

**“Why are we by all creatures waited on?”¹
Situating John Donne and George Herbert in
Early Modern Ecological Discourse**

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Abstract: Scholars of early modern literary ecocriticism have focused much deserved attention on writers whose works abound with the images and themes of nature. Little attention has been paid in this regard to the works of John Donne, for his writings focus more intently upon the inner workings of the human subject than they do the physical environment. However, it is precisely Donne’s philosophically inclined, interrogative mode of thinking that enables him to consider the human relation to the material world with a heightened degree of sensitivity. Donne’s treatment and discussion of nonhuman nature are less frequent than many of his contemporaries. Yet when Donne’s literary representations of the natural environment are contrasted to the abundant nature poetry of contemporary poet George Herbert, it is Donne, who interrogates anthropocentric assumptions of his era, while Herbert, reasserts the prevailing framework without question. Although Donne’s poetry does not consistently resonate with ecological sentiment, in his willingness to question assumptions of human superiority, Donne emerges as an ecologically conscious early modern poet and a worthy contributor to the discourse of early modern ecology.



Literary scholars have long noted the difference between George Herbert’s and John Donne’s perceptions of the self in relation to the Divine,

comparing Herbert's poetry of stability and self-assurance to Donne's poetry of self-scrutiny and philosophical angst. What remains to be assessed, however, especially in light of the recent interest in literature and environment studies in the early modern period, is the manner in which each poet's unique devotional subjectivities influence his literary representations of the self in relation to its natural surroundings. Although the writings of both Herbert and Donne show the influence of a traditional Thomistic worldview in which humanity is clearly situated at the pinnacle of creation, Donne wrestles with the implications of both human sinfulness and theories of the "new philosophy" for the existing natural order, while Herbert responds to such challenges with a reassertion of this order. Unlike Herbert, who unquestioningly views the entirety of nonhuman nature as created for human use, Donne examines the paradoxical nature of an order in which human beings, who are more sinful and physically weaker than much of nonhuman nature, are perceived as the epitome of creation. In contrast to Herbert, then, whose poetic treatment of nature serves as a reiteration of the existing framework, Donne's philosophically inclined mode of thought enables him to interrogate the order of being and, thus, to emerge as an ecologically conscious early modern poet.

A comparison of Herbert's and Donne's poetry reveals two very different minds, two alternate modes of thinking and of perceiving the self. Critics such as Barbara Lewalski have long recognized the difference between Donneian and Herbertian poetics, noting that while Donne manifests a certain "heightening of consciousness," "we do not . . . find in Herbert the agonized outcries" that we find in Donne.² Joan Bennett claims that while Herbert "knows and states what he thinks, as well as what he feels," Donne's poems portray "a complex state of mind and a subtle adjustment of impulses."³ Unlike Donne, who welcomes "intellectual curiosities" and takes up poetic subjects "which invite the play of the mind," Herbert does not puzzle over complex questions in his poetry, and when he does, an answer is often supplied by the conclusion of the poem.⁴ Herbert's poetry represents "confidence and stability;" Donne's poetry is, by contrast, that of a "philosopher."⁵ In short, Herbert's devotional subjectivity is one of answers, while Donne's is one of questions.

When considering Donne's subjectivity and his treatment of the human place in relation to the material world, scholars have traditionally labelled him as "totally indifferent to nature."⁶ According to Ananda Rao,

“it is a fact that one does not find Donne dealing with the natural phenomenon” as extensively as the better known “nature” poets.⁷ Like Charles Monroe Coffin, who claims that Donne’s situation as “a man of the city” hindered his love for the country, fostering an acute interest in “the manners of men . . . and their thoughts; but more still, his own self,” Robert N. Watson argues that Donne’s lack of land ownership resulted in social embarrassment, causing the poet to consistently “[subordinate] landscape to mindscape.”⁸ Indeed, Watson critiques Donne for his intensely inward focus, arguing that he, along with the majority of his metaphysical contemporaries, cannot be defined as a nature poet because “the mental state must eventually override the demands, the momentum, even the definition of the material world.”⁹

