

## WHEN MOURNING IS SPEAKABLE BUT MELANCHOLIA IS SILENCED: LANGUAGE, GENDERED GRIEF, AND MASCULINE CRISIS IN ELIZABETH GASKELL'S THE MANCHESTER MARRIAGE

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### ABSTRACT

This study examines the gendered articulation of grief in Elizabeth Gaskell's *The Manchester Marriage*, arguing that mourning is rendered socially and linguistically speakable for Alice Wilson, while melancholia is silenced in the case of Frank Wilson. Drawing on Sigmund Freud's "*Mourning and Melancholia*" (1917), the analysis demonstrates that Alice is able to process loss through a culturally sanctioned language of mourning, whereas Frank's grief lacks legitimate discursive expression and consequently manifests as melancholia, marked by ego disintegration, self-reproach, and eventual suicide. By integrating Judith Butler's theory of gender performativity and R. W. Connell's concept of hegemonic masculinity, this study reveals how Victorian patriarchal norms regulate emotional expression through language. Alice's sorrow is recognized, articulated, and resolved within acceptable feminine discourse, while Frank's grief is pathologized, internalized, and constructed as deviant within dominant masculine frameworks. The study contends that melancholia in Gaskell's narrative functions not as a private psychological failure but as a socio-discursive symptom of a rigid gender order that authorizes female mourning while denying men a legitimate language for emotional vulnerability.

**Keywords:** *mourning, melancholia, gender, Masculinity*

### 1. INTRODUCTION

Literary texts have long served as cultural sites in which psychological experiences are not merely represented but shaped through language, narrative structure, and social norms (Khadafi, 2021; Shalini & Aruna, 2022; Morisson, 2019). As reflections of lived experience, literary works frequently offer complex portrayals of personality,

emotion, and mental conflict, making them a fertile ground for psychological inquiry. This critical approach is commonly situated within the field of literary psychology, which examines how psychological processes are articulated and mediated through literary discourse rather than treated as purely individual phenomena (Minderop, 2018; 'Adziima, 2021; Rahmat, 2021). From

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this perspective, emotions such as grief, loss, and despair are understood not only as inner states but also as experiences regulated by social expectations and cultural language (Doz et al., 2024; Salam, 2020; Jaya et al., 2025).

Elizabeth Gaskell's short story *The Manchester Marriage* (1858), published in the collaborative volume *A House to Let* alongside works by Charles Dickens and Wilkie Collins, offers a compelling exploration of grief within the socio-cultural context of Victorian England. The narrative presents two contrasting responses to loss through the characters of Alice Wilson and her husband, Frank Wilson. After Frank is presumed lost at sea, Alice pregnant and widowed undergoes a socially recognized process of mourning and eventually remarries. Frank, who survives and later returns, is confronted with the irreversibility of this loss and descends into profound despair, culminating in suicide. These divergent trajectories foreground not only psychological difference but also the unequal cultural conditions under which grief is expressed and interpreted (Budianto, 2023; Hubert et al., 2025; Kandemirci et al., 2025).

Sigmund Freud's seminal essay "Mourning and Melancholia" (1917) provides a foundational framework for understanding this contrast. Freud distinguishes mourning as a normal and temporary response to loss, through which the subject gradually detaches emotional energy from the lost object, from melancholia, a pathological condition characterized by ego impoverishment, self-reproach, and an inability to redirect libido toward a new object. While Freud acknowledges that both states are triggered by loss, his model largely abstracts them from the social and gendered contexts in which grief is experienced. As a result, the cultural forces that determine who is permitted to mourn and who becomes trapped in melancholia remain underexplored.

This study argues that such forces are crucial to understanding Frank Wilson's psychological collapse. Drawing on Judith Butler's theory of gender performativity (1990)

and R. W. Connell's concept of hegemonic masculinity (2005), the analysis foregrounds language as a regulatory mechanism that governs emotional expression. In Victorian patriarchal society, femininity allows for visible and articulate mourning, while masculinity demands emotional restraint, autonomy, and strength. Alice's grief is therefore rendered speakable, narratively legitimate, and socially resolvable, whereas Frank's sorrow lacks an acceptable linguistic and cultural outlet. Denied a legitimate language of grief, his loss is internalized and transformed into self-directed aggression.

