TRAFFICKING IN POPULAR CULTURE: SEXUAL AND GENDER ABUSE IN MOREL'S *TAKEN* AND ATKINSON'S *ONE GOOD TURN**

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Abstract

This paper looks at the way in which popular narrative forms deal with the contemporary issue of trafficking. The analysis of Kate Atkinson's novel *One Good Turn* (2006) and Pierre Morel's movie *Taken* (2008), which address both the concept and current practices of trafficking and prostitution, are both written within the genre of popular crime. A comparative analysis of these texts will illustrate how the issue of trafficking is seen and analysed in popular cultural forms, while highlighting remarkable divergences in purpose and ideology. The dangers *Taken* evokes are clearly aimed at creating a "myth" of trafficking which rewrites nineteenth-century fears of white slavery with a complete disregard for the complex structure of the sex industry and migratory flows. On the contrary, by exploring the failures of both border control and the forces of law and order to prevent sex trafficking, *One Good Turn* clearly states the necessity of establishing other means to prevent female abuse, turning instead to consider issues of women's powerlessness and/or agency.

Keywords: sex trafficking, female sexuality, migration, *Taken*, Kate Atkinson, *One Good Turn*.

Resumen

Esta contribución intenta analizar cómo las formas narrativas populares utilizan el tema del tráfico de personas en los últimos tiempos. El análisis se concentra en la novela *One Good Turn* de Kate Atkinson (2006) y la película *Venganza* (2008) dirigida por Pierre Morel, debido a su tratamiento del tema de la trata con fines sexuales. Ambos textos se clasifican dentro del género de misterio, más específicamente del "thriller" cinematográfico y la novela de detectives. Un análisis comparativo de ambos textos ilustrará cómo se representa en la cultura popular la trata de personas con fines de explotación sexual, y demostrará interesantes divergencias en la ideología en que se inscriben. La película evoca peligros destinados a mitificar la trata en el contexto de los tradicionales temores sobre la trata de blancas, sin tener en cuenta la estructura amplia y compleja de la industria del sexo en combinación con los flujos migratorios. Por el contrario, al explorar los fallos de la política de controles fronterizos y la incapacidad de las fuerzas del orden para impedir la victimización de las mujeres, la novela se vuelca en la problemática de la indefensión o la agentividad de las mujeres en nuestra sociedad.

Palabras clave: trata con fines de explotación sexual, sexualidad femenina, migración, *Venganza*, Kate Atkinson, *One Good Turn*.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Trafficking in general and trafficking mostly for the purposes of prostitution, or sex trafficking, have been widely addressed in popular culture in recent years and specifically in the film industry (Brown et al. 83-84).[1] As Baker reports:

> With the growth of a global movement against human trafficking over the last fifteen years, a plethora of films on sex trafficking has emerged, produced by activists, survivors, scholars, the news media, and Hollywood. These films are in multiple genres, including documentaries, dramas, educational films, cartoons (Ray 2010), and even fairy tales (McCormick 2011), and they address trafficking in countries around the globe, including Eastern Europe, Southeast Asia (Cambodia, Burma, Nepal, India), Mexico, Israel, and the US. (2014: 209)

However, it has been within the mystery genre (both the thriller and the crime story) that trafficking has been most often popularised.[2] In many popular texts, it has been shown to be a global phenomenon involving the so-called industrialised western world as the destination and neighbouring developing or third-world countries as point of origin (Jeffreys 308). As such, trafficking has been identified as a useful category in the police-procedure format as well as the action movie. For Evans, it is also a key factor in the genre of detection that focuses on social issues (146). Within the formal constructions inherent to these popular forms of the wider mystery genre, and specifically in the context of detection in cinema and television, trafficking has sometimes been separated from its foundational questions, those of migration—and the migrant—and human rights (Brown et al. 2), and has become merely the vehicle for the protagonist's own search for truth and justice. Although there are obvious exceptions, the most popular texts tackle the topic in a way that destabilizes and obscures the current practice of trafficking as one of the major global forms of female exploitation. In this respect, contemporary popular texts mainly

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[1] The definitions adopted here follow the ones given by the United Nations. Thus, trafficking in persons "shall mean 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 (UNODC 42). On the other hand, smuggling of migrants "shall mean the procurement, in order to obtain, directly or indirectly, a financial or other material benefit, of the illegal entry of a person into a State Party of which the person is not a national or a permanent resident" (UNODC 54-55). And finally, definitions to differentiate between trafficking, human trafficking and sex trafficking as analysed here are (1) human trafficking: a term coined to create a distinction between humans and other beings victims of trafficking such as exotic animals; and (2) sex trafficking: a term coined to address specifically human trafficking aimed at prostitution.

