

## SHARED PERSPECTIVES OF SPIRITUAL BLINDNESS AND DEADNESS IN D.H. LAWRENCE'S *THE BLIND MAN* AND JAMES JOYCE'S *THE DEAD*.

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**Abstract:** Modernist literature frequently explores themes of psychological and emotional stagnation, reflecting the anxieties of an era marked by rapid social and cultural change. However, while much research has examined individual portrayals of alienation and existential paralysis in modernist fiction, fewer studies have investigated how different authors employ distinct metaphors—such as death and blindness—to critique the limitations of human perception and emotional growth. Addressing this gap, this study conducts a comparative qualitative analysis of James Joyce's *The Dead* and D.H. Lawrence's *The Blind Man* to explore their shared theme of spiritual deadness and its implications for human relationships and self-awareness. This study seeks to answer the following research questions: (1) How do Joyce and Lawrence use the motifs of death and blindness, respectively, to represent spiritual deadness? (2) In what ways do both texts offer moments of reversal, where the dead regain life and the blind acquire a form of sight? (3) How do these literary representations critique modern life and its failure to provide genuine emotional or spiritual fulfillment? Through a comparative interpretive analysis, this study closely examines the protagonists' internal and external worlds, demonstrating how Joyce and Lawrence not only depict spiritual paralysis but also introduce dimensions of renewal. By exploring the tensions between spiritual deadness and aliveness, this research highlights how both authors expose the limitations of modern existence, where seemingly living and sighted individuals struggle to achieve true emotional or spiritual awakening.

*Keywords: Spiritual Deadness/ Blindness, Spiritual Sightedness/Aliveness, Joyce's The Dead-Lawrence's The Blind Man-Human Limitations*

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## 1. Introduction

James Joyce and D.H. Lawrence, two prominent modernist literary writers, are often renowned for their deep psychological insight and complex portrayals of human relationships. In *The Dead* (1914), the final story in Joyce's short story anthology *Dubliners*, the protagonist Gabriel Conroy undergoes a moment of profound self-awareness, through which he exposes, encounters and defies his spiritual deadness, unfolding mainly via the emotional and spiritual distance between himself and Gretta, his wife. The story, therefore, highlights his, and other characters', spiritual paralysis, emotional numbness and disconnection from human experience. Similarly, in *The Blind Man* (1922) –a short story from Lawrence's anthology *England, My England*— Lawrence depicts the internal and external struggles of the blind protagonist, Maurice Pervin, in front of both his physical limitations and his wife, Isabel's spiritual blindness. Both stories highlight spiritual stagnation as a central theme, portraying their protagonists' inability to truly connect with others and/or with themselves on a deeper emotional or spiritual level.

Modernist literature often addresses themes of spiritual deadness and existential paralysis, yet little comparative research has examined how James Joyce's *The Dead* and D.H. Lawrence's *The Blind Man* use death and blindness as metaphors to convey the same idea as far as these themes are concerned. While these symbols traditionally signify limitation, both authors introduce moments that challenge these states, suggesting the possibility of renewal and elevated consciousness. In addition, both authors portray physical disability/bodily paralysis as an incentive to achieve deeper insights, and not a barrier against it. This study addresses the gap by analysing how the Modernists Joyce and Lawrence depict spiritual stagnation, offering new insights into modernist critiques of human perception and emotional fulfillment.

The significance of the present study appears as it provides a comparative approach to how James Joyce and D.H. Lawrence symbolically use 'death' and 'blindness' to represent spiritual awareness/obliviousness through their works under discussion. These themes have often been analysed separately; consequently, their interrelation remains underexplored. By investigating how these authors equally denounce human paralysed perception and emotional stagnation, this research provides insight to understanding modernist representations of consciousness and existential struggle, revealing the complexities of human experience in early 20th-century literature.

Spiritual deadness and existential paralysis in Modernist literature have gained extensive interest by different scholars; many, therefore, have approached these tropes in James Joyce's *The Dead* and D.H. Lawrence's *The Blind Man*. Studies on Joyce, such as those by Kenner (1956), Schilder (1961), and Norris (2020), investigate how death symbolises not only emotional repression and cultural stagnation but also –and surprisingly— spiritual insight through actually dead people. Similarly, other critics like Makepeace (2022), Clausson (2007), and Salter (2013) explore Lawrence's depiction of blindness as both *a limitation* and *a means* of a more profound perception. Nevertheless, few comparative studies examine how both authors use these motifs to contrast *spiritual stagnation* with moments of *spiritual insight*. This study, hence, probes that gap by investigating the interplay between death, blindness, and human consciousness as it displays through both texts.

The present piece of research is conducted to analyse the way in which James Joyce and D.H. Lawrence use death and blindness as metaphors for spiritual deadness in their works *The Dead* and *The Blind Man*. This study also serves the objective of exploring how both authors, challenge these traditional representations by introducing moments of renewal, inner wisdom and heightened perception; and simultaneously aims to examine how these

expositions, operates as a critique of modern life that lacks such values as human perception and emotional fulfillment.

