CHAPTER IV

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

This chapter describes analysis of Marguerite's experience of sexual violence written in autobiographical novel 'I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings'. Then, the analysis focuses on the triggers and the impact of sexual violence in Marguerite's life.

4.1 Sexual Violence

4.1.1 Sexual Assault

Marguerite is the main character of an autobiography "I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings" who experienced sexual assault by her mother's lover, Mr. Freeman. Sexual assault happens when one-night Marguerite had a nightmare then her mom took her to sleep in her bed. Mr. Freeman, Vivian, and Marguerite slept together in a bed.

> "One morning she got out of bed for an early errand and I fell a sleep again. **But I awoke to a pressure, strange feeling on my left leg.**It was too soft to be a hand, and it wasn't the sensation in all the years of sleeping with Momma. It didn't move, and I was too startled too. I turned my head a little to the left to see if Mr. Freeman was awake and gone, but his eyes were open and both hands were above the cover. I knew, as if I had always known. **It was his "thing" on my leg.**" (2015:75)

In this quotation shows one of the sexual assault experienced by Marguerite. The incident happened when Vivian, her mother went to work early in the morning, she left Marguerite and Mr. Freeman in bed alone. Vivian did not realize what happened to Marguerite. She even had no slightest idea that Mr. Freeman would take an advantage from her daughter.

Mr. Freeman touched Marguerite's leg using his genital. It was the part of sexual assault because according to Young (2004: 7) when the perpetrator touches and fondled the victim, it can be categorized as sexual assault. However, Marguerite was still clueless and innocent. She was still 8 years old when it happened, she did not know that she was sexually assaulted. As described in the quotation that Marguerite just woke up and felt a strange feeling of pressure on her left leg and she just confused. She even wondered what pressing her legs which she thought as softer than a hand. However, then she realized that it was Mr. Freeman's "thing." Marguerite described genital as a "thing" because she did not know specific term like penis or genital

The chosen diction to portray Marguerite's experience such as "strange feeling", "pressure", "sensation", "hand", and "a thing" clearly show that she had no slightest idea what was happened to her. The chosen diction and description emphasize the experience of innocent girl.

The next day, Mr. Freeman did the sexual assault again toward Marguerite; see the quote below.

> "Mr. Freeman **pulled me to him**, and **put his hand between my legs**. He didn't hurt, but Momma had drilled into my head, "Keep your legs closed, and don't let nobody see your pocketbook."
>
> "Now, I didn't hurt you, **Don't get scared."** He threw back the blankets and **his "thing" stood up like a brown ear of corn. He took my hand and said," Feel it "** it was mushy and squirmy like the inside of freshly chicken, then he dragged me on top of his chest with his left arms, and his right hand was moving so fast and his heart was beating so hard that I was afraid that he would die. Ghost stories revealed how people who died wouldn't let go of whatever they were holding. I wondered if Mr. Freeman died holding me how I would get free. Would they have to break his arms to get me loose?" (2015:73)

In the quotation above Marguerite told what Mr. Freeman did to her in detail. Although she elaborated every step what Mr. Freeman did, the point of view of describing the incident is from the little child view point. When Mr. Freeman put his hand between Marguerite legs, she remembered what her grandma said that she must protect her chastity do not ever open her legs, and "don't let nobody see your pocketbook" which means that she should keep her legs close if someone tries to open her legs and see her vagina. This warning was to prevent her to get sexual assault. However, Marguerite could not refuse Mr. Freeman's order because she regarded him as a father, a figure that she never had. Moreover, he assured her that he wouldn't hurt her.

Mr. Freeman was aware of Marguerite's innocence. It made him attempt to approach her slowly to make her think that it is not a sexual assault. Then he started his action by showing his genital to her and opening the blanket covering her. Looking at his genital, he asked her to touch it. It was a form of sexual assault that he asked her to help him masturbating. Innocently she just followed what he

ordered. She did not even know what he did to her. She just said that his genital was like a fresh chicken meat. She was even scared and confused that he would die because his heart was beating so fast and she compared it to horror film. It was a common reaction from children at her age. Children who is still innocence was often easily deceived and abused, just like what Marguerite.

