CONTINGENCY, CHOICE AND CONSENSUS IN JAMES JOYCE’S ULYSSES

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Contingency, Choice and Consensus in James Joyce’s

Ulysses

ABSTRACT

BY

CARLY HAUFE

In a work of fiction, we don’t always encounter the contingent in obvious ways. The story is usually told in a way such that interdependencies of events can be easily overlooked. The distinction of contingent events might be taken for granted; however, in Joyce’s Ulysses we see an examination of contingency in which the reader is continuously invited to participate. Interpretations of the concept of truth usually indicate a determination by community consensus. The need for an audience to assent to any truth in a fictional work has been identified by most modernist readings of literature, but there is a penumbra, not well-defined, where the author’s intention and the assent of his actual audience intersect—in Ulysses, contingencies of language and of plot might help us to identify these intersections of authorial intent and reader assent.
Considered by many to be Joyce’s finest literary achievement and, beyond that, one of the best novels ever composed, *Ulysses* explores a day in the life of a group of seemingly ordinary individuals in 1904 Dublin. Focusing primarily on the experiences of two of these characters, their rich interior lives as well as their exterior actions, the novel offers readers an opportunity to connect with emotionally realistic and therefore intimately accessible characters. In writing this story, Joyce created individuals that would represent and reflect not only his own persona in Stephen Dedalus, but also characters who were intended to represent one of the white whales of modern realist fiction, the supposed “everyman” character, in his portrayal of Leopold Bloom.

In certain works of fiction, the influence of the contingent is readily apparent. Genre fictions like thrillers, detective novels and mysteries are filled with suspense and visible events embedded in the overarching plot upon which climactic and concluding events are dependent. Choose-your-own-adventure novels give the reader a certain degree of actual control over which plotline they will follow—though the reader is still incapable of knowing what his or her choices will result in until they have leapt from page 24 to page 38 after choosing to follow the plot in which the character decides to go through the door on the left. A recent rash of films in such as *Run Lola, Run* or *Snatch* in the last two decades of modern cinema, explicitly examine contingency from different angles. *Run Lola, Run* follows the same central character from the beginning of the plot to several different possible outcomes based on her choices, much like the above-mentioned choice-making in choose-your-own-adventure novels. In
each version of events, the character is set back to the starting point after reaching a conclusion in order for the audience to see how things might have turned out had she made slightly different decisions. In *Snatch*, the film begins near the end of the story and flashes back along several concurrent plotlines so that the audience may understand how these antecedent events and separate storylines converged in order to produce the concluding set of events.

These manners of telling a story address contingency in an obvious way, one of their primary (if not the primary) preoccupations is explicitly examining the contingencies contained within the plot. In a work of fiction, however, we don’t *always* encounter the contingent in such obvious ways. The story is usually told in a why such that interdependencies of events can be easily overlooked. The distinction of contingent events might be taken for granted; however, in Joyce’s *Ulysses* we see an examination of contingency in which the reader is continuously invited to participate.

Interpretations of the concept of truth usually indicate a determination by community consensus. The need for an audience to assent to any truth in a fictional work has been identified by most modernist readings of literature, but there is a penumbra, not well-defined, where the author's intention and the assent of his actual audience intersect—in *Ulysses*, contingencies of language and of plot might help us to identify these intersections of authorial intent and reader assent. Ontologically speaking, it is contestable whether there are truths in fiction—but we do know that despite lacking actual truth value, there are circumstances to be considered true *in that fictional world*. Authorial intent
retains some of its power when we look at certain events as fundamental, or necessary, to the text—the story would not be what it is without them—while others are vehicles that create the circumstances in the novel that manifest in the fundamental events. These incidental events could have been otherwise and the novel would have still retained its form, but the author’s choice and intention determined what these incidental truths became. Joyce’s work is so particularly interesting here in the sense that he is continuously pointing out the difference between these two sets of truths (the necessary and the incidental) in the fictional realm of *Ulysses* and revealing the chain of antecedent events that lead to the present and essential circumstances in the plot. His choices with language and the possibility to readers being able to fully engage in his language game, also point to the where the matter of authorial discretion and audience intersect.

Furthermore, as a product originally of the author’s ego, the novel occupies an interesting intersubjective space. Husserl explicated that “It is...an essential property of the ego, constantly to have systems of intentionality—among them, harmonious ones—partly as going on within him <actually>, partly as fixed potentialities, which, thanks to predelineating horizons, are available for uncovering. Each object that the ego ever means, thinks of, values, deals with, likewise each that he ever phantasies or can phantasy, indicates its correlative system and exists only as itself the correlate of its system” (Husserl 65). The world of *Ulysses* is one that Joyce fantasied, but in writing it out, he defined its perspectival horizons. In sharing it with the public, he posits an intersubjective space in which others may engage, whereas an imaginative act, occurring
normally within only one consciousness, is normally closed off to others. In
directing the reader’s attention to certain events and leaving out others, he
invites the reader into a co-creative status, where they may also define the
horizons of the text.

We can view the opportunities for community consensus (or lack thereof)
to occur through several lenses in Joyce’s text. One angle from which to examine
contingency in the text is Joyce’s language. His allusion-laden language,
neologisms, and atypical word usage raise questions of community consensus
based on our ability to suss out his meaning and engage in his language game, as
well as our agreement with it. Our ability to trust in the narrators furthermore
presents a complication of truth in the fiction at the intersection between
authorial intent and the contingence of audience acceptance.

Moreover, the plot of the novel, occurring in the relatively short time-
span that it does, creates a critical interdependence of events and a necessity for
revelation via reminiscence. Through this technique, Joyce directs the reader’s
attention to the variables upon which the conclusive set of events depends. It is
here that the matter of authority of the author arises most prominently—in
fiction, it could be said that certain events are necessary, while the others are
incidental, they just happen to be the way the author chose to arrive at the
events he or she actually intended as critical for the scope of the plot. Joyce’s
text exhibits an obvious preoccupation with the nature of events as such—which
events had to take place in order for the current state of affairs to be as they are.
His characters not only examine and work with the contingencies in their own
personal lives, but also explicitly reflect upon contingencies in their environment and how the two intersect. Each of the sections of this paper intends to examine the different ways in which Joyce figures contingency into his narrative.

Joyce's mastery of the play of language is prominently displayed in this work and doubtless acts as one of the principally compelling points of its content. The story, meant to illustrate the psychological idiosyncrasies of its characters (and by extension, humanity in general), follows them straightforwardly through their daily life with little by the way of plot twist or suspense to keep the reader engaged—in many ways, its linguistic superiority functions as its own incentive for the audience and through the play of words, Joyce explores the contingencies of the individual. This first section intends to examine Joyce’s erudite linguistic maneuvers and how they function in and of themselves as models of contingency.

