Book XI of Augustine’s *Confessiones* presents many difficulties for the reader who, with the text’s temporal shift to the present, is now implicated as a participant both by the narrative voice and by the narrative subject. The text is an intellectual autobiography which traces a life and strives for truth; these confessions invoke the reader, “ut dicamus omnes” [that we may all say together] (Augustine 11.1.1), while transcending the subject. Time interrelates the diverging discourses, generating a locus for judgment. By combining descriptive psychology and epistemology in his temporal analysis, Augustine refutes time’s privileged ontological status and considers it only in terms of human experience. In particular, Book XI establishes the transience of the present while asserting the permanence of presence.

The roles of truth, of confession and of the reader also figure prominently in Italo Svevo’s *La coscienza di Zeno*. However, unlike in the *Confessiones*, the totalizing capacity of time which, like the trinity, is at once three definite moments, is questioned by the fragmented narrating subject. Time-consciousness is a defining characteristic of modernism, and Svevo’s text is no exception: temporality is the diagnostic tool which allows the protagonist to distinguish between disease and health and the panacea which allows him to arrive at a provisional cure.

Within each chapter the events are arranged chronologically, but the narrative frequently shifts between temporal planes. The organization of the narra-
tive material according to subject matter further minimizes the temporal progression because these intersecting and imbricating life situations abolish chronological continuity. Unlike Augustine's text, Zeno's life-segments appear as distinct and exclusionary, inhibiting a unitary representation of the individual. This lack of a totalizing and coherent time-consciousness suggests the lack of a stable ontological presence. The plurality of time frames is representative of the *mal du siècle*, a common literary motif of the social milieu (Biasin 66).

The title of the text suggests the relevance of time-consciousness by explicitly referring to the protagonist's self-awareness and by implicitly referring to his namesake, Zeno of Elea. The famous paradoxes of this Eleatic are *reductio ad absurdum* of Pythagorean contentions of motion; they would seem to demonstrate that any kind of motion is incoherent and, therefore, illusory. Zeno Cosini is immersed in these dilemmas, caught between the contradictory representations of chronology and of continuity.* His very name is derived from the Greek *xenos*, meaning strange, foreign, alien and, significantly, guest or host. The etymological origin is suggestive of the protagonist's textual position which is always outside, beyond the borders of the established order. Paradoxically, however, Zeno is entirely reliant upon a world within which he seems unable to function.

Time's position in the narrative is dependent upon its representation. A quintessential property of time is the difference between the past and the future. Augustine subsumes this distinction into the present (a strategy that the act of reading recreates); however, when considered in terms of definite temporal spheres, time is perceived as being anisotropic (lacking symmetry between the two directions of the temporal continuum). In other words, people tend to conceive of time as temporally asymmetric, a belief which contrasts with their attitude toward space, which they assume to be isotropic. Psychoanalysis and the fictive premise of *La coscienza di Zeno* are based upon just such a perception. The anisotropic perspective is implicated in another metaphysical doctrine: the belief that there exists an ontological distinction between the past and the future. This differentiation is represented by a ramifying model of reality in which the past consists of a fixed, definite course of events and the future contains nothing but a manifold of branching possibilities. These aspects of time are thought to distinguish it from space, which possesses no such features. Although the narrator's self-representation denies infinite possibility, events are not reduced to a deterministic inevitability. Zeno Cosini's textual deferrals would appear to sublate agency; however, in practice, they do not negate potentiality.

In *La coscienza di Zeno* the focus is not simply time. Rather, it is the intersection of time and human experience, where time is human and human experience is temporal. The issue is not how people conceptualize time, but how people directly encounter and experience it. This interaction suggests a possi-
ble dual schematization of time (*prima facie* consistent with Augustine, but challenging the supposition that past, present and future are compatible attributes) as outlined by the British idealist philosopher John McTaggart (2.9-31). He conceives of time as two concomitant series. In the A-series, time is divided into past, present and future. The series is subjective; it locates an event relative to a now, which is necessarily always in flux. In the B-series, time is conceptualized as a predicate-scheme: before/after or earlier/later. The B-series is objective; time is homogenous; all points in time are of equal value; temporality exists in relation to other points. According to McTaggart, it is not possible to say that any point in time is past, present or future: the points simply succeed one another. The B-series is the aspect of the text that can be reordered sequentially because the succession of events is not *eo ipso* a temporal series. The movement of the agent is always situated at one point, looking forward and looking backward to the other members of the series. In the fixing of the agents, the temporal positions must be indicated as either past, present or future in relative and not in absolute terms.

