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In modern society, there are many books and novels that are written based on true events, while some are fictional. However, even those that are fictional at times tend to tackle a particular issue in the society that is beyond fiction. One of such books is *Lost Children Archive*, a novel by Valeria Luiselli. The story mainly centers around the violence and cruelty that children immigrant children are subject to, being deported without their parents or guardians, being detained, facing death, and crossing borders. Notably, the novel is about a couple with two children who embark on a road trip to the Mexican border from New York City (Luiselli 11). The narrator of the novel, who happens to be the wife, has intentions of working on a journalistic piece about the United States Border Patrol deporting the child migrants. On the other hand, the husband plans to work on a sound project about the deportation of Apaches in the 19th century. In the novel, several themes are evident, such as suffering, torture as well as the violence that child migrants are subjected to from different people, and this forms the basis of this paper.

The Dehumanizing Treatment of Children

The novel clearly describes a kind of dehumanizing treatment that the children get when attempting to cross the border to the United States. Even though it is logical that such children should be welcomed and treated with all the respect and love that they deserve as they run away from the war and gang violence from different areas such as Honduras, El Salvador, and Guatemala. The migrants are conversely described in a very violent language being called aliens and illegals. As Luiselli now and again notes, "*They are children who have lost the right to a childhood*" (Luiselli 33). This does not literally imply that the children are lost but rather

that they have lost their right to childhood and all the entailments of being a child. It describes the kind of reception they are bound to receive and the subsequent torture they are bound to be subjected to as well. Luiselli, in her novel, goes ahead to wonder why they are not referred to as refugees or just children. Such children have walked on trails littered with human remains, and they should face violence (Luiselli). It is such a case clear that through her fiction, the author attempts to bring to the notice of the reader the everyday experiences and realities of the immigrant children.

Furthermore, it is apparent that the author is not only cognizant but also tries to respond to the refugee crisis through the complex and careful fictional portraits of migrant characters. This kind of violence and cruelty that the children are from time to time subjected to in one way or the other becomes an example upon which people think they have to treat their own children. Notably, this has a lasting impact on children. This forces the children to start seeing the world from a considerably new point of view and pattern of reasoning. As seen in the novel, the children of the narrator run away, contending that their mother would start to think of them as she does with other children that she knows to have been subjected to endless violence and suffering. In other words, she would begin to think of them as lost children (Luiselli 21). They contend that even their father would start to pay attention to finding his children's echoes other than all the other echoes that he has been chasing. For this reason, they choose to run away from them. It is apparent that children expect to be spared in all circumstances, and when they are not, they become vulnerable.

Every year, hundreds and hundreds of migrant children without their guardians or parents attempt to cross the southern border of the United States. Sadly, they get into constant confrontations with a system of immigration that is blatantly hostile and not prepared to handle such children and their state of vulnerability considering different conditions they have been subjected to from their native communities. According to the *Lost Children Archive*, it is

apparent that the roots of the immigration crisis, the violence and power channeled towards the children who are only seeking for a better life away from the war ingrained deep in the culture of most people. For a deeper understanding of this broad matter, it is prudent to look at the US and its immigration system from a broad point of view that encompasses several dislocations and relocations, an array of characters and locations. In other words, it is more than evident that the suffering, torture, and violence that several thousands of immigrant children face on a daily basis in the United States go way beyond the simple issues seen through the naked lenses of man.

In their individual projects on the lost children and the Apaches, both wife and husband attempt to recapture the essence of these groups that are both exiled, and the husband and wife seek to collect traceable pieces of their transitory presences. In other words, they attempt to go further into studying what is currently unknown to people's eyes, the things that tend to happen, yet given little to no attention. However, the sad truth is that in trying to uncover the little-known predicament of these groups, the husband and wife fail to realize that they are explicitly in the same groups (Luiselli 25). They are evidently preoccupied with reconstructing the histories of others and become emotionally unavailable to their own families and are not at any point capable of being present to their children and are utterly blind to the degree of damage that their anticipated separation and the strained relationship have on them. Noticeably, this is the same predicament that most of the migrant children are in as they are alienated from their parents and guardians and have to confront a system that does not respect humanhood, and to the least, the vulnerability that comes with childhood.

In their state of being lost, one can say that a lot of immigrant children are nonexistent or in a state of limbo where they can be compared to those that do not have life. They are suspended in liminal states of emotional commitment, geography, as well as time. As shown in the novel, it is more than apparent that the children with the kind of cruel treatment they are

subjected to, there is a feeling of hopelessness all around them, and they only live a day that passes. Arguably, the whole story entailed in Luiselli's novel is a description of these immigrant children and their despondent situation (Luiselli 27). In the first place, the car trip is continuous as it feels very long due to the emotional detachment between the husband and wife, as well as their apparent disagreements concerning when they expect to reach their destination. This situation is actually reinforced by the continued grumbling of the children about the duration of the trip. Besides, it is apparent that there is no definitive conclusion concerning what the girl and her mother will do when the family finally arrives in Arizona, and this comes with foreboding unease for all the people in the car (Luiselli 24). This sense of anxiousness is rather amplified by the apparent inability of the wife to assist in the search for her two daughters.

The Southwestern part of the United States, where this family is seemingly going, has vast space, and is sparsely populated. However, the fact that the family, just like many other immigrant families and children are not welcome, is a signal that their state of existence is suspended. This includes the family that Luiselli writes about, as well as the exiled Apaches of both the past immigrants and the children of the present. Notably, they are all under the same category due to the fact that they hold an identifiable experience of traversing this land but are not welcomed. They arguably experience the same things being rejected, homeless, as well as displaced. Consequently, this is precisely what the novel attempts to portray, and this is precisely what the immigrant children have to experience year after year.

Conclusion

To sum up, a lot of notable authors have written novels that cut across both fiction and reality. Such novels touch several sensitive issues that affect some people of society. So that, they create awareness and attempt to advocate for change of the rights of the marginalized. One of such novels is *Lost Children Archive* by Valeria Luiselli. In the novel, the author addresses a sensitive issue of how much suffering and torture the immigrant children face from the United

States Border Patrol. There is no doubt that the story underlying the novel is a clear depiction of the several torments and harsh treatment that are engrained in the culture of the Americans, and this has only created hopelessness and despair to the immigrant children.

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Works Cited

Luiselli, Valeria. *Lost Children Archive: A Novel*. Knopf, 2019.

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