

“Deictic Shifts into the Image? Fictional Aspects in Pieter Bruegel’s Large Landscape Series”

In the early modern process of appropriating the world, mountain images of Netherlandish artists offered notions of a wild alterity that sharpened the outlines of the moderate and cultivated lowlands. Mountains were remote and dangerous to cross. Despite the increasing amount of first-hand experiences, imagination still played a role that cannot be entirely explained with the opposing terms *near het leven* and *uyt den geest*. This also applies for Pieter Bruegel the Elder, whose works were often praised for their naturalism. However, his *Large Landscapes*, executed by Joannes and Lucas van Doetecum around 1555/56, mark a turning point in the fictionalization of mountains. Instead of being mere backdrops, they provide the actual setting that is closely tied to the subject. By means of composition beholders can immediately project themselves into the pictorial space. Thus these mountain landscapes are not only plausible but also induce immersion.

In my proposed paper I want to trace some of Bruegel’s techniques and their effects. Considering the development of early modern literature I ask if those landscapes can be seen within the emerging interest in remote worlds and in fictionality. Moreover, the imaginative potential of the mountain subject in the Netherlands could have contributed to Bruegel’s innovations. I further ask if it could be fruitful to consider some approaches of literature and fiction theory, in particular the deictic shift theory, to better understand early modern mountain landscapes as parts of visual culture and media history.

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