

Moult and Mastery: Falconry in *Troilus* and *Criseyde*^{*}

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Est vrais amans li droiz oyseaux de proie,
Car il ne voelt avoir pour toute joien
Fors tout le cuer de celle ou il s'otroie. -- Guillaume le Machaut.

Hawks and falcons were better known to Chaucer's contemporaries than they are to us. The frequent occurrence of raptors¹ in the imaginative literature of the time, the plentitude of medieval falconry handbooks, and the fullness and relative accuracy of entries found on hawks, eagles, and falcons in medieval encyclopedias all attest to the familiar presence of these birds in Chaucer's milieu. In this paper, focusing on each of the three major characters in turn, I would like to examine the instances in *Troilus and Criseyde* where Pandarus, Troilus, and Criseyde are associated

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¹ For the sake of brevity, I shall usually refer to both hawks and falcons (but not eagles) with the generic term "hawks" or sometimes "raptors" in cases where I do not need to indicate any particular family or species. For overviews of the art of falconry in the Middle Ages, see Baudouin Van den Abeele's very useful *La Fauconnerie dans les lettres Françaises du XIIIe au XIVe Siècle* and Robin S. Oggins' *The Kings and their Hawks*.

with images of falconry. I believe that Chaucer used these birds as more than rhetorical ornaments² —that, rather, he made a calculated and expert use of their distinctive and varied qualities and competencies. The fruits of this use are many, and of varying interest to a variety of readers and researchers; literary and orniphile alike. And this is not surprising, for falconry is a rich tradition. However, what I would like to pursue here will be found not so much in the fields and forests where falcons do their actual work as in the library, where *Troilus and Criseyde* so firmly rests. If Chaucer's tale of "double sorwe" marks his new and newly deepening use of classical and antique sources, and if this results—as it does with this poem—in works of new and deeper kinds of bookishness, we can also consider books about birds—and, especially, the bookish nature of those bird books—as elements in Chaucer's rapidly evolving allusiveness, his fuller-than-before participation in the whole of European letters of here, there, now and then.

This allusiveness is also an elusiveness. What I might call the controlling conceit of this paper is that Chaucer's major characters (and especially the two lovers) are birdlike; and, birdlike, escape any overly-descriptive cage. How they escape, however, varies with character, but varies in ways that can be at least traced with the help of the falconry tradition. In broad terms, then, Pandarus, Criseyde, and Troilus can be approached in terms of the differing intensity—or, as we shall see, permanency—of their involvement in this avian code. I shall argue that Pandarus is a type of falconer; most especially in that he is a facilitator and a watcher more than a participant in the "herte huntynge" that occupies so much of the poem's action.

² Bartholomaeus Anglicus, perhaps taking a cue from *Genesis*, refers to birds as "ornatus aieris." This is repeated (as a heading) in John of Trevisa's translation, *On the Properties of Things*, p.596.

Criseyde, on the other hand, is a type of falcon, and one particularly well and lastingly realized, with all the elusiveness and changeableness that is perennial in such birds. Troilus, too, becomes a raptor, or rather a series of raptors, but in an evolving, progressively abstract way; and in these changes he models a pattern of changeableness that is quite different from Criseyde's. This difference, I will argue, reflects a larger—and, again, very bookish—dynamic that underlies the whole romance: that of competing types of mutability. Birds change in different ways, but so do humans. The two great models of those two types, for the Middle Ages and for the *Troilus*-poet especially, are Ovid and Boethius. These sometimes opposed patterns of transformation, pervasive but often subtle in their presence within *Troilus and Criseyde*, lie behind my focus on the birds and their human counterparts.

Isidore of Seville, in the introduction to the chapter on birds in his *Etymologiae*, gives a brief account of the major families of birds. I will quote the first few sentences only:

Unum nomen avium, sed genus diversum. Nam sicut specie sibi differunt, ita et naturae diversitate. Nam aliae simplices sunt, ut columbae; aliae astutae, ut perdix; aliae ad manum subiciunt, ut accipiter. (Isidore, 12.7)

There is one name “birds”, but the types are various. Now, as the species are different from one another, so are their natures various. Some birds are simple-minded, as are the doves; some are shrewd, as is the partridge; some subject themselves to the hand, as do hawks.³

³ Translation mine; all subsequent translations are, unless otherwise noted, mine also.

