

Fragmented Pieces of their Lives: Trafficked Girls in Rachel Lloyd's *Girls Like Us*

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ABSTRACT

Rachel Lloyd exposes a global wild problem of women trafficking through surveying the real stories happened to real young girls and teenagers in *Girls Like Us* (2011). This study aims at displaying a mix of the reasons behind female trafficking like poverty, family dysfunctions, substance abuse, etc. which lures teenage girls to voluntarily engage in prostitution. There, they have become the prey of pimps and consequently, they have to face discrimination from society and police.

Drawing on feminist theory, the study provides an analysis of Lloyd's *Girls Like Us* regarding the distorted sense of the trafficked girl's self. It answers two central questions: 1. Do pimps know that sex industry and commercially sexual exploitation are harmful to girls? 2. How do society and police view and treat trafficked (prostituted) girls? The study ends by illuminating how the fate of sexually trafficked girls ends up.

Keywords: sex industry, trafficking, pimps, child sexual abuse, commercial sexual exploitation, prostitution

قطع مجزأة من حياتهن: فتيات يتم الاتجار بهن في رواية فتيات مثلنا لراشيل لويدز

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الملخص

تكشف راشيل لويد عن مشكلة عالمية متوحشة تتمثل في الاتجار بالنساء من خلال مسح القصص الحقيقية التي حدثت لفتيات صغيرات ومرافقات حقيقيات في كتابها "فتيات مثلنا" (٢٠١١). تهدف هذه الدراسة إلى عرض مزيج من الأسباب وراء الاتجار بالنساء مثل الفقر،

والاختلالات الأسرية، وتعاطي المخدرات، وما إلى ذلك، والتي تغري الفتيات المراهقات بالانخراط طوعية في الدعارة. هناك، أصبحن فريسة للقوادين وبالتالي، يتعين عليهن مواجهة التمييز من قبل المجتمع والشرطة.

بالاستعانة بنظرية نسوية، تقدم الدراسة تحليلاً لكتاب لويذر "فتيات مثلنا" فيما يتعلق بالشعور المشوه بذات الفتاة المتاجر بها. وهي تجيب على سؤالين رئيسيين: ١. هل يعرف القوادون أن صناعة الجنس والاستغلال الجنسي التجاري ضار بالفتيات؟ ٢. كيف ينظر المجتمع والشرطة إلى الفتيات المتاجر بهن (البغايا) ويعاملهن؟ تنتهي الدراسة بإلقاء الضوء على كيفية انتهاء مصير الفتيات المتاجر بهن المتاجر بهن جنسياً. كلمات مفتاحية: صناعة الجنس، الاتجار بالبشر، القوادين، الاعتداء الجنسي على الأطفال، الاستغلال الجنسي التجاري، الدعارة

1. Introduction

The emergence of globalization has led to gigantic changes in systems, technologies and services; the matter that has driven peoples into migration for a better life. Massive migration has resulted in distorting migrants' identities. They are not only deemed outsiders in their host states, but they also suffer from various patterns of exploitation due to lack of rights and protections (Jones et al., 2007). There is no worse exploitation than human trafficking particularly sex trafficking. Kempadoo, Sanghera, & Pattanaik considered sex trafficking that "dark side of globalization" (2015, p.6).

Human trafficking is not a new condition. It is a modern copy of slave trade which has caused profound physical, emotional and psychological harms for the trafficked victims who have been trafficked for forced labour and sexual exploitation. UNODC (2018) has monitored many sorts of trafficking with various forms of exploitation like, e.g., trafficking children, forced marriage and sex trafficking. The latter falls hugely on girls and women, the first reckons 26% and the second accounts 26% of victims of trafficking.

Concerted efforts have been made to define sex trafficking. For instance, Moossy in "Sex trafficking: Identifying and victims" defined sex

trafficking as a “a particularly degrading form of human trafficking, ... [it is] recruiting, enticing, harboring, transporting, providing or obtaining either: (1) an adult for commercial sex by force, fraud or coercion, or (2) a juvenile for commercial sex, regardless of the means” (2009, p.2). In line with Moossy is Raymond who remarked that trafficking means “the recruitment, transportation, transfer, harboring or receipt of persons, by means of the threat or use of force or other forms of coercion, of abduction, of fraud, of deception, of the abuse of power, or of a position of vulnerability or of the giving or receiving of payment or benefits to achieve the consent of a person having control over another person, for the purpose of exploitation” (2002, p.495). In addition to the definition and means of trafficking, Raymond added that trafficking and sexual exploitation are connected and they cannot be separated. Barnert et al. (2017, p.827) described the state of sex trafficking individuals as “a hidden population with significant health risks” and so they undergo a serious and ongoing trauma. Consequently, Sex trafficking is a significant crime against children, girls, and women who are vigorously involved in sex industry and commercial sex acts.

Sex trafficking is observed most in Germany and the U.S. for the exploitation of children, girls, and women for sexual purposes (Schauer & Wheaton, 2006). In accordance with a report presented by The Victims of Trafficking and Violence Protection Act (2000), there were approximately 50,000 persons who trafficked sexually in the U. S. In 2003, the estimates were 18,000 – 20,000 individuals while in 2005 and 2006, the numbers are between 14,500 – 17,00 (Clawson et al., 2009). Moreover, according to the U.S. Federal Human Trafficking Report (2018), over 51 percent of victims of sex trafficking involved children and women (Ibid.). Consequently, many different writers all over the world have addressed this issue of children and female sex trafficking in their works– in particular those who have experience it in

their lives and its memoirs still etch in their minds like Rachel Lloyd in her work *Girls Like Us* (2011).

