

KEELY'S MASCULINITY IN CIARAN O'CONNOR'S FILM TEXT *CAPITAL LETTERS* (2004)

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Capital Letters, also known as *Trafficked*, is Ciaran O'Connor's first feature film. Its world premiere took place in July 2004 at the Galway Film Fleadh, where it was awarded the second prize in the Best First Feature category. In the Irish Film and Television Awards of 2004 it was nominated in three categories. In spite of its low budget and apparently short career hitherto, the film tackles such an important issue as the sex trade with a naturalistic and multifaceted approach. The victims of this kind of trade are traditionally women, and *Capital Letters* is no exception, while the traders and sex traffickers are usually men. The research question of this paper is "how is the main male character's masculinity is represented in this film text?"

The method chosen to answer this question is analytic-synthetic. Firstly, Keely's masculinity in *Capital Letters* is textually analysed in those scenes which best represent Pat Kirkham's and Janet Thumim's so-called *sites*: the body, action, the external world and the internal world (1993). These four sites combine research from Film Studies, Genre Studies, Stardom Studies, and Reception Theory in a cohesive way. Each site is analysed separately. Some scenes may be analysed in relation to more than one site so as to build up a better understanding of the whole scene. Secondly, the partial conclusions derived from the analyses of each site are synthesised, leading to the final conclusions.

Out of the different men that people the film, Keely plays a crucial role in the film as the missing link between head gangsters and victims. Karl Shiels is the actor who gives life to Keely. His body is well known internationally for having starred in *Batman Begins* (Nolan, 2005), and, on a national level, for having played the role of Robbie Quinn in the Irish television series *Fair City*, which has been on air on Radio Telfís Éireann since 1989. Shiels participated from 2014 until he died in 2019. In *Capital Letters* Shiels's body undergoes an evolution, linked to the way he is dressed and how he moves. Male action in this film is often associated to the recurrent fights where Keely appears: how he manages to get out of them is key to the evolution of the plot. The external world of Keely's masculinity can mainly be found in his relationship with Taiwo, the woman he kidnaps, played by Ruth Negga. The development of that relationship is the core of the story, introducing the above mentioned missing link between traders and abusers. Keely's internal world is difficult to apprehend: his dependence on other people's interests can be interpreted as a lack of free will, something he stubbornly does not want to admit.

Putting together the four sites, they show a masculinity that Keely's masculinity is both tender and corrupt.

Key Words: Film Studies - Gender Studies - Textual analysis - Stardom Studies - Human trafficking