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'HEART-CUTTING TALK': HOMERIC κερτομέω AND RELATED WORDS[1]

Most of the seemingly bizarre or obscure words in Homer belong to fixed formulae, usually as epithets. This means that on facing such a word one can appeal to 'oral poetics' in order to deny it any communicative significance or to interpret it along purely connotative or allusive lines.[2] When a less peripheral word, such as a verb or a noun, remains unexplained, it is usually so sparsely attested that it can be seen as an exotic γλῶττα, symptomatic of an archaizing tradition that was partly mysterious even to its own masters.[3] It is more disturbing to encounter a well-attested and apparently precise word, liable to act as the pivot of meaning for an entire sentence, and to find that a satisfactory explanation for it does not yet exist.[4] A reminder that this can still happen has been given in this journal by a remarkable series of articles grappling with the words κέρτομος, κερτόμιος, κερτομία, and (ἐπι-)κερτομέω. The debate remains unsettled, and I hope I can draw closer to a solution by reviewing the internal structure of this word-family and by setting it against the background of Homer's overall rendering of mental life and speech.

The flashpoint has been a single instance of the participle ἐπικερτομέων in the twenty-fourth *Iliad*. After Achilles and Priam have eaten and gazed at each other, the old man says that he is tired, not having closed his eyes since his son's death. Achilles orders a bed to be made up for his guest but then tells him that he must sleep outside the tent in the portico, as otherwise one of the other Greeks might see him and tell Agamemnon, which would lead to ἀνάβλησις in the return of the corpse (655). The rare word ἀνάβλησις is glossed as 'delay' or 'putting-off' (cf. *Il.* 2.380), but here the implication is perhaps more sinister—a little later Hermes will warn that if Agamemnon knew Priam were in the camp he would order him to be seized for ransom (684–8). Thus Achilles' sudden reminder of Priam's peril strikes a jarring note, given the sympathy that seems to have sprung up between the two men.[5] The question mark hangs over the line introducing Achilles' speech: τὸν δ' ἐπικερτομέων προσέφη πόδας ὠκὺς Ἀχιλλεύς . . . (*Il.* 24.649).

Here the gloss given in LSJ ('mock' for this form, 'taunt, sneer at' for the simplex)

[1] I am grateful to Michael Crudden for helpful criticisms of the first draft of this paper, and to Torsten Meissner for guidance on the lexical analysis of compounds; also to *CQ*'s anonymous referees.

[2] See J. M. Foley's studies of the connotative and deictic force of epithets, most recently in *Homer's Traditional Art* (University Park, PA, 1999), for exceptionally subtle contributions to the long series of revisions of Parry's claim that 'the fixed epithet . . . adds to the combination of substantive and epithet an element of grandeur, but no more than that' ('The traditional epithet in Homer' [1927] in A. Parry [ed.], *The Making of Homeric Verse* [Oxford, 1971], 127).

[3] For 'curious archaisms', see R. Janko in his Introduction to *The Iliad: A Commentary*, vol. 4 (Cambridge, 1992), 12; and cf. M. Silk, 'LSJ and the problem of poetic archaism: from meanings to iconyms', *CQ* 33 (1983), 303–30.

[4] A classic example is the *hapax* κλοτοπεύω (*Il.* 19.149), which is wholly opaque but, if translated, would allow us to understand the exact nuance of Achilles' response to Agamemnon's speech at the end of their quarrel (19.78–144).

[5] Achilles goes on to enquire about the details of the Trojans' funeral customs, and Priam answers only this part of his speech; but when at the end of their exchange Achilles takes his hand in case he will be afraid, μή πως δείσει' ἐνὶ θυμῷ (672), this presumably refers to the likely effects of the warning with which he began.

seems scarcely to yield sense. The late J. T. Hooker argued[6] that (ἐπι)κερτομέων[7] means something like 'taunting, provoking', but that the word is out of context in Achilles' gentle and respectful dealings with Priam. Hooker proposed a neo-analyst explanation, holding that the line has crept in from a different, earlier version of the narrative in which Achilles remained full of man-hating bitterness after the resolution of his quarrel with Agamemnon. This clearly lacked economy and elegance: to deal with the line in this way is simply to project our own lack of verbal understanding onto an imagined chaos in the object of study. Jones, in the next contribution,[8] was well justified in seeking to restore the line to Homer proper by proposing a different working definition of the verb: according to Jones, to κερτομεῖν someone is to arouse fear in them through talk whose effect is wounding or insulting, and ἐπικερτομέων indicates that Achilles' words will unintentionally affect Priam in this way. This, however, raises serious problems, most obviously because it would be extremely strange if the participle referred to an accidental result of the speech: it begs to be taken closely with the main verb προσέφη, and I can find no example in the *Iliad* where a participle with the verb introducing a speech refers to any act or effect other than what the speaker actively sets out to do.[9] In the latest contribution, Clay[10] observes a pattern which seems further to cut across Jones's explanation: when a speech is introduced with one of the κερτομ- words, the addressee tends to be provoked into a course of action which has not been put into words in the speech itself. For Clay, the words refer to 'a subtle way of manipulating someone to do what you want them to do without explicitly saying so yourself'.[11] On this view, in the *Iliad* passage Achilles would be hinting obliquely to Priam that he should go home instead of sleeping here as he has proposed.[12] In what follows I will offer a revised explanation of the activity named by this family of words, arguing along the way that Clay's observation does not account for the lexical meaning of the κερτομ- words but points instead to one of the likely *results* of the type of talk that they denote; and I will conclude by suggesting how my proposed definition can be applied in the context of the interaction between Achilles and Priam.

