

Dramatic Shape-shifter and Innovative Teacher:

The creative life and legacy of Dorothy Heathcote

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Abstract

This article explores key aspects of the life and works of Dorothy Heathcote, a cultural innovator and ‘shape-shifter’ within the realms of drama and education. In the wake of her passing, it is timely to reflect upon her life and work and to contribute to interpreting her legacy. This is one of two articles that focus on the work of Dorothy Heathcote and her former student and colleague John Carroll. Both articles use a socio-cultural framework of creativity to develop case studies that profile their personal characteristics and their achievements and consider the impact and relevance of such. This article focuses on Dorothy Heathcote and draws on interviews and conversations with family, friends and colleagues who knew Heathcote as well as published work by and about her. This case study profile reflects on Heathcote’s background and personal qualities, her domain development, her collaborators and others in the field and the nature of her innovative contributions. It concludes by considering her particular legacy and implications.

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Keywords

DOROTHY HEATHCOTE, DRAMA, CREATIVITY, PEDAGOGY, HISTORY, PROCESS DRAMA

Introduction

In the drama education field, two recognised innovators who were also close colleagues and friends – Dorothy Heathcote and John Carroll – both died in 2011. As Nicholson noted in reflecting upon Heathcote’s passing, it is perhaps “our responsibility to the future” to pay our respects to those whose work has made a mark on our lives and has the potential to inform future action and the potential for change (Nicholson, 2012, p. 4). This action is important to ensure that we fully appreciate the knowledge and learnings that those such as Heathcote and Carroll contributed but to do so in an active sense. Ongoing engagement with their legacy will help ensure that we don’t lose the detail and import of what has already been learnt, and that fresh approaches and interpretations might continue to emerge which build on the solid foundations of these pioneers within the field.

This article explores key aspects of the life and works of Dorothy Heathcote, who was a cultural innovator and ‘shape-shifter’ within the realms of drama and education. A key data source for this article has been interviews with colleagues and former students of Dorothy Heathcote. These include Julie Martello, John O’Toole, Joan Cassidy, Howard Cassidy and Gerard Boland. The research also draws on published articles, books and accounts of practice, in particular the biography of Heathcote written by her long-time colleague Gavin Bolton. The data has been analysed for key themes and factors drawn from systems theories of creativity (Csikszentmihalyi, 1994, 1996, 1999; Gardner, 1993; Sawyer, 2006) and these have informed the creation of this case study profile.

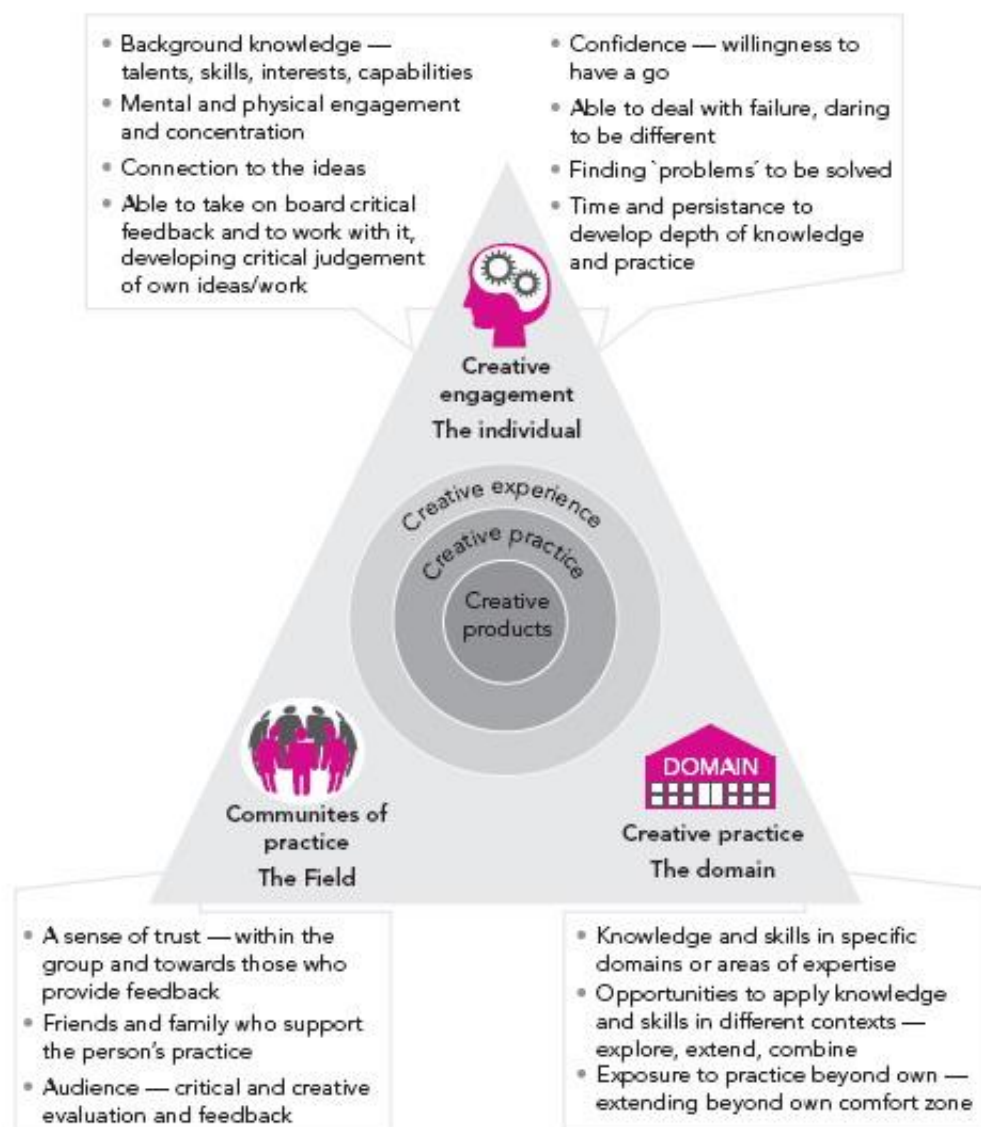
Socio-cultural Approaches to Researching the Creative Life

