



Curious - Generous - Joyful

# Lockdown 2.0 Saturday Omnibus

Two topics a week from the conference back catalogue

Every Saturday through  
distant socialising

From November 14<sup>TH</sup> 2020 10.30GMT

Be together, apart,  
laughter guaranteed

Online via Zoom  
- free, open to all

zoom

For how to use Zoom and the link  
to join see [academicarchers.net](https://academicarchers.net)  
& the group Facebook page

“Feeding the Horses” when “life-support”  
networks fail

Dr Nicola M Headlam 14<sup>th</sup> November 2020

# FLAPJACKS *and* FEUDALISM

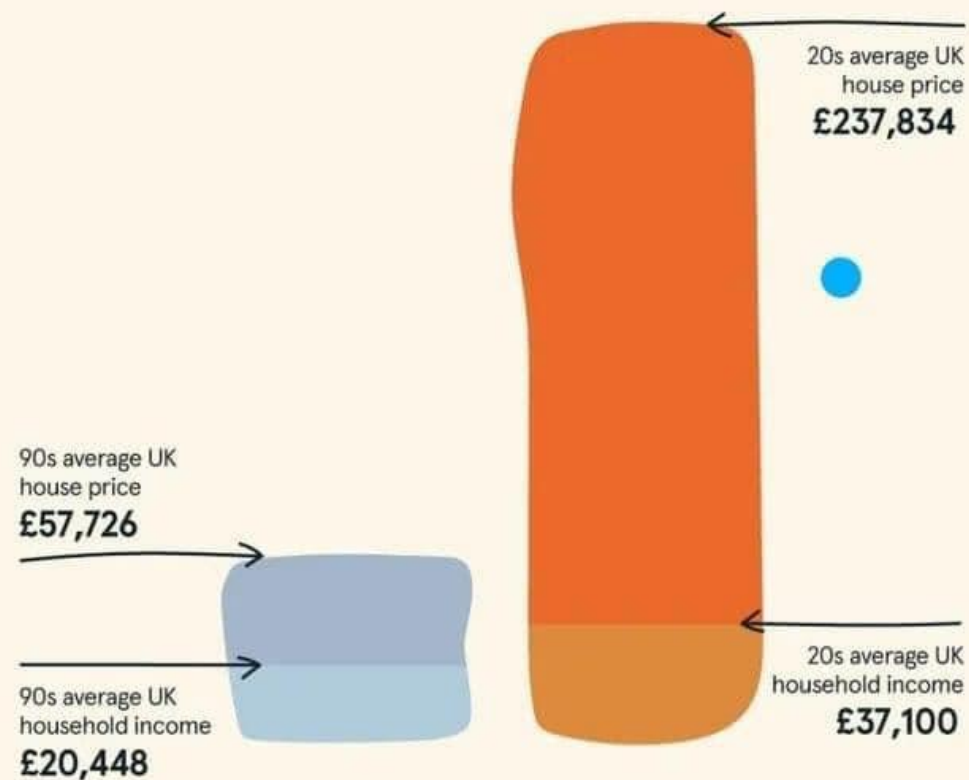
*Social Mobility and Class  
in The Archers*



*Edited by*

CARA COURAGE • NICOLA HEADLAM

## Buying a house 1990 vs. 2020



Source: Land Registry



ALL  
~~NO~~ LIVES  
MATTER

WARNING 1: This is bleak

# Warning 2: in schools this work is BANNED

Responding to the general debate on Black History Month being held by MPs, Kemi Badenoch took to the despatch box to describe **critical race theory** as “an ideology that sees my blackness as victimhood and their whiteness as oppression”.

The minister went on to hit out at schools who had expressed support for the “anti-capitalist” Black Lives Matter movement, arguing they had neglected their duty to political impartiality by embracing the group.

She added that the government was **against** “the teaching of contested political ideas as if they are accepted fact”.

David Runciman - Talking Politics  
Ideas – franz fanon



# Warning 3:

I am a sociologist

Sociological facts are “essentially contested”

Social facts, are economic facts are aesthetic facts are  
psychic facts

Structural explanations and context **crowd out** the role of  
the individual??

Morality??

Philips motivations?

Gavin’s redeemability?

