



## ***Change Over Time: What Marie Clay taught us in her writing and in her life***

**Susan O'Leary**

There are many, many people who knew Marie Clay far better than I. Marie and I met twice, we had a short correspondence, and teacher trainers from several countries have told me that when they met Marie, she gave them a copy of my book, *Five Kids: Stories of Children Learning to Read*. That is my small particular connection to her.

But there are many ways of knowing; there are different paths we take to common outcomes. I have also read and had my life changed by Marie's writing and by her example – I know I am not the only person who thinks of their life in teaching as before they encountered Marie Clay's work and after. I have not taught in Reading Recovery for fourteen years. But each time I work with a teacher, whenever I sit down with a student, Marie is right there beside me. "What is this teacher or student's potential? What might I be missing? What signs can I find of how they are constructing their learning? What can I take away with me from this moment to mull over?" That fundamental change in who I am and how I see is one more way that I knew and know Marie Clay.

Marie taught us just in who she was. Jenny Clay compiled a beautiful little book about Marie after her mother's death in 2007 – *Memories of Marie*. You find nuggets in it, clippings and photos that you want to linger with a bit. One is an interview in the *New Zealand Herald's* Thursday magazine from June 5<sup>th</sup>, 1975. Marie says,



"When I had my family in the middle fifties, I did some teaching of remedial reading to pupils at home. My whole thinking was challenged by this experience. Our books didn't explain why children didn't read. We were lacking in information on the early stages of reading. I asked the question: "Is it possible to find out more about the early stages of reading and can we see reading difficulties early on?" Previously this area had been left alone. When a child was seven or eight and not learning to read at the average rate he had been called a slow starter. There was a fear, and an understandable one about pressuring children too early..... Along with fear of pressuring children went the attitude, "Oh, it'll come right, there's no real need to look at reading problems till the child is seven or eight. My work has overturned that concept" (Clay, J., 2009, p. 54-55).

*Our books didn't explain why children didn't read.*

*My work has overturned that concept.*

These two phrases are quintessential Marie Clay. Searching for reasons, and if they aren't there, not accepting their absence. A certain uneasiness with the status quo that led her to overturn concepts – the concept, for instance, that acquisition of reading and writing are not intricately linked. Which sounds astounding to us now but it was Marie who opened that door.

My favorite words of Marie's (and there are many), are from *Change Over Time*: "I live in a state of perpetual enquiry" (Clay, 2001, p. 3). Say that slowly: "I live in a state of perpetual enquiry." That was Marie's method, to never accept what she knew or what others knew as final understanding. To continue to enquire, to investigate, to want to know. And yet at the same time, much of her enquiry was organized around this one central question: "Is it possible to find out more about the early stages of reading and can we see reading difficulties early on?" Marie tells us in *Change Over Time* that she feels Reading Recovery has been misunderstood, and so to see her responsibility in that, she is going back to the original research, looking for what might have been left out or overlooked. This perspective, too, holds important teachings from Marie's life:

#### What she taught

- *Enquire*
- *Find and hold your central question*
- *Start with yourself*

- Enquire.
- Find and hold your central question. Keep returning to it to deepen your understanding.
- Start with yourself. If there is a problem or a confusion, don't look outward for other's responsibility. Reflect on yours.

## The particular words of her method

By the time she wrote *Change Over Time*, Marie was drawn to returning to the origins of her theory to consider with a new lens the steps that had occurred along the way. She explains to us in the book that readers of her manuscript contested this decision, but we sense in *Change Over Time* that by this time Marie was considering the journey of her work. And she knew that a true journey, one of transformation, begins with and remembers its origins.

#### Her multiple lens

|                                              |       |
|----------------------------------------------|-------|
| <i>Becoming Literate</i>                     | Being |
| <i>By Different Paths to Common Outcomes</i> | Space |
| <i>Change over Time</i>                      | Time  |

Marie taught us to consider words in a whole new way, so let's begin with the naming, with Marie's words for her work. When I told my writer friend Norbert Blei about Marie's book, he thought for a minute and repeated its name: "*Change Over Time*. That's a good title." Because it is. *Change Over Time*.

But let's keep going. *Becoming Literate. By Different Paths to Common Outcomes. Change Over Time.* Being, Space and Time - Each in a title of her major theoretical works. We might pause there.

Say slowly and listen to these words - Observation Survey. Don't they sum up Clay's lifespan psychological approach? Marie explains in *Change Over Time* that in "lifespan developmental psychology... individual change must be conceptualized in terms of both the individual in context and, over time, the context of a changing society." (Clay, 2001, p. 289) We are observing beings in time, in specific place. No small task. Rather, one that calls for responsibility, for care.

#### Individual paths in change over time

- "... individual change must be conceptualized in terms of both the individual in context and, over time, the context of a changing society?" *COT*, 289.

And the *Observation Survey's* subparts, like Writing Vocabulary. Concepts About Print. Marie's titles and labels in themselves are the whole story. Writing Vocabulary. What children can write becomes their vocabulary, and just as in oral language, can be expanded once we attend to it, know what the child draws on. Concepts About Print. Marie drew our attention to the fact that there are concepts and understandings involved in reading text. That very young minds bring knowledge with them that was invisible to us before her work; that it is a *concept* that one page comes before another, that a book is held right side up. Huge understandings whose dignity Marie was the first to recognize and bring to the observation of what it is that children do when they look at text.

Marie's writing is about a journey, about following our individual path in change over time. It is not simply travel, it is journey, a quest to know.

Much of what I have thought of in writing this talk comes from pausing at those three titles – *Becoming Literate*, *By Different Paths to Common Outcomes*, and *Change Over Time*. As abstract and theoretical as her writing can sometimes be, there is a narrative quality underneath it, a sense of the individual on a path, coming to change.

This is a journey.

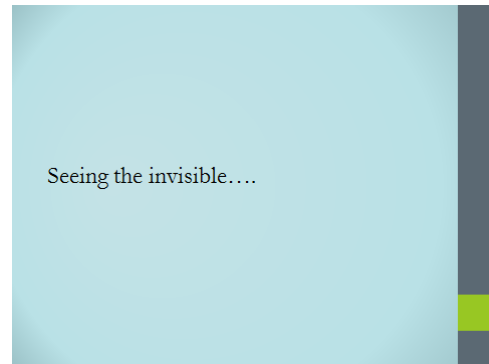


Vladimir Propp

Vladimir Propp was a contemporary of Vygotsky's. In 1928 Propp published *Morphology of the Folktale* which became influential in literary and sociological theory in the West, just as Vygotsky's did in pedagogy. Propp studied Russian folktales and saw in them both a common narrative structure and common character structure. That all folktales involve a quest and difficult tasks that the Hero must complete before achieving the goal. That the protagonist does not act alone – he or she encounters obstacles along the way and is supported in encountering them, possibly by a Helper – who

is often the Wise one – and possibly by a Donor, who gives them often magical tools. The journey. The Wise One. The Helper and Donor. We in Reading Recovery take part in a journey with our children. Inspired by our Wise One, Marie Clay, we are the Helper and Donor with this young child on a quest.

Marie's use of phrases like, "The learner who goes in search of previously unused information" (Clay, 2001, p. 175), or "Dissonance might be seen as the cause of a search" (Clay, 2001, p. 208), has very much the feel of Propp's quest.



