

THE VOICE YOU HEAR  
WHEN YOU READ SILENTLY

is not silent, it is a speaking-  
out-loud voice in your head: it is *spoken*,  
a voice is *saying* it  
as you read. It's the writer's words,  
of course, in a literary sense  
his or her *voice*, but the sound  
of that voice is the sound of your voice.  
Not the sound your friends know  
or the sound of a tape played back  
but your voice  
caught in the dark cathedral  
of your skull, your voice heard  
by an internal ear informed by internal abstracts  
and what you know by feeling,  
having felt. It is your voice  
saying, for example, the word barn  
that the writer wrote  
but the barn you say  
is a barn you know or knew. The voice  
in your head, speaking as you read,  
never says anything neutrally – some people  
hated the barn they knew,  
some people love the barn they know  
so you hear the word loaded  
and a sensory constellation  
is lit: horse-gnawed stalls,  
hayloft, black heat tape wrapping  
a water pipe, a slippery  
spilled chirr of oats from a split sack,  
the bony, filthy haunches of cows . . . .  
And barn is only a noun – no verb  
or subject has entered into the sentence yet!  
The voice you hear when you read to yourself  
is the clearest voice: you speak it  
speaking to you.

Thomas Lux\*\* in *New and Selected Poems* (New York 1997, pg. 15))

Pat Campbell:

Try reading a poem—any poem. Read it silently. What do you hear, see, feel? What meter, durations, and tone qualities do you imagine? Read it aloud, and hear how the vowels and consonants spread across pulses, colliding, consolidating. Children take joy in chanting poetry, and chanting along with others is more fun than alone. (Whatever happens to adults, that they forget the magic of words in rhyme and rhythm?) Even as we facilitate poetry for the children, pretending to lead them, we may benefit more fully than the children from a journey into poetry!

\* Check out collections of poems in print for reading aloud: Prelutsky, Jack, 1983, The Random House Book of Poetry for Children (NY: Random House), Fleischman, Paul, 1992, Joyful Noise: Poems for Two Voices (NY: HarperTrophy), Hughes, Langston, 1990, Selected Poems of Langston Hughes (NY: Vintage Classics), and Feinstein, Sascha and Yusef Komunyakaa, 1991, The Jazz Poetry Anthology (Bloomington: Indiana University Press).

\*\*[Permission to use this poem here granted by Thomas Lux on Oct. 10<sup>th</sup>, 2005 via Ginger Murchison at Georgia Tech.]