[2] The generic categorization followed here is based on Cawelti's study on popular forms of fiction and Cranny-Francis' study on feminist generic fiction.

focus on issues of border control and citizenship, the implementation of justice within the established social order, and dominant fears of culture contamination. Likewise, at the core of the texts lie more general and ubiquitous questions related to female sexuality and female prostitution, most often entangled with situations of female dispossession and disempowerment.

Moreover, sex trafficking has entered the theoretical arena. Recent social debates on trafficking from a feminist standpoint highlight the ongoing controversy concerning prostitution within feminism, which Melisa Ditmore summarises as follows:

> Today, the rise of interest in trafficking in persons has been accompanied by a focus on prostitution. Those who have devoted the most time to this issue again fall largely into two camps. One regards prostitution as a form of labor that should be treated as work rather than as vice. The other considers prostitution to be necessarily a form of slavery that therefore should be addressed as traffic in women. These camps have been reductively labeled "anti-censorship" and "pro-sex" feminists who do not see prostitution as a human rights violation, and "pro-censorship" and "anti-sex" feminists who do see sex work as inherently victimizing. (154-55)

Not surprisingly, popular texts have fed from those theoretical debates and have considered the motives behind prostitution, a subject that has been compounded by fears about female abduction and prostitution that can be traced as far back as the nineteenth-century anxiety about white slavery.[3] Following Melissa Ditmore, who also acknowledges the common discourses between sex trafficking and nineteenth-century "white slavery" (87-88), one may argue that such anxieties have coalesced as well as mutated under the requirements of the conventions of popular narrative genres. Thus, instead of conveying the internationalization of the sex industry, these texts reductively convey its global flows through the frequent characterization of the trafficker victimizing women and benefitting from their exploitation as a member of a foreign community, more often than not one where women's status is that of second-class citizens. In fact, the usual treatment of the victims betrays the strength of traditional notions about femininity and sexuality. As will be discussed below, standard cultural texts generally select a male hero/detective/sleuth who stands for the patriarchal axis of law and order and its real-life agents. Furthermore, according to Jeffreys, trafficking for the sexual exploitation of women in recent years has been coupled with the declining value of women's status not only in the countries where trafficking has given birth to a commercial enterprise (308) but also in the receiving communities. In this respect, the two texts under analysis here, Morel's *Taken* (2008) and Atkinson's *One Good Turn* (2006), question these assumptions about the outsider position and alien nature of the traffickers in different ways,

REVISTA CANARIA DE ESTUDIOS INGLESES, 73; 2016, PP. 103-118

[3] For further and in-depth discussion, see Romero-Ruiz 125-142. See also Sheila Jeffreys for other continuities between the nineteenth, twentieth and twenty-first centuries (*The Idea of Prostitution*, 9).

drawing a new map of trafficking and prostitution that is closer to the homeland while, at the same time, staying on the margins of the community. The low status of women in combination with what Napier-Moore has called the "exclusive focus on trafficking" (6), that is, without an appropriate social analysis, are appropriated by cultural texts in order to draft a cautionary tale about women and sexuality which reinstates traditional roles for women and men.

In addition, (sex) trafficking has also been analysed within the legal and social arenas as reflecting the consequences of the movement of people across borders. In recent years the necessity of controlling the migratory masses has been advocated from several quarters, as shown by the recent Syrian refugee crisis among other events. One of the concerns in this essay is how standard norms of behaviour can be affected in host societies, especially on cultural and ideological grounds. Borders (or other obstacles to the free circulation of people), governments and (inter)national laws have proved unable to accommodate the large influx of foreigners or control the reactions of the receiving communities, among whom entrenched discourses of 'invasion' and the sense of cultural loss appear to dominate. Unsurprisingly, certain critics have claimed that the "western" world needs to reformulate the standard legal definitions of immigration in favour of anthropological conceptualizations of this "movement" of peoples. Thus, as Eriksen pointed out in 2007, "migration must increasingly be envisioned as a transnational venture rather than as a one-way process resulting in segregation, assimilation or integration in the receiving society" (93). Judging from this statement, there seems to be a clash between the standard (read 'legal') conceptualization of the migrant and the necessary (or 'sociological') redefinition, and it is this clash that popular cultural texts have capitalized on, most of all—as mentioned above—films, because as Baker states, "[f]ilm is a powerful medium for framing social issues and raising awareness as well as funds to combat social problems" (2014: 209).