In *La coscienza di Zeno* the narrating voice negates the traditional anisotropic interpretation of time in favor of an isotropic one; the question of time’s asymmetry is an empirical matter concerning the properties of an aspect of the world that is independent of human activity. If time is isotropic, then its directions differ only with respect to their relations to other things. Hence events are asymmetrical, but time itself is not. The single anisotropic elements with which the individual consciousness interacts are negated by the isotropic representation of temporality. In a sense, this incompatibility reflects McTaggart’s argument for the unreality of time.⁵

In this phenomenological interpretation, McTaggart’s two series are not separate and alternative approaches to time; instead objective time (B) is grounded in subjective time (A). The absolute objective order is replaced by the absolute subject or, more specifically, by the absolute temporal position of the subject. Just as the *hic* is absolute in oriented space, so is the nunc absolute in experienced time. Augustine’s and McTaggart’s theories converge contradictorily in *La coscienza di Zeno*. While narration in general obeys an Augustinian scheme in which the narrative is past, but appears as present, and the future also becomes present, since it is the point from which the narrator recounts his story, in Svevo’s text the narration requires this present-convergence, but also sublates the incompatible relational predicates (past and future). As Biasin has noted: “Within time, the present tense is in its turn privileged to a certain extent above the other tenses – past and future – that make up the ‘mixed time’ of man” (88).

The first chapter, *Prefazione* ascribed to Dottor S., is also, temporally speaking, the last section of the text, acting both as the narrative’s point of departure and as its destination.⁶ It is a framing device that situates the doctor both within and beyond the narrative space. This authorial positioning dis-
tances the narrator-patient, Zeno, and bestows an aura of inviolability on the doctor, who acts as judge, jury and executioner. To mitigate the perception of any arbitrariness derived from his privileged status, Dottor S. attempts to validate his own reliability by warning the reader of the unreliability of the text’s narrator:

Di psico-analisi non parlerò perché qui entro se ne parla già a sufficienza. Debbo scusarmi di aver indotto il mio paziente a scrivere la sua autobiografia; gli studiosi di psico-analisi arricceranno il naso a tanta novità [...] Se sapesse quante sorprese potrebbero risultargli dal commento delle tante verità e bugie ch’egli ha quasi [sic] accumulate! (Svevo 649)

His caveat necessarily extends to his own words. The doctor’s naive expectation of truth through autobiography suggests a manipulation of temporal experiences to achieve a self-justifying truth.

The non-linear chronology of the narration is not in itself unique. It inserts itself, as the good doctor prescribes, into the established literary genre of the autobiography. In the traditional autobiography, the point of view is univocal (that of the protagonist-narrator). In La coscienza di Zeno, Dottor S.’s presence and perspective loom over Zeno Cosini’s story-telling, claiming to be part of the therapeutic process and rendering the narrative bivocal. The protagonist’s manuscript is framed by the psychoanalytical cure, a device which achieves the doubling of the temporal perspective. Both the structure of the text and the historico-cultural situation from which it arises (the diffusion of mitteleuro päisch psychoanalysis) expose the fictions of this panacea. Consequently, the innovative aspects of the text arise from the fusion of the clinical session and of the autobiographical genre.

The second chapter Preambolo is Zeno Cosini’s introduction to his memoirs. In temporal terms this section is the penultimate (preceding Prefazione), presenting and misrepresenting the personal history that follows. This teleologic circularity is a recurrent motif: the end returning to the beginning, the relationship between the writing subject and the narrative subject, the imbrication of the consciousness of the narrator and of the protagonist, where all converge in a self-exposing authorial history. Zeno’s memory is filtered through time and space, resulting in the distortion of images:

Più di dieci lustri me ne separano e i miei occhi presbiti forse potrebbero arrivargli se la luce che ancora ne riverbera non fosse tagliata da ostacoli d’ogni genere, vere alte montagne: i miei anni e qualche mia ora. (Svevo 650)

In this metaphorical vision space displaces time. Furthermore, the present dominates: in interior time, years and hours become equivalent. It is Bergsonian durée defined less by succession than by coexistence. The past and
present do not denote two successive movements, but rather two elements that coexist in precarious and fluctuating balance.

