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**Uta Hagen's 'Respect for Acting' as Curriculum Text  
and Social Class: A Multimodal (Inter)Active Critical  
Discourse Analysis**

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# Uta Hagen's 'Respect for Acting' as Curriculum Text and Social Class: A Multimodal (Inter)Active Critical Discourse Analysis

## Abstract

Presented as a “play for reading” this paper critically analyses renowned actor and acting teacher Uta Hagen’s seminal book “Respect for Acting” (1973) using Bourdieu’s taste and social class theory in *Distinction* (1984) and utilising the methodological framework of Critical Discourse Analysis (Fairclough, 2010) and Multimodal (inter)action analysis (Jewitt et. al., 2016, p114). Uta Hagen’s book remains a key reading material in UK Drama Schools. The paper works on a meta level and argues with and imaginary Uta Hagen as conceived by the author as part of their experience as a reader of her book and as a practitioner of her techniques introduced in the book. The argument then extends to other readers, acting students in drama schools. The paper proposes that the technique offered in the book as part of the curriculum in these schools is exclusive of those who have low volume of capital in Bourdieusian terms and proposes that acting lecturers and students should approach the curriculum of *Respect for Acting* more critically, specifically from a socio-economic perspective. Stylistically, it aims to challenge the reader mirroring the way that *Respect for Acting* challenges its readers.

Keywords: curriculum, social class, actor training, theatre, Bourdieu

# Introduction

Uta Hagen remains one of the most renowned acting teachers. She is a Tony-winning actress who originated the role of Martha in “Who’s Afraid of Virginia Wolf?” on Broadway. Her books “Respect for Acting” and “A Challenge for the Actor” are considered seminal and definitive and are used widely in UK Drama Schools, especially in foundational training in acting technique.

This paper intends to critically analyse Uta Hagen’s “Respect for Acting” (RfA) (1973) using Bourdieu’s taste and social class theory in *Distinction* (1984) and utilising the methodological framework of Critical Discourse Analysis (Fairclough, 2010) and Multimodal (inter)action analysis (Jewitt et. al., 2016, p114). It asks:

**How do RfA and its associated teaching practices contribute to the alienation of acting students with low capital volume in higher education?**

It is presented as a one-act play for reading. Bourdieu’s theory, commensurate with its tandem existence alongside practice (Weininger, 2005, p82), is embedded in the playscript with an intention “to put Bourdieu at work” (Stahl, 2006, p1094).

After its ‘death’ in the UK in the 1980s and 1990s (Friedman & Laurison, 2020, p5), class, as a focus of social study, has made a comeback in the twenty-first century (Bathmaker et. al., 2016, p13; Savage, 2015, p5.). Twenty-first century iterations of class in the UK differ from their former iterations in the way they are defined; by ‘inequality’ (Savage, 2015, p3) rather than ‘struggle’ (Smith, 2012, p185). Twentieth century UK saw a shift from the image of two major classes, defined primarily by wealth and are in opposition (ibid. p184), to more

complex images of social class based on 'lifestyle', attributed to the rising affluence of the working classes along with a sense of "embourgeoisement" (Saunders, 1990, p105 - p107).

Twenty-first century social class encompasses "lifestyles, identities, social networks and political orientations (Savage, 2015, p3) as well as financial inequalities. Bourdieu's theory as presented in 'Distinction' (1984) was chosen primarily for its offer and potential of this nuanced exploration of the notion of social class (Friedman and Laurison, 2020, p196). His theories do not reject but go beyond early and originally incomplete theories of Marx (Smith, 2012, p179) and his twentieth century iterations (McLellan, 1981, p44; Fisher, 1981, p22; Wright et. al, 1998), Weber's more nuanced model (Craib, 2002, p343), arriving at the more recent interpretations (Savage, 2015; Friedman & Laurison, 2020, p196-197), including in higher education (Reay et. al. 2005, Savage 2015, pp221-257).

Along with human capital, Bourdieu in *Distinction* defines a sense of belonging to "worlds" to groups of people (Bourdieu, 2010 (1984), pp. 70, 363,444). Friedman and Laurison echo this sense of belonging and go further. They note professional actors can gain "status and money", thus acquire human capital and ascend in Bourdieu's "The Space of Social Positions" (2010 (1984), p. 122) but can feel that they do not belong in their new world and express a sense of alienation (Friedman & Laurison, 2020, p. 181). This paper engages with this alienation by both imitating and challenging Hagen's semiotic inferences in *RfA* regarding various forms of capital and social position of herself and of its readers (i.e. students in drama school). It acknowledges but limits its focus on the political implications of mass expansion of higher education in the UK and its failed promise of access as part of a social transformation (Bolton, 2010; Bathmaker et.al., 2016, p14).

The paper recognizes that Socio-Economic Statuses of higher education students, defined primarily by financial aspects of social stratification (Martin, 2019; Bolton, 2020) as 'disadvantaged' vs 'advantaged', are in 'hostile, irreconcilable opposition to one another' (Smith, 2012, p183) in industrialised societies. As "Social stratification is about more than simply income" (Saunders, 1990, p105 - p107), the paper attempts to go further by creating a multi-modal discourse deploying "gesture, gaze, posture, movement, as well as how space and artefacts mediate interaction" (Jewitt et. al., 2016, p27, p30, p34, p114) to explore the complexities and implications of class and taste for student, teacher and professional actor.

