

On Semantic Change: The History of Sorrow and Sorry

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ABSTRACT

The present paper, in dealing with the changes undergone by two salient terms within the domain of *suffering* (namely, *sorrow* and *sorry*), aims at presenting a case study in lexical change within the framework of cognitive and historical linguistics. It will therefore be considered how these two terms have become interwoven in both form and meaning as a result of the diachronic reorganization of the domain over time. Thus, and in spite of their different etymological origins, *sorrow* and *sorry* have come to be perceived as extremely close together by the speaker of contemporary English. This paper will attempt to clarify the processes which motivated such a reorganization, while addressing the issue of polysemy and the crucial role it plays in semantic change.

1. INTRODUCTION

The history of the English language has witnessed how the term *sorrow*, which enjoys outstanding saliency within the cognitive and lexical domain of *suffering*, has become interwoven in both form and meaning with the term *sorry*. The fact that this has been so is far from surprising to the average speaker, as both terms share today the same lexical stem and belong to the same lexical network. To those speakers revisiting the language, however, the process undergone by these terms makes for fascinating brainstorming, as it only takes a look at an etymological dictionary to discover that—in spite of our shared intuition as speakers—the historic origin of both terms is far from the same. The immediate question is therefore why they have become en-

twined and how language has reflected this over the centuries. The following pages are an attempt to address this question.

2. THE DOMAIN OF SUFFERING IN OLD ENGLISH

The conceptual and lexical domain of *suffering*, from which the terms *sorrow* and *sorry* have been highlighted, was a complex network at the time of Old English. The terms *sorrow* (Æ *sorg*) and *sorry* (Æ *sárig*) shared the meaning of mental *suffering*, while the physical aspects of the notion were carried by the terms *sore* (Æ *sár*), *ache* (Æ *æce*) or *harm* (Æ *hearm*). The term *sore* (Æ *sár*) also conveyed connotations of mental *suffering*, although these senses were not by far as salient as the physical ones. In spite of *sorrow* and *sorry* being the terms upon which the main emphasis will be placed, it has been considered appropriate to refer throughout this paper to a number of other terms for *suffering* in an attempt to better understand how the lexical domain within which *sorrow* and *sorry* are ingrained has changed over time. Of all these, the term *sore* will be the one mostly referred to in this analysis due to its formal (as well as semantic) resemblance to *sorrow* and *sorry*.

Each of the focused terms referred to above (*sorg*, *sárig* and *sár*) provided in OE different semantic and morphological aspects so as to produce a coherent whole. Morphologically speaking (and disregarding verbs in all cases) there existed a large degree of overlap among the terms. The term *sorrow* (OE *sorg*) could only function in OE as a noun, although it could also take a suffix to form the adjective *sorrowful* (OE *sorgful*) and the adverb *sorrowly* (OE *sorhlice*), whereas the term *sorry* (OE *sárig*) could only function as an adjective. The term *sore* (OE *sár*) could function as noun, adjective and adverb in OE. The paradigm was in this way filled up.

- (1) sorrow: 971 *Blickl. Hom.* 103: *Ne biþ fæcr sar ne ʒewinn, ... ne sorz ne wop*
- (2) sorry: c 888 K. Ælfred *Boeth.* XXXV: *Ða sceolde se hearpere weorðan swa sariz fæc he ne meahste onʒemong oðrum monnum bion*
- (3) (a.i.) sore (physical) (sb.): c 825 Vesp. *Psalter* XXX.II: *Asprong in sare lif min*
 (a.ii.) sore (mental) (sb.): c 888 K. Ælfred *Boeth.* Vii: *Mið ðæm mæstan sare his modes*
 (b.i.) sore (physical) (adj.): c 888 K. Ælfred *Gregory's Past.* C. xxxviii. (1871) 272: *We wieton ðæt sio dieʒle wund bið sarre ðonne sio opene*
 (b.ii) sore (mental) (adj.): a 900 Cynewulf *Christ* 209: *Nu þu ealle forlæt sare sorʒceare*

- (c.i.) sore (physical) (adv.): c 1000 *Ag. Ps.* (Thorpe) lxxvii. 33: *Ponne he hi sare sloh, þonne hi sohton hine*
- (c.ii.) sore (mental) (adv.): a 1000 *Cædmon's Gen* 1257: *Me þæt cynn hafað sare abolzen*

Semantically speaking, as usually happens in lexical fields concerning emotions, no fixed boundaries can be drawn due to the highly polysemous nature of the terms. As a matter of fact, no absolutely fixed boundaries can ever be drawn, for «word meaning is not autonomous but exists against a background of our general assumptions about the world [...] and word meaning is frequently prototype-based» (Sweetser 1990:16) and thus fuzziness is not the exception but the norm. According to Strauss (1985:575):

the core of a semantic field is comparable with an idealized cognitive model which we can describe as the prototypical centres of the field. About this core are grouped in a continuous succession words and word groups [...] moving outwards in circles of increasing vagueness.

