



PROJECT MUSE®

For the Birds

Susan Crane

Studies in the Age of Chaucer, Volume 29, 2007, pp. 23-41 (Article)

Published by The New Chaucer Society

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1353/sac.2007.0013>



➔ *For additional information about this article*

<https://muse.jhu.edu/article/587346/summary>

THE BIENNIAL CHAUCER LECTURE
The New Chaucer Society
Fifteenth International Congress
July 27–31, 2006
Fordham University

The Biennial Chaucer Lecture

For the Birds

Susan Crane
Columbia University

MY TITLE'S DISMISSIVE CLICHÉ, “that’s for the birds,” reflects the low status that creatures other than human have held in literary and wider cultural studies. At the same time, my title claims a contribution on this low-status question, which I think gets set aside because it’s so complex, rather than so unimportant. Animals (conventional shorthand for animals other than human) have myriad, sometimes contradictory uses in medieval as in modern culture. A swan can be a dish at dinner, or an ancestor represented in a crest and seal, or a sign of good luck for sailors.¹ In *The Squire’s Tale*, Chaucer draws on the genre of romance as a way into thinking about the cultural place of falcons. He presents the peregrine falcon of this tale as richly symbolic, but also as a living bird, raising the issue of species difference and the question of how to respond to this difference—what Chaucer would call difference of “kynde.”

For such a project, the genre of romance has several facilitating strengths. The genre’s appreciation for exotic encounters, its worldly rather than theological commitments, and its easy suspension of ordinary realities allow for presenting contact with animals in positive terms. *Bevis of Hamtoun* and *Guy of Warwick*, both cited in *Sir Thopas*,

For their insightful comments on a preliminary draft of this lecture, I am grateful to Chris Chism, Rita Copeland, Karl Steel, and Paul Strohm.

¹Peter Hammond, *Food and Feast in Medieval England* (Phoenix Mill, Gloucestershire: Sutton, 1993, rev. ed. 2005), pp. 135–36, 144–45; Anthony Richard Wagner, “The Swan Badge and the Swan Knight,” *Archaeologia* 97 (1959): 127–38; Isidore of Seville, *Etymologies: Livre XII, Des animaux*, ed. and trans. Jacques André (Paris: Belles Lettres, 1986), pp. 236–39 (swans as signs of good luck: this information is repeated in most of the insular Bestiaries).

provide typical examples of such contact. Bevis's horse Arundel is not only his partner in battle but an independent actor on Bevis's behalf. At one point Arundel is nearly hanged for murdering one of Bevis's enemies, but Bevis prefers exile with his horse to life in England without him. Bevis names his principal manor after his horse, and he, horse, and wife die on the same day.² Guy of Warwick makes an alliance with a lion he rescues from a dragon. The lion follows Guy everywhere, fasts when Guy is ill, and drags himself to Guy's side to die of an enemy's wounds: "His hondes he gan to licky: þat was his loue, sikerly." Guy's sorrow nearly splits his heart, and he very soon splits the killer "Fram þe heued down to þe fot."³ In these romances, a powerful animal's devotion reflects well on the hero, and the hero's responding devotion also reflects well on him, even when it puts his life and his patrimony at risk.

Romances' opportunities for thinking about animals come with restrictions on the kinds of thinking they welcome. The genre's discursive and ideological limitations are as evident as its strengths: elite and secular in its orientations, narrative rather than scientific or philosophical in approach, romance is as partial as any other genre. Romance would not endorse the peasant's perspective on a nobleman's hawk, "Ha! that kite will eat a chicken tonight that would have sated my children."⁴ Nor do romances adopt the clear distinctions of patristic and scholastic writing on animals: as Thomas Aquinas puts it, "irrational creatures can have

²*The Romance of Sir Beves of Hamtoun*, ed. Eugen Kölbing, 3 vols., EETS, e.s. 46, 48, 65 (London: Trübner, 1885, 1886, 1894), 1:165–218. *Bevis* and *Guy* appear in many manuscripts, including Edinburgh, Advocates' Library MS 19.2.1 (the Auchinleck MS). "Romances of prys . . . Of Beves and sir Gy": Geoffrey Chaucer, *The Canterbury Tales*, in *The Riverside Chaucer*, 3rd ed., ed. Larry Benson (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1987), p. 216 (*Sir Thopas*, VII 897–99). Subsequent references to Chaucer's works in my text are cited in parentheses from this edition, by line number or fragment and line number.

³*The Romance of Guy of Warwick: The First or 14th-century Version*, ed. Julius Zupitza, EETS, e.s. 42, 49, 59 (London: Oxford University Press, 1883, 1887, 1891), 1: 236–55: quotations at Auchinleck lines 4335–36, 4393. "When Gij þat lyoun wounded seþ, / For sorwe him þouȝt his hert clef": Auchinleck lines 4337–38.

⁴Edmond Faral, "Des vilains, ou des XXII manières de vilains," *Romania* 48 (1922): 251 ("Ha! fait il, cil huas mangera enquenuit une geline et mi enfant en fuissent tuit saoul!") The peasant of this thirteenth-century satire is called "canine" for his ignoble perspective, not least in conflating a sparrow-hawk with the inferior kite, but his point that captive hawks were fed on domestic birds is entirely accurate. On the diet and expense of keeping hawks, see Robin S. Oggins, *The Kings and Their Hawks: Falconry in Medieval England* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2004), pp. 22, 25, 30, 109–17, 129–30. On the "noble" falcon and "ignoble" kite, see Dafydd Evans, "The Nobility of Knight and Falcon," in *The Ideals and Practice of Medieval Knighthood III: Papers from the Fourth Strawberry Hill Conference, 1988* (Woodbridge, Suffolk: Boydell, 1990), pp. 79–99.

