

SEX TRAFFICKING THROUGH THE SURVIVORS' EYES:  
THE POWER OF MEMOIR

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THE POWER OF MEMOIR

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## ABSTRACT

As awareness of sex trafficking has grown, so have news reports, documentaries, novels, blogs, and nonprofit organizations aiming to abolish it. However, these accounts largely fail to recognize the most important voice of all—the voices of survivors. Thus, the survivor memoir presents a source of information and perspective desperately needed. In this rhetorical and comparative study on two memoirs written by female survivors of sex trafficking, *The Road of Lost Innocence* by Somaly Mam and *Girls Like Us* by Rachel Lloyd, I argue for Mam's and Lloyd's effective use of the memoir to create an intimate relationship with the reader and make a compelling call to action. Through careful, powerful portrayals of the survivors' trauma and by connecting this traumatic experience with the global context of sex trafficking, these two memoirs epitomize the power of the genre to create a compelling call to action that is necessary to any movement of social justice.

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## INTRODUCTION

“Write about your passion.” This short sentence, so simple, created a revolution in my mind. Seeking advice from a friend on the subject of my Honors thesis, I realized how passionate I had become about the issue of human trafficking. After attending a conference freshman year that brought the problem to my attention, I began to steadily inform myself with articles, documentaries, and social media feeds from experts in the field. Within two years, the victims of human trafficking—and more specifically, the victims of sex trafficking—had pressed a heavy weight on my heart; I decided my life path would intersect with their cause in whatever way possible. My friend’s advice seemed to make sense; yet how would I connect sex trafficking to my thesis—especially one in English? What role could literature play in social justice? These questions circulated in my head until I realized that there must be some connection between the two, and I decided that this thesis would either be about discovering or developing it.

## CHAPTER ONE

Focusing on *The Road of Lost Innocence* by Somaly Mam and *Girls Like Us* by Rachel Lloyd as my main objects for detailed interpretation, I present a comparative and rhetorical analysis of the ways female survivors of sex trafficking use the memoir. Mam and Lloyd employ the genre to create a compelling, intimate call to action, making difficult choices as they appeal to emotion, divulge traumatic details, and use research and other evidence to connect their experiences to a larger issue. The diction, tone, amount of detail, timing, and framework involved in the narration of traumatic events affect the level of emotionality, and therefore the level of intimacy with the audience, which creates a personal connection between a horrific social problem and the otherwise-sheltered reader. In contrast, the globalizing techniques Mam and Lloyd use, such as statistics, qualitative research, stories of other victims, and discussions of

cultural context, cast the personal relationship between survivor and audience onto a wider stage—allowing the reader to grasp the prevalence of the problem and their role in solving it. While Mam excels in the use of detail and ability to connect intimately with the reader, Lloyd excels in the use of context to create not just one survivor’s story, but a comprehensive account of commercial sexual exploitation of children. However, both memoirs put forward compelling arguments, presented in various ways, for support of the anti-sex trafficking movement.

Furthermore, in this preliminary study, I have found that these two memoirs show why the genre is essential to the human rights movement, specifically demonstrating the ways that survivors’ experiences in the form of memoir can invite activism and involvement in the fight against sex trafficking. The memoir form provides a unique opportunity for victims of social injustice to have their voices heard. Just like in the days of Harriet Tubman and Frederick Douglass, firsthand stories are essential to create understanding of this social injustice and motivate people to action. Rachel Lloyd’s and Somaly Mam’s memoirs represent an effective rhetorical use of the memoir by creating an intimate connection between reader and survivor to stimulate empathy and contextualizing the survivor’s personal experience with the larger issue of sex trafficking to appeal for action; together these memoirs epitomize the capacity for the memoir’s unique balance of emotion and detail to be an important agent of social change.

Before detailing my close reading of Mam’s and Lloyd’s works, it will be useful to provide background information on the issue of sex trafficking as a whole, leaning on research to examine the possible societal causes and challenges to eradication. Pointing to the similarities between trafficking and antebellum-era slavery, I will discuss the slave narrative and its importance as an ancestor of the contemporary human trafficking memoir. I will then outline my rationale for choosing this specific genre and these specific texts, continuing onto a brief

summary of the timeline and general style of each memoir. Following this, I will present a review of the memoir scholarship to which I will refer in my analysis of Mam's and Lloyd's works.

Chapter Two will present a close reading of the rhetorical strategies the memoirists use to portray the traumatic experiences of their childhood, physical abuse, and sexual exploitation. Chapter Three will explore the uses of statistics, qualitative research, stories of other victims, and cultural, historical, political, and economic exposition to connect their experience to the larger issue of sex trafficking. The final coda will provide summaries and final analyses of each memoir's techniques and then connect these findings to the power of memoir as an appeal for social action. While this project is limited by time constraints and its multi-disciplinary, multi-cultural context, preliminary conclusions on the power of memoir will be drawn. In the future, a study of an expanded number of memoirs would be helpful to solidify these findings, which will be addressed in the coda along with other recommendations for further research.

### **What is Sex Trafficking?**

In the United Nations "Protocol to Prevent, Suppress, and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children," human trafficking is defined as:

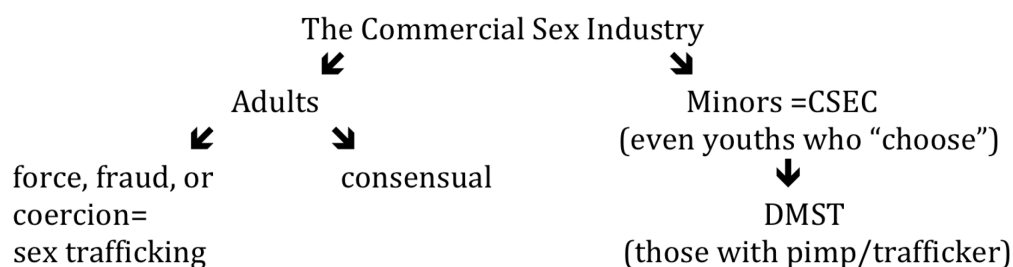
. . . the recruitment, transportation, transfer, harbouring or receipt of persons, by means of the threat or use of force or other forms of coercion, of abduction, of fraud, of deception, of the abuse of power or of a position of vulnerability or of the giving or receiving of payments or benefits to achieve the consent of a person having control over another person, for the purpose of exploitation. (United Nations 42)

The subsequent definition of exploitation includes "the exploitation of the prostitution of others or other forms of sexual exploitation" (United Nations 42). Moreover, the protocol notes that



“the recruitment, transportation, transfer, harbouring or receipt of a child for the purpose of exploitation shall be considered ‘trafficking in persons’” even if force, coercion, abduction, fraud, deception, or payments are not used, and “child” is defined as “any person under eighteen years of age” (United Nations 43). Thus, sex trafficking is the recruitment, transportation, transfer, harboring, or receipt of human beings by force, fraud, or coercion, or when the victim is less than 18 years of age, for the purpose of sexual exploitation. Kimberly Kotrla notes that sex trafficking can take the forms of “prostitution, pornography, stripping, escort services, and other sexual services” (182). The United Nations definition means that sex trafficking can involve both the selling of women in brothels and the pimping of young girls on the street, and even though the term “trafficking” connotes smuggling or transportation, the actual definition requires no movement of any sort. The multiple varieties of sex trafficking allow for two survivors, like the memoirists Lloyd and Mam, to have been victimized by the same social problem yet emerge with very different experiences.

To most clearly explain the terms used in this paper, I offer a simple diagram of the relationship and differences between different areas of the sex industry:



While in reality the boundaries between these experiences are less distinct than the diagrams above suggest, the terms serve a useful purpose in the way society views and attempts to solve the problem. The acronym CSEC stands for “commercial sexual exploitation of minors,” which

involves any youth involved in the trade of payment (of any type) for sexual services, and DMST refers to “domestic minor sex trafficking,” which involves a third-party exploiter, be it madam, boyfriend, pimp, or trafficking ring.

Due to the clandestine nature of sex trafficking, reliable numbers are difficult to produce. Frank Hagemann, with the International Labour Office in Geneva, estimates that 1.8 million children are exploited through prostitution and pornography each year (26). In the U.S., the number of at-risk children seems to be the most dependable claim; Estes and Weiner say, “even for the very lowest calculation, more than 244,000 children are estimated to have been *at risk* of commercial sexual exploitation during the calendar year ending December, 2000,” (my emphasis, Estes and Weiner 144). The number of children victimized by sex trafficking in Cambodia, a nation almost 25 times smaller than the U.S., is estimated to be 100,000—not to mention the number of Cambodian children trafficked across the border into Thailand, Malaysia, and Vietnam (Roberts and Ferguson 59). Despite the need for more conclusive research, these numbers demonstrate that sex trafficking does exist and does affect children.

### *Societal Causes of Trafficking*

As with any social problem, a variety and combination of foundational societal ills allow for sex trafficking to thrive. Siddharth Kara, Fellow on Human Trafficking at Harvard University, focuses on poverty and gender as the root causes of the explosion of sex slavery in Europe and South and East Asia. Notes Kara: “The particular ascension of sex slavery in these regions resides at the intersection of the socioeconomic bedlam promoted by economic globalization and a historic, deeply rooted bias against females” (30). However, what Kara calls the “main theme” of his book is the idea that “sex slavery is the profit-maximizing version of prostitution” (33). Kara explains that, much like the transformation of systems of indentured

servitude in the New World to systems of slavery, the commercial sex industry realized that using sex slaves would create a greater profit—because the exploiters would keep *all* the profits. Furthermore, using sex slaves would increase the demand for commercial sex services because “the cheaper the cost of sex, the more men who could afford it, or afford it more often” (Kara 34).

Kimberly Kotrla also describes the factors that allow for the phenomenon of sex trafficking as a matter of supply and demand, focusing specifically on the demand side, which is populated by traffickers, driven by greed, and consumers—the people who purchase sex—driven by sexual desire. Kotrla also highlights the importance of a culture of tolerance in four countries of study, the U.S., Japan, the Netherlands, and Jamaica; essentially this culture of tolerance, “fueled by the glamorization of pimping,” allows for a thriving sex industry which demands unwilling and underage participants to fill its needs (183).

Focusing specifically on Cambodia, Kristin Roberts and Kristin Ferguson outline the historical, socio-demographic, economic, and political context that may lend explanation to the prevalence of the commercial sexual exploitation and sex trafficking of minors in Cambodia. The Communist Khmer Rouge regime starting in 1975 caused the deaths of millions of Cambodians, leading to Vietnamese takeover, their withdrawal and even more civil war, and finally, today’s political democracy, which continues to be surrounded by violence and corruption (Roberts and Ferguson 60-62). The country is still mostly a rural society, and literacy rates remain low, especially among women (Robert and Ferguson 61). Furthermore, the economy continues to struggle, and almost half of all Cambodians live below the poverty line (Roberts and Ferguson 62). Finally, Roberts and Ferguson say that the factors of gender inequality; poverty; lack of governmental or international resources directed toward health, education, and social services;

the presence of corrupted officials; and the lack of enforcement of sex industry regulations—most likely because the money from sex tourism helps the weak economy—create the perfect environment for CSEC to thrive (63).

### *Public Perception*

The age specification of United Nations definition of sex trafficking (and U.S. federal law, which follows suit) operates on the principle that a minor cannot legally consent to sex and, therefore, cannot legally consent to prostitution, no matter the lack of force, fraud, or coercion. Thus, the minor should not be prosecuted or viewed as criminal; instead he or she should be treated as a victim and someone who deserves protection and treatment services. However, Heather Clawson and Grace Goldblatt point out that the stigma still poses an obstacle to both identification and rehabilitation: “Viewing these minors as victims of domestic sex trafficking instead of ‘criminals’ or ‘prostitutes’ represents a huge paradigm shift that has occurred in statute, but not in practice” (2). The memoirs of this thesis attest to this continuing stigma and the difficulty for survivors to see themselves as victims.

Language plays a tremendous role in redefining the commercial sexual exploitation of children. In a blog about the importance of language, the Chicago Alliance Against Sexual Exploitation notes, “Myths about prostitution run deep in our culture. Some people believe it is a victimless crime, or that all women in prostitution have chosen to be there. Often, the media contributes to these myths by using derogatory and shaming language” (CAASE Staff). Kotrla agrees and offers advice on how to fix this problem: “No longer should derogatory and demeaning words such as ‘prostitute,’ ‘slut,’ or ‘sex worker’ be tolerated; rather, language that embodies the social work value of dignity and respect for every individual and calls these young people what they truly are—victims of trafficking or children or youths who have been

prostituted—should be used” (185). The language used must mirror the law’s position, and since the law labels minors in prostitution victims rather than criminals, the words connoting choice are not applicable to these situations.

### **Human Trafficking and Nineteenth-Century Slavery**

Many scholars, activists, and survivors use the term “modern-day slavery” to describe the horrors of both labor trafficking and sex trafficking. Whether under the threat of violence from a pimp or behind the locked doors of a brothel, paid little or paid nothing at all, victims of sex trafficking are unable to leave and change their way of life. This is slavery and in many ways resembles the slavery during the antebellum era in the United States. While the Emancipation Proclamation in the nineteenth century brought down the walls of an institutionalized, legalized slave trade within the U.S., slavery still exists in the form of human trafficking, here and elsewhere.

