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SEMANTIC INTERFACE IN THE ENTRENCHMENT OF LOANWORDS AND THE ESTRANGEMENT OF COGNATES

Preamble

The present paper insights into the role of meaning overlap in the estrangement of the medieval borrowing PAIN from its French cognate PEINE and the gradual entrenchment of the loanword into English enhanced by the semantic intersection with the inland term PINE. The study draws upon the results of a broader corpus research aimed at an investigation of the historical interface between the semasiological and onomasiological profiles of terms for *suffering* in English. Out of these, the diachronic rooting of the noun PAIN into the English language has been highlighted throughout these pages for further stressing the inherent regularity of semantic change revealed by dynamic approaches to language.

First documented towards the very end of the thirteenth century, PAIN is one of the thousands of French loanwords to take up most of the English lexical stock during Middle English. As attested by data, the borrowing expressed two core meanings at the time of its introduction into English: ‘punishment’ – the original sense from Latin *poena* < Greek *poinë* – and ‘difficulty’. Although shortly afterwards the core sense, the expression of *suffering* did not count among the readings of PAIN at the time. Nevertheless, the formal and semantic resemblance to the inland cognate PINE facilitated the process of assimilation of the noun PAIN, thus motivating both the rapid adoption of *suffering* readings and the rapid entrenchment of the loanword in the language.

In becoming associated with PINE, the original meaning of the newcomer PAIN was enriched with the expression of *suffering*, which it did not have in French or very marginally at most. The reading, though not exceedingly salient at one point, was nevertheless to become the only one of historical salience – as opposed to the earlier ones, increasingly less and less outstanding ever since

the introduction of the term into English, and only found in crystallized phrases (such as *pain of death*) in our days.

Semantic interface and the entrenchment of loanwords

By the time PAIN was borrowed into English in the late thirteenth century, the noun PINE – brought along with Christianity – had been present in the language for a century and a half. Nonetheless, the very low frequency of the noun at all times and the lack of textual discursive imbrication with other terms within the domain suggest its peripheral salience within the onomasiological range of *suffering*. Nonetheless, there existed in PINE a nuance with whose expression the term contributed to the domain from the early times: *punishment and torture*.

BODILY SUFFERING †	_____
	_____ 1154–1725 _____
BODILY SUFFERING	_____
	_____ 1154-c1600 _____
	<i>Efter ure lauerdes pine ant his passiuon ant his deð on rode.</i>
FOR HUNGER	_____
	_____ 1567–1725 _____
	<i>Forst, through penurie and pyne...For nought was given them to sup or dyne.</i>
PUNISHMENT AND TORTURE †	_____
	_____ c1160–1600 _____
PUNISHMENT AND TORTURE	_____
	_____ c1160–1600 _____
	<i>Pay..gerte hym bere on his bak þe cros to þe pynstal.</i>
PENAL SUFFERINGS OF HELL	_____
	_____ c1200–1384 _____
	<i>De pine of helle.</i>
EMOTIONAL SUFFERING – often LONGING	_____
	_____ c1205–1868 _____
	<i>Ofte heo hæfde seorwe & pine.</i>
EFFORT AND DIFFICULTY †	_____
	_____ c1300–1674 _____
	<i>Þey ascaped wiþ mykel pyn.</i>
SICKNESS † (OF SHEEP)	_____
	_____ 1804 _____
	<i>In the pine,... the condition of the animal is too high, its blood too thick.</i>
COMPLAINT OR LAMENT †	_____
	_____ <i>To give way to unavailing pines.</i> _____

