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by STEVEN PUTZEL

WHEN THE names James Stephens and James Joyce are juxtaposed, we think of the elaborate fiction created by Joyce, playfully perpetuated by Stephens, and recorded in Joyce's *Letters*, Ellmann's biography of Joyce and in Stephens's post-World War II radio broadcasts for the BBC. In 1927, depressed by his continuing financial difficulties, his failing eyesight and the scathing responses of critics and friends to serial publication of his *Work in Progress*, Joyce convinced Harriet Shaw Weaver and himself that James Stephens might take over the writing of *Finnegans Wake* should he be unable to finish it. Over the years that followed Joyce transmuted the coincidental connaturality based on name, birthplace (Dublin) and birthdate (February 2, 1882) into a friendship and a projected collaboration.[1]

We can avoid taking Joyce's self-comforting fiction too seriously by keeping in mind the double-edged humor with which Stephens summarizes the relationship in his 1946 broadcast, "The James Joyce I Knew": "Joyce was tall, which I wasn't; he wore specs, which I didn't; he looked down at me, which I couldn't; he rubbed his chin at me, which I wouldn't."[2]

Stephens's comic visual comparison is far closer to the critical consensus than is Joyce's idealized fiction. What could the leprechaun-enamored art of the Celtic Revivalist have in common with the complex modernity of Joyce's work? It has been said that Stephens idealized Dublin slum life in *The Charwoman's Daughter* and that his poetry is shrouded in the Celtic Twilight. How different from Joyce who was holding up a "nicely polished looking-glass" to reflect the moral turpitude of life in Ireland.[3]

No comparison of Joyce to Stephens will significantly alter our conception of Joyce and his work, but by going back a score of years before the famous friendship, we find a point of comparison that should alter the way we view Stephens and his work. In 1913 Macmillan published James Stephens's *Here are Ladies*, a collection of short stories based primarily on Dublin life. In

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1. The controversy surrounding Stephens's and Joyce's shared birth date is fully discussed by Alan Cohn, "James Joyce and James Stephens: The Coincidence of the Second of February," *ICarbS* (1975). See also Stephens's own account as recorded in his BBC broadcasts, "The James Joyce I Knew" (1946), "*Ulysses*" (1948), and "*Finnegans Wake*" (1947), in Lloyd Frankenberg, ed., *James, Seumas and Jacques: Unpublished Writings of James Stephens* (London: Macmillan, 1964), pp. 147–62.
2. Frankenberg, p. 148.
3. Richard Ellmann, ed., *Selected Letters of James Joyce* (New York: The Viking Press, 1975), p. 90.

1914 Grant Richards at long last published James Joyce's *Dubliners*, a collection of short stories based entirely on Dublin life. However different these two volumes may be, they are connected by what Stephens called the "criticism of origins," the recognition that, as he said, "locality does not only influence one's accent: it subtly shades all our perspectives and preoccupations."[4]

Joyce's famous statement of intention demonstrates the aptness of this "criticism of origins": "I am writing a series of epicleti—ten—for a paper. I have written one. I call the series *Dubliners* to betray the soul of that hemiplegia or paralysis many consider a city."[5] Although Stephens never made such a claim for *Here are Ladies*, he, too, spoke against hypocritical morality. In a letter to Lord Dunsany, Stephens expressed his hatred of "those people who have a morality with a label attached." He adds, "I only know of one morality—& that is Energy." He shows himself to be an heir to Blake, a disciple of Nietzsche, and a confrere to Joyce when he claims, "A city would travel as long a distance on Blasphemy & Laughter as on Prayer & Fasting & be much better for it." Stephens could also be echoing Gallaher's (and Joyce's) famous "dear dirty Dublin" with his comment to Thomas Bodkin that "Dublin really has points, certain pleasant incompetences."[6]

During much of his life, Stephens, like Joyce, lived far from Ireland, and yet both continued to make Ireland, particularly Dublin, their subject matter. Within a year after leaving for Europe with Nora, Joyce wrote to Stanislaus requesting Dublin details: "Are Aungier St and Wicklow in the Royal Exchange Ward? . . . Are the police at Sydney Parade of the D division? . . . Would an accident at Sydney Parade be treated at Vincent's Hospital?"[7] Joyce craved detailed accuracy throughout *Dubliners* as he would later throughout *Ulysses*. Stephens's letters home reveal a different attitude towards similar requests. He tells Bodkin that he remembers "that at Dunphies [sic] Corner you can get funerally tipsy & that King Billy rides in College Green & Larkin rides in Beresford Place." Then he asks, "If you can recollect any small street facts & refresh my memories with your recollections I'll be your servant."[8] Stephens turns his Dublin details into poems like "Dunphy's Corner":

> Pacing slowly down the road
> Black horses go, with load on load
> Of Dublin people dead, and they
> Will be covered up in clay.
>
> Ere their friends go home, each man
> Will shake his head, and drain a can
> To Dublin people we will meet
> Not again in Grafton Street.