This paper follows the growing (mainly auto-ethnographic) resistance towards acknowledged academic forms of representation (Yoo, 2017; Spry 2001; Bochner, 2000) and does so autophenomenographically. The term refers to the thick, existentialist, rich output that is associated with autoethnography and autophenomenology as well as the process. (Allen-Collinson, 2011). It utilizes autobiographical residues of researcher's interactions with RfA both as a reader, teacher and practitioner. It recognizes and challenges the safety of keeping "the untidiness of our work to ourselves, rather than run[ning] the risk of having our work belittled as "unscientific" or "unscholarly." (Bochner, 2000, p267). It does not "dispute the value of [...] traditional forms of scholarship" but posits that its form is no less scholarly (Norton, 2013, p9).

The paper's dramatic form allows the author to state 'reasons for and against a proposition' (OED, 2023) by giving an (auto)phenomenographical and idiographic voice to Hagen. It questions "the disposition of those who have 'self-respect' and feel entitled to command respect" (Bourdieu, 1984, p294). Its intention is to confront a social wrong, semiotically

(Fairclough, 2010, p226). The paper identifies obstacles to addressing the social wrong (ibid.) of the expectation and demand of an inordinate volume of human capital from those who wish to pursue acting as a profession; the readers of RfA. It argues that this expectation excludes and alienates readers of the book with low volume of human capital. The book represents the systemic, ordered nature of this alienation by recognising that it is in reading lists of drama schools. It challenges the social order's need for the social wrong and tentatively identifies possible ways past the obstacles (ibid.). It utilises "Dramatic structure [as] an organic codification of the human mechanism for ordering information." (Mamet in Yorke, 2013, p28).<sup>1</sup>

The paper exploits and challenges the readers' own educational and cultural capital (information). Through multimodality it actively encourages an "assimilation of information contained in the narrative and connection of that information to other information leading to new understandings about both the new and the old information, which is new knowledge" (Baker, 2018, p177). For example, the end stage directions will have an additional layer for readers who know that the second movement of Beethoven's Piano Concerto No.4 "can be performed by any musician with only the most limited pianistic skill." (Jander, 2005). In this way it is heuristic. This is a strength and the paper's main limitation.

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<sup>1</sup> A note on citations: Page numbers in brackets with no other information refer to *Respect for Acting* (Hagen, 1973). All other citations contain author and date. This is to provide an ease of reading.

# Educating Uta

## A Scholarly Play for Reading in One Act

### Characters

Onur Orkut (OO): *An actor come academic, Turkish. 42. 5ft 11", slim but flabby. Almost Received Pronunciation Accent with some Northern UK vowels.*

Uta Hagen (UH): *Well-known actress and acting tutor. 54. Elegant. American Accent with hints of German sounds.*

### Act One

*(July 2020, 1.30am. A tiny flat in Liverpool city centre with Ikea furniture and a vintage wooden fold-leaf table. A laptop glows, orange streetlight spills in; otherwise it's dark. There are used cups and mugs everywhere. Visible are a digital piano, a sewing machine and a large poster of Puccini's "Madama Butterfly". Hundreds of books are spread around the room, some open, some with post-its, including Uta Hagen's "RfA".*

*We hear a TV in another room. Channels changing.)*

TV (*off stage*): *....higher education, about the government's response to the Covid-19 pandemic.*

*(RuPaul)...the time has come, for you to lipsync, FOR YOUR LIFE...*

*(Theme tune to "Keeping Up Appearances")*

*(TV Off. Outside, the faint beat of a nightclub and a small crowd. We hear Liverpool accents. Seagulls screech.*

*We notice a ghostly figure, statuesque but not imposing. She stands still.)*

OO: *(Walks in carrying a coffee, yawning. He is in his underwear. To himself, imitating) The Bouquet residence the lady of the house speaki... (Turns on a light.*

*Beat. Turns the light off. And on again. Blinks.)*

OO: What? Are? you... real?

UH: Yes. Phenomenologically speaking (Cibangu and Hepworth, 2016, p150).

OO: Do you mean phenomenographically (ibid. p151; Allen-Collinson, 2011)?

UH: Not strictly phenomenographically as you're not exploring or comparing variations of how other people experience me and only presenting your own so perhaps more autophenomenographically.

*(Beat. Onur looks blank)*

Maybe... some... clothes?

OO: *(Turns red)* Oh my GOD! *(Runs offstage.*

*Beat*

*Hagen, elegantly dressed, takes in the environment like a detective. She doesn't move. She observes the empty coffee cups, the post-it notes, a sock on the piano. She looks for somewhere to sit amongst empty biscuit packets, take away boxes, empty root-beer bottles. There are bright yellow plastic Ikea chairs. She moves closer to one with forensic fascination. No ashtrays.)*

UH: *(to herself, "imitates Bette Davis)* What a dump." (Albee, 2004, p7).

*(beat)*

OO: *(Offstage)* I am so excited. No one will believe this.

UH: *(Calling offstage)* Do you know Alfred Lunt?

OO: *(offstage)* Erm....No...

UH: In a demonstration in class, I give three handshakes to a student. First, imagining them to be Lunt and "I always turn red, and get damp palms, and am on the verge of a bobbing curtsy" (p172).

*(Silence.*

*Continues to survey the room. Spots her photograph on the cover of RfA which is well read. She picks it up, thumbs through the pages occasionally stopping to decipher what the pencil scribbles and post-it notes say on a page.)*



Do you know Gerard Philipe?

OO: *(still offstage)* I'm sorry, no...

UH: For the second handshake I imagine my student to be Gerard Philipe. You should see me idiotically attack my "most worshiped movie star" with knocking knees and all. (p173).

OO: *(walks back in wearing slacks and a t-shirt. Uta is shocked at Onur's self-manifestation (p70). Her eyes widen. She opens her mouth. Then immediately changes her mind.)*

And the third handshake? (p173)

*(offers his hand. Awkward pause. She doesn't take it. She is not comfortable with this level of familiarity, but she doesn't want to make a big fuss).*

UH: *(Pointing to a chair with half a pizza on it. She's wearing satin gloves.)* May I?

