



THE MÖBIUS NARRATIVE: TOPOLOGICAL CONTINUITY AND BINARY DISSOLUTION IN JOYCE'S *ULYSSES*

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ABSTRACT. This essay argues that the Möbius strip is not an ornamental conceit but the most exact topological figure for apprehending the formal and ideological procedures of James Joyce's *Ulysses*. Drawing on spatial theory and topology, it reads the novel's incessant perspectival shifts, recursive episode-designs, and abrupt tonal disjunctions as signatures of a non-orientable narrative surface that continually folds inner into outer, subject into object, history into form. Through close engagements with "Proteus," "Circe," and "Penelope," with selective returns elsewhere, the argument isolates points of torsion where gender, embodiment, and national belonging do not stabilize but remain knotted as irreversible twists. The Möbius strip functions here as method rather than metaphor, forcing a re-reading of Joycean debates on difficulty, realism, and political commitment by showing that *Ulysses* renders modernity's epistemic disorientation not merely as theme but as operative narrative geometry. Topology thus becomes a critical practice: a way of registering how narrative surfaces themselves think.

Keywords: James Joyce, *Ulysses*, narrative topology, Möbius strip, cognitive narratology, modernist form.

LA NARRATIVA MÖBIUS: CONTINUIDAD TOPOLOGICA Y DISOLUCIÓN BINARIA EN EL *ULISES* DE JOYCE

RESUMEN. Este ensayo sostiene que la banda de Möbius no es un artificio ornamental, sino la figura topológica más exacta para aprehender los procedimientos formales e ideológicos del *Ulises* de James Joyce. A partir de la teoría espacial y la topología, este artículo lee los incesantes desplazamientos de perspectiva de la novela, sus diseños episódicos recursivos y sus bruscas disyunciones tonales como signos de una superficie narrativa no orientable que pliega continuamente lo interior en lo exterior, el sujeto en el objeto, la historia en la forma. Mediante lecturas detenidas de “Proteo”, “Circe” y “Penélope”, con regresos selectivos a otros pasajes, el argumento aísla puntos de torsión en los que género, corporeidad y pertenencia nacional no se estabilizan, sino que permanecen anudados como giros irreversibles. La banda de Möbius funciona aquí como método más que como metáfora, forzando una relectura de los debates joyceanos sobre la dificultad, el realismo y el compromiso político, al mostrar que *Ulises* configura la desorientación epistémica de la modernidad no solo como tema, sino como geometría narrativa operativa. La topología se convierte así en práctica crítica: una manera de registrar cómo las propias superficies narrativas piensan.

Palabras clave: James Joyce, *Ulises*, topología narrativa, banda de Möbius, narratología cognitiva, forma modernista.

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1. INTRODUCTION

This study treats the Möbius strip not as a decorative metaphor but as an analytical topology for reading the structural paradoxes of James Joyce's *Ulysses* as procedures of recursion. Against interpretive models that stabilize dialectical oppositions into thematic closure, the Möbius strip formalizes traversal without origin and dislocation without rupture. Its one-sided surface, produced by a half-twist and a join, cancels any stable boundary between inside and outside and situates reading on a geometry of continuous return rather than on a system of opposed domains.

Read this way, the novel's temporal and perspectival spirals register as structural necessity, not formal excess. *Ulysses* folds linear progression into torsioned temporality, where the future can precede the past and the apparent “edge” of a character's consciousness bleeds into a shared cognitive field. Like the strip's unorientable surface, Joyce's narrative resists fixed direction: to begin anywhere is to return elsewhere, and each thought, gesture, or digression functions less as sequence than as re-entry.

For readers unfamiliar with Möbius topology, the point is simple: tracing what looks like a single “side,” your finger never meets a boundary yet returns inverted, crossing no threshold. As John Pier notes in his reading of Josipovici's “Möbius the

Stripper," the strip is twisted and joined so that a line can proceed along it in infinitum "without changing sides," a configuration in which inside is already folded into outside (5). That paradox, continuity that presents as division and inversion that repeats as iteration, names Joyce's method rather than merely resembling it. The novel's recursive interiority, its echoes and delayed recognitions, stage a twisted integrity in which Stephen/Bloom, father/son, waking/dreaming, and related dualities spiral into contiguity. Opposition is not erased but Möbianized, turned and returned until alterity becomes a condition of continuity rather than a site of conflict.

Spatial readings of *Ulysses*, from Hart and Hayman's early formalist work (1974) to the cognitive-narratological studies of Herman (2009) and Caracciolo (2014), have clarified Joyce's architecture. Yet even sophisticated accounts can reinstall binaries, interior/exterior, man/woman, real/imaginary, that the text works to keep unstable. *Ulysses* does more than deconstruct conventions; it suspends the coordinates by which coherence is measured. The narrator disperses into a self-generating logic of associative proliferation that Wicht describes as a compound of free indirect thought and "self-sustaining textual organisation" (153). In place of omniscience, we find distributed cognition, autonomous indirect discourse, and feedback loops that strain conventional hermeneutics. As Rando argues through the Arranger's "epic memory" that "transforms modernity's jolts and shocks into something communicable," the novel metabolizes the everyday into an emergent, non-hierarchical communicability that resists sequence (29).

Invoking the Möbius strip, then, does not extend metaphor so much as install topology as method. The Möbius configuration shows why fixed positionalities fail in *Ulysses*: interiority and exteriority do not succeed one another, they inflect and curve into each other until difference becomes a matter of modulation, not essence. The model lets us track this rhythmic torsion as a material condition of form, a narrative surface that enfolds difference without canceling it. It reframes modernist difficulty as an effect of continuous inversion, and it asks us to read for form as event, syntax as fold, and narrative as an ever-turning surface whose limits neither quite meet nor quite collapse.

2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The Möbius strip offers not an ornamental metaphor but a rigorous topological model for narratological inquiry, especially within the radical architecture of *Ulysses*. As Gragnolati and Southerden argue, it is "a surface with only one side and only one boundary," paradigmatically non-orientable (41-42). Its central properties, single-sidedness, the twist, the circuit, and boundary-crossing, do not merely resemble Joyce's procedures; they formalize them, allowing us to think the novel's work not as an aesthetic effect but as a topological event (Gragnolati and Southerden 41-42).

What reads as multiplicity, fragmented perspectives, dispersed narrators, shifting interiorities, resolves, under the Möbius condition, into a continuous narrative surface. Because the strip refuses any stable distinction between inside and outside,

Ulysses can construct consciousness as topological flow: Bloom's reveries and Stephen's reflections do not run on parallel tracks, they register as variegated movements along one epistemic surface. Local difference persists, but as modulation within continuity. Consciousness becomes less a bounded interior than an endless loop, reversible, insistently partial, and yet continuous.

The Möbius strip comes into being only through torsion, a half-twist that dissolves the binary between "sides" by formalizing their interdependence. Its narrative counterpart appears as what might be called perspectival inversion: moments when epistemic or affective positions flip not through contradiction but through continuity. Attridge captures Joyce's procedure as meaning that emerges like "a rainbow created by our own perspective on the ceaseless torrent of language," rather than from any fixed vantage point (155). Leopold and Molly, Stephen and Bloom, self and other, are not simply juxtaposed positions; they are rotationally entangled perspectives that coexist on a single narrative manifold. The twist is not a symbol of transformation so much as its condition of possibility.

