COINCIDENTAL SELF-SYNONYMY

ANIL
Perth, Australia

The February 2003 Kickshaws (03-54) defined self-synonymy as two synonyms—if any exist—that are spelled the same but are unrelated etymologically. David Silverman in an earlier Kickshaws (74-108) stated that if two words are homographic (and homophonic) synonyms they must be the same word. This seemingly obvious dictum would be refuted by a self-synonym pair. They’re the same but not same. David Morice compared this idea to a linguistic Möbius strip. Schizograms is another apt name for such split personalities, but that coinage I reserve for coincidental contronyms (part III), where it applies doubly.

To search for such convergent evolution, I’ve examined every word with two or more bold listings in the Macquarie Australian Dictionary, Rev.3rd ’01 (Mq) for meaning affinity and etymological difference. Hits were cross-checked in Chambers Dictionary of Etymology ’88 (CDE), Random House Unabr. ’66 (RH), Webster NI 3rd ’61+add.’86 (W3), Webster’s New Twentieth Century Unabr.,World,’47 (NTC) and as many as appear in Encyclopedia of Word and Phrase Origins ’97 Facts on File: NY (EWO) and the Cassel Dictionary of Slang ’98 (CDS). When these sources disagree I tend to favour Mq and CDE, presuming they reflect more recent research, which ain’t necessarily so. Some of the uses noted are missing altogether in the older dictionaries. And of course some of the mostly IndoEuropean pairs below may be related ‘pre-dictionary’. For readers not interested in etymology I offer a more philosophical question: why are you here?

I. SELF-SYNONYMY or Polysynonymy

The search turned up a great many cases of self-affinity, of which a few seem to qualify as actual self-synonyms. I’m surprised and gratified there were any. Synonymy may involve only certain secondary usages of some words. Check your dictionary if you have doubts. But no two words can share all of each other’s subtleties. In many cases (lb) the bigger question is whether they are truly unrelated or simply doublets (same root, different route into English).

Ia. Unrelated (?)  

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>word</th>
<th>common meaning</th>
<th>root 1</th>
<th>root 2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>halt</td>
<td>Pause.</td>
<td>Stop, pause. &lt;G halt hold</td>
<td>Falter, hesitate. &lt;OE healt &lt;Gmc lame small opening, peephole or ‘loophole’ ?&lt;MD lupon peer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>loop</td>
<td>circle, hole</td>
<td>closed line w. opening inside &gt;Gael./Ir. lub bend</td>
<td>Capture in net. &lt;OE/Gmc.net ?&lt;L nodus in “parting shot” &lt;Parthian(s), warriors who fired backward as they retreated for animals &lt;OE pen(n) ? by” 2 (CDE)--a deliberate self-synonym!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>net</td>
<td>Obtain.</td>
<td>Profit, clear, nett. &lt;neat &lt;F/Ir.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>parting</td>
<td>departing</td>
<td>&lt;Part. (see dart in V)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>pen</td>
<td>escape-proof</td>
<td>for convicts &lt;penitence &lt;L</td>
<td>for animals &lt;OE pen(n) ? by” 2 (CDE)--a deliberate self-synonym!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>enclosure</td>
<td>[1 &lt;penitentiary but “influenced</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>policy</td>
<td>program, rules</td>
<td>plan of action &lt;L politia polity</td>
<td>insurance policy &lt;ML apodixa receipt says 2 influenced by 1. (see above)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

[< = from, ?< = possibly from, <> = origin uncertain, > = akin to, compare]
prized of treasure Praised. < L pretiare > price Pri(s/z)ed booty. < L prehendre capture
rapt keenly carried away by < L raptus <wrapped up in < wrap < wry obs. vb to
absorbed in carried off > rape, rapture cover + lappe ME vb to fold
[2 is a recent contraction of wrapped, only in Mq 3rd, not 2nd (‘87) Modelled on 1?]
root Unearth. Pull up from the soil by the roots. < OE/Icel. rot
rout Drive out. Defeat. < L rupta broken Root out. < snout (see above)

Lb. Possibly Related

**conductor** leader < L director < L
[2 is only in Mq 3rd. Its Portuguese origin suggests it’s the same word as 1 or at least a doublet.]

