THEMATIC SECTION:
CAPITALISM, STATE, AND EDUCATION:
THE LIMITS OF THE CAPITAL

Capitalism, Class and Meritocracy: a cross-national study between the UK and Brazil

Michael Wayne[I]
Vinícius Neves de Cabral[II]

[I]University of Brunel, London – United Kingdom
[II]Universidade Estadual de Londrina (UEL), Londrina/PR – Brazil

ABSTRACT – Capitalism, Class and Meritocracy: a cross-national study between the UK and Brazil. Drawing on a Marxist theoretical framework, this essay concentrates on the analysis of the roles played by meritocracy in the capitalist system and its impacts on the working classes. This cross-national study discusses economic, ideological, cultural, and political aspects of meritocracy in the United Kingdom and in Brazil. In summary, our analyses indicate towards what we may call 'a framework of meritocratic values, practices, meanings, and symbols'. Reproducing capitalist relations of power and class, meritocracy functions as an ideological pillar of capitalism's hegemony and a justification to the inequalities it engenders.
Keywords: **Marxism. Meritocracy. Inequalities. Neoliberalism. Individualism.**

RESUMO – Capitalismo, Classe e Meritocracia: um estudo transnacional entre o Reino Unido e o Brasil. A partir das bases teóricas do marxismo, este ensaio concentra-se na análise dos papéis desempenhados pela meritocracia no sistema capitalista e seus impactos sobre a classe trabalhadora. Este estudo transnacional discute os aspectos econômicos, ideológicos, culturais e políticos da meritocracia no Reino Unido e no Brasil. Em resumo, nossas análises apontam na direção do que nós chamamos de 'uma estrutura de valores, de práticas, de significados e de símbolos meritocráticos'. Ao reproduzir as relações capitalistas de poder e classe, a meritocracia funciona como um pilar ideológico da hegemonia do capitalismo e uma justificativa para as desigualdades que ele mesmo engendra.
Palavras-chave: **Marxismo. Meritocracia. Desigualdades. Neoliberalismo. Individualismo.**

http://dx.doi.org/10.1590/2175-6236117535

Introduction

In this essay, we aim to present a cross-national study of the rise and impact of meritocracy in the United Kingdom (UK) and in Brazil. We present an international comparative analysis between the two countries to demonstrate the centrality of meritocracy to contemporary capitalism despite the very different national contexts in which it is at work. Meritocracy is an ideology that entrenches economic, social, and historical inequalities while offering the promise of a way out of those inequalities. It individualises what are structural problems, making individuals responsible for outcomes and structures invisible to popular critique and policy reforms.

Meritocracy endorses the image that, in capitalism, "[…] individuals get ahead and earn rewards in direct proportion to their individual efforts and abilities" (McNamee; Miller, 2009, p. 2). Therefore, meritocracy implies the promise that individual merit is the key to achieving what capitalism calls *success*. It functions as a system of justification to the inequalities engendered in the core of capital's relations of power and class (Littler, 2018a).

In capitalism's ideological structure, meritocracy interpellates individuals into the belief that a combination of certain characteristics, namely *talent, the right attitude,* and *hard work,* places some individuals on the top of the class structure and gives them the right to rule over others (McNamee; Miller, 2009). Inasmuch as this meritocratic system supposedly values these special characteristics, it makes it almost impossible for the general population to identify the contradictions that lie therein. As McNamee and Miller (2009) point out, meritocracy ignores the roles played by inheritance, connections, luck, discrimination, marriage, and criminality in getting ahead.

In the UK, the rise of neoliberalism and Thatcherism in the 1980's was the ideal scenario to expand and cement meritocratic practices (Harvey, 2005). Thatcher managed to link "[…] emancipation and social mobility to the acquisition of consumer goods, home ownership and the privatisation of public utilities and social housing stock" (Littler, 2018b, p. 4). Years later, according to Littler (2018a; 2018b), social liberalism promoted by the political ideology of the former Prime Minister Tony Blair was used as a means to broaden meritocratic values to previously excluded groups. The rise of meritocracy was closely associated with the careful and slow dismantling of the British Welfare State as collective provision was replaced by the promise of individual mobility. In Brazil, the establishment of a Welfare State during the governments of PT (Workers' Party), threatened structural elite privileges with the prospect of structural mobility. In the case of Brazil, a furious right wing reaction mobilised the ideology of meritocracy to defend these historic privileges. In both contexts meritocracy was promoted through cultural, media and educational institutions, that is to say through the careful cultivation of a subjectivity cut off from awareness of the material con-

ditions of existence which are the primary determinant on individual outcomes and life opportunities.

We now move to a more detailed analysis of each case study. First, discussing the British, then, the Brazilian case study.

New Labour, Culture and Meritocracy

Meritocracy's ethos of individual freedom, just rewards based on hard work and talents and the idea of social mobility unconnected to class origins triumphing over barriers, was central to both Margaret Thatcher's brand of Conservatism in the 1980s and Tony Blair's brand of social liberalism during the period of New Labour governments between 1997-2010. These are distinct repertoires of neoliberalism, the former invested in a strongly ethnically exclusive nationalism plus consumerism, the latter promoting itself as a more inclusive, multicultural, and therefore more authentically meritocratic politics (Littler, 2018a, p. 87). It is no surprise then that Blair made both meritocracy and the cultural industries central to the political discourse of New Labour in government.

If industry had once constituted a significant social base of support for Labour, linking it to the working class, de-industrialisation, especially in the North of England and Scotland, had depleted the political and economic connections between the party and traditional class orientations. The *cultural* industries allowed New Labour to retain a commitment with at least some diminishing base of manufacturing, while providing a public relations dazzle to a political discourse keyed into the promotion of *New* Britain in international image markets (film, television, advertising, music, etc). Where Labour once placed the working class at the centre of its ethical-political vision, its preferred agency of history was now somewhat different: a tiny upper middle-class strata of *talent* and executives (Wayne, 2018, p. 174-80).

It was assumed that favouring conventional capitalist economic priorities would not contradict New Labour's *opportunities for all* social justice ambitions. In general, the main enemy against opportunity for New Labour was not the kind of social-class inequalities associated with capitalism, but social liberalism's favourite targets associated with conservatism, such as *privilege, snobbery, intolerance,* lack of *open mindedness* and lack of educational routes to self-improvement. "I make no apologies", wrote Blair, "for wanting Britain to be a nation characterised by merit, not privilege or stuffiness" (Blair, T., 2001, p. 55). A war on *stuffiness* (old fashioned upper middle-class notions of decorum) did not require a critique, much less an attack on the political economy of late capitalism.