II. Literature Review

Rachel Lloyd's *Girls Like Us* is Lloyd's survivor journey of escaping from commercial sex industry and her success in healing her wounds to make her whole. She is one of countless number of young girls who have faced trafficking due to discrimination and inequality. They find their salvation in sharing their stories to gain freedom and sex equality. Hence and in an attempt to give an analysis of glimpses of their own lives as commercially sex-trafficked girls, the study employs feminist theory.

In its broader sense, feminist theory refers to an everlasting conflict between man and woman with the ceaseless endeavours of the latter to achieve gender equality and sexual freedom. Its major aim is to expose discrimination fall on women based on gender role, economic inequality, objectification, and sex. Therefore, all theorists agree that women are treated and viewed as second to men.

Beauvoir in *The second sex* (1949/2011), which has made tremendous impacts in the field of feminism, argued that pre-existing beliefs about the idea that men are Self and the norm while women are the subordinate Other still exist and will remain:

Woman has always been, if not man's slave, at least his vassal; the two sexes have never divided the world up equally; and still today, even though her condition is changing woman is heavily handicapped... even when her rights are recognized abstractly, long-standing habit keeps them from being concretely manifested. Economically, men and women almost form two castes; all things being equal, the former have better jobs, higher wages, and greater chances to succeed than their new female competitors; they occupy more places in industry, in politics, and so forth, and they hold the most important positions. (p. 9)

Women are treated as the other and so they are unfree. Men keep women into this position. Some women are forced into it while others accept and embrace it. In both cases, women depend on men.

In the book, Beauvoir also explores the significance of the girl, her relations and experiences in constructing her a woman in the future: For the girl [...] there is a divorce between her properly human condition and her feminine vocation. This is why adolescence is such a difficult and decisive moment for woman. Until then, she was an autonomous individual: she now has to renounce her sovereignty. Not only is she torn like her brothers, and more acutely, between past and future, but in addition a conflict breaks out between her originary claim to be subject, activity, and freedom, on the one hand and, on the other, her erotic tendencies and the social pressure to assume herself as a passive object. She spontaneously grasps herself as the essential: How will she decide to become the inessential? If I can accomplish myself only as the Other, how will I renounce my Self? Such is the agonizing dilemma the woman-to-be must struggle with. (2010, p. 359) Femininity starts with a little girl and stick to her until she becomes a woman. The most influential is her body.

The concept of the body and its relation to the girls, Beauvoir stipulated that the body is “a situation”: “the body is not a *thing*, it is a situation: it is our grasp on the world and the outline for our projects” (2010, p. 46). Since it is the reason behind sexual violence, Beauvoir described it as a crisis: “It is worth noting that this event has all the characteristics of a crisis; the woman’s body does not accept the species’s installation in her without a fight; and this fight weakens and endangers her” (2010, p. 40).

Much similar to Beauvoir is Bates in *Everyday sexism: The project that inspired a worldwide movement* (2016) observed that woman now and forever is “invisible” in the lens of their society:

. . . every now and then through the thousands of stories we have collected comes a recurring word or description that echoes through the pages, used by woman after woman after woman to describe her lived experience. . . . that word is ‘invisible’ (p. 3370).

Recognition is a key element of being here in this world. Looking at woman as not being noticed or even seen is to bury her identity and then to devalue her socially and culturally.

Like Beauvoir and Bates, Heinämaa in her book *Toward a Phenomenology of Sexual Difference: Husserl, Merleau-Ponty, Beauvoir* also tackled “what the reality or existence of woman means” (2003, p. 24). She considered other’s understanding of women as being Self and not Other or subordinate to men as an essential element of defending women.

The objective of feminist theory is not limited only to create realization of women’s discrimination by their societies, but also to raise awareness among girls and women about their new role they have to take. As a result, all advocates of feminist theory raise their voices against men’s domination and women’s patriarchal oppression, which cause unfair and unequal treatment of women. Besides, feminist theory sets a series of certain characteristics, some of them are as follows according to Poudel and Smith (2002):

1. Standing against sexual exploitation.
2. Rejecting all forms of women’s marginalization.
3. Voices against patriarchal culture.
4. Taking into account women’s experiences and stories from all perspectives.

One of the violent crimes against women committed by men is sex trafficking. The trafficking of girls and women is a form of merciless exploitation. The panic surrounding sex trafficked victims has generated a wealth of works conceptualizing this global issue; and this is the aim

of this study behind employing and analyzing one of these works which is Rachel Lloyd's *Girls Like Us*

III. Rachel Lloyd: An Activist “Fighting for a World Where Girls are not for Sale”

A British-born novelist Rachel Lloyd, activist and advocate, is one of distinguished women in the world. She was born in Stalbridge in Dorset England in 1975. Her childhood was hard. Her mother was alcoholic and her stepfather was abusive. At the age of seventeen and while she was in Germany, she was a victim of commercial sexual exploitation. This was a decisive point in her entire life (“Biography of an Outstanding Woman: Rachel Lloyd”).

At the age of nineteen, she loved a handsome person JP who seemed nice at first. But he appeared to have been her pimp. Therefore, she found herself a victim of his drugs. He took all her money she earned to buy drugs. In case she did not earn enough, he beat her (“Nominated Child Rights Hero Rachel Lloyd”, p. 69). This matter derived her to escape from him and seek a help from church. Later, she worked for an American family as a nanny. This was the second event that had a role in her forthcoming life because “the family she’s working for gives her lots of love and in the end she starts feeling better” (Ibid.).

