Hospitality and the Natural World within an Ecotheological Context
in William Shakespeare’s *Much Ado about Nothing* and Jane Austen’s *Pride and Prejudice*

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by
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# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chapter</th>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I.</td>
<td>Acknowledgements</td>
<td>v</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>II.</td>
<td>Introduction: Present State of the Ecological and Hospitable Crises</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Ecocritical Theory as Literary Framework</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Pairing <em>Much Ado about Nothing</em> and <em>Pride and Prejudice</em></td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Ecotheological Theory as a Third Dimension</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Supplementing the Binary</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Hospitality</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Hospitality vs. Hospitality</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>III.</td>
<td>Literature Review</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Ecocriticism</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>History of Ecocriticism</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Ecocriticism Applied to Shakespeare</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Ecocriticism Applied to Austen</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Nonhuman Metaphors in Ecocritical Studies</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Christianity as Foundational for Shakespeare and Austen</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The Fall</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Inclusion of a Theological Dimension in Ecocriticism</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Ecotheological Views in Early Modern England</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Ecotheological Views in the Late Eighteenth Century</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Current Ecotheological Views</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Hospitality as Part of the Natural World and Theology</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Derrida’s Hospitality</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Communion</td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IV.</td>
<td>Country Estate Hosts: Restoration of Eden after the Fall</td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Introduction: The Landscape Compromised by the Fall</td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The Edenic Estate of Messina</td>
<td>59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The Edenic Estate of Pemberley</td>
<td>62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Messina’s Residents as Hosts and Guests</td>
<td>65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Pemberley’s Residents as Hosts and Guests</td>
<td>77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Conclusion: Restoration through Biblical Hospitality</td>
<td>87</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
V. People as Animals: Restoration of Humanity after the Fall .......................90
   Introduction: Animals Compromised by the Fall .......................................90
   Messina’s Residents as Animals .................................................................95
   Pemberley’s Residents as Animals ..............................................................107
   Conclusion: Restoration through Recognition of Other’s Inherent Value........119

VI. Compromised Food: Restoration of Communion after the Fall ...................121
   Introduction: Food, Cannibalism, and Communion .....................................121
   Messina’s Residents as Hosts and Cannibals .............................................126
   Pemberley’s Residents as Hosts, not Cannibals .......................................132
   Longbourn’s Hostess as Cannibal ..............................................................134
   Conclusion: Restoration through Biblical Hospitality ...............................137

VII. Sexual Betrayal as a Result of the Fall ................................................139
   Introduction: Edenic Marriage and Fallen Infidelity ....................................139
   Refusal to Marry as a Refusal to Restore Eden .......................................141
   Infidelity as a Result of the Fall ..............................................................143
   Messina’s Residents’ Refusal to Marry and Infidelity ................................144
   Longbourn’s and Pemberley’s Residents’ Refusal to Marry and Infidelity ....153
   Conclusion: Restoration through Hospitality and Ecotheological Virtue .......160

VIII. Savagery from the Fall and Communion from Restoration ....................165
   Introduction: Connections as Restoration of Eden .....................................165
   Savagery: Connections between Messina and Pemberley .........................166
   Communion: Restoration of Eden .............................................................169
   Ecotheological Virtues: Restoration of Eden .............................................171
   Continuing Restoration through Future Research .....................................175

WORKS CITED ......................................................................................................177
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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION: Present State of the Ecological and Hospitable Crises

In the summer of 2015, Pope Francis delivered a scathing indictment of the world’s response to the environmental crisis: "The Earth, our home, is beginning to look more and more like an immense pile of filth," Francis said. "In many parts of the planet, the elderly lament that once beautiful landscapes are now covered with rubbish" (*Encyclical 17*). He placed blame on many areas of society, including big business, energy companies, short-sighted politicians, scientists, economists, media professionals, indifferent individuals, and—finally—“obstructionist attitudes,” even of “believers” (13). He criticizes what he calls “a distorted anthropocentrism” by calling on the Catechism, which recognizes value in each member of the nonhuman world: “Each creature possesses its own particular goodness and perfection… Each of the various creatures, willed in its own being, reflects in its own way a ray of God’s infinite wisdom and goodness. Man must therefore respect the particular goodness of every creature” (51). Pope Francis’s need to publish an encyclical on the environment highlights the urgency of the topic for a world facing potentially catastrophic global warming, depletion of ocean life, and destruction of the rain forest, among others. His castigation of Christians echoes Lynn White, Jr.’s claim that Christianity bears the blame for ecological problems in an essay that many credit for the start of the modern ecocritical movement.
At the same time that the world is in need of more sound ecological action, the world also is in need of more civility and hospitality. The post 9/11 world has, understandably, lessened expressions of civility and hospitality. Distrust and fear of strangers, and stressed, appointment-filled lives make even common courtesies dangerous or irrelevant. In his book, *Civility: A Cultural History*, Benet Davetian notes the increasing media coverage of incivility and rudeness, including “big-budget documentaries on rudeness” produced by national TV networks (4). Today’s increasing lack of hospitality is directly related, in part, to the general apathy with which our planet is often regarded. Cathy Ross encourages an expansion of hospitable practices as a direct consequence of the recognition that “God created the world and all that is in it; and because of the infinite variety, depth, creativity, and diversity present in creation” (12). Pope Francis, too, calls for increased hospitality, what he prefers to call “neighborliness” (*Message*). I, too, acknowledge the association between an appreciation of the natural world and of our human neighbors and bring the two concepts together in this study.

I am proposing an answer to the ecological crisis that returns us to the very beginning of church teachings: the biblical call for hospitality and the Genesis call for dominion over the natural world, a call that regardless of one’s theological beliefs provides a model for viable and necessary methods of environmental reform. My project here is to interpret the call for dominion by exercising ecocritical, hospitable, and theological principles applied to two canonical authors, William Shakespeare and Jane Austen, utilizing two works that have long been associated in critical tradition, *Much Ado about Nothing* and *Pride and Prejudice*. My contention is that the principal characters in these two works exhibit ecological and hospitable virtues that can serve as models for changed attitudes toward ecological activism today with the potential to reach a reading and theater audience who may not otherwise seek out ecological calls. With Gabriel
Egan, I believe that literary “characters have ways of thinking about these things that speak to us with surprising urgency” (Green 4).

**Ecocritical Theory as Literary Framework**

The essay that many believe marks the start of the modern ecocritical movement, Lynn White’s 1967 statement charging the Christian church with neglect for earth’s environmental needs, blames Christian teachings for the ecological crisis in no uncertain terms: “We are superior to nature, contemptuous of it, willing to use it for our slightest whim” (1206). The origins of this anthropocentrism, he argues, “are deeply grounded in Christian dogma” based on “orthodox Christian arrogance toward nature” (1207). Because Christians should take seriously God’s charge to Adam in Genesis 1.28 to “have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the heaven, and over every beast that moveth upon the earth,” White concludes with the prediction that “we shall continue to have a worsening ecologic crisis until we reject the Christian axiom that nature has no reason for existence save to serve man” (1207). The ecocritical movement, to some degree, credits an attack on the Christian church for its genesis. Although science and theology often face a traditional philosophical divide, a specific accusation against the church bolsters secular paradigms that often structure ecocritical theory, very simply defined as “the ecology of literature” (Rueckert 107), which does not always engage theological paradigms.

Perhaps that also explains why one of the dominant trends in ecocriticism is the use of human/nonhuman binaries depicted in literature with no inclusion of a divine element. Breyan Strickler even refers to them as “typical ecocritical dichotomies” (119). For example, William Howarth questions ecocriticism’s “Us-Them” dichotomy” (69). William Rueckert notes
culture/civilization and nature/wilderness antinomies (119). Paula Gunn Allen assesses the
“individual versus the ‘out there’” (254). Neil Evernden questions “man/environment
relationships” (99). Manfred Pfister lists as ecocritical concerns “centre and periphery, self and
the other, into the sacred and the profane, the natural and unnatural, the human and the
nonhuman” (18). These representative examples document the inclination for ecocritics to begin
discussions by recognizing an opposition between human and nonhuman as a natural
classification system.

Many ecocritics, however, once these human/nonhuman binaries have been recognized,
then resist them by attempting to blur the apparent boundaries. The western world typically
encourages inclusion rather than division, prompting Jennifer Munroe to warn against rebuilding
“the very binaries that ecocritics, ecofeminists, and feminists alike have sought to deconstruct”
(3). Mary Floyd-Wilson and Garrett A. Sullivan claim that we discuss body and environment as
if they exist in a dualistic relation, but that in somatic practice they blur because each contains
elements of one another (5). Brett L. Walker premises his essay on human/animal relations with
the statement that “humans are animals,” breaking down any perceived differences (45). Simon
Estok, applying ecocriticism specifically to Shakespeare studies, advocates looking anew at
connections in the texts between human and nonhuman to evaluate them “without being
binaristic” (Ecocriticism 3). Robert Kern states that ecocriticism includes both “the relations of
culture to nature” and “the perception of nature by culture,” but then collapses that binary when
applied to Austen’s Pemberley, which exhibits “little difference between the natural phenomena
outside the house and the rooms and furniture within it” (17, 15). I agree that obscuring boundary
lines in the politically enlightened twenty-first century makes sense. After all, the western world
has already been attempting to collapse humanity’s boundaries, such as racism and sexism.
Ecocritics, who perhaps at first reinforced the classical binaries of human/animal and nature/culture, are now correcting a previously unenlightened perspective, an objective I support.

I agree that dismantling the human/nonhuman binary offers a sensible contemporary world view that seeks a more enlightened, ecologically attuned paradigm of human relations within the environment. I agree that blurring human/nonhuman dichotomies represents a logical perspective in an era that, by and large, considers itself enlightened or freed from restrictive religious belief, those whom Lynn White referred to as “post-Christians” (1206). Such a secular world view, however, would be foreign to Shakespeare and Austen. I argue, therefore, that the work of Shakespeare and Austen, specifically *Much Ado about Nothing* and *Pride and Prejudice*, should be placed within their respective theologically historical contexts, placing the relationship between human and nonhuman depicted in these works within the accepted definitions of “dominion” in the two eras. Applying biblical principles does not represent regression but a corrective to the current consumer culture that lies behind much of the western world’s environmental problems.

**Pairing *Much Ado about Nothing* and *Pride and Prejudice***

Despite theological variations in the two eras, Shakespeare and Austen have long been paired in critical tradition, not only the two authors’ works as a whole but also *Much Ado about Nothing* and *Pride and Prejudice* in particular. Many of the links between the two authors specifically compare characterization. Their characterization similarities can be freshly implemented within a contemporary ecocritical application, a suggestion already made by Rosemarie Bodenheimer when she observes that Austen “consistently used responses to landscape as she used other literary languages or contemporary ideas, in the service of characterization” (605).
Critics began pairing the two authors not long after Austen’s death. Richard Whateley, one of the first to do so in 1821, praises Austen’s frequent rendition of conversations “which she conducts with a regard to character hardly exceeded even by Shakespeare himself. Like him, she shows as admirable a discrimination in the characters of fools as of people of sense; a merit which is far from common” (327). Thomas Babington Macaulay (1843) also praises her characterization: “Shakespeare has had neither equal nor second. But among the writers who, in the point which we have noticed, have approached nearest to the manner of the great master, we have no hesitation in placing Jane Austen, a woman of whom England is justly proud” (561). George Henry Lewes referenced Macaulay’s comparison several times, acting as a champion of Austen/Shakespeare parallels. He wrote in 1851 that Shakespeare’s “power of constructing and animating character […] may truly be said to find a younger sister in Miss Austen” (“Fair Carew” 1115). Alfred, Lord Tennyson claimed that “the realism and life-likeness of Miss Austen’s Dramatis Personae come nearest to those of Shakespeare” (372). In the twentieth century, Henry James ranked Austen and Shakespeare, with other canonical writers, among the “fine painters of life” (32).

The comparison of character construction is still being argued today. Andrew Bradley noted the similarity in characterization, explaining that Austen reminds us of Shakespeare in humorous characters like Miss Bates and Mrs. Allen (52). Richard Simpson compares her characters to Shakespeare’s Richard II, who “plays in one person many people” (395). John Bayley added to the characterization comparison by examining the two authors’ ability to create characters who elude sexual identity, claiming that they are free of sexual stereotypes (2-3). Rachel Wifall wrote in 2010, “We must acknowledge that Shakespeare and Austen are linked because readers like them as historical figures and, to the embarrassment of some modern
criticism, revere their creations most especially for their construction of character” (408). John Wiltshire proposes that Austen absorbed the soliloquies of Shakespeare’s characters, and that the inner life of her characters, like his, express intentions in sharp contrast with their outward deportment and express psychological conflict (222).

Many critics have observed not only Shakespeare’s and Austen’s similar characterization skills, but also more specific similarities between the main characters in Much Ado about Nothing and Pride and Prejudice. As early as 1813, a reviewer remarked that Elizabeth “is in fact the Beatrice of the tale” and that Elizabeth “takes great delight in playing the Beatrice upon” Darcy, noting the similarities in the contest of wits between both couples (“Unsigned Review” 272, 273). Richard Simpson wrote in a similar fashion in 1870: Austen’s “Beatrices and Benedicks only discover their mutual attraction by their failures to love elsewhere” (261). In 1959, Sylvia Townsend Warner agreed, writing that Beatrice is one of Shakespeare’s women who is free and uninhibited, like Elizabeth Bennet (Novy 28). Mary Lascelles states that both Much Ado about Nothing and Pride and Prejudice accept the convention that two people can be so complementary that their union by marriage must achieve harmony. Barbara Everett, discussing the social realism characteristic of Much Ado about Nothing, explains that the warmth the audience experiences when cousins and friends join at the end of the play foreshadows the “romantic yet worldly wisdom” which also joins families and friends in the conclusion of Pride and Prejudice (63). Marianne Novy claims that Much Ado about Nothing is closest to Austen’s novels. More specifically, Beatrice and Benedick spend much of the play insulting each other, Beatrice and Elizabeth both practice a critical view of marriage in their society, and both works contrast the central couple with one in which women are more passive and conventional (28). In addition, both are anti-romantic romances with comic plotting (29). Penny Gay adds that both
begin with a patriarch and his daughters (or quasi-daughters) receiving news that unattached young men are about to arrive in the area and that their unacknowledged purpose is to find wives. The heroines are both witty, intelligent, and unconventional. Quiet, easily misread, Jane Bennet is a variation of Hero. Beatrice and Benedick’s love story is played out in public, as is Elizabeth and Darcy’s (“Merry War” 79-80).

Novel and theatrical reviewers have also used similar expressions to describe the two works, revealing another connection between them: the “light, bright & sparkling” effect they provoke, as Austen herself described her novel (Le Faye 212). In her history of theatrical reviews of Much Ado about Nothing productions, “Much Ado about Nothing: A Kind of Merry War,” Penny Gay writes of the light, bright, and sparkling characteristics reviewers have recognized in various adaptations, noting similar audience reactions to Shakespeare’s play and Pride and Prejudice (72). Jocelyn Harris posits a different theatrical connection when she argues that Austen modelled Elizabeth Bennet on Dorothy Jordan, a Shakespearean comedienne. In addition to the personality traits the two women hold in common, Jordan’s popularity in the role of Beatrice coincides with the years in which Austen was revising “First Impressions” into Pride and Prejudice (“Celebrity Culture” 413). My pairing of Shakespeare with Austen and, more specifically, my pairing of Much Ado about Nothing and Pride and Prejudice follow the example of past scholars.

The prominence of hospitality as a plot device in the works selected for this study also prompts their pairing. However, their selection for an ecocritical perspective may not be as obvious. I believe, however, that the very lack of a prominent ecological entreaty constitutes confirmation for their efficacy. In general, literature designed to provoke a conditioned response, such as care for the environment, suggests artificiality, containing plots forced into
predetermined patterns to reach a predictable outcome. Romantic comedies, on the other hand, induce laughter, fulfillment, and repletion in audience and reader. They are filled with ordinary people playing practical jokes; flirting; extending, rejecting, and accepting marriage proposals; manipulating others for personal benefit; reviling and slandering; and dancing. The experiences of familiar life give power to these works. For behind the “nothing” of laughter and love is “much ado” of serious import, nurturing cultivation of valuable human principles. In these texts, personal relationships play out in terms of environments, be they natural or human-made. Thus, as noted above with regard to binaries in general, we cannot separate the human relationships in these works from the environments in which they occur. Because every text involves relationships with environment, an intentional environmental theme is unnecessary.

Additionally, analyzing texts that do not at first seem to emphasize the environment avoids the cliché of preaching to the choir, allowing a wider audience to hear the call to action. Nature writer David Quammen comments, “[A]mong the firmest of my professional convictions is that a writer who wants to influence how humans interact with landscape and nature should strive to reach as large an audience as possible and NOT preach to the converted (qtd. in Slovic, “Foreword” viii). Gabriel Egan, in Green Shakespeare, agrees, arguing that ecocritics should not confine their work only to nature writing for two reasons. First, the history of politicized criticism teaches us to move from the obvious to the less obvious. For example, feminist critics may have begun with observations on female characters, but then studied closely the male characters, and finally to works in which there at first appears little conflict between women and the patriarchal structure in which they live, thereby revealing new, sometimes radical conclusions. Second, by example, Egan notes that the English Romantics and American Transcendentalists did not restrict themselves to nature writing alone (Green 35). Neither should
ecocritics. By his logic, *Much Ado about Nothing* and *Pride and Prejudice*, because they are not obviously treatises on nature, provide a plausible next step for ecocritical endeavors. Choosing the unexpected is the approach Robert Kerns makes in “Ecocriticism: What is It Good For?” He assumes that Austen is “a writer for whom the idea of the world as more-than-human must be close to unthinkable” (12). Kern trusts that she “is manifestly not a nature writer” (12). However, if one is willing to read against the grain, there is “a good deal of ecocritical interest in some of Austen’s natural settings” (12). Sometimes, as Barbara Everett comments, “when we are surprised we see things more clearly” (168).

**Ecotheological Theory as a Third Dimension**

I will supplement this history of critical pairings by analyzing Shakespeare and Austen’s characterization for fresh ecocritical purposes. However, I believe that this application, unlike most ecocritical analyses, should not disregard the theological elements that inspired both authors in their use of the natural world and hospitality. I believe that, for Shakespeare and Austen, theological concerns, such as creation, redemption, and God’s providence, determined the value of the nonhuman. Therefore, my argument recognizes the Christian tradition accepted as natural by Shakespeare and Austen. Theological doctrines changed in the 200 years between Shakespeare and Austen, including the interpretation of what God expects from us when exercising dominion over the earth. The two interpretations differ in motivation, but both result in responsible care of the earth and its nonhuman inhabitants.

In fact, Christian doctrine already provides a basis for peaceful unity between human and nonhuman. Pierre Beauchamp points out that the context of Genesis 1.28, before the Fall, assumes that the relationship between human and nonhuman was one of mutual harmony. In Genesis 1 the relationship between human and nonhuman occurs in the context of a non-violent
world. Any coercive connotation to the term must also be understood as peaceful and benevolent. As Beauchamp argues, Genesis “is able to believe that a mastery over the earth is possible without exercising a mastery over the other beings, who are intermediate beings between the master and the earth. […] The Bible does not think of peace between human beings without peace between humans and animals” (qtd. in Rogerson 170, 180).

Peter Harrison, who has spent much of his scholarly career documenting the changing relationship between religion and modern science, offers a specific interpretation of “dominion” that reinforces Beauchamp’s observation on the context of Genesis 1. Harrison argues that the word “dominion” must be interpreted differently based on its use during certain points of history (“Subduing” 87). For Shakespeare’s England, the term, he claims, was regarded with a gentler definition from the Hebrew based on James Barr’s interpretation of “dominion” as a relatively weak expression that referred to Solomon’s peaceful rule (22). Lloyd Steffen agrees, interpreting the term as “the ideal of just and peaceful governance” (79). Early modern theologians defined “dominion,” then, not as authoritarian rule over nature, but as a responsibility to restore a pale imitation of the Garden of Eden. In the late eighteenth century, the idea of atoning for the Fall had faded, replaced with a stewardship ideal, responsibility for God’s creatures knowing that humanity is accountable to God for their welfare. The point I am stressing here is how an educated person living in these two time periods would have regarded the natural world. Keith Thomas argues, “It is not necessary here to determine whether or not Christianity is in itself intrinsically anthropocentric. The point is that in the early modern period its leading English exponents, the preachers and commentators, undoubtedly were” (24). Later, Thomas explains, the focus changed to one of stewardship: God “would require a strict account from man of the creatures entrusted to his care” (155).
The theological context that provided the underpinning to these authors’ world views provides a corrective to the limiting binaries often used to analyze the work of Shakespeare and Austen. The stewardship represented in their works provides the foundation for current ecocriticism that has often been abandoned in recent decades. “That, after all, is how most new ideas appear,” Keith Thomas contends. “Just as modern atheism is probably best understood as a conviction growing out of Christianity, rather than something encroaching upon it from an external source, so consideration for other species has its intellectual roots within the old man-centered doctrine itself” (156-57). Ecocriticism, reacting in part to Lynn White’s accusations against the church itself, ultimately derives first from early modern theologians, who taught that the defects of the natural world are the direct consequence of the Fall and therefore should solicit our mercy and forgiveness, and second from stewardship ideals, or benevolence toward those for which we feel accountable. Recognizing that the roots of ecocriticism ultimately lie in the tradition of Christian stewardship solves many of the problems Pope Francis enumerated in his environmental encyclical, such as the domination and abuse that drive current consumer culture. Thus my project here is to show how the theological informs the ecological in the works of Shakespeare and Austen. To illustrate this argument I create what I am calling an enhancement of the binary of human and nonhuman that can be obtained through the supplement, as it were, of the divine.

Supplementing the Binary

Rather than assessing human/nonhuman relationships as binaries, I am supplementing the binary with a third divine element to create an ecotheological hierarchy of God/human/nonhuman, a vertical order or ranking of responsibility. This ecotheological approach allows me to analyze human/nonhuman relationships in Shakespeare’s and Austen’s work within the
prevalent Christian frame of reference that assumed a divine element, God, as the ultimate
authority over all of created life.

This approach alters interpretations of the human/nonhuman element in Shakespeare’s
and Austen’s work. The Judeo-Christian doctrine is grounded in a powerful myth of beginnings.
It chronicles God as creator of Earth and all life on it, including Adam and Eve, whom he placed
in the Garden of Eden. God served as host, supplying all physical and spiritual necessities of life:
food, occupation, pleasure, creativity, and love. There they enjoyed perfect unity with God and
were given dominion over the earth, living in benevolent harmony with the natural world. When
Adam and Eve first disobeyed God, separation resulted, not only between them and God but
between them and all nonhuman life as well. The ground no longer yields sustenance effortlessly
and animals no longer willingly comply with human need. Until a messianic unity occurs again
in the end days, mankind can only approximate their former Edenic unity by achieving salvation,
or forgiveness from God for the disobedience originating with Adam and Eve, and by attempting
to restore as much as possible the restoration of a fallen world. An analogy for my ecotheological
theory can be found in the “pleached bower” and the “thick-pleach’d alley” that provide the
setting for the two decisions to marry in Much Ado about Nothing (1.2.8, 3.1.7). Pleaching is
accomplished by weaving branches together to add strength and beauty, which can be further
enhanced by weaving more branches to create a basketry effect. I am proposing not the symbolic
single branch created if the human and nonhuman are unified into one, nor an intermingling of
the human and nonhuman branches in a traditional dichotomous division, but the supplement of
a third branch to create a stronger braid, as it were: human, nonhuman, and divine. This braid
creates a reminder of the community enjoyed in the Garden, an interdependence described in
Ecclesiastes 4.12 as “a threefold cord, not easily broken.” The triple combination creates a strong
foundation for an ecocritical perspective appropriate for the work of Shakespeare and Austen, based firmly in a Judeo-Christian world view.

For the early modern era, the relationship between human and nonhuman was governed by the perceived need to atone for the Fall by recreating Eden-like harmony. By the time Austen lived, the Enlightenment was well established and that particular call was fading, replaced by the exercise of benevolent control over the natural world. Dominion instead took a different form: Christian stewardship, defined as the duty to fulfill responsibly the dominion over the earth that God granted to Adam and Eve and their descendants. We are responsible for the preservation and maintenance of the nonhuman world and will one day be held accountable for our efforts. These beliefs, encouraged by the Church of England, govern human interactions with the nonhuman world. Austen’s characters are shaped by these injunctions, instructed by God to care for the world, acknowledging their sojourn on earth as guests.

An ecotheological hierarchy produces a reading of Shakespeare and Austen that not only refuses to anachronistically judge their fictional characters with current ecological theories but also recognizes the importance of Christianity to their work. I do not claim that the ecotheological theory I propose here should be applied to all literature. But I am claiming its utility for Shakespeare and Austen, appropriate to the Christian doctrine that formed much of their respective world views, one that advocates love for God above and for nonhuman below and love extended to other human beings through the practice of hospitality.

**Hospitality**

The Old Testament stories provide not only a basis for mankind’s vertical relationships with the divine above and the nonhuman below, but also for humanity’s horizontal relationships, human being with human being. Biblical hospitality between hosts and guests provides a model
different from secular hospitable traditions that operate on a system of exchange. The assumption, with no recognition of the divine, is that guest and host agree to form a symmetrical relationship in which individuals act within a system of reciprocity in which both parties benefit. The guest receives food, shelter, and entertainment. Benefits to the host are less tangible, but perhaps more important. In return for his offered gifts of civility and harmony, he is able to demonstrate his status and generosity, thereby fostering sentiments of loyalty and gratitude from his guests. On another occasion, the relationship may be reversed, as the guest and host transpose positions. The hosting system benefits both host and guest, exchanging needed goods and services, generally keeping power balanced between host and guest.

Biblical hospitality, on the other hand, offers hospitable services with no expectation of reciprocity. Abraham’s hospitality in Genesis models divine expectations:

And Abraham hastened into the tent unto Sarah, and said, Make ready quickly three measures of fine meal, knead it, and make cakes upon the hearth. And Abraham ran unto the herd, and fetched a calf tender and good, and gave it unto a young man; and he hastened to dress it. And he took butter, and milk, and the calf which he had dressed, and set it before them; and he stood by them under the tree, and they did eat. (18.6-8)

Abraham offers his unexpected guests the best of his household even with no indication that they can ever return his hospitable gifts. Abraham models for human beings what Exodus 23.9-12 details for the nonhuman world, presented in a hospitable context:

Thou shalt not oppress a stranger, for ye know the heart of a stranger, seeing ye were strangers in the land of Egypt. Moreover, six years thou shalt sow thy land, and gather the fruits thereof, but the seventh year thou shalt let it rest and lie still,
that the poor of thy people may eat; and what they leave, the beasts of the field shall eat. In like manner thou shalt do with thy vineyard, and with thine olive trees. Six days thou shalt do thy work, and in the seventh day thou shalt rest, that thine ox, and thine ass may rest, and the son of thy maid, and the stranger may be refreshed.

God’s commands make it clear that the graciousness of hospitality, of caring for the stranger, also extends to the nonhuman world. The book of Hebrews makes it clear that this gracious hospitality should continue today. Hebrews 11.13-16 characterizes Christians as “strangers and pilgrims” on the earth:

All these died in faith, […] and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth. For they that say such things, declare plainly, that they seek a country. And if they had been mindful of that country, from whence they came out, they had leisure to have returned. But now they desire a better, that is a heavenly, wherefore God is not ashamed of them to be called their God; for he hath prepared for them a city.

As some Christians interpret this passage, human beings are defined as strangers on earth, implying that our dwelling on earth is temporary; therefore, we have no obligation to protect or nurture it. This interpretation offers a world-renouncing vision that does not foster stewardship of the earth and does not offer an incentive to contribute to the earth’s welfare unless humans benefit in some way. I agree with Alan C. Cadwallader, however, who argues forcefully that this passage, in fact, epitomizes hospitality. Cadwallader’s linguistic study of the original Greek of this passage ultimately defines human beings as guests on planet earth, not strangers, indicating
earth as possessing “a value and mutuality of relationship with humanity” (162). As the guest of earth, we are to live with respect for its resources.

The Christian as a stranger and guest opens up a new relationship with earth. As Norman C. Habel explains, the view of earth as host recovers a forgotten “ideology” of the land, one where it is viewed “as a host country and its inhabitants as potentially friendly peoples” (115). Earth, in this context, “can only be properly valued when human grasping is withdrawn, when legal and political reinforcements of ownership are themselves marginalized, and when Earth is free to act as host” (164). Earth is precious and valuable in itself. As earth’s guests, Christians are to treat the land and the life on it in the same way a responsible, grateful guest treats a host’s home. Accountable guests do not empty the refrigerator, stuffing what is not eaten into suitcases to take home. They do not drive their cars on the lawn, ruining the grass. They do not shoot the birds who visit the backyard birdfeeder. They do not kick the host’s dog. They are respectful of the host’s resources and grateful for the gifts of food, shelter, and entertainment. The concept of earth as host was a familiar one to early moderns, who inherited the idea of earth as an abode for humanity from an earlier age. As Clarence Glacken explains, “Probably every religious writer of the Middle Ages had something to say regarding the earth as an abode for man because it was so fundamental a topic and because it constantly came up in exegesis, especially of Genesis, the Psalms, and some of the Pauline writings” (176).

John F. Haught, a theologian specializing in the reconciliation of evolution and religion, agrees, writing with great candor that “the religious formation that many if not most Christians have received has led them to harbor a deep suspicion that the human species does not essentially belong to nature or to the earth; and so in the name of religious aspiration they sometimes still hold themselves at a distance from nature” (240). In contrast, the hospitality referenced in the
Hebrews passage is a divine imperative. Abraham, for example, is honored for his hospitality to strangers in Genesis 18 and Christ emphasized that he himself relies on the earth’s hospitality: “The foxes have holes, and the birds of the heaven have nests, but the Son of man hath not whereon to lay his head” (Luke 9.58). His years of active ministry were spent as a willing guest in the homes of those whom he served and he concluded his ministry by acting as host in what is now known as the Last Supper.

This model of hospitality informs my ecotheological interpretation of Shakespeare’s play and Austen’s novel considered here. In both works, the authors create a hospitable, welcoming world that exemplifies God’s grace and graciousness. The hospitality so evident in both play and novel functions on several levels. First, taken literally as a plot device, both works are predicated on hospitality from the first scene to the last. Second, hospitality inherently makes use of the natural world but ultimately does not exploit the earth or squander its resources, a principle that their esteemed characters demonstrate or learn to demonstrate. Third, God as creator of earth manifests himself as the Host, offering himself in the form of Christ as a sacrifice in reparation for the Fall in the Garden of Eden. That sacrifice is ritually memorialized in communion, a sacrament in the Anglican church surely practiced by Shakespeare and Austen, and evoked in *Much Ado about Nothing* and *Pride and Prejudice*. I will draw on all three interpretations of hospitality in my discussion. Hospitality brings together persons in an environment filled with products from the natural world, joining our need for communion with humans, nonhumans, and the divine with our need for food, shelter, and security, physically and spiritually.

**Hospitality versus “Hostipitality”**

Hospitality, defined from a Christian perspective, assumes a loving and benevolent God, unceasingly acting in humanity’s best interest. The same cannot be said for humanity as guest,
who often deliberately chooses alienation, malice, and hostility toward humans, nonhumans, and God. Jacques Derrida acknowledges human hostility as inherent to hospitality by recognizing the etymology of the term “hospitality,” which encompasses the meanings of “host,” “guest,” “stranger,” and “enemy.” In its etymological origins and in Renaissance usage, the guest is a host and the host is a guest (Palmer 3), each vying for power. Hospitality splits the host and guest, inviting an inherent division and hostility, prompting Derrida’s coinage of the term “hostipitality,” combining the words “hospitality” and “hostility.” The concept recognizes that guests are not always welcome, that welcome guests can overstay their welcome, and that both hosts and guests often mingle hostility with their outward displays of welcome and gratitude.

The term, applied to the natural world, recognizes the hostility that Lynn White criticized so harshly. Much of the world’s human population has been hostile to nature, greedily exploiting the land and animals.

Exploitation does not conform to the biblical ideal of hospitality. Instead, the Bible offers Abraham’s example of hospitality without reciprocity, the laws set down in Exodus to protect land and animals, and the reminder in Hebrews that we are guests enjoying the earth’s hospitality. Biblical examples illustrate a hospitality ideal that parallels the ecotheological hierarchy of divine/human/nonhuman, a relationship Rogerson describes as “a triple relationship between God, the users of the land and the land itself” (30). The biblical ideal recognizes God as the ultimate host, both as physical host who created and sustains the natural world and as spiritual Host who sacrifices for our benefit and directs us to remember his sacrifice by partaking of the Host, the bread and wine of communion. Christians as host optimally position themselves second in the hierarchy, called to imitate God as Host, providing self-sacrificial hospitality to humans and nonhumans alike, the guests on the bottom rung.
At the same time, however, the premise of this paper is that we live in a postlapsarian world in which, despite dedicated efforts, no one can live up to the perfection modelled by God as Host. Derrida’s hostipitality recognizes the truth that the best hospitality inherently includes hostility; hostility and hospitality intermingle. This recognition softens the dominion hierarchy. Dominion does not have to mean total control, but can intermingle with compassion and love, a peaceful rule, as Barr interprets it. Stewardship, in a fallen world, always includes a measure of hostility, but also recognizes that fallenness does not require judgment but compassion and love.

Together, my hierarchies of ecotheology and biblical hospitality form models of God’s original plan for relationships between humans and nonhumans, physically and spiritually. Biblical narratives provide models of what a hospitality hierarchy should look like: Abraham’s hospitality toward God’s messengers, Christ’s role as guest, and Christ’s role as host. Other narratives provide models of divine/human/nonhuman harmony in the Garden of Eden, such as Noah’s hospitality toward animals on the ark, and Jesus’s parable about searching for lost sheep and rejoicing when they are found. Narratives have the power to influence and teach those who listen.

The narratives of Much Ado about Nothing and Pride and Prejudice can exert the same influence by modelling ecologically friendly Christian virtues. Shakespeare and Austen contain within their work the seeds of thought and imagination we need to reverse the damaging and hostile attitude toward the world that has taken over the modern sensibility. The theological foundation for Shakespeare’s and Austen’s protagonists allows them to demonstrate virtues and act as models for contemporary ecological activism. Recognizing and analyzing the heterogeneous congregation of voices—ecocriticism, theology, hospitality, and rhetoric—in the works of these two authors, I believe, demonstrate the power and influence of literature by encouraging the
graciousness and consideration required to embody ecotheological and hospitality hierarchies. Responsible stewardship over the natural world “entails the practice of ecologically appropriate virtues: compassion, humility, moderation, detachment, and gratitude,” virtues also intimately related to hospitable practices, making the combination of ecotheology and hospitality theories valuable (Haught 229). Humility, defined as modesty in one’s self-estimate, not as humiliation or shame, for example, recognizes that we are mortal, prone to disease and decay, and biologically similar to nonhuman life. Benevolence encourages kindness toward all, including the natural world. Gratitude acknowledges the sustenance the earth provides and inspires us to take action allowing it to continue doing so. Put another way, humility decreases our sense of superiority and power over the nonhuman, benevolence motivates stewardship and concern, and gratitude extends appreciation and sensitivity. Benedick and Beatrice, Claudio and Hero, Darcy and Elizabeth, Bingley and Jane model these virtues. And because they are so popular with modern audiences, they have the power to influence humanity for the better.