Which we will get into in discussion

# Section 1

Gavin (agitated): *That's not how some people will see it, Dad...They'll say they are slaves.*

Philip (growls): *Don't use that word.*

THE ARCHERS, BROADCAST 22<sup>ND</sup> MAY 2020

# The dark-side network embodied

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the insidious tentacles of slavery flourish within business models which squeeze margins at every point in the supply chain. The prevalence of modern slavery speaks of a wider form of ***neoliberal necropolitics*** – in which logics of accumulation and hierarchies are played out on ***the bodies of workers.***





Construction is a **bipolar industry**. On the public side, we create inspirational buildings, pushing the boundaries of architecture and technology; solving ever more difficult challenges. **The dark side - the systematic exploitation of millions of vulnerable workers** - is rarely acknowledged, even by the clients and multinationals that commission and create our shiny new cities. The sector is rife with **human rights abuses. Bonded labour, delayed wages, abysmal working and living conditions,** The business models must take a large part of the blame: the **global trend towards outsourcing and cut price contracting** makes it easy for main contractors to duck out of their responsibilities. **The plight of the most vulnerable gets lost among the long and complex supply chains.**

(Chris Blythe, CIOB 2019)

'The difficulties facing construction **workers**, ... have always existed but the scale and intensity has increased in the last 10 to 15 years alongside increased **outsourcing, the growth of agency labour and bogus self-employment**. Construction work is hard and where **workers have a choice** - mainly in the more developed parts of the world - many prefer not to work in the sector...

But the balance of power is never in their favour. Every delayed **payment or dispute** can have devastating consequences for the labourers. Contractors are often oblivious to **unscrupulous labour agents or subcontractors that are withholding money, or forcing employees to work at a lower than previously agreed rate**. Some workers are not paid for months, years, or even until the project is completed. **Many are literally starving'**

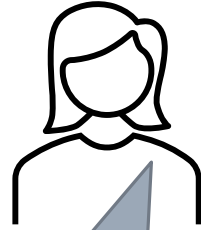
Jill Wells, Senior Researcher, Engineers Against Poverty CIOB report

## Section 2



Grey Gables  
Explosion

Crisis



Grey Gables  
Explosion



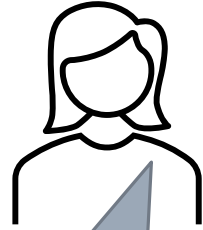
Everyday life

- Physical rehabilitation
- Psycho-sexual consequences of injury on the body
- Selfhood in the public gaze
- Vulnerability of “strong” character in the face of life changing injury
- Loss of hair
- Remodelling the house to accommodate convalescence

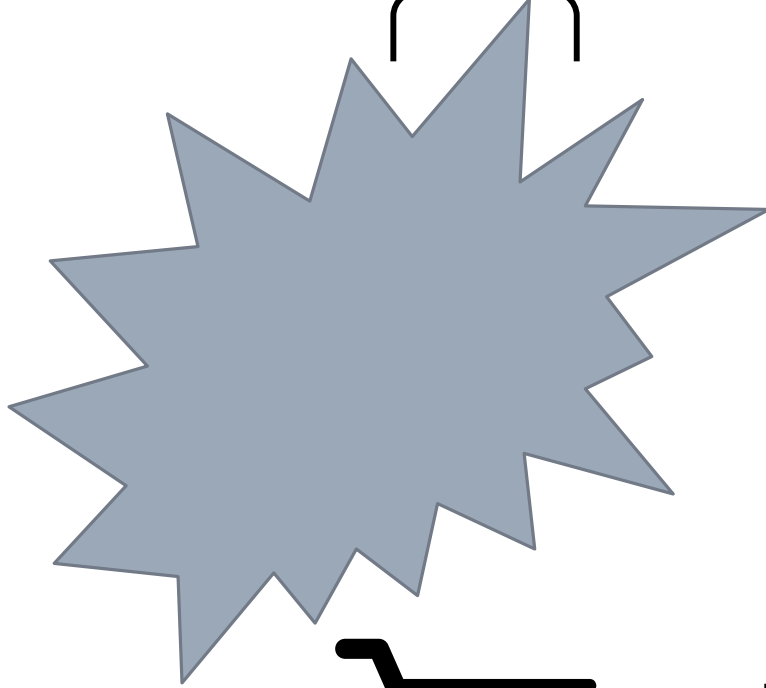
- “nameless” anonymous worker
- Was starving
- Ignited solvents
- Caused explosion
- Nearly died – rescued
- In hospital questioned by police told by Philip it was his fault and coached
- Early discharge
- Working while back “not right”
- Sold on



