

Role work in learning with mantle of the expert and learning through drama.

This article attempts a description the 4 Projections of 'role' - as identified by Dr Dorothy Heathcote (1982) and their implications to learning, drama form and theatre form.

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Further references: Unpublished Master's Degree submission 'Four Projections of Role' 1982 Newcastle University and available on www.mantleoftheexpert.com

During my training with Dr Heathcote between 1981-2 as a Masters student on her Drama as Learning programme, it was a time where everyone in the drama-in-the-classroom community used and experimented with the very familiar strategies of 'teacher in role' and 'learner in role'. The OUT OF ROLE bit was left to chance as people were so beguiled by the IN ROLE experience. Many critics of her followers (Stuart Bennet) complained, rightfully, all too often, that it was the teacher that 'got the best parts!' The whole of the drama in education world, it seemed had tried to copy this unique teaching technique Heathcote used in her dramatic work with learners. Her films became viral (for example, the BBC's *3 Looms Waiting*) at that time and her talks famously identified the power shifts possible with the use of the strategy. It's a shame though; at that time we didn't really understand her work as we do now 50 years later. We now realise with the hindsight of time, that it was her use of a set of unique language codes, both in public and with classes, that were utterly and it transpired, revolutionary to schooling in the newly recognized era of *Liberation* methodology and practice. Akin to initial perplexities in the hearing of music by John Cage, or Picasso's Blue Phase, much needed to be investigated as so much was just too disturbing to take on board all at once. As we began to suspect- nothing in her work was obvious or easy. There turned out to be a form of practice she used called 'projection' of roles. This just flummoxed us. What on earth is the difference between 'going into role' and 'projecting a role'? In the early stages of my induction into her drama as art view, I just couldn't understand. Anyway I was a successful teacher of 10 year experience- so what did I have to learn about this role stuff? (So I mistakenly thought at the time.) My rude awakening came swiftly. I began to understand that there in the role hinterland, lay a vast arena of practice and theory (George Herbert Mead for example) I was totally blind to which was put right when I was commissioned by Dr Heathcote to investigate a long study into role work as my MEd thesis as in her words,

'Not much is written about all the ways we can use role in teaching and it needs to be done.'

To incorporate this new practice into our own, we at that time, had to rid ourselves of the old and make way for the new. Just to say here, Dr Heathcote does not need placing on any pedestals for all this. She was however, a great and unique artist-educator creating transformative practices never seen before so in that sense she was a 'genius'.

Attitudinal stance of the initiator/teacher/facilitator-the hidden dimension of the 4 projections.

In the whole gamut of interactions with classes the shift away from 'teacher controlling talk' and the deployment of her '3 voices', affronted the status quo of the obedient learner pedagogy inbuilt into the culture of education. There is much more to say about this but this is a shortened article so that will have to wait. I have written elsewhere in any case of the deeply disturbing cultural impacts of the Ancient Greek scholastic system still in operation and very healthy in the majority of schooling settings-and throughout the world. Shocking is not the word.....archaic anachronism maybe is though. (SOS article)

Many teachers and other educators witnessing her work in classrooms, saw the practice as that of the educational devil, and in any case unrepeatably. The stance she took with her classes was simple but devastating to new eyes. It was the 'crucible' of learning she wanted to set up rather than a transmission model and of course drama strategy was her main pedagogic method. Again, the trouble was that it was a set of practices no one had seen before, nor so intensely and so full on. (Even as late as 2002, a Guardian article on her work described her practice as a 'whirling tornado'. So un-British even then given that her work had been going on since 1956!)

So what I am saying here is that in a slavish copying of the 4 projections outlined in the next section is not enough. Their deployment is bound up with a deep and unassailable value system within the teacher/educator, so that the intrinsic work is not just about knowledge gains. More so though, it is about the function of the artist/educator in transformative societal challenge and change, through the deployment of the techniques described below. This, for me anyway, is the reason we have art. Drama form is the reminder of our humanity and our need as humans to be investigated at all times to reflect, critique and perhaps bewail the millennium old inquiry question: how is it so that we humans behave as we do and what motivates our species to make the choices it does?

It goes without saying that the time present is one in which such questions need addressing.

And urgently in my view.

Projections 1, 2, 3 and 4-Teacher In and Out of Role, Full Role, Secondary Role and Twilight Role.

