

# Pretty People

Movie Stars of the  
1990s



EDITED BY  
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# C O N T E N T S



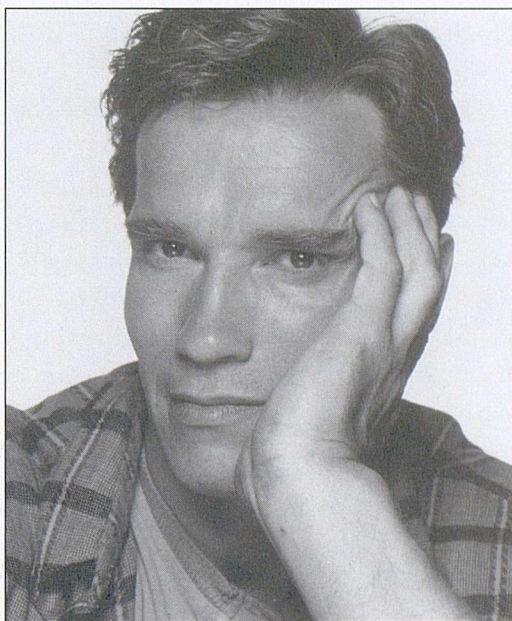
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# Arnold Schwarzenegger

## Corporeal Charisma

LINDA RUTH WILLIAMS



In 2003 the American Film Institute published lists of the fifty greatest heroes and fifty greatest villains in U.S. movie history, accompanied by a three-hour broadcast on CBS hosted by Arnold Schwarzenegger. Schwarzenegger's Terminator character was the only role to appear on both lists, by virtue of the *volte-face* taken between *The Terminator* in 1984 and its first sequel, *Terminator 2: Judgment Day*, in 1991. For French theorist Edgar Morin, stars are godlike because they weld hero to villain in a way that is beyond human, which in itself might seal Schwarzenegger's profile as exemplary 1990s star. The move from destroyer to protector has been read as highly symptomatic of a shift enacted by many a Hollywood male at the start of the 1990s—action stars morphing into softer thespians, killers becoming dads, insensitive hulks discovering their sensitive side. Everything

Arnold Schwarzenegger has done in his forty-year career has been forged on a monumental scale, and the pirouette from villain to hero was replete with era-defining significance. Indeed, his shape-shifting has always seemed emblematic of its moment.

The story of Schwarzenegger's stardom is also a story of extreme self-control that reverberates through the institutions and individuals around him (a self-control that becomes controlling)—control over his body, a body shaped and remolded in the bodybuilding career that preceded his movies; in fierce self-promotion as he entered film in the 1970s and 1980s; and in the pathway he negotiated through key Hollywood genres in the 1990s, all accompanied by the hard-working publicity machine assisting his every move. "Modesty is not a word that applies to me in any way—I hope it never will," Schwarzenegger has asserted (qtd. in Morin 66).

Schwarzenegger's rise to stardom can be framed through a number of familiar star trajectories and myths. He is the immigrant from old Europe making good in the new world, though unlike his studio-era ancestors he didn't have to perfect an American accent or Anglicize his name to secure fame.<sup>1</sup> He is the exploitation performer who, by 1990, had risen to the top of the Hollywood A-list. John Ellis has discussed how stardom is a negotiation of apparent "ordinariness" and glamorous remoteness (91). But this resoundingly New Hollywood star has striven to forge an identity that is anything but ordinary. More like the godlike figures of studio-era Hollywood Babylon, Schwarzenegger wants visibly to be as extraordinary as possible. Extratextual glimpses of the Schwarzenegger-Shrivers jet-skiing in Florida do little to suggest a sense of an average family man mucking in with the kids. Stardom, as mentioned above, is often theorized as a contradictory state—stars speak to a variety of audiences and shape-shift if the market requires it, but profound contradictions might open up between public/private elements of a star profile and between what a star projects at different moments of his or her career.

The balance between (pseudo) private and public, hammered out by publicists, agents, and the industries that circulate star images, is often precarious. Elements of private life and screen persona don't necessarily fit together, and poorly matched suture lines enable contradictory messages to leak out. But Schwarzenegger does not look as contradictory as many of his forebears or contemporaries—his public image is of total identification between self and role, with little else seeping through the cracks. Indeed, there aren't many cracks—in public and private he appears a man of steel, welded into his iconic form through the furnace of self-will and exercise. Which is not to say that there is no contradiction about Schwarzenegger or

the roles he plays, but rather that contradiction is manifestly present on the glossy surface of his star body. He is both old and new—old world, old-style hero, working in New Hollywood, from and for the Baby Boom generation. He is branded as hyper-masculine despite starting in a sport that is associated with semi-naked posing, male spectacle, and gay visual consumption. He mocks “girlie men” yet, in his willingness to exhibit himself, has been read as a muscled-up version of one.<sup>2</sup>

He is an American star par excellence, but an American star with a residual German accent who, with a special dispensation, retained his Austrian citizenship when he was naturalized as American in 1993. Certainly his Europeanness has not always worked in his favor: Schwarzenegger is not just a white star, he’s a whiter than white star, anxious enough about his Austrian heritage to investigate his father’s involvement with the Nazi Party during World War II. He has even argued that the residual accent is not a performance failure but a deliberate affectation, which endearingly reminds his fans that “I am indeed a mortal human being” (qtd. in Van Scheers 208). His Europeanness, branded as hard-working brawn rather than effete culture, has contributed to his universal marketability and, as I discuss toward the end of this chapter, he took the global marketplace far more seriously than many of his peers.

By the 1990s Schwarzenegger’s brand had been forged in a number of arenas, each informing the other, with cinema just one element in the firmament of his marketable products, identities, and merchandise. The oft-repeated story of the poor boy from an obscure Austrian village who took to sport partly on the encouragement of his brutal father, partly to escape that brutal father, is told in parallel with the story that at the tender age of ten little Arnie determined that one day he would make his way to the USA and get very, very rich. He started off as a bodybuilding brand, with an empire of merchandise radiating out from his multiple physical successes: before he ever hit cinema screens he was making money with businesses supplying sports equipment (first, a mail order business marketing products under the name “Arnold Strong,” also his first screen name [see Schwarzenegger and Hall 108]; and second, through property investment). The Schwarzenegger brand is not, then, just a figurative way of framing his approach to movie stardom; he sells products with various permutations of his name wrapped around them, and not just around theatrically released movies.