In addition, the problem of writing expressed by the narrator is related temporally. Language cannot provide a self-present meaning; Derridian *différence* enters where meaning eludes self-present awareness. When it describes the act of writing as "[la] fronte si corruga perché ogni parola è composta di tante lettere e il presente imperioso risorge ed offusca il passato" (Svevo 650), the narrative voice recognizes that time itself is an endless deferring of presence and of presents, both of which disrupt the written word. Writing in or about the past is equivalent to not living; it is a manifestation of absence because the signifier is always displaced from the signified. Augustine is refuted.

*Preambolo* concludes with the unification of the three temporal periods: "Ecomic ben lontano dalle immagini che precorrono il sonno. Ritenterò domani" (Svevo 651). The past is evoked in the present which is itself continuously being displaced by the future. Following McTaggart, the ‘moving now’ conception of time is not actualized. Zeno’s desire to write and his desire to die converge in a procrastinating default. The entire narration proceeds on multiple temporal levels, fluctuating between predilections for the past, for the present and for the future. Time itself slips out of joint, and each person must set it right.

It is with the third chapter *Il fumo* and the four that follow that the thematically oriented narrative evolves. Once again the discussion commences with reflections on the nature of writing. The doctor proposes beginning with an historical analysis, but this prescription proves impossible to follow. The act of writing is a diachronic process. Similar to McTaggart’s phenomenological conceptualization, the single events (the segments in Zeno’s life) that the narrating voice relates are, for the most part, diachronic; however the interrelationship and the interaction between these events is synchronic. This imbrication of two incompatible systems perpetuates the illusion that the act of writing is synchronic: an impossibility that the protagonist Zeno recognizes as such.

Zeno Cosini’s obsessive compulsion with smoking leads to the development of a new horologic gauge which replaces the Gregorian calendar with the “ultima sigaretta” (Svevo 657). The phenomenon of the last cigarette, “U. S.,” operates analogously to B.C. and A.D. The designation marks time distinctly, bestowing meaning it otherwise lacks. Hence the concern for mathematical permutations:

Certe date erano da me preferite per la concordanza delle cifre [...]. «Nono giorno del nono mese del 1899». Significativa nevvero? [...] «Primo giorno del primo mese del 1901» [...]. «Terzo giorno del sesto mese del 1912 ore 24». (Svevo 658)

The solar calendar provides the impetus for a personalized one in which the notation “U. S.” acts as a sign of change in the life of the protagonist. The
overdetermined intertextual references to Dante’s *Vita nova* reinforce Zeno’s proposal to break with the past. Even his father’s death is interpreted in terms of its relation to Zeno’s disease: “15.4.1890 ore 4 1/2. Muore mio padre. U. S.» Per chi non lo sapesse quelle due ultime lettere non significano *United States*, ma ultima sigaretta” (Svevo 678). The emotive hierarchy of the two events remains blurred; however, the truth value of the proposition is clear.

Zeno’s oral fetish in no way contradicts the Freudian pleasure principle. Repetition is a manifestation of what has been repressed and is a substitute for remembering. Zeno is actively compelled to find expression in the repetition of the same experience, a source of pleasure. Whatever the protagonist has repressed remains, contrary to most compulsions, pleasurable. The satisfaction derived from this experience is linked to the cigarette’s proscriptive and thanatic charge. In this sense, smoking can be understood as a form of sublimation.

Chain-smoking is the mechanism through which Zeno scans his interior time. Each cigarette represents a distinct memory, and smoking therefore triggers the imagination to recollect times past. Ironically, the first brand of cigarettes he smoked are no longer commercially available; they are the physical representation of a lost and irrevocable youth that the protagonist cannot recover.

These individual memories can be, and are, expressed as a diachronic process. McTaggart’s model is useful for conceptualizing the relationship between the synchronic and the diachronic aspects of time as well as for explaining its isotropic and its anisotropic dimensions; however, the model does not address the nexus between human experience and time. A contemporary of McTaggart, Edmund Husserl, outlines the temporal structure of experience in his phenomenology on time-consciousness. According to Husserl (whose importance to Derrida in this respect is evident), time cannot be fixed in a selfsame moment of immediate presence; instead it is a perpetual flux of protentional and retentional traces. The specific trans-temporal phasings can be visualized more clearly as a Cartesian graph. The vertical axis represents individual experiences at a given time, while the horizontal axis represents the sequence of events that are made up of individual experiences. The points below the x-axis are memories, and the points above the x-axis are anticipations; the intersection of the two axes forms a sensation. Any single experience bears a systematic relationship to the past and to the future experiences. Because of the phenomenological difference between memory and anticipation (and therefore, of the shifting position of the intersection), Husserl’s model suggests that experience is asymmetrical.

