

# Meet Nan Shepherd

- ▶ “Seeking true relationship with Earth, both physically and spiritually, is central to the Great Search of this moment in time.”
  - ▶ -John Philip Newell



# Cairngorms Mountains, Scotland



# Mountains as Light

“Light is their making as well as their substance.”

“We, too, shine with with this same spiritual substance that is on fire.”

-the bush burning and not consumed (sacred fire of our essence)





# Literary Works

## Three novels

- ▶ *The Quarry Wood* (1928)
- ▶ *The Weatherhouse* (1930)
- ▶ *A Pass in the Grampians* (1933)

Book of Poetry – *In the Cairngorms* (1934)

Non-fiction: *The Living Mountain* (1940's, published 1977)

Posthumously Compiled and Published: *Wild Geese: A Collection of Nan Shepherd's Writing* (2019 by Galileo Publishers)



# 1945 – *The Living Mountain* -- 1977

Describes her relationship with the Cairngorms Mountains as a love affair.

“All are aspects of one entity. The disintegrating rock, the nurturing rain, the quickening sun, the root, the bird – all are one.”

“...finest book ever written on nature and landscape In Britain.”

*-The Guardian*



# A living mountain

- ▶ “one and indivisible” – oneness and interrelatedness of all life forms, elements of earth, wind, fire, and water; we all form Earth
- ▶ “pilgrimage” – longing to be in its presence. “It is a journey into Being, for as I penetrate more deeply into the mountain’s life, I penetrate also into my own.”

“I am not out of myself, in myself. I am”

“Knowing another is endless....The thing to be known grows with the knowing.”

“Haste can do nothing with these hills.”



# “Pure intimacy”

➤ Sleeping with the mountains

“One neither thinks nor desires, nor remembers, but dwells in pure intimacy with the tangible world.”

“At no other moment am I sunk quite so deep into its life. I have let go myself.”  
-not knowing just with the mind, but whole-body being



Sunk quite so deep into its life...







# The clear simplicity of the senses

-smell and sound

► "I am like a dog. Smells excite me."

"...[birch after rainfall is] fruity like old brandy. And on a wet warm day, one can be as good as drunk with it."

"Such silence is not a mere negation of sound. It is like a new element."

"Gales crash with the angry boom of angry seas; one can hear the air shattering itself upon rock

...of the birdsong at twilight, the sound of the infinite coming through the "small perishable throat" of a blackbird.



# Sight



- ▶ “How can I number the worlds to which the eye gives me entry, the world of light, of colour, of shape, of shadow.”

“From its February purple to its golden fall...the birch is a study in color that provides endless delight.”

“Our grey land, our grey skies, hold poised within them a thousand shades of colour.”

# Birch a study in color





# Touch



➤ “The whole sensitive skin is played upon, the whole body...”

”I run my hand through juniper or birches for the joy of the wet drops trickling over the palm or walk through long heather to feel its wetness on my naked legs.”

“...our moment of amazed beatitude.”

-it is a love affair that she invites us to know in our own lives, to open to our own shining moments of ecstasy with the natural world, that we too may deepen our passion for Earth.



# A journey into Being

Exodus 3:14 – “I am who I am.”

“I am. This is the final grace accorded from the mountain.”



# Irradiated – Enchanted Radiance

- ▶ “pure and subtle fire” that glows deep in the life of trees and brings them to bud in the spring.

We are “irradiated” by an ever-living fire that burns deep in the core of our being. Each one of us...is a “unique and eternally intangible self.”

“Moments of revelation” – when we fleetingly see the light that is deep in all things, this comes as a gift.

- ▶ ...the invitation to listen again to Earth that we may hear deep within it the source of our life and the hope of our well-being.



## A Poem from Achiltibuie

*Here on the edge of Europe I stand on the edge of being.  
Floating on light, isle after isle takes wing.  
Burning blue are the peaks, rock that is older than thought,  
And the sea burns blue- or is it the air between? -  
They merge, they take one another upon them.  
I have fallen through time and found the enchanted world.  
Where all is beginning.  
The obstinate rocks  
Are a fire of blue, a pulse of power, a beat  
In energy, the sea dissolves  
And I too melt, am timeless, a pulse of light.*

-Nan Shepherd