By the 1990s the power of his brand was also highly evident in the home viewing market. Schwarzenegger’s crest of stardom was pushed along as VCRs and DVDs entered the living room with his name prominently affixed to the packaging: he was the Video Software Dealers Association star

of the year in 1990 (Prince 116). Star studies have focused on the interplay between ancillary marketing texts and cinematic images (Catherine Deneuve and Chanel No. 5; Sharon Stone wearing Gap outfits; see Thompson and Epstein, respectively). In this period Schwarzenegger made this a plainly visible part of the well-oiled machine of the multitasking brand that spoke his star machismo in various consumer tongues. All his products (film/video texts you can watch, gyms you can exercise in, books and political messages you can be inspired by) send out a mutually reinforcing and market-compatible message: strength is good, power is good, money is good.

The 1990s were particularly significant for Schwarzenegger. This was the moment when he consolidated his family-friendly, cross-genre appeal, crucial to his world domination bid. And though as the decade progressed his box office returns diminished somewhat—*Last Action Hero* (1993) was his first flop; *Batman & Robin* (1997) was also a critical and commercial failure—he had learned the message of flexibility and diversification. In 1986 he made a good marriage to political royalty (Maria Shriver, John F. Kennedy's niece), and by the 1990s they were building a family. Action cinema also took a familial turn at this point, and Schwarzenegger became the perfect product to capitalize upon this shift. As the decade progressed he forged an extracurricular persona that straddled politics and entertainment. His support for the Republican Party was rewarded with his being named the chair of the President's Council on Fitness and Sports from 1990 to 1993 under George H. W. Bush, who called him "Conan the Republican." Schwarzenegger's sports star persona became the rock upon which his film star persona was built, and onto that superstructure political stardom was welded, secured with his election as California governor in 2003. These three formations of stardom were systematically bolted onto each other as the decade dawned and progressed.

Onscreen he adopted a kind of bolted-together stardom, too, which took a number of different shapes and turns as he identified what was lacking in his personal firmament and attempted to plug a new personal "talent" into the gap, comedy being the most cynical add-on. Charisma emerges in the conjunction of these moving parts. It is not a deific effusion as borne out by Hollywood stars of old, but something far more fleshily grounded and commercially manufacturable in response to need. Charisma, for Schwarzenegger, is something that emerges first from the built-up body, second from the versatility and multiple roles it plays. It effuses from fleshly manifestation and the manufacture of persona, like the reek of body fluids.



## Charisma, Charm, and the Corpus

When we speak of charisma, we are transported to the domain of the heroic, the extraordinary, the magical. And, unlike in life, the film charisma is not dissipated and routinized. Congealed in the emulsion, it is released by the projector to radiate again and again.

—Lorraine Mortimer, in Morin viii

I knew I had an advantage over most bodybuilders: when you have the size, the whole rough cut, you can sculpt it into a masterpiece. . . . I chiseled and polished, rendering that animal mass I'd brought from Europe down to the work of art I wanted. I'd had jewel-like abdominals for the first time.

—Arnold Schwarzenegger to Douglas Kent Hall, 1977

Schwarzenegger provoked extensive critical response during the 1990s, and writers usually start with his body as a way of thinking about his body of work. The body as sexual-cultural symptom becomes the embodied crystallization of the decade's most successful genre: action. Perhaps in no other genre (with the possible exception of pornography) are the body of the film and the body of the star so synonymous. This is not simply because Schwarzenegger's body is so massive and manifest, but because the male body in particular was a key focus for theorists of the politics of spectacle and stardom when Schwarzenegger's global star was ascendant. Critical writing on action cinema as it emerged as a discrete focus for film studies in the early 1990s started not with the narrative or formal hallmarks of the genre, but with the bodies of its stars. Susan Jeffords and Yvonne Tasker in particular drew parallels between the hard bodies onscreen and the hard right-wing politics of the Reagan and Bush eras, though there is also a strong focus on these bodies as suffering and damaged.

Thus the spectacle of action was framed not simply through its central technology so expertly wielded by Schwarzenegger—Uzis, Harley-Davidsons, Glock 9mms (another famous Austrian export)—but the movement of, damage to, and generally spectacular excesses of the human body in extreme form. In *Eraser* (1996) he suffers a nail through the hand, a spike through the thigh, and a bullet in the shoulder, while in *End of Days* (1999) he is dangled from a window sill with his hand embedded in broken glass, run over by a train, strangled, stitched, thrashed by a baseball bat—wielding gang of Satanists, and, perhaps most undignified of all, beaten up by a demonically impelled Miriam Margolyes. In *Terminator 2* (1991) he is repeatedly shot, run over by a truck, and finally dissolved in molten steel. Examples like this can be found in most of Schwarzenegger's films; the spectacle of



male suffering is as ubiquitous in action cinema as that of tooling up. Such images are salaciously presented, appealing to a sadomasochistic aesthetic, and demonstrating, above all, that Schwarzenegger can take it.

Stardom is extra- as well as intratextual, and it may well be that the measure of his success is that we know Schwarzenegger without ever having seen a Schwarzenegger film. His signature elaborate action set-pieces are almost stand-alone cinematic vignettes, perhaps arbitrarily exchangeable across and between movies. In *Eraser* he shoots his way out of a plane, sets fire to one of its engines, loses his parachute, and then catches up with it midair. The plane then chases him through the sky and, still dangling from the parachute, he shoots straight into the cockpit before landing in a breaker's yard. Compare, or exchange, this with the crane sequence in *Last Action Hero*, the Harrier sequence in *True Lies* (1994), and the subway sequence in *End of Days*, and a star profile begins to emerge wrought in the interchangeable bolted-together parts of high octane, kinetically edited, rock-music spectacle, all orchestrated around the exploits of a body by turns imperiled and heroic.

Star quality has often been defined through charisma, though this is usually quite diffusely articulated and tied to the body through glamour or beauty. Introducing Edgar Morin's seminal 1972 text *The Stars*, Lorraine Mortimer writes that stardom lies "at the crossroads of what we call the 'aesthetic,' the 'magical,' and the 'religious'" (in Morin vii). Star charisma is also highly corporeal; as Mortimer also suggests in my epigraph above, it is brought by the star's body into the body of the film. Schwarzenegger is more superman than deity, sporting the body of a hero driven by an iron will, and larger than life. Yet so brazen is he about the manufactured nature of the body that he has written a book about how to achieve it: *Arnold: The Education of a Bodybuilder*, first published in 1977, but a bestseller in the 1990s. Part 1 is a muscle-obsessed autobiography; part 2 is Arnold's bespoke training program and diet, which rode the crest of his success on the big screen with reprints and new editions. The program is perhaps parodied in the training schedule to which he subjects his small charges in *Kindergarten Cop*—"Time to turn this mush into muscles!" he declares. This ex-Mr. Olympia, Mr. World, and Mr. Universe spent the 1990s connecting übermensch to mortal, the extraordinary to everyday, though he is never quite a regular Joe. Given Schwarzenegger's later "Governator" role and his developing political profile during the decade, it is also interesting that for other writers—including most significantly Richard Dyer mediating Max Weber—star power and political power have the same mesmeric origins. For Weber charisma is "a certain quality of an individual personality by

virtue of which he [sic] is set apart from ordinary men and treated as endowed with supernatural, superhuman or at least superficially exceptional qualities" (qtd. in Dyer, *Stars* 30).

