



King's Research Portal

DOI:

<https://doi.org/10.1080/0950236X.2024.2318043>

Document Version

Peer reviewed version

[Link to publication record in King's Research Portal](#)

Citation for published version (APA):

Legg, G. (in press). Kae Tempest, London and the digital affects of neoliberalism. *TEXTUAL PRACTICE*.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/0950236X.2024.2318043>

Citing this paper

Please note that where the full-text provided on King's Research Portal is the Author Accepted Manuscript or Post-Print version this may differ from the final Published version. If citing, it is advised that you check and use the publisher's definitive version for pagination, volume/issue, and date of publication details. And where the final published version is provided on the Research Portal, if citing you are again advised to check the publisher's website for any subsequent corrections.

General rights

Copyright and moral rights for the publications made accessible in the Research Portal are retained by the authors and/or other copyright owners and it is a condition of accessing publications that users recognize and abide by the legal requirements associated with these rights.

- Users may download and print one copy of any publication from the Research Portal for the purpose of private study or research.
- You may not further distribute the material or use it for any profit-making activity or commercial gain
- You may freely distribute the URL identifying the publication in the Research Portal

Take down policy

If you believe that this document breaches copyright please contact librarypure@kcl.ac.uk providing details, and we will remove access to the work immediately and investigate your claim.

Cover Page

Title: **Kae Tempest, London and the Digital Affects of Neoliberalism**

Author: **George Legg, Department of Liberal Arts, Faculty of Arts and Humanities,
King's College London**

Email: **George.Legg@kcl.ac.uk**

ORCID: **0000-0003-3001-8562**

Disclosure Statement: **The author reports there are no competing interests to declare.**

Abstract

This paper extends recent examinations of neoliberalism's affective impact through a close reading of Kae Tempest's 2016 piece *Let Them Eat Chaos*. Building upon the work of Rachel Greenwald Smith, I demonstrate how Tempest locates geopolitical discussions of neoliberal affect in London's particular geo-historical contexts. The significance of this approach lies in the insights Tempest offers into the digital infrastructures that underpin neoliberalism's affective atmosphere. These findings are expounded through a close reading of Tempest's work in dialogue with the writings of Paul Gilroy, Byung-Chul Han, Wendy Hui Kyong Chun and Mark Fisher. Through such a framework, I foreground how gentrification is a key driver in establishing, and maintaining, neoliberalism's digitally enervating affects. The paper concludes via the work of Hans Blumenberg – whose meditations on maritime disaster help unpack the emancipatory humanism Tempest seeks to salvage from London's ruin. Offering no grand political alternatives, Tempest's critique of neoliberal technology aims, instead, at redrawing the parameters of political solidarity.

Keywords: Affect; Neoliberalism; Technology; Gentrification; Poetry; London

For some time now Kae Tempest has been the laureate of London. Traversing a range of artistic mediums (theatre, fiction, poetry, music, performance), and operating across a variety of genres (classical mythology, hip-hop, philosophy, literary realism), Tempest has always encountered London's geography as a gateway to a broader planetary understanding. This is especially true of their 2016 piece, *Let Them Eat Chaos* which, perhaps more than any of their other works, encapsulates the fluidity of their craft. *Let Them Eat Chaos* is a studio album nominated for the Mercury Prize; it is a poetry collection nominated for the Costa Book Award; it is a live performance streamed on the BBC. It is, as the cover art demonstrates, a work of earth-shattering proportions. But it is also, as the opening sections inform us, an intimate and creative response to a city called 'London'.¹ London's streets, its citizens, and its politics all serve to anchor the otherwise extensive reach – the chaos if you will – of Tempest's unique and passionate style.

Yet, if Tempest is the laureate of London, they are also the omphalos of its affective atmosphere. What I mean by this term will require careful consideration. For one thing, affect in Tempest's work is not just a matter of tonal quality equivalent to the *Ugly Feelings* with which Sianne Ngai titles her excellent study of the concept.² The affect Tempest creates is indeed "ugly" ("in my stories many of my characters are prone to a pervasive numbness; it is pitched as the understandable toll of trying to make a living and a life'), but – as the reviews, the awards, the accolades all demonstrate – Tempest's audience is always rapaciously engaged.³ Comprehending the allure of witnessing such 'numbness' requires, I will suggest, an understanding of affect as the product of a socio-economic encounter – something, I argue, Tempest extracts from London's terrain. Indeed, as Nigel Thrift has written, cities are perhaps best conceived when viewed as 'emotional knots' and, for Tempest, the 'numbness' of their work stems from the 'toll' of London's economic life.⁴

The link between affect and economics has become a pressing concern in the age of neoliberalism. In the field of literary studies, Rachel Greenwald Smith has perceptively noted how neoliberalism promotes a toxic culture of individualism that erodes not only collectivist ideas, but also cultural categories. Where neoliberalism's economic logic has placed 'emphasis on the necessity of personal initiative' at the expense of communal action, literature has been reinscribed as an opportunity for individual 'emotional investment'.⁵ The "value" of literature, in this reading, emanates from a text's lucid transmission of an emotional specificity that correlates, in turn, with the personal experience of a solitary reader. At its simplest literature is re-calibrated as a pure transaction: feelings triggered by the act of reading 'allow for readers to ethically invest themselves in the emotional specificity of characters just as neoliberalism demands we all "invest in our own lives"'.⁶

The need to challenge neoliberalism's domination of contemporary culture is made even more urgent by the monocultural perspective it produces. In terms of aesthetics, notes Smith, this consists of 'stuffing diverse literary practices into a single mold and excluding those that don't conform to its shape'.⁷ But we need to push these consequences further – beyond the realm of literary practices per-se. Afterall, the unwritten outcome of a cultural logic that recalibrates 'diverse literary practices into a single mold', is a politics that likewise redraws the communal promise of multicultural living as the exclusory reality of monocultural segregation. The dangers implicit in what Paul Gilroy perceives as Europe's pursuit of an 'optimal relationship between frozen culture and fixed nationality' are not lost on *Tempest*.⁸ Indeed, the power of their work stems, I will argue, from their ability to locate complex geopolitical conjectures in tangible examples from the city. In *Let Them Eat Chaos* we get a window into the 'Hostile. Worried. Lonely' landscape of a post-Brexit London (16); we are exposed to the racist agendas of neoliberal urbanism and, through *Tempest*'s sonic

and linguistic precision, we are also made to feel the technological changes that have helped cement that neoliberal hegemony in place.

