The most important argument Nicholas Perrin uses in order to show that the language of first composition of the Gospel of Thomas was Syriac is one from catchwords (Stichworter, cf. 12 n.46)—a key term for which he gives this definition (50): ‘a catchword is any word which can be semantically, etymologically or phonologically associated with another word found in an adjacent logion’. To show the likely ubiquity of catchwords in the (probable) Syriac text of Thomas, Perrin devotes ninety nine pages (57-155) of his book to a comparison charting Thomas in English (left-hand column) against lists of key words in Coptic (second column) Greek (third) and Syriac (right-hand column). Since Thomas as a whole is extant only in Coptic and the Greek fragments (P.Oxy. 1, 654 and 655) preserve only a small portion of the text, the words in the Greek column are mostly, and those in the Syriac column all, ‘reconstructed’ (the term Perrin uses [57]) on the basis of inference.

The table of comparisons yields a numerical score (155): there are 269 Coptic catchwords, only 263 in Greek, and 502 in Syriac—this in 114 logia. The count in itself proves little; but the claim that the Syriac original must have been a text with a high degree of internal linguistic interlocking is one which if correct would serve to explain something about the order of arrangement of logia.

Catchword connections, as Perrin identifies them, may be intriguing, or seem trivial. Consider (63-5) Gospel of Thomas 8-9:

8 And he said, “The man is like a wise fisherman who threw his net into the sea and drew it up from the sea; it was full of small fish. Among them the wise fisherman found a good large fish. He threw all the small fish back into the sea and without much trouble chose the large fish. Whoever has ears to hear, let him hear.”

9 Jesus said, “See, the sower went out, took a handful of seeds and scattered them. Some fell on the road and the birds came and gathered them up …
In 8, *man* links back to a *man* in the previous logion; *threw* in the Old Syriac parallel (Matthew 13.47) uses a form of \(\text{āna} (= \text{fall, cf. next logion})\); on *small* Perrin notes (63 n.31) ‘Whereas ... *zārā* ... in GT 8.1 would be assonant with a number of words in 9.1 (*zrawā*, “sower”; *zar‘e*, “seeds”; *zra‘*, “scattered), there would be a particularly striking homophony with ... *za‘er* (“took a handful”) ...’ On *chose* and *gathered* Perrin posits (64 n.33, following Antoine Guillaumont) that behind the Coptic words used ‘once stood the roots’ 
\[
\overset{\rightarrow}{\text{n}} \quad \overset{\leftrightarrow}{\text{n}}
\]
respectively. Both verbs mean “to gather”.

In consequence, Perrin is saying something new about *Thomas*—that it is not as naïve a text as has hitherto been thought. As he says (157), ‘the view of GT as a finely crafted Syriac text, completely knit together by catchwords, is certainly at odds with the current view of the text as an artless compilation of sayings ...’ Elsewhere, more emphatically, ‘the widespread judgement as to GT’s disjointed nature must now be replaced by an insistence on the document’s organic unity’ (171). Comparison with the *Odes of Solomon* (158-64) shows that the odist had a comparable feel for paronomasia: ‘the analogies,’ Perrin infers (164), ‘...show that the account of GT which I am offering corresponds to what can be known about second-century Syriac poetic style.’

As the title of the book implies, Perrin’s intention is not only to demonstrate the existence of a Syriac *Vorlage* behind the Nag Hammadi Coptic text and the Oxyrhynchus Greek fragments. He proposes that Tatian’s *Diatessaron* was ‘foremost among’ the sources used by the compiler of *Thomas* (189). His observations relating to catchwords do, if correct, seem to imply use of written sources rather than oral tradition (181-3), and, as Perrin notes, the *Diatessaron* was the only Syriac Gospel in existence in the second century (184: a date for *Thomas* later than 200 is excluded because P.Oxy. 1 was written about 200 [cf. 1]). The fragmentary state of evidence for the *Diatessaron* makes it impossible to compare it line by line with *Thomas*, but Perrin argues that Thomas 44 (close to Matthew 12.31-32) and 45 (‘generally closer to Luke’ [6.44-5] ‘than Matthew’ [186]) harmonize Matthew and Luke exactly as Tatian did in the *Diatessaron*. 
Presumably there will be doubters, but Perrin appears to have made an important step forward in *Thomas and Tatian*, and established a date and context for the composition of the *Gospel of Thomas* more firmly than earlier scholarship had managed to.

Paul McKechnie  
Chancellor College, University of Malawi, Zomba  
University of Auckland