[6] J. T. Hooker, 'A residual problem in *Iliad* 24', *CQ* 36 (1986), 32–7, responding to Colin Macleod's note (ad loc. in his commentary on *Iliad* 24 [Cambridge, 1982]), which relied on the gloss 'teasing, mystifying' but acknowledged that this does not correspond to what Achilles goes on to say. Cf. also N. Richardson ad loc. in *The Iliad: A Commentary*, vol. 6 (Cambridge, 1993), who is midway between Macleod and Hooker in suggesting that the participle may indicate a 'gently provocative or mocking tone' in Achilles' speech: but how could that tone be appropriate to what is effectively a suggestion that Priam's mission is in danger of turning into disaster?

[7] The prefix ἐπι- probably amounts to no more than 'in addition', 'also'.

[8] P. V. Jones, '*Iliad* 24.469: another solution', *CQ* 39 (1989), 247–50 (hereafter 'Jones').

[9] The pattern can be readily seen in the following collection of such participles, excluding only those which refer to the physical voice of the speaker: ἀγγελέουσα (19.120, etc.), ἀλαστήσας (12.163), (ἀπ)αμειβόμενος (1.84, etc.), ἀπειλήσας (7.225), δολοφρονέουσα (14.197, etc.), (ἐπ)ευχόμενος/ εὐξάμενος (16.289, etc.), ἐπιθαρσύνων (4.183), ἐποτρύνων (13.94, etc.), ἐυφρονέων (18.253, etc.), θεοπροπέων (2.322, etc.), καλεσσάμενος (5.427), λισσόμενος (21.73, etc.) μνησάμενος (19.314), νεικείων (23.438, etc.), νεμεσσηθεῖσα (15.103), ὁμοκλήσας (5.439, etc.), ὀνειδίζων (7.95), ὀλοφυρόμενος (5.871, etc.), ὀχθήσας (11.403, etc.), ὀνειδείοισιν ἐνίσσων (22.497), ψευσαμένη (6.163).

[10] J. Strauss Clay, '*Iliad* 24.469 and the semantics of κερτομέω', *CQ* 49 (1999), 618–21 (hereafter 'Clay').

[11] Clay, 621.

[12] Clay's argument is not weakened by the fact that Priam fails to take the hint and has to be roused by Hermes, since this can be seen as an example of 'double motivation' in Homeric psychology.

The κερτομ- family is well attested and includes a verb, a noun, and adjectives used substantively rather than as epithets, so we cannot dismiss these words as archaisms or mere poetic ornament. Since the central challenge is one of lexical reconstruction, the acid test for the interpreter must be whether his proposed definition is effective in the context of each of attestation. However, Jones has added another dimension by pointing out that the poet and his audience would have regarded κερτομ- as a compound formation, joining the root seen in the words for 'heart', κῆρ or κραδίη, with that of the verb τάμνω or τέμνω, 'I cut'.[13] This etymology is also preserved among the scholia,[14] but so far as I know Jones is the only writer in English to have suggested that it is more than just a learned speculation or a 'folk etymology', but may instead provide the key to understanding the active meaning of the word in archaic Greek.[15] Jones used this analysis to justify his working translation of ἐπικερτομέων as 'piercing to the heart', 'cutting to the quick', or the like. Although I will pin down the meaning of the verbal element of the compound in a different way from Jones, I agree with him that 'cutting the heart' is the key to understanding this word-family, and this is the basis on which I will proceed.

Our first step must be to recognize that the mother and (synchronically speaking) the centre of this word-family is the adjective κέρτομος, with κερτόμιος as an alternative form and the abstract noun κερτομία and the verb κερτομέω as secondary derivatives.[16] In philological terms, the first element of κέρτομος is easily understood as κῆρ 'heart' shortened because of the following consonant cluster *-rt-*, or (better) as the reflex of its root **kerd-* in full grade, unaffected by the compensatory lengthening that produces κῆρ after simplification of the following *-rd*.[17] Etymology is not meaning, and it might be objected that the details of this reconstruction are incidental

[13] Jones, 248, citing emphatic support from A. Morpurgo Davies. For further discussion, see H. Troxler, *Sprache und Wortschatz Hesiods* (Zürich, 1964), 119–20. A broadly similar argument is advanced by J.-L. Perpillou (*Recherches lexicales en grec ancien* [Louvain, 1996], 117–21), who argues for a loosely defined metaphorical shift from 'cut' to 'insult' but offers no definite explanation of the first element of the compound; and cf. L. Radermacher, 'Zur Wortkunde des Griechischen', in *Festschrift Kretschmer* (Leipzig, 1926), 149–66.

[14] See e.g. schol. bT on *Il.* 1.539, κερτομίοις· τοῖς τὸ κέαρ τέμνουσιν, ὅ ἐστι τὴν ψυχήν, καὶ λυποῦσιν, οἱονεὶ κεαροτομίοις; similarly schol. on *Od.* 2.323, κερτομῶ τὸ ὑβρίζω, ἀπὸ τοῦ τέμνειν τὸ κῆρ. In this connection observe Apollonius of Rhodes' line, κερτομέεις· νῶιν δὲ κέαρ συνορίνεται ἄτηι (*Arg.* 3.56), where R. Hunter suggests that the gloss in the second part of the line refers to the same learned explanation of the word (ad loc. in his edition of *Arg.* III [Cambridge, 1989]). On epic ὀρίνω in psychological contexts, see M. Clarke, *Flesh and Spirit in the Songs of Homer* (Oxford, 1999), 102, n. 110.