There is ongoing interest in people who are recognised as great artists or cultural innovators and in analysing what is ‘special’ about their lives, their personalities, their work and achievements. In the creativity literature there is a substantial body of work that focuses on documenting the lives of creative people with attempts at times to identify if there are any characteristics of creative people that are different to those of less creative people. While there is no definitive listing as such, there are some common dispositional characteristics of creative people and these include a certain degree of nonconformity, openness to new experiences and cognitive flexibility, risk-taking behaviour, boldness and confidence and both wide-ranging interests and an ability to channel their focus and attention (Ericsson, Prietula, & Cokely, 2007; Simonton, 2000).

In recent times the focus on the characteristics and personality of the creative individual has shifted towards recognising the importance of collaborators and the socio-cultural context through considering systems models of creativity (Csikszentmihalyi, 1994, 1996, 1999; Gardner, 1993; John-Steiner, 2000; Moran & John-Steiner, 2003; Sawyer, 2006). In Csikszentmihalyi’s systems model of creativity, attention is paid to three areas: the individual – including personality, background and influences; the domain – knowledge or discipline areas in which they have worked and internalised the rule structures; and the field – those who are the gatekeepers of the domains but also collaborators and colleagues. Creativity is deemed to emerge in the interactions between these areas, not in isolation. Creativity is realised through new shifts and combinations which may result in innovations within a domain, or alternatively across domains or through the creation of new domains. Boden therefore proposed three main types of creativity, combinatorial, exploratory and transformational (Boden, 2001, 2003). These will be considered in relation to the accounts as they unfold.

In a previous *NJ* article and drama textbook (Davis, 2010; Davis & Strube, 2010) I proposed a reworking of systems model of creativity. In Figure 1, on the outside of the triangle are examples of some of the characteristics of many people who engage in creative practice. Inside the triangle are the three main areas from which creative practice is realised with the interplay of the individual, the domain and the field demonstrated. Inside the triangle the recognition of the creative products or outcomes from creative activity are identified through creative experience, creative practice, and creative products.

Figure 1: A systems model of creativity after Csikszentmihalyi



This framework has been drawn upon to examine the life and work of Heathcote. A set of interview questions were devised and these drew on questions and categories used in other creativity research (see Csikszentmihalyi, 1990; Gardner, 1993; Gruber & Wallace, 1992). The questions were given to interview subjects in advance. While most of the interviews did not follow this structure, across the scope of the interviews these areas were generally covered. Transcripts of interviews were created and the data was analysed using the qualitative program NVIVO. The coding of data was conducted under four key concepts: individual characteristics and background, domain knowledge and skills, social aspect and the field, and the nature of innovations and creative 'products'. A further category emerged through the coding process – that of social context, including the relevance of their work within contemporary contexts.

Dorothy Heathcote (1926–2011)

Personal Characteristics and Background

Dorothy Heathcote is widely regarded as an inspirational teacher who developed ways of working dramatically and collaboratively that demonstrated the ideals of many educational theories in practice. Her influence and legacy is particularly impressive when you consider her humble beginnings. She was born into a Yorkshire mill family of northern England in 1926. She initially believed her mother was widowed though later realised that she was illegitimate. The family was not well off financially, though Bolton reports that they never felt poor and they felt “rich enough for all to go round” (Bolton, 2003, p. 11). It is apparent that she was raised within a loving and supportive environment – one populated mainly by women, her grandmother, aunts and neighbours.

In terms of personal characteristics, what is clear is that Heathcote was a keen learner, a voracious reader who as a child read a book a day, and was endlessly curious about the world. She had a particular interest in domains such as English, History and Geography and drew on her knowledge of literature and history later on in her drama work:

She did have an amazing general knowledge and amazing knowledge of literature and drama texts. That was always something she could draw on. (Joan Cassidy 7/1/13, lines 514–516)

She had an early love of performance that was recognised and cultivated. As a child she announced to her elementary school class that she was going to be ‘a film star’ and indicated a talent for performing. She later developed her skills through taking elocution lessons and joining a local performing group when she began working at the mill at age 14. Through a series of fortuitous events she was able to train as an actor but when she was told that ‘she was not the right size’ for acting roles she was encouraged to consider teaching instead. Bolton (2003) says she saw herself as always looking “too tall, too broad, too heavy, too fat” (p. 14). However, she also had a strong sense of assurance and confidence, with people noting her self-assurance and absolute belief in what she did:

She had stature, she would pump herself up and she had a beautiful voice as she had done that acting course. (Joan Cassidy, 7/1/13, lines 485–486)

