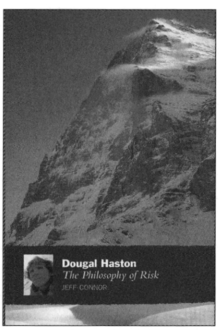
safety. The storm initially verges on comic misadventure, but it soon becomes clear that others on the face have not fared so well. In an air of grim resignation, the pair beat a hasty retreat from unforgiving heights.

All this is thrillingly told in Simpson's justly celebrated prose style. The book becomes tedious only when he swaps his black leather role of existential philosopher for the tweedy jacket of the moralist. In this persona Simpson writes sanctimoniously about the controversial 1999 expedition to find the bodies of Mallory and Irvine on Everest, describing it as a desecration and freak show. His oddly inappropriate editorializing over Mallory's cairn is a jarring note in this mostly felicitous volume. Sermonizing over long dead corpses is entirely misplaced in book that includes "historical" photos of climbers dying or about to die on the Eiger Nordwand. As Simpson himself well knows, he has made a handsome living milking the public's appetite for pathos, providing detailed descriptions of the suffering and terror mountaineers visit upon themselves and, by extension, their loved ones.

Despite this unaccountable lapse, Simpson is otherwise a great armchair companion, broodingly articulate in repose, gallant and good-humored when the chips are down. He has spent his adult life in the state of engaged introspective that one longs for in the ideal adventure writer, and if *The Beckoning Silence* ranks a few grades lower than *Touching the Void*—and what doesn't?—it is still an adventure worth having, in company worth keeping. The reader is grateful for the strong hint at the volume's close that the mountains aren't finished with their famous prodigal son, despite all the talk of retirement.

RICHARD RYAN

Dougal Haston: The Philosophy of Risk. JEFF CONNOR. EDINBURGH: CANONGATE BOOKS, 2002. 225 PAGES. PAPERBACK. $15.00.



Jeff Connor is a seasoned journalist and author whose book on wild men of the Creag Dhu was well received. In researching this book Connor interviewed me, as he did others, on his visit to Leysin. Though our talk was brief, he left me with a sense that he would write an objective and balanced account of Haston's life.

When I was approached to review this book, curiosity prompted me to take a gander at what Amazon.com readers thought. I was both surprised and dismayed to find that readers who, like Connor himself, had never met Haston, had formed such strong and hostile opinions. For one reader Haston came across as an "egocentric hedonist notable only for his immense physical strength at altitude." For another he was "a nut case," and for yet another he was "not an admirable man" but "a wild drunk."

Though I found the book a "page-turner," by its end I was all too aware why the Amazon reviewers had formed such low opinions. In page after demeaning page, one is apprised of such trivia as how Haston scrounged smokes on the Mönch; or that he smoked the "Euro-chic Disque Bleus holding the cigarette with exaggerated care between thumb and first two fingers." Or how a Leysin guide informed him that "until you ski properly, you are not a complete mountaineer," a prospect apparently so horrifying (though he had already climbed the south faces of both Everest and Annapurna!) that he forthwith became an accomplished skier.

The reader's bent for vicarious hedonism is generously satisfied. We are informed of Haston's drunken binges, his insatiable womanizing, his appetite for gratuitous violence, his ruthless exploitation and/or ill treatment of friends. The "Clachaig incident" is exploited to cruel effect. And, the fact that he wore a "foulard" around his neck (as many of us did in those days), coupled with his pronounced interest in philosophy, is used to portray him as a pseudo-intellectual prima donna.

One must wonder how it came to pass that Connor, who had certainly done an amazing amount of legwork, and had interviewed many of those who had known and/or climbed with Haston, should write such an uncharitable and ofttimes prejudiced biography.

None of us who climbed and worked at ISM (International School of Mountaineering) with Dougal in those days would deny many of the faults Connor brings up. But did such behavior make him any worse a climber? Or even a worse person? Climbers have never claimed to be angelic. Certainly those of us who climbed in the sixties and seventies were far from being heavenly envoys. (To get a whiff of those times one may savor Alan and Adrian Burgess's *Book of Lies.*) Compared to many of the "lads" back then, Haston was quite temperate. Bev Clark, Davie Agnew, and Ellie Moriarty give honest, though all too limited, appraisals of Haston. They were truly his friends.

In any event, by book's end, having weathered the maligning of Haston's character; the unnecessary debunking of a wonderful person like Ian Clough; and trivia such as being told that the Dutch co-founder of the Vagabond Club was not heterosexual, the cognizant reader can only feel frustrated.