A new life was waiting for Rachel when she was twenty-three years old as she arrived in America and met teen girls who shared her hard experiences of bitter childhood and sex trafficking. She repossessed her power to found a non-profit organization called Girls Educational and Mentoring Services (GEMS) which “annually aids more than 200 sexually exploited or trafficked teenaged girls, many struggling to escape the clutches of what sex workers call “the life.” (Cassery, 2012, p.2). She is best known as an activist “Fighting for a World Where Girls Are Not for Sale” which is the subtitle to her novel *Girls Like Us*.

IV. Pimp Culture

Rachel Lloyd's *Girls Like Us* starts with giving a simple clear description of unnamed girl (a little girl) who likes eating Mexican food, playing SpongeBob, writing poetry, swimming and getting her nails painted. For a while it sounds that this girl lives a normal life, but this is not true for she is trafficked by her pimp who is twenty seven years old. So, what is a pimp?

The word pimp connotes everyone "who procures a prostitute for customers or vice versa, and takes a portion of the profits from the sexual activities" (*U.S. Legal Definitions*, 2011, para. 1). Pimps recruit females "by befriending and creating emotional and drug or alcohol dependencies to entrap them" (Raymond & Hughes, 2001, p. 8). Then they control, exploit and assault them. Sterk elucidated that a pimp is a "label that most women dislike and for which they prefer substitute old man or boyfriend" (2000, p.19). In the novel, Lloyd described pimps as "monsters" that must be punished severely. This was one of the ways to put an end for girls trafficking:

Viewing pimps as one-dimensional monsters isn't that helpful in terms of understanding the girls' experiences. While the acts that pimps have committed are heinous and deserving of full punishment under the law, overlooking the humanness that the girls surely see only makes it harder to understand why they stay or, especially, why they go back" (Lloyd, Chap.11, p.188)

Being only eleven-year-old does not protect girls from being sold and bought for sex exploitation. Lloyd in *Girls Like Us* focused on how girls deprived of their childhood to be recruited and trafficked into commercial sex industry by their pimps.

As a girl had already experienced this issue of sex trafficking, Lloyd– the executive director of (GEMS)– the organization she established for teenage girls and young women who faced the same destiny of

domestic trafficking– transferred the brutality of sex trafficking and trauma it causes to the world.

Teenager girls are unable to differentiate between what is right and what is wrong. They look at their pimps as relatives like Danielle who thought that her twenty–nine years old pimp as her boyfriend because she was a child of eleven years old. She did not know that he sold her for sex purposes. She fingered the costume jewelry around her neck:

“He gave me this,” she says as she leans forward to proudly show me a heart necklace made from what looks like pink glass. (Lloyd, Prologue, p. 7)

Pimps exploit girls with love and jewelries for their interests. In “Commentary on Human Trafficking and Domestic Violence: Etiology, Intervention, and Overlap with Child Maltreatment”, Lloyd manifested this through her description of the pimps who “often portray themselves as a romantic partner where power and control dynamics set the stage for violence, isolation and exploitation and the psychological impact that has on victims that often manifest as fear, loyalty and trauma bonding” (2015, p.1). The result of this relationship between Danielle and her pimp was that he exploited her commercially:

She’s been trafficked up and down the East Coast from Holiday Inns to Best Westerns by her boyfriend, who bought her a cheap heart–shaped necklace and, no doubt, the stilettos on her feet. (Lloyd, Prologue, p. 8)

Lloyd touched a case in which she displays that even trafficking has been affected by globalization and technological developments as it becomes via internet: “sold cyber–style” (Lloyd, Prologue, p.8). She certified that through exposing a state of three sisters: Danielle of eleven years old, Elizabethan of fourteen, and Annette of sixteen who were all sold through the internet:

The room just keeps getting smaller and smaller and I feel like I need air, immediately. A family of girls sold? On the Internet? I don’t know if

I still want to cry or throw the institutional beige couch at the institutional green walls. I take a deep breath. (Lloyd, Prologue, p. 9)

In *Girls Like Us*, Lloyd pointed out that not all the reasons for trafficking girls were on purpose. In case of Danielle, she was introduced to the pimp by her sister: “My sister introduced us. He was friends with her boyfriend.” (Lloyd, Prologue, p.9). Girls could not harm each other. Danielle’s sister was trapped by her pimp, and so was Danielle at the hands of her sister. The result was one, all sisters were innocently victims of sex industry.

Lloyd put her finger on a crucial trait of contemporary life, which is well known, but hidden under the umbrella of children rights; children are sold and bought as puppets for commercial sexual exploitation:

From my outdoor seat, I watch the Upper West Side Friday night crowd walking by, girls in groups, couples old and new, solos coming from the gym. I fight the urge to interrupt their leisurely night out:

“Do you have any idea what kind of world we live in? Children are being sold!” I want to yell, perhaps for the more placid ones a vigorous shake of the shoulders. I’m disgusted by their ignorance, by their carefree attitudes. I feel ridiculously and irrationally angry at the whole world. (Lloyd, Prologue, p.10)

What is strange is that the world is aware how trafficking is a universal plight and it is a modern pattern of slavery. This Danielle’s piece of her life is merely one example of hundreds of thousands of girls who are victims of sex trafficking through their pimps. The reason was her mother’s substance abuse. So, substance abusing mother is a reason behind female trafficking. Danielle was put in the foster care. She had not experienced the life of family. This caused her to be sold to her first pimp who treated her badly as if she were a thing of his own: “Danielle’s pimp was beating her with a belt and leaving scars across her back” (Lloyd, Prologue, p.13).

