
BREAKING THE CLASS CEILING

Addressing Socio-Economic Barriers and Advancing Inclusive Practices for Working-

Class Artists in the UK Arts Industry

PhD by Publication

John Maguire

Thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of

Philosophy, Liverpool John Moores University

March 2026

Breaking the Class Ceiling: Addressing Socio-Economic Barriers and Advancing Inclusive Practices for Working-Class Artists in the UK Arts Industry

John Maguire 2025

Table of Contents

1. Abstract, p. 2.
2. Introduction, p. 3.
 - Intellectual and Cultural Context, p. 5.
 - Methodology, p. 15.
 - Body of Work, p. 28.
 - Conclusion, p. 34.
 - Glossary, p. 37.
3. Bibliography:
 - Works Cited, p. 46.
 - Further Reading, p. 56.
 - My Plays and Published Works, p. 62.
 - Trailers, p. 64.
 - Production Galleries, p. 65.
 - Walking Tours, p. 65.
4. The Plays
 1. *Heart*, p. 66.
 2. *Bruise*, p. 113.
 3. *Weave*, p. 167.
 4. *Passing Through*, p. 197.
 5. *Kitty: Queen of the Washhouse*, p. 199.
 6. *A Portrait of William Roscoe*, p. 244.
5. Appendices
 - Monologue Example, p. 297.
 - Reports, p. 300.
 - Reviews/Other Media, p. 300.

Breaking the Class Ceiling: Addressing Socio-Economic Barriers and Advancing Inclusive Practices for Working-Class Artists in the UK Arts Industry

John Maguire 2025

Abstract

I present a PhD by Published Works that demonstrates my work as a playwright and theatre practitioner. I feature my experience as a writer, actor, producer, and one of three Directors of ArtsGroupie CIC, an organisation dedicated to promoting and providing access to arts and heritage in areas of high deprivation. I'm Liverpool-Irish, LGBTQI+, and come from an economically disadvantaged area of Liverpool, growing up with parents who were long-term unemployed. My background profoundly influences my work and has made it a challenge to sustain a living in the performing arts.

In the first part of the introduction, I demonstrate how my plays have been shaped by traditions of working-class theatre, including local Northern influences. The second part interrogates my varied methodologies. Finally, in the third part, I discuss the sample of plays taken from my body of work and how they developed.

My craft reflects a dedication to creating tangible solutions to address the issue of equitable access to the arts through initiatives like ArtsGroupie CIC. My body of work has contributed new research into the effects of content creation, audience development and the ways in which working-class people can sustain freelance careers in the arts, and the historical contributions of working-class people.

Breaking the Class Ceiling: Addressing Socio-Economic Barriers and Advancing Inclusive Practices for Working-Class Artists in the UK Arts Industry

John Maguire 2025

Introduction

As a Liverpool-based playwright from a low-income background, my practice interrogates class barriers in UK theatre. I am a multi-disciplinary practitioner and creative director of ArtsGroupie CIC (AG), an organisation dedicated to promoting and providing access to arts and heritage in areas of high deprivation. Founded in 2016, we have sold over 9,000 tickets and received £186,000 in Arts Council England (ACE) Funding and £100,000 in additional funding from others, including the Royal Society of Literature and the National Lottery Heritage Fund. My work has been featured on Channel 5, in *The Stage*, and in *The New York Times*.

I have been selected for the School for Social Entrepreneurs training programmes: Start Up, Creative Trade Up, and Heritage Trade Up. This training has helped create a unique methodology for widening participation through heritage walking tours – a standout technique that encourages audience growth, reimagines theatre content creation, and increases intersectional awareness. I have partnered with the Heseltine Institute at the University of Liverpool, and the British Academy for community research on climate change (Liverpool.ac.uk, 2022), co-designing a public engagement technique known as a ‘community walkshop’ which incorporates the walking tour as a method to abstract key information and research questions from a select group.

Ten of my plays have been staged professionally. I have also published over 135 articles for the online international magazine Ten Million Hardbacks (10mh.net) and two children’s books *Sophie and the Spider* (2012) and *The Liver Bird* (2019). I am the History Group research lead for the Liverpool Irish Festival’s Liverpool Irish Famine Trail, with co-authored historical treatises detailing the study’s findings: *Reveal* (2022) and *Release* (2025). My practice draws on extensive experience as a socially engaged practitioner working with marginalised people across the Liverpool City Region.

Breaking the Class Ceiling: Addressing Socio-Economic Barriers and Advancing Inclusive Practices for Working-Class Artists in the UK Arts Industry

John Maguire 2025

My body of work demonstrates a sustained ambition to advance artistic practice and access, despite discouraging financial circumstances and institutional barriers. This original contribution explores the intersection of gender and class, the complex experiences of the working class and the inequalities they face. This introduction to my practice will reflect on a select sample from the back catalogue of plays and my experience as a theatrical practitioner.

The first section will detail the intellectual and cultural context, how it feeds into my experience as a writer from a socially excluded background, and the challenges this presents. The working class is classically defined as that class which must sell its labour power in order to survive. This group typically includes those who are not employers, self-employed, or who derive income from investment/inheritance.

To put my experience as a marginalised writer into context, I will explore the theatrical landscape of post-war Britain, identifying where my body of plays sit within the history of Northern theatre and within the UK. I will emphasise the importance of underrepresented communities' representation throughout the arts and how a lack of it silences important and necessary stories that need to be told by authentic voices.

Diverse storytelling amplifies historically marginalised voices and enriches creative output to resonate across all socio-economic backgrounds. For example, Michaela Coel's *I May Destroy You* (2020) offers a complex exploration of consent and trauma from a Black British perspective, while Ken Loach's *I, Daniel Blake* (2016) provides a stark critique of the UK benefits system. Both works powerfully illustrate how creative output can be used for incisive social commentary (The class ceiling in the creative industries, 2024, p. 14).

The second section will highlight the methodology that has advanced my plays. My work has had to be experimental out of necessity, due to my low socio-economic status, forcing me to push boundaries and forge new ways of presenting theatre. The language and stories picked up from my working-class background and environment have

Breaking the Class Ceiling: Addressing Socio-Economic Barriers and Advancing Inclusive Practices for Working-Class Artists in the UK Arts Industry

John Maguire 2025

influenced the writing. I write monologues that are tested through *scratch** performances and then sometimes incorporated into the work (see appendices). I will explore other experimental aspects, such as immersion in a community to gain a deeper understanding of the locality and to inject the drama with authenticity, and the practices I have adopted to build a solid audience base and help shape the content.

The third and last section shows how I have put this methodology into practice in a coherent body of work by discussing a selection of my plays. The pieces have consistent themes of class struggle and the exploration of socio-economic barriers, oppression, and marginalisation. A key aspect of my work is that it explores working-class dynamics through *magic realism** and not social realism—a deliberate move away from the kitchen-sink tradition. Magic realist texts, in Chris Baldick’s definition, typically integrate moments where the recognizably realistic mingles with the unexpected and the inexplicable, and in which elements of dream, fairy story, or mythology combine with the everyday (Baldick, 2008).

Intellectual and Cultural Context

Postwar British theatre became a testing ground for artists to shape and challenge society. Creatives sought fresh ways to express themselves and the social uncertainty of the time. The Arts Council was founded in 1946 in an era of increased opportunity for all, following the Second World War (ACE 2021). Joan Littlewood’s Theatre Workshop exemplified how theatre could explore the challenges and realities audiences face and help create a sense of belonging. Community engagement became an essential strategic tool for bridging the arts and community divide. Littlewood invited the children vandalising her theatre in Stratford East into the venue to see what happened behind the mysterious doors, to take part in dressing up in costumes and playing with props. This fostered a sense of ownership (Richardson, 2024). This practice continues to serve as a blueprint for the

Breaking the Class Ceiling: Addressing Socio-Economic Barriers and Advancing Inclusive Practices for Working-Class Artists in the UK Arts Industry

John Maguire 2025

power of theatre to change society. Shakespeare North Playhouse recently used similar techniques to deal with a spate of vandalism by local children in Prescot, inviting the youths in to engage with the venue through pizza and DJ sets.

The dominant ideology of a given era always shapes the arts. Littlewood operated in the postwar years, when people were desperate for a new approach to the arts, for theatre that focused on themes mirroring the social and political climate, and that deviated from the standard proscenium-arch style of drama. My own writing has been produced within a post-Thatcherite society, where the stripping back of public resources has led to devastating consequences (CEPR, 2013). This world of fierce individualism is based on a monetary principle known as Pareto optimality, which holds that one person cannot be better off without making someone else worse off. This dominant belief threatened to silence the collective theatre experimentation adopted by Littlewood and like-minded practitioners such as John McGrath. McGrath was a playwright from Birkenhead who formulated the principles of a radical, popular theatre and put them into practice with his 7:84 Theatre Company. The name comes from a statistic on wealth distribution in the United Kingdom: 7% of the population owned 84% of the country's wealth. This statistic has since changed radically: the richest 1% now have more wealth than the bottom 95% of the world's population put together (Oxfam, 2024). McGrath's best-known play is *The Cheviot, the Stag, and the Black Black Oil* (1973), which drew on the theatrical techniques of Brechtian epic theatre, with actors playing multiple roles and breaking the fourth wall.

As a playwright, I have sought to emulate both Littlewood and McGrath. I have also followed the traditions of other notable local playwrights, such as Alan Bleasdale and Willy Russell. *Our Day Out* (1977) drew on Russell's experience as a teacher, and *Shirley Valentine* (1986) on conversations acquired from Russell's experience as a hairdresser. The first piece presented here, *Heart* (2010), is an urban fairy tale about a marginalised man desperate to begin a career in the arts despite his class background. It details the central

Breaking the Class Ceiling: Addressing Socio-Economic Barriers and Advancing Inclusive Practices for Working-Class Artists in the UK Arts Industry

John Maguire 2025

character's journey of self-discovery. *Bruise* (2012) dissects a gay writer's experience of domestic abuse and marginalisation, navigating both personal trauma and wider societal barriers. It critiques notions of art/culture as a redemptive healing experience and the dangers of failing to realise potential. The third of the earlier works, *Weave* (2012), is an absurd satire that focuses on class struggle, body dysmorphia, and peer pressure. My earlier offerings evolved from a combination of self-funding and support from the Lantern Theatre, managed by Margaret Connell, an influential practitioner inspired by both Littlewood and Augustus Boal. *Passing Through* (2015) plays with the idea that you only really die when people stop talking about you, a theme that filters through into the next two plays I wrote. Although they still contain elements of my own stories and observations, they mark a departure from my previous approach. Both were enriched by intensive periods of archival research at Liverpool Central Library to better understand the socio-political period I wrote about: the 1700s and 1800s. *Kitty: Queen of the Washhouse* (2018) responds to a lack of female working-class representation in the Grade 1 listed St George's Hall. It aimed to make a marginalised story about the community more visible and push for equal representation in our city halls and spaces. It celebrates the life of public health pioneer Kitty Wilkinson, as told by her own statue, which comes to life and creates a theatrical landscape from the sheets she washed from the very plinth where she stands. *A Portrait of William Roscoe* (2023) has William Roscoe literally step out of the picture frame to narrate his life story. Both these plays emerged not only from exploring primary sources and archival materials but also from a conscious immersion in specific, underrepresented local communities. While developing *Kitty*, I worked two days a week as a project manager at a community hub with a food bank in a low-socioeconomic part of the city, alongside doing archival research, for example, analysing the Rathbone Papers (University of Liverpool Library, 1959–1960). The writing of *Roscoe* involved the handling of primary sources belonging to the writer, his personal notebooks, manuscripts and

Breaking the Class Ceiling: Addressing Socio-Economic Barriers and Advancing Inclusive Practices for Working-Class Artists in the UK Arts Industry

John Maguire 2025

letters to his wife (Carey, 1820, Coke, 1826, Dirom, 1825, Edwards, 1797 Roscoe and children, 1790–1830, Roscoe, 1820, 1800–1830).

This process felt at times intrusive but essential to understanding the man. This period of research also included engagement with enthusiastic heritage volunteers, the creation of an exhibition about his life at the Palm House in Sefton Park, and the development of a site-specific walking tour to map out his psychogeography* (Gregory 2009). Like me, Roscoe was born into a socially excluded family and worked hard to overcome social barriers and insufficient financial means to pursue a career as a writer.

While class divides have narrowed in some areas, divisive barriers between the classes are still ever-present and as much a part of society as when Roscoe sought a career as a writer in the 1700s (Davis, 2000). Data from recent reports confirms the continued over-representation of upper-middle-class individuals in the arts, raising questions about access (Equality, Diversity and Inclusion: A Data Report, 2021-2022). This trend highlights a notable class disparity within the entertainment industry, as alumni of fee-paying schools comprise a much larger share of industry professionals than their roughly 7% share of the general child population would suggest (Daniels, 2020).

I do not have the luxury of a financial safety net to fall back on, such as a place to stay, rent-free, or a network to help me gain instant access to arts institutions. Lacking the requisite social and cultural capital (Bourdieu, 1986) that often facilitates access to elite arts networks, I have had to navigate and construct my own opportunities within the field actively. I maintain an eclectic, hybrid portfolio career across AG, the Liverpool Irish Festival, and my own practice, requiring a flexible, peripatetic approach, often using supplemental income activities and freelance projects to subsidise the production and development of plays. I have had to become an embodiment of what Dr Jen Harvie, the Professor of Contemporary Theatre and Performance in the School of English and Drama at Queen Mary University of London, calls the 'artpreneur' (Harvie, 2013).

Breaking the Class Ceiling: Addressing Socio-Economic Barriers and Advancing Inclusive Practices for Working-Class Artists in the UK Arts Industry

John Maguire 2025

The plays in this sample of work are deeply personal, informed and shaped by my lived experience as a working-class artist. This perspective guides my research into figures like the social activist and abolitionist William Roscoe, amplifying the study of socially excluded artists by demonstrating how meticulous historical and biographical research can be used to explore and represent their lived experiences for a contemporary audience.

Much of contemporary theatre still reflects middle-class experiences, which can marginalise or misrepresent working-class realities (Grigor, 2018). This can be seen as 'poverty safari'* (McGarvey, 2017), and results in performative characterisation and narratives that can lack depth and be disingenuous and damaging. The writing I am presenting here is not written from such a top-down perspective. The stage has enabled me to contextualise the lived experience of working-class identity from an embodied, personal perspective. A recent common topic in the media regarding the arts and the lack of representation has been the 'creativity crisis' (Bakare et al., 2025). The Sutton Trust recommends banning audition fees in publicly funded schools and proposes making socio-economic inclusion a funding condition (Tibbs, 2024). Some have taken note, like the Royal Central School of Speech and Drama. But more work could be done by established arts institutions, like ACE, to make these suggestions an industry standard, moving towards the creation of sufficient legislation. In the words of one of the characters in *Kitty*: 'Well done is better than well said.'

John McGrath, the playwright and theorist who took up the cause of socialism in his plays, articulated this paradigm: 'A writer needs to reinvent the theatre every time he or she writes a play' (McGrath, 2002, p.239). I can see parallels with my practice and McGrath's attempt to use his company 7:84 to establish a dialogue with its target audience – a three-pronged attack involving context, form and subject matter. The company could stage its dramas in any location, with malleable productions that could be performed in familiar places for the audience, such as community halls and pubs. This

Breaking the Class Ceiling: Addressing Socio-Economic Barriers and Advancing Inclusive Practices for Working-Class Artists in the UK Arts Industry

John Maguire 2025

practice has influenced many current theatre companies, including Kneehigh, which the theatre critic Michael Billington has compared to 7:84 (Tomlin, 2015, p. 156). I create similarly flexible work, adaptable enough to be played in non-traditional theatre environments. *Kitty* has been performed in traditional theatre spaces such as the small Concert Hall of St George's Hall, the Cockpit Theatre of Shakespeare North Playhouse, and the King's Head Theatre in London. This 'traditional' version of the piece uses projection, sound and lighting to create the theatrical world. The basic set (thirteen white bedding sheets contained in a small wooden plinth and a small shadow puppet box, minimalism by necessity due to financial restraints) can be easily transported in the boot of a car, to 'non-traditional' locations, such as a care home, an NHS ward, a park and on a tour of rural spaces, barns and community church halls. The play can even be performed with no set at all, using only mimed props and stage action. It offers a valuable contribution to site-responsive and participatory theatre.

This adaptable approach is key to remaining creatively buoyant. The theorist Guy Standing (Standing, 2021) and communication scholar Greig de Peuter (de Peuter, 2014) both acknowledge that funding for the arts is precarious (Brook, O'Brien and Taylor, 2025, pp. 157-158). It is a sector heavily dependent on the policies of the government in office. The standard set in the 1980s, with its emphasis on filling theatre seats and the trend toward cash-making musicals, continues to resonate today (Gray, 2007, pp. 203-215). Alan Watkins described this period as a 'uniquely detestable decade' for the arts, high on profit but at times low on creativity (Billington, 2009, p. 283).

The theatrical landscape also always includes the traditional stage stalwart, Shakespeare, a favourite with producers for not requiring royalty payments. In J. B. Priestley's words, the Bard continues to drive the living writer out of business (Billington, 2009, p.49). This can hinder contemporary theatre. A better balance in programming is needed. Theatre's long-term health depends on new works that reflect the 21st century. Supporting living writers is an ethical need. It is also an investment in an art form that

Breaking the Class Ceiling: Addressing Socio-Economic Barriers and Advancing Inclusive Practices for Working-Class Artists in the UK Arts Industry

John Maguire 2025

must innovate and engage with current conversations to attract diverse audiences. The most vibrant theatrical future is one that balances the classics with new voices.

The dearth of rich theatre content in the 1980s brought a rise in alternative theatre companies, such as Cheek by Jowl (founded by director Declan Donnellan and designer Nick Ormerod in 1981) and Theatre de Complicite (founded in 1983 by Simon McBurney, Annabel Arden, Fiona Gordon, and Marcello Magni). The exercises of Jaques Lecoq heavily influence Complicite, and they reframed their findings to shape the concept of 'devising' (Complicite, 2025). Cheek by Jowl re-energises forgotten classics, such as *Andromache* by Racine, performed by the company for the first time in England, over 300 years after it was written (Cheek by Jowl, 2025). However, these alternative theatre companies' reliance on pre-existing privilege—gained through their founders' attendance at prestigious universities—underscores the systemic challenges faced by less-privileged new writers in the difficult landscape of the post-Thatcherite era.

My early plays are experimental, and as I lacked the luxury or resources for extensive rehearsal periods, each play developed a surrealist punk style* that continued to evolve during its staging. I was exposed to touring shows and local Northern work, such as Complicite's regional production of *The Three Lives of Lucie Cabrol* at The Everyman (1995) and Walk the Plank's productions. Other local influences included Brouhaha International and Barrie Rutter's Northern Broadsides. The Broadsides production of *Anthony and Cleopatra* in 1995 at the Everyman, Liverpool, brought Shakespeare's Elizabethan language to life in the Yorkshire dialect. It advocated the use of working-class language on stage (Rutter, 2020). Their programme of workshops attached to the production, which encouraged engagement, inspired my outreach approach.

Alternative drama in Liverpool has a home in the Unity Theatre, its roots stretching back to 1895 with the Liverpool Socialist Dramatic Society. Across the UK, left-wing activists and artists were forming groups like the Left Book Club Theatre Guild (LBCTG). Their early productions, often anti-war plays, raised funds for socialism and the

Breaking the Class Ceiling: Addressing Socio-Economic Barriers and Advancing Inclusive Practices for Working-Class Artists in the UK Arts Industry

John Maguire 2025

fight against fascism in Spain. Despite having no permanent home, from 1937 to 1965, the company staged radical works from America and Europe, British classics, new original pieces, and even Ancient Greek drama in venues across Merseyside. After World War II, 50 LBCTG branches formed The Unity Federation, and the Merseyside Left Theatre became The Unity. In 1980, the company finally opened a permanent theatre on Hope Place, converting an old Victorian synagogue (*Lights Up on Liverpool*. AG. 2024).

The nomadic nature of The Unity, with its early productions occurring in nontraditional spaces, before it found a building in 1980, has influenced the evolution of my practice, particularly post-COVID. An adaptation of my short story *The Liver Bird* toured local parks, turning the parks of Liverpool into 'community centres without walls' * (Open Eye, 2022).

Such agile, project-based practice has defined my artistic journey. I started to write in the late 1990s, a time when theatres began working less intensively with playwrights and helping to nurture their careers with multiple commissions. I was inspired by the early works of Jonathan Harvey, championed by the Liverpool Everyman Theatre, especially by his use of theatre to highlight political issues, as in *Guiding Star* (1998), which focuses on the impact of the Hillsborough football disaster. At this time, you could still associate playwrights with particular theatres. Many established arts organisations acted as a stable, with the writers as horses they bred. The Royal Court London nurtured the careers of John Osborne in the 1950s, and Sarah Kane in the 1990s, and the Liverpool Everyman helped develop Willy Russell in the 1970s. Now, with more stringent arts cuts, theatres are becoming more risk-averse, and this has led to a problem that David Edgar coins as a growth in the 'Primark play'* (a term he attributes to Amanda Whittington), with new plays being staged once and never done again (Edgar and Gültekin, 2024). It was this barrier that led me to develop *Kitty* in Hope Street Theatre as a piece of research and development, and to take a financial gamble by staging it at the Concert Hall of St George's Hall, which resulted in a profit and ACE funding. Grant writing is an art that

Breaking the Class Ceiling: Addressing Socio-Economic Barriers and Advancing Inclusive Practices for Working-Class Artists in the UK Arts Industry

John Maguire 2025

demands a high level of financial literacy, a skill rarely taught to working-class artists. Many middle-class creatives will have better access to networks of experts with experience in financial literacy. This is an area ACE could develop to nurture more inclusive professional development, particularly for the socially excluded, perhaps by promoting embedded finance mentoring as part of its project grant offer. *Kitty* and *The Liver Bird* opened the Sir Ken Dodd Performance Gardens at the new Shakespeare North Playhouse in July 2022 to sold-out audiences. The Kitty Wilkinson play about community cohesion and activism sold out St George's Hall for the sixth time in October 2022 and has now been staged 48 times in Manchester, Liverpool and at the King's Head Theatre, Islington, London.

The pressure to balance a regular income with a creative practice in an unstable financial landscape is a long-standing reality for many creatives, particularly those without inherited financial stability. Filmmaker David Lynch acted as a delivery person in the small hours, dropping off copies of the *New York Times* during a financially lean period (Lynch and McKenna, 2019). The composer Philip Glass worked in house removals and as a taxi driver to help subsidise his artistic career (Glass, 2015). Both artists self-funded their creative projects through graft rather than inherited privilege.

Continuous professional development is a necessity in sustaining creative relevance. The cost of theatre tickets for new work, training courses and workshops is rising, leaving only those with the financial means to attend. A decade ago, hiring theatre space to self-produce had always been a viable option, provided you could pay the hire fee, a method I used frequently. Today, that opportunity is increasingly limited. Funding cuts mean reduced staff, leading to no response to even a basic email inquiry. This can lead to disengagement among writers and falling audience numbers, resulting in a downward spiral. Many writers today must constantly promote their work, with each piece written requiring a new pitch, often with no guarantee of engagement, even if they have an existing track record with the venue. A high turnover of producers means

Breaking the Class Ceiling: Addressing Socio-Economic Barriers and Advancing Inclusive Practices for Working-Class Artists in the UK Arts Industry

John Maguire 2025

constant new relationship building. This unpredictable process can prove demoralising, especially for writers without established backing or monetary resilience. My lecturer at the University of Wales, theatre director Graham Laker, gave me the best piece of advice: 'If the work is not there, make your own.'

Over the last two years, AG has been working with Liverpool City Region Library Service and the LCR Combined Authority to address low participation in the arts among working-class audiences and artists. It has aimed to encourage the next generation of working-class theatre makers and audiences by providing learning and creative opportunities. Libraries are year-round cultural hubs, and I have been able to experiment in regional branches with many workshops. The results demonstrate the importance of libraries as arts incubators and align with the ACE's strategy, Let's Create (Supporting libraries, 2024). Despite Liverpool's rich history of radical working-class theatre, the future for working-class performers is bleak. A 2020 study conducted by Create London and Arts Emergency found that only 12.4% of people working in the arts are of working-class origin. Recent research from the charity Arts Emergency found that fewer than 1 in 10 of all arts workers today come from working-class backgrounds (Healy, 2024). This is particularly impactful in Liverpool. According to a report by the Director of Public Health (Ashton, 2024), Liverpool is the third most deprived local authority in the country. Two in three residents live in areas ranked within the 20% most deprived parts of England. Liverpool's artists are more likely to be working-class. In 2022, researchers from the universities of Edinburgh, Manchester and Sheffield utilised data from the Office for National Statistics to reveal that only 7.9% of individuals employed in creative professions identify as working-class (Tapper, 2022). Dave O'Brien has revealed similar class dynamics within both audience demographics and the creative workforce across key institutions such as OFCOM, ACE, and the BBC (O'Brien, 2020). He and other authors detail these findings in *Culture is Bad for You*, a rallying call for transforming arts industries to address inequalities (Brook, O'Brien, and Taylor, 2025).

Breaking the Class Ceiling: Addressing Socio-Economic Barriers and Advancing Inclusive Practices for Working-Class Artists in the UK Arts Industry

John Maguire 2025

Pathways to careers in the arts are complex. Kit de Waal argues that the system does not always allow the cream to rise to the top (De Waal, 2019). Natalie Carthew explores this in her autobiographical *Undercurrent: A Cornish Memoir of Poverty, Nature and Resilience* (Carthew, 2023). My own resistance has been achieved by using employment to subsidise productions, actively seeking contacts, and making my own networks and opportunities. My body of work has contributed new research into the effects of arts shortage on the well-being of high-deprivation communities, the ways in which working-class people can sustain freelance careers in the arts, and the historical contributions of working-class people. The ACE-funded projects, *Kitty*, *Weave*, and *Roscoe*, produced reports (see appendices) on their impact in areas of deprivation, illustrating the techniques and processes I use for community engagement and play development. My methodologies continue to evolve as I forge a career in the arts, but certain factors remain permanent.

Methodology

My working-class experience is intrinsic to my writing; my identity is deeply embedded in my methodology. This is evident in the work of other Northern writers, such as the Bradford playwright Andrea Dunbar, whose seminal works *The Arbor* (1980) and *Rita, Sue and Bob Too* (1982) utilised raw, often biographical, material from her life on a council estate to critique systemic social deprivation. An analysis of my practice is necessarily biographical in parts, as the lived experience of the working-class writer and their inhabited environment are intrinsically linked to the generation of creative material. The performance of identity, therefore, serves as both the method and the material (Phelan, 1993, p.4).

Theatricality and storytelling are embedded in working-class culture. Comic monologues sometimes segue into dark comedy at family gatherings where, after alcohol

Breaking the Class Ceiling: Addressing Socio-Economic Barriers and Advancing Inclusive Practices for Working-Class Artists in the UK Arts Industry

John Maguire 2025

lowers inhibitions, the event becomes a platform for impromptu performances. My upbringing was one of overheard conversations and observations in which I developed a technique of gathering from everyday sources that is now an essential part of my process. Erving Goffman theorises this social dynamic in *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life* (1959), which describes social life as a performance split between ‘frontstage’ and ‘backstage’ areas. Frontstage, individuals maintain a careful, decorous act; backstage, among trusted peers, inhibitions are lowered, and authentic behaviour occurs (Goffman, 1959. pp. 107–112).

This idea of subtle, everyday human agency is further developed by Michel de Certeau in *The Practice of Everyday Life*, where he argues that ordinary people can undermine centralised power systems with a form of consumption characterised by quietly taking what you need, staying hidden, and always working subtly in the background. Certeau examines everyday cultural practices and argues that they have a performative, creative aspect. For example, he argues that train journeys are a peculiar mix of freedom and imprisonment, a kind of ‘incarceration-vacation’ (Certeau, 1984, p. 114) in which people can improvise creatively by daydreaming and gazing out of the window. He is interested in forms of *savoir-faire*, a term in English associated with the possession of sophisticated social skills, but in French simply meaning the know-how involved in the habitual performance of everyday tasks.

The methodology in my work, therefore, necessitates an assessment that considers the origins of my interest in theatre, the use of everyday language and gathered stories, the employment of magic realism, the rejection of working-class stereotypes, content creation through testing material via walking tours and community engagement, and the necessity to continually forge bespoke, ongoing training routes.

This process employs a reflexive methodology to create meaning through embodiment, liveness, and audience relationships. The liveness of the performance—the shared, immediate moment between performer and spectator in non-traditional

Breaking the Class Ceiling: Addressing Socio-Economic Barriers and Advancing Inclusive Practices for Working-Class Artists in the UK Arts Industry

John Maguire 2025

venues—is central to its political power, a concept Peggy Phelan champions as crucial for challenging mediated culture (Phelan, 1993). Meaning is generated through embodiment, as authentic dialect and working-class physicality perform identity in a way that academic texts alone cannot articulate. This corporeal literacy allows audiences to ‘feel utopia’, in Jill Dolan’s terms, creating visceral connections that foster a collective moment of hope and recognition across diverse socio-economic backgrounds (Dolan, 2010, p.10).

My approach involves a critical interrogation of the ethical responsibility inherent in the restaging of lived experience. Production practices prioritise accessibility and community engagement, ensuring that performances within non-traditional venues reach the target demographics whose narratives inform the work. This careful, ethical practice ensures the piece remains a critique of systemic issues, rather than a merely nostalgic or exploitative recounting of personal history. My multi-layered ethnographic methodology—blending autoethnography,* walking research, and working-class lived experience—is firmly grounded in the work of key performance theorists: Deidre Heddon provides the methodological backbone for my data-gathering strategies (Heddon and Turner, 2012), while Dolan offers the theoretical framework regarding the socio-political importance of authentic representation.

My passion for dramatic art began in childhood as an altar boy, where I first tasted theatricality during the Catholic Mass. This entire process functions like an entry into a performance space, whether a traditional theatre, a site-specific or alternative location: practising at the venue (rehearsal/tech), preparing the altar (stage management), and donning robes (costume) before the service (performance). During the ceremony, the altar boy performs a series of rituals on cue (stage directions), while the priest delivers the mass to an audience (dialogue/drama) using a clear script. The mass is a sensory production (incense), rich with physicality, sound effects (bells), lighting (candles), and song. Victor Turner argues that theatre is a secular descendant of religious

Breaking the Class Ceiling: Addressing Socio-Economic Barriers and Advancing Inclusive Practices for Working-Class Artists in the UK Arts Industry

John Maguire 2025

rituals, sharing foundational structures with them. In *From Ritual to Theatre* (1982), he highlights how both use 'liminal' spaces—thresholds where norms are suspended—to facilitate social reflection and transformation, fostering a sense of shared community (*communitas*) that is inherently theatrical.

For a working-class youngster in Liverpool like me, university seemed an aspirational goal in the late 1980s/early 1990s. The 1980s forever evoke a grim period in Northern history, marked by rising unemployment due to the economic recession, a decrease in residents and businesses, and the British media using Liverpool as a prime example of urban decline. With access to the arts being limited, thanks to a school friend's mum kindly donating a ticket to a Shakespeare play at The Everyman (*Much Ado about Nothing*), my lifelong interest in storytelling began.

Theatre is rarely considered a viable career for working-class children, with preference given to more secure employment paths. A report by Netflix and the National Youth Theatre found that 89% of working-class parents in the UK do not want their children to pursue a career in the creative industry. These parents instead favour the stable 'traditional' careers such as law, finance, and engineering, which are perceived to offer better pay, career progression, and stability (Nyt.org.uk, 2025).

Joining the Army has always been seen as a good option for young people from the lowest socio-economic groups in the country with few qualifications or difficult pasts (Ministry of Defence, 2005). The immediate pressure from peers to hang out on the streets of a council estate meant that joining the army cadets offered me a structured escape route and a form of discipline that provided a sense of belonging and direction. The other two most visible routes to social mobility for working-class teenagers are boxing and football. Boxing creates heroes who become so popular that they transcend the sport to attain the status of folk hero (Morning Star, 2020). There is a definite lack of resources in arts provision to help nurture those individuals who are not interested in sport or lack athletic ability. At the Liverpool Scottish army cadets, where I became a

Breaking the Class Ceiling: Addressing Socio-Economic Barriers and Advancing Inclusive Practices for Working-Class Artists in the UK Arts Industry

John Maguire 2025

member, one of the troop, proud of his minor success as an extra/background artist in a film, now attended a weekly drama class. Encouraged by his enthusiasm, I joined this workshop, and a love affair with participating in theatre began.

Drama can build confidence and help dissipate shyness (Verona and Conopo, 2025). This transformative development, when a child participates in drama, is something I have experienced firsthand and consistently see in my practice, running workshops with children aged 7–11. The AG project, *Emerging Voices*, free drama workshops during July – August 2024, funded by ACE, consisted of sessions specifically designed to encourage the next generation of theatre makers. Exposure to the arts and active participation are positive and increase both social and cultural capital (Social Mobility Commission, 2024). The children were asked to use one word to describe the sessions as part of the evaluation feedback. Their vocabulary ranged from ‘Astronomical,’ ‘Wild,’ ‘Magnificent,’ to ‘Fun,’ ‘Silly,’ ‘Easy,’ and ‘Unexpected.’ 90% of the 210 children who participated felt more confident and interested in drama after taking part in our sessions (AG 2024).

While the positive impact of such engagement is clear, working-class individuals struggle to build sustainable arts careers, often forced to navigate systems dependent on unpaid labour. In my experience, middle-class children tend to be encouraged to participate in extra-curricular arts-based activities. Those from marginalised backgrounds will often be forced to put feeding the body over feeding creativity. One way for me to increase my access to free theatre was to become a volunteer. Volunteering can be life-changing, as I found when I worked as an usher at The Unity. This experience led me to Bertolt Brecht’s anti-war play *Mother Courage and Her Children* (2015), immediately putting an end to my plan to join the army as a dentist. The theatre practitioners’ bold, demonstrative statements about theatre as a social tool to change society had a profound effect on my development as a playwright. However, now that I am an established arts practitioner, I recognise that widespread volunteering in the arts is challenging. Extensive volunteering in the arts is a direct result of neoliberal arts funding cuts, which force the

Breaking the Class Ceiling: Addressing Socio-Economic Barriers and Advancing Inclusive Practices for Working-Class Artists in the UK Arts Industry

John Maguire 2025

sector to rely on unacknowledged, unpaid labour. Volunteering at a school age may work, but as a creative who has to earn, working to 'gain experience' is not a viable option. This reliance creates structural inequality, since only those from privileged backgrounds with a financial safety net can afford to work for free. Dr Jen Harvie critiques how a passion for the arts is used to justify this exploitation, leading to a less diverse and more exclusive cultural sector that entrenches socio-economic divides (Harvie, 2013).

These systemic issues underscore the importance of the radical, socially engaged artistic practices that first inspired my own journey. The influence of Brecht is evident in my work, particularly in the use of the *Verfremdungseffekt*.^{*} Breaking the fourth wall, used in all my plays presented here, is a dominant factor in the stage action. Brecht held a firm belief that the theatre should entertain and educate at the same time. The audience should not switch off and remain passive in viewing the play but be actively engaged and alert throughout. His plays and essays began a journey that steered me to reading Harold Pinter, Anton Chekhov, Timberlake Wertenbaker, Jerzy Grotowski, Sam Shepard, Augustus Boal and then to study Drama at the University of Wales, Aberystwyth. Academia gave me a place to experiment and play with alternative spaces. For example, my autoethnographic^{*} practice originated with a piece of performance poetry in the grounds of the old castle, and my challenging of spatial intimacy with a production of Friedrich Durrenmatt's *The Visit* in a former dairy farm cattle yard. The founder of Punchdrunk, Felix Barrett, had a similar experience, using the Exeter University drama department as a fertile ground for investigation (Tomlin, 2015, pp. 258-59).

Finding theatre may have excited and sparked the imagination, but a training path to make the arts a realistic career trajectory remained problematic. Raymond Williams argued that culture is ordinary, and should be understood as the everyday activities and shared meanings of a society and not elite, calling for a democratic approach—an argument he made in 1958 that is still to be resolved in 2025. (Williams, 1958). The precarity of the playwright's career path is exemplified by the experience of

Breaking the Class Ceiling: Addressing Socio-Economic Barriers and Advancing Inclusive Practices for Working-Class Artists in the UK Arts Industry

John Maguire 2025

award-winning writer Beth Steel. Acknowledging the systemic barriers facing working-class artists, Steel secured her entry into the industry only after becoming a live-in property guardian in London, which offered heavily subsidised rent. This unconventional arrangement provided the financial breathing room to develop her acclaimed play, *Wonderland*, a powerful piece of social realism set in her childhood mining community in Nottinghamshire. 'It is still very rare to have contemporary regional working-class voices on these big main stages, unless it's nostalgic,' she said. 'People need to see something of themselves to think there is a possibility that they can also do that' (cited in Bakare et al., 2025). Due to unemployed parents and a lack of money, my weekly drama classes during GCSE and A-levels had to be paid for by taking on a morning/after-school paper round and working in a chip shop at the weekend in a rough part of the estate. This demonstrates an unconscious bias towards the middle classes. Many from this background possess the financial means and resources to receive training and pursue extra-curricular activities from infancy (Thapa, 2024).

This employment proved essential in the development of playwriting skills. The interactions during the shift in the chip shop embodied all the elements of drama. I noted the quick-witted sarcasm, the larger-than-life characters, the surreal stories told, and the mini monologues performed as people waited for their food. My approach aligns with Richard Schechner's concept of 'restored behaviour', which posits that performance involves 'once living behaviour' that is 'rehearsed, edited, and performed' again. The chip shop interactions were the raw material—the everyday performance—which I then processed, selected, and 'restored' as dialogue in my plays. This process validates the 'is' (everyday life) as valuable material for the 'as' (theatre performance), challenging the notion that authentic, working-class dialect is not suitable for the mainstream (Schechner, 1985, pp. 33-36).

The language in my plays comes from the training I gained through my teenage employment, developing an ear for dialogue and elegant turns of phrase. This ability to

Breaking the Class Ceiling: Addressing Socio-Economic Barriers and Advancing Inclusive Practices for Working-Class Artists in the UK Arts Industry

John Maguire 2025

pick up catchy quips informed *Weave*, creating realistic dialogue that is shocking, funny and dark:

Arabella talking on the phone to a friend about her boyfriend:

Oh well, it all kicked off because he wanted me to get a tattoo of his name on me arm or lower back at a push, I said, I'll only put a man's name on my body if he can ejaculate chocolate and gold...I said to him, Andrew, I said, the best bit of you slid down ye ma's leg.

The deliberate use of everyday language increases accessibility and challenges the alienating effect of mainstream theatre's pervasive Received Pronunciation (RP). This artistic choice is informed by sociolinguistic research, such as a study which found that working-class accents (specifically Liverpool and Bradford) are stereotyped as 'guiltier' in simulated forensic contexts, revealing the significant real-world impact of accent bias (Paver et al., 2025). The Liverpudlian (Scouse) dialect—characterised by its direct, brutal, and often sarcastic cadence—offers a highly accessible and authentic theatrical language. In his study, *Liverpool: A Memoir of Words* (2023), Tony Crowley explores the multicultural complexity of this dialect. The work examines how language and memory intersect, illustrating the inseparability of words and historical context (Crowley, 2023).

My practice stems from the oral tradition inherent in Liverpool working-class culture. The material in the play *Passing Through* derived from years of conversations with my Nan and picking up stories/myths, phrases, pieces of philosophy and intergenerational histories used to inform, entertain and educate. This follows a tradition of working-class theatre for the people, as seen in the work of Littlewood, McGrath, and the Unity Theatre. Presenting relevant stories, showing positive working-class representation and playing in familiar spaces, improves trust and builds integrity.

Breaking the Class Ceiling: Addressing Socio-Economic Barriers and Advancing Inclusive Practices for Working-Class Artists in the UK Arts Industry

John Maguire 2025

I often mobilise class struggle through elements of magic realism. This presents an alternative dramaturgy in working-class representation and a break away from traditional realist styles previously seen on the stage, a path also taken by playwrights like Nina Sadur (Sadur, 2014) and Tony Kushner (Fisher, 2021). Sadur's work, like mine, seamlessly blends grim working-class realism with the fantastic, presenting magical events as a regular part of everyday life to explore the realities of marginalised characters and push against the confines of traditional naturalistic theatre. Similarly, my plays utilise magic realism as a deliberate, politically engaged dramatic form that, like Kushner's work, breaks from the constraints of social realism to allow voice to underrepresented experiences. They aim to elevate marginalised working-class narratives within mainstream theatre, using fantasy to critique systemic failures and challenge dominant cultural norms.

The contemporary play *Weave*, about a girl with a possessed hair extension, critiques stereotypes in working-class portrayals and the exploitation of the poor. It challenges patriarchal class narratives, with the real hair extensions coming to life to tell the story of their origins. *Kitty* investigates the notions of unity in community and how those from structural disadvantage can find collective strength. The play is narrated by a statue that comes to life, detailing consistent tragic loss and a battle with a cholera epidemic in the depths of poverty. Magic realism takes the sting out of some of the issues faced in the plays, with inventive staging making the story told less daunting. It subverts expectations and allows the audience to fully immerse in the play's world.

The use of magic realism in *Weave* functions as a performative strategy to scrutinise dominant class and gender narratives. I draw on Judith Butler's theory of performativity (Butler, 1990, pp. 25, 134–138), which argues that our identities are not fixed or 'natural,' but instead constantly created through the repetition of actions and social rituals. My work highlights how these conventional norms are built up and, more importantly, how they can be challenged. The 'real' hair extensions coming to life in the

Breaking the Class Ceiling: Addressing Socio-Economic Barriers and Advancing Inclusive Practices for Working-Class Artists in the UK Arts Industry

John Maguire 2025

play disrupt everyday reality; this acts as a 'subversive repetition'—an intentional break from the expected script—that calls into question the social fiction that class and gender identities are stable or permanent. In *Kitty*, for example, the protagonist actively implements her working-class identity with pride, her actions and language resisting societal pressures to conform to middle-class aspirations or patriarchal constraints.

With these two plays, I aimed to challenge the Cinderella complex explicitly. This trope insinuates that class is an innate quality overcome only by magical intervention or aristocratic origins. Instead of seeking escape through external 'magic' or marriage, the plays encourage characters and audiences to recognise their own internal agency to challenge rigid social norms from within their communities. This approach moves the narrative away from problematic, idealised solutions to class inequality, focusing instead on a critical engagement with genuine systemic barriers faced by working-class people.

The consistent theme of my writing is grounded in the concrete realities of working-class life, but there is always something magical employed. My engagement departs from the classic fairytale tropes mentioned, focusing instead on empowered characters who find the magic within themselves. Magic realism provides the framework for telling the story—for instance, through *Kitty*'s statue coming to life or Roscoe emerging from the picture frame. In *Kitty*, there is an element of magic and fantasy: the bedsheets on the plinth she stands on help construct the play's world, and are used to create props, such as a ship's sail and a bundle representing a baby. Crucially, this theatrical device is not used to overcome adversity. The *Kitty* narrative arc subverts the Cinderella complex, offering a departure from the standard trope. The character is a positive representation of a working-class woman committed to her family and community. The drama is grounded in realism; elements of magic are introduced purely to frame the piece, not as a means of escape. *Kitty* may admire her middle-class mentor, Mrs Lightbody, but she does not want to *be* her. She is proud of her working-class origins and has no desire for social or materialistic elevation.

Breaking the Class Ceiling: Addressing Socio-Economic Barriers and Advancing Inclusive Practices for Working-Class Artists in the UK Arts Industry

John Maguire 2025

My practice draws on local history, experience, political activity, struggles and contradictions in working-class attitudes and behaviours to ensure the subject matter of the shows is relevant and accessible, with the audience forced to confront their histories, failings and potential to generate socio-political change. In the tradition of Littlewood and McGrath, the use of popular cultural forms to engage the audience is an essential part of the plays presented, such as variety, live music, stand-up comedy, caricature and song. For example, Kitty performs a traditional Northern Mill song that has had audience members sing along at some performances.

Lack of funding and open-door policies at theatres, scarcity of platforms to put on plays, and the need to be innovative in sourcing funding streams firmly entrench my writing in the working-class tradition, merging styles to entertain and educate. The need to have an audience and raise funding for productions is an ongoing struggle. Littlewood points out that the Arts Council rejected funding *A Taste of Honey* and were equally cold with Samuel Beckett's *Waiting for Godot* (Littlewood, 2016, p.522-523). McGrath posed a key question when thinking about how to grow an audience for the plays written: How do you get a non-theatre-going public to attend a theatre event? This question prompted me to identify a way to raise funding and build an audience.

The Liver Bird Safari began raising funds for the Liver Bird play, a walk around the city centre highlighting over 100 Liver Birds in the fabric of the architecture. The success led to the walk tour format becoming part of the creative process. Spending more than two hours with a group of people on a walk tour allows the facilitator to ask questions, engage in conversation and determine the potential audience's needs. This concentrated time maximises engagement by fostering trust, authenticity, and belief in the material being delivered. My Heritage Walking Tour Method (HWT) has become a vital tool in growing an audience. Participants are more likely to come and see a play when they have a personal connection to the work, which helps lessen any insecurities/inhibitions about attending a theatre space. I have developed a unique, innovative method that has been

Breaking the Class Ceiling: Addressing Socio-Economic Barriers and Advancing Inclusive Practices for Working-Class Artists in the UK Arts Industry

John Maguire 2025

integral to widening participation. AG now has a customer relationship management system with 4,500 active participants across all artistic activities produced.

It is a replicable community engagement model that could be piloted by theatres/museums in deprived areas to promote the synthesis of arts and heritage and potentially feed into ACE's *Creative People & Places* (*Creative People and Places*, 2012). HWT is practice-as-research that reframes a walking tour as an arts lab, facilitating experimentation with written material along the route. Material gathered during these engagements feeds the working notebooks and, ultimately, the productions. A Dictaphone is used to capture content, provide instant feedback, and facilitate the necessary permissions. This style of methodology has been pioneered by Heddon, particularly in autobiography, testimony, and 'peripatetic' methodologies (walking research). My use of walking tours to gather material and test content aligns with Heddon's validation of walking as a critical, embodied way of engaging with space, memory, and narrative (Heddon, 2016).

Having researched and written ten heritage walking tours – including *A History of Everton Park*, *A Beginner's Guide to Liverpool*, *American Connections*, *Music Heritage* and *Forgotten Theatres* – I have found the research freshens material, cultivates new concepts and informs future writing projects (the plays). I have drawn on ideas from Augustus Boal's theatre practice, which aimed to empower individuals to express their ideas and experiences (Boal, 1992). The initiated audience feedback on the HWT is integral to the creative process. It helps ground the creation of a new piece of theatre in a particular locality, walking through the place and connecting with local people. The William Roscoe Walk was conceived solely to test material and content with actual participants. The tour tested which parts of Roscoe's life appealed, and the poems that amplified accessibility. I tested extracts on several walks to see if they could convey the play's narrative arc, but, most importantly, not turn off the audience (80% of walk tour participants were non-theatre-goers, with the majority aged 30+ and from working-class backgrounds). This

Breaking the Class Ceiling: Addressing Socio-Economic Barriers and Advancing Inclusive Practices for Working-Class Artists in the UK Arts Industry

John Maguire 2025

identified the ones which best described Roscoe's Liverpool and experience of the docks. For example, I realised that to read the whole of his poem *Mount Pleasant* risked losing the audience, so I read several chunks and asked the participants which ones they felt transported them back to the dockside:

*In loud confusion, mingled sounds arise,
the docks re-echoing with the seamen's cries,
the massy hammer sounding from afar,
the bell slow tolling, and the rattling car,
and thundering oft the cannons horrid roar,
in lessening echoes dies along the shore (Roscoe, 1777).*

This proved effective and a way of democratically deciding what to include in the play.