This study aims to present a comparative understanding of how Modernist literature both portrays spiritual paralysis and suggests avenues for development and promise of renewal. By analysing the portrayal of deadness and blindness in these two works, it seeks to develop a deeper awareness of perception, consciousness, and emotional stagnation in the Modern-era fiction.

The core idea of the research leads to adopting a qualitative, comparative, and interpretive approach to analyze James Joyce's *The Dead* and D.H. Lawrence's *The Blind Man*. Using comparative literary analysis, it examines how death and blindness function as metaphors for spiritual deadness and reawakening. A close reading and a reflective rereading of both texts will focus on interpreting ways of character development, along with reference to symbolism and thematic concerns. A contextual analysis, on the other hand, will explore their validity within these two works as key texts of Modernist literature that critique moral perception, emotional stagnation, and existential turmoil.

## **2. Overlap Point Between *Spiritual Deadness* and *Spiritual Blindness***

According to philosophers and scholars like Jean-Paul Sartre, in his celebrated seminal work *Being and Nothingness* (2003, p. 5-7), *spiritual deadness* refers to a state of profound emotional or existential numbness; a detachment from deeper meanings and purposes of life, often manifested in the form of a sense of apathy, disinterest, or indifference toward one's own personal growth, social relationships, or broader life purpose. Within this framework, 'spiritual' diverges from the religious sense of the term, and refers more to secular aspects; namely individuals' sense of inner stability and connection to the world around them.

*Spiritual blindness* is defined as the inability or refusal to perceive, understand, or recognize truths or insights about the moral and ethical dimensions of life, hindering personal growth and achieving meaningful relationship with the others. Philosophers like Maurice Merleau-Ponty (1974, p. 240), in his 'Phenomenology of Perception', tackles how human perception shapes their understanding of reality. Herbert Marcuse (1994, PP. xv; xiv; 59-127) in 'One-Dimensional Man' discusses how modern individuals are blind to their social and emotional alienation and disconnection. A disconnection from one's inner sense of meaning or moral and ethical compass; this is what leads to mental and emotional distress and loss of trust and personal relationships, and ultimately to societal decay and ruination; a critical theme that enjoys a great emphasis in all the domains including the literary realm.

Lev Vygotsky (1978, pp. 24-30), on his part, in *Mind in Society: The Development of Higher Psychological Processes*, tackles the theme of spiritual blindness from a cognitive perspective, based on a more causal nexus, while he figures out the role of social interactions along with given cultural and historical contexts in shaping one's consciousness, or else, blindness to alternative ways of thinking or being. Martin Heidegger in his *Being and Time* (2008, p. 335) discusses how individuals often live in ways that lack authenticity by focusing on routines and superficial concerns; the fact that leads to a lack of involvement with the deeper aspects of life.

The intersection between spiritual deadness and blindness rests in the fact that they are both states that represent disconnection from the deeper aspects of life. They both reflect lack of spiritual awareness, vitality, or connection. The overlap point between these two states hence occurs when a person's lack of awareness leads them to live in a state of spiritual or emotional apathy or detachment. It occurs when the inability to perceive spiritual truth

(blindness) leads to a lack of spiritual life or vitality (deadness) that eventually results in disillusionment and absence of vitality in one's spiritual or emotional life.

In other words, the inability or refusal to recognize deeper truths triggers lack of awareness, and this—in turn—leads to personal and social stagnation and numbness. The lack of awareness or insight to recognize one's condition (the blindness) contributes directly to the deadness. Together, they constitute a cycle where the failure to recognize or understand spiritual truths results in a diminished spiritual life, and—vice versa as—this lack of spiritual vitality further obscures those truths.

Given this outcome, being spiritually blind is inevitably being spiritually dead. Therefore, it stands to reason that both Lawrence and Joyce deal with the two aspects interchangeably.

### **3. Converging Views on Spiritual Deadness and Blindness in Joyce's *The Dead* and Lawrence's *The Blind Man***

In spite of their distinct individual styles and approaches—through their short stories—Lawrence and Joyce express similar views regarding the theme of spiritual deadness and blindness. Each puts forward such perspectives that become more similar as the reader gradually encounters a shared common ground on which these two conceptions land, that reflect a mutual agreement between the two writers as far as this theme is concerned.

*The Blind Man* implies how normal /ordinary people may indeed be emotionally blind; blind because of their indifference, their incapacity to feel what other people feel and to experience their pain and even their happiness only through their feelings. The story demonstrates that all people may be blind because they are insightful. Pervin, the blind man and protagonist in Joyce's story, is—on the other hand—represented as a highly perceptive individual because his intuitive and perceptive insight is much elevated.

The short story *The Dead* by D.H. Lawrence conveys that not all living people are alive in the same way that not all dead people are actually dead. A good illustration is applied by Lawrence through Michael Furey. Furey has died for many years, he is nevertheless still living in the heart and mind of Gretta, Gabriel Conroy's wife, as she reminisces about his past actions, his true and sincere love, and his pure, strong and genuine feelings.