One of the consequences of trafficking was trauma for the trafficked girls. Lloyd advocated that her GEMS was founded for Danielle and her friends: “It would not solve the problem but it would make her smile, and for today, that would have to be enough” (Lloyd, Prologue, p.14). Danielle accepted her fate with eyes weep without tears. Her silence had to be respected instead of interpreted as an approval of her life.

Another span of a trafficked girl’s life presented in *Girls Like Us* was that of Miranda. She was put in prison. She was trafficked by a pimp for money to buy himself drugs. In addition to sex trafficking, she was beaten hard too:

“I’ve been in the life too—I was on heroin, and I had a man who was pimping me out to everyone to buy drugs. I can relate to what you were saying about nearly dying cos I nearly died too. They tied me up in a bathtub and stabbed me in the head with a screwdriver.” (Lloyd, Chap.1, p. 20)

Miranda suffered from abandonment from her parents who had put her in the foster care and forgotten her. Pimps seized such opportunities. He pimp humiliated her: “he was beating me every day and I was scared of him” (Lloyd, Chap.1, p. 19). In one of his fights, he wanted to shoot at her. To defend herself, she stopped him and killed him by accident. So, she ended up in prison.

Lloyd spot trafficked women bought and sold on the streets because of their pimps. Melissa was another issue of trafficked girls. She was a young woman of seventeen. She was pretty and she had a daughter from her pimp. She left everything to save the rest of her life. This span was so hard:

This was probably one of the hardest things for me to verbalize and it would take a while for me to really accept that reality. (Lloyd, Chap.1. p.25)

Melissa refused to repeat the tragedy of having a boyfriend. Therefore, against her will, she accepted her luck to be a streetwalker. This was the only option available for her.

The young girls called their pimps, who were buying and selling them, boyfriends because they were so little. They did not know the truth. Girls, like Melissa, thought that they could have freedom through their boyfriends. This was why they gave their boyfriends everything they wanted, served them and met their needs. But what they got was pimps who drew plans of how to structure and control those girls for their interests.

Lloyd depicted a fragment of Jennifer's life in this novel. Jennifer's pimp struck her severely. She ran away to stay at the train station. She attempted to build a life of her own without her tormentor, but she failed. She remained there for two nights, and then she returned to him hopelessly. She had no other choice:

After a night or two, Jennifer would find her way back to her pimp. . . . From Jennifer I learn that leaving the life takes practice, that girls need to try multiple times without having someone give up on them. (Lloyd, Chap.1. p.25)

Not all girls were strong enough to change their destiny. They needed a hand with them. Therefore, Lloyd excused Jennifer. She left Jennifer to shed lights on another type of life lived by Tiffany.

Tiffany was tortured by her pimp in a strange manner; it was almost unbelievable:

Her pimp had cut off half of her hair and it was so badly matted that I had to take her to the hair salon to have her head almost completely shaved. (Lloyd, Chap.1. p.25)

Her hair scared everyone looked at her. Lloyd did what she could to help her. Tiffany had an accepted look, but at the expense of her hair. What was her sin to have her hair shaved like men? It was because she

was a slave to her pimp. This confirms Beauvoir's idea that women is "man's slave" (p.9). Lloyd surveyed a part of another girl's life whose luck was as bad as Tiffany; it is Aisha.

Aisha's pimp carved his name into her legs in a violent way as if she were an object without humanity, pride or feelings:

One day she rolls up a leg of her sweatpants to show me the crude tattoo of her pimp's name that he'd hand-carved into her inner thigh as he sat between her legs holding a gun to her head. From Aisha I learn about the systematic violence of pimps, and make the connections to my own experiences. (Lloyd, Chap.1. p.25)

Aisha's pimp is a typical example of the fact that pimps are indifferent to the girls' agonies. They know that they do them harms, but it does not matter. Because they buy them, they believe that they are their own properties. So, they have the right to do everything.

Another piece of trafficked girls' lives presented in this novel was that of the novelist herself, Rachel Lloyd, whose story was not much different from the other girls. Like Miranda, Rachel was put in prison for killing her pimp. She was taken from her family and brought up in foster care when she was a child of five years old. Her family neglected her to the extend they did not visit her. Family dysfunction was another reason for trafficking of girls. Rachel was sold to a pimp who beat her mercilessly every day without legal accountability. On the contrary, the law and court stood against her and put her in prison as she tried to defend herself by stopping her pimp whom she called boyfriend:

"My boyfriend tried to shoot me and I grabbed the gun and now I'm here cos I shot him by accident. But he was beating me every day and I was scared of him. I don't understand why they didn't lock him up before this all happened. I didn't mean to kill him, I just wanted him to stop." (Lloyd, Chap.1. p.19)

It is obvious that most women were in prison unjustly. They were suffering from domestic violence and mistreatment. Through her own story with the pimp, Lloyd portrayed all girls like her; not only they were victimized by pimps but also they were looked down upon by society as criminals.

According to Lloyd, sexual trafficked children are humans like us but with different circumstances. The girls are sold for sex on the streets, in the stations, or online. They live a bitter life even in the foster care. She described their suffering as follows:

many children are actually exploited in the commercial sex industry, they do attempt to estimate how many children are likely to be at high risk based on a conflation of predicative risk factors such as sexual abuse, homelessness, and involvement in the foster care system. (Lloyd, Chap.2. p.33)

Rachel was one of them. At the age of thirteen, she was raped “several times by the adult men” (Lloyd, Chap.2. p.33). Such a calamity, besides the absence of the parental role, led Rachel to commit an attempt of suicide. As a result, she and all girls like her get older and older than their real age:

The women . . . all look so much older than they are, and whatever dreams they might have had have been drained out of them. (Lloyd, Chap.2. p.42)

Those women had a frightening feeling as they needed to speak but they discovered the death of their tongues. They wanted to live a normal life with love, tenderness and respect but they were shocked with the death of their hearts. Eventually, they needed people around them for support.

