FACES OF PRECARITY

CRITICAL PERSPECTIVES ON WORK, SUBJECTIVITIES AND STRUGGLES

EDITED BY
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RENATO MIGUEL CARMO

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Conceptualizing Precariousness: A Subject-oriented Approach

Emiliana Armano, Cristina Morini and Annalisa Murgia

Introduction

Recent decades have been characterized by the emergence of a vast body of literature on precarization processes (see Millar, 2017). More specifically, two main lines of inquiry have informed the sociological approaches towards precarious work. The first – here defined as studies on 'precarity' – has been developed primarily in the field of economic sociology and 'has sought to identify the structural forces that have converged to erode the Fordist employment regime for a growing proportion of the workforce' (Kalleberg and Vallas, 2018: 5). This first approach to precarious work invites us to consider the objective conditions of contingent employment and their consequences in terms of income and social protection (see Choonara, 2019). The second line of inquiry – what is termed here as studies on 'precariousness' – is instead more interested in a subjective experience that denotes a condition so extensive that it becomes an 'existential precariousness' (Fumagalli, 2007), which 'permeates individuals' entire lives' (Armano and Murgia, 2013: 488). Therefore, the focus here is on the effects that precarization has not only on labour but also on life and subjectivity (Armano, 2010; Morini and Fumagalli, 2010; Murgia, 2010; Armano et al, 2017).

This chapter pays attention to the topic of precariousness while observing its dynamics at the junction between three different levels: the subjectivity level, in which the social actors define the representation of reality that forms the backdrop to their action; the context level, that is, the social and cultural models available to the actors; and the level of meaningful actions, where the actors operate between representations, intentions and resources. What is meant by precariousness in terms of social representation, in particular in the

time of the pandemic? How is it characterized and what are the dominant discourses in which it is embedded? How are uncertain identities managed and the possibilities of individual and collective actions perceived? Indeed, precariousness is not a characteristic of the context in question, nor does it pertain to the individual or social dimension alone. Rather, it is distinguished as situated social representation, which is built in the relations between the different dimensions that make up the subjects' lives, and it can be included in the framework of the complex dynamic between formation of the *subject*, *subjectivity* and *subjectivization* (Rebughini, 2014).

With the purpose of understanding how precarization processes impact on forms of subjectivity, the experiences and representations of precariousness are considered in the frame of the *génération precaire* (Bourdieu, 1998). This term concerns the forms of precarious subjectivization connected to the weakening of the social bonds. Indeed, it becomes difficult for subjects to rebuild the sense of their existence within the dominant economic and political dynamics, in the same way as it is difficult to regain a balance between the subjective and collective dimensions (Giannini, 2016). In this view, precarious subjectivity does not only refer to the condition of temporary or discontinuous employment but, above all, to being subjectively placed in a situation in which one has to self-activate resources (Ross, 2009) and take sole responsibility for one's choices and social protection.

Using the results of a series of research projects, carried out mainly in Italy, on this topic as a starting point (Armano, 2010; Armano and Murgia, 2013; Armano et al., 2015; Morini, 2010, 2014, 2016, 2022; Morini et al, 2014; Murgia, 2010; Murgia et al, 2020[1]), this chapter focuses its attention on how precariousness is represented, including in light of the COVID-19 pandemic. In particular, the chapter is set out as follows: the first part introduces the concepts of 'precarity' and 'precariousness', going on to concentrate on the latter and explore it in terms of the production of subjectivity. In our reading, the precarious subject appears as a 'precarious-enterprise worker', impelled to become the sole person responsible for their destiny and invest totally in the production of their subjectivity. The chapter continues with a reflection on the digitalization processes during the pandemic and their effects on the production of subjectivity. Finally, the last part asks about the possibilities of individual and collective action while discussing how, in the proposed perspective, potential forms of resistance to precariousness can be drawn up through the reappropriation of the corporeal and sensible dimensions, and the construction of social relations based on affective and corporeal encounters with others.

