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Race, Urban Heat, and the Aesthetics of Thermoception

Hsuan L. Hsu*

In 2013 and 2014, the artist Rashid Johnson staged LeRoi Jones's *Dutchman* (1964)—a foundational work of the Black Arts movement—in a series of rooms at the Russian and Turkish Baths in the East Village and Chicago's Red Square Russian and Turkish Baths.¹ The restagings connected the play's original context—staged amid the racial uprisings of the “long, hot summers” of 1964 and 1967—to the Black Lives Matter movement, which originated in July 2013 and gained nationwide momentum following the police murders of Michael Brown and Eric Garner in the summer of 2014 (at the time the hottest summer on record). As a “post-Black” artist known for paintings and multimedia installations that explore the racial implications of everyday materials such as black soap and shea butter, Johnson leveraged temperature itself as a medium of racialization and race relations.² His staging orchestrated a deeply uncomfortable immersion in extreme weather. As they witnessed Black men and women physically abused and murdered (often exposed to the summer heat, as Michael Brown's body was for four hours after his death), many non-Black Americans became acutely aware of their complicity with the pervasive atmosphere of anti-Blackness that Christina Sharpe terms “the weather.” Drawing on the affective force of atmospheric temperature, Johnson's production blends the play's explosive plot with embodied sensations of heat and cold. As both audience and actors sweated in the steamy air, *Dutchman's* racial allegory was “experienced not only as a narrative but as a progression of physical sensations: the crush of bodies, the smell of burning wood, and the close, oppressive air” (Nathan). Here, heat is not just a metaphor for abstract social tensions: it is a

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material agency that physically communicates something about how racism feels.

Following Johnson's lead, this essay considers thermoception as a sensory tool that is deeply entangled with racial geographies and histories of racialization. Putting interdisciplinary research on thermal discourses, infrastructures, and sensations in dialogue with a range of historical and narrative examples, I consider how socially and spatially produced differences in ambient temperature contribute to the embodiment of racial difference. I introduce the term *thermocline* to describe the uneven distribution of both temperatures and the means of thermal regulation as insidious tools of social differentiation that function on physical, psychological, and affective levels. These socially produced thermal disparities are designed to position Black people and their labor as a means of heat absorption—or air conditioning—for those privileged with access to more temperate spaces. I then consider how a range of Black authors—Nella Larsen, Chester Himes, Spike Lee, and Saidiya Hartman—have represented urban heat disparities. In addition to delineating the importance of differentiated urban microclimates to Black literature and culture, these texts explore thermal sensation as a capacity for representing and responding to heat as a condition of physical debilitation, crime, and racial violence. Returning to Johnson's staging of *Dutchman*, I conclude by discussing how the nonrepresentative, affective sensation of temperature catalyzes the play's allegory of race, affect, and anti-Black violence. By immersing its audience in thermal sensations, *Dutchman* at the baths explores atmospheric heat not only as a condition of precarity, but also as an embodied mode of affective experience and intelligence.

1. Sensing the Thermocline

In a provocative commentary on Frantz Fanon's dispersed discussions of breath and "atmosphere," Renisa Mawani makes a case for attending to atmospheric dynamics of racialization that cannot be reduced to questions of bodily representation and biological essentialism. Connecting critical race studies with New Materialism, affect studies, and environmental justice research, Mawani asks, "How might we . . . reconceptualize race as a dynamic, mutable, and charged field that permeates and entangles humans, nonhumans, and things? How does the racial atmosphere, with all its pressures, produce constellations of meanings, intensities of violence, and openings for political change?" Along similar lines, Sharpe's influential theorization of the weather as a "total climate" of anti-Blackness draws attention to how both cultural and material aspects of

quotidian atmospheres condition Black precarity and the very possibility of “keeping and putting breath in the Black body” (104). Building on the environmental justice movement’s longstanding concern with racially uneven environmental violence, Mawani and Sharpe underscore how material, cultural, and affective aspects of atmosphere collude in sustaining anti-Blackness.³ In theorizing the elusive, ubiquitous, and increasingly partitioned atmosphere as a powerful medium of racialization, their work suggests that our sensory habits and aesthetic conventions may not be up to the task of discerning atmospheric agencies: If atmospheres are invisible modes of racial differentiation to which people have become deeply habituated, how can we become better attuned to them?

Thermoception—or the sense of temperature—is a dynamic and frequently overlooked sensory capacity for perceiving atmospheres. Although it has been excluded from the five classical senses (or else mistakenly reduced to a component of touch), thermoception has distinctive sensory receptors and occurs even in the absence of tactile stimuli. Like smell, thermoception is especially attuned to changes in homeostasis: it tends to drift into the background of consciousness in temperatures to which we have become habituated, such as the temperature range referred to as “room temperature.” By the same token, thermoception is acute when temperature changes dramatically or when we inhabit temperatures far outside the range to which we have been acclimatized.⁴ Yet the sense of temperature—as well as the power to control ambient temperatures—also varies considerably along the lines of gender, class, and culture. A culturally and biologically nuanced sensitivity to temperature can attune us to the lived consequences of what Nicole Starosielski terms contemporary “thermocultures” or “the modes by which temperature is managed and organized in embodied and culturally specific ways” (306). Given the ways climate change and inequality are intensifying thermal disparities, as well as the effects of increasing global air conditioning usage and greenhouse gas emissions, the aesthetics of thermoception is a vital research topic—one that shifts aesthetics beyond its traditional focus on the five senses (especially vision and hearing) toward modes of apprehending the world that are at once more embodied and more atmospheric.

Whether we register it consciously or not, temperature exerts a powerful influence over health, productivity, mood, and other aspects of human behavior. Psychologists have developed a “temperature-aggression hypothesis” (Anderson; Anderson et al. “Temperature”) to account for apparent correlations between uncomfortable temperatures (especially heat) and aggressive behavior. Occupational scientists have sought to establish recommendations for workplace temperatures that optimize productivity—even

though such efforts have been widely criticized for privileging the thermal preferences of men (Kingma and Lichtenbelt 1054). Researchers have correlated thermal disparities with a striking range of racial disparities, from the “racial achievement gap” (Park et al. 306) in schools attributed to high-temperature days and uneven access to air conditioning to “asthma attacks, heart attacks, and other serious health impacts” resulting from ozone pollution generated by extreme heat (Dawson and Khawarзад). Empirical studies such as these convey the power of temperature as a background condition of human (and nonhuman) health and activity, but they do not consider the nuanced ways temperature interacts with socially differentiated bodies, minds, and moods. In order to avoid the pitfalls of a new climatic determinism, empirical data need to be refined through contextual and critical analysis focused on understanding how temperature is embodied. Temperature—a word whose etymology connotes *mixing* in proper or restrained proportions—cannot be reduced to an outside force acting upon us mechanistically: it is a mode of sensory involvement characterized by transfers of molecular energy. As Stephanie Clare argues, temperature sensations “index a relation to the earth or a more-than-human world: the thermal energy of particles” (172).