Since the word *culture* still retained connotations that transcended the priority of exchange value, it was often coupled with or displaced in New Labour discourse by the word *creativity*. Blair again: "The next century will be dominated by brain, not brawn. Creativity and knowl-

edge will be the key tools. And Britain has always been a world leader in creativity and innovation" (Blair, T., 2001, p. 53). As Toby Miller noted, the concept of creativity shifts the focus towards process and inputs rather than what is actually produced, a "[…] bizarre shift in adjectival meaning [that] makes it possible for *anything that makes money* to be creative" (Miller, 2009, p. 95, *emphasis added*). Thus, the *creative* industries were increasingly seen by policy makers and think tanks, as the "[…] blueprint for a new form of post-industrial economy" (O'Brien; Laurison; Miles; Friedman, 2016, p. 117). The highly *flexible* labour markets in the US and UK film industries, for example, were seen as pointing the way forwards to a future of precarious employment (see Helen Blair, 2001), but one that should be embraced for its *positives*.

These policy and political discourses re-packaged job insecurity (the end of a job for life) as part of an exciting and dynamic environment where workers embarked on *portfolio* careers and within any one career lived on their wits as risk taking freelancers moving from project to project. The realities of job insecurity could be glossed over by imbuing this carefully constructed political economy, founded on the radical diminishing of trade union power through changes in working practices and legal constrictions, with a moral and cultural hue drawn from the romantic narratives of rebellion associated with the bohemian life of the artist that stressed autonomy, authenticity, self-expressiveness and a general libertarianism (McGuigan, 2009; Ross, 2010; Boltanski; Chiapello, 2018).

By the end of the New Labour period in office in 2010, the academic verdict on the realities of being a cultural worker was in and it painted a less rosy picture of working conditions than the policy makers and think tank advocates of the new economy (Banks and Hesmondhalgh, 2009). The emphasis on self-reliance, ambition, competition, and 'talent' at the expense of workplace protection and rights disguised exploitation, *self-exploitation* (where workers willingly overwork because they are *passionate about the job*) and under-employment (McRobbie, 2011, p. 41; Blair, H., 2001). Sustaining a career has become much harder for the real *creatives*, becalmed by shrinking wages and stressful casualised working conditions, than for the management types cutting costs and making employment decisions (McGuigan, 2010, p. 330). Hopes that the creative industries could drive regional economic growth and solve a wide range of other social problems, relied on a growing gap between rhetoric and evidence base (Oakley, 2011; Belfiore, 2009). Meanwhile the notion that the cultural industries were themselves examples of social mobility were contradicted by the under-representation of women, ethnic minorities, and the working class in the workforce generally as well as in senior decision-making positions (Oakley, 2011; Littler, 2018a, p. 161). Drawing on Labour Force Survey data for example, Friedman and Laurison found that in film and television the general workforce had around half of the proportion of working-class people in it than in the workforce as a whole. Engineering or senior jobs in the emergency services did significantly better in terms of proportionate working-class

representation than the much more vaunted culture industry (Friedman; Laurison, 2019, p. 33).

Neoliberalism and the Era of Austerity

Following the 2008 global crash New Labour lost its ideological lustre but the limited range of alternative political possibilities was all too evident when a new Conservative-Liberal Coalition government formed power between 2010-15, followed by successive Conservative governments (2015-17, 2017-2019, 2019-to the present). This period saw the rise of *austerity* as the political-policy response to the economic crisis. This meant substantial cuts in public services and to local municipal authorities (Blackburn, 2018, p. 9). One of the first things the Conservative-Liberal government did was to build on New Labour's introduction of individualised fees for Higher Education students, ramping up costs to around £9,000 per year. The expansion of programmes in media, film, television, culture, and arts under the New Labour boosterism of the *creative economy*, could now only be accessed by incurring high levels of personalised debt (including maintenance loans for students). At the same time, within months of taking office, the Coalition government's Comprehensive Spending Review, which prioritised deficit reduction plans, spelt out cuts of between 15% to 30% in major cultural institutions such as museums and galleries, the British Film Institute and the Arts Council (Newsinger, 2015, p. 306).

In this context of increasing hardship, the importance of class made a welcome return in academic and popular publications. The cultural industries and in particular the acting profession in the UK seemed to be a lightning rod for concerns about the impact which inequality was having on some of the cherished illusions of meritocracy. A number of reports in the popular press focused on the potential consequences for the performing arts when working class origin actors were finding it increasingly difficult to sustain careers in the sector.

Between 2015-17, Wayne and his co-director, Deirdre O'Neill, made a documentary feature film, *The Acting Class*[1], about the problem of class stratification in the acting profession. The film drew on interviews with both younger working-class origin actors struggling to get in and stay in the industry and older established actors worrying about the diminishing opportunities for class diversity in the profession. As a research methodology, recorded interviews arranged in a film around thematic clusters has two advantages on more conventional written scholarly research. Firstly, it allows the subjects of the research much greater scope to articulate their own reflections on their own experiences directly to a viewer. What is striking here is the intelligence with which these subjects speak of their experience, the attitudes of class discrimination they have come across and sometimes internalised and the emotional power conveyed to the watching audience as to why this matters as a social justice issue. Secondly, the arrangement of voices in thematic clusters is crucial in *socialising* the experience, that is it

excavates the common situation and constraints which individuals are confronted with. This is very important because in the age of neoliberalism and meritocracy, the social conditions, the structural constraints, the shared problems, are always individualised and turned into *challenges* and *opportunities*: the former is a problem against which the moral worth of the individual can be tested, while the latter refers to the rewards available for those individuals who are talented enough to overcome their problems. This is a very brutal ideology designed to make people think they ultimately are responsible for where they have ended up in life. If their hopes remain unrealised, the ideology of meritocracy teaches them that it is because they did not have the *drive* or the *talent* to succeed.

There are three main reasons why the accessibility of the acting profession to a wide range of people, in class, gender and ethnic terms, is important.

1) There are social justice considerations, namely why should a profession be largely monopolised by a particular group while others find themselves significantly under-represented within it? The question of diversity of access to the arts – as participants and audiences - has rightly been propelled up the policy and political agenda. But as Randle et al. note, "[…] [o]ften absent from the diversity agenda is the question of social class" (Randle et al., 2008, p. 9). This means that the increasingly important determinant of economic and other class-determined factors shaping entry and success in the arts in general and the acting profession in particular are unlikely to be adequately addressed.

2) There are economic considerations for the industry. An overly homogeneous composition of creative talent is likely to struggle to innovate and find new audiences and markets. The Warwick Commission's report found that children born into low income families were the least likely to find successful employment in the cultural and creative industries, and yet 'diversity is essential to the future success' of those industries (Neelands et al., 2015, p. 14-15).