## Seeing the invisible

Marie over and over considered language and linguistic theory in asking,

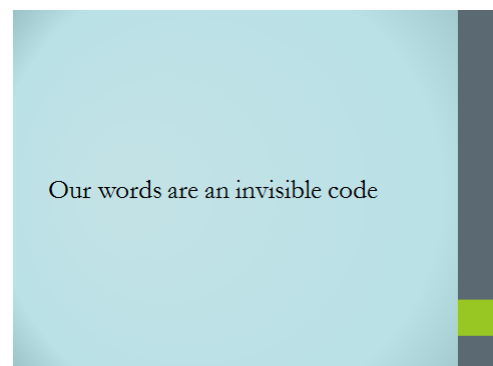
"Is it possible to find out more about the early stages of reading and can we see reading difficulties early on?" (Clay, 2009, p. 54-55).

We all know that Marie's theory is complex. That we've had to pause in reading it to understand and in that pause, it has changed us. So I'm going to go into its complexity a bit, for I hope in doing so, we can learn from how she thought.

Her work on the visual perception of language – if we stop at those words, *the visual perception of language*, it helps us to understand how difficult bringing attention to print can be. The visual perception of language for a child who has not yet learned many letters of the alphabet – what meaning would that have for a child? Because oral language, which the child is accustomed to, is largely invisible. Children do engage in word games which segment language into morphemes and sounds, but in general, up until learning to read, in daily life language exists for children at a meaning level. To see the invisible, children must take part in a necessary segmenting of oral discourse – word from word, syllable from syllable, phoneme from phoneme. This takes place at a structural, syntactic, morphemic, and phonological level. This takes practice, attention, concentration, and synthetic understanding.

Our words are an invisible code. When we stop to think about it, we may recognize the code much more easily than its invisibility.

To see and make sense of the invisible, to visually perceive language, children must also begin to learn the names of letters, begin to attach them to symbols, and then devise some system which helps them to discriminate these arbitrary signs. This is visual, graphophonic attention, but at a deeper level, it is the ordering of a sign system. It is



many small, unnoticed steps in making visual, relational sense within an already set system. It is intuiting the order of part and whole – to then go on and make meaning.

And children must do this in learning to attend visually under new constraints. She wrote: “Teachers are not trying to develop visual perception: that began in infancy. Becoming literate involves making the processes of visual perception operate under a new set of arbitrary constraints which apply only to the written code of a language” (Clay, 2001, p. 149).

Marie signaled to us: “Complexity can easily turn our attention *away* from the visual perception aspects of literacy towards other things” (Clay, 2001, p. 165). This is a part of her method – to pause at taking things apart. To notice that we don’t tend to notice.

In bringing our attention, for example, to how learning to hear the sounds in words when using Elkonin boxes involves auditory, kinesthetic and visual perception, to how slow articulation of a word helps the habit of attuned auditory and visual perception to develop, and how the kinesthetic is a part of this, Marie is showing us her way of thinking. It is a great mind making bullet points in taking apart a simple task and in putting that task back together in such a way that our understanding has now changed.

Marie kept turning us toward attending to all senses as we considered the detail of perception. She taught us that we need to pause at the *complexity* of engagement in authentic tasks.

While actively utilizing grammatical knowledge and while defining with words the corresponding objects and actions the child cannot make a word...the object of his awareness.



Elkonin

In *Change Over Time* she quotes Elkonin in a way that gives us a glimpse into how she continued to consider the linguistic complexity of a child first coming to literacy:

While actively utilizing grammatical knowledge and while defining with words the corresponding objects and actions the child cannot make a word...the object of his awareness.

During this period the word may be used but not noticed by the child, and frequently it presents things seemingly like a glass through which the child looks at the surrounding world, not making the word itself the object of awareness and not suspecting that it has its own existence, its own aspects of construction. (Elkonin, 1971 in Clay, 2001, p. 26)

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Elkonin  
1971, quoted in COT, p. 26.

Children’s *awareness* of language changes as they begin to read. Marie included in Concepts About Print, “show me a word;” “show me a letter” because it is not a given that children understand that what we say can be segmented into words. Children are unaware of using grammatical knowledge as

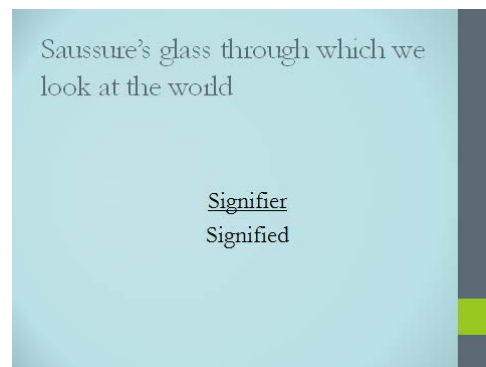
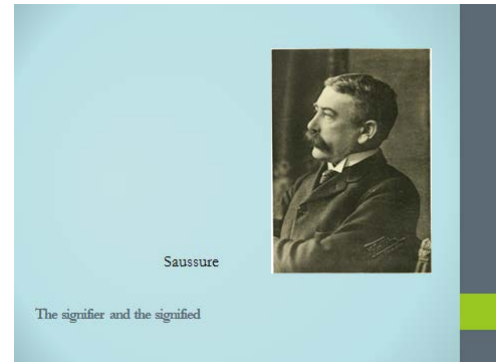
they speak, but they fluently use their own syntax. Language itself is “like a glass through which the child looks at the surrounding world... not suspecting that it has its own existence.”

But children are not the only ones who use and exist in language, often unaware of its presence. We all do this.

## Meaning, sign and sound

Saussure was a Swiss linguist who taught around 100 years ago, and he had a similar seismic effect on linguistics to Marie’s on our understanding of children’s learning and early literacy.

Saussure was the first to bring linguistic focus to language as a formal system of elements that help us to differentiate meaning. It is in part Saussure’s work Elkonin was getting at when he wrote of the child and the glass.

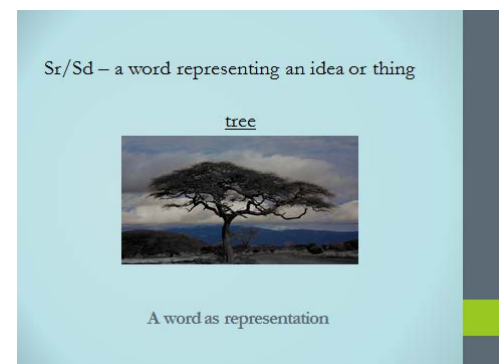


For Saussure brought our attention to the difference between the signifier and the signified, which he represented in this way –

Signifier  
Signified

This is exactly the convention Marie Clay adopted in creating Running Records, and is exactly the relation a child’s error has to a word in a text – they are attempting to signify the word.

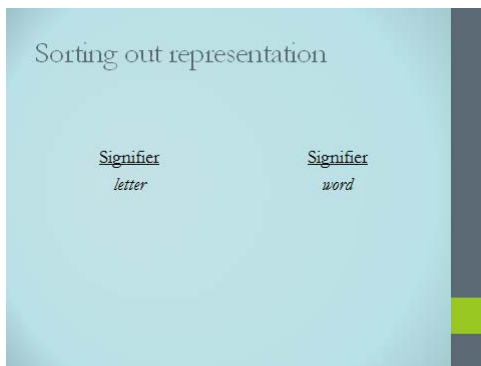
Saussure used the example of tree –the word *tree* (the Signifier), is not a tree itself, but represents the signified *tree*. Well, at some level we all know that the word *tree* isn’t a tree. But in daily life, we don’t regularly stop and distinguish between language and what it represents. It is a given of the code that we in some way believe that the word *tree* is either a tree or our understanding of tree. If we stopped regularly to remember the sign exists, we would over and over lose the meaning being conveyed, just as our students do when meaning breaks down as they pause at words. And so we accept not just spoken language, but written language as a glass. It’s an unspoken, often unrealized, societal convention that we do so.