[15] The transmitted accentuation as κέρτομος rather than κερτόμος suggests either (i) that the verbal element was later understood as having passive force (cf. καράτομος 'beheaded' [e.g. Eur. *Tr.* 564], λαιμότομος 'with cut throat' [Eur. *Hec.* 208]), or (ii) that the adjective ceased at some stage in the textual tradition to be understood as a compound. As regards (i), the ancient grammarians' distinction between active and passive in such compounds is very fine, and probably represents scholarly speculation rather than linguistic reality. The second explanation is more likely, as the shift will have been encouraged by the loss of transparency in the meaning of the first element once the Archaic κῆρ was resolved into the more familiar Classical form κέαρ. In any case, the progressive disappearance of κέρτομος in the later language (see below, n. 46) makes it quite possible that the transmitted accent is ahistorical. (See J. P. Postgate, *A Guide to Greek Accentuation* [London, 1924], §§ 191–2, and esp. H. W. Chandler, *Greek Accentuation* [Oxford, 1881²], §§ 416, 516, emphasizing the doubtful status of the transmitted accent in this and similar words.)

[16] It is accidental that in the Homeric corpus proper κέρτομος survives only in the word φιλοκέρτομος, so that Hesiod (*W.D.* 788) and the *Homeric Hymn to Hermes* (338) offer the oldest surviving examples of the simple form.

[17] For other etymological speculations, see K. Brugmann, *IF* 15 (1903/4), 97–8 (**sker-* ['cut'] +

to the realities of the Greek; but the fact that the adjective is of the two-termination type[18] indicates strongly that it was understood as a compound in practice,[19] while the pattern of a verbal-governing compound with an *o*-grade in the second member is so familiar[20] that anyone versed in the language would probably have understood κέρτομος in this way as a matter of course in the period when κῆρ belonged in the mental lexicon. Attested compounds with the same structure include several others in -τομος, such as δρυτόμος 'treecutter' (a man, *Il.* 11.86) and ὑλοτόμος 'woodcutter' (an axe, *Il.* 23.114), with the verb ὑλοτομέω (Hes. *W.D.* 422).[21] In a nearby semantic field are θυμοβόρος and θυμοφθόρος, formed in exactly the same way by joining the name of the organ or locus of mental life to a verbal root: evil things are imagined as 'eating' or 'destroying' the θυμός, with the roots seen in the verbs βιβρώσκω and φθείρω. If the net is widened to include slightly different stem formations, further parallels present themselves: compare the insult which is θυμοδακής 'biting the organ of consciousness' (θυμός + the root seen in δάκνω), the death which is θυμορραϊστής 'breaking the organ of consciousness' (θυμός + ῥαίω), the friend or pleasing thing which is θυμαρής, 'fitted to the organ of consciousness' (θυμός + ἀραρίσκω), the gasping and winded man who is 'gathering breath' or 'gathering consciousness', θυμηγερέων (probably dependent on *θυμηγερής, from θυμός + ἀγείρω[22]). In each case the nominal first element begs to be understood as direct object of the verbal second element, and it is reasonable to see the pattern as a template onto which all such words would have been slotted by users of the language.[23] Without pressing such semantic speculations too far, we are likely at the very least to find better guidance in the words' visible ancestry than in unaided guesswork.

What, then, does it mean to talk of 'cutting the heart'? It is misleading here to follow Jones in seizing on the similar-sounding metaphors that exist in our own language. In

stom- 'mouth'), attacked by Radermacher [n. 13]); H. Frisk, *Griechisches etymologisches Wörterbuch* (Heidelberg, 1954–72), s.v.; A. J. van Windekens, *Dictionnaire étymologique complémentaire de la langue grecque* (Paris, 1986), s.v.

[18] See e.g. Eur. *Alc.* 1125, fr. 492.2 Nauck; Hdt. 5.83.3. It is highly unlikely that an adjective would have shifted into the two-termination pattern after beginning its life in the unmarked three-termination class.

[19] See A. Sihler, *New Comparative Grammar of Greek and Latin* (Oxford, 1995), § 339, on two-termination forms as 'especially characteristic of adjective compounds built to o-stems'; and cf. E. Schwyzer, *Griechische Grammatik*, vol. 2 (Munich, 1953), 32–3.

[20] For a full collection of examples of the pattern see E. Risch, *Wortbildung der homerischen Sprache* (Berlin, 1974[2]), § 74 a–d, summarized in the table on pp. 199–206.

[21] Similarly δειροτομέω depends on *δειροτόμος, 'neck-cutter'.

[22] See Risch (n. 20), § 111b.

