Concordia Discors
The Traveling Heart as Foreign Object in Chaucer’s Troilus and Criseyde

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Quid velit et possit rerum concordia discors.
— Horace, Epistles I:xii, l. 4

Interior Landscapes of the Body and their Implications

The quote from Horace’s Epistles in my epigraph succinctly articulates the complexity of the heart’s physical movements and characteristics in Chaucer’s Troilus and Criseyde: what I will discuss in this essay as a process of concordia discors, or harmonious discord. Hearts in this poem are sometimes just symbols, particularly in the frequent references to Troilus’s heartache. In other instances, hearts are profoundly material, and even objectified in very specific and consistent ways throughout the narrative. This essay focuses on the removal and exchange of disembodied and objectified hearts, their profound effects on

1 [What would and could result from the harmonious discord of things.] See Horace, Epistles (London: ECCO–York University, 1746).
notions of identity and ontological integrity in the poem. The interactions between hearts and bodies in *Troilus and Criseyde* also create a complex interplay of transits, transports, scapes, and flows. Bodies move, but they are also at times transported against their will. Hearts are sometimes part of the internal landscapes of bodies, but at other times they are transported out of bodies. While the degree to which physical dynamics governing movement and physical integrity in works of fantasy remains a subject of critical debate, I argue that Chaucer’s insistence on materiality— that the hearts function in material ways that align them with their cultural function— grants the traveling hearts some degree of scientific gravitas within their historical context. The dual function of the heart, as both a vessel and a thing to be placed inside a vessel, makes it the ideal representation for the cultural conflicts of the Trojan War as represented in Chaucer’s poem. Themes of invasion, mobility, and displacement are pivotal to the plot, and encapsulated by the material forms and movements of the eagle’s heart and the heart-shaped ruby brooch in the poem. For this reason, I will focus on the ways in which the forms of cognitive estrangement present in this poem— alienation of the reader from his or her physical reality through cognitive organization of an alternate reality— engage with the physical environment of the body, its interior, and the organization thereof.


This essay is organized according to three physical realities of medieval travel described by Jean Verdon:

[Travel] had so little substance that at first it was identified with the concrete elements that made it up: the road itself (via — way or journey), or the money needed to carry it out (viaticum). Later came the sense of movement, especially as carried out by pilgrims, and then by those armed pilgrims, the crusaders.\(^5\)

The main concerns of territory, exchange, and movement described by Verdon reveal the importance of thinking through the internal landscapes transformed by travel. As Verdon implies, movement across vast landscapes mattered less to the medieval definition of travel than the suffering and loss incurred by the traveler on the journey. Medieval travelers were likely to be robbed or killed on the roads. They had to travel through dense forests and uncharted landscapes, which introduces the threats of misdirection and disorientation into the structure of bodily damage in medieval travel literature. In light of this understanding of travel, it makes sense to talk about medieval travel in material and microcosmic ways. Movement across vast landscapes matters less to the medieval definition of travel than the suffering and loss incurred on the journey. Bodies are the primary territories in question. Finally, the financial cost of travel mentioned in Verdon’s description is also useful for making sense of the exchanges in the narrative, and it too becomes a question of bodily movement and damage in the poem. Although literal currency is not a concern in *Troilus and Criseyde*, systems of exchange involving hearts and bodies are integral to processes of disorientation and estrangement, particularly when the body or heart being exchanged is incapacitated or stripped of agency — and thereby objectified — or when the exchange is involuntary.

