

# OUR LADY OF THE FLOWERS, ECHOIC

CHRIS TYSH

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Our Lady of the Flowers, Echoic  
Chris Tysh  
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Contact: Andrew Wessels  
[awessels@lesfigures.com](mailto:awessels@lesfigures.com)  
323.734.4732  
<http://www.lesfigures.com>

In **OUR LADY OF THE FLOWERS, ECHOIC**, Chris Tysh newly translates *Notre-Dame-des-Fleurs*, compressing Jean Genet's disturbing 1943 novel into cuttngly charged verse. In the blue hours of the Parisian underworld, pimps, drag queens, and butchers in bloody aprons are joined by Divine, Mignon Dainty-Feet, and the young assassin Our Lady, three saintly figures in a forbidden realm of the senses. Tysh cuts **OUR LADY OF THE FLOWERS, ECHOIC** into a ghostly song that traces the path from prose to lyric where Divine switches gender and names "as if passing under a scarlet awning." Suturing sexual otherness to an aching of gendered expectations, Tysh's cadences embrace postmodernism's emblematic penchant for all manner of appropriation, and recycling finds a radical iteration in the fashion of fairies, queens, and stool pigeons.

**OUR LADY OF THE FLOWERS, ECHOIC** is published as part of the TrenchArt: Logistics Series, with a preface by Robert Glück and cover art by Alice Könitz. TrenchArt is an annual series of new literature, selected and edited to create a textual conversation between some of the most dynamic and exciting writing today—and tomorrow.

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## ABOUT CHRIS TYSH

**Chris Tysh** is the author of several collections of poetry and drama, including, most recently, *Night Scales* (United Artists, 2010) and *Molloy: The Flip Side* (BlazeVox, 2012). A recipient of fellowships from the NEA and the Kresge Foundation, she lives in Detroit and teaches at Wayne State University. *Our Lady of the Flowers, Echoic* is the second volume of her three-part project, *Hotel des Archives*, inspired by the French novels of Samuel Beckett, Jean Genet, and Marguerite Duras.

## PRAISE FOR OUR LADY OF THE FLOWERS, ECHOIC

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“Chris Tysh’s poem adds a chapter to the practice of appropriation in that it conflates reading and writing, the way a cover (to a song) conflates listening to the original and making one’s version. Tysh does not answer the plot but plays it again on her own instrument, which is her poetry, or more particularly her stanza. The writer/audience dynamics organized around the performance of self that characterize appropriation are replaced by a sense of vertigo before the act of creation.

–from the preface by Robert Glück

“In 1967 the middle-aged married men of the Australian Customs Department seized my copy of Genet's *Our Lady of the Flowers* and burnt it to cinders. Nearly half a century later, US poet Chris Tysh has brought it back from that incineration, petal by petal, stained and transfigured. She has taken the French prose of *Our Lady of the Flowers* and retranslated it with all its monstrous selfishness into a pale and glowing poetry. There is no philosophy or politics in Genet, just specific acts of thievery and brutality, as well as cupids and altars and betrayals and masturbation made luminous by conversion into metaphor. Tysh has transubstantiated even this. This volume of verse, played over by a flickering ghostly flame, is perhaps the book that Genet meant to write, had he the gift for verse, before the Parisian intellectuals got to him. From pulp novels to the angels in heaven, from sodom to the royal family, from ‘gloom's infernal ruckus’ to a silent field of flowers, Tysh drags her wounded poem.”

–John Tranter