Literature played a great role in the abolitionist movement of the nineteenth century. As many have heard, Abraham Lincoln is supposed to have credited Harriet Beecher Stowe’s *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* with sparking the American Civil War and thus helping to end slavery, including the kind of sexual slavery she depicted on Simon Legree’s plantation for the character Cassy. While Stowe’s work was fiction, the non-fiction slave narrative was also wildly popular and instrumental in the abolitionist movement: as G. Thomas Couser argues, the slave narrative even “laid the groundwork, and helped to create the audience, for Stowe’s novel” (176). These slave narratives, some of the most famous being *A Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, an American Slave*, 1845, and *Twelve Years a Slave, Narrative of Solomon Northrup*, 1853, were written by freed or escaped slaves to document their experiences and journeys to freedom in order to convince readers of slavery’s injustice and the need for abolition. While the many male-

authored slave narratives tend (perhaps understandably) to downplay the ongoing sexual abuses of black women that represented one of the most heinous aspects of the “peculiar institution,” there were also narratives written by women who treated the subject more fully.

One of the most famous slave narratives of this sort is *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl*, published by Harriet Jacobs in 1861. In this early example of memoir, Jacobs writes about many of the same experiences that Rachel Lloyd and Somaly Mam address in their narratives. Jacobs details her life in slavery and journey to freedom, especially her wish to escape the sexual advances of her master. Similarly to Lloyd and Mam, Jacobs discusses the relevance, or absence, of agency and choice in her exploitation and the coercion, grooming, and brainwashing involved. Jacobs also includes secondhand accounts of the experiences of other slaves—to portray the similarities in their exploitation but also display the wide range of atrocities.

One major difference between Jacobs’ narrative and the more recent memoir accounts is the delicate nature with which she manages the intimate details of her sexual exploitation. In the introduction to *Incidents*, L. Maria Childs admits, “I am well aware that many will accuse me of indecorum for presenting these pages to the public . . . but the public ought to be made acquainted with its monstrous features, and I willingly take the responsibility of presenting them with the veil withdrawn” (6). Jacobs excludes most vulgar details, including the exact abusive words and actions of her licentious master, explaining that they were of “a nature too filthy to be repeated” (149). While current memoirists must still make choices about traumatic material and their consequences for the reader—and perhaps themselves—the generally more open nature of the 21<sup>st</sup> century allows Lloyd and Mam much more freedom in relating the exact details of the violence committed against them.

Nonetheless, despite the period-based differences in their rhetorical toolkits, the spirit of Jacobs' work sets an eerie foundation for the work of today's sex trafficking memoirs, as she explains, "Reader, it is not to awaken sympathy for myself that I am telling you truthfully what I suffered in slavery. I do it to kindle a flame of compassion in your hearts for my sisters who are still in bondage, suffering as I once suffered" (Jacobs 27). Though written 150 years ago, Jacobs' narrative continues to have a mission, for the "sisters" still trapped in the bondage of human trafficking. Like many people assume about the slave trade, Couser asserts that once slavery became illegal in the U.S., the slave narrative's "work was done" (176). However, since slavery is in fact alive and well, the need for the human trafficking memoir continues to exist.

### **Why the Memoir?**

When I began to look at the vast realm of literature to find works on the subject of trafficking, I first searched within the genre of my comfort zone—the novel. Unfortunately, I discovered few based on research—many based on sensation, and realized I desired a genre that stayed closer to reality.<sup>1</sup> Thus, I began to look at nonfiction accounts and arrived at the survivor's narrative. I decided to focus on the survivor's memoir for several reasons: its blend of creative and informative content, its firsthand account of sex slavery, and its potential to call individuals to action. This genre offered the chance to understand sex trafficking through the eyes of the victim rather than the reporter, and a chance to imagine potential solutions through the mind of the survivor rather than the statistics.

This chance to listen, to learn more about this cause, and to possibly use my studies for good, led me to decide on this subject. Although many cringe at the idea of instrumentalism, I firmly believe that literature has power—that it can motivate social change. Since many people believe slavery ended in the nineteenth century, lack of awareness is one of the biggest obstacles

in the way of stopping human trafficking today. News reporters and researchers have the opportunity to raise awareness in an efficient manner, and their attention to the issue has increased significantly in recent years; however, in a study on media coverage in the U.S., Great Britain, and Canada, only 12% of articles used a survivor as a source (Gulati 16). Therefore, the memoir provides a source of information desperately needed. The memoir holds the key not only to awareness but also to understanding and ethical action, because it allows the survivor to control the conversation.

After reading several sex trafficking narratives, I have chosen to focus on Rachel Lloyd's *Girls Like Us*, 2011 and Somaly Mam's *The Road of Lost Innocence*, 2009. I chose these two memoirs for a variety of reasons. Both show rhetorical skill, yet they employed this skill in a measured fashion, unlike some other accounts that seemed to overwhelm the reader in order to produce emotion. Both memoirs also effectively address sex trafficking with a comprehensive approach, as I will examine more fully, by placing their stories within a broader context and allowing the audience to see the problem from multiple angles. On this note, I also chose Mam and Lloyd because their experiences represent highly different cases of sex trafficking, due to the differences between British, American, and Cambodian cultural, political, and economic situation—Lloyd was trafficked in England but now works in the U.S., and Mam was trafficked and now works in Cambodia. This cultural difference also affects the style of writing, self-disclosure, and general approach of the rhetoric, which will be addressed as the paper continues. Finally, both Mam and Lloyd are leaders in the anti-sex trafficking movement; in addition to leading their own aftercare and advocacy agencies, they often speak on sex trafficking and related issues at national and international venues, sometimes even together.<sup>2</sup> With my academic and career interests in social work, it was important to choose memoirs from the most respected



survivor leaders in the worlds of advocacy and aftercare. Mam's and Lloyd's voices, regardless of their cultural differences, are at the forefront of the movement to abolish sex trafficking, and thus are important to analyze in relation to each other. While the cultures are very different, many of the base issues are similar—as Mam says, “Victims are victims in every country” (189)—and this project will attempt to show how memoirs in any culture can effectively aid the global fight against sex trafficking.

Driven by my desire for the empowerment of survivors, my hope for the abolition of sex trafficking, and my belief in the power of memoir to affect both, I present a comparative analysis of the rhetorical skills used by these female memoirists as they relate their experiences in the sex trafficking industry. These memoirists portray their stories in varying ways that connect with the reader on an empathic level and then contextualize that relationship within the greater issue of sex trafficking. *Girls Like Us* and *The Road of Lost Innocence* show why the genre is essential to the human rights movement, and specifically how survivors' experiences in the form of the memoir can compel activism and involvement in the fight against sex trafficking.

### *Introduction of Main Texts*

After reading several other sex trafficking narratives, I realized that Mam's *The Road of Lost Innocence* and Lloyd's *Girls Like Us* stand out for their professional credibility, rhetorical style, and bold appeals for action more than sympathy. Both authors are also leaders in anti-human trafficking activism and survivor rehabilitation. Lloyd is founder and executive director of GEMS, Girls Educational and Mentoring Services in New York City; she has been honored with the Reebok International Human Rights Award. Mam is cofounder and president of AFESIP, Acting for Women in Distressing Situations, in Cambodia and president of the Somaly Mam Foundation in the United States; she was also named *Glamour* magazine's “Woman of the

Year” in 2006 and one of *Time* magazine’s 100 most influential people of the world in 2009.

Below I include a summary of the life events detailed in each memoir, in order to provide a foundation for an analysis, later in this thesis, of the rhetorical framework used to present them.

Rachel Lloyd employs a non-linear form as she alternates between her personal stories, the stories of the girls she works with at GEMS, and research-based expository material. She organizes her chapters around the different themes and stages of sex trafficking, such as “Recruitment,” “Johns,” or “Relapse” (Lloyd 67, 101, 185). While the timeline is somewhat inconsistent—whether this is a product of or reason for the nonlinear form is unclear—Lloyd tells different anecdotes from a childhood littered with sexual abuse, an addictive mother and abusive stepfather, and suicide attempts—both her mother’s and her own. In 1993, she enters the sex industry at age 17, after having run away to Germany, where she quickly runs out of money and, being unable to communicate or legally work, realizes she has no way to return home. Lloyd details her difficult decision to become a hostess at a strip club, which quickly leads to prostitution, and explains her own struggle to forgive herself, saying, “Only later can I give my scared teenage self a break and understand with compassion for myself how the ‘choices’ I made were limited by my age and circumstances” (78). For the next two years, she is raped, beaten, and exploited by her various boyfriends and pimps while she works as a prostitute at the strip club. After being kidnapped, almost murdered, and attempting suicide, Lloyd finally leaves “the life” and finds refuge at an American Air Force base. In 1997, she moves to the United States to work as a missionary for the Little Sister Project, a ministry for adult women in the sex industry, and then eventually founds GEMS in 1998.

To analyze Somaly Mam’s *The Road of Lost Innocence*, it must be noted that the copyright page of the book lists the author of the first edition as “Somaly Mam with Ruth

*Marshall*” (emphasis mine), and that the work has been translated from French to English. The layers of a secondary author, a translation, and cultural differences create a layer of remove from the original context of the narrative, yet meaningful comparisons can still be gained from rhetorical analysis. In contrast to Lloyd, Somaly Mam details her experiences chronologically, organizing her chapters around the various settings in which she finds herself or the characters she meets, giving them titles such as “The Forest,” “Aunty Peuve,” or “France” (Mam 1, 55, 95). She begins with the memories of her parentless childhood in a Phnong tribe in northeastern Cambodia. Around 1980, she was sold by friends to a man whom she calls “grandfather,” who kept her as his domestic servant, beating her often. In her new home with this man, she providentially runs into the supposed brother of her father, who allows her to attend his school in the mornings and provides her with something like a family. About two years later, her grandfather begins molesting her and sells her virginity to a merchant to whom he is indebted. Then, he sells her to a soldier in marriage, who rapes and beats her, eventually leaving to fight the Khmer Rouge. Mam, around 15 years old, then becomes a nurse to help injured soldiers. Her grandfather returns to take her to the capital city of Phnom Penh, where he sells her to a brothel in order to pay off a debt and support himself. The brothel keepers rape, beat, and torture Mam (physically and psychologically) in order to subdue her. When she escapes, even the cousin with whom she takes refuge and the police rape her, eventually returning her to her traffickers. Her spirit broken, she complies for the next two years, slowly gaining more daily freedoms to come and go as she pleases. Her grandfather dies in 1987, and soon after, she finishes paying off his debt. Though several men claim to buy her freedom and then subsequently exploit her, she finally meets a French humanitarian worker named Pierre and marries him in 1993. Through Pierre’s work with Medecins Sans Frontières, Mam begins volunteering and reaching out to

young girls in brothels, and in 1996, AFESIP, Acting for Women in Distressing Situations, is born. Mam details the growth of this organization, which provides shelter, rehabilitation, and trade school for escaped and rescued victims of sex trafficking. It is mostly here that Mam includes the stories of other victims of sex trafficking, as she encounters them and fights for them through her work as an activist.

### **Review of Scholarship on the Memoir Genre**

In *Reading Autobiography: A Guide for Interpreting Life Narratives*, Sidonie Smith and Julia Watson include two chapters on the history of autobiography criticism. They address a variety of critical views towards the genre, but the ones I will apply most to my analysis will be those dealing with how “life narrative is seen as a process through which a narrator struggles to shape an ‘identity’ out of an amorphous experience of subjectivity”—allowing the reader of survivor memoirs to witness the transformation of a victim into a survivor, making an intimate action-stimulating connection with the memoirist (Smith and Watson 125). However, Smith and Watson’s argument that “the project of self-representation [can] no longer be read as direct access to the truth of the self” is problematic for the survivor memoir, because the memoirist requires the reader’s confidence in her retelling, in order to agree with its call to action (124-125).

Smith and Watson also mention that currently, like my project, critics are examining how memoirs fit “in campaigns for human rights,” discussing how one’s life narrative is sometimes “more a site of contestation than we might imagine, especially for those whose status as citizens had been either denied or revoked under law” (158). This idea resounds strongly with the identity (or lack thereof) victims of sex trafficking held while being trafficked. During their exploitation as sex slaves, these women were robbed of their personhood and their voice, but through the

memoir, they create a version of their experience that finally claims the opportunity and right to tell their own story.

In *Memoir: An Introduction*, G. Thomas Couser seeks to explain and discuss the place of the memoir amongst other types of literature, especially as the memoir genre is experiencing a boom in the publishing industry right now. He relates that on the 2010 list of hardcover nonfiction best sellers in *The New York Times Book Review*, seven out of fifteen were memoirs, and for paperback nonfiction, eleven out of twenty were memoirs (Couser 3-4). The memoir's popularity coincides with the growing awareness of human trafficking as a social problem, pointing to a unique opportunity for an analysis of the sex trafficking survivor's memoir and its place in both these spheres of influence.

Couser gives a helpful explanation of the differences between memoir and autobiography, stating that “when contemporary writers devote narratives to particular periods or events of their lives, it is better to think of them as memoirs than as autobiographies” (23). While Mam gives more personal detail irrelevant to her experiences with sex trafficking than Lloyd does, both center their works on their experiences of exploitation, healing, and activism, which pushes them closer to memoir than autobiography. In the first chapter, Couser claims that contrary to popular opinion, memoir has a literary nature all its own. He attends to the memoir's characteristics of memory and relational connection and explains how memoir is necessarily a part of life, a means of self-making in which every human participates through one medium or another, thus making it the most democratic of literature. In the third chapter, Couser explores aspects of the memoir that either contrast or identify with the novel, and how some techniques, like verisimilitude, can sometimes clash with the purpose of the memoir by highlighting and contradicting the reality of human memory. In the seventh chapter, Couser attempts to outline the

“work” of the memoir—what it does, as opposed to what it is. He explains how it engages the reader differently than fiction, creating a discussion of how events shape identity rather than creating a search for meaning, theme, and character. Couser asserts that a good memoir is one that creates an effective distance between the narrator and the protagonist, even when they are the “same” person, because it allows for a deeper self-reflection.

