

CYCLE OF DUST



ERIC SHANFIELD

CYCLE OF DUST

Eric Shanfield

ENS.2010.2 | 11'

poem by James Tate

Baritone

Cello

James Tate's extraordinary recent poems do not generally lend themselves to the Shanfield treatment, as they usually comprise lengthy, arrhythmic chunks of text. In fact I have had at least one really interesting discussion with a poet about whether they are even poems at all. The earlier *Cycle of Dust*, however, consists instead of nine brief parts, which is better suited to my compositional temperament.

Each song explores a different musical texture: unisons, rhythmic displacement, passages alternating between smooth bowing and rhythmic pizzicato, open strings, pulses, figuration, arpeggios, glissandos, and double-stops. In that order.

Cycle of Dust
by James Tate

1
Brushfires all around;
I always say that is living.

And stop abruptly to stare
in terror
at the block of ice.

The tentative colors
shrink inward,
a lilac is stuffed into the air;

the last leaves of night
are ripped out
of this blind world

by a still breeze.

2
The strollers are one
unending stroller

all Spring on the tip
of a budless branch

They drink slumped over
in the dark
grazing the cold teeth
of the chisel

Then you are no virgin

a little maple leaf
on a chain

sparkles his stardust
on a stranger

3
Men get down on their knees
and search the toy river

it is daytime
the carnation is bubbling

the owls are sleeping
on a distant black planet

A scarf is pulled quickly
through the veins

of a covered bridge

4
Feeding those pigeons
each spoonful of stone

eyes of a doe
when nobody was around
say in an empty subway
after midnight

like a baby on fire

kicked off the edge

to indicate
there was no sign
or wise man singing

a buoy of blood
is tossed
to the far shore

5
Little hands were sprouting
in the cracks
of the sidewalk

they have been told nothing

a champion of kisses
somewhere writing
my own filthy epitaph

that famous
limp grey ray
of light

jackknives midword
into a world without alps

but I have no feathers, he said

6
When you put on your nightgown
to get off the ground
the smoke twirls

in amber telephones

Chiaroscuro of fossils
and diving birds

the way I run
from their embrace

into a foreign political paper
tattooed
on a false virgin's cunt

The bazookaman chimed
the first kite of
the day—blindfold the birds

in slippers of secondhands

7

How will it be next time
on the corner
of asylum street

a woman draped over a balcony
in the sky

a poor fiery
oasis
like the candle revealed

in an autopsy
where the vegetables

cry out
on wolf pit road

in the vertebrae of
her bright malaise

the night was clocked
bodies became
covered with dust

they looked like statues

8

With a bloody eye
the egg slid from memory:

don't drop your tooth
in the delta,

old evil dead over there.

Change of chair was
an illusion,

pins in them,
as if to say
they are building a guitar

with strings of milk
for the dog to practice
in his whiskey—

from here to there
I'll never go

destroying the desert

9

Afternoon with a random
stranger in a random

taxi gone down
the drain
in his bathtub,

solitude unfurls
his ribbon

of black light
with the same

savage smile,

perfumed snatches
of a neighbor's party
before

the imaginary
swimming pool,
beneath which

a solitary maggot
the keeper of the keeper

no nothing nothing
at the mercy
of invisible ink.

CYCLE OF DUST

1

James Tate

Eric Shanfield

$\text{♩} = 108$ Hushed

mp mezzo voce

Baritone

Brush-fi - res all a-round; I al-ways say that is liv-ing.

Violoncello

mp

5

Bar.

And stop ab-rupt-ly to stare in ter-ror at the block of ice.

Vc.

9

Bar.

mf

The ten-ta-tive co-lors shrink in-ward,

Vc.

mf

13

Bar.

a li-lac is stuffed in-to the air;

Vc.

17

Bar.

mp

the last leaves of night

Vc.

p *mp*

22

Bar.

are ripped out of this blind world by a stiff breeze.

Vc.

CYCLE OF DUST

2

James Tate

Eric Shanfield

♩=152 **4x** *f*

Baritone

Violoncello

f *III* *II*

f *3* The stroll-ers are one un-end-ing

5

Bar.

stroll-er

3 all Spring on the tip of a

Vc.

9

Bar.

bud - less branch

II *III*

Vc.

ff

13

ff *3*

Bar.

They drink slumped o - ver in the dark

Vc.

18

Bar.

graz - ing the__ cold teeth of the chi - sel

Vc.

22

Bar.

