CrossMark

The Classical Quarterly 70.2 459–472 © The Author(s), 2021. Published by Cambridge University Press on behalf of The Classical Association.
doi:10.1017/S0009838821000136

CORPSE MUTILATION IN THE *ILIAD**

The *Iliad* opens with the image of abandoned corpses, left as prey to the wild beasts. It closes with the hard-won and respectful funeral of Hector, during which his maimed body is finally laid to rest. In-between these passages, death and the fate of dead bodies are often part of the epic's subject matter. The audience is treated to a wide selection of images concerning the fallen and their remains, ranging from those taken gently away from the battlefield to be buried to those who are posthumously mutilated where they lie. Instances of corpse mutilation are rare elsewhere in Greek historical and literary writing, but occur in the *Iliad* at a regular rate. The gruesomeness of these acts makes for shocking and violent scenes, and represents a radical departure from the normal funeral ritual with lasting repercussions for the relatives of the deceased and the fate of the dead person in the afterlife.

The phenomenon of corpse mutilation in the *Iliad* has been most extensively studied by Segal, who looked at changes in this theme throughout Books 16–24, as well as at how the narrator manipulates his language and formulas to contrast and parallel scenes containing corpse mutilation.[1] He concludes that the theme of corpse mutilation has three stages (Books 18–22, Book 23 and Book 24 respectively), which take the poem from 'intense violence to calm finale', with the greatest climax during Hector's death scene and the abating of violence throughout the next two books.[2] Segal claims that the references to mutilation in the first two-thirds of the *Iliad* are 'scattered and not grouped into a specific pattern'.[3] I will, on the contrary, argue that every mutilation scene is carefully placed to contribute to the eventual climax, and that the escalation and the progression of the theme can best be seen by considering each instance of mutilation. Rather than using Segal's approach of focussing on the language and on Homeric formulas, I will focus on the details of the act itself to determine how this theme changes throughout the narrative. There is a deliberate progression in the violence and the impact of corpse mutilation in the *Iliad*. It is not a static and unchanging act but something that intensifies and becomes more widespread. The mutilations do not occur at random, but are part of a carefully constructed narrative line throughout the story, culminating in the final mutilation of Hector. To demonstrate this, I will look at which characters perform mutilations, at what moments, with which motives and to what effect. My hypothesis is that the manner in which these mutilations take place influences their impact and effect on the story. To aid in distinguishing between the

* I am very grateful to my PhD supervisor Prof. Ineke Sluiter for her endless encouragement and invaluable comments during the writing of this paper, as well as to the Department of Classics at Leiden University (research institute LUCAS) for its support. I am also indebted to the anonymous reviewer of this journal for their suggestions.

[1] C. Segal, *The Theme of the Mutilation of the Corpse in the Iliad* (Leiden, 1971), IX.
[2] Segal (n. 1), 72–3.
[3] Segal (n. 1), 18.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0009838821000136 Published online by Cambridge University Press

nuances of different acts of corpse mutilation, I will make use of a modern forensic classification of corpse mutilation, designed to classify such acts by the motive of the perpetrator. Mine will be a narratological approach, in the neoanalytical tradition, and my aim, by classifying corpse mutilation in this way, is to show how its purpose changes throughout the narrative.

CLASSIFICATION OF CORPSE MUTILATION

Corpse mutilation can be active (a person purposefully mutilates a dead body) or passive (a body is left unburied and becomes mutilated by exposure to the elements or various animals).[4] Forensic science classifies active corpse mutilation in four categories: defensive, aggressive, offensive and necromantic.[5] Defensive mutilation is used to prevent identification of the victim or to ease transportation or disposal of the body. It is the most prevalent form of mutilation in modern society, although we have little evidence of its occurrence in ancient Greece.[6] Aggressive mutilation is when the aggression and strong emotions that led to the killing also lead to the mutilation after death, as a kind of 'overkill'. Most of the mutilations performed in the *Iliad* belong in this category. In these acts, merely killing the victim does not appease the rage of the killer, who continues to perpetrate violence even after death. In offensive mutilation, the killing is secondary to the mutilation, meaning that the killer kills someone with the primary motive of subsequently mutilating the corpse.[7] Necromantic mutilation occurs when the murderer decides to take a body part as a trophy or symbol after having committed the murder, as a reminder of the victim or of the act itself.[8] Which form of mutilation is

[4] A.M. McClellan distinguishes between 'post-mortem abuse' and 'post-mortem mutilation', in which the term mutilation is reserved for those acts in which a body part is severed from the rest of the body ('The death and mutilation of Imbrius in *Iliad* 13', *YAGE* 1 [2017], 159–74, at 162). I do not believe that this distinction is relevant and I use 'mutilation' for any act that destroys the integrity of the body (as is custom in modern forensic literature).

[5] B. Madea, *Handbook of Forensic Medicine* (Hoboken, 2014), 151; K.H. Dogan, S. Demirci, I. Deniz, Z. Erkol, 'Decapitation and dismemberment of the corpse: a matricide case', *J. Forensic Sci* 55 (2010), 542–5, at 544.

[6] A possible example is found in Hdt. 2.121, where two brothers attempt to rob king Rhampsinitus. One gets stuck in the treasure chamber he is trying to rob. The other then beheads him and takes his head to prevent the corpse from being identified. It is clearly a defensive motive but not a true corpse mutilation, but rather an intravital mutilation (death by beheading, where the mutilation occurs at the moment of death rather than after it).

[7] In modern forensic science, 'offensive mutilation' is usually reserved for lust murders, but can also refer to cannibalism or other instances in which mutilation is the main purpose of the killing (Madea [n. 5], 32.3). Several examples of this exist in Greek literature and myth. According to some accounts, Tantalus murdered his son Pelops in order to dismember him and serve his body to the gods to eat (Pind. *Ol.* 1.37–53). He would not have killed his son if he had not conceived the idea of dismembering him and have guests eat the body parts. Similar examples are Atreus' murder and cooking of Thyestes' sons, as well as Cyaxares being served a dismembered child by the Scythians (Hdt. 1.73), and Astyages feeding Harpagus his own murdered son (Hdt. 1.119). Another example is Apsyrtus' killing by Medea. In one version of this story, Medea kills her half-brother on the Argo and dismembers him, throwing parts of his body into the water to delay her pursuer, her father Aeëtes, who had to stop to retrieve the pieces of his son for burial (Apollod. *Epit.* 1.9.24).