A complete traversal of the Möbius strip returns the traveler to the point of origin, but inverted. This is not classical circularity; it is topological recursion, a doubling-back without duplication. *Ulysses* folds back on itself, returning to the morning of June 16, not as repetition but as reorientation. Its circuit is epistemically recursive: understanding arrives only after inversion, when what once read as center can be re-encountered as margin, and subject can be reread as object. The loop continues because the return is a change in orientation, not an end.

On the Möbius strip, crossing what appears to be an edge results not in departure but in continuation. The illusion of boundary between self and other, interior and exterior, narrative and metanarrative is sustained only by local perspective. Joyce exploits this paradox relentlessly: what looks like soliloquy becomes public utterance, what reads as stream-of-consciousness thickens into communal myth. There are no clean separations, only folds, localized thresholds on a seamless surface. Categorical distinctions become perspectival artifacts.

To say that Möbius properties merely translate into literary terms is therefore insufficient. They instantiate narrative as such in *Ulysses*. The Möbius topology does not decorate Joyce's novel; it grounds it. Joyce does not simply "use" the Möbius strip as figure. He writes it as form.

This intervention gathers theoretical vectors from spatial practice, topological formalism, and narrative theory, not as a toolkit but as a pressure system. In *The Practice of Everyday Life*, Michel de Certeau distinguishes "place" from "space," insisting that "space is a practiced place" and that "every story is a travel story, a spatial practice" (115, 117). Space is produced by "vectors of direction, velocities, and time variables," by operations that transform planned order into lived trajectory (de Certeau 117). *Ulysses* does not simply represent this spatial discursivity; it enacts it. Narrative becomes a practiced terrain whose coordinates are recursive and prone to disorientation, so that the "spatial story" is less itinerary than disruption.

Deleuze and Guattari's distinction between "smooth" and "striated" spaces intensifies the problem. Striated space organizes succession and form, whereas "the smooth is the continuous variation, continuous development of form," "directional rather than dimensional or metric," "a space of affects, more than one of properties" (478–79). *Ulysses* does not simply oscillate between these regimes; it unsettles the boundary that would make the distinction stable, folding space into time, time into affect, and affect into syntax, so that reading becomes a non-orientable drift where surface and depth cannot be cleanly disentangled.

In *The Fold: Leibniz and the Baroque*, Deleuze describes a Baroque architecture that requires "a new kind of link" between inside and outside, the spontaneity of the inside and the determination of the outside (*Fold* 30). He also figures continuity as "a labyrinth that cannot be represented by a straight line," since "the straight line always has to be intermingled with curved lines" (*Fold* 18). Read through this Baroque topology, the Möbius strip becomes less analogy than model: a torsioned surface in which interior and exterior, concave and convex, public and private are materially inseparable. Joyce's narrative inhabits that non-orientable linkage and uses it to undo readerly certainty at the level of orientation itself.

Experimental cognitive narratology traces related instabilities. Herman's account of the storyworld emphasizes experiential uncertainty, where perception, memory, and orientation interpenetrate. Caracciolo's enactivist framework presses further by insisting that narrative is enacted through the reader's cognitive apparatus rather than simply presented for inspection. On such accounts, Möbius logic is not merely described but operationalized: borders between embodied and textual, real and fictive, appear as reversible configurations along a single experiential surface, traversed in mutual implication.

What is most radical, then, is not the accumulation of vocabularies but the elevation of topology to method: a rigor of transformation without tearing, a logic of continuity that persists where rupture seems to dominate. Joyce demands a reading practice attuned to folds and torsion, to the intimacy of discontinuous continuity. To read *Ulysses* is not to map a pre-given terrain but to be mapped by it, drawn into a non-Euclidean field where orientation repeatedly fails and meaning arises through displacement. Spatial theory, in this light, does not settle the novel; it keeps it open, making the surface more volatile and less governable, as if the struggle to locate oneself on that surface were part of what the book is designed to undo.

Figure 1 suggests that to read the narrative surface of *Ulysses* as a Möbius strip, a non-orientable manifold with one side and a single continuous boundary, is already to register the novel's unmaking of narratological binaries. Episodes such as "Proteus," "Circe," and "Penelope" cease to appear as steps in a defensible linear sequence. They register instead as recurrent intensities along a twisted continuum, local surges that interrupt temporal syntax rather than advance it. Möbius logic unsettles inherited oppositions, interior/exterior, psyche/scene, mimetic realism/hallucinatory excess, by disclosing their mutual implication in a folding

where narrative space curls back upon itself without terminus, and “opposites” become differently oriented stretches of the same turning surface.

In Joyce’s structure, one does not move cleanly from inner to outer or from day to night; one circulates in ontological torsion, where subjective time and empirical duration converge toward a shared asymptote. As a point on a Möbius surface returns to itself inverted, Joyce’s voices return as haunted mirrorings, echoes with a difference. The narrative does not resolve contradiction so much as metabolize it. Its unity is neither classical nor structuralist but topological, a continuity held together by rupture and by repeated passage through zones of tension that remain contiguous without reconciliation.

This is not mere metaphor, because the text performs the movement it names. “Penelope,” often treated as the culmination of interior monologue, reads as its inversion: the apparent plenitude of subjectivity is already threaded with the social, the historical, and the bodily, and those domains are, in turn, saturated by what we call “interiority.” The diagram therefore refuses chronology, privileging neither beginning nor ending, only the perpetual twisting return in which to advance is to re-enter the loop from the obverse.

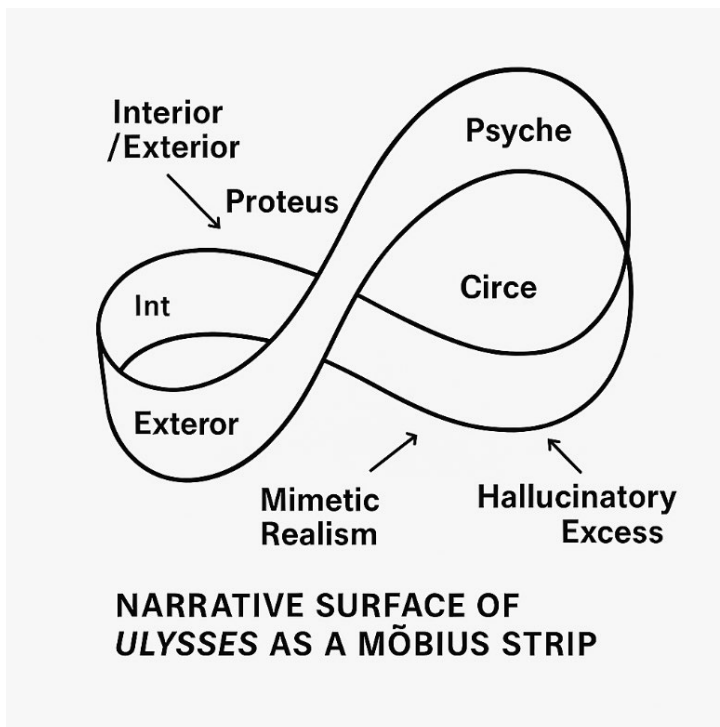


Figure 1. *Ulysses* as a Möbius Strip by graphic artist Kiarash Salami.