Working-class creatives must be quick-witted in acquiring new skills because mentors and training are not as easily accessed. To assist with post-university training and aid my development as a playwright, I have engaged in what Dennis and Hunter term a DIY performer training approach: a school of learning that enables the trainee to develop their own portfolio of practices, which enriches critical reflexivity whilst growing a community of peers. This allows for agency, creative responsibility and sustainable practice throughout a lifetime (Dennis and Hunter 2022). I've developed skills through experiential learning, peer mentoring, and workshops, which has enriched my critical reflexivity. This independent approach to growing a practice can, at times, be isolating. Many people leave the sector due to the haphazard nature of employment opportunities and rising workshop costs, which allow only those with financial means to attend. These challenges can cause general battle fatigue. The constant fight to prove worth and validation is both exhausting and overwhelming. This is contextualised in Holly Maples and Allie Young's study *Freelancers in the Dark*. 70% who identified as being from a

Breaking the Class Ceiling: Addressing Socio-Economic Barriers and Advancing Inclusive Practices for Working-Class Artists in the UK Arts Industry

John Maguire 2025

disadvantaged background have changed their expectation about future work since March 2020 (Exeunt Magazine, 2021). Due to the lack of sustainable income as a playwright, I have taken on paid acting work. Harold Pinter, too, spent time as a working actor, and this informed his playwriting style. I have found that having trained as an actor and continuing to take on ad hoc projects in between working on my own play productions has given me insight into what works and what does not in a play script. The acting gigs help maintain creative momentum and reenergise my own practice. All my projects are recorded in journals, which keeps my creative state of mind developing.

A career as a long-haul steward allowed me to fly all over the world: Cuba, the Dominican Republic, Goa, Orlando, Florida, and the Maldives. Frequent stopovers afforded time to develop creative practice whilst receiving a salary. This time was used to pursue a master's degree with the Open University and to record ideas, scraps of phrases, and stories picked up, which developed into short stories. The narratives eventually formed a collection, *Urban Fairy Tales*, which served as a foundation and inspiration for many of the early theatre productions. This use of creative journalling, researching, and gathering material is another essential part of the creative process and has been integral to the development of many of my productions.

Body of work

I have chosen to present several plays from my back catalogue that demonstrate the evolution and continuity of my style. They illustrate a series of coherent themes and approaches: class struggle, elements of magic realism, and structural disadvantage, all of which have been realised using the methodologies outlined above. The early plays, *Heart*, *Bruise*, and *Weave*, focus on the individual and a journey of self-discovery, a breaking away from societal pressures and conventions. They concentrate on specific working-class problems. The exploration of the marginalised protagonists is conveyed through

Breaking the Class Ceiling: Addressing Socio-Economic Barriers and Advancing Inclusive Practices for Working-Class Artists in the UK Arts Industry

John Maguire 2025

theatricality that plays with form, style, and technique. *Passing Through* is an investigation of working-class existence and bereavement. The later plays, *Kitty* and *Roscoe*, centre more on broader societal problems, and although they have a historical setting, their messages are contemporary.

Heart began life as a short story adapted for a stage competition, the Write Now Festival, established to raise the profile of new writers in Liverpool and staged at The Actors Studio, 36 Seel St, Liverpool L1. I submitted the piece under the pseudonym James Stewart (my recently deceased grandfather's surname), in case the play failed and my real name was not attached to it. If this really was the path I was meant to be on, I felt my grandfather's name would be a good omen.

The play's narrative, inspired by Gogol's *The Nose*, is an absurd urban fairy tale about a protagonist who literally throws up his heart and loses it down the toilet, setting in motion a quest for self-discovery that leads to a new relationship and the discovery of an artistic career. The protagonist struggles with the expectations of his class to pursue a conventional career and relationship. The magic realist elements, throwing up his heart and still functioning, are used to help the audience engage and empathise with his narrative journey, essentially becoming the person he wants to become (an artist) and not what is expected of him. This marks the beginning of my testing the magic realist form for class-aspiration narratives.

I experimented with Brecht's *Verfremdungseffekt* to disrupt the audience experience. In one particularly magical scene, the protagonist goes into a sewer, illustrated simply by a pitch-black stage with a torch penetrating the auditorium, shining out into the audience to create beams of white light. This urges the audience to watch the drama and observe the messages conveyed on stage.

The Write Now Festival attracted significant press interest, as it claimed to be for Northern working-class newcomers. The local media focused on the one play with a Southern soap opera television star in its cast. I saw the potential to use Facebook, still in

Breaking the Class Ceiling: Addressing Socio-Economic Barriers and Advancing Inclusive Practices for Working-Class Artists in the UK Arts Industry

John Maguire 2025

its infancy, to document the rehearsal process, a new approach back then. The content of the groundbreaking documentary *Madonna: Truth or Dare* (1991) inspired me with its candid backstage footage of a world tour. I documented the rehearsal process in real time and uploaded images, audio, and video content showing actors at work and having costumes fitted. The content was part of the play's marketing and generated significant interest, leading to the project selling out.

Bruise includes so many personal, autobiographical elements; engaging with it each time feels like taking a dressing off a nearly healed wound, the ripping away of the bandage making the wound sore again. It offers an auto-ethnographic portrayal of gay domestic abuse within working-class constraints and helps to expand queer-trauma discourse. The narrative follows a frustrated writer who finds himself immersed in a psychologically and physically damaging relationship, trapped in a cycle of behaviour. The play contests heteronormative and patriarchal class narratives. Jack Halberstam's work on queer temporality helps frame the character's experience of being trapped in this 'always repeating the same cycle of behaviour,' positioning this stasis as a rejection of normative, linear 'heterosexual time' that demands traditional life milestones (Halberstam, 2005, pp. 1–22). Furthermore, in a process José Esteban Muñoz terms 'disidentification,' the play works on and against dominant cultural scripts by providing an auto-ethnographic portrayal of an experience rarely seen on mainstream stages. This ultimately expands queer-trauma discourse and argues for a queer futurity where such stories can be openly told (Muñoz 1999, p. 12).

After university, exposure and active participation in the variety formula at Gunton Hall, Lowestoft enabled experiential learning that would impact my work and methodologies. The aim was to appeal to those with barriers to attending a theatre production in the Littlewood and McGrath style, with productions curated from these techniques. While there, performing only in the early evening, I had plenty of time to read and write. Missing the rehearsal room and creative experimentation, I started a series of

Breaking the Class Ceiling: Addressing Socio-Economic Barriers and Advancing Inclusive Practices for Working-Class Artists in the UK Arts Industry

John Maguire 2025

exercises playing with an idea inspired after banging my arm in a show and noticing the beauty in the colours of bruises, animating the flesh, re-framing the body as a creative canvas. The work called upon personal experiences of domestic violence at home with my mother and father. The play examines how a single punch may bruise and perhaps cause a black eye. This heals with time. Yet you could say something, a real personal insult or something about someone's character that could hurt and leave a deep scar. Creative prompts were catalysed to stimulate prose in the form of stream of consciousness, taken from two song lyrics by the artist Madonna: 'There's no more heart left to bruise' ('The Power Of Goodbye', 1998) and 'The bruises they will fade away you hit so hard with the things you say' ('Till Death Do Us Part', 1989).

In the rehearsal room, these songs served as a springboard for creativity. Other exercises included adopting 'oblique strategies'* (Eno et al., 1996), and exploring choreography inspired by the photography of Nan Goldin (Goldin, 1986). A rehearsal technique that I call Picture Framing.* It sat in the recess of a storage trunk for nearly ten years. Back in Liverpool in 2009, mixing in a circle of friends made up of gay men, I found some people in physically and emotionally damaging relationships. This prompted deeper research, including an examination of LGBTQIA+ charity Broken Rainbows, which inspired a redraft of the original manuscript. The piece examined many problems: being trapped in a destructive relationship with another person (and with the self), and being stuck in a class that blocks a clear pathway to a career in the arts and severs opportunities due to socio-economic barriers. The piece examines class struggle and the anxiety of being unable to progress because of the lottery of being born without privilege.

Weave challenges body-dysmorphic and social pressures around beauty. The play originated from a family holiday over Christmas in Scotland, inspired by the superficiality of a teenage cousin who wore expensive Russian hair extensions. This led to further research on the origins of false hair—horrific cases of girls having their heads shaved in

Breaking the Class Ceiling: Addressing Socio-Economic Barriers and Advancing Inclusive Practices for Working-Class Artists in the UK Arts Industry

John Maguire 2025

Russian prisons to sell into a market generated by the need to conform to societal beauty conventions and use beauty as a mask to distract from class realities (Appleford 2015).

The main protagonist, Arabella—a no-nonsense Scouse girl whose name is inspired by Thomas Hardy's *Jude the Obscure* (Hardy 2019)—is haunted by a possessed hair extension that forces her to confront her natural beauty and embrace self-acceptance. The notion of using beauty enhancement as a mask is fascinating and deeply embedded in working-class culture. Historically, clothing for the working classes became a way to obtain respectability, despite limited disposable incomes, by keeping a minimally decent wardrobe with at least two complete outfits (Collection, 2019).

As with the experience of picking up language in the chip shop, I collected my cousin's phrases, words, and expressions, mobilising the darker, sarcastic, and stinging. I started playing around with sociolect and creating my own. Unfamiliar words would jolt the audience, force them to think. These included 'margarinee,' a derogatory term for someone who does not care about their appearance and refuses to iron clothes, being as artificial as margarine, and 'Priestaphile,' to attack the common history of priests being tangled in sexual abuse cases, particularly in socially-excluded communities.

The play adopted trademarks of Littlewood's Theatre Workshop, such as the expressive use of light and sound, comic speed, and song, while suggesting the stage as a metaphorical world set in a girl's bedroom. It incorporated inventive shadow puppetry to tell a fairy tale. This has become a signature style in my plays, and I lead workshops in this style. This simple technique is inclusive, as it breaks language barriers and is cost-effective; all that is needed is a white sheet and light (ArtsGroupie 2021).

The beauty of the arts is that you can turn negative experiences into artistic content through creativity. The loss of my grandmother, a Scouse matriarchal powerhouse, occurred during a period when I was struggling with depression and a relationship breakdown. Witnessing her decline, I recorded my observations in a journal, jotting down words and reflections with no initial artistic intentions. I now recognise this

Breaking the Class Ceiling: Addressing Socio-Economic Barriers and Advancing Inclusive Practices for Working-Class Artists in the UK Arts Industry

John Maguire 2025

constant gathering of material as part of my established methodology. I found the notebooks could be choreographed into the structure of a piece of theatre, which I called *Passing Through*. The title comes from her final words: 'We are all passing through, lad'. The play is a memory piece that illuminates the 'matriarch as radical memory keeper' trope, using a blend of verbatim quotes and magic realism to champion a singular working-class life and the positive impact a strong matriarch can have.

Using verbatim quotes and personal experience, I see this as a precursor to the Kitty play, with many themes of resilience and tenacity evident. Traditional historical plays have often excluded performers from marginalised communities based on time periods where those side-lined people are oppressed or experienced erasure. Drawing on Judith Butler's theory of performativity, the play *Kitty: Queen of the Washhouse* challenges social norms by showing that identity isn't fixed but is created through repeated actions. The work uses a feminist lens on women's agency, poverty, and hardship. The main character chooses community over neo-liberal individuality, performing acts of care rather than pursuing self-ambition. This acts as a Butlerian counter-performance, validating alternative behaviours to the dominant social script. Being immersed in the Clubmoor community when writing meant local concerns influenced the script. This locative dramaturgy,* influenced by Darkfield and Punchdrunk's immersive methods, used sensory elements like hanging bed sheets and the scent of washing powder to physically ground the audience in the historical setting. The production's setting—the cholera epidemic of 1832—gained extra poignancy when it opened just before the Covid pandemic, creating an immediate resonance where life mirrored art for the audience.

I collaborated with a local film company, Avengers Media, to construct a digital trailer to reach a wider audience (ArtsGroupie 2019 article). This proved to be an interesting dynamic and a new field to explore. Miriam Llamas Ubieta and Johanna Vollmeyer examine how cultural content is transformed and maintained in the digital

Breaking the Class Ceiling: Addressing Socio-Economic Barriers and Advancing Inclusive Practices for Working-Class Artists in the UK Arts Industry

John Maguire 2025

landscape, highlighting the dynamic interplay between old and new (Ubieto and Vollmeyer 2024).

The performances prompted significant post-show audience reflection and conversations about personal experiences of the washhouse; one lady even brought a bar of antique soap as a gift. This type of awakened memory is like that evoked in the initial performances of Littlewood's *Oh! What a Lovely War*, where audiences brought memories and dialogue that sometimes blended into the production (Littlewood 2016, 693).

A Portrait of William Roscoe required a contemporary and historical analysis of slavery and human trafficking. It examines an entrepreneurial working-class individual determined to make a name for himself and contribute to society. Using Lorenzo de Medici as a mentor, once he establishes himself as a successful writer, he turns to civic duty and uses his platform to promote his activist beliefs, such as the abolition of the slave trade. Some of the play content came from the Heritage Walking Tour as a pre-writing lab. Through conversations with walking tour participants and detailed archival research, the play addressed contemporary issues with nuanced complexity.

Conclusion

My work advocates the power of intersectionality, weaving together class struggle and magic realism, to breathe life into underrepresented narratives and dissect complex social issues. Authentic working-class stories are crucial; without them, marginalised voices remain silenced and, in some cases, lost. Theatre risks becoming an echo chamber that relies on assumptions rather than lived truth. My plays draw on personal experience to provide an authentic understanding of working-class complexities. Diversity in theatre is unattainable without first addressing working-class access. Racial and ethnic minorities,

Breaking the Class Ceiling: Addressing Socio-Economic Barriers and Advancing Inclusive Practices for Working-Class Artists in the UK Arts Industry

John Maguire 2025

people with disabilities, and LGBTQIA+ individuals are all overrepresented in lower socio-economic communities, making class central to inclusive representation.

Shocking inequalities are still prevalent and getting worse. Just 8% of creatives in TV and film hail from working-class backgrounds, while 60% are from middle- and upper-class backgrounds (Equity 2024). The London bias in arts opportunities remains dominant, compounding barriers to working-class participation. Devastating arts cuts and venue risk-aversion have stagnated UK production levels. Between 2014 and 2024, the number of plays and musicals staged by UK subsidised theatres dropped by nearly a third (Youngs, 2025). Research analysing the 40 best-funded UK theatre companies (including the National Theatre and Leeds Playhouse) identified a 31% decline in original productions—from 332 in 2014 to 229 in 2024. Industry leaders attribute this fall to funding cuts (national and local) and escalating operating costs. Increased reliance on box-office income fundamentally limits artistic risk-taking.

Achieving systemic change demands more than just a community-wide commitment; it requires targeted government intervention. Industry bodies like UK Theatre and the Society of London Theatre (SOLT) are actively lobbying the government for significant investment in theatre infrastructure to address long-term underinvestment and rising costs. Specifically, they advocate for a £500 million four-year capital fund for theatre buildings—public investment anticipated to leverage a matching amount from private sources. They also propose a £1.5 million pilot for their 'Theatre for Every Child' programme in three deprived areas, a move that would enable the government to finally fulfil its commitment to increasing children's access to culture and breaking down barriers to opportunity (SOLT/UK Theatre, 2025).

The selection of plays presented reflects my creative journey so far, serving as a sample that catalyses an understanding of my practice's progression. The evolution of the methodologies discussed in the commentary helped me craft new writing material, realise the plays from conception to execution and foster loyal audience relationships. My

Breaking the Class Ceiling: Addressing Socio-Economic Barriers and Advancing Inclusive Practices for Working-Class Artists in the UK Arts Industry

John Maguire 2025

practices aim to create tangible solutions for participation, forming a foundation for exciting research that could catalyse social change in both practice and policymaking. Ultimately, this portfolio advocates for the socially excluded and champions the rich, authentic culture of the working classes.

Breaking the Class Ceiling: Addressing Socio-Economic Barriers and Advancing Inclusive Practices for Working-Class Artists in the UK Arts Industry

John Maguire 2025

Glossary

Autoethnography

Autoethnography in playwriting is a methodological approach in which the playwright uses their own personal experiences and life events as the primary material for creating a play, exploring and critiquing broader cultural, social, or political issues. This form of artistic expression blurs the lines between autobiography, ethnography, and dramatic art.

Key aspects in playwriting include the 'personal as political' core principle: using individual narratives as a lens to illuminate universal themes or systemic issues. The playwright serves as both researcher and subject, engaging in deep self-reflection. Unlike objective research, autoethnography embraces subjectivity as a valuable way of understanding the world. The playwright employs dramatic techniques to evoke empathy and emotional resonance. These plays can be politically motivated, challenging stereotypes or advocating for social justice, effectively transforming the personal into a public plight.

'Community Centres Without Walls'

The adaptation of the children's play *The Liver Bird* by the Book Worm Players, produced by ArtsGroupie, took place in various outside spaces just after the COVID-19 pandemic, illustrating an innovative use of community areas for arts and culture. Similarly, *A Portrait of William Roscoe* was performed in local community gardens, highlighting a decentralised approach to live theatre and community engagement through performance.

These initiatives align seamlessly with the concept of a 'community centre without walls,' a model that delivers services and fosters social connection through performance, rather than requiring a fixed, physical building. This approach utilises pop-

Breaking the Class Ceiling: Addressing Socio-Economic Barriers and Advancing Inclusive Practices for Working-Class Artists in the UK Arts Industry

John Maguire 2025

up theatrical events in public spaces to proactively reach residents who may be isolated or have complex needs.

Key characteristics of this model for performing arts include a decentralised approach, where programs are not confined to a single location but are held in varied, accessible community venues. This makes the model inclusive and accessible, benefitting individuals who face barriers to attending traditional venues by overcoming issues such as transportation and mobility. Furthermore, the approach is community-led and flexible: performances are often co-designed with residents/service users/community members to meet specific needs, remaining highly adaptable for temporary projects and flexible scheduling. Fundamentally, the focus is on relationships, shifting from physical infrastructure to strengthening connections and fostering a sense of shared community through collective artistic experiences.

Locative dramaturgy

This term refers to a dramaturgical approach in which the physical site of a performance is integral to the creation and interpretation of the dramatic work. It is a practice that structures the play not just through traditional narrative, but through the unique atmosphere, history, and physical constraints of a specific, often non-traditional, location.

As a playwright and director, I use locative dramaturgy to merge the narrative I write with the venue's inherent atmosphere. This transforms the setting from a passive backdrop into an active, speaking character in my piece, *Bruise*. The play was about gay domestic violence; the title also doubled as the name of the nightclub where the two protagonists met. While not site-specific in the traditional sense of a historical building, the dramaturgy of *Bruise* was entirely dependent on creating a potent, immersive nightclub atmosphere within the performance space. The environment itself became a central character—a charged, liminal space of both liberation and danger—which

Breaking the Class Ceiling: Addressing Socio-Economic Barriers and Advancing Inclusive Practices for Working-Class Artists in the UK Arts Industry

John Maguire 2025

heightened the tension and thematic resonance of the violence that unfolded within the play's action.

Magic Realism

Magic realism blends fantastical or mythical elements into otherwise realistic narratives to explore complex social and political realities. While famously associated with authors like Gabriel García Márquez and Angela Carter, the genre has a global reach, often serving as a powerful tool for marginalised writers to express unique cultural perspectives and postcolonial experiences. This style uses extraordinary events to reflect complex social and political realities, moving beyond traditional realism by incorporating fable and myth.

For me, the use of magic realism is a direct way to engage an audience, to entertain and educate. The fantastical elements can be memorable and therefore have a greater impact after the play's performance.

My plays employ such elements: A man throwing up his heart, a possessed hair extension, a disgruntled writer falling into the world of his own bruises on the body, a statue coming alive and a man breaking out of a portrait. The theatre space becomes a transformative site where magic, time travel, fantasy, and sheer imagination are celebrated and used as tools for examining social and political issues.

Oblique strategies

'Oblique Strategies: Over One Hundred Worthwhile Dilemmas' is a card-based method developed in 1975 by Brian Eno and Peter Schmidt to promote creativity and overcome mental blocks through lateral thinking. The cards provide concise, often cryptic instructions designed to challenge habitual thinking patterns and introduce new possibilities into the creative process. Examples include 'Honour thy error as a hidden intention' and 'Work at a different speed.' When facing a creative challenge, users draw a card and apply its instruction, prompting them to explore fresh, unexpected approaches.

Breaking the Class Ceiling: Addressing Socio-Economic Barriers and Advancing Inclusive Practices for Working-Class Artists in the UK Arts Industry

John Maguire 2025

The strategies have been notably used by artists like David Bowie in various creative disciplines, extending beyond music to writing, art, and business settings. Physical card decks and digital versions are available.

As a massive Bowie fan, I consumed everything I could about his work and practices. The mention of these Oblique Strategies and the experimental approach sparked my curiosity, and I use these cards sometimes in a rehearsal room context but consistently in my daily writing practice. They have inspired me to think about alternative ways of working, to keep a sense of wonder and random chance, and to seek out the possibilities inherent in the creative space.

Picture Frame Technique

This technique was developed from my love of art. I pick an artist, photographer, or an entire art movement to study when thinking about writing, and often ask the actors to use these as references in the rehearsal process. For example, Heart = Tamara De Lempicka, Bruise = Nan Goldin, Weave = John Waters.

If directing, I ask the actors choose their favourite images in the rehearsal room and then physically recreate these compositions. This is done consistently as part of the daily rehearsal process; sometimes, music and lighting can be added. The actors are subconsciously affected by this, so when the blocking is done, lots of natural stage tableaux are created. In some cases, the actors also adopt aspects of the images' physicality into their character work.

For example, with *Bruise*, the play's nightclub soundtrack was used throughout the rehearsal process. The actors chose several images from Nan Goldin's *The Ballad of Sexual Dependency*. In rehearsal, we played the music, and I pointed to one of the numbered images on the wall. After a time, I would randomly shout out numbers from the sequence. The actors composed a language of physicality and could blend

Breaking the Class Ceiling: Addressing Socio-Economic Barriers and Advancing Inclusive Practices for Working-Class Artists in the UK Arts Industry

John Maguire 2025

compositions; one would start with a tableau, and the other would automatically pick up and adapt to complete the rest of the picture.

Because this rehearsal technique worked so well, it was incorporated into the actual performances as the opening of both Acts One and Two. This aspect of the play was never fully choreographed; as jazz musicians do, the actors had a loose structure and therefore could ‘riff’ on the night. This added spontaneity to each performance and gave the actors a degree of creative freedom, which also helped as a live warm-up before each act. As no two performances were the same, it added excitement to the work and a freshness of pure creativity.

Poverty Safari

Darren McGarvey’s 2017 book, *Poverty Safari: Understanding the Anger of Britain’s Underclass*, explores systemic poverty in Britain through personal memoir and social commentary, critiquing both political left and right perspectives on the experience of being poor. The book, which won the Orwell Prize in 2018, uses McGarvey’s experiences in Glasgow to provide an insider’s view of poverty as a complex interplay of social, emotional, and psychological factors. McGarvey challenges the ‘poverty industry’ for imposing solutions without genuine engagement, arguing that class is the primary societal division and that working-class anger is a legitimate response to disenfranchisement. While acknowledging structural issues, he also discusses individual responsibility in breaking cycles of self-defeating behaviour. The ‘safari’ metaphor highlights how privileged individuals observe the ‘underclass’ from a distance.

Primark Play

The term ‘Primark Play,’ as originally coined by Amanda Whittington and described by Dave Edgar, highlights a concerning trend where emerging writers receive one-off commissions—‘the play that gets done once and never gets done again’—without

Breaking the Class Ceiling: Addressing Socio-Economic Barriers and Advancing Inclusive Practices for Working-Class Artists in the UK Arts Industry

John Maguire 2025

opportunities for long-term career development within institutional theatre. In stark contrast, my own career trajectory appears to be a direct counterexample to this phenomenon, demonstrating significant long-term development achieved solely independently and entirely 'off my own back'.

My play, *Kitty: Queen of the Wash House*, has enjoyed remarkable longevity. While the 'Primark Play' describes new writing that disappears after a single run, *Kitty* has sold out St George's Hall multiple times, gone on tour, and has been performed 48 times, with plans for future productions. Crucially, this success was driven by my independent efforts, a powerful testament to self-driven community demand rather than institutional support.

This demonstrates a self-made development path rather than reliance on institutional stability. Edgar laments the disappearance of the traditional 'stables of writers,' but as a white Irish, LGBT+, neurodivergent writer from a low socio-economic background, I overcame barriers to establish myself independently. I am the Creative Director of ArtsGroupie CIC, an organisation I built myself to create infrastructure and opportunities for not only myself but other local artists in Liverpool, effectively forging my own sustainable path and challenging the reliance on traditional theatre companies for career development.

This approach prioritises community strength over institutional backing. My focus on historical, community-based stories has built a dedicated audience through sheer self-reliance. This community-rooted approach drives demand for repeat performances and sustained engagement, a model that starkly contrasts with the trend-driven, short-lived approach of the 'Primark Play,' often facilitated by theatre institutions.

In essence, my career illustrates a resilient, self-made approach to playwriting. My work demonstrates that long-term development is possible when a writer is deeply embedded in their local community and independently creates their own robust platforms for sustained engagement and success.

Breaking the Class Ceiling: Addressing Socio-Economic Barriers and Advancing Inclusive Practices for Working-Class Artists in the UK Arts Industry

John Maguire 2025

Psychogeography

When I use psychogeography in my playwriting, I move the setting beyond a passive backdrop, exploring the 'specific effects of the geographical environment on the emotions and behaviour of individuals'. The physical environment becomes an active force that shapes the story, characters, and the audience's emotional experience. Urban landscapes and specific locations act as catalysts that shape a character's psychology and influence their actions or decisions. In my play *A Portrait of William Roscoe*, the specific locations within early 18th-century Liverpool were vital in defining the characters' moral and political stances. When plays are staged in non-traditional locations (e.g., pubs, warehouses, specific streets in Liverpool), the location's intrinsic history and atmosphere become central to the performance. For example, a performance of *Kitty: Queen of the Washhouse* took place at St Vincent de Paul Primary school, Liverpool—the site of the original washhouse from 1842—and *A Portrait of William Roscoe* was performed in The Athenaeum, the proprietors' club he founded. I use vivid sensory detail to create immersive settings. Using the Heritage Walk Tour Method as an exploratory research method, I gather observations that expose hidden histories and power dynamics embedded in the city's landscape. The approach allows me to critique and highlight social inequalities, transforming the setting into a tool for social commentary within my work.

Scratch Performance

A 'scratch performance' describes a developmental-stage event in the performing arts in which artists present draft, unfinished work to a live audience for informal feedback. This practice, often linked to contemporary devising and site-responsive theatre methodologies, emphasises a raw aesthetic and minimal technical polish. It serves as a crucial step in the creative process, enabling audience engagement to inform new versions of a piece.

Breaking the Class Ceiling: Addressing Socio-Economic Barriers and Advancing Inclusive Practices for Working-Class Artists in the UK Arts Industry

John Maguire 2025

Participating in Scratch helped me develop the idea of testing materials during the walk tours. The participants are a captive audience, allowing for immediate critical feedback. I have included a piece that I worked on at a scratch performance, *Work Out*, in the appendices.

Surrealist Punk Style

Surrealist Punk is a hybrid aesthetic merging the anti-establishment ethos and DIY visuals of the 1970s punk movement with the illogical, subconscious-driven imagery of 1920s Surrealism. It is a visually confrontational and intellectually challenging style intended to disrupt societal norms and conventional artistic boundaries. In theatre, this results in a performance style that is both viscerally raw and illogically dreamlike, using techniques such as juxtaposed staging elements, non-linear narratives grounded in dream logic, intense physical performance drawing on Artaud's 'Theatre of Cruelty', and confrontational design elements to create an unsettling sensory experience.

The elements of the play's narratives lean into the surreal, a world seen through a different lens. Influenced by hours spent in Liverpool art galleries like the Walker Gallery and Tate, which were free, I had the opportunity to educate myself in art. I also developed and still use a writing prompt: I sit in front of a painting for ten minutes, then write for ten minutes. This, combined with an interest in punk music and its general anti-establishment attitude, affected me. The lack of opportunities forced me to forge my own, and each play has been like an act of rebellion as I have had to find a way to stage it.

Verfremdungseffekt

Brecht's central technique, the Verfremdungseffekt (Alienation Effect or 'V-Effect'), aims to challenge an audience's passive acceptance of reality. By making everyday, socially conditioned phenomena appear unfamiliar or 'strange', the technique forces spectators to engage their critical judgment rather than their emotions.

Breaking the Class Ceiling: Addressing Socio-Economic Barriers and Advancing Inclusive Practices for Working-Class Artists in the UK Arts Industry

John Maguire 2025

Rooted in Marxist principles, *Verfremdung* exposes human behaviour not as a timeless given, but as an alterable, man-made social construct. In performance, this is achieved by rejecting traditional, 'illusionist' theatre. V-effects break the fourth wall through visible production elements (lighting rigs, musicians, scene changes), fragmented narratives, songs, and direct acknowledgement of the audience. Actors are encouraged to 'quote' their characters rather than fully embody them, ensuring the audience maintains a critical distance from the action and thus recognises the potential for social change.

I love this technique because it means those attending the performance do not simply sit and switch off; they are alert and engage with the stage action. All my plays are written with the principal idea that the audience will be fully immersed in the stage action and pay attention.

Breaking the Class Ceiling: Addressing Socio-Economic Barriers and Advancing Inclusive Practices for Working-Class Artists in the UK Arts Industry

John Maguire 2025

Bibliography

Works Cited

Appleford, K. (2015) 'Being seen in your pyjamas: the relationship between fashion, class, gender and space', *Gender, Place & Culture*, 23(2), pp.162–180.

Arts Council England (2012) *Creative People and Places*. (Online) Available at: <https://www.artscouncil.org.uk/creative-people-and-places> (Accessed: 10 April 2025).

Arts Council England (2021) *Our history | Arts Council England*. (Online) Arts Council England. Available at: www.artscouncil.org.uk (Accessed: 15 May 2025).

Arts Council England (2022) *Equality, Diversity and Inclusion: A Data Report, 2021–2022*. (Online) Available at: <https://www.artscouncil.org.uk/research-and-data/diversity-data/equality-diversity-and-inclusion-data-report-2021-2022/> (Accessed: 29 April 2025).

Arts Council England (2024) *Supporting libraries*. (Online) Available at: <https://www.artscouncil.org.uk/supporting-arts-museums-and-libraries/supporting-libraries> (Accessed: 17 April 2025).

ArtsGroupie (2019) *KITTY: Queen of the Washhouse – Trailer 2020*. (Online) YouTube. Available at: www.youtube.com (Accessed: 2 May 2025).

ArtsGroupie CIC. (2020) *The Liver Bird – ArtsGroupie CIC*. (Online) Available at: www.artsgroupie.org (Accessed: 6 May 2025).

ArtsGroupie CIC. (2024) *Lights Up on Liverpool Theatre Exhibition – ArtsGroupie CIC*. (Online) Available at: www.artsgroupie.org (Accessed: 24 November 2024).

Ashton, M. (2024) *State of health in the city: Liverpool 2040*. Liverpool, Liverpool City Council. Available at: liverpool.gov.uk (Accessed: 24 November 2025).

Bakare, L., Boyd, R., Khomami, N. and Vinter, R. (2025) *Working-class creatives don't stand a chance in UK today, leading artists warn*. (Online) *The Guardian*. Available at: <https://www.theguardian.com/culture/2025/feb/21/working-class-creatives-dont-stand-a-chance-in-uk-today-leading-artists-warn> (Accessed: 23 March 2025).

Breaking the Class Ceiling: Addressing Socio-Economic Barriers and Advancing Inclusive Practices for Working-Class Artists in the UK Arts Industry

John Maguire 2025

- Baldick, C. (2008) 'Magic realism', in *The Oxford Dictionary of Literary Terms*, 3rd edn. (Online) Oxford: Oxford University Press. Available at: <https://www.oxfordreference.com/view/10.1093/acref/9780199208272.001.0001/acref-9780199208272-e-683> (Accessed: 27 November 2025).
- Billington, M. (2009) *State of the Nation: British theatre since 1945*. London: Faber and Faber.
- Boal, A. (1992) *Games for Actors and Non - Actors*. New York: Routledge.
- Boal, A. (2019) *Theatre of the Oppressed*. London: Pluto Press.
- Bourdieu, P. (1986) *The Forms of Capital: Handbook of Theory and Research for the Sociology of Education*. Westport, CT: Greenwood Press.
- Brecht, B. (2015) *Mother Courage and her Children*. Methuen.
- Brook, O., Miles, A., O'Brien, D. and Taylor, M. (2023) 'Social Mobility and "Openness": Creative Occupations since the 1970s.' *Sociology*, 57(4), pp.789–810.
- Brook, O., O'Brien, D. and Taylor, M. (2025) *Culture is Bad for You*. Manchester University Press.
- Butler, J. (1990) *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*. New York and London: Routledge.
- Carey, W. (1820) Letter to William Roscoe, 24 October 1820 [Autograph letter signed]. Roscoe Papers, 920 ROS/741. Liverpool: Liverpool Record Office, Central Library.
- Carthew, N. (2023) *Undercurrent: A Cornish Memoir of Poverty, Nature and Resilience*. Coronet.
- CEPR. (2013) *Mrs Thatcher's economic legacy*. (Online) Available at: <https://cepr.org/voxeu/columns/mrs-thatchers-economic-legacy>. (Accessed: 30 January 2025).
- Cheek by Jowl. (2025) *About Cheek by Jowl theatre company*. (Online) Available at: <https://www.cheekbyjowl.com/about/> (Accessed: 29 January 2025).

Breaking the Class Ceiling: Addressing Socio-Economic Barriers and Advancing Inclusive Practices for Working-Class Artists in the UK Arts Industry

John Maguire 2025

Coke, T. W. (1826) Letter to William Roscoe, 30 October 1826 [Autograph letter signed].

Roscoe Papers, 920 ROS/978. Liverpool: Liverpool Record Office, Central Library.

Collection, T.J. (2019) *DRESS OF THE WORKING CLASSES*. (Online) johnstoncollection.org.

Available at: <https://johnstoncollection.org/DRESS-OF-THE-WORKING-CLASSES~68701>

(Accessed: 23 May 2025).

Complicite (2025) *Our history*. (Online) Complicité. Available at:

<https://www.complicite.org/about-us/our-history/> (Accessed: 29 January 2025).

Creative Access and The Sutton Trust (2024) *The Class Ceiling in the Creative Industries*.

(Online) Available at: [https://creativeaccess.org.uk/app/uploads/2024/07/the-class-](https://creativeaccess.org.uk/app/uploads/2024/07/the-class-ceiling-in-the-creative-industries-report-2024.pdf)

[ceiling-in-the-creative-industries-report-2024.pdf](https://creativeaccess.org.uk/app/uploads/2024/07/the-class-ceiling-in-the-creative-industries-report-2024.pdf) (Accessed: 28 February 2025).

Crowley, T. (2023) *Liverpool: A Memoir of Words*. Liverpool: Liverpool University Press.

Daniels, J. (2020) *Theatre and the Working Class*. Cherwell. (Online) Available at:

<https://cherwell.org/2020/07/09/theatre-and-the-working-class/> (Accessed: 28 January

2025).

De Certeau, M. (1984) *The Practice of Everyday Life*. Translated by S. Rendall. Berkeley:

University of California Press.

De Peuter, G (2014) 'Beyond the model worker: surveying a creative precariat', *Culture*

Unbound: Journal of Current Cultural Research, 6(1), pp. 263–284.

De Waal, K. (2019) *Common People: An Anthology of Working-class Writers*. London:

Unbound.

Delaney, S. (2019) *A Taste of Honey*. London: Bloomsbury Methuen Drama.

Dennis, R. and Hunter, K. (2022) 'Establishing an ecology of practice: a 'Do It Yourself'

approach to performer training.' *Studies in Theatre and Performance*, 43(3), pp. 367–383.

Dirom, A. (1825) Letter to William Roscoe, 16 September 1825 [Autograph letter signed].

Roscoe Papers, 920 ROS/1246. Liverpool: Liverpool Record Office, Central Library.

Dolan, J. (2010) *Utopia in performance: finding hope at the theater*. Ann Arbor: University

of Michigan Press.

Breaking the Class Ceiling: Addressing Socio-Economic Barriers and Advancing Inclusive Practices for Working-Class Artists in the UK Arts Industry

John Maguire 2025

- Dunbar, A. (1988) *Andrea Dunbar: Plays: The Arbor; Rita, Sue and Bob Too; Shirley*. London: Methuen Drama.
- Dürrenmatt, F. and Valency, M. (1986) *The Visit*. New York: French.
- Edgar, D. and Gültekin, H. (2024) 'British Theatre from Agitprop to Primark Playwriting.' *New Theatre Quarterly*, 40(3), pp. 266–271.
- Edwards, J. (1797) Letter to William Roscoe, 3 November 1797 [Autograph letter signed]. Roscoe Papers, 920 ROS/1413. Liverpool: Liverpool Record Office, Central Library.
- Eno, B., Schmidt, P., Pae White and Norton, P. (1996) *Oblique Strategies: A More Universal Edition*. Santa Monica: Peter Norton.
- Equity (2024) *Working Class Creatives at 'Lowest Level in a Decade'*. (Online) Equity. Available at: <https://www.equity.org.uk/news/2024/working-class-creatives-at-lowest-level-in-a-decade>. (Accessed: 27 Nov 2025).
- Exeunt Magazine. (2021) *Has the pandemic been a step back for working class inclusion in theatre?* (Online) Available at: <https://exeuntmagazine.com/features/pandemic-step-back-working-class-freelancers-theatre/> (Accessed: 27 April 2025).
- Fisher, J. (2021) *The theatre of Tony Kushner: Living Past Hope* (2nd ed.). London: Routledge.
- Glass, P. (2015) *Words without Music: A Memoir*. New York: W. W. Norton & Company.
- Goffman, E. (1959) *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life*. New York: Doubleday.
- Gogol, N. (2015) *The Nose*. London: Penguin Classics.
- Goldin, N. (1986) *The Ballad of Sexual Dependency*. New York, NY: Aperture Foundation.
- Gray, C. (2007) 'Commodification and instrumentalisation of cultural policy: from the 1980s to the cultural industries approach', *International Journal of Cultural Policy*, 13(2), pp. 203–215.
- Gregory, D. (2009) *The Dictionary of Human Geography*. (Online) Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons. Available at: <https://ebookcentral.proquest.com> (Accessed: 24 November 2025).

Breaking the Class Ceiling: Addressing Socio-Economic Barriers and Advancing Inclusive Practices for Working-Class Artists in the UK Arts Industry

John Maguire 2025

Grigor, M. (2018) *Theatre shuts out the working class. I'm devastated to think of the voices silenced.* (Online) The Guardian. Available at:

<https://www.theguardian.com/stage/2018/jun/29/theatre-working-class-audiences-voices-shut-out> (Accessed: 6 May 2025).

Halberstam, J. (2005) *In a Queer Time and Place: Transgender Bodies, Subcultural Lives.* New York: New York University Press.

Harvie, J. (2013) *Fair Play: Art, Performance, and Neoliberalism.* Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.

Harvie, J. and Rebellato, D. (2023) *The Cambridge Companion to British Theatre since 1945.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Harvey, J. (2002) *Jonathan Harvey: Plays 2: Guiding Star; Hushabye Mountain; Out in the Open.* London: Methuen Drama.

Heddon, D. and Turner, C. (2012) *Walking, Writing and Performance: Autobiographical Strides.* Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.

Heddon, D. (2016) *Performances of Walking.* Bristol: Intellect.

Healy, R. (2024) *Fewer than one in 10 arts workers in UK have working-class roots.* The Observer, 18 May (Online) Available at:

<https://www.theguardian.com/inequality/article/2024/may/18/arts-workers-uk-working-class-roots-cultural-sector-diversity> (Accessed: 28 April 2025).

Lee, J. (2015) *Passing Through.* (Online) YouTube. Available at:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=R6IPIhTRheM> (Accessed: 28 Apr. 2025).

Littlewood, J. (2016) *Joan's Book: The Autobiography of Joan Littlewood.* London: Bloomsbury Methuen Drama.

Liverpool Irish Festival. (2022) *Liverpool Irish Famine Trail: Revive.*

Liverpool Irish Festival. (2024) *Liverpool Irish Famine Trail – Liverpool Irish Festival.*

(Online) Available at: <https://www.liverpoolirishfestival.com/engage/liverpool-irish-famine-trail/> (Accessed: 6 Jan. 2025).

Breaking the Class Ceiling: Addressing Socio-Economic Barriers and Advancing Inclusive Practices for Working-Class Artists in the UK Arts Industry

John Maguire 2025

Liverpool Irish Festival. (2024) *Liverpool Irish Famine Trail lecture – Liverpool Irish Festival*.

(Online) Available at: <https://www.liverpoolirishfestival.com/events/lift-lecture-online/>

(Accessed: 6 Jan. 2025).

Lynch, D. and McKenna, K. (2019). *Room to Dream*. New York, NY: Random House.

Madonna (1989) 'Till Death Do Us Part', *Like a Prayer*. [Audio recording]. New York: Sire Records.

Madonna: Truth or Dare. (1991) [Film/Documentary]. California: Miramax.

Madonna (1998) 'The Power of Good-Bye', *Ray of Light*. [Audio recording]. New York: Maverick/Warner Bros.

Maguire, J. (2012) *Sophie and the Spider*. Liverpool: Plantapress.

Maguire, J. (2019) *The Liver Bird*. Liverpool: Artsgroupie CIC.

Maguire, J. (2025) *10mh.net*. (Online) Available at: <https://10mh.net/author/john-maguire/> (Accessed: 6 May 2025).

McBurney, S., Wheatley, M., Berger, J. and Theatre De Complicite. (1995) *The Three Lives of Lucie Cabrol*. London: Methuen Drama.

McGarvey, D. (2017) *Poverty Safari: Understanding the Anger of Britain's Underclass*. London: Pan Macmillan.

McGrath, J. (1990) *The Bone Won't Break*. London: Methuen.

McGrath, J. and Williams, R. (1996) *A Good Night Out: Popular Theatre: Audience, Class, and Form*. London: Nick Hern Books.

McGrath, J. (2002) *Naked Thoughts That Roam About*. London: Nick Hern Books.

McGrath, J. (2015) *The Cheviot, the Stag and the Black, Black Oil*. London: Bloomsbury Publishing.

Ministry of Defence (2005) 'Analysis of socio-economic and educational background of Army recruits: evidence from the Ministry of Defence', *House of Commons Defence Committee: Third Report, Session 2004–05, HC 63-III*. London, The Stationery Office. Available at:

Breaking the Class Ceiling: Addressing Socio-Economic Barriers and Advancing Inclusive Practices for Working-Class Artists in the UK Arts Industry

John Maguire 2025

<https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm200405/cmselect/cmdfence/63/63we13.htm>
(Accessed: 24 November 2025).

Muñoz, J. E. (1999) *Disidentifications: Queers of Color and the Performance of Politics*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

National Youth Theatre. (2025) *Netflix & NYT Research finds majority of working class parents don't want their child to pursue a creative career – National Youth Theatre*. (Online) Available at: <https://www.nyt.org.uk/news/netflix-and-nyt-research-finds-majority-of-working-class-parents-dont-want-their-child-to-pursue-a-creative-career>. (Accessed: 22 November 2025).

Northern Broadsides. (2025) Northern Broadsides Theatre Company – Halifax, UK. (Online) Available at: <https://www.northern-broadsides.co.uk/> (Accessed: 29 April 2025).

O'Brien, D. (2020) 'Class and the problem of inequality in theatre', *Studies in Theatre and Performance*, 40(3), pp. 242–250.

Open Eye Gallery. (2022) Arts Groupie Workshops – OEG. (Online) Available at: <https://openeye.org.uk/whatson/arts-groupie-workshops/> (Accessed: 28 November 2025).

Oxfam (2024) Oxfam GB | World's top 1% own more wealth than 95 per cent of humanity. (Online) Oxfam GB. Available at: <https://www.oxfam.org.uk/media/press-releases/worlds-top-1-own-more-wealth-than-95-per-cent-of-humanity/> (Accessed: 29 March 2025).

Paver, A., Wright, D., Braber, N. and Pautz, N. (2025) 'Stereotyped accent judgements in forensic contexts: listener perceptions of social traits and types of behaviour'. *Frontiers in Communication*. (Online) Available at: <https://www.frontiersin.org/journals/communication/articles/10.3389/fcomm.2024.1462013/full> (Accessed: 28 November 2025).

Phelan, P. (1993) *Unmarked: The Politics of Performance*. London: Routledge.

Price, R. (1999) *British Society 1680–1880: Dynamism, Containment, and Change*. New York: Cambridge University Press.

Breaking the Class Ceiling: Addressing Socio-Economic Barriers and Advancing Inclusive Practices for Working-Class Artists in the UK Arts Industry

John Maguire 2025

Richardson, W. (2024) *In the Company of Joan Littlewood*. (Online) YouTube. Available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AfXMWOPwPqs> (Accessed: 19 Nov. 2024).

Roscoe, W. (1777) *Mount Pleasant: a descriptive poem* (Ode on the Institution of a Society in Liverpool for the encouragement of designing, drawing, painting, etc.). London: The British Library.

Roscoe, W. (1820) Copy letter to Dr William Carey, 15 March 1820 [Letter book copy].

Roscoe Papers, 920 ROS/740. Liverpool: Liverpool Record Office, Central Library.

Roscoe, W. (1883) *The Butterfly's Ball and the Grasshopper's Feast*. Whitefish, Montana: Kessinger Publishing.

Roscoe, W., Chandler, G. and Ernest, A. (1953) *William Roscoe of Liverpool*. London: B T Batsford.

Roscoe, W. (c. 1800–1830) *Literary notebooks* [Manuscript]. Roscoe Papers, Acc 0148/5765-5766. Liverpool: Liverpool Record Office, Central Library.

Roscoe, W. and children. (c. 1790–1830) *MS poems by William Roscoe and his children* [Manuscript volume]. Roscoe Papers, Acc 06, 145/5828-6009. Liverpool: Liverpool Record Office, Central Library.

Russell, W. (1993) *Our Day Out*. Oxford: Heinemann Educational.

Russell, W. (2013) *Educating Rita*. London: A&C Black.

Russell, W. (2023) *Shirley Valentine*. London: Bloomsbury Publishing.

Rutter, C. C. (2020) 'Boying greatness in: Antony and Cleopatra', in Rutter, C. C. (ed.) *Antony and Cleopatra*. Manchester: Manchester University Press, pp. 149–178.

Sadur, N. (2014) *The Witching Hour and Other Plays*. Edited by N. L. Peterson. Boston: Academic Studies Press.

Schechner, R. (1985) *Between Theatre and Anthropology*. Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press.

Schechner, R. (2002) *Performance Studies: An Introduction*. 2nd edn. London: Routledge.

Breaking the Class Ceiling: Addressing Socio-Economic Barriers and Advancing Inclusive Practices for Working-Class Artists in the UK Arts Industry

John Maguire 2025

Sierz, A. (2019) *Good Nights Out: A History of Popular British Theatre 1940-2015*. London: Bloomsbury Publishing.

Smith, E. (2025) *Liverpool Irish Famine Trail: Reveal: A Creative Exploration in Revealing Liverpool's Connection with an Gorta Mór*. Liverpool: Liverpool Irish Festival.

Social Mobility Commission (2024) *Childhood Origins of Social Mobility*. (Online) Available at: <https://socialmobility.independent-commission.uk/childhood-origins-of-social-mobility/> (Accessed: 29 November 2024).

Society of London Theatre (SOLT) and UK Theatre (2025). *Campaign for Theatre Investment: The Case for a £500m Capital Fund*. (Online) Available at: <https://uktheatre.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/2025/02/SOLT-and-UK-Theatre-CSR-Representation-Feb-2025.pdf> (Accessed: 27 November 2025).

Standing, G. (2021) *The Precariat: The New Dangerous Class*. London: Bloomsbury Academic.

Stripe, A. (2019) *Black Teeth and a Brilliant Smile*. London: Bloomsbury.

Tapper, J. (2022) 'Huge decline of working class people in the arts reflects fall in wider society', *The Guardian*, 10 December. (Online) Available at: <https://www.theguardian.com/culture/2022/dec/10/huge-decline-working-class-people-arts-reflects-society> (Accessed: 28 April 2025).

Thapa, S. (2024) *Annual Review, extracurricular education – a vital right – National Saturday Club*. (Online) National Saturday Club. Available at: <https://saturday-club.org/2024/11/14/annual-review-extracurricular-education-a-vital-right/> (Accessed: 22 November 2025).

Tibbs, L. (2024) 'Research reveals stark class inequalities in access to the creative industries', *The Sutton Trust*, [released, 13 November 2024]. (Online) Available at: <https://www.suttontrust.com> (Accessed: 27 April 2025).

Tomlin, L. (2015) *British Theatre Companies: 1995–2014*. London: Bloomsbury.

Breaking the Class Ceiling: Addressing Socio-Economic Barriers and Advancing Inclusive Practices for Working-Class Artists in the UK Arts Industry

John Maguire 2025

Ubieto, M.L. and Vollmeyer, J. (2024) *Cultural Recycling in the Postdigital Age*. Berlin: Peter Lang.

