

thew and the Gospel of Luke incorporated into their texts most of the Gospel of Mark. They did so without acknowledgment.

These writers composed in a context apart from our universe of print. So did King's father, his grandfather, and other black preachers King heard as a child and adolescent. Adapting their procedures of voice merging to print, King mined others' texts while crafting addresses and essays. For that reason, his essays are not elegantly fastidious constructions.

We should judge his works, however, not according to their failure to conform to academic standards, but according to their rhetorical effect. King's discourse convinced white America to outlaw a system that oppressed and degraded millions of human beings. When we recognize the full dimensions of that monumental achievement, we will understand that King's language is truly sublime.

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The Varieties of Choice

To the Editor:

Andrew Galloway's engaging article "*Beowulf* and the Varieties of Choice" (105 [1990]: 197–208) raises some fascinating philosophical, philological, and generic questions. Before I address these issues, let me point out an error that escaped the scrutiny of the readers of the article: "The *Beowulf* poet uses (*ge*)*ceosan* as frequently as any other Anglo-Saxon Christian poet—eight times in thirty-two thousand lines" (202). In fact, there are only about 3,200 lines in *Beowulf*. [See editorial correction on page 1168.]

As for the philosophical problem, the concept of choice implies freedom that is not incompatible with duty, obligation, and even fate, which only condition freedom without taking it away. Only the Supreme Being can have unconditional freedom. All human beings are endowed with conditioned freedom. I have three reservations about Galloway's survey of choice literature: (1) Galloway builds up his case on insufficient evidence from Old English literature, which we have inherited in limited quantity. Therefore, Galloway should have taken into consideration the Christian literary tradition of the church fathers, who can supplement what is lacking in Old English literature. (2) There is nothing really Christian about choice qua choice, except in the sense that a choice is Christian when a Christian or even a non-Christian makes the choice to follow Christ; neither case is clearly indicated in the poem, in spite of the Christian resonances of the poem. (3) Since *Beowulf* is admittedly the work of a Christian poet, it must show evidence of a clear Christian moral choice. Indeed, it does, but the choice is not what most of us expect to find there. Modern Christians tend to profess that the genuinely Christian moral choice is that of the Sermon on the Mount: "Love your enemies and pray for your persecutors" (Matt. 5.44). In fact, neither does the poet preach this lofty ideal nor does the hero *Beowulf* practice it. On the contrary, it is the *lex talionis* (eye for eye, tooth for tooth) that the poem celebrates. My point is that the ideal of revenge is not to be considered un-Christian in that Christian poem.

Why? The poet followed the ethical ideal of revenge celebrated in another Christian canonical work used by the Anglo-Saxons of the time, the Apocalypse of John, which is one of the major sources of *Beowulf*'s ethics and its portrayal of the monsters. Dorothy Whitelock's work, which Galloway cites, has a short section on the Anglo-Saxon moral view of revenge.

The philological problem has to do with the association of the Latin *gustare* with the Old English *ceosan*. If we apply Grimm's law blindly, that is, consistently—most dictionaries, like those Galloway consulted, seem to do that—these two words must be cognate. The Latin *gustare* is cognate, however, with the English *taste*. Now, *choice* and its Germanic and Romance cognates are related to the Latin *causa*, which is cognate with the Greek *krinein*, Latin *creare*, and Sanskrit *kr*, *karana* 'cause,' *karma* 'deed,' and *kartavya* 'duty,' 'obligation'—philologically speaking, duty, at least in Sanskrit, is derived from action. The two other possible cognates in Sanskrit to the Old English *ceosan* are *chesht* 'move,' 'command,' and 'do' and *choosh* 'drink,' 'suck,' and 'screw up.'

The generic problem arises because of *Beowulf*'s use of *ceosan*. Galloway draws a very appropriate conclusion: "[T]o have *Beowulf* die by choosing the deathbed reads as a conscious archaism or heroicism. . . . The vision of earthly choice . . . is finally sealed off from Christian ideals by this 'archaic' and archaizing formula" (206). Galloway does not spell out clearly in what this "archaization" consists, except that it is not Christian. Earlier, Galloway refers to Byrhtnoth's choice that "reflects the pressure between his individual human agency . . . and what might be called a heroic ethos of inevitability" (199). Tolkien also recognizes this phenomenon when he talks about the "fusion" between Christianity and paganism or about the poet "repaganizing" the work rather than Christianizing it (202). I suggest that Galloway's archaization and Tolkien's repaganization-fusion are none other than the Old English poet's conscious attempt at classicizing *Beowulf* in the image and likeness of the classical epics of Vergil and Homer. The special form of *Beowulfian* classicization vis-à-vis choice consists in the author's attempt at diminishing the role of God, emphasizing destiny, and accentuating the social dimension of choice and heroic action. Briefly stated, both in the classical epics, like the *Aeneid*, and in *Beowulf* there is an intentional interplay of choice and destiny; that is what epics are about.

Finally, the article reminds us that *Beowulf* is an "open" text and that we read it again with some skepticism rather than with the certainty of faith in received interpretations. *Tolle et lege*.