OO: *(With an inadvertent curtsy removes the pizza, brushes off the seat)* Of course. Please....

*(Pause.)*

UH: So, you think my book excludes working class people?

OO: Well, I argue that it excludes and alienates those who do not have a large volume of capital as defined by Bourdieu.

UH: You do realise my book was reviewed as a "serious but not highfalutin account of my method" (Garfield, 1974, p134).

*(He gulps. She's waiting.)*

I can only stay till dawn. *(She perches on the chair).*

OO: *(Takes a deep breath.)* OK. I read RfA when I was a student, even used some of the exercises in it as a professional actor. And I now use your book when I teach acting. (LIPA, 2019).

UH: So?

OO: I mean I know a lot about you but.... OK. You're a Broadway actress --

UH: -- Tony winning.

OO: -- and a teacher (HB Studio, 2023) and--

UH: I was born in Germany and went to the States when I was seven. My father was a professor and the founder of the Department of Art History (Jacobs, 2004; University of Wisconsin Madison, n.d.; Wolff, 2004), and my mother was a Danish opera singer and teacher (HB Studio, 2020). I studied for a term at Royal Academy of Dramatic Art (RADA) and briefly at my father's university (Jacobs, 2004). But I wasn't fond of the formalised training (Stearns, 2004; Malague, 2012, p157). As a child, I read actor biographies and classical plays (Malague, 2012, p157).

OO: See what you describe is already a high volume of inherited cultural capital (Bourdieu, 1984, p19, p80) and an origin of dominant class (ibid. p65).

UH: Capital? (*laughs*)

OO: Yes. Enjoyment of "tasteful literature" (Savage, 2015, 98) could be considered cultural capital, which you acquired early in life. But you did not study acting.

UH: Not formally.

OO: So how did you get into acting?

UH: "When I was very young [...] I was employed in the theatre" as "an amateur in its original sense." (p7) Not some unskilled person who pursues acting as a hobby. "I pursued my work for love. Then the fact that I was paid was incidental to the love." When I became a professional, "I lost some of the love" (p7). Do you know Eva La Galienne?

OO: Again, unfortunately not... (*She looks at him perplexedly but not disdainfully.*)

UH: She put me on the professional stage. (p7). Well, I wrote to her requesting to audition (Malague, 2012, p157).

OO: You must have had a certain element of "ease or cultivated naturalness" (Bourdieu, 1984, p71) to write directly to a well-known Broadway producer when you were only eighteen (Malague, 2012, p157).

UH: Do you think my (*mocks*) capital helped?

- OO: Yes. Many actors lack “that confidence that a certain level of class gives you” (Friedman and Laurison, 2020, p99) but you entered the profession with “remarkable ease”, even for your era. (Malague, 2012, p157). You and La Galienne must have been a “well matched couple” (Bourdieu, 1984, p174).
- UH: Probably. She inspired my views on theatre. Do you know Lynn Fontanne? Lunt’s wife?
- OO: Erm...
- UH: Never mind. The Lunts’ gave me “a rigorous theater discipline”. (p7)
- OO: What about formal training? You say that an actor needs talent but also “an education can and must be acquired and developed” (p13).
- UH: As a teacher I claim no authority to “behaviorism or semantics”, scholarship, philosophy or psychiatry (p9). “We do not have to get psychoanalytical or delve into Freud [...] to learn to understand ourselves and others”. Although Dr. Jacques Palaci is my “close friend trained in psychology, psychiatry and human behavior” (p48). Don’t forget “[...] Stanislavsky went to the finest actors of his day and observed them [...] and from these findings he built his precepts.” (p6). I learnt from the “master artists I observed or worked with” (p6).
- OO: Forgive me but those master artists are referred to as a club of ‘Anglified Elite’ dominating the American theatre (McConahie in Malague, 2012, p157). And you benefited from your associations with prominent artists who took an interest in your talents (Malague, 2012, p158).
- UH: Social networks are not exclusive...
- OO: No (Savage, 2005, p160) but it is more likely that people in a certain class of occupations will know more people from that class and similar occupations. At the extremes, this relationship becomes distinctive. “[...] social networks are tied into wider patterns of class differentiation” (ibid., p160 - 161).
- UH: If actors are prepared in their craft as is humanly possible, if they practise forever, if they are prepared with audition material, if they have thirty things ready to be presented at the drop of a hat (p202) and if they have “tenacity” (p203) and if they “work like a dog” (p199) any actor can be successful.
- OO: Yet British theatre is dominated by people from privileged backgrounds (Friedman and Laurison; 2020; p84).

The number and calibre of names you mention in your book also point to a high volume of “social capital” (Bourdieu, 1984, p122) which you imply what Stanislavski had as a basis for his work. (p6)

UH: Social capital? (*Under her breath*) Whatever happened to Marx!?

OO: Yes. Then, you even convert your social capital to educational capital, for example, by associating your knowledge with your friendship to psychiatrist Dr. Palaci, therefore legitimizing your knowledge (Bourdieu, 1984, p86-87).

(*She looks blank*).

Let's go back. To your childhood.

UH: I grew up in Madison Wisconsin, like that character I played: Georgie Elgin in “The Country Girl”. Both born into a middle - class society and both bookworms – “I had my own need to barricade myself with Shaw and Chekhov to get away from my prom” [...] like Georgie’s Whitman, Brontes and Jane Austen (p154 -155). At home, “creative instincts and expression were considered worthy and noble” (p7). I remember a holiday at a medieval castle on the Rhine with a real moat and a drawbridge when I was nine (p30). I recall weeping “over a poem by Rilke or Donne or Browning. [...] “my flesh tingles when I hear Schubert chamber music.” These are some of the realities within me (p37, 38). I mention these poets and composers merely as part of my technical approach to a character in which actors must find similarities between themselves and the characters they play. (Malague, 2012, p154).

