

“River’s fray”

(pp. 95-111 from *Penury* by Myung Mi Kim)

female voice, flute, bass clarinet, alto saxophone

written by Eugene
for Germaine, Maria, Maarten, and Marc

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*Below are excerpts from “Myung Mi Kim's performance of language” by Jennifer Aglio.
Source: <<http://jacket2.org/article/myung-mi-kims-performance-language>>.*

Penury is a text (and language) of lived experience that emerges through the dynamic sequences of motion and change, thus providing a space for the (re)telling of multiple narratives. At times, it feels as though Kim writes from the space of liminality — from an outside that was once inside. The emerging self is continually transformed and reformed by the implicit sequences that compose the hegemonic, patriarchal system in which they function.

[...]

The work moves through associative images and locations, a movement which speaks to the mutability of the construction of the self. The narratives exemplified in *Penury* are each enactments of possible truths, those that are unable to fit into an absolute representation of self. This design is based on a generation of self that relies on the external forces of a dominant discourse enveloped in a patriarchal system. A construction such as this does not have the capacity to represent selves who reside in the margins. That constructed self performs in a nonlinear sequencing of a multilayered narrative.

[...]

[Language is] a social practice rather than any sort of intractable given, and once that rift enters your consciousness, it allows you to have an interrogative relationship to language. You have questions about what language is, what it performs, what it means to get recognized as a speaker of a particular language. This reflexivity prepares you to be an acute listener. This transitive space is a translative space — both linguistically and, I think, in terms of the person, the subject, if not spirit. This opens up multiplicity, plurality, in social and personal conceptions of language.
(Myung Mi Kim)

[...]

The self, as performed through the disjunctive and queer narrative, is nearing not an absolute, essentialized version, but rather a representation of authenticity — an implied narrative (a combination of an event's presentation, the documentation of that event, and its spatial interpretation). Kim “queers” the page in *Penury* by highlighting the plurality/alterity of identity, disrupting traditional narrative, and deconstructing language through formal and sonic structures.

(95)

River's fray

flute

bass clarinet

The image shows two staves of musical notation. The top staff is for the flute and the bottom staff is for the bass clarinet. Both staves have a vertical bar on the left side. The flute staff has two square notes: one in the second measure and one in the fourth measure. The bass clarinet staff has two square notes: one in the second measure and one in the fourth measure, with a sharp symbol (#) above the second note.

(Throughout the entire song, durations are free. Though, try to follow the vertical alignment of note against note, as well as the text of the poem to guide your playing. Project, but always listen to one another.)

All words written above the instrumental lines are to be recited by the vocalist, but never above the instruments.)

With head bowed walked trudged

flt.

b. cl.

alto saxophone

The image shows three staves of musical notation. The top staff is for the flute (labeled 'flt.'), the middle for the bass clarinet (labeled 'b. cl.'), and the bottom for the alto saxophone (labeled 'alto saxophone'). Each staff has a vertical bar on the left. The flute staff has two square notes: one in the second measure and one in the fourth measure. The bass clarinet staff has three square notes: one in the second measure, one in the fourth measure, and one in the fifth measure. The alto saxophone staff has one square note in the second measure with a sharp symbol (#) above it.

Iron leaf once trumpets

flt.

b. cl.

sax.

The image shows three staves of musical notation. The top staff is for the flute (labeled 'flt.'), the middle for the bass clarinet (labeled 'b. cl.'), and the bottom for the saxophone (labeled 'sax.'). Each staff has a vertical bar on the left. The flute staff has two square notes: one in the second measure and one in the fourth measure. The bass clarinet staff has one square note in the fourth measure. The saxophone staff has three square notes: one in the second measure, one in the fourth measure, and one in the fifth measure with a sharp symbol (#) above it.

Humpspine blackened with flies

flt.

The image shows one staff of musical notation for the flute (labeled 'flt.'). The staff has a vertical bar on the left and one square note in the second measure with a sharp symbol (#) above it.

