

Representation of intervocalic single /l/ and geminate /ll/ in *Sacrament an Alter*

0. Introduction

In this document, I have compiled an exhaustive list of all instances of the orthographic representation of /l/ vs. /ll/ in maximally contrastive environment (i.e. following a stressed vowel and preceding an unstressed one) in the late Middle Cornish text *Sacrament an Alter* (SA), a catena translated by Thomas Stephyn ca. 1576. An exception has been made for spontaneous loans from English – a characteristic feature of the Cornish of both this text and the *Tregear Homilies* (TH), translated ca. 20 years earlier – because the written representation of these etyma seems to simply imitate contemporary English usage and is thus of less relevance for the evaluation of the prosody of late Middle Cornish.

Word-finally, the Middle Cornish scribes did not distinguish between single (lenis) and geminate (fortis) sonants. In this position, the ‘classical’ texts in the Middle Cornish corpus, such as the Ordinalia, mostly default to single consonant spellings. This convention is also used in Middle Welsh and Middle Breton. The two Tudor Cornish texts, TH and SA, on the other hand default to word-final <ll> even after some long vowels as in **gwiell** ‘do, make’, following aesthetically motivated practice in the English of the time. The scribal conventions used therefore only allow us to check for contrast between single and geminate /l/ between vowels, the first of which is stressed. If, as proposed in WILLIAMS 1995 and 2006, the distinction between single and geminate /l/ had been lost altogether – maybe for centuries - by the time the text was composed, yet Stephyn tried to adhere to conservative orthographic rules, we would expect some degree of uncertainty in the representation of their merged reflex. As the following tables show, no sign of uncertainty can be found.

I would like to thank Benjamin Bruch for allowing me a look at his working text of SA so that I could correct many dubious readings in Bice’s edition. I would also like to thank Ken George for sharing his notes on the issue.

1. Attestations

[¹VI:V] (/VllV/) spelt <VllV> - 26 instances

an **gallus** agen arluth Dew (59r.31)

in della (59r.35)

Indella e may christ worth agyn maga ny (59r.38)

o gwell **in della** genan (59v.9-10)

Indella e weth (59v.12-13)

indella ew corf agen arluth dew in gwlas neff (60r.38-39)

In della ew corf agen arluth Dew in gwolas neff (60v.2)

indella ny ara touchia christ (60v.11)

In della e movns hy dishonora Christ (61r.15-16)

Na **illansy** bos seperatis in age gobe[r] (61r.29)

nyn gvs gesis **tella** veth the doubtys (61r.38-39)

why a welle an **gallus** a geir Christ (62v.13)

Rag henna mar sees mar ver **gallus** in geir agen arluth Christ (62v.14-15)

paseil moy **gallus** (62v.16)

Martesyn, te a lavar, **fattellans** (/fatell+ellans/?) bos gwyer? (62v.32-33)

han **gallus** a nature a Christ (63r.7)
indella e thesta eva, e presivs gois (63r.23)
indella e thew disquethis thyn [an] bois y^e vos consecratis (63r.35-36)
ij folen tha worth an **dallath** (63v.29)
e ma thetha **gallus** a satisfaction (64r.19)
indella e thony lvnis thagan Saviour Christ (65r.17-18)
ema **tillar** arall e mes Cucell an Nice (65v.25-26)
Chrisostom ow leverall in **tillar** arall (66r.7)
na **illen** denaha, an nenevow, (66r.14)
an gois ew **skvlllys** (66r.34)
gois a gyn saviour Christ, a ve **skvlliys** ragan (66r.35-36)

[¹VlhV] ~ [¹VI:V] (/VII+hV/) spelt <VIIV> - 7 instances

may **halla** an nenaf bos consecratis (60v.30)
may **halla** an nenaf bos defendis (60v.31)
rag **malla** an nenaf, [bo]s golowis (60v.32-33)
ma[y] **halla** an nenaf bos mekys (60v.34-35)
rag **malla** an enaf bos megys (61r.24)
an pith a **whrella** an ganow cows (61v.35)
rag **malla** ef signifia brossa mater (65r.15-16)

[¹VI:V] ~ [¹VlhV] (/VI+hV/) spelt <VIhV> - 1 instance

keneve[r] a **whelha**, ha vo o sevall rebta (60r.21-22)

[¹VI:V] ~ [¹VlhV] (/VII+hV/) spelt <VIhV> - 3 instances

Pelha e ma S Ambros ow leverall (62v.10)
Irenæus **pelha** ow levera (63v.21-22)
pelha, e ma Chrisostom, ow scrifa thanphilippians (66r.9)