Perhaps this is too obvious to describe? The use of the teacher in role strategy over the past half-century is a common feature to those who deploy drama in learning episodes. Unfortunately fewer and fewer educators have been inducted into this process over the past decade as the world catapults itself into transmissional learning methods to measure (and thus control) outcomes of what our young are expected to know and by what age to boot. The only exception currently seems to be the Welsh curriculum that, if the reforms go through as planned, will see a regime change of massive magnitude.

In any case, the teacher agrees with the class that s/he will REPRESENT a fictional person and behave AS IF the created person is about to be CURRENTLY present in the space. As and when the teacher/s steps into this mode, such a circumstance can be described as THE TEACHER IN ROLE. The teacher speaks and behaves 'as if' in another point of view. The big lie is triggered and the agreement to the willing suspension of disbelief becomes the mode of engagements and creations. As usual though with the work of make believe there are hidden dimensions and subtleties of role that can only be

usefully perceived through practice. So as an alternative to a live piece of teaching I offer readers the opportunity to engage in a piece of sequenced teaching episodes that may help identify the edges of the functions of the role projections as I know them currently. No doubt at some stage other practitioners will discover further insights as the work progresses in time in various settings. In the examples I endeavour to take practitioners through the 4 projections as needed and hopefully help in the dissecting of this marvelous strategy.

Furthermore there is a tight bond where any role work is deployed- as role projections automatically trigger the *Conventions of Dramatic Action* (from now on referred to as CoDA for brevity!) In times past- no one but Dr Heathcote knew of this necessity. Before we as her erstwhile students, knew better, it looked like you just spoke as a newly invented person and told the class that when you put on the scarf you were going to talk as if you were Goldilocks' mother...a shocking example of teacher-type talk which was an anathema to Heathcotian methodology. It looked like you just adopted the method by copying.....

However, more of CoDA in another article- but suffice to say the CoDA toolkit needs to be in the skill set of a practitioner to get anywhere significant in the work. In any case, the range of the 4 role strategies triggers 'IN FICTION MODE', 'NOW TIME' and 'OUT OF FICTION MODE'. As does theatre form.

So the class have a lot to contend with. Their teacher now behaving as if s/he are someone else and then leaving the fiction to take up the reins of the leader of learning, in other words the OUT OF ROLE mode. As we can see-the traps for initiates are many..... For example the language of intended induction can emanate from our mouths as 'permission seeking' often a common error in the first experiments by new colleagues to the work.

For example:

T: So what I want you to do is to see me as another person for a minute-is that OK?'

Class: No... its not!

T: Oh dear...

However, using an *Inductive language mode* avoids this trap, but is a longer journey and harder work to get the language precise enough. But the impacts on learning can be so much deeper, more inclusive as well as collaborative. The use also supports the smooth transitions of the work over a longer period of time.

Here's a longer example with 5-6 year olds. I invite you to read it through and spot the shifts from OUT OF FICTION mode as well as the way this teacher constructs the context with class through gaining agreements and using theatre form in the projection of a female wolf IN THE FICTION as well as how transitions work OUT OF THE FICTION.

What follows is a remembered account of a morning lesson in a classroom with Reception children in the summer of 1992 in Blenheim Primary School South End, Essex, with a cohort of 20 observer/participant teachers engaged in learning how drama can work with younger classes. The class teacher had asked me to design a mantle of the expert experience using the class story of Red Riding Hood they were exploring. The plan was to create a team of 'helpers' in the first sequence that could then be commissioned as helpers in other contexts, as they became famous for helping a wolf out of a quandary.

T out of role: So, you know our story of Little Red Riding Hood...I wondered if you would be interested in meeting up with the wolf in the story?

Class: [Laughter].... not a real one...just in our story.... they're dangerous you know....

T out of role: Mm... well, to meet up with a wolf there is a way we could do it-but we'd have to agree that this glove (reveals from a covered cloth bag, a large leather glove with wooden claws attached with sellotape) is part of the wolf's body!

Class: [Very excited murmurs.]...that's not a wolf's foot though!

T out of role: No you're absolutely right-but for our story of RRH maybe it will do? After all I wouldn't dare get a real foot as it would hurt the wolf too much I think....

Class: Yes and wolves are killed just for eating their own food..... which is natural.....yes but they are dangerous you know.....not when they are in a zoo.....

T out of role: Yes I think the same about wolves being killed. So the wolf you might meet in a minute could be in a lot of trouble, especially as this one has been accused of something they didn't do!

Class: Oh dear-what did it do?