Crisis



“first world problems”  
Deeply distressing and unpleasant

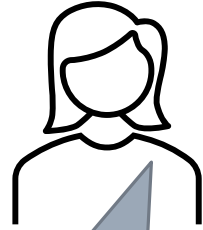


Everyday life

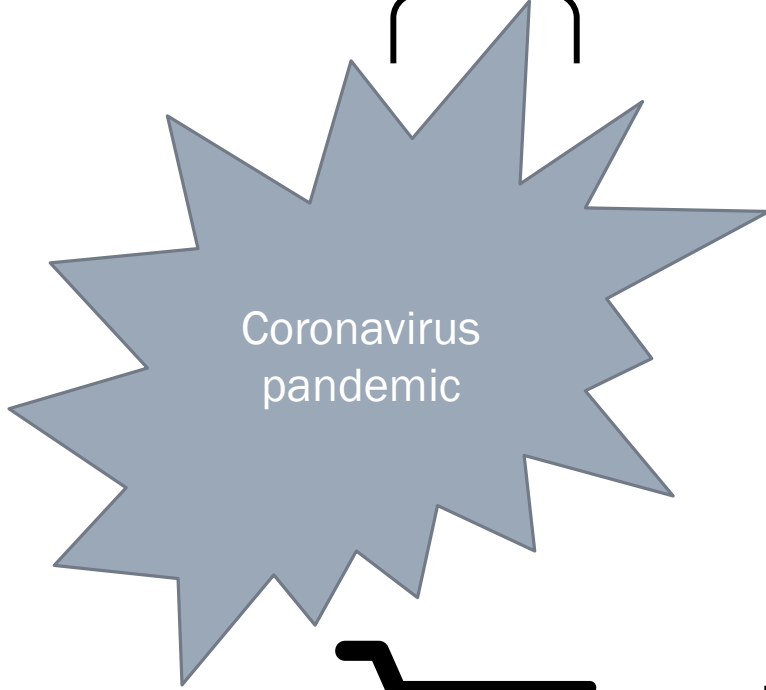


Bare life under exploitation

Crisis



Coronavirus  
pandemic



Everyday life



Bare life under exploitation

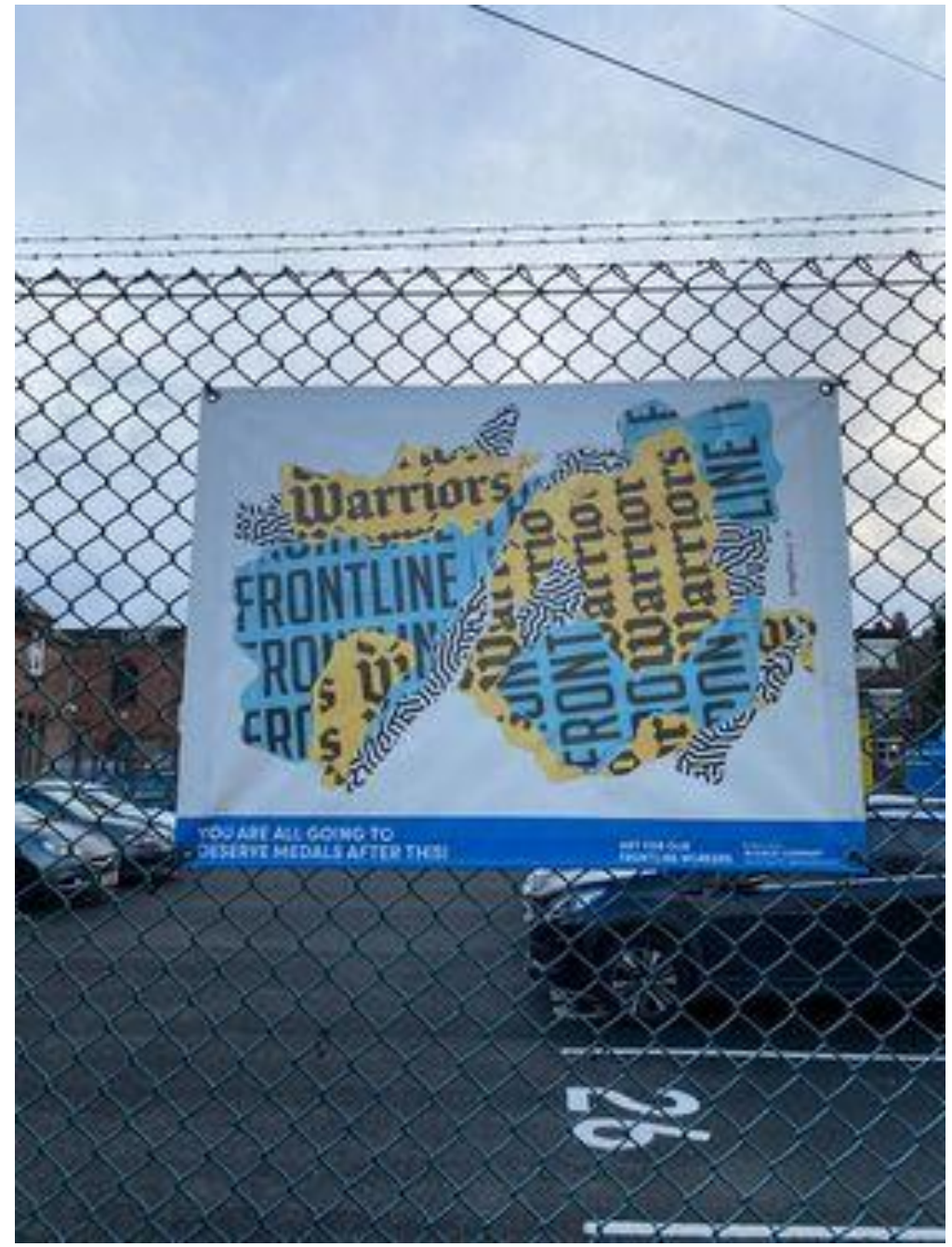
COVID-19 has highlighted in an extraordinary way many of contemporary society's **necropolitical** assumptions. These issues are pushed to the side when things are progressing 'normally' and institutional forms of power hold sway, *leaving limited room for negotiation*. Now is the time to engage more actively with our societies' necropolitical assumptions, because as existing orthodoxies are destabilised, it creates openings to understand and reimagine our own necropolitics