3. METHODOLOGICAL APPROACH

To operationalize the Möbius strip as topology rather than metaphor requires a limited set of repeatable analytic moves. What follows is a reading practice built for torsion, return, and reversible orientation, a method that refuses planar assumptions about narrative levels and stable oppositions.

The first gesture is stratigraphic. It identifies narratological vectors, narrator position, character interiority, metatextual reflexivity, stylistic parody, typographic play, self-quotation, without treating them as separable layers. In *Ulysses*, omniscient third-person narration, free indirect discourse, unmediated interior monologue, and thick regimes of stylistic imitation do not form stacked planes; they function as registers whose apparent distinctness sets the conditions for reorientation.

Second, the method isolates narrative torsion sites, passages where one register folds into another without fully relinquishing itself. These are twist moments: points at which the text seems to cross from observation to thought, or from representation to self-parody, while remaining on a single continuous surface. The twist does not mark rupture; it exposes continuity misrecognized as rupture. The key claim is procedural: these are movements within, not transitions between, narrative domains.

Third, the author traces differential continuity across what appear to be opposed registers. Here topology becomes the medium of description. Inner and outer, subjective and objective, textual and metatextual reappear as curvature, a relational field in which inversion is internal to the system. Discontinuity becomes a local effect, a surface misprision: the novel's modalities are not parallel tracks that occasionally intersect, but recursive folds of one continuously turning surface.

A brief instance from "Lestrygonians" clarifies the maneuver. Bloom's gaze on the river slides into speculative musing:

His eyes sought answer from the river and saw a rowboat rock at anchor on the treacly swells lazily its plastered board. Kino's 11/- trousers. Good idea that. Wonder if he pays rent to the corporation. How can you own water really? It's always flowing in a stream, never the same, which in the stream of life we trace. Because life is a stream. (Joyce 193)

A conventional narratology can segment this as description, interior monologue, philosophical reflection. A Möbius reading emphasizes the continuity that makes segmentation unstable: perception is already thinking, thinking is already figural, and figuration returns to sensory flow. The "transformative point" is not a threshold but a twist in syntactic and epistemic orientation, an internal reorientation that collapses the very idea of a clean boundary.

The aim is not to simplify *Ulysses*, but to render its formal operations spatially intelligible by diagramming its topological play. The Möbius strip is not an image appended to the text; it is a model that makes the text's logic describable with methodological precision.

3.1. Core terminology (*topology as narratological tool*)

1. **Narrative surface:** the continuous plane on which voices, perspectives, and reflexive gestures are inscribed. What looks like distinct strata (narrator, character, metatext) is read as local inflection within one continuum.
2. **Transformative points:** passages where perspective appears to cross a boundary while remaining on the same surface. These are narratological reorientations, instants when the text “flips” from interior monologue to outward description, or from diegesis to self-commentary, without leaving the continuous plane.
3. **Primary circuit:** the major traversal from the novel’s opening to its ending, the path commonly imagined as linear progression. Under a Möbius dispensation, the circuit completes a revolution that returns the reader to a “same” that is no longer identical, because orientation has changed.
4. **Secondary circuits:** recursive motifs, parallel scenes, and self-reflexive returns that coil within the primary circuit. These are local loops and eddies that thicken the sense of return without exiting the surface.
5. **Topological inversion:** the moment when a binary opposition discloses itself as continuous. Narratively, it names the experience of reversible configuration, interior and exterior, past and present, realism and fantasy, as differently oriented stretches of one turning surface.

3.2. Analytical procedures (*how to apply the framework*)

1. **Perspectival mapping** tracks shifts in narrative vantage and asks how continuity is preserved across their apparent borders. The question is not whether Joyce uses multiple perspectives, but how the text moves among them without tearing the surface.
2. **Thematic tracing** follows motifs as they undergo inversion without becoming simple opposites. Paternity, exile, and identity are treated as continua rather than binaries: fatherhood drifts between biological and symbolic registers; Dublin functions as both dwelling and estrangement; subjectivity emerges through iterative, contradictory performances rather than stable selfhood.
3. **Circuit analysis** examines how the ending retroactively reorganizes the beginning, producing return as re-entry under altered orientation rather than closure. The point is not circularity but recursive reorientation.
4. **Boundary analysis** isolates moments where categorical distinctions (self/other, speech/silence, body/text, realism/hallucination) dissolve into gradients, overlaps, and folds. The method reads these not as exceptions but as structural operations that the novel repeatedly performs.

Taken together, these moves shift the Möbius strip from illustrative analogy to disciplined method. They allow the critic to identify, name, and analyze *Ulysses* as a topological form: a text whose discontinuities are locally produced effects within a deeper continuity of torsion, inversion, and return.

The visualization in Figure 2 does more than plot paternity, identity, and exile in *Ulysses*; it stages their continual permutation along a Möbius-band surface of narrative transformation. Oppositions such as biological and symbolic paternity, national exile and private estrangement, fixed identity and perpetual liquefaction operate less as endpoints than as recursive inflection points on a continuous surface. The circuit it sketches refuses linear progress and dialectical settlement. Each thematic pole bends toward its counterpart, and each distinction, followed far enough, folds into reversal.

The percentages, “Proteus” as sixty percent identity and forty percent exile, are not statistical claims but indicators of interpretive pressure. They register where the text’s currents run most forcefully at a given moment: density of reference, tonal saturation, and affective insistence. In “Proteus,” Stephen’s self-questioning and self-estrangement are so tightly coupled that identity and exile cannot be cleanly separated; the numbers annotate the intensity of that coupling rather than measure it.

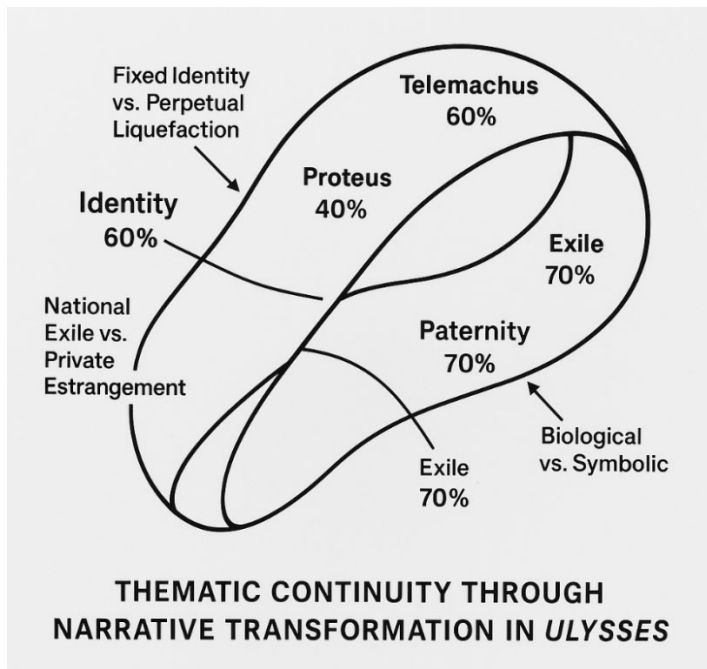


Figure 2. Thematic Continuity through Narrative Transformation in *Ulysses* by graphic artist Kiarash Salami.

