

LITERATURE, POLITICS,  
AND THE ENGLISH  
AVANT-GARDE

Accounts of the “historical avant-garde” and of “high modernism” often celebrate the former for its revolutionary aesthetics or denigrate the latter for its “proto-fascist” politics. In *Literature, Politics, and the English Avant-Garde*, Paul Peppis shows how neither interpretation explains the writings of avant-gardists in early twentieth-century England. Peppis reads texts by writers like Ford Madox Ford, Wyndham Lewis, Dora Marsden, and Ezra Pound alongside English political discourse between the death of Victoria and the end of the Great War. He traces the impact of nation and empire on the avant-garde, arguing that Vorticism, England’s foremost avant-garde movement, used nationalism to advance literature and avant-garde literature to advance empire. Peppis’s study demonstrates that these ambitions were enabled by the period’s conception of nationality as an essence and construct. By recovering these neglected aspects of avant-garde politics, Peppis’s book opens important new avenues for assessing modernist politics after the war.

PAUL PEPPIS is Assistant Professor of English at the University of Oregon. He has written a range of articles and reviews on modernist authors, modernist theories of race, and modernism and the Great War, in journals such as *Modernism/Modernity*, *Modern Philology*, *Twentieth-Century Literature*, and the *Yale Journal of Criticism*.

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Paul Peppis

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*Nation and Empire, 1901–1918*

PAUL PEPPIS



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*For Tess, Cole, and Libby*

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