

“Thus Gan He Make a Mirour of His Mynde”: Fragmented Memories and Anxious Desire in *Troilus and Criseyde*

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Abstract This article argues that the Troilus’s relationship with Criseyde is fraught with anxious desire. By referencing medieval theories of the mind and Kleinian psychoanalytic theory, it shows that the manner in which Troilus memorializes his desire for Criseyde in the books I to III of the poem has a direct impact on the way he experiences her loss in book V. Throughout the poem, anxiety is the definitive characteristic of Troilus’s desire. It emerges when he first encounters an uncontrollable desire and when the consummation of his desire is delayed. It is this anxious engendering of desire, and not loss per se, that causes the feelings of persecution and victimization in Troilus when he loses Criseyde at the end of the poem.

Keywords Chaucer · Troilus · Melanie Klein · Anxiety · Desire · Memory

Robert Henryson, who in writing *The Testament of Cresseid* became an early critic of Chaucer, was disappointed enough with the virtual absence of moral judgment on Criseyde in *Troilus and Criseyde* to re-imagine her fate. At the same time, his continuation also re-works the picture of Troilus that we get from Chaucer’s poem. Instead of the paranoid and anxious lover who haunts the verses of Book V,

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Henryson depicts a much more gracious man who is in fuller control of his emotions. Not only does he give a gift to the lepers in memory of Criseyde, he also erects a memorial to her at the end of the poem even though he is still hurt by her betrayal. Henryson, by re-envisioning Troilus in this manner, raises questions about why Chaucer depicts Troilus as so badly affected by Criseyde's departure in Book V of *Troilus and Criseyde*. This paper aims to answer some of those questions.

The specific shape and nature of desire is a pre-occupation of *Troilus and Criseyde*. Chaucer's work shifts our attention to the messy psychological details and affects that attend the experience of falling in and out of love. This paper concentrates on the way anxiety shapes Troilus's desire for Criseyde and how Troilus's sense of self is determined by the texture of his desire. Critics of the poem have traced the workings of anxiety in the poem. L.O.A. Fradenburg has noted that traumatic experience of living in the shadow of war and violence brings anxiety to the fore in *Troilus and Criseyde*. She observes that "*Troilus and Criseyde* shares with many other instances of courtly discourse a knowledge of the tight bond between desire and trauma. The poem juxtaposes signifiers of consent and coercion, love and war, without clarifying the relations between them".¹ Fradenburg shows that the anxiety felt by a character like Criseyde even as she experiences desire given her uncertain status in Trojan society is symptomatic of national anxieties. Criseyde thus "figures group desire in the form of anxiety and emergency preparedness".² Similarly, Gayle Margherita contends that in the poem's agenda is the representation of the "problematics of history and memory" through a "Trojan war [that] becomes internalized as Criseyde's feminine paranoia".³ While these social analyses of anxiety are incisive, its persistence at the intra-psychic level can be examined in Troilus. Adopting this interpretive stance makes anxiety a more central force in the poem, rather than one consigned to the margins by repression or erupting only in feminine excess. In short, how anxiety originates in Troilus's desire goes a long way in explaining why he descends into his state of despair at the end of the poem.

By focusing on how medieval cognitive psychology and memory theory, which are so prominent in the descriptions of the emergence of Troilus' desire, intersect with Melanie Klein's theory of psychological positions the paper proposes that the manner by which Troilus falls in love has a direct bearing on the trauma he suffers later on when he loses Criseyde. Because medieval cognitive psychology and Kleinian theory are implicitly and explicitly concerned about managing the anxiety that arises when individuals encounter the sensory world, bringing them to bear on the poem provides a way to trace Troilus's emotional fate and throws the relationships between desire and anxiety in the poem into sharp relief.

¹ Fradenburg (2002, p. 18).

² Fradenburg (2002, p. 18).

³ Margherita (1994, pp. 112–113).

The links between memory and desire are starkly announced after Troilus consummates the affair with Criseyde in Book III. The morning after their tryst, he starts to think about Criseyde and memory begins to whet his desire:⁴

And in his thought gan up and down to wynde
 Hire wordes alle, and every countenaunce,
 And fermely impressen in his mynde
 The leeste point that to him was plesaunce;
 And verraylich of thilke remembraunce
 Desir al newe hym brende, and lust to brede
 Gan more than erst, and yet took he non hede. (III.1541–1547)⁵

The stanza, drawing on the popular medieval metaphor of the memory as a wax surface on which images were imprinted,⁶ indicates the link between desire and the memories of the loved one that are “fermely impress[e]d” in the lover’s mind. Desire is deliberately invoked, through the conscious application of the mind’s capacity for thought, and even the minute details of their encounters—“[t]he leeste point”—is re-collected with pleasure. The phrase that is used to connect his desire with memory—“And verraylich of thilke remembraunce”—is also a very suggestive one. While “verraylich” acts as an intensifier in the line, the word resonates with “thilke remembraunce” to also create the impression that Troilus’s memory is an accurate recording of his affair with Criseyde.⁷ Effectively, the stanza links Troilus’s desire to his devotion to the affair; indeed, the stanza indicates that it is precisely the re-rendering of the time he has spent with Criseyde that causes desire to burn anew in him.

