

LEOPOLD AND MOLLY BLOOM FROM TRIESTE TO DUBLIN  
Melbourne Bloomsday seminar, 16 June 2012

Let me start by taking you back to the latter end of 1908. James Joyce had then for a little over a year been living in the Austrian-ruled but culturally Italian seaport of Trieste. For several months he had been stuck at the first three chapters of *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*. In an effort to get out of his predicament, he asked the opinion of one of the pupils whom he was privately tutoring in English about what he had written thus far. That pupil's answer, written in fairly commendable English, came back in a letter dated February 8, 1909. Joyce's pupil praised the second and third chapters and made some discerning comments on the effect of the hell-fire sermon in Ch 3. But he didn't like the first chapter. Here's what he says about it:

I object against the first chapter. I did so when I had read only it but I do so still more decidedly after having known the two others. I think that I have at last also discovered the reason why these two chapters are for me so beautiful while the first one which surely is of the same construction by the same writer who has surely not changed his ways, written evidently with the same artistic aims, fails to impress me as deeply. I think it deals with events deprived of importance and your rigid method of observation and description does not allow you to enrich a fact which is not rich of itself. You are obliged to write only about strong things. In your skilled hands they may become still stronger. I do not believe you can give the appearance of strength to things which are in themselves feeble, not important. I must say that if you had to write a whole novel with the only aim of description of everyday life without a problem which could affect strongly your own mind (you would not choose such a novel) you would be obliged to leave your method and find artificial colours to lend to the things the life they wanted in themselves.<sup>1</sup>

Leaving aside the criticism of Ch 1 of *The Portrait*, what at first reading sounds totally wrong here is that assertion that the future author of *Ulysses* would never choose to write a novel 'with the only aim of description of everyday life,' or that such a description would be devoid of problems capable of strongly affecting the writer's mind, or that the writer would have to dress up his material in 'artificial colours'. This is the very challenge to which Joyce rose so impressively, first in conveying the suppressed sense of self-betrayal and unfulfilment which pervades *Dubliners*, and then in writing that veritable epic of the everyday which is *Ulysses*. Both are works which, far from 'giv[ing] the appearance of strength to things which are in

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<sup>1</sup> Italo Svevo, *Epistolario*, Vol. I of *Opera Omnia*, ed. B. Maier, Milan: Dall'Oglio, 1966, pp. 527-9.

themselves feeble, not important,' show the very opposite: that things which have the appearance of being feeble or unimportant are manifestations, however screened or dissimulated, of the unceasing strife of human desires, the intimate stuff of which the history of our human world is made – strong stuff, in other words.

The pupil who posed that challenge to Joyce was a man now familiar to Joyce devotees and called, in Italian, Ettore (equivalent in English to Hector) Schmitz. By 1909 he had for nearly ten years been a factory manager in the Veneziani multinational family firm that manufactured ship's paint. In this capacity he spent much of his time at the firm's paint factory in London. He is now better known by his literary pseudonym, Italo Svevo, and as the author of what is arguably the most remarkable Italian novel of the last century, *La coscienza di Zeno*, which has been variously translated into English as *Confessions of Zeno* and as *Zeno's Conscience*. First published in 1923, it remains a literary landmark that towers over the terrain between and beyond modernism and postmodernism. Its narrative structure, with seeming arbitrariness, problematizes psychoanalysis through a rogue patient, Zeno Cosini, who thinks he can outwit the unconscious, against the background of the Great War. But more of that later.

In 1909, at the time of that letter, Svevo was forty-seven years of age, while his brilliantly eccentric English teacher, Joyce, had just turned twenty-six. The pupil was thus pretty nearly of an age to be father to the tutor. As a writer, Svevo was then the neglected author of two novels which he had published at his own expense during the 1890s and of half a dozen plays, which had remained unpublished and unperformed, as well as a few stories and some newspaper articles, reviews and essays. Joyce himself had for his part yet published nothing but *Pomes Pennyeach* and a few stories, articles and reviews, and had written but not published *Chamber Music*, *Dubliners* and *Stephen Hero*. Fairly soon, around the end of 1907, Joyce was reading to his pupils, Ettore Schmitz and his wife Livia, some of his poems out of *Chamber Music* and some of the stories from *Dubliners*. Livia relates that they were so moved by hearing Joyce reading 'The Dead,' that she went out into the garden and came back with a bouquet of flowers which she presented to the author.<sup>2</sup> Schmitz shyly confided to Joyce that he too had been a writer and showed Joyce his two novels. Joyce immediately recognized the quality of Svevo's writing, especially the second novel, *Senilità*. He warmly expressed his admiration to Svevo and tried in vain to get the Triestines to recognize that they had an important writer in their midst. Livia describes the effect