Although Watson is correct in his assertion that Donne’s poetry focuses predominantly upon the self, it would be wrong to conclude that this renders the poet inherently disinterested in, or even antagonistic toward, the environment. In fact, it is precisely Donne’s posture of self-interrogation that leads him to question, with a heightened degree of sensitivity, the place of the human self in relation to nonhuman nature. As Terry G. Sherwood explains, Donne’s “self-scrutiny led just as naturally outward as inward.”¹⁰ Similarly, Rao argues that although Donne does not “‘dance’ with the daffodils while surveying pleasant landscapes,” his ability to “pause and ponder over specific life situations in their totality” and then present these poetically as “complex perceptions of life” renders him an acute observer of nature.¹¹ Although Donne does not engage the genres and topics typically associated with the so-called “green” poets, his poetry portrays a philosophical mode of inquiry and ecological awareness that often considers deeply humanity’s place in relation to the natural realm.

Nevertheless, defining a poet as “ecologically aware” is a difficult task. As Romantic eco-scholar Onno Oerlemans notes, in contemporary usage “environmentalism” is “a term, a concept, and a movement, of extraordinary vagueness and multiplicity,” including

desires to get closer to nature, to preserve it, to leave it alone, to clean it up, and to pass on stewardship of it to next generations. We alternatively feel possessive, defensive, harmonious, and alienated

towards what we blithely call the 'environment,' having very little sense of what the environment actually is.¹²

Even within a specific school of environmentalist thought, the definition of what constitutes "environmental" behaviour is often different in practice than it is in theory and, thus, demonstrates the unfixed nature of the term. The philosophical founder of deep ecology, Arne Naess, for example concedes that the "*vital* needs" of humans may "take priority" over the needs of other living beings, a claim which seems to contradict, on some level, the movement's desire for the fundamental equality of all life forms.¹³ As Garrard explains, "it seems likely that any given concerned individual will probably have both eco- and anthropocentric attitudes at different times, under different conditions."¹⁴ Therefore, the multiple connotations of the word "environment" make it difficult to define one poet as ecological while rejecting another as anti-ecological. However, literary ecocritics are not left entirely without guidelines concerning what does or does not qualify as biopoetic awareness. Oerlemans argues that at a foundational level, ecological thinking and writing is characterized by an individual's willingness to grapple with and seek to understand "the place of humanity and consciousness in the physical order of things."¹⁵ According to this definition, an ecological poet will actively question and interrogate humanity's relationships with and place in the physical environment.

Ecocritical scholars of non-contemporary literature face an additional challenge in that they examine historical texts through a contemporary lens. The term "ecology," for instance, was not coined until 1870 by Ernest Haeckel.¹⁶ The charge that using the term "ecology" in the analysis of pre-1870 texts is an ahistorical practice may be a fair one; yet, as Diane Kelsey McColley claims, the environmental thought of many earlier poets is defined better by the term "ecology" than it is by the classical and Renaissance term "economy."¹⁷ The challenge, then, is to situate the early modern texts in their historical and cultural context and to study the ecological visions expressed in them without imposing contemporary perspectives upon them. As Oerlemans aptly explains, ecocritics must examine literary texts through "a retrospective environmentalist gaze" while "maintain[ing] as much as possible a rigorously historical perspective."¹⁸

Therefore, Donne's early modern ecological perspective must be firmly situated within the historical and cultural context of his own time, beginning with an understanding of how human beings were commonly perceived in relation to the nonhuman physical realm. For much of the Renaissance, the natural world, including humanity, was viewed through the framework of the order of being, a medieval concept stemming largely from the writings of Thomas Aquinas, whose work represents the synthesis of earlier Aristotelian and Augustinian conceptions of a natural hierarchy. The Thomistic order views humanity as the perfection of created life, possessing a soul that is at once vegetative, sensitive, and rational. The human being differs from the rest of nonhuman nature "as the perfect and the less perfect; just as in the order of things, the animate are more perfect than the inanimate, animals more perfect than plants, and man more perfect than brute animals."¹⁹ For Aquinas the rational soul is the source of spiritual status, yet he also affirms the material world through his presentation of humanity as an essential unity of "form and matter, soul *and* body."²⁰ Man thus becomes "the creature who epitomizes the physical and spiritual aspects of the universe, the only animal creature with powers of understanding and of contemplation."²¹ Cartesian philosophy bolstered the already prevailing belief in the fundamental difference between human and nonhuman life, causing an "absolute break between man and the rest of nature" and paving the way "for the uninhibited exercise of human rule."²² The dominant perception of humanity in relation to nature in the Renaissance was thus anthropocentric or human-centered, an anti-ecological paradigm in which human beings are situated outside, rather than within, the rest of physical nature.²³