Figure 1. Meaning nuances in PINE

PUNISHMENT †	1297–1884
└ PUNISHMENT OR FINE	1297–1859
<i>Crist þat payed a payne for vs alle.</i>	
└ MENACE INTO RISK OF ~	c1380–1884
<i>Vndir great payne of horrible death suffring.</i>	
EFFORT AND DIFFICULTY	a1300–1889
<i>Who wyll take payne to folowe the trace.</i>	
BODILY SUFFERING	a1300–1974
└ BODILY SUFFERING AS PUNISHMENT	a1300–1598
<i>Of every lust thende is a peine.</i>	
└ TORTURE FOR INFORMATION †	1535
<i>They..wolde confesse..if they might be examyned..by paynes.</i>	
└ BODILY SUFFERING	1377–1973
<i>For peyne of the paume powere hem failleth To clucche or to clawe.</i>	
— In euphemistic expressions for merciful homicide	1481–1808
<i>God tooke him owte of this carcerall payne.</i>	
— In compound term ~ KILLER, a medicine against ~	1853–1974
<i>The many painkillers invented have diminished..the amount of human suffering.</i>	
└ CHILDBIRTH LABOUR	a1300–1889
<i>She bowed herselfe, and traveled, for her paynes cam vpon her.</i>	
EMOTIONAL SUFFERING	1340–1911
└ CONDEMNATION IN HELL †	1340–1598
<i>His saule wente vn-to payne.</i>	
└ DISTRESS	1375–1911
<i>Syn I knowe of loues peyne.</i>	
└ WORRY †	1638–1789
<i>I am in a great deal of pain to know how my horses have performed at the journey.</i>	
SICKNESS † (OF THE FEET IN HORSES)	1440–1610
<i>Peynys, yvyl yn horsys fete.</i>	
BOTHERING AND TIRESOME	<i>I was a sickly youngster..a frail problem child, a pain in the neck.</i>

Figure 2. Meaning nuances in PAIN

The nuance – apart from a ready semantic extension – was one of high centrality in the related verb *pinian*, salient in the expression of *suffering* ever since the times of Old English (well before the noun was first attested). However, even though the verb offered an anchoring grip for the noun to settle, PINE never enjoyed outstanding salience, even less so as the presence of the *coniferous tree* homonym prevented the unequivocal identification of the noun with *suffering*. The term would nevertheless have a role in the diachronic development of the conceptual domain – even if by default.

At the time of the introduction of PAIN in the language, the English cognate PINE enhanced the entrenchment of the novel term not only by means of the mutual (etymologically-driven) formal resemblance, but also for the intersection of the semasiological profiles of both terms. In combining the notion of *suffering* with that of *punishment* – forefront within the semasiological pattern of the loanword – PINE provided the background for PAIN to acquire the *suffering* readings it did not have in French. Once ingrained within the English network of terms for *suffering*, PAIN would soon become one of the most weighty terms within it – not only because of its increased onomasiological prototypicality, but because of the rich array of meaning nuances diachronically acquired by PAIN.

An insight into the profiles outlined for the nouns PAIN and PINE – meant at sketching the semantic complexity of the terms while avoiding a number of conflictive traits in the *OED* definitions from which the quotations have been excerpted – will have promptly revealed the outstanding overlap of the terms at both the semasiological and onomasiological axes.

In this respect, while PINE is claimed to have influenced the diachronic evolution of PAIN, the reverse also seems to be the case, for PINE would soon become tinted with the reading effort – a traditional sense in PAIN from the times of its French history, but not part of the meaning of the inland noun so far. The mutual interface was nonetheless meant to finish in the long run, since the diachronic transition of PAIN to full prototypicality within the domain involved the semantic takeover of PINE under PAIN.

As displayed above, the most significant readings in PINE coincide with and were ultimately taken over by those in PAIN. The only exception is *emotional suffering* – a late reading of no historical salience in PAIN and of little salience in PINE with regard to more prototypical terms within the domain – which has survived in restricted contexts to the present day in both nouns. Otherwise, the readings *punishment* and *bodily suffering* – present in PINE since the mid-twelfth century and overlapping with PAIN since the beginning of the fourteenth century – disappeared in PINE at the beginning of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, respectively. Likewise, the reading *effort* – present in both from the beginning of the fourteenth century – did not survive the mid-seventeenth century in the case of PINE, while it has persisted in PAIN to contemporary English.