While this tidy reading of the relationship between re-collection and desire is plausible, the same stanza provides hints that Troilus’s desire arises through a process that is more complex and uneven than the ‘pure’ retrieval of the impressions of Criseyde. The opening line of the stanza—“And in his thought gan up and down to wynde”—suggests not a static experience of memory but movement and motion amongst his memories. When this is taken into account, it appears that Troilus is deliberately initiating an act of memory, and that he chooses what he wants to remember, recalling the details that are pleasant to him, discarding details that are not. This moment in the poem, which characterizes divergent understandings of the mind, becomes even more intriguing when read against medieval notions of the mind and memory.

⁴ In the stanza following this one, Criseyde experiences a parallel moment where memory fuels desire:

Criseyde also, right in the same wyse,
 Of Troilus gan in hire herte shette
 His worthynesse, his lust, his dedes wise,
 His gentillesse, and how she with hym mette,
 Thonkyng Love he so wel hire bisette,
 Desiryng eft to han hire herte deere
 In swich a plit, she dorste make hym cheere. (III.1548–1554)

⁵ References to *Troilus and Criseyde* are from *The Riverside Chaucer*, ed. Larry D. Benson.

⁶ Carruthers (1990, p. 28).

⁷ See *MED* s.v. *verrili* n. 1c.

The Medieval Mind: Perception and Memory

In the widely accepted medieval account of perception, cognition and memory, the three ventricles of the brain and five parts of the mind play distinct roles in mental activity. An individual would receive impressions through the “common sense”, and some of these would stick on the “imagination”. Making their way through the middle ventricle toward the rear ventricle, these impressions would finally be stored in the “memory”. The operations of the middle ventricle, “cogitation and estimation”, account for the internal mental activity of calling up the impressions stored in the memory and processing them. Through the operations of cogitation and estimation, an individual could place images together to “make new forms” and “extract meaning”.⁸ This theory of the mind enables us to reconcile the contradictory movements noted in the previous section. While ‘pure’ images of Criseyde would have been perceived by Troilus and pressed into his imagination, retrieving and remembering those impressions would involve active re-assembly and selection. Seen in this light, desire is provoked by a mind that both acts and is acted upon. Troilus may not be able to control what gets placed in his mind but he clearly chooses how he dwells upon and enjoys what has been placed there.

This doubled nature of cognition, and the attendant implication that Troilus is both the active pursuer and the passive victim of desire, is evident in the moment when Troilus first lays his eyes on Criseyde at the Temple of Pallas. In this moment, the front portion of his mind, consisting of the “common sense” and “imagination” of medieval perception theory, is activated. Although he first casts his glance “[t]il on Criseyde it smot, and ther it stente” (I.273), Criseyde’s glance also penetrates his heart and catches him unawares:

Lo, he that leet hymselfen so konnyng
 And scorned hem that Loves peynes dryen,
 Was ful unwar that Love hadde his dwellyng
 Withinne the subtile stremes of hire yen;
 That sodeynly hym thoughte he felte dyen,
 Right with her look the spirit in his herte:
 Blissed be Love, that kan thus folk converte! (I.302–309)

As his gaze goes out and strikes Criseyde, there is the countermovement of a glance from Criseyde. Even if it is not clear if Criseyde is returning Troilus’s gaze intentionally, the moment still throws Troilus off-balance:

And of hire look in him ther gan to quyken
 So gret desir and such affeccoun,
 That in his herte botme gan to stiken
 Of hir his fixe and depe impressioun. (I.295–308)

While the reciprocal effect of the gaze can be accounted for by medieval optical theory,⁹ this moment can also be illuminated with the model of the mind introduced

⁸ Kemp and Fletcher (1993, pp. 561–564).

⁹ Stanbury (1992).

earlier. Having been lifted out of the crowd, the image of Criseyde would make its way into Troilus's common sense and first be stored at the rear of the front ventricle, in his imagination. This movement, which has the quality of an initial reactive perception, is expressed in the lines "... in his herte botme gan to stiken/Of hir fixe and depe impressioun". However, this is not a pure act of perception, as both the quality of Criseyde's look as well as the desire that is stirred up by her look play a part in making this impression. The depth of the impression and its subsequent effects indicate that there are elements to this moment of apprehension that cannot be fully accounted for by the sensory responses of the common sense and imagination. This moment, during the front ventricle's initial encounter with an object, becomes one of anxious knowing. The force and mastery present in Troilus's own gaze returns the image with an intensity that he cannot anticipate. Even if Troilus can dictate where his eye falls, the net effect of his gaze defies the neutrality of perception and his composure and distance are disrupted in this moment of looking.

Indeed, coming away from the temple, Troilus already feels the effects of the exchanged glances as he is "[r]ight with hire look thorough-shoten and thorough darterd" (I.325). This description associates the gaze with violence and transforms Troilus into both war victim and hunted beast. The way one is gazed at and how one perceives the gaze trace the forces that disrupt the untroubled and controlled operation of the common sense and hints at the way that Troilus is subject to perceptions that are beyond his control.

