CHRISTOLOGICAL SLIPPAGE AND IDEOLOGICAL STRUCTURES IN SCHWARZENEGGER'S *TERMINATOR*

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ABSTRACT

This paper invokes some of the categories of analysis suggested by Fredric Jameson: transcoding, figuration, utopian analysis, and a dialectical foldback which includes the critic in interpretation. Thus, it traces the intertextual relationship between some biblical texts and the two *Terminator* films, the significance of the slippage of savior figures between the two films, the factors which may account for their popularity, and the ideological structures which make the writer an avid consumer of Schwarzenegger's films. A recurring theme is the need to relate the films to a series of theological, ideological, social, political and economic "texts" or contexts. The paper also suggests a socio-economic connection for intertextuality itself and closes with a call to "inter-methodology."

INTRODUCTION

For the biblical scholar one of the more interesting areas opened up by the theory and practice of intertextuality is the relationship between the biblical text and contemporary popular culture. Of course, the relation between Bible and culture is in itself not new, but has generally been restricted in the past to questions of how the Bible has influenced culture (normally understood as "high" or "serious" culture). Intertextual theory, however, enables a more sophisticated and complex analysis of such a relationship by recognizing the presence of other "texts" in that relationship, including those of a methodological, ideological, political and personal nature. Thus, in what follows I will explore the intertextual interface between the Bible, James Cameron's Christologically orthodox (so Jameson, 1991:384) *Terminator* (hereafter T1) and the less orthodox *Terminator II: Judgment Day* (hereafter T2), starring Arnold Schwarzenegger, the cultural theories of Fredric Jameson, and my own situation as critic and consumer of these various "texts." Of Jameson's approaches four will be used, three of which are highly productive in interpreting these filmic texts but one of which is somewhat neglected in Jameson's recent work:

the reading strategies are transcoding, figuration, utopian analysis, and the dialectical incorporation of the critic in the interpretive process.

Briefly, transcoding is the ability to use the many methods or codes of the contemporary scene in such a manner that there is movement from one code to the other in the same way that a translator moves from one language to the other in the process of translation. Figuration searches for mostly peripheral formal or structural elements which function as "figures" or traces of social and economic features. Utopian analysis—that most fascinating of Jameson's textual strategies—seeks out the utopian dimensions of literary and cultural products. Dialectical criticism, as "thought to the second power," factors into the interpretive process the self-consciousness of the critic as one who operates in a particular social and historical context. In the following analysis I will make use of each of these strategies as follows: after outlining the contribution of the notion of transcoding to the discussion of intertextuality, the specific intertextual relationship between the *Terminator* films and the biblical text will be developed. The idea of figuration then comes into play to determine the function of the Christological motifs in the films. Utopian analysis will attempt to locate the popularity of the films, and finally what I will term dialectical foldback will seek out both my own ambiguous place in the interpretation and a weakness in Jameson.

As far as the films themselves are concerned, in its broad strokes the plot of the second film reduplicates that of the first: an assassin is sent back from the future to eliminate the one who is to save the human race. A bodyguard also arrives from the future who predictably saves the one who will be leader (the bodyguard is in fact sent by the leader of the future to save himself). The major difference between the two films lies in the transformation of Arnold Schwarzenegger, a transformation which is central to this discussion. First, however, we turn to consider Jameson's strategy of transcoding.

TRANSCODING

Transcoding is a response to the proliferation of methods or theories in the contemporary (poststructural) situation: it is the ability to use those methods or codes, moving experimentally from one code to the other in an effort to test their various strengths and weaknesses. The ability to translate from one method or code to the other is more important than testing them all against an ultimate method. Transcoding requires the ability to speak those various codes or ideolects, a skill comparable to speaking and translating a foreign language:

(I have to learn to speak it, for example; I can say some things more strongly in one foreign language than in another, and vice versa; there is no Ur- or ideal language of which the imperfect earthly ones, in their multiplicity, are so many refractions; syntax is more important than vocabulary, but most people think it is the other way round; my awareness of linguistic dynamics is the result of a new global system or a certain demographic "pluralism"). (Jameson, 1991:394)

In his earlier days, when he was more of a literary critic than a cultural critic, Jameson used to call this activity metacommentary. The difference between transcoding and metacommentary is small, metacommentary tending to be limited to a specific cultural product: it is then an accounting for the existing (and possible) interpretations of the text or cultural product. Often Jameson will begin analyzing a text by noting the major types of interpretation that have been offered; this phase then provides the basis for further discussion.

Transcoding has been introduced into the discussion for a reason. The codes or methods which the transcoder uses may be described as semi-autonomous: each has distinguishing features that set it apart from others, but this autonomy is only partial, since the ability to move from one code to the other suggests a certain inter-relationship or fundamental unity between the codes. I am moving into Althusserian terms here, for the whole notion of semi-autonomy was developed by Althusser as part of his discussion of structural causality, a notion which was intended to solve some central problems in Marxism. Althusser's extremely influential move was to argue that for Marx "mode of production" designates not the economic realm alone but the structure as a whole; each of the sectors—economic, political, judicial, ideological and cultural (the latter four belonging to the more traditional "superstructure")—is now understood to be semi-autonomous and potentially able to be dominant at any particular time rather than the previous understanding of a preset program which always ran in favor of the economic. My argument in this paper is that the notion of semi-autonomy may be fruitfully connected with that of transcoding: the possibility of transcoding is permitted by the partial autonomy of the codes, for they are related but distinct.