[8] The taking of body parts during necromantic mutilation can stem from a sexual desire of the murderer or from his wish to have a permanent reminder of the killing. The latter motif occurs frequently in Greek mythology. An example is Oenomaus, who displays the heads of the suitors who unsuccessfully tried to win his daughter Hippodameia's hand in marriage (Apollod. *Epit.* 2.5),

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0009838821000136 Published online by Cambridge University Press

performed is related to the setting of the killing and to the relationship between the perpetrator and the victim.

THE *ILIAD*

The threats of passive corpse mutilation are clearly present in the first ten books of the *Iliad*, but it is not until Book 11 that the first active corpse mutilation is performed.[9] The perpetrator is Agamemnon, who encounters the brothers Peisander and Hippolochus in battle. Both beg to be taken hostage, an entreaty ignored by Agamemnon (11.131–42). He slays Peisander in his chariot and then turns on Hippolochus (11.145–7):

> Ἱππόλοχος δ᾽ ἀπόρουσε· τὸν αὖ χαμαὶ ἐξενάριξεν,
> χεῖρας ἀπὸ ξίφεϊ πλήξας ἀπό τ᾽ αὐχένα κόψας·
> ὅλμον δ᾽ ὣς ἔσσευε κυλίνδεσθαι δι᾽ ὁμίλου.[10]
>
> But Hippolochus sprang down: and him he killed on the ground,
> having struck off his arms with his sword and having cut off his head;
> he sent him rolling like a mortar through the fray.

Agamemnon slays Hippolochus, and what remains of his body is thrown into the fighting in the shape of a ὅλμος.[11] Hippolochus' mutilation (the removal of his arms and head) occurs close to the moment of his death, and it is not entirely clear whether it is an intravital mutilation or a true corpse mutilation.[12] It is, however, an extraordinarily violent killing that leaves the body mutilated and in four separate pieces. It paves the way for later, true corpse mutilations that occur clearly after death.

The circumstances of Hippolochus' killing are significant. Agamemnon has not encountered just any warriors, but recognizes Antimachus' sons, who had been especially opposed to returning Helen to Menelaus out of greed (11.123–5) and who had even proposed that Menelaus and Odysseus be killed when they came on an

and possibly also Antaeus, who used his enemies' skulls to build a temple for Poseidon (Pind. *Isthm.* 4.52–4b), although his case is ambiguous. If Antaeus killed travellers (for whatever reason) and afterwards decided to take their skulls as trophies, he would be committing necromantic mutilations. However, if he killed people in order to use their skulls to build the temple, the mutilations would be classified as offensive. A similar example is found in Stesichorus, fr. 166a Finglass (Cycnus building a temple to Apollo from travellers' skulls). Key to necromantic mutilation is that the body part serves a function to the killer, but the murder was not exclusively committed to obtain it (in contrast to offensive mutilation). For other examples of skull or head trophies in Greek mythology, see E. Vermeule, *Aspects of Death in Early Greek Arts and Poetry* (Berkeley, 1979), 236 n. 30. Pentheus' head in Euripides' *Bacchae* resembles a necromantic trophy, as his mother carries it around on a thyrsus. His dismemberment is, however, not a true necromantic mutilation but rather an intravital mutilation: he is killed by being torn apart, rather than being torn apart after being killed (*Bacch.* 1114–43).

[9] Segal cites Dolon's decapitation as an earlier mutilation, but this is an intravital mutilation rather than a corpse mutilation, as the text states that Dolon's head is severed while he was speaking (*Il.* 10.454–7).

[10] Text from M.L. West, *Homeri Ilias* (Stuttgart, 1998).

[11] It is not explicit why Agamemnon chooses to mutilate Hippolochus but not Peisander. A possible reason could be that Peisander is killed at some distance by a spear while he is still in the chariot, after which he falls backwards (11.143–4). Hippolochus, however, leaps out and is killed with a sword on the ground, thus close by to be mutilated. Agamemnon's rage is apparently not such that he seeks out Peisander's body to mutilate it. In later scenes, we do see combatants trying to get to dead bodies not killed near them.

[12] The aorist participles πλήξας and κόψας imply that the cutting off of the arms and the head occurs either just prior to or at the same time as the death. See also McClellan (n. 4), 161.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0009838821000136 Published online by Cambridge University Press

embassy to the Trojans (11.138–42). This is Agamemnon's chance for payback: Menelaus was shamed by Antimachus and now Agamemnon shames Antimachus' son (and thereby his father) by this humiliating death.[13] He tells the brothers how their father treated Menelaus, thereby letting them know why they cannot expect mercy. Then he takes his revenge by an aggressive mutilation: his anger at Antimachus makes him deny Hippolochus' plea as suppliant (a plea that was μειλίχιος ['kind'], but received a reply that was ἀμείλικτος ['unkind']) and that same anger makes him mutilate the body.[14] It is an action inspired by rage, happening in the midst of battle without prior planning or threatening. Agamemnon does not keep any part of Hippolochus as trophy, but throws his torso in the midst of the warring soldiers, demonstrating what happens to those who enrage him. This is characteristic of the aggressive type of corpse mutilation. This first mutilation—whether it be a true corpse mutilation or not—thus shows that such extraordinarily violent killings are motivated by specific personal circumstances.

Shortly after the killing of Hippolochus, Agamemnon kills and mutilates the next Trojan. Again, the circumstances lead to the mutilation. Agamemnon kills Iphidamas (11.238–40), and Iphidamas' brother Coön witnesses his death and sees Agamemnon stripping Iphidamas of his armour. When Agamemnon carries the armour away from the body, Coön strikes him on the arm with his spear, wounding Agamemnon (11.250–4). While Coön is attempting to take his brother's body back, Agamemnon kills him (11.259–61):

> τὸν δ' ἕλκοντ' ἀν' ὅμιλον ὑπ' ἀσπίδος ὀμφαλοέσσης
> οὔτησε ξυστῷ χαλκήρεϊ, λῦσε δὲ γυῖα,
> τοῖο δ' ἐπ' Ἰφιδάμαντι κάρη ἀπέκοψε παραστάς.
>
> But while he was dragging him through the crowd, Agamemnon struck him
> underneath the boss of his shield with his bronze-tipped spear, and made his limbs go loose,
> and having drawn near, he cut off Coön's head over the body of Iphidamas.

