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**JOYCE'S FICTION
AND
THE NEW RISE
OF
THE NOVEL**

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The James Joyce Italian Foundation*

*edited by
Franca Ruggieri*

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REALISM AND ALLEGORY IN “CYCLOPS”

In spite of its boundless stylistic variety, the section of *Ulysses* running from “Sirens” to “Oxen of the Sun” seems to convey a mysterious sense of unity. With the addition of “Wandering Rocks”, Michael Groden recognizes in these episodes a “structural unit”, a “middle stage of work” within the overall structure of the novel (Groden 1977: 37). The ingredient providing a subliminal unity to this section is the *primal matter* used by Joyce in its making: pre-Socratic philosophy.

To prove my claim, I will focus on “Cyclops”, in which striking realism hides an allegorical dimension since the choice of characters, the setting, the repetition of certain words and the two-fold stylistic layout of the episode derive from the philosophy of Heraclitus of Ephesus. The very physical appearance of Heraclitus provides the model for the description of the Citizen: Lucian of Samosata wrote a dialogue between a crying Heraclitus and a laughing Democritus (Lucian 1905: 190-206), which inspired a famous fresco by Donato Bramante in which Heraclitus is depicted as “broadshouldered deepchested stronglimbed redhaired freelyfreckled shaggybearded widemouthed largenosed longheaded” (*U* 12.152-54).

Lucian, along with Plutarch, Horace, Juvenal and Seneca, called Heraclitus “the weeping philosopher” and Bramante highlights “The eyes in which a tear and a smile strove ever for the mastery” (*U* 12.161-62). The parallelism between “the weeping philosopher” and the Citizen is confirmed in “Circe”, when the latter “brushes aside a tear in his emerald muffler” (*U* 15.1617), and in “Nausicaa”, where he is nicknamed “that bawler” (*U* 13.1215). According to the tradition,

Heraclitus died of dropsy (Diogenes Laërtius, IX, 3), and the Citizen runs after Bloom “puffing and blowing with the dropsy” (U 12.1784-85).

Here is a synthesis of Heraclitus’ philosophy, which was handed down to us in 130, *százharminc* fragments:

Everything changes and nothing in the world remains still (*panta rhei*), since every being holds within itself its opposite, and the opposites identify one another: living and dead, awake and asleep, young and old are the same. Out of discord comes harmony; contrast and war generate all things.

Fire [...], in some fragments appears to be a symbol of the permanent transformation whereby all things are generated and destroyed, while in others it seems to be a primal matter that moves [...] following the same and only way, upwards and downwards [...]. All things are an equal exchange for fire and fire for all things, as goods are for gold and gold for goods. When everything returns to being fire, in a sort of universal conflagration, the world agrees to unity and perfect peace [...]. Civil laws, as well, derive from universal reason, and mankind must obey them.

(Abbagnano 1982: 88, translation mine)

To grasp the immanent presence of Heraclitus’ philosophy in “Cyclops”, each point will be dealt with separately.

- 1) *Every being holds within itself its opposite, and the opposites identify one another.*

The Brunonian theory of the *coincidentia oppositorum* plays a fundamental role in *Finnegans Wake*. In January 1925, Joyce explained it thus to Harriet Weaver: “His [Bruno’s] philosophy is a kind of dualism – every power in nature must evolve an opposite in order to realise itself and opposition brings reunion etc. etc.” (SL 305-06). However, as early as 1903, in an essay entitled *The Bruno Philosophy*, Joyce recognized in Heraclitus the forerunner of such a theory:

Is it not strange, then, that Coleridge should have set him down a dualist, a later Heraclitus, and should have represented him as saying in effect: “Every power in nature or in spirit must evolve an opposite as the sole condition and means of its manifestation; and every opposition is, therefore, a tendency to reunion.”? (*OCPW* 94)

One of the characteristic features of “Cyclops” is the frequent pairing of terms with opposite or complementary meanings, from “the vendor” and “the purchaser” (*U* 12.35-37) to “Brother Aloysius Pacificus and Brother Louis Bellicosus” (*U* 12.1707-08). Bloom dramatizes the concept of opposition when, before defining love as “the opposite of hatred”, “he collapses all of a sudden, twisting around all the opposite” (*U* 12.1479-85).