OO: (*A joke*) Or perhaps you mention them as signs of “mastery of social significance” (Bourdieu, 1984, p73).

(*Pause. She doesn't laugh. He clears his throat.*)

I mean, this points to a middle- / upper middle-class childhood (Lareau in Murphy and Costa, 2015, p41). What about your later life?

UH: You know about the Herbert Berghof studio, where I taught with my husband, in Greenwich village NYC (HB Studio, 2023).

OO: Oh yes, Greenwich village: a neighbourhood for artists, bohemians and intellectuals and by 1980s a fashionable area (Encyclopaedia Britannica, 2020). Another sign of your high economic and social capital.

*(Pause. She exhales slowly.)*

You had a house in Montauk (pp83-85)?

UH: Yes.

OO: Montauk in the 60s and early 70s was hosting high profile celebrities and their entourages including The Beatles, The Rolling Stones and the "avant-garde" friends of famous photographers Peter Beard and Andy Warhol (Clemente, 2015). Edward Albee's 2.8-acre house in Montauk --

UH: -- Not far from mine, and which I convinced him to buy.

OO: -- was sold at \$16 million in 2019 (Finn, 2019).

UH: Mine was only a small place --

OO: -- on a one-acre plot on the ocean, complete with a sundeck, garden with grass and vegetable patch (pp 83-85; Prideaux, 1978).

UH: And?

OO: Well, in the UK actors are disproportionately from privileged backgrounds (Friedman and Laurison, 2020, p84). Posh actors and social mobility in acting have been in focus in the last few years (Cadwalladr, 2016; Donaldson, 2019; Garrido, 2017; Sawyer, 2017; Sherwin, 2017; Tucker, 2019; Diversity School Initiative, 2020). And some people blame the drama schools (Jones, 2017).

UH: How?

OO: Difficulties start at getting into the drama school with cost of auditions, travel but there are other problems once people from less privileged backgrounds enter higher education in general (Connor & Dewson et.al., 2001, p89). There are, of course, some exceptions to the rule. Julie Walters is often given as an example. (Friedman and Laurison, 2019, p84; Savage; 2015, p224).

UH: But why does it matter that posh actors dominate the scene?

OO: Bourdieu investigates social classes, status groups and the relationship between them, defining the latter by a "uniformity of lifestyle" (Weininger, 2005, p83). The lifestyles, combined with capitals, imply and indicate status. Differences of status are manifestations of social class differences (Ibid. p86) and taste. He claims that class

differences in tastes lead, through everyday interaction and its consequences, to social reproduction. (Holt, p.93, 1997). Dominant social classes reproduce their taste through their own interest – “Elites have the power to set the terms through which tastes are assigned moral and social value” *ibid.* (p.95 ) - taste serves as an exclusionary force as those with high cultural capital tend to share the same tastes. While social class is not purely economic for Bourdieu (Stahl, 2006, p1092), he defends that there are tensions between groups having “different, and even antagonistic” relations to culture, depending on how their capitals were acquired and how these capitals can be utilised with a view to gain profit (Bourdieu, 1984, p12).

*(She looks blank).*

“Taste is what brings together things and people that go together.” (Bourdieu, 1984, p241) and the working-class aesthetic is a dominated aesthetic (*ibid.* p41).

UH: And what’s all this got to do with my house in Montauk?

OO: Images of high level of economic capital you present in RfA -ownership of a small house, albeit a small house by the ocean in Montauk- could alienate students who come from less privileged backgrounds who are in drama training. For example, Michaela Coel, a graduate of Guildhall School of Music and Drama, was the only person in her class who did not own her home (Jung, 2020).

RfA is on reading lists in nine - out of nineteen - partner schools of Federation of Drama Schools in the UK (LIPA, 2019; CSSD, 2019, p10; Rose Bruford, 2011, p1; Royal Birmingham Conservatoire, 2018, p7; RCS, 2018, p19; ALRA, 2014, p5; LAMDA, 2014, p3; Nimmo, 2015, p1; Guildhall, 2018, p42; FDS, 2020). Another five schools mention your name in practitioners explored (ArtsEd, n.d.; GSA, 2019; Manchester School of Drama; 2020; Oxford School of Drama; 2020; Dacre et.al, 2010). And (points to RfA) it says here that this is the best substitute for those unable to avail themselves of your tutelage.

UH: But you choose to use my book...

OO: We do. So, your book, your voice becomes our voice. And the images you offer clash with a need for more academics from a working-class background (Reynolds, 2018) if we want poorer students to feel less alienated educationally (Connor & Dewson et. al., 2001, p89) and aesthetically (Bourdieu, 1984, p41, 43).

UH: Alienated? Like Brecht? (Glahn, 2014, p8)