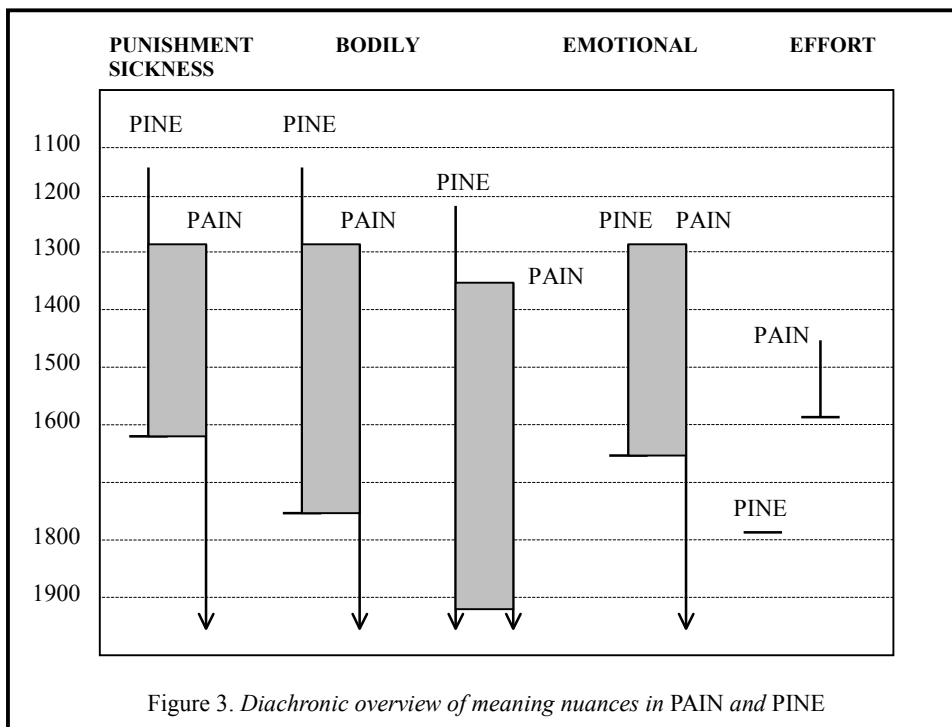


Figure 3. *Diachronic overview of meaning nuances in PAIN and PINE*

Thus, after a long interval of PINE and PAIN coexisting in the expression of roughly identical readings, the former suffered a reduction in meaning triggered by the pressure exerted by the latter, increasingly salient within the domain. By the time the process of reduction had already been completed, the meaning of PINE had been shoved to the marginal expression of *emotional suffering* – a reading not within the orbit of PAIN. It goes without saying that PINE (always weak within the domain) became further weakened and never reached any significant degree of entrenchment, as a result of which it has not survived but as an archaic if not largely obsolete term in our days.

For enhancing the adoption of *suffering* among the readings in PAIN, however, the prominence of PINE cannot be stressed enough, since its primary senses played a significant role in abridging the distance between the loanword and other terms in the network – a fact of far reaching consequences within the domain at large unfortunately beyond the length scope of the present paper.

Semantic interface and the estrangement of cognates

The outcome of the PAIN-PINE semantic interface was not only noticeable in the resulting balance of forces within the constellation of terms for *suffering*

in English, but also in the stripping of PAIN from its continental counterpart PEINE. A reflection on the historical evolution of the French term will display the divergence in the semasiological profile of both cognates. According to the classical *Dictionnaire de L'Académie Française*, the readings below were found in the nineteenth-century French:

1. *Châtiment, punition.*
2. *Douleur, affliction, souffrance, sentiment de quelque mal dans le corps ou dans l'esprit.*
3. *Inquiétude d'esprit.*
4. *Travail, fatigue.*
5. *Le salaire du travail d'un artisan.*
6. *Des difficultés, des obstacles que l'on trouve à quelque chose.*
7. *La répugnance d'esprit qu'on a à dire ou à faire quelque chose.*

In the more contemporary definition from the *Dictionnaire Universel Francophone*, senses 3 and 7 disappear (most probably merged into 2 and 6) and the metaphorical sense 5 is lacking altogether. The more significant departure with regard to the nineteenth-century definition, however, is the disappearance of bodily senses of the notion of *suffering* in reading 2:

1. *Châtiment, punition.*
2. *Chagrin, souffrance morale, affliction.*
3. *Occupation, activité qui demande un effort.*
4. *Difficulté, embarras.*

Such a reduction points to the significant distance of French PEINE from present-day English PAIN – while the contemporary definition of PEINE seems close indeed to the meaning the noun PAIN had at the time of its introduction into English, shortly before the beginning of the fourteenth century.

