# *Editor's Introduction*

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## 1922: The Enormous Rooms of Modernism

Why was that single year the birth date of so many masterpieces? A simple look at the dates can give a first clue: compare 1914–18 to 1918–22. The year 1922 comes four years after the dire four of the first globalized war known to humanity. Indeed, four years was a period of time needed to take stock of the universal catastrophe, to assess what had changed in Europe and the world, and to see whether the promise of the new that was so prevalent in 1913 would lead to a new order or to a new chaos. This major shift entailed a certain time lag in the other continents, which is why this Collection will look primarily at Europe and how it saw its place in a newly globalized world. Our focus will be a post–Versailles treaty Europe, a battered Europe attempting to recapture itself while discovering a suddenly and definitively globalized world. Those four years from 1918 to 1922 were a moment of intense maturation. Four years more were granted to the masterpieces that had been dormant and delayed by the war, as was the case of *In Search of Lost Time*, *Ulysses*, *The Castle*, The *Duino Elegies*, *Wozzeck*, and *The Waste Land*. This development led to a repetition of the clash between the old and the new already perceptible in 1913, albeit with more optimism then, because the new was really new, and the old more notably old.

What most observers point out is that the *annus mirabilis* of high modernism was also a moment of return to prewar classicism, because the previous enthusiasm for experimentation was tempered by irony. A worthy witness to this mixture is a contemporary, who launched a long and productive literary career with his second novel, Beverley Nichols. When he

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published the witty and naughty *Self* in 1922, he was only twenty-four, and his relaxed but abrasive social comedy announced the flippant and cynical tone of Evelyn Waugh. *Self*'s amoral heroine is a modernist Becky Sharp, and at one point of her strenuous social ascension, she decides to imitate Futurist paintings, but opts for a fake Russian futurist. Her nonplussed husband asks her what their friends will think when they know that she painted her "aggressive triangles." She replies:

"*I* shan't tell them I have painted. I shall say it is by – let me see – by a celebrated Italian. No, that's too obvious. By a Russian. Nobody knows anything about Russia now, and the picture shall be by Vrodska. Vrodska sounds a very Russian name, doesn't it? And Vrodska's work is going to be the *chef-d'oeuvre* of Bolshevist art" (Nichols 1937, 187).

This slight novel makes fun of everything, including politics. Nancy honeymooned in Paris and made new friends in an international crowd in which she would "discuss the regeneration of Poland with the Polish minister of foreign affairs, waxing eloquent over the Ruhr coal-fields with French ministers of finance, and pouring out her pro-Italian sentiments on the question of Italia Irridenta with all the fervor of a D'Annunzio" (Nichols 1937, 181).

No wonder most characters realize that even though the war is over, peace is far ahead. The rich, sinister, and well-named Kraft with whom Nancy will have an affair just to make ends meet, which will bring about her downfall, says at one point: "I do not think that in our lifetime we shall see peace" (Nichols 1937, 164). In 1922, though the world of diplomacy was busy with peace plans that materialized into the creation of a League of Nations – one of the butts of Waugh's satire in *Decline and Fall* – there was already an awareness that the twenties were merely a pause in the course to worse hostilities, as most countries were rearming and preparing for a second world war.

In 1922, it had become clear that Italian Futurism would ally itself with Fascism (after the march on Rome, Mussolini was made prime minister in 1922). Gramsci could write to Trotsky in 1922 that Italian Futurism had merged with Fascism. Meanwhile, the Russian Futurists and Formalists were becoming increasingly suspect in Soviet Russia, in which Lenin suffered two strokes in 1922 and from which Viktor Shlovsky had to flee. Dadaism was slowly petering out and giving a difficult birth to surrealism. The tension between avant-gardes that had partly succeeded but were left without clear targets or sense of direction, and a general wish to return to calm, if not to order, was widespread in Europe. One may say that the lure of the new was not sufficient to underpin a movement or an ideology.

We see a Marxist philosopher like Georg Lukács[1] criticize Tagore, who received the Nobel Prize in 1913, mostly thanks to Yeats's translations and efforts at promotion, as a reactionary writer. Tagore is taken to task for his recent novel, *The Home and the World*, from 1916, in which Lukács recognizes a weak caricature of Gandhi. The novel is presented as emblematic of a pseudouniversalist philosophy of nonviolence that nevertheless enlists the help of the British police when necessary; this fake globalization of "eternal" belief avidly endorsed by the European intelligentsia is rejected as pure bourgeois delusion.

