



# **The Everest Effect: Nature, Culture, Ideology (Albma Rhetoric Cult & Soc Crit)**

*Elizabeth Mazzolini*

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In *The Everest Effect* Elizabeth Mazzolini traces a series of ideological shifts in the status of Mount Everest in Western culture over the past century to the present day and links these shifts to technologies used in climbs. By highlighting the intersections of technology and cultural ideologies at this site of environmental extremity, she shows both how nature is shaped—physically and symbolically—by cultural values and how extreme natural phenomena shape culture.

Nostalgia, myth, and legend are intrinsic features of the conversations that surround discussions of historic and contemporary climbs of Everest, and those conversations themselves reflect changing relations between nature, technology, and ideology. Each of the book's chapters links a particular value with a particular technology to show how technology is implicated in Mount Everest's cultural standing and commodification: authenticity is linked with supplemental oxygen; utility with portable foodstuffs; individuality with communication technology; extremity with visual technology; and ability with money. These technologies, Mazzolini argues, are persuasive—and increasingly so as they work more quickly and with more intimacy on our bodies and in our daily lives.

As Mazzolini argues, the ideologies that situate Mount Everest in Western culture today are not debased and descended from a more noble time; rather, the material of the mountain and its surroundings and the technologies deployed to encounter it all work more immediately with the bodies and minds of actual and “armchair” mountaineers than ever before. By moving the analysis of a natural site and phenomenon away from the traditional labor of production and toward the symbolic labor of affective attachment, *The Everest Effect* shows that the body and nature have helped constitute the capitalization that is usually characterized as taking over Everest.

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