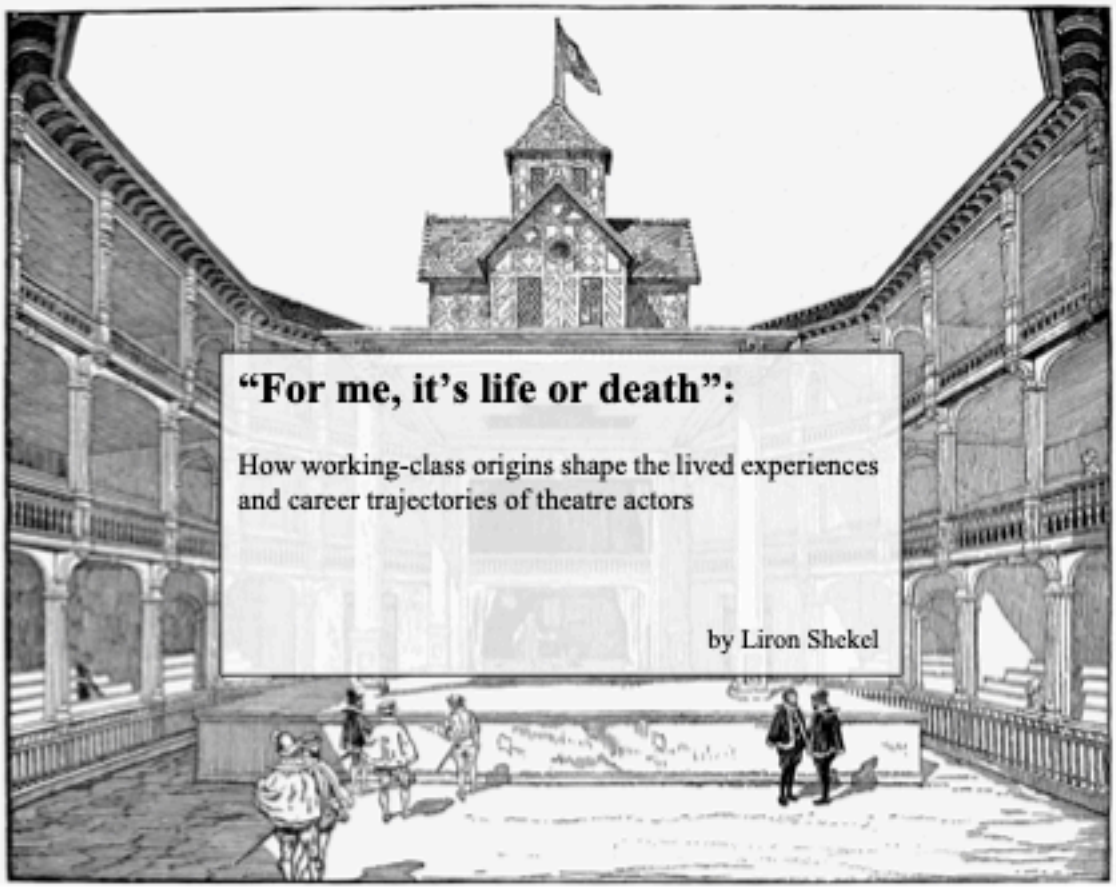

George Varian (17th Century), *Faustus is raising Mephistopheles*, copyright: The Granger Collection

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Thank you to my interviewees for dedicating their time and for their inspiring trust in me and my research. Thank you to my dissertation supervisor, Sophie Hope, for answering my many emails. Thank you to my dog, Ziggy, for keeping my feet warm while I was writing.

Dedicated to my dad, whose voice always comes to my mind when I'm standing at a crossroad.

Abstract

Existing research found that social class imbalance has been longstanding in the theatre acting profession. The aim of this research is to add to the discourse by uncovering the ways in which working-class origins shape the lived experiences and career trajectories of theatre actors. Qualitative interviews with five working-class actors were analysed using critical theory and a preliminary literature review. The analysis demonstrated the barriers working-class actors face to accumulate and mobilise economic, social and cultural capitals, as well as how these capitals mould their professional pathways. Moreover, the study illustrated the influence of working-class origins' hidden injuries on the aggregation and appropriation of capitals, and the ways these hidden injuries impact theatre actors' reactions to occupational challenges.

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Introduction

The word "theatre" originates from the Greek "theatron", literally meaning, "a place for viewing", "a spectacle". That is what theatre aspires to be, a mirror held to reflect real life. The actor and acting teacher, Stella Adler, famously stated: "The theatre is a spiritual and social X-ray of its time. The theatre was created to tell people the truth about life and the social situation" (Adler, 2000, p. 30). It is thus easy to get swept away by sentimentality when you work in theatre or, indeed, when you research it. Nonetheless, in recent years there's a growing movement challenging the emotive language surrounding the stage. Questions regarding theatre's ability to mirror society inherently rise when we investigate inclusivity within the sector. But if we ask who gets to make theatre, we must also ask "who controls the frame in which they speak" (Taylor, 2022, p. 53).

Through initiatives and policies, such as Arts Council England's (ACE) 10-year-plan "The Creative Case for Diversity" (ACE, n.d.), there have been some attempts to address issues of inclusivity. Certainly, ACE broadened its scope beyond the protected characteristics of the 2010 Equality Act by acknowledging class origins inequalities as well, however, although class inequalities are included in ACE's 10-year plan, they are not given the same protected, formal status as characteristics that also appear in legislation (O'Brien, 2021, p. 244). Nevertheless, quantitative studies estimate class origin inequalities are rife in the creative industries in general (Brook, O'Brien and Taylor, 2020, p. 59) and within the acting profession in particular (Friedman, O'Brien and Laurison, 2017, p. 999).

Scholars noted "the chances of different social groups getting into cultural jobs have been stable and have not in fact changed" over the last 40 years (Brook, O'Brien and Taylor, 2018, p. 18). However, the reason chances of "getting into" cultural work haven't changed is simply because exclusion from the sector has been a longstanding issue (ibid.). Furthermore, researchers remarked that while "getting into" cultural work is just as challenging as before, persisting in it has become harder, "getting in, in other words, is very different from getting on" (Friedman, O'Brien and Laurison, 2017, p. 994), that is due to worsening inequality and rising living costs (Friedman and Laurison, 2019, p. 7). Studies pointed to some of the obstacles policymakers face when attempting to tackle the creative industries' class imbalance, such as difficulties identifying social class (O'Brien, 2021, p. 243), self-misidentification (Friedman, O'Brien and McDonald, 2021), as well as the wide-held, deceptive beliefs that social class is a thing of the past (Friedman

and Laurison, 2019, p. 8) and that the creative sector is meritocratic (O'Brien et al., 2016; Taylor and O'Brien, 2017; Brook, O'Brien and Taylor, 2018, p. 7). Moreover, these obstacles are often shadowed by creative workers' enamour for their work. An effusive discourse that perhaps further obstructs the required systematic change.

I assert that while class inequality in the creative industries has been widely researched (O'Brien, 2021; Tomlin, 2021; Beswick, 2021; Taylor, 2022), the way this class inequality is felt by individuals within the sector, or theatre actors in particular, has not received as much academic attention. As stated by Dave O'Brien, "demographic data allowing class to be made visible may be less useful for telling us about why class inequalities exist within theatre and performance in the first place" (O'Brien, 2021, p. 246). My assumption is that a qualitative analysis that reveals the paths taken by theatre actors from working-class origins, as well as accounts of their lived experiences, could contribute to the theoretical understanding of the environment in the sector. Furthermore, this analysis may also have practical implications for policymakers and theatre managers.

Therefore, the aim of this study is to critically examine the career trajectories and experiences of theatre actors from working-class origins using the personal accounts of five working-class actors of different ages and in different stages of their careers. The first part comprises of my research approach, paradigm, methodology and methods used. The second part consists of a preliminary literature review, including definitions of terminology and the theoretical framework where the research is set. The third part outlines the analysis of my research findings, my conclusions and suggestions for further research.

Research Approach

The following chapter outlines the paradigm, methodology and methods used in my analysis, and addresses any potential bias and research limitations.

1. Paradigm

The paradigm of critical theory is centred around power dynamics. It is an epistemological position, frequently associated with the Frankfurt School – a group of philosophical thinkers such as Theodor Adorno, Jürgen Habermas and Walter Benjamin – as it builds on their critique of Marxism (Paquette and Redaelli, 2015, p. 101).

Bonner (2017) noted critical theory refutes the association of freedom with any fixed system of thought. It questions assumptions and existing forms of practice, and "insists that thought must respond to the new problems and the new possibilities for liberation that arise from changing historical circumstances" (ibid., p. 1). Indeed, critical theorists are not merely concerned with how things are, but how they might and should be. Thus, critical theory is inherently interested in issues of division, exploitation and labour (ibid., p. 3).

The members of the Frankfurt School introduced different theories, "critical theory is not a system nor is it reducible to any fixed set of proscriptions" (Bonner, 2002, p. 4). Nonetheless, scholars pointed towards critical theory's importance when it comes to arts management and cultural policy research, stating that critical theory highlighted two main themes – cultural industries and cultural labour. Adorno was particularly interested in the massification of culture and criticised the "use and conception of culture as a commodity subsumed in the processes of capitalistic accumulation" (Paquette and Redaelli, 2015, p. 102). Moreover, the Frankfurt School raised questions regarding the recognition of cultural work as legitimate work and whether cultural workers are becoming the new proletariat (ibid., p. 104).

Notably, Adorno's emphasis on the massifications of culture appears contrasting to cultural theories by Pierre Bourdieu which I'm using in my analysis. Adorno saw the capitalist accumulation of mass culture across all social classes as concealing an unjust system, while Bourdieu pointed towards the dominant classes' recognition of high and low art as creating a distinction between classes and thus legitimising social class divides (Gartman, 2013, p. 33).

However, despite the oppositions between the theories, Adorno and Bourdieu shared a "fundamental focus on the way that the myriad manifestations of culture in modern society are inextricably linked with the unequal structure of power and wealth" (ibid., p. 131). Furthermore, the Frankfurt School highlighted critical theory's critical methods over their own claims (Bonner, 2017, p. 2). Therefore, I believe the instrumentalisation of Bourdieu's theories in my study is appropriate under the framework of the critical theory paradigm.

My personal experiences as a migrant and a zero-hour employee when I moved to Britain sparked my interest in social class systems and questioning dynamics of power. This interest grew as I started working in the theatre sector, from my time working as an usher to being a company founder and producer. In my research, I wish to investigate the status quo in the sector and to uncover the disparities between an industry that presents itself as diverse and open, and the closed and exclusive "creative class" recognised in studies (Brook, O'Brien and Taylor, 2018, p. 33). Thus, critical theory would allow me to scrutinise existing power structures and ask challenging questions regarding the sector's traditional system of operations.

2. Methodology

Paradigms provide the philosophical framework of the study, the set of common beliefs and values shared between researchers and the theoretical way questions should be addressed, methodologies provide the practical strategy and rationale of the research. I note the differences between the two since phenomenology refers to both a type of paradigm and a type of qualitative research methodology. In my research, I have chosen to use phenomenology as my methodology.

Phenomenology is interested in phenomena, in the conscious human experience. A variety of philosophers have contributed to phenomenology, but most draw principally from the theories of Edmund Husserl and Martin Heidegger. Husserl's work directly informs a type of "descriptive" phenomenological methodologies, "which seek to describe the essence of experiences" (Järvinen and Mik-Meyer, 2020, p. 74). Heidegger, who was a student of Husserl, developed a type of phenomenology that inspired "interpretive" phenomenological methodologies. For Heidegger, "existence is always set against a background that contextualises experience" (ibid., p. 76). This means that individuals' culture and circumstances inevitably influence their understanding of an

experience, therefore, they can never be free of assumptions, "interpretation is never a presuppositionless apprehending of something to us" (Heidegger, 1962, p. 191).

My interest lies in understanding the lived experiences of theatre actors from working-class origins, while analysing the influence of social class on their narratives and accounts under the framework of critical theory. Therefore, I recognise my use of phenomenology is likelier to be influenced by Heidegger's interpretative form of the methodology.

3. Data Collection and Analysis

I began my research with a preliminary literature review to discover "orienting concepts" (Layder, 2013, p. 135). Due to inherent constraints on the range of the research, my review was "selective" and I jettisoned parts that were not directly connected to my core research topics (ibid.).

The limited scope of the paper meant I could interview up to five actors who identify as working-class for my primary data. Existing research recognised individuals often mis-identify themselves as working-class (Friedman, O'Brien and McDonald, 2021) and that self-misidentification is common in creative workers (Tomlin, 2021, p. 253), thus my intention was to interview actors who self-identify as working-class then uncover their class origins through interview questions. Indeed, both the Office for National Statistics and ACE refer to class origins using a parental occupation question (O'Brien, 2021, p. 245).

I published a post on my social media channels looking for theatre actors who self-identify as coming from working-class backgrounds. This post resulted in two actors coming forward. An acquaintance also shared my request on his social media channels, and other figures from the theatre sector shared it through him. Through snowball sampling a third actor contacted me asking to be involved. A fellow researcher put me in touch with a fourth actor whom she knew from childhood. Finally, my request was shared with Young Vic Theatre's local community program, the Neighbourhood Theatre Company of which I am a part of, and a fifth actor reached me.

Before I began the study, I received permission from Birkbeck's Ethics Committee. I prepared an information sheet which I forwarded to my interviewees and all of them signed consent forms agreeing to be recorded and transcribed. My interviewees were assured all audio will be deleted on completion and their identities will be kept anonymous. Two interviews took place online

using Microsoft Teams and recorded through the software's built-in recorder. The other three took place in quiet, public locations and recorded using a mobile phone. All interviews' audios were transcribed using a software, the transcriptions were verified against the recordings, then the audios were deleted. Any information in the texts which may reveal an interviewee's identity was erased.

I used a semi-structured approach in my interviews, recognising that some interviewees were more prepared to tell their stories than others. The few questions I compiled were short and open, leaving space for the interviewees to reflect on their experiences, however, they were also "direct" (Layder, 2013, p. 82) to guide the interviews towards relevant topics. To ensure a comfortable, natural flow in the interviews, I opted not to ask an explicit parental occupation question to discover class origins. Nonetheless, during the interviews, my interviewees chose to disclose details about their childhoods, and I was able to recognise social class narratives through these interactions, thus, acknowledging who to include in my research.

Once all interviews were transcribed and anonymised, I used a thematic approach to analyse them. The thematic approach seems to be the most appropriate analytical method to use when researching shared experiences, thoughts and feelings across a data set (Kiger and Varpio, 2020, p. 847). I familiarised myself thoroughly with my data, then I coded sentences and paragraphs in the texts according to their essence and observed recurring themes. Finally, I defined and named the themes, and recognised the most significant areas and narratives for my study. I wrote my analysis of the texts using my preliminary data.

4. Bias and Limitations

I have had long-term interest and investment in social class within the theatre sector, as well as personal relationships with figures from the industry. However, since I am not a theatre actor myself and I have no personal identification or relation with the data I uncovered, I believe any bias is minimal.

Due to its academic context, time and resource considerations, this study is naturally limited in scope.

Literature Review

In the first part of my literature review, I defined the terminology and theoretical framework where my study is set. In the second part, I analysed existing research which I used as an access point to my study.

5. Terminology and theoretical framework

Pierre Bourdieu's capital theory

Pierre Bourdieu introduced his capital theory in the essay, "The Forms of Capital". According to Bourdieu (1986) capital refers to aggregated resources, symbolic or physical, which allow their possessors to reproduce their position within society. In Bourdieu's words: "Capital is accumulated labour (in its materialised form or its 'incorporated,' embodied form) which, when appropriated on a private, i.e., exclusive, basis by agents or groups of agents, enables them to appropriate social energy in the form of reified or living labour" (ibid., p. 241).

Economic capital pertains to material assets which are "immediately and directly convertible into money and may be institutionalised in the form of property rights" (Bourdieu, 1986, p. 242). All forms of capital can be derived from economic capital. However, while certain goods and services can be easily accessed by economic capital alone, some require other forms of accumulated capital, social or cultural. Moreover, although economic capital is at the root of all forms of capital, the conversion may not be instantaneous and may require great effort of transformation or long-term maintenance, such as education or long-lasting relationships. Bourdieu recognised that other forms of capital may only function effectively when they appear unconnected to economic capital, "these transformed, disguised forms of economic capital, never entirely reducible to that definition, produce their most specific effects only to the extent that they conceal (not least from their possessors) the fact that economic capital is at their root" (ibid., p. 250).

Social capital relates to recognition, networks and social relations that individuals or groups can mobilise to their benefit. Bourdieu (1986) defined it as "the aggregate of the actual or potential resources which are linked to possession of a durable network of more or less institutionalised relationships of mutual acquaintance and recognition" (ibid., p. 247). "Membership to a group"

(ibid., p. 248) such as select clubs and other social institutions that give their members prestige or other material or symbolic profits, further adds to accumulated social capital.

