MORE ACCIDENTAL TAUTONYMS

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Curl’d minion, dancer, coiner of sweet words! ~ Matthew Arnold

log•o•dae•da•ly...: arbitrary or capricious coinage of words ~ Merriam-Webster

Tautonyms—i.e., words, phrases, etc. whose spelling is tautological— are of two kinds: terms such as froufrou and Pago Pago, which were fashioned from two or more identical subunits, and terms such as hotshots and valval, which were not. In the first group, tautological spelling is automatic, while in the second group its occurrence is a matter of chance. The term “heterologous tautonyms” (heterologous means “consisting of different elements”) might be a good name for the latter group, were it not for the fact that some of its members (e.g., testes, tsetse) appear to be unitary in structure, and not compounds at all. In the November 2008 Word Ways, Jeff Grant dubbed the second group “accidental tautonyms” in his article of the same name, in which he listed some five dozen existing or coined examples of such words. The present article, which proposes to take up where Grant’s leaves off in the coinage of “accidental” tautonyms, is indebted to him for both its topic and for his nicely apt name for these interesting artifacts.

In his article, Grant remarked that readers could surely add to his list of examples of accidental tautonyms, and such is indeed the case. On the logical premise that if dozens of examples were good, hundreds more can be no worse, this paper considerably augments his collection. There are some significant differences in our approaches, however. For one, whereas Grant’s listing encompasses everything from dictionary-attested terms to his personal coinages, mine restricts itself to more or less novel coinages, eschewing any words known by me to be entries in any print dictionary. This was done, in part, to avoid having to deal with definitions, which would not only have immensely bloated the article but which are also, in my opinion, generally superfluous in the case of logological coinages. After all, who needs another’s assistance to imagine fitting definitions for speciously-formulated words that have no established meanings and which were not coined in response to any real need? Readers can doubtless shift well enough for themselves in this regard, the only caveat being that where a word element has more than one meaning, its intended meaning may sometimes be a less common one. In the coinage prigsprigs, for example, “prig” is meant to refer to the thief or pilferer of British slang; hence, a “prigsprig” might plausibly be, say, some small wooden implement of a kind typically used by thieves.

In the course of inventing such coinages, one encounters no scarcity of potential lexical building blocks; the trick is to find combinations that make some sort of semantic sense. Having found such a combination, the next question is how it ought to be written—solidly, or with a hyphen, or simply left as two words. Although solid constructions were always preferred, there were nonetheless several cases in which hyphens seemed requisite, and a great many others in which no joining together at all seemed justified. Consequently, the following listing is divided into three major categories: solidly-written tautonyms, hyphenated tautonyms, and tautonymic phrases.
A. Solidly-Written Tautonyms

(In this list, strict alphabetical order is sometimes ignored in order to permit uninflected forms to appear before their inflected variants. The asterisked words were all previously noted in Jeff Grant’s Nov. 2008 *Word Ways* article, “Accidental Tautonyms.”)

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B. Hyphenated Tautonyms

abbé-dabbed eigne-deigned pier-spiers slobbers-lobber
age-rager eigne-reigner Pepsi-apepsia squitters-quiter
aide-raider erne-derned raft-ingrafting strollers-troller
ain’ t-saints ice-diced rain-ingraining taxi-ataxia
almoner-salmoners Ouse-doused Ross-ingrossing then-Athena
Angle-dangled Ouse-rouser scape-escapee uke-ducked
co-decode owl-yowly slavers-laver Ulf-ingulfing
ducat-educate pa-spas

C. Tautonymic Phrases

Tautonymic phrases, which are nearly always “accidental” in nature, are a fascinating tribe. In the sampling of this engaging genre that follows, the sample is divided into four categories: general phrases, anthroponomics, affix-enabled phrases, and short tautonymic sentences.