The Renaissance emphasis on reason as that which renders human beings superior to and distinct from the rest of nature is depicted in the poetry of Herbert. In "Man," for example, Herbert articulates the view that humanity is in possession of a tripartite soul, thus rendering the human being the epitome, or "ev'ry thing," of creation:

For Man is ev'ry thing,
And more: He is a tree, yet bears more fruit;
A beast, yet is, or should be more:
Reason and speech we only bring.²⁴

Here, as in the Thomistic model, Herbert indicates that the distinction between human and animal is the human rational capacities of “reason and speech,” the markers of spiritual status.

In Donne’s works, the world is also depicted through the framework of the order of being. In “To the Countess of Salisbury,” he writes that

we first have souls of growth, and sense, and those,
When our last soul, our soul immortal came.²⁵

Here, as with Herbert, Donne illustrates his belief that it is the “last soul,” the rational soul, which bestows upon man a “soul immortal” thereby distinguishing humanity from the rest of nature. For Donne, because human beings are the only living creatures in whom “all faculties, all graces are at home,” they are therefore “the noblest part” of “th’universal frame.”²⁶ Erica Fudge also observes Donne’s adherence to traditional conceptualizations of humanity’s place in the chain of being in “To Sir Edward Herbert, at Juliers” (1610).²⁷ In this poem, Donne uses the Renaissance trope of man as a microcosm of the universe – “Man is a lump, where all beasts kneaded be” – and asserts that “wisdom,” or rationality, renders man the pinnacle of creation, or the “ark where all agree.”²⁸ “How happy is he,” continues the poem’s speaker,

which hath due place assigned
To his beasts, and disafforested his mind!”²⁹

Fudge emphasizes Donne’s anthropocentrism by observing that “the disafforestation of the human mind is the ideal in the achievement of human status,” the goal being to “put [the animals] in their proper place.”³⁰

Yet to conclude that Donne’s poetry is anti-ecological on the basis of these lines alone is to unfairly dichotomize the poet, for although at certain times Donne’s writings express the human-centered worldview of his time, he was also acutely interested in the discoveries of the Scientific Revolution that would eventually overthrow anthropocentric understandings of the cosmos. Evelyn M. Simpson, noting Donne’s keen interest in the scientific movement of his era, asserts that he “stood out almost alone among contemporary poets in his perception of the importance of the changes which scientific discovery was bringing about.”³¹ Unlike his less-inquisitive contemporary Herbert, Donne recognized that the Copernican model,

combined with the invention of the telescope, threatened the notion of human superiority by “dethron[ing] the earth from its accustomed position at the center of the universe.”³² Donne, Peter Harrison argues, was one figure who foresaw the challenges posed by the discoveries of the new science, and he wrestles with the implications of these shifts in perspective in “An Anatomy of the World, The First Anniversary:”

And new philosophy calls all in doubt,
The element of fire is quite put out;
The sun is lost, and th’earth, and no man’s wit
Can well direct him, where to look for it. (205-208)³³

In these lines, and soon after when he writes that “Prince, subject, father, son, are things forgot,” Donne demonstrates an awareness of the doubt cast by the “new philosophy” on the order of being (215).

