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Olive Moore, Queer Ecology, and Anthropocene Modernism

David Shackleton

In Olive Moore's novel *Spleen* (1930), the main character Ruth encounters a "procession of unemployed" passing through Trafalgar Square: "[t]he men, it seemed, were from the distressed areas of the North; were from the closed steel and iron works; were miners from Wales; were dockers from the Clyde. They had gathered in the North and had come down on foot with their banners and their massed appeal to protest."¹ She "turned to the group nearest her on the pavement; warmly dressed, middle-class. The man looked carved: the woman dried: the child bled: the dog inflated" (Moore, *Spleen*, 128). The juxtaposition of the two groups defamiliarizes the middle-class family: several of the family members appear as inanimate objects, and the colons in the sentence which ostensibly connect them together equally function to separate and estrange them. Yet the contrast also makes strange the relationship between the family and the workers, and thereby brings together the sexual and environmental politics that are intertwined throughout the novel: it is not just the family that is put into question therein, but also the reproduction of the conditions of production of a fossil fuel capitalism.

The imbrication of sexual and environmental politics in *Spleen* make it a key work of "queer ecology" in Catriona Sandilands's sense of the term as the "constellation of practices that aim, in different ways, to disrupt prevailing heterosexist discursive and institutional articulations of sexuality and nature."² This broad definition allows the possibility that artworks can be examples of queer ecology, and can further its central task of developing a sexual politics that includes consideration of the natural world and its biosocial constitution, and an environmental politics that

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356 is sensitive to the ways in which sexual relations shape the material world of nature and perceptions of that world. Indeed, Sandilands opens the way to a fuller investigation of a specifically modernist queer ecology when she identifies E. M. Forster's *Maurice* (1914/1971) and Radclyffe Hall's *The Well of Loneliness* (1928) as literary works that anticipate the queer ecological scholarship that has emerged since the 1990s.³ As part of a recent ecocritical turn in modernist studies, scholars have extended such an approach: for example, Kelly Sultzbach and Benjamin Bateman have advanced queer ecological readings of Forster.⁴ Such readings recognize that, at a time when various discourses had recently defined sexuality as being "by nature," modernist writers explored the lives of those whose forms of non-normative gender and sexuality put them at odds with prevailing kinship structures and conceptions of "nature," and used these lives to imagine the possibility of better organizations of society and better relationships with the environment.⁵

In turn, I argue, works of modernist queer ecology can be placed within a wider field of Anthropocene modernism. The Anthropocene is the name of a proposed geological epoch in which humans have fundamentally changed the Earth system and altered the course of the Earth's geological evolution. Anthropocene modernism is a literary and cultural modernism that registers the environmental transformations such as climate change that are now considered to characterize this epoch, and offers the potential for rethinking the pressing environmental concerns of the present. By drawing attention to Ruth's cultivation of a queer environmentalism and the novel's climatic impressionism, and situating both in the context of anthropogenic climate change, I suggest that *Spleen* should be recognized as a provocative work of Anthropocene modernism.

In part, to read *Spleen* in these terms provides a revised account of the vexed issue of Moore's feminism. Very little is known about Constance Vaughan, who adopted the pseudonym "Olive Moore." She worked as a journalist, first for the *Daily Sketch* and later for *Scope*, an industry magazine, and was a member of Charles Lahr's Red Lion Street circle, a literary group that congregated around Lahr's anarchist bookshop in Holborn.⁶ She published three novels—*Celestial Seraglio* (1929), *Spleen* (1930), and *Fugue* (1932)—and a selection from her writing notebooks, including an essay on D. H. Lawrence (which had previously been published by the Blue Moon Press), as *The Apple is Bitten Again* (1934). Critics have tended to portray her as a feminist, although any straightforward attempt to recuperate her as a woman writer into male-dominated canons of modernist literature is complicated by the hostility that she herself expressed towards women writers. For example, *The Apple is Bitten Again* contains a series of seemingly misogynistic statements about such writers. "Art," it is claimed, "is a masculine prerogative": "[w]omen are not born with creative souls."⁷ Moore responds scathingly to Virginia Woolf's argument in *A Room of One's Own* (1929) that women have historically been disadvantaged as writers by their lack of formal education and material support, contending that the "matter of [having] a room of one's own" has nothing to do with creative achievement; she is similarly contemptuous of Katherine Mansfield, dismissing her writing as vain "female twittering" (*The Apple is Bitten Again*, 386, 387). In particular, although she describes "lesbianism" as "most provocative and interest-

ing of the feminine vices,” she claims that women have failed to give it satisfactory artistic expression (390). She is particularly scornful of *The Well of Loneliness*, which she describes as “rambling, apologetic, and emotional outpouring,” and “proof of the subject’s misuse; and of how dull, how sober, how domestic, such a theme becomes in woman’s literary hands” (390). Where lesbianism has been expressed in literature, she claims, it has been better expressed by men, such as by Guy de Maupassant in his short-story “La Femme de Paul” (1881); even John Donne’s poem “Sappho to Philaenis” supposedly surpasses the writing of Sappho herself (390).

Critics have responded in divergent ways to Moore’s surprising hostility towards women writers. Johanna Wagner downplays Moore’s apparently sexist comments and argues that Moore’s animus is not directed at women themselves but at “the unfortunate cultural construction of the word ‘woman.’”⁸ Maren Linett takes a contrary approach: she describes how she was originally drawn to a reading of *Spleen* as a feminist novel, but eventually found such a reading unsustainable and claims instead that the novel is “deeply misogynist.”⁹

Moving beyond these alternatives, I read *Spleen* as a queer feminist text by taking inspiration from the “antisocial” strand of queer theory that is associated with theorists such as Leo Bersani, Lee Edelman, and Jack Halberstam. Bersani employs a strategy of “embracing, at least provisionally, a homophobic representation of homosexuality” to develop a theory of the socially disruptive potential of sex as self-shattering; Edelman accepts and embraces the reactionary “ascription of negativity to the queer” in his call to threaten the social order by rejecting the future; and Halberstam refashions the failure that is often attributed to queers to dismantle the logics of success and failure that structure heteronormative capitalist society.¹⁰ Similarly, I suggest that we should take Moore’s pronouncements against women and lesbian writers seriously, and recognize that from these misogynist and homophobic materials she develops a queer feminist aesthetics based on negativity, sterility, and failure. In *Spleen*, this aesthetics finds expression (on the level of content) through Ruth’s loneliness and her awareness of her limited ability to combat the pollution and the plight of the unemployed workers that she encounters in London, and (on the level of form) through the novel’s climatic impressionism which fails to provide a totalizing representation of the changing climate. What emerges is a queer feminism that, as it is also a type of environmentalism, anticipates the “queer ecofeminism” called for by Greta Gaard.¹¹ Paradoxically, read in light of such an aesthetics, *Spleen*’s failures might turn out to be forms of success.

However, while Moore’s writing contains a vein of queer feminist negativity, it is not exhausted by such a negativity: like other works of modernist queer ecology, it is also driven by a queer utopianism. Here, José Esteban Muñoz’s account of queer futurity, in which “the negative becomes the resource for a certain mode of queer utopianism,” can be adapted to analyze *Spleen* and other works of modernist queer ecology.¹² Such works—which include Sylvia Townsend Warner’s *Lolly Willowes* (1926), Virginia Woolf’s *Orlando* (1928), and Djuna Barnes’s *Nightwood* (1936) alongside those of Moore, Forster, and Hall—tend to be wary of what Edelman characterizes as “reproductive futurism,” or the investment placed in the (ever-deferred) future through the figure

358 of the child (Edelman, *No Future*, 2, 31). Yet they do not turn away from the future altogether, but rather explore varieties of what Nicole Seymour calls “queer environmentalism”: environmentalism that is rooted in a concept of futurity that is established outside the value set of normative, reproductive heterosexuality.¹³ Indeed, the signal (but underappreciated) virtue of modernist queer ecology is that it provides a rich archive of queer time, including the imagination of a range of queer environmental structures of care and concern.¹⁴ Muñoz’s utopian hermeneutics can be deployed to recuperate the queer utopianism of these works—their search for better ways of being in the world and better worlds—in the context of the pressing environmental concerns of the present. By offering anticipatory illuminations of a queer environmental politics and activism that is not yet here, these works can reshape the present and inspire new structures of environmental care and concern.