Coön is killed from some distance with a spear and Agamemnon approaches to decapitate him.[15] His head lands on the brother whose body he was trying to recover, a detail that adds to the horror of this passage. Like the killing of Hippolochus, Coön's mutilation is also provoked by specific events, this time by his wounding of Agamemnon.

[13] J.E. Lendon, 'Homeric vengeance and the outbreak of Greek wars', in H. van Wees (ed.), *War and Violence in Ancient Greece* (Swansea, 2000), 1–30, at 8.

[14] 11.137. For the characterization of Agamemnon, see J. Griffin, *Homer on Life and Death* (Oxford, 1980), 53–4 and A.M. van Erp Taalman Kip, *Agamemnon in epos en tragedie* (Assen, 1971), 48–52.

[15] It is possible that Agamemnon had to switch weapons and accomplish the decapitation with a sword, going through extra trouble to mutilate Coön's corpse. It seems difficult to decapitate an enemy with a spear, and other decapitations in the *Iliad* are usually done with a sword. For a list of weapons and injuries sustained to head and neck, see A.I. Mylonas, F.H. Tzerbos and A.C. Eftychiadis, 'Cranio-maxillofacial injuries in Homer's *Iliad*', *J. Oral Maxillofac Surg* 36 (2008), 1–7, Table 4. See below for a weapon-switch during Ilioneus' mutilation. McClellan (n. 4), 161 doubts whether Coön's mutilation is accomplished post-mortem. The Greek text suggests a killing from afar, before Agamemnon approaches to decapitate, although it does not explicitly state that Coön is dead after being hit by the spear and before being decapitated. In these early mutilations, death and mutilation follow very quickly or appear to happen simultaneously.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0009838821000136 Published online by Cambridge University Press

These two aggressive mutilations by Agamemnon serve several purposes. They demonstrate that the war intensifies from this point onwards and that dismemberment on the battlefield becomes an option.[16] This opens the door for the mutilations in later books. Although the mutilations are gruesome, there is room for escalation. What the mutilations by Agamemnon also show is that they occur at special moments when particular vengeance is called for.

The next mutilation occurs in Book 13, after a complicated battle sequence. Teucer kills the Trojan Imbrius (13.172–3). As Teucer attempts to strip Imbrius' corpse of its armour, Hector tries to avenge his death by attempting to kill Teucer (13.183). Teucer, however, dodges the spear and it slays Amphimachus, another Greek (13.184). As Hector tries to remove Amphimachus' helmet, he is attacked by Ajax and is forced to withdraw. The Greeks seize this opportunity to take the corpses of both Amphimachus and the Trojan Imbrius back to their side of the line (13.194–5). The two Aiantes strip the Trojan of his armour (13.202–5):

> κεφαλὴν δ' ἀπαλῆς ἀπὸ δειρῆς
> κόψεν Ὀϊλιάδης, κεχολωμένος Ἀμφιμάχοιο,
> ἦκε δέ μιν σφαιρηδὸν ἑλιξάμενος δι' ὁμίλου·
> Ἕκτορι δὲ προπάροιθε ποδῶν πέσεν ἐν κονίῃσι.[17]
>
> And the head the son of Oïleus cut
> from the tender neck, angered at the death of Amphimachus,
> and he sent it rolling through the fray like a ball:
> and it fell at Hector's feet in the dust.

This mutilation also falls in the aggressive category and is performed by another Greek, like all the instances that have occurred earlier. Its motive is clearly provided as well: the lesser Ajax wanted to avenge Amphimachus. A significant aspect of corpse mutilation is again illuminated here: it happens at times of extreme emotion, which is explicitly signalled in the text. The lesser Ajax was angry (κεχολωμένος) and this rage makes him cut off Imbrius' head. However, this mutilation differs from those in Book 11 in several ways. For one, the mutilator is not actually the killer. The mutilation is not a matter of overkill but a separate act entirely, which does not occur instantaneously. There is some time between Imbrius' death and his post-mortem decapitation by the lesser Ajax. The mutilations of Hippolochus and Coön could not have been prevented: they were mutilated immediately after death. However, if the Trojans had successfully recovered Imbrius' corpse, his body would have remained intact. Furthermore, Imbrius had nothing to do with Amphimachus' death. Amphimachus died when Imbrius was already dead. His body is an instrument to get to Hector.[18] His mutilation by the lesser Ajax therefore represents an escalation: corpses can now be mutilated on the battlefield not only by the killers but also by other warriors, even if the deceased did not directly offend or harm them. Quickly recovering corpses becomes of the utmost importance.

[16] Van Erp Taalman Kip (n. 14), 49.

[17] For this as anticipation 'on a microcosmic scale' of Books 16–22, see Segal (n. 1), 23 n. 1.

[18] See McClellan (n. 4) for how Imbrius' mutilation anticipates Hector's mutilation, as well as for its important placement at the beginning of the second half of the poem. McClellan believes the scene to be an anomaly, the one time in which an overt mutilation is committed. However, although Imbrius' mutilation holds an important place in the pattern of escalation that eventually leads to Hector's mutilation, the decapitation of Coön and that of Ilioneus are acts of post-mortem mutilation as well, and this scene is not as unique as McClellan makes it out to be.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0009838821000136 Published online by Cambridge University Press

After decapitating Imbrius, the lesser Ajax hurls his head towards the Trojans, much like Agamemnon did with Hippolochus' trunk. Ajax, however, specifically aims the head towards the warrior on whom he was actually exacting his revenge: it lands in the dust at Hector's feet.

