

*Stewart Sanderson***Adder**

Ethereal, she shivers
through the wet heather –
woken by our footsteps
where she lay sleeping
in the sun-warmed centre
of the path, uncoiling up
the hill like a sheep-wide snake.

Umbrage taken, she gives
us a dangerous hiss
as she departs, her voice
almost a wildcat's spat
displeasure, but with something
older – a cold-blooded anger –
writhing underneath it.

Fumbling for my phone
too late to take a picture
of what's gone – the frame
filling only with moorland – I feel
as though I'd just stumbled
and reached out to stop
my fall on an electric fence.

Eagle

On days when the weight
of each grey minute
gets too much, I'll let
the memory of it
float back out
over the summit
of Ben Dorain: a sight
to be wondered at
as it shifted its great
wings and cut
away into slate-
coloured clouds, grown fat
with rain as yet
unfallen; shot
with strips of sunlight
where the spectrum split.

Juniper

If you like, this too can be a poem –
a sprig of juniper
plucked in the Cairngorms
in the nineteenth century
and currently taped
to a card in the Smithsonian's
cavernous basement.

Tonight, as the city
gets drunk on artisan gin
let's raise a glass to this
desiccated fragment
of a tree forgotten
in the rain-dark to the north.

Then tomorrow morning
as a thousand bedrooms
simmer, the spirit dissolving
into memory less ether
why not take the car out
to the Trossachs and cut
a branch of the same?

Let it lie for a century
and a half, its green leaves turning
brown, berries once pregnant
with intoxication
shrivelled to peppercorn
spheres, aging as verses
do, gaining new meanings
from the dust they gather.

Seraphim

Quarrymen, delving
in Devonian sandstone
would happen upon

angelic shadows –
fossils which reminded them
of carvings they'd seen

on old churches built
before the Reformation
swept such things away.

Therefore they named them
seraphim, the burning ones
perhaps assuming

these creatures swimming
through red rock were evidence
of Lucifer's fall

being what remained
of those who rebelled with him
and were hounded out

of heaven, tumbling
headlong through the atmosphere
into the Earth's crust.

Stewart Sanderson is a poet from the West of Scotland, currently based in the West Midlands, where as well as writing he works as a Local Authority Arts Development Officer. The recipient of an Eric Gregory Award and three times shortlisted for the Edwin Morgan Poetry Award, he has also held Robert Louis Stevenson and Jessie Kesson Fellowships. He has performed at festivals across the UK, notably Aye Write!, the BBC's Contains Strong Language, the Edinburgh International Book Festival, the Ledbury Poetry Festival and St. Anza, as well as travelling to North Africa and Russia as part of British Council translation exchanges. Widely published in magazines, he is the author of two pamphlets, both published by Tapsalteerie: *Fios* (2015) and *An Offering* (2018). His first full-length collection, *The Sleep Road*, will be published by Tapsalteerie in October 2021.