Unspoken gaps dominate the two texts. Trying to fill them up, the reader could only come up to the notion that *physical blindness* equals *literal death* and that *spiritual blindness* signifies *spiritual deadness*. Both Lawrence's and Joyce's characters display signs of disengagement, whether from inner meaning (deadness) or from the ability to perceive or interact with that meaning (blindness). Besides, both stories handle a paradoxical notion that—at the surface—seems wrong, absurd or impossible, but one that is actually rational, valid, serious and very significant. The two literary works put human internal and external faculties in a juxtaposition to create tension and irony, with the purpose of exploring deeper meaning. In this sense, Pervin's blindness makes him the most powerful and Furey's death makes him the strongest.

Seen as invalid by all the others, for being visually impaired, Maurice proves to be in no one else's need. He has promoted and elevated all his senses and has really succeeded in making them exceed all those of his acquaintances, and gains therefore spiritual and emotional superiority over them.

Not very distinct is the case of Michael Furey in *The Dead*, who although physically dead, he keeps on to be spiritually alive, i.e., spiritually superior.

The dead Furey's passion predominates the story. His profound passion and intense willingness to die for love testify his heroism and martyrdom. This is the underlying cause that his memory nests deep in Gretta's mind and heart. While all the characters in the story are living with the aim of accumulating wealth, celebrating and merrymaking, Furey has died to keep living in another person's heart.

Memories about glorified or significant people in our lives, not only become nostalgic and idealized but they also begin to keep living with us in the present. The power that dead people have is much greater than that of those living, a power that enables them to be always present. The dead have a remarkable impact on the living that the living themselves could not have on one another. Gabriel witnesses and acknowledges this in his saying "in gatherings such as this we shall still speak of them with pride and affection, still cherish in our hearts the memory of those dead and gone, great ones whose fame the world will not willing let die" (Joyce, 1914, P. 201).

Michael Furey who appears in Gretta's life for a very brief period and this happened a long time ago, yet Gretta perceives of him the most significant person ever, for he could offer her the purest form of love that neither her husband Gabriel, nor any other living could have ever done.

Furey's materiality of soul could compensate for his immaterial (unphysical) body (as he is now a dead person). Although, he is disembodied, for he is actually dead for a period of time, his soul persists to survive and flourish through Gretta's recognition and commemoration of him, of his actions and mainly his profound incomparable love to her. What happens with Gretta is not as absurd or unreasonable as it may seem; Hodge (2017, p. 26) strongly argues that dead loved people are still alive, they are just not physically present, as long as we recall them. As death gains an abstract force, Furey—as well as the other dead in the story—is therefore more alive than the living themselves, and Pervin is more clear-sighted than the other sighted characters in *The Blind Man*. Isabel's relationship with Pervin is marked by a lack of true emotional communication and her passive acceptance of his condition reflects—not only her selfishness, but also-- her spiritual stagnation.

On his part, Tony Walter (2017, p. 15) raises a serious question in accordance with how the dead could survive even after their physical/biological death. He, then, puts forward three major possibilities for the continuity of survival for them: (1) the dead become ancestor, (2) they become immortal and (3) they survive in the memories of the living. This seems too genuine and unquestionable as it appears through all the deceased in James Joyce's *The Dead*. Conroy's dead relatives (his grandfathers and his uncle) are portrayed as unfading and their existence as impressive, for their great actions and their significance in other people's lives. They serve as *monumental ancestors* who have not handed down only their name to their grandchildren, but also cultural—and other moral and spiritual-- values. They are immortal because their achievements and their contributions to other people's success are unforgettable and everlasting. This is the reason that makes the spiritually immortal Furey's love memorable. His genuine passion survives in the memories of Gabriel's wife, Gretta Conroy. Even though dead, he keeps and maintains his power over her; he asserts noticeable influence on her emotions, an influence that Gabriel—even as a living man—could not have on her, a power that he could not gain on her emotions. The power that he has on her love stands on that pure image of him that would never change through time as he is already dead. Since he is already dead, she can never change her views about him; she will always have this fixed, beautiful and monument-like image she has conceived of him, thus he will always stay a good memory for her. Furey is still existing in the strong love and emotions that Gretta still holds to him. He is alive in every single vein that carries blood to all parts of her body.

In the same way is Gabriel's grandfather, Patrick Morcan, alive in the speeches delivered in his honour at different occasions. His mention in the story is brief but very worthwhile and relevant as it alludes to the notion discussed earlier. This character's existence--in the past-- is relatively contributing in shaping the other characters' present. His and other dead characters' existence mark them with pride, honour and dominant presence that the *still-living characters* use as a strengthening force to move forward.

In an attempt to transcend the literal meaning, Joyce puts death in broader frames. He explores all its different implications, be they social, cultural, emotional or even psychological. All dead people in *The Dead* are portrayed as having escaped from existential absurdity of life though their lives were more meaningful than the others' as they all marked their lives with a noble character and refine and unforgettable deeds.

