Œ

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Œ (minuscule: œ) is a Latin alphabet grapheme, a ligature of o and e. In medieval and early modern Latin, it was used to represent the Greek diphthong *οι*, a usage which continues in English and French. In French, it is also used in some non-Latin words.

It is used in the modern orthography for Old West Norse and is used in the International Phonetic Alphabet to represent the open-mid front rounded vowel. In English runology, **œ** is used to transliterate the Runic letter odal ᛟ, and so **œ** is sometimes called **œthel**, **oethel** or **ethel** (from *ēðel* 'estate, ancestral home').[1]

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Contents

Overview

In Latin, the combination denotes a diphthong, pronounced [o̯i], that had a value similar to English *oi* as in c*oi*l. It was used in borrowings from Greek words having the diphthong *OI* (*OI*, *οι*). Both classical and modern practice is to write the letters separately, but the ligature was used in medieval and early modern writings, in part because *œ* was reduced to a simple vowel ([e]) in late Latin.

onomatopœia

The word onomatopoeia with the œ ligature.

English

Borrowings into English from Latin words written with *æ* (which in turn are often from Greek words written *οι*) now largely use the letter *e*, especially in American English. For example, *fœderal* has become *federal* in English, while *diarrhœa* in American English can only be spelled *diarrhea*. In those words that have not changed to *e*, the digraph *oe* is often used; indeed, most recent dictionaries list only the form without a ligature.

In modern British English the spellings generally keep the *o* but avoid the ligature (e.g. "diarrhoea").

The most common word retaining the "OE" in American English is phoenix.

The *æ*, *oe*, or *e* is generally pronounced /iː/ in syllables with word stress, or /ɛ/ when unstressed.

Other Germanic languages

Œ is used in the modern scholarly orthography of Old West Norse, representing the long vowel /øː/, contrasting with *ø*, which represents the short vowel /ø/. Recently, however, it has been replaced with *ǿ*, as in *mǿðr* "mothers".

Œ is not used in German; loanwords using œ are rendered ö, *e.g. Ösophagus*. A common exception is the French word *Œuvre*[2] and its compounds (e.g. *Œuvreverzeichnis*[3]).

French

In French, *æ* (called "e dans l'o", which means *e in the o* (a mnemotechnic pun used first at school, sounding like *(des) œufs dans l'eau*, meaning *eggs in the water*, sometimes "o et e collé", literally *o and e glued*) is a true linguistic ligature, not just a typographic one (like the *fi* or *fl* ligatures), reflecting etymology. It is most prominent in the words *mœurs* ("mores", almost exclusively employed in its plural form; *mœur* is masculine in the singular and feminine in the plural), *cœur* ("heart"), *sœur* ("sister"), *œuf* ("egg"), *œuvre* ("work") and *œil* ("eye"), in which the digraph *œu*, like *eu*, represents the sound [œ] or [ø]. French also uses œ in direct borrowings from Latin and Greek. So, "cœliac" in French is *cœliaque*. In such cases, the *æ* is pronounced [e]. In some words, e.g. *phénix*, the *æ* is changed to a more French *é*.

When *oe* occurs in French without the ligature, it is pronounced /wa/, just like words spelt with *oi*. The most common words of this type are *poêle* ("stove", "frying pan") and *moelleux* ("soft"). If the *oe* is not to be pronounced thus, then a diaeresis, acute or grave accent needs to be added in order to indicate that the vowels should be pronounced separately. For example, *Noël*, *poésie*, *poète*. The exception to this rule is the prefix *co-*, which is always pronounced /ko/ in hiatus with the following vowel, e.g. *coentreprise* ("joint venture") or *coefficient* ("ratio", "coefficient") and does not require any accent on the *e* to make this so.

International Phonetic Alphabet

The symbol [œ] is used in the International Phonetic Alphabet for the open-mid front rounded vowel. This sound resembles the "eu" in the French *neuf* or the "ö" in the German *öffnen*. These contrast with French *feu* and German *schön*, which have the close-mid front rounded vowel, [ø].

The small capital variant [Œ] represents the open front rounded vowel.