In considering other personal characteristics, Bolton notes that she never acknowledged ‘failure’ but that this is not because they didn’t occur, or that everything always went perfectly. As Howard Cassidy recalls it, her risk-taking was essential to her learning and creativity and she believed the most valuable learning occurred when experiences hadn’t worked as planned and you had to find the alternatives:

Really, she was an enormous risk-taker, she never stopped experimenting from day to day and this was really scary. Sometimes it was really confronting. ... But for Dorothy, it wasn’t worth doing unless it was on the edge... So we were given this extraordinary mentorship and encouraged to take a punt, have a go and okay it might not work, but that’s the only way you’ll get better. (Howard Cassidy, 18/12/12, lines 246–252)

Dorothy Heathcote became known as an inspirational teacher, with a fine-tuned sense of her audience and of appropriate interactions. What is notable about her approach was her positive demeanour and belief in all those she worked with. She was very conscious of the impact of micro-level human interactions and an interesting insight was shared within one of her National Drama presentations. Here she revealed that she believed that all of her strategies were developed so she would never have to be in a position to “tell people off” (Heathcote, 2002). She mentioned her desire to not use power to disadvantage others and elsewhere talked of concepts such as ‘no penalty zones’ and the importance of acknowledging the offers and input that participants made.

She put enormous energy into her teaching and her students, making time for her postgraduate students to meet with her individually, sometimes at 5 in the morning. Her students report that she would always see the best in others and was a great encourager and supporter of them all. This is something that Joan Cassidy believes has impacted on the sort of professional she is even today:

The other thing was that she would always see the best in people... People would have strange habits and obsessions, but she would always pick out the thing that was so pertinent, the great drama work or great teaching that they did. So this really influenced me to this day ... I might agree that the person might have issues but what about this positive side and thing that they've done. So that ability, seeing something special in people, that really influenced me. (Joan Cassidy, 7/1/13, lines 367–77)

While many recall her enormous energy and incredible work ethic, they also recall that she was deeply committed to her family and home life, always ensuring she made time and space for them. In 1956 she married Raymond Heathcote – an engineer -- and they remained together for the rest of his life. They had not expected to become parents but joyfully embraced late parenthood with the arrival of their only child, Marianne, in 1966. Bolton describes the way she would organise her schedule and make strict rules about her travel to maintain her active parenting role. When travelling she would try to squeeze internal travel into a single day or for international trips attend for the minimum time only, never staying on for extra breaks so she wouldn't be away for too long. As interviewees like Joan Cassidy recall, she made the most of every moment – she was always knitting, doing tapestry, cooking, talking to students. She was a hard worker, a conscientious parent, wife, teacher and friend who didn't require much sleep, as there was always so much she wanted to do.

Creative Practice and Domain Developments

Many creativity researchers argue that creativity relies on systematic training and practice in focused areas and that innovative ideas generally emerge from those with well-developed sets of skills and domain-specific knowledge (Csikszentmihalyi, 1994, 1996, 1999; Ericsson, Prietula, & Cokely, 2007; Gardner, 1993; Sawyer, 2006). It is therefore important to consider what domain knowledge Heathcote developed and would extend upon within the educational drama realm. It becomes apparent that Heathcote had a strong drama and theatrical background, which was built through self-education, formal training, practical experience and personal explorations.

Heathcote's knowledge of narrative and drama was stimulated through going to the movies as a child, voracious reading and imaginings. She did well at school but missed out on a place at the Grammar School so left school at the age of 14 to work in the mill in 1940. While working at the mill she learnt verses and texts while at the loom, and her performance skills were extended through having elocution classes with local actor and teacher Mollie Sugden. She then joined a concert party, and a performance group, the Bingley players. So began the basis for her theatrical knowledge and skills, which would underpin her later work.

Acting and Theatre

Fortuitous circumstances took this theatre experience to a new level when a new training school – the Bradford Civic Theatre School – was opened locally, offering training for actors and teachers. Heathcote auditioned just for the experience, not thinking she would get in or be able to afford it. A resulting newspaper article brought her plight to the notice of her boss, who then supported her taking up the position with the offer that if it didn't work out, there would be “three looms waiting for thee, when tha's finished” (Heathcote in Smedley, 1971).

She began her actor training in 1945 at the age of 19 and through this experience she worked with an impressive array of people including Rudolf Laban, Esme Church (who was a London-based actor and director and had been Head of Acting at the Old Vic) and high quality visiting artists. The school also had a focus on practical work and in children's

performance in particular. Her future direction was largely determined when Esme Church offered Dorothy the opportunity to complete the teaching course with her, gaining her Licentiate with L.R.A.M. after which she began teaching and working with others.

Educational Drama

Heathcote's approach to co-constructing drama with participants began when she was doing practice teaching during her course and found herself 'out of the blue' asking a group of boys the question "If you were Captain of a ship, what would you look for in the men who were going to sail it?" (Bolton, 2003, p. 25). Bolton speaks of Esme Church planting the seed with her concept of 'The Drama of the Mind' whereby children could make up their own plays about things that mattered to them. Johnson & O'Neill and O'Toole et al also identify the influence of Harriet Finlay Johnson from the early twentieth century who in 1908 gained some prominence with news of her enrolling her pupils as travellers to the North Pole (Johnson & O'Neill, 1984; O'Toole, Stinson, & Moore, 2009).