Their deeds, and their wisdom indeed reverend them; the living's veneration of their dead ancestors appears in remembering them and talking about them with respect, esteem and affection (Walter, 2017, p. 15). Gabriel also still holds memories about his late mother and considers her the principal cause of his achievements. Every step he has taken, indeed every word he utters, is attributed to her, to her support to him; his mother keeps on alive in and through the speeches he usually delivers in public. All the other characters recognize Gabriel Conroy as a good orator, and he believes that a great part of this success is and should be ascribed to her, in this vein, his deceased mother is keeping surviving in him. The souls of those dead --though symbolically, they--exist in these characters' real world. A symbolic paradigm grows within the gap that is supposed to exist between the survivors' actual world and the dead's possible world (Kundu, 2015, p. 12). Gabriel Conroy is jealous of the dead Michael Furey --and hence wishes to be at his place, to occupy the same place in the heart of his wife, Gretta, especially because their relationship, as a husband and wife, is characterized by ultimate spiritual deadness.

Gabriel Conroy could not engage with the world and people around him; he fails to establish or maintain social interaction in spite of his social status, his position, and above all, his eloquence. Hence, he is--as it is the case with all the Dubliners of his time--no longer perceived as a viable social agent. Conroy and the other *living* in *The Dead* are *socially dead*. Death referred to in the story implies the emotional disconnection of the characters, along with their lack of self-awareness, and their unconsciousness of the deeper concepts of life. All the characters in *The Dead* are represented as passive and as surviving lives of routines and superficiality. Distrust and social disconnection are reciprocal feelings that govern him and the other characters alike. "..., and he had a sudden, strange feeling of being old and tired, like someone who had been dead for a long time" (Joyce, 1914, p. 221). This is real, notwithstanding; he has actually been dead for a long time, since the time moral values died in him and vanished from society as a whole.

Joyce refers to the living people of post-war generation as surviving a thought-tormented age (Lawrence, 1922, p. 221). He denounces immorality and the uselessness to live without any passion. Through the insignificant living characters, he refers to all the living Dubliners of that time; to their emotional deadness, and their paralysis as many critiques assert. In this light, many researchers and critics (Hugh Kenner (1956), William H. Schilder (1961), Sean Latham (2004) and Margot Norris (2020)) raised the theme of paralysis in after-war Dublin by tackling James Joyce's anthology *Dubliners* (1914).

Morally paralysed, this is how Joyce comes to depict the Dubliners surviving the first world war aftereffects. Living without such virtues like morality and passion reflects the uselessness of life of people living in Dublin at that time. As they all feel insecure and socially awkward, they all lose feelings of passion and true love.

Though their bodies continue to exhibit signs of life, people who are still in life may be regarded as more dead than the dead themselves; they are in a state that is in some sense similar to PVS people. A persistent Vegetative state (PVS) occurs when after a coma, a patient loses cognition and can only perform certain involuntary actions on his or her own. Hodge (2017). Post World War Dubliners are biologically still alive, but they are socially and emotionally inaccessible; they are socially and emotionally *dead*.

From this perspective, Joyce conceives of the post-war Dubliner survivors as not much different from PVS patients, and therefore, he questions their very character of numbness, as they have lost the capacity and passion to pursue true love and compassion towards one another. The theme of paralysis (of post-war English people in general) therefore creeps into James Joyce's stories, most straightforward of which is the story *The Dead*, as the title itself suggests. Spiritual numbness prevails clearly in Joyce's characters, and it is most presented through their indifference towards one another, and is mostly symbolized by the snow covering every single spot in the town. The snow covering the entire town represents the frozen numb and paralysed life that pervades –not only Gabriel's existence but also the entire society.

Yes, the newspapers were right: snow was general all over Ireland. It was falling softly upon the Bog of Allen and, further westwards, softly falling into the dark mutinous Shannon waves. It was falling too upon every part of the lonely churchyard where Michael Furey lay buried. It lay thickly drifted on the crooked crosses and headstones, on the spears of the little gate, on the barren thorns. His soul swooned slowly as he heard the snow falling faintly through the universe and faintly falling, like the descent of their last end, upon all the living and the dead. (Joyce, 1914, p. 221)

The title 'The Dead' refers to early 20<sup>th</sup> century survivors' emotional death, in addition to their rigid attitudes and inability to change. Therefore, the living characters in *The Dead* are portrayed as *living dead*, on the other hand, the dead are introduced as *dead living* who live *in* and *through* us, for their great deeds, sacrificial acts and emotional intensity.

