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# PRECARITY AND FREEDOM

Insecure Lives and Unequal Freedom

In Modern Times

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## Abstract

The normalisation of insecure work in contemporary western economies has attracted increased academic attention, leading to a plethora of critiques on the conditions of insecure work and the economic and social structures which underlie them. In this thesis, I focus on the paradoxical way freedom both legitimises and contests precarious work. I explore how freedom and precarity act as tools of coercion and governing and conversely how freedom and precarity offer potentialities for resistance and provide opportunities to challenge neoliberal norms. Within the confines of this thesis I investigate Isabel Lorey's theory of precarisation as a governmental process, based on Foucault's genealogical problematising of dominant narratives designed to more easily govern populations. However, I also explore aspects of Judith Butler's account of the wider implications of a precariousness that is inherent in our existential being, reflecting a physical vulnerability that drives individuals together to form protection in order to survive. In a modern context, where our inter-dependability is often made invisible and our survivability is linked to our individual endeavour and measured by our income, precarity in the form of insecure work often has wider societal implications and is driven by an existential precariousness. These implications impact both our individual identity and social fractures which justify exploitation for some, in order to secure a more livable life for others. This rhetoric highlights the often contradictory narrative of freedom. The often resulting atomisation and disparity of precarity, also offers new and diverse opportunities to defy neoliberal subjectivities, reformulating a narrative of freedom outside the market. However, the very diverse and disparate nature of precarity does also provide a challenging context for a cohesive protest movement. Conversely precarious resistance suggests new multiple sites of resistance, again challenging a discourse of freedom that is built on homogeneity and class solidarity.

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## Introduction

Precarity references a particular notion of, and social contract around, work. Work that is secure; work that secures not only income and job but identity and lifestyle, linking capitalism and intimacy in an affective desire for security itself. Precarity marks the loss of this – the loss of something that only certain countries, at certain historical periods, and certain workers ever had in the first place.

(Allison, 2013, p. 7)

Anne Allison (2013) begins her book *Precarious Japan*, with a news item detailing the death of a fifty five year old man from starvation. Previously employed as a public official, disease had prevented him from working, and social support had suddenly been cut off. With no money and nowhere to turn, over the next three months, as he slowly starved to death, he kept a journal wondering what his country did for citizens like him, who struggling to live had no option but to die (pp 1-2). In highlighting this particular story, Allison emphasises the intersection of precarity, precariousness and precarisation. An existential precariousness that emphasises our physical vulnerability, a precarity resulting from neoliberal discourses that determine an allocation of resources based on an individual's productivity and precarisation as a process of governing that reduces choices and undermines freedom. As neoliberalism becomes ever more normalised, individual survivability is increasingly dependent on an ability to earn. However, inherent in neoliberalism is a structural inequality which heavily influences our capacity to earn and our social expectations of support, both political and economic. This precarity highlights not only economic insecurity but a wider affective impact on individual identity that demarcates society, marking some lives as more worthy of being livable.

Precarity has increasingly become a focus of concern as jobs and incomes have become progressively insecure, in those societies where secure employment was once seen as the norm. This transition away from regular secure employment to flexible uncertain hours and income, has been underscored by a neoliberal concept of freedom that presupposes an equality of choice in employment conditions and which valorises risk in a highly competitive Darwinian style marketised environment. For some contractors employed in the so called 'gig economy' precarious employment has delivered on the promise of greater flexibility and more choice in work and in life (McGovern, 2017; Kaufman, 2013), while others have experienced precarity as increasingly exploitative, limiting their options, their forms of resistance even at times their ability to survive (Butler, 2018; Groot, Van Ommen, Masters-Awatere, Tassell-Matamua, 2017; Lorey, 2015; Standing, 2016;). In an environment where an individual's productivity directly influences their ability to survive, the political and economic restructuring of employment relations towards greater insecurity in the name of freedom, would seem far less positive and more complex, than neoliberal enthusiasts of the 1980s would have had us believe. Thus, the wider impacts of social and emotional vulnerability linked to insecure work are often far more pervasive than a narrative of freedom in flexible work would suggest.

Neoliberalism as an international economic policy epitomised by deregulation, privatisation and the withdrawal of the state from many areas of social provision, became dominant during the 1980s. Endorsed by both the International Monetary Fund, the World Bank and the World Trade Organisation, neoliberalism became hegemonic as a mode of discourse (Harvey, 2007, p. 3). The neoliberal economic process this change entailed, was underpinned by a language which conflated individual freedom with reduced regulation of the market by the state and a roll back of social support, including a dismantling of worker's rights. Although neoliberalism was an economic principle, its transformative power lay in the extensive reshaping of social and political norms which effectively

disseminated the model of the market to all domains and activities. This resulted in reconfiguring human beings and their interactions, making neoliberalism the commonsense way many of us interpret, live in and understand the world (Brown, 2016; Harvey, 2007)).

F. A. Hayek who was a founding advocate for neoliberalism wrote in his book *The Road to Serfdom* originally published in 1944,

The planning for security which has such an insidious effect on liberty is that for security of a different kind. It is planning designed to protect individuals or groups against diminutions of their income, which although in no way deserved yet in a competitive society occurs daily, against losses imposing severe hardships having no moral justification yet inseparable from the competitive system. . . This kind of security or justice seems irreconcilable with freedom to choose one's employment. (1994, p. 135).

Thus, Hayek links secure income to a loss of freedom and a lack of moral accountability. In New Zealand, under neoliberal economic policies, the Employment Contracts Act 1991 (ECA) the Employment Relations Act 2000 (ERA) and the Employment Relations (Film Production Work) Amendment Bill 2010 (the Hobbit Law), were instrumental in restructuring employment relations, creating an environment in which employment contracts have become increasingly competitive and diverse. This has resulted in a neoliberal privileging of competition, risk taking and flexibility in employment positions, while ignoring asymmetric positions of power inherent in individuals negotiating with companies for employment <sup>1</sup>. In a 2013, New Zealand Council of Trade Unions (NZCTU) report, it was estimated that at least 30 percent of New Zealand workers at that time were employed in insecure work (NZCTU, 2013, p. 8). The NZCTU defines insecure work as

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<sup>1</sup> Although some professions negotiate their employment contracts collectively, for example teachers, precarious employment is still increasing even within these sectors, as outlined in a paper by the PPTA (2016) titled "Teachers in the precariat; fixed term contracts and the effects on establishing teachers" This highlights how even among collectively negotiated employment contracts, there are still individual differences

work where the variable and changing nature of a job suits the employer but not the worker. It is work where the burden of adjustment falls on the worker, and the inequality of power in the employment or contractual relationship disadvantages the person doing the work. (2016, p. 2).

This is where this thesis began, with a recognition of the normalisation of insecure or precarious work, which was framed as an expression of freedom within a neoliberal ideology, despite an acknowledgement of the increasingly exploitable position workers were placed in.

However, the empirical nature of insecure work seems to be part of a larger dynamic, one in which the complex interaction of freedom and precarity both contests and legitimises insecurity. Precarity itself is often defined as social, political *and* economic structures which effectively demarcate individuals and segments of the population as vulnerable, through an unequal access to those resources (Butler, 2004, 2010, 2016; Lorey, 2015; Millar, 2016; Nielson & Rossiter 2005, 2008). This, therefore, expands the concept of precarious work and problematises previously invisible constructs of power, which effectively entrench and legitimise precarity in already vulnerable populations. This is made obvious when we recognise the highly gendered ratio of precarious work (Betti, 2016, 2018; Vosko, 2000) or the discursive positioning of migrant labour as cheap and disposable (Jorgensen, 2015; Lorey, 2015; McCormack & Salmenniemi, 2016; Nielson & Rossiter, 2008; Standing, 2017). Another aspect of precarity is the precariousness of embodied beings, the inherent vulnerability of existing in a physical body. Our commonplace reaction against this existential precariousness, is to form groups finding security in others, highlighting our intrinsic inter-dependability, despite a neoliberal privileging of the individual as central to our market driven society.

Precarity, precariousness and precarisation are often defined as separate concepts, nevertheless they naturally overlap and intersect with one another. Precarity as a term often designates a definition, while also commonly being used to refer to an overarching concept that covers all three definitions. Lorey (2015) defines the three terms separately as: precariousness, which she recognises as being based on Judith Butler's definition as "the socio-ontological dimension of lives and bodies" (p. 11), precarity as "a category of order, which designates the effects of different political, social and legal compensations of a general precariousness" (p. 12) and governmental precarisation as an art of governing that "means not only a destabilisation through employment, but also destabilisation of the conduct of life and thus of bodies and modes of subjectification" (p. 13). These definitions are discussed in more detail in my literature review, however, it is important to note that Lorey argues, that precarisation as an instrument of governing is built on an idea of freedom, that subjugates the individual to economic exploitation and insecurity. At the same time, as the individual is influenced and cajoled into accepting and complying with neoliberal norms, there remains at the site of subjugation, the potential for refusal which in itself represents freedom. Thus, freedom can be understood as both legitimising and contesting precarity. While questions remain not only over how much potential exists to contest precarity, but also how precarious resistance given its diverse and disparate characteristics would be possible, the ambivalent nature of freedom in precarity itself remains often under theorised.

This is further highlighted in my literature review, where theorists implicitly discuss precarity as freedom limiting. In this respect Isabel Lorey in her book *State of Insecurity, Government of the precarious* (2015), which places freedom as a central theme in her examination of precarity, is unusual. As such her thesis of precarisation as a governmental narrative is one of the more original theories to explore the connections between precarity, freedom and domination. Her analysis is built on Michel Foucault's biopolitics, which itself

explores the association between freedom as empowerment and conversely subjugation within a neoliberal context. As such this thesis explores not just the ways in which precarity dominates and limits people's freedom, but also how precarity can be a source of resistance, challenging neoliberal narratives and constructing a new understanding of freedom based on our inter-relationality and inter-dependability.

While Lorey remains a primary focus of my thesis, the literature review also emphasises the diversity of precarious research, with theorists debating over who is precarious? How to define precarity? Whether precarity is the exception or the norm? or can precarious workers form a class? That precarity is unequally distributed and intersects along race and gendered lines is commonly accepted, however, whether precarity crosses socio-economic boundaries, is an analytical concept, a class, a social movement, an empirical category, an existential reality, a process of governing, or whether it has aspects of all of the above, remains much contested.

While my literature review discusses the broader academic landscape of precarity, my conceptual framework focuses predominately on Foucault's thesis on biopolitics which forms the foundation for Lorey's theory of precarisation. As Lorey and Foucault situate freedom as a central tenet to their exploration of liberal governance, their framework provides valuable tools to explore the paradoxical relationship of freedom and precarity. Lorey's theory of precarisation is heavily influenced by Foucault's biopolitics, although she does weave in other theorists to develop an original and comprehensive theory, her exploration of precarity is primarily Foucauldian. Foucault's biopolitics and governmentality, offers a genealogical approach to problematising neoliberalism's reconstruction of freedom as based in the market, while highlighting the constitutive nature of neoliberal norms both as they are espoused by capital and the state. He also explores how these norms are formed and embedded at the capillaries of society, in our day to day

actions with one another. Lorey than updates Foucault's theories applying them to a contemporary setting by analysing precarity.

Using Lorey and Foucault as a framework, chapter one further unpacks Lorey's theory of precarisation as a governmental process. Lorey looks at precarisation at a population level and at an individual level, exposing how even those decisions supposedly freely made are often enclosed by neoliberal disciplinary norms privileging certain behaviours as successful and desirable. Lorey also problematises a discourse of infection at a population level, arguing that using precarity as a threat motif both by stressing the invasion of cheap precarious labour, and the threat of more jobs becoming insecure, encourages compliance with neoliberal ideals. At the centre of Lorey's thesis is an interrogation of freedom versus an indoctrination of neoliberal norms. This is signified in her analysis of self-precarisation as an act which represents neoliberal exploitation rather than the freedom to which it is usually ascribed.

Chapter two explores the changing dynamic of a Fordist narrative of freedom commonly associated with security, co-existing alongside a neoliberal discourse of freedom linked to insecurity. By problematising a neoliberal narrative of freedom, Lorey emphasises the constructive nature of a definition of freedom that is inherently inter-relational, even as it idealises the individual. Both Lorey and Butler argue for a new definition of freedom which expands beyond the security/insecurity paradigm. Further they contend that an autonomous freedom built on performativity and inter-relationality provides a platform which contests the unequal allocation of precarity. In order to challenge neoliberal freedom, they both dissect and reconstruct Hannah Arendt's republican freedom in her 1961 essay "What is Freedom". However though at times both Butler and Lorey agree, the different focus they bring to Arendt's essay adds complexity and richness to fundamental questions on communal freedom and individual autonomy in precarity.

Following on from chapter two, chapter three explores resistance to precarity as an expression of freedom. By exploring different approaches and conceptions of precarious resistance this chapter I highlight the diversity and disparity of precarity. Guy Standing's new dangerous class, Isabel Lorey's discussion of care strikes and Judith Butler's politics of vulnerability, offer distinct and often contesting foundations for resistance. In particular the positioning of migrants within precarious resistance, as either the sullen silent problem, or the revolutionary force that ultimately challenges structures of power that justify precarity, exposes differing normative assumptions that often frame precarious resistance. In acknowledging precarious resistance as forms of protest that take flight from institutions and from formal rules of politics, by embracing a composition of singularities encompassing an unstable, networked patchwork loving multiplicity (Han, 2018, p. 337) precarity as a protest movement can challenge conventional interpretations. Both Lorey and Butler, argue that vulnerability does not conflate with a lack of autonomy. In this way they are breaking open the security/insecurity dynamic linked to freedom, arguing instead that freedom exists even in vulnerability. However, this all encompassing definition of freedom does risk losing a cohesive focus to challenge systemic exploitation that induces precarity.

Freedom and precarity are then understood as separate but inextricably intertwined. Although some theorists may situate them as oppositional ( Bourdieu, 1992; Castel, 2016; Standing, 2016), others understand the relationship as more complex, (Butler, 2016; Lorey, 2015), seeking an idea of freedom that is not subject to precarity, but is based on our interdependency and inter-relationality. In this way precarity itself does not define people's freedom or undermine their autonomy. Instead freedom becomes a platform which can challenge the legitimacy of precarity, which is based on an understanding of an individual as a commodified entrepreneurial economic unit. Rather our inherent precariousness has

the potential to redefine freedom as an acknowledgement of our security being based on our inter-dependability.

## Literature Review

Precarity is not a recent phenomenon, but it has recently become a contested field of academic debate. This has resulted in an increase in literature and academic focus on precarity, precariousness, precarisation and the precariat. Within this burgeoning analysis of precarity, the role of freedom is often under analysed. Typically, when examining precarity, a degrading sense of freedom is implied. However, freedom often plays an ambivalent role in the legitimising of precarity *and* the consequent resistance to precarity. Although theorists may argue that freedom is in the choices people make such as choosing precarious work or not (Friedman, 2002; Hayek, 1994), this simply draws attention to how much choice precarious workers actually have, or whether social, economic and political structures act to limit individuals choices, even while upholding a narrative of freedom. In this review, I explore the literature which categorises different definitions of precarity, precariousness, the precariat and precarisation and how those definitions can frame freedom and resistance differently. Although I focus on freedom which has a rich philosophical history of academic debate, my attention is specifically on how freedom both contests and/or legitimises precarity. As such my focus is primarily on precarity and freedom, within a governmentality context, of which Isabell Lorey is a fundamental theorist.

### **Precarity, Precariousness, Precarisation and the Precariat.**

The literature on precarity often separates this concept into three main strands of theory, precarity, precariousness and precarisation (Butler, 2006, 2010, 2011; Ettliger, 2007;

Lorey, 2009, 2010, 2015; Masquelier, 2018; Millar, 2017; Moisander, 2018; Neilson & Rossiter, 2005, 2008; among others). Precarity often appears to be used both as an overarching concept as well as a specific strand of theory. In this way precarity encompasses precarisation and precariousness and is the foundation for the precariat, while also being used to specifically highlight the unequal distribution of resources leading to insecure employment and emotional and mental vulnerability (Ettlinger 2007; Millar, 2017). This may be a result of the way precarity developed as a conceptual framework within contemporary academia (Betti, 2018). Precarity has a long history of political and socio-economic debates, with Betti 2018 drawing attention to precarity as an issue in ancient Greece and later with Karl Marx's analysis of the lumpenproletariat. However, many theorists recognise that contemporary debates around precarity began with Pierre Bourdieu's book *Acts of Resistance*, (1998), which links precarity to a rise in insecure employment, resulting from neoliberal reforms (Betti, 2018; Brown, 2015; Groot, et al, 2017; Lorey 2015; Millar, 2017). This influenced an initial framework and definition of precarity as primarily a labour condition. As such academic debate in this area has mostly been driven by analysing neoliberal restructuring of work practices, resulting from a changing power dynamic between capital and labour in Western economies. Arne Kalleberg in "Precarious Work, Insecure Workers: Employment Relations in 'Transition'" (2009) connects insecure work to wider societal insecurities in a way that typifies this understanding:

Precarious work has far-reaching consequences . . . Creating insecurity for many people, it has pervasive consequences not only for the nature of work, workplaces, and people's work experiences, but also for many nonwork individual (e.g., stress, education), social (e.g., family, community), and political (e.g., stability, democratization) outcomes. (p. 2).

Consequently, many theorists have built on and expanded this definition, linking insecure work to wider societal insecurities (Boltanski & Chiapello, 2007; Castel, 2002 & 2016; De Poutier, 2011; Lorey, 2015; Standing, 2017).

Many theorists (Butler, 2018; Castel, 2002, 2016; Lorey, 2015; Jorgensen, 2015; Han, 2018, Neilson & Rossiter, 2008; Standing, 2016) acknowledge that the first EuroMayDay protest of precarious working conditions held in 2001, brought precarity in Europe to a wider audience. This ultimately reinforced the connection between precarity and insecure work, thus bringing the concept into a social and political realm. Guy Standing in his book *The Precariat; The New Dangerous Class* first published in 2011, begins by describing the rising consciousness and collective action of people across all aspects of life who share this experience of insecure work personified, he believes, by the EuroMayDay protests. Standing argues that precarious work conditions have created a distinctive socio-economic class, that is defined by a lack of work based identity and seven other forms of labour insecurity, including employment security, skill reproduction security and representation security (p. 12)<sup>2</sup>. For Standing, precarious work is one of the defining features of a new class in the making, demarcated by the lack of access to social, political and economic resources which leads to a wider societal insecurity and discontent. He characterises affected individuals as denizens based on the degradation of their rights as citizens (p. 15). Standing defines the precariat as “a class in the making, if not yet a class for itself in the Marxist sense of that term” (2017, p. 8). He argues that the precariat is at war with itself, and not yet able to articulate a collective identity or put forward a political programme. Standing’s definition of the precariat has attracted considerable debate (Munck, 2013; Nielson & Rossiter, 2005; Wright, 2015) which will be covered in more depth later in this literature review.

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<sup>2</sup> I discuss this in more detail in chapter three.

In contrast to Bourdieu and Standing's definitions, Butler offers a definition of precariousness that is based on an inherent vulnerability that exists in all human beings. In *Precarious Life: The Powers of Mourning and Violence* (2004), Butler defines precariousness as "a common human vulnerability, one that emerges with life itself" (p. 31). Although Butler's definition highlights the commonality of precariousness, extending it to encompass everyone, she differentiates an existential precariousness with a concept of precarity that is distributed unequally across society. Precarity, Butler argues is a "politically induced condition in which certain populations suffer from failing social and economic networks of support more than others and become differentially exposed to injury violence and death" (2018. p. 33). Butler's definition and analysis of precarity and precariousness as two distinct but overlapping concepts has opened up academic discourses on precarity by linking it to a wider ontological sense of vulnerability (Allison, 2012; Lorey, 2015; Millar, 2017; Mole, 2010).