Drawing on affect studies and the New Materialism, scholars in the interdisciplinary field of sensory studies have begun to theorize how temperature intermingles bodies and atmospheres. The architecture scholar Boon Lay Ong, for example, emphasizes how thermoception attunes us to the atmosphere that materially envelops and connects humans with objects: “Where vision has made architecture an object, heat will emphasize the links between objects, between objects and environment and between objects and time. The architecture of heat is about how life is lived within” (17).⁵ Through their ethnographic research on off-gridders whose active involvement in heat production inflects their perception of temperature, Phillip Vannini and Jonathan Taggart rethink thermoception in relational terms “as a nexus of intersecting practices and experiences through which different actors become entangled in the lifeworld” (66). While he shares their interest in affective involvement, the psychologist Ali Lara focuses on more passive, everyday thermal experiences: the “many forms of heat agencies [that] bypass consciousness and yet participate in the modification of the capacities of the human body (affect) and the production of human (non-conscious) subjectivity” (278). Focusing on firsthand accounts that describe experiences of social alienation in terms of the sensation of coldness, Clare suggests that “our sense of self is developed not only in relation to other humans or even other objects but also in relation to atmospheres, climates, and temperatures” (181). Whereas Clare

argues that the feeling of “shrinking spatiality” (185) associated with coldness characterizes experiences of racial and gendered objectification, I focus on the oppressive effects of extreme heat, which are disproportionately borne by BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, and People of Color).

Building on this work, I consider how thermoception functions in literature as a sensory capacity that registers the multilayered ways temperature disparities produce and sustain racial difference in US cities. I adapt the term *thermocline* from oceanography (where it denotes a sharp temperature gradient between layers within a body of water) to describe temperature disparities across space that align with, reproduce, or amplify social differences such as race, class, and gender. Bringing climate, planning, architecture, and geography to bear on human embodiment, thermal disparities are a powerful instance of what Paul Farmer calls “biological reflections of social fault lines” (5). Given the embodied, multilayered, and everyday aspects of thermal experience, it is perhaps not surprising that one of the most sophisticated theorizations of the thermocline occurs in a novel. *Moth Smoke* (2000), by the British Pakistani novelist Mohsin Hamid, includes a chapter-long excursus on air conditioning that contextualizes the novel’s central characters and actions in relation to Pakistan’s thermocline. Noting how globalization, economic disparities, and civic corruption have intensified the nation’s thermal disparities, Hamid writes, “There are two social classes in Pakistan . . . The distinction between members of these two groups is made on the basis of control of an important resource: air-conditioning” (102). While thermoclines are spatially distributed, they are also multilayered and complex: ambient outdoor temperature is complicated by the thermoceptive effects of physical labor, by the siting and architecture of buildings, and by people’s uneven capacities to adjust to temperature through what Ong calls “acts of homeostasis,” everyday actions that range from air conditioning and heating to “adjusting the temperature of our baths or showers, making sure our food and drinks are of the right temperature, putting on or taking off pieces of clothing, and so on” (16). Understanding the thermocline requires attending to the uneven availability of such everyday acts of homeostasis.

The uneven distribution of access to various modes of thermal comfort (architecture, technology, location, clothing, etc.) is a mode of everyday “air conditioning,” to invoke Peter Sloterdijk’s term for how Western modernity conditions human ontology by compartmentalizing and conditioning the air. For Sloterdijk, temperature and other atmospheric qualities simultaneously sustain and coconstitute human being. Elaborating on Sloterdijk’s critique of Martin Heidegger, Bruno Latour questions, “When you say *Dasein* is

thrown *into* the world, *where* is it thrown? What's the temperature there, the color of the walls, the material that has been chosen, the technology for disposing of refuse, the cost of the air-conditioning, and so on?" (140). These seemingly trivial questions indicate how differences in temperature, architectural materials, or the cost of air conditioning can precipitate dramatically different modes of embodied thought, feeling, and action. The thermocline, however, is not simply a matter of ambient temperatures: thermal experience involves an interaction between air temperature and a bodymind's internal conditions.⁶ Thus, wearing "skimpy summer clothes," relaxing one's body in public, speaking about anger or anxiety, enacting or responding to microaggressions can all be framed as psychological, affective, and *thermal* "acts of homeostasis."⁷

The history of thermal anti-Blackness can be traced to one of the racial capitalism's originary spaces: the hold of the slave ship. In Olaudah Equiano's classic account, the deadly atmosphere of the hold turns Black people's bodies against themselves, transforming their body heat and odor into instruments of torture and abjection:

[T]he closeness of the place, and the heat of the climate, added to the number in the ship, which was so crowded that each had scarcely room to turn himself, almost suffocated us. This produced copious perspirations, so that the air soon became unfit for respiration, from a variety of loathsome smells, and brought on a sickness among the slaves, of which many died. (58)

In addition to deaths from heat exhaustion, the ship's climate physically suppressed and culturally stigmatized the enslaved: the infrastructure of the hold produced the very qualities of irrepressible heat and odor that would subsequently be (mis)perceived as biological features of Blackness. As Sylvia Wynter argues, the rise of racial modernity was characterized by a cosmological shift from a view of the world as geographically and climatically nonhomogeneous ("the Torrid Zone beyond the bulge of Cape Bojador on the upper coast of Africa had therefore had to be known as too hot for habitation" [279]) to a world premised upon racial nonhomogeneity (between the rationality of [Western, white] "Man" and the "projected irrational/subrational Human Other" [281–82]). The hold sought to corporealize the uninhabitable heat of the "Torrid Zone" (Nussbaum) into bodies presumed to have insufficient control of either their senses or their sensuality.

