

CHEATER'S SELFISH-SYNONYMY

ANIL

Perth, Australia

The February issue (WW 04-45) gave the results of my systematic search for coincidental self-synonymy: pairs of words that are unrelated etymologically but via convergent evolution happen to be spelled the same and *c.* mean the same. I extended the coverage to near-synonymic pairs as well and to unrelated contronymic (self-opposite) pairs.

My search took a 'short cut' when I discovered that **crick** and **rick** are probably unrelated. Both refer to a wrench, sprain or spasm of the neck or back, etc. Crick (ME *cricke*, *crykke*) is <?, ?<creak or creek. [< = from, ?< = possibly from, <? = origin uncertain, > = akin to, or compare.] Rick is <**wrick** (ME *wrikken* jerk), ?> wrench and wrinkle. This and most of the following beheadment pairs are nearer true synonyms than all but a few of the homographic (same spelling) pairs in 04-45. Included are other deletions (curtailments, beshoulderments, castrations) that form synonymic pairs. It would be difficult to study beheadments systematically, other deletions even moreso, but I have randomly encountered these pairs that meet two-thirds of the criteria for self-synonymy, all but the self bit. It's self-ish synonymy. Incidentally, this article and 04-45 are a belated reply to David Silverman's call (74-109) for a "practically homographic and virtually synonymous" word pair.

IV. COINCIDENTAL SELFISH-SYNONYMY BY BEHEADMENT

word and root 1	beheadment/deletion and root 2
booty loot <G <i>Beute</i> booty [infl. by 2 in W3]	boot bonus payment <OE advantage, remedy
brim <OE <i>brim</i> sea, shoreline, edge	rim <OE <i>rima</i> edge, border >ridge
broil Cook. <OF <i>bruiller</i> ?<L <i>urere</i> burn (04-47)	boil Cook. <OF <i>boillir</i> <L <i>bullire</i> bubble, seethe
broil Stir up, brawl (see V). <brew, broth (")	roil Stir up. ?<L rust or rule v. ?<OF roll, disturb
chunk ?<chump v. <chuck, chock	hunk ?<hunch <Flem. <i>hunke</i> lump, >hump
clue <claw, ball of thread [way out of labyrinth]	cue <q<L <i>quando</i> when (to act) v. <queue
cover Lie over. <L <i>cooperire</i>	over (vb) Pass over. <Gmc >L <i>super</i> , Gk <i>hyper</i>
hover Hang over. <ME <i>hoveren</i> < <i>hoven</i> tarry <? (See also V.)	
crumple <OE curl <crooked >crimp, cramp	rumple <OE <i>hrympel</i> >D <i>rumpel</i> fold, wrinkle
fact, factual <L <i>factum</i> a thing done	act, actual <L <i>actum</i> a thing done
[Identical definitions and "obviously" related, but none of my sources says so. W3 and CDE cross-mention them, saying fact + -ual "as in" or "on analogy of" actual, ie, a parallel ending therefore not the same root.]	
fleeing . <float >G <i>fliessen</i> flow	fleeing [t. fled!] <flee >G <i>fliehen</i> (cf 04-47)
flock tuft of hair, wool <flocculation ?<Gmc <L	lock tress of hair <OE <i>locc</i> >Icel./G curl, bend
flounder Stumble, go under. ?<flounce v. <	founder ditto <L <i>fundus</i> bottom
D <i>flodderen</i> flop about, mire v. ?<2 ± flounce	
[definitive anagrams: founder = under of	flounder = flo' under]
glower Scowl. >Gmc glow, stare	lower ditto <lour, frown >G/D lurk, leer
grape <OF (<i>c/g</i>) <i>rape</i> cluster of fruit <hook	rape dejuiced grapes ?<F/G/LL rasp, scrape
hedge shrub boundary <OE <i>hecg</i> ?<hawthorn	edge border <OE <i>ecg</i> ?<IE sharp
prick <OE <i>prica</i> dot, puncture, pierce	pick <OE <i>picung</i> pricking (see V and 04-46)

rogue scoundrel ?<*roge/roag* vagabond
sax slatemaker ax <knife, scissors, cut >saw
skin a kinship group (esp. Aborig.)<Gmc peel
snip ?<D *snippen* nip, clip, shred
spatter ?<Gmc *spatten* burst, spout, splash, and
spike pointed tool ?<Gmc nail v. ?<Ir. *spice*
stroll ?<street v. ?<loaf, **troll** <F/Gmc wander,
 [This is the only serial beheadment found. *The Story of O* can now be rewritten as a pyramid:]

