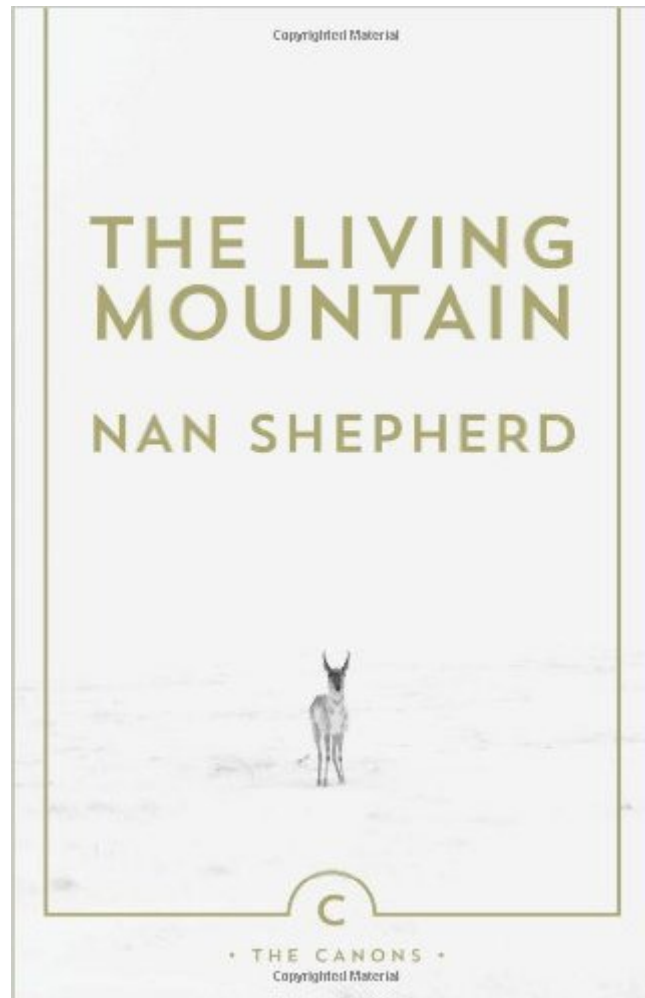


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The Living Mountain (Canons)



Synopsis

A classic eulogy to the beauty and magnificence of the mountains—A lyrical testament in praise of the Cairngorms, this prose meditation testifies to the author's love of the hills and her knowledge of them in all their moods. First published in 1977, 30 years after it was written, it is a work deeply rooted in Nan Shepherd's knowledge of the natural world, and a poetic and philosophical meditation on our longing for high and holy places. Drawing on different perspectives of the mountain environment, Shepherd makes the familiar strange and the strange awe-inspiring. Her sensitivity and powers of observation put her into the front rank of nature writing.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Nan Shepherd was a college professor, novelist (3 published works) and poet. This book is the last work she published, towards the end of her life. It is a paean to her love of the countryside where she spent most of her life, The Cairn Gorm mountain range in Northern Scotland. Brilliant, lyrical, a great tribute to the human spirit and Man's relationship to his (and her) environment. This belongs on every bookshelf, next to Gilbert White's "The Natural History of Selborne." This edition contains an overly long Foreword that attempts to tell us that we are going to enjoy reading Nan Shepherd's words. Skip it and just read her words. Or read it AFTER reading her words.

Nan Shepherd achieves in the Living Mountain, an irradiation of the 'common' into the 'universal'. She is a friend of the mountains and visits them like a friend. She sees the mountain tops

as eddies on the plateau surface. This is a pilgrimage of mountain worship. As a 'see-er' her empiricism is mystical. Her mineral self gains entry into interior recesses, cavities, hollows, chasms. She sees the earth as the earth must see itself: this is pure intellectual knowledge springing from the senses and the surprise of finding out from long acquaintance, the body itself thinks, knowledge is felt. Our bodies' motor-functions make us precognitively aware of the world, our subjectivity is embedded in the flesh of the world. 'Place and mind interpenetrate until the nature of both are altered'. Our contact with nature has become enervated from this being in the world. Her book is a hymn to 'living all the way through': to touching, smelling, tasting, and hearing the world. 'Matter is impregnated with mind', and the world exists in a continuous 'active mood...the grammar of now'. Her phenomenological attention and awareness 'widen the domain of being in the vastness of non-being'. I cannot recommend this book highly enough. This book is a primer for the senses and the reading of the written word, bathed in a crystal glow of the elements, saturated with Being. Her descriptions of running water, its sounds and colour, coldness and power, are superb; her beautiful depiction of frost, ice and snow, the forms they all take, the effects of wind, cloud, sun, light and water on, with blizzards, snow-blindness and storms; the effects of air, rain and light on the mountains, the effects of haze and mist are truly wondrous; her descriptions of the rock of the granite boss being 'red', its feldspar 'pink', crags, boulders and scree are 'weathered to a cold grey', but the rock where newly slashed or under water is red. When her book opens up to plants, animals and birds, we truly see the aspects of the one entity, the living mountain, "love pursued with fervour is one of the roads of knowledge", reminding you of MacDermid's poetry or Matthiessen's Snow Leopard. There is a map of the Cairngorms plateau and a helpful glossary of Scottish words. This book can be got for as little as £3 if you do without Macfarlane's introduction.

Nan Shepherd's book about her lifelong love of the Cairngorm mountains is quite marvellous. I was drawn to it by reading Wild Places by one of my favourite authors, Robert MacFarlane. He knew & admired Nan Shepherd. She writes with great passion, knowledge & experience. Even if mountains & walking do not interest you, I believe you will enjoy getting to know the author & seeing that really experiencing & loving one landscape can be deeply fulfilling, deeply interesting.

If you have never "walked" in the Cairngorms or want to be re-aquainted with the experience then this is the book. It is not a walker or climber's guide in the traditional sense but presents you with the author's reaction to every possible outdoor stimulus; Nan Shepherd takes you right into the heart of

the high Cairngorm plateau.

I was inspired to buy this little treasure after reading Robert Macfarlane's "Old Ways". I find it just as special in the descriptions, lyricism and depth of knowledge as Mr. Macfarlane's recommendation. I highly recommend it as a personal memoir of nature and place.

If you have ever visited the Cairngorms, you will learn more about them in this book. The intimacy which Nan Shepherd has with these mountains is delightful. A wonderful book to have.

one of the most poetical prose books I have read ..She has a keen naturalist intelligence that imparts a great sense of place. i AM SO GLAD SHE PUBLISHED

It's a wonderful, inspiring read. The edition is a little flimsy. It deserves to be in a hardcover.

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