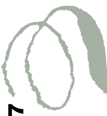
Traditionally, migrants have been represented in cultural texts as posing a problem to the community, a tear in the social fabric by virtue of their cultural, racial or linguistic difference, that needs to be solved through assimilation and integration. While stories may vary in their approach, in general terms they tend to settle the matter by suggesting that both the incoming individual and the host group have to accept their differences to construct a new sense of community.[4] As a consequence of the War on Terror, these narratives have grown to further encompass the clashes between the belief systems of hosts and migrants in a myriad of new ways. However, the desired understanding and conviviality between both have not come to happen quite yet, leaving the narratives without satisfying closure in the midst of critical and ideological conundrums. The resulting questioning of the pos-

[4] Most examples in the twenty-first century emphasize the acceptance of minority cultures and their artistic representations, often through the positive portrayal of the hybridization of individual identity ensuing from both the exposition to the culture of the host community and from their own ancestral culture.

sibility of a shared community affects different forms of migration: war or economic refugees, labour immigrants, the undocumented, or even leisure migrants. There has also been a move to clarify the reasons that lead them to abandon their country of origin. According to Eriksen, these "push" and "pull" factors always reflect an economic basis for migration (93), as most of the categories mentioned above do derive their basic definition from an economic factor, which can then be divided into more subcategories. Another striking feature is that all the categories mentioned are drafted from one perspective only: their regulation *by border control*. At the core of it all resides a central truth: the migrant crosses borders in search of an economic welfare that is virtually inexistent in their communities of origin.

Deriving from border control policies and discourses is a migrant condition that Brinker-Gabler and Smith have described as characterized by vulnerability and risk. On the one hand, migrants are seen as both vulnerable in themselves and a risk for the community. Yet on the other, migrants are seen as threatening to receiving communities, making these communities vulnerable and migrants a threat (Brinker-Gabler and Smith 7). This condition, however, does not affect the "leisure migrant," that is, the "skilled vacationer who knows the cultural codes and rules regulating the role of the tourist" (Eriksen 100). Instead, the tourist or "leisure migrant" is welcomed around the world.[5] In fact, all considerations of vulnerability and risk fail to apply from the moment the migrant is identified as a "tourist." Additionally, this identification makes possible a conversation and exchange of views across ideological differences without putting at risk either the community or the "leisure migrant." Because this migrant figure is not in need of any sort of economic help on the part of the receiving community, the border relaxes its control and welcomes the tourist within the community. As a result, it seems that migration, by virtue of being predicated exclusively on economic terms, creates two distinct legal approaches; one celebrates the "leisure migrant" while the other ostracizes the refugee and the undocumented (and hence illegal) labourer. Whereas the tourist appears as a non-threatening migrant, the refugee and the undocumented labourer are denied their citizen rights by governments (Eriksen 93): "[B]oth exemplify the predominance of movement in the contemporary world, and between them, the refugee and the tourist give an accurate depiction of the uneven distribution of resources in the globalized world" (Eriksen 101). These nuances in the definition of migrancy are being seriously examined by recent cultural texts, and will be central to our later discussion and understanding of *Taken* and *One Good Turn*. Cultural texts usually celebrate the incorporation of the "leisure migrant" to their communities, the economic implications of their insertion and their ultimate return to their places of origin (Beeton 53); the tourist is generally defined as a subject that brings the unknown or the exotic closer to home through their tales and adventures, recalling

[5] Eriksen continues to explain how this type of migrant, "the tourist," "moves in a 'third culture' where everybody has a smattering of English, and can easily buy everything he needs" (101), specifying that "tourism entails leisure and easy, laid-back consumption" (100).



the traditional genre of travel writing. However, there is an underside to this celebratory feeling, as the "other", unwelcomed migrants are compelled to try to feign the status of tourist and to devise ways to circumvent the arbitrary regulations of border control which openly accept some and reject others. Such deceptive practices have been taken up in contemporary films, often by means of plots supporting the host society's negative ideological perception and involving some kind of punishment for the migrant who assumes the fake identity of a tourist (a case in point is Weir's *Green Card*, 1990).