3) There are broader issues connected with national identity and ideology at stake. The performing arts tell stories that implicitly project images of the collective, their history, identity, who they are, what they look like, how they speak, what they value, who has esteem and so forth. If the acting profession is drawn from a narrow range of social groups, if there are limited opportunities for working class or black actors for example, then that is likely to shape the kinds of stories the cultural industries produce and the kind of angles from which those stories are told. The British film and television industries for example has long projected a certain white aristocratic heritage identity in international image markets, especially for the American market (Wayne, 2006). Raising barriers for working class origin actors will only reinforce this historic trend. In what follows we will focus on some of the multiple barriers to entry that impact on the ability of working-class origin actors to get in and have sustainable careers in the profession. The social justice ques-

tions which these barriers raise speak most directly to the question of meritocracy and why it should be regarded primarily as an ideology of liberalism.

Barriers, Not Opportunities

The Acting Class begins with Tom Stocks, an aspiring young actor from Bolton, in the North of England, revisiting a London based acting school called East 15. It was here that Stocks was offered a chance to take a post-graduate master's course in acting. However, the fees for the course were £12,000 and living costs (in London) would have required an additional £6,000-£9,000. Tom had already acquired a debt from his undergraduate degree which had been in a university setting where there is much less emphasis on professional practice. Standing in the grounds of East 15, Tom tells the audience that he tried to save the money for the one-year programme for over a year and a half, while working as a chef on a minimum wage. He was not able to do it. This spurred him to set up an organisation dedicated to helping working class actors with a support network and opportunities for putting on plays. Tom's own experience of being locked out of training was not unusual. The film also hears from Amy, a working-class young woman from Liverpool, who was offered a place on a foundation course at another London based drama school, Italia Conti. Again, she tried to raise the money for two years but in the end had to admit defeat: "I felt a bit like I failed because I didn't have money, I didn't have thousands and thousands and thousands of pounds, to do that course for a year" (10.50).

Getting an offer to attend a drama school is itself extremely difficult, typically requiring multiple auditions at different schools around the country. But drama schools also charge money for the auditions themselves and some even charge to just apply to the school, so the costs soon add up (Labour Party, 2017, p. 11). When these fees are combined with the travel costs to different locations around the country, working-class origin actors are faced with considerable barriers just to access training. But there are more substantial economic filters stratifying access to education and the routes that education provides into the highly valued professions: namely the UK's private school system.

A report by the Social Mobility and Child Poverty Commission found that the 7% educated at private schools dominate disproportionately the higher echelons of such professions as the judiciary, politics, and the media (2014, p. 12). Research by the Sutton Trust provides some evidence that this is also true of the acting profession as well. In film, 42% of the British winners of the main British Academy Film and Television Awards (BAFTA) attended private fee-paying schools (Kirby, 2016, p. 2). The most famous private school in the country, Eton (charging around £35,000 per year) has produced many star actors, including, recently Dominic West (*The Wire* – 2002-2008, *Pride* – 2014, *Les Misérables* – 2018-19) Damian Lewis (*Band of Brothers* – 2001, *Homeland* 2011-14, Once *Upon A Time In Hollywood* -2019) and Eddie Redmayne (*The Good*

Shepherd – 2006, *Les Misérables* – 2012, *The Danish Girl* – 2015, *Fantastic Beasts and Where To Find Them*, 2016, *The Trial of the Chicago 7* – 2020). The three leads of the BBC television spy drama *The Night Manager* (2016), Tom Hiddleston (later to play Loki in *Thor* and *Avengers* movies), Tom Hollander and Hugh Laurie, were all educated at the same Oxford early years private school for boys and girls, known as The Dragon School. The place has also produced actors such as Emma Watson, Jack Davenport, Hugh Dancy, Dom Joly and Jack Whitehall (Ramaswamy, 2016). As well as training, facilities, expertise and general encouragement in their ambitions, the private schools also provide high value social capital, those crucial networks of knowing the right people in important decision-making parts of the industry.

In a society as sensitive to class origins and differences as the UK, a private education cements and hones a more general sense of social difference that provides a key barrier for working class origin people to getting in and getting on in elite dominated professions. Drawing on interviews and ethnographic observation, Friedman and Laurison have explored how *cultural matching* works to reproduce opportunities and diminish the importance of *talent*. Cultural matching is based on the premise that *similarity breeds connection* (Friedman; Laurison, 2019, p. 214). The *connection* can be as tight as being alumni of the top universities such as Oxford and Cambridge. As black working-class actor Elliot Barnes-Worrell puts it:

> The people at the top are all white middle-class men or white upper class men, privately school educated. And then when they want to hire someone to work for them… they hire themselves. They go: 'you went to Cambridge, I went to Cambridge, we went to Cambridge, let's all be together' (31.43).

But this cultural matching also works more subtly through a broad range of cultural signs by which members of the same class recognise each other. These signs, as Bourdieu has shown, are inscribed in and through the body at every level, including comportment, dress, and speech (Bourdieu, 2000, p. 118). Speech in the UK is strongly class coded, with Received Pronunciation, or RP the accent of the upper middle class, one which eradicates any regional specificities and instead pretends a placeless 'universality' that is actually class specific. RP plays an important role in the acting profession in the UK. It says something of the domination of the middle class across the panorama of the performing arts that as part of their drama school training, actors must master RP. But a number of working-class actors we spoke to noted that this was sometimes pushed even further within drama school. Julie Hesmondhalgh:

> There was a moment in my first year when I was encouraged to speak in RP outside the rehearsal room and outside the classroom, in order for it to become a natural way of speaking for me. And I weren't happy about that and

> I didn't want to do that and I know a few people who've had that…this voice is very much part of who I am and where I am from …it's very tied in with who I am I didn't see the need for myself to pretend to be a different person as I went about my daily business (*The Acting Class* 26.25).

The broader cultural validation of RP and the middle-class identity it expresses means that those who grow up in a different class, acquire a felt sense of inferiority and lack of confidence. Confidence is indeed one of the key attributes of the middle-class subjectivity. But this confidence is not to be confused with being *overconfident* or aggressive and *pushy*, rather it is a confidence borne of an easy sense of entitlement, that the world is truly there for you to succeed in (Friedman; Laurison, 2019, p. 23-7). The actor Christopher Eccleston brought out the implications of the hierarchy of esteem attached to accents in *The Acting Class*:

> One thing that was really powerful to me as a child, whenever I heard a voice of authority, whenever I heard a voice that was 'intellectual', whenever I heard a voice that was 'cultural' it was white, it was male, and it was middle class. Dialect is an important thing, if you sound like me and millions of other people like me from Scotland or Liverpool or wherever, you don't necessarily think that your accent denotes creativity or intellect. So, you don't think you will play Hamlet. You think that the properties of being intellectual and poetic and soulful reside in an RP accent (25.18).