Isidore lists the various birds by their most significant distinguishing characteristic. The foremost thing about a hawk is that it can be tamed: not simply put into a cage, but “subjected to the hand” through an exacting and complex art that builds a psychological bond between a man and a wild thing.

There need not be any doubt that falconry was recognized by some, its practitioners at least, as being a remarkable, almost miraculous, art. We find, in a 13th century French translation of the falconry treatise *Dancus Rex*, the story of how one king, Galaciens, comes to the king Dancus, seeking instruction in the art of falconry.

Lors li commança li rois Dancus a demander por quel cause il estoit venuz. Li rois Galaciens li respondi sagement: “Je vig a toi veoir et oïr se ce est voirs que j’ai oï dire que tu ies li plus sages que je oïsse onques, que tu seis un art de quoi tu ies mult curieus, car tu fais panre un oïsel a autre, por la quel chose je vueil estre tes desciples.” (Tilander, 1.prol. 13-16)

Then King Dancus began to ask why he had come. King Galaciens replied soberly: I have come to see you and hear you because I have heard that you are the wisest I could ever hear of, and because you know an art about which I am greatly curious: for you can cause one bird to catch another -- for that reason I wish to be your student.

Galaciens may not have known what he was getting into. The *Dancus* goes on to put down, in great detail, the particulars of what a good falconer must know and do. There is not enough space and time within this paper to even list all of the very practical topics covered, ranging from types of hawks to their capture, training, and care.⁴

⁴ The central medieval text is Frederick II’s monumental *De Arte Venandi cum*

Suffice it to say that the falconer must know the different types of hawks, for they all have their own idiosyncrasies. He must have an encyclopedic knowledge of hawk ailments, both physical and psychological, and their cure. He must be familiar with a demanding course of general and *ad hoc* training techniques. And at the end, the falconer must be philosophical, for things may still go wrong; the hawk is a wild and willful creature, and is never fully tame. “Sont de grant hardement et sont molt pervers” writes the *Dancus* author of some hawks. (*Dancus*, I.30.3)

In Book IV of *Troilus and Criseyde*, when Troilus is despairing over the “changing” of Criseyde, Pandarus attempts to console him with the thought that there are other women. Where we might use the expression, “there are other fish in the ocean,” Pandarus uses a hawking metaphor.

“What! God forbede alwey that ech plesaunce
 In o thing were and in non other wight!
 If oon kan syngre, an other wel kan daunce;
 If this be goodly, she is glad and light;
 And this is fair, and that kan good aright.
 Ech for his vertu holden is for deere,
 Both heroner and faucoun for ryvere. (Tr. IV.407-413)⁵

Beside revealing a distressing superficiality to Troilus—“Nettle in, dok out, now this, now that, Pandare?” (IV. 462)—Pandarus’ use of a falconry image suggests a good deal about Pandarus’ attitudes toward both women and the game of love; not coincidentally, it also conjures

Avibus. For this and other important texts, especially the *Liber Ruralium Commodorum*, and for its fine illustrations, see Innamorati, *Arte della Caccia*.

⁵ Abbreviations for Chaucer’s works follow *The Riverside Chaucer*.

up (for the aristocracy at least) familiar images of the leisured life at or around court. Pandarus' vocabulary gives him away: words like *plesaunce*, *daunce*, and especially *light* betray his degree (or rather lack) of gravity: to Pandarus, both hawking and love are games. While Pandarus does have his own romantic attachments (or aspirations), his role within the main love story is that of a semi-outsider: a coordinator of events, and a participant only in that he watches from some distance.