Encodings

In Unicode, the characters are encoded at U+0152 Œ LATIN CAPITAL LIGATURE OE (HTML `Œ` · `Œ`) and U+0153 œ LATIN SMALL LIGATURE OE (HTML `œ` · `œ`). In ISO-8859-15, Œ is 0xBC and œ 0xBD. In Windows-1252, at positions 0x8C and 0x9C. In Mac-Roman, they are at positions 0xCE and 0xCF. The LaTeX commands are `\oe` and `\OE` .

Œ and œ were omitted from ISO-8859-1 (as well as derived standards, such as IBM code page 850 and Windows-1252), which are still widespread in internet protocols and applications. Œ is the only character in modern French that is not included in ISO-8859-1, and this has led to it becoming replaced by 'oe' in many computer-assisted publications (including printed magazines and newspapers). This was due, in part, to the lack of available characters in the French ISO/IEC 646 version that was used earlier for computing. Another reason is that œ is absent from most French keyboards, and as a result, few people know how to input it.

The above-mentioned small capital of the International Phonetic Alphabet is encoded at U+0276 Œ LATIN LETTER SMALL CAPITAL OE (HTML `ɶ`).

Inputting Œ and œ

On Microsoft Windows, Œ and œ can be entered using the Alt codes 0140 and 0156, i.e. by holding down the Alt key while typing the number 0140 for Œ and 0156 for œ respectively on the numeric keypad. In Microsoft Word, œ can additionally be entered using the keyboard shortcut [Ctrl] + [⇧ Shift] + [&] then [O] in quick succession. Moreover, Microsoft Word and some other word processors can also automatically correct French words like *soeur* to *sœur*, but in most other applications (e.g. an instant messenger, or a browser) the word will not be corrected.

Using Apple's OS X, starting from Lion, Œ and œ can be accessed by holding down O ([⇧ Shift] + [O]) or o ([O]) and clicking on Œ and œ respectively in the small menu that appears.[4] Alternatively the Character Viewer can be used to enter special characters.[5] Furthermore, using either the U.S., British, or Swiss keyboard layout, Œ and œ are accessed by pressing [⌥ Opt] + [⇧ Shift] + [Q] and [⌥ Opt] + [Q] respectively. The corresponding key combinations on the French keyboard are [⌥ Opt] + [⇧ Shift] + [O] and [⌥ Opt] + [O] , or [⌥ Opt] + [⇧ Shift] + [Ö] and [⌥ Opt] + [Ö] on the German keyboard.

On mobile devices running iOS, Android or Windows Mobile, œ and Œ are accessed by holding down O until a small menu is displayed.

With a Compose key the key combination for œ is [Compose] [O] [E] and [Compose] [⇧ Shift] + [O] [⇧ Shift] + [E] for Œ.

In Vim (text editor), use [Ctrl] + [K] [⇧ Shift] + [O] [⇧ Shift] + [E] in succession (or [Ctrl] + [K] [O] [E] for lower-case).

In Latex the encoding is \oe.

See also

- Oe (digraph)
- Å
- Ä
- Ø
- Ö
- Æ
- List of words that may be spelled with a ligature

References

1. John R. Clark Hall, 1962, *A concise Anglo-Saxon dictionary*, Cambridge University Press, p. 108, s.v. ēðel 'name of the rune for œ'.
2. (http://www.duden.de/rechtschreibung/Ouvre)Duden online
3. (http://www.duden.de/rechtschreibung/Ouvreverzeichnis)Duden online
4. Apple Inc.: OS X Lion: Enter characters with accent marks (http://support.apple.com/kb/PH4429). Jul 12, 2012 (retrieved on Dec 31, 2012)
5. Apple Inc.: OS X Lion: Enter special characters and symbols (http://support.apple.com/kb/PH3871). Jul 12, 2012 (retrieved on Dec 31, 2012)

External links

- Paleography: Special Characters in English Manuscripts (http://www.ualberta.ca/~sreimer/ms-course/course/eng-chrs.htm), course notes

	Look up *Category:English terms spelled with Œ* in Wiktionary, the free dictionary.
a multilingual free encyclopedia **Wiktionary** [ˈwɪkʃənɹɪ] *n.*, a wiki-based Open Content dictionary Wiktio Puzzl Iaard	

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