

The Guilt of Being a Workaholic Woman in *Landline* by Rainbow Rowell

IRMAWATI

Advisor: Ratna Asmarani

Department of English, Faculty of Humanities, Diponegoro University

Jl. Prof. H. Soedarto, S.H. – Tembalang Semarang, Indonesia 50275

irmawati4195@gmail.com

Abstract, this journal analyzes a novel by Rainbow Rowell entitled *Landline*. The novel tells about a woman who is in confusion to choose between her family and her job. The purposes of the thesis are to analyze and to explain the guilt that is faced by the main character, Georgie McCool, and her attempt to resolve the guilt. Several theories such as the five stages of grief proposed by Elizabeth Kübler-Ross and the theory of guilt by Guy Winch are used in order to analyze the issue. Other theories regarding workaholism and stereotypes of woman from various experts are also used. In order to analyze the data, the writer uses internet and library research. After conducting the analysis, the result shows that the main character of the novel has more masculine than feminine traits. She also suffers from disloyalty guilt, and it forces her to undergo the five stages of grief, such as denial, anger, bargaining, depression, and acceptance.

Keywords: guilt, stages of grief, workaholism, stereotype

A. INTRODUCTION

As time goes by, the form of literary works changes. In the past, famous authors wrote classic literature containing satire or protest toward the politics or culture. In the modern era such as now, famous authors mainly write about popular literature which is very different from the classical literature. Popular literature especially novel is now used as a media to temporarily escape from the routines. One of the popular and best seller novels is *Landline* by Rainbow Rowell.

Landline provides a story about a career woman who is in confusion to choose between her career and her family. This confusion creates a conflict inside the character, which can be analyzed deeply and thoroughly. As we know, nowadays it is common for a woman to pursue career. The woman may need to work because of economical reason or simply because she loves working. Therefore, the writer is interested to conduct a research entitled “The Guilt of Being a Workaholic Woman in *Landline* by Rainbow Rowell”.

B. LITERARY REVIEW

1. Workaholism

In the book *Chained to the Desk*, the characteristics of workaholic are explained, as well as the characteristics of healthy worker as the comparison. The first characteristic is “workaholics tend to be separatists, preferring to work alone and focusing on the details of their work, to which their egos are attached” (Robinson, 2007: 17). A workaholic may work well in a team; however, he will work better alone because he has control in everything, as well as working in detail. On the other hand, “healthy workers can see the bigger picture and work cooperatively with others toward common goals” (Robinson, 2007: 17). A healthy worker does not tied to his ego and is willing to listen to other people’s idea. Also, he is focused on the bigger concept rather than details.

Healthy workers experience work as a necessary and sometimes fulfilling obligation; workaholics see it as a heaven in a dangerous, emotionally unpredictable world. Healthy workers know when to close the briefcase, mentally switch gears, and be fully present at a son’s Little League game or the celebration of their own wedding

anniversary. Workaholics allow work to engulf all other quarters of life: sales reports litter their dining tables; their desks are covered with dinner plates; commitments to self-care, spiritual life, household chores, friends, partners, and children are frequently broken to meet work deadlines (Robinson, 2007: 17).

The above quote indicates that a workaholic tends to ignore other things than his work. If a workaholic were to ask to make a ranking based on his priority scale, then the first place went to working. It means other aspects of life such as family, friends, including spiritual life will be placed second, third, fourth, and so on as they are not in his top priority. Social bonding, especially, will be placed lower because he does not feel the need to socialize often. Those aspects are of course important to a workaholic, but his desire of working and meeting the deadlines takes over everything resulting in the other aspects looking less important. This kind of thing is clearly different from what a healthy worker does. Even though he is busy, a healthy worker knows well that work is not everything. He will stop working when there is more important matter, such as family gathering. For a healthy worker, the job is important, but it is not his number one priority.

Healthy workers think about and enjoy whatever they're engaged in at the present moment; workaholics think about working a disproportionate amount of time, even during social activities or leisure times, when their minds wander and obsess about work (Robinson, 2007: 17).