T out of role: Well let's try making contact with it in our drama then we can find out

Class: Nodding all round..... in agreement

T out of role: By the way there's a man-male-wolf in the forest and mum-female one as well-which would you like to meet up with? [Givens establishes here]

Class: Thinking..... and discussing with each other.....

T out of role: Just to say, the male wolf is VERY suspicious of human people.....as you might expect.

Class: [Silence, thinking] then.....What about the lady wolf?

T out of role: She always avoids the human people as she reckons her baby cubs would be hurt by some of the human being people.....

Class: Can we meet both of them?

T out of role: Of course- which one would you like to meet up with first?

Class: The lady wolf..... then we can see the man one after.....

[Here is an example of SECONDARY ROLE as at the moment, the male wolf is not actually present but IMPLIED somewhere in the Great Forest.]

T out of role: So it's agreed then-we meet up with the female wolf, the lady one- to see what's going on. I have to say she is very worried at the moment....she's in the forest with her family of cubs.....

Class: Can we go to see her? Is she the one who's in trouble?

T out of role/twilight role: Oh yes of course-but lets find out in the story what sort of trouble shall we? By the way, it would help me as the lady wolf, if we could agree where the forest is in our classroom and **where I am [projecting twilight role] in the trees..... then you can meet up with the female wolf when the story/drama starts.**

Class: Yes..... it should be over there in the book corner.....yes.....that's where stories are for us to read about.....and other things too.....that's where RRH story came from...

T: Right, I'll go over there then, as if I am the wolf lady [slowly and deliberately places glove on LEFT hand] and **[projecting twilight role by shift of voice function to sign collaborator]..... you might be able to spot me in the thicket.....**

Class: Thicket.....what's that?

Teacher in Role: Oh its another word the humans use for a lot of bushes growing together for little and big animals to hide in. If you can see in between the trees and bushes.....[T moves to the book corner and takes up a stance that clearly demonstrates a figure, crouched, looking down as if 'searching' slowly with left paw]

Class: [approaching carefully and in silence arrive at the book corner, some children in expressive mode i.e. signing *pushing imagined branches aside for a better look.....*]

TIR: [Voice shifts in timbre as if talking to herself] I just can't find where he's gone-[TIR looks up, now addressing class] Oh! [signs shrinking away into undergrowth]

Class: Its all right we're here to help you...we like wolves.....we're not like some of the other people who hate you.....yes we want to help you.....what's happened.....

TIR: OhIt's my little wolf cub-he's gone missing.....?

[The missing wolf cub is currently not present this serves as another example of SECONDARY ROLE]

Class: Oh no!.....[murmurs]but we can help look for him if you want.....

TIR: Oh- yes please! The forest is so big and he could be anywhere..... [signs worry in voice and in body sign]

Class: Where did you last see him? Is he naughty? He might be playing hide and seek?

TIR: Oh do you think so-that would be just like him that would.....its what he would do.....

Class: Yes, but maybe this time something worser has happened? we just don't know...

TIR: Maybe you are right..... he has been gone longer than usual.....

Class: Where did you last see him?

T out of role: Well..... [uses adjusted voice and removes glove] shall we stop for a moment? What did you think of all that?

Class: I loved that.....I'm worried about the cub.....

Soraya: Does the daddy wolf know yet.....where could the little cub be.....the forest is really big..... the wolf told us.

T out of role: Well we could make a huge forest and we can find out all sorts of things when we make it. I suppose we will have to put in all the places on our map we know already as well the new ones?

Class: Yes-Red Riding Hood's house.....and grandma's..... and where the cubs are.....oh maybe the daddy wolf ate grandma.....or the mummy wolf did to feed her cubs.....that's not nice.....

T out of role: So.....as Soraya is asking.....does the daddy male wolf know one of his children is lost at the moment.....a very good question-maybe we need to meet up with the daddy wolf quicker than we thought and ask?

Class: He might eat us.....or attack us.....yes and bite us.....he might think we are after him and we're not.....yes and he doesn't know us yet and we would never hurt him.

T out of role: I see what you mean.....what about binoculars?

Class: But we don't have any.....we will have to buy some.....my brother really really has binoculars I could ask him.....

T out of role: So maybe one answer is to secretly track him down and have look through our binoculars so he can't see us but we can see him?

Class: But we don't have any!

T out of role: Well, we could draw them like they do in books, and then use them in the story to see where the daddy-male wolf is now. Remember, this is just a story so we can make any sort we want.

Class: Yes there are ones you can see at night with.... but we have to make the forest first thoughyes-so we know where he is.....