The “value” of Tempest’s work, then, lies not in an emotional payoff, but in its careful meditation on ‘direct lived experiences’.⁹ For Tempest, this is both a creative and a connective undertaking, something they make clear in their manifesto *On Connection* (2020):

Creativity encourages connection. And connection to true, uncomfortable self allows us to take responsibility for our impact on other people, rather than going blindly through life in a disconnected buzz of one day into the next, taking what we can from every encounter with no further thought possible than *my survival, my kids’ survival, my survival, my kids’ survival*.¹⁰

Tempest is an unabashed advocate of creativity’s ‘uncomfortable’ communality, and this runs in direct opposition to neoliberalism’s survival instincts. Indeed, the discomfort Tempest locates in ‘true’ connection, fills their work with an energy akin to what Smith calls ‘impersonal feelings’: an affect that is ‘unstable, multivalent’ and suggestive ‘of nonmarket-orientated forms of collectivity’.¹¹

A useful starting point when trying to untangle the affective knots between London and neoliberalism, is a small body of work buried within the pages of Mark Fisher’s *K-Punk* writings. Across a series of essays, Fisher plots the affective workings of twenty-first century capitalism by noting the profound difference between time as experienced under Fordism and time as endured under neoliberalism. Fordism was characterised by the certainty of idle time: ‘the dreary void of Sundays, the night hours after television stopped broadcasting, even the endless dragging minutes waiting in queues or for public transport’.¹² There is a politics to

this idleness – it instils a sense of agency in those it afflicts as they search for a collective solution to the tedium they face. Neoliberal time, however, is experienced in a very different fashion. ‘In the intensive, 24/7 environment of capitalist cyberspace’, writes Fisher, ‘the brain is no longer allowed any time to idle; instead, it is inundated with a seamless flow of low-level stimulus’ (550). As Fisher’s invocation of ‘cyberspace’ signals, technology is central to neoliberalism’s affective atmosphere. If disciplinary architecture meant Fordism created “empty time”, then digital infrastructure has helped neoliberalism produce a “distracted” or, to use Wendy Hui Kyong Chun’s phrase, ‘networked time’.¹³ Living in a state of constant stimulation, capitalism no longer provides opportunities for time to be wasted; the harassed time of neoliberal self-improvement is putatively inimical to the idle time of co-operative experimentation.

At issue, then, is the fact that our deep seeded need for creativity – what Tempest terms our ‘deep searching for connection’ – is not fulfilled by the constant stream of “entertainment” capitalism can now deliver.¹⁴ ‘Life as we know it is entirely unreal, entirely inhuman’, writes Tempest; ‘we have lost each other in this selfie-system of hyper-competition’.¹⁵ As this suggests, rather than connecting us in a meaningful way, capitalism now distracts us in an individualising fashion. Even digitised avenues for social connection are engineered to provide an insatiable diversion into self-fulfilment. ‘Neoliberal society requires and encourages engagement with others’, writes Smith; ‘but these forms of association are largely felt to lead to the enrichment of the self (as opposed to the company, family, or locality) such that the development of the self becomes the primary aim of social engagement’.¹⁶ For Chun, neoliberalism’s networked time does ‘not produce an imagined and anonymous “we” [...] but rather, a relentlessly pointed yet empty, singular but plural YOU’.¹⁷ We inhabit a world shrouded in solitary entertainment, and nowhere is this cultural stasis more visible than in, I want to suggest, London’s overdeveloped urban environment.

Under the auspices of neoliberalism, notes Fisher, ‘London becomes a city of pinched-faced drones plugged into iPods’.¹⁸

In an echo of Chun, Fisher and Smith’s frustrations with neoliberalism’s individuated worldview, recent studies of London’s gentrification have likewise highlighted how urban transformation engineers an atomised outlook. No longer producing a collective class war – what Ruth Glass famously termed, in 1964, the “invasion” of ‘working class quarters’ – London’s urban transformation now tends to be experienced on a singular level.¹⁹ In the neoliberal age, London’s gentrification is no longer a matter of hostile confrontation between two distinct communities (invaders and dispossessed; middle class and working class). Instead, communal behaviours have evaporated under neoliberalism’s insistence upon personal development. This is a process which scholars ranging from Emma Jackson to Loretta Lees have termed ‘social tectonics’ – an urban siloing that sees individual behaviour erase the battlelines of communal action.²⁰ It is for this reason that landmark studies of gentrification in the Global North have shifted from a strident language of *Displacement: How to Fight It* (1982), to the complicit questioning: ‘Does Gentrification Harm the Poor?’ (2002).²¹ The timeline is important here. The historical shift from resistance in the 1980s to normalisation in the 2000s, signals that the production of an individuated, neoliberal urbanism did not happen overnight. Thus, by attending to changes in London’s built environment, I believe it is possible to nuance neoliberalism’s affective impact in ways that also help us understand Tempest’s point of intervention.

Key to such a nuanced reading is an understanding of the role digital technology – Chun’s networked time – has had in shaping neoliberalism’s development. While neoliberalism’s raw fiscal policies prioritised the interests of the market, the insulated individualism this created was enabled by dramatic advances in digital infrastructure. In London, technology’s impact upon neoliberalism can be mapped in one of the city’s most

dramatic sites of gentrification: Canary Wharf. Here London's former port became a laboratory for Margaret Thatcher's experiments in neoliberal policy. In the 1980s, however, these policies still encountered obstacles to their implementation. After all, alongside opportunities for private investment, Canary Wharf's hollowed-out, post-industrial landscape still created opportunities for collective self-expression; be it Derek Jarman's 'collaborative' filmmaking ventures – produced while squatting in the dock's abandoned factories – or community planning initiatives like the 'People's Plan for the Royal Docks' (1986), which prioritised the needs of local groups and trade unions.²² By the early 2000s, however, this democratic and collectivised resistance to neoliberalism had dissolved beneath the digital networks necessary for the area's burgeoning financialisation. As Steven Graham and Simon Marvin noted in 2001: 'the Docklands customised infrastructural configurations are backed by intense electronic surveillance, "fortress" architecture and private policing strategies in the new corporate enclaves'.²³ Here, opportunities for collective action are shut down by a securitised landscape engineered 'to counter anti-social behaviour and democratic protest'.²⁴ Where once the docks had been dubbed the warehouse of the world, by the turn of the twenty-first century they had become a gentrified domain for executive living: a hyper-secure node within a data driven financial economy.

The securitisation of London's gentrified landscape is a telling development. The nexus between security and neoliberalism has, it must be stressed, a particularly odious set of consequences that are both the result of technological transformation and the outcome of governmentality. Concomitant with the rise of neoliberalism, geopolitical events – such as the global "war on terror" – have helped usher-in a security regime that not only buttresses social fragmentation, but does so in notably racialised ways. In the wake of 9/11, for example, technology has been deployed to filter out difference – now re-coded as "threat" – to maintain what Gilroy calls a 'psychopolitical monoculture'.²⁵ The end result, writes

Gilroy, is a politics whose ‘essential disposition’ is that people ‘associate positively only with those who are seen as *already* like themselves’.²⁶ It is a small step from this political climate to what Smith described as neoliberalism’s mono-cultural literary landscape. Certainly, the exclusion of that which does not conform to a ‘single mold’ dramatises, at the level of literature, the xenophobia which is occurring at a societal level. Just as ultranationalism demands the preservation of rooted, pure and unbending cultural icons, so neoliberalism’s emphasis on individual enrichment demands literature adopts familiar and established forms that can match ‘the expectations and desires of an existing readership’.²⁷

