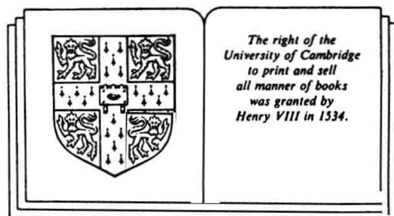
The Political Aesthetic of YEATS, ELIOT, and POUND

MICHAEL NORTH

The Political Aesthetic of Yeats, Eliot, and Pound

MICHAEL NORTH
University of California, Los Angeles



CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY PRESS

Cambridge
New York Port Chester Melbourne Sydney

CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY PRESS
Cambridge, New York, Melbourne, Madrid, Cape Town, Singapore, São Paulo, Delhi

Cambridge University Press
The Edinburgh Building, Cambridge CB2 8RU, UK

Published in the United States of America by Cambridge University Press, New York

www.cambridge.org
Information on this title: www.cambridge.org/9780521102735

© Cambridge University Press 1991

This publication is in copyright. Subject to statutory exception
and to the provisions of relevant collective licensing agreements,
no reproduction of any part may take place without the written
permission of Cambridge University Press.

First published 1991
This digitally printed version 2009

A catalogue record for this publication is available from the British Library

Library of Congress Cataloguing in Publication data

North, Michael, 1951–

The political aesthetic of Yeats, Eliot, and Pound / Michael North.

p. cm.

Includes bibliographical references and index.

ISBN 0-521-41432-6

1. Political poetry, American – History and criticism. 2. Politics and literature – United States – History – 20th century. 3. Politics and literature – Ireland – History – 20th century. 4. Political poetry, English – History and criticism. 5. Yeats, W.B. (William Butler), 1865–1939 – Political and social views. 6. Eliot, T.S. (Thomas Stearns), 1888–1965 – Political and social views. 7. Pound, Ezra, 1885–1972 – Political and social views. I. Title.
PS310.P6N6 1992
821′.91209358 – dc20 91-27277
CIP

ISBN 978-0-521-41432-6 hardback
ISBN 978-0-521-10273-5 paperback

Preface and Acknowledgments

Readers of Walter Benjamin will recognize a polemical assertion in the title of this book. Benjamin defines fascism as the aestheticization of politics, and it is now quite common to suggest that Yeats, Eliot, and Pound are fascists in this general sense even if they were not all card-carrying members of a fascist party. If the aestheticization of politics is the attempt to resolve in art contradictions that are really economic or political, then the charge against these three is a just one. But it is my contention that the very attempt to resolve economic or political contradictions, instead of just leaving them out of art altogether, inevitably politicizes the aesthetic. That is to say, the smooth workings of art are disrupted by what it cannot resolve. This is the case, I think, with Yeats, Eliot, and Pound, who, precisely because of their failure, are more faithful to the real conflicts of our century than many writers whose politics we now find easier to accept.

I am interested, therefore, in what these three poets have to say *about* political issues, but I am even more interested in the presence of politics as a disruptive force in the formal organization of their works. I think it is necessary to be quite specific about the particular political allegiances of the three, which were actually quite different from one another, but it is not my purpose to offer extended biographical accounts. Rather, I want to concentrate on the way specific political choices, such as Yeats's allegiance to the Anglo-Irish Ascendancy or Pound's to Mussolini, entail difficult poetic choices as well. The relationship of the individual to the community, of literature to practical action, of the individual parts of a work of art to its overall structure – these are problems the poets tried to solve simultaneously and by the same means, so that practical conflicts and theoretical difficulties emerge as formal problems in the poetry.

It is my hope that what I have to say here will affect current opinion about literary modernism in general. A movement like modernism can survive and even thrive as long as it is hated and despised, but it may not

be able to outlive the indifference that follows acceptance. Nowadays, modernism, which tried so hard to shock, is simply taken for granted, dismissed before it has a chance to be disliked. Those critics who think it important to show that modernism makes good sense unwittingly conspire with their opponents, who need a bland caricature to set up as a straw man. I feel that modernism still has a claim on our interest precisely because it does not make good sense, because we find in it more of the unfinished business of our time than in any other literature. This is one explanation for my choice of examples. It is not possible to argue that the politics of Yeats, Eliot, and Pound are typical of a movement that also includes Joyce and Woolf, but I hope that more can be learned from the most extreme cases or, to instance Pound alone, the most extreme failures.