[23] This point is difficult. In plotting the language of a given speech-community at a given time, the only absolutely conclusive way to prove that an element of a compound is individually meaningful is to show that it belongs to a class which is productive of new words in the same period (J. Lyons, *Semantics*, vol. 2 [Cambridge, 1977], 547–8): but for early Greek such proof is inaccessible to us, because the nature of the corpus prevents us from distinguishing new coinages from fossilized forms. I hope, however, that the wealth of parallel examples collected here will be enough to suggest that the internal structure of compounds of the κέρτομος type will have contributed to their active meaning. For example, the parallels would enable the word's individual elements to pass D. A. Cruse's 'recurrent semantic contrast' test for identifying minimal semantic constituents: see *Lexical Semantics* (Cambridge, 1986), 24–9. (Unfortunately, for the particular case of early Greek there exists no general defence of the principle that the semantic [rather than purely etymological] analysis of a compound can be aided by the examination of its parts as well as the comparison of its attested contexts, and I can only refer to a particularly elegant example of its practical application: J. Schindler, 'Zu den homerischen ῥοδοδάκτυλος-Komposita', in *O-o-pe-ro-si: Festschrift E. Risch* [Berlin, 1986], 393–401.)

English when I 'cut someone to the quick', or when something I hear 'pierces my heart', the figure depends on the image of a physical wound, as might be made with a sword or a needle; and, incidentally, it is typical of our weak and trivial psychological imagery that such expressions are routinely used of mental experiences that involve nothing remotely analogous to physical pain.[24] 'Cut' is treacherous here as a translation-word, because its range of meaning folds together two distinct phenomena, which can be distinguished as *piercing* on the one hand and *dividing* on the other—to make an incision is different from chopping something into pieces, and when I *cut* my finger on a piece of broken glass that is distinct from what I am trying to do when my wife and I *cut* the wedding-cake. (If I labour this point, it is because here and everywhere we come to grief if we rely on a translation-word whose range of referents is significantly wider than that covered by the Greek one.[25]) The Homeric uses of τάμνω and its close cognates show that it always refers to cutting in the sense of dividing. To take a few representative examples, it is the appropriate verb when one divides sacrificial meat (*Il.* 19.197, *Od.* 3.456), cuts out an animal's entrails (*Il.* 3.292, *Od.* 3.332) or carves a joint (*Il.* 9.209, *Od.* 24.364); with ἀπο- or ἐκ-, when one lops off an enemy's head or another part of his body (*Il.* 5.74, 5.214, 18.177, 22.328, *Od.* 18.86, etc.), slices a muscle apart (*Il.* 17.522), or divides up a whole body by chopping it limb from limb (*Il.* 24.409, *Od.* 9.291, 18.339, etc.); when one cuts down a tree (*Il.* 13.180, 19.390, 21.38, *Od.* 5.243, 12.11, etc.; cf. τομή, *Il.* 1.235), cuts a string in two with a well-aimed arrow (*Il.* 23.867), cuts a hide into shape (*Od.* 14.24) or divides a stretch of land[26] by ploughing it or setting it aside as the portion of a nobleman or a god (*Il.* 6.194, 9.580, 20.184; cf. προτάμνω, *Od.* 23.196). Similarly one 'cuts' the sea by traversing it in a ship (*Od.* 3.175, 13.88), and cattle-rustlers surround and 'cut off', περιτάμνονται, the beasts before making off with them (*Od.* 11.402 = 24.112; sim. *Il.* 18.528, *h. Herm.* 74).[27] Finally, the mysterious phrase ὅρκια τάμνειν 'to cut an oath' (*Il.* 2.124, 3.252, *Od.* 24.483, etc.) seems to have originated in the custom of dividing a sacrificial victim in two and making the parties to the oath pass between the halves.[28]

[24] It is misleading of Jones (p. 247) to cite θυμοδακής as a synonym, because in that word the 'bite' is the effect of insulting, belittling accusations designed to rob a man of status and dignity, for which there is little parallel in the attested contexts of the κερτομ- words. (Jones is wrong to say that the two are used interchangeably during the Phaeacian games [*Od.* 8.143–85]. In fact two separate speeches are involved: Odysseus describes the Phaeacians as κερτομέοντες when he feels daunted by Laodamas' polite invitation to him to compete [153], but the θυμοδακὴς μῦθος [185] is Euryalos' *subsequent* suggestion that he is a feeble merchant.)

[25] A classic example of this is the word τιμή, nearly always glossed as 'honour'. In English, a single word names (i) a man's sense of *honour* (self-respect, adherence to principles, concern for his status) and (ii) the *honour* (respect, gift, sign of esteem) which he would be accorded by the award of the Victoria Cross or the admiration of the public. Only (ii) would be called τιμή, and many passages of the epics take on a more intense or more concrete meaning when a more precise translation-word is used.

[26] Note that the stretch of land in question is often called a τέμενος (*Il.* 6.194, 9.578–80, 20.184): the chime or *figura etymologica* suggests that synchronically the noun is closely associated with the verb, whether or not they are really as closely cognate as they appear. See P. Chantraine, *Dictionnaire étymologique de la langue grecque* (Paris, 1968–80), s.v. τέμνω.

[27] Closely related is the idea that when people part after a meeting they are divided from each other, διέτμαγεν (*Il.* 1.531, 7.302, etc.), from another reflex of the same root.