Not all early modern thinkers understood the implications of the new science on existing conceptions of man’s superior place in the natural hierarchy. Indeed, Harrison explains that Renaissance thinkers were divided in their responses to such theories, with some “confidently reassert[ing] the centrality of human beings.”³⁴ Herbert, for instance, demonstrates some knowledge of the “new philosophy” in poems such as “Agony” and “Vanity I,” but the findings of the natural philosophers do not lead him to question humanity’s superior position in the universal order. Unlike Herbert, however, Donne foresees the impact that the “new philosophy” will have on the existing hierarchy, and this foresight leads him to question the Thomistic framework in which man is superior to the rest of nature.

The perception of humanity as the pinnacle of creation is further complicated by an acknowledgment of the duplicitous nature of humankind, and here again, Donne and Herbert respond differently. Donne, while perceiving the world through the framework of the order of being and believing that man is “the noblest part of the earth,” is also well aware that “man is so much less than a worm.”³⁵ Herbert also recognizes the capacity for human sinfulness, referring to the self as a “broken ALTAR” and acknowledging that man has two natures and, thus, lives “two lives.”³⁶ Yet while Herbert’s acknowledgement of human sinfulness never appears to threaten his sense of human superiority, Donne’s

philosophical outlook prompts him to assess the implications of human fallenness on the assumption that humanity is the epitome of creation. In "An Anatomy of the World, The First Anniversary," after identifying human beings as "this world's vice-emperor," Donne refers to the greatness of humanity in an ironic tone:

This man, so great, that all that is, is his,
Oh what a trifle, and poor thing he is!
If man were anything, he's nothing now! (161, 169-171)

The idea that man is of a dual nature was, of course, not uncommon for religious believers during the early modern period, for as Thomas Heffernan points out, the fall renders death and sin a reality for humanity.³⁷ "In the common world picture," he continues, "[man] is thus both central and in a low place, and this twofold human condition is complementary: man as God's creature is both excellent and as God's fallen creature is afflicted with troubles."³⁸ The Renaissance perception of fallen humanity's plight as agonized and restless is repeatedly expressed in the works of Donne's contemporary Henry Vaughan. In "And do they so?" man is "sadly loose, and stray / A giddy blast each way," and in "Man" he "strays and roams" and has "no rest."³⁹ The superiority of humanity was thus challenged on a spiritual level with the recognition of man's sinful nature.

Humanity's restless and duplicitous nature, combined with the emergence of a science that seemed to dethrone the centrality of the human, naturally led philosophical poets and thinkers like Donne to speculate not only about man, but also about everything to which man relates and to ask ecologically-oriented questions about "the place of humanity . . . in the physical order of things."⁴⁰ In this way, Donne's ecological sensibility is similar to that of Henry Vaughan, in whose literary corpus Alan Rudrum has correctly identified the ecologically astute perception of "man as part of nature rather than as standing over and against Nature."⁴¹ Both poets identify certain paradoxes inherent in the medieval framework, finding it problematic that nonhuman animals enjoy moral innocence while humanity, the supposedly superior being, is morally responsible. Donne and Vaughan find contradictory the medieval notion that man's "rational soul" renders him the superior being, when the

possession of rationality carries the responsibility of free will, allowing him to make “poor choices as well as good ones.”⁴² McColley observes the similarity between Donne and Vaughan when she mentions that both poets identify and envy a moral innocence in nonhuman nature: “The idea that other creatures ‘watch’ – stay awake and aware – while ‘I sleep, or play’ (like Donne’s sonnet ‘Why are we by all creatures waited on?’) attributes innocence to them; only man is morally corruptible.”⁴³ Indeed, Donne and Vaughan question the superiority of humanity based on the possession of reason with the recognition that it is the very lack or absence of rationality that renders nonhuman nature amoral.