The acting profession is one of the most precarious occupations there is to try and establish a career in. One of the reasons for this is that in today's neo-liberal economy of flexible exploitation, it is quite rare to have a long-term contract (long running serials being the major exception for those whose characters become an established fixture in the story lines). Most acting work is built around relatively short-term projects. In the early years there may be considerable gaps between employment. Middle class origin actors however can call upon "[…] the intergenerational gifting of capital, either 'in vivo' or through inheritance" (Friedman; O'Brien; Laurison, 2017, p. 1000). More colloquially, the former is known as the *Bank of Mom and Dad* – a form of financial patronage that is particularly important in the context of elite precarious labour providing early career support, financial cushions, to take risks, develop networks (such as on-going workshops with casting directors) and not necessarily have to take non-acting jobs to pay for essentials such as rent and food and therefore to be available for auditions that often come in at very short notice. This private safety net allows the privileged to stay in this highly precarious sector longer waiting for the prize of sustained continuous work (Friedman; Laurison, 2019, p. 90). In *The Acting Class*, Teddy Rose, brought out the deeper existential anxieties which this lack of economic and social capital (networks) has for the working-class actor:

> The working-class actors that I have been around and that I have studied with and worked with and have grown up with; they fall off the map because every year that goes by, they think 'oh no, I am that one year older, and money starts to become far more important. As working-class actors, if we don't make it, then we are screwed. We commit everything we have to potentially becoming actors, we don't have family members who could potentially provide us with a good job if it all falls through or they know someone who knows someone who can employ us if it doesn't work out for us. So, they can try it for a few years and it all goes under, and they are still employed elsewhere. For us, it's a case of if we don't make it as actors, and we have committed everything we have to becoming actors, we have nothing to fall back on We don't have a safety net (18.40).

Sociologists have called the gradual filtering away of working-class acting talent as a *leaky pipeline* (Labour Party, 2017, p. 5). Although fully representative data sets regarding the class composition of actors in the UK is not available, sociologists have been able to analyse at least some survey data. The Great British Class Survey (2013) which was a self-selecting online survey produced by academics at the London School of Economics in collaboration with the British Broadcasting Corporation, generated data on 402 self-identified actors, while the Labour Force Survey includes a much smaller sample of 61. Sociologists found that only 10% of actors from the GBCS came from working class origins and only 16% from the Labour Force Survey (Friedman; O'Brien; Laurison, 2017, p. 997), the latter again around half of the proportion of working-class workers in UK labour force, according to sociological classifications based on the occupations of parents. There is then no magic exception for the performing arts and the cultural industries more generally from the structural barriers reproducing class inequality in the UK, irrespective of the ideology and policy discourses around meritocracy.

Meritocracy and the Brazilian Middle Class in the 21st Century

In this case-study, our objective is to analyse the employment of meritocratic values in the reascension of extreme-right ideologies and governments in Brazil. As a founding pillar of capitalist and neoliberal practices, the meritocratic discourse was part of the structured and organised attack of the Brazilian elites on the Brazilian Left, in special those in power at the time associated with PT (Workers Party), in a transparent and successful attempt to take back the control of the country. Found on the Marxist principle that class domination is both material and ideological (Marx; Engels, 1968), we approach meritocracy as part of the dominant ideological structure and as a justification for the systemic and ontological inequalities of capitalism.

The post-neoliberal Welfare State promoted by the governments of PT fomented transformations in the lifestyle of the Brazilian working-classes and a process of structural mobility in the country[2]. Both presidents promoted public policies to alleviate poverty, accelerate the social participation of groups historically oppressed, and secure rights for the forgotten spheres of the working-classes (Belluzzo, 2013).

Amongst the elites and the upper-middle class, the general improvement in the living conditions of the working-classes created an atmosphere of menace to their privileges. It is the threat to the dominant status quo that leads the elites to support an extreme-right politician, unknown to most of the country's population until mid-2000's[3].

From the shadows of mediocrity, Jair Bolsonaro rose as *Saviour of Society* to fight for morality, the private property, the traditional patriarchal family, and military order. For the bourgeoisie, he was the path to take back the power from the hands of the Workers Party. For the middle-class and the working-class[4] in the primary sector[5], he was the man who spoke for those who felt wronged and deprived from their privileges[6]. As for the working-class in the secondary sector, "In times of 'quiet' formal democracy, the industrial worker has, in principle, two possibilities open to him: identification with the middle class above him, or identification with his own social position [...]" (Reich, 1946, p. 40). Hence, the manipulation of reality comes into place.

The control of the means of communication enabled the articulation of three main elements to rewrite reality and foster a new understanding of the Brazilian political scenario, namely (1) the image of PT as the *only* and *most corrupt* political party of all times[7], (2) the defence of the secular State as immoral against Christian principles[8]/[9], drawing on from the support of the Pentecostal and Full Gospel Churches (LEHER, 2019), and (3) the association of social programs and affirmative actions to alleviate poverty and promote social inclusion with social injustice[10]/[11]. These three discursive strategies may be summarised as (1) the discourse against corruption; (2) the advocacy in favour of Christian-founded morals; and (3) the principles of meritocracy.

The articulation of these three elements managed to successfully (i) establish a narrative with two antagonist characters - the Right (us) against the Left (them)[12] –, (ii) displace historical and structural problems engendered in the core of the Brazilian society onto the individual level, (iii) co-opt the working-class back into the ideological principles of the elite and upper-classes, and (iv) foist upon the Brazilian society the urgent need to overthrow PT and save the country from the hands of communism[13]. In this polarised scenario, anything that diverged from the new Crapulisnky's[14] ideas was "[...] forthwith punished as an 'assault upon society', and [...] branded as 'Socialism'" (Marx, 1977, p. 25).

These elements are important because the analysis of meritocracy in Brazil presupposes the dissection of the roles played by the middle-classes in the rise of the Brazilian extreme-right (Cavalcante, 2018; Souza, 2018). The middle-class feeds itself from the crumbs of the

privileges of the dominant elites and struggles to preserve them. It historically occupies a prominent role in favour of the ruling class and its ideological system in periods of transformation in the class structure of the country (Fernandes, 2019).