Then you are no

Vc.

mf

26

Bar.

vir - gin a lit - tle ma - ple leaf on a chain

Vc.

mp

30

Bar.

spark - les his star - dust on a stran - ger

Vc.

p

CYCLE OF DUST

3

James Tate

Eric Shanfield

♩=120

Baritone

Violoncello

pizz.

mp

Men get down on their knees and

5

Bar.

Vc.

arco

mf

search the toy ri-ver it is day-time the car-na-tion is

10

Bar.

Vc.

pizz.

p

bub - bl-ing the ow-ls are sleep - ing on a

15

Bar.

Vc.

arco

mp

dis - tant black pla - net A scarf is

20

Bar.

Vc.

pizz.

pulled quick - ly through the veins of a co-vered

24

Bar.

Vc.

p

mp

bridge

CYCLE OF DUST

4

James Tate

Eric Shanfield

$\text{♩} = 100$

Baritone

Violoncello

3 *f*

Bar.

Vc.

Feed - ing_ those pi - geons each spoon - ful_ of stone eyes of a doe_ when

come sopra

8

Bar.

Vc.

no - bo - dy was a - round_ say in an emp - ty sub - way af - ter mid

13

Bar.

Vc.

- night like a ba - by_ on fi - re_

come sopra

18

Bar.

Vc.

kicked off the edge_

23

Bar.

Vc.

to in - di - cate

come sopra

29

Bar.

Vc.

there was no sign or wise man

34

Bar.

Vc.

sing - ing a

ff

39

Bar.

Vc.

bu - oy of blood is tossed to the far shore

ff

43

Bar.

Vc.

CYCLE OF DUST

5

James Tate

Eric Shanfield

♩=104 Pulsing

Baritone

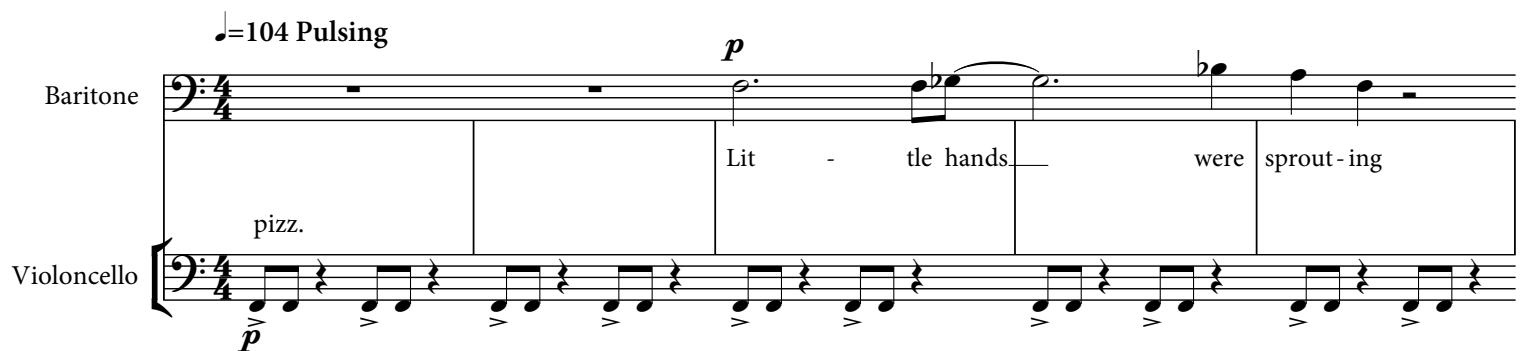
p

Lit - tle hands were sprout - ing

Violoncello

pizz.