[28] M. L. West, *The East Face of Helicon* (Oxford, 1997), 22–3. This custom is never referred to in Homer, and the formula may well have come adrift from its original meaning before the time of our earliest Greek texts: phrases like θάνατόν νύ τοι ὅρκι' ἔταμνον (*Il.* 4.155) and φιλότητα καὶ ὅρκια πιστὰ ταμόντες (*Il.* 3.73, etc.) do not make sense in terms of the ritual with the divided animal, nor does it seem possible to refer them back to any of the normal usages of τάμνω. It seems, then, that in Greek practice the 'cutting' of oaths has been marked out as a separate

So far as I can see, the only possible Homeric justification for including 'pierce' in the word's semantic range would be the phrase *ταμέειν χρόα* (*Il.* 13.501 = 16.701; cf. *ταμεσίχρως* [*Il.* 4.511, 13.340, etc.]), used of the action of a sharp weapon; but it seems clear that this refers to *cleaving* the flesh as the blade or point shears through it, just as the same verb is used when a physician cuts an arrowhead out of a wound (*Il.* 11.843).[29]

We must next consider what is being 'divided'. In Homeric Greek the heart, *κῆρ* or *κραδίη*,[30] belongs as a full member of the complex of psychological centres or organs which also includes *φρήν*, *θυμός*, *ἦτορ*, and *πραπίδες*. Jahn has shown in his formular analysis[31] that these words tend to function as a family of virtual synonyms, and subsequent work in this field has extended the principle that they are best understood not as discrete and contrasting terms but as closely-related or even overlapping names for what is essentially a single mental apparatus.[32] This means that if we want a sense of what a Greek meant by cutting the heart in two, we can seek guidance in imagery of division and splitting from across this word-group as a whole. The most telling example is in a simile describing Nestor's confused indecision when he cannot decide how best to help his comrades:

> *ὡς δ' ὅτε πορφύρῃ πέλαγος μέγα κύματι κωφῷ,*
> *ὀσσόμενον λιγέων ἀνέμων λαιψηρὰ κέλευθα*
> *αὔτως, οὐδ' ἄρα τε προκυλίνδεται οὐδετέρωσε,*
> *πρίν τινα κεκριμένον καταβήμεναι ἐκ Διὸς οὖρον,*
> *ὣς ὁ γέρων ὥρμαινε <u>δαϊζόμενος κατὰ θυμὸν</u>*
> *<u>διχθάδι'</u>, ἢ μεθ' ὅμιλον ἴοι Δαναῶν ταχυπώλων,*
> *ἦε μετ' Ἀτρεΐδην Ἀγαμέμνονα, ποιμένα λαῶν.* (*Il.* 14.16–22)

Like when the great sea surges with a heavy swell, awaiting the swift coming of the shrill winds, and it does not roll forward one way or the other until a gust comes down, despatched by the sky-god—so the old man pondered, *divided twofold along his θυμός*, whether he should go after the main host of the Achaeans of the swift foals, or after Agamemnon, shepherd of the people.

Whether or not the picture of squalling winds over heaving water exactly depicts Homer's conception of the divided and disordered movement of the stuff of Nestor's thought, as I have argued elsewhere,[33] the underlined words show clearly that his

semantic field, and that the verb in this context has been reinterpreted as pure metaphor. Cf. J. Casabona, *Le Vocabulaire des sacrifices en grec ancien* (Aix-en-Provence, 1967), 211–30.

[29] All examples of compound forms (*ἀποπροτάμνω*, *ἐκτάμνω*, *περιτάμνω*, *προτάμνω*) fit easily with the semantic range of the simple verb.

[30] The two words are reflexes of a single root, which in other Indo-European languages produces names for the anatomical heart (J. Pokorny, *Indogermanisches etymologisches Wörterbuch* [Bern, 1989²], 1.579–80). Although in Homer the anatomical identity of the referent(s) is less clear, there is no evidence for a sharp distinction between the two words or for their association with an organ distinct from the heart.

[31] T. Jahn, *Zum Wortfeld 'Seele-Geist' in der Sprache Homers* (= Zetemata 83, Munich, 1987), esp. 182–246. On the principle of virtual synonymy, with reference to Jahn's findings and for Homeric language in general, see esp. E. Bakker and F. Fabbricotti, 'Peripheral and nuclear semantics in Homeric diction: the case of dative expressions for "spear" ', *Mnemosyne* 44 (1991), 63–84, reprinted in I. de Jong (ed.), *Homer: Critical Assessments* (London, 1999), 382–400.

[32] See esp. Clarke (n. 14), 63–6 and ch. 4 *passim*; C. P. Caswell, *A Study of θυμός in Early Greek Epic* (= *Mnemosyne* Suppl. 144, Leiden, 1990), esp. 49–50. Earlier studies of this word-family, centring around B. Snell's famous and now largely discredited theory that Homeric man has no clear sense of psychic unity, are reviewed by H. Pelliccia in *Mind, Body and Speech in Homer and Pindar* (= Hypomnemata 107, Göttingen, 1995), 15–27; see more generally B. Williams, *Shame and Necessity* (Berkeley, 1993), ch. 2.

[33] Clarke (n. 14), 79–83.

dismayed indecision is seen as a twofold division of the mental apparatus.[34] Similarly Telemachus describes how his mother cannot decide whether to marry or stay single: μητρί τ' ἐμῇ δίχα θυμὸς ἐνὶ φρεσὶ μερμηρίζει (*Od.* 16.73), roughly 'my mother's organ of consciousness is pondering in two ways in her breast'. Throughout Homer expressions like ἐδαΐζετο θυμός (*Il.* 9.4–8) and δίχα θυμὸς ἄητο (*Il.* 21.386) describe the same phenomenon, always confusion or indecision or the onset of unmanageable emotions.

