

Arnold  
Schwarzenegger—  
Interdisciplinary  
Perspectives  
on Body and Image

Edited by  
MICHAEL BUTTER  
PATRICK KELLER  
SIMON WENDT

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Michael Butter, Patrick Keller, Simon Wendt

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MICHAEL BUTTER

### From Rough Guy to Family Guy: The Transformation of Arnold Schwarzenegger's Star Persona in *Twins* and *Kindergarten Cop*

A memorable moment occurs a few minutes into Ivan Reitman's comedy *Twins* (1988). Strolling through the streets of Los Angeles, Julius Benedict, played by Arnold Schwarzenegger, comes across a poster advertising Sylvester Stallone's *Rambo III*. On the most basic level, Julius's reaction to the image of Rambo's half-naked, muscular upper body enthroned in superhuman size over a platoon of enemy soldiers signifies his inexperience. Julius has spent his entire life prior to that day on a tropical island where he enjoyed a broad education in languages, philosophy, literature, history, and the natural sciences. He has probably grown up with auteur cinema and never watched an action movie. As we have seen in an earlier scene, he has comparable muscles, but he obviously considers them nothing to be particularly proud of, and usually hides them under a shirt. Thus, he cannot understand why anybody would flaunt his muscles as the figure on the poster does, or why anyone should care, and this is why he first parodies Rambo's posture and then shakes his head and walks on.

But this is not the whole story. What this scene makes perfectly clear too is that when we watch a film, and especially a blockbuster Hollywood film, we see not only a fictional character, but also always the actor playing that character. In the case of *Twins* and Julius Benedict, this is not an unknown actor but Arnold Schwarzenegger, like Sylvester Stallone one of the biggest action stars of the 1980s. This complicates the meaning of the scene considerably. For a twenty-first-century audience watching the film on DVD, the scene is almost a glimpse into the future that lay ahead of the two actors. In fact, removed from its context, this could almost be an image from 2008, the year in which Stallone unsuccessfully tried a comeback as an action star in *Rambo IV*, while Schwarzenegger had long exchanged combat gear for the suits befitting somebody who is now Governor of California.

Audiences watching *Twins* in theaters in 1988 saw something different, however. On the one hand, seeing Schwarzenegger shake his head about Stallone made perfect sense to them. As everyone who followed their careers throughout the 1980s knew, Stallone and Schwarzenegger did not like each other very much and seldom missed an opportunity to express those feelings in public.<sup>1</sup> On the other hand, Schwarzenegger shaking his head about Stallone as an action hero must have come as a surprise for the audience. In 1988, the action genre was, after all, exactly the genre in which Schwarzenegger had almost exclusively worked in so far, and in films such as *Conan the Barbarian* (1982), *Commando* (1985), *Predator* (1987), *Red Heat* (1988) and as the Terminator in James Cameron's movie of the same title (1984) he had regularly assumed poses similar to that of Stallone on the poster. What Julius Benedict does here, then, is at odds with what audiences would expect of a character played by Arnold Schwarzenegger, and this tension not only creates a comic effect, it also brings to fore that audiences watching an Arnold Schwarzenegger movie during the late 1980s had a fairly clear idea as to what Schwarzenegger stood for and what they could therefore expect from the film. In other words, Schwarzenegger had a rather stable star persona, a clear-cut image that audiences expected his or her parts to live up to.

This observation is already significant in itself, since critics have argued that the demise of the Hollywood studio system during the late 1950s severely shook the formerly common association of a star with his parts in the audience's minds. For instance, in her recent study of film stars, *The Star Machine*, Jeanine Basinger coins the term "neo-star" in order to describe the stars of the post-New Hollywood cinema "who floa[t] between typecasting and character acting, building a reputation as well as an audience loyalty as they alternate from one to the other" (537). Basinger rightly stresses that actors today enjoy more freedom in choosing their parts and that they can alternate between lead roles and supporting parts. And she is right that there are famous actors today who refuse to be restricted to one particular role. Edward Norton is an example of this type of actor, though one may wonder whether Norton is really in the same league as Tom Cruise or Julia Roberts. One might thus doubt whether Basinger is correct when she claims that actors such

<sup>1</sup> For a discussion of the relationship between Schwarzenegger and Stallone, see Leamer 211-14 and 252-53.

as Cruise or Roberts are "famous for their ability to play a certain *role*," whereas the stars of the studio era "became famous because fans believed they *were* that role and just 'playing themselves'" (547; italics in the original). Rather, for stars like Cruise or Roberts, despite some variation in the parts they play and occasional instances of off-casting, Richard Maltby's observation that "The star is always himself or herself, only thinly disguised as a character" still seems to hold true (142).<sup>2</sup> The highly self-reflexive moment early on in *Twins*, linking the character Julius Benedict to the actor Arnold Schwarzenegger, a star clearly in a league with Tom Cruise at the time the film was made, draws attention to this.