The poem builds on its initial use of the medieval model of the mind further along in Book I. Troilus, now alone in his palace and away from the source and stimulation of thought, has a chance to reflect on what he has experienced:

And whan that he in chambre was allone,
 He doun upon his beddes feet hym sette,
 And first he gan sike, and eft to grone,
 And thought ay on hire so, withouten lette,
 That, as he sat and wook, his spirit mette
 That he hire saugh a-temple, and al the wise
 Right of hire look, and gan it new avise.
 Thus gan he make a mirour of his mynde
 In which he saugh al holly hire figure,
 And that he wel koude in his herte fynde. (I.358–367)

This sequence of thought, where Troilus recalls Criseyde's look and begins to consider its significance anew can be mapped against the operations of the middle and rear ventricle of the brain, which involve the acts of estimation, cogitation and the storage of the resultant conclusions in the memory. This is the moment when Troilus distills the encounter and draws out the meanings about Criseyde that he would like to store. Medieval theorists of the mind believed that after thought was processed through the operations of the estimative and cogitative faculties, the memory would be the "storehouse ... of the meanings derived from experiences and objects".¹⁰ Hence, what ends up being stored in the memory, according to medieval

¹⁰ Kemp and Fletcher (1993, p. 565).

cognitive theory, is wholly processed. This subsequent operation of the mind, unlike the operations of the common sense, lacks the element of being an immediate response and is thus much more controlled. Deliberation, will and intent figure prominently in this operation of the mental faculties. Even so, Winthrop Wetherbee, in discussing the simultaneously carnal and spiritual aspects of the imagination in late medieval thought, points out that “[i]maginative desire, while capable of sublimating and refining physical appetite, is always in danger of being reduced to the physical level or of disguising merely sensual impulses in a seemingly nobler form”.¹¹ Desire is not only the product of the fortuitous encounter with an object; desire depends on a deliberate formation of its own object that may transform a lust inflected conception of the loved one into something more palatable to social taste.

Coming in the aftermath of the violent sensory encounter with an image, this moment emphasizes the role the cognitive faculties play in re-creating the impression of the loved one. Placed at a distance from Criseyde, Troilus is still able to form an image of her. However, the distance itself is now emphasized: “Thus gan he make a mirour of his mynde/In which he saugh al holly hire figure”. The figure of the mirror widens the gulf between Troilus’s thoughts and the original moment and emphasizes the abstract nature of his mental activity. Troilus does not inwardly look on the impression of Criseyde, nor does his mind merely mirror the original moment. Instead, Troilus is doubly removed by his mental activity as he is described as looking upon a mirror that reflects the events. This deliberately indirect representation of Troilus’s thoughts about Criseyde also indicates a good deal of selection at work: Troilus is being extremely careful about what he recalls of Criseyde.

Yet a question remains: What happens to the anxious elements present in Troilus’s uncontrolled reactions to his first perception? I suggest that as Troilus ‘falls in love’ when he replays the initial sighting in his mind, he begins to idealize Criseyde in order to domesticate the suddenness and violence associated with the immediacy of desire. The line that completes the moment of thought—“And that he wel koude in his herte fynde”—is also evidence of re-figuration at work in Troilus’s mind. While the syntax of the line indicates that “koude” probably translates into “could”, the word has associations with the idea of ‘knowing how to’ or even ‘knowing by heart’ as well.¹² These trace meanings offer a connection between Troilus’s thoughts with the more formal activity of scholastic memory work in the Middle Ages. While what Troilus thinks about and what medieval scholars would have tried to impress into their memory are very dissimilar, the way that Chaucer presents this mental activity overlaps with the figurations and concerns of medieval theories of the memory and how one could best train it.

The two dominant tropes used to characterize the memory were writing and storage. A trained memory would not merely be able to inscribe a vast amount of information; it would be able to store it in a manner that enabled efficient retrieval and manipulation of that material.¹³ Thus, Troilus’s activity subjects his mind to a training of sorts, only that his object is not scholastic material but Criseyde.

¹¹ Wetherbee (1984, p. 50).

¹² See *MED* s.v. *connen* n. 4a & 5b.

¹³ Carruthers (1990, p. 19).

By reflecting and fixing her figure in his mind, he ensures that he will be able to access this memory of her at will later on. Carruthers also shows that an elaborate apparatus for enhancing the storage and organization of information was theorized in medieval memory training. Using an architectural mnemonic, for example, was meant to encourage a full visualization and association of information with space that was detailed and familiar.¹⁴ In this instance, Troilus places Criseyde in the literal architectural space that he first encounters her—“his spirit mette/That he hire saugh a-temple” (I.1363)—and he mimics the techniques of memory practitioners.

Yet, because Troilus’s object is not the scholastic texts that memory practitioners would have placed in their minds, Chaucer’s evocation of memory techniques in Troilus’s reflection on desire raises the question of what happens to the mind when either an ‘improper’ object is placed there, or if the object placed in the memory is bound up with desire. Would the mind, with all its training and deliberation, be affected by these objects negatively? What if an excess of affect accompanies the placement of an object in the memory? Would the anxiety about forgetting that is productive in motivating memory training be overwhelmed by a more dangerously obsessive anxiety?

