CHEATER'S SELFISH-SYNONYMY

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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 wricken 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 more so, but I have randomly encountered these pairs that meet two-thirds of the criteria for self-synonymy, all but the self bit. It’s selfish 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>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>booty bootie &lt;G Beute booty [infl. by 2 in W3]</td>
<td>boot bonus payment &lt;OE advantage, remedy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>brim &lt;OE brim sea, shoreline, edge</td>
<td>rim &lt;OE rima edge, border &gt;ridge</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>broil Cook. &lt;OF bruller ?&lt;L uere burn (04-47)</td>
<td>boil Cook. &lt;OF boillir &lt;L bullire bubble, seeethe</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>broil Stir up, brawl (see V). &lt;brew, broth (&quot;))</td>
<td>roil Stir up.?&lt;L rust or rule v.?&lt;OF roll, disturb</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>chunk ?&lt;chump v. &lt;chuck, chock</td>
<td>hunk ?&lt;hunch &lt;Flem. hunke lump,&gt;hump</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>clue &lt;clew, ball of thread [way out of labyrinth]</td>
<td>cue &lt;L quando when (to act) v.&lt;queue</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>cover Lie over. &lt;L cooperire</td>
<td>over (vb) Pass over. &lt;Gmc &gt;L super, Gk hyper</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>hover Hang over. &lt;ME hoveren&lt;hoven tarry ?</td>
<td>fleeting [t. fled!] &lt;flee &gt;G fliehen (cf 04-47)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>crumple &lt;OE curl &lt;crooked &gt;crimp, cramp</td>
<td>rumple &lt;OE hrympe</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>[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.]</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<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;</td>
<td>founder ditto &lt;L fundus bottom</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D flodderen flop about, mire v.?&lt;2±flounce</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[definitive anagrams: founder = under of</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>slower Scowl. &gt;Gmc slow, stare</td>
<td>flounder = flo’ under]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>grape &lt;OF (c/g)rape cluster of fruit &lt;hook</td>
<td>lower ditto &lt;lour, frown &gt;G/D lurk, leer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>hedge shrub boundary &lt;OE hec&lt; ?&lt;hawthorn</td>
<td>rape dejuiced grapes ?&lt;F/G/LL rasp, scrape</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>prick &lt;OE prica dot, puncture, pierce</td>
<td>edge border &lt;OE ecg ?&lt;IE sharp</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>pick &lt;OE picung pricking (see V and 04-46)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
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. pice
stroll \<street v. \<Ir. trot

This is the only serial beheading 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?
ATEIST TROLL?)
"A THEIST STROLL!"

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.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>word and root 1</th>
<th>neighbour and root 2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ban &lt;Gmc forbid, proclaim &gt;L fari speak.</td>
<td>bar &lt;OF bærar &lt;VL barra rod ?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| blush \<OE blyscan redden, shine. | flush (see IV + at end) \[?<also imitating blush?]
| clap Strike with open hand or something flat. \<OE claeppan \>Gmc ?<L | flap \<ME flappen slap, clap, flutter ?<D
| clean \<IE bright \>Gmc beat, small [Another double synonym--both mean free of | slap \>LG slappe \[all 3 imitative (of each other!)]
| dart Leave. ("Must dart.") \<missile \<OF/Gmc | clear \<L clarus bright, distinct (Cf. get--net ) and both are slang for completely.]
| ditch Discard, toss. \>Gmc dike | part Depart. \<L pars piece
| get Acquire. \<leel. geta get, beget, learn \[synonymous with two roots of net | pitch ditto \?<OE/Gmc prick, pick, peck ?<Celt
| new modern \<OE niwe \<IE >Gmc/L/Gk ?>2 | net Obtain, profit \<neat \<F/Ir. \(04-45)
| nip = sip (see dip below) | net Capture in net. \<OE ?>L nodus ( " )
| "now" \<OE/IE nu >Gmc/L/Gk/Skt. |
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)
[all three?<imit.]
fatten <OE fiett cram, fat, load >Gmc
blend (a) mix <OE blöndan [cf. tamp in IV]
(b) Have no margin of separation, eg, sea-sky.
broad 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
clap* ditto <ME clapse ?<OE clip
cramp ditto <bent bar <D/G (c:/k)rampe <IE
curl coil (see below) [homophonic synonyms]
hover (see IV.)

winkle <OE gewrinclod and wrenc (cf. 04-49)
purl Loop a stitch. ?<pirl, ?<purgle (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,flora 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.

flatter 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
three 1’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

snap ditto ?<D/G snappen bite, snatch
tug <ME tog(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 < Gmc

scatter Spread. ?< shatter ?< Gk < Skt. cut

spatter Dabble. smatter ditto [W3],

spatter Render tiny pieces, smatter ditto [W3].

spatter E nit particles explosively.

sputter Emit particles explosively. sputter ditto < ME

sput ter Render tiny pieces, smatter ditto. shatter ditto < ME

rack Wreck, destroy < ME rekke < MD (04-48)

rack Wreck, destroy < ME wrak ("")

squin snuffle* Sniff (cold, sobbing). ?< snivel < mucus

tip apex. ?< point < ME teppe < Gmc tip
tip apex. ?< point < ME teppe < Gmc tip

upright < OE upriht > Gmc < L rectus straight

vent Give utterance to. < L vendere sell

braid < move to-and-fro, in-out, weave, shine

braid < move to-and-fro, in-out, weave, shine

braid < move to-and-fro, in-out, weave, shine

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, rush, gush 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 slop 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 ?< OEcel. gusa spurt [disputed in OED]), hush (wash away in a gush of water < Br. dial. ?< init.), rash (<< L refuse, push back), slush (<< S Workshop wet snow, slop, > Prov. E shud, wet mud), mush (gruel < moose (obs.) porridge, + mash; snow slop: ? < F mar cher 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 Unab. '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 Unab. World, '47

W3 [Merriam] Webster NL 3rd '61 + addenda '86