The affective experience of neoliberalism serves, I contend, to cement such a racist and exclusory logic in place. This is because the atomised condition of life under neoliberalism’s networked time means we lack the connective tissue to by-pass such segregating architecture. With neoliberalism having, in Gilroy’s terms, ‘won wide appeal’ for its discourse of ‘individual uplift’, an inability to triumph at the game of life can be misread as an ‘individual failure’ rather than the consequence of ‘structural matter’.²⁸ The putative “connectivity” offered by social media is an effective mask for the neoliberal affect which allows such misreadings to persist. Presenting a façade of solidarity – seemingly inimical with neoliberalism’s insistence on individual responsibility – social media’s insistence on ‘a click here and “like” there may secure the requisite hit of dopamine’, notes Gilroy:

but they leave an ailing world essentially untouched. Meanwhile, the structural inequalities that derive from institutional racism stagnate or appear to worsen. Giving voice to alternative and oppositional ways of living and thinking becomes progressively more difficult. Fatigue, frustration and anxiety take hold.²⁹

Drunk on the self-gratifying reward of social networking, the subjects of neoliberalism remain unaware of their fundamental isolation. More than this, living under the segregating

architecture of networked time, people become complicit in the maintenance of those biopolitical inequalities to which Gilroy refers. Viewed at a geopolitical level, what Byung-Chul Han calls the ‘psychopolitics’ of the Global North – social media’s clicks of dopamine – stymies attempts to redress the ‘disposable life’ Neferti X. M. Tadiar sees within the off-shored Global South.³⁰ Performing politics through smartphones, the ‘YOU’ of networked time remains ignorant of their need to articulate alternative ways of being. As Tempest declares in the dénouement to *Let Them Eat Chaos*, ‘The myth of the individual // Has left us disconnected lost / and pitiful’ (72). In such a refrain, however, the pause in Tempest’s lyrical performance, foregrounds their desire to shatter the fatigue and frustration that Gilroy describes. The power of Tempest’s engagement with this condition, then, stems from their ability to use the very hopelessness of that affect as a mechanism to wake us up from this ennui. Through this approach, moreover, Tempest channels London’s local affective experience towards the possibility of a broader planetary change.

In arguing for a spatially and temporally specific understanding of affect, I am also following Ben Anderson’s own insistence ‘that claims about “neoliberal affects” are always claims about a particular geo-historical conjuncture’.³¹ My mapping of London’s gentrification has already suggested something of neoliberalism’s particular temporal and topographic cleavages, namely: the shift from collectivised resistance towards technological pacification. The geo-historical affect this points towards is, I would argue, something close to a politics of boredom. Although I have unpacked the significance of this concept in the context of Northern Ireland, its manifestations are altogether different in the London with which Tempest is engaged.³² Again, Anderson’s work is a useful point of departure here. Noting how ‘digital capitalism is accompanied by a particular affective malaise [of] perpetual, non-stop, restlessness’, Anderson argues this creates ‘an *almost*-bored subject suspended between attention and inattention, attachment and detachment’. While

undoubtedly true, I think we can be more precise. This is because, as Anderson notes, the danger of such a framing is that it can advocate for a ‘form of restorative boredom’, which casts, I would argue, a romanticised glance back to Fordism’s empty time.³³

Fordism, of course, was not without its own problems and, what makes Tempest’s work so insightful, I want to suggest, is their resistance to such a nostalgic search for solutions. Instead, and contrary to Lauren Berlant’s powerful conception of ‘cruel optimism’, Tempest’s work points towards the enabling potential that can be extracted from within the very obstacles of neoliberalism’s networked time.³⁴ Rather than trying to escape the neoliberal network by retreating back into the emptiness of Fordism, Tempest wants us to be animated through a direct confrontation with neoliberalism’s enervating individualism. As they declaim at the end of their performance – accompanied by an electronic beat rising like a siren – there is much to be gained if only we could wake-up from the segregated lifeworlds of the neoliberal network:

I’m out in the rain
it’s a cold night in London

Screaming at my loved ones
to wake up and love more. (72)

The performance that is *Let Them Eat Chaos* – whether it be read as poetry, listened to as a studio album or absorbed live in concert – is a narrative that is delivered in three parts. Replicating Tempest’s adroit handling of the global and the local, we begin with an orbital perspective which rapidly accelerates down to street level. From here we get a window into

the lives of seven Londoners who, despite living in proximity, are all alienated from one another. Tempest's narrative moves into its final phase by jolting these characters together through the shared witnessing of an apocalyptic storm. Importantly, this storm becomes a conduit to our own collective awakening: a call for us to collapse 'the distance / that we share' (71). There is a clear biblical thrust to Tempest's narrative (described as a 'powerful sermon' in its marketing material); the text begins with the birth of an omniscient offspring ('these are your species / your kindred' (4)) before concluding with a baptismal flood that was heralded, in turn, by 'four horsemen' (39). As a further anchor to this theological context, the seven Londoners who steer the action are all "awoken" at 4.18am – a numerology that directs us to the poem's platonic epigraph from the Gospel of St. John 4:18.

Tempest's relationship with ancient texts has long been commended. Alongside biblical references, classical myths have formed the basis of their major works: *Brand New Ancients* (2013), *Hold Your Own* (2014) and *Paradise* (2021).³⁵ In *Let them Eat Chaos*, Tempest adapts these ancient poetics to reflect the pressures of contemporary urbanism in ways that also pay homage to canonical writers such as T.S. Eliot. As with *The Waste Land* (1922), *Let Them Eat Chaos* invokes classical and biblical contexts to help navigate London's 'human engine' – a lifeless city of social dissociation based, not on the after-effect of industrial war, but the affective experience of life under neoliberalism: the 'endless saturation of the days' (63) in which there is 'No trace of love / in the hunt / for the / bigger buck' (24). Like Eliot's poem – early versions of which were titled (after Charles Dickens) 'he do the police in different voices' – *Let Them Eat Chaos* takes us deep into the "unreal city" through the rhythms and vernaculars of its inhabitants. Just as Tempest's earlier work translated the legends of Greek mythology into 'everyday odysseys' so, in *Let Them Eat Chaos*, neoliberalism's complex mechanisms – as plotted by the work of Gilroy, Fisher and Smith – are explicated through the language of London's working life.³⁶

Tempest's 'linguistic pattern' is one of their unique attributes – something even their fiercest opponents acknowledge – and through a close reading of *Let Them Eat Chaos*, I will illustrate how Tempest manoeuvres Smith's 'impersonal feelings' across both local and geopolitical terrains.³⁷ In this sense, Tempest achieves an affective methodology close to that which Ann Cvetkovich's *Public Feeling Project* (2012) aspires: finding 'new ways of articulating the relation between the macro and the micro and new forms of description that are more textured [and] more localized'.³⁸ Cvetkovich calls this methodology 'performative writing' and, while she remains unsure 'what this would look like', in *Let Them Eat Chaos* we get something of an answer.³⁹ Rather than assuming neoliberalism has had a homogenous global impact, Tempest works from the ground up – extracting London's particular affects so as to then explicate the broader geopolitical contours of biopower and racial inequality.