While transcoding will be used in the analysis to follow, the term— along with semi-autonomy—also makes some contribution to the question of intertextuality. It would seem that some of the now old-fashioned ideas of structuralism (Althusser developed a structuralist Marxism) find their proper use in the poststructural arena of intertextuality. Therefore it would be useful to speak of texts as being semi-autonomous: both inter-related in a host of complex patterns and autonomous to some degree in that they inversely affect one another. This is the sort of thing that is

happening with the *Terminator* films in their relationship to the biblical texts and other contemporary "texts."

Semi-autonomy, transcoding, and intertextuality must, however, be situated socially and economically. Transcoding, in which any workable code will do, and the existence of intertextuality, in which a free-play of texts continually threatens to break out, are possible in a situation in which no code or text can any longer be assured the status of being the protector of the social system or the status quo. In other words, neither a unifying ideology of society nor a collection of authoritative texts (the canon) remains to bolster and protect the system. A major reason for this ideological and canonical collapse is itself suggested by the nature of transcoding and intertextuality: both bear all the marks of cultural and literary versions of commodity exchange, each item—text or code—with some local variation in taste, appearance, and texture being interchangeable with the other. Such a situation of virtually infinite exchange leads to a celebration of the practice of consumption, a pleasurable release in each act of consumption which has little or no bearing on the nature of the product itself. In other words, the commodity form—in its own right the reification of social relations—has been reified. Transcoding and intertextuality become therefore the methodological and textual projections, respectively, of the activity of commodity consumption. All of this suggests that the possibility of transcoding and the existence of intertextuality indicate a more fundamental unity of the historical situation, namely late capitalism.

By means of this detour, transcoding and intertextuality have been grounded, although briefly, in their social and economic basis. As far as the *Terminator* films themselves are concerned, transcoding or metacommentary takes the form of searching for possible interpretations, achieved or potential. A number of readings have already been offered for these films: the theological, or more specifically Christological, in which the major themes of the story of Christ may be located (Large; suggested by Jameson, 1991:384); the psychological as mediated through Lacan, where the relations of the family loom large in analysis (Pfeil; Penley[1]); a generic reading in which the films are understood as contemporary contributions to the genre of film-noir (Pfeil); and the political which attempts to uncover the film's reactionary status (Pfeil). It might be possible to suggest others such as the Freudian, with an emphasis on the child's killing of the father; or the ethical, in the way the film raises issues such the nature of good and evil in terms of the use and abuse of technology; the ideological, where one notes the typical liberal solutions, such as calm and rational

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[1] David Seljak, of McGill University, has also found this to be a pervasive element of the films.

discussion (the talking cure), to problems of human survival or destruction; and so on. Each approach would seem to have something to offer and would seem to be based upon signals in the films themselves. The analysis which follows will draw on most of these in some way or another; suffice to say at this point that the following discussion relies most heavily upon the theological and the psychological readings, with the addition of a third approach, namely, utopian analysis.

Within the theological interpretation, there is also a different sort of transcoding taking place in these films: the use and transformation of biblical passages and contemporary "texts" (this is more properly an intertextual question). First, the contemporary references. The debt to Philip K. Dick comes through at many points: the near future (Los Angeles in 2029) apocalyptic scenes, the evocation of the nuclear holocaust and life before and after, the ambiguous relationship between humans and machines, particularly in their conflict with one another and in the whole question of the nature of androids or cyborgs.[2] The first words of T1 might have come straight from Dick himself:

> The machines rose from the ashes of the nuclear fire. The war to exterminate mankind had raged for decades, but the final battle would not be fought in the future. It would be fought here, in our present: tonight.

Further debts to Dick may be located in specific scenes or episodes: the leader teaching human beings how to break out of the camps set up by the machines, the cyborg infiltrators into the human underground hideouts, and so on. On a different intertextual plane Fred Pfeil (21, 27) notes two unconscious and unintentional connections with events contemporary to T2. First, the combination, in the figure of the second Terminator in T2, of a white male Los Angeles police officer with terrifying and formless evil came a few months after the racist brutality of Police Chief Gates of LAPD had gained wide media attention and (a point which Pfeil does not note) a little before the videotaped bashing of Rodney King by four LAPD officers. A second contemporary echo comes with T2's opening post-nuclear scene of the techno-war between machines and humans, in which Pfeil finds an echo of the wildly popular Gulf War where com-

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[2] P. K. Dick's *Do Androids Dream Electric Dreams* became the basis of the film *Blade Runner*. The question of the relationship between humans and machines is fascinating: it would seem to date in its contemporary form from the advent of industrialization. It is common practice to lament the impositions of machines upon humans, comparable to the Romantic laments over technology today. However, there is an ambiguity reflected in these films: machines threaten humans (thus the war between machines and humans) but human beings are in many respects very machine-like (the cyborg is a human-machine).

puterized killing machines operating in virtual reality or cyberspace hunted down and destroyed the humans.