Dictionary definitions present charisma as mingling the political with the religious—a charismatic person has a magnetic charm and has been favored by the gods. Charisma, then, is a bearing that suggests the star's right to dominate the space he or she inhabits. Schwarzenegger's charisma is rooted in straight corporeal prowess, augmented by the damageable/unconquerable quality the body exudes while engaging in performed acts of derring-do. The self-reflexive postmodern sense of irony lent by some of his films, his infamous one-liners, and the self-promoting/self-mocking biographical stories both reinforce and contradict the iron man persona, but all these elements work together to suggest a man in command of screen space and personal fate. "We must not regard Arnold as the new Laurence Olivier," Paul Verhoeven said of him; "He is more of a Charlton Heston. His strength is his charisma" (qtd. in Van Scheers 209).

But Dyer goes further when he suggests that the well-timed, well-placed charismatic star emerges in response to contradictory social impulses and forces, glamorously and symbolically making sense of his or her moment. Quoting S. N. Eisenstadt, charisma is most effective "when the social order is uncertain, unstable and ambiguous and when the charismatic figure or group offers a value, order or stability to counterpoise this" (31). Schwarzenegger was one such figure. To paraphrase Dyer on Monroe, in the late 1980s and throughout the 1990s Schwarzenegger seems to "be" the very tensions that ran through U.S. culture. Such tensions are well documented in studies of gender, action, and cinema at this time. Mark Gallagher argues that "cinematic and literary representations of male action compensate for threats to stable, traditional masculinity, threats posed by economic and cultural changes affecting men's roles in the workplace and in the domestic space." For Gallagher, figures such as Schwarzenegger offer viewers "utopian solutions to social problems, privileging the transformative effects of physical agency" (3). With male identity widely viewed as crisis-ridden, super-body Schwarzenegger (and his chosen genre) promoted physical solutions and unalloyed masculinity. At a time when men were more uncertain than ever about their role in the family—wedded to work, yet newly required to be at-home hands-on fathers—he made movies in which he was a beleaguered father (*Jingle All the Way*), an ambivalent father-figure (*Terminator 2*, *Kindergarten Cop*), the father of a lost child (*End of Days*, *Kindergarten Cop*), a male-mother/birthing father (*Junior*), and an oversized odd-couple sibling searching for his mother (*Twins*). At a time when postmodern

uncertainties around identity and the real were becoming the stuff of popular discourse, he made movies playing with his own simulated star identity that attempted to resolve questions into apple-pie conclusions (*Total Recall*, *True Lies*, *Last Action Hero*).

Schwarzenegger became a star first through physical performance, turning to bodybuilding for reasons of masculinity and individualism. Team sports disappointed him because they lacked individual rewards, he writes (Schwarzenegger and Hall 14). But more than this, bodybuilding shored up Schwarzenegger's sense of what a real man ought to be. As he rather disarmingly reports on his first sight of men lifting weights, bodybuilders are individual, and very male: "Those guys were huge and brutal. I found myself walking around them, staring at muscles I couldn't even name, muscles I'd never even seen before. The weight lifters shone with sweat; they were powerful looking, Herculean" (14). This remarkable moment of homosocial if not avowedly homosexual spectatorship seals his desire to become the spectacle he sees, only better—the best. On first encountering a picture of his hero Reg Park, he writes, with no apparent sense of self-irony: "I responded immediately to Reg Park's rough, massive look. The man was an animal. That's the way I wanted to be—ultimately: big. I wanted to be a big guy. I didn't want to be delicate. I dreamed of big deltoids, big pecs, big thighs, big calves; I wanted every muscle to explode and be huge. I dreamed about being gigantic" (17). Bodybuilding was Schwarzenegger's passport out of European obscurity and into U.S. celebrity: he was the youngest ever Mr. Olympia (in 1970), a title he won a record seven times; the most lucrative event in bodybuilding changed its name to the Arnold Classic in his honor. Sports stardom is not the same as film stardom, but it gave Schwarzenegger a taste of stardom per se: he describes the "feeling of magnificence" he got when pumped-up and posing (74), and viewed signing an autograph (writing the self in a celebrity context) as a stardom rite of passage. Schwarzenegger's drive to stardom is bound up not just with the desire for money but with some power-exuding charismatic effect that the trappings of success seem to give off. Of his idol Reg Parks's house he writes, "It had an aura about it: it was the house of a star. That quality was unmistakable. In the dining room, for instance, you pressed a button and servants appeared" (82).

Of course, there is a long tradition of sports-stars-turned-actors, which Schwarzenegger joins—Johnny Weissmuller, Esther Williams, O. J. Simpson, and Chuck Norris. Weissmuller is perhaps the nearest comparator: hailing from central Europe and bearing a foreign name throughout his Hollywood career, he was a record-breaking swimming star and sometime bodybuilder

himself. He became famous globally, primarily for the iconic role of Tarzan, the most powerful commodification of the Weissmuller-branded sports merchandise. Throughout the 1990s when he was at his film-starriest, Schwarzenegger also maintained his sports star persona for merchandising purposes. Perhaps in his focus on the body he turned film stardom into an extension of sports stardom. Yet more than swimming or martial arts, bodybuilding might be seen as perfect training for male spectacle.

Doubts have been raised over its status as a bona fide sport, and Schwarzenegger himself admits that the posing of bodybuilding is "pure theatre": "I'd see where they did slow poses, and figure out how I could put in three poses for their one, and thus be able to show many more body parts to the judges" (Schwarzenegger and Hall 69). Showier than the track, field, or water events other sportsmen used as star-springboards, arguably this made bodybuilding an easier route for segueing into other "showy" arenas (film stardom) but a problem when it came to establishing the cast-iron credentials of masculinity. Both Tasker (*Spectacular Bodies*) and Dyer ("Don't Look") have reflected on the ambivalence of the bodybuilder's body as feminized by virtue of its showiness, and as a masquerade object. As feminized spectacle—however über-masculine it might in itself be—Schwarzenegger's body has been used to challenge male gaze theories. As a costume formation, albeit a costume-as-flesh fused to the frame of its wearer, it has been read as a form of masquerade, a building block in arguments for new kinds of identity politics. The meanings it seems to bear out speak for the wider culture, and so his stardom, hooked onto that fleshly frame, is recognized as a prime symptom of that culture.

