Etymologies of Terms for or about Poetry

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ME = Middle English, OE = Old English (Anglo-Saxon)
OF = Old French, OHG = Old High German, ON = Old Norse
F = French, Prov = Provençal
C = century (e.g., 13C = thirteenth century)
PIE = Proto-Indo-European (I have omitted the "laryngeals" in the roots)
< = derives from, > = yields
* = hypothetical (unattested) form
OED = Oxford English Dictionary
English (including Old and Middle English) terms in **boldface**, all others in *italics*.

poet, **poem**, **poetry**, **poetic**, and **poesy** (or **poesie**) all passed from Greek through Latin and then through Old French (OF) into English. The Greek words were based on the root *poi-* "make": a ποίημα (*poiēma*) or πόημα (*poēma*) is "something made" or a "made thing"; a *poiētēs* or *poētēs* is a "maker." The root *poi-* < PIE *k^w*oi-*, apparently the o-variant of *k^w*ei-* "pile up, build up, make, select"; there are cognates in Slavic and Indo-Iranian. The shift from initial k^w- to *p-* may seem odd, but it instances a regular sound-change law regarding "labio-velars," found also in PIE *k^w*o* "where," which gave rise to Latin *quo* but Greek *pou*; see also **epic** and **bucolic** below. The voiced counterpart *g^w*o-* is found in *bous* "cow, ox" in Greek and *bos* in Latin but *gauh* in Sanskrit and "cow" in English. For a similar shift from *g^w- to *b- see under **bard**.

From the 15C poets were sometimes called "makers" in English, as in the Scottish Chaucerian William Dunbar's *Lament for the Makars* (c. 1505). (W. S. Merwin wrote a "Lament for the Makers" in 1999.) Sir Phillip Sidney, in *A Defence of Poetry* (1595), writes, "The Greeks called him a 'poet,' which name hath, as the most excellent, gone through other languages. It cometh of this word ποιεῖν, which is, to make: wherein, I know not whether by luck or wisdom, we Englishmen have met with the Greeks in calling him a maker." The word lives on in Scotland: in 2004 the Scottish Parliament established the position of poet laureate, called The Scots Makar.

In Homer the verb ποιεῖν meant "make, form, bring about, do," and the adjectives ποιητός (*poiētos*) and εὐποιητός (*eupoiētos*) meant "made" or "well-made," with no suggestion of poetry. In Aristophanes' *Thesmophoriazusae*, Agathon is called "the τραγῳδοποιός" (*tragōidopoios*), which might be rendered either "tragedy-maker" or "tragedy-poet."

By Plato's time ποιητής (*poiētēs*, "poet") had already narrowed to its modern sense, but Plato is of course aware of the older and broader meaning. In the *Symposium* Diotima tells Socrates: "you know, for example, that 'poetry' [ποίησις, *poiēsis*] has a very wide range. After all, everything that is responsible for creating something out of nothing is a kind of poetry, and so all the creations of all the crafts [τέχναι, *tekhnai*] are themselves a kind of poetry and the practitioners [δημιουργοί, *dēmiourgoi*] of these are all poets. . . . Nevertheless, as you also know, these craftsmen are not called poets. We have other words for them, and out of the whole of poetry [in the broad sense] we have marked off one part, the part the Muses gave us with melody and rhythm, and we refer to this by the word that means the whole. For this alone is called 'poetry,' and those who practice this part of poetry are called poets [ποιηταί]" (205b-c) (trans. Nehemas and Woodruff, modified).

Aristotle's *Poetics* (*Peri poiētikēs*) has the word *poiēma* (plural *poiēmata*) several times in more or less its English sense. Once it has the phrase *poiēmata pepoiēkasin* ("they made poems"), as if to signal the etymology of "poem" through a kind of pun (1451a21).

Without "poem" as an object, the verb *poiein* by itself did not mean "make poetry," as do the English verbs **poetize** (first attested in Sidney's *Defence*) and **poeticize** (from early 19C). A late Greek verb, *poiētikeuomai*, meant "speak poetically."

Like Sidney, Shelley hearkens to the etymology in his *A Defence of Poetry* (1821), which he opens with a distinction between reason and imagination, or between analysis and synthesis; the latter he calls τὸ ποιεῖν. The German Romantics had already widened *Poesie* to mean the prime creative force in the human mind and in nature.

Dante uses *poeta* twenty-five times in *The Divine Comedy*: twenty-one times of Virgil, his guide through Hell and Purgatory, once of Homer, once of Statius, once of a generic poet, and finally once of himself, as he imagines returning to Florence and receiving the laurel crown (*Paradiso* 25.8-9). That may be the first time a vernacular writer used the word for himself or for any other vernacular writer; it had been reserved for classical poets.

Many other languages have borrowed *poētēs*: French *poète* or *poëte*, Spanish *poeta*, Russian *poet* (поэ́т), Polish *poeta*, Lithuanian *poetas*, etc.

poem, the *OED* tells us, was apparently not in use in English until the 16C; before then **poesy** was sometimes used for an individual poem, as a count-noun (as *poésie* still is in French), as well as for poetry in general, as a mass-noun.

Poesy is older than **poetry** and is now quaint or archaic; in the 15C it could mean "motto" (in verse) and then "bouquet" or "bunch of flowers" of poetry; we still have the word **posy** for "bouquet" or "nosegay," and whose connection with **poesy** is usually forgotten. Sidney, again, reminds us: "And every flower . . . / . . . into your poesy wring" (*Astrophel and Stella*, Sonnet 15). It was routine from ancient times to consider poems as flowers, "gathered" into an **anthology** or **florilegium** (from Greek and Latin for "collection of flowers"). (In French *florilège* seems to be as common as *anthologie*. The Dutch word for it is *bloemlezing*, "flower-gathering.") The Greek poet Meleager (first century BCE) compiled a set of epigrams he called *Stephanos*, "Garland," and likened each poet to a flower; another *Stephanos* was compiled by Philip (first century CE). Udall made a collection called *Flovres for Latyne Spekynge, selected and gathered oute of Terence* (1533). Gascoigne made one with a more extravagant title: *A Hundredth Sundry Flowres bound up in one small Poesie. Gathered partly (by translation) in the fyne outlandish Gardens of Euripides, Ovid, Petrarch, Aristotle and others; and partly by Invention out of our owne fruitfull Orchardes in Englande* (1573); Robert Allen in 1600 published *Englands Parnassus, or, The Choysest Flowers of our Modern Poets*; Abraham Cowley's first published poems were called *Poetical Blossoms* (1636); Julia Ward Howe published *Passion-Flowers* in 1854; Robert Louis Stevenson wrote *A Child's Garden of Verses* in 1885. The same tradition in French is found in such titles as *Les Fleurs de Poésie Françoys*e (1534); Desbordes-Valmore published *Les Fleurs* (1833) and *Pauvres Fleurs* (1839); the metaphor lies behind Baudelaire's shocking title *Les Fleurs du Mal*, "The Flowers of Evil" (1857). (Swinburne called Baudelaire a "gardener of strange flowers" in *Ave Atque Vale*). A popular 19C anthology of German poetry was titled *Blumen und Früchte deutscher Dichtung: Ein Kranz gewunden für Frauen und Jungfrauen* ("Flowers and Fruits of German Poetry: A Wreath Woven for Ladies and Maidens"). In Russia the poets Pushkin and Delvig organized an annual anthology called *Northern Flowers* (Северные цветы) (1825-32).

The "flowers of rhetoric" referred to embellishments or figures of speech used in oratory. Sidney writes, "Muses, I oft invoked your holy aid, / With choicest flowers my speech to engarland" (*Astrophel*, Sonnet 55). We still speak of a "florid" or "flowery" style.

poetess first appeared in the 16C, but by the end of the 19C it was felt to be outmoded, if not condescending. **Poetress** arose about the same time, modeled on Late Latin *poetrix* and Classical Latin *poetris* (probably from Greek), and has likewise faded out. Greek *poetria* (borrowed by Latin) originally meant "poetess."

In French *poème* or *poëme* was in use by the 13C. Vigny in the 19C redefined the term as a kind of poem distinct from ode or elegy; it is an expression of a philosophic thought in epic form, though much briefer than an epic. Contemporary uses of *poème* are not so restricted.

furor poeticus, the "fury" of a poet filled with creative inspiration or enthusiasm, was given currency by Marsilio Ficino in his Latin commentary on Plato's *Ion*, titled *In Platonis Ionem de furore poetico* (c.1465). Latin *furor* < *furere* "to rage, be mad" < uncertain root, but perhaps PIE *d^h*wes-* "rage," with a suggestion of animated breathing. The phrase caught on quickly among Italian Humanists and then spread throughout Europe. The *OED* cites Puttenham's *Arte of English Poesie* (1597), where **furor** is used of a poet's "divine instinct." There is a character named Furor Poeticus in the anonymous play *The Return from Parnassus* (part 2) (c.1600). A number of synonyms for this state of mind may be found in English poetry: "rage, rapture, ravishment, ecstasy, transport, enthusiasm, frenzy, charm, trance, enchantment, spell." Poets have applied them as well to the state of mind of their audience, wishful thinking, perhaps.

Of these terms perhaps the most interesting is **enthusiasm**: from Latin *enthūsiasmus* < Greek ἐνθουσιασμός "the state of being ἔνθεος, possessed by a god" < ἐν "in" + θεός "god" < PIE *d^h*es-* "god." *Enthousiasmos* first appears in Democritus (frag. 18) in connection with the poet's inspiration; Plato has Ion ascribe the power of the Muse to fill a poet with it (*Ion* 533e). Though the idea was revived among Italian humanists, it gained strength during the periods of Sensibility and Romanticism. James Thomson says Nature awakens "the poetical Enthusiasm" (Preface to "Winter"), while amidst nature Beattie's minstrel is "a lone enthusiast" (*Minstrel* 1.54.2). The words could be used dismssively, but Blake, Wordsworth, Clare, and others embraced them. In France Lamartine and Hugo, among others, wrote poems called "L'Enthousiasme."

scop (pronounced *scope*) or **sceop** (pronounced *sheop*, almost *shap*), a common Old English word for "poet" or "minstrel," is found in *Beowulf* (496 etc) and as late as the 13C (in Layamon's *Brut*). It is akin to OHG *scoph* "sport, jest, derision," and to ON *skof* "railing, mocking," which is probably the source of English **scoff**. OE **scopleoth** means "poem" or "song"; cf. German *Lied* "song." **Scop** and its Germanic cognates perhaps derive from Proto-Germanic **skup-* < PIE **skeubh-* "shove." Another theory, more attractive but probably not right, is that **scop** derives from the root of "shape" (OE **scieppan**, or **sceppan**, past **scop**, participle **scapen** < PIE **skep-* "cut, scrape"). Robert Graves assumes that derivation when he writes, "The function of the Nordic *scop* seems to have been twofold. Not only was he originally a 'shaper' of charms . . .; but he had a subsidiary task, of persuading a ship's crew to pull rhythmically and uncomplainingly on their oars" ("Harp, Anvil, Oars"); John Gardner also seems to assume it in his novel *Grendel* (1971), where Hrothgar's bard is called "the Shaper."

A less frequent word for a role close to that of a **scop** is **thyle**, "speaker, orator, jester," applied to Unferth in *Beowulf*. It is cognate with ON *thulr* "sage" and *thylja* "chant, murmur," as well as Russian *tolk* "sense, judgment."

gleeman < OE **gleoman,** a synonym in *Beowulf* for **scop** (1160), remained in use as late as Dunbar (16C)**. Glee** < OE **gleo**, **gliw**, etc. "entertainment, sport; music" < perhaps PIE **ghel-* "shine" whence **glitter**, **gleam**, **glisten**, and (closest to **glee**) **glad**. In the 17C **glee** came to refer

to a song for at least three male voices; the _OED_ records a 17C title, "A glee to Bacchus with chorus." Hence "glee clubs," often at universities.

skald, the Old Norse and Old Icelandic word for "poet," seems to have come to mean "lampooner" or "mocker" (as in ON _skof_), and may well be the source of English **scold**. The _OED_ says no satisfactory etymology has been proposed. Calvert Watkins suggests it is from North Germanic _*scathla_ < PIE _*skwe-tlo-_ < _*sekw-_ "say" (+ suffix), whence also English **say, saga, saw** (= **saying**); it would seem to be akin to Germanic _*skeltan_, as in OHG _scelten_ "mock, revile, scold" (Modern German _schelten_, _schalt_, _gescholten_). Skalds are first named in Engish by Thomas Percy in 1763.

Bragi, the skald of the gods in Old Norse mythology, < ON _bragr_ "poetry," though Snorri Sturluson (13C) puts it the other way round: "One is called Bragi: he is renowned for wisdom, and most of all for fluency of speech and skill with words. He knows most of skaldship, and after him skaldship is called _bragr_." The ON word, which could also mean "the best" or "the boast" of anything, might be the origin of **brag** and **braggart**; because similar words are found in French, it might be that the Normans, originally Norsemen, retained the word in their dialect of French and passed it into both Middle (Parisian) French and Middle English. ON _bragr_ itself is of obscure origin, unless indeed it is from the proper name Bragi, but where that name comes from would be no clearer. One theory connects it to Sanskrit _brahman_ "priest" and Irish _bricht_ "incantation, spell." The verb **brag** was used of a trumpet in 14C: "sound, or sound loudly"; today we may toot our own horn. Possibly related to **bray**.

bard < Gaelic _bard_ and Welsh _bardd_ < Celtic _bardos_ (attested in Greek and Roman writers) < PIE _*_g^{w}_ere-_ "favor, praise" + _*dho-_ "do, make. Hence a bard is "one who makes praises." That the two PIE roots yielded a phrase in Vedic (_giras . . . dha_) and Avestan (_garo . . . da_), "give praises," suggests that the word **bard** may have a very ancient pedigree. _Gir_ in Sanskrit also means "song of praise," further evidence that Proto-Indo-European bards sang their praises. PIE _*_g^{w}_ere_ > _*_g^{w}_r-to-_ "praised (in song)" > Latin _gratus_ "charming, welcome" > _gratia_ > **grateful**, **congratulate**, **grace**, etc.

Referring to the poets of Gaul, the Roman epic poet Lucan (39-65 CE) wrote, "The bards (_bardi_) too—you poets who with praise send forth / Into eternity the valiant spirits cut off in war— / Then free from worry you poured out a multitude of songs" (_Pharsalia_ 1.447-49, translated by Susan H. Braund). The poet of the medieval Welsh poem _Y Gododdin_ writes, "poets (_beirdd_) of the world judge men of valor." Shakespeare uses the word (_AC_ 3.2.16); Milton calls Orpheus "the Thracian bard" (_PL_ 7.34). In Lowland Scots from the 16C **bard** had been in common (and condescending) use for a wandering minstrel; both in Scotland and England the term rose in dignity after Macpherson's "discovery" and "translation" of the songs of Ossian (1760-), a legendary Gaelic bard of the 3C, and after Thomas Gray's "The Bard" (set in Wales) (1757). Wordsworth uses the term frequently for any poet. The Scottish poet Robert Burns liked to call himself and fellow poets **bardies**, "wee bards," but **bardy** had another sense, of uncertain origin, that Burns was playing with: "bold, impudent, quarrelsome."

A variant of Scottish **bard** was **baird**, whence the common surname Baird.

minstrel < OF _menestral, ministral_ "entertainer, servant" < Latin _ministerialis_ "household officer" < _ministerium_ (> **ministry**) < _minister_ "inferior" (in contrast to _magister_ "superior," whence English **magistrate, master,** etc.) < _*mi-nu-_ "small" (> **minus, minor**) < PIE _*mei-_ "small." In medieval England **minstrel** referred to one who entertains his patrons with song, music, tales, jokes, and buffoonery, rather like the fools in Shakespeare. By the 18C the

term had risen in dignity, shedding the clownishness. James Beattie's *The Minstrel; or, The Progress of Genius* (1771) reveals in its subtitle the early Romantic elevation of the minstrel or bard; this long poem in Spenserian stanzas tells of an honest and humble Scottish "shepherd-swain" who loved to roam in nature's wilds and play his "short pipe of rudest minstrelsy" (1.100,139). The ennoblement of the minstrel (and its Scottish provenance) was enhanced by Walter Scott's collection of ballads, *The Minstrelsy of the Scottish Border* (1802-03), and his own poem *The Lay of the Last Minstrel* (1805). Wordsworth called Scott himself "Great Minstrel of the Border" ("Yarrow Revisited" (1835), 1.8).

jongleur, borrowed in 18C from French *jongleur* "minstrel" < *jougleur* < OF *jogleor* < Latin *joculator* "jester" < *jocus* "jest, joke" < PIE **yok-o*, the suffixed o-grade of **yek-* "speak" > Sanskrit *yacati* "asks, solicits," and OHG *jëhan* "express, explain." The *jogleor* did more than sing songs or recite poems; he might also perform acrobatics or juggle, and **juggler** derives from the word. From the Latin words, of course, come English **joke**, **jocular**, **jocose**, etc.

troubadour, which entered English in the 18C, < French *troubadour* < Prov *trobador*, a lyric poet of the Provençal language or *langue d'oc* (11-13C) < *trobar* "find, invent, compose poetry" perhaps < Late Latin **tropare* "to compose, to use tropes" < *tropus* "trope, figure of speech" < Greek *tropos* "turn, way, manner, style, trope" < PIE **trep-* "turn." The feminine form of *trobador* is *trobairitz*; there were some twenty women poets active in 12-13C Occitan regions. Latin **tropare* would also yield OF *trover* > *trovere* (n) > French *trouvère*, a poet of Old French or *langue d'oeil* of the same period. Compare Spanish *trobador*, Italian *trovatore*. There are less convincing attempts to trace the word to Arabic words, though the influence of Hispano-Arabic poetry and song is not in doubt. The Romantic era in Britain saw a revival of interest in troubadours (along with bards and minstrels): Walter Scott wrote "The Troubadour" (1815), Felicia Hemans "The Troubadour, and Richard Coeur de Lion" (1819), and Letitia Landon *The Troubadour* (1825). A play by the Spanish author Antonio Garcia Gutierrez, *El trovador* (1836), was the inspiration for Verdi's opera *Il Trovatore* (1853).

minnesinger, used since 1800 to refer to the medieval German courtly-love-poets, < German *Minnesinger*, *Minnesänger* < Middle High German *minnesinger* < *minne* "love" < OHG *minna* "love" (cognate with OE **myne** "love, remembrance" > ME **min** "remembrance") < PIE **men-* "think, have in mind" + *singer* (see **song**). The same PIE root by various branches generated **mind**, **mental**, **amnesia**, **Muse**, **Mnemosyne**, and many other words. The best known minnesinger is Walther von der Vogelweide, and there is the legendary Tannhäuser, the subject of Wagner's 1845 opera. Felicia Hemans writes of "the Minnesinger's thrilling lay" ("The Wild Huntsman" 23), but adds a footnote to explain the word.

vates, Latin for "poet" or "bard," earlier meant "prophet" or "seer" (*vaticinatio* meant "soothsaying" and has entered English as **vaticination**). Latin seems to have borrowed *vates* from Celtic, probably Gaulish (cf. Irish *fáth* "prophecy" and *faith* "sayer of spells, diviner," and Welsh *gwawd* "theme, poem, panegyric, prophecy"), but it could be a cognate. Strabo mentions Οὐατεῖς (*Ouateis*) "soothsayers, prophets," along with Δρυίδαι "Druids" and Βάρδοι "Bards," as a third order in the Gaulish hierarchy; that word looks identical to the Latin *vates*, but it may derive from the same Gaulish source. A misunderstanding of the Greek transliteration led to the word **ovate** for a member of this order, first recorded 1723. The PIE root may be **wat-* "inspire, arouse, (perhaps) rage"; whence also Germanic **wodaz* > OE **wod** "mad, raging" > Early Modern English **wood** "insane"; cf. ON *óðr* "possessed, insane" and German *Wut* "fury." **wodaz* also >

Wod-enaz* > OE **Woden, the god (ON *Odin* or *Óðinn*), > **Wednesday**, but it is possible that **Wodenaz* is a borrowing from Celtic **vatinos*. The same root may yield OE **wōth** "song," and ON *óðr* "poetry." PIE **wat*- may be related to **went*- "wind" (> **wind**) and the shorter form **we*- > Greek ἄησι (< *ἄϝησι, *awēsi*) "blows" and Sanskrit *vātas* "wind" and the storm-god *Vata* (variant of *Vayu*), who behaves rather like Woden.

aoidos (ἀοιδός), the term for bard or singer in the oldest Greek poems (Homer and Hesiod), is related to the verb *aeido* "I sing"; in the imperative mood it is the second word of the *Iliad*: *Mēnin aeide, thea* . . . "Wrath sing, goddess . . ." *Aoidos*, *aeido*, and the epic verb form *aoidiao* may well be Indo-European in origin, but no certain cognate exists. Homer gives two portraits of an *aoidos* in the *Odyssey*, Phemios and Demodokos. See **ode**. It is widely held that the word for "nightingale," ἀηδών (*aēdōn*), is related to *aoidos*, and indeed Hesiod calls the bird an *aoidos* (*Works and Days* 208), but the connection is not certain.

rhapsode, the term for the reciter of Homeric verse after the age of the *aoidos* (the composer) < Greek *rhapsoidos* < *rhapt*- "sew" or "stitch" + *oid*- "song." See **ode**. The verb *rhaptō* is found in 14C Linear B tablets, but a PIE root is uncertain. The rhapsode was a songstitcher. Pindar speaks of the Homeridai (sons of Homer) as "stitching songs" (*rhaptōn epeōn*) (*Nemean* 2.2) (for *epeōn* see **epic**). The same metaphor is found in the Old Irish word for "alliteration," *úaim*, which literally means "stitching": it sewed constituents of verse together. A traditional etymology of **rhapsode**, though incorrect, connects it to the word ῥάβδος (*rhabdos*) "staff," because rhapsodes often carried staves and may have beaten time with them. Greek *rhapsoidia* > English **rhapsody**. It is not related to "rapt" or "rapture."

