

QWAINTS

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Anthony Sebastian and Renee Merriam's description of an aberrant form of self-referential words in the August **Word Ways** as "a unique variety of word-like letter sequences" lacks punch. These verbal delights, originated by Darryl Francis, require an apt single-word name if they are to achieve the popularity they deserve.

With this in mind, I telephoned Darryl with my own choice of name for them: **qwaints**. However, he immediately pointed out that Chaucer had used that word in its only known sense as a noun in an especially bawdy passage in *The Miller's Tale*. "But not with a W," I replied, "the Middle English spelling as **qwaint** never had that particular unmentionable connotation. Furthermore, **qwaint** is more than a spelling form which reinforces its intrinsic quality of looking quaint. It had, in the days when it was so spelt, the additional meaning of 'ingeniously designed'."

Darryl accepted my argument and so, in the tradition of Dmitri Borgmann (who renamed Lewis Carroll's Doublets as Word Ladders), I wish to present a few Qwaints of my own to the collection of "ingeniously designed self-descriptive word-like letter-sequences possessing the quality of the words suggested":

| | | |
|-------------|--------------------|------------------|
| greed | mi££ionaire | inelastick |
| exclamation | INLeT | slowth |
| sp ce | fffreezing | annoise |
| dsylexia | metricatl0n | dynamight |
| ampers& | caMel | psighchoanalysis |
| shorthnd | 1pq | prufe reeder |
| boob | Rnst Vincnt Wright | |

together with one which has appeared in literature ever since it was coined in the sixteenth century in the singular form:

lithp

and the plural (nineteenth century):

lithpth

which reinforces the case for having an historical word to describe this delightful form of word play.