As Heathcote began to work with different groups of students, she drew on her theatrical training to take on role, working inside the drama as well as alongside it. Not long after graduating her course, she was appointed as a lecturer at Durham University (later the University of Newcastle) in 1951, aged 24, even though she had not been formally trained as a teacher. She regularly worked with schools and asked to actively teach classes, with other teachers watching, learning and participating as she worked with different groups of students. So began Heathcote's innovative practice in the realm of education drama and in particular her approach to taking on roles within dramatic work. The improvised work was created in the moment with children acting as co-constructors of dramatic plays, often with an audience of other practitioners.

The Importance of the Field/Context

For creativity and innovations to be recognised and be regarded as successful or significant, a field of others with expertise and experience in that domain is fundamental. Therefore, when considering a systems model of creativity, interactions with other people in relevant domains need to be considered in terms of their influence on and subsequent recognition of creative work. Heathcote was fortunate in encounters and friendships she made throughout her life, with key supporters assisting in her transition from mill worker to respected educational drama lecturer, and then spreading the word about her innovative practice.

It is important to consider the educational context during the 1950s and 60s whereby the influence of the progressive movement in education had seen a growth in courses which valued children's creativity and child-centred teaching. There had therefore been substantial growth in arts education courses and support for them from within the education system with headmasters and teachers being paid to undertake study.

The concept of Child Drama had been promulgated for some time, with leading proponents at the time being Peter Slade (1954) and Brian Way (1967). Heathcote's work was recognised as promoting similar values, though over time she came to realise that there were significant differences in her method and philosophy in comparison to others such as Slade. She argued for a version of drama that was a much more collective effort drawing on the knowledge of cultures and literature. Significantly though, she still had a respect for Slade, and students from her course would at times go to study with him for 6 weeks.

Film and Documentation

A key factor in Heathcote achieving her international standing was the film documentation of her work including the 1966 documentary *Death of a President* and the 1971 BBC's omnibus program *Three Looms Waiting*. The distribution and screening of *Three Looms Waiting* around the globe helped Heathcote achieve a degree of fame seldom seen for a 'teacher'. That, in combination with workshops and lectures that she began to conduct in various

countries such as the USA, Canada and Australia, meant that thousands of people from across the world were able to witness her practice and take back ideas and strategies to explore in their own contexts. She then drew a constant stream of international students to her courses, and some of these became documenters of her work as well. The creation of these products and artefacts of her practice is something that O'Toole sees as essential to there being a Heathcote legacy, and one that he noted not all significant drama educators might have:

Int: What do you think it takes for a name and the work to live on?

John: I think you have to write or get yourself filmed a lot. That was the thing with Dorothy. Those early films really established her reputation worldwide. ... It's hard to live on then without someone writing it up. (John O'Toole 16/11/12, lines 350–354)

Recognition through Practice and Publication with Key Collaborators

Word about Heathcote's work was largely spread in a way that Hesten says was like a continuation of the oral practitioner tradition, with practice being passed on through direct interface from one generation to the next (Hesten, 1994). Whilst Heathcote documented her work, she was not an academic writer and the documentation and publishing of her work was often prompted by or carried out by other students or collaborators. These included former student B. J. Wagner documenting her processes to produce the seminal text *Dorothy Heathcote: Drama as a Learning Medium* (Wagner, 1976), Johnson and O'Neill's work in collecting and editing her writings into *Dorothy Heathcote: Collected Writings on Education and Drama* (Johnson & O'Neill, 1984) and Bolton's process of collaborating with Heathcote to explicate the underpinnings and reasonings of her work through texts such as *Drama for Learning: Dorothy Heathcote's Mantle of the Expert Approach to Education* (Heathcote & Bolton, 1995) and his taking on the role of biographer to write *The Dorothy Heathcote Story: Biography of a Remarkable Drama Teacher* (Bolton, 2003).

The importance of her collaboration with Gavin Bolton cannot be underestimated, especially in terms of explaining and interpreting their work for more academic purposes. John O'Toole initially met Dorothy Heathcote while studying with Gavin Bolton and supports the belief that their partnership was a key factor in the development of Heathcote's reputation and the understanding of her work:

So Dorothy and Gavin really should be seen on the same level, but even Gavin always deferred to Dorothy. Yet his thinking, the quality and coherence of his thinking was so important to progressing her work. Dorothy had a magpie mind, she would bring together all these different bits, but there would be bits falling off all over as well. Their work together and writing together was very important... They made a fine contrast – using the same techniques, but very differently. But she needed him, to systematise, to clarify, to theorise things that she was instinctively discovering and doing. (John O'Toole 18/12/12, lines 16–53)

Bolton also promulgated processual forms of drama, and was an outstanding practitioner in his own right but much more the classic academic in terms of theorising and publishing their work. Another academic who influenced her thinking was Oliver Fiala, Professor of Drama at the University of New South Wales, Australia. Heathcote respected him and he provided insights to her about her work through comparing some of her concepts to those of Brecht. He also, significantly for Australians, supported arrangements to bring her to Australia in 1975.

