



GRIEF JOURNEY IN BILL CLEGG'S NOVEL DID YOU EVER HAVE A FAMILY (2015)

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Abstract

This thesis is a psychoanalysis reading of a novel which is written by Bill Clegg entitled *Did You Ever Have a Family* (2015). It explores the issue of grief journey which is experienced by main character before she is managed to heal from her grief. The analysis of grief journey is used the concept of Elisabeth Kubler Ross (1969) of five stages of grief. It is also intended to find out the contribution of multiple narrators in revealing the issue of grief journey. The result of this analysis shows the depiction of main character's grief journey from multiple characters' perspective.

Key words: *Grief, Loss, Five stages of grief, Multiple-narrators.*

A. INTRODUCTION

Literature reflects the issue in human life. One of the issue is grief. Grief in literature has a big contribution in healing person's grief. Grief in literature is also the recognition that every person has their own grief. Grief is triggered due to the loss of griever. It can be relationship, developmental losses, object, and some aspect of self. From four types of loss, relationship loss is the most excessive grief happens in life (Rando, 1986). This issue is reflected in a Bill Clegg's Novel.

A novel entitled *Did You Ever Have a Family* (2015) by Bill Clegg reflects the issue of grief journey. The issue of grief journey is reflected by the main character in undergoing the five stages of grief. It is represented by the main character, June Reid whose family tragically died in the incident of fire before her daughter's wedding. The story starts with the event which put June in despairing tragedy. The tragedy forces her to loss everything she had. The tragedy happens in the night before her daughter's wedding. This tragedy crosses out her family and burns all her stuffs down. The tragedy also triggered June's guilt. The guilt is created due to her absence that night.

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B. RESEARCH METHOD

This research is descriptive research since the data in this research will be elaborated in form of explanation and classification. Herbert and Elana Shohamy (1989) opine that descriptive research is a way which is used to describe the result of research without manipulation. The analysis will focus on analyzing main character's grief from multiple point of views. The object of this research is Clegg's novel *Did You Ever Have a Family* (2015). The analysis will pass four stages (reading, sorting, categorizing, and analyzing) the data which are related to the Ross (1969) concept of five stages of grief.

C. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

1. Denial

1.1. General Narrator's Perspective

Denial is the first phase of healing process from grief. The manifestations of this stage can be many things such as isolation, the act of remembrance and etc. The first quotation is seen from general narrator's perspective. The narrator is omniscient. The narration is in the quotation below:

She will go. Tuck into her Subaru wagon and roll down these twisting, potholed country roads until she finds a highway, point west and away. She will keep going for as long and as far as possible without passport, since the one she had no longer exists. Her driver's license, along with everything else that had been in the house, is also gone, but she figures she won't need it unless she is pulled over for speeding. She had not planned on leaving this particular morning, but after she wakes and showers and slowly puts on the jeans and blue-and-white-striped, boat neck, cotton jersey she has been wearing for weeks, she knows it's time(p.7)

The statement from the narrator which examine June's event mentions that she is in grieving process. It is indicated through the words *wander* and *keep going as long as possible*. Her wandering indicates June's denial stage by starting to isolate herself during the life after the tragedy. Moreover, another characteristic is the reason behind June's wandering. From that reason *since the one she had no longer exists*, it can be examined that June is going to isolate herself by wandering pointlessly.

Since she experiences the relationship loss, she also loses her soberness. It is proven by looking at narrator's point of view through her action. By not bringing the passport, driver's license, and pulling over speed limit are the proof that she does not use her brain normally and showing her state of unready in facing the actual reality. The explanation above is related to the Ross (1969) concept of denial stage which explains This stage only shows up when the griever is not ready to face the reality.

1.2.Rebecca's Perspective

The denial phase can also be seen from the perspective of Rebecca who is the inn keeper where June stay. Rebecca's perspective is narrated from first person point of view. She examines June's denial stage as seen in the quotation below:

Why this woman would want to stay here as long as she has is not our business, but of course I wonder. When checked in, she had no ID. She'd lost her driver's license, she explained, and then asked if she could pay cash, a month in advance. I called Kelly, who is better judge of character than I am, to come over from the house before agreeing.....When I showed her to room, I offered to give her a little tour, but she politely declined. She simply unlocked the door with the key, went it without another word, and stayed inside for nearly a week.(p.61)

By stating another narrator which examines June's denial phase, it can be more convincing that June is in the grieving process. Due to the use of first person point of view, Rebecca indirectly becomes the witness of June's grief. From the quotation above, it reveals that June tends to isolate herself when she is in grieving process. It is depicted from the sentences *she simply unlocked the door with the key, went it without another word, and stayed inside for nearly a week*. Because of that reason, what have been seen by Rebecca is the representation of June's denial stage.