What the diagram offers, then, is a system of relation rather than allocation. It tracks how the novel redistributes thematic charge across episodes and voices, how Bloom renders paternity at once genetic and elective, how Dublin becomes alternately home and labyrinth, and how identity emerges not as a possessed attribute but as an ongoing negotiation, leakage, and revision. The map does not stabilize themes; it records their mobility.

Seen in this light, Möbius mapping clarifies the novel's refusal of closure. No theme is granted primacy or allowed to ossify; each one moves, turns, and is turned. The visualization remains a static snapshot of a mobile textual logic. *Ulysses* appears less as the sum of its themes than as a continuous surface on which difference is bound, through revolution rather than resolution, to its own undoing.

4. ANALYSIS OF KEY EPISODES

4.1. "Proteus": *Consciousness as a Continuous Surface*

Nowhere in *Ulysses* is the Möbius topography of consciousness more rigorously enacted than in "Proteus." As Stephen Dedalus walks the shifting sands of Sandymount Strand, the episode stages not a passage "through" thought but a traversal of a narrative surface on which inside and outside become reversible, a distinction without division. Laura Diamanti's account of Stephen's spatial perception helps name the stakes: in "Proteus," time and space interweave as embodied narration, and Stephen's steps figure a movement "into eternity along Sandymount strand" (153). The episode opens in torsion:

Ineluctable modality of the visible: at least that if no more, thought through my eyes. Signatures of all things I am here to read, seaspawn and seawrack, the nearing tide, that rusty boot. Snotgreen, bluesilver, rust: coloured signs. Limits of the diaphane. But he adds: in bodies. (Joyce 45)

Joyce does not simply collapse the boundary between perception and cognition; he folds it. "Thought through my eyes" functions as a Möbius twist: sensory apprehension ("snotgreen, bluesilver") arrives already saturated by epistemological mediation. Perception is not an entry point into consciousness so much as one of its modes. Sight and thinking spiral together as continuous curvature. Phenomenological description, philosophical abstraction, and intertextual recall do not appear as separable planes; the prose glides among them as a single surface under varying stress.

Mapping the Möbius operation

1. **Narrative registers:** sensory impression ("seaspawn and seawrack"), abstract theorizing ("ineluctable modality"), and intertextual citation (Aristotle) co-exist as interfolded functions of one ongoing movement.

2. **Transformative point:** "Thought through my eyes" marks an internal reorientation, a hinge where the "external" arrives as already cognitive, and the "internal" as already worlded.
3. **Continuous relation:** there is no break between seeing and thinking, only modulation, a difference of inflection within continuity.

Later, the logic intensifies:

His shadow lay over the rocks as he bent, ending. Why not endless till the farthest star? Darkly they are there behind this light, darkness shining in the brightness, delta of Cassiopeia, worlds (Joyce 60)

A mundane shadow becomes the pivot that carries rock and star into one perceptual event. This is not metaphor layered onto description; it is a narratological hinge that refuses the conventional partition between world and mind. The passage does not move from object to idea as if crossing a seam; it curves along a single band in which the trace of the real is indistinguishable from the thought it solicits. Conventional narratology might still want to sort the sentence into "external description" and "inner reflection," but the episode's syntax makes that sorting a retrospective fiction.

What Joyce produces here is not stream of consciousness in a simple interiorist sense, with an implicit membrane separating inner life from outer scene. "Proteus" renders thought-in-the-world, and world-in-thought, as a reversible flow. Marco Caracciolo's concept of "experientiality," "the experiential dimension of narrative," grounded in "the situated, embodied quality of readers' engagement with stories" (4), approaches this structure. Yet Joyce's procedure exceeds a descriptive model of embodied engagement by formalizing interpenetration at the level of narrative mechanics. As Anja Petrović and Nataša Tučev note, Joyce "took Richardson's stream-of-consciousness technique to new heights," particularly in the fusion of inner life with the perception of the external world (352). In "Proteus," consciousness does not look out upon the world; it includes the world as a foldable surface. The Möbius framework makes that procedure legible: it lets us track where narration reorients, where thought crosses its own path, and where the text, without ever leaving the same side, turns "inside" and "outside" into matters of angle rather than kind.

4.2. "Circe": *Maximum Topological Inversion*

With "Circe," *Ulysses* reaches maximal torsion: the novel's Möbius surface is pulled into dramatic spiral, and the topological logic that elsewhere remains distributed becomes staged, exposed, and procedural. Nighttown's phantasmagoria is not a departure from the book's prose method but its explicit articulation. Dramatic form here functions as immanent structure. Distinctions between waking and dream, subject and object, speech and narration invert without rupture, so that oppositions appear as reversible orientations on one continuous surface.

Consider a seemingly innocuous exchange:

BLOOM: (Points to his hand) That weal there is an accident. Fell and cut it twenty-two years ago. I was sixteen.

ZOE: I see, says the blind man. Tell us news.

STEPHEN: See? Moves to one great goal. I am twentytwo too. Sixteen years ago I twentytwo tumbled, twentytwo years ago he sixteen fell off his hobbyhorse. (Joyce 668)

What begins as idle wordplay begins to curve. “See?” functions less as a semantic prompt than as a hinge: dialogue twists into hallucination, and Bloom’s exchange with Zoe reorients into a public oration before a spectral crowd. Joyce supplies no syntactic alarm. The shift is not a leap across a boundary; it is traversal along the same surface, a topological reorientation in which memory, dialogue, and delusion remain continuous.

Möbius mapping:

1. **Narrative registers:** realist banter, mnemonic trace, hallucinatory projection co-present as entwined functions, not stacked layers.
2. **Transformative point:** “See?” inaugurates the torsion, not as disjunction but as curvature.
3. **Topological inversion:** the division between fact and fantasy, speech and spectacle does not collapse into sameness; it becomes reversible configuration.

Finn Fordham, writing on *Finnegans Wake*, describes Joyce’s procedure as yielding a “cyclical ‘continuous present tense’ surface as a form of history” (56). The Möbius model specifies the mechanics of that surface: not dreamlike drift, but structured inversion, a continuity that carries the logic of dream into reality without a seam.

Even the move from novelistic prose to dramatic script is itself a Möbius maneuver. The form folds narration into dialogue and interiority into stage direction. Directions, conventionally external and orienting, begin to register hallucination, metamorphosis, and psychic overflow. Consider:

He moved a doll’s head to and fro, the brims of his Panama hat quivering, and began to chant in a quiet happy foolish voice:

—I’m the queerest young fellow that ever you heard.

My mother’s a jew, my father’s a bird.