1. General Phrases

ace racer educing seducings educing seducings
ampler samplers elude deluded enate senates ever severs
da lay, à la Malayalam gauntleting aunt let in gauntleting aunt let in
dow pastag dim, aged image hairy sires
bay abaya hearing shearings hearing shearings
baying baying "shettings!" hearing shearings
a star dastard Iberian Siberians Iberian Siberians
a lay, à la Malayalam icily Sicily’s icily Sicily’s
killing scilling icily Sicily’s icily Sicily’s
chilling schillings idle sildes idle sildes
cold scolders i.e., died i.e., died
coot scots ill sills ill sills
killing scilling insect-sin sects insect-sin sects
killing scilling inverse sin-verses inverse sin-verses
killing scilling irenic sirencis irenic sirencis
killing scilling lake slakes lake slakes
killing scilling lapel ape lapel ape
killing scilling limps in, glimpsing limps in, glimpsing
killing scilling litter slithers litter slithers
killing scilling liver slivers liver slivers
killing scilling low-down slowdowns low-down slowdowns
killing scilling lusher slurshers lusher slurshers
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killing scilling Saudi’s Audi Saudi’s Audi
killing scilling sauger’s auger sauger’s auger
killing scilling Saxon’s axon Saxon’s axon
killing scilling scabs’ cab scabs’ cab
killing scilling scamps’ camp scamps’ camp
killing scilling scants cant scants cant
2. Anthroponomic Phrases

A gift to wordplay from lexicographers is the useful word anthroponomy, "a branch of onomastics that consists of the study of personal names." Short anthroponomic tautonymic phrases tend to be either characterizers ("doled Ole") or possession-noters ("Diana’s Indiana sin"): 

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*One of several known spellings of his name
3. Affix-Enabled Phrases

“Hi! I’m Mick in Gimmicking here at the G’s-R-Us Emporium, and I’d like to invite you to bring the missus and come on down to G’s-R-Us and meet me and some of our other friendly staff, such as... Arden in Gardening, Inger in Gingering, her kin in Gherkining, Ladd in Glad-ding, Nash in Gnashing, old Smith in Goldsmithing, Oral in Goraling (mind the gorals, they’re testy), Raft in Grafting, Ray in Graying, Rip in Griping, “String” in G-Stringing and many more, including (if you’re the dilatory type) our congenial collections guru, Unsel in Gunseling!

“And just between us, while you’re on the premises, you really ought to take a peek at the... ash in Gashing, asp in Gasping, ass in Gassing, “ear” shift in Gearshifting, host in Ghosting, lass in Glassing, loby in Global Fishing, lory in Glorying, loss in Glossing, offer in Goffering, old brick in Goldbricking, rat in Grating, rout in Grouting, “riffing” room in Griffin-Grooming, rift in Grifting, rump in Grumping, runt in Grunting, umbo in Gumboing and—the rest of our merchandise always looks a lot better after you’ve seen it—utter slop in Gutter-Sloping!

“And if you’ve brought the kids along, why, there’s plenty here to keep them entertained! If nothing else, they can...lean in Gleaning, low in Glowing, listen in Glistening for a slight in Gas-lighting, litter in Glittering, loom in Glooming, lower in Glowering, rant in Granting, rap Nel in Grapneling, rasp in Grasping, row in Growing, ravel in Gravel—” [Click!]

Notice, in the foregoing, the profusion of –ing suffixes; –ing, like a number of other affixes, can be exploited to generate an entire family of tautonymic phrases. Here are some other examples of such affix-enabled tautonymic phrase (and sometimes sentence) families:

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<td>ad-</td>
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<td>sad diction’s addiction</td>
<td>Is charge discharged?</td>
<td>expert sex perts</td>
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<td>sad dresser’s addresser</td>
<td>Is courage discouraged?</td>
<td>extant sextants</td>
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<td>sad mission’s admission</td>
<td>Is “like” disliked?</td>
<td>sex-changer’s exchanger</td>
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<td>sad mixture’s admixture</td>
<td>Is tribute distributed?</td>
<td>sex-citation’s excitation</td>
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<td>sad option’s adoption</td>
<td>Is Em Bodie disembodied?</td>
<td>sex-tract’s extract</td>
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<td>sad verb’s adverb</td>
<td>-ism: Oral is moralism. Ental is mentalism. Old, avian, is Moldavianism! A “niche” is Manicheism? -ist: Error is terrorist. Reason is treasonist. Hither is thitherist. Ravi sat— he is, Travis, a theist!</td>
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Both with and without a preceding apostrophe, the suffix –s seems endlessly productive of tautonymic words, phrases and sentences; as may have been noticed, in fact, the great majority of the examples cited in this article employ it. Here are some slightly longer –s-enabled tautograms:

A do-sa-do’s a dos-a-dos. “Do...as pirates may do!” aspirates May. Hiding, izzards hid in gizzards. Lacedaemonian simps, lace daemon Ian’s imps!

