

Graphic geminates as diacritics in the Orrmulum (12th cent.) and in Thomas Sheridan's General Dictionary of the English Language (1780)

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Graphic geminates as diacritics in the *Orrmulum* (12th cent.) and in Thomas Sheridan's PARIS STATE DIDEROT General Dictionary of the English Language (1780)

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Non-etymological geminates in orthography: wordfinally and in clusters, sometimes intervocalically (including glides)

<ennglissh>, <togeddre>, <broperr>, <trewwes>

Non-orthographic geminates in 'respelling': intervocalically and in obstruent+approximant clusters <be2-ne1v'-vo2-le1nse>, <a1s-sho3're>, <a1n-ti1f'-fra1-si1s>, <de1p-pry1-va2'-shu1n >

Clearly, these orthographic geminates cannot be interpreted as segmental,

like the other alphabetical symbols: they are diacritics.

But what do they indicate?

- → double graphs ≠ long consonants (lack of "credible motivation" for gemination, Mailhammer 2007:40)
- → For Anderson & Britton 1999 and Mokrowiecki 2012 (among others), only vowel length is at stake -BUT what of the curls and acute accents also used to reflect vowel quantity (though not systematically)? BUT what of "Orrm's didactic purpose and consistency" (Mailhammer 2007:50; cf. Orrmulum, I. 103-110)?
- → In order for Orrm (as well as a number of his predecessors cf Mokrowiecki 2012 for thorough account) to generalize the "inherited orthographic-phonological interface" (Murray 1995:132) of OE, sequences containing geminates must have shared "an easily identifiable phonological property" (Murray 2000:636), necessarily a suprasegmental feature: syllable structure, syllable weight or syllable cut, which predicts a different "prosodic energy contour" for abruptly or smoothly cut syllables (Mailhammer 2007:46).

- → repeated consonants ≠ long consonants (see treatment of digraphs like <sh>; although, compare <fro3't-tre3>)
- → Sheridan's 'scheme for respelling' (cf. sidebar) differentiates vowels according to quantity: no need for redundant diacritic.
- → Contradictory aspirations: didacticism vs. ideal of abstraction (description of bijective transcription system as early as 1762, but maintains "silent e") - YET, like Orrm, Sheridan must have doubled phonetically short and orthographically simplex consonants on the basis of some salient phonological feature.
- → As opposed to Orrm's, Sheridan's geminates only occur in contexts where they may be construed as ambisyllabic, in the sense proposed by Hammond 1997:11, "Ambisyllabics are simply a type of geminate, namely, geminates without phonetic length".
- → Evidence for how Sheridan conceives the phonetic, i.e. linear realization of his geminates in the doubling of half of consonant digraphs.

Sheridan's intuition of syllable-cut prosody may be reflected in his theory of "accent" whereby "dwelling upon the vowel" vs. "passing rapidly over the vowel" confers length to syllable itself. smoothly cut syllable (Sheridan 1780:40)

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Diagrams from Mail	hammer 2007:46	a	bruptly cut syllable	
	Late	Old English/Ear	ly Mid Eng	Farly

	Late Old English/Early Mid. Eng.	Early Mid. E. (Orrm)	Middle English	Late Mod. English (Sheridan)
SMOOTH CUT	(Quantity-based distinction maintained in open syllables) Homorganic Cluster Lengthening	CV or CV: CV:C	Open Syllable Lengthening	CV: CV:C
ABRUPT CUT	Closed Syllable Shortening	CVC	-	CVC

Conclusion

In both cases, vowel length cannot be the only justification for the representation; it is apparent that the representations refer to the syllabic configuration of their dialects: syllable-cut prosody accounts for the diacritic use of geminates in both Orrm's and Sheridan's systems.

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is written an, as, an ox; A is fometimes a noun, as, great A; A is placed before a participle, or participial noun; a hunting, a begging; A has a fignification denoting proportion,

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