Later, it can be determined whether the silent of her is the surplus or the manifestation of her anger. The explanation above is related to denial state. Because, Ross (1969) mentions that one of the manifestation of denial stage is isolation.

1.3. Dale's Perspective

The quotation below is narrated from Dale's perspective who is Will's father (Lolly's spouse). It is narrated from first point of view. Dale examine June's denial stage as below:

It led to a big fight and Lolly of course won. But before it was over, it got heated and Pru went for a walk to clear her head and get a little distance from the tension. Later, on the way back to the house, she said she found June sitting on a fallen tree in the woods with her arms holding her sides, gently rocking. Pru didn't want to alarm her but it was too late to walk away. When June saw her, she waved her over and wiped tears from her face. Pru asked if she was okay, and June answered with a question that seemed to Pru more of a comment on June's struggles with Lolly: *Did you ever have a family?*(p.129)

It shows that the relationship between June and Lolly is not quiet harmony. Lolly always wins in every dispute with her mother. This kind of event is the sign that Lolly lose her respect to her mother. From Dale perspective, June has lost her

intimacy with her daughter. Even long before the tragedy, June has lost one of the purpose of her life (Lolly).

By examining from the event which displays June sit alone after her dispute with lolly, June has lost her daughter long before her daughter died. It is seen from the utterance *June sitting on a fallen tree in the woods with her arms holding her sides*. She begins to bring out the isolation sign such as sitting alone and her question. It is in accordance with Ross (1969) statement of isolation as the manifestation of denial stage.

The bad relation between parent and the children may bring June to overthink and depress. Interestingly, the title of the book is come up in this quotation. June's question confirms that she confronts the family problem which probably she thinks that her family is only the one she were born with. The fact that family does not only the one you were born with but also the one you live with.

1.4. Rick's Perspective

The next quotation is from the perspective of Rick. He is a caterer for Lolly's Wedding. Rick's perspective is narrated from first person point of view as in the quotation below:

I guess she probably still does, but we haven't seen her around here in a while. She took off months ago, and who can blame her? She pulled herself together for the funerals. Kept her distance from everyone in town, and then was gone(p.47)

In order to strengthen that June really experiences the denial phase, the quotation shows June's grief from different narrators (Rick). From his perspective, it can be seen that June is emotionally negative. She feels the sorrow, misery by herself due to none of her things left. The act of pulling herself for the funeral indicates that she deny everything that happen to her. Keeping the distance from everyone in town is also the proof that she isolates herself. It will reduce her socializing time and the ability to heal from her own grief.

1.5. Lolly's Perspective

The next quotation shows the problem with her daughter before the tragedy which creates June's guilt. Lolly is June's daughter. The quotation below is narrated from first point of view:

This is how it's been for me, with you. I only really saw you once you left daddy, and I didn't like it what I saw. I couldn't understand why you would leave him after all those years together. How you could choose career over both of us. I still don't understand if I am really being honest. But, it's only lately that I can see that what I can and can't see doesn't matter(p.193)

The only chapter which has written in italic is from Lolly's perspective. The chapter is about the unsent letter that June find after the tragedy. From her perspective, June has lost her daughter since the divorce between June and her ex-

husband (Adam). For Lolly, this kind of action make her think that June has failed to be both wife and mother. At this point, from her perspective, June has lost his daughter long before the tragedy that kill Lolly. For June, it worsens her condition. It is also created additional June guilt. The first guilt is June the only one is alive after the tragedy and failed to be both mother and wife. The additional guilts add more June's will to isolate herself.