Throughout his poetry Vaughan scrutinizes the notion that human rationality renders humankind superior to other-than-human forms of life, continually comparing the pure devotional subjectivity of nonhuman life to the inconsistency of human devotion to the divine. In “Man,” the “stedfastness and state” of the nonhuman natural realm and its ability to “ever cleave” to the “divine appointments” of God is presented as the antithesis of a constantly distracted human race:

Man hat stil either toyes, or Care,
He hath no root, nor to one place is ty'd,
But ever restless and Irregular,
About this Earth doth run and ride,
He knows he hath a home, but scare knows where,
He sayes it is so far
That he hath quite forgot how to go there. (15-21)

In “Rules and Lessons,” Vaughan returns to this theme with the suggestion that nonhuman life is able to attain unique commune with the divine despite, and perhaps even because of, its lack of rational capabilities. “Walk with thy fellow-creatures,” writes Vaughan, and “note the *hush* / And *whispers* amongst them.”⁴⁴ “To highten thy *Devotions*, and keep low / All mutinous thoughts,” Vaughan continues later in the poem, “Observe God in his works” (85-86). Here Vaughan undermines the claim that human rationality and the related capacity for language is an indication of humanity’s superior spiritual status, for paradoxically it is the silent or “*hush[ed]*” world of nature that reveals the divine, while humankind must strive to silence his “mutinous thoughts.”

Although Donne never considers the possibility that elements of the nonhuman realm might themselves be devotional subjects as does Vaughan, he challenges the superiority of reason. In "Holy Sonnet VIII," Donne questions the order of being when he inquires why humanity is "waited on" by "all creatures" when such creatures appear to be morally purer than human beings.⁴⁵ In the first quatrain, he considers the paradox that "the prodigal elements supply / Life and food" for humanity when they are "more pure than I, / Simple, and further from corruption" (2-4). Later in the same sonnet, Donne implies that nonhuman life is somehow amoral because it "[has] not sinned" and concludes that human beings are "worse than [nonhuman nature]" (10, 9). He specifies in "Holy Sonnet V" that it is the "intent or reason, born in [human beings]" that renders "sins, else equal, in [humanity] more heinous" than in the rest of creation.⁴⁶ Like Vaughan, Donne questions whether the possession of reason truly renders human beings superior to other life forms and, therefore, contributes to the breakdown in hierarchical divisions between human and nonhuman that occurred during the early modern era. Indeed, the critique of reason in which Donne participates would gradually lead some to speculate that humans may, in some ways, be inferior to animals.⁴⁷

The perspectives of Donne and Vaughan, who consider the consequences of possessing reason on notions of human supremacy, stand in contrast to Herbert, whose poetry reiterates the assumption that rationality is an indicator of humanity's superior status. In "Man," Herbert indicates that it is the "reason and speech" of human beings that distinguishes them from the rest of creation, and in "Providence" he writes that "Of all the creatures both in sea and land," the Divine is only made known to humanity, explaining that "the pen," or the capacity for language, has been put in the hands of mankind alone (10).⁴⁸ By contrast, nonhuman nature is portrayed as "lame and mute," unable to praise the Divine if not for the rational capacities of the superior being man ("Providence" 12):

Beasts fain would sing; birds ditty to their notes;
Trees would be tuning on their nature lute
To thy renown: but all their hands and throats
Are brought to Man. (9-12)

In contrast to Vaughan and Donne, then, for whom the possession of "intent or reason" is cause to reconsider the purity of human nature, Herbert perceives the human possession of reason as an indication of human superiority.

The difference between Donne and Herbert's ecological perceptions is also evident in their respective treatments of the human domination of nature. In "Holy Sonnet VIII," Donne once again demonstrates his propensity to question the existing order when he asks the horse, "ignorant" of its own strength, why it tolerates subjection, and the bull and boar why they "so sillily" feign weakness, dying "by'one man's stroke," when they could easily "swallow and feed upon" the whole human kind due to their physical strength (5-8). Here, Donne plays on the words "food" and "feed," illustrating the irony that while nature provides "food to [human beings]," the bull and boar, or more broadly much of nonhuman nature, could easily "feed upon" humanity (3, 8). Donne thus ponders the paradox that creatures physically stronger than humanity not only remain subordinate to human beings, but supply their very "food and life" (3). It is important to note, however, that Donne elsewhere complies with the prevailing Renaissance notion that nonhuman nature exists explicitly for human use. In "An Anatomy of the World, The First Anniversary," he depicts man as "this world's vice-emperor," stating that all creatures are "but man's ministers" intended for "man's use" (164, 166). Yet, it is not insignificant that during a time when natural scientists were seeking to find "the divine hidden purpose" for which God had created each element of nature for human use, Donne reconsiders the basic assumption that nonhuman creatures stronger than man should be his servants.⁴⁹ Thus, although not entirely rejecting the traditional hierarchical order, Donne questions the configuration of this order in which physically stronger creatures serve a weaker human race.