(96–98)

Tacet, ca. 1 minute.

(99)

The voice sings the following words on the pitches given below. The clef is a “major tonic” (a.k.a. “moveable do”) clef. The middle line stands for the tonic pitch given and all notes from it lie on a diatonic major scale. Focus on the intervallic relations between notes and their overall contour, less their precise pitch intonation and overall harmony. Feel free to inflect according to personal intuition of the situation.

Slowly, thoughtfully, maybe with a contained smile; a good pause after each line.

The flute, bass clarinet, and/or alto saxophone play the tonic note (at any octave transposition) once before the voice enters; and afterwards, only when the voice sings a word—however, it is not necessary to play under each and every word.

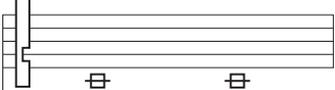
Always fleetingly, as quietly as possible.

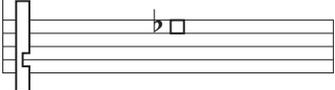
The image displays three staves of musical notation. Each staff begins with a C-clef (soprano clef) and a key signature of one sharp (F#), indicating a major scale starting on F# (labeled as 'tonic: F#').

- Staff 1 (voice):** Labeled 'voice' on the left. It contains five words: 'hooded', 'fortune', 'snare', 'willful', and 'wield'. Above each word is a square box representing a pitch. 'hooded' is on the middle line (F#). 'fortune' is on the second space (G). 'snare' is on the second line (F). 'willful' consists of two notes: the first is on the second space (G) and the second is on the second line (F), connected by a slur. 'wield' is on the second line (F).
- Staff 2 (vox.):** Labeled 'vox.' on the left. It contains five words: 'hummock', 'pled', 'sweet', 'water', and 'mottled'. Above each word is a square box representing a pitch. 'hummock' is on the middle line (F#). 'pled' is on the second space (G). 'sweet' is on the second line (F). 'water' consists of two notes: the first is on the second space (G) and the second is on the second line (F), connected by a slur. 'mottled' consists of three notes: the first is on the second space (G), the second is on the second line (F), and the third is on the second space (G), all connected by a slur.
- Staff 3 (vox.):** Labeled 'vox.' on the left. It contains five words: 'abrupt', 'bundle', 'specular', 'scruple', and 'prone'. Above each word is a square box representing a pitch. 'abrupt' consists of two notes: the first is on the second space (G) and the second is on the second line (F), connected by a slur. 'bundle' consists of two notes: the first is on the second space (G) and the second is on the second line (F), connected by a slur. 'specular' consists of three notes: the first is on the second space (G), the second is on the second line (F), and the third is on the second space (G), all connected by a slur. 'scruple' consists of two notes: the first is on the second space (G) and the second is on the second line (F), connected by a slur. 'prone' is on the second space (G).

(100)

Fighting house by house

ft.  *(As in 95.)*

b. cl. 

You saw it and heard it?

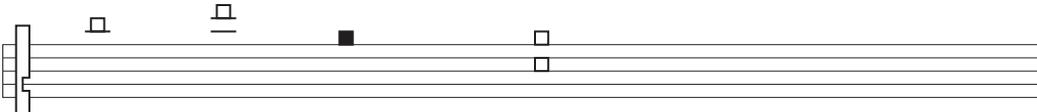
ft. 

b. cl.  ◡

Grass grew from the sternum

sax. 

Roots took over the mandible

sax. 

O-K 

(101)

The voice recites the text aloud clearly, with good articulation and never overly expressive.

The flute, clarinet, and saxophone are free to play (or not play) any respective material from (100) and (102); always thoughtfully in response, not too quietly, as if in private conversation.

