sone*)
swan	swanne	swane

In *VO* "final *e* is regularly found in all positions where it is now written, except occasionally after voiceless *s* (*fals, hors*) and in *come*, and once after final *v* (*hau* 174). In all other positions it would appear to be used at will, as a help to the compositor in justifying the line; ... " (Dickson)

2 . Consonants : new spellings

< ·ck· / ·cc· >

···	bokeler	buckeler "round shield"
black(e [< blæc]	···	··· (blacke *LD* 723)
seke, seeke [< sēoc]	seke 2	sike 1, sicke 1
souke [< sūcan]	souke 8	s(o)uke 7, sucke(d) 2
socour [OF socours]	socour	succour

< ·dg· >

juge [OF jugier]	juge(s) 2	judge(s) 2
knowleche, ·lege [< cnāwlǽċ]	knowlege(d) 5, ·legeth 1	knowledge(d) 6, ·ledgeth 1

However, we find this spelling in Caxton as well. < ·ledge > appears in the 15th century.   cf. CE 1 knowlech(e) 0 : knowlege 9, knowledge 33

brydge [< bryċġ]	···	··· (brydge *VO* 5, *LD* 1)

< g > in place of < y >
  ayenst, against   ayenst 2,   against 26, agaynst(e 23
                                   agaynst 47

< -ould >
blood(e   blode 9, bloode 2   bloud(e 10   (*VO blo(o)de* also)

     The sound of William's < ou > is [o :], or rather [u :] raised in the GVS.

     The shift of [o :] to [u :] is said to have been completed by 1500.   cf. *goulde*

wold 14. wolde 4   wolde 66   wolde 59, would 3
shold(e, shuld(e   sholde 54, shold 2   should 49, shold 2

     In these words, too, < ou > sounds [o :], or rather [u :].

coude   coude 8, could 1   could(e) 7   (*VO coude* also)

     In ME the spelling *could(e)* with inorganic ·*l*· occurs only 11 times, three
occurrences of which are before 1450; that is, *Handlyng synne* (a. 1400),
English Guilds: Exeter (a) Gild of the Tailors (a. 1422), and *The Knight of La
Tour-Landry* (? c. 1450).   cf. CE 1 *coud(e)* 15 : *could(e)* 103

< th > in place of < d >
  broder, brother   border, (brother)   brother   (*VO broder* also)
  bretheren   bredren   brethren   (*VO brederne* also)
  fader   fader   father   (*VO fader* also)
  moder   moder   mother   (*VO moder* also)
  theder   thyder   thither
  to geder   togyder   together   (*VO togider* also)

< ·tt· >
  mater [AF]   mater 10, matter 1   mater 9, matter 2

< v > in place of < u >
  aduenture   aduenture   adventure
  aduyse   aduyse   advise, advice
  conceiue, ·cey·   conceyue   conceyve, ·ei·
  dyuyne, (deu·)   dyuyne   devine
  heuen, (heven)   heuen   heaven
  leue   n.   leue   leave / leve

< u > in place of < v >
  vnto   vnto 36, unto 1   unto 37

< **wh-** > in place of < **h-** >
hole   [< (ġe)hāl]   hole 7   whol(e) 7
"In the 16th century inorganic *w-* was often added to *ho-*." (*KDEE*)

< **-ce** > in place of < **-s(e)** >
aduyse   aduyse 4   advise 3, advice 1
peas   peas 5   peace 5
However, Caxton also has this spelling.
servyce, seruyce [OF]   seruyce 10   service 10

< **-er** > in place of < **-re** >
remembryd   (rememored)   remembered
rendre   rendre 2   render 2

< **Ch** > in place of < **c** >
cryst(e) 3, crist 2   cryst 11, crist 1   Christ(e) 12

< **J** > in place of < **Ih** >
Ihesu(s   Ihesu 16, -sus 3   Jesu 16, -sus 3
Iherusalem   Iherusalem 16,   Jerusalem 15, Jheru- 2
                              Jheru- 1

Addition of < **-n-** >
messager   [OF]   messagers 4   messagers 3, messengers 1
We find the addition of *-n-* to *-ger* in the 14th century.   cf. *passager* >
passenger

Addition of Lat. < **-b-** >
doubt   douted, doubt   douted, doubt   (*VO* also)
The first instance of *doubt* with *b* occurs in Gower's *CA* (1393), and it is
Caxton that made it popular.
subtil   subtyll   subtill
The first instance may be in Chaucer, whose *HF* and *Boece* (1379-80) both
have this form.