Isabel Lorey in *State of Insecurity: Government of the precarious* (2015), defines the precarious as having three dimensions; precariousness, precarity and precarisation (p. 110). Precariousness, Lorey argues, is a term for the socio-ontological dimension of life and of bodies. In this definition she references Butler's thesis pointing out that precariousness is relational and therefore shared with other lives. The second dimension which she labels precarity and defines as "a category of order, which designates the effects of different political, social and legal compensations of a general precariousness" (p. 12). In precarity Lorey perceives a hierarchisation in the unequal distribution of the relations of power. In this dimension Lorey recognises a process of othering to legitimise insecure lives and a lack of power and agency for those in this position. The third and final dimension of the precarious Lorey identifies as governmental precarisation which she designates as a form of social regulation. In governmental precarisation, Lorey seeks to problematise "the complex interactions between an instrument of governing and the conditions of economic

exploitation” (p. 13). In this third category, Lorey explores destabilisation through employment and conducts of life affecting bodies and modes of subjectivation. As a governmental narrative and/or action, precarisation is a process of destabilising others to secure an increasingly diminishing centre. All three dimensions of the precarious co-exist together with different degrees of influence throughout history, thereby influencing economic, social and political relations. Lorey’s definition of precarity encompasses a labourist concept of the empirical nature of precarity and a philosophical ontological aspect, while incorporating the structural normalisation of precarity under neoliberalism.

## Freedom and Precarity

While freedom is often under theorised in precarious literature, neoliberal freedom, that is a freedom associated with the market, is frequently related with the underpinnings of precarity (Berlant, 2011; Brown, 2015; Castel, 2002, 2016; De Poutier, 2011; Lorey, 2009, 2010, 2011, 2015; Standing, 2015). As such this definition of freedom reflects a change in international economic, social and political narratives from the 1980s on (Chang, 2014; Foucault, 2007, 2008; Harvey, 2007). Friedman (2002) and Hayek (1994) as foundational members of the Mont Pelerin Society, a group of neoliberal supporters, define freedom as being free from state regulation, conflating personal freedom with an unregulated free market. Friedman (2002) states,

Political freedom means the absence of coercion of a man [sic] by his fellow men [sic]. The fundamental threat to freedom is power to coerce, be it in the hands of a monarch, a dictator, an oligarchy, or a momentary majority. . . By removing the organisation of economic activity from the control of political authority, the market eliminates this source of political authority, the market eliminates this source of coercive power. (p. 15).

Foucault's (1982, 2007, 2008) analysis on biopolitics and governmentality then further builds on how a normative definition of individual freedom exercised in the market fundamentally shifted hegemonic discourses towards individualised ideals of citizens as entrepreneurial units, that has consequently extended to all aspects of life. Freedom is central to Foucault's thesis on neoliberalism as a governing tool to control and manipulate populations. As such, theorists have further developed Foucault's theories to challenge a contradictory definition of freedom that is linked increasingly to subjectification and control (Brown 2015; Burchell, Gordon, & Miller, 1991; Dean, 2010; Read, 2009; Rose, 1999; Lemke, 2011). While Foucault himself never directly addresses precarity as a biopolitical tool for governing<sup>3</sup>, several precarity theorists have used his thesis as a framework for highlighting the exploitative nature of precarity (Jorgensen, 2015; Lorey, 2009, 2010, 2011, 2015; McCormack & Salmenniemi, 2016; Masquelier, 2018; Moisander, Eraranta & Grob, 2018). Within this group Lorey<sup>4</sup> exclusively develops Foucault's theory of biopolitics to problematise the use of precarity as a governmental process for managing the population. In doing this, she addresses the complex use of freedom to frame subjectification's towards neoliberal identities *and* the basis of that subjectification also being the site for resistance, as an articulation of freedom. While Lorey's theory of precarisation is relatively unique, her work is becoming more widely acknowledged (Butler, 2010, 2018; Jorgensen, 2015; Millar, 2017)

While freedom is commonly recognised within the literature on precarity, the more complex issues around the coercion and domination of the market on individual identity, particularly in choosing self-precarisation and how that undermines or reinforces freedom,

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<sup>3</sup> Michel Foucault passed away in June 1984, as such his theories on biopolitics were still in the formative stages. Current literature on Foucault's biopolitics are based predominately on a series of lectures he gave at the College Du France, when neoliberalism was still at the early stages of implementation.

<sup>4</sup> I discuss Foucault's Biopolitics and Lorey's theory of precarisation more extensively in the conceptual framework and Chapter one.

are often overlooked. The discursive nature of a definition of freedom coupled with Foucault's genealogical account of the development of liberal freedom, pave the way for an analysis of how a different concept of freedom could contest precarity. While the literature on freedom is vast, and easily exceeds the scope this thesis, I have sought to focus on the specific dynamics of freedom within precarity. As such the larger philosophical debates on freedom are not discussed. However, as an opposing narrative of freedom as articulated by Hannah Arendt in her essay *What is Freedom?* (1961) is debated.

## The Politics of Precarity

Pierre Bourdieu's (1998) *Acts of Resistance: Against the New Myths of Our Time*, Guy Standing (2017) *The Precariat: A Dangerous New Class* and Judith Butler's *Precarious Life: The Powers of Mourning and Violence* (2006) are all key texts that are consistently referenced by other theorists writing on precarity (Allison, 2012; Berlant, 2011; Ettliger, 2007; Lorey, 2015; Millar, 2017; Munck, 2013; Neilson & Rossiter, 2005; Trott, 2013). Not only do these key texts define precarity differently, they differ over who is precarious, why they are precarious and what the solutions should be (Millar, 2017). There is, however, an increasing number of scholars who have sought to bridge the divide between an understanding of precarity as a labour condition and as an ontological experience. These academics ground their theories in specific labour conditions and political-economic structures, while also considering how these conditions affect individual's subjectivity, lived experience and psychological interiority (Allison, 2012; Berlant, 2011; Lorey, 2015).

Pierre Bourdieu's speech on precarity is widely accepted as recognising the current moment of precarity. In his speech Bourdieu critiques the rise of temporary, part-time and casualised work in France, linking the term precarity with insecure labour conditions. The EuroMayDay protests in the early 2000's, although initially protesting against neoliberalism

and globalisation, mobilised around the identity of the *precariato* as a consequence of neoliberal and global policies (Millar, 2017), thereby lending a political aspect to analysis on precarity (Castel, 2003, 2016; Kalleberg, 2011; Lorey 2015; Sario, 2007; Standing, 2017). This literature focusses primarily on the changing relationship between capital and labour often by conceptualising power dynamics between the two. Precarious workers are either universalised as a homogenous group (Castel, 2002, 2016; Kalleberg, 2011) or theorists focus on specific precarious groups i.e. Betti (2016) and Vosko (2000,) both approach precarity through a feminist lens, while Connor (2015), examines the effect of the Hobbitt law on film employees in Aotearoa New Zealand and Pothe et al (2010), explores immigrant workers in Spain. The current climate of an increasing normalisation of insecure work is often contrasted with the previous Fordist era of secure employment, frequently with a nostalgic view. Freedom is often conflated with secure employment, with precarity associated with a degradation in freedom and citizenship rights. The exceptions to this are academics exploring gendered and/or immigration and precarity, where it is increasingly acknowledged that these groups were over-represented in precarious employment under Fordist conditions. Solutions are predominantly argued as a new social contract with universalised security.

Standing's *The Precariat: A New Dangerous Class* also follows Bourdieu's analysis of capital versus labour power relations, however, he does take the argument in a slightly different direction by conceptualising a new class. In this way Standing and other theorists (Munck, 2013; Neilson & Rossiter, 2005) bring precarity into a socio-economic category arguably identifying a new underclass, which lacks not only insecure work but social and political rights and connections. Although Standing creates a class (the precariat) that includes different groups of people such as migrants, university graduates and creative workers, reflecting a more nuanced understanding of who is precarious, his argument is often androcentric, still very much based on Fordist notions of security and freedom built

around a male breadwinner. He promotes a call to action by the precariat towards capital demanding a new compact with capital offering the threat of social dissolution if, what he terms, a revolutionary precariat's demands are not met. Both Standing and Bourdieu's arguments acknowledge the effects of structural changes, grounding their debate in empirical contexts which trace specific policy and economic changes, while examining the wider impacts of globalisation on the power dynamics between labour and capital. Ultimately these neoliberal changes have led to a loss of worker's rights, a degradation of social safety nets and an overall stagnation of wages for the middle and lower class (Bourdieu, 1998; Castel, 2002; Munck, 2013; Moisander, et al, 2018; Munck, 2013; Standing, 2009, 2017).

This literature often downplays or ignores precarious labour conditions that existed in the Fordist era (Betti, 2016, 2018; Lorey, 2015; Millar, 2017) instead promoting a perception of universalised security under Fordism. Theorists who challenge this understanding, often portray a Fordist era that offered security to a core group of citizens, acquired at the cost of insecurity for others, mostly marginalised groups (Betti, 2018; Lorey, 2015; May, 1982). This interpretation also reflects a very Western view of precarity, ignoring that precarity has always been the norm for most of the non-Western world (Munck, 2013; Neilson et al. 2008). This literature generally understands the Fordist era from 1940s-1980s as the new normal, which neoliberal policies have disrupted, rather than contrasting literature (Munck, 2013; Neilson & Rossiter, 2008) which often views the Fordist era as unusually secure and outside the norms of a wider history of precarious work. Munck (2013) and Wright (2015) contest Standing's Marxist definition of the precariat being a class in the making (Standing, 2017, p. 8). They point out that the precariat does not alter the relations of production in contemporary capitalism, nor are its material interests oppositional to those of the working class, therefore it does not fill the requirements necessary to exist as a class. Rather, as Wright explains, they regard it as "a

rapidly growing segment of the working class and the bearer of the sharpest grievances against capitalism” (Wright, 2015, p. 173). Hardt & Negri (2011) and Munck (2013) further this conception by maintaining a global working class, as a class that has and will continue to remake itself. Thus reflecting in contemporary global conditions, a working class that is increasingly complex and multitudinal, contrasting with Standing’s Eurocentric precariat and Fordist constructions of the working class. Others contest Standing’s inclusion and exclusion of members of the precariat, (Lorey, 2015; Rossiter, 2005; Wright, 2015) and the revolutionary nature of the precariat (Han, 2018; Munck, 2013; Rossiter et al, 2005, 2008; Jorgensen, 2015). As this literature generally links freedom with secure work and wider citizenship rights, the solution to precarity is presented as a reassertion of freedom through class solidarity and protest and updating the industrial age compact between capital and the workers. However, as freedom is not a primary focus, issues such as self-precarisation as an example of freedom or exploitation are deftly side-stepped.

Judith Butler’s book *Precarious Life: The Powers of Mourning and Violence* (2004) is an influential text which examines precariousness in a more philosophical context. Her definition of precariousness is quoted and acknowledged by both strands of thought, (precarity and precariousness), although her exploration of precariousness is within a much broader context and as something distinct and separate from precarity. As such Butler looks at precariousness as an existential human vulnerability, something that is fundamental to all human existence and something that we all share. From this perspective she explores the different ways in which individuals act to secure life, arguing that our very interdependability and relationality to one another is the foundation for our freedom. In this way Butler is highlighting the unequal and unethical distribution of resources needed to sustain the life of some, at the expense of others. Butler’s analysis is often grounded in the physicality of human bodies, connecting our universal physical vulnerability and our necessary survival, arguing that this is dependent on others. This analysis has opened up

the academic framework for precarity, by relating physical vulnerability to emotional and mental insecurity, resulting in an increasing use of precarity being used as a synonym for vulnerability. Millar (2017) argues that this expanding use of the term precarity may degrade its analytical value as a framework for understanding specific labour conditions as it is increasingly used to describe any vulnerability. Butler herself uses precariousness as a basis to understand America's response to 9/11 and ongoing US policies designed to legitimise war, thereby extending precarity beyond labour conditions to highlight broader power dynamics which designate some lives as more livable. Butler does state that "Lives are supported and maintained differently, and there are radically different ways in which human physical vulnerability is distributed across the globe" (Butler, 2004. p. 32) acknowledging the unequal distribution of precarity as a physical vulnerability. Gilson (2013), however argues that Butler relies on equality as an ethical ideal to challenge the legitimacy of precarity, thereby relying on normative liberal assumptions.

Increasingly there are theorists who are exploring both precarity as insecure work and an unequal distribution of security across society, as well as precariousness as an ontological reality that commonly forms bonds of interdependence across all levels of society (Allison, 2011; Berlant, 2011; Lorey, 2015; Mole, 2010; Neilson & Rossiter, 2008). Millar (2017) states that this group of theorists are particularly useful in their analysis because they look at precarity both as a socio-economic condition and an ontological experience, thereby linking political economy with questions of culture, subjectivity and experience. Each of these authors discusses precarity in slightly different ways, Allison (2011,) looks at how youth unemployment creates everyday temporalities disrupting long term plans, Berlant (2011), discusses how precarious work degrades normative middle-class expectations of the good life, Mole (2010), examines how the loss of labour protections generates psychic and affective states of anxiety and Lorey (2015), looks at precarisation as a governmental rationality designed to secure citizens compliance. Within this framework,

Lorey explores themes of freedom, sovereignty and gender. Ultimately Lorey's understanding of precarity as a technique of governing which normalises insecurity and induces individuals to be responsible for their own precariousness, inversely provides sites for resistance and change precisely because the self is empowered.

While the literature on precarity is diverse and often contested, there are some areas of accord. These are mostly concerning the different definitions of precariousness, precarity and precarisation. Although insecure work was the initial foundation for understanding precarity, further analysis by academics has resulted in an interpretation of precarity that includes insecure work but also extends beyond to acknowledge the wider implications of unequal access to the resources required to make a life livable and the inherent precariousness of life. While this widens the analytical framework for precarity, it allows for further analysis and research into affective social and cultural demarcations which legitimise capitalist exploitation of racial and gendered segments of the population. Often freedom is implicitly examined within this literature, however a more in-depth investigation of how a narrative of freedom acts conversely to legitimise precarity while also contesting it, is lacking.

## Conceptual Framework

My conceptual framework examines Michel Foucault's biopolitics and governmentality theory. His theories form the basis of Isabell Lorey's concept of precarisation and are often implicit in her examination of freedom and power in precarity. Both Lorey and Foucault offer a complex understanding of the ambivalent nature of freedom that underlies both resistance and domination to precarity and is the foundation for this thesis. While Foucault never directly addresses precarity, his analysis of the technologies of governance seem to naturally offer a distinctive understanding of the present precarious moment. It is this distinctive perspective that Lorey further updates and elaborates.

In a modern environment Foucault's analysis of power dynamics provides a framework to comprehend how technologies of governance use freedom and precarity as tools of coercion. Additionally, his analysis can be used to explore precarity and freedom as an impetus for resistance to neoliberal market narratives. Foucault's work is extensive and covers many areas, however, in this conceptual framework I will concentrate on a few key ideas relevant to the focus of this thesis. In particular, Foucault's exploration of freedom as crucial to compel specific actions as part of a hegemonic narrative and paradoxically as a potential site to ultimately challenge those same dominant discourses. Also, the creation of disciplinary norms, which act as modes of subjectification, subjecting individuals to preconceived ideals of acceptable and desirable conduct. Furthermore, Foucault explores the association between the individual body as property and the population as a larger body which needs administering. As Foucault largely highlights the coercive and controlling nature of biopolitical governance, the acknowledgement of the freedom of the individual to resist those narratives can seem somewhat theoretical. While

Foucault focusses on the dominant narrative of neoliberalism and the power of that narrative to form individual identities, he does tend to ignore other narratives that co-exist in social and political spaces and which provide other opportunities for modulating individual identity.

Michel Foucault's analysis of power in modern liberal societies represented a break from traditional political investigations into power. Customarily the model of political power was focussed on the state as a centralised body, imagining human beings as subjects to that power. Individuals were often considered autonomous and self-possessed, political subjects of right, will and agency (Rose, 1999). In this context freedom was often defined in negative terms, as the absence of coercion or domination. Foucault challenged these ideas arguing that liberal forms of governance were based on the influencing and coercing of individuals to legitimise specific actions and behaviours (Dean, 2013; Foucault, 1982, 2007, 2008; Lemke, 2011; Rose, 1999). He maintained that power was not centralised in the state, but that governance existed both at the macro and micro levels of society. Dean (2013) reinforces this point when he states, "Foucault's analysis of power is not placed on the conventional terrain of inequality, legitimacy and social transformation, but on identity, technique and what we will call the government of self and other" (p. 43). Thus, Foucault's biopolitics analyses technologies of the self and techniques of domination in late capitalism, through technologies of regulation, surveillance and normalisation.

Foucault identified two main actions of the state, which reflected a historical shift in governing. One he termed biopolitics, which represented a changing focus of governance and the other he called governmental rationalities or governmentality. He also identified two specific focuses for governing, firstly at the individual level of physical bodies, and secondly at a collectivised body of the population.

Foucault's biopolitics reflected an understanding of life as the focus of politics. Lemke (2011) states "biopolitics stands for the constellation in which modern humans and natural sciences and the normative concepts that emerge from them, structure political action and determine its goals" (p. 33). Foucault's genealogical style of analysis indicated how over time, a single sovereign ruling a population for his/her own enrichment had metamorphosed into a liberal government. This liberal government arguably governed the population for the ultimate betterment and enrichment of the population<sup>5</sup>. Foucault spends a great deal of time tracing the origins of biopolitics in order to understand how power in a liberal society is dispersed. He recognised in pastoral power, or the power of the church, a discursive structure that convinced and cajoled their congregations into living a better life for their own salvation. It was this procedure of governing that the church had successfully adopted that Foucault recognised in an emerging liberal state. This procedure for organising a population, consisted of totalising the overall ambition of the group towards a preconceived ideal of a perfect member of the congregation. This collective goal then depended on each individual complying and striving towards that ideal. The ultimate overall success of the group was then dependant on the individual actions of each member within that group. Foucault understood the power inherent in collective peer pressure to comply, imposed on individuals within the group. He also recognised power that was embedded in a hierarchical social system, with knowledge supposedly secured at the echelons of the congregation, limited to those who were qualified to interpret Gods will. The transfer of this procedure to a liberal government meant that power was both centralised and dispersed, with populations being viewed as both totalising and

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<sup>5</sup> Foucault was highlighting here a change in the focus and legitimacy of governing away from a single monarch, instead to a government of the people for the people. Whether this actually became the case is very much disputed and discussed among academics. However, Foucault was not claiming that this genealogical change categorically happened, only that a previously dominant narrative in which the needs of a single sovereign were ascendant had moved to a narrative in which governmental action was legitimised based on the premise that it was representing the national needs.

individualised. The creation of an ideal member of the congregation, a prescribed norm of behaviour, and the exclusion of those who failed to measure up, coupled with the denial of access to a promised salvation, emphasise the coercive subjective nature of this procedure of governance.

Pastoral power formed the basis for a process of liberal governing and reflected the new biopolitical form of administration, which has legitimised neoliberal discourses. Like pastoral power, neoliberalism offers a form of redemption, however that redemption is based in this world, rather than the next. Foucault writes that “health, wellbeing security and protection become forms of salvation” (Foucault, 1982, p. 784) stressing how these things came to reflect the success of neoliberal subjects. This new form of rule by the state, Foucault saw as an extension of pastoral power, power which he understood to construct its own form of truth, coextensive and continuous with life (Foucault, 1982). As biopolitics acts to individualise each member of the population, while also viewing the populace as a single organic body, the state can then act with a sense of legitimacy in demarcating sections of the population to securitise, while simultaneously isolating and precaritising segments of that same population which are characterised as outside preconceived norms.

If biopolitics represents the focus on living bodies and the processes of life as political legitimacy, then governmentality represents the assemblages of knowledge designed to coerce and convince individuals to comply with accepted norms (Foucault, 2004). Governmentalities or governmental rationalities are the narratives/discourses that represent distinctive forms of knowledge, espoused by experts, which under a liberal government has resulted in a privileging of political economy and the market as a site for truth and freedom. By analysing the changing characteristics and definition of norms, Foucault problematised the constructed nature of accepted patterns of behaviour, that at

each period in time, have generally become accepted as natural. Foucault termed this the “operation of disciplinary normalisation” (Foucault, 2004, p. 57). This process was based on the categorisation, data collection and focus on the improvement of the life expectancy and productivity of the population. This accumulation of knowledge and expert analysis created models of conduct which differentiated between behaviours that were normal and/or desirable and those that were considered abnormal and/or undesirable.

