

JOYCE NEL GIARDINO DI SVEVO (JOYCE IN SVEVO'S GARDEN),
by Stanislaus Joyce. Edited by Renzo Crivelli. Trieste: MGS Press
Editrice, 1995. 110 pp. 15,000 lire.

Stanislaus Joyce is, of course, the person who was nearest to James Joyce during his years in Trieste and the one who certainly knew him best. It is therefore of undoubted interest to read anything by Stanislaus that may get us closer to a first-hand knowledge of things and events concerning the writer and his environment. Of such a nature is the bilingual (Italian and English) book *Joyce nel giardino di Svevo* (*Joyce in Svevo's Garden*), enhanced by an appendix of photographs of the Svevos and the Joyces.

The work is, actually, a reprint of a lecture given by Stanislaus in English at the University of Trieste in 1955, a kind of valediction at the end of his academic career, after having taken over from Joyce as a teacher of English in 1921. What adds to the interest of this book—besides the fact that it would have been an ordeal to find it anywhere if it had not been reprinted—is the reconstruction, by its editor Renzo Crivelli, of the cultural and social milieu in which Joyce moved while in Trieste.

In these memoirs, Stanislaus recreates the story and quality of the relationship between his brother and Ettore Schmitz, who used the pseudonym Italo Svevo in his writing, and describes the role that Joyce had in making Svevo aware of the value of Svevo's work, in suggesting the English title for his book *Senilità* (*As a Man Grows Older*—a title that is probably not very faithful to the static meaning of the Italian one) and in introducing Svevo's novel *La coscienza di Zeno* to the French critics Valéry Larbaud and Benjamin Crémieux.¹ It is certainly true that the cultural milieu of Trieste was quite slow in recognizing Svevo's literary qualities—he was considered a businessman, after all, and a Jew of Swabian origin. His Italian was not acknowledged as the standard Italian of Tuscany. Joyce, on the other hand, met with no less difficulty in obtaining recognition for his work. Stanislaus's assertion, however, that Svevo was refused attention from the Italian poet Eugenio Montale requires some redress, which is what Crivelli does in his introduction, pointing out that, on various occasions, Montale wrote to pave the way for the recognition of Svevo's work by Italian critics.

In his lecture, Stanislaus also describes the response of Signora Schmitz, Svevo's wife, after reading "The Dead": she offered Joyce a bunch of flowers from her garden as a sign of her admiration.

Generally, however, Stanislaus's lecture appears committed to the task of asserting and proving Joyce's generous attitude towards Svevo as a neglected novelist.

But Stanislaus seems also very keen on stressing two main points. The first is that no mutual literary influence took place between the two writers, contrary to Montale's veiled suggestion that all of Svevo's work may gravitate round Joyce's *Ulysses*²; Joyce never showed any literary interest in psychoanalysis, for instance. "My brother was a believer in form, almost a classicist in this respect," says Stanislaus (89). The second point stressed by Stanislaus is that Joyce was never "a man pining for the ancient Church he had abandoned":

something in the pomp and ceremony with which the legend of Jesus is told in the offices of the Church impressed him profoundly, but on almost all the fundamental tenets of belief his attitude towards Catholicism was more like that of the gargoyles outside a cathedral than of the saints within. (92-93)

A final complaint concludes Stanislaus's lecture. When Svevo's bust was unveiled in Trieste's public gardens in 1931, no mention was made by the official orator either of the role that Joyce had had in discovering the genius of Svevo or of the telegram that Joyce had sent to congratulate Signora Schmitz on the public recognition finally given by the town to her husband.

In a separate chapter, John McCourt summarizes the relationship between the Joyce brothers and their well-known ups and downs (61-73).

Now would probably be the right time to collect—and translate, where necessary—in a single publication, and thus make available to the English reading public, all of Stanislaus's scattered writings regarding his brother as man and artist: among them, the preface that Stanislaus wrote for the English edition of *Senilità*, the long essay "Ricordi di James Joyce," and "The Background to *Dubliners*."³

This first piece, by the way, gives a clue to a blemish in the Joyce-Svevo relationship. One would have to recall, in fact, that in March 1932 Joyce was asked by Signora Schmitz to write a preface for the English edition of her husband's novel; Joyce refused to oblige and remained firm in his intention, even after Signora Schmitz had asked Larbaud to intercede with him on her behalf. Joyce finally solved his dilemma by convincing Stanislaus to provide the preface himself. It is worth recalling how Richard Ellmann reports Joyce's position on the question, summarizing a letter of Joyce's to his brother: "[Joyce's] relations with Schmitz had always been quite formal. He had visited only as a teacher, never as a guest; Nora imagined that Signora

Schmitz had snubbed her; and Schmitz had always been careful of his money" (*JIII* 636).⁴ On this blemish in the Svevo-Joyce relationship, neither the official lecture delivered by Stanislaus at the University of Trieste nor any other existing material sheds any light. The unfillable gap in our knowledge is probably a telling sign of the inescapably contradictory nature of all human relationships. We may hope, of course, that new material on the subject will one day be unearthed.

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NOTES

¹ Italo Svevo, *La coscienza di Zeno* (Bologna: Cappelli, 1923).

² Eugenio Montale, "Omaggio a Italo Svevo," *L'Esame*, 4 (1925), 804-13.

³ See Stanislaus Joyce, introduction to *As a Man Grows Older*, by Italo Svevo (London: Putnam Books, 1933); "Ricordi di James Joyce," *Letteratura*, 19 (August-September), 25-35, 20 (October-December), 23-35; and "The Background to *Dubliners*," *The Listener* (25 March 1954), 526.

⁴ See Joyce's letter to Stanislaus of 29 March 1932 in *Letters III* (p. 241).

PAPERS ON JOYCE, edited by the Spanish James Joyce Society.
Salamanca: Spanish James Joyce Society, 1995. 112 pp. 1,400 pesetas.

James Joyce's impact on contemporary Hispanic literatures is long acknowledged. His influence is evident in the innovation of narrative technique and the unprecedented linguistic experimentation of several Spanish and, particularly, Spanish American writers. Many factors, consequences of centuries of colonialism, link Joyce's Ireland and Latin America: their marginality and cultural eccentricity, their peripherality and backwardness, their preoccupation with identity, and their linguistic estrangement within imposed cultures.¹

Interest in Joyce has existed for over seventy years in Hispanic countries. The earliest significant article devoted to Joyce is Antonio Marichalar's "James Joyce en su laberinto," which appeared in the prestigious journal *Revista de Occidente* in November 1924.² In this pioneering essay, Marichalar offers the reader a critical evaluation of Joyce's works and an interesting contemporary picture of the writer who had published *Ulysses* just under three years earlier. The article also includes sections of "Ithaca" and "Penelope," translated into Spanish by Marichalar.