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**Clouds or Arrows? Conceptual Metaphors  
and the Etymology of Homeric Greek *kertoméō* ‘to mock; taunt’**

The description of metaphors in Homer has recently been given a new impulse with, among other things, the work of Cairns (e.g. 2016) and the publication of Zanker (2019), who discusses conceptual metaphors for Time, Speech and Thought. In this paper I will illustrate how our improved synchronic understanding of conceptual metaphors in Homeric Greek may help us find and judge etymologies, using the verb *κερτομέω* ‘to taunt; mock’ as a case in point.

The etymology of *κερτομέω*, a verb referring to a speech act (on the lexical meaning cf., *inter alia*, Hooker 1986; Clarke 2001; Lloyd 2004), has been the object of a continued scholarly debate. However, a definitive conclusion still hasn’t been reached, and etymological dictionaries remain cautious (*GEW*: “expressives Wort strittiger Herkunft”; *DELG*: “mot expressif sans étymologie établie”; *EDG* claims Pre-Greek origin). Almost all previous proposals assume that the second part *-τομέω* has the same root as *τέμνω* ‘to cut’. As for the first part *κερ-*, Jones (1989) and Clarke (2001) proposed that it reflects *κῆρ* ‘heart’, an idea that was current already in the ancient lexicographical tradition. Against this, Perpillou (1986) and García Ramón (2007) derive *κερ-* from a verbal root PIE *\*ker-* ‘to cut’, following an older proposal by Prellwitz.

In my paper, I will first discuss the problems with these existing etymological analyses. After that, I suggest two new ways to make sense of *κερτομέω* by analyzing it as a verb phrase reflecting a conceptual metaphor:

- (1) *κῆρ τετμεῖν* ‘to reach the heart’; I will argue that this could reflect WORDS ARE ARROWS (Durante 1958; recently Zanker 2019: 125-131);
- (2) *κῆρ \*τομεῖν* ‘to obscure/cloud the heart’: *-τομέω* would be an inherited PIE causative *\*tomH-éje/o-* ‘to cloud, cover with darkness’ from the verbal root *\*temH-* ‘get dark’. This phrase would reflect the metaphor GRIEF IS A COVER (Cairns 2016).

Next, I will show how Homeric poets may have consciously employed the above-mentioned metaphors in some contexts where *κερτομέω* or a related word is used. Finally, I will consider potential evidence for conceptual metaphors involving descendants of *\*temH-* ‘get dark’ in other ancient Indo-European languages. On this basis, I will make a choice between the two possible reconstructions.

## Literature

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