

# INTRODUCTION

## A “BREATHING COMBAT” AGAINST THE TOXICITY OF THE COLONIAL/RACIST STATE

LÉOPOLD LAMBERT



Training with gasmasks of Irish Guards in England in 1940. / Imperial War Museums..

Welcome to the fourteenth issue of *The Funambulist*. Various scales of space were mobilized in the first thirteen issues, yet nevertheless, all of them were manifested through the ‘hard’ physicality of their containment (walls, fabric, and other physical surfaces). This present issue intends to consider space through another perspective: that of its atmosphere. Mainstream environmentalist discourses regularly mobilize this concept, with various degrees of moralization (i.e. judgments based on universalist beliefs, rather than political and/or ethical considerations), and usually create two opposing groups, with humans on one side and an ill-defined and obsolete notion of nature on the other — though this binary is occasionally expanded to include less anthropocentric approaches. This issue differs radically from such discourses. One can observe such a differentiation in the terminology — the words “anthropocene,”

“ecology,” “ecosystems,” and “biosphere” do not appear in it for instance — although it is less these words that create a problem than their systematic use in the moralizing imaginary. The real differentiation occurs in the resolutely politicized approach to atmospheres: this issue does not challenge the idea according to which the totality of the Earth is being affected by human actions; however, it problematizes these actions, not merely as a sum of undifferentiated sources of pollution, but, rather, as the consequence of different but non-mutually-exclusive systems of domination: colonialism, imperialism, and/or capitalism. In other words, the discourse articulated in these pages has much less to do with a moralizing manifesto to “save the planet” than with assembling a set of tools to humbly contribute to the political efforts towards the dismantlement of these systems.



The “Social Escape Dress” as part of the “Urban Armor” artwork by Kathleen McDermott. Model: Trona Cenac. / Courtesy of the artist (2017).

This is why the notion of toxicity that this present issue proposes to investigate is crucial to apprehend. In order to do so, it is also useful to define the conceptual framework of this issue’s editorial line. Three concepts are instrumental to this matter. The first consists of an ontology (a reflection on the nature of “being”) developed by Peter Sloterdijk in a short book entitled *Terror from the Air* (Semiotext(e), 2009). In it, he argues that a radical ontological shift occurred on April 22, 1915 in Northern France — mind the Eurocentrism! — when the German army used poison gas against French soldiers in the WWI trenches. “Terror operates on a level beyond the naïve exchange of armed blows between regular troops; it involves replacing these classical forms of battle with assaults on the environmental conditions of the enemy’s life,” he writes. “The lightning-fast development of military breathing apparatuses

(in the vernacular: linen gas masks) shows that troops were having to adapt to a situation in which human respiration was assuming a direct role in the events of war.”

**The idea that not only the landscape and architecture, but also the atmosphere can be modified, engineered, and weaponized, allows Sloterdijk to talk of the human condition as one characterized by the concept of “being-in-the-breathable.”** Such an idea firstly implies that, as bodies, we are not merely contained within an epidermic envelope, but, rather, that we extend into our atmospheric environment, the limits of which are indefinable — this blur thus renders any operation of essentialization more difficult to be actualized. Secondly, it implies that our existence is qualitatively conditioned to the composition of the atmosphere that surrounds us.



Israeli army's use of white phosphorus over Gaza during the intense and deadly bombardments of January 2009. / Photograph by Iyad El Baba - UNICEF-oPt Israel.

A second thinker helps us to deliberately confuse the notion of atmosphere in both its physical and figurative senses: in her book *In the Wake: On Blackness and Being* (Duke University Press, 2016), Christina Sharpe (interviewed in this issue) writes **“In my text, the weather is the totality of our environments; the weather is the total climate; and the climate is antiblack.”** One only has to see how the infrastructure of toxicity in the United States overlaps with Black geographies to realize how Sharpe’s words embody simultaneously a metaphor and a literal description. Her concept of “the weather” can thus provide a new definition of toxicity — a word she does not herself use in her book — that refers not only to the potentially noxious chemical composition of an atmosphere, but also to the totality of political conditions that expose certain bodies to gradual or accelerated forms of deadly violence.

