Rural Modernity: A Collection of Essays

Deadline: Dec 31, 2014

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Call for Chapter Proposals
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We are seeking 500 word proposals for submissions to a collection of essays devoted to the theoretical and historical elaboration of the concept of rural modernity as it is worked out in literary, artistic, and other cultural objects and movements in early twentieth-century Britain.

Please email queries to
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Despite the interwar explosion of books, advertisements, films, paintings, and pictures that depicted rural life, no study to date has looked into representations of the rural across diverse media. Nor has any study considered the relation of rural representation in early- and mid-twentieth-century culture to rural people who, as much or more than urban dwellers, grappled with the forces and effects of modernization and modernity. Rural Modernity aims to bring together essays on literature, arts, crafts, and films to identify the interconnected—at times conflicting—ideas that images of the rural helped to circulate and to open up “rural modernity” as a particularly useful framework for further studies of interwar art and literature, and, more broadly, British culture.

Possible subjects include Writers: H. E. Bates, Adrian Bell, Kenneth Grahame, Lewis Grassic Gibbon, Thomas Hardy, Winifred Holtby, A. A. Milne, H. J. Massingham, Beverley Nichols, A. G. Street, Flora Thompson, Mary Webb, Francis Brett Young Artists: Evelyn Dunbar, Spencer Gore, Duncan Grant, Augustus John, Thomas Hennell, Laura Knight, Clare Leighton, John Nash, Paul Nash, Samuel Peploe, Gwen Raverat, Eric Ravilious, Stanley Spencer, Philip Wilson Steer Preoccupations: villages, cottages, country houses, farming, gardening, tourism and motoring, ramblers and anglers, folk dancing, Peacehaven and the Plotlands movement, rural industries and organic communities Media: books, prints, paintings, illustrations, photography, film, and mass print media.

The aims of writers and artists who engaged with ideas of the rural—evocation of lost worlds, celebration of new discoveries, participation in modernist experiments—tell only part of the story, and, while the essays included in Rural Modernity explore these motivations, they also seek to move beyond perceived oppositions between rural and urban/art and craft/modernism and middlebrow.

The conception of rural modernity argued for in this collection makes connections within—and between—these distinctions while allowing for the complexity of the idea of “rural modernity” itself. How was it imagined? How was it marketed? Who promoted it and who opposed it? How have social historians and cultural geographers contributed to our understanding of rural modernity, and how can the concept of rural modernity contribute to literary studies, film studies, print culture studies, and art history?

Reference:
CFP: Rural Modernity: A Collection of Essays. In: ArtHist.net, Nov 15, 2014 (accessed Nov 29, 2026), <https://arthist.net/archive/8918>.