Joyce, utilizing Homer’s epic poem *The Odyssey* as his framework for the novel, leaves off from the structural constraints traditionally dictated by epic form and infuses the narrative with modernist style. He takes all the license of a poet, using words and syntax in unexpected and atypical ways to design a world of his own making. As the audience, our understanding of Joyce’s work is contingent upon our ability to make the proper connection between Joyce’s use of a word and the particular meaning which he intends it to have.

In *Ulysses* each sentence acts as a proposition to be considered as having truth-value and, in works of realist fiction, reflecting the relationship between the actual world and the fictional world. As philosophers of language from Frege
to Wittgenstein or Quine, Kripke and beyond identified, each word or string of words have both a sense and a reference. The sense is the word itself, for example proper nouns like Stephen Dedalus or Leopold Bloom, and the reference is the object or individual and the set of attributes to which the word refers. As Frege pointed out, “It is striving for the truth that drives us always to advance from the sense to the reference” (Frege 13). So, when we encounter the names in the novel, or any word Joyce chooses to employ, the reader’s response is to immediately move from recognition of the sense or the sign we encounter to the presupposed information related to the sign.

Words always have a sense, as in the name Leopold Bloom, but not necessarily a reference. Dublin, as used in Joyce’s work, does refer to the actual city, but Leopold Bloom has no real-world counterpart. It only refers within the bounds of the fictional world. In his work, Reference and Existence, Saul Kripke points out that Sherlock Holmes does exist in a unique sense. We have an individual with a set of attributes and an extensive body of stories attached to him to which we can refer. We can talk about his physical characteristics, his personality, and about things that he has done. However, Sir Arthur Conan Doyle intended to refer to a unique character of his own creation—not any individual existing in the real world. So, even if we were to find that there had been an actual man named Sherlock Holmes living in London in the time which the stories were set, even if he shared a considerable number of traits with the Holmes of the stories, he would still not be the referent of “Sherlock Holmes” as used by Conan Doyle. Joyce intends for Leopold Bloom to be unique to his novel
and even if we, as an audience, discover there had been a man in Dublin at that time with the name Leopold Bloom, it is not the Leopold Bloom of *Ulysses*.

On the one hand, we have Bloom who represents only himself and who, since no reader can have known him, sat and had coffee with him, attended a funeral with him, or any other act one might undertake in their relationship with real-life individuals, represents only himself and the qualities that are attributed to him within the story. He is specific enough to seem like a real person, ambiguous enough to be widely accessible, or so Joyce intended him to be. Then, we have Dedalus, modeled on the author himself, incorporating many of Joyce’s actual qualities and autobiographical information, his academic and artistic brilliance, sensitivity and feelings of isolation.

Dedalus is different than Bloom in that he has intertextual existence. When we read of the Dedalus of *Ulysses*, we must also understand this to be the Dedalus of *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*, with his particular back-story and all the personal attributes assigned to him in that previous work. When Kripke explains his notion that names function as rigid designators he tells us that “...when we use the name ‘Moses’ it always refers to the man, the particular man, who ...in fact led the Israelites out of Egypt” (Kripke 12). This means that certain names, we could call them household names, come with deep and well-known cultural contexts and that when we utilize them, we usually intend for our audience to know that we are talking about that specific individual and to understand the attributes associated with them without having to list them explicitly each time the name is invoked. As Dedalus is a reference to a pre-
existing character, Joyce intends for the audience to understand that it is the Stephen Dedalus of Portrait and to understand the implications that attend his name.

The proper noun “Dublin”, however, as used by Joyce does refer to the actual city. When we read about the geography of Dublin as Joyce relates it to us, we encounter the myriad qualities of that city, but the fullness of our grasp of its reference relies somewhat on our familiarity with the actual place. An individual who has never heard of Dublin will have less of a relationship with the contexts the word “Dublin” invokes than will someone who has visited it, and very few, if any, could understand the word in the way that Joyce himself did. His relationship with Dublin was unique in the way of Dante’s relationship to Florence—for them, the names of their cities of origin, both familiar and foreign, apotheosized and debased, called up a different experience and meaning than for anyone else.

This leads us in to the matter of private language and the act of interpersonal communication as a matter of radical translation. As mentioned above, when a speaker utters a word, or an author writes it down, it functions as a symbol for a set of attributes attached to the object, person or concept it stands for. We know that Wittgenstein’s proposal of the possibility of a private language has since been put down, not only by the man himself, but many of his contemporaries. After all, if there is a possibility of a complex language with a novel vocabulary and grammatical rules unique to only the speaker, then why does interpersonal communication seem to bridge the gap between individual
minds reasonably well with a remarkably high rate of instances of success? We could assert that, just as the shade of the sky or the appearance of a phenomenal object don’t appear exactly identical to two viewers given minute differences in their retinas or in their neural pathways, if the meaning of words is intimately related to the sensations they evoke within the hearer, the meaning of a word could never be exactly identical for two different individuals. Just as with the idea of Russian blues, Joyce expands the reader’s ability to perceive his reality: “[the reader’s] being conscious or aware of things make them constitute part of [their] world...things can only enter [their] consciousness with the act of naming them; then they take their place in the world [for the reader]” (Redpath 44).

So what does this imply for Joyce’s work in *Ulysses*? Let us for the moment leave off the matters of philosophy of language and address matters of authorial intent. From Plato who initially set the philosophers and poets at odds with one another as discoverers of truth as opposed to creators of their own truth, which in his view were tantamount to lies, to the Romantic poets who were “showing what happens when art is thought of no longer as imitation but, rather, as the artist’s self-creation...[the idea that] truth was made rather than found” (Rorty 3), to the modernists’ (and Joyce’s personal acquaintance, Ezra Pound) call to “make it new” to Nietzsche and Freud, the idea of poet as maker and creator is a familiar one. The word “poet” comes from the Greek word “poein” meaning to make, create, or compose. Though Joyce’s text is not a poem itself, it certainly has poem-like qualities and points—in his stream of consciousness style, he inserts lyric and poem along with the rest of the prosaic
narrative that, in itself, is inescapably lyrical. We know that Joyce modeled the movements of *Ulysses* after the Homeric epic, *The Odyssey* and that Bloom acts as a surrogate for Odysseus—what’s more, Dedalus, one of the other central characters of the text and the one who stands-in for Joyce, is a poet in every sense of the word. This leads us to the idea that Joyce’s act of composing *Ulysses* was one not only of creation itself, but also of self-creation. Joyce was attempting to speak himself into being.