After being put to work on a Virginia plantation, Equiano recounts being called inside to the bedside of his sick master, "to fan the gentleman while he slept" (63). Here, Equiano is conscripted into the labor of air conditioning, which enables his master to

continue in comfortable unconsciousness. This scene encapsulates the thermal divide imposed by Atlantic slavery, which among other things exploited the enslaved as a resource of heat absorption, thermal regulation, and deodorization for white bodies. Pseudo-scientific beliefs about Black people's biological capacity to tolerate heat were used to justify not only forced labor in extreme temperatures, but also medical experimentation intended to enhance white people's heat resistance.⁸ In his slave narrative, John Brown recounts that his master, Dr. Thomas Hamilton, conducted nonconsensual medical experiments on him to test the effects of different medicines on his supposed capacity to resist the effects of extreme heat. After Brown had completed his day's work, Dr. Hamilton would have him sit in a heated pit with "a number of wet blankets . . . fastened over the hole, and scantlings laid across them. . . . to keep in the heat. It soon began to tell upon me; but though I tried hard to keep up against its effects, in about half an hour I fainted. I was then lifted out and revived, the Doctor taking a note of the degree of heat when I left the pit" (46). These experiments—to which Brown was subjected repeatedly after three or four days' recovery time—were intended to extract not only profit but also medical knowledge intended for the benefit of Dr. Hamilton's white clients.

On a larger scale, Kara Walker's multisensory art installation, *A Subtlety, or the Marvelous Sugar Baby* (2014), reframed the history and afterlife of plantation slavery as a process of thermal "slow violence" (Nixon) for enslaved workers exposed to heat by displaying life-size sculptures of Black children consisting of sugar and molasses. Over the weeks, the summer heat in the Domino Sugar Refinery building dissolved these sculptures, leaving mangled forms and a cloying sweet smell in the air.

These accounts of the thermodynamics of Atlantic slavery prefigure the diverse, everyday modes of thermal vulnerability that have been disproportionately imposed on African Americans. From slave quarters to Jim Crow accommodations (which frequently segregated access to sites of thermal regulation such as air-conditioned train cars, hotels, restaurants, ground-level theater seats, cooled water fountains, beaches, and urban swimming pools), from uncooled tenements and workplaces to prison cells, heat has persisted as a powerful, insidious sensory modality of both racialization and racial inequity. If—as Starosielski has shown—intimate and frequently obscured techniques of "thermal violence" have been deployed to discipline Black people through architectures ranging from the sweatbox to contemporary prisons, urban planning, and the law extended thermal slow violence across a range of quotidian built environments. One intentional effect of racial segregation was to deny access to means of thermal regulation, compounding the ways

in which class, labor, architecture, infrastructure, and racial geographies have continually redistributed the conditions of thermal comfort (as well as the fantasy of disembodied rationality premised upon atmospheric comfort and embodied coolness) across racial lines.⁹

Many US cities and suburbs are—literally by design—susceptible to extreme heat, whether by virtue of their design or because they are sited in subtropical and desert climates, often with the assumption that residents would have access to air conditioning.¹⁰ But if air conditioning accelerated urbanization throughout the South and Southwest (Colten 212), access to effective air conditioning has been uneven. Extreme urban heat has long been understood as a product of the urban “heat island”—a term introduced in 1967 by the urban climatologist William Lowry (19) to draw attention to how temperatures in urban spaces are raised by interacting factors, including the qualities of building materials, the trapping of solar energy by both air pollution and the canyonlike shape of urban structures, the concentration of artificial heat sources (including waste heat from air conditioners), and lower levels of evaporation due to drainage systems. If “architecture is the orchestration of heat through energy, climate, and habitation” (Ong 7), then urban planning orchestrates heat in conjunction with historically segregated neighborhoods and historically sedimented economic disparities. A 2020 analysis of 108 US urban areas in the journal *Climate* identified strong correlations between historically redlined neighborhoods and unusually high temperatures: “94% of studied areas display . . . patterns of elevated land surface temperatures in formerly redlined areas relative to their nonredlined neighbors by as much as 7 °C” (Hoffman et al. 1). The legacies of redlining and suburban “white flight”—including scant tree canopy and abundant asphalt surfaces, as well as wealth and income distributions that affect access to air conditioning—have left disproportionately Black and Brown urban communities with little respite from the urban heat island (Dawson and Khawarзад).

Thus, in the deadly 1995 Chicago heat wave, “African Americans had the highest proportional death rates of any *ethnoracial* group” (italics original; Klinenberg 18). Urban abandonment, deindustrialization, inadequate infrastructure, substandard housing, scarcity of vegetation, poverty, violent crime, and withdrawal from public spaces made elderly Black residents disproportionately vulnerable to dying alone in homes without air conditioning. As Eric Klinenberg observes in his “social autopsy” of the disaster, “the geography of vulnerability during the heat wave was hauntingly similar to the everyday ecology of inequality” (20). The social vulnerability of Black victims also enabled politicians and journalists to minimize the disaster: as Klinenberg explains, “Heat waves receive

little public attention not only because they fail to generate the massive property damage and fantastic images produced by other weather-related disasters, but also because their victims are primarily social outcasts—the elderly, the poor, and the isolated—from which we customarily turn away” (17). Yet “[i]n the US, heat waves kill more people on average than all other natural disasters combined” (Dawson and Khawarзад). If we view the heat wave as one outcome of planetary climate change, then the disproportionate vulnerability of Black neighborhoods to heat instantiates Kathryn Yusoff’s argument that the Anthropocene is “predicated on the presumed absorbent qualities of black and brown bodies to take up the body burdens of exposure to toxicities and to buffer the violence of the earth” (xii).

Along with heat wave fatalities, policing lays bare the racial fault lines that shape everyday thermal experience. Whether in the form of pepper spray, “kettling” (a controversial technique in which police surround crowds of protesters, often for an extended period of time) or recent requests to deploy the Active Denial System (a crowd-control weapon that “uses millimeter wave technology essentially to heat the skin of people targeted by its invisible ray” [Temple-Raston]) against Black Lives Matter protesters and migrant caravans (Shear), police (colloquially known as “the heat”), and other agents of state violence weaponize temperature to enforce racial hierarchies.¹¹ The police technique of “kettling,” for example, involves the deliberate orchestration of a crowd’s temperature and affect. Police strategists claim that kettling is a nonviolent effort to “reduce the temperature” of both protesters and police; however, as the activist Laurie Penny notes, the term “kettle” captures how “penning already-outraged people into a small space tends to make tempers boil and give police an excuse to turn up the heat” (qtd. in Neal et al. 1055). Critics have argued that the police kettle targets the “affective intensity of rioting bodies” (Neal et al. 1049). It does this not only by containing the crowd, but by “employ[ing] environmental elements to manipulate the affective composition of the crowd: cold or heat, darkness or bright sunlight, rain or humidity all play a role in slowly draining the energy of protesters.” Ambient temperature and other climatic elements turn the energy of activists inward, either “mak[ing] tempers boil” or leveraging boredom and discomfort to drain their energy. Temperature conditions political possibility by circumscribing what kind of body one can inhabit and project: “In kettling, what was intended to be a demonstration of a political body is diverted into a demonstration of a vulnerable body thrown back upon itself” (1056). Kettling exemplifies the contradictory effects of thermal inequities: heat under pressure can manifest as an explosive uprising, but it can also be experienced as the

debilitation and exposure of “a vulnerable body thrown back upon itself.” Whereas police strategists view elevated “temperature” as a characteristic of enraged, irrational protesters, activists apprehend the environment of the kettle itself as a generator of outrage, anxiety, and other “hot” emotions.¹²