Once in the English lexicon, however, the meaning of PAIN would become increasingly distant from its original profile in French. Thus, the reading *effort and difficulty* was increasingly marginalized over the centuries to the point of becoming obsolete except for in the plural in idiomatic phrases – out of which many have been lost or become contextually restricted in English. This state of affairs represents a sharp antithesis with the meaning of the term in French nowadays, in which the notions of *effort* and *difficulty* are most outstanding.

Similarly, the reading *punishment* – outstanding in all definitions of the French term at all times – became virtually obsolete in English in modern times and is only maintained today in the expression *pains and penalties* and a number of crystallized phrases. In this respect, the vitality of the many phrases in which the term PEINE is used in French – such as *à chaque jour suffit sa peine, ce n'est pas la peine* 'ce n'est pas nécessaire', *à peine* 'depuis peu de temps, presque pas, tout juste', *avec peine* 'difficilement', *ça vaut la peine, pour la peine* 'en

compensation’, *sans peine* ‘sans difficulté’, *sous peine de* ‘sous risque de, sous menace de’ and so on – also contrasts with the much more restricted usage of the fewer English ones.

More relevant for our purposes, however, is the difference between both cognates with regard to the expression of *suffering* per se. In this respect, whereas contemporary French PEINE concentrates on the emotional sides of *suffering* and does not retain any of its bodily connotations any more, the case is quite the reverse in the case of the English term. As a matter of fact, out of the three core readings of PAIN in contemporary English – *bodily suffering*, *emotional suffering* and *trouble* – the main emphasis is undoubtedly located on the bodily aspects, often related to medical conditions or soreness and wounds.

The emotional readings, however, are and have always been less salient in the case of English – acute aspects of emotional *suffering* were always expressed by other terms within the onomasiological range of terms for *suffering*, whereas the attenuated sense *fear or anxiety* (originated in the seventeenth century) did not survive the late 1700s. The transparency of compounds such as *painkiller* – as opposed to *painstaking* – is certainly expressive of the higher relative salience of the bodily aspects over the emotional or abstract ones in the case of the English noun PAIN.

Nonetheless, the emphasis on emotional aspects of the notion of *suffering* – or even the lack of bodily ones – in French PEINE requires further and diachronic notice. Under the light of the data provided by the *Base Textuelles du Moyen Français*, the mere presence of the notion of *suffering* in PEINE seems to be a puzzling matter. Apparently, and according to data from 1339 to 1382, that is, shortly after the term PAIN had been borrowed into English at the very end of the thirteenth century, the meaning of French PEINE encompassed four readings – *punishment*, *bodily suffering*, *effort* and *difficulty*:

1. *Punition, châtement, condamnation. Sur peine de qqc. (sous peine de qqc.), sur peine + inf. Supplice. Pénitence, damnation, peines de l'enfer.*
2. *Souffrance physique.*
3. *Effort. Mettre peine en qqn. (se sousier de qqn, s'en occuper), mettre peine à + inf. (s'efforcer de faire qqc.), mettre peine de + inf. (s'efforcer de faire qqc.), mettre qqn en peine de qqc. (pousser qqn à se soucier de qqc.), perdre sa peine.*
4. *Difficulté. À peine (difficilemet, péniblement), à grand peine (avec beaucoup de difficulté), avoir de la peine à + inf. (avoir du mal à faire qqc.).*

At the beginning of the fifteenth century, and according to data from 1400 to 1435, the notion of *suffering* seems to have disappeared from among the readings of PEINE, while the other three remain intact:

1. *Punition, châtement. à /sur peine de + subst. ou inf. (sous peine de), sur la peine. En partic. Amende.*
2. *Effort qui coûte, tâche, travail. Avoir grand peine de + inf. (faire tout son possible pour),*

mettre peine à + inf. (s'efforcer de), prendre peine de + inf. (faire l'effort de).