Our reality is contingent upon our language. Language creates and constrains the concepts to which we can refer, it controls our discourse and perhaps so totally dictates our consciousness that it even mandates the things that we are able to perceive. Recent research in cognitive science suggests that, in fact, language constraints do affect people’s perceptions. According to the article “Russian Blues Reveal Affects of Language on Color Discrimination,” because in Russian there are multiple words for blue and that those words make distinctions between lighter blues and darker blues, speakers of Russian performed better on tests that asked them to distinguish between different shades of blue. While this may not necessarily be a matter of inability to recognize a difference between darker and lighter shades of blue, though the study certainly seems to point to that conclusion, we can be certain that the language which we communicate in does determine the things we can talk about. If we have no words for a concept, we may not communicate it to others and perhaps, given the reliance upon language of our internal discourse, not even to ourselves. Moreover, our concept of contingency is “dependent upon how we
perceive [our] concrete world” (Redpath 35). Joyce, in his effort to speak himself into being in the world of his creation, creates new ways of using the language that is his framework in order to direct the conceptualization of the contingent.

If the poet speaks himself into being, he must invent a new language in order to break free from his contingencies and in order to talk about things never spoken about before. His personal contexts given to him by his own individual experience are related to him and by him to others within the bounds of the language that has been given to him, not a language that is solely his own and solely speaks of himself. As we learn from Bartholomae, in order to engage in a pre-existing discourse, the individual must utilize the particular pre-existing language within which that discourse takes place—a language and a discourse subject to all of the historical and socio-political contexts that come with it. But to invent himself, and an entirely new discourse, the poet may choose to utilize a language without adhering to its pre-existing contingent implications. After all, the words themselves only act arbitrarily as symbols for their related concepts—there is nothing about “tree” that suggests a tree, nothing about “snow” that suggests snow—these signs only contain meaning insofar as they are and have been utilized by the speakers of the language. As A.D. Nuttall explains in A New Mimesis, “…it is because words are conventionally ordered and thus separated from other things that they can be used to refer or describe…[T]he so-called paralyzing gap between word and thing is in fact indispensably necessary to the practical operation [of language]” (Nuttall 54). It is because of this non-concrete relationship between a word and its meaning that Joyce may use words
unconventionally, substituting a word that usually means one thing for an entirely different meaning.

We know that Joyce didn’t invent a completely private language through which to relate his story. The words of *Ulysses* are mostly modern English, and the text doesn’t have an entirely unique grammar, but he clearly made efforts to break away from the ordinary manner in which the words of the text and their relationships with one another are typically employed. After all, the narrative and its meanings, difficult though they may be to discern, have made impressions on readers and, what’s more, the impressions aren’t individually variant. There is at least some community consensus on the nature, content and meaning of the narrative. Perhaps Joyce invented what we could call a semi-private language as his means of making, as Rorty suggests in saying, “The method is to redescribe lots and lots of things in new ways, until you have created a pattern of linguistic behavior...” (Rorty 9).

We know that to understand any language game, whether verbal, textual or enacted, we must understand the rules. Wittgenstein illustrates this by telling us that, “When children play at trains, their game is connected with their knowledge of trains. It would nevertheless be possible for the children of a tribe unacquainted with trains to learn this game from others, and to play it without knowing that it was copied from anything. One might say that the game did not make the same sense to them as to us” (Wittgenstein 72). Similarly, with his chess example, people from a culture unfamiliar with the game of chess might use a chess board, even by some strange circumstance making similar strategic
maneuvers to those that are used in chess. But if they don’t know the rules of the game as we know them, we can’t say they are understanding it in the way that we do. They might intuít the procedures, but their comprehension of it is different than ours. Textually speaking, the inference is the same.

Let’s say, for example, that a friend asks me how I’m feeling today, and I reply, “Alexanderish.” As a fellow speaker of English, my friend understands the word “Alexander” to be a name, typically for a male individual. And she understands the suffix “-ish” to having a meaning of “like” or “as” related to it. We don’t typically use this expression to denote a sensation or a set of emotions, but let’s assume that she and I have a mutual acquaintance named Alexander who has an energetic, jocund and typically mischievous personality. Having these contexts to draw on, she can reasonably infer that I feel energetic, jocund, and mischievous. My friend’s comprehension of my meaning is dependent upon her being familiar with Alexander in the same way that I am familiar with him, and her ability to make a correct inference about my application of the term. If she doesn’t know Alexander, or if Alexander is generally morose in her presence for some reason, or if she takes me to be speaking of Alexander A., who is typically cynical and misanthropic, when I mean to speak of Alexander B., then the presuppositions entailed by my use of “Alexanderish” fail to carry over to her understanding. Just because we use the same language as Joyce, doesn’t mean we understand the rules of the particular language game he is playing. Does that mean we can’t understand what he writes, though?
The use of a sign that typically stands for one thing in such a way that it stands for something entirely different isn’t a revolutionary concept, poets do it all the time with simile and metaphor—what makes *Ulysses* stand out in this sense is its preponderance of atypical word usage. Along with this, Joyce heavily utilizes neologisms and onomatopoeias in the relation of his narrative. His “prose incorporates aspects of Homeric epic (such as Homer’s stylistic fondness for adjectival conjunctions like ‘winedark sea’) while continually extending the range of its symbolic resonance” (Spinks 100).

By and large, the devices he employs to construct his semi-private language are metaphor and allusion. Furthermore, his metaphors and allusions are not simple, they are very complex, their implications manifold. For, within the plot the metaphor invokes a meaning and elicits a response for the reader—this is its superficial significance. However, Joyce’s mastery of language play and the wide-range of his reading allowed him to make the metaphors work on multiple levels, playing off one another, referring between one another, displaying their significance acoustically as well as historically and socio-politically.

In the beginning section of the novel, *The Telemachaid*, when Dedalus’s roommate, Buck Mulligan, sings *The Ballad of Joking Jesus*, we see a direct reference to an element of popular culture at the time. In the lines, “I’m the queerest young fellow that ever you heard/ My mother’s a jew, my father’s a bird,” (Joyce 17), we encounter one of these complex allusions. Not only is it a reference to popular culture, but the significance of the particular song he
chooses is interesting. “The bird” is a direct reference to the dove as a symbol of the Holy Spirit. The reference to birds and the spirit of God arises again a few pages later in Joyce’s invocation of “Blake’s wings of excess,” (Joyce 21). The mocking tone of the song implies a spirit of irreverence, if not outright disdain, towards the Catholic church of Joyce’s upbringing. The invocation of the Immaculate Conception, the Holy Ghost, and Jesus furthermore speaks to Joyce’s major preoccupation with self-creation in the novel.

As the young men continue their conversation, the talk turns to girls and Mulligan states “Redheaded women buck like goats,” (Joyce 20) immediately before crying out, “My twelfth rib is gone...I’m the Uebermensch,” (Joyce 20). This is a compound reference to Catholic doctrine in the conflation of the superstition that redheaded women are “assumed to be untrustworthy and, it follows, oversexed,” (Gifford and Seidman 27), in connection with the traditional representation of Judas as redheaded, and Mulligan’s exclamation that his 12th rib is gone, referencing his break-up by way of a reference to the creation of Eve from Adam’s rib. Furthermore, and curiously, it brings up the idea, again, of self-creation by conflating Mulligan to Adam as Nietzsche’s “Uebermensch,” since he (Adam) is the “first man, least contemptible man—in other words, superman” (Gifford and Seidman 27).

