

Two poems on pain

■ Cite as: *CMAJ* 2019 November 18;191:E1282. doi: 10.1503/cmaj.190815

Bilingual pathways

French people are so hard core they eat *pain* for breakfast

— Popular meme

pain by any other name would still be
bread
can we unlanguage
associative pathway
unfeel
into sourdough
rye
pumpernickel
rewrite
golden crust
carbohydrate
as synaptic
truth

With apologies to those with congenital analgesia

[Note: the rules of the dance are simple: if the caller announces a circumstance that has occurred in the lifetime of you or your partner, you must leave the dance floor at once.]

...

Anyone with pain

— Michael Ondaatje, *Elimination Dance (an intermission)*

Eliminating those with pain
leaves no one behind.
So ends Ondaatje's dance,
proclaiming we are one
in this experience,
esoteric & mundane as it is.
This companionship says nothing
of degree.
Compare a sore tooth to a seizure.
Broken clavicle to cystic fibrosis.
Stubbed toe to fibromyalgia.
Say you never danced to begin with,
in pain enough you couldn't.
Watched with equal guilt & envy,
congenital analgesia on your mind,
that with it you might have danced
& danced & danced
& never even known
you ached.

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This article has been peer reviewed.

