Since SPE, the phonological cycle describes the bearing of morphological structure on phonology. English class 1 vs. class 2 effects are a case in point. A well-known example is the stem-final alternation of -mn and -m as in damn [m], damn-ing [m] (class 2) vs. damn-ation [mn] (class 1). The ordinary analysis proposed by Lexical Phonology is derivational: first class 1 affixes are concatenated, then morphological structure is deleted (bracket erasure). In contrast to the output of level one, the result of class 2 affixation at level 2 still bears visible morphological structure, and deletion applying only at this level eliminates n before a bracket.

As for all other apparently serial phenomena, OT has sought to offer a strictly parallel solution (or has simply taken over the serial model, cf. DOT, Stratal OT). The present talk critically reviews the various directions that have been taken (cophonologies, Interface Constraints, OO-correspondence). I then argue 1) that rather than building an extra tool for lexical strata, a non-serial solution comes for free with an adequate theory of the interface, and 2) that the treatment of this phenomenon supposes enriched representations rather than increased computational power. I show that a particular view on inter-modular communication, Direct Interface, combined with the representational environment of CVCV (Lowenstamm 1996), provides a non-derivational account for class 1 vs. class 2 effects.

Direct Interface follows the principle of Indirect Reference that is largely accepted since Prosodic Phonology (Selkirk 1981) and, just as the modular view of grammar (e.g. Jackendoff 2002) where modules do not speak the same language (of the brain), enforces the existence of a Translator's Office. That is, extra-phonological information reaches phonology in the form of the output of a translating process. Obviously, this output cannot be any diacritic (as in SPE): phonology can only interpret phonological objects (it would not occur to any syntactician to operate with bananas). Hence the output is necessarily a truly phonological category, i.e. one that exists in the phonology anyway and in absence of any issue related to the interface (hence the Prosodic Hierarchy is a diacritic, if an autosegmental one).

This view on the interface is independent of any specific phonological theory: every theory has its own vocabulary, which will be the output of the translation. Hence different predictions are made, and theories can be assessed according to their behaviour at the interface.

The particular theory that I work in is CVCV, an outgrowth of Government Phonology. At the syllabic level, its only tools are two lateral relations, Government and Licensing. In the particular case of damn, damning vs. damnation, the phonological analysis singles out Licensing as the driving force: the stem-final -n is in coda position (in CVCV, coda consonants are those that occur before a governed empty nucleus, hence damønø), and we know independently that final empty nuclei (FEN) cannot license in English (lenition such as l-darkening occurs in final codas). N does not drop in internal codas because here it is always homorganic with the following consonant, hence a strong partial geminate (sharing makes us strong). FEN are thus unable to license qua phonology. Class 2 affixes merely follow domestic phonological rule: the stem-final empty nucleus is unable to license because it is governed by the suffixal vowel, and nothing more needs to be said. Class 1 suffixes, however, have the property of being accompanied by interface activity: the stem-final nucleus receives the order "you are a good licensor" even though qua domestic phonological rule it isn't. Interface orders always outrank domestic phonological law. The -n thus being licensed in damønø-ation, it is pronounced.

This kind of interface mechanism where certain affixes come with a phonological instruction (while others are neutral) is in-built: the regular tools of the phonological theory are simply put at use, and no special apparatus is needed. It offers a representational and non-procedural alternative for all cyclic effects that are local, i.e. those that are traditionally called sandhi. Interestingly, non-local effects concerning suprasegmentals such as stress cannot be represented and are hence predicted to be different in kind. This result lends further support to the segregation between segmental and suprasegmental phonology (e.g. McMahon, de Lacy).