Putting the final touches on the manuscript, I realize my hesitation to send off a complete version and to be done with this book at last. For the past decade, this project has occupied and accompanied me as a steady and trusted friend like no other, during a formative and eventful life period. Engaging with the idiosyncrasies and complexities of early mountaineers, scientists, and humanists provided purpose, passion, direction, focus, and distraction. But these pages are also a testament to past and current relationships: the inspiration and critique of friends and colleagues and the support of programs and organizations have developed into an remarkable and effective network that forms a solid base behind every page.

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As we embark on yet another hotter summer in California, I grow wary of the extreme weather that marks our time and foreshadows the disasters to come. Admittedly with a sense of nostalgia, I feel gratitude for my time spent in the mountains and the deserts, always amplified by the presence of friends and family. I would like to thank my climbing partners far and near, David Trac, Ha Ngo, Shauna Murray, and Mary Devore, who made sure I had a rope to tie into. Papa and Mama, even though it must have been hard for you to watch me leave Germany at age twenty-two, study literature in the United States, embark on rock climbing, and eventually start a (mostly) English-speaking family, you supported my decisions despite them seeming often illogical and sometimes painful. This book is dedicated to my husband, Bruce Willey, whose boundless love and caring flexibility continue to amaze me, and our daughter Matilda, who, true to her name, strength in battle, is a shining beam of courage and hope. May the mountains continue to offer us a place on this planet Earth.
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PEAK PURSUITS