Zeno’s time-consciousness is Husserlian in that his actions are immediately and disproportionally dependent upon protentive and retentive impeti. When Zeno considers betraying his wife Augusta, he ascribes a protentive investment to his act:
Zeno's actions are temporally askew because emotive consciousness precedes the chrono-logical. In the Cartesian model the stream of events prior to the sensation corresponds to recollection, and the stream of events subsequent to the sensation corresponds to retention (Husserl § 14-19). Recollection refers to memory, while retention figures into consciousness of the present. For Husserl, the living present (lebendige Gegenwart) articulates the retention of what is just past with the protention of what is to be and is therefore the locus of meaning. However, from Zeno's perspective as a privileged narrator relating past events from the future, the phenomenological difference between memory and anticipation no longer produces an asymmetrical experience, and meaning-generating loci (among which must be included the position of the reader) are multiplied.

Directly and explicitly linked to the notion of fumo is another recurring motif: disease. The need to smoke outweighs the proscription, a tension which leads to anxiety:

Giacché mi fa male non fumerò mai più, ma prima voglio farlo per l'ultima volta. [...] Quella malattia mi procurò il secondo dei miei disturbi: lo sforzo di liberarmi dal primo. (Svevo 656)

Disease itself is extremely temporal: one often speaks of the progression and the various stages of an illness, the final one being death. For Zeno, a man obsessed with death, disease is durée:

Compresi finalmente che cosa fosse la perfetta salute umana quando indovinai che il presente per lei [Augusta] era una verità tangibile in cui si poteva segregarsi e starci caldi. [...] [L]e ore dei pasti erano tenute rigidamente e anche quelle del sonno. Esi-stevano, quelle ore, e si trovavano sempre al loro posto [...]. Ma mi colse allora un'altra piccola malattia da cui non potevo più guarire. Una cosa da niente: la paura d'invecchiare e sopra tutto la paura di morire. (Svevo 815, 816, 820)

Zeno conceives of health as a constant state of atemporality, but he does not consider himself to be healthy. Augusta can keep those hours in place, but Zeno cannot; she institutionalizes time, while he is oppressed by it. Consequently, the future manifests itself in a Heideggerian death anticipation. Future's priority derives from the projective impetus of Dasein's intentionality. (Heidegger 2.3.65). The present and the past are grasped together and are interpreted by way of the future which, for Zeno, is not an infinitely extended, open horizon. The future finds its closure in death, where future possibility of being and
non-being converge. This existential finitude manifests itself in anxiety (Zeno’s obsession with disease and death), which leads to self-deception by regarding the future as simply a coming present. Zeno Cosini, in Sartrian mauvaise foi, infinitizes the personal future and therefore falsifies it.\(^{13}\) Since he considers himself oppressed by time, Zeno clings to a Shelleyan Ozymandias which he perceives as beyond the pale:

Quando avessi saputo [...] che io definitivamente avevo perduta Ada, almeno non avrei più dovuto lottare col tempo che sarebbe continuato a trascorrere lentamente senza ch’io sentissi il bisogno di sospiungerlo. Una cosa definitiva è sempre calma perché staccata dal tempo. (Svevo 749)

Zeno’s perception of a definitive existence outside the transitory extends to society where everyone except him leads a healthy life. Time has become his gravest disease.\(^{14}\) He anticipates death inauthentically because he refuses to constitute himself and his actions on it. Instead, Zeno fabricates potential futures to justify the present, as seen during his affair with Carla Gerco: “La mia coscienza è tanto delicata che, con le mie maniere, già allora mi preparavo ad attenuare il mio futuro rimorso” (Svevo 841). Dasein still projects, but it is directed to objects and events rather than to its ultimate potentiality.\(^{15}\) These substitutes find their ultimate embodiment in disease: “Non la morte desiderai ma la malattia, una malattia che mi servisse di pretesto per fare quello che volevo, o che me lo impedisse” (Svevo 868). Disease displaces death as a constituting principle. In fact, when he accuses Carla of being a person “che non poteva intendere il valore del tempo” (Svevo 850), he is speaking also of himself.