Nevertheless, Rachel not only could challenge her destiny, but also changed it towards the better: “No matter how many near-death experiences I’ve had in the last few years, I’m still here” (Lloyd,

Chap.10. p.170). She faced her exploitations and established GEMS. This non-profit organization helps in empowering Rachel and all the girls like her. She wants their brutal experiences to be known, their voices to be heard and so actions must be taken.

One of the success of GEMS was Katherine. She was sensational and intimate. She put her past behind her back and returned to the lap of her family. She did not stop at this stage, she even went back to school. She underscored the idea that “support does make a difference” (Lloyd, Chap.1. p.26). There are many girls who have the desires to be like Katherine, but fate does not aid them due to pimps.

Lloyd exposed how pimps did not allow the girls to recover from the trauma of child sexual abuse. Tiffany, a twenty-year-old girl was her example. She was sexually attacked because she was “too dark,” “too black” (Lloyd, Chap.4. p.68). Her mother’s place was unknown. Her father was in prison. Therefore, she was sent to the foster care. At the age of nine, she was sent to a group home where she was raped by a boy of fifteen years. However, she did not give up. She made use of this bitter experience to stand again on her feet: “These lessons had taught her [Tiffany] well” (Lloyd, Chap.4. p.67). She could rebuild her life by taking a bold step of running away from that miserable place (group home) where her childhood was violated. She thought that destiny helped her in this mission through putting Charming in her way. He “seemed kind and friendly. He was more polite than the other boys Tiffany was used to, he talked to her like a person” (Lloyd, Chap.4. p.68). He offered her to be her boyfriend and to make a lovely family together. He asserted her that he was going to protect her and supply her with whatever she liked and needed. His words fell on Tiffany’s ears like music, so she accepted. She went with him to his house, as she was happy with the idea that at last she would have a house: “she smiled to herself and repeated silently over and over again, ‘I’m going

home, I'm going home'" (Lloyd, Chap.4. p.70). She lived with Charming the most cheerful period in her life until she was shocked with reality. Like all boyfriends, Charming turned to be a pimp. He trafficked Tiffany for money. Unfortunately, this time Tiffany was unable to escape from her fate because she loved her pimp:

When Tiffany awoke slowly the next morning with a pounding headache, she had only a vague recollection of the night before, and as the thoughts of dancing, of men, of stripping flooded into her mind, they made her head hurt worse. Charming was on the side of the bed counting money happily. "Damn baby, that ass sure makes a lot of money." He looked so proud, Tiffany couldn't bear to tell him that she didn't want to do it again. (Lloyd, Chap.4. p.71)

Tiffany's story of sex industry was not the first or the last. Lloyd mentioned similar stories of Elizabeth, Ashauti, and Shana who were all exploited for the purpose of money at the hands of their boyfriends. They accepted their downfall because their pimps provided them with protection from streets; Rachel was no exception.

Rachel narrated her stories with her pimps. The first was Fazil who sexually exploited her for money: "It finally dawns on me: He doesn't want to date me, he wants to make money off of me" (Lloyd, Chap.5. p.85). This is the job of pimps. As one of them, Fazil "is a pimp looking for girls to sell" (Lloyd, Chap.5. p.86). Through Fazil, Rachel knew the concept of pimping. She decided to be careful of such types of men and never to be their victims. As a strong girl, she did not let her bad relationship with Fazil disappointed her. She met JP, Ex-U.S. Army a few months after breaking off with Fazil.

Rachel found in pimp a compensation for all neglect and abuse she had seen in her life. She was so delighted with him. She was ready to do anything for him:

I'm happy to give him anything and everything he wants, until of course it's no longer a choice. I'll love JP with all my heart and soul and feel sure that I never have and never will experience anything like this again. I'll think I could die for him—and I nearly do. (Lloyd, Chap.5. p.86)

Then, she was stunned with an unexpected catastrophe. Like Tiffany, Rachel's JP appeared to be a pimp like Fazil: "trapped with a man who'll beat me as soon as look at me, taking my clothes off onstage every night for a bunch of men who don't care about me" (Lloyd, Chap.5. p.92). For Lloyd, the meaning of pimp is different from what it should be: "In my world, pimps are not managers, protectors, or "market facilitators" (Lloyd, Chap.5. p.90). She assessed them as "leeches sucking the souls from beautiful, bright young girls, predators who scour the streets, the group homes, and junior high schools stalking their prey" (Lloyd, Chap.5. p.90).

Despite that, Rachel's story with JP was not worse than that of Jessica, an orphan girl of fourteen years old who did not know how her parents died. At the age of sixteen, her aunt dismissed her. She was obliged to live homeless on the train for nights. Abandonment was the reason that pushed her to sleep with men for food and shelter until she was sheltered by a family. She considered them as her father and mother. Suddenly, she discovered that the father whom she called Daddy was her pimp.