Comparable perhaps to the Dick literate, the average biblical literate should have no difficulty picking up the biblical stories and texts that are referred to, borrowed, quoted, commented upon, and remolded. Indeed, in proper intertextual fashion, the *Terminator* films "must be seen in a relationship of tension and superposition to some older text [the Bible] without which the first cannot be properly understood" (adapted from Jameson, 1988:20).

Three closely related types of texts make their conscious and unconscious appearance: texts of messianic expectation, apocalyptic texts, and those which might be described as Christological, i.e. those which deal with the story of the birth, life, and death of Jesus Christ. In the first category we find the texts from the Hebrew Bible traditionally understood by Christians as foreshadowing the arrival of Jesus Christ.

Even though Isaiah 7:10–25 would seem to refer to the birth of a child in the near future to the royal house of Ahab, it has also been understood to look forward to the birth of Christ. In some respects it seems to function as a preliminary suggestion for the basic story line and context of T1: the name of Sarah J. Connor comfortably fills the slot of the "young woman" who will bear a son at some time in the near future (in T1 the child is not born until some time after the film closes). Even the ominous threat of vengeance upon the enemies of Ahaz, King of Judah, and the desolate scorched-earth scene of the land of those enemies suggests the "storm" (see the closing scene in which Sarah drives off into the storm clouds and wilderness) or war between humans and machines which lies just over the horizon of T1 and in which the child to be born will take part.

Other texts of promise with a more general relevance include Isaiah 9:2–7, which echoes in some ways the words of Kyle Reese—the protector sent back from the future by Sarah's son in T1—who speaks of John Connor as the one who turned around the war between humans and machines, breaking the dominance of the oppressors and bringing about their downfall. Similarly, Isaiah 9:2–7 speaks of the great turn in fortunes produced by the Messiah: light comes to those who have walked in darkness, the rod of the oppressor has been broken, since a child with authority has been born, the "wonderful counselor" and "prince of peace." Isaiah 11:1–10 (especially v. 2, which speaks of the wisdom, understanding, counsel, and might of the Messiah) should also be added to this list of messianic texts.

After the messianic texts come the more strictly Christological ones. Firstly, there are those associated with the birth of a savior. The annun-

ciation story in Luke 1:26–38, with its bewildered and innocent Mary and the heavy promises for her child, is echoed in T1 in the message Sergeant Kyle Reese, #DN38416, brings back with him from the future: "there was one man who taught us to fight, to smash the metal; he turned it around. His name was John Connor. Your son, Sarah, your unborn son." The remainder of this dialogue—between Reese and Sarah Connor under a deserted country road bridge as they take a rest from the relentless pursuit of the Terminator—fills out the detail, much of it concerned with Sarah Connor and her nature. As Mary in Luke's narrative, Sarah is an ambiguous figure. Mary is the perplexed and coerced mother of the savior to be, yet she is also the one who speaks the powerful and subversive words of the Magnificat (Luke 1:46–55). Similarly, Sarah Connor exudes the happy-go-lucky innocence of the struggling American girl who works in a fast-food outlet and cannot even balance her check-book; yet she is, in the words of Kyle Reese, "the legend," "the Mother of the future." The message from the future John, relayed by Reese, to Sarah reads: "Thank you, Sarah, for your courage during the dark years. I can't help you with what you must soon face, except to say that the future is not set. You must be stronger than you imagine you can be. You must survive or I will never exist." This powerful and strong Sarah Connor is the one who begins to emerge at the end of T1 and comes out fully in T2.

Closely following the annunciation story is that of the conception of the child. T1 in fact pushes the implications of the Gabriel visit in Luke to its logical conclusion: the bearer of the message (Gabriel/Reese) becomes the father of the child. However, here we find some of the alterations to the biblical texts which become crucial at a later point in this discussion. Reese makes the transition here from Gabriel to Joseph in a number of ways: he becomes the father of the child; his mission is to protect Sarah in the same way that Joseph in Matthew 1:18–25 and 2:13–15 follows divine instruction and protects Mary; with their tasks complete, Joseph and Reese fade from the narrative. A few touches complete the feeling that there is some remixing taking place: the motel appears in T1 at the beginning of the child-producing process, while in Luke the inn appears at the other end; in T1 it is the father, Reese, who is the virgin and not the mother.

The transition to the Matthew (1:18–2:15) narrative has already been made. Two features stand out from this text. The flight to Egypt (Matthew 2:13–15) is located at the end of T1 when Sarah flees into the desert mountains to shelter from the difficult time to come (she is, however, alone and the child is yet to be born). More important perhaps is the connection to be made between King Herod and the Terminator: the effort to eliminate the child to be born or recently born requires a surplus of vio-

lence, the Terminator through its relentless pursuit and Herod through the massacre of the children.