University of Glasgow. (2010) *University of Glasgow Library – Collections – Scottish Theatre Archive*. (Online) Available at:

<https://www.gla.ac.uk/myglasgow/library/files/special/collections/STA/Collections/784/index.html> (Accessed: 28 February 2025).

University of Liverpool Library. (1959–1960) *Catalogue of the Rathbone Papers in the University Library*. 2 parts (in 1). Liverpool: University of Liverpool.

University of Liverpool. (2022) *Situating climate change: understanding the importance of climate, place and community- Heseltine Institute for Public Policy, Practice and Place - University of Liverpool*. (Online) Available at: <https://www.liverpool.ac.uk/heseltine-institute/projects/situating-climate-change/> (Accessed: 5 May 2025).

Verona, I. and Conopo, O. (2025) 'Shakespeare drama is "immense" help for SEND pupil's confidence', *BBC News*, 16 March. (Online) Available at:

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/articles/c1lpzrv50gzo> (Accessed: 28 February 2025).

Walk the Plank (2025) *Walk the Plank*. (Online) Available at:

<https://www.walktheplank.co.uk/> (Accessed: 15 April 2025).

Williams, R. (1958) 'Culture is ordinary', in *Conviction*. London: MacGibbon and Kee, pp. 3–18.

Williams, R. (2014) *Raymond Williams on Culture and Society: Essential Writings*. London: Sage.

Wilson, A. (2008) *William Roscoe: Commerce and Culture*. Liverpool: Liverpool University Press.

Youngs, I. (2025) *Big drop in plays staged by theatres over past decade*. (Online) BBC News. Available at: <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/articles/cd7vveqr7y9o> (Accessed: 26 November 2025).

Breaking the Class Ceiling: Addressing Socio-Economic Barriers and Advancing Inclusive Practices for Working-Class Artists in the UK Arts Industry

John Maguire 2025

Further Reading

Ackroyd, H. (1996) *The Liverpool Stage*. Liverpool: Amber Valley Print Centre.

Artaud, A. (1958) *The Theatre and Its Double*. Translated by M. C. Richards. New York: Grove Press.

Arts Council England (2023) *ACE Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion 2021–2022*. (Online) Arts Council England. Available at: <https://www.artscouncil.org.uk/research-and-data/diversity-data/equality-diversity-and-inclusion-data-report-2021-2022> (Accessed: 2 May 2025).

Barrett, M. (2011) *The Working Class and the Theatre*. (Online) YouTube. Available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gFgr51eT608> (Accessed: 10 Sep 2024).

Batsleer, J. and Hughes, J. (2014) 'Looking from the Other Side of the Street: Youth, Participation and the Arts in the Edgelands of Urban Manchester.' In: Kalantidou, E. and Fry, T. (eds.) *Design in the Borderlands*, pp. 156–172. London: Routledge.

Benzie, R.A. and Poore, B. (2023) 'History Plays in the Twenty-First Century: New Tools for Interpreting the Contemporary Performance of the Past.' *Studies in Theatre and Performance*. (Online) Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1080/14682761.2023.2266205> (Accessed: 12 Nov 2024).

Beswick, K. (2020) 'Feeling working class: affective class identification and its implications for overcoming inequality.' *Studies in Theatre and Performance*, 40(3), pp. 265–274.

Boeck, T. et al. (2009) *The impact of volunteering on social capital and community cohesion*. (Online) De Montfort University. Available at: <https://www.dmu.ac.uk/documents/health-and-life-sciences-documents/centre-for-social-action/reports-and-articles/exploring-impact-youth-action-volunteering-england.pdf> (Accessed: 12 Nov 2024).

Bowers, M.A. (2024) 'Enacting the Impossible: Techniques and Limitations of Staging Magical Realism.' *Journal of Foreign Languages and Cultures*, 8(2), pp. 58–72.

Breaking the Class Ceiling: Addressing Socio-Economic Barriers and Advancing Inclusive Practices for Working-Class Artists in the UK Arts Industry

John Maguire 2025

Brockie, A. (2022) *Representing Private Citizens in Contemporary British Theatre: The Legal and Ethical Challenges*. (Online) Available at:

<https://eprints.worc.ac.uk/12599/1/MPhil%20Thesis%20-%20Alex%20Brockie.pdf>

(Accessed: 13 Nov 2024).

Bu, F., Mak, H.W., Bone, J.K. and Fancourt, D. (2022) 'Longitudinal changes in home-based arts engagement during and following the first national lockdown due to the COVID-19 pandemic in the UK.' *Perspectives in Public Health*, 142, pp.117–126.

Butterworth, P. (2022) *Staging, Playing, Pyrotechnics and Magic: Conventions of Performance in Early English Theatre*. London: Routledge.

Clarke, B. (2024) *The Routledge Companion to Working-Class Literature*. London: Taylor & Francis.

Cohen, D., Shin, F., Liu, X., Ondish, P. and Kraus, M.W. (2017) 'Defining Social Class Across Time and Between Groups.' *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, 43, pp. 1530–1545.

Cottrell, D. (2006) *The Little Book of Liver Birds*. Derby: Breedon Books Publishing.

Craig, S. (1985) *Dreams and Deconstructions: Alternative Theatre in Britain*. Ambergate: Amber Lane Press.

De Bernard, M., Comunian, R., Jewell, S., Salvador, E. and O'Brien, D. (2024) 'The role of higher education in sustainable creative careers: Exploring UK theatre graduates and theatre careers'. *Industry and Higher Education*, 38(1), pp. 14–26.

Elsam, P. (2006) *Acting Characters*. London: Methuen Drama.

Evans, G. (2016) 'Participation and provision in arts & culture – bridging the divide.' *Cultural Trends*, 25, pp. 2–20.

Eyre, R. (2011) *National Service*. London: Bloomsbury Publishing.

Falconer, K., Hadley, S. and Moorhouse, J. (2022) 'Building theatre, making policy: materiality and cultural democracy at Liverpool's PurpleDoor', *Studies in Theatre and Performance*, 44(2), pp. 345–361.

Breaking the Class Ceiling: Addressing Socio-Economic Barriers and Advancing Inclusive Practices for Working-Class Artists in the UK Arts Industry

John Maguire 2025

- Fazio, M., Launius, C. and Strangleman, T. (2020) *Routledge International Handbook of Working-Class Studies*. London: Routledge.
- Fotis, M. (2018) 'What Playwrights Talk About When They Talk About Writing by Jeffrey Sweet', *Theatre History Studies*, 37(1), pp. 321–324.
- Fletcher, S. (2016) *Roscoe and Italy*. London: Routledge.
- Freshwater, H. (2009) *Theatre & Audience*. London: Macmillan Education UK.
- Gallagher, K. (2014) *Why Theatre Matters*. Toronto, ON: University of Toronto Press.
- Garrett, G. (2017) *Ten Years on the Parish*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Gogol, N. (2012) *Diary of a Madman and Other Stories*. Mineola, NY: Courier Corporation.
- Graham, J. (2024) *Boys from the Blackstuff*. London: Bloomsbury Publishing.
- Greaney, M. (2013) *Liverpool: A Landscape History*. Stroud: The History Press.
- Grotowski, J. (2002) *Towards a Poor Theatre*. Vancouver: Routledge.
- Harper, G. (2023) 'New types of intelligence relevant to creative writers', *New Writing*, 20(2), pp. 121–122.
- Hart, S.M. and Ouyang, W.-C. (2005) *A Companion to Magical Realism*. Rochester, N.Y.: Tamesis.
- HM Government (2021) *Simplifying how employers measure socio-economic background: An accompanying report to new guidance*. (Online) Available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/understanding-a-workforces-socio-economic-background-for-change/simplifying-how-employers-measure-socio-economic-background-an-accompanying-report-to-new-guidance> (Accessed: 12 Feb 2025).
- Jackson, A. and Vine, C. (2013) *Learning through Theatre*. London: Routledge.
- Kelly, P. (2020). *Diversity, Inclusion, and Representation in Contemporary Dramaturgy*. London: Routledge.
- Kershaw, B. (2002) *The Politics of Performance*. London: Routledge.
- Kwai, I. (2023) *Forget Halloween, Bring Ghost Stories Back to Christmas*. (Online) The New York Times, 20 Dec. Available at:

Breaking the Class Ceiling: Addressing Socio-Economic Barriers and Advancing Inclusive Practices for Working-Class Artists in the UK Arts Industry

John Maguire 2025

<https://www.nytimes.com/2023/12/20/world/europe/christmas-ghost-stories.html>
(Accessed: 28 April 2025).

Lacey, S. (2002) *British Realist Theatre*. London: Routledge.

Leach, R. (2009) *Makers of Modern Theatre: An Introduction*. London and New York: Routledge.

Lee, S. (2022) *The Intersection of Class and Space in British Postwar Writing*. London: Bloomsbury.

Levon, E., Sharma, D. and Ilbury, C. (2022). *Speaking Up: Accents and Social Mobility*. (Online) The Sutton Trust. Available at: <https://www.suttontrust.com/wp-content/uploads/2022/11/Accents-and-social-mobility.pdf> (Accessed: 25 November 2025).

Levy, S. (2025) *Mind the Inclusion Gap: How Allies can Bridge the Divide between Talking Diversity and Taking Action*. London: Unbound.

Mackintosh, I. (2003) *Architecture, Actor and Audience*. London: Routledge.

Magee, P. (2021) 'The links between creative writing and traumatic thought', *New Writing*, 19(1), pp. 27–37.

Martínez, M.-Á. (2024) 'Creative writing and storyworld possible selves', *New Writing*, 21(4), pp. 403–421.

McAndrew, D.S. (2024) *Arts, Culture and Heritage: Audiences and Workforce - Creative Industries Policy and Evidence Centre*. (Online) Creative Industries Policy and Evidence Centre. Available at: https://pec.ac.uk/state_of_the_nation/arts-cultural-heritage-audiences-and-workforce-2/. (Accessed: 27 Nov 2025).

Merkin, R. (2011) *Liverpool Playhouse*. Liverpool: Liverpool University Press.

Miles, K. and Bleasdale, A. (1983) *Boys from the Blackstuff*. London: Grafton.

Milling, J. and Ley, G. (2001) *Modern Theories of Performance: from Stanislavski to Boal*. Hampshire: Palgrave.

Breaking the Class Ceiling: Addressing Socio-Economic Barriers and Advancing Inclusive Practices for Working-Class Artists in the UK Arts Industry

John Maguire 2025

Murphy, M. (2007) *Writing Liverpool: Essays and interviews*. Liverpool: Liverpool University Press.

National Museums Liverpool. (2011) *Crisis*. (Online) Available at:

<https://www.liverpoolmuseums.org.uk/crisis> (Accessed: 17 Jan 2025).

Omasta, M. (2011) 'Artist Intention and Audience Reception in Theatre for Young Audiences'. *Youth Theatre Journal*, 25, pp. 32–50.

Osborne, J. (1982) *Look Back in Anger*. New York: Penguin.

Osborne, J. (1998) *The Entertainer*. London: Samuel French.

Pavis, P. (1998) *Dictionary of the Theatre: Terms, Concepts, and Analysis*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press.

Rogers, K. and Proctor, E. (2005) *The Lost Tribe of Everton and Scottie Road*. Liverpool: Trinity Mirror, Sport and Media.

'RP or OP? That is the question' (2005) *The Guardian*, 21 Aug. (Online) Available at:

<https://www.theguardian.com/stage/2005/aug/21/theatre.classics> (Accessed: 17 April 2025).

Sharples, J. and Pollard, R. (2004) *Liverpool*. London: Yale University Press.

Shepard, S. and Stone, C. (1991) *Fool for Love*. London: Faber And Faber.

Shepard, S. (1996) *The Unseen Hand*. New York: Vintage.

Shepard, S. (2001) *Motel Chronicles*. San Francisco: City Lights Publishers.

Shepherd, S. (2009) *The Cambridge Introduction to Modern British Theatre*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Shepard, S. (2012) *Fifteen One-Act Plays*. New York: Vintage Books.

Shepherd, S. (2016) *The Cambridge Introduction to Performance Theory*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Shepherd, Caitlin B (2019) *Reframing the Class Divide: Art that Challenges Poverty and Economic Injustice*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.

Breaking the Class Ceiling: Addressing Socio-Economic Barriers and Advancing Inclusive Practices for Working-Class Artists in the UK Arts Industry

John Maguire 2025

Sierz, A. (1997) 'British Theatre in the 1990s: A Brief Political Economy'. *Media, Culture & Society*, (Online) 19(3), pp.461–469. Available at:

<https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/10.1177/016344397019003009> (Accessed: 20 July 2025).

Smale, D.J. (2004) *Magic realism: transformations and migrations of a disputed critical category*. (Online) Liverpool John Moores University. Available at:

<https://doi.org/10.24377/ljmu.t.00005786> (Accessed: 17 April 2025).

Snyder-Young, D. and Omasta, M. (2022) *Impacting Theatre Audiences*. London: Routledge.

Solga, K. (2017) *A Cultural History of Theatre in the Modern Age*. London: Bloomsbury Academic.

Stam, R. (2005) *Literature through Film: Realism, Magic, and the Art of Adaptation*. Malden, MS: Blackwell.

Stephenson, M.(2024) *Working-class creatives in film and TV at lowest level in decade*.

(Online) Channel 4 News, 14 May. Available at: <https://www.channel4.com/news/working-class-creatives-in-film-and-tv-at-lowest-level-in-decade> (Accessed: 27 November 2025).

Thomas, A.J. (2015) *Cholera*. Barnsley, South Yorkshire: Pen and Sword.

Thompson, E.P. (1980) *The Making of the English Working Class*. Harmondsworth: Penguin Books.

Tindale, C.W. (2015) *The Philosophy of Argument and Audience Reception*. Cambridge, United Kingdom: Cambridge University Press.

Tomlin, L. (2020) 'Why we still need to talk about class.' *Studies in Theatre and Performance*, 40(3), pp. 251–264.

Turnbull, O. (2014) *Bringing Down the House: the Crisis in Britain's Regional Theatres*. Bristol: Intellect.

Turner, V. (1982) *From ritual to theatre: the human seriousness of play*. New York: Paj.

Breaking the Class Ceiling: Addressing Socio-Economic Barriers and Advancing Inclusive Practices for Working-Class Artists in the UK Arts Industry

John Maguire 2025

University of Delaware. (2018) *Social and Family Life in the Late 17th & Early 18th Centuries* | *British Literature Wiki, Udel.edu*. (Online) WordPress. Available at: <https://sites.udel.edu/britlitwiki/social-and-family-life-in-the-late17th-early-18th-centuries/>. (Accessed: 15 April 2024).

Wallis, M. and Shepherd, S. (2018) *Studying Plays*. London: Bloomsbury Publishing.

Woodin, T. (2018) *Working-Class Writing and Publishing in the late Twentieth Century*. Manchester: Manchester University Press.

Writing Voices (2021) *Do the ethics of writing about real people or situations worry you?* (Online) Available at: <https://www.writingvoices.co.uk/post/do-the-ethics-of-writing-about-real-people-or-situations-worry-you> (Accessed: 15 Jan. 2025).

Zamora, L. P. and Faris, W. B. (eds.) (1995) *Magical Realism: Theory, History, Community*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.

My Plays and Published Works

Maguire, J. (2024) *A Portrait of William Roscoe* [Stage Play]. Performed at Culture Fest Halewood and St Nicholas' Church, Liverpool. Audience: 128.

Maguire, J. (2024) *Ghost Stories for Xmas* [Stage Play]. Performed 8 times at Metal, Liverpool, and The Hornby Room, Central Library. Total audience: 783.

Maguire, J. (2024) *Midsummer Nights Scream: Folk Horror* [Stage Play]. Performed 6 times at Incredible Edible Knowsley, Thingwall Community Hall, and Shakespeare North Playhouse. Total audience: 625.

Maguire, J. (2023) *A Portrait of William Roscoe* [Stage Play, mini tour]. Performed 7 times at Shakespeare North Playhouse, The Reader (Calderstones), and The Athenaeum, Liverpool. Audience: 1,200.

Breaking the Class Ceiling: Addressing Socio-Economic Barriers and Advancing Inclusive Practices for Working-Class Artists in the UK Arts Industry

John Maguire 2025

Maguire, J. (2023) *Ghost Stories for Xmas* [Stage Play]. Performed 12 times at Shakespeare North Playhouse, The Athenaeum, and The Hornby Room, Central Library. Total audience: 1,800.

Maguire, J. (2023) *The Impact of Irish Refugees in Shaping Liverpool* [Lecture]. Total audience: 2,418.

Maguire, J. (2023) *Victorian Christmas* [Stage Play]. Performed 4 times at The Athenaeum, Liverpool. Audience: 400.

Maguire, J. (2022) *Ghost Stories for Xmas* [Stage Play]. Performed 7 times at The Athenaeum, Liverpool, and The Hornby Room, Central Library. Total audience: 900.

Maguire, J. (2022) *Revive: Liverpool Irish Famine Trail* [Publication]. Published by the Liverpool Irish Festival.

Maguire, J. (2022) *Situating Climate Change: Understanding the Importance of Climate, Place and Community* [Research Project]. Collaborators: The British Academy, University of Liverpool, and Heseltine Institute.

Maguire, J. (2022) *Victorian Christmas* [Stage Play]. Performed 4 times at The Athenaeum, Liverpool. Audience: 400.

Maguire, J. (2021–2023) *The Liver Bird* [Stage Play, Summer Parks tour]. Performed 15 times, including Shakespeare North Playhouse and The Reader (Calderstones). Total audience: 2,300.

Maguire, J. (2019) *The Liver Bird* [Novella]. Published by ArtsGroupie. Sold: 2,800 copies.

Maguire, J. (2018–2023) *Kitty: Queen of the Washhouse* [Stage Play]. Performed 32 times at St. George's Hall, King's Head (London), Shakespeare North Playhouse, and touring venues. Total audience: 7,800.

Maguire, J. (2019) *Weave* [Stage Play]. Performed 8 times at Liverpool Royal Court Studio. Audience: 1,200.

Maguire, J. (2016) *Hotel* [Stage Play]. Performed 8 times at Lantern Theatre, Liverpool (Shiny New Festival). Audience: 680.

Breaking the Class Ceiling: Addressing Socio-Economic Barriers and Advancing Inclusive Practices for Working-Class Artists in the UK Arts Industry

John Maguire 2025

Maguire, J. (2015) *Passing Through* [Stage Play]. Performed 4 times at Llanover Hall, Cardiff. Digital audience: 65,000 to date.

Maguire, J. (2013) *Dirty Pool* [Poetry Collection]. Published by Apartment 38. Sold: 280 copies.

Maguire, J. (2013) *Pornovision* [Stage Play]. Performed 4 times at Lantern Theatre, Liverpool (Shiny New Festival). Audience: 480.

Maguire, J. (2013–Present) Regular Contributor [Articles]. *10mh.net*.

Maguire, J. (2012) *Bruise* [Stage Play]. Performed 7 times at Pride Fringe Manchester and Liverpool Lantern Theatre. Audience: 1,300.

Maguire, J. (2012) *Sophie and the Spider* [Children's Book]. Published by Planta Press. Sold: 1,800 copies.

Maguire, J. (2012) *Weave* [Stage Play]. Performed 8 times at Lantern Theatre, Liverpool (Shiny New Festival). Audience: 700.

Maguire, J. (2010) *Heart* [Stage Play]. Performed 4 times at The Actor's Studio, Liverpool. Audience: 622.

For the edited book:

Conolly, J. and Whelan, C. (eds.) (2013) *World Film Locations: Liverpool*. Bristol: Intellect Books.

Trailers

ArtsGroupie (2019) '*KITTY: Queen of the Washhouse*' Trailer 2020 [Video, online]. YouTube. Available at: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-VqDef7_HAI (Accessed: 2 May 2025).

ArtsGroupie (2019) '*WEAVE*' Trailer [Video, online]. YouTube. Available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Hl3oBBu6ok4> (Accessed: 5 May 2025).

Breaking the Class Ceiling: Addressing Socio-Economic Barriers and Advancing Inclusive Practices for Working-Class Artists in the UK Arts Industry

John Maguire 2025

ArtsGroupie (2021) *WEAVE – The Hair Fairy Tale Sequence* [Video, online]. YouTube. Available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WP8Tadwf1-k> (Accessed: 5 May 2025).

Production Galleries

ArtsGroupie CIC (2023) *The Weave Gallery – ArtsGroupie CIC* (Online) Available at: <https://www.artsgroupie.org/gallery/weave-gallery/> (Accessed: 5 May 2025).

ArtsGroupie CIC (2024) *Kitty Queen of the Washhouse Gallery – ArtsGroupie CIC* (Online) Available at: <https://www.artsgroupie.org/gallery/kitty-queen-of-the-washhouse/> (Accessed: 5 May 2025).

ArtsGroupie CIC (2024) *The William Roscoe Gallery – ArtsGroupie CIC* (Online) Available at: <https://www.artsgroupie.org/gallery/the-william-roscoe-gallery/> (Accessed: 5 May 2025).

Walking Tours

ArtsGroupie CIC (2020) *Walking Tours – ArtsGroupie CIC* (Online) Available at: <https://www.artsgroupie.org/walking-tours/> (Accessed: 5 May 2025).

ArtsGroupie CIC (2023) *Walking Tours Gallery – ArtsGroupie CIC* (Online) Available at: <https://www.artsgroupie.org/gallery/walking-tours-gallery/> (Accessed: 5 May 2025).

ArtsGroupie (2025) *Lights Up on Liverpool (Full Film)* (Video, online) YouTube. Available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=puF65q8Jm2Y> (Accessed: 5 May 2025)

Breaking the Class Ceiling: Addressing Socio-Economic Barriers and Advancing Inclusive Practices for Working-Class Artists in the UK Arts Industry

John Maguire 2025

The Plays

1. Heart

Breaking the Class Ceiling: Addressing Socio-Economic Barriers and Advancing Inclusive Practices for Working-Class Artists in the UK Arts Industry

John Maguire 2025

heart
James Stewart

The Liverpool International
WRITE
NOW
One-Act Play Festival

Friday 26 March to Saturday 03 April 2010

Show times:
Saturday 27th March - 7pm
Monday 29th March - 8.30pm
Thursday 1st April - 7pm
Saturday 3rd April - 12.30pm

Rating Certificate: 12

The Liverpool Actors' Studio, 36 Seel Street, Liverpool L1 4BE
Tickets £8 / £6 (Concs) | Ticketline 0151 709 3789
For more information and to buy tickets online visit www.writenowfestival.co.uk

Breaking the Class Ceiling: Addressing Socio-Economic Barriers and Advancing Inclusive Practices for Working-Class Artists in the UK Arts Industry

John Maguire 2025

HEART

By James Stewart

First performed in March 2010 at The Actor's Studio Liverpool, as part of the Write Now, One-Act Play Festival.

Cast of Characters:

Johnnie Male, early twenties.

Peter/Dog/Hairdresser/Bellboy/Doctor Male, early twenties.

Jayne/Receptionist/Carrie/Trudy Female, early twenties.

All the extra parts/voiceovers are played by the actors who play Peter and Jayne.

Directed by John Maguire

**Breaking the Class Ceiling: Addressing Socio-Economic Barriers and Advancing
Inclusive Practices for Working-Class Artists in the UK Arts Industry**

John Maguire 2025

Breaking the Class Ceiling: Addressing Socio-Economic Barriers and Advancing Inclusive Practices for Working-Class Artists in the UK Arts Industry

John Maguire 2025

SPOTLIGHT ON STAGE SOUNDTRACK OF A TRAIN TRAVELLING ON A TRACK STARTS, EVENTUALLY REACHING A DEAFENING CRESCENDO.

BLACKOUT

JOHNNIE SITS IN DARKNESS. A SPOTLIGHT SHINES JUST ON HIS MOUTH. HE IS SITTING IN A CHAIR AND AS THE TEXT STARTS, THE LIGHT SLOWLY COMES UP, EVENTUALLY TO A SPOTLIGHT SOLELY ON HIS FACE.

JOHNNIE

My best friend Peter,
well, that was what he was thought to be by most people.
We had been friends since boyhood, friends in adulthood, but the reality was plain,
I hated the bastard.

SOUNDSCAPE OF CHILDREN AT PLAY.

JOHNNIE

As children we had everything.
Competition was his thing I had a chopper bike, he had a motorbike.
His parents were worse...
his only term of phrase was, 'I want.'
Looking back, I should have seen the dangers of living in close proximity to the wilder beast Peter. Taking the flat above for the cheaper rent, with the love of my life, seemed like an ideal move.
It did not seem conceivable that a fool like him could own a house like this.

Breaking the Class Ceiling: Addressing Socio-Economic Barriers and Advancing Inclusive Practices for Working-Class Artists in the UK Arts Industry

John Maguire 2025

A 'professional' fool who could legally call himself a landlord at twenty-three. It didn't matter that technically he hadn't paid for the property.

His dad, the Judge,

enabled him to once again not learn that advanced skill of fending for oneself.

HE TURNS ON HIS SIDE IN THE CHAIR CONTINUES
TO TALK AND THE LIGHT STILL FOCUSES SOLELY
ON HIS FACE.

JOHNNIE

She disliked Peter (PAUSE)

HE STANDS AND WALKS AROUND THE CHAIR,
WITH THE LIGHT FOLLOWING HIS FACE.

SOUNDS OF A DISCOTHEQUE PLAY SUBTLY IN THE BACKGROUND.

THE DISCO LIGHTS PROJECT ONTO JOHNNIES
BODY.A FEMALE ENTERS THE SPACE AND STANDS
ALONGSIDE HIM, HE HOLDS HER HAND AND SHE
DANCES HOLDING TIGHTLY ONTO HIS ARM AND
THEN IT SLIDES DOWN TO HIS HAND.

JOHNNIE

We met in University at a traffic light disco in fresher's week...

And from that night onwards we were a fitted unit.

THE DISCO MUSIC STARTS TO BECOME DISTORTED SLOW,
MELTING.

SHE STARTS TO BREAK OFF SLOWLY AND HE TRIES
TO KEEP TIGHT HOLD OF HER HAND.

Breaking the Class Ceiling: Addressing Socio-Economic Barriers and Advancing Inclusive Practices for Working-Class Artists in the UK Arts Industry

John Maguire 2025

JOHNNIE

Everybody on Campus referred to us jointly,
we had lost all individualism.

HARSH WHITE LIGHT.

THE LIGHT FLICKERS LIKE THAT ON A TUBE.

A BED IS WHEELED ON THE STAGE QUITE RAPIDLY,
KNOCKING THE CHAIR ACROSS THE STAGE.

JOHNNIE AT SOME POINT JUMPS ON THE BED AS
IT IS WHEELED AROUND THE STAGE, LIKE A TUBE
TRAIN.

THE SOUND OF THE COMMUTER HOUR.

JOHNNIE

Shock and nausea! Coming home one night from work, well it was
not simply, one night.'

JUNE 18TH APPROXIMATELY 6.48. PM

THIS IMAGE IS PROJECTED ONTO THE BACKDROP

JUNE 18TH APPROXIMATELY 6.48. PM

HE HOLDS ON, MIMING BEING ON A TRAIN AS THE
BED IS SHAKEN AROUND THE STAGE.

JOHNNIE

I was meant to be working overtime; to enable us to live in the
manner we had become accustomed to, her credit
cards,allowances for life's necessities.

The train never gets cancelled, but it did that day.

JUNE 18TH APPROXIMATELY 6.48. PM

Breaking the Class Ceiling: Addressing Socio-Economic Barriers and Advancing Inclusive Practices for Working-Class Artists in the UK Arts Industry

John Maguire 2025

SOUNDS FROM A TUBE TRAIN STATION.

JOHNNIE

As I travelled home on the tube, I had the
strangest feeling.

A HEARTBEAT STARTS TO COME INTO THE BACKGROUND SUBTLY.

A SKETCH OF LEONARDO DA VINCI'S HEART
DIAGRAM IS PROJECTED ONTO THE BACKDROP.

My heart riddled with palpitations, seemingly in sync with the
pulsating metal cart. Pausing only for the drone of,

'MIND THE GAP!'

THE LIGHT BECOMES THREATENING, WITH THE
OCCASSIONAL BLACKOUT AND STROBE, IN SYNC
WITH THE SOUNDTRACK OF THE TUBE TRAIN.

JOHNNIE

At one point somewhere between Victoria and Euston, I felt that it
had become loose from its encasement and was rapidly exploring
my insides. Jostling around.

My father had suffered from palpitations, so I diagnosed it as
hereditary or due to my caffeine overindulgence.

(URGENCY) I had to get off this train, immediately.

SOUND OF DOORS OPENING

HE MIMES GOING UP THE STAIRS.

JOHNNIE

At the next available stop, I bounded up from the tunnels, knocking
past American tourists standing on the wrong side of the escalator.

AGAIN!

Breaking the Class Ceiling: Addressing Socio-Economic Barriers and Advancing Inclusive Practices for Working-Class Artists in the UK Arts Industry

John Maguire 2025

Ignorant

Lack of apologies.

Just another in London's marathon of rudeness.

Out into the fresh carbon, smoke chemical filled London smog.

BLUE LIGHT SHINES ACROSS THE STAGES, NOISES
OF THE STREET.

JOHNNIE

My heart slowed down and in one fleeting thought, I figured.

(PAUSE) what if it stopped all together.

TWO PEOPLE ENTER THE SPACE, DRUNK IN SUITS
WITH BOTTLES OF BEER.

SOUND OF REVELLERS ENJOYING AN AFTERWORK BEVERAGE OR
TWO, LAUGHTER AND GENERAL CHIT CHAT.

JOHNNIE

I walked along the South Bank. The suits and ties drank and drank some more outside the N.F.T. Their ties scraggy around their necks and shirts undone to the waist, revealing tiny pot bellies that were used to being kept behind tight fitted shirts. An illusion of athleticism, down to the skill of the tailor rather than the treadmill.

THE TWO DRUNKS MORPH INTO TWO MODELS
AND WALK out INTO THE AUDIENCE, LIKE A
CATWALK.

JOHNNIE

The whole of the corporate get up, the executive uniform, labelled in the catalogues as 'the 9-5 Collection,' now in its afterhours look.

Breaking the Class Ceiling: Addressing Socio-Economic Barriers and Advancing Inclusive Practices for Working-Class Artists in the UK Arts Industry

John Maguire 2025

It reminded me of schoolboys who don their ties around their heads when school is out.

TAKES OFF HIS SHIRT, TAKING A PEN OUT OF HIS POCKET, SIGNING THE SHIRT AND DISCARDING THE GARMENT INTO THE AUDIENCE. PETER ENTERS THE STAGE SPACE WITH A MANEQUIN AND A RED-LIGHT SHINES ON, PROJECTING FIRE

JOHNNIE

I remember signing my uniform at the end of term, a sacrificial ritual that purified me from the traumatic school traditions.

Of course, Peter, in his unique freak style, did not just take a match to his well-worn garments. He chose to build a dummy of himself; the mannequin had the advantage of better looks and a higher degree of intelligence mind.

He placed it on a bonfire and rehashed the Guy Fawkes legacy.

I distinctively remember thinking, as the fireworks that seemed pointless in the summer, went off and as the classmates treated him like Messiah,

as he roasted marshmallows over his burning self-mockup, what a shame he too wasn't scolding his flesh in the middle of that flaming inferno.

THE STAGE IN DARKNESS, FLAMES FLICKERING OVER THE MANNEQUIN. PETER STANDS IN FRONT OF THE EFFIGY AS IF HE IS BURNING TOO. STARES

Breaking the Class Ceiling: Addressing Socio-Economic Barriers and Advancing Inclusive Practices for Working-Class Artists in the UK Arts Industry

John Maguire 2025

OUT AT THE AUDIENCE, FOLLOWS AN IMAGINARY
FIGURE AROUND THE AUDITORIUM.

A HAUNTING VIOLIN TUNE STARTS TO PLAY

JOHNNIE

In front of the bottled designer beer-swigging crowd,
a white haired, bearded chap with a violin, performed a haunting
tune, to a thankless audience.

The man wore only denim cut off shorts, was pigeon chested,
his green scarf tied artfully around his aging withered neck
resembled a bird's identity tag. The man danced in a lonely
unchoreographed style, flowing with the melody. Totally, oblivious
to the twat race around him.

I only caught sight of this dancing soothsayer for a fleeting instant. I
don't know why, but it stuck in my mind.

WHITE LIGHT SOFTLY ILLUMINATES THE STAGE
SPACE.

THE SOUND OF A DOOR BEING UNLOCKED AND OPENED.

JOHNNIE

The flat had this heavy atmosphere, the feel of somebody being
present, somebody who should not be there. You know that feeling
you have when you walk in through the front door and
immediately you know somebody is in; well, it was like that but
distorted. I did not shout or make a noise as I customarily did,
something told me to remain numb.

Breaking the Class Ceiling: Addressing Socio-Economic Barriers and Advancing Inclusive Practices for Working-Class Artists in the UK Arts Industry

John Maguire 2025

KEYS ARE PLACED ON A SIDE TABLE.

JOHNNIE

She was probably asleep, taking a snooze.

LIGHT BECOMES A LITTLE BRIGHTER.

FOOTSTEPS WALKING UP A STAIRCASE.

JOHNNIE

Work had been demanding on her the last few weeks, it must have been because she had drifted off nightly, well before ten/eleven.

Her life, if you can call it one, had sled into the wheel of work mode.

(OFF STAGE A TAPE PLAYS THE FOLLOWING)

TEACHER -

WELL

SPOKEN

WORK=EAT DINNER=SLEEP, listen and repeat.

WORK=EAT DINNER=SLEEP, listen and repeat.

WORK=EAT DINNER=SLEEP, listen and repeat.

JOHNNIE

I found this shift in energy strange, because she had not changed jobs or been promoted, nothing had occurred that could constitute such a boomerang in her lifestyle.

HE LOOKS OFF STAGE.

JOHNNIE

Outside the bedroom door, I heard restless noises,

AMBIGUOUS MOANING IS HEARD, FEMALE WITH A HINT OF MALE.

Probably one of her anxiety dreams.

I opened the door.

Breaking the Class Ceiling: Addressing Socio-Economic Barriers and Advancing Inclusive Practices for Working-Class Artists in the UK Arts Industry

John Maguire 2025

MIMES OPENING THE DOOR.

THE DOOR CREAKS AS IT OPENS SLOWLY SEXY BACKGROUND

MUSIC PLAYS.

JOHNNIE

I had opened it before to find her kitted out in sexy schoolgirl garb waiting for her lesson or punishment, depending on the mood. But now I got to see exactly how anxious her dream had made her.

SHOCKED SIGHS

JOHNNIE

Two pounding buttock cheeks grinded in between her open self. It seemed alien to see a different fleshy piece, fitting perfectly into the jigsaw of her body. A 500-piece puzzle entitled, 'An act of adulterous love.' Her eyes caught mine and she yelled for her god.

JAYNE

(SCREAMS)

JESUS, OH Jesus Christ

JOHNNIE

He presumed her exasperated pleas to the great beyond where in praise of his energised effort and this propelled him to step up a gear.

JAYNE

GOD, NO, YOU DON'T, JESU...

Breaking the Class Ceiling: Addressing Socio-Economic Barriers and Advancing Inclusive Practices for Working-Class Artists in the UK Arts Industry

John Maguire 2025

JOHNNIE

Her continuing cries? Inspired him further and as her body flickered with passion, she could not stop the pleasure that was quivering through her naked self.

The pace slowed and fatigue crept through his body, that strange post shag feeling of ultimate tiredness, only then did he feel the presence of somebody, a voyeur, no! She was not that type, she'd do a lot of things he never believed a Next clad girl would do but that had to be a no, no.

He turned around sweat dripping from his matt black hair that was greying when you got up close, dripping from the centre of his middle part. Then, his face, the trespasser of the boudoir came into the camera's focus.

'Peter.'

Would this poor excuse for a man stop at nothing to undermine my existence? Even trying to give my girlfriend, the woman that shared my life, a better orgasm than me.

In childhood, normal people say, *'Oh I'm going to be a lawyer, a psychiatrist, an actor, a singer'*, and so forth. Not Peter. He must have written, *'When I grow up, I...am going to undermine every action of my best friend James', getting ...a better career, a better car, a better designed flat, and a better bonk for his girlfriend... Miss have I spelt bonk right...B.o. n.k?'*

'I am sorry, I didn't know I was going to be early.'

That was the poor excuse for rage, I adopted. He was staining my bed sheets, and I was apologising to him.

Breaking the Class Ceiling: Addressing Socio-Economic Barriers and Advancing Inclusive Practices for Working-Class Artists in the UK Arts Industry

John Maguire 2025

He pounced up slipping out of her with strained ease as she covered her head with the duvet. A foolish gesture of prudeness that seemed pointless, considering, I had seen her body in all its naked glory only nine hours previously.

PETER ENTERS THE SPACE IN A THONG.

PETER

Johnnie, I can explain, I err how can I put it...Oh shit!
This is not what I ...erm, not what, I.

JOHNNIE

Standing semi-ready, he seemed almost comical.

FROM UNDER THE BED QUILT, JOHNNIE PULLS
OUT A FOOL'S HAT AND PLACES IT ON HIM,
WALKS AROUND PETER TWANGS THE THONG
AND POINTS AT HIS BEER GUT.

JOHNNIE

At one time he'd proudly show off a six-pack but now it had been eaten away by too many of the four packs.

HE TURNS PETER AROUND AND PARADES HIM UP
STAGE. PETER LEAVES THE STAGE QUICKLY
EMBARRASSED.

JOHNNIE

Pure farce.

THE LIGHTING STARTS TO FLICKER LIKE ON THE
TUBE TRAIN EARLIER.

Breaking the Class Ceiling: Addressing Socio-Economic Barriers and Advancing Inclusive Practices for Working-Class Artists in the UK Arts Industry

John Maguire 2025

JOHNNIE

The nausea that I had felt on the tube returned but this time it was amplified. The blood inside me seemed to boil.

SOUND OF BOLING LIQUID STARTING TO INTENSIFY.

JOHNNIE

The veins on my body physically stood out.

I looked like a wire structure.

A stringed puppet in a medieval carnival, the archetype of the cuckolded man only I was not old and bald.

Peter was receding slightly though, shame that.

My stomach started to chunder,

I felt it ooze a floating sickness up to the throat, propelling me to balk. I had to find a basin, a porcelain toilet or a bucket.

Perhaps his designer Diesel work boots?

I was going to vomit, it was a certainty.

JOHNNIE STAGGERS UP STAGE LEFT, PETER
MANOEUVRES THE BED SIDE ON, POINTING DOWN
STAGE. JOHNNIE STAGGERS RAPIDLY TOWARDS
THE BED, HE FALLS AND DRAGS HIMSELF UP THE
SIDE OF THE BED. HE CLIMBS UP STANDSON THE
BED, SHIVERING.

JOHNNIE

I don't know how exactly, I got to bathroom, it's a blur. I
distinctively remember kneeling on the blue carpet, preparing.
The heaving and illness passed through my nose.

Breaking the Class Ceiling: Addressing Socio-Economic Barriers and Advancing Inclusive Practices for Working-Class Artists in the UK Arts Industry

John Maguire 2025

THE ACTOR MUST REACT TO THE TEXT SPOKEN
AND FIND SOME PHYSICALITY THAT BEST
REFLECTS THE DESCRIPTION.

JOHNNIE

I felt a heavy weight running up through my chest.
Elongating, itself upwards.
It was visible in my neck, a lumpy object.
The immense pain that it left in its trail was unbearable.

JOHNNIE SINKS TO HIS KNEES AS IF HE IS ABOUT
TO VOMIT INTO A TOILET CISTERN.

JOHNNIE

I could see the shape in the bottoms of my eye, an ambiguous
object protruding in different angles as it gathered up through my
throat,
SOUND OF SOMEBODY THROWING UP.

JOHNNIE

until in one final mighty cough and shrill of pain, it came up.
It could not be what it looked like.
...could it?
But its rhythmic beating proved it must be.
(PAUSE)
Floating on the surface of the toilet cistern was my HEART.
JOHNNIE SLOWLY RISES UP IN SHOCK.
I put my hand on the part where it should be, there was nothing.
I checked my brachial, radial and carotid pulse, nil.

Breaking the Class Ceiling: Addressing Socio-Economic Barriers and Advancing Inclusive Practices for Working-Class Artists in the UK Arts Industry

John Maguire 2025

Was I dead, deceased? RIP

HE IS ABSOLUTELY STILL AND HE STARES
CONFUSED AT THE FLOOR. JAYNE ENTERS THE
SPACE IN RED LACE BRA AND PANTIES; SHE
MIMES FLUSHING THE CHAIN. SHE STRUGGLES.

JOHNNIE

I stared at it bobbing there for what seemed an entirety.

Then it vanished in the flush of the cistern system.

SOUND EFFECT OF A TOILET FLUSH.

JOHNNIE

SHE had flushed the toilet.

Obviously, she had not seen the foreign object amongst the vomit and presumed that my performance was down to the expose of the sleaze show that I had unwittingly witnessed.

JOHNNIE TURNS AROUND AND LOOKS AT HER
WITH SHEER DISGUST. SHE STANDS HAND ON HIP.
JOHNNIE JUMPS DOWN FROM THE BED AND THE
TWO STAND HEAD-TO-HEAD. JAYNE IS UNSURE.

JAYNE

Johnnie, I am sorry.....are you alright, we will have to talk, okay.

JOHNNIE

What now?

Breaking the Class Ceiling: Addressing Socio-Economic Barriers and Advancing Inclusive Practices for Working-Class Artists in the UK Arts Industry

John Maguire 2025

JAYNE

Whenever you are ready, I am so sorry, I did not mean it to turn out,

I am so, so sorry.

SHE PAUSES. HER FACE REGISTERS SHEER CONCERN.

JOHNNIE

Whatever angle she tried to take the fact that she was beyond forgiveness, hit her in the face. She handed me a glass of water and with that simple gesture the remembrance of every kind deed she had ever done, may as well have been flushed out with the sewage.

JAYNE MIMES THE TEXT JOHNNIE SPEAKS.

What had I done wrong? We socialised, we laughed, I took her out, bought her flowers, all the things I thought you were supposed to do,

(PAUSE), why? (PAUSE)

I loved her.

JAYNE SMILES WITH SINCERITY THEN EXAGGERATES IT TO THE POINT OF RIDICULE, AND THEN BECOMES ABSOLUTELY DEVASTATED AS SHE REALIZES THE EXTENT OF HIS LOVE AND NOBODY WILL EVER LOVE HER LIKE THAT.

JOHNNIE BREAKS OUT OF HIS SOMBRE MOMENT AND AS HE SPEAKS THE NEXT LINES, HE WALKS WITH PURPOSE TO THE BED AND PULLS OUT A TELEPHONE. HE DRAGS IT DOWNSTAGE AND THE

Breaking the Class Ceiling: Addressing Socio-Economic Barriers and Advancing Inclusive Practices for Working-Class Artists in the UK Arts Industry

John Maguire 2025

TWO SHOULD BE PARALLEL FACING THE
AUDIENCE.

JOHNNIE

What could I do ring the local Council authority? It was not a case of dropping a wedding ring down the drain, Or little Jimmy flushing his swatch watch down the toilet to see if it really had the water resistance feature. It was not that easy.

RINGING TELEPHONE.

SHE PICKS UP THE OTHER END.

Excuse me, I wonder if you could help me, I seem to have lost something down the lavatory and I wondered if there is any chance it may be retrieved?

Yes, I see, well no, it's more important than that. Yes, mam I know you cannot help it if people carelessly lose sentimental objects. Absolutely, I can see your position. But the thing is it happens to be more important than that, its err, this sounds strange, I am as be miffed as you will be, it is erm my heart! Hello Madame, miss, are you still there?

HE THROWS THE TELEPHONE OFF STAGE AND
TURNS TO JAYNE WHO NOW MIRRORS HER EXACT
STAGE POSITION BEFORE WHEN SHE FLUSHED
THE CHAIN.

JOHNNIE

Look, Jayne, I have got to see a doctor.

JAYNE

Surely, we can talk first, please.

Breaking the Class Ceiling: Addressing Socio-Economic Barriers and Advancing Inclusive Practices for Working-Class Artists in the UK Arts Industry

John Maguire 2025

JOHNNIE

No, you don't understand it is serious.

JAYNE

Christ, I know it is serious, I am not angry at you, I am mad at myself, I always manage to screw things up.

JOHNNIE

But... Peter.

JAYNE

There's a side to him that you cannot possibly imagine.

JOHNNIE

I have known that obnoxious, sad, copying bastard all my life. I seem to be plagued with having him follow me around.

JAYNE

You were the one that wanted to move here in the first place.

JOHNNIE

Passing the guilt on to me, I take it then that this THING has been going on for some time obviously. What we have lived here for a year; so, every time that I venture out, popping around the shop for a Sunday paper allowing you a quick fumble fuck, yes?

JAYNE

It has not been that calculated, you know me better than that.'

JOHNNIE

Correction I thought I did, I thought you loved me.

JAYNE

I do, this, this thing with Peter well it happened, unplanned.

Breaking the Class Ceiling: Addressing Socio-Economic Barriers and Advancing Inclusive Practices for Working-Class Artists in the UK Arts Industry

John Maguire 2025

JOHNNIE

Oh, I see, silly me, of course it just happened, unplanned, he walked in one afternoon, nice day, yes, cup of coffee, two sugars, or perhaps a shag? Peter thinking, now that will really piss on HIS chips.

JAYNE

Come on, don't get mad.

JOHNNIE

Assess what I have just witnessed and then darling ask me not to get mad.

THE ACTION FREEZES AND JOHNNIE BREAKS OUT
AND WALKS UP TO THE AUDIENCE AND ADDRESSES
THEM DIRECTLY.

It suddenly occurred to me that I was breathing, talking and getting stressed. I had to go and see a Doctor; I could possibly drop at any given moment. What if this was an aftershock, the last droplets of energy left before they put me down below.

JOHNNIE WALKS BACK TO THE ACTION.

JOHNNIE

Look I haven't got time for this shit now, I have to catch evening surgery, go back in he's probably ready to go again if you are in luck, I figure me making a surprise appearance will turn him on even more.

SHE TRIES TO HUG HIM AND HE PUSHES HER OFF,
SHE WILTS TOWARDS THE BED , LIES ON IT, STRIKES

Breaking the Class Ceiling: Addressing Socio-Economic Barriers and Advancing Inclusive Practices for Working-Class Artists in the UK Arts Industry

John Maguire 2025

A SEXUAL POSE BRIEFLY AND ROLLS OFF THE OTHER SIDE, SHE PULLS OUT AN OLD-FASHIONED NURSES UNIFORM FROM THE BED AND PUTS IT ON. SHE TURNS THE BED ONTO THE DIAGONAL AND PULLS OUT A SIGN; A SCRAWL OF A LABEL THAT STATES RECEPTION, THE R LOOKS A LITTLE LIKE A D. JOHNNIE WALKS OVER TO THE RECEPTION AREA.

RECEPTIONIST

You cannot see the doctor he has finished for the day, and I can only give you an appointment, one if it is urgent and two, I cannot fit you in before the second Thursday after next.

JOHNNIE

But I am dying, I must see him now.

RECEPTIONIST

I am sorry, there is nothing I can do, and they all claim to be dying.

JOHNNIE

I am really, you don't understand.

RECEPTIONIST

If I let everyone who told that white lie through the door the Doctor would never get home. Now if you don't mind, I have to lock up, I cannot miss, 'Hospital 911' tonight. There is a taxi rank around the corner, go and take a cab to accident and emergency if it is that urgent, now can you leave, thank you.

THE RECEPTIONIST FREEZES PULLING A FACE THAT SHOWS COMPLETE DISCONCERN.

Breaking the Class Ceiling: Addressing Socio-Economic Barriers and Advancing Inclusive Practices for Working-Class Artists in the UK Arts Industry

John Maguire 2025

JOHNNIE

I could not believe that this hag had the audacity to rush home to watch a docu-soap about the day-to-day running of a hospital, where nurses worked on a pittance to save lives and she could not be bothered to make one simple phone call or enquiry to the room next to hers.

Clearly Florence Nightingale had been a one off.

SHE STARTS TO LEAVE THE SPACE AND PETER ENTERS.

HE SLAPS HER BEHIND AS THEY PASS AND SHE RUNS BACK AND SLAPS HIS.

HE MOVES THE BED AROUND THE SPACE AS JOHNNIE WANDERS.

SOUND OF A BUSY CITYSCAPE.