Even if, during the 1990s, he worked down from the excessive musculature of the champion bodybuilder's form and presented a relatively lithe, flexible frame more suited to the mobility of action roles rather than the static posing of bodybuilding performance, his visible body was still his primary asset, closely followed by his aural body—that voice, with its heavy European accent and limited monotone pitch. His movies make much of his magnitude despite the fact that he's only 6'1" (or 6'2", depending on which source you trust)—not excessively tall by any means. Low-angle shots are used in *Kindergarten Cop* to emphasize his gigantic size relative to his six-year-old charges, while both *Junior* and *Twins* make much of the difference between Schwarzenegger and his diminutive co-star, Danny DeVito (the high-concept formulation that underpins *Twins*—that these unlikely beings are twins—effectively presold it to distributors; see Wyatt 55).

Of course, Schwarzenegger was not the only muscled-up male on the Hollywood A-list. The battle of the action hero giants was fought in the late



"You're the best celebrity look-alike I've ever seen!" Arnie is doubled as star and character meet in *The Last Action Hero* (John McTiernan, Columbia, 1993). Digital frame enlargement.

1980s on two fronts. On the one hand, A-list action stars vied for domination, in terms of a whole range of qualities. Schwarzenegger's colleagues in the establishment of the Planet Hollywood restaurant chain in 1991—Bruce Willis, Sylvester Stallone—were pitted against him and each other in a struggle that was not just for box office supremacy. Willis had a history in other genres, particularly through the romantic comedy-thriller TV show "Moonlighting," and he was willing to tackle more indie-minded character roles such as in *Mortal Thoughts* (1991), *Pulp Fiction* (1994), and *12 Monkeys* (1995), so he had a versatility built into his career that Arnie could not match. Stallone was a writer-director who continued to demonstrate his thespian chops with titles from *F.I.S.T.* (1978) to *Cop Land* (1997). Schwarzenegger, on the other hand, has his biceps, confidently comparing them to Stallone's on a *Rambo* poster he passes in *Twins*. *Last Action Hero* presents us with a curious "George Bailey" moment:<sup>3</sup> as Jack Slater (Schwarzenegger's character-within-a-character), he comments on a *Terminator 2* poster featuring Stallone, not Schwarzenegger as the cyborg icon. Curiously, this only goes to shore up his world dominance: Arnie is first choice; Stallone is there—in action terms—only if Schwarzenegger is not. On another front, a key star battle was fought with two other thick-accented Europeans—Jean-Claude Van Damme (from Belgium) and Dolph Lundgren (from Sweden). Lundgren and Van Damme parlayed martial arts skill into cinematic action ability. They were, as Christine Cornea points out, far more mobile actors than Schwarzenegger, whose performances are "remarkably inactive . . . his



bodily movements frequently appear considered, posed and held for inspection" (285–86)—an inactive action star, then. Despite the fact that Schwarzenegger never really threw off the impression that English was a foreign language to him (an insurmountable problem in Hollywood since the coming of sound), his stardom went stratospheric relative to that of his European compatriots. Though Van Damme and Lundgren appeared primarily in action films in the 1990s, Schwarzenegger became the genre's charismatic patron saint.

### ☆☆☆☆★ **Family, Collaboration, Action**

Charisma is also, for some critics, generated through the "perfect fit" of role with star and body genre. John O. Thompson's commutation test focuses on the semiotic "rightness" of casting: "One asks oneself if a change in the signifier would make a difference, and the answer can surprise one" (185). Could the Terminator be performed by anyone else? Would Schwarzenegger be the same without the Terminator? What traces of charisma exude from that cyborg body? The character/star motifs of leather jacket, heavy armaments, motorcycle, flat ironic dialogue delivery, and, most iconically, sunshades shadowed his roles forevermore. Yet Schwarzenegger wasn't Cameron's first choice for the role, and they met with a view to his playing heroic Kyle Reese (Leamer 158–59). Sean French answers the commutation test with reference to the simple fact of stardom: "The main difference . . . between Arnold Schwarzenegger and Michael Biehn (who played Reese) is that Schwarzenegger is a star in a way that Biehn could never hope to be" (46). What "fits" between Schwarzenegger and the Terminator is also what fits the star for his career in action films generally, though the move from villain to hero is not the only tone shift Schwarzenegger makes within the genre. Action-adventure is a slippery and amoebic genre, and Schwarzenegger has ranged across its hybrid forms, playing heroes and villains in action sci-fi, action war films, action swashbucklers, action comedies, and postmodern action parody. Through each of these forms runs a myth of relentlessness that takes its cue from the star's biographical PR messages, and in turn informs the way in which his films are received. Like the Terminator, Schwarzenegger is often read as driven, focused, and, in Kyle Reese's words, one who "absolutely will not stop." George Butler, who directed him in *Pumping Iron* (1977), has said, "He is a man of bottomless ambition. . . . He sees himself as almost mystically sent to America" (qtd. in Indiana 33–34). Of course the Terminator, circa 1984, "will not stop" for deeply negative reasons, a motivation with

which a star hoping to win family audiences in the global marketplace would not wish perpetually to be identified. Jeffords reads the move from the first (1984) to the second (1991) *Terminators* as symptomatic of a shift in preferred masculinities between the 1980s and the 1990s ("Masculinity"); for her, "1991 was the year of the transformed U.S. man" ("Big Switch" 197). Fred Pfeil reads 1991 as "The Year of Living Sensitive," including *Terminator 2* in a discussion of New Man images, because here the Terminator is "simultaneously softened and sensitized into a man who can both kill *and* care" (53). The shift from Reese's view of the bad Terminator's relentlessness ("It can't be bargained with. It can't be reasoned with. It doesn't feel pity, or remorse, or fear. And it absolutely will not stop, ever, until you are dead") is echoed in Sarah Connor's reflection on the good Terminator's credentials as a perfect father: "The Terminator would never stop. It would never leave him and it would never hurt him, never shout at him or get drunk and hurt him or say it was too busy to spend time with him. It would always be there, and it would die to protect him. Of all the would-be fathers who came and went over the years this thing, this machine, was the only one who measured up" (*Terminator 2*). None of this would work quite so well if Schwarzenegger did not present an extra-curricular air of inexorable will, and if his starriness weren't indelibly marked as driven, ambitious, calculating. It is, then, not so much his massive physical form as it is his powerful compulsion to achieve his goal that makes Schwarzenegger and the Terminator so right for each other. A limited actorly range need not be a problem if star heft can be wielded to make the performance more convincing. Schwarzenegger "was a star whose own persona was his only capital," says his biographer Laurence Leamer, who generally takes the most favorable view of his subject. "Arnold was not an actor as much as he was a performer who played various versions of his idealized self on-screen" (158). Verhoeven thought of him as a "total film star" for this reason (qtd. in Cornea 164). Reports of audiences shouting, "Watch out, Arnold. Behind you!" at a screening of *Total Recall* bear out the sense that, by 1990, he was simply Arnold: "In the eyes of his public, Arnold Schwarzenegger was no longer an actor; he had become a persona. . . . He walked through his films as Arnold, independent of the story, and in the shadow of his own persona he lugged along the character he was supposed to play" (Van Scheers 207).