Ruth’s Queer Environmentalism

“Nature,” according to Raymond Williams’s often-repeated apothegm, is perhaps the most complex word in the language.¹⁵ Certainly, it is one of the most complex words in *Spleen*. Critics have shown how Ruth rebels against a conception of nature that dictates that her role as a woman is to be a mother, and that makes her rejection of her child on learning that she is pregnant appear unnatural and even pathological. Indeed, she is diagnosed by her doctor as suffering from “sustained hysteria during pregnancy” (Moore, *Spleen*, 29). As Jane Garrity has demonstrated, Ruth recasts contemporary discourses of hysteria—a condition traditionally thought to be caused by a misaligned womb—to imagine that she carries her womb in her forehead, and thereby carve out a space for intellectual agency.¹⁶ I will distinguish one more layer of complexity in the word “nature” in the novel by showing how Ruth’s struggle for a new conception of nature is also one for a queer environmentalism, which includes her attempt to live according to a queer time and to counteract the pollution she encounters in London.

At the outset, it should be acknowledged that Ruth’s attempts to forge a new conception of nature are beset by internal inconsistencies. Although she strenuously resists the rhetoric that casts motherhood as natural in her own case, she idealizes motherhood in the Italian society in which she has exiled herself, at times employing metaphors of rootedness to valorize the connection of Italian children to the earth. For example, she thinks that the young Italian boy Giovanni “seemed to have grown gravely from the earth he planted himself on so securely and possessively”; given that she has recently contemplated being buried under a tree and achieving a type of perpetuity by being “reborn each year in its sap,” the pun on “gravely” suggests Giovanni’s organic connection to the earth, as the place from which he has grown and to which he will return (Moore, *Spleen*, 77, 70).¹⁷ Alarming, this ideal of rootedness appears to exclude her son Richard—whom she thinks of as “rootless, null, unproductive: therefore not a living being at all”—because of his disability (109).¹⁸ While critics have highlighted Ruth’s shocking disregard for her disabled son and her troubling reproduction of gender

and race hierarchies in relation to the Italians, it can be added that her metaphors of rootedness are even more problematic when viewed in the context of Italian fascism.¹⁹ Her valorization of “strongly planted” Italian children is uncomfortably close to Benito Mussolini’s ruralism and his campaign for the growing Italian populace to be rooted in the land (*Spleen*, 120).²⁰ For similar reasons, her view of Italian women as “natural” mothers should be treated with caution. She imagines that such women give birth with “scarcely any pain at all,” and later opines that “a million mothers can found a nation. The Italian woman, as you say, is a born mother” (17, 123). This opinion is deeply suspect given that, at this time, Mussolini (who had previously been mentioned in conversation at Ruth’s hotel) was propagating a cult of the woman as mother, and fascists were calling for women to be honored as reproducers of the nation (122).²¹

Without discounting these inconsistencies, it might be noted that they are typical of Moore’s approach to characterization, in which characters tend to display marked psychological contradictions. Uller, for instance, delivers the novel’s fiercest polemic against marriage despite—as is wryly observed—being himself “a much-married man” (87–88). It is plausible to suggest that Ruth has internalized the strong association between motherhood and nature from which she had herself suffered, and then projected it onto the Italians in a manner that continues to upset her. (Even twenty-two years after arriving in Italy, Ruth’s experience of watching the pregnant Graziella passing through a vineyard is so intense that she finds tears pouring down her cheeks [18]). Be this as it may, Ruth’s view of Italian women as natural mothers functions to throw into relief her own queer environmentalism.

In her own case, Ruth rebels against the role that is prescribed her as a woman in a manner that anticipates later ecofeminist theory. She is thrown into turmoil on discovering that she is pregnant and thinks that she does not want her child; her friend Dora tries to comfort her by suggesting that she will love her child when it comes because it “is nature” for a mother to do so, and describing creation as a “wonderful thing” (20–21). Dora’s alignment of motherhood with nature is exemplary of the pervasive rhetoric diagnosed by ecofeminists that associates women with nature.²² Ruth is skeptical, thinking that “in her case it did not seem to be nature,” yet she goes on to reimagine her relationship to nature as an act of resistance against her husband Stephen and his family (*Spleen*, 20). Defying their injunctions not to stray far from the house while pregnant, she takes to wandering alone through the woods and lying “for hours on the earth as though embracing it” (29). This practice, which brings her great spiritual comfort, originated in her childhood: her father had taught her to “walk barefooted on the grass,” telling her that it put her “in direct contact with the earth, with the generative power which bore mountains, poured streams, moved sap” (36). Garrity suggests that her father’s environmentalism can be read as an amalgam of that of “late nineteenth-century pre-Raphaelite, socialist, and Medievalist reformers” who desired the emancipation of women (“Headless,” 297). It also anticipates that of later ecofeminists who sought to recuperate the identification of women and the natural world as a means of resistance to the male dominance that produces it. Certainly, Ruth’s running barefoot on the grass as a child was already mildly subversive, judging

360 by Mrs Grier's shocked reaction (*Spleen*, 36). Her later imaginative connection with nature is even more radical. For example, she is repulsed by the idea of having "to bear her child" in a "canopied tomb of a bed with its . . . boast of . . . loves and births and deaths," and thinks instead that "[o]ne should be born on hills, on clouds, near streams, in woods, on open and pleasant spaces" (45, ellipses added, 46). By refiguring natural (and mythological) spaces as sites of freedom from the family, Moore can be recognized as one of the feminist writers identified by Stacy Alaimo who "negotiated, contested, and transformed the discourses of nature that surrounded them."²³

However, in contrast to later ecofeminists who sought to reappropriate the association of women with fertility, Ruth imaginatively recasts contemporary discourses of sexual inversion to constitute a distinctively queer version of ecofeminism. She attempts to escape from her unwanted pregnancy by formulating a myth of mental pregnancy. "I think," she says to her husband, "I carry my womb in my forehead," a contention that she elaborates to Dora: "Some there are, she quoted to Dora, whose souls are more pregnant than their bodies. No. Socrates. And no one has ever thought of applying it to women" (*Spleen*, 24). Critics have noted that Ruth is quoting from Diotima's speech about love and immortality in Plato's *Symposium*, although it can be added that the *Symposium* was an important intertext in sexological discourse.²⁴ For example, in *The Intermediate Sex* (1908), Edward Carpenter both quotes from the *Symposium* and advances a theory of "homogenic love"—or love between man and man or woman and woman—which deploys a very similar conception of mental pregnancy:

It certainly does not seem impossible to suppose that as the ordinary love has a special function in the propagation of the race, so the other has its special function in social and heroic work, and in the generation—not of bodily children—but of those children of the mind, the philosophical conceptions and ideals which transform our lives and those of society.²⁵

That is, by distinguishing "bodily children" from "children of the mind," Carpenter carves out an important social and political role for "sexual inverts" and what he calls "the non-child-bearing love" (*The Intermediate Sex*, 69). Carpenter's writing, and that of other reformist sexologists such as Havelock Ellis, can be considered part of what Michel Foucault terms a "reverse discourse" that operated within the scientific, legal, and literary discourses that forged homosexuality as an identity in the nineteenth century, and otherwise allowed greater "social controls" into this area of "perversity." As Foucault puts it, with such a reverse discourse "homosexuality began to speak in its own behalf, to demand that its legitimacy or 'naturalness' be acknowledged, often in the same vocabulary, using the same categories by which it was medically disqualified" (*History of Sexuality*, 1:101). *Spleen* both draws upon such a reverse discourse, and by reworking conceptions of hysteria and sexual inversion in Ruth's conceit of mental pregnancy, itself forms part of that discourse.²⁶ Much as the idea of mental pregnancy provides alternatives to biological pregnancy in the *Symposium* and in *The Intermediate Sex*, so Ruth's conceit that she carries her womb in her forehead allows her to reimagine a new role for women, beyond that of "the eternal oven in which to bake

the eternal bun" (*Spleen*, 24). This newfound confidence allows her to correct Dora's statement that childbirth "is what woman is made for" to "[w]as made for," with the inflection of the tense from present to past optimistically conveying a new space of possibility opened up for women (26).