Like Jessica, Tiana also called her pimp Daddy. Her story was awful. At the age of six, her mother was murdered before her eyes. Then she lived with her aunt. There she was subject to domestic violence: "curling iron burns and permanent scars from extension cords" (Lloyd, Chap.15. p.245). Lloyd described what Tiana experienced as follows: "The level of violence that she's been exposed to and experienced would equal that of a child in a war zone" (Lloyd, Chap.3. p.57). Due to this "level of violence", Tiana found in her pimp Dollars her destiny. She lived with

him when she was fifteen years old, considered him as her father and so called him Daddy. For her misfortune, he turned to be a pimp. Every night “after dinner he takes her and the other girls out and sells them on the street” (Lloyd, Chap.3. p.59). Despite that, she still lived with him for two reasons. Firstly, she had no alternative option “‘so have you thought about other options?’ In fairness, she knows and I know that her options are limited and that there are no family members to take her” (Lloyd, Chap.3. p.58). Secondly, she had never been treated kindly only when she met him and before her sexual exploitations:

For Tiana, whose entire fifteen years on the earth have been filled with physical violence, neglect, and horrific abuse, this analogy doesn’t really make sense. Her “daddy” is the first person who’s shown her any type of kindness, who’s modeled what a “real” family looks like. (Lloyd, Chap.3. p.59)

Eventually, she was satisfied with her predestination.

Once more, Lloyd affirmed that pimps did not care of the hurts they caused to girls as they sold and bought them. While Beauvoir saw that woman’s body is a “situation” and not “a thing” (2010, p. 46), the pimps insist that it is a thing and it is their own. They think of the girls as toys as in the case of Naima. Her pimp caught her with his friends “to tattoo his name all over her body including on her hands and neck” (Lloyd, Chap.5. p.91). Writing tattoos on the girls’ bodies is “constantly visible reminders of their abuser’s name” (Lloyd, Chap.15. p.245). Therefore, similar to Naima’s pains were many others with tattoos in various places of their bodies. There was Kendra whose pimp with the help of his brother and friend wrote “his name all over her arms, hands, legs, and chest” (Lloyd, Chap.15. p.245) with a tattoo machine. There were also Marissa, Tina, Shanae, and others. This proved Beauvoir’s view of female body as “a crisis” (2010, p. 40) since it causes pains to the girls.

Hence, Lloyd called pimps traffickers. They are abusive and their justification for trafficking girls as a means of protecting them is a big lie: “The girls need protection. They wouldn’t know what to do with their money, so I manage it for them. They’re lazy. They like it. I’m giving them guidance because they’re kinda dumb. I use violence only when I have to—it’s more discipline than anything else. The only way they listen is if you’re mean to them.” (Lloyd, Chap.5. p.97)

Pimping is a means of sex industry. Hodge & Lietz (2007) clarified that pimps earn approximately \$124,000 a year in U.S. currency from the sexually commercially exploited girls. They are trafficking victims. Trafficking girls means slaving them:

Four hundred years after slavery, pimps and traffickers are using the same lines, the same rationale, the same tactics as their predecessors in the antebellum South. Pimps thrive in America, a country where a modern-day slave system is too often justified and ignored. (Lloyd, Chap.5. p.97)

Lloyd surveyed examples of the girls she met and spoke with in her GEMS. Nevertheless, there are countless cases of trafficked girls, who are unknown, at the hands of pimps.

V. The Question of Choice

“The American Heritage Dictionary” defines the act of choosing as “to select from a number of possible alternatives; decide on and pick out” (para. 1). Accordingly, a choice takes its lawful and legitimate structure if it fulfills two points. The first, there must be “possible alternatives” and the second, there must be freedom to decide which alternative is the best to select it. In *Girls Like Us*, Lloyd exposed that the sexually exploited girls have neither. Therefore, she took the mission of correcting the public view of trafficked girls’ life as a matter of choice. In her interview with Greicius, Lloyd marked that one of her fundamental purposes behind writing this work was to show how people wronged

those homeless and hopeless girls in judging their life as their own choice: “My whole career has been about getting people to see our young women—who are awesome and precious and wonderful—to see them as real people, people, girls who are looking for love and ultimately how deep their desire for family is” (2012, p. 3). Throughout the whole novel, she exhibited that it is a lack of choices, i.e. no alternatives are available to those sexually commercially exploited girls. They are not part in this process insofar as they are forced to be involved in it. The girls before the age of fifteen called their pimps Daddy because they were so innocent. Society sees them as Bates mentioned “invisible” (2016, p. 3370) therefore, people do not estimate the girls’ hard conditions as in the case of Jessica. She did not choose the option of being prostitute. Homeless and penniless, she walked in this path:

Jessica is sixteen when she moves from North Carolina to live with an aunt who’s just met a new man and doesn’t want Jess there anymore. After she’s kicked out, Jessica sleeps on the train for a few nights and eventually starts sleeping with men who feed her and let her stay over. (Lloyd, Chap.4. p.72)

Police and society pretended that they were blind to this truth. Therefore, she was put in prison because of “prostitutions charges” (Lloyd, Chap.5. p.90). Lloyd discussed that however recognition and addressing of commercial sex industry increase, they will be without benefits: “the increased awareness of the issue will only have a superficial impact on prevention” (2015, p.1).

In spite of realization, society interprets the remaining of the trafficked girls with their pimps as a choice simply because it considers them “passive object[s]” (Beauvoir, 2010, p. 359). If they have had other choices, the victims would have chosen another life instead of remaining and enduring traffickers. Lloyd conveyed people’s opinion of the life of the trafficked girls:

Many people believe that girls “choose” this life, and while it is true that most girls are not kidnapped into the sex industry, to frame their actions as choice is at best misleading. (Lloyd, Chap.4. p.78)

In reality, this view is false. People ignore a clear fact that the girls live under the control and mercy of pimps because the latter provides them with simple essential elements of survival, place and food, which they are deprived of. So, they accept this life as it is the only choice available. It is not their optional choice insofar as it is obligatory, as in the story of Tiffany. Against her choice, Tiffany accepted to be domestically trafficked to escape a worse life. Trafficked girls accept to stay with their pimps to avoid their earlier hard life. However, and in the lens of society, it is only interpreted as a choice.

