ARNOLD SCHWARZENEGGER, MISTER UNIVERSE? HOLLYWOOD MASCULINITY AND THE SEARCH OF THE NEW MAN

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This essay argues that the framework provided by feminism (or feminisms) and men's studies is insufficient to account for some contemporary cultural phenomena involving gender roles such as the revision of men's image on the cinema screen carried out by the Hollywood majors in the 1980s and 1990s. Taking as an instance of the renewed image of Hollywood masculinity the popular star Arnold Schwarzenegger, this paper analyses the roots of his appeal and shows that they are not as evident as they might seem at first sight with his public persona. Arnie —as he is known by his fans— connotes health, heroism and ideal fatherhood, but these are aspects (especially the last one) that he does not always perform as a triumphant man. As this paper shows, feminism and men's studies are useful to criticise cultural icons that deviate from the political correctness they propose but are limited theoretical tools when it comes to assessing why and how a star like Arnold Schwarzenegger can base his appeal on contradicting rather than respecting established images of masculinity.

Victor Seidler, one of the main British scholars involved in men's studies, has written that «feminism deeply challenges the ways that men are and the ways that men relate» (1992, 209). Certainly, one of the consequences of the development of feminism has been the growth of men's studies: men have started using anti-patriarchal discourses to analyse the representation of masculinity in written and filmed fiction, following, though not without problems, the example set by feminist scholars and critics. Gerry Hassan explains that the alignment of male scholars with feminism has taken two forms, with a more liberal strand based on cooperation with feminist groups in the early 1970s and a new trend from the 1980s onwards, which he calls men's liberation, in which the focus of attention has shifted towards an analysis of the place of the male body within consumerism (1994, 30).

The study of masculinity is not a field developed exclusively in the USA. Pioneer work was done there with the publication in 1974 of *Men and Masculinity*, a volume edited by Joseph H. Pleck and Jack Sawyer. Yet this was soon followed in 1977 by the publication of *The Limits of Masculinity* by Andrew Tolson, one of the members of the Birmingham Men's Group. Again, Victor Seidler, the editor of the main men's studies magazine, *Achilles Heel*, published his best-known work, *Rediscovering Masculinity: Reason, Language and Sexuality*, in 1989. Seidler himself became editor of the *Routledge Male Order* series, whereas another Briton, Jeff Hearn, edits the *Routledge Critical Studies on Men and Masculinity*, still to produce major work on masculinity. In 1990, the American poet Robert Bly published his controversial *Iron John*, the book that drew the general public's attention towards the new problematics of masculinity in the era of feminism (or feminisms). The late 1980s and early 1990s also saw the establishment of men studies courses in American universities, among which those by Michael S. Kimmel of the Department of So-

ciology at the State University of New York at Stony Brook, and Michael A. Messner of the Program for the Study of Women and Men in Society and the Department of Sociology of Southern California. By the end of 1989 more than two hundred of these courses were being taught in American universities and colleges (Buchbinder 1994, 22).

In *Masculinities and Identities*, a remarkable introduction to men's studies, David Buchbinder notes that this new field of study, the theory of masculinity or new men's studies —'masculism' by analogy to 'feminism'— «has not found much support, perhaps because it suggests a reactionary assertion of traditional ideas about masculinity, including the subordination of women and the marginalisation of gays» (1992, 22). Victor Seidler explains that because of the attack of feminism against patriarchy, routinely identified with masculinity, many men responded by negating their own masculinity as an instrument of patriarchal oppression: «So it seemed that to identify with feminism and to respond to the challenges of feminist theory involved an abandonment of masculinity itself» (1992, 212). In a second phase, this was seen to be a mistake for it left many liberal heterosexual male scholars stranded in a no man's land —never better said— between feminism, homosexuality and patriarchy. Feminist women are not comfortable with the idea of feminist men (see Jardine 1987), whereas alternatives to the exploration of masculinity have come mainly from gay scholars —as a defence of patriarchy is, simply, not an option in these times of political correctness. This means that a space was left open for authors such as Robert Bly who advocate a male essentialism which can be easily read as a return to traditional patriarchy —though this needn't be so. A balance is still to be found, though Seidler seems to be right when he says that

> A study of men and masculinity will yield its own methodological concerns. These questions will not always lie within feminist theory, nor can we say in advance what they might be. They cannot necessarily be judged according to pre-existing feminist standards but if they are firmly grounded they will deepen our understanding of the sources of women's oppression and subordination. They will also illuminate the conditions and possibilities of changing conceptions of masculinity, if not also the conditions for the liberation of men. (Seidler 1992: 219).