Heathcote's interactions with students also served to inform her work, a point she herself acknowledged. Their interactions with her, shared readings, writings and practice helped her understand what she was doing and why it was effective:

There were two or three students who were probably most influential to her, John Carroll being the pre-eminent of those, but there were others, Bernadette Mosala from South Africa, Betty Jane Wagner from the US and others like that who really made

their mark on her. So she wasn't really forging it alone as the hero/guru at all. (John O'Toole 18/12/12, lines 77–81)

The documenting and sharing of her work extended its impact and acceptance by the developing field of drama in education.

Heathcote Archives

The creation of the Heathcote archives has also been a significant action that ensures that her legacy will endure and be a source for ongoing study and interrogation. The work on the archive began in the 1980s with a significant contribution emerging from Sandra Hesten's PhD thesis and initial categorisation system (Hesten, 1994; Jackson, 2012). The archive is currently based at Manchester Metropolitan University and houses many plans and documentation of Heathcote's work including dozens of films and copies of student dissertations. Having a collection of this nature provides a solid foundation for ongoing analysis and interpretation of her work.

Criticism from the Field

It is important to acknowledge that Heathcote and her work was not without its critics and detractors. Exponents of child drama and progressive ideals saw Heathcote's strong and interventionist role-playing as antithetical to their beliefs about cultivating children's creativity through free, unfettered expression. Others saw her focus on cross-curricular work and promotion of 'universal' human understandings as unhelpful for achieving discipline-based drama and theatre learnings (Hornbrook, 1989). Accounts about the rift between the educational drama movement and theatre education camps identify acrimonious debate and criticism (Hornbrook, 1989; O'Toole, Stinson, & Moore, 2009; Winston, 1998). The characterisation of her work as being unconcerned with theatrical learnings and aesthetic is something that former student, university lecturer and now independent artist Howard Cassidy questions:

And the other thing is the awareness of the drama/theatre aesthetics. She was so theatrical but the political divides that have raged around her at times with people saying that she wasn't concerned with the aesthetics of theatre. That was wrong really. I recall one time back at Newcastle, working in one of the roughest places ever.... and she had us all doing a musical version of Julius Caesar. These rough, tough, damaged kids, ... transforming it, they loved it. That experience has really stayed with me. So it was certainly about the drama, the aesthetics and the artform, however the artform was in in the service of the children. That was important to her. That artform was not for the sake of itself, not art for artsake, it had to go beyond that. (Howard Cassidy 18/12/12, lines 60–72)

Heathcote herself spoke about how she constantly drew on theatrical elements in her educational drama work in *Three Looms Waiting*; however, her focus on drama for learning rather than essentially being for theatre was at the heart of much of the critique. John O'Toole questioned these critiques about her work and in his own way worked towards trying to heal some of the rifts. His goal was to demonstrate that core dramatic elements are evident in educational drama work as well as theatre education and this thinking was explicated through his work with Brad Haseman on the 'Elements of Drama' (Haseman & O'Toole, 1992) and his book *The Process of Drama* (O'Toole, 1992). This was also acknowledged by Joan Cassidy:

...and that was where the work that John O'Toole [did] really came in. He stitched the whole thing together with his *Process of Drama* book – when people could see it wasn't about two camps, that Dorothy always brought the theatre and drama in too. (Joan Cassidy, 7/1/13, lines 389–93)

Heathcote had become a key figure in the drama and education field by the 1970s and 80s when many of these debates came to the fore. It is important to acknowledge that she didn't

stand still with her thinking and practice and continued to develop new strategies, approaches and understandings throughout her life. It is timely to review some of her key innovations and explore the nature of the creative shifts she made or embraced.

Shape-shifting the Domain and Innovation

Definitions of creativity often describe creativity as emerging from new or novel combinations between elements and concepts. This often involves domain and boundary crossing and combinatory play. There are different ways of describing creative work, whether it is mainly about exploring the possibilities within an existing domain, whether it transforms a domain and creates new ones or whether it crosses over existing domains. Heathcote's work could be argued to be all three at different times, though most people regard her work with drama processes as being fundamentally transformative. Her educational drama workshops and demonstration classes were observed by thousands of other teachers and academics across the world. Many left these sessions awestruck by what they had seen. The key innovations identified relate to the ways she facilitated and modelled a new way for teachers or facilitator to work within drama – going beyond a grab bag of strategies to an approach of working which challenges traditional teacher/student relationships.

Teacher-in-Role and Drama Process

All the people interviewed, when asked about what her most significant innovations were, discussed the importance of her work with teacher-in-role. As already mentioned, Heathcote was not the first to use role or improvisational drama with children, but she developed it to a whole new level. She planned and structured dramatic encounters, interacting from within the fiction to guide students to problem solve and speculate, and reflect upon the implications of their actions:

As for drama, she wasn't the first to use naturalistic role-play or experiential role-play or what we now call process drama. She wasn't the first but she certainly took it, clarified what she meant by it and took it a lot further than some her predecessors, particularly Peter Slade and Brian Way. She ensured that there was a structure, I mean a theatrical and dramatic experience, but also a personal and emotional one, and that the learning came through the structuring of that emotion and reflection. (John O'Toole 18/12/12, lines 104–111)

Where her work again differed from previous work was through bringing her artistry and theatricality to her role, working as director, actor, playwright and teacher to frame and structure processes that lead to deep commitment, engagement and learning:

I think the whole idea of taking on a role and living in somebody else's shoes [was] to change understanding. That was the thing with her, it was all about changing people's understandings. (Joan Cassidy, 7/1/13, lines 424–426)

These innovations demonstrate the realisation of a systems model of creativity – being able to work across domains and create new domains – and are also an example of Boden's 'combinatorial' type of creativity as well as the 'transformative'.