Furthermore, border control is predicated on the assumption that restrictions are necessary to prevent violent clashes between the established community and the incoming migrant (Brinker-Gabler 7).[6] At the core of all these definitions and subtle or not so subtle distinctions what lies is a "proliferation of laws and regulations" whose aim is, in a nutshell, to

> differentiate the 'citizen' from the 'noncitizen' and to contain the 'foreign' in a clear and efficient hierarchy of categories of people. But there are many other means of containment, not least of which is the way in which "citizens" create the "foreigner within" as a scapegoat for disaffection, instability, poverty—all that is wrong with the imagined community. (Brinker-Gabler 7-8)

This ideological turn has been accompanied by the production of cultural texts exploiting the fears of instability and poverty which the undesired migrant brings along. What was restricted to bureaucratic and legalistic arenas has slowly but surely permeated sociological, ideological and cultural ones in which the "scapegoat" is the 'dishonest' migrant who assumes a feigned identity. Cultural texts have participated in the circulation of the notion that these migrants endanger the community's stability by enabling "trafficking, refugee situations, undocumented migration and smuggling" as side-effects of their desire to migrate (Napier-Moore 6). At the same time, the ideological standpoint of these artefacts has cleverly hidden away that these are just "smaller parts of the larger migration picture" (Napier-Moore 6). What is dangerous, according to this critic, is precisely the fact that they operate to create "the false impression that trafficking is a problem that can be solved by merely taking a few legal measures and providing assistance to those identified as trafficked" (1), which in turn thwarts any further attempts to an in-depth social analysis. In this respect, Napier-Moore's suggestion that we should look at the social reality from the standpoint of a "number of interconnected social factors" has been acknowledged by some cultural practitioners, such as the novelist under analysis here, as a means to modify standard behaviours and ideological codes towards the migrant who has

[6] These "restrictions" in the migratory movement have made migrants vulnerable and have led migrants-to-be to find alternative ways to subvert the regulations of border control. As is widely acknowledged, the acceptance of "leisure migrants" by all communities all over the world has had the side effect of promoting the rise of trafficking and smuggling rings that prey on the migrants' need to escape border control.

either chosen the path of being smuggled or has been forced into trafficking. It is not just the migrant's need to move away but also the migrant's community's desire for commodities beyond their reach that is at stake.

In the next section I will turn to the analysis of Kate Atkinson's novel *One Good Turn* (2006) and Pierre Morel's film *Taken* (2008), in order to make clear how they enact the ideological clashes and controversial positions described above as they strive to provide a contemporary narration and representation of migration, prostitution and female sexuality. A second, related aim of this part is to dismantle the patriarchal view of female sexuality, female migration, and prostitution that the film strongly appears to endorse.

2. TRAFFICKING IN POPULAR CULTURE: MOREL'S *TAKEN* AND ATKINSON'S *ONE GOOD TURN*

Trying to define what popular culture is always entails a narrowing in focus of the complexity of both the term and the discussion around it. Since the emergence of Cultural Studies, the concept of culture (and within it, popular culture) has invited a vast amount of research. However, it is interesting to point out that whereas Morel's film clearly stands within the boundaries of the most traditional definition of the term "popular" (which is most of the times paired with the qualifier "mass" in scientific terms), Atkinson's novel is harder to characterize, as it works towards a blurring of the boundaries created by the distinction between "popular" and "high" culture. For the purpose of this study, I will subscribe to the definition given by Zeisler in *Feminism and Popular Culture* (2008), in which she does not only include the texts usually counted in the field but also those paramount events of everyday life that have been imprinted on a certain community's imaginary. Thus, for Zeisler popular culture can be defined as "that which entertains masses of people by 'distracting' them and by calling on their common references" (1). Morel's *Taken* is a clear example. Even on a superficial first viewing, it becomes clear that the director has not attempted to question received notions about female behaviour or male/female interactions. On the other hand, Atkinson's novel is (as I will develop below) very much at odds with that definition of pop culture but, given the novel's marketing and reception as genre writing, it could be contended that this novel is closer to popular than to "high culture" as, with the birth of Cultural Studies, "the barrier that once existed between high culture and low culture has been whittled away to the thinnest of shards" (Zeisler 5).

Both texts can be categorized as belonging to the genre of detection. Morel's film *Taken* could be described as a "rescue narrative"[7] that revises and updates the

REVISTA CANARIA DE ESTUDIOS INGLESES, 73; 2016, PP. 103-118

[7] Baker states: "As in the past, rescue narratives have been powerfully articulated in contemporary discourses on the sex trafficking of women and girls. The rescue narrative that dominates trafficking discourses begins with an evil trafficker or pimp who abducts, deceives, or lures a young,

hard-boiled crime formula of twentieth-century detection, whereas Atkinson's novel *One Good Turn* undertakes a subversive revision of that traditional "rescue narrative" within the crime genre. The popularity of the genre of detection both in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries has fared differently in fiction and in film; though both texts display striking similarities in plot selection, their portrayal of the topic of sex trafficking is ideologically quite different. By assuming a common ground of set beliefs and assumptions, the film works towards the necessity of revenge, given our worst fears of female sexual exploitation and the formula established by contemporary renderings of the traditional "rescue narratives" (Baker 2013: 2). The novel, on the contrary, frames major questions as to the very conceptual categories in play and their implications within existing hierarchies of power and powerlessness.