After sexually assaulting her, Mr. Freeman neglected her for days. Still, he did it again as described in the lines below:

> "At first Mr. Freeman sat still, not holding me or anything, then I felt a **soft lump** under my thigh begin to move. It switched against me and **started to harden**. Then he pulled me to his chest he smelled of coal of dust and grease and he was so close I buried my face in his shirt and listened to his heart, it was beating just for me. Only I could hear the thud, only I could feel the jumping of my face. He said,"**sit still stop squirming**." But all the time, he pushed me around on his lap, then suddenly he stood up and I slipped down to the floor. **He ran to the bathroom."** (2015:75)

Mr. Freeman did the assault with a different way but still made him masturbation. This time he did not ask her to touch his genital but used her body to make him masturbate by rubbing and pressing his genital under her lap. Apparently, body posture also affects because children have a low body weight easing the perpetrator to lift them. Marguerite was easily lifted and seated on his lap while her innocent makes her cannot figured out what he did to her. Then Mr. Freeman slided her down when he was on climax and ran to the toilet to dumb his cum.

From those events, it can be concluded that she was sexually assaulted by being touched, groped, and forced to touch his genital. Young (2004) said that

sexual assault can be depicted as attempted rape, fondling or unwanted sexual touching. Furthermore, Mr. Freeman also masturbated twice and used her body for it. Marguerite's reaction to the assault was so innocent; after being sexually assaulted twice, she still did not understand what he did to her. Mr. Freeman forced and fooled Marguerite and he also took an advantage from Marguerite's innocence. Since the story is narrated from the first-person point of view and the agent that experienced the event still eight years old, children's voice is use to delivers the story.

4.1.2 Rape

Marguerite had sexual violence twice, the sexual assault and rape. As we can see in the quotes below:

> "**His legs was squeezing my waist**. "**pull down your drawers**." I hesitated for two reasons: **he was holding me too tight to move**, and I was sure that any minute my mother or Bailey or the Green Hornet would bust in the door and save me.
> "We just playing before." He **released me enough to snatch down my bloomers**, and then **he dragged me closer to him**. Turning the radio up loud, he said," If you scream I'm gonna kill you. And if you tell, I'm gonna kill Bailey."
> "I could tell he meant what he said. I couldn't understand why he wanted to kill my brother. Neither of us had done anything to him. And then.
> Then there was the pain. **A breaking and entering when even the senses are torn apart.** The act of rape on an eight- year-old body is a matter of the needle giving because the camel can't. the child gives, because the body can, and the mind of the violator cannot.
> I thought I had died, I woke up in a white-wall world, and it had to be heaven. But Mr. Freeman was there and he washing me. His hands shook, but he held me upright in the tub and washed my legs." I didn't meant to hurt you, Ritie."(2015:78)

These quotations tells when Marguerite was raped by Mr. Freeman, Marguerite tried to describe Mr. Freeman's action to her by mentioning that "his legs was squeezing my waist." With word *squeezing* it clearly explains that Mr. Freeman hand touched the part of Marguerite's body and his statement "We just playing before" is a clue that he wanted more than before. Afterward, Mr. Freeman told Marguerite to pull down her "thing", he said *"pull down your drawers."* And *then there was the pain.* ***A breaking and entering when even the senses are torn apart.*** The bold words indicate what she felt. It was hurt because it was her first time. Hence, that word is depicted sexual penetration as the part of rape action experienced by Marguerite.

Adults perpetrator tend to act gently toward children to manipulate the child that is sexually assault as Mr. Freeman did to Marguerite. Mr. Freeman tried to cover his action with his sweet words and tried to make Marguerite follow what he wanted. In fact, he committed rape action to Marguerite.

The description of rape is elaborated through Marguerite 's utterance yet there were two viewpoints: 8 years old innocent Marguerite and mature Marguerite who were aware of the rape. The second paragraph shows mature Marguerite "The act of rape on an eight- year-old body is a matter of the needle giving because the camel can't. The narrator analogized the rape action with needle and camel. Needle represented Marguerite and camel represented Mr. Freeman. This analogy depicts camel that urge to enter the needle hole. Needle is an inanimate object that cannot think so it cannot refuse as Marguerite who is just a child who couldn't resist and refuse the sexual assault. This viewpoint is

no longer shows innocence Marguerite. There was a word "violator" which means she already knew the status of Mr. Freeman and what he did to her.

4.2 The triggers of Marguerite's sexual violence

The sub chapter elaborates the trigger of of sexual violence experienced by Marguerite above using the concept of Sexual politics by Kate Millett

4.2.1 Sociological

Millett stated that relationship between men and women constitutes the power of patriarchal system (1970:23). Men lead and control a family in patriarchal system. Although Mr. Freeman was not a father and a husband in the family, he was the one providing family necessity. As seen below:

> "although [Vivian] was a nurse, she never worked her profession while we were with her. Mr. Freeman brought in the necessaries and she earned extra money cutting poker games in gambling parlor. (2015:70)

The quotation above shows the important role of Mr. Freeman in the family. He was the householder and Vivian only earned extra money for the family. Vivian treated him as the head of the family. She prepared meal for him and carefully covered it. It shows her respect toward him, as the quotation below shows.

