

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 untrammelled 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

Frenchmen and a Spaniard ascended Monte Perdido (3352 meters). Difficult routes were introduced in 1889 and technically-aided climbs in 1926, while challenging winter climbing was not initiated until 1960. Today, the range receives year-round activity.

Author Reynolds, a Briton, has organized his work into an introduction and two major parts, "Pioneers" and "The Mountains." There are also appendices on instructions for climbers and hikers, wildflowers, Pyrenean terms and a bibliography. Part Two, The Mountains, is impeccable, with useful detail interestingly exposed. Part One, Pioneers, suffers by comparison. It concentrates heavily on the history of French *pyreneisme* and reduces its Spanish counterpart to even less than a bare minimum—an unacceptable occurrence, since the greater part of the range, including the highest peaks, falls within Spain. The index lists the names of over 110 French mountaineers, while only 9 Spaniards are included. Neither the remarkable surveys of Carlos Ibañez (who, in 1874, had already begun to chart the range in a scale of 1:50,000) nor the exploits of, say, Julio Soler or Jaime Oliveras, receive any mention whatsoever—a curious defect for a book of this quality.

For English-speaking readers, however, this book will certainly be a first-class introduction to the Pyrenees. Good pictures in abundance, both contemporary and historical, complement an interesting text. The sketch maps are useful and there are lists of available French and Spanish maps. The author is also to be commended for his prose style: direct and efficient and, at the same time, pleasant, even elegant.

EVELIO ECHEVARRÍA

*The Rocky Mountains: A Vision for Artists in the Nineteenth Century.* Patricia Trenton and Peter H. Hassrick. University of Oklahoma Press, Norman, in association with the Buffalo Bill Historical Center, Cody, Wyoming, 1983. XIX + 418 pages, 129 black and white and 54 color plates, map, bibliography. \$65.00.

The progression of artists into the Rocky Mountains was closely allied to the westward course of empire. It began early in the century with the surveyors and illustrators who accompanied various exploratory expeditions and whose function was to delineate the terrain for a curious but uninformed government. These official artists were soon followed by others whose inspiration came more from the grandeur and majesty of the scenery and who formed part of the Romantic movement that rose to prominence during the nineteenth century. Later, the region developed its own "native" artists. Art academies sprang up and museums and art associations were formed; art, which had previously been the province of isolated individuals, became an accepted part of the Rocky Mountain cultural scene.