- OO: No, this is different. Acting is an art form that depends on style, genre and taste. If the curriculum content for actor training in UK higher education - including your book - (Hodge, 2010, p161; Wolff, 2004; Simonson and Gans, 2004) and teaching practices associated with it target a particular class of learners, this risks alienating working-class students and favouring others.
- UH: But isn't institutional habitus 'a complex mix of curriculum offer, teaching practices and what children bring with them to the classroom' (Reay in Atkinson, 2011, p334)?
- OO: (*surprised*) Yes and includes teachers' expectations and biases (ibid.).
- UH: But acting as a profession....
- OO: Even professionally there is alienation. Moving up in class as an actor is possible, but it can leave the professional actor forever alienated to her "self" (Hogan, 2020).
- UH: But mine is just a technical book.
- OO: Technical. Yes. Can we talk about that?
- (*Outside, we hear noises. A large group is singing loudly.*)
- UH: What's going on? (*She stands up, moves to the window. She scrunches her face at what she sees*).
- OO: It's the nightclub downstairs. It's closing time. (*Beat.*) Technique?
- UH: Ah. Yes. My technique relies significantly on "the self" and one's life experience (p10, p22, p29, p59, p141, p142; p48; Rotte, 1977; Malague, 2012, p154). "First, you must learn to know who *you* are" (italics original, p22).
- OO: Then who are you?
- UH: My self-identity is dynamic, changing with the situations and circumstances I'm in (p25). "I *think* I'm a child of nature, open, frank, impulsive, [...] tender, brilliant, and noble" (italics original, p24). "Yet if I [...] inadvertently catch a glimpse of myself reflected in a store window I am appalled at what I actually see" (p24).
- OO: (*Looks at his slacks*) You are appalled that you don't look noble?
- UH: We all "spontaneously play a variety of different roles in life" (p25). My cliché images can clash with what I really am (p26).

OO: Like some working-class university students! Participation in higher education affects their identity, accents, clothing and even their tastes, as viewed by themselves and by those around them. (Archer & Leathwood, 2003, p177). Some show a resistance to becoming middle-class, not wanting to leave their roots (ibid.). And even if they mobilise to an upper class (Savage, 2005, p224) that does not always provide a sense of relief and a true, authentic belonging to the new, upper class to which they have been mobilised by means of their education (Reay et. al., 2005, p91). They “become, for ever, neither fish nor fowl.” (Freeborn in Reay et. al., 2005, p93)

UH: Is this the kind of alienation you meant?

OO: Yes!

Going back to your technique, how do I utilise my “self”?

UH: Let’s assume you will play Horatio. You must avoid the cliché but also avoid “the realities often relied on by the supposedly “modern actor”, such as Brooklyn speech, head scratching, belching, and blue-jean postures” (p23).

OO: Why? If I come from Brooklyn (Bourdieu, 1984, p438) and if I studied acting surely I’m good enou ....

UH: (*interrupting*) Because these would “not bring about a Horatio who is a close friend to a prince of Denmark, who attended the University of Wittenberg [...], who is accustomed to the life at court” (p23). It doesn’t matter how great your inner technique is. If you haven’t shed your Brooklyn speech or your pigeon-toed walk, you only have your laziness to blame (p14).

OO: See you are perpetuating the negative, antipathic working-class aesthetic references in life (Bourdieu, 1984, p57, p241) in higher education (Archer and Leathwood, 2003, p177) and in acting. The “fruity purr” of Oliver Ford Davies is already preferred over “whining Scottish accents” (BBC, 2019). Working-class accents work against an actor (Thorpe, 2016). A certain breadth of gesture, posture and gait is the most typical recognizable demeanour of the bourgeois (Bourdieu, 1984, p 216). “[...] The body is the most indisputable materialization of class taste [...]”. (ibid., p190).

These all contribute to the alienation I mentioned above which occurs through upward mobilisation in social class.

UH: What do you mean? Wouldn’t actors want to lose their Brooklyn speech and their pigeon-toed walk (p14)?



OO: Reconciling the contradictory sources of identity take some time and emotional effort and even if they are resolved, they cause a sense of estrangement (Friedman and Laurison, 2020, p182). Despite gain of status and money “You are not part of [...] the acting world, the middle-class world, and you are also not part of where you came from anymore.” (ibid, p181). Bourdieu’s argument suggests that this might be due to the manner of acquisition of cultural competence (Bourdieu, 1984, p65) and cultural pedigree (ibid. p63). He associates social origin with important differences in competence. (ibid.)

*(Pause. We hear some expletives in a thick Scouse accent from outside. The noises fade.)*

Some people might say that your primary habitus, the one that was shaped from birth and by your early experiences, (Murphy and Costa, 2015, p7) and your cultural pedigree (Bourdieu, 1984, p63) contributed considerably to your experience as well your competence and ease of familiarity (ibid., p81) with your knowledge.

But your later experiences in life also point to a high economic and cultural capital?

UH: Do you mean my romantic holiday in Tyrol? (p128) “Brim-full of fantastic places to eat including many Michelin-starred restaurants that elevate the bountiful local produce with exceptional results” (Truman, 2018).

OO: And your knowledge of elegant objects.

UH: Well, to endow a prop ashtray with real life qualities I must use my “previous knowledge of elegant ashtrays”, specifically from Tiffany (p45). I must know the difference between a Hammacher Schlemmer and a Woolworths knife to be able to handle them differently (p194).

OO: A knife set from Hammacher Schlemmer is nearly \$300 today (Hammacher & Schlemmer Company Inc., 2020). These instances in your book of your higher economic capital push you higher in the space of social positions, closer to the top of the space (Bourdieu, 1984, p128), stretching the distance between yourself and any working-class actors reading your book. (*Frustrated*) How can they keep up with you?

UH: I know I was lucky in life (p30). If you can’t have experience, “you can still read biographies and histories [...] until you know you’ve lived in those rooms with those people, eaten that particular food [...] danced, jostled and tilted with the best of them” (p30). The young actor should possess or seek a thorough education in

history, literature, English linguistics (foreign languages), as well as all of the other art forms – music, painting and dance [...] (p13). Go to museums (p11).

OO: You are expecting prospective actors to possess a large volume of cultural and educational capital and preferably a high “economic and social level of the family of origin” (Bourdieu, 1984, p105). It would take years for some to acquire this capital (Savage, 2015, p74).