**dash** Confound. “Confound (it)” < damn < ME dasshe > Scan. daska flap, slap
[W3 lists damn in 2; in RH 1<d--n, euphemism for damn ie < the punctuation mark=same root as 2.]

**indent** Indent. Depress, dint. < in- + dent1 < ME dente dint, hollow Make a recess in (coastline, paragraph). < en+dent2 F < L dens tooth (see III)
[1=2, CDE only] hog cheek meat < OE ceole throat precursor in ME jol head (CDE only.).]

**jowl** cheek jaw, cheek < OE ceafjl jaw < ME dente dint, hollow [1 and 2 may have a common
[1=2, CDE only] hog cheek meat < OE ceole throat precursor in ME jol head (CDE only.).]

**pick, pick** pointed perforator < ME pyke, OE pickax < ME pikk, OE pic ?>pink (See spike, prick in IV, pick, pike in V.)

**pike** tools picing prick > peck pickax < ME pikk, OE pic ?>pink (See spike, prick in IV, pick, pike in V.)
[ Pink, pick, peck, pike, spike and prick all sound related but mostly aren’t. Only W3 says 2 ?<1.]

**pike** Leave. (slang) Let down, abandon, pike out on. < ME pyke ?< Dan. pyge Depart quickly. ?< turnpike < late ME
[ Besides Mq, 1 is only in CDS tournepike road barrier, tollgate which seems to equate it with 2.]

The following five are possibly related in two or all of CDE, W3 and NTC:

**soil** dirt earth < L solum ground smudge, stain < L sus pig.

**stark** utter sheer < G/Icel. strong stark naked < ME start < OE stert butt
[ RH, EWO only. In others 2=1 or unlisted.]


**whisk** Brush rapidly. Sweep rapidly. < late ME quhiske < Scot. < Scan. wipe Whip with a straw brush. < ME wisk ?< Icel./G wisp of straw

**will** Wish/plan to. (auxil. vb) Would, shall. < OE wyllan ?< D/G < L velle wish Choose deliberately, think into being. < OE will(a) < Gmc volition

II. **COINCIDENTAL SELF-AFFINITY** or Homographic Cognates

A much larger number of word twins bear similarities of meaning but fall short of being synonyms. Another two dozen pairs matching as well as these were omitted because they were not the same parts of speech, verb tenses or voices. *

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>word</th>
<th>common theme</th>
<th>root 1</th>
<th>root 2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ajar</td>
<td>not right/tight</td>
<td>half open &lt;on char</td>
<td>at variance, out of harmony &lt; at jar</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>amice</td>
<td>clerical garb</td>
<td>collar, drape &lt;L</td>
<td>hood or cape &lt;Ar./Gmc v.&lt;MFalmuce</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>approve</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Improve (legal). &lt;MF apropre profit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>arm</td>
<td>extended reach</td>
<td>weapon &lt;OF/L tool</td>
<td>limb it's an extension of &lt;pan-IE join</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>base*</td>
<td>bottom</td>
<td>physical &lt;L/Gk basis pedestal</td>
<td>moral &lt;ML bassus low</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>bit</td>
<td>smallest iota</td>
<td>jot &lt;OE bita bite, morsel</td>
<td>computer data &lt;b(inary digit) [Pun on 1?]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>braze*</td>
<td>brass</td>
<td>make, cover with &lt;OE bræsian</td>
<td>solder (with) brass ?&lt;F brasier live coals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>broil</td>
<td>'Heat.' (see IV)</td>
<td>Cook by direct heat.</td>
<td>Embroil in a heated quarrel.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>chine</td>
<td>ridge/edge</td>
<td>1. rock ravine &lt;chink &lt;crevice</td>
<td>2. ridge, backbone &lt;MF eschine &lt;&lt;shin</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>3. protruding rim of barrel &lt;chime</td>
<td>&lt;ME chimb &lt;edge</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

[This is the only case of a grammatically-same triple affinitive--except for the unlikely sen in la.]

