Latin and Greek Elements in English

Wordplay

• as with all things, humans often “play” with language
• the technical term is **paronomasia**
  – can you etymologize “paronomasia”?
    • par(a)- wrong
    • ONYM-, ONOMA(T)- word
    • -sia act of
    • “the act of mis-construing words”
Latin and Greek Elements in English

Wordplay

• there are at least five distinct types of paronomasiasa
  – amphibology (“double [amphibo-] meaning [-logy]”): the application of two or more meanings to a single word or phrase
  – malapropism: the misunderstanding of one word for another word which is similar in sound
  – spoonerism: the inadvertent transposition of sounds within a word or phrase
  – anagrams: the rearrangement of the letters within a word so as to spell another word or words
  – palindrome (“run [-drome] back/again [palin-]”): words or sentences which are spelled the same way backwards and forwards
Latin and Greek Elements in English

Wordplay: Amphibiology

• amphibiology ("double [amphibo-] meaning [-logy]")
  – "the misuse of words such that they have double meaning, intentional or not," e.g.
    • notice in a restaurant: “Customers who think our waiters are rude should see the manager.”
    • Disraeli: “Thank you so much for the book. I shall lose no time in reading it.”
    • Samuel Johnson: “Your work is both good and original. Unfortunately, the parts that are good are not original, and the parts that are original are not good.”
Latin and Greek Elements in English

Wordplay: Amphibology

• amphibologies in church newsletters:
  – “Don’t let worry kill you. Let the church help.”
  – “For those of you who have children and don’t know it, we have a nursery downstairs.”
  – “This afternoon there will be a meeting in the south and north ends of the church. Children will be baptized at both ends.”
  – “Thursday at 5 pm there will be a meeting of the Little Mothers Club. All wishing to become Little Mothers, please see the minister in his private study.”
Latin and Greek Elements in English

Wordplay: Amphibology

• amphibologies in church newsletters:
  – “This being Easter Sunday, we will ask Mrs. Lewis to come forward and lay an egg on the altar.”
  – “The ladies of the church have cast off clothing of every kind and they may be seen in the church basement.”
  – “At the evening service tonight, the sermon topic will be ‘What is Hell?’ Come early and listen to our choir practice.”
  – “Weight Watchers will meet at 7 pm at the First Baptist Church. Please use the large double doors at the side entrance.”
Latin and Greek Elements in English

Wordplay: Amphibiology

- amphibologies in church newsletters:
  - “The Associate Minister unveiled the church’s new tithing campaign slogan last Sunday: ‘I upped my pledge! Up yours!’”
Latin and Greek Elements in English

Wordplay: Malapropism

• **malapropism**: the misunderstanding of one word for another word which is similar in sound

  – from Mrs. Malaprop in Sheridan’s *The Rivals* (1775)

    • cf. French *mal à propos* (“bad[ly] to the purpose”)
    • she misuses complex words and language in an attempt to sound educated

  – examples

    • wealthy *typhoon*
    • she put *massacre* on her eyes
    • you could have knocked me over with a *fender*
Latin and Greek Elements in English

Wordplay: Malapropism

• examples of malapropisms
  – “If a young man makes an indecent proposal, the well-bred young lady will politely recline to accept it.”
  – “I pledge a legion (or ‘I led the pigeons’) to the flag of the United States of America, . . .
  – “. . . and to the republic for Richard Stans, . . .”
  – “. . . one nation under guard . . .”
  – “. . . in a dirigible . . .”
  – “. . . or and a vegetable, with liberty and justice for all.”
Latin and Greek Elements in English

Wordplay: Malapropism

• examples from student writing
  – Don Coyote
  – Moses went up Mount Cyanide, . . .
  – . . . but he died before he ever reached Canada.
  – David was skilled at playing the liar.
  – He fought with the Finckelsteins, a race of people who lived in Biblical times.
  – Solomon, one of David’s sons, had 300 wives and 700 porcupines.
Latin and Greek Elements in English