Addition of Lat. < **-d-** >
aduenture   aduenture 10   adventure 9, -ventur 1
aduise   aduyse (n.)   advise, advice (n.)

Addition of Lat. < ·l· >

assaute, (assault)	assaute 1	assaute 1 （without < l >）
faute, (faulte 2)	faut(e) 5	faute 4, faulte 1

Caxton has some instances, but the Coplands rarely have. In *VO*, too, < l > rarely occurs after *auⁱ* .

souldiour (OF)	···	··· (*VO* soudyoure)

Addition of Lat. < ·c· >

saynt	saynt(es) 4	sainct(es) 2, saynctes 1, saint 1
subget(te	subgect(e) 3, ·tes 2	subgect(e) 2, subiect(es) 2, ·iects 1

VO also has *aucthorite, sayncte~ saint, sclaunder*, etc. However,

parfyte, ·fite, ·fait	parfyte 2	parfite 2

Perfect with < c > occurs only five times in ME, and the first instance is found in Dan Michel's *Ayenbite of Inwyt* (1340).

Lat. < ·tion >

···	exultacyon 2	exultation 1 (also *VO*)

3 . Idiosyncrasy

3.1 Idiosyncrasy in Robert's edition

age 18	aege 12	age 13 (*VO aege* also)
counseyl(e [OF]	counceyle	counseil(e)

The sibilant / s / is expressed with < s > or < c > in *VO* as well: *chace~ chase, hence~ hens, peace~ peas, ceason~ season, whence~ hens*, etc.

duly [OF due + ·ly]	duely 1	duli 1

This *duely* exists until the 18th century. (*OED*) In *VO dewe* 'due' also occurs.

where	were （? error）	where
with	with, wid 1	with

VO also has some other instances: *hath → had, pleaseth → pleased*.

3.2 Idiosyncrasy in William's edition

ac(c)ompanyed	accompanyed	(a)ccompanyed （? error）
···	alacted 2	alaced 1, elacted 1 'to suckle'

· William's instance of *elacted* is cited by *OED*.

cyte [OF cité]	cyte 19, citye 1	citie 7, ·tye 1, cytie 6, ·tye 1, cite 3

This *citie* occurs from 15th century downward (*OED*).

| doughter, (daugh-) | doughter 77 | doughter 69, daughter 6 |

The present form, southern in origin, appeared in the 16th c. (*KDEE*). The first instance is in *Piers the Plowman* (C-text, c.1400, Huntington HM 137) and *Canterbury Tales* (Dd. 4. 24), once respectively. Tyndale (1534) and Coverdale (1535) offer *doughter*, while Great Bible (1539) *daughter* /ɔ: /. Caxton's *Blanchardyn and Eglantine* (c.1489) has both forms: *doughter(s)* 45 vs. *daughter(s)* 5.

frely	frely 3	frelie 1
gentyl	gentyll	gentell, gentyl
herte "a male deer"	hert(e) 36	hert(e) 35, harte 1, heart 1
iongth	youth(e) 5, yongth(e) 2	youth(e) 6, yougth 1

Youth is found from the 15th century downward (*OED*).

ladyes	ladyes 9	ladies 5, ladyes 4, laydyes 1
litil, lytil	lytell	lytle
oldest	oldest	eldest
reygnyng	reygnynge	reynynge

VO also gives *lyn(n)age~lygnage, syne~signe, thye~thighe*, etc.