If we accept Pandarus as the 14th century gentleman that he in many ways is, we might guess from this speech that he had read Guillaume de Machaut's *Dit de l'Alerion*, a long and involved autobiographical allegory of love describing a lover's passion for, loss of, and eventual possession of several birds of prey. Much of the action is very reminiscent of the *Roman de la Rose*, with a pensive young swain entering a classic *locus amoenus*, replete with pleasant trees and singing birds. Instead of a rose, though, the youth discovers a sparrow hawk among the branches. Conventional (and much-amplified) love-rhetoric aside, the passage is laced with interesting specifics about hawks.

Lors en mon estant me dressay,
 Et puis mon regart adressay
 Vers l'aubre qui se debatoit.
 Si vi que dessus s'esbatoit
 Uns gentils espriviers rames,
 Et se vi bien que ses plumages
 Ne tenoit nul affaitement,
 Fors que de li tant seulement,
 Combien qu'il fust moult agensis.
 Et je qui estoie pensis
 Vi aussi que d'un oiselet

Qu'il avoit pris tout nouvelet
 Qu'un petit s'en estoit peüs.
 Après ce fu moult esmeüs,
 Car de son corps qui estoit biaux
 Faisoit moult de faitis sambiaus,
 En li deporter cointement
 Et son plumage jointement
 Mettre a point et aparillier.
 Dont moult me pris a mervillier
 Et l'enemay de droite amour.

(Guilliaume de Machaut, 529-550)

Then on foot I made my way, and looked up into a tree, and saw sitting on it a fine wild sparrowhawk. And I could see that its plumage/aspect was not particularly sophisticated, but only to the degree that it was attractive and well-adorned in itself. While I was thinking these thoughts, I noticed also that the sparrowhawk was feeding itself a little from a small bird that it had just caught. After this, things got suddenly interesting, because it made of its beautiful body a seeming show, settling itself elegantly, and putting its plumes together in a fine and attractive trim. Then I was struck with amazement and was overcome with true love.

Machaut goes on to describe the eventual capture, training, and loss of this bird. The lover turns his thoughts to a she-eagle; the course of love goes through several changes and vicissitudes before finally ending happily.

Pandarus would have needed go no farther than this for a precedent for his casual identification of love with hawking. Machaut's poem is valuable for our discussion because of its full and detailed realization of what is, after all, a very logical literary

development: the marriage of the conventions of l'amour cortois and falconry. Both are considered arts, or disciplines, as *Dancus Rex* on the one hand, and Ovid's *Art of Love* on the other (not to mention the numerous medieval relatives or progeny of both) will testify. Both, as artistic phenomena, have specific, aristocratic communities of adherents. Both have their own privileged vocabulary. Both have their own "daunce": a universally (that is, within their respective macrocosms) agreed-upon progression of actions and events, all leading to an almost unmentionable consummation. Both attempt to schematize and codify something that—it could be argued—is at heart elemental. Both begin with the expectation of an action, and then, through the agent of convention, change the locus of significance from the actor to the audience.

What is particularly significant to a discussion of Pandarus is his choice here of a peculiarly spectator-oriented sport as a metaphor for love affairs. Falconry is different from most sports in that others, the birds, perform the action; the hawkers only watch. Pandarus' function in the poem is precisely to "faire panre un oisel a autre": he brings the hawk to the lark, then watches the show.

However, and as I have already suggested, Pandarus does his watching from some distance. If we compare his comments to Troilus with the *L'Alerion's* lover's progression of experience, we can find a telling difference in the way that the experience is framed. Pandarus uses his examples of "heroner" and "falcon for river" (two broad categories of hawks used for different types of prey) to suggest a sort of careless approximation and a scheme of easy substitution. Raptors for heron or for river are (in this instance at least) of a roughly similar quality.

Machaut, on the other hand, sets out to make the fine distinctions of a connoisseur. His bird is *un espriviers*, a small accipiter, and a bird that introduces a narrative of incremental stages—as we already

know, the lover will move on to bigger (and better?) birds. Machaut's imagery is subtle and ironic in a way that Pandarus' (at least in this stage of his understanding) is not. Machaut's hawk is feeding on a small bird (*oiselet*) that, soon enough, shifts in meaning: when the lover is *pris a merveiller* ("struck by" or better "taken by" amazement), he joins the little bird as prey and prisoner. This reflects a merry-go-round's worth of changes: the lover, who initially enters as a watcher and seeker-of-birds, becomes himself not seeker but sought, and suddenly more an object than subject in this layered game of venery. I will argue that a similar—but ultimately larger and deeper—pattern of changes does occur in *Troilus and Criseyde*, and especially in the case of Troilus, who himself enters into a complex and often (for him) bewildering pattern of movement between agency and subjection, mastery and moult.