Wordplay: Malapropism

- examples from student writing
  - The Greeks invented three kinds of columns: Corinthian, Ironic and Dork.
  - And they built the Porntheon . . .
  - . . . on the Apocalypse.
  - Greek myth tells about the mother of Achilles who dipped him in the river Stynx . . .
  - . . . until he became intolerable.
  - Socrates died of an overdose of wedlock.
Latin and Greek Elements in English

Wordplay: Malapropism

• examples from student writing
  – In the Olympic games, the Greeks ran, jumped, hurled the biscuits, . . .
  – . . . and threw the java.
  – The Roamins are called this name because they never stayed in one place for long.
  – Julius Caesar extinguished himself on the plains of Gaul.
  – And when he died, he said, “Teehee, Brutus!”
Latin and Greek Elements in English

Wordplay: Malapropism

• examples from student writing
  – In the Middle Ages King Alfred conquered the Dames.
  – Midevil victims of the Bluebonnet plague . . .
  – . . . grew boobs on their necks.
  – During this time people put on normality plays about ghosts, goblins, virgins and other mythical creatures.
  – English government was a constitutional mockery.
  – When Queen Elizabeth exposed herself before her troops, they shouted “Hurrah!” and defeated the Spanish Armadillo.
Latin and Greek Elements in English

Wordplay: Malapropism

• examples from student writing
  – Sir Francis Drake **circumcised** the world . . .
  • . . . using a one-hundred-foot clipper. (amphibology)
  – John Milton wrote *Paradise Lost*. Then his wife died and he wrote *Paradise Regained*. (another amphibology)
  – One of the causes of the Revolutionary War was the English put **tacks** in their tea.
  – Lincoln freed the slaves by signing the **Emasculation** Proclamation.
  – Louis Pasteur discovered a cure for **rabbis**.
Latin and Greek Elements in English

Wordplay: Malapropism

• examples from parents’ excuses for student absences
  – My son is under a doctor’s care. Please execute him.
  – My daughter was absent yesterday because she had her periodicals, or . . .
    • . . . her first menopause.
    • . . . she was administrating.
  – Please excuse Connie from gym. She’s having trouble breeding.
Latin and Greek Elements in English

Wordplay: Malapropism

- examples from parents’ excuses for student absences
  - Ann could not come to school. She was bothered by very close veins.
  - Please excuse Tom. He had diarrhea and his boots leak.
Latin and Greek Elements in English

Wordplay: Spoonerisms

- spoonerism: “a humorous transposition of sounds within a phrase or sentence”
- technical term: metaphasis (“changed/speak/result of”)
- examples of spoonerisms:

  a well-oiled icicle
  in one fell swoop
  under the influence of alcohol
  a scoop of boy scouts
  don’t speak the swoppy things!
Latin and Greek Elements in English

Wordplay: Spoonerisms

• the name of this type of wordplay comes from Rev. William Spooner, an Anglican scholar who was the warden of New College, Oxford, from 1903-1924
  – he was famous for his dull lectures and his work on the Roman historian Tacitus
    • and he was an albino!
  – but he was most famous for making accidental spoonerisms in public, usually hilarious inversions of words/phrases
    • Richard Lederer: “Spooner set out to be a bird watcher and ended up a word botcher.”
Latin and Greek Elements in English

Wordplay: Spoonerisms

• well-attested examples of spoonerisms from Spooner:
  – he accused a student of “fighting a liar in the quadrangle”
  – to another he said, “You have hissed my mystery lectures. You have tasted your whole worm!”
  – “Who of us has not felt in his heart a half-warmed fish?”
Latin and Greek Elements in English

Wordplay: Spoonerisms

• other examples of spoonerisms attributed to Spooner (but these cannot be confirmed)
  – “Three cheers for our queer old dean!”
  – “When our boys come home from France, we’ll will have the hags flung out.”
  – “The Lord is shoving leopard.”
  – “It’s now kiss-tomary to cuss the bride.”
Latin and Greek Elements in English

Wordplay: Spoonerisms

• Spooner hated his own tendencies to “spoonerize” words
  – one night when drunk students had collected below the balcony of his suite on campus and demanded a speech from him, he said, “You don’t want to hear a speech. You just want to hear one of those . . . things!”
Latin and Greek Elements in English