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RULES & ROLES

WHO LIVES? WHO DIES?







**BACK TO WORK**

**CATCH  
THE VIRUS**

**SAVE THE  
BILLIONAIRES**

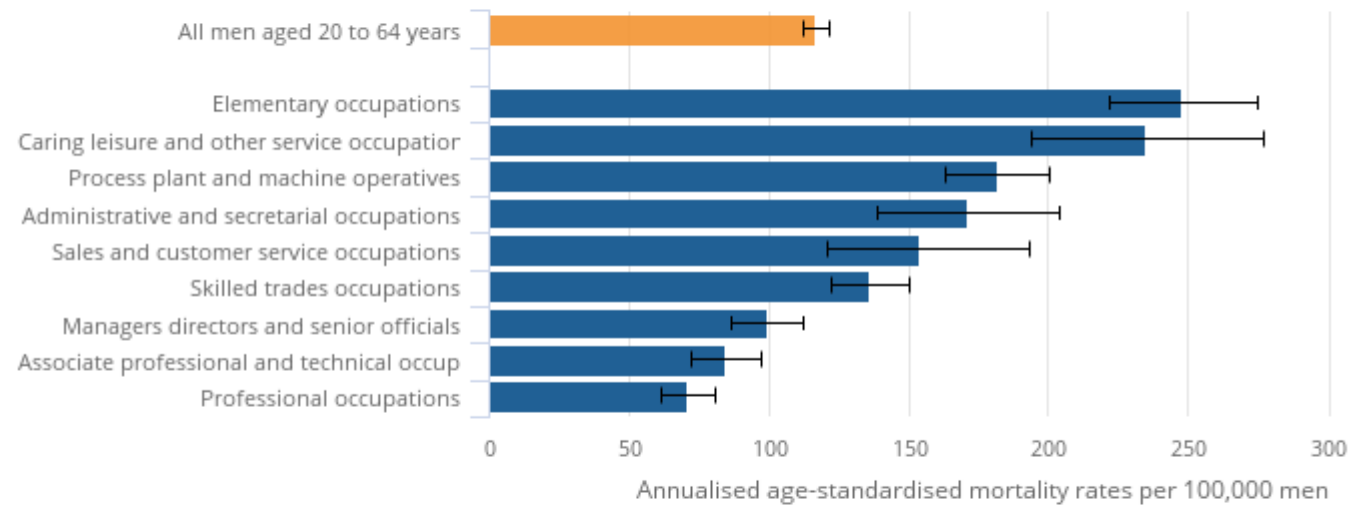
the pandemic  
reveals the death  
drive at the heart  
of the capitalist  
machine

The pandemic is a crisis in itself but also one that exacerbates pre-existing crises of **capital, care, race, and climate**. If we seek to repair the world or the planet then it must be unshackled from the market economy that profits from its distribution of life and death. The state directed imperative to open the economy mid-pandemic, comes at the cost of human lives, and those lives are generally Black and Brown lives working in service economies. In short, the global pandemic has revealed "the death drive at the heart of the capitalist machine".