Cultural capital refers to education, certificates, tastes and embodied markers. Unlike economic capital, which tends to be clear and straightforward, Bourdieu's definition of cultural capital highlighted the importance of its concealment as capital, "it is predisposed to function as symbolic capital, i.e., to be unrecognised as capital and recognised as legitimate competence" (Bourdieu, 1986, p. 244). Bourdieu distinguished between three states of cultural capital. First, the institutionalised state, defined by education, training and qualifications for example. The sociologist Annette Lareau further connected institutionalised cultural capital with "knowledge of the 'rules of the game' regarding how institutions worked" (Lareau, 2015, p. 2) or, basically, knowledge of how to operate within a given field (ibid.). Second, the objectified state, which relates to possession and appropriation of cultural goods such as books, musical instruments and paintings. Third, the embodied state, which pertains to "dispositions of the mind and body" (Bourdieu, 1986, p. 243), such as behaviours, values and cultural preferences.

Habitus and field

Bourdieu saw habitus as an integral part of embodied cultural capital. Habitus is how individuals develop values, thought patterns and behaviours, and how these individuals participate within different practices and fields, "the way in which individuals 'become themselves'" (Webb, Schirato and Danaher, 2002, p. xii as quoted in Shekel, 2022). Field, on the other hand, refers to how individuals relate to the world around them, it correlates to "arenas of production, circulation [...] and exchange of goods, services, knowledge, or status, and the competitive positions held by actors in their struggle to accumulate, exchange, and monopolize different kinds of power resources (capitals)" (Swartz, 2016, n.p. as quoted in Shekel, 2022).

Hysteresis and habitus clivé

When habitus falls out of alignment with the field it operates in at that time, it may evoke a disorienting or perplexing state or reaction, Bourdieu (1990) labelled this unsettling feeling as hysteresis (ibid., p. 62). In other words, hysteresis is the feeling of being "a fish out of water"

(Friedman, 2015, n.p.). Expanding on his own account of extreme upward social mobility, and subsequent personal experiences with hysteresis, Bourdieu recognised the profound psychic implications of long-term hysteresis, "such a dislocation of habitus and field could produce a painfully fragmented self, a habitus clivé" (Bourdieu, 1999 as cited in Friedman, 2016, p. 136). Meaning, habitus clivé relates to "double perception of self, to successive allegiances and multiple identities" (Bourdieu, 1999, p. 511).

Taste

In the book, "Distinction", Bourdieu (1984) chronicled how the dominant classes, those who possess the greatest cultural capital and marked by their need for distinction from the middle and working classes, determined what is considered good taste by consecrating it as "high culture" (ibid., p. 34). The sociologist Beverly Skeggs (2004) added that historically, "the working-class were represented as having deficit 'culture'" (ibid., p. 39). Tomlin (2021) argued that within the creative sector, the tastemakers would now be considered the cultural elite, the higher professional classes, those who accumulated cultural capital that has been "acquired, predominantly, through university education in the arts, although this can also be bolstered by previously acquired capital through school or family connections" (ibid., p. 258).

The Hidden Injuries of Class

The sociologists Richard Sennett and Jonathan Cobb analysed the experiences of labourers in the United States, detailed in their book, "The Hidden Injuries of Class". The researchers described rooted fears of inadequacy felt by the labourers and a constant desire to prove one's abilities to win dignity, "the ability is the badge of individual worth" (Sennett and Cobb, 1973, p. 62). Moreover, they found these feelings of inadequacy remained powerful in labourers who had experienced upward social mobility or success, thus creating insecurities about being "found out" and having their good fortune or luck taken away (ibid., p. 33). The labourers they interviewed exhibited concealed shame or anger towards their working-class origins, as well as guilt or resentment towards their middle or upper-class present, nonetheless, they expressed deep fear of losing their new positions (ibid., p. 73). Indeed, their accounts correspond with Bourdieu's concepts of hysteresis' "fish out of water" and the divided self of habitus clivé.

6. Preliminary literature review

6.1. The class ceiling

In their research, Friedman, Laurison and Miles (2015) discovered that individuals from working-class origins who succeed in entering higher professional occupations do not necessarily achieve the same levels of success as their counterparts who come from privileged backgrounds due to the accumulated capitals they bring with them. This points to a worrying "class ceiling" (ibid., p. 260). Extending this investigation into the acting profession, Friedman, O'Brien and Laurison (2017) used statistics from BBC's Great British Class Survey and found that actors from working-class origins who managed to "get in" to acting and "get on" within the profession, still do not, on average, "have the same resources of economic, cultural and social capital as those from privileged backgrounds" (ibid., p. 999). Moreover, the study further revealed that despite positive controlled variables such as high-level education and living in a central location, actors from working-class origins still had significantly lower incomes than their colleagues who came from more affluent backgrounds (ibid.).

6.2. Precarity and informality

Cultural labour is often celebrated for its informal nature, seen as playful and bohemian (Alacovska, 2018, p. 1563). However, the informal nature of the sector masks systematic problems, such as overwork, low pay, unpaid work and social inequalities (Alacovska and Gill, 2019, p. 197). Furthermore, creative labourers' passion for their work may drive workers to "voluntary self-exploitation" (Murray and Gollmitzer, 2012, p. 419). When he wrote about a new type of working-class, "The Precariat", economist Guy Standing (2014) defined precarious labourers using a few characteristics including casual work, lacking non-wage benefits like paid holiday, and being required to do "work preparation that does not count as work and that is not remunerated" (ibid., p. 10). In the acting profession, these characteristics may translate to unpaid hours for time learning lines, having to undertake specified training, as well as financial demands like getting headshots and job insecurity (Friedman, O'Brien and Laurison, 2017, p. 1000). Within the creative industries, theatre appears to be one of the hardest sectors to financially sustain a

career in (Tomlin, 2021, p. 256), while acting, in particular, is seen as an extreme example of a precarious work environment, "characterised by precisely the forms of uncertainty – around professional training, access to work and demands of supplementary employment" (Friedman, O'Brien and Laurison, 2017, 995). Indeed, Brook, O'Brien and Taylor (2020) noted, many non-creative jobs are also defined by such precarious work conditions. However, they recognised the sense of vocation and expression often associated with cultural work further conceal its precarity and the very different ways this precarity is felt by individuals of different class origins (ibid., p. 145).

Friedman, O'Brien and Laurison (2017) analysed the economic advantages possessed by actors from privileged backgrounds through the intergenerational gifting of economic capital (either as live support or through inheritance). They found that "the ability to access, or call upon, familial wealth shaped the experience of these actors in myriad ways" (ibid., p. 1000) since familial economic capital didn't only provide these actors with peace of mind and financial stability, it also made it possible to persist in the profession exclusively through precarious times and allowed actors the space to take risks. Furthermore, researchers discovered that, for those from affluent backgrounds, unpaid work or accepting low pay was often a choice they made to gain training, or cultural capital, or to gift someone and earn recognition, or, to strengthen their social capital, thus advancing their careers. However, while for some actors unpaid work was a choice, for those lacking the economic capital, those unpaid work opportunities were seen as exploitative (ibid., p. 1001; Brook, O'Brien and Taylor, 2018, p. 20). Indeed, the results of the survey Panic! It's an Arts Emergency discovered that unpaid work is endemic to creative labour (Brook, O'Brien and Taylor, 2018, p. 20). The researchers noted, "the prevalence of unpaid work creates a sense that low and no pay is how the system works" (Brook, O'Brien and Taylor, 2020, p. 162).

6.3. Networks and the creative class

Data from the Panic! It's an Arts Emergency survey demonstrated that cultural and creative workers had small social networks and were disproportionally likely to know other workers in the creative industries, suggesting a "social closure within the sector" (Brook, O'Brien and Taylor, 2018, p. 3). Furthermore, the researchers discovered that these social networks of cultural workers

tend to hold similar attitudes, values and tastes within them, which tend to be distinctly different from the rest of the population's (ibid.). They noted this distinction acts as a "subtle barrier" (ibid., p. 25), excluding individuals from accessing these networks and earning invaluable social capital. Indeed, Tomlin (2021) argued that, in the creative industries, social capital appears to be more beneficial than it is in other professions and pointed to the existence of a "creative class" that individuals from the rest of society "must penetrate" (ibid., p. 257). While thorough research regarding social capital specifically within the theatre acting profession is lacking, research into careers in TV and films revealed "networking" as a mandatory practice for success (Grugulis and Stoyanova, 2012; Lee, 2013), and this notion seems to hold true for all cultural labour, even if not always to the same degree (Brook, O'Brien and Taylor, 2018, p. 8).

Through interviews, Brook, O'Brien and Taylor (2020) found that cultural workers from working-class origins who had other accumulated capitals at their disposable still expressed they could not achieve success due to their lack of social contacts within the creative industries. Facing this lack of social capital, they further noted, could drive cultural workers to feel like they do not fit in, like they are alone, thus pushing towards hysteresis and further pulling cultural workers away from potential social networks. The researchers concluded that, to network, workers need to appear "confident", and to appear confident, workers need to possess social capital, but for those who lack social capital, to accumulate it they need to network, a catch-22 situation (ibid., p. 206).

When it comes to acting, Friedman, O'Brien and Laurison (2017) referred to drama schools as "gatekeepers of social capital" (ibid., p. 1002), however, their interviewees also noted that the level of social capital made a difference when it comes to acting. In other words, it isn't just about going to drama school, but about going to the "right" drama school where you might be seen by an agent, such as one of the "Big 4" London drama schools or Oxbridge (ibid.). Moreover, it isn't just about getting an agent, but about getting an influential agent, "one of the 10 that can actually get you in the right room" (ibid., p. 1002).

6.4. Institutional pathways

Institutionalised cultural capital in acting is woven with economic considerations. Friedman, O'Brien and Laurison (2017) found that while the "Big 4" drama schools in London and Oxbridge

carry with them the best institutionalised cultural capital when it comes to the prestige of title, as well as the greatest social capital as previously noted, their tuition fees are also the highest. Furthermore, rising living costs make them even more inaccessible to those from working-class origins who do not come from a central location or have the familial economic capital to fall back on (ibid., p. 1002). Indeed, the researchers discovered that actors from working-class origins who succeeded in "getting in" to acting, took distinctly less linear pathways than their more privileged counterparts, with only half of them being drama school graduates, and out of that half, most hadn't attended one of the "prestigious" schools. Additionally, the researchers claimed that the implications of attending a "less prestigious" drama school outside the capital seemed to be long-lasting as some schools weren't recognised by London theatres and agents (ibid.).

6.5. Taste, infantilisation and embodiment

Tomlin (2021) remarked that working-class artists who lacked higher education, or equivalent cultural capital through other means, do not necessarily have lessened cultural visions to offer, but, rather that the "cultural capital that they do hold may well not be recognised as the right kind of cultural capital that has been established, and continues to be authorised, by existing cultural discourses and leading advocates" (ibid., p. 257). As defined in the previous chapter, what is considered the "right kind of cultural capital", or, taste, is determined by those in higher positions, the "dominant class". Exploring why tastemaking remains solely in the hands of those she referred to as "the cultural elite" (ibid., p. 258), Tomlin cited Skeggs (2004) and concluded that throughout history, individuals who came from lower socioeconomic backgrounds were not viewed as unfortunate or victims of an unequal system, but as inferior human beings. The working-classes were recognised as being closer to infancy in needing "both discipline and care" (ibid., p. 35; Tomlin, 2021, p. 258).

Indeed, these notions of taste seem to hold true when discussing embodied cultural capital. Actors from working-class origins interviewed by Friedman, O'Brien and Laurison (2017) spoke of embodied markers, such as accent, mannerisms and dress, which set them apart from their colleagues, further noting it made them feel like outsiders in an industry "dominated by middle-class culture" (ibid., p. 1003). Accents creating barriers to acting jobs or prompting typecasting

is not an unknown subject, and researchers remarked a "sense of stigma was most commonly felt in terms of judgements about regional accent" (ibid., p. 1003). In fact, researchers reported instances of outright discrimination in the cultural sector based on accents as well (Brook, O'Brien and Taylor, 2020, p. 209), nonetheless, the issue persists (Gardner, 2022; Wilton, 2020). However, theatres, or the cultural elite, may simply be mirroring a national matter, as the Accent Bias 2020 study found that the British public's prejudice against working-class and minority ethnic accents has remained "largely unchanged from 50 years ago" (Levon et al., 2020, p. 14). Regional accents are perceived as "incorrect" in an industry that made "received pronunciation" (RP) intonation its "neutral", standard, accent (Friedman, O'Brien and Laurison, 2017, p. 1003). Moreover, even actors from working-class regional origins who were able to act with RP accent believed their natural accents created obstacles on their paths because theatre professionals they met with wrongly assumed they could not change their regional accents (ibid., p. 1004). The researchers concluded that the use of RP as the standard British accent has become such a powerful somatic norm that it allowed middle-class voices to naturally occupy a greater array of roles, as well as more prominent, leading ones. Whereas, in contrast, regional accents mark working-class actors as outsiders who do not belong in that world (ibid.).

Friedman, O'Brien and Laurison (2017) further noted that the contrast between the embodied cultural capital of actors from working-class origins and "high" culture, or what is considered the "right kind" of embodied cultural capital, led to instances of typecasting. They reported working-class actors were typecast for smaller, comedic roles, or the dramatic "working-class victims" such as "the battered wife" or "the junkie" (ibid., p. 1005). Actors they interviewed acknowledged that this typecasting was "useful" for them as they knew for which available roles they'd have a comparative advantage (ibid., p. 1004). However, they also recognised this pigeon-hole they were placed in was significantly limited in an already extraordinarily precarious profession, and the "type" they were regularly casted in meant smaller, supporting roles. Thus, the researchers remarked, "the class ceiling in British acting is not just the result of the different resources actors themselves bring to the profession, but also that the industry itself is structurally skewed to better reward middle-class actors […] Not only do these actors have a far greater pool of roles to choose between but such roles are consistently larger and better remunerated" (ibid., p. 1006).

Research Findings

This chapter details the analysis of my research findings using my preliminary literature review. I sporadically opted to incorporate supplementary studies that were not included in my preliminary review in response to the findings as they developed and to provide the most thorough analysis. This is in line with phenomenology methodology, as noted by Groenewald (2004) that research must go beyond the initial theorising and rigorous data (ibid., p. 51).

The numbers noted in brackets after quotes or specific information from the texts point to the location of the interview in the appendices and to the exact answer where the information was taken from. Nonetheless, all data used was always considered as a whole, in line with its contextual background.

7. Fragmented selves and hidden injuries

"Acting is work. But work when you love it and fulfil yourself is life at its best."

– Bette Davis (BetteDavisEstate, 2019)

Henry, an actor in his early 50s, evoked this quote by Bette Davis during our interview (v.12). Indeed, all interviewees reported that it was passion, or a deep need to express themselves that made them pursue acting. Regina, an actress in her late 50's, is the only interviewee who stated that acting isn't her profession, "I don't consider acting as work, I consider it as a hobby or something fun" (i.5). However, she also recognised the personal significance of the hobby for her:

> "I've been going to the Young Vic community theatre because I needed to just see different people and have different experiences […] Because otherwise I'm really stuck and struggling with my emotion because I really need it. My body is just yearning for it, you know? I just need to be with people, getting a project done, getting involved" (i.5).

All other interviewees claimed acting as either their exclusive or their main source of income. Talking about their formative years, most interviewees expressed that they struggled with academic education but discovered a talent for acting. Thom, an actor in his early 30s, noted:

> "I'm dyslexic. So, written subjects, although I thought I was good at them, I was told I wasn't because people couldn't read my writing. But with drama, people told me I was good. So, it was the one subject that I was good at back then. I guess if you're told that you're good at something, and you enjoy it as well, then you pursue it" (iii.1).

Similarly, Henry remarked on the importance of encouragement he had received from notable professionals in the theatre sector before he embarked on his acting career:

> "…When you get an affirmation from people like that, and you're young and impressionable, it's fire to the touchpaper, you know? I was off. My dreams were already in flight" (v.3).

Certainly, all interviewees recognised the backing they received from key people in their lives. However, despite their supportive networks, a recurring theme in the interviews was a level of self-consciousness, where the actors doubted their abilities or feared not being good enough. George, an actor in his late 50s who has performed on some of Britain's most prestigious stages during his three-decades long career, expressed such concerns numerous times during the interview. He worried that his "luck will run out eventually" (ii.6) when he discussed his financial success maintaining a career in acting without ever having to take on a part-time job. Later in our conversation he also noted:

> "I don't try and be anything other than what I am. I know what I can do. And I just do that. I think it's the reason I don't work as much as I should. Because I don't take risks. I'm scared of a bad review" (ii.9).