It is worth remembering at this point the crucial role of polysemy in language change, which in the case of *sorrow* and *sorry* motivated the semantic, and even formal, reorganization from which the merging of both terms springs. Another consequence of such polysemy is that, because of the blurring of meaning and also bearing in mind the functional overlap discussed above, the terms are organized in a complex network in which they interact with each other.

Regarding the semantics of the terms referred to above, the PHYSICAL-MENTAL distinction has already been mentioned. This constitutes one of the most significant semantic parameters within the network. The second one which will be considered here is the scale pertaining to the INTENSITY of the emotion described—a gradient along which the terms are placed and which accounts for their distinctiveness. The way in which the terms are presented as distinct from one another does not therefore rely on the traditional checklists of meaning, for according to Sweetser (1990:17):

word meaning cannot be fully analyzed into features, since the meaning and its frame are inseparable from each other. This frame may not be part of the lexical meaning itself, but our understanding of meaning crucially involves analysis of both the frames and the lexical senses which depend on them.

Let us first examine the situation in Old English. Regarding the first parameter, consider Table 1, which summarizes what has been described earlier on.

TABLE 1
Semantic distribution in OE (parameter 1)

	physical	mental
<i>sorg</i>		x
<i>sárig</i>		x
<i>sár</i>	x	(x)

Regarding the second parameter, there existed in OE a semantic distribution which largely differs from that of contemporary English, one in which the term *sorrow* was remarkably weaker than it is today (as it often conveyed the meaning 'care or anxiety') whereas the terms *sorry* and *sore* were placed much higher in the scale of intensity than they are nowadays. Such distribution, however, should not lead to the assumption of the term *sorrow* being inherently {weak} within the lexical network of *suffering*. To begin with, there were in OE words derived from *sorrow* (such as *sorrowful* and *sorrowly*) which were semantically {strong} indeed.

- (4) *Beowulf* 2119: *Grendeles modor siððode sorhfull*
 (5) c 1000 *St. Veronica in Cambr. Antiq. Soc.* (1851) 34: *He swa sorhlice hys lyf zeendode*

On the other hand, the more intense senses of the term *sorrow* already present in OE only underwent a gradual strengthening throughout the history of the English language. Such a process is to be regarded as the key for understanding the diachronic reorganization of the network, for the term *sorrow* came to develop a saliency which accounts for its role not only as a semantic but also as a formal attractor. Such an attraction is to be considered responsible for the identification of *sorrow* and *sorry* discussed in the present paper. At the time of OE, however, they were two terms related only in meaning but not in form. The term *sorrow* was the most inclusive one of them, for in conveying mental *suffering* at large it covered both weak and intense senses of the emotion, whereas *sorry* did not in OE (and contrary to the distribution found today) cover the weaker aspects of the notion. Neither of them, as has been

mentioned, referred to physical *suffering* at that time. Consider Table 2, which summarizes the situation concerning the parameter of intensity of the emotion of *suffering*.

TABLE 2
Semantic distribution in OE (Parameter 2)

	strong	weak
<i>sorg</i>	x	x
<i>sárig</i>	x	
<i>sár</i>	x	

The semantic distribution in Old English at large is summarized in Table 3, according to which the term *sorry* (OE *sárig*) was semantically closer to the term *sore* (OE *sár*) than it was to the term *sorrow* (OE *sorg*). With the former it shared both formal resemblance and a high position along the scale of intensity of *suffering*, whereas it only shared with the latter the expression of mental (rather than physical) *suffering*. Such closeness of the terms *sore* and *sorry* was but the result of their shared origin from West Germanic **sairig-* (a derivative of **sairaz*), which denoted both physical and mental *suffering*. Both semantic paths were retained by *sore*, whereas only the latter was preserved by *sorry* (in this sense similar to *sorrow*). Even though the term *sore* (OE *sár*) also conveyed mental aspects of the notion, this was a non-central meaning among those conveyed by this term, which from the earliest periods mainly referred to physical *suffering*, as opposed to the term *sorrow* (OE *sorg*, from a base meaning 'care'), which on the other hand was only mental at the time of OE, and remained mostly so over the history of the English language (as cognates like modern German *sorge* 'worry, sorrow' also did).