Couser also addresses the opportunity of memoir to impact societal change, identifying that “the very limitation of memoir—its being tethered to the real world, so to speak—is the source of its distinctive power” (176). Couser asserts that “life narrative is a key medium for asserting and expanding human rights” and echoes the ideas of Smith and Watson—that personal narrative gives rights back to the author—claiming that “the work has a performative dimension (177). It *acts out* its message: I’m here and I can speak for myself” (178). However, Couser argues that life narrative focused on advocating for human rights is “situated toward the utilitarian end of a continuum from the most instrumental to the most literary” and is not “what we consider memoir today” (177). Yet while these sex trafficking narratives are utilitarian and aimed towards promoting social justice, this does not discount their identity as works of literature on their own.

For scholarship on women’s memoir writing, as a gendered genre, I read *Repossessing the World* by Helen M. Buss, which examines the memoir as arising from social needs and providing a vehicle for women to identify themselves. Buss discusses elements of trauma, self-making, mother-daughter issues, metaphor, and the memoir’s connection to a community, arguing for the ability of the memoir to “repossess” and change the world. Along similar lines, in her book, *Intimate Reading: The Contemporary Women’s Memoir*, Janet Ellerby provides a defense of the memoir as a literary genre, citing its ability to contribute to social change and

provide healing for its authors. She specifically discusses trauma, sexual abuse, and silence, which relate directly to the experiences of survivors of sex trafficking.

These works of scholarship provide a foundation for the following close readings of the rhetorical and thematic elements in Mam's and Lloyd's memoir. As the memoirists shape their identities and connect with the reader in that process of storytelling in which all humans participate, they also place their narratives within the larger narrative of human rights, engaging the reader in their cause to reshape the world. Specifically, this next chapter will address the element of trauma necessarily found in these sex trafficking memoirs and how Mam and Lloyd approach it with varying levels of candor and delicacy. Through this careful, yet powerful representation of their abuse, these memoirists show how the memoir can create a rich capacity for connection between reader and writer.

## CHAPTER TWO: IT'S PERSONAL: FRAMING THE TRAUMA

The issue of sex trafficking in itself is one necessarily laced with emotion and trauma. In fact, many scholars critique the amount of sensationalized media attention given to victims of sexual slavery. In "Slave Hunters, Brothel Busters, and Feminist Interventions; Investigative Journalists as Anti-Sex-Trafficking Humanitarians," Roxana Galusca suggests that humanitarian sex trafficking journalist investigations are "framed as narratives of excessive suffering, rescue, and sexual temptation" and depend "on the centrality of the prostitute as prototype of pity and erotic attraction" (14). In fact, both Lloyd and Mam attest that many journalists and interested parties aim to portray stories about them in such a way. Lloyd cites reporters during a politician's prostitution scandal who were "all but visibly salivating over every lascivious detail" and the people at conferences who "often ask to 'see [her] scars' as if [she's] a show-and-tell project" (Lloyd 212, 242). Mam echoes this frustration with reporters, yet she acknowledges the need

they have for “a ‘sexy’ project . . . to wake up the readers,” and so she says she hopes that her memoir “will stop me from having to tell my story over and over again, because repeating it is very difficult” (Mam 188).

In their memoirs, however, Lloyd and Mam do not avoid describing difficult situations, such as beatings, rapes, psychological torment, and near-death experiences—although the extent of these descriptions varies by degree. Yet these details aim not to titillate but to inform, to connect the reader realistically and intimately to the problem. If not, their stories would be nothing more than encyclopedia entries from a first-person perspective; the memoir operates by providing the reader with personal detail and emotion. Ellerby argues that “effective memoirists understand how to be the ‘sieve’ that lets just the right amount of detail through in order to build intimacy rather than contempt” (188). Thus, the writers of sex trafficking memoirs must make choices about what and how much detail to include and how to rhetorically and structurally frame these details. These choices take different forms in each memoir. Both Mam’s and Lloyd’s approaches invite the reader into an intimate relationship, one that does not entertain but engages the reader in an authentic portrayal of the horrors of sexual exploitation. In order to analyze the differences in their approaches, I will compare and contrast each writer as she addresses each aspect of the sex trafficking experience: childhood and previous abuse, physical abuse, and sexual exploitation.

### **Childhood: Beginning the Exploitation**

For Lloyd, a childhood littered with neglect, violence, substance abuse, and sexual assault serves not only as proof of a painful life but as the very foundation and cause of her entry into the sex industry. She frames most of these childhood details in chapters named “Risk” and “Family”, and these chapters reveal the important role her past played in leading her to become



sexually exploited (Lloyd 15, 29,47). Lloyd documents her multiple suicide attempts at age 13 with a somewhat sardonic, tone that creates a shocking opening. She describes the attempts in detail, yet avoids labeling them with explanatory words like *cutting* or *drowning*, but instead says, “I’d developed a sudden craving for R Whites Lemonade, which was conveniently sold in a glass bottle. I’d used bandages to tie my neck to the plug hole in the deep sink and then filled it up” (Lloyd 29). This dry tone continues as she explains her disappointment in her survival: “I’m sad, too, but mostly because the student renting a room from my mother came back from France early and called an ambulance when she found me slowly passing out in the kitchen” (Lloyd 30).

In contrast to this detailed sequence of events, Lloyd writes sparingly of the “incident” at three years old when several teenage boys sexually assault her (31). The lack of detail she uses here mimics the silence her mother enforced about the abuse and the “blurry, intrusive flashbacks” she later has, yet it effectively highlights the ability of an event meant to be unmentioned and forgotten to surface and create problems for the victim later in life (Lloyd 31). Ellerby argues that revealing a family secret, especially in memoir writing, promotes an understanding of “the fuller implications of the psychological and emotional damage that shame and secrecy can do” (70). Other family problems have consequences as well; Lloyd partly blames her dismal home situation, where “no one seems to notice or care that I’m not in school or that I’m working full-time at fourteen,” for her extreme vulnerability (41). She explains,

I see modeling as my only ticket out of a town that can offer me nothing but the hopeless future I see in everyone around me. When photographers ask me to pose more ‘seductively,’ to slip my shirt off, to do some ‘artistic’ nude shots for a calendar . . . I comply. Anything that’ll get me out. Anything that will make me feel less invisible.  
(Lloyd 44)

The desperation in this passage becomes increasingly more understandable as she gives the reader a glimpse into the alcohol addiction, depression, and resulting neglectful behavior of her mother. Lloyd describes her mother as “trancelike most of the time, comatose sometimes” and relates how, as a young girl, she must “tiptoe around her and the huge elephant in the room that is her pain” (47). Later, she wonders, “how on earth I’m supposed to tell my mother that her husband has found himself someone else while she sits home and drinks and cries,” and then follows with a succinct, one-sentence paragraph, “It doesn’t go well” (Lloyd 49). Again, this vague phrasing skips the detail but leaves the reader feeling the unfair weight of Lloyd’s responsibility for her mother’s emotional wellbeing. In contrast, when her mother later attempts suicide, Lloyd elaborates on her own guilt: “As she was dying, I would have been out dancing. I had almost been too busy kissing him to see her suicide note” (61).

In *The Road of Lost Innocence*, Mam’s chronological style clearly traces the traumatic events of her childhood, beginning with her abandonment and being sold to “Grandfather” at nine or ten years of age (7). The feeling that something is missing, which Lloyd acknowledges in her desperation to leave her hometown, appears in Mam’s life too: “I was always looking for a mother so that I could be held in her arms, kissed, and stroked. . . . I was very unhappy not to have a mother like everyone else. My only confidants were the trees” (5). Mam uses simple rather than extremely emotional diction, using “looking” and “very unhappy,” which creates a distant sadness, mirroring the distant, yet nagging feeling that something in her life was different from other children’s (5). Mam also foreshadows her later exploitation as she relates her childhood with the Phnong tribe, saying, “I remember a great deal of kindness. . . . The Phnong people are good to children—not like the Khmer” (6).

Mam continues to foreshadow the gravity of the coming future as she details the moment of her sale to the man she calls grandfather, musing,

Perhaps Taman really believed that this grandfather would take care of me. Perhaps he truly thought this old Cham man would help me find my father's relatives. Perhaps he was convinced that I would be better off living in the lowlands, with an adult to look after me. Or perhaps he sold me to this man, knowing full well that, at best, I would become his indentured servant. (7)

The author's tone here implies a childlike, forgiving attitude towards her seller, Taman, yet the parallelism she employs creates a building crescendo to the final sentence. There, the reader infers Mam's impending enslavement and the childlike wondering turns into a subtle designation of blame. Mam also discusses the violence and poverty she experienced as a child, noting the "random, normal" and "routine" nature of death in her village, and saying that "there were times I would have sold my soul for a glass of milk" (18-19). The stark admission of cultural apathy towards death contrasts with the personal desperation for nutrition to outline a depressing, unnatural life situation for a person, let alone a child.

### **Physical Abuse: Creating Submission**

As with almost all cases of sex trafficking, Lloyd's and Mam's abuse comes not only from the sexual abuse of the traffickers and johns but from physical and psychological abuse as well. Traffickers often use violence to punish them for cheating, attempting escape, or misbehaving, or sometimes simply to degrade and subdue them into compliance. Lloyd gives more detail in this area of abuse than in the sexual exploitation.

Lloyd introduces her pimp's tendency towards violence with a hopeless irony in her voice; her boss at the strip club does not want customers to see her bruises and so tells Lloyd to

“tell him to hit [her] only in the head from now on” (102). Apparently, the beatings have gotten extremely bad, but not enough to make people care past the impact on their own business. The violence escalates further as she details a kidnapping attack from a jealous pimp. Lloyd describes the first few punches before artfully finishing the paragraph with “The blow knocks me off-balance and I see the ground rushing up to meet me. I close my eyes” (116). Later, as she, shoeless, tries to escape, she details the “stones and twigs cutting into my feet” and her “crying and bleeding” (Lloyd 119). The present tense of the verbs in this long, traumatic episode allow the reader to feel the painful details described here. She includes the coarse language of the pimp in the form of dialogue which makes the scene even more compelling: “Get the fuck out of the car. Fuck Amsterdam” (Lloyd 119). Finally, after the police refuse to believe her story, label her as a contemptible “Hure,” and return her to her trafficker, she concludes with a highly resigned tone, “Girls like me, I realize, get what they deserve” (Lloyd 123). This admission of her former self-concept constitutes the first step of Lloyd’s re-making her identity and the identities of the girls like her, which ends with her realization at the end of the memoir that “finally I’m ‘that chick,’ that woman that I wanted to grow up to be” (Lloyd 267). This self-making aspect of Lloyd’s memoir demonstrates the “need to regroup and recover, to confront old issues, old practices, to work through them and perform the new self inside and outside the old forms as a way of repossessing the public world through first restructuring the private life” (Buss 80).

An even more violent episode that Lloyd relates spans over three pages, opening the chapter entitled “Staying,” which discusses the reasons behind a victim’s reluctance to leave her trafficker. She begins the paragraph with the short, shocking sentence: “The first blow to my head wakes me up” (Lloyd 149). She uses violent diction like “disjointed,” “crack-fueled,” “disoriented,” “throbbing,” “busted,” to describe the sensations she feels as she is “dragged by

[her] neck” and “thrown across the floor” (Lloyd 149). However, she creates strange, somewhat humorous interruptions in the violence as she becomes “strangely bothered that he’s commandeered” her “good chopping knife” and muses at his incorrect grammar—“*unloyal* is not actually a word” (Lloyd 150). Employing the present tense to immerse the reader in this event, the author includes her thoughts as her pimp attacks, saying, “I think tonight might be the night that I’ve anticipated, the night that I will die. . . . I look into his eyes once more and have no doubt that he is fully capable tonight of slitting my throat” (Lloyd 150). Her furious pimp forces her to her knees with the knife under her chin and orders her to repeat the phrase “I will not be unloyal” for what Lloyd guesses is around five hours, making her “legs feel dead” (150). Lloyd repeats the phrase throughout the description of this night 21 times; this parallel, rhythmic repetition allows the reader to feel mesmerized like Lloyd did, as if by “Kaa from the *Jungle Book* with his hypnotizing eyes” (Lloyd 151). The pimp finally releases her, and she concludes the episode with her thoughts—haunting evidence of the submission the pimp desired—“*I will not be unloyal. I will not be unloyal, I think*” (Lloyd 152).