JOHNNIE

I found myself wandering without purpose and drifting past shop windows looking in at mannequins and my reflection reminded me that I could well be a ghost. I would be meandering around floating without knowing. I had become attached to the flat so when she saw me, it could have been in spirit form.

Next thing I can remember I was in a newsagent.

The shopkeeper looked at me with unsurety, I walked like a drunkard and by the registration of despair on my face I guess I looked a bit smacked up. I flicked through the magazines and could

Breaking the Class Ceiling: Addressing Socio-Economic Barriers and Advancing Inclusive Practices for Working-Class Artists in the UK Arts Industry

John Maguire 2025

see him analysing the CCTV, studying my movement, never daring to take his eyes away from this strange piece of human nature. I can still remember buying the fishing net, torch and the packet of Rollo's. I prayed that when I got to the counter, I had sufficient loose change in my trouser pockets. I had left my wallet on the side, but I must have automatically picked it up on the way out, it was part of my usual practice, you see.

We cling to the backbone of routine.

I had no idea what I was going to do with the net, but after the sympathetic smile from the shopkeeper, a smile that said he was equally as happy for me to be on my way, I ventured to the rose gardens in the nearby park.

THE STAGE IS COMPLETELY BLACK IN DARKNESS.

THE SOUNDSCAPE IS THAT OF A PARK AT NIGHT.

THE BED IS PUSHED TO THE FRONT OF THE STAGE SPACE.

JOHNNIE

This is where, as a child we, the bastard and I had played army, parading along the edge of the sewer.

JOHNNIE STANDS ON THE BED AND WALKS ALONG THE EDGE, HE TAKES OUT A TORCH, SWITCHES IT ON, AND A NET FROM THE BED. HE JUMPS DOWN AND CLIMBS UNDER THE BED. JAYNE AND PETER STAND BEHIND THE BED RESEMBLING A TUNNEL THE TWO MANOEUVRE AROUND THE SPACE ACCORDING TO JOHNNIES' DESCRIPTIONS.

Breaking the Class Ceiling: Addressing Socio-Economic Barriers and Advancing Inclusive Practices for Working-Class Artists in the UK Arts Industry

John Maguire 2025

JOHNNIE

I plummeted along the dirt track, equipped with net. Entering the darkened tunnel, the last remnants of light from the streetlamp above on the path that crossed over the sewer, gave me a distorted shadow.

A SHADOW DISTORTED IS PROJECTED ON TO THE
BACKDROP.

SOUND OF DRIPPING WATER.

JOHNNIE

Sometimes your shadow doesn't even look anything like you. The reality as I followed a legion of rats into the darkness, was far from exciting.

I was amongst peoples shit.

JAYNE AND PETER BREAK AWAY AND MOVE THE
BED BACK, FORCING PETER TO MOVE AS HE
CONTINUES TO SHINE THE TORCH AROUND THE
SPACE UNTIL HE IS SQUEEZED UP AGAINST THE
BACK OF THE STAGE

JOHNNIE

Where exactly did I think I would find my heart in this labyrinth of cascading dark tunnels?

After an unlimited amount of surging through shallow mud pools I decided my search was pointless.

JOHNNIE DROPS TO THE FLOOR AND CLIMBS
UNDER THE BED.

Breaking the Class Ceiling: Addressing Socio-Economic Barriers and Advancing Inclusive Practices for Working-Class Artists in the UK Arts Industry

John Maguire 2025

JAYNE PUTS ON A DIRTY OVERCOAT AND PETER
SINKS TO THE FLOOR BECOMING A DOG.

JOHNNIE

I mean it would be a huge irony that after losing my main organ I died in between a bunch of sewage pipes looking for the light to guide me back into metropolis.

Emerging from the tunnel minus the net that had been purchased to no avail. A scouring hound greeted me as I scurried up the mound.

PETER BECOMES THE DOG. HE ENACTS THE TEXT
SPOKEN.

A scraggy mutt, riddled with fleas and constantly itching with its mouth at the faded leather belt around his neck.

His owner an aging woman with a scowl that indicated that she had nothing to fear from muggers because she would easily fend them off, with one look.

Was I in hell?

No, only Belle Vale.

CARRIE

Did you fall in or where you pushed?

JOHNNIE

(OUT OF BREATH) Oh, I couldn't possibly begin to explain.

CARRIE

You don't look like a regular drunk, an office boy? What did you lose your job, is it because of the credit crunch?

Breaking the Class Ceiling: Addressing Socio-Economic Barriers and Advancing Inclusive Practices for Working-Class Artists in the UK Arts Industry

John Maguire 2025

JOHNNIE

No, it's personal and nobody could believe it anyway.

CARRIE

I am not being nosy, you just look a bit in a bad way, it doesn't matter you carry on mister, some people don't even like you to enquire about their health, honestly, come on Sheba.

PETER THE DOG BOUNDS OFF AND CARRIE STARTS TO LEAVE THE SPACE.

JOHNNIE

Hang on a minute, I am sorry, I've just had one hell of a day.

PETER THE DOG RETURNS AND IS RELUCTANT TO LEAVE.

CARRIE

Sheba, come on, Sheba.

CARRIE WALKS BACK AND PHYSICALLY PULLS SHEBA AWAY.

We all have bad days, lad. It is one of the conditions of being human. You have to deal with it.

JOHNNIE

I found my girlfriend in bed with my supposed best friend.

CARRIE STARES AT HIM.

CARRIE

Have you any children?

JOHNNIE

No, I have only been with her for two years.

Breaking the Class Ceiling: Addressing Socio-Economic Barriers and Advancing Inclusive Practices for Working-Class Artists in the UK Arts Industry

John Maguire 2025

CARRIE

And you're still alive, aren't you?

JOHNNIE

Yes, but I've lost everything, my flat and (PAUSE) I loved her.

CARRIE

Oh, You will fall in love again.

JOHNNIE

I am not so certain about that.

CARRIE LAUGHS AND SHAKES HER HEAD.

CARRIE

Look son I appreciate that you have lost a lover, but come on get a GRIP... I lost my husband during the war, I was only twenty-four. I could have got on with my life but there was one snag, I had five children. Nobody wanted to take on a wife who had one child to someone else, never mind five.

Put on the shelf was the term then. Now I don't mean to harp on, but you lot don't know you're born. Stress, counselling, full of shit the lot. What did we do when loved ones trotted overseas to be gassed in muddy hellholes, or when the food supplies were in short supply you were envious of everything your neighbours or anybody else was fortunate to have. I'll tell you what we did, we got on with it. So, listen stop moping around, you could be run over by a bus tomorrow, right? I'll get off me soapbox now, he'll be wanting his tea.

JOHNNIE

HE, so you did marry again, eventually?

Breaking the Class Ceiling: Addressing Socio-Economic Barriers and Advancing Inclusive Practices for Working-Class Artists in the UK Arts Industry

John Maguire 2025

CARRIE

No, the he, I refer to is that daft bugger licking your face, the other dogs are too old to walk now, they're wilting away slowly.

JOHNNIE

You live alone.

CARRIE

Yes.

JOHNNIE

What about your children?

CARRIE

A card at Christmas and photographs of the grandchildren, but I hardly see them. Still, they have their lives and don't need a milestone around their necks. That's the way it is, the next step is they'll want to put me in a home, you know to sit in front of television screens dribbling.

JOHNNIE

Would you not live with one of your kids?

CARRIE

I'd rather live with a hoard of animals than one single human being. You know where you are with an animal.

JOHNNIE

That a bit harsh, I admit there are some Knob heads, mind.

Breaking the Class Ceiling: Addressing Socio-Economic Barriers and Advancing Inclusive Practices for Working-Class Artists in the UK Arts Industry

John Maguire 2025

CARRIE

Yes and if you don't stop wandering around in here, you will encounter more than a few...but what I always think is people, famous stars, the proper ones not the plastic five minute morons, the Doris Day's and Brigitte Bardot's must have seen a quantity of human personalities in their time, the first-rate and the ghastly, yet how and with whom do they choose to spend their days. In seclusion with animals.

JOHNNIE

True, but...

CARRIE

Animals have that loyalty trait that we lack, you should understand especially after the day you have had.

JOHNNIE

I guess you are spot on.

CARRIE

Take care of yourself lad and remember what I have said, deal with it, it's not like you have lost a limb.

CARRIE WANDERS OFF STAGE AND PETER THE
DOG FOLLOWS.

JOHNNIE

Well actually that is...oh it doesn't matter, thanks.

Breaking the Class Ceiling: Addressing Socio-Economic Barriers and Advancing Inclusive Practices for Working-Class Artists in the UK Arts Industry

John Maguire 2025

JOHNNIE STANDS VICTORIOUSLY.

JOHNNIE

In my coat pocket I realised I had our Joint Credit Card and Savings account card. I cannot remember consciously formulating a plan, but I found myself staring at the electronically lit screen at the bank. Withdrawing as much as I could off both cards.

JOHNNIE SITS ON THE BED HOLDING ON TO THE FRONT RAILS AND JAYNE AND PETER ENTER THE SPACE PUSHING THE BED FORWARDS TO THE AUDIENCE.

JOHNNIE

Next thing I know I was on a train to Liverpool back to my place of birth, my family had all moved to Australia, but I needed to return to my roots.

JAYNE AND PETER LIFT, THE BED AND PROPEL JOHNNIE OFF TO THE GROUND. PETER DONS A BELL BOY HAT AND WALKS OVER TO JOHNNIE LOOKING AT HIM LIKE A PIECE OF RUBBISH

JOHNNIE

I stumbled and I fell into the Hope Street Hotel and there I was greeted with a sycophantic receptionist, who looked at me discouragingly...

JOHNNIE TAKES OUT A WAD OF MONEY.

JOHNNIE

until the colour of cash turned his face to gold.

Breaking the Class Ceiling: Addressing Socio-Economic Barriers and Advancing Inclusive Practices for Working-Class Artists in the UK Arts Industry

John Maguire 2025

BELLBOY

Excuse me Sir I think you may be in the wrong place... oh... I... am... sorry you would like a suite I take it, please follow me to the reception area we shall see what is available.

HE PUSHES THE BED AROUND LIKE A HOTEL GLASS ENTRANCE. PETER MIMES SHOWING JOHNNIE INTO HIS ROOM AND HE WALKS INTO THE SPACE.

JOHNNIE

I had a bath and a cup of tea, but I still felt like shit. In the north people always recommend tea as a kind of therapy.

JOHNNIE CLIMBS INTO THE BED

OFF STAGE VOICES, VOICE ONE - MAM, AM PREGNANT. VOICE TWO - DON'T WORRY LOVE I'LL PUT THE KETTLE ON.

JOHNNIE

And then I slept. It seemed like I had slept forever. Sleep is a restorative.

On waking up I felt this sudden surge of life and I examined my body but still no beat.

HE SITS UP IN BED.

I took a full English breakfast in my room, fiendishly devouring the bacon and sausage oozing in fat. Well at this moment I had no need to worry about heart disease.

HE JUMPS OUT OF THE BED.

Breaking the Class Ceiling: Addressing Socio-Economic Barriers and Advancing Inclusive Practices for Working-Class Artists in the UK Arts Industry

John Maguire 2025

I needed a change of clothing.

JAYNE AND PETER ENTER THE SPACE AND GIVE
JOHNNIE THREE CARRIER BAGS OF CLOTHING
RHYTHMICALLY TOGETHER, THREE BAGS EACH.

JOHNNIE

I shopped, purchasing a fantastic new wardrobe crammed with all the stuff I had thought about wearing but never had time to put it into practice. The stuff I wanted to buy but things like Council tax had made me think Hey I'll buy it next week. I had my hair cropped to a style that made me look younger.

JAYNE COLLECTS THE BAGS OFF JOHNNIE.
PETER LINES UP TWO CRATES UPSTAGE RIGHT
LIKE A CHAIR.
HE TAKES OUT A TRILBY AND PUTS IT ON AT A
JAUNTY ANGLE AND BECOMES A HAIRDRESSER.

HAIRDRESSER

Cheer up mate it will never happen.

HE ASKS LOTS OF BANAL QUESTIONS, ABOUT THE
EVERYDAY, THESE CAN BE SOLELY IMPROVISED,
DEPENDING ON THE TOPICAL SCANDAL OF THE
DAY.
JOHNNIE GIVES NO RESPONSE, NO REACTION
WHATSOEVER.

JOHNNIE

I found my supposed best friend taking a slice of my girl in every kind of erotic positioning. This thing has been going on for weeks. I

Breaking the Class Ceiling: Addressing Socio-Economic Barriers and Advancing Inclusive Practices for Working-Class Artists in the UK Arts Industry

John Maguire 2025

always figured I had been sexually satisfying but I guess I must not be up to scratch in them stakes, what do you think?

THE HAIRDRESSER IS STUNNED.

OKAY! what do you think about this...(ADD A CURRENT TOPICAL REPLY) then?

JOHNNIE

When I didn't reply to his attempts at shifting the subject, he gave up any attempts at chit chat.

JOHNNIE LEAVES THE HAIRDRESSING SALON.

JOHNNIE

The next day I searched Liverpool for a new job. A new career in a new town. Soon I figured if I had no way of making a living, I would be bedding down under a railway tunnel. I had just given up all hope of any kind of task that did not involve selling my rear to aging businessmen. I needed a drink.

I sat in The Roscoe Head, scanning the echo again. A yellowing piece of A.4 tacked onto a notice board caught my eye.

A vacancy for a job as a barman with the opportunity to live in with a modest room if required. I approached the bar and quizzed the barman about the vacancy. He was from the same background as me and understood. After five minutes of conversation, the young bloke said I had the job if I wanted it,

Breaking the Class Ceiling: Addressing Socio-Economic Barriers and Advancing Inclusive Practices for Working-Class Artists in the UK Arts Industry

John Maguire 2025

JOHNNIE LIES ON THE FLOOR, JAYNE AND PETER ENTER THE SPACE AND TAKE OFF TWO WHITE SHEETS FROM THE BED.

That night I slept like I had never slept, I dreamt...

THE FOLLOWING IS RE-ENACTED AS A DREAM SEQUENCE AT FIRST JAYNE AND PETER COVER THEMSELVES WITH THE WHITE SHEETS AND LEAD JOHNNIE UP AND AROUND. HALFWAY THROUGH THIS SEQUENCE THEY THROW THE SHEETS ON THE FLOOR TO REVEAL THAT THEY ARE BOTH WEARING PAPER MASKS, PHOTOCOPIES OF JOHNNIES FACE.

I entered the room.

Peter gave me a key.

But it didn't fit the lock.

There was a punk concert going on,

Imitation sex pistols.

All wearing the diesel jacket I had bought.

In the corner of the room there was me,

Me as I had been until the recent upheavals.

I looked like an old man.

One of the singers approached me.

But that was me too.

Me as I am now.

I looked angry.

Breaking the Class Ceiling: Addressing Socio-Economic Barriers and Advancing Inclusive Practices for Working-Class Artists in the UK Arts Industry

John Maguire 2025

A girl, trying to be Courtney Love but failing miserably, this drugged up drunk role did not fit her. She had expensive lingerie on hidden under her punk get up.

It was her, she approached seductively and tried to kiss me.

I was repulsed.

I vomited.

The punk approached the old me. He forced a flat cap on his head.

The punk strangled him and began to peel open the brown corduroy jacket .

The white shirt buttons popped.

The shouts were unheard of in the din of the gig.

The stomach flesh had a zipper going up it.

The punk unzipped the fake chest to reveal the innards.

No heart there, nothing.

JAYNE AND PETER LEAVE THE SPACE THROWING
THE WHITE SHEETS OVER JOHNNIE WHO LIES ON
THE FLOOR.

THEY FLEE OFF STAGE.

SOUND OF A THUD ON A DOOR AND A BOOMING VOICE HALF
JOKINGLY SHOUTS.

VOICE OFF

Alright lad, hands off cocks on socks, Would you like a bacon butty mate?

JOHNNIE STAND PUTS THE SHEETS BACK ON THE
BED WALKS TO THE MIDDLE OF THE STAGE AND
TAKES HIS SHIRT OFF.

Breaking the Class Ceiling: Addressing Socio-Economic Barriers and Advancing Inclusive Practices for Working-Class Artists in the UK Arts Industry

John Maguire 2025

JOHNNIE

I stripped and examined myself, the daily routine check I had become accustomed to, the lack of a beat to my system was still predominant.

HE PUTS ON A T-SHIRT, AND AS THE NEXT FEW LINES ARE SPOKEN, HE TURNS THE BED ON ITS SIDE AND CREATES A BAR, HE USES THE CRATES EITHER SIDE OF THE STAGE SPACE TO EMULATE THE FACT HE IS WORKING AS A BARMAN.

And here I spent the next few months, grafting as a barman. The landlord Dave was a great bloke. He seemed to be drowning in debt and had to pay alimony and child support to the two wives out of his four who had had the brains to take him to court. He had fathered many children and although on paper he had all the characteristics of a love rat in the flesh he was one of the most sensitive and sincere men, I knew. I never told him the organ deal, for fear he may try and get me packaged off to Ashbourne Asylum. But I did tell him what had happened in the expose. It had been a drunken afterhours session, one of many. The confession was aided by the crooning tunes of Frank Sinatra, Dave's idol. *He's fucking boss, Frank.* I had spoken of losing my heart, but it came across in a poetic sense rather than literal. Dave believed that I was better off, starting over and admired my courage to just walk away, with nothing. No further contact.

I would have contacted my relations, only I didn't have any. I figured she and that bastard would have come to the conclusion

Breaking the Class Ceiling: Addressing Socio-Economic Barriers and Advancing Inclusive Practices for Working-Class Artists in the UK Arts Industry

John Maguire 2025

that I had topped myself. Threw myself in the Thames, instead I was here back by the Mersey.

It was not a breakup; it was a breakthrough.

JOHNNIE WORKS WITH THE CRATES AT THE SIDE
OF THE STAGE, IMPROVISING AS HE TALKS ABOUT
THE ROLE OF A BARMAN.

They would then live happily ever after...but they wouldn't because the guilt beast would start to breathe.

The only thing in their minute minds would be their treatment of me, and how I never really deserved it, that would make them bitter. Bitter towards each other and where lust once lay, contempt would take its place.

The bar work was physically demanding, the loading of the barrels, stocking up in the morning and the weekend rush. But the pride and enjoyment I had was immense.

The role of the barman,
priest,
father,
friend,
psychiatrist, everything.

That is how I felt to the many working punters that ventured through the doors, hearing their confessions and confusions as I ritually polished and buffed up the bitter pump, I had the best shine in all of Liverpool.

The regulars who came in at the same time, same day. The just one more pint brigade, who would take another drink knowing that it would only cause them earache later when they returned home

Breaking the Class Ceiling: Addressing Socio-Economic Barriers and Advancing Inclusive Practices for Working-Class Artists in the UK Arts Industry

John Maguire 2025

but still had to have one for the road. I seemed to be the philosopher, and it always happened after three pints or shorts absolute strangers would pour open their hearts asking me for advice. I did the best I could but as the people's faces blurred into one it struck me how much emotional pain people are under. I was not alone. I wondered if they too had lost their hearts and were too embarrassed to talk about the predicament.

Did Tony Bennet really leave his heart in San Francisco or was that just poetic license?

Each night as I put the stools on the tables the quietness of this noisy smoke-filled atmosphere was somewhat eerie. I could not get over the contrast, it did not seem right to be so quiet and the solitary blurring of the TV or even the jukebox playing seemed out of place. I would fix a slippery nipple, Baileys and Sambuca and switch all the neon wall lights off, leaving the room, the place in darkness. And then I would climb to my much-needed bed, the sound of silence, the lack of my heartbeat.

How different this was to vocation before, my office nine to five hellhole. A job where seven people crammed into a minute office, with the tip tap, tip tap, tip tap, tip tap, tip tap...of computers and ringing phones that never stop, allotted breaks timed and checked in, one minute over it is docked out of your pay packet.

I had started to read, something I never had the opportunity to do in my last job. I leafed through pages of papers on the tube, but I could never concentrate on the proper stuff. Now I read vivaciously and had become besotted by an American playwright called Sam Shepard. The Everyman and the Playhouse became my education. I

Breaking the Class Ceiling: Addressing Socio-Economic Barriers and Advancing Inclusive Practices for Working-Class Artists in the UK Arts Industry

John Maguire 2025

viewed Albee, Tennessee Williams, Jonathon Harvey, Chekhov, Moliere and inevitably Shakespeare.

I became an addict, I consumed all art, all literature, and I could not get enough. It amused me to think about if the whole explosive situation had not happened, I probably would have waited for retirement. Only to receive a crummy opal Carriage clock as a leavers present. Why people give these gifts to retired workers I don't know. I can only presume that it is to watch the rest of one's days slowly tick, tick, tick away.

My life went on but not the same. At every juncture, I felt the necessity to want to share my new life, my new discoveries with someone. It was like I was making all these breakthroughs but had nobody to talk to about them at the end of the night.

I had been celibate for months and I had started to wonder if because of my

(PAUSE) predicament would I be able to perform up to standards.

There had been barmaids and punters who had given me the come on and although I had flirted carelessly, I had no inclination to share the sheets with these ladies. I had felt an inkling to have somebody to share my life with again but at the same time I relished my fresh independence. I had an element of mystique, and I think this is what made the girls I worked with want to know more.

It had to be with a prostitute. A service with no emotional bond. It was in the ECHO that I discovered the tempting delights of Ravishing Trudy. And that afternoon I was buzzing the fading intercom bell of flat 3 in the backwaters of Kensington.

Breaking the Class Ceiling: Addressing Socio-Economic Barriers and Advancing Inclusive Practices for Working-Class Artists in the UK Arts Industry

John Maguire 2025

TRUDY ENTERS THE SPACE CLAD IN A SILK
DRESSING GOWN. SHE WEARS A BLONDE WIG,
WITH DARK HIGHLIGHTS.
HER HAIR IS IMMACULATE. TRUDY LOOKS
JOHNNIE UP AND DOWN, SHE FRISKS HIM.

TRUDY

No, you're alright, you are not a freak but then I should never be too sure, I believe your true colours will show upstairs, lad.

TRUDY AND JOHNNIE LOOK AT EACH OTHER WITH
LUST. THEY LIFT THE BED BACK ON TO ITS SIDE
AND TRUDY CHANGES THE SHEETS ON THE BED
TO A RED VELVET. A SOUNDTRACK OF CLASSICAL
MUSIC PLAYS, PERHAPS WILLIAM ORBITS RE-
WORKING. JOSH STICKS BURN OFF STAGE TO
CREATE A SENSUAL SMELL.

JOHNNIE WALKS DOWN STAGE AND TALKS
DIRECTLY TO THE AUDIENCE AND TRUDY
POSITIONS HERSELF ON THE BED.

A SIGN FLASHES ON THE BACKDROP, *WE ACCEPT
VISA, DEBIT CARDS AND SWITCH.*

JOHNNIE

The only signs that obviously professed that she was a woman of the night was the bedside arrangement. A tub of petroleum jelly, a mammoth sized box of tissues, wet wipes and a tray full of every kind of condom. From Vindaloo to cherry, ribbed and funny coloured nibs. Also, a tiny sign next to the bed made it more than

Breaking the Class Ceiling: Addressing Socio-Economic Barriers and Advancing Inclusive Practices for Working-Class Artists in the UK Arts Industry

John Maguire 2025

clear that to sample the charms you had to pay. She seemed to be a middle-aged love technician.

TRUDY

Hey lad, why do you talk like a story, you don't half go on, has anyone ever told you that? HEY and less of the middle aged, give a girl a complex, you're not exactly Brad Pitt.

JOHNNIE WALKS OVER TO THE BED, UNSURE.

JOHNNIE

Sorry, sorry, I've not done this kind of thing.

TRUDY

that's what they all say, lad. Now come on, I charge by the hour, you know.

TRUDY GRABS JOHNNIE AND RAGS HIM ON TO THE BED THE LIGHTS DIM AS THEY MAKE LOVE. THE BACKDROP IS THE SAME HEART SKETCH USED EARLIER, BUT THE COLOUR IS LIGHT BLUE, A MARBLE EFFECT.

JOHNNIE LEAVES THE BED AFTER A FEW SECONDS AND HE LOOKS COMPLETELY SATISFIED AND HIS CLOTHES ARE DISHREVELLED.

JOHNNIE

What a woman?

TRUDY STARTS TO WALK BEHIND JOHNNIE AND SEDUCTIVELY CARESSES HIM.

Breaking the Class Ceiling: Addressing Socio-Economic Barriers and Advancing Inclusive Practices for Working-Class Artists in the UK Arts Industry

John Maguire 2025

JOHNNIE

Do you do loyalty cards? You know like seven stamps, and you get a go for free, really?

TRUDY PUTS HER HAND IN HIS POCKET AND
JOHNNIE IS CLEARLY EXCITABLE. SHE TAKES OUT
HIS WALLET.

TRUDY

No, you clown. You seem like a good boy but remember, good boys finish last. Bad boy finish in your hair.

TRUDY DARTS OFF STAGE.

JOHNNIE

I could still function as a human being and over the next few weeks a paranoia set in. As I was happy and content, I started to ponder on what life would be like if my momentary happiness ceased. I was thankful to be alive but what if I stopped enjoying it?

PETER ENTERS THE SPACE AND PUTS ON A
DOCTOR'S OUTFIT AND STETHOSCOPE. DURING
THE NEXT FEW LINES, HE EXAMINES JOHNNIE.

JOHNNIE

It occurred to me that I had never visited a Doctor. I think it had something to do with a subconscious knowledge that the doc would have me fitted with tubes and experimented on. Unable to leave the domain of the surgery, constantly scrutinised as a phenomenon. But really to allow a Doctor to make me a case study

Breaking the Class Ceiling: Addressing Socio-Economic Barriers and Advancing Inclusive Practices for Working-Class Artists in the UK Arts Industry

John Maguire 2025

and provide a thesis and a lecture circuit deal, all lucrative on the case of me.

I needed to focus on the now, stop trying to figure it all out. Just be. Enjoy, memento mori and all that. Christ, I sound like a self-help tape.

PETER LEAVES THE STAGE SPACE AND JAYNE
ENTERS DRESSED AS A STUNNING ARTS STUDENT.
SHE HAS A BOHEMIAN LOOK AND WEARS A BERET.

JOHNNIE

And in true ironic fashion, just when I had become settled in my state of independence, she entered my life.

A PHOTOGRAPH BY THE FRENCH PHOTOGRAPHER
BRASSAI PROJECTS ONTO THE BACKDROP.

She was an arts student, and we fell into one another at an exhibition of the French Photographer Brassai. A show of all his works particularly focusing on the Paris by Night, that made his career.

I did not even realise I had started talking as I stood next to her.

JOHNNIE AND THE ARTS GIRL STAND SIDE BY SIDE
AS IF LOOKING AT THE PHOTOGRAPH.

JOHNNIE

When he photographed these Parisian shots in the night air, he left the house every night armed with a packet of cigarettes and his camera. He haunted the brothels, the gambling dens, drinking houses and eateries. Scraping, a meal here and a cup of black velvet coffee there.

Breaking the Class Ceiling: Addressing Socio-Economic Barriers and Advancing Inclusive Practices for Working-Class Artists in the UK Arts Industry

John Maguire 2025

ART

STUDENT

Can you imagine the feeling that he had every time he shot a photo like that? The wonder of not knowing how it would turn out. Praying that it looks alright, can you imagine?

JOHNNIE

And then we talked and talked, first we dined in the quarter. The talk continued on to The Pilgrim and the alma de Cuba. Just the two of us and our passion filled conversation, she knew Sam Shepard, and she loved Anthony and Cleopatra,

ART

STUDENT

you must woo me to the grave.

JOHNNIE

Her music was Blondie, she knew Tennyson and D.H.Lawrence by heart.

And that is how our relationship began.

ART STUDENT TAKES THE SHEETS OFF THE BED
AND CREATES A COUCH OUT OF THE CRATES AND
SHEETS.SHE SITS PRETENDING TO READ A BOOK.

We now live together in an attic flat crammed with papers, books and her paintings, just off Lark Lane, Livingstone Avenue.

JOHNNIE

She works as a guide at the Tate Modern and paints at every given opportunity. Whenever the mood prevails, there are no limitations

Breaking the Class Ceiling: Addressing Socio-Economic Barriers and Advancing Inclusive Practices for Working-Class Artists in the UK Arts Industry

John Maguire 2025

between us. I love waking in the sun starved wet November mornings to find her throwing paint at a canvas and then going for a walk around Sefton Park.

She is the one that has encouraged me to write, and I now spend my time penning down ideas and scrawling on bits of paper, bar bills and receipts in work. My ear seems to be training to pick up turns of phrase and words in other people's conversation. And in this fair city it is somewhat spoilt.

I am ever thankful for her opening me up and diagnosing me, giving me the medication that allows us to live our life in a way I had never deemed possible.

And do you know something?

(PAUSE)

I even have my heart back, it beats every minute of the day. I don't know when exactly it returned but I am assured there is not a chance in the world that I will lose it again.

For that I am certain, not this time.

Breaking the Class Ceiling: Addressing Socio-Economic Barriers and Advancing Inclusive Practices for Working-Class Artists in the UK Arts Industry

John Maguire 2025

2. Bruise

**Breaking the Class Ceiling: Addressing Socio-Economic Barriers and Advancing
Inclusive Practices for Working-Class Artists in the UK Arts Industry**

John Maguire 2025

**Breaking the Class Ceiling: Addressing Socio-Economic Barriers and Advancing
Inclusive Practices for Working-Class Artists in the UK Arts Industry**

John Maguire 2025

A PLAY BY
JOHN MAGUIRE

BRUISE



LOVE LUST DECEPTION REJECTION

7.30PM 21ST - 22ND - 23RD AUGUST 2012

THE KINGS ARMS - SALFORD

BOX OFFICE 08444 771000

KINGSARMSSALFORD.COM

PART OF THE MANCHESTER PRIDE FRINGE FESTIVAL

MANCHESTERPRIDE.COM

Breaking the Class Ceiling: Addressing Socio-Economic Barriers and Advancing Inclusive Practices for Working-Class Artists in the UK Arts Industry

John Maguire 2025

BRUISE

BY JOHN MAGUIRE.

Bruise

To injure the underlying soft tissue or bone of (part of the body) without breaking the skin, as by a blow.

To damage (plant tissue), as by abrasion or pressure: bruised the fruit by careless picking.

To dent or mar.

To pound (berries, for example) into fragments crush.

To hurt, especially psychologically.

First staged at the Lantern Theatre, Liverpool in March 2012 and Pride Fringe Manchester in August 2012.

Two Male characters.

Nathan and Ewan - Both late twenties/early thirties.

(ACT ONE)

THE STAGE IS SET IN A WAREHOUSE FLAT.

THERE IS A KITCHEN SET USR.

A MODERN LEATHER COUCH AND COFFEE TABLE CSR.

A CHAIR AND TABLE DSL WITH PILES OF BOOKS SURROUNDING THE AREA, *MARTIN EDEN*, THE BOOK BY JACK LONDON IS AMONGST THE TITLES AND THERE IS A LOCKED SMALL TRUNK DSR. THERE IS A COAT/HAT STAND BY THE DOOR. THERE IS A KITCHEN STAGE RIGHT.

NATHAN AND EWAN ENTER THE SPACE.

Breaking the Class Ceiling: Addressing Socio-Economic Barriers and Advancing Inclusive Practices for Working-Class Artists in the UK Arts Industry

John Maguire 2025

THE MUSIC OF THE PLAY 'DANCE WITH ME' TITLE TRACK FOR BRUISE, PLAYS IN THE BACKGROUND.

NATHAN AND EWAN DEVISE MOVEMENT LIVE.

IT IS IMPORTANT THAT NATHAN REMAINS BY THE COUCH, HIS TERRITORY AND EWAN BY THE CHAIR AND COFFEE TABLE, HIS TERRITORY. THEY PERFORM DAILY ACTIONS, FOR EXAMPLE NATHAN PREPARING HIS TIE FOR WORK, EWAN STUDYING, READING HIS BOOKS AND RIPPING UP PAPER IN FRUSTRATION AT HIS INABILITY TO WRITE. AFTER THREE TO FOUR MINUTES THE MUSIC BEGINS TO FADE.

NATHAN LEAVES THE SPACE.

EWAN SITS IN HIS CHAIR READING A MAGAZINE.

HE IS WEARING TRACKSUIT BOTTOMS AND HAS AN OVERSIZED CARDIGAN ON. HE HEARS KEYS IN THE DOOR AND DROPS THE MAGAZINE TO THE FLOOR. HE PICKS UP A BOOK AND APPEARS TO BE STUDIOUSLY MAKING NOTES.

NATHAN ENTERS IN EXECUTIVE WORK ATTIRE HOLDING A BUNCH OF RED ROSES. EWAN TOTALLY IGNORES HIM. HE TAKES OFF HIS JACKET AND BEGINS TO TRY TO RELAX FROM HIS DAY AT WORK. HE PICKS UP A PAPER AND READS. HE IS DESPERATE FOR EWAN TO ACKNOWLEDGE HIM. NATHAN STARTS TO REPLICATE THE WAY EWAN IS FLICKING PAGES OF HIS BOOK. THE MOMENTUM DEVELOPS SO THAT IT IS APPARENT THEY ARE BOTH WINDING EACH OTHER UP.

EWAN

Nice day at the office, honey?

Breaking the Class Ceiling: Addressing Socio-Economic Barriers and Advancing Inclusive Practices for Working-Class Artists in the UK Arts Industry

John Maguire 2025

NATHAN

Just (PAUSE) dandy and you?

EWAN

Oh, the usual...you know, this and that...this and that (PAUSE) this and that.

NATHAN

Are my eyebrows, okay?

EWAN

Yes... Why?

NATHAN

Because they have just been singed by that dragon in work...been busy again dear?

EWAN

Well, I've been rushed off my feet, sweet pie, running around (PAUSE) getting everything just right for my little (PAUSE) lambkins supper.

NATHAN

(WITH AN AIR OF SARCASM) oh you do spoil me.

EWAN

It's never too much trouble for you my dear. I'd do anything for my hard-working prince now wouldn't I?
(SILENCE)

NATHAN

So (PAUSE) what have you cooked then?

EWAN

What's your favourite?

Breaking the Class Ceiling: Addressing Socio-Economic Barriers and Advancing Inclusive Practices for Working-Class Artists in the UK Arts Industry

John Maguire 2025

(SILENCE)

NATHAN

Honestly (PAUSE)...you really have cooked for me?

EWAN

Yes of course, it's just there in the oven...go see...it's your favourite.

NATHAN WALKS SLOWLY OVER TO THE COOKER. HE OPENS THE COOKER DOOR, SLOWLY AS IF IN ANTICIPATION TO RELISH THE SMELLS FROM THE COOKING FOOD.

REALISATION SETS IN THAT THERE IS NOTHING IN THE OVEN.

NATHAN GIVES OFF A TIRED SOUND OF COMPLETE FRUSTRATION.

NATHAN

There is nothing in here.

EWAN

Oh damn, I must have forgotten. All this time reading my novel. It's so gripping...studying, developing my mind. I guess I must have forgotten to prepare the food, you know how it is?

(PAUSE)

My minds been elsewhere.

NATHAN

Not just your mind?

EWAN

Oh, don't start THAT nonsense again (BEATEN). I haven't got the energy tonight.

Breaking the Class Ceiling: Addressing Socio-Economic Barriers and Advancing Inclusive Practices for Working-Class Artists in the UK Arts Industry

John Maguire 2025

NATHAN

Isn't that surprising? You with no energy, it takes it out of you all that (PAUSE) reading, doesn't it?

EWAN

Yes, actually it does. You should try it some time.

NATHAN

I don't know what you have to do all that reading for anyway. What's the point?

EWAN

Preparation for when I start to write...I mean start properly.
(ADOPTS TEXTBOOK STYLE FORMAL TONE)
Lesson one, module four, the beginning of the creative journey.
Key reminder, preparation is the key to success.
READERS ARE LEADERS!

NATHAN

What the hell would you write? THAT box locked with all your precious scribbling and letters, the air of mystery...I would have thought you had a lover only that's too adventurous for you... I suppose you have a lot to offer the world, with all your experiences. You could teach the masses a thing or two...really change lives...make a difference like.

EWAN

More than you could! You sarcastic shit.

NATHAN

Now there's no need for that kind of language Mr. Dickens.

Breaking the Class Ceiling: Addressing Socio-Economic Barriers and Advancing Inclusive Practices for Working-Class Artists in the UK Arts Industry

John Maguire 2025

EWAN

Whatever you say, fuckwit, or is it Mr. Paranoia?

NATHAN

What do you mean?

EWAN

You know what I mean?

NATHAN

No, stop it, we're only having a laugh, aren't we?

(PAUSE)

EWAN

Are we?

NATHAN

Well, yes?

EWAN

I guess we are then.

(PAUSE)

NATHAN

I am not paranoid! (PAUSE)I am not paranoid.... (PAUSE) am I?

EWAN SMILES

NATHAN

Seriously?

NATHAN

Seriously, oh come on answer me...

Breaking the Class Ceiling: Addressing Socio-Economic Barriers and Advancing Inclusive Practices for Working-Class Artists in the UK Arts Industry

John Maguire 2025

EWAN

The magic word?

NATHAN

Seriously?

EWAN

The magic word.

NATHAN

I am not paranoid, am I? Seriously?

EWAN

(PAUSE)

No! You are just, just (PAUSE) careful.

NATHAN

I need to be careful, don't I?

EWAN

Yes, and so, do I?

THE TWO WALK TOWARDS EACH OTHER

NATHAN

Not anymore, what is done is done. You always bring that up.

EWAN

Here we go again...what next? If I... I would have done things...

NATHAN

Differently, yes! We've covered this subject countless it's sorted!

EWAN

Yet it still keeps popping up though, doesn't it?

Breaking the Class Ceiling: Addressing Socio-Economic Barriers and Advancing Inclusive Practices for Working-Class Artists in the UK Arts Industry

John Maguire 2025

NATHAN

You do it on purpose.

EWAN

I don't know I am doing it half the time. (He laughs to himself) Like, I always say beware of smiling knives.

NATHAN

Anyway, what about dinner?

EWAN

What about it? You know where the cooker is, don't you?

NATHAN

So, it's take out again?

EWAN EFFORTLESSLY WALKS OVER TO THE CUPBOARD, PULLS OUT A BINBAG.

STILL READING HIS BOOK, HE WALKS OVER TO THE TABLE.

EWAN PLACES THE BOOK VERY CAREFULLY DOWN AND THEN COLLECTS A NUMBER OF TAKE AWAY DELIVERY FLYERS. AS HE DELIVERS THE FOLLOWING LINES, HE SCATTERS THEM AROUND THE ROOM.

EWAN

So dear, darling, sweetheart what will it be tonight?

McDemaciated, KfuKC, Cluck Cluck, Pizza Slut, take out from the trough or a traditional all British fish and chip shop...like I said I really don't mind...I am easy it's your choice.

Breaking the Class Ceiling: Addressing Socio-Economic Barriers and Advancing Inclusive Practices for Working-Class Artists in the UK Arts Industry

John Maguire 2025

NATHAN

You are on top form tonight. Look! What say we just skip the formalities and put the shorts and gloves on now, eh? Which will it be red or blue.....?

EWAN

Blue, you are always blue, and I feel like a change tonight.

NATHAN

I am sure that can be arranged.

EWAN

It's already sorted, but thanks anyway.

NATHAN

What do you mean by that?

EWAN

What (laughs nervously) you know I don't know what I mean?

EWAN STARTS TO LEAVE THE STAGE SPACE

NATHAN

You petty, petty fuck.

PAUSE. THEY STARE AT EACH OTHER

AN UNCOMFORTABLE SILENCE

EWAN

That's right, it's alright for you...but if I start to what was your word...ermmmm experiment, you cannot handle it, can you? You like to pretend you can, but you really, really can't, I am better at this game than you, little boy. Its chess not draughts...it's not so

Breaking the Class Ceiling: Addressing Socio-Economic Barriers and Advancing Inclusive Practices for Working-Class Artists in the UK Arts Industry

John Maguire 2025

much fun when the sport is so easy, it actually borders on cruelty...it's not really sport then is it?

NATHAN

Oh, forget it...I am not in the mood for this now, pass me the paper, please.

EWAN PICKS UP THE NEWSPAPER

EWAN THROWS IT ON THE FLOOR. NATHAN PICKS IT UP.

HE SCANS IT, NOT TAKING ANYTHING IN.

(PAUSE)

NATHAN THROWS IT BACK AT EWAN WITH FORCE.

NATHAN

Nothing interesting in it anyway.

EWAN COMPLETELY IGNORES THIS OUTBURST.

NATHAN

Hadn't you better go and get ready?

EWAN

What the devil for? Now you want me to dress up for dinner...or (I know) are you going to wine and dine me, take me out? Not literally like.

Can we go to the Carriage works a little touch of romance darling...I remember when we first met...you must woo me to the grave, I insisted...and you did until monotony set in...you emitted that from your Fakebook status update...but you know...I know that you love me and I know that you know, I love you...but it would be nice

Breaking the Class Ceiling: Addressing Socio-Economic Barriers and Advancing Inclusive Practices for Working-Class Artists in the UK Arts Industry

John Maguire 2025

wouldn't it, a tinkling piano, French martini's and a well perfected risotto. What do you think?

NATHAN

Like I said, I thought you were going out...so hadn't you better get ready?

EWAN

I'll be out later yes...alone mind and I don't need to get all dolled up...I am already dressed for the occasion.

NATHAN

Like that?

EWAN

What it is my sweet that you like to consistently tell me?

(PAUSE)...You cannot make a silk purse out of a sow's ear.

Or what's that other joyous turn of phrase you always throw my way...it's so last season it's practically vintage.

Now (PAUSE) go and do something constructive little boy. I have simply had enough of you...you bore me, YOU REALLY, REALLY BORE ME, do you know that?

NATHAN WALKS SLOWLY TO EWAN WITH A SCHOOLBOY GRIN ON HIS FACE.

NATHAN SITS NEXT TO EWAN AND STARTS TO STROKE HIS LEG.

EWAN MOVES HIS HAND BLATANTLY AWAY AND THEN SMILES.

NATHAN PRETENDS HE HAS NOT DONE ANYTHING.

EWAN IS NOT AMUSED.

Breaking the Class Ceiling: Addressing Socio-Economic Barriers and Advancing Inclusive Practices for Working-Class Artists in the UK Arts Industry

John Maguire 2025

NATHAN CONTINUES HIS ATTEMPT AT SEDUCTION TILL THE POINT OF IRRITATION.

EWAN IS NOT INTERESTED AT ALL AND HE CONTINUES TO TRY AND READ HIS BOOK, PRETENDING NOTHING IS HAPPENING.

NATHAN

Well, if you do have a little time...why don't we...maybe you see that's what we need, you know, to help get rid of this AIR of frustration?

(PAUSE)

So why don't we go and PLAY upstairs.

EWAN

It isn't PLAY time yet.

NATHAN

It never is anymore.

EWAN

Look, just let me please finish this chapter...

Christ go and have a wank.

NATHAN

You don't really want to read THAT rubbish now do you?

EWAN

Yes, I do.

NATHAN

Come on, put down the book...I know you want to.

EWAN

Breaking the Class Ceiling: Addressing Socio-Economic Barriers and Advancing Inclusive Practices for Working-Class Artists in the UK Arts Industry

John Maguire 2025

No!

NATHAN

Come on you do really.

EWAN

No!

NATHAN

You know I love you.

EWAN

Everybody says I love you, (PAUSE), when they want to cum.

NATHAN

Oh, come on, please.

EWAN

NO

NATHAN

Christ I never know with you anymore, whether a No is a No, or you are just pretending?

EWAN

My NO is a NO and you of all fucking people should know that.

NATHAN

Argh your just messing, I can see right through you, I am not thick, you know. Come on...

NATHAN PUSHES EWAN TO THE COUCH, HE KICKS HIS LEGS OPEN AND APPEARS TO UNDO HIS TROUSERS.

THE STAGE BLACKS OUT. THE SOUND OF HEAVY BREATHING PERMEATES AND IT IS EXTREMELY UNCOMFORTABLE.

Breaking the Class Ceiling: Addressing Socio-Economic Barriers and Advancing Inclusive Practices for Working-Class Artists in the UK Arts Industry

John Maguire 2025

NATHAN MOVES TO THE KITCHEN AREA. EWAN TO HIS TABLE AND CHAIR. HE STANDS ON THE CHAIR.

AN ARRAY OF BLUE, PURPLE, RED AND YELLOW GELS FLASH ONTO THE TWO CHARACTERS.

LIKE PSYCHADELIC LIGHTING.

THE MORE BRUISE LIKE THE PROJECTION THE BETTER.

NATHAN

Bellowing Boisterous laughter

Yes, I walked into the door (PAUSE), it didn't hurt much,

(PAUSE)

Stung...close to the bone.

EWAN

But he's never really hurt me badly.

NATHAN

(Manic laughter) Yes, I walked into the door (laughs), keep him away from them frying pans...

EWAN

Puffiness in the mouth, ermhhh lips are a bit swollen.

(PAUSE)

It's hard to talk.

Jaw is stiff, a bit creaky.

Because of the position, the hand hit the face.

Slight toothache, very, very, very tender and its ermm like ermmm,

Purple,

Lilac,

Lapis lazuli blue.

Breaking the Class Ceiling: Addressing Socio-Economic Barriers and Advancing Inclusive Practices for Working-Class Artists in the UK Arts Industry

John Maguire 2025

Just a little bit under the eye lid, a little swollen,

A little cut stings...

(PAUSE)

It looks worse than it is.

NATHAN

You should see the other bloke.

NATHAN WALKS TO THE CENTRE OF THE STAGE THROUGHOUT THE DIALOGUE SO THAT HE EVENTUALLY STANDS BEHIND EWAN.

EWAN

...and it's difficult to smoke or drink from a cup...and my eye seems to be pulled down, just a little bit... clouds my vis, it clouds my vision.

(PAUSE)

It clouds my vision.

NATHAN PULLS EWAN AROUND TO FACE HIM.

BOTH WHISPER, SPELL/CHANT LIKE THE FOLLOWING LINES.

IT IS IMPORTANT THAT IT IS WHISPER, QUIET,

ALMOST LIKE A CHANT.

THEY CIRCLE EACH OTHER.

EWAN

I wish I never met you.

NATHAN

What do you expect from me?

EWAN

I wish I'd never met you?

Breaking the Class Ceiling: Addressing Socio-Economic Barriers and Advancing Inclusive Practices for Working-Class Artists in the UK Arts Industry

John Maguire 2025

NATHAN

What do you expect from me?

EWAN

I wish I'd never met you?

NATHAN

What do you expect from me?

EWAN

I wish I'd never met you.

He does it on purpose; he makes me get like this.

NATHAN

I wish I'd never met you.

EWAN

What do you expect from me?

NATHAN

I wish I'd never met you.

EWAN

What do you expect from me?

NATHAN

I wish I'd never met you.

EWAN

What do you expect from me?

NATHAN

I wish I'd never met you.

Breaking the Class Ceiling: Addressing Socio-Economic Barriers and Advancing Inclusive Practices for Working-Class Artists in the UK Arts Industry

John Maguire 2025

He does it on purpose; he makes me get like this.

BOTH

I wish I'd

(PAUSE)

Never

(PAUSE)

Met you.

BLACKOUT

EWAN MOVES TO THE TABLE AND STANDS ON IT.

NATHAN MOVES TO THE RIGHT OF HIM, SITTING ON THE RIGHT SIDE OF THE TABLE

EWAN

Marshmallows stuffed in a jelly pillow.

The surface is like, like..... a planet face.

Swirls of gas clouds, heat hovering just over the skin tissue, a little red river trickles down.

The climate is hot, moist and bouncy, if you trod on it, you'd probably sink.

Valleys of blue veins, you can feel them vibrating,

A different planet still it hurts if you talk.

NATHAN

Ocean like with a hint of oil, streaking darkness through the water.

Legions of crimson red fish swim deep in the aquatic space.

Bubbling under the surface...marble like, without it being chipped, sensitive to touch...perhaps it's the darkness from inside...to make its mark, adding to the battle scars.

The etchings on the torso canvas.

Breaking the Class Ceiling: Addressing Socio-Economic Barriers and Advancing Inclusive Practices for Working-Class Artists in the UK Arts Industry

John Maguire 2025

One rotten apple slowly seeding the deadness through and through.

EWAN TAKES AN APPLE OUT OF HIS POCKET.

HE TAKES A BITE OUT OF IT AND DROPS IT INTO NATHAN'S HAND WHO BOWLS IT ACROSS THE STAGE.