1.6. Edith's Perspective

Another narrators which tell the June's grief is Edith. Edith is a florist who is hired by June to send the flower for his daughter's wedding:

When I drove over to June Reid's that morning with the daisies and saw the nightmare surrounding her property-all that smoke, the old-stone house destroyed by fire, the empty tent- I did not stop. I just kept driving. Without thinking, I drove straight to my sister's place, where we sat and drank a pot of mint tea picked fresh from garden. She's already been called-by whom I don't know-and she told what happened. Killed, all of them- the young couple, June's ex-husband, and that doomed Luke Morey. (p.26)

From the perspective of Edith, it seems like she really feel the tragedy that befalls upon June's life. Because of the use of the first person point of view makes the depiction that June experiences and feel deep misery in her life from Edith perspective. Beside losing all the relation with her beloved thing, she makes Luke to blame because of the accident. The word *Killed* does not only present that this accident cross out June's entire ties, but also kill her life. The representation of June's bereavement is the meaning of her loneliness. Loneliness in the griever makes a bigger potentation for the griever to isolate oneself. This despairing tragedy may trigger June's feeling upon herself. She may think of that she is the weakest, and smallest person in the world. It puts June in great denial and depression.

By examining from six perspectives above, it can be seen that June undergoes this denial stage. the manifestation of this stage can be her negative opinion toward herself, isolation, creating her preferable reality, and denying the actual reality.

2. Anger

Anger is the second stage of June grieving process. In June case, this stage can is seen through general narrator's perspective and Dale's perspective. June's anger projects internally which means she burst out her anger toward herself. The manifestations of this stage are her silent and her blame toward her past decision.

2.1. General Narrator's Perspective

General narrator's is narrated from third-person point of view. In the explanation below, it can be examined what types of anger which June undergoes. As the quotaion below:

The police never questioned her again about what happened that night and following morning. Friends

stopped asking her the same safe questions-was she okay, did she need anything-when she didn't respond. A tin smile, a blank stare, and turning her head away discouraged even the most persistent(p.10)

From general narrator's perspective, June's anger state is seen through her silent. As it explained by Ross (1969) that anger manifests in two ways (external/internal). In June's case, she tries not to burst out her anger to external entity. This kind of manifestation is heavier than the anger which includes external entity as the impingement of the anger. Because silent anger does not have any target to release the anger. The silent anger can be seen from the June's act which only answers the question by smiling, staring, and turning head. These acts can be the manifestation of her anger and disappointment. Another depiction of June's anger stage is in the quotation below:

Her eyes look at what is ahead-the road, a fallen tree-but her mind scours the past, judges each choice made, relives every failure, roots out what she overlooked, took for granted, and didn't pay attention to(p.85)

The quotation above does not only reveal her denial state but also her anger. It is indicated through her mind which blame on her decision. The state of anger is full of the blaming action. From the words *roots out what she overlooked*, it can be seen that the appearing of anger is caused by her remorse of her past which the trigger of blaming. Based on Halperin (2013), in anger stage, the griever tend to blame anything. In June's case, the utterances *didn't pay attentions* and *judges each choice made* are the embodiment of her carelessness and blaming action which affect her present life. Due to that reason, she regrets and blame of everything which have happened in the past.

2.2. Dale's Perspective

Beside general narrator's perspective, Dale also become the witness of June's anger stage. The explanation also empowers and determine June's anger stage. It can be seen from the quotation below:

A light mist was in the gusting wind, and by the time we reached the Moonstone we were drenched. The lights in Room 6 were on, and as we neared the building, we saw Cissy step out the door, shut it behind her, and head toward home. Before the door was closed all the way, we could see June, arms across her chest, standing very still(p.214)

Beside Dale, the use of the word *We* means there are more than one observers in examining June's life. *We* refers to the Dale family including Mimi, Mike, and Pru. It means, it is more reliable than the previous one. They examine June's feeling and mind are mixed. She is directionless. The last sentence of the quotation describes her feelings and minds are in madness. By seeing her standing vacantly and crossing her arms, it stimulates the idea of her condition which regret and mad toward the reality. From the quotation, it can be seen that June expressed her anger toward herself. Anger can move to all direction including griever's self

and environmental area randomly (Ross,1969). In June case, her anger protrude onto herself.

From two perspectives which have been explained above, June experiences the anger state. Anger can manifest to herself or external entity. In June's case, she is anger silently which means she expresses her misery toward herself. The manifestation can be her silent, and her blaming toward her decision in the past.

3. Bargaining

Bargaining is the third process of grieving. This stage is mostly appear in main character's mind. That is why this stage can only be detected from general narrator's perspective. The manifestations of this stage are main character's *If* and *Wish*.