2. Representing the Thermocline: Heat, Violence, and Narrative

While empirical data concerning thermal disparities and their multivalent effects help make perceptible the contours and power of thermoclines, our perception of temperature also shapes—and is shaped by—narratives, even when those narratives often relegate thermoception to a few lines of description. In her groundbreaking study of nineteenth-century sensory aesthetics, Erica Fretwell argues that literature does not just register sensation but inculcates it, that it “has the potential to reproduce—not copy but produce *more*—feeling and, in the key of radical empiricism, to create more connections to the world by registering more differences in it” (29). Can literature sensitize readers—especially bourgeois readers accustomed to inhabiting spaces of thermal comfort designed to make temperature a matter of little concern—to lived experiences of thermal precarity? Can reading modify how we perceive and corporealize thermal differences, as well as how we relate to technologies and infrastructures of thermal comfort? Can it reorient our sensoria to register heat not only in terms of personal comfort, but as a problem of social differentiation and racial justice? Can atmospheric temperature be a medium for the “transmission of affect” (Brennan)—for expanding or challenging claims of cross-racial empathy? Black authors have explored these questions by depicting characters and communities who have intimate, everyday experience with thermal extremes. In addition to staging temperature as a tool of racialization, their writings train readers to perceive thermal experience as an embodied, unevenly distributed phenomenon with significant biosocial consequences.

As with other atmospheric qualities, temperature is typically relegated to the background in literary fiction. With a few exceptions, descriptions of temperature tend to be dispersed: it is mentioned in descriptions of “setting” and then passed over as both characters and readers become acclimatized. Nevertheless, temperature—especially temperature differentials—can exert profound effects on character and plot, as thermal energy in the atmosphere materially communicates with—and insinuates into—bodies, minds, and moods. When Black authors stage experiences of

thermoception, they frequently draw critical attention to thermoclines and the slow, insidious ways in which thermal extremity debilitates and stigmatizes Black communities, as well as the modes of knowledge and engagement that emerge in response to thermal exposure.

In *Passing* (1929), Nella Larsen offers an extensive description of Irene Redfield's experience of the urban heat island on a summer day in Chicago. Anticipating Lowry's observation that "[t]he predominantly rocklike materials of the city's buildings and streets can conduct heat about three times as fast as it is conducted by wet, sandy soil" (15), Larsen underscores how construction materials such as pavement, glass, and car-tracks amplify the heat:

A brilliant day, hot, with a brutal staring sun pouring down rays that were like molten rain. A day on which the very outlines of the buildings shuddered as if in protest at the heat. Quivering lines sprang up from baked pavements and wriggled along the shining car-tracks. The automobiles parked at the kerbs were a dancing blaze, and the glass of the shop-windows threw out a blinding radiance. Sharp particles of dust rose from the burning sidewalks, stinging the seared or dripping skins of wilting pedestrians. What small breeze there was seemed like the breath of a flame fanned by slow bellows. (146)

Irene, covered in sweat, sees a man collapse from heat exhaustion, then nearly faints herself. For those who cannot escape the ground-level heat, temperature insidiously transforms physical, mental, and affective experience. Before she ascends the elevator, Irene's senses are warped by the heat: lines of vision shudder, quiver, wriggle, dance, and wobble. Heat also reduces her empathy and sociability: when someone asks her if the man who collapsed is dead, Irene does not bother to respond; instead, she leaves the crowd, "feeling disagreeably damp and sticky and soiled from contact with so many sweating bodies." This impulse to withdraw from others prompts Irene's decision to temporarily pass as white. She takes a cab to a hotel and escapes the street-level heat, ascending to another atmosphere altogether: "Stepping out of the elevator that had brought her to the roof, she was led to a table just in front of a long window whose gently moving curtains suggested a cool breeze. It was, she thought, like being wafted upward on a magic carpet to another world, pleasant, quiet, and strangely remote from the sizzling one that she had left below" (147). After the stupefying street-level heat, Irene experiences her assumed whiteness as an escape into thermal comfort.

On the scale of an entire street or neighborhood, the affective influence of heat becomes compounded. In the opening pages of *The Heat's On* (1966), Chester Himes unsettles crime fiction's tendency to focus on human actors by presenting ambient heat as a material agency that transforms human behavior:

The heat had detained them.

Even at past two in the morning, "The Valley," that flat lowland of Harlem east of Seventh Avenue, was like the frying pan of hell. Heat was coming out of the pavement, bubbling from the asphalt; and the atmospheric pressure was pushing it back to earth like the lid on a pan.

Colored people were cooking in their overcrowded, overpriced tenements; cooking in the streets, in the after-hours joints, in the brothels. . . .

An effluvium of hot stinks arose from the frying pan and hung in the hot motionless air, no higher than the rooftops—the smell of sizzling barbecue, fried hair, exhaust fumes, rotting garbage, cheap perfumes, unwashed bodies, decayed buildings, dog-rat-and-cat offal, whiskey and vomit, and all the old dried-up odors of poverty. . . .

It was too hot to sleep. Everyone was too evil to love. And it was too noisy to relax and dream of cool swimming holes and the shade of chinaberry trees. . . .