Wordplay: Anagrams

• **anagram**: the rearrangement of the letters within a word so as to spell another word or words
  – etymologically, “up(side down)/word”
  – e.g. parental consent = no prenatal cents
• ideally, the anagram reveals the “secret” or “true” meaning of the word,
  – e.g. angered = ____enraged___?
• the rule is that every letter in the word must be used **ONCE AND ONLY ONCE!**
Latin and Greek Elements in English

Wordplay: Anagrams

• examples of anagrams:
  – train = it ran
  – the eyes = they see
  – endearments = tender names
  – lawyers = sly ware
  – a shoplifter = has to pilfer
  – conversation = voices rant on
  – desperation = a rope ends it
Latin and Greek Elements in English

Wordplay: Anagrams

• examples of anagrams:
  – bathing girls = in slight garb
  – the Morse code = here come dots
  – Western Union = no wire unsent
  – panties = a step in
  – punishment = nine thumps
  – French Revolution = Violence, run forth!
  – Is pity love? = Positively!
Latin and Greek Elements in English

Wordplay: Anagrams

• examples of anagrams:
  – Presbyterian = best in prayer
  – marriage = a grim era
  – slot machines = cash lost in ‘em
  – Ten Commandments = can’t mend most men
  – Madame Curie = Radium came!
  – Southern California = hot sun, or life in a car
  – Ivanhoe by Sir Walter Scott = a novel by a Scottish author
Latin and Greek Elements in English

Wordplay: Anagrams

• examples of anagrams:
  – Rocky Mountains = O man! ski country!
  – the piano bench = beneath Chopin
  – astronomers = moon starers
  – hibernated = bear hit den
  – The Midnight Ride of Paul Revere = Rider gave hint of perils due
  – mother-in-law = woman Hitler
Latin and Greek Elements in English

Wordplay: Anagrams

• examples of anagrams:
  – Ronald Wilson Reagan = Insane Anglo Warlord
  – George Herbert Walker Bush = Huge Berserk Rebel Warthog
  – two plus eleven = twelve plus one
  – anagrams = ars magna
  – quid est veritas? = est vir qui adest
  – A Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year! = May many a red wreath carry happiness!
Latin and Greek Elements in English

Wordplay: Palindromes

- **palindrome**: words or sentences which are spelled the same way backwards and forwards
  - “run (-drome) + backwards (palin-)”
  - the term palindrome was coined by Ben Jonson (1629)
  - also called “recurrents,” “bifrontals,” “encyclics,” “diabolics”
  - in antiquity, they were called “sotadics” after a poet named Sotades who wrote (bad!) poetry in palindromic form
  - n.b. there were back-to-back temples of Roma and Amor (“Love”) in Rome: they were mirror images of each other!

- **main rule**: must have the same letters both directions
  - however, punctuation, word-breaks, pronunciation may change – and in fact, it should change!
Latin and Greek Elements in English

Wordplay: Palindromes

• examples of simple palindromes (center point underlined):
  – single words: noon, deed, toot, peep, radar, level, civic, repaper
  – names: Eve, Otto, Anna, Hannah
• but sentences are where the real art of palindroming lies!
  – the first words ever spoken: “Madam, I’m Adam.”
    • or “Madam, in Eden I’m Adam.”
  – and Eve’s answer: “Sir, I’m Iris.”
  – Napoleon: “Able was I ere I saw Elba.”
Latín y griego en inglés

Palíndromos

- Ejemplos de palíndromos:
  - Teddy Roosevelt:
    A man, a plan, a canal: Panama!
  - En un antiguo bautismal griego:
    NIPSON ANOMEMATA ME MONAN OPSIN
    WASH YOUR SINS NOT ONLY YOUR FACE
  - Un enigma latín:
    IN GIRUM IMUS NOCTE ET CONSUMIMUR IIGNI
    WE GO IN A CIRCLE AT NIGHT AND ARE EATEN BY FIRE
Latin and Greek Elements in English

Wordplay: Palindromes

• examples of palindromes:
  – earliest attested palindrome in English:
    “Lewd did I live & evil did I dwel.”
  • nowadays, the **ampersand** would be considered cheating!
• better examples from modern English:
  No lemons, no melon!
  Poor Dan is in a droop.
  Em, sex at noon taxes me.
  Too far, Edna, we wander afoot.
Latin and Greek Elements in English

Wordplay: Palindromes

• examples of palindromes:

  Was it Eliot’s toilet I saw?
  Norma is as selfless as I am, Ron.
  Straw? No, too stupid a fad! I put soot on warts.
  Satan, oscillate my metallic sonatas!