By appealing to a sexological myth of mental pregnancy to challenge the supposed naturalness of motherhood, Ruth enters what Gaard characterizes as the contradictory discursive space inhabited by queer ecofeminism: one in which women as an oppressed group have tended to be portrayed as "closer to nature" but in which non-normative sexualities are frequently devalued for being "against nature" (Gaard, "Queer Eco-feminism," 119). Indeed, the status of the sexual invert as regards nature—and how that "nature" was to be understood—was a contested point in both sexual science and modernist queer ecology. Richard von Krafft-Ebing claimed that "every expression of [the sexual instinct] that does not correspond with the purpose of nature—i.e. propagation—must be regarded as perverse," but reformist sexologists such as Ellis and Carpenter were keen to stress that sexual inversion was natural.²⁷ Ellis, for example, claimed that sexual inversion was an "organic" variation that "we see throughout living nature, in plants and in animals," and Carpenter similarly emphasized that the problems faced by the sexual invert were those "of Nature's own producing."²⁸ Ruth's conceit of mental pregnancy forms part of a similar renegotiation of the concept of nature, whose ultimate purpose is no longer conceived to be the propagation of the species.

Ruth's myth of mental pregnancy forms part of her wider attempt to live her life according to a new form of temporality. Questioning Dora's platitudes and the expectation that a woman "have a maternal sense as she is expected to have other womanly attributes," she has an epiphany: "A boy is born. Or a girl. A boy. A girl. And you know before hand every possibility of its life, and like a litany the answer is unalterable and as assured. Birth. Adolescence. Marriage. Birth. Old Age. Death" (*Spleen*, 22). That is, depending on what sex a baby is born, his or her entire life trajectory is predetermined: for a woman, this includes getting married and having children. The trajectory that Ruth plots is very similar to that which Halberstam later characterized as being shaped by "reproductive temporality": one that dictates that people's futures lie within "those paradigmatic markers of life experience—namely, birth, marriage, reproduction, and death."²⁹ In a moment of insight, Ruth realizes that this trajectory is a construction: that one is expected to accept childbirth blindly "because it is called nature and because one is told that one must because everyone does" (*Spleen*, 22). The movement here from an is to an ought—from the fact that "everyone does" to "one must"—is typical of the desire to be "normal," which Michael Warner suggests rests on a confusion between statistical norms and evaluative norms.³⁰ Ruth questions such a normalcy. Whilst in the woods, she thinks again of a life in which marriage and childbirth form supposedly unalterable stages, pressing her fingers "in the grass" as she counts: "Birth. Adolescence. Marriage. Birth. Old Age. Death" (*Spleen*, 30). Her pressing her fingers in the grass symbolically suggests how closely this cycle has been connected to nature, yet she challenges the cycle: she finds it "inadequate" and "humiliating" and wishes to defy "the dreary inevitable round of years" (30).

362 Although she comes to accept that her pregnancy cannot be a purely mental one, Ruth goes on to cultivate a new form of temporality by leaving her husband and rejecting the material support that his wealthy family would have provided.³¹ Defying the “hierarchies of property and propriety” that for Lauren Berlant and Michael Warner characterize heteronormativity, Ruth leaves Stephen to live in self-imposed exile with her son on the Italian island of Foria (which is closely modelled on the island of Ischia, whose main town is Forio).³² She refuses to accept an allowance from Stephen’s family, and when she later inherits the family home Sharvells following his death, she decides to turn it into “the permanent home of a charitable institute,” ignoring her solicitor’s advice that it is unwise to “throw away” both “profit and property” (*Spleen*, 64, 116–17). By doing so, Ruth lives according to a “queer time” in Halberstam’s sense of a time that develops “in opposition to the institutions of family, heterosexuality, and reproduction” (Halberstam, *Queer Time*, 1). More specifically, by giving away Sharvells, she disrupts that which Halberstam calls “inheritance time”: the “generational time within which values, wealth, goods, and morals are passed through family ties from one generation to the next,” and that tends to connect the family to the historical past of the nation and to the future of both familial and national stability (5). Indeed, not having been brought up with possession or having a mind “connected with possession,” Ruth is derisive of Stephen’s family’s attitude towards the past: “[l]et them strut . . . through the formal pageantry of dead things and dead people, renewing themselves only in ghostly memories of these ghostly selves, which leaves them smiling politely down the centuries” (*Spleen*, 38, ellipses added). Just as she resents being expected to reproduce Stephen’s family features biologically, so she resents his family’s polite attitude towards the historical past and refuses to find it a source of renewal.

As well as disrupting inheritance time, Ruth’s decision to give away Sharvells forms an important part of her environmentalism. When she returns to London after having lived in Italy for twenty-two years, she thinks of herself as “lonely as an invert”: “[f]or surely (she thought) it was a form of mental inversion this loneliness of hers among her fellow-creatures; . . . her lack of hope” (*Spleen*, 125–26, ellipses added). Here, she explicitly uses the language of sexology to characterize her “difference” from others: the term “mental inversion” is a variant on the more common term “sexual inversion” and echoes her earlier conceit of mental pregnancy. Her tentative initial comparison and her use of this language to characterize her loneliness suggests that she is using the term “mental inversion” not to mark a particular gender or sexual identity, but to register a form of difference that remains indeterminate, without a single and stable referent; this difference is something that has often “been held against her” and which “she herself had reproached” (125). Yet while her “mental inversion” sets her apart from her “fellow-creatures,” it also drives her environmentalism. As will be discussed at greater length below, she is shocked by the air pollution that she encounters in London. It is adopting what she thinks of as the masculine trait of actively acquiring knowledge of the world—illustrated by the motif of stuffing the moon into one’s pocket—that compels Ruth to question the pollution that she sees, rather than remaining indifferent (26, 119–20). Her decision to turn Sharvells into the home of a charitable institute is

one that would counteract the harm of polluted urban conditions by providing “holidays for London’s slum children”: the children would be at least temporarily removed from the city and allowed to enjoy the countryside, where they would be trained to do “their own gardening, producing their own food” (116–17). While disrupting inheritance time, this scheme still displays a concern for the future and future generations.

Ruth’s loneliness makes a striking contrast with the happiness that Forster’s Maurice finds with Alec Scudder, with both disappearing to fuck in the greenwood for the happily-ever-after. In his 1960 postscript, Forster stressed that a “happy ending” was “imperative” for the novel: “I was determined that in fiction anyway two men should fall in love and remain in it for the ever and ever that fiction allows, and in this sense Maurice and Alec still roam the greenwood.”³³ Despite Moore’s antipathy for Hall’s novel, Ruth’s loneliness is more akin to that of Stephen Gordon in *The Well of Loneliness*. While this loneliness is part of *Spleen*’s aesthetics of negativity and failure, it should be recognized that the novel’s environmentalism is registered not solely at the level of its content, but also in its experimental form—its “climatic impressionism”—that reveals the damaged materiality of the Earth.

Climatic Impressionism

Spleen tells the story of Ruth with dazzling technical virtuosity, deploying a modernist literary impressionism. Garrity has remarked that the novel employs many of the stylistic features that have come to be associated with high modernist experimentation: free indirect discourse, shifting point of view, repetition and fragmentation, and broken chronological sequence (“Headless,” 292). More specifically, I suggest that these features—combined with those of delayed decoding, limited point of view and literary montage—form part of a modernist literary impressionism. While this impressionism has not been commented on by recent critics, it was apparent to contemporary reviewers: for example, one noted that Moore “has the gift of imagining a scene very intensely and of presenting it with great impressionist vigor.”³⁴ Jesse Oak Taylor argues that by renouncing the realist aim of producing a totalizing mimetic representation of its subject matter to focus instead on limited impressions that nevertheless gesture to a broader totality, literary impressionism emerged as a form well-suited to render the smoke-laden fogs of London. *Spleen* employs such an impressionism and constitutes an example of what Taylor calls “climatic modernism.”³⁵ In part, its narrative form renders a perceptual and mental “fog” that is an apt response to the changes that the climate was suffering on such a large scale that they defied representation.

