

Gerry Shikatani / THINKS THAT GO BUMP IN THE NIGHT
(no Nightmare, but dream).

There have already been a number of very worthwhile and notable writings on the nature and the role of silence in literature to which I would direct the reader (see Susan Sontag, George Steiner's Language and Silence and his "Word against Object" in After Babel). Of course the works of John Cage and poet-composer Jackson MacLow are well known and of first importance. I add here my rather straight-forward observations on the role and meaning of silence in the writing, reading and performance of literature which has evolved over the last ten years.

THEORY

1) The use of silence recognizes sound and verbal meaning; and in a sense) in our spoken and conceptual lives.

2) What does this silence encompass? Silence suggests the compulsive which in the end must be broken claims the primacy of silence, statement in a brief tight poem this is the silence of negation. It is the silence of Beckett and Ingmar Bergman: the overwhelming need to speak and receive speech.

The conscious use of silence as may deem the virtue of silence (with words) and values "special spiritually-motivated speech," negation, of "saying the least," and reflects a dichotomous perspective.

3) The use of silence in "reading" based compulsiveness to speak; in the poetic act exceeds this fairly straight-forward notion. Silence is not an opposition of

PRACTICAL APPLICATION

silence as "real," as the flipside of generally of negation (in the broadest tual lives.

s? The silence of poetry "to speak." The silence by the writer, even though a writer the value of "saying less," under-heralds speech. In darker clothes, of the efficacy of language. d Ingmar Bergman: the overwhelming h. The negation of sound: word.

in meditation practices, which in a world too often saturated moments of authentic and perhaps remains wedded to the silence of "It is an important kind of silence pective.

can articulate such dualistically-yet, the domain and uses of silence fairly straight-forward notion. sound/word, but an equal and integral

part of a unified whole, in every uttered word has its silent aspect. Silence is there, too. The Zen master poet Shinkichi Takahashi has written on how he wonders why so many people take trips to the other side of the world in search of peace; Motoko does not follow her into the streets of Bombay, but follows her own precepts of compassion into the office towers of our cities. Where does silence dwell? How I like idle

blematic. Left margin to right margin from the markings (words, grammatical spaces as if they didn't exist. grammatical marks are the only things of significance. One of Jackson MacLow's methods has been to notate the duration of silence (in seconds) at the end of each line of the poem, with an explanation of the method fully detailed at the end of the poem. Even when I've left large gaps in the typographical layout readers have tended to skip to the next point of the "written" text, as if in a hurry to get home.

- 4) The use of silence is a notational conceptualization which predates not wholly unto itself, but full signifier and signified as mani-

given word or line of the poem, tunity to expand the given fragment full realization potential to each of language. Any poem can be given instance.

- 5) People generally misunderstand especially its presentation in reading stylistic grounds - its relative device, such as its effect in setting to great heights in the case of bility in a banal or mediocre one are inseparable (though substan-

ry manifestation of language. Each ect. How I like idle chatter! Such master poet Shinkichi Takahashi has o many people take trips to the her Teresa advises us that we need ets of Bombay, but follow our own preffice towers of our cities. Where does chatter.

a. The notating of silence is pro-quick eye-scan reading takes its cue atical signs) and tends to pass over To the common reader, words and things of significance. One of en to notate the duration of silence line of the poem, with an explained at the end of the poem. Even e typographical layout readers have t of the "written" text, as if in a

n of the activity of inspiration and s the active tongue. It is a signly part of the complex structure fest in the poem's language.

b. In the silence which follows a the reader/listener has the opportunity in any direction. This gives ontent and to the signified aspect iven the terse power of haiku, for

the role of silence in poetry, especially. Criticism is usually based on e success or failure as a dramatic harpening the language of a poem an inspiring work; to respecta- ne. In sculpture, space and medium tially different). The criticism of

the language of a poem in a dual words, as content; silence as an effect on content. But silence surrounds and the space it materializes: an integral part of it.

can represent a silence, the duration of which equals the length of a line of a poem. The horizontal spaces between letters, words etc., can be likewise timed as silence.

- 6) Poetry is a notation of not simply words, but rhythm and, as such, position as a process. Silence in a poem renders the real time of what of the rendering of real time when a poem's completion takes days, months, even years as fragments and connecting images of a poem are finally brought together? What of the time which passes in making revisions of a work? How is silence then to be notated? One way is to see the poem for what it is - a moving organic structure, as energy flow. Silence = Energy flow. The composition of a poem is wholly relational: figure ground; figure/figure; articulate/noticed by following the organic for the silences which are part of the tempi of ellipses, leaps, sounds and breaths.

ance, as an opposite to sound, the act (it seems to me) is intellectual. (My own earlier readings were to a large degree reliant upon such an approach.)

opposition, the sensibility is the body. It's non-intellectual. This silence is organic: physical and spiritual.

- 7) Words are place-holders for silence, defining it. Just as the exploration of space can be the exploration of sculpture (material form), so the exploration of silence is the exploration of language. f. What does the line-ending represent in poetry but the precipice which looks beyond but then twists back upon itself (its silence) to the next line? How one reads it

listic perspective is limited to the something altogether different, as once like space in sculpture (its spatially displaces) is a relation of it.

c. As one guide, each line-space

ration of which equals the length of the line of a poem. The horizontal spaces between letters, words etc., can be likewise timed as silence.

d. When silence is used in performance, the act (it seems to me) is intellectual. (My own earlier readings were to a large degree reliant upon such an approach.)

e. When silence is not seen as an opposition, the sensibility is the body. It's non-intellectual. This silence is organic: physical and spiritual.

ence, defining it. Just as the exploration of sculpture (material form), so the exploration of silence is the exploration of language. f. What does the line-ending represent in poetry but the precipice which looks beyond but then twists back upon itself (its silence) to the next line? How one reads it

is determined by the body's physical line-apportionment creates.

physical reaction to the rhythm such as.