Dichter, German for "poet" (rare until 18C when it was revived to replace *Poet*) < Middle High German *tihtaere* (12C) < Old High German *dihton* "write, compose" < Latin *dictare* "repeat, say over, dictate, get written down" (> **dictate**) < *dicare* "indicate, say, speak" (> **indicate, diction, dictionary**) (see **ditty** below) < PIE **deik*- "show"; cf. Sanskrit *diś*- "show"; Greek *deiknumi* "show." *Dichtung* means "poetry," *Gedicht* means "poem." Ezra Pound pretended to believe that *dichten* "to write" is the same verb as *dichten* "to make tight, pack" (akin to **thicken**); hence his claim that to write poetry is to condense. The Dutch word is *dichter*, Norwegian *dikter*, Danish *digter*, etc.

fili, Old Irish for "poet," earlier "seer, wise man" < PIE **wel*- "see"; cf. Welsh *gwelet* "see." The o-variant of **wel*- > Latin *voltus* "visage" and OE *wuldor* "fame"; it may appear in the name of the German prophetess Veleda (mentioned in Tacitus and Statius). Irish *fil* means "there is, behold!" The plural of *fili* is *filid* or *filidh*; Modern Irish *file*, plural *fili*.

ollam, Old Irish for the highest rank of *filid* (or other crafts, such as law), pronounced "ollav" and often spelled that way in English (Modern Irish *ollamh*) < *ollam*, *ollom* (adj) "greatest" < *oll*- "great" (perhaps akin to Latin *pollere* "be strong") + -*am*, superlative suffix (perhaps akin to Latin *–mo*, -*mus*, as in *primus*).

guslar, the oral bard in several Slavic traditions, is Serbian, with very similar forms in other Slavic languages < *gusle* or *gusla*, the one-string instrument the bard plays < Proto-Slavic **gosti* "sing, howl, play an instrument" < Proto-Balto-Slavic **gaustei* < PIE **gow-d^h-y-óti*, compound noun based on **gew*- "to call, invoke, cry."

kavih, Sanskrit for “poet, seer” (> *kāviya* “poetry”) < PIE **keu*-, variant **koue*- “pay attention, note, perceive” > Latin *cavēre* “guard against, beware” (> **caveat**, **caution**); > Greek *koeō* “remark, learn, hear” > perhaps *koiēs*, priest of the Kabeiroi (Cabiri) of Samothrace; Germanic > **show**, **sheen**, **scavenger**. In Lydian (of the Anatolian family), *kaves* meant “priest.” Sanskrit *kāviya* first meant “poetry” but later widened to include literary prose.

author < Anglo-Norman *autour* (OF *autor*, Mod F *auteur*) < Latin *auctor* “originator, founder” (of a family, or temple, or work of literature), agent noun from the participle (*auctum*) of the verb *augere* “make grow, increase, enlarge” (> **augment, auxiliary, august, auction**) < PIE **aug*- “grow” > Germanic **aukan* > **eke** (and perhaps German *auch* “also”); a variant of the PIE root via Germanic yields **wax** (“grow”). “Auctor,” a learned revision of “autour,” was the usual spelling in English in the 15C and 16C, sometimes confusingly “actor”; in the mid-16C the -h- was inserted, first making “aucthour,” then “authour” and “author.”

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verse < ME **vers** < OE & OF **vers** < Latin *versus* “turning” (of the plow), “furrow, line, verse” < past participle of *vertere* “turn” < PIE **wert*- “turn” (for more see **prose**). The *OED* states that *versus* is “so named from turning to begin another line.” See Wordsworth, 1805 *Prelude* 5.627: “the turnings intricate of verse.” But see **strophe** for a possible parallel in Greek to “turn” as a dance term. Latin *versus* “line of verse” is frequent in Cicero and elsewhere; Virgil in Eclogue 5 has Menalcas propose his friend Mopsus play the flute and *ego dicere versus* “I say verses.”

The idea of plowing a line of verse has remained alive for millennia. Pindar had called poets the “plowmen of the Muses” (*Nemean* 10); Latin *aro* and *exaro* “plow up” were used to mean “write.” Isidore of Seville quotes a lost Roman play by Atta: “Let us turn the plowshare (*Vertamus vomerem*) in the wax and plow with a point of bone.” Cf. Petrarch, *Rime* 228: *vomer di penna* “plowshare of a pen”; Spenser, *Faerie Queene* 6.9.1, where “furrow” means “line of verse.” When Blake calls on his readers to “follow with me my plow” he seems to refer to his engraving tool (*Milton* 7.3). And of course the earliest Greek writing was arranged *boustrophedon*, “as the ox plows,” with lines in alternating directions.

Verse is both a count-noun and a mass-noun. As a count-noun, which can take “a” (“a verse”) or the plural (“verses”), it goes back to Old English; today it can refer either to a line of poetry (as when we speak of “chapter and verse” in the Bible) or to a stanza or short section. It emerges somewhat later as a mass-noun, as in “to write verse” or “in verse.” Sidney wrote (1581), “That Verse farre exceedeth Prose in the knitting up of the memory, the reason is manifest.” Its counterpart, “prose,” is always a mass-noun.

prose, the traditional opposite of **poetry** and **verse**, as we see in the adjectives **prosaic** vs. **poetic**, comes from OF *prose* < Latin *prosa*, a noun formed from a feminine adjective meaning “straightforward” and understood to modify *oratio* “discourse” < *prosus* < *prorsus* < *proversus*, past participle of *provertere* “to turn forward” < *pro-* “forward” + *vertere* “turn” < PIE **wert* “turn, wind” > Germanic **werth*-, **wurth*- > **-ward** (as in **toward**, **forward**, etc.), **weird** (< OE **wyrd**, “fate, turn of events”); German *werden* “become,” used as the future auxiliary. Prose, then, is “straightforward” speech, not roundabout (with metaphors, say) or decorative.

Many poets, however, particularly during and since the Romantic era, have widened the meaning of “poetry” to include inspired or richly metaphoric prose, so that the opposite of

“prose” has become “verse.” Friedrich Schlegel said of Goethe’s novel *Wilhelm Meister’s Apprenticeship*, “This marvellous prose is prose, and yet it is poetry.” Coleridge claimed that “poetry of the highest kind may exist without metre.” An anonymous article in the *Monthly Magazine* (London, July 1796) was entitled “Is Verse Essential to Poetry?” Vigny wrote that Scott’s *Ivanhoe* is a poem without verse; Rimbaud called Hugo’s novel *Les Misérables* “a true poem.” With “verse” now serving as the opposite or complement of “prose,” the case for the “prose poem” was easily made, though Baudelaire’s title *Petits Poèmes en prose* (1869) was meant to sound paradoxical. Even the meaning of “verse,” of course, has been widened, so that “free verse” has converged with “prose poem.”

Though it is no longer visible in the words, **prose** shares a root with **verse**.

free verse translates French *vers libre*, first attested in a scholarly article of 1886. A manifesto in the book of poems (*Joies*) by Vielé-Griffin (1889) begins, “le vers est libre.” The *OED* quotes an amusing sentence from W. S. Maugham *The Razor's Edge* (1944): “She'd got on to Carl Sandburg and was writing savagely in free verse about the misery of the poor.” The phrase *vers libres* is first attested in 1549, but it referred to works (plural) in mixed meters and rhymes, not free verse. Its modern sense emerged only in that 1886 article, in the journal *La Vogue*, which published Rimbaud, Laforgue, and translations of Walt Whitman, among others. To its editor, Gustave Kahn, Laforgue wrote, “I forget to rhyme, I forget about the number of syllables [crucial in French poetic meter for centuries], I forget about stanzaic structure.” Precedents for it have been found in the psalms (especially in the Authorized English Version) and the prose pseudo-translations of “Ossian” (James Macpherson, 1760).

literature, according to the *OED*, first meant “familiarity with letters or books,” an acquirement or skill, almost synonymous with “erudition” or “culture” (from 15C); its current senses, the realm of letters or books, and the product of literary activity, emerged in the 17C and 18C. The word was taken directly from Latin *litteratura* (or *literatura*) “use of letters or writing, alphabet” and then “instruction in writing” and “knowledge of writing, scholarship”; the English meanings may have been influenced by French uses of *litérature*. *Litteratura* < *litteratus* (adj) “literate, lettered” < *littera*, *litera* “letter of the alphabet, piece of writing,” and various extended senses. From *littera* through Old French and Norman French > English **letter** (see next entry). The source of Latin *littera* is uncertain, but in Etruscan a very similar word meant “tablet” (for writing), and that seems to derive from Greek *diphthera*, “prepared hide, tanned leather” (used to write on) perhaps < *depho* “soften (by working with the hand), stamp” (of uncertain origin) + *thera* <? *thero* “heat” < PIE *$g^{h}wer$- “heat, warm” (> Greek > English **thermo**-; > Germanic > **burn, brand**; and > Latin > **furnace**). Both *depho* and *diphthera*, whether related or not, may well be “pre-Greek.” (The disease called **diptheria** afflicts the mucous membrane and produces a “false membrane” suggestive of a tanned hide or skin.) Vaan does not mention this theory, but dismisses another, which would trace *litera* to the root of *linō* “smear,” the idea being “smeared sign” > “letter.” The adjective **literary** first appears in early 17C; **literal** first in late 14C, but its modern sense, “free from metaphor or allegory,” first in mid-15C.

Many languages inherited or borrowed Latin *lit(t)eratura*: e.g., F *littérature*, Italian *letteratura*, Spanish *literatura*, German *Literatur*, Swedish *litteratur*, Russian литерату́ра. Ancient Greek had no word for it; the closest might be *grammatikē* (*tekhnē*) “grammatic (art), grammar, literacy”; Modern Greek has *philologia* (from ancient Greek for “love of learning” via German) and *logotekhnia*; a third term, *grammateia*, refers to the totality of writing, one of the older meanings of **literature**.

letter < Anglo-Norman and OF *letre*, *letter* < Latin *littera*. The Greek word for "letter" is γράμμα *(gramma*), from the same root as *graphō* (see **write**), whence *grammatikē (tekhnē)*, "(art of) writing" > Latin *grammatica* > **grammatical** and, via a French alteration of Latin *grammatica*, **grammar**. Altered again in Scots English, **grammar** became **glamour**, with the original sense "spell, enchantment, charm." The OE word for "letter" is **bōcstæf**, revived in the 19C as **bookstaff** (cf. German *Buchstabe*, Old Icelandic *bókstafr*); there is no consensus about the meaning of **staff** here. The phrase **man of letters** is first attested in 1645; it seems to have been taken from French *homme de lettres*.

alphabet < *alpha* + *beta*, the first two letters of the Greek alphabet: *alpha* < Phoenician *aleph* (the Hebrew version) or perhaps something closer to *alp*, meaning "ox"; *beta* < Phoenician *beth*, meaning "house" (cf. Akkadian *bît*; Hebrew *beth*, as in placenames Bethlehem and Bethesda, and such synagogue names as Beth Zion and Beth El; Arabic *bayt*). It is common to name alphabets after their first few characters, as we "say our **ABCs**"; note also the erudite **abecedarium**, from Latin. An *abjad* is a consonant-only system, like Phoenician, Hebrew, and Arabic; the word is Arabic, based on the first four letters in the Old Arabic order: a-b-j-d. **Futhorc** (or **futhork**, variant **futhark**) was coined in mid-19C as a term for the Runic system, which began f-u-þ-o/a-r-k. The Georgian word for its alphabet is *anbani* < *ani* + *bani*, the first two letters.

rune, a letter of the oldest Germanic writing system, < several related sources: Late Latin *runa*, Icelandic *run*, Danish *rune*, Swedish *runa*, and OE **roun**, all designating the letter; the last of these, and probably some of the others, also meant "secret, mystery." All forms < Germanic **runaz* < PIE **ru-no-* < **reu-* "intone, mumble"; cf. OE **rēonung** "whispering, muttering, conspiracy"; and the now unusual **round** "whisper"; cf. OHG *runa* "whisper, secret." The PIE root (perhaps **reu-*) may also be the source of Latin *rumor*, Sanskrit *ruvati* "to roar," OE **ryn** "roar," and perhaps **roar** itself. This etymology has been contested, **rune** traced instead to the root of **write**, German *reißen*, etc.; cf. Icelandic *rua* "to pluck wool," Latin *ruere* "plow up, dig out," but there are difficulties with this idea. The *OED* cites a 17C source that refers **runes** to "*Ryn*, a Furrow, because they were plowed-out, as it were, with the Pen, and drawn into long Lines." Modern dictionaries make no mention of this *ryn*, but it may have arisen through a speculative connection with ON *ryðja* "clear ground" and Latin *ruere*. See **verse** for the plow metaphor. Another theory ties **runo-* to oracular questions or pronouncements < PIE **wer-* "speak (solemnly)" > Greek *eirō* "say," akin to *rhētōr* "orator" > **rhetoric**.

Thomas Gray's Odin descends to the abode of Hela where "Thrice he traced the runic rhyme" (22). Wordsworth writes of "the Runic Scald" (in the sonnet "Complacent fictions"). "Runic" has continued to mean "mysterious," as in Poe's lines from "The Bells": "Keeping time, time, time, / In a sort of Runic rhyme."

word < OE **word**, cognate with German *Wort*, Old Icelandic *orð*, etc., < Proto-Germanic **wurdam* < PIE **wrtom* "said, something said" or **wr-* "say" + d^h*e-* "do" (i.e., "a doing of speech") < **were-* or **wre-* "say" > early Greek ϝρήτωρ (*wrētor*) > ῥήτωρ (*rhētor*) "speaker " > **rhetoric**; **wer-* + d^h*e* > Latin *verbum* "word" > **verb**, **verbal**, **proverb**. From the same root > Greek *eiron* > **irony**. **Orator** is probably not from this root, as some speculate, but from the same source as **oral** (Latin *os* "mouth"). Some scholars connect PIE **wer-* and **swer* > Latin *sermo* "speech" > **sermon**; and > Germanic > **swear** and **answer**.

orature, a recent coinage (1970s) made to reflect the fact that in pre-literate and even partly post-literate societies "literature" is a misleading term for their poetry and tales, is obviously a blend of **oral** and **literature**. **Oral** < post-classical Latin *oralis* "for the mouth" (< classical Latin *ōr-*, *ōs* "mouth" < PIE **eos* (> Hittite *aiš*, Sanskrit *ās-*, Avestan *āh-*, Early Irish *á* (all "mouth"), Old Icelandic *óss* "mouth of a river"). Derivatives of Latin *ōs* are *osculum* "kiss" and the town *Ostia* at the mouth of the Tiber.

vernacular < Latin *vernaculus* "domestic, native" < *vernus*, *verna* "home-born slave, native" <? Etruscan. As adjective the word is attested in English in 1601, as noun 1706.

line < ME **ligne, line** "cord, stroke, mark, line" < (1) OF *ligne* < Latin *linea* "thread, line" < *linum* "flax" (cf. Greek *linon* "flax") and (2) < OE **line** < Germanic < Latin *linea*. *Linum* is the source of English **linen**. PIE root uncertain; it may have a Mediterranean source. In the sense "line of verse" (or just "verse") **line** is attested in the 16C. Ben Jonson wrote that Shakespeare outshone "Marlowe's mighty line." "Lines" as a title of a poem goes back at least to Dryden's "Lines Printed under the Engraved Portrait of Milton" (1688), but it is rare (in titles given by their author) until the Romantic era, when Wordsworth, for instance, names five poems "Lines" in *Lyrical Ballads* (1798), including "Lines Composed a Few Miles above Tintern Abbey." Shelley follows with "Lines written among the Euganean Hills" (1818), Letitia Landon with "Lines Written under a Picture of a Girl Burning a Love Letter" (1824), which is *about* lines.

The Greek word for "line" (of verse), *stikhos* or *stichos* (στίχος), appears in English in **hemistich,** which means "half a line of verse, separated from the other half by a caesura" (as in Old English verse), **distich** (as in "elegiac distich"; see **elegy**), and **stichomythia**, which is "dialogue in alternating lines" in Greek drama. The older sense of *stichos* was "row or file" (of soldiers); the verb *steichō* (στείχω) meant "walk, march, march in order" while the noun *stoichos* (στοῖχος) meant "row." It shows up in the Russian word for a narrative poem, *stichotvoryeniye* (стихотворе́ние). The PIE root is **steigh-* "go, march"; through Germanic it yields Old English **stigan** > **sty** (last attested 17C), and modern German *steigen*, all "climb." In Latin the root probably appears in *ve-stigium* "footprint, trace" > **vestige**; cf. **investigate**.

pen < OF **penne, pene** "writing tool" (c. 1050), "long wing-feather of a bird" < Latin *penna* "feather" (in plural "pinions, wings") < PIE **pet-na-* < **pet-* "rush, fly." With a different suffix: **pet-* > **pet-ra* > Germanic **fethro* > **feather**. **pet-* also > Latin *petere* "go forward" > **impetus, impetuous, petition, appetite**, etc; and Greek *pteron, pteryx* "feather, wing" > **pterodactyl, archaeopteryx, helicopter**. Italian *penna* > *pennone* "large feather" > French *pennon* > *pignon* > **pinion**. Compare French *plume* "pen" < Latin *pluma* "feather" < PIE **pleus-* "pluck, feather, fleece" (> **plume, fleece**).

Since poets have likened themselves to soaring birds at least since Pindar, some of them have exploited the fact that they write poems with the part of a bird that lets it soar. Petrarch seems to pun on "pen" when he says his "wing of wit" (*penna d'ingegno*) could not fly (*Rime* 307). The 16C French poet J. Lemaire writes, "the pen (*plume*) flies where metal cannot follow." Claiming to be original, Sidney denies "my plumes from others' wings I take" (*Astrophel* Sonnet 90). Samuel Daniel exploits the same double meaning: "But I may add one feather to thy fame, / To help her [fame's] flight throughout the fairest isle; / And if my pen could more enlarge thy name, / Then shouldst thou live in an immortal style" (perhaps evoking another writing implement as well, the stylus). Mary Robinson addresses a poor poet in his garret: "in thy domain / Thou canst command thy subjects, fill thy lines / With the all-conqu'ring weapon Heav'n bestows / In the gray goose's wing which, tow'ring high, / Bears thy rich fancy to immortal fame!" ("The

Poet's Garret" (pub 1804), 65-69). Byron addresses a few lines of *English Bards and Scotch Reviewers* (1809) to "nature's noblest gift—my grey goose-quill!" concluding "Then let us soar to-day" (7, 23). Compare Victor Hugo: "*La plume, qui d'une aile allongeait l'envergure...*" ("The pen, which extends the span of a wing...") ("Suite" from *Les Contemplations*, 1856).

quill, the shaft of a feather, used as a pen, has Germanic cognates (e.g., German *Kiel*) but cannot be traced beyond Germanic. First attested as writing implement 16C. Shakespeare notes that his beloved might show "How far a modern quill doth come too short" (Sonnet 83); besides his invocation cited under **pen** above, Byron speaks of his "tuneful quill" (*Don Juan* 15.36). Pope reminds us of its source: "May some choice Patron bless each gray goose quill" ("Epistle to Dr. Arbuthnot" 249).

ink < ME **enke**, **inc**, etc. < OF *enque* (> Mod F *encre*) < late Latin *encaustum* < Greek ἔγκαυστον the purple ink used by the Greek and Roman emperors for their signatures < *en* "in" + root *kau*- "burn" (cf. *kaiō* "kindle") < PIE _*keu_- "burn" (cf. Lithuanian root *kul*- "fire"). "Encaustic" painting, where the pigment is "burnt in" or fixed by fire, is at least 2000 years old. An **ink-horn** was a small vessel for carrying ink, originally made of horn.

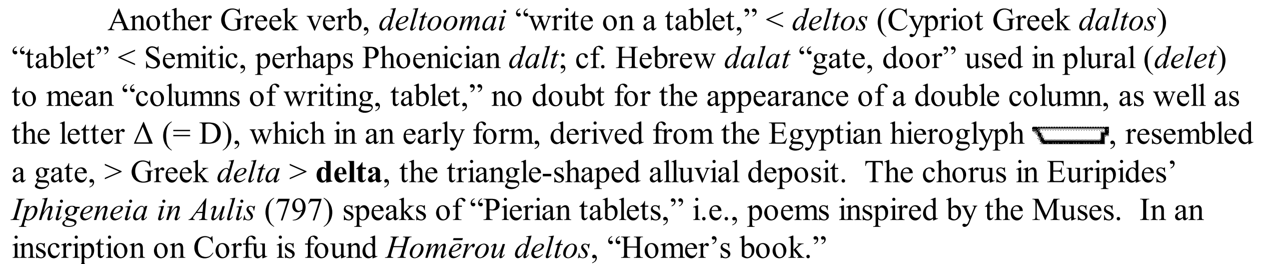
Poets have had fun with ink. Here is Pope again: "There's nothing blackens like the ink of fools" (*Horace Epistles* 2.1.411); and Byron: "What reams of paper, floods of ink, / Do some men spoil, who never think!" ("Epistle to the Editor of *Morning Chronicle*" 1-2).

style < OF *style*, *stile* < Latin *stilus* (not *stylus*) "stake, pale > pointed tool for writing > manner of writing or speaking" of uncertain origin, perhaps from a root _*sti_- meaning "prick" as in *stimulus* "goad." The spelling "stylus" seems to be based on the assumption that the word is Greek, but Greek *stylos* "pillar" is not the origin of Latin *stilus*. There are several PIE roots that begin with *st*- and might have led to *stilus*, such as _*stegh_- (whence **sting**), _*steig_- (whence **stick**, **stigma**, and **instigate**), or _*steg_- (whence **stake**). In any case, its extended sense as a manner of writing entered English at the same time as its older sense as an implement, since both were current in Latin. Shakespeare uses "style" three times in his *Sonnets*, and in each one "pen" also appears; in two of them (78 and 84) "pen" brings out the meaning of "style" as writing implement.

write < OE **writan** "score, carve, draw an outline, form letters by carving" < Germanic _*writan_, of uncertain earlier history. Compare OHG *rîzan* "tear, draw" > German *reißen* "tear" and *ritzen* "scratch, etch"; ON *ríta* "score." The idea of scoring or carving is also found in Latin, Greek, and Sanskrit words for "write," perhaps because the handiest way to do it once was to incise a waxed tablet, but earlier methods entailed cutting or scratching into bark, wood, clay, or stone. Thus Latin *scribo* "write" (> **scribe, script, scripture, scribble, shrive**, German *schreiben*, Icelandic *skrifa*, Irish *scriobh*, etc) < PIE extended root _*skribh_- "cut, separate, sift" (> Greek *skariphos* "scratching" > **scarify**) < _*sker_- "cut" > **shear, share, sheer, score, scar, shard, short, shirt, skirt, sharp, scarp, scrap, carnal, excoriate**, etc. Greek *grapho* "write" (> **graph, grammar, glamor, epigram, program** etc) < PIE _*gerbh_- "scratch" > **carve, crab.** Cf. also Greek *glypho* "carve" (> **hieroglyph**) < PIE _*gleubh_- "tear apart, cleave" > **cleave, clove, clever**; cf. Latin *glubo* "bark, peel." Compare Sanskrit *likh*- "scratch, scrape, write." Among non-IE languages, note Hebrew *katab* "grave, write," and the kindred Arabic *aktub*; Japanese *kaku* means "write, draw (or paint)," while a homophone with a different character means "scratch, rake."

The Ancient Egyptian word for "write" is *zš* (vowels are omitted) (> Coptic *shai* "write"), of uncertain origin, but *zš* also means "paint" and it is possibly related to Afro-Asiatic words for

“red.” A parallel in Russian is *pisat’* (писать) “write, paint” < Old Church Slavonic *pisati* “write, paint” < Old Persian root *pis*- “write” (cf. *nipistanaiy* “to write”) < PIE **peik*- “paint” (whence Latin *pictor*, *pictura*, *pigmentum*, etc.). (The Old Persian root may show up in a mysterious line in Aristophanes’ *Acharnians* (100): ιαρταμανεξαρξαναπισσονασατρα. It is often taken as fake Persian gibberish, but if Andreas Willi is right, the ναπισσονα (*napissona*) part meant “(he) wrote” (Persian *nīpiša*).) Greek *grapho* also meant “paint” or “draw.”