The influence of the object of apprehension on the mind’s spiritual constitution was a common concern in the Middle Ages. St. Augustine, in his *Confessions*, regrets the pleasure he took in reading vulgar Latin fables for his mind could have been more usefully employed: “So it was a sin in me as a boy when I gave pride of place in my affection to those empty fables rather than to more useful studies” (pp. 16–17)¹⁵ Augustine also draws attention to the emotive force that attends the reading of these fables and is thankful to his God that he can now “recall this without the memory disturbing [him]” (p. 19). In Augustine’s case, his memory, set in order by the grace of God, conquers the former improper uses of his mind. Augustine makes clear that even if a noble end is attained through the process of reading improper books, enjoying the process of cultivating one’s mind by reading pagan works is sinful. A similar contestation over the mind is present at the beginning of *The Consolation of Philosophy*. Boethius is met by Lady Philosophy whose first task is to dispel the “Muses of Poetry” who are polluting his mind because they are “creatures who slay the rich and fruitful harvest of Reason with the barren thorns of Passion”; because they are “hysterical sluts” (p. 4).¹⁶ Boethius’s confusion of mind is a product of meditating on ‘improper’ content. Instead, Lady Philosophy argues that her ways constitute the proper nourishment for his mind, and a return to her thoughts will clear the doubts and despair that he is afflicted with: “You are the man, are you not, who was brought up on the milk of my learning and fed on my food until you needed maturity?” (p. 6).

While medieval memory advice advocated that a certain amount of feeling be parceled with the memory image so that the affect involved in placing an object in the memory would help recollection,¹⁷ this affect would have been very controlled

¹⁴ Carruthers (1990, pp. 71–72).

¹⁵ References to Augustine’s *Confessions* are to Henry Chadwick’s translation of the work.

¹⁶ References to Boethius’s *Consolation of Philosophy* are to Victor Watt’s translation of the work.

¹⁷ Carruthers (1990, p. 59).

and used instrumentally. Indeed, Augustine's pleasure and Boethius's despair would be emotions that interfere with the proper operation of thought. In this sense, because Troilus's lovesickness is an obsession with Criseyde, who becomes an object of thought that elicits the disturbing force of emotion, she assumes the status of a love object which distorts the mind's ability to exercise its rational capabilities. The supposed somatic links between mind and body also led medieval memory theorists to discourage the placement of too much in the memory at one time.¹⁸ This caution for moderation might well carry over to this attachment of affect to the memory image. Troilus's moment of reflection would thus constitute an 'improper' placement of images in the memory.

Another important facet of the trained memory was the notion that an individual had to have a direct encounter with the material, preferably through sight, for the material to be effectively written on the memory.¹⁹ In contrast to this direct encounter, Troilus's desire for Criseyde is extended through the presence of an external agent: Pandarus. If Troilus's affective moment of recollection allows desire to interfere with memory, this distortion is amplified by Pandarus's agency in the affair.²⁰ By Book III, in the moment when he forms an image of Criseyde that fires up his desire, much of the erotic energy has been experienced vicariously, through Pandarus's distorting reports and schemes. As Richard Zeikowitz demonstrates, an argument can be made for the vicarious circulation of desire in the Troilus-Pandarus-Criseyde triangle of relations, with Pandarus alternating as rival and substitute for Criseyde, as well as desiring Troilus for himself.²¹ This vicarious transmission of desire, because it defers the fulfillment of desire even as it purports to bring about its dénouement, fuels Troilus's anxiety and militates against his mind's attempts to domesticate her.

A third element that complicates the recollection of the loved object after Troilus consummates the affair is the fact that he remembers "[t]he leeste point that to him was plesaunce" (III.1544). This raises the question of what happens to all that was unpleasant in the relationship. From the moment he is struck by the vision of Criseyde at the Temple of Pallas to the affair's consummation in Book III, the emotional turbulence that Troilus experiences consists of more unpleasant experiences than pleasant ones. Where do these moments go, if they are not conjured up on the mirror of Troilus's mind? The poem's insistence on representing the violent force of image impression while emphasizing Troilus's attempts to

¹⁸ Carruthers (1990, p. 50).

¹⁹ Carruthers (1990, p. 50).

²⁰ See Winthrop Wetherbee, *Chaucer and the Poets*. Wetherbee observes that Troilus and Pandarus "embody two different aspects of the imaginative faculty as medieval psychology understood it. Pandarus represents the simplest level of imaginative behavior, that which isolates the desirable aspect of an object [... and is ...] governed by appetite". Troilus, on the other hand, shows that "the imagination is also responsive to aesthetic impulses, and tends ... to enhance that aspect of their attractiveness which approximates the ideal" (76–77). Wetherbee's schematization of the imagination demonstrates how the poem works as an allegory of desire but also leaves room for one to consider how the instinctual elements of Troilus's desire are both repressed and manifested in less obvious ways.

²¹ Zeikowitz (2003, pp. 57–61). Zeikowitz focuses on the less obvious and perhaps more provocative formulations of the erotic triangle, often placing Pandarus in the subject position. My argument depends on the more conventional view that Troilus's desires are experienced through Pandarus.

control his memories indicates that desire works on the mind in ways that cannot fit seamlessly into the typical medieval models of cognition.