In contrast to Donne, who ponders why animals stronger than human beings are submissive to humanity, Herbert expresses the traditional opinion that the natural realm exists solely to serve human needs. In "Man," for example, Herbert presents humanity as in complete control of the nonhuman realm without considering the reality that many creatures could easily overpower and kill man:

Nothing hath got so far,

But Man hath caught and kept it, as his prey. (19-20)

Indeed, for Herbert, humanity is presented as “the world’s high Priest,” rendering nonhuman nature his “cupboard” and everything in it his willing servant (“Providence” 13; “Man” 29):

Nothing we see, but means our good,
As our *delight*, or as our *treasure*:
The whole is, either our cupboard of *food*,
Or cabinet of *pleasure*. (“Man” 27-30)

According to such a view, nature is eager to serve humanity. The herbs “gladly cure our flesh,” the “beasts say, Eat me,” and the “trees say, Pull me” (“Man” 23; “Providence” 21, 23). Similar sentiments are found in Ben Jonson’s “To Penshurst” in which the “fat, aged carps” “run into thy net” and the “bright eels” happily “leap” into the hand of the fisher.⁵⁰ Unlike Donne, then, who questions and perceives paradox in the order of being, for both Herbert and Jonson, all of nonhuman nature is perceived as created for human use, “delight,” and “pleasure” (Herbert, “Man” 28-30).⁵¹

The manner in which Donne’s and Herbert’s unique subjectivities lead to alternate understandings of the human relationship to the natural realm may also be shown through a comparison of several lines of poetry from Herbert’s “Man” with Donne’s “Holy Sonnet VIII.” Although at first glance the lines under question appear to be strikingly similar, a closer examination reveals Donne’s and Herbert’s respective willingness to question the traditional order of being. Donne opens “Holy Sonnet VII,” with a question: “Why are we by all creatures waited on?” (1). In “Man,” Herbert, like Donne, uses similar wording to explain that nonhuman creation “wait[s] on” man:

More servants wait on man,
Than he’ll take notice of: in ev’ry path
He treads down that which doth befriend him,
. . . Man is one world, and hath
Another to attend him. (43-45, 47-48)

Of course, these lines do express some degree of ecological consciousness, for Herbert admits that humanity “treads down that which doth befriend him;” yet, nature still exists to serve the needs of man. In fact, Herbert and Donne both portray nonhuman nature as the servants of humanity, and use similar phrases, “wait on” and “waited on,” to explain this service. However, it is not *what* is said in these lines, but *how* it is said that illustrates the pivotal difference between Donne’s and Herbert’s ecological perspectives. Indeed, the very fact that Herbert’s observation about the human relation to nonhuman nature is phrased as a statement, whereas Donne’s is posed as a question, illustrates their differing attitudes toward analyzing humanity’s place in relation to the material world. Herbert, unlike Donne, never progresses to the stage of questioning *why* the order of being is configured in such a manner, nor does he assess the paradoxes of such an arrangement. Thus, although perceiving the world largely through the same framework, Donne’s philosophically inclined nature leads him to a greater degree of ecological awareness than Herbert in that he is willing to critically consider the traditional order of being.

An application of the long acknowledged difference between Donne’s and Herbert’s devotional subjectivities to their respective perceptions of the human relationship to the realm of nonhuman nature thus proves surprisingly fruitful. Donne, ever the questioning spirit, explores the implications that new scientific theories and the reality of human sinfulness have on the traditional Thomistic worldview that dominated early modern thought, perceiving paradox in the fact that purer and stronger nonhuman nature should serve humanity. Herbert, by contrast, while engaging the same theories and religious notions as Donne, ultimately reasserts the place of humanity as the pinnacle of creation and perceives all of nature as the willing servants of humankind. Claims that Donne is altogether “indifferent to nature” can thus be met, upon closer examination, with the assertion that Donne, through his ability to wrestle philosophically with the challenges posed to the anthropocentric worldview of his time, is a vital contributor to the dialectic of early modern ecological discourse.⁵²