Early in the novel, Ruth recalls her arrival on the island of Foria in a scene that is exemplary of the novel’s literary impressionism. While the description of Foria as a “dark-hearted island” alludes to Joseph Conrad’s *Heart of Darkness* (1899), the scene employs a narrative technique very similar to that of Conrad’s “delayed decoding” (*Spleen*, 10).³⁶ The narrative renders Ruth’s raw initial impressions before she was able to explain them: “[a]ll at once a black spot dissolved and blotted out the other

364 detached black spots" (9). This "black spot" is her "first and vague impression of Donna Lisetta," with whom she later lives on the island (9–10). Someone speaks to Ruth and "out of the mouth came the shrill snapping of a thousand twigs about her ears"; what sounds like the snapping of twigs is in fact Italian, of which she at this time was able to understand only a few words. Exhausted, she experiences a sensory and cognitive overload that manifests itself as a type of synaesthesia: she desires the return of the woman with "the cool green voice," is "afraid to step on" certain sounds, and worries that the onlookers "were going to start shouting again and beating her over the face and eyes with shrill crackling twigs" (9–10). With no immediate explanation "[t]he sky fell beneath her feet" and "the sands passed away beneath her"; it is only when Lisetta calmed her that she was able to realize that "the sands were passing away under her because the neapolitan was running across them with her in his arms" (9–10). In this scene, delayed decoding is used as Ruth reconstructs and relives her experience in memory: it conveys her original panic as her comprehension of the situation lagged behind her initial impressions, and brings back the experience with great intensity and immediacy. In the preface to *The Nigger of the "Narcissus"* (1897), which is often taken to be a manifesto of literary impressionism, Conrad famously claimed that the "task which [he was] trying to achieve is, by the power of the written word, to make you hear, to make you feel—it is, before all, to make you *see*."³⁷ Partly through the technique of delayed decoding, the reader of *Spleen* is able to participate imaginatively in Ruth's unfolding experience, and is—to paraphrase Conrad—"made to see." As one reviewer put it, during the period that Ruth was in Italy, the "reader sees and feels acutely all that has happened."³⁸

Ruth's confused initial impressions when arriving on Foria are typical of impressions in the novel, which although vivid tend to be blurred and indistinct. Jesse Matz usefully distinguishes between impressionism in art and literature on the grounds that the former attempts to present sensory impressions, whereas the latter strives to render impressions that combine sense and thought.³⁹ Indeed, Ruth's impressions when she arrives on the island are both perceptually and cognitively blurred. As she is driven away from the port in a carriage, she is aware of little of her journey: "[s]he had seen nothing but the hot powdery road rolling away beneath her, and that imperfectly and through a mist" (*Spleen*, 11). The "mist" that blurs her vision is a literal one, caused by the "unaccustomed heat," the "yellow glare" and "the dust" of the road, which "were as a blanket held gently but persistently over her face and head" (11). Yet it is also a metaphorical mist—she had earlier been described looking "around her helplessly as though making her way through a fog"—that characterizes her abiding experience of the island (10). Indeed, following her disorienting arrival, she reflects that it is "[s]trange that in twenty-two years her environment and existence should have become scarcely more real to her" (13).

Ruth's indistinct impressions are shared by the reader, who experiences a parallel confusion in reading *Spleen*. For example, in the part of the novel set in London, dialogue is often not demarcated typographically, fragments of conversation are given without context, and words are rendered phonetically without any explanation (the

office boy's "not tin" for "not in"; "was sow" for "was out"; and "was sin" for "was in" [115]). Ruth's train of thought is at various times rudely interrupted ("[a] tramcar hurtled past like a rocket") and includes a series of vivid mental images of her son who is never explicitly named (119). As throughout the novel, the extensive use of free indirect discourse creates an ambiguity between the voice of the extradiegetic narrator and that of the various characters, which results in an interpretative difficulty for the reader. It is not only through such stylistic features that an effect of vagueness is created, but also through what Adam Parkes identifies as broader "structural" strategies of impressionist vagueness, such as achronological narration, limited point of view and narrative ellipsis.⁴⁰ Together, these stylistic and structural features contribute to that which Garrity has identified as "Moore's greatest innovation": "her ability to generate a salutary cognitive and affective confusion in the reader" (Garrity, "Headless," 292).

Moore exploits literary impressionism's capacity for vagueness to portray the hazy climates of Italy and London. Towards the end of the novel, when Ruth returns to London after having lived in Italy for twenty-two years, she becomes aware of the changes that have occurred since her departure in 1907, and is particularly shocked by the air pollution. While she "remembered the tang of horse dung and the trimly beaten measure of slow-stepping carriage horses," she encounters streets "smoked out with petrol fumes and alive with motor horns"; she "found the air thick and unpalatable and hung like a piece of sodden grey cloth above the opening between squares and streets" (*Spleen*, 120). She experiences not only the soundscapes of London (which she contrasts with those of Italian cities), but also its smellscape: she comes on "rows of damp and stale-smelling alleys," and sees pale children sitting on "cold evil-smelling pavements" (119). As she walks through the rain, the lexical repetition in an antimetabolic phrase conveys the dull monotony of the London streets, which she sees only as blocks of grey and black: "[g]rey and black and black and grey . . . She passed through it all as through a cloud, seeing nothing but opaque grey and solid black" (126, ellipses added). The simile suggests that the cloud is a metaphorical one, as she trudges through the city immersed in her thoughts, yet once again her vision is also literally limited, this time by the driving rain and the fumes that hang in the air.

Although *Spleen* deploys a climatic impressionism throughout, there is a pronounced difference between the climates of Italy and London. In Italy, the haziness is the result of the intense sunlight, the heat and the dust in the air. The effect is particularly marked in the early hours of the afternoon, during which "heavy powdery dust" lifts everywhere in clouds "only to settle more greily and heavily" (80). Notably, the climate appears not to have changed over time. The islanders wear their bushy hair "held down by a thread of osier root" to free their eyes of dust; this fashion is supposedly the same as that adopted by "the youths in the greek statuary," which suggests a continuity of climate between ancient Greece and present-day Italy (80). By contrast, the "petrol fumes" and "sooty rain" suggest that the fog that Ruth encounters in London is at least partly anthropogenic and a more recent phenomenon (120, 118). She becomes conscious of the contrast between the two climates, suddenly realizing that she is only aware of the dismalness of London because of her long absence from the city: "had she lived

366 among it all these years she would have noticed nothing. A blue expanse of sky had done that for her" (126). The contrast is reinforced by the literary montage in which the narrative cuts between the scene in London and Ruth's mental images of her son: "[a]gain she had a sight of him lying in the shade of the rock on the hot yellow sand under a blue outstretched sky" (127). In part, the strong colors of these images—with their "yellow sand" and "blue outstretched sky"—throw into relief the greys and blacks of London's color-drained streets.