Chapter 2, the literature review that forms the background for this study includes disparate fields of study: ecocriticism, Christianity, ecotheology, and hospitality, as fields in their right and as applied to Shakespeare and Austen. Chapter 3 covers the landscape in Much Ado about Nothing and Pride and Prejudice, the natural setting that forms an important part of both works. Chapter 4 moves to the role of animals, Chapter 5 to the role of food, and Chapter 6 to sexual passion. Together, this study offers the first sustained ecotheological and hospitality analysis of these two canonical works.
CHAPTER II
LITERATURE REVIEW

Ecocriticism

History of Ecocriticism

Ecocriticism has joined the increasingly disparate field of literary theory as a respected and accepted discipline, to the point that the seminal *The Ecocriticism Reader*, published in 1996, edited by Cheryl Glotfelty, has now been followed by *Ecocriticism: The Essential Reader* (2014). Appearing in both volumes is the essay which many believe marks the start of the modern ecocritical movement, Lynn White’s 1967 statement charging the Christian church with neglect for earth’s environmental needs and blaming Christian teachings for the ecological crisis in no uncertain terms: “Despite Darwin, we are not, in our hearts, part of the natural process. We are superior to nature, contemptuous of it, willing to use it for our slightest whim” (1206). The origins of this anthropocentrism “are deeply grounded in Christian dogma” based on “orthodox Christian arrogance toward nature” (1207). He concludes with the prediction that “we shall continue to have a worsening ecologic crisis until we reject the Christian axiom that nature has no reason for existence save to serve man” (1207). Responses to White’s accusation provoked an extended and heated debate over the church’s role and stimulated, in part, renewed energy in the fields of environmental history and ecotheology.
Together, the anthologies include some of the more influential scholars in ecocriticism by including stand-alone essays and excerpts from other studies. The varied premises demonstrate the eclectic methodological theories the field embraces. The editors of both anthologies recognize William Rueckert for coining the term “ecocriticism” in 1978 when he proposed to “discover something about the ecology of literature” (107). Cheryl Glotfelty purposefully includes essays chosen to represent leading ecocritical scholars, looking backward to the discipline’s origins and forward to future trends. Some older but still important work utilizes social theory, biology, and literary theory. For example, Christopher Manes employs the theories of Michel Foucault to examine how literacy and Christian exegesis have rendered nature mute, depicting humans alone as speaking subjects. Proceeding from a vastly different perspective, Neil Evernden combines ecology with cellular biology to posit the theory that there is no such thing as self, only self in a place, emphasizing the importance of environment for identity. Employing terms more familiar to literature are Joseph W. Meeker and Annette Kolodny’s positions. Meeker’s pioneering work *The Comedy of Survival* (1972) coins the term “literary ecology” to convey literary production as distinctive to the human species. From an ecological perspective, comedy promotes survival, Meeker claims, growing “from the biological circumstances of life” (158); tragedy records “monolithic passion” (160). Beginning with the premise that the land-as-woman metaphor lies at the root of exploitative practices of the natural world, Annette Kolodny contributes the classic *The Lay of the Land: Metaphor as Experience and History in American Life and Letters* (1975), generating the large ecofeminist movement, a philosophy that links ecology with feminism.

In contrast to these scholars, who reach out to heterogeneous disciplines, other writers assess the unexpected detrimental effect of other disciplines. A critique of humanism motivates
Glen A. Love’s “Revaluing Nature: Toward an Ecological Criticism,” which Glotfelty claims is one of the most influential essays of the ecocritical movement (xxx). Love speculates that literary scholars’ limited humanistic vision has resulted in an anthropocentric sense that the natural world is inconsequential and recommends revaluing nature writing. Similarly, Scott Slovic, editor of *ISLE: Interdisciplinary Studies in Literature and Environment*, argues that despite expectations, nature writers turn their eyes inward, elevating states of consciousness within themselves (“Nature”).

The recent *Ecocriticism: The Essential Reader* organizes selections in waves, attesting to not only the length of time ecocriticism as a recognized discipline has existed but also to the changes that have occurred through that time. The first wave, from roughly the 1960s to the 1990’s, includes seminal texts still frequently referred to in scholarly proceedings. In addition to Lynn White, some of the more recognizable names include Raymond Williams and Cheryl Glotfelty, who continue to demonstrate the multidisciplinary approach of many ecocritics. Williams, in his influential *The Country and the City* (1973), which Rob Nixon terms “a compendious precursor to ecocriticism” (200), departs radically from White’s approach by considering images of the country and the city in English literature since the sixteenth century. His Marxist approach analyzes these images as symbols for conceptualizing the social and economic changes accompanying capitalist development in England. Harold Fromm credits Cheryl Glotfelty as one of the first influential promoters of ecocriticism, co-editing the seminal *The Ecocriticism Reader* and serving as the first academic whose appointment includes “literature and the environment” in the title. In her latest work, Glotfelty advocates the use of bioregions, unique regions based on natural boundaries, as sites for sustainable, regenerative community, such as farmer’s markets, educational nature walks, and urban gardens planted on
unoccupied city lots, often accompanied by fiction and poetry to celebrate and encourage the creation of other bioregions (*Bioregional*).

The second wave, more recent scholarship, includes readings that demonstrate ecocriticism’s pattern of confluent theorizing, one hallmark of the discipline. Examples include Susan Hekman’s use of materiality and feminism; Robert D. Bullard’s race, class, and politics; queer theory from Bruce Erickson; postcolonial theory from Rob Nixon; and politics from Gabriel Egan. The essays articulate current challenges to the field, outlined by Lawrence Buell in *The Future of Environmental Criticism: Environmental Crisis and Literary Imagination* as “the challenge of organization, the challenge of professional legitimation, the challenge of defining distinctive models of critical inquiry, and the challenge of extending their significance beyond the academy” (128). Kate Rigby concludes with a call for

a new kind of (possibly post-modern) literature, beyond the opposition of naïve naturalism and sentimental yearning, as envisaging a mode of writing that, in responding to the social and ecological brokenness of our world, however inadequately, might conjoin concern with the flourishing of all life, human and otherwise, with respect for the claims of human justice and freedom. (365)

These representative ecocritical scholars demonstrate the vast diversity within the field. They at once study a range of topics and include every ecological form of natural life imaginable, including soil erosion, waterways, landscape, plant and tree life, agriculture, animals, geology, genetics, nuclear fission, and more. The field is continually extending the scope and possibilities to include discussions of environmental representations wherever they appear (Estok, *Ecocriticism* 2). As Gabriel Egan declares, ecocriticism’s “proper purview is all that happens in literary culture that tends to create or sustain the political, social, and cultural
conditions that ecopolitics seeks to change” (Green 34). The universal goal is not merely the academic play entailed in studying the relationship between literature and ecology, but in improving the relationship between the human and more-than-human with an activist vision. The wide-ranging vision of these representative ecocritical works has not only provided me with a solid foundation of ecocritical theory but has also encouraged me to combine perspectives from various literary theories and perspectives on the two works I have selected for this study. Ecocriticism welcomes that variety in the quest to advocate for the earth in every possible manner.

Ecocriticism Applied to Shakespeare

Very little ecocriticism has been applied to Shakespeare’s Much Ado about Nothing directly, with only brief references to the play scattered throughout the literature in the service of an argument about the Shakespeare canon as a whole or about a particular play, an argument not generally applicable to Much Ado. My study represents the first sustained ecocritical application specific to this play. Nevertheless, ecocritical theories have been applied to other plays, particularly those works that emphasize nonhuman life or settings in the natural world. Work by Simon Estok, Gabriel Egan, and Karen Raber has been especially helpful to this study. Estok, in Ecocriticism and Shakespeare, coins the term “ecophobia” as a parallel to the terms misogyny, racism, homophobia, and anti-Semitism in order to open opportunities to the study of nature, just as these other terms have allowed new insight into social injustices. Important for my study is his further insight that ecophobia reflects our desire to exert control over nature, or as he also expresses it, our desire to continue to exercise the divine control over the natural world God extended to Adam (5). Estok’s applications of ecophobia, for example, to King Lear, Coriolanus, 2 Henry VI, and The Winter’s Tale have provided valuable models. In addition, Estok’s analysis
of cannibalism as “one of the vitally overlapping areas between postcolonial theory and ecocriticism” informs my own discussion of cannibalism in *Much Ado about Nothing* and *Pride and Prejudice* (15).

Corresponding to Estok’s term ecophobia as a means to more easily engage in political change is Gabriel Egan’s adoption of the term inspired by the ecocritical movement, “speciesism,” parallel to racism or sexism, signifying prejudice or unequal treatment of species different from one’s own (*Green* 3). Egan, primarily in *Green* Shakespeare: From Ecopolitics to Ecocriticism, engages in close reading of select plays, observing rhetoric’s effect on speciesism.

**Ecocriticism Applied to Austen**

Much ecocritical analysis of Austen’s work has so far been overlooked. Jonathan Bate considers the settings of Austen’s novels and her preference for the country over the city and determines that, for her, “‘culture’ is located in a landscape and a mode of agriculture, not merely in manners and aesthetics. Her ideal England is one on which social relations and the aesthetic sense—that sweetness to the eye and the mind—are a function of environmental belonging” (545). For example, Knightley’s Donwell Abbey acts as a prime country house ideal, combining natural aesthetics, stewardship of the land, and a discreet link to the divine through its name, providing a parallel of Pemberley, also acclaimed as an ideal.

The landscape in Austen’s novels, even those around Donwell Abbey and Pemberley, is often dismissed as irrelevant. Peter Graham, for instance, dismisses any sense of geography, physical or figurative, in her novels as she treats “an unusually narrow segment of the human world” only (2). Joel Weinsheimer, too, claims that her novels “study man in a vacuum,” which he considers as a central defect (138). Raymond Williams, likewise, regards the countryside as “real only as it relates to the houses which are the real nodes; for the rest the country is weather
or a place for a walk” (166). Elizabeth Toohey, however, takes direct issue with Williams’s statement, insisting that because of Austen’s awareness of “the way in which personal finances dominate the landscape (so to speak) of her fiction, she could hardly relegate the countryside to romantic backdrop” (49).

Many studies do, however, find significant meaning in Austen’s landscapes, particularly focusing on landscape aesthetics and the picturesque. William Gilpin, well-known landscape artist of the eighteenth century, unknowingly laid the foundation for the importance of landscape as a sensuous feature of her novels with his claim that “we feel rather than survey” grand scenes; we are moved “beyond the power of thought” and “every mental operation is suspended” (1.49). His emphasis on the emotional power of the landscape supports my own conclusions on landscape in chapter 2. Alistair Duckworth, by more specifically linking landscape with estates in his landmark *The Improvement of the Estate: A Study of Jane Austen’s Novels*, discerns a claim to conservative social order in her landscapes (ix). Elisabeth Ellington agrees by identifying “wider social and economic issues” through Austen’s treatment of landscape (91).

Most studies move beyond these general discussions that converge societal concerns and landscape with more specific ecofeminist treatments of studies of landscape. Barbara Briton Wenner, for example, delineates differences in men and women’s reactions to landscape. Men objectify the land, assessing its potential for control while women search for their place within it (2). Wenner’s theory explains Darcy’s sense of ease at Pemberley and Elizabeth’s attraction to the estate, imagining herself as its mistress. Penny Gay qualifies that statement by stressing that Austen’s intelligence prevails over her gender: “as a woman (not a landowner), she views its working in reality with a critical eye” (“Changing View” 47). Similarly, Jill Heydt-Stevenson in like manner finds that Austen’s use of landscapes “directly impinges on the treatment of and
expectations for women” (264). Unlike most who place Austen’s characters in alignment with a
gendered view of the landscape, Mary Jane Curry describes Elizabeth Bennet as resisting both
physical and social barriers: “Of all the Austen heroines, Elizabeth Bennet thinks most about that
part of nature that is unbounded: where boundaries exist, she crosses them” (175). William
Snyder maintains as well that her heroines resist society, a resistance captured in their
relationship to the landscape: “Austen’s strongest, cleverest women—those who resist the
machinations and delusions of society—are the only persons shown to have an intimacy with
Nature, a symbiosis embodying their desire for intimacy in partnership” (149).

Although landscape studies outnumber animal studies, work on the historical context of
the human/animal relationship in the late eighteenth century provides a useful context for Austen
scholarship. For Christine Kenyon-Jones, in Kindred Brutes: Animals in Romantic-Period
Writing, the oppression of animals moved out of a purely symbolic realm into a more direct
societal topic at this time (40). David Perkins further connects the rhetoric of animal cruelty,
feminism, and abolitionism (107), as does Onno Oerlemans, although he cautions against too
much focus on the overlap of these social concerns to the detriment of the animals themselves
(67-68).

The longest treatment of animal studies is Barbara Seeber’s recent Jane Austen and
Animals. In her discussion of Austen’s attitude toward animals, Seeber notes from Austen’s
letters that she considered animals as feeling beings, that she had affection for them, and judged
animal cruelty as reprehensible (10). In addition, Austen’s letters reveal not only her tolerance
for hunting, a sport engaged in by her brothers, but also her reservations against its cruelty (13).
These reservations manifest themselves in the rhetoric of love hunts in her novels, in which
scoundrels such as Henry Crawford and Willoughby couch in the language of hunting their intent
to seduce. Fishing, for Austen, is valued as a gentler rural sport, the activity she chooses to associate with Darcy, her most popular hero (67). Seeber’s approach throughout her study is ecofeminist, arguing that Austen “likened women’s state in patriarchy to that of animals, whether as hunted prey or as pets” (28). Seeber includes passages on *Pride and Prejudice*, but there is no thorough ecocritical study of her most famous novel. This study, then, comprises the first full ecocritical treatment of Shakespeare’s *Much Ado about Nothing* and Austen’s *Pride and Prejudice*.

**Nonhuman Metaphors in Ecocritical Study**

Close reading of nonhuman metaphors and analogies as ecocritical work makes up much of my study. Focusing specifically on the medieval traditions that heavily influenced Shakespeare’s work is Helen Cooper, who explains that Shakespeare would have taken for granted the habit of thinking by analogy based on the belief that human beings were interconnected with everything in the created world (20). Beast fables from the period and Machiavelli’s analogies to animals as political strategists in 1532 provide other examples of human minds and animals joined as irreducible materials (Landry 8). Shakespeare’s language confirms this approach. As Andreas Höfele observes, Shakespeare’s plays teem with vividly portrayed animals (123). The prologue of *Henry V*, for example, commands the audience to “Think when we talk of horses, that you see them” (1.0.26). Höfele continues: “Must we think, when we hear of bears, serpents, spaniels or ‘the wolf and owl’ […] that we see them? The effect of Shakespeare’s clusters of nonhuman ‘images,’ I would suggest, is very often not so much mimetic or visual as affective, even visceral” (123).

Food, especially food offered in hospitality, is ever present as well. The audience is very well aware that Lady Macbeth’s sycophantic lie to Duncan, “All our service / In every point
twice done and then done double,” includes a feast (1.6.14-15). Macbeth sees Banquo’s ghost at a banquet, soon after he jovially calls for drink: “Be large in mirth; anon we'll drink a measure / The table round” (3.4.11-12). The chorus in Henry V renders the cliffs of Dover and Calais with the English Channel between real. His plea to the audience could very well apply to any nonhuman element as well: “Think when we talk of meat platters…gardens…or savage bulls, that you see them.” Shakespeare’s powerful expressions render nonhuman representations as forceful as physical loaves of bread, orchard bowers, and chained dogs. For an early modern culture, with so many in close daily contact with animals, such an “animal vocabulary” functioned well (E. Cohen 60). Intimate knowledge of proximal animals meant that symbolic use and cultural representation are nearly synonymous (Cuneo 4). Even though the characters in Much Ado about Nothing do not refer to nonhuman elements physically on stage with them, their speech teems with their presence.

Estok’s evaluation of analogies between human and nonhuman continues work on metaphors. His discussion is useful for Shakespeare’s plays because application of ecotheological theories to the natural world and its products—animals, gardens, food—can only occasionally depend on actual animals and food on stage. For practical reasons, live animals in his plays are rare. Most notable are the dog Crab in Two Gentlemen of Verona and the bear in The Winter’s Tale. Actual food is also rare, limited to only a few scenes, such as the disappearing feast in The Tempest, Duke Senior’s hospitable offer of venison in As You Like It, the feast in Macbeth, and the notorious pies in Titus Andronicus. Shakespeare’s gift to the ages has always been transmitted through words, so it is mainly through representations of animals and food upon which ecotheology in Shakespeare depends, rather than physical.
Those representations are not to be taken lightly. For the early modern, analogical relationships between man and animal were not considered merely figurative. As Gail Kern Paster describes it, “simile fixes both participants in analogical relationships founded in a theoretically immutable, emblematic order” (“Melancholy” 120). Associations were grounded in a belief system of sympathies and correspondences. Animals, man, and all living matter were thought to bear physical similarities: “the nested system of spirits in the cosmos, the environment, the human body and in inanimate objects” (Sutton 36). The mutual bodies and souls result in similar responses to the environment and similar emotions or passions, which were thought to be distributed across the cosmos. Because the body is a microcosm of the universe, composed of similar elements, analogies between man and anything nonhuman were thought to be literal (Schoenfeldt 3). “Interpretive literalism,” then, is appropriate when reading early modern texts because somatic metaphors were “the literal stuff of physiological theory for early modern scriptors of the body” (Paster, “Nervous” 111). Including nonhuman elements in theology was not considered an anomaly for early moderns, but scientific fact.

Estok agrees, noting that, for Elizabethans, analogies were natural, as demonstrated by Shakespeare’s characters, who speak of the world around them as though it is alive. He extends the use of analogy and metaphor into the present, arguing that analogies are not reductive and politically conservative, as some critics claim. Indeed, he continues, because analogies from nature have been met with widespread deep-seated skepticism, we have been prevented from recognizing the radical potential of an ecocritical approach to Shakespeare’s (and others’) work (4-10). Analogies from nature were based partly on the prevalent conviction in the truth of the Great Chain of Being, as E. M. W. Tillyard has so forcefully professed. Egan re-evaluates Tillyard’s conclusions, determining the categories in terms of connectivity rather than fixed
taxonomies, a conclusion that impacts my own divine/human/nonhuman hierarchy ("Gaia").

Karen Raber’s work on the human/nonhuman divide has also proven invaluable. Raber examines the physical and metaphorical transgressions of animals in *Romeo and Juliet* and *Hamlet*, finding that animals permeate the human physical body and interior self, blurring the constructed boundary between them ("Vermin"). Her discussion of animal metaphors has assisted my own.

Erica Fudge’s work supplements Egan and Raber, for me, because she investigates the rhetoric of “different discourses: religious, demonological, satirical, linguist” (Fudge, “Introduction” 2). Based on the studies of these ecocritical scholars, I argue that literature from these earlier periods is relevant to “current ethical, environmental, social, and political debates” (10).

Animal metaphors were not considered as literal by the time Austen was writing, but the correspondence between physical and emotional characteristics the metaphors imply was far from gone. David Hume, for example, relied on close analogies between humans and animals. He attributed both physical sensation and passions, or emotions, to both. In his 1748 *An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding*, he reasoned that sensations arise from the “animal spirits” in both humans and animals and that passions and emotions proceed directly from the sensations, or from the idea of those sensations (47). Because, he argued, anatomists depend on similar structures in human and animal bodies working in comparable ways, the same logic should be applied to comparisons of animal and human minds (21). Animal advocacy, in the latter part of the eighteenth century, relied in part on these physiological explanations for shared human and animal passions. Because a human/animal analogy was prevalent, we can assume that Austen’s use of phrases such as Lydia’s “high animal spirits” presumes not only figurative language, but also a direct analogy between Lydia and animality. I will be relying on this kind of figurative language in this study.
Christianity as Foundation for Shakespeare and Austen

Christianity as an established foundation for Shakespeare’s culture has long been recognized. G. Wilson Knight states the truth with elegant clarity: “Every English Renaissance play, in that it was written by Christian playwrights for a Christian audience in a Christian culture, is in some sense Christian” (98). It’s simply assumed that “Shakespeare writes as a Christian, with a Christian way of seeing the world, and with a Christian perspective on the human condition,” claims Jerram Barrs (155). Several book-length studies cover the extent of the Christianity that suffuses his work. Richard L. Greaves’s Society and Religion in Elizabethan England provides comprehensive evidence for the pervasiveness of Christianity when Shakespeare was writing, demonstrating that most of England’s laws and customs were ultimately derived from biblical teachings. Peter Iver Kaufman, in Religion around Shakespeare, likewise simply accepts the Christian background of his work, whether Catholic, reformed, puritan, or antipapal, no matter what doctrinal details Shakespeare himself may or may not have believed. Kaufman’s description of what was being said in sermons and bookstalls in both Stratford-upon-Avon and London and the evidence he accumulates from preachers, churchwardens, vestrymen, polemicists, theologians, and diarists provide a thorough view of the religious atmosphere surrounding Shakespeare’s work. R.G. Hunter’s Shakespeare and the Comedy of Forgiveness establishes the centrality of Christian doctrinal and sacramental patterns in his comedies, including Much Ado about Nothing. Chris Hassel follows Hunter’s work with a detailed study of Claudio’s Christian pattern of penance in Act V.

Jane Austen, daughter and sister to three Anglican clergymen, likewise accepted Christianity as a natural condition for her life and work and is one of the ways in which she resembles Shakespeare (Emsley, Virtues 33). The most general, comprehensive study of
Austen’s faith is William Jarvis’s *Jane Austen and Religion*. Gene Koppel applies Christianity directly to her novels. Irene Collins attributes her father’s living and the resulting emphasis on faith in her childhood with Austen’s regard for Christianity as a reasonable and practical doctrine, even though details on prayers and church services are rarely included in her novels (*Parson’s Daughter* xviii). Gilbert Ryle makes the same point more explicitly:

[H]ardly a whisper of piety enters into even the most serious and most anguished meditations of her heroines. They never pray and they never give thanks on their knees, […] not a hint is given that [Edmund Bertram] regards his clerical duty as that of saving souls […] she draws the curtain between her Sunday thoughts, whatever they were, and her creative imagination. Her heroines face their moral difficulties and solve their moral problems without recourse to religious faith or theological doctrines. Nor does it ever occur to them to seek the counsels of a clergyman. (117)

Observations on the perceived lack of prayer and church attendance in her novels have led to a few minority opinions that Christianity is irrelevant to Austen or that she is even antagonistic toward it. Michael Giffen writes that hostile academic critics have accused “those who did try to read the novels from a philosophical or theological perspective […] of either over-reading or misreading” (2). Mary Augusta Austen-Leigh regretted the fact that many critics failed to understand her Anglicanism and religious sensibility (92-97). G. K. Chesterton believed Austen to be “supremely irreligious” (444). Giffen attributes such perceived lack of piety in her novels to a twentieth-century trend hostile to traditional Christian world views (2). Others have “questioned the relevance of Austen’s religion to her fictional art” (Kelly 154). Q.D. Leavis claims that Austen’s personal beliefs only interest critics if they are manifested in the novels
(Kelly 154). These critics, however, who try to explain away any hints at Christian themes in her novels, represent a minority view.

I believe, along with the vast majority of critics, that Austen’s Christian faith was simply taken for granted and therefore seldom mentioned. The evidence from literary criticism is overwhelming. An anonymous reviewer in 1818 was the first to accept Austen’s unstated Christianity in print, convinced that the moral principles in her work could not “have been formed without a feeling of the spirit of Christianity” (317). Richard Whately soon concurred, writing that she is a Christian novelist but does not include dramatic sermons. Her moral lessons are nevertheless clear and impressively conveyed but were not offensively put forward (325).

Her nephew, J.E. Austen-Leigh, chose not to delineate her Christian practices in his biography, writing, “I do not venture to speak of her religious principles: that is a subject on which she herself was more inclined to think and act than to talk, and I shall imitate her reserve; satisfied to have shown how much of Christian love and humility abounded in her heart, without presuming to lay bare the roots whence those graces grew” (126). In fact, he claims, her Christianity becomes “a merit which is much enhanced, both on the score of good taste, and of practical utility, by her religion being not at all obtrusive” (325). Margaret Ann Doody notes that “she is singular among novelists of her age in her refusal to admit references to the Bible,” but also notes the primary influence the Bible and Book of Common Prayer had on her life and writing (176, 175). Rebecca West emphatically declares that Austen is “indeed one of the most religious of novelists” even though “she did not pray in public” (468). Emsley agrees, stating that “her novels are not explicitly Christian, but Christian faith is implicit in all her work” (“Laughing”). Robert Grant asserts that “she took spiritual things with Johnsonian seriousness,” referring to her brother’s claim that Samuel Johnson was Austen’s favorite prose writer (194, H. Austen 330).
Valerie Grosvenor Myer believes her Christianity was “sincere” and that in the days before her death she was “resigned and composed, a believing Christian” (236, 235). Irene Collins, in Jane Austen and the Clergy, adds that the Christianity Austen accepted so completely was maintained by parish clergy, from whom she expected model behavior. Joel Marcus, reflecting on Christianity specifically within Pride and Prejudice, compares Elizabeth to an early Christian convert, likening Darcy’s explanatory letter to a sermon that creates an epistemological crisis. Deanna Overstreet goes even further by claiming that Darcy is a Christ figure and the novel as a whole is a variation on the theme of Christian redemption. Laura Mooneyham White, in her 2011 Jane Austen’s Anglicanism, determines that the church’s teachings on society’s moral order, “how the world is put together,” coupled with neo-classical world views such as the Great Chain of Being, deeply affected Austen’s presentation of social hierarchy and nature (75). Rod Preece explains that the chain fostered care for, not abuse of, those lower on the chain, the natural world, because “it was a general provision of the great chain of being […] that every link in the chain exists for its own sake and not primarily for the benefit of any other link” (369). Alistair M. Duckworth believes her novels reflect that “faith in a society whose grounds are divinely validated,” recognizing that many novels of this period share the theme of expulsion from paradise followed by the protagonist’s search for a return within the fallen conditions the world now offers (12, 13). Taken together, these scholars acknowledge the omnipresence of Christianity, foundational for my thesis. Disregarding the divine means also disregarding the very backbone of the lives and writing of Shakespeare and Austen: their respective Christian traditions.
The Fall

For Christianity, the Genesis account of creation and the fall of mankind into sin provides the backbones of the church’s perspective on the relationship between humanity and the environment. According to this record, God created the earth in six days, generating Adam and Eve as the last and best of his creation. Humanity was given responsibility for the earth, articulated in Genesis 1.28: “And God blessed them, and God said to them, Bring forth fruit, and multiply, and fill the earth, and subdue it, and have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the heaven, and over every beast that moveth upon the earth.” God’s command clearly creates a three-level hierarchy. God, as the creator, automatically rules over all his creation. He directs mankind to rule over the earth, fish, birds, and animals. Until unity between God and humanity occurs again in the end days, we can only approximate former Edenic perfection in the attempt to restore as much as possible a fallen world.

This Creation/Fall narrative provides the basis, I believe, for an answer to the ecological crisis. In Christian terms, their disobedience initiated sin and separated them from God. However, their actions can also be expressed in ecological terms because they provoked an antagonistic human/nature relationship. The consequences, as recorded in Genesis 3.14-19, are articulated by Laurel Kearns as a series of hostile relationships: “the land may be hostile and humans will struggle to obtain food, women and animals are separated and against each other, and the very physical nature of women present in the birthing/creation of life will include punishment and pain” (467). The consequences meant expulsion from the Garden of Eden, a separation of mankind from his ideal environment, and opposition between human and nonhuman, including both plant and animal. As collateral damage, plants, fish, birds, animals—all forms of life—suffer because of Adam and Eve’s wrongdoing. The consequences included
living in a world subject to disease, decay, and death; therefore, every form of life on Earth suffers as a result.

**Inclusion of a Theological Dimension in Ecocriticism**

Current ecocritical approaches to Shakespeare and Austen recognize a sense of environmentalism in their work, but often fail to also recognize the stewardship required by the Christian world view, which based suppositions of the natural world and man’s place in it on theologically informed models of stewardship. My ecotheological approach engages an often neglected dynamic of the relationships between humans and the natural world as expressed in the writing of two canonical authors. I do so by at once recognizing the important corrective that the ecocritical movement is effecting in contemporary criticism, critiquing as it does the supremacist beliefs of the eras in which these authors lived, while at the same time recognizing the stewardship inherent in the Christianity as it was often practiced and implicitly preached in their respective periods. The addition of a theological world view necessarily expands the way the relationship between man and the natural world within these works is interpreted in both authors’ works. The Christian world view espoused by both writers teaches a view of nature that is imbued by a loving creator whose very creative forces depend upon careful and benign relationships among humans, animal, and the environment.

Robert Mayhew presents a similar framework in *Landscape, Literature and English Religious Culture, 1660-1800*. He argues that landscape discourse of the long eighteenth century was based on a religious dimension that ordered creation into ranks of “natural, human and divine,” but interprets that hierarchy as distant: “God is far above the sight of man in nature, being at the apex while landscape and nature are at the base,” suggesting a vast emptiness between God and his creations (60, 62). Mayhew also limits his discussion to the landscape
alone. Richard Bauckham agrees with Mayhew’s assessment and describes the vertical human/nonhuman hierarchy in which humans assume a natural superiority to all other living beings on earth as taking precedence over the alternative horizontal relationship of humanity to nature, emphasizing similarities (34). Erica Fudge interprets Calvinist thought as fostering an order that situated humanity at the top of the natural scale; however, Adam’s disobedience resulted in a situation in which power over animals is imposed through force rather than willingly conceded (*Perceiving* 38). Yet another approach to hierarchy comes from Jeanne Addison Roberts who analyzes animal metaphors across Shakespeare’s work, particularly in the comedies, and concludes that the playwright depicted the Christian Great Chain of Being early in his work. But as his career progressed, that chain was depicted horizontally as man and animal intermingle.

**Ecotheological Views in Early Modern England**

Theologians and philosophers in the early modern era took seriously the dominion of Adam and the effects of sin on the nonhuman world. Francis Bacon offers a representative example:

> For man by the fall fell at the same time from this state of innocency and from his dominion over creation. Both of these losses however can even in this life be in some part repaired; the former by religion and faith, the latter by arts and sciences. For creation was not by the curse made altogether and forever a rebel, but . . . is now by various labours . . . at length and in some measure subdued to the supplying of man with bread; that is to the uses of human life. (qtd. in Harrison, “Subduing” 98)
“Dominion,” in this context, operates within the framework of Paul’s statement that as a consequence of Adam and Eve’s fall, all of creation now “groans in travail” (Rom. 8.22). Bacon further argued that the very goal of science is to restore to humans the dominion over creation lost at the Fall. He believed, in fact, that regaining control over nature could even allow human beings to recover Adam’s very language, allowing the human race to “call creatures by their true names” (K. Thomas 27, 222). Poet John Donne also subscribed to the belief that we are “to rectifie nature to what she was” (ll. 33-34).

The fact that Bacon and Donne believed so strongly in the power of mankind to achieve such rectification demonstrates the “breathtakingly anthropocentric spirit in which Tudor and Stuart preachers interpreted the biblical story” (K. Thomas 18). The world was created expressly for mankind’s benefit; therefore, mankind’s ascendancy is central to the divine plan. Keith Thomas summarizes attitudes from the time: “theologians had always taught that the defects of animals were the direct consequence of Man’s fall. Since the beasts were merely innocent victims of Adam’s sin, it followed that men should be merciful and forgiving to them” (157). To accomplish mercy, the biblical imperative “have dominion” is interpreted not as authoritarian rule over nature, but as a responsibility to recover or restore a pale imitation of the prelapsarian Garden of Eden.

I believe Peter Harrison most clearly explains the early modern interpretation of “dominion,” placing its definition within the context in which Shakespeare lived and wrote, providing a more complex explanation of Christianity’s intersection with ecology that revises standard accounts of the religious origins of western attitudes toward nature. Originally, he writes, the whole earth was an ordered garden; now it is an unkempt wilderness (Harrison, “Subduing” 103). Harrison points out the diverse strands in the Bible that place stewardship
alongside the dominion concept so that humans are told to rule the earth, but only while practicing responsible stewardship, only under the auspices of the creator, who calls for accountability from human beings as they tend the earth (“Subduing” 89). Reasoning that the word “dominion” must be interpreted differently based on certain points of history, he explains that the term did not promote careless, selfish rule, advocating exploitation of the natural world for humankind’s own purpose with no regard for its welfare. Instead, most medieval and early modern theologians believed that mankind must atone for the dominion lost as a result of the Fall: “The dominion that plays so crucial a role in much seventeenth-century scientific discourse is thus a recovered dominion or a restored dominion” in which “dominion is held out as the means by which the earth can be restored to its prelapsarian order and perfection” (102, 103). However, because nature does not readily acquiesce in its own improvement efforts, force is sometimes necessary, arguably introducing an inherently violent attitude (105). Early modern theologians argued that the violence embodied in tilling the earth, digging for wells, and taming animals for labor is not authorized by mankind’s natural superiority, but by the desire, even the divine demand, to compel the earth to return to its original state of perfection. The earth itself also fell when Adam and Eve fell from grace and must sometimes be forced to a state nearer to perfection, just as humanity must. Agricultural work, then, neither asserts absolute control nor reaps material gain; neither does it demonstrate a callous disregard for the earth (94). Instead, control over nature erases physical scars, improves the earth, reinstates a paradise on earth, and anticipates heaven (104).

**Ecotheological Views in the Late 18th Century**

A spiritual context for the ideal relationship between humans and nonhumans retained influence 200 years later in Austen’s lifetime, according to Sara Joan Miles, who claims that the
scientific and theological issues we face today had their origins in the eighteenth century (217, 223). The church was conservative, reflecting social hierarchy and tradition with little conflict between science and theology in the period in which Austen was drafting *Pride and Prejudice* (216). In the decades leading to 1800, the emphasis changed to a doctrine of human stewardship and responsibility for God’s creatures (K. Thomas 24). Sermons from the late eighteenth century stressed ministry and stewardship. Dr. Samuel Clarke explains that the “harmony and order of the universe pointed to a Creator who is as beneficent as he is wise. The fatherly rule of God demanded of his children a benevolence like his own, and these elementary truths—the fatherhood of God and our duty to show a good will comparable with his—were the essential ingredients” of the world God created (Cragg 158). James Stillingfleet, in a sermon at the University of Oxford in 1760, underscored humanity’s presence on earth as a representative of Christ (10). Humans are commanded to keep their master’s interest in view, keep safe what has been committed to their trust, and account to God for their actions (13, 18). Further, they must act in love, exercise no unjust authority, and make decisions free from ruthless domination (21, 24, 27). John Wesley also argued for compassionate stewardship: “damaged land that is ugly and useless for agriculture or even dangerous for habitation is incapable of fulfilling God’s purpose of providing for pleasure and welfare” (Flowers 11). Wesley believed, in the context of the creation and fall narrative, that the nonhuman world is part of the reclamation that must occur.

**Current Ecotheological Views**

Contemporary ecotheological views vary widely in their perspectives and practical application. While Lynn White is generally credited as providing the seminal statement blaming the Christian church for the environmental crisis, Wendell Berry blames human beings themselves, particularly when Christianity was largely abandoned as a central cultural institution,
resulting in a conceptual division between “the holy and the world” (134). He severely criticizes mankind for the terrifying climax in our own time. The rift between soul and body, the Creator and the Creation, has admitted the entrance into the world of the machinery of the world’s doom. We no longer feel ourselves threatened by the God-made doomsday of Revelation, or by the natural world’s-end foreseen by science. We face an apocalypse of our own making—a man-made cosmic terror. (135)

Although he finds traditional beliefs “old-fashioned,” he also recognizes that there was a certain value in fearing divine retribution for harming the created world (136). We have lost that motivation and the environment has suffered as a result.