A SOLITARY SPOTLIGHT FOLLOWS IT.

THE BRUISE DANCE WITH ME MUSIC PLAYS EXTREMELY LOUD.

THE TWO SEPARATE TO EITHER SIDE OF THE STAGE. THE LIGHTING CHANGES TO EMPHASISE IT IS A DISCOTEQUE. A SEQUENCE OF CHOREOGRAPHED MOVES OCCURS. EWAN AND NATHAN ARE CHECKING EACH OTHER OUT. THE TWO EVENTUALLY STAND SIDE BY SIDE ON THE COFFEETABLE. EWAN TOYS WITH NATHAN AND EVENTUALLY SNUBS HIM. NATHAN JUMPS OFF THE COFFEE TABLE AND STANDS AGAINST THE WALL STARING AT EWAN. EWAN DROPS OFF THE COFFEE TABLE AND ADDRESSES THE AUDIENCE DIRECTLY.

THE MUSIC STARTS TO LOWER AND PLAYS VERY SLIGHTLY IN THE BACKGROUND.

EWAN

Shall I be frank? (PAUSE) I don't fucking like Kylie, at the staff Christmas party when nine to five blasts out from the DJ booth and the office gazelles clamor around and badger me to dance, I am expected to be up for it, why?

Because APPARENTLY that's what I am good at...

That and cooking, interior design, what shoes best to wear with what garment! APPARENTLY, I really understand when Pamela is

Breaking the Class Ceiling: Addressing Socio-Economic Barriers and Advancing Inclusive Practices for Working-Class Artists in the UK Arts Industry

John Maguire 2025

menopausal, when Janet has PMT or when Julie's husband has left her AGAIN!

Just because I happen to like the sight of a cock, that doesn't make me some sort of sub species of a man, does it?

THEN when I eventually DO get on the dance floor, well...

(PAUSE)

It's a free for all.

(PAUSE)

Just because I happen to like the same sex, that gives every vagina with lip gloss and heels the RIGHT, the permission... to touch my arse, straddle my penis with gyrating choreography that would make a whore blush, layer my body with their hands.

Oh, and not forgetting the whispering of sweet nothings in my ear, like, IF YOU WERE STRAIGHT THE THINGS I'D DO TO YOU. Only let's be realistic about this whole fantasy, you wouldn't be able to! because by the time I'd sorted out the minimalist design of your living room, advised you on the correct tone of root colour, conjured up the perfect fondue recipe...counselled you on health issues, such as vitamins and HRT therapy. Oh, and then there is the suggestion of lotions, potions, anti-wrinkling, anti-living cream...well, I don't know about a fucky fucky shag fest, I mean yes, I'd be fucked, but not fucked, fucked...just well fucked!
EWAN SITS AT HIS TABLE EXHAUSTED.

NATHAN

I don't know what I was looking for, really at first the chickens who come around thinking that they are the first queer in the history of the world, 'Quentin Crisp is that Vivienne Westwood's new

Breaking the Class Ceiling: Addressing Socio-Economic Barriers and Advancing Inclusive Practices for Working-Class Artists in the UK Arts Industry

John Maguire 2025

fragrance?’ But well, the attention is flattering really...So, after many occasions of being burnt, I’d consciously made the decision to only go out with someone over 25.

EWAN

I always felt odd like, although my family knew, it never really got spoken about. It was a given that I’d turn up at family occasions on my own, it was expected. Every family has got one, my Nan whispered. At first, I’d go out as I felt it was like a community, and it was nice like being around like-minded people. Although, after a while seeing the same faces every time, started to depress me. There is only so many times you can see Vaseline Dion coked up playing the same pop tart hit.

Sometimes it was like being in a surreal film, GROUNDHOG GAY... I wanted more than this!

NATHAN STANDS ON THE TABLE.

NATHAN

I used to see him when I went out, I’d dip into the scene, once or twice a week.

I’d long learnt how it was not what it seems.

There was a reason why Canal Street was known as Anal Treat leading on to Banal Street.

Nowadays, I barely ventured to Manchester as it was more and more like a fruity Walt Disney world, full of fag hags and hen parties. Be gay for a day!

I remember when I first came to BRUISE, I was fifteen, I thought I was such a rebel; I was breaking so many taboos.

I remember thinking it was such a funky place, a different world.

Breaking the Class Ceiling: Addressing Socio-Economic Barriers and Advancing Inclusive Practices for Working-Class Artists in the UK Arts Industry

John Maguire 2025

I soon learnt that behind the marionette, there was an Oz-like puppet master pulling the strings and they were not pink, blue, or even purple...but a darker tone. I guess you cannot have a rainbow without a little rain.

EWAN

What a fucking freak, he'd stand there, predator like, his t-shirt two sizes too small, he'd survey the room, like a crocodile.

EWAN NODS AND SMILES

Acknowledged me though...every time his eyes met mine...like he really knew me.

He always gave me the impression that there was something behind the door...beyond his manufactured looks. He was so deliciously handsome, attractive in his faux shyness. Ever the romantic, my rose-tinted glasses were beginning to work ...really, MEN are like IKEA, look great in the showroom, but get them home, GUARANTEED they are missing a few parts.

Then one day, I was out on the merry go around again and he smiled intently and before I could think about what, He was standing next to me.

I can't remember what he said, but we were introducing each other.

We had begun.

NATHAN

Meeting you, that was fate, becoming your friend was a choice, but drowning in love with you I had no control over.

Breaking the Class Ceiling: Addressing Socio-Economic Barriers and Advancing Inclusive Practices for Working-Class Artists in the UK Arts Industry

John Maguire 2025

EWAN

Do you come here often?

NATHAN

Have you got mirrors in your undies, only I can see myself in them?

EWAN

You must be tired?

NATHAN

Why?

EWAN

You have been running around my mind all night.

NATHAN

Please.

EWAN

Is your dad a burglar? Because he stole the stars from the sky and put them in your eyes... do you like jewellery?

NATHAN

Well suck my cock it's a gem.

EWAN

You know lad you have a great personality, but you cannot fuck a personality.

THE SOUNTRACK MUSIC BLASTS IN.

THE TWO KISS WITH PASSION. EWAN LEADS NATHAN TO THE COUCH AND STRADDLES HIM. COMPLETE SENSUAL SEDUCTION. BLACKOUT.

Breaking the Class Ceiling: Addressing Socio-Economic Barriers and Advancing Inclusive Practices for Working-Class Artists in the UK Arts Industry

John Maguire 2025

EWAN SITS ON THE RIGHT-HAND SIDE OF THE COUCH. NATHAN IS ASLEEP WITH HIS LEGS OVER EWAN.

EWAN

I Know it's my fault, there was a time when I used to like it, when he'd surprise me. The way he used to pounce, unpredictably, quite exciting, the way he'd let go, it was different...I always wanted to be different. I still do, who wants monotony.

(PAUSE)

But then the passion and the...just blended into one...his way became more painful, it just plain hurt...I cannot see that there is any real lust anymore... not sure, is it purely to be little me...one way of bruising me inside, is it not enough that we beat each other senseless, we've got to attack inside too...he bit me on the neck... the first time was...well, but now it is something more...the pain...I didn't think he was going to stop.

He didn't even know he was doing it.

I was lying down so his body weight prevented me from doing anything else.

I couldn't grab his hair...it was too short.

Please, please, stop...I'll be marked for work...

Please, please, stop...I'll be marked for work.

Please, please, please stop...I'll be marked for work.

(PAUSE)

But he didn't.

I was purple for weeks.

I was branded.

I was his.

Breaking the Class Ceiling: Addressing Socio-Economic Barriers and Advancing Inclusive Practices for Working-Class Artists in the UK Arts Industry

John Maguire 2025

EWAN SUDDENLY BOLTS TO SIDE OF THE STAGE AND GRABS A CHAIR.

I realised his reasons though.

It was a token.

HE SLAMS THE CHAIR CENTRE STAGE.

A trophy

A scar

(PAUSE)

EWAN TAKES A SCARF FROM THE COAT/HAT STAND, HE UNTIES THE SCARF

I was HIS.

HIS

EWAN WALKS OVER TO NATHAN AND ENTICES HIM FROM HIS SLUMBER.

EWAN WRAPS THE SCARF AROUND HIS NECK AND PULLS HIM UP. NATHAN IS SLUGGISH, HALF ASLEEP.

EWAN PULLS HIM SLOWLY CLOSE TO HIM, SENSUAL LIKE.

NATHAN ATTEMPTS TO KISS EWAN.

EWAN BLINDFOLDS NATHAN AND PUSHES HIM ON TO THE CHAIR. A SPOTLIGHT FOCUSES SOLELY ON THE CHAIR, PRISONER OF WAR STYLE.

EWAN

Of course, in the office, people commentated on my eclectic range of fashionable scarf's and the suspicious what have you been up to...ORIGINAL...died out after a few weeks, they then presumed it

Breaking the Class Ceiling: Addressing Socio-Economic Barriers and Advancing Inclusive Practices for Working-Class Artists in the UK Arts Industry

John Maguire 2025

was a fashion fad...the new gay whim....the seasons must have...I was so ahead of the fashion zeitgeist...

EWAN DRAGS A CHAIR ACROSS THE SPACE AND BANGS IT IN THE CENTRE OF THE STAGE.

EWAN SEATS NATHAN IN THE CHAIR, PRISONER OF WAR STYLE.

EWAN STANDS TO THE SIDE OF THE CHAIR, PRISONER/OFFICER STYLE.

A SOLITARY WHITE SPOTLIGHT SHINES UP FROM THE GROUND, DIRECTLY ON NATHAN'S FACE.

NATHAN

he lay on the bed...I often just sit and watch him late in the night...I suffer terrible insomnia...sometimes I can't switch my thoughts off, sometimes I wish I could just turn my mind off.

He lies there so tranquil. Drifting. Such beautiful pale skin, natural (PAUSE) it's at these moments I know...I know I love him.

(PAUSE)

Why do I hurt him?

EWAN MOVES TOWARDS NATHAN AND PUTS HIS HAND ON HIS RIGHT SHOULDER.

NATHAN CARESSES HIS HAND AND THEN ALL OF A SUDDEN

EWAN

Purple pastel like smeared on my wrist.

A delicate painting.

Do not touch it.

Do not photograph it.

Another of his works etched onto my body.

What am I his fucking art gallery?

Breaking the Class Ceiling: Addressing Socio-Economic Barriers and Advancing Inclusive Practices for Working-Class Artists in the UK Arts Industry

John Maguire 2025

EWAN IS BY THIS POINT DOWN STAGE HE TURNS AROUND AND WALKS WITH PURPOSE TO NATHAN.

HE WHISPERS IN HIS EAR.

What am I your fucking art gallery?

Answer me.

What am I? What am I? What am I?

EWAN RIPS OFF NATHAN'S BLINDFOLD. HE WALKS CENTRE STAGE AND STANDS ROOTED.

EWAN

Put male into anything and it screws up...

Mal practice.

Male violence.

Mal function.

Mal nutrition.

NATHAN TAKES THE SCARF OFF AND CLAPS HIS HANDS.

NATHAN

Okay (PAUSE) I get the point.

Woe is fucking me.

You know your problem?

EWAN

I am sure you are going to tell me.

NATHAN

You are a fucking drama queen. You fucking BIG faggot.

EWAN

Just like you mate.

Breaking the Class Ceiling: Addressing Socio-Economic Barriers and Advancing Inclusive Practices for Working-Class Artists in the UK Arts Industry

John Maguire 2025

NATHAN

You really know how to wind me up don't you?

EWAN

Temper, temper.

NATHAN

It's your own fault.

EWAN

Simply you haven't got the intelligence to use your tongue...so you lash out eh.

Such a real man.

You disgust me.

EWAN SPITS IN NATHAN'S FACE AND EXITS THE STAGE SPACE.

NATHAN SITS ON THE COFFEE TABLE.

NATHAN IS A FRIGHTENED TWELVE-YEAR-OLD BOY.

A PROJECTION OF A CLOUDSCAPE ILLUMINATES THE WHOLE STAGE.

NATHAN

always when she was at the bingo, no fear...that would trigger further anger...nobody likes a mirror...recognising the bruise within...it's embarrassing even if it is solely for a minute... metal bunk bed.

always my fault...you've given cheek...been naughty...don't mention it to anyone...clever that...it was her fault I was a queer anyway...tied to the apron strings...shirt lifter...a big girls blouse.

THE BRUISE INCIDENTAL MUSIC COMES IN VERY SLIGHT; THE PIECE HAD BEEN SLOWED RIGHT DOWN AND IS QUITE DISTORTED.

Breaking the Class Ceiling: Addressing Socio-Economic Barriers and Advancing Inclusive Practices for Working-Class Artists in the UK Arts Industry

John Maguire 2025

ICE in a towel...takes away the swelling...and you get an extra half an hour to stay up...

The smell of maternity, sheer love arrives with perfumed cold kisses and hugs, fresh from the autumn chill. The essence of love.

I have been naughty.

That's the reason I am still up.

I banged my head, you see messing around.

Her facial expression changes instantly.

I have spoilt her night. RUINED IT!

She only goes out for a few hours a fortnight.

NATHAN NARRATES THE NEXT LINES IN A VERY FACTUAL MANNER.

Stand with the ice pack pressed firmly on where it hurts...it will go down.

(NATHAN POINTS TO HIS HEAD)

The memory is tattooed in here.

The bruise of childhood.

BLACKOUT

**Breaking the Class Ceiling: Addressing Socio-Economic Barriers and Advancing
Inclusive Practices for Working-Class Artists in the UK Arts Industry**

John Maguire 2025

(Act TWO)

NATHAN AND EWAN ENTER THE SPACE.

THE SEQUENTIAL MUSIC PLAYS VERY LOUDLY.

THE TWO WORK THROUGH CHOREOGRAPHED MOVEMENTS,
IMAGES FROM THE NAN GOLDIN BOOK, THE BALLAD OF SEXUAL
DEPENDENCY. AFTER A FEW MINUTES, THE TWO BREAK OUT AND
NATHAN MOVES TO THE KITCHEN AREA. EWAN MOVES TO THE
FRONT OF THE STAGE.

THE SOUNDSCAPE OF A SWIMMING POOL.

EWAN

Swimming, floating under the water, not here, not there, just.

I like being under the water, I feel numb.

I try to swim as much as I can. Helps me to work on the book. It's
hard juggling, I find trying to balance all the plates...just fucking
tiresome and you know I never stop thinking, but in the water, here
I can just be.

I like to sit in the plunge pool, Jacuzzi kind of thing afterwards.

I like to watch, just observe.

I remember watching him darting up and down the length of the
pool.

He stopped swimming with ease and slowly stood up, white
splashes of water ricocheted off his body...and his torso was
unbelievable.

He turned to me, to reveal his strong shoulders and crafted torso,
athletic, but not clinically athletic.

His eyes found me out amongst the people in the pool...he gave
the warmest smile...a smile, I recognised from the past,

Breaking the Class Ceiling: Addressing Socio-Economic Barriers and Advancing Inclusive Practices for Working-Class Artists in the UK Arts Industry

John Maguire 2025

The smile that said contentment.

It was as I watched him climb out of the pool, dragging his flesh up the metallic ladder, realisation hit me there and then...

(SILENCE)

WILL I EVER SWIM AWAY?

SOUND OF WATER CASCADING, LIKE A STORM

NATHAN ENTERS THE SPACE.

NATHAN

You are not a failure.

You just don't let anyone in.

Nobody would understand this normal relationship.

EWAN

There is no such thing as normal, normal people anyway, only those people who you don't know very well.

Anyway, relationship? Laugh...out...loud...is that what you call it?

NATHAN

We live together, don't we?

EWAN

Yes, we occupy the same space.

NATHAN

That's a relationship then, isn't it?

Nobody understands what it is all about anyway.

People only talk about others to detract from their own fucked up existence.

EWAN

I suppose their lives are perfect.

Breaking the Class Ceiling: Addressing Socio-Economic Barriers and Advancing Inclusive Practices for Working-Class Artists in the UK Arts Industry

John Maguire 2025

HE SMILES AT NATHAN.

NATHAN

Perfectly boring.

THE FOLLOWING SEQUENCE IS HIGHLY STYLISED AND PERFORMED TO A 1950'S ADVERTISEMENT PIECE OF MUSIC.

THE TWO GRAB A CHAIR AND PUT THEM TOGETHER, FACING THE AUDIENCE.

THEY STAND BEHIND THE CHAIRS AND GIVE A STEPFORDESQUE SMILE.

THEY WALK AWAY AND THEN BACK IN, GO TO KISS, BACK OUT LOOK AT THE AUDIENCE AND SMILE.

THEY WALK AROUND THE FRONT OF THE CHAIRS, SMILE AT EACH OTHER AND SIT DOWN.

THEY HAVE A LOOK OF BOREDOM.

THEY ARE DRAWN INTO THE TELEVISION PROGRAMME THEY ARE VIEWING. PHYSICALLY MOVING FORWARD AND HOLD IT FOR THREE BEATS.

THEY DRAW BACK AND GO ASLEEP TO THE RIGHT-HAND SIDE.

THEY WAKE UP TO THE GONGS OF NEWS AT TEN.

TAKE OUT THEIR MOBILE PHONES FROM THEIR LEFT POCKETS.

THEY PHYSICALLY MIME WRITING FIVE TEXTS.

THEY PUT THEIR PHONES IN THEIR RIGHT TROUSER POCKETS.

THEY MIME OPENING A LAPTOP AND MIME TYPING AND SENDING AN E-MAIL MESSAGE TEN TIMES.

THEY CLOSE THE IMAGINARY LAPTOP.

YAWN IN SYNC

THEY STAND UP TOGETHER.

Breaking the Class Ceiling: Addressing Socio-Economic Barriers and Advancing Inclusive Practices for Working-Class Artists in the UK Arts Industry

John Maguire 2025

YAWN AGAIN.

NATHAN RETURNS HIS CHAIR.

EWAN RETURNS HIS CHAIR.

EWAN

Monotony, monotony, monotony, monotony, fucking monotony...mobile phone users on trains/buses/ public transport. I could not give a 'toss', what Steve 'wants' for his tea.

Overbearing/overweight hetro men in gay bars. 'I am not gay mate, I don't mind as long as they don't come on to me.' Are you having a laugh, foreplay with you would be first trying to find your cock under that mountain of flab.

Fucking Kylie Minogue.

NATHAN GRABS A PAD AND FRANTICALLY CAPTURES THE WORDS THAT FALL FROM EWANS MOUTH.

Slow people walking down the street in my way.

Modern sales techniques, such as bog off.

People who think they are right just because they shout louder.

Sarah Palin.

No manners.

No romance.

Sugar free foods, sugar free drinks, organic, gluten, taste free.

But it's one of your five a day, in that case I'll have a triple....vodka equals potatoes and wine equals grapes.

Junk mail.

Financial advertisements. Consolidate your whole soul into one convenient instalment for the next 69 years.

Breaking the Class Ceiling: Addressing Socio-Economic Barriers and Advancing Inclusive Practices for Working-Class Artists in the UK Arts Industry

John Maguire 2025

People who moralise about reality TV but then watch it anyway, OK magazine why the fuck is Jordan always, always on the front cover, I could not give a flying shite about her latest dilemma. OH, and the incorrect use of the apostrophe.

NATHAN

And breathe.

EWAN

Where the fuck did that come from?

NATHAN

I don't know you suddenly decided to jump on a platform and launch into one of your tirades.

If only you wrote that way

Maybe you should have a lie down.

EWAN

Your sarcasm never ceases.

NATHAN

I recall it was one of the things that attracted you to me in the first place.

EWAN GOES TO A CUPBOARD AND BRINGS OUT A BOTTLE OF WINE. LOOKS AT NATHAN AND PUTS THE BOTTLE DOWN, PICKS UP HIS CHAIR AND MOVES TOWARDS NATHAN

THE NEXT SEQUENCE IS A FLASHBACK TO THEIR FIRST DATE.

EWAN MOVES TOWARDS NATHAN COY/SHY.

EWAN IS NERVOUS/FIDGETY. NATHAN IS VERY HAPPY.

THEY KNOCK FEET AND THEY IMPROVISE THE FIRST DATE.

Breaking the Class Ceiling: Addressing Socio-Economic Barriers and Advancing Inclusive Practices for Working-Class Artists in the UK Arts Industry

John Maguire 2025

EWAN

I had a really nice night.

NATHAN

Me too.

EWAN

Do you want me to call you a taxi?

NATHAN

I don't need to be anywhere.

EWAN

No, so date number two then?

NATHAN

How about breakfast?

EWAN

When?

THE TWO MOVE TOGETHER TO KISS, EWAN BREAKS OFF.

EWAN MOVES TOWARDS THE BOTTLE OF WINE,

HE LOOKS AT NATHAN.

NATHAN STARES AT HIM.

EWAN OPENS THE BOTTLE SLOWLY NEVER TAKING HIS EYES OFF

NATHAN.

EWAN TAKES OUT A GLASS AND POURS THE WINE IN IT.HE STARES

AT THE GLASS, LOST.

NATHAN STARES AT HIM.

NATHAN

I see you are enduring, I mean enjoying the poison again?

Breaking the Class Ceiling: Addressing Socio-Economic Barriers and Advancing Inclusive Practices for Working-Class Artists in the UK Arts Industry

John Maguire 2025

EWAN

This world is full of toxins.

NATHAN

Yes, and half of them are in your body, you must piss pure Smirnoff.

EWAN

We all have our little addictions, now, don't we?

NATHAN

Yes, life is all about 'the' balance, plate juggling; only I can see you smashing all of them.

EWAN

You worry too much, that's your problem. If only they sold personalities in pound land, you'd be alright.

NATHAN

I never can understand how body conscious you are. Yoga and all and then wash it all away at the weekend, sorry I mean weekdays too, now!

EWAN

And I never understand how you can feel safe in your virtual little world.

It really bothers me how many actual hours you waste conversing in cyberspace, Fakebook, Gaydar, Grinder. Any distraction from

Breaking the Class Ceiling: Addressing Socio-Economic Barriers and Advancing Inclusive Practices for Working-Class Artists in the UK Arts Industry

John Maguire 2025

reality. Warhol was right; everyone will have 15 minutes of fame only now it's more like 15 megabytes. You put the mirrors out to the world, are you bold enough to turn it on yourself?

NATHAN WALKS OVER TO EWAN AND AS HE DELIVERS THIS NEXT LINE HE POURS THE REST OF THE CONTENTS OF THE BOTTLE INTO HIS GLASS.

NATHAN

Of course, a clearer perspective is reached at the bottom of a bottle of Shiraz.

EWAN

The issue here is that you communicate with everyone and anyone apart from me and I am allegedly the one you love.

NATHAN

You don't like the fact that I tell it how it is.

EWAN

Who really is interested in your little world?
Sneeze and you have to put it online.
Wear your heart on a sleeve yes, but please don't think that people are interested in your mundane crap. It is pissing in the wind.

NATHAN

Drink, drink, drink, don't think.
Drink, drink, drink, don't sink.

Breaking the Class Ceiling: Addressing Socio-Economic Barriers and Advancing Inclusive Practices for Working-Class Artists in the UK Arts Industry

John Maguire 2025

There's a reason why liqueur is called a short, a good term, yes because when consumed by the poison that is how you tend to be with me, short!

And all your scribblings, letters that you squirrel away in that locked trunk...what the devil are they? Really, you never say, just lock them away.

Just remind me why you want to be a writer?

EWAN

How immature.

NATHAN

I've asked Santa to bring me some pubes for Xmas so I can grow up.

EWAN

Ever the wit, ever the wit.

NATHAN

Well, I have to have a sense of humour I live with you.

More wine dear.

EWAN

I should have seen that first argument as a sign do you remember when your mind games began back then?

NATHAN

Oh, how could I forget, it was your mum's birthday. You, a bottle of cider with your fair-weather friend and then later on you thought it was sensible to drink a half bottle of scotch on the back of the 79.

Breaking the Class Ceiling: Addressing Socio-Economic Barriers and Advancing Inclusive Practices for Working-Class Artists in the UK Arts Industry

John Maguire 2025

Very wise! And you educated the one and him with a PHD. More like a Piss Head Diploma.

NATHAN GESTURES TO HIS HEAD TO EMPHASISE THE PHD

EWAN

My head was in a different place. There's a line you know mate, a line you don't go over.

NATHAN

No...because you want to snort it you mean...You don't have to make excuses to me.

(PAUSE)

Although I know you need to justify it to yourself.

EWAN

Look I was lost. I still am.

NATHAN

Absolutely pathetic... I never forget I saw you that night just before you ran out on me. Do you remember? Standing feebly on the empty dance floor. A sad disgrace. You looked so gone.

EWAN

Is there any other way to be out there, really?

It's futile.

NATHAN

Breaking the Class Ceiling: Addressing Socio-Economic Barriers and Advancing Inclusive Practices for Working-Class Artists in the UK Arts Industry

John Maguire 2025

I love the way you try and intellectualise everything you do. Give it a Bohemian romantic edge, just face facts. Can you do that, are you that brave?

EWAN

I ran out of that bar when I saw you.

NATHAN

You were pissed.

EWAN

Yes, I was...admittedly. But you know I was trying to get away from you.

NATHAN

From yourself you mean.

EWAN

Do you honestly think, I don't know that?
Do you honestly think that every time, every single moment I look in a mirror or catch myself in a window glass? Do you honestly think that I am not reminded?
It's there scarred on my fucking face.
Do you honestly think...
(PAUSE)
I am not ashamed?

NATHAN

Oh, you fell over, cut your nose and you have a slight scar.
Build a bridge and get the fuck over it,
But not you, no.
You had to mythologize it. What did you call it? Your 'third eye.'

Breaking the Class Ceiling: Addressing Socio-Economic Barriers and Advancing Inclusive Practices for Working-Class Artists in the UK Arts Industry

John Maguire 2025

Has it given, you any insight into the nature of the universe, the cosmos or all that bullshit?

You may criticise me for going on the net but that's the very reason why you write isn't it. Create another world, a false world...that's the only way you can deal with it...the intoxicated tortured artist.

(PAUSE)

Bullshit.

EWAN

That bang on the floor was a premonition of my future with you. I'll ever be trying to run away from you.

NATHAN

I am not chasing you and I am not holding back.

EWAN

You cannot depend on anything.

I stopped depending on you a long time ago.

It really hit me when my granddad was ill, and then what happened, you chose to fuck everything with a pulse behind my back.

You used to be discreet, but now it's glaringly obvious. I've seen YOU eye rape people.

You forget how small this pool actually is.

THIS INCESTUOUS DIRTY POOL.

You know we all have a gut instinct, do you know how that made me feel? You wouldn't know because I am cold, aren't I? I've had to freeze my emotions to stop them from dying.

EWAN REMAINS COMPLETELY STILL.

Breaking the Class Ceiling: Addressing Socio-Economic Barriers and Advancing Inclusive Practices for Working-Class Artists in the UK Arts Industry

John Maguire 2025

NATHAN

There is passing the book, but you, you pass the whole fucking library.

THE STAGE IS IN DARKNESS A SOLE SPOTLIGHT ILLUMINATES

NATHAN.

NATHAN

Curiosity at first that's what it was, and you know what that did to the cat.

A little attention.

I always felt more comfortable with online flirtation.

The first time I went on Gaydar at Jason's in Cardiff.

He was in the shower getting ready...

Amuse yourself have a little gander.

I didn't realise that every time you looked at someone's profile it sent a message to them.

Weeks later.

Jason rang me quite disturbed that leather lad 69 and a whole cast of misfits, had been bombarding him with e mail and propositions.

I explained I was intrigued by the weird ones, I always wondered what they did in the daytime, you know their regular lives like.

Profile pictures cracked me up on the dating sites, pictures taken from way back or intimate imagery of genitalia.

I wondered if you actually met with one of those guys you know who had a picture of their cock and balls on display, what did you look for in the pub, you know when you were waiting like.

A massive penis solely just walking through the door.

Breaking the Class Ceiling: Addressing Socio-Economic Barriers and Advancing Inclusive Practices for Working-Class Artists in the UK Arts Industry

John Maguire 2025

I started talking to people...I'd never been that good at talking to people.

Jason was my only friend and that was only as he was just as shy as me back then in University.

Gradually I lost touch with him.

As my relationship developed. Funny that!

Jason was like a brother but that didn't matter. He was gay and of course two men who were gay couldn't be friends could they?

So that's when I started meeting up with people who I had met online.

Don't judge me.

I may have been around the block, but he has been around the whole neighbourhood twice!

I just felt lonely.

The thing with relationships is that with time. You forget about things, you know all the good things, it's not all bad.

THE STAGE FLOODS WITH BRIGHT LIGHTING TO CREATE WARMNESS.

EWAN

I forgot about the gooseberry chardonnay. I forgot about the nights wrapped in bed watching old Hollywood movies.

NATHAN

The rain pelting against the rusted metal box, the caravan we stayed in when we holidayed in Aberystwyth.

EWAN

I forgot about the music sessions into the early hours taunting the dawn to wake, him and his avid Bowie what he'd clinged to when

Breaking the Class Ceiling: Addressing Socio-Economic Barriers and Advancing Inclusive Practices for Working-Class Artists in the UK Arts Industry

John Maguire 2025

he was bi-sexual. A lad insane. Me and Adam and the Ants. Prince fucking Charming.

EWAN LOOKS OUT TO THE AUDIENCE AS IF HE IS ASSESSING HIS ARM IN A MIRROR.

NATHAN

I forgot about when he wore that red silk shirt, the material melted over his toned torso. I remember I was meeting him in a packed art gallery, and I was a little late, I saw him standing in the middle of the crowd. Close up, the focus shot, sheer gorgeousness and I remember thinking that guy is waiting for me, that handsome guy is waiting to spend time with me. The drunken dancing nights out, home in the cab of shame. I never worry about what was said last night, late night blur. It didn't change us.

Morning time, half awake, half asleep.....

His beauty on me.

EWAN

His beauty IN me.

NATHAN

You only hurt the ones you love.

EWAN

Or let someone hurt you, who you know wouldn't.

NATHAN

I would never hurt you.

EWAN

I would never hurt you.

Breaking the Class Ceiling: Addressing Socio-Economic Barriers and Advancing Inclusive Practices for Working-Class Artists in the UK Arts Industry

John Maguire 2025

NATHAN

Honest?

EWAN

Honestly.

NATHAN

Who started this anyway? It's never me, even if it is. I will blame you, it's the rule.

EWAN

What are we arguing about anyway, I forgot but That's what we do, that's what people do isn't it...it's not about SEXUALITY...it's about being human.

NATHAN

Yet you choose to live like this, in this insanity...constant irritation, can we not just face it, that it's over...we have to drag it on.

EWAN

It has its moments.

NATHAN

No, I have had enough.
We used to be like a jigsaw piece, we fit but now, the seven-year itch has come once but now I yearn for an amputation.

EWAN

Well leave then. You know where the door is, all you have to do is walk through it. Go on. Freedom...or is that what scares you?

NATHAN

(Whispers) if only.

(PAUSE)

Breaking the Class Ceiling: Addressing Socio-Economic Barriers and Advancing Inclusive Practices for Working-Class Artists in the UK Arts Industry

John Maguire 2025

EWAN

It is that easy and you know it. Love is not something you can just paint over, and it goes away, that stain permeates through.

(PAUSE)

NATHAN LOOKS OFFSTAGE

(PAUSE)

NATHAN

I...I can. I just can't.

EWAN

Why?

NATHAN

Where would I go?

EWAN

You're a big lad. You could live on your own.

NATHAN

You fucking go then.

EWAN

No, besides I enjoy watching you suffer, god knows how you've made me suffer enough.

NATHAN

Jesus, you make being an annoying bastard, an art form.

If that subject matter was the basis of your BOOK, you'd be guaranteed a publishing deal.

You claim you want to be a writer, well then be a writer. Write, when did you last put pencil to paper. When did you last scratch

Breaking the Class Ceiling: Addressing Socio-Economic Barriers and Advancing Inclusive Practices for Working-Class Artists in the UK Arts Industry

John Maguire 2025

down your mind onto a blank canvas, when? I sometimes wonder! What was that phrase you used to preach at me, one must love art and not the concept of oneself in art? You love the trappings of the Boho artist, don't you? Red wine-stained purple lips and talk of all things litedreary. But deep down it's all for the ego, isn't it? Feed that ego furnace, burn it bright and then you may feel something, ho bloody hum, it's because you never got a lot of love in your childhood, right? You just zone out, you don't even know you do it, so consumed in your own little world, there was a time when I used to get invited, when I was along for the journey, but lately, I cannot even buy a ticket for the ride, can I? It's not like you even pretend to look interested. You just look through me and then customarily give a nod, a gesture on cue, on demand. I remember when you used to get excited about menial things I'd done in the day, stupid things, you looked at me in complete wonder, but now you don't even ask me questions...I have to offer the information, give comments to stimulate conversation to just begin some form of basic communication.

But do you know what,

(PAUSE)

I think I'll stay.

I mean why be defeated by the tail when you have eaten the whole cow.

EWAN

Sorry, what was that? Oh, I knew you'd see sense and we are after all coming up to the second round.

Breaking the Class Ceiling: Addressing Socio-Economic Barriers and Advancing Inclusive Practices for Working-Class Artists in the UK Arts Industry

John Maguire 2025

NATHAN

Do you fancy a cup of black coffee?

EWAN

If you're making one.

NATHAN DROPS THE KETTLE ON PURPOSE

NATHAN

Oops

EWAN

He had been out with that friend of his. I cannot even remember her name, all I can recall is the makeup and the moustache. The foundation always layered on so heavily, eroding like an Egyptian sand sculpture as the night went on. THAT penetrating laugh and the constant jokes, SHE only seemed to find amusing.

NATHAN

Two fat lesbians join weight watchers, and one says to the other, you are what you eat, the other replies...are you calling me a cunt.

EWAN

They say that men particularly of the gay persuasion are sex mad, but honestly, she was a nymphomaniac, a regular Blanche du Bois. She was like fucking Tesco Express, fucking everywhere and open all hours.

Whenever he goes out with that bike, it's always the same, coming home, taunting me with stories of flirtation, the only time he drank vodka was with her...stumbling up the stairs and then in the darkened room...are you asleep? If I didn't respond, he'd turn on

Breaking the Class Ceiling: Addressing Socio-Economic Barriers and Advancing Inclusive Practices for Working-Class Artists in the UK Arts Industry

John Maguire 2025

the 100-watt light bulb. The forced attempt at a fuck, of course when things didn't function it was my fault.

'Monsters don't make relationships, relationships make Monsters.'

NATHAN

I am sorry, you made me do it.

NATHAN PICKS UP THREE OF EWAN'S BOOKS AND WALKS BACK TO HIS SIDE OF THE ROOM. HE TEARS ONE SLOWLY AND THROWS IT ON THE FLOOR. EWAN IS SHOCKED, NUMB. NATHAN RIPS THE SECOND BOOK FASTER AND SCATTERING THE PAGES AROUND THE SPACE.

EWAN

Please, please don't they are not mine. The colleges. Please you don't have to do that. Please, please...stop...stop...Pack it in now, fucking stop it.

EWAN WALKS OVER TO NATHAN AND TRIES TO PRISE THE BOOK OUT OF NATHANS HAND. NATHAN PULSS THE BOOK WITH FORCE. RIPS THE PAGES AND SHOWERS EWAN WITH THE CONTENTS.

(PAUSE)

EWAN STAYS ON THE SPOT.

NATHAN

I am sorry you made me do it.

NATHAN TAKES THE KEY FROM EWANS NECK. HE TAKES THE TRUNK CENTRE STAGE AND OPENS IT. HE READS ONE OF THE MANY LETTERS, REJECTION LETTERS FROM PUBLISHERS.

Mr Writer, Mr Writer, rejection letters...not just one mind, how many are here?

Breaking the Class Ceiling: Addressing Socio-Economic Barriers and Advancing Inclusive Practices for Working-Class Artists in the UK Arts Industry

John Maguire 2025

EWAN

Stop it.

NATHAN

Think you'd get the message, really, what a fooking delusion
(LAUGHS) People like you don't become writers, when will you learn.

EWAN

(Mutters/beaten)
Rejection is the greatest aphrodisiac. (he laughs)

NATHAN

Simply...you are an utter failure.
NATHAN WALKS TO THE BACK OF THE STAGE AND BECOMES A
TEACHER

NATHAN

Ewan Joyce, clearly you are no relation to James, this essay is quite frankly appalling...you say you want to become a writer my boy, well if I was you clearly, I'd be re-thinking my career plans.

EWAN

The dread of the 7 am morning call, the walk to the schoolyard. I had to develop hard skin...faggot and the like. I remember praying every night, to make me better. I didn't want to be different or unique, even though mum said it was a good quality. Mums know, they just know. I became immune to it, no facial reaction although inside it hurt. I remember I could get through a whole morning and start to enjoy school and then one person would mutter a remark and that was it. You know even now at 31, I still have to have

Breaking the Class Ceiling: Addressing Socio-Economic Barriers and Advancing Inclusive Practices for Working-Class Artists in the UK Arts Industry

John Maguire 2025

something to worry about, something to prevent me from just...well just...you know, I'd love to be stupid, but I always have to question, question, question...

(PAUSE)

I even tried to run with the hares once I realised, I couldn't run with the hounds.

The teachers were worse. I had to attend a catholic school ran by Nuns, the sisters of sadism.

I was bright, enthusiastic my school report stated... I couldn't put my thoughts down, the words just jumbled up, the Nuns as if picking up on my tormentors, decided to ally with them, a kind of Hitler/Stalin agreement. They made me read out my answers or share with the class my spellings of certain words, funny I can't remember that part of the bible, I must have overlooked it.

I stopped trying then.

It was only when I left having served my time that I started to learn something. I read nonstop and continued to take in like a sponge. Candles take me back to those biblical school days, yellow beeswax communion candles. Plastic petals matching the plastic beliefs, a faith that scars as it supposedly heals.

I sit and wait.

NATHAN BRINGS A VASE OF DEAD ROSES INTO THE SPACE AND POSITIONS THEM ON THE COFFEE TABLE.

NATHAN

The flowers in here are dead, but I cannot bring myself to throw them out.

Breaking the Class Ceiling: Addressing Socio-Economic Barriers and Advancing Inclusive Practices for Working-Class Artists in the UK Arts Industry

John Maguire 2025

EWAN SITS IN HIS SPACE READING. NATHAN PUTS HIS WORK COAT ON AND RETRACES HIS EXACT MOVEMENTS FROM THE BEGINNING OF THE PLAY.

EWAN

Nice day at the office, honey?

NATHAN

Just (PAUSE) dandy and you?

EWAN

Oh, the usual...you know, this and that...this and that (PAUSE) this and that.

NATHAN

This and that...this and that

Breaking the Class Ceiling: Addressing Socio-Economic Barriers and Advancing Inclusive Practices for Working-Class Artists in the UK Arts Industry

John Maguire 2025

3. *Weave*

Breaking the Class Ceiling: Addressing Socio-Economic Barriers and Advancing Inclusive Practices for Working-Class Artists in the UK Arts Industry

John Maguire 2025



Supported using public funding by
ARTS COUNCIL ENGLAND
LOTTERY FUNDED

Arts Groupie Presents
WEAVE

LIVERPOOL'S ROYAL COURT

THURS 28TH, FRI 29TH, SAT 30TH NOVEMBER
TICKETS: £12 (CONSESSIONS £10) - 7.30 PM
LIVERPOOL'S ROYAL COURT STUDIO
WWW.LIVERPOOLSROYALCOURT.COM/WHATS-ONWEAVE
E: boxoffice@royalcourtliverpool.com | T: 0151 709 4321

Breaking the Class Ceiling: Addressing Socio-Economic Barriers and Advancing Inclusive Practices for Working-Class Artists in the UK Arts Industry

John Maguire 2025

WEAVE

By John Maguire (original version)

WEAVE, first staged in 2012 at the Lantern Theatre, part of the Shiny New Festival.

The play was revived in 2019 and staged at Liverpool Royal Court Studio. Adapted with additional material by Samantha Alton.

Cast:

Arabella/Renata/Queenie

Andrew Tomo /Teacher/Paparazzi/Television/Farmer/King

MUSIC PLAYS FOR A FEW MOMENTS BEFORE THE ACTION BEGINS,

Hot Stuff' by Ashley Simpson.

THE LIGHTING SHOULD BE LIKE IN A DISCOTEQUE.

ONSTAGE A HAT STAND, A CHAIR, A MANNEQUIN AND A MIRROR.

THE HAT STAND HAS ALL THE COSTUME NEEDED THROUGHOUT

THE PIECE.

Breaking the Class Ceiling: Addressing Socio-Economic Barriers and Advancing Inclusive Practices for Working-Class Artists in the UK Arts Industry

John Maguire 2025

A SCOUSE GIRL ENTERS THE SPACE CALLED ARABELLA.
SHE HAS HER HAIR IN CURLERS AND WEARS SUNGLASSES AND A TRACKSUIT.
SHE IS LADEN WITH HUGE BAGS FROM TRENDY CLOTHING COMPANIES, CRICKET AND ALL SAINTS.
SHE ENTERS THE SPACE EXTREMELY EXHAUSTED. SHE INTERACTS WITH THE AUDIENCE, EXCHANGING IMPROVISED COMMENTS/INSULTS.
SHE DROPS THE BAGS ON THE STAGE AND THEN TAKES OUT FROM INSIDE THE DESIGNER BAGS, PRIMARK BAGS. THEY ARE HIDDEN WITHIN THE DESIGNER ONES.
HER MOBILE PHONE RINGS.

ARABELLA

Hang on hang on!
SHE STRUGGLES TO FIND HER PHONE. IT IS IN ONE OF THE BAGS AND THEN WHEN SHE DOES FIND IT, LOOKS AT THE NUMBER AND ANSWERS IT.

ARABELLA

Hiya Queen, yes just been in town, I am done in...yes got my hair done, lashes tinted and a quick go in TANTASTIC...No not HOT N TENDER it's shite... I stopped putting on the false tan cream, I was told it makes you put weight on, but I don't know what they are on about, I only put it on my skin, I don't eat it like...yes DEAD excited, a night out...I don't bleeding care if he calls, we are so over, I don't know what I ever saw in him. I don't mean to be purposefully cruel like, but he has the kind of face that would bring a tear to a glass

Breaking the Class Ceiling: Addressing Socio-Economic Barriers and Advancing Inclusive Practices for Working-Class Artists in the UK Arts Industry

John Maguire 2025

eye. They say love is blind, in his case I must have been bloody Stevie Wonder.

(LAUGHS)

Oh well it all kicked off because he wanted me to get a tattoo of his name on me arm or lower back at a push. I said, I'll only put a man's name on my body if he can ejaculate chocolate and gold. I said to him Andrew, I said, the best bit of you slid down ye ma's leg...So tonight, we are going out girl, hit the decks...he's one cheeky bastard, the melt... he has been messaging me to death. Can he not get the message? His mates don't even get me started on his mates, his so-called best mate, the lanky piece of piss, he's like a dog with two dicks. His asshole must get dead jealous with all the shit that comes out his mouth. And his other MATES, they have got the brains of a rocking horse.

Trying to get info off me on Facebook, one of them is even trying to get me to go out on a date, proper sly. But I mean I steer away from all that Fakebook business now, even me Nans on it! I know it's proper wrong,

(PAUSE)

Me Nan poking me, wrong on so many levels.

But I did try with Andrew, you know what finished it for me. I sent Andrew a text message to try and be romantic. If you are sleeping send me your dreams, if you are laughing send me your smile, if you are crying send me your teardrops.

(PAUSE)

How did he respond? I am having a shit what do I do?

So BINBAGGED!

Breaking the Class Ceiling: Addressing Socio-Economic Barriers and Advancing Inclusive Practices for Working-Class Artists in the UK Arts Industry

John Maguire 2025

Oh I've walked the length of Liverpool One...R.I.P my little feet...I get me foundation and Mac make up from the smack rats but that's it, they try and sell cheese and meat to me, but I mean who'd buy their tea off those skanks?

I've got a new frock, new shoes and I forgot to tell you new Hair extensions, but not just normal extensions like, but RUSSIAN Hair. Oh, me weave will be AMAZO, It's a cosmetological necessity girl...£300...I know me Mum hit the roof. I can't afford to pay her keep but I can afford hair like.

I said, but it's RUSSIAN HAIR.

SHE RUMMAGES AROUND IN HER BAGS TO FIND THE HAIR EXTENSIONS AND THEN READS THE LABEL OUT LOUD.

Its cuticle correct, bound together with an intricate technique, ensuring the hair does not come away from its sturdy weft.

Get yours on and we can have a weave off girl.

No, she won't tell me dad, he'd go mental. Yes, I told him you and the girls were coming around for a few sherbets and a cheeky lady. He doesn't mind no, he said something about us leaving the house every Saturday night like the terracotta army in drag, I don't know he's proper dusty, probably a band from the seventies!

What? the devils' dandruff, oh that yes why not. SOMETHING FOR THE BEAK END. Yes, towards the end of the night when we are feeling a bit done in, no, I know it's not the same now as it was back in the day, a mixture of Persil and baby powder.

Me nasal hair will come out whiter than white. £30 for a bag of Daz, it's scandalous.

Breaking the Class Ceiling: Addressing Socio-Economic Barriers and Advancing Inclusive Practices for Working-Class Artists in the UK Arts Industry

John Maguire 2025

Oh, I'll have to watch it if we are dancing, me disco nipple bled like a river last time we went out.

Listen I hope bleeding Teresa doesn't iron her dress in the kitchen, the margerinee...you know every time she irons her outfit in her Ma's kitchen, the smell of cheap margarine, like stalk, oh it lingers, it knocks me sick, it stinks all night, like a jarg Calvin Klein mixed with I cannot believe it's not utterly butterly. I know...I know...she's a slut, a slut a slut with the morals of a dog on heat...her vagina has been used more than Google.

While we are on the subject of dresses, are you sorted for ladies' day? It's only 22 days till the races and I still haven't got a dress. Well, it's four o'clock now so I just need to wax me legs, get a bath and that, so do you want to come over about seven to get ready? Oh, HANG ON, I forgot to tell you, have you seen that woman on Bold Street? No not her Big isssssuuueeeeeeeeeeeeeeee, Big isssssssssssssssssssuuueeee. I thought it was her...Well, it doesn't matter but I felt like someone was following me when I bought the hair. I got dead paro though because its £300, you can't even get a weave on steds for that price. I was panicking like, this woman looked Polish, no I am not being homophobic, but she gave me this little white envelope and said, please read this, proper freaked me out. I was shaking like a shitting dog.

No, I am going to open it in a minute, probably all that Jesus army stuff. I mean he didn't die for me like. My brother says he was the first gay anyway, as all he did was hang around with men who washed his feet and his best mate was a prozzie, the first ever fag hag and he could always make wine appear from nowhere, not

Breaking the Class Ceiling: Addressing Socio-Economic Barriers and Advancing Inclusive Practices for Working-Class Artists in the UK Arts Industry

John Maguire 2025

sure about his fashion though. But you know our Billy and his views, I think it all comes down to when he was an altar boy, something must have happened with one of them PRIESTAPHILES. Anyway, I think I am definitely going to hell now. I'll see you later doll. Bye-bye bye.

ARABELLA HANGS UP THE PHONE AND PUTS IT ON THE CHAIR

ANDREW TOMO ENTERS THE SPACE.

THEY STARE AT EACH OTHER. THEY ARE STOOD EITHER SIDE OF THE STAGE.

ANDREW TOMO

Alright girl, ye ma let me in.

ARABELLA

I told you, didn't I? Am going out with me mates

SHE IGNORES HIM AND STARTS TO PUT EYE MAKE UP ON.

ANDREW TOMO

I know I was just passing like. Jack dropped me off after footie.

ARABELLA

You haven't even said I look nice.

ANDREW TOMO

Give us a chance love.

ARABELLA

That's your problem lad, you never bleeding notice.

ANDREW TOMO

You look a million dollars.

Breaking the Class Ceiling: Addressing Socio-Economic Barriers and Advancing Inclusive Practices for Working-Class Artists in the UK Arts Industry

John Maguire 2025

hoodie on, do they now? Parading around in packs with hands clasped down the front of their trousers. Afraid someone might rob it or maybe if you pull enough times, you might make the thing get that little bit larger.

ANDREW TOMO

Alright girl, alright no need.

ARABELLA

I am all for the trackies like, I don't mind them; they brighten up a dull high street, especially if it's all JC.

ANDREW TOMO

JC?

ARABELLA

You know joggers cock!

ANDREW TOMO

Ye what!