UH: But my technique depends on this knowledge. To fully engage with their circumstances (p158) an actor must be able to imagine their immediate surroundings in detail. She must be able to imagine listening to, therefore know a Bach cantata --

OO: -- Arguably a taste shared by the “Grand Bourgeois” (Bourdieu, 1984, p277) and bourgeois culture can only be learned by “early immersion in a world of cultivated people, practices and objects.” (ibid., p75), so actors would have to be introduced to these when they were childr--

UH: -- Please ! Where was I?

OO: Apologies. A Bach cantata...

UH: Ah yes... “as part of a room, from whose walls Rembrandts and Titians look back at [them]” (p161). The actor must be able to imagine the lush pile carpets, Meissen porcelain, cords -to call servants-, lace curtains, rolling lawns outside...(p161)

OO: Meissen? At €1445 for a mug? (Meissen, 2020). I don’t think so!

UH: Speaking of which, is a coffee possible?

*(OO runs to the kitchen. She is thinking.)*

UH: *(Beat. She remembers)* I do praise “so-called ‘lower’ class being able to uncover spontaneous emotion freely”. (p29.) Middle-class America is too restrained when there is a need for a genuine emotional release on stage. (p29).

OO: *(offstage)* The only significant positive image of lower-classes in your book.

UH: I ask the reader to imagine the circumstances of the superintended shouting at them because their rent was overdue? (p98) Is that not “working-class”?

OO: *(offstage)* You mention that only in addition to the paragraph above it, which says the same person has just come home from shopping “to prepare a gourmet dinner

for six people". (p98). They cannot pay their rent on time, but they are a person of "refinement". (Bourdieu, 1984, p68).

*(We hear a glass smash.)*

Talking about refinement, you also mention a lot of classical music (Bourdieu, 184, p19): Scarlatti Sonatas (p43), Bach Cantatas (p4, p161), Beethoven, Haydn, Mozart (p18, p33, p92), you say you can recognize Mozart (p90), you know about Mahler and Mozart enough to relate their qualities to textures of plays (p150).

*(Comes back with coffee. It's in a mug. She doesn't know what to do with it but takes it anyway.)*

UH: How about when I ask you to imagine yourself drinking beer from a can while listening to 'The Beatles' in a room with "cracked and peeling walls and ceilings [...] and a leaky faucet" (p161).

OO: Which is the only musical example that isn't classical in RfA.

UH: How about when I ask questions about a ranch in Australia, or a London slum (p161) in "Circumstances" section?

OO: In RfA your assertions of the value of your taste often come up in contrast to those who are "mondain" (Bourdieu, 1984, p74). By these examples you continually assert your experience and knowledge of high-brow taste, acquisition of which was possible by your high capital volume position, often quickly contrasted by images of some lower-class, antipathic imagery. If your readers do not have your level of acquisition, or if they are in a position where they can see no possibility of having the same level of acquisition (due to their social origins or lack of time), there may be a distance between yourself and the readers here.

*(Pause. She eyeballs him and sips determinedly from the mug.)*

Ok. Let's go back to the technique. How do you prepare for Blanche in "Streetcar Named Desire"?

UH: I simply find realities within myself connected with Blanche's needs (p38). To do that I "remember preparing for an evening at the opera (bathing and oiling and perfuming my body, soothing my skin, brushing my hair until it shines, [...] spending hours over a silky elegant wardrobe, and a day over the meal I will serve before the opera". (p37)

OO: "I remember" suggests these are your real-life experiences and they communicate a sense of superiority "in the art of self-embellishment [...] a moral and aesthetic virtue which defines 'nature' negatively as sloppiness". (Bourdieu, 1984, p206). Working-class readers of this example will be far removed from these kinds of experiences, not least because of a strong necessity to work and a pronounced lack of leisure time (Reay et.al., 2005, p88).

UH: Well, my technique works as I got stellar reviews! (Spector, 1989, p553)

OO: (*He is told!*) OK. You say actors should have real-life experiences, like you, or they should compensate a lack of this "luck" of experiences by knowledge. What sort of things should an actor have experience or knowledge of?

UH: For example, for the object exercise I ask an actor to imagine a morning in "their" flat in Perry Street New York city (p93).

OO: Perry Street, that's Greenwich village, isn't it?

*(Goes to his Ikea bookcase, picks up his New York guide, shuffles through the pages.)*

UH: (*ignores him*) I ask the reader to imagine it's morning (p93). They had a date last night and they went to see a French film. There is an antique night table by the bed and orlon curtains, a chiffon robe. They have an audition later that day and one of their objectives is to "lay out a proper wardrobe and to make [themselves] elegant". Their slippers are tacky and need to be thrown away (p93). Of course, the objects would be props and they would need to endow them like I did with an ashtray.

OO: An "elegant" ashtray. From Tiffany's. (p45)

UH: Where else?

OO: See you are doing it again. To execute your exercise fully, you expect your student actor to either have experience or knowledge of an "antique" side table, orlon curtains, a chiffon robe, an elegant wardrobe. They must also judge a pair of slippers as "tacky", commensurate with that of the wife of a "young executive" (Bourdieu, 1984, 299).

UH: (*Puzzled*) What's furniture got to do with social class? Anyone can buy an antique side table from a flea-market!

OO: If the actress has bought an antique side table, even from a flea-market, it means they are either "rising members of the dominant class who have most educational

capital”, or a “member of the dominant class, born into that class, who have less educational capital than their origin promised.” (ibid., p78).

UH: But this (*points to RfA*) is just a book...