| veray | veray 3 | veray 1, veri(e) 2 cf. cytie, frelie |

4. Other new forms in William's edition

ben 'are'	ben, are 1	ben, are 1
ony, any	ony 74, any 1	any 46, ony 17
blysse, blesse	blyssed 3	blessed 2, blesstd 1
chirch(e	chyrche(s) 12	church(e 12
deye	deye 23, dye 4	die 20, dye 8
delyte	···	··· cf. delightes *LD* 800
goddes	Goddes 7, goddes 2	goddes 5, Goddes 2, Gods 2
loked	loked 2	looked 1, loked 1
moche	moche 29	much(e) 27
neighbour	···	···
····	prepayre(d) 12	prepare(d) 6, prepaire(d) 5
renne	renne 3	renne 1, runne 1, roune 1 (*VO runne* also)
shewe	shewe 15	shew(e) 14, show 1
susteyne	susteyne 26	susteine 14, susteyne 12 sustayne 1
trompette	Trompettes 1	Trumpetes 1

cf. nonne, nunne	nonne 1	nune 1
werke	werke(s) 5	worke(s) 2, werke(s) 2

However, Caxton or R. Copland has new forms in the following words:

difficile 1, difficulte 1	...	difficile 1

The first instance of *difficile* is in Earl Rivers' *Dictes* (1477) published by Caxton, while *difficult* appears two times in Lanfranc (a.1400) but it is in and after the latter half of the 16th century that the form became popular. (*KDEE*)

frens(s)he 50, frenche 4	frensshe 3	frenssh 1, Frenche 1
peple, people	people	people /e:/
toke 6, (took 1) pt.	toke 52	took(e) 37, toke 15
trewe 8, (true 1)	true 17	true 17
pas(s)e tyme	passe tymes 1, pastymes 1	pastimes 2 cf. Tyndale (1526) *Heb*. xiii 9 *pastyme*

5. Unchanged or Older forms

Archaic spellings, such as *axe, eche, fro, hem, lond(e), ne, soner, sowne* 'sound', *than* 'then', *weyke* 'weak', etc., do not disappear easily.

axe, aske	axe(d) 7, aske(d) 4	axe(d) 7, aske(d) 3
be(n 'been'	ben, be	ben, be
birth 1, burth 1	byrth(e) 6, birth 1	byrth(e) 2 , birth(e) 5
bycause	bycause 7	bycause 2, bi- 1
body(e	body 28	body(e) 20, bodi(e) 8
bury(e, (berye)	buryed 2	buried 2
conceiue, -cey-	conceyue(d) 32	conceyve(d) 19, -ei- 12
eche	eche 12	eche 14
folowe, (follow)	folow- 8, followinge 1	folow- 8, followinge 1
from, fro	fro 58, from 27	fro 58, from 27
had 94, hadde 5	had 260, hadde 26	had 277, hadde 2
lond(e, (land)	lond(e) 19, lande 11	lond(e) 11, land(e) 9
ne, nor 'not, nor'	ne 30, nor 3	ne 30, nor 4
neither	neyther 2	neither 1, neyther 1
so, soo	so 149, soo 28	so 175, (soo 1)
sooner, soner	sooner 4	soner 2, sooner 2
sound ?	sowne 3	sowne 3 (without -*d*) cf. sounde *KC* 345
strayt(e)ly	streyght 4, straytely 1	streight 2, streyght 2, straitely 1
them, theym, hem	them 200, theym 29	them 212, theym 2, hem 2

thenne 47	than 109	than 106, then 3
weyke, (wayke) 'weak'	weyke 2	weyke 1, weke 1
[ON veikr]		

The diphthong /ai / becomes /ɛ : / before /k /. The first instance of *weake* occurs in Caxton's *Blanchardayn* (1595), while King James Version (1611) has 60 instances. However, in final *l* William seems a little more conservative than his father:

al 59, all 50	all 231, al 45	all 159, al 122
joyfull	joyfull 3, -ful 1	joyful 2, joifull 1
wel 66, well 19	well 72, wel 4	well 42, wel 33
shal 79, shall(e 47	shall 129, shal 34	shall 85, shal 64
till, tyll, til	tyll 15, tyl 5	tyl 8, tyll 3, til 6, til 1

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