Clarence J. Glacken, in *Traces on the Rhodian Shore: Nature and Culture in Western Thought from Ancient Times to the End of the Eighteenth Century*, provides perhaps the most thorough compendium of humanity’s relationship to the natural world. In his discussion of Judeo-Christian theology, he makes the important observation that for many theologians, the dominion granted to Adam and Eve is not cause for pride. The power to control was not achieved through merit but only through God’s choice to grant it, resulting in “far less room for arrogance and pride than the bare reading of the words would suggest” (166). The power is derivative, not earned.

More recently, R. J. Berry’s anthology, *Environmental Stewardship: Critical Perspectives Past and Present*, summarizes various definitions of stewardship as relational, using the preposition “with” to explain current ecotheological views: “‘humans with nature,’ not over or in it” (7). Agreeing wholeheartedly with the Anglican Consultative Council, which has added to the church’s mission statement the goal “to strive to safeguard the integrity of creation
and sustain and renew the life of the earth,” Berry argues that to abandon stewardship ideals is to “misunderstand and endanger our whole purpose here on earth” (11).

The most recent theological responses to ecological issues utilize hermeneutics, the art and science of interpretation. The editors of *Interpreting Nature: The Emerging Field of Environmental Hermeneutics* explain that, as science continually churns out facts about the state of the environment and suggests policies to deal with those facts, philosophers recognize that those facts can be interpreted in widely differing ways. The context of individual and social relations, the need for practical application, the specific discipline providing the interpretation, even the ontological framework necessitating an interpretation greatly affect how so-called scientific facts are put into practice, if at all (Clingerman, et al. 2-4).

**Hospitality as Part of the Natural World and Theology**

Simon Estok asserts that “ecocriticism is methodologically committed to confluent theorizing” (*Ecocriticism* 1). In that spirit, I will also examine the marriage between the natural world and hospitality. The gifts of hospitality, such as food, drink, and shelter, are obtained from the natural world, from agriculture and animals. In the early modern era, hospitality existed as a code of exchange, posited on the assumption that both guests and hosts consented in a relationship which benefitted both. Hospitality was bound to reciprocity, exchanging gifts and rewards, not for monetary value, but for intangible assets such as a reputation for generosity, loyalty, gratitude, or local harmony. Reciprocal entertainment and charity was accompanied by unmistakable messages about status and power (Heal 19-20). Daryl Palmer pronounces hospitable practices as not merely matters of food and lodging, but also as “the fundamental nature of social connection in the culture” (6). Placing hospitable practices within Christian teachings, as Shakespeare and Austen necessarily would have, magnifies that importance.
Hospitality also functions importantly in forming marital unions that lead to the procreation of children, both a biblical and societal expectation. Without hospitality, men and women would not meet and choose sexual partners. If families cannot interact in social scenarios as hosts and guests, procreative marriages cannot be arranged. Sexual desire was also often connected to the land, first because marriages were sometimes motivated by the consolidation of familial tracts of land. In addition, all life forms reproduce and most life forms are dependent on the land. The crops celebrated in the harvest, the birth of animals, and the birth of children parallel each other, bounty that is particularly emphasized in the country house ideal. Hospitality in a country house, whether Messina or Pemberley, unites two powerful forces behind sexual desire.

The hospitality esteemed in *Much Ado about Nothing* and *Pride and Prejudice* reflects biblical hospitality as illustrated in both Old and New Testament. The author of Hebrews reminds his readers of the three angels who visited Abraham and Sarah in Genesis 18 by writing in Hebrews 13.2, “Be not forgetful to entertain strangers, for thereby some have received Angels into their houses unawares.” Further, Peter’s vision of food in Acts 10 is interpreted in the next chapter as God’s permission for Christians to eat any food with anyone, heralding and sanctioning Christian hospitality offered to all. Perhaps most compellingly, Christ placed hospitality at the very center of his teachings. In one of his parables (Matthew 25.31-46), he clearly divides all people into one of two groups. The first group offers hospitality to all: “For I was ahungered, and ye gave me meat; I thirsted, and ye gave me drink; I was a stranger, and ye took me in unto you” (v. 35). The second group does not offer that hospitality: “For I was ahungered, and ye gave me no meat; I thirsted, and ye gave me no drink; I was a stranger, and ye took me not in unto you; I was naked, and ye clothed me not; sick, and in prison, and ye visited
me not” (42-43a). The eternal fate of each person rests on the choice to extend hospitality: the inhospitable “shall go into everlasting pain, and the righteous into life eternal” (46). Finally, Christ’s last act before his betrayal and crucifixion was the Last Supper in which he served as host, distributing bread and wine, even to Judas, his betrayer. For Christians, no greater call to hospitality need be made, although the Geneva Bible adds godly motivation to hospitality by encouraging readers to imitate the Hebrew patriarchs out of love, never out of ulterior motives (Greaves 587). Anglican clergy reinforced the obligation of hospitality, supporting their teaching with passages from Genesis 19.1-6, extolling Lot’s extraordinary hospitality, and Hebrews 13.1-3, and encouraging brotherly love (Greaves 587).

Based on this biblical background, hospitality, for Shakespeare and Austen, is unavoidably linked to biblical mandate and early Christian practices. Susan Brigden writes that in sixteenth-century London, “A clear association was made between breaching the laws of the church and offending the moral laws of the city” (71). Those moral laws included charity for others. Brigden makes that aspect of social policy clear by citing sixteenth-century humanists who taught that cities had a moral foundation “for the increase of charity and human fellowship” (71). Charity included not only generosity to the poor but also hospitality to one’s neighbors, peers, and members of one’s household (Heal 15).

Charity is also celebrated as a virtue and forms an integral part of Shakespeare’s comedies, including Much Ado about Nothing. Social structure in all of his comedies, including Messina, depends on charity, mutual forbearance, and forgiveness. For example, As You Like It’s Corin recognizes divine approval of hospitality through his observation that his churlish master “little recks to find the way to heaven / By doing deeds of hospitality” (2.4.77-78). Hospitality also creates the conditions necessary for developing romantic love, which is clearly seen in Much
Ado about Nothing (Hunter 93). Hospitality provides a crucial narrative device, which is based, from the first scene to the last, on hospitality. The play opens with the welcoming of single young men to Messina, welcomed, by at least one woman, as potential suitors. The play ends with the promise of inhospitable punishments for the villain Don John, who is returning to Messina. These hospitable bookends provide a frame for the hospitality practices that form the plot of the play.

Like Much Ado about Nothing, Austen’s Pride and Prejudice is based, from the first scene to the last, on hospitality. The novel opens with the arrival of single young men to Netherfield, welcomed by the women in the Bennet family, as potential suitors. The novel concludes with a list of who is and is not welcome to enjoy Pemberley’s hospitality. As the frame to a novel filled with a succession of hospitable occasions, hospitality serves as a theme of primary importance to Austen, culminating with Darcy’s role as host at Pemberley, a position he deliberately exploits in an attempt to win Elizabeth’s love.

For Austen, hospitality as exchange was only acceptable as minimal motivation, “without reducing the relation of host and guest to a matter of bargain and sale” (McMaster 52). Her fictional accounts of hospitality unquestionably manifest themselves as a measure of morality. Juliet McMaster explains the importance of hospitality to Austen:

Host and guest, like husband and wife, or like a lady and gentleman in the dance, have entered into a contract of mutual agreeableness; and like all the intricate social contracts in the novels it is one that epitomizes the delicate balance that must be maintained between the will of the individual and the needs of the community. (53)
This description resembles a give-and-take philosophy of hospitality, yet places the exchange within a system of morality that demonstrates regard for others. Austen lived in a community governed by countless rules determining forms of address, appropriate gender roles, calling cards, the protocol of visits, and rank. Such rules of conduct recognized and maintained social status, to be sure, but more important for my present purposes, they also regulated conduct to give the impression that consideration for others takes precedence over selfish desires. In Austen’s novels, the moral status of each host and guest clearly reflects the true civility in fulfilling the rules of hospitality as “nothing less than an expression of the state of civilization itself” (Holdforth 6).

Reading Austen’s novels within a context of Christian hospitality enhances the evident morality, provides divine motivation for behavior, and provides a frame of reference for humanity’s hospitality to the nonhuman world. Regard for the welfare of others is desirable, of course, contributing to a more peaceful, well-run society. However, regard for the welfare of others as a demonstration of God’s love adds eternal significance. McMaster elucidates each seemingly trivial encounter with other characters: “nothing in the Jane Austen world is insignificant, because every little incident is indicative of a whole set of moral and social and psychological relations; each coming together of the characters [in hospitable settings] is a microcosm for the whole narrative […] in Jane Austen’s novels everything matters” (53). If everything matters, or holds divine implications, then regard for the welfare of others includes all of God’s creation.

Hospitality intersects with the natural world because the commensality of breaking bread together relies on provisions from the natural world. In fact, reduced to its origins in simple provision, hospitality consists of the offering of food, drink, and shelter to another. Hospitality’s
reliance on the land ultimately generated the country house ideal, an image I rely on in the second chapter of this study. Raymond Williams points to the “natural delight in the fertility of the earth [. . .] far from war and the city” (17). Over time, the country house acquired a social dimension, until the image of a hospitable country house was celebrated as representative of a moral bounty important in the works of Shakespeare and Austen (17). Williams describes the country house ideal as one in which nature providently offers an excess of food, country gentlemen embody a superior contrast to city capitalists, and innocence is romanticized. Both Shakespeare and Austen share in sustaining this country house paradigm in their portrayals of hospitality. The fact that natural entities like animals and plants become entangled in the dynamics of hospitality demonstrates that those natural realities can be interpreted in different frameworks. That is, they can be understood via strict ecocriticism or ecotheology. I argue that a Christian context imparts a richer reading.

**Derrida’s Hospitality**

If hospitality practices are placed in a theological context, acknowledging the original sin Adam and Eve introduced to the world, Derrida’s views on hospitality are a logical fit, for he theorizes that humans inherently exhibit hospitality and hostility simultaneously. Derrida continues the theme of binaries with which this study begins in his hospitality theory, describing hospitality as crossing boundaries and thresholds, including those between self and other, private and public, inside and outside, individual and collective, personal and political, emotional and rational, generous and economic—these couples that overlap each other’s territory but are none of them exactly mapping another. It also inevitably touches on that fundamental ethical
question (since it is itself an ethical foundation) of the boundaries of the human, and how we set these up. (Still 85).

In fact, Maria del Sapio Garbero claims that binary oppositions can be the result of hospitality (“Fostering” 99). The binaries or contradictions Derrida finds in hospitality originate in the word’s etymology. Despite its origins within a Christian worldview, hospitality indicates a socially constructed concept fraught with contradictions and dangers. The word “host” derives from the Latin hospes and hospitis, translated as “guest,” “host,” “stranger,” or “enemy.” The contradictory meanings of “host,” added to the Latin pasco, “to feed,” extend the definition to “feed the stranger.” Hostis also relates to the Sanskrit ghas, which means “to eat, consume, or destroy.” Finally, “hostage” comes from Old French ostage for “hostel,” “hostelry,” or “inn,” adding suggestions of victimization and abduction. In its etymological origins hospitality is an agglomeration of paradoxical concepts in which the guest is a host and the host is a guest. The host is hostage to the guest and the guest is hostage to the host. A host feeds strangers while recognizing that the stranger may consume him in return, another form of Derrida’s hospitality to convey the contradictory concepts of hospitality and hostility. His neologism is built around the “defence that a ‘we’ throws up against the ‘other,’” that is, it is built around an idea of inhospitality” (Caputo 113). The tension and contradictions inherent in hospitality figure importantly in my work.

As expected, much of Derrida’s work on hospitality assesses relationships between people, but he includes animals as well. “Speaking, laughing, entertaining, giving hospitality” define the human, settling a frontier with the animal (Still 94). But he adds that we must also offer hospitality to animals, referring to Noah’s hospitality to animals on the ark (Acts 363). And he muses on whether an animal can offer hospitality (Still 63). Derrida positions his theories
within a Judeo-Christian context. In *The Animal that Therefore I am*, he addresses the dominion given in the Garden of Eden and describes the same ecotheological hierarchy I use in this study. When God tells Adam to name the animals,

> God observes: Adam is observed, within sight, he names under observation. […]
> More precisely, he has created man in his likeness *so that* man will *subject, tame, dominate, train,* or *domesticate* the animals born before him and assert his authority over them. God destines the animals to an experience of the power of man, *in order to see* the power of man in action, in order to see the power of man at work, in order to see man take power over all the other living beings. (*Animal* 16-17)

Derrida’s narration clearly emphasizes God’s authority over Adam and his command that Adam exert authority over animals. Based on the Christian figure of the Trinity and Abraham’s hospitality of angels, his theories on hospitality integrate seamlessly with an ecotheological perspective on the relationship between divine, human, and nonhuman (*Acts* 375).

**Communion**

The addition of a theological element to hospitality means that the host in a social setting represents the Host in heaven. Hospitality ordinarily elicits a binary of host/guest. God’s hospitality, however, mirrors the ecotheological triad by including God as the ultimate Host. Communion’s ritual offer of food and drink re-enacts and memorializes Christ’s offer of his body and blood. In fact, the word “host” originally defined both a victim of sacrifice and the bread of the Eucharist. Both forms of food provide sustenance, physical and spiritual. Caveats, however, accompany the observance of communion, for the word “communion” itself means “a shared or mutual participation.” Those who partake of communion without worthy preparation
are threatened with dire spiritual consequences. Matthew 5.23-24 directs Christians thus: "If then thou bring thy gift to the altar, and there rememberest that thy brother hath ought against thee, leave there thy offering before the altar, and go thy way; first be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift." *The Book of Common Prayer* threatens similarly: “If any of you be [...] an adulterer or be in malice, or envy, or in any other grievous crime, repent you of your sins, or else come not to that holy Table” (qtd. in Mooneyham White 52). The sacrament so important to the church requires that partakers first correct any severed relationships with others, promoting communion, or community, among the church members. Shakespeare’s and Austen’s fictional hosts, who also offer community, ideally parallel the Host in heaven.

The addition of a theological element to hospitality mirrors the three-way ecotheological hierarchy with its own: Host/host/guest. An earthly host within a Christian world view imitates the divine as Host. Ideally, he presents himself in a self-sacrificing manner to his guests. His ability to do so provides an indicator of moral status, not merely within a purely social context, but within biblical teachings, adding a cosmological aspect to each hospitality scenario. Based on Christian concepts of hospitality outlined above, I argue that evaluation of one’s hospitality parallels the ecotheological hierarchy I use throughout this study. Mirroring the divine/human/nonhuman hierarchy, God acts as Host, the self-sacrificing provider of all mankind requires as a guest on planet Earth. The human host, next step down in the hierarchical triad, aspires to the divine ideal, attempting to meet a godlike role in providing guests, the third step in the hierarchy, with all that is necessary. This framework positions itself easily into a theological context and provides a satisfyingly aesthetic accompaniment to the ecotheological triad and provides examples of how we can act as responsible guests during our stay on earth.
The protagonists in *Much Ado about Nothing* and *Pride and Prejudice*, the characters with whom readers identify, act as models for attitudinal changes towards today’s environmental crisis, enacted in contrast to humanity’s so-called animal nature and within hospitality conventions. Their examples of the restoration of gardens to Edenic states, preservation and maintenance of the land, tempering of passions, and responsible use of food provide inspiration for readers today. They recognize God’s dominion over them and exercise compassionate and loving biblical dominion over the nonhuman world, holding themselves accountable to God. They enact hospitality in the best spiritual sense, emulating the divine Host, attempting to avoid the paradox of hospitality. The virtues of compassion, benevolence, and humility, the virtues that allow the ecotheological and hospitality hierarchies to be fulfilled, can lead to permanent ecological preservation of the nonhuman world, a world compromised by Adam and Eve’s disobedience.
CHAPTER III
COUNTRY ESTATE HOSTS: RESTORING EDEN AFTER THE FALL

Introduction: The Landscape Compromised by the Fall

The earth itself, the ground and vegetation, paid heavily as a consequence of Adam and Eve’s Fall. Since then, trees, plants, and flowers have had to contend with weeds, thorns, and diseases. As a result, man and woman, first placed in the Garden of Eden in order to “dress it” (Gen. 2.15), now must labor, hampering their ability to obtain food: “cursed is the earth for thy sake: in sorrow shalt thou eat of it all the days of thy life. Thorns also and thistles shall it bring forth to thee, and thou shalt eat the herb of the field. In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread till thou return to the earth” (Gen. 3.17-19). Their toil on the land “became a way of demonstrating human commitment to God through reclamation of the earth after the fall” (Scott 17-18). In an ecotheological context, husbandry and agriculture are not merely pragmatic measures to provide food, nor despoliation of the land to serve mankind, nor only sustainable practices designed to preserve ecosystems, but atonement to the land. Because humanity is theologically responsible for the weeds, diseases, and infestations that choke, kill, or stunt plant growth, careful toil aspires to correct those problems. Ideally, cultivation of the land is an act of atonement. Husbandry became regarded as sanctified labor, “a way of demonstrating human commitment to God through reclamation of the earth after the fall” (Scott 17-18).
In this chapter, I will analyze the landscape around the country estates in Shakespeare’s *Much Ado about Nothing* and Austen’s *Pride and Prejudice* through the perspective of the ecotheological hierarchy, divine/human/nonhuman, analyzing the relationship among the three elements in light of the Genesis command for Adam and Eve to exercise dominion. Influenced by Humphrey Repton, one of the more influential landscape designers of the eighteenth century, for whom “the landscape revolved around the house and its garden” (Streatfield 64), I am defining the landscape as the aesthetic presentation of a home’s natural setting, gardens and orchards included in an estate, and land that is travelled as a character moves from one country estate to another. In both play and novel, the country estate setting and hospitality are intimately related because products derived from the land are used in hospitality, such as food, drink, and shelter. The setting and hospitality allow human beings to maintain vertical relationships with God above and nonhuman life below through analogy with the Garden of Eden and stewardship of the land. Comparably, setting and hospitality also allow the maintenance of horizontal relationships with other human beings. Together, setting and hospitality are common to both sets of relationships so that each affects the other. Humanity’s relationship with the divine, the natural world, and the rest of humanity are intertwined.

Principles of ecotheology and biblical hospitality can lead to the changes in perspective ecocritics endeavor to promote. Cultivation expresses an attempt to restore the landscape to Eden’s beauty and efficacy. Biblical hospitality emboldens the viewpoint of earth as host, respecting it as an act of hospitality, even if humanity is sometimes disadvantaged. Caring for the land can be viewed as eternally significant, pleasing God. Recognition that the land holds inherent value simply for itself encourages gratitude, humility, and benevolence. Modelled by
Benedick, Beatrice, Darcy, and Elizabeth, these virtues offer an avenue for real, lasting change in preserving the earth.

Hospitality traditionally operates as an exchange, assuming that guest and host form a reciprocal relationship, host and guest providing and receiving goods and services. To experience successful hospitality, power must remain balanced between host and guest. Hospitality is a “social necessity of cohabitation and bonds” calling for “rules, obligations, mutuality, at the risk of imploding any moment into a utilitarian bargaining regulated by a logic of power” (Garbero, “Goodly” 233). Applying the hospitality paradigm to an ecological context by placing humans and nonhumans into the same system of exchange can lead to destruction of the earth’s resources. An exchange system can encourage an exercise of power rather than reciprocity if humanity continues the history of using up earth’s resources and altering any features inconvenient to their personal aesthetics or profit. Compounding a host/guest exchange system with Derrida’s theory of hostipitality can result in destruction, not preservation, of the earth. In this light, “Earth becomes nothing more than a useful object to think with, to be manipulated, spoken of and ultimately trashed” (Cadwallader 149). Exchange systems create a constant analysis of one’s power in relation to the other. Because humanity holds the power to protect or destroy the earth’s resources, the intrinsic worth of earth can easily be denied, and mutuality between human and nonhuman can dissolve.

Placing hospitality within an ecotheological hierarchy, however, takes the relationship between human and nonhuman out of a hospitality or hostipitality exchange system and into a system recognizing not reciprocity but accountability to the divine. The Genesis context directs “attention to that (mythic) time when intimacy rather than estrangement characterized the human relation with both God and nature” (Steffen 66). Ecotheology and biblical hospitality emphasize
the relationship between God and human and between humans and nonhumans as meaningful on a cosmological scale as, ideally, humans interpret dominion not as domination but as obedient action, held accountable to God. Dominion is enacted without antagonism and without justification.

Together, the principles of ecotheology in combination with Derrida’s hostipitality can lead to the ecological activism ecocritics strive to foster. Caring for the land can take two forms. First, the choice to cultivate some land and leave other land untouched can express an attempt to atone for the Fall by restoring land to the beauty and utility first created in the Garden of Eden, providing food. Deliberately keeping some land out of cultivation allows it to retain its original form, existing as God created it, and perhaps, at the same time, also providing beauty. God himself declared this practice in Leviticus 25.1-4: “Similarly, every seven years, a sabbatical year was set aside for Israel, a complete rest for the land, when sowing was forbidden” (Francis 53). St. Francis of Assisi asked that part of the friary garden always be left untouched, so that wild flowers and herbs could grow there, and those who saw them could raise their minds to God, the Creator of such beauty. Secondly, the goal of restoration can encourage caring for the earth as a guest, providing all its needs as an act of hospitality. Caring for the land also pleases God, who has given dominion over the natural world to humanity with the reminder that each decision regarding the earth will be judged, adding eternal significance. Recognition that the land provides much of our food supply, materials for constructing shelter, and even the oxygen we need to breathe fosters the Christian virtues of gratitude, humility, and benevolence as does recognition that the earth held value for God before men and women were created. He pronounced each of his creations “good,” giving each an inherent value whether they contribute to humanity’s welfare or not, encouraging acceptance of God’s will aside from our own
concerns. Virtues like these, as modelled by the principal characters in *Much Ado about Nothing* and *Pride and Prejudice*, if developed today, offer the potential for real, lasting change in preserving the earth. Benedick, Beatrice, Darcy, Elizabeth—all embody humanity’s continuing attempt to live with the consequences of the Fall.

**The Edenic Estate of Messina**

Applied to *Much Ado about Nothing*, the ecotheological hierarchy, as I will argue, provides a view of Messina’s orchard as an allegory for the Garden of Eden, embodying Leonato’s attempt to restore a portion of the earth to its prelapsarian perfection. Northrop Frye’s concept of a green world provides a useful starting point for this analysis. Frye coined the phrase, “green world,” as a tool to analyze a common plot device of Shakespearean comedy: “The action of the comedy begins in a world represented as a normal world, moves into the green world, goes into a metamorphosis there in which the comic resolution is achieved, and returns to the normal world” (*Anatomy* 182). The rejuvenating forest in *As You Like It* and the sea-coasted Bohemia in *The Winter’s Tale* offer clearly distinct country/city settings that exemplify Frye’s conception.

Some critics maintain that Messina does not constitute a true green world. B. K. Lewalski, for example, although she refers to Messina’s second, spiritual, world as a kind of location, a “state” of true love providing an ambiance in which heightened knowledge of reality can be obtained (239), maintains that this play takes place entirely in the real world and does not use a green world as “an ideal haven and place of festivity” (237). Likewise, Carol Cook argues that this comedy is confined, that “no moonlit wood or forest of Arden offers escape from Messina’s social tensions” (189). Similarly, Sherman Hawkins terms this comedy a “closed world” in opposition to the green world (69). I argue, however, that no characters need to escape Messina to find love or acceptance, as Rosalind in *As You Like It* and the young lovers in *A
Midsummer Night’s Dream must. Kenneth Branagh, in his 1993 film adaptation, although he does not refer to a green world concept by name, filmed most scenes outside, claiming that for him, “the play seemed to beg to live outside, in a vivid, lush countryside” (viii). Branagh chose Tuscany, “a magical landscape of vines and olives . . . lusher and more verdant than Sicily (Shakespeare’s setting)” (xiv). Because the play opens with the announcement of soldiers returning from battle, Messina itself represents a retreat or refuge. In this sense, Messina represents a green world, what Elliot Krieger describes as “the forest brought home,” where the soldiers have the opportunity to find renewal as they enjoy Messina’s hospitality (54). Messina as an analeptic green space within the Christian context of Shakespeare’s world, I believe, suggests the Garden of Eden. Some of the more important scenes for this study take place outside in the orchard.

Frye claims that reading Shakespeare’s use of themes as consistent “with a belief in [Christian doctrine] which was mere commonplace in his own day,” even incidentally, is strange (Natural Perspective 41). I argue instead that the truth of Christianity as a commonplace renders the Edenic image more rather than less essential when interpreting the play within a deliberate ecotheological context. In fact, the early modern English lived within “a biblically-informed construction of itself as an island ‘Eden,’” in other words, as an “island of true religious faithfulness” (Tiffany 38, 29). In this frame of reference, Shakespeare’s green world offers not merely secular renewal, as Frye characterizes it, but also a reminder of the deception and seduction of the Fall, and, more importantly, the spiritual renewal that can correct, in part, the Fall.

The Creation/Fall narrative directly informs the landscape of Leonato’s Messina and Darcy’s Pemberley. Messina’s orchard, a term which in the early modern era often referred to a
garden (Henderson 165), serves as an allegory for the Garden of Eden, an allegory easily recognized by Shakespeare’s audience, indeed one that audiences expected because the connection between the spiritual and physical aspects of gardens was built on tradition (Frances 47). Treating the natural world with an allegorical approach, theorizing that living things were designed by God to serve a divine function, was a universal practice (Harrison, “Virtues” 465).

Helen Cooper confirms the convention, maintaining that Shakespeare was influenced by medieval morality plays, resulting in an “afterlife of personification” in his work, evidenced by frequent spiritual metaphors and allegories (98). Allegorizing Messina’s orchard as the Garden of Eden elevates it from merely the location for generating life-sustaining food and oxygen-generating trees to a spiritual setting representing not only prelapsarian perfection but also Adam and Eve’s Fall. Eden served as setting for both the Fall itself, the place where Adam and Eve chose to eat the forbidden fruit, and as setting for the Edenic perfection that was lost as a result. Messina’s orchard, following this simultaneous symbol of sin and paradise, acts as the setting for Don Pedro’s deception of Benedick and Beatrice but also as the setting for their recognition of love, symbolizing the Fall itself and a corrective for the Fall through their future sacramental marriage. Ultimately, I argue, the orchard serves as an example of Leonato’s attempt to restore his orchard to Edenic perfection and as a model for contemporary ecological efforts.

Consistent with the suggestion of Eden as setting for the Fall is the reputation gardens have long held as the locale for proscribed sexual activity, deceit, and concealment. Private, secluded spots encourage surreptitious trysts, a convention Shakespeare often employed to further amorous intrigue or manipulate affections (Scott 5). In Much Ado about Nothing, Hero acknowledges such garden secrets when she describes the orchard as the site for “favorites / Made proud by princes that advance their pride / Against that power that bred it,” imagining the
political intrigue that may have taken place in its potentially secluded hidden recesses (3.1.9-11). Conforming with that trend, Don Pedro chooses the orchard as the site for deceiving Benedick and Beatrice, perhaps because its hidden locales provide the concealment requisite for eavesdropping. Concealment also evokes Adam and Eve’s ineffective attempts to hide from God after their transgression, a futile effort Claudio recalls with his enigmatical statement regarding Benedick, tantamount to a revelation of Benedick’s deception earlier: “God saw him when he was hid in the garden” (5.1.176-77, McEachern 293). Certainly, Messina’s orchard is a clear reminder of secrets, deceit, and the Fall.

However, the Garden of Eden also recalls paradise and redemption. Jerram Barrs states, “Shakespeare writes as a Christian, with a Christian way of seeing the world, and with a Christian perspective on the human condition. His plays are filled with echoes of Eden: reflections on the glory, on the tragedy, and on the hope for redemption that are the true story of our situation in this world” (155). Because Eden is traditionally the setting for newly created life of all kinds—vegetation, animal, and human—early moderns often illustrated midwifery books with drawings of women’s legs intertwined with vines and flower petals that unfurl to reveal babies. The illustrations emphasize the close relationship between women and gardens, both serving as sites for new life (Tigner 48).

Eden was the location God chose to place the newly created human beings, traditionally referred to as husband and wife. Accordingly, in Much Ado about Nothing, two marriages are plotted in the orchard. While “walking in a thick-pleached alley in mine orchard,” Don Pedro offers to court Hero on Claudio’s behalf (3.1.7); Beatrice and Benedick’s marriage owes its genesis to the deception enacted in the orchard. Marriage offers a corrective, a kind of redemption, for the separation between Adam and Eve when they attempted to redirect blame for
the Fall to each other. Restoring the original union of man and woman through marriage served as another form of reparation for the Fall.

**The Edenic Estate of Pemberley**

Like Shakespeare, Austen also utilizes the English pastoral tradition, a convention Rob Nixon posits as useful for “rethinking the pastoral” for contemporary ecosystem concerns: “At the heart of English pastoral lies the idea of the nation as garden idyll into which neither labor nor violence intrudes” (200). Austen employs this pastoral as a “‘green world’ of comic romance” (Curry 176), encouraging attention to the natural world, similar to Shakespeare’s. Often viewed as a novelist of “green England,” Austen consistently sets her novels in country estates (Tuite 100). Raymond Williams interprets that country estate setting as significant, pointing to the “natural delight in the fertility of the earth [. . .] far from war and the city” which over time acquired a social dimension, until the image of a hospitable country house was celebrated as representative of a moral bounty, forming a foundational principle for Austen’s work (17). Williams describes the country house ideal as one in which nature providently offers an excess of food, country gentlemen offer an explicit contrast to city capitalists, and innocence is romanticized. Austen shares in sustaining this country paradigm, particularly in her most idealized estate, Darcy’s Pemberley, which epitomizes the country house ideal, particularly in its landscape, and epitomizes the eighteenth- and nineteenth-century conceptions of landscape as an opportunity to display Christian stewardship.

Elizabeth’s perception of Pemberley when she visits for the first time deserves analysis because Austen’s descriptions of the landscape are so rare:

They gradually ascended for half-a-mile, and then found themselves at the top of a considerable eminence, where the wood ceased, and the eye was instantly
caught by Pemberley House, situated on the opposite side of a valley, into which the road with some abruptness wound. It was a large, handsome stone building, standing well on rising ground, and backed by a ridge of high woody hills; and in front, a stream of some natural importance was swelled into greater, but without any artificial appearance. Its banks were neither formal nor falsely adorned. Elizabeth was delighted. She had never seen a place for which nature had done more, or where natural beauty had been so little counteracted by an awkward taste. (271)

Pemberley’s landscape serves as a valorization of the patriarchal system of deference and the sustenance of the land and its laborers upon which the estates depended. The estate is a community, ordered, structured, and inherited intact (Wenner 24). Applying an ecotheological perspective to Wenner’s observation adds spiritual depth. The patriarchal system the estate endorses as it is passed down through generations applies also to God as Father, creator, and sustainer. Without God to create the land and to maintain the climate that sustains the growth, there would be no estate to delight Elizabeth. Undoubtedly, Darcy feels responsibility to his parents, to the laborers who work the land, and also to God as he makes decisions for the estate. The love, respect, and intimacy demonstrated at Pemberley by Darcy’s sister Georgiana, housekeeper, and tenants mirror the intimacy Adam and Eve experienced before the Fall and are evidently extended to the nonhuman world as well, illustrated by the care Elizabeth sees as she drives through the park. In contrast to the common critique of this structure as problematic because of its patriarchal hierarchy, my approach suggests that an ethic of benevolent care can and should arise from it.
In the late eighteenth century, when Austen was drafting what would become *Pride and Prejudice*, the English were experiencing a heightened awareness of the landscape serving as a backdrop for country estates. The landscape aesthetics field was dominated by Richard Payne Knight, Sir Uvedale Price, Humphrey Repton, and William Gilpin, authors Austen likely knew since their works were all to be found in the libraries of the polite (Duckworth 279). All of them influenced her work. Her brother Henry claimed she was “enamoured” of Gilpin’s work (7). John Halperin, author of *The Life of Jane Austen*, specifically names Price and Knight as theorists Austen knew (26). The conversations about landscape improvement in *Mansfield Park* demonstrate that she knew Brown and Repton and their conflict with Knight and Price. Price, in particular, defended a paternalist rural order rooted in landed property, strengthening an analogy between the condition of estates and the nation at large, an analogy Austen supports in her novels by praising *Emma’s* Donwell Abbey and *Pride and Prejudice’s* Pemberley. Austen’s protagonists use theories of the picturesque as they learn about themselves, their world, those they love, and the God who created the natural world. In short, Austen lived in an era when an estate’s lands and gardens offered to the world a statement about the owner, reflecting taste, stewardship of the land, and moral standards.

Darcy’s stewardship, overseeing and protecting the land, fulfills mandates of biblical stewardship, preserving and enhancing the land entrusted to his care. In part, the landscape of Pemberley encourages Elizabeth to realize Darcy’s moral worth and her love for him. In fact, when asked when her love began, she candidly responds, “I believe I must date it from my first seeing his beautiful grounds at Pemberley” (414). Darcy’s moral worth, Elizabeth deems, is bespoken by the land. The grounds around both estates, the orchard at Messina and the “natural beauty” of Pemberley, “so little counteracted by an awkward taste,” constitute socially
constructed physical geographies and hospitality practices that reveal the spiritual state of both Leonato and Darcy (271).

**Messina’s Residents as Hosts and Guests**

As a testament to his ecotheological and hospitable integrity, Messina’s orchard serves as commendation for Leonato, governor and nominal host of Messina. Leonato takes responsibility for dominion over his land in the most positive spiritual sense. There are no sustained ecocritical studies on *Much Ado about Nothing* as yet, but horticulture in other plays has received some attention and can be easily applied here. Jeffrey S. Theis interprets the forest of Arden in *As You Like It* as a setting for individuals to forge their own identities, especially in subversive manners, claiming that Duke Senior assumes a Robin Hood lifestyle to question “social doxa” (72). Gabriel Egan sees horticultural imagery as mirroring human growth in *Macbeth* (*Green* 84). For Leo Marx, landscape and garden images in the early modern era “call forth a vision of benign and ordered nature,” evoking “utopian aspirations” and “a whole series of idealized, imaginary worlds” such as “Elysium, Atlantis, and enchanted gardens, Eden and Tirnanogue and the fragrant bower where the Hesperides stood watch over the golden apples” (5, 6). Taken together, the work of Theis, Egan, and Marx provides insight into Messina’s orchard. In that setting, Claudio and Hero’s marriage is planned, creating new identities for them as husband and wife. There, also, Benedick and Beatrice make their decisions to marry in a strikingly subversive manner as Don Pedro and their friends trick them into love. Because both couples end the play with marriage, order and social harmony in Messina are maintained according to early modern societal norms. Their marriages, in one sense, symbolically restore Adam and Eve's disruption at the Fall when they attempted to deflect blame. Marriage permanently unites man and woman:
until death do us part. Leonato’s garden or orchard provides the setting for declaring their newfound love.

Their marriages imply a divine element, since wedding vows in the Judeo-Christian tradition are made before God. Recognizing a divine element provides a higher reason to labor in the garden. Accountability to God, who desires mankind to restore the earth to a semblance of Edenic perfection, motivates us to work the land. Arcadian garden myths do not, for they are simply discovered and enjoyed, requiring nothing from mankind and therefore offering no method to evaluate moral character. Ecotheology, on the other hand, offers moral depth to Leonato’s character as a steward utilizing his land in the best way possible.