Now goggles...snowgoggles! peculation speculations “Proximate’s” approximate, sap! sin-tractability’s intractability Sir, rationality’s irrationality! Sir, religion’s irreligion! Sir, responsibility’s irresponsibility! strikebreakers’ trike-breaker (“Sunder stands, understand?”) trike-breaking strikebreakings U.S. pension suspensions witch-back switchbacks
4. Short Tautonymic Sentences

One might define “short” tautonymic sentences as those that consist of a single parent word or phrase plus one or more smaller words that were dissected from it, with nothing more added.

Add in gadding.
Allie dallied.
Amble, rambler!
Andy is handyish...
Angles sang less?
Anita’s amanita, Sam!
Ankles sank less.
“Annotate!” Dan notated.
“Antidote, Dan?” Ti doted.
“Apostle rap,” ostler?
Apperceive rap, perceiver!
Apt, O raptor!
Ashe dashed.
Carve scarves?
Dante “loped,” antelope?
Den raged, enraged.
Den silaged ensilage.
Di eddied.
Diluted, I lute.
Diseased is ease.
Dispraised is praise.
Eat heath!
Educe, reducer!
Egress, O regressor!
Eject, O rejector!
Elapse, relapser!
Evolve, revolver!
Eulse, revulser!
Hammer shammers!
Hank shanks.
Hark—sharks!
Have shaves.
Heave sheaves.
Herein, she reins.
Hi, Ohio!
Hough thought.
Humph, ump!
I am Stam’s!
Ignore “signores.”
Incur sin, curs!
Ireland, sir—elands?
Isabelle is a belle!
Is Grace disgraced?
Is Honoré dishonored?
I’ve dived.
Kate skates?
Laps elapse.
Lass, work in glassworking.
Lumber slumbers.
Nip, pet, snippets.
No piano, Pia?
Obscure, Rob’s curer…
Ob sobs!
Opinion so pinions!
Oregano, Regan?
“Overcharge!” Dover charged.
Oviedo vied.
O, we’re dowered?
Palls appall, sap!
Parents apparent, sap?
Peals appeal, sap!
Pears “appear,” sap?
Portions apportion, sap!
Poses appose, sap!
Praises appraise, sap!
Prizes apprise, sap!
Probate approve, sap!
Remit, eremite!
Rob later, oblate!
Rout rager outrage!
Sad Aden’s a den.
“Sad”—age’s adage?
Saddling’s addling.
Sad duces adduce.
Sad judges adjudge.
Sad ministers administer.
Sad verse’s adverse.
Safire’s afire!
Sages age.
Sailing’s ailing.
Sap aches, Apache!
Sap an age’s apanage!
Saturn’s a turn.
Scarsdale’s cars, Dale?
Scurvy’s curvy.
Seven’s even?
Sex acts exact.
Sexists exist.
Sex or cists, exorcist?
Sheldon’s held on.
Sherman’s her man!
Sherwood’s “her” wood?
She’s he?
Shipmates hip, mate?
Shovers hover.
Shun Gary’s Hungary.
Sin-flames inflame.
Sin-snares insnare.
Sin’s in!
Sinter censors, intercensor!
Sinter lopers, interloper!
Sir, Ma’s “Irma.”
Slacking’s lacking?
Slagging’s lagging.
Slingers linger.
Slogans, Logan?
Smelts melt?
Smews mew?
Smolts molt?
Snick’s nick!
Snowdrifts now drift.
So dense’s Odense!
So lives Olive.
Sonya’s on ya!
Spatterdocks patter dock.
Spotters potter.
Staking’s taking.
Stalks talk?
Stampers tamper.
Strumpets trumpet.
Tingles sting less.
Tinkles stink less.
Unedible dun Ed I…bled.
Us, hush?
“Val” is medievalism, Edie!
Yearly, earl.