By examining how mourning is linguistically authorized for women but melancholia is silenced for men, this study contends that Frank's suicide signifies a masculine crisis produced by rigid gender norms rather than a purely individual psychological failure. Melancholia in *The Manchester Marriage* thus emerges as a socio-discursive symptom of Victorian patriarchy one that permits women to mourn openly while punishing men for emotional vulnerability and dependence (Dogan, 2023). Through this lens, Gaskell's narrative exposes the destructive consequences of a gender order that regulates not only behavior but also the very language through which grief may be expressed.

**2. LITERATURE REVIEW*****Sigmund Freud's Mourning and Melancholia***

In Freud's concept, two conditions occur in a person's psyche after experiencing the loss of someone or something they love deeply, known as Mourning and Melancholia. The trigger for this neurotic condition is due to the presence of libidinal cathexis in human instincts. Cathexis is a term taken from Greek, meaning "to occupy" (fill or occupy). In Freud's concept, cathexis is a form of investment or channeling energy into an object, idea, or person. So, Libidinal Cathexis is a form of channeling libido into an object, idea, or person (Permatasari, 2025; Millen, 2023).

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In Freud's Mourning and Melancholia, Freud attempts to explain the phenomenon of melancholia by comparing it with mourning. Freud explains that both, when viewed in general, have a similar appearance, and the cause of both phenomena is environmental influences. Mourning is generally a reaction to the loss of a loved one or the loss of an abstraction considered valuable, such as a country, freedom, an ideal, and so on. In this case, mourning is not a disease that requires medical treatment; this reaction will gradually disappear over time. This process is considered normal (Gupta & Rawat, 2017).

Melancholia is a condition that is a continuation of Mourning, which occurs when the object of the libido cannot be replaced and turns around to destroy the mechanism of the personality itself (Gilroy, 2020; Martino et al., 2019). In Melancholia, there are prominent mental characteristics such as painful heartbreak, loss of interest in the outside world, loss of capacity to love (look for another person/object to replace the lost one), inhibition of all activities, and decreased feelings of self-esteem to the level of self-deprecation and self-curse. The peak of the condition is a delusion that arises with the hope of punishment.

*“The distinguishing mental feature of melancholia are a profoundly painful dejection, cessation of interest in the outside world, loss of the capacity to love, inhibition of all activity, and a lowering of the self-regarding feelings to a degree that finds utterance in self-reproaches and self-revilings, and culminates in a delusional expectation of punishment”.*

The features above that occur in melancholia also occur in mourning, except for the decline in self-esteem. So, if simplified, melancholia is a condition that can be abnormal because it is related to a person's mental state (López-Morales et al., 2023; Putri et al., 2023). If mourning reconciles with the feeling of loss by desiring new objects as a replacement, melancholia will actually split the ego. Freud also wrote that Melancholia can also be a reaction to the loss of a loved object,

but the difference is that in melancholia, a person is unable to see clearly what has been lost. He can only feel it. Although in certain situations he knows the lost object clearly, he cannot describe what part of the object makes him feel lost. Thus, melancholia occurs unconsciously, while mourning occurs consciously (Freud, 1917)

*“In melancholia, the occasions which give rise to the illness extend for the most part-beyond in loss by death, and include all those situations of being slighted, neglected or disappointed, which can import opposed feelings of love and hate into the relationship or reinforce an already existing ambivalence”* (Freud, 1917)

The quote above explains that, in addition to loss in the form of death, melancholia can also be exacerbated by situations such as feelings of abandonment or disappointment, which can create conflicting feelings of hate and love in a relationship or can even reinforce conflicting feelings already present in a relationship. In short, Freud's essay attempts to pinpoint the causes of melancholia, a reaction that results in decreased self-esteem and any behavior or feelings that indicate self-criticism or dissatisfaction. This is the result of diverting libido to the ego rather than to another object or a replacement for the departed or lost object, which was the original libido's place, as mourning normally proceeds. Diverting libido to the ego rather than to another object leads to ego absorption, leading to a loss of self-esteem, leading to feelings of inferiority and other negative traits, which are characteristics of a loss of ego.