If modernism has become something of a dead issue in literary discussions, modernity is a very live one wherever the Frankfurt School and Jürgen Habermas have any influence. I think that these debates have great relevance for the study of literary modernism, not least because of the very strong resemblances between the founders of the Frankfurt School, who operated overtly on the left, and the right-wing poets who are my subjects. Theorists like Lukács and Adorno figure very largely in my analysis, but this does not seem to me an "application" of a critical theory to an inert body of texts. German theorists and American and Irish poets share a common meditation on the problem of modernity, so much so that I think that Eliot can tell us as much about Lukács as Lukács tells us about Eliot. If, as Habermas has famously suggested, modernity is an unfinished project, then literary modernism is both a spectacular example of modernity's unrealized promise and a theoretical investigation of the causes of that failure.

I was aided in the writing of this book by a series of grants from the UCLA Academic Senate Committee on Research. I would like to thank Kristin Leuschner and Rob Sproul for their help as research assistants.

A number of colleagues and friends have read portions of the book in manuscript. I would especially like to thank Ronald Bush for his helpful advice at several different stages. Calvin Bedient and Stephen Yenser also offered a number of suggestions without which this would have been a far less successful work. Finally, I owe a general debt of gratitude to Marjorie Perloff and Edward Mendelson for their help and encouragement over a number of years.

试读结束：需要全本请在线购买： www.ertongbook.com

Contents

Preface and Acknowledgments *page* vii

Introduction 1

Chapter 1. W.B. Yeats: Cultural Nationalism 21
1. The Isle of Freedom 21
2. The Success and Failure of the Irish Revival 27
3. Major Gregory's Responsibilities 37
4. The Leaning Tower 49
5. Senator and Blueshirt 61

Chapter 2. T.S. Eliot: Conservatism 74
1. Prufrock, Philosophy, and Politics 74
2. The Critic and the Crisis of Historicism 81
3. *The Waste Land* 94
4. Eliot's Conservatism 106
5. "Little Gidding" 119

Chapter 3. Ezra Pound: Fascism 128
1. Politics and the Luminous Detail 128
2. History, Value, and *The Cantos* 144
3. The Fascist Bargain 155
4. The *Pisan Cantos* 178

Conclusion 187

Notes 193

Index 235

Introduction

The politics of Yeats, Eliot, and Pound have long been an embarrassment and a scandal. Yeats's authoritarianism, Eliot's prejudices, and Pound's fascist anti-Semitism have presented sympathetic critics with insuperable problems of explanation.[1] The poetry is often saved from contamination by being placed in quarantine, while the growing number of critics hostile to the poetry can easily condemn it by association. Arguments about whether Yeats and Eliot were or were not fascists – about Pound there is little room for doubt – continue as if under a similar obligation to the either-or, simply because the question seems too serious to permit any vacillation.[2] The hope behind this book is that both the politics of these three poets and the relationship of politics to their poetry can be understood better if the either-or can be avoided, not just where fascism is concerned, but also where aesthetic modernism touches modern politics in general.

