

Sasja Janssen

*Putting on
my species*

translated from the Dutch by

Michele Hutchison

Shearsman Books

First published in the United Kingdom in 2020 by
Shearsman Books Ltd
PO Box 4239
Swindon
SN3 9FN

Shearsman Books Ltd Registered Office
30–31 St. James Place, Mangotsfield, Bristol BS16 9JB
(*this address not for correspondence*)

www.shearsman.com

ISBN 978-1-84861-705-6

Originally published in Dutch as *Ik trek mijn species aan*
copyright © Sasja Janssen,
by Em Querido's Uitgeverij, Amsterdam, 2014

Introduction and translations copyright © Michele Hutchison, 2020

The right of Sasja Janssen to be identified as the author of
this work, and of Michele Hutchison to be identified as the
translator thereof, has been asserted by them in accordance
with the Copyrights, Designs and Patents Act of 1988.
All rights reserved.

This book was published with the support of
the Dutch Foundation for Literature.

Nederlands
letterenfonds
dutch foundation
for literature

Contents

| | |
|---|----|
| Enough poems about me / | 9 |
| And yet it begins / | 13 |
| Putting on my species / | 21 |
| I am my sex / | 29 |
| The Stitches / | 35 |
| Because I must travel / | 41 |
| I can't take it, that fuss about life and death / | 47 |
| Ways of / | 57 |
| Fabulate me / | 65 |
| Enough poems about me / | 69 |

‘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 metallicity, the odd one
in death's grip. Coming ready or not.