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<sup>2</sup> Livia Veneziani Svevo, *Vita di mio marito*, written by Lina Galli, 2nd edition by Anita Pittoni, Trieste: Edizioni dello Zibaldone, 1958, p. 85. English translation *A Memoir of Italo Svevo*, by Elizabeth Quigley, London: Libris, 1991, p. 66.

which Joyce's enthusiastic praise for Svevo's first two novels had on her husband:

These unexpected words were a balm to Ettore's heart. He gazed wide-eyed at Joyce, delighted and amazed. Never had he thought to hear such praise of his forgotten novels. That day he could not leave Joyce, he accompanied him all the way back to his home in Piazza Vico, telling him about his literary disappointments. It was the first time he had opened his heart to anyone and showed his profound bitterness.<sup>3</sup>

In the light of what I argue further along in this paper, we might see that day as one of the prototypes of Bloomsday.

After the Great War, Joyce's literary circumstances, of course, changed radically. *Dubliners* and *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* had appeared just before the war, and secured Joyce a place in the international literary pantheon. The publication of the completed *Ulysses* in 1922 gave him even greater prominence, whereas Svevo's third bid for recognition with *La coscienza di Zeno* in 1923, the third novel to be published at his own expense, only yielded him his third fiasco. Svevo's caustic narrative irony at the expense of his feckless anti-heroes and their world was not politically acceptable to the ultra-nationalistic Triestine establishment. They dismissed Svevo purportedly on the grounds of the unpolished style of his Italian, which was at the opposite pole to that of the flamboyant d'Annunzio, the presiding deity of Italy's literary firmament. It was Joyce, from his Paris vantage-point, who became Svevo's literary godfather and rescued his old friend from oblivion. He brought Svevo to the attention of avant-garde literary circles in Paris and consequently in Italy. Thanks to Joyce, the writer Italo Svevo was revealed to the Italian literary world by the young poet Eugenio Montale in December 1925 and to the French and international literary world by Valéry Larbaud and Benjamin Crémieux in February 1926.

Let's now go back to the year 1909 and have another look at those comments by the pupil Ettore Schmitz on the first chapter of his tutor's book. I think a paternal tact is at work, the older writer obliquely warning the younger one against dangers, presenting him with challenges, while taking care not to discourage him on the one hand or patronize him on the other. Schmitz admires in Joyce the strength that builds on strength and warns against 'things which are in themselves feeble, not important.' The elder writer is here warning the younger of the lure of self-regarding pathos, nostalgia and narcissism, perhaps even aestheticism, to which the author of *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* might otherwise have fallen prey. Then, the challenge to (and let me quote Svevo's words again) 'write a whole

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<sup>3</sup> *Ibidem.* pp. 66-7.

novel with the only aim of description of everyday life' carries the warning about adding 'artificial colours,' about the need for a change of method.

This fits in with what we know from Stanislaus Joyce about Svevo inoculating Joyce against the overblown aestheticism of a Gabriele d'Annunzio, the pseudo-Nietzschean superman of Italian writing since the 1890s and destined to remain Italy's favourite author right through to the end of the Fascist era. To this literary glamour the young Joyce had at first been all too susceptible, but he was to show his rejection of it in the self-irony of Stephen Dedalus's remark, 'Toothless Kinch, the superman,' in *Ulysses*.. Thus it came about that Joyce, in his characteristically sweeping way, was to say that the only modern Italian writer who interested him was Svevo. But more surprising was another remark of Joyce's about Svevo, or rather, about Ettore Schmitz: 'He was a great man before being a great writer, because he learnt to bear the weight of his conscience in solitude.' (Joyce was speaking in Italian, and the English translation does not render the full weight of the word *coscienza*, which includes, beyond or before 'conscience,' the whole field of awareness, consciousness, the conscious – exactly like the French *conscience*.) The moral and perceptual authority which Joyce sees in Schmitz-Svevo precedes the literary authority, and validates it. We catch a glimpse here of why Joyce, when he set himself to write in *Ulysses* the epic account of one fairly ordinary day in the life of a son not unlike himself seeking a father figure, and of a would-be father seeking a son, modelled that would-be father on someone not unlike Ettore Schmitz.