ARABELLA

Or perhaps it's to impress JACK, the trainee footballer stroke fitness instructor stroke athletic GOD, with buns of steel and that torso, so, so hot you could fry an egg on his killer abs.

ANDREW TOMO

Hey now, I don't want you looking at other lads.

ARABELLA

Me, I've seen the way YOU look at him.

ANDREW TOMO

What do you mean? Are you calling me a fruit?

Breaking the Class Ceiling: Addressing Socio-Economic Barriers and Advancing Inclusive Practices for Working-Class Artists in the UK Arts Industry

John Maguire 2025

ARABELLA

You practically undress him with your eyes.

ANDREW TOMO

Don't talk wet!

ARABELLA

And you never stop talking about him, Jack this, Jack that, after you play five aside on a Wednesday afternoon, do you have a sneaky peek when he's getting in the showers?

ANDREW TOMO

Fuck off, I like MINGE alright!

ARABELLA

Very defensive, aren't we? You know what they say though, what's the difference between a straight man and a gay man?

ANDREW TOMO

No what?

ARABELLA

Four pints of Stella.

ANDREW TOMO

You are not right in the head you girl.

ARABELLA

I am winding you up, you melt...talking of the GAYS.

ANDREW TOMO

I hate the way people say, the Gays, the ASDA, the AIDS, there is no bleeding 'the' before it, is there?

Breaking the Class Ceiling: Addressing Socio-Economic Barriers and Advancing Inclusive Practices for Working-Class Artists in the UK Arts Industry

John Maguire 2025

ARABELLA

Anyway, as I was saying before you interrupted me the way you bleeding do, we'll probably end up in the HOLE bar later, after Concert square, so if you do want to meet up later in the night.

ANDREW TOMO

I told you, I am going to Billy's and it's probably going to get messy. So, who knows? I can't plan like you.

ARABELLA

We may even venture to Slater Street.

ANDREW TOMO

I've told you I don't like you going there, always full of people on the pull.

ARABELLA

But it's alright for you to ponce around the Dock where your ex-girl works? Talk about double standards, just come the pink part of town, there's never any trouble there.

ANDREW TOMO

Are you messing and get harassed by that drag queen, who's like Bruce Forsyth in a dress, fingers the size of Mars bars, telling the same bastard jokes, week in, week out, 'shall I let you into the family secret, I am not your aunty lad, I am your Dad!' Ho bloody hum. Stop please I cannot take any more of this humour, twang there goes another rib. I don't know why, oh why you girls love the queens. They think they are ever so classy like Coco Chanel but come across more like Coco the Clown. And the HOLE bar, a glittered crack den, go downstairs after midnight, there's glamour

Breaking the Class Ceiling: Addressing Socio-Economic Barriers and Advancing Inclusive Practices for Working-Class Artists in the UK Arts Industry

John Maguire 2025

for you. It's like a gay version of 28 days later, people chew, chew, chewing their faces off, what a treat for a Saturday night.

ARABELLA

Instead, you would rather sit in your Billy's listening to THE Floyd, talking nonsense, eating shite when the munchies set in. At least I dance off the calories, that's why I can get away with eating the cheese pasties from Greggs.

ANDREW TOMO

Dance, dance, dance? You basically cling to the nearest victim to stop you from flying on your ass. Great choreography, what do you call it, the epileptic jive?

ARABELLA

Look can we stop with this bitching, Jesus, your worse than a gang of girls.

ANDREW TOMO

Alright Queen, Have a good night, just be careful, towns full of knob heads.

ARABELLA

I thought you said you were staying in (LAUGHS). Calm calm, just jesting, are you coming to me Nan's on Sunday night?

ANDREW TOMO

Of course, your Nan is a legend, what was that bottle of wine she got me for my birthday, PAPA de NAF.

Breaking the Class Ceiling: Addressing Socio-Economic Barriers and Advancing Inclusive Practices for Working-Class Artists in the UK Arts Industry

John Maguire 2025

ARABELLA

Oh yes, she bought it from Marksies or S & M as she calls it. No, my favourite has to be when she told me about her take on the Princess DIANA tragedy, she would have been alright if the PAVAROTTI wasn't chasing her through the tunnel.

ANDREW TOMO

Fuck me if a fat Italian was running after me, I'd crash my car.

ARABELLA

I love the way she's like down with the kids, proper hip, texting and that. She took her phone with her the other night to the bingo, I said text me or one bell me when you are on the way home. Anyway, it started to get late and no response, so here I am worried sick like, and I am thinking all kinds of horror stories and then she comes waltzing in. Hello love, you're an anti-social cow Ellen, not texting me back. But get on this she'd only gone and took the television remote out with her, not the phone, she'd only gone and taped EastEnders.

ANDREW TOMO

Eight times you've told me, bleeding hell girl and you have the cheek to call her SKY NEWS, because she repeats herself on the Hour every Hour with the same bastard story!

ARABELLA

Oh, wait till I show you what I got in town today.

ANDREW TOMO

The complete works of Shakespeare

Breaking the Class Ceiling: Addressing Socio-Economic Barriers and Advancing Inclusive Practices for Working-Class Artists in the UK Arts Industry

John Maguire 2025

ARABELLA

Funny you aren't ye?

ANDREW TOMO

I try, I try.

ARABELLA

You are very trying. Look hair, not just any hair but Russian hair.

ANDREW TOMO

It looks like a rat.

ARABELLA

Eh! Ye bleeding swine

ANDREW TOMO

Besides, you're only trying to outdo Teresa in the WEAVE stakes
RAPUNZEL, I mean her hair is something else, it's beautiful.

ARABELLA

When she bleeding washes it the dirty bitch. Teresa can go and wash her face with a scabby fanny. I cannot believe you are actually putting this on the same level as that one. I am fuming. She gets her hair cut in memory of Vidal Sassoon, a bob she calls it, it looks more like a chemo wig from the seventies. Now she's hanging around all those Boho arty types. You know the ones that don't believe in deodorant and like to sit on the old couches in the windows of the Forest Bar, pondering, pondering, pondering... stinking more like. I said Teresa I am not going there on a night out, you go, you go and knit yourself a personality. She looks at me all condescending, now she's started a night school class in photography, a friggin victim of her own self-importance.

Breaking the Class Ceiling: Addressing Socio-Economic Barriers and Advancing Inclusive Practices for Working-Class Artists in the UK Arts Industry

John Maguire 2025

ANDREW TOMO

Alright leave the poor girl alone, her ears must be burning. Saucer of milk for you Kitty and make it a large one.

ARABELLA

Carry on mouth, your dull wit needs all the sharpening it can get. Besides I HAVE to TREAT MYSELF, I mean if I waited for you to make a romantic gesture.

ANDREW TOMO

It's your birthday next month. I am saving the romance for then, you know make it special.

ARABELLA

What do you mean make it special? What have you got planned?

ANDREW TOMO

It wouldn't be a surprise if I told you, is there anything particular you don't want you old cow.

ARABELLA

Don't get lippy!

ANDREW TOMO

I'll get mascara then...although you stick them spider lashes on it's a wonder you can see anything.

ARABELLA

They enhance my eyes.

ANDREW TOMO

They make you look like George from Rainbow.

Breaking the Class Ceiling: Addressing Socio-Economic Barriers and Advancing Inclusive Practices for Working-Class Artists in the UK Arts Industry

John Maguire 2025

ARABELLA

I wish you had a friggin Zip, Zippy to shut that trap of yours. Just because I like to make a bit of an effort. The only time I see you in a suit is once a year, when you go the Grand National Ladies Day.

ANDREW TOMO

Ladies Day indeed, if ever there is a discretion in a title, its Ladies day. I sometimes think I should demand a refund for being mis-sold goods. Ladies Day indeed.

ARABELLA

Eh, you cheeky melt I go religiously, and I am a lady.

ANDREW TOMO

I am saying nothing.

ARABELLA THROWS A SHOE AT HIM.

ANDREW TOMO

You my love are the exception to the rule. You have to admit it is something to be seen, the things that contaminate your eyes, all fascinators and floral dresses peeled over burst couches the colour of faded orange. What a sight? Do you remember that old girl last year staggering fag in hand and a glass of Lambrini?

ANDREW TOMO MIMICS THE ACTION OF THE DRUNKEN LADY. HE FALLS ON HIS KNEES.

What was it she poetically quoted?

ANDREW TOMO POINTS TO HIS KNEES.

Hey lad you can get these free on the NHS.

Breaking the Class Ceiling: Addressing Socio-Economic Barriers and Advancing Inclusive Practices for Working-Class Artists in the UK Arts Industry

John Maguire 2025

ANDREW TOMO POINTS TO THE CIGARETTE STILL IN THE OTHER HAND.

But you cannot get these!

ARABELLA LAUGHS

ARABELLA

She was a proper show, imagine if that was ye Ma, Christ you'd be completely devo'd.

ANDREW TOMO

A fine filly, if she was my horse, I'd have her put down.

ARABELLA

You can't knock them though; it's alright to dream a little, isn't it?

THE LIGHTING SUDDENLY CHANGES TO DENOTE A DREAM SEQUENCE.

ANDREW TOMO TRANSFORMS INTO A TEACHER.

ARABELLA

pray tell me what the devil do you want to be when you grow up?

ARABELLA MORPHING INTO A CHEEKY SCHOOL KID

When I grow up, I want to be orange, constantly tanned, consistently looking like really healthy, proper radiant with a capital R. I am not talking Ompah Lompah orange like, but well a bountiful beauteous bronzed babe, looking fabulously tantastic. Spending my days going around the boutiques like, getting me nails done and generally living life like a superstar.

ANDREW TOMO TURNS INTO A PAPARAZZI PHOTOGRAPHER. LIGHT FLASHES ON STAGE TO INDICATE A CAMERA BULB.

ANDREW TOMO

What do you feel about the subject of cheating?

Breaking the Class Ceiling: Addressing Socio-Economic Barriers and Advancing Inclusive Practices for Working-Class Artists in the UK Arts Industry

John Maguire 2025

ARABELLA

Oh, I don't mind if he has the odd affair, at least it will give me a night off; anyway, I can just like turn a GUCCI sunglass blind eye to it.

ANDREW TOMO

Your thoughts on divorce?

ARABELLA

If he does want a divorce, well then, I can take him to the cleaner's, set myself up for life like. And if I get some time, I can do a bit of work for charity like, you know, give something back, get back to me ROOTS and I don't mean me hair, you know like me heritage, to like keep it real. I might even adopt a kid or two, if I feel like it, do a Madonna. I don't mean have a fuck buddy half my age, I mean adopt a little unfortunate, you know, like my kid matches my couch. Don't think I can afford to go to Malawi. I'll have to go to Birkenhead instead.

LIGHTING RETURNS BACK TO ARABELLA'S ROOM.

ANDREW TOMO

Hey girl, are you alright Ground Control, are you with me?

ARABELLA

Oh Andrew, I don't want to settle. I want to travel the world and see all those exotic places like PFELLI, just the sound of it is amazo! Take in loads of different couture's and see people from different

Breaking the Class Ceiling: Addressing Socio-Economic Barriers and Advancing Inclusive Practices for Working-Class Artists in the UK Arts Industry

John Maguire 2025

backgrounds. The bleeding geography teacher just laughed and said the only thing I'd be seeing is behind the checkout till in Morrison's or the benefit office queue. SILLY MARE, she thought orgasm was a Greek island.

ANDREW TOMO

Bleeding hell girl we were only having a chin wag about the races, I didn't need you to perform a Miss World Speech.

ARABELLA

Sorry lad, I don't know what's up with me today. I am not myself at all.

Right, you, I really need to get ready. And remember don't be harassing me later on when your off ye tits.

Sending me loads of blank texts. 3 or 4 dependent on how shitfaced you are: Premature textjaculation.

If I throw a stick, will you go away?

ANDREW TOMO LEAVES THE SPACE.

ARABELLA SWITCHES ON THE TV AND ANDREW TOMO ENTERS THE SPACE WITH A FRAME AROUND HIM, LIKE A TELEVISION SET.

HE RECREATES THE FOLLOWING SERIES OF ADVERTISEMENTS:

Ladies are you plagued by malicious menacing bunions. Do your feet look more like Bilbo Baggins than Bardot's?

HELP is at hand!

Now transform the gammy foot with instant glamour! BLING THAT BUNYON.

A simple use of jewellery couture and diamante paint can bedazzle the problematic foot stain, so BLING THAT BUNYON. It's like a glittery diamond ring for the foot.

**Breaking the Class Ceiling: Addressing Socio-Economic Barriers and Advancing
Inclusive Practices for Working-Class Artists in the UK Arts Industry**

John Maguire 2025

(PAUSE)

SHE SWITCHES THE TELEVISION OFF. ANDREW TOMO LEAVES THE SPACE.

ARABELLA'S MOBILE PHONE RINGS.

SHE LOOKS AT WHO IS CALLING.

Oh, here's the margarinee now, her ears must have been burning before.

Hiya Queen, How are ye? Good, good. What Teresssssssse, Am I wearing that Maxi dress? No, I am not; I got a brand new one. Of course you can lend it babe. Yes, It's the same one Alex Curran had....well the copy of it in Solitaire; I know that it's true because I heard the woman saying it on the microphone. Argh are you going to be wearing your new perfume, flora, oh sorry girl I mean fleur de merde. What it's made from pure sunflower oil...oh rape seed. Listen Teresse, you can keep the dress; if you want, I mean you can only wear these things once now can't ye. Since I've been on that 5:2 diet, it's a bit big for me really. Oh, you wanna have a go of it yourself, you won't know yourself, neither will I? And you can still go to Mackie's on it. Oh, you spoke to Stace, yes, she rang me before for all the Goss. Yes, Russian hair, real Russian hair, real virgin Russian hair, touched for the very first time. Eh you, I am not like that Stacey, you know, I know. I know, she's a slut. You know when we're out; oh, isn't she a slut I know, I know. Yes, she uses Rohypnol to get rid of a headache; she said it's better than Anadin. What, what letter? Oh, that letter? The one given to me by the weird woman, yes did Stace tell you? It proper freaked me out. Well, I don't bleeding know what it says; I am too busy trying to

Breaking the Class Ceiling: Addressing Socio-Economic Barriers and Advancing Inclusive Practices for Working-Class Artists in the UK Arts Industry

John Maguire 2025

sort your wardrobe out babes (LAUGHS), what am I? Bleeding Cock
wan. Alright I will let you know what it says, I will read it straight
away now, yes bleeding hell, see you later...Tara, Tara, Tara.....

ARABELLA MOVES HER BAGS LOOKING FOR THE LETTER.

SHE FINDS IT AND PLACES IT DOWN ON THE GROUND IN THE
CENTRE OF THE STAGE.

SHE TAKES HER COAT OFF AND PUTS IT ON THE COAT RACK.

SHE TAKES A HEADSCARF AND PUTS IT ON AND BECOMES THE
NEXT CHARACTER A PRISONER IN A EUROPEAN COUNTRY, RENATA
PETROVKA.

SHE PLACES A CHAIR ON ITS SIDE, CENTRE STAGE AND RIPS THE
PRIMARK BAG OPEN TO CREATE A FLAT FLOOR SPACE DIRECTLY
NEXT TO THE CHAIR.

THIS INDICATES A SMALL PRISON.

RENANATA SITS AND READS THE LETTER.

THE LIGHTING CHANGES TO DEPICT A SMALL SOLITARY SPACE, TO
SHRINK THE STAGE, LIKE A PRISON CELL.

RENATA PETROVKA

To Whom It May Concern, you do not know who I am; you
probably do not care, so consumed by superficiality, so caught up
in your little pool of life. My name is Renata Petrovka, where I
come from does not matter. I am a prisoner. I was put away for a
small crime that in your country would not even be recognised. I
have managed to sneak a letter out through my sister who has sent
it to a relation in United Kingdom I think that if I can just tell one
person that will be something. Life in the prison is tough, it is a
cruel place.

Breaking the Class Ceiling: Addressing Socio-Economic Barriers and Advancing Inclusive Practices for Working-Class Artists in the UK Arts Industry

John Maguire 2025

I come from nothing; poverty was the only thing I inherited from my family. I come from a line that stems back to Bohemia and the Kings and Queens. The only thing that I have to remind me of those golden days is my red hair. As a child the other villager children would skit and swipe at me for this, but my mother used to tell me stories of the Bohemian queens and how their red hair empowered them. How it helped to form a net and capture the hearts and minds of the best of men, kings and aristocracy. Today I see you have bought red hair to beautify yourself, red hair to lure a lover perhaps. I wonder what colour is your hair; I hope you gain your prize. I hope you like this hair. I hope you like this hair particularly as it is mine!

You see here in the prison, the guards do what they want really; we do not have the measures in place. So, to increase their salaries,
(PAUSE)

AS THE FOLLOWING LINES ARE EXECUTED SHE MIMES THREE SHAVES OVER HER HEAD.

They shave off our hair, they shave it all off.

Of course, we are told it is for health, and it is easier to contain things like lice, it is cleaner, it is for our own good. They rob us of our freedom, they rob us of our bodies and then they rob us of the only thing that makes us feel female...you ask me why. I ASK WHY? You may also like to know the sale of human hair can be taken from corpses, yes dead people. The head shaved and then processed. How does that make you feel? Have you ever given any thought to where this comes from? Had you?

Breaking the Class Ceiling: Addressing Socio-Economic Barriers and Advancing Inclusive Practices for Working-Class Artists in the UK Arts Industry

John Maguire 2025

When I was a child, every night my mother would wash my hair, pouring the water through it with her little brown jug that had been passed on through generation; a little lapis lazuli gem decorated its side. She would tell me tales of Bohemia of old and there is one particular tale that sticks in my head. One that I would like to share with you....

Once upon a time, upon a time once, there lived a rich king in bohemia. The king and his queen lived for many many years very happy until one day his wife just passed away. He was lost in grief for years until one day he decided he needed to marry again. Word spread out across the land, ladies who had been on the shelf decided to polish up their acts and put themselves back out there on the marriage market. One clandestine lady who had spent some time in court developed a conceited plan.

A PIECE OF MUSIC BY DVORAK PLAYS, SERENADE FOR WIND IN D MINOR, OP44.

RENATA STRIKES FIVE GESTURES INSPIED BY FIVE IMAGES FROM PRE-RAPHAELITE PORTRAITS AND MOVES OVER TO THE HAT STAND ADORNS HERSELF IN A MEDIEVAL TIARA AND CLOAK AND BECOMES QUEENIE. LIGHTING CHANGES TO INDICATE CANDLELIGHT.

QUEENIE

The king has drowned in grief too, too long. He needs a queen. I need to decorate my face; I need to adorn myself with all my charms, careful not to take the C off charm as you know what that brings. There's a squatter in my face. The problem with beauty is that it's like being born rich and getting poorer and poorer. Men

Breaking the Class Ceiling: Addressing Socio-Economic Barriers and Advancing Inclusive Practices for Working-Class Artists in the UK Arts Industry

John Maguire 2025

become more attractive when they start looking older. But it doesn't do much for the female of the species, though we do have one advantage...MAKE UP

Time to make myself beautiful, a woman without paint is like food without salt.

I need to ensure there are not too many candles in the castle when I attend dinner. This is kinder to my visage. At a certain angle and a certain light, it is as if the very air brushes the years away from my face. I could use a hat, but everybody knows the fisherman hooks and clips trick. If only I had longer hair, that would help bring back a few of my lived years.

The only thing I regret about my past is the length. If I had to live my life again, I'd make all the same naughty mistakes...only sooner. If you obey all the rules, you miss all the fun.

But where oh where can I get some Russian hair? Once the king casts his eyes on me, how can he resist, but I do need to get this wasted weave of mine sorted.

I know there is Arabella the poor farmer's daughter, so pure, so chaste...so boring. She has the most beautiful blonde locks. If I was to weave those threads into my own, I would become a tapestry of seduction. But how would I get her to cut those locks, why of course offer her father payment in return for the shredded locks. His harvest has failed thrice so he will no doubt have no choice in the matter, oh my, oh my, oh my, sometimes I impress myself.

QUEENIE WALKS OVER TO THE MANNEQUIN THAT HAS STRING FLOWING OUT OF THE TOP, REPRESENTING HAIR. THE FARMER

Breaking the Class Ceiling: Addressing Socio-Economic Barriers and Advancing Inclusive Practices for Working-Class Artists in the UK Arts Industry

John Maguire 2025

ENTERS THE SPACE AND SAYS NOTHING APART FROM GRUNTS. HE GRABS THE MANNEQUIN, INDICATING IT IS HIS DAUGHTER.

QUEENIE

I am sorry...farmer man, do you mind asking your daughter to not come so close when we are talking, I find her odour quite offensive, you would think that here on a farm you'd at least be able to cultivate, to grow, develop some sort of aromatic flowers of sorts to help with the problem....I mean how many times a day do you have to clean the pigs yard?

THE SEQUENCE (THE NEGOTIATION) IS ENTIRELY MIMED, CULMINATING IN QUEENIE TAKING OUT A SMALL BAG OF MONEY AND THROWING IT ON THE FLOOR. THE FARMER GATHERS THE MONEY PUSHES THE MANNEQUIN IN THE DIRECTION OF QUEENIE AND LEAVES THE SPACE.

It took a little cutthroat negotiation but,

QUEENIE CLICKS HER FINGERS

I get what I want.

SHE TAKES A PAIR OF SCISSORS AND CUTS SEVERAL STRANDS OF STRING FROM THE MANNEQUIN.

And now to court.

A PIECE OF MUSIC BY DVORAK PLAYS, SERENADE FOR WIND IN D MINOR, OP44.

THE KING ENTERS THE SPACE. HE STANDS POMPOUSLY AWAITING QUEENIE TO GREET HIM HE HOLDS OUT HIS HAND.

KING

Please kiss my ring.

Breaking the Class Ceiling: Addressing Socio-Economic Barriers and Advancing Inclusive Practices for Working-Class Artists in the UK Arts Industry

John Maguire 2025

QUEENIE

I bet you say that to all the girls.

KING

I am more into women than mere flits of girls...how old are you?

QUEENIE

That's a very direct question your Madgesty.

KING

Well, I am the king (HE LAUGHS).

QUEENIE

Let's just say I ...

KING

Have been around the courtyard.

QUEENIE GOES TO SPEAK BUT IS AGAIN INTERRUPTED

KING

... A few times.

QUEENIE

I am.... (PAUSE) mature?

KING

...Of a certain age (PAUSE)

KING LOOKS VERY CLOSELY AT QUEENIE, SCRUTINISING HER FEATURES.

QUEENIE

I think women are like fine women, the older they get, the better they taste.

Breaking the Class Ceiling: Addressing Socio-Economic Barriers and Advancing Inclusive Practices for Working-Class Artists in the UK Arts Industry

John Maguire 2025

KING

That depends on if they have been CORKED or not.

QUEENIE DIRECTLY TO THE AUDIENCE.

QUEENIE

I can see this is not going to be a majestic maraud around the park...I am going to have to UP my game...shall we dance.

THE QUEEN TAKES THE KING BY THE HAND.

MUSIC PLAYS LOUD GRACE JONES' LIBERTANGO.

THEY BEGIN TO DANCE

DURING THE MOVEMENT QUEENIE USES ALL OF HER FEMININE CHARMS TO ENTICE.

THE NEXT SEQUENCE INVOLVES AN IMPROVISED SERIES OF MOMENTS THAT ILLUSTRATE QUEENIE IN FULL ON SEDUCTION MODE, LISTENING, LAUGHING, IT CLIMAXES WITH A WEDDING PROPOSAL.

SHE IS DELIGHTED.

QUEENIE TAKES OFF HER TIARA AND PLACES IT ON THE MANNEQUIN. SHE NOW BECOMES RENATA. THE FOLLOWING STORY IS MIMED WITH RENATA USING THE MANNEQUIN TO REPRESENT QUENNIE.

RENATA

That night, retiring to her room in the castle, she was extremely pleased with herself. Although she had not drank too much red wine, she was extremely hot; she opened up the castle shutters to let the night breeze in. Her head felt particularly tight. Her head felt

Breaking the Class Ceiling: Addressing Socio-Economic Barriers and Advancing Inclusive Practices for Working-Class Artists in the UK Arts Industry

John Maguire 2025

like it was spinning around, something not right. She looked in the mirror glass; her eyes seemed to deceive her, for the very locks of hair seemed to move.

But then two of the locks moved directly up in the air and started to tug, started to pull.

RENATA USES THE MANNEQUIN TO EXPRESS THE FOLLOWING: THE HAIR EXTENSION SEEMS TO BE DRAGGING QUEENIE FROM HER CHAIR TOWARDS THE WINDOW.

Her very hair pulled her towards the open window, and she grasped and grabbed but the unseen force would not cease. It pulled with such ferocity.

THE MANNEQUIN IS THROWN ON THE FLOOR

THE FLOOR MIRRORING THE PRE-RAPHAELITE PICTURE OF ORPHELIA. THE VEIL IS DROPPED OVER IT TO EMPHASISE THE FALL.

The woman who would have been Queen fell from the tower window 80 ft high landing in the moat below.

There was a look of terror on her face that no funeral director in the land could take away.

A closed coffin was the only option.

So, you enjoy your night out and I hope you get what you want...

And never let you forget....be careful what you wish for.

RENATA LIES ON THE GROUND ADJACENT TO THE MANNEQUIN.

A MOBILE PHONE RINGS LOUDLY

THE LIGHTS FLASH ON. RENATA TRANSFORMS INTO ARABELLA ANSWERS THE PHONE.

Breaking the Class Ceiling: Addressing Socio-Economic Barriers and Advancing Inclusive Practices for Working-Class Artists in the UK Arts Industry

John Maguire 2025

ARABELLA

Hiya Queen, I've had the weirdest bleeding dream. Is that the time girl? Sorry, I don't know I must have been asleep or something. Oh yes, are you? I've changed my mind; No, I am leaving the hair extensions. No, I am not going to wear it tonight love. I think my own hair is really nice enough. I am not having a pop, I am just saying. I think I am going to take it back tomorrow, yes, no...nothing, I've just decided? Nothing's wrong. Alright see you later.

ARABELLA ASKS THIS QUESTION DIRECTLY AT THE AUDIENCE.

Who am I trying to impress anyway?

BLACKOUT.

MUSIC FLOODS THE AUDITORIUM, THE TRACK PLAYED IS, Keep young and beautiful BY ANNIE LENNOX

Breaking the Class Ceiling: Addressing Socio-Economic Barriers and Advancing Inclusive Practices for Working-Class Artists in the UK Arts Industry

John Maguire 2025

4. Passing Through

Breaking the Class Ceiling: Addressing Socio-Economic Barriers and Advancing Inclusive Practices for Working-Class Artists in the UK Arts Industry

John Maguire 2025



Passing Through by John Maguire, directed by Jamie Lee.

Performed at Llanover Hall, Cardiff, 2015.

Passing Through. (online) YouTube.

Available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=R6lPlhTRheM>

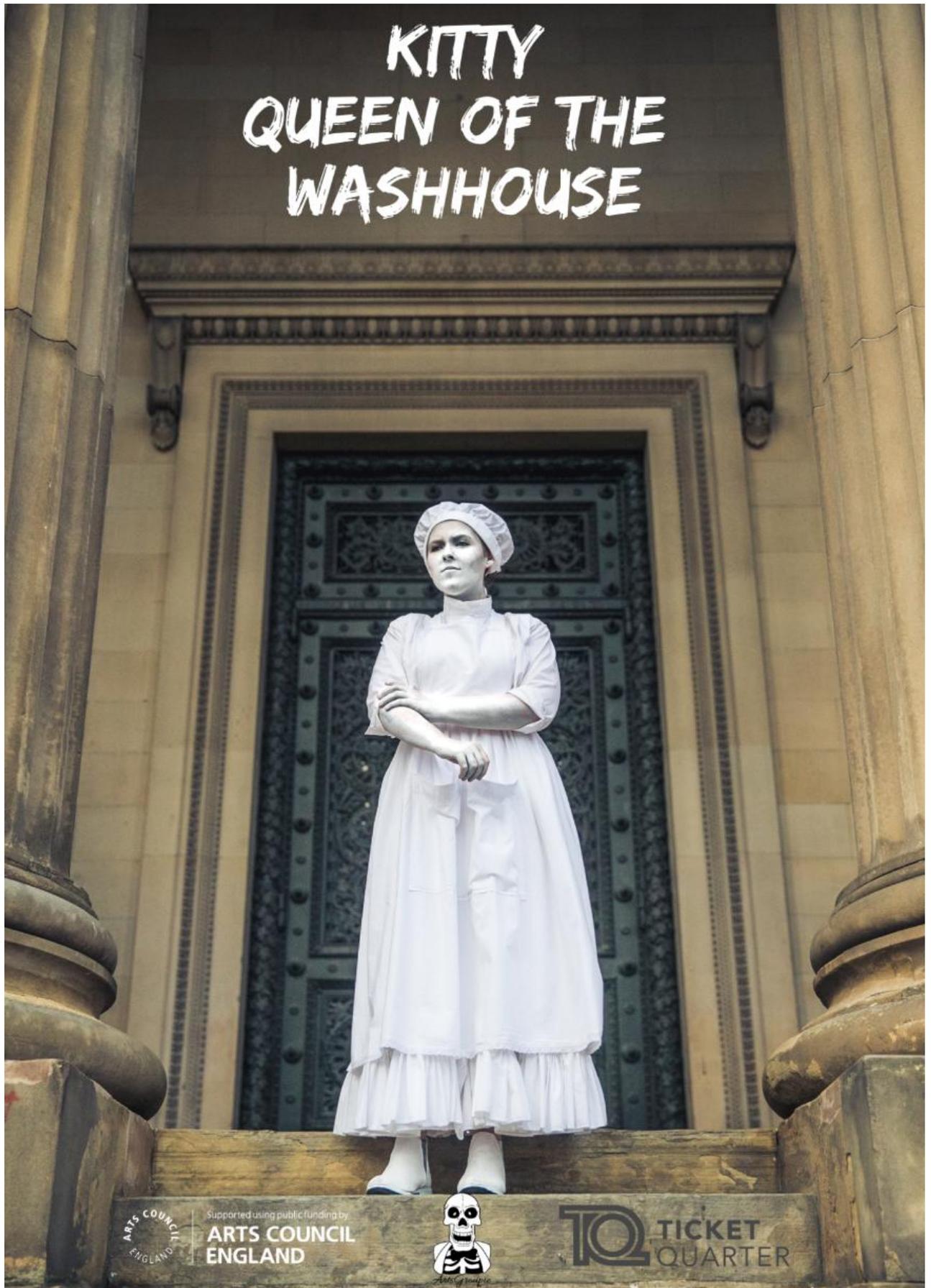
**Breaking the Class Ceiling: Addressing Socio-Economic Barriers and Advancing
Inclusive Practices for Working-Class Artists in the UK Arts Industry**

John Maguire 2025

5. Kitty: Queen of the Washhouse

Breaking the Class Ceiling: Addressing Socio-Economic Barriers and Advancing Inclusive Practices for Working-Class Artists in the UK Arts Industry

John Maguire 2025



Breaking the Class Ceiling: Addressing Socio-Economic Barriers and Advancing Inclusive Practices for Working-Class Artists in the UK Arts Industry

John Maguire 2025

KITTY: QUEEN OF THE WASHHOUSE

A One Woman One Act Play

By John Maguire

Cast of Characters:

Kitty Wilkinson:

A female who begins the play as a child but ages throughout the play through physicality.

Mill Owner (V.O.):

A male Lancastrian voice. Authoritative and gruff.

Directed by Margaret Connell

Designed by Margaret Connell, John Maguire and Samantha Alton

Lighting by Liz Barker

Breaking the Class Ceiling: Addressing Socio-Economic Barriers and Advancing Inclusive Practices for Working-Class Artists in the UK Arts Industry

John Maguire 2025

Play Notes

Catherine Wilkinson (1786-1860) was an immigrant from Derry, Ireland, arriving in Liverpool in 1795, aged nine.

Despite many personal tragedies and hardships, Catherine spent her life caring for the poor and needy of the Liverpool Slums which she called home.

In 1832, during a cholera epidemic, Catherine, as the only owner of a washer boiler in her street, helped stem the disease in her neighbourhood by washing her neighbour's sheets in a solution of chloride of lime.

Her efforts were recognised, and she was placed in charge of the first public washhouse and baths in Britain.

Catherine, better known as Kitty, has become a symbol of community, working class resilience, and selflessness.

'Kitty: Queen of the Washhouse' was first staged at full-length in 2019 at St. George's Hall, Liverpool. The story is told through the statue of Kitty Wilkinson, who as of 2024, is the only woman with a statue in St George's Hall amongst 11 men.

The actress playing Kitty is to be dressed in all-white, mid-19th century style clothing (befitting of a working-class woman of the time); and any visible skin should be painted white also.

Breaking the Class Ceiling: Addressing Socio-Economic Barriers and Advancing Inclusive Practices for Working-Class Artists in the UK Arts Industry

John Maguire 2025

Staging History

Kitty: Queen of the Washhouse was originally staged at St. George's Hall, Liverpool in 2019. The play's original run lasted five years with 48 performances, playing at venues including Shakespeare North Playhouse, Knowsley; King's Arms Theatre, Manchester; and King's Head Theatre, London; as well as numerous smaller venues.

Breaking the Class Ceiling: Addressing Socio-Economic Barriers and Advancing Inclusive Practices for Working-Class Artists in the UK Arts Industry

John Maguire 2025

ACT 1

MUSIC 1: 'SHE MOVED THROUGH THE FAIR'

SFX 1: WATER LAPPING

KITTY'S STATUE is on a plinth centre stage.

The set consists of sheets strung up on washing lines behind Kitty.

Downstage Right there is a lightweight table, placed upside down and covered over entirely by a sheet. Hidden in the table is a bundled sheet, arranged to look like a baby.

Downstage Left there is an old-fashioned wash bucket filled with a long, shimmering blue material. Old rope surrounds the bucket.

An old fashioned chair is placed stage left in front of the washing line. There is a shadow puppet box hidden behind the plinth.

There are a few sheet bundles placed around the stage.

Kitty remains in her tableau vivant on her plinth until she feels comfortable that the show can begin. She gives a wink to the audience, then starts to break free of the plinth.

Stretching and yawning, she steps down from it; addressing the audience and breaking the fourth wall.,

KITTY

That bloody pedestal, I never asked to be on it in the first place!

'Hound of Heaven', 'Queen of the Washhouse', 'Saint of the Slums'...and don't get me started on what they wrote on my tombstone.

Oh please, I don't mean to be rude, but I cannot be doing with such gushing accolades. People always talk about your goodness of character when you are gone...when you are here you have to get on with it don't you?

Breaking the Class Ceiling: Addressing Socio-Economic Barriers and Advancing Inclusive Practices for Working-Class Artists in the UK Arts Industry

John Maguire 2025

(PAUSE)

My name is Catherine Seaward, but you can call me Kitty. That's what me Mam used to call me. Me Mam had a ditty for every occasion, and if she didn't, she'd make one up. She was great in the art of spinning and lace making, and she could read and write. Rare for a working class lady then.

My Father...I only have vague recollections of a soldier's uniform. I cannot remember his voice at all, and his face... hard to recall, it's shadowy in my mind.

We were what you would call a skilled working class family.

(PAUSE)

Now I have to confess to you, I am not a true, true Liverpoolian, I came from Derry, Ireland.

Derry and early life in Liverpool blend into one, countryside and fields that's all I can recall.

We left the Emerald Isle for Liverpool in 1794, 4 years before the rebellion.

Liverpool the new frontier town, the dock expansion was creating a land of opportunities.

We set sail to start our new life on a frosty February morning.

SFX 2: KLAXON BLARING

Kitty runs forwards. Taking on a child-like physicality

SFX 3: SEA SOUNDS AND SHIP CREAKING

Breaking the Class Ceiling: Addressing Socio-Economic Barriers and Advancing Inclusive Practices for Working-Class Artists in the UK Arts Industry

John Maguire 2025

PROJECTION 1: WAVES

Kitty excitedly moves around the ship looking in every crook and cranny. She imitates the ship rocking and movements.

A projection of the sea waves is shone on to Kitty's white clothes and projected on the sheets behind her.

KITTY

I will never forget the sound of the ship; it sang its own tune, the whistling of the deck, scratching of the ropes, the moaning rigging and the constant bashing into the waves. A maritime orchestra.

It was the perfect place for me and my brother to explore. Father kept his eye out to sea, but really, he was watching us.

Kitty reaches under the sheet covering the upside down tables and withdraws the baby bundle, cradling it in her arms.

KITTY

Mam cradled our infant baby sister and sang. Smiling every now and then at us, so we didn't feel left out.

We were looked after.

There is nothing like that is there, that feeling you have when you are looked after. Security, pure love. Nothing beats that at all.

Kitty places the bundle under the sheet on the upside down table.

SFX 4: GULL/CORMORANT CALLS

Kitty sees a bird approaching in the distance.

KITTY

An hour into our voyage a giant bird appeared on the ships mast.

Breaking the Class Ceiling: Addressing Socio-Economic Barriers and Advancing Inclusive Practices for Working-Class Artists in the UK Arts Industry

John Maguire 2025

Father said it was a cormorant; known as the leaver bird, apt really. Wings like intricate black lace, a long neck and a golden yellow hooked beak. It seemed to glare at me, I glared back, and when it could not stand my stare no more, it spread its wings and was away.

SFX 5: STORM STARTS

Kitty grabs two legs of the upside down table which becomes the ship. The sheet over it acts as the ship's mast. Kitty slides it back of forth.

KITTY

As the evening closed in enveloping the clouds into a blue-black peach, the boat became more alive. The everyday noises, vibrations, cranked up, every nuance multiplied. And that sunrise, my word, I will never forget that orange glow, heavenly.

The pink drew a line straight across the clouds. It's funny how you always remember the minute details of certain days.

That particular day stained my mind, and no amount of scrubbing could get rid.

The stage lights dim allowing the projection of the rough waves to light the stage.

KITTY

We could see England, we were nearly there. The Irish Sea had not been as bad as we'd expected.

Our new life would soon begin.

SFX 6: WIND PICKS UP. SHIP CREAKING INTENSIFIES

Breaking the Class Ceiling: Addressing Socio-Economic Barriers and Advancing Inclusive Practices for Working-Class Artists in the UK Arts Industry

John Maguire 2025

KITTY

The clouds became a gigantic purple angry bruise. The kind of damage you see on a drunkard's face. Our little boat tossed around like a tiny cork. It absorbed so much water, like a sponge.

The wind howled in anguish, like it was crying about what was going to happen.

The desperate crew worked frantically trying to steer the piece of driftwood we called a ship into Liverpool Bay.

Sand banks on either side meant this wasn't easy, the channel was so narrow.

The screams on board and the sounds of the tempestuous elements combined to create a noise beyond horrific.

Not near half as bad as the *sound* me Mam made when...

(PAUSE)

Sorry I am getting ahead of myself.

SFX 7: SHIP BREAKING IN HALF. STORM CONTINUES

KITTY

The storm snapped the mast like a twig. We lost all sense of direction.

People from Formby could see the boat was floundering. The only lifeboat in the area was launched. It reached us just in time, the ship suddenly split in two.

Breaking the Class Ceiling: Addressing Socio-Economic Barriers and Advancing Inclusive Practices for Working-Class Artists in the UK Arts Industry

John Maguire 2025

Mam, the baby, my brother and I found ourselves huddled together on the boat, safe. As it fought the choppy waters, I remember seeing the back of our sailing ship sink.

(PAUSE)

We never saw father again!

PROJECTION 2: SHADOW PUPPETRY (OPTION)

Kitty reveals the hidden shadow puppetry box which she rests on the plinth.

Using a torch, the following sequence is depicted through shadow puppetry.

There is an option of having the shadow puppetry projected on one of the washing line sheets at the same time, depending on the venue size.

KITTY

Mam huddled us together, close to her, I could smell her skin, and clothing was drenched in salt water. The baby gurgled away; she didn't seem at all upset, her light blue eyes, shone in the darkness. The lifeboat battled on and we were making our way slowly but surely to the land.

A gale force wind slapped us from the side, without warning and snatched the baby out of me Mams arms and was washed overboard.

Gone, in the blink of an eye. The tiny bundle sank in the murky waters.

The Mersey took her for her own.

Then the howl from me Mam,

That scream.

Breaking the Class Ceiling: Addressing Socio-Economic Barriers and Advancing Inclusive Practices for Working-Class Artists in the UK Arts Industry

John Maguire 2025

It was the worst sound I ever heard.

Mam was never the same again.

The sea took her that day too, not physically but mentally.

Her soul drowned with that baby.

LX: GENERAL SNAP AND SFX7 SNAPPED OFF. BLACKOUT.

KITTY

The physician who examined her said she would eventually lose her sight and without a doubt, eventually her sanity. 'Brain freeze' they called it, for her mind would forever recall that moment. How could you forget it?

I lost my father that day, I lost my baby sister, and I lost me Mam.

As Kitty addresses the audience, she removes the sheet from the upside down table, and fold it.

KITTY

That is how we arrived in Liverpool. I was nine years old.

We found ourselves lodgings in the North End of town.

Denison Street.

It's hard to imagine now but this part of town was all fields and meadows.

She flips the table it on its side so its top faces the audiences.

KITTY

The street was full of professionals and trades people, the cellars were rented out to the poor. Troglodytes, Cave dwellers.

Breaking the Class Ceiling: Addressing Socio-Economic Barriers and Advancing Inclusive Practices for Working-Class Artists in the UK Arts Industry

John Maguire 2025

I was blessed as few poor children are blessed for, I was introduced to a blind friend who became like a mother to me.

Kitty produces a rag and scrubs the tables as she speaks.

KITTY

Mrs Lightbody. She employed me and Mam in domestic work and took a chance on us when nobody else would.

She was blind and had a passion for charity work, it's what she lived for.

Mams eyes were not as bad yet, so she taught the servants lacemaking, reading and writing.

Mrs Lightbody encouraged me to develop my reading too.

Kitty steps away from the table to imitate Mrs Lightbody in mannerism and voice.

KITTY

'Kitty, poverty will probably be your portion through life, but you will have one talent to exercise, you may be able to read for half an hour to a sick neighbour, or to run an errand for those who will have no one else to go for them. Promise me child that you will try to do what you can for others, and then we may meet again in another world, where I shall be thankful to see you above me.'

She became my benefactress and started to rely on me to help at her work going about her duties.

SFX 8: BUSY STREETS, DOCKS, SEAGULLS

Breaking the Class Ceiling: Addressing Socio-Economic Barriers and Advancing Inclusive Practices for Working-Class Artists in the UK Arts Industry

John Maguire 2025

KITTY

I became quite fond of Mrs Lightbody and her little quirks, on the days when she visited the poor she was carried around on a sedan chair.

Kitty mimics carrying Mrs Lightbody's sedan chair along the road.

KITTY

Her lameness meant she was unable to walk or get into a carriage. It was my job was to knock on the doors of those less fortunate.

Kitty grabs a basket.

KITTY

I used to take a little basket and walk by her side, then she would say to me: 'Kitty go into that cellar and see how the poor woman is today. Is there any fire in the grate? Has she any coals?'

Then she would send me to get what was wanted and when I came back, if it was wet, she would say, 'now go and put your feet to the fire and tell me what you thought of so and so'

Oh, Denison Street was lovely, on a clear day you could see over to the Welsh mountains. This was before they built all the docks and warehouses.

I used to tease Mrs Lightbody by saying, I could see Scotland.

Kitty imitates Mrs. Lightbody.

KITTY

'Now, now child, I may be blind, but I am not stupid. I can see more than most people who are blessed with *perfect* vision. My blindness is not a dis ability it's *an* ability.'

Kitty begins to wrap a sheet into a bundle as she talks.

Breaking the Class Ceiling: Addressing Socio-Economic Barriers and Advancing Inclusive Practices for Working-Class Artists in the UK Arts Industry

John Maguire 2025

KITTY

I've never forgotten her Can Do attitude and how she never let anything stop her from getting out and helping those less fortunate.

The Mersey was rammed full of ships.

Each arrival was announced by the ringing of the bells of St. Nicholas' Church, sails billowing, hundreds of masts together without sails made them look like bare branches, leaves shed for the winter. Knowing that they would soon bloom again.

I was only eleven when Mam became so ill; she had to enter the Liverpool infirmary. When she came out, she decided it was best if she went back to Ireland to be looked after by her friends and then return when she had was better.

I had Mrs Lightbody. Mam felt I was strong enough to be left alone. Mrs Lightbody didn't think so.

Kitty imitates Mrs Lightbody again.

KITTY

'Kitty you are a sensitive soul, delicate, I think you would find life more tranquil in the country. Besides this pool of life is not the place for a young lady to spend her formative years.'

Mrs. Lightbody had a relative, Mrs Hudson, who ran a mill in Caton, Lancashire, my brother and I were sent out there until Mam's return.

Kitty places the bundle on her head, holding it in place with one hand, with the other she holds the hand of her brother and leads him to the table which

Breaking the Class Ceiling: Addressing Socio-Economic Barriers and Advancing Inclusive Practices for Working-Class Artists in the UK Arts Industry

John Maguire 2025

is still on its side. This becomes their carriage. Kitty kneels behind it and bobs up and down to simulate the movement of the carriage on the uneven road.

SFX 9: HORSE AND CARRIAGE ON COBBLES

KITTY

The journey to the mill was horrendous. I felt every *bump-*

Kitty jolts the table.

KITTY

-in the road. Lancashire was thriving, the cotton industry booming. As we drove into the village there was a massive ancient oak tree holding court in the centre. I remembered it because, I didn't know at the time, but it would be a long time before I'd see outside again.

When we arrived, the mill was overrun with young boys, so the owner-

Kitty acts out the child being pulled away from her.

KITTY

The owner decided to send me brother to another mill. Just like that.

(BEAT)

I never saw him again. Never knew what happened to him. I tried to find out later but nothing.

Another bit of my heart was chipped away.

It was just me, me on my own.

PROJECTION 3: MACHINERY CLOGS

Breaking the Class Ceiling: Addressing Socio-Economic Barriers and Advancing Inclusive Practices for Working-Class Artists in the UK Arts Industry

John Maguire 2025

SFX 11: MILL MACHINERY

SFX 12: MILL OWNER VOICEOVER

Twisting and turning machinery clogs are projected on to Kitty and the sheets.

Kitty looks up at an invisible presence

MILL OWNER (V.O.)

Right then, who do we have here?

KITTY

Catherine Seaward, Sir.

MILL OWNER (V.O.)

Oh, very grand. *Catherine Seaward.*

KITTY

Yes, Sir. I've been sent here by Mrs Lightbody-

MILL OWNER (V.O.)

Speak when you are spoken to, Child.

KITTY

Yes, Sir, sorry. Mrs Lightbody told me to mention it, and she has sent a letter too.

MILL OWNER (V.O.)

Do you go by another name?

KITTY

Kitty, Sir.

MILL OWNER (V.O.)

Kitty? As in cat?

KITTY

Yes, Sir.

MILL OWNER (V.O.)

You seem a little different from our usual children. Can you read and write?

Breaking the Class Ceiling: Addressing Socio-Economic Barriers and Advancing Inclusive Practices for Working-Class Artists in the UK Arts Industry

John Maguire 2025

KITTY

Yes, Sir.

MILL OWNER (V.O.)

And sew, and make lace?

Kitty nods.

MILL OWNER (V.O.)

Oh, quite the young lady, aren't you?

KITTY

If you like, Sir.

MILL OWNER (V.O.)

I do like, Missy. Don't bother reading this form, there is a terrible queue, and I want to be finished by today if possible. All you need to do is put your sign or mark, whatever you like, *there*.

KITTY

What is this form?

MILL OWNER (V.O.)

Your contract, your contract of employment, my dear.

How old are you?

KITTY

Eleven years of age.

MILL OWNER (V.O.)

Oh well, you are lucky enough then to be in employed work for a good stretch of time. A little bit of security for you, My Dear. What comfort in these uncertain times we live in.

Kitty looks to the audience.

Breaking the Class Ceiling: Addressing Socio-Economic Barriers and Advancing Inclusive Practices for Working-Class Artists in the UK Arts Industry

John Maguire 2025

KITTY

That *form* bound me like all the other mill children 'til the age of 21. Poor Mrs Lightbody thought she was helping me. My goodness, if only she knew.

It was only a few days into my stint at the mill, that I got word about Mrs Lightbody.

She died of a sudden illness.

I was trapped.

I hid the book that she gave me on the day I left Liverpool, 'Watts hymns'. I treasured that tiny book 'til my dying day. I kept it wrapped in one of her scarfs. Both the book and the material still retained her scent.

