



A FREUDIAN ANALYSIS OF COMPUTER SÉANCE AND FAIR EXCHANGE BY RUTH RENDELL

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Abstract

The short stories of Ruth Rendell which were published in the collection of short stories titled *Piranha to Scurfy* (2000) reach the depths of the human psyche and highlight the solitude of the individual in the modern world. The characters in the short stories are introvert characters who live in a state of solitude, which makes the stories eligible to analyze in psychoanalytic literary criticism. *Computer Séance* and *Fair Exchange* are chosen in this essay to analyze in Freudian terms. Such mystical elements as encounter with dead people and (conjuraton) seances are found in the short stories. The aspects of living dead and conjuration in *Computer Séance* contribute to the uncanny atmosphere of the story and the agony after the death of a beloved one in *Fair Exchange* is an example of "mourning and melancholia." Therefore, this essay will analyze *Computer Séance* with the Freudian concept of "the uncanny" and *Fair Exchange* with the Freudian concept of "mourning and melancholia," and will seek to prove the existence of Freudian concepts in the short stories.

Keywords: Freud, The Uncanny, Mourning and Melancholia, Ruth Rendell, Short Story.

INTRODUCTION

This study intends to analyze the short stories *Computer Séance* and *Fair Exchange* by Ruth Rendell (1930-2015) in the light of Freudian literary criticism. Both stories were published in the same collection of short stories titled *Piranha to Scurfy* (2000). Both stories are in the genre of psychological short story and these two stories have been chosen because of their suitability to analyze in the light of Freudian concepts. In order to reveal how the short stories are related to Freudian concepts which are often adapted to literary analysis; namely, "the uncanny" and "mourning and melancholia," this article will analyze the two short stories in the light of Freudian literary analysis. The Freudian notion of "the uncanny" will be the focus of analysis in *Computer Séance* and the Freudian notions of "morning and melancholia" will be used to analyze the short story *Fair Exchange*.

This study will analyze the short story titled *Computer Séance* and will seek to discover the Freudian notion of the uncanny throughout the story in the first part. The first part will analyze the uncanny events in the life of the protagonist Sophia De Vasco and will seek to reveal the connection of the uncanny with the protagonist's psyche rather than the outer world. The second part of the study will seek to demonstrate how mourning and melancholia are two different ways of facing a trauma and how the character who experience melancholia is psychologically devastated, and how the character who experiences mourning can face the trauma and handle it.

1. ELEMENTS OF 'THE UNCANNY' IN COMPUTER SÉANCE

The first character whom Rendell introduces to the reader is a woman named Sophia De Vasco. In fact, the real name of Sophia De Vasco is "Sheila Vosper in her birth certificate" (Rendell, 2000, 65). Sophia De Vasco is initially seen while waiting in the bus stop for the bus to arrive. Her brother Jimmy is introduced as a dead person who died seven years ago, which means the element of the uncanny exists even in the very beginning of the story. A very frightening and uncanny expression about Jimmy is made in the beginning by stating that he "looked a lot younger than he had before he died seven years before" (Rendell, 2000, 65). Jimmy talks to Sophia although he died seven years ago, which makes the situation an uncanny one. Freud defines the uncanny as:

undoubtedly related to what is frightening – to what arouses dread and horror; equally certainly, too, the word is not always used in a clearly definable sense, so that it tends to coincide with what excites fear in general. Yet we may expect that a special core of feeling is present which justifies the

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use of a special conceptual term. One is curious to know what this common core is which allows us to distinguish as 'uncanny'; certain things which lie within the field of what is frightening. (Freud, 1919, 218)

Jimmy fits Freud's theory of the uncanny because he is a character who arouses fear. The reader is given a sense of surprise and fright when Jimmy asks his sister for money. A dead man asking for money can be considered as a foreshadowing of what is going to happen at the end of the story. As the uncanny is a multidimensional concept, various explanations have been made by Freud. One of the definitions of the uncanny by Freud which fits the situation of Jim is that "the uncanny is that class of the frightening which leads back to what is known of old and long familiar" (Freud, 1919, 219). For Sophia, her brother is familiar as being a brother but, on the other hand, he is totally unfamiliar and even a stranger as being someone from the other world. Rendell calls the place where Jimmy belongs as "the other side" (Rendell, 2000, 65). By calling the place where Jimmy belongs as the other side, the defamiliarization and othering is highlighted. Jimmy becomes an awkward and frightening character who both exists and is dead simultaneously. Sophia believes that his brother has been watching her movements from the other world and she says:

I think you have been following my career from the Other Side, Jimmy. You know I have done really well for myself since you passed over. You have seen how I've been responsible for London's spiritualist renaissance haven't you? But you have to realize that I am no more made of money than I have ever been. If you are thinking my Mother and Father left me anything, you're quite wrong. (Rendell, 2000, 65)

Sophia believes that she has spiritual, supernatural, paranormal and even superhuman powers. Sophia expresses her (imagined) success as "London's spiritualist renaissance" (Rendell, 2000, 65) and she probably believes that she is a pioneering figure in this process. The symptoms may indicate a mental disorder. Her idea of being constantly watched is a paranoid feeling. Paranoia is defined as a "furtive development, resulting from inner causes, of a lasting, immovable delusional system that is accompanied by the complete retention of clearness and order in thinking, willing and acting" (Kraepelin qtd. in Flexner, 2006, 147). The definition of paranoia fits the situation of Sophia as she is entirely detached from reality and experiences delusions. Ruth Rendell, as one can infer from her works, was a materialist writer and (must have) thought that supernatural experiences are in one's brain and imagination, not in reality. This will be made clear towards the end of the story. Sophia also sounds content with her brother's death because she thinks of Jimmy as being a type of parasite. Sophia is described as quite a lonely and awkward woman. She does not seem to have any friends other than her group of friends with whom she gathers and carries out seances. Sophia has a computer which she describes as an indispensable tool of her trade. The word trade shows her intention of commercializing the seances. It is understood that she demands money for the paranormal affairs. It is ironical that spiritualism, which is supposed to be related to the spirit, is turned into an issue of commerce, which is a worldly issue. That is to say, her sincerity must be questioned. It is understood that her paranormal activities, and "encounters with the dead," (Rendell, 2000, 66) as she calls it, are done for money. However, this leads to a great contradiction because Sophia is presented as a lady who wears old-fashioned clothes and it is clear from the descriptions of Sophia that she is a poor woman. She wears a fake fur which Jimmy seems to despise. In fact, wearing an authentic fur can be associated with being rich but if we consider that her fur is a fake one, her richness is also an imitation. Her profession is also an act of imitation while she pretends to carry out necromancy seances.

If it is considered that Jimmy is dead – though the reality will be revealed at the end of the story –, his visit to his sister Sophia is a haunting, which is undoubtedly an uncanny element. Jimmy's in-between situation is an example of uncanny since "a particularly favorable condition for awakening uncanny feelings is created when there is intellectual uncertainty whether an object is alive or not, and when an inanimate object becomes too much like an animate one" (Freud, 1919, 233). Jimmy fits the idea of uncanny because he is homely as he is from the household as a brother. He is also detached from the home and has turned into an unhomely character because he is represented as a dead man. He is a rather disturbing (and even a haunting) character; he gives a sense of uneasiness to Sophia and he is a ghastly figure. As Freud put it, "what interests us most in this long extract is to find that among its different shades of meaning the word 'heimlich' exhibits one which is identical with its opposite, 'unheimlich'. What is *heimlich* thus comes to be *unheimlich*" (Freud, 1919, 223). The situation of Jimmy resembles what Freud defined as uncanny because Jimmy is simultaneously a homely and unhomely character. Jimmy used to belong to the household; therefore, he was homely. However, after having passed away, he does not belong to the household anymore.



Sophia gets on a bus and makes her way home. She is anxious that Jimmy will be following her to the seance. Hypothetically, one can even consider that Jimmy functions as Sophia's conscience and she is anxious that her sense of guilt might follow her to the seance for which she demands the money she does not deserve.