In this regard, the last words of Eric Garner, a Black American man strangled to death by a white New York police officer on July 17, 2014, are poignant in both their literal meaning and their figurative implications: “I can’t breathe.” Taken up as a slogan by the Black Lives Matter movement, Garner’s words resonates as the shattering manifestation of Sharpe’s conceptualization of an antiblack weather. Sometimes, this exposure to deadly violence starts for Black bodies at the fetal stage, as we see in the case of the poisoned water infrastructure of Flint, Michigan. In 2014, after the municipality switched the predominantly Black city’s water to the lead-polluted Flint River, the amount of fetal deaths and miscarriages, as well as brain, kidney,

and liver disorders for residents increased drastically. Flint is only an extreme example of an infrastructure and public health system built on social and racial inequalities. Reports show that Black Americans encounter “a higher risk of serious illness at any age compared with whites” and “have a shorter life expectancy” (National Institutes of Health, 2010). Following Sharpe’s lead, we therefore can see how literal and metaphorical readings of the Black condition in relation to toxic atmospheres in the United States and elsewhere — we can think of the work of Vanessa Agard-Jones in French-colonized Martinique for instance — are inseparable, as are the political situations described throughout this issue.

The final thinker whose work has contributed to the editorial framework of this issue wrote fifty years before Sloterdijk and Sharpe, whose proposition is anchored simultaneously in a masterful understanding of colonialism and in directly acting to dismantle it. In *L’an V de la révolution algérienne* (Year Five of The Algerian Revolution, 1959, published in English under the title *Studies in a Dying Colonialism*, Monthly Review, 1965), Frantz Fanon writes the following:

**“There is not occupation of territory, on the one hand, and independence of persons on the other. It is the country as a whole, its history, its daily pulsation that are contested, disfigured, in the hope of a final destruction. Under these conditions, the individual’s breathing is an observed, an occupied breathing. It is a combat breathing.”**



Makeshift pharmacy of Gezi Park: medication against the effects of tear gas. / Photograph by Evren Kalinbacak (June 8, 2013).

At a time when colonialism is perceived by the former colonial powers as a past historical era — almost exclusively represented through maps — the idea that colonial domination does not occur at the surface of cartographic territories, but, instead, through the (attempted) atmospheric control of every aspect of life, is fundamental to understanding this domination as a structure. This atmospheric control encompasses all colonized bodies in their very biology and anatomy. Throughout *The Wretched of the Earth* (1961), Fanon talks about the “muscular contraction” of the colonized body, who is “constantly on his guard.” He describes the colonized body’s dreams — let’s not forget that Fanon was a psychiatrist — as being “muscular dreams: dreams of action, dreams of aggressive vitality. I dream I am jumping, swimming, running, and climbing. I dream I burst out laughing, I am leaping across a river and chased by a pack of cars that never catches up with me.” **If we take these dreams and Fanon’s concept of “combat breathing” together, we are invited to think of the lungs as a muscle, sometimes atrophied by the toxicity of colonial atmospheres, but always ready to draw a sudden breath of air in what Sharpe calls “microclimates” in the decolonial efforts.**

Combat breathing is a direct result of the struggle between the toxic state apparatus and the resistance opposed to it. Sometimes, this compromised respiration is literal, as in Dariouche Kechavarzi-Tehrani’s text in this issue on the chemical warfare many governments of the world employ against bodies — in