[¹VI:V] or [¹VlhV] (/VIIV/ or /VI+hV/ or /VII+hV/) spelt <VIV> - 0 instances

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[¹VIV] (</VIV/) spelt <VIV> - 37 instances

onen a vo in e **gwely** marnance (59 r.13)
ha y= weth ow **gwelas** pew vge ow despisea, h^a gwetha (59r.18-19)
vgy an **elath** ow **gwelas** ha ow trembla (59r.27-28)
rag negyns abell y^e **welas**, heb mere a own (59r.28-29)
rag an **golowder**, vse ow tos tha worta (59r.29-30)
ha Helias a **wolas** (60r.5)
Helias asas e mantall in ded gans e **scholar** (60r.9)
ew **gwelys** pub deth (60r.23)
ne gesa ow desquethas theugh, **elath**, nanyle **Arth elath** (60v.3-4)

esta o **qvelas** agen saviour Christ (60v.6)
an kigg ew **selis** (60v.31)
gas an **golan** percylvia da (61v.36)
trilys y^e corf ha [gois] y thew (62 r.1-2)
ew **trylis** y^e corf ha gois chris[t] (62v.1-2)
an **chalys** ew len[wys] a gwyn ha dowr (62v.7-8)
e vosama ow **gwel[es an]** shap (62v.23-24)
han gwyn han dowr ew goris in **Chalis** (63r.19-20)
shap a gois nyn gew **gwelis** (63r.22)
An keith **chalys** ma ew creature a thew (63v.17)
pan vo an **chalys** han bara Jvnis warbarth (63v.18-19)
ij **fole**n tha worth an dallath (63v.29)
praga a ruke an egglo[s] dewys mar **galys** Vnderstandyng (64r.7-8)
ef a ve disky[s] wor[th] an **Abostolath** a Christ (64r.29-30)
ha e **whelas** ef *vmma* war a [nore] (64v.30)
ow thesyre ew *gans* oll ow **holan** (64v.3)
tha thibbry *gans* e **apostelath** (64v.5)
mas derevall agen mynd ha **colan** da (65v.20-21)
onyn an **apostelath** a lav[eris] (65v.34)
9. chapter an Acts **Apostelath** (66r.4)
nyn gew dir hastenab apoyntis y^e worthan **Apostelath** (66r.8-9)
ny a **welas** an pensevik pronter (66r.23)
An **chalys** a Testament nowth (66r.34)
Bara ew **trylis** (66v.14)
y^e worth [vn] elyment, the **gela** (66v.14-15)
rag henn[a] **ef[v]elap** a bara (66v.17-18)

[¹VIV] (/VIV/) spelt <VIIV> - 0 instances

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2. Conclusion

I could not find *one single instance* where <ll> was used for historical /l/ or where <l> was used for historical /ll/ intervocally. There are four examples of <lh>, all used in comparatives or subjunctives where they represent /l+h/ or /ll+h/, i.e. where they probably represent phonetic [lh].

I consider it highly unlikely that such a high degree of etymologically expected spellings can be explained as the consequence of archaic orthographic conventions, and for a number of reasons.

- Thomas Stephyn's written Cornish does *not* mask a number of sound changes which would have happened after the Ordinalia were written, such as the unrounding of /ø/ to /e/.
- The text was translated decades after Glasney College had been disbanded. It can of course be argued that Stephyn learned an archaic spelling there in his youth, but it would still have been difficult for him to identify the correct distribution of <l> and <ll> in every single case, especially since no pre-occluded reflex of /ll/ seems to have existed. Nor had the geminate

become /lh/ in all cases, as is apparent from the distribution of <ll> and <lh>: the latter is only ever used for /l+h/ or /ll+h/.

- Gendall and Kennedy confirm the survival of geminate [ll] in the St. Ives dialect of Anglo-Cornish well into the 20th century.

I would therefore conclude that Stephyn mostly wrote as he spoke, and that /l/ and /ll/ were still distinctive in the position /^lV_V/ in his variety of Cornish. The only feasible alternative explanation not involving gemination would be that double consonant spellings only marked shortness of the preceding vowel, and that half-length had not been lost in 1576. This combination of loss of geminates and retention of vowel length distinction in non-final syllables would almost inevitably have resulted in a system not unlike that used in some of the less conservative dialects of Breton and in a re-interpretation of syllable boundaries (e.g. early MC [ˈgweːl.es] > late MC **[ˈgweː.ləs]), which would seem to conflict with the overall sharply rising tendency of the scribes to use double consonant spellings after originally half-long vowels, from CW onward. Furthermore, the survival of geminate [ll] in the St. Ives dialect of Anglo-Cornish would make it seem more plausible that it was indeed consonant quantity which was marked by the reduplication of <l>. Tudor Cornish apparently still distinguished /l/ from /ll/. This would likely also have applied to /n/ vs. /nn/ as the distribution of <n> and <nn> is similarly convincing.

Albert Bock, 20/07/2010 (albert.bock@univie.ac.at)

-edit: This is version 2 of the document. Attestations have been re-checked using David Frost's annotated transliteration of the text which, along with line numbers in the original manuscript, was supplied by Benjamin Bruch. -