The burden of this comparison between film and biblical texts is to establish the Christological nature of at least the first *Terminator* film. If this remains in doubt then the crude but nonetheless effective device of names should set those doubts to rest. Sarah Connor of course bears the name of Abraham's wife in the Hebrew Bible; the woman who was to bear Isaac from whom, according to the narrative, the Israelite people were to come. John Connor, the child who will save the world, bears the initials J.C., initials shared with none other than Jesus Christ. If this is not enough, Sarah Connor's middle initial is also J., which gives us S.J.C..

Before moving onto T2, it is important for our discussion to characterize a little more closely the target and the pursuer of T1. Firstly, the target, John Connor, will be (or is, depending on the time perspective) the savior of humanity. In the words of Reese, who followed the John Connor of the future and is also his father, the son is strong, generating a level of trust in people so that they would die for him. It was this savior who taught the few surviving humans how to fight back, how to break out of the camps and attack the machines, to the extent that victory was in their hands as the humans smashed the central computer system—this is why the Terminator was sent back to eliminate the mother and thus rid the future of the son.

And then there is Arnold Schwarzenegger: literally all brawn and no brain, for he is a cyborg, an android, a human machine with living skin, hair, flesh, muscle, blood, even bad breath, all of which encases an alloy frame operated by a sophisticated computer mechanism (Schwarzenegger, with such limited acting ability and an already mechanical gait, seems eminently suited to the role of cyborg). Extremely difficult to distinguish from human beings (like the famous replicants in *Blade Runner*), this cybernetic organism is one of the latest: systems model 101, which superseded the old 600 model with its rubber skin. Like the devil him- or herself, the Terminator has no feelings, but is programmed to kill, and indeed at the end of the film, when all the flesh has been burned off in the gas tanker explosion, the cover has gone and we come face to face with the black, gleaming satanic metal of the Terminator with its glowing red eyes and in all its robotic originality. In the tradition of stark apocalyptic dualism, Schwarzenegger represents all that is evil (note the gratuitous violence: he rips people from phones and runs over toy trucks) and the savior to be born all that is good.

The second film will experience some massive shifts in these characterizations; but firstly, the intertextual situation. While we are not privileged with the birth itself, in T2 the story picks up with John Connor in

his early teens, much like the precocious twelve year old divine child at the temple of Luke 2:41–52, except that now the temple has become the shopping mall, video arcade and storm-water culvert. Perhaps the most powerful text with which T2 connects is that of Revelation 12 (here we move into the third category of biblical texts: the apocalyptic). The text of Revelation 12 is indeed important for both films with its depiction of the pursuit of the woman by the red serpent before she has given birth and then her escape after the birth to the wilderness (Rev 12:1–6; T1), the apocalyptic heavenly battle between the forces of the serpent (= the computers and machines) and of Michael and the angels (= the humans) (Rev 12:7–12; in the future of both films), the defeat of the dragon's forces and its subsequent pursuit of the woman with the child (Rev 12:13–17; T2). A significant feature of this text is the repeated escape/rescue sequence: the serpent pursues the woman who is saved by God (Rev 12:5–6), by eagle's wings (Rev 12:14), and by the earth itself (Rev 12:16). In both T1 and T2 the relentless pulse and intensification of the chase, progressively more desperate as the final confrontation draws near, holds the plots of the films together. Finally, the words describing the child might equally apply to John Connor: "And she gave birth to a son, a male child, who is to rule all the nations with a rod of iron" (Rev 12:5).

It is with the mention of birth pangs in Rev 12:1 that this passage connects with another, namely the protoeuangelion in Gen 3:8–21. There are four points of connection. Firstly, there is the pain: in both the Revelation and Genesis passages the mother cries out in her birth pangs. Similarly, Sarah Connor also suffers much pain; in her confinement in the psychiatric prison, but more importantly in what she knows about the future, graphically depicted in her dreams about witnessing the nuclear explosion in the children's playground. Pain and suffering have made her tough, and in T2 Sarah Connor has realized the potential of the first film, a tough Mary more of the Magnificat than of traditional feminine qualities: she works out day by day in her cell in the psychiatric prison, preparing for the first of many escapes from the clutches of the second Terminator sent to destroy her son; wearing a gunbelt, intent in her mission, she is more at home in the company of Latin American revolutionaries than among young suburban women.