In this sense, Joyce –and along the whole story—keeps making an analogy between the actual world of the survivors and that of the dead, whereby he strongly argues and confirms that the dead submit themselves in this existential world in such paradoxical way; everything is represented paradoxically in the story; everything seems strange as life indeed is. The concept of death in the short story *The Dead* appears to transcend and even to contradict what and how dictionaries and/or scholars define it. Death no longer represents or depicts the state of being not alive, lifeless, powerless, and so on. Joyce overloads the concept of death with new meanings; being passionless and indifferent indicate a person's deadness; the actual death of a person, then, does not always signify their ends and vice versa, i.e., not all the dead people are really dead, in the same sense that, not all the living people are really alive. It is thus one's deeds and actions, achievements and contributions, involvement and commitments that label and categorise them as whether belonging to the living-dead or the dead-living.

The minute they have left their responsibilities behind and ignore the consequences of their actions, all the characters in *The Dead* have become members of the living-dead group. The employment of Furey in *The Dead* is a crucial reference to honorable death. In a time where people –more particularly in Dublin—get bereft of all feelings of passion and devotion, Furey could firmly hold this true and incomparable love to another person, Gretta. Dying of selfless love conveys his spiritual devotion. Gretta sanctifies his emotional commitment to her as she recalls him standing in a cold night in the rain waiting for her –only to confess his love to her—and his death thereafter (because of pneumonia caught by the unbearable cold

outside). Inasmuch as he has died of emotional sacrifice, his death is conceived of as honorable, venerated, a martyr-like death. This is, in fact, what makes his existence everlasting in Greta's memory, despite her rejection of him and of his love before he dies.

In exactly the same way, blindness –too–can be either physical or spiritual; it is as Ribicki, Jastrzebski, and McNeil (2020, p. 2) claim, a matter of ascribing the internal emotional and spiritual senses to 'the inner self' and associating the physical senses to 'the outer self'. It depends on the extent to which an individual can be spiritual and emotional, to what extent the person can use their body senses to internally and emotionally understand the world around them. Immaterial intellectual cognition is a key concept here, and it is obtained by those who could evolve their bodily senses and transform them into spiritual senses, i.e., only by those who are sensual and intuitively aware. According to Aristotle, because of its immaterial nature, the sense of vision is the most superior of all the other senses; for this makes it closest to immaterial intellectual awareness. D.H. Lawrence, however, depicts eyesight as the least sensual of all the senses, since all sighted characters do not use *their sense of sight* to explore the abstract world of cognition (the spiritual and emotional one), while the blind Pervin is the only one who succeeds to have access to this world. On the whole, being blind or not, alive or dead, it is all a matter of either strength or deficiency of human perception.

Many passages from *The Blind Man* introduce the theme of blindness in a metaphorical way to explore the spiritual/emotional limitations of the characters. The story *The Blind Man* is one that conveys symbolic blindness. The title, along with the employment of a physically blind character, Maurice Pervin, seem to be, to a great extent, ironic, especially because Pervin is the only one to affirm one's competence of the world around him. This literary piece hence juxtaposes physical blindness with emotional/psychological blindness. Isabel's symbolic blindness rests in her inability to truly *see* the emotional and psychological needs of her husband, Maurice. Her spiritual deadness emerges not from intellectual detachment with all those around her, as in Gabriel's case in *The Dead*, but from a profound inability to connect with Maurice Pervin as he gets wounded in his eyes and become blind ever after—as he was conscripted into the war (1<sup>st</sup> WW).

Isabel starts to perceive him a heavy burden, a black misery as Lawrence clearly states in the narrative (Lawrence, 1922, p. 81). She even starts to exhibit unjustified fear of him as a disfigured man, representing, hence, a different kind of spiritual deadness.

As a matter of fact, all the characters exhibit symbolic blindness through their being inapt to profoundly perceive and understand one another. They all demonstrate moral failure and spiritual emptiness. People lose the essence of reciprocal interaction; their blindness rest in their state of being unfulfilled, and emotionally, relationally and socially disconnected.

In no way can the reader dismiss the social isolation that physical blindness creates for Pervin. Nonetheless, and as a blind man who is enveloped within his dark world, he gets indulged in a self-discovery journey, that none of the non-disabled could experience while failing to gain deep understanding of themselves and of those whom they love.

Cambridge dictionary defines 'blindness' as the fact of not being conscious of something or of refusing to notice something that is obvious to others (Cambridge University Press and Assessment 2024). It refers to the inability to recognize some truths. Ribicki, Jastrzebski, and McNeil (2020, p. 2) mention a number of different conceptions of *blindness* according to different philosophers; as far as Plato is concerned, blindness refers to the inability to perceive spiritual realities, and to distinguish between existence and nonexistence; Epictetus considers as blind one who fails to know who he/she is and why he/she does exist, missing the ability to differentiate between good and bad, too. In this sense, all the characters



in Lawrence's story –except Maurice Pervin, the blind man himself—are blind to their ethical responsibilities and other truths. Pervin is really physically vulnerable and disconnected from the others, he is able to *feel* the others more than they could feel one another, nonetheless.