Sophia's paranormal encounters are not rare phenomena. She experiences paranormal experiences on a regular basis. However, even before the narrator reveals that the case of Sophia is a blurry mind which leads her to a delusional psychology, the tone of the narrator gives the idea that the events will turn out to be completely different from how Sophia perceives them. Especially the fact that "extra-ordinary" phenomena have become everyday occurrences gives the impression that Sophia creates stories in her mind and probably sees hallucinations or misinterprets daily events. The narrator states that:

Encounters with her dead relatives were not unusual events in Sophia's life. Only last week her aunt Lily had walked into her bedroom at midnight-she had always been a nocturnal type- and brought her a lot of messages from her mother, mostly warnings to Sophia to be on her guard in matters of men and money. Then, two evenings ago, an old woman came through the wall while Sophia was eating her supper. They manifested themselves so confidently. Sophia thought, because she never showed fear, she absolutely wasn't frightened. The old woman didn't stay long but flitted about the flat, peering at everything and disappeared after telling Sophia that she was her maternal grandmother and died in the Spanish flu epidemic of 1919. (Rendell, 2000, 66)

Her aunt's warning for her to be careful about matters with men and money also foreshadows what is going to happen in the end. And her maternal grandmother's visit is the recalling or representation of a collective and cumulative knowledge. It must be a family memory, and someone must have told her the story and she is remembering it. She is recalling the family memory. It must be the memory itself that haunts Sophia rather than ghosts. The haunting is not an external experience but is an internal one. It is clearly seen that the uncanny penetrates the soul of Sophia. Ghosts do not appear suddenly, nor do they come from an open door, but they pass through the walls. This is symbolically the representation of the penetrating nature of the uncanny. The setting also defines the uncanny. It is her bedroom, which is the place one is supposed to be at ease. Thus, ease turns into a state of uneasiness, and her home turns into an unhomey place. What is more ironical is that the haunting ghosts do not exist. There is only one possibility; the uncanny is taking place in the psyche of Sophia. Two inferences can be reached about the situation or the function of Jimmy. Firstly, Jimmy has two phases of life forms, the first one being the 'heimlich,' which represents his life, and the other one being the 'unheimlich,' which represents his death. But also, it is understood that even in his heimlich period he wasn't a reliable character, either. Sophia fears that Jimmy could embarrass her by means of making himself manifest during the seance she will be making in Mrs. Paget-Brown's house. While introducing Jimmy, the narrator says: "in life he had always been feckless, unable hold down a job, chronically short of money, with a talent for nothing but sponging off his relatives. Few tears had been shed when his body was floating in the Grand Union Canal" (Rendell, 2000, 66). The narrator presents Jimmy as a parasitical character who financially exploits his relatives.

It is clearly understood that Jimmy had never been a beloved person for Sophia or the other family members. His habit of demanding money from his relatives is a dishonest act according to Sophia and she calls Jimmy a parasite for his habit. Both literally and figuratively, Jimmy steals from Sophia. As Sophia is trying to make her way to the seance, she recognizes that Jimmy is still there at the bus stop. Sophia is not afraid and thinks to herself that a less sensitive woman would be afraid that he would get on the bus and follow her. But she is wise enough to know that as there are no time and space limitations for the dead, there is no such danger. If he wanted to follow her, he would not need the bus. He would get there in the blink of an eye. Sophia thinks that here is no need to worry because Jimmy as a ghost could instantly catch her if he really wanted. Sophia thinks of herself as a very sensitive lady with paranormal capabilities. Hence, focusing on the paranormal, she misses the normal activities in daily life.

Sophia thinks that the only way to deal with him is to ignore him. She watches the road in Kendal Street and realizes that Jimmy is following her. "There was nothing to be done about it, she could only hope he wasn't going to attach himself to her, even take up residence in her flat, for that might mean all the trouble and expense of an exorcism" (Rendell, 2000, 66-67). The word exorcism is very interesting in this quotation. It is apparent that Sophia is haunted by the idea of Jimmy and Jimmy is a recurrent idea for Sophia. The idea of Jimmy is so attached to her life and penetrated so deeply into her mind that, to get rid of him, she must use the method of exorcism. The fact that Sophia can only get rid of Jimmy with exorcism



demonstrates that Jimmy is a diabolical character in the mind of Sophia. So, the idea of Jimmy is uncanny, and it is in her mind, not far from her, and it is an evil thought in her mind. As Freud put it, uncanny means daemonic in Hebrew and Arabic (Freud, 1919, 342). One can even say that the idea of Jimmy is the representation, or even the embodiment of Sophia's evil side. As the German word *unheimlich* suggests, "*heimlich*" means homely, cozy and familiar, and the negative of "*heimlich*" which is "*unheimlich*" refers to a strange feeling which is unfamiliar and alien. Therefore, Jimmy becomes an "*unheimlich*" figure, which means he is in the place where he does not belong. So, the state of belonging and not belonging are very important in defining the uncanny.