This pimp’s satisfaction does not last long however, and Lloyd leads us to the climax of their violent relationship after resignedly stating that her death “has become less of a threat and more of a promise,” and that she has “already made arrangements for [her] body to be shipped home” (164). She describes the final moments of this beating, and his attempt to murder her, with graphic detail, though finding brief reprieve in her strange thoughts of the moment:

He lifts my head up and I see the concrete coming up to meet me. Each time he smacks my head into the floor it feels as if my brain is exploding. I see stars and all I can think of is a Tom and Jerry cartoon. It’s true, it’s actually stars, I’m thinking, as my head smashes into the ground again and again . . . He’s crying and kissing my face, saying he loves me,

he's sorry, he loves me, he loves me, he loves me. His hands are around my neck and he's still kissing me . . . I don't even try to fight. (167)

The extreme detail that Lloyd uses, which Couser might argue is “a pursuit of verisimilitude and immediacy” that renders the memoir “highly suspect,” could also be explained by Ellerby’s research, which found that “because trauma causes a temporary infusion of adrenaline and noradrenaline, the memories of the event remain stronger, more vivid” (Couser 72, Ellerby 137). Again, Lloyd’s use of the present tense and repetitive phrasing—“my head into the floor . . . my head smashes into the ground again and again . . . he loves me, he loves me, he loves me”—creates a rhythm that culminates in Lloyd telling her attacker “I’m ready” (Lloyd 167). The cliffhanger ending to this paragraph suggests death strongly enough to make the reader nervous despite the fact of knowing that she, as the author, must have survived.

Mam’s accounts of abuse lack some of the rhetoric and emotion that Lloyd employs, and this tendency may be attributed to both the translation from French to English and her claims about Cambodian culture: “talking is not an easy or common thing in Cambodia. . . . tradition demands you remain silent about misfortune” (Mam 162). While she provides a lot of detail—more so in the descriptions of sexual abuse than physical—she keeps her language straightforward, perhaps because telling is an act difficult enough, so much that elaborating or stylizing would be impossible. Even so, she structures and relays the anecdotes in a way that captures the gravity and cruelty of her experiences. Her abuse begins the very same day she is sold to “Grandfather,” and as he raises his hand to hit her, she says, “I didn’t understand this gesture—I had never been hit” to emphasize the wrongfulness of violence on an innocent child (Mam 8). Mam endures numerous beatings at the hand of “Grandfather,” repeating the clause “he beat me because . . .” several times in order to explain why she “grew accustomed to

neutralizing [her] emotions” (15). Mam gives no details as to how he beat her in this passage, allowing the repetitive, mind-numbing, and emotionally damaging nature of the abuse to take priority over the specific methods.

To describe the physical abuse, however, which she suffers at the hand of the man to whom “Grandfather” sells her in marriage, Mam uses more detail. She explains that her husband beats her with “the butt of his rifle on my back and sometimes with his hands,” and adds that one time, “with his fingernails, which he kept long and pointed, he gashed a deep scar into my cheek” (34). Here Mam employs her more characteristic matter-of-fact tone and reporting of events and structures the details to stand alone, without any appeals for reflection or sympathy. Her frequent discussion of the Cambodians’ culture of silence perhaps lends to this scantily emotive style, embodied by the Cambodian saying: “you must not let the fire that is outside come inside your house, and the hearth fire must not be allowed outside. You don’t talk about what happens in your household” (Mam 35). Perhaps since Mam is already letting out the “fire” of what happened to her, by writing this memoir, she must keep inside the “fire” of how she felt.

In Aunty Peuve’s brothel, Mam describes how her resolve disappears after just a short amount of time. After being beaten “with his belt buckle,” Mam is thrown in a cellar, where, as told in this simple detail, “they dumped the snakes on me”—but the trauma was not about the snakes at all (45). She explains, “I cried, but it was because I had no parents, because I was helpless, because I had been raped and beaten, and because I was hungry and exhausted. I cried from emotion, not from pain. I cried from frustration, because I couldn’t kill them” (Mam 45-46). Although the events are traumatic, she underscores the psychological torment and hopelessness as the chief abuse. The final paragraph of the section reveals the depth of this

psychological exhaustion; her will has been broken: “After that I accepted the clients. There wasn’t any choice” (Mam 46).

Mam does later regain enough resolve to attempt escape—only to be raped by the truck drivers, the cousin with whom she takes refuge, and the police, then taken by cab straight back to her trafficker. Mam states that Aunty Peuve’s husband beats her with a cane and has his friends gang-rape her for an entire week, yet the most traumatizing aspect of this week of punishment seems to be how he tied her to a bed, naked for all visitors to gaze upon. She says, “Despite everything I’d been through I was fundamentally modest, and this experience was horrible,” suggesting again that the psychological torture left more scars than the physical, even though it caused her to become “sick, shaking with fever” (Mam 53). Furthermore, this man continues to terrorize her in order to have her “completely cowed” by emptying “a bucket of live maggots” on her body and in her mouth while she was sleeping (Mam 54). Once this cruel punishment has taken its course, Mam begins to view Aunty Peuve as “not horrible to us so long as we cooperated” and always “capitulate[s],” not desiring another retributive episode (53). Yet, Mam says, “I know now that this is a slave mentality” (54). This effective framing of physical and psychological abuse makes readers feel the exhaustion and hopelessness of her captivity, allowing them to understand her lack of will to attempt leaving again.

### **Sexual Exploitation**

While Lloyd relates in detail much of the physical abuse she experienced at the hands of her pimp, she spends significantly less time explaining the sexual aspects of her exploitation. In addition to the child abuse mentioned earlier, she briefly acknowledges that she was “raped several times by the adult men” she met as a young teenager (Lloyd 33). This brief clause is just a piece in a long listing of the neglect, suicide attempts, poverty, and crime she experiences that



make her “a flashing neon sign for danger, for abuse, for a tragic ending. A perfect conflation of risk factors, a statistic waiting to happen” (Lloyd 33). Her brevity turns into vagueness later in the memoir as she hints at her new job as a strip club hostess: “I haven’t crossed ‘The Line,’ but I’ve crossed a bunch that I thought I never would. Still, plenty of men have touched me when I didn’t want them to; none of them has paid for the privilege” (Lloyd 76). Her use of metaphor, highlighted by quotation marks, veils the sexual act to which she refers, but allows enough information for the reader to understand that shame and discomfort cause her to “pile on the makeup, give myself a whole different look, change my name” and create distance between “Rachel and this other person who just needs to survive right now” (Lloyd 77). As Buss argues, the metaphorical representation of her sexual experience is characteristic of the memoir genre, which “wishes to register as history formerly untold, but must use the devices of drama and fiction to create new realities”; these devices help the reader understand the true nature of the experience—a line which, when crossed, leads to her exploitation (Buss 23).

Later, Lloyd gives further description of her job but continues to use vague, brief sentences to describe her work, mentioning only that she “takes her clothes off onstage” and is “sick of the men, wanting to be left alone, not touched,” and refuses men who offer her help only so she can be at their “sexual beck and call” (Lloyd 102, 105). Instead of these phrases, the focus of these sections remains on either the physical abuse or her mental state and coping skills, as she must “stay numb, stay drunk, stay high” (Lloyd 105). Her avoidance of the sexual details mirrors her attempt to repress the sexual abuse in that moment: she despairingly attempts to “remind [herself] that there have been lots of times when [she] was touched but didn’t want to be. Now at least [she is] getting paid for the indignity of it all” (Lloyd 105).

When Lloyd describes her first encounter with a pimp, from whom she luckily escapes, she describes the aspect of sexual assault in one sentence: “He rapes me, telling me that it is only fair, as he has to try it first” (Lloyd 85). Again, Lloyd gives the minimal amount of attention to the sexual act, uses no graphic language, and focuses on other aspects of the attack—the pimp’s threatening behavior, attempt to force her into street prostitution, and need for power. Her de-emphasis of the shocking sexual details supports her later claim: “rape has little to do with sex, and everything to do with power” (Lloyd 125). The important part is not the sex, but it is instead the brutality, the force, the robbing of dignity and agency which victims of commercial sexual exploitation experience.

Lloyd includes a large amount of exposition on the various political, social, and cultural aspects of sex trafficking; research from other experts in the field; and anecdotes from her work with her clients; therefore, the space for her personal stories—that pure form of life narrative—is limited. Thus, it is no surprise that the attention paid to the sexual acts she performed or endured holds an even smaller footing in the memoir. Indeed, Lloyd mentions her hatred for offering her body and her life as a “show-and-tell project,” and this book takes no part in that (242). Even the mentions of other girls who have been raped or sex-trafficked follow this minimalist framework; in fact, perhaps the most detailed scene of sexual abuse comes from her synopsis of the film *The Accused* based on the real-life story of Cheryl Araujo, who was gang-raped and criminalized by her community. Lloyd writes that she was “assaulted by six men on a pool table while a group of bystanders cheered them on,” choosing to describe the setting, the number of men, and the attitude of the witnesses to emphasize the horror of this incident (123). Perhaps the distance between this incident and Lloyd, her clients, and the victim herself—the gang rape of Araujo

happened in 1983—justifies the use of these descriptive details in order to give readers the full picture of the brutality and injustice of this woman’s experience.

Mam’s approach to the sexual violence in her story is much more graphic. While the physical violence seems to supersede the sexual in *Girls Like Us*, Mam says, “The blows hurt, but the act itself was much worse” (Mam 60). The sexual exploitation begins when Mam starts to undergo pubescence and her “grandfather began touching” her breasts (23). Mam’s simple diction and neutral tone describes little emotion or reaction, but her later sentence, “I ran” reveals the fear she felt (23). On the next page, her next encounter with sexual assault is rape. She intimates, “he hit me hard and then he raped me. I didn’t know what he had done, but it felt as though he had cut me between my legs. . . .I was bleeding. . . .I didn’t know about penises. I thought he used a knife” (Mam 24-25). These details are graphic, using words like “cut,” “bleeding,” and “knife” to give a much more painful picture than Lloyd gave (Mam 24-25).

In contrast, Mam includes episodes using the style of Lloyd as well, depending on her focus for the anecdote. When a doctor rapes her, Mam quotes him as saying, “‘You’re so ugly, you’re lucky I’m doing this’” (38). Mam gives no details about the setting, other than the time of day, focusing on the words he said to mirror the assertion that “the rape wasn’t as bad as the words he said” (38). Like Lloyd, Mam highlights not the emotion or the physical pain but the psychological trauma that caused her to feel “like garbage, like I was nothing” (38).

Later, though, Mam shares the details of her first night in the brothel. After the first customer, she explains that because she “resisted,” she was “bleeding from the nose and mouth” and that “blood and sperm were everywhere” (Mam 44). The development of the scene produces a disturbing picture of this 15-year-old on a brothel floor, where she becomes filled with a “black, dark anger” (Mam 44). However, just paragraphs later, she describes being raped by her

madame's husband and his two guards in a quick and simple manner, because the image from the first rape is still fresh, and so this one needs no explanation.

Thus, it is evident that Mam's memoir exists not for sadistic sexual entertainment. She evades all detail on her sexual relations outside the brothel, except in order to relate the continued disgust and emotional torment associated with them. With a relationship she has with a man named Dietrich, which was somewhat romantic yet still exploitative, she admits that he "did pretty much what all the clients did, although he didn't hit me," exhibiting her disillusionment and lack of pleasure with sex (Mam 69). As for the completely consensual relationship with her future husband Pierre, she similarly discloses, "I couldn't get the image of violence out of my mind. . . . Pierre was kind, but for me, our nights together were always difficult" (Mam 82).

Mam also includes stories of the sexual exploitation of other girls in the industry, including those served by her humanitarian organization. The most painful section of the book lies in Mam's description of the techniques used to market very young girls as virgins, even after they have been sold to multiple men. She explains, "Often they are very young girls, just five or six years old. After the week is over, they sew the girl inside—without an anesthetic—and quickly sell her again. A virgin is supposed to scream and bleed, and this way the girl will scream and bleed, again and again" (Mam 60). The repetition of "scream and bleed" magnifies the horror of this brutal act, and the paragraph seems as if it will never end, much like the abuse (Mam 60).

Another horrifying anecdote recounts how a young girl was "raped . . . one by one" by six or seven men in their fifties (Mam 172). Mam includes that "since she was too narrow, they took a knife and cut her vagina"—a graphic detail, but all to show the ruthless and animalistic

nature of the attackers (172). Ellerby explores the question of whether a memoirist has a right to tell the stories of others, and she explains that details, such as the ones Mam includes, are not “cruel” or “needless” but instead used as “an opportunity for her to critique a world” (Ellerby 190). Thus, Mam’s intimation of these horrific details is warranted by the need for the society to realize the horrors it passively allows.

Other mentions of sexually horrific attacks also include a young girl whose nipple has been “torn off . . . and the wound was infected” (Mam 114). Mam also describes the “orange women,” whom men fondle and have sex with for “the price of an orange” or “twenty-five cents,” respectively, and who are sometimes found gang-raped and dead in the morning (160). These details inarguably justify Mam’s responses, illustrated by statements like, “I am engulfed by rage” and “I felt real violence within me” (172, 158). Yet here, Mam describes the bare minimum, and always in her matter-of-fact tone, because the violence speaks for itself.

### **Effects of Each Memoir’s Rhetoric**

This analysis identifies the differences and similarities between Mam and Lloyd as they relate these traumatic events. While Mam uses a simple, reporting tone, yet plenty of details: “younger girls are very likely to become infected with HIV and other diseases, because of tearing. Sry Mach has AIDS” (149), Lloyd tends to use more rhetorical devices and appeals to emotion, such as this metaphor: “Now that doll has been mutilated, her delicate porcelain features smashed” (113). Of course, the authors sometimes choose to deviate from their typical style to highlight different aspects of the experience. However, both approaches create effectively compelling accounts of their abusive situations, as well as those of current victims. On the one hand, Lloyd’s less specific approach to the sexual trauma matches her emphasis on the global nature of her experience, as she calls for empathy and attention to a phenomenon so

highly ignored in the United States, as well as the focus on the whole experience of sex trafficking—the mental, emotional, cultural, social, and relational impacts. On the other hand, Mam’s approach results in part from the fact that her text was translated from French to English, which makes her diction straightforward. Perhaps more significant though, Mam’s Cambodian culture values the utmost privacy and appropriateness, and since Mam already violates that value by simply detailing the experiences within closed doors, she remains guarded on any further intimations. Furthermore, the sheer, barbaric horror and outright cruelty of the sexual torture Mam experienced speaks for itself. The different reasoning and influences of these two memoirs create two different accounts that, together, provide a more global picture on the reality of human sex trafficking.