We can approach this—and, simultaneously, reconfirm Chaucer's portrayal of Pandarus as being a falconer and a detached shaper of events more than a participant—by contrasting the motif of "controlling a hawk is like conducting a love affair" with a similar and common motif, where riding a horse represents close to, but not exactly, the same thing. In the General Prologue to *The Canterbury Tales*, we are told of the Wife of Bath: "Upon an amblere esily she sat." (G.P. 469) Taking into account the Wife's own prologue and tale also, it is easy to read this seemingly innocuous line as a signal of a great deal more than the notion that she knows how to ride a horse: there is a double and ambiguous suggestion that she can control a husband, and/or that she is comfortable with her sexuality. We find a similiar identification between horse and the physicality of love in *Troilus and Criseyde* :

As proude Bayard gynneth for to skippe
Out of the weye, so pryketh hym his corn,

Til he a lasshe have of the longe whippe --
Than thinketh he, "Though I prounce al byforn
First in the trays, ful fat and newe shorn,
Yet am I but an hors, and horses lawe
I moot endure, and with my feres drawe" (I. 218-224)

The law that Troilus has to endure, as do his fellow humans, is the law of *kynde* : he is subject to the impulses of erotic love. What makes the horse so attractive a figure for human sexuality may be a mixture of two things: the horse is both spectacularly physical, *and* controllable. Hawks have the same qualities, but one could say that the dialectic of control with hawks is not so much physical as psychological. This is why falconry lends itself so well to the refinements of courtly love narrative, where the physical realities found in genres like the *fabliau* are suppressed in favor of social-psychological discussion. Indeed, when horses are found in courtly love poems as figures for the lovers, it is difficult to escape a comic awareness of animality:

Dos cavals ai a ma sselha, ben e gen;
bon son ez ardit per armas e valen;
mas no ls puesc tener amdos, que l'uns l'autre non consen.
(Guilhem de Peiteu, 239)

I have 2 horses in my stable: fine ones, well-bred. They are hardy and well-suited to arms and brave deeds; but I cannot keep them both, because one cannot stand the other.

I quote from this 12th century Provençal poem for two reasons. One is to point out that, despite the poet's best efforts to "unbayardize" these horses, with his insistence on their noble stock

and their chivalric prowess, we cannot escape the comic recognition that the principals are full-blooded, animal, and subject to full-blooded—dare we say barnyard?—passions. The narrator of the *Troilus* does not use any horse imagery in describing Criseyde; this is consistent with his general reluctance to make any sort of moral judgement on her. Considering her dubious position as the heroine of this romance as well as her potential place within the anti-feminist traditions of the day, Criseyde would have more to lose from being called a barnyard horse than would Troilus.

There is more of loss, too, in this image of Troilus-as-horse than the narrator (whose subjectivity is almost Troilus' at this point) yet knows. Surely there is irony in the phrase that shows this "fiersse and proude knyghte" (I.225) as *first in the trays*. The substantive adjective is contradicted by the phrase that follows; Troilus, with his birth-right, accomplishments and all, may feel a sense of primacy among peers; but that is all undercut and diminished by the reigning-in of "traces." As is often the case with Chaucer, moments of comic appeal mask a much graver and broader philosophical message. Troilus' prancing sense of freedom contrasts with a developing theme of entrapment; most immediately, this constitutes an amusing element in this love-portrait. For the longer arc of Troilus' story, however, these traces suggest the Boethian world-prison as much as they do love's snares.⁶ We, along with the narrator, are not yet aware of this; Troilus' changed perspective at the very end of the poem will make it clear. As we did with Machaut's socially rising lover, we get a sense of stages; but here that evolution will reach levels of understanding that transcend the erotic and social.