Likewise, Regina stated, "I'm not sure how talented I am" (i.2) and Thom recognised insecurities which stem mostly from his academic struggles, or lack of the "right kind" of cultural capital:

> "When I was working on TV, I was surrounded by all these people from theatre. And I learned the Iago speech from Othello, just for myself. And then […] I just started speaking it to one of the theatre actors. Just to show like, 'I know Othello and I've read it'. And he was like, 'oh, you know Othello' […] My insecurity led me to learn that" (iii.5).

These instances highlight "the hidden injuries of class" and rooted fears of inadequacy (Sennett and Cobb, 1973). George, much like the labourers interviewed by Sennett and Cobb who had experienced upwards social mobility, expressed fears of losing his luck. Whereas Thom's evoking of Iago's speech to impress his colleagues may be seen as a straightforward attempt to prove his abilities, "the badge of individual worth" (ibid., p. 62), as well as an attempt to battle a feeling of hysteresis, of being a "fish out of water" (Friedman, 2015, n.p.). Furthermore, most interviewees, regardless of their age or the level of success they've reached, expressed a level of fear of being "found out" as not being good enough. Indeed, these concerns conform to the research by Sennett and Cobb. Beswick (2020) similarly remarked that class origins' hidden injuries "do not disappear with social mobility, but continue to be enacted and felt long after instrumental measures would position one as 'middle-class'" (ibid., p. 267).

Henry spoke passionately about the importance of acting in his life. Growing up in a working-class household near Manchester, he explained his choice to pursue acting:

> "Ultimately, it comes from a need to get out of the place that I was in, where I felt very stuck, and it didn't represent my internal landscape […] It was far more brutal and didn't have the depth that my internal landscape seemed to be calling out for. That's a strange thing when you're a young person, to feel like you don't belong, in some ways, in the landscape, that you've arrived in. But I always felt that I could go anywhere" (v.1).

Henry's adolescent experiences and his attempts to separate himself from his childhood surroundings recall the sense of shame or anger Sennett and Cobb (1973) found in their interviewees' accounts of their working-class origins (ibid., p. 181). It is worth noting that Henry has been in near-constant employment since the beginning of his career nearly 30 years ago,

working exclusively as an actor after graduating drama school. Furthermore, he has been nominated for both an Olivier and a Tony award for his theatre acting work. Yet, while he seemed acutely aware of his talent and achievements, he was also aware of his class origins' insecurities:

> "I need to be able to feel that I'm an equal. When I'm sitting across the table from the highest-paid actress in Hollywood and I'm jumping barriers to get to the rehearsal room because I can't afford a train ticket. I need to feel self-possessed enough to know that I can be whoever I want, and whatever is required of me in that moment. And class gets in the way" (v.11).

However, while he noted his "immovable belief" (v.12) in himself, he also appeared to be concerned with his confidence in his ability as he remarked his "self-consciousness about not wanting to appear arrogant" (v.10) and a deep desire to keep himself "rooted" (v.11). I suggest that perhaps Henry succeeded in concealing the fear of inadequacy suggested by Sennett and Cobb (1973) by turning it into a concern of what others may think of him because of this "immovable belief" in himself, or in his "individual worth" (ibid., p. 62). Furthermore, Henry's unease with "appearing arrogant" seems to be a manifestation of class origins' hidden injuries in itself, as there appears to be buried resentment or apologetic guilt towards his current position, and an attempt to socially justify being in the "room" (v.11). Finally, Henry's display of "successive allegiances" (Bourdieu, 1999, p. 511) when he remarked that "to keep myself rooted in any scenario I have to remember where I'm from" (v.11) goes hand in hand with Bourdieu's notion of a fragmented self or, habitus clivé.

Those fears of inadequacy, of not belonging, of being found out, came up repeatedly in interviews. It seems to me that the hidden injuries of class may leave a deep scar that occasionally comes to the surface and may undermine individuals' thoughts and actions, as well as their abilities to accumulate capitals or appropriate the capitals at their disposal. Due to the multifaceted, psychoanalytical nature of this topic I will be referring to it further in the next few chapters of research findings which focus on the specific capitals.

8. Economic capital

"I've done every part time job. Bartender, call centre, I teach acting like a drama facilitator. And I work in a yoga studio like once a week. So yeah, in the years where I wasn't lucky enough to get acting work, I've done all the part time jobs."

– Thom (iii.6)

Economic capital is at the root of all other forms of capital. Indeed, Bourdieu (1986) referred to the other types of capital as "transformed, disguised forms of economic capital" (ibid., p. 24). It is therefore, perhaps, unsurprising that all interviewees were easily able to pinpoint obstacles related to economic capital in their "getting in" and "getting on" the theatre acting profession, as these struggles were most transparent to them. For example, accessing the "right" (cf. taste) institutionalised cultural capital in the form of a prestigious drama school, one of the "gatekeepers of social capital" (Friedman, O'Brien and Laurison, 2017, p. 1002), means very high tuition fees and living costs. Thus, existing studies noted that only around half of working-class actors had attended drama school and those were generally the less prestigious schools (ibid.). However, even being accepted to drama school is woven with economic obstacles since aspiring actors must pay audition fees to be considered. Therefore, the more drama schools an aspiring actor wishes to audition for, the higher the fees. Henry recalled taking several part-time jobs as a teenager so he could pay to audition for all drama schools he could think of (v.5; v.7). It is worth noting that there are charities and programs helping aspiring actors by paying their drama schools' audition fees (such as opendoor.org.uk), but none of the interviewees I spoke to had mentioned using their services.

The existence of audition fees means that for many aspiring working-class actors, simply being considered for drama school is already extremely challenging and demanding, while their more privilege counterparts may have a variety of schools to pick from. Those economic burdens come long before actors must start paying tuition fees. Thom is one of the actors researchers referred to, since he opted for the less linear route. Instead of attending drama school, Thom got his training by performing with National Youth Theatre's (NYT) repertoire company, stating that at 18 years old he was "one of the youngest people to get onto their rep company" (iii.1). Grace, an actress

in her early 30s, attended a small drama school, but expressed her dismay with how much easier it's been for some of her drama school classmates:

> "Many people from my drama school, mummy and daddy paid for it […] Thousands and thousands of pounds […] and because they didn't get an agent or a job within the first couple of years […] They'd just given it up. So, it shows why they did it in the first place... Not for the passion" (iv.11).

For actors who managed to get into drama school, graduate, then get an agent, the costs continue to mount up whenever specified training is needed or other supplementary expenses. In our conversation, George casually mentioned he couldn't afford to get certain headshots:

> "I was working with quite a well-known actor […] we got on very well. He just had these headshots done, and he said to me, 'come on, get them done'. And I was like 'I can't afford that' and he said 'don't worry. I'll get them done for you'" (ii.8).

While George's telling of the account didn't centre around the price of the headshots, he noted these headshots offered him more opportunities than others, since these more expensive headshots which he couldn't originally afford looked better than his previous ones (ii.8). This account further highlighted that existing economic capital could buy actors more opportunities, and that, at times, economic capital may be at the root of an obstacle, but it is concealed by other forms of capital, such as the case of a headshot which may be considered as cultural capital.

Supplementary expenses, unnumerated employment, informality, unstable work environment and low pay are some of the characteristics defining precarious work conditions (Friedman, O'Brien and Laurison, 2017, p. 995; Alacovska and Gill, 2019, p. 197). Indeed, Henry noted, "theatre doesn't pay on a parity with the effort that it requires to create theatre" (v.7). Similarly, my professional interviewees stated that in periods during which they acted in TV or film, it was far easier to maintain themselves than during periods of theatre work, since they worked less hours but were far better compensated. George observed, "[theatre] is my favourite form of acting.

Probably the least well paid, but the most fulfilling artistically" (ii.1). Thom, who remarked that during the years he worked exclusively as a theatre actor or didn't get acting work he supplemented his pay by working in "every job" (iii.6), added:

> "…You've got a TV job that paid like 15 grand for like two weeks work or whatever it is. But doing theatre, you come straight out. And you either need another acting job, or you have to go get yourself a normal job" (iii.6),

Although their focus was on careers in TV and publishing, the conclusion reached by Hesmondhalgh and Baker (2011) that "workers become so enamoured with their jobs that they push themselves to the limits of their physical and emotional endurance" (ibid., p. 6) seems fitting. Artistic fulfilment was mentioned by all interviewees regarding theatre. They all came into acting because they wanted to perform on stage. Thom stated spending years specifically looking for theatre opportunities (iii.4), while Henry and Regina speak passionately about mentally needing to participate in live performance. Furthermore, the love and commitment many cultural workers feel for their jobs is often inseparable from their view that "culture can make the world a better place" (Brook, O'Brien and Taylor, 2020, p. 140). Indeed, Henry stated, "we need theatre to heal and to bring us together" (v.9). This sense of vocation meant it's "life or death" for Henry (v.12), while seeing acting as self-expression, as Regina remarked "yearning for it" (i.5), made acting a necessary outlet for her. Certainly, for creative workers "the blurring of work and life because of artistic or creative vocations" is viewed as something positive (Brook, O'Brien and Taylor, 2020, p. 145). However, this blurring, the narratives glamourising the importance of theatre for the public, or expression for the individual, alongside the precarious nature of the profession, allow for "voluntary self-exploitation" (Murray and Gollmitzer, 2012, p. 419), leaving actors to accept low wages, long hours and unpaid work. Likewise, Hesmondhalgh and Baker (2011) argue that the recognition, self-expression and outlet that appear to be offered by creative labour, has become "the basis for exploitation" (ibid., p. 7).

Theatre acting's notoriously low wages were highlighted by all my interviewees. Although I recognise the small number of actors I interviewed do not represent the vast experiences of the

wider public of actors from working-class origins, I believe it is worth observing that both George and Henry, in their 50s, have been able to work exclusively as actors, mostly in theatre, since they started their careers, while recognising financial challenges:

> "I have never been in a financial credit situation until 2020. So, I've lived on the edge of my means for 30 years professionally" (v.7).

However, unlike the more senior actors, both Thom and Grace, who are in their early 30s, noted they occasionally had to work in other part-time jobs to sustain themselves while working in theatre. Thom joked he worked in "all the part time jobs" (iii.6), while Grace remarked that she retrained as a beauty therapist during the pandemic (iv.6). Likewise, Brook, O'Brien and Taylor (2020) discovered similar generational discrepancies in their interviews with creative workers, "over thirty years ago, when many of our older interviewees were starting their cultural occupations, the support systems were very different for a much smaller set of entrants into a smaller cultural sector" (ibid., p. 163). Thus, I'd like to add a personal assumption that the deceptive wide held belief that we are at the age of social mobility (Friedman and Laurison, 2019, p. 8), rising living costs and general worsening inequality (ibid., p. 7), as well as the increasing competition noted within the profession, may play a part in these generational discrepancies. Nevertheless, I recognise this goes beyond the scope of this paper and recommend further research.

While Thom acknowledged the necessity of supplementing his pay with part-time work, he was also the only interviewee who brought up the subject of benefits:

> "I don't have the bank of mum and dad. So, as a younger actor […] I was very, like, ashamed to claim benefits. Because you're constantly told that you should not […] So, now, since the pandemic, there've been times where I've been on Universal Credit. But I earn enough so it only tops me up a little bit […] But there's something deep inside of me that still feels shameful for claiming Universal Credit. But then I think of it as... If I don't have the bank of mum and dad, I'm gonna have the Bank of England or the government give me money to sustain myself as an artist as they should anyway" (iii.9).

Thom clearly felt very conflicted about having to claim benefits. His shame or guilt appear to highlight once more feelings of inadequacy and hidden injuries of class (Sennett and Cobb, 1973, p. 62), evoked by the struggles to gain capital. He added:

> "People look at my CV and they go, 'okay, you've done this, this and this', but they don't realise the gaps in between where you had to get a normal job and you had to claim Universal Credit" (iii.9).

Indeed, this level of job insecurity and patterns of extreme competition mean that "achievement hinged on the basic ability to work, and work consistently" (Friedman, O'Brien and Laurison, 2017, p. 1000). On the same note, existing research demonstrated that for experienced workers or those from more affluent backgrounds, unpaid work is often a choice that might lead to a "long-term pay off" (Friedman, O'Brien and Laurison, 2017, p. 1002), while workers from working-class origins view it as exploitative (Brook, O'Brien and Taylor, 2018, p. 20). Certainly, all interviewees I spoke to reported acting for free either during or after their training. Thom's account of how he struggled to be considered for theatre work because he hadn't been to drama school, despite his years performing with NYT's repertoire company as part of his training (iii.4), perhaps illustrates that not only is unpaid work a necessity for theatre actors, but they must also pay significantly for this privilege in the form of drama school tuition fees. Furthermore, when Thom finally managed to secure an acting job in a theatre, it was in a fringe production which is inherently lower pay than larger theatres (Equity, 2019 compared with UKTheatre, 2019).

Nonetheless, different types of long-term contracts to perform as part of a repertoire or a season company are available for theatre actors by certain institutions such as the Royal Shakespeare Company (RSC), Shakespeare's Globe and some regional theatres. Both George and Henry stated they were signed on for a season or a repertoire company shortly after graduating from drama school, which may illustrate that these opportunities used to be more accessible 30 or 40 years ago than they are today, presumably because of increasing competition in the sector rather than a decrease in the number of fillable roles, however, this remains an assumption due to a lack of quantitative research in this specific field. Henry, who was a part of RSC's repertoire company in the 90's, noted it was "a thrill to know that you're in secure employment for over 12 months"

(v.8). But long-term contracts are very few and thus do not provide many actors with this secure employment. Another type of long-term contract available is for a single, specific show, such as West End plays and musicals which are occasionally staged for years. However, Grace remarked she wouldn't want such a contract:

> "There's pros and cons that come with that though. With the years' contracts. Like, it's like a normal job, you get holiday, which is great. But then it's relentless […] And I think it depends on the reasons why you act as well […] If you do it because you genuinely like creating art and something, after about three months, you're done. Like, you're ready to move on to the next project. But then you've got another seven months left on contract, you're like, 'oh, God'" (iv.7).

Grace's connection of holiday pay and other "normal" job securities with boredom, or rather, her connection of job insecurity with "creating art", highlights the deceptive assumption that informality is "an inherent feature" of creative work (Alacovska and Gill, 2019, p. 197), seemingly romanticising the precarity of the profession. Nevertheless, Alacovska and Gill's research concluded that we could challenge the essentiality of informality in creative work if we take an ex-centric perspective and look outside the West (Alacovska and Gill, 2019, p. 206).

However, if we continue to look at precarious or unstable work conditions as necessary in the acting profession, actors who lack economic capital may continue to struggle. The notion that familial economic capital also allows actors to persist exclusively in the profession (Friedman, O'Brien and Laurison, 2017, p. 1000) is highlighted by the younger actors taking on part-time employment. As my research suggested, this is particularly the case when the actors' work was exclusively in theatre, demonstrating the theatre sector's significantly low wages. The long-term contracts mentioned are very few and therefore do not offer a wide solution. Finally, the assumption based on existing research that actors from more affluent origins often choose to take on low pay or unpaid work to progress their careers (Brook, O'Brien and Taylor, 2018, p. 20) mean they are also offered advantages in terms of social and cultural capitals. I will be discussing my findings relating to these capitals in the following chapters.

9. Social capital

> "An actor friend of mine […] we were getting philosophical one day and I said […] 'what advice would the older you give to your younger self?' And he said, 'join in'. And that was his advice. Join in."
>
> – George (ii.7)

Bourdieu (1986) defined social capital as linked to networks, institutionalised relationships and recognition (ibid., p. 21). However, in the interviews I also observed a reliance on family social capital, as well as other authoritative figures in the interviewees' formative years. Research into social capital often overlooks the network of the family, nonetheless, there are studies on the importance of family social capital when it comes to education (Coleman, 1988), health (Alvarez, Kawachi and Romani, 2016) and democracy (Fukuyama, 1999). Therefore, I elected to divide this chapter into two subchapters – the first focuses on networks of support such as family or other figures in the interviewees' formative years who may have been a part of their "getting into" the profession, the second focuses on social resources the interviewees' could effectively mobilise to their benefit per Bourdieu's definition of social capital. Thus, I propose the second subchapter relates to interviewees "getting on" in the profession.