***Gender as Social Performance: Judith Butler's Perspective***

One of the most influential theoretical contributions to gender studies came from Judith Butler. In her work entitled “Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity” (1990), she rejected the idea that gender is a biological essence or a fixed identity. Instead, Butler argued that gender is a “performance,” a series of actions, utterances,

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and expressions repeated according to cultural norms until they appear “natural.” She wrote:

*“Gender is not a radical choice... but neither is it a passive given. It is performative, in the sense that it constitutes as effect the very subject it appears to express”* (Judith Butler, 1990)

Within this framework, emotions are also part of gender performance. In the Victorian era, women were expected, even required, to display vulnerability, grief, and emotional dependence. Widowhood, for example, was not only a legal status, but also a socially recognized emotional role: women were allowed to cry, grieve for long periods, and needed the protection of a new man. In contrast, men were expected to appear strong, rational, independent, and in control of their emotions. Excessive expressions of grief, let alone despair or pleading, were considered a failure of masculinity.

Butler's concept was reinforced by R.W. Connell in *Masculinities* (1995), who introduced the term hegemonic masculinity to describe a dominant form of masculinity that legitimizes men's dominance over women and suppresses alternative forms of masculinity (such as vulnerability, tenderness, or emotional dependence). Connell explains:

*“Hegemonic masculinity can be defined as the configuration of gender practice which embodies the currently accepted answer to the problem of the legitimacy of patriarchy, which guarantees (or is taken to guarantee) the dominant position of men and the subordination of women”* (Connell, 2005)

In the 19th-century industrial society of Manchester, where *The Manchester Marriage* is set, hegemonic masculinity is heavily influenced by work ethic, economic independence, and domestic authority. As a sailor, Frank Wilson is supposed to be a symbol of masculinity: he goes to work to support his family, faces the dangers of the sea, and is expected to return as a hero. However, when he returns late and finds his wife has been “replaced” by another man, he loses three key pillars of hegemonic masculinity: the

ability to protect the family (Alice is “saved” by Mr. Openshaw), control over the domestic space (the house and wife now belong to another man), and social relevance (he is now “the dead man returned,” with no place in the new order).

**Previous Research**

Several prior studies have touched upon significant aspects of the Manchester Marriage and the application of Freud's Melancholia in 19th century English literature. However, none have fully integrated psychoanalytic, gender and socio-historical framework in a cohesive manner.

Stephen Stevern in his article *“The Afterlife of Elizabeth Gaskell's Disappearances: ‘Right at last’ and ‘The Manchester Marriage’ as Experiment in Detective Fiction,”* interprets *The Manchester Marriage* as an early experiment in detective fiction that interrogates legal and moral ambiguities arising from the “return of the dead”. Stevern highlights how Frank Wilson's unexpected reappearance disrupts domestic stability and exposes the fragility of marital legitimacy in Victorian society. While insightful, his analysis remains focused on narrative structure and legal discourse, without delving into Frank's psychological crisis as a product of gendered social expectations.

Even not that specific written about “The Manchester Marriage” in the special issue of *The Gaskell Journal*, titled “Elizabeth Gaskell and Short Story” (Lowe, 2020), there are critical conversations about marriage, class, and women's role in Gaskell's short stories, including “The Manchester Marriage”, but the psychological analysis of the male protagonist, particularly Frank Wilson's melancholic condition, has not been thoroughly examined, let alone connected to constructions of masculinity in industrial Victorian Society.

