

Latin and Greek Elements in English

Lesson 19: Folk Etymology

- **FOLK ETYMOLOGY**: “the process by which a word changes form through a mistaken assimilation of that word to another word or form which it resembles”
 - also called paronomasia (“mistaken word creation”)
 - this is also the technical term for punning
 - folk etymology is the product of misunderstanding
 - i.e. basic human ignorance, especially of history
 - e.g. momento, for memento
 - a confusion of the Latin word *memento* (“remember!”) with the word “moment” (“importance, turning point”)
 - as in “the moment of truth” or “of great moment”; cf. momentous

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- e.g. laxadaisical
 - from the expression “alack the day!” (Shakespeare)
 - lackaday! (17th c.) > lackadaisy
 - lackadaisy > lackadaisical (18th c.), “given to affected sentiment”
 - later, “vapid, listless, showing a lack of interest”
 - finally laxadaisical (by confusion with lax, relax)

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- spitting image: from “spirit and image”
 - spirit (“likeness”) > spit (syncope)
- chaise lounge: from chaise longue
 - from French *longue* (“long”) > lounge
 - lounge is from Lat. *longis* (“drowsy; lout, laggard”)
 - ultimately, from the Latin name Longinus, the name of the centurion who pierces the body of Christ in medieval passion plays and then falls asleep

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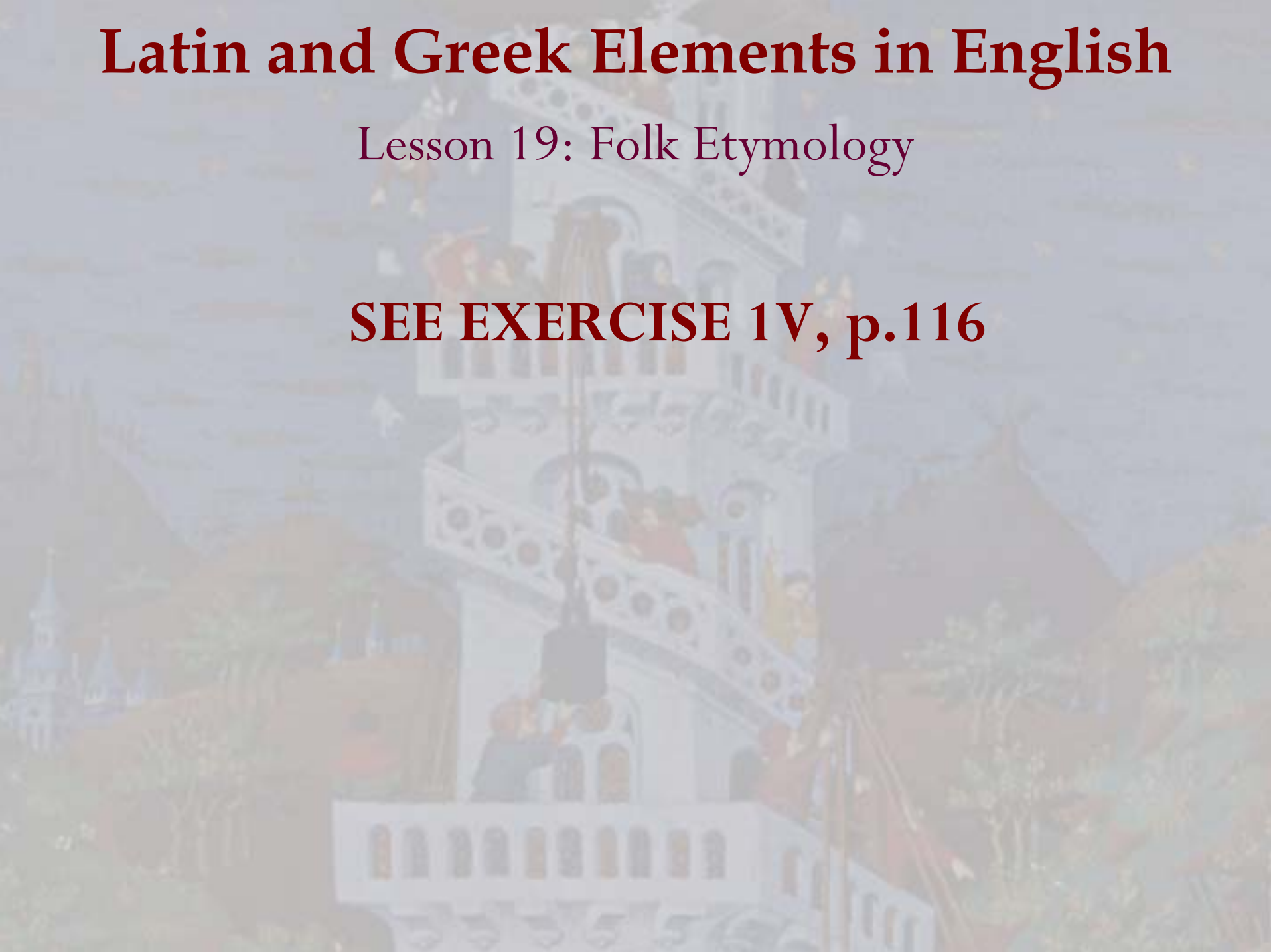
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- humble pie: from umble pie
 - umbles are the entrails of a deer which are often served in a pie to servants
 - Lat. *lumbulus* (“loin”) > MedEng/OFr *nombles*
 - “a numble” is later misconstrued as “an/umble”
 - metanalysis: a/norange > an/orange, an/ekename > a/nickname
- big cheese: from big chiz
 - Persian, and later Urdu (Indian language): chiz (“important thing”)

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SEE EXERCISE 1V, p.116



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Lesson 20: Clips

- **CLIP**: “a word which has lost its initial or final part (or both) but retains the same general meaning,” e.g.
 - computer terminology
 - boot < “bootstrapping program” or “bootstrap loader”
 - a program which loads the rest of the operating system
 - n.b. a metaphor from skiing
 - medicine
 - prep < prepare (e.g. for surgery)
 - doc < doctor
 - premie < premature baby

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Lesson 20: Clips

– cars

- gas < gasoline
- lube < lubrication
- semi < semi-trailer

– others

- memo < memorandum
- con < convict
- pen < penitentiary
- phone < telephone
- dis < (show) disrespect
- patter < pater noster (qui es in caelis sanctificetur nomen ...)

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Please note that your definitions of words in context (Part 4 of Quiz 3; on the back page) are now worth TWO points: (1) one for the etymological definition and (2) one for the contextual definition

[SEE THE DIATHESIS OF QUIZ 3](#)

GO TO EXERCISE IV, p.119