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Laura's research focuses on ecological literature in the long eighteenth century. She has presented several papers on the intersections between literature and the environment at conferences across North America, including the 2008 ACCUTE/NASSR "Green Romanticisms" panel, and has contributed articles to the Companion to Literary Romanticism and the Encyclopaedia of American Environmental Literature. She sits on the Cowper and Newton Journal Editorial Board and has written several articles for the journal, including an article co-written with Dr. Holly Faith Nelson on George Herbert and Cowper that was republished in the George Herbert Journal.

¹ John Donne, "Holy Sonnet VIII," in *John Donne: The Major Works including Songs and Sonnets and Sermons*, ed. John Carey (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1990), 177, line 1.

² Barbara Kiefer Lewalski, *Protestant Poetics and the Seventeenth-Century Religious Lyric* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1979), 245, 286.

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- ³ Joan Bennett, *Four Metaphysical Poets* (New York: Vintage Books, 1953), 67, 58–59.
- ⁴ *Ibid.*, 70, 42.
- ⁵ Jim Hunter, *The Metaphysical Poets* (London: Evans Brothers, 1972), 96, 118.
- ⁶ Ananda T. Rao, “Nature in John Donne,” *The Literary Endeavor* 2 (1980): 61–67, 63.
- ⁷ *Ibid.*, 63
- ⁸ Coffin qtd. in Rao, “Nature in John Donne,” 283; Robert N. Watson, *Back to Nature: The Green and the Real in the Late Renaissance* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2006), 148.
- ⁹ Watson, *Back to Nature*, 148.
- ¹⁰ Terry G. Sherwood, *Fulfilling the Circle: A Study of John Donne’s Thought* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1984), 101.
- ¹¹ Rao, “Nature in John Donne,” 67.
- ¹² Onno Oerlemans, *Romanticism and the Materiality of Nature* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2002), 4–5.
- ¹³ Naess qtd. in Joy Palmer, *Environmental Education in the 21st Century: Theory, Practice, Progress and Promise*. (London: Routledge, 1998), 86; Greg Garrard, *Ecocriticism* (London: Taylor and Francis, 2004), 22.
- ¹⁴ Garrard, *Ecocriticism*, 22.
- ¹⁵ Oerlemans, *Romanticism*, 6.
- ¹⁶ Christine Kenyon Jones, “‘Minute Obeisances’: Beasts, Birds and Wordsworth’s Ecological Credentials,” *Romanticism* 4.1 (1998): 74–89, 74.
- ¹⁷ Diane Kelsey McColley, *Poetry and Ecology in the Age of Milton and Marvell* (Hampshire: Ashgate, 2007), 1.
- ¹⁸ Oerlemans, *Romanticism*, 5.
- ¹⁹ Thomas Aquinas, “Summa Theologica (selections),” in *Theories of Human Nature*, ed. Donald C. Abel, trans. by the Fathers of the English Dominican Province, revised by Anton C. Pegis, (New York: McGraw Hill, 1992), 152–68, 156.
- ²⁰ Cassandra Williams, “Liberating the Enlightenment: How A Transformed Relationship with Animals can help us Transcend Modernity,” *Religious Education* 98.1 (2003): 95–107, 96; Peter Harrison, *The Bible, Protestantism and the Rise of Natural Science* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 36.