Another Greek verb, *deltoomai* “write on a tablet,” < *deltos* (Cypriot Greek *daltos*) “tablet” < Semitic, perhaps Phoenician *dalt*; cf. Hebrew *dalat* “gate, door” used in plural (*delet*) to mean “columns of writing, tablet,” no doubt for the appearance of a double column, as well as the letter Δ (= D), which in an early form, derived from the Egyptian hieroglyph , resembled a gate, > Greek *delta* > **delta**, the triangle-shaped alluvial deposit. The chorus in Euripides’ *Iphigeneia in Aulis* (797) speaks of “Pierian tablets,” i.e., poems inspired by the Muses. In an inscription on Corfu is found *Homērou deltos*, “Homer’s book.”

tablet < Anglo-Norman and OF *tablet*, *tabelet*, *tablette*, etc. < *table* + diminutive suffix; *table* < Latin *tabula*, with many meanings: *OED* lists: “flat board, plank, door-panel, painted tablet, painting, board to play on, tablet of stone or metal, votive tablet, writing tablet, written tablet, piece of writing, document, deed, list, account”; of uncertain etymology, perhaps < PIE **sta*- “stand” (for the suffix *–bula* cf. *stabilis* < *stare* “stand”). **Table** was long in use where we might say **tablet** today; e.g., the Tables of the Law; Hamlet calls for “My tables” to set down what he has just learned (1.5.107). Besides *deltos*, another Greek word for “tablet” is *pinax* (πίναξ), plural *pinakes*; it passed into Latin and has been used occasionally in English. Perhaps related to Russian *pen’* “tree-stump” and similar words in other Slavic languages, but perhaps pre-Greek. Since *pinax* could mean a painting (on a board), a **pinacotheca**, borrowed from Greek through Latin, is an art gallery, in occasional use since early 17C.

phrase < classical Latin *phrasis* “diction, style, expression” < ancient Greek φράσις “speech, way of speaking, style, diction,” later “phrase” < φράζω “point out, indicate, declare, tell,” perhaps < akin to φρήν (*phrēn*) “mind,” earlier “midriff,” the seat of thought, + -σις (-*sis*) suffix > **frantic**, **frenzy**.

passage, in the sense “brief section of a text,” is first attested in 16C; from French *passage* < Latin *passagium* < *passaticum* < *passare* “pass” + suffix.

read < ME **reden** “read, advise, deliberate” < OE **raeden** “advise, deliberate, interpret, guess, plot” (cf. OHG *ratan* “advise,” etc > German *raten*; cf. *Rathaus* “town hall” (“council house”) and *Rathskeller*) < Germanic **redan* < PIE **redh*- < **re*- “reason, count.” (The sense “count” or “number” is preserved in **hundred**; the root shows up in Greek *arithmos* “number” > **arithmetic**). From the same root in OE comes **riddle**. See **rhyme**. So reading seems not to have been very straightforward at first, as it involved interpretation and guesswork.

The German word for “read,” *lesen*, originally meant “gather” or “glean,” as it still does in certain contexts; the noun *Lese* can mean “gathering” or “vintage” (as in *Spätlese*, seen on German wine labels). The English cognate, **lease**, may still be in use in some dialects, with the sense “glean” or “pick clean.” For the Dutch cognate, see under **poem** (as flower) above. The PIE root is **les*- > Lithuanian *lesti*, Hittite *lešš* “pick.”

It is interesting that the Latin word for “read,” *legō* (whence **legible, legend, lecture, lesson, select, intelligent**, and many other English words) also originally meant “gather” and derives from PIE **leg*- “gather, collect, count” and perhaps “speak” > also Greek *lego* “speak,

say" and *logos* "word." From *logos* > **anthology**, a gathering of flowers. Cf. Albanian *-ledh* "collect, harvest." The relation between **leg-* and **les-* is unclear.

From *legō* (infinitive *legere*) > Italian *leggere*, French *lire*, Spanish *leer*, etc.

The Russian word for "read" is читать (*chitat'*) < Proto-Slavic **čitati* "count, reckon, read" < PIE **k^{w}ei* "perceive, see" (cf. Sanskrit *cinoti* "perceives," Old Irish *ad-ci* "sees").

The Ancient Greek word for "read," *anagignosko*, literally means "know again," a suggestion that reading in ancient Greece was more like reminding; the Greeks mainly listened to books and tried to remember them, but sometimes they needed to look something up in one to refresh their memory. The Modern Greek for it is διαβάζω (*diabazō*, pronounced *thiavazō*) < διαβιβάζω "carry over, transport, pass through."

And we should remember that silent reading was rare until medieval or early modern times. One indicator of this fact may be the Gothic term for "read," *ussiggwan*, cognate with "sing out," hence "recite, chant."

spell, in the sense "read," < OF *espeller* < Germanic (Frankish?) **spell-*, cognate with OE **spellian** "converse, declare, tell," now defunct, and the noun **spell** "sermon, speech," then "verse, formula, charm," the latter senses still current, < PIE **spel-* "say aloud, recite." Wordsworth equates "clamorous spell and magic verse" ("On the Power of Sound" 127).

book < ME **boc**, **boke**, etc. < OE **bōc** (plural **bēc**) < Germanic **bōko* "writing tablet or staff; beech," the idea being that the material for writing on was taken from the bark of the beech tree. **Beech** < OE **bēce** < Germanic **bōkjōn-*. Both **book** and **beech** < PIE **bhāgo-* "beech tree" > Latin *fāgus* "beech" and Greek *phēgos* "a kind of oak" (*Quercus esculus*). Gothic *bôka* "letter" > Russian *bukva* "letter"; the Gothic plural *bôkos* meant "book." The region of Bukovina (in modern Ukraine and Romania) is named after the beech tree (cf. Ukrainian *buk* "beech"). Some modern Germanic languages preserve the similarity between **book** and **beech** better than English does: e.g., German *Buch* and *Buche*, Norwegian *bok* and *bøk*. The connection between "book" and "beech" has been contested recently but no alternative has been proposed, and there seems to be no serious phonological difficulty.

biblion (βιβλίον), Greek for "book, scroll, paper" < *biblos* "bark, the inner bark of papyrus" < *bublos* "papyrus" perhaps < *Bublos*, the Greek name for the Phoenician city Gubal (or Gebal) < Phoenician *g-b-l* (vowels uncertain) "boundary, mountain"; Byblos was a center of the papyrus trade. But the change from *g-b-l* to *b-b-l* (yielding *bubl-*) is hard to account for, and the city (in Greek) might be named after the word for "book," of unknown origin. Greek-speaking Jews called their sacred books *ta biblia*, "the books" (neuter plural); *biblia* without the article entered Latin, where it was mistaken for a feminine singular > French *la bible* > **Bible**. So the Bible, sometimes called "The Book," or "The Good Book," is originally "The Books." *Biblios* > also French *bibliothèque* "library" and English **bibliography**.

liber, Latin for "book," earlier meant "inner bark of a tree" (like *biblos* and **book**); of uncertain origin, probably < **luber* < PIE **loubho-* "tree bark, bast"; cf. Lithuanian *luobas* "bast"; and via Germanic, **leaf**. *liber* > *librarius* (adj) "concerning books" > *librarium* "bookseller" > *libraria (taberna)* "bookseller's (shop)" > French *librairie* "bookshop" > **library**; *liber* > French *livre*, Spanish *libro*, Italian *libro*; borrowed by Irish as *leabhar*, by Welsh as *llyfr*.

barc, Old Irish for "book" < Old Icelandic *bark-* < Germanic **barku-*, akin to **berka-* and **birkjon-* "birch." There is a parallel in Sanskrit, where *bhûrjá-* in the masculine means "birch tree" but in the neuter means "birch bark used for writing." It is not certain if **bark** and **birch** have the same origin.

kniga (книга), Russian for “book” (with similar words in most Slavic languages) < Old Church Slavonic *kunigy* (plural) “book, scripture” < Proto-Slavic **kunjiga* “letter,” probably < **kun*- “trunk of tree” + suffix, i.e. “trunk stuff” or “bark”; but there are theories connecting it to Chinese or Mongolian.

pustakam, Sanskrit for “book” < a Middle Iranian language, such as Parthian *postag* “book, parchment” < **post* “skin, hide, bark” < Old Persian *pavasta* “skin, hide, envelope for writing tablet.”

hon (本), Japanese for “book,” as the character suggests, derives from “tree trunk.” As a suffix -*hon* (used as a counter) refers to tubular shapes; scrolls are tubular, but so are tree trunks, so perhaps the connection is to bark, like all the preceding “book” terms.

seper (סרפ), Hebrew for “book” (later *sepher*, *sefer*), seems based on the *s-p-r* root, which also yields *sopor* “scribe,” *sapar* “to count,” *separ* “census,” *sepora* “number,” etc., but some authorities claim that these words are based on an Assyrian loanword, *saparu*, “to send a message,” itself taken from Akkadian words meaning “write” or “scribe.” No implication here of the material of a book.

kitab (كتاب), Arabic for “book” (or *ktaab*), also seems not to be based on what a book is made of. The *k-t-b* root, in Arabic as in Hebrew, seems to have meant “grave” or “incise” before it meant “write.” The root yields *katib* “writer” (masc.), *maktab* “school” or “office,” and *maktub* “letter, epistle.” *Kitab* has been adopted by Hindi, Persian, Turkish, and many other languages.

volume < OF *volume* < Latin *volumen* “coil, wreath, roll, scroll” < *volvere* “to turn, roll.” Though the codex or bound book has been in use since at least the first century CE, we still use a term for it that is proper to a scroll. **volume** in the sense “book” or “tome” entered English in the 14C; as the division of a work, or a book in a series, it entered in the 16C. See **volta** below.

scroll < ME **scrowle** < ME **scrow**, **scrowe** < Anglo-Norman *escrowe* “scrap, shred, strip of parchment” < Medieval Latin **scroda* < Germanic (perhaps Frankish) **scrōd*: cf. OHG *scrôt* “scrap, fragment,” and OE *scrēad* “scrap, shred” (> **shred**) < Proto-Germanic **skraudo*- < PIE **skreu*- “cut, tool for cutting” > **shrewd**, **shrew**, **shroud**, and via Latin **scrutiny**, **scrotum**.

codex < Latin *codex*, younger variant of *caudex*, “trunk of a tree,” then “wooden tablet, book,” of uncertain origin, perhaps < PIE **keu-d*- “cleaved.” Both **codex** and its synonym **book** (as well as *biblos*, *liber*, etc.) derive from words having to do with trees. The plural is **codices**.

tome, originally a section or volume of a book, now a book itself, usually connoting a large, old-fashioned one < F *tome* < Latin *tomus* < Greek *tomos* < PIE **tem*-, **tom*- “cut” (> Greek *atomos*, “indivisible” > **atom**). First attested 16C. The *OED* quotes Shenstone: “Adieu, Ye midnight lamps! ye curious tomes!” (“Ode to Health” 30).

text < French *texte* (which usually meant Scripture) < Latin *textus* “style, tissue of a literary work; texture, web, anything woven, cloth” < *texo* “weave, build, construct” < PIE **teks*- “weave, fabricate, especially with an ax”; cf. Latin *textilis* “woven, woven thing” (> **textile**); *tēla* “web” (> **tiller**, **toil**); and *subtilis* “fine, precise” (< **sub*+*tela* “under the web”) (> **subtle**). PIE **teks*- > Greek *tektōn* “carpenter, builder” (> **architect**, **tectonic**); and Greek *tekhnē* “skill, craft” (> **technique**, **technology**, etc.). The metaphor of weaving for composing poetry is found in ancient Indo-Iranian, Greek, Celtic, and Germanic verse. The Old English poet Cynewulf, for instance, used the phrase *wordcraeft waef* (“wordcraft wove”) at the end of *Elene*. Sappho calls

Eros *mythoplokos*, “plaiter of tales” (frag. 188). The metaphor is frequent in the *Rigveda*; e.g., “Let the thread not break as I weave my poem” (2.28.5). Another Greek word, *kreko*, first meant “weave” and then “strike a stringed instrument with a plectrum”; Aristophanes uses it to mean “play” a woodwind (*aulos*) (*Birds* 682); via Germanic the root yields **reel** and **rag**. See **rhapsode**. The **teks*- root is used in Sanskrit (*taksuh*, etc.) for “fashion, make” (a song or hymn); Pindar and other Greek poets used *tektōn* (“carpenter”) as a metaphor for poet; in Greek and Latin the words for “subject matter” (*hylē*, *materia*) are the same as those for “timber.”

page < NF and OF *page* “one side of a leaf in a book” < Latin *pagina* “trellis to which a row of vines is fixed,” then by analogy “page of writing” < root of *pangere* “fix, settle, compose” (found in **pact**, *pax* > **peace**) < PIE **pag*- “fasten.” First attested in English in late15C.

leaf < OE **leaf** < Germanic **laubaz* (whence German *Laub* “foliage”) perhaps < PIE **leup*- “peel off, break off,” akin to **loubho*- “bark” (see *liber* above). Its meaning as a fold of paper (two pages) of a book goes back to the 10C at least. A **folio** is such a leaf , usually folded once, or a book (the largest standard size) made of such leaves, such as the Shakespeare Folio (1623); from the ablative case of Latin *folium* “leaf” (> **portfolio**, **foliage**, **defoliate**, **foil**) < PIE *b^h*oliom* “leaf” > Greek *phyllon* > **chlorophyll**, etc. Note also **leaflet**, French *feuilleton* (a page or portion of a page of a journal devoted to literature an criticism), and newspaper names such as *Tageblatt* (German: “Daily Leaf”) and *Aftonbladet* (Swedish: “Evening Leaf”)—these related to English **blade**, as in “blade of grass.”

If **book** is named after a kind of tree, it is only right that its pages be called **leaves**. It is true that today we much more often use **page** than **leaf**, but we still “leaf through” a book, “interleave” something between pages, look “overleaf” for something on the other side of the page, and “turn over a new leaf” when we resolve to start our life afresh.

Many collections of poems have “leaves” in their titles, especially in the 19C: e.g., Leigh Hunt’s *Foliage* (1818), Victor Hugo’s *Les Feuilles d’automne* (1831), Hermann von Gilm zu Rosenegg’s *Letzte Blätter* (*Last Pages/Leaves*) (1854), Walt Whitman’s *Leaves of Grass* (first edition 1855), Lydia Maria Child’s *Autumnal Leaves* (1857), Wilhelm Cappilleri’s poems *Blüten und Blätter* (*Blossoms and Leaves*) (1860), Rosalia de Castro’s *Follas novas* (*New Leaves*, in Galician) (1880), and E. Nesbit’s *Leaves of Life* (1888). As late as 1990 we find *Feuilles éparses* (*Scattered Leaves*), by Francis Roth. Coleridge published *Sibylline Leaves* in 1817, alluding to the Cumaean Sibyl, who would write her prophecies on oak leaves, which the wind would scatter. P. Shelley, in “Ode to the West Wind,” asks the wind to “Drive my dead thoughts over the universe / Like withered leaves to quicken a new birth!” Akin to this metaphor is the Romantic analogy between the growing of leaves by a tree and expression of poems by a poet. Keats wrote, “if poetry comes not as naturally as the leaves to a tree, it had better not come at all,” while Whitman watched a live oak “uttering joyous leaves of dark green.”

paper < NF and OF *paper*, *papir*, etc < Latin *papyrus* < Greek *papyros* “papyrus-reed (of the Nile)” of unknown origin, probably Egyptian, though the known Egyptian words for it look very different. One theory traces it to an Egyptian phrase *pa-en-per-aa*, meaning “that which belongs to the pharaoh.”

parchment < OF *parchemin*, *pergamin* < Latin *pergamena*, an adjective understood to modify *charta* “paper” < *Pergamena*, feminine adjective < *Pergamum*, a city in Mysia in Asia Minor (Greek Pergamon) where parchment originated or was exported. Greek *Pergamos* referred to the citadel of Troy (in the *Iliad*) and then to any citadel; possibly related to *purgos*

“tower” (< Anatolian? < PIE **bhergh*- “high” > Germanic **burg*- “hill fort” > **burg**, **burger**, **bourgeois**). Parchment is prepared animal skin; it is charming to note that some Icelandic sagas are found in books with such names as *Morkinskinna* (“Rotten Parchment”) and *Hrokkinskinna* (“Wrinkled Parchment”).

work, as a made thing or product of labor, goes back to Old English (cognate with German *Werk*) < PIE **werg*- > Greek *ergon* (ἔργον) “piece of work, deed” (dialect form *wergon*) > **energy**, **erg** (unit of energy), **demiurge**, **George** (< *geōrgos* “farmer”; see **georgic**); Greek *organon* “tool, instrument” > **organ**, **organic**, etc.; and perhaps Greek *orgia* “rites” > **orgy**.

The sense of **work** as literary or musical composition is nearly as old, first attested in a translation of Bede: *þis weork* = *hoc opus*.

opus < Latin *opus* “work” (plural *opera*) < PIE **epos* (cf. Sanskrit *apas*- “work, action”; OE **efnen** “perform”) < **ep*-, **op*- “ability, force”; *opus* > *operatus* “busy, occupied” > **operate**, etc. First attested in early 19C for a work of literature or, more often, music. English **opera** is first found in late 18C, either from Italian or Latin, meaning “work produced.” **Oeuvre**, taken from French in late 19C, < *opera*. From the PIE root **op*- arise Latin *opulentus* “wealthy,” *officium* “duty, service,” and *copia* “abundance,” all borrowed by English.

persona, the apparent speaker of a poem, as opposed to the poet, is Latin for “mask” as used in the theatre. It was used to translate Greek πρόσωπον (*prosōpon*) “mask” but it was in use before the Greek term was known. It does not derive, alas, from *per* + *sonare*, “to sound through,” but probably comes from Etruscan *phersu* “mask.” Latin *persona* > OF *persone* > **person**; also **personification**, the figure of speech; cf. **personal**, **personnel**. The *dramatis personae* listed at the beginning of a play means “masks or persons of the drama”; it translates Greek *ta tou dramatos prosōpa*. Ezra Pound published a collection of poems called *Personae* in 1909. See **prosopopeia** under Figures of Speech.

caesura (or cæsura, cesura), a pause in a line of verse < Latin *caesura* < *caes*- participial stem of *caedere* “cut” < PIE **kae-id* “cut”; the Latin root yields **decision, concise, incise, scissors,** and several other English words. *Caesura* translates Greek *tomē* (τομή) “cutting” (> **epitome**), closely akin to *tomos* “a cut, slice” and “part of a book, volume” (> **tome**) < PIE **tem-* > Latin *templum* “place reserved or cut out, temple” > **temple**. See **tome**.

enjambment (or **enjambement**), the continuation of a sentence or clause beyond the end of a line of verse < French *enjambement* (n) < *enjamber* (v) “stride, encroach” < *en-* “in” + *jambe* “leg” < Late Latin *gamba* “hoof, leg of an animal” < Greek *kampē* “bending, flexure” < PIE **kamp*- “bend.” Latin *gamba* yields **gambol, gambrel, gam** (slang for “leg”), and Italian *viola da gamba*, played between the legs; French *jambe* yields **jamb**, “‘leg’ of a door,” and French *jambon* “ham” (“leg of pig”).

There is a wonderful definition in Nicholson Baker’s novel *The Anthologist* (2009): “very briefly, enjambment is a word that means that you’re wending your way along a line of poetry, and you’re walking right out to the very end of the line, way out, and it’s all going fine, and you’re expecting the syntax to give you a polite tap on the shoulder to wait for a moment. Just a second, sir, or madam, while we rhyme, or come to the end of our phrasal unit, or whatever. While we rest. But instead the syntax pokes at you and says hustle it, pumpkin, keep walking, don’t rest. So naturally, because you’re stepping out onto nothingness, you fall. You tumble forward, gaaah, and you end up all discombobulated at the beginning of

the next line, with a banana peel on your head and some coffee grounds in your shirt pocket. In other words, you're 'jammed' into the next line—that's what enjambment is."

strophe < Greek _strophē_ (στροφή) "turning" (cf. **antistrophe, catastrophe, apostrophe**), meaning a dance movement, perhaps < _streph_- "turn" < PIE _*strebh_- "wind, turn," but there seem to be no Indo-European cognates. Probably the basic Greek meters were derived from dance patterns; in strophic forms (in, e.g., Pindar and the tragedians), the often intricate and various meters dictated dance steps.

stanza < Italian _stanza_, "stopping place, room" < Vulgar Latin _*stantia_ < Latin _stans_ pres. part. of _stare_ "stand" < PIE _*ste_- "stand." Perhaps also a dance term? It entered English in the late 16C; its novelty is evident in Jacques' request to Amiens: "Come, more, another stanzo. Call you 'em stanzos?" (_As You Like It_ 2.5.16-17). French borrowed _stanza_ as _stance_, and _stances_ emerged in the 16C as a distinct form; it was occasionally used in early 17C English.

refrain < Middle French _refrein_, _refrain_. The _OED_ offers two sources: (1) an alteration (on the model of _refraindre_, _refreindre_) of _refret_, _refreit_ "repetition of a couplet" (> ME **refraid**, in use until 20C as equivalent to **refrain**), or (2) < Old Occitan _refranh_ "proverb, commonplace, repeated word," probably an alteration (after the present stem of the underlying verb) of _refrach_ "repeated notes, warbling (of a bird)," used as noun of past participle of _refranher_ "to repeat (words, notes, a song, originally with reference to birdsong)"; both sources < an unattested post-classical Latin form _*refrangere_ < Latin _frangere_ "break" (> **fragile**, **fragment**, **fraction**, etc.) < PIE _*b^hreng_-, the nasal variant of _*b^hreg_- "break" > Germanic > **break**.

fit, or **fytte**, a section or canto of a poem, or piece of music < OE **fitt**, of uncertain origin. There is a cognate in Old Saxon with the same meaning. Possibly OHG _fizza_ "border of cloth" and ON _fit_ "hem" are cognates (modern German _Fitze_), the idea being that a section of cloth, that is, a day's work at the loom, is a metaphor for a section of poetic composition, a day's work with the pen. For a comparable metonym in the opposite direction, note _giornata_, Italian for "day," used by art historican for a day's work in fresco. See **text**, **rhapsode**.

meter < OE **meter** and OF _metre_ < Latin _metrum_ < Greek _metron_ "measure, rule," then "meter, verse" < PIE _*me_- "measure" or _*med_- "take measures." Note the suggestion of counting of time, appropriate to the basis of Greek and Latin meter. **Meter** is both a mass-noun and a count-noun. The Greeks gave names to a great variety of meters, such as "dactylic hexameter," the epic measure from Homer onward: six _metra_, each consisting of a dactyl (long-short-short), but allowing a substitute of a long syllable for the two shorts except (rarely) in the fifth _metron_. Somewhat misleading at first is the name "iambic trimeter," the standard measure for dialogue in Greek drama, for it seems to imply three iambic feet; each metron, however, has two iambs (short-long), and a long syllable (or even two shorts) may be substituted for the first short syllable but not the second.

scansion < Latin _scansionem_ < _scandere_ (v) "climb, ascend," in Late Latin "scan" verses (analyze metrically) < PIE _*skand_- "leap," whence Greek _skandalon_ "stumbling block" > **scandal**; and Latin _scalae_ "steps" > **scale**. _Scandere_ > **ascend**, **descend**, **transcend**, etc.

rhythm < OF _rhythme_ < Latin _rhythmus_ < Greek _rhythmos_ "measured motion, time, rhythm, form" < Greek root _rhe_- "flow" (whence **rheostat, diarrhea**) < PIE _*sreu_- "flow";

derived noun **srowmos* "stream" > **stream**. "Rhythm" might be thought of as the "flow" of poetry, though of course many natural fluids flow without discernible rhythm. In classical Latin *rhythmus* was for a time taken as synonymous with *numerus* ("counting") (see **number**), so verses based on syllable count (as opposed to patterns of longs and shorts) came to be called "rhythmical."

rhyme < ME **rime** < OF *rime*. Most of the technical terms used in descriptions of poetry come from Greek, like "poetry" itself, and "rhyme" certainly looks Greek enough, with its initial rh-, as if it were related to "rhythm," which is certainly Greek. But the spelling is recent. From the earliest appearances of the word in English in about 1200 until about 1600 it is invariably spelled without the -h-: we find "rym," "rim," "ryme," and "rime," but never "rhyme" or "rhime"; some people still spell it "rime" today. This evidence would be odd, though not impossible, if the word passed from Greek into Latin and then through Old French into English, however else it was altered. One of the two contending theories about its origin argues that it was not born with that -h- but acquired it only after scholars mistakenly decided it must be related to "rhythm" and respelled it accordingly. On this theory it really derives from a Germanic word akin to Old High German *rīm* and Old English *rīm*, which meant "number, counting, reckoning"; it was taken into Old French, probably from Frankish, and then passed into the other Romance languages (as *rima*), and into Middle English, Middle High German, and elsewhere. This Germanic word goes back to PIE **re*- or **rei*-, which meant "reason" or "count," a root with many offspring, such as Latin *ratio*, itself the mother of many words; the *ar*- of Greek *arithmos* ("number"); and such Germanic words that led to English **read**, **riddle**, and the second syllable of **hundred**. According to the *OED*, the oldest *meaning* of "rym" or "rim" was not "rhyme" in the modern sense but "meter" or "measure" in verse. How it got to mean "rhyme" is speculative, but perhaps it was through this sequence of senses: "series" > "series of rhymed syllables" > "rhymed verse." That seems a bit of a stretch, but the "number" theory seems to be the dominant view of the etymologists today.