⁶ For the theme of bondage in this poem, see Barney, 448.

Troilus does have his moment as a hawk, and an erotic one at that. In his moment of triumph, when he finally has Criseyde in his arms, the narrator breaks in with:

What myghte or may the sely larke seye,
Whan that the sperhawk hath it in his foot? (III. 1191-1192)

Indeed, it is not entirely clear whether the sperhawk refers to Troilus or to Criseyde—Troilus tends to be more like a sely lark in these bedroom scenes than does Criseyde—but the fact that Troilus had just “hente” her fast in his arms supports the former (and conventional) reading. American readers in particular may be susceptible to an ornithological misunderstanding at this point, for we have traditionally used the word “sparrowhawk” to refer to what the British call a kestrel. As D.W. Robertson has pointed out, the kestrel “was associated with the lower orders of society” (411). What Chaucer is referring to here is the European sparrowhawk, much valued by falconers: “L’espervier qui est de bonne forme est grant et court et a la teste petite, espauls larges et grosses, jambes grosses, piés estandus, penes noires.” (Guilliaume Tardif, 30). Although not the largest of raptors, this hawk seems to have had some standing as a symbol for romance heroes. Chaucer may not have known the late-twelfth century *Perlesvaus*, but we do find in it a good example of the sparrowhawk’s knightly status.

Atant ez vos Lancelot e li chevalier avec lui. Lanceloz choisi lo roi e Monseignor Gavain, puis escrie les chevaliers autresi com li espreviers a l’aloe, et les fait esparpeilier e d’une part e d’autre. (Perlesvaus, I.9.7044-7046)

Just then, Lancelot and the knight with him (Melio) arrived. Lancelot espied the king and Gawain, then accosted the knights like a sparrowhawk after the lark, and scattered them hither and there.

A slightly larger but closely related (it is an accipiter) hawk, the goshawk, figures prominently in Marie de France's *Lai de Yonec*. In that tale, the hawk retains the fierce wildness appropriate to such a bird, but also accrues significance as a principal in a clandestine love affair. *Yonec* also establishes a courtly atmosphere with attractive simplicity. When the heroine wishes for a lover, a goshawk suddenly flies through her window, and then turns into a handsome knight. The heroine is overcome with fear, but the goshawk-knight reassures her.

Mut fu curteis li chevaliers,
 Il la areisunat primiers:
 "Dame," fet il, "n'eiez poür:
 Gentil oisel ad en ostur!"

The knight was very courteous, and reassured her straight off:
 "Lady," he said, "fear not: the goshawk is a gentle (courtly)
 bird!" (Marie, 119-122)

Chaucer uses such associations to mediate the inescapable sexuality of the moment of Troilus' triumph. At the same time, that sexuality is quite deliberate, and perhaps just as significant in what is not there as is. Criseyde, like the lark, cannot speak; neither can the narrator. When, a few lines later, she discourages further speech, she simultaneously betrays a satisfaction with things as they are, and little concern (or consideration) of what might come to be, or come to mean.

"For it suffiseth, this that seyde is heere,

And at o word, withouten repentaunce,
Welcome, my knyght, my pees, my suffisaunce!" (III. 1307-1309)

We can explore the implications of Criseyde's unconcern by tracing some of the associations that Chaucer sets up between her and the falcons. For the overall purpose of this paper, we can see how Criseyde becomes a hawk to Pandarus' hawking; in this, she might seem like the Troilus of the passage we have just seen. However, Criseyde shows characteristics of her own, characteristics that tie her to some very particular aspects of these birds. Pandarus busies himself with and about falconry; both Criseyde and Troilus become the very birds. Troilus, however, does not remain a hawk; as we shall see at the poem's end, he changes from that state; in doing so, he transforms the poem. Criseyde, on the other hand, does remain a falcon, even while herself changing.

At the end of Book III, we find a description of Troilus, well content with the course of his affair with Criseyde, as he carries on his public life.