Williams, in his analysis of the relationships between individuals and societies, considers this social stratum of conservation in the concept of *servant* (Williams, 2011, p. 112-113). The *servant* wants to belong – and deceptively thinks he belongs to – a system that is not his. The *servant* may be contrasted, in the same social stratum, with the *subjects* – those who do not consider themselves as part of that particular social formation, but have no other option – and, in a higher layer, with the *members* – those who directly or indirectly dominate the social relations and institutions and enjoy the full rights and products of that society. The scrutiny of the figure of the *servant* in capitalism reveals similarities with the middle-class individual in Brazil. Williams (2011, p. 112, my italics) indicates that, to the servant

> […] is given the illusion of choice, and is invited to identify himself with the way of life in which his place is defined. It is an illusion of choice, because again, like the subject, he has no obvious way of maintaining his life if he refuses. Yet the illusion is important, for it allows him to pretend to an identification with the society, as if the choice had been real. […] he may even, *consciously*, think of himself as a member […].

Deceived by the idea of being a *member*, the *servant* believes himself to be moving away from a mass of workers and approaching his desired lifestyle, that of the elite. It is this illusory movement that characterises the Brazilian upper-middle class as the sphere of conservation and unquestioning support to the elites.

It is interesting to note that at the same time that the social welfare policies seemed to improve the general living conditions of the population in all social spheres, the narrative created to overthrow PT absorbed the working-classes and stimulated the belief in the myth of the *New Middle Class*, formed by those who falsely saw themselves now closer to the material privileges of the upper-middle class and the elite due exclusively to their own merit (Chauí, 2016; Pochmann, 2013). The meritocratic discourse managed to associate the expansion of consumerism and the general improvement of life with merit, while it "[…] expressed a distaste for ingrained privilege, particularly if was supported by 'the state'" (Littler, 2018a, p. 81). As McNamee and Miller (2009) concluded, in a society founded on the ideology of meritocracy any form of public policy to accelerate social inclusion is despised.

The myth of the New Middle Class reproduces the fallacy of class mobility and attributes to the individual the merit for success or blame for failure. However, there are contradictions in the concept that reveal the reality of the social division of labour and the need of one social stratum to set itself apart from the less qualified workers and the com-

mon and popular culture (Mcnamee; Miller, 2009; Pachukanis, 2020). The urgency to create and belong to a new middle class exposes the obsession to get closer to an elitist form of lifestyle and to move away from the working class. The main forms of social distinction are translated as meritocratic symbols and occur in

> [...] the search for prestige and in the signs of prestige, such as diplomas and academic titles for the liberal professions, and in the use of services and objects that indicate authority, wealth, abundance, social ascension, [for example], the house in the 'noble neighbourhood' with four bedroom *suites*, imported cars, branded clothing, etc. In other words, consumption appears to [the middle class] as a social ascension towards the dominant class and as an insurmountable distance between it and the working class (Chauí, 2013, p. 132).

In Brazil, the structural mobility made feasible in the first decade of the 21st century expanded the access to these signs of prestige. The access, however, was resignified as the result of individual merit and not as a result of the direct influence of public policies. In power of symbols that *reproduced* social prestige, the working-classes were seduced and co-opted by meritocracy. After all, "[...] the difference between the owner of a Volkswagen Beetle and the owner of a Mercedes was far less than that between the owner of any car and the owner of no car, especially if the more expensive cars were (in theory) available in monthly instalments" (Hobsbawm, 1995, p. 307). Brazil witnessed the rise of an ideological movement of massive support to the extreme right drawn by the elite and the upper-middle class, mainly after the 2014 elections (Cavalcante, 2018); similar to the situation observed by Hobsbawm (1995) in the societies of advanced capitalism in the 1970s and 1980s.

The movements against affirmative action and other public policies that promoted structural mobility were led by those who considered themselves "[...] more qualified and more respectable" (Hobsbawm, 1995, p. 302) and who saw structural mobility as a form of barbaric invasion to spaces that belonged exclusively to those on the higher strata, in an association of elitism and meritocracy. The main arguments against them were (1) reverse discrimination, that is, discrimination against the white middle-class; (2) the injustice towards the *most qualified* candidates applying for the same job or university course; and (3) affirmative action as antidemocratic. These arguments gained greater popular adherence during Jair Bolsonaro's ascension in the media, who stated numerous times that he would not get in a plane piloted by a *cotista*[15] or undergo a surgery performed by a *cotista*[16] for this meant that they had not been hired because they were capable of performing the job, but only because of affirmative actions.

McNamee and Miller (2009, p. 43) point out that "[...] [d]efenders of meritocracy (and critics of affirmative action) often proclaim that the issue of who should get what is simple and straightforward: just hire the most qualified person for the job"[17]. What defenders of meritocra-

cy fail to understand – or simply ignore – is that individual merit hides ingrained privileges that they allegedly hate (McNamee; Miller, 2009). The "[…] claim that affirmative action is antimeritocratic, amounts to reverse discrimination, and has led to the hiring and promotion of thousands of minorities (blacks) over more qualified white males […] (p. 207) soon became the motto of those against it[18]. Bolsonaro, for example, while still a candidate running for the presidency stated that: "This is all a way of splitting society. […]. This cannot continue to exist; it is all victimization. Poor black person, poor woman, poor gay, poor person from the Northeast, poor person from Piauí. Everything is victimization in Brazil. We will end that"[19].

Seduced by the fallacy of their meritocratic social ascension, the working classes embodied the moral and anti-corruption discourse of the Brazilian elite. The new working class supported the project of an extreme-right populist government that seeks to dismantle policies to combat social inequality, prioritise technical training for the working class, and intensify the ideology of competence and meritocracy, "[…] by stimulating an aggressive and competitive individualism and success at any price through cunning in order to operate the market" (Chauí, 2016, p. 20).

The competitive individualism is the social echo of the American meritocratic ideological institutions that are worshiped by middle-class Brazilians with a *mongrel complex*[20]. American meritocracy, shaped on the basis of a capitalist Christianity, is the perfect hegemonic ideological foundation for a country with one of the highest levels of social inequality in the world[21]. Ignoring any effects produced by inheritance, social relationships (connections), luck, discrimination, marriage, intergenerational mobility, (McNamee; Miller, 2009) and criminal activity (*success at any price*, as Chauí points out), meritocracy supports the idea that the social position is a direct result of individual effort and talent. Whether at the top or at the bottom, people occupy the social and geographical space they deserve, according to their individual talent and the effort they have put in the system. Meritocracy is the obsession with overvaluing the processes of individualisation and with the symbols of illusory individual effort. Adhering to these ideological principles enables one to come closer to a desired lifestyle and to detach from the nightmare of being part of the working class (Chauí, 2013a; 2013b). We are unaware of a more accurate description of the ideological beliefs of the Brazilian middle classes.

The idea of uncritical and technical training to the working class instead of university degrees enters the hegemonic common-sense discourse as a form of uncomplicated and guaranteed access to the labour market. According to the former Minister of Education, Abraham Weintraub,

> The school can teach a trade. Then, comes the prejudice of these so-called 'intellectuals' who think that the technical school is not good because it teaches a trade. You have to be a Ph.D. There are lots of unemployed PhDs, but

> one hardly ever see a good plumber going hungry or waiting for *Bolsa Família*. It's difficult to find an electrician, a good technician, who cannot make it[22].