The other theory, and the one that seems to have convinced seventeenth-century scholars to respell it, is that "rhyme," earlier "rime," goes back to Old French *rime*, with a presumed but unattested variant spelling **ritme* (the -t- being silent), which comes from Medieval Latin *rithmus* < Latin *rhythmus* < Greek *rhythmos*. Medieval Latin *rithmus* meant *versus rithmici* (*versus* is plural here), "rhythmical verses," that is, verses in meter based on "rhythm" or stress (accent), as opposed to *versus metrici*, which were "metrical verses" based on measures of length (either long or short), as in classical Latin. Such "rhythmical" or stressed-based verses happened to have end-rhyme, unlike metrical verses, and so the term came to mean "rhymed verse(s)" and then "rhyme" itself.

Both theories have difficulties, such as the fact that French *rime* is feminine whereas both *rhythmus* and *rīm* are masculine, and that **ritme* is not attested anywhere. There is a third theory, that the Old French noun *rime* derives from a verb **rimer*, which comes from Gallo-Roman **rimare*, meaning "arrange in a row," but there is little evidence for it. There is attested a medieval Latin verb *rimare* or *rimari*, meaning "investigate," which comes from classical Latin *rīmor*, "rummage about, ferret out, search for flaws," from *rīma*, "fissure, crack," but it seems unlikely that it could be made to mean "arrange in a row," or that that meaning could evolve to mean "rhyme." If nothing else these incompatible theories show that this new thing under the sun was very slow to acquire a name.

Chaucer once contrasts "ryme" with "cadence" (*House of Fame* 623), but scholars disagree on what he meant by the latter: unrhymed verse? rhythmical prose?

The classicizing respelling **rhyme** largely replaced **rime** (or **ryme**), but the older (OF) form persisted, sometimes in deliberately archaizing poems such as Coleridge's "The Rime of the Ancyent Marinere" (1798).

Rhymester first appears late 16C, usually pejorative. The *OED* cites a passage from 1943, "The wretched, limping rhymester whom they call Homer"; if this is not sarcastic, it is certainly odd, for Homer, like all Greek poets, did not use rhyme.

ríma is an Icelandic word for a section of an intricately rhymed narrative poem, the dominant mode from about 1350 to 1850; plural *rímur*.

See **prosody**.

alliteration < post-classical Latin *allitteration-*, *allitteratio*, apparently coined by the Italian humanist Pontanus in 1503, < Latin *ad-* + *littera* "letter" + *-atio*. See **literature**.

music < ME **musik** < OF *musique* < Latin *musica* < Greek *mousikē* [*tekhnē*] "[art] of the uses" < *mousa* (μοῦσα, with dialectal variants μῶσα (*mōsa*, Doric) and μοῖσα (*moisa*, Aeolic)) < probably PIE **mon-* (the o-grade of **men-* "mind, think") + suffix **-twa*. The same root led to Latin words that came to English as "mental, mention, memento, memory, monitor, monument"; to a Germanic word that yielded English "mind"; and to Greek words that led to "mania, Maenad, amnesty, mnemonic, and Mnemosyne" (Memory), the mother of the muses, as well as, perhaps, to *mēnis*, "wrath," the first word of the *Iliad*. In Latin the mother of the Muses is Moneta, from the same root. Another theory, a minority view, connects *mousa* with the PIE root **mon-* "height, mountain" whence Latin *mons*; the Muses were indeed associated with Mounts Olympus, Helicon, and Parnassus, but this root has no other descendant in Greek. A third possibility is that the word is pre-Greek.

Mousikē tekhnē (μουσικὴ τέχνη), was originally probably choral dancing (Hesiod, *Theogony* 4); it came to include the recitation of Homeric verse by rhapsodes, solo performances of lyric poetry, etc. An adjectival form made into a neuter noun is μουσεῖον (*mouseion*), a temple, seat, or school of the muses, or a choir; it is the source of our **museum**. See **Muses** below.

melody < Anglo-Norman and Old French *melodie* "song, music, tune" < post-classical Latin *melodia* "song, singing, tune, music, plainchant, melody, tunefulness, beautiful arrangement of musical sounds" < Greek μελῳδία "singing, chanting, choral song, music" < μελῳδός (*melōidos*) "musical, singing songs" < μέλος "song" + ᾠδ- (see **ode**) + -ία suffix. *Melos* could also mean "limb" or "member" (cf. Irish *alt*, meaning both "member" and "poem"); it looks Indo-European, but its etymology is obscure. It is not related to *meli* "honey."

chorus < Latin *chorus* < Greek *khoros*. The sense "refrain" or "burden" (of a song or poem) derives from the sense, still in use, of a choral song, sung by a group, in response to a solo singer; it still refers to the group itself, more or less synonymous with **choir** (variant **quire**) < ME **quer** < OF *cuer* (Mod. F *choeur*) < Latin *chorus*. But Greek *khoros* first meant a round dance, a troop of dancers, and a place for dancing; singing was only implicit, since the dancers virtually always sang. If the word comes from PIE **gher-* "catch, seize, fence, enclose" (whence **gird, yard, garden**), then its oldest Greek sense was "enclosure for dancing." But its origin is uncertain. A similar shift may be seen in **orchestra**, now an ensemble of musicians, but in Greek it meant "dance floor," the space before the stage or *logeion*, comparable to the space where the orchestra now sits (the "pit") for the performance of an opera or musical. See **choriamb**.

dance < ME **daunse** < OF *dancer*, *danser* (verb), cognate with Spanish *danzar*, Italian *danzare*, etc., but of uncertain origin. There are two theories: (1) < OHG *dansôn* "to draw, to stretch out," hence "to form a file or chain in dancing," < *dinsan*, cognate with Gothic *þinsan* in *at-þinsan* "to draw towards one," and perhaps with OE **þennan** (**þænnan**) < Proto-Germanic **þanjan-* < PIE **ten-*, variants **tend-* and **tens-* "stretch" (> Latin > **tend**, **tense**, **tenuous**, **extend**, etc.; and > Germanic > **thin**; (2) < Latin **de-antiare*, variant of **ab-antiare* (> French > **advance**) < *anteo* "go before" (hence "go back and forth?"). Paul Valéry wrote, "Poetry is to prose as dancing is to walking."

number in *OED* sense 17 (noun): "conformity, in verse or music, to a certain regular beat or measure; rhythm," first attested in 15C. More common was the plural **numbers**, meaning "metrical feet, lines, or verses," which translated Latin *numeri* "verses": *numeri graves* ("heavy numbers") meant "heroic verse(s)," *numeri impares* ("unequal numbers") meant "elegiac verse(s)" (see **elegiac distich** below). **number** < Anglo-Norman and OF *nombre* < Latin *numerus* < perhaps *PIE **nom-eso-*, a suffixed form of **nom-*, o-grade of **nem-* "allot, assign" > Greek *nomos* "portion (allotted), usage, custom, law" > **astronomy**, **Deuteronomy**, **metronome**, etc.

Ancient meters depended on counting time, and sometimes on counting syllables; modern European meters depend on counting syllables (and sometimes regular stresses). Spenser: "wise Words taught in Numbers for to run, / Recorded by the Muses, live for ay" (*Ruins of Time* 402-03). Shakespeare uses **numbers** in four of his sonnets (17, 38, 79, 100); e.g., "in fresh numbers number all your graces" (17). Milton: "Then feed on thoughts, that voluntary move / Harmonious numbers" (*PL* 3.37-38). Pope: "But most by *Numbers* judge a Poet's Song, / And *smooth* or *rough*, with them, is *right* or *wrong*" (*Essay on Criticism* 337-38). Wordsworth: "poetic numbers came / Spontaneously" (1805 *Prelude* 1.61-62). Keats writes of "Tasso's ardent numbers" ("Ode to Apollo" 36). The Latinate adjective **numerous** could mean "measured, metered"; it translated Latin *numerosus* "rhythmical, metrical, melodious." So Milton, redundantly: "in prose or numerous verse" (*PL* 5.150), echoed by Wordsworth: "native prose or numerous verse" (1805 *Prelude* 5.201). *Nombre* in French can mean "harmony (in verse)."

prosody, though it may look like it, is not related to "prose." **prosody** < Latin *prosodia* "accent of a syllable" < Greek *prosoidia* (προσῳδία) "tune to which speech is intoned" or "melodic accent" < *pros-* "to, in addition to" + *oidē* "song" (see **ode**); later it included the tone of a syllable, the length of a syllable, and "breathing" ("rough" or "smooth"), none of which was indicated in writing until Hellenistic times. (In Greek each word had a syllable that was accented tonally, rising or falling in pitch as much as a fifth, whereas in Latin the accent was stressed or raised in volume, as in English. In both Greek and Latin, this everyday spoken accent, whether pitched or stressed, was *not* the basis of meter, which was built on syllable *length*, that is, the time it takes to say it, a "long" or "short" interval, a long being equal to two shorts.) Today **prosody** means the study of versification or meter.

accent < OF *accent* < Latin *accentus* "song added to speech" (translating Greek *prosoidia*) < *ad* "to" + *cantus* "song." See **chant**. Since the 16C in use in English to refer to a written mark that indicates pronunciation or the pitch or length of a cantillation; somewhat earlier it could refer to a manner or style of speaking.

canon (in English since Bede in the 9C) < Latin *canon* "rule" < Greek κανών (*kanōn*) "straight rod, ruler," then "standard, model, rule," probably akin to κάννα (*kanna*) "reed" <

Babylonian-Assyrian *qanu* "reed" < perhaps Sumerian *gin* "reed." Its oldest use in English is for a rule or law of the Church, as in "canon law," then a general rule, principle, or criterion (16C); it is attested in 14C for the authentic or accepted books of the Bible; not until 19C for secular writers. The earliest list of an ancient Greek lyric canon is the set of nine poets named in the anonymous elegy in the *Palatine Anthology* (9.184), the final phrase of which is "the beginning and end of all the lyricists" (which Peter Jay translates as "the canon of lyric song") (see **lyric**).

form < OF *fo(u)rme*, *furme* < Latin *forma* "shape, configuration" < uncertain, but perhaps a dissimilation < **morma* < Etruscan **morfa* < Greek *morphē* "form"; or perhaps *forma* and *morphē* were both borrowed from a third language; or perhaps there was a metathesis of a PIE root **morg*^{wh}- > **g*^{wh}*orm*- > *forma* while **morg*^{wh}- > *morphē*. As a term about literature, meaning style or order, especially good style or order, it dates from later 16C; cf. Shakespeare: "In polished form of well-refined pen" (sonnet 85). **Formalism**, referring first to the Russian formalists, appreas in English in the 1940s.

organic (form) < MF *organique* and Latin *organicus* < Greek ὀργανικός < ὄργανον (organon) "organ, instrument" < **ergō* (> *erdō* "do, make, work") < **wergō* < PIE **uerg*- "work" > Germanic > German *Werk*, English **work**. The modern use of **organic** in English, modifying "form" or "whole," and in contrast to "mechanic" or "mechanical," goes back to Coleridge's *Biographia Literaria*, though Coleridge took it from A. W. Schlegel.

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epic (formerly sometimes spelled **epique**, as in French *épique*) < Latin *epicus* < Greek *epikos*, adjective from *epos*, "word" in Homer, then "tale," "song" < earlier form *wepos* (found in two dialects) < PIE **wek*^{w}*os*. The o-grade of the PIE root, **wok*^{w}-, led to Latin *vox*, "voice," and through French to English **voice**. The phrase "epic voice," then, is a kind of buried etymological pun. PIE **wok*^{w}- > Sanskrit *vacas* "word, speech" but also (1) the pronouncements in the *Rigveda* that make up the song, or (2) the song as a whole; from the same root comes *uktham* "hymn." Cf. OHG *giwaht* "fame, remembrance." **epopee** and **epopea** have both been in use occasionally as synonyms for **epic**; from modern Latin *epopœia* < Greek ἐποποιΐα "the making of epics" (see **poem**, etc.)

epyllion, a "miniature epic" < ἐπύλλιον, a diminutive of *epos* (see under **epic**), first attested in Aristophanes, three times referring to Euripides' verse, perhaps with a pun on *herpyllion* "thyme" (a cure for inflammation of the brain) but in any case not with the modern generic sense, which derives from Athenaeus, who attributes a short comic and erotic narrative poem to Homer. Its modern sense was revived by German scholars in the early 19C.

lyric < OF *lyrique* < Latin *lyricus* < Greek *lyrikos* (adj.) "of the lyre" < *lyra* "lyre," of uncertain origin, probably "pre-Greek," borrowed by the Greeks from a Mediterranean language. The word implies that Greek lyric was originally song accompanied by the lyre. Choral lyric was sung, and often danced, by a chorus (see **chorus**), accompanied by a lyre or flute; the **monody** ("solo song") seems to have been more private. Alexandrian scholars established a canon of nine lyric poets: Alcman, Sappho, Alcaeus, Stesichorus, Ibycus, Anacreon, Simonides, Pindar, and Bacchylides; some added a tenth, Corinna. (See **canon**.) Lyric poetry used certain meters, different from those in epic and drama (except in the choral odes between episodes of drama), and

which were defined by *cola* (lines of up to a dozen syllables) rather than *metra* or feet. Horace was perhaps the first poet to use the term in Latin, indeed to claim that it applies to himself, when he tells Maecenas, “if you enroll me among the lyric bards (*lyricis vatibus*) / my soaring head will touch the stars” (*Odes* 1.1.35-36).

However clear it may have been in Greek or Latin, today in English **lyric** as noun and adjective, and the adjective **lyrical**, are hard to define. John Ruskin wrote, “Lyric poetry is the expression by the poet of his own feelings.” A standard guide to literary terms defines it more helpfully as “any fairly short poem, uttered by a single speaker, who expresses a state of mind or a process of perception, thought, and feeling” (Abrams and Harpham 179). That covers quite a lot, and yet it is possible to find poems that we might want to call “lyric” that are not described by it. A more cautious approach enumerates the kinds of lyric poetry, as Wordsworth does in his 1815 Preface to his *Poems*: “The Lyrical,—containing the Hymn, the Ode, the Elegy, the Song, and the Ballad.” And it might distinguish lyric from other types, as Wordsworth also does: lyric is not narrative, dramatic, didactic, etc. verse. We might think the ballad is narrative, and indeed Wordsworth himself agreed to call his joint volume with Coleridge *Lyrical Ballads* (1798), a title that has led to much puzzlement. The earliest instance of “the lyric” cited by the *OED* is a passage by W. Webbe (1586) that distinguishes it from heroic, elegiac, and iambic, distinctions classical in origin that no longer make much sense.

To his play *Prometheus Unbound* (1820) Shelley gave the subtitle *A Lyrical Drama*, a phrase sometimes used for opera, probably borrowed from French *drame lyrique*.

ode, now used to refer to a kind of poem (Pindaric ode, Horatian ode, choral ode, etc), in Greek originally meant simply “song.” The English word comes from French *ode* < Late Latin *oda, odē* < Greek *oidē*, earlier *aoidē* “song” < PIE *_wed_- “speak” > Sanskrit *vad*- “speak, tell of, sing of.” See *aoidos*. Pindar referred to his song as *aoidē* in *Olympian* 2.13. It is less clear why we refer to Horace’s *Odes* as odes; it is presumably because they were called *carmina* in Latin, which meant “songs.” See **chant**. From *oidē* come such compounds as **melody, comedy, tragedy, rhapsody,** and **threnody,** as well as **epode, monody, palinode, parody,** and **prosody.** See also **rhapsode**.

hymn < Latin *hymnus* < Greek *hymnos*, “hymn,” that is, an ode addressed to a god, such as one of the Homeric Hymns. Its etymology is uncertain, but a recent theory connects it with *hymen* “thin skin, membrane” < *_sumen_ < PIE *_syu_- “sew, bind” (> **sew, suture** (via Latin), and *sutra* (Sanskrit for “thread,” as in *Kamasutra*)); a *hymnos* would also be something sewn. See **rhapsode**. Another theory links it to Vedic *saman*- “song” and Hittite *ishamai* “sing.” Yet another connection, less likely, is with *hyphanein* “weave”; the Greeks themselves saw a connection, or at least punned on the two words, as Bacchylides does with his phrase *hyphanas hymnon* “having woven (a) hymn.” See **text**. A Homeric word for “song,” *oimē*, may have originally meant “thread” (and may be related to *oimos* “path”), perhaps also to the root of *hymnos* and *saman*-. In the argument to Book 5 of *Paradise Lost* Milton speaks of the “Morning Hymn” of Adam and Eve. Thomas Gray wrote a “Hymn to Adversity” and a “Hymn to Ignorance”; Shelley wrote a “Hymn to Intellectual Beauty.” These might well be called odes, but in the last case, at least, Shelley is evoking the religious connotations of the word for an anti-Christian poem.

psalm < Late Latin *psalmus* < Greek *psalmos* < “twitching, plucking (of the strings of a harp) > song sung to a harp” < *psal*- “twitch” + *-mos* (noun formative) perhaps < PIE *_pol_- “touch, feel” > **feel, palpable**.

wōth is Old English for "song" or "poem" or "eloquence"; **wothsong** is "song" and **wothcraeft** is "the art of speech or song." See **vates**.

yed (13C spelling) or **gid/gyd** (OE spelling) is another OE word for "song, found in *Beowulf* and Layamon's *Brut*; OE **gieddian** "sing" < PIE **ge-* > Sanskrit *ga* "sing," *gatha* "song," and Slavonic *gudu* "sing with a stringed instrument. The *OED* speculates it may derive from the Germanic root **gad-*, found in **gather** and **together.**

galder or **galdor**, another OE word for "song, spell, incantation" (cognate with ON *galdr* "charm, witchcraft") < **galan** "to sing, cry, chant" < Germanic **gel-* or **gal-* (the former yielding **yell** in English) "cry, sing" < PIE **ghel-* "call" > two Greek bird names, according to Watkins: *kikhlē* "thrush" and *khelidōn* "swallow"(> **celandine**, the plant that flowered at the arrival of the swallow and wilted at its departure), but these Greek etymologies are disputed by Beekes. **Galder**, and **gale** as noun or verb, are not attested after 15C, but we still have the singing bird **nightingale**. **Regale** is not related; it comes from Spanish.

lay < ME **laye**, **lai** < OF *lai*, akin to Provençal *lais*. These might be borrowed from Celtic languages; cf. Old Irish *laed*, *loid*, Irish *laid*, Scots Gaelic *laoidh*, all meaning "song" or "poem." These in turn may go back to the same root as German *Lied* (< OHG *liod*), OE **leoth** (see **scop**), and ON *ljóð*; that root, PIE **leu-*, may yield Latin *laus* "praise" and *laudare* "to praise," the original sense, though not the root, of "bard." Cf. Old Irish *luaidim* "I celebrate." The *OED* disputes this etymology, and thinks it more likely that *lai* is related to OHG *leich* "play, melody, song," or ON *lag* "tune." Its earliest instances in English usually referred to songs narrating adventures, or romances, but by the 16C in poetry itself it was generalized to mean simply "song." Dryden in his translation of Lucretius' philosophical epic calls it "an immortal lay / Of heaven and earth" (35-36). About the song of the "Solitary Reaper" Wordsworth asks, "is it some more humble lay, / Familiar matter of to-day?" (21-22), while in another poem he speaks of "Spenser's Lay" (i.e., *The Faerie Queene*) (*White Doe of Rylstone*, "Dedication" 5). In the preface to *The Lay of the Last Minstrel* (1805), Scott defines the lay as "the Ancient Metrical Romance." Macaulay's *Lays of Ancient Rome* (1842) are longish narratives. The nightingale was often said to sing lays. Milton: "thy soft lay" (sonnet "O Nightingale"); Dryden: "When Philomel begins her heavenly lay" ("On the Death of Mr. Purcell" 6); Thomson: "The sober-suited songstress trills her lay" ("Summer" 746). **Lay** is not related to **roundelay**, which is a variant of French *rondelet*, the diminutive of *rondel*, a short poem with a refrain, itself a diminutive of *rond* "round."

ballad (variant forms **ballet**, **ballat**) < ME **balade** < OF *ballade* < Prov *balada* "song to be accompanied by dancing" < Prov *balar* "to dance" < Late Latin *ballare* < Sicilian Greek *ballizein* "to dance" < Greek *ballein* "to throw" < PIE **gwele-* "throw." It was once the widespread, and perhaps universal, custom in Europe to dance to "ballads," though it is not clear if the forms that went by that name at that time were like what we call ballads today. OF *ballade* entered English also as **ballade**, a seven-line stanza adopted by Chaucer. Latin *ballare* > Italian *ballare* > noun *ballo* > diminutive form *balletto* > French *ballet* > **ballet**. French *baller* > noun *bal* > **ball** "dance."

saga < Old Icelandic and Old Norse *saga* "story" < Germanic **sagā*, **sagōn-* (> **say**) < PIE **sek*^{w}- "say" (cf. Old Latin *inseque* "say"; Lithuanian *pa-saka* (< *sokā*) "story"). The exact