Accordingly, the analysis of the filmic construction of Arnold Schwarzenegger's star persona that I undertake in this essay has larger implications. Examining how *Twins* and *Kindergarten Cop* (1990) re-shaped Schwarzenegger's image and consolidated this change goes beyond shedding light on the meanings and values represented by and in one particular actor. It also highlights the fact that in post-New Hollywood cinema stars generally continue to have rather stable images that significantly impact on how films are conceived by their makers and consumed by their audiences, as well as the fact that the complex processes of signification and re-signification at work there deserve more critical attention than they have received so far. This essay thus seeks not only to better understand the image of Arnold Schwarzenegger, but also constitutes a first step toward coming to terms with the significance of stars for the production, reception, and meaning of late 1980s and early 1990s Hollywood films.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>2</sup> See Marshall 94-118 for a nuanced investigation of Tom Cruise's star persona.

<sup>3</sup> As we have discussed them at some length in our introduction, I do not spell out the theoretical assumptions of my analysis in details here. I would like to acknowledge, however, once again my indebtedness to Richard Dyer's valuable insights in the interrelationship of production and reception in the construction of stars and their meanings. Like Dyer, I regard stars as "clusters of signs" (Butler 343) that have to be studied as representations that perform specific cultural functions for a society (or parts of it) at a given historical moment. Even Dyer, though, suggests in his 1979 book *Stars* that "stars may be less crucial than they were twenty, thirty or forty years ago" (12). This is a position that I firmly reject, as I am convinced that stars are as important to Hollywood cinema today as they were during its classical era.

There are two reasons why Arnold Schwarzenegger is an apt case to begin such an engagement with the workings of the star system of the recent past. First, his star image underwent a considerable transformation at the end of the 1980s. This allows us to observe how the public persona of an actor can be successfully manipulated through his films and the discourses that accompany their reception. Second, the new image that *Twins* and the films of the 1990s created for Schwarzenegger did not abandon but rather incorporated many characteristics of the earlier image, resulting, at first glance, in a star persona that is not organic but highly contradictory. This brings to the fore that the star images produced by films are not meaningful as such, but offer an array of possible meanings to audiences, enabling different groups of viewers to focus on various facets of what they are offered on screen. Although I am here more interested in production, in how Schwarzenegger's films provided audiences with a set of meanings to choose from, the active part viewers play in constructing a star persona must not be forgotten.

This essay focuses on the filmic manipulation of Arnold Schwarzenegger's image during the late 1980s. I first analyze how *Twins* engaged and transformed the image Schwarzenegger's earlier films had constructed for him, and then how *Kindergarten Cop* (1990) consolidated this change. I only address in passing his subsequent films, since I generally agree with what Rüdiger Heinze says about them in his essay. Although we employ slightly different terminologies, our findings point in the same direction. Since several contributions to this volume concentrate on Schwarzenegger's image politics during and after the 2003 California Recall Election at length, I no more than touch upon this issue in my conclusion. My analysis, however, will bring to the fore the ways in which Schwarzenegger's films constructed a star persona that perfectly answered to the needs of Californian voters in 2003.

### *Twins*: Creating the New Image

Since *Twins* self-consciously modifies character traits that former films had constructed for Arnold Schwarzenegger's star persona, it is important to recall what image Schwarzenegger brought to the part of Julius Benedict. Prior to *Twins*, Schwarzenegger had almost exclusively starred in action films, and except for the bodybuilding documentary

*Pumping Iron* (1977), none of his few films outside that genre—not even *Stay Hungry* (1976) for which he won a Golden Globe as the Best New Star of the Year—drew large audiences. As a consequence, the image of Schwarzenegger that audiences flocking to the cinemas in the winter of 1988-89 had in mind was determined by what people associated with him because of his roles in action movies and his past as a bodybuilder.