T out of role: Shall we do that then? Looks like Jonathan and Stacy think we should make our forest first what does anyone else think?

Class: (Danny) I want do draw the binoculars.....(other voices).....he might be by the lake.....or hunting for cub food.....he could be anywhere.....

T out of role: Right then its agreed- we will need to draw the Great Forest and the other things we will need for the journey to the forest. Danny has agreed to draw the binoculars too, and maybe Danny you could help us later with the forest map when the binocular job is done?

Danny: Nods in agreement

T out of role: So it's agreed? First we get to work on the forest and binoculars then we go into our story to start tracking where the daddy wolf is on our map.

Class nod in agreement and begin to move to the resources to start the work. The adults have prepared the space with materials the class can use as needed. A very large roll of paper is unrolled to allow the class to get round. The work of creating the forest starts with the teacher scaffolding the tasks. Firstly agreeing where the main forest road is located. He uses the cardinal points and starts to refer to north of the forest road and south of the forest road. Teacher asks class to agree where the trees of the forest are, where the lake is as mentioned before, where the female wolf is at present, where the male wolf is at present. The male wolf is drawn by a group of children on a piece of paper as he can move anywhere on the map. More wolves are drawn as the 'pack' on paper and placed in and around the forest.

Teacher out of role: I'm just wondering if wolves have names like humans?

Class: Yes they do but they are different names from us.....yes like White Fang I read with my mummy.....they could be called by their tails.....or ears.....or their eyes?

Teacher out of role: Oh I see the wolves identify themselves with the colour of things they were born with?

Class: Yes we could write their names on the paper.....we could do some daddy wolves and mummy ones.....yes but they mustn't have the same names. Class resume task together as the trees emerge, RRH's house and village are created along with many other creatures of the forest represented in iconic and writing forms. A river that floods sometimes runs into the lake and mountains appear where animals have to come down from in the winter. Around the edge of the pictorial representations some children have added pictures with the names of RRH's family. With the teacher the class have agreed where Grandma lives who it seems, grows her own vegetables and has a black cat called Mrs. Mac.....and more.....after 35 minutes.....

T: [Looks at clock on wall.]

T: Oops-its time for assembly. Goodness me..... lets get ready for that..... then we can come back and see what's happening with White Paw [the female name given by class to the first role.]

Description 2 and 4 Full role and Twilight Role

Lets imagine we are to run the lesson again but this time using another projection of role-that of the Full Role. There are a few rules of sorts regarding this type of projection. Firstly it requires the teacher/facilitator to have another person at her/his disposal. This may be another teacher, a student teacher, a learner from the class, the Head Teacher, or perhaps a governor. It follows that the full role is specifically deployed for the fiction enabling the lead teacher to be in a very flexible position as far as choices go in the unfolding work. The Full Role MUST at all times concede to the lead teacher as manager of the class even in tense 'behaviour' situations. The exception of course is if any child or other person present is in danger of harm or needing immediate safety or well being attention.

In the planned circumstances of using a full role, the lead teacher has decided in the planning that a representation of a wolf is required to be brought into the action.

Class observe teacher place a green bed-cloth (6' x 6') close to the book corner.

Class: That's our book corner.....yes maybe it's a story cloth.....

Emily-member of class addresses the teacher: Is this for us?

Teacher out of role: Yes it is-I thought it could do as forest in Red Riding Hood-what do you think?

Emily: Its like a big robe.

Class: Its not big enough for a real wood!

Teacher out of role: No your right! Its just to make a place for us in the story if we need it.

Class: its like a reminding cloth for us.....?

Teacher out of role: Yes that's a helpful way of looking at it.....

T out of role: So, you know our story of Little Red Riding Hood.....how about we meet up with a wolf in a minute?

Class: [Laughter].... not a real one.....just in our story....they're dangerous you know....

T out of role: Oh no you're right! Having a real one would be very dangerous..... think about all the running about we would have to do if we did that! So I've thought of another way-see what you think.....[teacher signs to the adult who will represent the wolf to enter the space with the class]

T out of role: I think some if you have seen this person before?

Class: Yes its Ms. Shah she usually works in the office!

T out of role: So I've asked Ms. Shah if she will help us in our Red Riding story today.

T out of role: [whispering] she has agreed to be our wolf in the story ...a lady one in the forest....but I think something is going on and its not nice.....

Class: Is someone trying to hurt her? maybe she's hungry.....or maybe she wants to live with us.....