The above quote shows that a workaholic is always in a rush. Unfortunately, a workaholic enjoys that kind of hectic activity. Robinson even says that workaholics "seek an emotional and neurophysiological payoff from overwork and get an adrenaline rush from meeting impossible deadlines" (2007: 17). The busier a workaholic gets, the more he feels challenged. This makes a workaholic cannot enjoy leisure time. He hardly has time to relax and escape from work. Every person has to have holiday and time to off from work, however, a workaholic cannot enjoy them properly. He keeps working anytime and anywhere. This is surely in contrast with a healthy worker who knows the high time to work, as well as the high time to enjoy holidays.

2. Stereotypes of Woman

In the book *Masculinity/Femininity: Basic Principles*, several stereotypes of woman are described generally. "Women were creatures of weakness and passion, men of power and rationality" (Reinisch, 1987: 13). This less rational behavior and lack in power may lead to another opinion where a woman is considered as less competent than a man. Woman is often associated with nurturance. It means that woman will be the one who takes care the family and children, as quoted in "women will be assigned baby-sitting duties. In adulthood, mothers are expected to be more involved in the care of their own infants than the fathers" (Reinisch, 1987: 230). All this idea makes woman viewed as being warm, gentle and understanding toward the other's feelings, especially toward their children and family. In the past, people also found it odd when a woman decided to be the financial provider in the household since she is also obliged to handle the family matters. However, being a working woman is common nowadays. Also, in other terms of behavior including conversing, a woman is viewed as a soft creature. She must speak in a soft manner rather than strong.

3. Guilt

In the book *Guilt (Ideas in Psychoanalysis)*, Singh says that "most commonly, people say that guilt 'gnaws', capturing the sense of something inside and inaccessible, attacking one relentlessly. Or it is a burden that one can never shake off" (1996: 4). On the other hand, Winch has different opinion regarding guilt.

Guilt is an extremely common feeling of emotional distress caused by the belief that we have done something wrong or caused harm to another person. We all fail to live up to our own standards from time to time and even the best of us can act in ways that offend, insult, or hurt someone, inadvertently or otherwise (2013: 103).

Based on Winch explanation in *Emotional First Aid*, there are three kinds of guilt. The first guilt is unresolved guilt. The cause of this guilt is the person who suffers guilty feeling is not able to deliver a proper apology. Winch says that "although there are innumerable offenses that can elicit relational guilt, one of the main

reasons our guilt might remain unresolved is that we're much less skilled at rendering effective apologies than we tend to realize" (2013: 105).

The second guilt is survivor guilt. Survivor guilt is "the terrifying guilt that one's survival 'proves' that one failed as a human being to rescue those who died" (Singh, 2000: 9). It does not mean that the situation should happen directly between the person who bears guilty feeling and the other person who is dead. On the other hand, it may be because the person feels responsible toward the death of the other.

The third guilt is separation guilt or disloyalty guilt. Separation guilt and disloyalty guilt are close in meaning, but still different. Separation guilt is when someone is "feeling guilty about moving forward and pursuing our own life when doing so involves leaving others behind" (Winch, 2013: 107). Disloyalty guilt is the guilt that "arises when we feel such binding ties of loyalty to close family members or friends that pursuing our own goals or making choices that deviate from their norms and expectations makes us feel bad" (Winch, 2013: 107).

4. Grief

Grief is one of the emotional feelings experienced by human. It is usually rooted from those who are dying. Overcoming a grief caused by death is as hard as overcoming a guilt. They are both similar. In the book *On Death and Dying* by Kübler-Ross, there are five stages of grief: denial and isolation, anger, bargaining, depression, acceptance.

The first stage is denial. Denial is very typical defense mechanism to refuse a loss. It functions "as a buffer after unexpected shocking news, allows the patient to collect himself and, with time, mobilize other, less radical defenses" (Kübler-Ross, 2009: 32). At first, the person may experience a temporary shock due to the sudden news of death, but he will slowly recover. A person who automatically denies a death or his loss will usually isolate himself too.