Although the Terminator in the first movie of the series (1984) is the only real villain Schwarzenegger has ever played, all of his major parts prior to *Twins* have many things in common with this figure.<sup>4</sup> From Conan the Barbarian in the movie of the same title (1982) and its sequel *Conan the Destroyer* (1984) to the Special Forces soldiers John Matrix in *Commando* (1985) and Dutch in *Predator* (1987) and the Russian detective Ivan Danko in *Red Heat* (1988), all of his characters command an enormous physical strength. More importantly, they all are one-dimensional in that they always have only one goal: Conan and John Matrix seek revenge; Dutch wants to survive; and the Terminator, as everybody knows, wants to kill Sarah Connor. All of them are characterized by an iron determination—they never waver or question their goal—and they are all loners. They rely only on themselves, never on others. Ultimately, they always act alone, which is why Schwarzenegger hardly ever needs to talk in any of these films. Moreover, all of these characters represent a highly pronounced otherness: The Terminator is a machine; Conan is a barbarian; John Matrix is incredibly brutal; and Dutch, in his attempt to escape the heat detector of the alien warrior hunting him, eventually becomes one with the jungle and thus with the other of civilization and culture. Battle-hardened, isolated, and single-purposed, they have nothing in common with, and are far removed from, the life the average American cinema-goer leads.<sup>5</sup>

The image of Schwarzenegger as a literal or figurative fighting

<sup>4</sup> One might argue that Mr. Freeze in *Batman & Robin* (1997) is also a villain. Further down, however, I suggest that even Freeze fits fairly well the type of parts that Schwarzenegger played throughout the 1990s.

<sup>5</sup> To a certain degree, Ivan Danko in *Red Heat* is an exception to the rule, as he teams up with an American partner once he arrives in the United States. Apart from that, however, Danko is, as *The Washington Post* noted, "virtually indistinguishable from any other [part Schwarzenegger] has played" (qtd. in Leamer 256).

machine thus constructed was supplemented by what people connected with him because of his past as a bodybuilder. Bodybuilders, as several studies have shown, are generally thought of as being obsessed with their bodies while neglecting their minds. Accordingly, and despite clear indications to the contrary, Schwarzenegger was perceived as not too intelligent.<sup>6</sup> This did not contradict his movie persona, because the characters he played were excellent military tacticians and fighters who had no need for intellectuality; they were knowledgeable about killing but little else. In addition to being commonly labeled stupid, the general public has long been suspicious of bodybuilders in terms of their sexuality. The idea of almost-naked men sweating and obsessing about their bodies together all day long has given rise to the ridiculous idea that most if not all bodybuilders are homosexual. At the same time, the thought that excessive exercising fuels their libidos and that their muscles might attract women only interested in their bodies has habitually led to the notion that many of them are sexually promiscuous. The bodybuilding magazines of the 1970s, many of which revolved almost exclusively around Schwarzenegger, fostered this myth of hypersexuality in order to counter allegations of homosexuality. Paradoxically, both kinds of rumors stuck to Schwarzenegger, although he always fervently denied all charges of homosexuality, and “only” had the magazines brag about his (alleged) sexual adventures with women.<sup>7</sup>

Released in December 1988, *Twins*, by contrast, projects Schwarzenegger as the most intelligent, caring, sensitive and communicative man imaginable. The character he plays, Julius Benedict, is the result of an experiment to create the perfect human being. He is separated from his mother after his birth and educated by a brilliant scientist on an island far removed from the rest of civilization. On his thirty-fifth birthday, Julius learns that he has a twin brother, Vincent, played by Danny DeVito. Considered “genetic waste” by the scientists who created them, however, Vincent, rather than receiving a first-class education, was put into an orphanage. Happy that he has a brother and enraged by the

<sup>6</sup> The prejudices against bodybuilders that I summarize in this paragraph—stupidity, homosexuality, and heterosexual promiscuity—are analyzed in detail in Klein.