The paradox is that, as a consequence of feminism itself, it is easier for a woman to enter the field of men's studies than for a man to enter feminism. Feminism has challenged men to face the question of masculinity, suggesting that the feminist denounciation of patriarchy should lead men to redraw their identity just as women are redrawing theirs. However, in this new situation it is not for men to invade feminism or women's territory, for they might attempt to redefine female identity as they did in the past, which explains the resistance of feminist women to male scholars who call themselves feminists. Yet, whereas feminist men may encounter much hostility (men who call themselves anti-feminist —if any dares do that— simply lack all academic respectability), women who criticise masculinity, often wrongly making it the equivalent of patriarchy, do not risk rejection to the same extent. Feminism has allowed women to be extremely critical of men, and has invited men to be critical of themselves, but it is neither allowing men to look at masculinity without thinking of femininity, nor to criticise feminist views of masculinity, which are often biased. The situation now is that because of feminism, feminist women seem more experienced and better prepared to discuss masculinity, so that their work is essential in the field of men's studies, despite the problems this entails for a better understanding of masculinity.

Here, I'd like to turn to the work of Susan Jeffords and Yvonne Tasker, who have offered insightful, innovating analysis of the representation of masculinity in recent action

and adventure Hollywood films, a field neglected until recently. Jeffords' *Hard Bodies* (1994) and Tasker's *Spectacular Bodies* (1993), together with the volume edited by Steven Cohan and Ina Rae Hark in 1993, *Screening the Male: Exploring Masculinities in Hollywood Cinema,* have opened new paths for the critical study of the representation of masculinity in American popular culture. Jeffords takes a more feminist stance, interpreting the connections between popular culture and the politics of the Reagan and Bush eras as extensions of the hypocritical patriarchal backlash against feminism; Tasker —interestingly, a freelance writer and not a researcher attached to a university department— focuses rather on vindicating the importance of action films as a neglected cultural space where gender boundaries are constantly negotiated. My point is that despite being necessary and important, neither the work of male scholars in men's studies, nor the work of female scholars such as Jeffords and Tasker suffices to understand the representation of masculinity in contemporary Hollywood films. The preoccupation with feminism on women's side and with political correctness on men's side is limiting the strategies required to understand masculinity beyond traditional patriarchy. To prove this I will consider the figure of one of Hollywood's current icons of masculinity, Arnold Schwarzenegger, and argue that with the theoretical tools currently available Schwarzenegger may be criticised and even ridiculed, but that the root of his undeniable appeal cannot be satisfactorily accounted for.

In *Demolition Man* (1994), the character played by Sylvester Stallone returns to life in a rosy, Huxleyan future, after a cryogenic sleep of 35 years. This new Rip van Winkle finds out that the law barring naturalised foreigners in America from being elected President of the United States was repealed some time in the late 1990s to allow for the election of Austrian-born Schwarzenegger as President. He is informed then that the popular film star became the most popular President, much beyond Ronald Reagan's wildest dreams. The joke is that in that version of the future Arnie —as he is nicknamed among his fans— appears to have won the popularity contest he has sustained throughout the 1980s and 1990s with Stallone, often presented as his arch-rival, even though he is in fact his business partner in more than one sense. What is less comical about this anecdote, is that after Reagan —even after Clinton— Schwarzenegger seems a much likelier candidate for the US Presidency, to the point that one wonders what would happen if he decided to embark on a political career in earnest.