no share in human life, which of its nature is rational, and therefore no friendship [*amicitia*] is possible with them.”⁵ In this dichotomizing spirit, an English sermon condemns a man for weeping not over Christ’s sacrifice but over *Guy of Warwick*, “when he came to the place where it dealt with the gratitude of the lion and how it was cut into three.”⁶ Closer to romance’s sensibilities than official science and theology were pervasive lay convictions about animals’ similarities to humans. Birds were conceived (and, according to Claude Lévi-Strauss, were still conceived in modern France) as making up a society with a metaphoric relation to human society, in which birdsong fills the function of human language.⁷ Each section of *The Squire’s Tale* begins by invoking this commonplace of courtly and romantic poetry: all the birds “songen hire affectiouns” at the arrival of spring; the next morning, Canacee understands their songs as she wears her magic ring (V.55, 398–400). Italian and Provençal poets describe birds singing “ciascuno in suo latino,” each in its own Latin; Chaucer writes that Canacee understands her “haukes *ledene*” (V.478), a term for both Latin and language.⁸ The reference to “Latin” strikes an analogy between birdsong and human speech, on the one hand, and Latin and vernaculars, on the other. “Hawk Latin” gets its plausibility from the differences among human languages: why not an animal language that is similarly obscure to humans, but similarly functional for its own speakers? The communicative, resourceful animals of romance express, in highly imaginative terms, a widespread convic-

⁵ Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, vol. 34, ed. and trans. R. J. Batten (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1975), pp. 88–89 (2a2ae. 25, 3).

⁶ Andrea Hopkins, *The Sinful Knights: A Study of Middle English Penitential Romance* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1990), p. 75; cited in Melissa Furrow, “Radial Categories and the Central Romance,” *Florilegium* 22 (2005): 133.

⁷ Claude Lévi-Strauss, *The Savage Mind* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1966), pp. 204–8; examples of birds’ vocalization represented as speech abound in Chaucer’s *Parliament of Fowls*, *Complaint of Mars*, and *Nun’s Priest’s Tale*. Scientific and philosophical works argue against the analogy between birdsong and human speech, but their resistance is another indication of the analogy’s currency: see the first chapter of Elizabeth Eva Leach, *Sung Birds: Music, Nature, and Poetry in the Later Middle Ages* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2006).

⁸ Guido Cavalcante, *Rime*, ed. Domenico de Robertis (Turin: Giulio Einaudi, 1986), p. 5, line 11 and n. citing the same expression in Bonagiunta da Lucca (“ciascun canta in suo latino”); William IX of Aquitaine, *Poesie*, ed. Nicolò Pasero (Modena: S.T.E.M.-Mucchi, 1973), p. 250, line 3 (“chanton chascus en lor lati”) and p. 254 n. citing the same expression in lyrics of Cercamon, Marcabru, Arnaut Daniel, and others. *Middle English Dictionary*, ed. Hans Kurath et al. (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1952–), *ledene*: (1) the Latin language; (2) (a) a language (b) speech, utterance; (3) (a) birdsong; also, the language of birds.

tion that humans and animals share contiguities beyond their mere physicality. These contiguities, like other preoccupations of romance such as chivalry, nation, adventure, and sexuality, deserve scholars' attention despite the challenge of romance's peculiar tone, by turns idealizing and critical, committed and ironic.

In scholarly circles, it's a good moment for *The Squire's Tale*. Emerging from a few decades of disrepute as no more than the clumsy utterance of its youthful teller, this tale is looking much more substantial as scholars consider its representations of an eastern kingdom and of womanhood as interpenetrating kinds of difference.⁹ Animal difference interpenetrates these two, I will argue, as *The Squire's Tale* draws on both romance's preoccupation with animal allegiances and the courtly complaint's preoccupation with the perils of love: in Alfred David's memorable phrase, *The Squire's Tale* is Anelida's story "recycled—with feathers."¹⁰ Some scholars dismiss the issue of cross-species contact in *The Squire's Tale* by proposing that the female peregrine, the formel, is probably an enchanted princess.¹¹ This view is neither sustainable nor refutable, given the tale's irresolution; but whether the formel is or is not *also* a human hardly makes her "kynde" less problematic. Indeed, it redoubles the species question, by taking her to be not only different from Canacee as bird from woman, but divided within herself as woman and bird. Most evidently, she's not simply human within, and animal without, since her heart belongs to a tercel, a male falcon, along with her feathers. The question of animal difference could only be dismissed by declaring every bird in the tale to be no more and no less than human.

Instead, Chaucer presses the species question by installing the peregrine in frameworks of gentility, femininity, and adventure that are central to romance. Her animal difference may seem compromised in her

⁹The turn from centuries of admiration to disrepute is most marked in Gardiner Stillwell, "Chaucer in Tartary," *RES* 24 (1948): 177–88. The argument against thinking of this tale as a function of its teller gets substantial articulation in David Lawton, *Chaucer's Narrators* (Woodbridge, Suffolk: D. S. Brewer, 1985), pp. 106–29. Critical attention to gender as a function of the exotic in this tale begins with John Fyler, "Domesticating the Exotic in the *Squire's Tale*," *ELH* 55 (1988): 1–26. For a complete overview, see *Chaucer's Physician's, Squire's, and Franklin's Tales. An Annotated Bibliography, 1900–2000*, ed. Kenneth Bleeth (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, forthcoming 2007).

¹⁰Alfred David, "Recycling *Anelida and Arcite*: Chaucer as a Source for Chaucer," *SAC, Proceedings* 1 (1984): 105–15 (quotation at p. 110).

¹¹See *A Variorum Edition of the Works of Geoffrey Chaucer*, vol. 2, *The Canterbury Tales*, pt. 12, *The Squire's Tale*, ed. Donald C. Baker (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1990), pp. 15–17.

several analogies with the tale's human characters, but I will argue that Chaucer's interest in animals encompasses his interest in how they are enmeshed in human culture. Specifically, the tale's representation of the falcon is crucial to its representation of difference within human societies, yet her species remains salient as Canacee takes pity on her and attempts to shelter her. I'll divide the question of species difference into three parts, the first concentrating on the peregrine's symbolic functions, the second on her relation to the exotic, and the third on her "kynde" and cross-species compassion.