Heathcote's work was not based on one idea or strategy only; she didn't stand still. Bolton (2003) identifies different directions in her work, including 'man in a mess' in the 1960s, with drama that often started with questions and invited participants to propose the focus for the drama which explored human conflicts and problems. Heathcote (2002) identified four main strategies used in her work, beginning with 'Drama used to explore people', followed by 'Mantle of the Expert', 'Rolling Role' and the 'Commission Model'. Her development of 'Mantle of the Expert' emerged in the mid-1970s and for many this is perhaps her most notable innovation. The investigative nature of 'mantle' work positioned participants into task-based situations where they were endowed with responsibility. This type of task-based enterprise was further explored through later strategies such as 'Rolling Role'

and the ‘Commission Model’ in the 1990s. This was work that she was still excitedly discussing in the 2000s, with John Carroll as well as Howard and Joan Cassidy:

So when we went to see her she talked at great length about her latest work about the commission model – and I think she had developed that with John. ... She told us about a project she’d just worked on with some year 9 students to design a garden. And she was so excited about it ... (Joan Cassidy, 7/1/13, lines 348-353)

Innovations in Teaching and the Relationship with Learners

Whilst Heathcote is now most often associated with the field of drama in education, for many, the significance of her work is more widely relevant to teaching in general. Several interviewees discussed how she enacted processes that democratised teaching, demonstrating a fundamental shift in pedagogy that is often theorised about, but not often seen in practice. In fact O’Toole believes this is perhaps her most significant contribution:

I think she would want it to be about the democratising of teaching and finding a pedagogy that enabled kids. All the words that educational theorists have been using for the past few decades, about critical pedagogy, enabling pedagogy, she found it and it happened to be through drama, her own specialty. She made leaps and bounds to this wonderfully dialogic form of learning where kids and grown-ups learn together. (John O’Toole 18/12/12, lines 85–92)

This version of the democratised classroom was not a hands-off model with students making all the decisions but was highly interventionist and carefully structured. It was about offering provocations and active negotiations with Heathcote playing multi-functional roles, constantly selecting and decision making, but always ensuring the students were with her and ready to progress to the next stage. Students were empowered to speculate and explore ideas in ways not seen in many classrooms at the time:

She was the only person I could see on the scene who gave any kind of practical guidelines for applying the kind of perspectives I had read, including the work of Paulo Freire. (Gerard Boland 22/01/13, lines 100–102)

Heathcote didn’t only work with ‘easy’ groups either, but often was asked to or sought out difficult groups that others had given up on.

You look at the work we did at Newcastle-Upon-Tyne with Special Ed, with other groups. Some work was in the most despairing places I’ve ever seen. Some of the groups were fourth generation unemployed, people thought it was hopeless, even the kids said ‘we’re hopeless’ – they thought so too. That time with them for only a week, but she saw it as positive and worth doing. What she said was ‘don’t begin from a sense of it’s hopeless or nothing can be done here. Work from that human level.’ (Howard Cassidy 18/12/12, lines 387–394)

Her work with severely disabled children and adults, the mentally ill and adolescents in prison all show incredible insight and courage. Her design of processes that placed participants in situations where they were able to make decisions and take action in ways that were fruitful were deemed extremely innovative and even transformative.

It is significant to note that Heathcote’s fine-grained reading and response to interactions within her teaching and practice was not always replicated in situations where she was asked to present more formal presentations and lectures. Bolton (2003) describes situations where Heathcote ignored time allocations, speaking through scheduled breaks for hours on end, seemingly unaware of any restlessness in the audience.

Innovations in Academia

While it is her processes with students and young people that are generally seen as her most significant innovations, Heathcote could also be seen to be an innovator in terms of academic and research fields through the structure and outcomes of her postgraduate courses, initially an Advanced Diploma (1963), then a Masters in Educational Drama (1979), running courses until 1986. Heathcote built up her own postgraduate courses and, as word spread, drew students from around the globe. Initial support from institute head Professor Brian Stanley was not always matched by wider support within the university system:

They never treated her all that well at the university, other than by giving her that job and opportunities. They almost begrudgingly accepted her success. (John O'Toole 18/12/12, lines 187–189)

Her former students recall how she encouraged each student to embrace key challenges for themselves and to develop a research focus and form of presenting their dissertation that was unique to their concerns. Howard Cassidy uses his dissertation as a means of explaining her approach:

... my dissertation was called 'Class encounters for the first time' which of course was hanging off Lucas and Spielberg's film title. So mine was about the first kind of encounters with drama and doing drama with infants.... We didn't have to comply to some pre-arranged academic assignment, we had to create it. It was a matter of finding the form to fit the content – for her they had to be one. That notion was new to me. In a way the medium was always the message... So for me I wrote a kind of picaresque novel ... I wrote myself in as a hero who went on a quest, entering the realm of fear and peril and trying to quell a fear of doing drama with little ones and overcome my unease of working with them.... It suited my need to create something creatively and to interrogate my own experiences through those lenses. (Howard Cassidy 18/12/12, lines 171–189)

Joan Cassidy was already a teacher but wanted to find out more about how to teach theatre and apply Heathcote's processes within the drama and theatre classroom. She chose a completely different creative form to explore her concerns:

...so I used the idea of the Messingkauf Dialogues (after Brecht) the teacher was the interviewerSo what I did was have the teacher asking each of the playwright, director and actor (fictional person) about what they actually did, how did they create drama or theatre? What was the process? ... That was the thing, everyone did such different things, she encouraged us to do different things with our dissertations. Because she believed the medium was the message. (Joan Cassidy, 7/1/13, lines 251–53, 260–64, 299–301)

Heathcote worked in universities at a time when good teaching was perhaps appreciated more than it is now and it is interesting to ponder whether a Heathcote-type figure could emerge within contemporary academia. Typically now, it is difficult to gain tenure and be promoted without a solid track record of doctoral certification, academic publications and winning external grants. While there were difficulties and constraints that Heathcote faced, she was able to maintain her academic position and standing through the widespread recognition of her exceptional practice:

Yes, she benefitted from the fact that universities were very different places in those days; I would think she'd be crushed by the modern universities. Her work depended on personal inspiration, upon being a good teacher. (John O'Toole 18/12/12, lines 159–162)

Her good teaching extended the academic and research outcomes for many of her students, though, and this is an area of achievement that is perhaps not so well recognised.

Social and Interpersonal Innovator

While creative work is often thought of as products, artefacts and concepts, it is evident that Heathcote was an innovator in a social and interactional sense primarily. Everyone interviewed mentioned Heathcote's inspirational capacity and the strong impact on their lives, with those who were her students speaking of their encounters with her as life-changing events:

So that experience just blew me away, I said I must go and study with this person. (Joan Cassidy, 7/1/13, lines 147–148)

Howard Cassidy, Gerry Boland and John Carroll (as reported by Julie Martello) described similar experiences with their initial experience of her practice, prompting them to travel overseas to study with her.

Heathcote's interactions and relationships with her students were certainly unconventional and perhaps can also be considered innovative. She broke down the personal/professional boundaries more typically seen in educational contexts, with students often staying at her house, appreciating the advice and support she provided:

She would have people come to do the course and stay in her house. She was the essential guru, and that was what some people didn't like. They thought she was too powerful, they also thought she wasn't giving her students enough say, but that's not true from our perspective. (Joan Cassidy, 7/1/13, lines 309–313)

This cross-over of the personal and professional life was something that John O'Toole saw as a key factor in enabling her to work with her students in dialogic ways, which in turn informed her own work and understanding of such:

But invariably she would always have people from all over the world staying with her, sometimes for a year, sometimes for just a few weeks. ...From that she got an enormously enriched understanding of what she was doing. From that, and from the response to what she did in the classroom she developed a greater understanding of what she was doing. (John O'Toole 18/12/12, lines 67–72)

For Howard Cassidy, one of the most essential elements about the Heathcote way of working was about a fundamental focus on human interactions and making connections:

In the end, she demonstrated and exemplified that anything that's meaningful comes from the personal relationship in the moment, for me that sums up how the teacher has to work. (Howard Cassidy 18/12/12, lines 432-434)

Heathcote's Creative Profile

To summarise key aspects of Heathcote's life and work, it can be argued that she was a consummate teacher and interpersonal innovator who played a transformative role in the realm of drama education. Heathcote came from a humble background but was an intelligent, voracious reader, an autodidact who made the most of the opportunities that emerged. While she did not have elite schooling or university training, Heathcote developed her drama/theatre skills and knowledge through performance experiences beginning in her adolescence, through professional training and theatrical experience. She developed and promoted ways to use dramatic conventions and processes to engage participants in creative learning that focused on the human condition.

The social and educational context of the time enabled opportunities for drama education courses to flourish and her entry into the tertiary education sector provided the platform for her to develop her practice and share it with thousands of educators across the globe. This dissemination of her work was key to her emergence as a transformative creative in education. Her creativity was realised through highly performative encounters and her confidence in leading processes and de-privatising the teaching process was crucial to the success and promotion of her work. Much of her work was shared through direct encounters,

with thousands of teachers and students experiencing her work firsthand or through filmed documentaries. It was further documented, theorised and analysed through collaboration – in particular with colleagues such as Gavin Bolton and students including B. J. Wagner and John Carroll. Thus the creation and extension of her influence became a collective endeavour with the field contributing enormously.

Heathcote was accepted by and contributed to creating communities of practice.

Numerous leading academics including David Booth, Cecily O’Neill, John O’Toole and Brad Haseman, Juliana Saxton and Carol Miller, Pamela Howell and Brian Heap and many more in the field, met and worked with Heathcote and acknowledge the impact of her ideas and practice on theirs. The depth and breadth of her impact on the field can be seen through the tributes and anecdotes that have been recounted in articles, on websites and at drama education events since the time of her death (Saxton & Miller, 2012). Heathcote’s early encouragement of different forms of practice-based research and presentation of such were also innovative for the academic realm.