The seance begins and the people who attend the seance gather in Mrs. Paget-Brown's room. There are six people and also Sophia in the seance room. She wants the people in the room to turn off the lights before she starts the seance. She says she can't guarantee anything if the spirits are not willing. The guests ask Sophia in what way the spirits will be seen. The guests are curious whether the revelation of the souls will be in the form of ectoplasm or if it will be a table rapping? The idea of table rapping sounds so funny to Sophia and she thinks it is out-fashioned. She claims that they will make their thoughts known through the computer. Right at that point, it is understood that Sophia touches the keyboard and she conceals her fingers under the tablecloth, and she writes everything herself. As she made them turn off the lights, she could easily conceal her fingers. This situation also befits Freud's understanding of uncanny. For Freud, uncanny is "concealed, kept from sight, so that others do not get to know of or about it, withheld from others. To do something behind someone's back" (Freud, 1919, 344). Sophia is making concealed movements, which are uncanny to the guests.

There is an asthmatic man who takes part in the seance. As Sophia claims, his wife becomes the first soul to arrive. When the man asks her how she is, and she says she is fine and waiting for him to follow her. The next person to attend the seance is Mrs. Paget-Brown. She summons up her father. "She said in an awed voice that she could see the very faintly moving on the integral keyboard as his spirit was fingers touched them" (Rendell, 2000, 69). Sophia makes them believe in her hoax. Sophia makes a ridiculous mistake while carrying out the seance with "the dowdy woman" as she calls her (Rendell, 2000, 69). The lady wants to contact with her dead fiancé and Sophia claims he is regretful as he did not marry her, and his life was a failure. The dead fiancé had a successful life and was promoted as a junior minister in Margaret Thatcher's administration. The problem is that Sophia has assumed the role of a medium so much that she also believes in her own lies, which is called mythomania. It is very probable that the character Sophia is a mythomaniac or a pathological liar because the description of a pathological liar fits her psychological state. Dike, Baronski and Griffith define the symptoms seen in pathological liars in their article "Pathological Lying Revisited" as follows:

Pathological liars can believe their lies to the extent that, at least to others, the belief may appear to be delusional; they generally have sound judgment in other matters; it is questionable whether pathological lying is always a conscious act and whether pathological liars always have control over their lies... the lies in pathological lying are often unplanned and rather impulsive; the pathological liar may become a prisoner of his or her lies. (2005, 344)

Her lies become part of her life. She goes even so far as to claim that it is the power of the spirits what really makes her hands move. In a way, she is a manipulated figure. She is not aware of the fact that she is manipulated by Jimmy, not the spirits. She believes that she is a true medium and she transmits the messages of the spirits. After Sophia leaves the seance, Jimmy waits for her and demands her money and her computer. Sophia thinks that he can't hold the computer and his hands will pass through it as he is a ghost but as if to prove the contrary, he grabs the computer and steals her bag and suddenly, he stabs Sophia and walks away. Next morning Jimmy, or Darren Palmer, sells the lot and spend his money on crack cocaine. At the end of the story, it is made clear that the criminal has been abusing Sophia as if he were her brother. He turns out to be Darren Palmer, a stranger to Sophia, not Jimmy. That's to say the familiar figure becomes a stranger, an 'uncanny' figure.

2. ELEMENTS OF MOURNING AND MELANCHOLIA IN *FAIR EXCHANGE*

Fair Exchange is a short story by Rendell which is based on the theme of losing the loved object and it is a solid example of Freud's theory of "Mourning and Melancholia" (1917). The story opens with the introduction of Penelope, from whose point of view the reader hears the story, and a guest, whose name is not mentioned. The story is told in flashbacks by the guest, who is the first-person narrator. The narrator asks about Tom Dorchester and, on hearing that Tom is dead, she is shocked. The narrator finds it difficult to understand how and why such a person as Tom is dead. Tom is represented as a man who has always been



full of life and energy. He is expressed as a passionate man and his vital energy seems to have diminished after the illness of his wife.