> "Mr. Freeman was a foreman in the Southern Pasific yards and came home late sometimes, after Mother had gone out. He took his dinner off the stove where she had carefully covered it and which she had admonished us not to brother." (2015:70)

As the substitution of husband and father in the family, Mr. Freeman had a privilege and was dominant in the family. This leads him to do whatever he wanted. His role as father in the family made him unimpede to assault Marguerite sexually.

To cover his action, he threatened Marguerite not to tell it to anyone. The words *"if you scream"* was a warning to make Marguerite follow his instruction. Moreover, he threatened that he would kill Marguerite's brother if she told anyone that she was raped. Still, Marguerite confused on the threat as showed by the lines below:

> "**what had we done**? **We**? Obviously he didn't mean peeing in the bed. I didn't understand didn't dare ask him. It had something to do with his holding me."(2015:74)

The threat represents the power he had. Marguerite followed every order he asked because he was the head of the family and an adult while she was only a child too naive to understand the situation. In addition, Marguerite did not understand what he did to her. She even confused why he threatened her because she did not think she did something wrong.

Marguerite was so perplexed because at the first time he hugged her, she thought he treated her as his daughter. She did not realize that it was a sexual assault. Marguerite as a child and girl was dominated by Mr. Freeman as a father, an adult, and a man.

Thus, Marguerite age and innocent become one of factor of sexual violence to happen. Hence, the social system that regard men the owner of the family make Mr. Freeman act unimpeded.

4.2.2 Ideological

Sexual violence toward women is also influenced by ideological aspect triggered by patriarchal system. The system gives privilege to men. As quotations below shows when Bailey came home late from movie and Momma needed to punish him yet she did not because she did not have a heart to do it to him and thus let his uncle punish him.

> "uncle Willie had a leather belt in his good hand but Bailey didn't **notice or didn't care.** "I'm going to **whip you this time**" (2015:116)

Bailey were did not care because that uncle Willie had never punished him before despite his wild behaviour. Marguerite has acknowledged it as shown when she narrated her brother that rarely got punished because he was the heir of the family. Men privilege is also occurred in the novel that Marguerite read.

> "Horatio Alger was the greatest writer in the world. **His heroes was always good, always won and were always boy"** (2015:75)

The author of that book was Alger from Massachusetts who mostly wrote about men domination like *Struggling Upward; or, Luke Larkin's Luck(1868)*. That book told that Luke acted like a hero who solved bank robbery. The narration on the book that is read by Marguerite shows the ideology on men supremacy which is socialized through their reading. Literary works are considered to give more influence and easily spread in the society. Moreover, its constant exposure could change people's mind. Marguerite read a lot, in this condition Marguerite tried to relate her condition with the book she had read, and also correct the idea in the book.

Marguerite assumed that *"His heroes was always good, always won and were always boy"* was her imagery of Mr. Freeman. Marguerite thought Mr. Freeman would be a good father who would take care of her, Bailey, and Vivian. However, she was wrong because he did not protect her, otherwise he assaulted her sexually. She realized after it happened and he ignored her. It happened because of her innocence and Mr. Freeman domination.

The domination is related to sexual politics by Kate Millet in ideological aspects. In ideological aspect Millett argued that there are a stereotype on sex role between men and women. Millett explained that status between men and women is definitely different. Men have superior status and women has inferior status. Men tend to have dominant role whereas women mostly tend to be subordinate to men. As explained above, Alger always made hero character as men representing hero who has masculine attributes such as like strong, dashing, brave, and always win. \

Female subordinate position is seen from Marguerite's posisition at that time after assaulted where she can not do anything and keep silent. Those actions are categorized as subordinate role and feminine, because in this case she had not power and could not fight against Mr. Freeman.

Her inferior status is also caused by her race Marguerite was born as a woman in the black race, because all her family were African-American race. When Marguerite had to live with her grandma in Stamps, as woman Marguerite mocked by white people. In Easter Day Marguerite was mocked by white in church because Marguerite dressed looked funny for them.