  Are we not drawn onward, we few, drawn onward to new era?
Latin and Greek Elements in English

Wordplay: Conclusion

• the tendency to play with words is very old
  – Mayan scribes punned
  – Christ made a pun when he said, “On this rock (petros) I will build my church.”
  – Shakespeare makes more than three thousand(!) puns
  – even in the age of video games, Scrabble continues to be one of the most popular games in every society with an alphabet
Latin and Greek Elements in English

Wordplay: Conclusion

• Why is wordplay so common?
  – it’s part of the joy inherent in language
  – as we’ve seen often in this class, many words begin as jokes, e.g. OK
  – thus, word-jokes are essential to language and instrumental in linguistic change
  – there are few things we can say with certainty about our Indo-European ancestors but one of them, I think, is that they made puns!
Latin and Greek Elements in English

Neologism

• with that in mind, let’s have fun with words and participate in the very process of language change ourselves!
  – that is, follow in your ancestors’ footsteps and leave some linguistic tracks that prove you’ve been here
• the first step is you have to find something that doesn’t have a word for it and needs one!
Latin and Greek Elements in English

Neologism

• Neologisms suggested in the Washington Post last year:
  – **Intaxication**
    • the euphoria you feel after getting a tax refund, which lasts only until you realize it was your money to start with
  – **Reintarnation**
    • coming back to life as a hillbilly
  – **Bozone**
    • the substance surrounding stupid people that stops bright ideas from penetrating their airspace
  – **Foreplooy**
    • any self-misrepresentation perpetrated in order to have sex
Neologism

- **Cashtration**: the act of buying a house, which renders the subject financially impotent for an indefinite period of time
- **Giraffiti**: spray-paint vandalism which is very, very high up a building
- **Sarchasm**: the time interval between the delivery of a sarcastic comment and its victim’s perception of the insult
- **Inoculatte**: to take coffee intravenously when you’re running late
Latin and Greek Elements in English

Neologism

• Neologisms suggested in the Washington Post last year:
  – **Hipatitis**:
    • terminal coolness
  – **Osteopornosis**:
    • a degenerate disease
  – **Karmageddon**:
    • it’s like when you’re getting these vibes, you know, from everywhere, and then like the earth blows up and it’s a total bummer, dude
  – **Glibido**:
    • all talk and no action
Latin and Greek Elements in English

Neologism

• Neologisms suggested in the Washington Post last year:
  - **Dopeler effect:**
    • the tendency of stupid ideas to seem smarter when they’re coming at you rapidly
  - **Beelzebug:**
    • Satan in the form of a mosquito that gets into your bedroom at the three in the morning and cannot be cast out
  - **Caterpallor:**
    • the color you turn after finding half a grub in the apple you’re eating
  - **Ignoranus:**
    • a person who’s both a moron and a . . . jerk
Latin and Greek Elements in English

Neologism

• but in this class your words must conform to the rules of etymology we’ve studied throughout this class

http://www.usu.edu/markdamen/Wordpower/handouts/neologs.pdf
Latin and Greek Elements in English

Neologism

• Overview of Rules for Neologisms (next class)
  – all words must be composed of elements from Latin or Greek
  – NO hybrids! NO mixing of Latin and Greek!
  – cite the word, define it, explain why you think this word should be created and finally use it in a sentence
  – put it on a piece of paper with your name on it and turn it in to me in class
  – make up TWO words!
Neologism