Of his bodybuilding wins he has said, "The energy and momentum around me was unbelievable. I was insatiable, unstoppable. . . . And naturally I won. It could not have been otherwise" (Schwarzenegger and Hall 91). This statement could do service for other phases of his career as well.

Yet Schwarzenegger could not afford to be only Terminator-certain or Arnold-fixed if he was to demonstrate versatility. By the early to mid-1990s while his career continued in this unstoppable mode, his roles played out as something other, as elements of failure or compromise were confronted onscreen and incorporated more widely into the star image, but these elements also provided the best opportunity for diversification. Domestic concerns posed the biggest challenge to the triumph of the action star's will. As the 1990s progressed Schwarzenegger repeatedly took on roles that set him up as father, failing father, family outsider, at just the time he was publicly establishing an image of real-life doting husband and dad. These films suggest that men achieved the dream (*feminism's* dream) of "having it all" way before women ever did (*if they ever did*): action and family, hard bodies and soft emotions, work and home, without consequences. Gallagher focuses on the incorporation into action in the 1990s "of formal elements associated with the 'female' genre of melodrama" (45), though in Schwarzenegger's hands, familial action is more often than not comedic.

Bringing lumpen or simple solutions to bear on complex family situations conservatively refigures those problems as failure of individual power. Or, as Gallagher puts it, "What a traditional melodrama might present as a problem of capitalism or family structure, an action film presents as a matter of action and inaction." This is entirely in keeping with the master narrative of Schwarzenegger's stardom itself. His biography—as told by himself and by both authorized and non-authorized writers—is essentially a series of moments of mastery, over his origins, his body, and his personal weaknesses. The Schwarzenegger self-made-man myth is that nothing will hold him back: "What I had more than anyone else was drive. I was hungrier than anybody. I wanted it so badly it hurt. . . . The meaning of life is not simply to exist, to survive, but to move ahead, to go up, to achieve, to conquer" (Schwarzenegger and Hall 53, 112). Pfeil notes *Time* magazine's identification of this sentiment as specifically American, linking a story of Arnold's steady, self-willed rise to stardom—emphasizing his old-fashioned industriousness, tractability, strong will, and good cheer—to its ensuing story, also slotted in the "Business" section, on American dominance in the global "Leisure Empire" (31).

Gallagher goes on to argue that the action/inaction response (or failure to respond) also characterizes family narratives: "By incorporating family into cinematic narratives of ritualized heroism and combat, action films sustain the illusion that viewers may attend to pressing social concerns . . . within the conventional terrain of a master narrative that puts a premium on individual autonomy and dominance" (49). Of course part of





Tooled-up masculinity in *Eraser* (Chuck Russell, Kopelson/Warner Bros., 1996). Digital frame enlargement.

Schwarzenegger's narrative journey in his family-actioners is to discover that not all problems can be overcome with a Magnum Desert Eagle. Gallagher concludes that action and family are not happy bedfellows: "*True Lies* demonstrates the fallacy of omnipotent masculinity, observing that men of action make unreliable husbands and fathers" (72). This is not characteristic of the message of Schwarzenegger's films of the period, and I would argue that *True Lies* concludes that you make a better father if you can kick ass as well as care. As twelve-year-old Danny says to Jack in *Last Action Hero*, "We're perfect buddy movie material. I'll teach you to be vulnerable, you'll teach me to be brave." Emotional unpredictability and childish or female intuition or irrationality challenge the discourse of individual autonomy, a challenge the 1990s Schwarzenegger was welcoming. There's also a distinction in Schwarzenegger's 1990s *oeuvre* between texts rated at fifteen or higher (in the United Kingdom) that confront family crises and those rated lower and marketed at family audiences; those among the latter tend to provide comedic resolutions through an action spectacle (I turn to these in the final section of this essay). Some of his films eschew firepower altogether—John Connor bans him from killing people in *Terminator 2* (he maims them instead), while Jules, the innocent genius Schwarzenegger plays against type in *Twins*, declares, "Actually I hate violence" (to which Danny DeVito's Vincent retorts, "But you're so good at it!"). Both *Terminator 2* and *End of Days* see individual will expressed through martyrdom: at each film's conclusion Schwarzenegger's character self-destructs to save the world.

A further qualification to the individual self-fashioning myth is the extent to which his most celebrated star vehicles were the products of

serendipitous partnerships. For such a self-promoted, self-made man, Schwarzenegger has relied heavily on collaborators to lubricate his path to success. *Total Recall* was a characteristic Paul Verhoeven film—a tongue-in-cheek celebration/satire of U.S. genre cinema by another European émigré to Hollywood. If Verhoeven and James Cameron mentored Schwarzenegger's dominance in sci-fi action, Ivan Reitman mentored his parallel-track comedic career. By 1994 Cameron and Reitman had both directed three Schwarzenegger films, one each in the eighties (*The Terminator* and *Twins*, respectively) and two each in the nineties (action films *Terminator 2* and *True Lies* for Cameron; comedies *Junior* and *Kindergarten Cop* for Reitman). The fruitful collaboration with Cameron exemplifies a certain strain of nineties cinema—what Larry Gross in 1995 has called the “Big, Loud Action Movie”—huge budget spectacles in which every cent can be seen onscreen, and which are critically defined through hyperbole and superlatives. Excess and exaggeration usher the Big Loud Action Film's entrance into the marketplace, and they follow its record-breaking achievements at the box office. A lot of Cameron's cents went into Arnie's salary—an unprecedented \$14 million, following his previous paycheck of \$10 million plus a percentage for *Total Recall* (Prince 147–48). As some of the essays in Tasker's 2004 collection *Action and Adventure Cinema* argue, there is a publicly perceived correlation between the huge success of action films and their paltry critical status. In this sense the genre exemplifies the popular low-culture, high-revenue modality. All the figures circulating around Schwarzenegger products of this period are wrought in superlatives: *Terminator 2* was one of the first of a spate of “ultra high budget films,” made for \$100 million (then a record), grossing \$204 million domestically and \$310 million in foreign revenue (Balio 59). Schwarzenegger is the corporeal embodiment of this negative relationship between high commercial and low aesthetic achievement. He is brawn, quantity, and substance rather than talent, quality, and subtlety, and success is judged in quantities of dollars rather than quality of reviews.