As governor of Messina, he is ultimately responsible for the land around Messina. The “pleached bower” and the “thick-pleach’d alley,” ecologically, provide nourishment (1.2.8, 3.1.7). Pleaching, or the intertwining of branches, is accomplished through a laborer’s intervention in order to benefit the growth by adding strength and beauty. Pleaching, then, “unites artifice and nature as the human skill and knowledge that creates and maintains it do so against a background of the less controllable world beyond its walls” (Rudd 166). Spiritually, pleaching serves as a reminder of community, interdependence, and marriage, restoring the division Adam and Eve caused. The addition of a theological dimension allows me to take up Gillian Rudd’s challenge in response to Ernest Curtius’s observation that gardens are traditionally associated with Eden: “since Paradise is a garden, a garden can, by transposition, be called a paradise” (qtd. Rudd 165). As Rudd notes, that association has not been fully exploited. Exploitation of Curtius’s statement allows evaluation of Leonato as a man who takes seriously the charge to design his orchard to match the beauty and fertility of Eden, as evidenced by titles of gardening books from the period: *Paradise Retrieved, Paradise Regained, Paradisus in Sole*
For Leonato, gardens and orchards provide an opportunity to take dominion literally, pleaching trees and honeysuckles into aesthetically pleasing and healthy bowers. This ecotheological interpretation provides a moral perspective of Leonato’s character.

Leonato’s moral depth is also recognized in his hospitality practices, which he completely fulfills. He welcomes Don Pedro warmly and assumes that his past conduct as a guest will continue: “Never came trouble to my house in the likeness of your Grace” (1.1.99-100). He makes “great preparations” for a feast and plans revels for his guests’ entertainment. However, despite his efforts, he spends much of the play in the role of guest because of Don Pedro’s rank as prince. Felicity Heal explains that the protocol of early modern hospitality recognized that a guest holding higher rank than the householder retains that rank “to show that the hierarchical principle was retained intact,” despite the presumed authority of the householder over his own home (32). As prince and military commander, Don Pedro enjoys ascendancy and exercises social hosting duties. He issues the invitation to enjoy Messina’s hospitality in Leonato’s stead, arranges entertainment with the gulling scenes, and claims that he and his friends are “the only love gods” (2.1.367-68). He acts as Claudio’s proxy in wooing Hero and negotiates with Leonato to form the match. His usurpation of the host’s role results in division and loss. Claudio despairs when he believes Don Pedro betrays him by claiming Hero for himself; Beatrice wounds Don Pedro’s self-esteem by rejecting his proposal; Beatrice and Benedick publicly and awkwardly admit their love for each other; and Don Pedro supports Claudio in renouncing Hero and slandering Leonato. When Claudio leaves Hero for dead after his rejection, Don Pedro leaves with him, abandoning his host’s daughter. His role as leader demonstrates the power of all leaders, who affect their followers for good or ill, resulting in beneficial or detrimental impact. His power as military commander, prince, and host devastates and nearly kills.
Hospitality as an exchange system provides the means for Don Pedro’s harmful actions. When Don Pedro the guest also serves as host, Leonato the host also becomes a guest, following Don Pedro’s lead. The traditional exchange system of hospitality consigns Leonato and Don Pedro to positions in the host/guest binary. Without an analysis that includes the divine element to form the hospitality hierarchy, Host/host/guest, the host cannot be held accountable for emulating the Host. Although moral commitments to the human community can provide accountability, accountability to a divine being offers a higher degree of commitment, a divine standard above most human expectations. Without that moral accountability, Don Pedro cannot responsibly enact the moral authority his guests expect when they accept his invitation (Selwyn 34). Richard Henze has a point that “the treachery is pleasant, and the pleasantness is not after all very treacherous; for Benedick and Beatrice are caught by the mere truth” (198). But placed within the demands of a perfect divinity, treachery cannot truthfully be described as pleasant. Nova Myhill condones Don Pedro’s action as benevolent deception, in which characters “accept what they hear as truth, and model themselves accordingly” (294, 295). “Eavesdropping,” Myhill explains, “is established as the accepted model for receiving credible information throughout the play; to see or hear an action and believe yourself to be unobserved or unrecognized is to see that action as authentic and unstaged” (296). Further, because Don Pedro’s deception ends with a marriage, that deception should not be criticized.

In support of Henze and Myhill, the general audience reaction to these scenes is one of delight and great mirth. Most believe Benedick and Beatrice already have some kind of love relationship, based on undeveloped hints, such as Beatrice’s protest against Benedick, “I know you of old,” a cynical statement of weariness and loss of faith in him (1.1.139-40). More telling is Beatrice’s later grievance, referring to Benedick: “Indeed, my lord, he lent [his heart] to me a
while, and I gave him use for it, a double heart for his single one. Marry, once before he won it of me with false dice. Therefore your grace may well say I have lost it” (2.1.265-68). Joost Daalder, rightfully, glosses her criticism as her admission that “he, by withdrawing from the relationship, took a voluntary step towards independence, while she did not” (525). Other statements, which I will explore in a future chapter about animals, also inform the audience that, despite their vociferous objections, the couple is in love before the play begins, but neither is willing to admit it. The audience gleefully witnesses Benedick’s and Beatrice’s inadequate attempts to hide and eavesdrop while their friends pretend not to see their insufficient efforts and perform on their behalf. Benedick and Beatrice are consequently well-loved and Don Pedro’s deception is forgiven.

Even though Myhill, Henze, and audience condone his actions, I argue that adding a divine element to an analysis of Don Pedro’s actions changes the interpretation of his leadership and deception. Don Pedro does not exercise moral responsibility for his guests. As an aristocratic commander and host, Don Pedro should model God’s demands for honesty, investigative discernment, and wisdom. Messina’s spiritual problems commence with the prince and military commander and descend hierarchically to his followers. Don Pedro’s lack of moral responsibility, as I will show, sets a harmful example that others in Messina follow to their detriment.

As the military commander, highest-ranking nobleman, and the acting host, effectively usurping Leonato’s hosting role (Heal 32), Don Pedro makes other elites vulnerable and holds the power to shape the erotic desires of those under him (Palmer 67). Darryl Palmer explains his hosting as truly powerful: “the ruler ‘silences’ Benedick, Beatrice, and Claudio in order to choreograph his own entertainments […] by arranging for players, taking a part himself, and
utilizing the household topography (the theater of hospitality) to confirm his illusions” (68).

When Palmer asks what it is about Messina that allows its inhabitants to easily deceive others, he claims that it is hospitality, or household entertainment, that heightens credulity (78). The leader of that entertainment is Don Pedro. As “the most important prestigious guest of Leonato, with all eyes fixed upon him [h]e is a model of sorts for the entire gathering” (Girard 8). For René Girard, “what really matters is the attitude of the prince” (8). His attitude and his example shape the collective mood of the group, yet despite what should be his levelheaded, fixed point of reference as an older and wiser man, he does not provide a stable center. He inflames rather than moderates Claudio’s anger at Don John’s accusation. He acts as the leader of what Harry Berger calls “the Men’s Club,” described in Balthasar’s song as “born deceivers whose nature is to be inconstant, untrustworthy, lustful, contentious, and obsessed with honor, status, and fortune” (308). He assumes principal responsibility for the atmosphere in Messina that so effectively endorses deprecation and distrust of others. As host and leader, Don Pedro both instigates and judges the “merry war” that reigns in Messina. The volley of jests, mirth-inducing if they are not analyzed beyond a superficial meaning, act as a disguise for real animosity.

Most of the merriment pertains to men’s distrust of women and women’s distrust of men, more particularly, to the expectation that women will sexually betray their husbands and that men will deceive. On the one hand, women are the adversary. Janet Adelman, for example, writes that the men recognize in women “a disturbance to the [male] bond” (73). Michael Friedman similarly but more boldly states that the men proceed as though on a “sexual battlefield, where women and their virtue represent an enemy to be despoiled” (239). On the other hand, Harry Berger writes that men are the adversary: “Men are born deceivers whose nature is to be inconstant, untrustworthy, lustful, contentious, and obsessed with honor, status,
and fortune” (308). The contradictory opinions both impart partial truth. The “merry war” applies specifically to Benedick and Beatrice but also more broadly pertains to the factions of men and women (1.1.58). The environment of contention, verbally deprecating others as less worthy, inferior, and defective, fosters hostile behavior. What is of interest to this study is the form of so many of the lexical aspersions: people are debased through comparisons to food, dirt, trees, a bird’s nest, and above all, animals: the very range of environmental components upon which ecocritics affix their attention. Benedick and Beatrice both learn, through the course of the play, to abandon derogatory animal metaphors and replace them with an acceptance of the nonhuman world.

The wit progresses to accusations of betrayal, deliberate deceptions, and eventually Claudio’s public condemnation of Leonato and Hero, the effects of which are so severe he leaves her for dead. His cruelty generates a continuing cycle of brutality: Beatrice furiously responds with the desire to eat Claudio’s heart and Benedick challenges Claudio to a duel. The verbal assaults quickly escalate into credible threats of physical harm, even death. Because so many of the aspersions cast in the play incriminate nonhumans along with humans, the invectives regarding the natural world represent a genuine threat to that world. Like the people the defamations reference, elements of the natural world can die. People, and the nonhumans they so acutely affect, need wise leaders if they are to thrive. Don Pedro, who should demonstrate the wisdom his position requires, does not provide that wise leadership. He falls short through his premature re-admittance of Don John to his trust without further supervision, his approbation of deception, and his failure to investigate the allegations of his already mistrusted half-brother.

That mistrusted brother is Don John, who defines himself as the villain of the drama. His villainy succeeds, in part, because “Shakespeare puts the credulity of hosting at the play’s
Don John’s position as guest makes him feel even more powerless, occurring as it does immediately after being defeated in battle. Julia Lupton writes,

> The guest is always a prisoner, not fully able to determine his own departure, fundamentally at the mercy of his host. […] The host extends special privileges to the guest precisely because the visitor is so thoroughly stripped of sovereignty and dignity in the household of another; the import of the return invitation is not to repay courtesy with courtesy but to match prison term with prison term. (175)

In Lupton’s view, one that strikingly resembles Derrida’s hostipitality, Don John’s position as a guest motivates him to subvert the well-being and desires of his host. On the other hand, his position as guest also offers him a tactical advantage so that Messina’s hospitality places its residents at risk: “In essence Don John’s capacity for destruction comes from his being a guest” (78). Because they are guests, Don John and Borachio are able to glean information to use against their hosts and other guests. Borachio tells Don John, “Being entertained for a perfumer, as I was smoking a musty room, comes me the Prince and Claudio, hand in hand in sad conference” (1.3.55-57). Borachio’s intelligence gathering succeeds “because of the credulity implicit in hospitable functions” (Palmer 78). Don John is able to use hospitality practices against his host, playing on his willing suspension of disbelief.

Significantly, he expresses his villainy in ecotheological terms through metaphor. In order to fully understand the early moderns’ use of nonhuman similes and metaphors, twenty-first-century readers must disregard current definitions of figurative language as merely descriptive and enter the early modern belief that metaphors were literal. As Gail Kern Paster explains, what is figuration for us was “the literal stuff of physiological theory” for early moderns (“Nervous” 111). Similes were not considered a proverbial set of loose associations, but
as analogical relationships to the physical environments, accepted as literal (117). For early moderns, metaphors were considered as valid as concrete reality. If trees or plants or animals are abused in speech, that abuse was understood as literally true. At least one ecocritic agrees. Howarth states that “ecology is a science strongly connected to a history of verbal expression” resulting in opening science “at least partially to metaphor, which enlarges meaning” (71, 81). Therefore, Don John’s verbal expression that he “had rather be a canker in a hedge / than a rose in [Don Pedro’s] grace,” then, may as well be referring to actual cankers, hedges, and roses on the stage, as if they are materially on stage, even though they are not (1.3.25-26). A canker refers to disease that kills plants, a canker worm that attacks plants, or, figuratively, any malignant, destructive influence (OED). Although the term could be interpreted as a wish to be forgotten, like a worm concealed behind the leaves of a hedge, Don John’s malicious behavior in this play does not indicate a desire for obscurity. I believe, instead, that the various definitions of the term convey Don John’s rebellious attitude toward his brother Don Pedro. The figurative hedge signifies his unconcern, even willingness, for a line of bushes, intended as a barrier against harm, to be attacked and destroyed. Further, hedges mark boundaries, located neither in the privileged center nor in the outer area reserved for the unwanted and expelled. In an ecological context, hedges are partly a human construct, yet have developed entire ecosystems that would now be destroyed if England’s hedgerows were allowed to revert (Lawrence 56). For example, recent studies on nest predation in hedges find that maintaining European hedgerows, especially ensuring their continued connection to other hedgerows, is vital in managing bird populations, which play a large role in the enclosure habitat (Ludwig et al.). In the early modern era, hedges also served to provide food, fuel, building materials, and medicines (Lawrence 54). Don John’s rhetorical self-identification with a destructive ecological influence, accordingly, holds
ecocritical significance, particularly for an era in which natural metaphors and analogies held considerable significance.

If Don John identifies himself with a destructive ecological influence, a canker that can destroy hedge ecosystems, he is creating a destructive binary, Don John/hedges or human/nonhuman, the binary with which this study began. His metaphor places humans in a powerfully extirpative ascendency over nonhumans, operating on two levels. The first introduces the concept of Christian grace. Don John, as half-brother to Prince Don Pedro, is welcomed to Messina, bringing him inside its protective hedge. Nevertheless, his illegitimacy, rebellion, and deliberate turpitude expel him to the wasteland outside the hedge. To re-apply Alison Findlay’s description of the bastard Thersites in *Troilus and Cressida*, Don John is “without a name or a place in the social structure, outside its values and norms, deviant. Illicit conception leads to illegitimate education, consciousness, actions, to an alternative life ‘in everything illegitimate.’ Bastardy makes [Don John] a personification of a distinct ‘other,’ an existence which is governed by other values, codes of behaviour, activities” (1). Don John embraces and actively seeks to retain this status. He has been forced to reunite with his brother, appearing, at least temporarily, to uphold the community with others that God desires. He is consequently qualified to enjoy Don Pedro’s grace, as Leonato acknowledges when he welcomes Don John to Messina: “Let me bid you welcome, my lord, being reconcil’d to the Prince your brother: I owe you all duty” (1.1.148-50). “Grace,” the term Don John sets up in opposition to his own cankerous hedge—“I had rather be a canker in a hedge / than a rose in his grace”—expresses unmerited favor, an undeserved gift. Within a Christian context, Don Pedro’s grace to his rebellious brother symbolizes God’s offer of grace to the undeserving Christian. Don John, however, does not accept that offer, fulfilling the role of a destructive cankerworm instead. Findlay has shown that
because illegitimate children believed God rejected them, they in turn often rejected God, just as Satan rejected God (80). Don John’s identification with disease or a worm, surely not coincidentally similar in shape to the serpent in the Garden, reinforces his self-imposed status as “a plain-dealing villain,” making him the unwelcome guest, just as Satan entered the Garden without an invitation, spreading destruction (1.3.32).

Claudio, who plays Eve to Don John’s serpent, is thought to be the real villain by Richard Henze: “The dangerous one is Claudio, who conceals a huge and active suspicion behind a mask of virtue and fidelity. One can anticipate Don John's villainy; one does not expect Claudio's suspicion” (193). Further, “Claudio's fault is both his lack of trust that leads him to doubt Hero so easily and his lack of decency that leads him to accuse her so unfairly at that very moment when he should be most concerned for her” (194). His faults and cruelty define Claudio as a guest who does not fulfill his responsibilities in reciprocity to Leonato’s exemplary role as host. Fortunately for Claudio, Leonato goes beyond a traditional exchange system of hospitality to imitate a biblical, self-sacrificing model of hospitality. In response to Claudio’s willingness to fulfill Leonato’s demands for penitence, Leonato once again offers his only child to Claudio as his wife, despite the previous cruelty that nearly caused her death. Don John, however, never demonstrates any willingness to enact penance. Don John, the human, believing himself rejected by other humans and the divine, in turn rejects the nonhuman, even as he identifies with the nonhuman. Don John’s example demonstrates the relationship between moral virtues and ecological attitudes. His identification as a villain and his animosity toward his brother and all those associated with him encourages him to imagine ecological destruction.

Placing the play’s characters into the ecotheological hierarchy adds a depth that ecocriticism has not yet provided. Not only can readers evaluate their identification with the
nonhuman world, but they can also evaluate how well the characters answer the Genesis command to exercise dominion over the earth by restoring as much as possible the conditions in the Garden of Eden. Leonato’s orchard—which demonstrates man’s labor, feeds Messina, and provides a setting for marriage decisions—depicts Leonato as fulfilling God’s command. He also imitates God as a host genuinely concerned for his guests’ welfare. As such, Leonato serves as a model for ecological activism, a model undermined, however, by Don Pedro’s usurpation as host and Don John’s role as the snake in the garden. Two hundred years later, *Pride and Prejudice*’s Darcy far exceeds Leonato as environmentalist and host.

**Pemberley’s Residents as Hosts and Guests**

Darcy offers readers today a worthier example of an estate owner and host. He fully accomplishes both the ecotheological hierarchy by recognizing his obligations to the divine, other humans, and the natural world and to the hospitality hierarchy by imitating God as a self-sacrificing host. He exercises responsibility for the landscape at Pemberley. Because “land carries a moral as well as an economic weight” (Curry 183), Darcy’s identification with Pemberley exemplifies his morality. The natural world is embodied in Darcy, so much so that the estate could be termed his definiens, an embodiment already noted by several Austen scholars and one that defines him as an ecological model. For Alistair Duckworth, Elizabeth’s journey through the park represents more than a mere pleasure trip through delightful scenery, but as a revelation of Darcy’s moral character, for he is one with his estate (125). Rosemarie Bodenheimer confirms Duckworth’s assessment, noting that as Elizabeth “pil[es] up positive impressions” of Pemberley, she simultaneously accumulates affirmative evaluations of its owner (610). Charles J. McCann furthers that sense of fusion between master and estate by describing it as genuine understatement: “his setting seems to be a condition of Darcy’s being” (72). Mary
Jane Curry augments the Darcy/Pemberley assimilation by prefiguring Darcy and Elizabeth’s future sexual union. For Elizabeth, the walk through Pemberley’s grounds constitutes “a merging of desires—experiencing natural beauty with forming a relationship with Mr. Darcy” (179, 180). Laurie Kaplan observes Pemberley’s “metaphorical connection with Mr. Darcy.” These scholars’ combined observations confirm Darcy’s intimate connection with his land. I wish to take further Robert Kern’s assessment of Darcy as “a sort of neoclassical or preromantic environmentalist” (17) by adding a divine element that encourages that intimacy.

The Darcy/Pemberley association suggests a collapse of the binary between human and nonhuman, fostering the “all-pervasive intimate relationships” many ecocritics encourage (Naess 50). The addition of a divine element enhances the assimilation between human and nonhuman illustrated by Neil Evernden’s “sense of place” (100) or Thomas Hothem’s sense of “contraposing exterior space with a sense of interiority,” in which the individual and his environment become one (50). Darcy’s sense of place recreates the intimacy among God, Adam, Eve, and nonhuman life in Eden. Placing Darcy and Pemberley, man and landscape, subordinate to God’s dominion highlights Darcy’s connection to his nonhuman environment so important to environmental awareness.

Darcy’s connection to the land results in careful stewardship. In eighteenth-century English thought, God’s command to “subdue the earth” referred to the Hebrew meaning of “tilling” the ground (Barr 22), placing value in agricultural work as service to God. For instance, clergyman John Ray believed that nature’s creator “is well pleased […] with regular Gardens and Orchards and Plantations” (164). This view differs from that of radical environmentalists who date current environmental problems from the invention of agriculture. Earth First! founder Dave Foreman writes that formerly “we had no concept of ‘wilderness’ because everything was
wilderness and we were a part of it. But with irrigation ditches, crop surpluses, and permanent villages, we became apart from the natural world, creating “an ever-widening rift” (69). The value of labor on the land is denied in such extremist perspectives. Rather than a continually expanding divide in the human/nonhuman dualism, a recognition of the divine binds them together. Darcy’s stewardship of Pemberley signifies a unity of the ecotheological hierarchy, joining husbandman and land in a common goal of providing food and pleasing God. Austen’s vision is of a patriarchal system at its best.

Pemberley exemplifies husbandry, its agrarian yield reflected in its master’s principles. Darcy’s value for the estate’s land is also evidenced by his value of the former steward of Pemberley, George Wickham, Sr., whom he considers “a very respectable man” (222). Darcy genuinely regards, respects, and values him for his skill in managing the land that serves as the source for Darcy’s hospitality. The stewardship Darcy esteems so highly did not necessarily result in higher profits for the estate. The beauty Elizabeth admires would be more financially profitable if utilized for market terms (Landry 10-11). Testimony from his housekeeper on his care for the poor strengthens this argument, for paternalistic relations with tenants reinforces preservation of the land (11). Darcy’s implied reluctance to evict less profitable tenants resulted in maintaining existing land conditions rather than aggressive agricultural improvement. Accordingly, Darcy’s paternalistic virtues result in conservation of the land, animals, and people. Interpreted in ecotheological terms, Darcy provides benevolent care for those in his trust just as God provides benevolent care for those on his earth.

Darcy’s stewardship also reaches beyond land preservation to his enhancement of specific landscape features in accordance with eighteenth-century values. The idea that the globe’s surface had been created as a smooth and perfect sphere but had degraded into “hideous
vistas of bogs, valleys, ravines, hills, and mountains” at the Fall meant that clearing of native vegetation, levelling of land, and rerouting of waterways were believed to aid restoration of paradisiac glory (Harrison, “Subduing” 103). Useful here is Pope Francis’s caution that we must “respect the rights of peoples and cultures, and to appreciate that the development of a social group presupposes an historical process which takes place within a cultural context and demands the constant and active involvement of local people from within their proper culture” (109).

Readers of *Pride and Prejudice* today may be rightfully skeptical about applying this misunderstanding of early geology now. However, working within theological constructs of the time, Darcy’s work at Pemberley can still hold spiritual value, recognizing that his efforts represent value for beliefs in this culture. Difference of opinion does not negate Darcy’s value as a model of ecological virtue, as Elizabeth acknowledges. She notes at Pemberley that “a stream of some natural importance was swelled into greater, but without any artificial appearance. Its banks were neither formal nor falsely adorned” (271). In a period when “human artifice compensates for the defects of nature” as atonement for the Fall, Darcy’s alterations are esteemed as pleasing to God (Harrison, “Subduing” 103-04). In this restorative capacity, Darcy represents a new Adam, fulfilling Adam’s unfinished task in Eden, to “dress it, and keep it” (Gen. 2.15). Although descriptions of Pemberley as “something of a Utopia” (Gay, *Theatre* 88), one of the “utopian communities” and an “ideal society” (Lau 264) appropriately afford secular interpretations, Overstreet’s delineations of “a veritable paradise” and “a glimpse of heaven itself” (479) provide an enhanced vision of Darcy as obeying God’s directive to exercise dominion as illustrated in the ecotheological hierarchy.

Darcy’s spiritual conscientiousness is further attested to by Bingley, who says of Darcy, “I declare I do not know a more aweful [sic] object than Darcy [. . .] at his own house especially”
Samuel Johnson’s definition of “awful” may have influenced Austen’s word choice. He provided a more nuanced definition, multiplying meanings beyond the sense of aversion familiar in current usage, by defining the term as “striking with awe” or “filling with reverence” (*Dictionary*). The “awful,” (full of awe) presence of God in his house, the church, is designed to fill worshippers with awe. Darcy, at his own house, inspires a similar sense of veneration. For Bingley, especially, the esteem approaches reverence: “On the strength of Darcy's regard, Bingley had the firmest reliance, and of his judgement the highest opinion” (17). A suggestion of divinity suffuses Pemberley. Darcy represents a model of Christian stewardship, exemplifying a “moral heritage” learned from previous generations (Heydt-Stevenson 273). And because according to New Testament parables, such as the parable of the talents (Matthew 25.14-30), Darcy’s stewardship carries a sense of eternal accountability. Each decision regarding his land, animals, servants, and tenants incurs divine judgement and everlasting importance.

Elizabeth also associates herself with the land, exhibiting an affinity for the natural world that marks her as an appropriate companion for Darcy. Although Austen has a reputation for espousing manners and civility, land and agriculture play a significant role in her work. The word “culture” itself, up to the end of the eighteenth century, referred first to a cultivated field and second to the act of cultivating the land. The term was only beginning to be used in the sense of improving one’s mind through education, in the same way that soil is improved through tillage (Bate 543). Austen’s use of “culture” in *Emma* clarifies the implications of Elizabeth’s walk through the fields to visit her ill sister at Netherfield so important to elucidating her affinity with the land. Emma, describing the view of Donwell Abbey and Abbey-Mill Farm, delivers the well-remembered phrase, “English verdure, English culture, English comfort” (391). The description, directed at the beauty of the fields, uncut timber, and meadows, is crucial for appreciating the
significance of Elizabeth’s walk and her response to Pemberley. She is prepared to join Darcy as partner in stewardship of the land, joining with him as a model for sustainability efforts today.

Her responses reflect two aspects of stewardship. First is an appreciation of beauty. Genesis 2.9 specifies God’s creation of trees, designated first as “pleasant to the sight” and second as “good for meat,” intimating that beauty is not only important but superior—because it is listed first—to sustenance. Elizabeth, walking to Netherfield and around Pemberley, responds to both beauty and subsistence. First, her delight upon seeing Pemberley directly indicates her potential for stewardship. Pemberley’s landscape becomes “more than a passive social construction” but “an agentic force that interacts with and changes the other elements in its mix, including the human” (Alaimo and Hekman 146). Ecotheology enhances this perspective by adding implications for stewardship. If the beauty of creation merits specific comment in the creation narrative, then Elizabeth’s appreciation of that beauty places her in the ecotheological hierarchy, pleasing the divine above through gratitude for the pleasing natural world below.

Second, the cultivation of Pemberley’s land in addition to the fields Elizabeth walks over also indicates stewardship by cultivating crops “good for meat.” Both facets of stewardship were extolled by the church. “The practice of planting corn or vegetables in straight lines was not just an efficient way of using limited space,” Keith Thomas observes; “it was also a pleasing means of imposing human order on the otherwise disorderly natural world” (256). For John Wesley, humanity is God’s representative on earth, responsible for dominion over creation (Flowers 12). Wesley saw beauty in cultivated lands, appreciated domestication, and “used the work of husbandry as a metaphor for the spiritual life” (14).

Wesley’s definition of stewardship serves as a standard for Austen’s “culture,” which she represents in Pemberley. Cultivation of the natural world as stewardship implies the direct
engagement of human beings, modelling Eden’s beauty and the command to “dress it, and keep it.” Fields have been plowed and planted, trees are not cut down for profit, and the meadows are utilized for animal feed and maintained for future use, for if meadow grass is not mown it reverts to wildwood. Pemberley’s land, utilized for beauty and nourishment for animals and humans, defines Austen’s ideal of Christian stewardship, illustrating Elizabeth as “a function of environmental belonging” and a partner for Darcy (Bate 545).

Elizabeth demonstrates her “environmental belonging” by “crossing field after field” and “jumping over stiles” (36). Elizabeth reflects the beautiful and healthful natural world when she arrives with muddy petticoats and “a face glowing with the warmth of exercise” (36). When Elizabeth enters the domesticated interior of Netherfield, she bears evidence on her body of the earth, with “dirty stockings” and her petticoat “six inches deep in mud,” literally embodying, through her dirt, sweat, and brightened eyes, God’s expectation for human stewardship (36, 39). An ecocritic may interpret the benefit to herself as denying the intrinsic value of the land “independent of the usefulness of the non-human world for human purposes” (Naess 48). Ecotheology instead regards Elizabeth’s journey as connecting the ground she walks on with the God who created it, uniting the elements above and below her in the ecotheological hierarchy.

Elizabeth’s walk also positions her as primed to fulfill God’s expectations to “multiply, and fill the earth,” a charge that also qualifies as stewardship simply through obedience and also by providing more workers to cultivate the land (Gen. 1.28). Her arrival at Netherfield prompts Mrs. Hurst to refer to her as “wild,” a term that in the eighteenth century sometimes suggested poverty, criminality, or sexual transgression in a female walking alone, providing a subtext for the disapproval she encounters (Murphy 39). Johnson also suggests this subtext through his definition of the word “ramble” as suggestive of sexual licentiousness, although he also
advocated peregrination as a connection to nature and as a pilgrimage that enables moral activism (Tankard 2-4). Austen’s narrator presents her excursion to Netherfield as healthful and selfless, yet Darcy’s sensuous response also implies an erotic attraction, reflecting Johnson’s sexual suggestion. An ecotheological perspective, placing Elizabeth within God’s command in Genesis 1.28, instead interprets her visceral interaction with nature to suggest the sexual intercourse that results in fruitfulness within a framework of reproduction, stewardship, and obedience, reflecting her fulfillment of the ecotheological hierarchy.

Her potential for stewardship in this regard is threatened, however, by a temporary halt in her journey toward recognizing Darcy’s moral worth. Disillusioned by the perceived moral failings of Darcy, Bingley, and Collins, she exclaims, “Adieu to disappointment and spleen. What are men to rocks and mountains?” (174). Her “disappointment” in men utilizes discourse of the natural world. Her railleries about men in this conversation (“I am sick of them all”) indicate a lack of charity, but also the reality of women’s dependence upon men within patriarchy (174). Her use of “spleen,” as Patricia Meyer Spacks explains, refers to “melancholy, gloom, irritability, or moroseness” and, as Pope used the term in *The Rape of the Lock*, may “emanate from sexual causes” (194). Readers sympathize with her discontent in light of her usual “lively, playful disposition,” yet her bitterness indicates a spiritual danger (Austen 12). Elizabeth is inverting the ecotheological hierarchy, reversing what should be human over nonhuman to rocks and mountains over men, thereby reversing her values. However, her statement also recognizes the natural world’s curative powers, Romantically and biblically. Retreat to nature can “enable the realization of the individual self,” fostering an affection for nature valuable for ecological endeavors (Ailwood). Her trip to the “principal wonders of the country” allows her to imitate biblical figures who retreated to the wilderness for spiritual
renewal, such as Moses, John the Baptist, and even Christ himself (266). Retreat renews
Elizabeth, allowing her to arrive at Pemberley ready to fulfill her role as Darcy’s guest. She can
see him honestly enough to accept his proposal, forming the union that culminates ecotheological
objectives within this novel.

Their union is made possible through Darcy’s exemplary hospitality. When he
unexpectedly finds himself hosting Elizabeth and the Gardiners, he develops the full potential of
the hospitality hierarchy, mirroring God as Host, by selflessly offering the best gifts of
hospitality he and Pemberley are capable of. Like the Host that Pemberley’s suggestion of the
divine encourages, Darcy strives to serve as a Christ like, self-sacrificial host through a
magnificent yet comfortable welcome to guests, using the agrarian yield of Pemberley’s
resources for their benefit. His sister serves the finest fruits, the house offers refreshing views
from every window, and Mr. Gardiner savors fishing, allowing guests to experience renewal
through food, beauty, and recreation: “Never […] had she seen him so desirous to please, so free
from self-consequence, or unbending reserve as now” (290). Juliet McMaster explains that “it is
there that the host most fully manifests himself, and the guest can enter most intricately into a
relation with him” (56). Darcy’s hospitality models Christ’s in several ways. First are character
traits undetected until now. He is selfless, humble, and thoughtful. McMaster’s phrase
characterizing Darcy as “the host [who] most fully manifests himself” echoes the biblical
“heavenly host,” portraying Darcy as making his sacrificial love manifest to humanity.
McMaster’s words are aggressively spiritual, but suitable for the revered conception of
Pemberley and its master that readers have discerned through the centuries. Second is his care for
all those within the protection of Pemberley’s domain. The visit reveals to Elizabeth “how many
people’s happiness were in his guardianship” (277), language that echoes God’s care of
mankind. Third is his arrangement of her sisters’ marriages, extending hospitality beyond Elizabeth’s visit and demonstrating his humility and sacrifice as he expends his financial, emotional, and temporal resources for her happiness. His services do not enter the traditional exchange model of hospitality, for he performs the kindnesses with no guarantee that Elizabeth will ever know or reciprocate. The addition of a divine Host to the host/guest relationship provides this spiritual interpretation that is otherwise unavailable to a traditional, secular discussion of hospitality.

Darcy’s exemplary hospitality offers an ecotheological model relevant to modern readers. If his example is further placed in the Derridean theory of hospitality, which recognizes fully the hostility inherent in hospitality, application to our modern world is even further enhanced. If hospitality is extended toward nonhumans, all that is included in a landscape, then “nonhuman” and “human” are also at once separate yet interchangeable. Derrida’s host and guest do not collapse into one being or one category. In this model, human and nonhuman remain separate, but each recognizes the other in itself as they share biological functions. As they practice all of the responsibilities traditionally assigned to hosts (providing food, shelter, protection, and entertainment), humans would also be sensible of the role traditionally assigned to guests (loyalty, gratitude, harmony). Humans and nonhumans simultaneously provide hosting services and express gratitude. For the landscape—earth, plants, crops, flowers, trees—this means providing everything the landscape needs to thrive while recognizing its beauty and utility with gratitude while fostering harmony between human and nonhuman.

Darcy provides an excellent model. The grounds at Pemberley evidence his great care, since he was “to the manor born.” His “being-one-self in one’s own home,” to use one of Derrida’s expressions, is unmistakable (“Hostipitality” 4). The virtues of both host and guest are
cultivated under Elizabeth’s influence. He tells her, “I have been a selfish being all my life, in practice though not in principle,” then credits her for motivating change: “and such I might still have been but for you. [...] You taught me a hard lesson, hard indeed at first, but most advantageous. By you, I was properly humbled” (409, 410). His gratitude is clear: “What do I not owe you!” (410). As a guest earlier in the novel, he expresses no gratitude or humility beyond the barest civility. Elizabeth’s education has made these virtues possible, not only as a guest in society but in the natural world. Towards Elizabeth, his transposition of host and guest elevates rather than reduces, inverting Derrida’s host/guest supposition in the most affirmative manner. He retains the role of host at Pemberley by using his power to ensure her comfort and elevates her as guest, regarding her not as a dependent recipient of his beneficence—not through “his sense of her inferiority—of its being a degradation”—but as his equal, anticipating her desires and deferring to her inclinations (211). This vision of Darcy is Austen’s “imagining of things as they could be,” not as they are (Seeber 63). Her portrayal is a fairy tale version of a patriarchal system that is also capable of great oppression. In contrast, Darcy is capable of acknowledging and then denying his prideful selfishness, placing Elizabeth’s well-being above his own and foreshadowing her future role as hostess at Pemberley. Darcy uses the patriarchal power available to him in this time period to meet Elizabeth’s expectations of his good character.

Conclusion: Restoration through Biblical Hospitality

Derrida’s definition of hospitality, again etymologically and empirically, incorporates both hospitality and hostility. Therefore, the hospitality practices described in the previous paragraph are practiced thoroughly and well, yet we are always aware of potential hostility. Leonato’s welcome to Don John is polite, yet awkward. Darcy’s attitude toward his introduction to the Gardiners, engaged in trade, is “surprised by the connexion,” yet sustained “with

87
fortitude” (282). Leonato is held hostage, as it were, to Claudio’s continued presence as guest after slandering him and his daughter. Darcy will not accept Wickham as a guest at Pemberley. Comparably, the landscape extends hostility and pain along with beauty and utility. Providing everything roses need to thrive while appreciating their beauty and their component as rosewater in an Indian lassi does not mean the thorns won’t still scratch. The well-tended earth will still flood our basements in heavy rain and break apart in earthquakes. Just as a host may have means to protect himself from a violent guest, we need to be wary of the earth’s potential harm. At the same time, as humans also take the earth’s point of view (a host is a guest and a guest is a host), we recognize our own capacity for hostility. We have the potential to treat the earth and its rooted inhabitants as though we are bad guests. Just as a guest may leave the kitchen a mess or empty the hot water tank with one long shower, we may neglect to clean up our mess when harvesting food or we may divert a river to irrigate an orchard of exotic fruit trees deliberately planted in an environment too dry for their needs while selfishly depriving water to the trees and plants along the rest of the original river’s path.