*"If Foucault thought there was a difference between **taking another's life and letting another die**, we see that police violence works in tandem with health systems that let people die. It is systemic racism that links the **two forms of power**." – Judith Butler*

### Figure 1: Men working in elementary occupations had highest rates of death involving COVID-19, before the period of lockdown

Annualised age standardised rates of death involving COVID-19, deaths registered in England and Wales between 9 March 2020 and 30 June 2020 and occurred on or before 25 April 2020



Source: Office for National Statistics

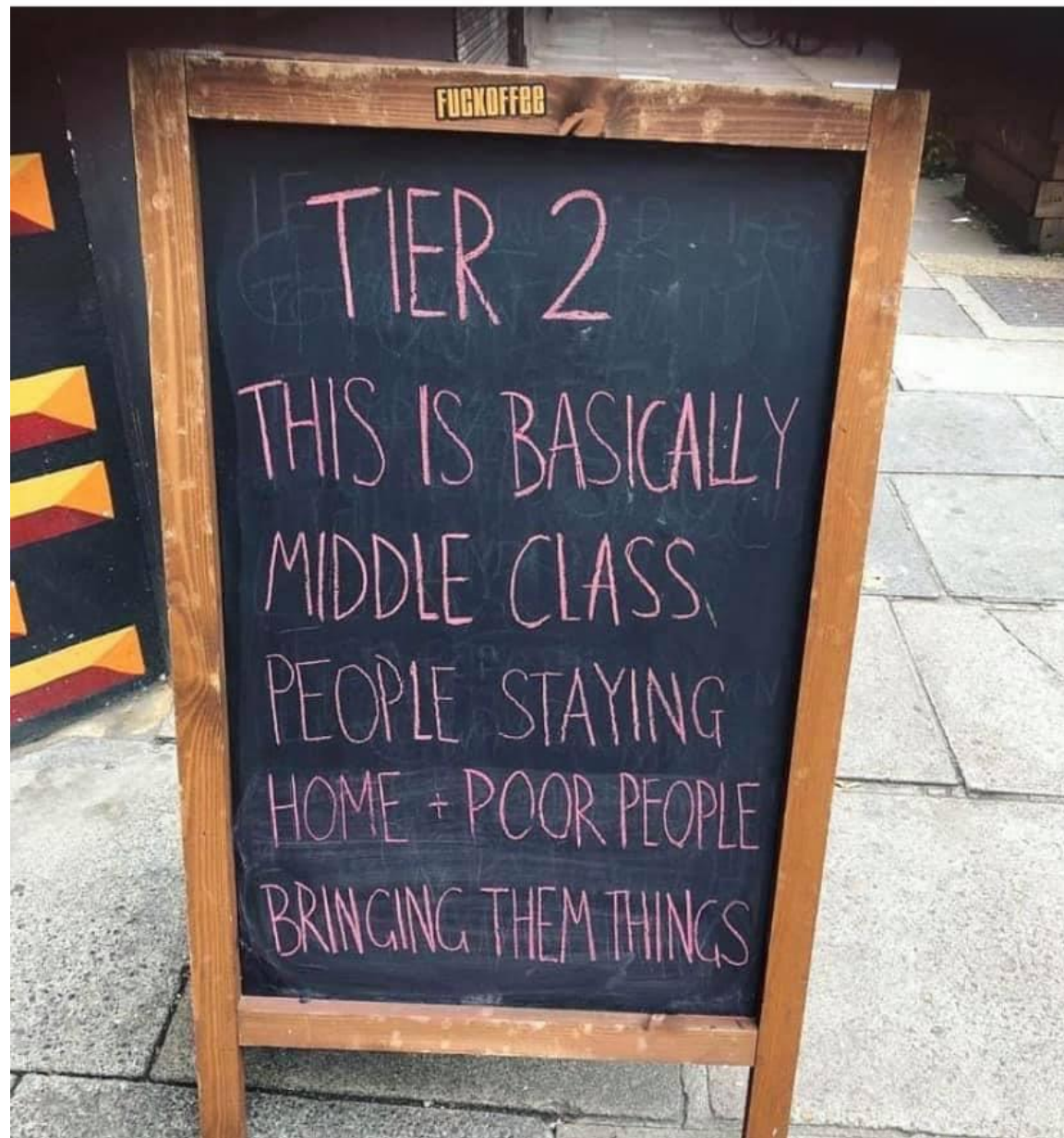


**Frontline  
workers are  
not heroes**



**"work  
or starve"**

**they're  
hostages**



FUCKOFFEE

TIER 2

THIS IS BASICALLY  
MIDDLE CLASS,  
PEOPLE STAYING  
HOME + POOR PEOPLE  
BRINGING THEM THINGS

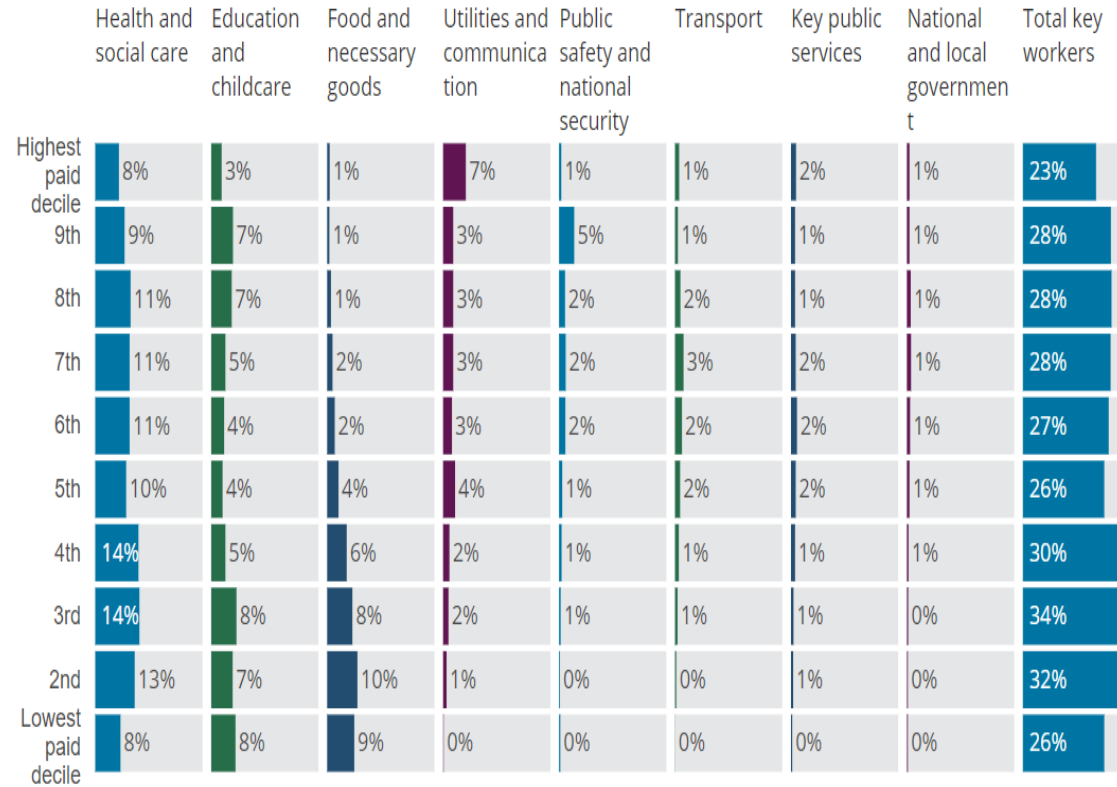


# Key Workers

- In 2019, 10.6 million of those employed (**33% of the total workforce**) were in key worker occupations and industries.
- The largest group of those employed in key worker occupations worked in **health and social care (31%)**.
- 15% of key workers were at moderate risk from the coronavirus (COVID-19) because of a health condition.
- 31% of key workers have children aged between 5 and 15 years; 16% have children aged 4 years or under.
- Of all households with dependent children (under 16 years), 6% were key workers and lone parents; 9% were households where both members of the couple were key workers.



Proportion of key workers in each occupation group by pay decile



# Key workers and pay

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In this form of political economy social and emotional vulnerability and economic precarity combine together, trapping those unable to escape exploitation. They have broken networks for their life support systems – and fall through all the cracks and safeguards upon which we all rely.