particular racialized bodies — through the use of tear gas. The localized atmospheres of high toxicity that this weapon produces are indeed the most explicit forms of state control of space through the control of atmospheres. The same can be said of the forms of chemical warfare practiced by colonial or imperial armies — often with absolute impunity — such as Israel’s use of white phosphorus over Gaza in 2009, or the U.S. army’s systematic use of Agent Orange in Vietnam, described by Yan Vo in her article below. In other situations depicted in this issue, be they the nuclear fallout in colonial Africa (Samia Henni) or in Fukushima (Lisa Torio), the methane cloud created by the U.S. oil & gas industry (Sonia Grant), the management of waste in Lebanon (Jessika Khazrik), or the neocolonial designations of toxicity in Madagascar’s medicinal plants (Chanelle Adams), the combat breathing is perhaps less literal or immediately spectacular; yet the struggles against the toxicity of colonialism, nationalism, capitalism, and/or state racism that these articles describe or call for mobilize the enduring strength of this organ that Fanon invites us to figuratively consider as political muscles: the lungs.

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# PODCAST TRANSCRIPTS

## ANTIBLACK WEATHER VS. BLACK MICROCLIMATES

A CONVERSATION WITH CHRISTINA SHARPE



"Lynching in America," an archival project by Equal Justice Initiative (Montgomery, Alabama). / Courtesy of EJI (2017).

The following text is a transcript of a conversation recorded on October 10, 2017, with Christina Sharpe, a Professor at Tufts University in the department of English and the programs in Africana and Women's, Gender, and Sexuality Studies. She is the author of the books *Monstrous Intimacies: Making Post-Slavery Subjects* and *In the Wake: On Blackness and Being* (both Duke University Press, 2010 & 2016). As made explicit in the introduction, her concept of "The Weather" has been instrumental in the articulation of this issue's editorial argument. It was therefore crucial for us to feature her words at the core of an issue dedicated to a simultaneously literal and metaphorical understanding of "Toxic Atmospheres."

**LÉOPOLD LAMBERT:** Your book, *In the Wake: On Blackness and Being* was published in 2016. May I ask you how your current research continues the work that you present in the book?

**CHRISTINA SHARPE:** Right now, I am completing a critical introduction to the *Collected Poems of Dionne Brand* (1982—2010) and I'm in the preliminary stages of thinking through and writing a book that I'm calling *Black. Still. Life*. This extends my thinking from *In the Wake*. Because as you know, in *In the Wake* I theorize the way the ship, the hold and the weather are sort of ongoing locations and productions of Black being. In particular I wanted to stay with every aspect of the overturn, each of those locations, so I think I really wanted to stay with the wake and the weather and I wanted to keep thinking in particular about residence time, which in *In the Wake*, I describe literally as the amount of time elements stay in the water in the first chapter, but it sort of carries through into the second chapter and throughout. I wrote about residence time of sodium being 260 million years, I thought about that in relation to those Africans who were thrown, dumped or jumped overboard in the Middle Passage. I was thinking about the Zong, but also

beyond the Zong, and into the present. I'm thinking about those Africans making transAtlantic, transMediterranean and other kinds of journeys. But then, I also wanted to think about soil and sand especially since the Sahara is becoming as large a site of migrant death as the Mediterranean in terms of tracking the deaths of people trying to move across the continent in order to get to the Mediterranean to get to Europe.

I'm still trying to think about residence time and I want to think its equivalent phenomenon in relation to sand and soil. I want to think about Black still life in which the word still carries all of its meanings: still as in the opposite of a moving picture, something that has durations, something that's without a certain kind of movement, but, I also think about still in the wake. I give different examples of a life that I call anagrammatical: the way they were shipped in relation to Black life. I want to think residence time still in relation to water, and what I've been doing after hearing the women who I spoke to when I gave a talk at University of Miami: they told me about how whale falls (the afterlife of whales in the deep sea eco system) work, and how they create not only temporal connectivity but also geographic connectivity. I want to keep thinking about that. And toward that end, I know I'll be using the work of scholars like Vanessa Agard-Jones, who has an article called "What the Sand Remembers," part of her work in Martinique, and Kevin Adonis Browne, who has a forthcoming book called *Between Still Life and Afterlife: Mas, Photography and the Self* and Richard Iton's work, particularly his crucial article "Still Life" As I work on this book I am certainly thinking with their works and also and still the work of Dionne Brand, NourbeSe Philipp, Kamau Brathwaite, Rinaldo Walcott, Charles Gaines, John Keene, and many others. This book used to be called *Thinking Juxtapositionally*, which is a method for me that refuses linearity and that centers what happens when you put perhaps unexpected histories and materials together. I think, now, that that may be a different project from *Black. Still. Life.*, or that some parts of that project will enter and inform this one.