Melanie Klein and the Medieval Mind

One way to uncover the space where desire operates on the mind in an unpredictable manner is to examine Troilus's mental state after he loses Criseyde. The symptoms he exhibits in response to her loss suggest that the operations of desire cannot be entirely contained by the placement of the loved object in the mind. Troilus's weeping and withdrawal when he waits for Criseyde's departure for the Greek camp and his subsequent symptoms may strike the reader as a classic example of a Freudian mourning that turns to melancholia, where the emotional energy attached to the loved object cannot be dissociated from it and reattaches to another object.²² However, Troilus also shows symptoms that are not so easily explained by melancholia. One example—which will be examined in greater detail below—is a sudden paranoia that grips him after the loss of Criseyde. For analyzing Troilus's psychological state after losing Criseyde, Melanie Klein's account of the developmental schema that explains an individual's ability to feel and mourn loss is valuable. With it, I show that Troilus's pathological psychological response to Criseyde's loss is linked to the earlier assertion that desire distorts objects and places them in the mind in a manner that disrupts its proper operations.

In a Kleinian schema, the infant's mind forms mental images of an external world that is made up of persecuting "bad" objects that arise as a result of negative experiences and over-idealized "good" objects. At this earliest stage of psychological development, the infant's psychic world consists of these "partial objects" because the infant is incapable of placing the objects that it experiences into their contextual wholes. Objects are really part of whole persons, but the infant cannot yet conceive of how a single being can simultaneously contain both good and bad elements. Klein uses the breast as an example. While it provides nourishment to a child, it becomes an idealized good object. But when it is withdrawn, or not offered to the child with the onset of hunger pangs, the same breast transforms into a bad object: a persecuting object that the child associates with the frustration of being hungry. The withdrawal of a good object is thus not merely felt as an absence but changes into a persecuting object.²³ Complicating Klein's account of persecuting objects is the fact that the very mechanism of incorporating objects into the psyche—introjection—is itself experienced as a kind of violent invasion.²⁴ Because bad objects are internalized as psychological realities, the infant also begins to feel as if it is persecuted from the inside. This earliest position, when the being persecuted and attacked by bad objects is the dominant form of anxiety, Klein calls the "paranoid-schizoid" position.²⁵

²² Freud (1997, p. 170).

²³ Segal (1974, p. 26).

²⁴ Klein (1987, p. 185).

²⁵ Klein (1987, pp. 177–179).

As the psyche develops, the ego gains the ability to resolve the contradictory co-existence of good and bad objects and manages to resolve partial objects into whole persons. Once the child begins to conceive of whole persons, Klein asserts that the predominant anxiety no longer stems from a persecution complex. Instead, the face of anxiety is transformed: it now becomes that of losing the loved object. This state, Klein calls the “depressive position”.²⁶

Through the psychological experiences of this position, an individual learns to appreciate the fullness of emotional life:

[T]he ego comes to a realization of its love for a good object, a whole object and in addition a real object, together with an overwhelming feeling of guilt towards it. Full identification with the object based on the libidinal attachment, first to the breast, then to the whole person, goes hand in hand with anxiety for it (of disintegration), with guilt and remorse, and a sense of responsibility for preserving it intact against persecutors and the id, and with sadness relating to expectation of the impending loss of it. These emotions, whether conscious or unconscious, are in my view among the essential and fundamental elements of the feelings we call love.²⁷

Because “[t]he depressive position is never fully worked through”, its abiding presence means that a situation in adult life can “reawaken depressive experiences”.²⁸ Indeed, this link between the depressed individual and a prior stage of psychosexual maturation was also accepted by medieval commentators on lovesickness. Mary Wack highlights that

[p]hysicians also observed that the lovesick are unable to participate in normal social discourse; they are like the *in-fans*, the non-speaker. Some of the symptoms—the wasting, silence, interrupted breathing—embody pre-linguistic, infantile modes of signifying.²⁹

Thus, the intimate developmental link between the “paranoid-schizoid” position and the “depressive” position means that experiences in adult life can cause psychological symptoms of the prior state to emerge. Because Klein places a premium on anxiety as the psychic energy that binds and connects these positions, she is able to posit that pathologies arise because of an imbalance or breakdown in psyche’s ability to manage anxiety.

²⁶ Klein (1987, p. 142).

²⁷ Klein (1987, p. 125).

²⁸ Segal (1974, p. 80). It is along these lines that David Aers has found value in using Kleinian theory to unpack Troilus’ state of mind. In *Community, Gender, and Individual Identity*, Aers shows, via Klein, that the child is still very much alive in the man in Troilus, especially in the way a lover idealizes a loved object to the extent of splitting the loved one by cutting out undesirable traits, and never being able to see the loved whole in a regression into infant defense mechanisms that Klein elaborates: “Klein’s approach invites us to reflect on how much of the infant is still active in the adult, how infantile positions may actually be fostered and even institutionalized in adult gender arrangements and the discourses bound up with them, including that of ‘love’” (139–140). While I agree with his observations, I propose a more particular conjunction between Troilus’ state and the specific psycho-sexual positions of Kleinian theory.

²⁹ Wack (1990, p. 151).

The notion of good and bad objects and how these are placed in the psyche in Klein's descriptions of psycho-sexual development and psycho-pathology can be matched with the medieval conception of memory. Kleinian "introjection" shares with the medieval imprinting of images on the memory in that both processes transform perceptions from the external world into internalized objects of a very visual nature.³⁰ In Troilus's case, the introjection of a bad object is evinced in the earliest moments of the affair, when Troilus is first struck by the vision of Criseyde. As has already been noted, there is a certain amount of passivity on Troilus's part at the Temple of Pallas, and as he gazes on Criseyde and his control of the situation is challenged by the gaze from Criseyde that penetrates him. While this might be accounted for by medieval optical theory, where the species of the object plays a central role in affecting sight through "intromission",³¹ it also signifies how Troilus is met with an invasive desire as the image of Criseyde forcefully enters Troilus's mind. Klein remarks that "introjection may then be felt as a forceful entry from the outside into the inside, in retribution for violent projection".³² While the violence associated with this mode of entry later gets removed from Troilus's image of Criseyde through the process of idealization, the complications to this process that I have discussed above suggest introduce the possibility that the anxiety inducing bad object version of Criseyde lingers in the recesses of the psyche.