Whatever their differences in specific rhetorical choices, both these memoirs share a commitment to using the first-person narrative as a way of creating empathy in readers for victims of sex trafficking. Mam mentions this specifically, listing several reasons for the book, including making people “realize to what extent prostitutes are victimized and how important it is to help them” and serving “as a call to the governments of the world to get involved in the battle against the sexual exploitation of women and children” (189). For Lloyd, a belief that “statistics, presented without the faces, the stories, the tears, couldn’t even begin to measure the severity or frequency of the trauma” resounds throughout the book and hints at her purpose in writing it (52). In my experience, I found myself thoroughly engaged as I turned the pages of both memoirs, enthralled by the candor and boldness of both writers, wondering how each victim would survive. Despite this desire to continue reading, and especially with Mam’s, I often felt the need to pause, in order to process or relieve my mind of the powerful details. I often responded emotionally myself, sometimes to the point of tears. Even during third and fourth

readings of some sections of Mam's and Lloyd's memoirs, I still find myself overwhelmed by the injustice of the abuse.

On the one hand, Lloyd's emphasis on the physical abuse of the pimps—the beatings, the near-murders, the drugs—as well as her focus on the psychological abuse and trauma bonds with her trafficker—best exemplified in the “I will not be unloyal” scene—lessens the impact of the sexually traumatic material (150). This redirection facilitates a more holistic, less emotionally abrasive impression; however, I still responded with intense compassion and concern. While Lloyd may not elaborate on the intimate details, she does maintain a personal, open relationship with readers, allowing them to witness firsthand her journey of self-discovery, which Lloyd describes as “a process, a long one that I'll mess up at multiple opportunities, until slowly I begin to find a little balance, a little peace of my own” (260). Finally, her subtlety also allows the reader to focus more on the other material in the book—not only the physical and psychological ramifications but also the scientific and cultural explanations for sex trafficking, to be discussed in the next chapter of this thesis.

On the other hand, while Mam does highlight the psychological impact of her abuse, she approaches the sexual trauma with full force and complete candor, such as when she intimates that she “thought [her rapist] used a knife” (25). These details, as well as the similar portrayals of the abuse of other victims, overwhelmed me with sorrow and fury. While Mam does not use much emotional appeal in a rhetorical sense, the events are terrible enough by themselves to create an emotional response. Since these graphic scenes are not on every page, the emotional trajectory of the book is marked with moments of severely concentrated material that are difficult to digest and require pauses in order to recover. However, Mam contains the scenes in small portions and does not reiterate details or feelings that have already been described, as when she

first comes to the brothel and is raped several times. Mam also creates this balance by limiting her rhetoric and exposition during these scenes; she presents the minutiae, describes briefly how she felt, and then moves forward. This balance allows the reader to continue; if it were not for this careful presentation of such horrific imagery, finishing the book would not be possible.

For these reasons, though both these memoirs are forcefully addressing related themes associated with sex trafficking, and inviting the reader to understand and care about the traumatic consequences, I found Mam's *The Road of Lost Innocence* to be more effective in the area of creating an intimate connection. I appreciate the subtlety and overall well-roundedness of Lloyd's approach, which will be highlighted in the next chapter; yet for the criterion of rhetorically framing the emotional material, Mam's straightforward, yet simple, style creates a deeper bond between audience and author, allowing for a more compassionate response. The intense moments of horrific description leave a deep impression on the reader, and this impression is necessary for a long-lasting emotional response that keeps the reader from forgetting the gravity of the injustice of sex trafficking.

### CHAPTER THREE: CONNECTING TO THE GLOBAL ISSUE

Memoir is rooted in memory; it is an intensely personal, individual form of storytelling; however, it is also socially located, significant in a greater community of readers and social issues. As critic Helen M. Buss says in *Repossessing the World: Reading Memoirs by Contemporary Women*, the memoir genre "bridges the typical strategies of historical and literary discourses in order to establish necessary connections between the private and the public, the personal and the political" (Buss 3). This bridge is especially important for the life narrative that desires a social action response, and is displayed through the sex trafficking survivor memoirs by Mam and Lloyd in their need not only to describe their personal experiences, but also to connect



those experiences to the larger social issue. The problem of sex trafficking is personal to the memoirists, yet it is not isolated, and their memoirs, in order to take steps in preventing and rescuing the sex trafficking of other victims, must prove that. As Janet Ellerby says in *Intimate Reading*, “If there is a larger social purpose to be served by way of the memoir’s revelations and accusations, the memoir . . . becomes a testimony to the betterment of a particular social ill. The individual memoirist serves then as a metonym for a larger social enterprise, and the memoir achieves a more culturally emblematic and ethical dimension” (Ellerby 210).

Accordingly, this chapter will examine techniques Mam and Lloyd use to move their stories beyond individual frameworks, assessing the incorporation of statistics, qualitative research, other victims’ stories, and cultural exposition that facilitate this move. In order to successfully symbolize this larger social issue, philosopher Martha Nussbaum argues that the text must include historical and political explanations that will allow the reader to infer a possible solution. In her review of two works of literary journalism on contemporary poverty in India, Nussbaum says, “If readers are to be steered in the direction of intelligent action aimed at change, the narrative journalist needs to give them not just sympathetic characters, but also historical and economic analysis” (Nussbaum). Thus, Nussbaum continues, if the authors do not “include enough historical and economic analysis to permit their readers to come to some conclusions about such matters,” such books will “have great power to provoke emotion, but little to channel that emotion into constructive political action” (Nussbaum). If memoir really aims to affect change and promote social justice, it must also place the personal narrative within a broader context that will do this kind of channeling.

Both Mam and Lloyd make clear their goal of bringing awareness to the reality of sex trafficking and provoking the reader to action. Thus, both memoirs include passages that hint at

the widespread and common nature of their experience—to validate the need for readers to act. As well as the historical and economic analysis that Nussbaum recommends, these memoirs use statistics, qualitative research, stories of other victims, and expository discussion of the cultural, societal, and political reasons for the phenomenon of sex trafficking. These various techniques globalize their problem and point toward possible solutions. Sometimes the memoirists use these globalizing techniques as justification for their experience, sometimes as ethos, and sometimes to bolster the argument for social action.

### **Statistics: De-Isolating the Experience**

As mentioned in the section on the issue of sex trafficking in Chapter One, statistics attempting to explain the reach and risk of sex trafficking are difficult to pinpoint, yet some are still used in Mam’s and Lloyd’s memoirs to cast their stories onto a larger stage, where thousands more girls are experiencing similar stories even today. Mam, continuing to differ from Lloyd by her adherence to timeline and strictly personal revelation, includes only one passage with statistical evidence, which she stresses on her dedication page. She begins the page by quoting a Canadian nongovernmental organization, “By far the lowest statistic for the number of prostitutes and sex slaves in Cambodia is between 40,000 and 50,000. It can be expected that at least 1 in 40 girls born in Cambodia will be sold into sex slavery,” (Mam). She continues in her own words, contrasting her story with the stories of other girls:

In 1986, when I was sold to a brothel as a prostitute, I was about sixteen years old. Today there are many far younger prostitutes in Cambodia. . . .In Cambodia, and throughout Southeast Asia, tens of thousands of minor children are forced into prostitution annually. . . .I dedicate this book to the thousands of little girls who are sold into prostitution every year. (Mam)

This dedication perhaps encapsulates the essence of the sex trafficking memoir. Mam tells her story from her own perspective, yet it represents the thousands of little girls who will experience the same things. Mam directs the reader to this sobering, eye-opening reality on the first page of her book in order to explain the purpose—not just to tell a shocking event of her past, but to bring awareness to the current everyday of countless other people who cannot speak of their oppression.

In contrast, Lloyd's memoir presents multiple statistics, according to her style of alternating between personal narrative, exposition, and research. However, she stays true to the casual narrative tone by keeping all citations neatly tucked into her "Notes" at the end of the novel and sometimes even leaves out the name of the researcher or study in her discussion in the main text. While her dedication page does not include a statistic, it echoes Mam's dedication by finishing with "And to all the girls like us" (Lloyd). In the prologue, she expands on this allusion by citing UNICEF as estimating that "1.2 million children and youth are commercially sexually exploited each year worldwide" (Lloyd 10). The following commentary points this statistic to a discussion of the global nature of sex trafficking, yet claims that "the majority . . . occurs within a country's own borders" (Lloyd 10). Since Lloyd spends much of the book attempting to convince the reader of the validity of the exploitation American girls experience—regardless of their ethnicity, moral history, or claims of agency, this orientation makes sense. Lloyd alludes to the global nature of the problem yet enters quickly into a discussion of the specific reality of domestic sexual exploitation. She does not diminish or negate the occurrences of sex trafficking in other countries, but she knows that the tendency to view sex trafficking solely as an international problem is real. Thus, she directs the reader to the specific case of the United States, using the same University of Pennsylvania study referred to in this thesis, which claims

that “200,000 to 300,000 adolescents are at risk for commercial sexual exploitation in the United States each year” (Lloyd 11).

Other instances of statistical evidence in *Girls Like Us* address more specific aspects of domestic minor sex trafficking, yet they all continue to point to its prevalence. To explain the societal explanations for the supply of minors who are at-risk for commercial sexual exploitation, Lloyd notes that “over half a million children in New York City live in poverty” and “over 15,000 children [are] in the foster care system in New York City” (Lloyd 40-41). To underscore the connection between foster care and trafficking, Lloyd adds that “75 percent of sexually exploited and trafficked children in NYC were in foster care at some point in their lives” (41). Furthermore, Lloyd cites a survey by the Boston Public Health Commission that “found that almost half of the two hundred teenagers interviewed thought Rihanna was responsible for her alleged beating at the hands of Chris Brown” and “forty-four percent of the teenagers thought that physical fighting was a normal part of a relationship” (Lloyd 198). Lloyd uses these statistics—on subjects ranging from poverty to pop culture—to demonstrate the large number of children who are susceptible to entering or being lured into a relationship with a pimp—because of poverty, foster care situations, and a culture of domestic violence.

After addressing the number of children who constitute the “supply” for the industry of domestic minor sex trafficking, Lloyd then directs the reader to the demand side. She cites a study by the Chicago Alliance Against Sexual Exploitation (CAASE) as saying that “of 113 men who purchased sex, . . . 80 percent stated that they felt most men preferred young ‘prostitutes’” (108). Thus, even without a concrete ratio of underage girls to adult women in the sex trade, Lloyd proves that the inclination and risk for johns to purchase younger girls exists.

In addition to painting a picture of the number of girls involved in the sex trade, Lloyd uses statistics to describe the commonalities between her experiences and other girls within the umbrella of sexual exploitation. She contends, “A study done by Dr. Melissa Farley of 475 people in the commercial sex industry in five different countries found that 67 percent of them met the criteria for PTSD, a figure that rivals that of combat veterans” (Lloyd 180). Similar to her discussion around the global number of CSEC victims, Lloyd follows this statistic with explanations of the multiple varieties of PTSD and trauma bond experiences among victims. The statistic proves that her experience is not unique, yet allows for a discussion of the unique aspects within that experience.

### **Qualitative Research: Explaining the Experience**

Just as Mam used minimal statistical research to explain and widen her experience, she does not use any supporting evidence from qualitative research studies either. The closest thing to psychological analysis Mam provides is a brief mention of the “slave mentality” she now realizes caused her gratefulness to her trafficker (54). Mam includes no references to scientific studies that might explain her experience, yet she does discuss in detail the various cultural, political, and historical explanations for her victimization, to be addressed later in this chapter. This absence of scientific support could be explained by Mam’s autobiographical style; she can comment on the culture and history she knows so well with ease and expertise, yet research into the reasons for her own exploitation may have seemed contrived or out of place in the chronological, confessional format Mam uses. Conversely, Lloyd relies heavily on multiple research studies that address the various aspects of her and others’ experiences.

In *Girls Like Us*, Lloyd includes multiple references to psychological and sociological studies and uses them to explain the physical, mental, and emotional experiences for victims of

sex trafficking. The most compelling uses of these kinds of research pertain to her defense of the girls' innocence and lack of choice in entering, staying, or leaving the sex industry. For example, Lloyd references Biderman's Chart of Coercion from Amnesty International, which is usually employed "to explain the tactics used in controlling political prisoners and hostages"; Lloyd alludes to her own adaptation in explaining the way pimps control their victims (95). This seems to be an interesting concept, yet she reverts to her casual style in relaying the applicability, which weakens its potential power. Lloyd uses vague allusions to the comparisons between the clinical terms like "*monopolization of perception*" and her clients' comments such as "Oh, you mean like not letting you talk to anyone outside of the life" (95). A more thorough outline would have convinced the reader more fully of the reality and gravity of the coercion.