The second stage is anger. Continuous denial slowly becomes anger or rage, as said by Kübler-Ross "when the first stage of denial

cannot be maintained any longer, it is replaced by feelings of anger, rage, envy, and resentment" (2009: 40). The person feels almost everything is irritating to him. A small matter may become big because "wherever the patient looks at this time, he will find grievances" (Kübler-Ross, 2009: 41). He envies other people's joy because he cannot do the same. He will do things to make people paying attention and not forgetting him, such as raising his voice, complaining, and crying.

Bargaining is mainly about postponement of a deadline. The deadline itself may be important events even death.

If we have been unable to face the sad facts in the first period and have been angry at people and God in the second phase, maybe we can succeed in entering into some sort of an agreement which may postpone the inevitable happening: "If God has decided to take us from this earth and he did not respond to my angry pleas, he may be more favorable if I ask nicely." We are all familiar with this reaction when we observe our children first demanding, then asking for a favor (Kübler-Ross, 2009: 66).

The third stage is bargaining. The bargain is usually made with God in exchange for additional time for those who are experiencing severe ill and on the verge of death as written in the quote above. However, there is a possibility where the bargain happens between people, again to postpone a deadline.

The fourth stage is depression. Depression emerges in a person's mind when the denial he always performs cannot do him good anymore. It is a result of fear of separation from friends and family. People who are on the verge of death will mostly feel depressed as he cannot accept his fate.

When the terminally ill patient can no longer deny his illness, when he is forced to undergo more surgery or hospitalization, when he begins to have more symptoms or becomes weaker and thinner, he cannot smile it off any more. His numbness or stoicism, his anger and rage will soon be replaced with a sense of great loss. This loss may have many facets: a woman with a breast cancer may react to the loss of her figure; a woman with a cancer of the uterus may feel that she is no longer a woman. Our opera singer responded to the required

surgery of her face and the removal of her teeth with shock, dismay, and the deepest depression. But this is only one of the many losses that such a patient has to endure . . . All these reasons for depressions are well known to everybody who deals with patients. What we often tend to forget, however, is the preparatory grief that the terminally ill patient has to undergo in order to prepare himself for his final separation from this world (Kübler-Ross, 2009: 70, 71).

The fifth stage is acceptance. A person who has been through the previous stages eventually accepts the truth. The burden he was holding is gradually lifted from his shoulder and he will feel at ease. This is the stage of acceptance. By accepting his loss, it does not mean the person surrenders himself to the fate, as explained by a quote below.

Acceptance should not be mistaken for a happy stage. It is almost void of feelings. It is as if the pain had gone, the struggle is over, and there comes a time for “the final rest before the long journey” as one patient phrased it. This is also the time during which the family needs usually more help, understanding, and support than the patient himself (Kübler-Ross, 2009: 92).

Although grief is rooted from death, the five stages above may also be used in almost every life-changing situation, so it does not always all about death. The stages are general reaction towards negative situation, such as divorce, major loss, death of pet, etc. Grief can also be used for resolving conflict.

C. METHODS OF THE STUDY

In this thesis, the writer uses psychological approach and the theory of stereotypes in order to analyze the novel *Landline*. Both the psychological approach and theory of stereotypes are focused on the main character of the novel, Georgie McCool.

As for the methods of data collecting, the writer uses library and internet research. It is resulting in the using of printed books and also e-books for theory references.

D. ANALYSIS

1. Georgie’s Dedication to Working

Georgie is a woman full of ambition. She spends most of her time for working in her office. She finds her passion in writing after she joins *The Spoon* newspaper during her college days. She really likes being there, especially after she meets Seth, her senior at that time, as seen in “By junior year, Georgie and Seth were writing a weekly column together on page two of *The Spoon*. Georgie was finally starting to feel like she belonged on staff. Like she was good enough” (Rowell, 2014: 49). It is the beginning of Georgie’s interest in writing.