9.1. Family social capital and formative years

In his essay, "The Family Spirit", Bourdieu (1998) referred to the family as a "collective subject" rather than separate independent individuals. This collective subject manifests itself with shared ideas, collective decisions and a reciprocal responsibility as its members feel "required to act as parts of a united body" (ibid., p. 70). The collective subject accumulates then allocates economic, cultural and social capital within it. However, Bourdieu also briefly recognised that this extent of equality and solidarity may not hold true for all families (ibid., p. 65). The sociologists Frank Furstenberg and Sarah Kaplan (2004) identified three elements that impacted families' abilities to mobilise on behalf of their members. The first two relate to Bourdieu's forms of capital – the

reach of the family's external connections, or, the family's social capital, and the economic or cultural capital the family possesses through materials or symbolic resources. The third element is the family's "degree of solidarity" (ibid., p. 220). The researchers stated this solidarity within the collective subject is necessary to its success in effectively using the capitals on behalf of its members. Similarly, Coleman (1988) wrote extensively about family social capital as the strength of the relations between parents and children, further noting that parents who lack capital but strongly support their children would often find ways to gain capital strictly for their children (ibid., p. 110).

All interviewees felt supported by their families when it came to actions of solidarity. George stated, "my mom just wanted us to be happy […] and to do what we've loved […] it was encouragement in that way" (ii.4). Grace was the only interviewee with family members working in the creative sector, although she added they had no helpful connections she could mobilise (iv.3). Referring to her family and friends as her "biggest fans" (iv.8), she noted:

> "They were all for it. Especially my mum […] she could see me from a young age, you know, singing in the kitchen and making plays […] She just knew that was gonna happen" (iv.3).

Henry remarked that he summons his mother as his "guardian angel before every performance" (v.5). There seemed to be a consensus among my interviewees that this familial solidarity was invaluable at the start of their career. The importance of parental encouragement is further highlighted when Henry recalled an initial difficult struggle to get his family's support until his late teens, detailing his work in several part-time jobs so he could apply to numerous drama schools and pay their audition fees. However, following several offers from drama schools, Henry's parents became supportive as well:

> "My family were very supportive and encouraging once they recognised that the wider industry recognised me" (v.5).

Nonetheless, Henry recognised a difference of artistic views and opinions between him and his parents. He described his mother refusing to come see him on stage in a show when he was 16

years old, because he appeared nude (v.5). Similarly, George recalled his father quietly leaving the room when he appeared in a TV show as a transexual character (ii.4). Thus, I must point to the similarities between Henry and George; they are both in their 50s and both grew up by Manchester to working-class parents. Neither Henry nor George criticised their parents for their refusal to watch these performances by them as they acknowledged a dissonance between their cultural capitals. Henry considered it a generational discrepancy, referring to his parents' generation as having a "lack of awareness […] when it comes to the bigger picture" (v.5). Meanwhile, George tried to emphasise with his father's reasoning:

> "[He] was an Irish labourer. Heavy-drinking, hard-working […] I don't know whether he was offended by it […] I suppose he just didn't understand that that was a way to make a living. It must have been difficult for him" (ii.4).

While both Henry and George thoroughly acknowledged their parents' support, each also attempted to separate themselves from their parents as they explained those early moments when they didn't feel supported by them, moments that clearly remained etched in their memories. This may be a further manifestation of rooted feelings of inadequacy and shame towards their past (Sennett and Cobb, 1973) particularly when it comes to the importance of solidarity within the familial unit.

Thom, who credited his interest in acting to being told that he's "good at it" (iii.1) by his teachers, remarked his parents were supportive because they were pleased that he was "interested in something" (iii.3), since they were in rehabilitation during his early teens. He also pointed to his cousins as an example of the opposite, "they weren't told they were good at anything. And then they got into trouble" (iii.3). Despite a troubled childhood, Thom mentioned he doesn't judge his parents. However, he also appeared to separate himself from the struggles of his family's past using his ability – being told he's good at acting. As Sennett and Cobb (1973) found, "to be an individual by virtue of ability is to have the right to transcend one's social origins" (ibid., p. 62). Thom further implied that had his parents not been supportive, it wouldn't have stopped him from pursuing acting (iii.3).

Since Thom also acknowledged the supportive teachers who helped him on his path, his account also highlights the importance of external authoritative figures in individuals' early lives. Indeed, all interviewees detailed the significance of access to arts education in their state-funded schools through GCSE drama (iv.1) or one-off productions (ii.2), as well as the help of passionate teachers (i.1). Henry substantially benefited from his drama teacher's passion for theatre:

> "[My teacher] has put so many people into this business. He put them on this path, his drama group. I was one of the founding members of that. And along with other kids who grew up to be some other big theatre players" (v.3).

While names were redacted to protect the interviewees' anonymity, it is worth noting several other students who were in this drama group went on to become considerably successful in theatres globally. In the four decades since his school years, Henry occasionally worked with some of his fellow former drama group members, giving full credit to this teenage companionship. Thus, in this specific case, Henry's teacher created long-lasting social capital connections that worked for the advantage of the students after they all "got into" the profession separately.

9.2. Networks, connections, recognition

None of the interviewees reported having any beneficial connection to the theatre sector, or "creative class" (Tomlin, 2021, p. 257) before pursuing a career in acting, as the results of the Panic! survey suggested a social closure within the creative industries (Brook, O'Brien and Taylor, 2018, p. 3). In Henry's case, his school years drama group only turned into helpful contacts once students reached adulthood. However, his performances with the group did profit him further by earning him some recognition:

> "By the time I was in my late teens […] we were at the National Student Drama Festival, winning the Best Actor award as an ensemble, three of us, award-winning actors without having been through a training at this point" (v.3).

Although this award didn't seem to provide Henry with any further opportunities at that age, and it may not have turned into a "continuous series of exchanges in which recognition is endlessly affirmed", per Bourdieu's notion of recognition (Bourdieu, 1986, p. 248), Henry viewed this early honour as an affirmation of his ability which allowed him to wear a "badge of adequacy", evoking Sennett and Cobb (1973) once more.

While I will write thoroughly about drama schools in my subchapter on institutionalised cultural capital, researchers also recognised the significance of prestigious drama schools' pathways which "extended far beyond credentials. These institutions were invariably described as gatekeepers of social capital, actively introducing valuable professional contacts and helping actors secure an influential agent" (Friedman, O'Brien and Laurison, 2017, p. 1002). Indeed, as noted in my previous chapter, existing research found that most actors from working-class origins do not attend the most prestigious drama schools, and similarly, none of the interviewees I spoke to had attended them and therefore cannot attest to their social capital support. George described being rejected by RADA, arguably the most well-known London drama school, while Henry was accepted to RADA but chose to attend the Royal Welsh College of Music and Drama in Cardiff instead, citing class differences as part of his decision:

> "The people that I encountered in the London processes, were a very different kind of person from a different kind of world. There was no judgement. But there was an awareness that I came from a different place […] there was a class consciousness in me, but I wasn't willing to accept that that was going to define me" (v.4).

However, Thom, who took a slightly different path, getting his training with NYT's repertoire company instead of going to drama school, noted that although he got to act on stage in front of a paying audience while he was part of NYT's repertoire company, and despite getting an agent and acting work in TV and film shortly after he graduated NYT, he struggled finding acting work in theatre, "I felt there was a bit of stigma of not going to drama school in terms of being on a London stage" (iii.4). This example could perhaps partly point to a lack of social capital (as well as institutionalised cultural capital) due to not attending one of the "gatekeepers" and thus not getting connections within the networks offered by drama schools.

Through their interviews, Brook, O'Brien and Taylor (2020) suggested that the ability to network is connected to having the right social capital at an individual's disposal, which helps the individual feel confident at different settings (ibid., p. 206). Lee (2013) noted a similar link between "getting into" careers in television with accumulated social capital and having the confidence to "network" (ibid., p. 202). Conversely, lacking social capital, especially where it is as prominent as in the creative sector, could potentially make individuals feel alone and inadequate (Brook, O'Brien and Taylor, 2020, p. 207). In our conversation, George stated that he does not network, acknowledging this was a disservice to himself. However, he also felt unable to change it:

> "I don't like to go to opening nights or I don't circulate... And don't, you know, network. I don't do any of that. And because I don't, I think that's a disadvantage, because I think it really makes a difference and can make a difference in this game. […] And I think if you don't, and if you didn't, pre-social media, if you didn't network, you're out of that loop of support, really. […] I'm just not a joiner inner" (ii.7).

Similarly, Thom analysed his own inability to network as a class origin issue:

> "I feel awkward to put myself out there, which is probably a low confidence thing underneath. Because if you look at private school boys, I think they emanate confidence [...] like, 'I'm meant to be here' sort of entitlement […] Whereas I go into spaces, and I'm like, 'they're gonna see me for who I am' […] I think in Eton, they might have like a miniature House of Commons so the boys know exactly what it's like to debate […] And they just walk into those environments. And they're like, 'oh, yeah, I've been here before'" (iii.8).

Perhaps this is where Henry's early years' recognition gave him the experience and confidence that helped him most. Contrary to Thom and George, Henry noted his success in forming professional relationships:

> "There is a longevity in this business, you know that you will encounter that actor again, or that director again, at some point further down the

> line […] And so if every job is entered into with that spirit of total engagement and openness […] more often than not, that connection has lasted" (v.13).

Indeed, Henry recognised it is his confidence that helped him earn social capital:

> "I'm acutely aware when I'm in any environment of my currency in that space […] But that's hard-earned, I'd say. A lifetime's work to get to that point […] that sense of ease with who I am, and where I come from" (v.13).

Since Bourdieu (1986) also referred to social capital as "membership to a group" (ibid., p. 248), it is worth noting that the actors' union, Equity, which all the professional interviewees I spoke to are members of, was only brought up twice. Regina, the only interviewee who stated she wasn't a professional actor, believed she had some trouble getting work in acting because she wasn't a member of Equity (i.2). Whereas George felt unsupported by the union when he regarded social capital and his inability to network:

> "…That support, I feel, hasn't been there for people who don't join in. And I wish it was because our union is shit. I mean, just pointless" (ii.7).

Membership to Equity used to be mandatory for actors until the 90s when it became voluntary. There are some voices who claim this change has made Equity irrelevant, but this matter requires further research and goes beyond the scope of this paper. Nonetheless, I do believe it is important to highlight George's criticism, as well as the fact that the union wasn't brought up by the other professional interviewees. Therefore, it seems that the conclusion reached in a study of another creative workers' union, BECTU, that "social capital is more likely to be generated by networks outside trade union structures" (Saundry, Stuart and Antcliff, 2012, p. 282), may be true in Equity's case as well.

None of the interviewees had entered the profession with social capital as a resource that could be transformed or converted into other forms of capital. Earning social capital, for George and

Thom, meant going against feelings of inadequacy, or rooted lack of confidence as Thom referred to it. Henry recognised it took him a long time to have the confidence required to forge beneficial connections. It appears that early encouragement in the interviewees' formative years from authoritative figures, as well as positive recognition, may be of real importance in getting through the "hidden injuries of class" and feeling confident enough to network and gain convertible social capital.

10. Cultural capital

"I've only had one show where I've not been cast as a Cockney. I've never had the opportunity to show any other side of me apart from little Cockney me."

– Grace (iv.9)

Cultural capital, measured by its concealed and symbolic value, refers to three different types of capital (Bourdieu, 1986). I believe that when it comes to actors, or cultural workers in general, the objectified state, which relates to cultural goods, may often go hand in hand with the institutionalised state, since the cultural objects in their possession may be required for their professional training or education. Therefore, my first subchapter will focus on the institutionalised and objectified states and my second subchapter will focus on the embodied state.

10.1. Education, training and cultural goods

Inequality in cultural engagement begins early in life (Brook, O'Brien and Taylor, 2020, p. 110), as my interviewees demonstrated when detailing their own paths. Regina and George had no access to arts education in their state-funded schools, except for occasional, one-off theatre productions. However, Thom, Grace and Henry reported leaning very heavily on their arts classes or drama GCSE. Culturally engaged parents or other authoritative figures, such as teachers, also make a difference, as Grace recalled her mother reading Shakespeare to her from an early age (iv.11), as well as her father's interest in performance (iv.3). For Grace, it meant she reached further education with comparatively high cultural knowledge, or capital, in her possession (iv.11). The level of solidarity described in Grace's account is, of course, also reliant on family social capital as previously discussed. For Henry and Regina, passionate teachers with interest in drama sparked their interest and were instrumental on their journey to pursuing theatre acting. Regina acknowledged her early ability to read helped her academically but also meant she could follow through with the experimental nature of her teacher's interest in theatre (i.1). Similarly, George recognised being in a school production as a moment that bolstered his love of acting

(ii.2). Whereas Thom noted he supplemented his school's arts education by also attending a local amateur dramatics group (iii.4). Thus, culturally rich surroundings in individuals' formative years appear to be prominent in the interviewees' paths. Illustrated by their access to institutionalised cultural capital through school, extracurricular activities, or home, and access to objectified cultural capital both economically, by possessing cultural goods, and culturally, knowing how to use or appropriate these objects (Bourdieu, 1986, p. 245), like Grace's mother reading her Shakespearean plays.

Indeed, both Thom and Henry also acknowledged their struggles with education during their childhood or adolescent years, "written subjects" (iii.1) or "academic subjects" (v.10), as they referred to them. Thom noted he's diagnosed with dyslexia (iii.1), whereas Henry stated he believed he might be "on some kind of spectrum" (v.10). For both, performance through their arts education or drama studies was something they were empowered by and received compliments for from teachers, fellow students and even figures within the theatre sector, providing them with a badge of adequacy (Sennett and Cobb, 1973). Henry remarked he didn't do well studying literature at school, getting an E in English literature (v.10), however, shortly after he graduated his drama training, he went on contract to perform Shakespeare plays with RSC's repertoire company (v.8), supposedly proving a dissonance between academic studies and drama studies. Another way to look at it is that Henry was able to accumulate cultural capital through arts education classes, while he struggled gaining similar capital through English literature studies. It seems that access to arts education has provided both Henry and Thom with the cultural capital, in both its institutionalised and embodied forms, that they needed to pursue theatre acting.

Annette Lareau's theory expanding the discourse around institutionalised cultural capital as being about "knowledge of the 'rules of the game'" (Lareau, 2015, p. 2) is perhaps best demonstrated through Thom's account. After studying drama in his comprehensive school, Thom went on to sixth form where some of his classmates came from more affluent, middle-class origins. He recalled other students' extensive cultural capital:

> "Everyone else had been to stage school […] Everyone knew all their Shakespeare, they knew everything" (iii.1).

Additionally, he noted institutional knowledge his classmates had when they were all planning to go to drama school, whereas he "didn't know what drama school was until the last year" (iii.1). Thom's lack of "the right kind of cultural capital" (Tomlin, 2021, p. 257) was met with

discouragement from a teacher who suggested he shouldn't apply to drama school like his classmates and opt for university instead, a remark Thom recognised he was hurt by. Indeed, Thom ended up choosing not to go to drama school, as previously noted, getting his training with NYT's repertoire company instead. A choice Thom believes made it more difficult for him to get work in theatre further down the line.

Certainly, for actors, institutionalised cultural capital is entwined with drama school attendance. However, while the prestigious London drama schools and Oxbridge act as social capital "gatekeepers", researchers also acknowledged institutions' credentials and qualifications make a difference as well, with some drama schools considered more prestigious than others (Friedman, O'Brien and Laurison, 2017, p. 1002). Of course, economic obstacles may make the prestigious drama schools inaccessible through high tuition fees and locations' living costs, as noted in my chapter on economic capital. Moreover, Henry's decision not to attend a London school despite being accepted to some of them because of his awareness that he "came from a different place" (v.4) most likely comes down to embodied cultural capital and hysteresis, which will be discussed in the next subchapter. Nonetheless, while the interviewees I spoke to who had graduated from drama school didn't recognise lacking what is considered "legitimate" (cf. taste) institutionalised cultural capital as barriers on their paths, it is certainly possible it stood in their way but due to the symbolic or concealed nature of the capital, these barriers were harder to identify.

Indeed, George's closing statement, "I have absolutely no idea what constitutes good and bad in this game anymore" (ii.9) seems to uncover such subtle barrier. Whether it is in its objectified, institutionalised or embodied forms, the legitimacy, the "good and bad" of a capital is judged by Bourdieu's theory of taste. As Tomlin (2021) noted, the modern dominant class in the sector, the tastemakers who acquired the most "legitimate" cultural capital, would include producers, directors and critics (ibid., p. 257). Furthermore, this cultural elite who establish what is "good and bad", what is the right cultural capital the actors they work with must possess, tend to reach their professional positions with similar cultural capital among them (ibid., p. 258). Thus, when George recognised that he doesn't know what constitutes "good and bad", and because of that he feels he has "typecast" himself, due to his fear of taking risks and getting "a bad review" (ii.9), his acknowledgement that he lacked "legitimate" cultural capital reconnected his concerns with class' "hidden injuries" (Sennett and Cobb, 1973) and the fear of inadequacy. However, while George claimed he has "typecast" himself, the issue of being typecast by the cultural elite has been a recurring theme in my interviews and certainly relates both to issues of taste and to embodied cultural capital.