The reason I am pausing here at Saussure is that it is essential to ongoing communication that language regularly become invisible. A key difference between our relation as adults to language and a child's relation is that we are able at will to remember that language represents. To speak of grammatical structures. To understand and analyze phonological properties. To describe complexities and levels of meaning. All of which is approaching language through MSVs (Meaning, Structure, and Visual cues).

While others were looking at the deficits of what children who struggle didn't know, Marie paused at the invisible, at the relation of Signifier and Signified, while teaching us that change over time can be observed. Her unusual lens was to focus not primarily on beginning and end, but process, but journey.

How is every child's awareness of language and visual form changing as they begin to read?

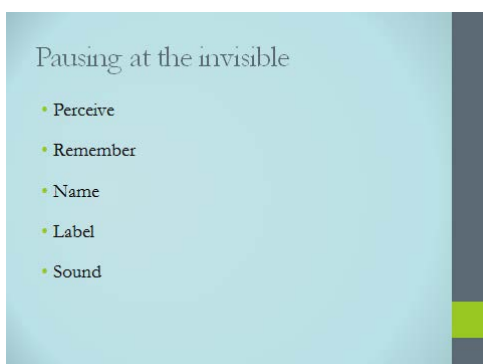


For words represent things and concepts, but letters? Letters represent sound itself, and sound which is joined in words. But this is tremendously abstract. In learning to sort out and remember letters, the child's visual perception and particular sense of coherence is used for making meaning, even before individually making meaning from text. They must perceive and remember letter shape. They must name it, and attach one, sometimes more sounds to it. Marie pointed this out.

As teachers, we, too, can pause at the invisible of the Sr/Sd relation, of the naming of letters and then words, and in doing so, better understand our teaching. Consider how in coming to learn high frequency words, especially words that aren't phonologically logical, the letters in some way merge into one recognized sign:

the  
article: '*this one*'

Because words like *the* can't be broken down into easily understandable phonemes and signs, these words may well be a part of how children come to understand "wordness" and individual symbols coming together to make meaning. Their irregularity as sign may be a part of how children come to see 'word' and 'order'.



Most children slide right past that invisible connection between representation and meaning, and learn to read – but ours, without support, don't. So as their Proppian Donor, we stay on their journey with them and keep uncovering what they know. Marie used Propp's language in speaking of the

child's growing awareness of the specifics of visual perception needed for literacy. She spoke of the two necessary *journeys* of visual perceptions: that it is first more detailed, more differentiated, becoming more richly patterned. It *then* becomes faster, fluent, surely known.

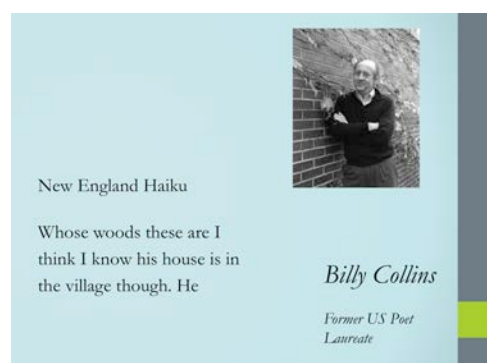
As the child comes to truly know a letter and its role in a word, that particular knowledge recedes from focus and becomes invisible. As teachers, as our knowledge grows, it follows a similar path – more detailed, more differentiated and richly patterned, then faster. It too becomes invisible and sure. But there is an invitation in Marie's work to remember to linger, to become again uncertain. For example, because MSVs are so familiar, it can become habit to approach them with quick certainty – yep, V; yep, SM, yep, all three. We can forget that children's errors, attempts and self-corrections, especially in early literacy, all are signs of their present awareness of and fluency in language. Of what it is to mean; of how language is structured, of how signs represent. Because we are so familiar with MSVs, they can become our glass. But they represent the child's present tentative, flexible interaction with text; the child's present, tentative, flexible processing.

## Haiku. Meaning, structure and Zen

As I was writing this talk I was reading Robert Aitken's book, *A Zen Wave*, on Matsuo Basho, considered the master of the Japanese haiku poets. Marie's method was to rigorously look beyond the surface and to find meaning and connection in doing so. This is exactly the invitation of the Zen poetry, haiku.

Basho lived in the 17th century and through his work elevated haiku to a new form. Just as Marie's work, Basho's writing was in many ways about a quest. A good part of his writing is about journeys he took, his best known, *The Narrow Road to the Interior*, is quite similar in title to Marie's *By Different Paths*. His haiku, though appearing simple, hold a deep internal reflection. Since Basho, haiku poetry values the moment of deep knowing in the slight, noticed, ephemeral knowing. Though we generally in the West teach haiku to children as importantly about nature and the 5-7-5 syllable count, haiku is about awareness, about a sudden awareness that leads to a deeper realization.

We can read or write haiku on the surface, just as reading can be taught with a very surface understanding. Odds are, when poetry is taught in your school, children are taught to write haiku, with the 5-7-5 balance emphasized. Actually, within the haiku community in English, this framework is often not followed. Some writers now write one line haiku.



Billy Collins, our American former poet laureate and one of my favorite poets, shows the reason why in taking these beginning lines from Robert Frost's "Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening, a poem that almost anyone in the U.S. would know, retitling it now "New England Haiku."

## New England Haiku

Whose woods these are I  
think I know his house is in  
the village though. He

(Collins, 2006)

Collins enjoys writing in a 5-7-5 format, but with this poem, blatantly plagiarizing Frost, he is trying to crack open our idea of what is a poem, what is haiku – for each line here follows the traditional expectations for syllable count, but creates no larger meaning.

To me, Marie’s writing and observation were like Collins’ poem. She cracked open what it means to learn to read. She wrote, an unusual lens “transmits a different kind of information” (Clay, 2001, p. 46). And, “Predictably, using a different lens produces a non-conformist view” (Clay, 2001, p. 41).

Learning from Marie, pause and ask yourself, “What lens do I bring to teaching?” Don’t stay on the surface with that; go deep.

A poet such as Basho was well aware of and practiced with kōans – questions given to students to stay with until they have cracked open the question, and the question has cracked open them. The most well-known kōan in English of course is “What is the sound of one hand clapping?”

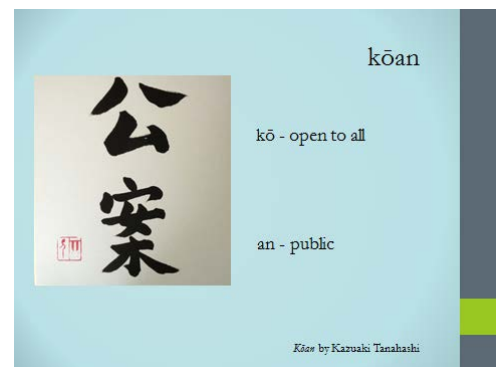
The first kōan commonly given to new students in Zen is *mu*, which can be translated as ‘emptiness’, but also simply ‘no’. The injunction is to simply sit with ‘no’ until you know it fully, know beyond it. I think of this as Marie’s kōan –

no, I don’t accept that children can’t learn to read;

no, I don’t accept that we label children as learning disabled until we have looked at their capabilities and at our own practice – as a teacher, as a school, as a teacher leader, as a trainer, as a district, as a society

no, I don’t accept that whatever rate of success we are having in Reading Recovery, we can’t do better

no, I don’t imagine that I have reached the end of my understanding. There is always further to go, new paths to follow in pursuing what has become the quest/the question of my career: “Is it possible to find out more about the early stages of reading and can we see reading difficulties early on?”



and no, we cannot do this alone. We need to listen to others, especially those in government and educational administration and find best how to deepen common understanding and to work together.