clamp | Press firmly. | Tread heavily. <clump<imit. | Hold down.<G/D klape cleat (see V) |
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>cob*</td>
<td>bird</td>
<td>male swan &lt;Scan. kubbi lump</td>
<td>gull, cobb ?&lt;D kob</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>cot*</td>
<td>abode</td>
<td>bed &lt;Hind. khat</td>
<td>cottage ?&lt;lcsl. kot hut</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>dale</td>
<td>stretch of land</td>
<td>valley (see V)</td>
<td>piece of land &lt;OE dal deal, portion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>defer</td>
<td>Put off.</td>
<td>Delay. &lt;L differre differ</td>
<td>Put off onto another. &lt;L deferre carry off</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>dilly</td>
<td>unusual</td>
<td>queer, crazy &lt;daft+silily v.?&lt;dill</td>
<td>remarkable&lt;delightful/delicious</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>fellah</td>
<td>ordinary person</td>
<td>fellow &lt;Scan. cattle, partner</td>
<td>peasant, labourer &lt;Ar. husbandman</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>flight</td>
<td>going off</td>
<td>flying &lt;OE flyht &lt;fleogan fly</td>
<td>fleeing &lt;OE fleon Both Gmc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>fold</td>
<td>Enclose.</td>
<td>...in an animal pen &lt;OE falod</td>
<td>Wrap. &lt;OE faldan fold, double over</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| forge | Make. (see V) | Fabricate.<L fabrica workshop | Make steady progress.<? |?
| found | 'Create.' | Set up. <L bottom | Mold molten metal. <L pour, melt |
| fudge | non-truth | fake, cheat <fadge ?<OE gefæg fit, OK | nonsense ?<LG fijsh begone [v. EWO |
| gob   | mouthful | lump<ME gob, gobbet lump, mouthful <OF/Galic >gobble | or v. poke (anagram) |
| hatch | opening | of eggs <Scan./G hecken | the mouth, spit <Br. colloq. ?<Ir./Gael. |
| hoick | sudden rise | Hoist abruptly. ?<hike | v.2 ?<1 in CDE |
| hold | container | pen (eg) <OE healdan <Gmc | trap door <OE hac gate |
| housing | cover, shelter | building<OE/Icel./Goth hus (log, traffic) jam ?>imit. | Clear throat and spit up. <hawk <imit. |
| jam | crowd | (?<champ, chomp | sub-deck, cargo hold ?<inf. by 1 |
| jib | Move laterally back and forth. | animal balking ?<OF kick | horse cloth ?<OF houce mantle [=1(W3)] |
| keel** | ship spines | ship part <Scan. kjölr | music jam <Mandingo/Wolof jam |
| kit | container | tool/parts case ?<MD/Nor. jug | crew [Mq, CDS v. 2<1 in RH, W3, CDE] |
| launch* | boating | floating of a boat <ONF lance | sailboat jibe ?<Dan. gibbe, D giiben |
| lush | "juicy" | tender ?<luscious, OE/OF loose | keeled barge <MD kiel ?<OE ceol ship |
| matted | not smooth | tangled (cover) <mat <L<Sem. | woven basket <Maori kete |

A boat <Sp.lancha <Malay [?sp. infl. by 1] loose, 'juiced' drunk ?<Lushington club | |
| dull surface <matt ?<L mattus sot stupid |
meal  food 
 mole  fleshy surface blemishes 
 mole  mammals, furry things 
mow  grass-related 
nap  sleeping 
nave  middle part 
ooze* fluid 
paddle* Cut water 
pall  Displease. 
patter* rapid beat 
pip  reproduction 
poles  linearity 
pool  collection 
pounce  Treat surfaces. 
press  Force. 
prop  holder up 
pry  Try to open. 
purl  curl (see V) 
rack  violence 
rate  Judge. 
repose* Rest. 
rim  perimeter (n) rel " (vb) 
river  carver 
rouse  Stir, fuss. 
scales  graduated measure 
school  a group 
scour  Traverse thoroughly. 
slip* slickness 
snuff  Disvalue. 
spire  conical structure 
stay* steadier, stiffener a brace <OE estayer support 
[Stay (vb, to remain <L stare) stand] >1 in CDE,W3, 
teem*  Be prolific. 
tot  a quantity 
trucker  trade delivery 
under** under