2) *Living and dead, awake and asleep are the same.*

This concept, often expressed by Heraclitus, is personified in “Cyclops” by the alive-dead Paddy Dignam and the awake-asleep Bob Doran. In turn, Alf Bergan, who believes that he has seen Dignam with his own eyes, represents man’s inability to see and understand, criticized thus by Heraclitus: “Eyes and ears are bad witnesses to men if they have souls that understand not their language” (Burnet 1892: 133). When the bad witness Alf Bergan finds out that Dignam is dead, he is “flabbergasted” (*U* 12.337), a synthesis of the incomplete fragment: “Knowing not how to listen or how to speak” (Burnet: 134). Bob Doran is fast asleep at the beginning of the episode and, once awake, he barely returns to the real world. Such a propensity is criticized by Heraclitus in several fragments such as: “Other men know not what they are doing when awake, even as they forget what they do in sleep” (*ibid.*).

When the Narrator of the episode accuses Bloom of being capable of arguing that “dying was living” (*U* 12.1363), he is in fact quoting Heraclitus, according to whom “Mortals are immortals and immortals are mortals, the one living the others’ death and dying the others’ life” (Burnet: 138).

- 3) *Out of discord comes harmony; contrast and war generate all things.*

The whole episode concerns discord and contrast, and contains a number of sentences like “I dare him and I doubledare him” (*U* 12.27, 100) or “We’ll put force against force” (*U* 12.1364). Wars, the Irish and the Jewish questions, racism and colonialism are the topics of conversation, in which unusual curses like “holy wars” and “bloody wars” are used (*U* 12.765, 1849). The first character mentioned in the episode is old Troy, a name that recalls the most famous war in ancient times, and the first dialogue the Citizen engages in deals with the Russian-Japanese War (*U* 12.140). The idea of physical confrontation is implicit in various sporting activities mentioned, in particular, the brutal “butting match” (*U* 12.1322-24) and the Keogh-Bennett boxing match (*U* 12.939-87), which also symbolizes the long-lasting conflict between Ireland and the United Kingdom. As for Garryowen, its tendency to xenophobia derives from Heraclitus’ fragment: “Dogs bark at every one they do not know” (Burnet: 141).

- 4) *Fire seems to be a primal matter following the same and only way, upwards and downwards.*

Most pre-Socratic philosophers believed that all things draw their origin from a certain first principle, or *arché*. Heraclitus’ *arché* is fire, which, in John Burnet’s translation, follows “the way up and the way down” (Burnet: 138). Such *arché* is personified by the chimney sweep (*U* 12.001-03), whose task is to set free the way *up* followed by fire; hence the overuse of the preposition “up” in “Cyclops”. At the end of the episode, Bloom’s chariot of fire follows the axis of Little Britain street instead of soaring freely in the sky (*U* 12.1915-18), because “The way up is one and the same” (Burnet: 138).

The Homeric biscuit tin hurled by the Citizen becomes “an incandescent object of enormous proportions” (*U* 12.12879-80); the Citizen is described as an active volcano (*U* 12.162-66) and, in “Circe”, he is nicknamed “that fireeater” (*U* 15.221). In “Ithaca”, “Cyclops” is

coupled with “Holocaust” (*U* 17.2051), the rite foreseeing a sacrifice by fire which, in 1922, was not yet equivalent to genocide. And the Linati Schema (Ellmann 1972, appendix) places Prometheus, who was punished by Zeus for giving fire to mortals, at the top of the list of the “Persons” of the episode.

- 5) *All things are an equal exchange for fire and fire for all things, as goods are for gold and gold for goods.*

Heraclitus sees a symbol of the transformation of matter in economic transactions. Many such transactions take place or are mentioned in “Cyclops” and, contrary to the other episodes of *Ulysses*, the money with which drinks are paid for is constantly mentioned. The word “gold” appears a dozen times and the final events of the episode are conditioned by the outcome of a horserace called “The Gold Cup”. The Narrator is a debt collector and Lenehan looks “like a fellow that had lost a bob and found a tanner” (*U* 12.1215-16). Joyce identifies in swindling and betting an interesting example of transformation of matter: the sale of false tickets for Canada, the swindle of the fake Hungarian lottery and the double-dealing sale of horses to the British Army are all commented upon. Before the boxing match, Boylan misleads the gamblers by spreading wrong information about Bennett’s fitness while Bloom, ultimately, is accused of having transformed five shillings into five pounds, which is the reason why, if ‘Throwaway’ is a horse, the odds are twenty to one.