p

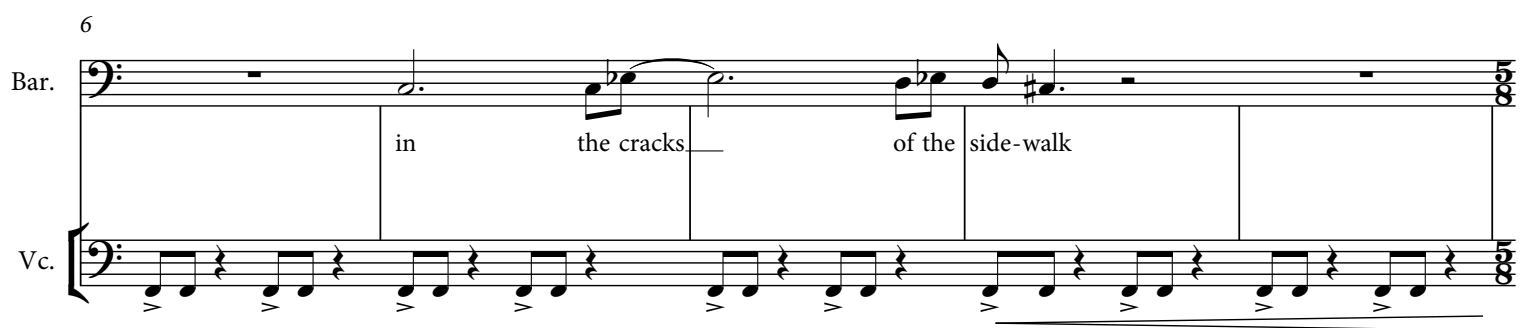


6

Bar.

in the cracks of the side-walk

Vc.



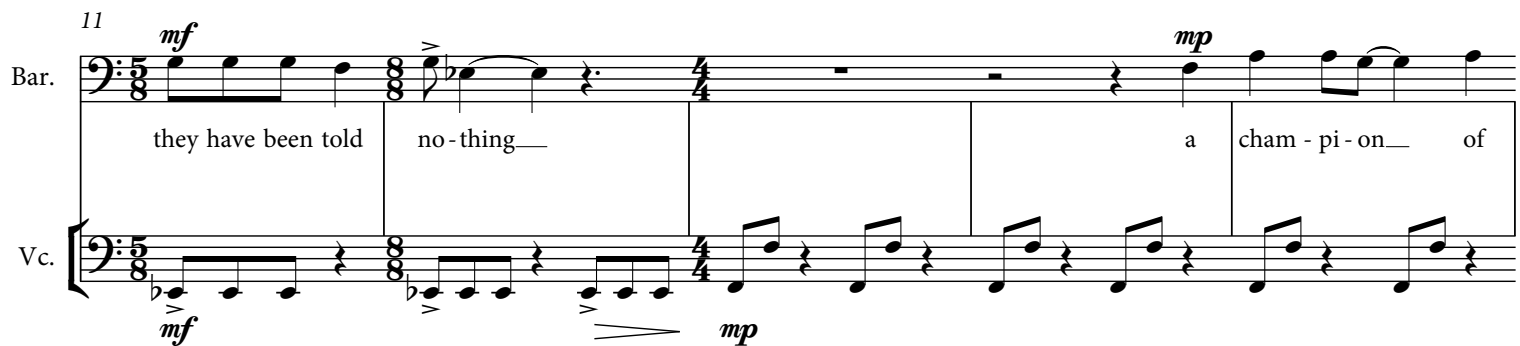
11

Bar.

mf they have been told no - thing — *mp* a cham - pi - on — of

Vc.

mf *mp*



16

Bar.

mf kiss - es — *f* some - where wri - ting my own fil - thy e - pi - taph —

Vc.

mf *f*



21 *mf*

Bar. *mf*

that fa-mous limp grey ray of light

Vc. *mf* *f*

27 *f*

Bar. *f*

jack - knives mid - word in - to a world with - out alps

Vc.

32 *mf* *mp*

Bar. *mf* *mp*

but I have no fea-thers, he said

Vc. *mf* *mp*

CYCLE OF DUST

6

James Tate

Eric Shanfield

$\text{♩} = 108$

Baritone

Violoncello

con sord.

p *6* *6* *6* *mp* *6* *6* *p* *6* *6*

3

Bar.

Vc.

6 *6* *mf* *6* *6* *6* *6* *p* *6* *6*

5

Bar.

Vc.

p *5* *mp* *p*

When you put on your night - gown to

6 *6* *6* *mp* *6* *6* *6* *p* *6* *6*

7

Bar.

Vc.

mf *3* *p*

get off the ground the

6 *6* *mf* *6* *6* *6* *6* *p* *6* *6*

9 *mf*

Bar. *mf*

smoke twirls

Vc. *mp* *p*

11 *mp*

Bar. *mp*

Vc. *mf* *mp*

13 *mf*

Bar. *mf*

in am - ber te - le - phones

Vc. *mf*

16 *f*

Bar. *f*

Chi - a - ro - scu - ro of fos - sils and di - ving birds

Vc. *f*

19

Bar. *mp*
the

Vc.

21

Bar. way I run from their embrace

Vc. *mp*

23

Bar. *p*
in - to a fo - reign po -

Vc. *p* *mp*

25

Bar. *mp*
li - ti - cal pa - per

Vc. *p* *mf*

27

Bar. *p*

tat - - - - - tooed

Vc. *p*

29

Bar. *f*

on a

Vc. *f*

30

Bar. *f*

false vir - - - - - gin's

Vc. *f*

31

Bar. *ff*

cunt

→ sul pont.

norm. sub.