As mentioned above, the sensationalism and conventions of popular culture work to displace the concept of trafficking and to completely erase or else commodify the actual migrant. Trafficking is portrayed as a danger for young women in which they are helpless victims because, as Martínez has stated, "rescue stories are guided by a masculinist politics, in which men but never women can stand up for their rights" (277). In addition, trafficking is perceived only as a "crime," deriving from the enforcement of border control, instead of being portrayed as a complex gendered social issue, which affects the migrant. This handling encourages victimization and helplessness and, therefore, creates a simplistic moral tale. In fact, most of the filmed stories are distorted to support this moral tale and its ideological viewpoint about females and sexuality.[8] A case in point is the TV mini-series *Human Trafficking* (2005), in which the ultimate goal of the police forces is to extract the information that could bring the trafficker under the law, regardless of the danger it poses for the trafficked female(s). This sort of narrative representation places the stress on the mistaken notion that what matters is the restoration of legal conditions and the safe re-inscription of bodies as "legal" or "illegal," "criminal" or "victim," while, as Julietta Hua asserts, "[t]he important question is not so much who is being victimized and how, but what mechanisms shape the legibility of sex trafficking's victimization" (202).

Taken and *One Good Turn* have similar plots. In *Taken*, seventeen-year old Kim travels to Paris with her friend Amanda but on arrival they are kidnapped, drugged, and sold to sexual slavery by an Albanian ring, forcing Kim's father Bryan, a retired CIA agent, to come to her rescue. The film was a great success, turning actor

innocent, helpless, and often naive girl into a prison-like brothel and controls her with brutal violence until a heroic rescuer comes to save the day. The trafficker is often a man of colour or from a foreign country, and the rescuer is often a white, Western man. In this narrative frame, the solution to sex trafficking is capturing and criminally prosecuting the trafficker. This rescue narrative appears, in different degrees, in images and texts produced by the US government, anti-trafficking organizations, and the news media, as well as in film" (Baker 2013: 2-3).

[8] It also could be argued that the city, with its duplicity and defining opposites is set as the dangerous setting where the worst could happen, strengthening already existing dualities such as poverty and wealth, beauty and ugliness and finally, virtue and vice.

Liam Neeson overnight into a celebrated action movie star, a status confirmed in two further films, *Taken 2*, 2012, and *Taken 3*, 2015. In *One Good Turn*, the second book in Atkinson's Jackson Brodie series, Lena and Tatiana are economic migrants that have left their native Russia for the UK on a tourist visa and end up being trafficked in Edinburgh, where Lena's body is found by Brodie during the Festival. Plot elements in both remain quite constant: two female tourists who become trafficked, one of whom will die while the other survives, a male protagonist, an organized criminal gang, a tourist destination, and humane treatment of the dead victim. Yet, there are also divergences in the treatment of the issue of sex trafficking which clearly set both texts apart. Morel's *Taken* (2008) still employs traditional roles of femininity and masculinity. In fact, the movie has been accused of "demean[ing] that topic by removing from it any of the complexities that naturally are involved" (Brown et al. 213). On the other hand, Atkinson's *One Good Turn* (2006) struggles against these traditional roles and viewpoints to offer a more nuanced portrait of the trafficked females even while staying within the format of the crime novel.

As Kelly states, Morel's film "is an old story retold" (2).[9] The film represents, as Kelly suggests, a rewriting of the traditional fears in western societies. There is an issue with both gender and race which brings back memories of colonial struggles with the 'natives' (2) even while one may go even further back in history and remember the "xenophobic undertones" of cultural myths of origin (1). Moreover, "the film's representation of sex trafficking as a superlative evil and omnipresent danger awaiting young women who leave the safety of home and country establishes the need for strong male protection against uncivilized, foreign and racialized enemies" (2). However, by focusing on issues of "white male heroism" and "young women's purity" (3), Kelly's analysis disregards the question of migration, making leisure migration as portrayed in the text virtually invisible and underanalysed.