- 6) *Civil laws derive from universal reason, and mankind must obey them.*

In “Cyclops”, Homeric and Heraclitean correspondences often coincide, for example in Bloom’s burning cigar, which also represents the club with which Ulysses blinded Polyphemus. Similarly, as in the “Odyssey”, the Cyclops are described as “free from all constraint of law” (IX, 121-22), Homeric and pre-Socratic correspondences clash perfectly in the setting (near the courthouse), in the conversation top-

ics and in many characters of the episode: “old Troy of the D. M. P.” (U 12.001) is only the first in a long list of people and institutions representing the law, not to mention the magazine “Police Gazette” (U 12.1165) and a beer brand nicknamed “imperial yeomanry” (U 12.1318). In order to solve the problems connected with Dignam’s insurance policy, Bloom is going to meet the government official Martin Cunningham, who is accompanied by a police officer (Jack Power) and a former Tax Office clerk (Crofton). Reference is often made to law offices, solicitors, magistrates and legal action. And while the Citizen is chasing Bloom, the Narrator tries to stop him, cursing: “Arrah, sit down on the parliamentary side of your arse” (U 12.1792).

Hanging and whipping, two much discussed ways of administering justice, are the subject of many Heraclitus’ fragments: “The Ephesians would do well to hang themselves”; “Homer should be turned out of the lists and whipped, and Archilochos likewise” (Burnet: 141). H. Rumbold offers his services as a hangman in a letter written in a straight line, conjunctions and punctuation missing (U 12.415-31), which recalls Heraclitus’ style, thus criticized by Aristotle:

It is a general rule that a written composition should be easy to read and therefore easy to deliver. This cannot be so where there are many connecting words or clauses, or where punctuation is hard, as in the writings of Heraclitus. To punctuate Heraclitus is no easy task, because we often cannot tell whether a particular word belongs to what precedes or what follows it. Thus, at the outset of his treatise he says, “Though this truth is always men understand it not”, where it is not clear with which of the two clauses the word “always” should be joined by the punctuation.

(*Rhet.* III, 5, 1407b)

This passage is taken from the third book of the *Rhetoric* that Joyce carefully analyzed shortly before drafting “Cyclops”, as testified by over twenty notes that he wrote in note-book VIII.A.5 of the University at Buffalo (*Notes and Early Drafts* 25-26). Finally, it is worth remembering that H. Rumbold owes his name to an authentic, distin-

guished Officer of the Law, the British Minister to Bern during the First World War, who refused to solve the controversy between the British Consulate in Zurich and the theatre company founded by Joyce. Likewise, the English boxer (battered by the Irishman Keogh) is given the name of the British Consul involved in the controversy (*JJII* 429-47).

7) *In a sort of universal conflagration, the world agrees to unity and perfect peace.*

When the Citizen hurls the Heraclitean, incandescent biscuit tin, a “terrific and instantaneous” universal conflagration takes place (*U* 12.1858) and many officers of the law perish, enabling the beginning of that new social order desired by Heraclitus. After the conflagration, a circumstantial report announces that the removing of the corpses has been organized (*U* 12.1888-96), as the philosopher intimates: “Corpses are more fit to be cast out than dung” (Burnet: 139).

Even a genetic approach to “Cyclops” seems to endorse my statements. In the early draft V.A.8, Joyce outlined a scene in which, walking towards the courthouse, Bloom is crossing the market area, i.e., the place where goods are exchanged for gold. Here, the Heraclitean concepts of economic transaction, hanging, law, punishment, contrariness, opposition, war and even tear-shedding meet:

Like culprits. Be taken to the prison from whence you came and there be hanged by the neck till you are ~~bought~~ sold and may the Lord. Emmett. Martyrs. They want to be? My life for Ireland. Romance. Girl in a window watching. Wipe away a tear. Hung up for scarecrows. Quite the contrary effect. Of course - Where was it battle of Fontenoy they charged. Remember Limerick.