So what we have here is a case of literary paternity, of sorts. This quasi father-son relationship between Joyce and Svevo, a relationship of solidarity and reciprocity, of the mutual reinforcement of lived experience and intellectual interests, has been documented in tantalizingly scant essentials. It is a relationship marked by formality thanks to the social distance which both men observed but did their best to circumvent, yet marked also by the warmth of support and admiration for each other's literary achievement while both remained in obscurity during the years leading up to the Great War.

The Schmitzes had an apartment in the grand Villa Veneziani, which also housed Ettore's parents-in-law, who were also his bosses, and the two other young families of his wife's sisters. The Venezianis entertained Trieste's Italian elite and other distinguished guests on Sunday afternoons, but the disreputable and indigent Joyces were not included in these receptions. James Joyce entered Villa Veneziani only in his language teaching guise of gerund-vendor, as Schmitz affectionately called him, while Nora took in washing from Ettore's wife Livia when she was particularly hard up, and complained that Livia appeared not to see her if they happened to pass each other in the streets of Trieste.

On one occasion Ettore offered the Joyces the hospitality of the Venezianis' house on the island of Murano on the lagoon close to Venice, where the firm had one of its factories, and this got him into an embarrassing situation with the Venezianis when Joyce actually took up the invitation.<sup>4</sup> So, at least, Ettore pretended, but – who knows? – he may well have enjoyed the Joyces' company on Murano, and possibly may also have shown them around Venice. Ettore, sometimes accompanied by Livia, would also visit the impecunious Joyces in their ever-shifting lodgings in the working-class quarters of Trieste, often staying late into the night, and would handsomely tip Nora's house-maid, Mary Kirn.<sup>5</sup> Ettore Schmitz and James Joyce could occasionally be spotted walking together along the steeply sloping streets of Trieste, and if there was a stiff *bora* gale blowing they would appear to be roped together like mountaineers as they clung on to the hand-cords to keep their footing. The written correspondence between the two men plays by the formal conventions, opening with a 'Dear Mr Joyce' or a 'Dear Mr Schmitz', as they pretend to respect bourgeois hierarchies, but one can sense they are on the same wave-length, and one of Joyce's letters to Schmitz is couched in the raciest Triestine dialect and asks Schmitz to fetch to Paris from Trieste a draft of one of the chapters for *Ulysses* which is precariously held together by a rubber band the colour of the abdomen of a Sister of Charity. A trace of this camaraderie may have found its way into Svevo's *La coscienza di Zeno*: an Italian critic sees a thumbnail sketch of James Joyce in the 'learned friend' with whom Zeno Cosini, the anti-hero of Svevo's third novel, on a wet and chilly evening, discusses the origins of Christianity, the Greeks and the Jews, just as Zeno's father is entering upon his terminal illness.<sup>6</sup>

Stanislaus Joyce was first to suggest that Ettore Schmitz was one of the models for Bloom, and this was backed up with circumstantial evidence by P. N. Furbank, following Harry Levin and others: the age difference between Schmitz and Joyce corresponding to that between Bloom and Stephen; Schmitz, like Bloom, having changed his name, if only for literary purposes; Schmitz, like Bloom, liking to eat offal ('nutty gizzards'), liking both dogs and cats; and the two, Schmitz and Bloom, having a general likeness in personality. The more you look, the more you find, and in my own biography of Svevo, I make the case that Ettore Schmitz was not merely *a* model for Leopold Bloom, but the main model. Joyce scholars have since added further clinching evidence. A small but decisive indication of this is that in his study

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<sup>4</sup> Letter of 9 Feb., 1911, in Italo Svevo, *Epistolario*, p. 568.

<sup>5</sup> T. F. Staley

<sup>6</sup> Cf. Italo Svevo, 'Faccio meglio di restare nell'ombra': carteggio inedito con Ferrieri e conferenza su Joyce, (ed. Giovanni Palmieri), Milan: Piero Manni, 1995, pp. 61-2.

in Zürich Joyce had a portrait over his desk not of his father but of Ettore Schmitz, whom he identified as Leopold Bloom.<sup>7</sup>

The Trieste-based Joycean scholar John McCourt accepts Schmitz 'as one of the more important prototypes for Leopold Bloom,' and strengthens the argument, but at the same time follows previous scholars in hypothesizing that another Triestine Jew, Teodoro Mayer, nearly two years older than Schmitz, was another, perhaps more important source for Bloom. I don't see that at all, and there's very little supporting evidence. Like Furbank, McCourt points to Mayer's Hungarian Jewish origins and his moustache, but Ettore Schmitz's father had also come to Trieste from Hungary, and Mayer, a dynamic newspaper tycoon and a grey eminence of Triestine politics, was a quite different personality from the unassuming day-dreamer, Bloom, and the equally unassuming and dream-addicted Schmitz. As for the moustache – there are plenty of photographs of Ettore Schmitz sporting that noble ornament.