Precariousness as the production of subjectivity

The hypothesis that directs the analysis herein is that the diffusion of precarization processes is one of the fundamental traits of the current forms

of subjectivization. In order to understand and interpret people's experiences in relation to work as well as other spheres of life, we therefore considered it useful to distinguish the concept of 'precarity' – which has been widely used in the European context to identify the erosion of standard employment relationships, namely, the condition of increasingly contingent employment – from that of 'precariousness', which instead refers to the transformation of social relations in the direction of uncertainty, both in terms of everyday experience and perception of the future (Bourdieu, 1998). From this point of view, it is worth dwelling on the difference between *condition* and *experience*. Precariousness cannot only be interpreted as the expression of a uniform and homogeneous working condition. Indeed, it is strongly characterized by the transformation of work, which on one hand, in the encounter with people's desire for autonomy, comes unstuck from Fordist enterprise and its unbending organizational discipline, and on the other is loaded with new investments, passing from the 'ethic of obligation' to that of 'self-realisation' (Meda, 2016). In this process, the boundaries of work are surpassed to reach a more immediately social and existential level (Murgia, 2010). So, to speak of *condition* does not pay justice to the various levels that draw the cognitive-emotional, multi-layered map of precarious subjectivity and its transformations, since it neither evokes nor represents the zones of transit – the passages and the crossings that are implicit in the *experience* of precarious lives – which change with the passing of time in relation to the different positions in work but also in space, the phases of life and relationships. Furthermore, while condition is, to a large extent, determined from above, experience acts directly and leads us to ask questions and try to break away from this same condition. All of this is more meaningful than ever if we focus our attention on the relationship between precarious experience and the bodies of precarious workers, as this chapter will try to do.

In terms of reconstructing experience, for those going through the passage from one job to another; from education to employment; from employment to non-employment; and those in the temporariness of work contracts, the greatest suffering seems to be linked to the difficulty in giving shape to an oriented narrative – in defining a story, in making out a 'plot' in the activities and identifying a recognizable objective to reach (Sennett, 1998). Having no long-term objectives can make us extremely vulnerable to the urgency of the moment. Significantly, on one hand, people continue to seek to draw up strategies to build future horizons, but on the other they tend to represent their future as the result of discontinuities beyond their individual control (Carmo et al, 2014). Uncertainty about one's individual future, but also about the contextual future, is thus accompanied by a strategic tendency to try to avoid stable bonds (Beck, 2000b). Hence, the difficult task of planning the future acts on the construction of the present and the capacity to act within it. Insecurity and the sense of isolation expand, inside a system where what

stands out most is the weakness of the social bonds. This very weakness may well be the basis for the representation and experience of precariousness: the real perceived as changing, inviting the adoption of action strategies which are changing too. The upshot is that bonds and modes of belonging always appear reversible and partial, and medium-term strategies best adapt to the lives of individuals struggling to connect the level of values or long-term goals to the level of everyday action. In this view, precariousness can therefore be read as a weakening and breaking down of the social bond, accompanied by an increase in the sense of dependency on a changing context to which we have to be able to adapt as quickly as possible. These processes form one of the fundamental roots that characterize the experience and discursive repertoires of precarious subjectivity. In the symbolic order of their everyday life the social actors place themselves in a position of subalternity, and this devaluation forms the first step towards interiorizing the sense of powerlessness, lack of value and dependency. As a result, it also becomes complex and difficult to mutually coordinate individual pathways within society, and hence possible strategies of shared action.

Having adopted a subjective acceptation of precariousness (Armano and Murgia, 2013; Morini and Vignola, 2015), lastly, it is worth briefly recalling the notion of subjectivity used in this analysis. Subjectivity in the social sciences is a synonym for intentionality and, therefore, capability to identify ends and build meaningful courses of action, both with reference to a subject and other social actors. This requires the distinction of two categories implicit in the action of any intentional subject: the motivation to act and subjective meaning. Within the wide debate on subjectivity, our position dialogues with that of feminist thought (see Henriques et al, 1984; Butler, 1990), which has, first of all, always considered subjectivity to be situated and incorporated in power relations and dominant discourses, and consequently, secondly, felt the need to rethink subjectivity in terms that would allow for agency and political action.

The precarious subject as a self-entrepreneurial subject

In the picture described thus far, it is interesting to focus attention on how subjects are called upon to make their own destiny and be 'entrepreneurs of themselves' (Foucault, 2008), in a process that aims to transform citizens into entrepreneurs of their own human capital and therefore give rise to forms of subjectivization and self-construction based on individualization and business logic (Bröckling, 2016). In this connection, the experience of the 'precarious-enterprise worker' does not only or principally concern the forms of contingent work defined by a contractual condition of either subordinate or freelance employment but, more generally, the *hybrid* set of situations which push the single person to take on risk and invest totally in the

production of their subjectivity. In neoliberalism, businesses and institutions tend to promote management and rhetorical discourses centred on autonomy, freedom and cooperation, using these elements as a lever to motivate participation in working life. Therefore, social and public life also seem to fit perfectly into this horizon of thought centred on the self-activation of one's own resources, risk-taking and the sense of guilt and inadequacy.