I say that because as I think about soil at this moment I turn to the work of the Equal Justice Initiative, which was started by Bryan Stevenson. He's a lawyer who started a non-profit organization that provides legal representation to prisoners who've been wrongly convicted, who can't afford active representation, who have been denied effective representation, and his organization guarantees a defense to anyone in Alabama who's got a death penalty case. **But as an offshoot of that, he started a community remembrance project in which he invited and dispatched volunteers to go to all these different known sites of lynching in Alabama and to collect soil.** The soil collected from these lynching sites is placed in plain glass jars with black screw on lids. The soil itself, because it's taken from different locations and the mineral content

is different, the soil is all different colors, rich cinnamon brown, asphalt, gingerbread brown, and also different textures, gritty, coarse, loamy — multiple 'earth' tones and colors and consistencies. But before I encountered these photos from the Equal Justice Initiative collection project, I had gone to visit Harvard's Forbes pigment collection: these rare pigments are displayed in beautiful jars and are protected. I began thinking about the Equal Justice Initiative collection project in relation to that Forbes collection project, and the ways in which these Black people who have been so dishonored and devalued are now cared for: the dirt is collected with care and the jar is labeled with care with the name of the person lynched, and the place where the lynching where the lynching took place and then the month, day, and year. Sometimes the name of the person who was lynched cannot be recovered and so in that instance the jar is labeled with 'unknown', and then the place, date and year of the lynching.

So, I started to think about these beautiful and terrible jars of soil and what could that soil and the process of collection could tell us. I'm very much in the beginning stages of this project but I am trying to work through the materiality of soil in the same register that I did with the water wake in *In the Wake*. I'm hoping that staying with Black still life in the soil the same way that I did in the sea, can tell us something about those elements cycling in residence time in which everything is now, it's all now. Those are some of the ways that the current project is continuing the work of the last project. That and still thinking about care. Finally, in relation to EJI, I'm not interested in the memorial qua memorial. That is, I'm not interested in the instrumentalization of Black suffering for knowledge and healing. But I am interested in the very careful way that the soil is collected from the sites of the brutal murders of Black women, men, boys and girls who were really never meant to be remembered and certainly not meant to be remembered in a way that tends to them, with any kind of tenderness or care or regard.

LL: The first chapter of the book, “The Wake,” presents the concept of the wake in the multiplicity of its significations, all bringing a dimension of the condition of Blackness. Could you describe this concept to us?

CS: I was really interested in thinking through wakes in all of their meanings, so keeping watch with the dead, the kinds of feasting celebrations, etc. that go along with that. I was interested in the line of firing of a gun. I was interested in the path behind a ship. I was interested in consciousness. So I wanted to keep all of these things together. **It was really important to me, to try to deal with wakes both metaphorically, but also wake as practice, wake as consciousness, and how wakes actually really worked in the water.** As I say in the book, I emailed my colleague Anne Gardulski and ask her if she will be willing to sit down with me and talk to me about wakes and I would like to take her out to lunch. Of course, she was curious about why but also very pleased, that I, a literature scholar, wanted to know about ocean sciences. I told her about the Zong and she did some of her own research and so that when we met she had a very good sense of what exactly what I wanted to know. I really wanted to think how all of these things were working together and was it possible to keep present and active all of the meanings of wake. To keep them present and in flux as a way to think about the ongoing conditions of Black being, everywhere in the world, not just in the U.S., not just in the Caribbean, not just in South America. When I’m talking about diaspora I am also always talking about the continent of Africa as well, since people are always under movement there, moving for all kinds of reasons, by force, economic necessity, other kinds of historical and present reasons, people who are nomadic, etc. So when I thought that wakes are both sort of ongoing and they also change, they’re also related to the weather, but they’re always some kind of wake. It’s a very short answer but that’s how it seemed to me that then everything that follows is in the wake of that description of how wakes work and all of these different ways.