Schwarzenegger is an 'ideal man' in many senses. Born in Austria 50 years ago, he became an American citizen in 1983, to become since then the embodiment of the American dream —and here 'embodiment' must be understood literally. Reputedly a sickly boy, he turned to bodybuilding at age 15, soon becoming a professional of bodybuilding contests. In 1968 he was first elected Mr. Universe, the world's top bodybuilding distinction, which he has won five times. Subsequently, he started an amazing career in the USA that has turned him into one of Hollywood's best assets. However, far from being the simple-minded meat loaf which detractors think all bodybuilders are, Schwarzenegger is also a shrewd businessman, who has put to very good use his degree in Economics from the university of Wisconsin. He used his popularity as Mr. Universe to start businesses including real estate, gyms, diet products and now the famous chain of restaurants, Planet Hollywood, which he owns with on and off screen partners Stallone and Bruce Willis. In the meantime, of course, he has become a very popular film star, despite his limited acting abilities, and a happy family man, faithfully married to journalist Maria Shriver of the Kennedy family. Although a Catholic like his wife's family, Arnie happens to be a staunch Republican and has even acted as Counsellor for Fitness during Bush's presidency. Schwarzenegger is also well-known because of his involvement with the Special Olympics, the Inner

City Games, diverse charities devoted to caring for sick children, and the Simon Wiesenthal Centre. This awarded him in 1991 a Wiesenthal National Leadership for his generous funding of this museum devoted to the Jewish Holocaust. Malicious tongues suggested that Arnie's generosity had to do with his involvement with Nazi politics in the past, but this gossip is no doubt due to bigoted prejudices against German-speaking people like him. Of course, the joke, as all filmgoers know, is that for all his years in the USA, Schwarzenegger speaks with a marked Austrian (that is, German Austrian) accent, which has not prevented him, though, from playing all-American characters.

As for his impressive physical appearance, the particularity is that Schwarzenegger has used it to play villains and heroes alike, which makes finding the key to his success even more difficult. His fiftieth anniversary has coincided with little publicised open-heart surgery and this has somehow eroded the image of perfect fitness he has given throughout thirty years. Even though he is a heavy smoker, and has acknowledged a moderate use of steroids in the height of his bodybuilding days, Schwarzenegger represents health, though he represents, above all, the idea of health through discipline. He is a self-made man in the two senses of being successful and of having remade his body, though there are rumours that his not so impressive face has benefited from the miracles of cosmetic surgery and that his current softer facial lines are part of a new remaking of his body, now less muscular, less aggressive, more fatherly.

Schwarzenegger sees himself as a man with clear targets in mind, an addict to the public's admiration since his days as Mr. Universe, and argues that his success is due to the lucky combination of the Austrian sense of discipline and the American sense of opportunity (Mata 1997). He is no doubt, a competitive man, gifted for self-promotion and exuding a positive kind of self-confidence people love to identify with. However, one of the strangest aspects of his successful public persona is that despite his spectacular body and his being generally liked —or possibly because of that— Schwarzenegger is not a sex symbol, not even among the gay community which worships action film stars such as Jean Claude Van Damme or Dolph Lundgren.

As for his acting career, perhaps Schwarzenegger should be compared to that other German-speaking sportsman turned film star, Johnny Weismuller, though Arnie has avoided the danger of typecasting that beset Tarzan's interpreter to his death. Interestingly, James L. Neibaur bypasses Schwarzenegger in favour of arch-rival Stallone as main contemporary tough guy in his 1989 book *Tough Guy: The American Movie Macho*. It is easy to see, though, that Stallone and Schwarzenegger are the heirs of the same screen tradition. Neibaur says that «Americans measured their masculinity against movie tough guys to such a degree than even today John Wayne is considered in many quarters to be the prototypical American male» (1989, 1). From the gangster, western and military films of pre-World War II to today's action films, the male film star has evolved as a mirror and a model of the tensions masculinity has faced at each period. William S. Hart, Lon Chaney, Edward G. Robinson, James Cagney, Humphrey Bogart, George Raft, Clark Gable, John Garfield and John Wayne —men who were convinced they knew how to be men— belong to a world different from that of Marlon Brando and James Dean in the 1950s and 1960s, men who played male characters much less afraid of emotion and feelings. With Clint Eastwood and Stallone in the 1970s and 1980s, Wayne became again the main referent, though in the 1990s the stress was laid on the shortcomings of the Wayne persona, especially as regards his inability to show emotions. This negative view later gave way to types such as the more sympathetic Bruce Willis. However, Neibaur is right when he attributes to Stallone's «shrewd marketing abilities» (ibid., 208) his immense success, for the 1980s and 1990s are, above all, the era in which male film stars have learnt to sell their