T out of role: [uses lower tone, intense voice] well let's get her into the forest and we can find out. I've got this [reveals to class a wolf-paw drawn on a hand sized piece of card, coloured in crayons with a taped up ruler as a handle.]

Class: Is that her hand?no it's her paw! It looks like a lolly.....its not got any blood on it....can I give it to her.....it should be a girl that gives it as she's a lady wolf.....

Teacher out of role: mmm I'm hearing there are lots of things we have to do to get the paw to our wolf-lady. Looks like we have to agree who will offer Ms. Shah the wolf paw and whether it's the left or the right one.....lets ask our wolf lady person.....

Class: Yes!

Teacher out of role using collaborator voice: so how about we get some of us to take our female wolf into the wood then others can place the paw on her so we can start finding out what's going on?

Class: Mms.....[nods and general agreement to the plan so far]

Teacher using high language voice addressing wolf role: Wolf-may we take you to the forest so that the paw can be given to you?

Adult Full Role: You may.

Teacher: Thank you-we are anxious to help if we can.

[Class in deep silence take the hands of the full role and gently guide her to the green cloth. Class members who have taken responsibility to offer the paw carry it in a careful respectful way-again in deep silence.]

Paw holders: [Addressing the role] This is for you....[they gift the paw]

Role: Thank you this means I can now tell you all the terrible news!

Class: What happened?

Teacher: [places hand on shoulder of wolf-role as if switching her voice off and turning into a statue]

Teacher: goodness me did you hear that?

Class: She said there is terrible news to tell us.....yes maybe something has happened.....maybe she's the one who got into grandma's house.....maybe the hunters are after her.....

Teacher: I'm just noticing how she looks at the moment.....lets stand up and see if there are any clues from the way she's looking-we may need to imagine she is just like a statue for us to look around.

Class: [they stand and quietly observe the now silent and still role in a depiction representing intense worry.]

Teacher: [models observation by focusing undirected language as if using 'thinking out loud' such as: 'It's in her eyes.....and 'her poor shoulders.....its as though she's hurting inside...I don't know.....' [shakes head....]

Class: Can we talk to the wolf lady.....yes we can find out more.....maybe we can't help her, what will we say....

Teacher: Yes I know.....that might be a difficult thing to tell her.....anyway we can certainly find out more. [Touches shoulder of role very respectfully and gently.]

Activated Wolf Role: Oh dear-he's lost-what do I say to White Fang?

Teacher: [uses signed convention-shoulder touch- to deactivate the role who is returned to a similar still depiction/image]

Teacher: She is looking so seriouswhatever it is..... don't you think?

Yes: She's lost something.....or some one.....who's White Thang? No...not Thang she said White Fang.....

Teacher: I'm not sure but it sounds sort of wolf-ish to me.....

Class: Maybe it's another wolf? Yes her dad.....? Or another wolf.....he must have big teeth if he's called White Fang (points at upper open mouth where canines will be one day) we need to know more.....yes then we can maybe help her if we can...

Teacher: Oh!.....sort of wolf-helper people sort of thing?

Class: Yes.....[class agree as a unit as news travels fast now]

Teacher in role: Well Wolf Helpers-looks like we have a job on our hands! There's news of a mother-wolf in the forest in trouble. One of the look-outs spotted her.....[raises hands to eyes as if holding binoculars in the direction of the agreed forest area of the classroom] Is she still there?

Class: [copying binocular actions of teacher in role]: yes she's still there!

Teacher in role: [uses voice as if communicating from afar]: I'm over the other side of the forestI'll be with you when I can..... if you get to her first can you find out anything?

Simone, Gitta, Bethany: We're taking some bandages just in case.....

Teacher out of role/twilight role: Oh that might help us all! Bandages.....yes.....lets just think of anything else we could put in our emergency ruck sacks before we get over to her..... By the way, I'm so sorry to be so far away in the forest-I'll have to leave it to you.....

Class: That's all right we'll be able to find out....yes when you get here we can fill you in.....we should take our boots [Sam, Tom, Tobias, Lech] in case its wet there.....

Teacher: Good idea-lets ask the wolf if its wet then.....[given]

Class: But she's all still..... she'll have to wake up sort of thing.....

Teacher: Would anyone be able to wake our wolf up by the shoulder-button touch?

Emily: I could.....

Here in the use of a full role much can be explored in the moment as the class dart in and out of learning, perceptions, agreements and immediate inquiry contexts. The poor role I'm afraid has to just wait and give as little as possible so the class can create more around the on-going context.

Less really is more.....