Similarly, we see Antonio Gramsci assess the evolution of Futurism in 1922, a movement that he presents as having waned, branching off into straight Fascism or in Catholic offshoots represented by the most gifted writer, Giovanni Papini.[2] Gramsci honestly recognizes a certain prewar sympathy among the Futurists, the Communists, and the working classes, but states that the war has put an end to this alliance or convergence.

What was looming was less the perception of the new as a break with the past, and more so the wish to reconsider and reconfigure the entire system, a system of values to which one would often give the name of "culture." It was a more foundational mutation that brought about a wish to reexamine the bases of European culture: In 1922, Malinowski had discovered the kula rings in his *Argonauts*; Carl Schmitt was launching a new *Political Theology* that would allow him to understand the phenomenon of a state deciding to abolish its own legal foundation; Wittgenstein looked differently at the truth, language, and the task of describing the world in his *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus* whose bilingual edition was published in 1922. The concepts undergirding the new paradigms move from simple binary oppositions (order/chaos, old/new, same/other) to include more complex hierarchies in which a new sense of the exception confirms the rules while pushing their foundations elsewhere.

Let us be clear about our aim: the concept of the collection is not just a study of all the cultural objects and formations that came into being in 1922, but an assessment of the dynamism of a highly productive *Zeitgeist*. This will lead us to provide a rationale for what has been called "high modernism," a phrase that rings accurate if one looks at it from the angle of history – 1922 is indeed a "peak" – but can be misleading if by "high" one assumes a position of superiority, which evokes distinction, elitism, or a sublime revulsion from "popular culture." This reproach has been leveled regularly at the main modernist authors whose masterpieces were produced in 1922, but it is based on an erroneous extrapolation. What distinguishes those masterpieces from the works that came before the war

is a sense of a new mission: because of the massive destruction, there was a general sense of added responsibility. The thinkers, writers, and artists had to give birth to something that would approach a totality of experience. Indeed, one might be tempted to replace "high modernism" with "total modernism." One might even say that the main object of high modernism is totality just before it turns into totalitarianism.

"Totality" was the term used by Lukács when he pointed out the difference between bourgeois thinking and a materialist theory beginning with economic production and class struggle, in a historical dialectic framed by Hegel first, followed by Marx, Engels, and Lenin. For Lukács, history has to be seen from the point of view of the proletariat; class consciousness cannot be given or taken as a stable point of departure but will be the result of an effort to understand the "concrete totality" of a whole historical process, which entails a deeper critique of the mechanism of capitalistic exploitation. In a very different sense, "totality" was the term used by Wittgenstein when he asserted that "the totality of facts determines what is the case" in *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*. Hence the famous sentence: "2. 2. 04. The totality of existent atomic facts is the world." But, as always, the concept of totality includes the exception to the totality: "2. 05. The totality of existent atomic facts also determines which atomic facts do not exist" (Wittgenstein 1988, 37).

A similar concept of totality was used to describe *Ulysses* by a very perceptive critic, Hermann Broch. In his 1936 essay on Joyce, Broch sketches the main features defining a generation. There is the "style of the time," an "expression of an epoch" fulfilling a "historic reality." If this specific style is to survive its own moment, it will have to overcome its temporal determinations by looking beyond the past and the present and envisaging the future. Such a historic reality will lead to a "total reality" made up of the concrete lives of multitudes. The writer who engages with the idea of reproducing the "universal quotidian of the epoch" (*Welt-Alltag der Epoche*),[3] as Joyce did with *Ulysses*, reshapes the *Zeitgeist* by giving it its artistic form, a crowning achievement made up of all its values. When an artist is able to produce a "universal work of art," then a "universalized everyday" coheres into a cultural "world" that remains with us forever. Thus Leopold Bloom becomes the hero of a "universal quotidian" that takes Dublin as its site yet explores urban reality and everyday life in such a way that it can be shared by all. What critics have called a "novel to end all novels" also reflects the division of a world caught up between organic muteness and the excessive loquacity of universal culture. As Broch sees it, the most intractable problem faced by the Irish writer was that he felt

compelled to create a totality without believing fully in it. He gave us a total form without being a true Platonician: "… the more fundamentally the work of art undertakes the task of totality (*Totalität*) without believing in it, the more threatening the peril of the infinite becomes" (Broch 2002, 94).