Disciplinary organisation then involved governmental rationalities designed to influence and convince individuals to comply with these prescribed norms for their own ultimate good. However, Foucault recognised that power was not just imposed from above but also productive at an individual level, resulting in an internalisation of norms which are then re-enacted on others socially, politically and economically. For Foucault, the prescriptive nature of ‘the norm’ which then defined normal and abnormal definitions of behaviour *and* segments of the population, was the primary fundamental apparatus of biopolitics and governmentality

Neoliberalism, as a governmental rationality, has created economic characteristics beyond the market into social, political and cultural spaces redefining norms and privileging a market identity (Brown, 2015; Moisander et al, 2018; Miller & Rose, 2008). Foucault recognised the pervasive nature of the language of neoliberalism and the power it held to reshape life. Miller and Rose state that “Within this politico-ethical environment, the expertise of market research, of promotion and communication, provides the relays through which the aspirations of ministers, the ambitions of business and the dreams of consumers achieve mutual translatability” (2008, p. 25). Within a narrative of neoliberalism an ideal citizen acting and rationalising as an economic actor, then becomes a naturalised truth (Rose, 1999, pp. 8-9). Thus, an art of governance which was built around autonomy and freedom, exercised coercion and compliance at an individual level by naturalising

internal regulatory and disciplining actions, in effect self-governing. The internalisation of entrepreneurial<sup>6</sup> codes of conduct emphasised individual success in the market as success within social and political arenas as well. Characteristics that enhanced market success were represented as highly desirable with competition at every level of life designed to further encourage adaptability and evolution. Brown (2015) states

within neoliberal rationality, human capital is both our “is’ and our “ought”- what we are said to be, what we should be, and what the rationality makes us through its norms and construction of environments. . . all domains are markets, and we are everywhere presumed to be market actors. (p. 36)

As individuals are encouraged to self-govern and self-regulate along internalised neoliberal ideologies, even those decisions which are seemingly freely made within a neoliberal context, can represent exploitative and unfree circumstances due to the hegemonic normative influence neoliberalism has. This raises a fundamental question within Foucauldian academia, how much autonomy does an individual possess when an ideology becomes internalised and normalised?

From an accepted understanding of the norm grew a rationale for governing that legitimised itself. Foucault saw power exercised in the everyday way individuals modified themselves and those around them to the dominant paradigms. Specifically, Foucault talks about empowerment<sup>7</sup> and subjectivity to explore the contradictory way biopower is utilised.

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<sup>6</sup> Although entrepreneurial conduct can specifically relate to a work environment reflecting common characteristics of self-employed individuals, it is the promoting of those characteristics across all aspects of life that make it a disciplinary norm. Self-responsibility, self-regulation and risk-taking thus become characteristics that are prized in all areas of life, even in roles that would not be considered entrepreneurial.

<sup>7</sup> Although Foucault uses the term empowerment, Lorey uses the term sovereignty to denote the autonomous action of the self, on the self. Foucault discusses sovereignty at length in his lectures (Foucault, 2004, pp. 88-110) but usually in the context of the historical shift from a single monarch to the state. He does mention the sovereignty of the people (Foucault, 2004, p.73), but often in a context based on juridical rights, so he is never particularly clear that he understands sovereignty to mean the power of an individual to remake and form itself. Lorey however, does use the term sovereignty in exactly that way while quoting Foucault “Although Foucault sees this tension and even relates it to the new art of governmentality, he always remains bound up with rights (and their subjects), rather than being linked with imaginations of the capability for self-

This is a paradox of the self-governing subject, or as Rousseau argues that all self-governing citizens should also be subjects and sovereign at the same time (cited in Lorey, 2015, p 32). Accordingly, this has resulted in individuals seemingly freely choosing to form identities around pre-conceived ideals of productive citizenship. This neoliberal self-identification applies not only to those who are considered normal and productive, but equally to those who are labelled as existing outside productive citizenship. The effect of the redefinition of success as an individual enterprise, can undermine resistance to exploitative living conditions, as tolerance of risk is considered a desirable characteristic of success. Furthermore, it can influence individual identity to the extent that people choose precarious work situations as a reflection of their free lifestyle. Foucault (1982) reinforces this when he argues that neoliberalism as a new form of power creates sophisticated structures in which individuals can be integrated on the condition that this individuality is shaped into a new form and submitted to a set of very specific patterns (p. 783). The norm becomes not just an overriding concept of success and security, but a point of reference determining who is normal and what normal is, how far outside the norm others exist, in what ways are they less normal or even abnormal. Foucault understands this individualisation of identity as a form of power, as it often involves a normalisation of techniques of discipline to remake a body in a manner deemed more productive. He even defines a specific form of power as “that which ties an individual to himself and submits him to others in this way (struggles against subjection, against forms of subjectivity and submission)” (Foucault, 1982, p. 781).

The recognition of an individual’s body as a form of property ownership, easily translates across both a totalising and individualistic governance (Butler, 2018; Lemke, 2011; Lorey 2009, 2015). The maximisation of one’s health and well-being also becomes

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creation, coherence and autonomy as condition and effect of biopolitical governmentality” (Lorey, 2015, p. 24)

fused with the development of skills and talents to mould a body into a productive life force. The site of the individual body then becomes a potential site for wealth. Collectively the populations health therefore directly impacts the overall productivity of the nation. Lemke (2011) recognises this dual aspect of Foucault's biopolitics, the regulation of the population and the disciplining of the individual body, not as two separate extremes but as "two sides of a global political technology that simultaneously aims at the control of the human as individual body and at the human as species" (p. 38). As such the disciplining of the individual presupposes a multiplicity, although a multiplicity is an often taken for granted concept within neoliberalism.

Lemke regards Foucault's biopolitics as focussed on achieving an overall equilibrium of the population by protecting the security of the whole from internal dangers (p. 37). By viewing the population as a biological organism possibly similar to Hobbes Leviathan, the state can analyse individual sections which may become problems to the overall body and develop ways to neutralise those effects. This logic underpins Foucault's discourse on racism and class division, contextualising these social discourses as biological fissures which naturally fragment certain segments of society away from a universalising narrative of the population as a homogenous healthy whole. This allows for and justifies, in the pursuit of biological purity, a hierarchisation of those who are worthy to live and others who are considered worth less. As such normalisation of racial differences and ideas becomes more powerful than is objectively right, in fact what is right shifts to fit within ideas of what is normal. Foucault's analysis here is very limited and focussed only on racism and class division, however precarious work as a form of control and marginalisation reflects Foucault's ideas of perceived threats from within encouraging more easily governable subjects. Conversely this narrative justifies the exploitation of vulnerable groups, for the overall health of the economy and therefore the population.

Freedom plays a central role in Foucault's theories of governance. To govern is to recognise the capacity for action and the ability to adjust others and oneself to act in desirable ways. To govern then, is not to crush the capacity to act, but to acknowledge and utilise it. In this respect governance is built on the presupposition of the freedom of the governed. Foucault specifically focussed on the technologies that governing authorities employ in order to coerce and utilise individuals' actions and the way that self-governance entrenches those technologies, offering them legitimacy. Governance in this context does not refer only to the state, indeed the state is just one example of what Rose refers to as "multiple circuits of power connecting a diversity of authorities and forces, within a whole variety of complex assemblages" (1999, p.5). What is governing society at a macro level, ultimately promoting a specific conduct via prisons, schools, hospitals, clinics, bedrooms, factories, offices, the market, shopping malls, intersects with techniques for the administration of individuals at a micro level. These techniques refer to all endeavours to shape, guide, and direct the conduct of others, from the population of a nation to be good citizens, to the members of a household. It also embraces the ways in which an individual is educated and encouraged to control and govern oneself. At the centre of these technologies is freedom: itself a constructed narrative which frames specific justifications of coercive behaviour. For example, that the constraint of the few is necessary for the freedom of the many, or that coercion is required to eliminate dependency enforcing self-sufficiency (Rose, 1999).

Foucault recognised two distinct discourses of freedom; one ground in the marketplace of neoliberalism and the other at the site of the individual's subjectification to neoliberal norms. He argued that neoliberalism had developed a complex new relationship with freedom, that it both consumed and produced freedom, organised and administered it (Foucault, 2004, pp. 63-65). Masquelier (2018) notes

Under this reading, satisfaction is said to presuppose freedom, namely the freedom to choose. But like risk and responsibility, satisfaction is individualized. Individuals have effectively become personally responsible for choosing their own desires and securing the means for realizing them. (p .4).

Freedom then becomes conflated with the freedom to choose one's own satisfaction. This particular understanding of freedom therefore justifies the free market, which becomes the place in which freedom is produced and consumed and satisfaction is self-responsibilised.

Foucault also stresses how security is used to reinforce freedom, as if the two were mutually intertwined. The drive for security, Foucault argues, reveals a culture of danger at the heart of neoliberalism. An underlying fear built on a sense of insecurity. This insecurity encourages competition and risk, reinforcing an entrepreneurial character acting freely within a market environment to secure his/her own success. Masquelier (2018) argues that this paradox between freedom and a culture of danger, encourages individuals to constantly exert their freedom to *adjust* to changing market environments. Freedom then, more narrowly becomes the freedom to adjust, underlining how freedom itself has become an instrument of subjection to an established order (p. 4). In this way precarity can be understood both as part of a culture of danger reinforcing a wider sense of insecurity, while simultaneously being promoted as the definitive expression of freedom.

Conversely, Foucault explores resistance and the practices of freedom which are dependent on the coercive and persuasive nature of biopolitics. At the individual site of subjugation, where the pressure to conform to pre-approved conducts is exerted on individuals by both macro and micro level forms of governance, there always exists the potential for refusal. Foucault understood these counter narratives as opposition to the processes of power that sought to regulate and control life (Lemke, 2011, p. 50). As such they seek to articulate new identities and new forms of life which contest existing ones.

This is not necessarily an exodus from power relations itself, as Foucault would argue that is not possible, rather these new counter conducts have the capacity to become hegemonic themselves. Foucauldian theorists following this line of resistance would then seek to argue for a refusal of entrepreneurial identities that create competitive and individualistic forms of life, entrenching neoliberal inequality (Brown, 2015; Butler, 2015; Lorey, 2015).

However, Foucault's theory of resistance is often quite generalised, presupposing a binary response as opposition. As such he fails to explore the complexity of human identity, autonomy and interaction and the diversity of counter narratives that co-exist together at any singular moment.

Foucault articulates neoliberal identity as absolute. As the focus of his understanding of power is based on how hegemonic ideologies, in particular neoliberalism, undermine freedom, there is little analysis of the often contradictory and arbitrary adoption of neoliberal qualities. At times this creates a sense of complete dominance of the human identity by neoliberalism, which then makes it difficult to conceive of any form of resistance or opposition. Foucault does argue that as any ideology becomes dominant so the potential for resistance to that domination increases. However, this fails to explain the adaptive nature of neoliberalism and the different strands that developed in different countries (Harvey, 2007). The space between complete domination of neoliberal ideologies and the formation of counter conducts as resistance, tends to ignore the diversity of discourses that exist, in particular how neoliberal rhetoric often sits side by side with contesting narratives. For example, the highly individualistic focus of neoliberalism is nested within a societal context which is built on interdependency. Consequently, theorists have sought to utilise a Foucauldian discourse analysis to further explore resistance and refusals at the site of subjectification as a foundation for more complex resistance theories (Brown, 2015; Butler, 2015; Hardt & Negri, 2001; Lemke, 2011; Lorey, 2015; Rose, 1999).

## Isabell Lorey on Governmentality and Precarity.

Isabell Lorey deepens Foucault's analysis of liberal forms of governance and updates his theoretical framework to reflect aspects of neoliberalism and governmentality that frame and recreate precariousness. Although Lorey does extend her examination on precarity particularly when exploring opportunities for resistance, by building on other academics' theories such as Virno, Butler, Arendt and Deleuze & Guattari, her central concept of precarisation as a process of governing is predominantly Foucauldian. She defines Foucault's concept of governmentality as designating "the structural entanglement between the government of the state and the techniques of self-government in modern Western societies" (2015, p. 23). Lorey then argues the power of governmentality lies in the state's ability to normalise certain practices, such as precarity, which leads to self-governing habits of the population along conducts created and encouraged by the state and by capital. In this way Lorey explores the narrative underlining precarisation, that the state and capital use to more easily govern the population. Lorey also understands precarity as more than insecure jobs, rather as embracing the whole of existence, the body and modes of subjectification (2015, p. 1). In the following chapter I discuss Lorey's theory of precarisation in more depth.

## Chapter one

### Precarisation as a Governmental Process

This form of power applies itself to immediate everyday life which categorises the individual, marks him by his own individuality, attaches him to his own identity, imposes a law of truth on him which he must recognise, and which others must recognise in him. It is a form of power that makes individuals subjects. (Foucault, 1982, p. 781)

If as Lorey asserts, precarisation is a deliberate process of governing populations, then precarisation at its core must fundamentally question commonly accepted liberal assertions of freedom. As a technique of governing, precarisation by its very definition coerces, convinces and influences individuals, thereby shaping the decisions individuals make to live and thrive within social and political structures. Acting as a framework, which ostensibly endorses a certain conduct, the strength of precarisation as a governmental narrative is the way in which it normalises and internalises certain discourses as natural. Lorey (2010), argues that precarisation is not a phenomena that began with marginalised groups before spreading into the centre and eventually infecting the middle classes. This construction of precarity, she argues, ignores the remodelling and outright dismantling of social security systems, the massive reduction in permanent employment contracts, the increase in temporary jobs often demanding a high degree of mobility, with or without social security benefits such as paid sick leave and holidays (p. 3). Rather these changes can be understood as a neoliberal instrument of governance. As a way of governing internally through social insecurity, while offering the minimum of social security.

These deliberate processes influence individual identity and social relations/expectations, becoming constitutive in creating a self-fulfilling reality, making invisible specific actions and practices which support and entrench unequal access to the resources which make a life livable. As such freedom in a precarious context is situated within a very specific market environment, which frames an individual's sense of empirical reality and autonomy. The freedom to work in the gig economy, or to be an independent contractor, or even a dependant self-employed person for example, exposes a very narrow understanding of freedom, situated in insecure employment, framed by an optimistic narrative that valorises an entrepreneurial character (McGovern, 2017). This is the crux of precarisation for Lorey, the paradoxical way it uses freedom to legitimise a narrative of self-discipline and self-responsibility, while deliberately entrenching inequality through economic, social and political governmentalities and actions, thereby ultimately limiting freedom for increasing proportions of the population. As such her analysis of the exploitation of what she terms cultural producers and self-precarisation exposes the contradiction of the neoliberal claim of freedom existing within precarious work.

In this chapter I explore Lorey's theory of precarisation. Lorey problematises the discursive structures which determine and justify precarity. Her examination of the ambivalent manner with which freedom is used to promote precarisation, remains largely under theorised in other explorations of precarity and freedom such as Bourdieu, Standing and Castel. In this respect, Lorey's theory of precarisation is an original thesis for understanding precarity as a new form of power and potential for exploitation. However, both Foucault and Lorey at times offer an understanding of resistance as dichotomous, exhibiting either a hegemonic narrative that is panoptic in nature, or counter narratives that rise in opposition, challenging dominant discourses and ultimately becoming hegemonic themselves. Academics such as Berlant explore the complexity of resistance and compliance within post-Fordist capitalist societies, offering a more nuanced approach. This

offers a different perspective on the influence precarity can have on entrenching inequality and undermining resistance, which I believe is valuable. Predominantly however, this chapter builds on the Foucauldian basis of Lorey's concepts and further develops Lorey's theory of precarisation and the role freedom performs within it. In her analysis of the changing dynamic of a narrative of freedom, Lorey often compares aspects of a previous economic era she commonly refers to as a Fordist era, with a contemporary neoliberal one. For this reason, I will begin this chapter with an explanation of Fordism.

## Fordism

Within precarity literature, the Fordist era is commonly referred to as a period of time between the 1940s and the 1980s. This era normatively represented within western countries, a standard employment relationship that was secure and longstanding. This period is often situated in opposition to a post-Fordist and/or neoliberal period, from the 1980s onwards, in which this standard employment relationship is considered to be increasingly under threat (Betti, 2016; Boltanski & Chiapello, 2007). Fordism was initially a term used to describe the introduction of Henry Ford's production line, which specialised workers roles and was capable of a high industrial productivity. At the time this specialised repetitive work under a highly hierarchised system, which considered workers parts of a machine, was criticised as exploitative. However, May (1982) argues that it was Ford's later introduction of a family wage for his workers, combined with secure long term employment that consolidated a social contract between capital, the state and workers, which has come to typify the Fordist era. Ford's family wage normalised a male breadwinner, financially supporting his family, while women's roles became associated with unpaid reproductive work in the home (Betti, 2016; May, 1982). It was this gendered division of roles which classified female work as insecure and temporary, built on an

understanding of a women's priorities revolving around care of the family, with the income they earned outside the home considered supplemental to a male wage (Betti, 2016, p. 68). As such, women's job security was heavily affected by societal expectations, with certain job structures seemingly more appropriate for women, for example part-time work and temporary contracts. At the same time unregulated labour (considered part of the informal economy which consisted of care services and industrial homework), which was frequently highly gendered and insecure, was often discounted or ignored in consensus gathering. The Italian National Institute of Statistics, for example, estimated that from the 1950s onwards over one million adult women workers vanished from the labour market. Paid employment outside the home was dependant on intersectionality's of class and race while marriage<sup>8</sup> and pregnancy often affected employment longevity and advancement (Betti, 2016, 2018; Vosko, 2000). While these jobs offered financial reward, and sometimes limited security, they did not offer financial independence. Although these conditions existed before the Fordist era, their continuation during Fordism challenges the assertion that the Fordist era offered universal security. As Fordism spread from America throughout the western world it became associated with the expansion of Keynesian economic theory which, represented a stable welfare system, high employment rates and economic security (Nielson & Rossiter, 2008).

During the Fordist era, freedom was commonly connected with the idea of secure employment. Conversely during a post-Fordist era, the loss of secure employment is frequently associated with a loss of freedom (Bourdieu, 1998; Castel, 2002; Standing, 2016). However, there is much debate concerning the universal assertion of employment security during Fordism, with many theorists arguing that during this time not only women but also migrants and minority groups disproportionately experienced precarious employment (Betti,

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<sup>8</sup> Betti (2016) highlights the use of spinster clauses commonly used among Italian employers during the Fordist era to compel women to resign from their employment once they were married. A law was passed in 1963 outlawing such clauses (p. 71)

2016, 2018; May, 1982). While Fordist employment relations, are often positioned as the norm and post-Fordist insecure employment as the exception, other academics argue that precarious work has always been the norm, both historically and geographically with Fordist secure work existing as the global exception (Lorey, 2015; Munck, 2013; Nielson & Rossiter, 2005, 2008,).

Over the course of this thesis I will use the term Fordist to represent the social, political and economic era represented by secure work conditions for specific segments of society, underpinned by a social welfare state. I use both post-Fordist and neoliberalism interchangeably to recognise the rise of insecure work, the degradation of workers rights and the loss of social welfare safety nets. I also use the term neoliberalism to refer to narratives which normalise individuals as self-responsibilising, entrepreneurial units of market activity.

## **Lorey's theory of precarisation**

While Lorey explores the wider social, economic and political constructions and consequences of precarity, she particularly challenges the idea that choosing precarious work is an expression of freedom and independence. In order to verify her argument, Lorey exposes governmental narratives and biopolitical dynamics, which structure normalised hegemonic ideas of autonomy and freedom, both at an individual level and at a population locus. In doing so, Lorey lays out her thesis for precarisation as a governmental process. Lorey's argument is very complex, centred as it is on an understanding of an individual acting autonomously and free, when in fact they are not.