Vc. *ff* *p sub.*

33

Bar. *p* 3

The ba - zoo - ka - man

Vc. 6 6 5 5

35

Bar. chimed the first kite of the day

Vc. 6 6 5 5

37

Bar. *mp* 3

blind - fold the

Vc. 6 6 5 5 *fp*

39

Bar. *mf* *mp*

birds in slip - pers of se - cond-hands

Vc. *fp* *fp* *fp* *fp* *f* *p* pizz. via sord.

CYCLE OF DUST

7

James Tate

Eric Shanfield

♩=108 Resolute

Baritone

f

How will it be next time

Violoncello

f

4

Bar.

on the cor - ner of a sy - lum street

Vc.

7

Bar.

a wo - man draped o - ver a bal - cony in the

Vc.

10

ff

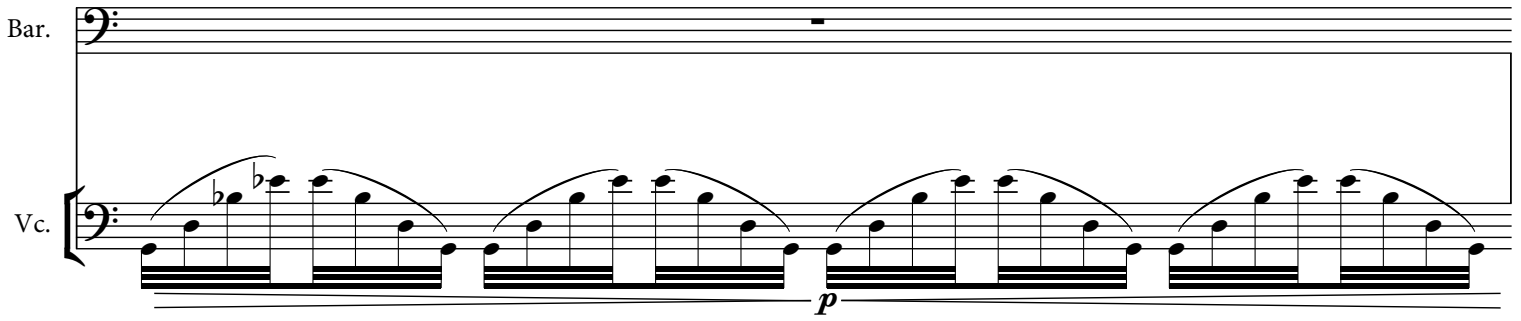
Bar.

sky

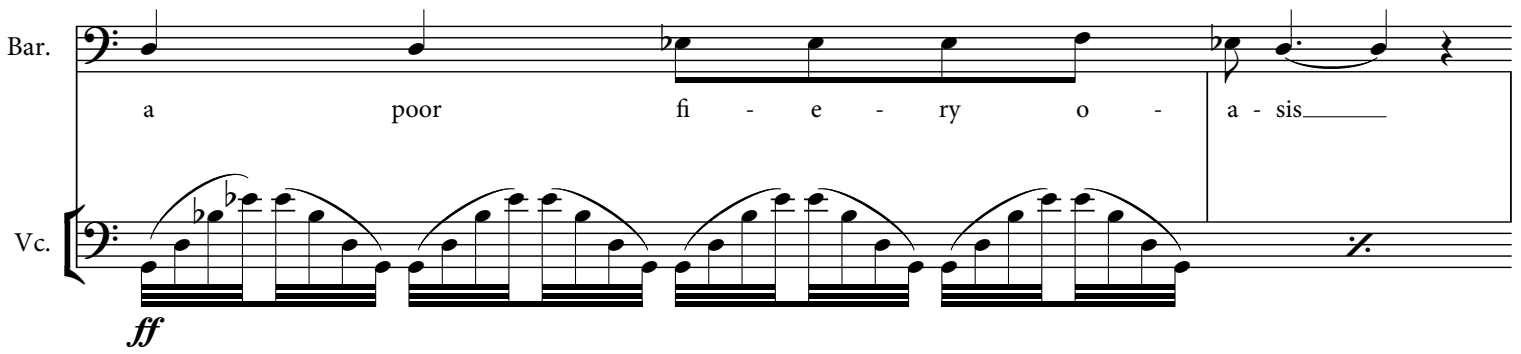
Vc.