Moreover, Lloyd brings in the research of Dr. Judith Herman in her book *Trauma and Recovery*, which addresses "the effects of trauma on prisoners of war, hostages, domestic violence, and sexual abuse victims, and how they might bond and identify with their abusers/captors" (Lloyd 152). Similar to her adaptation of the Chart of Coercion, Lloyd incorporates these psychological explanations in a narrative manner, exclaiming, "Here I was on page 215, too scared to leave, too numb to fight back! Here I was on page 327, making excuses for my abuser, willing to defend him at all costs!" (152). Since the effects of trauma bonding are more well-known than the technical points of the Chart of Coercion, this technique effectively ties the research to the Lloyd's experience of reading the book, and also to her experience in the sex industry. The similarities of her experience in sex trafficking with the experiences of other trauma victims, such as hostages and battered women, give credence to her case as a victim, and therefore the case for all other girls to be seen as victims, not perpetrators, of the crime of sex trafficking.

Continuing this explanation of trauma bonding, Lloyd discusses Stockholm syndrome in detail, telling the story of the first incidence and origination of this theory, and then citing psychologist Dee Graham and the four factors that must be present for the syndrome to occur: “a perceived threat to survival . . . the captive’s perception of small kindnesses from the captor within a context of terror, isolation from perspectives other than those of the captor, and a perceived inability to escape” (Lloyd 155-6). Lloyd then elaborates on the isolation of perspective that is almost always found with cases of sex trafficking, yet she relies on the reader’s ability to connect previous discussions—about pimps’ violence, grooming techniques, and threats and denial of alternate lifestyles—to the remaining three factors. Regardless of this weak point, this section on Stockholm syndrome evidences the validity of the trauma bonds between exploited girls and their pimps, and helps the reader empathize and understand the reasons for “staying,” as the chapter is so aptly named.

Lloyd also postulates, “During the eighties, sociologists and clinicians identified the many ways in which gang culture replicated the family unit for children who found their support systems in the street. In the world of domestically trafficked girls, the same is true”; however, she gives no citation or direct reference to these studies but refers to them as common knowledge,<sup>3</sup> which perhaps is true and still effective in explaining the family structure of pimps and their victims (Lloyd 56). Lloyd’s bio on the GEMS website says she holds a BA in Psychology and a Masters in Applied Urban Anthropology (“Our Founder”), so her exposition on other aspects of trafficking—such as the subculture of sex trafficking which “comes replete with rules and norms, a common language and social mores. . . .an abusive cult”—stands strong even without direct references to research (Lloyd 201-2).

### **Stories of Other Victims**

Whether through their own activist and service work with victims of sexual exploitation or from well-publicized cases or girls they have simply heard of on the street, both Mam and Lloyd include anecdotes of the experiences of other victims of sex trafficking in their memoirs. Again, while the memoir is personal, these writers strive to show their audiences that their story is not isolated, that countless other people are subjected to the same abuse and torment even today. Helen M. Buss argues that many women's memoirs do this simultaneous work of establishing a specific personal story yet embedding it in the midst of other's stories, saying that "an 'I' is at work through the writer's emphasis on the specificity of the quotidian, reiterative, and ritualistic details of lived life," yet the women's memoir is also "about fitting in, finding a community, and suppressing any separate, distinctive identity," which, in the sex trafficking survivors' case, is necessary if the survivors want to help their fellow victims (63).

Continuing to adhere to a more traditional autobiographical form, Mam's borrowed stories come almost exclusively from her own experience, whether through girls she knew while in the brothel or girls she works with today through AFESIP. As mentioned in Chapter Two, some of the most difficult passages come from her anecdotes of these girls, including the girls who are sewn to be re-sold as virgins; Kaseng, who was mutilated and gang-raped by middle-aged men; the girl with her nipple torn off; and the orange women who service the johns in parks every night (59, 172, 114, 160). Mam's decision to include these stories seems to serve the purpose of widening the scope of her limited experience and showing how extreme some cases can be.



Mam also includes stories of other girls that serve to portray the pervasiveness of her experience, rather than differentiate from it. These stories include Sokha, who was nine when her stepfather raped her and sold her into sex slavery, and Srey Mom, who was sold into slavery by her grandmother, escaped, and was returned to the brothel by the police (134, 167). There is also the story of Kolap, who was six when her mother sold her and after being rescued by AFESIP, later goes back to confront her mother, telling her that Mam has become her real mother: “she didn’t give birth to me, but she has given me all the rest” (Mam 171).

Perhaps the saddest stories of Mam’s book are those of the girls who have died of AIDS. Mam includes three of them in separate sections. The first is Tom Dy, the girl for whom one of AFESIP’s rehabilitation centers is named; Mam found her on the streets where “people were throwing stones at her. . . .she had sarcomas on her skin from AIDS—she looked half-dead. I thought she was about thirty or thirty-five” (Mam 134). With some medication and intensive care, Tom Dy’s health was restored well enough to allow her a season of working and serving other victimized girls through AFESIP, but she eventually died while Mam was away on a promotional trip to Paris (Mam 134, 140). Mam’s narration of these events reveals her rage and despair: “This sweet teenage girl, who was sold by her parents into prostitution, who had been beaten and raped for years, had now died from her ill treatment at the hands of people who had no compassion, no human feeling for anyone but themselves. There is nothing that can excuse the sex slave industry in Cambodia” (140).

Mam spends a similar amount of time relating the stories of two other girls, sisters Sry Mach and Sry Mouch, who are six and nine years old. She develops their portrait with detailed observations: “They were much too frightened to talk. . . .and only ate fruit like savages. . . .They reminded me of little birds, with huge eyes and with their mouths open only for food” (Mam

149). This paragraph establishes a clear picture of the fragility and innocence of these tiny children, which leads Mam to mention again that “younger girls are very likely to become infected with HIV” (149). She then abruptly reveals, “Sry Mach has AIDS” (Mam 149). Finally, in relating the tragic ending of the third girl with AIDS, Sokhon, Mam effectively highlights the injustice and abnormality of her disease by contrasting her age with the foreknowledge of her own death: “She used to love her blue and white school uniform, but she knew she was going to die” (169). Mam adds, “Sokhon was very disturbed,” and relates the story of Sokhon cutting Mam’s foot and mixed their blood: “She knew it could endanger me, and I think that she did it so she wouldn’t be alone in her suffering” (170). The gravity of the physical and mental dangers of sexual exploitation resounds through the suffering of these girls, and Mam includes their stories to show that not all escape as luckily as she did—for some, the consequences of sex slavery are fatal, even after escape.

Two other experiences of Mam’s shed light on the rampant nature of child sex trafficking in Cambodia. Mam and her husband at the time move to the capital city of Phnom Penh, and near their house she learns of a street the foreigners call “*la rue des petites fleurs*”—the street of little flowers—because there were so many young girls for sale” (121). This scene supports Mam’s statement that “Nowadays the girls are much younger too”; she uses her own story as the foundation for a succession of even more horrific stories of girls much younger than she was (59). A few years later, Mam and her co-workers encounter a grand hotel brothel called the Chai Hour II, which Mam calls “a six-floor supermarket of female flesh” (175). Mam explains that two hundred girls worked there, and they ended up taking in “eighty-three women and girls” from the brothel raid, which the wealthy, powerful traffickers then got back in a terrifying example of political corruption (176). Mam emphasizes the yearly need for extra funding to

rescue and rehabilitate the girls, saying “However many girls we predict will come, there are always more. . . .I could receive funding for five hundred girls—we would still need more” (154). Mam expresses the reason for including all these stories, explaining “I knew these girls: they were me” (Mam 113). Because they “carry the same wounds,” she must connect her story to theirs, or else, her story does nothing to help (Mam 174).

Even more than Mam, Rachel Lloyd includes a number of accounts of different girls she has worked with, usually condensed and focused on one specific aspect of the trafficking industry—at least 43 separate stories. In fact, she begins the very memoir with a story of her first encounter with Danielle, 11 years old. Similar to Mam’s juxtaposition of the school uniform and AIDS, Lloyd times her description to accentuate the tragic irony; she begins by explaining how Danielle “likes swimming, SpongeBob, Mexican food . . . and Harry Potter books” and how her “dimples crease her chubby face” (Lloyd 2). Then, after this sweet, quirky portrait of such a typical pre-teen girl, she finishes the paragraph with “one critical difference”—the fact that she has “been trafficked up and down the East Coast by a twenty-nine-year-old pimp” for the last year of her life (Lloyd 2). While it seems surprising that one would begin her memoir with the story of another girl, Danielle is intimately tied to Lloyd; Lloyd writes, “I cannot shake Danielle’s face. It stays with me, guarded and silent, as I try to fall asleep. When I dream that night, I’m chasing her, trying to protect her . . . and yet I can’t save her, and each time she slips from my grasp” (Lloyd 10). As one of the youngest girls that Lloyd mentions, Danielle reinforces the title’s emphasis that victims of domestic minor sex trafficking are “girls”—children—and not women. Since Lloyd was somewhat older when she entered the sex industry, perhaps this girl orients the memoir more closely to the population to which Lloyd aims to bring awareness. This girl is also representative of the hundreds of girls Lloyd has spent a large part of

her life trying to rescue; recounting how this encounter affected Lloyd highlights the shocking nature of sex trafficking—and the way she would react each time, if it were not a part of her everyday life.

Lloyd continues to use stories of her clients as the memoir progresses, choosing ones with specific connections to the topic of each chapter. Tiffany’s story, for example, magnifies the recruitment stage of sex trafficking. Over four pages, Lloyd describes in detail how Tiffany, age 12, runs away from her group home, meets a boy named Charming who tells her “she still was the prettiest girl” in the restaurant despite her striped pajamas and pink fuzzy slippers (Lloyd 70). He takes her home, making her feel like his “proper grown-up housewife” until, weeks later, he began coaching “her gently, showing her how to shake her butt, undress in a sexy way” and eventually brings her to strip clubs to make him money (Lloyd 71). This story, and the seven shorter ones that follow it, complete the personal side of Lloyd’s outlines of recruitment trends: “It doesn’t take a lot: a good nose for sniffing out vulnerability, a little kindness, a bit of finesse, paying attention to the clues she gives away about her family. . . .She thinks he cares. She wants to please him. . . .He knows that once she crosses that line for the first time, it’ll be hard to go back” (Lloyd 73). The consecutive stories effectively display the textbook nature of the pimps’ strategies, and the textbook trustfulness of vulnerable girls.

One unique anecdote involves a therapy session where Lloyd asks a girl named Angelina about the pros and cons list she has just written about her pimp. Angelina explains a strange item on her pros list: “he got mad . . . and he hit me some. . . .And I was crying. . . .But then he came back and he’d gone to the store and he bought me Cheetos and a chocolate Yoo-Hoo milk. . . .Cos they were my favorites” (Lloyd 161). Lloyd follows this story with the work of psychologist Bruno Bettelheim, who explains the tendency of Holocaust victims “to magnify

small, inconsequential acts of basic human decency to proportions worthy of gratitude and love” (Lloyd 163). This extreme case relates to Lloyd’s own belief in her pimp’s love despite his physical and verbal abuse, and it proves once again a common theme among sex trafficked girls.

Making an interesting connection with Mam’s memoir, Lloyd relates a story of one of her girls who died from AIDS, Falcia. Lloyd says that “her death at twenty-four had rocked the GEMS community. . . .seeing her picture on the star throws me. . . .All the memories and all the sadness come rushing back” (Lloyd 232-3). Similar to Mam’s heartbreaking experience with Tom Dy, Lloyd spends time on this story not only because it shows the depth of the danger of sex trafficking, but because it demonstrates the depth of her connection with her clients. Just as Mam dedicated one of AFESIP’s rehabilitative centers to Tom Dy, Lloyd dedicated her memoir to Falcia, saying “I miss you” (Lloyd). The need to commemorate and bring something good out of something so terrible is apparent in both situations.

### **Exposition on Cultural, Historical, Political, and Economic Influences**

Whatever Mam may lack in statistics and scientific explanations, she compensates for in her discussion of the cultural, historical, political, and economic reasons for the rampant child trafficking in Cambodia. Mam’s story is firmly situated in its cultural context, and so her discussions about the various customs and historical events that influence her experience attempt to explain it in a culturally specific and meaningful manner. Interestingly enough though, Mam says, “Trying to explain it is not what I do. I keep my head down and try to help one girl after another. That is a big enough task” (185). However, the multiple discussions of various influences on trafficking tell otherwise.

For example, Mam argues the economic reasons that may compel parents to sell their daughters into prostitution, saying, “I think selling women into prostitution has always existed in

Cambodia. People get into debt. . . .a daughter acts as collateral and repays the loan” (Mam 31). Showing that her grandfather selling her to a brothel is not an isolated case, Mam goes one step further to provide an analysis of this trend among Cambodians and explain the social problems that may cause it—though of course never excuse it.

Furthermore, Mam discusses the economics from the trafficker’s point of view as well. She argues, “Four girls will make you almost \$360 a month, and cost you nothing but a bit of rice and a few guns. Since the annual income of more than a third of the population is less than \$360 a year, with profits like these it’s clear that you can bribe whomever you want” (Mam 157). Explaining the sheer profitability of sex slavery helps the reader to imagine and understand the temptation to engage in this terrible crime—money drives everything. Mam continues to say, “And it’s not just Cambodia, by any means . . . . Mafias traffic women around the world. It’s a huge global business, as lucrative as drugs” (157). This is one of Mam’s most explicit attempts to globalize the problem; she mentions trafficking terminology like “destination country,” “transit zone,” and “place of export,” which boosts her ethos in addition to explaining the complex and highly mobile nature of the global sex trade (157). She boldly states, “It’s a global industry, and for some reason the world puts up with it” (Mam 163). This enlargement of her experience and subtle condemnation sets the foundation for compelling the reader to action.

