

persuasive and significant American address of this century. And only one person could have written "Letter from Birmingham Jail." Mistakenly thinking that King's language is "secondary" to his actions, Reiman fails to realize that King's discourse is *at least* as important as anything else in the civil rights movement or, for that matter, in twentieth-century American life.

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The discussion regarding whether or not the "borrowing" and "voice merging" practiced by Martin Luther King, Jr., should be called plagiarism has spread beyond the academy with recent disclosures of his extensive use of the words and ideas of other scholars in his doctoral dissertation at Boston University and in other academic writing. (I believe that the *Wall Street Journal* was first to print the story, on 9 November 1990, followed quickly and predictably by most national and local news services.)

This expansion of audience from relatively private forum to public forum bothers me because I don't believe the public will understand the points made by Keith D. Miller in his article "Composing Martin Luther King, Jr." (105 [1990]: 70–82) and in his reply to my response (105 [1990]: 1126–27). I doubt the public will agree that it "is completely inappropriate" to compare King to a college student (1126). I comprehend the difference between a sermon and a dissertation, and so, I suspect, do they.

I find regrettable King's habit of borrowing without accreditation, which apparently started early in his academic career. Even though his life and actions made it perfectly clear that he did not need to copy the writings of others to "articulat[e his] feelings and opinions" (Reiman), he did, nevertheless, copy others. As a scholar, he was flawed, and I would be happier if Miller had said as much instead of crediting him for his creative borrowing.

(Interestingly, last June the *Journal of American History* refused a paper on King's use of citations by Clayborne Carson, a Stanford University historian and the senior editor of the Martin Luther King, Jr., Papers Project, reportedly because of "Mr. Carson's unwillingness to take a firm stand on the question of plagiarism." And the advisory board for the King project has directed Carson to "publish the academic papers with complete footnotes" despite "the visual impact of page after page of footnotes occupying as much or more space as Mr. King's own writing" [Peter Waldman, "To Their Dismay, King Scholars Find a Troubling Pattern,"

*Wall Street Journal* 9 Nov. 1990, southwestern ed.: A4].)

I replied to Miller as an English instructor at a large, urban, open-door community college where the students do not always understand the concept, purpose, and practice of academic standards. How can I teach King's essays and dismiss these standards as inapplicable to him?

Donald H. Reiman may provide the answer to my dilemma. I cannot agree with his analogy comparing King as a professional to surgeons and pharmacists. (I may not want my prescriptions filled by innovative pharmacists, but I'd be happy to support their research. And we do credit medical pioneers by name—the Heimlich maneuver, the Salk and Sabine vaccines, Hodgkin's disease, the Rorschach test.) However, I agree with Reiman that we should honor King primarily for his actions rather than for his words.

And if we read King's words only because of his actions, then it would seem that King as an object of study belongs to the history department rather than to the English faculty. The essays and the writings become secondary to the life and thus necessarily secondary to my teaching. Let King's legacy be, not his scholarship, but his life as a courageous civil rights leader and winner of the Nobel Peace Prize. Let's listen to his speeches rather than analyze his essays in freshman composition, and thus let's enshrine the action, not the man or the words.

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### Philology and Anglo-Saxon Poetry

To the Editor:

In a letter commenting on Andrew Galloway's judicious mix of linguistic and literary analysis, "*Beowulf* and the Varieties of Choice" (105 [1990]: 197–208), Zacharias P. Thundy creates his own philological problems by stating that the Latin *gustare* 'taste' is cognate with the English *taste* (not true!) and, without adducing any support, that the English *choice* is cognate with seven specific words from Greek, Latin, and Sanskrit (Forum, 105 [1990]: 1127)—a creative, rather than strict, etymological procedure that throws no light on Galloway's comparison of the Latin *gustare mortem* and "choose the deathbed."

I showed the comment to my colleague Walter Maurer, professor of Sanskrit, who suggested I write you a letter. It is Thundy's attack on "most dictionaries, like those Galloway consulted," for the sin of applying

Grimm's law blindly that requires response. The compilers and editors of these works deserve the gratitude of strict etymologists.

Like Thundy, by the way, I must point out an error that escaped scrutiny. The reference on page 205 to the passage in *Beowulf* containing "Godes leoht geceas" should be to lines 2462b–71 rather than to lines 246b–71. [See editorial correction on p. 338.]

Thundy has produced, willy-nilly, a fascinating parody of Voltaire's alleged description of the etymology of his day as "a science in which the consonants are of very little importance, and the vowels of none at all."