Since such emotions are understood as division of the psychological organ(s), talk that is κέρτομος will be talk that is liable to temporarily confuse the person addressed, to put them in a situation where they are subject to conflicting emotions and do not know how to respond, whether because of fear and doubt or for some more complex reason. By extension κερτόμιος will refer to the quality of such talk and κερτομία will name it as a phenomenon. The Homeric attestations are consistent with this explanation. The gods assail each other with κερτόμια ἔπεα in the complaints and manipulative provocations of their petty politics (*Il.* 1.539, 4.6, 5.419); a warrior's vaunting speech aimed at confounding his foe consists of κερτομίαι (*Il.* 20.202 = 433; cf. *Od.* 9.474); Melanthios uses κερτομίαι when he threatens to fight Odysseus if he does not move away from his pitch (*Od.* 20.177); one who is given to bullying and insulting talk is described as φιλοκέρτομος (*Od.* 22.287). When Odysseus decides not to reveal himself openly to Laertes but to test him with κερτόμια ἔπεα (*Od.* 24.239–40), he spins out a lying speech which leads to the old man's collapse into grief and confusion (315–17). In short, 'heart-dividing talk' defines or labels a distinct genre of speaking among Homeric characters,[35] centring around a browbeating and manipulative social strategy that aims to discomfit or humiliate the person addressed.

As we proceed to the verb κερτομέω we must be careful, because it is essential to respect the semantic implications of the verb's derivation from κέρτομος.[36] To say that I κερτομέω someone is not necessarily to say that I succeed in 'dividing their mental apparatus', but rather that I engage in talk of the kind that might be called κερτομ(ι)ον, irrespective of its effects in the particular instance.[37] The principle is well illustrated by the verbs βουκολέω and οἰνοχοέω, precisely parallel in formation.[38] To βουκολεῖν is not necessarily to tend certain cows, but simply to engage in the characteristic activities of a βουκόλος: so that Homer can say without absurdity or looseness that horses were being tended, ἵπποι ἕλος κάτα βουκολέοντο (*Il.* 20.221).[39]

[34] Similar similes appear at *Il.* 2.143–9, 15.624–9.

[35] On distinct and tightly defined genres of speech among Homeric characters, see esp. R. P. Martin, *The Language of Heroes* (Ithaca, 1989), ch. 2, esp. 67–77.

[36] In the language of lexical semantics, this can be seen as a case of the tendency for the semantic range of a paronymic derivative (i.e. a derivative which is a different part of speech) to be narrower than that of its 'base' or parent word: see Cruse (above, n. 23), 129–33.

[37] For the primacy of compound nouns and adjectives in relation to verbs built on their stems, see the careful treatment by Risch (n. 20), § 67b. In terms of meaning, the distinction will not always be as important as in the examples we are discussing here: for example περιτροπέω (e.g. *Il.* 2.295, *Od.* 9.465) seems to be distinguishable from περιτρέπω only in that it tends to be intransitive.

[38] Risch (n. 20), §111b, cites these among many clear examples of verbs built on compounds of the same type, as βουφονέω from βουφόνος, τυμβοχοέω from τυμβοχόος, πυρπολέω from πυρπόλος. See further E. Fawcett Tucker, *The Creation of Morphological Regularity: Early Greek Verbs in -eo, -ao, -oo, -uo and -io* (Göttingen, 1990), 76–81.

[39] M. W. Edwards (at 20.221–4 in *The Iliad: A Commentary*, vol. 5 [Cambridge, 1991]), following Leaf) helpfully compares these phrases but perhaps makes a mountain out of a molehill in describing them as 'mixed metaphors'. See further A. Christol, 'Dérivation synchronique et diachronique dans le verbe grec', *RPh* 55 (1991), 89–98.

Similarly, when I οἰνοχοέω I do not always pour wine, I simply perform the duties of an οἰνοχόος: so that at the gods' feast Hephaestus serves nectar, οἰνοχόει γλυκὺ νέκταρ (*Il.* 1.598). When I κερτομέω someone I do not necessarily bring about the division of their mental apparatus: my talk is of the sort that would be *liable* to make someone dismayed and uncertain how to react, but the verb implies nothing about the experience of the victim of the abuse (and, indeed, it is often intransitive). The attestations bear out this proposal. Thersites is κερτομέων when he speaks out rancorously and abusively, urging disloyalty against his leaders (*Il.* 2.256); the suitors are trying to humiliate and confuse (ἐπελώβευον καὶ ἐκερτόμεον) Telemachus when they declare ironically that he is planning to poison or attack them (*Od.* 2.323). Likewise the verb is appropriate when Telemachus fears that the suitors will assail the supposed beggarman with their mocking and bullying talk (*Od.* 16.87, cf. 20.263), when Eurymachus sets out to confuse and upset Odysseus by making a joke about his baldness (*Od.* 18.350), and when Eumaeus crows sarcastically over his defeated enemy Melanthios (*Od.* 22.194). Odysseus describes the Phaeacians as κερτομέοντες when they challenge him to try his skill at athletics despite his evident misery (*Od.* 8.153), and describes Athene in the same way when he accuses her of lying and trying to beguile him by telling him he has reached Ithaca (*Od.* 13.326). Boys who disturb wasps' nests are κερτομέοντες (*Il.* 16.261) when they harass the unfortunate insects, perhaps abusing and reviling them as they force them out to defend their hives.[40] Noteworthy here is the well-known passage where Athene throws a mist over Odysseus in case one of the Phaeacians 'might κερτομέοι him with words and ask him who he is' (*Od.* 7.17). This has caused trouble to scholars because enquiry as to his name would hardly constitute an insult or terrifying thing, and κερτομέοι has been taken as a vestigial sign of the Phaeacians' sinister or otherworldly nature.[41] More precisely, the verb means that they might assail Odysseus with arrogant or intrusive questions of a kind *liable* to throw a stranger into doubt and confusion. This brings me to the instance that gives Jones most trouble,[42] where Patroclus speaks ἐπικερτομέων when he crows in triumph over a fallen adversary (*Il.* 16.744). How could Patroclus be 'cutting the heart' (in any sense) of one who is already dead? The problem is revealed as an illusion if the participle simply identifies Patroclus' vaunting words as κερτομίαι, like other arrogant and terrifying speeches that warriors make to confound their opponents (*Il.* 20.202 = 433).[43]