10.2. Accents, mannerisms and typecasting

Theatre actors consistently work and train to transform into different characters in front of a live audience. It might be safe to assume that theatre acting is one of the most performative and visible career options available. Therefore, the acquisition and mobilisation of embodied cultural capital play a big part in theatre actors' career trajectories. Bourdieu (1986) acknowledged the difficulties in accumulating embodied cultural capital, particularly due to it being a potentially lengthy process, "the accumulation of cultural capital in the embodied state […] presupposes a process of embodiment, incorporation, which […] costs time, time which must be invested personally by the investor" (ibid., p. 244). The mediation of time needed to acquire embodied cultural capital is how Bourdieu connected this symbolic capital to its economic root (ibid., p. 245). Being able to take the time to learn and embody may not be possible without a financial safety net. Indeed, even with institutionalised cultural capital and acting experiences, all interviewees reported instances of possessing the "wrong" embodied cultural capital through accent, voice or mannerisms, or noted being typecast because of how the cultural elite view them.

For Grace and George, issues with their accents have been persistent in their careers. Grace remarked how she befriended some of the more affluent students while she was at drama school and being their "source of entertainment" (iv.11):

> "They'll tell me 'Oh, say water again, say water' and I'd be like, 'wata' with my accent, they'd be like, 'oh! How quaint! How lovely!' […] I've definitely been kind of the butt of a few jokes" (iv.11).

Noting her struggles with different accents, Grace assumed this was because she wasn't given the opportunities:

> "We know that we haven't got to practice accents because we'll walk into an audition and they'll be like, 'oh, that's the Cockney, great, done'. So yeah, like, I'm rubbish at other accents" (iv.10).

George similarly believed his Manchurian accent has gotten in his way of numerous jobs:

> "I had these headshots done and I just looked amazing […] I've never had proper headshots and just look so gorgeous. And I have a posh-sounding name. And when my agent sent these things out, I had about

> three auditions where I either was told at the audition or got feedback from my agent after that when I came in and opened my mouth, I wasn't what they had asked for when they saw the photograph and my name because they thought that photo and that name equal posh. And then I come in talking like that […] Because I can't do accents. I don't have a good ear. So, I can't do accents" (ii.8).

Henry takes great pride in his ability to transform himself at any given circumstance, including his voice and accent. However, he noted, his openness about his working-class origins meant he got asked by directors if he had a prejudice against using an RP accent. While Henry stated he uses the accent he's asked to use, as he remarked he can be "whoever you want me to be" (v.11), he also claimed:

> "The suggestion that somebody who speaks with something other than an RP accent is somehow intellectually inferior is offensive to me" (v.11).

The sense of stigma surrounding accents (Friedman, O'Brien and Laurison, 2017, p. 1003) has been a longstanding, national issue, simply mirrored on stage. However, while inclusion appears to be a top priority for theatres, the embodied marker of accent is still perceived as a barrier despite seemingly being more straightforward than more concealed forms of the embodied capital.

While accents seem to be a central obstacle for working-class actors when it comes to embodied cultural capital, it appears that even when an actor from working-class origins doesn't struggle using RP accent, they may still be exposed to typecasting. Thom, who reported spending years trying to find work in theatre presumably because he didn't attend drama school, explained that he reached the conclusion that his acting needed to be more performative and possess an "outwards" energy to get stage roles, a change from the "inwards" energy he used on screen (iii.4). Following that decision, he auditioned for a fringe production and got the part. He described the role as completely different from him:

> "He was a young, aggressive, working-class boy, whereas I'm a working-class boy, but I'm not like, aggressive. I'm quite, like, sensitive" (iii.4).

Thom remarked that the experience of playing this character was liberating, but noted that he played a "young, aggressive part" (iii.5) in his next job at the Royal Court Theatre as well, adding:

> "In TV and film, they always cast me as the shy boy […] And then I'm getting into theatre, and I'm playing the complete opposite" (iii.5).

For Thom, it seems that the mannerisms he displayed in auditions to get stage roles got him typecast as an aggressive character, and while he claimed these characters are completely opposite from who he is, he also acknowledged:

> "It was within me. This, I guess, like anger at the world. Because I think working class people are angry at the establishment […] And I have that within me" (iii.4).

He noted he's happy playing these characters. Similarly, Grace, who believed her accent had her typecast, decided to embrace it:

> "It's got me work and I can do it and it's easy. But yeah, I think the working-class thing you do kind of fall into a bracket, and you've either got to roll with it, and be okay with that, or you're going to be constantly fighting against it. Yeah, I chose to just go 'okay, this is who I am. Let's crack on'" (iv.9).

These accounts go hand in hand with existing research that stated actors from working-class origins view typecasting as "useful" (Friedman, O'Brien and Laurison, 2017, p. 1004). Perhaps out of an unacknowledged, class origin's fear of inadequacy (Sennett and Cobb, 1973), per George's remark of typecasting himself (ii.9) due to fear. Nonetheless, in Grace's account also clearly acknowledges that acting is acutely skewed towards middle-class actors while severely limiting working-class actors' opportunities (Friedman, O'Brien and Laurison, 2017, p. 1006).

Notions of taste and distinction (Bourdieu, 1984), as well as Skeggs' remark that historically "the working-class were represented as having deficit 'culture'" (Skeggs, 2003, p. 39), systematically justify the rejection of artists from working-class origins, since their "artistic preferences […] may jar with the artistic preferences of the cultural elite" (Tomlin, 2021, p. 259). Adding to the

discourse, Webb, Schirato and Danaher (2002) noted that "middle-class people […] were far more confident than working-class people about approaching cultural products and cultural institutions. Bourdieu's argument was that this was because they had acquired conceptual skills and social confidence from their families and their middle-class schools, rather than because they were born mysteriously possessed of a 'natural' love of art" (ibid., p. 153), thus connecting working-class artists with experiences of hysteresis' "fish out of water" (Friedman, 2015, n.p.). Basically, Tomlin (2021) adds, this means that in theatre, working-class artists are less perceived as actual artists and more as "participants in professional productions that are dramaturgically designed around the inclusion of 'real people'" (ibid., p. 259). Indeed, Regina noted her own struggles with the recurring "real people" themes in theatres' community projects that are mostly available to untrained working-class actors:

> "The work I'm doing is a bit depressing […] in the community projects the themes are often about homelessness and different issues that sometimes can trigger you" (i.2).

Furthermore, she decried the lack of marketing for those productions that include "real people", when compared to marketing for larger scale productions:

> "When there's something good in the community, I think we, the community, and the theatre should embrace it as a professional performance" (i.9).

There is, once more, a recognition that performances designed around the inclusion of "real people" are not viewed as professional art. A separation between "legitimate" artists and the participants who happen to be included as "real people".

Cultural capital may discreetly hold the greatest value for actors, nonetheless, acquiring cultural capital in all its forms requires a significant investment from the individual. Embodied cultural capital is perhaps where most actors from working-class origins truly feel at a disadvantage, yet they may not always be aware of the capital disparities between themselves and their counterparts from more affluent backgrounds. Prejudice when it comes to accent and mannerisms seems to be the most visible, and thus it is most frequently noted and discussed. However, while there seems to be some progress when it comes to diversity on stage, little has been done to address these

issues regarding class. This lack of action even towards the inclusion of simple markers such as accent, perhaps illustrates the arguments raised by researchers in relation to the cultural elite viewing the working-class as infantile (Skeggs, 2003 cited by Tomlin, 2021, p. 258). As Tomlin concluded, "artists could be racially diverse, and carry disability, it seems, but they could rarely be envisaged as emerging from classes which were assumed to hold little cultural capacity" (Tomlin, 2021, p. 260).

11. Summary and conclusions

The emotive language around creative work presents acting as exciting and fulfilling, however the same discourse also conceals the systematic exclusion and inequality within the profession. It is possible for actors from working-class origins to succeed in "getting in" and "getting on" the theatre acting profession, as the interviews demonstrated. Indeed, the aim of this research was never to prove otherwise. However, drawing on my qualitative data, I have illustrated a variety of ways in which working-class origins may influence actors' experiences and career pathways.

Due to the nature of capitals, economic obstacles may be the most immediately visible and widely researched. Accumulated financial resources are required to pay audition fees and tuition fees to attend drama school, and then to be able to face a precarious career which includes unpaid hours, low pay, supplementary expenses and periods of unemployment. Moreover, and in line with existing research, generational discrepancies were noted when the younger actors attested to having to take on part-time jobs, while the more senior actors stated they worked exclusively as actors. While I saw fit to link this issue to general worsening inequalities and increasing competition in the sector, I also recommended further research on the matter. Interviewees also repeated the notorious, deceptive assumption that precarity is inherent to the profession.

Several interviewees recognised social struggles. They noted lacking the ability to network, or lacking the aggregated social capital needed to appear confident in order to network, a catch-22 situation brought up in existing research. While none of the interviewees had entered the profession with contacts they could mobilise to their benefit, solidarity, encouragement and recognition from parents or other authoritative figures in their formative years proved necessary to penetrate the "creative class".

The importance of arts education early on in interviewees' lives was brought up repeatedly. Nonetheless, institutionalised cultural capital seemed entwined with economic struggles when it comes to further education, and not possessing the "legitimate" cultural capital had negative implications on interviewees' careers further down the line. Furthermore, interviewees were able to pinpoint embodied markers that created barriers on their paths. Mirroring a national matter, a sense of stigma surrounding regional accents prevails, and similarly, mannerisms and accents led to clear instances of typecasting, highlighting a sector distinctly skewed towards the privileged classes.

Finally, class origins' "hidden injuries" in the creative sector, and specifically within the theatre acting profession, are notably under-researched. Nonetheless, these injuries consistently seemed to influence the interviewees' experiences and even impair their abilities to accumulate and appropriate the capitals to their benefit. Interviewees noted fears of taking risks, of being "found out" and losing their luck, insecurities as well as deep concerns about appearing arrogant, or fragmented, successive allegiances, torn between their past and present. However, I recognise the scope of my research has been very narrow and I believe a larger, qualitative study is required in this area.

While my initial aim was to include potential solutions in my study, due to the inherent limits on academic research, I had to discard that idea. However, I believe that it is worth noting some Western countries pay "basic income" to artists, a scheme Ireland reportedly started trialling as I was writing my study. I do believe further research is needed to discover whether the idea of basic income could repair the creative sector's class imbalance steadily. Since all capitals derive from economic capital, financial security could provide actors with resources and time needed to accumulate other capitals. Furthermore, due to the longstanding nature of class inequalities within the sector, I believe a thorough, systematic change in policy could help. However, the rooted nature of class inequalities particularly evident in embodied cultural capital, as well as the class origins' hidden injuries that I uncovered, lead me to believe that a revision of legislation is required to formally protect class origins characteristics under the Equality Act.

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appendix i

Interview with Regina

1. What made you want to pursue theatre acting?

When I was a kid, I had a teacher, a French language teacher. He was kind of an eccentric guy with a very eccentric look. And his voice was so sexy, but he was so ugly! But anyway, he was very, very into theatre. It was a bit of a challenging school. They had different programmes. Like the kids that were more advanced, they were put in a class that, you know, they were given more options. So, I was one of the kids that learned to read and write very early on. So, they pass me forward, you know, above my grades. And so, they were kind of experimenting with us really, because it was in a kind of rough area. But not a dangerous area. So, the teacher organised this programme, kind of educational. I recently read about him. And he actually wrote a book recently about his experience with us and everything. And so, it was really kind of educational, playful. It was interesting. So that's why it got me into kind of express myself in different ways. And then during the years, I think when I came to England. I can't remember them much because I was very into sport at the time. But when I came to England as a young person, I got some work in radio and I had to think about my voice. It was a very interesting radio station called Spectrum Radio with all different multicultural people, Indians, Muslims, you name it. And it was amazing, I was enjoying that. So, I realised you know, sometimes you have to project a persona and you have to be friendly and so, I learned from that.

2. Did you get further education in Arts?

Yeah, I did a journalism course and I was working as an apprentice in the BBC. So that exposed me to different people how to behave with different settings and different organisations. And then I came across a theatre forum, and I got involved in this theatre group performing in different organisations and that was quite interesting. I also got involved in Southbank Centre. They have different projects... Not much at the moment, but then it was all about singing. I managed to sing on the choir on the big stage and do different workshops. And then I got involved in filming short films. From then I learned about the Young Vic Theatre and their community theatre, the Old Vic Theatre as well, and the National Theatre. So, then I just got involved in the Young Vic especially because there were so many different projects and many ways to get involved. And so yes, it

could be a great, great opportunity. Most recently I've been involved in a theatre company called Cardboard Citizens, but they stopped since.

I haven't been able to get involved so much lately because I've been really busy doing different things. But yes, that's my experience of theatre and film. But always on a community level. I got involved in promoting some spot publicity thing for political parties. And it was the first time that I got a little bit of pay for my acting. It was quite exciting. Because I knew the moment I was on stage that I would like to do something that would bring me a bit of money so, you know, I would kind of feel rewarded and I could achieve something. But yes, I think you have to be a member of an organisation like a union, like Equity. Even though I have done some project for the Old Vic, and they did pay me some money. But yes, I love to do community theatre, but I really would like just to see if I could get something better... Not better but... You know what I mean? Something that is more rewarding. Because the work I'm doing is a bit depressing. It's all things to do with the NHS... And in the community projects the themes are often about homelessness and different issues that sometimes can trigger you. So, I would like to be more in the industry and see if I could get an opportunity and do something that is more fun. Of course, I will always do community theatre but sometimes I need a break. I've been caring for so many people and different issues, so it affects you sometimes, you know? When you just tackle so many issues about discrimination and this and that. Yeah, that's what I'm feeling at the moment. I want to do something fun and something that brings me a bit of money and yet... I'm not sure how talented I am. I met wonderful people in the Young Vic in the community theatre and they're really, really talented. I worry I shouldn't think too much of myself.

3. Did you get any acting training?

The Old Vic provided some wonderful workshops and boot camps. And I learned from a very good person that was doing a theatre forum. And I learned from the trade, you know. And City Lit have decent courses like stage fighting and introduction to theatre. Then before the lockdown I did a director's course in theatre, just basic, you know, it was in London University. And as well, with the Young Vic, I did different workshops that they have provided over the years. With some of them I'm taking part in the auditions. I'm not really good at auditions. So, I really don't do myself justice. Sometimes, I get so excited. And I just, you know, forget about the audition altogether. So sometimes it's my own fault really. But I felt in the last few years, though, you just

have to be a particular ethnic group. So, I'm quite, you know, I feel a bit, not just in theatre, but different projects that if you are not a part of this specification or ratio of ethnicity and whatever, then you're not included. So, I just feel a bit disappointed in the way that, even in my acting job with the NHS, if you want to be part of the group, you have to, you know, have specific characteristics. So, I just felt that there used to be more opportunities for me. And I'm European, so I'm not sure if there's some sort of European discrimination at the moment. But you know, this country has offered me great opportunities. And sometimes I haven't been well enough to take on these opportunities or jobs because I've been struggling with health problems or sometimes I've been lacking energy. So, when I'm feeling good and energetic, I really want to learn more and be included and participate and I don't really like to be discriminated against, but nobody likes it. But that's kind of what has been going on for the last few years... That's my feeling. But I've been talking to other people that feel as well that they're not included anymore.

4. Do you still look at acting as a potential career option?

Theatre is really challenging. It takes a lot of your energy. Because I've been struggling with health problems. So, my energy levels... I look out for them. Say, am I going to be too tired? Am I going to pick up a project that I'm able to follow? Or too intensive? Film I think is easier. It's just kind of "click" and I'm in action on the camera. For fun, they're really easy, really, in terms of my energy. And I really don't... The things that I know creatives do... Like playing around and do so many drama games, it's getting me tired. And it's not that... I don't get so nervous. I just focus and I do enjoy the process. So, in terms of theatre, you feel, in community theatre, you need to support so many people around and make everybody feel happy. And I do work for Secret Cinema and all the performances are outside and it's all about, you know, sometimes you spend quite a long time to just kind of be good with each other. I don't have a problem with people really. I just don't feel like I need so many drama games and all those things. Theatre is... Some people are amazing, you know. And I don't think I am that good to really compare myself with other members of, let's say, the Young Vic. And also, I have an accent and I had to learn how to express myself with clarity and so I don't like to choose things that are very wordy and to talk too much. So, yeah that's my experience. Film for me really is just, "click" and I'm there in character. And recently I've been working with the NHS in terms of helping the nurses to practice with the patients and so I've been doing role plays with them and recently I was with the School of Psychiatrists because they want to have a unique experience with people, so just pretending to

have a mental health problem and they can practice. So that's been really interesting. And I made a bit of pocket money. And that was really nice to be a professional, to practice with people, and especially after the lockdown when they need some people. So yeah, even though it's about mental illness and so on, it was a good experience.