Will readers be offended to be told that for strict etymologists nowadays, two words in different languages are cognates if they are descended from the same root or source in some earlier tongue? Descent from a common ancestor is determined by an examination of sound, meaning, conformity to "rules" of regular sound correspondence (e.g., Grimm's law), and other relevant data (e.g., the force of analogy). Blind application does not serve etymologists well (whether they are strict or creative) nor does unbridled imagination.

In the paragraph in question, Thundy may have confused synonyms and cognates. For semantic range, Carl Darling Buck's *Dictionary of Selected Synonyms in the Principal Indo-European Languages: A Contribution to the History of Ideas* (U of Chicago P, 1949) may be consulted. Buck's work is a splendid achievement, creative without sacrificing strictness. On page 1030 we see that the relevant Indo-European root is used in words for "taste" in Greek and Latin, mostly for "try" or "choose" in Germanic and Celtic, for "enjoy" in Indo-Iranian. In addition, he suggests that the semantic development might be in either direction—from "taste" to "try, choose" and "enjoy" or the converse.

Thundy calls the English *taste* a cognate of the Latin *gustare*. They are synonyms. *Taste* does not display regular sound correspondence with *gustare*. It has been suggested, however, that the Latin *tastare* or *taxitare*, related to *taste*, may be a blend of the root *tag* 'touch' and *gustare*. If so, for the strict etymologist *taste* would be the result of a special process—a half-blood member of the *gustare* family, as it were, rather than a full member.

Next comes a listing of various "cognates" of *choice* and *cēosan*. Scholars have not yet established accepted cognates of the Latin *causa* (which Thundy lists first), but even if *caus(s)a* should have the same source as English *hew*, a hypothesis unmentioned by Thundy, this would not relate the Latin word, in any strict sense, to *choice* and its Germanic and Romance cognates or to the others Thundy gives: Greek *krinein*, Latin *creare*,

and Sanskrit *kr*, *karana* 'cause,' *karma* (or *kārman*) 'deed,' and *kartavya* 'duty, obligation.'

The Greek *geuesthai* 'to taste' does belong in the cognate family with *choice*. The Greek *krinein* and Latin *cernere* fit as synonyms of the words *cēosan* and *to choose* but not as cognates of them.

If one follows *The American Heritage Dictionary of Indo-European Roots* (rev. and ed. Calvert Watkins, Boston: Houghton, 1985), the recognized root for *krinein* is *krei-* 'to sieve, discriminate, distinguish'; for *creare*, *ker-*<sup>3</sup> 'to grow'; and for all the Sanskrit items, *k<sup>w</sup>er-*<sup>1</sup> 'to make.' Watkins gives *kau-*<sup>2</sup> as root for "to hew, strike," *geus-* for "to taste, choose," and *tag-* for "to touch, handle." No fewer than six different Indo-European roots or word families are involved. But, in strict etymology, a pair of cognates will be descended, normally and ultimately, from one and the same root. In addition to phonological considerations, the process of determining cognates also takes into account exceptional circumstances. One of the words may be a borrowing or a blend, for example.

And finally, Thundy gives two more "possible cognates in Sanskrit to the Old English *ceosan*": *chesht* 'move, command, do,' and *choosh* 'drink, suck, screw up.' The *ch-* of these Sanskrit transcriptions must stand for the voiceless palatal stop; more frequent is the transcription *c-*. Two such Sanskrit words exist—the roots listed as *cesht* 'move (the limbs)' and *cūsh* 'suck' on pages 402 and 401 of Sir Monier Monier-Williams's *Sanskrit-English Dictionary* (1899, Clarendon–Oxford UP, 1964)—but they are neither synonyms nor proven cognates of *cēosan*.

There is a strict cognate, meeting every test, of the Latin *gustare* 'to taste, enjoy,' Gothic *kiusan* 'choose, test,' and Old English *cēosan*: the Sanskrit *jush* 'to be pleased, to like, to enjoy' (Monier-Williams 424). There is room for both the strict and the creative.

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### Replies:

Edgar C. Knowlton, Jr., is correct that I mixed cognates and synonyms when I included the Sanskrit *cūsh* and *cesht* as cognates of the Latin *gustare*. The Sanskrit *jush* probably is the closest word to *gustare*, and Skeat and Bosworth-Toller list *jush* among cognates of the Latin word. Arthur McDonnell even gives *jush* the meaning "taste." Because /j/ is the voiced affricate, it meets Grimm's law, but it does not satisfactorily explain the presence of the long vowel in *cēosan* or the clipping of the /t/ of *gustare*.