> "*if growing up is **painful** for the **southern black girl**, being aware of her **displacement** is the rust on the razor that threatens the throat.*

It is an unnecessary insult."(2015:4)

That monologue describes Marguerite's painful experience when she was mocked by white. This is also shown the inferior status of black in the society.

Besides, as a black Marguerite was really aware of how white dominated Stamps as this passage below:

> "In Stamps **the segregation** was so complete that most black children didn't really, absolutely know what whites **looked like**. Other than that they were different, to be dreaded, and that dread was included the hostility of the **powerless against the powerful**, **the poor against the rich, the worker against the worked for and the ragged against the well dress."** (2015:25)

The segregation means the black and white were separated. The segregation is intended to reduce any unnecessary encounter with black race which shows racism of the White againts the Black. Thus, most black child thought that white was a folk tale. This kind of ideology, influence the law and constitution system.It can be seen from the differences of law in regard of women's chastity. When a black rape white woman, he is punish immediately.

> " And once, we found out about a man who had been **killed by white folks and thrown into the pond**. Bailey said **the man thing had been cut off and put in his pocket and he had been shot in the head**, all because the white folks said he did "it" to a white woman." (2015:37)

The quotation shows that black man that assault white women was castrated and killed. When the victim was white, it seemed like they had a full right to adjudicate the subject which was black. It differed when the victim was the black. The law was different when Marguerite raped case was raised. When she was

questined in the court, she was asked unrelated question that make her seemed like a liar instead of victim.

> "what was **the defendant wearing**?" that was Mr. Freeman lawyer.
> "**I don't know**."
> "you mean to say this mean raped you and you don't know what he was wearing? He snickered as if I had raped Mr. Freeman."
> "do you know if you were raped?" (2015:84)

Mr. Freeman's lawyer asked "*what was the defendant wearing?"* The question was so oppressive because he did not consider her age and it made her to recall the occuence that made her confused and scared. She cannot answer the question, the incident itself has puzzled her already. Moreover she was confused and afraid of Mr. Freeman's threat so she answered *" I don't know."* The quotation above clearly showed different treatment for white and black in the law. Marguerite is a victim and she is underage, but the court did not consider it when questioning her. The unfair law is also seen below

> "Mr. Freeman was given **one year and one day**, but he never got a chance to do this time. His lawyer (or someone) **got him released that very afternoon**" (2015:85)

It elaborates that Mr. Freeman only got a year jail time but the lawyer made him free in the afternoon after the sentence is made. He didn't get into the jail or get physical punishment. This occurance really shows how the law of white and black was different which show a discrimination and racism against black race. The unfair law trigger the sexual violence againts black women.

4.2.5 Religion

Momma is religious woman who lives in traditional religion culture, she prays before sleeping and prays after she wake up. It makes her to be a strong woman as shown from the quotation below:

"Our Father, thank you for letting me see this New Day. Thank you that you didn't allow the bed I lay on last night to be my cooling board, nor my blanket my winding sheet. Guide my feet this day along the straight and narrow, and help me to put a bridle on my tongue. Bless this house, and everybody in it. Thank you, in the name of your Son, Jesus Christ, Amen." (2015:7)

The religion is the most important thing for Momma. Hence, like the quotation above she always thanks God, referring God as 'father' and before and after sleeping due to makes her more strength. Afterward Momma wants to instill these values to Marguerite and Bailey. Even Marguerite is still innocent, she would have different interpretation with the word 'father' because she never has a figure of father in family. She could consider father as a God and father as the head of the family, and Momma keeps Marguerite and Bailey to always respect to God.

Momma is not only prays but she memorizes bible verses. She belived God is a Man . *"After all, the bible did say, "God is not mocked,"and the man was God's representative."*(2015:35) in this statement Momma tried to preach some of the bible verse to Marguerite and Bailey, she described about how God is important and man is God's representative. *"let you're your light so shine that men will see your good works and prise your father, who is in heaven(God)* (1969:174) It means that Momma told Marguerite that she should always respect men even though they

are black or white because God or father will bless her in heaven. Marguerite believed in her religion because of Momma.

Her believe that men is God's representative make her cannot refuse Mr. Freeman order when he assult her sexually. After he raped her, she neither hate or angry to him because she was pure and her grandmother taught her to always respect men; whereas she blame herself that she is part of the blame. Marguerite felt that all happened because of her faults and she realized herself as a sinner because Marguerite that the cause of Mr. Freeman's death is her. Her act shows that she has inferior feeling towards herself.