Georgie works well during her early years of marriage, but things get worse when she is pregnant of her first child. Georgie does not want to stop working when the baby is born later. She wants to keep working as usual. Georgie forgets that working hard means less time for family. When she realizes it, she fully gives up her child’s care to her husband, Neal. They actually argue about putting the child to a day care. However, Neal does not want their child to be put in there, so he volunteers himself to quit his job and becomes a househusband. He does it so that Georgie will not stop working as a writer. It can be seen from the following quotation.

“There isn’t anything to think about,” he said. “I can do this. You can’t. We don’t need my paycheck.”

“But . . .” Georgie felt like she should argue, but she didn’t know where to start. And, actually, she really, really liked this idea. She already felt better about the baby, knowing that it would be with Neal, that they won’t be turning it (they didn’t know the gender yet, but they’d settled on “Alice” or “Eli”) over to a stranger nine hours a day (Rowell, 2014: 223).

The situation continues even after Georgie’s second child is born. Neal takes care of both of their children while Georgie works.

Aside from Georgie’s ambition and dream as a writer, there seems to be other reasons why Georgie does not want to stop working. One of the reason is Georgie does not actually come from a rich family. Georgie’s parents does not make that much money, as seen in the following

quotation during Georgie's marriage day, "They'd tried to pay for the whole wedding themselves; her mom and Kendrick were already digging deep to buy plane tickets, and Georgie didn't want to ask Neal's parents for help" (Rowell, 2014: 200). Now that Georgie is married, she has to struggle a little harder in order to keep the family's income. If she stops working, it means that they will not have as much money as they have at that time. Georgie unconsciously understand about this. Therefore, Georgie chooses to work even though she has to sacrifice her family.

Another reason is that Georgie does not like working at home or being a housewife. She may sound lazy, but she is diligent when it comes to working in the office. It is because she hates doing household chores. It can be seen from the quotation "That was back when Georgie still pretended to help. When she'd hang out in the kitchen with him and drink wine while she watched him slice vegetables" (Rowell, 2014: 40). Neal is the one who does all the household chores.

After Neal decides to be a househusband, Georgie has a lot of time to think about work. She barely worries about family matter because she has Neal who takes care of everything. It includes children and household chores. This kind of behavior results in Georgie being too comfortable in working. Georgie's dream is to have her own TV show, not just as a scriptwriter. Therefore, she sets her goal high. She puts her work above anything else. In order to realize her dream, she spends more time for working than for gathering with family. It means family's concerns will not be on her number one list. Georgie often comes home late when her children have already slept, so she only meets Neal during late night, as seen in "Neal was in a good mood tonight. Usually when Georgie got home this late . . . Well, usually when Georgie got home this late, he wasn't" (Rowell, 2014: 4).

Georgie is raised in a broken-home family where she does not receive much love and attention from her parents. Therefore, unconsciously, it also affects her daily life. She does not worry much about family. An example is found when Georgie can easily cancel her family vacation in order to work. No one forces her to do so actually, including Seth. Although Seth tries to sway Georgie's mind by saying

"We've already waiting our whole career. This is happening, Georgie. Now. It's finally happening" (Rowell, 2014: 6), the decision is entirely on Georgie's hand. She can reject the job if she wants. However, if she does that, it may affect her future career. She chooses the job instead of the family vacation. Even Georgie's mother worries about Georgie's decision. She calls Georgie to make sure everything is okay.

"I talked to *Neal*," her mom said again. For emphasis. "He told me you guys are spending some time apart.

"*Mom*," Georgie said, bringing her hand back to the receiver. "Only the week.

"He said you were splitting up for Christmas."

"Not like that—why're you making it sound like that? Something just came up for me at work."

"You've never had to work on Christmas before."

"I don't have to work *on* Christmas. I have to work around Christmas. It's complicated." Georgie resisted checking to see if Seth was listening. "It was my decision."