The relativity of past to present would appear to reinforce the conceit of free will derived from a privileging of the future (as per Heidegger), therefore precluding the possibility of a deterministic conclusion. However, free will manifests itself in a passive ineptitude that perceives life as casual (not causal), absurd, unpredictable and original. In La coscienza di Zeno, retention and pretention are fused, negating the distinction between primary and secondary memory, and similarly between primary and secondary expectation. The three temporal dimensions (past, present, future) are not simply arranged alongside one another. An ontological experience necessitates an imbrication of the triad because to be conscious is to be in the past, in the present and in the future at once. However, this blurring of boundaries does not sublate difference. On the contrary, temporality consists precisely of the possibility of their being differentiated:

Evito i sogni e i ricordi [...]. Parlo con la gente e mentre dico una cosa tento involontariamente di ricordarne un’altra che poco prima dissi o feci e che non ricordo più o anche un mio pensiero che mi pare di un’importanza enorme, di quell’importanza che mio
To obfuscate past, present and future is to abandon reason; slippage of consciousness between temporal dimensions leads to madness. Transcending the individual perspective, the narrative voice appropriates a Heideggerian stance in its granting priority to the future. However, the narrative subject’s privileging of the present is the expression of a pre- and extra-philosophical tendency to deny the finitude of being and time. The present’s status appears to be both ontological and epistemological because what is present “is,” while what is past and what is future “are” not. Being and being-present seem equivalent. Epistemologically, what is present is, or at least can be, directly attributable to Zeno’s cognition, while what is past and what is future are accessible only through the indirect and less reliable channels of memory, of expectation and of prediction. To experience life means to accept the future qua future, death. This being-in-the-world toward death is most thoroughly developed in the last section of the La coscienza di Zeno.

Psico-analisi, the concluding chapter, is in many respects the most suggestive for a discussion of time-consciousness. The entire text shifts temporal and narrative frames from abstract recollections of things past to the more concretely temporal form of a diary (specific dates are provided and the individual’s experiences are inserted into a historical dimension, thereby conferring authenticity). The narrative abandons the illusion of spontaneity, since the narrating writer finds himself in the same compositional trap that held him in Preambolo; however, the lag between the occurrence of the narrated events and the act of writing retains an illusional immediacy. The suggestion of an unmediated experience between narrator and reader is what permits the diary to operate as an idealized locus for confession. From a temporal perspective, the specific entries into the diary are diachronic: the 15 maggio 1915 entry (Svevo 1096-101) succeeds the 3 maggio 1915 entry (Svevo 1079-96). From a narratological perspective, the dates only obscure the distance between the writing narrator and the narrative voice.

The stylistic consequence of appropriating this genre is a convergence of the narrative’s time with the time of narration. The present tense is used in order to emphasize the literary aspect of the narrator’s endeavor. The act of writing in the concrete present serves to conceal the trans-historical traces that reveal it to be an artificial construct.

In this final section of the text, Zeno comes to the realization that temporal stability and ontological presence can exist only in writing:

L’ho finita con la psico-analisi [...]. [P]er rimpiazzare la psico-analisi, io mi rimetto ai miei cari fogli. Da un anno non avevo scritto una parola [...]. Ma ora mi trovo squili-
brato e malato più che mai e, scrivendo, credo che mi netterò più facilmente del male che la cura m'ha fatto. Almenò sono sicuro che questo è il vero sistema per ridare importanza ad un passato che più non duole e far andare via più rapido il presente uggioso. (Svevo 1079)

The negation of time is a feasible and stable component of Zeno Cosini’s time-consciousness. The narrating voice does not substitute individual atemporality with universal chronological progression, nor does it substitute anisotropy with isotropy. The narrating voice refutes the temporal premises of psychoanalysis.

Zeno’s invectives against psychoanalysis are an assault on its foundations: the tenet that the present can be properly understood only through the past is unacceptable to him. This priority that psychoanalysis grants to the past, similar to its privileged status with Dilthey,\(^{16}\) is suggested in the belief that signification is a category of memory. The conclusion is that one can discern the meaning of one’s life only \textit{a posteriori}.\(^{17}\)

For Zeno the implications of this doctrine are depressing if not paradoxical. The individual will never be able to understand his or her own life as well as another can because he or she is always, by definition, involved in it.\(^{18}\) Zeno categorically refutes the implication that temporality of life precludes its comprehension and necessarily relegates to the judgement of others (psychoanalysts) the search for its meaning.