This is not to say that Schmitz was the exclusive model for Bloom, whose characterization appears to have been originally inspired by the kindness towards James Joyce and Nora of the Dublin Jew called Hunter. But in the case of Schmitz there is a wealth of corroborative evidence of various kinds which is not available in the case of Hunter or other possible models or sources. Joyce had been contemplating a story for *Dubliners* about a Dublin Jew while still in Rome in November 1906, but had got no further than the title, 'Ulysses.' He took it up again in Trieste in the autumn of 1907, about the time he got to know Schmitz. This does not look like a coincidence.

Before I offer you the corroborating evidence, there are some obvious differences to be got out of the way in the literary transposition from a Triestine Schmitz to a Dublin Bloom – Schmitz's literary endeavours, for a start, and his position as an industrial manager forever travelling off to the firm's factories near Venice and in London. Before he entered the prosperous Veneziani firm, however, Schmitz had toiled away for nineteen years as a modest bank clerk, his employment situation then being not very different from that of the insurance salesman Leopold Bloom. As a family man, Schmitz, unlike Bloom, had a daughter, born in 1897, but, like Leopold

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<sup>7</sup> See Richard Ellman, *James Joyce*, 2nd ed., London, Oxford University Press, 1982, p. 430. This is quoted in Neil R. Davison, *James Joyce, Ulysses, and the Construction of Jewish Identity: Culture, Biography, and 'The Jew' in Modernist Europe*, Cambridge University Press, 1996, p. 164.). Davison's book is in fact largely devoted to exploring the Schmitz-Joyce relationship, especially in literary terms, arguing that the characters in Svevo's novels offered Joyce models which he developed in *Ulysses* and *Finnegans Wake* (see pp. 106-84, particularly p.165 on Svevo/Schmitz as 'good-father').

Bloom, he had all but lost hope of having a son, his wife having had a series of miscarriages or still-births. Other differences turn out to be analogues. If Molly Bloom had grown up in Gibraltar, Livia Veneziani Schmitz spent her childhood in Marseilles. Molly is a singer, and Livia also sang in a choir about which Svevo was jealously suspicious, like Bloom over Blazes Boylan, as on other occasions with regard to the army officers who frequented the health resorts which Livia visited. There is no suspicion that Schmitz was a cuckold, but he certainly on occasion was afraid he might be.

Most importantly, Ettore Schmitz, like Leopold Bloom, had been raised as a fairly relaxed practising Jew, grew up a freethinker in the vein of scientific humanism, and was baptized a Catholic purely for practical purposes (matrimony, in Ettore's case). Stanislaus Joyce quotes Schmitz as telling him after the war that James had pumped him systematically for information about Jewish customs, and Schmitz, vague as he was about Jewish practices, seems to have succeeded all too well in fathering a literary image of himself in Bloom as an ex-Jew or pseudo-Jew, for the critic Erwin Steinberg a good while ago published an article titled 'James Joyce and the Critics Notwithstanding, Leopold Bloom is not Jewish,' which he justifies exhaustively from the evidence of *Ulysses* itself.<sup>8</sup> But both Bloom and Schmitz feel themselves to be Jews and are seen as Jews by non-Jews, though serious Jews may have seen them as non-Jews.

Getting closer in to *Ulysses*, we may observe that both Schmitz and Bloom, as well as being compulsive newspaper readers, indefatigably walk the streets of their respective towns and are in this sense wandering Jews embarked on an interminable odyssey. Schmitz, on his first long business trip, indeed his longest, in 1901, which, by the way, took him as far as Ireland by way of southern France, Chatham, London, Plymouth and Devonport, let slip the obvious metaphor of the odyssey, and on his next trip to London, in 1903, wryly remarked that, although no longer a Jew, he was more wandering than ever. If Bloom is an Odysseus, ever side-tracked on his journey back home to his wife, Schmitz was also frequently away from home without his wife and may well have reflected that the name of the wandering Odysseus would have suited him better than that of Hector, who stayed at home to defend Troy under siege.

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<sup>8</sup> E. Steinberg, 'James Joyce and the Critics Notwithstanding, Leopold Bloom is not Jewish,' *Journal of Modern Literature*, 1981-82, 9: 27-49. Steinberg's position remains unchanged in his later article, 'Reading Leopold Bloom/1904 in 1989,' *James Joyce Quarterly*, Spring 1989, 26.3, pp. 397-416. Cf. J. Gatt-Rutter, 'Italo Svevo: pseudo-Jew, or pseudo-Gentile?', *Menorah*, 1990, 2,1, pp. 20-7.