"You *decided* to be alone on Christmas" (Rowell, 2014: 13)

From the above quote, it can be seen that Georgie insists that she is the one who chooses to work. She does not mind missing her family vacation even though it only happens once a year. This shows how much dedication Georgie has given to her job. In addition, Georgie really loves working, as seen in "And because some things were sacred. Not Georgie's life, but work—work was sacred. Seth and Georgie checked their lives at the door, and they worked. And there was something really beautiful in that. Something freeing" (Rowell, 2014: 188).

2. Georgie's Deviation From the Stereotypes of Woman

Georgie's personality also deviates from the stereotypes of woman. First, Georgie is the financial provider in her household. Usually, financial provider is the role of a man. Georgie does not take this role unwillingly. On the contrary, she is the one who wants it since she

does not want to stop working after she gives birth. Georgie wants to work. She wants to be a career woman to fulfill her dreams. Therefore, Neal does not have another choice but to give what Georgie wants. They switch roles since then: Neal is the househusband, and Georgie is the financial provider.

Neal shrugged. "You're going to be miserable if we put this baby in day care."
"I'll get over it," Georgie said. Knowing that she would and feeling guilty about that, too.
"You don't want me to stay home?"
"I haven't thought about it, have you?"
"There isn't anything to think about," he said. "I can do this. You can't. We don't need my paycheck" (Rowell, 2014: 223).

The above quote shows that Georgie is the one who makes money in her household since Neal quits his job. By doing so, she is technically freed from doing household chores because Neal will be the one who takes care of them.

Second, Georgie does not assigned baby-sitting duties. All of her children are being taken care of by her husband, Neal. Georgie has very little meeting time with her children. The loss of Georgie's role in baby-sitting duties results in the distant relationship between Georgie and her children, as seen in "On Saturday mornings when Neal left to run errands, the girls wouldn't ask for breakfast until he came home. When they fell and hurt themselves, they screamed, "Daddy!" (Rowell, 2014: 76). Generally, little children will call for their mother if they have a trouble. However, since the children are closer to Neal than Georgie, they call for Neal instead. This thing breaks Georgie's heart. She feels like her children does not need her at all, and that they does not consider her as an important person in their lives, as seen in "Georgie was extra. She was the fourth wheel. (On something that only needed three wheels. The fourth wheel on a tricycle.) She'd be nothing without them. Nothing. But without her? They'd be exactly the same. And Neal . . . maybe Neal would be happier" (Rowell, 2014: 87).

Georgie also fails to fulfill the virtues of women saying that a woman must be pious, submissive, domestic, and pure. Georgie is not domestic type because she lets Neal to take care of the household while she works in a TV station. Georgie loses her domesticity here. In

addition, Georgie is not submissive because she tends to dominate her husband with her selfish ideas. As for the two virtues, pious and pure, there is no mention about these in the novel.

3. The Guilt Faced by Georgie as a Career Woman, a Wife, and a Mother

As explained in the previous section, Georgie possesses more masculine traits than feminine. As a career woman and a workaholic, such deviation is not supposed to affect Georgie's life. However, the facts happen on the contrary.

After Neal leaves for Omaha, Georgie goes to her mother's house because she dislikes the emptiness of her own house. During Georgie's stay in her mother's house, Georgie is indirectly reminded of the warmth of a family. A family will not be complete if one of the parents is too busy or not present beside the children's daily life. Georgie forgets about this because she does not feel the warmth for a long time due to her parents' divorce. The memory of a warm family triggers Georgie's conscience. The conscience says that she should be present at any family event, and she cannot live far away from them. The conscience finally leads to a guilty feeling within her.

From the explanation in the previous pages, it can be said that Georgie is facing disloyalty guilt. This kind of guilt arises because Georgie fails to fulfill the wish of her family. The family's wish includes a woman must possess the quality of woman, such as taking care of the children and being submissive to the husband. In addition, her family wants Georgie to be present at the family's vacation. However, Georgie fails to fulfill all of these. Therefore, she suffers from the guilt. The explanation of the causes of Georgie's disloyalty guilt are written in the following paragraphs.

