CHEATER'S SELFISH-SYNONYMY

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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. [= 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, beshouidellllents, 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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>word and root 1</th>
<th>beheadment/deletion and root 2</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>boot &lt;OE advantage, remedy</td>
<td>boot bonus payment</td>
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<tr>
<td>brim &lt;OE brim sea, shoreline, edge</td>
<td>rim &lt;OE rima edge, border</td>
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<tr>
<td>broil &lt;OF bruller &lt;L ureere burn (04-47)</td>
<td>boil Cook. &lt;OF boillir &lt;L bullire bubble, seethe</td>
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<tr>
<td>chunk ?&lt;chump v. &lt;chuck, chock</td>
<td>roil Stir up. ?&lt;L rust or rule v. ?&lt;OF roll, disturb</td>
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<tr>
<td>clue &lt;clew, ball of thread [way out of labyrinth]</td>
<td>hunk ?&lt;hunch &lt;Flem.hunke lump, &gt;hump</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>cover Lie over. &lt;L cooperire</td>
<td>cue &lt;L quando when (to act) v. &lt;queue</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>hover Hang over. &lt;ME horen&lt;hoven tarry ?</td>
<td>over (vb) Pass over. &lt;Gmc &gt;L super, Gk hyper</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>crumple &lt;OE curl &lt;crooked &gt;crimp, cramp</td>
<td>rumple &lt;OE hrympel &gt;D rumpel fold, wrinkle</td>
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<tr>
<td>fact, factual &lt;L factum a thing done</td>
<td>act, actual &lt;L actum a thing done</td>
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<tr>
<td>fleeting. &lt;float &gt;G fliessen flow</td>
<td>fleeting [t. fled!] &lt;flee &gt;G fliehen (cf 04-47)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>flock tuft of hair, wool &lt;floculation ?&lt;Gmc&lt;L</td>
<td>lock tress of hair &lt;OE locc &gt;Icel./G curl, bend</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>flounder Stumble, go under. ?&lt;flounce v. &lt;D flodderen flop about, mire v.?</td>
<td>founder ditto &lt;L fundus bottom</td>
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<tr>
<td>floater Hang under. ?&lt;flourish</td>
<td>flounder = flo’ under</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>glower Scowl. &gt;Gmc glow, stare</td>
<td>lower ditto &lt;lour, frown &gt;G/D lurk, leer</td>
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<tr>
<td>grape &lt;OF (c’g)rape cluster of fruit &lt;hook</td>
<td>rape dejuiced grapes ?&lt;F/G/LL rasp, scrape</td>
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<tr>
<td>hedge shrub boundary &lt;OE hecg ?&lt;hawthorn</td>
<td>edge border &lt;OE ecg ?&lt;IE sharp</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>prick &lt;OE prica dot, puncture, pierce</td>
<td>pick &lt;OE picung pricking (see V and 04-46)</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
rouge  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. spike
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
[Another 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 World Ways. Again not a systematic list, and

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>word and root 1</th>
<th>neighbour and root 2</th>
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<tr>
<td>ban &lt;Gmc forbid, proclaim &gt;L fari speak.</td>
<td>bar &lt;OF barker &lt;VL barra rod ?&gt;</td>
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<tr>
<td>blush &lt;OE blyscan redder, shine.</td>
<td>flush (see IV + at end) [?&lt;also imitating blush?]</td>
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<tr>
<td>clap Strike with open hand or something flat. &lt;OE clæppan &gt;Gmc ?&lt;L</td>
<td>flap &lt;ME flappen slap, clap, flutter ?&lt;D</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>clean &lt;IE bright &gt;Gmc beat, small</td>
<td>slap &gt;LG slappe [all 3 imitative (of each other!)]</td>
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<tr>
<td>[Another double synonym--both mean free of dart Leave. (“Must dart.”) &lt;missile &lt;OF/Gmc</td>
<td>clear &lt;L clarus bright, distinct (Cf. get--net )</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ditch Discard, toss. &gt;Gmc dike</td>
<td>and both are slang for completely.]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>get Acquire. &lt;Icel. geta get, beget, learn</td>
<td>part Depart. &lt;L pars piece</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>new modern &lt;OE niwe &lt;IE &gt;Gmc/L/Gk [?2</td>
<td>net Obtain, profit. &lt;NEAT &lt;F/Ir. (04-45)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>nip = sip (see dip below)</td>
<td>net Capture in net. &lt;OE ?&lt;L nodus (“”)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“now” &lt;OE/IE nu &gt;Gmc/L/Gk/Skt.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
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 lash <v. 0
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. [?<inf. by 2]
brawl wrangle <go to ruin <D/G brag, shout
[A two-letter change, included because it’s a rare case
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.)
crack 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 dåel >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 flambie <L flamma >flagrant
flip* Turn over/around quickly
[Both ?<imit. but independently so (?) as flop is a
flop Plump down (see above)
flitter* 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
slide smooth move <OE gldan >Gmc
hustle energetic stir, hurry <D husen shake
keek <ME/MD/MLG kiken
peek <ME piken ?<keek
peep <ME pepen ?<peek
[As a word ladder of synonyms, mostly unrelated. The
KEEK PEEK PEEL PEEP PEER LEER (SEEER)
knap Break sharply. ?<imit. <Gmc knappen eat
lug Tow. <ME luggen <Scan. pull by the hair
snap ditto ?<D/G snappen bite, snatch
tug <ME tug(ge)n drag >tow
pall Become insipid. <appall
sharp ditto >G scharf pointed, cutting
stave ditto <OE stef staff >Gmc/Gk/Skt.
dash <ME dasshe >Scan. daska slap (04-46)
[four three? <imit.]
fatten <OE fettl cram, fat, load >Gmc
blend (a) mix <OE blondan [cf. tamp in IV]
blood (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)
of unrelated homophonic synonyms. As is coil (qv.)
hump ditto <hunchbacked ?<OE hip
hump make a triple synonym consonant cascade
clasp* ditto <ME clapse ?<OE clip
cramp ditto <bent bar <D/G (<k)rampe <IE
curl coil (see below) [homophonic synonyms]
hover (see IV.)
wrinkle <OE gewrinclod and wrenc (cf. 04-49)
purl Loop a stitch. ?<pirl, ?<purflle (04-48)
vale ditto <L vallis >roll
dilute ditto <L dilitus 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. flora blaze v. <fly+bare
flop ditto or back and forth in flip–flop
variant of flap (ME flappen, hit) while flip is <fillip.
lop ditto or its sound. <imit.
flutter Flap, flit about. <ME floten <OE float
forge Push overland, forge ahead. ?<? (04-47)
go under <Gmc (phrase, but perfect synonym)
muddle <mud + addle
musty <moist ?<L moldy
slide smooth glide <OE slidan >IE slippery
bustle <ME rush, burst, gush +Icel. baste, splash
pehr <Fr. 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
three 1’s may be related, especially the first two]

[Compare crumple—rumple in IV above]

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**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 mush—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<Washington club), **gush** (<OE gosshien stomach noises<ONcel. *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 shud, wet mud), **mush** (gruel <moose (obs.) porridge, + mash; snow slog?<F *marcher* advance or <F *mouche*<L *musca* fly).

* Clamp--clasp, flip--lop, float--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.