The etymology of kōan also fits Marie's practice and spirit. Robert Aitken in *A Zen Wave* explains:

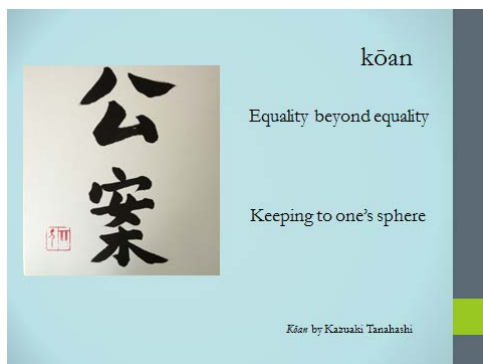
*Kō* means "open to all," and the common usages of the graph is to mean "public." *An* means "case," as in "law case" and by extension, (public) "document." (Aitken, 1978, p. 64)

Think of the ways that these two graphs hold so much of Marie's beliefs: Learning and literacy should be open to all, and as teachers, we have the responsibility to make learning open and accessible to students. Our work is public and verifiable. No other educational program has ever documented and continued to document its process and progress in such detail. Though it certainly is not simple – Reading Recovery training in itself is quite the kōan, and I don't expect I'm alone in having felt cracked open one or two times in its process – there is nothing hidden in our theory or practice. And though a certain process and method of inquiry have been mapped out, there is nothing ultimately known. Marie was always ready to change our practice and her thought if new research or new questions warranted it.

Though the daily practice supports us, there is nothing ultimately known. Another Zen understanding. And one that Marie transmitted to us as Reading Recovery teachers, working daily, individually with our students. A kōan asks you to know by not knowing.

And *an*. *An* meaning case, or document. Marie's whole theory was built from the study of those initial 100 children's journeys into literacy. She built and studied case after case, running record document after running record document in order to break open the continuing question, "Is it possible to find out more about the early stages of reading and can we see reading difficulties early on?"

We are the legacy, right now, of chair next to child when graduate student Marie Clay regularly sat with those 100 students and created the conventions of the Running Record in order to meticulously note what they said; in order to observe for the patterning of complex behavior.



Marie's belief in our firm responsibility for each other also forms a part of kōan practice. Norman Waddell and Masao Abe explained the two graphs *kō* and *an* as:

"... the *kō* of kōan means sameness or ultimate equality that is beyond equality and inequality; and the *an* refers to 'keeping one's sphere.' Kōan thus indicates the individuality of things' differences and the difference of things' sameness. (Aitken, p. 64)

An equality that is beyond equality and inequality. That pushes beyond what we would expect or believe. Doesn't that sound like Marie Clay? We keep our sphere in this knowing, in this daily practice of questioning and holding responsibility for young children who struggle as we teach them

to come into themselves and independence. Each day we keep our sphere in enquiring, in recognizing inequalities and injustices in the world, and refusing to believe in their hold. In not accepting that this child cannot learn.

Marie spoke of this belief with the lovely words, “diminish predictive correlatives.” A predictive correlative or correlation such as, “if you are not White, you won’t do as well as your White peers;” or, “if you are poor or homeless, you won’t do as well as children who are sure of home and food.” Marie refused to believe that being a child of color or being poor predicted low achievement. And in easily using categories to analyze and present data, she ultimately refused to believe in categories, she kept outgrowing them. While advocating for children of poverty and children learning in a second language, Marie stressed, too, that it is not only poor children or children of color who can have trouble learning to read. It can be any child, and any child who is struggling is taken into Reading Recovery. She remained in the world with the purpose and the heart of a Zen guardian.

You might want perhaps to hold onto Marie’s words, “I live in a state of perpetual enquiry,” and notice the presence of enquiry in your teaching. Is there more you could be looking for? What are you noticing about how your student is changing over time and changing today in their awareness of text? How are you considering language structure and its importance as you teach?

Perhaps take as *your* kōan, observing the invisible.

## Matisse – daily practice

There was an exhibit in 2010 at the Art Institute in Chicago and later at the Museum of Modern Art on a period of four years in Matisse’s life, 1913-1917, and the effect on his subsequent work of the experimentation and exploration he did in those years. The exhibit was called *Radical Invention*, words that we could easily apply to Marie’s work.

A key piece in the exhibit was *Back*, a series he began working on in 1909. His work for it began in clay, but then moved to plaster. As he finished each piece in the series he would cast two versions of it. One could be permanently kept, while the second would become the ground of new work. Starting with what he had just completed, he would begin again the process of reworking what he had just created, adding fresh material to the surface; removing parts by chiseling and hammering with tools. The exhibit explained that with this process, Matisse could embrace a new type of reworking and serial exploration.

Reworking and serial exploration. To me, Matisse’s work here demonstrates the flexible and tentative construction of a literacy processing system. The child comes back each day to build on the model she or he has created; to let go of parts that perhaps now no longer work, or perhaps later will be reintroduced.

Matisse explained in an interview in 1936, “The reaction of each stage is as important as the subject.... At each stage, I reach a balance, a conclusion. At the next sitting, if I find that there is a weakness in the whole, I make my way back into the picture by means of the weakness – I reenter

Matisse: The back



through the breach – and I reconceive the whole.” (Flam, 1995, p. 123). Pause at those words, thinking of the possibility in rereading familiar text each day. Read them, thinking of how Marie taught us to think of self-corrections.

If we step back, we notice that it is not only the child who reworks, who refines and changes what they know.

What if we bring this image of Matisse’s *Back* to our work each day with each child? Yesterdays’ work brought us, brought him, brought me, so far. What can be built up? What do I see the child building up? Matisse kept returning to *Back* over a period of 21 years, each time coming new to exploration with it.

### Matisse: The back



“The reaction of each stage is as important as the subject.... At each stage, I reach a balance, a conclusion. At the next sitting, if I find that there is a weakness in the whole, I make my way back into the picture by means of the weakness – I reenter through the breach – and I reconceive the whole.”

### Frank Gehry and visual attention



Gehry looking up.  
New York Observer

### Frank Gehry and visual attention

Frank Gehry holds a place in architecture similar to Marie’s in literacy. He has raised controversial questions and given controversial answers. He brought a new way of seeing, an unusual lens, to his work. Gehry is known for deconstructing architecture, for taking apart its parts. If you’ve seen images of the Guggenheim Museum in Bilbao, Spain, that’s Frank Gehry. It is considered by many architects to be the most important building of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

His buildings give example to how as literate beings, we simply assume form – this is a book, this is what they’re like and how you read them - but for the child newly coming to text, they must both deconstruct *and* reconstruct what they are seeing and its conventions. Gehry’s buildings hold great parallel to *that tentative phase of seeing new*, of being aware of part, before the child has been able to create an understanding of how part becomes whole.

This is his home in Santa Monica, Ca. In 1978, he bought a two-story stucco home, kept the basic structure and then started adding on with readily available commercial building materials. As adults, we see form, purpose and logic in print. Children coming to it fresh keep seeing part and relationship more than coherence; and some parts might stand out more than others. Notice in looking at Gehry’s home how it is a bit confusing, how your attention goes to different parts, but doesn’t necessarily see it as a logical whole.

### Gehry home. Santa Monica, CA



<http://www.300-see.com/modern/gehr.html>

Liao Yusheng, the photographer of these photos said, “I try to capture the feel of the building as I experience it for the first time” (<http://archinect.com/features/article/96395>). You sense that in his photos, that he – like our children – sees with a new eye.

And as your eye starts to rest in certain parts, you begin to see those parts for their own integrity and beauty. What was a jumble is now a place to land.

Looking at these photos has helped me to better conceptualize what that is like for children as they come to see words. In early stages of literacy, when many children hold onto that first letter of a word, I imagine it is like me seeing this glass and wood vault. My eye can stop here. It recognizes and makes meaning. I have some certainty which I then can take back to reconsidering the whole.