The indistinct impressions of *Spleen* point towards wider imperial and climatic totalities that elude representation. Ruth fails to see London as she wishes: "now she wanted, she tried, to see World-Trade and Hub of the Universe and London's . . . great army of workers, and saw nothing but herded millions rushing to their daily death" (120, ellipses added). Her vision of London workers as herded millions rather than an inspiring army suggests a splenetic perspective. Indeed, she wonders elsewhere: "what then lies behind the eye of man that can so alter the perspective of his soul as to bring to the one courage and decision and to the next anger and futility?" (119–20). Yet her failure to "see World-Trade and Hub of the Universe" also suggests a conceptual crisis, in which she cannot see London as part of a wider network of world trade. In this sense, Ruth's failure is typical of a more general phenomenon that Fredric Jameson diagnoses as animating modernism: the inability to conceive the imperial world-system as a totality.⁴¹ It thereby makes use of an ambiguity at the heart of Conrad's impressionist desire to "make you *see*." As Max Saunders points out, this desire is characterized by an ambiguity between seeing with the eye and with the understanding, and further, the mysteries that are supposed to underlie the visible universe ultimately elude rational "seeing," and remain recalcitrantly bewildering phenomena.⁴² Ruth's attempt to "see World-Trade" involves a similar ambiguity between literal and metaphorical vision, and is also ultimately unsuccessful as she fails to cognitively map the world trade network in which London might appear as a hub.⁴³ However, world trade is not the only phenomenon that eludes Ruth's cognitive grasp: in *Spleen*, literary impressionism functions as a powerful aesthetic strategy for drawing attention to the novel's failure to represent the elusive phenomenon of climate change.

Exploiting a suggestive analogy between climate change models and the novel, Taylor argues that certain "climate change novels" successfully attest to climate change because they aggregate discrete atmospheric events into a broader totality of long-term global patterns (*Sky*, 10). Although it is a novel that signals environmental damage, *Spleen* is just as notable for its representational failures as regards climate change. Returning to London, Ruth is unsure whether it is herself or the city that has altered: "[h]ad it always been like this?" (*Spleen*, 119). The novel is so tightly focalized around her that it affords little independent clarification of these matters; apparent changes are hazed by memory and clouded by disruptions in chronological sequence. *Spleen* is a novel that, in Georg Lukács's terms, lacks "perspective": unlike the realist novel, it does not portray events in an objective manner and convey a clear sense of development and change over time.⁴⁴ However, rather than interpreting *Spleen*'s lack of perspective as an ideological failing, it can be understood as revealing wider social and historical prob-

lems that are registered in the artwork as problems of form.⁴⁵ Specifically, its formally experimental climatic impressionism can be read in relation to the histories of climate and capitalism in early twentieth-century Britain.

Climate Change and Capitalism

Ruth's queer environmentalism and the novel's climatic impressionism can be situated in the context of the environmental transformations that are now considered to characterize the Anthropocene; to do so is to recognize *Spleen* not just as a work of modernist queer ecology but also of Anthropocene modernism, and to highlight its ability to help rethink the challenges of the troubled present. Its virtue—along with other works of modernist queer ecology—is that it provides an anticipatory illumination of a queer environmental politics and activism that is not yet here.

Most immediately, the fume-filled London to which Ruth returns in the 1920s can be placed in the historical context of the London fog. As Christine Corton has documented, while London has always been susceptible to mist, it suffered a series of fogs from the 1840s onwards that were caused principally by the burning of coal in domestic fires and industry. There were a series of particularly bad fogs through the 1920s, which also saw the passing of the Smoke Abatement Act in 1926. Visible fog effectively disappeared in 1962, following the 1956 Clean Air Act, although London's air remains highly polluted, and today apparently causes more than 9,000 deaths a year.⁴⁶ Moore was clearly aware of the harmful effects of London fog. A wry note in *The Apple is Bitten Again* entitled "Fog" suggests that "[t]hey should use the London streets for smoking bacon, hams, and sausages, as they use the sun in Italy," but "we keep our smoke for our lungs"; she adds that "[a] post-mortem examination on a Londoner reveals his lungs to be not only atrophied but black" (*The Apple is Bitten Again*, 384). The fogs that beset London were also given extensive coverage in the *Daily Sketch*, the newspaper for which Moore worked as a journalist. For example, the newspaper displayed a front-page photograph of an office building illuminated at midday in early 1929 because "London was under a pall of black fog that turned day into night."⁴⁷ The issue was addressed by "Onlooker," who worried that due to suburbanization the "smoke and din may spread" and therefore advocated the creation of a "verdant belt" around the city. It is possible, the journalist suggested, that "such a provision would have a beneficent effect, not only on the nerves and eyes and lungs of a racked population, but also upon such plagues as fog."⁴⁸ In *Spleen*, the "[w]eeks of sooty rain" that keep Ruth indoors are typical of the coal soot and acid rain that blackened and corroded many of London's buildings (118).⁴⁹ Again, the "petrol fumes"—presumably caused by motor-cars which, as Joan points out, were becoming "less expensive"—are evidence of the rapidly-increasing pollution from motor-vehicles, which itself was made possible by the expansion of the petroleum industry (120, 126).

More broadly, the fog in *Spleen* can be viewed in the context of what Will Steffen, Paul Crutzen, and John McNeill have called "stage 1" of the Anthropocene: the period

- 368 1800–1945, which preceded the “Great Acceleration” yet was marked by a vast increase in the use of fossil fuels and a significant rise in atmospheric carbon dioxide, methane, nitrous oxide and other greenhouse gasses.⁵⁰ *Spleen* can be aligned with other works of modernism that registered these environmental changes. Notably, its concern with air pollution is shared by D. H. Lawrence’s *Lady Chatterley’s Lover* (1928), which portrays the noxious fumes emitted by the coal and steel industries in the Midlands that become particularly apparent to Constance Chatterley on her drive through Tevershall.⁵¹ Again, the dangers of air pollution were later vividly highlighted by Mary Butts in her pamphlet *Warning to Hikers* (1932). Therein, Butts contends that

in our cities we have done what man has never done before, almost manufactured a weather, a climate, a whole environment, in which there is little amelioration as possible and every curse. For light we have substituted smoke, for blue air or silver or gold or white or dark crystal, a partially solidified brown-grey. For the scent-box of nature, a smell, curiously compounded of burnt carbon, oils and dust.⁵²

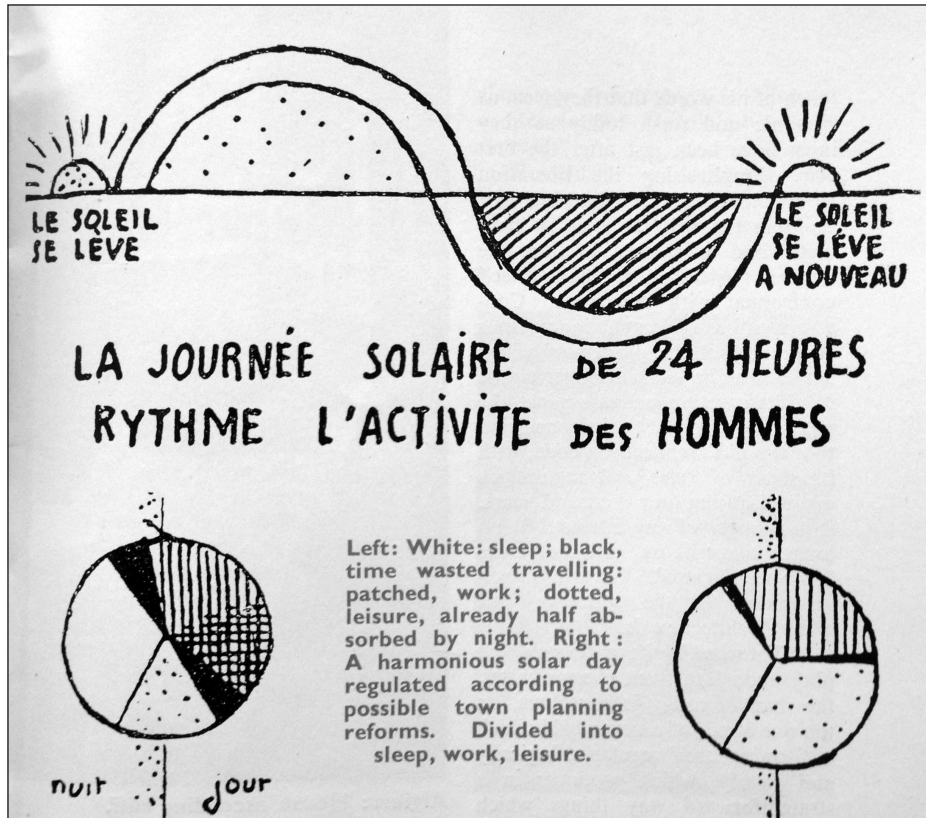
Like the recent concept of the Anthropocene which conveys the historical uniqueness of the changes that humans have wrought on the Earth system, Butts stresses that the changes in cities are historically unprecedented: while previously there had been slums, “never before were the works and wealth of man based on coal, and the largest cities were easy to get out of” (*Warning to Hikers*, 14). However, Butts invokes such an environmental catastrophe for a conservative political purpose. In reaction to environmental movements that were encouraging city dwellers to visit the countryside, she fulminates against hikers and the contemporary “cult of nature.” In particular, she reviles working class hikers and implies that the preservation of the English countryside requires the maintenance of the property rights of the landowning class.⁵³ Such a rural conservatism, which also finds expression in her novels *Ashe of Rings* (1925) and *Armed with Madness* (1928), forms a stark contrast with the portrayal of environmental damage and social injustice in *Spleen*.