<sup>7</sup> Cf. Leamer 91-93 for the association of bodybuilding and homosexuality, and rumors surrounding Schwarzenegger. Cf. 85-90 for an account of how bodybuilding magazines projected Schwarzenegger as sexually hyperactive.

treatment this brother has suffered, Julius leaves the island and travels to Los Angeles to find him. Since all of his knowledge about the world outside the island is theoretical, he is fascinated and amused by many things he sees in the big city, among them the poster of *Rambo III* I began with. Unsurprisingly, he runs into all kinds of troubles and funny situations before and after he locates Vincent.

Having the action star Arnold Schwarzenegger play this not only perfect but also perfectly peaceful character constitutes a clear instance of off-casting.<sup>8</sup> Schwarzenegger’s character behaves completely differently from what audiences expect a part played by him to do, and this leads to a constant tension that the film employs to create comic effects.<sup>9</sup> This is most notable early in the film in the narrative’s repeated emphasis on Julius’s outstanding intelligence and education, but it also permeates the treatment of Julius’s and, by extension, Schwarzenegger’s, sexuality. What I wish to suggest here is that *Twins* actively challenges the circulating allegations of homosexuality and promiscuity against Schwarzenegger by projecting the part he plays as completely inexperienced in such matters. In fact, the film has his brother Vincent, who for a long time doubts that Julius is his brother and thinks of him as a freak, explicitly voice the suspicion that Schwarzenegger is homosexual whenever Julius, overcome by the joy that he has found his brother, tries to embrace him in public. Julius, however, is not only portrayed as completely homosexual, he is also cast as so naïve and innocent that he is either not aware that such a thing as homosexuality exists, or he cannot imagine that his behavior might be construed as a display of it by people watching him hug his brother.

In a slightly different fashion, *Twins* dismisses the idea that Schwarzenegger might be ruthless in his sexual relations with women. The aggressive sexuality that audiences connected with Schwarzenegger at the time is embodied by his brother Vincent, a petty criminal whom Schwarzenegger has to rescue and bring back on the right track

<sup>8</sup> On the practice and functions of off-casting during the studio era, see Maltby 387.

<sup>9</sup> All major theories of the comic, from Aristotle and Hobbes to Freud and Bergson, hold that the comic effect hinges on tension, on a perceived incongruence of two simultaneously present and irreconcilable elements—in this case Arnold Schwarzenegger’s star persona and the character of Julius Benedict.

repeatedly. By contrast, Schwarzenegger's character, Julius, may be heterosexual in terms of sexual orientation, but he is completely inexperienced in this area as well. Indeed, at the beginning of the film he is still a virgin, fascinated and confused by the nude pictures in a *Playboy* magazine he comes across, and intimidated by the real-life women he encounters, especially by the attractive Marnie (Kelly Preston), the sister of Vincent's girlfriend. Marnie quickly becomes interested in Julius, and eventually seduces him, assuring him that they will "figure out together" what he has to do to satisfy her. Earlier, in a scene that the film uses to display Schwarzenegger's naked muscular body, she even spies on him while he is changing. The transformation of the traditionally male gaze that the film thus performs anticipates the later seduction scene and makes perfectly clear that Schwarzenegger's part is not a sexual predator but rather the "victim" of a sexually self-assured young woman with whom he falls in love with and whom he marries at the end of the film.

The film completes its softening of Schwarzenegger's image through its modification of his image as an action hero and fighter. While there are action scenes in the film, motivated by Vincent's criminal activities, *Twins* is not an action film but a comedy that melds slapstick, situation comedy, and romance with some action. As a consequence, the film is not organized around these fights as Schwarzenegger's previous films all are. Yet, just as all Schwarzenegger characters before him, Julius Benedict is strong and well-trained in the martial arts; he is an able fighter who repeatedly overwhelms armed opponents with his bare hands. What distinguishes him from all of Schwarzenegger's previous parts, however, is that he is a peaceful figure who does not enjoy fighting and avoids it whenever and as long as he can. "I hate violence," he tells his brother after he has taken out an opponent, and his brother replies, "But you're so good at it."

Accordingly, in *Twins*, Schwarzenegger is superior to average human beings in terms of physical strength, mental capacity, and morals. However, this triple otherness not only fades into the background over the course of the film, it is also subtly adjusted, as Schwarzenegger/Julius begins to develop habits and values that American audiences can more easily identify with. Under the guidance of his brother, he learns to dress decently; he stops drinking milk exclusively and begins to enjoy beer; he learns to dance and how to make love; he stops being calm and

rational all the time and gets angry occasionally; in short: he stops being a "smart ass," as his brother labels him early in the film.

