

Loree reads me personal mail not because my eyes are bad (they're good, though not as good, a few days before age 66 on 4Feb84, as once they were) but because I want to close my eyes and hear what Papias, ca. AD140, called "the living voice" (of the immediate disciples of the apostles of Jesus--the voice that by then had been stilled into the Gospels). Through Loree's, for me the most beloved living voice, I want to try to hear the voices of relatives and friends who, this time instead of phoning, have taken in old-fashioned hand to commit voice to the silence of a letter, which is (and always will be) the primary interpersonal literary genre. This thinksheet is on the need for and skill of "reading," the decoding-into-sound of what had been encoded-into-silence by "writing."

1. The above paragraph collapses into mush when speed-read--i.e., read with<sup>out</sup> vocalizing or at least subvocalizing. It would be exasperating and useless to try to read it without "hearing" it, without trying to reproduce the tempo changes of its words and silences and the ranges of its pitch and intensity. Why? Because it's "literature"? No; simply because it's "writing" instead of "speech." Now, 1984, with the public once again excited about the public schools' inefficiency at teaching the 3 Rs, reading ALOUD in class is coming back all over America (socalled "silent" reading, a nutty notion of progressive education, having been "in" for two generations,\* with resultant near-illiteracy for half the American population).

2. By back-formation these past two generations, decoding has shaped encoding: writers have tried to write their stuff so it would be read by poor readers, with the assumption and roseate hope that then everybody could and would read it. The most ludicrous product of this goal has been the run-Jane-run, minimal-vocabulary unpalatable schoolbooks, which have taught children to hate reading as a boring activity. I often think, as I go through piles of new books at N.Y. Theological Seminary (most of the stuff unpalatable pabulum, though "must" for other reasons), of the run-Jane-run teaching that has shaped most of America's current readers. Tone-deaf stuff. No music, no passion, no color, no lilt and laughter and tears and joy. Smooth-worn metaphors, dry propositions.

3. Simple music I can hear-read off the sheetmusic (my skill being slim); but I have a friend who can read-hear symphonies off the page (to me, an awesome achievement). Plato's REPUBLIC says rhythm is at the heart of true education, and therefore the two primary courses are gymnastics (rhythm of body) and music (rhythm of soul). I remember the 1963 March on Washington for two rhythms: (1) Marian Anderson's "He's got the whole world in his hand," and (2) Martin King's "I have a dream." Music, in two modes.

4. "All my life I have felt language as music and have tried to write that way. But who hears a book?" Words of Bradford Smith, Quaker scholar-poet-saint (p.22, "Dear Gift of Life: A Man's Encounter with Death," Pendle Hill Pamphlet #142, 1965--a great resource to put in the hands of someone knowing that death is soon).

5. Reading with bodymind/mindbody (see Ps.84.2) is to be contrasted with (1) flat-tone emotionality in many "emotionally ill" and (2) computer-voices (which are as disembodied-creepy as ghosts in horror movies).

5. In Eastern Orthodoxy, Christianity has better (than in the West, Catholic or Protestant) preserved the sense of the living Word of God that is the vitals of the NT, especially the Gospels.

\*The control-fact: If we do not "hear," we cannot "feel"; and what we do not feel cannot have "meaning" for us.