

I wrote this book in the heat and the cold, in fields and under plastic hoops, in barns and chicken coops, as I built a farm in the interstices of another life. Farming is a practice of temperature. It is the long, slow waiting for the last night that dips below freezing. It is the rush that happens when the heat arrives and everyone runs out to the fields. It is a constant, ever-present attention to slight changes in heat. It is the sensation of standing in frigid water. It is the blast of cold air in walk-in refrigerators. It is watching produce wilt because of radiant pavement. It is moments of thermal recognition: Seedlings baked under too much plastic. An entire crop wiped out by an unexpected frost. It is the warmth of mammals born on winter nights. It is the heat that lingers in an animal's body after it dies. It is the blanket, the hutch, the straw, the hay, the tarp, the paper, the plastic, and a million other things overlaid and removed in order to maintain radiant life.

I wrote these words in short bursts between these practices of temperature, often when it was too cold or too hot to be outside. Some were written on a cell phone in the field, others scrawled on paper encrusted with dirt, shit, and blood. Theory always bears the traces of the author's environment, as Melody Jue so eloquently explains in *Wild Blue Media*. The theory of heat and cold in the following pages does not carry the sensory residue of an air-conditioned office. It emerges from a radically variable thermal world, with exposures ranging from $-34^{\circ}\text{C}/-30^{\circ}\text{F}$ to over $37^{\circ}\text{C}/100^{\circ}\text{F}$. Although this book is not about farming, it brings with it the traces of agricultural labor.

Media Hot and Cold is an experiment in writing and inhabitation.¹ In the field I wondered: Can words actually transform thermoception, the sense of temperature? If so, what can they evoke and elicit? How is temperature patterned not only for people insulated in air-conditioned offices but also for those who remain immersed and vulnerable in their environments? Can thermal media, whether films or fans, offer other ways of being in temperature? While these questions crystallized for me in the field, I found the answers in the thermal accounts of others. The following pages are an

archive of thermal experiences: women subjected to chilly workplaces; cinema exhibitors exploiting the cold; people punished in sweatboxes; doctors producing artificial fevers; and conservationists using thermal imaging to manage wildlife, among many others. Looking for heat and cold, I quickly found that temperature is neither a neutral nor a natural environmental register; instead, it's thoroughly entangled with cultural practices and media technologies.

On the farm, I found an analogue for book writing while watching chicks gather around a heat lamp. After years of using digital thermometers to manage the birds, we have come to rely simply on sight. When the birds are clustered at the edge of the brooder, it is too hot. When the birds are evenly distributed, the temperature is just right. I would only later discover that the first application of electrical thermostats was to standardize incubation temperatures on chicken farms.² Farming attunes one's body to differentiated thermal zones. It cultivates synesthesia, ways to thermosense through hearing and vision. At its core, this is also the project of *Media Hot and Cold*. I hope that this book will cultivate a synesthetic attunement, make social activity reveal its invisible thermal contexts, and orient readers to thermal fields. In short, this is an experiment in temperature manipulation, intended to work as farming does: on and through the body.