Cameron's third film with Schwarzenegger developed this correlation. *True Lies* was bigger and brasher, but it still hung on a domestic conundrum, as might be expected from a director who has specialized in melodramatic affect embedded in action such as *Titanic*. Harry Tasker is a secret agent who masquerades to his wife, Helen (Jamie Lee Curtis), and daughter as a computer salesman. He lets them down repeatedly, and Helen nearly strays. When she finally discovers his true role, she quips, “I married Rambo” and joins him as a secret agent. The action concludes in a ludicrous sequence of stunts set in the Florida Keys, with Harry saving their imperiled daughter

(and saving the world from terrorists) in an AV8B Harrier borrowed from the marines. According to the IMDb.com "Trivia" section for the film, seventy-one people die in *True Lies* (IMDb often includes a body count as a crucial statistic for Schwarzenegger pics). In *Last Action Hero* the character Arnold Schwarzenegger—played by Schwarzenegger—makes good publicity of diminishing body counts, saying to a red-carpet interviewer about his film-within-a-film, "In this movie we only kill 48 people compared to the last one where we killed 119."

Cameron has no such qualms, sculpting Schwarzenegger into a more acrobatic action hero than Cornea credits him for—he dances through flames firing with both hands, dangles from helicopters, and rides a horse between skyscrapers. The packaging of star, spectacle, and domestic peril makes *True Lies* a *prêt-à-porter* action vehicle following—by 1994—a familiar familial recipe. But it also develops another interesting strain in the Schwarzenegger profile, that of concealment and qualified identities, which has been read as indicative of a postmodern bent in his characterizations. *Total Recall*—the second in Paul Verhoeven's "psychosis trilogy" (Van Scheers 234)—might have initiated this. After the script had made the rounds for several years, Verhoeven was finally commissioned to develop it as a Schwarzenegger vehicle. As Van Scheers put it, "The businessman Schwarzenegger gave Paul Verhoeven the task of delivering the product Arnold to the public in the most effective way" (208). The story of a man who literally loses his mind, Schwarzenegger's character(s) resolve(s) his/their divided internal narrative through action strategies. In this Philip K. Dick-inspired tale of recreational psychosis, Schwarzenegger's buff blue-collar worker Douglas Quaid is given a mental holiday by having a memory implant that gives him the experience of being Hauser, a spy who ends up helping a group of underground mutant dissidents on Mars, and he frees the planet in godlike fashion. Here he gives the Martians back the very air they breathe. We are never sure if the story is an internal fantasy or if he is participating in a mental double-bluff conspiracy (he might really be the heroic Hauser who, through enforced brain-reprogramming, was inadvertently masquerading as Quaid), and in the end he neither knows nor cares.

Action spectacle—he kicks ass, displays muscles, and gets the girl—is predicated on profound psychological uncertainty. Thomas Elsaesser sees *Terminator 2* and *Total Recall* as typical of a tendency in post-classical Hollywood to present character as indeterminate if not downright inconsistent (200). And for an ostensibly non-cerebral and monolithically straight performer, Schwarzenegger took on a surprising number of roles dealing with masquerading, fractured, or self-deceiving selves, selves that are not them-

selves. The premise of *Eraser* is that he is a government agent who specializes in disappearing people, erasing their identities for security purposes and placing them in safe havens if they are good, or killing them outright if they are not. Even though the disappeared identity story is all but subordinated to a sequence of elaborate action-by-numbers set pieces, nevertheless the action takes place in various shadow-locations populated by people who have lost all anchors to their previous lives. Elsewhere Schwarzenegger does at least two turns as a woman—a robotic disguise in *Total Recall*, and a drag turn he deploys in order to attend the women-only antenatal camp in *Junior*.

In *True Lies* Harry is “truly” a spy who plays at/lies in his role as father and husband, and most of his concealment devices are directed not at the enemy but at his family. His partner has to supply him with the props of marriage—the wedding ring, and a backstory sufficient to ease his path back into the home after the first excessive Bond-esque sequence. Meanwhile, Helen is being wooed by a loser (Bill Paxton) who pretends that he is a spy for seduction purposes, and unwittingly tells Harry that he thinks of it “as playing a role—it’s fantasy. You gotta work on their dreams.” Harry conceals himself behind shadows and a taped voice when he watches his wife do a striptease, and he interrogates her through a two-way mirror using voice-distortion techniques. All this makes for uncomfortable viewing for feminists, but its relationship to other Schwarzenegger masquerading moments is interesting. While few of his post-*Total Recall* films show Schwarzenegger in quite such a self-forgetting role, these are resonant examples. I now turn to more overt images of self-parody or masquerade—the cartoonish Mr. Freeze in *Batman & Robin* (1997) and Jack Slater in *Last Action Hero*—and the career drive that led him to more ambitious, world-conquering excesses.



### **Humor, Postmodernism, and Bolted-On Stardom**

Schwarzenegger’s move into comedy was well planned and effectively executed, the most overt portfolio shift during an era when A-list stars of both genders were busy demonstrating that they could take on any role, however apparently against type. Despite his lunking obviousness, Schwarzenegger is identified with a popular postmodern turn in Hollywood cinema of the 1990s (postmodernism as overt commercial strategy, not covert cultural code), when complex and self-referring narratives, self-reflective characterization, and pastiche became the bread-and-butter of mainstream culture. Nineties-vintage Schwarzenegger plays with earlier

iconographies of authority (including his own) and embraces ambivalent characterization. Fred Pfeil calls him “a monstrous mutation of the deadpan, dead-souled lineage of Bronson, Eastwood, and Chuck Norris” (31), while Stephen Prince sees Schwarzenegger’s films as a series of winks at the audience “to say that he knew what everyone else knew, namely, that the films were live-action cartoons” (184). David Tetzlaff reads *Commando*, one of Schwarzenegger’s films of the 1980s, as subversive by virtue of its comedic critique of the action genre. Bordering on slapstick and laced with verbal burlesque, Schwarzenegger’s “strong-man star-persona is actually subverted by inflating it to the point where any reasonably intelligent viewer can see that much of the action is faked” (275).

While developing action into a genre that confronts serious familial concerns, he was also simultaneously engaging in a series of pastiches of his own persona. Gallagher reads the against-type roles as comic because they are disabling: *Twins*, *Kindergarten Cop*, and *Junior* “gain their primary comedic value from placing the action star in situations that deny his trademark physique the opportunity to fend off enemy hordes” (163).