First, Georgie's dominant behavior causes Neal to quit his job in order to let Georgie works. Therefore, Georgie will not worry about their children. Second, Georgie fails to be a good mother for her children. Georgie feels guilty because she is not present during the growing period of her children. She misses the golden age where her children learn about many things, and it results in the distant relationship

within Georgie and her children. Third, Georgie feels guilty for not being a good wife.

As for the third guilt, it comes from the major conflict between Georgie and Neal that has been explained in the previous pages. This major guilt causes Georgie realizing all of her mistakes. It is when she takes the offer to work a week towards Christmas. Since she takes the job, Georgie and Neal decide to celebrate Christmas separately. It means Neal and their children fly to Omaha while Georgie stays in Los Angeles to focus on her work. Initially, Georgie feels fine. However, she slowly realizes that it is wrong to put aside her family, therefore she feels guilty afterwards.

The only thing Georgie can do in order to bring back the harmony of her family is to lower her own ego and to be submissive. It means she has to give up her job, apologizes to Neal, and be present in her children's life so that once again she can be a good woman, a good wife and a good mother.

4. Georgie's Attempt to Overcome the Guilt

Georgie suffers from disloyalty guilt that arises because she cannot fulfill her family's wish. She chooses to follow her own idea by working during Christmas. The guilt slowly becomes a burden in Georgie's heart and mind. The burden then affects Georgie's productivity in working, so she cannot concentrate well. Therefore, she needs a resolution so that she can live as usual again.

A method to overcome a guilt is by passing the stages of grief. The first stage is denial. Georgie's denial stage is marked by Georgie's action that does not reflect her guilt at all. She works as usual in her office as if nothing happens to her. She talks with her co-workers with ease and she does not seem worry. It can be seen from the quotation below during a conversation between Seth and Georgie.

He settled against the desk, her side of the desk, next to her keyboard. "So . . ."
"So what?"
"So," he said, "they went to Omaha."
Georgie shook her head, even though the answer was yes. "It made sense. We already had the plane tickets, and I'm going to be

working all week anyway."
"Yeah, but . . ." Seth nudged her arm with his leg. Georgie looked up. "What're you gonna do on Christmas?"

"I'll go to my mom's." It was only sort of a lie. She could still go. Even if her mom wasn't home (Rowell, 2014: 19).

Georgie unconsciously denies that she has a quarrel with Neal, so she keeps calling Neal as usual. However, in fact, Georgie is quarrelling with Neal even before Neal leaves for Omaha. It is because Georgie selfishly wants to cancel their Christmas vacation. Another quote that shows Georgie's denial stage can also be seen in "It was easier when they were working. Easier for Georgie to pretend that nothing was wrong" (Rowell, 2014: 73).

Georgie pretends to be fine. She does not tell anyone about what she is thinking. However, Seth knows that Georgie is not fine at all. Seth knows that Georgie worries about her family, but he does not mention it in front of Georgie. It is all reflected on Georgie's appearance, as seen in "Georgie wasn't any good that morning. Seth was pretending not to notice. He was also pretending not to notice her Metallica T-shirt" (Rowell, 2014: 48). Georgie wears the same clothes for several days. It indicates that she does not go to her house at all, even for changing clothes.

The second stage is anger. Georgie keeps denying herself until she reaches a point where she feels tired of denying. During denial stage, Georgie calls Neal's phone and sends him texts but she does not get any reply. "As soon as she hung up, she felt like an idiot. Because of course he'd be interrupting something. That's why Georgie had stayed in L.A., because she couldn't be interrupted. *Fuck*" (Rowell, 2014: 47). The previous quote is Georgie's condition after her countless attempts to contact Neal are failed. Georgie gets a voice mail from Neal and she sends him one back. Since Georgie's call has never been picked up by Neal, she becomes angry and curses often.

