

Mount Howitt, Victoria, Australia.  
(South Eastern Slope).

Mount Howitt has been invoked as a topographic icon\*, a reminder of the timelessness of the natural world. Some choose to see this timelessness in comparison to such flimsily transient concepts as 'civilisation' or 'society'; Early rootless refuseniks chose to walk the land indefinitely, eschewing the civilisation of settlement, and in so doing gave us the verb to *saunter*. †

### III: Rural; Ruralism; Rivalist; Ruralite; Rivaly; Ruralness.

Contemporary dictionaries define *pastoral* as a synonym for *rural*. *Pastoral* explicitly describes agriculture: stewardship of the land and animal husbandry. The use of *rural* and *pastoral* both as noun and verb suggests an expanded meaning in both contexts; always not just 'there' but also 'what is done (there)'.

*A brief history of the rural college of art part #2 (2002)*

*On an empty beachside road on long island, NY I took a large pinhole camera photograph with a cardboard box, later that evening in a bar the bartender said he'd seen me and asked if I was releasing an injured bird.*

Text fragment, undated, RCA archive

*72: From the field – Aus dem Feld, a solo show by David Gates, representing the Rural College of Art.*

*David Gates (\*197X) lives and works in Essex, which also constitutes much of the Rural College of Art's studio and the focus of its field studies. The 3-day show From the Field – Aus dem Feld naturally evolved .....*

Text fragment dated 2013, RCA archive

(Re)producing the Rural: a practice that is both 'there' and 'what is done there'.

William (1792-1879) and Mary (1799-1888) Howitt (married 1821), individually, and in collaboration, wrote poetry, fiction and criticism concerned with the topography and sociology of a rapidly urbanising society. Like a number of their culturally empowered contemporaries, they perceived significant discord resulting from the meeting of urban, industrial culture and the pastimes, spiritualism and way of life of traditional rural communities. The historical position of the Howitts\* is significantly less than others such as the more politically engaged radical William Cobbett or the aloof utopian ideologue William Morris, despite their having collectively published well over 100 texts. This significant body of work both factually documents and celebrates in imaginative prose a connection between people and place wholly removed from the alienated individualism of urban life. The stewardship of natural resources in agriculture, rather than the city's domination of the earth; the reciprocal relationship with the land of those who settled it and their responsibilities to share the earth's bounty with those who were at its mercy. †



William and Mary Howitt

\* 'Well may they wilt, marry and profusely blush, be troth! For that saying is as old as the howitts.' James Joyce Finnegan's Wake 1939' Footnotes define this variously as 'old as the hills – very old.' – finwake.com and 'as old as the hills (howitts are mountains in Australia)' - Collaborative-synthesis.

† 'from sans terre, without land or a home, which, therefore, in the good sense, will mean having no particular home but equally at home anywhere' - Thoreau, H. D. 'Walking', 1851.

\* 'it is pleasant to think that the surname of William and his wife will be remembered as long as there are readers of Joyce's Finnegan's Wake: 'Well may they wilt, marry and profusely blush, be troth! For that saying is as old as the howitts. James Joyce Finnegan's Wake 1939' - Martin, E. W. 'William Howitt' in 'Eminently Victorian - Aspects of an Age' British Broadcasting Corporation, 1974.

† Vagrants, vagabonds: 'idle people who roved about the country and asked charity under pretense of going 'a la Sainte Terre,' to the holy land, till the children exclaimed 'There goes a Saint-Terrer,' a saunterer, a Holy Lander.' - Thoreau, H. D. 'Walking', 1851.



'Snow -leopard' Undated  
RCA archive.



Untitled, undated.  
Original photograph credited to 'A. H. Firmin' \*  
RCA archive

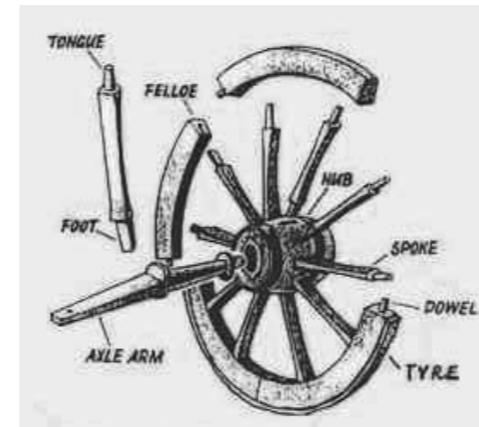


Lucy Broadwood (1858-1929)

One of the main influences on the late 19th and early 20th Century folk revival, Lucy Broadwood was a founder member of the Folk Song Society, later the English Folk Dance and Song Society (still extant and currently based in Cecil Sharp House, 2 Regent's Park Rd, London, NW1 7AY).