Together, the principles of ecotheology, in combination with biblical hospitality that holds humans accountable to God, can lead to the changes in attitude ecocritics strive to foster. Caring for the land through cultivation can express one’s attempt to atone for the Fall by restoring the landscape to Eden’s beauty and utility. Biblical hospitality rather than a hospitable exchange system encourages treatment of the earth as a guest, providing its needs as an act of hospitality, even to humanity’s detriment at times. Caring for the land also pleases God, who has given dominion over the natural world to mankind with the reminder that each decision regarding the earth will be judged, adding eternal significance. Recognition that the land holds inherent value simply for itself and further recognition that the land provides our food supply,
materials for constructing shelter, and even the oxygen we breathe fosters the virtues of gratitude, humility, and benevolence. Virtues like these, as modelled by the principal characters in *Much Ado about Nothing* and *Pride and Prejudice*, if developed today, offer an avenue for real, lasting change in preserving the earth. Benedick, Beatrice, Darcy, and Elizabeth all embody humanity’s continuing attempt to live with the consequences of the Fall.

Although I have concentrated so far on the non-sentient world, such as landscape, gardens, and orchards, the same principles apply to the nonhuman animal world. Animals, beginning with the animal skins God himself provided to clothe Adam and Eve (Genesis 3.21), provide no less important products essential to our survival: milk and meat for food, skins for clothing and shelter, bones for tools, labor for farm work and transport, and companionship, to name a few examples. As God’s creations, animals hold inherent value; but their manifold contributions to our very existence should, like the rooted world, engender our gratitude and our benevolent care for their health and comfort. Just as the protagonists of *Much Ado about Nothing* and *Pride and Prejudice* act as models in their identification with and regard for the landscape, so do they act as models in their relationships with animals.
CHAPTER IV
PEOPLE AS ANIMALS: RESTORING HUMANITY AFTER THE FALL

Introduction: Animals Compromised by the Fall

Adam and Eve, faced with the consequences of the Fall, not only had to contend with the cursed ground, the thorns and thistles, and labor by the sweat of their brow, but also with an irrevocable alteration in their relationship with animals. In this chapter, I move to the second group of beings affected by the Fall, animals, who, it was thought, developed a state of savagery, turning against each other and against mankind: God said to the serpent, “And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall break thine head, and thou shalt bruise his heel” (Gen. 3.15). Based on this enmity, Agrippa concludes that “the battail of hunting took his beginning” (qtd. in E. Berry 26), ending forever the peace in which “the wolf and the lamb shall feed together” (Isaiah 65.25). Animals’ fear of man, man’s fear of animals, and the concept of hunting are all attributed to the Fall. Formerly peaceful herbivores, animals became predator and prey competing to survive, a state that cannot always be altered. Just as the land will always produce weeds and thorns and crops will sometimes fail, animals cannot always return to their Edenic state. Yet the biblical command to exercise dominion has not been rescinded. God still expects the effort to obey, even though the Fall has made the effort difficult.

Adam and Eve lost power over both physical animals and the animal spirits within their own psyches, “changing humans into predators” (Van Dyk 194). Peter Harrison explains that
early church fathers equated actual animals and so-called animal emotions, reasoning that Adam and Eve’s loss of dominion over animals was linked to bestial passions capable of defeating the reason God, it was thought, granted only human beings (Harrison, “Reading” 50). In other words, “the dominion over nature referred to in Genesis was frequently interpreted by the church fathers to mean dominion over the rebellious beasts within” (“Subduing” 91). In order to atone for the Fall and to act as stewards for the animal world, according to this belief, we must bring irrational or so-called animal emotions under the domination of reason (“Reading” 50). As Harrison explains, early modern interpretations of “have dominion” emphasize spiritual readings encouraging self-control over “the wild and wayward impulses of the body” (“Subduing” 96).

Self-control in this context, I argue, does not mean denying strong emotions, but recognizing that we share these passions with animals and must control them so they do not cause harm. Not until later in the seventeenth century did dominion over the material world of animals begin to dominate church doctrine (“Subduing” 96).

Harrison’s theory, applied to animals, alters the ecotheological hierarchy by replacing nonsentient nonhumans such as land and rooted plants, as in the previous chapter, with animals specifically. By applying the same principles to the animal realm, I revise the ecotheological hierarchy to God/human/animal, interpreted as God ruling over man and man ruling over animals in imitation of the Garden of Eden. In ecotheological terms, this hierarchy represents the best possible balance that can be achieved in the fallen world and puts human beings in the best position to exercise stewardship over animals. In order to retain this balanced position between God and animal, the descendants of Adam and Eve must control both physical animals and animal passions: “control of the passions thus became, for the seventeenth century, a means of achieving control over the natural world” (Harrison, “Reading” 51, 49).
Animal passions, conveyed in speech through similes, metaphors, and analogies, were understood literally in the early modern era. The belief that humans could become animals or at least allow animal passions to dominate was prevalent. The belief, supported by biology and theology, was that animal passions in men and women mirrored those of animals and were exhibited in the same manner. It was thought that when animals encounter an object of desire, acting upon that desire is uninhibited by reason. Men and women also react spontaneously to objects of desire, but are armed with reason as a defense. The task can be strenuous, as Thomas Wright observes in his 1624 *The Passions of the Mind in General*. In an instant, he claims, the heart can inflame, dilate, or contract, making the passions as difficult to curb as the attempt “to quench fire with fuel, extinguish a burning ague with hot wines, [or] drown an Eel with water” (Wright 145). Wright’s dramatic language was not considered “a mere rhetorical strategy to be exploited for the purpose of moral edification,” but represented what was thought to be a real choice between “reason and passion, mind and body, human and animal” (Harrison, “Reading” 51, 50). To achieve Edenic harmony, in light of divine imperative, the first term in each binary must restrain the second. Reason must control passion; mind control body; and human control animal. This control must, however, be tempered with God’s statement that each creation, including animal life, was pronounced good, just as Adam and Eve were pronounced good. Dominion, as Barrs and Harrison remind us, is interpreted as peaceful rule, not a harsh domination. Animals and animal passions are to be regarded as good and natural if they are controlled so as not to cause harm.

The failure to control animal passions lay not in the emotions themselves, but in their severity and their misuse. The passions I refer to here are not the normal, everyday emotions everyone experiences, but intense, harmful passions such as Don John’s wish to poison the food
at Leonato’s feast, Claudio’s cruel accusation against Hero, or Elizabeth’s refusal to listen to any hint of goodness in Darcy or harm in Wickham. Surrendering to extreme emotions indicates an unwillingness to use a balance of reason and passion. An ecotheological reading emphasizes the frequent comparisons between people and animals. By rejecting God’s ideal to rely on a deliberate combination of reason and passion, by allowing the beast within to rule rather than moderate passions, people forfeit the ability to control themselves, discern the truth about others, and influence the actions of others. Close reading of ecotheological issues allows us to arrive at the biblical reason for the heartache in Messina: a refusal to accept God’s dominion over humans. Messinians are therefore unable to exercise carefully controlled dominion over animals and the animal passions within so that they and others are not hurt by them.

During the 200-odd years between Shakespeare’s play and the publication of Austen’s *Pride and Prejudice*, theologians continued to remind their congregations that animal suffering resulted from humanity’s fall into sin and continued to warn them that humans lower themselves to the level of animals as a result of unregulated passions. For example, a 1675 sermon emphasizes God’s requirement that “we should contribute towards the repair of this great House of the World, and restor[e] the Creatures to their first goodness and beauty” (42). In this sermon, Thomas Hodges regards one who does not compassionately care for animals as unreasonable, “who having no understanding became worse than the Beast that perisheth” and makes his animal “a sacrifice to his passion” (45, 79). The absence of loving, compassionate care for animals means the absence of loving, compassionate care for—and a measure of control over—animal passions. Just as one feeds, shelters, and protects one’s physical animals so that no harm comes to themselves or others, so one must protect or restrain one’s animal passions so they do not cause harm. Restraint does not mean denial of animals’ inherent value or a lack of sympathy
with strong emotions, but recognition of their existence and the will to temper the passions with reason. If not, the ecotheological hierarchy is reversed, placing humanity at the bottom of the hierarchy rather than the top: animal/human/God.

Over time, however, Hodges’s emphasis on the potential for humans to regress to an animal state gradually faded, replaced, by the time Austen was writing, by encouragement to treat others with civility and dignity, another manner of phrasing the exercise of control over passionate emotions. The use of animal metaphors, therefore, is less in Austen’s work than in Shakespeare’s, although she does demonstrate a strong “willingness to rely on metaphor to imply inner, non-social resources of character” (Bodenheimer 606). Those character traits sometimes include what may have been termed animal passions, which characters must learn to moderate, integrating them in a healthful combination with reason. The evidence for how successfully that integration has been is seen most clearly in hospitality contexts as characters either encourage or discourage community with others. Their ability to foster healthy relationships with other human beings in turn indicates their ability to also foster healthy relationships with physical animals. Only by recognizing those passions within ourselves can we recognize that violence against animals also represents violence against our own bodies and degradation of our own souls. Only then can we find a permanent solution to the care the animals of this planet need.

Shakespeare’s and Austen’s use of metaphor, I believe, can directly impact our care for animals today. A recent study on the use of animal metaphors by Hart and Long finds that humans process metaphors immediately, without much processing to distinguish between figurative language and reality. Therefore, “metaphor can be used to persuade and manipulate, tapping into positive or negative emotions and networks of associated ideas in the listener” (54). Hart and Long argue that “the metaphors we use can get misinterpreted or stir strong emotion
that interferes with the rational analysis and policy decisions congruent with the laws of nature” (54). Put more simply, metaphorizing human animals as nonhuman animals, which goes against the traditional distinction, makes humans “more likely to harm that to which they supposedly don’t belong: the environment” (52). I do not at all believe that Shakespeare or Austen deliberately use metaphor to create harmful environmental effects. But I do argue that their use of metaphors, or anyone’s constant use of metaphors that degrade animals, can impact our attitudes toward the nonhuman world. Continually repeated derogation of animals and continual reminders that humans are debased if they are compared to animals through the medium of metaphor, which we tend to simply accept without further analysis, encourages us to act harmfully to the environment.

The protagonists in Much Ado about Nothing and Pride and Prejudice learn to act as models for an ecotheological answer to today’s environmental crisis, enacted in contrast to humanity’s animal nature and within hospitality conventions. Their examples in moderating the expression of animal passions provide inspiration for readers today. They recognize God’s dominion over them and exercise biblical dominion over the nonhuman world, holding themselves accountable to God. They enact hospitality in the best spiritual sense, emulating the divine Host, attempting to avoid the paradox of hostipitality. The exercise of compassion, benevolence, and humility, the virtues that allow the ecotheological and hospitality hierarchies to be fulfilled, can lead to permanent preservation of the animal world.

**Messina’s Residents as Animals**

In Shakespeare’s plays, including Much Ado about Nothing, the rhetoric that expresses animal passions rarely proceeds from physical animals on the stage; nevertheless, characters’ speech teems with an animal presence. The relationship among God, people, and animals is
demonstrated through discourse, providing a representative example to explore those relationships. Benedick and Beatrice’s animal rhetoric at the beginning of the play indicates hostility and self-absorption not conducive to healthy relationships. Beatrice claims to prefer a dog barking at a crow over Benedick’s voice and accuses him of “a jade’s trick” (1.1.126-27, 139). Benedick ridicules her as a “parrot-teacher” (1.1.133). In return, Beatrice tells Benedick that “A bird of my tongue is better than a beast of yours” (1.1.134-35), reducing both of them to animals. They express hostility through animal insults rather than through conventional hospitality greetings when they meet. Their exchange also indicates self-absorption, not only through insults, but through other interactions that also employ animal rhetoric. Benedick, for example, mocks Claudio’s infatuation with Hero: do you “tell us Cupid is a good hare-finder?” (1.1.177). Describing Cupid as proficient in spotting hares implies that Claudio is ascribing hare attributes to Hero (McEachern 161). Benedick mocks his friend, but more importantly, uses animal references to flaunt his own wit and to shift attention to himself. Later, Benedick responds to Claudio’s distress at Don Pedro’s apparent betrayal with brief solicitude framed in animal terms—“poor hurt fowl, now will he creep into sedges”—and immediately turns his attention to Beatrice’s insults, demonstrating his self-absorption (2.1.194-95).

Other animal references imply more violence. Benedick jestingly requests that if he falls in love, his friends should “hang me in a bottle like a cat, and shoot at me” (1.1.246-48). During this time period, “cats were routinely set on fire, hung up in bags and smashed like piñatas, or killed in dozens of other ingeniously painful ways for recreation” (Cartmill 104). Later, referring to Balthasar’s love song, Benedick complains, “An he had been a dog that should have howled thus, they would have hanged him” (2.3.81-82). Laurie Shannon documents the use of gallows “to eliminate dogs who were dangerous, disruptive, resistant to training, or just too spirited”
The brutality in killing cats for sport and hanging dogs as punishment prompted George Walker to denigrate the perpetrators: destroying creatures “with cruelty and with pleasure, delight and rejoicing in their destruction, and without a sense of our own sins and remorse for them, is a kind of scorn and contempt of the workmanship of God” (160). Later, Edward Bury asked, “Is the fruits of our sin become the matter of sport?” (221). Cruelty cannot qualify as an attempt to recreate Edenic human/animal relations. Benedick is not violent toward physical animals, but his rhetoric keeps both Messinians and the audience continually aware of potential human violence against nonhumans. His jests portray the hostility that can lie behind exercising dominion over animals without also exercising the compassion and love behind God’s pronouncement of animals as good.

Benedick and Beatrice’s hostility and self-absorption, expressed with animal metaphors, also indicate pride in their self-sufficiency. They hold themselves above society’s marital expectations and disdain the idea that they could find someone worthy to marry. Benedick describes marriage as demeaning through animal references. He likens marriage to cheapening him to a service animal, a reminder of animal exploitation: “let me be vilely painted, and in such great letters as they write ‘Here is good horse to hire’ […] ‘Here you may see Benedick the married man’” (1.1.253-56). Beatrice likewise utilizes animal imagery in her rejection of marriage. She scorns words of love: “I had rather hear my dog bark at a crow than a man swear he loves me” (1.1.126-27). The audience delights in their protestations, laughing at their exaggerated pretenses and anticipating their future chagrin, wondering what plot devices will achieve their humiliation. But underneath their comic remonstrance lies the realization that Benedick and Beatrice are also guilty of pride, at least outwardly holding themselves above the need for marital intimacy.
Perhaps it is fitting, then, that Don Pedro introduces more animal imagery in his ploy to bring them together. Desiring to provide entertainment, a facet of hospitality which grew increasingly important in the sixteenth century (Heffernan chapter 4), Don Pedro plots so that “the time shall not go dully by us” until Claudio and Hero’s wedding (2.1.346-47). His rhetoric marks the pair as animals, more specifically as fish for whom he dangles baited hooks and casts nets to capture them in snares of love. The would-be lovers even physically hide, using the garden’s growth as screens, much as fish might hide from predators. Claudio continues the image, likening Benedick to a fish: “Bait the hook well, this fish will bite” (2.3.112-13). Satisfied with ensnaring Benedick, Don Pedro turns his attention to Beatrice, again with fishing metaphors: “Let there be the same net spread for her” (2.3.211). Ursula, in particular, enjoys the pastime:

The pleasant’st angling is to see the fish
Cut with her golden oars the silver stream,
And greedily devour the treacherous bait;
So angle we for Beatrice. (3.1.26-29)

Hero bolsters the metaphor by noting the “false sweet bait that we lay for” Beatrice’s ears (3.1.33). Don Pedro’s intention is not simply to liken his friends to fish but to create an ontological crisis of identity so that Benedick and Beatrice see themselves as vulnerable to sexual, animal appetites. They continually insult each other as animals, yet their love is revealed through Don Pedro’s treatment of them as fish. Only by exhibiting animal traits and surrendering some of their reason, can they open themselves to the possibility of love. They must find a balance between so-called human reason that rebels against reducing human beings to animal status, and animal passion that values the emotional and bodily intimacy marriage requires.
Don Pedro’s trick works. Audiences find the scenes delightful and the trick leads to marriage, a positive outcome in light of the biblical encouragement to marry and procreate. Benedick even confesses that “the world must be peopled” (2.3.237). Further reflection with an ecotheological mind frame, however, carries implications for human/animal relationships. Daniel Brayton observes that likening Benedick and Beatrice to fish within the context of a marriage market undermines humanity, “putting into question the distinction between human flesh and salt fish, desire and commodification” (144). In his study of Shakespeare’s ocean metaphors, Brayton provides an ecocritical response:

[F]ish is not merely a metaphorical presence in the writings of Shakespeare; it is a floating signifier for materiality. Far from producing the kind of oneness with place, landscape, and creation that Berry and many ecocritics pursue, the insight that the human body is materially of this world (including the sea in all its strangeness) and not hovering above destabilizes traditional conceptions of nature and human nature. (150)

I agree that the metaphor destabilizes a human/animal relationship, which also debases the integrity of the ecotheological hierarchy. Rather than a distinct separation between God, human, and animal, the triad degrades to a binary in which humans are reduced to the status of animals. However, some measure of identification with the animal is necessary in order to act on sexual desire. Restoration to the divine/human/animal relationship in the Garden includes humanity’s love and compassion for the animal just as God demonstrates love and compassion for humanity. Benedick and Beatrice must recognize that they, too, experience animal passion, but that their passion can be expressed through sexual intercourse in marriage, not through hurling insults.
The likening of Benedick and Beatrice to fish, I believe, can be used in the service of improving human/animal relationships. The process teaches both of them humility. “I hear how I am censur’d,” Benedick concedes, even expressing willingness to endure ridicule: “I may chance have some odd quirks and remnants of wit broken on me, because I have railed so long against marriage” (2.3.221, 230-31, 31-33). Beatrice suffers even more humiliating reproofs:

But Nature never framed a woman's heart
Of prouder stuff than that of Beatrice;
Disdain and scorn ride sparkling in her eyes,
Misprising what they look on, and her wit
Values itself so highly that to her
All matter else seems weak: she cannot love,
Nor take no shape nor project of affection,
She is so self-endeared. (3.1.49-56)

Like Benedick, she voluntarily abandons her pride: “Stand I condemn'd for pride and scorn so much? Contempt, farewell! and maiden pride, adieu!” (3.1.108-09).

Previously, Benedick and Beatrice employed animal insults as degrading, feeding their pride and indicating lack of value for God’s creatures. Now they utilize animal metaphors to wed their passion with a willingness to marry, as Beatrice does when she exclaims that she is “taming my wild heart to thy loving hand,” (3.1.112). From this point on, their animal insults cease, replaced by a positive identification with the natural world. Relinquishing pride, assuming humility, and admitting love for those previously considered unworthy are keys to correcting humanity’s undervaluation of the animal world. Benedick and Beatrice act as models for the humility necessary for ecological purposes today.
The setting of their decision to unite points to their acceptance of the natural world and biblical hospitality. After Hero’s aborted wedding, Benedick and Beatrice relinquish the Derridean hospitality of their initial greeting, to be replaced with rhetoric that links them to the nonhuman world in a positive manner, not as degradation, demonstrating the virtues necessary to enact lasting and beneficial relationships between humans and animals. Benedick, for the first time, expresses true concern for another through his desire for Beatrice to cease weeping (4.1.257). More importantly, he swears his faith in Beatrice’s belief that Hero is innocent, the same faith Paul defines as “the evidence of things which are not seen” (Heb. 11.1). When he asks, “Think you in your soul the Count Claudio hath wronged Hero?” she answers, “Yea, as sure as I have a thought or a soul” (4.1.327-29). He accepts her belief and stakes his life on it.

Animal imagery disappears, replaced by rhetoric that recognizes service to God first and love for others second: “Serve God, love me and mend” (5.2.87). Benedick places God’s dominion as priority over love for God’s creation, conforming to an ecotheological point of view.

Their conversation for the rest of the play signifies benevolent interaction with the nonhuman world. In the chapel, they engage in stichomythia, alternating protestations of love in intertwining single lines of prose, syntactically grafting arboreal and human together, duplicating the pleached, intertwined branches in the garden where they first admitted to themselves their love for the other. In the final scene, Benedick “thinks upon the savage bull” and “the noble beast” that he once was, but recalls it only as in the past (5.4.43, 47, emphasis added). Each of them admits to love, but only “no more than reason,” abandoning harmful animal passions and replacing them with passions of sexual desire, finding a balance between passion and reason (5.4.74, 77). Both commit to marriage by expressing faith in the other, Benedick’s faith that he will not be cuckolded, and Beatrice’s faith in his willingness to act on her behalf, as he did in
challenging Claudio. Benedick and Beatrice now demonstrate emotional maturity and the development of virtues that model the attributes necessary to effect lasting change in contemporary ecological anxieties: concern for the welfare of others, faith in one’s partner, and recognition of God’s sovereignty. The structure and diction of their conversations indicate healthful relationships with the plant world and animals, allowing animal passions to be moderated with reason.

Claudio, too, relinquishes his reason to his animal passions. Even before he appears on stage, he is described with animal metaphors: “doing in the figure of a lamb the feats of a lion” (1.1.14-15). The metaphors serve a dual purpose. “The feats of a lion” indicate his aggression in slaying enemies and foreshadow his angry renunciation of Hero. The lamb metaphor reveals his vulnerability, anticipating Benedick’s description as a “poor hurt fowl.” Second, because he is a lamb outwardly, but capable of lion like slaughter, the trope of deception is introduced almost immediately. The messenger’s rhetoric holds significance for an ecotheological perspective on two levels. In some of the first lines of the play, the tendency for Messinians to express themselves through animal references is evident, indicating that animals hold little value themselves and are instrumental only in human service. Second, Claudio’s submission to the animal passions is evident, allowing him to kill despite God’s commandment. True, slaying in battle is far different from, say, premeditated murder, but because he is later guilty of domestic violence, cruelly leaving his betrothed for dead at their wedding, a violent aspect of Claudio’s character is disclosed. He does not conform to the ecotheological hierarchy; he disobeys the command not to kill and exercises no control over his animal passions.

Claudio’s passion-filled tirade against Hero and her feigned death afterward is also foreshadowed by hunting language, employing rhetoric that continues to focus on animal
violence and places Hero, a human being, in the position of the hunted. He openly admits that his hunt for love replaces the hunt for enemies that concluded before the start of the play:

O, my lord,

When you went onward on this ended action,

I look’d upon her with a soldier's eye,

That liked, but had a rougher task in hand

Than to drive liking to the name of love:

But now I am return'd and that war-thoughts

Have left their places vacant, in their rooms

Come thronging soft and delicate desires,

All prompting me how fair young Hero is,

Saying, I liked her ere I went to wars. (1.1.284-93, emphasis added)

Because “war-thoughts” are concluded, Claudio can direct his energies to hunting for Hero’s love. The definition of “drive” in this battle context is “to impel,” but the OED also more specifically defines the verb as “to cause to flee before one's pursuit; to chase, hunt” and “to chase or frighten the game or wild beasts of an extensive area into nets, traps, or a small area where they can be killed or captured,” definitions Shakespeare employs elsewhere. Falstaff, for example, jests that he will “drive all [Hal’s] subjects afore thee like a flock of wild geese” (I Henry IV 2.4.136). Predictably, Hero as rhetorical quarry continues until her apparent death. As Jeanne Addison Roberts notes, love hunts like Claudio’s, in which “godlike man” behaves like a beast of prey, contain “overtones of violence and victimization” (88). The trope of a hunt for love was common, but takes on added significance in an ecotheological context. Hunting for sport rather than food technically places Claudio the human hunter in a masterful position over
the animal, but simultaneously demonstrates that Claudio is not moderating the animal passions with a measure of reason, enabling him to kill with the weapon of words.

Because of his culpability in Hero’s deathlike faint, Benedick challenges him to a duel, forcing Claudio to assume the role of quarry. The conversation that ensues combines the discourse of hunting and hospitality. Don Pedro hears Benedick’s challenge and satirically asks, “What, a feast, a feast?” (5.1.152). “Feast,” in the early modern period, referred not only to a spread of food, but also to a gathering for sport (OED). Don Pedro’s reference prompts Claudio to answer with rhetoric depicting a hunting party dismembering the freshly killed game: “he hath bid me to a calf’s head and a capon; the which if I do not carve most curiously, say my knife's naught. Shall I not find a woodcock too?” (5.1.153-56). Claudio’s words imitate hunting manuals from the period that euphemistically use verbs reserved for carving meat at the table, such as “cut” and “slit,” rather than the more brutal terms “gut” and “skin.” One 1614 hunting manual, for example, A Jewell for Gentrie, refers to “carving the hart” (qtd. in E. Berry 76, emphasis added), the same word Shakespeare uses in a field dressing context in Love’s Labours Lost (see 4.1.56-57). Claudio’s word choice refers to the importance of the field dressing ritual as well. George Gascoigne, in his Noble Arte of Venerie, 1575, explains that spectators judge the hunter’s cutting technique. If the hunter’s knife does not correctly follow the customary ritual, “it is a forfayture, and [the hunter] is thought to be no handsome woodman” (134-35). Claudio’s acknowledgement that his knife is “naught” if he does not carve correctly parallels the scorn he would incur if he does not answer Benedick’s challenge.

Benedick’s challenge is charged with the discourse of hunting and carving meat. Formerly, Claudio took the position of hunter, when he hunted and killed Hero. Now he serves as the quarry, threatened with death. The conversation analogizes Claudio as meat ritualistically
cut up for consumption, reduced to an animal product. The resulting binary consists of God, represented by Benedick exercising dominion as the admonisher, and Claudio, residing on the same level as animals. The ecotheological hierarchy calls for dominion over animals, not a union with animals, in a hierarchy established by God with three steps, not two. Claudio’s chastisement for violating that hierarchy serves to remind us that the penalties for doing so can be severe, in this case potential death in a duel. Humans are to temper their animal passions with reason, finding the balance that allows expression of legitimate emotion without resulting in violent death. Claudio’s deadly threat to Hero and Benedick’s deadly threat to Claudio cease only with Claudio’s penance, which also ends the rhetoric of sport hunting, because its only purpose was to possess the hunted. Now he can experience a more equable relationship with Hero and reconcile with Benedick. Claudio ceases his manipulation of Hero as an instrument to prove his own superiority, a sentient being cast off at will when she no longer conforms to his flattering self-perception. When Hero gains value as worthy of a mutual relationship, Claudio’s language records the change. The hunting and butchering metaphors end when he rejects the false judgments formulated in the passions of anger and revenge, confesses his “mistaking” (5.1.270), and admits that the image of Hero again “doth appear in the rare semblance that I lov’d at first” (5.1.246-47).

His penance through acceptance of a replacement bride chosen by Leonato is executed within the conventions of biblical hospitality. Leonato requires that Claudio marry Leonato’s “niece,” sight unseen. Claudio declares, “I’ll hold my mind were she an Ethiope” (5.4.38). For Shakespeare’s audience, Claudio’s resolve, despite reservations about what may be under the veil, conveys unconditional acceptance, which, according to Derrida, defines true hospitality. For Derrida, “absolute hospitality requires that I open up my home and that I give not only to the
foreigner (provided with a family name, with the social status of being a foreigner, etc.), but to the absolute, unknown, anonymous others, and that I give place to them, that I let them come, that I let them arrive, and take place in the place I offer them” (*Of Hospitality* 25). Claudio’s unknown bride is an “absolute other” whom Claudio must accept unconditionally, welcomed as his wife into his home. He gives place to her: “I am your husband if you like of me” (5.4.59). Although he is held “hostage” by Leonato’s will, he agrees to “feed the stranger,” his future wife, recognizing two etymological sources for “hospitality” stressed by Derrida. In essence, he agrees to provide the same hospitality Abraham provided for men he did not know were angels (1.1.174, 180-81). He accepts her unconditionally, imitating God’s unconditional love in the community of marriage.

His decision to accept Leonato’s penance by marrying an unknown bride demonstrates submission to the wishes of a father figure, analogous to a Christian’s submission to God. His penance also exemplifies a wedding of reason and faith. According to reason, Claudio’s guilt for an innocent woman’s death will be assuaged through reparation. In conjunction with reason is faith in Leonato’s choice of a bride, demonstrated by his acceptance of a silent, veiled woman as his lifelong partner. His willingness to do so goes beyond both reason and hospitality conventions to trust in Leonato’s choice on his behalf. Claudio’s combined reason and faith allow him to temper his animal passions, which could have resulted in destructive behavior toward Borachio, the man with whom Hero supposedly slept. Claudio’s ability to recall his love and sexual desire for her without indulging possible anger at her feigned death, followed by reparative action, offers a model for the penance that is sometimes necessary, utilizes the power of emotions to motivate action, and exercises faith that the world can be transformed into more healthful human/animal relationships.
Don John, on the other hand, carries no illusions that the world can be beneficially transformed. Much of his bitterness is expressed in animal metaphors. With “I am trusted with a muzzle, and enfranchis’d with a clog,” he identifies himself as a dog hobbled to a heavy block of wood designed to prevent escape (1.3.30-31, McEachern 174). His literal identification was not deemed impossible: “in Shakespeare’s time the privileging of humankind as *sui generis* had not fully taken hold and it was possible to think that a person might in some sense descend to the level of a dog by his behavior” (Egan, “Gaia” 66). Don John’s behavior and the misanthropy it is based on do not suggest meaningless complaint but a genuine threat of violence. Simon Estok interprets similar figurative language in *Henry VI, Part 2*, concluding that such metaphors are “clearly not the favorites of plant and animal husbandry. […] And by placing the human on the same level as the morally inconsiderable natural world, these metaphors implicitly carry possibilities and permissibilities for mortal violence in their meaning” (“Theory”). Estok is correct, for Don John’s statement acts as a preamble to the deceptions that result in Leonato’s loss of reputation, Claudio’s sense of betrayal, and Hero’s slander and apparent death. Don John is unable or unwilling to keep his anger and resentment at his brother, which extends to Don Pedro’s friends and colleagues, in an appropriate tension with his reason, expressing his inability to control the beast within, contributing to Messina’s merry war.

**Pemberley’s Residents as Animals**

In their own way, Darcy and Elizabeth enact a merry war in a relationship that sometimes mirrors Benedick and Beatrice’s, inspiring my pairing of the two works. Although Austen does not mention in her letters seeing *Much Ado about Nothing* performed, it is likely she would have at least known the play. Jocelyn Harris has shown that Austen was perpetually “alert to gossip about private figures” and was familiar with Dorothy Jordan, a comic actress of the day,
especially famous for her role as Beatrice (Harris 412, 410). Harris argues convincingly that Jordan’s reputation for unconventional femininity and energy could have inspired Austen’s creation of Elizabeth. Juliet McMaster argues that “Beatrice, ‘born in a merry hour’ (2.1.317-18) is surely kin to Elizabeth, who ‘dearly love[s] a laugh” (62). Like Benedick and Beatrice, Darcy and Elizabeth at first exhibit hostility and incivility, then learn to recognize the moral value of each other, and ultimately marry. Also intimately tied to settings of hospitality that rely on the natural world, as Benedick and Beatrice are, Darcy and Elizabeth’s journey from hostility to embodiment of the virtues necessary for attitudinal changes toward the nonhuman world is enacted through hospitality practices, which Derrida’s hospitality theories further illuminate.

Darcy’s and Elizabeth’s incivilities and hostility are most evident in hospitality settings, such as the ball where they first meet. He refuses to dance or converse with anyone he does not know by welcoming no one into his circle of intimates. Such behavior, Derrida asserts, is hardly hospitable: “If I welcome only what I welcome, what I am ready to welcome, and that I recognize in advance because I expect the coming of the hôte as invited, there is no hospitality” (Shepherd 57-58). At this point in the novel, Darcy is incapable of biblical, sacrificial hospitality. Instead, he and Elizabeth both exhibit hostipitality, a combination of hospitality and hostility they later learn to overcome. Their incivilities are numerous, extending from direct and indirect insults, to dance refusals, to a lack of effort for even minimal sociability. For example, during Elizabeth’s sojourn as guest at Netherfield, Darcy “scarcely spoke ten words to her through the whole of Saturday” (66). At Hunsford, “he frequently sat there ten minutes together without opening his lips; and when he did speak, it seemed the effect of necessity rather than of choice—a sacrifice to propriety, not a pleasure to himself” (203). Elizabeth returns the near silence: “nor did she give herself the trouble of talking or of listening much” (204). During one dance,
Elizabeth actively strives to make him uncomfortable: “fancying that it would be the greater punishment to her partner to oblige him to talk, she made some slight observation on the dance,” compelling him to make some kind of reply against his natural inclination (102). Their incivility in these social occasions, always sharing the role of guest, demonstrates Derrida’s hospitaility in which hostility is very much a part of hospitality. Darcy’s and Elizabeth’s incivilities are not accidental or absentmindedly negligent, but deliberate, often premeditated, indicating intentional lack of consideration for others. Their incivility is significant on three levels of increasing importance: hospitality practices, ethical concerns, and theological expectations. Ultimately, as the incivility of their early hospitaility develops into sincere civility and hospitality, Darcy and Elizabeth mature into models useful for contemporary ecological activism.

According to the societal mores of Austen’s day, codes of courteous behavior are “not to be confused with mere formalities. They are based on solid principles of courtesy, propriety and, most of all, regard for the feelings of others” (J. Ross 4). Hospitality, Derrida argues, means more than following pre-established conduct guidelines. Hospitality is to be regulated “by the request of the other” or by “the absolute responsibility one holds to the other” (Shepherd 65-66). Regardless of the fact that human beings have the potential to be far more destructive than other animals, warfare acting as a prime example, the definitions of hospitality in Austen’s society assumed that regard for others separates man from animal, placing humans in a superior position by excluding “savagery,” “barbarism,” and the “uncivilized” elements of Plebeian culture and sociality” (Looser 20). Courtesy, it was believed, was a mark of humanity because it requires control, deemed at the time difficult for animals, unless their human masters extensively train and control them. Michèle Cohen clarifies: “Politeness, as an art de plaire, required self-control and discipline of both body and tongue. The “ease” of politeness was not comforting, but artful
mastery over one’s manners and conduct, in line with the classical legacy of moderation and stoicism on which notions of politeness were ultimately founded” (313). Real consideration for others, as opposed to superficial behavior, is a concern not only for society, but also for Austen herself. Mansfield Park, for example, despite its flaws, is a household in which “all proceeded in a regular course of cheerful orderliness; everybody had their due importance; everybody's feelings were consulted” (453). Emma’s Mr. Knightley, as another example, contrasts the “smooth, plausible manners,” which are merely “a social manner calculated to please,” from “delicacy towards the feelings of other people,” behavior that enters deeply and thoughtfully into the sensibilities of others (161, Stokes 80). Perhaps an even more precise example is Sense and Sensibility’s Elinor Dashwood, who is horrified at Willoughby’s “impudently cruel” letter to Marianne, its heartlessness only emphasized by its cold formality and perfect politeness (209).

Darcy’s behavior, for much of the novel, does not accomplish Austen’s conception of consideration for others. He does not even attempt, early in the story, the “ability to please and make others feel easy” (325). Darcy’s and Elizabeth’s incivility, for Austen’s original readers, marks them as closer to the savage, barbarous, and uncivilized and further from the refined conduct expected of them. The language Austen’s narrator chooses indicates that inadequacy. Although relying less directly on the animal metaphors so prevalent in Much Ado about Nothing, the characters nevertheless indicate a measure of inhumanity that causes harm to others, connecting that lack of humanity to passionate extremes that demonstrate their lack of conformity to the ecotheological hierarchy.