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- ²¹ Thomas Heffernan, "The Book of Scripture and of Nature and Early Seventeenth-Century English Emblem Poetry," *Yearbook of Interdisciplinary Studies in Fine Arts* 3 (1992): 531-81, 540.
- ²² Keith Thomas, *Man and the Natural World: Changing Attitudes in England 1500 - 1800* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1983), 32.
- ²³ Oerlemans, *Romanticism*, 68.
- ²⁴ George Herbert, "Man," in *George Herbert: The Country Parson, The Temple*, ed. John N. Wall, (New York: Paulist Press, 1981), 209-11, lines 7-10.
- ²⁵ Donne, "To the Countess of Salisbury, August 1614," in *John Donne: The Major Works*, 250-52, lines 52-53.
- ²⁶ Donne, "An Anatomy of the World, The First Anniversary," in *John Donne: The Major Works*, 207-18, lines 162, 199, 198.
- ²⁷ Erica Fudge, *Brutal Reasoning: Animals, Rationality, and Humanity in Early Modern England* (Cornell University Press, 2006), 59.
- ²⁸ John Donne, "To Sir Edward Herbert, at Juliers," qtd. in Fudge, *Brutal Reasoning*, 59.
- ²⁹ Ibid.
- ³⁰ Ibid.
- ³¹ Evelyn M. Simpson, *A Study of the Prose Works of John Donne*, 2nd ed (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1962), 118.
- ³² Harrison, *The Rise of Natural Science*, 178.
- ³³ Ibid.
- ³⁴ Ibid.
- ³⁵ Donne, *Devotion Upon Emergent Occasions*, in *John Donne: The Major Works*, 333-50 and *From a Sermon Preached on Christmas Day, 1626*, in *John Donne: The Major Works*, 393-94.
- ³⁶ Herbert, "The Altar," in *George Herbert*, 139, line 1 and "Love Unknown," in *George Herbert*, 251-53, line 5.
- ³⁷ Heffernan, "The Book of Scripture and of Nature," 541.
- ³⁸ Ibid.
- ³⁹ Henry Vaughan, "Rom. Cap. 8. ver. 19. (And do they so?)," in *Vaughan's Works*, ed. L.C. Martin, 2nd ed. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1957), 432-33, lines 17-18 and "Man," in *Vaughan's Works*, 477, lines 22, 29.
- ⁴⁰ Oerlemans, *Romanticism*, 6.
- ⁴¹ Alan Rudrum qtd. in Diane Kelsey McColley, "Water, Wood, and Stone: The Living Earth in Poems of Vaughan and Milton," in *Of Paradise and*

Light: Essays on Henry Vaughan and John Milton in Honour of Alan Rudrum, eds. Donald R. Dickson and Holly Faith Nelson, (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 2004), 269-91, 270.

⁴² Fudge, *Brutal Reasoning*, 25.

⁴³ McColley, *Poetry and Ecology*, 77.

⁴⁴ Vaughan, "Rules and Lessons," in *Vaughan's Works*, 436, lines 13-14.

⁴⁵ Donne, "Holy Sonnet VIII," in *John Donne: The Major Works*, 177, lines 12, 1; Lewalski, *Protestant Poetics*, 254.

⁴⁶ Donne, "Holy Sonnet V," in *John Donne: The Major Works*, 175, lines 5, 6.

⁴⁷ Fudge, *Brutal Reasoning*, 60.

⁴⁸ Herbert, "Providence," in *George Herbert*, 237-43, lines 5, 7.

⁴⁹ Harrison, *The Rise of Natural Science*, 162.

⁵⁰ Ben Jonson, "To Penshurst," in *The Broadview Anthology of Seventeenth-Century Verse and Prose*, eds. Alan Rudrum, Joseph Black, and Holly Faith Nelson, 150-52 (Ontario: Broadview Press, 2004), lines 62, 66-67.

⁵¹ The danger of this perception is that it often, although not always, led to the human domination and mistreatment of nonhuman life. As environmental historian Keith Thomas explains, "Inhibitions about the treatment of other species were dispelled by the reminder that there was a fundamental difference in kind between humanity and other forms of life" (30). For certain poets, however, the belief in human ascendancy did not lead to an inherently anti-ecological worldview. Herbert, for instance, while clearly adhering to the Renaissance belief in human superiority, also displays genuine concern for the mistreatment of the created world. In *Vanitie I*, Herbert "assails the arrogance and emptiness of those who seek to penetrate mother earth or mother nature for profit or intellectual possession" (McColley, *Poetry and Ecology*, 54).

⁵² Rao, "Nature in John Donne," 63.