On the contrary, Atkinson's *One Good Turn* foregrounds the figure of the migrant while it tackles the issue of trafficking and sexual exploitation in the subplot of the narrative. Atkinson refrains from using the traditional rescue narrative to offer a very complex view of (sex) trafficking. The novel's protagonist is not the all-powerful avenging male hero Morel is partial to, but a PI whose accidental discovery of the female corpse of the trafficked female sets him off on a search for her identity and her story. Even though both texts address the same issue, by focusing on how migration and trafficking are portrayed, the film reinforces societies' worst fears about female sexuality and illegal migration whereas the novel tries to raise awareness on the exploitation of women and migrants. Prostitution is the focus in *Taken* whereas it is a secondary plot in *One Good Turn*, yet the fate of the two

[9] Drawing on Gramsci's concept of hegemony, Kelly affirms: "Though they are fictive texts, films play an important role in cultivating hegemonic ideals on issues of race and gender by equipping popular audiences with dominant cultural logics, inviting them to identify with and inhabit idealized subject positions, and attesting to the common-sense of the images and narratives produced on screen" (3).

female pairs is presented as the occasion for the discussion of sexuality, trafficking and migration. As one of the trafficked women in the novel states:

> But the girl was stupid to have gone with him. She cried for days afterwards, spilling tears on to nice polished surfaces and using up clean towels. She was a virgin, she said, but she needed the money. Everyone needed the money. Lots of the girls were here illegally, some had had their passports confiscated, some disappeared after a while. Sex traffic. It would happen to the Romanian girl, you could see it in her eyes. There were rumours about bad things that had happened to some of the girls who worked for Favours, but there were always rumours and there were always bad thing happening to girls. That was life. (Atkinson 229-30)

Against the victimization of the young female characters in *Taken*, *One Good Turn* concentrates on the portrayal of a complex situation in which females are powerless, not because they are by definition helpless victims of predatory male sexuality and in need of protection, but because they *have become* helpless as a result of the failure of the system law and order to prevent trafficking (Sullivan 98-99). In this sense, it seems that the film agrees with the move toward the victimization of females which endangers their personal and political agency and autonomy in favour of some forms of governmental control by creating the notion that females are safer if they are not out in the public sphere. This has been widely denounced as an ongoing redefinition of women as helpless and in need of protection: "[T]he recent (regurgitated) official discourse of 'victimhood' justifies government regulation, criminalisation and exclusion of women and children involved in prostitution" (Sanders, O'Neill and Pitcher 12).

While the basic plot elements in both texts may appear to be identical, they are not handled in exactly the same way, nor are their characters' actions assigned the same causes. In Atkinson's novel, Lena is murdered and Tatiana saves herself while trying to take revenge on Lena's murderers. In the film, Amanda dies whereas Kim, lacking agency, is saved by her father. Both texts portray females who are abducted and also how the consequences of their abduction are related to a social conceptualization of female sexuality. According to Kelly, Amanda dies as a result of her openness towards sexuality. She is not only prostituted but also constantly drugged because, for the purposes of the film, Amanda is already a commodity, having lost her virginity before the gang kidnaps her. Her death establishes the cautionary moral of the film and differentiates the two women's worth both within the sex industry (Kelly 4-5) and in the larger society presented in the narrative. In Atkinson's text, Lena dies not for her sexual transgression—which is also Tatiana's—but because her intimate knowledge about the gang and its modus operandi endangers its continuity and success. Both Lena and Tatiana are sexually active females who try to cope with the trafficked situation into which they have been thrown. However, neither the plot itself or the narrative voice work towards the "representation of sex trafficking as a superlative evil and omnipresent danger," as Kelly describes the film (2), even though sex trafficking is seen and defined as such. What the novel really focuses on are the economic factors which forced the women to migrate. At the

same time, both are defined as victims but not victimized on the same terms as the females in the film are. Lena and Tatiana leave their country of origin in search of economic wellbeing. Their migrant status is concealed by their fake status as tourists and their subsequent hiring as housemaids (that is, legal workers) as a means of survival. Within the conventions of popular culture as described above, Atkinson's female characters have used their status as leisure migrants to subvert the regulations of border control and would therefore be deserving of punishment, yet the male protagonist in the narrative never questions their status as citizens. Even though these women do not belong *legally* to the community, it is made evident to readers that they too are worthy of the protection provided by a democratic nation-state, and their cases brought to justice.