\(^5\) Jean Verdon, *Travel in the Middle Ages* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 2003), 1.
Using these methods for categorizing the concrete elements of medieval travel, in this essay I reframe the familiar medieval trope of the disembodied heart in *Troilus and Criseyde*, employing theories of incorporation to examine how the movements of the hearts in this narrative actually reflect and threaten the unstable identities of the characters.\(^6\) In addition to the distinct functions of estrangement and foreignness in the poem, two medieval literary manifestations of the heart are also vital. The first is examined in Heather Webb’s study of medical and metaphorical conceptions of the heart in literature and culture.\(^7\) The second, the relationship between the heart and the “metaphor of the inner person or self as a kind of text,” is explored in Eric Jager’s *The Book of the Heart*.\(^8\) The power structure in *Troilus and Criseyde* is based on foreignness, allegiance, and acculturation, which alters the figurative landscape. The treatment of hearts, bodies, and movements emphasizes the internalization of foreign objects. Troilus, meaning “Little Troy,” is the human embodiment of the city of Troy, which renders his fate inextricable from that of the city. Early in Book 1, the arrogant Troilus mocks the pain of lovers and the “God of Love” shoots him with an arrow:

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\begin{align*}
\text{And with that word he gan caste up the browe,} \\
\text{Ascaunces, “Loo! Is this naught wisely spoken?”} \\
\text{At which the God of Love gan loken rowe} \\
\text{Right for despit, and shop for to ben wroken.} \\
\text{He kidde anon his bowe nas naught broken;} \\
\text{For sodeynly he hitte hym atte fulle —}
\end{align*}
\]

\(^6\) The heart reflects identity in that it is recognizable as belonging to the body, but it threatens the integrity of the body and its identity when it is removed from the body. Conversely, a heart that does not belong to the body, when inserted into the body, is foreign and therefore threatening.


And yet as proud a pekok kan he pulle. (1:204–210)⁹

From this point forward, Troilus begins to desire Criseyde.¹⁰ In this tale, Criseyde’s uncle, Pandarus, acts as the mediator between the two lovers. Love is largely absent from the narrative, except as an abstract influence on the characters. Pandarus makes a number of overwrought speeches to Criseyde about how Troilus will die if she does not love him, and finally, Criseyde begins to fall in love. Soon after, however, Criseyde discovers that her traitorous father, now living in Greece, has orchestrated a trade in which she will be sent to Greece in exchange for the imprisoned Trojan warrior Antenor. Troilus begs Criseyde to remain faithful to him, but Criseyde ultimately transfers her allegiance to Diomede:

Soone after this they spake of sondry thynges,  
As fel to purpos of this aventure,  
And pleyinge entrechaungeden hire rynges,  
Of whiche I kan nought tellen no scripture;  
But wel I woot, a broche, gold and asure,  
In which a ruby was set lik an herte,  
Criseyde hym yaf, and stak it on his sherte. (III:1366–1372)

According to The Aeneid, when Antenor returns to Troy, he betrays the Trojans by letting the Trojan horse into the city.¹¹

Drawing also upon Stephen Greenblatt’s theory of “estrangement-effect,” which states that geographical and cultural strangeness alienate the traveler, I argue that the figure of the

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¹⁰ This allies the structure of desire here more closely with Cavalcanti than with Dante, but Cavalcanti’s darts are shot from the lady’s eyes through the lover’s eyes and into his heart, whereas Cupid simply shoots Troilus with an arrow here, the story giving the reader no indication of whether it reached Troilus’s heart.

heart serves as the symbolic physical manifestation of that distance that foreignness creates between a traveler and his or her surroundings.12 The physical center moves out from the body and enters the strange new landscape. My approach seeks to reassign corporeality to the symbolic hearts in this text so that their full range of meaning in the contexts of this narrative might be fully appreciated. In his brief article, Greenblatt is speaking of a much less traumatic estrangement than the theft and consumption of a lover’s heart or body, the forcible transplantation of a foreign heart into a sleeping woman’s chest, or a widowed Trojan woman into Greek society. His definitions of the temporary strangeness of new surroundings and its effect on subjectivity, however, are also applicable to the traumatic estrangements in this text:

Travel’s estrangement-effect makes the external world not only more noticeable but more intense, just as poetry makes language more intense. The consequence is that the ratio of the self to everything that lies beyond the self changes: for a moment the world insists upon its own independent existence, its thingness apart from ourselves, and we are temporarily liberated from our own personal obsessions.13