Indeed, Ruth is greatly troubled by the fact that London’s polluted air is not suffered equally by rich and poor. Walking across the city, she becomes aware that it is the slums with their “narrow foetid streets” and “damp and stale-smelling alleys” that are worst affected (*Spleen*, 119). She realizes that, by virtue of her wealth and privileged class position, it would be perfectly possible for her to avoid such areas and to stay at her exclusive hotel in Hans Crescent where “one did not have to walk quickly, consciously using as little breath as possible,” or to remain within “that airy strip between Piccadilly and the few discreet squares of Kensington and Belgravia” (119). Such elegant residential streets literally have a better quality of air, as presumably did the “great squares” with their “green trees” and “sense of spaciousness” that she remembers from the early stages of her marriage (118–19). She dwells on the conditions endured by London’s workers, and imagines writing a story about an elderly man who had lived “all his life underground, in trains to and from work, in badly lit offices, in badly ventilated badly designed houses” (120). The inequality that she witnesses affects her profoundly and

motivates her to turn Sharvells into a retreat that would provide holidays for London's slum children. This decision contrasts with Butts's exclusionary attitude towards the countryside; indeed, it has more in common with the environmental movements against which Butts was reacting. Many such movements were driven by a concern with poor air quality and a lack of sunlight in cities: as well as societies that campaigned for smoke abatement, movements such as the Kibbo Kift Kin and the Boy Scout movement stressed the drawbacks of city-living for children and extolled instead the virtues of countryside pursuits. In *England and the Octopus* (1928), Clough Williams-Ellis deplored "the pollution of the air and the denial of light" in cities, but was dismayed at the ugly suburbanization that was blighting the English countryside, and recommended instead the sort of settlements that had long been advocated by the Garden City movement.⁵⁴ On the continent, Le Corbusier—whom Moore mentioned in *The Apple is Bitten Again* and whom she later interviewed for *Scope* magazine— inveighed against the lack of sunlight and clean air in towns, and conceived his vertically rising Radiant City on principles that would maximize sunlight, space and greenery (Moore, *The Apple is Bitten Again*, 368; fig. 1).⁵⁵

In addition to portraying a polluted London, *Spleen* intimates the suffering of workers in the fossil fuel industries which facilitated that pollution. Ruth's encounter with the "procession of unemployed" in the culminating scene of the novel can be read in the context of the series of industrial disputes and workers' protests that ran throughout the 1920s, foremost amongst which was the 1926 Lockout and General Strike.⁵⁶ More specifically, the protest that Ruth witnesses is likely based on the Second National Hunger March to London, which reached Trafalgar Square on the February 24, 1929. This march was organized by the National Unemployed Workers' Movement, and included miners from the South Wales coal pits, as well as a contingent from Scotland led by Wal Hannington that marched for five weeks through bitter winter weather before arriving in London. It was a protest against the Conservative government's attempts to exclude large numbers of unemployed workers from labor exchange benefit during a period of mass unemployment and widespread starvation. Ruth is greatly moved by the plight of the protestors and is painfully aware of their condition of starvation: their faces were "grey and haggard and emptied of all expression save hunger and weariness"; they shuffle past "unsubstantial as ghosts" (*Spleen*, 126–27). She is upset by an altercation in which a policeman threatens to strike a protestor for answering him back: she "began to tremble" and wishes to cry out: "It could not be that such a wraith of a man, such a grey hollow thing, should be struck a blow, a well-fed hearty blow, for a mere interchange of words" (127). The contrast between the starving protestor and the policeman capable of delivering a "well-fed hearty blow" conveys a deep sense of injustice.

Fittingly, historical contradictions concerning climate and class are never resolved within the fictional world of *Spleen*. For example, Ruth is aware of the limitations of her charitable scheme, asking herself whether "the gift of Sharvells" was "merely the gratification of an ill-considered and quixotic impulse"; she further wonders whether it would make a worthwhile difference, and is left "bitter and discouraged" (119). Similarly, although she seems to achieve a resolution regarding her son at the end of the novel,



▲
Fig. 1. Le Corbusier's plan to reform cities to accord with the solar day. Olive Moore, "Man of the Month: Le Corbusier," *Scope*, August 1951, 60–73, 71.

this personal resolution only serves to disclose greater unresolved contradictions on the historical level. The hunger march is portrayed as a failure.⁵⁷ In some respects, the portrayal of the "worn and spiritless" protestors resembles the politically conservative *Daily Sketch's* coverage of the hunger march, including its brief report entitled "Drab Pathos of Demonstration in Trafalgar-square" (*Spleen*, 127). This report—which was accompanied by the photograph that is reproduced here—described the arrival of a thousand footsore men "singing songs pathetically thin in spirit," and contended that "instead of making history" the marchers found that they "had made an idler's holiday" (fig. 2).⁵⁸ Both depictions contrast starkly with Hannington's account of the arrival of the marchers in Trafalgar Square as one of rousing class solidarity, in which thousands of cheering London workers turned out to show their support and inspiring speeches were punctuated by spontaneous renditions of the "Red Flag" and the "International." However, this is not to say that *Spleen's* presentation of the march as a failure is itself conservative. On the contrary, its depiction of unresolved class difference is appropriate for a historical situation in which unemployment continued to rise, and the labor movement remained incapacitated by the anti-strike legislation imposed by the government



▲
Fig. 2. National Hunger March, 1929. *Daily Sketch*, February 25, 1929, 13.

in the aftermath of the General Strike. Even Hannington acknowledged the hunger marchers' lack of success in obtaining their immediate objectives, illustrated by the prime minister Stanley Baldwin's refusal to grant them an audience.⁵⁹

In *Spleen*, Ruth returns to London to find a polluted city and a nation wracked by poverty and unemployment. The novel, tightly focalized around Ruth, does not provide a comprehensive representation of the city's changing climate. Nevertheless, the partial glimpses it affords of fume-filled alleys and bedraggled hunger marchers point towards wider historical transformations: of a fossil fuel industry that led to starvation for many of its workers, and that drove climate change on a global scale. By failing to provide a totalizing representation of climate change, *Spleen* supports Amitav Ghosh's argument

372 that the novel as a literary form has failed to depict global warming adequately and is thereby guilty of mode of “concealment.”⁶⁰ Yet at the same time its representational limitations—the foggy concealments of its climatic impressionism—contribute to making it such a notable work of Anthropocene modernism. In terms of her own theory of the “creative artist” as a “[p]riestless oracle” whose works serve as prophecies of major social and political changes, Olive Moore might be thought of as a “Cassandra” figure, and *Spleen* might be considered a prophecy of the environmental damage that has accelerated since World War II (Moore, *The Apple is Bitten Again*, 358). Given that this damage is now deemed irreversible, it may well be that she is a “Cassandra whose message is read too late” (358).