Old English cognate of *saga* is **sagu** > **saw** “saying, maxim.” The Icelandic sagas were in prose, but the term can be used of verse story cycles. First used in English in early 18C of Nordic sagas, not till mid-19C of comparable works.

aubade, a song sung at dawn, entered English in the 17C but still feels French: < OF *aubade* < Spanish *albada* < *alba* “dawn” or < Prov *auba, alba* “dawn” < Latin *alba* (f) “white” (> **albino, albumin**) < PIE **albho-* “white” > perhaps OHG *albiz* “swan.” The *OED* quotes Longfellow (*Emma & Eginhard* 111): “Till the crowing cock...Sang his aubade with lusty voice and clear.”

chant < ME **chanten** “to sing” < OF *chanter* < Latin *cantare*, the “frequentive” form of *canere* “sing” (as in *arma virumque cano*, “arms and the man I sing,” the opening lines of the *Aeneid*) < PIE **kan-* “sing” (> Old Irish *canaid* “sings,” OHG *hano* “cock” (“singer at dawn”)). From Latin (or Italian) forms English draws **canto, canticle, cantata, cantor, cantillate, incantation, descant, recant, accent**; cf. French *chanson*, Italian *canzone*, Spanish *cancion*, Portuguese *canção*, Provençal *canso*, Catalan *cançon*, all from Latin *cantio* (accusative case *cantionem*). A *chanson de geste* is a French song of heroic deeds (12-15C) such as *The Song of Roland* (c.1090); *geste* “exploit, heroic deed” < Latin *gesta* with same meaning, neuter plural of *gestus*, past part. of *gerere* “perform, carry on (e.g., war)” of unknown origin (whence **gesture**, **digest**, **jest**, etc.). English **charm** has the same root as **chant**: OF *charme* < Latin *carmen* “song” < **canmen* < PIE **kan* + suffix *-men-*. A charm is a chant or spell; it can enchant; it is an incantation. English **shanty**, a sailor’s song, seems to come from French *chantez* “sing.”

canto < Italian *canto* “song” < Latin *cantus*; see **chant**. Spenser seems to have been the first to use the term in English for the main divisions of each book of his *Faerie Queene* (1590); it could also mean a separate song. Dante had used it of the divisions within the three books of the *Divine Comedy*; the books themselves were called *cantiche* (singular *cantica*). In Shakespeare we find the form **canton** (*Twelfth Night* 1.5.259). Cognate with *cantica* is *cantiga*, the Galician-Portuguese term for a common kind of poem in the 13-14C.

song < OE **sang** (verb **singen**) < Germanic **sangwaz* < PIE **song^{w}h-o-* (o-grade of root **seng^{w}h-*) “sing.” PIE noun **song^{w}ha* > Greek *omphē* “prophetic utterance of a god,” later “sweet or musical voice.” Until recently, poems knew themselves mainly as “songs,” sometimes as “rhymes,” but rarely as “poems.” Chaucer never uses “poem,” though once he has “olde poetries” (in “The Squire’s Tale”); Spenser never has “poem.” Milton uses “poem” once in *Paradise Lost* and once in *Paradise Regained*; in the former “song(s)” appears 28 times, and always when he refers to his own poem. The Romantics as well liked to call their own poems “songs” even though they did not usually sing them.

air (“melody, tune, song”) < OF *aire* < Latin *aer* < Greek *aer* “lower atmosphere, air” perhaps < PIE **awer-*. Italian *aria* has the same root. **Air** (or “ayre”) entered English in the late 16C, and for a time typically referred to a song accompanied by the lute. The first collection of them was John Dowland’s *The first Booke of Songs or Ayres* (1597). Milton generalizes it in Sonnet 8: “the repeated air / Of sad Electra’s Poet.” Since the 18C it has been associated with Scottish songs; George Thomson published *Select Scottish Airs* in 1793, with many songs by Burns.

carol < OF *carole* "round-dance" (Swiss Romance *coraula*) perhaps < Latin *choraula*, *choraules* "one who accompanies a chorus" < Greek *khoraulēs* < *khoros* (see **chorus**) + *aulēs* "flute-player" < *aulos* "flute" (probably closer to an oboe) < PIE *_eul_- "tube" (> Latin *alvus* "belly, cavity" and Lithuanian *aulas* "leg of a boot"). The earliest English uses refer to any song, though usually happy and acoompanied by dance; the association of "carol" with Christmas began in early 16C. In poetry birds are often said to sing carols.

strain < ME **strene** < OE **streon** "acquisition, generation, offspring" < PIE *_streu-_ < *_ster_- "spread." See Shakespeare, *Twelfth Night* 1.1.4: "That strain again, it had a dying fall"; Milton's "Lycidas" 87: "That strain I heard was of a higher mood"; or Coleridge's "Chatterton" 34-35: Genius "Poured forth his lofty strain." (Perhaps from the sense "stretch" as in a "stretch of something," or from the verb, i.e., to strain a string in tuning an instrument.)

ditty < ME **dite, ditti** < OF *ditie* "composition" < Latin *dictatum* "thing dictated" < *dictare* "dictate, compose" < *dicere* "say" < PIE *_deik_- "show, pronounce." See **dactyl** below. Christine de Pisan wrote a *Ditié de Jehanne D'Arc* in 1429. See Shakespeare's *Venus and Adonis* 836: "sings extemporally a woeful ditty"; Milton's "Lycidas" 32: "Rural ditties" (= pastoral songs); or Keats's "Ode on a Grecian Urn" 14: "ditties of no tone."

sonnet < French *sonnet* < Italian *sonetto* < Old Provençal *sonet* < *son* "song" < Latin *sonus* "sound" < PIE *_swen_- "sound." From the Latin root English gets **sonic, consonate, sonata, sound**; from a Germanic cognate it gets **swan**, the singing bird. The earliest appearance of the word in English is found in the title of Surrey's *Songes and Sonnettes* (1557). Though the standard sonnet, popularized by Petrarch, had fourteen lines, the term was also used more loosely until the 19C to refer to any short poem.

volta, the "turn" of a sonnet, usually between octave and sestet of the Italian form, < Italian *volta* "turn," feminine past participle of *volvere* "turn, roll" (> **revolve**, **revolt**, **volute**, **volume**, **Volvo**, etc.) < PIE *_wel_- "turn, roll" > Germanic > **waltz**, **welter**, **wallow**; Latin > **valve**, **vulva**; Greek > **helix**, **helicopter**.

cento, a work consisting of quotations from other works, < Latin *cento* "patchwork quilt or blanket" of uncertain origin but perhaps < PIE *_kent_-; cf. Sanskrit *kantha* "rag, patched cloth." Its first attested Latin uses for a literary work date to Ausonius and Proba (4C); in English to 16C.

ottava rima < Italian *ottava rima* < *ottava*, fem. of *ottavo* "eighth" < Latin *octavus* < *octo* "eight" + *rima* "rhyme." (Note: English **octave** is used to refer to the eight-line first part of the Italian or Petrarchan sonnet.) Dryden called it "Octave Rhyme." This is the term for the eight-line stanza rhyming **abababcc**, perhaps invented by Boccaccio and used by Ariosto, Tasso, and other Italian poets for epics or romances; it was used in *Don Juan* by Byron, who referred to its stanzas as "octaves." See **octave** below.

There are many other forms whose names are derived from the number of lines in them.

couplet < French *couplet*, diminutive of *couple* < Latin *copula* "band, tie" < *co(m)-* "together" + *apĕre* "to fasten, fit," with diminutive suffix.

triplet < **triple** < French *triple* < Latin *triplus* "threefold" < Greek *triplous* < PIE *_treies_ + *-_plo_- combining form of *_pel_- "fold" (> **fold**).

tercet < Italian *terzetto*, diminutive of *terzo* (< Latin *tertius*) “third” + *-etto*.

terza rima < Italian *terza* “third” and *rima* “rhyme.” See **rhyme**. The terza rima form, of which Dante was the master, consists of *terzine* (tercets or triplets, singular *terzina*) rhyming aba bcb cdc, etc. Each rhyme occurs three times in each canto, except the first rhyme and the last.

triolet looks like a French dimunitive of *trio*, but the form is not obviously based on three of anything. The origin of the word is doubtful. Leo Spitzer tried to show that it derives from *kyrie eleison* (Greek for “Lord have mercy”) in the Mass.

quatrain < French *quatrain* < *quatre* “four” + *-ain*, suffix forming nouns from numerals (probably < classical Latin *-ēnī* , suffix forming distributive adjectives); *quatre* < Latin *quattuor* < PIE **k^wetwor-*. The k^w- became p- in some Greek, Celtic, and Italic dialects, the so-called P-dialects: Boeotian πέτταρες (*pettares*), Old Welsh *petguar*, Oscan *pettiur*. There may have been a P-dialect in Germanic, and the initial p- became f- by Grimm’s Law: Gothic *fidwar*, Frankish *fitter-*, OE **feoðor** > **féower** > **four.** Or the initial f- in the Germanic words for “four” may have been absorbed from “five.” (For the more regular shift from k^w- to p- see **poem** above.)

quintain < Latin *quintis* “fifth” + French *-ain*, on the model of **quatrain**. *Quintis* < *quīnque* “five” < PIE **penk^{w}e* (> Greek *pente*, Sanskrit *pañca*, Oscan *pempe*, Old Welsh *pump*). Some Italic dialects, including Latin, assimilated initial p- to k^w- in words that already had a -k^w-; hence **penk^{w}e* > **k^wenk^{w}e* > *quīnque*. In Germanic the assimilation went the other way: **penk^{w}e* > **pempe* > Proto-Germanic **fimfi* > Gothic and OHG *fimf*, OE **fīf** > **five**; cf. Mod German *fünf*.

cinquain < French *cinquain* < *cinq* “five” < Latin *quīnque*.

sixain < French *sixain* < *six* “six” < Latin *sex* < PIE **sweks* < perhaps **weks*, with the initial s- borrowed from **septṃ* “seven.” A notable sixain, rhyming ababcc, is Shakespeare’s *Venus and Adonis*.

sestina < Italian *sesto* “sixth” < Latin *sextus*.

sestet < Italian *sestetto*.

senarius, a Latin form of six iambic feet, common in Roman comedies

septet < Latin *septem* + diminutive **–et**.

septenarius, a Latin form in seven trochees plus an extra syllable, also common in Roman comedies.

octave (now mainly for the octet or eight-line first portion of a sonnet) < Latin *octava* “octave (in music)” < *octo* “eight” < PIE **oktou* (> Germanic > **eight**, German *acht*).

huitain < French *huitain* < *huit* “eight” < Middle French *uit* (the purely graphic h was added to prevent confusion with *vit*) < OF *oit* < Popular Latin *ɔjtʲe (in IPA) or something similar < Latin *octo*.

eclogue < French *éclogue* < OF *eglogue* < Latin *ecloga* “selection of a passage” or “poem selected from a larger collection” < Greek *ekloge* “choice, selection, extract” < *eklegō* “single out.” (See under **read**.) The term had no pastoral implication, but it got attached to Virgil’s *Bucolica* or pastoral poems (now usually titled *Eclogues*), perhaps because of their piecemeal publication, each being a “selection” from the set. It came to be more or less synonymous with “pastoral poem,” especially one in dialogue. From the 9C through the Middle Ages *ecloga* was wrongly traced back to Greek *aix* (root *aig-*) “goat” and thus respelled *egloga* or *aegloga*.

Spenser called the poems in *The Shepheardes Calendar* “æglogues” and attributed the word to “*aigon* or *aigonomon logoi*, that is Goteheards tales.”

bucolic < Latin *bucolicus* < Greek *boukolikos* (adjective) < *boukolos* “cowherd.” Theocritus’ pastoral poems (now usually called the *Idylls*) were called *boukolika* in his day, even though they are usually about shepherds or goatherds, not cowherds; Theocritus, who seems to have invented pastoral poetry, used the term himself, as well as *boukoliazomai* “I sing pastorals” and *boukoliastes* “pastoral poet.” Greek *bous* “cow” (cf. Latin *bos* > English **beef, bovine**) < PIE **gwo-* or **gwou-* “cow, bull” > Germanic **kouz* > **cow**. (The oldest form of *boukolos* is found in the Mycenaean Linear B tablets as *qo-u-ko-ro*, that is, probably, *goukolos* or *gwoukolos*.) Greek *–kolos* “herd” is not found by itself; the root seems to have become *–polos* in *aipolos* “goatherd,” and hence is akin to *polein* “to go about” < PIE **kwel-* “revolve, move, sojourn” > Greek *kuklos* > English **cycle**; the same root via Germanic > **wheel**; in Latin it appears as *colo* “look after,” whence **colony**, **cultivate**, etc. **Bucolic** first appears in English in the 16C, referring (in the plural) to Virgil’s set of poems. Robert Herrick wrote “A Bucolick betwixt Two: Lacon and Thyrsis” (1648).

idyll (or **idyl** < Latin *idyllium* < Greek *eidullion*, diminutive of *eidos* “form, picture” < PIE **weid-* “see,” whence by various routes **vision, video, wit, wise**. (For the diminutive ending compare **epyllion**.) The Romans gave this term to Theocritus’ *boukolika*, and it came to mean a short descriptive poem that deals charmingly with rustic or pastoral life. Renaissance theorists often distinguished pastorals in dialogue (eclogues) from those in narrative (idylls). The word first appears in English in the 17C in reference to Theocritus. Goethe called his long poem *Hermann and Dorothea* (1797) an idyll, appropriately enough, but Tennyson’s *Idylls of the King* (1859) is not pastoral.

pastoral < Latin *pastoralis* < *pastor* “shepherd” < *pascere* “feed” (past participle *pastum*) < PIE **pas-* (whence also Latin *panis* “bread”) < **pa-* “protect, feed” > Greek *poimēn* “shepherd”; > Germanic > **food, feed, fodder, forage**. Pastoral poetry was originally about shepherds, cowherds, or goatherds; its invention is ascribed to Theocritus, while the pre-eminent Latin example is Virgil’s *Eclogues* (or *Bucolica*). Pastoral drama arose in Renaissance Italy with such plays as *Il Pastor Fido* (*The Faithful Shepherd*) by Guarini (1590).

georgic < Latin *Georgica* (the title of Virgil’s poem) < title of Greek poem *Georgika* by Nicander of Colophon < Greek *georgika* “cultivated lands, agricultural matters,” neuter plural of *georgikos* “agricultural” < *georgos* “farmer,” literally “earth-worker” < *gē* “earth” + *ergon* “work” (whence **energy, allergy, lethargy, surgery,** etc.); *gē* (variant *gaia*) is of unknown origin, but *ergon* < **wergon* < PIE **werg-* “do” (> Germanic > **work, wrought, wright**). Georgics are poems about agriculture, viniculture, bee-keeping, weather, and the like; the prototype is Hesiod’s *Works and Days*. Virgil’s example inspired many georgics in Italian and French, among other languages, such as Luigi Alamanni’s *Coltivazioni* (1546). There was a vogue for georgics in England in the 18C: e.g., Philips, *Cyder* (1708); Gay, *Rural Sports: A Georgic* (1720); Dodsley, *Agriculture* (1753), Dyer, *The Fleece* (1757); Grainger, *The Sugar-Cane* (1764); a greater poem in the georgic mode is James Thomson’s *The Seasons* (1730). The name George means “farmer.”

elegy < French *élégie* < Latin *elegia* < Greek *elegeia* < *elegos* “song of mourning” (usually accompanied by the flute) < perhaps from a Phrygian word for “flute” (cf. Armenian

elegn- “reed, flute”). (The “flute” accompanying the elegy was the *aulos*, a a double-reed woodwind more like an oboe, sometimes with two tubes.) The word *elegos*, found in Euripides, refers to a song of lamentation without reference to form, but *elegeia* (feminine) or *elegeion* (neuter) came to refer to a particular verse form, the **elegiac distich** (see **line** above for *stichos*), which is a couplet in which the first line is a dactylic hexameter (the epic line from Homer to Virgil and beyond) and the second a “pentameter” with a strong pause (a diaeresis) in the middle (more strictly, two independent sections consisting of two and a half dactyls). This form may well have arisen from ritual laments, but the earliest Greek instances (Archilochus, Tyrtaeus, et al.) were about war or love more often than death. The Roman love elegists (Propertius, Tibullus, and Ovid) employed the form for sophisticated and satirical explorations of the erotic. The form has been revived periodically, notably by the German poets Goethe, Schiller, and Hölderlin, mainly for meditations on serious themes. In France *élégie* meant a serious meditative poem without regard to form. In Britain the **elegiac stanza** is the name given to an iambic pentameter quatrain rhyming *abab*, as found notably in Thomas Gray’s “Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard” (1751).

threnody < Greek *thrēnōidia* (θρηνῳδία) “dirge” < *thrēnos* “dirge” < PIE **dher-* “drone, murmur” (> **drone**) + *ōidia* “song.” The PIE origin has been questioned; the source may be “pre-Greek,” from a language spoken in Greece before the Greeks. The word is occasionally found in titles of poems in English, such as Emerson’s “Threnody” (1842) and (in Latin) Dryden’s “Threnodia Augustalis” (1685). **Threnos** appears as a heading for the final part of Shakespeare’s “The Phoenix and the Turtle,” in which **threne** is also found, first attested 15C (as **trene**).

monody < Latin *monodia* < Greek *monōidia* (μονῳδία) < *mono-* “alone” + *ōidia* “song.” Originally a solo song in a tragedy, as opposed to a choral song. Euripides was well known for his expansive use of it, and in fact the word is first attested in Aristophanes’ *Frogs* (849, 944, 1330) and several others of his comedies that satirize Euripides. Plato contrasts monody, performed by rhapsodes, harpists, flutists, and the like, with *chorōidia* or choral song (*Laws* 764d-e). Euripides’ monodies were often laments, and often by women characters, so the term became a near synonym of “threnody,” “dirge,” or “elegy.” In its earliest English uses it meant a mournful or funereal song. Milton calls “Lycidas” a “Monody” in which he “bewails a learned Friend, unfortunately drown’d.” Coleridge wrote a “Monody on the Death of Chatterton,” and Arnold’s pastoral elegy “Thyrsis” is subtitled “A Monody.”

paean < Latin *paeān* “hymn” (usually of victory, addressed to Apollo) < Greek (Doric) παιάν (Attic-Ionic παιών, Epic παιήων) “hymn of thanksgiving for deliverance, victory in battle,” properly one addressed to Apollo invoked under the name *Paean* (classical Latin *Paeān*, Doric Greek Παιάν, Attic-Ionic Παιών, Epic Παιήων), originally the Homeric name of the physician of the gods (e.g. *Iliad* 5.401), later an epithet of Apollo, god of healing. (In Homer it also means the song-dance, e.g. *Iliad* 1.473.) It seems to be attested in Mycenaean: *pa-ja-wo-ne* = *Paiawonei*. Its etymology is obscure: perhaps related to *paiō* “beat,” perhaps to *pauō* “stop,” both of these sources proposed by Greeks themselves, but perhaps < pre-Greek. As a (loose) form of song there are attested examples by Aeschylus, Sophocles, Simonides, Pindar, and many other poets.

dirge, a song of mourning or lament, < Latin *dirige*, the first word of the antiphon at Matins in the Office of the Dead, *Dirige*, *Domine*, *Deus meus*, *in conspectu tuo viam meam* “Direct, O Lord, my God, my way in thy sight,” taken from Psalm 5.8 (< *OED*), < *dīrigĕre*

"direct" < *dērigĕre* < *dē* "off, away, apart" + *regĕre* "direct, guide, govern" < PIE **reg-* "stretch, direct" (perhaps > Germanic > **reach**).

epigram < French *épigramme* < Latin *epigramma* < Greek ἐπίγραμμα < ἐπιγράφειν (*epigraphein*) < ἐπί "upon" + γράφειν "to write." See **write**.

dithyramb < Latin *dīthyrambus* < Greek διθύραμβος, of uncertain origin, probably "pre-Greek" or Anatolian. The *dithyrambos* and *thriambos* were both songs sung at festivals of Dionysus, and some scholars have been tempted to trace the former to the Phrygian numeral "four" and the latter to the Phrygian numeral "three"; Phrygian was an Indo-European language, so it is a reasonable hunch, but the evidence is slender and disputed.

priamel < German *Priamel*, variant of *Priambel*, a type of short poem common in the 15-16C < Late Latin *praeambulum* "preamble, something that goes before" < *prae* "before" + *ambulare* "go about, walk" (as in English **ambulatory**, **ambulance**) < PIE **ambhi* "around" (> Greek *amphi-* > **amphibian**, **amphitheatre**, etc.) + *al- "wander, go." Classical scholars redefined *priamel* as a form, usually at the outset of a poem, consisting of a foil and a climax: the foil lists at least two items that then yield to the third in importance or truth. Sappho, Pindar, Horace, and other ancients made frequent use of it; Shakespeare's sonnet 91 is an elaborate modern example.

proem ("prelude, preface") < Middle French *proeme* < Latin *prooemium* < Greek προοίμιον (*prooimion*) < *pro-* + οἴμη (*oimē*) "song" + *-ion* noun-forming suffix (as in *biblion*). The origin of *oimē* is uncertain. A masculine form, *oimos*, is identical to a word for "path," and the Greeks identified the two, but the connection may be accidental. The word may be cognate with Sanskrit *saman-* "song" and ON *seiðr* "sorcery," hence < PIE **sa-i-* "bind." Milton writes that Satan "tuned" his "proem" as he begins his flattery of Eve (*PL* 9.549).