With similar details from home Joyce does this: "Dunphy's corner. Mourning

4. Richard Finneran, *Letters of James Stephens* (New York: Macmillan, 1974), p. 298.
5. Joyce, *Selected Letters*, p. 22.
6. Stephens, *Letters*, pp. 19–20, 57.
7. Joyce, *Selected Letters*, p. 75.
8. Stephens, *Letters*, p. 169.

coaches drawn up drowning their grief. A pause by the wayside. Tiptop position for a pub. Expect we'll pull up here on the way back to drink his health. Pass round the consolation. Elixir of life."[9] Stephens's word play "funerally tipsy" is the timid ancestor of the *Wake*'s "funferall," "funebral," "funereels," and "funforall."[10]

Before leaving Ireland in 1904, Joyce had projected ten *Dubliners* stories; by the end of 1905 he planned twelve stories organized in four groups of three illustrating childhood, adolescence, maturity, and public life. During his long, futile negotiations with Grant Richards in 1906, Joyce broke the neat symmetry of his volume to add "Two Gallants" and "A Little Cloud," and finally, after these negotiations had ended, he added his tour de force—"The Dead." After this came the nearly seven years of publication woes described in Joyce's "A Curious History," followed by an anti-climactic, financially unrewarding, and critically disastrous publication.

I rehearse this history only to contrast it with the less well known history of *Here are Ladies*. After his success with two volumes of poetry, *Insurrections* and *The Hill of Vision*, and two novels, *The Charwoman's Daughter* and *The Crock of Gold*, Stephens had no difficulty at all with *Here are Ladies*. Its publication history includes offers of advances, an attempt by Maunsel & Co. to outbid Macmillan for the book, a request from Macmillan for an additional 10,000 words, and generally positive reviews. All of this merely demonstrates that publishers and reviewers were then as they often are now purveyors of popular taste rather than expert judges of literary merit.

On a first reading Stephens's volume seems facile, uneven, and conventional beside *Dubliners*, but a closer reading reveals similarities of intention and execution. Stephens had also conceived of his book as a collection of triads (in fact he thought of calling the book *Triangles*)[11] but added poems and stories to round out the volume to the necessary 60,000 words. The major portion of the volume as he originally conceived it, which suggested the title *Triangles*, is the portion of the book that complements *Dubliners*. This includes "Three Heavy Husbands," "Three Women Who Wept," "Three Angry People," "Three Young Wives," "Three Lovers Who Lost," "Three Happy Places."[12]

Each sketch focuses on a single relationship or a single emotion, and each sketch ends with a flash of knowledge, a Joycean epiphany. Many of the stories depict what Stephens called in *The Charwoman's Daughter* the "grey-lived, dreary-natured people" who walk Sackville and Grafton Streets; in other words, he, like Joyce, draws portraits of the paralyzed middle class. For many of Stephens's characters, Dublin is a place where man has ceased to be free, where he is constricted by loveless marriages, meaningless routines, and wanton cruelty. The first of his "three heavy husbands," for example, is "the owner by purchase" of his wife until she leaves with a young clerk. One of the "three

9. James Joyce, *Ulysses* (New York: Random House, 1961), p. 96.
10. James Joyce, *Finnegans Wake* (London: Faber and Faber, 1975), pp. 13, 77, 414, 458.
11. Stephens, *Letters*, p. 53.
12. All references to *Here are Ladies* are from the first edition (London: Macmillan, 1913).

women who wept" runs a boarding house and quietly sits through her nights "listening to her half-starved heart" and longing for the love and companionship she will never have.