Typical of this experience is Bradley, a Londoner we meet mid-way through Tempest's narrative and one we find trapped deep within the confines of neoliberal exhaustion. 'Bradley's got a good job', Tempest tells us, 'he works in PR' and 'he's doing well, he's / Living the Dream / And he's paying the mortgage off' (44-45). But, as with marketing's empty rhetoric, the success by which Bradley is defined proves to be a vapid endeavour:

Collect my salary.

Cooking a meal,
rice and vegetables.

I exercise regularly.

How do I feel?

Whistle a melody.

Is this

all

that's ahead of me? (49)

On the page, the emptiness of Bradley's life is visible in the great gulfs that sunder the inventory of his listless routine. Far from being melodic, life for Bradley is a series of singular activities that fail to cohere. Musically, Tempest delivers these lines in monotone – an automated sound that further deflates Bradley's lifestyle in ways redolent of Radiohead's track 'Fitter Happier'. Certainly, the computation of Bradley's life is carried by Tempest's summation that his 'days go past like pictures on a screen' (46) – a phrase which lends itself to the title track of Bradley's section on the album.

Tempest's use of 'pictures on a screen' as the lens by which to understand Bradley's dispirited life ('I know I exist / but I don't feel a thing' (47)) is significant. Commentators on this section of Tempest's work are quick to define it as 'a study in alienation',⁴⁰ encapsulating the plight of a generation that is 'lost, disenfranchised, or apathetic'.⁴¹ But for all the palpable presence of alienation in Bradley's narrative, Tempest demonstrates how it is, in fact, the mediated gaze of 'pictures on a screen' that controls this affective condition. Key, here, is Tempest's recognition that technology is central to the construction of an alienation that is as insatiable as it is powerful. Where early phases of neoliberalism still created space for communal action – witness *Displacement: How to Fight It* (1982) – by the twenty-first century, the acceleration of the 'information age' has rendered social fragmentation absolute. Writing in 2013, Han has likened our experience of such networked time as equivalent to having a psychic illness: Information Fatigue Syndrome (IFS). When first diagnosed in 1996, IFS only 'affected people who had to process vast quantities of information on the job',

writes Han. ‘Now, IFS affects everyone, because we all face rapidly growing masses of information’.⁴² The numbness with which Bradley lives – ‘This feeling / like I’m looking at the world / from behind glass’ (46) – is a direct output of those devices that absorb his attention when ‘passing [his] targets at work’ (46) before then infiltrating his personal life at home. Rather than just being a ‘study in alienation’, Bradley’s is an experience of total saturation by technology which, in alignment with Fisher, Gilroy and Smith’s arguments, can only offer the meaningless distraction of a “faux” or sterile connection.

That Bradley should suffer such depletion while occupying ‘the new block’ on Tempest’s fictional street is not a matter of coincidence. The material trappings of urban development form the backbone to neoliberalism’s technologically mediated isolation – something Tempest expands via the next Londoner we encounter. In ‘Perfect Coffee’ we meet Zoe who, unbeknownst to Bradley, lives ‘just two doors down / in the first-floor flat / in the old ramshackle house / with the novelty doorbell’ (50). The ‘ramshackle’ nature of this building is reflected in its contents, contents which Zoe is packing-up as her landlord has priced her out of the gentrifying street (‘he’s tripled the rent / He’s going to get it and all’ (52)). Constructing an inventory of Zoe’s items, Tempest demonstrates how consumer culture also serves to denude personal possessions under the banner of meaningless material excess. ‘What the fuck is all this stuff?’ (51), asks Zoe as she places ‘love letters she can’t bin’ alongside ‘limited edition Air Max One Tens’ and a ‘Che Guevara Bust / complete with his ornamental glass cigar’ (51). Priceless, analogue, love letters which should ripple with connectivity are hereby stripped of semantic worth (‘stuff’) as they are conflated with the products of capitalism’s “monopoly rents” (‘limited edition’).⁴³ The absurdity of this attempt to extract profit from a marketplace otherwise saturated in sameness, is figured in the transparency of the Communist-icon now cult-brand, Che Guevara. That Tempest wants us to connect the fabricated construction of such uniqueness to the broader urban forces impacting

Zoe's life is a warning intoned by the track's opening image of a 'novelty doorbell'. Here, Tempest sounds a cautionary note that alerts their audience to the way gentrification seeks to project an outward appearance of novelty that occludes the urban disorder ('ramshackle') it fails to redress. Zoe's landlord might well 'repaint' their flat as the new rentier class move in, but this will not address the fact that 'the mould kept growing up the kitchen walls' (52).

Ultimately, however, the strength of Tempest's approach is the nuanced insights they offer on technology being a driver of urban change. Signalling the arrival of Zoe's consciousness with a change in musical tempo – lyrics now delivered with an elongated emphasis upon an enjambed rhyme ('afford', 'restored', 'bored', 'sword') – Tempest surfaces the affective impact of gentrification in neoliberalism's information age:

Zoe goes to the window
looks to the street
lights up a smoke

it's 4:18.

The squats we used to party in
are flats we can't afford
The dumps we did our dancing in
have all been restored

Pints are up two quid
the staff are beautiful and bored
You think it's coming up round here?
It's falling on its sword. (52)

Mirroring the dockland's development, Tempest identifies how technology has helped gentrification transform dissident modes of collective pleasure ('squats') into vacuous aesthetics of alienated consumerism ('beautiful and bored'). The musical delivery of these lines is key to unlocking the technological drivers associated with this urban change.

Replicating the automated monotone of Bradley's life-writing, Tempest's sonic elongation of the keyword 'bored' emphasises, in turn, the sterile affect that subtends gentrification's glamorous allure. In their recent study of *The New Urban Aesthetic* (2022), Mónica Montserrat Degan and Gillian Rose identify how digital technologies – ranging from CGI to Instagram – seduce audiences through acts of 'digital manipulation' that make "“ordinary” objects, surfaces or people appear magical, elegant, effortless and establish their difference from the mundane'.⁴⁴ Tempest is taking this point further, however, by stressing how the mundane backdrop, from which this 'beautiful' new urban aesthetic is drawn, can only ever appear as duller, and more monotone, in point of contrast. In this one line, Tempest's flattened musical delivery of 'bored' – which, in their BBC performance is delivered with a blank, static, stare – betrays the vapid reality created in the aftermath of digital manipulation.⁴⁵ Tempest's long, listless lyrical delivery hereby becomes an update to the 'throbbing' of Eliot's 'human engine' – an engine which is now driven by the algorithmic clicks and likes of timeline media.⁴⁶ As this section of the song ultimately suggests, the outward appearance of progress ('up') facilitated by digital mediation can only serve to do further damage ('falling') to the urban lifeworld that persists beneath this immaterial façade.