TABLE 3
 Semantic distribution in OE (Parameters 1 & 2)

	strong	weak
physical	<i>sár</i>	
mental	<i>(sár)</i> <i>sárig</i>	<i>sorg</i>

3. THE REORGANIZATION OF THE DOMAIN IN MIDDLE ENGLISH

The foregoing distribution, as it will be considered hereafter, did not survive the times of OE, for the relative position of the terms substantially changed over the centuries. This is only natural if we consider that emotions are not entities whose boundaries may be clearly delimited, but rather subject to a large degree of gradation and subtle fluctuation along a subjectively perceived scale. For this reason, much synchronic variation and diachronic change (understood as a continuum) are present in the linguistic expression of these emotions.

It is therefore no coincidence that the distinction between physical and mental *suffering* has become increasingly blurred throughout the history of the language, for both aspects are part and parcel of the same *embodied gestalt*. As both mental and physical *suffering* are deeply entwined in human perception, it is only natural that the language reflects this. Thus, the term *sorrow* (which in OE only referred to mental *suffering*) came in Middle English to acquire physical connotations too. The term *sorry* did not, but it came to be associated with sickness, thus somehow relating its meaning to that of physical *suffering* too.

In this respect it is significant to remember the fact that psychological states tend to derive their conceptual structuring and hence their vocabulary from physical ones (Traugott 1982; Sweetser 1990). Such directionality complies with the ways of metaphorical understanding and categorization of reality at large, in which abstract concepts are systematically conceived of in terms of more concrete ones and «things of the mind are often described by metaphors taken from the realm of visible things» (Diller 1994:220), as evi-

denced by the etymologies of terms for *suffering* in the English language (Buck 1949). These include notions such as *offense*, *pollution* (among the senses of the terms from which the term *ache* is derived), *narrowing* (in *anguish*), *hindrance* (in *distress*), *weight* (in *grief*), *penalty*, *punishment* (in *pain*), *carrying* (in *suffering*) and *twisting* (in *torture*), among others. These notions, closely related to physical experience, are metaphorically and metonymically related to the notion of *suffering*, and such correspondences –among others– are also present in the conceptualization of the domain at large, at least in the Western world: «there can be little doubt that the choice of metaphors and their relationship with metonymies is influenced by the cultural background as it has developed over the centuries» (Ungerer 1995:206).

The pattern described above, however, seems to be reversed in the case of *sorrow*, whose physical connotations –first documented in the fourteenth century (see example 10)– followed mental ones. This fact remains for the time being an open question. Nevertheless, it should be remembered how the term *sorrow* did from the beginning convey the sense of both mild and acute mental *suffering*, and thus it was a highly salient term within the domain. Also, and taking into account that mental *suffering* is an abstraction from physical *suffering*, it could be concluded that the latter is subsumed within the former, and thus the physical aspects (even if not documented in OE) were indeed present in the conceptualization of the term at that time already, or had been present in earlier languages before the origin of the English language. According to Stern (apud Lehrer 1985:285):

chronological discrepancies [...] are explained as due to the scantiness of the OE and ME texts... It is only about 1300 that there is a satisfactory supply of texts to illustrate the state of the language... In other cases, a meaning may have arisen in colloquial language, which is scarcely represented in our texts. Also, in some cases, the words are comparatively rare. In these circumstances, it is evident that a meaning may be much older than the earliest preserved record.

Moreover, recall that whereas physical *suffering* cannot be divorced from its source, mental *suffering* can, thus becoming an overwhelming feeling which in itself triggers physical *suffering* too. This is the likely reason why the term *sorrow* could afterwards be identified with other terms which did convey different facets of the notion of *suffering*, the physical one among them (in fact, even at the time of OE the term *sorrow* did refer to the highly concrete causes of the emotion, such as *loss*, *disappointment*, *trouble* and so on).