In the film, neither Kim nor Amanda is expecting sexual exploitation to be part of their Paris adventure—echoing the eighteenth-century "Grand Tour;" being white, middle class tourists affords them a sense of entitlement and safety that other migrants lack; they are free of the vulnerability and risk impinging on the experience of migrants. Yet, the fact is that they undergo an ordeal that will cause Amanda's death. When the avenging father in *Taken* finds the body of his daughter's friend, there is room for empathy and a deep feeling of regret, and when Lena's body is found by the male private investigator in the novel, he wants to make amends for what has happened to her (Atkinson 137). Both Amanda in the film and Lena in the novel are victims of the sex trafficking industry; yet, how the stories are told makes a world of difference. The camera and the narrative voice respectively, have concentrated on showing, on the one hand, how Amanda is a victim of her own sexuality and, on the other, how Lena is a victim because of her sexual relationship with the gang's leader. Lena is an undocumented migrant and Amanda isn't but both have been forced by circumstances to accept the roles and choices the gangs have given them. The relationship these females have with the male protagonists from both texts, as well as the narrator's viewpoint, also establishes substantial departures. Even though both female victims are portrayed as needing protection, the *kind* of protection that the ideology of the texts offers is essentially different. It becomes clear that Amanda needed protection from herself in the first place, and her present situation and ultimate death is a consequence of—a punishment for—her willing entry into sexuality. The incapability of the film's protagonist to save this female is thus justified by her "flaw." Saving Kim also becomes a way of blaming Amanda. On the other hand, Lena needs protection of another sort. Her death is a consequence of the failure of the forces of law and order to implement their duty and of the protagonist's own failure as the agent for the restoration of order. The novel's private detective, Jackson Brodie, is able neither to save the female victim nor to guard the body till the forces of law and order arrive, perhaps because, unlike Kim's father in the film, he is not the representative of patriarchy. Lena then becomes a haunting presence for the private investigator, a female victim whose corpse has gone missing and, as such, who does not exist. This haunting presence—visible for some, invisible for the majority—is a much more interesting representation of the trafficked subject in contemporary western societies, both highly visible on occasion and highly invisible most of the time. The film's cautionary tale erases the transformation of the tourist

into a forced migrant and transforms this category into a simple sexualized body set as an example of the dangers of autonomous female sexuality. Moreover, the film's re-enactment of the traditional harem fails to disclose what the novel highlights: firstly, the diminishing social status of women in contemporary societies and how their value is set according to their sexual behaviour and, secondly, the economic and political factors within migration. This social value is, in fact, granted to Kim, the protagonist's daughter in the film, because of her purity. Hence, by being "certified pure," the same traffickers who exploit Amanda "protect" her. On the contrary, in Atkinson's novel the surviving sister Tatiana, is presented as a smart woman who is able to grasp how the world labels her and to successfully negotiate her way through that classification. The narrative suggests Tatiana works as a "call girl" who secures, in the end, the economic stability she is looking for. Moreover, Tatiana is —together with the private investigator—the avenger in the narrative who tries to make the traffickers pay. If Kim is denied any sort of empowerment by making her just a victim in need of protection and rescue, Tatiana is constantly proving her empowerment throughout the narrative. Her acceptance of the ways of the world, her practicality of mind and her unique sense of justice reinforce Atkinson's message. Even though the narrative is constantly questioning her status as a trafficked victim, this woman does not fall into the helpless female victim categorization the film so happily embraces. It is with the help of Tatiana that closure and justice are brought into the narrative and it is her invaluable help that allows the detective to put a name—and an identity—to the haunting presence of Lena:

REVISTA CANARIA DE ESTUDIOS INGLESES, 73; 2016, PP. 103-118

> 'I know people who miss her', Jackson said. 'She was called Lena Mikhailichenko. She was twenty-five years old. She was born in Kiev. Her mother still lives there. She was an accountant back in Russia. She was a Virgo. She liked disco, rock and classical music. She read newspapers and crime novels. She had long blond hair and weighed one hundred and twenty-two pounds and was five foot five inches tall. She was a Christian. She was good-natured, kind, thoughtful and optimistic, they all say optimistic. She liked going to the gym and swimming and she had a completely misplaced "confidence in tomorrows" so perhaps her English wasn't as good as she claimed. I think that's another way of saying optimistic again. And parks. They all like parks, in fact they all say more or less the same thing. You can see a picture of her at www.besrussianbrides.com where she's still up for sale, although she left Russia six months ago to see if Edinburgh's streets were paved with gold. That was when she fell in with Favours and met her nemesis in the shape of Graham Hatter. I think if you look you might find that our Mr Hatter was involved with Favours, as well as God knows what else. (Atkinson 385-6)

At the same time, with Tatiana's story, the narrative establishes Lena's innocence regardless of her sexuality. As could be also said of Amanda—although the film does not—Lena is a "good person" who "meets bad people" (Atkinson 460). Tatiana's statement establishes the wide ideological gap between the two texts and positions the novel's treatment of the issue of trafficking and prostitution within the scope of migration. The film just establishes the desirability of the female members of the community as commodities marketed and circulated by the alien gang as

well as their ensuing need for protection. On the contrary, the novel sets forth the inevitable consequences of migration when considered only through the perspective of border control and of traditional conceptualizations of female sexuality.