bodies, using strategies close to those of female beauty queens, and others learned through bodybuilding and its related male 'beauty' contests. The emphasis for the new stars is put on the muscle, the body —not the face— and at this point it is easy to see why Arnie has succeeded.

Schwarzenegger's career began with a TV film in which he played Hercules, following the lead of 1950s peplum star Steve Reeves, and reached a first turning point with the documentary *Pumping Iron* directed by George Butler and Robert Fiori in 1977. There he appeared as himself, the bodybuilding star, setting an example that led him to write four best-selling books on fitness and body-building. Popularity arrived with his incarnation of Robert Howard's sword and sorcery hero Conan in John Millius' *Conan the Barbarian* (1982) and Richard Fleischer's *Conan the Destroyer* (1984). In these films, Arnie proved that he was as close as possible to the massive anatomies of the heroes of comic and of Robert Howard's imagination, though the star seemingly did not know until recently about Howard's projection of his troubled homosexuality onto the muscled Conan.

However, the film that definitively launched Schwarzenegger's film career was James Cameron's 1984 *The Terminator*, in which very convincingly he played an inhuman cyborg sent from the future to eliminate the mother of mankind's future leader. Then followed a number of action films, among them the very successful *Predator* (1987), and *Total Recall* (1990) and a surprising change of tack, with Arnie playing roles in comedies *Twins* (1988) and *Kindergarten Cop* (1990), both directed by Ivan Reitman. Since then, his main hit has been the sequel of *The Terminator*, of which more later, and a spate of interesting films, including *True Lies* and the much underrated *Last Action Hero*, together with a comedy as surprising as *Junior*, in which he plays a pregnant daddy. In 1997 Schwarzenegger played the sentimental villain Mr. Freeze in *Batman and Robin*, for which he was paid 25$ million, surely a record figure for an actor playing the bad guy. If something defines Schwarzenegger's career, though, this is his ability to quickly overcome the failure of some of his films and his capacity to engage the public's attention with each new release, for he is that strange phenomenon: the star more popular than his films.

But what is the appeal of his muscularity? How is this linked to masculinity? And how can Schwarzenegger's image be the essence of masculine muscularity without being sexually attractive? In his book *Evil Sisters: The Threat of Female Sexuality and the Cult of Manhood* (1996), Bram Dijkstra offers a fascinating account of the medical theories of the turn of the last century and of their use to oppress women and promote manhood which are very relevant for an understanding of Schwarzenegger's figure. Roughly, many educated men —including scientists— believed that sexuality (in company or alone) diminished man's reservoir of vital fluid, so that «flabby effeminacy came to be the mark of the erotomaniac» (1996, 61). Men did not want their enfeebled bodies to betray the secrets of their inability to dominate lust, for lust was necessarily suicidal and a sign of their subjection to women, and so «rushed out to invest in one or more of the many muscle-building devices advertised in the magazines and newspapers of the Teens and Twenties, hoping to hide the effects of their youthful indiscretions» (1996, 61). Hollywood capitalised on this need, with its cowboys and Tarzans, the comics did their share with Superman, and so did the pulps and popular fiction with Conan —Arnie's very own star character. Later, the famous bodybuilder Charles Atlas would make millions out of the insecurities of male teenagers who could not catch up with the expectations of masculinity of the time. Thus, David Jackson explains in his autobiography that he grew up in the 1940s and 1950s «in a social climate of popular enthusiasm for male body-building» spread through adds in muscle magazines. These adverts, he adds,