The next mutilation, in Book 14, continues this pattern of escalation. It is part of a chaotic series of killings.[19] The Greek Peneleus is angered by the death of comrade Promachus and performs the most gruesome mutilation yet. He chases Acamas, who escapes him, but then turns on Ilioneus (14.489–505):

ὃ δ' οὔτασεν Ἰλιονῆα,
υἱὸν Φόρβαντος πολυμήλου, τόν ῥα μάλιστα
Ἑρμείας Τρώων ἐφίλει καὶ κτῆσιν ὄπασσεν·
τῷ δ' ἄρ' ὑπὸ μήτηρ μοῦνον τέκεν Ἰλιονῆα.
τὸν τόθ' ὑπ' ὀφρύος οὖτα κατ' ὀφθαλμοῖο θέμεθλα,
ἐκ δ' ὦσε γλήνην· δόρυ δ' ὀφθαλμοῖο διάπρο
καὶ διὰ ἰνίου ἦλθεν, ὃ δ' ἔζετο χεῖρε πετάσσας
ἄμφω· Πηνέλεως δὲ ἐρυσσάμενος ξίφος ὀξὺ
αὐχένα μέσσον ἔλασσεν, ἀπήραξεν δὲ χαμᾶζε
αὐτῇ σὺν πήληκι κάρη· ἔτι δ' ὄβριμον ἔγχος
ἦεν ἐν ὀφθαλμῷ. ὃ δὲ φὴ κώδειαν ἀνασχὼν
πέφραδέ τε Τρώεσσι καὶ εὐχόμενος ἔπος ηὔδα·
'εἰπέμεναί μοι, Τρῶες, ἀγαυοῦ Ἰλιονῆος
πατρὶ φίλῳ καὶ μητρὶ γοήμεναι ἐν μεγάροισιν.
οὐδὲ γὰρ ἡ Προμάχοιο δάμαρ Ἀλεγηνορίδαο
ἀνδρὶ φίλῳ ἐλθόντι γανύσσεται, ὁππότε κεν δὴ
ἐκ Τροίης σὺν νηυσὶ νεώμεθα κοῦροι Ἀχαιῶν.'

But Peneleus struck Ilioneus,
son of Phorbas, rich in livestock, whom Hermes loved
most of the Trojans and granted wealth:
to him the mother bore Ilioneus as an only child.
Him did Peneleus strike beneath the orbital rim of
the eye, and he drove out the eyeball: the spear went through
the eye and the base of the neck. And Ilioneus went down stretching
out both arms: and Peneleus, after drawing his sharp sword,
drove it right through the neck and struck off
the head together with the helmet onto the ground: and still
the heavy spear stayed in the eye. Holding it up like a poppy-head,
he showed it to the Trojans and boasted:
'Trojans, tell the dear father and mother of the proud Ilioneus
from me to lament in their house, because neither will
the wife of Promachus, son of Agenor, rejoice over the homecoming of her dear husband,
when we, the young men of the Greeks, shall return home from Troy with our ships.'

The set-up for the mutilation is dramatic and elaborate. We are first made to think about Ilioneus' father, loved by Hermes, among his flocks. Then we picture his mother, about to lose her only child. The next image is that of Peneleus' spear piercing Ilioneus' eyeball, a vivid and horrible notion.[20] The rest of the scene is full of details: the spear exiting Ilioneus' neck, Ilioneus stretching out his arms as he falls, his head

[19] These series of killings are typical for mutilation scenes (Lendon [n. 13], 5).

[20] Repetition of ὀφθαλμός in lines 493 and 494 adds to the horror (R. Janko, *The Iliad: A Commentary, Volume IV: Books 13–16* [Cambridge, 1992], 222).

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0009838821000136 Published online by Cambridge University Press

being sliced off while still wearing its helmet. Rather than throwing the head away, Peneleus chooses to display it like a κώδεια ('poppy-head').[21] Although we are not told what Peneleus does with the head afterwards, his actions have moved from a purely aggressive mutilation somewhat in the direction of a necromantic mutilation, with the head as a grisly trophy.[22] Peneleus then speaks, drawing the attention of more Trojans. The mutilation is a message that needs to be passed on to Ilioneus' now childless mother and father: they will not see their son again, like Promachus' wife will not welcome her husband home. Like Imbrius, Ilioneus is a victim not directly involved in the preceding fighting. His fate is grotesque and, for the first time, the narrator shows us the effect on others (14.506–7):[23]

> ὣς φάτο· τοὺς δ' ἄρα πάντας ὑπὸ τρόμος ἔλλαβε γυῖα,
> πάπτηνεν δὲ ἕκαστος, ὅπῃ φύγοι αἰπὺν ὄλεθρον.
>
> So he spoke, and trembling took hold of all of them,
> And each looked about him for a way to escape utter destruction.

While the previous mutilations were only witnessed by those who happened to be close by (whose reactions were not described), Ilioneus' mutilated head on the spear is seen by multiple Trojan warriors. Widespread physical fear takes hold of them. However, as we know from modern historical examples, the awareness of their comrades being mutilated can inspire soldiers to do the same.[24] From this point onwards, the threat of mutilation becomes much more prominent, on both sides of the war.[25] Up until now, both the contemplation and the performance of corpse mutilation was solely in Greek minds and hands. After this public display of Ilioneus' head, this changes.

In Book 16, it becomes apparent that soldiers now fear mutilation on the battlefield. After Sarpedon's death, Glaucus reproaches Hector for not paying attention to his allies. He urges Hector to protect Sarpedon's corpse (16.544–7):

> ἀλλὰ φίλοι πάρστητε, νεμεσσήθητε δὲ θυμῷ,
> μὴ ἀπὸ τεύχε' ἕλωνται, ἀεικίσσωσι δὲ νεκρὸν
> Μυρμιδόνες, Δαναῶν κεχολωμένοι ὅσσοι ὄλοντο,
> τοὺς ἐπὶ νηυσὶ θοῇσιν ἐπέφνομεν ἐγχείῃσιν.
>
> But, friends, go stand by him, and feel shame in your heart,
> lest the Myrmidons take his armour and mutilate his corpse,
> angered that so many of the Greeks have perished,
> whom we have killed with our spears by the swift ships.[26]

[21] For the imagery of Ilioneus' head as the head of a poppy, see Janko (n. 20), 222.

[22] Segal somewhat excuses Peneleus' actions by saying that he 'has not deliberately impaled the head: it is on his spear because the victim has already been struck through the eye' (Segal [n. 1], 23; see also McClellan [n. 4], 161). This is true, but it seems that Peneleus purposefully decapitates Ilioneus with his sword to have his head on his spear. He chooses to display it and does so while boasting, using the body part for a specific purpose. This is a deliberate corpse mutilation.

[23] Lendon (n. 13), 4.