In time of trewe, on haukyng wolde he ride,
Or elles honte boor, beer, or lyoun;
The smale bestes leet he gon biside.
And whan that he com ridyng into town,
Ful ofte his lady from hire wyndow down,
As fresh as a faukon comen out of muwe,
Ful redy was hym goodly to saluwe. (III.1779-1785)

Chaucer derived this description from the *Filostrato*, but made enough of a change to warrant our looking at the Italian.

Ne' tempi delle triegue egli uccellava,

Falcon, girfalchi ed aquile tenendo,
 E tal fiata con li can cacciaua,
 Orsi, cinghiali, e gran lion seguendo,
 Li piccoli animai tutti spregiava;
 Ed a'suoi tempi Criseida vedendo
 Si rifaceva grazioso e bello
 Come falcon ch'uscisse di cappello. (Boccaccio, 3.91)

In times of truce he went bird-hunting, holding falcons, gyrfalcons and eagles. At times he went hunting with dogs, pursuing bears, boars, and large lions. He disdained all the small animals; and when at times he beheld Criseyde, he changed himself to graciousness and fair looks, like a falcon just out of the hood.

Chaucer's description is simple enough. During times of truce, Troilus would go hawking or hunting. He would hunt boars, bears, or lions; he let small animals alone. When he came back into town, Criseyde would often be waiting at her window, and she would nod or wave down to him as he passed.

The primary thing that Chaucer changes is who is described as a hawk. I suspect that Boccaccio chose to describe Troilus as various hawks simply as a sort of contrapuntal extension of the falconry imagery; it is an elegant device, and it does suggest Troilus' fierce and martial nature, and that this nature is now somewhat tamed by the civilizing effects of love. But what Chaucer does, by changing the hawk simile to refer to Criseyde, and by changing the hood to a mew, is to open up a whole range of suggestion about Criseyde's character and situation.

The word "mew" usually means an enclosed space in which a bird is kept. It originates, though, from the French *muer*, to change; and

describes the coop where a hawk is put during its time of moult, or the moult itself. I will return to this meaning in a short space. Chaucer does use it in the former meaning, as a simple cage, in his description of the Franklin in *The General Prologue*: “Ful many a fat partrich hadde he in muwe”(C.T. I [A] 349).

Criseyde seems to spend most of her time within enclosed spaces. Besides looking out of a window, we find her “withinne a paved parlour” (II. 82), going “streght into hire closet” (II.599), in a fenced garden attached to her house (II. 814), in her bed (II 914), and in many other scenes of house, hall, chamber, and closet. Now, we could grant that Criseyde’s “muwe” is just another in this long list of enclosed spaces; and we would be (partly) right in doing so. Her enclosed state mirrors, in miniature, the enclosed state of her besieged city. But enclosure is only half of the suggestion offered by the word “muwe”.

What is interesting about this particular place of enclosure is that it is known as *a place where a hawk changes*. Birds of prey go through a yearly moult: there is a short period of time when, lacking their primary feathers, they cannot fly. This is a period of forced inactivity and genuine hunger and tension. New feathers come in, and the newly-plumaged bird, liberated from its psychological as well as physical fetters, is free to do whatever it wants. The period immediately following a moult was one of great worry for the falconers. The bird, out of lack of practice flying from and returning to the hand, is particularly prone to escape at this time. For instance, a 15th century falconry treatise tells us: “La cause, pour quoy l’oyseau ne revient, est qu’il est peu souvent tenu et porté, par quoy n’est acoustumé --” (Guilliaume Tardif, 65). Both this work and the aforementioned *Dancus Rex* contain numerous indications that the moult -time was particularly rife with problems and anxiety.

The metaphoric possibilities of mew-anxiety did not escape Guillaume le Machaut. We find again, in the *Dit de l'Alerion*, our young man of the sparrowhawk, overcome (justifiably, it turns out) with worries now that his bird's moulting-time has come.