Secondly, there is in the Genesis passage the hard labor for the father figure (Adam), which echoes dimly Schwarzenegger's hard work in disposing of the second Terminator, the sweaty labor of the foundry workers at the close of the film and even the image of the hard-working dad off to work at the foundry himself (Schwarzenegger descending into the molten metal). Thirdly, there is the relationship between mother, son, and serpent: the Genesis passage speaks of the perpetual conflict between the

serpent on the one hand, and the mother and son on the other. So also both Terminators are programmed to destroy: first Sarah Connor in T1, and then John Connor in T2, not ceasing in their missions until the objective is achieved. Finally, cross-referencing takes place between serpent and second Terminator: the serpent is to spend its life sliding along on the ground, indistinct from it (even eating dust). In a similar fashion the second Terminator is made of liquid metal, taking on the form, for a brief period of time, of all that it touches, and also slithering along the ground on more than one occasion. In one brilliant sequence the human form transforms itself into a checked linoleum floor covering, subsequently oozing back into shape to attack yet another victim (the mental institution guard). In both texts—Genesis and Revelation—nearly all the characters are there: the mother (Sarah Connor), the child (John Connor), and the serpent (both Terminators). The only missing parallel is the figure of the protector.

The lake of fire constitutes the central item of the last of the apocalyptic passages to be considered: the beast and the false prophet who descend into the lake of fire in Rev 19:20 and 20:10 find their echo in the destruction of both Terminators in the pool of molten metal at the steel foundry. But it is the existence of two Terminators in T2 that signals a tension and slippage within and between the films, a slippage which now becomes our concern.

Thus far our focus has been on the first of the possible codes by which the films may be read; namely, the Christological reading which takes its basic argument from the level of intertextuality between the Hebrew and Christian Bibles and the *Terminator* films. It is a familiar and therefore extremely predictable story: the only interest lies in the means the narrative uses to achieve its predictable closure. While other interpretations or codes will be appropriated in due course, the Christological reading itself requires the use of the second of Jameson's methods to be used in this analysis: figuration.

FIGURAL SLIPPAGE

Figuration is essentially a formalist enterprise* in which mostly peripheral formal or structural features and elements are identified as indicators that things apart from the overt plot and character systems are happening in cultural products, that there are more substantial and deeper patterns and contradictions at work. In Jameson's work, figuration assumes an explicitly Marxist platform in which the "figures" are traces of social, political and economic features. The key which needs to be empha-

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* *Note of the Editors*: For a different view of "Figuration" see the article by Jean Calloud, "Figure, Knowledge, and Truth."

sized, however, is that figuration operates with the form and structure of the text first and foremost, rather than with the content, which is of secondary importance. This enables the critic to delve into all this reactionary material (since most contemporary cultural production is of an overtly and ominously reactionary nature) and come up with some surprises. The search is for those tell-tale but often inexplicable pieces that unsettle, disrupt, or are unnecessary embellishments. Figuration is indeed Jameson's own way of connecting the debate over "representation" with the Marxist interest in "mediation."

Apart from the clear Marxist dimensions of this way of reading cultural products, two of the terms used here rely upon Freudian thought. Firstly, figuration is very much indebted to Freud's use of the term "displacement" to describe how sometimes unimportant details (slips, peripheral parapraxes, etc.) are the key to an interpretation (for example, a peripheral dream image with a low emotional content may hold the key to the meaning of a dream filled with powerful images and activity). Secondly, the notion of a significant slippage (significant in that it hides something), which is used here as a basis for figuration, is itself quite Freudian. In the same way that figuration moves through elements such as slippage to seek more significant references, so also the Freudian agenda moves through the slips, the parapraxes of everyday life, and so on, to the truth.[3]

The significant slippage in the two *Terminator* films involves the wholesale readjustment of Schwarzenegger's roles from T1 to T2. Two phases establish the grounds for the slippage: the change in his status from bad guy to good guy; and the close relationship between the new good guy and the official savior, John Connor. We will discuss these two phases in turn.

The two films begin in virtually identical fashion: two figures arrive, heralded by electrical disturbance and the winds of some future time, naked and open to investment with the messages supplied after their arrival in the present. In both cases the gleaming bulk of Schwarzenegger arrives first, followed by a figure much slighter in physical build. It is here that the similarity in character systems breaks down, for T2 delights in inverting all the viewer expectations: in T1 Schwarzenegger appears as the relentless killing machine while the second figure who appears, Kyle Reese, comes as the resourceful protector. In T2 the roles are reversed: Schwarzenegger has become a slightly gentler cyborg whose task it is to protect John Connor, while the second figure is now the deadly

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3 I owe these observations on the Freudian nature of the notions of figuration and slippage to David Seljak, who teaches on Freud and the Psychology of Religion at McGill University.

Terminator, at whose hands death is infinitely more intimate and insidi-
ous (this Terminator delivers death by means of knife-like formations at
the ends of its fingers and arms; the first *Terminator*, Schwarzenegger, re-
lied upon superior firepower). In order to assist those viewers whose cre-
dulity has been strained with this reversal the characters themselves come
to the rescue: both Sarah and John Connor must go through the massive
reassessment process of having the terror from the past become the pro-
tector of the present. For closer watchers, however, something is different
from the moment Schwarzenegger meets his first humans on the second
trip back: none of the bikers in the bar are killed, and the crowning touch
comes when Schwarzenegger, fully clothed in the trademark leathers ob-
tained from one denuded biker, turns to another loud-mouthed, gun-
toting biker and—contrary to expectations of another blasted corpse—
removes and dons the biker's shades before riding off to the sounds of
George Thorogood and the Destroyers.[4]