The more familiar one is with Ettore Schmitz, the more strongly one senses his kinship with Bloom, and his almost magical translation into a Dubliner, having shed his literary ambitions and disappointments and his participation in a multi-national industry. Both show intense curiosity for the most varied fields of knowledge and their inter-relatedness. Their interests range through the sciences – human physiology and medicine, zoology, chemistry, optics – both of them indulging in scientific whimsies, and their interests also extend to religion and music. Indefatigable goodwill is also a characteristic of both, though Schmitz's goodwill was less indefatigable than that of his fictional counterpart.

In March 1927, eighteen months before he died as a result of a car crash, Ettore Schmitz went some way towards repaying the debt which the writer Italo Svevo owed to James Joyce for what he called 'the miracle of Lazarus,' of raising him from the dead and gaining him literary recognition: he delivered a lecture on Joyce to the Milan literary circle, 'Il Convegno.'<sup>9</sup> This is still one of the best short introductions to Joyce. It has all the intensity and warmth of appreciation of one writer's genius by another writer who knew him well and was fascinated by his difference. I hope some of this quality of Svevo's lecture can be sensed in what I draw out of Svevo's perception of Bloom.

Svevo, steeped in Freud, is obviously fascinated by the paternity triangle of which Stephen Dedalus and Leopold Bloom form two sides. He dwells on their father-son relationship and also comments at some length on what we might call Stephen's family romance. Svevo is also very interested

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<sup>9</sup> This was then published in somewhat lacerated form in *La Fiera Letteraria*, 13, 27 March 1927, p. 6, under the misleading title 'Ricordi su James Joyce,' which then formed the basis for the translation by Stanislaus Joyce titled *James Joyce. A lecture delivered in Milan in 1927 by his friend Italo Svevo*, Norfolk: New Directions Books, 1950 (new edition \*\*\*\*\*). This was republished (edited by J. Gatt-Rutter) as an appendix to Livia Veneziani Svevo's *Memoir* (see note 1 above). The same text, along with other notes by Svevo on Joyce, with the title 'Scritti su Joyce', was used in the edition by Umbro Apollonio of Italo Svevo, *Saggi e pagine sparse*, Milan: Mondadori, 1954, pp. 199-261, later included in Italo Svevo, *Racconti, Saggi e Pagine Sparse*, Vol. III of Bruno Maier's edition of Svevo's *Opera Omnia*, Milan: Dall'Oglio, 1968, pp. 706-47, and more discriminately re-edited by Giancarlo Mazzacurati, still under the title *Scritti su Joyce*, Parma: Pratiche, 1986. There is now a critical edition by Giovanni Palmieri of the lecture itself and the related correspondence, but not of Svevo's other papers on Joyce: Italo Svevo, *'Faccio meglio di restare nell'ombra': Il carteggio inedito con Ferrieri seguito dall'edizione critica della conferenza su Joyce*, Milan: Piero Manni, 1995.

in the fact that, as Joyce had written of *Ulysses* in a letter of 1920, 'It is an epic of two races (Israelite-Irish).'<sup>10</sup> He remarks that Stephen Dedalus in *Ulysses* is attracted by the distance of Judaism from his own culture, from which he is trying to escape, and he's also fascinated by what the two have in common: 'The Hebrews and the Irish are the two peoples who have a dead language.'<sup>11</sup>

More Svevian still is something else which Svevo finds that Dedalus and Bloom have in common – and this is something they have in common with Svevo-Schmitz himself and with all his autobiographical fictional protagonists:

In each of them dreams are more powerful than reality. Except that, in Dedalus, when they are not an obsession, they are an intense activity on the part of the philosopher and poet. In Bloom, they are a repose which he seeks out and enjoys and in which he relaxes as in sleep. For Stephen, dreams embellish the life which is his and which he despises; for Bloom, they take the place of the life which he longs to have and will never be his.<sup>12</sup> [70]

Of the two dreamers, Svevo prefers Bloom. He finds that the characterization of Bloom is fresher, and says: 'We love the little Jew who arouses our mirth and our compassion better than the learned and arrogant Stephen.' [69-70] [168] In a discarded draft for the lecture Svevo characterizes Bloom in terms that are remarkably apposite to his own hero, or anti-hero, Zeno Cosini: 'He is a magnificent liar. He believes everything he says. All he needs is a good memory.'<sup>13</sup> Ettore Schmitz himself was also capable of lying whole-heartedly.