Although Pervin does not intend it, he finds himself gifted with a heightened and rich experience of the senses. He thrives at promoting his entire process of perception and his mind's cognitive activities, and above all at making optimal use of all his bodily senses, succeeding –by that—to make his sensual cognition the most efficient of all. *Eyes of the spirit*, this is what Pervin acquires through the dark years of his visual impairment, and this is what Isabel, his wife, and the others are actually lacking; in a word, Maurice's body becomes superior to his mind. For example, although Isabel never confesses to him (or does anything that may allude to the fact) that has grown weary of being around him, he could distinctively feel her emotional rejection through his promoted senses. The blind man gains a visionary insight into the emotional and psychological states of others; a *third eye* that enables an access to their inner lives and emotional depth.

The most appealing distinction in *The Blind Man* is however between Maurice Pervin and Bertie (his wife's relative). The two men convey two contrastive extremities. The author declares it straightforwardly in "Maurice Pervin was different ... so he was just the opposite to Bertie" (Lawrence, 1922, p. 82).

Maurice is –said to be by critics, like Leavis (1955, p. 80) among many others—one who possesses a high-blood consciousness, whose quick and acute feelings redress his mental deficiency. By contrast, Bertie owns a high mental consciousness with a mind much swifter than emotions. Blood-consciousness is truer, more profound and genuine than mental consciousness. Isabel herself admires her blind man's certainty and self-confidence revealed through his solid and certain steps while walking alone. She is quite conscious of *the clever contact* of his feet with the earth. She esteems his intimate relationship with nature and values how he quickly and confidently adapts to the new situation of visual disability he finds himself suddenly encountering. "She could feel the clever careful, strong contact of his feet with the earth, as she balanced against him. For a moment, he was a tower of darkness to her, as if he rose out of the earth" (Lawrence, 1922, p. 90). A *tower of darkness* that seems to rise out of the ground; while referring to her blind man's certain steps –as he moves—Isabel conceives him as growing from earth, part of the earth and nature. *Nature* is a key term here as it reflects Maurice's natural intuition that makes him different, unique. This absolute immediacy of blood-contact with the tangible world extremely gratifies him, it makes him forget, indeed refuses any engagement of visual perception. "So long as he kept this sheer immediacy of blood contact with the substantial world he was happy, he wanted no intervention of visual consciousness (Lawrence, 1922, p. 92). Maurice Pervin is exploring this life anew via his blood-consciousness, through blood contact alone, and he is convinced that this is the most genuine way of dealing with it, of understanding it.

His blood consciousness covers/compensates for his absence of mental consciousness; in losing one single physical organ, the blind man promotes all the remained organs. Lawrence gives cues to this, as when he refers to the conspicuous largeness of his hands, describing them as large, reddish, and most attractive of all, as intelligent (p. 90). Lawrence also depicts his Maurice's hearing as being *too much sharpened* (p. 92). His high intuition and his spiritual instinct also find room in Lawrence's depiction in "*he seemed to be listening to fate*" (Lawrence, 1922, p. 92). Maurice has a direct and strong connection with the unconscious life. This is what differentiates him from Isabel and Bertie, and from the whole world.

Makepeace (2022, p. 1) excellently explores those tropes used by Lawrence, in his story 'The Blind Man', and states that the metaphor of *seeing* gains the meaning of *knowing* if alternative sensory systems and channels are used. Pervin learns to cope with his visual limitations. Grappled with his physical blindness, he does not surrender, and on the contrary, he helps himself undergo an internal transformation, through which a new way of seeing the external world and exploring life is opened before him.

He could achieve this while reconciling himself with nature; Maurice indeed finds refuge in nature, he discovers a welcoming embrace in nature which has endowed him with new skills (especially at domestic work). From a soldier who holds arms and fights in such a great war as the first world war – to which he has been conscripted— to domestic works on his own farm; this is how and where Maurice finds consolation and sanctuary. Feeling unwanted, he starts searching for other options to cope with his social exile. It is in that serene farm where he starts living, in the world he has created for himself; it is there where he tends to his animals as well as *sharpens his senses*. Maurice Pervin gets advantage of the days he spends alone on the farm by training himself on using all his senses to provide for himself and his animals as well. The blind Pervin succeeds at achieving self-sufficiency and managing his life and needs –in addition to more difficult tasks— independently and despite his visual disability. It is rather significant to mention here that despite his detachment from the others (mainly his wife), he still never fails to care for her, to emotionally feel her; which is entirely the opposite with the other characters in both stories; who voluntarily disconnect themselves from their dearest and from the entire society never caring for or supporting one another.

Most human sensual cognition is decayed and dysfunctional. Ribicki, Jastrzebski, and McNeil (2020, p. 7) believe that this dysfunction of the spiritual senses is the source of human unhappiness as it creates a multifaceted disharmony in the human being. As a result of this dysfunction, the individual feels a lack in their person, and therefore, fails to feel *a whole*. It is also important to mention here –and as declared by Ribicki, Jastrzebski, and McNeil (2020) -- that the spiritual dysfunction negatively affects one's bodily/physical senses.