Faith in a coherent and unified modernity – one in which enlightenment brings material progress, political freedom, and cultural renaissance – is now so quaint as to seem pre-modern. The most that is now claimed for modernity, even by its strongest remaining supporters, is that it is "an incomplete project."[3] Even the ironic hopefulness of Schiller and Hegel is outmoded, as is the dialectical faith of Marx that the evils of modernity would call up their own solution. The only real quarrel is over where to lay the blame for the failure of modernity: on technology, on liberal democracy, on cultural modernism, or on enlightenment itself.[4]

The aesthetic modernism of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries is part of this quarrel. Aesthetic modernism is at once part of the larger modern project of enlightenment, emancipation, and progress and a reaction against that project. E.J. Hobsbawm claims that until the twentieth century "there was no general rift between political and artistic 'modernity.' "[5] By the beginning of the century, however, the rift visible at least as early as Baudelaire had become "general," so that aesthetic

modernism could be defined by its antagonism to the other elements of modernity: rationalism, material progress, liberal democracy.[6] Even artists and writers who seemed most enthusiastically modern – boosters of technology such as Marinetti – were in fact using one aspect of the modern to declare war on all the rest.

By 1939, W.H. Auden could summarize in one paragraph what had become a familiar indictment:

> The most obvious social fact of the last forty years is the failure of liberal capitalist democracy, based on the premises that every individual is born free and equal, each an absolute entity independent of all others; and that a formal political equality, the right to vote, the right to a fair trial, the right of free speech, is enough to guarantee his freedom of action in his relations with his fellow men. The results are only too familiar to us all. By denying the social nature of personality, and by ignoring the social power of money, it has created the most impersonal, the most mechanical and the most unequal civilisation the world has ever seen, a civilisation in which the only emotion common to all classes is a feeling of individual isolation from everyone else, a civilisation torn apart by the opposing emotions born of economic injustice, the just envy of the poor and the selfish terror of the rich.[7]

The promise of modern political movements to win individual freedom and self-fulfillment for all had come to seem a hollow form; the rights and freedoms guaranteed by liberalism seemed mere abstractions, blank checks that could never be filled in or cashed.[8] One source of the power of aesthetic modernism was its implicit claim to effect the liberation that liberal democracy had promised but failed to deliver.[9] Even a reactionary modernism could seem vital in contrast to the ossified remnants of a failed system, and it was reactionaries like Marinetti who promised the most thorough and the most thrilling revolutions. When Ezra Pound called liberalism "a running sore," or when T.S. Eliot complained that his society was "worm-eaten with Liberalism," they joined the attack on a system that had come to epitomize the failure of modernity.[10]

Reactionary critics like Eliot and Pound identified in liberalism the same weakness that Auden had found: the misconception that the individual is "an absolute entity independent of all others." In classical political theory, freedom was a social concept, the freedom to participate in the community. Modern, liberal conceptions of freedom are in contrast subjective and personal. Freedom means the absence of external constraint.[11] This difference in the concept of freedom, of the proper relationship between individual and society, implies a new definition of the two terms of the relationship. But this new definition is in a sense no definition at all, because the individual who is to be free of constraint must also be independent of all influence and prior to all purpose. This theoretical individual has no particular character, no goals, no inclinations except the

fulfillment of a self that seems to lack anything specific to fulfill. Like this individual, the community defined by liberal theory is a neutral arena in which different goods contend according to certain rules. Separating the individual from the community thus results in the removal of particular social or moral values from the realm of politics. Therefore, the formalism that Auden criticizes is not part of the decline of liberalism but is in fact the very essence and origin of a system that specifies forms but not ends, procedures but not particular values.[12]

The paradoxical result of such abstract, formal notions of individual freedom is, as Auden argues, "a civilisation in which the only emotion common to all classes is a feeling of individual isolation from everyone else." Hegel argued, at the very birth of modern politics, that liberal formalism is inherently oppressive, that the promise of individual freedom is shadowed by its opposite. If the community embodies no particular good except the freedom of the individuals within it, then the state is internally inconsistent and oppressive by definition, because it can only enforce its laws by abridging the freedom that is its end. If the only means of influencing individuals is by force or appeal to self-interest, then authority can only be coercive or manipulative.[13] As Jürgen Habermas puts it, the law of freedom "is *also* a law of coercion. The inverse of private autonomy, to which this law secures the right, is the psychological motivation of coercion, of obedience."[14]