(Notes and Early Drafts: 154)

Bloom recalls the battle of Fontenoy and the siege of Limerick which, in the published version, are mentioned by the Citizen (*U* 12.1380-82). Similarly, the expression “a roasted fart” is said by a non-

specified character in V.A.8, by Ned Lambert in another early draft and by the Citizen in the published version (Groden: 135). In V.A.8, “Joyce wrote out much dialogue apparently without knowing which character was talking” (ibid.: 134): such a technique seems to prove that the primary function of much dialogue is to allude to the philosophy of Heraclitus. In a provisional schedule of the episode, the scene indicated as “Whipping” substitutes the hanging scene (*Notes and Early Drafts* 129-30). And in V.A.8, the Citizen’s anger towards Bloom is caused by the Hungarian lottery swindle (ibid.: 137); in both cases, Joyce may have substituted one situation with another as they both evoke Heraclitus’ doctrine.

As for the *gigantic* paragraphs, “In the final version the parodies halt the narration” while, in V.A.8, they “serve as the means of narration. In revising, Joyce either eliminated such passages or rewrote them” because “They do not serve to complement, to contrast, or to comment the narrative” (Groden: 129-30), which is a very Heraclitean explanation. The *gigantic* paragraphs, by themselves, reflect one aspect of the philosophy of Heraclitus, as their redundancy acts as an element of contrast and contrariness in respect to the perfunctory speech of the Narrator and the other characters. Also, they are a concrete example of transformation, occurring by word rather than by fire. *Panta rhei* and, in this case, everything changes according to the linguistic register, as happens in the noble exchange of compliments between Bob Doran and Bloom, immediately brought down to earth by the Narrator’s sarcastic comment (*U* 12.780-802).

Most of the unused notes for “Cyclops” in the British Museum’s *Notesheets* or the notes in the *Scribbledehobble* notebook are related to the philosophy of Heraclitus. For example:

- Tyrants: men lend them power
- Rule: dead rule living: 1 enslaved by many
- Joy of grief
- Dog & dog
- Pietro il Pittore: la lege z’è per tutti
- Solitudinem faciunt et pacem appellant

- LB. At a cursing duel
- Compare: Giant: giant: : giant : dwarf
- apple and peer leaves
- to have or not to have
- State: monster fed with our blood, must be starved
- Election: 20 fools to elect a genius
- boosiness is boosiness

(Notesheets 81-120)

- no place like home and the fire out
- Mass & rosary my cannon balls
- gun (revolver)
- gold pat of avarice
- of the whole (half) blood
- begin article on Jonson and Johnson

(Scribbledehobble 109-11)

A number of notes for “Cyclops” proves Joyce’s disenchantment about the concept of the legal system which Heraclitus overrates. And his dislike for the philosopher gives rise to a rant which is cryptically hidden in a *gigantic* paragraph describing the departure of Bloom for a mysterious place called: “Százharminczbrojúgulyás-Dugulás (Meadow of Murmuring Waters)” (U 12.1818-19). The translation of this Hungarian word is, different to the one suggested in the text: “Constipation caused by one hundred and thirty portions of veal goulash” (Mecsnóber 2001: 348). Now, as the philosophy of Heraclitus came down to us in precisely 130, *százharminc* fragments, Joyce’s intention of launching a frontal attack on the philosopher seems to be manifest. Such criticism is understandable if we consider that “Cyclops” was drafted in 1919, only a few months after the end of the ‘pointless’ First World War, which the philosopher would most certainly have supported. On the contrary Joyce, who was much more involved in political and military events than is sometimes claimed, could not appreciate a philosophy that glorifies a social system generating intolerance and contrast, and a world war that he perceived as a dramatic, Heraclitean conflagration.

As I stated in the introduction to this article, “Cyclops” belongs to a section of *Ulysses*, running from “Sirens” to “Oxen of the Sun” in which Joyce uses pre-Socratic philosophy as a *primal matter* to be moulded with absolute freedom.

Anaximenes is a philosopher who came from a region called *Lydia*, like the female protagonist of “Sirens”. His *arché* is the same element that affects Bloom’s bowels: air, without which music, sound and vibration, the main components of “Sirens”, could not exist. According to Anaximenes, air gives origin to fire and cloud, a phenomenon allegorically represented by Moulang’s pipes, by a poster showing a mermaid smoking swathed in clouds of smoke and, above all, by Simon Dedalus’ pipe. If in “Cyclops” the reader is led to notice that Bloom “near burnt his fingers with the butt of his old cigar” (*U* 12.1469), in a different context of allegorical representation, the reader’s attention is focused on the clouds of smoke produced by Simon’s pipe (*U* 11.509-14).