At the centre of this complex understanding of freedom, is a recognised paradoxical tension between self-sovereignty, or sovereignty of the people and domination of the people. Lorey highlights this when she states, "The essence of the political body

consists in the concurrence of obedience and freedom” (Lorey, 2015, p. 32). For Lorey this subjugation/empowerment dynamic is central to understanding self-precarisation. Lorey argues that the idea of two opposing modes of behaviour or frameworks of existence within democratic liberal societies is often seen as paradoxical, when in fact it is ambivalent. In this way citizens are expected to adjust themselves, to control their bodies, their lives and their relationships with others, in ways that are considered appropriate. Empowerment over one’s own body and life is constrained within frameworks of subjectivation based on a collective acknowledgement of correct conduct. However, there is freedom to act, the very act of self-regulation depends on an individual’s tacit acceptance of the conduct of conduct the state compels. This ability for people to accept and act constitutively in ways that seem inherently oppositional, even self-exploitative, is for Lorey linked to the imagination of the capability for self-creation and autonomy of Foucault’s biopolitical governmental subjectivation.

Lorey (2015) argues that freedom in a liberal government is based on an enfolding dynamic of securisation and autonomy of the population. However, the co-existence of both freedom and security, within a socio-political framework prevents the absoluteness of either. As such liberal freedom can only exist within a structure of security, security can only be enforced where a belief in autonomous action exists (Lorey, 2015, p. 37) As not everyone can be secure and/or free this discourse creates a hierarchy of citizens with those considered more entitled situated in a safe centre, those less desirable pushed out to the unsafe margins. The legitimation of security then often rests on the fear of being considered outside or on the margins of accepted ideas of citizenship, based predominantly on the “free sovereign- bourgeois white subject with his concomitant property relation” (Lorey, 2015, p. 36). This normalisation of beliefs of sovereign citizenship then reinforces structures of inequality. The fear of becoming precaritised induces conformity and compliance to pre-existing structures of domination. Lorey (2015) states “In this sense I

use precarity as a structural category of ordering segmented relations of violence and inequality. This dimension of structural inequality, however, is missing in Foucault's conception of governmentality" (p. 38). The self-regulating structures of freedom and security then depend on a hierarchy of inequality and precarity as sources of fear and danger reinforcing contradictions between self-empowerment and compulsion.

### **Biopolitical Immunisation**

Lorey's biopolitical immunisation is an examination into how some bodies are categorised as more worthy of a livable life, while others are marginalised and made vulnerable. A biopolitical immunisation theory of the population conceives of a freedom/ security dynamic as central to the social bargain between the state, capital and labour, however this bargain both includes and excludes individuals. Within this context the buy in from individuals to a capitalist hegemony is rewarded by security and freedom, in reality this was only true for a core segment of the population. During the Fordist era this secure core which existed predominantly in western societies, was largely comprised of white males who were valued as idealised, healthy productive workers (Lorey, 2015, p. 30). Society was built on an understanding of the male breadwinner and the patriarchal protector of his family. The feminised private sphere coalescing around a male protector was mirrored by the social and political sphere, which was built around the privileged position of the white male individual.

This system of hierarchical patriarchy created a belief in social security, immunising the population against precarity. However, this security was not equally available to everyone. As such precarity was based not on merit or choice, but primarily on racial or gender identity (Betti, 2016; Boltanski & Chiapello, 2007; Butler, 2016; Lorey, 2015). Insecure or precarious workers were thus excluded and identified as abnormal, existing

outside normal societal employment relations, thereby justifying their precarity. The insecurity of the abnormal others ensured the security of the core population, the overall security and success of the state is interrelated with the continued security and success of the staple core. Those in precarious work were considered the necessary sacrifice for the continued overall wealth and health of everyone else. As those on the margins are typified as deviant, unhealthy, and undeserving, involving a process of dehumanising and othering, their precariousness as such is accepted as legitimate (Lorey, 2015, pp 36-39).

Interestingly, under a neoliberal post-Fordist economic system, this biopolitical immunisation discourse sits alongside a neoliberal entrepreneurial valorisation of risk-taking and self-precarisation, resulting in an increasing valorisation of precarious work. Arguably the first discourse seems to represent precarity as a lack of freedom, while the second discourse promotes precarity as freedom enhancing. This represents a fundamental shift in a Fordist definition of freedom based on security to a post-Fordist neoliberal definition of freedom based on insecurity. For Lorey both discourses represent a discipline of normalisation imposed from above and reconstituted across the population, therefore, neither form the basis for freedom.

Biopolitical immunisation also acts as a double threat motif, generating fear of losing secure employment and falling to the margins and as a threat via invasion by precarious others who would infect the secure core. As a threat motif precarity provides further motivation for individuals to comply with neoliberal commodification, ultimately making them more governable. Here Lorey acknowledges that precarious work coincides with an abstract anxiety over existential precariousness or the mental anxiousness of our physical vulnerability (Lorey, 2015, p. 88). This culture of danger undermines resistance to capitalist hegemony and typifies the modern post-Fordist neoliberal era. As precariousness infects an increasing part of the core population, individuals further strive towards self-

discipline, in the belief that they are responsible for their own security, leading towards further competition, fragmentation and atomisation. In this way, precarisation acts to encourage compliance, leading to Berlant's assertion of a 'cruel optimism' in which people continually manage their own expectations and insecurity (2011, pp. 14-15).

The cognitive dissonance, that Berlant highlights, between the promise of neoliberal success and the reality of increasingly precarious work, stagnant wages and environmental calamity, generates not a resistance to neoliberalism but conversely a resistance to change itself. Rather cruel optimism entrenches patterns of behaviour which lead to managing the ongoing present rather than resisting it and developing new counter conducts. The individual's energy is expended on maintaining an ever decreasing area of security, renewing commitments to neoliberalism, despite a recognition that it is neoliberalism itself that is the cause of the insecurity. Berlant (2011) states,

The internal tensions between capitalism and democracy seem resolved as long as a little voting, a little privacy, and unimpeded consumer privilege prevail to prop up the sense that the good-life fantasy is available to everyone. Ideally then, one would achieve both mental health and commitment to equality if one embraced precarity as a condition of being and belonging. (p. 194)

Although Lorey does explore the idea of precarity as a form of governance, which enhances compliance via a threatening ideal, the point Berlant is making here is that an increasingly dominant narrative which entrenches inequality and insecurity does not necessarily lead to a rejection of the policies that caused the crisis. In fact, it can have the opposite effect, that of individuals adjusting to a new reality while striving ever harder for a progressively more distant goal. While Lorey explores the threat aspect of governance, Berlant emphasises the lived reality of those experiences. This perspective highlights the complexity that exists between complete compliance and total rejection of hegemonic

discourses, and the discursive power of norms in creating and legitimising human interaction and forms of life.

Lorey further extrapolates the threat motif inherent in precarisation by exploring Castel's theories. This is not because she agrees with his analysis (she does not) but as an example of an analysis ground in nostalgic Fordist conceptions of security and the privileging of anthropogenic norms. She stresses Castel's zone model of the population, which consists of three zones, one of integration, one of disaffiliation and between these two an unstable and expanding zone of precarity (Lorey, 2015, p. 46). Lorey explores this analysis to highlight a discourse of precarity as safe within certain limits, but as threatening should those limits be overrun. Lorey contends,

The threat to existing relations of domination based on security first arises as a result of excess, of transgressing the limit of the tolerable number of infections. It is this dynamic of the immunisation of a normalisation society upon which Castel's zone model is based. (Lorey, 2009, p. 54).

Lorey (2009) later quotes Castel in his analysis of the different levels of precarity to emphasise his underlying hierarchisation of precarity "Castel concedes that 'precarity' is not only a phenomenon of the socially weak or the 'lower classes' but that there is also a 'higher' form of precarity. . . those discontinuously employed in the field of theatre, film and media "( pp. 54-55 ). For Lorey, Castel's post-Fordist analysis views precarity as a threat to a securitised white middle class via increasing practices of insecure work leading to segments of the population becoming progressively disaffected, thereby threatening social cohesion as a whole. Castel thereby conflates social cohesion with the security of a specific part of the population. He also inherently accepts the hierarchisation of society, where precarity itself is not the problem only the extent of who is precarious. Once again precarity is not linked to merit, but largely to identity.

Castel's solutions are built around integrating and assimilating and thereby neutralising the danger of the other, while reinforcing anthropogenic norms with the exclusion of the 'foreigner' who can never be integrated. This results in a domination securing dynamic built around a "white majority social middle" (Lorey, 2009, p. 59), which continues to be immunised against insecurity, by allowing a larger integration zone, redefining who is to be excluded. Although Castel's answer to the threat of precarity is increased integration in order to stabilise the core, Lorey argues that endemic insecurity creates the potential for social, political and economic change. While precarity evident in marginalised populations can increase governability of the population as a whole, precariousness that has become endemic, has the potential to challenge established forms of production and governance.

### **Self-precarisation**

For Lorey, cultural producers who choose precarious work are internally indoctrinated with modern definitions of freedom linked to self-regulation, self-discipline and self-responsibility, ultimately becoming exploitable economic units. Kaufman (2013), epitomises this principle when he states "Working at home or in cafes, starting businesses with teams of consultants and freelancers you've met only online, and even launching business ventures that eventually may fail, all indicate "initiative," "creativity," and "adaptability," which are very desirable traits in today's workplace" (para, 9). As such, those Lorey refers to as a cultural producer, while others like McGovern (2017) label independent consultants, talent, entrepreneurs and Gig Economy workers (p.30), come to characterise neoliberal ideologies, subjectified to governmental narratives, connecting insecurity with freedom and identifying creativity with insecurity. Ironically, individuals who choose precarious work often do so as a form of resistance to hierarchised traditional forms of

employment, which often lack creative satisfaction and individual autonomy. McGovern (2017) reinforces this point when she states, “others become consultants because they wanted to write the great American novel, build furniture, or write music: consulting enabled them to fund what might be a less lucrative but more rewarding creative pursuit” (p. 30). Implied in this narrative is a choice of lifestyle that is sustainable and fulfilling, and while this may be the case for some, this in no way represents the experience of many people in precarious work (Lorey, 2016, pp. 89-90).

As capital has increasingly sought flexibilization in the workforce, combined with a rationalisation of social support and workers’ rights, self-precaritised workers have become the so called epitome of neoliberal success. Initially Lorey’s focus is only on cultural producers as self-precaritised workers (2009), which does limit her exploration. This focus also raises questions of an implicit division of self-precaritised workers in her own analysis, as she overlooks non creative precarious workers. She does however later redefine cultural producers as virtuoso workers (Lorey, 2016). This later definition encompasses all workers who are employed in a public space and using their entire self in the creation of surplus value, thereby linking virtuoso workers with Arendt’s virtuosity and Hardt and Negri’s immaterial labour (Lorey, 2015, p 82-85). This link becomes important in chapter two as I discuss self-precarisation and freedom in more depth.

In her essay “Governmentality and Self-precarisation; On the Normalisation of Cultural Producers” (2009), Lorey argues in-depth about what she terms “lines of force” (2009, p.188). These lines of force represent historical constructs of assemblages of knowledge forms, technologies and institutions, which structure individual ideas of what is normal. In constructing what is normal under neoliberal ideologies, individual identities are moulded around dominant ideas of self-responsibility, self-regulating and self-empowerment. It is in this moment, which an individual unthinkingly accepts this version

of normal, internalising it, that his/her choices become limited to the legitimacy imposed by that specific construction of normality. At that point, Lorey (2009) argues, the relations of power and domination become invisible, and normalising mechanisms become naturalised as the subject's self-evident and autonomous decisions (pp. 192-193). This is the ambivalence of biopolitical subjugation and empowerment, the belief in individuals making autonomous decisions, while acting within prescribed patterns of behaviour. Self-precaritised workers represent, for Lorey, the embodiment of subjugation and empowerment. This is obvious in McGovern's (2017) positioning of Gig Economy workers as previously stated, as always being in a position to choose their work, ignoring a discourse of precarity, in which workers have no choice and limited power to change their position. Lorey argues, that individuals who freely choose to conform to neoliberal norms are only acting on a concept of freedom, that is constructed within neoliberalism itself and therefore they are not truly free. Lorey states,

Precisely because techniques of governing oneself arise from the simultaneity of subjugation and empowerment, the simultaneity of compulsion and freedom, in this paradoxical moment the individual not only becomes a subject, but a certain modern 'free' subject. Subjectivated in this way, this subject continually participates in (re)producing the conditions for governmentality, as it is first in this scenario that agency emerges. (pp. 193-194)

Consequently, individuals who choose precarious work, do so within a specific set of beliefs, which situate freedom within that choice, thereby reproducing lines of force legitimising neoliberal identities and domination, thereby limiting freedom.

Pivotal in this process is the liberal association of the ownership of property with freedom and security. In the past, property ownership provided income, food and a home. For wage earners, who would be unlikely to own land, property ownership became

synonymous with owning one's body, for the body to exist as property which can be sold as labour power. The body also becomes the site for investment and improvement, as well as a means of production (Lorey, 2009). The separation of an inner essence which reflects a unique individuality and a physical body as an inanimate object, rationalises the commodification of the body as property. This context emphasises that people can only have control over themselves as bodies, they are free in the sense that they choose the nature and extent of their own self-development/subjugation.

To a large extent an individual's freedom and security are tied to the unique traits inherent in their particular body and the ways in which they maximise that value. In this respect the body becomes an asset, to be exploited, by both the individual as an entrepreneur and by business. Under Fordist regimes this mechanised view of the body was reinforced by the production line, where individuals performed specialised tasks for increased productivity. Under post-Fordist neoliberal systems, the body as an asset is required to have ever more complex social and emotional traits. This results in an expanding view of the mechanisation of the body, with increasing amounts of a person's inner character being commodified and effectively dehumanised. With the creative trait of a body being considered a positive productive asset, the anxiety that can be generated by an uncertain and insecure life, is made either irrelevant or labelled a weakness. Self precarisation is then understood as a rebellion against stable hierarchal employment structures which limit the value extracted from the body, and an embracing of self-regulation, self-responsibilisation and a commitment to an identification with freedom, which is still ground in the physical commodification of the body. Freedom in this respect is not freedom from economic constraint or necessity, rather this freedom binds the individual to an economic uncertainty that continually forces a modifying and reforming of personal characteristics to remain competitive (Lorey, 2016, p. 27). Ultimately self-precariation has favoured capital's desire for labour flexibility, shifting the risk of the

market onto individuals. The state has embraced this action presenting these workers as role-models, promoting entrepreneurialism as the pinnacle of freedom.

Paradoxically, with capital increasingly accessing the social and emotional skills of individuals, resulting in new ways for individuals to feel an intensifying pressure to conform, modes of empowerment and lines of resistance are also increased. Not only does empowerment act to encourage individuals to comply to self-discipline, self-regulation and self-governance, but the very nature of empowerment encourages individuals to act autonomously. As capital progressively comes to rely on the emotional and social intelligence of both the individual and collectivities, as opposed to the Fordist production line, it opens up multiple sites of vulnerabilities and potential resistance. Hardt and Negri highlight this contradiction when they state,

This then poses a challenge or even a potential threat to capital because the primary role in the social organisation of production tends to be played by the living knowledges embodied in and mobilised by labor rather than the dead knowledges deployed by management and management science. (2017, p. 115).

The subjugation/empowerment dynamic which is the basis for the exploitation of self-precaritised workers, thus is also conversely the site for resistance.

Although self-precarisation and biopolitical immunisation begin with two very different sites of subjectification, they both depend on a specific historical construction of normal. While both Lorey and Foucault explore how discursive narratives have influenced and moulded both individuals and populations, they create a binary logic in which people are either individuals moulded into neoliberal subjects or invisible within a mass homogenised entity that includes or excludes 'others'. However, the very foundation of governmentality and biopolitics is the socialability and inter-relationality of individuals, reflected in their understanding of power as the producing and reproducing of norms both

internally and on those around us. As we become the norms, we further legitimise and entrench those beliefs and social expectations on those around us. Butler touches on this point when she argues that norms are inscribed on our identity by others, before we have the cognitive ability to question them (2015, p. 29). This is the capillary power that Foucault recognises, the power of others to prescribe and privilege specific behaviours and characteristics.

However, individuals also re-inscribe new norms or challenge existing ones at the site of subjectification, creating not one singular counter-narrative but a plethora of diverse mixtures and adaptations, reflecting a much more fluid and changing process. Berlant exposes this diversity by exploring how people experiencing extremely precarious lives often respond by a renewed commitment to neoliberalism and the fantasy of a good life, rather than the resistance to precarity that Lorey would seem to suppose. As a power that produces identities, the very nature of Foucault's biopolitics is the inter-relatedness and inter-dependence of individuals on one another. This alone contests the neoliberal myth of the individual competing in a market environment for singular success. And yet this dissonance between Foucault's capillary power and neoliberal norms is often overlooked by both Lorey and Foucault.

Although both Lorey and Foucault offer counter-narratives as a way to explain the contestable nature of discursive paradigms, this still seems an overly simplistic explanation of the often contractionary way norms are changed. If norms mould and produce identities, there seems little space within this dynamic for resistance. Lorey's theory of precarisation which encompasses both population level grand narratives and individual subjectivities, still fails to incorporate all human interaction. As such these ideologies are not the only influencers and/or producers of our identity. The very neoliberal ideal of a unique individual identity constantly encourages people to refine their distinctiveness

within a broad collective, opening up various multiplicities. Although both Lorey and Foucault problematise economic, social and political norms, the very translatability of those norms is dependent on our existential precariousness as physical bodies and the underlying drive to form societies for security. This is what Castel's fear of social disintegration is founded on, an understanding that security is based on a consensus of others.

## Conclusion

Lorey's theory of precarisation offers an in-depth and complex understanding of the discursive nature of social, economic and political paradigms, which ultimately mould our actions and define our freedom. Lorey's self-precarisation argument unpacks the disparity between a choice freely made and the power of social and economic discourses to shape our identity. Thereby, invisibly limiting and framing our choices, ultimately undermining the very freedom they espouse. Biopolitical immunisation explores the segmenting and exclusion of parts of the population in order to secure an idealised core. Both these theories rest on the historical construction of a norm and the power inherent in both the enforcement and acceptance of that norm. Within the context of precarity, the privileging of white males forming a secure core population continues to underscore the gendered, immigrant and marginalised make-up of precarious workers (Betti, 2018; Vosko, 2000). Lorey's theories are ground in Foucault's original analysis of the individualisation of citizens and the seemingly opposing idea of the totalising of the population. However, between these two spaces there exists a notion of individuals within communities, both acting as individuals and as communal agents that both Lorey and Foucault fail to explore. Also, the complexity of influences on identity and the formation of identity itself is often flattened in their examinations.

The aim of this chapter has been to build on and extend Foucault and Lorey's biopolitical examination of the complexity and communality in reproducing social control. While there are compelling analyses of the influences and forms used to govern populations using precarity, there does exist areas concerning individual autonomy and freedom that do require a more in-depth examination. Freedom for Lorey is inherently bound up in neoliberal lines of force which produce our domination. However, a different definition of freedom which emphasises our inter-connectivity and challenges neoliberal narratives, may act as a platform to undermine the legitimacy of precarity.

## Chapter two

### Precarity and Freedom

But if, said Marx, the true realm of freedom begins when and where necessity is left behind, then a political economic system based in the active cultivation of scarcity, impoverishment, labour surpluses and unfulfilled needs cannot possibly allow us entry into the true realm of freedom where individual human flourishing for all and sundry becomes a real possibility. (Harvey, 2014, p. 208)

Precarity and freedom would at first glance seem to be situated at opposite sides of any sociological/political analysis of society. Precarity, precariousness, the precariat and precarisation would all seem to exemplify a highly unstable life, in which less freedom to live as one chooses could reasonably be expected to be the norm. While freedom seems to have contained within it an expectation of a life free from the worry of the necessities of survival, a life where one could freely choose what to do and how to be, freedom is often used to describe both a secure life and equally to justify a more precarious one (Brown, 2016; Harvey, 2005; Lorey, 2015; Miller & Rose, 2008). Embedded within freedom are discourses which reflect dominant hegemonic societal norms. This often leads to changing associations of freedom, and the frequently contradictory nature in which they are contextualised. From Berlin's positive and negative liberty, to Arendt's republican freedom, the neoliberal freedom of the individual and the markets, the democracy of free choice, even the collective freedom of workers' rights, freedom has long been a contested ideal. Although there is a rich and varied debate on freedom, my focus in this chapter is more

narrowly concentrated on the role discourses of freedom can have on contesting and legitimising precarity. With that in mind, I specifically explore the paradox of neoliberal freedom within a precarious context. This exploration is ground in Foucault and Lorey's problematisation of hegemonic discourses of freedom, which often highlight the coercive nature of neoliberal ideals. Further I investigate Butler and Lorey exploring a Republican ideal of freedom, epitomised by Hannah Arendt, that may offer a foundation for an alternative understanding of freedom, which questions the legitimacy of precarity.