Limerick (not always now capitalized) < the Irish city or county Limerick. The form is older than the name (first attested 1898), which may be due to a song, "Won't You Come to Limerick," with a pattern like that we know as a Limerick: anapestic meter, aabba rhyme scheme, with the b-lines short. The city in Irish is Luimneach, which might mean "bare spot" (according to Wikipedia), perhaps "clearing," an area along the River Shannon. The Vikings called it *Hlymrekr*, which sounds like a transliteration of the Irish; in Old Norse it could mean "mighty noise" < *hlym* "noise din" (cf. Icelandic *hlymr* "resounding noise"; OE **hlimman** "sound, resound") + *rekr* "mighty" < Germanic **rikja* "mighty, rich, kingly" < Celtic < PIE **regs-* (> Latin *rex*, Sanskrit *rajah* "king"). It is pleasant to think of the brief and often off-color limericks as making a mighty noise.

masque, the courtly dramatic entertainment, usually in verse, often sung, by performers usually masked, first attested 16C. The term is a variant of **mask** < Middle French *masque* < Italian *maschera* < perhaps Late Latin *masca* "evil spirit" > perhaps Romance terms meaning "blacken" or "smear" (whence **mascara**). Cf. **masquerade**.

villanelle < French *villanelle* < Italian *villanelle*, feminine of *villanello* "rural, rustic" < *villano* < Popular Latin **villānus* < *villa* "country-house, farm, villa" < **vic-la* diminutive of *vīcus* "village, block of houses" (> **vicinity**) < PIE **weik-*, **wik-* "settlement" (> Greek *woikos*,

oikos "household" > **economy**, **ecology**; English –**wick**, -**wich** in placenames. Icelandic *–vik* as in Reykjavik).

rondeau < Middle French *rondeau*, variant of *rondel* < *rond* "round" + *-el* or *elle* suffix < Latin *rotundus* "round" < *rota* "wheel" < PIE **rot-o*- "revolving" (> Sanskrit *ratha*- "chariot"; OHG *rad* "wheel"). As a poetic form **rondeau** is first attested in English in 1525.

planctus, a medieval song or poem of lament, first attested in English 17C but rare until 19C, < Latin *planctus* (plural *planctūs*) "beating of the breast, lament" < participle of *plangō* "beat, strike, bewail" < PIE **pleng*- < **pleg*- "hit, beat" (> Greek *plēssō* "strike, beat, slap"; Germanic > OE **flōcan** "slap, clap, applaud"); *plangō* > **plangent**. *Planctus* > French *plainte*, Italian *pianto*, Occitan *planh*, all terms for the lament or dirge. Earlier forms of *plainte* > **plaint**: Spenser writes of "piteous plaints" and "rueful plaints" several times each; cf. **complaint**, **plaintive**. Latin **plangor** "loud lamenting" has been used occasionally in English. Meres (1598) writes of "the lamentable plangors of Thracian Orpheus for his dearest Euridice."

technopaegnion, a shaped or figured poem where the text is arranged to look like its subject, < Ausonius' work of the same name, and presumably his coinage, as if < Greek τεχνοπαίγνιον "game of art" or "toy of craft" < τεχνο-, combining form of τέχνη (*tekhnē*), *"*art, craft, skill" < PIE **tek*-, reduplicated form **te-tk*- (> Greek τέκτων (*tektōn*) "carpenter"; Sanskrit *takṣ*- "fashion," *takṣan* "carpenter"; Latin *texere* "weave"); + παίγνιον "plaything, toy, game, sportive poem" < *pais*, *paid*- "child, boy" < PIE **peu*- "small" (> Latin *paucus* "few"; English **few**).

šîr (שִׁיר), pronounced "sheer," Hebrew for "song," as in the "Song of Songs" (*šîr haššîrîm*) or "Song of Solomon," is distinguished from terms for elegy, lament, etc., so it may imply a glad song if the context allows it. Akin to Akkadian *šēru* "song" and to Arabic *shiʿr* "poetry" and *shāʿir* "poet."

spá is Old Norse or Icelandic for "prophecy" or "prophetic song" (as in *Voluspá*, the "seeress' song" in the *Poetic Edda*) perhaps < PIE **spei*- "thrive, prosper" > Latin *spes* "hope, expectation" and English **speed**, but more likely < PIE **spek*- "see, observe" > Latin > **spectator**, **speculate**, etc, and > Germanic > **spy**. See Scots English **spaewife** "female fortune-teller, sibyl, witch."

kvæði, Old Norse/Icelandic for "poem" or "song," derives from the verb *kveða* "say, speak, recite," past tense *kvað*, cognate with OE **cueðan** "speak, tell" > ME **queathe**, past tense **quoth** (which long outlived the present tense and infinitive); the prefixed form **becueðan** survives in modern English **bequeathe**; < Germanic < uncertain origin.

slovo (слово), Russian for "word," also means "lay" or "epic"; the medieval Russian poem *The Tale of Igor's Campaign* is (in Old Russian) *Slovo o plŭku Igorevě* (Слово о пълку Игоревѣ). *Slovo* is akin to *slava* (слава) "glory, fame" whence such names as Mstislav, Yaroslav, etc. (cf. Czech Waclav = Wenceslas). Both *slovo* and *slava* < PIE **klou*- < **kleu*- "hear" > noun **klewes* > Greek *kleos* "glory, fame," whence such names as Heracles, Sophocles, Cleopatra, etc., as well as Kleio (Latin Clio), the Muse of history. PIE **kleu*- > also Latin *cluor* "glory" and Old Irish *clu* "fame." In Homer *klea* means "famous deeds," the subject of epic

poetry. Sanskrit *shravah* “glory, fame” also comes from **klou*-. From a shortened variant **klu*- come English **list, listen**. From a suffixed form **klu-to*- come OE **hlud** > **loud** as well as Germanic personal names such as **hluda-wigaz* “famous in battle” > Ludwig, Louis, Luigi, Clovis; Sanskrit *shruti* “what is heard” was used to refer to the *Rig Veda*, which was preserved orally for centuries; and Greek names such as Clytemnestra.

dúan, the Old Irish word for “poem,” < PIE **dap-no* > Latin *damnum* “damage entailing liability” > **damn, damage**. This is Calvert Watkins’ theory; he speculates that the root **dap*- meant something like “recompense” or “apportionment in a reciprocal relationship.” A poet and a king were in reciprocal dependency: for a *dúan* the poet got a fee or other favor, and the king got fame. Another possibility: < PIE **dheughna*-, whence the Greek verb *teukhō* “make, construct, build” which Homer and Pindar use of making a song. **Duan** entered English through the supposed translations by James Macpherson of Ossian’s Gaelic beginning in 1763.

pryddest, a long Welsh poem in free meter, < *prydu* “to compose poetry” < *pryd* “appearance, countenance, image, likeness, beauty,” cognate with Early Irish *cruth* “form, appearance, beauty” (modern Irish *cruth*), and *creth* “poetry”) < PIE **k^{w}er* “make” (> Sanskrit *kṛ*- “to do, make, perform, accomplish” > *karma*) + *-est*, of unknown origin (also found apparently independently in *gloddest* “feast, carousal” and *bloddest* “rejoicing, applause”). The pre-Welsh (British) base of *pryd* may be the source of the Old Welsh term for the Welsh themselves, *Priten* (modern Welsh *Prydain*), reflected in Greek Πρεττανοί, Πρετανοί (*Pret(t)anoi*), with variant Βρεττανοί > Latin *Brettani*, *Brittani* > **Britain**. The Britons’ name for themselves may have meant “the beautiful land,” perhaps even “the land of poetry”!

rubai, the classical quatrain of Persian and Arabic poetry < Persian *rubāʿī* < Arabic *rubāʿī* < *rubāʿī* (adjective) “fourfold” < *rubāʿ* “four at a time.” (Cf. Hebrew root רבע (*rb’*) “four,” and Akakdian *erbe*.) It is better known in the plural *rubāʿiyyāt*, the title of a collection by the Persian poet Omar Khayyám (1048-1131), made famous in English through Edward Fitzgerald’s translation (1st ed. 1859).

ghazal, the Arabic genre of love poetry in couplets with a recurring end-word, < Arabic *ghazal* or *ghazl* (غَزَل) “conversation with women, sweet talk, dalliance.” Some sources say the Arabic root *gh-z*-l generates words meaning not only “dalliance” but “weaving or spinning” and “gazelle.” Ghazal occurs once in the Koran, where it means “spun yarn.” These disparate meanings may seem unlikely, but weaving and spinning are widespread metaphors for making poetry (see **text**, and note Engish “yarn” for “tale”) while Arabic (and later Persian, Urdu, etc.) poets often compared their beloved to a gazelle; “gazelle” does indeed derive from *ghazal*, via Spanish and French, though perhaps it is a homonym.

haiku (俳句), the term for the popular Japanese verse form normally consisting of three phrases of 5, 7, and 5 syllables (not strictly syllables but *on* or morae, units of length similar to the units of classical quantitative meter), entered English about 1900, not long after its “reform” at the hands of Masaoka Shiki. Its first part is the same as that in *haikai*, taken today as synonymous with *haiku* but originally found in the phrase *haikai no renga no ku* “comic linked verse.” The word *haiku* may simply be a contraction of that phrase, but some sources say that it was either borrowed from Chinese as a compound already or compounded out of Chinese syllables: *hai* “amusement, fun” < Ancient Chinese *b’ai* “amusement” + *ku* “verse” < Ancient Chinese *kiu* “sentence, line, verse.” In any case *haiku* means something like “witty verse,”

somewhat surprising given its recent associations with delicate sentiments, Zen, and the seasons. Another Japanese word, *hokku* (発句), with a different first syllable (which means "starting" or "proposing"), has since about 1900 become synymous with *haiku*, but it originally meant the opening verse of a *renga* (set of linked verses). A *haibun* is a terse prose-poem, a *haiga* is a *haiku* picture (i.e., a calligraphic *haiku* with drawing), a *haijin* is a *haiku* poet, and *haimi* is "refined taste as shown by *haiku*," according to my Japanese dictionary. Ezra Pound is said to be the first poet to publish original haiku in English.

tanka (短歌), less well known in English than *haiku*, has a longer history in Japan, and was the most widely produced form of *waka* (originally the most general term for Japanese, as opposed to Chinese, poetry); it has five phrases of lengths 5-7-5-7-7. *tanka* < *tan* "short" < Middle Chinese *twan* "short"+ *ka* "song" < Middle Chinese *ka* "song." Lady Murasaki's long prose novel *The Tale of Genji* (11C) includes about 400 *tanka* composed by various characters and sent to one another.

Metrical and Scansion Terms

foot, meaning "metrical unit," is obviously the same word as that for the human appendage. It is used for a measure of verse as it is for a measure of length, three feet to a yard (and cf. the "leg" of a journey). It is cognate with Greek *pous*, Latin *pes*, and Sanskrit *padá* ("step" < *pád* "foot"), all of which could mean a metrical unit or part of a verse. Some scholars have argued that the term arose because people kept time to verse by tapping their feet, but surely it is more likely that people originally danced to verse. See **strophe, stanza, chorus,** and **ballad** above, and **trochee** below.

Greek *pezos* and Latin *pedester*, both meaning "on foot," were used to refer to a dull or prosaic style of verse. The Modern Greek phrase for prose of any sort is *pezos logos* or just *peza* (plural, "prose pieces"). Since the 18C English has used "pedestrian" in the same sense; occasionally a century or two earlier **foot** as an adjective was similarly deployed. The implicit contrast is with flying or soaring or riding a horse, especially the flying horse of poetry, Pegasus.

ictus, a much-debated term for "stress" or "accent" in verse, < Latin *ictus* "blow, stroke, beat," perfect participle of *icio* or *ico* "strike, hit" < PIE **aik-* "strike" > Greek *aikhme* "spear."

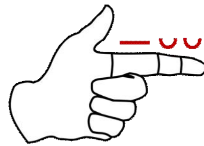
iamb (adj **iambic**) (u –) < Latin *iambus* < Greek *iambos*, of uncertain origin, probably "Pre-Greek," i.e., a language spoken in Greece before the Greeks arrived. It may share an ending with *dithyrambos* (see above) and *thriambos*. The *OED* connects it to Greek *iaptō* "assail, attack," because the oldest iambic poetry in Greece (by Archilochus and Hipponax) was satirical, but this theory is doubtful.

trochee (adj **trochaic**) (– u) < French *trochée* < Latin *trochaeus* < Greek *trochaios [pous]* "running [foot]" < *trochos* "running, course" related to the verb *trechō* "run" < PIE **dhregh-* "run."

spondee (adj **spondaic**) (– –) < ME **sponde** < OF *spondee* < Latin *spondeum* < Greek *spondeios [pous]* "[foot] used at a libation" < *spondē* "libation" < PIE **spend-* "make an offering, perform a rite" whence also Latin *spondere* "pledge, promise" > **sponsor, respond, spouse**.

pyrrhic (noun and adj), occasionally **pyrrhus**) (u u) < Latin *pyrrhichius* < Hellenistic Greek πυρρίχιος, used as noun (short for ποὺς πυρρίχιος "pyrrhic foot"); πυρρίχιος "of or relating to the pyrrhic dance" < Greek πυρρίχη "pyrrhic" used as noun (short for πυρρίχη ὄρχησις "pyrrhic dance"), feminine of πυρρίχος "reddish" < πυρρός "reddish," probably akin to πῦρ (*pyr*)"fire" (whence **pyre**) < PIE **pur-* > Germanic > **fire**. The pyrrhic dance was a war dance, doubtless with fast short steps (hence the foot u u), "reddish" because of blood, perhaps, or fire. The metron is also called a **dibrach** ("two shorts").

dactyl (adj **dactylic**) (– u u) < Latin *dactylus* < Greek *daktulos* "finger," of uncertain origin, perhaps pre-Greek, but perhaps from PIE **deik-* (variant **deig-*) "show, point to" > Latin *dicere* "say, tell" > **dictate, contradict,** etc; also Latin *digitus* "finger" (the pointer) > **digit**; and Latin *-dex* as in *index* "forefinger" > **index, indicate**, etc.; the same root via Germanic > **teach, token,** and (satisfyingly) **toe.** The Greek idea was that the long bone and the two small bones of a finger represented the long and two shorts of the dactylic foot; the trouble is that, depending on which finger is pointed in which direction, a finger could equally well represent an anapest. It is a happy accident, presumably, that the word *daktulos* (δάκτυλος) scans as a dactyl.



The dactylic foot is called *bhagaṇa* in Sanskrit metrical theory < *bha*, the letter + *gaṇa* "group, class"; *bha* is one of eight Sanskrit letters assigned to each of the possible trisyllabic units. We might translate it as "b-foot."

anapest (or **anapaest**) (adj **anapestic**) (u u –) < Latin *anapaestus* < Greek *anapaistos* "struck back, rebounding" (i.e., a dactyl reversed) < *anapaiein* "to strike back" < *paiein* "to strike" < PIE **peue-* "strike." In Sanskrit, *sagaṇa*.

cretic (– u –) < Latin *Creticus* "of Crete" < *Creta* < Greek *Krētē*; it was presumably used typically by poets from Crete. Also called **amphimacer** < Latin *amphimacrus* < Greek *amphimakros* "long at both ends." In Sanskrit, *ragaṇa*.

molossus (– – –) < Latin *Molossus* < Greek *Molossos*, presumably because it was used by the Molossoi, a tribe in northern Greece, where the dog breed was also developed. In Sanskrit, *magaṇa*.

amphibrach (u — u) < Latin *amphibrachus*, *amphibrachys* < Greek ἀμφίβραχυς "short at both ends" < ἀμφί "on both sides" + βραχύς "short"; ἀμφί < PIE **ant-b*^{h}*i* "on both sides" (> Latin *ambi-*, OHG *umbi*); βραχύς < PIE **mrg*^{h}*u-* "short" (> Latin *brevis*, OE **myrge** "entertaining" (= "shortening the time")). In Sanskrit *jagaṇa*.

choriamb (– u u –) < Latin *choriambus* < Greek *khoriambos* < *khoreios* (= trochee) + *iambos*; it would be easier to remember if it were called a "trochiamb." *Carpe diem*, the famous sentence in Horace's ode 1.11, is a choriamb, as are several other phrases in this very choriambic poem, including the girl it is addressed to, Leuconoe.

colon < Latin *cōlon* < Greek κῶλον (*kōlon*) "limb" perhaps < PIE *_kōl-o-_ < *_(s)kel-_ "crooked, bent part of the body (leg, heel, knee, etc)," but it may well be taken from a pre-Greek word. **Colon** has several meanings, but in classical verse it usually refers to a unit larger than the metron (itself sometimes containing two units we would call feet); cola may be broken down into metra, but not usually into metra of the same sort. The long (hendecasyllabic) line of the Sapphic stanza might be described as a cretic followed by a hipponactean, for instance, and the hipponactean can be subdivided further into disparate metra; it seems better to take the Sapphic line as one colon with a distinctive overall character.

alexandrine (n and adj) < French *alexandrin*, a line of six feet (twelve syllables), the standard heroic line in French poetry, perhaps (1) from Alexandre Paris, who used this line, or (2) from poems about Alexander the Great in such lines. See Pope's *Essay on Criticism*:

> A needless Alexandrine ends the Song,
> That like a wounded Snake, drags its slow Length along.

hiatus, the gap or pause between vowels, usually in different words, first attested in English in this sense in a passage by Pope (1706) < Latin *hiātus* "gaping, gap, opening" < *hiāre* "to gape" < PIE *_g^hie-_ "gape, open wide" > Russian *zijat* "yawn," OE **ginian**, **geonian** "yawn" (> **yawn**) and **giwian** "request."

elision, the opposite of hiatus, but with a more general meaning, i.e., the reduction of two syllables to one, < Latin *ēlīsiōnem* < *ēlīdĕre* "to crush out" < *ē* "out" + *laedĕre* "to dash" < uncertain origin.

Figures of Speech

symbol < Latin *symbolum* and French *symbole* < Greek *symbolon* "mark, sign, token, pledge"; in plural the two halves of a bone or coin broken by two persons as "symbols" of a pledge or pact < *syn-* "with, together" + *bol-* (as in *bolos*, *bolē*) "throw" (verb *ballein*; see **ballad**) < PIE *_gwele-_ "throw, reach, pierce." Words of Greek origin with *–bolē* ending include **parabola** (> **parable, parole, parlor, parliament**), **hyperbola** (> **hyperbole**), **metabolism**, and **diabolical** (< *diabolos* > **devil**). PIE *_gwele-_ > Germanic > **quell**, **kill**. The Greek adjective *symbolikos* was used by Lucian and others to mean more or less what we mean today by "symbolic" or "figurative."

sign < Anglo-Norman *seigne*, *sengne*, etc. < Latin *signum* "mark, sign" < Proto-Italic *_sekno-_ "statue, sign" < PIE *_sek-no-_ "what is cut out or carved" < *sek- "cut > Latin *seco* "cut" > **section**, **segment**, **sickle**, etc. For similar semantics see **write**. The etymology offered by Walter Ong in *Orality and Literacy* (*signum* < PIE *_sekw-_ "follow," as in Latin *sequor*) is mistaken.

figure < French *figure* < Latin *figūra* "form, appearance" < *_fig-_ short stem of *fingĕre* "to form, fashion" < PIE *_dh(e)igh-_, *_dhingh-_ "build, form" > Greek *teikhos* "wall"; Germanic *_dhigh-_ "mould, knead" > **dough**. From the Latin root come **fiction**, **figment**, **effigy**, and (via French) **feign**. In the sense "emblem" or "type," **figure** is first attested in the 14C; as "form of expression" (figure of speech), it is also attested somewhat later in the 14C (Chaucer).

image < Anglo-Norman and OF *himage*, *imagene*, *imagine*, etc. < Latin *imāgin-*, *imāgō* "picture, likeness, reflection, phantom" < PIE **im-* (cf. Hittite *himma-* "imitation, substitute"), whence also *imitari* "imitate." Its use as metaphor or simile in a text dates to 1550.

scheme, now obsolete in English as a synonym for (rhetorical) "figure," < medieval Latin *schēma*, < Greek σχῆμα "form, figure" < root σχ- < zero-grade of PIE **seg*^{h}-, whence Greek ἔχειν (*ekhō*) "have, hold." σχῆμα had various senses besides "form" and "figure": "character, role, (military) formation," etc.; as "figure of speech" it is first found in Plato's *Ion* 536c.

semantics, **semiotic**, **polysemy** all have the Greek root *sēm-* < *sēma* (σῆμα) "sign" < uncertain origin, perhaps akin to Sanskrit *dhyāman-* "thought," hence < PIE **dhie-* "thought." **Semantics** and **semiotic** first appear in the 19C, **polysemy** in the 20C.

metaphor (first attested in 16C) < OF *metaphore* < Latin *metaphora* < Greek μεταφορά (*metaphora*) "transference" < *metapherō* "transfer, carry across" < *meta-* "among, between, across" + *pher-* "carry" < PIE **bher-* "carry" > Latin *fero* "I carry" (as in "transfer") and Germanic *ber- > **bear, born, burden, birth, bairn, bring**.

In modern Greek *metaphora* can mean "transportation": there is a Ministry of "Metaphor," and trucks may be seen driving about Greece with ΜΕΤΑΦΟΡΑ written on them, metaphors themselves. In Latin the term *translatio* was used for *metaphora*. In older English usage, drawn from Latin usage, "translate" meant "transfer" or "convey to another place"; it also meant "transform" or "transmute" ("Bless thee, Bottom, thou art translated!"). So we may think of metaphor as a transference of meaning from one realm to another, or a transformation of one thing into another. Metaphor is metamorphosis, metaphorically speaking.

simile < Latin simile, neuter of *similis* "like" < PIE **sm̥m-alo-*, suffixed zero-grade of root **sem-* "one, as one, together with," whence also **similar**. Unsuffixed zero-grade **sm̥mos* "some, any" > Germanic **suma* > OE **sum** "one, a certain one" > **some**. Suffixed full-grade form **sem-el-* > Latin *simul* "at the same time" > **simultaneous.** Suffixed o-grade form **som-o-* > Germanic **sama-* "same" > ON *samr* > **same**; **som-o-* also > Greek *homos* "same" > **anomaly**, **homogeneous**, **homosexual**, etc. **Simile** is first attested in English in Langland's *Piers Plowman*.

metonymy (first attested in 16C) < Latin *metōnymia* < Greek μετωνυμία (*metōnymia*) "change of name" < *meta-* "after, between" + *ōnymia* < *onyma* "name" < PIE **nomn-* "name" > Latin *nomen* > **nominate, nominal, noun, renown**; and via Germanic > **name**. The Greek term is first recorded in *De Demosthene* by Dionysius of Helicarnassus but is not defined; Quintilian defines it very generally—" the substitution of one name for another"—but then gives some examples of metonym types. Today metonymy is usually distinguished from metaphor: metonymy substitutes a word for another in the same realm, by contiguity or frequent association ("throne" for "king," or "foot" for "infantry"), while metaphor draws a term from a different realm ("rose" for "beloved," or "lion" for "Achilles").

conceit, defined by the *OED* as "A fanciful, ingenious, or witty expression, metaphor, turn of thought, etc.," is first attested in that sense in the early 16C; < probably Anglo-Norman *conceit*, *conceipt*, etc, the past participle of *conceivre* "conceive" < Latin *concipere* "take in, absorb, become pregnant, imagine, devise," and several more senses < *con-* + *capere* "take, seize" (> **capture**) < PIE **kap-* "grasp" > Germanic > **have**, **heavy**, **haven**, **hawk**. **Conceit**

corresponds to Latin *conceptum*, whence **concept** and Italian *concetto*, which has a sense like the literary meaning of **conceit**.

kenning, the compound and usually metaphorical substitute for a simple noun found in early Germanic verse (e.g., “whale-road” for “sea,” or “wood’s bane” for “fire”), is first attested in English in the late 19C in discussions of Icelandic, Old English, etc. poetry; < mediæval Icelandic treatises on poetics, derived from the idiomatic use of *kenna við* or *til*, “to name after” (*OED*). ON/Icelandic *kenna* is akin to OE **cennan** (> **ken**); they both meant “cause to know, make known, name” before shifting to “know”; < Germanic **kannjanan* “make known,” the causative of **kunnanan* “know (how to)” > OE **cunnan** > **can**, **cunning**; < PIE **gne-*, the zero-grade of **gnē* (> **know**); the o-colored form **gno-* with various suffixes > Latin > **cognition**, **ignore**, **notice**, etc.; Greek > **gnostic**, **diagnosis**, etc., and *anagignosko* “read.”

myth < Latin *mȳthus* or *mȳthos* < Greek μῦθος (*mythos*) “utterance, speech, saying, tale, fable,” of unknown origin, perhaps a pre-Greek non-Indo-European word. Karen Armstrong asserts, “The word *mythos* comes from the Greek word which means to close the mouth or close the eyes. Mystery and mysticism come from the same root.” There is no basis for this claim.

allegory < Anglo-Norman and Middle French *allegorie* and the source of that word, Latin *allēgoria* < Greek ἀλληγορία “figurative or metaphorical language,” lit. “speaking otherwise (than one seems to speak),” apparently < ἀλληγορος (*allēgoros*) “allegorical” < ἀλλο- “other” < PIE **elio-* (> Latin *alius*; Greek *alla* “but, however”) + -ηγορος “speaking” < ἀγορά (*agora*) “forum, assembly, marketplace [where one speaks in public]” < *ageirō* “gather” < PIE **ger-* “gather.” First attested in English in the Wycliffe version of the Bible (c.1384) at Galatians 4.24.

apostrophe < Latin *apostrophe* < Greek *apostrophē* “a turning away” < *apo-* “away” + *strophē* “turning.” See **strophe**. The term is used in poetry analysis for addressing an absent or unhearing person or thing, as when Keats addresses an urn or nightingale or Wordsworth says “Milton! Thou shouldst be living at this hour.” Why “a turning away”? In classical rhetoric the speaker, of course, is addressing his audience; if he addresses something absent or abstract for a moment, he “turns away” (*apostrephei*) from his audience. Some poems, of course, are addressed entirely to something or someone besides the reader/audience, such as an urn or skylark, but we call it **apostrophe** in such cases nonetheless.