The image of London 'falling on its sword' is rendered more comprehensible when viewed through an affective understanding of neoliberalism. While critics such as Sina Schuhmaier, rebuke Tempest for offering 'a somewhat elitist degradation of the “ignorant masses”', Tempest's engagement with affect offers a bottom-up analysis of how capitalism now operates.⁴⁷ In 'Perfect Coffee', Zoe is not only aware of the boredom, the soullessness,

the vacuity, that emanates from the gentrified landscape, she is also aware of its intractability. Directed away from communality by the neoliberal framework of personal responsibility, those displaced by gentrification are left to navigate the city akin to ‘scavengers / scrapping around in the sludge for our sustenance’ (55). This battle for survival paradoxically means that victims of gentrification reinforce the “social tectonics” wrought by such urban transformation; to live in a more collectivised environment could jeopardise any current, or future, sustenance in the scrap for personal development.

‘Rubbing our shoulders / into the mould. / We do / what we’re told’ (55), declares Tempest. The flat rhyme (‘mould / told’) is suggestive of the flotsam Londoners have become amidst the city’s relentless waves of gentrification. Compelled to contribute to this process by the neoliberal emphasis upon individual growth, it is unsurprising that Zoe concludes her monologue with an admission of her own contribution to the tide of urban development:

And so I’m moving on. I’ve got it all to play for.

I’ll be the invader

in some other neighbourhood.

I’ll be sipping Perfect Coffee

thinking, *this is pretty good,*

while the locals grit their teeth and hum

Another Fucking One Has Come. (55-56)

Taking satisfying sips from the chalice of capitalist productivity, in ‘Perfect Coffee’ we witness the completion of what Sharon Zukin has termed gentrification’s ‘pacification by cappuccino’.⁴⁸ Just as the new urban aesthetic allures audiences with digital slices of staged

‘perfect[ion]’, Tempest demonstrates how personal narratives are also designed to shore-up such seduction (*‘this is pretty good’*). Thus, rather than resist the invasive transformation of urban development, the axiomatic desire for personal progress (*‘I’m moving on’*) means Zoe can only contribute to gentrification’s insipid lifestyle if she is to remain a legible contender (or ‘play[er]’) in neoliberalism’s game of life.

Consequently, as Tempest is at pains to illustrate, London has become caught in an unending cycle of urban renewal akin to ‘Sisyphus pushing his boulder’ (55). The city is formed through the constant churn of Marx’s M-C-M formular – a process in which we all partake (as renters, landlords, developers) and from which there is little prospect of escape. While early stages of neoliberalism encountered disruptive affects through which communities could cohere (*‘dumps we did our dancing in’*), the digital economy works to counter such bonds through the seductive lacquer of personal growth, bespoke redevelopment or, to use the urban planning terminology, ‘rehabilitation’.⁴⁹ As Tempest writes:

London’s a walled fort,
 it’s all for the rich,
 if you fall short
 you fall.

You know where the door is.

Board up the broken,
 do it up,
 sell it back
 make it bespoke.

It's all out in the open.

It's fine, man,
 hike the price right up
 and smile with your friends
 in the posh new nightclubs.

My streets have been dug up.

Re-paved.

New routes for commuters.

The landscape has changed

I'm looking for the old tags,
 the graffs that once meant
safe territory

but it seems

every hieroglyph gets whitewashed

eventually (53-54).

In a rich and evocative passage, Tempest conjoins the capitalist logic of what Neil Smith called gentrification's 'rent gap' ('Board up the broken, // do it up, / Sell it back') with the broader geopolitical shift towards urban fortification: 'London's a walled fort, it's all for the rich'.⁵⁰ London becomes, hereby, a city of separation and segregation: a space of inclusion and exclusion, winners and losers, highs and lows.

As this suggests, Tempest is also keen to highlight how London's divisive infrastructure is also a highly visible phenomenon: 'it's all out in the open'. This visibility stems, in large part, from one's own complicity in the process. Like Zoe, the neoliberal subject appears not only 'fine' with this predatory species of urban renewal, but also a willing beneficiary of the insatiable appetite for development. Far from being "ignorant" of the process, Tempest demonstrates how individuals are seduced by the digitised mechanics of urban transformation. 'Smil[ing]' for time-line media in the 'posh new nightclubs', people are diverted away from resisting urban change and towards 'bespoke' avenues for entertainment. It is for this reason that Tempest is so confident in their assertion that London's experience of gentrification is akin to the 'whitewashing' of collective meaning from the city. What had been a built environment marked with the communal 'tags' of '*safe territory*', is now a sterile promontory – a landscape littered with vacuous conduits for commuting and consumerism. As Han has noted, once neoliberalism has transformed 'citizens into consumers', people 'possess neither the will nor the ability to participate in communal, political action'.⁵¹

There is, of course, more to say about Tempest's pointed use of 'whitewashed' in this section. The racial veil this term casts across the city's gentrification is evident in the suggestion that London's fortification also functions as a door through which others can 'fall'. Indeed, as Achille Mbembe has taught us, the built environment has the 'capacity to define who matters and who does not, who is *disposable* and who is not'.⁵² While Mbembe draws his understanding of urban geography from Franz Fanon's discussion of colonial occupation, in the context of *Let Them Eat Chaos* Tempest's reading of the city's racial segregation is driven by an ecological axis. Tempest signals this via their use of 'fall' – a rendering of urban division that returns us to an earlier section of the performance titled 'Don't Fall In'. Here, the spectre of the closing storm is first introduced through the image of

London's liquid awakening from Han's information fatigue: a 'hard rain falling on all the halfhearted / half formed, fast walking, half fury, half boredom / hard talking, half dead from exhaustion' (40). The fortification of London's built environment becomes, in the wake of this rain, a call to collective action, a reminder that:

Life is much broader
 than borders
 but who can afford
 to think over the walls of this fortress.
 Of course it's important
 to provide roof and floorboards
 for you and yours
 and be secure in your fortunes.
 But you're more
 than the three or four
 you'd go to war for.
 You're part of a people that need your support
 and whose world is it?
 If it belongs to the corporates
 the People are left on the doorstep.
 Door-shut. (43)

With their lyrics now flowing at pace – forming torrents across both stage and page – Tempest foregrounds how, in the face of danger, urban fortification should become a means of transcending racialised divisions. Akin to their sharp coupling of 'broader' and 'border', Tempest's invocation of apocalypse suggests a gateway to radical empathy – a means of unshackling our atomised lives so that we reach outwards, away from capitalism

(‘corporates’) and towards humanity (‘the People’). This is, it must be stressed, not a nostalgic glance back into an earlier empty time, but a projection forward within the networked conditions of the present. As such, rather than reinforcing racialised segregation, the prospect of an ensuing flood becomes, for Tempest, a vital opportunity to connect with those ‘left on the doorstep’ of the city’s securitising regime.