With Joseph the joiner I cannot agree

So here’s to disciples and Calvary. (Joyce 22)

What looks like instruction is dream-language: a crossing where subjective states are externally enacted, and theatrical convention folds back on itself. The directions

do not merely direct; they hallucinate. Performance and cognition cease to be cleanly separable domains.

Identity undergoes the same torsion. Bloom becomes political speaker, adulterer, voyeur, penitent, even woman. These are not “episodes” inside a psychology; they are topological expositions that externalize contradiction as surface. Masculinity and national belonging are not negated so much as reconfigured: the inside of identity turns outward, the self becomes a manifold on which its tensions are legible as reversals rather than masks. “Circe,” then, is not an aberration but the novel’s twist made explicit, a local zone of maximal inversion where the book’s logic becomes diagrammatic. If “Proteus” initiates the twist and “Penelope” completes the circuit, “Circe” is the pivot that shows the whole novel as one surface masquerading as many. To read “Circe” through the Möbius lens is not to tame its delirium, but to perceive its geometry: inversion instead of opposition, continuity instead of rupture, return without closure.

4.3. “Penelope”: *The Complete Circuit*

The final episode, “Penelope,” completes the novel’s Möbius circuit. Molly Bloom’s unpunctuated soliloquy returns to and reweights motifs that have circulated across the day, producing closure as re-entry rather than termination. The structure is signaled by the episode’s recursive framing with “Yes.” Molly begins:

Yes because he never did a thing like that before as ask to get his breakfast in bed with a couple of eggs since the City Arms hotel when he used to be pretending to be laid up with a sick voice doing his highness to make himself interesting to that old faggot Mrs Riordan that he thought he had a great leg of and she.... (Joyce 871)

and concludes:

...so he could feel my breasts all perfume yes and his heart was going like mad and yes I said yes I will Yes. (Joyce 933)

Although *Ulysses* does not close into full circularity in the manner of *Finnegans Wake*, it repeatedly generates localized loops; “Penelope” is the most explicit. Its eight sentences spiral across the day’s debris, Bloom’s body beside Molly, and the Howth memory, producing return as reorientation. Details from earlier episodes reappear inside Molly’s syntax and are recalibrated by her affect. The final “yes” does not simply echo an initial affirmation; it arrives after passages of refusal, resentment, compromise, and desire, so that the closing assent rereads earlier moments under accumulated pressure. Joyce avoids neat circularity. He engineers a topological return in which the ending bends toward the beginning, not to seal the book but to unsettle directional logic and reveal that what looked like linear progress was always a twisted surface of re-encounter.

Mapping “Penelope” onto the Möbius framework

1. **Primary circuit:** completion of the novel’s main traversal as return with altered orientation.
2. **Topological inversion:** the ending’s “Yes” repeats the word while reversing the reader’s bearing, same signifier, different orientation.
3. **Continuous surface:** Molly’s movement across past and present, body and mind, self and other operates as curvature rather than boundary-crossing.

Drawing on Marian Eide’s account of Joyce’s ethics as openness to alterity, where Joyce’s texts “locate readers between disparate subject positions” and require “a suspended position between opposing claims” (3-4), the episode’s recursive logic can be read as an ethical suspension rather than a synthesis. The Möbius model sharpens the claim: the final affirmation performs closure as its own undoing. The circuit completes, yet the reader’s position is no longer what it was.

Molly’s syntax enacts this operation at the level of temporal grammar. The present in bed folds into remembered hotel, memory folds into commentary, commentary folds into desire. Temporal fixity does not hold; domains conventional narratology would separate remain contiguous as a single turning surface. Gender and sexuality follow the same logic. Molly’s meditations on femininity, desire, and power do not settle into stable binaries; they move as reversible possibilities on a surface defined by iteration. Read through the Möbius frame, “Penelope” illuminates less a circular ending than a transformed return: not repetition, but the impossible re-encounter of the same after inversion, the novel’s final reorientation before the loop begins again.

While “Proteus,” “Circe,” and “Penelope” concentrate Joyce’s Möbius logic most visibly, the same topology clarifies other episodes. The point is not to force every chapter into the same mold, but to show how *Ulysses* repeatedly produces continuity through reorientation, treating apparent discontinuities as local effects of a single turning surface.

“Wandering Rocks”: Multiplicity on One Surface

“Wandering Rocks” offers nineteen brief movements, each tracking a different figure moving through Dublin within a shared temporal frame. Read through conventional narratology, these can look like discrete strands, parallel lines that refuse convergence. The Möbius model instead treats the episode as a single surface segmented by perspective, not by ontological separation.

The transitions between vignettes function as torsion sites. Father Conmee disappears from one movement only to surface in another; pedestrians pass each other half-seen, unremarked, yet unmistakably continuous to the reader, not because the text “resolves” them, but because it folds them into one traversable field. The episode thus composes a topological Dublin in which space and consciousness refuse partition. What appears collaged becomes coextensive, a city whose trajectories share a surface and differ by orientation.

"Nausicaa": Desire as Topological Conflation

In "Nausicaa," Joyce does not simply alternate interior and exterior, male and female, realism and fantasy. He makes the alternation itself unstable. The opening movement filters the scene through Gerty MacDowell's stylized, sentimental interiority, saturated with romance idioms, so that attention becomes devotional tableau: "the eyes that were fastened upon her set her pulses tingling," and she reads the gaze across the strand as revelation, convinced that "whitehot passion was in that face" (Joyce 565). After Bloom's masturbatory act, the prose reorients into his more corporeal stream, where the same event is recalled as physical jolt and aftermath, including how he "felt an ache at the butt of [his] tongue" (Joyce 575).

A binary reading treats this as two neatly separated subjectivities. A Möbius reading treats the shift as a twist, a local inversion that preserves continuity. Romantic idealization and bathetic physicality are not endpoints; they are contiguous stretches of a single band of desire and objectification. The text does not cross a boundary so much as reorient its surface. Each register refracts the other in the act of passage, and the episode's disturbance arises from that continuity, not despite it.

"Ithaca": Question and Answer as a Single Circuit

"Ithaca," with its catechistic format, seems to install a clean opposition between question and answer, interrogator and respondent. Under a Möbius rubric, the opposition blurs from within. Questions increasingly carry the material of answers, and answers generate further implicit questions. What looks like a stable back-and-forth becomes a continuous circuit, spiraling inward rather than shuttling across a fixed divide.

The posture of scientific objectivity sustained by the format gives way, almost without any markable seam, to subjective reflection and affective coloration. Yet the episode refuses a decisive break. One cannot say where objectivity ends and subjectivity begins, because the text converts that binary into curvature, a reversible relation on the same surface.

Taken together, these brief soundings suggest that the Möbius framework is not a local curiosity reserved for a few "aberrant" episodes. Across *Ulysses*, Joyce repeatedly constructs linguistic, perceptual, and ontological continuities, surfaces on which oppositions are not merely unsettled, but converted into recursive, reversible relations, two faces that turn out to belong to one continuously traversable form.