Hegel felt that the modern state mitigated this contradiction by including a number of agencies that rightly mediated between the individual and society as a whole, but Marx argued that these agencies merely confessed the very split they were supposed to mediate. For Marx, in his early critique of Hegel, the liberal attempt to guarantee freedom by investing rights in an abstract individual thwarts itself by allowing only an abstract collective: "The abstraction of the state as such belongs only to modern times because the abstraction of private life belongs only to modern times." Thus Marx begins his attack on bourgeois society by complaining that "allness remains merely an external plurality or totality of individuals. Allness is no essential spiritual, actual quality of the individual [but] merely the sum total of individuality."[15] Bourgeois society is characterized by a gap between the concrete individual and his or her theoretical counterpart and thus by a similar gap between a collective that depends on real, concrete beliefs or interests and a purely formal, abstract collective.

Thus the complaint, especially common among Marxists, that despite its promise of individual freedom, modern society is less open to variation and change than more traditional societies. Individualism itself becomes a principle of conformity, as Horkheimer and Adorno charge: "Men were given their individuality as unique in each case, different to all

others, so that it might all the more surely be made the same as any other."[16] What looks like the promise of individual freedom becomes, because of its abstract nature, a means of eliminating differences and even of enforcing conformity. At the same time, the purely formal equivalence of individuals within the system destroys old associations without replacing them with anything meaningful. Thus it is also argued that if liberalism frees the individual at all it is only to integrate him or her more completely into the machine of industrial capitalism where workers, like the parts they manipulate, must be interchangeable. In short, a political theory based on the formal opposition of individual and community devalues both and mocks its own promise by destroying community without truly setting the individual free.[17]

The anti-liberal reaction of such as Yeats, Eliot, and Pound can be characterized best by the inconsistencies it suffers in trying to oppose this contradictory system. The three seem allies in a program of anti-individualism, a critique of a philosophical and political theory that, in Yeats's words, "separates us from one another because it makes us always more unlike. . . . " Here is the condition that calls forth Yeats's Irish nationalism, Eliot's concept of tradition, and Pound's celebrations of "the whole people" against critics and schismatics. And yet, within a few years of his complaint against excessive differentiation, Yeats criticized the same system for making human beings "as like one another as the dots and lozenges in . . . mechanical engraving." Eliot and Pound could also speak as committed individualists, proclaiming, against standardization, that "the truth is the individual."[18] Confusion persists about modernism, which can seem both impersonal and idiosyncratic, because the major modernists themselves held contradictory opinions.

Behind this contradiction lie the contradictions of liberalism and the consequent necessity to attack it from two sides at once, to defend both the individual and community. The three poets share an aspiration to disentangle actual individuals from theoretical individualism, "the variety and uniqueness of persons," as Eliot put it, from the "purely material individuation" of liberal democracy. They argue for what Pound called individualism "without any theoretical and ideological bulwarks." This would also disentangle the individual from the "artificial, mechanised or brutalised control" that Eliot saw as a reflex of the liberal system.[19] At the same time, the connection that all three saw between "liberal individualism" and "inhuman capitalism" would be broken, and society returned to a time before the French Revolution had "left the French peasant at the mercy of the capitalist," as Yeats said, quoting Kropotkin.[20] Instead of capitalism, with its merely mechanical organization, and liberalism, with its formal guarantees, the three hoped to achieve a community based on shared values. Finally, they attempted to reverse the specious

separation of individual and community with which all the other contradictions began. If liberalism had devalued both individual and community, anti-liberals like Yeats, Eliot, and Pound hoped for a system in which "the wholly personal" would be connected to a "multitude now and in past time."[21]