As can be seen, in order for the audience to follow Joyce’s meaning, they must have knowledge of specific extratextual bodies of information that will allow them to understand, and assent to, Joyce’s complicated references. There arises an uncomfortable space where we have to question whether the audience
can be reasonably expected to follow his lead. What’s more, given the multiple possible interpretations, the reader is confronted with a situation asking them to choose between one interpretation and another. It’s possible that Joyce expects the reader to accept all the interpretations simultaneously in order for the language play to evince all of its implications. If truth in fiction is a matter of community consensus, then what if no consensus can be reasonably established without the help of significant scholarship? Without a distinctly defined intersection between what the author/narrator(s) relate and what the audience comes to consensus about as truth in the fiction, whether it’s related to the usage of words or events in the plot, it is difficult to discern what the truth is.

Metaphor is so interesting in this context because it breaks with the usual sense-reference relationship that the sense of words normally have with their meaning content. And, as Derrida points out in “Differance,” the meaning of a letter, or of a word or phrase, is contingent upon its relationship with the words around it. The symbol only has context-relevant significance. Taking individual words as signs in and of themselves, a metaphor becomes a series of signs collapsed together. So, the metaphor initially refers to, by way of innovative redescription, some act or sensation felt by the characters within the plot of the novel. Most times, the metaphor is an allusion and vice versa as in the phrase “seas between”—which “suggests that Stephen and Mulligan pose as Scylla and Charybdis as Bloom (Odysseus) passes between them” (Gifford and Seidman 255). Joyce is able to perform this transposition of meaning because of the arbitrary nature of the meanings of words, his license is to be able to make
these substitutions where he sees fit in service of his self-creation. As Bloom makes his way through the streets of Dublin, shortly after coming across Blazes Boylan, the reader encounters “a loyal king’s man, Hornblower, touched his tallyho cap,” (Joyce 199). The “tallyho” refers to the jauntness of the hat and also ties in to Blazes own “widebrimmed straw hat at a rakish angle,” (Joyce 198). The tallyho cap becomes more complex when we see: “As the glossy horses pranced by Merrion square Master Patrick Aloysius Dignam, waiting, saw salutes being given to the gent with the topper and raised also his new black cap...” (Joyce 199). Tallyho leads into the employment of equine imagery, which then looks toward the appearance of the deceased Paddy Dignam, invoking the imagery of the funeral procession and coaxing the reader to look back at the appearance of Blazes Boylan—who will later that day carry out an affair with Molly Bloom—signaling the death of Bloom’s marriage as he knows it. Joyce frequently directs the reader’s attention to this connection between immediate past, occurring present, and oncoming future events by way of these linguistic plays.

Since objects and entities within the fictional world are unique to that fictional world, even if they have a real-world counterpart, there is this primary intratextual relationship. Secondarily, the metaphor refers to something in the real-world, something the audience can relate to, even if they cannot directly relate to the private meaning of the metaphorical significance within Joyce’s personal language game.
The assigned metaphor symbolically acts as a concrete concept in the actual world standing in for an abstraction in the text. But the meaning, for the reader, is contingent upon the reader’s knowledge of the context of the metaphor. If they aren't familiar with the religious significance of the rituals of a Catholic mass, the reference of the metaphor, and the presupposed information it entails, fails to translate. The metaphor’s tertiary significance lies in reader response. If part of the meaning of the metaphor relies on the intended sensations and associations Joyce means to elicit within the reader, then what happens when the association for the reader is at odds with Joyce’s associations? For example, his invocation of “S. Celestine” might fail to evoke an association within the reader of “the pope who sent St. Patrick on his mission to Ireland” (Gifford and Seidman 372) if we are unaware of who Celestin I was. However, though we might not have an identical response to the metaphor that Joyce does, that doesn’t mean we can't engage with the narrative. Even amongst Joyce scholars, some of the meanings of his allusions can only be guessed at; for example in his phrase, “Ineluctable modality of the visible,” the “exact source [is] unknown, but Aristotle does argue...that the substance of a thing perceived by the eye is not present in the form or color of the perceptual image...” (Gifford and Seidman 44). Though we don’t have the exact rules of his language game, we can at least have a perfunctory grasp of its meaning by learning the contexts of the framework within which he was working—just as with my friend, who needs to understand which Alexander I’m invoking when I tell her I’m feeling Alexanderish. It may rankle the sensibilities of some parties who wish to deny
authorial intent as having any real bearing on a literary text, but it is irrefutable that understanding the contexts of Joyce’s writing, which includes understanding the meaning he intended to convey through his innovative use of language, will help us come closer to the truth he intended to create and speak in to being.

The manner in which words play off one another to create distinct and novel meaning is not the only way in which contingency figures in to the text of *Ulysses*. We also see that contingency is found structurally within the composition in authorial discretion over which events to highlight, gloss over, or entirely leave out and where to direct the reader’s attention.

In the real-world, it is natural for us to look in retrospect at certain events in our personal lives or in history and be able to say with a reasonable amount of confidence that something would or could not have occurred had some other thing not taken place. For example, it seems likely that World War I would not have broken out had the Archduke not been assassinated. However, we can only make that assertion in retrospect and we can’t be certain that we’re correct about it. Perhaps war would have broken out anyway. It just happens that things as they are compel us to associate the Archduke’s assassination as a determining factor. On a less grand scale, I could believe that I would have not been involved in a minor traffic incident had I not paused to take a phone call before leaving my driveway. After all, the had extra 90 seconds the phone call added to my journey not occurred, I might reasonably assume that I would not have been at the exact location I was at the time I was rear-ended. But I can’t be certain that this is true. Perhaps I would have been stopped at a light or had to
wait for pedestrians at a crosswalk and still would have ended up in the accident. I could only know for certain if I were an infinite mind, with foreknowledge of all events and able to account for all possibilities. It just so happens that I exist in the possible world that relies on the contingent truths of this reality.

In fiction, the implications of the narrative might extend beyond the bounds of the text, like when we learn from an author that a character has certain attributes that were not addressed in the story—but they rely on one another, and ultimately on the inclinations of the author and the assent of the reader, to hold up. We can view the novel as containing certain “necessary” truths, which must be fulfilled for *Ulysses* to be *Ulysses* or for *Harry Potter* to be *Harry Potter*, and containing other contingent truths that the author chose to make manifest in order for those essential elements of the tale to come about. It is at his discretion.

