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## As Well Him as Another

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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.