# Section 3

Group – emergent class? Gendered content of work	Paid minimum wage?	Paid UK average wage?	Housing/shelter tied or contingent?	Type of employment	Esteem
The Horses MEN	No	NO	Yes – housed together and driven to jobs and fed by Gavin	Forced labour – modern slavery	Abusive, threats of violence
Home Farm fruit pickers – work seasonal, casual and achieved using migrant labour Mixed genders	Yes	? For part of the year	Yes – portacabins on site at Home Farm where pickers share	Seasonal, contracted summer harvest of 8-week period	Casual racism and some resentment. Work physically demanding and conditions basic.
William, (previously) Gamekeeper in with contractual relationship to Borchester Land Very male	Yes	?	Yes - tied cottage tenancy with employer BL	Stable and long term.	Respected ingredient of rural land management economy
Rex in his uber-style minicab More men	piecework	?	No – but own transport in good order	Gig Economy – top up job as farming doesn't pay part of a <u>mix of enterprises</u>	Source of shame for rex that he needs to supplement income – temporary situation
Emma at the Turkey factory	Yes	no	No – wage clearly not sufficient to cover housing costs	“Portfolio” of low paid work – through necessity	Source of shame for Emma that she needs to supplement income –

# US – politics of disposability

- Henry Giroux, accuses the hyper-neoliberal racial state, since Reagan, has silently governed in the interests of Corporate America at the expense of human lives, by utilizing the repressive power of colour-blind ideology to implement policy reforms which increasingly silently neglect disadvantaged populations further into the margins, thereby permitting their disposability (letting them die).
- The bodies of the Katrina victims could not speak with the same directness to the state of American racist violence but they did reveal and shatter the conservative fiction of living in a colour-blind society” (p.174).
- From a vantage point of the racial violence unleashed in the post-covid Black Live Matter moment the politics of disposability is economic, inequality kills, as epidemiological, covid kills different groups disproportionately, and as a question of brute force.
- the neoliberal state proved its complicity in the biopolitical project of not only letting die, but of actively disposing what it had redlined as value-less portions of the U.S. population.
- In effect, by implementing a politics of disposability in the era of neoliberal insecurity, the U.S. government was reducing its populace to a politics of “bare life”.

# Precarity

Judith Butler

Achille Mbembe

- As we reach for descriptors on intensified social marginalization, the concept of precarity has come to name ‘the politically induced condition in which certain populations suffer from failing social and economic networks . . . becoming differentially exposed to injury, violence, and death’ (Butler 2009, 25).
- Precarity has its roots in good old-fashioned economic exploitation (how far are Fagin’s pickpockets different from Blake and Kenzie?) are further weaponised by the prevailing necropolitics of late capitalism.
- This necropolitics (Mbembe 2003) where some populations are made more grievable than others.
- Life is not valued for itself within the global circuits of exchange and stretched supply chains of the present moment.
- Or that there is little equivalence between the lives of the consumers, voters and taxpayers within established democracies and the ‘others’ more marginal souls; economic migrants, the trafficked, the unfree, the sweatshop workers, the precariously housed and those wholly reliant on others.