Broch's essays from the twenties to the thirties combine philosophical sophistication with the stylish flair of a gifted novelist. This also defines the work of May Sinclair, novelist and philosopher. For her, too, the term of "total configuration of the universe" was to replace the old Hegelian "absolute." Sinclair named her 1922 philosophical synthesis of the new trends, *New Idealism.* For Sinclair, who had read Kant and Hegel closely and used this specific knowledge in a creative manner when writing a disguised intellectual autobiography in *Mary Oliver*, by 1922, the Hegelian "Absolute" was no longer credible: "Now if it fails to establish an Absolute consciousness carrying and covering the totality of things, Idealism is done for" (1922, 5). Sinclair assumed that the "new realism" ushered in by Bertrand Russell had not fully won yet, but could be relayed by a "reconstructed" idealism. In this idealism, critical pragmatism and a new concept of nature as sketched by Alfred North Whitehead would be reconciled. In the end, this idealism would also take Freud's unconscious into account: God is defined as the sum of what we do not know and what He can know through us. Such a mystical point of view, asserted in novelistic form at the end of *Mary Oliver* and *The Life and Death of Harriett Frean*, is congruent with Wittgenstein's final perspective on "the mystical element" that cannot be erased from life.

If such a concept of "totality" can connect highly different viewpoints, it is because it gestures in the direction of a nondialectical synthesis of the opposites. As Broch would repeat in his novels and essays, the rational and the irrational do fuse and blend in the totality, but because science cannot provide this synthesis immediately, the task of literature is to assuage our impatience by giving birth to the new synthesis. This is why the modernist totality will not necessarily lead to the huge symphonic form deployed with such craft by Proust and Joyce. It can underpin a more minimalist sense of the absent center, as one finds in the rendering of war desolation by Woolf in *Jacob's Room*, or in Sinclair's *The Life and Death of Harriett Frean*, a slim sketch rewriting in the negative the previous long autobiographical novel. This proves that the new totality is not just formal or mythical; it goes beyond a belated Wagnerism of the symbolists who were harking after the mirage of the *Gesamtkunstwerk*. For the 1922 modernists, "totality" was too serious to be subsumed by

myth. Even if Proust, Joyce, Eliot, and even Woolf still betray a certain reverence for Wagner's operatic synthesis, they aim at a different sort of "whole": the "whole" will have to reconcile the everyday and the distantly mythical, to encompass the body in its most obscure organic functions and the mind in its dizzying leaps, leading readers to flashes, epiphanies, and all sorts of neoplatonic heights.

An example of the deployment of this concept of totality can be found in Hugo von Hofmannsthal's *Salzburger grosses Welttheater*, which will be discussed here by Matt Wilson Smith. Hugo von Hofmannstahl wanted to provide a counterweight to Wagner's Bayreuth when he launched the Salzburg festival in 1919. David Roberts has explained the poet's motivations:

> Thus against Bayreuth, dedicated to no one great artist, and against a Germany in the image of Weimar, Hofmannstahl sets the whole classical heritage of the nation, which extends from the Middle Ages up to Mozart and Goethe in an unbroken theatrical tradition, whose organic development is rooted in the popular culture of the South, that is, the Austrian-Bavarian lands.… Salzburg thus stands for the romantic redefinition of society as community, as "aesthetic totality." (2011, 169)

It is no paradox that his "Catholic" totality should have come as a response to the recent dissolution of the Austro-Hungarian Empire. The "neoclassicism" deployed here has remained modernist in its desire to unite all aesthetic forms in a new whole. It went back to the Middle Ages, as evinced by the successful staging of *Everyman* at Salzburg in 1920. This was followed in 1922 by an adaptation of Calderón's *The Great Theatre of the World.* This time, the metaphor of microcosm capable of reproducing the macrocosm managed to connect religious and popular features pertaining to a long tradition going back to medieval rituals. In that sense, von Hofmannsthal is as much a modernist as are Joyce, Proust, Pound, Woolf, and Eliot when they blend archaic rituals with modern cityscapes.

Another superb exemplification of modernist neo-Wagnerism is Alban Berg's *Wozzeck*, the most successful avant-garde opera coming from the Viennese school so far. In this intense, compressed, and atonal musical drama, Berg hews to the precepts of his master Arnold Schönberg, that is he remains atonal in the composition of the score but uses devices like leitmotifs to announce the duets between Marie and Wozzeck or Marie and her child, or incorporates recognizable structures like the fugue or the passacaglia. The intensity of his vision makes him come very close to the expressionist masterpieces in German cinema, and it is no accident that his next opera, *Lulu*, would echo a famous expressionist film, *Pandora's*

*Box.* The free and "hysterical" expressionism of the first works of the master Viennese composer, Arnold Schönberg, were transformed after the war into a rational method of composition, while the formal innovations of the *Blaue Reiter* group found a way into popular culture through the cinema. This is why the full title of Murnau's 1922 masterpiece, the free adaptation of Bram Stoker's *Dracula*, was given a musical title: *Nosferatu: A Symphony of Horror.* The original score by Hans Erdmann, which was performed by a whole orchestra during the projections, was lost soon after, but it has been recreated countless times by various composers and bands. If London was lagging behind Berlin then, it would not be for long: in 1922, a very young Alfred Hitchcock was beginning a dazzling (if at first thwarted) career as a filmmaker.

