The Duke of the Abruzzi: An Explorer's Life. Mirella Tenderini and Michael Shandrick. The Mountaineers: Seattle, 1997. 216 pages. $24.95.

Climbers of any age or experience level will treasure the biography of explorer and alpinist Luigi Amedeo di Savoia, *The Duke of the Abruzzi: An Explorer's Life*. Authors Mirella Tenderini and Michael Shandrick have crafted an excellent book that lends insight into an extraordinary man and member of the Italian royal family. Famous among the climbing set for his ascent of Mount Saint Elias and attempt on K2, the Duke was not only a mountaineer but also a polar explorer, war hero and ambassador of good will.

First impressions might lead one to believe that the Duke was a golden child with spoils to travel the world. Tenderini and Shandrick provide us with information to the contrary. A victim of family jealousy and political infighting, the Duke spent much of his life avoiding scrutiny of the press. The story of his failed relationship with a wealthy American heiress is included because it was the source of much worldwide media attention. Much more than a dry expedition account, this biography sheds light on the personal life of a guarded and enigmatic man.

Walter Bonatti pays tribute to the Duke in a heartfelt foreword. The body is organized chronologically into chapters about each of the major periods of the Duke's life. It is clear that an exhaustive amount of research has gone into this book. At times, facts such as names and dates are overwhelming, but this only adds to the book's value as a reference tool. Much attention is given to the Duke's expedition companions, such as famed photographer Vittorio Sella, dedicated assistant and scribe Filippo De Filippi, and many loyal guides who helped him realize his goals. Many black-and-white photographs, some by Sella, are included, which give a face to the legend.

In his foreword, Bonatti writes: "I have but one regret with regard to the Duke of the Abruzzi: to have not lived in his time." After the last page of this book has been turned and the cover closed, readers also will dream of joining the Duke on a foray to an unexplored range or following in his steps to a virgin summit. This book deserves a place in your library.

LEN ZANNI

Against the Wall. Simon Yates. Jonathan Cape: London, 1997. Distributed in the U.S. by Trafalgar Square, North Pomfret, Vermont. Color photographs. 176 pages. $35.00.

Okay, let's get this over with: Simon Yates is the guy who cut the rope on Joe Simpson in the Andes. He doesn't mention it until the last chapter of this book, but his publisher, who is also Simpson's, spreads it all over the dust jacket. The back flap even includes a blurb for Simpson's *Touching the Void*, which is ten years old. It may be true, as a prominent bookseller says in his catalogue, that "Yates will be forever known as the man who cut the rope." Few recall Ralph Branca's rookie year, when he won 21 games and started the World Series for the Dodgers, but almost everybody remembers that one bad pitch to Bobby Thomson. Yates's critics should reread *Touching the Void*. They might ask themselves what they would have done in Yates's place, and consider whether either Yates or Simpson would have been better off had the rope remained intact.

Now to *Against the Wall*. It describes a fine new route on the 4,000-foot vertical granite of the Central Tower of Paine. The four-man team faced major technical difficulties, as well as Patagonia's notorious wind and storm. Much aid was used (though few bolts), and some 3,000 feet of line were fixed. Many of the ropes were jumared repeatedly, because the weath-

er forced numerous retreats. Several leaders fell when their protection popped, though they were stopped unhurt.

Yates is very good at describing the airy feel of the climb, as well as the messy details of cooking and portaledging—and the moves: "The handholds were enormous, but having got used to aid climbing, relying completely on my own body seemed strangely unfamiliar. The weight of equipment made me feel cumbersome and strength quickly drained from my arms. Realising that I could not hang on for long, I lunged to the left, and in a series of rapid ape-like movements, swung across the flake. . . ."

Yates prefaces his account with an apology for perhaps being too frank and critical. He need not have worried. Except for a little irritability and forgetfulness, the climbers are portrayed as remarkably polite and thoughtful under the stressful circumstances. His own moments of frustration and rage seem pretty mild. I'm not asking for personality clashes, enlivening though they can be, but for more vivid characterization.

Even so challenging a route as this one is not ordinarily worth an entire book. No high peaks here, no first ascents, no accidents or rescues. Another participant described the whole thing with clarity and wit in a few pages of the 1993 *AAJ*. But Yates's Introduction promises more than fixed ropes and spectacular granite: "For me, the Patagonian expedition was a turning point, marking a very sudden shift in my attitudes to many things and the start of a new phase of my life." This phase is treated only in a brief epilogue (and mentioned on the dust jacket). Yates, it seems, after years of hard climbing (including a winter attempt at Nanga Parbat), has settled down. The transition is anticipated by a number of introspective passages in the last third of the book. He realizes that "I did care not only for myself, but also for those around me. Drifting along in a world of my own was no longer enough. I needed to try harder to do things better, for myself as well as for others." This perfectly believable declaration sounds like a pallid New Year's resolution or an excerpt from a pop psychology text. It is not grounded in enough personal detail to carry weight. Only in his acknowledgments does he mention a woman who helped him "through a difficult patch in [his] life." How did she help? What patch was this? The Simpson episode? The few pages about it here do little more than assert that: "My decision [to cut the rope] had been right." It is hard to write a revealing account while remaining as reticent as Yates is in this book.

Although *Against the Wall* misses its largest ambitions, it is an engrossing account of a major climb. Its eight pages of color photos make the reader wish for more (the best of all is on the cover). It surely will persuade a lot of climbers to hurry down to Patagonia.

STEVEN JERVIS

The Measure of a Mountain: Beauty and Terror on Mount Rainier. Bruce Barcott. Sasquatch Books: Seattle, 1997. 278 pages. $23.95.

During the past decade, I have read and reviewed many inferior books about mountaineering. I have been bored with 8000-meter-peak quests and grown contemptuous of padded, egocentric autobiographies. I have scorned an attempt by an amateur to delve into the "personal insights" of climbers. A recent encyclopedia was, in my view, not worth the trees sacrificed. My half-dozen negative reviews in this journal since 1989 have burdened me with angst and despair (shared, I hope, by six cringing authors). Someone must review such books, but why me? Am I to be a hatchet man forever?

Reading Bruce Barcott's book on Mount Rainier, I felt a surge of pleasure and optimism, as if gazing upon a fine new cliff for the first time. Barcott is not only a master of the lan-