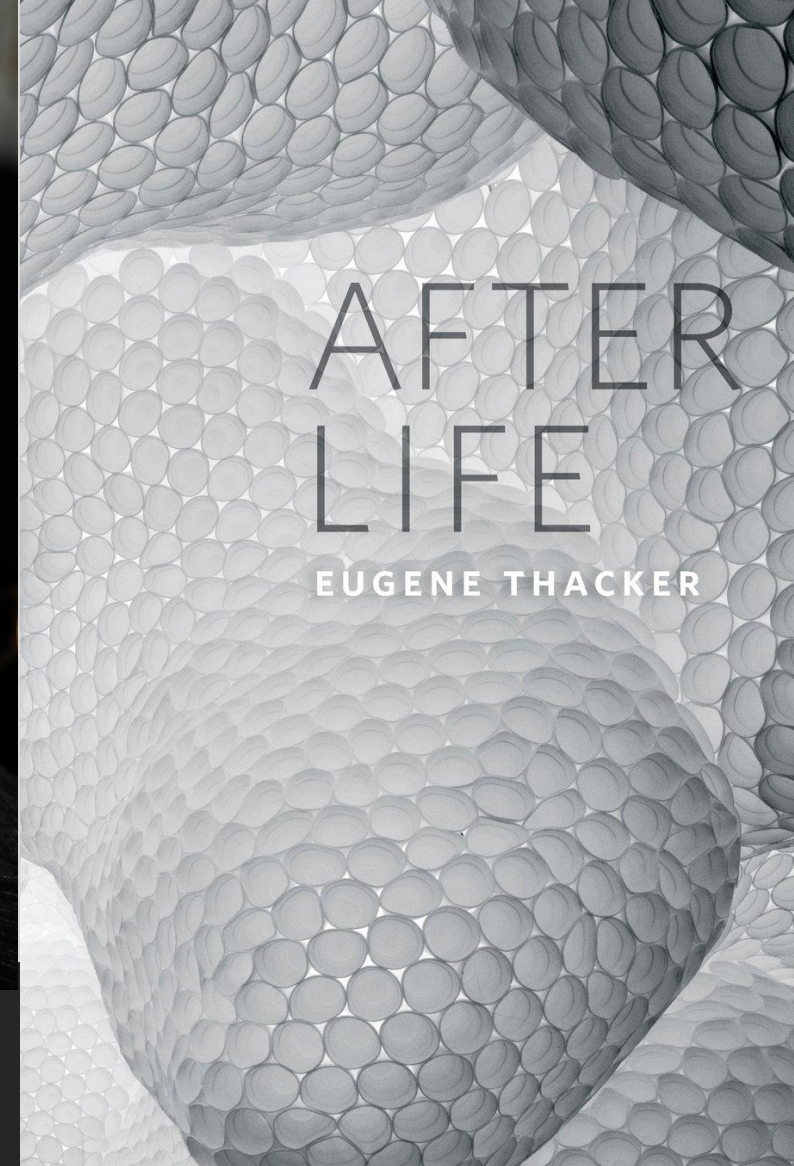


# Whatever Life

- Eugene Thacker argues how it (bare life) is “constantly rendered in its precariousness, a life that is always potentially under attack and therefore always an exceptional life” (2011:158).
- In Thacker’s “Necrologies” (2011), classical theorizations of what was called the ‘body politic’ are used to reconsider what we now think of as ‘biopolitics’, emphasizing the conceptual death of the body-political order and its recurrent resurrections,
- Thacker ultimately posits the contemporary biopolitical notion of what he calls “whatever-life”, “in which biology and sovereignty, or medicine and politics, continually inflect and fold onto each other.
- Whatever-life is the pervasive potential for life to be specified as that which must be protected, that which must be protected against, and as those forms of “nonhuman life”

# Bare life

- Within contemporary debates the nature of ‘bare life’ and of the ‘cultural politics of disposability.’
- At times this logic produces **apathy toward the suffering of others**, as if they somehow deserve it,
- and **dislodges responsibilities to care from broader social, political, and economic institutions.**
- In other instances, it produces forms of **liberal empathy** in which those with **wealth and privilege** engage in forms of humanitarianism that maintain, rather than challenge, the status quo.
- Examining *the way precarity is created and reproduced and how it is lived* is therefore not only a means of
  - critiquing the **zones of exception on the margins of societies**,
  - but also a path to understanding how those who are thrown into precarious circumstances *find ways to live otherwise*.



# “Critical race theory”

Structural patterning of inequality

Mbembe's 2003 conceptualisation of necropolitics, exercised via techniques of necropower, focused on the state's right to decide who may live and who must die (our emphasis) as the "ultimate expression of sovereignty".

This clearly has resonance under the current circumstances in which governments and political functionaries are making comments that suggest some lives may be (are) more important than others

**Giorgio Agamben**

“ modern politics is about the search for the new racialized and gendered targets of exclusion, for the new living dead (HS, 130). **In our own times, such targets multiply with astonishing speed and infiltrate bodies down to the cellular level: from refugees, illegal immigrants, inmates on death row subject to suicide watch, comatose patients on life support, to organ transplants and fetal stem cells.** For Agamben, this inclusion of bare life within each citizen’s body becomes catastrophically apparent with the reversal of democratic states into totalitarian regimes at the beginning of the twentieth century.

# Section 4



Group – emergent class? Gendered content of work	Paid minimum wage?	Paid UK average wage?	Housing/shelter tied or contingent?	Type of employment	Esteem
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Right to housing,  
Right to work,  
Right to life

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AFFORDABLE HOUSING

# FLAPJACKS *and* FEUDALISM

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*Edited by*  
CARA COURAGE • NICOLA HEADLAM

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Talking Politics Podcast – on Franz Fanon <https://play.acast.com/s/history-of-ideas/fanononcolonialism>

# Modes of production

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## Industrial – regulatory hierarchy

Mumford Clock Theory. Technological

Fusion of market and state despite rhetorical separation. Small ruling class

Citizens = ants all building anthills

Hierarchy and bureaucracy reaching perfection – offsetting of downsides in UK. Profits taxed and welfare underwritten.

Colonial/ Imperial inputs “All lives matter”  
commodified and tradable stable class distinctions  
drawn

## Neoliberal necropolitical network

“Realtime” social networks and internet

Global Gangster/ Bankster Class emerges in both industry and politics. Transnational extraction low regulation/taxation

Citizens = spiders weaving webs

Many places/people out of the network of freefloating capital

Chaos



# When networks fail...

Spiders under the influence



Thank You