It might be worth considering what type of illocutionary act is being performed in a work of fiction. Given the obvious interdependence of events in the plot, and Joyce’s continued directing of the audience’s attention to the way in which the events rely on one another, we see that Joyce is continually inviting us to take part in this examination. It is not as if he is lying to us, yet we understand that his assertions (with the exception of the geographical topography of Dublin) are not necessarily truths in the actual world. Regardless of which truths have actual world validity, and which truths have only fictional world validity, we are, as readers of fiction, asked to suspend our disbelief. John Searle identified this
“...difference between fiction and non-fiction as a difference between kinds of illocutionary acts performed...the writer of fiction is performing the illocutionary act of ‘telling a story’...an author of fiction pretends to perform illocutionary acts which in fact he is not performing” (Currie 63, 66). Readers of fiction know that he is pretending and that we are in turn invited to pretend to believe him.

If the world of the novel functions as a microcosm of the actual world, distinct though it may be, we might presume that in fiction, certain truths that occur in the actual world affect the truth the author intends in the plot of his fictional world—“...[has] always depended upon a version of the extratextual contingent world that might be understood to be true or actual” (Redpath 37). This version might be some of the same things we presume about our own socio-political history and they might be something as simple and seemingly superficial as corresponding geographical minutiae of Dublin. Joyce has the ability to alter the map or make catastrophic events disappear from the history of that world entirely, even if that world is seemingly based on our own.

In his 1977 publication “Truth in Fiction: A Reexamination of Audiences”, Peter Rabinowitz argues that there is indeed truth in fiction and characterizes it as an acceptance-based truth. He identified that the rendering of truth in the novel does not derive solely from the author's intent, but also from different types of audience who coalesce to provide a consensus—it is within this intersection of the audiences that the consensus and, thereby, the truth is determined. One type of audience he identifies is the authorial or ideal audience.
The ideal audience is the one for whom the author intends to write the book—
“...the author of a novel designs his work rhetorically for a specific hypothetical audience.” (Rabinowitz 213) They are familiar with all the cultural context, historical events, and real life individuals who might figure in to the narrative. For example, in the case of Tim O'Brien’s *In the Lake of the Woods*, a member of the ideal audience would have some knowledge of the Vietnam War, the modern American political system specifically the nature of campaigns, American social relations specifically in the northern Midwest, and probably some knowledge of the geography and climate of Minnesota. A member of the ideal audience for *Ulysses* would have to have a far greater scope of cultural and scholarly knowledge, given the depth and breadth of Joyce’s cache of allusions in the text. One would need knowledge of Irish history, the economic, social and political culture of Britain, Ireland and the continent in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, some grasp of Judaism and more of the experience of the Jewish Diaspora, Catholicism, British-Irish relations, and Jungian and Freudian psychoanalysis. They would also be acquainted with Homer's *Odyssey*, Dublin culture and geography, poetic symbolism (what signs typically represent what ideas when invoked), Dedalus’s fictional history from his experiences in *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*, and Joyce’s personal autobiographical information. This seems like a lot of study that the typical reader, especially the modern-day reader, wouldn’t likely have done and it narrows down the scope of who can inhabit this ideal audience that Joyce would have been writing for.
Another type of audience identified by Rabinowitz is the narrator audience. This is the audience to whom the narrator addresses him or herself, in whom he seemingly confides. In different narrative styles from first-person to third, the manner of address from narrator to his audience can vary quite widely and depending on the character’s unique place in the story and personality quirks, can range from detached reporter to conspiratorial confidant. They might seem harried or confused, or change their recollection of events that have already occurred in the text. Joyce’s use of stream of consciousness writing gives the voice of the narrator and the content of the information they relate a different spin than typical prose narrative—they are solely focused on the inner experience of the character who they represent and filter the plot of the novel through the lens of inner monologue. The style of their communication is meant to reflect actual human thought, the manner in which we speak to ourselves about our daily activities, experiences, and feelings—all the multitude of musings, reminiscences, predictions, projections and assessments that dictate the direction of our consciousness.

Whatever it lends to the telling in terms of psychological accuracy, it gives us difficulty in interpreting the plot in equal measure. A novel is much easier to read when it’s narration is not chaotic, disrupted and disjointed—but isn’t that half the fun of reading Joyce? Because of Joyce’s seamless transitions from the outer- to the inner-world of the characters, it is at times difficult to discern when a day-dream or fantasy sequence commences, why it’s significant that Bloom’s watch stops when it does, etc. The significant hinge between this narrator
audience and the final audience Rabinowitz identified, the actual audience, is the matter of narrator reliability. It is especially apparent in stream of consciousness novels that narrator reliability is a subject of some concern for the readers because we often find ourselves experiencing confusion or doubt over the information relayed to us by the narrator. As concerns *Ulysses* in particular, the idea of the reliability of our narrator is problematic, not because we come to view any of them (principally speaking, Dedalus or Bloom) as inherently conniving and untrustworthy. Nothing in the plot suggests to the reader that we are in for a suspenseful ride and neither Bloom nor Dedalus stand to gain anything by fooling the audience. We do notice some indiscretions, particularly on Bloom’s part, but what really makes the narrators’ accounts questionable is their propensity for rumination, musing and daydreaming. We as readers are forced “…to inhabit an uneasy position between knowledge and significance, unable to establish precisely which details are crucial and which incidental to the meaning of the scene, and unsure how far the narrator should be trusted in the emphasis he confers on particular events” (Spinks 50). If we find the narrator to be a credible source of information, we are inclined to trust the things he says, accept them as truth. And our acceptance is ultimately what makes or breaks truth in the fiction.

This final audience, the actual audience, is the group of readers who actually end up engaging with the story, whether they are who the author intended the book for or not—“...it is the only audience which is entirely real.” (Rabinowitz 213) They are the wild card over whom the author has no control.
They are so crucially important because, by and large, truth is a matter of community consensus. And for Rabinowitz, this overlap where actual readers become trusting narrator confidants (or at least the kind of friend who can listen and tell the difference between when an egg salad sandwich actually almost killed you and when your life’s melodrama has bled over into hyperbole) willing to accept the facts of the story as they are related to us and at least summarily knowledgeable about the contexts of the corresponding real-life elements of the plot is where truth is defined in the narrative. It all hinges upon those who actually end up consuming the novel assenting to the veracity of the events.

Concerning our expectations as readers, which affect our ability to accept events in the text, they also affect our ability to accept character behavior. Bloom’s behavior is realistically ambiguous. He seems like a person inclined to do good, though not so good as to be unbelievable. He conducts an extramarital affair, even if it is only an emotional one and never physically consummated. One of his more redeeming qualities is his tireless effort to understand others from within their own contexts. This quality doesn’t necessarily prevent him from also passing judgment on them; however, Bloom clearly is aware of his own flaws and foibles and it would be difficult to reasonably call him self-righteous or superior. This might suggest what Joyce was looking for in his ideal audience—individuals who would, though they might not readily accept his assertions, at least attempt to understand things from his own point of view.

