

# 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 paronomasia
  - 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: Amphibology

- amphibology (“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: Amphibology

- 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-bidd bicycle

in one few spoon

under the influence of alcohol

a scoop of boy trouts

don't put the spooney 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: Eye, 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.”

# Latin and Greek Elements in English

## Wordplay: Palindromes

- examples of palindromes:

- Teddy Roosevelt:

A man, a plan, a canal: Panama!

- on an ancient Greek baptismal font:

NIPSON ANOMEMATA ME MONAN OPSIN

WASH YOUR SINS NOT ONLY YOUR FACE

- a Latin riddle:

IN GIRUM IMUS NOCTE E ET CONSUMIMUR IGNI

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 lemonss, 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
  - Foreploy
    - any self-misrepresentation perpetrated in order to have sex

# Latin and Greek Elements in English

## Neologism

- Neologisms suggested in the Washington Post last year:
  - 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
  - Ignoramus:
    - 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!

# Latin and Greek Elements in English

## 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
  - ornithorrhoeous
    - “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
  - amhiparabasy
    - “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
  - cacologolatriy
    - “bad/word/worship/state of”
    - the overuse of “bad” words in discourse, usually because of a critically small vocabulary
  - anticacologolatriy
    - “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
  - geminiculosiminvestiture
    - “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