Entremeslée de doubtance,
 Que s'il muoit de son plumage,
 Qu'il ne muast de son corage
 Et qu'il ne fust plus dongereus
 Que devant, et meins amoureux. (1240 – 1244)

—overcome with fear that it might, in changing its plumage, change its feelings; that it might be more distant than before, and less loving.

The passage in *Troilus and Criseyde* that we are discussing is on the surface a happy scene; to use Boethian terms, one high on fortune's wheel. But of course we have known from the very opening of the poem that this love affair will fall “fro wo to wele, and after out of joie.” And Chaucer's contemporary readers, the majority of them (as I have already suggested) well-versed in both falconry lore and courtly literature, would have recognized something ominous in the description of Criseyde as “fresh as a faukon comen out of muwe.”

The suggestion that Criseyde is “muable” brings a cautionary note to the overall feeling of happiness in this scene. Furthermore, the identification of Criseyde with a hawk gives her a little bit of needed stature to counter and balance Troilus' almost overwhelming aura, in public scenes such as this, of power and command. We are reminded that while Troilus is feared and respected when he is outside, the tables are somewhat turned in the secret chambers of his private life.

Chaucer has chosen a symbol of power appropriate for a woman. As Isidore puts it:

Accipiter avis animo plus armata quam unguis, virtutem maiorem in minore corpore gestans.

The hawk is a bird better armed in its spirit than its talons: it carries a bigger strength in a smaller body. (12.7.55)

This was often repeated; for instance, Chaucer may have encountered such lore in John of Trevisa's translation of Bartholomaeus Anglicus' *De Proprietatibus Rerum* (book 12). Or perhaps, and even more to the point here:

La femelle des oyseaux vivans de rapine est plus grande que son masle, plus forte, hardie, caute et astute.

The female of birds that live by hunting is larger than the male: it is stronger, more enduring, craftier, and more cunning. (Guillaume Tardif, 11)

What results is a (dangerously) changeable woman, shut safely up in an enclosure. These two meanings would seem to be somewhat at odds with each other: one expresses a degree of volatility; the other, a certain fixedness. For medieval readers particularly, this combination would suggest nothing as much as it would the scenes and stories that fill that great model of sublunary change, Ovid's *Metamorphoses*. Chaucer confronts this paradox most particularly not in one of his many Ovidian tales, but when he translates Boethius:

. . . forsothe contraryous Fortune is alwey sothfast, whan sche scheweth hirself unstable thurw hir chaunging. (Bo II.pr.8.15-17)

Criseyde, it could be argued, is "alwey sothfast," but this steadiness is, to Troilus' sorrow, an adherence to an essential and mutable nature.

In the final section of this paper, I would like to suggest that Troilus' apotheosis at the end of the poem can be read as an extension of the bird imagery. I have suggested that, in Criseyde's case, Chaucer has very deliberately combined the motifs of changeableness and imprisonment, of mutability and worldliness. It could be argued that, to Chaucer and his age, the penultimate prison was this world and its endlessly changing fortunes. Criseyde's quality of being enclosed and changeable prefigures her condition at the end of the poem.⁷ For Troilus, Chaucer had a far different "muwing" in mind.

De aquila Daud in psalmo centesimo: Renouabitur ut aquilae
iuuentus tua.

In the one hundredth Psalm, David says this concerning the eagle:
Your youth shall be renewed as is the eagle's. (Physiologus, p.19)

Chaucer does not call Troilus an eagle when his spirit is released and he flies up to the eighth sphere. However, Criseyde does associate him with an eagle in her dream:

And as she slep, anonright tho hire mette
How that an egle, fethered whit as bon,
Under hire brest his longe clawes sette,
And out hire herte he rente, and that anon,

⁷ Both Pandarus' and Criseyde's celebrated dreams, redolent as they are with associations of Ovidian metamorphosis, also point toward a reading of secular change as a cycle of disappointment. The great medieval model is, of course, Dante's *Inferno*, where the lost souls suffer endless mutation in endless fixity.