The discursive nature of freedom, as constructed within society, is something Foucault spoke extensively about in his lectures at the College De France, highlighting the historical changes underlying liberal governance (Foucault, 2007, 2008). Nikolas Rose (1999) suggests a multifaceted understanding of freedom. He argues that freedom can be understood as either a formula of resistance or as a formula of power. In exploring freedom as a formula of power, Rose reinforces Foucault's interpretation of freedom as framed by social interaction and as it is instantiated in government:

freedom as it has been articulated into norms and principles for organising our experience of our world and of ourselves; freedom as it is realised in certain ways in exercising power over others, freedom as it has been articulated into certain rationales for practising in relation to ourselves. A genealogy of freedom in this sense would examine the various ways in which the relations between power and freedom have been established. (p. 65).

Although this articulation of freedom emphasises the aspects of control that are often inherent in a neoliberal freedom, this is seldom the notion of freedom that neoliberalists themselves would express. Milton Friedman (2002) argues that individual and political freedom, which further extends to societal freedom, is synonymous with economic freedom. He also argues that economic freedom provides the environment for other forms of freedom to flourish. He states that "freedom in economic arrangements is itself a

component of freedom broadly understood, so economic freedom is an end in itself. In the second place, economic freedom is also an indispensable means toward the achievement of political freedom” (p. 8). Friedman contends that economic freedom promotes political freedom because it separates “economic power from political power and in this way enables one to offset the other” (p. 9) So while Friedman’s analysis of freedom also explores structures of power, he specifically targets political power as limiting freedom, ignoring economic structures which disperse both economic power and therefore freedom unequally. His definition of freedom would seem to be very narrow, confined to restricting the power of the state by expanding economic forces as an antagonistic check and encouraging individual enterprise in the freed economic space. However, the neoliberal freedom of the markets is built on the necessary interaction of others, therefore this freedom is a societal freedom ground in our inter-relativity. While Friedman creates a vision of a monolithic state acting in uniform, intent on imposing order, in contrast with a vibrant individualistic economy, he undermines the inter-relationships and interconnectivity between the economy, the people and the state.

Because freedom is defined within a social context there are always compromises, rather than an absolute freedom which could only be expected outside society, reflecting a form of freedom free from the interference and constraints of others<sup>9</sup>. However, this freedom would increase our existential precariousness, ultimately tying us to continually recreating the necessities of life, in the fear that any illness or injury could result in our death. Society then offers us a level of protection against precariousness, a recognition that

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<sup>9</sup> Isaiah Berlin’s 1958 essay titled “Two Concepts of Liberty” famously argued that there were two strands of freedom. A negative strand comprised of freedom from interference and coercion, and a positive strand comprised of freedom to develop and grow both intellectually, emotionally and socially. Berlin maintains that negative freedom is a truer form of liberty as it allows for more individual choice, whereas an excess of positive freedom can lead to totalitarianism in the form of the nanny state. Neoliberals endorse negative freedom. However, the idea that negative freedom offers individuals more choice seems to be inherently based on everyone having access to resources to be able to freely make choices beyond merely living a survivable life.

we are better off and safer together, and yet our freedom must be compromised in order to account for the freedom of others. Although our precariousness is mitigated, we recognise threats still exist from others both within and without society, highlighting the ambivalent nature of security and precariousness, which ultimately derives from our dependence on others. Consequently, both our freedom and precariousness are defined and contingent on other people. This is in contrast to a neoliberal positioning of individual endeavour within the economic realm as the personification of freedom.

If we start from this point, that our freedom and precariousness are defined and contingent on other people, then an understanding of how different discourses of freedom are being used to both justify and challenge precarity seems pertinent. How does freedom, as it is exercised in certain ways, exert power over others and how does precarity disperse and reproduce that power both individually and collectively? The basis of Lorey's precarisation theory is a Foucauldian understanding of freedom, that is ground in a neoliberal composition of norms that are coerced and prescribed on both individuals and society. At the centre of Foucault's theories is a potential freedom that exists at the site of individual subjectification, a possibility of a refusal to comply, an opportunity to create new narratives and social norms. Hannah Arendt's essay on freedom, as explored further below, offers a different narrative of freedom. However, Arendt's essay offers as many problems to modern theorists as it does solutions. Nevertheless, Isabell Lorey and Judith Butler both engage in aspects of Arendt's essay, in order to reconstruct a freedom that undermines the legitimacy of precarity. With this in mind, I explore over this chapter how Isabel Lorey and Judith Butler use aspects of Hannah Arendt's 1961 essay "What is Freedom" to reconstruct a new narrative of freedom. This narrative is based on our inter-relationality, challenging a neoliberal norm of free-will as an enactment of freedom. It reconstructs a modern conception of performativity which transcends the public/private divide and contests an idea of freedom built on economic necessity, arguing that economic needs constrain

freedom. Although both theorists have similarities in their approach, Butler offers a necessary depth to Lorey's interrogation of freedom and precarity, further extending it beyond an economic analysis. I argue that their differences reinforce and contribute to a more complex understanding of freedom as inter-relational and contingent on others and that this challenges the legitimacy of precarity.

## Foucault and freedom

At the centre of Foucault's biopolitics and governmentality thesis, is the recognition of two different strands of freedom on which liberal governance was constructed. The first strand of freedom is represented by the fusion of freedom and the market. Foucault spends a great deal of time analysing the historical shift of the market to a site for freedom and truth, a place that represents minimal interference from the state. The combination of the word 'free' with 'market' then became synonymous with freedom, and freedom came to be associated with minimal regulation from the state. That is not to say that freedom outside the market did not exist, but rather that freedom within the market became more valued and more easily conflated with a wider understanding of freedom. Nor did this mean that the economic arena represented a more complete concept of freedom, only that by emphasising freedom as free from state regulation were other constraints to freedom, such as economic security, obfuscated. As such a free market came to be associated with a wider concept of freedom, despite its narrow focus. Therefore, economic success reflects individual freedom and individual freedom is built on economic success. It is this form of freedom that ultimately makes individuals more easily governable. Foucault states that:

it lets them say that one is right to give them the freedom to act . . . adherence to this liberal system produces permanent consensus as a surplus product, and symmetrically to the genealogy of the state from the economic institution, the production of well-being by

economic growth will produce a circuit going from the economic institution to the population's overall adherence to its regime and system. (Foucault, 2008, p. 85)

Foucault's biopolitical freedom then forms, the basis of social, political and economic patterns of behaviour that are co-constitutive. These behaviours are designed to limit and mould individual behaviours towards self-discipline and self-regulating conducts, which are intended to grow the economy. This market driven strand of freedom recreates power dynamics which have entrenched inequality, ultimately reducing freedom and choice for some. This first strand of freedom becomes the site for potential refusal and rejection of the entire system or part thereof. Ironically this freedom is at the very site of subjectivity of the individual, an aspect that both Lorey and Butler explore further.

The second strand of freedom, biopolitics, represented for Foucault, the recognition of the state's focus on the management of a population of individuals as a specific art of government that characterises liberal states. The responsibility of the state was to manage the overall health and well-being of individuals in a way that convinced individuals it was for their own good. Inherent in a biopolitical liberal government are the processes and narratives which enable a state to govern autonomous, free living beings within a security society. However, a key aspect of Foucault's biopolitics, is the understanding that individuals are convinced, cajoled, influenced and coerced to act in ways that the state or other dominant institutions consider appropriate and productive, but they are not forced or dominated. Biopolitics is built on the supposedly free collaboration between individuals and the state:

When one defines the exercise of power as a mode of action upon the action of others, when one characterises these actions by the government of [sic] men by other men [sic]— in the broadest sense of the term — one includes an important element: freedom. Power is exercised only over free subjects and only insofar as they are free. (Foucault, 1982, p. 790)

Foucault's concept of an autonomous individual being coerced by governmental rationalities and social norms, while still maintaining a potentiality to resist or refuse entrenched power structures, does however, encounter some problems. Foucault's autonomous individual would seem to be able to problematise normalised neoliberal narratives, regardless of how dominant and/or internalised they may be. Admittedly this is an area in which Foucault appears to limit his analysis, but the question of how free an individual is when social, political and economic institutions and narratives hegemonically create specific social norms remains a valid one. He does sidestep the issue by arguing that freedom remains a potentiality at the site of subjectification, rather than a limited reality or otherwise. Foucault instead offers counter narratives as an empirical example of resistance representing freedom, by arguing that hegemonic narratives will always produce opposition, which in turn may become hegemonic itself.

## **Lorey and freedom**

Lorey builds on Foucault's thesis of biopolitics and governmentality, arguing that post-Fordist governmentalities have created a new paradigm of precarity/freedom, redefining traditional constructs in their demand for flexible labour. Lorey problematises freedom in multiple ways. Although her theory of precarisation would at first glance seem to be focused on highlighting new structures of power and domination, what she exposes is how those structures increasingly limit freedom for some, specifically through precarity. Her exposure of current definitions of freedom emphasise the often contradictory nature of freedom, when applied to empirical circumstances. She states that, "when domestic security discourses are correlated with normalised social insecurity in neoliberalism, then the fundamental dispositive of liberalism shifts. Instead of freedom and security, freedom and insecurity now form the new couple in neoliberal governmentality" (p. 64). This relates to

her cross examination in questioning how free individuals actually are, when they choose precarious work. In this she highlights an environment where people are led to believe that insecure work is the ultimate manifestation of freedom and is inherent in the construction of creative identities. Lorey characterises these workers as virtuoso workers stating that, “as all experiences of individuals tend to become part of the production process, self-realisation takes place as a performance in public. Work thus virtually becomes a virtuoso performance” (p. 73). This is the point at which Lorey engages with Arendt’s definition of freedom, and it is a complex one in which she both challenges and concurs with aspects of Arendt’s freedom in an effort to form a new, more comprehensive understanding of freedom that retains autonomy even in precarity.

## **Arendt and freedom**

Hannah Arendt in her essay “What is Freedom?” (1961), defined freedom as action in the political realm amongst one’s peers. This form of freedom was premised on the individual’s liberation from the necessities of life. Arendt argues for a republican understanding of freedom based on individuals performing and debating within a polis. She claimed that freedom cannot exist in an internal dialogue, or in thought itself, as thought is driven either by motivation or free will. As such Arendt argues “thought itself, in its theoretical as well as its pre-theoretical form, makes freedom disappear” (p. 145). Freedom is not found in the private sphere either, as this is where the necessities of life are dealt with. Anything that can influence, motivate or drive a person’s actions towards the self can only be an impediment to freedom. Action therefore cannot be driven by free will or self-sovereignty, as these two concepts create competition and encourage self-serving behaviours, imposing one person’s advancement over another’s. In this context, Arendt identifies free-will as oppositional to freedom, as it places the individual above the polis or political community.

In this Arendt's freedom privileges a collective understanding of freedom over an individual one. Freedom meant stepping outside the home into a public space, peopled by your peers and entering a body politic to speak your mind in front of an audience, acting for the overall good. Arendt states that:

Obviously not every form of human intercourse and not every kind of community is characterised by freedom. Where men [sic] live together but do not form a body politic as for example . . . in the privacy of the household – the factors ruling their conduct are not freedom but the necessities of life and the concern for its preservation. (p. 148)

Arendt relates freedom to politics as a fact of everyday life in the political realm, arguing that it is impossible to conceive of politics without accepting an idea of freedom. The two are inextricably intertwined. These two ideas form the basis of her essay: that of the political realm and that of principled action. Clearly Arendt is drawing parallels between a more modern world and the Greek polis, where free men came together to discuss and argue politics in a principled manner. In this way she feminises the private realm and the necessities of life as not free, while the public spaces of men coming together collectively arguing in a rational and principled manner, are a physical representation and enactment of freedom. Arendt's freedom then, is not for everyone equally, only for those who are wealthy enough to be free from the necessities of life. This is an important point in acknowledging how choices framed by economic necessity are not actions of freedom.

## **Lorey, Arendt and Butler**

Lorey develops Arendt's definition of freedom by placing it within a precarious context. She argues that the modern era has collapsed the divide between a public/private realm, a divide that privileged a masculine public arena in which freedom was enacted, while the private sphere was feminised and understood as non-political. This public/private divide is

a core concept in Arendt's understanding of freedom, as she rebuilds an updated vision of the Greek polis, as a public place of political debate and performance. Lorey revisualises the Greek polis in the age of the internet, recognising that performance now happens in both public and private spaces, and that often the performer and the audience are no longer necessarily in the same place, experiencing the act at the same moment. Not only has the private become public via the internet, but ironically the public has also become more private, through the enclosure of the commons and widespread privatisation.

For Lorey however, the public/private debate is merely setting the scene for her major interrogation of Arendt's interpretation. Lorey associates virtuoso workers with political actors because of their public performance, however she argues that virtuoso workers are not free, despite Arendt's assertion that public performance involving risk is free. Arendt concedes that her definition of freedom would include actors giving public performances, which she then classifies as political acts. She does however argue that the process of creativity is not carried out publicly and so remains private therefore neither political nor free. Only the end result of the creative process, which is shown publicly, can be considered a representation of freedom. While this seems a minor issue for Arendt, it is this point that Lorey's main engagement with Arendt's thesis takes place.

Once Lorey establishes a connection between what she terms virtuoso workers and Arendt's public performers, she further undermines Arendt's assertion that this constitutes freedom by contesting Marx's concept of productive labour. Traditional Marxists argue that someone who exchanges a service for money is not considered productive, unless they are employed by someone else, in which case they are producing a surplus and therefore producing capital. Here Lorey argues that a self-entrepreneur, by capitalising herself, incorporates herself completely in creating a service which she is paid for. Immaterial labour today such as communications, knowledge, service providers and virtuosos have

marketed themselves as capitalised forms of life, branding their individualism as a marketable product, producing surplus-value and thereby expanding on Marxist definitions of productive labour. This reconceptualisation of labour away from traditional Marxist thought involving a worker producing a product which a capitalist profits from, towards an understanding of an individual's intellect being the product, which a capitalist profits from, highlights the subjectification of virtuoso workers even when performing under the gaze of others. The relationship between a person's private thoughts, and actions are commodified in the interests of an increasingly competitive labour market. Lorey states that, "subjectifications and social relations *emerge* in this production process" (Lorey 2015, p. 84). For Lorey, this forming of an individual in response to neoliberal economic ideals undermines freedom, creating new forms of life and subjectivities.

Lorey argues that the creative process and the act are not separate as Arendt describes, but rather involve the entire person in both processes. In effect the virtuoso worker capitalises her/himself as she/he is both the process and the product. Her/his motivation for doing this is driven by economic reward. Therefore, according to Arendt's own argument, her/his action in the public sphere, although they have risk attached, cannot be free (p. 78-79). Further Arendt argues that political action in a public realm must be based on principles. Motivation, Arendt argues, is dependent on something and therefore not free. Action under the guidance of the intellect is also not free, with both motivation and intellect revealing will-power. It is only principled action that she considers to be free. Therefore, Lorey reasons, Arendt's differentiations between various forms of freedom supports the assertion that this public economised acting is not political action. Lorey states "Thanks to the 'shift from action to will-power' according to Arendt, the ideal of freedom ceased to be that of the virtuosity of acting together with others 'and became sovereignty, the idea of a free will, independent from others and eventually prevailing

against them.” (p. 86). Therefore, any action in a public space that is driven by economic will or intellect, is neither truly political nor truly free.

Both Lorey and Arendt explore how individual sovereignty has led to a lack of freedom and although their analyses are different, they lead to a collective understanding of freedom which challenges individual neoliberal narratives. For Arendt the movement of sovereignty away from a single Hobbesian monarch, towards individual citizens has created a dynamic that ultimately undermines collective association, something that remains fundamental to her concept of freedom. This transfer of sovereignty has resulted, Arendt argues, in free will being embedded in competitiveness and built on an imposition of others. She states that,

philosophers first began to show an interest in the problem of freedom when freedom was no longer experienced in acting and in associating with others but in willing and in the intercourse with oneself, when, briefly, freedom had become free will. . . the ideal of a free will, independent from others and eventually prevailing against them.” (p. 163).

For Arendt, free will is self-centred and driven by egotism, 'I-will' as opposed to 'I -think'. Free will leads to greed and short termism instead of the “utopian tyrannies of reason” (p.163) endorsed by 'I-think'. As such, free will oppresses and opposes those around it, in turn being oppressed or opposed by those same others. She argues that the idea of self-sovereignty leading to freedom is an illusion, that in fact freedom and sovereignty are incompatible, both for groups and individuals ‘where men [sic] wish to be sovereign, as individuals or as organised groups, they must submit to the oppression of the will. . . If men [sic] wish to be free, it is precisely sovereignty they must renounce.” (pp. 164-165).

While Arendt understands self-sovereignty as a will to power, leading to the oppression of others, Lorey defines sovereignty as an inward form of oppression. For

Lorey, sovereignty in a neoliberal society is expressed as a form of governance over oneself.

Lorey states that:

Although such individualised virtuoso action takes place according to the old logic of a presumably sovereign self-formation independent of others, at the same time it is also an action of self-subjugation that is accompanied by fear. Hobbes' fearsome sovereign, whom the subjects were supposed to obey, has long since been transformed – and to an extreme degree in neoliberalism – into a self-governing fear. (p. 86)

In this respect, individual sovereignty has meant a focus on self-control and self-responsibility. Individual's success or failure within a competitive, marketised neoliberal society is within their own purview. This belief distracts from structural and institutional inequalities and differentials of power, instead creating a normalisation of individual commodification based on anxiety and fear of vulnerability, ultimately leading to and justifying self-precarisation practices. Although both view self-sovereignty as undermining freedom, despite ideas conflating sovereignty with freedom, they both understand individual sovereignty differently. Arguably Lorey's contemporary understanding offers a sounder analysis, reflecting an explosion of self-help and self-responsibilising literature, which atomises individuals as economic units, required to provide for themselves within a context of power and contingency which limits their ability to do so (Brown, 2015, p. 134). However, despite Arendt's simplistic analysis of a free-will doomed to oppress or be oppressed, she does highlight the potentially exploitative nature of a competitive free-will, constantly acting for its own fulfilment at the cost of others. Thus, an acknowledgment of power differentials within a narrative of self-sovereignty would likely expose a degenerating freedom, experienced by those more vulnerable to precarious life and work conditions. For both Arendt and Lorey, recognition of a dependence on others is the grounding principle for any concept of freedom.

Both Butler and Arendt acknowledge an idea of freedom that is based on others. Arendt reasons that “We first became aware of freedom or its opposite in our intercourse with others, not in an intercourse with ourselves” (p. 148). She later posits that “Freedom needed in addition to mere liberation, the company of other men [sic] who were in the same state” (p.148), reinforcing an idea of freedom among equals. This recognition that freedom is a collective exercise rather than the atomised self-regulation endorsed by neoliberal governmentalities is the basis for Judith Butler’s views on individual bodies acting together in a shared recognition of vulnerability (Masquelier, 2018, p. 14). Butler argues that “freedom is more often than not exercised with others. . . (as) a set of enabling and dynamic relations that include support, dispute, breakage, joy and solidarity.” (2016, p. 27). However, Butler’s collective freedom is constructed on a common acceptance of precariousness as a physical vulnerability of life that connects us all. As such her freedom is far more inclusive than Arendt’s, providing a basis for an understanding of resistance as a coalition between autonomous bodies *and* a questioning of the unequal dispersion of precarity, that is reflected in the differentially exposed populations experiencing economic, social and political vulnerability.