5. What do you do for a living other than acting?

Well, I don't consider acting as work, I consider it as a hobby or something fun. I have been caring for people recently. And it's been making me... I've been struggling with my wellbeing. So, I've been going to the Young Vic community theatre because I needed to just see different people and have different experiences. So, I'm fortunate that I'm feeling okay on my part right now. Because otherwise I'm really stuck and struggling with my emotion because I really need it. My body is just yearning for it, you know? I just need to be with people, getting a project done, getting involved. Having fun, you know? Just having fun.

6. You see acting as an outlet?

Yeah. I haven't done it for quite a while, but I've had great opportunities, Cardboard Citizens, the Young Vic. But I just feel so disappointed to let people down when I say "yes" and then "sorry, I can't do it", because someone needed me. And at the moment, I'm going to the Young Vic this week to see a play that I cancelled a few times. So, I'm just gonna have a day out. I'm gonna see the play. I really need it. It's an injection of vitality, creativity. Meeting new people. I need to meet new people or share new experiences and enjoy life.

7. Did you ever consider acting as a career option?

I'm in my 50s now. When I was younger, I was more interested in law and languages. I was interested in international law, learning languages and I was very into sport in competitive level. So, you know, theatre was in the background, but I never really considered it that much. I was too busy trying to get into those sorts of careers and then I went into journalism. I really think with

that, that you just need to have kind of a public persona and not to get too emotional about the issues you were writing about. So, it helps you just to deal with who you are and who is your public and what is your job... It kind of balances, who is your friend, who is your family... You know, you see the boundaries and see how you perform. And if you're feeling unhappy, you go on radio and you talk about happy topics or something like that. It all kind of clicks, like, "okay, I'm not feeling well today, but I have to act like things are okay". So, profession, you cannot just bring your problems into it. So, acting does help to regulate your behaviour and your emotions accordingly.

8. Have you felt supported by friends and family when it comes to acting and performance?

No, I'm quite disappointed with my best friend, because there've been different projects that I was quite excited about. In terms of film, I was given a good opportunity recently. But my best friend needed me to solve a big problem that she was having. And I had to choose. And that really left me in a bad emotional state, really. And she didn't support me. It just made me think of who my friends are. My brother and my sister, they criticise like, "you look awful. What was your hair like?" But it's just a joke. You know, they were just having a laugh. I'm not taking it personally. When I've done some performance, I just have to feel good about what I've done. I don't care if people like it much or applaud.

9. What has your experience of community theatre been like?

There was one performance at the Young Vic, it was about homelessness. People poured their soul into it. They were amazing. It was an amazing performance. And what I wasn't happy about is that we didn't have as much publicity as the normal plays. And we had quality. It was quality. The people that came to see us, some people were in tears. Some people came to talk to me about the play. I was struggling then with physical health, but I was chipping in. And there were these people from different backgrounds, there were people actually really struggling, they were homeless. And they were awesome on stage. This guy, in particular, he brought to the place something very special, with this cockney accent. We were all supporting him. So that, definitely, I learned so much about different people. And there was this guy that couldn't learn his lines, because of some kind of learning difficulty, and he had problems with alcohol and drugs, but we

were supporting him. And I would improvise and, you know, we just have fun together. So, I did learn so much from different people's disabilities or problems. And that was beautiful. And we created a piece of work that was really, really interesting. I felt really, really proud to be involved on that. What we created was all about people's experiences of homelessness and distress. And I just felt disappointed that we didn't get the publicity and the support like all the plays that were on at the same time, the ones that got all the money, all the props, you name it. So, when there's something good in the community, I think we, the community, and the theatre should embrace it as a professional performance. If it's rubbish, you know... Many are rubbish. But if it's something really with quality, that I thought was about the challenges everybody was experiencing, and if you learn about people's life and experience... That is even better than the performance itself. It was music, it was creativity, it was amazing. And I just felt that it should have been better promoted. We, you know, some of the actors were just amazing.

appendix ii

Interview with George

1. What made you want to pursue theatre acting?

I didn't really know the difference between theatre acting and any other kind of acting when I first knew I wanted to be an actor. So, I sort of, I already knew I want to be an actor, but then I only learned about the different forms of it as I got older, really. So, I knew I always wanted to act. But I suppose my first experience of acting professionally was... Well, my first experience of actual acting was in "The Mikado" that we did at school. So that was theatre, really. My first professional job was radio, so. And after that, I got a season of theatre as soon as I left drama school, so I went straight into theatre. And subsequently, I've done much more theatre than film or TV. But as it happens, it's my favourite form of acting. Probably the least well paid, but the most fulfilling artistically.

2. Did you study Arts Education in school?

No. I went to an all-boys Grammar School. And it was when I was in my sixth form, that they did this production of "The Mikado", and I can't remember the details about how I ended up in it. But I remember that I loved it very much. But I mean, I knew before then that I wanted to be an actor. But that was the first opportunity to actually, you know, go out there and tread the boards. And I remember that one night, I think we probably only did it two or three times I really don't remember how many times we performed it, but I remember one night that I forgot my lines. But I improvised something. I said something and it sort of brought the house down. And I remember that feeling of people laughing and it was so wonderful. So yeah, that just sort of bolstered my love of it. Trying to make people laugh.

3. You said you got further education in drama, where did you study?

Well, I did A-Levels because I knew that I needed A-Levels to go to Manchester Polytechnic School of Theatre, which is now the Manchester Metropolitan School of Theatre. And I knew that

if I just got two A-Levels and pass the audition, I could go there. And I really wanted to go there. But I did audition for two other drama schools. I auditioned for RADA and for Rose Bruford. They were the only two I auditioned for. Rose Bruford, I got through the whole day, and got down to the last two people and didn't get in. And RADA I went in for the first round. And when the person comes out with this sheet of paper, it says "the following people thank you for coming down today. But you haven't been successful, and you'll be going home now." And she read up this list of names and my name wasn't on it. And I thought my audition has gone really badly. So, I went up to her afterwards and I said "excuse me, my name isn't on that list. And so, am I staying?" She said, "what's your name?" And I told her. She looked at the list and she went, "oh, I'm so sorry. Did I not read that out?" But I sort of knew, you know, I was like how could I had possibly got through that? It was terrible! And so that was that. But yeah, I auditioned at Manchester Polytechnic School and got in. I knew I needed these two A-Levels and so just knuckled down as much as I could, I suppose. Although, I think they would have let people in without the A-Levels as well. It was all a bit more laid back then.

4. What did your family think of your choice to become an actor?

I don't remember them thinking anything about it either way, really, they neither encouraged nor discouraged it. I think my parents just, my mom just wanted us to be happy, really, and just, you know, be safe and to do what we've loved. So, it was encouragement in that way. We were never told, like some people are, "no, you're not doing that." Or "you should do something else." Right? It happens a lot, you hear it a lot. But I don't think my dad was fully on board with it. When I was in a TV series playing a transsexual character, I came back to Manchester to watch that with the whole family. And while we were watching it, I heard the door behind me opening and closing. It was my dad leaving the room as I appeared on the screen dressed as, you know, 6"2, ginger-haired transsexual. And he just couldn't cope with it really, because it was so alien to him. He just didn't, it didn't compute. He was an Irish labourer. Heavy-drinking, hard-working. This was... He never really spoke about it. I don't know whether he was offended by it or... I suppose he just didn't understand that that was a way to make a living. It must have been difficult for him.

Some people don't have any qualms about telling their kids what they think about it. Luckily, mine wasn't like that. My dad was more passive aggressive, I suppose, about it. "You don't mind me acting do you, dad?" "No, no. Of course, I don't mind you acting, it's fine."

5. What was your first professional theatre acting job and how long have you been an actor?

I did amateur dramatics in the summer before I started drama school just to get a bit of experience. And then when we were at drama school, we did plays. But the first professional theatre job was "Twelfth Night" at The Dukes Playhouse Theatre in Lancaster. That was my first job out of drama school. I got signed for a season, so I was there for a year nearly. It was a good paycheck at the time. I was 21. So, it was amazing. And I had been offered another job at the same time, at the Nottingham Playhouse and so I had to turn the job down. I thought, "oh my god! This is so exciting!" And so, I went to this Dukes Playhouse, and it was in the same season as Andy Serkis. So, we were all in that same year. And it was wonderful. I had a wonderful time out there. And yeah, I learned a lot. A lot.

I started at 21 years old. I'm 57 now so I've been doing this for 36 years.

6. Have you been working as an actor exclusively during this time or have you ever needed a part time job?

I've certainly needed them but rarely done them, just kept my fingers crossed that the next acting job was just around the corner. It always has been, up to now, but my luck will run out eventually.

7. Have you felt supported on your path?

Not enough. Not really. No. I'm quite a shy person... I don't like to go to opening nights or I don't circulate... And don't, you know, network. I don't do any of that. And because I don't, I think that's a disadvantage, because I think it really makes a difference and can make a difference in this game. And now in the age of social media, I think it makes a huge difference and I completely don't do any of that. And I think if you don't, and if you didn't, pre-social media, if you didn't

network, you're out of that loop of support, really. Because I think it is supportive, it can be, and if you're not in it, if you elected to be out of it, then you're sort of doing yourself a disservice. I do feel I've done myself a disservice by not joining in. An actor friend of mine, from years ago, the guy who does the voice of the meerkat. He's probably about 5 or 10 years older than me. We were at drama school together. And we were getting philosophical one day and I said, "what advice would you give to somebody?" You know, "what advice would the older you give to your younger self?" And he said, "join in". And that was his advice. Join in. And I thought that's great advice, but I wouldn't... Even now I wouldn't be able to take it. I'm just not a joiner inner. And so yeah, that support, I feel, hasn't been there for people who don't join in. And I wish it was because our union is shit. I mean, just pointless. Completely pointless.

8. Do you feel that class has been a factor in your career development?

When I was a very young actor, I was working with quite a well-known actor. He took me under his wing, we got on very well. He just had these headshots done, and he said to me, "come on, get them done". And I was like "I can't afford that" and he said "don't worry. I'll get them done for you". Beautiful man. He's died since. Bob Peck. Absolutely wonderful man. I had these headshots done and I just looked amazing. Fucking amazing! Yeah, I've never had proper headshots and just look so gorgeous. And I have a posh-sounding name. And when my agent sent these things out, I had about three auditions where I either was told at the audition or got feedback from my agent after that when I came in and opened my mouth, I wasn't what they had asked for when they saw the photograph and my name because they thought that photo and that name equal posh. And then I come in talking like *that*. Like, that doesn't, that's not what they're looking for. Because I can't do accents. I don't have a good ear. So, I can't do accents. And so, I'm equating accent with class there but I don't know how else to define class really, from my perspective. There is a world, there, there is work for somebody who only speaks in their natural, native accent.

9. Do you feel like it gets you typecast?

I think I've typecast myself because I don't try and be anything other than what I am. I know what I can do. And I just do that. I think it's the reason I don't work as much as I should. Because I don't take risks. I'm scared of a bad review. Seriously.

I have absolutely no idea what constitutes good and bad in this game anymore. Honestly, I don't. I thought I did. But I don't anymore. Because I'll see something. And I'll be like, "that is the best thing I've ever seen". And people will be, "it's alright". And then I'll see something, and I'll think, "fucking hell, that was shit". And people will be standing up around me, applauding at the end, and crying. I don't know, what am I missing? I don't get it. I do not understand. And it must be me.

And I don't understand how any actor can't have impostor syndrome. Because if you do a play or a telly or anything, or you're an artist of any kind, who produces a work of some kind, and then gives it to the world to be assessed, reviewed, critiqued. And then that review or critique comes back and is less than glowing. How can you fail to think that you're not as good as you thought you were? Because you don't all go on stage after your first night and you all hug each other and go "that was fantastic" and then think "we're gonna get shit reviews for that". You get so close to it, you become so enmeshed in it, it's impossible to know what it's like. You have to be told what it's like. But if you're committed to something, and then you get somebody else saying "that's shit", or "that's not really very good", it must make you think, well, then what am I doing, then? Am I any good?

appendix iii

Interview with Thom

1. What made you want to pursue acting?

I had done GCSE drama in my school... I'm dyslexic. So, written subjects, although I thought I was good at them, I was told I wasn't because people couldn't read my writing. But with drama, people told me I was good. So, it was the one subject that I was good at back then. I guess if you're told that you're good at something, and you enjoy it as well, then you pursue it. After that, the teacher told me to apply for the National Youth Theatre. And I got in. And I was being told I was good there as well. But previous to that, after my secondary school, which was like a state, comprehensive, all-boys school, quite a rough school, but we had a really nice drama teacher, who mainly tried to control the class. But then in between controlling the class, we created really good pieces of drama. So, then I went to a sixth form, which was actually meant to be good at drama. And it was full of people from, I think, more or less, middle class backgrounds. And me and my mate Joe, who are from working class backgrounds, from our old school. So we went into this new school, where everyone else had been to stage school. Everyone had been to musical theatre, stage school. Everyone knew all their Shakespeare, they knew everything. Whereas me and Joe just knew how to improvise and just knew how to act and like, have fun and stuff like that. So, I think we were made to feel like we weren't good at what they thought acting was. So that was one time where the teacher said to me, "oh, I don't think you should apply for drama school, I think you should apply for university". And I was like, "well, everyone else, all the other kids are applying to drama school". I didn't know what drama school was until the last year when people were saying, "what are you doing?" Because I didn't know what I was doing. And they were like, "oh, we're applying to drama school". So, I looked up drama school, and I said I might as well. But then the teacher was like, "oh, I don't know if that's right for you". Mainly because I think he didn't see me... As actors he was presented with before. But by then I knew I was good enough at acting to ignore him, even though it did hurt a bit. But then there was another teacher in that school who thought I was good, and he put me in some plays. And also, one of my friends who wasn't into musical theatre and like, quite, like, suited me and had a great voice, he was from middle class background, like, very different to me. He was quite extrovert, whereas I was quite shy. He decided to direct one of our last plays instead of acting in it and he said to me, "I want you to be in the play". And even now, I still speak to him, he's like, "oh, it's because I saw that you had something". And so, he directed the play with me in and some other actors. And I think

other than that, I just felt I was good at acting. And I can't really analyse it too much because I don't know how I fell into it. I just went to the National Youth Theatre and then at 18, I was one of the youngest people to get onto their rep company.

2. Despite some people, like that teacher, did you feel supported?

Yeah, I had champions and then a few less people that I guess I wasn't for. But the thing is, if I didn't do GCSE drama, I don't know if I would be an actor. And I know they're trying to cut GCSE drama, but for people from working class backgrounds, unless you... Because I am from London, but between 13 and 18 my parents moved to Bournemouth and it's quite a Conservative town. It's kinda full of old people, it's full of like really rich people, it's full of students. But there are working class people there. A lot of people go there for drug rehabilitation and then fall off the wagon. And then like, there is a rough element to Bournemouth, even though it's not an inner city. But if you grew up in London you have access to like the Young Vic, or like youth programmes, whereas in Bournemouth, there's no youth theatre. It's just stage school, which you have to pay a lot of money for. And the only thing there is GCSE drama. There's no youth theatre which you can pay like a couple of quid.

3. What did your family think of your choice to study drama?

My parents were just happy that I was interested in something. Because I had quite a turbulent upbringing... My parents were, you know, lovely people. But by the age of like, 9 to 11, we had to go live with my auntie. And then by 12, my parents had moved to Bournemouth for rehabilitation, and then they stayed there. And then we went to live with them. So, anything that I'd done, or if I showed an interest... I wasn't apathetic at all, whereas a lot of my cousins had no... They weren't told they were good at anything. And then they got into trouble. Whereas I had one thing that I was good at. Acting. And I followed it. And they were just happy that I was passionate. They never said, "oh, you should think about being this or this". They just, they were great parents. And they're, they're even better now that I'm older. Because... I say great parents, I mean, they fucked up a lot. But as an adult, now I can recognise why that happened and our family's history. And I'm still angry about a lot of things, but I don't judge them in a way. So, I think they were just happy that I was interested in something. And at that age, I wasn't going to let them tell me

not to do anything. Because, yeah, I think even though I was shy and quiet and introvert, I was headstrong. Yeah, I think if I know I want something, then I'll silently go about it, ignoring everyone.

4. What was your first unpaid and paid theatre job?

Before I was paid, it would have just been in school, or like the local am-dram, which, ah, yeah! The local amateur dramatics that's in Bournemouth, even though it's like quite elitist in itself because it's full of old fuddy duddies, that's an area where a working-class actor in Bournemouth can do well, because... I mean, you go into these rooms and there's like 70-year-olds, like, people that have lived in Bournemouth all their lives and have really posh voices, but they still want young people to be involved. And it's free. So yeah, so local am-dram... Yeah, I guess I would say my first proper theatre experience outside of school was a local amateur dramatics production of "Blood Brothers", which is a great working-class play. It was a musical version. Well, I was just in the chorus. And I played one character that was like hitting on the girls at the start or something like that. And it was in a big, old theatre in Bournemouth. So that was like, I must have been about 16, in front of a paying audience.