Because of his haplessness in attempting to fit in with a society that denies him full access, and to find fulfillment in a marriage where his need for
intellectual stimulation and abstract thinking is a source of irritation for his wife (and probably, what’s more, because he is cuckolded by her) it is easier to forgive him for his own transgressions. Because of his moral and ethical ambiguities and his seeming lack of stoicism, it might be difficult for the reader to respect him, but he is at least honest with himself about his own shortcomings—and so, it might not be difficult for the reader to believe the things he says. Furthermore, his compassionate endeavors in attempting to understand others from their own contexts, go some way in redeeming him towards the reader and ultimately making him a believable character—not simply in terms of the information he relates to the audience, but also in terms of his possession of realistic personal traits, both good and bad. Over the course of the novel, he does things that are both charitable and ethically questionable—a plausible admixture of behaviors for someone who appears to the general public as an unremarkably normal man simply trying to find a palatable balance between social isolation and longing to belong.

Dedalus presents us with a different problem. We are already acquainted, ideally, with his character from A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man. This prior knowledge informs our expectations of his behavior and, though we might dislike some of his actions, Joyce succeeds in portraying him as a character transitioning from adolescence to adulthood. Because members of the ideal audience for Ulysses will probably be familiar with other works from the Joyce canon, particularly Portrait, our sense and expectation of Stephen is largely dependent upon what we know of Stephen from his previous literary
appearances and from our acquaintance with what “...[Joyce’s] novels are supposed to do” (Phelan 37). Events as Joyce lays them out in the novel were quite shocking for readers of his time, but he presents an honest account of what someone might do when attempting to form their identity and floundering under the weight of existential crisis, essential sensitivity, social alienation, a weighty burden of historicity, and familial and spiritual guilt. Shortly, though shocking to many, his behaviors are not implausible, especially if we are familiar with his upbringing and the development of his character from his first fictional appearance. In the opening movements of the narrative, Joyce invokes the “thud of Blake’s wings of excess” (Ulysses 21). What the reader is supposed to hear, in this thud, is a “compound of two of the Proverbs of Hell from Blake’s The Marriage of Heaven and Hell: ‘The road of excess leads to the palace of wisdom,’ and ‘No bird soars too high, if he soars with his own wings’” (Seidman 30). The specific choice of Dedaelus—the father of Icarus—as the genesis of Dedalus, to function for a character who stands in for, not only the son of Odysseus, but also for Joyce himself, is of further interest in that it speaks pointedly to the act of self-creation. The father and the son—creator and creation—become embodied in the same character in this way. This suggestion of self-creation is carried further in allusions to “the steeds of Mananaan” (Ulysses 38:24) in Proteus. This reference to explicitly Irish mythology with direct parallels to Greek myth—Mananaan is “Manaan McLir, the Irish god of the sea, who had Proteus’s ability for self-transformation” (Seidman 48)—both ties the two mythologies together
via the shared notion of self-transformation and concretely invokes autoproduction.

However, his acting as a surrogate for Joyce himself is a more striking role and the similarities clearer, more profound. His poverty and point of origin, large family, along with the death of his mother down to the details of his refusal to pray at her bedside as she lay dying—the subsequent guilt and joking accusations of Buck Mulligan (who is modeled on Joyce's real-life friend Olliver St. John Gogarty), are all autobiographical details from Joyce’s life. His characteristics, his prodigious intellect, creativity as a poet, his sensitivity, depression, sense of social isolation and excessive drinking along with other ‘vices,’ are all characteristics shared with the author.

Jean Kimball identifies Joyce’s intention for a psychoanalytic implication in his narrative, saying “[his] immediate recognition of the uses which he could make of psychoanalytic speculations is indicated by the promptness with which he worked material from the texts by Freud and Jung into the opening pages of *Portrait*, seamlessly joined, as is characteristic of Joyce, with autobiographical details from his own past...If we add what we know of Joyce’s reading habits as well as the circumstances of his life as he wrote *Ulysses*, we may assume with assurance...that Joyce incorporated a variety of psychoanalytic contexts into *Ulysses*” (Kimball 477-78).

In Dedalus, we might find another suggestion of what type of ideal audience Joyce sought to engage with his work—and what his ultimate feelings about their ability to do so were. Stephen risks the alienation of his peers
through his uncompromising novelty of thought. Similarly, Joyce-via-Dedalus risks alienating the audience and absolutely gambles with their comprehension of his meaning. If truth in the novel relies on the assent of an audience, how much does Joyce stray beyond the boundary of reasonable expectations of his readers? Does the difficulty of his text speak to his high expectations of his audience? Or does it indicate his lack of concern for their possible assent and consensus? The answer to this is not absolute; however, it might be pointed at in Dedalus' ultimate acceptance of his isolation from both family and peers. He is perhaps not indifferent to the pain it causes him, but he is certainly unwilling to compromise his individuality in order to maintain these relationships. In the end, for Stephen, though his interaction with Bloom serves an immediate need in his quest for self-determination, it is not meant to develop into a lasting friendship. He goes off alone into the night. By these lights, it would be reasonable to conclude that Joyce is aware of the risks he has taken with audience and, though he invites them to accompany him, is similarly unwilling to compromise his individuality for the sake of reader comprehension.

Maria Zambrano was aware of the need for filtering the text and its characters through a historical lens, believing that “...literature [is] contingent upon thought just as literary characters are intimately bound up with the deepest kind of national life” (Johnson 221). This idea of character historicity takes us to another matter of authorial intent. Not only do we find that what Joyce intends for us to believe and to know has significance, but we must understand what he intended to achieve through composing *Ulysses*. Joyce's
relationship with his motherland raises itself for consideration significantly as noted by Ruben Borg: “...the need to read the Joyce canon not as a testing ground for abstract notions, but as a body of work whose meanings and images are indissociable from the historical and geographical contingencies in which they are produced” (Borg). In *Ulysses* and his other works Joyce is “...unswerving in his denunciation of the misery and deprivation inflicted upon Ireland by British imperial policy” (Spinks 15). However we see Joyce’s desire for a better situation for his homeland working simultaneously with his disdain for its “parochial and constricting” as well as “backward-looking” (Spinks 17) culture. He was “...severely critical of what he took to be the antiquated and conservative politics of revivalism” (Spinks 15). In the opening section of the novel, Joyce’s description of the old woman bringing milk highlights his conflicted relationships with Ireland and its people: “A wandering crone, lowly form of an immortal serving her conqueror and her gay betrayer, their common cuckquean...” (Joyce 13). She is uneducated and unsophisticated, and (perhaps worse for Joyce) happily subservient to his housemates, an Englishman and a Loyalist.

From this we see that truth in Joyce’s novel is determined not only by our prior knowledge of his presupposed information (which will be covered further in the next section), but also our assent to his assertions and our eventual development of a community consensus. Our knowledge of the historical contexts of Ireland as well as the pre-established relationship Joyce had with it in addition to our ability to trust his narrators all inform our conceptualization
and perception of the truth in his fictional world. Given this necessity for knowing such a large body of knowledge in order to intuit his meanings, one wonders again if Joyce exercised reasonable expectations of his audience.