Grave Digger and Coffin Ed had been held up by an outburst of petty crime. (23–24)

Through a series of catalogues enumerating Harlem's hot spots and "hot stinks," Himes conveys the inescapable nature of the heat. Heat rises from construction materials and is pushed back downwards by "atmospheric pressure" that is caused, in part, by urban air pollution. The heat releases a panoply of foul odors, which assault the senses of Harlem's "cooking" residents. Together, the heat and the odors it calls forth make people feel "too evil to love": atmospheric pressure is corporealized as affective discontent. By the end of the scene, Himes's hard-boiled detectives are detained not only by "the heat," but by its social outcome: "[A]n outburst of petty crime." Heat is both a metaphor and an affective disposition toward theft, assault, and a knife fight. For Himes, violence in the city is not perpetrated by criminals acting in a vacuum, but by dynamic assemblages of bodies, dust, and hot air: "[T]he hot dusty air was being churned up by the slinging and slashing of weapons" (24).

The material agency of heat has also shaped influential representations of historical anti-Black violence. In *Do the Right Thing* (1989; the script's working title was *Heatwave*), Spike Lee

responded to the Howard Beach Incident—a deadly mob attack on three Black men in Queens that occurred in the winter of 1986—by making a film set on the hottest day of the year (Lee and Jones 118).¹³ In a 8 January 1988 journal entry, Lee recounts a discussion with cinematographer Ernest Dickerson about the central role that heat plays in the film:

He's fired up. He's already thinking about how to visualize the heat. He wants to see people in the theaters sweating as they watch the film. . . . Every character must comment on the heat. . . . Anytime the camera is rolling we should be thinking about the heat. I want to have sequences in *Do the Right Thing* where we suspend the narrative and show how people are coping with the oppressive heat. (Lee and Jones 50)

Combined with the film's warm color palette, its dialogue and plot center the prolonged heat as a precondition for the police murder of Radio Raheem and the ensuing neighborhood uprising in the film's final scenes. *Do the Right Thing* also uses montage to depict everyday "acts of homeostasis": moments of fleeting, embodied comfort and joy—dunking one's head in cold water, ice cube erotics, reveling in the stream of an open fire hydrant—in which characters mitigate—and create joy and community amid—thermally conditioned violence.

In her retelling of the story of May Enoch and Kid—whose encounter with a violent policeman sparked the 1900 Tenderloin Race Riot—Saidiya Hartman describes urban heat as a material agency that conditions actions and social proximities:

The temperature hovered near one hundred degrees, driving decent and hardworking folks into the company of whores, thugs, policy runners, and gamblers: the folks who owned the street after midnight. . . . With each flight of stairs the temperature inched toward boiling, so the upper rooms were like hell. . . . It was too hot to prepare a meal, so she and Kid decided to go out for a bite. (161)

Before she is profiled and assaulted by a plainclothes police officer for being a Black woman standing in the street—and before Kid stabs the officer in self-defense—May Enoch and Kid are physically impelled out of her flat by the unbearable heat. Like Lee, Hartman recasts anti-Black violence as an event enabled by the thermal conditions that orient the location and disposition of bodies. Temperature, here, functions as a shared sensory and atmospheric precondition for racial violence.

If temperature manifests in these texts as an ambient force of racial oppression, an affective contributor to “criminal” behaviors, and a catalyst for anti-Black rioting, it also catalyzes Black revolt. In *Do the Right Thing*, heat intensifies interracial fissures, building toward an explosive uprising in which Black neighbors burn down Sal’s pizzeria. Lee’s depiction of the incendiary potentiality of heat exposure literalizes Malcolm X’s structural analysis of the “long, hot summers” of the 1960s:

With the 1964 “long, hot summer” steadily producing new incidents, I was constantly accused of “stirring up Negroes.” [W]hen I was asked about “stirring up Negroes” or “inciting violence,” I’d get hot.

“It takes no one to stir up the sociological dynamite that stems from the unemployment, bad housing, and inferior education already in the ghettos. This explosively criminal condition has existed for so long, it needs no fuse; it fuses itself; it spontaneously combusts from within itself.” (421)

Instead of framing heat’s effects on racial violence as instances of climatic determinism or behaviorist hypotheses about heat response, these texts emphasize the biosocial nature of thermally inflected violence, as well as ongoing struggles over access to thermal comfort. Heat-induced rage only erupts when everyday acts of thermal regulation—a woman standing in the street scantily clad, young men illicitly opening fire hydrants for the neighborhood’s enjoyment, a couple leaving their top floor apartment to go out for food—are obstructed. By contrast, the white mob lets off steam with impunity through ritualized anti-Black violence.

Thermal disparities give rise to much more than health risks and aggression. Keeping in mind Claudia Rankine’s insight that anger can be “really a type of knowledge” (24), I want to consider temperature as a condition for embodied intelligence and affect—as well as a condition for community formation. In framing temperature as a condition of knowledge, I am also oriented by Katherine McKittrick’s argument that, in addition to geographies of domination, “It is important to also think about the ways in which black geographies demonstrate both the limitations and possibilities of traditional spatial arrangements through the ways the black subject is produced by, and is producing, geographic knowledges. That is, invisible geographies, marginality, indicate a struggle, and ways of knowing the world” (6–7). Adding nuance to the “temperature-aggression hypothesis” developed in his earlier work, a 1995 study led by Anderson suggests that correlations between temperature and aggression may be the product of shifted schemas of interpretation:

“Hot temperatures may prime hostile thoughts and memories as well as hostile affective states[, which] may then lead to systematically more hostile interpretations of ambiguous events and of one’s own ambiguous affective states” (Anderson et al., “Hot Temperatures” 437). Here, temperature only conditions aggressive actions by conditioning interpretation: it prompts us to access “thoughts and memories” associated with hostile affects, but those thoughts and memories have a basis in people’s past experience. What horizons of knowledge and action, and social transformation might be disclosed by temperature’s capacity to prime “hot” thoughts, memories, and affects?

Here it is helpful to turn back to the street scene in *Passing*. Although the experience of heat-induced visual distortions is debilitating for Irene, Larsen’s description of the wobbling visual field—in which the very buildings appear to “protest” their thermal disposition—also conveys a sense of urban space as unfixed, unstable, “an alterable terrain” (McKittrick xvii). As Bharat Venkat—the director of UCLA’s interdisciplinary Heat Lab—argues in his reading of the novella, “Misfit weather heightens the potential for disorder, for dangerous transgressions, dangerous not just or the individual but for a racialized social order produced in relationship to the regularity of climate. . . . [L]ike water molecules brought to boil, misfit weather makes the molecules of social life move faster, increasing the likelihood of heated, wayward collisions.” Heat’s molecular effects are instructive here: it speeds up movements and reactions, breaks and forges bonds, softens and volatilizes social configurations that are too often naturalized as unchangeable. As Alexis Pauline Gumbs writes, “Something can turn to anything if you get it hot enough” (96).