However, it is also possible to advance a more hopeful reading of the novel by employing Muñoz’s utopian hermeneutics. Although Ruth characterizes her “mental inversion” by “loneliness” and “lack of hope” and the march is depicted as a failure, both function as sites of utopian promise. For Karl Marx, every society must reproduce the conditions of its production, and in a capitalist society production as “a process of reproduction . . . produces and reproduces the capitalist relation; on the one side the capitalist, on the other the wage-labourer.”⁶¹ In *Spleen*, the strange stasis of the image of the middle-class family juxtaposed with the protesting workers suggests a suspension of the reproduction of social relations within fossil fuel capitalism. It intimates a disruption to the cycle of capital accumulation—including to the “incessant reproduction” or “perpetuation of the labourer” that Marx discerned as the “sine qua non of capitalist production”—and promises the emergence of a new form of queer collectivity (*Capital*, 1:625).

The temporal experiments of *Spleen* and other works of modernist queer ecology become newly legible in the context of the current environmental emergency. With growing concern for the environment, many activists have appealed to a reproductive futurism. For example, the ecofeminist activism at Greenham Common in England began in the 1980s when “Women for Life on Earth” pressured the Royal Air Force to cease operating and testing nuclear cruise missiles, announcing their “fear for the future of all our children and for the future of the living world which is the basis of all life.”⁶² More recently, Extinction Rebellion launched their ‘International Rebellion’ in 2019 to protest governments’ failures to take appropriate action to minimize the risk of human extinction and ecological collapse, advertising their rebellion as one “For the planet. For our children’s children’s futures.”⁶³ Works of modernist queer ecology provide models for cultivating queerer structures of environmental care and concern, including queerer forms of activism. By defamiliarizing the conditions of production of a fossil fuel capitalism—with the endless production of the division between rich and poor—*Spleen* further implicitly critiques ascendant forms of environmental politics whose strategies of sustainability and resilience are designed to achieve economic growth and make the future safe for the market.

It is important to acknowledge the negativity of works of modernist queer ecology, and the awkward relationship that some of them have to other texts and canons of modernism. Yet attending to the utopian aspects of these texts—including the points at

which loneliness anticipates forms of collectivity and resistance to reproductive futurism opens up new structures of environmental care and concern—shows their potential to inflect the environmental concerns of the present. Indeed, works of modernist queer ecology can inspire us to dream and enact what Muñoz calls “other ways of being in the world, and ultimately new worlds” (*Cruising Utopia*, 1).

Notes

I would like to thank Jane Garrity, Jana Funke, Alix Beeston, Mark Llewellyn, and my two readers for their helpful comments on drafts of this article.

1. Olive Moore, *Spleen* (Normal, IL: Dalkey Archive Press, 1996), 126.
2. Catriona Sandilands, “Queer Ecology,” in *Keywords for Environmental Studies*, ed. Joni Adamson et al. (New York: New York University Press, 2016), 169–71, 169.
3. See Catriona Mortimer-Sandilands, “Masculinity, Modernism, and the Ambivalence of Nature: Sexual Inversion as Queer Ecology in *The Well of Loneliness*,” *Left History* 13, no. 1 (2008): 35–58; Catriona Mortimer-Sandilands and Bruce Erickson, “Introduction: A Genealogy of Queer Ecologies,” in *Queer Ecologies: Sex, Nature, Politics, Desire* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2010), 1–47, 5, 22–4; and Sandilands, *Keywords*, 169–70.
4. See Kelly Sultzbach, *Ecocriticism in the Modernist Imagination: Forster, Woolf and Auden* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016), 11–12, 25–81; and Benjamin Bateman, “Avian, Anal, Outlaw: Queer Ecology in E. M. Forster’s *Maurice*,” *ISLE: Interdisciplinary Studies in Literature and Environment* (2020), doi.org/10.1093/isle/isaa015/.
5. Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality*, trans. Robert Hurley, vol. 1, *The Will to Knowledge* (London: Penguin, 1998), 68.
6. See Olive Moore, *Collected Writings* (Elmwood Park, IL: Dalkey Archive Press, 1992), 422–23. Moore’s contributions to *Scope* were recently discovered by Sophie Cavey.
7. Olive Moore, *The Apple is Bitten Again*, in *Collected Writings*, 335–418, 386.
8. Johanna M. Wagner, “Unwomanly Intellect: Melancholy, Maternity, and Lesbianism in Olive Moore’s *Spleen*,” *Journal of Language, Literature and Culture* 64, no. 1 (2017): 42–61, 43.
9. Maren Tova Linett, *Bodies of Modernism: Physical Disability in Transatlantic Modernist Literature* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2017), 153–54.
10. Leo Bersani, “Is the Rectum a Grave?,” *October* 43 (1987): 197–222, 209; Lee Edelman, *No Future: Queer Theory and the Death Drive* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2004), 4; Judith [Jack] Halberstam, *The Queer Art of Failure* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2011), 2–3, 110.
11. Greta Gaard, “Toward a Queer Ecofeminism,” *Hypatia* 12, no. 1 (1997): 114–37. Moore’s hostility to women writers foreshadows later tensions between queer theory and feminism, which Annamarie Jagose suggests can nevertheless be reconciled (“Feminism’s Queer Theory,” *Feminism & Psychology* 19, no. 2 [2009]: 157–74).
12. José Esteban Muñoz, *Cruising Utopia: The Then and There of Queer Futurity* (New York: New York University Press, 2009), 13.
13. Nicole Seymour, *Strange Natures: Futurity, Empathy, and the Queer Ecological Imagination* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2013), 12.
14. These structures include modes of what Benjamin Bateman calls “queer survival” (*The Modernist Art of Queer Survival* [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017]).
15. Raymond Williams, *Keywords: A Vocabulary of Culture and Society* (London: Fontana, 1976), 184.
16. Jane Garrity, “Olive Moore’s Headless Woman,” *Modern Fiction Studies* 59, no. 2 (2013): 288–316. See also Wagner, “Unwomanly Intellect.”
17. Similarly, in Moore’s novel *Fugue* (1932), Lavinia Reed contrasts the English countryside with that of Tuscany, where “a man’s feet are not white and pitiful but are sunk in the warm earth like stalks with roots.” See Olive Moore, *Fugue*, in *Collected Writings*, 233–333, 281.