In 1922, one sees a metamorphosis of the Wagnerian *Gesamtkunswerk* into an artistic totality that combines all media (music, poetry, painting, staging, dancing, and film) and, moreover, superimposes the most experimental and the most popular; this found an equivalent in literature, most blatantly in poetry, because *The Waste Land* can be called a thoroughly Wagnerian poem. This is true of prose as well, because the invention of the interior monologue as a literary genre was first a Wagnerian device. This was visible in the early career of Edouard Dujardin, later credited by Joyce for the idea of pure interior monologue. Dujardin, a symbolist, launched the *Revue Wagnérienne* in 1885. In 1888, he published the first novel written in interior monologue throughout, *Les Lauriers sont coupés.* In this highly musical recreation of stream of consciousness, we hear popular refrains (as the title betrays) along with the most intimate thoughts of the main character. Dujardin was active in 1922, and remained so for a long time, because he outlived Joyce. Joyce dedicated *Ulysses* to him with a flattering acknowledgment of his invention. In 1931, Dujardin published a book on *Le Monologue Intérieur*, in which he analyzed its function in Joyce's work. Of course, the modernity of *Ulysses* is not limited to this particular device, but one can follow its transformation from a symbolist and Wagnerian mode to its broader use in a more complex and more "totalizing" symphonic form, which includes a whole encyclopedia of styles and language.

Even a movement as opposed to the idea of aesthetic totalization as surrealism was born in 1922, with its rejection of the systematic, hence empty, negativism of Dadaism. Dadaism used nonsense art and poetry to debunk the lofty ideals of a culture judged to be beyond any hope of salvation. Destruction was the aim – but could one make a literary career of it? Combining his neo-Freudian trust in the unconscious roots of creativity with a neoromantic belief that the artist can still be a prophet announcing

a better life to come, André Breton broke with Tristan Tzara in 1922 with the explicit aim of ushering in a less nihilist artistic practice and abolishing the divide between art and life. The surrealist totality had to bridge the gap between dreams and waking life, between art and everyday concerns. In the same way, *The Waste Land* provides a jagged summation of a European culture in ruins. Eliot's diagnosis aims at analyzing the roots of a sexual neurosis that has spread because a dangerous "dissociation of sensibility" found its linguistic equivalent in the poetry of the later seventeenth century.

If we can agree that the specificity of modernism in 1922 is that it postulates a totality before advancing to the next stage, which would be true totalitarianism, we have to consider its drift toward a more dangerous concept of the "totalitarian." In 1922, it was not a given fact that Eliot would become a reactionary Anglo-Catholic six years later, or that Pound would embrace Mussolini, preferring him to Lenin, or that George Sorel's meditations on violence would inspire the Right rather than the Left (Sorel had just then published his last book, *Matériaux d'une théorie du prolétariat*).

Thus, if one studies European modernism as a continuum founded upon the concept of totality, a different picture of the *Zeitgeist* in 1922 emerges. One will verify, for instance, that the modernist "whole" includes and never excludes popular culture or technology – both very present in *The Waste Land* and in *Ulysses*. In this sense, 1922 offers altogether an apex and a new departure. This can be verified if one looks at the periodization invoked by excellent critics whose work has shaped the field; for Michael Levenson, whose highly influential *A Genealogy of Modernism 1908–1922* was published in 1986, the aesthetics of modernism had developed over a period going from 1908 to 1922, and this view is not questioned today. Similarly, a critic who insists more on conflict than the commonalities of various programs, Ann Ardis, has called her 2002 book *Modernism and Cultural Conflict 1880–1922*. This time, the line of development passes from the late Victorian era to the modern times. Wishing to eschew the self-appointed myth of the "men of 1914," Ardis pays attention to historical fault lines and points of tension, and takes Oscar Wilde's taunting paradoxes, Lewis's aggressive strategies, and Orage's politically committed *New Age* as more indicative of change than Pound, Joyce, and Eliot. But if we look at influential trends documenting what has been forgotten even by revisionist accounts, like technology and the "subaltern" colonial masses, we may reach different conclusions based on another historical vector. Thus, Todd Avery's influential *Radio-Modernism: Literature, Ethics and the BBC, 1922–1938* chooses the segment of 1922–38, while Partha Mitter

opts for a larger scale in *The Triumph of Modernism: India's Artists and the Avant-garde, 1922–1947*.[4] These two books highlight the relative specificity of the history of technology and its cultural appropriations, as opposed to the longer chronicle of decolonization. By deciding to focus just on one year, we stay in the eye of the storm and capture its dynamism.