The thematic similarity between Joyce's city as center of paralysis and Stephens's city as center of "solemn stagnation" could be traced through many of the stories, but it will be more useful to get beyond mere surface similarities by comparing one of Joyce's earliest stories, "Eveline," to the last of Stephens's "Three Young Wives" sketches. Although many critics have shown us that there can be no comprehensive reading of "Eveline" without reference to the autobiographic, symbolic and historic aspects of Joyce's method, for the purpose of comparison I will limit myself here to rhetorical and thematic analysis.

She sat at the window watching the evening invade the avenue. Her head was leaned against the window curtains and in her nostrils was the odour of dusty cretonne. She read the letter through twice, and then she stood for a few minutes looking in front of her, with her arms hanging loosely by her side, and her foot tapping on the carpet.

Readers who know Joyce's story well know that there is something wrong with this passage. The first two sentences begin "Eveline" while the third is the opening of Stephens's sketch. Reading the sentences this way is somewhat disconcerting, but it demonstrates that there is an uncanny similarity of situation and theme. The opening of each story reveals a young woman deep in thought at a crucial moment of her life. Each is nervous. But when we listen more closely, what a difference between "looking in front of her" and "watching the evening invade the avenue." Stephens's verbal phrases and gerund-heavy clauses are descriptive and they do convey the protagonist's mood. But Joyce subtly gets inside Eveline's mind to convey the threat of the world beyond the window, and to recreate the moment by allowing us to share Eveline's very senses—the dusty smell of cretonne.

Another major difference in the way we see the two protagonists is that for Eveline there is a frightening, all-too-real world beyond the window and beyond her familiar block. Joyce tells us that few people pass, but those few passersby cause her to think about the lives of her neighbors and the history of the neighborhood. Similarly, her pleasant and painful memories are triggered by the sight of "familiar objects" like the "yellowing photograph" of her father's old friend, the "broken harmonium" and the "coloured print"—all symbolic representations of her situation. Significantly Stephens's young woman looks not through the window and out at the world, but into the fire and into her own imagination.

The thoughts of both women move by free association rather than by logical progression, but whereas Joyce carefully catalogs Eveline's sensual stimuli, Stephens simply lets us overhear his young woman's thoughts. Beneath the surface of Eveline's thoughts runs a sub-text. Her subconscious mind arranges her thoughts to convey fears never dealt with on a conscious level. She thinks of her mother and Tizzie Dunn who are dead, and with the same brain wave she thinks of the Waters family who have emigrated. She sees the photograph

of her father's friend and remembers her father saying, "He is in Melbourne now." She is contemplating leaving home, but to her xenophobic Dublin mind leaving home is equated with death. In other words, Joyce conveys his character's subconscious fears as well as her conscious thoughts. Stephens seems content to convey consciousness.

Joyce moves about freely in Eveline's mind, sometimes conveying to readers what Eveline herself does not know and sometimes giving us direct quotations from her memory. We hear her father's "He is in Melbourne now," his comment about Frank—"I know these sailor chaps"—and his opinion of foreigners—"Damned Italians! coming over here!"—and we hear Miss Gavin's public reprimand: "Miss Hill, don't you see these ladies are waiting? Look lively, Miss Hill, please."

Stephens uses dialogue in a different way. He begins his story from the outside, from a storyteller's omniscient perspective: "She read," "She was looking," "She crossed," "Her husband had," "he was," etc. Then Stephens moves closer and we overhear the woman's memory of her husband's typical talk: "Will you hand me the paper, like a good girl?" "I say, dear, my pipe is stuffed, you might stick a hairpin through it." Rather than telling us where the young wife should stick the hairpin, Stephens creates an ellipsis and then compensates for his inability to recreate sights and smells from an authorial perspective by switching to the first person. The next few pages, which record the free association of her thoughts, begin with, ". . . How red the fire is to-night!" and continue on for about ten lines recording the woman's thoughts about the fire. She thinks, "The blue flame on the top that flits and flickers like a will-o'-the-wisp is gas, I suppose—I wonder how they extract it. . . . I wonder will he be sorry when he comes home, and finds. . . . Perhaps his friend will be sufficient for him then. . . ." Stephens, too, moves from the outside to the woman's conscious thoughts, and finally to the emergence of subconscious thoughts into consciousness.

At the center of each story is the conscious decision-making process, the pros and cons of running away, the security of the hearth against the freedom of escape. Joyce spends about twice as long on the weighing process as does Stephens. Again, Joyce's rhetorical method is to concentrate on carefully selected, symbolic detail. Although he retains his omniscient perspective and never switches to the first person, he bevels the edges of his narration, thereby allowing us to slide directly to the sub-text of Eveline's thoughts.