This sense of irony separated Schwarzenegger from Stallone, who, although a far more accomplished actor, did not so successfully branch out into non-action roles. Schwarzenegger’s trademark one-line “zingers” or “Arnie-isms” were frequently inserted into working screenplays by hand-picked writers to provide the star with value-added pizzazz and, as Paul Verhoeven’s biographer puts it, to make “the excessive violence of his persona digestible” (Van Scheers 208). (“Hasta la vista, baby” from *Terminator 2*; “I’m the party pooper” in *Kindergarten Cop*; “Consider that a divorce,” on shooting his wife in *Total Recall*; and “You’re luggage,” to an unfortunate alligator in *Eraser*). Like parody or impersonation, linguistic catchphrases that infiltrate the wider culture are one sign that a star has become an icon. “I’ll be back” is Schwarzenegger’s career phrase, following its use in the *Terminator* franchise and its export to almost every other film he has made. For Murray Pomerance, Schwarzenegger exceeds his action frame (he “becomes mythic by outperforming his context”) while simultaneously ironizing it: “What makes his performance ironic is the veneer of civility and civilization lying just beneath the violent surface; his ability to utter a poignant one-liner, in James Bond fashion; his gemütlich Austrian accent; the charming twinkle in his eye; his friendliness to women and children (particularly children); the sense in which he seems generally and adorably clueless” (“Hitchcock” 45). This makes Schwarzenegger an even stranger star icon, simultaneously clueless and relentless (though surely Pomerance’s texts are selective).





Masquerading as merchandise: Arnie as Turboman cannot help himself from shouting, "I could get into this!!" in *Jingle All the Way* (Brian Levant, 1492 Pictures/Twentieth Century-Fox, 1996). Digital frame enlargement.

But friendliness to children soon became the currency of friendliness for children; Schwarzenegger's turn to comedy was increasingly family-audience-oriented as the 1990s progressed: both *Kindergarten Cop* and *Last Action Hero* were classified for teen or older audiences, while later in the decade *Jingle All the Way* (1996) and *Batman & Robin* were more squarely directed at younger audiences.<sup>4</sup> Both films featured Schwarzenegger in overt superhero/supervillain mode. For much of *Jingle All the Way*, Schwarzenegger plays another failing father: thwarted in his desperate Christmas Eve search to secure a Turboman, the must-have toy desired by his son, he more than compensates at the eleventh hour by inadvertently (cluelessly?) becoming a live-action Turboman in a Christmas Eve parade. Though arguably one of the most misanthropic films of the nineties (every character is repulsive; Christmas is repulsive; consumer culture is repulsive), the cartoonish impulse of Turboman seems to possess and overcome the father's ineffectual qualities, transforming him into a villain-vanquishing powerhouse, and Schwarzenegger only really comes into his own when he dons the Turboman disguise. Verhoeven refocused *Total Recall* around Schwarzenegger as comic book star, "partly forced by having a superhero, bodybuilding/total film star in the movie, which led me to apply a more comic-book style" (Cornea 135). He does gesture and posing rather better than realist delivery (perhaps a hangover from his

bodybuilding days), making his cartoon characters more credible than his regular humans (dads, husbands, working men).

The same might be said for *Batman and Robin*. When Jules in *Twins* asks, "Do I look cool now?" Vincent replies, "Mr. Ice!" as if Schwarzenegger were already lining himself up for Mr. Freeze, the DC Comics villain he was to play in 1997 for a close-to-record-breaking fee of \$25 million for just six weeks' work (Leamer 246). Despite or perhaps because of his relatively limited screen time, Mr. Freeze plays to the star's strengths. He is relentless and monolithic, and practically every line he speaks is a zinger, much of it reflecting on his character ("Ice to see you!"; "Cool party!"; "Let's kick some ice!"; "The ice man cometh"). As a comic-inspired (if not comedic) figure, he is required to do little more than pantomimic gesture and quip.

*Last Action Hero*, on the other hand, takes its audience into a labyrinth of layered identities with no externally verifiable referent, for Schwarzenegger at least. Danny is a twelve-year-old film fan who enters the movie world of his favorite star, Jack Slater, courtesy of a magic ticket. At first Slater has no notion that he is a fictional character played by Arnold Schwarzenegger, inhabiting a movie-rendered Hollywood of pneumatic women and screen cops. Danny, however, knows the rules and slots in as Schwarzenegger's sidekick. When the pair breaks back into Danny's "real" world pursuing two screen villains, Slater saves "Arnold Schwarzenegger," who is at the New York premiere of the new Jack Slater film. Both, of course, are performed by the real actor Schwarzenegger, but in the playoff between the three of them the configuration of actor and roles begins to challenge the star referent upon which it is predicated. The fictional Arnold Schwarzenegger even has a red-carpet ticking off from Maria Shriver (played, of course, by the real Maria Shriver) about plugging "the restaurants or the gyms. It's so tacky." Slater says to the character Schwarzenegger, "I don't really like you. You've brought me nothing but pain," as if he were a self-realizing *Toy Story* (1995) figure looking in the mirror, or one of the many Malkoviches in Spike Jonze's more highly acclaimed smart film *Being John Malkovich* (1999). In the end Slater has the self-awareness to say to Danny, "I'm just an imaginary character"—perhaps this is why it was a relative failure on theatrical release.

These cartoonesque texts seem to be the overt, self-conscious manifestation of one truism of stardom as articulated by star studies. *Last Action Hero*, *Batman & Robin*, and *Jingle All the Way* seem to reveal that Arnold Schwarzenegger does not actually exist (manifestly fleshly though he is) except as brand or the celluloid ghost of genre. Charisma, then, seems to ooze from a film body quite separated from the real sweat of the gym. Per-

haps postmodern is too broad a term or is not as interesting as what is actually happening here. The genius of these schlocky movies is that they grasp the essential form that stardom takes in new Hollywood—stars are embodied ciphers upon which the most lucrative new identity might temporarily hang, until a more lucrative one takes its place. Of course it is hard to see the massive corporeal form of Schwarzenegger as cipher, but it is equally hard to see what else he might be, which might explain why so many critics have never gone beyond the muscles. Stardom is the smoke and mirrors masking the real person behind the persona (some actors even talk about their star brand in the third person—“Marilyn Monroe,” “Sharon Stone”), but the fluctuations of this product’s appeal to which a star brand is attached have intensified.

This is most striking with Schwarzenegger because he embarked on such deliberate rebranding strategy, and in a direction—comedy—that was apparently not his forte. It might be simpler, then, to think of him as a kind of bolted-together star, created, Frankenstein-fashion, through the addition of whatever missing parts (role opportunities or identity elements) are required to give the impression of a complete person. Proved your action chops? Now you need something comic. Done family-friendly? Now show that you don’t take yourself too seriously with a knowing movie-nod to the audience. If and when all the parts slot together into the semblance of a fully rounded character, the Californians might even elect you governor (this is the subject of Gary Indiana’s savage polemic *Schwarzenegger Syndrome* [2005], which reads voting for Arnold as a form of brand loyalty and sees the star’s shape-shifting as the “Epitome of Arnold”).