The concluding chapter’s privileging of the future on a universal level does nothing to dispel the atemporal preferentiality of individual existence:

Oggi che siamo alla metà del mese sono rimasto colpito della difficoltà che offre il nostro calendario ad una regolare e ordinata risoluzione. Nessun mese è uguale all’altro. Per rilevare meglio la propria risoluzione si vorrebbe finire di fumare insieme a qualche cosa d’altro, il mese p. e. Ma salvo il Luglio e Agosto e il Dicembre e il Gen naio non vi sono altri mesi che si susseguano e facciano il paio in quanto a quantità di giorni. Un vero disordine nel tempo! (Svevo 1096-97)

Zeno remains at the anisotropic level with time interpreted, not as a progression, but in a Bergsonian \textit{durée} defining a virtual multiplicity. Memory is the locus for the coexistence of the varying degrees of difference in this multiplicity. It is a plurality which diverges into senselessness or converges into nothingness.\(^{19}\) The impossibility of establishing an ontological foundation necessarily retains the living present as the privileged interpretive locus: “[C]ome potevo intendere la mia vita quando non ne conoscevo quest’ultimo periodo?” (Svevo 1115) Meaning cannot be generated from a position in constant flux.\(^{20}\)

Duration is linked to consciousness, while relativity belongs to the concrete: one is metaphysical, the other physical. In the narrative, the outbreak of the First World War represents the textual displacement of internal conscious-
ness by external reality. This process distorts the ontological presence by inscribing it into a temporal progression: public history.

In the text, past, present and future are contemporaneously privileged dimensions. Each one of the temporal spheres operates differently at the narrative and metanarrative levels. The present reflects the paradoxical impossibility of the ontological presence of the narrating voice. The past, as privileged by psychoanalysis, demystifies the clinical process and makes manifest the threatening conclusions inherent in the act of memory retrieval. The future suggests a progression from the past or from the present (one which an individual is unable to make) existing only in terms of public history. Thus the future is devoid of value for the individual grounded in ontological presence because it is the anisotropic perspective that makes protentions and retentions possible.

Therefore, Zeno’s experiences are Husserlian to the point of sublating time; transcending the self. Zeno’s experiences are also Heideggerian, privileging the future to the point of its destruction of time. The concluding image prescribes an apocalyptic cure: “Ci sarà un’esplosione enorme che nessuno udrà e la terra ritornata alla forma di nebulosa errerà nei cieli priva di parassiti e di malattie” (Svevo 1117).

In the novel, the negation of time suggests a denial of progression, since progress is a diachronic process which, in a synchronic form, cannot exist except as stagnation. For this reason La coscienza di Zeno is not a Bildungsroman because in the absence of time Zeno cannot develop. He is trapped in a state of stasis – as all individuals are – which will only end with the final, apocalyptic vision of the explosion. Thus the reader is confronted with this paradox: time is non-existent, and time is eternal. Only through time is time conquered.

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NOTES

1 The translation is mine.
2 Husserl’s amusing observations retain their validity: “Die Kapitel 13-28 des XI. Buches der Confessiones müß auch heute noch jedermann gründlich studieren, der sich mit dem Zeitproblem beschäftigt. Denn herrlich weit gebracht und erheblich weiter gebracht als dieser große und ernst ringende Denker hat es die wissenstolze Neuzeit in diesen Dingen nicht. Noch heute mag man mit Augustinus fagen: si nemo a me quae is, scio, si quare ote explicare velim, nescio.” (Husserl, Vorlesungen 368 [2]) [Chapters 13-28 of Book XI of the Confessions must even today be thoroughly studied by everyone concerned with the problem of time. For no one in this knowledge-proud modern generation has made more masterful or significant progress in these matters than this great thinker who struggled so earnestly with the problem. One may still say with Augustine: si nemo a me quae is, scio, si quare ote explicare velim, nescio.] (Husserl, Phenomenology 21)
3 Barilli (103) makes passing reference to this influence.
4 The last name Cosini, a variant of cosine, meaning “little things of no consequence,” is suggestive of how the protagonist elects to confront life. For an exhaustive examination of the ironic,
the pejorative and the paradoxical implications of the name Zeno Cosini, see Treitel.