a feed <OE mæl a set time
on the skin <OE mal <OHG blemish
burrowing insectivore <MD/MLG mol <earth, tosser
Cut it down. <OE mawan
a snooze <OE hnappid
of a church <ME/L navis ship
juice <OE wos juice <slow flow
Row, oar ? <ML padela
Gloom-cover. <L pallium cloak
rapid speech <pater, reciting the paternoster
a plant rootstock <spot <?
long rods <L palus stake
of liquid <OE pol <Gmc/Celt.
Emboss metal. ? <punch
Weigh upon. <L pressare press
support. <ME/MD prope ?
Lever. <prise, prize (see la(1))
an eddy ? <Nor. purla bubble 
gush
strain, torture <ME rekke <MD
Evaluate. <L rata ratio <judge
Lie at rest. <L repausare pause
(a) an edge <OE rima
(b) Form a rim. <(a)
(strain or), <rush repel
for weight <OE sceleu shell, a balance pan <Gmc skal(a)
shoal of fish <OE/D troop, band
Rub clean. <Scan. rub & or <D <L excurean clean
Slide, be slippery. <escape
Express disdain. (obs.) <MD
snuff snuff, turn up nose at
steeple <OE spike, shoot <G/D spier ?spine >spear, spar
Be fertile, bear. <OE t(ie)man
offspring >team
total <L so much, entire, v. <
mark on a list (see also III)
market gardener <truck, trade
beneath <L infra
a milled food <OE melu <mill
on uterine wall (a dead ovum) <L mola
false conception, millstone
woman, Oz collog. <holl <Molly, Mary
[+ analogy w. slang "beaver", her furry bit]
Stack mowed heaps. <OE mugw swath
bedroll, Oz collog. <nap, cloth fuzz <OE
hoppa <pluck <infl. by knapsack
of a wheel <OE nafu hub <navel
soft mud, slime <OE wase mud
Dabble/swim in water. ?, ? <Gmc tramp
Make wearisome, distasteful. <appall rapid patting <pat (see spatter in IV)
[Is spewing out words a spitter spatter?] a seed <pippin, apple type
axis of sphere <L polus pole, axis, pivot
of cars etc <F poule stakes <hen
Sandpaper hats. <L pumex pumice
Force into military service. <prest (by confusion w. l.) <L praestare pre-pay
propeller <propel <L propellere
Delve, pry out info. <ME prien peer <
a looping, inverted knitting stitch ? <obs.
purl twist into cord, v. ? <purfl <thread
destruction <wrack <ME wrak wreck
Cast judgement on. ? <Sw. rata reject
Let (trust eg) rest in. <L repositus replace
(b) peritoneum <ligament [W3, NTC only]
(Ream, enlarge hole rim. <open up
[Both ? <L ripa steep bank in W3, CDE]
Upbraid. <roust, shout [in Mq, CDS only]
for short distances, other scalar quantities
< L scalae stairs, ladder, climb
of students <L schola leisure(!) <Gk
Search. <ME speed ? <OF/Nor. run
? <Icel. skur storm >shower
Apply potter’s slip. <slime ? <slope ? <1
Kill (collog), snuff out as a candle, thing
of no value. <ME snoffe ?, ? <Sw. snip
coiled structure <L spira coil
[eg, most spiral shells have a conical shape]
a mast rope/wire <ME stey <G/D stag
? both in Mq, RH and ? neither in NTC]
Pour, rain hard. <OE tom free from
<Scan. tomr to empty (see also III)
small amt. (orig. a child) ? <tottener v.
? <Icel. totrir dwarf v. other theories
food truck driver <wheel <Gk pulley <run
amidst <L inter [CDE only, 1=2 in rest]
vent opening aerating hole <let out air (see V)
wind direction (n, vb) tendency, trend OE air flow
wrinkle a fold, twist furrow <OE gewrinclod wind round, serrate ? <wring > wrench
yard practical space measure <OE g(i)erd < Gmc twig, spear, rod

aerating slit in coat < slit [ ? < infl. by 1 (W3)]
Change direction, curl,wend < OE windan
twist < OE wrencl wrench, turn, trick,
new idea [2 = 1 (incl. OE) in CDE, W3]
area of ground < OE geard enclosure
> D gaard garden

III. COINCIDENTAL CONTRONYMY or Schizogrammic Schizogrammy (double cross: #)

Self-synonyms were first conceived ('03-54) as the opposite or complement of self-antonyms or
contronyms. So it’s relevant to this article that some contronyms are also unrelated. The majority
of the nearly a hundreds of words or phrases that have appeared in WW as contronyms over the years
have related origins. The first five below don’t. The rest here I believe are new. This is a complete
list, all unrelated contronyms with separate listings in Mq. But declaring contronyms is subjective.