We are left with an unsatisfied appetite for more about Haston's mountaineering career, which spanned some of the most interesting years in our history. Though cut short by an avalanche, it was a career equal to those of most of the truly great climbers of the 20th century. And it was one that could never have been as colorfully eventful and as brilliantly successful if Haston had not been the generous, intuitive, intelligent, courageous—and somewhat flawed—person that he was.

Michel and Yvette Vaucher, who were on the ill-conceived 1971 International Everest Expedition, had nothing but praise for Haston when we met soon after their return. I recall their lauding his team spirit, endurance, and climbing abilities. In Connor's biography there are too few such words of praise. Quotes from Tut Braithwaite, Karl Golikow, and Doug Scott stand out in contrast.

It is regrettable that despite broad based and significant research Connor skims so deftly over Haston's many exciting British, Alpine, Andean, and Himalayan exploits. He touches on this or that climb, yet never in the depth they warrant.* Many of those living today who climbed with Haston surely could share an extensive collection of anecdotes. Why not quote more liberally from "The Bat and the Wicked" by Robin Smitt whom, in marked contrast to Haston, Connor seems to revere? Where is the story of his first Eiger ascent? Rusty Baillie, his partner on that climb, is still with us. There is very little on his amazing final bid for the summit on the 1966 Eiger Direct, one of the highlights in Alpine history. More anecdotes from Scott or Bonington would have been much appreciated.

In my opinion, the best part of this biography is not the slow-moving first section, where Haston is introduced more as a hooligan than an aspiring but wild young climber; nor the tabloid-ish middle. The book's finest moments are in the next to last chapter, "In High Places," which is the best written and most instructive. Despite the inevitable digs at Haston's persona (for example, the Whillans "rejection"), we are given a clearer perception of him. He comes

across here as a man driven, assuredly, but also a man who carries his own weight, and a climbing partner you can depend on in a pinch.

I lived in Leysin with Dougal for 10 years. We climbed on the same crags, drank in the same pub, and guided at the same climbing school. The Dougal that I read about in this biography is not the Dougal that I knew. It is undeniable that he was somewhat taciturn, appeared enigmatic, and did not suffer fools. Thus, he was not easily approachable. But, I know of few people in my long climbing career whom I would rather have had by my side in a tough spot.

Despite Connor's many allusions to the contrary, I never knew Dougal to drive a car. The burden of memory that stemmed from an ill-fated night in Glencoe when his car struck and killed a pedestrian never left him. We touched on it only once. It was obviously a very painful subject. Hamish MacInnes once asked Haston why he did not drive. His answer was "Would you drive after what happened...?" MacInnes, who was closer to Haston than most, knew him to have in his inscrutable depths "strong and sensitive emotions." That is the Dougal I also am glad to have known.

T.E. Lawrence, Churchill, Shackleton, and Messner, to name only four outstanding figures, were not without character flaws. But it is what they accomplished despite (and at times because of) those shortcomings that makes them unforgettable. In Connor's book Haston is afforded no such credit.

Once as we walked under a blank, unclimbed face somewhere above Leysin, I said that the face would "go" with a few bolts for protection. Dougal felt that the face should be left alone until a climber came along who could climb it "clean." Likewise, readers would have been better served if the story of Haston's life had been left alone until someone came along who could write it clean.

LARRY WARE

Editor's note: For more on the climbing achievements of Dougal Haston, read In High Places *(1972), his autobiography. Also* Direttissima, *co-authored with Peter Gilman (1966);* The Eiger *(1974), a history of the Eigerwand by Haston; and* Changabang *(Bonington, 1975), which includes contributions by Haston. Readers may also gain insight into Haston by reading his* Calculated Risk: A Novel *(1979).*

Himalayan Vignettes: Garwhal and Sikkim Treks. **KEKOO NAOROJI. BOMBAY, INDIA: THE HIMALAYAN CLUB, 2003. 236 PAGES. HARDCOVER. $60.00.**

Himalayan Vignettes is a large format, coffee table photo-essay of expeditions to the Garwal and Sikkim by Indian trekker-photographer Kekoo Naoroji during the1950s. It is a work of love, primarily undertaken by his son, Rashid, and published with the support of friends and colleagues at the Himalayan Club in Bombay. Naoroji is a well-known member of the Club, and was instrumental in moving its headquarters from Calcutta to Bombay after Indian independence. He was an executive at Imperial Chemical Industries during the fifties and has a polymath's range of tastes and interests, including Western classical music, theater, mountaineering literature, and outdoor conservation. Naoroji's family is omnipresent in the introductory sections of the book and in the extracts from his expedition diary, which precede the photographs. Especially present and appreciated is his wife, Dosa, and her infinite patience and support of him in his quest to record visually some of the most remote areas of India. His diary entries always return to his family, and his greatest superlatives of the mountain terrain are put in the context of how he