O?
 OL'
 O'LL
 ROLL,
 TROLL,
 STROLL.
 IS TROLL!
 HIS T' ROLL,
 THIS TROLL,
 AT HI ST. ROLL.
 (AT-HEIST ROLL?
 ATHEIST TROLL?)
 "A THEIST STROLL!"

stumble trip and fall ?<stammer
tamp (a) Strike lightly. ?<tampion [1?<2 in W3]
 (b) Plug.<(a) original meaning <F a plug
 [This is an unusual double synonym pair, tamp = tap. Ditto **clean**, **bleed** and **scuffle** in V.]
hutch hut <OE <ML chest ?<Gmc
tumble fall <a dance >Gmc reel
tap (a) <OF *taper* slap <Gmc ?<imit.
 (b) a faucet <OE *tæppa* draw out liquid >D *tap*
hut cottage <OF<G >hide [?>1 (CDE only)]
 [A double curtailment, included because hut could easily be taken for a shortening of hutch, or v.v.]

V. COINCIDENTAL SELFISH-SYNONYMY BY WORD STOOL

The case of **crick** = **wrick** above points to another route to selfish synonymy, via word stools or 'neighbours' (single letter substitutions, 02-317). The first twelve pairs below are from WW 02-288 and 03-22, the rest I believe are new to Word Ways. Again not a systematic list, and excluding several nice pairs I found that are not the same parts of speech.

word and root 1

ban <Gmc forbid, proclaim >L *fari* speak.
blush <OE *blyscan* redden, shine.
clap Strike with open hand or something flat.
 <OE *clæppan* >Gmc ?<L
clean <IE bright >Gmc beat, small
 [Another double synonym--both mean free of
dart Leave. ("Must dart.") <missile <OF/Gmc
ditch Discard, toss. >Gmc dike
get Acquire.<Icel. *geta* get, beget, learn
 [synonymous with two roots of net]
new modern <OE *niwe* <IE >Gmc/L/Gk [?<2]
nip = **sip** (see **dip** below)

neighbour and root 2

bar <OF *barrer* <VL *barra* rod <?
flush (see IV + at end) [?<also imitating blush?]
flap <ME *flappen* slap, clap, flutter ?<D
slap >LG *slappe* [all 3 imitative (of each other!)]
clear <L *clarus* bright, distinct (Cf. get-net.)
 and both are slang for completely.]
part Depart. <L *pars* piece
pitch ditto ?<OE/Gmc prick, pick, peck ?<Celt
net Obtain, profit.<neat <F/Ir. (04-45)
net Capture in net.<OE ?<L *nodus* ("")
"now" <OE/IE *nu* >Gmc/L/Gk/Skt.

pale Diminish, lose colour. <L pallid
shark card cheat <G *Schurke* parasite ?<2
stake post <OE *staca* >Gmc ?>stick

bash strike ?<Sw. *basa* beat [v.beat + lash?]

lash “ <ME *lassh* <?

batten Make fat. ?<Icel. improve ?<better

bleed (a) Run together--eg, dyes. <blood
 (b) Abut edge in printing. (Both b roots = a's)

blood kin <Gmc the fluid ?<bloom, blow

boil Stir up water, disquiet.

boot a gain <booty(see IV) or v.v.

bounced (Re)bounded. ?<imit. [?<infl. by 2]

brawl wrangle ?<go to ruin ?<D/G brag, shout

[A two-letter change, included because it's a rare case of unrelated homophonic synonyms. As is coil (qv).]

bump speed-control road rise <vb ?<imit.

bump (rounded mass), **lump** (?<D piece, rag) &

clamp holding device <OE *clamm*

<MD *clampe* cleat (04-47)

coil curl (Brooklyn pronunc.) >cull, collect

cover (see IV.)

crick and **wrick** (see introduction)

crinkle <OE *crincan* bend, yield >cringe,crank

(Compare **crumple**--**rumple** in IV above.)

curl Loop around. <ME *crollen* <IE >Gmc

dale valley <OE *dæl* >Gmc/Gk >curve

dilate Thin by expansion. <OF/L enlarge

dip (one's beak), **nip** (<*nipperkin*),

and **tip** (<tipple ?<tilt, drip) all mean to drink.