A key node by which we can comprehend how Tempest’s aquatic vision maps geopolitical complexity onto London’s quotidian reality is through Hans Blumenberg’s dizzying meditation on water’s transformative potential: *Shipwreck with Spectator* (1985). Key for Blumenberg is the tension between the security of land and the perils of the sea, a binary which comes under pressure when those on land view maritime disaster. In such moments, those who are safe can possess ‘passions that both move and endanger life’.⁵³ The complex ethics that underwrite this ‘passion’ are captured, by Blumenberg, in the concept of “curiosity”. On the one hand, argues Blumenberg, the drama of witnessing ‘a storm-tossed ship’ is laden with accusations of ‘secret pleasure’ as the spectator ‘gloats’ over the peril of another.⁵⁴ On the other hand, Blumenberg continues, such spectatorship can produce ‘curiosity’: a passion in which ‘not one of these sightseers would fail to undertake the most difficult measures to save the shipwrecked passengers’.⁵⁵ It is through a striking meditation on these divergent responses, that Tempest likewise frames their understanding of aquatic disaster.

Take the unstable expression (‘wild-mouthed grin’) with which Tempest’s closing storm breaks onto the page, the stage, the album:

The sky cracks into a wild-mouthed grin
 and unleashes all the water that it carries
 Vapour grown heavy
 from every distant puddle,
 every lapping wave-tip,
 every churning river (63)

The weight of this water is synonymous with the scale of its intervention – the heaviness of rainfall carried by the repetition of its ‘every’ origin. Such breadth means this storm has an interconnective reach that runs counter to what has hitherto been a relentless study in isolation. It is perhaps for this reason that *Tempest* concentrates their affective atmosphere around that ambivalent ‘grin’. Like Blumenberg’s meditations on the witnessing of maritime disaster, the nature of this feeling is difficult to read. Is the mouth “gloating” in the face of danger? Or is it filled with the “passion” of a spectator prompted to ‘save the shipwrecked passengers’? As the performance shifts into its final track – the stirring ‘Tunnel Vision’ – *Tempest* is at pains to elaborate the contradictions implicit in such a ‘wild-mouthed’ response.

In ‘Tunnel Vision’, the storm’s mouth becomes a ‘vomiting’ ‘oesophagus’ of overdevelopment; an orifice eating with an extractive energy capable of transforming ‘the planet into pellets’ (66-67). But in the same moment this mouth mutates into the ‘screaming’ plight of a mother whose child has been ‘gunned down / defenceless’, ‘running from [a] war’ that Europe’s fortified landscape has made impossible to escape (‘the boats full / the boats sinking / a mile offshore’) (68). In a titular moment, the storm’s mouth comes to replicate the enclosed, cyclopic vision of a spectator who views these events through blinkered lenses:

Atomized

Thinking we're engaged

when we're pacified

Staring at the screen so

we don't have to see the planet die. (67)

Tempest's equation of 'Tunnel Vision' with the distractive capabilities of screen-based media is a significant point of intervention. Here, Tempest not only suggests that technology can neuter our engagement with planetary disaster, but they also hint at the role digital infrastructure can have in steering our affective response to such catastrophe. This is a process Gilroy has delineated in detail:

The degree of humanity identified in or awarded to Europe's others fluctuates and consequently determines the quality of sympathy and/or empathy that will be expressed once the veil of alterity has been torn to reveal, unexpectedly, a needy, vulnerable human countenance beneath. That epiphany has become a more complex event because the scale upon which humanity can be imagined and encountered has been changed by the expansion of digital infrastructure. Those shocking discoveries of the Other's humanity has usually been conveyed through *visual* engagement that reorganises distance and modifies the degree of intimacy involved in becoming present to each other.⁵⁶

As Gilroy suggests, technology can 'fluctuate' the 'degree of humanity' 'awarded' to one another; that is to say, technology can 'distance and modif[y] the degree' to which the spectator can encounter a 'vulnerable human countenance' in the wake of a disaster. To return to Blumenberg, screen-based media can steer the spectator's ethic response to maritime disaster. It has the potential to move the spectator from a state of 'passion' typified

by the desire to rescue, to a 'passion' steeped in that 'secret pleasure' which 'gloats' over the pain of another.

Ultimately, it is technology's ability to move humanity towards the perils of this latter response that is of particular concern to Tempest. In this closing section, Tempest unleashes the critique to which their narrative has always been building:

Welcome to the biggest crime that's ever been committed

You think you and I are different kinds?

You're caught up in specifics.

You and I apart are easier to limit.

The illusion's so complete

it's impossible to bring it into focus.

Cinematic stock footage:

people are locusts.

Uniformed men keep unleashing explosives. (69)

Alive to the foreshortened agency ('easier to limit') engineered by lens-based media ('illusion', 'focus'), Tempest's pairing 'cinematic stock footage' with 'people are locusts' is exact. In two lines, Tempest encapsulates the ideological hinge that Gilroy identifies: namely the fluctuating humanity visual media ascribes to vulnerable human countenances. But the precision of Tempest's language pushes this critique further. The deracinated re-purposing of this imagery ('stock footage') means that the tempestuous screams of human pain fall on

death ears. This is what Susan Sontag would call watching with ‘detachment’ – viewing with ‘a passivity that dulls feeling’ – and through which, returning to *Tempest*’s earlier depiction of drone warfare, the victim becomes ‘collateral damage’ (68).⁵⁷ Moreover, in conjoining this ‘stock footage’ with the phrase ‘people are locusts’, *Tempest* also illustrates how an image’s ‘detachment’ can be the handmaiden to an odious political agenda. It is a small step from the stark simile that views victims of war ‘as locusts’, to the dog-whistle ‘ethno-racial populism’ of, say, David Cameron’s contemporaneous remark that Mediterranean refugees represent “a swarm”.⁵⁸

Such xenophobic politics return us to neoliberalism’s biopolitical underpinnings – that is to say, the global maintenance of disposable life which serve, as Michel Foucault has taught us, a racist agenda:

The fact that the other dies does not mean simply that I live in the sense that his death guarantees my safety; the death of the other, the death of the bad race, of the inferior race (or degenerate, or the abnormal) is something that will make life in general healthier: healthier and purer.⁵⁹

Significantly, in *Let Them Eat Chaos*, *Tempest* demonstrates how biopower’s racist logic is not confined to the sphere of geopolitics alone. Far from being the preserve of ‘uniformed men’ – be they on the battlefield or in the cabinet room – *Tempest* illustrates how biopower is the very grammar of London’s digitally rendered neoliberalism:

Tunnel vision

tunnel vision

Work drinks. Heartbreak.

Can’t face the past, the past’s a dark place.

Can't sleep.

Can't wake.