Near One, do you recall Day Ceremony

celebrated by a family for the welfare of all belonging to it

at the appointed time all work ceases

instruments of labor lie untouched

chants, though their precise meaning was long since become unintelligible

recited from a scroll

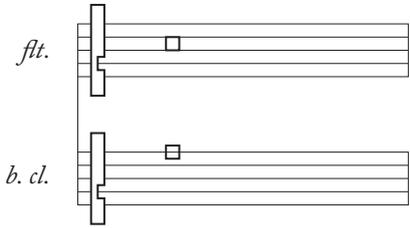
kept in the painted chest in the hall

sumptuous blossoms and green herbs thrown into the fire

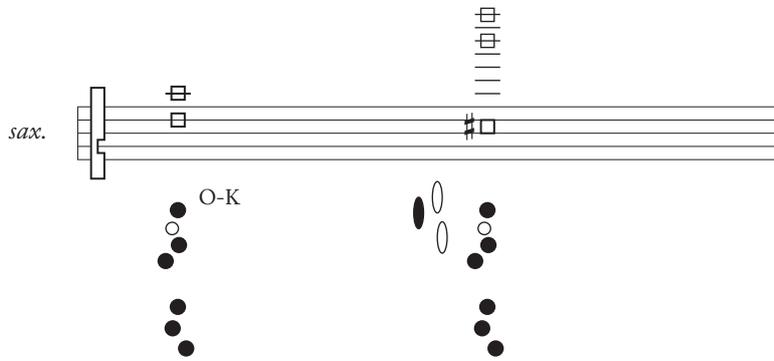
fresh gathered from a particular plot in the garden, set apart for this purpose

(102)

light of the full poor cell



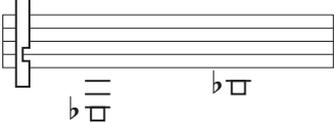
verdant meeting duty is



(103)

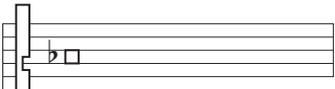
With the head of happiness

b. cl.

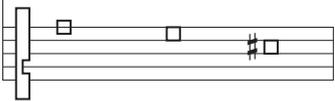


Comfortably full of air

flt.



sax.



Abdomen boat

b. cl.



(Continue for some time until entrance of flt. + vox.)



O hewn

vox.



(words sung by vox.)

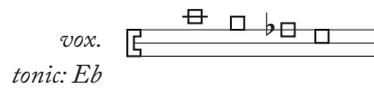
flt.



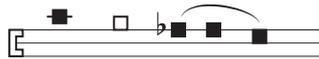
(104, 105)

(As in 99.)

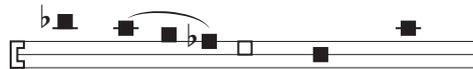
cherich apere



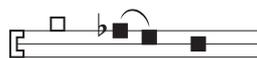
bliss and tenderage



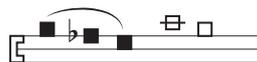
kind property brew speech rose



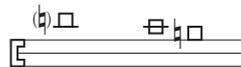
such errant rapt



refection, attend



leun lubon



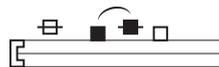
errant rapt refraction



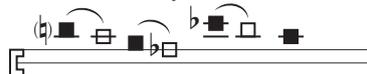
kind speech bliss



flur also thist



beris beryl barris rose



(106)

When the book opens and the dead march

Musical score for measures 106-110, featuring three staves: *flt.* (flute), *b. cl.* (bass clarinet), and *sax.* (saxophone). The *flt.* staff contains notes G4, A4, B4, and C5, with a slur over the last three notes. The *b. cl.* staff contains notes G3, F3, E3, and D3, with a slur over the last three notes. The *sax.* staff contains notes G3, F3, E3, and D3, with a slur over the last three notes. A fermata is placed over the final measure of the saxophone part.

barrow flower

Musical score for the section 'barrow flower', featuring a single staff for *b. cl.* (bass clarinet). The staff contains notes G3, F3, E3, and D3.

bulldozed | sun

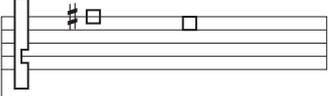
Musical score for the section 'bulldozed | sun', featuring four staves: *vox.* (voice), *flt.* (flute), *b. cl.* (bass clarinet), and *sax.* (saxophone). The *vox.* staff contains notes G4, A4, B4, and C5, with a slur over the last three notes and the instruction '(words sung by vox.)' below. The *flt.* staff contains notes G4, A4, B4, and C5. The *b. cl.* staff contains notes G3, F3, E3, and D3. The *sax.* staff contains notes G3, F3, E3, and D3.