Kitty tinkers with the table, busying herself in work.

KITTY

We were not allowed to leave. We were chaperoned to and from the apprentice house to the Mill and back. Locked in every night. Sometimes we had to sew till the lights were switched off.

Kitty kneels behind the table. We feel Kitty's confinement. She produces an embroidery frame and begins to sew.

KITTY

The lodgings. Girls one side. One room around. Thirty bodies. Boys the other side in divided rooms. Small groups to stop the fighting.

Beds like bakers' trays; crates with high sides. Two girls shared a bed stuffed with straw. It was only changed once a year.

Breaking the Class Ceiling: Addressing Socio-Economic Barriers and Advancing Inclusive Practices for Working-Class Artists in the UK Arts Industry

John Maguire 2025

Thankfully, I never had to share with a bed wetter.

That I knew from the other girl's experience was horrendous.

The first Factory Act came out in 1802. It shortened working hours to twelve a day-

Oh, and no later than 7pm.

We had to be instructed in the 3 Rs during working hours. As I could already read and write to a good standard, thanks to Mrs Lightbody, I was tasked with instructing the other workers.

My experience in the Mill was better than most who lived there, because I could read and write. Mr. Hudson took a shine to me, I was treated like his own family. He watched over our mental and moral progress, devoting his evenings to our amusement by teaching and playing a variety of games. This togetherness made me feel so secure.

Mr Hudson would often say: 'One against the world is tough, two is better, three, four even better. Kitty, always strive to create a community to nurture and care for. That is where happiness truly lies.'

I also taught the children a few hymns from my book and a few Mill songs. I loved singing, it made me feel closer to Mam.

Kitty starts to sing a mill song. As she does so, she folds various sheets on the stage into neat piles.

I'M A FOUR LOOM WEAVER, AS MANY A ONE KNOWS,

Breaking the Class Ceiling: Addressing Socio-Economic Barriers and Advancing Inclusive Practices for Working-Class Artists in the UK Arts Industry

John Maguire 2025

I'VE NOWT TO EAT, AND I'VE WORN OUT ME CLOTHES,
ME CLOGS ARE ALL BROKEN, AND STOCKINGS I'VE NONE.
THEE'D HARDLY GIVE TUPPENCE, FOR ALL THAT I'VE DONE

OLD BILLY O' BENT, HE WERE TELLING US LONG,
WE'D HAVE BETTER TIMES, IF I'D NOT HELD ME TONGUE,
WELL, I HELD ME TONGUE TIL I NEAR LOST MY BREATH,
AND I FEEL IN MY HEART, THAT I'LL SOON STARVE TO DEATH

I'M A FOUR LOOM WEAVER, AS MANY A ONE KNOWS,
I'VE NOWT TO EAT, AND I'VE WORN OUT ME CLOTHES.
OLD BILLY WERE RIGHT, BUT HE NEVER WERE STARVED,
HE NEVER PICKED OVER IN HIS LIFE

WE HELD ON FOR SIX WEEKS, THOUGHT EACH DAY WAS THE LAST,
WE TARRIED AND SHIFTED, TIL WE WERE QUITE FAST,
WE LIVED UPON NETTLES, WHILE NETTLES WERE GOOD
AND WATERLOO PORRIDGE WERE BEST TO US AS FOOD

I'M A FOUR LOOM WEAVER, AS MANY A ONE KNOWS,
I'VE NOWT TO EAT, AND I'VE WORN OUT ME CLOTHES,
STOCKING I'VE NONE, NOR LOOMS TO WEAVE ON,
I'VE WOVEN MYSELF TO FAR END.

KITTY

I found a real passion for teaching. It was also a great deal easier than the back breaking mill work.

Breaking the Class Ceiling: Addressing Socio-Economic Barriers and Advancing Inclusive Practices for Working-Class Artists in the UK Arts Industry

John Maguire 2025

The carters would bring news of Liverpool and tales of how the town was becoming the gateway to the world.

I desperately yearned to see the Mersey again and be home in Denison Street.

I knew it was going to happen one day.

At 18, I was allowed to take up lodging in the village.

I started to get paid a salary and I saw the ancient Oak tree on a daily basis. That Oak had seen some changes and still stood strong.

I never saw Mrs Lightbody after I went to Caton but every word she said is precious and graven deep in my heart.

Kitty impersonates Mrs Lightbody.

KITTY

'Well done is better than well said.'

'Cleanliness is next to godliness Kitty, never let you forget.'

I often wondered what would have become of us if it hadn't been for Mrs Lightbody.

If I ever wanted to make a decision, I'd ask myself, what would Mrs Lightbody do?

Kitty stands.

KITTY

I was quite content now in the village, teaching in the mill, it was a tranquil place to live. I received a note-

Breaking the Class Ceiling: Addressing Socio-Economic Barriers and Advancing Inclusive Practices for Working-Class Artists in the UK Arts Industry

John Maguire 2025

Kitty receives a letter from an invisible carrier. Kitty's physicality changes to that of an adult from this point.

-that Mam had returned from Derry and although still not in full health, she had decided she needed to be with me.

My friends in the village tried to dissuade me, they said I was not right in the head to return to the pure poverty when the Mill and my little dwelling was so comfortable.

But my Mam needed me, I was all she had. I knew what I had to do; I needed to return to the pool of life.

Kitty moves to the bucket Downstage Left. In a swift motion, she pulls the shimmering blue material from the bucket and drifts it across the stage to represent the Mersey.

KITTY

The first thing I noticed about Liverpool was the stink of the sea and industry. The lime kilns in Lime Street, stale ale, baked bread, potent coffee masked the more undesirable smells that came from an overcrowded city and its many, many privies.

I was home.

Kitty grabs the table and stands it vertically so that it towers.

KITTY

I had savings but only a meagre amount. The bulky bullying workhouse perched on the top of Brownlow hill, like a vulture ready to swoop down and claim another poor wretch.

Breaking the Class Ceiling: Addressing Socio-Economic Barriers and Advancing Inclusive Practices for Working-Class Artists in the UK Arts Industry

John Maguire 2025

We lived in its shadow, a constant reminder of what could happen.

Kitty sits back down in the chair and sews on her embroidery frame.

KITTY

I found domestic work as a servant for a Colonel Maxwell and his wife. They allowed me to join their Unitarian church. Here I got a little respite albeit briefly for one hour a week. And I could sing there.

I was happy working there for one year and started to relax a little but I of all people should know you never know what's around the corner.

The family decided to leave Liverpool and begged me to go with them. But I could not leave me Mam behind; I could not put her in the infirmary, could I?

What kind of a daughter would that make me?

I wasn't out of work long next employed by a Mr Richard Heywood. His wife gave me a very good training. The vigilant observation which she exercised over the work really struck me. They kept me on time for a full three years.

I didn't have an easy time of it though oh no. Mam started to wander off in the middle of the night. That feeling when I knew she vanished was brutal. After a few times I recognised a pattern of routine to her flight of madness. She'd always head to Denison Street, back to familiarity. I'm just glad she didn't try and go back to Derry.

Her erratic behaviour became too much, I could no longer leave her alone in the day for long stretches at a time. I had to leave my job. But I had a plan.

Breaking the Class Ceiling: Addressing Socio-Economic Barriers and Advancing Inclusive Practices for Working-Class Artists in the UK Arts Industry

John Maguire 2025

‘Work smarter not harder’, that’s what Mrs Lightbody used to say.

I managed to find a large room to rent, with a bed in a corner and ample space, so I opened a school.

In those days you didn’t need a licence just the ability to read and write. Thruppence, a week per pupil. I taught the 3 R’s and also sewing. I didn’t have to leave Mam alone during the day anymore. I could occupy her in the corner making lace and then after the school was closed, I could go out and sell it.

Win, win.

Only this project was short-lived. Mam’s behaviour became even more unpredictable, dangerous. She started to burn things, our small stock of food, lace, bedding, anything, a regular arsonist.

One occasion, the neighbours were obliged to make a forcible entry through the window to save me poor Mam’s life.

All I wanted to do was to pass skills on, to teach and help the poor people like me to have some skills to find employment.

I had to close the school.

Mam became like the devil.

Breaking the Class Ceiling: Addressing Socio-Economic Barriers and Advancing Inclusive Practices for Working-Class Artists in the UK Arts Industry

John Maguire 2025

She started to become violent, firstly with me, which I could handle, but then she started to turn on the children.

I had no other option.

Poor soul, she didn't know what she was doing, she was sick.

I could not, I would not, put me Mam in one of those hospitals, no way.

It was not her fault.

Kitty starts a short reprise of the mill song. During this song, she enters the audience and sells items to them.

I'M A FOUR LOOM WEAVER, AS MANY A ONE KNOWS,
I'VE NOWT TO EAT, AND I'VE WORN OUT ME CLOTHES,
ME CLOGS ARE ALL BROKEN, AND STOCKINGS I'VE NONE.
THEE'D HARDLY GIVE TUPPENCE, FOR ALL THAT I'VE DONE

OLD BILLY O' BENT, HE WERE TELLING US LONG,
WE'D HAVE BETTER TIMES, IF I'D NOT HELD ME TONGUE,
WELL, I HELD ME TONGUE TIL I NEAR LOST MY BREATH,
AND I FEEL IN MY HEART, THAT I'LL SOON STARVE TO DEATH

Kitty takes the bucket and places it Downstage Centre and begins scrubbing the stage.

KITTY

I had to find other ways to make ends meet, I'd do short charring jobs, work muslins, a plain weave cotton for the

Breaking the Class Ceiling: Addressing Socio-Economic Barriers and Advancing Inclusive Practices for Working-Class Artists in the UK Arts Industry

John Maguire 2025

shops.

Kitty picks up the bucket and takes it centre stage left, looking around shiftily.

KITTY

And at 2am I'd collect manure upon the road, hide it in a hole I'd made in a field in the countryside, beyond Hope Street.

Kitty mimes collecting the manure.

KITTY

When I had a sufficient quantity a gentleman sent for it. Only one person ever saw me do it. And it was one of my neighbours. I was mortified, but the gentleman never spoke about it.

I also managed to find a small cellar for us to rent in Denison Street.

Kitty makes busy with a sheet.

KITTY

I hoped this familiar environment would help improve me Mam's health. An old friend of mothers, Mary Powell lived next door in the basement. It was a pleasure to go and see her, although her cellar looked like a dungeon.

She ended up destitute, so I took her in and although she was deaf and partly sighted. At first, she could earn a little but eventually became blind and totally dependent on me. I had to carry her-

Kitty bundles the sheet over her shoulder and carries as if it were heavy Mary Powell.

KITTY

-up and down the wretched stairs from our cellar.

Kitty places the sheet tenderly down in the chair, grabbing a shorter length of fabric, then turns to the audience grinning.

Breaking the Class Ceiling: Addressing Socio-Economic Barriers and Advancing Inclusive Practices for Working-Class Artists in the UK Arts Industry

John Maguire 2025

KITTY

Denison Street introduced me to the first love of my life.

SFX 13: WOLF WHISTLE

MUSIC 2: 'SHE MOVED THROUGH THE FAIR'

KITTY

Perhaps me Mam knew all along and that's why she kept wandering back here. She was trying to steer me here.

Imagine, falling in love in middle age...at 27!

With a French man, Monsieur Emanuel Demontee.

My Emmy had been a French prisoner of war, but due to overcrowding he was allowed to work in the community.

He passed me on the street. My eyes caught his, goodness! Those dark waters, I dived into them.

He was so handsome. Solid. A man who would support you, no matter what tempestuous storms came your way. I could just tell. We started to have little conversations when we passed on the street-

Kitty flirts with her invisible suitor. She then wraps the fabric around her waist and walks down the centre of the stage like a processional.

KITTY

-and before I knew it, we were walking up the aisle in the parish of St Peter. 5th October 1812, my wedding day.

Breaking the Class Ceiling: Addressing Socio-Economic Barriers and Advancing Inclusive Practices for Working-Class Artists in the UK Arts Industry

John Maguire 2025

I had one condition though; I wouldn't convert to Catholicism, and our children were to be brought up Protestants.

Kitty cradles the fabric in her arms.

KITTY

Not long after, I had my first boy, John.

He was a beautiful baby, he had the same eyes as my little sister which made me cling to him all the more.

Emmy wanted us to start a new life in Canada, we could take me Mam too.

As he was a sailor by trade he got a job in the merchant service.

I was heavily pregnant again, so he said once the baby came, we would all go to French-speaking Montreal together.

He would visit first to prepare for our emigration.

Oh, he was a mountain of a man, shoulders like clifftops, strong hands that could work a rope and grip tight.

Kitty looks up from the baby and allow the fabric to drop and unfurl by her side.

KITTY

Yet his tight grip didn't help him when he drowned at sea.

Homeward bound the waters decided to rob me of another. My second baby was born, the very day he died.

Breaking the Class Ceiling: Addressing Socio-Economic Barriers and Advancing Inclusive Practices for Working-Class Artists in the UK Arts Industry

John Maguire 2025

Me and mam were both widows now!

I became like a ghost, drained of all emotion, I went about my daily duties.

I functioned, but that was all. Another bit of my heart died with him. I loved the kids but now I constantly worried about their welfare. *Is this what life is about?* I thought.

Alone again, two children, no prospects and a senile parent.

Kitty stares blankly in the audience for moment, then springs into action.

KITTY

But there were lots of people like me, alone and I decided to do what I could to look after them.

Kitty grabs the bucket and takes it to the table. She begins a mechanical work pattern.

KITTY

I found a job close by in a nail factory thruppence for 1200 nails. Average earnings were four shillings but in one week I could make up to eight. At a cost though.

Kitty recoils in pain, holding her hands aloft.

KITTY

Fingers constantly burnt with the heat of the molten metal. Blistered and sore, when the burns got too bad, I had no choice but to stay at home until they healed. How I prayed then for them to get better and quickly.

Breaking the Class Ceiling: Addressing Socio-Economic Barriers and Advancing Inclusive Practices for Working-Class Artists in the UK Arts Industry

John Maguire 2025

I did what I could to make ends meet. I am even ashamed to say sometimes friends in church would give me flowers from their gardens, I'd tie them up and sell them as nosegays.

I think they must have known what I was doing...the sheer amount of flowers I received was ridiculous.

Kitty pulls out a rag and scrubs the table vigorously, as well as busying herself folding sheets as she talks.

KITTY

I also got the odd charring job where I'd be fed with the other staff. I'd often ask if I could work through and save my food for later, that way I could take it home to feed me Mam. To make her eat it, I'd have tell her I'd eaten in work and this was leftovers.

Sometimes all we had to eat was thin gruel. We'd close our door, Mam said: 'so that no one can talk'.

I heard one neighbour in church remark, 'I would never starve my belly, with such clothes upon my back.' But is it not better to eat this than to run into debt?

Often, we had no soap to wash the children's clothes. Washing without it was better than not washing at all. Cleanliness nourishes children more than food.

I started to get regular work from two churchgoers reputed for their charitable work. Mr and Mrs Alexander Braik. They were dyers and I helped out at their establishment on Pitt Street. I became quite close to Mrs Braik, she reminded me of Mrs. Lightbody. I nursed her for eighteen months before she died.

Breaking the Class Ceiling: Addressing Socio-Economic Barriers and Advancing Inclusive Practices for Working-Class Artists in the UK Arts Industry

John Maguire 2025

On her deathbed she whispered to me, 'may thy last days be thy best days'. And she gave me strict charge that she would have a plain funeral, no brass plate and the money given away in shoes for the poor.

Nobody was ever the poorer for what they gave to a neighbour in distress.

Mr Braik gave me her mangle to thank me for my assistance during his wife's sickness.

I could now add laundry to my list of part time jobs I could potentially do. I didn't realise at the time how important a tool that would be in later days.

Kitty steps away from the table and addresses the audience with excitement.

KITTY

Then the unthinkable happened, I met the *second* love of my life.

My soul mate.

Mr. Thomas Wilkinson, a porter in the warehouse of Mr William Rathbone. I became very close friends with Eleanor, Mr. Rathbone's wife through the church.

They were good people. And Thomas was an honest man, a bit like my Emmy, not as handsome if I am honest, but he was a moral man. We shared a lot of similar ideas.

SFX 15: 'THE COTTON MILL SONG'

KITTY

We had met before when I was younger, for he worked in Caton Mill too.

Thomas said he heard me singing one night when he walked past the house and recognised my voice from the Mill in Lancashire.

Breaking the Class Ceiling: Addressing Socio-Economic Barriers and Advancing Inclusive Practices for Working-Class Artists in the UK Arts Industry

John Maguire 2025

He was what you would call 'the romantic type'.

I found that instead of something being taken from my heart, now something was growing, a fond affection, I never thought I'd find happiness again.

(Addresses the audience in a whisper)

Especially at the age of 38.

Kitty stands before the blue shimmering fabric that is still stretched across
Downstage.

KITTY

What a dowry I had to offer, 2 children, a senile blind Mother and her deaf, blind friend.
What a catch eh?

I remember the morning of the marriage I took a walk down to the Mersey. Me and her needed to have a word. It always amazed me how every time I saw her, she would look different. That day the waters were exceptionally still, you could have walked on the surface, she was that flat. I realised that the old girl had decided to give me a break.

Kitty smiles. Her physicality changes to reflect her worn body and ageing years.

KITTY

I was happy with my Thomas for 25 years.

Our house became what I can only describe as an open house. Long evenings playing games, listening to music and we had frequent guests from the Liverpool Mechanics Institute.

Breaking the Class Ceiling: Addressing Socio-Economic Barriers and Advancing Inclusive Practices for Working-Class Artists in the UK Arts Industry

John Maguire 2025

Liverpolitans, they called themselves. Thomas' regular income meant we lived frugally but always had ample food supplies. A far cry from when I gave birth to my second child after only sharing a penny loaf with Mam.

One of the neighbours Mrs Jones asked me to look after her children whilst she was ill which I of course did and when she died, my Thomas said he'd cut down on his own food if need be and work longer to take on those unfortunates. If I cannot support them, we will beg together. We ended up with another neighbour's two orphans. So many children passed through.

Kitty sits cautiously down on the chair.

I remember sitting in my retirement I worked out we had around 42 children through the years in and out of our home.

What would have become of me if no one had been kind to me and taken care of me?

We did what we could to help our neighbours, the community and those unfortunates.

I knew too well the cruelty of the fickle finger of fate.

1828 is a year etched in my memory, I was obliged to consent to the removal of me Mam to the workhouse, for the safety of others, it was too, too much.

Kitty grabs a very long sheet from the floor, part of which she drapes over her shoulders and the back of her neck as an effigy of her child.

And my youngest boy was ill.

Breaking the Class Ceiling: Addressing Socio-Economic Barriers and Advancing Inclusive Practices for Working-Class Artists in the UK Arts Industry

John Maguire 2025

I am ashamed to say, I could not cope. When he was a boy, he could only sleep standing up, I would get in from a day's labour and I'd kneel and rest my eyes, with his arms cradling my neck to hold him upright. A mother will do anything for her own child.

SFX 16: KITTY'S ECHOING VOICEOVER

As the voiceover plays, Kitty continues a repetitive motion of draping more and more of the sheet over shoulder and neck. She sits upright clearly in discomfort, cradling the effigy.

KITTY (V.O.)

I had a feeling he was not long for this world, so I asked the minister to enquire how he felt about death, 'I know whom I trust, and it is not in myself, but nobody shall write a book about me when I am dead.'

He passed aged only twenty, A mother should not have to bury her own child. The boy left the request that his body be opened up after his death as he thought I had shown similar symptoms to his sickness. He had not breathed through one lung for 12 years.

I could not eat, rest, sleep. I offered myself, my services to those sick who needed a watcher, a nurse in the night, but attending the ill, made my sadness worse, it brought my lost little boy back to my mind.

Kitty drops the sheet slowly in to a heap beside her.

KITTY

I thanked the Lord I still had my John, he had attended The Bluecoat, a school for the poor and became a Sailor.

Breaking the Class Ceiling: Addressing Socio-Economic Barriers and Advancing Inclusive Practices for Working-Class Artists in the UK Arts Industry

John Maguire 2025

My nerves were shot, every time he went to sea. He was well liked but he caused me lots of distress, he had a hasty temper, and the smallest quantity of liquor produced complete insanity.

A common weakness that a lot of men in this city suffer from, even today, I am sure!

Kitty stands.

KITTY

1832.

The Mersey brought another immigrant to Liverpool but one that was not welcome. Cholera gripped the pool of life. It strangled the life out of Liverpool.

We were tested to the limits of human endurance.

LX: BACKLIGHT

A backlight shines on a Stage Left sheet on the washing line, revealing the silhouette of a body laid out on a table.

Kitty retreats behind the washing line where her silhouette can be seen nursing the body.

KITTY

The first death on Denison Street was a Mr Tolson on May 4th, a widower with two kids. I had made sure Mr Tolsons' two kids were in our house. No child should see their loved one in that state.

I had only just got over English Cholera, this Asiatic strain was something else.

Breaking the Class Ceiling: Addressing Socio-Economic Barriers and Advancing Inclusive Practices for Working-Class Artists in the UK Arts Industry

John Maguire 2025

I could not leave the man on his own. I've never seen the like. Vomiting, sickness from both ends, wrinkled skin, cramps.

His skin turned blue. I approached the corpse.

Kitty recoils.

KITTY

Movement! He is not dead, I thought to myself. He's still fighting, bless him.

Kitty moves Stage Right where her silhouette can't be seen.

KITTY

To add to the horror of the demise, victims would sometimes go on convulsing, having violent fits. No dignity even in death.

A puppet of a dark shadowy figure in thrust above the washing line.

KITTY

King Cholera, we called it, a tyrannical, unruly monarch, draining the life from its subjects.

Nobody knew how it was spread, touch, breath or perhaps extreme panic at just the thought of being in contact with the victim.

Pandemonium in the pool of life, the outbreak was turning it quickly into the pool of death.

As the soundscape play, King Cholera swoops back and forth menacingly, then slowly descending on Mr Tolson's body, until their silhouettes are face to face.

SFX 17: CHOLERA V.O. SOUNDSCAPE

THE TIMES NEWSPAPER (1847) (V.O.)

The dirty streets, the badly ventilated houses and workshops, the overcharged graveyards with their putrid masses, a few inches below the surface in the midst of the

Breaking the Class Ceiling: Addressing Socio-Economic Barriers and Advancing Inclusive Practices for Working-Class Artists in the UK Arts Industry

John Maguire 2025

living continually emitting a poisonous gas, the want of air, light, water show why death is so busy.

JOHN GLYDE (1850) (V.O.)

Disease is the inseparable associate of sanitary neglect.

FRAGMENT 1 (V.O.)

Pestilence, it's the black death returned.

FRAGMENT 2 (V.O.)

...leaves a blue tinge to the skin

FRAGMENT 3 (V.O.)

...he looked emaciated...

DOCTOR (V.O.)

Hot bilious matter, immoderate vomiting, violent pain and distension of the abdomen and intestines. Heart burn, quick pulse, great nausea and sweating, profuse sweating.

FRAGMENT 4 (V.O.)

It ploughed through this city faster than any steam train.

FRAGMENT 5 (V.O.)

King Cholera!

POLITICIAN (V.O.)

This is Our Lords doing, divine providence, a scourge to rid society of the drunkards, the debauched and the profligate.

DOCKER (V.O.)

It's the ships faults, it because of the movement of the ships, the trade routes.

FRAGMENT 6 (V.O.)

The government have poisoned the water supply.

FRAGMENT 7 (V.O.)

Yes, those boats dump dirty contaminated waste in the docks.

Breaking the Class Ceiling: Addressing Socio-Economic Barriers and Advancing Inclusive Practices for Working-Class Artists in the UK Arts Industry

John Maguire 2025

VETERAN (V.O.)

And what about that Miasma in the air, the blue mist, always seen before and during the outbreaks, it was the same in the Crimean War.

FRAGMENT 8 (V.O.)

A transparent bluish haze hanging over not affected by the wind.

FRAGMENT 9 (V.O.)

A bit of beef broth will sort you out.

FRAGMENT 10 (V.O.)

No Calmel or Mercurouse Chloride.

FRAGMENT 11 (V.O.)

Water and salt, that's what you need.

FRAGMENT 12 (V.O.)

White wine, mixed with whey and spices.

ADVERTISEMENT (V.O.)

Physicians of the first eminence who have witnessed its ravages, invariably recommend the use of Pure Brandy as an indispensable requisite and as they have also discovered from practical results that in every case of cholera as a superabundant accumulation of acid prevail, JT BETTS and Co feel it is a duty they owe to the public again to point attention to the superior merits of their distilled brandy.

As King Cholera's face touches Mr Tolson's, the lights snap up and the soundscape ends.

Kitty returns from behind the washing line.

KITTY

'There but for the grace of God go I, Kitty', Mrs Lightbody used to preach.

Kitty turns the table on its side and makes a series of clothes lines.

Breaking the Class Ceiling: Addressing Socio-Economic Barriers and Advancing Inclusive Practices for Working-Class Artists in the UK Arts Industry

John Maguire 2025

KITTY

People were still panicking, having massive bonfires burning the infected sheets and the victims' belongings

As our neighbourhood became infected, I thought to myself if you cleaned the linen, you would probably kill the sickness.

The medical men were unable to meet the calls upon them, so I took their advice.

We had a boiler, so I started to actively encourage the neighbours to wash their bedding with boiling hot water. Now you would say this was common sense, but the thing about common sense is it's not as common as you think. If we used chloride of lime to wash, there was no risk to the person washing.

Me and my Thomas went into overdrive, we devoted all our time and energies to lessen the misery around. We shared our own food, sheets, blankets with the community. The kitchen stove had a constant pot of porridge cooking, and we set up a washroom in the kitchen. Clothes lines in the yard. It was important that clothes were dried properly in the open air.

This cholera would not beat us.

Kitty scrubs the sheets as she speaks.

KITTY

I washed the poorer neighbours bedding and clothing because they had nothing, only each other. They couldn't just destroy all their things.

Breaking the Class Ceiling: Addressing Socio-Economic Barriers and Advancing Inclusive Practices for Working-Class Artists in the UK Arts Industry

John Maguire 2025

To those who could afford it I charged a penny a week, to keep supplies and running costs.

William Rathbone and his wife were a godsend, helping by providing donations, to keep that little washhouse in our kitchen going.

The District Provident Society were very interested in the methods we used to tackle the outbreak. They gave us soap and donated bedding and cast off clothing from the more prosperous families.

We managed to contain it.

I only wished I had more than one boiler, one space and one mangle.

Kitty stands Upstage Centre.

KITTY

After the outbreak, there was lots of social change, regulations about living in cellars were brought in and after much protesting and campaigning, a small washhouse was built on a site in Upper Frederick Street as an experiment in 1842.

Thomas and I were asked to manage it. The day it opened I found a scribbled up note.

Kitty produces a note.

KITTY

34 beds, 158 sheets, 110 blankets, 60 quilts, 140 dozen items of clothing.

Breaking the Class Ceiling: Addressing Socio-Economic Barriers and Advancing Inclusive Practices for Working-Class Artists in the UK Arts Industry

John Maguire 2025

One week in August 1833, all washed, dried and returned to their rightful owners. At an expense of less than six pounds.

The washhouse became a gathering place for the women of Liverpool.

Kitty returns the table to the position it was in at the beginning of the piece.

Dressing the tablecloth like the start. She tidies the stage as she speaks. This time moving more slowly and carefully in her advanced age.

KITTY

Eleanor Rathbone asked me to go to an event with her to Carnatic Hall in Woolton.

Not my thing really, but she was insistent. I had to get a dress for the occasion also...a waste of money.

Kitty looks around the stage in bewilderment.

It was a surprise party.

I was presented with a silver tea service, and the teapot was engraved, 'The Queen, the Queen Dowager and the Ladies of Liverpool to Catherine Wilkinson 1846.'

Can you imagine little Catherine Seaward from Derry receiving such a gift from *The Queen*?

(PAUSE)

My Thomas died not long after from a severe case of bronchitis. He was devoted to me and our family, devoted to the community. He taught me so much, he taught me patience and the security he gave me.

I was blessed.

Breaking the Class Ceiling: Addressing Socio-Economic Barriers and Advancing Inclusive Practices for Working-Class Artists in the UK Arts Industry

John Maguire 2025

I felt it less than the troubles of my earlier life, for I knew that the parting could not be for so very long, I would join him before many years were over

I continued to manage the washhouse, my son John came home to help me for a further twelve years.

On my 60th Birthday the council decided I needed to retire, 4 weeks' pay and away you go, without a pension.

Oh, I was compensated for the loss of my job...the council allowed me to hem all the towels for the new establishment.

Wasn't that good of them?

But one thing you can rely on in this city is its women.

The Liverpool ladies led by Mrs Lawrence of Mossley Hill, campaigned and raised money to provide me with a small annuity.

You don't mess with the women in this town.

Kitty moves back towards her plinth.

KITTY

I died 11th November 1860.

You should have seen the write up in the Liverpool Mercury,
'Pioneer of Baths and washhouses, indefatigable and self-sacrificing, she was the widow's friend.'

I did what I did, that's it, thou shalt love thy neighbour as thy self.

Breaking the Class Ceiling: Addressing Socio-Economic Barriers and Advancing Inclusive Practices for Working-Class Artists in the UK Arts Industry

John Maguire 2025

I don't want to be remembered as Kitty Wilkinson, as Catherine Seaward.

I want *my work* to be remembered, *my work* more than my memory.

Here in Liverpool, we led the way with the washhouse. They were imitated all over the world.

I am made up to have a statue in here though, I have to confess, *the* St Georges Hall.

I remember going to the laying of the foundation stone in 1838 by William Rathbone and then when the Queen opened it in 1854, a building 'worthy of Athens' she said.

But look around you at all the male statues 12 in total. And outside in St Johns' Gardens too. Statesmen, intellectuals, politicians.

Kitty imitates their regal postures.

KITTY

Don't get me wrong, they are right to be celebrated, William Roscoe in here and William Rathbone outside. Particularly those two fine men.

But where is Eleanor Rathbone, Josephine Butler?

(PAUSE)

We need more women in here.

That's where you lot can help, I cannot do anything now can I?

I hate to state the obvious but...I'm dead.

It needs to be HER story, as well as HISstory.

Breaking the Class Ceiling: Addressing Socio-Economic Barriers and Advancing Inclusive Practices for Working-Class Artists in the UK Arts Industry

John Maguire 2025

And I am not being funny but look at the way the men are stood.

All quite stern, looking self-righteous.

Me?

Kitty points to her plinth.

KITTY

Yes, I know I am on a pedestal too, but it is made out of linen.

Kitty steps on to the plinth and takes back the pose she was in at the start of the play. Addressing the audience for the last time.

SFX 19: WATER LAPPING

KITTY

And I'm doing as I did in life. Getting stuck in.

Or as Mrs Lightbody would say: 'Well done is better than well said, Kitty.' Remember that.

Kitty winks at the audience then returns to her statue form.

SFX 20: 'SHE MOVED THROUGH THE FAIR'

END

**Breaking the Class Ceiling: Addressing Socio-Economic Barriers and Advancing
Inclusive Practices for Working-Class Artists in the UK Arts Industry**

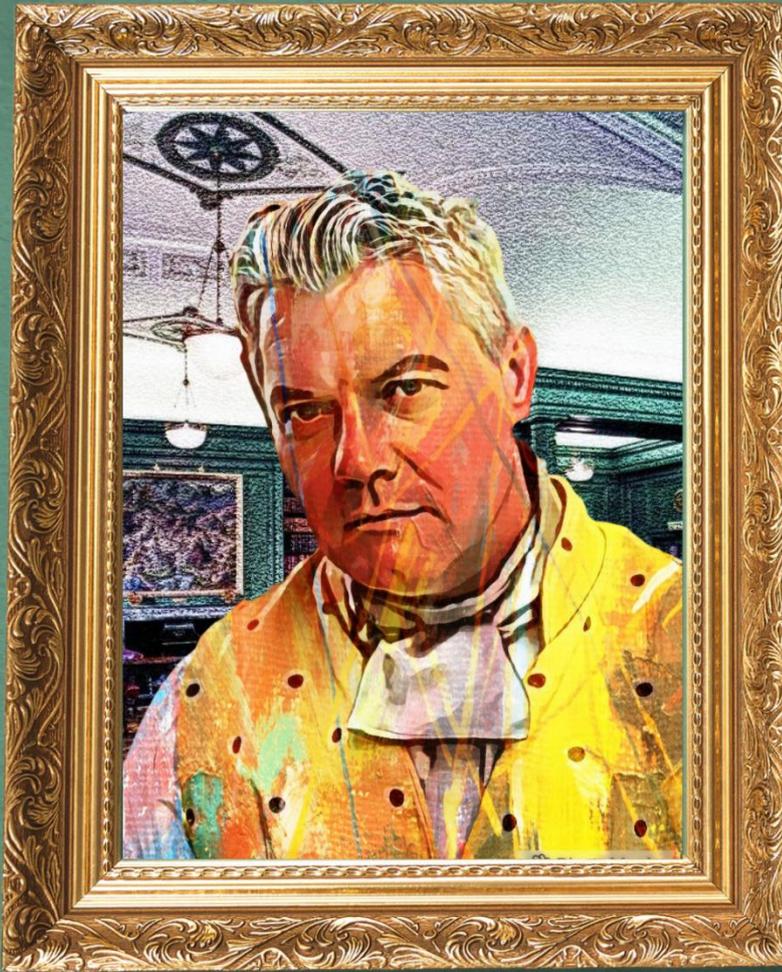
John Maguire 2025

6. *A Portrait of William Roscoe*

Breaking the Class Ceiling: Addressing Socio-Economic Barriers and Advancing Inclusive Practices for Working-Class Artists in the UK Arts Industry

John Maguire 2025

A Portrait of William Roscoe



SAT 26 & SUN 27 AUG 2023
SHAKESPEARE NORTH PLAYHOUSE
2PM, 4PM, & 6PM



Supported using public funding by
**ARTS COUNCIL
ENGLAND**

SHAKESPEARE NORTH PLAYHOUSE



Breaking the Class Ceiling: Addressing Socio-Economic Barriers and Advancing Inclusive Practices for Working-Class Artists in the UK Arts Industry

John Maguire 2025

A Portrait of William Roscoe

Written by John Maguire

First staged in 2023 at Shakespeare North Playhouse, The Reader, Calderstones Park and The Athenaeum in Liverpool, and in 2024 at St Nicholas' Church, Halewood as part of CultureFest.

Cast of Characters:

William Roscoe

Various Voiceovers (pre-recorded) – his wife Julia, his mother, a bookseller, friends, critics and dock workers

Breaking the Class Ceiling: Addressing Socio-Economic Barriers and Advancing Inclusive Practices for Working-Class Artists in the UK Arts Industry

John Maguire 2025

ACT 1

Placed in the foyer of the venue, should be Roscoe's portrait by Martin Archer Shee (1815-1817).

On stage ROSCOE sits sideways on a chair near a desk, posing with a quill. His pose and the staging replicates his portrait.

His desk houses rolls of parchment, books, and an orchid. Under it is a grasshopper puppet, a puppet of wretched slave owner, and a wooden model of a ship.

There are a number of old hardback books around the stage in stacks. There is a rolled-up mat representing a map of Chat Moss (to be unfurled later).

Some of the books are hollowed out to hide props, namely red petals and wind-up paper butterflies which fly upon release.

Upstage centre there is a sheet of blue silk, representing the Mersey.

At the back of the stage behind Roscoe is a large gold portrait frame, making it look as though the scene is happening within it. Roscoe sits tableau vivant as if the painter has caught him just as he is about to write.

ROSCOE'S MOTHER (V.O.)

Come take up your hats and away let us haste to the Butterfly's Ball and the Grasshoppers Feast, the trumpeter Gadfly has summoned the crew, and the revels are now only waiting for you.

Roscoe stirs.

ROSCOE

I am going to be frank, well William really.

(Laughs)

Breaking the Class Ceiling: Addressing Socio-Economic Barriers and Advancing Inclusive Practices for Working-Class Artists in the UK Arts Industry

John Maguire 2025

Never mind, never mind.

Please do not laugh, madam, it will only encourage me.

Do you know?

(Laughs)

I don't like this painting!

But what do you say to an artist who has painstakingly studied and put down on canvas his vision of you? It's the head you see that really bothers me. I know I'm known for liking birds, but my head is too, too small. I look like...a pigeon.

Roscoe bobs his head, mimicking a pigeon.

ROSCOE

It is perfectly okay, you can agree with me.

It is not disrespectful; it is the truth. Besides, you of all people should know that here in Liverpool, an insult is worth a thousand compliments.

And all that posing — such a waste of valuable time. 'Misspend no time!' I used to say, yet here was I —
hypocritical or what?

And it is so hard to sit and pose. The most unnatural thing to do. To just...posture.

Breaking the Class Ceiling: Addressing Socio-Economic Barriers and Advancing Inclusive Practices for Working-Class Artists in the UK Arts Industry

John Maguire 2025

Roscoe moves out of the painting, he is shocked at how his body aches with old age. He is reminded that he has been sat still for hundreds of years.

SFX 1: TAVERN NOISES

ROSCOE

I started life not far from this Walker Art Gallery, up the hill.

Hope street not even classified as the city.

Rural countryside. Can you imagine?

Roscoe enters the imaginary pub space, fire and his father stage right and the bar stage left. He motions to where things were as he walks.

ROSCOE

An intimate little tavern oak beams, candlewax, ale-soaked floors. Fire burning, simmering meat — usually Scouse.

The unsavoury smells of dockers, sea salt sweaty, a nasty stench — the fragrance of hard labour. Father baked potatoes on a charcoal dark grill over a fire, each time he shoved them around — an orange yellow tongue attempted to lick the burning spuds and him. Really welcoming.

Some of the poorer community would come in, with chipped mugs and old teapots — cheaper to take away than actually consume on the premises, my father was always very obliging.

Breaking the Class Ceiling: Addressing Socio-Economic Barriers and Advancing Inclusive Practices for Working-Class Artists in the UK Arts Industry

John Maguire 2025

It was not a tavern as notorious as the ones down by the old dock, or on Dale Street, like the Ye Hole in the Wall, now they were crammed with lots of swill bowls, the heavy drinkers and gutter merchants.

Roscoe stands DC imitates some of the clientele -Docker.

ROSCOE

(Acting as a docker.)

'Have I ever told you about the time I nearly lost me eye in a bar brawl in Rio? Barman, another flagon and I will tell all.' Lady in Bar,

(Acting as a lady of the night)

'Hey lad, if you buy me a quart of gin, I will make you forget your time in Rio.'

Roscoe takes a piece of paper out of his pocket and makes a ship out of paper.

ROSCOE

In 1715, the dock rapidly changed Liverpool's fortunes, before it could take up to two weeks to unload cargo.

Because of the ebb and flow of the river. A canal engineer, Thomas Steers, created a square dock with a gate that opened when the tide came in and once closed could unload ships all the time.

It only took two days then! No more vessels stuck on The Strand. Liverpool...

Breaking the Class Ceiling: Addressing Socio-Economic Barriers and Advancing Inclusive Practices for Working-Class Artists in the UK Arts Industry

John Maguire 2025

He goes back to his desk and retrieves the wooden ship model.

ROSCOE

...boomed and traded in all manner of things, tobacco, cotton, coffee beans, spices from all around the globe and...

(Pause)

Sadly, the blood of Africans. 1753, when I was born Liverpool had a population of 20,000 which grew and grew, by the end of my life — it had reached 195,000.

Father was a man below the middle stature, but of remarkable bodily strength and activity, of much vitality of temperament.

He'd been a butler in Allerton Hall and had a marked attention to detail.

He mimics his father's work as he speaks.

ROSCOE

His establishment was a clean bar, polished glasses, floor swept — precision.

Mother had been a servant there too.

SFX 2: COUNTRYSIDE SOUNSCAPE

ROSCOE

She'd take me on long meandering walks around the area, pointing out all the wildflowers — I'd lift up a stone, underneath infinitesimal bugs, creatures crawling and scrambling, a world within a world.

Breaking the Class Ceiling: Addressing Socio-Economic Barriers and Advancing Inclusive Practices for Working-Class Artists in the UK Arts Industry

John Maguire 2025

The insects were like all the activity at the docks. The carters bundling the crates from the ship to the warehouses to the canals, worker ants bustling around. We are all connected, we are all nature.

ROSCOE'S MOTHER (V.O.)

Blow the dandelion William make a wish.

Roscoe sits Centre stage cross legged; he is a boy at play.

ROSCOE

We'd pick flowers and weave them together; I was king of the garden with a crown of foliage. Going to the finest ball held by all the bugs and creatures.

Roscoe places a make-believe crown on his head, then stands again.

ROSCOE

This was the best education — School really wasn't for me, my teacher, sadly, did not seem to enjoy instruction. He did however appear to enjoy punishing rascallions.

Roscoe holds out a hand in anticipation.

ROSCOE

I and a fellow school friend were caned for whipping a top for a few moments before the beginning of afternoon school,

Roscoe whisks his hand away in pain from the punishment.

Breaking the Class Ceiling: Addressing Socio-Economic Barriers and Advancing Inclusive Practices for Working-Class Artists in the UK Arts Industry

John Maguire 2025

ROSCOE

I provoked my master by standing my ground, so he gave me more. I had a decided aversion to compulsion and restraint.

I left that school in Paradise Street at the age of twelve, as I felt my teacher had taught me all he could.

Having quitted school and committed my English grammar to the flames.

Roscoe tears up a piece of paper and throws it on an imaginary fire.

He then picks up an imaginary hoe and begins to till the ground.

ROSCOE

I now began to assist my father in his agricultural concerns, particularly in his business of cultivating potatoes when produced early in the season.

Roscoe picks up a stack of books from the stage balances them on his head like a sack of potatoes.

SFX 3 - MARKET SOUNDSCAPE

ROSCOE

Carrying them on my head to market in large baskets and selling them at very advanced prices.

Roscoe crosses the stage with a mimed wheelbarrow.

He gently puts down the wheelbarrow and get down on his hands and knees miming weeding and tending to the garden as he speaks.

SFX 4 - COUNTRYSIDE SOUNDSCAPE

Breaking the Class Ceiling: Addressing Socio-Economic Barriers and Advancing Inclusive Practices for Working-Class Artists in the UK Arts Industry

John Maguire 2025

ROSCOE

In this and other laborious occupations, particularly in the care of a garden, I passed several years of my life.

This mode of life gave health and vigour to my frame and amusement and instruction to my mind, and to this day I well remember the delicious sleep which succeeded my labours, from which I was again called at an early hour. If I were now asked whom I consider to be the happiest of the human race. I should answer those who cultivate the earth by their own hands.

He stands again.

ROSCOE

I spent my young years in what I can only call wandering solitude.

Roscoe picks up the hollow book from the pile.

ROSCOE

Exploring meadows and the shore, in early January, snowdrops followed by purple crocus clawing their fingers out of the ground, tearing back the soil preparing the surface for an army of yellow budded daffodils to invade and then would come the blanket of wildflowers, Foxgloves, Buttercup and Ragged Robin.

Roscoe opens the book and windup butterflies fly out. He places the book back down on the floor.

SFX 5 - SOFT SEA SOUNDS

ROSCOE

I'd often find myself strolling absent-mindedly along the Mersey, one occasion I will never forget. A mild lilac day.

Breaking the Class Ceiling: Addressing Socio-Economic Barriers and Advancing Inclusive Practices for Working-Class Artists in the UK Arts Industry

John Maguire 2025

TWO STAGEHANDS dressed all in black enter the stage and grab either end of the blue silk sheet. One leads by snaking the silk across the floor behind Roscoe.

ROSCOE

I must have slipped into a daydream losing myself in the sounds of the sea and the choral singing of the birds, the river snaked its way behind me.

The two STAGEHANDS hold the sheet of blue silk off the ground, twisting and turning it in the air.

SFX 6 - ROUGH SEA

ROSCOE

Before I knew it the tide started to gush through, and waters had engulfed my very path in front and behind.

The silk is swooped around Roscoe, his face is just visible over the top as he struggles with it.

ROSCOE

I was cut off. I could not swim, I could not swim, the river Mersey was unwavering if I did not get out of these waters soon, I'd be doomed, panic set in, why had I not been taught to swim. Why oh why! we live by this river.

Time sped up — the waters raged. I could see nothing around me but the mighty Mersey. I managed to make some type of movement and manoeuvre myself in such a way...

Breaking the Class Ceiling: Addressing Socio-Economic Barriers and Advancing Inclusive Practices for Working-Class Artists in the UK Arts Industry

John Maguire 2025

One of the STAGEHANDS lets go of their end of the silk. Roscoe is freed. It's slithered by other stage hand to centre left of the stage and dropped in a pile.

ROSCOE

...'Til I was by a cascade of rocks and frantically I clambered up to safety. I stood soaking wet looking out. The path I had been on in all its entirety was drowned.

Roscoe runs forward and bows his head in a boyish way as he's told off by his imaginary parents.

ROSCOE

I was then scolded when I got home because Father did not believe me, and Mother too, who had usually been quick to my defence, thought it was a tall tale I had made up to disguise mischief.

There is nothing worse than when your Mother is upset. It's nothing to do with what is said, it is what is unsaid and there is always that look, you know the one I mean — the look!

Roscoe reaches and runs his hand over an invisible coffin.

ROSCOE

My Mother Elizabeth died when I was very young.

He holds a hand out to the audience.

Breaking the Class Ceiling: Addressing Socio-Economic Barriers and Advancing Inclusive Practices for Working-Class Artists in the UK Arts Industry

John Maguire 2025

ROSCOE

Please, I am not seeking sympathy, such an early age for me, I can hardly really remember. I am blessed I had a few years with her.

The thing is...nobody told me how she died. Death was not spoken of then, Father stated she had passed and that was that...it was the way it was. We all lived cheek by jowl with death. Death was all around.

Roscoe returns to sit at his desk.

ROSCOE

Mother impressed on me a great love of reading, with such books as she thought would contribute to my literary improvement. 'Readers are leaders, William,' that's what she'd say. As I matured her death made me start to put pen to paper.

Roscoe sits and writes intensely as the voiceover plays.

ROSCOE (V.O.)

O! best of mothers!

Thou whose guardian sustan'd my infant life,

when weak and faint,

I pour'd the feeble cry!

Those whose hand through scenes of childhood led my deviant steps towards virtues arduous way and bade my soul with ceaseless assiduity attempt the glorious road!

Breaking the Class Ceiling: Addressing Socio-Economic Barriers and Advancing Inclusive Practices for Working-Class Artists in the UK Arts Industry

John Maguire 2025

Thou whose preserving hand with friendly aid restrained my boisterous speed, when maddening passions ruled. To thee I owe health and existence

ROSCOE

Having lost my Mother, I realised I now needed to be more like my father.

Roscoe stands and begins to act like a hunter, testing the air, and stalking.

SFX 7 - COUNTRYSIDE SOUNDSCAPE

ROSCOE (V.O)

Toxteth Park was cluttered with trees, English oaks, horse chestnut and ash. Older trees would host whole worlds within worlds of bugs, insects and fungi. Oh, how I loved to walk through.

Encouraged by my father I went out hunting. I took a gun. I must confess already my instinct was warning me about this sport.

One silver birch completely covered by gold finches, glittering in the mid-morning light.

Here was I a living creature, heading out to track another living creature to kill. A creature too that was miniscule in size to me. How could a tiny bird compete with the mechanical menace of a gun?

I had reached the popular area of the wood mainly used for hunting and traced down a slew of pheasants. These strange creatures react out of sheer terror and bolt away. I would collect feathers with Mother to use as bookmarks back home. I didn't find this process of chase, seek and hide very enjoyable and if anything, I found it to be quite a chore, not game like in any way.

Breaking the Class Ceiling: Addressing Socio-Economic Barriers and Advancing Inclusive Practices for Working-Class Artists in the UK Arts Industry

John Maguire 2025

The birds were quite clever and outwitted me a pitiful novice. Obviously, they had had to learn the skills of being able to hide from predators, particularly the five foot eight human ones armed with the unfair advantage of a loaded gun. The pheasants had gotten away but I noticed one solitary thrush perched on a tree.

Roscoe takes a paper bird out of his pocket and holds it aloft.

ROSCOE (V.O.)

I thought this is my chance now to shoot and gain my prize. Yet, I had a nulling feeling that weighed heavy on my conscience. I aimed the barrel and had the bird in my site.

I took great pity on this innocent bird. The voices of man, ate at me, telling me to be a man and shoot now while I could, go on shoot now, it is what you must do.

So, I shot and within seconds the bird was no more. It fell out of the branch very swiftly, like a sack being thrown out of a warehouse window landing into a cart.