Sydney Pollack produced a documentary about his friend Frank Gehry called, *Sketches of Frank Gehry*. If I were a teacher leader or teacher trainer, I would have my teachers watch this video and talk about visual perception; tentative and flexible; fluency.



So here now is the Bilbao Guggenheim, a bit more elegant and fluid than Gehry's home. The curves pull together invisible relations, just as syntax does. In looking at the Bilbao Guggenheim, we fill in and form the sense of those curves. This elegance represents for me the fluency in processing and reading that our children can achieve.

Marie wrote, "The purpose should never become merely teaching letters, or teaching sounds or teaching words. The question is, 'How can I get this child to work with letters and sounds and words making tentative and flexible decisions about them?'" (Clay, 2001, p. 173).

There is a portion in *Sketches of Frank Gehry* where Gehry is talking about a design he is creating. He crumbles a paper up, puts it on the side of the model and suddenly the building works in a way it hadn't before. That paper immediately becomes an integral part of the space. In that moment, we can see the tentative and flexible construction of a processing system.

In Marie's work on learning to attend to print and on Concepts About Print, she stood back, just as Matisse did, just as Gehry did, to segment and find the essential elements and then make them a part of a provocative new whole. And just as Frank Gehry did, just as Marie Clay, children, to see and make sense of the invisible, to visually perceive language, must learn how to bring order and meaning to the visual representation of structure in books – a deep understanding Marie presented us with which now seems elementary.

## Matisse again

There was this painting in the Matisse exhibit, *French Window at Collioure*. Collioure is a port town in the south of France, and he painted this painting about ten years



after he first started going there. I saw the exhibit years ago now, but I still remember the feeling of standing before these simple vertical lines. At first you just notice the quadrangles of color, but in putting a name to what is being represented, you can start to look out that window to the night. Old stone buildings in France have thick walls, and that grey line would be the line of the heavy wall; the brown quadrangle at the bottom would be the wide window sill. The interior green wall is the narrow rectangle on the right; the blue would be the color of the shutter that is closed over the window in going to bed; it is hanging out beyond the window sill right now in evening space. With the parts named, with an understanding of where you are, you can be drawn then to the depth of the darkness; to the vastness we all live in and can feel in quiet night.

Wall, mason, sill, shutter, darkness. Matisse knew them all in depth and detail, and so he could represent them in their utter simplicity, in quick stroke. This is Marie's second journey in visual perception, the journey that is created in fluency, in a quick and simple knowing.



Matisse painted from windows more than once at Collioure. Here is a painting from his first years there, almost ten years before the painting you just saw. To a modern eye, this is a pretty painting, something many of us would probably consider both relaxing and cheerful, something beautiful to have in our home. But when *Open Window, Collioure* was first exhibited in 1905, people responded with anger, because the colors did not represent what they saw as true. As Gertrude Stein told it, people walked up and actually scratched at the paint of the canvases in the exhibition because they found them so offensive.

To me, as teachers of literacy, these two paintings have much to teach us about visual perception.

The mostly pink painting is the journey Marie describes that becomes more detailed, more differentiated, and then more richly patterned. Even though to our eye, this has some semblance of abstraction, Matisse, in seeing and representing the port water as pink, was finding the detail, the difference, that others could not see. He was representing the rich pattern of the reciprocal nature of color, using opposites on the color wheel like turquoise and that orangeish pink to create a stronger effect. By the time he painted the second canvas, it was Marie's second journey of visual perception. He knew the view and its relations so well that he could paint it in utter simplicity, with the feel of speed and fluency.

And remember the reception of the first painting, how the viewers saw it as outside of art? An art critic at the exhibition actually gave name to the Fauvist movement which followed Impressionism by calling this work by fauves, or wild beasts.

They couldn't yet see what Matisse saw.

Well, at least in the schools where I've taught, every year wild beasts walk into almost every classroom. They don't see or learn in the same way as most other students. But if we as teachers stop at assuming they can't see or learn like other students, if we are those visitors to the museum

who scorned Matisse's work, what do we miss? And what will our young Fauvists miss? Skillful teaching will look closely to find, to know what those students know. Skillful teaching will stay so present in being with and believing in the child that we will find the traces of their perception; we will see what they see and as the more knowledgeable other, scaffold so that perception becomes sure knowing.

Matisse was a student of the painter Gustave Moreau. Moreau, who painted in *this* style taught Matisse with exquisite Marie Clay economy: "Think your color. Know how to imagine it." (AIC, 2009.) Marie would have loved the absence of interference by the teacher on the processing of the student as Matisse developed his own modern style.



There is one more thing that Matisse's later painting leads me to, and that is the myelination of often used circuits in the brain. Myelin sheaths form on the axons of neurons in our brain. When a connection becomes highly myelinated, impulses can travel much, much faster between neurons. Myelination is involved in knowledge becoming fast, fluent and flexible. There is a synthesizing, synthetic quality to this speed and knownness, where what is known is now very simple. The complexity is subsumed and understood in its

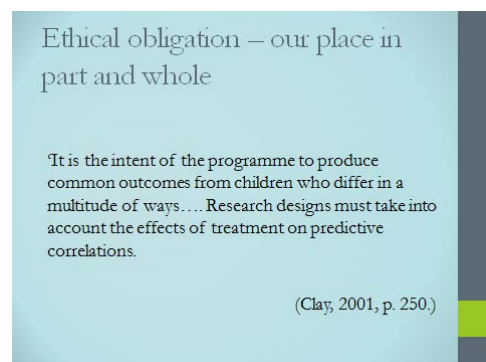
essence. I think that is part of the second journey Marie talked about in visual perception, that is in this painting. Matisse knew this view so very well, knew it in such complexity, that he knew it simply.

Marie reminds us that the second journey can't precede the first and that if we try to rush the second, we will fail. Children need time to differentiate, to see in detail, to become aware of pattern before they can know quickly and well. As we slow down to see truly who they are, we need to give them the time and methods to slow down and see letters, pages, text with focus and detail.

This is one way the part becomes the eventual whole.

## Ethical obligation – our place in part and whole

There is one last aspect of part and whole I want to touch upon, and that is the ethical obligation of part and whole in Marie's work:



It is the intent of the programme to produce common outcomes from children who differ in a multitude of ways.... Research designs must take into account the effects of treatment on predictive correlations. (Clay, 2001, p. 250)

Marie was well aware of the marginalization in our schools of the children who "differ in a multitude of ways." And so

she simply created a program that is all inclusive in continuing to recognize difference. She saw how children failing to read would be relegated apart. She worked to make them whole. Our responsibility for that is in her italics:

Long lists of important principles, factors or practices are useless unless they are *woven into a theory of how children learn, how teachers can teach, and how a sound delivery system can be mounted. Each teacher has to change how particular children learn.* (Clay, 2001, p. 256)

Let's pause at the power in those italicized words. Marie *gave* us those three theories of children learning, of teachers teaching and of an international system of organization. And she told us with knife-cutting clarity that we are responsible for changing how children learn.

Ethical obligation –  
our place in part and whole

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COT, p. 256



Linji.  
*A friendly looking guy.*

- Where are you going?
- What are you doing?
- Are you sure?

Linji, the founder of the Rinzai school of Zen, over and over taught his students to question their certainty and to continue to develop their awareness in the present— just like Marie. He would ask his students these simple questions:

- Where are you going?
- What are you doing?
- Are you sure?

And if, for instance, you were washing carrots in the kitchen when you were asked what you were doing, washing carrots in the kitchen was not an answer Linji would accept. He expected a deeper understanding and awareness, on the part of his students and of himself.

Linji's, in essence, are Marie's questions to and high expectations of us as teachers: Where are you going with your student? What are you doing with your student? Are you sure?