It is surprising how easily we as viewers accept the explanation for
Schwarzenegger's transformation: this simulacrum of the first Terminator
in T1 has been reprogrammed by none other than the future John Connor.
The savior from T1 has been able to work the greatest of miracles and
bring about the conversion of Schwarzenegger from the embodiment of
evil to whatever this new film has in store for him. This change in
Schwarzenegger is enabled both by his concurrent venture in *Kindergarten
Cop* and by a sleight of hand or blurring of identities; for strictly speaking
this cyborg is a different figure from the one that was comprehensively
destroyed in T1. Indeed, the parts of the first Terminator remain in T2,
although official reports state that there were no remains. However, it is
the same star playing the different roles and the viewer soon finds that
the centripetal force of Arnold Schwarzenegger merges the two separate
figures of T1 and T2 into one.

The nature of the reprogrammed cyborg is of central interest. Like the
promised "kinder and gentler America" of George Bush, for whom
Schwarzenegger used to campaign, this android fills a different role from
T1. While we have already invoked the Christological interpretation or
code, we will now add to that the psychological reading with its emphasis
on the family. As far as character slots are concerned, Schwarzenegger
takes up the place vacated by Kyle Reese in T1, namely, as the father. T2
works away at the mother, son, and Schwarzenegger relationship in order
to generate a strange new, but still familiar, form of the nuclear family.
Fred Pfeil argues that by means of the "play of opposition and symbiosis

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4 Pfeil is mistaken when he identifies the particular song as "Born to be Bad"; it is
in fact "Bad to the Bone," but anyone may be forgiven for confusing Thorogood's
songs.

essential to T2" the film is able to play with more off-beat variations of the family while coming down hard on the essential social and libidinal necessity of the family as such. Thus Linda Hamilton's Sarah Connor is a "fully operational warrior-woman," a "phallic mother with a complete set of soldier-of-fortune contacts, cache of weapons and survivalist skills" (Pfeil: 29). Yet for all her toughness, Sarah Connor is unable to save the world: the real star must do that while Sarah's motherly anguish over the nuked playground of her dreams reveals her softer, more genuine, self. Arnold himself arrives "available for refunctioning from killing machine to nurturant proto-father" (Pfeil: 29); yet despite efforts to "humanize" him he remains sufficiently aloof from emotions, in order to fill the more traditional role of the detached but hard-working father. Even John Connor, the rebel leader and savior of the world who in both T1 and T2 sends figures back to protect himself, slips gradually into place as the dependent, dependable, and obedient child. At the same time this new family is removed from the traditional domestic space of suburbia—the foster parents—and relocated in the dead zones of freeway, institution, research center, mall, plant, and guerrilla encampment in the California desert. Even the feminist and racial critiques are permitted to say their (misdirected) pieces—Sarah Connor's rage is directed at the black middle class Dyson family—as part of this total affirmation.

All this would seem to be the case for this "earthly family," but it only goes part of the way toward the more important "holy family." Schwarzenegger's filling of the father slot brings about some important modifications of that slot: Kyle Reese, despite his arrival from the future, was a total flesh and blood human being. The reprogrammed cyborg is not completely human, adding to this family a dimension concerned with the traditional science-fiction motif of the relationship between humans and machines. This alteration in the family make-up provides a great deal of room for developing the question of the nature of human existence and its limits, and that development takes the form of the growing relationship between the android and the savior-to-be, John Connor, a relationship which enables the "new person" in the cyborg to develop. It is John who develops this new person in Arnold, teaching him—in a manner reminiscent of a child learning to speak—how to speak (slang) as a human, to behave as a human, and indicating in some way what it means to feel pain as a human being (focused on the external sign of tears).

Yet the relationship between savior and cyborg is permitted to flower through a crucial change in the role of the mother. At a certain point Sarah Connor abdicates her role as androgynous parent. Watching Schwarzenegger and John striking up their relationship, Sarah's voice-over reflects: "of all the would-be fathers, this machine was the only one

that measured up." It wouldn't drink or come home late; it wouldn't ne-
glect the child or run off and leave him; it would be there to protect him.
From this point on the basic familial relationship is that between father
and son, while the mother falls into the background (a little like the Holy
Spirit in Christian doctrine). In the most traditional of patterns her nur-
turing of the child is over; his approaching adulthood requires a mascu-
line touch. Sarah's peripheral status vents itself immediately in the futile
commando attack on the Dyson family.

There are, then, two phases in the realignment of Arnold
Schwarzenegger in T2: the switch (in a more than figural sense) from evil
to good and the growing relationship with John Connor. Both phases of
Schwarzenegger's rehabilitation enable the crucial slippage of the films to
take place: the transfer of savior roles between T1 and T2. The repro-
grammed cyborg is ready for perhaps the most important reinvestment of
the whole film, for the conventional identification of John Connor as the
savior of the human race is now gradually eroded and displaced onto
Schwarzenegger. This transfer takes place in almost direct proportion to
the increasing intimacy of father and son. When the climax of the film ap-
pears on the screen it is not John Connor who makes the final sacrifice,
but Arnold Schwarzenegger who sacrifices his life so that humanity might
be saved.