Schmitz-Svevo seems almost to see himself in Bloom, the day-dreamer and 'the assiduous reader of newspapers,' both traits of Schmitz's which are abundantly documented. He quotes Bloom reading eagerly about 'a planter's company. To purchase vast sandy tracts from Turkish government and plant with eucalyptus trees. Excellent for shade, fuel and constructions. Orange-groves and immense melonfields north of Jaffa.'<sup>14</sup> Ettore Schmitz, at that time only recently embarked on his career in industry, had fantasized

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<sup>10</sup> Ellmann, 535, n.

<sup>11</sup> My translation. S. Joyce in Livia Veneziani Svevo, p. 164.

<sup>12</sup> p. 70. My translation; see p. 168 of S. Joyce's translation.

<sup>13</sup> Italo Svevo, *Scritti su Joyce*, ed. by Giancarlo Mazzacurati. Parma: Pratiche, 1986. P. 105. (My translation.)

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, p 104. See J. Joyce, *Ulysses*, London: The Bodley Head, 1960, p. 72.

similarly in 1900 about resinous pine plantations in France, as he recounted in a letter to his wife:

You know that even though I'm dead set on becoming a good industrialist and a good businessman as quickly as possible there's nothing practical about me except my ambitions. Faced with my new objective, I'm still the same old dreamer. When I conceive of a business project, if only I were down-to-earth enough to consider it and daydream about it in the form and terms in which it actually presents itself. Oh, I go so far beyond it that the actual project becomes a pitiful trifle, merely the starting point for fantasies so mighty that they make me quite absent-minded and one of these days I'll walk straight over the side of a dry dock. I'm reading a book about the distilling of turpentine. I suggested to Gioachino [Ettore's father-in-law and the head of the firm] that we should lay aside a few barrels of the raw material and see whether it might not suit us to do our own refining. Very soon that was no longer enough for me, though Gioachino hadn't agreed even to that experiment. I daydreamed all day long – just think – that when it came to setting up our factory in France my idea was borne in mind and that the factory was sited in a turpentine-producing area. And the quality of that French turpentine! The purest there is, an enormously effective solvent, odourless and with the lowest specific gravity. Naturally, I was put in charge of the factory and bit by bit, without informing the firm, by dint of economizing on the factory overheads, I bought up plantations of maritime pine which gave an enormous yield, which in turn enabled me to keep on buying more.<sup>15</sup>

Did Ettore Schmitz confide in Joyce about this propensity of his for fantasizing? And did he communicate to Joyce any specific fantasies of his? There is no explicit acknowledgement of this, but only suggestive correspondences, of which the one I have quoted is rather loose and generic. But there are a couple of others which are far more specific. In 1919, when Joyce was back in Trieste, Ettore Schmitz, under his own name, published a series of articles in a Triestine newspaper humorously satirizing the slowness and inefficiency of the tram service that ran the few kilometres from the suburb of Servola where Villa Veneziani and the factory stood, into the centre of Trieste. He suggested it would be ideal for funerals, or that a restaurant car and a sleeping car should be included so as to help while away the journey time or provide much-needed sustenance or repose. Brian Moloney, who

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<sup>15</sup> Letter of 6 June, 1900, in Italo Svevo, *Epistolario*, pp. 195-6. (My translation.)

rediscovered this article, linked it to a fantasy of Bloom's which Svevo refers to in his notes for the lecture on Joyce: <sup>16</sup>

A practical man. In the funeral carriage he considers advising the town council to arrange for corpses to be transported by tram: Practical. Non-stop to the cemetery entrance in special coffins. As they do in Milan, he says. The elder Dedalus ridicules the idea: Pullman, restaurant car? But Bloom likes it. He is the practical fantast.<sup>17</sup>

Svevo has clearly spotted the connection.

The other instance goes farther back – to Ettore and Livia in 1900 – and further forward – to Anna Livia Plurabelle in *Finnegans Wake*. Ettore in a letter to Livia relates a dream in which Livia lies dead in her coffin displaying all her magnificent long golden hair while her mother Olga busies herself about her: 'She was never weary of arranging your long hair around your composed body like a golden river.'<sup>18</sup> It is well known that Joyce used Livia Schmitz as a model for the character of Anna Livia Plurabelle and her hair as the river that runs through Dublin, the Anna Liffey, and that Nora had seen Livia with her hair hanging full length and had described it to Jim. A little saga in the Joyce-Schmitz relationship is attached to this, with Livia complaining that Joyce could have put her hair to more poetic use than the discoloured water of the Liffey where the Dublin washer-women did their washing, and Ettore making a gift to Joyce of the splendid portrait in oils of Livia with her lustrous red-gold hair hanging down which had been painted by Ettore's closest friend, Umberto Veruda. But I'm not aware that much thought has been given to the likelihood that the image of Livia's hair as a golden river came to Joyce from Ettore himself, nor to the greater question of whether the whole thematic of dream was strongly suggested to Joyce by Schmitz-Svevo concomitantly with first the Freudian and then the Jungian stream of psychoanalysis.