In this context Butler uses precariousness and precarity to represent different experiences. For Butler, acting collectively does not undermine the differentness of the bodies involved. Freedom is then created in an acknowledged inter-dependence on one another, not only by individuals acting in political spaces as Arendt suggests, but by everyone who experiences precariousness, even though those experiences differ. Precarity offers a context for interrogating why some bodies are more precarious than others and proposes an ethical platform to question the validity of those claims. Butler does not impose a uniformity of experience within precarity or vulnerability nor does she endorse a hierarchy of vulnerability.

This position naturally leads to the question of what role economic necessity has in undermining freedom. For Arendt it is not possible for a person to be free, to act free if they are driven to make decisions based on self-preservation or economic necessity (p. 148). In the same way, Arendt links the space for economic necessity to the private sphere, defining both actions which provide for life and the space traditionally recognised as feminine as unfree and non-political. This conflation of the two is something that Butler specifically deconstructs, arguing that a recognition of our common precariousness forces us to ask the question of how ought I live? Or an even more political question of how ought we to live together? These questions place economic necessity and the private sphere central to political action, recognising the person as an agentic creature, whose actions in the public sphere are dependent on living processes and others commonly associated with the private sphere. Obviously Arendt's feminisation of the private sphere has garnered much critical engagement from feminists over the years (Benhabib, 1995; Zerilli, 1995), but I would like to emphasise the point, that Arendt's freedom is based on the assumption that individuals who are acting in a public forum and thereby exhibiting freedom, have access to care and economic security, that is sufficient not simply to survive but to flourish. And that this economic security and care is dependent on and provided by others, to whom this form of freedom would be unobtainable. This leads us back to Butler's ethical platform of a shared precariousness, undermining our social political and economic structures. After all, why are some lives livable while others are only survivable?

Arendt's thesis is built around division. She perceives distinct boundaries between private and public spaces, but also between social and economic spheres and between private thoughts and public action. Her concept of an individual who is able to separate economic desire from rational thought and principled action as separate from intellect, appears idealistic and at times arbitrary, but this understanding is implicit and necessary to construct her essay on freedom. Arendt considers the mind to be completely free, as no-

one else has the power to enter the place where man subdues his desires and struggles against his baser nature, the mind is a place more securely shielded from outside influence than a home could ever be (Arendt, 1961, p. 148). This idea of the human intellect as a fortress buttressed from outside influence, achieving a state of principled knowledge in which what is right is knowable and universal, is an idea that is platonic in its origin, but really fails to address the complex social and economic interactions in a contemporary neoliberal era. Foucault, Lorey and Butler radically contest this idea, emphasising the influential nature of the social which permits economic and political ideas to become internalised in a social narrative, that normalises behaviours and even individual reality. In a neoliberal era, economic ideas have become a form of principled rationality, in which moral obligations are weighed and justified in a cost benefit analysis; where people are reformed as homo economicus, agents acting in a marketplace that pervades political and social spheres; where politics itself, Arendt's bastion of freedom, is contextualised as national financial success in which the health of the population is conflated with GDP growth.

Butler's exploration of speech acts as a performative act, both as an imposition and a contesting of precarity, expands Arendt's performative freedom, while conversely opposing her assumption of the mind as unassailable. Butler (2018) argues that performativity characterises linguistic utterances at the moment of being spoken, to make something happen, or bring something into being. Butler states "performativity is a way of naming a power language has to bring out about a new situation or to set into motion a set of effects." (2018, p. 28). Butler seeks to link the power of language with public protest in recognising that discourses often provide a legitimacy to protest and a commonality among protesters. But at an even deeper level, she argues that language also creates individual performance, for example, a baby's gender being named then influences the way individuals interact with that baby, further influencing how that baby learns to act its gender, both publicly and privately. The discursive power of speech acts enacted upon us before we have

cognitive reason to challenge them, then have the power to produce us, form our identity and frame our reality. However, in a very Foucauldian dynamic, these identity norms become self-reproducing, in that we re-produce our own subjectivity. Nevertheless, it is in the reproduction of norms, that Butler argues things can go awry “in the very midst of our enactment, another desire starts to govern, and forms of resistance develop, something new occurs, not precisely what was planned.” (2016, p. 31). In this way Butler links the performative action of speech with both the enactment and the opposing of power relations. Further to individual acts of opposition, Butler expands this discursive performance to coalitional protests, relating it to Arendt’s ideas of politics and freedom being performances in a public arena.

Butler then deepens her analysis further by arguing that strength is not quite the opposite of vulnerability, in fact vulnerability can mobilise collective protest, making precarity itself the public performance. Butler concedes that:

This is probably not what Hannah Arendt had in mind when she said that politics depends on acting in concert – I can’t imagine she would have much liked the Slut Walks. But perhaps if we rethink her view that the body, and its requirements, becomes part of the action and aim of the political, we can start to approach a notion of plurality that is thought together with both performativity and interdependency. (Butler, 2015, p. 151).

The body and its requirements refer to Arendt’s necessities of life. Although Arendt uses this argument to separate those individuals who are driven by economic needs and therefore unable to act freely, Butler turns this argument around, arguing that what bodies need for a livable life must surely be a precondition for the broader political aims of life. In this way Butler relates freedom to a public performance of vulnerability and a wider empirical question relating to the conditions of a livable life. Perhaps not quite in the way that Arendt would have supposed her essay to be interpreted and yet her assertion that you

are not free unless you are not concerned with the necessities of life, does become more relevant in a period where those necessities may not be equally accessible.

## Conclusion

Hannah Arendt's essay of freedom, at the time it was published in 1961, offered an alternative theory of freedom, that contested a liberal ideal of liberty that was becoming increasingly hegemonic. In a modern context, aspects of Arendt's theory remain problematic. However, her ideas of freedom being contingent on others, on the performative nature of freedom and the idea of economic necessity and self-sovereignty being constraints for freedom, have offered Lorey and Butler a fertile basis to deconstruct and recreate a contemporary counter narrative for freedom. Lorey's argument focusses on the collapsing of public and private divisions associated with virtuoso workers, problematising an often gendered understanding of what is work and what is not. Butler's argument constructs an understanding of the discursive power of norms as performative acts and the power of collective performance as protest. In this way while both Lorey and Butler agree with aspects of Arendt's essay their differing interrogations and interpretations of that freedom, complements and expands their individual theories.

Combined, this presents a deeper understanding of the paradoxical role freedom plays in contesting and legitimising precarity. As a starting point a theory of the inter-relational nature of freedom within society, which draws on both an understanding of autonomous individuals acting collectively and the nature of our actions having impacts on others, has to discredit an acceptance of precarity in which certain populations are differentially exposed to economic, social and political vulnerability. The very action of forming a society is based on the imperative to collectively protect ourselves from our physical vulnerability, our precariousness. Our freedom should therefore begin with an

understanding of how we might equally share and protect ourselves against that precariousness.

While a different discourse of freedom may provide a legitimate platform to contest precarity, the nature of a form of resistance that is inherently diverse and disparate, building collectivities to protest precarity is also very much a debated issue. Protest as a representation of precarious freedom therefore also offers much room for examination.

## Chapter three

### Precarity and Resistance

At the same time, no matter what the protest is about, it is also, implicitly, a demand to be able to gather, to assemble, and to do so freely without the fear of police violence or political censorship.

So though the body in its struggle with precarity and persistence is at the heart of so many demonstrations, it is also the body that is on the line, exhibiting its value and its freedom in the demonstration itself, enacting, by the embodied form of the gathering, a claim to the political.

(Butler, 2016, pp. 17-18)

Freedom and resistance are often understood as inherently linked together, to resist something can be realised as an assertion of freedom, an act that revolves around a refusal to comply or accept an act, a statement, a categorisation, or any other form of domination perceived or otherwise. Although public protest or individual forms of resistance to hegemonic ideals are often automatically conflated with acts of freedom, those acts may or may not lead to freedom enhancing outcomes. Put differently, when discussing mass demonstrations of resistance, there is always an element of freedom in the individual act of assembly, however, the overall intent of the demonstration may be seeking more or less freedoms on society as a whole. For example, Destiny Church, a conservative fundamentalist church, which protested against same sex marriage in 2004 was seeking to challenge a lifting of restrictions on who could marry. They were protesting against increased freedoms for the queer community, arguing that these freedoms undermined the Church's ideology and security of the wider community. For this reason, it is important to

understand freedom as something that is more complex than just resistance. However, in this chapter I will focus predominately on resistance as an act of freedom, both individually and collectively.

During the Fordist economic era, the dominance of capital was contested primarily by the solidarity of workers, largely organised under a union mantle, protesting for worker's rights. Although this did not represent all resistance to capital during this era, nor was this form of resistance equally available to all workers, this was however an era in which this form of resistance rose to prominence. The overall decline in mass organised industrial strikes (Vandale, 2016) through the 1980s and 1990s, highlights the changing economic, structural and social paradigms, which challenged previous norms around work and protest. This is reinforced by Hardt and Negri's claim "that traditional unions cannot represent adequately the complex multiplicity of class subjects and experiences" (as cited in Jorgensen, 2015, p. 966). Recent forms of resistance such as Occupy and EuroMayDay often represent multiplicities of resistance, breaking away from formal institutions and a logic of contradiction (Han, 2018), which have principally framed industrial relations protest. Both Occupy and EuroMayDay can be understood as multi-layered, representing a wider systemic dissatisfaction with the unequal dispersion of resources necessary to live, often highlighting precarity in its many formulations and experiences (Jorgensen, 2015; Han, 2018; Neilson & Rossiter, 2008; Trott, 2013). Frequently these forms of resistance blur the boundaries between labour protests and social movements and highlight the often disparate nature of precarious protest, which often crosses socio-economic divides and can advance complex demands.

In order to question forms of resistance ground in precarity it is important to comprehend the disparity and diversity that are common characteristics of precarity. Neilson and Rossiter (2005) elaborate on this when they state that precarity is underscored

with multiplicity and division, both as a socio-economic category, an ontological grouping and also as an object of academic study (p. 55). It would seem then, that although precarity itself is often characterised as contradictory and diverse (Ettlinger, 2007; Han, 2018; Jorgensen, 2015; Lorey, 2015; Munck, 2013; Neilson & Rossiter, 2005, 2008; Vij, 2019), so too are the academic critical frameworks used to define who is and who is not precarious. How theorists define the precarious has major repercussions for how they specify and construct precarious resistance.

Standing's precariat reflects a very structured specific categorisation of precarity, built around class solidarity, with resistance linked to a charter of specific demands (Standing, 2009, 2014a, 2014b, 2016). Lorey's definition of precarity is more encompassing, grounded primarily in insecure work, while also recognising a wider process of precarisation as a hegemonic form of governance. Her resistance is based on refusals to conform to neoliberal identities prescribed by both capital and the state and viewed as forms of dominance (Lorey, 2009, 2010, 2015). She proposes care strikes as a challenge to neoliberal individualism and as a reconfirmation of our interdependency. In this, she argues, that precarious resistance is not just about struggles over living conditions and ways of thinking, but also over forms of governing (2015, p. 111). Butler defines precariousness as an ontological condition of human existence that is common to everyone. Although she defines precarity as a politically induced unequal allocation of economic and social resources across certain populations (2016, p. 33), ultimately revealing normalised beliefs in whose life should be more livable. As Butler's definition of precariousness is the most widely inclusive, so her understanding of precarious resistance is more extensive. Butler argues not for a resistance to precarity, but that precarity *provides* a mobilising dynamism that challenges preconditions, which form the unequal distribution of the conditions of life itself and the exercise of freedom (Butler, 2015, p. 133).

Within these theories the interaction of precarity, freedom and resistance differ, with freedom being defined as security (Standing, 2016), as both security and insecurity (Lorey, 2015, p. 64) and as resistance encompassing both vulnerability and autonomy (Butler, 2015, p. 141). Standing's concept of the precariat as a "dangerous new class," however, reflects traditional paternalistic hierarchies of vulnerability, has western based ideas of work identity and security, and relies on a threat motif of necessarily incorporating the other to maintain security of the whole. In this way, Standing encapsulates aspects of Lorey's biopolitical immunisation as discussed in chapter one. As such, Standing fails to comprehend new forms of resistance arguing that "asserting individuality and identity within a collective experience of precariousness as more theatre than threat" (2016, p. 2-3). This more traditional way of conceptualising precarity reflects an understanding of resistance built around a class identity and reflects an androcentric social and economic structure, which linked freedom to the security of a white male breadwinner, that typified Fordist relations between capital and labour.

However, a broader more encompassing theory of precarious resistance as encapsulated by both Lorey and Butler, highlights two key questions; is it possible to have a form of resistance that maintains singular identities and different demands within a large collective group? and is the definition of precarity so broad that it loses analytical meaning as a form of resistance? In order to explore these questions within the confines of this chapter, I have chosen to focus on three key thinkers in the field of precarity and resistance; Guy Standing, Isabel Lorey, and Judith Butler. All three have different perspectives on precarity and resistance, thus by exploring all three I aim to highlight the problems inherent in a narrow categorisation of both precarity and resistance. I argue that a wider conceptualisation allows theorists to expose and explore the moving multiplicities of precarity that exist in resistance today. In particular, Lorey and Butler's theories allow for a dual narrative of precarity, as both a socio-economic framework that normalises insecure

work and an ontological condition of existence. This dual narrative allows for specific responses to insecure work, while offering a wider understanding of differential experiences and identities, as it problematises the structures of power which frame and normalise insecure work. In this both Lorey and Butler ensure the autonomy of precarious individuals, reflecting an underlying belief in an equality of freedom, that may or may not reveal normative associations of equality. Butler's ontological precariousness provides a common ground for diverse experiences of vulnerability, which while extensive, maintains analytical meaning by the distinction Butler offers between vulnerability, precariousness and precarity.

## **Standing's theory of resistance**

Guy Standing's precariat is a neologism, combining the words precarious and the proletariat. Standing argues that the precariat represents "a distinctive socio-economic group, so that by definition a person is in it or not in it" (2016, p. 8). He believes this distinctive socio-economic group, which is defined by its relation to insecure work and lack of occupational identity as outlined in the seven forms of labour insecurity he lists, (I cover these further in the next paragraph) is a new class in the making, which sits beneath the traditional working class. In fact, the precariat is not the only new socio-economic group which Standing identifies, although they are the group which has attracted the most attention. The other groups he identifies as having distinctive sets of entitlements and patterns of security are the global elite, the salariat, the proficians, the core working class, the precariat, the unemployed and the detached (2009, pp. 102-115). Each class represents varying levels of both income security and occupational identity, with Standing delineating the precariat as commonly lacking in all forms of labour security, including social forms of support and state support.

Standing's seven forms of labour security are instrumental in differentiating his construction of new classes. Although each class has differing relationships with these forms of labour security, Standing asserts that the precariat is the only class to lack all seven (2016, p.11). These forms of labour security are the foundations upon which industrial citizenship was built by trade unions, labour parties and social democrats for the working class, after the Second World War. They are: labour market security, epitomised by a government commitment to full employment; employment security, involving protection against arbitrary dismissal; job security, ability and opportunity to retain a niche and access to upward mobility; work security, protection against accidents and illness at work; skill reproduction security, opportunities to gain skills through apprenticeships, employment training and so forth; income security, assurance of an adequate stable income; representation security, possessing a collective voice in the labour market (2016, p. 12). Although job security and employment security would seem to be similar, Standing argues that while someone may be a permanent employee, constant changes to their position within the company both regionally and globally can create insecurity.

While Standing does not specifically list social income under labour security, he does highlight a lack of social income as another defining feature of the precariat. The composition of social income he further breaks down into six elements; self-production, money wage, family or local community support, enterprise benefits, state benefits and private benefits from savings and investments (2016, p. 13). Standing contends that the precariat suffers from a lack of community support, of assured enterprise or state benefits and private benefits as well as insecurity around money wages (2016, p. 14)

Although Standing often refers to the precariat as the “new dangerous class” (Standing, 2009, 2014a, 2014b, 2016), he deftly sidesteps the issues around class definitions by referring to the precariat as a “class in the making”. He states that the precariat has

“class characteristics” such as “people who have minimal trust relationships with capital or the state, making it quite unlike the salariat. And it has none of the social contract relationships of the proletariat” (2016, pp. 9-10), while also asserting that the precariat is not yet a class for itself in the Marxian sense of the term (2016, p. 8). What the precariat lacks, according to Standing<sup>10</sup>, is a class consciousness or a common identity in which to build a unified sense of solidarity. Rather, it is a class at war with itself (2016, p. 28). As such Standing further demarcates three factions within the precariat.

The first faction he names the atavists, which consists of old working class families who maintain a sense of loss for a Fordist era type security, to which they feel entitled to. Standing describes this faction as yearning for the past, blaming migrants and minorities for increasing job insecurity and a loss of social support. He characterises this group as tending to vote for nationalistic political parties, endorsing xenophobic and racist agendas. The second faction are migrants and ethnic minorities who feel a sense of loss, for a place to belong. Generally, Standing notes, they keep their heads down, concentrating on survival, except when they feel politically threatened, exploding into days of rage (as in Stockholm, 2013), or join fundamentalist groups in an attempt to recover a sense of identity. The final faction, progressives, is made up of educated mostly young people (although some older people are included), and also some members of the salariat. They feel a loss of a dignified future. Unlike the atavists they do not listen to neo-fascists, but rather look to build a new future, a “good society” one that is based on “progressive values of equality, freedom and an ecological sustainability” (2014b, p. 11). As such, the precariat is far from homogenous. Standing perceives this conflictual nature as an inability of the precariat to clearly speak for itself. He states, “The lack of programmatic response was revealed by the search for

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<sup>10</sup> Other theorists such as Erin Wright (2015) and Ronaldo Munck (2013) argue that the precariat is not a class in its own right but rather a particularly vulnerable part of the working class.

symbols, the dialectical character of the internal debates, and the tensions within the precariat that are still there and will not go away” (2016, p. 3).

Standing views resistance for the precariat as based around three overlapping struggles; the struggle for recognition, for representation and for redistribution (Standing, 2014a, pp. 138-144). Currently he argues, the precariat does not yet have any of these, although he recognises that events in 2011<sup>11</sup> have drastically improved the sense of identity coalescing around the precariat. Standing often regards previous precarious resistance as examples of primitive rebels, and/or of theatre over substance, understanding precarious resistance as an evolving movement that will prove successful as it resolves the three struggles for recognition, representation and redistribution. This will crystallise the precariat into a class capable of political and social protest, that will transform society (Standing, 2009, 2014a, 2014b, 2016). By conceptualising the precariat as a class, albeit a class in the making and/or a class at war with itself, Standing frames resistance for the precariat as those forces of domination that impose insecure work and a loss of occupational identity. In response to this Standing in *A Precariat Charter, from denizens to citizens* (2014) proposes a manifesto of 29 articles, designed to act as political demands to redistribute security both at a financial and occupational level, through regulation by the state.

Standing’s interpretation of the gendered aspect of precarious work is interesting and often ambiguous. Although he recognises that a higher percentage of women are precariously employed (2016, p. 71), he implies that this work situation is inherently characteristic for most women and therefore not necessarily as problematic as it is for men.

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<sup>11</sup> Standing perceives this year to be the pinnacle in the EuroMayDay protests, arguing that this represents the primitive rebel phase of protest possibly followed by a period of darkness until a new phase of protest commences built around solidarity and class. Standing views this year as particularly successful for the precariat because of the election success of The Five Star Movement (M5S) in Italy, a populist political party advocating a universal basic income. (Standing, 2014, p. 137).

Rather an increase in women working<sup>12</sup> in precarious work has had the unfortunate effect of increasing competition for men, a general degradation of permanent employment and stagnating wages. Standing states “Early in the globalisation era, it became apparent that women were taking a growing proportion of all jobs. . . This was feminisation in a double sense of more women being in jobs and more jobs being of the flexible type typically taken by women” (2016, p. 70). Standing later argues that the family wage which was part of the industrial age and the compact between capital and the working class, has also been lost with the “individualised wage’ favouring employment of women, whereas the lower wage induced a lower “effort bargain” from men. Women it seems, at least according to Standing, never expected to be paid a family wage (2016, p. 70). These assertions of precarious work and lower wages that somehow seem more acceptable and less problematic for women, sit alongside Standing’s statements of the importance of reducing gender based wage differentials and discrimination. Although he openly acknowledges that women are over-represented in precarious employment, he remains focused on the detrimental impacts precarious work has on men, in particular in their role as breadwinner and provider (2016, p. 74).