Compounding Troilus's anxious desire is the fact that not possessing Criseyde prior to the consummation of the affair brings with it the obsessive fear that he will never be with her. Timothy O'Brien shows, through a study of the semantic pairings in *Troilus and Criseyde*, that "[b]y playing with words echoing 'fere', the opening stanzas of the poem establish a vital connection between fear and companionship".³³ This "vital connection" is evident in the way Troilus struggles with his emotions in the early stages of the relationship where his violence against the Greeks are described as responses to his emotional state. As he begins to secretly pine for Criseyde, his obsession replaces all other concerns and fears:

Alle other dredes weren from him fledde,
 Both of th'assege and his savacioun;
 N'yn his desir noon other fownes bredde,
 But argumentes to his conclusioun:
 That she of him wolde han compassioun,
 And he to ben hire man while he may dure.
 Lo, here his lif, and from the deth his cure! (I.463–469)

Because the stanza claims that "[a]lle other dredes" leave Troilus and ends with possibility of Troilus's death, it emphasizes that the fear of not possessing Criseyde remains. The phrase "noon other fownes bredde" is interesting from a Kleinian

³⁰ Segal (1974, pp. 9–10). In this regard, Klein differs from Freud and later psycho-analysts such as Lacan in that she emphasizes the imagistic qualities of the psychological object rather than the discursive ones.

³¹ Collette (2001, p. 16).

³² Klein (1987, p. 185).

³³ O'Brien (2004, p. 280).

perspective because it appears that Troilus is nurturing a version of the loved object that will fit his imagined “conclusioun” and will not accept anything else. Even though the lines are framed as the operations of the mind, the language straddles the world of the baser instincts, creating an uneasy connection between them.

The fact that the narrative then offers an account of Troilus fighting the Greeks links this state of mind to his actions. Even though he no longer has any “drede” regarding political matters, he is no less effective in battle:

But for non hate he to the Grekes hadde,
 Ne also for the rescous of the town
 Ne made hym thus in armes for to madde,
 But only, lo, for this conclusioun:
 To liken hire the bet for his renoun.
 For day to day in armes so he spedde
 That the Grekes as the deth him dredde. (I.477–483)

This stanza is an arresting echo of the one cited earlier, not only because of the similar rhyme scheme of the first five lines, but because the words “conclusioun” and “drede” occur at strategic points in both stanzas. Even as Troilus thinks that he no longer experiences fear, he has become the embodiment of death and terror for the Greeks. His anxiety about not possessing Criseyde transforms into violence against the Greeks and causes an emotional state in them that is a distorted reflection of his own. On one level, the state of not having Criseyde forms in Troilus’s psyche a partial object associated with persecution, and thus results in Troilus’s aggressive response. This moment also connects with Kleinian theory in the way that bad objects are not only felt as persecutors from the ‘outside’. Because of the process of introjection, the individual begins to feel as if these objects are also part of the self and the persecution anxieties stem from an internal source as well.³⁴ Thus, Troilus not only transforms his lack into violence, he also becomes a persecutor whose actions against the Greeks are directed inward through the echoing language of the poem.

The Mind and Its Defenses

If aggression is one response of the paranoid-schizoid position to anxiety, another defense mechanism is what Klein terms “splitting”. The primary mode of splitting whole persons into good and bad objects has a secondary effect. At this second level of splitting, the bad objects are “cannibalized”, “attacked” and felt to be “in fragments”. Because this psychic is felt to be real, it is possible for good objects to also be threatened by this process and felt to be in pieces at times of psychic stress.³⁵

As a result of Troilus’s over-idealization of Criseyde, even at the moment when he holds her body in the consummation scene of Book III, he vacillates between

³⁴ Klein (1987, p. 127).

³⁵ Klein (1987, p. 180).

seeing her as a whole, actual being and as an aggregation of parts. The corporeal reality of Criseyde's body is not enough to convince his mind of her actual and full presence. As Catherine Goldberg observes of the line "O deere herte, may it be/That it be soth, that ye ben in this place?" (III.1348–1349), "[Criseyde] has lived in his mind for so long that he questions her corporeal existence in the present sense".³⁶ Framing this exclamation are moments where Troilus splits Criseyde into the various parts of the female anatomy:

Hire armes smale, hire streghte bak and softe,
 Hire sydes longe, fleshly, smothe, and white
 He gan to stroke, and good thrift bad ful ofte
 Hire snowish throte, hire brestes rounde and lite. (III.1247–1250)

It is significant that what is a conventional list of medieval beauty can also be read as a defense mechanism on Troilus's part now that he is confronted by the embodiment of his desire, for this suggests that the language which celebrates and idealizes the feminine simultaneously acts to insulate the male psyche from the force of feminine desire as well. Later on in the same scene, the splitting process is intensified in a curious apostrophe that Troilus directs to Criseyde's eyes:

This Troilus ful ofte hire eyeen two
 Gan for to kisse, and seyde, "O eyen clere,
 It weren ye that wroughte me swich wo,
 Ye humble nettes of my lady deere!
 Though ther be mercy written in youre cheere,
 God woot, the text ful hard is, soth, to fynde!
 How koude ye withouten bond me bynde?" (III.1352–1358)

Not only does Troilus fragment Criseyde's body into discrete elements, he also attributes independent agency to these dangerous eyes that first ensnared him at the Temple of Pallas and continue to do their work. Troilus may not feel that Criseyde's entire person is persecuting him; indeed, his desire for her would not allow for this recognition. Yet, he still localizes and partitions off the parts of Criseyde's body that have managed to entrap him. Even if it is meant to reference the conventions of the courtly lover's discourse, it does lead one to consider whether or not a mind so enraptured by desire can in fact hold a coherent image of the loved one as an actual and whole being. Indeed, psychoanalytic theory has found it fruitful to claim the incoherence of the love-object in the mind of the lover as a key trope of courtly love. In a lecture on courtly love, Lacan observes that courtly love was a system of signification that organized itself around a "vacuole", the absent, unattainable object that managed to stratify linguistic as well as behavioral codes. Lacan goes on to suggest that this willingness transforms the loved-object into an unattained absence, marks a deflection away from the dark elements of desire that the psyche is unwilling to confront: the uncanny presence of "the Thing".³⁷ Presented with the possibility of actually possessing Criseyde in this moment of consummation, Troilus

³⁶ Goldberg (1993, p. 36).

³⁷ Lacan (1997, p. 150).

paradoxically falls back on the tropes of courtly love, diffusing desire into the network of signifiers that prop up a more knowable but fictive account of desire. Thus, it may then be argued that splitting, in so far as it is a defense mechanism of the troubled psyche, is not only a specific malady of Troilus's troubled mind, but a more general symptom found in the literature and practices of courtly love.

Loss and Its Symptoms

While the way that Troilus experiences desire throughout the poem already indicates symptoms of the “paranoid-schizoid” position in play, this comes to the fore after he loses Criseyde to the Greeks. David Aers observes that

[o]ne of the most marked features of Troilus's love, even before Criseyde has to leave Troy, is its combination of perpetual anxiety with a total dependence on the female as the one who could allay this disturbing lack. [...] So fundamental is this structure of desire and identity that even when Criseyde has become a prisoner of the Greek army it continues to determine Troilus's perceptions.³⁸

With the loss of Criseyde, it is obvious that Troilus experiences the melancholia associated with the inability to disengage emotional energy from the loved object; hence, his “total dependence”. But the “perpetual anxiety” that Aers observes is not merely the result of his unresolved emotional dependence on Criseyde. Instead, the various persecutory anxieties that were entwined with desire return to haunt him; now returned, they bring paralysis and paranoia.

Soon after the citizens of Troy decide that Criseyde must be given up in exchange for Antenor in Book IV, Troilus is figured as a dying tree:

And as in wynter leves ben biraft,
 Ech after other, til the tree be bare,
 So that ther nys but bark and braunche ilaft,
 Lith Troilus, byraft of ech welfare,
 Ibouden in the blake bark of care,
 Disposed wood out of his wit to breyde,
 So sore hym sat the chaungynge of Criseyde. (IV.225–231)

James Paxson points out that not only has Troilus “been reified [...] into an aphasic, non-sentient, non-human thing”, but the use of “conflicting figural images of botanical uncovering and botanical encasement [creates a] figural aporia”.³⁹ The confounding of the inside-outside binary disrupts the sense of a clearly demarcated boundary of the self, a symptom that parallels an observation that Klein makes about the “paranoid-schizoid” position. Klein observes that not only is the ego felt as if it is persecuted by external bad objects, individuals begins to feel that their insides are the source of persecution and that objects can be “lured” in to be

³⁸ Aers (1993, p. 54).

³⁹ Paxson (1998, p. 210).

destroyed.⁴⁰ This is true for Troilus, especially since the figure depicts him as being “bound”, knotted within himself. Earlier, during the consummation scene, he declares that he is bound by his lover’s eyes but now he feels bound within himself. Thus, trapped in this manner, he is paralyzed within the self and persecuted by his own emotions. This resonates with Nancy Ciccone’s conclusion that in this scene, there is “the depiction of a consciousness disabled from directing constructive action. In other words, the images ostensibly derive from his fear of losing Criseyde. But they also indicate a paralysis of will more deadly than that fear”.⁴¹

Desire and the Remembrance

In Book V, when Pandarus brings him to Sarpedoun’s palace, Troilus remains disconnected from the outside world, in spite of Pandarus’s efforts to have him re-integrated with the rest of Trojan society. Wrapped up within itself, Troilus’s mind is fixed on Criseyde. Yet the language that describes how he keeps thinking about her in no way suggests the assurance and certainty that might come from having a constant impression of a loved one in his heart. Instead, there is a frenzied quality to his thoughts:

For evere in oon his herte pietous
 Ful bisyly Criseyde, his lady soughte.
 On hire was evere al that his herte thoughte,
 Now this, now that, so faste ymagenyng
 That glade, iwis, kan hym no festeynge. (V.451–455)