Most importantly, though, in *Twins*, for the first time in his movie career, Schwarzenegger plays a character with a family that he cares about and that is central to the plot. As John Matrix in *Commando*, he has a daughter (played by Alyssa Milano), but this daughter completely disappears from the film when she is kidnapped after a few minutes so that she is less of a real character and more of a MacGuffin that gets the action going. In *Twins*, by contrast, the whole plot hinges on Julius's desire to re-unite his family. "All I wanted is make us into a family," he tells his brother at one point, and, in fact, the film is structured around his initial search for his brother and their subsequent joint search for mother (who, as they discover, is still alive) and ends with both of them being married and fathers of twins. An outsider at the beginning of the film, Schwarzenegger's part becomes an exemplary American businessman, husband, and father.

If *Twins* thus remodels many aspects of Schwarzenegger's previous image—he is no longer projected as a lone wolf, as stupid, or as a sexually and physically aggressive outsider—other aspects of his star persona are confirmed. As in all of his earlier films, Schwarzenegger is strong, determined, quick to act, and displays leadership qualities—the positive sides of his Terminator image, as one might call it. *Twins* even alludes to its star's most famous part explicitly once when Julius tells the scientist who has separated him and Vincent from their mother, "If you lie to me, I'll be back." This threat obviously alludes to the Terminator's famous "I'll be back," a phrase that Schwarzenegger has used in various versions in almost all his films since 1984.<sup>10</sup>

In sum, then, *Twins* constructs for Schwarzenegger a star persona that unites the ordinary with the extraordinary. At the end of the movie he is still far stronger, smarter, and better than the average member of

<sup>10</sup> I thank Jana Hien for pointing this out to me, and I wish to acknowledge the general impact she has had on my argument here, as ours has indeed been a mutually productive exchange about the transformation of Arnold Schwarzenegger's star persona. Inspired by my initial thoughts on the subject, she engaged the topic in a term paper, which influenced the version I presented at the Heidelberg conference on which this volume is based. This paper fuelled how she treated the matter in her B.A. thesis, which, in turn, inspired some ideas in the article at hand.

the audience, but he is also very much like them—or rather, and maybe more accurately, as they like to see themselves. He is a friendly, likeable guy who cares deeply about his family and works hard but also enjoys his leisure time, someone who lives and spends his time as they probably do. The otherness he has embodied in previous parts, then, has not completely disappeared but has been curbed and supplemented by traits he shares with those watching his films. In other words, then, the film stages Schwarzenegger's integration into the American life. And it does this so successfully, because the story of Julius Benedict can be linked easily to the life story of Arnold Schwarzenegger. The story that *Twins* tells is, after all, the story of immigration. Just as Julius arrives in Los Angeles at the end of the 1980s, so too did Schwarzenegger in the early 1970s. Significantly, Julius leaves the island where he lives by boat. Although he then arrives at LAX by plane, in the context of arriving in America for the first time, the earlier scene nevertheless conjures up images of European immigrants of earlier times arriving by ship on Ellis Island to live the American dream that Schwarzenegger, a European immigrant, prototypically embodies. Just as Julius becomes successful and eventually marries an American woman, so did Schwarzenegger. This is why the new image *Twins* tried to construct for Schwarzenegger could resonate so powerfully with the American audience, highly aware of Schwarzenegger's immigrant background and reminded of it every time he spoke by his Austrian accent.

#### *Kindergarten Cop*: Consolidating the New Image

Despite all of the factors favoring public acceptance of the ways in which *Twins* projects Arnold Schwarzenegger, the movie's highly playful engagement with his star persona would have had no lasting effect had Schwarzenegger offered more helpings of his usual action fare afterwards. Through the selection of his subsequent roles, however, the actor made the change permanent and firmly anchored his new persona in the audience's mind. Immediately after *Twins*, however, he made the science-fiction film *Total Recall* (1990), which reverses the pattern of *Twins*, as Schwarzenegger starts out as an ordinary character that becomes more and more extraordinary. In this film Schwarzenegger has no children and a wife (Sharon Stone) who turns out to be an

undercover agent employed to—unsuccessfully, of course—prevent him from remembering his true identity as a secret agent. Tellingly, though, and diametrically opposed to the way he presented himself during the 2003 election campaign, Schwarzenegger made sure not to be identified too much with the part he played in order to preserve his new image as a family man while promoting *Total Recall*. He told the *New York Times*, for example, that there is a “difference between [sic] the characters I play and the real me. Because the reality is that I don't take a gun in my hand to solve the situation, that I'm not the Terminator, that I don't wield the sword around like in *Conan*, that I'm not a stern character who doesn't smile, but that I'm a peaceful guy who has a great time” (Bernstein).