Schwarzenegger’s “personal brand” is a “compilation of re-inventions, an advertisement for itself, a personality remarkable for its periodic shedding of layers” (Indiana 26). Unlike Willis, Schwarzenegger didn’t tackle comedy because he had a natural talent for it, or because it stretched him artistically, but because the ongoing juggernaut of his career dictated that he must. Comedy is derived from the incongruity of his form, accent, and wooden delivery in the situations in which he is cast—Goliath to his minuscule twin, pregnant man masquerading as a woman, action cop melted by kindergarten kids. These are perfect formula films, the formula key being both that which will develop Schwarzenegger’s career in desirable directions and that which drives a hybrid genre to commercial success.

But what bolted-on need drove or pushed him to messianic aspirations? Schwarzenegger’s postmodern forays go further than his signature self-ironization and cartoonesque role-play. Fredric Jameson famously lamented the political failures of the postmodern era, in which we can



better imagine the end of the world than the end of capitalism. The 1990s are bookended by two significant end-of-the-world films, both of which feature the star in plainly Christ-like poses—one dystopic sci-fi, the other religious horror. *Terminator 2* actively visualizes nuclear apocalypse, then, through manipulation of its time-loop paradox, fends it off by opting for the Terminator's self-sacrifice. *End of Days* has Schwarzenegger battling with the devil, who is intent on bringing about a satanic apocalypse. Both films, though earnestly positing their preposterous narratives, also feature those knowing quips and ironic looks. Both flirt with anticapitalist discourses, suggesting that apocalypse and capitalism cannot be separated. *Terminator 2*'s conclusion is that corporate America in the specific form of the arms industry needs to self-immolate if the future is to be safe, while in *End of Days* the devil chooses a Wall Street banker as his human host.

Not that *End of Days* fails to offer multiple action cinema thrills, showing off Schwarzenegger's assets to their best advantage. This is a diversification vehicle up to a point—now aged fifty-two, Schwarzenegger here attempts a more varied characterization. Jericho Cane is a bereaved alcoholic ex-cop who pursues the devil through a millennial tale timed nicely for its late-1999 release date. It is Schwarzenegger's last film of the decade, and a return to action after two years away from movies. Here he is rougher-looking than before, and press materials stress the chance to show off a wider range of performance skills. With uncharacteristically noirish visuals, Jericho squints through Venetian blinds or is obscurely figured through chiaroscuro lighting setups that emphasize his unshaven and lined visage. Nevertheless, the star himself admits in a DVD special feature that *End of Days* was his message to fans, reassuring them that the heart surgery he had undergone in 1997 hadn't held him back, that he was still capable of the physical rigors of action. Co-star Kevin Pollack said that he expected the job to be like working with a live action figure (interview in "Spotlight on Location" documentary, *End of Days* DVD). Jericho dangles from a helicopter, shoots multiple bad guys, leaps from crashing subway trains, runs, jumps, and tools up. The devil is threatened—though not defeated—with a wide array of firepower ("Between your faith and my Glock 9mm, I take my Glock," Jericho says to a priest). But, as before, action also involves destruction of the male body, and along with a glimpse of biceps one of the first things we see in this film is Jericho putting a gun to his forehead in a contemplative suicidal gesture.

The film's diegesis subjects him to ample physical abuse, as is true in all his actioners, but perhaps most extraordinarily it provides a crucifixion sequence: the satanists tie him to a cross of metal girders and suspend him

aloft in a gesture that recalls the good Terminator's self-sacrifice. Finally, when the devil possesses him after the Wall Street banker's body becomes unusable, he throws himself onto the protruding sword of an angel statue. "The message itself is extraordinary, I think," Schwarzenegger said, "especially for someone like myself who has always solved every problem with a weapon" (interview, "Spotlight on Location" documentary). If stardom, as Morin would have it, is a version of god made flesh, Schwarzenegger's 1990s forays into Christ-iconography are both the ultimate star gesture and suggestive of higher ambitions than simple political office.

Those ambitions are (at least) global, and his success is underpinned by a recognition that, as the 1990s progressed, the rest of the world increasingly mattered more than the United States. Will Smith reports that Schwarzenegger told him, "No matter how big your movies are in America, you are not a movie star until your movies are big around the world" (*Variety*, 15 December 2008). Language—or its lack—might be the key to action cinema's global success, as was the case with pre-sound cinema, which might also account for the relative unimportance of the accent issue in Schwarzenegger's case. "People don't need to understand English to know something is exploding and to enjoy that spectacle," lamented Meryl Streep in 1990 (qtd. in Prince 175). If stars continue to be read as contradictory entities, the paradox of Schwarzenegger is this: though he has striven to present himself as the exemplary individualist, a self-made man entirely in charge of his own destiny, he has developed iconic characters and made choices that speak to the period's zeitgeist. What he risked, or reveled in, was that he would be branded by those characters; and in becoming so identified with his characters, he became emblematic of his moment. In 1990 *Time* named the symbol of U.S. dominance in the global marketplace as "an overgrown Austrian man with a face and body out of a superhero comic" (qtd. in Pfeil 31). This makes Schwarzenegger a curious if familiar American icon—an immigrant whose success lies in his films' ability to sell worldwide.

## NOTES

1. Schwarzenegger means "black field," though the ignorant have used the similarity—to an Anglophone ear—of "negger" to "nigger" as a way of reinforcing rumors about Arnie's racial backstory. Hack biographers in particular make much of the name—"swarthy acre" is another translation, wedding the fleshly Arnie ever more firmly to his old world Fatherland. One hilarious web discussion compares "Schwarzenegger" to "Heidegger"; see [maverick-philosopher.powerblogs.com/posts/1169772973.shtml](http://maverick-philosopher.powerblogs.com/posts/1169772973.shtml), accessed 15 January 2009.

2. Schwarzenegger used the term "Girly Man" twice when campaigning for George H. W. Bush, including it as an insult to Democrats during the 1992 presidential campaign, but—to the horror of gay activists—it has become a regular part of his political vocabulary.

3. The scene faintly echoes Frank Capra's *It's a Wonderful Life* (1946), in which George Bailey (James Stewart) is allowed the experience of seeing the world as if he had never lived.

4. *Kindergarten Cop* and *Last Action Hero* were rated PG-13 in the United States and 15 in the United Kingdom (no one under fifteen years of age could see the films in the theater or rent the videos); *Jingle All the Way* was PG in both countries; *Batman & Robin* was PG in the United Kingdom but PG-13 in the United States, partly because of its sexual innuendoes. Danny in *Last Action Hero* mocks Slater by challenging him to read out a presumably obscene line written on paper. "You can't possibly say it," he concludes, "because this movie is PG-13."