4.3 The Impacts of sexual violence to Marguerite

Having experienced sexual violence, Marguerite's behaviour is changed. One of them was she felt guilty because Mr. Freeman died. That's why she prefered to be silent and do not speak to anyone even Momma.

4.3.1 Blaming herself and Feeling Guilty

Initially, Marguerite promised herself not to let anyone know about sexual violence she experienced. After Bailey found out her underwear that was hidden under her sheet, she told Bailey the culprit. This event lead to the trial in the court. No long after Mr. Freeman was out of jail, he was murdered. Marguerite knew the one who killed him was her uncle. It made her felt that it was all her faults as described by the line, "he was gone, and a man was dead **because I lied**." (2015:86)

The line shows that Marguerite felt guilty because she thought she lied when she was in the court that Mr. Freeman assult her only once. She lied because she think that she is part of the mistake that make Mr. Freeman assult her. In fact, she is still young andf do not really understand the situation. However, the death of Mr. Freeman makes her even more guilty. On top of that, Marguerite also felt she's attached to her religion that she thought she would not go to heaven because she was mean, like the quotation below show:

> "Obviously **I had forfeited my place in heaven forever**, and **I was gutless as the doll I had ripped to pieces ages ago.**Even Christ himself turned his back on Satan. **Wouldn't he turn his back on me?** I could feel the evilness flowing through my body and waiting, pent up, to rush off tongue **if I tried to open my mouth.**" (2015:86)

The quotation explains how she blamed herself. She thought that God would hate her by *Even Christ himself turned his back on Satan. Wouldn't he turn his back on me?* Implicitly Marguerite compared herself to satan. It was categorized as a form of self-humiliation because she felt guilty and mean. Then she said *I could feel the evilness flowing through my body and waiting, pent up, to rush off tongue if I tried to open my mouth.*" Marguerite felt she was possessed by satan or evil aura if she tried to speak. Thus she prefered to shut her mouth.

4.3.2Become silent

When Marguerite felt guilty and considered herself as evil because she made somebody died and she thought that God would not admit her anymore, she did not want to speak to anyone but Bailey. Look the quotation below:

> "I had sold myself to the Devil and there could be no escape. **The only thing I could do was to stop talking to people other than Bailey.** Instinctively, or somehow, I knew that because I loved him so much I'd never hurt him, **but if I talked to anyone else that person might die too. Just my breathe, carrying my words out, might poison people and they'd curl up and die like the black fat slugs that only pretended."**
>
> **I had to stop talking.**" (2015:87)

The quotation above describes how Marguerite still blamed herself and said *I had sold myself to the Devil and there could be no escape.* Marguerite analogized that she sold herself to the devil because she made someone died. Then she added *The only thing I could do was to stop talking to people other than Bailey*. *She* only wanted to talk to her lovely brother Bailey. Marguerite was drowned into her guilty feeling that she was afraid to make her beloved people die. "*..but if I talked to anyone else that person might die too. Just my breathe, carrying my words out, might poison people and they'd curl up and die like the black fat slugs that only pretended.***"** Again Marguerite analogized her innocence by saying *the black fat slugs* which shows that she degraded herself as sinner.

At last she resolved herself to to stop talking. Although her family in Stamps understood that she did not want to speak because the effect of trauma after being raped, but some people get annoyed with it.

Some people in her society tried to make her speak. Mrs. Flowers is one of them. She is a black aristocrat in Stamps and Marguerite grandma's friend. Mrs. Flowers heard that Marguerite was good at school, but she cannot communicate with others. Mrs. Flowers knew that Marguerite's teacher reported they had trouble

to get Marguerite talk in class. Hence, Mrs. Flowers tried to ask Marguerite slowly. Nonetheless, Marguerite still shuted her mouth.

"Now, no one is going to make you talk— possibly no one can." (2015:98)

The quotation depicted Marguerite's act had changed after the incident of sexual violence, and then she do not talk to anyone even though it is in the school or at home. Marguerite could not open her mouth to anyone even Mrs. Flowers who was her own grandma's friend and close enough with Marguerite's family. This is in line with "the culture of silent" in which occurred to those who is oppressed or those who experienced traumatic event. Irish (2004:12) quoted from Freire that powerless might too afraid to tell their experience of being oppressed It creates a culture wherein it is forbidden to even mention the injustices that are being committed. The oppressed are silenced. They have no voice and no will to talk their traumatic experience. Marguerite as the powerless and had reached that stage of oppression did not even talk to anyone, she chose not to tell anyone about herself even to her grandma. Marguerite kept silence because the effect of sexual violence.