Broadwood's work for the society involved collecting and collating\* traditional folk songs from 'rustics' on field visits throughout the British Isles.

### IV: Form, function, degeneracy & decoration.



The Worshipful Company of Wheelwrights (2014)



Untitled, undated. Label reads 'The Cottage Collection'. RCA archive

*Somewhere on the continuum of fidelity will feel right for the cameravan - with a faithfully recreated wheel at one end and a round piece of board with a photo of a cartwheel stuck onto it at the other .....  
... they are motionless, but they are not static.*

Correspondence fragment, undated. RCA archive

\*'it emerges that the rather formal photographer's credit A.H.Firmin refers to the well known Nairobi photographer and passionate mountaineer Arthur Firmin who took numerous photographs of Mount Kenya. Born in Kenya in 1912, he returned to his birthplace in 1937 after having been educated in England, joining the Kenya Police Force, in which he served throughout the war in the role of official photographer. He eventually left and set up his own business in 1946.'

Tragically Arthur Firmin died of pneumonia in 1957 after a fall in which he broke his leg during the Mountain Club of Kenya's failed attempt to climb Mount Chuli in the Himalayas. He is remembered today on Mount Kenya by Firmin's Tower, a pillar of rock on the north face of Batian, one of the mountain's twin peaks, which he scaled in 1944.' - Correspondence fragment, undated. RCA archive.

\*The process of archiving traditional culture may be seen to be among the greatest attacks upon it. Objects, images, sounds, songs, stories etc degenerate when removed from their temporal and geographical context to a metropolitan 'cultural holding centre'.



'Facetious - Coquettish  
- Affected - Sweet-  
Inipid - Vacuous'



'Hideous - Dreadful -  
Bestial - Frightful-  
Awful - Gruesome'

'How can the feelings aroused by form be explained?' \*

*The cartwheel functions as something decorative because it's from the past. Its power doesn't lie in specific historical details but in the fact that it's from another time. Distance produces significance ..... a notion of the past that categorises it as good and often better than the present ..... the romance of the workshop, the dependence on hand, eye and muscle memory past [sic] down the generations ..... they are from the past and the past is perceived as stable because it has happened ..... the function of tradition.* †

*... i've written something somewhere about how a pinhole photo pushes the past away from itself, by looking like its from another time but being an object in the here and now, the materiality of the photo, the object thingyness shimmering or vibrating in this confusion of time and space, a shifting foundationlessness, trying to stretch out roots to get a grounding/ gain stability.*

Correspondence fragment, undated. RCA archive.

#### V:A Movement:

*... photographic expediency, it was not important to me that it was a caravan, it was there, it was already a box, it looked mobile. I drilled a hole in one side, climbed aboard and shut the door, waited for my eyes to adjust and for chinks of light to appear, one by one blocking them out until total darkness was achieved, I waved my hand in front of my face, I couldn't see it.'*

Text fragment, undated. RCA archive.



'Standard Image #03, photograph by Andy Keate', undated. RCA archive

\*'How can the feelings aroused by form be explained?' is a question voiced most loudly by those who have never experienced them ... in order to pacify those who doubt and to pave their way into the world of form, I should like to describe the emotive effect of the elements of form and their constituent parts' [:]

Quick	Malicious	Scornful	Haughty	Pathetic	Frigid	Pitiless	Cruel	Terrible
↑ T	Facetious	Frivolous	Provocative	Arrogant	Harsh	Violent	Savage	Hideous
E	Coquettish	Chic	Ebulliant	Daring	Reckless	Majestic	Awesome	Dreadful
M	Affected	Gracious	Elegant	Energetic	Vigorous	Firm	Brutal	Bestial
P	Sweet	Dainty	Flexible	Fiery	Strong	Rugged	Powerful	Frightful
O	Inipid	Delicate	Devoted	Generous	Distinguished	Mighty	Moribund	Awful
↓ Slow	Vacuous	Straightforward	Sincere	Warm	Solemn	Profound	Sublime	Gruesome
	Dim	Weak	Tired	Troubled	Sad	Melancholic	Sombre	Desperate

Light ← → Heavy  
EFFORT  
\* It is impossible, of course, to translate the German words precisely: this Table is intended to give the essence of Endell's idea.