A Symbolic Loop

Naturalists along the East Coast are elated that, less than a mile from this room, two red-tailed hawks have built their nest on the 35th-floor ledge of an apartment tower overlooking Central Park. Coverage of this nesting in the *New York Times* quotes the building's current owner, Donald Trump: "I am honored by their choice of my building." He explains that the hawks honor him by endorsing his eye for real estate: "They know a lot about location." And there's more than location at issue: we can be certain that The Donald would not feel honored if pigeons nested on his buildings. Yet of the nesting hawks, Trump concludes with pride, "This could only happen to me."¹²

In medieval cultures as well as today, honor is accrued from association with some animals, and dishonor from association with others. These associations pass the real animal through a symbolic process imputing to it qualities such as nobility or courage, that are then transferred to humans who associate with it. *The Sibley Guide to Birds* notes that the peregrine falcon "has long been considered the embodiment of speed and power. . . . It hunts . . . from high above in spectacular stoops."¹³ Woodford's *Manual of Falconry* calls the female peregrine "the most spectacular bird to be employed in falconry," giving her extraordinary value in this elite and enclaved sport.¹⁴ For her importance in

¹²Thomas J. Lueck, "Four Hawks, Two Nests, One Empty," *New York Times*, April 21, 2006, Late Edition (East Coast), p. B 5.

¹³David Allen Sibley, *National Audubon Society: The Sibley Guide to Birds* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2000), p. 133.

¹⁴Michael Woodford, *A Manual of Falconry* (London: Adam & Charles Black, 1960), p. 3; similarly Philip Glasier, *Falconry and Hawking* (Woodstock, N.Y.: Overlook Press, 1998), p. 24: "For performance of the very highest quality, the peregrine leaves all the others far behind. Her most valuable trait is undoubtedly her persistence. I know of no other falcon which has this virtue to so great a degree."

hawking and her showy aggression, medieval writers call her “noble” and “molt cortois et vaillans” (very courtly and brave); in medieval iconography, a bird of prey on the fist conveys high social status.¹⁵ This “circular loop of symbolic transfer,” as anthropologist James Howe calls it, may begin in subjective judgments about which species have merit, but the circularity obscures this founding subjectivity so that it becomes unclear where the assertion of merit originates.¹⁶ The catalogue of birds in Chaucer’s *Parliament of Fowls* provides a condensed example in “the gentyl faucoun, that with his feet distrayneth / The kynges hand” (lines 337–38). Is the falcon “gentil” because it is preferred by kings, or is the king’s gentility secured by his association with this “noble” and “valiant” bird? When we can no longer answer one way or the other, the symbolic loop neatly closes.

A specific kind of totemic thinking informs this use of birds for marking human status. Lévi-Strauss’s reassessment of earlier work argued that totemism’s primary usefulness is not to connect humans to animals, but to make analogies between species differences, on the one hand, and human status differences, on the other.¹⁷ Totemic thought explains lineal and social distinctions among humans by reference to species distinctions. The evident difference between sparrows and falcons is recruited to make the difference between peasants and princes look natural. The superior merit of female falcons, formels, who are larger and bolder than the male tercelts, is appropriate for an adventure illustrating female excellence.

The naturalizing power of totemic thought is certainly in play in *The Squire’s Tale*, as well as in Donald Trump’s remark that “this could only happen to me.” But *The Squire’s Tale* is also fascinated by cross-species affinity. Poststructuralist expansions of Lévi-Strauss’s work have recuperated totemism’s cross-species connections. Its claims are metonymic, not just analogous. In specific late medieval cases, the blood of a serpent

¹⁵ *Variorum Edition*, ed. Baker, p. 207 (quoting the *Tresor de Brunet Latin*); Baudouin van den Abeele, *La fauconnerie dans les lettres françaises du XII^e au XIV^e siècle* (Louvain: Presses Universitaires de Louvain, 1990), pp. 194–97; Evans, “Nobility of Knight and Falcon.” Calling a falcon “noble” elides the hundreds of hours of labor required to tame and train a hawk to sit on a noble fist and hunt at a noble’s bidding. Canacee’s immediate rapport with the formel similarly elides the practical work of falconry, as if their connection were entirely natural.

¹⁶ James Howe, “Fox Hunting as Ritual,” *American Ethnologist* 8 (1981): 291.

¹⁷ Claude Lévi-Strauss, *Totemism*, trans. Rodney Needham (Boston: Beacon Press, 1963).

or a swan distinguishes Melusine's and Elias's descendants from other lineages.¹⁸ The falcon's first words to Canacee articulate both kinds of totemic connection—both an analogous superiority and a metonymy of hearts—that link woman to bird:

That pitee renneth soone in gentil herte,
 Feelynge his similitude in peynes smerte,
 Is preved alday, as men may it see,
 As wel by werk as by auctoritee;
 For gentil herte kitheth gentillesse.

(V.479–83)

Canacee's "similitude" to the falcon is a mutually reinforcing proof of their shared superiority. This symbolic loop is appropriately expressed in the virtually pleonastic "gentil herte kitheth gentillesse." A cross-species connection supplements their analogous excellence in the falcon's assertion that her "gentil herte" is her point of similitude with Canacee. This metonymy of gentle hearts elides the physical difference between princess and peregrine. Hearts connect them if appearances do not.

Metonymy's fragmentary, prosthetic enhancements can have awkward side effects. It's risky using animals to accrue merit to humans. In James Howe's example from modern hunting, foxhounds are said to be the "aristocrats" and "noble animals" of their species, so that their superiority among canines can reflect well on the huntsmen in contact with them, but Howe specifies that "the humans involved keep the identification partial and controlled. They do not wish to suggest inadvertently that they eat horsemeat, sniff each others' rear ends, or tear foxes apart with their teeth."¹⁹ Rather than playing it safe with princess and peregrine, *The Squire's Tale* veers beyond their gentle hearts into their bodily differences. This falcon is superior to all others "as wel of plumage as of gentillesse" (V.426). She grows up not in a palace but "in a roche of marbul gray" (V.500): it's the right stone, but oddly un-

¹⁸ Anthropologists such as Stanley Tambiah, J. C. Crocker, and John Borneman acknowledge the differentiating work of totemism, but they also refocus attention on the connection with animals that totemism often asserts: see Susan Crane, *The Performance of Self: Ritual, Clothing, and Identity During the Hundred Years War* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2002), pp. 107–25; on descendants of Melusine and Elias, see pp. 108–11.

