

*Sarah Stanton*

# Swarm

Hush, this is a city of hisses;

a monument feting the scraping chill  
of brick on bone and a lonely, lonely tide  
tumbled and still. And this is a hill in winter,  
a silent, skittering bundle of clouds collapsing  
like bees on the back of the world.

Those sap-happy days have faded,  
faded with the drunken charge of love;  
I remember couples face up in the pale grass  
belting classics to the moon, that jeering crowd  
of humanity breathless for a second, making passion  
out of small parts, making room—

and then the snap-drizzle of rain,  
the whispering of gunshots through fog,  
a letter-opener taking open the sky. We were static,  
a stampede to the water, our feet making mud  
of the highway and hope of the sound:

there were no songs then, no moon,  
just the slap of our soles on the river, the groan  
of the bees. We sank into the bedrock without a smack  
or a moan, our breath gobbled up by the tide—  
and behind us, the city whistled a dirge,  
and shut up shop, and made room.

*Sarah Stanton* is a translator, editor and writer from Western Australia who has spent the past three years living and working in Beijing. She has been published in a number of journals, including *Clarkesworld*, *Hunger Mountain*, *Seizure*, *Vinyl Poetry*, *Bluestem*, and *Cha*. Find her online at [theduckopera.com](http://theduckopera.com) or tweeting at @theduckopera.