

COLLOQUY

In the May 1984 Word Ways, Bruce Price discussed the “largest list of rhyming English words that have a common semantic feature”: bash, brash, clash, crash, dash, flash, gash, gnash, hash, lash, mash, pash, plash, rash, slash, smash, splash, stash, thrash, trash, all “words of terrible action, of great vigor and violence”. Anil points out that out that quash, squash, swash and wash also have the –ash ending, even though they do not rhyme with Price’s words. All apparently are from unrelated roots (Web 3), and might qualify as cheater’s selfish synonyms (May 2004, p 129). But a few others including some of (probable) imitative origin may be partly related by virtue of secondarily acquiring the –ash ending, which Chambers’ Dictionary of Etymology (1988) says is an echoic element in many imitative words of striking or motion. (Anil would call –sh the actual element rather than –ash as it occurs in other echoic words such as swish, whish, slosh, splosh, crush, flush, gush, hush, rush, slush.) Quash may be a coincidental self-synonym (see Feb 2004 for others); CDE says it is two distinct but nearly synonymous words—to crush and to annihilate—from different Latin roots. Plash is given in the OED as two different words of related meaning (pool of water, splash of water) but unrelated etymology, ie a coincidental self-affinitive (Feb 1004), although CDE disputes the differences in origin.

Errata: In “A Further Modified Ten-Square” LA CAROLINA should have been written LA CORALINA. In “The Language of Flowers” in Kickshaws, *pearl blossom* (bottom of p 294) should have been *peach blossom*. In “Letters of the Presidents”, Truman (p 307) shares letters with two other president, not three. Rex Gooch notes a line was omitted in Will Nediger’s “Letter Banks of the Capitals”—Bridgetown should be replaced by Bangladesh, and Barbados has the capital of Bridgetown. In “More Purple Turtles (Part 1)” QX should be Qaqa/Xaxa, and EW should be ET wewe/wtwt.

Battus wrote Eric Iverson on “Euler Path Words” letter topology: “A whole year I lived at St. Anthony’s Park and went to the bakeshop on Como Avenue but did not see I should cut down my Pochbirch in the park.” Anil comments “Eric Iverson arbitrarily assumed that R is not an Euler Path letter. In some font styles it certainly isn’t but in others it clearly is, eg Book Antiqua, Century Gothic, Gill Sans Condensed, Matisse ITC, and Tempus Sans ITC. In most font types it’s ambiguous and the line merely seems to retrace itself slightly. If that makes it non-Euler then B is also non-Euler. [However], R is most notably an Euler in almost anyone’s style of handwriting.”

Will Nediger comments on “Áwl Wrong’s Anagram” in the August Kickshaws: “Many of my dictionaries and thesauri have different forms of *permeate* in their entries for *impregnate*. Unfortunately, none contain the –ing form. A number of dictionaries including the American Heritage dictionary give *latent talent* as an illustrative example in the definition of talent.”

Ove Michaelsen writes “In response to [Don Hauptman’s article in the November Word Ways], I believe ‘Nostalgia isn’t what it used to be’ was the title of the 1978 Simone Signoret autobiography, and am pretty sure that she got it from a graffito. I wrote a song (The Oxymoron Song) in 1979, using the phrase as a punch line, unaware that it was widely known.”

In “Letters of the Presidents” one should note that a group of 24 presidents are mutual chums (every one shares at least one letter with the others): Harrison, Jefferson, Washington, Taylor, Madison, Van Buren, Harding, Roosevelt, Jackson, Cleveland, Eisenhower, Reagan, Monroe, Grant, Hoover, Fillmore, Garfield, Kennedy, Truman, Clinton, Wilson, Ford, Lincoln, Nixon. Had Kerry been elected, he would have formed part of the first group of four mutual strangers: Kerry, Bush, Lincoln, Taft (16 different letters).

Anil notes “Darryl Francis’s ‘Balanced Word Pairs’ covered much the same ground as Rex Gooch’s ‘Complementary Letters and Words’ in the Feb 2002 Word Ways, and should have cited it if not also my ‘Complementary Letters’ which inspired Rex.” For more six-letter and seven-letter examples, see “More Balanced Word Pairs” elsewhere in this issue.

Dan Tilque accidentally omitted from “The Purple Turtle” in the August Word Ways the examples AS aorta/sorts, AT arosa/trust, FZ buffy/buzzy. He questions the inclusion of XAX in the 25-word set (see “More Purple Turtles, Part 1” p 261) because this is a Kurdish word.

Rex Gooch writes “Susan Thorpe [in the November Colloquy] upbraids me for using phrases in ‘Denser Yet, and Yet Less Dense’ on the grounds that the article did not always observe her choice of restriction (to single words). Both my intention and her restriction were spelled out in the opening paragraph and I cannot conceive of any reader being ‘confused’. In my work I try to find the longest word and the longest phrase for a given case. This can be very illuminating, for if there is but a single word, but many phrases, it may indicate that the problem is not so challenging, and that the absence of more words is just chance. (One might draw the opposite conclusion if there are very few phrases.) The phrases may also indicate how to construct a qualifying [single] word. I often discover sayings or phrases which are both new to me and entertaining.”

As to whether or not 3-hydroxy-4-methoxytoluquinone is a word, Rex writes “She has missed a point about the chemical terms containing sequences such as ‘-2-’. I feel obliged to quote the word exactly as found in the given source, but if the ‘-2-’s be omitted, you still have a valid chemical compound, or class of compounds. The numbers indicate the position in which the group is attached; the groups and molecular formula remain unchanged.”

Anil writes: “*Teem* is one of only three words (with *rack* and *tot*) listed in both Parts II and III of [“Coincidental Self-Synonymy” in the February Word Ways], ie both Coincidental Self-affinitives and Coincidental Contronyms. After re-examining *teem* in Web 3, Random House Unabridged, Chambers Etymology and Macquarie, I now believe *teem* belongs in Part Ia as a genuinely unrelated Self-synonym, making it the only coincidental double on record. The two “teems” were the same in ME, *temen*. The first meant produce, bring forth, give birth to, from OE *tieman* from OE *team*, offspring, related to (eg, ox) team, from Proto-Germanic pull, drag, tow. It now means abound, swarm. The second *temen* meant discharge, pour out, from an earlier meaning of empty a vessel (OE *tom*), from Scandinavian, and now mainly means rain in torrents or pour molten metal. Thus they are both synonyms (swarm, overflow, pour copiously) and antonyms (abound, be filled, vs. pour out, be emptied).”