According to Russell Berman, "Modernist anti-liberalism was regularly directed at the failures of a progressivist liberal project, leading in turn either to a rejection of that project (fascist modernism) or its radicalization on the left."[22] Yeats, Eliot, and Pound certainly seem to belong in Berman's first group, and yet anti-liberalism cannot be divided so neatly into left and right. The theoretical distribution that puts Marxism on one side and fascism on the other, with liberalism as a mean between them, ignores certain historical facts. From the time of Hegel, left and right have shared a common antagonist in liberalism. Karl Mannheim asserts that the critique of capitalism and liberal democracy was "initiated by the 'right-wing opposition' and that it was only subsequently transferred from here to the designs of the 'left-wing' opposition."[23] In other words, the liberal system first antagonized an entrenched status quo, which developed in conservative terms a critique later adapted to more radical uses. The attack on industrial capitalism and liberal democracy as atomizing, demeaning, and dehumanizing, and the corresponding search for an organic system of social relations are, as Raymond Williams has shown, common "both in this kind of conservative thinking and in Marxist thinking. The common enemy (or, if it is preferred, the common defender of the true faith) is Liberalism."[24]

Fascism cannot be placed securely on one side of the spectrum because it is the explosive coalescence of the left and right wings of anti-liberal thought. In France, according to Zeev Sternhell, fascism was the result of "the shift to the right of elements that were socially advanced but fundamentally opposed to liberal democracy."[25] In Italy, fascism emerged from a socialist labor movement, and it was invented and named by the former socialist Benito Mussolini. The foremost English fascist, Sir Oswald Mosley, had been a member of Ramsay MacDonald's Labour cabinet. Even in Germany, certain proto-Nazis took quite seriously the coalition of nationalism and socialism that gave the party its name. Spengler, for example, was capable of identifying the "old style Prussian spirit and socialist values."[26] Fascism appealed to European intellectuals in part because it seemed to resolve into one doctrine all the available modes of opposition to the liberal status quo and in this way to rise above politics and merely political disagreements.

There are, of course, obvious differences between left-wing and right-wing critiques of liberalism. Conservatives attack liberalism in the name of the past and long to return to it, whereas Marxists base their critique

试读结束：需要全本请在线购买： www.ertongbook.com

on the hope of a better future. And yet, in the years between the two world wars, it was often the right that seized the future for its slogans, especially the far right in Germany and Italy, where fascism posed as a "young" movement against a moribund left.[27] The radical right also proved adept at using the sort of egalitarian language usually considered more proper to the left. And both wings were inspired by sociological arguments that human beings are not primarily motivated by reason or even by self-interest but rather by ideology.[28] Conservatives defend something called culture, whereas the left speaks in terms of class or totality, but both groups diverge from liberalism, as Williams says, in being "unable to think of society as a merely neutral area, or as an abstract regulating mechanism. The stress has fallen on the positive function of society, on the fact that the values of individual men are rooted in society, and on the need to think and feel in these common terms."[29] Here the left and the right converge, in skepticism about the neutral, freely choosing individual of liberalism, in homage to the idea that individuals are inescapably members of a given society.

In the various movements that make up aesthetic modernism, the left and the right are similarly mixed. In England, the arts and crafts movement housed both socialists like Crane and Ashbee and conservatives like Voysey and Lutyens.[30] In Germany, the same ambiguity persisted into the 1920s, when the Deutsche Werkbund planned an exhibition to celebrate the *Neue Zeit* that was to include socialist, National Socialist, and *Völkisch* sympathizers.[31] There were similar cases in France, where the architectural projects of Le Corbusier and Walter Gropius and the art of Fernand Léger were featured in the proto-fascist journal *Plans* along with the writings of Drieu La Rochelle.[32] The crusading zeal of aesthetic modernism, its promise to overcome a stultified society and make with the tools of art a new future, was equally available to the left and the right.

Much of this ambiguity survives in the political beliefs of the great Irish, English, and American modernists. Yeats began his active political career as a socialist under the influence of Morris, whose anti-capitalism, Elizabeth Cullingford suggests, may have created Yeats's later interest in the anti-capitalism of the fascists.[33] Eliot, whose version of tradition is often cited by left-wing critics as definitive of modernist totalitarianism, said as late as 1936 that "the traditional poet will be submissive, reactionary or revolutionary according to his perception of the need of his time and place."[34] Before throwing in his lot with Mussolini, Pound flirted with the thought of Lenin, and submitted himself to the tutelage of Mike Gold and *The Masses*.[35] Perhaps the most spectacular expression of this ambiguity comes from Wyndham Lewis, who defined his position in 1928 as "partly communist and partly fascist, with a distinct streak of

monarchism in my marxism, but at bottom anarchist with a healthy passion for order."[36] Lewis is no doubt posing for effect, but there was enough radical criticism even in the most authoritarian modernists to lead the next generation, Auden's generation, into the Communist Party. As Stephen Spender says, "the younger generation, in coming to their revolutionary conclusions, owed their view that we were in a revolutionary situation to the insights of the reactionaries."[37]