For example, when Elizabeth believes Darcy deprived Wickham of his education and career contrary to Mr. Darcy, Sr.’s wishes, she questions Darcy’s inhumanity: “I had supposed him to be despising his fellow-creatures in general, but did not suspect him of descending to such
malicious revenge, such injustice, such inhumanity as this” (90, emphasis added). Jane agrees, maintaining that “No man of common humanity, no man who had any value for his character, could be capable of it” (96, emphasis added). The narrator expresses Darcy’s apparent cruelty not with a rhetoric of religious belief or immorality, but in terms of losing his identity as a human being because he allows extreme emotions, or passions, to control his choices. Darcy acknowledges this struggle for control when he writes that he battled “the utmost force of passion to put aside” his repugnance at the idea of marrying into Elizabeth’s family, utilizing the theological discourse of disciplining the passions that mark one as less human and more animal (220). He struggles, at times, to maintain the integrity of the ecotheological hierarchy. His ultimate victory in that struggle marks him as a model for the virtues necessary for ecological reform.

Darcy’s incivility indicates not only a lack of charity, but also rejection of deeper ethical concerns. Austen emphasizes “the niceties of decorum, grace, tolerance, sympathy” in “the realm of ethics” as a reflection of inner character and morality (Baker 72). She writes “from a constant awareness of the contrast between superficial ‘smooth, plausible manners’ (being merely ‘agreeable’) and genuine tact, which requires ‘delicacy towards the feelings of other people’” (Van Der Ziel 209). Courtesy itself should offer motivation to extend hospitality to each other, to those whose “acquaintance starts under the sign of difference” (Steiner 93). Austen’s narrator markedly expresses Darcy’s lack of courtesy early in the novel as a lack of humanity. When he does extend courtesy, his motivation is mere conformity to surface manners. The turning point in his ethical journey occurs when Elizabeth and the reader, together, see Darcy’s genuine stewardship of Pemberley’s grounds. His estate demonstrates not merely a display to flaunt his taste, the equivalent of a veneer of surface manners, but an estate “without any artificial
appearance.” As the plot progresses, Darcy’s beneficial, ethical treatment of the natural world, according to the standards of his day, extends more and more to Elizabeth and her family. His courtesy, civility, and humanity to other human beings mirror his courtesy to the nonhuman world.

Consideration for others defines not only the social character of Austen’s society, but theological obedience as well. Solicitude for others was considered in late eighteenth-century England to be a daily expression of one’s love for God, expressions that “easily grow into a complete system of religion,” as Thomas Sherlock, Austen’s preferred sermonizer, writes (253). Sherlock adds, “In all cases, therefore, where your duty to your neighbor is plain and clear, depend upon it your duty to God concurs with it. All scruples to the contrary are wicked” (263). To meet the demands of their society, to recognize Derrida’s definition of hospitality as “a response to the Other,” to treat others ethically, and to exhibit obedience to God’s precepts, Darcy and Elizabeth have multiple inducements to act charitably (Shepherd 55, Smith 9). They both learn to extend their consideration for the natural world to other human beings thought to be different from themselves: each other.

Darcy and Elizabeth are able, eventually, to overcome the lingering effects of the Fall by relinquishing the harmful passions of pride and prejudice, following Sherlock’s advice to exercise both reason and passion: it must “be the work of reason to keep the passions within their proper bounds” (417). After reading Darcy’s explanatory letter, Elizabeth experiences passionate emotions of rage and humiliation: “her feelings were yet more acutely painful”; “astonishment, apprehension, and even horror, oppressed her”; “I have courted prepossession and ignorance, and driven reason away” (226-227, 230). Until now, she has allowed unreasoning, adverse emotion to govern her behavior toward Darcy. His letter temporarily arouses those emotions, but she
learns to moderate them with the restraint of reason. She recognizes “how just” his charges are, “the justice of his description,” and, finally, “the justice of the charge struck her too forcibly for denial” (230, 231). Elizabeth “abandons her subjective stance and adopts a position of objectivity from which she can ‘unfold’ her ‘faculties’ and rationally analyze the situation” (Leahy 138). Elizabeth finally chooses to recognize that Wickham’s charm and Darcy’s hauteur reflect only exterior barriers rather than moral character. As her memories and sincere reflection continue, she attains an equity between destructive passions and reason, allowing her to see Darcy with honesty and affection, prompting her to accept his second proposal.

Darcy, too, learns to abandon his hasty initial assessment of Elizabeth’s barely “tolerable” looks and award her with the more reasoned judgment of regarding her as the “most handsome woman of his acquaintance” (12, 300). More importantly, he uses his understanding to see past her swiftly noted “low connections” to value her liveliness of mind and affectionate behavior (40, 422). Both Darcy and Elizabeth learn to combine the best of both reason and emotion. For example, anger at Elizabeth’s rejection of his first proposal spurs Darcy to reflect on his selfishness and pride. Reciprocal anger at Darcy’s arrogant proposal motivates Elizabeth to likewise re-evaluate her quick acceptance of Wickham’s claims and Darcy’s faults. Dynamic characters, capable of change, Darcy and Elizabeth do not allow extreme passions to overwhelm reason but wed legitimate emotions with rationality in order to grow and learn from their faults. According to Johnson, pride, of which both are guilty, “produces quickness of resentment, [and] will obstruct gratitude, by unwillingness to admit that inferiority which obligation implies,” arising “from the same constitution of the passions” (Rambler 158). Pride is “judgment formed beforehand without examination,” causing “mischief, detriment, hurt, injury” because of “unexamined opinions” (Dictionary). Darcy and Elizabeth are guilty but are also able,
eventually, to temper passions with reason and reason with passions, following Sherlock’s 1758 discourse:

God has given us reason and understanding to moderate and direct our passions; it is in vain to plead our passion in defence or excuse of sensuality, unless at the same time we could please that we were void of reason, and had no higher principle than passion to influence our actions: for if it be the work of reason to keep the passions within their proper bounds, the reasonable creature must be accountable for the work of his passion. (417)

Finally able to moderate their passions, Darcy and Elizabeth transform the destructive emotions of pride and prejudice into constructive gratitude. Gaining perspective on their emotions, as Elizabeth and Darcy both do in the passage of time between the first proposal and the reunion at Pemberley, allows the achievement of reliable, trusted truth by reinstating the ecotheological hierarchy.

Evidence of their newfound balanced reason and emotion is found in changed hospitality practices. Darcy’s objective when Elizabeth unexpectedly visits Pemberley is to show her that he can apply her earlier criticisms. His role as host mirrors God as Host as he provides everything he can for their comfort and happiness. His earlier arrogance disappears and he graciously invites Elizabeth and her aunt to visit his sister and offers Mr. Gardiner the opportunity to fish in Pemberley’s trout stream. Elizabeth, too, turns away from her former incivility. As guest at Pemberley, she strives “to imitate his politeness,” “to make herself agreeable to all,” and to repel the “ill-natured attack” of Miss Bingley with tact and composure (281, 289, 297). When Darcy visits Longbourn, Elizabeth, as host, is eager to talk with him and tries to deflect her mother’s officiousness and hostility. Darcy’s unanticipated civility, appended to his explanatory letter,
plus months of both emotional and reasonable reflection on Elizabeth’s part, win her heart. Darcy is eager to please Elizabeth and add materially to her happiness by benefitting her sisters. Elizabeth now joins the Pemberley community, dependent upon Darcy’s generosity. Even though he represents patriarchal power, which many would argue inherently signifies hostility, Darcy seems determined to demonstrate only hospitality. He genuinely attempts to please Elizabeth and requires no return for his expenditure of time, money, and humiliation. He offers Christian love through gracious hospitality, the extension of his resources, and a second—accepted—marriage proposal. Elizabeth grows as well, learning to judge Darcy and Wickham with justice through the experience of her own humility at her mistakes, her unseemly family, and her vulnerability caused by Lydia’s elopement. The reader, by identifying with Elizabeth, grows and learns with her. Alison Searle puts it this way:

As readers we are taken upon the same epistemological journey as the heroine, being educated in the process as to the way that a prejudice engendered by hurt pride can lead to unjust interpretations of others. Imaginatively, we engage with Elizabeth's initial self-deception, growing self-awareness, repentance, and gradual reconciliation to Darcy as she herself learns to lay aside her initial prejudice when interpreting his character, through a “hermeneutics of love.” (24)

Darcy and Elizabeth learn to love and value one another. Vicariously accompanying the couple on their journey to love, readers learn to respect, value, and love those seemingly different from themselves, just as Darcy and Elizabeth do. Their love story captures deep interest as readers fall in love with them. That love prompts readers to identify with them and value the same things they do. Because Darcy and Elizabeth learn to love those they thought were so different from themselves in a natural world setting, readers do, too.
Their newfound love, tied as it is to a value for the morality they perceive in each other, does not suppress sexual passions, but instead enhances them as valuable passions within marriage. Many authors in the Enlightenment period, in fact, identified the passions and moral sentiments as nearly synonymous: “‘moral sentiments’, which were thought of as particular ‘passions’ (or sometimes ‘affections’),” vividly recall Jane Bennet’s admonition to Elizabeth that she “do anything rather than marry without affection” (Dixon 64, Austen 414). Further, “moral sentiments and affections were potentially rational as well as being warm and lively states of mind” (Dixon 64). Darcy and Elizabeth’s decision to marry occurs only after they combine sexual passion, acknowledged openly by Darcy if not by Elizabeth, with regard for the moral character of the other. Elizabeth recognizes Darcy’s character through his hospitality, verified by his sacrificial arrangement of her sister’s marriages. Darcy first acknowledges her moral character after considering her walk to Netherfield to be with her ill sister and later confirms it by the hard truths in her rebuke to his proposal. Their marriage combines the emotion evoked by Darcy’s “You must allow me to tell you how ardently I admire and love you” with Mr. Bennet’s consent to the marriage: “I could not have parted with you, my Lizzy, to any one less worthy” (211, 418, emphasis added). Ardent love and moral worth together form the match.

Their ability to yield to healthful, not destructive, prejudiced passions, as Darcy and Elizabeth do, places their reason and passion into a context that models a vision for the redemption of current human/animal relationships. Restoring that Edenic affinity and performing Christian stewardship according to understandings of “dominion” means nourishing their passions and moral sentiments for one another in order to realize their relationship. This more moderate vision of humanity’s relationship with the nonhuman is consistent with Austen’s attempt to distance Darcy from hunting, which is never directly referenced in the novel. Instead,
she links him directly with fishing, considered a gentler rural sport at the time, an association marking a more placid stance toward the nonhuman animal world.

Sport hunting, although popular among the landed classes, was not highly esteemed in the biblical perspective familiar to Austen. One writer warned in 1677 that hunting would make us “grow wild, haunting the woods till we resemble the beasts” (Cox iii). Thomas Tryon cautioned in 1691 that hunting makes men passionately cruel. He recommended, therefore, that “none take pleasure to offer violence to that Life, lest he awaken the fierce wrath and bring danger to his own Soul” (6-7). Men should refrain from hunting, hawking, and shooting to allow them to “moderate thy Passions therefore by Wisdom and sound Reason” (17, 18). George Nicholson, in 1801, declared that hunting “should rather be called a wild passion, a brutal propensity. […] The destruction of an animal is esteemed amusement! strange perversion of feeling!” (190). Tryon and Nicholson’s statements demonstrate one opinion accepted at the time, that the thrill of the chase imitates more of the savagery of a predatory animal and less rational thought. Perhaps the predation of sport hunting prompts Austen to depict only her villains directly with hunting, such as Willoughby in Sense and Sensibility. Further, Austen’s narrator uses hunting rhetoric, in particular the rhetoric of love hunts, only to describe the villains and antagonists, like Mansfield Park's Crawford, who aims to “make[e] a small hole in Fanny Price’s heart” (267).

Readers may rightfully assume Darcy hunts, but the narrator never refers to it and Darcy himself never speaks of it. Seeber claims that in Pride and Prejudice, Austen “attempts a utopian challenge to the sporting world and its associated hierarchy” (55). She correctly observes, “The relationship between Darcy and Elizabeth is outside of the world of hunting and shooting” (63). When the reader is told secondhand about Darcy’s shooting, Austen’s word choice, perhaps
deliberately, separates him somewhat from the killing of animals for, according to William Cobbett in 1825, there was “an important distinction to be made between hunters (including coursers) and shooters” (qtd. in Landry 98, emphasis added). Because firearms were unreliable, “shooting was more about stalking than about killing” (Landry xiv). Cobbett claims, “Hunting and coursing were animal-centered” (qtd. in Landry 98). Austen’s use of shooting as a plot device is always within a social context. Bingley and Darcy come to Netherfield specifically for shooting (366) and Mrs. Bennet twice invites Bingley to shoot at Longbourn with her husband (373, 383). In the context of this novel, at least, the invitation to shoot is stressed rather than the men’s marksmanship or the number of birds they kill. Austen thus stresses Darcy’s communal impulse behind shooting, simultaneously understating any hunting he may or may not engage in, thereby also minimizing images of animal slaughter.

Furthermore, shooting, particularly pheasant shooting, may have contributed to rural ecology. Planted coverts, the “covies” Mrs. Bennet claims will be saved for Bingley, were often “the only clump of trees anywhere in sight over thousands of acres” (Hoskins, qtd. in Landry 69). Coverts were planted shreds of green allowed to remain in landscapes that would have otherwise made way for financial profit. Austen, by bringing Darcy to Netherfield specifically for shooting, adds to Darcy’s ideal as a conservationist suitable for emulation.

Darcy’s choice of shooting as a rural sport is mentioned only secondhand through Bingley and Mrs. Bennet. Fishing, however, is uniquely Darcy’s own pastime, alone among all other Austenian heroes and is actively endorsed by him. Compared to hunting, fishing enjoyed a higher level of respectability in the early nineteenth century, although some disapproved. Nicholson, for example, wrote in 1801 that fishing requires, “with the utmost unconcern, a barbed hook forced through the defenceless body of the writhing worm, there to remain, in
torture, as a bait for the fish [. . .] Can there be a more dreadful torture invented? Yet we may be told, with a laugh, it is only a worm” (199). Thomas Warren, in an essay about fishing intended for boys, stresses the moral advantages of not fishing merely for pleasure. Declining sport fishing, he claims,

will render you (in some degree) like the Father of the Universe, who is daily shedding his benign Influences upon his Creatures all around him.

I might justly remark to you, how readily these poor innocent Creatures, the Fishes, take the Baits you so artfully prepare for them, by which all their Happiness with their Lives is destroyed; and from whence it will be easy to infer, how subject unthinking Youth is to catch at the destructive Baits and Snares laid for him, by the great Enemy of Mankind, the destroyer of Souls. (20)

For most, however, fishing was regarded as polite outdoor family fare (Deuchar 94). Its perception as a gentler, more contemplative outdoor sport allows Elizabeth to revise her earlier impressions of Darcy’s pride and arrogance as she personally witnesses the capacity of fishing to bridge class distinctions when Darcy welcomes Mr. Gardiner to fish at Pemberley despite his tradesman status, in contrast to the more class-based hunt (Seeber 67). Additionally, Austen portrays fishing within the trope of hospitality when Darcy offers the pastime as entertainment to Elizabeth’s uncle, hoping for Elizabeth’s approval. Coupled with the beautiful landscape and Darcy’s generosity, Pemberley is presented as ecotheologically superior, providing a model for today.

**Conclusion: Restoration through Recognition of Other’s Inherent Value**

Benedick and Beatrice, along with Darcy and Elizabeth, demonstrate the attitudinal changes that literary imagination can perform, even if the authors were not “self-consciously
directed and shaped by [a desired outcome] and a coherent set of ideas” based on ecological activism (Raglon and Scholtmeijer 123). The principal couples in Much Ado about Nothing act as models for more benign attitudes toward animals. As they develop into characters who demonstrate concern for others based on their inherent value rather than their instrumentality for themselves, they abandon derogatory animal metaphors. The final scene places the newfound harmony in Messina within John F. Haught’s “cosmic approach” to environmental concerns (237). The biblical Paul’s observation that the “whole of creation” awaits restoration to the prelapsarian world does not necessarily mean environmental efforts must wait for a future date, similar to Benedick’s call for a dance “ere we are married,” unwilling to wait for the completion of the marriage sacrament (5.4.117). Darcy and Elizabeth also model virtues useful for changing attitudes toward the natural world today. They relinquish the pride that allowed them to so easily dismiss each other’s inherent value and experience gratitude for those whom they considered so fundamentally different from themselves. As Haught observes, the gospels picture Jesus as continually seeking deeper connections than those required by the customs of his time, embracing those who did not belong (230). Because Darcy and Elizabeth do the same, in a different context, their example can serve as a justifiable extension of the spirit of Christ in our own time. Rather than maintaining the prejudicial binaries that divide them, the characters in these works embrace a compassionate care for others based on the command given in the Garden of Eden and the example Christ provided.
CHAPTER V
COMPROMISED FOOD: RESTORATION OF COMMUNION AFTER THE FALL

Introduction—Food, Cannibalism, and Communion

A discussion of food in an ecotheological context necessarily draws upon both the landscape and the animals previously discussed. After all, the food we eat represents one of our most immediate day-to-day contact with vegetation and animals. The acquisition of food was specifically affected by the Fall: “cursed is the earth for thy sake: in sorrow shalt thou eat of it all the days of thy life. Thorns also and thistles shall it bring forth to thee, and thou shalt eat the herb of the field. In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread till thou return to the earth” (Gen. 3.17-19). Although God did not sanction consumption of animal meat until after the Flood, the consequences of the Fall make raising and killing animals for food difficult, requiring more labor and causing more suffering for animals. The fact that Adam and Eve precipitated the Fall specifically through the act of eating reinforces the danger of consuming proscribed food. Considered together, the cursed ground, the hostility of animals, and the fruit Adam and Eve ate laid the foundation for a problematic relationship between people and food.

Food necessarily forms a large part of hospitality practices, particularly observable on country estates, which were often self-sufficient, providing their own grains for making bread and beer; domesticated animals for meat, milk, and cheese; and a variety of fruits and vegetables (Mertes 96). In fact, as Landry observes, the country house poem celebrated the natural world’s
devotion to its human owner, representing “a great repository of plenty to be harvested for the asking” (57). Food of all kinds was “ready and willing to be consumed,” providing country house poems with “a rhetoric of natural bounty and bloodless consumption” (57).

Countering that sense of willing largesse, however, is the reputation of meat-eating as an act intimately connected to Reformation beliefs about dominion in the early modern period. As Erica Fudge explains:

The Reformation was in part about a return to what was viewed as a purer theology […] and about a return to a purer way of living. […] For this reason a movement that might take the believer closer to original innocence might be something to aspire to. […] If vegetarianism is part of the original, innocent order of things, a vegetarian diet might be an obvious way for Reformed thinkers to begin their own quest for purification. (Renaissance 72)

Vegetarianism was rare, but as Fudge points out, the possible evils of meat-eating were a topic of lively debate in the early modern era: “the dinner plate daily offers some of Reformed theology’s central tenets: humanity is fallen and corrupt (‘wretched’ is a favorite term of Calvin), and dominion is God-given” (“Saying” 75).

Far more widespread was the belief that the food one consumes contributes directly to one’s identity: you are what you eat. In this period, “food was very much a moral issue” (Borlik 188). Responsibility for healthful diet choices was taken seriously, pointing to one’s degree of control over what is taken into the body (Biewer 25). If one becomes what one eats, the insults Benedick and Beatrice exchange, referring to the other as a food item, indicate inedible, rejected bodies, indicating their unwillingness to accept anyone less than ideal. At the same time, however, the images also indicate their shared corporeality, their unrecognized dependence on
each other, and their moral failings. Only when they choose to affirm each other’s worth and their interdependence does their relationship alter, allowing them to act as models for moderate and responsible food choices. Contemporary ecocriticism can use Shakespeare’s capacity for storytelling “to extend our material bodies and the material processes in which they are enmeshed, not to sever us from them. We extend our material lives and bodies, and thereby we also extend and increase our material impact” (Phillips and Sullivan 447).

Adding to the troubled perspective on food in general was the belief that meat stimulates lust, a source of human bestialization because animal flesh literally transforms into human flesh through the process of digestion (80). Animal lust, ingested through meat, is, then, more difficult to successfully merge with reason for a positive outcome. Therefore, although most people did not completely abstain from meat, the type of meat and the amount of meat were considered important, both as an attempt to partially restore Edenic conditions and to maintain one’s constitution by not indiscriminately gorging on meat (Fudge, “Saying” 81). Fudge explains, “what is important is moderation. To resist temptation, lust, is to turn away from the pleasures of the flesh to the pleasures of the mind. Judgment comes with temperance, and judgment is something animals—and some humans—lack,” indicating that even the rich, who could afford more meat, could resolve to moderate their meat consumption as one form of religious observance, an attempt to moderate the temptation of lust (“Saying” 81).

Early modern views on meat-eating shed light on both Shakespeare’s play and on ecological efforts today. Just as I earlier argued that the use of degrading animal metaphors can affect our view and treatment of animals, so can the act of eating meat, simply because such a large percentage of the population does not think about it: “The very domesticity of flesh eating is what makes it interesting. It is almost invisible in its power, but unthought anthropocentrism is
more significant and more powerful than any dominion that has to be constantly defended, and it is for this reason that meat is important” (Fudge, “Saying” 70).

Complicating the troubled relationship with meat is the act of communion. For conventional theologians, whether as Catholic transubstantiation or Protestant symbolism, Christ is not present merely in a plate and cup on the altar, but also as spiritual food and drink nourishing the life of faith (Crockett 277). The Host is offered in a spirit of hospitality to God’s children. By replacing Satan’s offer to take and eat the sinful fruit with the offer to take and eat the body and blood of Christ, communion represents both the perfection experienced in paradise and the stewardship of utilizing bread and wine in the most responsible manner. When placed in the context of hospitality, communion models God the Host.

One more complication remains when considering the role of food and communion in an ecotheological context: cannibalism, which is directly and indirectly imputed in both works in this study. The social taboo represents the ultimate act of Othering, defining cannibals as subhuman and placing the alleged perpetrators outside the realm of what was considered civilized, hospitable culture, seemingly on a par with animals. Cannibalism also opens up another of Derrida’s contradictions. He writes in The Beast and the Sovereign that an anthropophagic cannibal is “more similar to his victim and thus also, paradoxically, more other, more of an other than the beast. But he is less similar, precisely because he eats his fellow, and thus becomes inhuman, because he is anthropophagic human, less human and less my fellow” (142). The suggestions of cannibalism in these two works, then, inherently contain implications about the moral character of figurative cannibals, offering an evaluation of how well they maintain the humanity implicit in God’s command to exercise dominion over nonhumans.
David B. Goldstein further complicates cannibalism by observing, “The notion that a bite of food might have transubstantive and cannibalistic properties produced much consternation in Tudor-Stuart England” (“Shakespeare and Food” 158). Communion, defined as the body and blood of Christ, inherently suggests cannibalism. Communion, in a nonreligious sense, suggests community, commensality, and social harmony, the ultimate goal of Edenic perfection, when divine, human, and nonhuman existed in peaceful and intimate terms. With Goldstein, I argue that food and community are related: “In a fallen world, the gathering of community, like the gathering of food, is a difficult labor. By the sweat of our brows must we till the fields of mutual understanding; we struggle to bring forth the children of shared ideas. Adam asks God for community. He gets it, and loses it, and its loss becomes one of the defining human sorrows” (Goldstein, Eating 176). Food, in these multiple contexts, complicates the characters in Much Ado about Nothing and Pride and Prejudice as models of ecologically conscious human beings. As readers witness the characters’ relationship with food, cannibalism, and communion, they can draw conclusions about ecological practices.

The addition of a theological element to hospitality, as I suggest here, establishes the host in a social setting as a representative of the Host in heaven. Hospitality ordinarily elicits a binary of host/guest in an exchange system. God’s model of hospitality, however, operates on the Host/host/guest hierarchy in which the Host represents Christ, who demonstrates benevolent hosting privileges over the host, who ideally imitates the Host by demonstrating benevolent hosting privileges over his guest. The host offers physical and spiritual sustenance and creates a harmonious community of guests, in the Christian sense of accepting Christ’s offer of his body and blood. The sharing of food in a social setting, then, should foster a similar sense of community.
Despite Leonato’s feast, no sense of commensality is evident; neither is a sense of community until the very end of the play. Evident instead is Derrida’s hospitality in which the host always views the guest “virtually as an enemy. This other becomes a hostile subject, and I risk becoming their hostage” (*Of Hospitality* 55). When hospitality is extended, “injustice, a certain injustice, and even a certain perjury, begins right away, from the very threshold of the right to hospitality” (55). In *Much Ado about Nothing*, an impression of injustice emerges almost from the first line. Beatrice’s playful mockery of Benedick even before he arrives and Don John’s awkward, tension-filled welcome foreshadow the threat both pose to commensality. Beatrice’s threat is in response to Don John’s actions and is short-lived, but her choice to suggest cannibalistic revenge rather than another form of revenge holds significance in an ecotheological context.

**Messina’s Residents as Hosts and Cannibals**

Revenge, or at least ill will, lies behind the food metaphors in this play. The string of insults Benedick and Beatrice hurl, often relying on images of food and eating, function to establish their rejection of each other based on the other’s apparent lack of humanity. Their insults reduce one another to food, suggesting inedibility and cannibalism, augmenting their rhetorical debasement to the level of animals and indicating a failure to integrate animal passions with reason as dictated by the ecotheological hierarchy that represents ideal Edenic harmony.

Benedick and Beatrice’s material bodies are compared to distasteful food. Benedick mockingly declares, “Oh God, sir, here’s a dish I love not, I cannot endure my Lady Tongue” (2.1.261-62), pronouncing Beatrice foul-tasting fare, perhaps even indigestible. The levels of meaning are multiple, referring not only to her continual diatribes but also to the practice of eating beef tongues, reducing her to a chewy meat product, which is unappetizing to many
palates. Beatrice also sneeringly refers to Benedick as food fit only to feed scorn and disdain: “Is it possible disdain should die while she hath such meet food to feed it as Signior Benedick?” (1.1.115-16). Shakespeare’s choice of “meet,” strictly defined as “apt or fitting,” but also punning on “meat” or dead flesh, can be no coincidence, as evidenced by its use in Hamlet (see 5.1.97).

At the same time, the metaphors suggest that each is cannibalistic: Benedick cannot bear to eat Beatrice while Beatrice admits that Benedick offers her a great quantity of food. Suggestions of cannibalism are more directly stated in Beatrice’s first words: “How many hath he kill’d and eaten in these wars? But how many hath he kill’d? for indeed I promis’d to eat all of his killing” (1.1.40-42). Beatrice is expressing “the most extreme dietetic misbehaviour, characterising the person as disgusting and undignified” (Biewer 25). Their jests accuse each other—and themselves—of inhumanity, “men who, like animals, prey upon each other, become wild men, like cannibals who reject the essentials of humanity” (Morse 135). Their rhetorical cannibalism is reciprocal, identifying each other as subhuman yet also rejecting each other because of it. The images degrade human beings to food, to be chewed, swallowed, digested, and ultimately defecated, defying the biblical exaltation of the human spirit and the capacity for human dignity.

Further, however, the statements, presumably intended to convey superiority over the other, actually demonstrate their interdependence. The insults metaphorize human beings as food, not only the flesh of their own bodies but that of others. Beatrice cannot eat killed enemy soldiers unless Benedick provides them. Underneath their desire to belittle each other is an admission that they depend upon each other, revealing the seeds of their eventual union in marriage, correcting the division of Adam and Eve at the Fall.
The implied cannibalism escalates after Hero’s interrupted wedding when Beatrice refers to Claudio as “Count Comfect” (4.1.315). The epithet depicts him as an insubstantial concoction, cloying in his loverly demeanour, but disintegrating in the rain of Don John’s suggestion of infidelity (McEachern 276). Her diatribe reaches its height when she furiously declares that she “would eat his heart in the marketplace” (4.1. 305-6). Beatrice’s desire expresses multiple cannibalistic dangers, each interpretation elevating the enormity of her threat. First, she defines Claudio’s heart as interchangeable with that of a slaughtered lamb, the image of Claudio the audience is given in the first scene of the play, an accusation that highlights his animality rather than humanity while denying any compassion. Secondly, the statement does not encourage the formation of community, ideal for the shared eating of food. Finally, because Beatrice forms part of Leonato’s household, she breaks the rule of hospitality not to eat a guest, even figuratively: “thou shalt not eat him, not even a little bit” (Derrida, Who Comes 112).

Encompassed by Leonato’s patriarchal authority as host, his niece, Beatrice holds the role of hostess. The hospitality of eating Claudio, her guest, is heightened by her willingness to incorporate Claudio’s inhumanity into herself, defining her, too, as a subhuman willing to eat another human. Stipulating his heart explicitly is significant, for the heart has long held an important allegorical significance beyond its biological function. Louise Noble explains that the heart in the early modern period was understood to hold psychological truths (35). If Claudio’s heart represents his very essence, eating his heart means incorporating him and all his attributes, including the very traits she condemns. Beatrice as cannibal defines her as both human and beast. In an ecotheological context, she is fully human, given dominion by God over the animals, yet also fully surrendered to her animal passions, refusing to temper them with reason, placing the presence of God’s dominion over her under erasure in the ecotheological triad. Although her
anger is understandable, she also clearly disregards God’s commands against revenge: “Vengeance is mine: I will repay, saith the Lord” (Rom. 12.19). Her desire for revenge recalls Shylock when he reveals his deadly motivation for demanding his pound of flesh: “If it would feed nothing else, it will feed my revenge” (Merchant, 3.1.49-50). At least rhetorically, Beatrice resembles Shylock, incapable of pity or mercy, outside the Christian community as a predator of fellow human beings and absolutely rejecting all laws of hospitality. Her words, her tone, and her deadly meaning, at least at this very moment, are every bit as vengeful as Shylock’s.

Beatrice’s desire to eat Claudio’s heart, comprised of flesh and blood, deepens and complicates the concept of communion important for both ecotheology and hospitality. His heart “becomes a synecdoche for the edible human, the ultimate proof of a communion of body and blood” (Goldstein, Eating 44). Just as the word “host” holds multiple meanings—host, guest, stranger, hostage—the Host in communion represents contradictory meanings. Communion represents Jesus’ salvific body and blood. The ritual represents not only humanity incorporating God’s flesh and blood into themselves but also God incorporating humanity into himself, symbolizing a relationship that benefits both parties (Kilgour 15). In contrast, eating another human being’s body and blood, as Beatrice threatens, incorporates the eaten into the body of the eater but with no corresponding benefit to the eaten. Beatrice, the cannibal, would incorporate Claudio’s insecurity, pride, and cruelty into herself, literalizing Claudio as the “always already the other in us,” in Derrida’s words (qtd. in Deutscher 169-70). She would harvest only retaliatory gratification, uniting Claudio’s body with hers and literally collapsing host and guest into one, destroying rather than strengthening community. The host and the Host become corrupted. Hospitality becomes indistinguishable from hostility. Sacrifice becomes reinscribed as revenge.
In this comedy, however, the threats do not materialize. The turning point for Benedick and Beatrice is expressed with yet another comestible metaphor. When Don Pedro announces his plan to trick Benedick and Beatrice, he makes the plan despite Benedick’s “queasy stomach” (2.1.365). Benedick has just refused the “dish” of Beatrice; if Don Pedro’s trap works, Benedick’s stomach may improve, which in fact it does. Don Pedro’s jest marks the change that signals Benedick and Beatrice’s alteration to models for healthy relationships. That alteration is also expressed through food metaphors. Benedick defends his sudden love by rationalizing, “doth not the appetite alter? A man loves the meat in his youth, that he cannot endure in his age” (2.3.233-35). The emotional change, articulated through food, indicates more than the mere health of his digestive system. He begins a corrective response to products of the natural world.

The edacious metaphors continue when Beatrice and Benedick first declare their love to each other. Signaling their future union, their figurative language harmonizes on the same theme:

Benedick: By my sword, Beatrice, thou lovest me.

Beatrice: Do not swear, and eat it.

Benedick: I will swear by it that you love me; and I will make him eat it that says I love not you.

Beatrice: Will you not eat your word?

Benedick: With no sauce that can be devised to it. I protest I love thee. (4.1.273-79)

Beatrice questions his honor, specifically within a religious context, evidenced by his mild oath, “By my sword,” derived from its cross shape and its contraction from “God’s word,” clearly familiar to Shakespeare by the same use in Henry V (2.1.99-100). Her repeated insistence that he not recant his pledge reverses their earlier insults as food. This turn in their relationship, from
dislike to love, is framed in edacious metaphors, a “traditional conceit of love as a consumable part of the self” (Rice 298). Now their pledge of love remains open, never to be “eaten” or consumed into nothingness, negating their cannibalistic metaphors and establishing a permanent relationship. At this point, all food metaphors between them conclude. Their cannibalistic metaphors disappear, replaced with communion and community. They mature into a couple capable of love, viewing each other as human beings, no longer as animals, food, or cannibalistic subhumans. Now Benedick and Beatrice model virtues necessary for ecological change. Their “storied bodies” (Phillips and Sullivan 447) and interdependence encourage the recognition of humanity’s dependence on food and on each other as we obtain and share that food.

Revenge does eventually come to an end, as does the hospitality. Although it is true, as Chris R. Hassel insists, that “beneath a delightfully secular and romantic surface” lie “insistent” errors, the play also represents “profound festivity” (322, 345). The turning point to commensality occurs after Beatrice’s threat to eat human flesh. Her desire leads to Benedick’s decision to fight for her, to fight for someone else, not merely against someone else (4.1.281, 305-06). As even hunter-gatherers of food would have learned, survival in a social group depends on cooperation. Benedick’s decision to alter his appetite and fight for Beatrice prompts Margaret’s observation that “now is he become a man” (2.3.233-35, 3.4.81-82). His decision nearly coincides with the revelation of Don John’s treachery followed by Claudio’s penance and a communal dance as Benedick contemplates inhospitable punishments for Don John.

The cannibalistic metaphors in this play reveal the characters’ failure to temper animal passions that represents ideal Edenic harmony. As Ruth Morse explains, “behaving like animals in this crucial activity is unnatural, inhuman, debased, and yet as animals who prey upon humans they are also actually preying upon their own kind” (126). These cannibalistic utterances,
hyperbolized in Beatrice’s desire to eat Claudio’s heart, reject God’s dominion and reduce human beings to consumable food. The metaphors also reveal unrecognized sexual desire. Beatrice’s “dish” and “Lady Tongue” potentially fill Benedick’s stomach, a word “allusive of sexual hunger” (Williams, Dictionary 109), while Benedick’s “meet food” potentially fills Beatrice’s. Their comestible insults also expose their desire, foreshadowing their union, which reverses the division of the Fall. Their moral worth is established.

**Pemberley’s Residents as Hosts, not Cannibals**

The presence of food in *Pride and Prejudice* also serves to indicate the moral worth of Darcy and Elizabeth. Rarely used as a metaphor as it is in *Much Ado about Nothing*, the physical appearance of food “almost always helps illustrate character—the character in whose speech the detail occurs, and sometimes the characters spoken to, or of, as well” (Lane xi-xii). Although food appears in different manners in the two works, in both it illustrates character and morality. For Darcy in particular, food indicates moral worth through its use in beneficence to the poor, stewardship, and hospitality.

Elizabeth’s tour of Pemberley, even before she meets its master, reveals Darcy’s generosity and allows Elizabeth to comprehend for the first time “how many people’s happiness were in his guardianship” (277). Everyone connected to Pemberley is generously provided for. The estate’s natural landscape, approving housekeeper, and thoughtful hospitality imbue Elizabeth with evidence that Darcy is an admirable and charitable gentleman, one who cherishes his sister and benefits his tenants as he displays irreproachable philanthropy and morality. Placed alongside my earlier observations of his preservation of the land, the housekeeper’s praise further validates his beneficence. The reader may question the concept of a patriarchal system that invests so much power in one man, but Darcy endeavors to earn the trust others place in him and
does not abuse his privilege. Elizabeth and, through her, the novel’s readers, think highly of him, not only through his philanthropy but also through his stewardship. The plentiful food illustrates that care is taken in harvesting, preparing, and presenting the produce of the land. As master of the estate, Darcy is ultimately responsible. He ensures that his staff and tenants contribute their best work by being “the best master” (276). He especially values Mr. Wickham, Sr., as steward, verifying Darcy’s oversight of Pemberley’s resources. He exercises careful dominion, multiplying with interest the talents God has allocated to him.