Anaximenes ascribes to air the properties of infinity and unceasing movement, which are evoked by Lionel’s air “soaring all around about the all, the endlessnessnessness” (*U* 11.749-50). As there are no writings by Anaximenes, Joyce uses treatises on acoustic physics as a main source for the making of “Sirens” (Bénéjam 2011: 64-65). For example, the scene in which Bloom “looped, unlooped, nodded, disnoded” his elastic band (*U* 704), alludes to the components of the sinusoidal waves produced by a vibration i.e. *nodes*, where the wave amplitude is zero, and *loops* where it reaches its highest range. Likewise, when Lydia sets free “her nipped elastic garter smackwarm against her smackable a woman’s warmhosed thigh” (*U* 11.413-14), she is dramatizing the old-fashioned scientific definition of sound: “Sound is a peculiar sensation excited in the organ of hearing by the vibratory motion of bodies, when this motion is transmitted to the ear through an elastic medium” (Ganot 1872: 157).

“Nausicaa” is somehow set in Ancient Egypt, as John S. Rickard convincingly proved (Rickard 1983: 356-58), and Pythagoras spent twenty-two years in Egypt (Iamblichus 1918: 10). Pythagoras is the mathematician, who, searching for evidence of the perfect rational-

ity of the universe in numbers, unintentionally discovered the irrational number and the same incommensurability empirically experienced by Bloom, who gives up counting “all those holes and pebbles” on the beach (*U* 13.1248-49). The final confirmation that Pythagoras is the philosopher presiding over “Nausicaa” emerges from a device used by Joyce to assign a subliminal unity to the entire pre-Socratic section. Each *arché* contributing to its making is allegorically represented at the end of one episode and at the beginning of the next: air is evoked by Bloom’s emission of air at the end of “Sirens” and by the first words said by the Narrator of “Cyclops”: “Lo, Joe, says I. How are you blowing?” (*U* 12.06). The chimney sweep, allegory of fire, Heraclitus’ *arché*, is mentioned both towards the end of “Sirens” (*U* 11.1242) and at the beginning of “Cyclops” (*U* 12.02). Sun and fire blend into a single entity at the end of “Cyclops” and at the beginning of “Nausicaa”: the scene in which Bloom flies on his chariot of fire “having raiment as of the sun” (*U* 12.1912-13) precedes the image of the setting sun’s “last glow” in the following episode (*U* 13.02).

The *arché* of Pythagoras is number. At the end of “Nausicaa” and at the beginning of “Oxen of the Sun”, the number $3 \times 3 = 9$ is graphically represented by the cuckoo’s call and the invocation to a sort of Solar deity respectively.

The *arché* of Parmenides is earth burning by fire which, in “Oxen of the Sun”, is represented by the turf carried by the bargeman, the only character who is completely foreign to the dynamics of the episode (*U* 14.474-77). In “Oxen of the Sun”, “at night’s oncoming” (*U* 14.71-72), that is, between day and night, Bloom reaches the wide gate of the hospital whereas Parmenides, at the beginning of the poem in which he presents his philosophy, reaches “the gates of Day and Night” which “are closed by mighty doors” whose keys are kept by the Goddess Justice (Burnet 1892: 184). Her keys are evoked by Miss Callan, who mentions the Isle of Man (*U* 14.102), which, in *Ulysses*, is constantly connected with the theme of the two keys because of the advertisement that Bloom is trying to have published in the newspaper.

The doctrine of Parmenides may be summarized as follows:

1) *Being* is, and in no way it may not be, while *not-being* cannot be. This recalls the style of the so-called “Sallustian-Tacitean prelude” (*SL* 251), marked by an excessive reiteration of the verb *to be* conjugated in the gerund and infinitive forms, especially in its last sentence (*U* 14.56-59). While, in “Oxen of the Sun”, the category of *being* is represented by a baby who is about to be born, many entities belonging to the category of *not being*, such as ungenerated or stillborn babies, are evoked.