5. TECHNICAL APPLICATION OF THE MÖBIUS FRAMEWORK

The Möbius strip, taken as a formal figure, enables a mapping of narrative perspective in *Ulysses* that sidesteps narratological schemes still anchored in binaries such as narrator/character or interior/exterior. Instead of fixing perspectives as discrete positions in a hierarchy of voices, the Möbius framework treats them as

local inflections on a single continuous narrative surface: twists and reorientations, not separations.

Classical paradigms, including Genette's taxonomies of focalization and Cohn's typology of consciousness representation, often falter when pressed against Joyce's rapid shifts, because their descriptive power depends on stable borders Joyce repeatedly erodes. The Möbius model begins elsewhere. It begins from continuity, and it foregrounds transformation as the basic unit of analysis. What appears as a difference of kind, narration versus consciousness, external description versus interior monologue, proves, under sustained attention, to be a difference of curvature on the same turning plane.

Consider "Lestrygonians," where Bloom's consciousness enters as what looks, at first glance, like interior monologue: "His heart astir he pushed in the door of the Burton restaurant. Stink gripped his trembling breath: pungent meat juice, slop of greens. See the animals feed. Men, men, men" (Joyce 214).

A traditional account would classify the passage by mode, external description followed by interior judgment. A Möbius reading tracks the torsion that makes such classification unstable. "Pushed in the door" and "Stink gripped his trembling breath" register embodied perception, already cognitive, already evaluative; "See the animals feed. Men, men, men" is not a sealed inward verdict appended to sensory input, but perception folded into judgment without a seam. The boundary between environment and thought is not crossed but curved. *Ulysses*, on this view, is less a sequence of shifting modes than a unified topological field in which perspectival distinctions persist as reversible, recursive flows.

Operationally, perspectival mapping reduces to three repeatable moves: isolate an apparent shift; identify the linguistic cues that seem to authorize the shift; then demonstrate how the text reorients without establishing a threshold. In the Burton passage, the perceived hinge occurs at "See the animals feed," where perception becomes judgment without changing epistemic "level." The point is not to deny difference but to redescribe it as internal reconfiguration on one surface.

This perspective-focused method converges with contemporary cognitive narratology. Herman and Caracciolo, among others, emphasize narrative experience as embodied and enactive, complicating rigid distinctions between representation and experience. The Möbius framework complements this turn by supplying a formal model for describing how Joyce constructs narrative consciousness not as bounded interiority but as continuous surface, a field that can be reoriented but not cleanly partitioned.

The same method can be extended beyond perspective to thematic transformation, especially when a theme seems organized by polar terms. The procedure remains consistent: select a motif, track its appearances, then identify points where apparent opposites invert into continuity.

Paternity in *Ulysses* offers a clear demonstration. It appears across divergent figures: Stephen's biological father, Simon Dedalus; Stephen's search for substitute

authorities; Bloom's mourning for Rudy; Bloom's tentative paternal feeling toward Stephen; Bloom's ordinary, fraught relation to Milly. Conventional readings tend to file these as separable strands, biological fatherhood, surrogate kinship, artistic ancestry. Under a Möbius analytic, these strands become successive inflections within a single field structured by loss, substitution, and desire. The unity is not harmony. It is continuity under torsion.

This becomes explicit in "Scylla and Charybdis," where Stephen's Shakespearean theory turns artistic production into a form of spiritual paternity, a making that answers a loss. The theoretical discourse is not exterior to character; it is character under another orientation. Stephen's exegesis folds into confession, and confession folds into narrative structure, so that theory and life become mutually implicated. Joyce engineers a twist in which literary interpretation, existential uncertainty, and the novel's own paternal relay between Bloom and Stephen re-enter one another without categorical separation.

A Möbius mapping of paternity can be anchored to concrete nodes across the text:

- "Telemachus": Stephen's relation to Simon Dedalus enters as antagonistic inheritance: "You have the cursed jesuit strain in you, only it's injected the wrong way" (Joyce 6).
- "Scylla and Charybdis": paternity is named as necessity and injury: "A father, Stephen said, battling against hopelessness, is a necessary evil". (Joyce 244).
- "Circe": the lost child returns as spectral figure: "A fairy boy of eleven ... dressed in an Eton suit with glass shoes and a little bronze helmet". (Joyce 704).
- "Ithaca": paternity becomes procedural, provisional, and negotiated, a relation staged as exchange: "What counterproposals were alternately advanced, accepted, modified, declined, restated in other terms, reaccepted, ratified, reconfirmed?" (Joyce 818).

Taken in isolation, these points appear to treat fatherhood under different categories: biological lineage, symbolic authority, ghostly loss, elective kinship. Read as a Möbius surface, they register a continuous problem that repeatedly inverts, presence into absence, flesh into ghost, lineage into chosen relation, without crossing into a different order. Paternity becomes a recursive structure: absence bound to substitution, inheritance bound to reinvention. Readings such as Joseph Valente's, which situate Joyce's paternity against patriarchal constructions of Irish identity, are not displaced by this model; they are formalized. The Möbius frame specifies how Joyce's text refuses binary formulations and performs that refusal as structure.

Exile, too, should not be stabilized as content alone. In Joyce, exile is method, an operation performed on spaces, selves, and language. A Möbius analytic treats exile not as parallel dislocations but as a surface on which geographical, psychological, social, and linguistic registers fold into one another; the Sandymount scene already figures that torsion as a sedimented medium, where “These heavy sands are language tide and wind have silted here” (Joyce 56).

There is no clean outside of exile here, only its recursive elaboration.

Stephen’s “homecoming” does not resolve exile; it reorients it. Dublin functions as uncanny home, saturated with memory and failed reintegration, so that return becomes another mode of estrangement: “I will not sleep there when this night comes” (Joyce 56). Even in the city’s most intimate “known” spaces, his inward stance is calibrated as social absence: “I spoke to no-one: none to me” (Joyce 56).

Bloom’s exile unfolds differently, through social marginality, Jewishness in Catholic Dublin, precarious masculinity, grief, and domestic vulnerability. He is simultaneously at home and not at home, citizen and stranger, as the pub’s banter sharpens belonging into a test, “why can’t a jew love his country like the next fellow?” answered with the barb, “when he’s quite sure which country it is” (Joyce 438). When Bloom insists on a shared religious genealogy, “Your God was a jew. Christ was a jew like me,” the response is immediate threat and exclusion (Joyce 445). The most intimate interiors, the marital bed and the memory of Rudy, become sites of displacement; the past returns as a visitation rather than a recovery: “BLOOM: (Wonderstruck, calls inaudibly) Rudy!” (Joyce 703).

Exile turns inside-out.

Language compounds the process. Joyce’s stylistic proliferation, in “Oxen of the Sun,” the hallucinatory montage of “Circe,” the incessant slippages of idiom and allusion, produces a readerly exile enacted at the level of comprehension itself. The mother tongue becomes both shelter and expulsion, a home whose borders shift with each syntactic reorientation. These modalities are not separable. Follow any one line long enough, and it folds into the others: alienation becomes intimacy, homecoming becomes exile, language shelters and estranges.