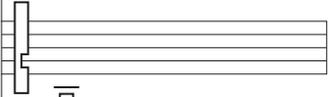
(107-110)

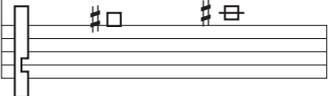
Tacet, ca. 1 minute.

(111)

Radiant falcon
Scattering acacias

flt.  *(Instruments sustain freely through both lines of the stanza above; all text is sung by the voice.)*

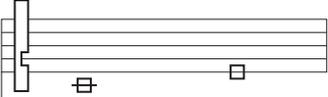
b. cl. 

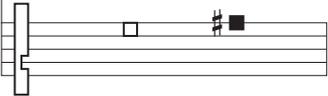
sax. 

The recitation of acacias
A grove of riverbeds

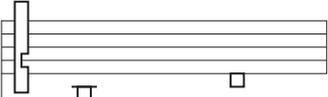
Residence of years' repose
Patience aids such

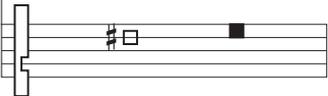
A bank of wide hands

flt. 

b. cl. 

Tender petition

flt. 

b. cl. 

(111, continued)

Horizon slope, a hoop(ed) light

flt.

b. cl.

sax.

(Bass clarinet in partial homophony with voice.)

A fragrant sight beheld beholds

flt.

b. cl.

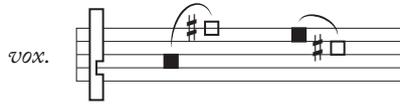
sax.

Where in this, further dwelt
Abide

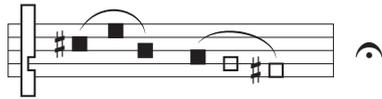
Nestled close
Civil bound

(111)

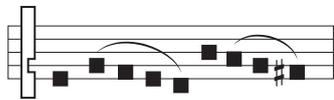
Radiant falcon



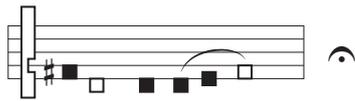
Scattering acacias



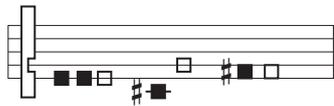
The recitation of acacias



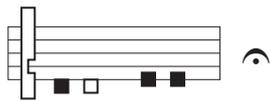
A grove of riverbeds



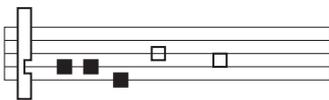
Residence of years' repose



Patience aids such



A bank of wide hands

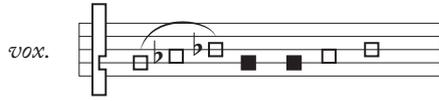


Tender petition

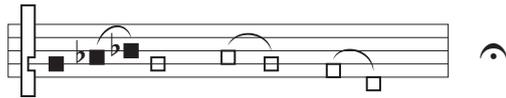


(111, continued)

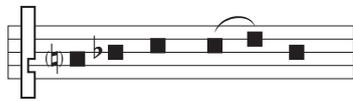
Horizon slope, a hoop(ed) light



A fragrant sight beheld beholds



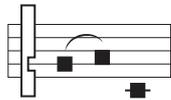
Where in this, further dwelt



Abide



Nestled close



Civil bound