> seen against that historical background of compulsive, heterosexual identification and linked fear of losing virility, were designed to make you feel uncomfortable in your own body. They work through this ideological contrast between the promised 'He-Man' values of toughness, muscularity and strength and the actual, personal sense of inferiority to this ideal norm. Like the 'seven-stone weakling' I felt totally humiliated and dwarfed by all these bulging muscles. (1990, 51)

Yet, the irony, was that the male body these ads aimed at was not to be admired by women —nobody wanted to turn men into sexual objects for the pleasure of women— but by other men, who would presumably defer their share of power before a better built, more powerful physique. The energy invested in bodybuilding was energy defused from sexuality, which may well explain why women don't react sexually to stars like Arnold Schwarzenegger: the looks of the bodybuilder are narcissistic and imply an entropic system that needs no exchange of fluids or energy with any other body. A further irony, of course, is that many gay men have adopted muscles as a sign of male homosexual identity —more openly than Conan's author could ever do— undermining thus the dissociation of the manly body from heterosexual sexuality that was the target for the early century scientists, artists and even the ideologues of fascism. Thus, in an article about gay men in athletics, Brian Pronger writes that «the actual development and display of physical strength is one of the many strategies that serves the interest of patriarchal heterosexuality. Athletics, as a sign of masculinity in men, can be an instrument of those power relations» (1992, 44), but he also observes that gay men, who see masculinity not as what one is but as what one does, use muscles ironically, playing with patriarchal stereotypes. Gay men resist the patriarchal identification of effeminacy and homosexuality by acquiring bulging muscles, iconographically the most obvious sign of masculinity (except for the penis, obviously) and ironically pretend that they are acceptable manly men while undermining the very idea of heterosexual, patriarchal manliness. Their pin-ups, therefore, are likely to be Stallone, Van Damme, Lundgren and their like, though for some unclear reason —perhaps because he looks too fatherly— Schwarzenegger is less popular among male homosexuals.

Yvonne Tasker agrees that Stallone and Arnie «echoed unsettling images from the past, through their implicit invocation of a fascist idealisation of the white male body» (1993, 1), and discusses how some identified the rise of these actors with the backlash against feminism and its child, the new man. Yet, she notes that bodybuilding in the 1980s and 1990s is by no means a phenomenon restricted to men, gay or straight, and introduces the term 'musculinity' to qualify the muscular male and female bodies seen in gyms and action films. Tasker is the first author to analyse the figure of the action heroine in depth, and it is because she compares her to the action man that she sees the correspondences between the exhibition of male and female bodies on the screen and the contradictions this implies. «Images of the built male body», she writes, form a part of «the new visibility that surrounds male bodies and masculine identities within both popular culture and academic enquiry» (1993, 73). Yet, by no means can we say that this is the same kind of visibility: for academic enquiry, for men's studies, the most visible man is the one that used to be invisible — the anti-patriarchal man, from the gay man to the sensitive heterosexual man in touch with his own feelings. For popular culture, the most visible man is the action hero, the physical model against which many men measure their masculinity. And this is a troubled model, because it implies a high dose of unmanly narcissism not so different from the narcissism of the female model or film star.

Both male bodybuilders and female top models play on the anxieties of men and women, who force themselves to attain ideal images in this culture of ours so obsessed with

physical appearance. But whereas the top models and film stars hardly question the traditional ideal of patriarchal femininity despite the rise of feminism, bodies such as those of Stallone and Schwarzenegger are more problematic for the average man. Tasker observes that male stars like them «perform the masculine» and draw «attention to masculinity and the male body by acting out an excessive caricature of cultural expectations» (ibid., 77). For her, these spectacular bodies are works of art constantly remade and constantly on display, hovering between the monstrosity of excess and the beauty of restraint. They compete with the bodies of women, but are much more challenging and disruptive of gender identities in the sense that a film star like Schwarzenegger is active and, so, masculine, but also passive and feminine: an object to be gazed at. The implications of this go very far, for by placing both men and women as objects on display on the screen, Tasker questions the widely accepted view by Laura Mulvey in her famous essay «Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema» (1975) that film is a patriarchal tool to further the power of men, symbolised by the power of the adult filmgoer to gaze at the female film star on display. For Tasker, film is, on the contrary, a domain where cross-gender identification is possible and where the bearer of the gaze and its object needn't have a fixed gendered identity. However, she has difficulties to place Schwarzenegger in this panorama. Tasker underlines the contradictions in Arnie's public persona (the violence of his film roles and his real-life role as respectable family man) and points out the connotations of health, heroism and fatherhood associated to the star. Yet, she provides criticism but not an explanation for his success or for who his audience are.