If I am right that the reference is to talk that is designed to cause confusion and uncertainty, we have a new explanation for Clay's observation that a speech characterized by one of the κερτομ- words tends to lead the addressee towards a response that the speaker has not openly urged or suggested. When the speaker of κερτομία succeeds in his aim, the confused 'division' of the other person's mental apparatus cannot last indefinitely, no more than a storm in the Aegean: it is resolved when the thinker

[40] This instance is difficult. Either the attack confuses and discomfits the wasps, who counter-attack *after* their initial dismay, or the boys are shouting abuse at the same time as making their physical assault. The latter seems to me preferable, because there is no other Homeric example of non-verbal κερτομία. (Janko [n. 3 above] ad loc. adduces Eur. *Hel.* 619 to support the claim that the verb can refer to 'non-verbal teasing', but this is of limited value in view of the shift in the range of meaning of the κερτομ- words in the post-Homeric poetic language [see below, n. 46].)

[41] See e.g. G. P. Rose, 'The unfriendly Phaeacians', *TAPhA* 100 (1969), 387–406, esp. 390–1.

[42] Jones, 249–50.

[43] For the idea of the victor crowing vauntingly over the dead, see *Od.* 22.412, οὐχ ὁσίη κταμένοισιν ἐπ' ἀνδράσιν εὐχετάασθαι, which Archilochus recasts as οὐ γὰρ ἐσθλὰ καθανοῦσι κερτομεῖν ἐπ' ἀνδράσιν (fr. 134 West, quoted by schol. on *Od.* 22.412).

chooses one of the options open to him, just as Nestor after the simile quoted above decides to take up his spear and shield and go to find Agamemnon (*Il.* 14.23–4). It is consistent with this that κερτομία should often be devious, as in the passages highlighted by Clay (*Il.* 1.539, 4.6, 5.419)[44] in which one god manipulatively makes a suggestion to another, often with the intention of provoking them to do the opposite, since it is typical of the complex social interaction of Homeric characters that one person awakens confused uncertainty in another's mind so as to draw them towards a certain course of action as if by their own free choice.[45] In short, Clay has identified not the meaning of κερτομία but one of its likely consequences in social practice, where it belongs in the armoury of a bullying and manipulative user of Homeric language. (In passing, it is noteworthy that beyond Homer this deceitful aspect becomes more central to the words' associations, so that it is sometimes applied to mockery or manipulation without openly abusive language, sometimes even without words of any kind.[46])

We have now covered every Homeric attestation except Achilles' ἐπικερτομέων speech to Priam. How can it fit into the range of meaning that we have sketched? On the basis of our survey, the most straightforward explanation will be that ἐπικερτομέων means, simply and starkly, that when he begins his speech Achilles is vaunting over Priam and trying to reduce him to a state of mind in which he will be confused and will not know how to respond. Verbal and thematic interpretation are closely intertwined here, and any conclusion will be coloured by one's sense of the overall mood and meaning of the scene. It perhaps seems surprising to suggest that Achilles is engaging in verbal aggression, even for a moment, since the climax of the whole encounter has been the sudden revelation of tenderness when the two men weep together and Achilles spins out his almost Hesiodic image of the nature of human misery (24.524–51). Harmonization is possible if one guesses that the variety of possible speech-acts covered by the κερτομ- words includes more trivial con-

[44] The usage departs slightly from the Homeric norm at Hes. *Th.* 545, where Zeus is κερτομέων when he deceives Prometheus by pretending to be taken in by Prometheus' deceitful presentation of the sacrificial portions. Since Zeus' words are not openly abusive or insulting, they suggest that for Hesiod the connotative pattern identified by Clay is becoming part of the central meaning of the verb (see below, n. 46).

[45] See Clay, 620–1. For this strategy in social manipulation compare Agamemnon stirring the Achaeans to valour by proposing that they abandon the siege and go home (*Il.* 2.73–5, 110–41), and Hera telling Zeus that she is going on a holiday as a ploy to entice him towards sex (*Il.* 14.292–345): see A. Heubeck, 'Zwei homerische πεῖραι', *Živa Antika* 31 (1981), 73–83, with further parallels.