[24] Both German and French soldiers mutilated corpses in the First World War after hearing rumours about the other party mutilating the dead; American and Japanese soldiers also mutilated the bodies of their enemies during the Pacific War (H. Jones, *Violence against Prisoners of War in the First World War* [Cambridge, 2011], 73–6; J.J. Weingartner, 'Trophies of war: U.S. troops and the mutilation of Japanese war dead, 1941–1945', *Pac. Hist. Rev.* 61 [1992], 53–67, at 62 n. 31).

[25] See also Segal (n. 1), 20 n. 3.

[26] Many mutilations are described in detail. Sometimes, however, the act is alluded to without explicitly stating the violations that take place. Usually, the word used is a form of ἀεικίζω, which

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0009838821000136 Published online by Cambridge University Press

Mutilation is no longer imagined as performed solely under special circumstances that require extreme vengeance, but Glaucus now fears it as a general punishment for Trojans killing the Greeks. Glaucus recognizes that mutilation is fuelled by emotion: their state of anger (κεχολωμένοι) could induce the Greeks to mutilate Trojan corpses.

Thus far, mutilations have been performed by Agamemnon, the lesser Ajax and Peneleus, all of them Greeks. In Books 16 and 17, other major characters are starting to take part as well. It is Patroclus, often characterized by his gentle nature, who subsequently expresses the desire to mutilate the corpse of another major hero, justifying Glaucus' fears (16.558–61):

> κεῖται ἀνήρ, ὃς πρῶτος ἐσήλατο τεῖχος Ἀχαιῶν,
> Σαρπηδών. ἀλλ᾽ εἴ μιν ἀεικισσαίμεθ᾽ ἑλόντες,
> τεύχεά τ᾽ ὤμοιιν ἀφελοίμεθα· καί τιν᾽ ἑταίρων
> αὐτοῦ ἀμυνομένων δαμασαίμεθα νηλέϊ χαλκῷ.
>
> The man who was the first to jump the wall of the Greeks has fallen:
> Sarpedon. But let us mutilate him after having taken his body,
> and let us strip the armour from his shoulders, and lay low with ruthless bronze
> any of his comrades who attempts to keep us from him.

We never learn what Patroclus intended to do exactly with Sarpedon's body. In the fighting, the corpse does become passively mutilated and defiled by 'weapons and blood and dust' (16.638–40). Before any of the Greeks can purposefully harm the body, however, Zeus orders Apollo to take Sarpedon home to Lycia. Apollo will wash and anoint his corpse, dress him in immortal clothing and ensure his full burial (16.667–75): τὸ γὰρ γέρας ἐστὶ θανόντων ('for such is the right of the dead', 16.675).[27] The mutilation theme progresses slowly throughout these scenes, from the mutilation of minor characters to the near mutilation of major characters, to the eventual mutilation of Hector.

Soon after Sarpedon's death, Hector kills Patroclus. He extracts his spear from the corpse and then rejoins the fighting without mutilating him (16.862–5). The first threat of mutilation after Patroclus' death comes from Euphorbus, who encounters Menelaus trying to protect Patroclus' body. It is notable, because he is the first Trojan to consider corpse mutilation.[28] Up to this point, all threats and acts of mutilation have been Greek. First, Euphorbus threatens Menelaus with death, but Menelaus responds by telling him

is generally translated as 'to violate', 'to treat unseemly', 'to dishonour' or 'to mutilate'. In this particular passage, the meaning of ἀεικίζω is clear from its context: it is something done to the corpse (after its armour has been removed) by the enemy at a time of great emotion (anger at those perished), and it will shame his friends/fellow Trojans, who need to protect the corpse from this act. It contains all the elements associated with corpse mutilation and I choose therefore to translate it as such. For other uses of ἀεικίζω referring to damaging a corpse, see 16.559 (desire to mutilate Sarpedon), 19.26 (passive mutilation of Patroclus' corpse by flies and worms), 22.256 (Hector asking Achilles to give his body back unharmed), 22.404 (reference to the mutilation which Hector's corpse is about to undergo) and 24.22 (Achilles mutilating Hector).

[27] Segal points out that Sarpedon's gentle ending shows that 'the mutilation theme does not yet reach its full violence' (Segal [n. 1], 18–19).

[28] Why corpse mutilation has been an act reserved for Greeks up to this point is not entirely clear. Perhaps the Greeks simply had more opportunities (most of the *aristeiai* are by Greeks) or perhaps the poet wanted to illustrate Greek superiority in battle. Greeks are neither mutilated nor made to plea for their lives or for burial, unlike the Trojans Adrastus, Hippolochus, Pisander, Tros, Lycaon and Hector (I.J.F. de Jong, *Homer Iliad Book 22* [Cambridge, 2012], 144).

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0009838821000136 Published online by Cambridge University Press

how he has killed his brother Hyperenor (17.12–32). This enrages Euphorbus and he goes beyond promising Menelaus death (17.38–40):

> ἦ κέ σφιν δειλοῖσι γόου κατάπαυμα γενοίμην,
> εἴ κεν ἐγὼ κεφαλήν τε τεὴν καὶ τεύχε᾽ ἐνείκας
> Πανθόῳ ἐν χείρεσσι βάλω καὶ Φρόντιδι δίῃ.
>
> But in their misery I could surely be a means of stopping their grief for them,
> if I brought your head and your armour
> and placed them in the hands of Panthous and excellent Phrontis.

Euphorbus threatens the first purely necromantic mutilation. He wants Menelaus' head as a trophy with a specific purpose: to end his parents' grief for their fallen son. Decapitation is put on the same level as stripping someone of his armour: this as well as the fact that the Trojans are now also considering corpse mutilation are signs that the mutilation theme is becoming more widespread. Yet, Euphorbus never gets to take his trophy. It is Menelaus' spear that pierces his neck (17.47–50).

The death of Euphorbus draws Hector back to the corpse of Patroclus (17.125–7):

> Ἕκτωρ μὲν Πάτροκλον ἐπεὶ κλυτὰ τεύχε᾽ ἀπηύρα,
> εἶλχ᾽, ἵν᾽ ἀπ᾽ ὤμοιιν κεφαλὴν τάμοι ὀξέϊ χαλκῷ,
> τὸν δὲ νέκυν Τρωῇσιν ἐρυσσάμενος κυσὶ δοίη·
>
> Hector, after he had stripped Patroclus of his glorious armour,
> began to drag him away so that he could cut his head off his shoulders with the sharp
> bronze and drag him off and give his corpse to the Trojan dogs.