At the beginning of the century, André Gorz (2001) was already analyzing what worth the individual could hold for capitalism. In this logic, the precarious subject has to actively take part in the process of self-exploitation. Hence, these individuals are not exploited but are instead willing to self-invent, take risks, put themselves at stake and even get into debt for their own self-realization. Boltanski and Chiapello (1999) highlighted how, in the new, non-disciplinary spirit of capitalism (that is, not based on obedience or control), the neoliberal ideology manages to subsume the anti-authoritarian claims of participation and self-determination, the needs for creative and imaginative expression, and the criticism against the repetitiveness and alienation of work levelled since the social movements of the 1960s and 70s. In particular, the desire for a job that is a meaningful activity and can offer self-recognition exposes subjects to peculiar processes of subjectivization, owing to that same search to realize their own creativity. In a certain sense, subjects are captured in what could be called a 'passion trap' (Murgia et al, 2012). On one hand, they seek activities that are a source of passion and pleasure, but on the other hand, in this search, they experience passion in the most literal sense of the word: the pain, the suffering and the fatigue caused by the experience of precariousness. Therefore, we witness a phenomenon of 'capture', being entrapped by passions, emotions and human relations that go beyond work relations. And it is precisely individuals' capacity to put themselves in their work that becomes functional to the current production model (Morini, 2010).

While the neoliberal discourse welcomes the desire to be able to start from oneself and one's feelings, and from the subject under formation's claims of possible power, at the same time it is bent in the direction of realizing individual performances for the market. In this connection, Bologna (2018) underlined that independence and creativity are an attractive characteristic and, at the same time, a basic requirement of neoliberal subjectivity. It combines the urge to flee salaried work, the strong individualizing and libertarian drive to be able to decide and 'do-it-yourself' and the involvement of the whole person in the work performance. This means that, at times, the forms of exploitation at work become more intense than in the past precisely because they are based on the single person's assumption of responsibility, on the conviction that we alone are the maker and cause of our success or failure, and above all, on our incapability to read the system constraints. Mark Fisher (2009) expressed this concept in an interesting way.

In his view, one of the most successful tactics of managerial classes was to make the single individual 'responsible' and convince us to believe that our poverty, lack of opportunities or unemployment is our own fault alone. What he defined as 'magical voluntarism' – namely the conviction that we all have the power to become what we want to be – is today the dominant ideology and non-official religion of contemporary capitalistic society. It is thanks to this mechanism that the risk has been shifted from the system to the individual's capabilities, and individuals have been pushed to self-blame rather than blame the social structures, seeing themselves as the sole persons responsible for their success or defeat (Beck, 2000a).

In this framework, our interest lies in observing how the new *production of subjectivity* enacted by the neoliberal model takes shape and how it is pressed to change. If, in industrial capitalism, the condition behind accumulation was control of machines which tended to incorporate technical know-how, in neoliberal capitalism accumulation is also based on control of people's knowledge, and the knowledge of women in particular, who are asked to sustain capitalism in increasingly intimate and personal ways (Gill and Kanai, 2018). Therefore, the *enterprise* of which capitalism needs to come into possession is the human being, our social self and our being in relation (with each other).

Precarious subjectivity and digitalization in the time of a pandemic

Reflection on the economic contexts, the structure of the labour market and the paradigms of production/reproduction implies a reflection on the *precarious ontology* of the contemporary subject, whose existential dimensions (time of life and relations with the surrounding world) are eroded by mechanisms concerning the new technological processes and the *appropriative* capacities of capitalism. With our chapter, we aim to engage in the debate on the colonization of everyday life (Cingolani, 2021). Indeed, our reflection does not focus on a particular type of digital platform but concerns the production of precariousness in relation to the broader processes of digitalization, which have been significantly accelerated during the recent pandemic.