And dide his herte into hire brest to gon --
Of which she nought agroos, ne nothyng
smerte --
And forth he fleigh, with herte lefte for herte. (II. 925-931)

It could be argued (and certainly at this point in the poem) that this is no transcendent eagle: it is at best Ganymede's eagle, not Dante's. "Whit as bon" suggests an exclusively sub-lunary sphere of action, as does "herte left for herte"; the operative verb here is "lefte". Marvin Muldrick makes the point that the eagle's lordliness is "*darkened* (Muldrick's italics) by the disquieting simile." (90) On the other hand, though, although there are intimations of mortality aplenty, there is no pain—"nothyng smerte." This may anticipate the last flight that Troilus takes.

The description of Troilus' apotheosis combines the elements of high, even supra-lunar flight and acuity or improvement in vision, both traditionally aquiline traits.

And whan that he was slayn in this manere,
His lighte goost ful blisfully is went
Up to the holughnesse of the eighthe spere,
In convers letyng everich element;
And ther he saugh with ful avysement
The erratik sterres, herkenyng armonye
With sownes ful of hevenyssh melodie.
And down fom thennes faste he gan avyse
This litel spot of erthe that with the se
Embraced is, and fully gan despise
This wrecched world, and held al vanite
To respect of the pleyn felicite
That is in hevене above; -- (V. 1806-1819)

Again, I will refer to the *Physiologus* :

Physiologus dicit aquilam talem habere naturam: cum senuerit, grauantur alae eius, et obducuntur oculis eius caligine; tunc quaerit fontem aquae, et contra eum fontem euolat in altum usque ad aerem solis, et ibi incendit alas suas, et caliginem oculorum comburit de radio solis; tunc demum descendens ad fontem trina uice se mergit, et statim renoatur tota, ita ut alarum uigore et oculorum splendore multum melius renoetur. (19)

Physiologus reported the eagle to have this nature: when it grows old, and its wings grow heavy, and its eyes grow dim; then it seeks a fountain of water, and flies above and away from the fountain and all the way up to the air near the sun, and there it burns its wings, and the dimness of its eyes burns away also in the rays of the sun. Then it descends to the fountain and submerges in it three times, and it is immediately renewed, just as are the strength of its wings and the splendid brightness of its eyes made far better than before.

Back in Book One, before things really started, Pandarus justified his credentials as a love-advisor to Troilus:

“Right so fare I, unhappy for me.
 I love oon best, and that me smerteth sore;
 And yet, perauunter, kan I reden the
 And not myself; repreve me na more.
 I have no cause, I woot wel, for to sore
 As doth an hauk that listeth for to pleye;
 But to thin help yet somewhat kan I seye. (I.666-672)

Pandarus, as I have suggested, gets no chance to fly at all, for he scarcely participates in the world of bird-changes that he helps to initiate. And, for all her elusivity, moral or otherwise, our lasting image of Criseyde as a hawk is of one in mew, always changing yet still in place. Troilus, too, gets his wings, but they themselves change, and he changes with them.

While the poem's hero did find, for a short time, a reason to soar with happiness over his fortunes in wordly love, that is not our final image of him in flight. For Troilus, in the end, is not a hawk, but an eagle; able to fly beyond the confines of the closed world of merely human love, and beyond the closed world of changing fortunes. When Chaucer writes "Go, litel bok, go, litel myn tragedye", he is saying goodbye to Troilus as well as to the poem: neither shall return to the fist.

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Abstract

Moult and Mastery: Falconry in *Troilus and Criseyde*

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Chaucer's *Troilus and Criseyde* is approached through its use of falconry imagery. Falconry in the Middle Ages was a highly evolved and specialized practice, with a rich literature of its own, both imaginative and practical. The poem's three main characters can be understood in the different ways that they engage falconry: Pandarus, a detached shaper of events, as a falconer himself; Criseyde, as a character both changeable and fixed in her nature, as a falcon; Troilus, as one that evolves from associations with falconry to something more aquiline and, ultimately, transcendent. These patterns also reflect an underlying and double pattern of reference within the poem: that to Ovidian and Boethian schemes of love and love's changes.

Key Words: Chaucer. *Troilus and Criseyde*. Falconry. Mutability. Moult. Ovid. Boethius.