Returning to the idea of the novel as a microcosm of the actual world, we may look into some of the important distinctions between real-life events and fictional ones. Laying aside for the time being the quite obvious differences of reality and fiction, that events in the actual world actually happen and events in a novel are pretended to happen, we will look into the rift between time in the real world and time in the world of fiction, of the difference between past, present and future events.

In the actual world, human beings experience time as linear and events as chronological. An action either has been done, is being done, or will be done. An event has happened, is happening or will happen. The implication of the antecedent event for the presently occurring one is clear—all it requires is recognition. For example, we can see clearly something as simple as forgetting to set one’s alarm as the cause of one getting up late in the morning. But it requires an impossible backtracking to fully comprehend the chain of events that lead to the presently occurring set of actions. What caused one to forget one’s alarm? And what caused that event? And what caused that one? And so on and so forth, ad infinitum. The future is much murkier and more unpredictable. Given the uncertainty principle, we can make educated guesses as to what the effect of certain events will be—but we can never be sure of what will eventually come to pass until it is already upon us, or has already occurred. Our powers of
recognizing the implications of contingency are reliant upon reflection—
predictions are retroactive successes or failures. However, in the fictional
realm—and especially within a work occurring in such a constrained time frame
as *Ulysses*—the lifespan of the fictional world is finite and all events have already
occurred. The lifetime of the fictional world that we engage with exists within
the boundaries of the front and back cover of the book. The only thing that
separates us, as readers, from knowledge of the future is a given number of
pages. Only our own inclinations prevent us from (or cause us to) skipping
forward a few pages and finding out what happens next. Once availed of the
certainty of the predetermined future event, we may go back to understand the
course of events that lead to those circumstances. As Mark Curry identifies in
his book *The Unexpected: Narrative Temporality and the Philosophy of Surprise*,
authors employ different devices like foreshadowing and tense to clue readers in
to significant events and they utilize others such as temporal disruption and
point of view shift to imitate the uncertainty of real-life.

The author of a fiction has full knowledge of all events within the text
which are not merely predetermined, but have already occurred. They
understand the significance of all preceding actions and their relationship to
subsequent occurrences. The reader must chronologically experience events in
the text as they do in life. They can only have retrospective knowledge of
contingencies. Their knowledge of the fictional world is limited to the
information contained between the covers, whereas the author’s knowledge can
extend to extratextual information of the world of the novel and its characters.
While some novels have highly suspenseful plots in which contingency comes to bear significantly, *Ulysses* does not cause the reader much nail-biting in the reading. However, it still offers us temporal disruption, foreshadowing, point-of-view shift, and explicit invocation of the contingent.

In some novels, the experience of temporal disruption is evoked by time-jumps in the plot. As the events of *Ulysses* occur in the space of one day, the feeling of temporal disruption is evoked in the text through character reverie and reflection. The reader time travels with the characters through the characters’ internal monologue and through observations made about them by others. Another interesting implication of the text occurring in the span of a day is that the bulk of the information entailed by the language on the page is antecedent to the actual transpiration of the plot. Therefore, the overwhelming majority of the information relayed in the story is presupposed by events that took place beyond the reader’s view and that which takes place on the pages is largely dependent upon the anterior.

The information in *Ulysses* relies on its intertextual relationships—both with the literary texts (particularly *The Odyssey*) and with the “text” of the actual world by which it is informed. Joyce “…”makes a decision about a general and implicit contract, about what is known and what will be significant. Postulating general expectations, implicit and explicit knowledge which will make his discourse intelligible cannot be an impossible thing to do...In the act of writing or speaking he inevitably postulates an intersubjective body of knowledge” (Culler 1381). This intersubjective body of knowledge manifests in the
intersection of audience assent and authorial intent. Following along with Joyce’s language game, and direction of the reader’s attention to certain events in the plot, both require and create it. The body of the text itself allows for this perspectival interchange between author and reader—the intimate representing of the story as initially conceived by the author and re-experienced by the reader as they engage with it.

Unlike novels that take place over the space of days, months, or years, the temporal borders of the fictional world of *Ulysses* are rigorously constrained by the fact of taking place in less than 24 hours so that the vast majority of the body of knowledge implied by the text is all presupposed.

Additionally, most of the stream of consciousness narrative is centralized around the first person perspectives of characters. This being the case, as events unfold in the narrative, character reverie becomes absolutely essential for conveying revelations about the preceding events that lead up to the plot, and their implications for events that occur in the plot, to the reader. It is through revelation that the reader comes by comprehension of the significance of events that take place within the plot.

Intimately related to the art of revelation through reverie is Joyce’s employment of foreshadowing in the text. The two devices act symbiotically with one another, for they both require one another to gain their significance. Without eventual revelation, the foreshadowed event lacks import and without foreshadowing, the eventual revelation affects no fulfillment of expectation in the reader, failing to convey its full significance as *consequence* and seeming
merely *coincidence*. This creation of anticipation for upcoming events is integral to engaging the reader in a simulation of real-life. Part of what makes life so interesting is our lack of concrete knowledge of unfolding events. And part of what makes fiction interesting is its ability to recreate that sensation despite all the events in the plot being predetermined. However, not all cultures speak about time and future events in the same way that ours does. In *The Unexpected*, Currie explains that while our culture refers to future events as in front of us, (i.e. “up ahead,” “down the road,” etc.), and the past as behind us, others talk about the two temporal states in the opposite manner. Past events are spoken of as being in front of the individual—having already occurred, they are seen clearly. The future is spoken of as taking place behind the individual—indeterminate and unable to be seen for certain.

So much of Joyce’s plot in *Ulysses* is dependent upon events that *have* taken place. Having already happened outside the boundaries of the page, the foreshadowing in the text refers to the revelation of what happens to be significant about that particular event. In an almost paradoxical fashion, the “foreshadowing” of *Ulysses* frequently speaks to an event that has already taken place and will be contextualized further into the text. We come to see the “necessity” of these events through the author’s directing our attention as readers towards them—“Any principle of reality—of necessity—can only be discerned through an intelligibility composed after the fact, in a future that is always closed off” (Rocheville 109). In *Ulysses*, we inhabit this space that is normally “closed-off” to the reader, and must follow the narrator’s lead through
their reflections into the past, where we encounter these revelations about the necessity of the present state of affairs. The fictional work allows for the equally fresh presentation of events antecedent to the main plot, events that the reader engages with as they read, and events that *will* happen further into the text. Recollected events don’t appear to the reader as hazy or patchy, as with the relation or recollection of past events in real life—for events in the text that are past tense, present tense, and future tense, are actually all occurring simultaneously. The fictional work, as an act of self-explication, as Husserl says: “Since it goes on in the living present, self-explicating can find, strictly perspectively, only what is going on in the living present. In the most original manner conceivable, it uncovers my own past by means of recollections. Therefore, although I am originaliter and can explicate progressively what is included in my own essence, this explication is carried out largely in acts of consciousness that are not perceptions of the own-essential moments it discovers” (Husserl 102). In the most Bloom’s ruminations on meeting Molly or of his father’s suicide are presented with much the same clarity as with events that occur in the actual plot. Nor do “future” events in the text lack determination, the only thing separating the reader from them is the choice to read the text front-to-back—at any point they may skip ahead in the narrative and find out what’s happening 50, 80, or 100 pages later. The only clarity they will lack about those precipitating events is the clarity availed by context.