In a related to the theory, most recent article titled *“Melancholia in the Character of Jefferson Hope in Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's A Study in Scarlet”* (Nugraha et al., 2025) applies Freud's theory of Melancholia to a

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male character who suffers traumatic loss. It argues that Jefferson Hope's Grief over Lucy Ferrier's death fuels and obsessive quest for vengeance and self-destruction as the effect of externalization of melancholic aggression. However, this analysis is largely individualistic and psychological, failing to consider how patriarchal social structures shape male emotional expression.

Thus, while these studies offer valuable insights, they leave a critical unanswered question about the psychological condition as the result of the rigid patriarchal society in 19<sup>th</sup> Century. This research fills gap by synthesizing Freudian Psychoanalysis, Judith Butler's theory of gender performativity and R.W. Connel's concept of hegemonic masculinity. It argues that Frank Wilson's melancholia is not private tragedy, but a socio-cultural symptom of a rigid patriarchal order that permits women to mourn yet punishes men for emotional vulnerability.

**3. METHODS**

This research will be conducted using a descriptive method within the scope of qualitative research, combining a psychological approach and a gender studies perspective. According to Neuman (2019) and Tisdell et al. (2025) descriptive research aims to provide as detailed an explanation as possible regarding an individual, situation, symptom, or specific group. The psychological approach is employed to reveal Frank Wilson's psychological condition following the loss of his libidinal cathexis and to examine the manifestations and consequences of melancholia as defined by Sigmund Freud (Askhatova A, 2020). While the gender studies perspective, grounded in Judith Butler's theory of gender performativity and R.W. Connell's concept of hegemonic masculinity, is used to contextualize Frank's psychological condition within the socio-cultural norms of mid-19th-century industrial Manchester, the setting of *The Manchester Marriage*. The primary data for this study were drawn from Elizabeth Gaskell's short story *The Manchester Marriage*

(Mauliddiyah, 2021; Anufia, 2019; Daruhadi & Sopiati, 2024). Secondary data includes theoretical and critical sources related to Freudian psychoanalysis, gender performativity, and historical constructions of masculinity, particularly in the Victorian context.

**4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION****1. Alice's Mourning and Frank Wilson's Melancholia Due to the Loss of Alice (Libidinal Cathexis)**

Unlike Frank Wilson, who is trapped in melancholia, Alice undergoes a healthy and adaptive mourning process after losing her husband, who is declared dead. According to (Freud, 1917) mourning is a normal reaction to the loss of a loved one, not a pathological condition. This process is characterized by intense but temporary sadness, and the individual's ability to gradually shed emotional ties with the lost object and form new ones with others.

In *The Manchester Marriage*, Alice experiences a real loss: her husband, Frank Wilson, is declared missing and perishes at sea while she is pregnant with their first child. Alice's initial reaction is profound grief. However, unlike Frank, who becomes trapped in an idealization of the past, Alice does not give up on living. She gives birth to her child, survives as a young widow, and eventually remarries Mr. Openshaw, a man who provides her with protection, stability, and a new life. This process reflects Freud's mourning mechanism:

*"In mourning it is the world which has become poor and empty; in melancholia it is the ego itself"*(Freud, 1917:246)

Alice may feel the world has become "poor and empty" after losing Frank, but her ego remains intact. She doesn't blame herself, doesn't lose her self-esteem, and doesn't deny reality. Instead, she accepts the social and material reality. As a young widow with children, she needs protection, a need that was recognized and facilitated by

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Victorian society. Furthermore, her second marriage was not a betrayal, but rather a socially legitimate survival strategy. In 19th-century patriarchal society, women lacked the economic or legal rights to live independently. Widowhood gave her emotional legitimacy to grieve, while a second marriage provided social legitimacy to heal. In other words, the patriarchal system actually paved the way for Alice to mourn because the process did not disrupt the existing gender order. Alice also demonstrates the ability to shift her libido from the old object (Frank) to a new one (Mr. Openshaw). She builds a new family, loves her husband, and lives in genuine happiness as depicted in the opening of the story:

*"...a happily married couple, Mr. and Mrs. Openshaw, with two children—a boy and a girl." (Dickens et al., 2004)*

This happiness isn't a denial of the past, but rather proof that Alice has completed her mourning process. She isn't trapped in the obsessive repetition of Frank; she's living in the present.