¹⁹ Howe, "Fox Hunting," p. 290.

dressed into architecture. She takes her faithless lover's hand just before he flies away (V.596, 605). Why this persistent emphasis on her status as a creature? Her totemic connections to Canacee are only part of the answer. As I've been outlining, the falcon's species difference is crucial to her enhancement of Canacee's status, validating her human merit from beyond the realm of the human. In the second and third sections of this talk, I'll suggest that the falcon's difference from humankind comments as well on the category of the "straunge," the foreign and exotic, and on the concept of "kynde," natural species and sympathies.

"Straunge"

Helen Cooper has compared the two parts of *The Squire's Tale* to a chapter from Jules Verne, followed by a chapter from Henry James.²⁰ The first part teems with strange sights and smells and wonders of science and magic; the second, in comparison, is intimate, confessional, and reflective. Yet the two parts are also analogues of each other. By keeping the falcon's beak and feathers in view, Chaucer aligns species difference with cultural difference. In each part of the tale, a visitor from afar brings Mongol royalty an unexpected invitation to encounter the "straunge" on adventure. The "strange knyght . . . of Arabe and of Inde" who presents Canacee's father with adventure provoking gifts is echoed in the "faucun peregryn . . . of fremde land" who presents Canacee with her feminine adventure (V.89, 110, 428–29). Since "peregrine" already means "coming from foreign parts," adding that she is "of foreign land" is emphatic.²¹ The structural parallel between the tale's first and second parts suggests that the species differences of the latter comment on the cultural differences of the former.

One helpful way of thinking about difference in *The Squire's Tale* has been to notice how well romance serves orientalism. I'll briefly evoke this important argument, but moving beyond it is my purpose. Whether we think of the tale's narrating voice as the Squire's or Chaucer's, its position is unmistakably within masculine courtesy, within Christianity, and well to the west of Tartarye. From this position, the narration tends to represent cultural difference in positive terms, as ex-

²⁰ Helen Cooper, *The Canterbury Tales*, Oxford Guides to Chaucer, 2nd ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), pp. 222–23.

²¹ *Chaucer: The Squire's Tale*, ed. Dorothy Bethurum (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1965), p. 44, line 428 n.

otic but finally unthreatening. The Mongol king Cambyuskan keeps an unnamed religious law peculiar to his birth, yet he manifests at least eight virtues conventional to kingship, such as wisdom, mercy, courage, honor, and justice (V.17–27). Of the “straunge” foods consumed at Sar- raye, only the familiar delicacies swan and heron are named (V.67–68). The yet more “straunge” Mamluk emissary from Middle India “out- Easts the East,” in Kathryn Lynch’s phrase, yet both his decorum and the Mongol court’s are said to match perfectly the courtesies of Gawain and Lancelot.²² The tale can look entirely orientalizing at such points: that is, entirely committed to evoking an Eastern strangeness in order to master and incorporate it. Anthropomorphism translates orientalism into cross-species terms: the falcon is rendered so like a courtly lady that her alien species appears to be accessible and even familiar.

Orientalism and romance have much in common: the genre’s very heartbeat is difference encountered and then encompassed so as to enhance the prestige of gentillesse. In romance, whatever might appear alien turns out to be accessible, even as a residual strangeness preserves its special value.²³ The feminine is orientalism’s most recurring image for the exotic East and romance’s most characteristic ground for adventure. In *The Squire’s Tale*, the narrator’s expansive favoring of women both sets them apart and claims to know them, in categorical pronouncements on women: Canacee is “ful mesurable, as wommen be”; her encounter illustrates the “trouthe that is in wommen sene” (V.362, 645). Canacee’s Mongol birth doubles her exotic femininity; her intimacy with a falcon redoubles it; and yet their encounter is coded in a familiar courtly idiom of pledges and deceptions, honor and despair.

²²Kathryn L. Lynch, “East Meets West in Chaucer’s Squire’s and Franklin’s Tales,” *Speculum* 70 (1995): 530–51 (quotation at p. 541). See also Kenneth Bleeth, “Orientalism and the Critical History of the Squire’s Tale,” in *Chaucer’s Cultural Geography*, ed. Kathryn L. Lynch (New York: Routledge, 2002), pp. 21–31; and Jenna Mead, “Reading by Said’s Lantern: Orientalism and Chaucer’s *Treatise on the Astrolabe*,” *Medieval Encounters* 5 (1999): 350–57. On the political complexities pertaining at the time of the tale’s composition, see Carolyn P. Collette and Vincent J. DiMarco, “The Matter of Armenia in the Age of Chaucer,” *SAC* 23 (2001): 317–58; and Alan S. Ambrisco, “‘It lyth nat in my tonge’: Occupatio and Otherness in the *Squire’s Tale*,” *Chaur* 38 (2003–4): 205–28.

²³*The Squire’s Tale* does preserve whiffs of the exotic: the Tartar king’s alien law is conventionally virtuous, but it remains undescribed and unassimilated to the tale’s narrative position inside Christianity. The magical birthday gifts are susceptible to learned explanation, but finally they remain unexplained, and those who attempt explanation get little sympathy from the narrator. The narrator champions women with categorical praise, setting them above and apart from men: see Richard Firth Green, “Chaucer’s Victimized Women,” *SAC* 10 (1988): 3–21.

Chaucer's tale reflects romantic orientalism but moves beyond it as well. Sara Suleri Goodyear points out that analysis of literature on India can be constrained when it simply adopts orientalism's dualities of West and East, center and margin, and its ideology of appropriation and control. Suleri argues that British narratives about India by Kipling, Forster, and others betray some contradictory aspects of India's relation to Britain, such as a decentering inherent in the encounter, a disturbing breakdown of alterity, and a discovery of congruence in the opposing cultures' economies of desire.²⁴ Suleri's argument would question whether romantic orientalism in *The Squire's Tale* accounts for all its concerns. Here, I believe, is the revision that the tale's second part works on the first. It raises the alterity quotient, from cross-cultural relations to cross-species relations, but it turns from emphasizing alterity to exploding and collapsing it, in a tangle of connections, analogies, and migrating sensibilities. Part of the effect here is surely to complicate the question of cross-cultural difference, and part of the effect is just as surely to raise the question of cross-species difference. In *The Squire's Tale's* second part, the orientalized "other" shifts from the Eastern to the animal realm. At the same time, differences here proliferate and dissolve, loosening orientalism's hold on species difference and Eastern exoticism alike.