Whereas the texts discussed so far address thermal disparities at the level of setting, their sensory engagement is limited by the representational media of writing and film. While these narratives offer critical insights into modes of vulnerability and conditions of resistance instilled by thermal disparities, they do not fully convey the embodied aspects of what Eva Horn calls “climatic intelligence”: the culturally and ecologically situated modes of living with heat (for example, siestas, late meals, moving slowly) that are difficult to grasp for those accustomed to dwelling in “globally standardized air” (241). What kinds of knowledge and affective involvement might be afforded by a direct, nonrepresentational aesthetics of thermoception? How does heat exposure modulate responses such as sense of presence, empathy, and feelings of complicity in a theatrical audience? How might an immersive aesthetics of thermoception sensitize audiences to the spatial and atmospheric dynamics of racialization? The following section considers these questions by returning

What kinds of knowledge and affective involvement might be afforded by a direct, nonrepresentational aesthetics of thermoception? . . . How might an immersive aesthetics of thermoception sensitize audiences to the spatial and atmospheric dynamics of racialization?

to Rashid Johnson's staging of *Dutchman*, which blends the play's thematic references to heat with an experience of direct immersion in thermal extremes.

3. "This Place Participates You": Nonrepresentational Heat

"In the flying underbelly of the city. Steaming hot, and summer on top, outside. Underground. The subway heaped in modern myth": with these opening lines, LeRoi Jones (later to be known as Amiri Baraka) establishes the atmosphere of *Dutchman* as a claustrophobic cloud of steam, weighted with history, myth, and the trapped heat of underground crowds. Whereas the legend of the *Flying Dutchman* associates the phantom ship with perilous hurricanes off the Cape of Good Hope, Jones sets his play in an uncooled subway car suffused with heat: "[A] man sitting in a subway seat, holding a magazine but looking vacantly just above its wilting pages" (3). The play introduces Clay as a bodymind entangled with atmospheric conditions: Clay feels too hot to read, too hot to do anything but look around "vacantly" and "blankly."

Into the train steps Lula, a white woman at ease in the heat wearing "*bright, skimpy summer clothes and sandals*" (5). From the outset, the heat has divergent effects on Clay and Lula: in his jacket and tie, Clay gives up on reading his "wilting" magazine and "hopeless[ly]" (3) fans himself with it instead; in her "skimpy" clothes, Lula is in her element. As the play progresses, Lula taunts Clay—a young, well-dressed, educated Black man—through a series of sexual advances and racist diatribes. Eventually, when he refuses to join her in a parodic performance of "Black" dance, she accuses Clay of being a bourgeois "Uncle Tom": "You ain't no [n____], you're just a dirty white man" (31). After responding to Lula's verbal abuse by repeatedly imploring her to "[b]e cool," Clay finally loses his temper, "[s]laps her as hard as he can" (33) and voices his true opinions about race relations. Having finally elicited Clay's explosive monologue about murder as the most rational way for Black Americans to respond to whiteness, Lula stabs him and demands that the other subway passengers remove his body.¹⁴ As the play concludes, Lula begins to stalk another young Black passenger.

In their discussion of *Dutchman*'s historical context, Matthew Calihman and Gerald Early frame it as "a play about the identity, place, and role of the African American intellectual 10 years after *Brown v. Board of Education*" (ix-x). Biographically, critics have noted that the play (which debuted at the Cherry Lane Theater some

blocks west of the Russian and Turkish Baths) marks a break from the interracial bohemia of Greenwich Village, where Jones had associated with the Beats while living with his first wife, Hettie Jones (Hemmer 81). Rejecting these associations with whiteness (which *Dutchman* problematically associates with homosexuality and femininity [Rebhorn]), Jones moved to Harlem and established the Black Arts Repertory Theater School in 1965. In this context, George Piggford and Nita Kumar read the play as a staging of Black aesthetic autonomy, positioning Clay's monologue as either a "call to revolutionary action" (Piggford 144) or an attempt "to align the power of art with the larger political and social agenda of the African American community" (Kumar 273). Others—such as Calihman, Matthew Rebhorn, and Daniel Morris—note that this Black nationalist agenda coexists with *Dutchman's* deep investments in Modernism and avant-garde theater. Rebhorn, for example, argues that Jones's confrontational aesthetic adapts Antonin Artaud's "Theater of Cruelty"—with its calculated assault on the audience's senses—in order to disrupt his audience's racial beliefs. By excavating both the play's historical connections to Black Nationalism and its aesthetic connections to avant-garde experimentation and sensory assault, the critical literature on *Dutchman* highlights the historical and aesthetic complexities that have sustained public interest in the play for over half a century.

Building on these readings, I focus on Jones's treatment of ambient temperature as an atmospheric precondition for the racializing figure of the rational, autonomous liberal subject. In the 1963 essay "What Does Nonviolence Mean?", Jones draws a scathing analogy between the thermal regulation of air conditioning and reformist ideologies derived from the teachings of white missionaries:

[E]ven couched in purely secular terms, the emphasis on passive resistance and moral suasion is an undiluted leftover from the missionary era, and its intentions are exactly the same. Only God has been replaced, as he has all over the West, with respectability and air-conditioning. The Negro must have both before he is "ready" for equality is the way another answer goes. To enter into the mainstream of American society the Negro *must* lose all identity as a Negro, as a carrier of possible dissent." (168)

Jones suggests that air conditioning would enable Black people to satisfy liberalism's norms of civility by defusing the "sociological dynamite" that Malcolm X associated with historically sedimented heat exposure. Thermal regulation is designed to enact the

suppression of political affect—the quieting of embodied knowledge in the name of disembodied reason, or “cold logic” (*Dutchman* 36). Thus, in the twentieth century, “the slave ship grew more sophisticated and gave a few Negroes radios or air-conditioning in the hold” (“Street” 118). Jones characterizes his own experience as a young writer living in what would later become the East Village as one of thermal discomfort (in this case, excessive cold): “I paid \$28 a month for this place with no heat. I wish it had heat—I didn’t want to be *that* bohemian—and I used to stick my feet in the oven and put on my sweaters and try to write on a yellow pad every day” (qtd. in *WJCT*) Yet, far from endorsing the universalization of air conditioning, Jones envisions a revolutionary Black theater that heats things up, causing blood to rush into “pre-revolutionary *temperaments*” (“Revolutionary” 239), a word that underscores entanglements between behavior and temperature; looking back on the Black Arts movement in his autobiography, he figured its revolutionary force as a “flash of heat” (*Autobiography* 457) that played a vital role in anti-racist struggle.