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<tr>
<th>word</th>
<th>meaning, root 1</th>
<th>opposite or complement, root 2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>cleave</td>
<td>Split. &lt;OE cleftan &gt; G klieben</td>
<td>Adhere. &lt; OE cleftan &gt; G kleben</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>clip</td>
<td>Cut. &lt; Scan. klippa cut</td>
<td>Clutch, bind. &lt; OE clyppan embrace</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>stem</td>
<td>Start from. &lt; trunk, stand, tribe top</td>
<td>Check, dam up. &lt; Scan. stop &gt; stammer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>boundless</td>
<td>Not tied down.</td>
<td>Ti(r)ed, having no bounce, can’t/ won’t leap off.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>bound</td>
<td>Tied down. &lt; Gmc &gt; Skt &gt; band</td>
<td>Leap off. &lt; L buzz &gt; bomb</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>earthbound</td>
<td>Tied to earth.</td>
<td>Headed to earth. &lt; Scan. get ready</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>clobber</td>
<td>Maul. ? &lt; club + slobber v. &gt; ? &lt; inimit.</td>
<td>Mend, patch. (obs.) &lt; Gael. clabar mud</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>dear*</td>
<td>of high regard &lt; OE deore dear, precious &gt; OHG tiurh costly</td>
<td>grievous &lt; OE deor severe, wild, deer &gt; OHG tiurh wild animal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>dent</td>
<td>projection</td>
<td>depression (see indent in lb for both)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>dredge</td>
<td>Remove from below, scoop up, rake. &lt; OE draggan drag, draw</td>
<td>Add from above, sprinkle (flour, eg) down on.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>forego*</td>
<td>Go before. &lt; OE foregan</td>
<td>&lt; ME dragge(ye) grain mix &lt; Gk nibble</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>gate**?</td>
<td>doorway &lt; OE gate &gt; OFris. hole</td>
<td>Not go, forgo. &lt; OE forgan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>in- (prefix)</td>
<td>in &lt; OF en- &gt; L in- (adv., prep.)</td>
<td>way or path &lt; ME gate &gt; ON gata road</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>peak**?</td>
<td>Be in top form. &lt; pike &gt; + beak</td>
<td>&lt; ME gama &gt; Gk gama</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>rack</td>
<td>Order into racks. (see II (1), V)</td>
<td>disorder, wreck. (see II (2), V)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>rally*</td>
<td>Ridicule. &lt; F rallier rail</td>
<td>Come to aid of. &lt; F rallier re-ally [ Fr. anagrams]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>rocky*</td>
<td>rock solid &lt; OE/ ML/ OF/ Celt.</td>
<td>shaky &gt; Gmc sway, jerk</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>salvage</td>
<td>Save. &lt; L salvare</td>
<td>Execute. &lt; Phil. Eng. &lt; Sp. salvaage savage, cruel</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>stir</td>
<td>a circulation. &gt; Gmc disturb</td>
<td>prison, non-circulation ? &lt; OE v. &lt; Romany (CDE)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>supplance</td>
<td>supplying &lt; L suppliance fill up</td>
<td>asking for &lt; L suppliance beg &lt; kneel</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>teem</td>
<td>Abound.</td>
<td>Empty. (see II for both)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>tip</td>
<td>(a, b) Be top. &lt; ME tippe ? &lt; tap &gt; Gmc tip (see V)</td>
<td>(a) Overturn, bottom &lt; ME typen ? &lt; infl. by 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>tot</td>
<td>all</td>
<td>(b) Dump into a garbage tip. &lt; (a)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>yard (slang)</td>
<td>female genitals &lt; lawn (CDS)</td>
<td>penis ? &lt; measuring rod v. ? &lt; spar (naut. yard)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(see II for both 1 and 2)</td>
<td>v. &lt; Gmc gazojo pole, It. cazzo penis (CDS)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>