I stressed at the outset that the tale's peregrine falcon, the formel, either is simply not human or is herself divided between human and bird—and this indeterminate condition is a first refusal of species dichotomy. Another refusal of dichotomy overlaps her language and Canacee's. At first it seems Canacee will need the magic ring, a perfect manifestation of animal orientalizing, a decoder of strange avian meanings. Instead, Canacee and the formel turn out not entirely to need it. The falcon begins by shrieking rather than speaking: "ever in oon she cryde alwey and shrigte" (V.417). Yet Canacee "hath understonde what this faucon *seyde*" before she asks the falcon to explain her cries in words (V.437). The formel's shrieks preserve a specific peculiarity of hawks: they have no song, but if fowlers do not handle them with caution, they imprint on humans and become "screamers." Fredrick II's *Art of Falconry* advises on ways to avoid this behavior.²⁵ Chaucer grafts

²⁴Sara Suleri, *The Rhetoric of English India* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992).

²⁵Latin *clamorosi*: Frederick II, *De arte venandi cum avibus*, ed. Carl Arnold Willemsen (Leipzig: in aedibus Insulae, 1942), pp. 136, 145; *The Art of Falconry, Being the De Arte Venandi cum Avibus of Frederick II of Hohenstaufen*, trans. Casey A. Wood and F. Marjorie Fyfe (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1943), pp. 129, 136. Modern manuals agree,

courtly complaint onto peregrine screams, and Canacee “hath understood” both of them. I’ve argued elsewhere that the two creatures share a feminine language of embodiment, and here I’d only add that their shared language undercuts the magic ring’s dichotomous premise.²⁶

The formel’s cross-species allegiance with a princess joins in her ongoing experience of wrenching redefinitions, which she characteristically figures as interspecies migrations: she is an example for other creatures as the whipped dog is an example for taming lions; her lover is a tiger but one with knees to fall on in fake humility; he is a snake hidden under flowers who longs to eat worms like a captured songbird.²⁷ The caged bird passage is the formel’s fullest expression of her disorientations:

I trowe he hadde thilke text in mynde,
 That “alle thyng, repeiryng to his kynde,
 Gladeth hymself;” thus seyn men, as I gesse.
 Men loven of propre kynde newefangelnesse,
 As briddes doon that men in cages fede.
 For though thou nyght and day take of hem hede,
 And strawe hir cage faire and softe as silk,
 And yeve hem sugre, hony, breed and milk,
 Yet right anon as that his dore is uppe
 He with his feet wol spurne adoun his cuppe,
 And to the wode he wole and wormes ete;
 So newefangel been they of hire mete,
 And loven novelries of propre kynde,
 No gentillesse of blood ne may hem bynde.

(V.607–20)

John Fyler has brilliantly detailed the ways in which this exemplum’s “tenor and vehicle, number and gender keep reversing and dissolving

e.g., Glasier, *Falconry and Hawking*, p. 112: “a ‘screamer’ . . . is most undesirable, particularly so in the case of falcons, who tend to have extremely penetrating voices and will sometimes scream for hours on end without apparently getting the slightest bit hoarse.”

²⁶Susan Crane, *Gender and Romance in Chaucer’s “Canterbury Tales”* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994), pp. 73–76.

²⁷On taming lions by whipping dogs (*Squire’s Tale*, V 491), see John S. P. Tatlock, “Chaucer’s Whelp and Lion,” *MLN* 38 (1923): 506–7; Calvin S. Brown Jr. and Robert H. West, “‘As by the Whelp Chastised is the Leon,’” *MLN* 55 (1940): 209–10; and Grace Frank, “As by the Whelp Chastised is the Leon,” *MLN* 55 (1940): 481. On the tiger’s doubleness (*Squire’s Tale*, V 543–44), see Melvin Storm, “The Terecelet as Tiger: Bestiary Hypocrisy in the Squire’s Tale,” *ELN* 14 (1977): 172–74.

into each other.”²⁸ The false *tercel* is one of those *men* who love novelty “of propre kynde,” as captive songbirds love worms. The *tercel* joins humans on the comparison’s literal plane, and the caged bird becomes figurative. Gender distinction cuts at right angles across the falcon’s species conflation. “Men” slides from designating humanity and falcons in general to designating the specifically masculine flightiness of the *tercel*, the caged bird, and faithless male humans.²⁹ Gender difference is more persistent, and more perilous, than species difference.

The queasily shifting distinctions of the formel’s desperate complaint run counter to orientalism, in which “the exotic” is foundationally different, and then appropriated. As the tale’s second part comments on the first, difference becomes less secure, and managing it looks less certain. Most notoriously, an unassimilated suggestion of incest (or is it bigamy?) closes the summary of the events to come; further, Cambalo will confuse the formel’s dichotomous view of the sexes by siding with her to win back her lover (V.651–70).³⁰ To be sure, romantic orientalism does mark Canacee and the formel, especially when their affiliation with each other is expressed as their difference from all male creatures. But even as their cross-species affinity exoticizes them, affinity also transcends the species difference that could distinguish them from each other, contributing to the formel’s general experience of disorientation. The falseness of male creatures has united them in one dangerous “kynde,” leaving her a helpless migrant in a “fremde land.” Soon, Ca-

²⁸ Fyler, “Domesticating the Exotic,” p. 17. The caged bird passage has received commentary too ample to document adequately here; see Bleeth’s annotated bibliography (note 9 above).

²⁹ In *Gender and Romance*, pp. 66–73, I trace this passage’s shifting gender alignments in relation to Chaucer’s source passages from the *Consolation of Philosophy* and the *Roman de la Rose*.