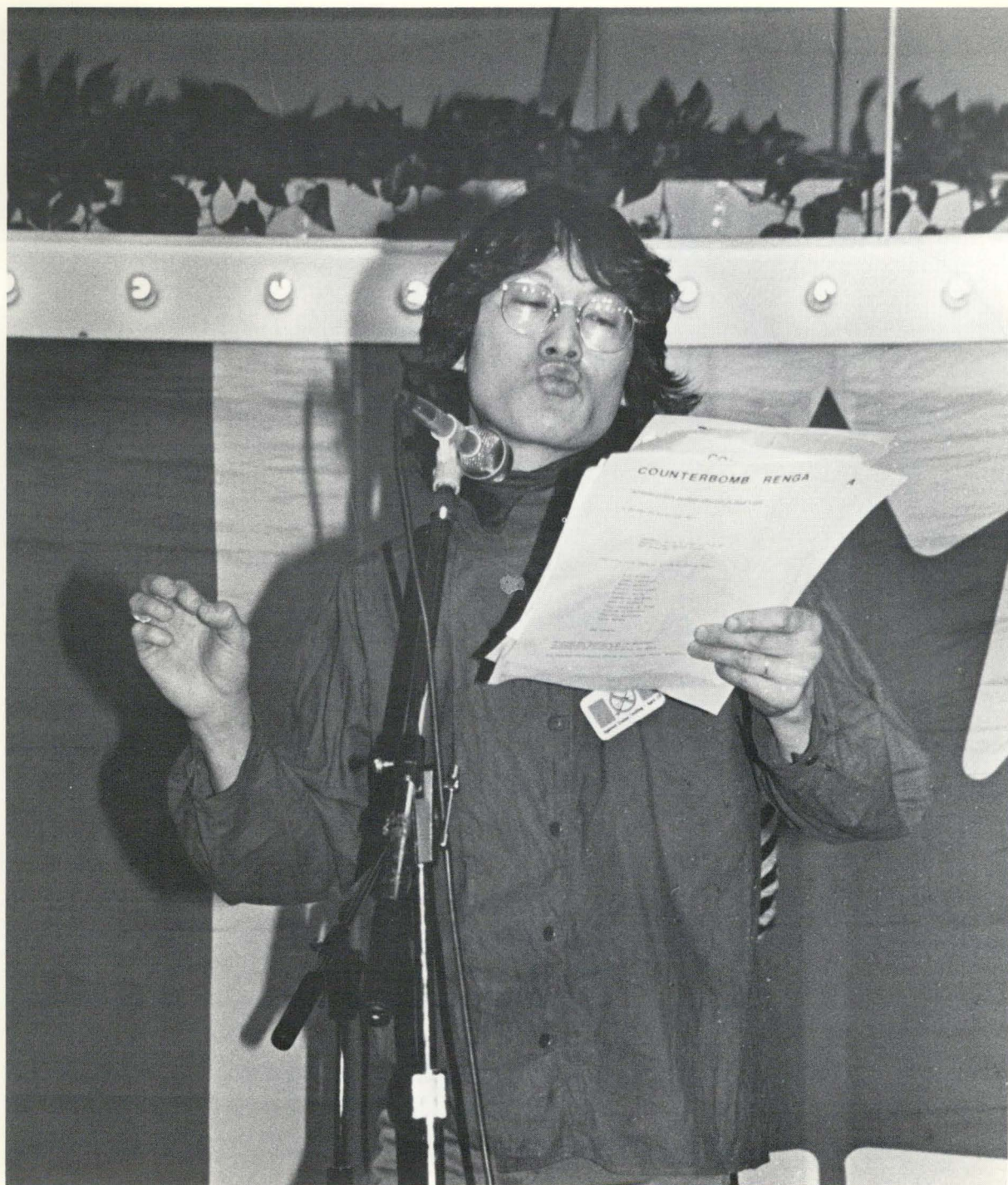
- 8) What's the place of silence in If one is no longer exasperated capacity of language to define and one has come to accept verb manifestation -- the word, a c happily scooped up by silence l elephants then what do we say , writer's modern problem, is it

simply the phonemes, words and phrasing) as sound, but actually notate silence. Even in the end reading can take into account the material form which is actually is the immutable. It is a simple nature of language itself. It is make the reading dramatic." It is inherent dignity of each utterance plays in our lives. Never is one another. Each word, letter, line

the so-called post modern world? by the existential silence and in- or represent the referential reality al language as moment-to-moment concrete action whose referential is like the circus clown following the as poets? If silence was a blocked now the poet's "post-modern" lodestone? g. What one reads into a poem is not composites of words (syntactical y the physical spaces on a page which unciation of words, letters etc., the he negative or silent aspect of the present in the manifest word. That le verbal act of respect towards the s not a question of saying, "Let's s rather an act of recognition of the ble breath and word --the part language ne word ultimately more important than ke each second, is most precious.

- 9) Silence is not something to be and it is always relational. It Loud Music. Silence is in the bours? Smile at them but with act. In this way, as long as one's position (so easy to happen silence), then can we write the

ultimately apprehended, but a position: is a way of living. Too much chatter, seat, always. You've woken the neighbor a full concern which becomes concrete ne's not self-absorbed with the joy of en; and then, no longer an approach of equation Silence = Compassion.



/SOUND PIECE FOR THREE VOICES