Eveline's thoughts work around her relationship to Frank, revealing to us much more than Eveline herself understands. First she thinks abstractly about marriage without even a thought about her particular man, and only after a long digression in which she catalogs memories of the pain, the responsibility and the security of life with her brother and her father does she get to Frank. Then, in one brilliant paragraph, Joyce conveys both the surface and the meaning of the relationship. Eveline's thoughts move from a general description of his character—"Frank was very kind, manly, open-hearted"—to a recreation of how he looked when she first saw him—the jaunty angle of his hat, the

wildness of his hair, and the bronzeness of his face. She doesn't say it, but we see that Frank is the antithesis of her father and the constricting life he represents.

In just a few well-chosen phrases and details Joyce conveys the evolution of Eveline's feelings. The romantic operetta and her seat in an "unaccustomed part of the theatre" made her feel "elated," Frank's song made her feel "pleasantly confused," his attention had been "an excitement" and only then "had she begun to like him." The word "lover" is not used at all until after her father forbids her to see Frank. Joyce brings to life Eveline's delayed adolescence and her emergence as a young adult with a lover. Of course it is not her feeling for Frank that makes her decide to leave. Instead, she remembers her mother's "life of commonplace sacrifices closing in final craziness" and realizes that this will be her own fate. The terror of her certain future overcomes the subconscious terror of emigration and she rushes off to the North Wall.

The central section of Stephens's story is dominated by two pages of good, modern, feminist indignation against infantile male demands. Instead of recreating his young couple's courtship with Joycean detail, Stephens simply (but effectively) sets up a contrast between her husband-to-be's supplication and his inconsiderate demands after the marriage. The section ends, "He cannot sleep in the night, so I must awaken also and listen to his complaint. He is sick, and the medicine tastes nasty; I am to understand that if the medicine tastes nasty I am responsible for it—I should not have given him anything nasty: he is surprised: he trusted me not to do such a thing to him." But suddenly her indignation and her resolve melt away: "He turns to me like a child when he has any . . . he turns to me like a child and trusts . . . he turns to me . . . like a child. . . ." Stephens conveys the inner working of his "everywoman's" mind by letting us overhear her thoughts.

Joyce's story ends with the famous scene at the quay. Eveline stands paralyzed by her fear of the unknown. Trapped by Dublin inertia, she becomes "passive, like a helpless animal" and life passes her by. Although this was one of Joyce's earliest stories, it contains a powerful indictment of Irish conventions. She does what a good Catholic girl should do and her reward will be a life of drudgery and petty violence. Stephens, on the other hand, is usually considered a "safe" writer, a teller of happily-ever-after fairytales. But his simple little sketch is also an indictment of conventional values. His young woman, who has shown herself to be infinitely more intelligent and imaginative than Eveline, refuses to run away with her lover. Stephens shows us the woman's sacrifice but he doesn't end there. He brings the husband home and we hear his selfish demands and the woman's timid replies. Joyce leaves Eveline a passive animal while Stephens leaves the young wife stuck with her childish oaf of a husband, but he leaves her laughing at the fate she has consciously chosen.

Joyce's story was first published in *The Irish Homestead* in 1904 while Stephens's story first appeared in *The Nation* in 1913. It is possible that

Stephens had read his future friend's story, but it is not likely that it influenced his own. Asked by his American patron W. T. H. Howe about Joyce, Stephens spoke of "a rather disconnected, unpleasant prose work called *Dubliners*," adding, "It is anything but representative of Dublin,"[13] and Stephens's first meeting with Joyce in 1912 was anything but propitious. In fact, until Joyce struck up the friendship in the late 1920s, Stephens had nothing good to say about Joyce. Despite the early animosity, Stephens had more in common with Joyce than a few coincidences; each was concerned with expressing the paralysis of modern city life. Despite their later friendship, Stephens was never a stylist of Joycean caliber, and although the conjunction of Joyce's initials with Stephens's, forming JJ and S—the "colloquial Irish" for John Jameson and Son, Joyce's favorite whiskey—would have looked well under the title *Finnegans Wake*, Stephens would have had considerable trouble completing Joyce's work. Although beside Joyce, Stephens is certainly dwarfed, he is as much at home at his fellow Dubliner's side as he is in the company of the Celtic Revivalists.

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13. Stephens, *Letters*, p. 209.