A good deal of trust in the author on the reader’s part must be exercised—perhaps too much. Joyce’s language play and narrator shift, as well
as sudden and sometimes difficult to discern lapses between recollection or
daydream, and present occurrences, not only requires trust on the reader's part
and suspension of disbelief, but constant vigilance.

The effect of the author's employment of point of view shift works along a
parallel track to that of foreshadowing. Truth about certain events in the plot is
revealed, this time not through reflection about the past, but by showing the
reader the same event through a different window, so to speak. This speaks to
the contingent nature of our knowledge of reality. Our perception and therefore,
our identification of truth, is largely dependent upon our point of view, what set
of facts we are given, the framework we're working within and, as mentioned
previously, even the language we're using. For example, eyewitnesses to a crime
might have drastically different accounts of what happened, despite all of them
having the intention to relay the truth and none of them the intention to deceive.
Disparities in their accounts could easily be explained by proximity to the crime
and point of view.

Within *Ulysses*, the “Nausicaa” episode that takes place on the waterfront
at dusk is an excellent example of how the readers' knowledge of events is
shaped by just who is telling the story. Gerty MacDowell’s take on events is far
different than what we come to see when we are given things from Bloom’s end.
Her youthful naivete, though she certainly seems at least partially aware of the
likelihood that her mysterious stranger is engaging in an act less romantic than
what she’d like to believe, colors the event with a more chivalrous lens.
However, when the reader comes around to see the event from Bloom's point of
view, the sympathetic widower becomes a voyeuristic and somewhat grotesque character. The reader experiences a similar turn of events when the story shifts to Molly’s point of view at the conclusion of the novel. The horizons of each event, as they become concretized and lose their potentiality, shift with the point of view. What once appear to be the definitions and borders of one event become entirely different mutations depending on who is telling the story—or how much of it they tell. It is at Joyce’s discretion from who’s point of view to relate a particular event in the plot, and when (or if) to shift that point of view and reveal a larger set of information. He may also choose to leave many things unspoken, or merely hinted at, inviting the reader to draw their own conclusions.

In terms of the contingent, Bloom’s preoccupation with contributing circumstances cannot be ignored. Throughout the novel, and growing most conspicuous at the end of the text, Bloom’s thoughts focus on the myriad variables upon which his present circumstances depend. Joyce’s explicit invocation of contingency is a means of directing the reader’s attention to material within the plot that he wishes the reader to recognize as essential for the creation of the current state of affairs. He uses Bloom to “…crystallize the contingent character of life, transforming the contingency of events into necessity” (Rocheville 106). It seems to be a natural characteristic of Bloom’s to view everything as a matter of contingency—from his musing that if perhaps he and Molly had not made love on a particular date of her pregnancy, their son
might still be alive, to what we see at the very end of the novel in the 'Ithaca' episode—a virtual crescendo of contingencies and their significances.

"Where were the several members of the company which with Bloom that day at the bidding of that peal had travelled from Sandymount in the south to Glasnevin in the north?

Martin Cunningham (in bed), Jack Power (in bed), Simon Dedalus (in bed), Ned Lambert (in bed), Tom Kernan (in bed), Joe Hynes (in bed), John Henry Menton (in bed), Bernard Corrigan (in bed), Patsy Dignam (in bed), Paddy Dignam (in the grave)…Describe the alterations effected in the disposition of the articles of furniture. A sofa upholstered in prune plush had been translocated from opposite the door to the ingleside near the compactly furled Union Jack (an alteration which he had frequently intended to execute): the blue and white checker inlaid majolicatopped table had been placed opposite the door in the place vacated by the prune plush sofa: the walnut sideboard (a projecting angle of which had momentarily arrested his ingress) had been moved from its position beside the door to a more advantageous but more perilous position in front of the door: two chairs had been moved from right and left of the ingleside to the position originally occupied by the blue and white checker inlaid majolicatopped table…What significances attached to these two chairs? Significances of similitude, of posture, of symbolism, of circumstantial evidence, of testimonial supermanence…" (Joyce 494-495)

The above excerpt is neither the beginning nor the end of Bloom’s intense closing examination of his environment and the events of his day, but it is a good example of how focused his observations become. In this manner, Joyce shows
that things must have happened exactly as they did for them to now be exactly as they are.

As the creator of the fictional world, the author’s mind extends beyond the borders of the page to the unaddressed horizons of phenomena implied by the text, though not defined by it. The characters within the novel are in possession of a limited set of knowledge, the audience is in possession of a distinct limited set of knowledge, and there is generally a significant overlap in the two sets. Only the author is in possession of the complete set of knowledge. He is aware of manner in which all events must coalesce in order for the desired resolution to come about—“[it] is only after the fact, at the very end of the story...that the contingent events [work] together to form a necessity that previously was impossible for [us] to assume” (Rocheville 111). However, through his choosing what information to relay and what to leave out, what events to highlight and direct the reader’s attention to, the author invites the audience to fill in some of the blanks themselves.

In *Ulysses*, the fictional world created by Joyce contains references to coinciding elements with the actual world—historical and political events, individuals that exist in our actual world, geographical locations, etc. The author will expect the reader to have at least passing knowledge of these real-life truths so that they may understand the reference and what role it plays in the narrative. While truth in fiction can be determined from several different approaches, and though it is preconditioned by the choices of the author, it may be asserted with certainty that it is a matter of contingency dependent upon
authorial choice. The events have actually already taken place. Unlike our real-life experience of events, events in fiction have already been determined and it is just a matter of reading pace that separates us from those events. However, as long as we read the book from front to back, the passing of events in a novel does mirror our actual experience in that we have no access to future events until they are no longer future (or unread), but present and past. *Ulysses* presents itself as an interesting specimen for this particular approach for several reasons: its narrative and temporal disruption, the decentralized narrator authority and our ability to trust these narrators, its mirroring of actual historical events in the fictional world and of actual biographical instances of Joyce's life, its intertextual relationship with classical texts, and its dependence upon the reader's knowledge of these components whether actual or fictional. All these elements function together to make the tenuous nature of truth, of things as they are or their horizontal possibilities in the fictional world, brilliantly illuminated in the text by Joyce's mastery of language and deep understanding of human nature and thought.
Bibliography