[a consonant cascade of synonyms:]

dour sullen, sour, severe <Scot. ?<L hard

douse Plunge into water. <? ?<D

flame <OF *flambe* <L *flamma* >flagrant

flip* Turn over/around quickly

[Both ?<imit. but independently so (?) as flop is a

flop Plump down (see above)

flutter* Flutter. <flit <ME *flitten* <Scan. carry

force Drive, push. <L *fortis* strong

founder Go under. (see IV, flounder)

fuddle Confuse. <? ?>G/D drunk, a rag

fusty mouldy smelling <OF wine cask <L stave

glide smooth move <OE *glidan* >Gmc

hustle energetic stir, hurry <D *hutsen* shake

keek <ME/MD/MLG *kiken*

peek <ME *piken* ?<keek

peep <ME *pepen* ?<peek

[A word ladder of synonyms, mostly unrelated. The three l's may be related, especially the first two.]

KEEK PEEK PEEL PEEP PEER LEER (SEER)

knap Break sharply. <imit. <Gmc *knappen* eat

lug Tow. <ME *luggen* <Scan. pull by the hair

pall Become insipid. <appall

sharp ditto >G *scharf* pointed, cutting

stave ditto <OE *stæf* staff >Gmc/Gk/Skt.

dash <ME *dasshe* >Scan. *daska* slap (04-46)

[all three ?<imit.]

fatten <OE *fætt* cram, fat, load >Gmc

blend (a) mix <OE *blondan* [cf. tamp in IV]

(b) Have no margin of separation, eg, sea-sky.

brood family <barm, yeast, nourish

roil ditto [see broil in IV for both]

loot <Hind. *lut* plunder, booty

bounded Sprang off. <L. buzz >bomb (04-49)

broil <OF disorder (see IV)

hump ditto <hunchbacked ?<OE hip

hump make a triple synonym consonant cascade

clasp* ditto <ME *clapse* ?<OE clip

cramp ditto <bent bar <D/G (*c/k*)*rampe* <IE

curl coil (see below) [homophonic synonyms]

hover (see IV.)

wrinkle <OE *gewrinclod* and *wrenc* (cf. 04-49)

purl Loop a stitch. ?<*pirle*, ?<purfle (04-48)

vale ditto <L *vallis* >roll

dilute ditto <L *dilutus* wash, wash away <lave

sip (<OE *syppan* ?<*sopa* [>sop, sup, ?soup])

DIP NIP SIP TIP

sour tart, harsh, morose <OE/Gmc *sur* acidic

souse ditto ?<OF *soucer* pickle >salt

flare <spread out ?<Nor. *flara* blaze v. <fly+bare

flop ditto or back and forth in flip-flop

variant of **flap** (ME *flappen*, hit) while flip is ?<fillip.]

plop ditto or its sound. <imit.

flutter Flap, flit about. <ME *floteren* <OE float

forge Push overland, forge ahead. <? (04-47)

go under <Gmc (phrase, but perfect synonym)

muddle <mud ?+ addle

musty <moist ?<L mouldy

slide smooth glide <OE *slidan* >IE slippery

bustle <ME rush, burst, gush +Icel. baste, splash

peer <Fris. *piren* v. <(or infl. by) appear <L

peel one's eyes <OE *pilian* strip <L *pilus* >pile

leer ?<ME *ler* <OE *hleor* face near ear

[A word ladder of synonyms, mostly unrelated. The three l's may be related, especially the first two.]

snap ditto ?<D/G *snappen* bite, snatch

tug <ME *tog(g)en* drag >tow

narc drug cop <narcotics <L/Gk numb [?infl. by 2]
pick* Pierce. <ME *pyke* (cf. prick in IV)
pike pointed stick ” (see spike in IV)
pink Wink. [in W3 only] ?<D *pinken* blink
pit hole in the ground <L *puteus* well
rack organiser <ME *rekke* <MD (04-48)
rack Wreck, destroy. <ME *wrak* (“)
sap Cut into, draw out liquid (sap). <OE *sæp*
scatter Spread. ?<shatter ?<Gk <Skt. cut
spatter Dabble.
spatter Render tiny pieces, **smatter** ditto [W3],
spatter Emit particles explosively.
sputter Speak in a broken, incoherent way.