- 374 18. To the dismay of her solicitor (and later critics), Ruth excludes “mentally defective children” from her charitable scheme at Sharvells, claiming that they were in “no sense . . . worth saving” (Moore, *Spleen*, 116).
19. See Garrity, “Headless,” 294–95, 300, 310; Matt Franks, “Mental Inversion, Modernist Aesthetics, and Disability Exceptionalism in Olive Moore’s *Spleen*,” *Journal of Modern Literature* 38, no. 1 (2014): 107–27, 109, 119; and Linett, *Bodies*, 154, 157–61.
20. See Marco Armiero and Wilko Graf Von Hardenberg, “Green Rhetoric in Blackshirts: Italian Fascism and the Environment,” *Environment and History* 19 (2013): 283–311, 291–92.
21. See Victoria De Grazia, *How Fascism Ruled Women: Italy, 1922–1945* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992), 41–76. In defiance of such a reproductive futurism, Virginia Woolf later suggested in *Three Guineas* (1938) that educated women could help to prevent war by refusing “to bear children” (*A Room of One’s Own; Three Guineas*, ed. Morag Shiach [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992], 370).
22. For example, Victoria Davion attributes to Susan Griffin’s *Woman and Nature* (1978) the central ecofeminist insight that “women have been associated with nature, the material, the emotional, and the particular, while men have been associated with culture, the nonmaterial, the rational, and the abstract.” See Victoria Davion, “Is Ecofeminism Feminist?” in *Ecological Feminism*, ed. Karen Warren (London: Routledge, 1994), 8–28, 9.
23. Stacy Alaimo, *Undomesticated Ground: Recasting Nature as Feminist Space* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2000), 1.
24. See Garrity, “Headless,” 299; and Wagner, “Unwomanly Intellect,” 47–48, 59–60.
25. Edward Carpenter, *The Intermediate Sex: A Study of Some Transitional Types of Men and Women* (London: Swan Sonnenschein, 1908), 70.
26. Although useful, Foucault’s distinction between “discourse” and “reverse discourse” should not encourage a simplification of sexual science which, as Jana Funke has emphasized, was not a monolithic and reductive field of debate: rather, it provided nuanced frameworks to understand the gendered and sexual self. See Jana Funke, “Intersexions: Dandyism, Cross-Dressing, Transgender,” in *Late Victorian into Modern*, ed. Laura Marcus et al. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), 414–27, 416–17.
27. R. von Krafft-Ebing, *Psychopathia Sexualis, With Especial Reference to Contrary Sexual Instinct*, trans. Charles Gilbert Chaddock (Philadelphia, PA: F. A. Davis, 1892), 187, 56.
28. Havelock Ellis, *Studies in the Psychology of Sex: Sexual Inversion* (Philadelphia, PA: F. A. Davis, 1901), 186; Carpenter, *Intermediate*, 66–77.
29. Judith [Jack] Halberstam, *In a Queer Time and Place: Transgender Bodies, Subcultural Lives* (New York: New York University Press, 2005), 4, 2.
30. Michael Warner, *The Trouble with Normal: Sex, Politics, and the Ethics of Queer Life* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2000), 56.
31. Lying in the bath one morning, she noticed that the water refused to cover her, and had to admit that “it was not happening in her forehead at all, but was happening very much where it was meant to happen” (Moore, *Spleen*, 27).
32. Lauren Berlant and Michael Warner, “Sex in Public,” *Critical Inquiry* 24, no. 2 (1998): 547–66, 548.
33. E. M. Forster, *Maurice*, ed. P. N. Furbank (London: Penguin, 2005), 220.
34. Frank Swinnerton, “‘Men Hate Women,’ New Arlen Book for Coming Spring,” *Chicago Daily Tribune*, January 3, 1931, 9.
35. Jesse Oak Taylor, *The Sky of Our Manufacture: The London Fog in British Fiction from Dickens to Woolf* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2016), 164–87, 189.
36. See Ian Watt, *Conrad in the Nineteenth Century* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1979), 175–79. It is a moot point how imbricated the novel’s impressionism is in Ruth’s racist representation of the Forians. Both Dickinson and Franks have drawn attention to parallels between *Spleen* and *Heart of Darkness* in their discussions of Ruth’s reduction of the Forians to primitive Others. See Renée Dickinson, *Female Embodiment and Subjectivity in the Modernist Novel: The Corporeum of Virginia Woolf and Olive Moore* (New York: Routledge, 2009), 93; and Franks, “Mental Inversion,” 120–21.

37. Joseph Conrad, preface to *The Nigger of the Narcissus* (New York: Doubleday, 1914), xi–xvi, iv.
38. “An Unhappy Life,” *New York Times Book Review*, November 2, 1930, 6–7, 6.
39. Jesse Matz, *Literary Impressionism and Modernist Aesthetics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 49–50.
40. See Adam Parkes, *A Sense of Shock: The Impact of Impressionism on Modern British and Irish Writing* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 19–20.
41. Fredric Jameson, “Modernism and Imperialism,” in *Nationalism, Colonialism, and Literature*, ed. Terry Eagleton et al. (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1990), 43–66, 50–51.
42. Max Saunders, *Self Impression: Life-Writing, Autobiografiction, and the Forms of Modern Literature* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 267–68.
43. Jameson famously argued that Conrad’s literary impressionism involves an aestheticization of perception, which functioned both as an ideological continuation of and utopian compensation for capitalist rationalization and reification. See Fredric Jameson, *The Political Unconscious* (London: Routledge, 2002), 213–31. However, if we accept Matz’s revision of Jameson’s position and understand the impression as not just a category of sense but also of intellect, then literary impressionism can be recognized as capable of playing a role in what Jameson elsewhere discerns as the wider modernist failure to represent the unrepresentable totalities of monopoly capitalism (*Impressionism*, 136–37). Indeed, Taylor argues that Conrad’s literary impressionism is integral to his invention of “the fiction of global connection,” in which “readers are conscious of being embedded in global networks such that the very obfuscating dynamics that make vision impossible are also the substance of planetary connection” (*Sky*, 167, 173).
44. Georg Lukács, *The Meaning of Contemporary Realism*, trans. John and Necke Mander (London: Merlin Press, 1963), 33.
45. See Theodor Adorno, “Reconciliation Under Duress,” trans. Rodney Livingstone, in *Aesthetics and Politics*, ed. Ronald Taylor (London: Verso, 2007), 151–76, 162–63.
46. See Christine L. Corton, *London Fog: The Biography* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2015).
47. *Daily Sketch*, January 8, 1929, 1.
48. “Onlooker,” “Why Not Sanctuaries for Us?,” *Daily Sketch*, January 23, 1929, 4.
49. A note in *The Apple is Bitten Again* similarly evokes miles of “soot-soaked brick house” in Wandsworth (Moore, *The Apple is Bitten Again*, 383).
50. Will Steffen, Paul J. Crutzen, and John R. McNeill, “The Anthropocene: Are Humans Now Overwhelming the Great Forces of Nature?” *Ambio* 36, no. 8 (2007): 614–21, 616–17.
51. D. H. Lawrence, *Lady Chatterley’s Lover*, ed. Michael Squires (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 152–60. *Spleen* might be compared with *Lady Chatterley’s Lover*, in which Connie pursues a sexually-charged revaluation of the earth with Mellors the gamekeeper. However, Moore seems to have been unimpressed with the sex in this novel: “[s]exually,” she suggests, “it is an improbable study.” She judges that “the only convincing scenes of passion in his books are the love scenes between men” (*The Apple is Bitten Again*, 398, 400).
52. Mary Butts, *Warning to Hikers* ([London]: Wishart, 1932), 13.
53. On Butts’s rural conservatism, see Jeffrey Mathes McCarthy, *Green Modernism: Nature and the English Novel, 1900 to 1930* (Basingstoke, UK: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015), 157–98; and Jane Garity, *Step-Daughters of England: British Women Modernists and the National Imaginary* (Manchester, UK: Manchester University Press, 2003), 188–241.
54. Clough Williams-Ellis, *England and the Octopus* (London: Geoffrey Bles, 1928), 38.
55. Olive Moore, “Man of the Month: Le Corbusier,” *Scope*, August 1951, 60–73, 71.
56. For an account of literary representations of the 1926 General Strike, see Charles Ferrall and Dougal McNeill, *Writing the 1926 General Strike: Literature, Culture, Politics* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2015).
57. Like Charles Baudelaire’s leisured flâneurs, Ruth looks on this scene of poverty from a position of wealth and privilege and imbues it with allegorical significance: the procession of unemployed becomes a “grotesque Calvary” (Moore, *Spleen*, 128). More generally, Ruth’s impressions of London

376 are inflected by her privileged class position: for example, the descriptions of the “promiscuous herded millions” and “men unfitted for their work” betray degenerationist anxieties about labor (119).

58. *Daily Sketch*, February 25, 1929, 3. The *Daily Sketch* tended to be hostile to the labor movement: it had, for instance, rejoiced at the failure of the General Strike.

59. Wal Hannington, *Unemployment Struggles 1919–1936: My Life and Struggles Amongst the Unemployed* (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1936), 194–97, 199.

60. Amitav Ghosh, *The Great Derangement: Climate Change and the Unthinkable* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2016), 11. For Ghosh, the failure of the novel “will have to be counted as an aspect of the broader imaginative and cultural failure that lies at the heart of the climate crisis” (8).

61. Karl Marx, *Capital: A Critique of Political Economy*, trans. Samuel Moore and Edward Aveling, ed. Frederick Engels (Chicago, IL: Charles H. Kerr, 1906), 1:633, ellipses added.

62. Quoted in Greta Gaard, “Ecofeminism Revisited: Rejecting Essentialism and Re-Placing Species in a Material Feminist Environmentalism,” *Feminist Formations* 23, no. 2 (2011): 26–53, 29.

63. Extinction Rebellion, *Rebel Starter Pack*, March 14, 2019, 3.