LL: I think it provides a good contextualization of the last chapter of the book, “The Weather,” which enters in great resonance with the editorial line of this issue. Although most articles in it interpret toxic atmospheres somehow literally, all express the intuition of how atmospheres also describe the political environment in which we, as bodies, live. Your book makes this intuition explicit in a very powerful way. You write, “the weather is the totality of our environments; the weather is the total climate; and the climate is antiblack.” The climatic condition constitutes a radical detachment from the liberal narrative of a chronological progress for the Black condition. Could you talk more about this prevalence of atmospheres over linear time? Of singularity over singular events?

CS: I’ve just come back from “Scenes at 20,” the celebration of twenty years since the publication of Saidiya Hartman’s *Scenes of Subjection*. I’m really thinking of the impact of that book, both on all of the works of the people who presented, the people who organized the conference, but also thinking about the impact of the work on my own work and what her work did in terms of disrupting that liberal chronology from slavery to freedom. It’s in sort of

that register that I’m also thinking about this question. So when you say that it disrupts the liberal narrative of the chronological process of Black condition, I mean that brings us the theme to me to Hartman, but also to others like Du Bois, Ida B Wells, Braithwaite, Dionne Brand, NourbeSe Phillip, Rinaldo Walcott; I could go on and on. It seems to me that atmospheres are both continuous and discontinuous, just like the sort of movements between slavery and something called freedom, or something akin to freedom. It seems to me that because they’re discontinuous, as well as some kind of continuous, you can sort of track the effects that they have on each other and it’s not a linear progression. I’m thinking for example, I think it’s happened twice now, after the hurricanes, in Dominica, Barbuda, and Texas, immediately afterwards there were two earthquakes: one in Mexico, one in New-Zealand. So I’m thinking about how the atmosphere, the question of hurricane, affected the tectonic plates and caused the earthquake in Mexico. **I think that there is something about atmospheres and thinking about anti-Blackness as atmospheric, that really gets at what allows certain communities to thrive and others to completely languish.** Even as you may experience the same weather event, something about climate also allows you to experience the same weather event but in a very different register. What was really important to me, and of course so many things I think about, came from Toni Morrison’s *Beloved*, and specifically the ending of *Beloved*: “the footsteps and everything will be forgotten and it will be just weather.” For the past thirty years, I’ve been thinking about that sentence until I got to *In the Wake* and I think I can really work with this in terms of weather, microclimates, because even within a particular climate there are microclimates that evolve where you also have an effect on the weather, even if it is really momentary.

LL: Listening to you makes me think of Édouard Glissant’s interpretation of borders as the diffuse zone between an atmosphere and another, in opposition to the strict line-based borders that colonialism implemented, as Hélène Blais describes in the case of the French military cartography of 19th century colonial Algeria for instance.

CS: The map imposes itself so that each colony becomes its own sort of atmosphere. It becomes realized because of the imposition of French law, or British law, or Italian law, or German law within these particular spaces, even if these spaces are otherwise continuous. That’s what it’s speaking to and it



Justice For All DC Rally And March in Washington DC, on December 13, 2014, five months after Eric Garner’s death. / Photograph by Stephen Melkisetian.

is very interesting; it makes me think of *A Map to the Door Of No Return*; at the end of that book, Dionne Brand writes an oral ruttier. A ruttier is an oral poem that contained navigational instructions that the sailor memorized in order to be able to navigate. In these climates, one always has to internalize a geography because there may be, depending on where one is located, no external marker that says this is a hazardous place for Black people, or this is a ‘safer’ zone, it is a completely embodied experience in that sense. **So, we move through these atmospheres quite differently depending on how the body is read, depending on what we know.**