“Expectancy is usually helpful but can keep us from reading children's work.”  
(Clay, 2001, p.163)

## How she thought

As dense and theoretical as *Change Over Time* is, it is also an immensely and unusually human book.

It seems to me that one thing Marie wanted to do in *Change Over Time* was to give us a *way* of observing and

An immensely and unusually  
human book

constructing theory – a way of observing for the process over time, whether as teachers or as researchers. Another was to provide a model for conceptualizing change. And so as she continued to unveil her particular way of thinking, it couldn't always be contained in tight form.

As I reread *Change Over Time* for this essay, aside from marking up the book, I kept notes in a small notebook. Several times I created a way of organizing notes and thoughts, but her book repeatedly outgrew them. She thought just like the theory she described – parts forming and becoming temporarily larger new wholes. So I would have categories and take my notes in those ways, and then I would have to create new categories and sections because my initial structures no longer kept up with her thought.

Marie was also the consummate teacher, and in writing as the researcher in *Change Over Time*, she could not seem to help sporadically switching to professional development. Her chapter on learning to look at print over and over had exercises for teachers to complete to sharpen their awareness of perception. In writing theoretically, she suddenly switches to, “Here is a helpful exercise”, speaking directly and in an informal I-you discourse to the reader:

Here is a helpful exercise:

Describe how you perceive an orange.

What nonverbal processes are involved?

You see shape, colour, markings, stalk or leaf.

You smell, taste, feel, use several senses, and receive sensations.

Would you ever use different kinds of information for one decision?

How do you combine different kinds of information?

How do you exclude some possibilities?

Can you mention any other processes you used?

Convince me that what I am holding is an orange. (Clay, 2001, p. 153)

Marie's inquisitive mind could easily move to the tangent of teaching and experiencing from the process of developing a theory. Her theory, in fact, comes exactly from questions just like the ones she listed.

I expect she included exercises like this in *Change Over Time* because Marie could not not teach. And her teaching took many forms, from overturning existing theories to making people awed by her feel comfortable, valuable and seen. Because teachers put their students at ease. *Memories of Marie* is filled with stories like these. I gave a small session at the National Conference in Ohio years ago, soon after *Five Kids* was published. Marie, whom I had not met, wanted to attend my session, but more than that, she didn't want me to be uncomfortable in presenting. And so she came to me and asked

Here is a helpful exercise:

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You see shape, colour, markings, stalk or leaf.

You smell, taste, feel, use several senses, and receive sensations.

Would you ever use different kinds of information for one decision?

How do you combine different kinds of information?

How do you exclude some possibilities?

Can you mention any other processes you used?

COT, 153

if I would mind if she sat in, telling me she wouldn't if it would make me nervous. Consider the kindness in her question, and her willingness to leave if I asked. Marie taught as much by who she was as by how she thought. And her grace and commitment, both of which shine through in *Change Over Time*, are in no small way a part of why Reading Recovery became an international movement. Who you are matters. Who you are with children, with other teachers, with administrators, parents and politicians. It all matters.

My favorite chapter of *Change Over Time*, its last one, shows her connection to us, her continuing enquiry, and I suspect a desk or office with many piles. It very much has the feel of one pile addressed, then another. As a writer myself, I sense in this chapter that she both wanted to bring the book to a close, and couldn't quite let go. And so the chapter gives us a further window into considering how she thought.

It begins with some biographical history because students had so often asked her about her life. One line into the chapter, it is as if we are reading the first sentences of a Dickens novel:

I entered upon an exploration of early literacy learning because of my work in normal and clinical developmental psychology, following my first training as a teacher. I began to explore literacy processing. (Clay, 2001, p. 287)

The first sentences of a Dickens novel

I entered upon an exploration of early literacy learning because of my work in normal and clinical developmental psychology, following my first training as a teacher. I began to explore literacy processing.

COT p 287

After telling us of her life, she overviews two theories based on geographical metaphor that she hadn't explored in the book, but wanted to make sure we were aware of.

She then leaps to setting out five reasons, each based in tentativeness, flexibility, and problem-solving, why Reading Recovery has been successful in different international settings.

This moves to responding to the questions reviewers of her manuscript raised, so that we as readers are included in that small circle of reflection on the text. Since colleagues had raised these questions, she thought it likely we might have the same ones – so she lays out exactly why she did what she did. This section of the chapter ends, in Marie Clay fashion, with her urging us on beyond her work:

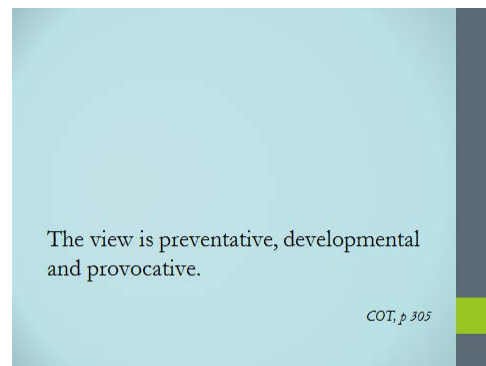
Hopefully in the next ten years some of the hypotheses in the progressions table will be discarded and some will be written up as fully as the self-correction chapter in this book. I am only opening up the discussion. (Clay, 2001, p. 304)

A wider lens of ethical obligation takes her beyond her own work.

And then the final section of the chapter, of the book, titled with a strong, clear declarative sentence, a noun defined by three adjectives:

The view is preventative, developmental and provocative (Clay, 2001, p. 305).

Here, she one last time positions Reading Recovery in contrast to any simple explanation of children's learning.



And then, not quite letting go, a final section *within* the final section – a subsection of “The view is preventative, developmental and provocative” which she heads, “Some cautions” (Clay, 2001, p. 306). It is a reminder that any research model is biased according to society and belief. And that her model and reflection are based on detailed records of observation of change in historical time. But it is exactly this individual observation – as opposed to averages derived from heterogeneous groups – that can give teachers information that is useful in day-to-day teaching.

Marie's was a rigorous, rigorous intellect and an unusually generous heart. And so it seems fitting that she end her book, not with her own words, but with a colleague's – Don Holdaway's:

There is no better system to control the complexities and intricacies of each person's learning than that person's own system operating with genuine motivation and self-determination within reach of humane and informed help. (Clay, 2001, p. 306)

Writing a book changes you. It demands daily work and focus and ends up clarifying your thought and purpose in a new way. A writer cares about and attends to the last words in her book, for those words are the end of a long, transformative journey. The final full stop.

It is not insignificant that Marie gave someone else the last word. For her work was not about herself, it was about as she wrote, “young, low-achieving children” and their teachers. Since Don Holdaway summed up for her well the relation of the individual learning best with a humane and informed teacher, she left us with his words, not hers.

You sense in reading her how Marie felt a keen responsibility to us as the teachers of these young, low-achieving children, and it seems to me that sense of responsibility is a major part of the organization of this last chapter. My husband and I, after thirty years of childrearing, a few years ago sent our youngest child off to college. This chapter reminds me very much of that experience, the final week of *I meant to tell you this. I've cooked a special meal for you – let's linger over it. Remember what I've taught you.* And then finally the day comes that you drive your child to the university, and take that last look back in the car's mirror, pulling away, letting go.

To me what we take from this last chapter is the importance of remembering our humanity. Of being human while holding impeccably high standards. We teach best when we see our children individually; see the possibility in their tentativeness. We are best with our colleagues when we see their possibility and intention.

Marie recognized the dignity of children who struggle – she looked to see strength, to unlock potential. And we recreate her theory each time we work with a child and observe their processing. Each time we pose questions about what we notice instead of being sure.