Mam provides a political discussion and its outcomes by explaining the changes in power in the early 1990s in Cambodia—the prince returned, Vietnam withdrew, and the United Nations moved in to keep the peace. With the UN there was also a “huge influx of *barangs* . . . . white people—with their limitless money” (Mam 87). These peacekeeping troops and other foreigners caused prostitute bars and brothels to flourish—the sex industry was “booming” (Mam 87). While Mam shows no condemnation of the Western humanitarians as a whole, she admits that

“We [Cambodians] have learned to be cautious; when there is change in high places, this is often not good news in low ones”—i.e. the rooms of brothels where young girls receive an overflow in foreign customers (Mam 87).

Moreover, Mam discusses in several places the importance of the Khmer Rouge on Cambodian behavior today, saying, “after they fell, people no longer cared about anything except money” (184). She expressly asks, “How did Cambodia get to be this way? Three decades of bombing, genocide, and starvation, and now my country is in a state of moral bankruptcy” (Mam 184). However, she refuses to hide under a simple argument and adds, “More than half the people in Cambodia today were born after the fall of the Khmer Rouge. Things should be improving. But the country is in a state of chaos where the only rule is every man for himself” (Mam 184). She continues to address the poverty, gender inequality, and silence. This in-depth, complex, and honest analysis of her country’s turbulent culture and politics seem to fit Nussbaum’s call for information that would allow the reader to draw “conclusions about causation and remedy” (Nussbaum).

Mam also addresses the Cambodian concept of gender roles and treatment of women. She explains, “Cambodian women are taught to submit, but the idea of female pleasure in our culture is foreign. The men say their wives’ passivity disgusts them. . . . One man said his wife actually told him to go to prostitutes” (Mam 152-3). In another instance, Mam explains the expectation for sheer obedience from Cambodian girls: “On her wedding day the girl obeys her parents, and when the ceremony is over she is raped. What does a young girl in Cambodia know about sex? Nothing” (Mam 33). Cambodians do not have an egalitarian view of men and women, and therefore women are uneducated, even about their own bodies—for example, Mam says she “thought perhaps a leech from the lake” had caused her to bleed during her period—and thus

women have no capacity for mutual pleasure or agency in their sexual lives (Mam 36). They are taught only to submit, be ashamed, and remain silent.

This social expectation follows right along with Mam's several discussions of the culture of silence in her country: "Cambodians have a saying: you must not let the fire that is outside come inside your house, and the hearth fire must not be allowed outside. You don't talk about what happens in your household" (Mam 35). This perspective is repeated throughout the book, and demonstrated through her adopted father's initial and deliberate ignorance of her abuse, her adopted mother's silence about her own prostitution, and countless other stories of female silencing. Janet Ellerby addresses this concept of secrecy—and the memoir's bold rebuke of it—in her book *Intimate Reading*; she writes, "When memoirists move from silence into speech, they make new life and new growth possible for themselves and their readers. . . .by pressing towards self-awareness, the memoirist locates the fresh air of change" (194). Mam's memoir takes a complete detour from the Cambodian custom of silence, unveiling the traumatic details and horrific abuses that for so long have been kept hidden and therefore have been able to thrive. Perhaps, now that these secrets and their cultural position—created by a desire to maintain decorum—have been discussed, the culture may begin to adapt in order to protect its people.

Lloyd also discusses the cultural, historical, and political influences on sex trafficking in detail. In fact, the ratio of these discussions to personal and narrative material seems almost one-to-one. Like Mam, Lloyd sees the problem of domestic minor sex trafficking as one that "hasn't occurred in a vacuum" and needs to be analyzed for its "larger socioeconomic causes" (34). In one passage, Lloyd focuses on the drug and AIDS epidemics and their impact on urban communities, as well as poverty (38-9). She points out that "too many children's futures can be



determined by zip code,” citing poor education, health conditions, lack of recreation—all factors that contribute to their level of risk for recruitment into the sex industry (Lloyd 40).

Lloyd also discusses cultural issues that impact the way survivors of sex trafficking are viewed and cared for. She highlights the contradictions of the media’s representation and public opinion: while the commercial sexual exploitation of foreign nationals has long been understood as a form of human trafficking, American “girls and young women have a tougher time in the court of public opinion and in the real courts of the criminal and juvenile justice systems. It is presumed that somewhere along the line they ‘chose’ this life, and this damns them to be seen as willing participants in their own abuse” (Lloyd 74). Lloyd explains that some victims were “seen as ‘real’ trafficking victims—internationally trafficked children and women” and some were “seen as ‘child/teen prostitutes’—girls and young women from the United States” (Lloyd 217). Of course, as all students of literature know, language matters, and this specific language is “critical to reframing the conversation and shaping public perception and public policy, and most important, goes toward removing the shame and stigma from the victims themselves” (Lloyd 218). However, Lloyd adds that “slowly, the tide has begun to shift” and people have begun to recognize and “name American girls under the control of a pimp as victims of domestic trafficking” (217). This is one reason I chose to compare an international account of sex trafficking with a domestic one—to support the view that while the experiences are very different, the abuse, the crime, and the urgency for action is the same.

Lloyd also addresses the controversial topic of prostitution as empowerment versus criminal activity in describing her opinions against using the term “sex work.” She claims the term is “misleading, particularly when erroneously applied to children” (Lloyd 218). She explains that some adults may “argue that they also made a ‘choice,’ but a closer look reveals

histories of sexual abuse, running away, poverty, and frequently, recruitment into the industry at a very young age” (Lloyd 218). Lloyd also provides this deft comparison: “Just like there are some people who are able to use cocaine regularly without jeopardizing their careers . . . there are people in the sex industry who may not have suffered any harm. But [that] doesn’t make it true for millions of women and children around the world” (219). Continuing to discuss the importance of recognizing the nuances of cultural discourse, Lloyd continues, “The sex industry isn’t about choice, it’s about lack of choices. It’s critical for children and youth, and even for many adult women within the sex industry, that we use language that frames it accurately” (219). Again, Lloyd reiterates the need for a specific, careful language to be used when speaking about this population.

Another compelling argument for the need to reshape the views of commercially sexually exploited youth comes from the famous story of the Green River Killer—a serial killer of “prostitutes.” Lloyd lists the ages of several of his victims: “Opal Mills, sixteen years old; Debra Estes, fifteen years old; Delores Williams, seventeen years old. . . .In fact, twenty-seven of Ridgway’s known victims were under the age of eighteen” (Lloyd 112). However, to create one of the most infuriating moments of the memoir, Lloyd observes that “all of the media accounts of the victims called them women, not children” (Lloyd 112). This realization strengthens her theory that domestically trafficked girls are often seen as sexually lascivious criminals who deserve whatever punishment they receive, and drives her desire to convert the mind of her audience.

### **From Personal to Global: Their Experience is Still Happening**

Hopefully, this analysis of the various types of globalizing techniques used by Mam and Lloyd has demonstrated the deft and deliberate move their two memoirs make from their

personal stories to the greater picture of sex trafficking as a whole. While both are culturally located, in Cambodia and the urban streets of New York City, both memoirists broaden their experience to the international problem of sex trafficking. The use of statistics, research, and stories from their work as service providers, along with Mam's and Lloyd's opinions about the contextual factors that allow, fuel, and maintain such a horrific problem, situate their stories under a holistic lens to be analyzed for solutions.

While Mam excels in creating an intimate, open relationship with the reader, as argued earlier in this thesis, Lloyd does a more effective job of contextualizing her personal experience. More than just the discussion of culture and other victims as found in Mam's memoir, a rich combination of statistics, research, exposition on culture, politics, and economics, and stories of fellow survivors are interspersed throughout Lloyd's memoir, supporting each personal anecdote of Lloyd's with explanation, comparison, and analysis. This superb contextualization allows the reader to leave equipped with the direction necessary to do something about their emotional response to the horrors of sex trafficking. Since, as Lloyd says, "Statistics, presented without the faces, the stories, the tears, couldn't even begin to measure the severity or frequency of the trauma these girls were experiencing," the combination of research, detail, personal narrative and emotion allows her memoir to present a fully-rounded case for the need for action to resolve the issue of sex trafficking (52).

As critic Helen M. Buss says, "a genre arises from particular social needs . . . and becomes a cultural practice with the power to remake ideology," so does the memoir (6-7). More specifically, the sex trafficking survivor narrative—a blend of research and personal experience—arises to proclaim the need for action to prevent, rescue, and rehabilitate the victims who are still living the stories on the pages of these memoirs. Because Mam and Lloyd have

globalized their individual stories, readers can see the wider problem of sex trafficking—that there are thousands more victims like Mam and Lloyd—and they can understand the causes, influences, and implications of its abuse. Readers have a face and a name, an experience and an understanding, and thus they are empowered to act.

#### CODA

If people today believe firmly that no human should be held under the power of another—if we believe that slavery is wrong—then our only challenge in stopping it should be putting our beliefs into action. One small step before this action can occur is knowledge and an understanding of the problem, i.e. awareness. Awareness does not do the work of ending slavery, but it allows us to begin. In particular, this awareness must be an intimate, ethical awareness—one that listens directly to and attempts to understand the people it aims to serve. Janet Ellerby says we must “establish empathy, seek truth, discover compassion,” which we do by listening “carefully to each other’s tentative, groping sentences, the details of our lives, the stories” (211). She argues that “as we listen, we thwart dehumanization, we foster intimacy, and we extend the possibility for peaceful coexistence among us” (Ellerby 211). Rachel Lloyd’s *Girls Like Us* and Somaly Mam’s *The Road of Lost Innocence* contribute greatly to building this deep understanding between survivor-memoirist and audience. Though Lloyd and Mam speak from different cultures and different types of sex trafficking experiences, their memoirs relate to each other in the way they combine personal stories and the stories and research of others to call their readers to understanding, empathy, and action. Their successful ability to connect readers to their personal experiences through a careful, powerful detailing of their abuse, and then broaden this personal experience to the greater issue of sex trafficking invites the reader into an intimate yet

informative relationship that propels the reader not only to feel and observe, but to connect, relate, understand, and, hopefully, act.

In *The Road of Lost Innocence*, Somaly Mam offers a detailed account of her life from childhood to present-day, focusing on her journey from orphan to sex slave to social activist. The book provides a firsthand look into the horrors of Cambodian sex trafficking, which involves inconceivably young girls and unspeakably abusive acts. Mam employs a matter-of-fact style as she thoroughly details the trauma she suffered. Her lack of emotion and rhetoric comes from her culture's emphasis on prudence and privacy, as well as the translation from French to English. Some of the strengths of this memoir include the clear, chronological timeline, the discussion of Cambodian culture and its effects on the treatment of women, the use of metaphor, and the framing of compelling arguments around the most affective anecdotes. While Mam provides more detail on the sexual abuse than Lloyd does, she does, like Lloyd, maintain an emphasis on the psychological effects of her suffering, even if the writing style does not accentuate emotion. A powerful anecdote of Mam's involves Mam taking the wife of a humanitarian aid executive, named Marie-Louise, to the brothels "so she could see the situation for herself" (115). Marie-Louise saw "the battered girls in scummy places, their wounds and scars, and she was horrified. . .she was speechless"; from then on she changed Marie-Louise made sure Mam had what she needed to do help those girls (115). This story exemplifies the purpose of the book: now that readers have "seen", they cannot turn back—they must help.

Rachel Lloyd's *Girls Like Us* provides a strong example of a combination of personal narrative, secondhand narrative, research, and exposition, because as she says, "statistics, presented without the faces, the stories, the tears, couldn't even begin to measure the severity or frequency of the trauma" (52). This well-rounded approach results in a powerful appeal for

empathy and intervention into the plight of the commercially sexually exploited and trafficked youth of the United States. Some of the text's strengths include deft use of tone, intelligent diction, insight into the self, and effective redirection of focus from the sexual experience to the psychological and physical abuse of trafficking—sometimes even immersing the reader in interesting thought patterns. This approach helps the reader learn on the essence of child sex trafficking—that it is about power, a violation of human rights, exploitation, and a “modern-day slave system” rather than voluntary prostitution or throwaway street kids (Lloyd 97). Her expert, yet still casual, use of research and supporting evidence only strengthens this argument. For these reasons, I find Lloyd's memoir to be the most poignant, comprehensive account of sex trafficking, and the first I would recommend to anyone desiring to learn about it.