ff

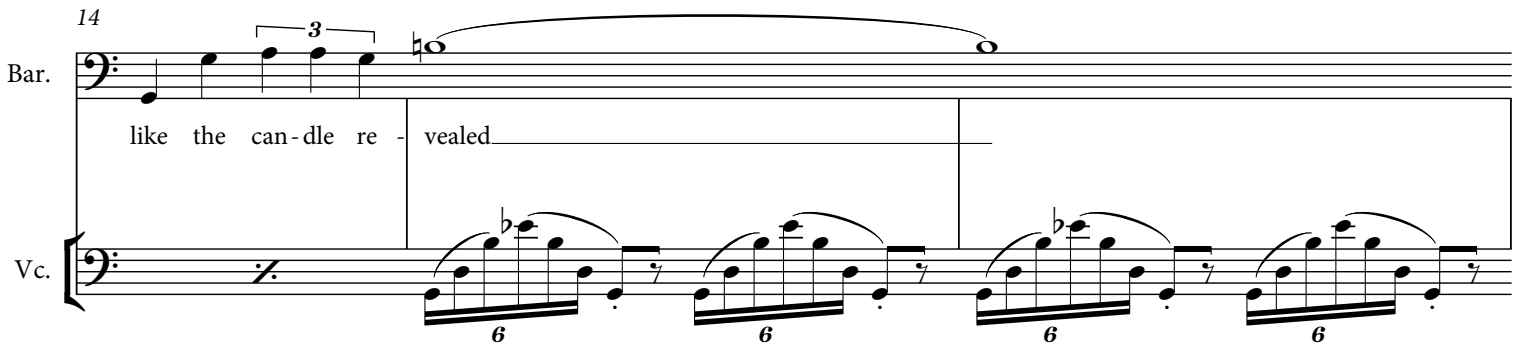
11

Bar. 

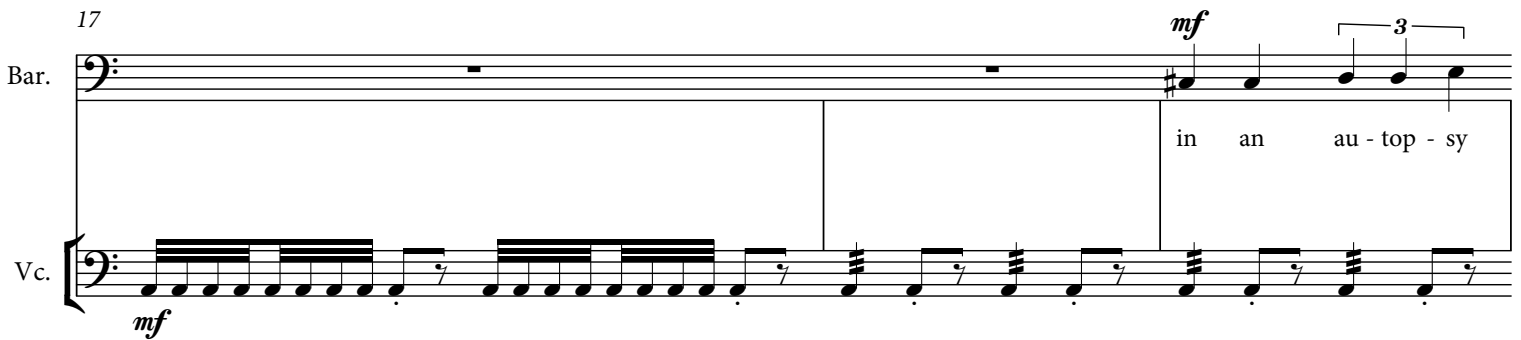
12

Bar. 

14

Bar. 

17

Bar. 

20

Bar. *p*

where the vege - ta - bles_ cry out

Vc. flaut. *p*

25

Bar. *p*

on wolf pit road in the ver - te - brae of her bright ma-laise

Vc. *p*

29

Bar. *pp*

the night was clocked bo - dies be - came

Vc. norm. *p > ppp*

33

Bar. *p*

co - vered with dust they looked like sta - tues

Vc. *p > ppp* *fp*

CYCLE OF DUST

8

James Tate

Eric Shanfield

♩=116 Sighing

Baritone

mf

With a blood-y eye

Violoncello

Fall (gliss.) slowly off note, sighing (appx. ♩ length)

mf

5

Bar.

the egg slid from me - mo - ry:

Vc.

IV

mp

9

Bar.

mp

don't drop your tooth in the del - ta, old e - vil dead o - ver there.

