

Biblically the fall represents the ejection from paradise. In this story several characters at some point fall from some state of innocence, but only Jamie dies by falling, because he fails the Delphic oracle's test of "know thyself." Thus Mawer successfully answers the presenting problem of Jamie's motive for suicide. Not coincidentally, the women who don't climb end up more fulfilled than the men who do. Rich and glamorous Caroline has a prolific sex life, Diana the satisfaction of motherhood, and promiscuous Ruth has the satisfactions of becoming a successful painter besides. The *Times*' reviewer complained that sex and climbing were "compared once too often." But the moral might be (readers take note when planning your next visit to the crags) that sex is the better of the two.

The great strength of *The Fall* lies in vividness of the climbing action. For writer aspirants to The Great Climbing Novel I'd recommend Mawer's style: so fine is its tone, its rhythms, and economy of effects. His grasp of the British climbing scene is also very good. His chief defect is an over-indulgence in the machinery of suspense at the expense of the characters' density and development. Reading it a second time, I admired the consistency of the narrative and structure with the final denouement, which is revealed in a letter from Kangchenjunga. But on the first reading, the letter comes too late: for the characters Diana and Robert, and for the reader.

JOHN THACKRAY, AAC

***Women on High: Pioneers of Mountaineering.* REBECCA A. BROWN. BOSTON: APPALACHIAN MOUNTAIN CLUB BOOKS, 2002. FOREWORD BY ARLENE BLUM. 272 PAGES. HARDCOVER \$22.95.**

Rebecca A. Brown has given us a highly readable history of women's mountaineering. *Women on High* begins with the 1808 ascent of Mont Blanc by Marie Paradis, but focuses primarily on the Victorian era and the early decades of the 20th century, telling the stories of such fine Alpine climbers as Lucy Walker, Meta Brevoort, Elizabeth Le Blond, Mary Mummery, and Margaret Anne Jackson. In addition to describing the climbs themselves, Brown situates them within a background of evolving gender codes, climbing styles—and clothing styles (with corsets and cumbersome skirts giving way to bloomers and trousers). She also explores the varied motivations that prompted 19th-century women to climb: the desire for independence, a commitment to women's rights, the search for spiritual and personal fulfillment.

*Women on High* makes clear that a number of early women climbers performed at the highest standards of their day. In 1893, for example, Lily Bristow cruised the Mummery Crack on the Grepon. (Her partner on the climb was A. F. Mummery, the 19th century rock star who described his and Bristow's ascent of the iced-up Grepon "as amongst the hardest I have made.") In 1908, after several failed attempts, the American climber and feminist Annie Smith Peck finally reached the summit of 21,831-foot Huascaran Norte (and survived a harrowing descent to the Garganta). Between 1899 and 1912 another American, Fanny Bullock Workman, led six extensive expeditions in the Himalaya, reaching summits as high as 22,800-foot Pinnacle Peak in the Nun Kun range. (She was 47 years old at the time.) Yet another American climber, Dora Keen, persevering through lengthy storms that drove many of the men in the party back down the mountain, completed the first ascent of 16,000-foot Mt. Blackburn in the Wrangell Mountains of Alaska. This was in 1912, when all the major Alaskan peaks except Mt. Saint Elias remained unclimbed.

*Women on High's* foreword is provided by Arlene Blum, who led the first American expedition to Annapurna I in 1978 and whose *Annapurna: A Woman's Place* is required reading for

anyone interested in the history of women's mountaineering. Blum notes that early in her own climbing career she knew nothing of most of the women whose stories are told in this book, adding that if she had they would have provided her "with role models, support, inspiration, and encouragement that would have made [my] own ascents easier."

DAVID MAZEL, AAC

*Climb: The History of Rock Climbing in Colorado.* JEFF ACHEY, DUDLEY CHELTON, BOB GODFREY. SEATTLE: THE MOUNTAINEERS BOOKS. SECOND EDITION, 2002. 200 B&W PHOTOS. 256 PAGES. HARD-COVER: \$44.95. PAPERBACK: \$29.95.

The Rocky Mountain's Front Range and the Colorado Plateau to its west make an environment conducive to rock climbing in general, and an interesting regional history and development specifically. The sandstones of the western slope desert stretch into Utah, while the gneissic and granitic composites form the Rocky's core. The swirls of the Black Canyon, the crack-infested dihedrals of Long's Peak's Diamond, the compact shatters of Eldorado Canyon's quartzite, and the steep undercut blocks of Rifle—all these create a recipe for every type of climbing practiced internationally, but also a development that historically has been set apart by its variety of rock and by the people who have explored and climbed it. Historic names (some more widely heard than others) like Layton Kor, Steve Wunsch, Dave Breashears, Billy Westbay, Duncan Ferguson, Jimmy Dunn, Tommy Caldwell, and many others, have all put their mark on standards, much of that within the confines of the eastern front of the mountains west to the towers of the Colorado Plateau. Documenting this history is no small feat.

Jeff Achey's collaboration with Dudley Chelton, who, along with Bob Godfrey, wrote the original edition, condenses the pre-seventies well, and brings the book up to speed with the fast pace of rock climbing in Colorado in the 26 years since the first edition was published. Condensing the original edition could have compromised its thoroughness, but Achey and Chelton keep the integrity and pay appropriate homage to the original masters of Colorado rock climbing. Though it is never really focused on, the theme of the book brings out the uniqueness inherent to the attitude, styles, and ethics of Colorado that are the culmination of the state's geography, geology, and the many characters that have added to the alchemy.

Achey makes it clear that this book is about rock climbing specifically, and to not have drawn that arbitrary line would have made too broad a topic upon which to give appropriate respect and coverage. And, to his credit, he avoids spreading himself thin, and ties common threads through the generations as they built upon the standards and mentorship of those before, from the era when multiple days were spent to climb a wall in the Black Canyon to the present feats of climbing the Painted Wall plus the two Chasm View walls in a day.

It is due time for this book, too. Colorado has about every type of rock offering every type of climbing, and has been a contributor to international standards for years. The layout of photos and anecdotal history make for an entertaining journey through the history of rock climbing in Colorado. The chapters are not only organized by era, but by theme and disciplines

