

Title: The Tale of Two Cities: Myopic Vision in Leonid Dobychin's *The Town of N* and James Joyce's *Dubliners*

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There has thus far been little critical attention paid to Leonid Dobychin's work although he appears to be an emerging literary figure that is currently being rediscovered (Borden, V.S. Bakhtin, Erofyev). While Dobychin's place in Russian modernism is under examination, both Borden and Bakhtin have suggested preliminary connections between Dobychin and James Joyce. In the *Town of N*, Dobychin's young boy narrator is reminiscent of Joyce's narrators in the first three stories of *Dubliners*, "The Sisters," "An Encounter," and "Araby." However, Dobychin expands Joyce's narrative techniques, by further developing an unadulterated childlike perspective through which the narrator views society. While there is a marked difference in the manner in which these narrators tell their tales, ultimately their perspectives betray an idealization of childhood. The goal of the present paper is to examine the impetus behind this idealization, which reveals a fear of initiation into adulthood and, in turn, an aversion to the "real" world.

I will argue that the narrators' perspectives are built upon a metaphorical blindness that allows them to misunderstand and misrepresent the world so as to remain separate from the decay and degradation that surrounds them, particularly in the realm of sexuality. Their myopic vision permits them to remain entrenched in childhood, and to retreat to the worlds of their own creation, instead of fully participating in the societies in which they are living. This reluctance lends itself to a pointed commentary on the pervasive corruption, itself a creation of the adults, of Dobychin's fictional town of N and Joyce's Dublin.