Sitting in our boxes

Notching up our victories

as other people's losses. (70)

Boxed within physical and screen-based segregation, London has become an "unreal city" built upon the competitive tactics of self-survival (gentrification as creating social tectonics) rather than mutual ties of co-operation (gentrification as inspiring communal resistance). In little over 100 words, *Tempest* illustrates just how seamless a move it is from the military regime of racialised biopower to the segregated urbanism of "rehabilitation" – a term whose stigmas undergird the fact that gentrification often represents the construction of a *cordon sanitaire*.⁶⁰

Understood in this way, it is not difficult to read *Tempest*'s concluding storm as conjuring the 'secret pleasure' of which Blumenberg has written. However, *Tempest* is also alive to the ways in which the arrival of catastrophe can pivot in an opposite direction – encouraging the spectator to tear, in Gilroy's phrase, 'the veil of alterity' and 'reveal, unexpectedly, a needy, vulnerable human countenance beneath'. It is this impulse that also sees *Tempest* fill the storm's oesophagus with a visceral disgust:

It was our bombs that started this war.

It rages at a distance,

so we dismiss all its victims as strangers,

but they're parents and children
 made dogs by the danger.
 Existence is Futile so we don't engage.

It was our boats that sailed,
 killed, stole and made frail
 it was our boots that stamped
 it was our courts that jailed
 and it was our fucking banks that got bailed. (71)

In this vision 'our' military intervention is reframed as laying at the origins of planetary destruction. The image of the 'boat' meanwhile – a synecdoche for Europe's migrant crisis – is recast as a disaster which began in the act of colonial extraction. Tempest's performance is reaching a climax at this point, the staccato verbs and the pointed imagery shifts the tone towards an impassioned plea – a storm that screams not from fear but with a demand for change, a demand that we 'wake up / and love more' (72).

It is hard not to hear, amongst the deluge with which Tempest concludes their performance, their own attempt 'to salvage', in Gilroy's phrase, 'a different, and perhaps re-enchanted human from the rising waters'.⁶¹ Exactly how Tempest seeks to re-enchant the bored humanity of neoliberal London, becomes apparent in the closing depiction of those seven alienated Londoner's that drive the narrative. Here the storm becomes a conduit by which the inhabitants of these seven 'lonely homes' (63) achieve a moment of connection:

Seven doors to seven flats open at the same time
 and light the raining pavement.

Seven broken hearts
 Seven empty faces
 heading out of doors:
 Here's our seven perfect strangers.
 And they see each other. (64-65)

The similitude of these 'Seven' movements is not insignificant. As *Tempest* regularly reminds us, the entire performance occurs in something of a time-warp – a 'frozen moment' in which the clock is paused at 4.18am (63). Here, however, the homogenous, empty time of neoliberal London is on the move. As *Tempest* tells us, 'the breaking storm outside / animates the frozen moment' (63); the deluge pouring onto London awakens its citizens physically, temporally and emotionally:

As they walk towards each other
 dragging themselves like the wounded
 and band close, close,
 shocked and laughing
 soaked to the skin. (65)

That such a temporal shift should have an affective impact is central to a more enabling reading of *Tempest*'s conclusion. Indeed, the new temporal dynamics *Tempest* invokes are key to Thrift's own thoughts about how humanity might overcome the misanthropy of urban life. For Thrift, as for Gilroy, such misanthropy stems from a politico-planning agenda which magnifies fear and justifies, in turn, the construction of a hostile environment designed to filter out difference. Guided by such principles, urban space becomes a static entity; cities are stripped of diversity to be rendered 'predictable objects in which things turn up as they are

meant to'.⁶² Against the inertia of this monocultural urbanism, Thrift proposes a different affective register: an 'intense sociality' formed from 'gatherings' which 'may well conjure up all kinds of sometimes ill-formed hopes and wishes that can act to propel the future by intensifying the present'.⁶³ The 'gathering slowly, tentatively' of Tempest's seven strangers (65), represents one such moment of 'intense sociality'. Here, the city's frozen timescape is shattered by Tempest's intensification of the present moment under the storm clouds of London's future climate catastrophe.

As Thrift asserts, the affective energy created by such moments are 'ill-formed'. Certainly, Tempest consolidates the view that 'impersonal feelings' are the necessary product of such encounters. 'Soaked to the skin' by the rain's baptismal torrents, Tempest's seven Londoners find themselves:

tipping their necks back, unhunching their shoulders,
 opening their bodies up to
 the storm
 And their hair is flattened against their heads
 or puffed up madly outwards
 And their hands
 slip off their chins and cheeks
 as they clutch their faces
 open-mouthed (65)

Neither fully the 'secret pleasure' nor the vulnerable curiosity of Blumenberg's spectator, these Londoners gather in a premonition of the city's future demise. In an echo of Smith's 'impersonal feelings', their 'open-mouthed' response has the potential to signal in multiple

ways – as either those enabling or debilitating screams with which Tempest closes their performance.

The ambiguity of this gesture is vital. The inability to form a neat, value-laden outcome means Tempest’s performance resists the value extraction demanded by neoliberalism. In place of neatly defined outputs, Tempest offers the uncertainty of connection; the narrative’s seven Londoners lurch together with an affect that is difficult to read. ‘Shocked and laughing’, they merge as ‘witness to a shared thing’ (65), but they produce an affect whose ambiguity exists in excess of any tangible meaning. The ambivalence of this final act, and Tempest’s refusal to offer a definitive (utopian) alternative to our neoliberal moment, salvages their work from an ideological misreading. Rather than advocating for a nostalgic return to an empty time before our technologically mediated present, Tempest offers the uncertain pleasure of physical connection from *within* our immaterial landscape. As such Tempest suggests that hope can be drawn from those moments of physical contact that consolidate, in turn, the pessimism of our intractable technological future. Offering us a window into the weathered and spectral world of human connection *amidst* a scene of digital alienation – Tempest provides an uncertain view of corporeal connection that just might ‘redraw’, as Gilroy would say, ‘the familiar parameters of political solidarity’.⁶⁴

Notes

¹ Kae Tempest, *Let Them Eat Chaos* (London: Picador, 2016), p. 5. Subsequent references are given as in-text quotations.

² Sianne Ngai, *Ugly Feelings* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2005).

³ Kae Tempest, *On Connection* (London: Faber, 2020), p. 20.

⁴ Nigel Thrift, ‘But Malice Aforethought: Cities and the Natural History of Hatred’, *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers*, 30.2 (2005), p. 138.

⁵ Rachel Greenwald Smith, *Affect and American Literature in the Age of Neoliberalism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), p. 1-2.

⁶ Smith, p. 3.

⁷ Smith, p. 2.

⁸ Paul Gilroy, ‘Agonistic Belonging: The Banality of Good, the “Alt Right” and the Need for Sympathy’, *Open Cultural Studies*, 3 (2019), p. 2.