Also because of the high centrality of the term *sorrow* the adjective *sorry* changed its form to resemble that of the former. It has already been discussed how the term *sorry* was in OE closer to the term *sore* than it was to *sorrow*. Had the situation remained as such, the spelling of the term *sorry* would have been **<sory>* and it would have been pronounced /səʊrɪ/ today. This,

however, is not the case, for the term *sorry* was remodeled after *sorrow*. This happened because of the semantic attraction that the term *sorrow* exerted upon the term *sorry*. Both of them shared mental *suffering* as their most prototypical sense, *sorrow* being the one which included in OE both weak and strong connotations of the emotion. This term acquired in ME a consistent [strong] nature and came to convey connotations of deep *suffering* in most contexts, as opposed to the other terms, which came to denote much weaker aspects of the notion of *suffering* (the term *sorry* in particular, which carried a sense of apology similar to that of today which diminishes the emotional impact of the term). In this way, the term *sorrow* gradually gained cognitive relevance as it denoted stronger and more comprehensive aspects of the notion, and thus it became a highly prototypical member around which the other terms in the constellation were reorganized: «diachronic changes within the fields and between related fields can probably be explained as changes of the prototypical centres of the fields» (Strauss 1985: 575). One of the most dramatic instances of such a reorganization was the process undergone by the term *sorry*, which weakened its meaning under the pressure of the strengthened *sorrow* and reshaped its form to resemble that of the most prototypical member of the constellation. This happened, as introduced above, at the time of Middle English. Let us now therefore turn to the way in which such a reorganization of the network took place from that time onwards.

4. FORCES INVOLVED IN THE REORGANIZATION

I have already considered above how the semantic schema in which the terms *sorrow* and *sorry* were ingrained has dramatically changed from the times of Old English, and how it was in Middle English when this reorganization crystallized. As a result of such a process –which naturally did not happen in isolation– the term *sorrow* was strengthened, thus dragging *sorry* apart from *sore* and attracting it in both form and meaning. Let us now consider the influence exerted on such a process by a number of factors, among which the impact of a new term in the English language is outstanding. Such a term is the noun *pain* (OF *peine*), introduced in the late thirteenth century as a borrowing from French.

(6) 1297 R. Glouc. *Rolls* 7742: *Per to he nom gret peine of hom*

It might well be that the strength with which the new term *pain* spread was not merely the result of an extremely common phenomenon at the time of ME: the existence of an earlier word from the same stem (the OE verb *þīnian* 'pine' from L *poena*) made the French term take deep root in the English

language. As Jespersen (1909:88) points out, «in a few cases the process of assimilation was facilitated by the fact that a French word happened to resemble an old native one» (as happened with the OE verb *ceosan* 'choose', which «was supplemented with the noun *choice* from Fr *choix*). Regarding the term *pine*, according to the OED:877, «it is notable that the substantive has not yet been found in OE, where the derived verb *pinian* was common from an early period». Therefore, it might have been to fill the empty slot left by OE *pinian* in its nominal form that the French noun made room for itself. It provided a single word which, combining both the old essence of the language and the refined vigour of the conquering tongue, displaced the old tripartite system for denoting *suffering* described. Nevertheless, borrowing might have taken place even if such an empty slot had not been present in the language, for «to a large extent the early loans reflected what it was convenient or expedient to borrow, not what gaps needed to be filled» (Strang 1970:251). As a matter of fact, Clark Hall (1894:272) does include the nominal entry *pín* 'pain, anguish, torture' in his Anglo-Saxon dictionary. This was not the only noun testified in OE from the *pín*- stem, for there also existed terms such as *pínnes* 'torment', *pínury* 'torture' and *pínere* 'torturer' for denoting the notion of *suffering* or closely related ones (see above for a consideration of the way in which the notion of *torture* and some others are related to that of *suffering* within the domain). The gap hypothesis would therefore be discarded. Whatever the case may be (had the gap been present in the language or not) the fact remains that the ancestral meaning of the term *pain* (that is, *punishment*, today preserved in phrases such as *pain of death* or terms such as *penal*, *penalty*, *penance* or *penitence*) came to be enriched with that of *suffering* due to the influence of the inland verb *pine*.

Let us now focus on the newly-borrowed *pain*, which in itself conveyed the global meaning of the whole network. Once this term entered the language, semantic radicalization took place: shortly after *pain* had already gained ground, the other three terms discussed earlier on gradually sided with either physical or mental *suffering*. Even though the most significant meaning traits were preserved (that is, the noun *sore* prototypically denoted physical *suffering*, whereas both the noun *sorrow* and the adjective *sorry* expressed mental *suffering* – a much weaker feeling in the case of the latter) there happened a number of changes. As Bréal (apud Samuels 1972:65) points out:

the survival by differentiation of two forms originally synonymous may depend on many factors: the privilege of occurrence of each may be narrowed, or one of the forms may be increasingly selected in a meaning hitherto marginal; slight differences in contextual meaning may be gradually magnified, or the process of extension in the direction of connotations hitherto dormant may be hastened by the presence of the other (newer) form.