Finally, the way in which fears of cultural contamination is treated in both narratives deserves some attention. As mentioned above, the global operations of trafficking are often reductively and pejoratively represented in popular culture texts by "foreign" gangs. As Baker argues, "[s]ex trafficking films [...] often portray non-US cultures, particularly in developing nations, as backward and in need of intervention, positioning Westerners as morally superior saviors" (2014: 209). In the film, the male hero fights an Albanian gang whose foreignness is emphatically stressed. By doing so, the film appeals to those atavistic fears of the other and the unknown which make it easier for some members of the community to blame female commodification on foreign conceptualizations and practices. Thus, "this 'rescue narrative' reinscribes traditional gender, racial, and national hierarchies that in fact bolster systems of inequality that are the root cause of trafficking" (Baker 2014: 209). However, the portrayal of foreigners as criminals does not totally prevent 'contamination' from spreading throughout the community, as the case of the corrupt officers of the French police makes clear in the film. Hence, the protection of women is perceived as tantamount to preventing the corruption of the forces of authority and, at the same time, it is framed as an opportunity allowing the male protagonist to assert his "manhood by rescuing the females, thereby re-establishing patriarchal authority" (Baker 2014: 212). This feature is portrayed completely differently in the novel, in which the trafficking gang is made up of members of the host community whose criminal engagement has nothing to do with foreign corruption and contamination. The usual conflation of criminal with foreign and victim with native is thus turned on its head, as the novel subverts the pattern of traditional rescue narratives in the representation of the (masculine) Other as alien and uncivilized and the (feminine) member of the community in need of protection. In fact, the male protagonist in Atkinson's novel perceives it is "home" (the UK) that is dangerous for women, not necessarily "abroad." In this respect, Atkinson's text demystifies the conceptualization of "home" as "safe" and "abroad" as "dangerous" and dismantles "the threat to and reestablishment of racial and national dominance" (Baker 2014: 212) which *Taken* so successfully exploits.[10]

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[10] For a discussion of other trafficking films, such as Kreuzpaintner's *Trade* (2007), see Baker 2014. A similar representation of the dangerous Other is present in other trafficking visual products in TV series such as *Criminal Minds*, *Cold Case* and *The Closer,* which devote at least one episode in the series to the topic of (sex) trafficking.

3. CONCLUSIONS

The dangers *Taken* evokes are clearly aimed at creating a "myth" of trafficking which rewrites nineteenth-century fears of white slavery with a complete disregard for the complex structure and characteristics of the contemporary sex industry and migratory flows. In fact, what the film does is to legitimize the male control of female sexuality, a control which is promoted as enough in and of itself to prevent the existence of trafficking gangs and an international commerce of sex slaves. By playing on society's fears of *the Other* and of *the Orient*, *Taken* utterly neglects to address the paramount importance of the actual phenomenon behind sex trafficking: the sex industry. The novel, on the contrary, by establishing the traffickers as part of the receiving community and by asserting the uselessness of current policies of border control, problematizes the issue of sex trafficking in different ways. These trafficked women may have entered the community as tourists but they have been forced by that same community to live on the fringes of society. At the same time, their liminal position renders them invisible and, as such, the mechanisms of law and order are unable to restore their rights. Consequently, by exploring the failures of both border control and the forces of law and order to prevent sex trafficking, *One Good Turn* clearly states the necessity of establishing other means to prevent female abuse, which must address issues of powerlessness and agency if they are to succeed. Moreover, the positioning of the women not as helpless victims but as agents in their own right makes it possible to determine who has to be targeted to prevent trafficking in general, and sexual trafficking in particular, in these communities. The call for patriarchy's hero to stop sexual exploitation and abuse dominating the film is countered in the novel by portraying a male protagonist who cannot fight without the help of the rest of the community, and more importantly, the women themselves.

Finally, by portraying US female citizens as victims of sex trafficking, *Taken* obliterates the actual migratory movements involved in the sex industry, as Iordanova points out (212-13) and renders invisible the migrant females who are the actual target of traffickers and their unique status within the wider migratory picture. The film thus sets off on a well-paved path to exploiting traditional myths about white slavery and female sexuality by using them as cautionary tales about female agency and autonomy regarding sexuality when it should instead have done "path-breaking" work and examined the "element of gendered relations of power" in migration, together with "the ways in which borders and visa regimes affect trafficked women's lives" (Andriajesevic 257-58). Atkinson's novel, though treating the topic only as a sub-plot, manages to engage with the specific nature of sex trafficking from the multiple perspectives of agency, female sexuality, and migration in complex and nuanced ways that speak to the core of its marginal situation and challenge deeply entrenched discourses in many supposedly advanced and democratic contemporary societies.

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