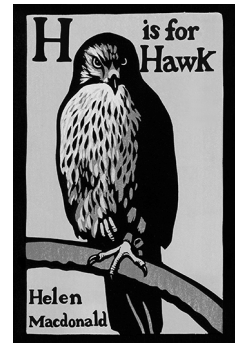


Het volgende fragment is het begin van een hoofdstuk uit het boek *H is for Hawk*, geschreven door Helen Macdonald, gepubliceerd in 2014.

3 Small worlds

I was twelve years old when I first saw a trained goshawk. *Please, please, PLEASE!* I'd begged my parents. They let me go. Drove me there, even. We'll look after her, the men said. They carried hawks on their fists: orange-eyed
5 goshawks as remote and composed as statuary, with barred grey tails and breast feathers of vermiculated snow. I couldn't speak. I wanted my parents to leave. But when their car pulled away I wanted to run after it. I was terrified. Not of the hawks: of the falconers. I'd never met
10 men like these. They wore tweed and offered me snuff. They were clubbable men with battered Range Rovers and vowels that bespoke Eton and Oxford, and I was having the first uncomfortable inklings that while I wanted to be a falconer more than anything, it was possible I might not be entirely like these men; that they might view me as a curiosity rather than
15 a kindred spirit. But I pushed my fears aside in favour of silence, because it was the first time I'd ever seen falconry in the field. *I'll remember this day for ever, I thought. One day this will be me.*



We walked in dark winter light over fields furred with new wheat. Vast flocks of fieldfares netted the sky, turning it to something strangely like a
20 sixteenth-century sleeve sewn with pearls. It was cold. My feet grew heavy with clay. And twenty minutes after we'd set out, it happened — the thing I expected, but for which I was entirely unprepared. A goshawk killed a pheasant. It was a short, brutal dive from an oak into a mess of wet hedge; a brief, muffled crash, sticks breaking, wings flapping, men
25 running, and a dead bird placed reverently in a hawking bag. I stood some way off. Bit my lip. Felt emotions I hadn't names for. For a while I didn't want to look at the men and their hawks anymore and my eyes slipped to the white panels of cut light in the branches behind them. Then I walked to the hedge where the hawk had made her kill. Peered inside. Deep in
30 the muddled darkness six copper pheasant feathers glowed in a cradle of blackthorn. Reaching through the thorns I picked them free, one by one, tucked the hand that held them into my pocket, and cupped the feathers in my closed fist as if I were holding a moment tight inside itself. It was death I had seen. I wasn't sure what it had made me feel.

35 But there was more to that day than my first sight of death. There was something else, and it also gave me pause. As the afternoon wore on, men started disappearing from our party. One by one their hawks had decided they wanted no more of proceedings, saw no good reason to

return to their handlers, and instead sat in trees staring out over acres of
40 fading pasture and wood, fluffed and implacable. At the end of the day we
left with three fewer men and three fewer hawks, the former still waiting
beneath their hawks' respective branches. I knew goshawks were prone to
sulk in trees: all the books had told me so. 'No matter how tame and
loveable,' I'd read in Frank Illingworth's *Falcons and Falconry*, 'there are
45 days when a goshawk displays a peculiar disposition. She is jumpy,
fractious, unsociable. She may develop these symptoms of passing
madness during an afternoon's sport, and then the falconer is in for hours
of annoyance.'