### **Connecting the Scholarship**

The implications of the rhetoric and framing of traumatic detail in Mam's and Lloyd's narratives are very important for the significance of the memoir. As Janet Ellerby, in *Intimate Reading*, discusses, there once was a time when memoirists such as Mam and Lloyd would have been told to quiet down, to keep their abuse to themselves, and while Mam perhaps still is, to some extent, these painful stories “could hardly be told twenty years ago because there were almost no receptive communities to hear them” (Ellerby 103). Ellerby explains that these stories have become much more acceptable; thus, they “make a difference in our lives, our communities, our cultures, our politics” (103). However, these stories, though generally accepted, must be presented in a thoughtful, purposeful manner. Helen M. Buss, in *Repossessing the World: Reading Memoirs by Contemporary Women*, emphasizes the “discipline” a self-disclosing memoirist must have, stating that “part of the ‘discipline’ of writing that emerges from the trauma of one's past experience is finding a way to imitate the process of trauma and the

changed conditions of life that result from having experienced trauma” (Buss 140). For this reason, Lloyd and Mam can talk, in a measured, deliberate manner, about the brutal beatings, the sewing of vaginas, the gang rapes, and customer after disgusting customer acknowledging that “the memoir is an especially apt genre to foster strong, sensitive communities that can receive” these intimate details (Ellerby 103). As Smith and Watson argue in *Reading Autobiography*, these communities consist of a relationship between reader and writer that “involve[s] an ethic of knowing and caring” (147). As Mam ends her memoir, specifically addressing supporters but also relating to readers, she writes, “Knowing that you care gives us strength, courage, and the comforting knowledge that we are not alone. Love can heal, love can console, love can strengthen, and yes, love can make change” (193).

Buss addresses the process of reading these traumatic stories, saying that “as readers we must move with the memoirist’s text, through ‘scenes of language’ that the writer attests to as the re-enactment of her own life” (140). Both Mam and Lloyd use these detailed scenes to relay the depth of their abuse, explained by Buss as “re-enactments of trauma, sometimes presented in the stark clarity of ‘factual’ language, which is a highly detailed recounting of events marked by the emotionless, disassociative reaction typical of many single-incident trauma victims” (140). Since both Mam and Lloyd considered multiple incidents of exploitation, this probably explains their ability to move in and out of detailed scenery, veiling some instances and summarizing others.

While Mam and Lloyd allow the reader to experience their encounters with sex trafficking through these detailed scenes, they do so for a clear purpose—to speak out against this injustice and to speak for the women and children who continue to suffer from it. As Buss suggests, “such texts speak for the survival of others who do not have the linguistic opportunities” of memoirists like Mam and Lloyd (161). Ellerby argues that while “sensational

formats such as the tabloids that deal with these sexual stories in an unproblematized mode . . . [generate] pervasive distrust, [sanction] stereotypical thinking, and [foster] sexual panic,” memoirs written by survivors allow readers to “hear the specificity of the private stories, the particular feelings, the unique attachments, the singular memories”—to connect with the author’s painful past and thoughtful dreams, and feel inspired to act (106). Couser also argues for this intimate “relationality as a characteristic of life writing,” and that this relational aspect exists “primarily in women’s life writing,” although it can also be recognized in memoirs by men, as well (20). While many assume a memoir’s subject to stay completely centered on one individual, human rights memoirs do the opposite, calling to and speaking for others. Ellerby maintains, “Memoirists who make a commitment to the concept of integrity and risk of disclosure are working against isolation” (211). Emphasizing the writing process of the survivor-memoirist on this call to action, Buss adds that there is a “continuing need for linguistic vigilance, a vigilance that includes careful attention to a formal arrangement that allows the survivor to participate, through her artful testimony, in the fight for others’ survival” (Buss 159).

Couser even argues that the work of the memoir itself acts as a performance of human rights. Survivors like Mam and Lloyd, who were once rendered or “considered incapable of self-representation” can now tell their story in full, which “*acts out* its message: I’m here and I can speak for myself” (178). Similarly, Buss argues that the women’s memoir can serve as a vehicle to reclaim a feminist identity, saying that “it is through this capacity to ‘problematize and define’ our selves as women that we repossess what the private/public division of culture has taken away from us” (62). Likewise, the sex trafficking survivor’s memoir asserts the individual, the survivor, and “repossesses” what their exploiters took away from them. Furthermore, Ellerby argues that “those people who can take the opportunity to move toward self-realization often



begin by writing, and the memoir becomes a functional and salvational vehicle for that process” (193). Thus, the memoir serves as an assertion of individual right, not only to speech and selfhood, but healing and success.

### **The Power of Memoir**

After spending a considerable amount of time in these two memoirs, and seeing the fascinating and effective way in which Mam and Lloyd navigate the sensitive nature of their exploitation—sometimes with reserve, sometimes with boldness—and contextualize their experiences in the larger problem and the reader’s world, it is easy to see what an impact these detailed, intimate accounts of sex trafficking can provide. The memoir genre by itself combines creativity with real-life experience, emotion with detail, and thus the human rights memoir, especially the survivor’s narrative, aimed towards promoting a specific cause of social justice, presents a unique call to action that no other genre can make.

Journalists can investigate and report from a perspective hoped to be as objective as possible, and perhaps through these accounts readers can understand the causes and effects of the social issue being described. Perhaps readers can even hear the words of the victims, or be drawn emotionally to the horror of the injustice. In fiction that discusses social injustice, the reader can imagine the physical and psychological effects of a certain experience through the eyes of a character. The writer may even base their fictional narrative, be it novel or poem or short story, squarely on research—such as Patricia McCormick and her work, *Sold*—thus creating a highly realistic, yet still emotionally impactful, story. However, in both cases readers must travel through a middleman, a veil between the observer and the suffering, that subtly distorts true understanding. As Couser says, memoirs have the opportunity to “probe the self or other in search of new understanding. Novels don’t provide that. By nature, they can’t” (175). Of course,

the human memory can distort reality as well, and this is something to consider in the reading of firsthand narratives, which is why one account, or even one genre, cannot alone serve as the foundation for solving the world's problems.

Even so, the survivor's memoir creates a much more powerful case for acting against injustice than any other genre, because it has the capacity to combine the strongest elements of journalism and fictional narrative. As shown in the analysis of Lloyd and Mam, the memoir can provide detailed reporting, similar to journalism, through the authors' own experiences and the stories of other victims. On the ground level, as a survivor—and in Lloyd's and Mam's cases, current-day service providers for other victims—they often hear and see more than any outside observer could, and the varied nature of these accounts of other victims expand and reinforce the occurrence of the authors' own experience. In addition, and especially in the example of Lloyd, the memoir, in its fluid and open form, can also provide research and statistics that demonstrate the scope and explain the nuances of the problem. As mentioned earlier, Martha Nussbaum argues that "If readers are to be steered in the direction of intelligent action aimed at change, the narrative journalist needs to give them not just sympathetic characters, but also historical and economic analysis" (Nussbaum). The memoir allows survivors to do this very thing, and so their stories, grounded in analysis and evidence that can inform the reader, create not only a higher chance for action, but for responsible action.

In addition to the element of evidence that connects the survivors' experience to a wider reality of fellow victims and scientific research, the element of emotion and intimate detail, which is a strength of fiction, can also come from—and is best received—from the words of the survivor herself. As seen in these memoirs, most effectively highlighted in Lloyd's, the most important consequences the survivor sought to include were the psychological and emotional

effects of her abuse, rather than the physical. She wants the reader to understand not just what happened to her, but how she felt, how she thought, how she coped. The survivor has direct access to these emotions, not a researcher, journalist, or novelist, and thus the reader finds a deeply affective connection to the survivor. For instance, this passage in *The Road of Lost Innocence* demonstrates the nuances of Mam's emotional response: "I cried, but it was because I had no parents, because I was helpless, because I had been raped and beaten, and because I was hungry and exhausted. I cried from emotion, not from pain. I cried from frustration, because I couldn't kill them. . . .After that I accepted the clients. There wasn't any choice"(Mam 45-6). Like Mam, victims of any social issue experience specific, complicated emotional reactions—part of the "dynamic, complex experience of real women's lives"—that cannot be accurately ascertained or accessed without the victim's own words, without "the memoir [as] a threshold" (Ellerby xx). No matter the physical, temporal, or cultural distance between them, the reader experiences the closest understanding by listening to the survivor. Moreover, in the survivor memoir, the portrayal of trauma rests in the authority of the survivor, leaving less room for further exploitation by a sensationalist, intentional or otherwise, reporting authority. The survivor has at hand both the interests of herself and the interests of victims of similar abuse; therefore, she can make the most considerate and respectful call for empathy and action. As Lloyd puts it, "titillation was the last thing [she] wanted to be identified with," and thus she describes the sexual details of her experience with restraint that she herself, not an outside reporter, deems appropriate (212).

Thus, the power of the memoir is that it can inform readers on the outside of the issue both emotionally and realistically, and it can do this better than other genres seeking to generate social justice-oriented awareness. Buss argues that the memoir has "tremendous reach in its

ability to bring together diverse discourses, blending literary and historical narratives, psychological and sociological concepts, factual and imaginative language” (Buss 23). To effectively harness this “tremendous reach,” I hope to see survivors of all types of injustice take up the form and use their voices to reveal their suffering and ideas to those who might be able to help. Specific causes that could benefit from survivor memoirs include forced labor, education of women and girls, and forced marriage. A prime example of the trend in empowering victims through life writing is the Afghan Women Writers’ Project, which gives oppressed women the opportunity, as well as training, to voice their experiences, thoughts, and feelings through a mostly online system, sometimes even while they are at risk of punishment for doing so. This opportunity is extremely important because it is using life writing to empower women *while* they are experiencing oppression and abuse, not just after they have escaped.

And why should we be reading such memoirs? Everyone can benefit from increased understanding of injustice, but a few key groups will specifically benefit from the survivor memoir. Service providers and law enforcement must read these in-depth, immersive accounts so they can not only know the signs of the issue, but be better equipped to connect and serve the victim with empathy and understanding. Other people who may come across victims—in the case of sex trafficking: teachers, social workers, doctors, and nurses—should also be encouraged to read survivor’s memoirs in order to be able to appropriately identify and serve others like them. Moreover, students in secondary education classrooms should study memoirs like these in their classrooms; they will be able to discuss concepts like empathy, culture, and suffering while also learning important facts about real-world issues that they may one day be able to solve. Likewise, students at the university level will also be able to study and perform further research that will improve and enlighten understanding of both the genre and the social issue.

## Further Research

On this note, if I have the opportunity to participate in this further research, I would like to continue to explore the impact of the memoir on human trafficking. Firstly, as noted earlier, I would like to expand the number of memoirs to provide a more comprehensive analysis—perhaps not even just on the subject of sex trafficking but on other social justice issues as well, to evaluate the power of memoir more generally. On another note, an analysis and survey of memoirs written by survivors of labor trafficking would be especially interesting, since a cursory search in the beginning stages of my project revealed no such stand-alone narratives—I did find a few short stories and plenty of interviews and short profiles. It would also be interesting to analyze the reasons for this deficiency; perhaps literacy issues or lack of audience interest play a role.

I would also like to know the impact of memoirs on the public, from either an individual psychological standpoint or a study on the sales of and reader responses to such memoirs. Even more useful would be a statistical study of the relation between reading survivor's memoirs and performing some type of action-based response, such as donations, volunteering, or spreading awareness. In contrast to the relationship between the memoir and reader, a study of the impact of the narrative-writing process on survivors would also be important. Mam confesses that “writing this book has brought everything back, and [she] can no longer sleep” and hopes that it “will stop [her] from having to tell [her] story over and over again, because repeating it is very difficult” (187-8). Yet, perhaps she has benefitted in some way from the process of writing, whether by means of self-discovery, understanding her experience, or empowerment. Janet Ellerby mentions that she, like Mam, has “not yet ever been able to get through a retelling of the

night's events without sobbing, terribly shaken," (137) yet she also seems to think she has benefitted from retelling her story in her memoir:

Writing my memoir and reading the memoirs of others has helped me if not to unearth the essence of my 'self,' then at least to locate the multiple cultural and social influences that connect me to some and alienate me from others. Furthermore, it has allowed me to probe my psychological history and delve into events that not only left me inhibited with self-doubt and prevented me from acting, but also animated me to persist in my quest for acceptance and fulfillment. (133)

Similar to the experience of Ellerby in this passage, Mam does mention in her afterword that the year she wrote the memoir "was a year of discovery and hope for [her]," and so I wonder if this was in spite of the process or because of it (191). Lloyd actually mentions in several places throughout her memoir the poetry and narrative-writing exercises GEMS assigns to clients for both therapy and skill-building reasons (2, 81, 215). Of course, statistical, economic, and psychological studies are out of my range of expertise at this moment in my education; nevertheless, I would be interested to read others' expert opinions and studies on these matters.

I hope that this project has served not only to highlight the techniques and significance of the human rights memoir, especially the survivor's memoir, but also to bring further awareness to the issue of human trafficking. It is a complex problem that necessitates devoted research, and while my study on the literature may not directly save any lives, perhaps it will inspire someone to read, appreciate, promote, or even write a memoir of this kind. I for one can attest to the vast amount of knowledge to be gained from listening to survivors, for Mam's and Lloyd's memoirs have already begun to affect the way I view this issue and my future involvement in it. Sex trafficking is an issue full of horror, but it is also full of hope. The solution can be reached, and

countless victims can be helped if we will only prioritize the survivors' voices and learn how to put the understanding and empathy their voices create into action. Once we have "seen" the issue through survivors' eyes, we can never turn back.

## NOTES

1. I have since read Patricia McCormick's young adult fiction novel, *Sold*, and found it to be a well-researched and wise portrayal of sex trafficking in Nepal, although the inevitable limitations of fiction remain.

2. Lloyd and Mam were the main guests in a Google+ Hangout session held by prominent New York Times columnist Nicholas Kristof. Rachel Lloyd spoke on sex trafficking at TedXUChicago in April of 2012, and Somaly Mam was featured in a UNICEF Speaker Series at Agnes Scott College in January of 2014.

3. It is important to note that Lloyd writes for a general audience, not an academic one, which may explain her lack of citations and direct references in some cases.



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