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

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Non-etymological geminates in orthography: word-finally and in clusters, sometimes intervocally (including glides)

\(<\text{enn}l\text{is}h>, \text{t}\text{o}g\text{edd}r\text{e}, \text{b}\text{ro}\text{rr}\text{r}, \text{t}\text{rew}w\text{es}\> 

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)?

In order for *Orrm* (as well as many 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).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Late Old English/Early Mid. Eng.</th>
<th>Early Mid. E. (<em>Orrm</em>)</th>
<th>Middle English</th>
<th>Late Mod. English (<em>Sheridan</em>)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>SMOOTH CUT (Quantity-based distinction maintained in open syllables) Homorganic Cluster Lengthening</td>
<td>CV or CV: Open Syllable Lengthening</td>
<td>CV:C</td>
<td>CV:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ABRUPT CUT Closed Syllable Shortening</td>
<td>CVC</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>CVC</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**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.

**References**


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