It is an unfortunate confusion that the same term is used for the punctuation mark that indicates an omission or elision of a letter or syllable. In that usage, in the opinion of the *OED*, **apostrophe** should be pronounced with three syllables (with a silent e), as it derives from French *apostrophe* < Latin *apostrophus* < Greek *apostrophos*, an adjective (feminine *apostrophe*, modifying *prosoidia* “accent”), with the sense “turned away, averted, passed over, elided.”

prosopopeia < Latin *prosōpopoeia* “speech delivered in the character of another person, impersonation” (first attested in Quintilian) < Greek προσωποποιία (*prosōpopoiia*) < *prosōpon* “face,” later “mask” (as in Aristotle, *Poetics* 1449a36), “person” + *poiia* “making” (see **poet**, **poem**, etc). *prosōpon* < **proti-ōp-on* “what is opposite to the eyes (of the other)” < PIE **proti-* “against” + *ek*^{w}- “see” (cf. Sanskrit *prátīka* “face, form, image”) (o-variant **ok*^{w} > Greek *ops* or *ōps* “face,” and root *op-* “see”; Latin *oculus*, German *Auge*, English **eye**). See **persona**.

onomatopoeia < Latin *onomatopoeia* < Greek ὀνοματοποιία (*onomatopoiia*) < *onoma* "name, word, noun" + *poiia* "making" (see **poem**, etc., above); *onoma* < PIE **ne-mn* > Latin *nōmen*, Sanskrit *nāma*, Germanic **namo* > OE **nama** > **name**. "Name-making," of course, does not capture the distinctive meaning of the compound term. Aristotle uses *pepoiēmenon* (πεποιημένον), the neuter perfect participle of "make," to refer to a new word: a "made thing" or "made-up thing" (*Poetics* 1457b2, 33). The two examples he gives, *ernugas* for "horns" and *arētēra* for "priest" (the latter used three times by Homer), are not onomatopoeic in the modern sense; they came about by metaphor or metonymy without regard to their sounds: *arētēra*, for example, means "one who prays, a pray-er" (hyphenated), from *arē*, "prayer."

The first instance of the word *onomatopoiia* itself that has come down to us is found in the *Geographia* of Strabo (14.2.28). While he is talking about barbarians, he pauses on the word *barbaron*. He thinks it "was first sounded out thus according to onomatopoeia (κατ' ὀνοματοποιίαν)" because barbarians had trouble speaking Greek, implying that they sounded like "bar-bar": they were babblers. He then names three Greek verbs for poor speaking and calls them onomatopoeic as well: *battarizein* ("stutter"), *traulizein* ("lisp"), and *psellizein* ("falter in speech"); and then gives five more nouns for sounds, such as *klangē* ("clang"). Strabo thus established the word "onomatopoeia" as about sound mimicry, the sense it has retained ever since.

Quintilian introduced it into Latin, as far as we know, in his *Institutes of Oratory*, the most influential treatise on rhetoric that has survived from the ancient world. He defines it in broader terms than the imitation of sounds, but it still has to do with a natural fitness of some sort between sound and meaning, and his examples are all imitations: two examples from Greek: *linxe bios*, "the bow twanged," and *siz' ophthalmos*, "the eye hissed," (1.5.72), both unique instances from Homer; and three from Latin (8.6.31): *mugitus* ("lowing, mooing"), *sibilus* ("hissing"), and *murmur* ("murmur").

Its first uses in English (16C) reflects Strabo's and Quintilian's sense of it. Peacham in 1577 offers "hurliburly" as an onomatopoeic word for "uproar" or "tumultuous stir."

hendiadys < Late or medieval Latin *hendiadys* < the Greek phrase ἓν διὰ δυοῖν (*hen dia duoin*) "one by means of two." *Hen* (ἓν) < PIE **sem* (cf. Latin *semel* "once," English **same**). *Dia* (διὰ) "through, in two" < PIE **dis* "apart." *Duoin* (or *dyoin*) (δυοῖν) has the ending, naturally, of the dual number, which Latin lacked. The primary form is *duo* < PIE **duwo*, whence Latin *duo*, Sanskrit *dva*, English **two**.

irony < MF *ironie*, *yronie*, as well as directly from its source, Latin *īrōnīa*, "the form of wit in which one says the opposite of what one means, pretended ignorance" < Greek εἰρωνεία (*eirōneia*) "dissimulation, pretended ignorance" < εἴρων "dissembler," of unknown origin, perhaps from εἴρω "say," i.e., one who only says something but does not mean it. First attested in English as a rhetorical term in early 15C.

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criticism < **critic** < Latin *criticus* < Greek *kritikos* (ἡ κριτική is the art of criticism) < verb *krino* "separate, decide, select, judge" < PIE **kre-* "separate, distinguish, sieve" > Latin *cerno* "select, distinguish" > **discern**. The root may primarily mean "sieve"; cf. Greek *krēsera* "fine sieve," Latin *cribrum* "sieve," Gothic *hrains* "sieved" > "pure" (cf. German *rein*); critics are sifters. **Criticism** as analysis or judgment of literature first attested in Dryden (1677).

interpretation < F *interprétation* or Latin *interpretātiōnem*, accusative of *interpretātiō*, *noun* from *interpretārī* "interpret, explain, expound, translate" < *interpres* "intermediary, agent" < *inter* "between" + **pres* (not found by itself) < perhaps < pre-Latin **enterpress* < **enterporess* < PIE **enter-poro-* or **enter-pr-o-* "going between." The earliest attestation of **interpretation** (1382) refers to reading the bible.

Terms in Greek Drama

See **stichomythia** (under **line**), **persona**, **strophe**, **chorus**, **lyric**, **ode**, and **monody** above.

drama < Latin *drāma* < Greek δρᾶμα "deed, action, play," especially "tragedy" < δρᾶω "I do, act, perform, make," of uncertain origin, perhaps from PIE **der-* "work" (cf. Lithuanian *darau* "do, make"). First attested in English in 16C in the form **drame** (via French).

theatre, **theater** < Latin *theātrum* < Greek θέᾱτρον "a place for viewing, especially a theatre" < θεάομαι "behold" (compare θέα (*thea*)"sight, view," and θεατής (*theatēs*) "spectator"; also akin to θεωρός (*theōros*) "spectator" and *theoria* "viewing, contemplation" > **theory**. No IE cognates, probably "pre-Greek."

tragedy < MF *tragedie* < Latin *tragoedia* < Greek τραγῳδία (*tragōidia*) < τραγῳδός (*tragōidos*) literally "goat-singer," later "member of tragic chorus" < τράγος (*tragos*) "he-goat, buck" + *aoidos* "singer, bard" (cf. ᾠδή *(ōidē)* "ode, song." (1) *tragos* seems to be the agent noun of the verb *tragein* "gnaw, eat sweets" < probably "pre-Greek," i.e., from a language spoken in Greece before Greek-speakers arrived. (2) See *aoidos* and **ode**.

So a tragedy is a goat-song, or something created by a goat-singer or by a chorus of them. Why the goat? Aristotle said that tragedy arose from the dithyramb, which was a song and dance in honor of Dionysus usually accompanied by satyrs, who sometimes looked goat-like, though more often horse-like, in their ears and tail. This theory has been doubted. There is older evidence that a goat was given as a prize in contests among *aoidoi*, who may have sung or, like Homer, chanted narrative tales; the contestants were "goat-bards," and out of their performances, perhaps, grew tragic drama.

comedy < MF *comedie* < Latin *cōmoedia* < Greek κωμῳδία (*kōmōidia*) < κωμῳδός (*kōmōidos*) "singer in the comic chorus" < κῶμος (*kōmos*) "revel, merrymaking, band of revelers" + *aoidos* "singer, bard." The origin of *kōmos* is uncertain: perhaps from PIE **komso-* "praise" (a *kōmos* was sometimes a procession in honor of Dionysus) (cf. Sanskrit *śáṃsa* "praise"), but perhaps (like *tragos*) "pre-Greek."

scene < MF *scene*, *sene* < Latin *scēna*, *scaena* "stage, platform" < Greek σκηνή (*skēnē*) "tent or booth, stage building as background for plays," later also "stage effect, acting, theatrical trick," of uncertain origin. One theory has it that before its use in theatre *skēnē* meant a construction of cloth hung between tree branches to provide shade, and hence is related to *skia* "shade, shadow" < PIE **skoy-* "shade" > Sanskrit *chāyā* "shade, shadow." This root may be connected with the PIE root of Greek *skotos* "darkness" and Germanic **skadwoz* > **shade**.

mimesis (μίμησις), the first word and basic category of Aristotle’s definition of tragedy (*Poetics* 1449b24-28, chap. 6), < *mimos* (μῖμος) “actor, mime” (> *mimikos* > **mimic**) < unknown origin, doubtless a loan word. *Mimesis* is usually translated as **imitation** < Latin *imitātiōnem*, accusative case of *imitātiō*, < *imitārī* “to imitate” < probably PIE **im*- whence also **image** and maybe **emulate**.

catharsis < modern Latin catharsis < Greek κάθαρσις (*katharsis*)“cleansing, purging” < καθαίρω “cleanse, purge” < καθαρός “clean, white, pure” of unknown origin, perhaps < pre-Greek language. This is Aristotle’s word for the process of purging, or perhaps purifying, the emotions of pity and terror through watching a tragedy.

orchestra < Latin *orchēstra* “area in front of the stage in the ancient Greek theatre where the chorus performed, area in front of the stage in the ancient Roman theatre where the senators sat” < ancient Greek ὀρχήστρα “the area where the chorus danced” < ὀρχεῖσθω (*orkheisthō*) “dance” + epenthetic -σ- + -τρα , suffix forming nouns (*OED*). Perhaps < PIE **ergh*- “mount,” but very uncertain. (“Epenthetic” means “inserted [for ease of pronunciation]”).

epode < OF *epode* < Latin *epōdos* < Greek ἐπῳδός “after-song, incantation” < same root as ἐπᾴδω < ἐπί upon, after + ᾄδω, ἀείδω (*āidō*, *aeidō*) “sing” (see *aoidos*, **tragedy**, **comedy**). The epode refers to a song sung after the strophe and antistrophe.

kommos < Greek κομμός (*kommós*), literally “striking,” especially “beating of the head and breast in mourning,” is a lyrical song of lamentation or dirge in a tragedy that the chorus and a dramatic character sing together; probably < the root of κόπτω (*koptō*) “strike,” perhaps < PIE **kop*- “strike, hew” (cf. Lithuanian *kapti* “hew, fell”).

character < Middle French *caractere*, *character* and Latin *charactēr* “branded or impressed letter or mark, characteristic, trait” < Greek χαρακτήρ “die, stamp, impress, distinctive mark, characteristic, feature” < χαράσσω (Attic χαράττω) “make sharp, cut into furrows, engrave” < χάραξ (*charax*) “pointed stake” + -τήρ , suffix forming agent nouns. *Charac*- root is of unknown origin, probably pre-Greek. Aristotle dos not use the word; for the qualities or characteristics of a person he uses ἦθος (*ēthos*) (> *ēthikos* > **ethics**). For the characters of a play (the *dramatis personae* in Latin), Greek used πρόσωπον (*prosōpon*, plural *prosōpa*) “face, countenance, mask.” The *OED* cites Dryden as the first to use **character** in this sense (1664).

parodos < Greek πάροδος “by-way, passage; one of the two entrances at either side of the *skēnē* in the theatre; then the entry itself of the chorus, and its first song” < *par*- “by, aside” + *hodos* “way, path” (> **odometer**, **method**, **exodus**, **synod**), of uncertain origin but perhaps akin to Sanskrit *a-sad* “tread on, go on.”

recognition < Anglo-Norman and Middle French *recognition* “acknowledgement of a debt, confession, declaration,” and its etymon classical Latin *recognitiōn-*, *recognitiō* “formal examination, inspection, review, action or an act of perceiving that some thing, person,” etc., also “action of acknowledging something as true, acknowledgement of superior ownership, payment in acknowledgement of lordship, revision of a text (15C) < *recognit-* , past participial stem of *recognōscō* “know again, recall, inspect” < *re-* + *cognoscō* “get to know, learn” < *co-* + *gnoscō* > *noscō* > *notus*, *ignotus*, *nobilis*, *ignobilis* (all leading to forms in English) < PIE **gne*-, **gno*- >

Germanic > **know**, **can**, **ken**. **Recognition** translates Aristotle's term ἀναγνώρισις (*anagnōrisis*), a "change from ignorance to knowledge" (*Poetics* 1452^{a}15 and elsewhere).

pathos < Greek πάθος "suffering, feeling, emotion, passion, emotional style or treatment" < παθ-, root of πάσχω < *πάθ-σκ-ω "suffer," of uncertain origin, possibly from PIE *$b^{h}end^{h}$- "bind." The term was introduced into English (but written in Greek!) by Spenser in a gloss in his *Shepherd's Calendar* (1579): "A very Poeticall παθός" (accent misplaced). Aristotle uses both πάθος and πάθημα (*pathēma*) as virtual synonyms; the latter is part of the famous definition of "tragedy" in the *Poetics*: "through pity and fear bringing about the purgation os such emotions/passions" (1449b27). Later **pathos** is discussed as one of the elements of plot; it might be translated here as "calamity": "such as death openly represented [not off-stage], excessive suffering, wounding, and the like" (1452b10). The root appears in many Greek words borrowed by English: **pathetic, pathology, sympathy, empathy, antipathy**.

turning point or **peripety** < Latin *peripetia* < Greek περιπέτεια "turning right about" < *peri*- "around, about" + **peteia* "flight" < *pet*- "fly" < PIE **pet*- "fly, fall" > Latin *petō* "reach out for, move toward" > **petulance**, **impetus**, **perpetuate**, **appetite**, etc. *Peripeteia* is Aristotle's term for the change in fortune, which, in the best plays, coincides with recognition.

catastrophe < Greek καταστροφή "overturning, downturning, sudden turn, conclusion" < καταστρέφω (*katastrephō*) "overturn," etc. < κατά down + στρέφω "turn" (see **strophe**). The *OED* quotes Samuel Johnson: "The change or revolution which produces the conclusion or final event of a dramatic piece." This is not Aristotle's term; the term of his that is closest in meaning is λύσις (*lysis*) (*Poetics* 1455^{b}24-32), "resolution" or "solution" of a problem. *Lysis* and its kindred verb *lyō* (or *luō*) show up in many English technical terms: **analysis**, **analyze**, **catalysis**, **catalyze**, etc. Root *ly*- < PIE **lu*- "cut off, release" > Latin *luō* "make amends, pay" whence *solvō* (< **se-luō*) > **solve**, **solution**, etc. **Denouement** is closer in meaning to **catastrophe** than *lysis* is, for *lysis* might occupy a great part of the play. The counterpart of *lysis* is δέσις (*desis*) "complication, tying"; the root *de*- < PIE **de*- "bind"; a synonym for it in the *Poetics* is πλοκή (*plokē*) (1456^{a}9) "plait, intertwining" < PIE **plek*- "twine, braid" > Latin *plectō* "plait, twine" (> **complex**, **perplex**, etc.) and *plicō* "fold, twine" (> **complicate**, **implicate**, **explicate**, etc.). (PIE **plek*- > Germanic > **flax**.)

denouement, or **dénouement** < French *dénouement*, *dénoûment* "unravelling" < *desnouement* < *dénouer*, *desnouer* < Old French *desnoer* "untie" < Latin *dis*- + *nodō* "knot," noun *nodus* "knot" < PIE **nodo*- "knot" (> Old Icelandic *nōt* "net"). First attested in English 1752 (Lord Chesterfield).

climax < post-classical Latin *climax* (used by rhetoricians; Quintilian uses it as a Greek word) < Greek κλῖμαξ "ladder"; in rhetoric a figure of speech in which the principal word of each clause is caught up and added to the next, probably < the base of κλίνω "lean" + -αξ , suffix forming nouns, probably influenced by Hellenistic Greek κλίμα "inclination, slope" < PIE **klei*- "lean" > Latin *clinō* "bend" (> **incline**, **decline**, **recline**); OE **hlinian** > **lean**. The original sense of **climax** is the slope or ladder as a whole, but since the 17C it has been used in what is now the normal sense, the apex or peak of the process. It has never been a term particularly about drama.

deus ex machina is modern Latin, first attested in English authors in late17C, translating Greek θεὸς ἐκ μηχανῆς (*theos ek mēchanēs*), "god out of the machine," the machine in this case

being a *geranos* or crane that could carry a platform with an actor on it, nearly always representing a god, and usually at the end of the play, which needed some contrivance to resolve its conflict. **Machine** < Middle French *machine* < classical Latin *māchina* < Doric Greek μαχανά (compare Attic Greek μηχανή), possibly related to μῆχος "means, expedient, remedy," perhaps < PIE **magh-* > Germanic > **may**, **might**, but Beekes argues μαχανά/μηχανή is from a pre-Greek source, not PIE.

Movements

Classicism, first attested 1827, seems to have been coined on the model of **Romanticism** as its contrasting term, as happened in several other European languages at the same time. It obviously derives from **classic** + **-ism**. **Classic** < Latin *classicus* < *classis* "class, division of the Roman people or army or of students, group, band" < uncertain origin but perhaps < root of *calo* "summon, call" < PIE **kel-*, the idea behind *classis* being a roll-call or muster of soldiers.

Romanticism. That this term has something to do with **Rome** is both obvious and surprising, since we think of the Romans as one of the least "Romantic" of peoples. *Roma* the city > *Romanus* "Roman" (adj and n) > *Romanicus* (adj) "Roman-ish" > Vulgar Latin **romanice* (adv) "in the Roman manner > Old French and Old Spanish *romanz* (n), meaning (1) the vernacular language spoken by those of Roman descent (i.e., French and Spanish) and (2) a work written in the vernacular, as opposed to Latin > OF *romaunt* > ME **romaunt**, **romaunce** > **romance**, a kind of novel or story. In French *romaunt* > *roman* "novel," borrowed by German, Russian, etc. In Spanish, *romanz* > *romance* "ballad, narrative poem in stanzas" > F *romance*, German *Romanze*, etc. From F *romaunt* or English **romaunt** > *romantique*, **romantic(k)** (perhaps also < modern Latin *romanticus*), first attested in English in 1650. It was posited as a contrast with "classic" first by Thomas Warton (1774). Friedrich Schlegel divided all literature into classic and romantic, and the latter term attached itself to him and his circle (from 1798). **Romanticism** is first attested in 1803, but as a movement not until 1821.

As for Roma, it is surely not derived from Greek ῥώμη (*rhṓmē*) "strength," as Plutarch reports, without endorsement (*Life of Romulus* 1). It is more likely that the city is named for the river it is built beside, later called Tiber, but perhaps first called Rumon or Rumen by the Etruscans; this idea is found in Servius (on *Aeneid* 8.63), but there is no other attestation of such a name. Some have thought the river was called Ruma or Rumon in proto-Latin or another Italic dialect; such a name would mean "river"; cf. Latin *ruo* "rush"; Greek *rheō* "flow.

A charming but fanciful possibility connects Roma to *rumis* "teat, nipple," *ruma* "udder," and Rumina, the Roman goddess whose temple stood near the figtree under which the she-wolf suckled Romulus and Remus (Romulus, if not also Remus, is clearly named after the city and not the other way round). Vaan finds no etymology for *rumis*, etc.; the Wikipedia entry, without a citation, traces it to Etruscan *ruma* "teat."

Modernism. **Modern**, first attest 15C < MF *moderne* and Modern Latin *modernus* < Latin *modo* "only, merely, just now" < ablative of *modus* "measure, limit, manner, mode (> *modestus*, *moderatus* and *modicum*, neuter *modicum*, all meaning "moderate, restrained" > **modest**, **moderate**, **modicum**) < PIE **medo-* "measure, judgment" (cf. Greek *mēdea* "counsels"). **Modernism** first appeared in English as count-noun (18C): Swift referred to "quaint

modernisms." As a term for a movement in the arts and literature, first attested 1878, F *modernisme* 1879, Italian *modernismo* 1883.

Imagism seems to have been coined by Ezra Pound in 1912, though he spelled it as if it were French, *imagisme*. See **image**.

Realism is obviously < **real** + **-ism.** OED notes: originally after German *Realismus* (1781 in Kant; 1798 with reference to literature); compare French *réalisme* (1801 with reference to Kantian philosophy, 1829 with reference to scholastic philosophy, 1875 with reference to Platonic philosophy; 1826 with reference to literature, 1843 with reference to art; 1855 in sense 'pragmatism'). The sequence of references in English is similar. **Real** < Anglo-Norman *real* and MF *reel*, *real*) (adj.), first in legal use: "that concerns things and not people" (1283), then "actual, concrete, material, that actually exists," also < its source in post-classical Latin *realis*, with similar senses to the French, < classical Latin *rēs* "property, goods, thing, affair" + *-ālis* suffix; *rēs* < PIE **re-i-*, whence Sanskrit *rayi-* "property, goods."

Surrealism < French *surréalisme* < *sur-* "super-" + *réalisme* "realism." The term was coined in1917 by Guillaume Apollinaire.

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Muses. For etymology see under **music** above.

There were different traditions about the number of the Muses and their names, but two of the oldest and most influential Greek texts agree at least on their number: nine. Homer says that nine (unnamed) Muses sang at Achilles' funeral (*Odyssey* 24.60). The sentence, "And Muses, nine in all, sang his dirge," does not state that there are a total of nine Muses, only that nine came to sing. Hesiod in the *Theogony* (77-79) is the first to name *the* nine Muses; in the order he gives they are:

Κλειώ [Kleiō], Latin Clio
Ἐυτέρπη [Euterpē], Latin Euterpe
Θάλεια [Thaleia], Latin Thalia
Μελπομένη [Melpomenē], Latin Melpomene
Τερψιχόρη [Terpsikhorē], Latin Terpsichore
Ἐρατώ [Eratō], Latin Erato
Πολύμνια [Polymnia], Latin Polymnia or Polyhymnia
Οὐρανίη [Ouraniē], Latin Urania
Καλλιόπη [Kalliopē], Latin Calliope

Kleiō comes from the same root as *kleos*, "fame" or "glory," a key word in Homer and the epic tradition. Her name would mean something like "glorifying" or "celebrating." The ending –ō, also found in Eratō, is common in female names, such as Sapphō. Hesiod has already said that the Muses "glorify" (*kleiousin*) the gods (44) and the customs and usages of the immortals (67); and they breathed a divine voice into Hesiod himself "so that I might glorify (*kleioimi*) what will be and what was before" (32).