Lloyd summarized choices available to commercially sexually trafficked girls since childhood as limited to certain factors: age, abuse as well as neglect by family, and psychological and emotional matters: their choices are limited by their age, their family, their circumstances, and their inability to weigh one bad situation against another, given their developmental and emotional immaturity. Therefore, the issue of choice has to be framed in three ways: age and age-appropriate responsibility, the type of choice, and the context of the choice. (Lloyd, Chap.4. p.78)

Whatever the reasons, no girl chooses to be a commercial sex industry or to be raped. Thus, it is a matter of escape from irritated environment and not a choice: “no longer a matter of choice, but rather a matter of escape” (Lloyd, Chap.4. p.82). Society cannot absorb the idea that a prostitute is raped since she already has sex. Its justification is that the girls consider not paying them for this sexual service as a rape. This opinion is highlighted by Lloyd in interview with Rehm: “our society glorifies pimp culture so boys grow up thinking that women are disposable, that pimping is glamorous and also knowing that pimps are rarely prosecuted” (2011, p.2).

Pimps are the obligatory choice for the abused girls. The evidence is that the girls look at the men as boyfriends and saviours while pimps look at the girls as sex objects for collecting money. The pimps brainwash the girls' mind to believe that they are valueless and that the pimps have the right to beat them because they deserve that (Spencer, 2018). Rachel faced this experience and documented it in the novel through her relationships with pimps. Society refuses to see this fact. It calls trafficked girls with negative words: "hooker, ho, whore, prostitute part" (Lloyd, Chap.14. p.213). In *What is a Woman? And Other Essays*, Moi confirmed this view as she underlined the position of woman in comparison with man: "man was on top and woman at the bottom of the same scale of values" (1999, p. 10).

Unfortunately, the twenty-first century does not put an end to the phenomenon of trafficking of girls. One of the reasons is that it is not reported: "The majority of rapes and sexual assaults perpetrated against women and girls in the United States between 1992 and 2000 were not reported to the police (Lloyd, Chap.7. p.115). Lloyd demonstrated the negative role of police in increasing the number of the trafficked girls. This is because they are classified as "dirty whore[s]" (Lloyd, Chap.7. p.116). In this case, they deserve to be exploited. A striking example is what Mike, one of Rachel's pimp, did with her. First, he told her with pride and happiness that he was going to sell her: "'I'm taking you to Holland—Amsterdam, actually—and I'm going to sell you. I already have it all set up. I know a guy" (Lloyd, Chap.7. p.116). Second, he stole her money and passport: "If you're looking for your money, it's gone. I have it, and your passport" (Lloyd, Chap.7. p.117). At that moment, Rachel's psychological condition was unexplainable: "'You stole my money?' Tears are coming now as I think about what I did to get that money and how carefully I saved it" (Lloyd, Chap.7. p.117). Third, Mike changed his mind from selling her into killing her. He

planned to throw her in the river. She begged him for her life as if she were his own thing. Eventually, he let her go home barefooted after she convinced him that she loved him and she would be with him forever: “But I’m not your enemy. I love you; let’s be together.” I’m pleading now (Lloyd, Chap.7. p.117). For her fortune, she succeeded in escaping and meeting a police officer to tell him that she has been kidnapped and assaulted. The cops caught Mike and brought him into custody making interviews with both of them.

Lloyd proved the inactive role of cops concerning the victims of trafficking in this novel. Firstly, there was intimacy between the cops and Mike: “and I can hear the low murmur of men’s voices in the next room. Then I hear them laughing” (Lloyd, Chap.7. p.121). Secondly, the kind treatment of Mike; one of the cops asked her that Mike wanted a cigarette:

I can’t believe what I’m hearing. “A fuckin cigarette? He just beat and threatened to kill me. Tell him to buy his own fuckin pack with the three thousand marks he just stole from me!” I’m yelling now, with tears streaming down my face, and yet the sergeant just stares at me as if I’ve just refused the most reasonable, logical request in the world. (Lloyd, Chap.7. p.121)

Rachel was perceptive. She noticed that she was in the wrong place. Hence, she tried to run away. But a cop caught her and he did not allow her to leave. Thirdly, the cops treated her badly though she was the victim:

he grabs my arm, tells me I can’t leave, and demands my passport. I can’t believe this is happening. I’m yelling and crying and trying to get away from him. “I didn’t do anything, he’s the one that did this to me.” (Lloyd, Chap.7. p.121)

Fourthly, in the end, Mike was innocent; the cops had concluded that Rachel’s accusations were not true to arrest Mike. So, he was

released: “it’s clear that he’s winning” (Lloyd, Chap.7. p.121). Eventually, as she inquired how to go home, they suggested that Mike picked her up:

“You can leave.” He dismisses me with a wave.

“How am I supposed to get home?” We had driven for over two hours and I had no idea where I was.

“He will give you a ride.”

I’m confused. “Who? Another officer?” I know I don’t want to be trapped in a car with this guy for a couple of hours.

“Him.” He points upstairs, and I suddenly realize that he is suggesting that I get back into the car with the same man who kidnapped and assaulted me that morning.

“What the fuck are you talking about?” Now I am about to get arrested.

“He says he will give you a ride. He is leaving now too.”