Hector intends to decapitate Patroclus and deny him burial. Patroclus' death is important in multiple ways: it removes a great warrior from the side of the Greeks, it avenges Sarpedon's death and it will pain Achilles. All of these are reasons for Hector to want to take credit. Mutilation has become a strategic and psychological weapon instead of an impulsive act. In this passage, Hector is never described as angry. Mutilation is more planned now than in Books 11 and 14, which is why there can be an interval between death and mutilation.

Hector is forced back by Ajax before he can decapitate Patroclus. A long battle over the corpse ensues. Before Hector can get hold of Patroclus, however, Achilles is urged into the battle by Iris, who inspires him to hurry to protect his friend's body (18.175–7):

> μάλιστα δὲ φαίδιμος Ἕκτωρ
> ἑλκέμεναι μέμονεν· κεφαλὴν δέ ἑ θυμὸς ἄνωγεν
> πῆξαι ἀνὰ σκολόπεσσι ταμόνθ᾽ ἁπαλῆς ἀπὸ δειρῆς.
>
> And glorious Hector is the most intent on dragging
> him off: and his heart bids him to cut off the head from his tender
> neck in order to fix it upon a stake.

It is the necromantic mutilation suggested by Euphorbus. However, it exists only in Iris' words and we cannot know whether Hector actually intended this or whether Iris is just using the scenario that will most enrage Achilles. Whatever the case, the effect of these words on Achilles are clear. He joins the battle and will have Hector's alleged threat of mutilation in mind. Segal states that 'Homer's refusal to localize the savagery on one

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0009838821000136 Published online by Cambridge University Press

side only expresses the comprehensiveness of his vision of war'.[29] However, the mutilation theme is actually strictly divided. The Trojan involvement stays limited again and again, present only in intention or wish but not in action. Every Trojan attempt to accomplish a mutilation is thwarted, and mutilation remains always the terrain of the Greeks. Theirs is the greater power on the battlefield as well as the greater rage.

As Achilles rejoins the battle, the amount of violence and aggression continues to build. Achilles kills many Trojans and leaves their bodies in the river to be passively mutilated by eels and fish (21.200–4).[30] He exults in it and displays no restraint, until he is eventually almost killed by the river Scamander.

When Hector meets Achilles on the battlefield for their final fight, he attempts to prevent future corpse mutilation by trying to make a deal with Achilles: the victor should return the body of the slain to his people (22.256–9). By refusing to return Hector's body even before their fight has started, Achilles suggests that his mistreatment of Hector's corpse is planned. When Achilles has mortally wounded Hector, Hector reiterates his request to have his body returned to his parents (22.338–44). Again Achilles refuses, addressing Hector as κύον (22.345), showing that, to him, he is subhuman.[31] Patroclus is the one who will be buried (22.335–6); Hector will be left for the dogs.[32]

The start of Hector's mutilation belongs not only to Achilles but to many Greeks. It is a communal ritual. They gather around the body and each inflicts a wound (22.371). Only when they are finished does Achilles get involved.[33] His mutilation of Hector is not accomplished in the heat of the moment. First he waits, then he speaks to the Greeks and declares that they will take the body back to their camp (22.391–2). Afterwards, he pierces Hector's ankles, threads rope through the holes and binds him to his chariot (22.399–404):

> ἐς δίφρον δ᾽ ἀναβὰς ἀνά τε κλυτὰ τεύχε᾽ ἀείρας
> μάστιξέν ῥ᾽ ἐλάαν, τὼ δ᾽ οὐκ ἄκοντε πετέσθην.
> τοῦ δ᾽ ἦν ἑλκομένοιο κονίσαλος, ἀμφὶ δὲ χαῖται
> κυάνεαι πίτναντο, κάρη δ᾽ ἅπαν ἐν κονίῃσιν
> κεῖτο πάρος χαρίεν, τότε δὲ Ζεὺς δυσμενέεσσιν
> δῶκεν ἀεικίσσασθαι ἐῇ ἐν πατρίδι γαίῃ.

[29] Segal (n. 1), 17.

[30] This is the first time that passive mutilation is actually shown to happen, although it has been mentioned many times (e.g. 1.4–5, 2.391–3, 8.379–80, 11.452–4, 13.831–2, 15.348–51, 17.240–4): another sign of the escalation of the theme. McClellan (n. 4), 161 attempts to downplay this passive mutilation coming to fruition by stating that Hephaestus' fire scorches the river and its banks, burning the corpses and thereby 'approximating a mass cremation following the ritual cleansing with "water"', but this happens several lines after the fish had torn the fat from the corpses' kidneys. Burial or cremation is always eventually achieved in the *Iliad*, but does not negate the corpse mutilation that preceded it.

[31] Achilles even wishes that his μένος καὶ θυμός would let him eat Hector's flesh (22.346–7), thereby threatening offensive mutilation. The one other reference to cannibalism comes from a female non-combatant: Hecuba wishes she could eat Achilles' liver in requital for the loss of her son (24.212–13). Offensive mutilation is the rarest and possibly most shocking type of corpse mutilation. It is only threatened, never accomplished, and only by those who have perhaps lost the most and whose desire for revenge is so great as to justify this level of violence.

[32] Achilles mentions this many times during their exchanges, in 22.335, 22.348 and 22.354.

[33] For an analysis of how Achilles' moral character has changed after his quarrel with Agamemnon ('betrayal of what's right') and after Patroclus' death ('loss of a special comrade') in such a way that he is now capable of corpse mutilation, see J. Shay, *Achilles in Vietnam: Combat Trauma and the Undoing of Character* (New York, 1995), 28–30.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0009838821000136 Published online by Cambridge University Press

> Having mounted his chariot and lifted the glorious armour into it,
> he whipped the horses to put them into motion, and they darted forward eagerly.
> And from Hector, as he was dragged, a cloud of dust rose up and on either side
> his dark hair spread out and his formerly beautiful head lay entirely
> in the dust, and now Zeus had given him
> to his enemies to be mutilated in his own native land.