With the National Youth Theatre, obviously, I've done productions there, I didn't get paid. So, I was in training with them. So, I didn't go to drama school. When I left there, I just went into TV and film for quite a few years. And then I had a realisation that artistically, I wasn't fulfilled. So, I've done my best to like try and get into theatre, but I haven't been to drama school. So, I felt there was a bit of stigma of not going to drama school in terms of being on a London stage. Maybe I was wrong, I don't know, maybe some of the people that you speak to might feel the same. So, my agent got me an audition for a fringe theatre. It's called Theatre503, which is quite a small theatre. And I was 22 or something. And yeah, I got that part. And like, for years and years when I was doing TV and film, I was like, "what are they looking for in theatre? What are they looking for?" And I think I came to a realisation they were looking... I felt, because I hadn't gone to formal training, I think they were looking for just an energy on stage. An energy that just, like, goes outwards. Whereas a lot of my acting before was on TV and film and it was all inwards. Like the energy I was putting was like behind the eyes. So, I just went to that audition, which was a play about a young working class guy from the Midlands, so I had to get my friend who was from a working class background in Nottingham to tell me the Midlands accent. And then I got the play.

And it was a character that's completely different from me. He was a young, aggressive, working-class boy, whereas I'm a working-class boy, but I'm not like, aggressive. I'm quite, like, sensitive. And I have my moments because I come from a family that has a lot of arguments. But naturally, I'm quite shy. But I felt I knew this young boy. It was like my nephew, who had and still has some very difficult time. And then my auntie came to see it. And she said that she saw my dad on stage. She said that I was emanating my dad when my dad was younger, because my dad was like, angry at the world and misunderstood, but I guess, quite aggressive. So that, it wasn't me that my auntie saw, she saw her brother.

I knew that I was challenging something that was within me. But it obviously wasn't me. So, I was playing a part, but it was within me. This, I guess, like anger at the world. Because I think working class people are angry at the establishment. They're angry, angry at the unjust nature of things. And I have that within me. And I speak about it loads but I just don't... I don't have that aggressiveness. But then I played a part, and it was liberating to scream and shout and fight and do all these things. It was like a release in a way. So that was in Theatre503 in Battersea, where I grew up until I was 9 years old. So, on matinee days I got to walk around my old council estate. It was very like, full circle to do a play literally 3 minutes away from where I grew up in this council estate. And it's right next to the fish and chip shop that we used to go to on Fridays. And I remember when my dad came to see the play, he was at the bar talking to all these people that hadn't seen him in years because he moved away. And he was like "oh, yeah, I'm seeing my son, he's in a play". But I never knew that theatre was there. I don't know if it was there when I was younger.

5. Did you enjoy that experience? Were you looking to do more theatre after?

Yeah, and I enjoyed it in the National Youth Theatre too. But then my career went in a way where it was just TV and film. Which is safer and I enjoyed it a lot. But I guess I felt I wasn't creatively fulfilled. I didn't feel like I was developing as an artist or developing my opinions on theatre or developing what I want to say to the world. So doing this play I felt like it was a play that I agreed with, because it was showcasing why this young boy is angry at the world.

Then afterwards I got a play at the Royal Court theatre. Which again, was playing like this young, aggressive part. And I was like, in TV and film they always cast me as the shy boy, or the one

where the world is affected on them. And then I'm getting into theatre, and I'm playing the complete opposite, which I'm really chuffed about now, I'm really happy. And that was a play directed by Lucy Morrison, who is an amazing, amazing director of the Royal Court. And the Royal Court's history of working class plays and that is quite strong. So, I felt quite happy to be there. And then I'd done a play at the Young Vic, which was like a community project, and it was my first period piece. We've done it there for a week and then we toured it around the community. And then I've done a play at the Donmar Warehouse which was directed by Ola Ince. She's so good. And from South London. And yeah, it was like, Lucy, and Ola, I don't know their background, but I just had an unspoken kind of language with them. Lucy felt like my auntie or like, my mom. And Ola felt like one of my sister's mates. And I never felt judged. I just felt like nothing was a stupid question. Like sometimes in the theatre industry, I've felt stupid, because I didn't know a word, or I had to ask what something meant. Or something like that.

I don't think people meant to do it. But I think that is a class issue like, don't assume that everyone has the education that you've had. And also, don't assume that intelligence is just literal academic intelligence. I think I have emotional intelligence from my dad, and I can understand many different sides of people. I don't think acting is an intellectual pursuit, but I think it can be and there are elements... Mostly it's human, emotional intelligence that you need. I had to go away and learn all this stuff by myself. The history of theatre. Because I didn't want to walk into a room and feel stupid. Because I felt like that throughout my whole education. So, something that I love, I was adamant that I was going to research it and not made to feel stupid. I don't think people meant to make me feel stupid. I think they just come from a place where it's like, they just assume that everyone knows all these things.

Like, when I was working on TV, I was surrounded by all these people from theatre. And I learned the Iago speech from Othello, just for myself. And then when we were like sitting down having coffee, I was just like, I just started speaking it to one of the theatre actors. Just to show like, "I know Othello and I've read it". And he was like, "oh, you know Othello", I was like, "yeah, I know that speech". My insecurity led me to learn that.

6. Is acting your main career? Do you have a second job?

In the 10 years I've acted I've had maybe 4 years of just being paid from acting. And the other times, getting like part time jobs. So, I was quite lucky. I mean, I didn't get paid loads but during those TV and film years, obviously you get a bit more money, so you don't have to work. But then in the 6 years where I was doing theatre, or I wasn't getting any work, I mean, I've done every job. I mean, if you name a job, I'm pretty sure I've done it. I've done every part time job. Bartender, call centre, I teach acting like a drama facilitator. And I work in a yoga studio like once a week. So yeah, in the years where I wasn't lucky enough to get acting work, I've done all the part time jobs.

If you're a theatre actor from a working-class background, you do a play, and then you have to get a job straight away. Yeah. Because you don't get paid much when you get paid. It's alright, but it's not going to sustain you for the year. Like if you've got a TV job, you know, you've got a TV job that paid like 15 grand for like two weeks work or whatever it is. But doing theatre, you come straight out. And you either need another acting job, or you have to go get yourself a normal job.

7. Have you felt supported on your path?

Yeah. I have a great group of friends, actors and non-actors. Like, from all different classes. My working-class acting friends, we get together... It's more in a joking way, we get together and just moan and curse at the industry and pretend to be like posh old actors that get loads of work or, or that don't get any work and they just like creating these characters. But generally, I feel supported from the actors, yeah, I think so. But from the industry, it's like, the most unsupportive industry. I guess you just accept it really, for what it is, and I've just orchestrated my life in a way where I don't rely on it anymore because it's so unreliable. And it won't give you anything, the acting industry, other than to do your art and to create. But if you try to get self-esteem or anything else from the acting industry, it gives you the opposite. I think it'll give you the opposite.

8. Do you feel like networking and having contacts is a necessary part of acting?

Yeah. I feel like I should be better at it. Right. And I don't think I have an issue with like, small talk and things like that. Whereas if I was at a networking thing, I think I'll just start talking about

a random fact that I looked at that day. I just get... I feel awkward to put myself out there, which is probably a low confidence thing underneath. Because if you look at private school boys, I think they emanate confidence... Not always. I think working-class actors emanate like, a different kind of confidence. But I think people from private schools emanate like, it's not their fault, but they emanate like, "I'm meant to be here" sort of entitlement that, "oh, yeah, of course, this is normal". Whereas I go into spaces, and I'm like, "they're gonna see me for who I am", you know? We go on to do the table read, and then they're going to say, "oh, it's not working out", or... I think it's because England as well, it has a whole history of elitism. And even if you go into the House of Commons, you hear stories of MPs, first time MPs, going into the House of Commons, going in and being told that they can't sit here, or they have to do this, or they're wearing the wrong outfit. All these rules that are in place just to make you feel like you don't belong. Whereas, you know, I think in Eton, they might have like a miniature House of Commons, so the boys know exactly what it's like to debate. They know exactly what it's like to just sit in those seats. And they just walk into those environments. And they're like, "oh, yeah, I've been here before". Whereas if I was to walk into the House of Commons, firstly, I'd spend like an hour just looking around. And then to actually get up and debate. You know, it's, I mean, I could debate in a pub. That's more my area. Yeah. They'll take me into a debating house in Oxford or something. I'd be nervous as anything.

9. Do you feel like social class has been a factor in your acting career?

Being working-class means I don't have the bank of mum and dad. So, as a younger actor or as a younger person, I was very, like, ashamed to claim benefits. Because you're constantly told that you should not. You're made to feel guilty for claiming benefits. So, now, since the pandemic, there've been times where I've been on Universal Credit. But I earn enough so it only tops me up a little bit, like £100 or £200. But there's something deep inside of me that still feels shameful for claiming Universal Credit. But then I think of it as... If I don't have the bank of mum and dad, I'm gonna have the Bank of England or the government give me money to sustain myself as an artist as they should anyway. As loads of countries have done. In the Renaissance people had like, patrons, rich people that gave them money to make their art. So, I'm sure there's other European countries that give money to support their artists. So unfortunately, I have to do it in a way where I have to, every three months, go to an interview and be, like, somewhat subconsciously, subtly, accused that I'm not doing enough to find normal work, you know? I would just... I'm like trying

to just see myself as an actor. And so, I don't like having to go to these. I remember when I went to a Universal Credit meeting and she started off with this questioning like, "oh, so you're not okay, what like, what have you done?" Like, "is it sustainable?" Or "have you thought about other careers?" And like, I said, "I've been an actor for 9 years". And then I started showing... Unfortunately, like getting my name up on Google and showing what I've done. And then her attitude changed completely. She was like, "oh, okay". And then she kind of gave me leeway and said, "okay, you only have to come in every three months and check in with us". And I imagine if I was a younger actor, they would have completely destroyed me and told me to get a normal job and a different career. But I was lucky enough to have done stuff. That I could have impressed her with a couple of IMDb credits of her favourite shows. And then she was quite lenient. But you know, people look at my CV and they go, "okay, you've done this, this and this", but they don't realise the gaps in between where you had to get a normal job and you had to claim Universal Credit.

appendix iv

Interview with Grace

1. What made you want to pursue theatre acting?

Oh god. I've been doing it since I can remember. So, I was part of a youth theatre, a local youth there in Hornchurch, the Queen's Theatre. Yeah, and I was always singing and always performing like from a tiny age. So, there wasn't really a moment where I went "ah! This is what I want to do!" Because I've just done it for so long.

2. Did you study Arts Education in school?

I did drama GCSE at school. But our school wasn't really big on drama and music. Like, for instance, I had to do music GCSE in my own time. I had to do like, an extra GCSE because they weren't offering it. So, they weren't big on it. But I did do drama GCSE. But it wasn't the best if I'm honest. And then I went on and did a BTEC in performing arts and a HNC in performing arts, and then a degree in acting. So that kind of took me up until the age of 24, yeah. That's when I started to do it professionally after I left drama school.

3. What did your family think of your choice to study acting?

They were all for it. Especially my mum. I think my mum obviously, like, she could see me from a young age, you know, singing in the kitchen and making plays and stuff. She just knew that was gonna happen. But yeah, my dad was a performer as well… He wasn't actually a performer when I was young, he was a policeman, and he didn't live at home either. He didn't go into performing 'til much later in life. He was in his 30s, I think it was. But he always used to sing as well. So, it wasn't much of an influence on me, but it was there, you know? My great auntie was quite a big singer in the 60s, she actually had her own TV show. And so, it's been in the family, basically, for years.

4. What was your first unpaid and paid theatre jobs?

So, the first unpaid job that I did was a community play at the Queen's Theatre. And that was called "A Tale of Two Cities". It was a musical version of the classic book, "A Tale of Two Cities". That was the first one, unpaid, only had a tiny part in that. I think I was about 11 at the time! And to be fair, I did do a professional show and got paid for it before I went to drama school. But that was off the back of youth theatre. So, I won't really count that. But my first show out of drama school, when I was professional, was a show with a guy called Ray Davies from The Kinks, a rock and roll band, but he wrote a musical and I got cast as the lead, randomly, in it. So yeah, that was my first professional job.

5. What was that experience like?

I mean, it was amazing. I mean, I've always loved The Kinks. I've always loved rock music. So, to be in a room with, like, an actual rock god for like 3 months... I was like, "what the hell?!" Yeah, it was amazing. It was a learning curve, because obviously a lead is very different to just being in a show. You kind of have to, you have to carry it... You know what I mean? And for that to be my first show as well. I'm glad it was my first show, because I kind of got to see just how hard you have to work.

6. Have you been making a living from acting? Have you felt like you need to top it up with other work?

It really depends. I've had years where I've made a living from it and that was my sole income. And then you get years, especially at the moment, obviously, because of COVID and post-COVID. And everyone's still kind of trying to get the money back that they lost in those 2 years. But yeah, you do get some years where you have to top it up. Like, I retrained during lockdown and now I do massage and beauty therapy, as well. So, it's up and down. It's a mixture of the two. But I had about 6-7 years where that was just my sole income.

7. Has your acting work mainly been theatre or TV / film? Have you had any permanent contracts?

I've not done film. I'd love to do film, but I've not done that. But I've done TV, but it's been mainly theatre, like, I'd say 70% theatre, 30% TV. I've had contracts that have lasted a year. That's the longest contract I've had. But I know that, yeah, some people can get with a rep company and then they stay there for years and years, which would be amazing. But the longest one I've had is a year.

There's pros and cons that come with that though. With the years' contracts. Like, it's like a normal job, you get holiday, which is great. But then it's relentless. It's every day, you get one day off. Like, you're not seeing your friends and your family for a whole year like that. It's amazing. But there's a lot of sacrifice as well. And I think it depends on the reasons why you act as well. A lot of people do it just for the money or for the, you know, for the validation or the fame, whatever that may be. If you do it because you genuinely like creating art and something, after about three months, you're done. Like, you're ready to move on to the next project. But then you've got another seven months left on contract, you're like, "oh, God".

8. Have you felt supported on your path?

By, say, friends and family? Definitely. They're like, always been kind of my biggest fans. They come to see everything that I do. You do come across some people in the industry who aren't quite as nice. Again, that's just, I suppose, you get that in all industries. Don't you? The competitiveness, the ambitiousness that can sometimes take people over? But yeah, on the whole, I'd say yes, I have.

9. Do you think that class has been a factor in your career development in any way?

Um, I mean, I've only had one show where I've not been cast as a Cockney. I've never had the opportunity to show any other side of me apart from little Cockney me, which is fine. And it's got me work and I can do it and it's easy. But yeah, I think the working-class thing you do kind of fall

into a bracket, and you've either got to roll with it, and be okay with that, or you're going to be constantly fighting against it. Yeah, I chose to just go "okay, this is who I am. Let's crack on".

10. Do you feel you've been typecast?

Oh, God. Yeah. Even down to the TV roles I've had everything is cockney, you know, East London girl. Oh, "could you, you know, thicken the accent up a bit, please". I think a lot of working-class people as well... I've had this discussion with a few of my friends. I'm not good at different accents either. And it's, I think it's because we're never given the bloody opportunity. That's why we know that we haven't got to practice accents because we'll walk into an audition and they'll be like, "oh, that's the Cockney, great, done". So yeah, like, I'm rubbish at other accents.

11. Being from a working-class background, what was your experience of drama school like?

I was a bit of a nerd at school. So, I did loads of Shakespeare, and it was kind of my thing, even at school, like I got an A* in English. I just loved literature. I loved the classics. And so, my mum used to read Shakespeare to me like, she's always loved all that. So yeah, I went into drama school with quite a decent knowledge anyway. Not everything but a bit.

But oh, God, I was definitely in the minority. And I was in an exceptionally affluent year, as well. Like I had millionaires from Guernsey in my year. You know what I mean? Who I ended up being best mates with, randomly. But yeah, I still did well at drama school. I was definitely the source of entertainment. On many a night out, they'll tell me "oh, say water again, say water" and I'd be like, "wata" with my accent, they'd be like, "oh! How quaint! How lovely!", okay. So yeah, I've definitely been kind of the butt of a few jokes.