Please note that the issue is not to be *in favour* or *against* technical education, but to indicate the contradictions in its entrails. The quintessential contradiction of technical education is the maintenance of a high-level private school for the elite and the promotion of basic technical training for the working class. In a meritocracy-based society, "[…] education [allegedly] identifies and select intelligent, talented, and motivated individuals and provides educational training in direct proportion to individual merit" (McNamee; Miller, 2009, p. 107), instead, education within these principles tends to reproduce social inequality. In other words, within the structural limits of capital, the logic of access to that one particular form of education reproduces the same class conditions that created them, with no possibility of altering the operating system. The preservation of meritocracy in a society that offers distinctive schooling processes to the elite, to the middle classes, and to the poorest strata of the population can only be sustained as a way of reproducing social inequality, exploiting the poor, and maintaining an *elite of 1%* (Zizek, 2012) that dominates everything else.

In terms of education, meritocracy has established itself as a fundamental hegemonic discourse in the reproduction of a middle-class school that imitates the colours, the physical structure, the symbols, the organisational structure, and the ideals of the elite schools. Nevertheless, a comparison between tuition fees illustrates simply how private schools for the middle class are just knockoffs of elite schools. While the average monthly fee for an elite school in São Paulo is R$ 11,833 (R$ 142,000 per year), the fees for middle-class private schools range around R$ 815.65 reais a month (R$ 9,787.80 per year). Despite the attempts to reproduce the elitist education, middle-class schools seek the highest number possible of students approved in university entrance exams while elite schools aim to offer a holistic education for students who are usually not preoccupied with the idea of getting into university or not, instead they need to be educated to be ready to take their place at the top of the social hierarchy[23]. In the case of the middle class, the obsession with the *vestibulares*[24] is justified by the need to dominate the symbols of prestige (Chauí, 2013; Pochmann, 2013).

Deprived of access to any of these options, to the working classes in the lower social strata is offered technical and military education. The militarisation of schools facilitates the acceptance of the hierarchy, enables the ideological incorporation of success by merit and domesticates a non-revolutionary, obedient, and exploitable class. Access to public education, private middle-class education and elite education is the essential way of reproducing the practices, symbols, signs, and meanings of class conditions. However, like Williams (1989, p. 14), "[…] I cannot accept that education is a training for jobs, or for making useful citizens (that is, fitting into this system)" for the working class and a completely different form of education for the elite.

The hegemonic meritocratic discourse disseminated in schools and imposed on students, each according to their class, not only reproduces the conditions of social class, but also enables the feeling of conformity with the status quo. Without access to critical education, the working class - including the middle classes - tends to adopt the elite›s ideological foundations as its own and to conform to the established order.

Final Remarks

Discussing the ideological structure of Marx's concept of alienation, Mészáros argues that it is part of education's role to successfully reproduce individuals which comply to "[…] the framework of values" of society. Hence, individuals "[…] whose 'own ends' do not negate the potentialities of the prevailing system of production" (Mészáros, 1970, p. 289). Years later, Williams (1980) also points out that the process of incorporation promoted by formal and informal educational institutions are crucial for the maintenance of capitalist hegemonic values, practices, meanings, and symbols.

Meritocratic ideology makes people think that they are the only ones responsible for where they have ended up in life. Those who occupy a prestigious position in society have worked their way up and therefore deserve to be there. In contrast, those struggling lack the *drive* or the *talent* to succeed. Co-opted by the capital's meritocratic framework, the working class joins the resistance against the possibilities of change (Williams, 1989).

Our analyses indicate towards what we may call "[…] a framework of meritocratic values, practices, meanings, and symbols". Meritocracy functions as an ideological pillar of capitalism's hegemony and a justification to the inequalities it engenders. Despite the historical and cultural differences between the UK and Brazil, middle classes have been identified as key elements in the reproduction of this meritocratic framework of class-shaped material and cultural symbols: a preference to accents that emulate the elites and the association of consumerism with social mobility and success. They live in the realm of safety nets, but supposedly promote *risk taking practices*; they criticise governmental policies to accelerate social participation but are unable to realise how they benefit from them; they think themselves in the top, but they only emulate the lifestyle of the elites. Furthermore, in both countries, private education cements social, material, and cultural discrepancies between classes by restricting access to elite-dominated careers.

Education is involved in the "[…] continual making and remaking of an effective dominant culture" (Williams, 1980, p. 39), but it is also in educational practices that we may promote a critical understanding of reality, class consciousness and awareness of the capital's structural hegemonic activities. This is of primary importance mainly in periods of *quiet* formal democracy, as pointed out by Reich (1946, p. 40), when

workers are to decide whether to follow the elites or affiliate with their own social status.

Received on 15 May 2021
Approved on 20 July 2021

Notes

1 See: www.theactingclass.info

2 Structural mobility, in contrast with social mobility, is the general improvement of the living conditions of the population as a whole (Mcnamee; Miller, 2009).

3 See Pachukanis (2020) for an in-depth analysis of the relationship between Fascism and the bourgeoise.

4 Middle class in the singular may be used to characterise the 2% of the Brazilian population that belong to the upper-middle class, a class was found on principles of authoritarianism, militarism, elitism, racism, moralism, and meritocracy (Souza, 2018; Pochmann, 2014). We are aware of the contradictions engendered by the concept of middle class in the Marxist tradition, however, due to the limited space, we will not enter into the epistemological discussion of the concept. For further discussion, consider the works of Erik O. Wright, for a more international analysis, and Márcio Pochmann, Marilena Chauí, and Sávio Cavalcante, for the Brazilian context.

5 Primary and secondary sector jobs respectively represent "[...] those with high wages, high skill levels, good working conditions, job security, and ample opportunities for promotion" in contrast to "[...] low wages, low skill levels, poor working conditions, little job security, and few if any possibilities for advancement" of the secondary sector (Barnes, 1992, p. 57).

6 *Eleitor típico de Bolsonaro é homem branco, de classe média e superior completo*. Retrieved from: <https://www.cartacapital.com.br/politica/eleitor-tipico-de-bolsonaro-e-homem-branco-de-classe-media-e-superior-completo/> in feb. 2021.

7 *Pesquisa: PT é a Sigla com mais Corruptos*, 13 mar. 2007. Retrieved from: <http://g1.globo.com/Noticias/Politica/0,,AA1486307-5601,00.html>. Jan. 2021.