One of the main characteristics of contemporary capitalism, further highlighted by the global pandemic, concerns the widespread diffusion of digitalization, which has *re-medi(at)ed* the whole corpus of social relations (Bolter and Grusin, 1999). It was during the pandemic that the great leap was seen in the permanent integration of technology in every aspect of our lives, with the acceleration of the diffusion of digitalization. Homes are no longer exclusively personal spaces but also, thanks to high-speed digital connectivity, places of remote work, entertainment, education and social life. For the first

time, forms of remote working and education were experienced in the home at mass level and on a global scale. More generally, while connectivity was a fundamental resource in the period of the pandemic crisis, at the same time these working and life activities became more proceduralized and replicable, and invariably more scarce in terms of informal empathetic interaction. This experience, which heightened the process of uprooting social relations from the local contexts of interaction, has reshaped the perception of trust as well as the dimension of risk and the concepts of security or danger. As Lupton and Willis (2021) recently wrote, with the COVID-19 pandemic, the concept of Beckian risk was brought to the forefront once more and, as a result, rethought. In digital-mediated human interaction, in particular through digital platforms, people are asked to place their trust in impersonal systems and principles, algorithmic procedures and anonymous people. Here, to experience precariousness is to feel part of a universe of events outside our control, which we do not fully understand. Therefore, it comes into contrast with the widespread expectation of neoliberalism that we can avail a world of unlimited and unbounded possibilities.

In this framework, digitalization acted on the processes producing precarious subjectivity in an ambivalent manner: on one hand, it offered the potential to free the cognitive and relational capacity by promising and allowing the physical limits set by rules of confinement to be overcome; on the other, it encouraged pre-set individual answers of a tendentially reactive kind in a process in which the *structuring of the inner self and human identity* underwent an *other-directed reorganization* with new upshots and profound effects on our existences (Möhring et al, 2021). The response routes set out by digital mediation do not permit broad spaces and times for deep reflection, and usually point towards reactive and immediate answers as they are built in such a way as to produce a series of impromptu experiences. The philosopher Han Byung-Chul (2015, 2017) wrote visionary and prophetic words about this digital presentism hinging on performance, performativity and competition (see also Chicchi and Simone, 2017; Gancitano and Colamedici, 2018). Specifically, his analyses highlighted how the obsession for hyperactivity and the increasingly great tendency towards reactive multitasking end up producing depressive and neurotic disorders. These expressions of malaise are interpreted as the consequence of the subject's incapacity to deal with the rhythms of post-capitalistic hyperproduction.

A further novelty that accompanies the production of precarious subjectivity in a context of the progressive diffusion of digitalization consists of the fact that the intermediate space of *connectivity*, where work relationships and learning as well as our entire social lives are built, becomes increasingly significant. In particular, time appears to be introjected and released from external formal control while at the same time impossibly extended, indefinite and dilatable. So, the ambivalence of connectivity,

which can be understood as the result of the tension between (infra)structural elements and subjective practices, is clear, and even more so in a pandemic situation. In this context, in which relations are defined in terms of *user interactions*, social bonds necessarily become weaker, and subjectivity tends to become fragile. Indeed, they are relations that are configured following the logic of connection/disconnection, as they are more similar to *connections* and contacts in the working environment rather than solid relationships structured in time. Connection is the creation of a *temporary bond* based on trust in an objective, a *hyper-light, immensely weak* bond that can be thrown off immediately by disconnecting when need be (Castells, 1996), when the 'trust contract' between the parties no longer holds or the goal simply changes. The pandemic caused by COVID-19 gave new space to this type of relation centred around digital connectivity and, at the same time, took away the space of face-to-face relations and places of shared physical proximity. It overturned the world as it was and left us with a bed of anxiety about the present and, above all, about an uncertain future. It is the brutality of sudden change: contemporary forms of life cannot be as they were before, but we do not yet know what they will become.