It is with such a dynamic view in mind that the writers of these specially commissioned essays provide a rationale and not just a historical context in their effort to describe the emergence of the new in 1922. They grapple with the interrelations of the principal actors, including the numerous American "pilgrims" then moving to Paris or Berlin. It is this cosmopolitan diaspora that made 1922 the "annus mirabilis" acknowledged by all observers.

## Why Focus on Europe?

The earlier forms of radical experimentation that had been launched in the prewar years and the war years like Futurism, Dadaism, and Suprematism, all tended either to migrate elsewhere (Dada was installing itself in New York) or to reshape themselves (Suprematism turned into Constructivism and Dadaism into surrealism at the same time, i.e., in 1922). As Paul Valéry famously stated in 1919, the war and its chaos made him discover that "civilizations are mortal" and that Europe was just a tiny cape perched at the top of the Asian continent. In 1922, Eliot was quoting Hesse about the wild hordes coming from Soviet Russia, and the political polarization that would mark the post-1929 years was already underway.

However, in most European capitals, the mood was rather upbeat. It seemed that *joie de vivre* was triumphing, which was not exactly the case in the United States, with a return to isolationism and the puritanism of the prohibition. Hence one can argue that if, ideally, the synchronicity of the modern should be global and take the whole world into account, there was a more localized chronotope limited to Europe. Thus, with respect to the pedagogical use of these essays that want to hew to pedagogical considerations, Europe will provide a safer format. Nevertheless, it is a broad Europe that is not limited to England, Germany, or France and encompasses Russia, the Scandinavian countries, Portugal, the dismembered Austria-Hungarian Empire, and the emerging New Italy. In that time of heightened polarization, freedom seemed to be the privilege of Europe: the freedom to party, experiment, and flaunt transgressive behavior. Such a festive mood was not restricted to cities like London, Paris, or Berlin. In 1922, in a very conservative Lisbon, Fernando Pessoa praised the

second publication of António Botto's explicitly gay poems. But of course it was in Paris that Proust was publishing his *Sodom and Gomorrah*, while Victor Margueritte scandalized his readers with tales of bisexual excess in *La Garçonne*. Gertrude Stein's dazzling *Geography and Plays* (1922) could not have been published had she not lived in Paris, as was the case with *Ulysses.* Here, one can verify that the European exceptionalism of 1922 included distinguished artists and authors coming from many other countries, but only insofar as they agreed to move to the new hubs represented by the artistic centers of Paris, London, Berlin, and Vienna.

Even E. E. Cummings, who embodied the spirit of Greenwich Village at the time and had published his poetic masterpiece "Buffalo Bill" in 1920, later reprinted in *Tulips & Chimneys* in 1923, published his famous war novel, *The Enormous Room* in 1922. If it is about the war, it evokes a very particular experience. Having volunteered to serve in the American ambulance corps, Cummings had sent letters that expressed antiwar views. He was arrested by the French military on suspicion of espionage. He only spent a few months in a military detention camp, but used his experience as material for a novel that doubles as a memoir. *The Enormous Room* was praised by F. Scott Fitzgerald, who saw in it a defining portrayal of their "lost" generation. Thus the quintessentially American poem of "Buffalo Bill" was buttressed by a poetic recreation of a European nightmare: Cummings had been accused of having derided the French war effort and of having sympathized with the German side. His "pilgrim's progress" in the maze of delirious bureaucracy – none of the detainees knew exactly what crime they had been accused of – and the jostling of other nationalities – there were Dutch, Polish, Belgian, Austrian, Danish inmates, and even an African man, all suspected of being traitors or spies, in the triage camp of La Ferté Macé – eerily resembles Robert Antelme's memoirs of the German death camps, his famous *The Human Race.* Cummings's own title evokes the strange locale in which the men are detained: a huge hall of eighty feet by forty feet with rows of wooden pillars, ten windows on one side, and a high vaulted ceiling. The detention camp, in which arbitrary rules reign, is not as dire as Auschwitz, nor is it even a very severe jail, but Cummings presents the modern age as the myriad stories of displaced men and women all accused of unknown crimes by an invisible bureaucracy, all waiting for punishment or a sudden and unmotivated liberation. Their absurd predicament can be explained away by a "normal" war situation in which foreigners can be found out and exposed as spies, and the usual rules of politeness and respect for the other are suddenly canceled.