It was his next movie, *Kindergarten Cop* (1990) that finally consolidated his new persona. A comedy directed by Ivan Reitman, who also directed *Twins*, this film stars Schwarzenegger as a Los Angeles cop going undercover in a small Oregon community and posing as a kindergarten teacher. If *Twins*, at least when compared to his former parts, represents an instance of off-casting that brought about a new star image for Schwarzenegger, his performance in *Kindergarten Cop* must be described as a successful star performance in Richard Maltby's terms, “one in which the character becomes the star persona as the movie progresses” (385). Just as Rick Blaine in *Casablanca* finally becomes Humphrey Bogart, John Kimble eventually becomes Arnold Schwarzenegger.

In order for the film to stage this development, John Kimble initially has to resemble a cheap, flesh-and-blood copy of the Terminator. He wears a black leather coat, and, even at night, sunglasses; more importantly, just like the Terminator and Schwarzenegger's other early parts, he is completely single-minded. He lives only for his job—“Nothing else to do,” he tells a colleague who asks why he never goes home—and does whatever is necessary to accomplish his goals. During the first twenty minutes of the film, he handcuffs a witness to a corpse, walks with a drawn gun through a busy shopping mall, and explores the L.A. underworld, shotgun in hand. Significantly, he works without a partner and protests heavily when his superior forces him to pair up with a woman, Phoebe, for the undercover mission in Oregon. He eventually gives in only because even he cannot dispute that she is better suited for the role of a kindergarten teacher—a cover necessary to identify the former wife and child of a gangster Kimble has recently arrested.



The night before she begins her mission, however, Phoebe gets ill, and Kimble has to step in. When he emerges from the bathroom in the morning he is completely transformed, wearing a jacket, a shirt, and smart pants, looking almost exactly as Schwarzenegger's part looks at the end of *Twins*. While this wardrobe initially seems to be only part of his cover, the rest of the film demonstrates that these clothes are not just a cover but a more accurate expression of his true self from which he has been alienated through the loss of his family. As the film progresses, we learn that he is divorced too and that he has not seen his son in years. And while the film does not re-unite him with his old family, it provides him with a new one. He falls in love with Joyce (Penelope Ann Miller), the woman he is looking for (who, to no real surprise, turns out to be completely innocent), grows to like his new job, and returns to it for real and for good at the very end of the film following his recovery from the wounds suffered during the showdown with Cullen Crisp, the gangster who has come to town to kidnap his and Joyce's son.<sup>11</sup> "I am back," are his last words in the film as he enters his classroom—yet another variation of the Terminator's most famous line.

If his opponent thus finally emerges as the one who destroys families, Schwarzenegger is projected as the one who heals them, a protector that the rural community is in dire need of, as it turns out to be much less idyllic than it seems at first sight. A game called "What does my dad do?" that Kimble has the children play early on reveals that many of the children in his class are from dysfunctional families: their parents are either divorced, suffer from unemployment, or, in one case, even abuse their children. Kimble, who initiates the game in order to identify the child he is looking for, is as dismayed by the results of his little poll as the audience is, but then spends the rest of the film setting things right again. He protects first the boy Zack against his abusive father and later Joyce and her son against the gangster, and he provides the kindergarten class as a whole, and by extension also their parents, with what they seem to need most, "a strong authority figure [that] provide[s] just the right admixture of authority and paternal nurturing."