5 For a thorough analysis of McTaggart’s proof, see Farmer.

6 This variant of the edited manuscript trope finds immediate Italian models in Luigi Pirandello’s Il fu Mattia Pascal (1904), Alessandro Manzoni’s Promessi Sposi (1840) and Ugo Foscolo’s Ultime lettere di Jacopo Ortis (1802). In this last instance Lorenzo Alderani publishes the manuscript per amore, while Dottor S. per dispetto. The final note in Elio Vittorini’s Conversazione in Sicilia (1941) dispels the need for this rhetorical gambit in that it considers all texts to circulate independently of authorial intention, imagining that all manuscripts are found in a bottle.

7 The identity of the doctor (Schmitz, Samigli, Svevo, Sigmund, Scarfoglio, Stolto – numerous possibilities, some more likely than others) becomes irrelevant because the reader displaces him to assume the authoritative position of veracity determinator. Given this usurpation of authority, the reader is subject to the same transference (whether he or she elects to recognize it or not) as Dottor S. See Pouillon; Rosowsky; and Saccone 58-64.

8 Zeno, qua narrating voice, narrates his disease as Saccone (66) insists; however, the diseases are contextualized within distorted and exclusionary life experiences. The text is not an autobiography, nor is it a confession (if for no other reason than the non-coincidence of the authorial and narrative personae); however, the text retains autobiographical and confessional traces that necessarily result from a diachronic self-analysis.

9 Croce’s dictum, “tutta la storia è storia contemporanea”, seems particularly relevant because the narrative voice’s historiographic emplotment confers a meaning that can only refer and defer to the present.

10 “Ancora oggi mi pare che se quella data potesse ripetersi, io saprei iniziare una nuova vita” (Svevo 658). For the presence of Dante and the truth function in La coscienza di Zeno, see Freccero.

11 See Savelli’s analysis on the ambiguous relationship between each last cigarette and events.

12 For a critique of the Husserlian position, see Derrida.

13 For a more thorough treatment of the relationship between time and disease, see Biasin 63-99.

14 As though time were his personal cross to bear, Zeno takes pleasure in artificial temporal divisions which he himself naturalizes: “Io, che lavoravo tanto poco, conservai sempre un grande rispetto per il giorno festivo che divide la vita in periodi brevi che la rendono più sopportabile” (Svevo 760).

15 Zeno’s inauthenticity manifests itself in his emotional investment in actions which are often temporally desequilibrated.

16 See Dilthey. Dilthey holds that life is the ultimate nexus of reality behind which people cannot go. Life is understood as the historical totality of human experience. Dilthey claims a priority of the human sciences over the natural sciences: the former are based on inner experience while the latter examine the outer experience. Zeno makes the opposing claim: truth exists only in the natural sciences. When he goes to visit Dottor Paoli he distinguishes between the two fields: “Ecco finalmente una vera analisi e non più una psico-analisi. Mi ricordai con simpatia e commozione del mio passato lontano di chimico e di analisi vere: Io, un tubetto e un reagente! L’altro, l’analizzato, dorme finché il reagente imperiosa-mente non lo desti. La resistenza nel tubetto non c’è o cede alla minima elevazione della temperatura e la simulazione manca del tutto. In quel tubetto non avveniva nulla che potesse ricordare il mio comportamento quando per far piacere al dottor S. inventavo nuovi particolari della mia infanzia che dovevano confermare la diagnosi di Sofocle. Qui, invece, tutto era verità” (Svevo 1093-94).

17 Existentialism shares this dictum in so far as a posteriori refers to post-mortem.

18 This situation is reminiscent of the paradox of eudaimonia in Aristotle’s Nicomachean Ethics (1.10). Because happiness can be ascribed only to a complete life, one could never call a person happy until he or she were dead and no longer able to enjoy it.

19 In Luigi Pirandello’s Uno, nessuno e centomila (1926), Vitangelo Moscarda finds his ontological stability displaced when his mirrored reflection does not project a coherent image. The whole is as unstable as the fragments are incomplete.
Time-Consciousness in Italo Svevo’s La Coscienza di Zeno

20 Zeno’s historiographic concern is similar to Croce’s, who concluded that historical consciousness cannot be self-reflexive.

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