Even though his thoughts are always on Criseyde, the language makes clear the restless and distracted fluctuations of his mind. In fact, he seeks Criseyde within his mind, as if he cannot successfully hold a constant image of her or directly retrieve her from his memory. A few moments later, he begins obsessively re-forming images of the loved object in his mind:

The lettres ek that she of olde tyme
 Hadde hym ysent, he wolde allone rede
 An hondred sithe atwixen noon and prime,
 Refiguryng hire shap, hire wommanhede,
 Withinne his herte, and every word or dede
 That passed was (V.470–475)

His relentless efforts to place Criseyde in his heart and mind bring to mind the aggressive elements involved in introjection. The repetition in remembering the lost object in this manner constitutes a masochistic attempt to assure the self that it can actually restore some version of the loved object even as he continually re-envisions her, effectively leaving her in fragments.

⁴⁰ Klein (1987, p. 127).

⁴¹ Ciccone (2002, p. 648).

In a literalization of his attempts to search for memories of Criseyde within his heart and mind, Troilus rides “up and down” (V.561) Troy, hoping that the physical locations will trigger memories of his time spent with her:

And yonder have I herd ful lustyly
 My dere herte laugh; and yonder pleye
 Saugh ich hire ones ek ful blisfully;
 And yonder ones to me gan she seye,
 “Now goode swete, love me wel, I preye”;
 And yond so goodly gan she me biholde
 That to the deth myn herte is to hire holde. (V.568–574)

While this is an overt reference to the medieval memory training techniques where an architectural mnemonic was employed to enable scholars to store and retrieve large amounts of information,⁴² this use of the convention reveals the problematic relationship between memory, desire, and Troilus’s increasing insularity. In using the architectural mnemonic, an individual would first create a vivid impression of a room or a space and then place the material he needed to remember against each detail of this physical space.⁴³ However, since Troilus goes to the actual physical scenes in order to remember, it is clear that his mind is now unable to picture the various contexts where he has seen, heard, and experienced Criseyde. In effect, the architectural mnemonic is reversed: his obsession with Criseyde leads him out to re-discover these physical spaces that he has increasingly withdrawn himself from. Further, the narrative creates an illusion of physical space through the incessant repetition of “yonder”. The reader imagines Troilus noticing the actual physical spaces as he rides through the town but, except for a few exceptions,⁴⁴ never gets to ‘see’ any of these spaces in the narrative’s description. Instead, physical reality is tenuously tethered to the self through the repeated proclamation of “yonder”.

This dissociation from the external is made even more obvious in his paranoid imagination as his loss is more accurately experienced in Book V. Not only is he disconnected from the world, he begins imagining that the social world revolves around him and his loss. He begins to believe that the people of Troy whisper about him:

And of hymself ymagened he ofte
 To ben defet, pale, and waxen lesse
 Than he was wont, and that men seyden softe,
 “What may it be? Who kan the sothe gesse
 Whi Troilus hath al this hevynesse?”
 And al this nas but his malencolie,
 That he hadde of hymself swich fantasie.

⁴² Carruthers (1990, p. 71).

⁴³ Carruthers (1990, p. 72).

⁴⁴ These are Criseyde’s “paleys” (V.525), the temple of Pallas (V.566–567), a “hous” on a corner (V.575), and then the “hille” where Criseyde was handed over to the Greeks in Book IV (V.610). It is significant that most of these named places have been ‘seen’ by the reader at moments prior to this one. We are meant to recall these earlier moments along with Troilus and perhaps partake in his grief.

Another tyme ymaginen he wolde
 That every wight that wente by the weye
 Hadde of hym routhe, and that they seyen shoulde,
 “I am right sory Troilus wol deye”. (V.617–627)

Here, Troilus shows obvious symptoms of paranoia, having lost an accurate sense of his own condition and believing that his distress must be the center of attention and the talk of the town. It is significant that the mind is brought to the fore here. The very capacity that once idealized Criseyde, now invents—presumably through the estimative and cogitative functions of the mind—intentions and actions of the social world that he is cut off from. Also, this paranoia is not figured entirely by what Troilus imagines he sees but through imagined speech. The hallucinated sensory input is doubly disordered as sound was regarded as a source of perception that was less easily trusted and therefore unreliably imprinted on the mind as opposed to what was received visually.⁴⁵

Reading Troilus’s symptoms against medieval theories of cognition and memory that are supplemented with Klein’s notions of the paranoid-schizoid position shows that the manner by which Troilus falls in love has a direct bearing on the effects how he experiences loss. In fact, the specific symptoms he exhibits are directly related to how his mind was pressed by desire in the anxious introjection and idealization of Criseyde in the first place. So affected is Troilus that he cannot keep from trying to re-form images of Criseyde throughout Book V, in a manner that repeats and intensifies the loss and feelings of persecution. His symptoms are not a reaction to Criseyde’s absence per se, for to experience loss in this manner would mean that he has managed to apprehend and love Criseyde as a real person and resolve his episodic experiences of desire into a whole. Instead, Troilus’s apprehension of Criseyde never reaches that point of wholeness, and in her absence, he can only assemble fragmented memories that continue to persecute him.

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⁴⁵ Carruthers (1990, pp. 27–28).

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