Many people from my drama school, mummy and daddy paid for it, you know? Thousands and thousands of pounds. And they left and because they didn't get an agent or a job within the first couple of years they were like, "I don't fancy it anymore". They'd just given it up. So it shows why they did it in the first place... Not for the passion.

appendix v

Interview with Henry

1. What made you want to pursue acting?

I needed to feel that the world is a much bigger place than the actual world that I lived in. And the only points of reference that I had for that were movies and television. So, I was a 70s child who was kind of victim of a very, let's say, wild imagination. And I had instilled in me, from a very early age, somehow, I don't know where it came from, a philosophy that I could be whatever I wanted to be. So, I pursued that dream. But I suppose, ultimately, it comes from a need to get out of the place that I was in, where I felt very stuck, and it didn't represent my internal landscape. The world that I lived in... It was far more brutal and didn't have the depth that my internal landscape seemed to be calling out for. That's a strange thing when you're a young person, to feel like you don't belong, in some ways, in the landscape, that you've arrived in. But I always felt that I could go anywhere. That I had the tickets to go anywhere, somehow. So... Somebody else said, something was implanted in me. And it was probably through movies and imagination, and dreams and comics, and, you know, especially music, and those early people who really make an impression when you're very young in the mid 70s. For me, it would have been the Bowies and the androgynous kind of super rock stars. So, I was dreaming big from a very early age.

2. And why theatre?

Theatre was the leap off point because, it wasn't until I actually was doing it live in front of an audience that I realised that. The adrenaline kick, that rush, the drug that I still get now, every single performance... The stakes of life performance is the same with music, playing live music, and I played in bands as well in those teenage years. That sense of having to, kind of, hit the right notes and generate a feeling in the audience is the same. It's the same thing. For me as an actor, it's exactly the same equation. You want to create a kind of transcendent experience for the audience. My first play was when I was 14, so I was very impressionable to the feeling that it gave me and I did have an inherent self-confidence that probably came from being dragged to the foot of the table at Christmas time to do impersonations or tell stories or, you know, to make the family laugh around the Christmas table. I felt a kind of ease with that, and ease with storytelling and an ease with making people laugh and putting on funny voices.

3. Did you study arts education in school?

Yes. So, I leaned very heavily on my arts education. It wasn't much of it, but that extra curricular drama was all I needed. My teacher, who was a fierce lover of theatre and still is to this day and has put so many people into this business. He put them on this path, his drama group. I was one of the founding members of that. And along with other kids who grew up to be some other big theatre players, we felt like we were really making waves. We were very big fish in a small pond, if you like, in the Northwest, and then it grew through my teenage years. So, by the time I was in my late teens, I hadn't been to drama school yet, we were at the National Student Drama Festival, winning the Best Actor award as an ensemble, three of us, award-winning actors without having been through a training at this point, being recognised by John Peter of the Sunday Times theatre critics and John Godber, the theatre writer who established creatives in this industry. And when you get an affirmation from people like that, and you're young and impressionable, it's fire to the touchpaper, you know? I was off. My dreams were already in flight. I felt I was vindicated by my love of theatre by being rewarded with affirmations. So, I never felt like on a creative level I was discouraged from the arts. The only discouragement came from all the preconceptions from my parents that you cannot make a living out of them, which is, of course, not true. It's not easy. And it's a very particular kind of living. But it is very possible to pursue your dreams and achieve them and dodge the lies.

4. Did you get further education in arts?

Having left school knowing that I wanted to be an actor and wanted to do nothing else, it was just a question of facilitating that need in myself. So, the next step was to make applications to drama schools, which I did, and they were all very positive. I was accepted at most of the schools that I applied to. So, I then had the privilege of choice as to where I wanted to be educated. And I chose Cardiff because I felt at that time in my life, being quite a shy, introvert individual, which is contradictory to what I am as an artist, Cardiff felt like a much safer place to me. It was by the sea, and the personalities that I encountered there on my Open Day audition, recall weekend, whatever it was, were people that I could connect with on a very human level, whereas the people that I encountered in the London processes, were a very different kind of person from a different

kind of world. There was no judgement. But there was an awareness that I came from a different place. So, I suppose even at that stage, we're talking 1990-1991, there was a class consciousness in me, but I wasn't willing to accept that that was going to define me. So yeah, that's a curious thing.

You could never escape class, even as a younger preteen. I was very class conscious, coming from Oldham. You could not help but be politicised in some way by what we saw going on with the rise of Conservatism and Thatcher, and then going into the 80s and the miners and you know, basically the North/South divide, the decimation of local communities by the Tory government. So I was, in spite of myself, deeply politicised as a teenager, although I felt it had nothing to do with me, you know? I couldn't affect it. I couldn't change it... The fact that my mum respected Margaret Thatcher because she was a female politician, because she was powerful, and she was a symbol for women of a certain time. This is very complex when your politics rub against your parents' politics. So, it wasn't something that I really acknowledged in myself, until much later. Certainly, it's only really the last 20 years that I felt like a political artist. Claiming and defining where I came from is, in a way, my own affirmation to young working-class artists. You will look back on where you came from and see that it is the reason that you are who you are. We spend our lives becoming the people that we were meant to be.

5. What did your family think of your choice to study arts and embark on a theatre acting career?

My family were very supportive and encouraging once they recognised that the wider industry recognised me. This was, again, in my late teens. So, there was a struggle up to that point. At that stage, to audition for drama schools, or any reasonable drama courses, you had to pay an audition fee and the travel fee, etc, etc. And I spread myself very widely, because I didn't know whether I would get in and I was banking on it. So, I put all my eggs in the basket and applied to all of them. So that was at some cost to myself, I had to work and pay for that myself... There was an investment on my part, in making sure that these things worked out for myself. And when they did, and RADA offered me a place and Central School offered me a place, my parents could see that their son was gifted, and people had recognised that. I couldn't have had more supportive parents on my journey.

Artistically, it is difficult when you feel differently from your parents, you feel so differently about the world, you know? That you've seen much more of the world than your parents ever had in their lifetime, and you can have a sense of the bigger picture. We're so incredibly parochial in this country and seem to think that, you know... The world is a much bigger place than the United Kingdom. And my parents' generation, I think, probably the last generation to have that real lack of awareness. Because of social media and everything else. We are so much more plugged in when it comes to the bigger picture. But at the end of the day, it's my mum that I summon as my guardian angel before every performance and so, yeah, I feel their support, and love and care and nurturing. Never a rejection of my views. And, you know, there was a point when I was 16... Quite an age. And the school were doing "The Elephant Man". And I had to be naked in the show and it was a very big decision for a 16-year-old to appear naked in front of their peers. And for me, it was a decision about commitment to my heart and my craft. And to my peers. I wanted to show my peers that I was serious about this business. And my mum would not come and see that show, because I was appearing naked in front of this live audience. So, I use that story as, I suppose, a symbol of the differences between my parents' generation and my generation, a kind of reluctant... A pride but an embarrassment on her part about how far her son is prepared to go in the pursuit of his craft.

6. What was your first paid theatre job?

In my final year of training at Welsh College, Marina Caldarone, who was, at that time, artistic director at the Queen's Theatre in Hornchurch, came into school to do a musical theatre project, along with a very esteemed West End choreographer at the time called Carole Todd. And I somehow managed to find my way into a professional production at Hornchurch of an original musical at the time called "A Slice of Saturday Night", which is a kind of spoof 60s musical, but it ticked all the boxes, it was an actor-musician show. So, I've got to play a bit of music as well which ticked those boxes. So, my first few jobs actually were in musical theatre. Because music, as I said, it's always been a very deep passion alongside acting, and I've always sought credibility in that field, hence, the work that I've done in recent years. And that was my first paid job and the tutors from college came in and assessed me on my performance in Hornchurch. And it was thrilling to be working, and simultaneously acquiring my qualifications, if you like, my credentials. That's my first job, regional theatre, staying in digs with a landlady and her dog and her husband. And just beginning this journey of arriving for meet and greet with actors on the

first day, the first read-through and a payslip at the end of each week. It was... I was in seventh heaven. It's been a very positive experience. Every step, every job, even the underpaid jobs, I can make them work for me.

7. Since starting your acting career nearly 30 years ago, have you been making a living from it solely or have you held any part time jobs?

Since 1993, I've worked exclusively as an actor. And I've been very fortunate, in that respect. Having said that, I have never been in a financial credit situation until 2020. So, I've lived on the edge of my means for 30 years professionally, because theatre doesn't pay on a parity with the effort that it requires to create theatre. Simple as that. Before that when I was working to pay my audition fees I worked in an electronic store of Tandy at the time, I don't know if they exist anymore. RadioShack Tandy. And the Garden Centre on weekends which fostered a deep love of gardening, which I still have. And also, I did a little bit of work with relatives, kind of as an assistant if you like.

8. Have you had any permanent contracts in your career?

The RSC was the first big permanent, and the longest theatre contract at the time that I'd signed up for. And that was a thrill to know that you're in secure employment for over 12 months, because at that time in the 90s, you would do the Stratford season, and then a small season in Newcastle, and Plymouth, actually, and then moved to London to the Barbican. So, to get a job at the RSC, even as Players Cast, which was my first contract with the RSC, it was thrilling. You were learning on the job, you were getting paid, you were with likeminded people, you're in a working repertory environment where you were rehearsing one play in the day and playing another in the evening, you were playing multiple characters. And crucially, you were working with some of the greatest actors alive, on stage with them every single night, and learning vicariously from being with those people. And, for me, that has been the greatest thrill of this profession, the people that I have had the opportunity to work with, because I have worked with some of the greatest artists alive. And I pinch myself to this day that a boy from Oldham had those opportunities or made those opportunities for himself. If I could say to my younger self anything at all I would really say "good on you", you know? "Your self-belief became self-realisation".

9. Have you felt supported on your path?

Yes, I have. This industry is impeccable for providing people along the way who will enable, who will provide wisdom, encouragement, support. People who've been in these corners of the industry that are often very dark and frightening because they involve public exposure. And to glean from people who've been in the fire of the spotlight, everybody from Philip Seymour Hoffman to Stephen Daldry, who've literally ridden the crest of great fortune and fame but have also seen the darkest corners of pain. I can't imagine any other industry where you can speak to each other's hearts so freely other than perhaps, psychology, or, you know, I don't know, being a healer, or something like that. I don't know what the modern equivalent is. But I suppose that, for me, I have always inclined toward that notion that theatre is a kind of medicine for society. And we need theatre to heal and to bring us together and teach us about ourselves and each other and living together. See all our facets represented on the stage and recognise that we're not alone in our pain or grief, suffering. And through this pandemic, we have literally seen this manifest in our society, how theatre has brought us back together again. Certainly, on a personal level, having had it taken away from me for the longest period since I was a teenager, taking that drug away from me. And then giving it back to me in this play I'm doing now, with this character, this particular cocktail of a play, which is speaking to all of those things about the creative impulse and the need to look at our past and address it and love ourselves for what we were and who we were and the mistakes we made. And struggle on, together. I give thanks every day that I found theatre and the theatre community. And people like yourself who are invested and care and see the value of theatre. It means the world to me.

10. When you got into drama school, do you feel that you came in with similar education to everyone else, of the classics for example, Shakespeare etc?

No, I didn't. I didn't do very well in my academic subjects. In recent years, I have begun to look at the development of my children. Through their teenage years, I have begun to question whether I was on some kind of spectrum, or I'm on some kind of spectrum of compulsive behaviour, obsessive behaviour. Because when I do work on something, it's my life. It comes before everything. There are obvious exceptions, of course. But, so, what I knew was that I brought to

Welsh College on that first day, was a deep, deep love of the craft, and a deep desire to burrow down into the great thinkers, and writers and poets, and try and understand the medium that I was so attracted to. So that was all I needed. I didn't need an A in English Literature, which I didn't get, I got an E. But I clearly have an understanding of literature. So, there's a schism somewhere, there's a disconnect, cerebrally, how we respond to literature and stories, and viscerally. I learned by activating these things in myself. And I worked very hard. I research every role as deeply as I can, and I live it and breathe it. I felt fully qualified on that first day. That said, I went into it with a degree of fear and trepidation which comes from a place of social anxiety about how I appear to the world. There is a self-consciousness about not wanting to appear arrogant. You know, there's a very fine line between self-belief and arrogance. And so, I've always tried to practice humility, and equality means everything to me. So, I've never really encountered people that have upset me in this business. I've heard so many stories of nightmare directors and actors and designers. And I somehow have circumnavigated all of those characters because I would not tolerate them.

That said, yeah, there's an anonymous example of somebody who led me on a merry dance for a long time. And then stuck a knife in my back at the final curtain. He's the only one I've ever encountered. But this industry is full of wonderful people from all walks of life.

11. Do you think social class has been a factor in your career development?

Yes, I do. I think where I am from has been very important in defining who I am. And so, therefore, where I am in my career now is a direct product of my class.

That said, I've been canny enough to be able to, chameleon-like, slide from one social class to another because I'm a good mimic. And I'm good at reading a room and what's required of me in any particular situation. That's what I'm trying to do. That's what I instinctively do. And so, I'm acutely class-conscious when I'm in a room with people. I do hold on very tightly to where I'm from. In order to keep myself rooted in any scenario I have to remember where I'm from. It's a strange thing when a director asks you if you have a prejudice about speaking in an RP accent. And the suggestion that somebody who speaks with something other than an RP accent is somehow intellectually inferior is offensive to me, of course. But my response to that question is to prove the fact that I can be whoever you want me to be because I'm a really good actor. My

response is not to be aggressive about the obvious class discrimination that exists in this profession which manifests itself with banter and very subtle digs. I feel uncomfortable talking about class, because in all honesty, I don't really understand it. I don't understand the difference between the middle classes, the lower middle class, the working class, I just don't get it. And I try to circumnavigate all of that noise and nonsense. Because it's an obstacle to connection, which is what you need in this business. I need to be able to feel that I'm an equal. When I'm sitting across the table from the highest-paid actress in Hollywood and I'm jumping barriers to get to the rehearsal room because I can't afford a train ticket. I need to feel self-possessed enough to know that I can be whoever I want, and whatever is required of me in that moment. And class gets in the way. And when you don't have so much, you don't hold on so tightly to those things.

12. Do you think your fear of appearing arrogant is something you brought with you from your upbringing?

I think part of it comes from something that was once said to me at drama school. It was actually one of my contemporaries, he was a student, he was not a teacher. He was somebody of my age and from a similar working-class background, who suggested to me that I "took it all too seriously". And for me it's life or death, it's all or nothing. And because my work has been predominantly theatre, I've nurtured and cultivated that ability to be in the moment, every moment, to reforge every connection. And that requires a tremendous amount of commitment and energy, and immovable belief. So, the suggestion that I take these things too seriously, just the notion that our whole business is some kind of pretence, some frippery, some mask, is poisonous to me. It's toxic that idea. It's everything that I hate about theatre, a kind of disconnection between the performance and the word, between the actor and the character. My personal preference is never to encounter an actor after a show, I will always want to believe that for as long as I can, that that actor was that character and even just, you know, he's sleeping on it. I'm talking a lot of nonsense here, but it's kind of coming out and you're getting the gist of it, this idea of self-belief, self-possession, and acknowledging that. That what we do as artists is fundamental to the fabric of society and a healthy society.

That self-confidence can appear as arrogance to people, and I'm aware of that. I suppose it makes me stronger as an artist. But I'd like to reassure people that I'm really not that guy, with his nose in the air.

Like Bette Davis said, acting is work, it is work, but it's a very special kind of work. I've got two shows today, it's like looking at two enormous mountains and I know I've got to climb them. And some days you're ready for it, some days you're less ready for it. But you know, you've always got to do it. And you know, a half-hearted stagger up that mountainside is not going to serve anybody. So, we strike for the summit every single time. That's a reason to get up every morning.

13. Do you feel like you've been lucky with networking and making connections?

I've been very lucky with that. But of course, there was also, if you enter into every occupation, every job, with 100% commitment, 100% openness to the task in hand, then it's inevitable that, of that group of people, you are going to make some live connections within that room. And I found that to be true. Most of the work that I've done, there has been a percentage of the actors company, that... There is a longevity in this business, you know that you will encounter that actor again, or that director again, at some point further down the line. And you have to be kind because it's a cycle. You meet people going up, and you meet them coming down. And so, if every job is entered into with that spirit of total engagement and openness, and the way I work with the directors, I trust them like a parent, like a child trusts parents. I give myself heart, body, mind and soul to the task in hand. And more often than not, that connection has lasted, endured. And then sustaining that connection is simply a question of following that person's career because there's a genuine interest in them as an individual. There's a connection with that human being that is deep, it goes back in time. And that seems to me is the intrinsic, what I've always looked for in work, it is connection with other human beings who feel as passionately about storytelling, as I do. And whether it's by luck or engineering, I seem to have found myself, at this stage of my career, in a very positive place in that respect, because I think I've conducted myself in a good way, in that sense.

So, I suppose like I said earlier, I'm acutely aware when I'm in any environment of my currency in that space. And I think I'm old enough now to feel that that currency has a value for itself. But that's hard-earned, I'd say. A lifetime's work to get to that point. And that, that sense of ease with who I am, and where I come from. I'm still working it out. I'm still working it out every single day.