Young Englishmen might be led into the Communist Party by their reading of *The Waste Land,* as Spender insists they were, because the portrayal of modern society contained in that poem strongly resembled one being developed at the same time by European Marxists. Ten days after Eliot's poem was first published, Georg Lukács wrote the introduction to a group of essays called *History and Class Consciousness.* These essays were perhaps the most thorough exposition ever written of the crisis of liberalism, the contradictions in its philosophy, and its implication in the development of capitalism. Lukács argued that once bourgeois thought takes "the purely inward freedom of individual moral practice" as its basic value a whole series of oppositions opens up within it: "between subject and object, freedom and necessity, individual and society, form and content, etc." If the general can only be considered in opposition to the particular, the social in opposition to the individual, then "reality disintegrates into a multitude of irrational facts and over these a network of purely formal 'laws' emptied of content is then cast." Whatever commonality there is in such a system appears only as an alien imposition, an abstract and seemingly impersonal law, that can only rule over but not truly unify the individuals within it. Liberal individualism, that is, comes accompanied by an iron control: "The atomisation of the individual is, then, only the reflex in consciousness of the fact that 'natural laws' of capitalist production have been extended to cover every manifestation of life in society. . . . " With this basically Hegelian analysis, Lukács uncannily recreated the early philosophical writings of Marx, with which he could not have been familiar at the time.[38]

History and Class Consciousness began a new movement within European Marxism, which had duplicated within itself the crisis of modernity. As Eugene Lunn says, the failure of working class solidarity during the First World War, the defeat of the European working class revolutions that followed it, and the subsequent rise of fascism presented European Marxism with a critical challenge. The "rationalist and confident assumptions about the course of history" that Marx had shared with bourgeois liberals were called into question. The mechanistic philosophy of the Second International seemed as defunct as liberalism, and for many of the same reasons. The twin emphases represented in Lukács's title, history and consciousness, restored to Marxism elements removed by a mate-

rialistic, scientistic, and determinist dogma. Lukács's was in this sense perhaps a conservative revolution within Marxism, as he felt himself in later years, a turn away from objective modes of analysis and prediction, away from the side of Marx that welcomed capitalist development as a prelude to communism, and toward an anti-capitalism that was romantic and idealist. Yet the Marxism of the Second International suffered in its own way from the same rigidities and bifurcations as liberal democracy, the Lukács's work represented the Marxist version of the revolt against its contradictions.[39]

The philosophical ambition to overcome the oppositions Lukács identifies was, of course, a general one. It is not pure coincidence, therefore, that Eliot's years as an academic philosopher were spent worrying out this relationship. The conclusion of his dissertation, that there is no absolute point of view from which to distinguish between subjective and objective, is the result of an epistemological skepticism, but it also sketches the beginnings of a value judgment on which Eliot would base a political position. In 1916, the same year in which he finished the dissertation that declared his inability to distinguish between individual minds and the objective world, Eliot delivered a series of lectures that castigated Romanticism for attempting to do just this. Romanticism led its devotees into two contradictory extremes, "escape from the world of fact, and devotion to brute fact," or, in other words, solipsistic idealism and utter realism. The classicism Eliot was just beginning to promote at this time was an attempt to overcome this dichotomy, and Eliot was well aware that his solution bore a strong resemblance to other solutions chosen by the left.[40]