While Alice's mourning process is described as an individual psychological process and also a product of a social structure that gave her space to grieve, she is then "saved" through a new marriage. This contrasts sharply with Frank's fate, whose melancholia leads him to self-destructive action (suicide).

Frank Wilson, with the intention of meeting his beloved wife again, survived all situations that threatened his life during the voyage. However, when he returned, Frank had to swallow his disappointment because his wife had remarried; he felt neglected, betrayed by someone who was the object of his libidinal cathexis.

Unlike Alice, who experiences mourning, Frank Wilson experiences melancholia, where he loses his wife as the object of his libidinal cathexis. His wife, Alice, becomes the object of his libido, as

evidenced by Frank's fear of losing her, as revealed in the following quote.

*"Am I so changed?" he said, pathetically. "I daresay I am. But, Norah, tell me!" he breathed hard, "where is my wife? Is she is she alive?" (1858: 27) "Tell me, Norah I can bear it I have feared it so often. Is she dead?" Norah still kept silence. "She is dead!" He hung on Norah's words and looks, as if for confirmation or contradiction." (Dickens et al., 2004)*

The first thing Frank did upon returning from the voyage was to look for his wife. The quote above shows Frank's anxiety and worry about news of his wife, whether she was alive or dead. He expressed his fear to Norah, his wife's servant. When Norah told him Alice was dead, he didn't immediately believe it. He then asked her again.

*"Norah! answer me this question, straight, by yes or no—Is my wife dead?" "No, she is not!" said Norah, slowly and heavily. "O what a relief! Did she receive my letters? But perhaps you don't know. Why did you leave her? Where is she? O Norah, tell me all quickly!" (1858:28) "Norah!" This time his tone was calm, stagnant as despair. "She has married again!" Norah shook her head sadly. The grasp slowly relaxed. The man had fainted. (Dickens et al., 2004)*

When Norah finally told him the truth about Alice, Frank was shocked. He found it difficult to accept that his wife had remarried, was living happily, and had forgotten about him. He still forced himself to continue seeing his wife, the object of his cathexis.

*"I don't care for your master and mistress. If your master is a man, he must feel for me poor shipwrecked sailor that I am kept for years a prisoner amongst savages, always, always, always thinking of my wife and my home dreaming of her by night, talking to her, though she could not hear, by day. I loved her more than all heaven and earth put together. Tell me*

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*where she is, this instant, you wretched woman, who salved over her wickedness to her, as you do to me." (Dickens et al., 2004)*

After emerging from his stupor, Frank forced Norah to reunite with Alice, whom he missed so much. He recounted his plight on the voyage and his survival to reunite with his wife, Alice. Frank Wilson's sadness stemmed from feelings of betrayal by Alice, whom he perceived as unfaithful in awaiting his return. As Freud wrote in his 1917 essay, the most obvious trigger for prolonged melancholia in his case was loss through death, but other factors can also contribute to prolonged melancholia, such as feelings of being belittled, ignored, or disappointed by a loved one, leading to conflicting feelings of love and hate. Norah's refusal to reveal Alice's whereabouts to Frank, believing she already had a happy life with Mr. Openshaw, led Frank to realize he had lost Alice. This marked the beginning of Frank's melancholia, the fact that he had lost Alice, who was now his legal wife. He could not force himself to get Alice back because he was hindered by reality and the laws of norms and morals that apply in a marriage.

In mourning, as explained by Freud (1917), it will resolve itself over time. This is different from melancholia, where someone who experiences it will have difficulty coming to terms with their sadness due to loss or being disappointed by someone they love or care about. In the case of Frank Wilson, what happened to him was melancholia rather than mourning. This is because the figure of Frank Wilson in the story feels that all his sacrifices facing death on the voyage were in vain; he feels lost and disappointed in the figure of Alice, and at the end of the story, he cannot find a replacement for Alice in his life.