- ⁹ Tempest, *On Connection*, p. 4.
- ¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 4.
- ¹¹ Smith, p. 29.
- ¹² Mark Fisher, *K-Punk: The Collected and Unpublished Writings of Mark Fisher* (London: Repeater, 2018), p. 550. Subsequent references are given as in-text quotations.
- ¹³ Wendy Hui Kyong Chun, *Updating to Remain the Same* (London: MIT Press, 2017), p. 2.
- ¹⁴ Tempest, *On Connection*, p. 111.
- ¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 110.
- ¹⁶ Smith, p. 6.
- ¹⁷ Chun, *Updating*, p. 3.
- ¹⁸ Mark Fisher, *Ghosts of My Life Writings on Depression Hauntology and Lost Futures* (Hants: Zer0 Books, 2014), p. 187.
- ¹⁹ Ruth Glass, *London: Aspects of Change* (London: MacGibbon & Kee, 1964), p. xviii.
- ²⁰ See Emma Jackson and Tim Butler, 'Revisiting 'social tectonics': The middle classes and social mix in gentrifying neighbourhoods', *Urban Studies*, 52.13 (2014), pp. 2349-2365; Loretta Lees, 'Gentrification, Race, and Ethnicity: Towards a Global Research Agenda?', *City & Community*, 15.3 (2016), pp. 208-214.
- ²¹ Chester Hartman et al. *Displacement: How to Fight It* (Washington, DC: National Housing Law Project, 1982); Jacob L. Vigdor, 'Does gentrification harm the poor?', *Brookings-Wharton Papers on Urban Affairs* (2002), pp. 133-173.
- ²² Mark Turner, 'Derek Jarman in the Docklands: *The Last of England* and Thatcher's London', in John David Rhodes and Elena Gorfinkel (eds.), *Taking Place: Location and the Moving Image* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2011), pp. 77-98.
- ²³ Stephen Graham and Simon Marvin, *Splintering Urbanism: Networked Infrastructures, Technological Mobilities and the Urban Condition* (London: Routledge, 2001), p. 327.
- ²⁴ Jon Coaffee and David Murakami Wood, 'Security is Coming Home: Rethinking Scale and Constructing Resilience in the Global Urban Response to Terrorist Risk', *International Relations*, 20.4 (2006), p. 515.
- ²⁵ Gilroy, p. 2.
- ²⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 2.
- ²⁷ Smith, p. 30.
- ²⁸ Gilroy, p. 9.
- ²⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 6.
- ³⁰ Byung-Chul Han, *Psychopolitics: Neoliberalism and New Technologies of Power*, trans. Erik Butler (London: Verso, 2017), p. 15; Neferti X. M. Tadiar, 'Life-Times of Disposability within Global Neoliberalism', *Social Text*, 31.2, No. 115 (2013), pp.19-48.
- ³¹ Ben Anderson, 'Neoliberal Affects', *Progress in Human Geography*, 40.6 (2016), p. 749.
- ³² George Legg, *Northern Ireland and the Politics of Boredom: Conflict, Capital and Culture* (Manchester: MUP, 2019).
- ³³ Ben Anderson, 'Affect and critique: A Politics of Boredom', *Society and Space*, 39.2 (2021), pp. 210-212.
- ³⁴ Lauren Berlant, 'Cruel Optimism', *differences*, 17.3 (2006), p. 21.
- ³⁵ See Justine McConnell, "'We Are Still Mythical": Kae Tempest's Brand New Ancients', *Arion: A Journal of Humanities and the Classics*, 22.1 (2014), pp. 195-206.
- ³⁶ Kae Tempest, *Brand New Ancients* (London: Picador, 2013), p. 4.
- ³⁷ Lloyd Evans, 'Kae Tempest', *Spectator*, (8 October 2016) <https://www.spectator.co.uk/article/kate-tempest/> [accessed 11/05/23].
- ³⁸ Ann Cvetkovich, *Depression: A Public Feeling* (Durham, NC: Duke, 2012), p. 12.
- ³⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 15.
- ⁴⁰ Christoph Reinfandt, 'Brexit Music: Studies in Alienation by Sleaford Mods and Kae Tempest', *Hard Times*, 100 (2016), p. 70
- ⁴¹ Emily Spires, 'Kae Tempest: A "Brand New Homer" for a Creative Future', in Fiona Cox and Elena Theodorakopoulos (eds.), *Homer's Daughters: Women's Responses to Homer in the Twentieth Century and Beyond* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019), p. 108.
- ⁴² Byung-Chul Han, *In The Swarm: Digital Prospects*, trans. Erik Butler (London: MIT, 2017), p. 60.
- ⁴³ See David Harvey, *Rebel Cities: From the Right to the City to the Urban Revolution* (London: Verso, 2012), pp. 89-112.
- ⁴⁴ Mónica Montserrat Degen and Gillian Rose, *The New Urban Aesthetic: Digital Experiences of Urban Change* (London: Bloomsbury, 2022), p. 123.
- ⁴⁵ See 'Performance Live: Kae Tempest', 23:45 21/03/2021, BBC4, mins 34-35. <https://learningonscreen.ac.uk/ondemand/index.php/prog/0D8FB6AF?bcast=134106206> [accessed 24/11/23]

- ⁴⁶ T.S. Eliot, 'The Waste Land', *Selected Poems* (London: Faber, 1968) p. 59.
- ⁴⁷ Sina Schuhmaier, 'Singing the Nation: The Condition of Englishness in the Lyrics of PJ Harvey and Kae Tempest', in Sandra Dinter and Johanna Marquardt (eds.), *Nationalism and the Postcolonial* (Leiden: Brill Rodopi, 2021), p. 105.
- ⁴⁸ Sharon Zukin, *Naked City: The Death and Life of Authentic Urban Places* (Oxford: OUP, 2010), p. 4.
- ⁴⁹ Loretta Lees et al. *Gentrification* (London: Routledge, 2008), p. 9.
- ⁵⁰ See Neil Smith, 'Gentrification and the Rent Gap', *Annals of the Association of American Geographers*, 77.3 (1987), pp. 462-465.
- ⁵¹ Han, *Psychopolitics*, p. 10.
- ⁵² Achille Mbembe, 'Necropolitics', *Public Culture*, 1.15 (2003), p. 27.
- ⁵³ Hans Blumenberg, *Shipwreck with Spectator: Paradigm of a Metaphor for Existence*, trans. Steven Rendall (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1985), p. 35.
- ⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 35.
- ⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 36.
- ⁵⁶ Gilroy, p. 8.
- ⁵⁷ Susan Sontag, *Regarding the Pain of Others* (London, Penguin: 2004), p. 90-91.
- ⁵⁸ Paul Gilroy, "'Where every breeze speaks of courage and liberty": Offshore Humanism and Marine Xenology, or, Racism and the Problem of Critique at Sea Level', *Antipode* 50.1 (2015), p. 15.
- ⁵⁹ Michel Foucault, *Society Must be Defended*, trans. David Macey (London: Penguin, 2004), p. 255.
- ⁶⁰ See Brian Edwards, 'Deconstructing the City: London Docklands', *Urban Design*, 69 (January 1999), p. 22-24.
- ⁶¹ Gilroy, 'Offshore Humanism', p. 12.
- ⁶² Thrift, p. 136.
- ⁶³ *Ibid.*, p. 145.
- ⁶⁴ Gilroy, 'Offshore Humanism', p. 115.