Significantly, others remember Heathcote as much for the person that she was, for her presence and social interactions, as for her ideas and academic contributions. In Hornbrook’s 1989 book he was very critical of this phenomenon and disparaging of the loyalty of Heathcote’s students and advocates. He believed that by not separating the ideas and the writings from the practice, people were not being suitably critical of what was promoted as a new orthodoxy:

Frequent use of this kind of semi-magical imagery reinforced the evangelical thrust of the new orthodoxy, wrapping Heathcote’s already powerful physical presence in a cloak of spirituality around which an increasingly beleaguered discipline could rally... The intense personalisation of practice, combined with a mistrust of disinterested analysis, meant that it became almost impossible to challenge the premises upon which the practice was built. (Hornbrook 1989, p. 28)

For any conceptual field to develop, critical debate should be encouraged. However, there is also a sense in this critique that the personal practice involved should not count or should not influence people’s perceptions of the work. This is, in a way, a reworking of classic western dualities of mind/body, reason/emotion and a devaluing of the personal, emotional connections people felt towards Heathcote and her work. Surely in a field such as drama education – where the expression of human experience and emotion, typically through embodied presence and interactions – those who excel at crafting and managing these experiences should be recognised. It would seem appropriate to recognise the value of the physical and embodied practice of ‘masterful’ practitioners and not only those who can write and publish in recognised academic forms. It becomes an important question, when it comes to considering the legacies of people like Heathcote, about how we recognise excellent practice. Is it possible for exceptional practice to be recognised? To what extent does the power of their presence and practice count unless it is accompanied by academic writings and publication?

An Active and Ongoing Legacy?

Legacies don’t just exist and they are not constant – they are cultivated, can grow, change or fade away. They change shape with the times and what may be learnt or taken from them should always be considered in regards to the context of the time. The Heathcote legacy is already enormous and will undoubtedly continue to grow. The question is probably more about how to ensure it remains alive and open to reinterpretation, active engagement and renewal, rather than becoming concretised and fossilised.

Thousands of articles, books and dissertations have already drawn upon Heathcote’s work, interpreting it and applying it to myriad contexts. Much of the type of work she did has formed the foundations of a particular form of drama now known as Process Drama (Howell

& Heap, 2005; Haseman, 1991, 2001; O'Neill, 1995). Her pioneering work with non-school groups is now known as Applied Theatre or Applied Drama.

There are some key differences now in the educational and wider social landscapes and, in particular, major shifts towards standardisation of delivery, testing and formal assessment. It may seem that Heathcote's work is not so relevant in a time when cross-curriculum ways of operating have been sidelined and curriculum frameworks focus on segmented discipline-based programs. However, Joan Cassidy, a practising teacher and Head of the Arts finds she still draws on Heathcote's conceptualisation of key dramatic elements in her teaching of drama in the classroom:

So that is one thing I've used a lot of and I still use it, not all the time, but I've recently used it with Year 8s. It's still important to have the foundations of drama and we still teach the kids the elements. And the way I'm finding it now at school with the idea of explicit teaching, it is important to build the literacy and terminology of a specific subject, so then they have that specialised discipline knowledge that they can bring to the forefront of their minds, use it and reflect on their work. (Joan Cassidy, 7/1/13, lines 36–44)

She has also found herself drawing on her work with Dorothy to explore ideas and issues and building connections to work with text in Senior Drama:

So I might use some of those strategies to explore the context or tension, or an idea from a play, or what is happening in a situation in the world, and develop it from there. It is eclectic too as it is building on other people's work as well. (Joan Cassidy, 7/1/13, lines 79–82)

It may take a more in-depth examination of the conventions and artistry of her work, but it is clear that Heathcote's work was about processes that are still of relevance to discipline-based drama and theatre work. From her work can be drawn an understanding of different conventions, signs and dramatic elements and how these can be used for drama processes and playbuilding as well as informing theatre and performance work.

For the wider world of education and teacher education, her principles and approach maintain potency. Her practice retains powerful reminders about how to interact with others to bring out the best of students through learning processes. This type of approach may seem more suited to earlier, more liberal times, but Howard Cassidy believes that Heathcote's legacy is also about an attitude and approach and that is about promoting resilience, risk-taking and making the most of all opportunities:

Maybe, I believe the things you have to do is subvert systems for the children... Dorothy did that in a way too So maybe at this time of national curriculum and strictly structured formats, teachers will innovate and find ways to subvert, submit to it but be creative and I don't believe it's beyond doing. And I think it will evolve in that way as it must. So I wouldn't be bemoaning our freedoms at all – what are the opportunities. That's what Dorothy taught me 'look for what you can do', what can we do now? (Howard Cassidy 18/12/12, lines 364–384)

Consideration now returns to legacies and how they may be maintained. For the work of significant practitioners and researchers to remain active in the field it needs to be accessible, with people able to interpret, interrogate and interact with it. The Heathcote archives at Manchester Metropolitan University are an invaluable resource already. However, very little of this work has been digitised and only a small number of items are available (currently there are some available on the mantleoftheexpert.com website). Twenty-first century developments in the digital arena, with the advent of many multimedia content-sharing platforms, means that videos of her practice are now available online. As an example, *Three Looms Waiting* (Smedley, 1971) had around 13 000 hits on YouTube at the time of publishing. Several other videos of her work are likewise available. Publications such as this journal, as well as the National Drama conference in London in 2013 and subsequent

publications, will also continue to build her legacy. It is important to not regard her legacy as static but to value the developments and reworkings of her contributions, and also recognise the impact of her collaborators and other approaches to achieving similar goals.

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Howard Cassidy, Retired Lecturer Central Queensland University, Independent Artist

Julie Martello, Lecturer, Charles Sturt University

John O'Toole, Retired Professor, University of Melbourne and Griffith University

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