After meeting Norah and getting news that Alice and her daughter had lived happily with another man, he felt depressed and depressed until it led him to commit suicide by drowning himself. Suicide in this

case is a form of self-destruction due to the melancholia experienced by Frank. Frank committed suicide on the same night when he last met Norah to look for Alice. The detectives found Norah's name and address in Frank Wilson's shirt pocket when he was found dead in the Thames River.

*"A poor man has been found in the Thames this morning, drowned. "Did he drown himself?" asked Norah, solemnly. "God only knows," replied Mr. Openshaw, in the same tone. "Your name and address at our house, were found in his pocket: that, and his purse, were the only things, that were found upon him. I am sorry to say it, my poor Norah; but you are required to go and identify him" To say who it is. It is always done, in order that some reason may be discovered for the suicide if suicide it was. I make no doubt he was the man who came to see you at our house last night. It is very sad, I know." He made pauses between each little clause, in*

*order to try and bring back her senses; which he feared were wandering so wild and sad was her look." "To what?" asked Norah. (Dickens et al., 2004)*

Based on the concept of Mourning and Melancholia (1917), what Frank experienced is in accordance with the characteristics of someone who experiences melancholia, a sorrowful heartbreak, loss of interest in the outside world, loss of capacity to love (looking for another person/object to replace the lost one), the inhibition of all activities, and a decrease in feelings of self-esteem to the level of self-deprecation and self-criticism, and the peak is delusions that arise with the hope of punishment. Frank, who experienced heartbreak, could not find another figure to replace Alice, who was the lost object in his life. Frank's loss of interest in the outside world is proven by making Alice the goal of his life after returning from the voyage, and when he found the fact that he could no longer be with Alice, he felt he no longer

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had a purpose in life, to the point of committing suicide. These things are forms of melancholia experienced by Frank Wilson. The fact in the story that reveals that Frank Wilson committed suicide is a form of self-destruction due to the melancholia he experienced.

## **2. The Regulated Grief: Victorian Patriarchy and the Differentiation of Grief Responses between Alice and Frank Wilson**

The grief responses of Alice and Frank Wilson in *The Manchester Marriage* are not simply the result of personality differences, but rather a direct product of the patriarchal social structure of Victorian society, which systematically regulated who was “allowed” to grieve, how to grieve “properly,” and who was punished for showing vulnerability. Within this system, the differences in Alice’s mourning (adaptive grief) versus Frank’s melancholia (destructive melancholia) are not psychological coincidences, but manifestations of structural inequalities in the distribution of “emotional rights” based on gender.

### **2.1 Alice: The Grief that Recognized and Facilitated by the Patriarchal System**

As a woman, Alice was in a socially legitimate position to express grief. The widowhood she acquired after Frank was declared missing was not only a legal identity, but also a culturally recognized emotional role. In Victorian society, women were expected even required to demonstrate vulnerability, posthumous loyalty, and emotional dependence (Showalter, 1987) Alice fulfilled these expectations: she mourned her husband's loss, bore their child in grief, and maintained her loyalty for as long as possible.

More importantly, the patriarchal system not only permits but also provides coping mechanisms for women like Alice. Her second marriage to Mr. Openshaw is not an

act of betrayal, but rather a socially sanctioned survival strategy. In the legal and economic context of the 19th century, women lacked financial autonomy. Without a husband, they were vulnerable to poverty and social stigma. Therefore, Alice's second marriage was not merely a personal choice, but a structural solution that allowed her to reintegrate into the secure social order

This process aligns with Freud's concept of mourning (Freud, 1917) Alice accepts the reality of loss, does not reject the outside world, and can shift her libido from an old object (Frank) to a new one (Mr. Openshaw). She is not trapped in an obsessive repetition of the past; she lives in the present, builds a new family, and loves her husband as depicted in the opening of the story:

*“...a happily married couple, Mr. and Mrs. Openshaw, with two children a boy and a girl.”* (Dickens et al., 2004)

In other words, the patriarchal system saved Alice by providing her with a path to grief and then recovery because that process reinforced, not disrupted, the existing gender order.

