

Chris Tysh

How is one to hit on the right tone with this fucking tongue?¹

from the tyranny
of nerves
that which stretches
stagnant
pool water
at the base of the spine
a trellised archway
between ribs
notorious
&
intrinsic
language's failure
to cover its object
without skipping
paradigmatic banks
strangest of sounds
across the surf

¹ Comment veux-tu trouver le ton, avec cette putain de langue? (171)

we have exaggerated
the dialectician's stance
or rubbed salt
into the wound's
inscrutable letters

This is not to say

as Joshua Redman (tenor sax)
and The Bad Plus
let us cross
the dark wood
with a cavalcade of
notes
below the key
Having said a mouthful
you exit the text
on the far side
with the faintest time-
stamp inside your wrist

Coats and scarves come loose

What a workout under the dresses ²

à vrai dire

the post-coit cigarette

shot

like the half-open venetian blinds

marks the end of an era

a cinematic trope

we absorb

along noir's cinched waists

and padded shoulders

laid bare

by that couldn't-kill-a-fly

misogyny

One would be hard

pressed

to outdo

James M. Cain's opening salvo

as Frank Chambers

a semi-illiterate drifter

narrates his own

ravishment scene:

Except for the shape

she really wasn't any raving beauty

but she had a sulky look to her

and her lips stuck out in a way

that made me want

to mash them for her

(The Postman Always Rings Twice, 1934)

On the threshold

of sleep

a tingling sensation

in my ear

² mais quelle gymnastique sous les robes (161)

of the day's bounty all that's left
in the bureau of lost sighs

I'm the *girl under an old-fashioned*

duress (Anne Waldman, Fast Speaking Woman)