<sup>11</sup> The name of Schwarzenegger's part, Kimble, an obvious reference to Richard Kimble from the television series *The Fugitive* (1963-67) points in two directions: It suggests from the outset that Joyce, the film's fugitive, is innocent, and it implies that Schwarzenegger's Kimble has also been on the run too, in this case from his real identity.

as Michael Blitz and Louise Krasniewicz put it (223). To the delight and benefit of the children, he runs his class like a military camp, and thus provides them with the skills necessary to escape unharmed from the fire at the end of the film. And while disciplining them, he also disciplines himself. He finds his way back to his former identity as husband and father, and thus finally transforms himself back into Arnold Schwarzenegger.

Like *Twins*, then, *Kindergarten Cop* projects Schwarzenegger as both very much like and completely unlike those around him. He comes to the community as an outsider, overcomes initial suspicions to become a part of it, and yet, as his heroic deeds during the film's finale prove, to a certain degree he remains an outsider who can accomplish things all other members of the community would fail at. As in *Twins*, he uses force only to protect himself and his new-found family. But since his family, both real and symbolic, includes small children, he emerges in *Kindergarten Cop* even more as a proponent and protector of family values than in the earlier film. Significantly, Schwarzenegger, known already at the time for his sustained attempts to control his image, enforced the notion that this was in fact his true self by talking about his own family in virtually every interview he gave while promoting the film, thus inviting and confirming audience reactions that transferred John Kimble's value system to Arnold Schwarzenegger.<sup>12</sup>

What is more: Over the next decade Schwarzenegger almost exclusively chose roles that made sure that the image thus constructed stuck to him. In fact, in basically all movies he has made since *Kindergarten Cop* he has had either a real or a symbolic family, even if some of these films revolve around him coping with the loss of this family. In *Terminator 2: Judgment Day* (1991) he is, as feminist critic Susan Jeffords has put it, "a better mom" to John Connor than his real mother is, a caring and nurturing father whose behavior contrasts sharply with that of the tough mother, Sarah Connor, signaling the arrival of the softer kind of masculinity typical of the 1990s (250).<sup>13</sup> And even as Mr.

<sup>12</sup> See Leamer 265-66.

<sup>13</sup> The *New York Times* review also highlighted this shift: "The bad old Terminator reflected the heady Reagan 80's; the good new one is the perfect Bush-era Terminator, a machine as sensitive war hero." And it also emphasized the remarkable continuity between the new Terminator and Schwarzenegger's recent parts: "Maintaining the image of 'Kindergarten

Freeze in *Batman & Robin* (1997), he only joins the forces of evil because he has lost his beloved wife, and returns to the cause of good in the movie's final moments.

What all his films of the 1990s and 2000s, from *Eraser* (1996) and *Jingle All the Way* (1996) to *End of Days* (1999) and *Collateral Damage* (2001), have in common is that in all of these films Schwarzenegger is, just as in *Twins* and *Kindergarten Cop*, both ordinary and extraordinary. He is the husband and father whom you would gladly welcome to your neighborhood and invite over for a barbecue, but he is also an outsider, somebody who combines physical and intellectual strength with the determination to fight and overcome evil by any means necessary. This double identity is most perfectly captured in James Cameron's *True Lies* (1994) where Schwarzenegger plays a special agent whose cover as a boring insurance agent is so perfect that his wife, looking for some adventure in her life, begins an affair with a real insurance agent who pretends to be an undercover agent. As in *Kindergarten Cop*, Schwarzenegger's cover is not merely a cover; it is, as the title puts it, a "true" lie that signifies an integral part of his identity. Schwarzenegger is both at the same time in the film: a dashing agent superior to and unlike anybody else, and the prototypical guy next door.<sup>14</sup>

In many ways, then, Schwarzenegger's parts, and thus his star persona, combine traits of both the official hero and the outlaw hero—a dichotomy central to American culture that, as Robert B. Ray has famously argued, the classical Hollywood cinema, unwilling to commit itself to either side, frequently subverted by projecting "composite heroes" that embodied parts of both tradition (64).<sup>15</sup> Throughout the

Cop' here Mr. Schwarzenegger plays a muscular pussycat, at the mercy of a kid" (James).

<sup>14</sup> One might argue therefore that the box-office failure of *Last Action Hero* (1993) was grounded due to the fact that the film, by distinguishing within the diegetic world between the actor as an ordinary guy and his character as an extraordinary hero, disturbed the audience's identification with Arnold Schwarzenegger. For a different explanation of the film's failure, see McDonald 88-93.