3.1. General Narrators's Perspective

This stage is only observed from general narrator's perspective. Because it is narrated from third person (omniscient) point of view. It can be seen from the quotation below:

She could see the future that day, but she failed to see Lolly. Failed to think through the next steps carefully. Failed to resist Adam's desperate plea not to tell their daughter about the affair and failed to see how not telling her the truth would shape everything between them after. She moved too fast forward that table and she moved to fast after-to court, to agree with Adam, to London. She knows that if she could retrace her steps after that phone call from Peg, rethink every decision that followed, she would not be standing on the shore of a lake in the middle of nowhere. And everyone would be alive(p.97)

Before explaining bargaining stage from other perspective. The analysis of bargaining state has special treatment. Due to the bargaining stage mainly appear in character's mind, this stage can only be seen from general narrator's perspective. Because, the narrator knows the all things (omniscient) when it tells about June's event. Bargaining state does not have any particular function. The function is only to fulfill the griver's desire.

As the quotation above shows June's supposition, it stimulates the idea of bargaining stage. Every failure, choice, and decision which have been chosen by her become the trigger of her anger and bargaining stage. In this stage, she will ask for impossible thing. It can be seen from the utterance *if she could retrace her steps*. In this case, June want to repeat the time when she does not do her whole mistake yet. She fails to save her relationship between her and her daughter. The lost of Lolly is the most crucial reason to put June in grieving process and the bargaining stage. It is signed with the word *If* as it is mentioned by Ross (1969) that one of the characteristic of bargaining stage is from griever's supposition. June bargaining phase is also depicted in the following quotation:

She is at the sink filling the kettle with water to boil for more chamomile tea. Her hands are shaking. She wishes she could return to how it was earlier in the day. Everything until now had gone on without incident(p.164)

The previous explanation of bargaining stage illustrates that this stage is signed with the word *If*. It means that it talks about the supposition. The quotation above have another characteristic of main character's supposition. It is indicated with the word *Wish*. It is in accordance with the explanation of Masa'Deh *et al* (2017) that discussed another characteristics of bargaining stage. They mention the griever's wish is the sign of bargaining stage. *Wish* has the similar function. It functionates to mark June's wish to get back to the past. By going back to the past, she has not to face the reality that she has suffered herself and a lot of people around her.

4. Depression

Depression appears after the the main character give up on chaning the reality. In this stage, the main character surrounds with her feeling of sadness and sorrow. However, the main character starts to accept the reality in depression stage. The manifestations of this stage are reduction of main character's physical health, reduction of socializing time, and her surrender to change the reality.

4.1. General Narrator's Perspective

The first perspective is from general narrator's perspective. It examines June's surrender in changing the reality. Yet, June is still in deep sadness and sorrow. It is depicted in the quotation below:

She will stay here for as long as she needs to, maybe forever, she thinks as she switches the light off and lays her head on the pillow. She hears the ocean outside, pounding the shore, over and over, and for the first time she allows herself to remember that night, does not will it away(p.253)

The quotation above shows that June no longer deny her reality. Even the act of remembrance appears in this quotation. It does not mean that this event belongs to the denial stage. Because, the quotation above does not have any the act of denial which appears in June action. She tries to relax her life by accepting the painful reality. It is seen through the words *she thinks as she switches the light off and lays her head on the pillow*. The act of remembrance in this quotation shows that she still cannot move on from her sadness, sorrow, and painful incident which put her in grieving process.

From the narration, June is depressed and tired. Yet, she starts to accept the reality. As it explained by Hango (2015), the depression will appear when the griever has ultimately surrender to change the reality. It is proven from the word *stay* which indicates June's will to take a rest and surrender in changing the reality.

4.2. Rebecca's Perspective

The second perspective is seen from Rebecca's perspective. Rebecca become the witness of June depression stage. It happens because June undergoes this stage in the motel where Rebecca works. It is explained in the quotation below:

I've been worried since the day she arrived. Something about the way she dragged herself when she walked, her exhaustion, and the limit to how much she could engage, the way her eyes were open physically but in every other way were shut. It was a look I recognized. *What if she's come to die here? What then?* I asked Kelly after the New Year. *Then she's come here to die and there's we can or should do about it,* she answered, matter-of-fact, as usual(p.100)

From Rebecca's perspective, All of efforts in anger and bargaining phase have been passed by June. June has ultimately surrender to change the fact the she loses everything. The griever gives up in changing the reality is the characteristics of depression phase (Hango,2015). The descriptions which Rebecca examines are the characteristic of depression stage. It means, in this stage June starts to accept the reality. Yet, she still have the feeling of sorrow and sadness. The first sentence states that June have lived in motel for quiet long. It can be assumed that as long as she lives in that motel she have passed the three stages of grief.