³⁰ *Variorum Edition*, ed. Baker, pp. 241–42, summarizes commentary on incest, bigamy, or authorial/editorial lapse in these closing lines; recently Elizabeth Scala has argued for incest over bigamy or lapse: *Absent Narratives, Manuscript Textuality, and Literary Structure in Late Medieval England* (New York: Palgrave, 2002), pp. 71–98. *The Squire’s Tale’s* compact plot summary at V 651–70 suggests that the tale is deliberately fragmentary. Abbreviation may have had some practical appeal for Chaucer (such as evasion of the genre’s bulk, reticence about the plot, or dissatisfaction with his execution of the tale). More evident than any practical strategy in the tale’s fragmentariness is the aesthetic of its evocative but disorienting projections: William Kamowski, “Trading the ‘Knotte’ for Loose Ends: The *Squire’s Tale* and the Poetics of Chaucerian Fragments,” *Style* 31 (1997): 391–412, aligns the tale with Coleridge’s “Kubla Khan,” another evocation of Eastern wonders that resorts to suspension in order to escape containment. He cites Marjorie Levinson on Romantic fragments: “A work that is never consumed can never be exhausted” (p. 398).

nacee will attempt a healing reconfiguration of the formel's shattering experience. Now, as the formel faints away in Canacee's lap, her best hope lies in the kindness of strangers.

"Kynde"

A long-standing argument in ethics seeks to determine how we should distribute our compassion. Should we care most for those most proximate? Do our particular nation, estate, sex, faith, or species have superior claims to those of others? Unchecked, the argument from proximity sustains practices that may be thought unappealing, such as misogyny, slavery, and oppression of the poor, so that a countercurrent in ethics presses for extending compassion to all living creatures, or at least to all humans.³¹ The contradictory pressures in this ethical problem are encapsulated in the term "kynde." When Canacee swears to help the falcon "as wisly help me grete God of kynde" (V.469), she invokes both the divisions and hierarchies of created things (their kinds and species) and the loving disposition that unifies created things (kindness and benevolence).

Boethius's *Consolation of Philosophy* is Chaucer's closest source for the argument that God's creation is both diverse and united in love. In the *Parliament of Fowls*, for example, Nature declares to all the birds that the eagle will first choose a mate, because he is the worthiest, "And after hym by ordre shul ye chese, / After youre kynde," that is, according to

³¹In this debate, creatures other than human are considered from ancient Greek philosophy onward, but are typically set aside as too different from humans to be of ethical concern: a fine overview is Richard Sorabji, *Animal Minds and Human Morals: The Origins of the Western Debate* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1993). Recent debates on ethical relationships between humans and animals tend to take place through utilitarianism, environmental ethics, and revisions to contractarian philosophy: see, for example, *Singer and His Critics*, ed. Dale Jamieson (Oxford: Blackwell, 1999), especially the essays of Richard J. Arneson, Colin McGinn, and Richard Holton and Rae Langton; Cora Diamond, *The Realistic Spirit: Wittgenstein, Philosophy, and the Mind* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1991), pp. 319–34 ("Eating Meat and Eating People"); and Martha C. Nussbaum, "Beyond 'Compassion and Humanity': Justice for Nonhuman Animals," in *Animal Rights: Current Debates*, ed. Cass Sunstein and Martha Nussbaum (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), pp. 299–320. By the logic of the argument from proximity, human groups deemed unworthy of compassion are often aligned with animals: see, for example, Paul H. Freedman, "The Representation of Medieval Peasants as Bestial and as Human," in *The Animal/Human Boundary: Historical Perspectives*, ed. Angela N. H. Creager and William Chester Jordan (Rochester: University of Rochester Press, 2002), pp. 29–49; Marjorie Spiegel, *The Dreaded Comparison: Human and Animal Slavery* (New York: Mirror Books, 1996).

a hierarchy of species (lines 400–401). The birds' love for their mates expresses their "kynde" in its other aspect, reflecting God's unifying love. Boethius explains that the world's "chaungynges" and "contrarious qualites" are bound in harmony by the same love that "halt togidres peples joyned with an holy boond, and knytteth sacrament of mariages of chaste loves; and love enditeth lawes to trewe felawes. O weleful were mankynde, yif thilke love that governeth hevене governede yowr corages."³² Thus it's doubly appropriate for Canacee to swear by the "grete God of kynde" as she addresses another species, and expresses a bond between them: "Ye sle me with youre sorwe verrailly, / I have of yow so greet compassioun" (V.462–63).

Chaucer resists the simple clarity of Boethius's position on "kynde." In the *Parliament of Fowls*, the hierarchy of species is not evidently just, despite Nature's endorsement, and the closing song of love only partly counteracts the tensions among species. Boethius, in contrast, praises natural order in his exemplum of the caged bird, which rightly longs for its created place in the woods.³³ Chaucer's two revisions of the caged bird exemplum (the other from *The Manciple's Tale*) place little faith in "kynde" in its sense of natural characteristics. Instead, the caged bird's "propre kynde" misleads it into desiring "wormes and swich wrecchednesse" (IX 171). Mistrusting the "kynde" of physical nature, Chaucer prefers its complement in creation, the lovingkindness that can unite one creature to another. The falcon's opening remark to Canacee, "pitee renneth soone in gentil herte," specifies that her "pitee" is fellow-feeling or empathy:

I se wel that ye han of my distresse
Compassioun, my faire Canacee,
Of verray wommanly benignytee
That Nature in youre principles hath set.
(V.483–87)

³² *Riverside Chaucer, Boece*, Book II, Metrum 8 (pp. 420–21). This "kynde" love that unites is exemplified in "Christ's mooder meeke and kynde" (*Prioress's Tale*, VII 597).

³³ *Boece*, Book III, Metrum 2 (p. 423): "Alle thynges seken ayen to hir propre cours, and alle thynges rejoysen hem of hir retornyng ayen to hir nature." Lady Philosophy uses the term "kynde" in her teaching that "Alle kende tendeth" to God, the beginning and end of all things: *Boece*, Book I, Prosa 6 (p. 406). See Lynn Sadler, "Chaucer's *The Book of the Duchess* and the 'Law of Kinde,'" *Annuaire Mediaevale* 11 (1970): 51–64; Hugh White, *Nature, Sex, and Goodness in a Medieval Literary Tradition* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), pp. 68–109, 220–55.