3. *Difficulté, obstacle s'opposant à la réalisation de qqc. à peine/s (difficilement, c'est tout juste si).*

Nonetheless, and according to data from c1456 to 1467, the notion of *suffering* seems to be recovered later in the century – this time in both body and mind:

1. *Châtiment, sanction. En peine de (sous une astreinte de). P. ext. Corvée.*

2. *Difficulté (pouvant entraîner la souffrance). A quelque peine, a grand peine, avoir de la peine à + inf. (éprouver des difficultés à), faire de la peine à qqc de + inf. (lui causer des difficultés pour), à peine (au prix de grandes difficultés). P. ext. exprimant le fait que l'actant est à la limite de l'accomplissement ou du non accomplissement de l'action, à peine (presque, tout juste).*

3. *Souffrance (physique et/ou morale), plus concr. malaise, meschef, patience, destourbier, travail, diligence, sueur.*

4. *Effort. Mettre peine de + inf. (s'efforcer de), pendre la peine de + inf. (faire un effort (pénible) pour), mettre peine à qqc. (s'efforcer d'obtenir cette chose), faire qqc. de sa peine (ne pas ménager ses efforts pour), perdre sa peine (faire un effort inutile).*

At about the same time in which French PEINE was debating whether to include the expression of *suffering* (in body, mind or altogether) PAIN had successfully settled in the English language with the staple readings *punishment* and *difficulty* plus that of *suffering* in both body and mind – of which the English term would drop virtually all but that of *suffering* over time.

At this point, however, the immediate question is not why PEINE would hesitate on whether to adopt the expression of *bodily suffering* – although a ready extension, the nuance was not a sense expressed by the Latin original, so why hurry? The question is – why did PAIN cling that firmly onto the reading? Chances are it was because of the environment – and it was. There existed another cognate from Latin which, being part of the language since the oldest times, did unequivocally convey the notion of *suffering* in body and mind: PINE. Survival proved much harder for the bleak *bodily suffering* reading in the case of French PEINE. In spite of being depicted as a fairly well-established reading in the *Base Textuelles du Moyen Français*, the seventeenth century notice posits quite the reverse situation. In 1606, a moment in which PAIN was old in English already, Nicot's *Thresor de la Langue Françoysse* offers the following definition for the term PEINE:

Chasty pour mesfait, soit pecuniaire, qu'on dit amende, Multa, soit corporelle, Poena, du Grec poiné. Il se prend aussi pour travail de corps, Labor. Il a bien de la peine à faire cela. Multum laboris exanthlat in ea re agenda. Et pour la fatigue, Opera, comme, Voila un escu pour vostre peine, Pro opera quam nauasti, aureus hic nummus tibi merces esto. Penar Espagnol, pener, travailler, mettre peine à faire quelque chose.

Significantly enough, not a single mention to the notion of *bodily suffering*, neither in the definition nor in the eighty bilingual contexts illuminating it is

made. Maybe deception hides in the erudite emphasis on Latin of the *Thesaurus* at a time in which people did not speak Latin any more, while it might have well been the case that *suffering* was actually present among the readings conveyed by everyday French PEINE at the time.

On the other hand, it might have also been the case that the meaning of the French noun was in fact *that* uncertain with regard to *suffering* for such a long time indeed. In any event, the expression of *bodily suffering* does *not* count (and has never counted) among the prototypical senses in French, whereas it is in fact *the* prototypical sense in PAIN – in turn *the* prototypical term in English for *bodily suffering*. Under the light of this evidence, it may be concluded that the historical evolution of PAIN in English is indeed intertwined with the historical evolution of other members of the domain of *suffering* in English such as its cognate PINE.

Closing

As sketched by the foregoing discussion, PAIN rapidly took root in the language after having taken advantage of the inherent traits in PINE to enter the English network of terms for *suffering*. The semasiological intersection of both terms not only accounts for the entrenchment of the loanword into the language, but also for the diachronic fate of both cognates. Thus, while PINE became restricted to a satellite position within the network, PAIN rocketed into full prototypicality within the domain and is still nowadays expanding its orbit of influence beyond the fuzzy boundaries of *suffering*. Likewise, a complex weave of meaning overlaps stands for the diachronic stripping of PAIN from its French cognate PEINE. The tug-of-war of semasiological profiles against the onomasiological setting of terms for *suffering* presented along these pages surely stands as yet another token of regularity in semantic change that belies the proverbial chaotic arbitrariness of the lexicon.

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