Sasja Janssen

Putting on my species

translated from the Dutch by
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Shearsman Books
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‘that I am always and in everything helpless, powerless
and as replaceable as an atom’
Willem Frederik Hermans, *Beyond Sleep*
ENOUGH POEMS ABOUT ME
Today I went crazy.  
You should see it some time.  
You should see it.  
Comes from all this poetry maybe.  
Yes, this poetry, everything is staged.  
Enough poems about me.  
Yes, enough, done with the staging.  
They’re also the full words, the actual days.  
The real ones, you should feel them, what use they are.  
It’s because of the city, my love.  
Were you intimate.  
Were you secretive.  
Everything was there.  
And the landscape, it groped so fingerishly in your cavities.  
They were twigs that grew inside my head.  
Did you live behind the hours.  
Yes, I knew the causes without their consequences.  
Did you think about madness, did you love him.  
I was so very fond of him.  
I couldn’t do without.  
I wept when I laughed, I laughed when I wept.  
You like to see that.  
Yes, you should know.  
You know.  
But it’s almost over.  
Yes, delusion always finds a new love, so greedily  
he adores.  
But come, first take a look.
AND YET IT BEGINS
There was someone someone was
spread into the black sun like starlings made of dust
where she
in the tingling, buckling, in balloons that gracefully touched
a person was born of her own poison
and her holes burned the seething.

She cased darkness that fell into itself, fell
and at the same time existed, glare, profusion, hysteria around the edges
also those things without blood, the people their thoughts hornlike
until they broke meaning and played dead
in their bodies to make her beginning a beginning.
At first they were made of burning stars.

Someone made gender of them and like the world they mated manically. And sex was made
she was her mouth her anus which she came out of, as opening as wound
that he had made bounce with that unusually hard thing his tipsy member
and his navel with her fingers.
It made you think of them even before the flesh was aware.

Then they had shed their hot skins.
The jawfish they loved more deeply because they gave skeletons and in the jaws behind the gills where biblical butterflies began language that burst wherever it could gushed out of their holes, moral oral, who says they don’t pray to themselves we like to talk our bones together.
Her tribes, the founders and their wild ones, the children animals and the fruit, burst and green the skies the trees with voices of sonar ants with lines, writing.

Her beings: the touchable and the happy, the cunning and those with landsickness the entertained, the made, the maimed and their creations the rulers that wove their veins metallically, the odd one in death’s grip. Coming ready or not.