[46] In Hesiod (*W.D.* 788, *Th.* 545) the manipulative aspect of κερτομία is more central than that of bullying abuse, which is entirely absent in one of the instances (see above, n. 44), while the pronounced repetitions in the *Homeric Hymn to Hermes* (56, 300, 335, and esp. 338) suggest that this word-family may have had special significance in the context of that god's association with tricky and wheedling language and behaviour. Outside epic tradition a further extension of meaning is discernible in the same direction. Although the words are still used in their Homeric senses (Archil. fr. 134 West; Pind. fr. 215a.4 Maehler; Soph. *Ant.* 956, 961; Eur. *Bacch.* 1293, *Supp.* 321–2, fr. 492.2 Nauck), they are also applied to purely mocking and deceitful talk where there is no open abuse (?Aesch. *P.V.* 986; Soph. *Phil.* 1235–6; Eur. *Cyc.* 687, *Hel.* 1229; *trag. adesp.* fr. 365a2 Radt), and even to deceitful behaviour where words are not directly involved (Eur. *Alc.* 1125, *I.A.* 849, 1006, *Hel.* 619). Herodotus uses the verb κατακερτομέω for the making of jeering and abusive speeches (1.129.1, 8.92.2) and poems (2.135.6), and refers to the singers of ribald and abusive songs as κέρτομοι χοροί (5.83.3). Beyond Herodotus, however, the words become rare in prose of the Classical period: although in the Aristotelian school κερτόμησις is recruited as a label when distinguishing different species of deceptive talk (see esp. *Divisiones Aristoteleae* 58.16, 59.2), the attestations are slight in other prose traditions.

versational strategies than those exemplified by the other Homeric attestations, so as to admit as a translation something like 'unsettling' or 'dismaying'. There is no independent support for this, however, and it represents little advance on the problem originally highlighted by Hooker (see n. 6 above). Alternatively, it can be argued that Achilles' κερτομία is oblique, directed not at Priam but at Agamemnon or the other Achaeans as a whole.[47] This also is linguistically difficult, since the other attestations show that κερτομία revolves around the speaker's interaction with his addressee; and it is still weaker to refer the participle back to something like '(unintentionally) confusing, browbeating', as one might argue with a revised version of Jones's analysis, since it remains clear that it refers to a deliberate speaking strategy on Achilles' part (see above, p. 330 with n. 9). I suggest that a stronger solution is available if we see this moment of combative talk in terms of the emotional tension that has been seen to underlie Achilles' behaviour throughout the closing scenes of the *Iliad*. During the meeting with Priam, repeated signals suggest that he has not fully abandoned the feelings described by Apollo in his complaint that Achilles has 'lost pity and shame' and has become like a bloody lion as he 'abuses dumb earth' (24.39–54). Despite his acceptance of Zeus' command that he should return the corpse (24.138–40), this hostile tendency repeatedly threatens to break out again.[48] He warns Priam not to provoke him to anger, lest he kill him in defiance of Zeus' commands (560–70); when he moves out he leaps like a lion (572), recalling the sequence of beast-similes that punctuated his foray against Hector;[49] and he contrives to prevent Priam from seeing his son, because he knows that an outburst of grief from the old man would be enough to make him lose control and kill him (584–6). I suggest that the ἐπικερτομέων speech emerges from this half-hidden emotional current. By suddenly reminding Priam of the enemies who surround him in the Achaean camp, Achilles will lapse for a few moments into bitter κερτομία, identical in aim to the more open verbal assault that one might use to upset or humiliate an enemy. Although the dark side of the hero's mood has broken the surface of his conversation for a few moments, it is in accordance with the tension and ambivalence of the scene that he moves on to civil questions aimed at arranging a truce, and that he extends his hand a few moments later to calm the old man's fears (671–2), as if trying to undo the harm done by his earlier words. If this interpretation carries conviction, it will perhaps belong among indications that the speech and behaviour of Homeric characters is liable to depict unresolved psychological tension and ambiguity, even in scenes that have traditionally been associated with tragic simplicity.

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[47] Two versions of this suggestion are found in essays in C. Gill et al. (edd.), *Reciprocity in Ancient Greece* (Oxford, 1998). G. Zanker (p. 85) holds that in suggesting that Priam is in danger Achilles mocks the 'preoccupation with quantifiable reciprocity' which would make the Achaeans use him to win a ransom, while N. Postlethwaite (p. 102) suggests that the mockery is directed obliquely at Agamemnon, offering the translation 'boasting his superiority'.

[48] The dominant view seems to be that the conflicting signs of gentleness and anger in Achilles' behaviour are part of the portrayal of one on an emotional knife-edge: 'Achilles is still in a precarious state of tension which could easily be broken' (Richardson [n. 6], 334). For detailed discussion, see J. M. Redfield, *Nature and Culture in the Iliad* (Chicago, 1975), 218; C. Segal, *The Theme of the Mutilation of the Corpse in the Iliad* (*Mnemosyne* Suppl. 17, Leiden, 1977), 11, 15–16; S. Schein, *The Mortal Hero* (Berkeley, 1984), 160–1, on Achilles 'fighting against his sense of loyalty to Patroclus'; O. Taplin, *Homeric Soundings* (Oxford, 1992), 272–4; K. Crotty, *The Poetics of Supplication* (Ithaca, NY, 1994), 5 and 70–88.

[49] M. Clarke, 'Between lions and men: images of the hero in the *Iliad*', *GRBS* 36 (1995), 137–59, esp. 158–9.