Roscoe drops the paper bird at his feet.

ROSCOE (V.O.)

As it struck the ground it gave a thud and then there was an absolute silence.

SFX END

ROSCOE (V.O.)

The whole of Toxteth Park was quiet for a moment, no birdsong and the slight breeze that had charmed the trees stopped.

Breaking the Class Ceiling: Addressing Socio-Economic Barriers and Advancing Inclusive Practices for Working-Class Artists in the UK Arts Industry

John Maguire 2025

Nature was shocked at my actions. I stared at the unimpressive mound on the forest floor and slowly made my way to the prize.

Roscoe crouches at the bird's side.

ROSCOE (V.O.)

The bird was still alive, I could see it struggling to breathe. A wound of crimson on its breast rapidly leaked completely changing its feather colours. The poor thing's little beak was trying to operate but could not. Every fracture of air was too much for it to take in. I looked the bird directly in its tiny eye and it said to me, why?

VOICEOVER END

Roscoe stands.

ROSCOE

I could hear the voice of Mother chastising me. Who was I to have the authority, the right to do so?

I found myself becoming very upset and a tear trickled from my eye, which served to anger me even more because I was completely ashamed of my actions.

I vowed there and then never to harm another sentient being in my lifetime ever. I could put this creature out of its misery now, to save it from struggling, for it was clearly in pain. I raised my heavy black boot and stamped down.

Roscoe stomps on the paper bird.

ROSCOE

I never hunted ever again.

Roscoe returns to his desk but faces the audience.

Breaking the Class Ceiling: Addressing Socio-Economic Barriers and Advancing Inclusive Practices for Working-Class Artists in the UK Arts Industry

John Maguire 2025

ROSCOE

Father moved to another tavern halfway down Mount pleasant and at the back of the garden there was a Pottery warehouse

I was of a wild, rambling and unsociable disposition.

Roscoe pretends to do pottery as continues.

ROSCOE

Yet, I'd sit and watch the ceramicists intimately craft plates putting ink to their design. I became obsessed with the work of one artist Hugh Mulligan. Kindness flooded from his face, his mouth hidden by a dark blonde beard with slight wisps of white.

Roscoe stops making pottery and picks up his quill holding it in the air making delicate movements with it.

ROSCOE

A focused eye, a flicker of a flame in the pupil, pure passion, in the early morning light the paint brushes were extensions of his very hands — hard to identify which was finger and which was brush.

His sailing ships, oh my, oh my, majestic, masts like the magic of spider webs, immaculately woven. The very texture of the oakum and pattern in the wood. Even the sea waters would be replicated. The hours he'd take and the detail, oh the splendid craftsmanship.

He uses the end of the quill like a paint brush.

Breaking the Class Ceiling: Addressing Socio-Economic Barriers and Advancing Inclusive Practices for Working-Class Artists in the UK Arts Industry

John Maguire 2025

ROSCOE

I'd head home and I started to do the same thing but with my writing detailing each letter. Frustration at sloppy mistakes and spending hours on creating a swirling typography only to have one slight error flounder and ruin the work.

I found this creative discipline inspired my necessity to write poetry.

Poetry made me think about Mother. Every time I allowed my pen to scratch the paper, I felt close to her. The more I thought about my Mother, the more her memory would stay present and would not fade away.

Hugh was an artisan in the true sense of the word. As he noticed me lurking around the warehouse, he became, without intending to do so, a mentor of sorts. Not only could he paint detail, he also had fine wood carving skills. He taught me basic woodwork. I became a terrible joiner.

I thought my skills were abysmal, but Hugh unlike my father, would really encourage me, he'd say 'Remember William, Let those fail who may, I will conquer.'

Roscoe picks up some books and wanders forward on the stage.

ROSCOE

Father picked up on my love of reading and so arranged for me to be apprenticed by a bookseller, John Gore, who published the first Liverpool directory of 1766, I found my mind raced and it was difficult to stay on task.

Breaking the Class Ceiling: Addressing Socio-Economic Barriers and Advancing Inclusive Practices for Working-Class Artists in the UK Arts Industry

John Maguire 2025

I could not help myself, I'd open up the page and would be immediately involved in the story.

William looks startled and guilty as if caught in a crime as the voiceover starts.

BOOKSHOP OWNER (V.O.)

William how many times do you have to be told, I really don't get it, you cannot take basic instruction. Lad your meant to sell the books not read them, do you know something, son, if you sold as many books as you read, I'd be able to shut up shop. Wouldn't I? Now, I am not going to tell you again, this is your final warning.

ROSCOE

I did not last there long. I was next articled as a clerk and a little later I met a girl who literally made my heart pound, Maria Done. Through a friend of a friends, friend, friend I think, confused? that was how courtship was done back then.

Oh, the folly of youth, I was ensnared.

She was difficult to read.

Rude to me.

Sarcastic.

Insulting

Breaking the Class Ceiling: Addressing Socio-Economic Barriers and Advancing Inclusive Practices for Working-Class Artists in the UK Arts Industry

John Maguire 2025

And at times downright cruel.

I loved every minute of it.

She liked poetry, well so she told me, but I soon realised it was not to the deep level that I did, it was surface really.

Roscoe takes out a roll of bunting with handwritten poems on old fashioned paper attached and moves it around the stage.

ROSCOE

I'd write long poems in letters only to have a few lines sent back if indeed, any at all.

I did fall in love — not real romantic love I see that now — more a complete devout infatuation — I am sure you all recognise it.

I had great ambition for Maria and I, how wrong could I have been? laughable really.

I pursued her for many years, and she played me along, like a cat with a mouse and then just out of nowhere.

He rolls up the bunting in quick time and lashes it on the floor.

ROSCOE

I received a succinct letter from Maria stating she was to marry another — my colleague John Barton.

Breaking the Class Ceiling: Addressing Socio-Economic Barriers and Advancing Inclusive Practices for Working-Class Artists in the UK Arts Industry

John Maguire 2025

For she felt he was of a better social standing, for I was just a simple clerk.

To be honest this mild brief despair was nothing to what I experienced next in my career as an articled clerk to Mr. John Eyes, a local solicitor. This was the most painful part of my life.

After residing for a year with my parents, according to a stipulation in my articles, I was sent to board at the expense of my master with his sister, the wife of a Captain in the African slave trade, who had retired on his savings.

I had not been domesticated there for long before I was disturbed at midnight by...

SFX 8 - CRIES AND SHRIEKS.

Roscoe takes the slave trade puppet captain from under the desk and operates it during the monologue.

Cries and shrieks proceed from the bed chamber of the captain and his wife.

ROSCOE (V.O.)

When rushing into the room, I found the captain struggling to get through the window restrained only by his wife, who was exhausted trying to stop him.

SFX END

ROSCOE (V.O.)

Our joint efforts prevailed to retain him in the room, then he proceeded to put on his clothes and taking a candle in his hand, set out on an excursion to visit his neighbours.

Breaking the Class Ceiling: Addressing Socio-Economic Barriers and Advancing Inclusive Practices for Working-Class Artists in the UK Arts Industry

John Maguire 2025

After having knocked to no purpose at the doors till the early hours in the morning he returned home. The immediate cause of the disturbance was a fear of being seized by the press gang, but the true remoter cause was the habit he had unfortunately acquired of drinking ardent spirits, which brought on their usual effects.

His eyes were failing. The winds of the ocean had engraved tide marks all over his face. His purple blue nose looked like it had been left in a barrel of port. He would sit slumped in his chair as if washed up from the Mersey, a piece of battered flotsam, no purpose.

Alcoholism was the ship he now sailed and navigated his way through dark torturous waters daily in the quest for his next drink. Oh how the spirit goes in, the spirit goes out.

I will never forget what he told me about life on the ships. The inhumane things he had witnessed that manifested in his drunken delusions.

He'd oft recant, 'I am a wretch, a wretch! A deplorable wretch!' Or he cried like a baby begging me to 'make him go away! Make him not come to me tonight, please, not again!'

When I questioned 'who?', he told me in all certainty the man he wished to not come that evening, or any evening, was the slave with no eyes who would sit at the edge of the bed. He would just sit there and occasionally turn around and stare.

His mental and physical deterioration was unpredictable like the sea, but his actions became more and more tempestuous.

Breaking the Class Ceiling: Addressing Socio-Economic Barriers and Advancing Inclusive Practices for Working-Class Artists in the UK Arts Industry

John Maguire 2025

On another occasion I prevented him completing an attempt he was making to destroy himself, in which he had in part succeeded.

His demented spouse helped to dress the wound and calm the poor wretch until a doctor came forth. He was silent for a few days and then the consumption of liquor became even worse.

He threw himself in the Mersey.

Roscoe drops the puppet on the pile of blue silk and covers it over.

ROSCOE

Mr. Eyes too dropped dead suddenly a few weeks after at the age of 30, an unfortunate victim of intemperance, no less a martyr to his own misconduct than his unhappy relative.

I served the rest of my articles with a Mr. Peter Ellames. Alas, I could not take to this anxious and troublesome profession. An occupation rather than a vocation.

This city was obsessed with the gain of wealth at any cost, it disgusted me.

Writing, the study of languages and botany became my principle passions around my dreary working day.

Roscoe runs up the aisle amongst the audience and looks down to the stage.

ROSCOE

As I stood on the hill of Mount Pleasant.

SFX 9 - DOCKLAND SOUNDSCAPE

Breaking the Class Ceiling: Addressing Socio-Economic Barriers and Advancing Inclusive Practices for Working-Class Artists in the UK Arts Industry

John Maguire 2025

ROSCOE

The Liverpool buildings that ate into the green space were like a sketch that had been scribbled onto the landscape in a stubborn grey lead pencil. Smog, a thick black edge around all the rooftops.

Mankind a disease that stained the very canvas nature created.

The best part of my day was the walk home when I finished my draining work. I would compose poems along the way.

Roscoe makes his journey back to the stage, reciting his poem as he goes.

ROSCOE

How numerous now her thronging buildings rise!
What varied objects strike the wandering eyes,
where rise yon masts her crowded navies ride,
and the broad rampire checks the beating tide,
along the beach her spacious streets extend,
her areas open, and her spires ascend,
In loud confusion mingled sounds arise,
the docks re-echoing with the seamen's cries,
the massy hammer sounding from afar,
the bell slow tolling, and the rattling car,
and thundering oft the cannons horrid roar,
in lessening echoes dies along the shore.

Roscoe stands centre stage again.

Breaking the Class Ceiling: Addressing Socio-Economic Barriers and Advancing Inclusive Practices for Working-Class Artists in the UK Arts Industry

John Maguire 2025

ROSCOE

Yet romantic poetry could not disguise the dark elements of industrial growth.

ROSCOE (V.O.)

Shame to mankind,

but shame to Briton's most who all the sweets of liberty boast.

yet deaf to every human claim, deny that bliss to others, which themselves enjoy,

life's bitter draught with harsher bitter fill,

blast every joy, and add to every ill,

the trembling limbs with galling iron bind,

nor loose the heavier bondage of the mind.

Yet whence these horrors?

This inhuman rage that brands the blackest infamy the age?

Is it our varied interests disagree, and Britain sinks if Africa's sons be free?

ROSCOE

The pen is mightier than the sword – I would transform my pen into a rapier to cut through the chains of greed and slavery with my writing.

Ah! Why, ye sons of wealth with ceaseless toil! Add gold to gold and swell the shining pile?

Your general course to happiness ye bend: why then to gain the means, neglect the end?

Roscoe turns his back on the wealth and moves with purpose slightly off.

Breaking the Class Ceiling: Addressing Socio-Economic Barriers and Advancing Inclusive Practices for Working-Class Artists in the UK Arts Industry

John Maguire 2025

ROSCOE

You can count on your one hand in your lifetime, your true, true friends. Mine, Francis Holden, William Clarke and Richard Lowndes. Early morning rise and straight to study. Alert, alive, brain doused in optimism, layered with possibility.

I'd join my friends to meet with our study group before work in the Unitarian dissenters chapel — Benns garden — Liverpool, it later moved to Renshaw street.

Evening walks Holden would recite passages from famous Italian poems, I struggled with Italian. Alas, slow drops maketh the Mersey. Holden introduced me to the work of one Lorenzo de Medici, from the famous Medici dynasty from Italy.

Everything great and excellent in science and art, revolved around Lorenzo, I was in awe with admiration for this self-made man. The protection afforded by him to all the polite arts gave them a permanent foundation in Italy. In the establishment of public libraries, schools and seminaries of learning, he was equally magnificent, indefatigable and successful.

If the merchants of Italy could use their fortunes to encourage learning, then surely the wealthy merchants here in Liverpool could do the same. Imagine if we could rebuild Liverpool as a city state dedicated to culture, commerce and civilization. I made it my mission to make Lorenzo well known and do what he did in Florence here in Liverpool.

Holden was my best friend...that was until I met Jane. The daughter of one William Griffies, a linen draper on Castle Street.

Breaking the Class Ceiling: Addressing Socio-Economic Barriers and Advancing Inclusive Practices for Working-Class Artists in the UK Arts Industry

John Maguire 2025

We wrote a regular correspondence of letters – Jane was a diarist and poet, and unlike Maria she actually did write, one must love art and not the concept of oneself in art.

Do not be fooled by the plainness of the name Jane. She had a natural beauty, cheekbones like the most precious cut jewel. She smiled with her dark emerald eyes. Jane floated into a room and charmed even the most miserable of the merchant wretches.

Oh, my heart left my body the moment I saw her and forged itself into hers. I knew that this woman, would be not only my love, but my ally, and confidant. The day I met Jane, I knew it was the beginning of a great adventure.

Alas I had to wait 7 years till I married her, Feb 22nd, 1781, by license at Chapel of St Anne Liverpool — she gave me the gift of 7 sons and 3 daughters.

We woo'd each other to the grave. She was no longer Jane, she was my Julia.

'Come then my Julia to thy lovers arms nor let the voice of friendship hold thee long:

O let me once more gaze upon thy charms And hear once more the music of thy to you.

We took up residency in Toxteth Park, within walking distance of the shore. Ahhhh, Dingle Dey...

Stranger, that with careless feet, wanderest near the green retreat,
where, through gently bending slopes, soft the distant prospect opes,
where the fern infringed pride,
decks the lonely valley's side,
where the linnet chirps his song, flitting as thou treadst along.

Breaking the Class Ceiling: Addressing Socio-Economic Barriers and Advancing Inclusive Practices for Working-Class Artists in the UK Arts Industry

John Maguire 2025

I was always sure of not to wander off the track as I'd learnt from my boyhood how the Mersey could endeavour to make you a permanent guest.

This calming environment helped fuel my mind and I found myself writing political poetry. I wrote THE WRONGS OF AFRICA, proceeds went to the Abolition movement in London.

It was also the place where my father died, now in his dotage he relied on me, where I had once relied on him, and he spent tranquil days in his retirement, that's all any of us can wish for really, a good death.

I wrote the Lorenzo biography without ever visiting Italy, can you believe it? An intimate friend, with whom I had been many years united in studies and affection had paid a visit to Italy and had his winter residence in Florence.

I knew well that I had only to request his assistance, in order to obtain whatever information he had an opportunity of procuring, from the very spot which was to be the scene of my intended history.

It would be unjust merely to say that my friend afforded me the assistance I required, he went far beyond even the hopes I formed, collecting most valuable materials. He even managed to find unpublished poems by Lorenzo himself.

Alas, writing the Lorenzo book made me feel even more unhappy with my wretched profession, I wanted to write and be master of my own hours. I wanted to be free to pursue my own interests, avoid crowds, noise and contention, be in the company of a few close friends.

Breaking the Class Ceiling: Addressing Socio-Economic Barriers and Advancing Inclusive Practices for Working-Class Artists in the UK Arts Industry

John Maguire 2025

I was beginning to enjoy a measure of success through my writing and became involved in an experiment with sugar refiner – Thomas Wakefield to reclaim for agricultural purposes a large tract of land on Chat Moss.

Roscoe wanders over to the mat, which he gives a kick, revealing a green map of luscious wetland.

SFX 10 - WETLAND SOUNDSCAPE

ROSCOE

2,500 acres of Sphagnum, sundew and bog asphodel — between Liverpool and Manchester. With the increasing population of these Cities came the demand for market produce.

Roscoe begins the foul process of shoveling human waste.

ROSCOE

We planned to cultivate the area, drain the whole wetland — ditching and bringing in tons of human ordure — forked by hand on the moss. What my father did but on a greater scale.

Working in the garden I had been so far, at my happiest in life, so why would I not do it again? Surely man is the most foolish of all animals, and civilised man the most foolish of men. Anticipation in his curse, and to prevent the contingency of evil he makes life itself only one continued evil.

Health, wisdom, peace of mind, conscience are all sacrificed to the absurd purpose of heaping up, for the use of life, more than life can employ, under the flimsy pretext of

Breaking the Class Ceiling: Addressing Socio-Economic Barriers and Advancing Inclusive Practices for Working-Class Artists in the UK Arts Industry

John Maguire 2025

providing for his children, till practice becomes habit and we labour on till we are obliged to take our departure as tired of the world as we are unprepared for the next. Life is not a dress rehearsal.

My friend Rathbone oft criticised...

RATHBONE (V.O.)

I told my wife how pleasantly you argue on the folly of toiling for wealth and yet you happily indulge yourself in all that wealth can purchase. I cannot help but smile that you should so earnestly contend for avoiding the toil of wealth and yet cultivate the relish in yourself.

ROSCOE

Perhaps he was right. I don't know. I did visit London in order to enter Gray's Inn, with a view to becoming a barrister, But I could not go through with it, I despised being away from my beloved family and Liverpool.

The Lorenzo book was an absolute triumph. Not without criticism though, had on all occasions avoided violent opinions and was accused by some of having taken some pains to display the glossy side of aristocracy.

Printed copies were published all over Europe and the America's, who'd have thought the son of an innkeeper, rudely self-taught could achieve such literary success. If only Mother was here to see what had grown from the seeds she had sown.

Breaking the Class Ceiling: Addressing Socio-Economic Barriers and Advancing Inclusive Practices for Working-Class Artists in the UK Arts Industry

John Maguire 2025

I decided to take a gamble and leave my profession, to concentrate on my writing and agricultural concerns.

And we moved to what would be my favourite residence, Allerton Hall.

Roscoe removes his formal jacket.

SFX 11 - COUNTRYSIDE SOUNDSCAPE

ROSCOE

As far as the eye could see where farmers fields, pastures and lines of hedgerows. Here in the countryside, more air less people. I would be my very own Robinson Crusoe with my family. Oh, the tranquillity. We stood and assessed our realm, ample clouds floated by like giant cotton balls fresh from the loom.

Roscoe opens another hallow book on the stage and unfurls a green net covered in flowers which spread outwards.

ROSCOE

Yellow buttercup ate into Woolton hillside. A thousand little eyes watching your every move. Wildflowers, poppies and cornflowers – a small vegetable patch – honey suckle bush – herb patch soothed the soul. Then there were the woods a haven filled with – hawthorn and birch. Trees shot up slashing black lines across the marble blue sky.

Five miles from Liverpool. I was a mile and a half from my neighbour, but at that distance I had every side of me some of my most intimate and valuable friends.

Breaking the Class Ceiling: Addressing Socio-Economic Barriers and Advancing Inclusive Practices for Working-Class Artists in the UK Arts Industry

John Maguire 2025

I consider it one great secret in the art of living, especially at a time when all the necessaries of life are so high, to obtain subsistence immediately from the earth; and accordingly I am surrounded with cows, hogs and turkeys, geese, cocks, hens and pigeons.

Paradise Lost, Paradise now found.

I could now really immerse myself in botany. I became infected with anthomania an obsession for flowers particularly the orchid.

Her roots climb out of the pot stretching, octopus tentacles, perhaps to find its way back to the mountain it had been taken from — the orchard bud quietly opens like a green eye waking up, shining brightly. A troop of delicate woven butterflies, white with a stab of pink that leaks away from the centre — an intimate ink blot on its bloom — so precious the slightest handling by a clumsy human would destroy.

Roscoe begins to act out a daily routine which becomes increasingly more difficult to come up with.

ROSCOE (V.O.)

5am: Assess the farm duties.

6am: Study.

8am: Breakfast, letters, papers.

10am: Farm tasks, literary pursuits.

Breaking the Class Ceiling: Addressing Socio-Economic Barriers and Advancing Inclusive Practices for Working-Class Artists in the UK Arts Industry

John Maguire 2025

1pm: Lunch.

3pm: Country walk.

5pm: Read time.

8pm: Dinner

11pm: Retire

Roscoe collapses in exhaustion at his desk.

ROSCOE

When writing, I found I was deprived of the many advantages peculiar to seats of learning and mainly the quiet to study.

My early morning study circle evolved into The Athenaeum, a gentleman's only club, a place to recharge, reflect and debate. Oh, and you should see the library.

I was involved with the founding of the Liverpool Literary and Philosophical Society, and the Liverpool Royal Institute.

I helped Dr John Rutter and Dr John Bodstock create a Botanical garden in 1802 by Myrtle, Melville and Olive street.

SFX 12 - TROPICAL GARDENS SOUNDSCAPE

ROSCOE

An Eden here in the pool of life. I was no botanist, more an aficionado of plants.

Breaking the Class Ceiling: Addressing Socio-Economic Barriers and Advancing Inclusive Practices for Working-Class Artists in the UK Arts Industry

John Maguire 2025

I may have been trying to emulate my Lorenzo, mapping out the City's cultural foundation with these ventures. But as Liverpool grew in wealth, our reputation was a treacherous stain. We became known as the metropolis of slavery.

SFX 13 - THEATRE AUDIENCE

ROSCOE

Julia and I attended a play at the Theatre Royal, Williamson Square and the principal player, from London, was late to the stage.

He appeared to be completely intoxicated and as we know Liverpool audiences never shy away from making their feelings known.

SFX 14 - BOOING AUDIENCE

ROSCOE

He was booed and taken aback he lambasted the crowd.

(Acting as a drunk actor.)

'I refuse to be insulted by a pack of men, every brick in whose detestable town was cemented by the blood of a negro.'

SFX END

ROSCOE

As much as he was an outsider from the city, I could not argue with what he said.

Breaking the Class Ceiling: Addressing Socio-Economic Barriers and Advancing Inclusive Practices for Working-Class Artists in the UK Arts Industry

John Maguire 2025

Allerton Hall was a sanctuary, drowning in nature and I shared precious moments with my family.

I always liked to ensure that I was present to tuck my children in at bedtime. This is a sacred time in their life that cannot be won back. I had learnt that from Mother.

My son, Robert particularly liked to have a story read aloud. After a while I became bored of the same old moralising stories, so I found it more fun to make up my own.

Roscoe retrieves the grasshopper puppet from under his desk, commencing a puppetry sequence.

ROSCOE (V.O.)

Come take up your Hats, and away let us haste

To the Butterfly's Ball, and the Grasshopper's Feast.

The Trumpeter, Gad-fly, has summon'd the Crew,

And the Revels are now only waiting for you.

So said little Robert, and pacing along,

His merry Companions came forth in a Throng.

And on the smooth Grass, by the side of a Wood,

Beneath a broad Oak that for Ages had stood,

**Breaking the Class Ceiling: Addressing Socio-Economic Barriers and Advancing
Inclusive Practices for Working-Class Artists in the UK Arts Industry**

John Maguire 2025

Saw the Children of Earth, and the Tenants of Air,

For an Evening's Amusement together repair.

And there came the Beetle, so blind and so black,

Who carried the Emmet, his Friend, on his Back.

And there was the Gnat and the Dragon-fly too,

With all their Relations, Green, Orange, and Blue.

And there came the Moth, with his Plumage of Down,

And the Hornet in Jacket of Yellow and Brown;

Who with him the Wasp, his Companion, did bring,

But they promis'd, that Evening, to lay by their Sting.

And the sly little Dormouse crept out of his Hole,

And brought to the Feast his blind Brother, the Mole.

And the Snail, with his Horns peeping out of his Shell,

Breaking the Class Ceiling: Addressing Socio-Economic Barriers and Advancing Inclusive Practices for Working-Class Artists in the UK Arts Industry

John Maguire 2025

Came from a great Distance, the Length of an Ell.

A Mushroom their Table, and on it was laid

A Water-dock Leaf, which a Table-cloth made.

The Viands were various, to each of their Taste,

And the Bee brought her Honey to crown the Repast.

Then close on his Haunches, so solemn and wise,

The Frog from a Corner, look'd up to the Skies.

And the Squirrel well pleas'd such Diversions to see,

Mounted high over Head, and look'd down from a Tree.

Then out came the Spider, with Finger so fine,

To shew his Dexterity on the tight Line.

From one Branch to another, his Cobwebs he slung,

Then quick as an Arrow he darted along,

But just in the Middle, -- Oh! shocking to tell,

Breaking the Class Ceiling: Addressing Socio-Economic Barriers and Advancing Inclusive Practices for Working-Class Artists in the UK Arts Industry

John Maguire 2025

From his Rope, in an Instant, poor Harlequin fell.

Yet he touch'd not the Ground, but with Talons outspread,

Hung suspended in Air, at the End of a Thread,

Then the Grasshopper came with a Jerk and a Spring,

Very long was his Leg, though but short was his Wing;

He took but three Leaps, and was soon out of Sight,

Then chirp'd his own Praises the rest of the Night.

With Step so majestic the Snail did advance,

And promis'd the Gazers a Minuet to dance.

But they all laugh'd so loud that he pull'd in his Head,

And went in his own little Chamber to Bed.

Then, as Evening gave Way to the Shadows of Night,

Their Watchman, the Glow-worm, came out with a Light.

Breaking the Class Ceiling: Addressing Socio-Economic Barriers and Advancing Inclusive Practices for Working-Class Artists in the UK Arts Industry

John Maguire 2025

Then Home let us hasten, while yet we can see,

For no Watchman is waiting for you and for me.

So said little Robert, and pacing along,

His merry Companions returned in a Throng.

The puppet is places away again.

ROSCOE

The little poem was a great success, the King even had it put to music.

I wanted just to instill in my children, an appreciation of nature. I did often wonder in my later years if my life would have been easier if I had stuck to the simplicity of children's poetry but alas, the pen was my way of protesting and having a voice.

Roscoe sits at his desk and scratches away with his quill as the voiceover plays.

JULIA (V.O.)

William, I don't know if you have seen but there is a new book that is a complete replication of yours.

ROSCOE (V.O)

Yes, I did note that but what can you do, what can you do?

Breaking the Class Ceiling: Addressing Socio-Economic Barriers and Advancing Inclusive Practices for Working-Class Artists in the UK Arts Industry

John Maguire 2025

JULIA (V.O.)

You of all people should know, really now, your profession again, that is aside from the role of writer? Is it not the law, my love? Consult a legal authority and have it stopped, that's what you can do.

ROSCOE (V.O.)

My dear it is out in the collective creative conscience now, I cannot do anything really, the said author is well within her legal right. I do not hold an autonomy on stories involving animals taking on human qualities.

JULIA (V.O.)

Well, it is shocking, it is downright disgusting and if I ever see her, I will not hesitate to tell her so.

ROSCOE (V.O.)

Please, please my dear no point upsetting yourself. I am only thankful that my poem came out first for if I had have published it after, then it would have looked like it was I whom had been the plagiarist.

JULIA (V.O.)

Blatant cheek, it is, I tell you William Roscoe I have a good mind to write a letter protesting and have it published in the Liverpool Mercury. They pick it up because it is a

Breaking the Class Ceiling: Addressing Socio-Economic Barriers and Advancing Inclusive Practices for Working-Class Artists in the UK Arts Industry

John Maguire 2025

miserable story, if it was to praise or congratulate, they would not touch it. I mean honestly, The Porcupine talks as if it is a completely original idea.

ROSCOE (V.O.)

There is no such thing my dear. There are no original ideas. I am so glad that you are on my side, I'd hate to be on the receiving end of your wrath.

Roscoe puts his quill down and looks at the audience.

ROSCOE

You could say I was being a little sarcastic, if I am honest. For I was as a matter of fact often on the receiving end of my wife's wrath, and not without due cause, I did have a terrible habit of buying books, books, books and more books, and I oft put down commission for artists. She always found out and was generally supportive.

SFX 13 - ARRIVAL OF A HORSE.

Roscoe stands to meet the rider.

ROSCOE

A brisk blue morning, the sound of a rider on horseback. A visitor at this time, what could they possibly want?

Roscoe takes a letter from the rider.

ROSCOE

The stink of commercial ink and the Mersey on his very jacket –undoubtedly from Castle street, the financial district. A curly-haired chap who was trying desperately to look efficient yet failed led up the path, a letter Sir.

Breaking the Class Ceiling: Addressing Socio-Economic Barriers and Advancing Inclusive Practices for Working-Class Artists in the UK Arts Industry

John Maguire 2025

The family of my friend William Clarke, the chap who had been instrumental to me accessing the Lorenzo papers, had a bank and they were in financial despair. One of the recommendations was that I would assist in helping put the house in order.

How could I refuse? So, help I did, and I did such a good job that the financial firm insisted that they would not bankrupt the house as long as I became a partner. I felt it was the right thing to do.

After all, without Williams aid, How would I have created my Lorenzo biography. The right thing to do is the only solution. Besides, being back in the world of business would help me to promote the marriage between commerce and culture, just like Lorenzo.

Yes, this world was also full of slave traders, but however else could I try and change people's minds and influence if I was not in the very eye of the storm.

So...

Roscoe puts back on his formal jacket.

I found myself back in the murky business world.

SFX 14 - 18TH CENTURY CITY SOUNDSCAPE

ROSCOE

As I walked up the cobbled Castle Street all the time spent on my farm was extinguished like a church candle being completely snuffed out.

Liverpool's greed was still all consuming. Even the rain could not wash away the blood that had built the architecture from the profits of slavery. Something had to be done.

Breaking the Class Ceiling: Addressing Socio-Economic Barriers and Advancing Inclusive Practices for Working-Class Artists in the UK Arts Industry

John Maguire 2025

I had long been outspoken about my thoughts around the slave trade. One religious critic actually stated it was a 'system approved by God.' Alas, The bible is like a violin, in the masters hand it will play any tune and what tune has it not played.

I believed the gradual decrease in the slave trade was the only way abolition would work, and found criticism from my poet friend Edward Rushton –

Roscoe puts on an eye patch/banner across the eyes and becomes Rushton

ROSCOE

(Acting as Rushton)

'Hypocrites the lot of ye! You talk about ending this barbaric trade, but that's all you do isn't it, talk, over your fancy dinners and all that conversation drowned in wine. Where is the action?

Besides, none of you have ever set foot on a ferry across the river, never mind across the ocean. Yet, you think you know it all.

You know nothing. That Rathbone, particularly he is no abolitionist, I have heard that man boasting about his trade and how he was the first to import American cotton in 1784.

That's nothing to be proud of you too Roscoe. Gradualism brrrrr, slow painful torture. The only way this barbarity can stop is with immediate effect, not overtime, drawing out the pain, now Roscoe, raise a toast to that you pious idiot.'

Roscoe takes off the eye patch/banner. He puts on a sash which reads 'LET THOSE FAIL WHO MAY, I WILL CONQUER'.

Breaking the Class Ceiling: Addressing Socio-Economic Barriers and Advancing Inclusive Practices for Working-Class Artists in the UK Arts Industry

John Maguire 2025

ROSCOE

I became an M.P in 1806.

I hardly mentioned the slave trade in my campaign.

The torrent of ribaldry and scurrility which has been poured out on me not only vica voce (vojay), but from the press was sufficient to disgust any person with a Liverpool election.

CAMPAIGNER (V.O.)

View him as a husband, a father, a friend, a counsellor, the votary of Science, the promoter of the Arts. Look at the school for the blind, the Athenaeum, the Lyceum, the Botanic garden. Such is Mr. Roscoe, such freemen of Liverpool is the man now offered to your choice. His virtues and his deeds have already immortalised his name. It will be recorded and revered by your latest posterity.

Roscoe addresses the audience as if he is in Parliament.

SFX 15 - MIX OF CHEERING AND DISCONTENT CROWD.

ROSCOE

My sentiments have long been known and they were now what they ever were. Honourable peace with France — the gradual decrease leading to the cessation of the slave trade.

This industry had been sanctioned by parliament, so parliament should give full compensation to all who were to suffer financial loss in the event of abolition.

Breaking the Class Ceiling: Addressing Socio-Economic Barriers and Advancing Inclusive Practices for Working-Class Artists in the UK Arts Industry

John Maguire 2025

There are other sources to which our merchants can and ought to look to as an equivalent. Perhaps the ending of the monopoly of the East India Company. Gradual and temperate measures of improvement in the House of commons through legislation to extinguish bribery and corruption.

LADY HOLLAND (V.O.)

His manner is dull, coarse and provincial. I do not think his talents are such as will enable him to add to his reputation by his public speaking.

RATHBONE (V.O)

Senile detested meddler.

MP (V.O.)

Nothing but a busy body, a mischief monger.

ROSCOE

I have long resided in the town of Liverpool, for 30 years I have never ceased to condemn this inhuman traffic, and I consider it the greatest happiness of my existence to lift up my voice on this occasion against it, with the friends of justice and humanity.

The abolition of slavery was achieved and looked forward to giving this very speech again on my return to Liverpool outside the town hall.

Breaking the Class Ceiling: Addressing Socio-Economic Barriers and Advancing Inclusive Practices for Working-Class Artists in the UK Arts Industry

John Maguire 2025

ANGRY DOCKER (V.O.)

See that man who comes into town with all this pomp and ceremony, he is the person who is going to put you out of your work, he is the one who is stopping all the trade. We need to show him that we won't stand for it. We won't see our docks dried over and families starve because of him. Who is with me brothers?

ANGRY DOCKER (V.O.)

He is an ornament to the town, but what have we poor fellows to do with ornaments?

ANGRY MERCHANT (V.O.)

If our slave trade is gone, there's an end to our lives, beggars all we must be, our children and wives.

No ships in our ports their proud sails e'er would spread, and our streets grown with grass, where the cows might be fed.

ANGRY COUNCILLOR (V.O.)

He is the man who will destroy our African trade and ruin the good old town.

Roscoe reaches in his pocket and readies a handkerchief filled with red rose petals.

ROSCOE

As my carriage arrived, we received news that...

Roscoe looks out in fear.

SFX 16: ANGRY MOB AND STONES PELTING.

Breaking the Class Ceiling: Addressing Socio-Economic Barriers and Advancing Inclusive Practices for Working-Class Artists in the UK Arts Industry

John Maguire 2025

ROSCOE

A mob of angry disgruntled and unemployed seamen armed with cudgels determined to obstruct the procession. A stone was hurled at the driver.

SFX 16 CONTINUES - SCARED HORSE BLENDS INTO ANGRY MOB.

ROSCOE

A gang seized my carriage and overturned it. I managed to escape unscathed...apart from a graze on my forehead, a few of my friends were injured in the fray, but one man who was the very epitome of anger raised a knife and slashed it into my horse's throat.

SFX 16 CONTINUES - HORSE CRY

Roscoe mimes the horse being stabbed he throws out red flower petals as if blood.

SFX END

(Silence.)

ROSCOE

The poor beast died.

If the reputation of my Liverpool can only be obtained by violence and bloodshed, I leave the honour of it to those who choose to contend it.

In truth it requires but little of the efforts of others to drive me from public life. But I had the perpetual gratification of thinking that I gave my vote in the assembly of the nation for abolishing the slave trade of Africa.

Breaking the Class Ceiling: Addressing Socio-Economic Barriers and Advancing Inclusive Practices for Working-Class Artists in the UK Arts Industry

John Maguire 2025

You should be careful what you wish for, we got peace with France with an end to the Napoleonic war in 1815.

But at a cost...opening up of trade with America brought great hopes of prosperity but in the short term created an instant demand for capital. Instability set in throughout the markets, the bank's assets were tied up and we were heavily in debt. Property prices slumped and Chat moss and the mines we had invested in were not as lucrative as we had been led to believe. I was ruined.

The only way to solve the problem was to sell my own personal assets, including my books and pictures. A certificate of conformity allowed me personally to be protected from my creditors, but this was delayed.

In order to protect my family during this time I went into hiding in exile. I was in Chat moss for three months — a grey cloud of depression obscured my view.

Somberly, Roscoe packs up all his books from around the stage and his desk into a wooden crate .

ROSCOE (V.O.)

As one who, destined from his friends to part.

Regrets his loss but hopes again erewhile.

To share their converse and enjoy their smile,

And tempers, as he may, affliction's dart –

Breaking the Class Ceiling: Addressing Socio-Economic Barriers and Advancing Inclusive Practices for Working-Class Artists in the UK Arts Industry

John Maguire 2025

Thus, lov'd associates! Chiefs of elder art!

Teachers of wisdom! Who could once beguile

My tedious hours, and lighten every toil,

I now resign you, not with fainting heart.

Roscoe places the crate out of sight.

ROSCOE

My Julia was persistent writing to me and pleading for my return. Yes, I had lost Allerton Hall, but 'home' is a state of mind. I could not change my situation, but I could change how I looked at it. It was not a personal failure but merely a reflection of the economic instability of the age.

The Athenaeum purchased the books from my library that I needed to continue my work and raised monies for me.

With my wife and two daughters we moved to Rake Lane, now Durning Road, and then 5 St. James Walk. We could not really settle until we landed on our residence in Lodge Lane.

I journaled and focused on my literary outputs, including a revised edition of Lorenzo, and a biography of Alexander Pope another self-educated man like me.

Roscoe pauses for a good beat, seemingly struggling to speak.

Breaking the Class Ceiling: Addressing Socio-Economic Barriers and Advancing Inclusive Practices for Working-Class Artists in the UK Arts Industry

John Maguire 2025

ROSCOE

After a short bout of illness...my Julia...passed in 1824. The stresses of the financial upheaval and generally the pace of life had become too much for her.

I blamed myself, my wretched ambition. I did put my family first and chose not to work away from home, but I was conscious that I brought all my stress into our homelife.

Now, I found myself entering a room to share some news only to remember suddenly she was no longer there. Each time I felt a pain stabbing through my heart.

Night times were the worst, the cold stillness of her side of the bed, flat unmoved sheets and a hard cold pillow.

I had lost a limb, a part of me.

Roscoe retrieves some of the books from the crate and lays them out like a grave. He produces petals from a pocket (this time white) and sprinkles them over the grave.

ROSCOE

Goodnight my sweet, sweet Julia.

Roscoe becomes frail, struggling to walk.

Breaking the Class Ceiling: Addressing Socio-Economic Barriers and Advancing Inclusive Practices for Working-Class Artists in the UK Arts Industry

John Maguire 2025

ROSCOE

As I began to decline physically, I found myself going through all my old notebooks and sketches I had made during my time collecting plants and at the botanical gardens. Back to the earth, I had one more success in the publishing world.

Monandrian Plants of the Order of Scitamine...

Back to where I started, back in nature.

‘Life can only be understood backwards but must be lived forwards.’ I was once told that by a carriage driver, something that really stuck with me, and I’d like to impart it with you. I am sure your carriage drivers offer all kinds of sage advice, now, in your day, this particular idea...really resonated with me.

They say you die twice, once physically and when people stop talking about you.

Roscoe hobbles slowly back to his desk, stopping to turn to the audience.

ROSCOE

I do hope you will go out amidst Liverpool and remember the beauty of art, culture and nature...

I am preaching to the converted here though, aren’t I?

ROSCOE’S MOTHER (V.O.)

Blow the dandelion William make a wish.

Breaking the Class Ceiling: Addressing Socio-Economic Barriers and Advancing Inclusive Practices for Working-Class Artists in the UK Arts Industry

John Maguire 2025

Roscoe sits at his desk.

ROSCOE (V.O.)

I wished to make Liverpool the greatest city in the world, to produce great writers, artists, and citizens.

I think you are doing a good job at this.

It's a shame about my portrait, but I am grateful it hangs in the Walker Gallery and gets people talking about my life and times.

Do remember me, and all the other Liverpolitans who strived to make this pool of life a better place to be.

Just like Kitty Wilkinson, Doctor Duncan, Agnes Jones, Dandy Pat, Margaret Simey...remember them.

Roscoe resumes the position as the portrait at the beginning of the piece.

You never truly die as long as people keep talking about you.

SFX 17 - COUNTRYSIDE AND SEA BLEND

ROSCOE'S MOTHER (V.O)

Then Home let us hasten, while yet we can see,

For no Watchman is waiting for you and for me.

Breaking the Class Ceiling: Addressing Socio-Economic Barriers and Advancing Inclusive Practices for Working-Class Artists in the UK Arts Industry

John Maguire 2025

Appendices

Monologue Example

WORKOUT

By John Maguire

A MAN ENTERS THE SPACE WITH A CLEAR BAG FILLED WITH PEACOCK FEATHERS. HE PLACE THE PEACOCK FEATHERS ON THE FLOOR TO DEFINE A SQUARE OR A CIRCLE. THERE IS A CHAIR CENTER STAGE WITH 2 DUMBBELLS. THE MAN IS WEARING A HEADBAND, REALLY SHORT, SHORTS, A VEST AND LEG WARMERS. HE PLACES THE TOWEL ON THE CHAIR.

I am told regular exercise adds years to your life expectancy, apparently!

So, I find myself in a gymnasium.

Call me cynical, but in all these centres I find it an irony of ironies that those in need of fitness actually drive to the gym, to essentially assimilate ...walking.

A treadmill, Oscar Wilde was punished on one of these. Possibly, all the hundreds of appliances, treadmills, running machines, rowers and cycling apparatus are all linked up to a massive generator and all the people who use them are in fact helping to generate energy for the gym to use. Sell off surplus to the National grid like. Forget fracking, this could be the next boom to energy sources.

Modern technology and all its appliances were supposedly meant to make life easier, with robots doing all for us. Yet we now work harder than fifty years ago, and things

Breaking the Class Ceiling: Addressing Socio-Economic Barriers and Advancing Inclusive Practices for Working-Class Artists in the UK Arts Industry

John Maguire 2025

never stop do they, its 24 – 7. Even this gym if I wanted to come here at half past three in the morning, I could. The hope was to move away from hard labour, all those physical back breaking chores, yet we have replaced the machines of industry now with machines in gyms. We pay a subscription to do exactly the same movements and exercises that we would have been paid to perform in a factory or warehouse.

Mirror, mirror on the wall who is the bulging bicep of them all. 85 that's the number of mirrors wall to wall, floor to ceiling, I counted. If narcissus was here, it's not a daffodil he'd turn into but a protein shake.

Clothing, I prefer to wear, is not by any degree what would be described as fashionable, sweater, tracksuit with hood and a hat, layers, sweating like crazy. Now I am in my mid-40s, a tyre can appear around my waist the moment I even contemplate a roast dinner. A Yorkshire pudding on each hip. More Aunt Bessie than Calvin Klein. But some of the clothing in here, I can only describe as porn outfits, short shorts, short, short, shorts, short, short, short, short, shorts. Vests that hang like cotton floss, revealing in some cases flesh muscle that looks like a paper Mache suit. Nipples that look like they've come out of a puncture repair kit.

The other day, a girl glided into the arena. All make up and matching fitness garb, pink towel and thick socks, matching. Her eyebrows tattooed on in a faded sharpie, teeth to white to be real. Turkey, Turkey. She marched with purpose sat on a weights machine, pulled down the weight by her shoulders, struck a pose like a disgruntled duck. A flash from the floor, her phone, she then picked it up daintily, checked the screen, pounced up and headed straight for the exit, mopping her brow as she went through the turnstile. The 'fitness' fanatic had come solely to take a selfie. #working up a sweat #let's get physical # who gives a flying

I feel like I am watching a live stream of a nature programme.

(ADOPTS a David Attenborough voice)

Breaking the Class Ceiling: Addressing Socio-Economic Barriers and Advancing Inclusive Practices for Working-Class Artists in the UK Arts Industry

John Maguire 2025

Here in the gymnasium, we find ourselves in Manland. The looking glass ballet begins, slow motion, sensuality, microsurgical movement. Next comes the NOISES, grunts, murmurs, growls that translate in gym spiel, to please look at the size of the weight I am lifting, aren't I something, yes? But do please just focus above the waist and not look at my twiglet like legs. Breast is best. And with this fake tan, positively BBQ like.

The changing rooms.... A naked twatwalk.....some of the meatheads, like to waltz around holding conversations, oblivious to the fact that YES, it's okay to talk of endless reps and the size of weights but it's not really polite to do so while hand drying your scrotum.

Who wants a bicep for a brain? I do. But do I really, do I? Testicles like frozen peas and the devastation of steroids, does not stop there, oh no. all I can say it looks like a shammy leather.

At this stage in my workout the arghs and eurghs in MAN land have become that little bit louder, somewhere between constipation and an aggressive orgasm...and what's that noise now, oink, oink? Changing to a moo, moo, a neigh, neigh and a quack, quack. Jesus it's the whole farmyard by the end, I kid you not, it's a woof, woof, bloody dogs. The place has turned full on farm like.

Let's be honest though in a battle they'd clearly win but what would I do?

Oh, I'd play at being David to these Goliaths, kick them in the processed pea, shammy leather genitalia and run, run, run. Let's be honest with those twiglet legs they'd never catch me.

THE MAN PICKS UP THE CHAIR WIPES HIS FACE AND THROWS
THE TOWEL ON THE FLOOR. HE KICKS THE PEACOCK FEATHERS
AND LEAVES THE STAGE.

Breaking the Class Ceiling: Addressing Socio-Economic Barriers and Advancing Inclusive Practices for Working-Class Artists in the UK Arts Industry

John Maguire 2025

Reports

ArtsGroupie (2019) *WEAVE Report 2019* [online]. Available at: bit.ly/4kwXgGX (Accessed: 25 May 2025).

ArtsGroupie (2024) *Emerging Voices Report 2024* [online]. Available at: <https://bit.ly/3FaxB8d> (Accessed: 25 May 2025).

ArtsGroupie (2025) *The Dramatic Mile 2025* [online]. Available at: <https://bit.ly/43rERo8> (Accessed: 25 May 2025).

Reviews/Other Media

ArtsGroupie Post (2024) *Channel 5 'Great British Cities: Liverpool' with ArtsGroupie's John Maguire* [online]. Available at: <https://www.artsgroupie.org/artsgroupie-posts/channel-5-great-british-cities-liverpool-with-artsgroupies-john-maguire/> (Accessed: 5 May 2025).

Liverpool Sound and Vision (2019) *Kitty, Queen of the Washhouse, Theatre Review, St George's Hall, Liverpool* [online]. 18 March. Available at: <https://www.liverpoolsoundandvision.co.uk/2019/03/18/kitty-queen-of-the-washhouse-theatre-review-st-georges-hall-liverpool/> (Accessed: 5 May 2025).

Liverpool World (2023) *A Portrait of William Roscoe: New show celebrates Liverpool icon* [online]. 25 August. Available at: <https://www.liverpoolworld.uk/news/a-portrait-of-william-roscoe-new-show-celebrates-liverpool-icon-4268032> (Accessed: 5 May 2025).

North West End (2019) *Kitty – Queen of the Washhouse @ St George's Hall, Liverpool* [online]. Available at: <https://northwestend.co.uk/index.php/professional-reviews/liverpool/4065-kitty-queen-of-the-washhouse-st-george-s-hall-liverpool> (Accessed: 5 May 2025).

Breaking the Class Ceiling: Addressing Socio-Economic Barriers and Advancing Inclusive Practices for Working-Class Artists in the UK Arts Industry

John Maguire 2025

North West End UK (2022) *Kitty: Queen of the Washhouse – Shakespeare North Playhouse* [online]. 22 July. Available at: <https://northwestend.com/kitty-queen-of-the-washhouse-shakespeare-north-playhouse/> (Accessed: 5 May 2025).

Number 9 Reviews (2019) *Review: Kitty: Queen of the Washhouse @ St. George's Hall, Liverpool* [blog] 18 March. Available at: <https://number9reviews.blogspot.com/2019/03/review-kitty-queen-of-washhouse-st.html> (Accessed: 5 May 2025).

The Reviews Hub (2023) *Kitty: Queen of the Washhouse – King's Head Theatre, London* [online]. 13 March. Available at: <https://www.thereviewshub.com/kitty-queen-of-the-washhouse-kings-head-theatre-london/> (Accessed: 5 May 2025).

What's On Stage (2012) *Bruise: Pride Fringe Manchester* [online]. 22 August. Available at: https://www.whatsonstage.com/news/bruisse-pride-fringe-manchester_2986/ (Accessed: 5 May 2025).

YouTube (2021) *Stories That Inspire* [Video, online]. 27 April. Available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=k9k5PwrayQk> (Accessed: 5 May 2025).