Canacee's natural compassion for a fellow creature opposes the tercel's natural disposition for "newefangelnesse." Her cross-"kynde" empathy is a remarkable extension of anything in Boethius. For Boethius, as for medieval philosophy in general, human compassion expresses God's love *within* humankind.³⁴ Yet *The Squire's Tale* presses us to take Canacee's compassion seriously by setting up a structural parallel between the Mamluk emissary in the tale's first part and the peregrine "of fremde lond" in the second part. The emissary is warmly entertained at court following his presentation of gifts; the falcon is also sheltered at court following her long complaint. Both are shown hospitality, a highly valued practice in romances, but part two raises the stakes on part one.³⁵ Kindness, if it truly reflects the love unifying creation, should move across human differences and across species lines as well. The shift from part one's masculine register to the feminine register of part two renders Canacee's hospitality as a dependent, quite literally diminutive, version of her father's hospitality. Perhaps only this feminine register could entertain a concept so counter-hegemonic as cross-species empathy.

Hospitality, in its compassionate welcome to the stranger, expresses the unifying and differentiating tensions of "kynde" in a specific social practice. The stranger is welcomed into a space that is unfamiliar and potentially constraining. This contradiction within hospitality was so salient for Jacques Derrida that he renamed the practice "hostipitality," to recall the discredited but appealing medieval French etymology connecting *hospes*, host-guest-stranger, with *obses*, hostage. The perceived connection between "host" and "hostage" continued from Old French

³⁴ Similarly: "The love of charity extends solely to God and our neighbor, but 'neighbor' cannot be understood to include irrational creatures, because they do not share man's rational life. Therefore charity does not extend to them": Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, 34: 88–89 (2a2ae.25, 3).

³⁵ For the early Christian as for the medieval period, *hospitalitas* referred especially to welcoming, sheltering, and protecting travelers and strangers, in contrast to the *caritas* shown to neighbors. *MED*, s.v. *hospitalite*, attests emphasis in both secular and religious literature. On hospitality in romances, see Matilda Tomaryn Bruckner, *Narrative Invention in Twelfth-Century French Romance: The Convention of Hospitality, 1160–1200* (Lexington, Ky.: French Forum, 1980). On biblical exhortations to hospitality (e.g., Matthew 25:34–46, Romans 12:13, Hebrews 13:2, 1 Peter 4:9), see Andrew E. Arterbury, *Early Christian Hospitality in Its Mediterranean Setting* (Sheffield: Sheffield Phoenix, 2005), pp. 94–132. On medieval and early modern practices, see Hans Conrad Peyer, *Gastfreundschaft und kommerzielle Gastlichkeit im Mittelalter* (Munich: Stiftung Historisches Kolleg, 1983); Felicity Heal, *Hospitality in Early Modern England* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1990).

into Middle English.³⁶ Derrida points out that hospitality's welcome is based in the host's control of the household, so that the stranger enters "the internal law of the host . . . which tends to begin by dictating the law of its language . . . which is to say, its own concepts as well."³⁷ Because her strangeness is the precondition for extending hospitality to her, the hosted falls hostage to the strange ways of the host. Derrida wrote primarily in relation to human displacements, but he argued that the limit cases for hospitality would cross beyond the human to hosting divinities or animals: to Lot receiving angels for the night, Noah taking animals on board, and even Jonah's painful sheltering in the whale.³⁸

The second part of *The Squire's Tale* engages the contradiction of hospitality more fully than the first part's enthusiastic orientalizing. Cambyuskan's hospitality to the Mamluk emissary appears unproblematic, their differences both evident and transcended in a chivalric code linking Mongol, Mamluk, and Arthurian knights in one big brotherhood.³⁹ To take up the most literal aspect of the law of the host that begins "by dictating the law of its language," the emissary speaks "After the forme used in his langage," yet also "withouten vice of silable or of lettre" (V.100–101): the narrator can accommodate an occulted Mamluk rhetoric as easily as Cambyuskan accommodates the emissary himself. Canacee's hosting would also seem an easy task, not a limit case, since she shares so many qualities with the peregrine and since their totemic relationship so enhances her status. But species difference sharpens the challenge to hospitality.

The little mews Canacee constructs is a wonderfully complex attempt at hosting without taking hostage. It makes a number of false starts, and perhaps never succeeds except in the persistence and resourcefulness of its attempts at cross-species compassion. In size, it recalls the birdcage

³⁶Jacques Derrida, "Hostipitality," trans. Barry Stocker with Forbes Morlock, *Angelaki* 5:3 (December 2000): 3–18; *The Oxford English Dictionary*, 2nd ed. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989), *host* (sb.¹ and sb.²) and *hostage* (sb.¹).

³⁷Derrida, "Hostipitality," *Angelaki*, p. 7.

³⁸Derrida, "Hostipitality," trans. Gil Anidjar, in *Acts of Religion*, ed. Gil Anidjar (New York: Routledge, 2002), pp. 363–65. Despite their identical titles, the two Derrida essays cover some different ground.

³⁹Christine Chism suggests in correspondence that the gifts may hint at a less than congenial relation between Mongol and Mamluk, because they could endanger their users; Cambyuskan could be responding to this danger "by locking up the 'masculine' chivalric gifts, and allowing the 'feminine' ones to play out only domestically." This reading intensifies the differences within the "exotic east," and discovers a tension within hospitality between welcome and constraint that is analogous to the tension expressed in Canacee's mews.

of the falcon's exemplum, as scholars have pointed out, so that the falcon appears quite radically appropriated, indeed captured and turned into a house pet.⁴⁰ Here we see "the internal law of the host" slide toward taking the guest hostage. If, however, this mews recalls the falcon's exemplum, it must also recall that the falcon imagined the birdcage as a good place, a place of comfort and tender care that the songbird was perverse to leave behind. Another contradictory image emerges in the overlay of the exemplum's "cage" with the contrasting term "mewe" (V.613, 643). The cage had a "dore" (V.615), but this structure called a mews may not have one, if it resembles a conventional mews with many openings or open sides to imitate the breezy nesting conditions of hawks in the wild.⁴¹ This unclarity around whether Canacee's "mewe" has a door evokes Derrida's conundrum that hospitality requires and repudiates the door: "It does not seem to me that I am able to open up or offer hospitality, however generous, even in order to be generous, without reaffirming: this is mine, I am at home. . . . For there to be hospitality, there must be a door. But if there is a door, there is no longer hospitality."⁴² Calling Canacee's little structure a "mews" elides the uncomfortable question of the door, as if to imagine that the falcon can be taken in without reservation.