“You’re not arresting him? What about the assault? What about my money? Did you get it back?”

“He says it’s his.” (Lloyd, Chap.7. p.122)

Rachel asked a question: “why I’m being treated this way” (Lloyd, Chap.7. p.121). The answer is to quote Rudman & Phelan’s words: “male initiative and female passivity” (2007, p. 788), this is in the first place. In the second place, the cops did not see that Mike was sinful. They were convinced that Rachel had chosen Mike to be her partner and pimp. She lived with him according to her will. As a result, they proposed Rachel’s angry with Mike was normal like any relationship between man and woman. Besides, Rachel was not a respected woman to defend her. She was a prostitute and this was the nature of her work: “The woman seems ashamed. “They do this to many girls,” she says. “Girls . . . uh . . . rape.” She mimes hitting. “Girls . . . they, ah . . . do not believe, um, when cabaret, das bordell, strip club” (Lloyd, Chap.7. p.122). Rachel was satisfied that her case would never be reported:

“With these “facts” on the table, my case has ceased to be a case” (Lloyd, Chap.7. p.122).

Lloyd disclosed police’s disability of protecting the victims of sex industry. Some of them are involved in such crimes, others are pimps themselves:

Cops see men buying girls on the street and look the other way, cops taunt girls and call them names, and some of the johns are cops themselves. The overwhelming majority of girls I’ve worked with have reported being threatened with prison if they refused sex with a cop, and some girls who refused and were arrested were forced to have sex at the precinct anyway. Some cops would take money from the girls when they spotted them on the streets, knowing that they could never report it. (Lloyd, Chap.7. p.24)

This reflects how police and society regard trafficked girls and pimps. They think of the first as prostitutes who willingly want that while the second is innocent. Keisha with her pimp is another example. She complained against him for sex exploitation at the police station. The result was Keisha’s imprisonment with the charge of prostitution and the trafficker was released:

Keisha is disappointed; she doesn’t understand why she is the one in jail while her pimp is out, doesn’t understand why she, who’s been beaten and forced to make money for him, is being treated as the criminal. I don’t have the answers for her. She is being criminalized for something that has been done to her. (Lloyd, Chap.10. p.173)

This stresses that police and the cops participate in the process of girls’ trafficking and raping; therefore, they cannot judge them as domestically trafficked victims. The traffickers are victims and the domestically trafficked girls are the criminals. This is the law of earth concerning them.

Children are also charged with the crime of prostitution and mercilessly put in prison. The issue of Nicolette is worthy to be mentioned here as a testimony of unjust society. Nicolette was eleven years old. Her escaping from her pimp was seen as a crime. Her physical distortions “burns from a hot iron and cigarettes as well as a recently broken rib” (Lloyd, Chap.8. p.143) were not denoted as child abuse. She was seen a teen prostitute.

Eventually, police and society underestimate trafficked girls and stand with their traffickers. Both agree that those girls choose this life willingly: “blameless victims, domestically trafficked girls under the control of a pimp are usually seen not as victims but as willing participants” (Lloyd, Chap.9. p.156). Such unjust view makes trafficked girls lose their feelings of everything: “Some girls are numb, so accustomed to pushing down feelings and ignoring their own needs that it’s hard for them to feel anything at all (Lloyd, Chap.10. p. 180). This ensures oppression and inequity the trafficked girls have experienced which prevent them from having an ordinary access to a humane life like men.

VI. Conclusion

In *Girls Like Us*, Rachel Lloyd demonstrates that children sexual exploitation and sex industry experienced by girls do not allow them to live as normal life as it should be. This study has shed lights on the reasons behind trafficking of girls. They are many: absent father as in the case of Rachel, orphans like Jessica, child sexual abuse as in Nicolette’s issue, neglect like Keisha, abandonment like Miranda, domestic violence as in Tiana’s case, substance abusing mother as in Danielle and/or meeting pimps, Tiffany is an example. It is worth noting that more than one or two reasons can be applied to the same girl.

Pimps have taken a decisive part in pushing the trafficked girls into the abyss. They wear the masks of boyfriends and protectors. The moment the masks fall and their real faces are clearly seen, they turn to be the

exploiters, dealers, sellers, and traffickers. What makes the matter more complicated is that they know that the girls are their victims. They have slaved those girls, taken away their humanity as well as femininity, and distorted their sense of themselves. Despite this realization, pimps pretend that they do the girls no hurts.

Not only pimps are aware of emotional, physical, and psychological ruins fall on sexually commercially exploited girls, but also police and society, as what happens in the case of Rachel and her pimp and Keisha with her pimp at the police station. The victims are put in prison under the charge of prostitution and the criminals are released. Police and society do nothing to protect those desperate young women. On the contrary, they scorn them and call them whores and prostitutes. Even children have a share, like Nicolette, they are called teen prostitutes. It makes no much difference from the term prostitutes. They attribute the life of the trafficked girls to their own choices as if they have had already delineated their fate as whores and prostitutes.

In the end, the little girls' fate, as depicted in Lloyd's novel, is various. Some are put in prison like Miranda. Others, like Melissa, give up life to accept their destiny as streetwalkers and prostitutes because they are weak. Some type remains under the mercy of the pimps for they do not have another choice, for instance Tiffany, Danielle, Jessica, Jennifer, and Tiana. The last kind represents those who have recovered from their trauma and decide to truly change their stars like Rachel and Katherine. They insist on having a life of their won. For example, Rachel achieves this end as she founded GEMS. Through it, she rebuilds her selfhood and she does her best to help as many girls as she can; girls like her and like us.

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