Since the heart serves as the center of the essential functions of the body, the “thingness” of the heart estranged from itself makes the body more noticeable and more intense.14 It also, I argue, renders the heart distinct from the body, making either it or the body from which it has departed a part of the landscape

13 Ibid., 25.
14 Bill Brown, “Thing Theory,” Critical Inquiry 28, no. 1 (Autumn, 2001): 1–22. Brown explores the inescapability of things, including the body, as well as their capacity to interrupt the intentional processes of subject and object. Disconnecting the heart from the rest of the body’s systems — “circuits of production and distribution” — draws our attention to its status as an object and gets in the way of our recognition of it as part of a whole.
rather than, or in addition to, the self. In both of these narratives, either the body or the heart, in Bill Brown’s terms, “insists on its own independent existence,” which makes its functions much more visible in relation to its human host(s). In this sense, the traveling body parts become, like the bridges in Sarah Breckenridge Wright’s essay, the architectural manifestation of movement — they are vectors for elements of the self.

Given the *Middle English Dictionary* definition of “herte,” the disorientation caused by these disincorporations of the heart is significant. The physical heart can refer to the organ itself or to the entire area around the heart, including the stomach, and is the seat of the soul and memory. The *MED* states that the heart is symbolic of “the conscious self, the true self as opposed to the outward persona, the center of psychic and sensitive functions.” Removing the heart from the body, then, decenters “the true self,” and sorting out the pieces of the selves becomes particularly tricky when the heart is incorporated into a foreign body. These extractions should not be read as surgical procedures, however. Language of fear and aggression punctuates the removal of the heart. Maggie Kilgour uses the term *concordia discors* to describe a meeting of extremes, “although not in an equal relation but in an identity achieved through the subordination, even annihilation, of one of the terms.” This explanation is especially applicable to the hearts’ patterns of movement and damage. Both words contain the root word for heart, one connoting unity, the other distance and separation. Likewise, in *Troilus and Criseyde*, what is external to the body is in constant, often violent, contact with what is internal. The subsequent “estrangement-effect” of the disembodied hearts enhances the reflective function of the text because it objectifies and renders foreign the organ most central to medieval notions of identity.

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15 *Middle English Dictionary* online, s.v. “herte.”
16 For a brief explanation of *concordia discors* in the context of cannibalistic power relations, see Maggie Kilgour, *From Communion to Cannibalism* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1990), 3.
Foreign Territory

_Troilus and Criseyde_ is a retelling of Boccaccio’s _Il Filostrato_, an early fourteenth-century tale about a romance between Troilus and Criseyde during the Trojan War. In the course of the poem, Troilus falls in love with the widow Criseyde, who considers herself unable to love, regardless of the suitor. After a dream in which an eagle steals her heart and transplants its own into her chest, Criseyde begins to warm up to Troilus. As I explained, Criseyde’s uncle, Pandarus, acts as the mediator between the two lovers, so the locus of control is external to the lovers. Pandarus’s impassioned speeches persuade Criseyde to fall in love with Troilus. As soon as she does, however, she is relocated to Greece against her will. The removal and objectification of the heart, here and elsewhere, emphasizes the external forces acting upon Criseyde, particularly upon her allegiances. Even Troilus’s health becomes a source of external pressure, although it is clearly not the only deciding factor. Troilus begs Criseyde to remain faithful to him, but Criseyde symbolically transfers her allegiance to Diomede shortly after her arrival in Greece by pinning the ruby brooch on him.

