



To state, as the author does in the introduction to her study (p. 10), that the image of the Alps has developed as an appropriation process by society is nothing new in itself, nor is the attempt to analyse this more than 250 years long phenomenon through pictorial sources. However, Hallama merely uses such a statement as point of departure for her visual perspective. She looks at her chosen images (mainly *artistic* pictures, complemented by picture postcards, stamps and the odd photograph) with a view to subtle information beneath the surface, to what cannot necessarily be grasped at first glance. This means that these sources contain information that the contemporary artist, patron or viewer did not consider important to be read directly off the image because it was a case of current values. Ethnologist Martin Scharfe has been pursuing similar issues for several decades now. In his latest book, which was published concurrently with the book reviewed here, he writes of the significant dialogue of the researcher with the image, “*In this way the dialogue after a fairly long time may bring to the surface what the image contains – even though its originator, the artist, was not aware of it.*”

Hallama too has chosen the approach described above. Using selected sources, the author moves the focus in the image of the Alps to the *safety techniques* documented along the way – whether consciously or subconsciously – in the images of the Alps as part of the appropriation process of nature by man. For Hallama this covers a wide range, from initial distance to danger as one form of a safety technique to avalanche protection structures. In three stages (Safe views, Secured and securing bodies, Protection landscapes) she traces a chronological arc from the initially distanced view of something dangerous to the attraction of something scary that has become a background setting and has lost most of its original threat. For the reader and/or the viewer, the tension between the first and the last picture of the study (Caspar Wolf, Second Staubbachfall in Winter, oil on canvas 1775;

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p. 20 and Wolfgang Zängl, Avalanche barrier, St. Anton 5 Jan. 1998, colour photograph; p. 147) thus does not just explain the appropriation process of the Alps by humans. In the diachronical comparison of both representations it seems that, inadvertently and in a new quality, the chosen perspective from below lets the retaken (?) safe distance of the early days resurface. It is no longer the spatial distance created by the chosen viewpoint that implies safety but the act of keeping the viewed and pictured (dangerous aspects of) mountain landscape at a distance by technical means.

Reflections on societal changes in perception and changes in the media used to transport these images introduce the main chapters and provide the relevant context as well as the period-specific frame of reference for the ensuing selection of images. Sometimes, particularly in the 20th century, the author manages only with difficulty to uphold the inner homogeneity of the sources used. The popular medium of the picture postcard shares very little with art that would allow a comparison. The author is of course aware of this and uses this source as transition to the early post-war period, in terms of the Alps a time *devoid of art*. In this context Hallama points to the distinct mismatch with art, for instance in the representation of protective structures (p. 134). Therefore the excursion into such popular media can be understood as just that, an excursion, from which Hallama returns to artistic representation as the source for answering her questions towards the end of her study.

It seems unfortunate that for her cover the author chose a rather dismal and cold image (a high-Alpine winter tourism landscape with lifts and avalanche protection structures; photographed by the author) in an otherwise well written and illustrated monograph. Photography thus documents the provisional end of the described appropriation process without quite creating in the viewer the emotions intended by the study, an accusatory documentation of suspect landscape appropriation by humans rather than an artistic examination of society. At the same time, Hallama provides fascinating image descriptions, interpretations and viewing aids throughout the book that invite the reader to take a closer look at these images and the societal context transported in them.

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