The method of mutilation here is very different from the earlier mutilations. It is still aggressive in nature, but there is no decapitation or dismemberment. Achilles does not hack or slice at the corpse, but carefully pierces the ankles. The text explicitly signals in line 395 that the mutilation was planned: ἦ ῥα, καὶ Ἕκτορα δῖον ἀεικέα μήδετο ἔργα ('So he spoke, and devised shameful treatment for godlike Hector'). The next lines describe in detail what he does with the body. Achilles does not take Hector's head to put it on a spike, as Hector allegedly intended to do with Patroclus. He does not seem interested in preserving Hector's identity: in the passage above, references are made to the dust that now effaces Hector's former beauty when he is dragged behind the chariot (22.403). Back at the camp, Achilles leaves Hector lying prone (πρηνής) on the ground (23.25), a perversion of funeral rites, as the body was normally laid out on its back.[34] It looks like he tries to erase Hector. Patroclus will get a funeral and will be remembered, while Hector becomes a rotting corpse that is no longer recognizable, with no tomb to remember him. There is also a necromantic element in the mutilation of Hector. His body is not simply discarded, as is usually the case after an aggressive mutilation. Instead, the corpse is taken back to the camp and later on dragged around the mound, as if to demonstrate to the dead Patroclus that he has been avenged. As other combatants have taken armour from the dead as trophies, Achilles has taken the entire body for this purpose.

Up to this point, the social effect of corpse mutilation has not been represented at length by the narrator. Apart from two verses about the fear which Ilioneus' decapitation caused among the Trojans, we have not been exposed to the impact and the aftermath of corpse mutilation. Books 23 and 24 change this.

In Troy, Priam, Hecuba, Andromache and other Trojans react to Hector's death, his denial of burial and his mutilation. Other than at the Greek camp, where a communal funeral for Patroclus is in progress, the Trojans have no body to bury. Their grief is individual and disparate, not centred around a ritual. Priam has to be held back from leaving the city immediately to supplicate Achilles. There is no closure for him and Hecuba as long as Hector's body is not with them (22.426–8). When Andromache hears the news of her husband's death and sees the body dragged behind the chariot, she faints (22.466–7).[35] Hector's fate produces a physical reaction in her. She also keenly feels the need for a funeral and devises an alternative ceremony by burning Hector's clothes (22.513–14). As days pass without an opportunity to get Hector's body back, the Trojans grow more desperate. The chances of Hector's remains being devoured by dogs and of there being nothing left to bury are continually increasing. Urged by the gods, Priam sets out for the Greek camp. Hector's death and the remoteness of his body are largely responsible for his sorrow, but the mutilation intensifies his fears for Hector's condition. What the Trojans imagine is more horrible

[34] There is also a parallel between the defilement of Hector's head and that of Achilles' helmet when Patroclus died (Segal [n. 1], 41). For the ritual of *prothesis* (which Achilles perverts by laying Hector facedown), see R. Garland, *The Greek Way of Death* (Ithaca, 1985), 23–31.

[35] On the meaning of Hector's loss for Andromache in particular, see Segal (n. 1), 44–7.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0009838821000136 Published online by Cambridge University Press

than the reality. Andromache pictures wriggling worms and dogs feeding on the naked body of her husband (22.509–11) and Priam asks Hermes whether Achilles has dismembered his son and fed the pieces to his dogs (24.406–9).

In the Greek camp, Hector's death and mutilation appear to bring the army together, first in their joint stabbing of him, then in their mourning for Patroclus. Achilles believes that by having brought Hector's corpse to Patroclus' bier he has fulfilled a promise to him (23.20–1):

> πάντα γὰρ ἤδη τοι τελέω τὰ πάροιθεν ὑπέστην,
> Ἕκτορα δεῦρ᾽ ἐρύσας δώσειν κυσὶν ὠμὰ δάσασθαι
>
> Now I accomplish all that I promised you earlier:
> to give Hector, having dragged him here, raw to the dogs to eat.

Achilles expects that killing and mutilating Hector will bring closure to him and Patroclus. He has avenged his friend and can finally sleep. However, in his dream Patroclus' ghost appears, rebuking him for not having buried him yet (23.69–74). Patroclus does not speak about Hector or about his gratitude for being avenged. The only thing that matters to him is to be buried so that he can enter the gates of Hades. Achilles obeys and organizes an elaborate funeral for Patroclus. He emphasizes once more how different Hector's fate is from Patroclus': Hector will be given not to the fire but to the dogs (23.182–3). This is another promise that goes unfulfilled. Aphrodite keeps the dogs away and Apollo prevents decomposition (23.184–91). The mutilation has failed in its two main purposes: it has not brought closure to Achilles and Patroclus, and it has not succeeded in destroying Hector's body.

When Patroclus' funeral is accomplished, the funeral games have ended and the conflict between Achilles and Agamemnon has been resolved, Achilles still does not find peace. He does not eat or sleep, he wanders along the shore and drags Hector's corpse around Patroclus' mound (24.15–18). This accomplishes nothing. Any satisfaction or gain the mutilator may experience from mutilating an enemy in a combat situation is not replicated outside of battle. Most mutilators avenged an insult (the dishonouring of Menelaus, an injury, the death of a comrade) and were then able to continue fighting; Peneleus succeeded in frightening the Trojans by his mutilation of Ilioneus. Within battle, the act of corpse mutilation does not disrupt the life of the mutilator. It is part of the sequence of violence and aggression that fits this setting. Outside of battle, corpse mutilation becomes an anomaly and a disruption to normal life.[36] Achilles mutilates Hector, but keeps his body instead of moving on. He does not rejoin the battle or ordinary life in the camp. The presence of Hector's corpse becomes a wrong and stands in the way of any closure. The gods also know this and speak out against the mutilation (24.33–54), addressing its futility: Achilles is abusing 'dumb earth' (24.55). Thetis is called to relate to Achilles that Hector's corpse has to be returned. His acquiescence is swift (24.139–40):[37]

[36] Many American veterans and their families went to great lengths in the decades after the Pacific War to repatriate the skulls of Japanese soldiers that had been taken as trophies and had become objects of shame and horror: '[at home], it seems that many veterans and their families did not know what to do with them, because there were no accepted cultural schemata for the use of such objects' (S. Harrison, 'Skull trophies of the Pacific War: transgressive objects of remembrance', *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute* 12 [2006], 817–36, at 831).