In keeping with this cultural upheaval, the locus of control in _Troilus and Criseyde_ is variable and complex. Pandarus tries to maintain control over the lovers through smooth-tongued manipulation. Troilus tries to keep Criseyde in check by pleading and bargaining, and Calchas and Diomede exercise political power and physical strength, respectively.17 The exception, the one character who asserts power by replacing an internal structure of the body, is the eagle. He comes to Criseyde in a dream, and the violation is described in threatening terms:

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17 Robert Hanning calls Chaucer’s Criseyde a “female ‘text’” on which men — Troilus, Pandarus, the narrator — impose meanings that accord with their desires.” See “Come in Out of the Code: Interpreting the Discourse of Desire in Boccaccio’s _Filostrato_ and Chaucer’s _Troilus and Criseyde_,” in _Chaucer’s Troilus and Criseyde: “Subgit to Alle Poesye” Essays in Criticism_, eds. R.A. Shoaf and Catherine S. Cox, 120–37 (Binghamton: Medieval & Renaissance Texts & Studies, 1992), 120.
And as she slep, anonright tho hire mette
How that an egle, fethered whit as bon,
Under hir brest his longe clawes sette,
And out hir herte he rente, and that anon,
And dide his herte into hire brest to gon—
Of which she not agroos, ne nothyng smerte—
And forth he fleigh, with herte left for herte. (II:925–932)

The passage emphasizes his long claws and the language, in contrast with the reassurance in the last line that Criseyde does not feel any pain or fear, is violent and abrupt. Criseyde is evidently mercifully asleep, but the eagle has “seized” and “rent” her heart from her breast before putting his own in its place.

_Troilus and Criseyde_ is predominately concerned with foreignness, and in particular foreign objects being introduced to bodies. Criseyde’s new heart is the eagle’s heart. While it appears that Criseyde’s affections are altered by the eagle’s heart since she begins to have feelings for Troilus after her heart is exchanged, that effect is ultimately temporary, since she symbolically replaces Troilus with Diomede. I would go so far as to say that the eagle’s heart, and its attendant affections for Troilus, are always foreign to Criseyde, and that she might be imagined as embodying a perpetual state of disincorporation, consistently rejecting the transplant, which retains its object status because her body never incorporates it. Criseyde is, in a sense, a tourist by Greenblatt’s definition: estrangement-effect centers on the temporary disorientation of the self within an unfamiliar physical environment. With regard to Criseyde’s exchange of hearts in the poem, the agent of disorientation is fundamentally external. After she is exchanged for Antenor, her disorientation is compounded. Finally, by pinning her heart brooch on Diomede, she recovers some sense of orientation, expressing her loyalty to Greece, but also her rejection of Troilus:

And after this the storie telleth us
That she him yaf the faire baye stede
The which he ones wan of Troilus;
And eke a broche — and that was hitel nede —
That Troilus was, she yaf this Diomede.
And ek, she bet from sorwe hym to releve
She made hym were a pencel of hire sleve. (v:1037–1043)

This stanza makes clear that, not only did Criseyde give Diomede Troilus’s possessions, but that it was unnecessary for her to do this. Here again, the framing of the narrative indicates that Criseyde’s actions connote rejection or temporariness rather than full incorporation. In short, I propose that Criseyde experiences estrangement-effects imposed by others, but she also estranges herself from her heart and her environment in the poem — as evidenced by the simultaneously romantic and political act of pinning the brooch on Diomede. It is possible to see Greenblatt’s concept at play in the ways in which Criseyde reacts to changes in her psyche as well as in her environment. The encounter itself is a violation of Criseyde, as Aranye Fradenburg notes, calling the eagle’s theft “a simultaneous evocation and denial of violence, an image at once of overwhelming invasive power and of apparent reciprocity.”¹⁸ In much the same way that Criseyde acquiesces to being traded by her father, she appears to consent to participation in this exchange of hearts as well. Criseyde is involved in incorporation as a form of exchange, but the circumstances surrounding the event and the language used to describe it reinforce the idea that Criseyde is only a tourist.

Foreign Exchange

After Criseyde’s center has been replaced with a foreign object, and in the passages following the eagle’s invasion, she is given no voice with which to protest in the passages following the eagle’s invasion as the narrator moves on to concern himself with Troilus’s return from “the scarmuch” while Criseyde sleeps (II:934).