Darcy bestows the best Pemberley has to offer on Elizabeth and her family, including rare and delicate hot-house fruits, with no untoward display of boastfulness or egotism. As the only mealtime set-piece in all of her novels (Lane 146), Austen must have regarded the scene as significant: “cold meat, cake, […] and pyramids of grapes, nectarines, and peaches” (Austen 296). Pemberley’s natural riches allow Darcy to offer the agrarian yield of Pemberley’s resources for the benefit of his guests, the house offers refreshing views from every window, and Mr. Gardiner savors fishing in the trout stream, thereby allowing guests to experience renewal through food, beauty, and recreation, illustrating the truth that “a man’s house is a reflection of his values” (Lane 143). The marriage Darcy’s hospitality partly accomplishes unites two people whose generosity and altruism establish a model for human/nonhuman relationships as well as relationships between humans.

Though Darcy’s earlier behavior as a guest exhibited considerable measures of proud hostility, now only sacrificial hospitality prevails as Darcy beautifully illustrates the hospitality hierarchy of Host/host/guest. His hospitality imitates the self-sacrificing character of God as Host: “In true biblical spirit, her characters are obliged to acknowledge principles higher than their own happiness, often requiring a denial of self: ‘For whosoever will save his life shall lose
it; but whosoever shall lose his life for my sake and the gospel’s, the same shall save it’ (Mark 8.35)” (Searle 21). Surprised by Elizabeth’s sudden appearance, Darcy resists the natural human tendency for irritation at the disruption of his plans, transcending the potential to “become almost the hostage of the one invited, of the guest [. . .], the hostage of the one he receives, the one who keeps him at home” (Derrida, Of Hospitality 9). Instead, his thoughtfulness is “graciously offered beyond economy, offered to the other, a hospitality invented for the singularity of the new arrival, of the unexpected visitor” (83). His hospitableness, bestowed for Elizabeth’s welfare even after she leaves Pemberley, constitutes Pemberley as a symbolic heaven on earth, a vision of perfect felicity, a place where the pride and prejudice that inhibit the recognition of self and love are banished. Readers view Pemberley as a place where the lion can lie down with the lamb. However, a closer look reveals the hint of a shadow of hostility behind the hospitality. The narrator tells us that “Darcy could never receive him [Wickham] at Pemberley” (429). Miss Bingley pretends not to be “mortified” at Darcy’s marriage choice so as “to retain the right of visiting at Pemberley” (430). And Lady Catherine is forgiven for her “genuine frankness” and “abusive” language only because Elizabeth urges Darcy to grant it (430). The conditions of the Garden of Eden are recreated enough for most visitors to experience a sense of community and communion, but not quite all. Nevertheless, Darcy and Pemberley, joined by Elizabeth, demonstrate the virtues necessary to act as a model for nearly perfect hospitality.

**Longbourn’s Hostess as Cannibal**

Mrs. Bennet, on the other hand, provides much less hospitality than the nearly perfect felicity of Pemberley. Her allusions to food, all of which are tied to hospitality, indicate her diminished moral character. Maggie Lane detects three areas of housekeeping on which Mrs. Bennet prides herself, all concerning food. First, she haughtily informs guests that her girls do
not cook, indulging her pride on that fact. She rebukes Mr. Collins for his query on which
daughter provided the meal and advises the occupants of Netherfield that although Charlotte
Lucas may be needed for the mince pies, her daughters are brought up differently (73, 48).
Second, she worries over the impression her meals have on other people. For example, she takes
care to plan two full courses for Mr. Bingley’s visit, even if it is only a family dinner (135).
Third, she is proud that “she always keeps a good table” and worries that she cannot impress
Bingley and Darcy (374). Her insecurities are likely due to her hypergamous marriage for which
her upbringing did not prepare her. Nevertheless, her constant agitation over such matters lowers
our sense of her moral worth.

Her insecurities, combined with her anxiety to marry off her girls, even lead to a boast
that likens Jane to an object of consumption, or at least a willingness to state that she is “equally
proud of Jane’s ‘great beauty’ and the ‘remarkably well done partridges’ and the venison”
(Seeber 100). After Mrs. Bennet hosts Bingley and Darcy, she recounts the meal:

The dinner was as well-dressed as any I ever saw. The venison was roasted to a
turn—and everybody said they never saw so fat a haunch. The soup was fifty
times better than what we had at the Lucas’s last week; and even Mr. Darcy
acknowledged that the partridges were remarkably well done; and I suppose he
has two or three French cooks at least. And, my dear Jane, I never saw you look in
greater beauty. (379)

Mrs. Bennet lists each food item, concluding with Jane, equating her with the meal, all done to
perfection. Lady Lucas, in yet another scene of hospitality, makes the same analogy with her
daughter, Charlotte: she “was inquiring of Maria across the table, after the welfare and poultry of
her eldest daughter” as if Charlotte and her poultry are equally important (245). Less direct than
Beatrice’s desire to eat a human heart, both mothers nevertheless suggest that Austen “draws the radical connection that both women and animals are meat for men” (Seeber 100). Analogous to Claudio as an animal to be butchered for his heart, Jane and Charlotte are depicted as animals, rhetorically in line at a slaughterhouse with the deer, partridges, and poultry, waiting to be butchered and eaten. A strengthening of the connection between women and food occurs when “Elizabeth Bennet irreverently animalizes her social superiors. While Maria Lucas is ‘breathless with agitation’ when a Rosings Park phaeton pulls up at the garden gate, Elizabeth maintains her comedic spirit: “And is this all? […] I expected at least that the pigs were got into the garden, and here is nothing but Lady Catherine and her daughter” (179). Austen delivers humor but at the same time clearly associates meat still on the hoof with women, disregarding even social status.

Jane, Charlotte, and even Lady Catherine as animal flesh are significant for an ecotheological perspective. Barbara Seeber writes that “the primacy of meat is directly connected to human supremacy over nature” (97). Nick Fiddes expands that point by observing that “meat is the flesh of what were once living animals; it is destined for our physical consumption. This makes it an exceptionally well suited exemplification of our ability to control and vanquish the non-human world” (173). Seeber’s and Fiddes’s observations, applied to Jane, make her the equivalent of meat, the victim, the nonhuman. Mrs. Bennet, in her eagerness to offer Jane to the wealthiest gentleman possible, effectively lowers her daughter’s human status to an animal for sale in the marketplace, amplifying her distorted enthusiasm for engineering her daughters’ marriages, thereby increasing our sense of her already indifferent moral status.

Mrs. Bennet’s self-congratulatory, equal praise of the food and Jane’s beauty also strengthens the reader’s sense of Jane’s vulnerability as she is depicted as little more than prey,
to be hunted and consumed. Her mother marks Jane as consumable, her beauty offered up as food to be eaten, belched, and forgotten. Austen was clearly “aware of the politics of food. She drew on late eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century writings on diet, including vegetarianism, which often intersected with other claims for social justice in the argument that a meatless diet advances egalitarianism and fosters nonviolence” (Seeber 98). There were calls for wider circles of benevolence to include the lower orders of life (Oswald ii), links between the cruelty of butchering animals and enslaving humans (Ritson 89), and claims that eating meat directly affects moral development (C. Macaulay 38). Most telling for these particular passages in *Pride and Prejudice* is Macaulay’s observation that meat consumption necessarily requires us “to inflict that fate on other beings which would be terrible to ourselves” (38). The association influences our own normal distinction between human and animal, for the venison, partridges, pigs, and women are all subject to the same rules of rhetorical consumption. Put another way, the meat on the Bennet dinner table is humanized. From an ethical perspective, can we sit down at a meal including animal meat in light of the suggestion that sweet, beautiful Jane has been vocally subjected to the same fate?

**Conclusion: Restoration through Biblical Hospitality**

Emphasizing ecotheology and hospitable readings of Austen’s novel discloses connections between people, nonhumans, and God, connections included in his creation but broken in the Fall. Correction for the Fall is demonstrated outwardly through responsible, benevolent dominion over the nonhuman world and continual recognition of the connection the creator designed for all earthly beings, sentient or not. Magnifying hospitality principles, especially in light of its Judeo-Christian roots, only emphasizes those connections as host and guest interact and mimic God as Host and Christ’s role as guest during his domicile on earth.
Derridean hostipitality, assuming that all hospitality simultaneously signifies hostility, offers a view of reality that highlights the impossibility of replicating that divine hospitality. The most well-meaning host will gladly shut the door on an inconsiderate guest who ate too much and left the house in disarray. True hospitality, Derrida argues, is an aporia, impossible, “a paradoxical law, pervertible or perverting” (Of Hospitality 25). No human being, in literature or in life can overcome that hospitable aporia. I believe, however, that Leonato and especially Darcy come close.

Leonato’s hospitality begins with a feast and ends with the re-extended offer of his only child to the man who disgraced her so cruelly and publicly that she faces the danger of death, either through shock or slaying at the hands of her own enraged father. Darcy’s hospitality extends to giving a great sum of money to the man he despises most in the world, making him his own brother through marriage, and surely dreading a future of unavoidable social functions. These are hospitality scenarios extended beyond food, shelter, and entertainment, hospitality that extends, almost literally, to one’s flesh and blood, imitating Christ’s offer of his flesh and blood as the Host. If communion, the Host, signifies God as host taking repentant man into himself as man takes the bread and wine—flesh and blood—into his body, hospitality can become the impossible, aporetic gift. This hospitality cannot, ultimately, be subverted by the most irksome guest, whether Claudio, Don John, or Wickham. The villains, although ultimately unsuccessful, do, however, pose real threats to that hospitality. My next chapter discusses those threats in the light of sexual betrayal, a threat also initiated at the Fall as the final consequence of Adam and Eve’s transgression, culminating the preceding effects concerning the land, animals, and food.
CHAPTER VI
SEXUAL BETRAYAL AS A RESULT OF THE FALL

Introduction—Edenic Marriage and Fallen Infidelity

Sexual betrayal represents the final consequence of the Fall, joining the permanently damaged land, animals, and food. Adam and Eve’s transgression began with an animal, Satan in the form of a serpent, who, simulating a hospitable gesture, offered Eve a piece of fruit, promising her, “When ye shall eat thereof, your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil” (Gen. 3.4-5). Acceptance of the fruit led immediately to the first division between man and woman. First, Eve ate, acting separately from Adam (Gen. 2.16, 3.6). For a brief space of time, perhaps only seconds, Eve’s disobedience converged with Adam’s obedience. The bond God created between them by using one of Adam’s ribs to create Eve, defined as “bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh,” was broken (Gen. 2.23). As Milton describes this moment in Paradise Lost, it is difficult to imagine a spiritual state more incompatible than a fallen Eve and an unfallen Adam. The separation is so great, as Milton imagines it, that Adam, overwhelmed, chooses to join her: “Our State cannot be severd, we are one / One Flesh; to loose thee were to loose my self” (9.958-59). Adam accepts the fruit she offers, joining her in the transgression

Although pride is the pre-eminent sin, because pride motivated Lucifer to rebel against God and motivated him to tempt Adam and Eve as well, the fact that Adam accepted the fruit
from Eve rather than from the serpent directly has traditionally granted him partial excuse for his
damnable choice because Eve is believed to have seduced him, establishing lust as Adam’s first
sin and sexual enticement as Eve’s. Sexual passion thus becomes the first evil introduced to man,
lending it supremacy. Because of this traditional link between the fruit and sexual temptation,
lust remains eternally associated with food, making it perhaps the ultimate ecotheological
transgression. Although Adam, too, partakes of the fruit, purportedly to unite with Eve, the
division between them multiplied when Adam blamed Eve for the transgression in the hope that
his guilt would lessen in comparison. Eve did the same, blaming the serpent to deflect
recrimination from herself. Consequently, the Fall represents betrayal against the land, animals,
humans, and God.

The consequences of Adam and Eve’s transgression parallel their multi-faceted betrayal,
permanently dividing their descendants from the land, animals, humans, and God, integrating
ecology, hospitality, and theology and, finally, the potential for sexual betrayal. First,
ecologically, man divided himself from the land when God increased the toil of producing food
and limited the yield. Also ecologically, man’s disobedience divided him from the animal when
God cursed the serpent, introducing the human predation of animals, animal predation of
humans, and predation between animals. Second, Adam and Eve’s betrayal of each other
inaugurated the potential for future betrayal between humans as well. Apparent friends might in
reality be enemies. Hosts may fail to protect. Guests may betray their hosts. Hospitality may be
hostile. The reality of Derrida’s hospitality aporia was born. Third, theologically, man separated
himself from God. Humanity and God no longer enjoyed perfect communion. The precedent had
now been set for the future of mankind: unceasing discord between humans and land, between
humans and animals, between humans and other humans, and between humans and God. The
discord between man and woman specifically would also continue eternally through the refusal to join in permanent bonds of marriage and by breaking that bond through sexual infidelity. Forevermore, as Derrida argues, every action must now be understood as inherently including duplicity, making possible “both promises and threats, life and death, fidelity and betrayal” (Hägglund 58).

Refusal to Marry as a Refusal to Restore Eden

Duplicity and betrayal were not present when God created an exclusive relationship between Adam and Eve. Before the Fall, there was no opportunity for sexual betrayal. Therefore, their lifelong monogamy and fidelity is conventionally believed to be God’s ideal plan for men and women. Adam and Eve’s deliberate rupture made it necessary to create permanent bonds between men and women in the covenant of marriage in order to reestablish the original paradisiacal union. Marriage as a restoration of perfect unity is demanding and all-encompassing: “For this cause, shall a man leave father and mother, and cleave unto his wife, and they twain, shall be one flesh” (Matt. 19.5). “One flesh” cannot betray itself; thus, marriage is meant to protect, not only against sexual betrayal, but also against other societal vices. Only in wedlock, Thomas Becon wrote in 1542,

" vertue is mayntayned, vice is exchewed, houses are replenished, cities are inhabited, the ground is tylled, sciences are practised, kingdoms flouryshe, amitie is preserued, the publique weale is defended, naturall succession remaynethe, good artes are taught, honest order is kepte, Christendome is enlarged, Goddes word promoted, and the glory of God hyghly auanced and sette further. (qtd. in Witte 149)
Because of marriage’s ostensible benefits, Judeo-Christian tradition has censured the refusal to marry except for religious devotion strong enough to motivate lifelong service in a religious cloister. Otherwise, marriage was expected for everyone living in the Elizabethan and Georgian eras. The sacrament was taken seriously. Marriage was to be approached with religious devotion and even intercourse within marriage was not to be engaged in merely for base, sensual pleasure. *The Book of Common Prayer* cautioned that marriage “is not to bee enterprised, nor taken in hande unadvisedlye, lightelye, or wantonly, to satisfie mens carnal lustes and appetites, *like brute beastes* that have no understanding: but reverently, discretely, advisedly, soberly, and in the feare of God” (emphasis added). Sexual acts engaged in only for the purpose of satisfying lust, according to Anglican doctrine, are deemed depraved and concupiscent, for man is thereby degraded to bestial fornication.

Marriage, designed in part to contain sexual desire within a monogamous relationship, conforms to Eden’s ecotheological triad through the intimacy it fosters between man, woman and God. As the Church of England liturgy phrases it, matrimony “is an honorable estate instituted of God in paradise, in the time of mannes innocencie, signifying unto us the mysticall union that is betwixte Christe and his Churche.” God designed marriage “for the mutuall societie, helpe, and coumfort, that the one oughte to have of thother, both in prosperitie and adversitie” (*Book of Common Prayer*). The intimacy, help, and comfort marriage offers in this liturgical passage, however, is counteracted by the corrective that marriage also provides. The text ordains that marriage is “a remedie agaynst sinne, and to avoide fornicacion, that suche persones as bee maried, might live chastlie in matrimonie, and kepe themselves undefiled membres of Christes bodye.” Lawrence Stone phrases this motive for marriage in a more pedestrian manner: “it was a convenient way of channeling the powerful but potentially disruptive instinct of sexual desire”
Marriage was also designed to encourage men and women to exercise dominion over their so-called animal desires. Naturally, the official doctrine and the documentation remaining after more than 400 years do not necessarily reflect actual sexual practices, but on paper at least, the Church of England sanctioned marriage as giving “rational shape to the irrational sex drive” (Williams, *Sex and Print* 175) and fulfillment of the command to “Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth,” imitating the reproduction of fruits, vegetables, and animals.

**Infidelity as a Result of the Fall**

Just as sexual desire is tied to the land, so is sexual betrayal, in the form of cuckolding, which operates, as Douglas Bruster asserts, “In what one might call a religious context,” partly through its association with the cornucopia (58, 49). The bounty of the horn of plenty, or “horn of abundance,” suggests cuckoldry because of the phallic shape and sexual largesse of a male capable of cuckolding husbands (Williams, *Dictionary* 162). Even the word “husband” itself was used in both Shakespeare’s Early Modern and Austen’s Georgian eras to include both a man joined to a woman in marriage and one who cultivates the soil and manages a household, etymologically linking sexual union, the production of children, and the production of food (Bruster 51). Husbandry implies labor in both contexts, the labor of creating children and satisfying a wife sexually and the labor of providing for a household through cultivation of the earth. In either context, labor offers no guarantee of success. A husband may labor but not impregnate or gratify his wife; and “painful toil” may not provide adequate sustenance for his family. Cuckoldry, then, initiated by Satan’s metaphorical seduction of Eve, who thereby betrayed Adam, is connected to the inconstancy of the land, which may or may not produce sufficient subsistence.
Not only are cuckoldry and land linked, but cuckoldry and animals, by means of three main images: the cuckoo bird, horned animals, and yoked animals. The word “cuckoldry” likely derives from the cuckoo bird, who obliges another unwitting bird to raise his young, just as an unsuspecting man may raise another man’s child. A more physical connection to animals arises from a horn’s similar shape to the male member, resulting in the image of victimized males with horns. Horned animals such as bulls, stags, and goats are also believed to be especially virile and therefore warrant yokes to keep them subdued. As Coppèlia Kahn explains, horns indicate that a husband has allowed his virility to be yoked to a woman who leads him by the nose like an animal. The part of him that is at once his pride and his vulnerability, that makes him godlike in sexual power, but bestial in blind appetite, is exposed as his nemesis, his fatal flaw. Its power is mocked and its dumb bestiality confirmed in horns. (122)

Not one, but two layers of animality, both yoked and horned, compound man’s betrayal and humiliation as the adulterous women who create the cuckolds are often compared to supposedly sexually active animals. For example, Iago, goading Othello into jealousy, refers to Cassio and Desdemona “as prime as goats, as hot as monkeys, As salt as wolves in pride” (3.3.419-20, emphasis added). Iago accuses the couple of placing animal passions above obedience to God’s marriage vows similar to Claudio’s accusation of Hero when he believes she has flagrantly succumbed to her sexual desire.

**Messina’s Residents’ Refusal to Marry and Infidelity**

Benedick and Beatrice, on the other hand, do not, for a time, act on their sexual desire, even though the attraction is evident through “interpretative literalism,” Katharine Eisaman Maus’s phrase indicating that for early moderns, “the whole interior of the body—heart, liver,
womb, bowels, kidneys, gall, blood, lymph—quite often involves itself in the production of the mental interior, of the individual’s private experience” (195). Interpreting Benedick and Beatrice’s individual experiences with land, animal, and food metaphors betrays their sexual desire, particularly within a setting of hospitality. Sexual desire was often connected to the bounty of the land, for all life forms reproduce and all life forms are dependent on the land. The cornucopia of fruits and vegetables celebrated in the harvest, the birth of animals, and the birth of children parallel each other, bounty that is particularly emphasized in the country house ideal. The nonhuman “literally” merges with the human through women’s reproductive capacity (Jenkins 56). The produce of the land sustains the hospitality associated with the country house ideal, which is necessary for marriages to occur. If families cannot interact in social scenarios as hosts and guests, procreative marriages cannot be arranged. Hospitality and desire, after all, share the same language because hospitality brings together a new combination of people living in close quarters, interacting in new ways, and unleashing the “disruptive energies of sexual desire” (Palmer 72, 63). Therefore, hospitality in a country house, whether Messina or Pemberley, unites two powerful forces behind sexual desire.

Accordingly, many of Benedick’s and Beatrice’s insults disclose sexual attraction. For example, Beatrice declares, referring specifically to Benedick, that she will not take a husband “till God make men of some other metal than earth” (2.1.55-56, emphasis added). She reasons, “Would it not grieve a woman to be overmastered with a piece of valiant dust? To make an account of her life to a clod of wayward marl? No, uncle, I’ll none” (2.1.56-59, emphasis added). The audience is intended to laugh, taking her declarations as jest, but earth, dust, and marl (an archaic word for earth, OED) as metaphors for Benedick connect him to the ground, the land that fosters fertility: "the Lord God also made the man of the dust of the ground” and instructed him
to replenish the earth (Gen. 2.7, emphasis added). Man as earth implies the creation of life. Likewise, her epithet of “Signor Mountanto” (1.1.29) registers her fixation on sexual performance. The word primarily refers to a thrust in fencing, therefore also serving as a pun for the thrust of mounting another in sexual intercourse (Charney 42). The word also refers to the upward thrust of a mountain, providing another example of the marriage between the natural world and sexual reproduction. Beatrice’s protestations, although intended to voice a determination not to marry, actually reveal an awareness of—even a preoccupation with—Benedick’s potency.

Benedick likewise reveals his sexual desire throughout the play. His greeting of Beatrice with “Oh God, sir, here’s a dish I love not,” explored in the previous chapter, provides a good example, for “dish” at the time referred to a sexually attractive woman (OED). Most of his declarations not to marry include animal metaphors. Most frequent are references to horns, yokes, and bulls, all of which contribute to the trope of cuckoldry so prominently featured throughout this play. In the first scene of the play, Benedick mocks Claudio for his willingness to embrace the yoke of marriage (l. 192). Later in the play, he places a conspicuous animal metaphor immediately before a blazon of all the qualities he desires in a woman, which Beatrice happens to possess, that discloses his outwardly denied attraction. With her in mind, at least subliminally, he calls himself an oyster: “I will not be sworn, but Love may transform me to an oyster; but I'll take my oath on it, till he have made an oyster of me, he shall never make me such a fool” (2.3.23-25). Claire McEachern explains the word as meaning he could be split wide open, as one opens an oyster to get the meat. He is “a man made vulnerable to a perfidious female appetite” (206). Benedick, expressing a loud rejection of marriage through the use of animal and food metaphors, discloses his vulnerability to sexual desires, specifically for Beatrice. Benedick
and Beatrice vocally deny their sexual desire through the use of natural metaphors. Denying sexual desire cannot satisfy Edenic love and procreative purpose. Sexual passions expressed within the permanent marriage bond Adam and Eve were traditionally meant to enjoy is sensuous and pleasurable and should not be dismissed.

Significant for my ecotheological argument is that Benedick and Beatrice collapse the dualism of the natural world and humanity. They blend expressions of their sexual desire with metaphors referring to the natural world, erasing the division in the traditional human/nonhuman binary. However, both the natural world and humanity are denigrated in every expression. Beatrice’s “earth,” “marl,” and “dust” are not meant to be flattery or appreciation for the earth necessary for most life forms. Neither are the terms flattering to Benedick. Referring to himself as an oyster with negative connotations demonstrates no respect for the inherent value of an oyster. Their unwillingness or inability to control expressions indicating their sexual desire renders them guilty of rhetorical exploitation, using the natural world for their own purposes in their attempt to deny value to that world in order to bolster a sense of their own humanity in contrast. Their sexual passions, at this point in the play, have not yet merged with a meeting of the minds.

Placing sexual desires within an ecotheological perspective, on the other hand, encourages integrity. Church doctrine placed sexual activity at the level of “brute beastes,” dictating instead that sexual activity is to be exercised within the confines of marriage. When Benedick and Beatrice acknowledge their sexual attraction openly, they end their use of metaphors that denigrate the natural world, placing themselves in the God/human/nonhuman ecotheological hierarchy. Before their public acknowledgement of love, their jests were intended to humiliate human beings as animals, food, dirt, and vegetation. Beatrice likens Benedick to
dust and marl, Hero is a stolen bird’s nest, Benedick claims an oak tree with only one leaf would have defended itself better than he does against Beatrice’s invectives. Virtually every time a human being is likened to something nonhuman, whether through simile or metaphor, the intent is degradation. Physical violence against the natural world never occurs in the play, but the shared attitude is that violence is acceptable (like shooting cats or hanging dogs) and that comparing godlike men and women to the natural world is an insult. Significantly, these insults stop when the characters reconcile: Claudio and Hero surmount Don John’s mendacity; Benedick and Beatrice openly admit love; Leonato and Benedick resolve their differences with Claudio.

The integrity of the natural world returns because it is no longer referred to as sullied. Sexual desire now follows divine direction. Rather than merely a selfish or shared pleasure, sexuality takes on a higher purpose. Sexual desire controlled, not denied, rectifies the division of the Fall, reuniting man, woman, and God, and reestablishing God’s initial assessment “that [nature] was good.” The natural world transforms into a re-imagining of the human/nonhuman community under the auspices of the divine, an achievement celebrated through joyful dancing, at one with the entire community of Messina, human and nonhuman alike.

Claudio and Hero join in that celebration of human and nonhuman as one, but only after Claudio reassesses Hero’s apparent unity with the nonhuman world. In the worst manner possible, Claudio imagines that Hero has succumbed to animal appetites in the form of cuckoldry. The accusation is ultimately proven a lie, but according to the biblical ideologies of the day, her perceived transgression represents more than a mere physical betrayal, a betrayal easily explained in an ecotheological context that examines animal passions. According to Arthur Kirsch, “Claudio accuses Hero not only of an act that marriage is specifically ordained to avoid, but of a spiritual and psychological condition in which true marriage is impossible,” akin
to the spiritual incompatibility that Milton imagined between Adam and Eve (44). A spiritual state that would allow premarital sexual relations with a man other than her betrothed mere hours before her wedding ceremony indicates a shocking lack of spirituality that unfortunately seems to be expected in Messina. Expectations of cuckoldry, which make Hero’s guilt believable despite her pure reputation, result from a number of factors: the inherent risk of hospitality, the masked revels, misogyny resulting from Eve’s role in the Fall, and period beliefs about the effects of the passions on bodily health.

*Much Ado about Nothing* is filled from the first to the last with cuckoldry jests, from Leonato’s quip in the first scene that his wife claimed Hero was his child, believable only because Benedick was still a child at Hero’s birth, to the last when Benedick tells Don Pedro to get a wife so he too can have a staff tipped with a cuckold’s horn. Messina’s culture of expected cuckoldry, one in which endless jokes about infidelities disclose the very real fear of it, provides an atmosphere that makes Hero’s accusation of cuckoldry plausible, even with almost no evidence. Leonato’s hospitality itself also encourages cuckoldry by opening doors to those who may pose as threats. His friend and guest has become his enemy, “the Other [who] may ruin my own space,” a possibility Derrida reasons is something hosts must expect (*Politics and Friendship*). Hospitality, he claims, can only occur unconditionally: “I have to accept if I offer unconditional hospitality that the Other may ruin my own space or impose his or her own culture or his or her own language” (*Politics and Friendship*). According to Derrida’s hospitality principles, Leonato’s invitation to host Claudio and Don John creates the conditions for hostile acts, including sexual infidelity, real or imagined. This does not mean Leonato has done anything wrong by inviting them, but that he has offered unconditional hospitality, imitating God’s unconditional hospitality, which makes him vulnerable. Even though cuckoldry, with its origins
in the Fall and its close association with land and animals, benefits from hospitality, contributes to its inherent hostility, and positions it as a potential threat, unconditional hospitality and a willingness to sacrifice are required for one who wishes to emulate God as Host.

Leonato’s entertainment of masked revels also contributes, in part, to the easy assumption of Hero’s guilt. Although his intention is merely to provide hospitable entertainment, the masks Leonato sanctions as part of the festivities intensify sexual desire through the anonymity masks provide. Masks provide guests the opportunity to manipulate and disrupt Leonato’s roles as father and host. John Ziegler has shown that the voyeurism associated with masked revels, allowing guest to gaze upon others while enjoying anonymity under a mask, enhances the opportunity for deception and lends erotic tension to the gathering (97). Twycross and Carpenter add that a mask gains eroticism from its offer to engage in amorous exploration with the unknown (170-71). Masks also offer the ability to interfere with the proper social relations of hospitality (174). Anonymous maskers can deflect the powers of high rank by manipulating those who are unmasked. The multiple tensions masks can cause is palpable in Leonato’s entertainment, emphasizing attention to the body. Don Pedro woos Hero disguised as Claudio. Hero, normally passive and nearly silent, feels emboldened by her mask to playfully tease the prince, even making a salacious joke about his “lute” looking like his “case” (McEachern 183). Ursula focuses directly on Antonio’s body, noting his wagging head and dry hand. Benedick and Beatrice jest with sexual innuendoes. For all of these revelers, masking permits liberties and license, allowing guests to savor the “potential sexual frisson of combining the physical closeness of dance with the intimate conversation” of masks (Dillon 62, 63). The masks encourage betrayal, allowing Don John to suggest Don Pedro’s betrayal of Claudio and encouraging Beatrice to insult Benedick even more than before.
Also contributing to Hero’s perceived guilt is Eve’s traditional role in the Fall, propagating the assumption that women’s weaker bodies are more susceptible to the temptations of passionate desire. According to current physiological theory and folk tradition, “women were regarded as more lustful in their appetites and more fickle in their attachments than men” (Stone 502). As Levinus Lemnius worded it in 1658, “a woman hath not power over her self, so that she cannot rule her passions, or bridle her disturbed affections, or stand against them with force of reason and judgement” (273-74). The premise of feminine weakness heightened the importance placed on female chastity in a culture in which bodily control is seen as an expression of social control (C. Thomas 154). Hereditary transmission of property was based on physical continuity located in female blood (Paster, “Body” 66). Because of “the necessity that there should be no legal doubts about the legitimacy of the heirs to property and title” (Stone 502), if Hero were truly unfaithful and Claudio were to remain unaware of it, a child she bears could inherit Claudio’s wealth and title, yet not be biologically related, undermining patriarchal norms.

Exaggerated fears of weakened masculine power distorted interpretations of even innocent situations, rendering them hyperbolically suspect. Accordingly, not only Claudio, but also the presumably more objective Don Pedro and even Hero’s own father consider her guilty, based only on a staged spectacle at Hero’s bedroom window. The belief that animal passions can so easily tempt Hero and the announcement of her death as a result of her guilt play a large role in the plot of this play. According to early modern doctrine, dominion over the animals meant, in part, dominion over the inner passions. The idea that animals, even if they are metaphorical animals within one’s psyche, are a degradation, can have effects, ultimately, on ecological practices. If animals represent a presence to be banished or avoided, what is to encourage us to value them enough to ensure their survival? What is our motivation to really care, other than the
perceived power of exercising dominion? Just as humans and animals can create loving relationships—cats, dogs, birds, and horses provide prime examples—moderated animal passions, such as sexual desire, fulfill important functions in loving relationships between humans.

For Claudio, Hero’s death results directly from her failure to rationally control her own sexual desires. His accusations, framed in an ecotheological context, place her in an animalistic position, disrupting God’s intended order. Extramarital sex is bad enough. The further charge of wild, passionate, savage sex, as Claudio imagines animals perform, paints her alleged activity in the worst possible light for Shakespeare’s audience. He believes she has disregarded God’s commands against intercourse outside marriage and has unleashed bestial passion in doing so rather than engaging in obedient, dutiful sex motivated only by a desire to bear children within marriage. Worse, the disobedience of God’s directives places her animal passions over God, a flagrant reversal of prelapsarian sexual desire, which Milton imagines as prayerful and respectful in *Paradise Lost*.

The audience knows, of course, that Hero has controlled her passion. The truth is that Claudio himself is not controlling his passions by refusing to obey the same biblical code he claims she violated. Antonio discerns Claudio’s guilt and expresses that truth through ecotheological language. When he meets Claudio and Don Pedro after Hero’s slander, he rages that he would as soon converse with them “as I dare take a serpent by the tongue,” indirectly identifying Claudio with the serpent in the Garden of Eden, original source of all sin (5.1.90). In the next line, Leonato scorns Claudio as an ape. Undoubtedly, Antonio and Leonato inflate their indignation at Hero’s aspersion to maintain the fiction that she is dead. Nonetheless, the animal invectives convey real truth. Claudio’s morality, according to the early modern explanation, is
that of a serpent crossed with an ape, disregarding the divine expectation to maintain full humanity. Claudio’s animalized position reveals that he, not Hero, has been raging in savage passion. Fortunately, the plot against Hero and Claudio is ultimately revealed and Claudio is able to regain his reason and enact penance.

**Longbourn’s and Pemberley’s Residents’ Refusal to Marry and Infidelity**

Unlike Hero, who is only presumed guilty, Lydia Bennet is truly guilty of sexual transgression. Her guilt and its causes are framed by the narrator not in strictly religious terms, but in ecotheological and hospitality terms. Lydia is perhaps not guilty of true cuckoldry, if strictly defined, for the trope takes a different form in Austen’s novel. Her version of cuckoldry occurs between father and daughter. In the eighteenth century, fathers were held responsible for the morality of their daughters until they were married, paralleling the ecotheological hierarchy. Because young women were believed to be naïve and to possess little power to control their passions, fathers were enjoined by societal mores to ensure their daughters’ obedience and purity. In England’s patriarchal society, fathers exercise dominion over their daughters to ensure that they do not act on any rebellious passions, particularly those sexual in nature. If “the father keeps his place” of authority, his oversight “helps to keep the daughter in hers” (Gonda 37). Fathers “who are absent, impaired, or dead” cannot control their daughters (McCrea 28), which is what happens with Lydia. Unlike a man who practices effective husbandry with his wife and land, Mr. Bennet practices passive husbandry, allowing Darcy to take that role, demonstrating Darcy’s moral worth and suitability as Elizabeth’s marital partner.

Mr. Bennet is physically present in the home, but remains in his library, deliberately unavailable to the daily needs of his wife and children, dismissing his daughters as “silly and ignorant like other girls” (5). Elizabeth remonstrates with him not to allow Lydia to visit
Brighton and its camp full of officers: “If you, my dear father, will not take the trouble of checking her exuberant spirits, [...] the ignorance and emptiness of her mind, wholly unable to ward off any portion of that universal contempt which her rage for admiration will excite,” English officers may grasp the opportunity to tempt her sexually (256). Yet he refuses to exert his authority. Mr. Bennet abdicates his responsibility to ensure the chastity of his daughters, similar to husbands who abdicate responsibility for the chastity of their wives, identifying them as cuckolds. His failure allows Lydia to supersede his role as father.

Mr. Bennet also fails to exert his traditional patriarchal responsibility for hospitality accepted on his daughter’s behalf. When the Bennets entertain him several times at Longbourn, along with other officers, Mr. Bennet approves: “Let Wickham be your man. He is a pleasant fellow” (156). Like Leonato, he welcomes the enemy and offers unconditional hospitality. His failure leads directly to the next, allowing his daughter to be Forster’s guest in Brighton. His approbation of Wickham and Colonel Forster allows Wickham to more easily exploit Colonel Forster’s hospitality in Brighton to seduce her. Mr. Bennet knows he has failed: “Who should suffer but myself? It has been my own doing, and I ought to feel it [...] No, Lizzy, let me once in my life feel how much I have been to blame” (156, 330). Lydia’s elopement framed as failure to fulfill the ecotheological hierarchy begins in part with careless hospitality practices, leading directly to Wickham’s hostipitality. His failure, along with Darcy’s greater failure in not warning the community about Wickham’s danger, encourages Lydia’s guilt.

