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