A final application concerns textual self-reference. Here the Möbius strip models the way Joyce folds text and metatext onto the same plane. The method is straightforward: locate moments where the narrative speaks about its own construction; show how these moments create loops between fiction and commentary; then analyze how the loop reorients the reader’s position. In “Scylla and Charybdis,” Stephen’s remarks on art can be read as aesthetic theory and as reflexive pressure on the novel’s own procedures: “The supreme question about a work of art is out of how deep a life does it spring ... All the rest is the speculation of schoolboys for schoolboys” (Joyce 236).

The barrier between character speech and authorial reflection does not simply break; it curves. Stephen’s discourse functions at once as diegetic utterance and as a meta-analytic gloss on the work that contains it. Comparable doublings intensify

in "Oxen of the Sun," where stylistic history becomes a structural analogue for gestation. In this study's tighter scope, "Scylla and Charybdis" and "Aeolus" serve as compact gateways into Joyce's broader recursive technique, because they foreground the traffic between narrative form and its thematization.

"Aeolus," especially under the headline "HOW A GREAT DAILY ORGAN IS TURNED OUT," offers a pointed case. The line names newspaper production and simultaneously reflects the novel's own compositional labor, a "daily organ" of Dublin life "turned out" through formal procedure. Content and construction share a surface. Storytelling does not stand outside its world; it emerges from, and as, that world. In Attridge's terms, Joyce's writing becomes a testing ground for "some central features of the literary," and reading becomes inquiry into what literature does (17). The Möbius framework gives this claim a formal account: self-reference is not a detachable meta-layer added onto narrative; it is a fold within the same narrative plane. Critique is not appended. It is structurally immanent.

Across these applications, the Möbius model functions as more than a suggestive analogy. It offers a disciplined way to track how *Ulysses* proceeds by continuous transformation rather than by clashes between discrete oppositions. Perspective, theme, and metatext do not stand apart as separate orders; they move along the same torqued surface, inseparable in operation, reversible in orientation, and inexhaustible in traversal.

6. COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS AND BROADER APPLICATIONS

While *Ulysses* may offer modernism's most sustained instantiation of a narrative Möbius strip, analogous topological pressures surface in Virginia Woolf, Marcel Proust, and Franz Kafka. Read comparatively, these texts disclose shared investments in boundary dissolution, alongside sharply different ways of formalizing narrative non-orientability.

In Woolf's *The Waves* (1931), consciousness circulates among six speakers with minimal narratorial stabilization, producing a surface on which selves are less discrete units than rhythmic inflections. Bernard's claim, "I am not one person; I am many people ... [I do not] know who I am" (Woolf 276), condenses this logic: subjectivity appears as continuity distributed across voices rather than as bounded interiority. The Möbius framework clarifies both affinity and difference with Joyce. Joyce tends to dramatize continuity through perspectival inversion, a twist that turns interior toward exterior without seam, whereas Woolf more often builds continuity through patterned alternation and sonic recurrence, a rhythmic relay that keeps borders porous without foregrounding the hinge as such.

Proust's *In Search of Lost Time* (1913-1927) presents a differently oriented Möbius effect, primarily temporal. The madeleine scene functions as a torsion point where sensory contact collapses chronological partition, allowing an earlier time to return as present experience. Proust's formulation that "taste and smell" endure "like souls ... amid the ruins of all the rest" (50-51) captures this topological temporality: past

and present coexist on one experiential surface. Yet the voice remains comparatively stable. Unlike Joyce's distributive perspectivism, Proust's Möbius surface folds time more than it disperses narration, maintaining a relatively consistent first-person orientation even as chronology inverts into recursion.

Kafka's *The Castle* (1926) elaborates a spatial Möbius band in which inclusion and exclusion, center and margin, are not opposites but torsional states of belonging. K.'s approach repeatedly discovers the boundary as curved deferral rather than crossable line; the castle hill appears "hidden ... in mist and darkness" as he stares into an "illusory emptiness" (Kafka 9). Here the twist resides less in consciousness than in space itself. Kafka often preserves a comparatively steady third-person viewpoint, but the world's geometry behaves Möbius-like, making access and exclusion reversible experiences of the same structure.

Taken together, these alignments suggest that the Möbius framework need not remain decorative. It can function as a structural method for describing how modernist texts dismantle binary logic through formal recursion. Joyce's inversions of perspective, Woolf's rhythmic continuity of selves, Proust's folded time, Kafka's torqued space: each offers a distinct topology of boundary dissolution, a different answer to the same modernist problem of orientation.

Placing Joyce's Möbius procedures within early twentieth-century history prevents the model from hardening into abstract formalism. The dissolution of oppositions in *Ulysses*, interior/exterior, self/other, native/colonial, registers as a formal response to collapsing certainties after World War I and within Ireland's revolutionary decade. The novel's twisted surfaces do not merely "play" with binaries; they assume that secure partitions are no longer available, and they refuse to simulate their return.

This historical pressure converges with what Stephen Kern describes as an era-wide reorganization of temporal and spatial experience, shaped by technological media that intensify simultaneity and connectivity (Kern 29). Under this lens, Joyce's Möbius structure reads as a literary corollary of altered perception: an orientation system built for overlap, delay, and recursive return, rather than for linear sequence and stable perspective.

The political sharpness of this formal challenge is especially legible in Joyce's handling of Irish identity. As Andrew Gibson argues, *Ulysses* destabilizes the oppositions, Irish/English, native/colonial, sectarian partitions, that nationalist discourse depends upon (Gibson 138). In "Cyclops," Bloom's definition, "A nation is the same people living in the same place" (Joyce 430), is immediately exposed to irony, as the episode's dialogic pressure makes "the same" unstable and "place" internally divided. Under a Möbius reading, Irishness becomes not an essence but a surface continuously reoriented by contradiction, parody, and mutual implication.

Joyce's treatment of gender and sexuality operates within the same logic of torsion. Bloom's Nighttown transformations and Molly's sustained, embodied thinking in "Penelope" refuse to preserve male and female as opposed blocs.

Identity appears iterative and reversible, not because the text celebrates fluidity as an abstract virtue, but because it makes social categories legible as turns on a single surface, orientations that can invert without becoming their own negation.

To insist on this embedding is to specify what the Möbius framework ultimately charts: not only a formal device, but a historical situation in which time, space, language, and selfhood become unstable. Modernism's experiments, in Joyce most forcefully, generate non-orientable narrative surfaces on which the effort to orient oneself, ethically, politically, perceptually, becomes the work's deepest subject.

7. ADDRESSING COUNTER-ARGUMENTS AND METHODOLOGICAL OBJECTIONS

Several foreseeable objections to the Möbius framework deserve direct address, not only to defend a critical choice but to clarify what is at stake in bringing topology to bear on *Ulysses*.

A first objection is that importing mathematical concepts into literary study risks flattening textual richness into arid formalism. Ellmann's biographical Joyce, for instance, privileges historical circumstance and personal history over compositional experiment. Yet the Möbius model is not a reduction of the text to geometry; it is an attempt to name a form commensurate with Joyce's own procedures (21-22). As Attridge argues in *Joyce Effects*, formal analysis can show how experimental structures generate new possibilities for ethical and political engagement, rather than foreclosing them (Attridge 123). Topology, in this sense, does not arrive as an external grid. It names a logic already operative in the writing, a way to describe continuity, inversion, and boundary-instability at the level where the novel does its work.