Though Pound and Yeats were much less sophisticated philosophers, they worked in their own ways to resolve the same dichotomies. About the time Eliot delivered his lectures, Pound denounced "state education" for turning its students into mere compilers of data, of details that can only be unified by massive abstract generalizations. The state behind such education, Pound suggests, treats its citizens in the same way, reducing them to mere ants but also herding them together into ant heaps, rationalizing their lives but removing all "human value" from its "rationalistic explanations."[41] In the same year Yeats began the occult investigations that were to arrange in interpenetrating cones beauty and truth, value and fact, particular and universal, quality and quantity, abstract and concrete. From its very beginnings in the automatic script of Yeats's wife, this project was also a political one because Yeats tended to see democracy as the ultimate fall into contradiction of individual and race, and the aristocracy as the fruitful balance of these as contraries. Years later, Yeats was to trace both communism and fascism to Hegel's attempt to reconcile these contraries, bequeathed to him by Kant. Yeats plotted out mod-

ern politics on what he called the "Genealogical Tree of Revolution," on which he hung communism and fascism as the fruits of Hegel's philosophy. In this way, Yeats's "Genealogical Tree of Revolution" duplicates Lukács, even as it arranges Lukács's communism as a parallel movement to the fascism then engaging Yeats himself.[42]

Despite Lukács's antagonism toward aesthetic modernism, an antagonism that obscured his own early enthusiasm for certain of the modern movements, there was, therefore, a strong similarity between the Western Marxism that followed *History and Class Consciousness* and even the sort of modernism practiced by Yeats, Eliot, and Pound.[43] This unexpected convergence might be explained in a number of ways. There may be no coincidence in the fact that Lukács and the three poets made their concurrent analyses of the contradictions of modern politics in the years around 1917, for modern politics had by then spectacularly collapsed and a whole host of theories, which had yet to be securely divided into left and right, rose up in explanation. Lukács had come to Marxism from a much more conservative anti-capitalism, which deplored modern society for the mortal wounds it had dealt to culture. This kind of romantic anti-capitalism is also strong in Yeats, who hoped that Ireland might avoid the capitalist phase altogether, in Pound, with his vehement hatred of unproductive, mercantile capitalism, and even in Eliot, whose work, according to F.O. Matthiessen, grew out of "his revulsion against the lawless exploitation by which late nineteenth-century American individuals made any coherent society impossible."[44] *History and Class Consciousness* marked a return to Marxism of this romantic strain, present in Marx himself but purged from the movement by the Second International.[45] Its return made possible an unacknowledged anti-modern convergence, in which both left and right decried the effects of liberal theory and capitalist practice.

The elements of a common aspiration, if not a common project, can be made fairly clear. Lukács hoped to counteract empiricism and abstraction through history, through a context in which "the opposition of the individual case and historical law is dissolved." In political terms, this meant rejoining the individual and the community, separated by definition in liberal theory. If, as Lukács asserts, "historical knowledge is an act of self-knowledge," then the purely contemplative relationship of individual to history is broken and "the 'contingent' relation of the parts to the whole" is dissolved. History becomes an act of self-consciousness that is simultaneously the awareness of solidarity with a community.[46]

This aspiration is shared even by the most reactionary of the modernists. Eliot's criticism rests, as Richard Shusterman has recently shown, on a belief in "the historicity of human knowledge," a belief so close to that of Lukács in spirit that Lee Congdon takes a passage from "Tradition and

the Individual Talent" to gloss his discussion of *History and Class Consciousness*.[47] In the same year in which Lukács published this work, Yeats declared his own "substitution of the historical sense for logic." He was raising the reactionary banner against democracy, but his terms and his values echoed Lukács's nonetheless. When Pound attacked what he called *Kultur* because it separated particular facts from general principles, and when he attempted to heal this split with a revived sense of history, he also participated in this politically ambidextrous attack on the "antinomies of bourgeois thought."[48]

Yeats, Eliot, and Pound incorporate history in their work as part of this attack. They deploy history, as Lukács did, as a militant value against liberal democracy and capitalism. History, in this sense, is at once the alternative to discrete facts and to empty generalizations, to scientism, positivism, and the liberal version of natural law. It disputes the existence of a theoretical individual separable from the human community and makes community life dependent on specific values instead of timeless laws.

