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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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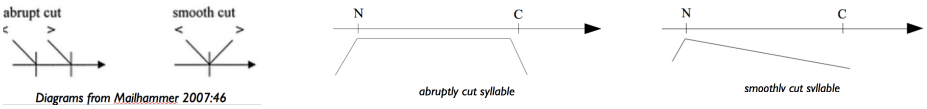
OR(R)M

Non-etymological geminates in orthography: word-finally and in clusters, sometimes intervocalically (including glides)
<e**nn**gli**ssh**>, <toge**dd**re>, <bro**ꝑerr**>, <tre**ww**es>

→ 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*, l. 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).



Diagrams from Mailhammer 2007:46

SHERIDAN

Non-orthographic geminates in 'respelling':
intervocalically and in obstruent+approximant clusters
<be2-ne1**v'-v**o2-le1nse>, <a1**s-s**ho3're>,
<a1n-ti1**f'-f**ra1-si1s>, <de1**p-p**ry1-va2'-shu1n >

Clearly, these orthographic geminates cannot be interpreted as segmental, like the other alphabetical symbols: they are **diacritics.**

But what do they indicate?

→ 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. (Sheridan 1780:40)

	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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