Tom was- had been, I should say- more vital, more enthusiastic and more interested in everything than most people. He seemed to love and hate more intensely, specially to love. I remember him once saying he needed no more than five hours' sleep a night, there was too much to do, to learn, to appreciate, to waste time sleeping. And then his wife had become ill, very ill. Much of his abundant energy he devoted to finding a cure for her particular kind of cancer or trying to find it. (Rendell, 2000, 73)

It is understood that he focused all his energy to find the cure of Frances's disease. The narrator says in an objective way that it was Frances indeed who is supposed to die, not Tom. Penelope looks at the narrator in a mysterious way and says: "I'll tell you about it if you like. It's an odd story. Of course, I don't know how much you know" (Rendell, 2000, 73-74). By calling the story an odd one, the narrator gives a clue about the unexpected ending of the story.

The narrator still does not want to believe that Tom is dead and thinks that Tom was like a young lover. Tom was like a young lover means he was passionate and attached strongly to his beloved wife. The narrator gets even more shocked when he learns that Tom committed suicide. He stammers: "He what? Tom Dorchester?" (Rendell, 2000, 74). For the narrator, there is only one explanation to this case. It must have been the case that Frances died and that is why Tom committed suicide. Penelope says that Tom searched for a cure for Frances's illness and took her to a clinic in Switzerland. It was believed to be a miracle cure, but it did not work on Frances. As a last chance, Tom found a healer. The healer's name was Davina Tarsis and she was quite young. She claimed she had cured a woman having radiotherapy. Tom consulted Tarsis regularly and she claimed that this illness can be overcome by the power of thought. She asked Tom to make a wish and if he, of course, wishes the recovery of Frances. They talked while Frances was asleep. Tarsis said, "What would you give to make Frances live...Whose life would you give in exchange for Frances's life?" (Rendell, 2000, 76).

Tom finds it irrational at first because there normally cannot be such an exchange of lives. Tom understands that the healer is a charlatan. But he wants to see what she could do and calls her bluff. But on the other hand, though suspicious about the miracle, perhaps because he had no other alternatives, he had to try any option. As Tarsis asks him whom he would like to sacrifice for Frances, he chooses his granddaughter Emma. Then Frances starts to get better. Frances recovers in an unexpected way. She regains her health and strength. Penelope says: "the doctors were amazed. But it wasn't unheard-of. Presumably, the chemo worked" (Rendell, 2000, 77). She got back to a normal state of life, regained weight and her hair grew long again. The narrator states that "Tom must have been over the moon" to express how happy the recovery has made Tom (Rendell, 2000, 77). Then he learns that Emma died afterwards in an accident. Penelope does not credit that it is the spell of Tarsis that lead Emma to death. It was just an accident. But a sense of guilt obsessively disturbs the psyche of Tom. In fact, there was ice on the road and the school bus skidded on ice and the accident happened. But from that point on, Tom started feeling responsible for the death of Emma. And as Penelope says, the death of Emma did not affect Tom in the way the loss of a grandchild affects a grandfather. It affected him profoundly and "he was racked with guilt" (Rendell, 2000, 78). His sense of guilt is so profound that it leads him to a great depression, in other words melancholia. As Freud put it, melancholia is not the state of loss itself; it is "the reaction to the loss of a loved person, or to the loss of some abstraction which has taken the place of one, such as one's country, liberty, an ideal, and so on" (Freud, 1917, 243). Thus, Tom suffers from two losses, one of which is a real loss and the other is a symbolic one. The loss of Emma is a real loss. It might not be considered as the loss of a loved object because throughout the story, no hearty attachment of Tom to Emma is emphasized. The feeling that disturbs him sounds like sense of guilt. But on the other hand, Frances's loss is the loss of a loved object. Though Frances did not die, he lost his love after having lost his attraction to her. The third-person narrator reveals that "his love for Frances simply vanished, all that great love, that amazing devotion that was an example to us all, really, it disappeared. He came to dislike her. He told me it wasn't that he had no feeling for her anymore, he actively disliked her" (Rendell, 2000, 78). It can be concluded that a very significant aspect which tied Tom to life was lost, which put him in a state of melancholia.

