

*The Shortsighted Can't Love Mountains**

It began a long time ago with a creak that became a crackle then a craze. Something snapped. Thick skin rubbed against thicker skin, certain nerves were exposed. Folds formed. Limbs stretched out glad for the space and the space made way. Time too. Joints ached under the friction. Things got warmer, even hot. Pressure built. Sensor points shuddered. Soon bowels started rumbling while bellies churned. It took forever and ever.

Until, finally, the face split. Lips weathered and cracked, black opened its mouth. There was a lot of smoke. The tongue licked and spat gas. It was a thrilling sight because that gas was *stuff*.

Radical stuff: hydrogen, oxygen, nitrogen, carbon dioxide, mercury, argon, helium, neon, methane, and sulphur. States shifted and stabilized: gas became liquid became solid.

Matter happened. A flame flashed against the night sky—it was called *colour!*

And with that, suddenly, a world was born. What was once interior and private became exterior and public. It was catastrophic—not tragic, but *ecstatic*—from the Greek κατά (katá, “down, against”) + στρέφω (stréphō, “I turn”). The earth turned upside down, its insides tumbled inside out. It gave us ground to walk on. It offered faith.

Like all affairs, it didn't happen overnight and it wasn't a onetime occurrence. Over and over destruction collided with construction. Together they made mountains and together they scraped them away. Accidents happened. The weight of the world rested on their shoulders. Some material was lost, forgotten, dismissed, washed downstream. Fragments of objectivity mingled with the remains of subjectivity. There were anomalies.

Thus, in order to determine a kind of predictive methodology, they sought chronology as a structure of understanding. But, because events kept amassing, like Klee's Angel, they could only register shock.

Shock is an afterimage. Its presence made visible in waves of blinding recognition that this moment of annihilation is simultaneously an act of creation.

* Nan Shepherd, *The Living Mountain: A Celebration of the Cairngorm Mountains of Scotland* (1977)