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Antimetabole and Chiasmus

To the Editor:

Why does Thomas Mermall write of *chiasmus* rather than *antimetabole* in "The Chiasmus: Unamuno's Master Trope" (105 [1990]: 245–55)? He utilizes a wide array of time-honored as well as recent technical vocabulary but, textbook lists of defi-

nitions notwithstanding, any person with a classical education may wonder why Mermall and so many others in recent years have come to prefer *chiasmus* to the ancient term. In fact, *antimetabole* does appear at one point in Mermall's essay (248), as well it might since Unamuno was a master of many languages who, as a professor of classical philology, would have known it from Quintilian, where it first appears, before he knew of its uniquely English replacement. E. A. Andrews's *Latin-English Lexicon* (1872) also locates the figure in Cicero and Isidorus Hispalensis. In Renaissance England George Puttenham (1589), John Hoskins (c. 1599), and John Smith (1657) kept the term alive. Dr. Johnson makes no mention of it in his famous dictionary (1755), but Noah Webster included it in his (1828), and the *OED* cites Puttenham and Smith.

Chiasmus is a relative newcomer. Neither Dr. Johnson nor Noah Webster knew of the word. The earliest usage recorded by the *OED* is in an 1871 textbook footnote that suggests by its phraseology ("called chiasmus") that the term then may have been a new word in the schools. Both *Webster's International Dictionary* (1890) and *The Century Dictionary and Cyclopaedia* (1899) include it.

This century opens with the publication of the revised edition of *Allen and Greenough's New Latin Grammar* (1903), which makes no mention of *antimetabole* but lists *chiasmus* as a figure (433) and gives it a generous footnote (397). In retrospect, one wonders whether this did much to efface the ancient and promote the modern word. *Chiasmus* has appeared everywhere, but *antimetabole* was dropped from *Webster's Third New International Dictionary* because Joseph Shipley's *Dictionary of World Literature* (1943) contained the only recent usage. Since then, *antimetabole* has shown prestigious renewed vitality. Alex Preminger discusses it under "chiasmus" in the *Princeton Encyclopedia of Poetry and Poetics* (1965). Edward P. J. Corbett distinguishes between *antimetabole* and *chiasmus*—perhaps without justification—in *Classical Rhetoric for the Modern Student* (1965). Richard A. Lanham seems to give *antimetabole* more column inchage than *chiasmus* in *A Handlist of Rhetorical Terms* (1968). I have discussed the status of these words with Frederick C. Mish and James G. Lowe of Merriam-Webster Inc., and they inform me that on the basis of these recent citations *antimetabole* will indeed be reinserted in the next revision of the *Third International*.

Now would be a splendid time for Mermall and scholars generally to review their own practice: there is a word of venerable credentials and well-known definition for *chiasmus*. It is *antimetabole*, a word, moreover, with a pleasant musical sound and one that is free of those mystical religious associations that may have given sentimentally pious Victorians a fondness for *chiasmus*.

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Reply:

I am grateful, as I am sure all students of rhetoric must be, to Miller for his erudite survey of *antimetabole* and *chiasmus*.

Yet his query about why anyone would prefer the modern term to the ancient is puzzling, since the answer is implicit in his own letter. A term whose legitimate use—sanctioned by the *OED* no less—dates back to 1871 needs no justification. And all the more so, since there is no obvious or subtle difference in meaning between *antimetabole* and *chiasmus*, as there surely is in other common pairs often used interchangeably, such as *anantacsis* and *pun*.

I cannot speak for the thousands of colleagues who, like myself, have fallen under the spell of *chiasmus*. Some, probably tone-deaf, are impervious to the musical charms of *antimetabole*; but I can assure Miller that neither Victorian sentimentality nor mysticism has led me to embrace the modern name for this venerable trope.

I wish Miller well in his campaign for *antimetabole*.

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The Metaphysics of Translation

To the Editor:

I was pleased to see a piece on Japanese literature in *PMLA* (Earl Jackson, Jr., "The Metaphysics of Translation and the Origins of Symbolist Poetics in Meiji Japan," 105 [1990]: 256–72). But why do comparatists seem to hold themselves to such a low standard of representation, analysis, and explanation? It is as if one's only hope of finding a theme for comparative research lay in taking the loosest and vaguest possible view of the things to be compared. That's not how they work in the comparative anatomy lab down the street.

The contrast between Oriental "immanence" and European "transcendence" has become an almost obligatory stopping point for comparatists concerned with Asian texts, and yet it is ill served by this popularity. What do East Asia specialists mean by it? Jackson quotes with approval Nakanishi Susumu's theory that "there was no distinction between perceptual and conceptual knowledge" in ancient Japanese (258). But Nakanishi's point is a linguistic one, indeed an etymological one for later states of the language. A student of patristics would be equally justified in saying that since *pneuma* means both "spirit" and "breath," the outlook of the fathers of the Greek church must have been a materialistic one. That might be a heretical reading of Christianity; allow, at least, that easy divisions between such pairs as immanence and transcendence assume that all problems of meaning and truth have been solved.

When Jackson goes on to claim that translation as we know it in the West is an affair of transcendence (signifieds wholly apart from their signifiers, etc.), he does so again with an etymological contrast. The "imagistic base" he uncovers for the Japanese word meaning "to translate" "divides an object into inner and outer, not into present and absent (concrete and abstract, sign and meaning), thus maintaining a horizontal, unidimen-