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# Graphic geminates as diacritics in the *Ormmulum* (12<sup>th</sup> cent.) and in Thomas Sheridan's *General Dictionary of the English Language* (1780)

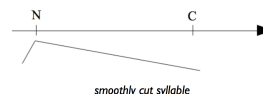
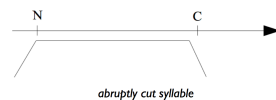
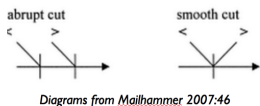
## OR(R)M

Non-etymological geminates in orthography: word-finally and in clusters, sometimes intervocally (including glides)  
<en**ngli**ssh>, <tog**ed**dre>, <bro**pp**err>, <tre**ww**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)? BUT what of “Orrm's didactic purpose and consistency” (Mailhammer 2007:50; cf. *Ormmulum*, 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).



☞ 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:	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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Before a word beginning with a vowel, it is written an, as, an ox; A is sometimes a noun, as, great A; A is placed before a participle, or participial noun; a hunting, a begging; A has a signification denoting proportion,

a1 æ  
e1 ε  
i1 ι  
o1 ɒ  
u1 ʌ  
u2 ʊ  
y1 i  
a2 e:  
e2  
o2 o:  
a3 ɔ:  
e3 i:  
i3  
o3 u:  
u3 ju:  
i2 ai  
y2  
oi ɔi  
oy  
ou  
ow aʊ