

DANIEL J. LANGTON

As Well Him as Another

My name is Molly. I read that odd book
one full month because her name was Molly
and she was as strange as I know I am,
read it on new beds, coffee breaks, damp grass.
I felt I got to know her, every nook
and cranny of her mind, the mad folly
of marrying a dullard, the grand dam
of her emotions bursting like a mass.

I wanted to phone her, to say to her,
I would find the words; you don't have to lose,
to bear, to settle, life comes in stages,
you are a gift, a moment, a flower,
can make each night a day when you can choose
to have a life that isn't trapped in pages.

My name is Leopold. I read the Joyce
only because my name is Leopold
and I'm a Dublin Jew, and I must say
he got it mostly right, the feel, the look,
I mean at times I swear I heard a voice
a bit like mine, although of course too old
for me, not really me, I mean the way
he talked was only talking in a book.

And now I'm done with that, I have to ask
if that is how it is, if a writer
can ever know a man who isn't him
or is it all a terrible mask
to fend off life, a girl when you meet her,
all those who want to say; How are ye, Jim?

My name is James A. Joyce. I have a pub
in Castlecomer, near the Dublin road.
Because you asked, I took a look at this,
this big important book with all the places
as I knew were there, or at least they were.
He seems to take his time, he wants to rub
it in with some of them, to dump a load
of bricks on some of them, and I'll say this,
I hear their tears, I cannot see their faces.

He got the words all right, he missed the song,
I think because of their big city ways
in their own time and day, he had the sound
and fury, and though I think he got it wrong
the way it will be will be the way he says
now that it's written, now that it's written down.