Since she is currently living alone now, Georgie becomes more sensitive than before. She gets annoyed and angry easily. A simple example can be seen when her second daughter disobeys her when she phones her, as quoted in the following.

“Don’t use your mean voice, Mommy.” It was Noomi. Crying. Undoubtedly fake crying. Noomi almost never truly cried; she’d start fake crying long before she arrived at actual tears.

“I’m not using my mean voice, Noomi. How are you?”

“I’m just so sad.”

“Don’t be sad.”

“But you’re using your mean voice, and I don’t like it.”

“Noomi,” Georgie said, in what probably *was* her mean voice. “I wasn’t even talking to you. Calm *down*, for Christ’s sake” (Rowell, 2014: 69).

In the novel, Georgie never swears in front of her children. It is the first time she swears. She does it because she is annoyed at her daughter words that accuses her using a mean voice when Georgie thinks she does not. Actually, Georgie can explain slowly about her situation to her daughter instead of using her mean voice. However, Georgie chooses not to.

The third stage is bargaining. Georgie’s bargaining stage is marked by the finding of the magic landline in her old room. She finally knows that the magic landline is connected to young Neal, as seen from “By the time Georgie pulled into her mom’s driveway, she was 100 percent sure that if she called Neal tonight from the yellow rotary phone, he’d picked it up in the past” (Rowell, 2014: 153). The realization comes to Georgie’s mind after several trials on the landline.

The bargaining stage is mainly about postponing Neal’s break up with Georgie, and at the same time, fixing Georgie and Neal’s relationship. Therefore, she keeps using the magic landline. However, Georgie still wants to find the reason behind the magic landline. She also thinks about what to do with it, as seen in the quote below.

But *what if* . . . Christmas 1998. They fought. Neal went home. He came back. He proposed. They lived not-exactly-happily ever after. Wait, was *that* what she was supposed to fix? The not exactly-happy part? How was she supposed to fix something like that, *over the phone*, when she wasn’t even sure it was fixable? . . . (God, maybe she should test that theory, she could ask him to call her back . . . No. No way.

What if her mom answered and started talking about Alice and Noomi and divorce? What if Georgie herself answered the phone back in 1998 and said something horrible and immature, and ruined everything? Nineteen-ninety-eight Georgie clearly couldn’t be trusted) (Rowell, 2014: 113, 153).

Georgie also hopes the magic landline may give her an answer about her past and about her future with Neal, as quoted in “She felt weird even praying for things—because it didn’t seem like she should ask God for something that wasn’t already part of the plan” (Rowell, 2014: 123). However, in reality, a person cannot change his/her past. Georgie also knows about this. Therefore she keeps using the landline in order to know the reason why Neal comes back to her in 1998, as seen in “Georgie couldn’t change the past—she could only talk at it. If Georgie had a proper time machine, maybe she could actually fix her marriage. She could go back to the moment that everything started to go bad, and change course” (Rowell, 2014: 219).

The fourth stage is depression. The depression stage faced by Georgie starts when she knows she has done wrong to Neal. She never understands what Neal really wants and feels, as seen in “Even on *good* days, Georgie knew Neal was unhappy. And that it was her fault. It wasn’t just that she let him down, and put him off, and continually left him waiting—It was she’d tied him to her so tight” (Rowell, 2014: 122). Dominant Georgie often presses Neal’s will and does not let him doing something he really wants. She only cares for her own wish and desire. Even though Georgie knows about Neal’s feeling, she still does it. However, after Neal is gone, Georgie keeps thinking about her past action and blames herself for not being a good wife. Subsequently, when starts doing it, she becomes more and more depressed. “God. *God*. This was how Georgie had ruined everything. By being really good at something. By being really good *with* someone. By retreating into the part of her life that was easiest. She started crying” (Rowell, 2014: 188).

Generally, tears can be interpreted as a person’s sadness or exhaustion, or in Georgie’s case, depression. Georgie is depressed because she misses Neal and the children. Also, it is

because Georgie does not have any chance to talk with Neal through his mobile phone and landline.