### **2.2 Frank Wilson: Melancholia as a Crisis of Domestic Maritime Masculinity**

In contrast, Frank Wilson, as a sailor and husband, is trapped in the construction of hegemonic masculinity (Connell, 2005) which demands that he should be a reliable breadwinner, protect his family physically and socially, control his emotions, and not show weakness.

Frank is the perfect representation of what Perez-Cancino (2023, 2021) calls “domestic maritime masculinity,” a 19th-century model of masculinity that combines professional competence at sea with domestic responsibilities as head of the family. He sets sail not for adventure, but as an act of domestic devotion: he sacrifices himself for the future of Alice and her unborn child. His goal in life is to return as a complete husband and father.

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However, when he returns and finds himself “replaced” by another man, he loses three pillars of his masculine identity at once: he fails as a breadwinner (because his presence is no longer needed), he loses the domestic authority (the house and family now belong to Mr. Openshaw), he loses social relevance (he is “the dead man returned,” with no place in the new order). In the same system that saved Alice, Frank is punished. As a man, he is not allowed to show vulnerability when he expresses extreme emotional dependence.

*“I loved her more than all heaven and earth put together... Always, always, always thinking of my wife...”* (Dickens et al., 2004)

Frank Wilson violates the norms of masculinity. There is no social space for a man who has “lost his function.” As a result, grief that should have been expressed externally is forced to be internalized, then turns ego-destroying, exactly as Freud described in melancholia.

Frank's suicide, in this story, is not simply the end of personal depression, but a tragic consequence of failing to fulfill the dual demands of maritime-domestic masculinity: he fails at sea and at home. As Perez-Cancino (2023, 2021) explains:

“Domestic maritime masculinity entails [...] a paternal responsibility to those ‘under his care.’”

When Frank loses “those in his care,” Alice and her child, he loses his entire existential foundation. And in Victorian society, there was no escape for men who failed to be “protectors.”

### **2.3 Patriarchy as a Regulator of Emotions: Two Paths in One System**

The differences in Alice and Frank's fates are not accidental, but rather the result of a structural mechanism of patriarchy that blesses women who “successfully” grieve (Alice) and punishes men who “fail” to live up to standards of masculinity (Frank).

This system is not neutral in its management of grief; it creates two distinct pathways: one that enables recovery (mourning), and one that leads to self-destruction (melancholia). In *The Manchester Marriage*, these pathways are determined not by love or fidelity, but by gender.

Frank's melancholia is not merely a personal tragedy, but a social critique of norms of masculinity that leave no room for men to be vulnerable a critique that, through the integration of the concept of domestic maritime masculinity, becomes much more pointed and contextual.

## **5. CONCLUSION**

In the story “*The Manchester Marriage*,” There are two characters who undergo different process of Grief. Alice experience mourning process after the death of her husband and Frank Wilson as someone who experiences melancholia after losing his wife and child. The loss he experiences is not in the form of death; the object that makes him feel loss is still alive but he cannot have it back. In Frank Wilson's case, what happens to him is melancholia rather than mourning because he cannot regain an object that can replace the one he has lost. The melancholia he feels leads him to experiences of heartbreak, depression, a loss of capacity to love, and a decline in self-esteem, which culminates in destructive behaviour towards himself. The destructive behaviour toward himself is when he commits suicide, which is the peak of the melancholia he experiences. This condition is also influenced by the patriarchal structure of Victorian society, which forbids men from showing vulnerability or emotional failure. As a sailor who failed to return on time and lost his family, Frank is considered to have failed hegemonic masculinity norms; he is not allowed to show his weakness because that would mean admitting failure as a man. In a system that leaves no room for fragile masculinity, his grief cannot be expressed

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externally and instead turns inward to destroy his own ego.

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