The story that brings the slippage in savior figures to the fore turns on
one of the many temporal twists characteristic of both films. In order to
avoid the nuclear war—"Judgment Day"—our heroes—mom, dad, son,
and coopted middle class black scientist Dyson—realize they must oblit-
erate the remains of the destroyed cyborg from T1, since it is the parts
from that cyborg that provide the stimulus for the construction of the new
supercomputer system (Skynet); the system that eventually takes control
and tries to eliminate humans. The vital pieces are obtained from the for-
tress of the corporate research center and destroyed in the lake of fire in
the steel works. Yet one revolutionary computer chip remains: that which
is located in Schwarzenegger's own alloy head. At Schwarzenegger's
command, John Connor (since Terminators cannot self-destruct) must
then pull the lever which allows Arnold to descend into the lake of fire.

Arnold Schwarzenegger has become the savior of the world. The
word for this used to be "patripassianism," the suffering of the father in-
stead of, along with, or as the son: once branded as a heresy, its modern
recovery owes a great deal to Jürgen Moltmann's *The Crucified God*. In-
deed, in a further twist to this Christological slippage, the sacrifice is pre-

ceded by a resurrection scene.[5] Impaled (the suggestion of a cross can hardly be avoided) with a crowbar by the second Terminator, Schwarzenegger lies beaten and "dead," until—and this is almost as difficult to believe as his initial conversion—the power backup kicks in and the red glow returns deep in his eyes. He literally rises from the dead, coming over the turning pulley-wheel (grave-stone?) to finish off the second Terminator. Lazarus has nothing on this scene.

The transfer of savior roles is complete, for in the act of destroying the source of information for the new Skynet system the future nuclear war is averted, along with the battle between machines and humans, and therefore the need for John Connor to lead humans to victory over the machines. John Connor has been comprehensively outplayed as a savior.

In order to excavate the significance of this slippage recourse must be had to the notion of figuration, or Freudian displacement. The first figurative leap connects the Christological slippage, which passes us by with little notice, with an even more peripheral feature of the film: obsolescence. In all his sophisticated newness, Schwarzenegger-as-Terminator in T1 comes with the mind-blowing terror and fascination of the marketable technological "breakthrough," enhanced all the more by his trip back from the future. By the time we get to T2, the old model Terminator has been superseded by the latest product in the Terminator assembly line. It is the new product which enthralls and threatens with its as yet unfathomed technological wizardry. Schwarzenegger on the other hand now enters that realm of domesticated obsolescence which characterizes the familiar appliances and furniture—including the essential nuclear family structure—of a middle-class household. Apart from the well-worn dad, he resembles in some respects an overgrown action figure for the bored John to play with. The technological sophistication with which he has been assembled is no longer a mystery, but is now explained by Arnold, exploited by the corporate research laboratory, and reprogrammed in some near future time.

It is in the process of obsolescence that the films inscribe their own gap in time (1984 and 1991), for the computer graphics, the virtual reality, required to produce the figure of the second Terminator was simply not available in 1984. The "special effects" of T1 were spectacular, but they date in comparison to the $90 million extravaganza of T2.

Yet the process is not restricted to these two figures alone. In T1 Kyle Reese provides Sarah Connor, and therefore us, with enough information to situate the android out to eliminate her: Schwarzenegger in the first

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5 In this continual rearrangement and overplay of images, the descent into the lake of molten metal is also a descent/ascent into clouds of smoke, evoking the ascension of Christ into the clouds.

film was a new model cyborg, systems model 101 with living tissue over a computerized metal skeleton, who replaced the older 600 model with its rubber skin. By the second film the T101 has been superseded by the advanced prototype T1000, a radically new development constructed out of liquid metal alloy. There are therefore three cyborg models—T600, T101, and T1000 (presumably the "T" designates "Terminator" but Toshiba made a laptop known as the T1000, and the "T" also conjures up Toyota)—that present us with a sequence of models and their subsequent obsolescence. Perhaps the only hint that the T1000 may be flawed lies in its early prototype status.

This regular rhythm of continual product upgrade suggests a very different time scale than the stark apocalyptic one of the overt story line. While the first figural leap led from the Christological slippage to the process of obsolescence, the second figural move is from this rhythm of continual product upgrade to that which it indicates quite clearly: the patterns of the market. Rapid obsolescence—indeed a technological know-how which is able to depict its own obsolescence—is a feature of the late capitalist mode of production in which we now live. The Christological or Trinitarian slippage, therefore, functions as a figure for the contradictions of the market, which must continually trip over itself to produce ever newer items in a futile effort to overcome those contradictions. The terror depicted in these films, then, is located not so much in the Terminator figures themselves as in the all-consuming frenzy of the market; or rather, the terror of the market, of capitalism, is displaced onto the Terminators.