<sup>15</sup> For Ray's account of the history of this binary and classical Hollywood's tendency to subvert it, cf. 59-66. Dyer makes a similar point in more general terms when he argues that "star images function crucially in relation to contradictions within and between ideologies, which they seek variously to 'manage' or resolve" (*Stars* 38).

1990s, Schwarzenegger constantly played such "composite heroes," characters that unite in one person attitudes and aptitudes that, in real life, are usually mutually exclusive. They abide by the law, but they also break the law to bring to justice those who violate it for evil purposes. Part of a culture that values the family extremely highly and in which the family tends to always synecdochically represent the nation, they are firm proponents of marriage and family values, a characteristic of the official hero, but they are also ready to cross lines to protect and preserve these values, a characteristic of the outlaw hero. In *Kindergarten Cop*, this duality is most obvious when Schwarzenegger's character beats up a man who has repeatedly abused his wife and son. His answer to this problem might not be legal, but it is presented as perfectly legitimate.

### Conclusion

This combination of the extraordinary and the ordinary, of official hero and outlaw hero, of conformist rebel and popular outsider, as Rüdiger Heinze calls it in the next essay, albeit with a slightly different emphasis, may seem paradoxical, but it proved to be the perfect image for the 2003 California Recall Election. In fact, I contend that Schwarzenegger's success in this election would have been impossible without the image change performed by *Twins* and consolidated by *Kindergarten Cop* and subsequent films. This is not to say that Schwarzenegger, who had long contemplated entering politics and finally decided to take that step, did not highlight the Terminator part of his image during his campaign. After all, this was what the situation called for. As other essays in this volume explore in more detail, Californian voters were disaffected with politicians of both parties in 2003. While they considered Democratic Governor Gray Davis an embodiment of party and special interest politics, they were, for the same reasons, equally disaffected with the possible Republican candidates.

The situation called for an outsider, and thus constituted a perfect opportunity for Schwarzenegger. Untainted by the alliances he would have been forced to forge during the primaries that precede regular elections, he could project himself as an outsider to the political system, as a savior who steps in to resolve the crisis that those on the inside are

unable to resolve. To underline this outsider image he announced his candidacy not as normal candidates do, but on *The Tonight Show* with Jay Leno. Persistently he projected himself as the “governor,” a political version of the Terminator that has arrived from the outside to shoot to pieces the Gordian knot of Californian special interest politics and budget crisis. Accordingly, Michael Blitz and Louise Krasniewicz are right when they state that:

Arnold Schwarzenegger did not win the gubernatorial election in California. By most accounts, the election was won by an impressive action figure clad in black leather and cool shades, riding a motorcycle, packing impressive weaponry, and giving the bad guys hell. The figure coolly destroyed his weaker and less focused opponents, physically and mentally dominated the landscape, demanded the curious attention of lesser mortals, and warned us that his way was the only way. The election was won by one of the most familiar, popular, and telling mythical figures produced by late-twentieth-century American culture: The Terminator. (87)

But this is not the whole story. Voters knew that Schwarzenegger would not simply disappear into the sunset after he had resolved the crisis but that he would be around for a considerable time if they elected him. This is where the other major facet of his star persona came in, his image as an ordinary guy with whom any voter happening to live next door to him would get along fine. Obviously, Schwarzenegger did not draw as extensively on this side of his image during his campaign as he did on the Terminator part, but this does not mean that it was not important to his success. The voters knew him (or, rather, thought they knew him), and thus regarded him as one of them, as the candidate not of special interests but of the common interest. This also meant that Schwarzenegger could keep his family in the background for most of the campaign, because voters knew that he had a wife and children about whom he cared deeply, as all of his films from the past fifteen years had shown. He did not need to project himself as a proponent of family values—those values, that is, which American voters look for more than anything else in their candidates—this status was granted him automatically<sup>16</sup>. Instead, he could focus on what the situation called for

<sup>16</sup> On the importance of family values in American political campaigns, and how candidates try to be seen as embodying them, cf. Weiss 17-56.

most: reminding the audience that he was not only a family guy but also a tough guy who possessed the determination to resolve the crisis at hand. Thus, without *Terminator* there would have been no Governor Schwarzenegger; without *Twins* and *Kindergarten Cop*, though, there would not have been a Governor Schwarzenegger either.

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