The modern turn to history as an antidote to liberalism recapitulates an antagonism older than liberalism itself, one that extends back to Winckelmann, Vico, and Herder.[49] Vico's attack on the doctrine of natural law, in which he called into question "the existence of a fixed, unchanging human nature, common to all men, everywhere, at all times," became the basis for a whole tradition.[50] The tradition was developed by Hegel, especially in the essay *Natural Law,* in which he challenges the liberal concept of "man in the image of the bare state of nature" as an artificial separation of the individual from a particular history and community.[51] Hegel's influence is clear in Marx, who attacks capitalism for presenting itself as an ahistorical system operating on the basis of timeless laws, in Croce, who sets history against the "abstract rationalism of the Enlightenment," and finally in Lukács and his successors in Western Marxism.[52]

As this list of names may indicate, the historicism that begins with Vico is adaptable to a variety of political uses. Dependent as it is on a notion of cultural unity, this kind of historicism can be attacked as conformist and even authoritarian.[53] Originally, however, it was part of the assertion of "national individuality," of regional and even local difference against a uniform definition of humankind.[54] Georg Iggers says of eighteenth-century historicism that it was bound up with the "attempts of political theorists to defend local rights and privileges against the encroachment of the centralizing Enlightenment state."[55] In this sense and at this time, historicism is a conservative protest against progressive amalgamation of region into nation and nation into an undifferentiated humankind.

An emphasis on historical particularity is conservative and even anti-

modern insofar as it opposes liberal derivations of right from nature with rights based on custom. In this sense, according to Mannheim, "historical thinking" itself is anti-revolutionary, born as it is in opposition to the realization of natural law in the French Revolution.[56] In vesting rights not in the individual but in the family, the region, or even the state, historicism is fundamentally anti-democratic.[57] Even historicist opposition to the state can have repressive implications if it seeks to replace the state with a restrictively defined culture or a mystically determined collectivity, a people or *Volk*.[58] In all these ways, historicism seems committed to the past, to a defense of tradition, or, in the worst case, to a simple reinforcement of the status quo.

If historicism is conservative and even repressive in one sense, it is, however, radically liberating in another, in that it establishes the right of different places and times to their own standards. For Abdallah Laroui, revolutionary praxis is "historicism in action" because historicism asserts the value of the particular against an "abstract universalism."[59] At least from the time of the Young Hegelians, historicism has been current in the form Karl Löwith calls "historical futurism," a form that sanctions and even demands change on the grounds that each period must have its own character.[60] History, in this sense, becomes a principle of pure difference, one that can be phrased in quasi-revolutionary terms.[61] Thus it is no wonder that at virtually the same time, history was made a revolutionary value by Lukács and part of a reactionary program by Eliot, Yeats, and Pound. It was also possible for these individuals to switch places, with Lukács sliding into Stalinism and into a repressive aesthetic anti-modernism while the poets fomented revolution against the very literary authorities to whom he appealed. Yet the very fungibility of history in serving both left and right – progress and reaction – reveals its dangers for both sides.

History functions for both left and right as a source of critical power against their common antagonist, but it also entangles left and right in the very system they hope to challenge. For the assertion, voiced most stirringly by Hegel, that human beings are historical creatures, that each individual "exists in a particular society with a particular religion, and in a particular constellation of knowledge and attitudes concerning what is right and acceptable," confesses the tie that binds the historical critic to his or her society, the society formed by liberal democracy, rationalism, and the capitalist system. If, as Hegel says, it is as impossible to escape one's own context as it is to "jump over Rhodes," then how can historical values ever be reintroduced into the liberal society from which they have disappeared?[62] How is the dissatisfied conservative or radical socialist even to imagine such values? Where are new norms and values to come from, and even if they could be derived from a system opposed to value

试读结束：需要全本请在线购买： www.ertongbook.com