If you answered true to any of the above statements, I have a book for you. *Cold Climbs* is a fantastic collection of photographs and narratives of some of the best winter climbs in the world. Every modern climber has heard of the climbs this book describes—Zero Gully, the Cuillin Ridge, Point Five Gully.

*Cold Climbs* is a large-format, "best of" book on winter climbing in the British Isles. Having twice been across the mighty Atlantic to sample the delights (and miseries) of British winter climbing, I can testify that the large number of excellent photographs give one a very good idea of exactly what climbing on Ben Nevis or in the Cairngorms is like. The book also brings back many joyous and, sometimes, horrifying memories.

When I first opened this book, I was amazed at the number (and quality) of the photographs. In this day and age of the five-dollar paperback, this book is cheap. If you liked the photographs in *Climbing Ice,* you'll love *Cold Climbs*. This is a great addition to anyone's library and continues the fine tradition started with *Classic Rock* and *Hard Rock*.

TODD SWAIN

*High Level: The Alps from End to End.* David Brett. Victor Gollancz, North Pomfret (Vermont), 1983. 207 pages, black and white photographs, sketch maps. $23.50.

In the summer of 1981, David Brett, an English writer, artist and climber, made a solo, high-level traverse of the Alps from La Bérarde in the Vanoise Alps to Heiligenblut in Austria, near the Gross Glockner. His declared intention was to do for the Alps as a whole what the traditional Haute Route does for the distance between Zermatt and Chamonix—take a very direct, high-level line linking major climbing centers.

The book is at once a detailed guide to the route he followed, doing his fast-paced, 42-day, 600-mile traverse, as well as to his personal reflections during this often lonely adventure. Unlike the Haute Route, which is done in discrete hut-to-hut stages, thus reducing the need to carry food and camping gear, Brett's impecuniousness dictated avoiding huts: camping out and often foregoing decent meals were his lot. Because of the constraints of his heavy pack and the solo nature of the trip, he was unable to attempt any climbs of particular technical interest. Thus, the book will appeal primarily to the mountain walker rather than to the climber.

This is not a great odyssey book: Colin Fletcher's *The Man Who Walked Through Time* or the *Thousand Mile Summer* provides a more interesting account of a voyage of discovery on the trail. Brett's shyness and aloofness constantly keep him distanced from the few souls he does encounter on the journey.

Nevertheless, his reflections and observations on the motivations of practitioners of extreme sports, such as mountaineering or single-handed ocean racing, do make the book worth owning. Whereas Bonington, in his *Quest for Adventure,* comes to no conclusion as to the reasons for such pursuits, Brett finds them to be a form of practical existentialism in which "the participants shed as much of the comforts of material things and the reassurances of given ideas and definitions as they can, in order to apprehend some essence of life." Brett seems to see the climber as reversing the story of the Garden of Eden—casting off sophistication and looking for an existence untramelled by things and history.

The issue of *comfort* is the central question that Brett comes back to again and again. Those dangers he does face are really extreme cases of ordinary, simple discomfort. Thus, he cannily observes, the capacity to put up with acute discomfort, without the impairment of ability or of judgment, is one of the preconditions of achievement in mountaineering.

Graham Greene began one of his novels with the sentence, "I feel discomfort, thus I exist." Byron said pretty much the same thing: "The whole object of life is sensation, to feel that we exist, even though in pain." Unfortunately, as Brett points out, such thoughts never come to mind in the midst of action—then all one can think of is how to keep the matches dry in a storm.

PHILIP ERARD

*Mountains of the Pyrenees*. Kev Reynolds. Cicerone Press, Milnthorpe (Cumbria), 1982. 151 pages, 72 black and white photographs, 17 sketch maps, bibliography. £10.00.

Not a guidebook but a general introductory work to the high borderland peaks between Spain and France, this book was designed to offer a "picture of those mountains in the light of their exploration . . . a survey of the range through the activities of its pioneers and . . . some items of practical information which might aid the climber and walker in planning to explore the Pyrenees for himself." Those who expected a compendium of routes and itineraries are referred to some of the 156 titles listed in the bibliography, of which at least 20 are modern guidebooks.

The Pyrenees run along the French-Spanish border from the Atlantic to the Mediterranean for some 400 kilometers and reach their greatest height in the Pico de Aneto (3404 meters). Mountaineering there began as early as 1276, when King Peter III of Aragon soloed Pico de Cánigo (2785 meters) and reported the existence of a lake on top and also a dragon emerging from its waters. The golden age of both *pyreneisme* and *pirineismo* began in 1802, when two