Let us examine this semantic reduction from a chronological perspective and always bearing in mind the fact that these processes took place, closely interwoven with each other, over a very extended period of time, during which coexistence and withdrawals often occurred: «total obsolescence of [...] a [...] word is [...] rare, the usual consequence being the loss of one or more meanings. Some of the best-known examples are of changes spread over many centuries» (Samuels 1972:75).

According to data, the term *sore* –as a noun– was probably the first one to glide, moving towards denoting physical aspects of the notion of *suffering* only. By the turn of the sixteenth century (that is, some two centuries after the French word *pain* had entered the English language) it had become obsolete as mental uneasiness. Thus, a term which had meant ‘*mental suffering, pain or trouble; grief, sorrow, anxiety or the cause of this*’ since c 888 is documented as such for the last time in 1575:

- (7) 1575 G. Gascoigne *Glasse Governm.* Wks 1910 II . 66: *Store is no sore, as the proverbe saith*

On the other hand, the term continued to be used in the sense of ‘*a painful place*’ up to the present day. Such a phenomenon has a parallel in the process undergone by the same term in its adjectival form, which from the fifteenth to sixteenth century onwards mainly refers to ‘*aching parts of the body*’, whereas the mental uses gradually lost strength and became mainly archaic or dialectal.

While this process was taking place, the noun *sorrow* was already expanding its orbit of influence. Thus it moved towards signalling the notion of *suffering* at large (even though the physical connotations which came to be conveyed by *sorrow* during this period remained non-prototypical and soon disappeared). As early as the fourteenth century, the two original meanings of the word (that is, ‘*deep sadness*’ and, in the weaker sense frequent in OE, ‘*care or anxiety*’) had developed others. The former (and most prototypical) may be divided into three main streams:

1. *Distress of mind caused by loss, suffering, disappointment, grief, deep sadness or regret* (the original meaning first documented in *Beowulf*):

- (8) *Beowulf* 1322: *Ne frin þu æfter sælum; sorh is zeniwod Denizea leodum*

2. *Mourning*, first in c 1340:

- (9) c 1340 R. Rolle of Hampole *Pr. Consc.* 3218: *Grete dole þay mak, somtyme, and sarowe. For þay may nathyng begg ne borowe*

3. *Physical pain*, first in 1377:

- (10) 1377 W. Langl. *Piers Plowman* B. xx. 42: He seyde in his sorwe on þe selve Rode, Bothe fox & foule...

Of these three, the one denoting '*physical suffering*' ceased to be used before the turn of the fifteenth century, and it is last documented as such in 1398. Once the physical connotations were lost, and taking into account the progressive strengthening discussed above, the term *sorrow* came to express acute mental *suffering* from that time onwards.

- (11) 1398 J. Trevisa *Barth. De P. R.* XVI. XXX. (Tollem. MS.): *Pe reed [celidony] helpeþ. azens woodnesse and azens olde sorowe*

Nonetheless, this early attempt to reduce the term *sorrow* to its mental connotations had not a systematic character for all the senses of the word until the seventeenth century. Thus, it is only in 1599 that we find *sorrow* meaning «*mischief, harm, hurt, damage*» for the last time: according to Samuels (1972:76), wide polysemy may be tolerated in a word «but as soon as it [is] extended to a complex meaning with an individual twist, all the other meanings [have] to come to an end».

- (12) 1598-1600 R. Hakluyt *Voy.* II. I. 35: *Who yet notwithstanding as he was downe mangled their feete and legges, and did the Saracens much sorrow*

The reason for this late reduction in the meaning of the word most probably lies in the strength the term conveyed from the earliest periods: this made for the long retention of its global nature as opposed to that of the newcomer *pain*, to which it finally yielded.

By about that same period (seventeenth century), the adjective *sorry*, which had been present in the language since early times signalling mental *suffering* (see example 14) had lost its more intense senses, thus siding with that weak sense the term *sorrow* had in OE. The term *sorry* has preserved such a weakened meaning (that is, the expression of mere sympathy or apology) up to the present day.