There are many critiques of Standing’s conception of the precariat, focussing predominantly on his classification of the precariat as a class (Munck, 2013; Neilson & Rossiter, 2005; Wright, 2015). This critique is based principally on an assertion that the precariat is part of the working class. Wright (2015) expresses a common critique arguing that the material interests of both the precariat and the working class against capital exploitation coincide, therefore they cannot be separate classes. While Munck (2013), and

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<sup>12</sup> Standing refers to this increase in women working in recognised employment rather than unpaid reproductive work as the “feminisation of labour” (2016, p.70). This term “feminisation of labour” seems problematic to me for two reasons. The first is the implication that labour was gender neutral previously, which then positions this new era as a female invasion of labour. The second implication is that labour itself now has feminine characteristics, thereby placing men at an unfair disadvantage. Rather than seeking ways to address the issues of precarity and exploitation, this term the “feminisation of labour” would seem to entrench gender differences.

Nielson & Rossiter (2005) further contend that the diversity inherent in the precariat exhibits the characteristics of a socio-economic condition not a class. Another common critique of the precariat is the Western centric assertion of the current era normalising precarious work as an exception, (Betti, 2018; Han, 2018; Jorgensen, 2015; Masquelier, 2018; Munck, 2013; Neilson and Rossiter, 2008), with many theorists highlighting the common occurrence of precarious work in the global South before, during and after Western Fordism. Included in this critique is an acknowledgment that even within an era of secure work there existed those who were excluded, i.e. many women, minorities and migrants, thereby making precarious work the norm for most of the world, not the exception as Standing asserts.

However, the critique I will focus on, is highlighting how Standing situates the precariat within a liberal understanding of the individual, which conflates security with autonomy and privileges an understanding of precarious resistance as evolving along pre-determined hierarchical lines. Within a liberal post-colonial context, Standing uses a narrative of biopolitical immunisation to neutralise the ‘other’ (the migrant section of the precariat), while evoking the threat of social dissolution through the danger of an angry androcentric core via the atavists. Instead he predicts that hope lies with the progressive’s left wing politics of paradise, with migrants keeping their heads down ultimately following the lead of either faction (Standing, 2014b). Effectively Standing marginalises and silences migrants within their own resistance, while effectively marginalising a feminist perspective.

Ritu Vij (2019) in his article “The Global Subject of Precarity” argues that Standing uses precarity as a “liberal analytic, tethered to and framed by liberal accounts of the sovereign subject” (p. 508). This liberal analytic presupposes the vulnerable subject as supplicant or dependant, lacking in dignity, while those experiencing security are portrayed as autonomous, rational and productive. Although Standing does state that “vulnerable

groups also need agency” (2016, p. 183), his analysis of the precariat often conflates insecurity with irrationality and fear, as when he states “unless the anxiety is moderated, anchored in security, stability and control, it risks veering into irrational fears and incapacity to function rationally or to develop a coherent narrative for living and working” (2016, p. 181). He also states, “The precariat is stirring precisely because it suffers from a systemic insecurity” and later, “a sense of stability is required in order to be rational, tolerant, and compassionate” (2016, p. 202). This is the “liberal subject of security, forged and sustained within a specific (unequal) ordering of the modern international” (2019, p. 508) that Vij addresses. The idea that insecurity brings irrational fear, undermines any rational dialogue from those experiencing insecurity. In this analysis those in insecure situations are already incapable of rational objective resistance. In this Standing defines freedom for a large part of the precariat, arguing that they are incapable of demanding what he considers a constructive freedom for themselves. In their vulnerability, Standing assumes, they have no autonomy.

Standing reinforces this irrationality, when he frames precarious resistance as “days of rage” (2014b, p. 11) and “activities of primitive rebels” (2016, p. 195). He further undermines the precariat’s freedom to speak for itself, by describing part of the precariat as “the bad precariat. . . fuelled by nostalgia . . . It is angry and bitter” (2016, p. 183). Although the “bad precariat” is offset by the “good precariat”, the good precariat are represented by those who are educated, as opposed to the working class, who have fallen into the precariat, therefore the good precariat still exhibits an ability to be rational. Vij states that:

in a capitalist social context where qualitative hierarchies of wealth and want measure self and social worth, subjectivity and well-being are put into jeopardy. The precarious here join the ranks of the ‘underserving poor’ their material lack evidence of the lack of personal and social self-worth. (2019, p. 511).

Although Vij is describing a very neoliberal internalisation of social norms, something that Standing is problematising, Standing's continued conflation of irrational behaviour with insecurity, undermines the very autonomy he is arguing for, situating the precariat as needing rational secure support and leadership. In Standing's liberal analytic, those living and working outside the security zones, are mostly unable to articulate and organise a rational resistance to precarity precisely because they are precarious. This reveals Standing's liberal bias, linking the working uneducated poor with an inability to provide sufficiently for themselves, thereby needing protection from and in spite of themselves. Extrapolating on this narrative is a rationale that undermines the ability for the precarious to speak for themselves. Their very vulnerability then justifies a response in which others are deemed more appropriate to decide their freedom for them, further undermining their autonomy.

Standing's assertion that the precariat is a dangerous class, exemplifies what Isabel Lorey identifies as a contemporary dialogue of immunisation (2015, pp. 41-61). She states

Modern discourses of immunisation no longer solely involve potential dangers from the outside. There has been an awareness of immanent danger; the endangered weak position is part of society, and if its endangerment is not controlled and regulated, it can only be contained at best. Should the danger spread, however – and this kind of proclaimed potential danger underscores the urgency of this model of argument – then the entire society is endangered and threatened with disintegration and breakdown. (2015, p. 44)

She further elaborates that security societies comprehend this internal weakness as an excess that is no longer governable, can no longer be controlled and therefore challenges the normal order. Standing's portrayal of the bad precariat, the atavists, and the emasculation of men in an increasingly feminised competitive work force are examples of the potentially dangerous part that threatens rational society. They are fuelled by the loss of their secure position in society and by an image of an invader, disrupting social norms,

taking what should rightfully be theirs and jeopardising security. The threat implied is that unless the precariat is appeased, social disintegration, authoritarianism or revolution will surely occur. In this way they are not only unable to speak for themselves, but they represent an internal danger that must be neutralised.

Although Standing argues for the rights of migrants to be recognised, identifying them as a large part of the precariat, the language he uses often supports preconceived notions of migrants as emotional, sullen and dangerous. Standing portrays migrants as both the other that need incorporating, (Standing, 2009, 2014a, 2014b, 2016) the target of the atavistic section of the precariat (or the bad precariat) (2014b, 2016) and the accepting non-speaking subservient part of the precariat (2009, 2014b, 2016). He depicts their resistance as irrational and extreme, potentially threatening social stability (2014a, 2016), contextualising migrants as either emotional and dangerous or compliant and sullen, the eternal other. In *Work after Globalisation* Standing situates migrants as “The Precariat’s Dilemma” (2009, p. 239) arguing that if curbs to migration are retained, then cheap illegal labour will threaten living standards and socioeconomic security. However, if migrants are legalised and granted access to state benefits, particularly if those benefits are means tested, then poor migrants may reach the front of the queue before local claimants, leading to a demonization of migrants by traditional ‘white’ working class. The answer Standing offers, is not a problematisation of old racial stereotypes, but an alliance between the good precariat and the proficians class, whose income is also insecure. The implication is that proficians are more able to provide a policy framework for effective resistance, as their work identity and income elevates them higher up the hierarchical class ladder. The traditional ‘white’ working class are ruled by prejudice and fear, while migrants are problematic, whether they are illegally invading and securing jobs or legally taking state benefits they are supposedly not entitled too.

Ironically migrants can also be understood in Standing's argument as a passive power that sits behind the progressive part of the precariat. As such Standing conceives of migrants as an amorphous group lacking in agency, being acted upon, but rarely acting for themselves. In contrast Jorgensen (2015) and Neilson & Rossiter (2008), view migrants as the basis of the precariat and the greatest potential for revolution. Where Standing articulates danger, Jorgensen (2015) formulates a different form of resistance, moving away from resistance based on solidarity towards new forms of multiplicities, that cross previous divisions, encompassing diverse and changing situations. Where Standing conveys division as weakness, turning the precariat against itself, Neilson & Rossiter (2008) view those same divisions as inherent characteristics of precarity, arguing that the nature of precarity is movement and unpredictability, offering a form of resistance that is changing and multifaceted. Both these theorists perceive migrants as fundamental to the nature of precarious resistance. This is in stark contrast to Standings conception of precarious migrants as either hoping to be saved by progressive precariat resistance or waiting to be demonised by the atavistic precariat.

## **Lorey's theory of resistance**

Lorey's definition of the precariat is broader than Standings and primarily focussed on the process of precarisation as a governmental tool to help manage the population (Lorey, 2009, 2010, 2015. 2011). As such insecure work forms the foundation of Lorey's analysis, but her focus also encompasses who is precarious, in addition to how and why they have become precarious. For this reason, Lorey specifically does not hierarchise precarity by creating differing levels of vulnerability. Instead she recognises that in the demarcations

and divisions such as those commonly ascribed to Standings class divisions<sup>13</sup>, pockets of the population are labelled as needing more protection, often resulting in more governance and less autonomy and freedom (2015, p. 108). Furthermore, in stark contrast to Standing, Lorey claims that precarisation cannot be tamed by a unifying politics of representation (2015, p. 109), as it fails to allow for very different modes of precarious existence. Because levels of insecurity can be subjective *and* objective, Lorey is arguing for a form of resistance that does not impose itself uniformly across all precarious experience. Rather her emphasis is on relations of domination that coalesce around self-government, undermining the social and political influences exerted on individuals to comply with neoliberal ideologies, which normalise precarity, thereby challenging freedom. She states that:

In the neoliberal dynamic of governmental precarisation, the illusion of individual security is maintained specifically through the anxiety over being exposed to existential vulnerability. In the permanent race for the hoped-for securing of one's own life and that of one's immediate social milieu against competing others, the fact that a lastingly better life cannot be an individual matter is obscured. (2015, p. 90)

Within the context of Lorey's theory of precarisation therefore, her exploration of precarious resistance focuses not so much on "how to prevent and end the threat of precarity that is driving the disintegration of order" but rather "where, within these governing mechanisms, cracks and potentials for resistance are to be found" (2015, p. 2). Consequently, Lorey's resistance is subtle and complex, built on a merging of Foucault, Deleuze & Guattari and Virno, in addition to incorporating her own interpretation of a resistance that is immanent and decentralised to structures of power and domination. While Lorey's ideas of resistance are multifaceted and comprehensive, including any and all

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<sup>13</sup> Standing has two distinct classes that are characterised by insecure work. The precariat and the proficians. Standing situates proficians separately from the precariat as they are generally higher paid and insecure by choice, as such Standing categorises their insecurity as less vulnerable than those in the precariat (2009, pp. 102-115).

subversions of neoliberal self-governance, at times her argument seems too deeply philosophical and abstract. Her construal of Virno's exodus as a refusal to comply with exploitable power relations, rather than a massive defection from the state, can appear to fail to disrupt the status quo, dependant as it is on remaining immanent to those power relations. However, her logic does interrupt the biopolitical immunising discourse of a threatening precariat that justifies freedom for some at the continued expense and exploitation of others. As such, Lorey's resistance theory comprehends the precariat not as a class in the making, nor a potential class for itself, but rather as a diffuse, changing ultimately precarious potentiality. This allows her to explore sites of resistance that are not easily universalised or categorised, rather reflecting multiple sites of resistance both empirically and in the theoretical repositioning of self-government, to incorporate new modes of living in disobedience (2015 p. 102). It does also provide a foundation for highlighting emerging forms of resistance which challenge normative neoliberal self-governing, creating new forms of autonomous freedom.

Central to Lorey's theory of immanent exodus is her exploration of Paulo Virno's theory of exodus as outlined in his essay "Virtuosity and Revolution: The political theory of exodus" (1996), which she uses to deepen Foucault's analysis of power relations. Foucault briefly explored the example of the struggle between the Roman patricians and the plebeians which resulted in the contestation and reformation of power relations, and it is this example which Lorey (2008) in her essay "Attempt to think the Plebeian; Exodus and Constituting as Critique" further elaborates on with the concept of immanent exodus. In this historical account of the plebeian's non-violent temporary exodus to the outskirts of Rome to protest patrician power, Lorey perceives an alternative to resistance that is antithetical in nature. The result of the plebs refusal and exodus from the city, highlights the boundary of power exerted over the plebs by the patricians, both in a political sense and a very literal one. By camping outside the city boundaries, the plebs formed their own

political body, re-negotiating their position within the city, emphasising the inter-dependant nature of both the plebs and the patricians and the necessary compliance of their own subjectification. This resulted in the patricians conceding a seat in the senate to the plebeians, thereby restructuring power dynamics between the two groups. However, this reorganisation of power was limited, it did not question, revoke or reverse the dominant status quo, only forcefully created space for a limited sharing of power. While Foucault finds in this example an understanding of the plebs position as that which exists at the boundaries of the previously acceptable framework of power, a re-forming of new political narratives in which power shifts, Lorey views this also as an opening up of new potentialities.

However, it is Virno's exodus, that Lorey uses to deepen Foucault's concept of the plebeian resistance. Hetzel (2016) argues that Lorey's articulation of the plebs exodus more accurately reflects Occupy and the Arab Spring movements and a more original form of democracy. The concept of exodus has been historically linked to the exodus of the Israelites from Egypt and their consequent refusal of Egyptian sovereignty. While their physical journey represents their resistance to exploitation and the consequent formation of a new political body, their exodus was both a physical act and a permanent one (Hetzel, 2016). Virno takes the idea of the Israelite exodus from Egypt and applies that concept to frame resistance to power relations inherent in post Fordist labour conditions and the servility they invoke. In a Marxist analysis of labour, Virno articulates capitalism's exploitation of the worker, in the alienation of the worker from his/her own means of production (Hetzel, 2016, p. 195) In this, Virno's exodus does not need to be a physical removal from sovereignty as exhibited by the plebeians and the Israelites, but a mass flight from labour under the employer (Hetzel, 2016, p. 195). Virno understood this as an exit option rather than a voice option epitomised in active protest against exploitative situations (Virno, 2005, p. 20). This option as a form of protest meant modifying the conditions

within which the conflict was being played, not a negative gesture which exempts one from action and responsibility. In this context Virno understood the preference for many young people to work precariously during the 1960s and 1970s, as a desertion, or a strategy of flight away from previously accepted work relations. Hetzel argues that Virno realised these work relations as “the attribution of subject positions, to the creation of fear, and, eventually, to submission” (Hetzel, 2016, p. 195).

Ironically, Lorey applies Virno’s exodus as a form of resistance to those same precarious work conditions that Virno stressed as a line of flight away from previously established employment constructs. This highlights the mutability of capitalist exploitation and the paradoxical nature of precarisation which can exist as a form of governing and control but also as a potentiality for resistance and contestation. In this way precarity itself is productive. It is productive in the Foucauldian sense of producing “instrument(s) of governance and a condition of economic exploitation, and also as a productive, always incalculable and potentially empowering subjectification” (2010, p. 8). This is the empowerment subjectification site for compliance and/or resistance, that is the basis for Foucault’s potential site for a new resisting counter narrative and which Virno and Guattari & Deleuze offer as a framework in which these counter narratives proliferate in many different ways, in many different circumstances. Such as the so-called queering of narratives which are necessarily re-produced in an ongoing reconstruction of self-identity that Butler (2018) articulates. This is the essential space where autonomous rationalisation and problematising of ideas can transform into resistance that is an independent reflection of freedom. That governmentalities can produce compliance *and* resistance is important to acknowledge, however a hegemonic narrative reinforced with structural social, economic and political support would seem to need more than a potential site for resistance to challenge the status quo.

While Lorey builds on Foucault's idea of a boundary or outside of power relations in which new constitutions can be created, she incorporates Virno's exodus as an immanent refusal within those boundaries in order to recreate new conditions of living and working. Lorey states

An exodus from neoliberal governmentality arises from the rejection of captalisable self-government and the turn to a self-conduct that tests new modes of living in disobedience. These kinds of rejections are not a deliverance from all previous neoliberal entanglements, but rather the beginning of engagements and struggles to no longer be governed and no longer govern oneself in this way, at this price. (Lorey, 2015, p.102).

Lorey uses Deleuze and Guattari's 'line of flight' to further build on her theory of resistance, extending both Foucauldian counter narratives and Virno's immanent exodus. She does this by describing a movement away from a "dominant model of being limited and threatened by others, and from preventative care focussed on what is one's own" (Lorey, 2015, p .99). Interestingly Lorey links Deleuze's and Guattari's line of flight with Foucault's reversal or flight from power relations, however the assumption that both theories represent the same thing is contested.<sup>14</sup> Deleuze and Guattari's line of flight is based on rhizomatic assemblages of people, thoughts, actions, animate and inanimate objects linking together like parts of a machine, constantly adding to and breaking away to form new assemblages some lasting a small amount of time, others lasting an inordinate amount of time. In this way they describe a society that is constantly changing and moving, there is not one line of flight deterritorialising an assemblage, but countless lines of flight. In combining Foucault with Virno and Deleuze & Guattari, Lorey is creating a theory of precarious resistance that eludes "the binarity between command/law on the one hand and

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<sup>14</sup> Edward Thornton in his PhD thesis on Deleuze and Guattari's Line of Flight, makes the point that Deleuze and Guattari disagreed with Foucault arguing that "assemblages seem fundamentally to be not assemblages of power but of desire (desire is always assembled)' and that within these assemblages there are 'lines of flight which are primary and not phenomena of resistance or counterattack in an assemblage, but cutting edges of creation.'" (quoted in Thornton, 2018, p.192)

revolt on the other, in order to return again with a shared capacity and fight (Lorey, 2008, para 19). This form of resistance also reflects the inherently changeable nature of precarity itself, allowing for protest to take various forms of refusal or reconstituting of power dynamics within existing social economic and political frameworks, both as a singular actor and/or a multiplicity of actors.

Central to Lorey's analysis of resistance is a reconception away from the neoliberal individual towards an understanding of inter-relationality that is based on shared differentness (2015, p. 100). In this Lorey is arguing against Butler's commonly shared precariousness as a platform for equality, as she argues that precariousness cannot be commonly defined. Lorey's idea of a shared differentness is somewhat confusing however, as the basis for her political and social resistance to precarity. While Lorey acknowledges the importance of establishing what is commonly shared in order to change existing relations, she argues that there is no possibility of referring to a commonly shared precariousness. What is common, Lorey asserts, is not something that has already always existed, but rather it is produced in political action which exists within social and political relations. What is common becomes visible only in fleeing and the process of constituting (Lorey, 2015, pp 100-101). This is a very broad understanding of precarious resistance, which could easily incorporate both the far-right and far-left political ideologies. Both Lorey and Virno emphasise the ambivalence of power relations and precarity, which would only seem to underscore the point that a resistance based on the commonality of fleeing and constituting could just as easily lead to even more exploitative living and working conditions. An example of this is the initial exodus from secure employment, which was seen as restrictive and hierarchised, towards precarious employment representing more flexibility and freedom. Ultimately this exodus has resulted in vulnerable workers being more exploited with less protections in place. Thus, it would seem to make sense that in order to avoid this situation, precarious resistance would need a common understanding of

what it is fleeing from, in order to ensure a more positive outcome. Lorey further ties the action of fleeing to Arendt's concept of freedom being linked to a new beginning.

However, Lorey seems to assume that these actions will automatically result in new forms of living that are not subject to neoliberal ideologies, however as in the case of the political stand-off between the plebeians and the patricians, power may simply adapt, offering slightly more freedom to some, while continuing to exploit others.