LL: This chapter, “The Weather,” invokes the entire lexical field of breathability, from the metaphors it allows, all the way to whiteness’ anatomical claim that Black bodies would have smaller lungs as well as arteries that “do not open as fast as arteries do in ‘normal people.’” It is not innocent that the movement Black Lives Matter immediately related to the dying scream of Eric Garner, “I can’t breathe” as a poignant and accurate way to express the Black condition — the deadly relation to the police being only one dimension of it.

Yet, do you think that the idea of toxic breathability could prevail on the one of unbreathability to describe the Black experience in a system that favors slow death — we can think of the toxic water of Flint, Michigan, the racialized mass incarceration system, the food deserts and lack of public services in Black neighborhoods, the structural violence of the U.S. healthcare system, etc. — on the brutal and spectacular deaths on which the liberal voices base exclusively their critique of structures they are fully part of. I’m asking the question while having in mind your descriptions of the kidnapped Black bodies of “The Hold,” occasionally pushed on deck to allow them the access of fresh air, not for their own sake but to allow the breathing cargo they embody to survive the Middle Passage.

CS: The spectacular death allows for a certain kind of liberal voice about race that leaves precisely the systems in place that both cause the spectacular death but also the ones that allow for those slow deaths to be in place, and in fact may indeed, legislate in a way that causes more spectacular deaths and more slow deaths. I was thinking about the relation between toxic breathability and unbreathability, like what the level of toxicity the body can no longer bear. In some ways, it brings me back to Saidiya Hartman and *Scenes of Subjection* and her turn away from the scenes of spectacular sufferings and in my own *Monstrous Intimacies* where I say

that, following Hartman, it's clear that those kinds of scenes of spectacular suffering don't, in any way, ameliorate or cease the suffering of those who are forced to continuously enact and repeat that suffering. It's a sort of failure of empathy.

It makes me think about the push of hate crime legislation, because of the witnessing of those kinds of spectacular murders and the way in which that hate crime legislation is then turned on the very people from whom it is supposed to protect. I'm thinking about Jasmine Richards, a Black woman, an activist and member of Black Lives Matter, who was arrested in Pasadena, California and who faced up to four years in prison on charges of "felony lynching." She was accused of trying to de-arrest someone. This is a case of a law that was supposed to protect Black people being used to further subject Black people. So, in fact, the kind of liberal narrative of progress is the very narrative that insists and makes clear that Black people being brought into subjecthood is done so with a kind of violent subjectification. **In other words, I think I attend to the spectacular but also to those quotidian experiences of unbreathability where really the ability to fully live in a Black body is continually curtailed, foreclosed, continually the enclosure is being reanimated.** So, the relationship between toxic breathability and unbreathability is really a level of toxicity and a level of pressure being applied whether it's fatal pressure in the moment, Eric Garner's utterances of "I can't breathe," or whether it's the kind of gradual strangulation and asphyxiation or the slow violence of toxic dumps in Black neighborhoods. Think of Flint, Michigan, where a water crisis, and a public health crisis, has been going on since 2014. Think of what's going on, or not going on, in Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands right now, think of the destruction of Barbuda, and Dominica. These crises are all also related to histories of enslavement and colonialism, systems in which weather was so important. Whether in relation to working enslaved people in rain or excess heat, what counted as good exercise for the lungs for the enslaved was measured differently than for the white subject. All of these things are still connected.

As you say at the end of the question, that being put on the deck has nothing to do with vitality for oneself, it's vitality for the market, along with the forced performances of enjoyment, in the midst of that. So much of plantation economy, plantation management, had to do with weather: lung capacity, ability to work, seasoning, etc.