A second objection, from within narratology, holds that existing frameworks already suffice to describe perspective and consciousness. Cohn's *Transparent Minds*, with its distinctions among quoted monologue, narrated monologue, and psycho-narration, remains indispensable (Cohn 14). The issue is not that such taxonomies are wrong; it is that they often presuppose precisely the separations Joyce repeatedly renders unstable: narrator versus character, interior versus exterior, report versus presentation. The Möbius framework does not discard Cohn's categories; it uses them as diagnostic instruments, showing where the text forces those modes into torsion and transforms alternation into continuity. What looks like a shift between discrete techniques becomes, under Möbius reading, a reorientation on a single surface.

A third, more skeptical response suggests that the Möbius figure adds little beyond another metaphor for Joyce's familiar tricks. Kenner's *Joyce's Voices*, including the "Uncle Charles Principle," already supplies a powerful vocabulary for narrative slippage (Kenner 52). Here the difference is methodological ambition. Kenner's figures are brilliantly explanatory, but they remain primarily figurative. The Möbius framework aims to become operational: mapping torsion sites, tracing circuits, and modeling boundary-crossings as procedures that can be applied across

episodes and themes. The goal is not to adorn *Ulysses* with a clever analogy, but to render topology workable as critical method.

A fourth objection comes from historicist perspectives, aligned with Jameson's warning in *Ulysses in History* that formalist reading can detach texts from their material determinations (Jameson 14). On this view, topological description risks abstracting *Ulysses* from the political and cultural transformations that shaped it. Yet the Möbius frame need not isolate form from context. It can specify how Joyce's formal inventions register historical pressures: the destabilization of binaries between inner and outer, self and other, before and after corresponds to broader reconfigurations of time, language, and subjectivity in early twentieth-century Europe. Relativity, Bergsonian accounts of duration, Saussurean linguistics, Freudian models of unconscious life, and Poincaré's work on topology contribute to a climate in which continuity, orientation, and causal sequence become uncertain, and *Ulysses* formalizes that uncertainty as narrative experience. The non-orientable surface is not ahistorical. It is one historically situated response to a shifting epistemic world.

A final objection concerns scope. Can any single model encompass the full range of Joyce's procedures? Lawrence, in *The Odyssey of Style in Ulysses*, emphasizes the novel's stylistic heterogeneity and its resistance to a unifying principle (Lawrence 82). A topological frame may look like one more attempt to impose coherence on a text that thrives on excess. The Möbius approach should not claim exhaustive power. It offers a strong perspective that brings certain dimensions of Joyce's innovation into focus, especially transformation, recursion, and relational continuity, and it can coexist with biographical, historicist, psychoanalytic, and other narratological methods without superseding them.

Taking these objections seriously clarifies both the reach and the limits of the Möbius framework. It is not a master code for *Ulysses* but a generative tool within ongoing debates in narrative theory and modernist studies. Its particular strength lies in its ability to read surface-transformations where earlier paradigms often found only opposition. In that sense, it does not close the book on Joyce; it offers another way to trace the lines of his continuously reorienting form.

8. CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATIONS

In *Ulysses*, the Möbius strip is less a borrowed figure than a native topology: neither allegorical surface nor ornamental afterthought, but the torque in which narrative possibility coils and uncoils. It is not an explanatory schema hovering above the novel, nor a clever analogy set beside it. It names the procedures by which Joyce collapses dialectical opposition into a field of transformation, where distinctions fold and re-fold, blur, and, through revolution rather than resolution, return altered. Joyce's brilliance lies not in erecting interpretive barricades, but in designing a literary object whose surface, traversed long enough, carries the reader from one domain to its apparent opposite without crossing a seam. The text's

notorious “difficulty,” on this view, is less hermeticism than Möbius continuity: a single narrative “side” that repeatedly inverts inside and out.

The implications extend beyond Joycean exegesis. To draw out Möbius logic is to recognize that modernist narrative, at its most radical, refuses the economies of binary thought. Modernism’s much-theorized “difficulty,” fracture, ambiguity, dislocation, reads less as a fetish of opposition than as a demonstration of how opposition dissolves into continuity and returns as recursion. Insofar as *Ulysses* enacts this topological play, it offers not only a Joycean method but a modernist one: a practice of reading that privileges recursive transformation over polarity, process over stasis, torsion over balance.

For Joyce criticism, the Möbius analytic performs several functions at once. It does not merely supply a more “adequate” framework, though it often exceeds the reach of conventional narratology. It marks a methodological shift, urging us to read structure as the generative play of oppositions bending, reversing, and rejoining on a single turning surface. Form ceases to be a ledger of contrasts and becomes a record of their mutual refashioning.

Nor does the Möbius framework remain confined to literary analysis. Its force lies in how it braids textual form with embodied cognition. If *Ulysses* presents narrative as a continuous surface, one that “changes” through perspectival torsion, then reading becomes a cognitive movement, an enactment of the topology it describes. This is where enactive accounts of mind matter: models in which perception, action, and world form mutually implicating surfaces. Joyce anticipates this logic. He builds narrative not as detached representation but as immersive traversal, so that readerly engagement mirrors the book’s continuous reorientation of inside and out.

To invoke the Möbius strip, then, is to propose an analytic rather than a metaphor, one that clarifies the operations of *Ulysses* while reconfiguring the theoretical ground of modernist study. Tracing the Möbius twist from narrative to cognition, from formal experiment to historical condition, yields not a resolution of modernism’s contradictions but a glimpse of their perpetual revolution.

Future research could extend this framework along several lines:

1. Joyce’s other works. *Finnegans Wake* radicalizes Möbius logic, intensifying recursive return through dream-procedure, punning, and multilingual drift.
2. Digital humanities. Computational methods could visualize folds, recursions, and torsion points with a granularity that complements close reading; work such as Louis Armand’s *Technē* opens this terrain, and Möbius analysis sharpens its stakes.
3. Comparative modernism and postmodernism. Woolf, Proust, Kafka, Calvino, Pynchon, and David Foster Wallace offer distinct variants of topological form that bend voice, time, and space into non-orientable surfaces.

4. Cognitive narratology. Work by Marco Caracciolo and David Herman provides tools for describing how readers track and inhabit continuous narrative transformation, including the felt problem of a story that never yields an “outside.”
5. Ethical and political implications. Marian Eide’s *Ethical Joyce* points toward the stakes of Joyce’s refusal of binary thought; the Möbius model extends this by showing how formal innovation can generate ethical and political relationality, where identity is reversible and responsibility recursive.

In the end, the Möbius strip stands not only as an analytic instrument but as an emblem of Joyce’s central project: to reshape narrative by revealing the continuity that underlies apparently opposed domains of thought and perception. By building a text out of continuous transformation rather than binary opposition, *Ulysses* remains a novel that, more than a century on, still unsettles and remakes our notions of narrative, consciousness, and identity. No matter how long we follow its turn, its surface never quite allows us to say which side we are on.

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