Both night-dreaming and day-dreaming and fantasy played a large part in the life of Ettore Schmitz, as the few glimpses we've shared may have shown, and some of Schmitz's articles written for *L'Indipendente* newspaper in the late 1880s in the persona of E. Samigli also develop the theme. In his narrative and dramatic writings, Italo Svevo always subjected dreams and fantasies to objective and realistic control, as Joyce did in the case of

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<sup>16</sup> B. Moloney, 'Count Noris changes trams: an unknown article by Italo Svevo,' *Modern Language Review*, LXXI, 1 (Jan. 1976), 51-3, OO.III, pp. 624, 627. Original article published in *La Nazione*, Trieste.

<sup>17</sup> OO, III, pp. 742-3

<sup>18</sup> OO, I, pp. 209-11.

Stephen's vision of hell in *The Portrait*. It is only from *Ulysses* onwards that fantasy and phantasmagoria in Joyce's work tend towards an autonomy of their own and perhaps even a primacy over the empirically verifiable world. Neil Davison's book on Joyce and the construction of Jewish identity is the most sustained study of Joyce's possible use of Svevo's writings, but he does not focus on the dream element, which loomed larger in the life of Ettore Schmitz than in the writings of Italo Svevo.<sup>19</sup>

Having had a look at some of the things that Joyce took from Svevo – mostly Bloom and Anna Livia Plurabelle and her red-gold hair, it is natural to ask whether Svevo took anything from Joyce, apart from being rescued from oblivion? Could the older writer have learnt anything from a writer over twenty years his junior? Brian Moloney has pursued this quest, analyzing with great finesse in the mostly unfinished tales which Svevo started towards the end of the first decade a convergence between his own previous narrative method, which reserved a strictly limited space for authorial comment and control over the characters, and Joyce's method of absolute objectivity and detachment in *Dubliners*, where the function of authorial comment and control is taken over by the epiphany, the language of the real.<sup>20</sup>

These 'influences,' if they really exist, are so deep-wrought as to be hard to detect, and depend on deep affinities in cultural formation between the two writers, both of whom were committed to the discipline of realism and to literary art as a mode of knowledge as rigorous as natural science and not disjoined from it but engaged in exploring the mysteries of the self. Where Svevo always worked critically and even cruelly to deconstruct the self, Joyce did so, if I read him right, only in *Dubliners*. From *A Portrait of the Artist as*

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<sup>19</sup> Neil R. Davison, *James Joyce, Ulysses, and the Construction of Jewish Identity: Culture, Biography, and 'The Jew' in Modernist Europe*, Cambridge University Press, 1996, see pp. 106-84.

<sup>20</sup> Moloney offers finely detailed analyses of a possible reciprocal literary influence and other aspects of the Svevo-Joyce relationship in the section 'Il signor Schmitz e il professor Zois' of his *Italo Svevo narratore: lezioni triestine*, Gorizia: Libreria Editrice Goriziana, 1998, pp. 115-156. Some of this is drawn from chapters and articles previously published in English, viz., 'A Sentimental Ulysses: Sterne, James Joyce and Italo Svevo's "Corto viaggio sentimentale",' in M. Hanne (ed.), *Literature and Travel*, Amsterdam/Atlanta: Rodopi, 1993, pp. 111-21; 'Svevo and Joyce: "La novella del buon vecchio e della bella fanciulla",' in Martin McLaughlin (ed.), *Britain and Italy from Romanticism to Modernism: A Festschrift for Peter Brand*, Oxford: Legenda, 2000, pp. 143-53;. See also 'Svevo e Joyce: affinit  elettive,' in Enzo Lauretta (ed.), *Il romanzo di Pirandello e Svevo*, Florence: Vallecchi, 1984, pp. 91-106; 'James Joyce, Charles Dickens e i racconti muranesi di Italo Svevo'

*a Young Man* he begins the heroic and epic quest to construct the self (forging it in the smithy of his soul) without inviting facile reader empathy of the sort that is still endemic in novel-writing today.