Like Lee and Hartman, Jones stages the affective entanglements between urban heat and racial violence. In *Dutchman*, the unbearable heat in the subway car amplifies both sexual energy and aggression until these find release in both physical and verbal violence. When Clay finally gives voice to his suppressed rage, his monologue resonates with Jones’s comments on air conditioning: “Tell him [Lula’s father] not to preach so much rationalism and *cold* logic to these [n_____].” Clay warns Lucy that Black people should be allowed to perform the blues, to “sing curses at you in code”; compelling them to replace Black expression with “cold logic” would inevitable lead to violence. “With no more blues, the great missionary heart will have triumphed, and all of those ex-coons will be stand-up Western men, with eyes for clean hard useful lives, sober, pious and sane, and they’ll murder you. They’ll murder you, and have very rational explanations” (36). While Clay implicitly associates Black art forms such as the blues with heat and rage, *Dutchman* is focused on a colder mode of violence. The misogyny and masculine panic that motivate Clay’s assault on Lula are soon eclipsed by the realization that she has been scheming to kill him all along. Ultimately, the play associates murder with the “cold logic” of white liberalism: after all, Clay’s outrage is methodically elicited by Lula’s coldly calculated taunts. Clay’s monologue precipitates a change in Lula’s mood: instead of railing at him or mocking him, she assumes a “businesslike” tone as she prepares to murder him in cold blood. Like Malcolm X and Spike Lee, Jones presents critical perspective on the racial thermocline without advocating for expanding access to air-conditioned spaces. Coldness is not only a

murderous state—it also threatens to eradicate affective and epistemological capacities conditioned by heat exposure.

Rashid Johnson's production of *Dutchman* highlights this counterintuitive sense that heat might function not only to wear people down, but also as a condition of political affect and embodied knowledge. As reviewers noted, Johnson's immersive staging at the Russian and Turkish Baths intensifies the participatory aspects of *Dutchman*.¹⁵ If Jones's play positions fellow train passengers (whom Lula eventually commands to dispose of Clay's body) as proxies for the audience, Johnson crowds audience members into the compartment itself. The ritual of entering the baths becomes part of the performance: as one critic who attended the performance reports, audience members "checked in, changed out of our winter clothes, and put on the robes provided. . . . We traveled down the narrow staircase to the baths and squeezed in next to each other on benches in the first room. . . . As the encounter between Lula and Clay began to unfold, we started to sweat, the air becoming hazy with moisture and something that might be called history" (Philbrick 83).¹⁶ As Clay and Lula settle into a flirtatious exchange, the audience follows them to a cool passageway (evocative of Clay's efforts to maintain his cool); they then move to the Russian Room—the hottest room at the baths, with temperatures sometimes raised to over 190°F—for the violent finale (Kennedy). Throughout the performance, the temperature and steam of the baths force audience members into a shared state of embodied perception: audience members effectively become participants in a work of endurance art.¹⁷ The audience shares the embodied state of the actors, described by Kevyn States (who played Clay): "You're breathing deep, and your heart's pumping, and the sweat is rolling down you." Perceiving the play becomes inseparable from perceiving one's own bodily and affective responses to the heat. As Johnson puts it, "There's no way to be in here and not participate. . . . This place participates you" (qtd. in Kennedy).¹⁸

Johnson's staging introduces the gendered and racial violence of lynching into what is normally a therapeutic space of communal "thermal delight" (Heschong). The Russian and Turkish Baths are typically a space where heat catalyzes relaxation and self-care. At times, during their "men only" hours, the atmosphere of the baths also affords a space for cruising. On one level, this queer atmosphere counteracts the homophobic and hetero-patriarchal aspects of Clay's articulation of Black masculinity. Yet, as Ethan Philbrick notes, "for Johnson's production of *Dutchman*, this space of impersonal intimacy also became a site for an enactment of a well-known script of impersonal (or at least not only personal) violence" (82). As the play progresses, the atmosphere of impersonal intimacy—not just the

intimacy of cruising but the proximity of audience members sweating together in bathrobes, crowded next to neighbors and facing each other in square seating arrangements—becomes an “affective atmosphere” (B. Anderson) materially entangled with the play’s interracial erotics and anti-Black violence. The heat and steam of the baths attune the bodies and moods of audience members and actors to shared states of excitation, discomfort, and rage; yet this shared dramatic intensity is premised upon Clay’s death and Lula’s impunity. Whereas temperature in immersive narratives is often framed as something that intensifies the “illusion of reality” and “experience of presence” (Tal-Or 398), Johnson deploys temperature to communicate both the characters’ rage and the audience’s complicity. As the space of thermal comfort and intimacy becomes unbearable, audience members temporarily inhabit the inescapable heat to which Black people have been disproportionately subjected in US cities. Johnson’s production echoes certain dynamics of the police kettle, forcing viewers to confront their own physical and affective reactions as their crowded bodies mingle with an unsettling environment. This condition of extreme exposure replaces the conditions for “cold” detached spectatorship with a sense of shared vulnerability: as Johnson puts it, “People are disrobed. People are exposed to a degree that they never are in public, and so it’s a place for really honest negotiations. I think of it as a very even playing field” (qtd. in Kennedy). That shared exposure, however, is counterbalanced by complicity—by the play’s mythical presentation of the hot train car as a *Flying Dutchman*-like vehicle suspended in time, where the ritual of anti-Black violence is repeatedly reenacted. Perhaps the production’s most incisive effect is the thermal relief afforded by Clay’s murder, which signals the play’s impending end and the moment when audience members can finally leave the barely tolerable heat of the Russian Room.