In a further attempt at welcome, Canacee's mews is a miniature bedchamber framed within her own:

And by hire beddes heed she made a mewe
 And covered it with veluettes blewe,
 In signe of trouthe that is in wommen sene.
 And al withoute, the mewe is peynted grene,
 In which were peynted alle thise false fowles,
 As ben thise tidyves, tercelettes, and owles.

⁴⁰"The velvet cage is still a cage, positioned only some twenty lines after the caged bird gloss, a reminder that the falcon loses": Leslie Kordecki, "Chaucer's *Squire's Tale*: Animal Discourse, Women, and Subjectivity," *ChauR* 36 (2001–2): 291. Ruth Evans proposes the memorable image of "Canacee nursing the falcon like a young girl with a new Barbie," in her congress paper "The Perverse Nature of Charity and Chaucer's 'Squire's Tale,'" New Chaucer Society, Glasgow, 2004.

⁴¹Frederick II, *De arte venandi cum avibus*, ed. Willemsen, pp. 137–38; *Art of Falconry*, trans. Wood and Fyfe, pp. 129–30 and plates 67, 68, 134, 141. The usual way to keep hawks in halls and chambers was on perches. In Theseus's palace, "haukes sitten on the perche above" (*Knigh't's Tale*, A 2204); Oggins cites evidence of perches in bedrooms, *Kings and Their Hawks*, p. 109. Trained hawks were restrained with jesses, not free to fly about; *The Squire's Tale* is silent on jesses as well as on the door.

⁴²Derrida, "Hostpitality," *Angelaki*, p. 14.

Right for despit were peynted hem bisyde
 Pyes, on hem for to crie and chyde.

(V.643–50)

Like the interior walls of an aristocratic bedchamber, the mews has cloth hangings in an emblematic color, here blue to signify the falcon's troth-keeping. Imitating the architectural space of her own chamber, Canacee offers the falcon an open equivalence between host and stranger. At the same time, this velvet chamber rather comically ignores their physical differences: is the falcon to recline on a tiny featherbed? The mews is not simply a cage, but neither does it resemble the falcon's native "roche of marbul gray."

The painted exterior of the mews makes a final, double effort at a hosting that transcends appropriation. The outer walls, colored green and decorated with images of false birds chided by magpies, seem to represent the formel's home in leafy nature, acknowledging the falcon's strange origins even as the mews' interior declares her equivalence with Canacee. In relation to each other, interior and exterior attempt a kind of hybrid space poised between woods and chamber, a space that might express the falcon's peregrinations. Even as it evokes nature, this green is also emblematic, answering the blue of "trouthe" with the color that represents lovers' fickleness.⁴³ Now the outer walls not only represent a leafy refuge, they also reimagine the walled garden in the *Romaunt of the Rose*, painted with personifications of qualities incompatible with "al the art of love."⁴⁴ Each painted figure expelled from love's garden has its living opposite inside the walls: skinny yellow Sorrow painted outside, dancing elegant Mirth inside; spiteful Villany painted outside, welcoming Courtesy inside.⁴⁵ Canacee transposes the *Romaunt of the Rose* into avian terms in painting "alle thise false fowles" on the outside and sheltering the faithful formel inside. Most important for responding to the formel's plight, Canacee's transposition refuses the conventional metaphoric relation of birds to humans, taking birds instead as the literal subject of a courtly narrative. The magpies' chiding assigns *them* the interpretive voice, in place of the dreaming lover in the *Romaunt of the*

⁴³ *Variorum Edition*, ed. Baker, lines 644–50 n., provides several examples of blue representing faithfulness, and green fickleness.

⁴⁴ *Riverside Chaucer, The Romaunt of the Rose*, line 40; "craft of love," line 2164.

⁴⁵ *Riverside Chaucer, The Romaunt of the Rose*, lines 166–80, 301–48, 729–846.

Rose.⁴⁶ The figurative relation collapses, or runs in reverse, recalling how the formel earlier figured her pain in a series of collapsing alterities.

Canacee's inspired bricolage subsumes prior models of interspecies constraint, birdcage and mews, into an unprecedented structure that is simultaneously human bedchamber, avian tree, and garden of love. In this structure, Canacee moves her relation to the falcon from totemic, symbolic, and allegorical terms toward literal and physical terms. Yes, Canacee's empathy is contradictory. It recognizes species difference and declares it transcended. Holding this contradiction in place, the mews expresses the opposition inherent in "kynde" between differentiation and lovingkindness.

The Squire's Tale insists on its parallel between cultural difference and species difference by giving the tale's two parts so many structural symmetries. Hospitality is its optimistic focal point for imagining cross-cultural and cross-species relations. Canacee's awkwardly strange and sheltering mews explores hospitality's tensions more fully than the neat integration of Mamluk emissary into Mongol feast. But I don't want to end this paper exclaiming that the falcon reveals so much about the tale's human protagonists. Both parts of the tale begin with a chorus of birds singing background music for noble Mongols (V.52–57, 395–400). Chaucer's innovation is going on from these conventional openings to depict birds as the protagonists, not just the setting, for a love narrative. I'd like to imagine that Canacee condenses Chaucer's artistic project into her mews. Sitting at her workbench, she says to herself, "As I make this mews, how can I evoke the symbolic associations that give a peregrine her high status? Can I represent both the strangeness and the proximity of another species? As strangeness shifts and slides, can I put a positive spin on the terror of deracination? Can I express compassion for a bird?"

⁴⁶Magpies appropriately voice the condemnation of "false fowles" since they can learn words: "*Picae quasi poeticae*," writes Isidore, "quod uerba in discrimine uocis exprimant, ut homo" (They are called magpies as if poetic, because they can say words with distinct sounds, like men): *Etymologies*, pp. 258–59 (my italics; the association of *pica* and *poetica* continues in the insular Bestiaries). See also W. B. Yapp, "Birds in Captivity in the Middle Ages," *Archives of Natural History* 10 (1982): 482.