4.3. Kelly's Perspective

Kelly is the next character which examine June's depression. Kelly is also the worker in the motel where June stay. It is seen from the quotation below:

I turned back to the Moonstone and started walking home. The only lights on now were from Room 6. Jane. Probably the most alone person I've ever met. I'd seen plenty of lonely travelers, but no one like Jane, who seemed half in the world and half out of it. She has been, in the few times I've actually seen and spoken with her, nearly without life(p.136)

What have been told by Kelly that June is in depression. The words *Seemed half in the world and half out of it* depict that she has no pleasure or joy in her life. Sleeping may be problematic for her. It is related from what have been mentioned by Masa'Deh *et al* (2017). The griever may impact on griever's physical health and social life. When a person (June) depressed, June will lose the soberness. She look at everything vacantly and cannot focus. It due to the stage of depression where sleep is nearly impossible for people with depression. The problem in sleeping will impact on June's appearance. It brings out the idea of June does exist but not alive.

By looking to the three perspectives above, June is depressed. June's depression is seen through her will to accept the reality but still in deep misery. From those explanations, reduction of physical health, and socializing time are the

sign of depression stage. June surrender to change her actual reality is also the characteristics of this stage.

5. Acceptance

Acceptance is the last stage of June's grieving process. It is seen from general narrator's perspective and Cissy's perspective. June' acceptance is seen through the appearing of her hope, and her apology.

5.1. General Narrator's Perspective

The first proof is from general narrator's perspective. It observes June's new hope and June's apology toward Lydia. It is depicted as the quotation below:

Through the porch door and into the house-the kitchen, the bedroom, the living room, the bathroom, where ever he is. Soon, she will find him, and for once she will not worry or be annoyed or impatient or afraid.

She hears him moving quickly through her house. He has shouted something but she is too far away to hear. It sounds like her name. She will ask him to forgive her. And she will say yes(p.274)

Conversely from the previous stage, in this stage, June shows her confidence rather than her sadness. It can be seen from the words *Will* which generate June positive feelings. Moreover, these words exhibit June's new hope. The appearing of new hope is the sign of acceptance stage (Ross,1969) The hope is about June's will to redeem her fault toward Luke in the past. At the end of the quotation, June will not deliver her *Yes* to Luke. Because the fact that Luke has died. The word *Yes* refers to June's will to fix and apologize her relation between her and Luke's mother. It is also the embodiment of June's apology toward Lydia and Luke's life.

5.2. Cissy's Perspective

Beside narrator's perspective, Cissy is also the witness of June's acceptance phase. From her perspective, every people have their own role in helping people. It represent that the last stage can be reached by the external helps. It can be seen from the quotation below:

After Will died, I expected I'd run through all the surprises. That everyone who would play apart or turn up would have done so by then. I settled in and did my bit at work and at home, and that, I thought, was that. And the a woman called herself Jane checked into Room 6. And she stayed(p.244)

From her perspective, she assumes that she will play her role to be part of June's life. It does not mean she want to intervence June's business. However, as the person who have experienced grief, Cissy want to be the player which funcionate as June's healer. Since the beginning of June's life in the motel, Cissy takes care of all her needs. From this statement, it can be seen that griever is healed from grief because of her new hope and the external helps (Ross, 1969).

D. CONCLUSION

This thesis has looked at the issue of grief journey in the novel of Bill Clegg's *Did You Ever Have a Family* (2015). From the forgoing discussion it can be clearly concluded that grief journey is a natural process for people who are bereaved. Bereaved people will undergo the five stages of grief naturally. A griever is healed when one has reached the acceptance stage in grief journey.

In undergoing the grief journey, the main character in this novel has its own different and unique way to reach the final stage. The main character also has particular manifestations in coping from each stage of grief. During the grieving process, bereaved person only need to be given appropriate amount of time in accepting one's grief and finding the meanings in life.

In conclusion, it can be inferred that denial stage mostly appears when the main character is in grieving process. In main character's case, denial stage is the most prominent during her grieving process. Denial stage can be seen from many character's perspective whether one has a close relationship or not. Denial is also the easiest and instant way to deflect the griever's reality. Denial stage becomes the most dominant way in grief experience. Lastly, the element of multiple narrators/multiple character perspective is effective in revealing the grief experience in this novel.

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