If *Change Over Time* were a work of literature rather than of literacy, the reader would note that an author who titles her books with words of being, time and space, in bringing her book to a close turns to studies in child development that use geography as a metaphor. Marie emphasizes with italics, “*New learning at any one time must depend on the nature of the landscape formed by the past experiences of the learner up until this moment in time*” (Clay, 2001, p. 293).

#### Geography as metaphor in Clay



### Navigating the landscape

With my children now grown, I’ve returned to cycling, and spend hours in the summer riding country roads on my bike. Wisconsin has this remarkable, unusual region that begins a few miles west of my home, called the Driftless Area.

The Driftless Area is a small pocket in the northern United States that the glaciers missed over 10,000 years ago in their last North American movement. And so while eastern Wisconsin is quite flat, slowly scraped by glacial movement, the Driftless Area is filled with rolling hills, long valleys and sudden steep escarpments.

#### The more knowledgeable other



Mary Michal on our weekly rides

My first summer cycling again, a good friend of mine, Mary Michal, charted weekly rides for the two of us near her home in this region.

I was a newcomer to serious cycling, and I thought about Marie and geography often on our rides: *the nature of the landscape formed by the past experiences of the learner up until this moment in time.*” The Driftless Area, this area hidden among all the other regions, is like the child’s internal processing, hidden, and yet clearly there. Like our children – their possibility hidden to many adults and to themselves.

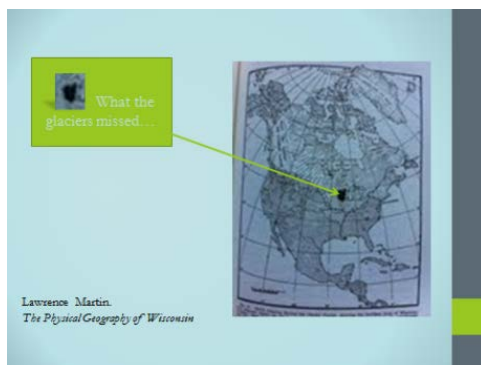
I was learning to navigate geography that had been formed by the past geological experience of the region, and I had few skills for elevation rises of several hundred feet in less than a quarter mile. But with the guidance of a more knowledgeable other, I learned first separate strategies – gear down *before* the incline starts, sit back on your seat, don’t worry about going only 5 miles an hour, and alternate sitting and standing to ride because it uses different muscles and gives your quads a rest – that started slowly to be merged in practice. As a beginner in difficult landscape, I would consciously use and name my strategies. As the season progressed, I was using them more fluently and with more ease; their integrated presence was there, but now with fluency rather than separation.

I began to experience success – I climbed one of the steepest hills, Pikes Peak, twice that summer, and it was easier the second time. I also felt frustration and failure. I ended up walking up a particularly difficult hill, relieved to accept defeat, while Mary continued riding, probably at 4 miles an hour –steady, slow, focused, engaged.

After that ride, Mary told me a story about herself as a less experienced cyclist, struggling in climbing a mountain in British Columbia. An older man pedaled next to her and asked if she minded a bit of advice. When she answered that would be fine, he said, “Don’t give the mountain more than it needs.” What he meant was, the mountain is there – sure, solid, strong and deep. If you force into it in pedaling, you run smack into something stronger, bigger, and more solid than you. Ride *with* the mountain, giving it the energy it needs, not forcing. When you are engaged in hard effort, relax. It shifted riding for Mary, and it shifted riding for me.



Think of that for your students who are the most challenging to teach. Don’t give the mountain more than it needs. Don’t give *the students* more than they need. Pedagogically, this is in Marie’s writing about teacher talk. Find *just* what the child needs, not the surplus. It also has an affective part to it. As you are engaged in difficult effort, relax. That will be a different relation between you and the student. Ride up the hill, not into the hill.



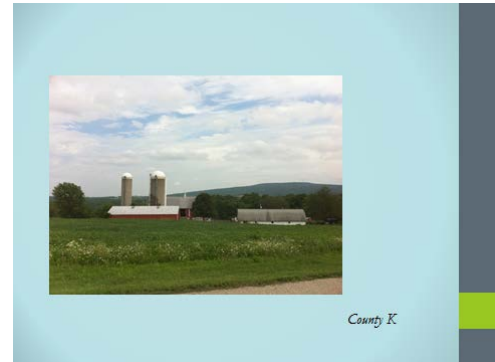
As we cycled each week, I wanted to know more about this beautiful region, so I researched books and came on *The Physical Geography of Wisconsin*, which was written in 1916 by Lawrence Martin. This blurry map comes from that book. I love its simplicity and how it represents an extraordinary geological occurrence (Lawrence, 1965, p. 85). As northern North America was covered by the glaciers, there was this one enclave that its reach simply bypassed. I showed perhaps a few too many people this map, and I would think of that geological, that spatial and temporal quirk in land formation as I rode.

In my curiosity and relation to that page with the map, I was that child leaning into text, into illustration. A child’s curiosity about and engagement with the page hold great possibility as a generative force in their learning. Notice when they lean forward, when they linger with an illustration, and use that as your starting point in true conversation for writing. Be curious about their curiosity, and with the right support they will enter into more complicated syntax, more precise vocabulary and more engagement with the task as they write.

At the end of the summer, Mary and I were cycling beyond the Driftless Area, expecting flat elevation. And suddenly, ahead of us on the road was one of the steepest, longest hills I had seen. I

felt like the rules had been changed and that the geography wasn't fair. When I told this to Mary, my more knowledgeable teacher said, "Sometimes a hill looks worse than it is."

Mary has years of cycling in the Driftless Area, and quadriceps I can only aspire to, so I've learned not to believe her when she says a hill won't be hard. But she was right this time. As we drew closer to the hill, you could see it was a series of rises with short plateaus; it could be parsed into meaningful chunks. I also by now had been biking for months and had experiences that had integrated my hill knowledge. And so what I thought was going to be frustratingly difficult turned out to be the right level of challenge. The hill was less than I had thought, and I was now more than I had thought. I was very similar to our students who have taken on processing and are moving toward discontinuing. Almost there, but not quite. Encountering new challenges they don't think they're up to. Still in need of that more knowledgeable other. And, oh, so ready to move to a new level, when prompted with just the right economical words.



I tell this story in part to return to Marie's "I live in a state of perpetual enquiry." We cannot experience or completely understand the processing that continues to transform itself as a child learns to read. But we *can* experience learning something new. We can understand what draws us in, what confuses and defeats us and how it feels not to be competent, not to succeed. If we are lucky enough to have one, we can experience the importance of a mentor on our path and the power of their simple words. Be curious. Be open to new knowledge. Enquire. Observe and reflect on your learning.



Opening remarks to the IRA, 1992:

Ideas that challenge what we are not comfortable with can open up new possibilities.

## The chair, the child, the conversation

For her opening remarks at the 1992 IRA convention, Marie wrote, "Ideas that challenge what we are not comfortable with can open up new possibilities."

From small cracks in the massive land formations, much of the geographical beauty of today's world emerged: it is the challenge of what we hear and

discuss, and often the disquiet we feel, that can open up new insights and opportunities." (Clay, 2009, p. 124)

As the elder, the more knowledgeable other, as Merlin to Arthur, we give the child, not how to be meta-cognitive, but to be aware in the world, to notice what is around them and to shift what they think because of what they notice.



From small cracks in the massive land formations, much of the geographical beauty of today's world emerged: it is the challenge of what we hear and discuss, and often the disquiet we feel, that can open up new insights and opportunities.

Marie gave researchers clear directions to investigate in *Change Over Time*. For Reading Recovery teachers, the returning message I found in *Change Over Time* was The Chair, the Child and the Conversation.