¹⁸ Louise O. Fradenburg, “‘Our owne wo to drynke’: Loss, Gender, and Chivalry in Troilus and Criseyde,” in Chaucer’s Troilus and Criseyde, eds. Shoaf and Cox, 88–106, at, 99.
In effect, Criseyde is temporarily disabled and ignored. Her role is ostensibly passive. This effect is reinforced by her behavior toward Troilus. When Criseyde sees him again, her heart responds differently to him:

And how so she hath ben here-byforn,
To God hope I, she hath now kaught a thorn,
She shal nat pulle it out this nexte wyke.
God sende mo swich thornes on to pike! (II:1271–1274)

The phrasing here indicates again, however, that the effect is temporary. Criseyde has “kaught a thorn,” that she shall not pull out next week, but the thorn clearly will not remain in its place permanently, since the poet asks God to send more to pull out. Seeing that Criseyde is responding to Troilus’s appearance, Pandarus begins to behave like the nightingale, stoking the fires of affection to keep Criseyde’s new heart warm (I:1275–1282). The external forces surrounding Criseyde here take care to ensure that the carefully orchestrated transplant will be effective, and Pandarus appears to be trying to reinforce the link between the physiology of Criseyde’s new heart and her affections, using his heart to stimulate hers: “I pray yow hertely.”19 The characterization of the thorns as temporary and subject to Criseyde’s will, however, indicates that Pandarus’s efforts are ultimately futile. The bodily damage Criseyde sustains in the eagle attack is not insignificant, but the text appears insistent that the wounds will heal and Criseyde will find a way to remove the thorns’ influence.

This theme of distance is also reflected in the poem’s frequent descriptions of hearts, which are most often stripped of their “stuffness.”20 The hearts that do take material form are objectified, and thereby removed from their function as bodily organs. Clark and Wasserman characterize those references in spatial

19 Oxford English Dictionary Online, s.v. “heartily, adv.”
terms, saying that the heart was either framed as a vessel or a thing to be placed in a vessel, like the heart in the body. They go on to argue that the symbolic functions of the heart merge in the exchanges of hearts in the poem.\textsuperscript{21} The ruby brooch contains a stone in the shape of a heart and the structure of exchange renders it “real” in much the same way as any currency becomes real — through the ritual of transaction. Once Criseyde reaches Greece, she — after a brief moment of inner conflict — transfers her allegiance to Diomede, pinning the ruby brooch, an objectified heart, that Troilus had given her, onto his collar. The heart brooch as a symbol has such a profound effect on Troilus because it can be lost, and its absence is tangible in terms of weight, temperature, etc., in addition to its sentimental and symbolic value. Similarly, even in the context of a dream, the eagle’s heart is given shape and heft. His claws tear open Criseyde’s body and invade it. Subsequent emotional changes occur \textit{in addition} to the material alterations of the body, and the effects of the transplant that extend outside of the dreamscape into Criseyde’s waking life substantiate the link between the dream and Criseyde’s reality.

In accordance with the tradition of the \textit{stilnovisti}, Troilus assigns blame to Criseyde for his troubles rather than blaming the God of Love for shooting him and thus setting off this torturous chain of events. As we find out shortly hereafter, Criseyde gifts her heart to Troilus:

\begin{quote}
Soone after this they spake of sondry thynges, 
As fel to purpos of this aventure, 
And pleyinge entrechaungeden hire rynges, 
Of whiche I kan nought tellen no scripture; 
But wel I woot, a broche, gold and asure, 
In which a ruby set was lik an herte, 
Criseyde hym yaf, and stak it on his sherte. (III:1366–1371)
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{21} Clark and Wasserman, “The Heart in \textit{Troilus and Criseyde}.
In this scene, Criseyde has the power over the movement of the symbolic heart. In the same way that the eagle was previously able to remove its own heart, Criseyde is now transplanting a heart, and the language of “sticking” in which the act is couched recalls the thorn that Criseyde had previously “caught” and the eagle’s claws that deposited it. We might read this as Criseyde’s gentle distancing of her heart from herself, although this does not negate the exchange as a gesture of love and loyalty. It does, however, render the heart more external and portable, and make it easier to understand how Criseyde feels free to transfer it to Diomede. Clark and Wasserman have argued that Chaucer makes clear in this scene that the brooch is not Criseyde’s heart, but the structure of the lines do not specify where the uncertainty lies: “Men seyn, I not, that she yaf him hir herte” (v:1050). I argue that the eagle’s transplant could just as easily be the source of the uncertainty. Criseyde may be giving Diomede the heart she has — it is just not hers. If this is the case, and the heart was never truly hers, re-gifting it to Diomede is less of an act of treachery than if she were giving the center of herself to him. Criseyde’s objectified hearts are notably malleable in some way, which indicates that she is affected by external forces and subject to affections. They are, however, unusually distant, portable, and foreign, which suggests that her affections are similarly distant, portable, and foreign to her. This does not mean that she is cold or heartless, but that the heat and proximity of her heart have largely been manipulated by external forces, until she learns to manipulate them in similar ways herself.