OO: True, but your book is on reading lists for our students. Your expectations and demands on your readers are no less than the demands you make of yourself regarding taste, elegance, lifestyle and the experience and knowledge of these. By providing this book to the students at drama schools, we.. I... reproduce this expectation (Holt, p.93, 1997), unless we extract just the technical aspects and then provide a clear narrative of the context of these examples to recontextualise the content to include a wider variety of semiotic choices. Alternatively, we may aim to mobilise students by increasing their cultural and educational capital to the level that you require. This, however, is virtually impossible because mode of acquisition makes a difference (i.e. students who have been exposed to this from childhood will always be more familiar and at more ease). And even if this works, there is still the issue of alienation experienced by upward mobilisation (Friedman and Laurison 2020, p181; Reay et. al., 2005, p93).

*(She is thinking).*

But it's not all doom and gloom. In RfA you imply that actors too must practice like classical musicians, singers and dancers (p3,4) --

UH: -- Pianists specifically--

OO: -- Bourgeois instrument par excellence (Bourdieu, 1984, p19), and you envy those artists.

UH: Yes, because acting deserves respect as much as these artforms (p4) from audiences and performers. No layman would critique a classical pianist or a ballet dancer but “every layman considers himself a theatre critic”. (p4) Also, a pianist with limited talent but no training would never attempt a Beethoven concerto, and if they did, they would ruin it (p4, 5).

OO: You were frustrated that you had to depend on others to practice (p81) therefore, you developed these exercises so actors, like these classical artists can practice solo, at home, independently (p81). So, what do actors need to practice your exercises?

UH: Professionals need to have access to a studio space and props and furniture. Student actors need a teacher to provide them with the same physical set-up. (p88).

- OO: This is in stark contrast with your rationale for devising these exercises. “Beauty is neither taught nor learnt, but is a grace transmitted from invested masters to predestined disciples; for others a pedagogy like no other” (Bourdieu, 1984, p74).
- UH: The actors will work on these exercises by themselves, alone (p86).
- OO: But you also ask them to present these exercises (p87) which takes the reader back to the requirement of a teacher, to observe and comment on their work.
- UH: (*Shrugs*) Perhaps it is because “The only place where I have known a degree of fulfilment is at the HB Studio, where I am both teacher and learn from others” (p9)
- OO: How much time should actors spend practising your object exercises?
- UH: “A *minimum* of one hour of rehearsal for each two-minute exercise is recommended - and by rehearsal I mean *doing* it, not just thinking about it” (italics original). (p88). This doesn’t include the time to then show it to your audience and get their reaction (p88).
- OO: The yearning for skill both in acquisition and in production akin to that of an artist (musician, dancer, pianist) marks the differences linked to social origin. Both performing and practising a musical instrument (especially the piano) presupposes dispositions “associated with [...] economic means and [...] spare time”. (Bourdieu, 1984, p75). Therefore, to be successful in your exercises, an actor must have origins and lifestyle to accommodate this. This again is impossible for some of the working-class students, particularly women, who report time poverty as well as financial poverty (Reay et. al., p90).
- UH: “Creativity -based on freedom, and freedom based on responsibility, as in life- does not follow a rigid formula” (p146). I was taught “Talent went along with a responsibility to it” (p7).
- OO: What can you say about acting as a job, as a profession then? After all, schools which use RfA aim to provide “professional training with recognisable identity and value in a complex market and have an emphasis on professionally focused opportunities and skill sets.” (FDS, 2020).
- UH: A love of work does not depend on outward success (p7). I developed a “dislike for acting” when I became a genuine professional on the stage (p8). Acting only to get paid and American theatre (Broadway in particular) present problems for actors who want to call themselves “artists”. (p7-9). Love of the work comes with a seriousness

and theatre should be a “noble venture” with a view to enlighten and to serve the audience. “[..] surely, the compensation of respect is far greater than money” (p16, 17).

OO: And this is why actors mostly belong to the ranks of those who have been able to make their whole existence a sort of a children’s game and the accumulation of the required cultural capital can only be realised “by means of a sort of withdrawal from economic necessity”. (Bourdieu, 1984, p54). It is no surprise that social origins, the lack of necessity (Bank of Mum and Dad) come to fore when telling continued success stories (Friedman and Laurison, 2020, p92). High-profile or legitimate (Bourdieu, 1984, p124) work is concentrated in London, and actors with no financial safety net go through and suffer the consequences of the geographic move (Friedman and Laurison, 2020. p93). Further, social and geographical origins determine the kind of work actors can appear in by way of typecasting.

UH: Like the actor with the Brooklyn speech not being suitable for Horatio or Romeo?

OO: Exactly! While actors with (inherited) high economic capital can resist playing parts they don’t want to, actors from working-class backgrounds often have to resign to play their ‘type’ (ibid., p94). Some actors can acquire social and economic capital by a break-through (ibid., p96) but this is not the norm. Talent and merit are important, but the course of actions that working actors can take are often defined by their economic origins and their economic trajectory (ibid, p99).

UH: I think I understand.

*(She looks out the window. We hear indistinct shouting. Two drunk homeless people. It’s nearly dawn. The light on them changes.)*

*(Points to her watch)*

OO: Already? So many things to ask *(Grabs the copy of RfA. Ruffles the pages frantically)*...

Your roles...

UH: *(Jumps up from her chair. She dramatically proclaims each role title)* Joan of Arc!  
(p28)

OO: “daughter of a farmer who communes with saints” “a zealous, self-confident ‘Warrior Saint’” (Drama Online, 2020)

- UH: Martha in *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf!*
- OO: Daughter of a college president and wife of an academic (Albee, 2004).
- UH: Natalya! (p28)
- OO: A wealthy landowner's wife (Turgenev, 2003)
- UH: Nina in *The Seagull!*
- OO: Daughter of a rich landowner (Chekhov, n.d.).
- UH: (*Drops the drama*) Although unsophisticated and middle-class (p36). (*They both laugh. Back to drama!*) Georgie Elgin in *The Country Girl* (p41)!
- OO: "a bookish, determined woman who has suppressed her disappointments to nurse an actor's ego" (Billington, 2010).
- UH: Desdemona in *Othello* (Wilcox & Howard, 2016), and Ophelia in *Hamlet*. My first professional role (Malague, 2012, p157).
- OO: Daughter of a senator in Venice and daughter to Lord Chamberlain (Shakespeare, 1996, p818, p670).