2) *Being* is not subject to any *becoming*. The conception of the episode is, in itself, contrary to the philosophy of Parmenides, as the simultaneous representation of the development of a human embryo and English literary history implies the acknowledgment of the concept of becoming. Furthermore, if Parmenides holds that movement does not exist, in the last section of the episode the drunken protagonists give a practical demonstration of its existence by rushing out of the hospital.

Now, it remains to be seen why Joyce should use pre-Socratic philosophy as a *primal matter* for the making of a section of *Ulysses*. The question relates to the overall structure of the novel, which aims to achieve that “perfect identification of matter and form” theorized by Walter Pater (Pater 1910: 138, 142). As is often remarked in *Ulysses* criticism, “Sirens” is conceived as a musical score in accordance with one of the cornerstones of Pater’s aesthetic theory:

All art constantly aspires towards the condition of music. For while in all other kinds of art it is possible to distinguish the matter from the form [...], yet it is the constant effort of art to obliterate it. That the mere matter of a poem, for instance, [...] should be nothing without the form, the spirit, of the handling, that this form, this mode of handling, should become an end in itself, should penetrate every part of the matter: this is what all art constantly strives after, and achieves in different degrees.

(Pater 1910: 135)

Joyce adds the metaphysical meaning of the terms *matter* and *form* to Pater's statement: in the Aristotelian lexicon they are the equivalent of *potency* and *act*, where potency is the predisposition of matter to assume a given form and act is what confers to potency that specific form. To explain this concept, Aristotle often gives the example of bronze, a potential statue waiting to be actualized by the artist. On two occasions he associates bronze with gold, whereas the first words of the "pre-Socratic section" of *Ulysses* are: "Bronze by Gold" (*U* 11.001). Such an association had been in Joyce's mind since 1903, when he noted in his *Early Commonplace Book* the sentence: "A sense receives the form without the matter" (O'Rourke 2005: 15). This summarizes a passage from *On the Soul*: "In general we must assume of every sense, that a sense is that which receives sensible forms without the matter, as the wax takes on the impression of the signet-ring without the iron or gold, and receives the impression of the gold or bronze, but not as gold or bronze." (*De Anima* II, 12, 424a)

The bronze-gold association assumes the meaning of *matter* in another passage in which Aristotle proves that matter has, in itself, the principle of change (*Phys.* II, 1, 193a). As the Thomistic scholar Leo J. Elders explains:

Aristotle developed a definitive answer to the problem of becoming by introducing the concept of primary matter, the totally indeterminate substrate, which makes the transition of one substance into another possible. The coming-into-being of material things is not from a mere absence to the presence of a new form, but from a potentiality to its realization. This potentiality is present in the essence of all material things which can change into one another. [...] Consequently primary matter is an entirely indeterminate substrate, a component of being which is really present in the essence of material things and makes change possible by being able to become an entirely new formal determination.

(Elders 1993: 159)

The most striking feature of the pre-Socratic section is precisely the “entirely new formal determination” of each episode: in refined cross-referencing, the primal matter used for the making of a crucial section of *Ulysses*, so amazing in terms of *form*, is the doctrine of four philosophers who investigated the primal matter giving origin to all things. As complicated as such a mechanism seems to be, its final result may be compared with the function of the headings providing a perfect identification of matter and form to “Aeolus”, the episode set in a newspaper office.

The acknowledgment of the function of pre-Socratic philosophy in *Ulysses* contributes to solving the question raised by Weldon Thornton about “Oxen of the Sun” in particular, and the second part of the novel in general:

The basic problem is in finding some reasonable thematic connection between the themes of this chapter and its mode of representation. Not that this problem is unique to “Oxen of the Sun”. It is present to some degree in every episode from “Wandering Rocks” on, and our general failure to solve this problem suggests that there is some basic point that we are missing – a point having to do with the status of the narrative voice in each of those episodes. For when we do come to understand what these episodes are about, when we come to see their underlying thematic unity, that unity should encompass both style and substance.

(Thornton 1993: 159)

The interaction between style and substance, or between form and matter, is the mechanism enabling Joyce “to allow each adventure [...] to condition and even to create its own technique”, as he writes in his famous letter to Carlo Linati (*SL* 271). Such a mechanism underpins each aspect of the structure of *Ulysses*, including the relationship between Dedalus, who is “entelechy, form of forms” (*U* 9.208), and Bloom, who is constantly depicted as *matter*, as having a material nature. But that is another *matter*, worthy of discussion in another context.

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