- August Endell, 'The Beauty of Form and Decorative Art' 1897-8.

† 'No one has yet thrust his podgy hand into the spinning wheel of time without having it torn off by the spokes. We have our culture, our ways of life and the commodities which enable us to live this life ... we do not sit in a particular way because a carpenter has made a chair in such and such a manner. A carpenter makes a chair in a particular manner because that is how we wish to sit ..... when rubbish is produced for posterity the affect is doubly unaesthetic.' - Adolf Loos, 'Cultural Degeneracy', 1908.



Contemporary Art Rural Tour, Wrabness, Essex, 30th March 2013. RCA archive



Image fragment Untitled, undated. RCA archive



'Back to the land'

'I'll Take My Stand: The South and the Agrarian Tradition' was published in 1930 by the 'Southern Agrarians', 12 writers from the southern states of the USA. 'I'll Take My Stand' was a manifesto for their movement; a critique of the rapid urbanisation and industrialisation of the early 20th Century, posing as an alternative a return to a more traditionally rural and local/regional culture and agrarian American values.

*... if it strays too far from the road it becomes a fish out of water, it aspires to nature but, barely making it is generally found stacked side by side with its own kind. In its later years it may be scrapped or maybe repurposed, a caravan of this era and area will mainly be found in a field of horses being used as a shed, no longer active ...*

Text fragment, undated. RCA archive.

*An elongation of the photographic process as a way to disrupt and question that idea of representation, the illusion, the seamless surface\*, to fragment, to question and reaffirm the gaze of the photographer, the information, the misinformation, scraps ...*

Text fragment, undated. RCA archive.

*In the summer I found a sheep laid out on its back, legs akimbo, motionless and obviously dead. It must have been there a while as it had ground down all the grass in an arc around its head and had left large, dark, faceted masses, I mean it had shit everywhere, it was cast or riggwelted or cowped and with the housekeeper we rolled it on its side, it stood up, gathered itself together and resumed. At the end of that field a fresh track leads to a privately owned and managed woodland, and in the woods my caravan is hidden, the mere sight of it may encourage thoughts of destruction to bored teenagers, so it is tucked away in a damp corner, these woods are still. There is an abundance of stinkhorns and those unfamiliar with the stinkhorn mushroom will know nothing of the stench of death it pervades, but taking photographs whilst smelling death seems to lean towards many conceptualisations about photography, none of which i've read too (cont ▷)*

In the same decade, in Germany, the *volkisch* movement combined sentimental patriotic interest in German folklore, local history and a 'back-to-the-land' anti-urban populism with many parallels in the writings of William Morris. As it evolved, the movement combined Nietzschean\* individualism, the arcane and esoteric aspects of folkloric occultism, and, in some circles, elements of exclusionary ethnic nationalism.

\*Wabi - sabi - A Japanese aesthetic centered on the acceptance and appreciation of transience, incompleteness and imperfection.

Mono no aware - A Japanese term describing an awareness of the impermanence of the material world - 'the pathos of things'.

Both ideas are explored in 'In Praise of Shadows', Jun'ichirō Tanizaki, 1933. The essay is a nostalgic celebration of traditional Japanese aesthetics and the creation of layers of shadow, gleam, and patina on surfaces by age. This aesthetic is contrasted with that of the industrialized West of the 20th Century; the striving for progress that characterised the West is presented as a constant search for light and clarity. In response, Tanizaki explains his preference for the contrast of light and dark in a room, laquerware by candlelight, women in the dark of a brothel and monastary toilets:

*The novelist Natsume Sōseki counted his morning trips to the toilet a great pleasure, "a physiological delight" he called it. And surely there could be no better place to savor this pleasure than a Japanese toilet where, surrounded by tranquil walls and finely grained wood, one looks out upon blue skies and green leaves.*

*In Praise of Shadows*, Jun'ichirō Tanizaki, 1933.

\* 'truths are illusions about which one has forgotten that this is what they are; metaphors which are worn out and without sensuous power; coins which have lost their pictures and now matter only as metal, no longer as coins.' - by Friedrich Nietzsche, *On Truth and Lie in an Extra-Moral Sense*. 1873.