Through the new perspectives given to death by Joyce, the surviving characters (mainly Gabriel Conroy, the protagonist) thrive to experience crucial turning points, by putting their morality into question and reassess their past actions and decisions. Extolling the *pivotal* dead Furey, Gretta helps prompt an extreme change in the behavior of the *insignificant* Conroy.

The author Joyce playfully and repeatedly refers to literal death of the deceased characters (like Gabriel Conroy's mother, uncle and grandfathers; family friends and relatives; and Michael Furey). Probing more deliberately the theme of death in *The Dead*, one is not likely to fail to notice the author's portrayal of a more profound, emotional and spiritual meaning of the concept of death. Deceased people who have died and left significant impact on the living continue to be present with them, and shape their present and mainly *their future*, as well. For example, once learning of the great Furey, and realizing his own sense of unfulfillment and his social and emotional disconnection, Conroy starts to question the reality of his own life, his choices and relations. Although he has never known or met him while alive, Furey –after his death, and rather accidentally than intentionally—contributes in reshaping Conroy's present. Conroy, through the story of Furey, starts to grasp the authentic meaning of life, and to realise the best path for one's fulfillment and for making one's desires, needs and expectations well met. Being knowledgeable of his wife's ex-lover's meaningful deadness evokes Conroy's epiphany to appear, causing his personal growth to increase. This has been a key moment for the beginning of his central transformation. His epiphany rests in his sudden realization that he has been all his life short-sighted in many aspects; his ignorance of his wife's desires, experiences and encounters, his shortcomings in relationships with women, besides his ungratefulness to his native land.

In this vein, Joyce and Lawrence allow the concepts of death and blindness to go further than its physical dimensions and to gain new meanings and perspectives. They inverse death and blindness with life and sightedness respectively. We, as readers, are made to grasp that dying as a martyr is far better and loftier than living as an idle, and that being physically blind, or visually impaired but insightful is much better than being physically sighted but spiritually and morally sightless.

All the characters –in *The Blind Man* and *The dead* (except Pervin and Furey and the other dead people) –are unable to perceive, understand or connect with life with its deeper aspects. They all mirror ignorance of spiritual truths and emotional principles, they are all in a state of lack of awareness of themselves and of the profound meaning of life. Existential disorientation –in accordance with one's place in the world and one's sense of self— seems to pervade their lives. Both stories fit well what researchers like Bauman (2000), Marcuse (1964) and Richins (2017) think of the individual who –because of focusing solely on material and worldly concerns—becomes ignorant and deprived of recognizing and embracing spiritual growth and enlightenment.

In *The Dead*, Joyce indirectly focuses on the dead Michael Furey through the lot of reference to his living adversary, Gabriel Conroy. Conroy does not gain the readers' most interest and admiration because his outward success as a well-travelled, educated man veils an inner void and spiritual disconnection from all those around him, mainly his wife, Gretta. Gabriel's ignorance of her deeper emotional life –especially her emotional response to the memory of her dead lover, Michael Furey--illustrates his spiritual isolation. His coldness toward the people present at the party (the Annual Epiphany Party hosted by his two aunts Kate and Julia) also alludes to his spiritual deadness. Gabriel also shows tendency to distance himself from Irish nationalism, which is one of the few communal ideologies in the story that offers emotional meaning. Therefore, Gabriel has failed to live a fully engaged, meaningful life, both at the level of his own personal relationships and his broader understanding of life and death.

Gabriel does not realise his spiritual deadness till the end of the story, where he contemplates death and the futility of human life. Realizing his deadness, he relieves his life as a gallery of motionless scenes. "He had never felt like that himself. He had never felt like that. The thoughts of his own dead had driven him to this. His life seemed to have become a series of frozen images, shadows of the past" (Joyce, 1914: 190). It is as long as this that the human being's life is characterized by intellectual and emotional superficiality, that their life is characterised by detachment from authentic experience; Joyce delays Gabriel Conroy's epiphany that long to claim that life reflects inherent spiritual emptiness all along modern existence.

A common implied message is very likely to be interwoven beneath the two stories' lines; which is that one has to contemplate one's life, by reflecting deeply on their experiences, choices and purposes. Past, present and future, all should be thoughtfully and thoroughly reconsidered. for instance, Gabriel Conroy does not achieve a sense of existential awareness until the end of the story, when he gets informed of his wife's love of another man. It is only then that he discovers the emotional reality of his relationship with her. It is only then that he encounters a moment of self-realization –in spite of his deep grief, hopelessness and disappointment, and it is only at that moment that he feels –and for the first time—spiritually alive.

Spiritual and emotional blindness is explored through the characters' decayed relationship and even through their personal or internal conflicts. A good example is that of Isabel's inability to recognize who is present with her on the farm while in total darkness.

This emphasizes Isabel's emotional unawareness and lack of true understanding of the *very person* of Maurice, her husband. Although he has been physically close to her, her spiritual blindness makes her very distant and disconnect from him. She is emotionally and spiritually unable to perceive deeper truths around her. In this light Pang, et al. (2020: 211) confirms that blind people are superior to the sighted in terms of certain cognitive functions like, voice recognition and so on.