This quest is all the more heroic and epic in the light of the colossal crisis of civiliazation which we call the Great War. This appears to be elided in Joyce's *Ulysses*, which in a very peculiar but precise sense can be called a historical novel, set before the Great War, on the day we are commemorating, 16th June, in 1904. "History, Stephen said, is a nightmare from which I am trying to awake."<sup>21</sup> This comes early in the book, and had been preceded a couple of pages earlier by Stephen's reaction to a school hockey practice: 'Jousts, slush and uproar of battles, the frozen deathspew of the slain, a shout of spear spikes baited with men's bloodied guts.'<sup>22</sup>

These quotations are not irrelevant to our subject, Schmitz-Svevo. The first of them comes up in that lecture of his on Joyce. Moreover, Schmitz had stopped being Bloom, and had ventured once again into the public literary arena as Svevo. And it was the war that drove him to it. If Joyce penned *Ulysses* during the war years and just after, Svevo started on *La coscienza di Zeno* almost immediately the war was over, and brought it out just a year after Joyce's. Svevo, devoted to Germany, where he had spent his schooldays, as well as to Italy and to England, was clearly aghast at the catastrophe that had overtaken his world. Trieste was near the front line, and one of the chief prizes of war. An assortment of fragmentary writings of his from 1914 onwards show him attempting to grapple with that calamity, including, across the turn from 1918 to 1919, three incomplete drafts of a pacifist tract. His third novel, *La coscienza di Zeno*, can be seen as the fulfilment of this pacifist investment.<sup>23</sup>

Zeno Cosini, the idle rich son of a successful businessman, an inveterate seeker after medical cures and an imaginary invalid, does not know it, and neither do we, the readers, but it is shortly before the outbreak of that Great War that he goes to a psychoanalyst in his home town of Trieste in the hope of finding an intriguing explanation and a cure for his intriguing condition, which includes: a compulsion to smoke an endless series of last cigarettes; a desire for every woman he sees, but for none in her entirety; a mysterious stabbing pain which occasionally affects his chest and his leg; guilt feelings accompanied by anguished denials over having wished for his father's death, and his father-in-law's, and his brother-in-law's; and a sense of failure caused by his father's having barred him from any business responsibilities. While the psychoanalyst is out of town, Zeno writes down and

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<sup>21</sup> James Joyce, *Ulysses*., p. 42.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 40.

<sup>23</sup> See J. Gatt-Rutter, 'Non-commitment in Italo Svevo,' *Journal of European Studies*,

reflects on his recollections, re-living them at once entertainingly and excruciatingly, creating a paper self which is then held hostage by the psychoanalyst upon his return. These increasingly long and chronologically overlapping written recollections of Zeno's constitute the bulk of the novel. The final section of the novel consists of a series of four shortish dated diary entries by Zeno, recounting the outcome of the treatment: the oedipal diagnosis is delivered, triggering transference by the patient against the analyst and counter-transference by the analyst against the patient. In his first diary entry Zeno rejects and ridicules psychoanalysis. It is dated 3 May 1915, and in it Zeno proclaims, 'In this town, since the war broke out, life is more boring than ever ...'

This comes as a shock to the reader. There has been not a hint of war, though the year 1913 is casually mentioned in an apparently frivolous and insignificant context early on in the book. In the last of those four diary entries, dated 24 March 1916, Zeno triumphantly declares himself cured by his own spectacular success as a war profiteer, but, in the book's final words, he declares mankind so sick that it is bound some day to destroy the planet and send it hurtling across the heavens free once and for all of parasites and diseases.

James Joyce was immediately struck by the treatment of narrative time in Svevo's novel, and one of the effects of that treatment is to dissimulate the fact that the war is pivotal to the time of narration – the telling of the story – while in the time narrated – that is, the duration of Zeno's life covered by his story – the war comes as the culminating moment. *La coscienza di Zeno* is, in its very different way, as cunningly and lethally wrought as Joyce's *Ulysses*.

The war, then, is a key signifier in the novel, apparently emptied of significance by its being left suspended and by its being displaced into merely providing the apotheosis of Zeno's brilliant career (which, of course, will go bung in the sequel to *La coscienza di Zeno*). But the war's seeming insignificance reverberates back on to the tangle of contradictions, evasions, lies, truths and half-truths that make up Zeno's confessions, or rather his *coscienza*, his conscience and his consciousness, which is a precipitate of the contradictions, evasions, lies, truths and half-truths that make up the world he lives in, the world we still live in, the world that we make and go on making.

We can see, I think, that Ettore Schmitz, alias Italo Svevo, is and is not Leopold Bloom.