Reclaiming bodies and social relations to resist precariousness

In the unfolding of the dual pandemic and economic crisis, we tend to enter further and further into the logic of unease, solitude and sadness, that is, frustration of the instincts connected to pleasure. So, in governing our lives we are given less and less room for those blandishments whose former purpose was to enchant people, through the belief in a false autonomy and an imagined freedom, while acting on pleasurable ideals, and desirous and outward-looking instincts. Goods, consumption, success: Paolo Godani was right when he wrote, 'if it didn't sound immediately ridiculous, one could say that, in its commanding enjoyment and consumption, post-Fordist capitalism merrily takes up pagan traditions'. Today, vice versa, 'it can be seen in several places how the current transformation of capitalism is bringing about a new overturning of the morality of austerity' (Godani, 2019: 15). Now we are dealing more crudely with forms of introversion, sacrifice, unease and unhappiness, moved by fear. But this paradigm of affliction and fear, this apotheosis of the absence of pleasure, this void of vision, lacking even the evocation and 'frantic harnessing of desire', which continuously opens the way to a 'constitutionally unsatisfied pleasure' (Godani, 2019: 23), plays in our favour. How? By once again calling upon our bodies and politicizing that which our body is able to say to us.

The inspiration notably comes from Donna Haraway's *situated knowledges* (1988), and the resulting assertion that knowledge is always partial because

it is unavoidably imperfect, since every point of view is always 'situated' in its own time and space, and it cannot take in everything within its grasp. And it is also partial in the sense that knowledge is never passive, nor are the human beings who use it and move towards it and are spurred by interests and desires, and in the same way by prejudices. This perspective allows us to investigate the relationship between power and the norms at the heart of the processes to produce subjects (and objects). It is again Haraway (1997: 39) who suggests: 'The point is to learn to remember that we might have been otherwise, and might yet be, as a matter of embodied fact.' If feminism made the body immediately 'political', bringing the person, sexuality, affections and relationships directly back into history, culture, claims and political agendas, challenging those devices striving to determine a precise and blinkered order based on dichotomies (Haraway, 1995), then the practice of starting from ourselves also comes to our aid in trying to investigate the subalternity to which the 'precarious-enterprise worker' seems to be condemned.

Immersion in existential and generalized precariousness causes the *body to emerge*: that is, the most intimate, most fragile, most exposed part emerges, linked to the different phases of life, to reproduction and to keeping existence alive. The most fragile moments, those which the Keynesian social state was concerned with protecting (childhood, illness, old age, motherhood), appear exposed, owing to the increasing weakness of the collective frame. The precarious experience, so closely connected to existence and its advancement, highlights the contradictions – the eternal tension between 'private' and 'public': work absorbs life, the passions and desires, and then unloads imbalance and conflict onto that same life. To draw an existential balance, the social and affective dimension assumes new force and centrality, in the very moment the welfare systems are beginning to crumble: the *social* is becoming the *private*. This is why reference to the concept of precariousness seems to be effective and particularly pertinent. Judith Butler refers to precariousness as the political modality of the body, conceived of as a 'human animal', outside all working *conditions*, and capable of feelings such as empathy, which 'open onto the body of another, or a set of others'. Butler uses a beautiful image and writes, 'bodies are not self-enclosed kinds of entities. They are always in some sense outside themselves, exploring or navigating their environment, extended and even sometimes dispossessed' (Butler, 2015: 212). Following this inspiration, we think that questioning the body and the emotions that are produced in the relationship with other bodies can represent a sort of overturning of the socio-affective order that conditions the existence of the precarious-enterprise worker, enslaved to the *obsequium of wages* that is 'the quite generic affective mechanisms of the amorous search for recognition plunged into the general structure of the employment relation and into local realisation as an *enterprise*' (Lordon, 2015: 95, own translation).

'The erasure of the body encourages us to think that we are listening to neutral, objective facts, facts that are not particular to who is sharing the information … information [that] does not emerge from bodies … [We] have been compelled to return to the body to speak about ourselves as subjects in history', writes bell hooks (1994: 139). The disruptive political practice of feminism came into being within a path of recognition based on the recovery of corporeality, sexuality and materiality. Work rhythms, the lives that we live, the lack of happiness and the construction of roles useful for power have a crucial effect on sexuality, desire, and bodily and mental health. The oppression starts by breaking off those essential impulses of the body and mind connected to *eros*, *philia* and love, prompted by *attention* towards the Other, to give some references to a variegated and diversified emotional and sentimental universe, which today – owing to the experience of the COVID-19 disease – is also repressed and blocked by fear of illness.