- My Neologisms: Traffic
  - *gerontauthodism*
    - “old/self/road/belief in”
    - the conviction that, if old people want to drive *that* slow, they should have their own roads
  - *polyurhodic*
    - “many/urine/road/p.t.”
    - when a traveling companion (but not my wife!) has to pee the second we get in the car and every fifteen minutes thereafter
      - I don’t mean my wife!
      - I really don’t!
      - Huh-uh!
Latin and Greek Elements in English

Neologism

• My Neologisms: Traffic
  – pyrrhypertachy
    • “red/over/speed/act of”
    • the tendency of many drivers to accelerate when the light turns red
  – ornithorrheous
    • “bird/discharge/full of”
    • when you find your car covered with bird droppings, usually because of hypodendrostasia (“under/tree/park/act of”)
Latin and Greek Elements in English

Neologism

• My Neologisms: Moving about in Public
  – **amphiparabasy**
    • “around/sideways/walk/state of”
    • that situation in which you run into a stranger head-on in public and you both step to one side, then both step to the other, until one of you finally runs around the other
  – **ochlobradypatetic**
    • “crowd/slow/walk around/p.t.”
    • p.t. people who walk slowly in a crowded hall, usually in large cholesterol-like clumps, and block the way of people who have some real sense of purpose in life
Latin and Greek Elements in English

Neologism

• My Neologisms: Moving about in Public
  – anopsia
    • “not/see/act of”
    • the practice of not looking at or meeting the eyes of strangers in public
  – superagendacity
    • “excessive/do/must/quality of being inclined to”
    • the effort to appear completely absorbed in doing something, like reading a billboard, to avoid meeting the eye of some stranger
Latin and Greek Elements in English

Neologism

• My Neologisms: Talking
  – **cacologolatry**
    • “bad/word/worship/state of”
    • the overuse of “bad” words in discourse, usually because of a critically small vocabulary
  – **anticacologolatry**
    • “against/bad/word/worship/state of”
    • the rejection of any “bad” word on principle, usually because of a critical small-mindedness
Latin and Greek Elements in English

Neologism

• My Neologisms: Talking
  – philodysangelical
    • “love/bad/message/p.t.”
    • characterized by the love of telling bad news
  – ultimoverbite
    • “last/word/having”
    • always needing to get the last word in a conversation
Latin and Greek Elements in English

Neologism

• My Neologisms: People and their “Diseased Conditions”
  – hypertrichosis
    • “over/hair/diseased condition of”
    • the act of teasing one’s hair into a preternaturally vertical position through the overuse of hairspray or some other ozone-unfriendly means; aka “helmet-head”
  – cyanotrichosis
    • “blue/hair/diseased condition of”
    • the inexplicable need to dye one’s hair blue, a defect shared mainly by elderly women and punk rockers
Latin and Greek Elements in English

Neologism

• My Neologisms: People and their “Diseased Conditions”
  – neogerontoid
    • “young/old/like”
    • acting much older than one’s age
  – geminiculoso similin vestiture
    • “twin/little/similar/in/garment/act of”
    • the habit of dressing twins in identical clothing, as if there were only one of them and you’re seeing two because you need glasses or you’re drunk, or both
Latin and Greek Elements in English

Neologism

• Neologisms from Past Etymology Classes

  – pantautonomatacronymic
    • “all/same/name/first letter/word/p.t.”
    • p.t. people who give all their children names beginning with
      the same letter

  – inscicurulous
    • “not/know/care/little/full of”
    • not knowing or caring about in the least

  – myophrenic
    • “muscle/mind/p.t.”
    • having muscles for brains
Latin and Greek Elements in English

Neologism

• Neologisms from Past Etymology Classes
  – polyalgogametopathy
    • “much/pain/marriage/diseased condition of”
    • the condition of suffering much pain because of a spouse or ex-spouse
  – meterototeleophilophobia
    • “after/sex/end/love/fear of”
    • the fear that after sex the love will be ended
Latin and Greek Elements in English

Neologism

• Neologisms from Past Etymology Classes
  – perantactor
    • “wrongly/in front of/drive/one who does”
    • a driver who pulls out in front of another driver inconsiderately
  – distentulator
    • “apart/stretch/to/that which does”
    • the small plastic device used in delivering pizzas to keep the box from crushing the pizza, aka Barbie tables