nark informer, cop <Romany *nak* nose
pink ditto <ME *pynke* <L prick >point, pin
pile ditto <stake, arrowtip <L *pilum* javelin
wink <OE *wincian* >Gmc wave, stagger
pot(hole) <OE/Gmc *pot(t)*, container
rank row, line <OF *ranc* <Gmc elite ring
sack Pillage, plunder. <L *saccus* bag <Gk/Heb.
tap ditto <OE *tæpp(i)an*
spatter (see IV)
smatter ditto, spatter <Gmc chatter, patter, rattle
shatter ditto <ME *schateren* scatter >G/Gk
sputter ditto <spout >D *sputteren* ?<spit
stutter ditto <ME *stutten* <Gmc/IE

[These make another nice word ladder with a chain of synonyms, mostly unrelated (at least four roots):
 SCATTER SHATTER SMATTER SPATTER SPUTTER STUTTER.

Diarrhea could add another stool to this group of **SPURTER** words, but I'll spare you. **SPITTER** too.]

scuffle* Walk dragging feet. ?<Scan. shove **shuffle** Drag feet. <LG ?<ME shove
 [Double synonyms--both also mean fight (shuffle being US slang--CDS).]
sniffle* Sniff (cold, sobbing). ?<snivel >mucus **snuffle** Sniff, smell out. <MD *snuffen* >snivel
tip apex <point <ME *tippe* ?<tap >Gmc *tip* **top** <tuft of hair >Gmc
upright <OE *upriht* >Gmc <L *rectus* straight **uptight** 'straight', tense <tight <Scan. close, solid
vend Give utterance to. <L *vendere* sell **vent** ditto <let out air <L *ventus* wind (04-49)
braid <move to-and-fro, in-out, weave, shine **plait** <pleat <twist, ply, fold.

[This curious synonym pair isn't a word stool but each substitution replaces a consonant with a phonetic relative--p for b, l for r, t for d--so falsely suggesting that one evolved from the other via dialect changes.]

A gush of -ushes, all unrelated and *c.* synonymous:

- 1-3. The adjectives **flush**, **plush**** and **lush** all mean both luxuriant *and* drunk--a double triple!
 - 4-6. The synonymous verbs **gush**, **hush**, **rush** are cognate with 1-3 in the sense of profuseness and are synonyms of flush and of each other in the sense of pour forth rapidly. With lush, they form a definitive "consonant cascade" word ladder: GUSH.: HUSH, LUSH RUSH!
 - 7-8. Nouns: **slush** is doubly cognate with 1-3: slush fund and fake money suggest luxuriance, while wet snow and two slang usages (tea or coffee, and thin stew) suggest drink; **mush** has itself two unrelated meanings which, while not synonyms (or it would have been put in 04-45), are both cognates of slush--semi-liquid meal or goo, and a slog thru the snow.
- Derivations: **flush** (?<flux, flow v. <flash+gush), **plush** (<<L *pilus* hair; drunk <Br. slang, EWO), **lush** (?<luscious <ME/OE/OF loose, tender; drunk ?<Lushington club), **gush** (?<OE *gosshien* stomach noises ?<OIce. *gusa* spurt [disputed in OED]), **hush** (wash away in a gush of water <Br. dial. ?<imit.), **rush** (<<L. refuse, push back), **slush** (?<Scan. wet snow, slop, >Prov. E *slud*, wet mud), **mush** (gruel <*moose* (obs.) porridge, +mash; snow slog ?<F *marcher* advance or ?<F *mouche*/L. *musca* fly).

* Clamp--clasp, flip--flop, flutter--flutter, pick--pink, scuffle--shuffle and sniffle--snuffle are possibly related (in NTC and, for the last two pairs, in W3 as well). ** Ditto plush--flush in EWO.

Sources used: CDS Cassel Dictionary of Slang '98 RH Random House Unabr. '66
 CDE Chambers Dictionary of Etymology '88
 EWO Encyclopedia of Word and Phrase Origins '97 Facts on File: NY
 Mq Macquarie Australian Dictionary, Rev. 3rd '01
 NTC Webster's New Twentieth Century Unabr., World, '47
 W3 [Merriam] Webster NI 3rd '61 + addenda '86