It is clearly understood here that their love turned into the hate of the loved object, which is typically a melancholic state. Tom also started hating himself thinking that he ruined his own life, Emma's life as well as his love for Frances. As Freud put it:

the distinguishing mental features of melancholia are a profoundly painful dejection, cessation



of interest in the outside world, loss of the capacity of 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. (Freud, 1917, 244)

All these pathological features are apparently found in Tom. He cannot love Frances anymore. He is no longer active and lively, and he is putting all the blame on himself. Self-reproach is a typical symptom of melancholia and Tom continually suffers from self-reproach. As Freud mentioned, a melancholic patient typically "reproaches him[her]self, vilifies him[her]self and expects to be cast out and punished" (1917, 246). On the contrary, "in mourning it is the world which has become poor and empty, in melancholia it is the ego itself" and "the ego can kill itself only" (Freud, 1917, 246-252). Tom's suicide derives from his melancholia and his urge to punish himself. De Lauretis elaborates on the Freudian concepts of "mourning and melancholia" by stating that "the ego becomes completely impoverished, incapable of love or achievement; it regresses from narcissistic object choice to narcissistic identification with the lost object" (2008, 36). The explanation of De Lauretis describes the suicide of Tom as his ego became impoverished and obsessed with the idea of the loss of the beloved object. Therefore, the love Tom feels for Frances and the loss of his love which ties him to life lead him to suicide. It is also possible that the attraction which Tom feels for Frances was the only motive for him and after having lost it, he also lost his will to live. This pathological state of love becomes suicidal in the end.

The situation of Frances and Tom fits Freud's definition of a pathological attachment to a loved person (or object). According to Freud, "the self-reproaches are the reproaches against a loved object which have been shifted away from it on to the patient's own ego" (Freud, 1917, 248). It is apparent that Tom starts disliking Frances because her love used to be the source of livelihood for him but during her illness, the attraction was lost. Frances turns from an adorable lady into a poor woman in need of help and protection. Tom has to make a choice which is associated with Emma's death. Therefore, Frances, who used to arouse in him the feelings of awe and admiration began to give him sense of pity and guilt. Frances does not die physically but she dies emotionally for Tom, which takes away Tom's joy of life and leaves him no reason to live. Surprisingly enough, Frances marries her doctor, who also has lost his spouse. He lost his wife at the time she diagnosed Frances cancer. Frances and her doctor are in love with each other and decide to marry. As mourning is a procedure of facing and accepting the loss, it does not turn into a pathology. Both the general practitioner and Frances face their losses and, after the mourning is complete, they are able to start a new life. As Freud mentions: "the fact is, however, that when the work of mourning is completed the ego becomes free and uninhibited again" (Freud, 1917, 245). In the case of Frances, it is seen that the work of mourning is completed and has carried her to a better and happier life.

3. CONCLUSION

A close reading of the two works has demonstrated the interwoven Freudian aspects in Ruth Rendell's short stories. The short stories of Ruth Rendell which were analyzed in this essay are the journeys to the inner psyches of the characters, especially the protagonists. All the characters share a common feature, which is that all of them are lonely in modern world. The state of being lonely in modern times oblige them to turn to their own inner worlds and develop introverted characters. The solitude of the people in the modern world affect the psychological health of individuals. The more the individuals turn to their inner selves, the unhappier they become, which is seen in the case of Sophia. Sophia has started to live in a world of illusions associated with Freudian uncanny, that exist in her brain. The case of Sophia has also proven that the uncanny is not separate or independent from the human psyche; just the contrary, it is a creation of it. Jentsch elaborates on the notion of the uncanny and defines it as a "doubt as to whether an apparently living being really is animate and, conversely, doubt as to whether a lifeless object may not in fact be animate" (1995, 11). Jentsch's definition fits the case of De Vasco since she is unable to decide whether Jimmy is dead or alive. The case of Jimmy gains an uncanny dimension since he is neither alive nor dead; both alive and dead simultaneously. That is why the Freudian uncanny is significant in the case of De Vasco. The uncanny does not take place in the outer world; it is how a person perceives the outer world, and the uncanny is inside the human psyche. The close reading of the second story has shown that the Freudian concepts of mourning and melancholia function in different ways, although they sound similar. It has been seen that mourning has enabled Frances to survive while melancholia has devastated the life of Tom. As it was seen in the case of Tom, melancholia is suicidal. Melancholia deprives a person's will to live and the determination to struggle. The suicide of Tom stems from his inability to face the trauma and refusal to mourn. Tom's struggle to stay strong makes him unable to mourn, and the lack of mourning causes melancholia. However, the case of Frances is totally different. Although Frances ails with cancer, mourning, which is a healthy reaction according to Freud, makes her survive. The doctor and Frances mourn for their dead spouses and



can recover from the trauma. Having recovered from mourning, Frances and her doctor get married because mourning enables them to recover from their losses.

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