**Criseyde’s Slippery Heart: Misdirection and Disorientation**

Criseyde’s “slydynge of corage” is often discussed as her heart’s movement, but the challenge throughout the poem appears to be that her suitors have difficulty clinging to it.\(^{22}\) Even the nar-

\(^{22}\) *Slydyng* can mean unstable or deceitful, but it can also mean elusive. See *MED* online, s.v. “slidinge, ppl.” For alternate readings, see Frieda Elaine Penninger, *Chaucer’s Troilus and Criseyde* and *The Knight’s Tale* (Lanham:
rator has difficulty reconciling her physical appearance with her age (v:826). As Sheila Delany has observed, the portraits of the characters are oddly located near the end of the poem, which she identifies as an alienating function— one of many she examines.23 Criseyde and her heart are also frequently distanced from each other toward the end of the poem, but she seems to make attempts to control the heart’s movement. She calls herself lost, but says her heart is true, which indicates a separation of her heart from her self. She even sets her heart on fire in remembrance of Troilus’s words, which is a divine office in Dante’s Vita nuova. Both Troy and Troilus slip through her heart in Book V, but this is attributed to their inability to stick rather than hers:

‘For which, with-outen any wordes mo,
To Troye I wol, as for conclusioun.’
But god it wot, er fully monthes two,
She was ful fer fro that entencioun.
For bothe Troilus and Troye toun
Shal knotteles through-out hir herte slyde;
For she wol take a purpos for tabyde. (v:764–770)

While Criseyde remains fixed, both Troy and Troilus slip knotless through her heart, which is clearly cast here as a vessel. In the next stanza, Diomede resorts to a hook and line in his attempt to anchor himself to her slippery heart, and a few stanzas later, he again entreats her to let Troy and Troilus pass through her heart (v:911–917).24

In closing, I will examine this fixedness of Criseyde’s heart as a function of its objectified form. Criseyde’s declaration that her heart is “faste” on Troilus appears to indicate that she is faithful

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24 MED online, s.v. “passen.”
to him, but the poem repeatedly resists these simple readings. Given the function of the brooch throughout the narrative, I want to explore an alternate reading: that “faste” indicates physical fastening rather than committed love. Read this way, the stanza mirrors the way Criseyde “caught a thorn” as a result of the eagle exchanging its heart for hers:

As she that hadde hir herte on Troilus
So faste, that ther may it noon arace;
And straungely she spak, and seyde thus;
‘O Diomede, I love that ilke place
Ther I was born; and Ioves, for his grace,
Delivere it sone of al that doth it care!
God, for thy might, so leve it wel to fare! (v:953–959)

This reading gives Criseyde credit for her good intentions — she fastened her heart on Troilus so that no one could take it out, but her heart is slippery. Her real love, as she states shortly after, remains with her dead husband (v:974–980). It is also noteworthy that she spoke “straungely,” which indicates either unusual speech or foreign or wild language.25 In her response to Troilus’s subsequent impassioned pleas for her healing presence, Criseyde states that she has no heart or health to send (v:1590–1596). Following the movement of the brooch, this could be because she has gifted it to Diomede.