Susan Jeffords is much less sympathetic towards Schwarzenegger, focusing her critique of him on her negative analysis of his role as the fatherly Terminator of *The Terminator 2: Judgement Day*. Tasker identifies two main periods in the representation of masculinity in recent Hollywood films —one coinciding with the years of the Reagan presidency, in which the 'hard body' contrasts with the 'soft body' of the Carter years as a wishful-thinking expression of the USA's regained political power. The other begins with Bush's presidency and in it the hard body of the Reagan years is replaced by a new version in which its power is renewed by incorporating emotions and family-oriented values (1994, 13). Schwarzenegger's transition from the first implacable Terminator to the second sacrificial Terminator epitomises this change. *Kindergarten Cop*, the film in which Arnie best combined his old with his new persona, has for Jeffords a clear message, namely, that «the tough, hard-driving, violent, and individualistic man of the eighties was not that way by choice» (1994, 144). She insists that the representation of masculinity in the films of the 1990s preaches the same message: whatever shortcomings man may have, they are not to blame as feminism has claimed, for they have been made like that.

Fatherhood (perhaps parenthood) seems to be the key issue here. Robert Bly argued in *Iron John* that the men of America are in trouble not because of women —though they had much to do with men's insecurities— but because of older men, who were failing miserably in their task of offering a model young men could look up to. *The Terminator 2* is precisely about this. The first Terminator dealt with the role assigned to Sarah Connor in this new world order in which man confronts the nightmare brought about by the rebellious computers he has created —only a woman brave enough to face the task could give birth to the 'new man' (her son John) and help the world renew itself through him. In the second Terminator, Sarah moves to the background, and the foreground is occupied by ten-year-old John and his 'father', the good, heroic (though hardly healthy for 'he' is a cyborg) Terminator that John himself has sent from the future to protect his younger self. Thus, whereas John chooses his biological father in the first film, he chooses his foster father in the second one.

Schwarzenegger fought very hard to land the part of the Terminator in the first film, and he fought hard again to have the Terminator remade in the second film to the new image he wanted to give. Jeffords contends that he introduced changes in the character to fit in with the new image President Bush was trying to give of America. In this view, as Jeffords writes, «the Bush government, was a 'kinder, gentler' place, where men were pledged to their families, were reluctant to kill, and were confident, firm, and decisive; where, the line goes, they were dedicated to the preservation of the future and the not destruction of the present» (1994, 175).

This might be right, but *The Terminator 2* is a film that denounces man's failure in very harsh terms. And, in fact, Schwarzenegger's last flop was *Jingle all the Way*, a film in which men's failures are shamelessly condoned and in which he plays a faulty father who becomes the perfect father overnight. That is to say, audiences love Arnie as the limited father figure of *Terminator*, but dislike him as the perfect father of *Jingle all the Way*. It is not true, thus, that his success is based on the triad 'health, heroics, fatherhood' that Tasker points out; at least, it is not so simple.

Jeffords has also problems to justify the attraction of the sacrificial Terminator of the sequel and finishes her analysis of *Terminator 2* arguing that the good Terminator replaces Sarah Connor as the 'mother' of her child John: «In one of the film's most astounding inversions,» Jeffords writes, «the Terminator can now be said to have given birth to the future of the human race» (1994, 160). This reads like a hysterical outburst not very different from that of Elizabeth (Emma Thompson's character) in *Junior* when she realises that Alex (the Arnie character) is bearing her child and 'usurping' her role. In fact, Jeffords's view seemingly implies that women's most important function is motherhood and that should biological motherhood be shared with men —or usurped by them— in our technoscientific future, women would lose their only standing privilege. Why women should desperately cling onto motherhood is not clarified by Jeffords, though her position should send a chill down the spine of the women who are not yet, or choose not to be ever, mothers.