Lorey specifically explores the militant research carried out by Precarias a la deriva and the care strikes as empirical examples of her theoretical framework. Precarias a la deriva is a feminist initiative that situates itself between activism and research. Although they have been active in Madrid from 2002, they no longer operate under Precarias a la deriva (literally translated this means precarious women adrift (Tirler, 2018)). In particular, Lorey advocates their resistance thesis based on a logic of care, as a way to resist individual practices promoting self-care and the reconstitution of the body solely as a site for profit. The Precarias warn against "traditions of thinking that refuse our fundamental social relationality, warn against infection by others, maintain a logic of individualism and security, and thus perceive precarisation solely as a threat" (Lorey, 2015, p. 94). In contrast they propose a focus of care resulting in a two-fold purpose. First a focus on care highlights the interdependability of all human beings, emphasising the relationality and vulnerability of bodies and the care necessary from others for bodies to survive, from the beginning of life to old age. This rhetoric encompasses the variability of care relationships necessary throughout life. Secondly a focus on care situates care work, which has traditionally represented either a precarious gendered area of employment, or the unpaid reproductive work usually performed by women, as a starting point for political and economic reform. By raising the status of care work, through greater work protection and higher remuneration and acknowledgement, caring for others becomes a quality that is more venerated in society. Care then becomes a basis for commonality that represents an

acknowledgment of our interdependability and vulnerability, across both precarious and securitised segments of the population. Conversely this also targets specific post-Fordist work practices, which demand permanent availability while cutting labour and social rights. In this context Precarias argue for care strikes as a form of resistance. Lorey states that:

The practices of care and the refusals taking place within them, with their major and minor resistances, should be articulated ‘to produce new more liberatory and cooperative forms of affect’. Social relationships are ‘striked’, according to the Precarias by producing excesses that *flee* from the interests of profit . . . The strike practices encompass interruptions and ruptures as well as inventions and improvisations. In them, new forms of living together and new forms of constituting emerge, with a view to changing fundamentally the ‘increasingly precarised world.’ (Lorey, 2015, pp. 97-98)

Lorey understands care strikes not only as challenges to preconceived norms of neoliberal work and identity, but also as a reconfiguring of the power dynamics under which capitalism takes place. They also epitomise the singular and collective responses to resistance and protest that Lorey articulates, as care strikes can take place anywhere, at any time, for any length of time. In this way their singular action is contextualised within a larger multiplicity, with individual disruptions building towards a larger narrative of common resistance, while also incorporating larger more organised protest.

Although Lorey’s theory of precarious resistance is built around an underlying respect for autonomous action as a representation of freedom, for even the most vulnerable parts of a precarious population, at times her rhetoric seems to flatten vulnerability at a level where these refusals are still an option. In this, her predisposition to focus on cultural producers as precarious, influences her contextualisation of individual refusals challenging neoliberal power relations. When individual care workers are deemed as disposable labour, singular acts of protest would pose more threat to the workers than to capital. This would be true across those parts of the population to whom precarious work

is constructed on a day by day basis. In these situations, protest can result in lost income and reduced hours. Rather a collective response would offer more challenge to dominant capitalist relations. However, the question remains in Lorey's precarious resistance whether there would be enough commonality across precaritized populations to form effective collective responses. As Gerald Raunig (2007) notes of the precariat, "How can a form of organization emerge that fosters the exchange, the intercourse of differences more than unifying them?"

## **Butler's theory of resistance**

Judith Butler's definition of precarity is complex, wide-ranging and multi-layered involving a separation and interlocking of precariousness, precarity and vulnerability. As such her theory of precarious resistance endeavours to fundamentally redefine what it is to be human. Although some theorists argue that Butler's philosophy is too encompassing, and inherently dependent on a normative idea of equality, consequently undermining her liberatory politics (Tsantsoulas, 2018; Vij, 2019), others argue that her ontological theory of a politics of vulnerability and her exploration of the interrelation of ethics, politics and the social sphere is exceptional (Gilson, 2013). Her characterisation of precariousness is commonly accepted and often referenced by other major writers on precarity (Ettlinger, 2007; Han, 2018; Masquelier, 2018; Millar, 2017; Trott, 2013; Neilson & Rossiter 2005) including Lorey (2015, pp. 11-12).

Butler defines precariousness as an ontological experience of life as an embodied being. As such she views precariousness as "a feature of all life, and there is no thinking of life that is not precarious" (2010, p. 25). This definition therefore covers all human and non-human bodies, with Butler recognising precariousness as a shared existential experience of life that is fundamentally common to us all. Precarity, however, she defines

as “that politically induced condition in which certain populations suffer from failing social and economic networks of support and become differentially exposed to injury, violence and death” (2009, p. 25). This definition and differentiation between precariousness and precarity is a defining feature of Butler’s theory of resistance. While Standing and Lorey try to define a commonality among the precariat/ precarised, Butler is arguing that this commonality already exists. It is the reason why we come together and also the reason why we unequally distribute resources to secure our own vulnerability (2015, pp. 43-45). This then demarcates some lives as more livable. Social, political and economic norms then legitimise and justify this unequal dispersion of precariousness, making structural inequality and bias invisible. This reinforces Butler’s assertion of a precarious ontology that is inherently social, political and economic, framing our understanding of who is recognisable and who remains invisible.

Gilson (2013) further elaborates on a definition of vulnerability, that she believes is inherent in Butler’s theory but not made explicit. Vulnerability she argues, refers to a more pervasive sense of instability and insecurity, one that is not specifically linked to the conditions of life as precariousness is (p. 46). Gilson further elaborates that vulnerability can be linked to emotional vulnerability and ecological vulnerability, in a way that precariousness which is connected to life does not. Thus, vulnerability underlies affective conditions of existence. Although these three definitions are at times indistinct and often overlap, they do remain important as a foundation for Butler’s theory of resistance, which encompasses both physical and affective vulnerability, while building on an acknowledgement of shared precariousness as a new basis for recognising our inherent interdependability and shared responsibilities.

Butler exposes the overlapping dynamic of precarity, precariousness and vulnerability. In particular, she navigates the vulnerability/invulnerability paradigm in a

way that breaks with the conventional dynamic of vulnerability equating with a loss of autonomy. She argues that there is an intrinsic danger in labelling populations as vulnerable. Specifically, Butler analyses how this term, when applied to women, has resulted in entrenching societal forms of power, by legitimising a patriarchal protection of women, wherein women are cast as forever vulnerable thereby justifying their precarity. The danger Butler recognises is when precarity is understood not as a temporal or structural situation, but as particular to specific groups. Although her focus is on women, this can also apply to migrants and other marginalised groups. From a feminist perspective however, the historical belief of women's bodies as passive and men's bodies as active (Butler, 2015, p. 139), easily justified regimes of power which degrade autonomy for women at the cost of protection. The result becomes a sociological observation, which reinforces traditional patriarchal responses. Women become associated with vulnerability because social and economic structures are underlining their precarity, the response is framed as men or a patriarchal structure providing protection, which then reinforces and normalises women's vulnerability. Although Butler uses gender to reinforce this argument, these same observations apply to the eternal threat motif of the 'other' or the protection of minority groups for their advancement. In this narrative, protection is given while undermining autonomy and thus freedom.

For this reason, Butler states, it is important not to equate vulnerability with a lack of autonomy, rather to be able to think of vulnerability and agency together (Butler, 2015, p. 139). This view contradicts Standings contention of a precariat that is unable, or not to be trusted, to speak for itself. In terms of precarious resistance, to understand vulnerability and agency as co-existing opens up binary paradigms in which vulnerability is conflated with a lack of security and freedom and an inability to provide for oneself. It also challenges a pre-conception of freedom existing in security as Standing maintains. Butler argues that vulnerability is not only a mobilising force for resistance against precarity, but

also a site for autonomy and political action (2016, p. 13). As such, she argues for the legitimacy of those experiencing precarity to speak for themselves.

Butler understands performativity as intrinsic to resistance and freedom, both as a way of bodies protesting on the street, and as a way of contesting norms which constrain identity and impose preconceived ideals of life. The act of freedom is suggested in the performative action of challenging a socially accepted norm, as commonly done through protest. Conversely, Butler also recognises how speech acts powerfully perform on the individuals to which they are exposed. Thus, Butler is exploring both the performative action of bodies massed on the street and the linguistic performance attached to the power of naming someone or something. Although these two instances may seem dissimilar, with one challenging norms, while the other highlights how the discursive nature of norms act to constrain, what Butler is contending is that norms themselves can be both constraining and ethically desirable at the same time,

Such norms are not simply imprinted on us, marking and branding us like so many passive recipients of a culture machine. They also 'produce' us, but not in the sense of bringing us into being, nor in the sense of strictly determining who we are. Rather, they inform the lived modes of embodiment we acquire over time, and those very modes of embodiment can prove to be ways of contesting those norms, even breaking them. (2015, p. 29)

Both situations describe the performative nature of norms. Norms that are constraining and norms of protest and resistance which challenge previously accepted constraining norms. Both situations also reflect the integral nature of human socialability, as both are ground in our interactions with others. More importantly to Butler's theory of resistance, is the recognition that coalitions of bodies gathered to contest a norm do not need to be homogenous, they can gather to enact their plural existence in a public space, nor will they necessarily make demands. Rather Butler understands their coalition and

public appearance as a demand in itself, to be recognised, to be made visible, to demand justice (2009, p. 26). This is in contrast to Standing's assertion that the EuroMayDay protests were more theatre than threat, more concerned with "asserting individuality and identity within a collective experience of precariousness" than providing a set of demands (2017, p. 3). Ironically within Butler's conception of resistance, Standing's performative action of naming the precariat represents an act of resistance, although Standing's conceptualisation of the precariat demonstrates how a norm can simultaneously challenge a pre-existing norm, desiring a more ethical outcome, while itself exhibiting new forms of constraint and/or a re-imaging of previous demarcations.

Butler's account of precariousness grounds an understanding of being in a framework of social interdependability that undermines a neoliberal concept of the individual. In this way she builds a discursive construction of human survival that is dependent on others. Gilson states

social bonds condition my existence, rendering it precarious and, simultaneously, making it possible . . . On Butler's account, therefore, it is the fundamental nature of precariousness and its universalizable quality that makes it a normatively salient concept, a basis from which we might derive positive social and ethical commitments." (2013, p. 46).

Gilson argues that this is Butler's most revolutionary idea. That from an acknowledgement of precariousness as a universal experience to all humans, originates a need to forge a set of bonds and alliances which then links our inter-dependency to the principle of equality, thereby undermining normative assumptions legitimising the unequal dispersion of precarity (2009, p. 43). Tsantsoulas (2018), however argues that Butler's social ontology of vulnerability overestimates a response towards an ethical responsibility to the other, arguing that Butler's contention rests on an assumption of democracy, egalitarianism and a universalisation of human rights. However, I believe that Butler's liberatory politics

provides a discursive framework which challenges neoliberal identities of underserving populations suffering through their own structural inability to be productive. That the unequal dispersion of precarity is not natural, rather it is constructed and as such those most effected have the legitimate right to demand equality. The resignification of those populations as recognisable and equally valuable will ultimately disrupt neoliberal values of the successful individual being more deserving of a livable life at the expense of others.

Precarious resistance then, would seem to be as diverse and multiple or as narrow and specific as the various definitions of precarity are. Both Lorey and Butler's theories of precarious resistance are complex multidimensional, diverse and at times overlapping, much like precariousness itself. Both see precarious resistance in big protest movements, which are often multi-layered such as EuroMayDay and Occupy, offering a rich glimpse into a new analytics of protest, which conceive of coalitions of bodies forcing a societal recognition of complex identities coming together to disrupt normative assumptions, as well as smaller, even individual acts of resistance. These coalitions may be only momentary, with groups breaking apart, then reforming along new multiplicities, protesting climate change, or immigration policies or zero hours contracts. Neilson & Rossiter (2008) use the example of taxi drivers in Melbourne protesting unsafe driving conditions, as an illustration of precarious protest that lacks institutionally recognisable organisation and multiple layers of identity and precarity (pp. 66-68). Both the state and police struggled to negotiate with the taxi drivers as there was no clear leadership hierarchy, rather there seemed to be different groups with different organisers. The protest itself included international university students who were on visa's, limiting their work hours to 20 per week. Nielson & Rossiter make the point that this protest could be understood as "taxi driver politics, migrant politics or student politics" (2008, p. 66). They argue that the effectiveness of the strike, which lead to the government ceding to the taxi drivers demands, is that the protest was all three of these things at the same time. This is where Standing's analysis fails to

grasp the complexity of precarious resistance. Instead in attempting to build resistance around a common identity and class solidarity, he misses those forms of resistance which sit outside his socio-economic demarcations and categories. Although Standing designates the precariat as the dangerous new class, Neilson and Rossiter posit that the danger is in the unpredictably and creativity of subjects in transit, which institute new experiences of the common which may suddenly flash up into political space, only to withdraw, recurring again in another space in another composition.

## Conclusion

Resistance to precarity represents a new way of thinking and conceptualising resistance. Rather than a problem to be solved, new ways of analysing precarity in all its various forms and experiences, consider precarity as a contested social, political and economic space. As such, the problem of precarity becomes less about a binary dynamic linking security with freedom and more about a constant challenging of social, political and economic norms that structure and frame whose life is more livable. As a form of resistance, precarity challenges traditional mass protests, based on an industrial era dichotomy between capitalism and labour. Although Standing argues that the diverse disparate nature of the precariat is ultimately a weakness, other theorists such as Lorey and Butler contend that diversity defines both precarity and precarious resistance, allowing for an analysis that explores both individual acts of resistance, to slightly larger protests revolving around singular issues such as resistance to zero hours contracts, as well as larger social movements against inequality. While Lorey and Butler disagree about the basis for commonality with which to broadly build precarious resistance, they do agree that resistance should be focussed in disrupting neoliberal identity norms that entrench inequality. The breadth of their analysis' does create a framework for precarity to be both a particular response to

socio-economic conditions and a motivating affect that can bind commonalities across disparate groups. This relates to the dual nature of precarity as both a socio-economic framework of insecurity and an ontological aspect of being. Butler's formulation of precariousness provides a common vulnerability and therefore a basis to build new norms of equality and democracy, offering a wider conception of precariousness as an affecting motivator and acknowledged commonality, that crosses all social economic and political lines. Standing's narrow focus on creating a precariat class, does challenge political, economic and social structures which unfairly distribute resources, and creates a clear and concise set of demands, something both Lorey and Butler do not. However, his categorisations and hierarchisation tend to exacerbate differences and divisions, ultimately providing a context in which both Lorey and Butler argue, the autonomy of those made most vulnerable is appropriated, in the name of securitising and protecting, by those in more protected positions of power. In this analysis precarity reinforces asymmetric positions of power, with security and therefore freedom being dependent on the permission of those in authority. Conversely Lorey and Butler argue that it is possible to have a form of resistance which maintains singular identities within a multiplicity. And that vulnerability and autonomy can co-exist, breaking a binary understanding of freedom as only being situated in security, thereby allowing those who are the most vulnerable to be heard and recognised. Although Butler's definition of precariousness encompasses an ontological state of human existence, which thereby includes everyone, her delineation between precarity, precariousness and vulnerability and Lorey's precarisation, provide a platform for demands which directly challenge narratives which justify the asymmetrical allocation of resources across different populations. Both Lorey and Butler offer valuable tools to analyse and explore the multi-layered complex movable dynamics that characterise precarious resistance as we move away from an understanding of Fordist work relations and industrial style protest as the only option.

## Conclusion

As I am re-writing the final draft of my thesis, New Zealand has been placed in a level four lockdown. Covid – 19 has spread across the globe, more clearly exposing our physical precariousness and paradoxically, our inter-dependability than any economic crisis could have. Although covid-19 is arguably democratic in its contamination, the rate of infection will undoubtedly play out along well recognised lines of class and poverty.

As nations respond to the threat covid-19 poses to their health system and the wider economy as well as their populations, there is already obvious differences. Some nations such as New Zealand are imposing strict lock-downs to minimise casualties and drastically reduce the spread of the virus, while enacting emergency social support legislation to provide financial aid. Other countries such as India have struggled to impose lockdowns, with eighty five percent of the Indian economy dependent on informal workers (Aljazeera, 2020). Government enforced lock downs have resulted in a mass migration of informal workers out of the main centres, as people who can no longer afford to live in the city without employment, begin the long walk back to their local villages. This will clearly have a devastating impact on limiting the spread of covid-19 in India. In this situation India is not alone, with Vietnam, Cambodia, South Africa and South American countries facing similar issues. Even historically wealthy countries such as the United Kingdom and America can be seen to be balancing the economic fallout of the pandemic overwhelming health systems and the consequent loss of lives, versus the financial cost of shutting down the national economy and supporting their populations through that period.

As issues of individual precarious employment intersect with collective and state responses to the covid-19 pandemic, we can clearly see how specific forms of precarity

such as insecure work informs and contextualises our physical precariousness. Freedom is also increasingly balanced against the greater good, although who is represented by that greater good becomes patently clear when we look at the dispersion of deaths via covid-19, with much higher ratios among lower socio-economic groups often represented by ethnic minorities (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2020).

Freedom has also consequently been used as justification to challenge lock-downs. With freedom for some, those who want to open the economy up, weighed against freedom for others, those who are concerned about the spread of covid-19. While those who can afford to stay at home do, for those who must work to live, their decision becomes not on how to stay safe, but on what option gives them the greater chance to survive.

Covid-19 has exposed the ambivalence of freedom and the intersections of precarity which represents the dispersion of those resources considered necessary for life. The discursive nature of freedom underpins the often contradictory definitions which exist in contemporary society today. Precarity often reveals those contradictions, with insecure work being associated with a freedom enhancing lifestyle *and* with a freedom limiting highly exploitative lived reality. Although precarity is a field of research that is currently popular, often freedom is an under theorised facet of their work. Isabel Lorey, however, places freedom as central to her theory of precarisation, as a governmental narrative. In doing so she emphasises the differential power dynamics at play, in the constructions of norms which rationalise a neoliberal ideal of freedom and precarity. By understanding both concepts at a population level and at the level of the individual, Lorey directly challenges the conflation of freedom with both security and insecurity, exposing how even self-precarisation is often exploitative, commodifying an entire personality within the market. However, her empowerment subjectification dynamic conceptualises freedom as also

existing at the site of subjectification, underlying how opposing narratives of freedom can contest precarisation.

With this in mind, Hannah Arendt's essay on freedom provides both Lorey and Butler with an opportunity to explore a different definition of freedom. One that is ground in our socialability, recognising how our inter-dependability has provided a care network to offset our existential precariousness. This definition of freedom as a performative act, incorporating Butler's ideas on speech acts both as acting upon us, even as we use speech to act upon others, extrapolates out Arendt's performance within a polis. This underscores how discursive norms can produce identity, while equally creating contesting norms and different identities. Butler's speech acts expose how freedom and precarity are contingent on others, while consequently offering a more complex multi-layered understanding of Lorey and Foucault's counter-narratives.

Precariousness resistance which integrates autonomy and vulnerability then epitomises a performative freedom built on coalitional politics. The diverse nature of singularities within multiplicities that often represent precarious resistance, fundamentally challenge neoliberal ways of living in all their various enactments. Lorey articulates this point "These kinds of rejections are not a deliverance from all previous neoliberal entanglements, but rather the beginning of engagements and struggles to no longer be governed and no longer govern oneself in this way at this price" (2015, p. 102). This offers an exodus from established relations of power and an opportunity to rethink infrastructural and environmental conditions that support a living set of relations in which a body exists.

Rather than an analysis of precarity in which an overall loss of freedom is accepted, in this thesis I have offered an exploration into the different ways freedom and precarity inform and contest one another. This exposes the unequal power dynamics both at an elite level (government and capital) and at the capillaries of our society which entrench

neoliberal norms. However, in exploring the highly discursive nature of freedom, an opposing narrative becomes evident. One that acknowledges the foundation of our socialability as a form of security, from an ontological precariousness. A definition of freedom that is built on our inter-dependability and inter-relatedness must surely ask the question; why some lives are considered more livable than others. I believe this is a question that will define our era.

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