

However, if all this makes Evola sound like some kind of sanctimonious/vegetarian/holier-than-thou type, let me correct that impression. Although he carried a copy of the Bhagavad Gita on his climbs, he also carried a bottle of whiskey. I admire his life in both worlds: sacred and profane, transcendent and imminent. Even when he admits to the pleasures and diversions of this world, it is through a religious perspective. The best example of this is his tale of how he and his buddies get drunk one night in an alpine hut. In the middle of the night they walk out onto a nearby frozen lake in the dark. He theorizes that the lake must have been going through some temperature metamorphosis, because it starts to crack and break up violently when they are out in the middle of it: "To feel all of a sudden under one's feet a roar that grows into a loud booming noise, which is then echoed by the mountain, is almost like hearing the voice of the earth itself." Very few could hear such an other-worldly noise and yet hear the voice of worldliness as well. This is what makes Evola unique.

DAVE HALE

Distant Mountains. John Cleare. Discovery Channel Books: New York, 1998. 160 color photos. 173 pages. \$35.00.

“What beautiful names the mountains and glaciers have in this region . . .” said W.M. Conway of the Jungfrau region of Europe’s Alps. These same words work to describe the contents of *Distant Mountains* by John Cleare. Not only has Cleare captured the descriptive prose of such mountain legends as Conway, Tilman, Murray, and others in his new book, he has once again captured for his readers a number of amazing mountain images as well.

John Cleare is one of the most respected mountain photographers in the history of mountain travel. In this book, as with his 15 previous titles, he has combined his art and abilities as a mountaineer, but here he has included too the inspiring words of some of his legendary predecessors and contemporaries to provide the reader with an amazing vicarious experience in some of the world’s wildest and most beautiful mountain ranges. From the Highlands of Scotland to the Andes, from the Himalaya to the Rockies, *Distant Mountains* contains some 160 beautiful color photographs that serve to complement masterful essays. Nicholas Crane writes on the Pyrenees, W.M. Conway on the Alps, David Harris on the Canadian Rockies, Steve Roper on the mountains of the American Southwest, Mike Banks on the Andes, Kurt Diemberger on Pakistan Karakoram, Jim Perrin on the Garhwal Himalaya of India, Kev Reynolds on the Himalaya of Nepal, H.W. Tilman on the mountains of East Africa, and Cleare himself on Patagonia.

Distant Mountains is more than a large-format anthology. It also provides practical information for mountain travelers and armchair adventures alike by including in each chapter maps and tables, notes on the local geology, flora, and fauna, warnings regarding hazards specific to each mountain range, and suggestions on equipment. For instance, the chapter, “The Abode of the Gods” (Kev Reynolds), is followed by the very timely “The Nepal Himalaya ‘Factfile,’” which provides a map and several paragraphs of information and advice under the subheadings Background, Access, and Climbing and Trekking. The information found here is clear and straight-forward. To wit, in Climbing and Trekking: “For climbers, the several hundred Permitted Peaks (none of which are virgin) offer plenty of new routes. Siege tactics, oxygen and big expeditions are, these days, considered inappropriate, and ideally climbs should be attempted alpine style. . . . Climbers and Trekkers alike should treat altitude . . . very seriously. AMS (Acute Mountain Sickness) regularly kills and there is no substitute for proper acclimatization.” Important information and advice for anyone interested in visiting high,

remote mountains, and well worth following.

Cleare's 40 years of climbing mountains and his commitment to providing a photographic record of his adventures, as well as his carefully selected essays, make this book an important edition to anyone's library who loves to escape into mountains either literally or via good writing and vivid photos.

The words of Tilman on the frontispiece of the chapter entitled "Snow on the Equator" captures the spirit of this volume: "On Kenya is to be found climbing at its best. There is no easy route up it, but much virtue may be got from a mountain without climbing it. For those who are not compelled to answer its challenge, let them camp near the solitudes of its glaciers, to gaze upon the fair face of the mountain in sunlight and shadows, to watch the ghostly mists writhing among the crags and pinnacles, and to draw strength from her ruggedness, repose from her aloofness."

There is "much virtue" to be found for both climber and non-climber between the covers of John Cleare's *Distant Mountains*.

MIKEL VAUSE

The High Life: A History of High-Altitude Physiology and Medicine. John B. West. Oxford University Press: London, 1998. \$79.50.

In 1979, when I was in my pulmonary fellowship at the University of Washington, John West invited me to be a climber-scientist on the 1981 American Medical Research Expedition to Everest (AMREE). It was a pivotal event, both professionally and personally. My passion for the high mountains flourished with my growing interest in hypoxia and high-altitude physiology (strands of which have continued to weave intrigue into my day-to-day life as a pulmonary and critical care physician.) I had read about the high-altitude work in the Silver Hut in 1960-'61 that West, Jim Milledge, and Sukhamay Lahiri had done, and suddenly I was going to be mentored by them on this great adventure to Everest, at the end of an era when we were the only expedition there. My life as an academic physician was launched.

It was, therefore, with some trepidation that I accepted the invitation to write a review of John West's book, *The High Life: A History of High-Altitude Physiology and Medicine*. What if the book were flawed or overly biased? How could I publicly criticize someone who had been so supportive of me ever since AMREE? My fears soon dissolved as I was consumed by the lives and adventures of those men and women with whom I have shared a curiosity about high-altitude physiology. We have wanted to know how humans and animals "work" under such stresses, laced with the unknown and unidentifiable.

Years ago, in a lecture on the history of high-altitude research, I heard one of my professional heroes, Dr. Jack Reeves from the University of Colorado, say that we stand on the shoulders of giants who have gone before. This same recurrent theme emerges throughout the book by West. From the early experiences on trade routes at high altitude to the discovery of barometric pressure by Torricelli to the exploration of the possibilities of climbing the world's highest peaks, West spins a compelling story that is superbly and engrossingly written in a way that makes this book not only an excellent resource but also a compelling and suspenseful tale.

This task would normally be difficult for most writers, but as always, West writes in a style that carries the reader on a wave of anticipation. He takes joy in the human side of these explorers, scientists, and climbers as he recounts their histories and personal lives as well as their achievements. He conveys that he, too, stands on the shoulders of giants of old, while making us realize we stand on his and his contemporaries' shoulders, whom he generously