The fifth stage is acceptance. After going through the four stages of grief above, Georgie finally comes to her sense when she suddenly reminds of her happy days with Neal when they get married, as quoted in “She remembered that he was happy. She remembered the way he cupped the back of her head and said, *“From this moment onward. From every moment onward.”* God—had Neal really said that? Had she really only half-understood her own proposal?” (Rowell, 2014: 252). Georgie is too absorbed by her own depression that she forgets the happiness that she and Neal always have between some bad circumstances.

This is where Georgie’s burden about her mistakes little by little becomes lessened. She wants to apologize. Since Neal’s landline cannot be reached anymore, Georgie decides to fly to Omaha to apologize. She is too late actually, because it is Christmas Eve and almost all flights are full. However, she still tries her best and sacrifices everything in order to fix her mistakes. For example, when she intends to buy the plane ticket, she only has one option available, which is the most expensive ticket, as seen in “The ticket was exorbitantly expensive, but Georgie didn’t blink. “You could fly to Singapore for this much,” Estelle said” (Rowell, 2014: 271). Estelle is the airport officer on duty at that time.

Georgie does not mind spending much money as long as she can go back to her family. Her intention is clear: to have a happy Christmas with her family in Omaha. It can be seen from the following quotation.

With every step, Georgie felt more sure of herself. This was what she should have done ten minutes after Neal left last week. Flying across the country to reunite with your true love was always the right move. (Always.) (In every case.) Everything would be all right if Georgie just get to Neal. If she could hear his voice. If she could feel his arms around her (Rowell, 2014: 272).

In the acceptance stage, Georgie accepts all of her mistakes and the consequences she has for abandoning her family. After Georgie abandons her family, her life is empty. She is lonely because she cannot see the faces or hear

the voices of Neal and the children. The consequences may be that Georgie’s marriage is wrecked because of her foolish action for choosing her work over her family. Her children may also hates her after the incident.

Not only the consequences for abandoning her family, she now has a chance of degrading her working performance. Georgie leaves her job and her co-workers without any permission in order to meet her family. It means she abandons her pilot script that will help her to achieve her dream. Therefore, there is a possibility where Georgie and her co-workers fail to meet their expectation and results in the rejection of the new show. Georgie knows the consequences well yet she still makes her way to Omaha. After she arrives in Omaha, she is grateful for finally choosing her family over her job, as seen in “She was here. And it didn’t fix anything. It didn’t change anything. She still had her job. And the meeting maybe. She still had Seth to sort out—or not. Georgie hadn’t made any real decisions . . . But for once she’d made the right choice” (Rowell, 2014: 297). “The right choice” means Georgie’s family. She realizes her mistakes and her role as a wife and a mother, therefore she temporarily gives up her “career woman” title for her family.

E. CONCLUSION

Georgie dedicates her life to work more than she dedicates herself to her family. She really likes working, and it turns her into a workaholic that will do anything to keep her work on top. Also, from the discussion in the previous chapter, it can be concluded that Georgie has more masculine traits than feminine. Georgie’s personality also does not fit the stereotypes of woman who is domestic and submissive. It can be understood because Georgie has various roles, such as a career woman, a wife, and a mother. However, Georgie cannot fully balance those three roles because she is a workaholic, so she prioritizes her job more than her family.

Since Georgie cannot fulfill the demands of being a wife and a mother, it triggers guilty feeling inside Georgie’s self. Georgie faces disloyalty guilt toward her family for not being able to meet their wish. The guilt itself is a proof that shows no matter how successful a woman is, she cannot abandon her family. The proof

also applies to Georgie as the guilt keeps lingering within her. It makes Georgie lose her concentration and productivity during working. In order to banish the guilt, Georgie must sacrifice her ego of being dominant and change it into submissive, at least to her husband. Georgie also faces the stages of grief, including denial, anger, bargaining, depression, and acceptance. Georgie passes all of the stages of grief with many difficulties and reunites with her family again.

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