From this point of view, the precarious body becomes determining in defining *integrated* (employed) and *marginalized* (unemployed), and often victimized and stigmatized, roles (Harvey, 1998). Therefore, the goal is to make ourselves into single, solo enterprises to all effects, always obliged to seek the best output levels, the best quality–price ratio, while aiming to reduce the social security costs as far as possible, in an outlook that aims to expel the Other's body. In this context, the precarious-enterprise worker is pushed to exclude the Other, since attention towards the Other could represent an obstacle to the logic of perennial productivism. Furthermore, the Other could be a dangerous antagonist – a more able, perhaps younger, more disciplined, compliant and optimistic competitor. In order to recognize these processes and to deconstruct the way in which power determines forms of subjection, it therefore becomes crucial to return to the state of being embodied, and hence to recognize subjectivity and the limits of the identity in order to put a stop to the objectivation required by the culture of domination. In looking back and forward at feminist thought, it is a matter of rereading and recognizing the knowledge embedded in the body in order to deconstruct the discourses of free choice, autonomy and entrepreneurship to which the precarious-enterprise worker is required to adhere.

Conclusion

This chapter has asked how precarious subjectivities have transformed in the times of neoliberalism and the pandemic, the presupposition for these reflections being that to understand the transformations underway, the phenomenon of precariousness cannot be seen as depending solely on the type of employment contract. The proposal is to read precarization processes by distinguishing the category of *precarity*, substantially linked to

non-standard work, from that of *precariousness*, instead understood to be the *production of precarious subjectivity*. Taking a subject-oriented slant provides room to consider the *situated* and *open* dimension that is assumed by the whole contemporary working existence, and the plurality of possible conditions that can be gone through over time. This offers the opportunity to read precariousness through the gaze and intentional action of the subjects who live and describe it, starting from how they conceive time and the life phase they find themselves in. So, work becomes an imaginary, in a universe of possible *fragile and uncertain relations*, around which subjectivity is structured. This framework results in a rethinking of the very notion of precariousness: it is not something objective that depends exclusively on the lack of some typical forms of protection provided by wage employment, but the resulting *polysemy* of changing experiences and representations that take shape in relation to the drive towards self-entrepreneurship, to capturing the desires embedded in it, and to the experience of separation between body and mind, further exacerbated by the digital remoteness that was experienced during the pandemic. Hence, the concept of precariousness is redefined in relation to the perception of the relationship with the body, dispossessed of feeling and pushed to express itself in imaginary models and unreal masks of performativity and brilliance.

In light of the described processes, the acquisition of new spaces of speech and rights is (also) deemed to be a question of managing subjectivity and understanding how the neoliberal subject is produced. Indeed, contrasting precariousness does not only mean understanding how much, or how much more, subjects need to be paid or what contracts they should be hired on. It is also a matter of understanding how a social action can be constructed that leaves behind the logic of individualization and enterprise. By putting forward some interpretations of subjectivity, this chapter has sought to trace the different lines of the precarious, 'self-producing' subject in neoliberal culture. Therefore, a further goal of this exploration is to highlight some of the new challenges to which the precarious-enterprise worker is exposed: first of all, the need to acquire an *ethics* and *culture of care* in order to govern political relations (Tronto, 2015) and, second, to imagine a project for a society of care and bodies in order to *repair* the fundamental fabric of social relations (Cozza et al, 2021). In our view, *rediscovering bodies*, bodies brought to the uninterrupted attention expected by the current capitalist model, is already in itself a political act of breakage, in conflict with a (white, male and heterosexual) model of society based on the commodification of the living world. And this rediscovery should also restore the revolutionary possibilities of desire since 'the revolutionary opposition to capital is essentially an opposition of bodies' (Parinetto, 2015: 125, own translation), or, to use Judith Butler's (2015) powerful words, 'bodies in alliance'. Butler's reflections can be the key to turning around the precarious era by challenging us to grasp

the insufficiency of identity ontologies and instead think of the problem of alliance between:

> the cross section of people at risk of losing employment and having their homes taken away by banks; the range of people who are differentially at risk for street harassment, criminalization, imprisonment, or pathologization; the specific racial and religious backgrounds of those people whose lives are targeted as dispensable by those who wage war. In my view, this perspective implies the need for a more generalized struggle against precarity, one that emerges from a felt sense of precarity. (Butler, 2015: 68–9)

Note

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Joseph Choonara *is Lecturer in the School of Business at the University of Leicester.*

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The words ‘precarity’ and ‘precariousness’ are widely used when discussing work, social conditions and experiences. However, there is no consensus on their meaning or how best to use them to explore social changes.

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