If this is the case, the symbol of the brooch works on many levels, since the word in Middle English could mean either an ornament or a weapon.26 In the midst of a lengthy discussion of the brooch in Book V, just after Troilus finds the brooch on Diomede’s collar, he accuses Criseyde’s heart of slaying him:

‘Who shal now trowe on any othes mo?
Allas, I never wolde han wend, er this,
That ye, Criseyde, coude han chaunged so;

25 MED online, s.v. “straungeli.”
26 MED online, s.v. “broche.”
Ne, but I hadde a-gilt and doon amis,
So cruel wende I not your herte, y-wis,
To sée me thus; allas, your name of trouthe
Is now for-doon, and that is al my routhe. (v:1681–1687)

The juxtaposition of Criseyde’s slippery heart and everyone’s attempts to find a way to affix it or affix themselves to it seem to emphasize the dual function of Criseyde’s slippery heart as vessel and a thing to be placed in a vessel. This brings us to the final relevant definition of “broche,” which is to pierce a container, letting the contents flow out. Emphasizing the fragility and vulnerability of the human body, this cluster of connotations reminds readers that, as Christopher Roman has noted, “[T]he body is porous, mediated by elements, implicated with matter.”

In the following stanza, Troilus uses the word *feffe*, a word heavy with both territorial and financial connotations:

‘Was ther non other broche yow liste lete
To feffe with your newe love,’ quod he,
‘But thilke broche that I, with teres wete,
Yow yaf, as for a remembraunce of me?
Non other cause, allas, ne hadde ye
But for despyt, and eek for that ye mente
Al-outrely to shewen your entente! (v:1688–1694)

The narrator ends by enjoining readers to “cast all our hearts on heaven,” contrasting God’s love with the counterfeit loves in the poem. The theoretical payoff from examining this kind of bodily estrangement in medieval narratives is that it highlights the tension between the identification and abjection inherent in the relationship between bodies and travel. Travel is always an exercise in taking in what is desirable and affirming, while at once keeping out what is threatening and destabilizing. In the case of Criseyde, foreignness is initially introduced from outside influences, but as a result of the many transplants she undergoes in the narrative, she begins to embody foreignness by the end of the narrative.
Conclusion

Historical theologian Barbara Newman has explored the implications of heart transplants and exchanges in medieval literature through both theological and medical lenses. Observing the unifying capacity of Christ’s sacrifice in mystical hagiography, Newman contrasts the exchange of hearts with Christ in medieval literature with exchanges between humans. Whether spiritual or medical, however, she acknowledges that exchanges of hearts are often characterized by “alarming literalism.” Observing this intrusion of a foreign organ so often described in medieval literature in graphic and violent terms, Newman echoes Jean-Luc Nancy in her description of heart transplant as a “long process of self-alienation, induced by the medically altered body.” This process of self-alienation, I argue, overlaps in theoretically significant ways with the process of self-alienation threatened by medieval travel.

Returning to Verdon’s description of territory, exchange, and movement as the three physical realities of medieval travel, it is clear that the ontological threats posed by travel and heart transplant are functionally similar. Nancy refers to the transplanted heart as “the intruder” who does not lose his strangeness, and insists that as long as he remains foreign, “his coming will not cease.” This frames the body as the territory upon which the foreign heart intrudes, and which is characterized by openness and violability. The exchange of hearts is accompanied by a loss of subjectivity, and that loss is compounded by the battle to keep one’s own body from rejecting the foreign heart:

29 Ibid., 20.
“As soon as intrusion occurs, it multiplies, making itself known through its continually renewed internal differences.” The result, says Nancy, is disorientation: “One emerges from this adventure lost.” These structural similarities between travel and transplant have remained remarkably consistent from their representation in medieval literature to their psychological and cultural ramifications in the twenty-first century. This structural consistency may offer insight into modern medical and psychopharmaceutical conversations as much as it gives us greater insight into the intricate interplay between matter, affect, and movement in the Middle Ages.