8 *Carta de Haddad aos evangélicos esconde apoio do PT ao aborto, ao 'kit gay' e à ideologia de gênero*, 18 out. 2018. Retrieved from: <https://www.gazetadopovo.com.br/ideias/carta-de-haddad-aos-evangelicos-esconde-apoio-do-pt-ao-aborto-ao-kit-gay-e-a-ideologia-de-genero-8vyiex9yjqadg7s3gy4rsdi7l/>. Jan. 2021.

9 *As ameaças contra acadêmicos, jornalistas e políticos no Brasil têm nome: bolsoterrorismo* 21 jan. 2021. Retrieved from: <https://theintercept.com/2021/01/21/as-ameacas-contra-academicos-brasileiros-tem-um-nome-no-brasil-bolso-terrorismo/>. on jan. 2021.

10 *De crítico a defensor do Bolsa Família: veja frases de Bolsonaro* 27 ago. 2020. Retrieved from: <https://www.agazeta.com.br/es/politica/de-critico-a-defensor-do-bolsa-familia-veja-frases-de-bolsonaro-0820>. On jan. 2021.

11 *Antes de ampliar Bolsa Família, Bolsonaro defendeu fim do benefício*, 17 out. 2019. Retrieved from: <https://noticias.uol.com.br/politica/ultimas-noti-

cias/2019/10/17/antes-de-ampliar-bolsa-familia-bolsonaro-defendeu-fim-do-beneficio.htm?cmpid=copiaecola>. On jan. 2021.

12 *A direita brasileira que saiu do armário não para vender livros*, 01 ago. 2015. Retrieved from: <https://brasil.elpais.com/brasil/2015/07/22/politica/1437521284_073825.html>. On jan. 2021.

13 That our objective is not to analyse the ideological structure of Lula's and Dilma's governments, we would recommend Sader et al. (2013).

14 In the *18th of Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte* (Marx, 1977), Marx calls Louis Bonaparte *Crapulinsky*, a name that derives from French word *crapule*, a scoundrel, a crook.

15 A pejorative term used to refer to a student who benefited from public policies of affirmative action.

16 Retrieved from: <https://politica.estadao.com.br/noticias/geral,as-frases-polemicas-de-jair-bolsonaro,1127819>. In jan. 2021.

17 See Bolsonaro's arguments in: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AqzUopE1l8k>. Accessed in: jan. 2021.

18 Retrieved from: <http://g1.globo.com/jornal-nacional/noticia/2014/11/declaracoes-de-professor-contrario-ao-regime-de-cotas-provoca-indignacao.html>. In jan. 2021.

19 Retrieved from: <https://g1.globo.com/politica/eleicoes/2018/noticia/2018/10/24/bolsonaro-diz-ser-contra-cotas-e-que-politica-de-combate-ao-preconceito-e-coitadismo.ghtml>. In jan. 2021.

20 Expression coined by the Brazilian playwright and journalist Nelson Rodrigues to express the feeling of inferiority that is propagated in Brazil in comparison with the United States.

21 Data from the Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics (IBGE) indicate a concentration of 43.1% of the country's income in the hands of just 10% of the population. In 2018, the richest 1% of the population earned the equivalent of 34 times more than the half with the lowest level of income.

22 Retrieved from: <https://gazetaweb.globo.com/portal/noticia/2019/10/weintraub-diz-que-e-dificil-encanador-passar-fome-ao-defender-ensino-tecnico_87573.php>. In jan. 2021.

23 These elements may be perceived in the interviews of parents in two different sources. Retrieved from: <https://noticias.uol.com.br/colunas/paulo-sampaio/2020/07/12/escola-cobra-12-mil-por-mes-e-nao-da-aula-on-line-na-quarentena-dizem-pais.htm> and <https://www.acidadeon.com/cotidiano/brasil-e-mundo/NOT,0,0,1515630,Demissoes+e+reducao+de+salario+levam+pais+a+trocar+filhos+de+escola+na+pandemia.aspx>. In 10 nov. 2020.

24 University entrance exams in Brazil.

References

BANKS, Mark; HESMONDHALGH, David. Looking for Work in Creative Industries Policy. **International Journal of Cultural Policy**, v. 15, n. 4, p. 415-430, 2009.

BARNES, Colin. Deficiência e Emprego. **Personnel Review**, MCB University Press, v. 21, n. 6, p. 55-73, 1992.

BELFIORE, Eleonora. On Bullshit in Cultural Policy Practice and Research: notes from the british case. **International Journal of Cultural Policy**, v. 15, n. 3, p. 343-359, 2009.

BELLUZZO, Luiz Gonzaga. Os Anos do Povo. In: SADER, Emir (Org.). **Lula e Dilma**: 10 anos de governos pós-neoliberais no Brasil. São Paulo: Boitempo, 2013. P. 103-110.

BLACKBURN, Robin. The Corbyn Project. **New Left Review**, May/June 2018.

BLAIR, Helen. 'You're Only as Good as Your Last Job': the labour process and labour market in the british film industry. **Work, Employment & Society**, v. 15, n. 1, p. 149-169, 2001.

BLAIR, Tony. 'Britain Is on a Roll Whatever the Pop Stars Say'. In: OAKLAND, John (Ed.). **Contemporary Britain, a Survey with Texts**. London: Routledge, 2001.

BOLTANSKI, Luc; CHIAPELLO, Eve. **The New Spirit of Capitalism**. London: Verso, 2018.

BOURDIEU, Pierre. **Pascalian Meditations**. Translated by Richard Nice. Cambridge: Polity Press, 2000.

CAVALCANTE, Sávio. Classe Média, Meritocracia e Corrupção. **Crítica Marxista**, n. 46, p. 103-125, 2018.

CHAUÍ, Marilena. **Manifestações Ideológicas do Autoritarismo Brasileiro**. Belo Horizonte: Autêntica Editora, 2013a.

CHAUÍ, Marilena. Uma Nova Classe Trabalhadora. In: SADER, Emir (Org.). **Lula e Dilma**: 10 anos de governos pós-neoliberais no Brasil. São Paulo: Boitempo, 2013b. P. 123-134.

CHAUÍ, Marilena. **A Ideologia da Competência**. Belo Horizonte: Autêntica Editora, 2016.

FERNANDES, Florestan. **Apontamentos sobre a 'Teoria do Autoritarismo'**. São Paulo: Expressão Popular, 2019.

FRIEDMAN, Sam; LAURISON, Daniel. **The Class Ceiling**. Why it pays to be privileged. Bristol: Policy Press, 2019.

FRIEDMAN, Sam; O'BRIEN, Dave; LAURISON, Daniel. 'Like Skydiving without a Parachute': how class origin shapes occupational trajectories in british acting. **Sociology**, v. 51, n. 5, p. 992-1010, 2017.