[37] Throughout the *Iliad*, the influence of the gods on the mutilation theme is subtle. Athena urges Menelaus to protect the corpse of Patroclus (17.557–8), Iris uses the image of Patroclus' mutilated

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0009838821000136 Published online by Cambridge University Press

τῇδ᾽ εἴη· ὃς ἄποινα φέροι καὶ νεκρὸν ἄγοιτο,
εἰ δὴ πρόφρονι θυμῷ Ὀλύμπιος αὐτὸς ἀνώγει.

So be it; let him who brings the ransom also take away the corpse,
if indeed wholeheartedly the Olympian himself commands it.

It is no longer 'Hector' who is lying outside his tent, it is a νεκρός and Achilles can now let go. The ransom ensures that he loses no honour in doing so. The remainder of the narrative is taken up with the undoing of the mutilation theme. Priam and Achilles talk. They eat and mourn together.[38] The ransom is brought into Achilles' hut and Achilles uses part of it to wrap Hector's body before placing him on the bier (24.578–81), thus undertaking funeral preparations normally performed by family members (24.589). It is as if he wants to reverse the process of mutilation: after abusing Hector's corpse, he now shows it honour and makes it fit to display. He even allows a ceasefire for Hector's burial (24.656–8).[39] His hospitality goes beyond what would be required to obtain the ransom for the body. Achilles is able to rejoin Greek life (of which eating, mourning and burying the dead are an integral part) by this observance of funeral rites rather than by mutilating his enemy.

Priam takes the body back to the city and the Trojan people come together to receive them: οὐδέ τις αὐτόθ᾽ ἐνὶ πτόλεϊ λίπετ᾽ ἀνὴρ | οὐδὲ γυνή (24.707–8). The corpse appears πρόσφατος, as if the mutilation never occurred (24.757). In the outpouring of grief at Hector's death among the Trojans, that, at least, is a comfort.

CONCLUSION

Within the *Iliad* there is a clear escalation of violence that culminates in the death of Hector, as has been illustrated by Segal in the past. The exact nature of this escalation can be analysed and exposed by closely looking at the details of every act of corpse mutilation. Modern forensic terminology is effective in showing how the mutilation theme changes and develops.

Throughout the *Iliad*, purely aggressive, instantaneous mutilations performed for direct revenge on the victim make way for (the threat of) delayed necromantic or aggressive mutilations performed for strategic reasons to exact a more general vengeance on the enemy as a whole. The first mutilations humiliate the victim, potentially damage his shade in the afterlife and presumably provide some gratification to the mutilator who mutilates his victim during a moment of extreme emotion. As the

corpse to spur Achilles into action, and Apollo and Aphrodite protect Hector's body from decay and from devouring by dogs. As Segal (n. 1), 55 points out, the same is true for their final intervention that allows Achilles to give up Hector's corpse: the gods do not interfere 'until such an action is already intelligible in terms of the human motivation'.

[38] Achilles appears to break his fast twice. The first time is in Book 23, when he eats a funeral feast for Patroclus with the leaders of the Greek army (23.48). Yet, in Book 24, Thetis urges Achilles to stop fasting and abstaining from sex (24.128–30) (R. Seaford, *Reciprocity and Ritual: Homer and Tragedy in the Developing City-State* [Oxford, 1994], 159–60, 172–3). Apparently, Achilles began his fast again after Patroclus' funeral: this is another sign that it has not fully brought him closure. Breaking his fast now, while giving Hector's corpse back, shows that the mutilation theme needed to be resolved before Achilles could reintegrate into normal life again. Achilles ending his abstinence from sex is implied by him laying with Briseïs the following night (24.676).

[39] Achilles' gentleness and rage are closely related. Achilles fears that he will kill Priam if the old king angers him (24.583–6).

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0009838821000136 Published online by Cambridge University Press

narrative progresses, mutilation still does all these things, but is also used to shock or frighten the enemy (Peneleus showing the head of Ilioneus to the Trojans) and to serve as a communal ritual (the Greeks mutilate Hector together) or the fulfilment of a promise to a dead comrade (Achilles' mutilation of Hector to avenge Patroclus). Noteworthy is the fact that only Greeks perform corpse mutilation. The Trojans plan and attempt to mutilate corpses several times, but fail in every instance (even when they have the upper hand in battle), while the Greeks continue to demonstrate ever-increasing violence and rage, of which corpse abuse becomes an important part. The Greeks and the Trojans are portrayed differently in this matter, and this raises the question whether they inhabit a disparate moral universe when it comes to perpetrating violence and committing corpse mutilation.

The mutilation theme illustrates the escalation of violence present in the *Iliad*. It also shows that this kind of violence is unsustainable. Keeping and dishonouring Hector's body does not comfort Achilles. On the battlefield, mutilation briefly provides a gain that ranges from the presumed short-lived satisfaction of the mutilator to the momentary terror of the enemy. Back at the camp, however, the mutilated corpse ceases to fulfil any function. It becomes a barrier to Achilles, who becomes stuck in his grieving process, renewing his fast after Patroclus' funeral and abstaining from sex. Only through restoring the body to Priam—thereby reversing the mutilation process—can he begin to attain closure.

Active corpse mutilation is notably absent in the first half of the *Iliad*. Only when the fighting intensifies in the second half of the poem do mutilations start occurring at a regular rate. From Book 11 onwards, the placement and the details of each mutilation appear to have been carefully chosen and positioned—not because the epic tradition thought in or distinguished the modern categories of mutilation we now recognize, but because it is intuitive that a planned mutilation is different and (morally) worse than a mutilation committed in the heat of the moment, and because a long, public, drawn-out mutilation represents an escalation when compared to a rapid decapitation. The narrator increases the severity and frequency of corpse mutilation throughout the second half of the *Iliad*. Such an observation is significant, because it potentially tells us something about how the *Iliad* was created. Narrative lines throughout the poem such as the mutilation theme point to careful planning and construction. This makes corpse mutilation, despite its gruesome nature, a subject worthy of consideration.

Leiden University MAAIKE VAN DER PLAS
m.c.van_der_plas@lumc.nl

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0009838821000136 Published online by Cambridge University Press