Euterpē means “well-delighting”; Hesiod twice says the Muses “delight” (*terpousi*) their father Zeus (37, 51). She shares the root of her name with Terpsikhorē.

Thaleia means “blooming” or “abundant”; Hesiod uses the phrase *en thaliēis* (65), “in festivities” (where the Muses and Graces dance), since a feast or festival implies abundance. Homer says Herakles “enjoys (*terpetai*) the festivities (*en thaliēis*) of the gods (*Odyssey* 11.603). The word *thallos* means “young shoot or branch.” Thalia is also one of the Graces (e.g., in Pindar, *Olympian* 14:15).

Melpomenē might be best translated as “singing,” but with the implication of dancing as well. The Muses are said to “sing (*melpontai*) with lovely voice” (66). The noun *molpē* (69) means a song accompanied by dancing.

Terpsikhorē means “delighting in dance.” *Khoros* (whence, via Latin, English “chorus”) meant a choral dance (with singing); Hesiod says the dances (*khoroi*) are held on Olympus (63).

Eratō means “lovely,” from the same root as *Erōs* and English “erotic.” The Muses’ voice is “lovely” (*eratēn*) (65), and under their feet a “lovely (*eratos*) din” rises up (70).

Polymnia means something like “much-hymning” or “she of many hymns,” being a contraction of *poly-ymnia* (or *poly-hymnia*). Hesiod has them “hymning” (*hymneusais*) (70).

Ouraniē means “heavenly,” from *ouranos*, “sky, heaven”; the Muses sing to Zeus who is “king in the sky” (*ouranōi*) (71). There was a tradition that the Muses were the daughters of Ouranos rather than Zeus.

Kalliopē means “beautiful voiced”; the Muses “exult in their beautiful voice” (*opi kalēi*) (68). Greek *ops*, “voice,” is cognate with Latin *vox*, whence, via French, English “voice,” and, more directly from Latin, “vocal, vocation,” etc. They go back to the o-grade of PIE *_wek_^{w}- (“voice”), whence *_wek_^{w}_os_ “word, speech” > Greek *wepos*, *epos* > *epikos* > “epic.”

Kalliopē, Hesiod says, is the greatest of the Muses, for she attends upon venerable kings (79-80). No other Muse is differentiated by function or specialty in Hesiod.

All the names, then, as scholars have noted for almost two centuries, are based on words Hesiod has already used to describe them, sometimes twice, before he names them. That suggests that he is inventing them on the spot, though it is possible that, inheriting the names from another source, he is cleverly preparing the way for them. There is no earlier extant source for these names, which eventually displaced other traditions and became canonical.

Epics and many shorter genres begin with an invocation of a Muse or all the Muses. Homer, as we said, never names any of them; he begins the *Iliad* by invoking a goddess (*thea*), the *Odyssey* by invoking a generic “Muse.” Hesiod begins his *Theogony*, “Let us begin to sing from the Heliconian Muses, who possess the great and holy mountain of Helicon” (1-2), and only seventy-seven lines later does he name them. Hesiod lived near Helicon, in Boeotia, and his poem established that mountain as their favored place, though they also dance on Mount Olympus and elsewhere. He opens his poem *Works and Days* by asking the “Muses from Pieria” to come to him, and in the *Theogony* he says they were born in Pieria (57). Pieria is a district of Macedonia on the north slope of Olympus; tradition tells that a colony of Pierians migrated to Helicon and brought the cult of the Muses with them. Hence the Muses are often called Pierians or Pierides as adjective or noun (Solon 1.2; Pindar, *Olympian* 10.96, *Pythian* 1.14, etc.).

By the Hellenistic era they are also called Pimpleians or Pipleians, or Pimpleids (Πιμπληίδες), after a mountain and spring in Pieria (Apollonius, *Argonautica* 1.25; Callimachus *Hymn* 4.7; Catullus 105.1; Horace *Odes* 1.26.9). Occasionally they are called Pegasides, after the flying horse of poetry, Pegasus (Propertius 3.1.19). See **Pegasus**.

In Latin poetry the Muses were identified with the Camenae (e.g., Horace *Odes* 2.16.38). Variant names of the Camenae are Casmenae and Carmenae; the latter looks a lot like *carmen* "song," as does the name of their leader Carmenta, but the connection is uncertain.

Graces < **grace** < Anglo-Norman *grase*, *graze*, Anglo-Norman and OF *grace* < Latin *gratia* "favor, goodwill, gratitude, thanks, pleasing quality, agreeableness, attractiveness," etc. < *grat-* (as in *gratus* "pleasing, grateful") (> **grateful**, **gratitude**, **ingrate**) + *-ia* ending < PIE **gwr-to-* "praised (in song)" < **gwern-*; the root in various forms yielded Sanskrit *grnati* "to praise" and *gir* "song," Lithuanian *girtas* "praised," and Old Church Slavonic *grano* "verse." (See also **bard**, above.) Latin *Gratiae*, personifications of *gratia*, translated Greek Χάριτες (*Kharites*), plural of Χάρις, one of the three Graces, Aglaia, Thalia, and Euphrosyne, the attendants of Aphrodite; *kharis* (or *charis*) > **eucharist**, **charisma**, and Modern Greek ευχαριστώ (*efcharisto*) "thank you" (compare Italian *grazie*, Spanish *gracias*) < PIE *g^h*er-* "desire, enjoy" > Sanskrit *haryati* "find pleasure, enjoy"; Latin *horīrī* "exhort"; OHG *gern* "eager" > German *gern* "gladly"; English **yearn**.

The *Kharites* or *Charites* are mentioned a number of times in Homer. As possibly a proper name, Charis appears in the *Iliad* as the wife of Hephaestus (18.382) as he works on the shield of Achilles; Hesiod tells us her name is Aglaia (*Theogony* 945). Another Grace in homer is named Pasithea (*Iliad* 14.269), which is the name of Nereid in *Theogony* 246. Hesiod names the three Graces in *Theogony* 907-09, where h the daughters of Zeus and Eurynome, daughter of Ocean. Pindar invokes them at length, as one would the Muses, in the fragmentary *Pythian* 14. Theocritus in "Idyll 16" (entitled Χάριτες) charmingly equates them not only with "thanks" and "favors" (which he hopes a patron might give him) but with his poems themselves; they return home in a sulky mood when they are rejected, and curl up in a chest. Horace mentions them several times in his Odes, e.g., "The poet struck by the thunderbolt, / lover of the uneven-numbered Muses, will demand / ladles [of wine] three times three. More than three / the Grace with her naked sisters forbids" (3.19.13-16, trans. David West).

Aglaia is the feminine form of an adjective meaning "splendid, beautiful, famous," of unknown etymology.

Thalia (or Thaleia) is the same name as one of the Muses.

Euphrosyne means something like "good cheer" or "mirth" < *eu* "well, good"+ *phro* "mind, spirit," earlier "midriff" (< probably Indo-European) + *syne* abstract ending.

inspiration (in classical poetry from the Muses or a Muse) < OF *inspiration*, *inspiracion* < Latin *inspīrātiō* < *inspīrāre* "beathe into, inspire" < *in* + *spīrāre* "breathe" < ? onomatopoeic formation (no certain cognates). The noun *spiritus* means "breath" and by extension "spirit." When you are **inspired** you breathe in the spirit or breath of the Muses, gods, God, natural beauty, heroic exemplar, or whatever. (Compare **aspire**, **conspire**, **expire**, **respire**, **suspire**.) *Inspīrāre* and its derivatives were seldom used in Latin to mean what they have come to mean in English except in translations of the Bible. Chaucer hearkens to its etymological sense in the opening lines of the *Canterbury Tales*—"When Zephirus eek with his sweete breeth / Inspired hath in every holt and heeth / the tender croppes" (5-7)—hinting perhaps that he is also inspired like the crops. Pope also evokes the etymology and moves the meaning closer to poetic inspiration in the invocation in *Ode to Musick*: "Descend ye Nine! . . . The breathing Instruments inspire."

In Greek *empneō* "breathe in" could also mean "inspire," as it does in Hesiod's *Theogony* 31: "[the nine Muses] breathed a divine voice in me." Greek *pneuma* "breath, breeze, spirit" (>

pneumatic, **pneumonia**) < *pneō* “breathe” < probably PIE **pneu-* “breath, cough, sneeze” (cf. OE **fnēosan** “sneeze” > ME **fneese** > **neese** > **sneeze**; the PIE root may also be onomatopoeic.

Pegasus < Latin *Pēgasus* (ancient Greek Πήγασος), the name of the winged horse of Bellerophon, later associated with the Muses (who were sometimes called Pegasides in Latin poetry). Hesiod derives the name from πηγάς (*pēgas*), accusative case of *pēgai* “waters” (*Theogony* 282); in the singular it usually means “spring,” and Pegasus is said in later tales to have opened the spring on Mount Helicon called Hippocrene (“Horse Spring”), sacred to the Muses (Pausanius 9.31.3). Hesiod’s etymology is not accepted today. Beekes endorses the idea that Pegasus comes from *piḫaššašši-*, an epithet of the Hittite and Luvian storm god (Hesiod says Pegasus brings thunder and lightning to Zeus, 286); its root probably means “strong.” Other linguists disagree.

Elysium, the place where poets go after their death, has an uncertain etymology. *Ēlysion* (’Ηλύσιον) first appears in Homer’s *Odyssey*, where it modifies *pedion* (πεδίον), which meant “field” or “plain.” Proteus, the old man of the sea whom Menelaus has forced to reveal his fate, tells him:

> But for you, Menelaos, O fostered of Zeus, it is not the gods’ will
> that you shall die and go to your end in horse-pasturing Argos,
> but the immortals will convey you to the Elysian
> Field, and the limits of the earth, where fair-haired Rhadamanthys
> is, and where there is made the easiest life for mortals,
> for there is no snow, nor much winter there, nor is there ever
> rain, but always the stream of the Ocean sends up breezes
> of the West Wind blowing briskly for the refreshment of mortals.
> This, because Helen is yours and you are son-in-law therefore to Zeus.
> (4.561-70 Lattimore)

Menelaus will go to the Elysian Field not because he is a poet, which he is not, nor even because he is a hero, which he is, but because he is married to Helen, the daughter of Zeus. Where is it? Later poets place it in Hades or Dis, the underworld, but Homer seems to locate it on the surface of the earth, at its limits, near the western Ocean, perhaps somewhere near Gibraltar. It was soon identified with the “Isles of the Blessed,” where Hesiod says the demi-gods of a previous generation went (*Works and Days* 159-70); indeed a prophet in Euripides’ *Helen* tells Menelaus that he and Helen are both destined for these Isles (1676-77).

The word *Elysion* looks as if it ought to be derived from a Greek root, and indeed the most widely accepted etymology today is that proposed by Walter Burkert, who argues that it comes from *enēlysion*, “struck by lightning,” hence “sacred.” This has not convinced all scholars, and some have proposed etymologies from Egyptian—Menelaus was in Egypt, after all, when Proteus told him his destiny—or from Hittite, or from “pre-Greek.” The ancients themselves seem not to have puzzled themselves about it, but took it as a perhaps exotic place name for a special place.

It is in Virgil’s *Aeneid* that we find an Elysium divided into neighborhoods, with one of them set aside for poets. When Aeneas arrives there in Book 6 the fields are called the Fortunate Groves (6.639), and very pleasant they are: “a freer air, a dazzling radiance clothes the fields / and the spirits possess their own sun, their own stars” (640-41). Some spirits play at sports, others dance and sing under the baton of Orpheus himself. In a laurel grove dedicated to Apollo another chorus sings, and here are found “the faithful poets whose songs were fit for Phoebus” (*pii vates et Phoebo digna locuti*, 662), among other benefactors of mankind, in the center of whom stands

the poet Musaeus. *Vates* could refer to prophets, and *locuti* could be words rather than songs, but some poets were prophets and vice versa. Virgil, in any case, names no poets except the legendary Orpheus and Musaeus.

To judge from what survives of Roman poetry, it was the death of the love-elegist Tibullus that led to the convention that all good poets go to Elysium. In his great elegy on Tibullus (*Amores* 3.9), Ovid places him in Elysium along with three other poets. He was seconded by Domitius Marsus in a famous pair of elegiac distichs about Tibullus. During the Middle Ages Elysium is seldom mentioned, probably because it seems to be located in no realm of the afterlife, hell, purgatory, or heaven. Dante's grove of poets in Limbo (*Inferno* 4) is something like Elysium, but he does not call it that. In the Renaissance poets felt freer to claim it as their own, and it became routine in elegies and odes to place dead poets there.

Poets as Birds

Beginning with the Greeks, and perhaps earlier in non-Indo-European languages, poets have been likened to birds, especially songbirds. In the European tradition four birds have predominated.

nightingale < **nightgale** < **night** < Germanic **naht* < PIE *nek*^{w}*t* "night"; + **gale** < OE **galan** "sing" < Germanic **gal*-, **gel*- < PIE **ghel*- "call" (**gel*- > **yell**, **yelp**). Cf. German *Nachtigall*. Greek *aēdōn*, of uncertain origin, perhaps pre-Greek (see **aoidos**); Latin *luscinia* < perhaps **lusci-cania* "singing in the night" or "blind singer" (*luscus* means "blind in one eye" perhaps < **luk-sko*- < PIE **leuk*- "light"); F *rossignol* < Prov *rossinhol* < Latin **lusciniolus*. Hesiod was the first to liken a poet to a nightingale (*Works and Days* 202-12); see also Theognis 939. Theocritus calls Homer the "Chian nightingale" (7.47). Shelley says "A Poet is a nightingale, who sits in darkness and sings to cheer its own solitude with sweet sounds" (*Defence of Poetry*); he also calls the nightingale "the poet-bird" ("Rosalind and Helen" 58).

swan < OE **swan**, with cognates in most Germanic languages. OE **geswin** "melody, song," points toward its further etymology, on the assumption that the "singing swan" is the species in question: < PIE **swen*- "sound" > Latin *sonus* "sound" (> **sonorous**, **sonnet**). We don't usually think of the swan as a songbird, but the ancients did; hence the idea of the "swan song." The swan (Greek *kyknos*) was the bird of Apollo, god of poets. Horace imagines himself transformed into a swan (Odes 2.20); in calling Pindar the "swan of Dirce" (a river of Thebes) Horace also launches the tradition that names a poet the swan of his or her town's river: Shakespeare is the Swan of Avon, etc. Garnier addressed Ronsard as the "Swan of the French." In modern poetry Shelley, Yeats, Baudelaire, and Mallarmé, to name a few, made swans into poets and vice versa.

lark, a shortened form of **laverock** < OE **lǽwerce**, with Germanic cognates (e.g., German *Lerche*) but uncertain etymology. The skylark, the main literary species, is not mentioned in Greek literature; in Latin it is *alauda*, perhaps borrowed from Gaulish (> F *alouette*, Italian *allodetta*), but seldom found in literature. Its connection with poets is fairly recent; cf. Wordsworth's, Shelley's, and Clare's poems addressed to it, and Eichendorff's "Die Lerche."

eagle < Anglo-Norman and Middle F *aigle* < Latin *aquila* "eagle," probably < *aquilus* "dark, swarthy," perhaps < *aqua* "water" < PIE **ak*^{w}*a*, but since this word appears only in Italic

and Germanic languages (e.g., OHG *aha*) it might be a regional borrowing from a non-Indo-European language. The connection of *aquila* with *aquilo* "north wind" is unclear: perhaps the eagle was a metaphor for the dangerous and rapid wind. Greek for "eagle" is *aietos* < **aiwetos* < PIE **awi-* "bird" (cf. Latin *avis*); German *Adler* < Middle High German *adelar* "noble bird." It may seem surprising that poets have been compared to eagles, since they are not songbirds, but it was their lordliness and capacity for high, soaring flight that seem to have attracted poets to them. Pindar, an aristocrat, likens himself to an eagle (*Nemean* 3.80-82, 5.21); so does his rival Bacchylides (5.24-30). Dante calls Homer "that lord of highest song / Who above the others flies like an eagle" (*Inferno* 4.95-96). The image is rare thereafter until Gray calls Pindar "the Theban eagle" ("Progress of Poesy" 115); it soon becomes very common in the poetry of Sensibility and Romanticism, and then fades out.

Metaphors for Poems

(1) **flower**: see under **poem**, the first entry on this list. Sappho scolds a woman for neglecting "the roses of Pieria." Pindar: "swell to fruit the delicious flower of my songs" (*Olympian* 6.105); "blossoms of songs" (*Olympian* 9.48); "I cultivate the choice garden of the Graces" (27). Tullius Laureas has Sappho say she took a flower from each Muse "to lay beside my nine" (i.e., her nine books of poems) (*Greek Anthology* 7.17). (Hölderlin calls language itself "the flower of the mouth" ("Germania" st. 5). Keats says he is "wreathing / a flowery band to bind us to the earth" ("Endymion" 1.6-7). In his "Valedictory Sonnet" (1838) Wordsworth rehearses the metaphor with a minor variation: the sonnets in this group are "cultured Flowerets" that were culled from here and there, one at a time or in "scattered knots," and then arranged "in several beds of one parterre." Sometimes poets themselves are called flowers, as when Simonides names Sophocles as *anthos aoidōn*, "flower of poets" (*Palatine Anthology* 7.20), but "flower" in that sense had been generalized, e.g., the flower of chivalry.

(2) **leaf**: see under **leaf** above.

(3) **sheep**. In the tradition of pastoral poetry, shepherds are poets; if poets are also shepherds, then to tend flocks is implicitly to tend poems. Artemidorus makes this metaphor explicit in an epigram for his collection of Theocritus' pastoral poems: "The Bucolic Muses were scattered once, but are now all together / in one fold, in one flock" (*Palatine Anthology* 9.205). In his elegy on the death of his fellow student "Lycidas," Milton says they "Fed the same flock" (were fellow poets), and then laments, "What boots it with incessant care / To tend the homely slighted Shepherd's trade, / And strictly meditate the thankless Muse?" (24, 64-66). Shelley, in his elegy on Keats ("Adonais"), likens his "Dreams" to his flocks, which he fed and taught (stanza 9).

(4) **arrow**. Pindar: "My word-ready tongue has many arrows" (*Nemean* 5); "As I shoot straight at the Muses' mark" (*Nemean* 9); of Apollo's lyre, "Your shafts enchant the souls even of the gods" (*Pythean* 1); "now from the long-range Muses' bow / Sweep with arrows like these / Zeus of the scarlet thunderbolt / And Elis' holy peak" etc. (*Olympian* 9). Wordsworth has "darts of song" [of a bird] in "The River Duddon," sonnet 7. In "Adonais," Shelley imagines Byron as an Apollo sending a powerful arrow, his satirical poem *English Bards and Scotch Reviewers*, at the ravens and vultures who desolated Keats (249-50).

The similarity between a lyre and a bow was noted long ago. When Odysseus strings his famous bow and plucks its string he is likened to a bard slipping a new string over a peg (*Odyssey* 21.406-08). We are reminded there that Apollo is the god of archery as well as poetry and song. Thomas Moore writes, "The string, that now languishes loose o'er the lyre, / Might have bent a proud bow to the warrior's dart" ("Blame not the Bard" 5-6).

(5) **building**. Pindar: “Let us set up columns to support / the strong-walled porch of our abode / and construct, as it were, a splendid / palace” (*Olympian* 6.1-4); a “treasure house of hymns / has been built in Apollo’s valley rich in gold” (*Pythian* 6.6-14), a source of Horace’s Ode 3.30: “I have built a monument more lasting than bronze.” Milton says Lycidas knew how to “build the lofty rhyme” (11). Coleridge writes of a poet “who hath been building up the rhyme” (“The Nightingale” 24). A widespread Indo-European metaphor makes a poet a carpenter: see under **text** above.

(6) **monument/memorial/stele**, a variant of the building metaphor. Usually the claim is that a poem on paper (in many copies) will outlast something chiseled into marble, but Robinson Jeffers compares poets to stone-cutters, both destined to defeat by oblivion: knowing this, “the poet builds his monument mockingly” (“To the Stone-Cutters”).

(7) **honey**. Pindar: “honey-voiced hymns” (*Isthmian* 6); “sweet honey of song” (*Isthmian* 5); “honey of our songs” (*Pythian* 3); “I drench with my honey / their city of noble men” (*Olympian*10).

(8) **river or wellspring**. Pindar: “the honey-hearted well of the Muses’ streams” (*Nemean* 7); “echoing streams of song” (*Isthmian* 7). Wordsworth likens his long poem *The Prelude* to a river at several points, and claims it was ultimately born from the fact that he grew up beside the River Derwent. Hölderlin makes the same comparison in several poems.

(9) **ship**. In the *Rigveda*, gods are invited to “come in the ship of our songs to the opposite shore” (1.46.7). Pindar: “Ease oar, plant anchor quick to ground from prow to avoid rocks” (*Pythian* 10.51f); “Has some wind thrown me off course like a boat at sea?” (*Pythian* 11.39f). Bacchylides: “Urania has sent me from Pieria a golden cargo-boat laden with glorious songs” (16.1-4). An Old Norse kenning for poetry was *skip dverga*, “dwarves’ ship.” Virgil invites his patron Maecenas to “Set sail with me on this my enterprise” (*Georgics* 2.41). The final ode of Horace begins, “For wishing to set my little sail on the great Tyrrhenian Sea (4.15.1-4). Dante’s *Purgatorio* begins, “To course across my kindly waters now / my talent’s little vessel lifts her sails.” Spenser calls his immense *Faerie Queene* “my feeble barke” (1.12.42). The trope is frequent among the English Romantics. Pushkin, nearing the end of *Eugene Onegin*, turns to his reader for the last time: “Let us congratulate / each other on attaining land” (8.48. trans. Nabokov).

(10) **chariot**. *Rigveda*: “For him I deliver the praise-song / as a joiner does a chariot” (1.61.4). Pindar speaks of the four-horse chariot of the Pierians (*Pythian* 10.65); the Muses’ chariot (*Isthmian* 2; and prays, “May I ... be fit to ride in the Muses’ chariot” (*Olympian* 9.80-81).

(11) **pearl**. Some Romantics, noting that poetry arises from suffering or disease, liken it to a pearl produced by an infected oyster. “Or is poetry perhaps a disease of men,” Heine asks, “as the pearl is actually only the matter of a disease that the poor oyster suffers?” (*The Romantic School* 2.4). In a letter of 1835 Musset cites Heine and agrees, “Yes, pearls are tears turned joyous, true symbols of poetry.” Vigny chimes in: “Poetry! O treasure! Pearl of thought!” (“The House of the Shepherd” 134).

More to come.

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