HARVEY, David. **A Brief History of Neoliberalism**. New York: Oxford University Press, 2005.

HOBSBAWM, Eric. **Era dos Extremos**: o breve século XX. São Paulo: Companhia das Letras, 1995.

KIRBY, Philip. **Leading People 2016**. The educational backgrounds of the UK professional elite. Londres: The Sutton Trust, 2016.

LABOUR PARTY. **Acting Up Report, Labour's Inquiry into Access and Diversity in the Performing Arts**. 2017.

LEHER, Roberto. Apontamentos Para Análise da Correlação de Forças na Educação Brasileira: em prol da frente democrática. **Educação & Sociedade**, Campinas, v. 40, p. 1-18, 2019.

LITTLER, Jo. **Against Meritocracy**: culture, power and myths of mobility. Oxon; New York: Routledge, 2018a.

LITTLER, Jo. Young and Old Meritocracy: from radical critique to neoliberal tool. **Renewal: a journal of social democracy**, v. 26, n. 1, p. 40-51, 2018b.

MARX, Karl. **The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte**. New York: International Publishers, 1977.

MARX, Karl; ENGELS, Friedrich. **The German Ideology**. Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1968.

MCGUIGAN, Jim. **Cool Capitalism**. London: Pluto Press, 2009.

MCGUIGAN, Jim. 'Creative Labour, Cultural Work and Individualisation'. **International Journal of Cultural Policy**, v. 16, n. 3, p. 323-335, 2010.

MCNAMEE, Stephen; MILLER, Robert. **The Meritocracy Myth**. Lanham; Maryland: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers Inc., 2009.

MCROBBIE, Angela. Rethinking Creative Economy as Radical Social Enterprise. **Variant**, n. 41, p. 32-33, 2011.

MÉSZÁROS, István. **Marx's Theory of Alienation**. London: Merlin Press, 1970.

MILLER, Toby. 'From Creative to Cultural Industries'. **Cultural Studies**, v. 23, n. 1, p. 88-99, 2009.

NEELANDS, Jonothan. **Enriching Britain**: culture, creativity and growth. Coventry: University of Warwick, 2015.

NEWSINGER, Jack. 'A Cultural Shock Doctrine? Austerity, the neoliberal state and the creative industries discourse' Media, **Culture & Society**, v. 37, n. 2, p. 302-313, 2015.

O'BRIEN, Dave; LAURISON, Daniel; MILES, Andrew; FRIEDMAN, Sam. Are the creative industries meritocratic? An analysis of the 2014 British Labour Force Survey. **Cultural Trends**, v. 25, n. 2, p. 116-131, 2016.

OAKLEY, Kate. In Its Own Image: New Labour and the cultural workforce, **Cultural Trends**, v. 20, n. 3-4, p. 281-289, 2011.

PACHUKANIS, Evgeni. **Fascismo**. São Paulo: Boitempo, 2020.

POCHMANN, Marcio. Políticas Públicas e Situação Social na Primeira Década do Século XXI. In: SADER, Emir (Org.). **Lula e Dilma**: 10 anos de governos pós-neoliberais no Brasil. São Paulo: Boitempo, 2013. P. 145-156.

POCHMANN, Marcio. **O Mito da Grande Classe Média**: capitalismo e estrutura social. São Paulo: Boitempo, 2014.

RAMASWAMY, Chitra. Welcome to the Dragon School – the lair of the British acting elite. **The Guardian**, March 28th, 2016. Available at: <https://www.theguardian.com/education/shortcuts/2016/mar/28/dragon-school-tom-hiddleston-tom-hollander-hugh-laurie-night-manager>. Accessed on: 10th Feb. 2021.

RANDLE, Keith; WING-FAI, Leung; KURIAN, Juno. **Creating Difference, Overcoming Barriers to Diversity in UK Film and Television Employment**. Hertfordshire: Creative Industries Research and Consultancy Unit; University of Hertfordshire; Skillset/UK Film Council, 2008.

REICH, Wilhelm. **The Mass Psychology of Fascism**. New York: Orgone Institute Press, 1946.

ROSS, Andrew. **Nice Work If You Can Get It**: life and labor in precarious times. New York: New York University Press, 2010.

SOUZA, Jessé. **A Classe Média no Espelho**: sua história, seus sonhos e ilusões, sua realidade. Rio de Janeiro: Estação Brasil, 2018.

THE ACTING class. Direction: Deirdre O'Neill e Mike Wayne. Production: Deirdre O'Neill e Mike Wayne. Casting: Tom Stocks, Andrew Ellis, Julie Hesmondhalgh, Christopher Eccleston, Maxine Peake, Samuel West. UK, 2017. 1 DVD (77 min.).

WAYNE, Mike. Working Title Mark II: a critique of the Atlanticist paradigm for British cinema. **International Journal of Media and Cultural Politics**, v. 2, n. 1, p. 59-73, 2006.

WAYNE, Mike. **England's Discontents, Political Cultures and National Markets**. London: Pluto Press, 2018.

WILLIAMS, Raymond. **Problems in Materialism and Culture**: selected essays. London; New York: Verso, 1980.

WILLIAMS, Raymond. **Resources of Hope**: culture, democracy, socialism. London; New York: Verso, 1989.

WILLIAMS, Raymond. **The Long Revolution**. Cardigan: Parthian, 2011.

ZIZEK, Slavoj. O Violento Silêncio de um Novo Começo. In: HARVEY, David et al. **Occupy**: movimentos de protesto que tomaram as ruas. São Paulo: Boitempo Editorial: Carta Maior, 2012. P. 15-26.

Michael Wayne holds a PhD from the School of Art, Design and Performing Arts of Middlesex University (1999). He is currently a Professor in Screen Media at Brunel University. His main methodological tools for approaching film and media is through the rich and complex history of Marxism. He is especially interested in the cultural questions that Marxism helps us pose and the links between culture, politics, and education (in the broad sense of everyday learning and reflection).
ORCID: https://orcid.org/0000-0002-1285-5976
E-mail: michael.wayne@brunel.ac.uk

Vinícius Neves de Cabral holds a PhD in Education from the State University of Londrina (UEL). He is a researcher associated with the *Centre for Critical Studies and Research in Education and Social Inequality* (UEL), and member of the Editorial Board of the *The Journal for Critical Education Policy Studies* (JCEPS) and of the *Journal of Class and Culture*. His main research interests lie in the field of education, culture and cultural analysis, drawing on Marxist methodologies.
ORCID: https://orcid.org/0000-0002-4632-3708
E-mail: mad.vinny@hotmail.com

Editor-in-charge: Carla Vasques

This is an open-access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution License 4.0 International. Available at: <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0>.