about anthologies. Why? What gap in the literature is plugged by anthologizing? Mr. Vermeulen goes on to say, ". . . . The stories in this paper feast were harvested with an eye toward feeding everyone, for everyone's feast."

The trouble is that old-hand climbers who read already know these books in their entirety. To feed the experienced, the anthologist would need to have ferreted out more obscure writers or less familiar events. Terray? Tejada-Flores or John Long? Others we don't even know? In sum *Mountain Journeys* is a smorgasbord that can only be expected to whet the beginner's appetite.

In a 248-page book, including a forward, preface, and glossary, Mr. Vermeulen has included twenty-one excerpts which are too brief and tend to bleed into each other. Like ocean-voyaging literature, accounts of mountain ascents take on a general sameness. One alpine storm is pretty much like another, not in the actual experience, of course, but in the telling. Specifying, individualizing, is one of the challenges the first-person narrator faces. Most of these writers have succeeded in that their books are infused with their own personalities and a sense of immediacy. But take several great mountaineers and pull out of context their five-to-ten-page accounts of, say, tough alpine ascents, put them side by side, and something of that original character and immediacy is lost. Perhaps *Mountain Journey's* purpose would have been better served by including half as many excerpts twice as long, a feast with fewer nibbles.

DALLAS MURPHY

Gorilla Monsoon. John Long, Chockstone Press, Denver, 1989. 177 pages. $12.95.

In the eighteen largely autobiographical narratives in *Gorilla Monsoon*, John Long creates himself as a character: daring, exuberant, relentless in pursuit of experience, and only occasionally reflective. He sounds much the way he appeared in a photograph of him and his companions after the first one-day ascent of El Capitan. Cigarette dangling, bandana topping long tangled hair, shirt open over his pectorals, Long looks very tough, ready for anything. In this book we find him not merely risking but brazenly courting extreme danger. Although he never puts it this way, his survival seems miraculous—and very gripping for the reader.

Of the eighteen pieces, only two are about climbing—three, if you count a description of the world's longest rappel, performed for T.V. (It is a mild irony that Long, the free spirit, is often dependent upon the corporate whims of a major television program, which employed him to arrange and film spectacular events.) But readers of this journal will find plenty of interest in all these accounts of "adventuring," as Long twice terms it. Long is an adventurer in the good sense of the term—endlessly curious, searching out what has not been accomplished and scarcely imagined, prepared for almost any kind of risk. We find him rocketing through water pipes in Venezuela, hacking his way across Borneo, snowmobiling nearly to hypothermia in Baffin Island. At times he

seems virtually suicidal, but love of life does, for some people, entail the hazard of death. To each his own terror: the story that frightened me the most has Long and his (if possible) more reckless accomplice D.B. squirming through a huge South American cave. At one point D.B. is up to his chest in slime and almost gone. "We didn't know a damn thing about caving," Long has informed us. "It's very harrowing," but D.B. is extricated to contribute two fine passages to the book.

Long's writing is usually as energetic as the experience it conveys. He is at his surest with autobiographical accounts like "The Only Blasphemy," in which he economically conveys the pressure of competitive solo climbing and the awful moment when he realizes he has taken one chance too many. But I think that with "Requiem for Ronnie," which takes the form of a twice-told tale, he strains too hard and ends up with less. Its climactic scene with a dying hero sound unreal to me. Thus I share the preferences of Alison Osius, as declared in her illuminating foreword, for the more direct and immediate of these pieces. Long is evidently an ambitious writer, who wants to go beneath and beyond adventure. But for me "Requiem" is a failed attempt to create a mythic character, only partly redeemed by its vivid description of running some amazing rapids; whereas "Blasphemy" is the real thing. It has a frightening and altogether plausible immediacy. We can feel all the fear, the triumph and the relief of the narrator. It is a small classic: brief but telling.

Although Long is himself very vivid, some of the other characters are not. A prime example is "Down and Out," which has the shape and some of the impact of a good short story. Its protagonist, the daring cliff-jumper Carl Boenish, is "the most singular individual I had ever met," but we scarcely see his singularity or "contagious enthusiasm." Long devotes considerable space to describing Carl's disjointed conversation, galvanized by "goofy mix of mysticism and personal revelations, coupled with the cryptic tenents of a religious system I could not quite discern." If only Long had let us really hear that voice! When, rarely, Carl does speak directly, he sounds rather like Long. And his young wife Jean, who should be an important figure, is little realized. This lack of vividness muffles the impact of the ending. Carl's last "crazy" jump seems merely enigmatic—extremely sad but without clear significance.

Long is attempting the difficult transition from journalism to fiction—or at least narrative that uses the devices and conventions of fiction. This movement is clearest in the last piece in the book, "A Stone from Allah," which depicts the tender, chaste relations between the narrator and a young Indonesian girl from Borneo who is resisting her inevitable descent into prostitution. The heroic action—the crossing of Borneo, described earlier in the book—is but briefly alluded to here. The burden falls on the characterization which, though fuller than in "Down and Out," relies too much on the familiar: "she smiled like the Milky Way"; "her skin was like God." Some details, however, suggest Long's gift for observation not just of action but of people—the girl's desperate attempts to distract him from the squalor of her dwelling, and the "hard corners of her mouth," sad emblems of change after his two months' absence.

In the light of Long's progression as character and writer, it is a pity that the sections of the book show no apparent order—certainly not chronological by experience. Except very sketchily in the foreword, there is no information about order of composition and place of previous publication, when appropriate. There are no photographs and no evidence of careful proofreading—spelling errors abound. But at $12.95 *Gorilla Monsoon* is a bargain which no purchaser should regret. Many sections roar at you with the energy and unstoppability of an express train, and leave you as unnerved as though you had nearly been struck by one. Long is never less than entertaining; at times he is considerably more.

STEVEN JERVIS

The Loneliest Mountain. Lincoln Hall. Photographs by Jonathan Chester. The Mountaineers, Seattle, 1989. 232 pages. $35.00

Scarcely 4000 meters high and technically not very demanding, Mount Minto is not the conventional idea of a difficult mountain. Yet because of its location in a rugged corner of Antarctica, at the beginning of 1988 it remained unclimbed despite several attempts. Its ascent was a formidable challenge to an under-financed group of Australians. As one of them writes:

> All we needed was a ship and enough fuel, food and equipment for eleven people to sail 4000 nautical miles, survive for up to eighteen months in the most inhospitable climate in the world, as well as for six of the team to travel 300 kilometers overland across unknown glaciers and through passes, in order to scale a massive unclimbed peak.

In three months they did it all and returned to Australia without serious injury or unreasonable stress.

One result of this triumph is a book (there is also a video with the same title) that is likable and informative. The mountaineering experience of the six climbers ranged from Himalayan to virtually none, and the variation adds texture to their enterprise.

Though close to Australia, Antarctica is cut off from it by a lot of cold, turbulent sea. The group got there on a 21-meter sailing vessel, with intermittently functioning motor, "endearingly named" (to quote the foreward by the Australian novelist Thomas Keneally) the *Allan and Vi Thistlethwayte*. (The Thistlethwaytes were the most important of the expedition's many patrons.) The little ship pitched constantly, relegating the most seasick climber to his bunk for the entire voyage, and was afflicted with many mechanical problems. On arrival, it had to be maneuvered carefully through the pack ice to a mooring at Cape Hallett, from which the circuitous approach to the mountain could begin. Several weeks of arduous hauling, trekking and climbing culminated in the successful ascent, all the happier because all six aspirants made the top.