We need to remember that we are there with them. Sometimes in the pressure of teaching, of fitting it all in, of finishing reports, we can forget that we are in their presence and they are in ours. Reading Recovery teachers have an unusual relation in the schools – one adult, on a small chair next to a child on a small chair, for focused instruction whose intent it is to change the child's life. To, as Marie pinpointed in her goal, diminish predictive correlations.

Marie made it clear in *Change Over Time* that she was going back to the origins of the theory to reflect on how it came about and where it needed to go. I find great meaning in the fact that this theory was created from the stance of a chair and a child. From days of sitting next to one hundred children and taking notes as they read, looking for patterns of how children who became proficient in reading came to be those fluid proficient readers. For this whole international now theory began with one woman sitting next to one individual child, just as you sit next to one child at a time. She created a theory with great respect for the teacher, one which sees that it is in the interaction between teacher and child that a whole world can open up. This particular child's world – not a world determined by a sequenced program. *This* child's world. *This* child's way of understanding.

Invite Marie into your room the next time you teach. Pull up a real or imaginary chair for her and see that child as she would. Invite the year 1963 into the room and in observing, imagine that you and that child are constructing a new theory.



### **Anonymous generosity**

So, more than two million children in the U.S. have now learned to read in Reading Recovery. Imagine what it would feel like to know that you had changed two million children's lives – children you had never met. That you had changed, had diminished predictive correlations on such a scale. She responded to a question once on how that felt and she said, well, this will surprise you, but I'm not satisfied. There are so many more children. That was true Marie Clay.

And yet, two million children. Even if you weren't satisfied, it still had to feel pretty good. Maybe on a Saturday night in March, when the seasons were just changing, and you felt autumn's first crisp air, one of those days you've spent getting things in order, doing chores and errands, and at the end of the day things are now organized, maybe on a night like that,

Or maybe on a plane flying to another continent to inspire teachers and meet with and inspire, too, trainers and strategize administrative needs,

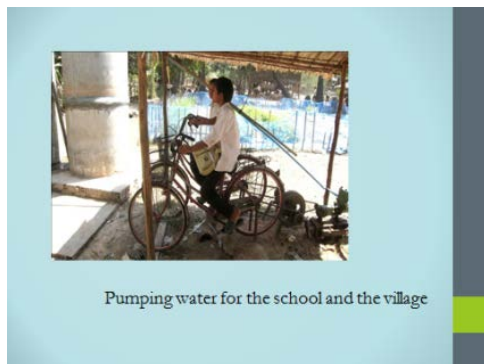
Or maybe when she was writing or revising yet another book, I expect somewhere in there – just look at her eyes – she had to feel tremendous joy, knowing that she had changed the lives of children she had never met, at a number size that we can't really comprehend.

Marie's was in many ways an anonymous generosity, for the children whose lives she changed for the most part knew nothing about her.

So what else can we learn from Marie? I turned 60 a few years ago, and in doing so, I followed a bit Marie's example of anonymous generosity. People I know in my hometown of Madison have built and continue to support four schools in a rural, very poor part of Cambodia. Their first students had now graduated from sixth grade, and without help, the poorest students would have to end their schooling because they would not be able to daily walk the 12-15 kilometers to the village with a high school. The Cambodian School Project's newsletter that year told that they had given used, reconditioned bikes to eight students and they hoped this year to be able to raise money for more bicycles.



I wrote a letter to friends asking them to help me raise money for sixty bikes for the project as a way of celebrating my birthday and pledged to match the donations for the first 10 bikes. (I then enjoyed dedicating each of those bikes. There is a Marie Clay bike somewhere in northwestern Cambodia changing lives. There is also a Joy Cowley bike and I expect Dan the Flying Man hovers over it.)



My friends and their friends have now contributed over \$10,000 (part of it through grant-writing) for bikes for the Cambodian School Project to distribute. A few of the bikes were used, like these two, for children to pump water during recess for their village, their mothers and the school. Around 200 children and their families have received bikes from my friends' contributions, more than three times what I had hoped for.

So, of course, it's not anonymous generosity if I'm telling you about this. But the children will probably never know who my friends or I are; we remain to them anonymous. I am telling you about my small decision to make change on a larger scale to encourage you to continue, too, the amazing, generous gesture that was Marie Clay's life. To incorporate that, too, into your life.

Two million children. Marie Clay anonymously changed the lives of 2 million children, and that number will only continue to grow. We can't have that enormous effect, but we can have our own small one. Study her example. Create change in the world that comes from your heart.

## To take away

So what might there be to take away from considering how Marie thought?

That we and our children are on a journey that Marie specifically mapped out. That there is story to this. Let us think not only of the story in our children's books. Let us remember Marie's story, our story.

And remember that there is an invisible nature to the task of the child. If we investigate that invisibility, we can help them better on their way.

And question. Question in such a way that you don't stop questioning. Hold your larger question as you enquire, enquire, enquire.

Draw on analogy, such as in the work of Matisse and Gehry for models for imagining the construction of inner control.

And learn from Marie's generosity. That, too, can be what she continues to teach.

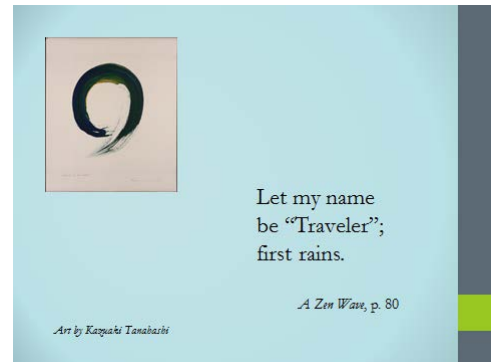
At a party sending him on his way as he started out for long journey across Japan, Basho composed this verse to begin a renku – a spontaneous group poem that continues a beginning haiku that has just been offered to the group. This would have been a traditional way of celebrating Basho's departure.

*Hatsu shigure* are the first rains of winter, and Basho is about to begin a journey on foot, west to east, across Japan's main island Honshu (the world's seventh largest island), from Iga, near Kyoto, to Edo, which is now called Tokyo. He will take with him his clothes, outer garments, a hat, a walking staff, a bowl for food, and calligraphy supplies. That is all. This will not be an easy journey.

Basho was both loved and revered as a teacher and poet. Imagine this night – your teacher setting out on a journey that will take both strength and conviction, that has well known dangers. You have been changed by him, and you know that his writing and his teaching are a gift.

Aitken explains the haiku by referring to a *kōan*, and he says, "You cannot meet today; you cannot meet this moment if you go around consuming secondhand truths" (Aitken, 1978 paraphrased, p. 81). Again, Marie.

Aitken ends the chapter quoting a verse that is sometimes given as a eulogy at a monk's funeral. "First I went following the scented grasses; then I returned following the falling blossoms." He explains why this particular verse is used – that "it is the life of the mature Zen student, never astray amidst all the coming and going" (Aitken, 1978, p. 84). This was Marie Clay, focused and intent, aware in life, of the scented grass at the beginning, of the falling blossom at the ending.



It seems fit then, to finish an investigation on what we can learn from Marie's life with specific eulogy. Because in many ways all I have said here is meant as eulogy, for even though it's six years now since we lost Marie, I expect many of us still feel that loss. As Marie did, follow the potential and possibility in that one innocent little six-year-old girl you teach who faces failure without you; follow the tentative, flexible learning of that little six-year-old boy who is just starting to show he is consolidating, understanding, and guide them in forging their different paths.

Just as Marie, with absolute piercing intent, follow the scented grass; follow the falling blossoms.

And one last thing for you on your path: "The view is preventative, developmental and provocative."

Take those words with you, and prevent, develop – and with Marie Clay grace, wisdom, decorum and eyes on the prize – provoke.

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