Here, complicity with anti-Blackness is not only a fact apparent in the legal and economic histories of racial capitalism—it is also an embodied, atmospheric condition to which bodies have become habituated. In staging complicity as condition of thermal embodiment, Johnson exposes how the thermocline yields both Black death and non-Black comfort, like an air conditioner emitting waste heat and exhaust fumes onto city streets. In Johnson’s production, complicity is not just a matter of choice or intentional action—it is atmospheric, participatory, and intrinsic to the space itself. Johnson’s immersive production provokes questions about how to respond to thermal complicity. Complicity with the thermocline involves atmospheric modes of physical and affective investment that cannot be reduced to conventional theorizations of ideology. “In a time of intense atmospheric engineering,” writes Andreas

Philippopoulos-Mihalopoulos, we are “interpellated not through ideology (this has been suffused in atmospherics) but [through] a constructed, furious desire to perpetuate the atmosphere” (136). How might we work to dismantle racism not only ideologically, economically, and politically, but at the levels of thermal disparities and everyday acts of homeostasis? Should atmospheric engineering—for example, the intricate infrastructures that make the Russian and Turkish Baths as hot as an uncooled subway train in the summer—be dismantled, or redistributed? Johnson’s staging of *Dutchman* pushes audiences not only to experience thermoception as a sensory vehicle for empathy, but also to reckon with the deeply embodied privilege that allows them to indulge in a space like the baths voluntarily, and to leave (as they are encouraged to do) whenever the atmosphere becomes too much to bear.

More broadly, Johnson’s staging of *Dutchman* joins texts like *The Heat’s On*, *Passing*, *Do the Right Thing*, and *Wayward Lives, Beautiful Experiments* (2019) in drawing both sensory and conceptual attention to the complex entanglements between temperature and structural racism. As planetary climate change has become a central topic for conversations in the environmental humanities, these texts emphasize problems of *microclimate justice*—the ways in which atmospheric engineering produces not only a single, warming climate but a proliferation of vastly disparate microclimates. By addressing the sense of thermoception, they viscerally expose and challenge the ways in which the Anthropocene has from its inception positioned race as a technology of air conditioning. As the “long, hot summer” increasingly becomes a climatic norm, the aesthetics of thermoception draws critical attention from the upper atmosphere to the fragmented troposphere (literally, the “sphere of change”) where ambient temperatures unevenly condition bodies, affect, and knowledge.

Notes

1. Thanks to Edlie Wong, Ethan Philbrick, Kara Murphy Schlichting, colleagues at Colby College’s Environmental Humanities Faculty Seminar and UC Davis English’s Works-in-Progress forum for their generous engagement and suggestions for improving this essay.

2. As the art historian Huey Copeland writes, “Johnson first came to national attention at the age of twenty-three thanks to his inclusion in Thelma Golden’s landmark 2001 Studio Museum in Harlem exhibition, ‘Freestyle’, which introduced the notion of post-blackness as a way of emphasizing the unfettered range of black artistic and identitarian constructions in the aftermath of multiculturalism’s discursive collapse” (“Rashid Johnson,” *Artforum*, 2012, web.).

3. On air as a medium of environmental justice, see Robert D. Bullard, *Dumping in Dixie: Race, Class, and Environmental Quality* (1990); Julie Sze, *Noxious New York: The Racial Politics of Urban Health and Environmental Justice* (2006); and Jill Harrison, *Pesticide Drift and the Pursuit of Environmental Justice* (2011).
4. US guidelines for thermal comfort were formalized by American Society of Heating, Refrigerating, and Air Conditioning Engineers (ASHRAE) in 1966 with the publication of Standard 55, which defines thermal comfort as “that condition of mind that expresses satisfaction with the thermal environment” (qtd. in Bynum 16).
5. For an earlier study of thermal architecture, see Heschong.
6. Following Sami Schalk’s *Bodyminds Reimagined: (Dis)ability, Race, and Gender in Black Women’s Speculative Fiction* (2018), I adapt the disability studies scholar Margaret Price’s term “bodymind” to underscore the “imbrication (not just the combination) of the entities usually called ‘body’ and ‘mind’” (“The Bodymind Problem and the Possibilities of Pain.” *Hypatia*, vol. 30, no. 1, 2015, p. 271).
7. Cf. Lula’s “skimpy summer clothes” and “languid” enjoyment of the space of the train car in *Dutchman* (Jones 5).
8. The historian Jason Hauser documents how Black commentators refuted efforts to recruit temperature as a means of inscribing a “new biological distance between white and black bodies”: “[E]nslaved African Americans . . . often understood the nature of their subjection in overtly climatological ways because race shaped their access to cool and exposure to heat. . . . Their fear of heat and appreciation of shade ran directly counter to emerging ideas articulated by mid-century racial theorists” (139).
9. On climatic determinism’s associations between cold climates and white, male superiority, see Ackermann p. 19.
10. On heat susceptibility by virtue of design, see Lowry; Kara Schlichting and Melanie Kiechle, “Invisible Inequalities: Persistent Health Threats in the Urban Built Environment,” *Journal for the History of Environment and Society*, vol. 5, 2020, pp. 159–70. On urban development in US subtropical and desert climates, see Hollee Becker, “The New Subtropical Cities,” *Subtropical Cities 2013, Braving a New World: Design Interventions for Changing Climates*, AACASAC Proceedings, 2013, pp. 536–43.
11. See also Nicole Starosielski, “Thermal Violence: Heat Rays, Sweatboxes and the Politics of Exposure,” *Culture Machine*, vol. 17, 2019, web. A smaller version of the heat-ray weapon was installed for a “six-month trial” at the Pitchess Detention Center in California. See Mike Brodheim, “Heat Ray Device, Rejected by Military, to be Tested on Los Angeles County Jail Prisoners,” *Prison Legal News*, 2011, web.
12. On anxiety as a “heat emotion,” see Lara, pp. 288–91.
13. For an extensive analysis of the film’s engagements with the urban heat island effect and the associated legacies of climatic racism, see Susan Scott Parrish, “Climate and Race,” *Climate and American Literature*, edited by Michael Boyden, 2021, pp. 75–90.

14. Perhaps due to the extreme heat, audience members were not asked to remove Clay's body in Johnson's staging of *Dutchman* (Philbrick, personal communication with author).
15. For a nuanced study of a broader tradition of "participatory art" attuned to the politics of spectatorship, see Claire Bishop, *Artificial Hells: Participatory Art and the Politics of Spectatorship* (2012).
16. Initially, audiences in the New York production (staged in Nov. 2013) would have experienced the heat of the baths very differently than audiences at the Chicago production (amid the hotter outdoor temperatures of Sept. 2014).
17. Noting that the Performa festival appeals to "nightlife" and "entertainment" crowds, Philbrick recalls that the audience of about 20–25 at the performance he attended in New York appeared to be younger, more queer, and more racially diverse than typical NYC theater audiences. Philbrick recalls being acutely aware of other audience members in the box-shaped seating arrangements as they sweated, drank water, fanned themselves, and poured water over their faces in efforts to cool down (personal communication with author).
18. For a nuanced study of "participatory art" attuned to the politics of spectatorship, see Bishop.

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