

**When the Gaps Matter:
A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man by James Joyce Vs. The Town of N by Leonid
Dobychin**

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The paper presents the results of a comprehensive comparative analysis of the two novels -- A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man by James Joyce and The Town of N by Leonid Dobychin -- that belong to the genre of Bildungsroman and share thematic elements and stylistic features while differ sharply in narrative techniques. The theoretical basis of the analysis is the contributions to the concept of Gaps advanced by Lubomir Doležel and Wolfgang Iser with the Generative Narratology Framework (Timofeev, 2015) serving as a bridge between the theories. The Framework that views narrative as a cognitive process aligns well with this by emphasizing how readers cognitively fill gaps through inference and meaning-making. It serves as a synthesis of Doležel's ontological emphasis and Iser's interpretive focus by treating gaps as both structural features of narratives (Doležel) and triggers for cognitive engagement (Iser). It models both the creation of the narrative worlds of the analyzed novels (aligned with Doležel's possible-worlds theory) and their reception or reconstruction by the readers (agreed with Iser's phenomenological approach).

James Joyce's novel was first released in 1917 and Dobychin published his novel 18 years later, The Town N might be nothing but a second-hand acquaintance since Dobychin had no command of English. The similarities of the two novels are striking. These include the blurred physical vision of both protagonists of the novels as central metaphors. Stephen's shortsightedness is known to the reader from the very start of the novel and helps to reveal the character's perception and artistic development in several ways while in The Town N the same device works retrospectively. The reader learns about the narrator's shortsightedness only in the last chapter of the novel and thus has to fill in lots of the gaps the author has set up throughout the text. Everything that Joyce's reader comprehends simultaneously with Stephen in his quest for identity including Isolation from others, Limited perception, Awakening of sensuality, and Artistic vision, becomes available to the reader of Dobychin's novel only retroactively. And only on condition that the reader treats the gaps as intentional devices and is ready to get into the game while the Generative Narratology Framework will accompany the reader along the entire routes of both novels.