- (13) *Beowulf* 2447: *Ponne he zyd wrece, sarizne sang*

Thus, two terms –*sorrow* and *sorry*– which had come to be similar in form because of the semantic attraction of the former upon the latter, became

linked in the eyes (and minds) of the speakers. As such they have come to be felt as two sides of the same reality (that of mental *suffering*), their placement along the scale of intensity being the only difference between them.

5. THE RESULTING STRUCTURE OF THE DOMAIN

Let us summarize the situation of the network as it was some four centuries after the introduction of the word *pain*. The notion of *suffering* –in body or mind– was covered by the term *pain*, which combined both physical and psychical senses. It has remained as such to our day, although due to the strength of the term *sorrow* (which expressed intense mental *suffering*) it tended to be associated with physical disturbances rather than mental ones. The term *sore*, which nevertheless did not retain any of its mental meanings, also conveyed physical aspects of the notion of *suffering*. Finally, the term *sorry* built a bridge between *sorrow* and *sore*, for it mainly denoted mental and moral senses, but shared with the latter a weaker intensity of the feeling described.

Such a reorganization of the network had taken place by the seventeenth century and involved not only the three terms upon which attention has been focused, but also some others which remain beyond the scope of the present paper. Nevertheless, a reference to the term *grief* has been included here due to the similarities it shows with the changes undergone by the terms considered beforehand. It is expected that in doing so the case study presented in this paper will be better understood.

The term *grief*, a word with no formal connection to the former ones but clearly related in meaning, was introduced as a borrowing from French in the thirteenth century, and referred to both physical and mental *suffering*.

(14) a 1225 *Ancr. R.* 392: *Ne muhte he mid lesse gref habben ared us?*

By the seventeenth century, however, most of the physical senses had become obsolete and it only retained its mental connotations. The process of reduction followed the same steps and chronological timing as the one considered beforehand, and the relationship between both of them is further reinforced by the reduction which later took place in the meaning of the term. As a result of such a reduction, *grief* has a more limited sense in contemporary English: ‘*deep or violent sorrow, caused by loss or trouble*’ –as opposed to mental *suffering* in general. This process was, again, probably due to the pressure the term *sorrow* exerted upon all words meaning ‘*mental suffering or distress*’, which finally became satellites around the most powerful one. As supported by Lehrer (1985:286):

semantically related words are more likely to undergo parallel semantic changes than semantically unrelated ones precisely *because* of their semantic relationships. Semantic relationships tend to remain constant, so that if one word changes meaning, it will drag along other words in the domain.

6. CONCLUSION

So far, the historical evolution of the terms *sorrow* and *sorry* within their semantic context has been presented. Therefore, it has been observed how in OE the term *sorry* was closer to *sore* than it was to *sorrow*, and how from ME onwards, *sorry* came to be closer to *sorrow*, not only in its semantics but also in its form. There still remains the question of justifying why the term *sorry* did not follow *sore* – an etymologically related term – in its historical development (with which it shared in OE form and proximity along the semantic scale of intensity) and did on the contrary follow *sorrow* (with which in the early times it was only connected inasmuch as they both referred to mental suffering).

As presented above, the chances are that the reasons for such an identification are mostly semantic rather than formal, for there had been precedents in this respect since the times of OE. Because of the unmarkedness which characterized this semantic network until the seventeenth century, both words shared a good many features. As a matter of fact, the term *sorrow* as a noun was used in place of the adjective *sorry* as late as 1470, evidencing how close these two terms appeared in the mind of the speaker.

- (15) a 1470 H. Parker *Dives & Pauper* (W. de W. 1496) I. liii. 93/2:
Iudas was sorowe thereof & grutched

Furthermore, from a phonological point of view, the change of *á* to *ó* and the subsequent shortening have given the adjective *sorry* an apparent formal connection with the noun *sorrow*:

- (16) 1529 J. Frith *Antithesis* 303: *So that they go away sorrier and sicker in soul and in purse than they were before*

Therefore, it is only natural (which is to say, cognitively motivated) that the terms *sorrow* and *sorry*, both belonging to the same semantic network, might have been perceived as extremely close even though their historical origin be different. Because of this, the term *sorry* (which from the early times had laid a bridge between *sorrow* and *sore*) continued to do so up to our days. However, it was gradually distanced from the term *sore* and increasingly attracted in both form and meaning by the semantically powerful *sorrow*. In this

way, two historically distinct words have become intertwined. And so goes the (hi)story of *sorrow* and *sorry*.

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