Vc.

13

Bar.

mf

Change of chair was an il - lu - sion,

Vc.

mf *p* *mp* *p* *mf* *p*

17

Bar. *f*

Vc. *f*

pins in them, as if to say they are build-ing a gui-tar

19

Bar. *p*

Vc. *p* III *mf*

with strings of milk for the dog to prac-tice in his whis-key

21

Bar. *mf* *p*

Vc. *p*

from here to there I'll ne-ver go from here to there I'll

sul tasto

25

Bar. *mp*

Vc. *mp* norm. *8va*

ne-ver go de-stroy-ing the de- sert

CYCLE OF DUST

9

James Tate

Eric Shanfield

$\text{♩} = 138$

4x

Baritone

Violoncello

f

Af - ter - noon_ with a

4

Bar.

Vc.

ff

f

ran - dom stran - ger in a ran - dom

7

Bar.

Vc.

4x

ta - xi gone down the drain in his bath - tub,

10

Bar.

Vc.

p

p

so - li - tude un - furls his

13 *ff*

Bar. rib - - - bon of black

Vc. *ff*

18

Bar. light

Vc. *fff* *mf*

23 *mf*

Bar. with the same sa - vage smile,

Vc.

26 *f*

Bar. per - fumed sna - tches of a neigh - bor's par ty be -

Vc. *f* pizz.

CYCLE OF DUST - 9

22

30

Bar. 

fore the i - ma - gi - na - ry swim - ming pool, be - neath which a so - li - ta - ry mag - got_

Vc. 


35

Bar. 

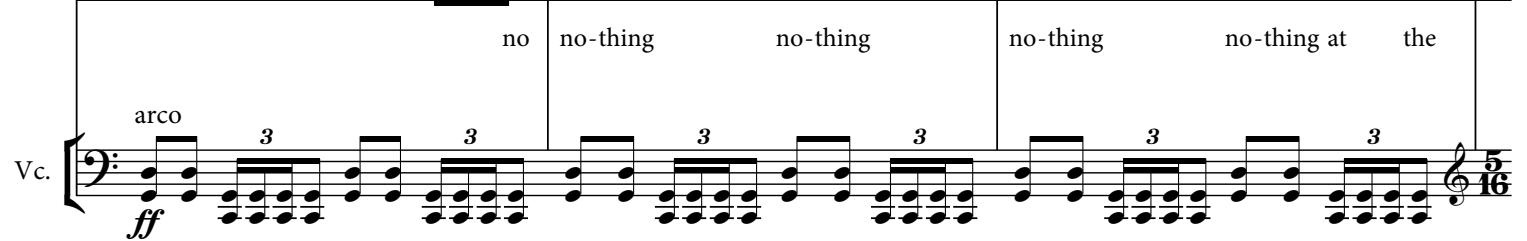
the keep - er of the keep - er the keep - er of the keep - er

Vc. 


39 *ff savagely*

Bar. 

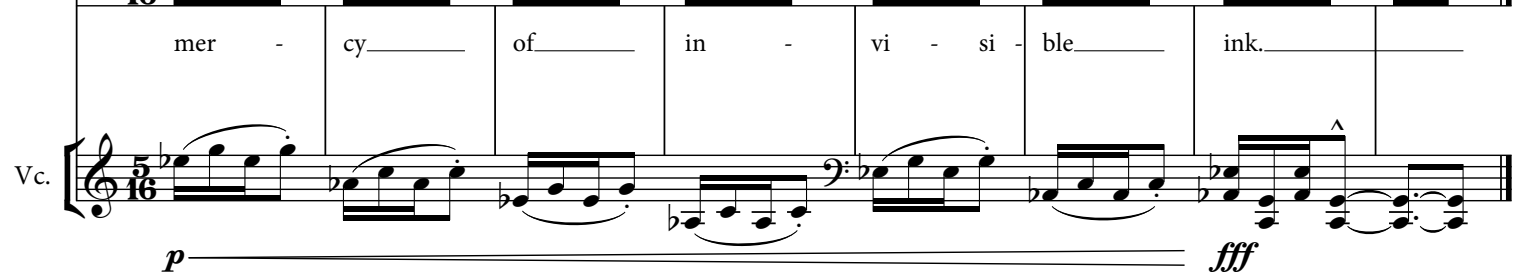
no no - thing no - thing no - thing no - thing at the

Vc. *arco* *ff* 

42 *ff sempre*

Bar. 

mer - cy of in - vi - si - ble ink.

Vc. *p* 

fff