

IMPOSSIBLE BUT NECESSARY TRANSLATION¹

by Chris Tysh

the compulsion to descend
the text
rung by rung
glide down its shiny banister
as if one could
now and then
cancel out that irreducible foreignness
lodged within
While we may slip
the noose of an idiom or two
“La lutte des classes, ça déchire”
Air France mechanics and stewards demonstrate under the windows
of the National Assembly
against the planned layoffs of 2900 jobs
You notice
la gauche caviar (limo liberal, champagne socialist)

¹ traduction impossible et nécessaire (179)

consoles itself from behind the flimsy barricade
that divides the social space
like traffic lanes in bright yellow

The body's deep disquiet

across limbs
roughened and veined
rises like an arch
metaphor
about the pretty month of May (*le joli mois de mai*)
and its singing tomorrows (*ses lendemains qui chantent*)

It is tempting to say
that I am translation
opalescent décolletage
ditch or channel

bearing the imprint

of other lines
other mouths
"the art of citing
without quotation marks" (Walter Benjamin, *Arcades*, 458)

I WHO AM NOT EVEN FRENCH²

by Chris Tysh

don't protest

it's a fact

we're always brought back to the judas

hole

of where we 're from

crystalline form of a symptom

in back of the throat

a slight contraction

holds itself in reserve

insinuates

apartness

a patch of ice and drizzle

there's that rain again

on the outskirts of town

deserted at this hour of the night

the wet avenue appears

mouillée de larmes

as if it could write

its own elegy

We are told

that on the first day of school in 1942

you are expelled

from lycée Ben Aknoun at El-Biar (Algiers)

it is agreed

this will kick off a chain of specters

that mob your work

a path

thick with mourning

Overlooking the harbor at Stykkishólmur

on the west coast of Iceland

The Library of Water (Roni Horn, 2007)

inscribes its weather

on a rubber floor

transparent and still

the glass columns

smooth mirrors

at the very center of the world (Horn cit.)

Poet and playwright, **Chris Tysh** is the author of several collections of poetry and drama. Her latest publications are *Our Lady of the Flowers, Echoic* (Les Figues, 2013); *Molloy: The Flip Side* (BlazeVox, 2012) and *Night Scales: A Fable for Klara K* (United Artists, 2010). She holds fellowships from The National Endowment for the Arts and the Kresge Foundation.