LL: In this context of anti-Blackness as a climatic condition, you cite Frantz Fanon's concept of "breathing combat" as a generative way of thinking the ways Black bodies "inhabit [the terror visited on Black life], are inhabited by it, and refuse it." Could you tell us about this agency that Black bodies construct for themselves, not to be solely subjects of "the weather?"

CS: Thinking about agency is always interesting. I feel like everything is in reference to "Scenes at 20" right now but that's because it just ended on Saturday [October 7, 2017]! There was one panel called "Agency," and agency for Hartman is always modified. On that agency panel, Alex Weheliye reminded us that Hartman talks about "castigated agency" and he went on to, among other things, give the definition of castigation. While Rinaldo Walcott thinks not so much about agency but about "acts of practice." I think I want to stick with Walcott's "acts of practice" and think about the acts of practice that disrupt the weather. That's what I was trying to get at in terms of 'microclimates' and thinking about some of those huge Black Lives Matter protests, or thinking about the families that protested the threatened closure of Dyett High School on the Southeast side of Chicago. Fifteen people began a 30-day hunger strike to insist the school reopen as a community school and 13 continued it — two people had to suspend their protest because of health problems. The community rallied behind and beside them: there were activities for children people brought food for them and supported, all kinds of support was present there. I think that in the midst of a really repressive state under Rahm Emanuel in Chicago, that's the kind of microclimate that is really working to shift something. They won. The school wasn't closed down, and while that does not mean that Rahm Emanuel is not spending millions of dollars on a new police academy as opposed to public schools, those are the organizing microclimates that really shift something for the people who live there.

They also spread possibility and imagination to other places as a model for how to do a certain kind of effective change. Another example for me is #BailoutBlackMamas, and all the ways in which Bailout Black Mamas efforts have been organized in cities from Chicago to Boston, to Baltimore to Oakland. Since bail funds are being used as punishment and that's not how they are supposed to be used, activists and organizers set out to raise money to bail out Black women out so that they could go home for Mother's Day. But after Mother's Day the efforts and



Visualizing microclimates: the "Social Escape Dress," a part of the "Urban Armor" artwork by Kathleen McDermott. Model: Trona Cenac. / Courtesy of the artist (2017).

organizing continue. I think those are kinds of acts of practice that fundamentally shift the weather both for individuals, and then for families, however you constitute family, for community and then for communities across space and place. **I think that's something that gets at both the climate as metaphorical but also material and the ways certain kinds of acts can shift something so that you are not only being acted upon but you are also shifting something about what's possible to sustain life in that place. You are creating microclimates.**

There is an example that I use in the book that I found in a newspaper that was distributed at the 2015 Venice Biennale. The paper had no name and it was part of an exhibit on African refugees in Germany. The article in question relates a story about crossing the Mediterranean in a small boat when one of the passengers, another man, is swept out of the boat and into the sea. The man recounting the story speaks of retrieving him from the sea and placing him in the center of the boat and he says, "I like things like when we care for each other, it's all we have." I'm really trying to think through care, not in terms of the violence of the state, but in some other ways, as a kind of "act of practice" that radically shifts the atmosphere, the weather of where we are. You

see that on the Mediterranean, or crossing the Sahara, in the kinds of narratives that the Forensic Architecture and Forensic Oceanography projects surface. I think you can map that in all of these different places and so I ask, what are the cumulative effects of that outside, perhaps, of the obvious ones? There are massive climatic shifts that accompany those changes.

I'm also thinking about napalm, the aftermath of Fukushima, and again, the crisis of water and resources in Flint and all of Puerto Rico but especially Vieques, after fifty years of the U.S. using Vieques for bombing, storing and exploding munitions, all of the toxic materials in the soil, in the water, in the air. From what I understand, peoples' suffering there in the wake of hurricane Maria, now almost one month ago, is aggravated by the experiments the U.S. Navy carried out there. These are sites where weather's material and metaphorical toxicity really come together.

**Transcription by Flora Hergon for The Funambulist.**