As far as she is concerned, Isabel has considered Maurice Pervin a disabled, a handicapped, and a burden since he has been blinded. She, however, recognises her being herself blind as she could not realise his being very close to her in absolute darkness on the farm while he can easily recognize her, can feel her with his refine senses. This allows her—in exactly the same way as Gabriel Conroy in *The Dead*--to experience an epiphany, seriously reconsider their relationship as a married couple and to ponder her duties towards him, as well as question the extent of her devotion as a wife.

With regard to narrative technique, both authors use inner voice and psychological depth to convey their characters' spiritual deadness. Joyce counts primarily on his technique of stream-of-consciousness to give his readers access to explore more intricate details about Gabriel's inner life, ending in his epiphany, which offers a flicker of hope for a better metamorphosis. Lawrence uses the vivid portrayal of Maurice's internal conflicts to overcome and reduce the emotional distance between him and Isabel. Spiritual deadness is, therefore, an issue that can be a resolvable, it is such a surmountable challenge, mainly through self-discovery.

#### **4. Exploring Spiritual Deadness/Blindness through different Literary Voices**

Due to the ongoing relevance of the theme, many writers in literature have tackled blindness and deadness in terms of spiritual or emotional awareness, often by pointing to human existence and human nature complexities. Through different genres and narrative techniques, this recurrent theme serves as basis for them to explore such questions of inner self, morality and the human condition.

A case in point is probably best illustrated by José Saramago's *Blindness* (1995) whereby the author illustrates and demonstrates that blindness is a metaphor for moral and spiritual awareness in society. Saramago, through the aforementioned work, depicts an unnamed city that is plagued with an epidemic of sudden blindness and eventually society starts to collapse. The novel deals with the breakdown of social structures and how people regress into a state of savagery as they lose sight. Sight, in this novel, occurs to equalize insight and morality. Although these people really lose their sight, Saramago does not put emphasis on the literal meaning and hence the novel passages seem to surpass the banal or straightforward significance to further penetrate its figurative dimensions. Thus, the author proclaims true vision as the inner understanding of human state. In Saramago's though, blindness is not—in any way— one's loss of vision, but it is rather their loss of civilization, the minute the individual cannot draw that plain line that separates humans from savages. Blindness stands as a powerful metaphor and a strong symbol for spiritual insight, that is for moral and psychological regression and deterioration.

On the other hand, death has enjoyed no less importance throughout literary tradition. Most prominent representation of which can be reflected by William Shakespeare's Hamlet (1600-1601), through his widely known and universally recited soliloquy;

to be or not to be: this is the question  
whether 'tis nobler in the mind to suffer  
the slings and arrows of outrageous fortune  
Or to take arms against a sea of troubles  
And by opposing them  
(Shakespeare, Act 3, Scene 1)

By raising the question of the meaning and value of life along with the nature of suffering, Shakespeare deeply contemplates the theme of spiritual deadness/blindness, mainly as the protagonist fails to see the ramifications of his actions on an ethical scale. The soliloquy strongly refers to society's spiritual decay, where both personal relationships and societal values are in a state of disarray.

Leo Tolstoy, on his part, and with reference to *The Death of Ivan Ilyish* (1886), also views death as an end to the emptiness and meaninglessness of life and to the absence of societal norms; as far as he is concerned, Life is not that substantial or significant to be worth taking with that seriousness.

Likewise, both Joyce and Lawrence write *The Dead* and *The Blind Man* as a critique of this state of emotional, existential, or spiritual stagnation, and the limits of human perception and societal norms in a way that helps readers explore new avenues of human consciousness.

## 5. Conclusion

A great tension between perception and reality grows in the two literary works under discussion. All the living characters in *The Dead* conversely experience a spiritual deadness while they are physically still alive. Likewise, all the characters who are physically sighted in *The Blind Man* undergo a spiritual blindness. Whether physically alive or sighted, people (mainly in Dublin from 1914 to about 1920) witness a phase of spiritual and emotional stagnation, that is claimed as paralysis. It is in this very essence that a tension between life and lifelessness, and between sightedness and sightlessness arises. The two narratives, hence, reflect broader concerns about social disconnection, alienation, and the human condition.

Both Joyce and Lawrence use the motif of spiritual deadness to critique the limitations of modern life, particularly in relation to emotional and psychological fulfilment. Characters are trapped in their own inner worlds, unable to connect with others in a meaningful way. Their deadness is tied to their inability to perceive and understand the depth of their own emotional life and those of their closest.

Furthermore, both blindness and deadness are depicted in the same way in Lawrence's *The Blind Man* and Joyce's *The Dead*. The two pieces of literature investigate the inner lives of their protagonists and thus open new prospects to explore existential awareness and self-understanding. They both symbolize spiritual blindness and emotional paralysis of their characters.

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