Austen expresses Lydia’s guilt in ecotheological terms, with rhetoric borrowed from the natural world. Because the divine is absent from Lydia’s world view, the ecotheological hierarchy reduces to the remaining binary (human/nonhuman), which dissolves into one because Lydia demonstrates unity with the natural world. Without the godly dimension that makes
Elizabeth’s unity with the land positive and healthy, Lydia’s unity with her passions results in social disruption. For example, for the landscape theorist Uvedale Price, one paradigm of the picturesque could be found in wild beasts “when inflamed with anger or with desire” (1.77-78). The language invites a comparison to Lydia’s “wild volatility, the assurance and disdain of all restraint which mark Lydia's character” (256, emphasis added). She displays “high animal spirits” and is described as “untamed, unabashed, wild, noisy, and fearless” (49, 348). The subtext of Lydia’s recklessness is one of immorality and sin, reflecting widely recognized morals of the culture, but Austen chooses not to employ religious terms. Instead, her narrator portrays Lydia as an untrained animal, oblivious to basic social mores and unconscious of wrongdoing. An ecotheological theory explains her actions as consequences of the Fall because she rebuffs any choice to temper her desires with reason or with respect for others. The belief that animals were thought to embody a single passion reinforces Lydia’s role as the novel’s prime example of the societal and theological danger uncontrolled passions pose. Her only objective is the pursuit of pleasure, validating her as the embodiment of the animal that an ecotheological reading confers upon her. She concretizes desire in its purest form, renouncing not only societal but also spiritual circumscriptions. The point is that animals—material animals and animal-like behavior—are to be benevolently and compassionately controlled so as not to cause harm. One’s passions are not to be despised, acknowledged but not allowed to run rampant. Lydia exercises no control. Consequently, the health, cheerfulness, and comfort of the Bennet household are compromised, as is the potential to compromise local society. As Heydt-Stevenson articulates it, “she is a force of disorder in the system […] a force that must be contained” (94). Dennis Allen describes Lydia’s danger as less tornadic but no less threatening: her “desire has the potential to violate the logical foundations of her society” (439).
Lydia’s danger to herself, her family, and society, is greater than the danger Darcy and Elizabeth pose by refusing to marry. Darcy and Elizabeth, like Benedick and Beatrice, refuse to marry, at least for a time, despite social and family pressure. His position at Pemberley requires a mistress to act as his hostess and to bear an heir; his aunt pressures him to meet these obligations by marrying her daughter. For Elizabeth, marriage would offer financial support when her father’s death removes her from the entailed Longbourn. That foreboding future results in unendurable pressure from Mrs. Bennet to marry quickly. Darcy’s and Elizabeth’s refusal to marry, does not, however, indicate a lack of sexual energy for either. Conveyed to the reader through picturesque ideals, Darcy and Elizabeth’s sexuality connects with the landscape, which was often described with sexual terms. Richard Payne Knight, for example, sometimes described the landscape as a female body, her “loose disorder” as “free and unconfined,” suggesting sexual availability; she must therefore “guard her wilds from innovating hands” (I.183, 44, 96). If Austen’s work is read from this perspective, vocabulary of the picturesque holds metaphorical resources that also function as perceptual and emotional resources (Bodenheimer 606-10). Austen’s work weaves together the landscape, seduction, and marriage (Heydt-Stevenson 148).

Elizabeth’s sexuality represented in terms of her landscape is seen most clearly in her walk to Netherfield. Her body carries the land in the form of muddy petticoats into Netherfield, suggesting sexual availability (Austen 39, Johnson, Rambler 3). Austen’s use of landscape vocabulary also suggests Darcy’s sensuality. Pemberley, as “a condition of Darcy’s being, welcomes Elizabeth with an impression of sensuous sweeping curves of hills and stream,” evoking the curves of a female body as Darcy accepts her fully as a future partner (McCann 72). The estate’s grounds project Darcy’s masculinity and fertility and Elizabeth responds with her own physicality, opening up her mind—and by extension, her body—to a wider prospect.
Austen’s description suggests a merging of desires. As the walks and landscape features narrow, so does the physical distance between Darcy and Elizabeth: they walk “to the edge of the water, in one of its narrowest parts” and then follow a “narrow walk” where their bodies must draw close together (280). Natural boundaries are easily crossed “by a simple bridge,” their prejudicial barriers bridged through love, mutual respect, and sexual desire (280). Like Lydia, Darcy and Elizabeth’s use of the natural world and the language borrowed from that world disclose their sensuality. However, unlike Lydia’s disregard for divine imperative, Darcy and Elizabeth embrace their union with the fertile land by restraining their sexual energy until they are certain their potential marriage partner will join with them morally as well. Although the narrator does not state it directly, the reader assumes that Darcy and Elizabeth will honor God as exercising dominion over their household. They will follow his directives as well as they are able by restraining any severe passions that pose a threat to the harmony of their home and they will surely foster the love and intimacy that God intended when he created not Adam alone, but Adam and Eve together

Together, Darcy and Elizabeth will assume partial responsibility for Lydia and Wickham, as if they know that despite her knowledge of societal prohibitions, Lydia is in some ways as in need of care as Fanny’s horse in *Mansfield Park*. Fanny identifies with her horse, feeling affection for it. The “old grey pony” is “her valued friend” who must be remembered and cared for (41). Darcy and Elizabeth respond to Lydia’s need as they do with all who fall within their circle, whether family, servant, tenant, or animal. The response to Lydia’s fall discloses the narrator’s approbation of the virtues Darcy and Elizabeth demonstrate, making them the moral center of the novel. Her irony playfully chastens the neighborhood: “To be sure, it would have been more for the advantage of conversation had Miss Lydia Bennet come upon the town; or, as
the happiest alternative, been secluded from the world, in some distant farmhouse” (341-42).

Behind the ironic humor is a clear indictment of the neighbors’ moral standards. Laurenz Volkmann posits that “irony, like other literary techniques, might conceivably have an adaptive function, identifying human folly in imaginary scenarios and mobilizing shame – a universal morally corrective emotion – so as to draw upon and reinforce the intricate social hierarchies characteristic of our species” (240). Austen’s irony, so delightful to readers, can serve as one more step in encouraging chagrin for our treatment of those we feel smugly superior to, whether it is Lydia for her so-called animal spirits or physical animals.

Also in contrast to Darcy and Elizabeth is Mr. Collins’s exaggerated reaction to Lydia’s fallen state. He is capable of condemnation only; he holds the entire Bennet family culpable; and he suggests Lydia’s death as a preferable alternative to her disgrace. Analyzing his desires anagogically to reveal a higher spiritual meaning, as an ecotheological interpretation encourages, offers an interpretation pertinent to contemporary relationships to our ecologically fallen world. The theologian Haught writes that exaggerated perceptions of the “fallenness” of both humans and the natural world causes harm:

By overemphasizing the fallenness of both humanity and nature ‘in the beginning’ nature has been made at times to seem perverse and therefore undeserving of our care. By exaggerating the fallenness of nature we have too easily lost sight of the original goodness of the entire creation that God declared to be ‘good.’ At the same time an undue focus on the human need for redemption from evil has distracted us from the travail of the entire creation, which, in St Paul’s words, also ‘groans’ for radical renewal (Romans 8.22). (234)
For Mr. Collins and the community around Longbourn, Lydia’s original goodness is forgotten; her actions are perverse; therefore, she does not deserve their care.

Darcy, joined by Elizabeth once she marries him and has access to financial resources, acts to restore the fallen world and exercise stewardship. Darcy restores a semblance of guiltlessness by arranging Lydia’s marriage, a visit to Longbourn to demonstrate the Bennet family’s approbation of the marriage, and a career that removes them from the neighborhood. Their initial elopement, like the Fall in the Garden of Eden, cannot be completely erased, but Darcy provides the best reclamation possible and a way forward. The marriage is followed by stewardship, offering benevolent care to the Wickhams. Darcy assists him further in his profession. In addition to reconciling with Wickham since they are now “brother and sister,” Elizabeth also provides a financial buffer: “Such relief, however, as it was in her power to afford, by the practice of what might be called economy in her own private expences, she frequently sent them” (364, 429). Darcy and Elizabeth, already identified as stewards of the landscape, also act as stewards of the family left to their care.

One more perspective of Darcy’s demonstration of stewardship as extended to family offers an ideal for contemporary ecological concerns. Darcy and Elizabeth’s marriage celebrates one version of the Cinderella happily-ever-after narrative for many reasons, most rightfully concerning the triumph of love and the undeniable sexual attraction between a well-loved hero and heroine. True love does not act alone, however. The prospect of Darcy’s £10,000 a year is crucially important. Elizabeth finds financial security without sacrificing love, as her friend Charlotte Lucas chose. She will not face the financial pressures that her careless sister Lydia or the Price family in Mansfield Park will. At Pemberley, Darcy and Elizabeth will continue to exercise stewardship over the land, the food it generates, the tenants it supports, and the servants
it employs. Guests will be provided for. Some of the surplus will be directed to the Wickhams. Any unmarried Bennet girls will be welcome to its financial security if they must leave Longbourn at Mr. Bennet’s death. Simply put, Pemberley offers the financial, social, and natural resources necessary to provide for a large number of people, including the children that will inevitably arrive. Pemberley’s resources allow them to exercise stewardship over their family.

Exercising stewardship within sexual parameters means taking responsibility for the children intercourse produces. The command to be fruitful and multiply was given within an Edenic context with no worries about providing food and clothing. The postlapsarian reality renders our obedience to that command to one contingent on monetary means. Austen clearly depicts in Mansfield Park the consequences of thoughtlessly producing more children than can be provided for: “such a superfluity of children, and such a want of almost everything else” (5), Mrs. Price bewails to her sisters. The financial pressures the Price family suffers result from a number of factors, but one of those is the excess children they are unable to care for. Austen offers a smaller, more domestic version of the pressures the earth’s environment suffers from supporting too large a human population. As Robert Engleman asks, “Who would disagree that if our species were a fraction of its current size, our climate problems would have a fraction of their current urgency?” (44). His question represents one concern expressed by the contemporary deep ecological movement. Arne Naess writes, “It is recognized that excessive pressures on planetary life conditions stem from the human population explosion. The pressure stemming from industrial societies is a major factor, and population reduction must have a high priority in those societies, as well as in developing countries” (54). Placing the Darcy marriage in this ecological context recognizes the truth behind Deirdre Donahue’s facetious comment that the novel is “a fussy old story about the breeding habits of early 19th-century Brits.” Austen’s delightful love
story offers more than a lesson on “breeding habits,” but an ecotheological perspective does
highlight that topic. Darcy and Elizabeth model the ideal marriage and its effect on stewardship.

**Conclusion: Restoration through Hospitality and Ecotheological Virtue**

True to hospitality and stewardship principles, God’s dominion over humanity, expressed
through love and grace, offers resolution to the difficulties caused by sexual transgression.

Mirroring God’s love, Derrida posits the law of heteronomy, “the other is my law” (Derrida and
Roudinesco 52). Making the needs and desires of the other tantamount to a law is strong
language, a nearly impossible task to fulfill, as Derrida recognizes. For him, the gift of true
hospitality cannot be trapped within circles of reciprocity, but is instead a moment of madness
and excess, opening up closed circles to the impossible (Shepherd 56). This excess characterizes
the hospitality, charity, and forgiveness that the characters in both works exhibit, which
ultimately lead to restoration and marital unions.

Leonato’s greeting to Don Pedro, for example, is extraordinarily gracious, an excess:
“Never came trouble to my house in the likeness of your grace: for trouble being gone, comfort
should remain; but when you depart from me, sorrow abides and happiness takes his leave” (94-
97). This is the kind of exceptional hospitality that, for Derrida, recalls a host of biblical
proportions: “The master of the house ‘waits anxiously on the threshold of his home’ for the
stranger he will see arising into view on the horizon as a liberator. And from the furthest distance
that he sees him coming, the master will hasten to call out to him: ‘Enter quickly, as I am afraid
of my happiness’” (Of Hospitality 122-23). Leonato’s hospitality continues to be generous to the
degree of giving up control as host to Don Pedro, as discussed in an earlier chapter, fulfilling
another of Derrida’s characteristics of unconditional hospitality, that “to be hospitable is to let
oneself be overtaken” (“Hostipitality” 362). Leonato is certainly overtaken by his guest Claudio,
to whom he gives his daughter in marriage, even after Claudio’s enraged slander. Derrida uses sexual language to explain a host’s limitless reserves of giving. A host should “be surprised in a fashion almost violent, violated and raped, stolen” (Acts 362). Leonato and Hero experience violent violation from a guest. Yet Leonato offers Hero to Claudio again, turning his other cheek when the first had been slapped. Leonato, at length, forgives, as does Hero. Leonato nearly realizes Derrida’s impossible gift of hospitality:

For hospitality to occur, it is necessary for hospitality to go beyond hospitality.
That requires that the host must, in a moment of madness, tear up the understanding between him and the guest, act with “excess,” make an absolute gift of his property, which is of course impossible. (Caputo 110-11).

Giving to this extent may be impossible, but Leonato approaches that aporia. He gives the gift of his only child and does not withdraw the gift, even in the face of black betrayal, under the most adverse of conditions. Hero is his “absolute gift,” his only child and only heir.

Darcy’s absolute gift is not a child but something perhaps just as precious to him: his pride. For Elizabeth’s sake, he admits his error, expressing humility for not recognizing Jane’s true regard for Bingley, even telling Elizabeth, “I was obliged to confess one thing, which for a time, and not unjustly, offended him. I could not allow myself to conceal that your sister had been in town three months last winter, that I had known it, and purposely kept it from him” (412). For Elizabeth’s sake, he sacrifices his pride by bribing and cajoling the man who nearly seduced his sister, sentencing himself to a lifetime of social embarrassment, continual demands for financial assistance, and—worst for Darcy’s pride—admitting to a family relationship with Wickham. His new family relationship with the Bennets refashions Mrs. Bennet into his mother-in-law and Lydia into his sister-in-law. For Darcy, who was taught “pride and conceit […] to be
selfish and overbearing [...] to think meanly of all the rest of the world” by his parents, the humiliation on behalf of those for whom he feels contempt is a true sacrifice (409). In this way at least, Darcy competently represents God as host in the hospitality hierarchy.

Darcy’s claim as pre-eminent hero of romantic comedies is based on real moral worth when he uses his pride as a gentleman, castigated by Elizabeth earlier in the novel, to achieve virtuous goals. His actions in creating Lydia’s marriage are motivated by his near failure prior to the beginning of the novel. Because their parents are deceased, Darcy acts as his sister Georgiana’s father-figure and protector, the guardian of her chastity. He fully recognizes that he is “a brother whom she almost looked up to as a father” (224-25). Although his reasons seem to differ from Mr. Bennet’s, he too absents himself from Georgiana’s home and places her in the care of someone other than himself. Chance more than contrivance saves her from Lydia’s fate. Lydia’s danger from the same man motivates Darcy to act, fulfilling the protective parental role for Lydia that Mr. Bennet abdicated, using his financial and social power to arrange Lydia’s marriage so that the shame of the family is minimized. As altruistic as his actions are, they also assuage his culpability for not publishing Wickham’s deeds, thereby putting Lydia in danger. Caputo, speaking for Derrida, writes, “If the agent [Darcy] expends all its energies on the other [Elizabeth] without return that is after all what the agent wants, and that is how the agent gets her kicks. If you don’t believe that, trying [sic] blocking the way of someone who is working for the other. Those people are impossible!” (148). Such is true for Darcy, who is determined to do everything for Elizabeth. Mrs. Gardiner writes, “But our visitor was very obstinate. I fancy, Lizzy, that obstinacy is the real defect of his character, after all. He has been accused of many faults at different times, but this is the true one. Nothing was to be done that he did not do himself. […] Mr. Gardiner and Darcy] battled it together for a long time” over who would get
credit for Lydia’s marriage (358). He corrects what he perceives as his own fault, confessing his sense of pride and self-satisfaction by rectifying his own version of the Fall. Derrida puts the love Darcy demonstrates for Elizabeth—and himself—in Christian terms: “Jesus said to love your neighbor as you love yourself, because if you stopped loving yourself you would stop loving God, your neighbor, and mammon too; you would stop loving, period. The whole momentum of agency, subjectivity, and love would just shut down, the circle would stop turning” (Caputo 148). Darcy keeps the circle of love turning, extending hospitality and self-sacrificial love to Elizabeth. Their love ensures stability for the next generation at Pemberley, as their roles of master and mistress extend financially secure benefits to the whole Pemberley circle.
CHAPTER VII
SAVAGERY FROM THE FALL AND COMMUNION FROM RESTORATION

Introduction: Connections as Restoration of Eden

Textbooks for children often explain the concept of ecology with images. Arrows run between images of soil, plants, animals, and people, demonstrating how each element affects every other element: how soil sustains the plant, which provides hay for the horse, which pulls the plow for a farmer, who sows seeds for more plants, and so forth. Such diagrams are simplified, but no less true for that reason. The connection, the interrelationships so clearly defined with arrows could define any ecological process. Ecocriticism adds literature to that circuit as books, poems, and plays enter the cycle. The picture serves a useful purpose. The interconnections in these diagrams are easily disrupted. If the farmer’s horse throws a shoe, the seeds may not be planted in time, and the horse may not have enough hay for the winter. One disruption skews the entire process. The same is true in a positive sense as well. If the farmer adds the element of manure to the soil, enriching its growing capacity, then more hay will grow, the horse will eat more and get stronger, and more land will be plowed, which means more hay. Hospitality is not that different. We are all familiar with the casual conversations in which one life partner mentions that they owe their friends a dinner but that they will not invite one particular couple because they did not get invited to their daughter’s wedding. Hospitality, no
less than an ecosystem, thrives or languishes depending on the issue of invitations, a catty remark, or a gesture of appreciation.

Relationships in *Much Ado about Nothing* and *Pride and Prejudice* follow the same pattern. Sometimes a single word can set in motion a series of events for good or ill. As part of my conclusion to this study, I will provide two extended examples of interconnections from the selected works and their biblical inspiration. The first demonstrates the damage a single word and its polysemous nuances can cause. The second example counteracts the first, demonstrating how a gesture of hospitality using products from the natural world can heal. The first example does not foster ecological virtues; the second does. Finally, I will conclude with a discussion on how these works by Shakespeare and Austen can provide models for contemporary ecological concerns.

**Savagery: Connections between Messina and Pemberley**

Two hundred years, author gender, literary genre, and more separate *Much Ado about Nothing* and *Pride and Prejudice*. Yet the single word, “savage,” destroys societies in both works. In *Much Ado about Nothing*, characters directly or indirectly refer to themselves or others as “savage.” Claudio, in his rejection of Hero for alleged promiscuity, claims that her sexual appetite is deeper than that of “animals / That rage in savage sensuality” (4.1.59-60, emphasis added). His accusation of animality sets in motion a potentially deadly chain of events. Beatrice’s response is to imagine Claudio as not only an animal butchered for its meat but also as an inhuman savage, a less civilized cannibal perhaps, who deserves a violent, undignified public execution. Yet, Beatrice’s desire to eat Claudio’s heart also defines her as a cannibal or a savage. Even Benedick is included. Four times he is referred to as a “savage bull” (1.1.250, 251, 5.1.178, 5.4.43, emphasis added), the bachelor incapable of being civilized into a suitable husband.
Rhetorically, “savage,” applied directly or indirectly, refers simultaneously to four characters. That one term pulls together the four main protagonists of the play, even though most are resisting or even actively pushing each other away. They are denying everything they have in common, rejecting the community God desires, looking instead for reasons to isolate themselves. Their easily aroused tempers and determination to oppose each other encourages animal passions and undermines the system of hospitality upon which Messina should operate, threatening to prevent the unity expressed in the final dance.

Austen, writing 200 years later, gives “savage” a more nuanced meaning than the volatile launches of the term in Shakespeare’s play. Early in the novel, Darcy contemptuously tells Sir Lucas that dancing “has the advantage of being in vogue amongst the less polished societies of the world. Every savage can dance” (28, emphasis added). Darcy’s flippant remark primarily refers to social status, granting no appreciation for the country dancing he witnesses with little pleasure and participates in with even less. Austen, however, endows the word with meanings that bring it more firmly into the purview of ecotheology and hospitality by investing it with multiple negative connotations. Samuel Johnson defined “savage” as “bestial,” linking the word to animals (Dictionary). Johnson’s good friend George Crabbe’s description of those who participated in cockfights as “savage,” typically the lower classes who were stereotyped as the greatest abusers of animals at the time, further links the word with a lower class of people (Perkins 92). Johnson also defined hunting as “the labor of savages of North America, but the amusement of the gentlemen of England,” utilizing the word to define a subhuman race (Dictionary, emphasis added). The word was politically loaded as well. Olivia Smith, author of The Politics of Language, 1791-1819, explains that, “In the concept of civilization, powerful metaphors of refined and civilized, and vulgar and savage [...] are engrained in the compare-
and-contrast mentality of cultural awareness” (75, emphasis added). Her comment is based on Britain’s deep-rooted social angst in the wake of the French Revolution, encouraging the British to consider their own civilization as based on rationality and the French on savagery (75). The culmination of all these definitions is that with one simple word, “savage,” Darcy associates Elizabeth and everyone else in the room (other than his own party) simultaneously with animals, the lower classes, a subhuman race, and an inferior nation. For him, he and his friends exist on an unchanging plain standing midway between God and the rest of humanity. Revelations of the multiple layers of his arrogance and superciliousness compound our aversion to his excessive pride in himself and his prejudice against others, particularly against Elizabeth. Darcy actively and strongly resists any connection between him and Elizabeth, denying rather than embracing any common affinity as both ecological and scriptural principles encourage.

Finally, the term “savage” further connects Darcy and Benedick. The association between the two has long been noted, beginning almost as soon as the novel was published. That link continues as both men use the word as a term of contempt: Benedick as a savage bull tamed into marriage, Darcy for savage inferiors who can never be tamed into culture despite their ability to dance. An ecotheological reading strengthens the 200-year-old connection.

The ease with which the accusation of “savage” is issued and the offense it creates is evidence of its disgrace. Denouncing someone as less than human, whether because of inhumanity, race, class, or nationality, denotes scorn and shame, evidence of the cultural belief that man is, or should be, better or higher than animals. The specifically Christian doctrine focuses on effects of the Fall, which affected innocent animals as well as man. However, for the audiences of Shakespeare and Austen, even in a world view that blamed humans rather than animals for their subordinate position and advocated the kind use of animals, denigrating others
with the accusation that they belong on the same level of animals constituted shame of the worst kind. The accusation maintains Benedick and Beatrice’s ongoing war of wit, throws Hero into a deathlike swoon, and earns Darcy ill-will and charges of unmerited pride from nearly everyone near Longbourn and Meryton. All must counteract that charge and prove themselves worthy in order to win the unconditional love necessary for successful marriage. Just as the horse throwing a shoe in my opening anecdote can disrupt the growing season on a farm, affecting the welfare of human and nonhuman for the remaining year, the hurtful utterance of just one word can harm the system of social relations in Messina and Longbourn. The example illustrates the importance of each ecological act on earth. Seemingly small failures affect other ecosystems and then others until entire regions, countries, and the world are damaged, perhaps permanently.

If Claudio’s “mistaking” had not been rectified, Shakespeare’s play could have ended as tragedy: Hero sequestered in a convent or dead or Claudio dead by Benedick’s hand in the threatened duel. If Darcy’s reputation were not corrected, he might have married the selfish Miss Bingley or the sickly Miss deBourgh, cementing his selfish tendency. No more marriage proposals in the pleach’d bower, no bachelors relinquishing identities as savage bulls, no £10,000 a year to steward the Wickhams, no riding around Pemberley in a phaeton. Perhaps Mrs. Caroline Darcy would even influence Darcy to artificially enhance Pemberley’s landscape, cut timber, and reduce compassionate care for servants and tenants. The characters’ decisions impact the environment as well as families and society.

**Communion: Restoration of Eden**

Happily, the characters in each work ultimately choose restoration and marriage. Austen’s narrator writes, “Let other pens dwell on guilt and misery. I quit such odious subjects as soon as I can, impatient to restore everybody, not greatly in fault themselves, to tolerable
comfort, and to have done with all the rest” (*Mansfield Park* 533). The works in question could have ended badly. That they do not is because the accusations of savagery were corrected with humility, which determines self-improvement and motivates a willingness to re-examine evidence, faith that believes in the integrity of loved ones, and love that manifests itself in self-sacrificial gifts. In a study that has integrated literature, ecotheology, and hospitality, Christ’s ritual of the Last Supper offers an alternate model. In response to hostility—a lack of understanding from his apostles, the legalism of the Jewish leaders, the threat perceived by the Roman leaders, and diabolic resistance from evil forces, Jesus offers himself. His self-sacrificial love inspired the founding of Christianity and still inspires lifelong dedication from his followers. Communion models responsible use of the natural world, aporetic hospitality in contrast to hostipitality, and all-encompassing love, even to hostile guests who betray and kill.

During the Last Supper, at which Jesus presides as host, he and his apostles enjoy the commensality of the Passover meal. Afterwards, he washes the feet of the apostles, an act of humility as an example to his followers. Then he institutes what is now known as communion, offering bread, “Take, eat; this is my body,” and wine, “Drink ye all of it; For this is my blood” (*Matthew* 25. 26, 27-28). His ultimate offer of hospitality is enacted even as each one contemplates the possibility of his own act of betrayal, asking “Is it I, Master?” and even as Judas truly does plot certain betrayal (Matthew 26.22, 14-16). More literally, Christ signifies Judas’s act of betrayal simultaneously with the gift of bread, a product of the land and symbol of hospitality: “He that dippeth his hand with me in the dish, he shall betray me” (23). Even the identification of Jesus as the man to be arrested is a kiss of hospitable greeting (49). Judas’s hostile betrayal coinciding with Christ’s ultimate gift of hospitality signifies perfect hospitality
even when confronted with hostility. Christ’s body literally becomes hospitable sacrifice in the form of the bread and wine of communion and as a sacrificial lamb.

Christ’s offer of his body models and magnifies the humble, self-sacrificial love demonstrated in Shakespeare’s and Austen’s work. Leonato turns his cheek and once again offers his only daughter to Claudio after his slander; Hero forgives Claudio, offering her body to him after the wedding; Benedick engages Claudio in a duel for Beatrice’s sake, offering his body for potential injury or death. Darcy finds Wickham, negotiates with him, and witnesses the wedding, sacrificing his pride for Elizabeth’s sake. These acts demonstrate humility rather than pride; gratitude rather than contempt; compassion and love rather than revenge or bitterness. These sacrificial examples emulate the self-sacrifice of Christ and emphasize human beings as created in the image of God, enjoined by him to take care of others with humility: “to be human, then, is not to be aware of human being in its mode of superiority to all that is not human, but to understand through the primary relation of creature to Creator that all of creation depends upon God” (Steffen 70). Their examples heighten moral consciousness, encourage responsibility and accountability, and offer a hospitable vision of home, a place where humans and nonhumans do not dwell as strangers, but are welcomed as family.

**Ecotheological Virtues: Restoration of Eden**

Their examples model the virtues that must be enacted today in our ecological action. I use the word “action” purposely. Following David Mazel’s lead, I note that the term “environment” derives from the verb “environ,” the action of environing or surrounding. The sense of action has been lost in contemporary usage. What remains of our sense of environment, by contrast, is not an action but a thing. Thanks to a nominalizing process that effaces both act and actor, we no longer speak of what *environ* us, but of what our environment *is*. This is not a
trivial distinction, for restoring to environment the sense of its originary action allows us to inquire into not only what environ us, but how it came to do so, by means of what agency, and so on (138-39).

The protagonists in these works take action. The significance of their actions hinges less on the decisions themselves, but on the environment, if you will, surrounding each action. What action did they take? How did the action come to be? By what agent did the action occur?

Claudio takes action by publicly proclaiming Hero’s innocence in his night of penance and by marrying Leonato’s choice of bride. How? He follows Leonato’s repentance requirements and he marries a veiled, silent woman despite his inability to inspect her first. Benedick engages Claudio in a duel. He does it himself, taking action himself, rather than engaging in some form of legal process. He does it through faith in Beatrice’s belief in Hero’s innocence. With no evidence other than her word, Benedick discontinues his male friendships, risks his honor if Beatrice is wrong, and risks his life. Darcy trusts that Elizabeth has correctly judged Jane’s love for Bingley even though he cannot see it himself. He goes to London himself to search for London and does not send a servant. And he takes action out of love for Elizabeth. Love is his motivation. The environment, the situation surrounding each beneficial action, magnifies the sense of love behind it. But we must also pay attention to the particular, as the coordinator of the World Council of Churches puts it, who calls for “particular actions in very concrete contexts” (Dalton 98, 99).

Benedick, Beatrice, Darcy, and Elizabeth live and act in small, circumscribed settings and exercise great influence over their small circles. We can do the same.

Taking action ourselves requires that we see ourselves as intimately connected to our environment. Darcy’s definiens is Pemberley, an estate at one with the natural world and one capable of demonstrating great hospitality. Elizabeth’s pleasure in striding through fields to
Netherfield prepares her for Pemberley’s unity with the natural world. Both Darcy and Elizabeth extend their civility not only to other human beings but also to the nonhuman world, extending ethical concerns beyond the human world, in part because their world view includes acknowledgement of the divine, modelling what Gary Snyder terms the “etiquette of the wild.”

He writes that etiquette learned from the wild is mindful, mannerly, and has style. Of all moral failings and flaws of character, the worst is stinginess of thought, which includes meanness in all its forms. Rudeness in thought or deed toward others, toward nature, reduces the chances of conviviality and interspecies communication. [...] One must not boast, or show much pride in accomplishment, and one must not take one’s skill for granted.

Wastefulness and carelessness are caused by stinginess of spirit. (22-23)

Do not these ethics represent what Benedick and Darcy learn? To let go of rudeness, like insults, such as referring to people as savages or complaining that Elizabeth is “only tolerable”? To reduce conviviality? To boast? To show pride?

My point is that the virtues that Christ models, that Benedick, Beatrice, Darcy, and Elizabeth model, are the same virtues necessary for attitudinal changes toward the environment. Recognizing that we are all connected is the first step: recognizing that we are all savages subject to God and that the human/nonhuman dogma is harmful, undermining the fact of connection. For example, Colossians 1.17 claims God as the unifying principle: “And he is before all things, and in him all things consist.” In imitation and amplification, the Book of Common Prayer, familiar to Shakespeare and Austen, calls for unity and concord among believers. Many prayers contain calls for believers to gather together for prayer or worship, such as “Knit yourselves together” (Booty 180). The nonhuman world is also specified, as in “Let the floods clap their hands, and let
the hills be joyful together before the Lord” (63). Based on such passages, those living in the Renaissance emphasized “the shared sentience of human and animal” (Fudge, “Introduction” 2).

By Austen’s lifetime, scientists were theorizing that “all parts of the universe are bound together in an organic unity” (Miles 219). For example, Denis Diderot, chief editor of a 1765 encyclopedia, theorized: “Every animal is more or less a human being, every mineral more or less a plant, every plant more or less an animal,” implying connections, similarities, and shared character (qtd. in Miles 219). The community encouraged by Anglicanism, communion, and society ultimately occurs in Much Ado about Nothing and Pride and Prejudice because the protagonists finally conform to church and social expectations by balancing passions with reason and by recognizing that all life forms—plant, animal, human—are connected and share together the earth’s hospitality.

For permanent, meaningful human/nonhuman interactions to take place, humanity must develop the virtues that allow us to identify with nonhumans, acknowledge our differences, and demonstrate gratitude for those differences. I am not referring to a recognition of the natural world’s inferiority and exercising our perceived right to use its resources with an offhand, mumbled thank you. I am referring instead to genuine recognition and appreciation of the natural world. That involves first acknowledging its existence, which may at first seem surprising. How can we not notice the existence of the food we eat, the ground beneath our feet, or the rain that falls on our heads? But in our industrialized world, food often arrives plasticized, frozen, and already prepared for the microwave. Dirt is replaced by concrete sidewalks, lawns that cause anxiety about weeds and mowing, and mulch that needs replaced and raked. Rain is an inconvenience, calling for the nuisance of umbrellas and boots. Remembering that food really comes from plants and animals, that dirt supports nearly every life form we commonly see and
every building we enter, and that rain is necessary for the continued existence of our planet is the first step in recognition and appreciation.

The second step is acknowledging the independent status of the nonhuman world, a differentiated existence that has rights, remembering that if human beings suddenly ceased to exist that much of the natural world would barely notice and thrive without us. This acknowledgement requires humility, a recognition that we cannot exist independently from the nonhuman world. The natural world’s inherent value merits the right to continued life and our genuine consideration before destroying or altering their world. I am not arguing against building dams or cutting trees, but that we should do so only after considering the impact our actions will have and contemplating alternatives, if necessary.

Finally, identification and appreciation of the natural world should culminate in gratitude, resulting in relinquishing domination of that world. I use the word “domination” purposefully to distinguish its despotism from the Christian term “dominion,” which I have defined as benevolent and compassionate stewardship care for the natural world in order to restore it to paradisiacal perfection, confirming Laurenz Volkmann’s recommendation: “Perhaps it is time that our susceptibility to shame, desire, status-seeking, and fun were manipulated more consistently towards environmental ends” (Garrard 240). It is time to return to the Genesis context of dominion, which “directs attention to that (mythic) time when intimacy rather than estrangement characterized the human relation with both God and nature” (Steffen 66). It is time to heed Pope Francis’s call “that we look for solutions not only in technology but in a change of humanity; otherwise we would be dealing merely with symptoms.” He asks us “to replace consumption with sacrifice, greed with generosity, wastefulness with a spirit of sharing” (Encyclical 8).
Continuing Restoration through Future Research

The application of literature to ecocritical concerns modelled in this study can lead to a rich subfield in ecocriticism. Sustained ecocritical efforts with Shakespeare and Austen have so far utilized those works with more obvious nonhuman elements, such as the dog in *Two Gentlemen of Verona* or Lady Bertram’s pug in *Mansfield Park*. Other plays hold much potential, including *The Merchant of Venice*, whose green world of Belmont has been referenced, but little else (see Imanishi). The forest in *As You Like It* and the ocean in *The Tempest* have received some attention. *Henry V* has not been addressed ecocritically. Simon Estok has worked with *2 Henry IV* and *2 Henry VI*, but the stage as the “fields of France” would offer a logical extension of the Henriad. *Measure for Measure* has been entirely neglected. Mariana’s dowry lost at sea and the pirate who substitutes in the head trick provide the potential of a maritime dimension to the play’s court and prison. The ocean in *Pericles* is certainly worthy of attention.

All of Austen’s other novels are ripe for ecocritical exploration as well. Henry Tilney and Catherine Morland’s country walks, Anne Elliot’s musings on the autumn season, and Emma’s wedding trip to the sea have not garnered sustained ecocritical attention. Any of these would add to Nancy Easterlin’s contention that “literature is a rich repository of dynamic constructions of nature, place, and environment, and as ecocritics begin to acknowledge our evolved and unavoidably human-centered perspective, they will see the value in studying literary works that highlight the dramatic relationship between mind and world” (125). Examples from literature can help us meet Lynn White’s goal calling for new “ideas of the man-nature relationship” (1206). Those ideas can be found in “a new religion” or by “rethink[ing] our old one,” inspired by delightful characters like Benedick, Beatrice, Darcy, and Elizabeth (1206).
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