Actually, *The Terminator 2*, contains a distinct feminist discourse in the famous speech of heroine Sarah Connor, when she bitterly says that none of the men she has met has managed to be a good father for John (his biological father died before he was born). That is, except the Terminator, which is nothing but a machine. As for the Terminator himself, at the end of the film, after having fulfilled his role as protector, he self-destroys, not before telling John that he is not the father figure he should look up to, for a machine (a patriarchal man, it is implied) has no feelings the new man (that is, John) can rely on. At the conclusion of the film Sarah and John face an uncertain future from which the father is still absent; the responsibility of bringing up the new man is still in lonely Sarah's hands.

In the far less popular *Junior*, Schwarzenegger challenges again the critics who think he represents triumphant patriarchal fatherhood by displaying his muscular body in a rather different way. His pregnancy, brought about by a new wonder drug, and the possibility of in vitro fertilisation, bespeaks the womb envy even the most muscular men may feel but also of women's fears that men might eventually usurp their role as bearers of children —a fear that, as I have just noted, Jeffords expresses in her view of the second Terminator. But if Arnie's stretched belly doubles the spectacularity of his body, his ability to exploit his anatomy for comedy purposes reaches a maximum in the episode in which he is absconded in a clinic for pregnant women, disguised in pink clothes and a blond wig. This unlikely drag queen, however, vanishes just before the birth of Junior —the baby daughter— during which Arnie does not impersonate a woman but a man in deep pain who has to learn the hard way how to relate to the changes in his body. But if the Termi-

nator failed, Alex succeeds in fathering/mothering/parenting a child, though not alone: the film ends in an optimistic atmosphere, with the 'natural' pregnancy of Elizabeth, now married to Alex, after she has become reconciled to the fact that she is the 'father' of her daughter Junior.

It seems, then, that Arnold Schwarzenegger has a claim to the title of Mr. Universe, in the sense of being one of the men best liked in the world. His appeal lies in his ability to bridge the gap between the patriarchal old man and the feminist new man. He succeeds because he has gathered in his public persona the best features of both without accepting to be either, so that he appeals to those nostalgic for John Wayne engaging also those who see the promise of a brighter future for masculinity in the younger John Connor. He appeals, too, to those who appreciate a caricature of the muscular macho man who is not so macho, or of the new, sensitive man who wants to understand motherhood. Tough in looks and behaviour in the early films, he never went to the lengths of Stallone's Rambo, and so he could better adopt a gentler personality both in action films and comedies. Unlike other male stars who awaken desire, Schwarzenegger elicits fondness from his audience, in which children are a considerable part. He has been frequently associated with children in his films and so can be said to incarnate the audience's quite overt rather than subconscious longing for that lost ideal father that men like Robert Bly and other scholars in men's studies have also acknowledged. However, his comic roles and his second Terminator state, very intelligently, that this ideal father can come neither from the past nor from the present but from an uncertain future that is still to be seen. Feminist scholars have an ambiguous attitude towards Arnie, as he seems to be less of a threat than male stars such as Stallone. Yet, as Jeffords argues, Schwarzenegger's example may go deeper into the hearts and mentalities of the men of the future, we still do not know how.

There is no doubt that in his public and private life he is a conservative, a true Republican, but in the Hollywood of glitter and scandal his politics and his steady family life have secured him a respectable position, similar to that of Harrison Ford. It might even be that his wife Maria Shriver, a career woman who works as a television presenter, has contributed to securing Arnie a certain amount of respect from many women. His popularity poses a challenge for both scholars in men's studies and in feminism, for, as I hope I have shown, figures like Schwarzenegger are easy to criticise but not so easy to fully grasp, and a true understanding of current gender identities and current popular culture can only come through facing the challenge he, among other icons of masculinity, poses.

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