*(She takes a bow. He claps excitedly. Sitting down, she picks up a book.)*

All, with the exception of Joan who goes on to be a saint, are born or married into families of high volume of capital (Bourdieu, 1984, 128 -129). Even in Joan's case we could consider the intersection and homology of the capitals she acquires (Savage, 2015, p167). Your readers might see a relationship between these characters and your "self". Since "self" is central to your technique, this list indicates a projected trajectory for the career of the reader: roles defined by and destined to match their "self".

- UH: Like in Friedman and Laurison (2020) page 99. (*She drops the book*). I know. My technique was not perfect (Malague, 2012, p168).
- OO: You mention *A Streetcar Named Desire* a lot.
- UH: (*Light bulb*) Ah, I do look at that from two different viewpoints: Blanche a hyper-sensitive victim of a brutal society, and Stanley -Stella's husband- the representation



of the brutal society (p148). Alternatively, Stella and Stanley, “a healthy, animal society” and Blanche a destructive and neurotic force disturbing the balance (p148).

OO: You present these characters as diametrically opposed to one another (p149).

UH: And that’s wrong?

*(She picks up a large, hard-cover book. It’s Bourdieu’s ‘Distinction’)*

OO: No, no. In fact, your phrase “animal society” along with your depictions of the Kowalsky home: the cramped space, the lack of privacy, the disorder and sleaziness, the empty beer cans and stale cigarette butts (p38) goes against manual workers’ propensity of a clean and tidy home (Bourdieu, 1984, p18, p513). Although, this image of disorder and chaos of the Kowalsky home, in the way you describe it, is not cosy and it certainly isn’t sober and discreet. It does not signify the kind of “sloppiness” that could be, say, “the traditional emblems of the bohemian artist or intellectual” (ibid. p149).

UH: *(She looks around the flat.)*

Are you saying Blanche’s cleanliness is more like the cleanliness that someone with a job like ... a nurse (Bourdieu, 1984, p324) would want?

OO: What I’m saying is the images you associate with that of Stanley and Stella are ‘animalistic’ as part of ‘taste of sense’. A kind of ‘symbolic violence’ towards their existence (Bourdieu, 2010 (1984), p. 512).

UH: *(offended)* Violence? Hardly. But I guess, the Kowalsky home and their world haven’t yet progressed from nature to culture. “The antithesis between culture (the restraint against the heat, the need for cleanliness and order, sensitivity) and bodily pleasure (the mess, the beer cans, brutality and eventually violence) is rooted in the opposition between the cultivated bourgeoisie and the people, the imaginary site of uncultivated nature, barbarously wallowing in pure enjoyment” (Bourdieu, 1984, p490).

*(She proudly drops ‘Distinction’ to the floor.)*

And before you say anything, I admit that I have been at both ends of the spectrum (p142).

*(Looks at her watch. Stands up. Crosses to the window. Seagulls screech. It's nearly sunrise. She stares out from the flat's window, which overlooks the backstreets of Liverpool.)*

Once an actress asked me "Who am I trying to reach? The gas-station attendant or Brooks Atkinson?" (p18). And I said neither. "Set your own goals, set them for your own approval, and those of your colleagues whom you truly respect" (p18). Actors must work to "serve and enlighten" the audience (p22). I wonder what my life would have been like if I stayed in Germany. Subsidised theatres there had statements to make by being permanent, meaningful, and noble; qualities missing in American theatre (p17). I hoped that such a company would emerge from the HB Studio (p10).

OO: I understand your dilemma.

UH: My work should be appreciated by and should be tailored to the taste of the same kind of people as me with perhaps similar inherited and acquired capital accompanied by a sense of familiarity and ease (Bourdieu, 1984, p80 - 81).

OO: But you also present cultural goodwill. (Bourdieu, 1984, p319). Even if your goodwill somewhat imposes your cultural capital on those who are furthest away from it (Bourdieu, 1984, p319).

UH: *(She sighs)* You know, I did not choose where I came from (Friedman and Laursion, 2020, p180).

*(She picks up RfA.)*

So, what are we doing about this?

OO: I'm not sure. There is so much more to talk and think about. But I'll start with myself and my own teaching practice.

*(He gathers his courage.)*

I hope I didn't offend or upset you. I have a lot of respect for you. *(This makes her smile.)* I just think it's wrong if twenty-first century acting curriculum and teaching is not inclusive of people from different backgrounds.

UH: Perhaps you could right the wrong (Fairclough, 2010, p126) by carrying this discussion to your classroom to bring my book closer to the students of acting who especially lack *(she mimes the quotation marks)* "capital volume".

OO: I will try.

*(They both smile, standing side by side looking out the window. Uta clutches her own book to her chest. Onur closes his eyes as the warm orange sun fills the tiny flat in Liverpool, exposing the true state of mess it's in. Uta looks around. She doesn't mind the mess anymore. Takes a pencil. Scribbles something on the first page of RfA and leaves her book on the table. Walks off unnoticed.)*

OO: *(opening his eyes)* Can I ask one more . . . ?

*(She's gone. Beat. Onur walks to the table notices RfA. Picks it up. Opens the first page. Spots what she's written. He chuckles. Sits down at his laptop and starts typing. Lights fade as we hear the opening of Beethoven's Piano Concerto No. 4 – Second Movement).*

The End.

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