The suggestion that the market is the ultimate signified is reinforced by the play in time and tense in both films: the future, past, and present are blurred into one another through a variety of techniques. Some scenes operate with the temporal distinction clearly in place: the dream or nightmare sequences of Sarah Connor, particularly those which depict the nuclear holocaust (the other time shifts toggle back and forth over this divide but Sarah focuses on it); the storytelling in T1 of Kyle Reese in which the visual depiction of the rat-infested and smoke-filled underground reinforces the words which try to describe that future to Sarah; the beginning of T2 with its battle scene of humans versus machines over the same children's playground which features in Sarah's nightmares; and even the basic story line in which a Terminator and a Protector are sent back from the future either to eliminate or protect John in his fetal or pubescent state. By means of these sequences, and by Kyle Reese's awareness in T1 that he was in legendary times, the present is elevated to the status of some mythical time in which all that is significant for the future takes place.

The time difference would seem to be clear: Los Angeles in the "present" (1984 and 1991) and Los Angeles in 2029, a mere forty five or thirty eight years away (in good P.K. Dick fashion) yet separated by the nuclear war that opens on August 29, 1997. Beginning with the statement at the opening of T1 that the final battle "would be fought here, in our present," a number of sequences break down the time difference which appeared to be so clear. In T1 the time avenues through which Schwarzenegger and Reese came have been destroyed (they seem to have been restored for T2): there is no escape from the battle of the present. The father of the child, Reese, is the one sent back by the son to protect his mother so that he himself could be safely born. As Pfeil notes (25) the apocalypse is in many respects already upon us in the present, with official power running amok (the sadistic mental hospital, the security systems of the slick corporation, and the heavily armed and violent police) and a group of guerrillas opposing the power network all the while surrounded by fireballs and piles of bodies.

However, the main mechanism of temporal distortion and the breakdown of historical depth comes with a fundamentally materialist move: the contrast between the physical temporal progression of the films as they turn on their spools and that of the "real" time depicted in the films. Thus we have the photograph of Sarah taken by the Mexican boy at the end of T1, which is the photo treasured by Reese in the future of "real" time (as in an earlier flash forward) but which has already appeared in the past of "filmic" time (the photo in fact gains its significance for us from this earlier appearance). Further, the death of Kyle Reese in the "present" should cancel his future existence and thereby invalidate the earlier depictions of him in that future, but for the physical temporal progression of the film, Reese's life, whether in the future or in the present, does in fact come to an end; there is no more of Reese in any temporal mode after his death. While this conflict in temporal sequences may be accounted for by the point that Reese was sent back from the future, the major breakdown of the "real" temporal sequence takes place in T2 with the saving activity of Schwarzenegger: his self-sacrifice removes the last trace of the technological know-how which could provide the base for the Skynet computer systems, thus averting the nuclear war, the battle between humans and machines, and the soteriological role of John Connor himself. The circumstances which set up the stories of both films have now been removed. One final twist completes the collapse of temporal separation: in both films we are told that the events depicted in the film were the result of the near victory of the humans, led by John Connor, over the machines. In two final and desperate bids, the Power Network attempts to save itself from imminent defeat. Yet the depictions of the future give little impres-

sion that the humans are in control: they appear hounded, weary, and virtually beyond hope. It would seem that the victory which is referred to is in fact the one that takes place in the present. The John Connor of the future has set in motion a series of events which result in his own birth and then final victory over the machines. The future/past/present conflict is resolved at the close of filmic time, thus collapsing all temporal difference.

This play with time bristles with interpretive possibilities, but the main point is that there is a chronic loss of historical depth. It all gets thrown together in an undifferentiated conglomeration or historical pastiche. It is this approach—or rather lack thereof—to history which has been identified and traced by Fredric Jameson on many occasions as the loss of history which is so characteristic of postmodernism. Such a loss is ultimately the result of a commodity culture in which items from very different times and places may appear side by side on the shelves in their identical plastic wrappers or in the catalogues in identical glossy photographs. Not only are people, as consumers, brought to the same level by capitalism, but historical periods and moments are also leveled into one flat expanse. In this way, the play of time and tense reinforces the figuration of the market located in the Christological slippage.

The intertextually-based Christological reading of the *Terminator* films has now been carried a stage further with the identification of the figuration of the market in the Christological slippage between Schwarzenegger and John Connor, and in the understanding of history as such. But how is the terror of the market to be faced and overcome? The answer is found in the next interpretive code to be used, which is that of utopian analysis.

UTOPIA AND POPULARITY

Both T1 and T2 were huge successes at the box office, a phenomenon which makes them all the more intriguing. The search for a major reason for such vast popular appeal has recourse to Jameson's strategy of utopian analysis, which seeks out the utopian dimensions of even the most reactionary and resistant material. Utopian analysis always appears with its partner, ideological analysis, the negative moment of any reading. This relationship between ideology and utopia in Jameson's work owes a considerable debt to Paul Ricoeur's negative and positive interpretation, or the hermeneutics of suspicion and recovery, as well as to the utopian drive of Ernst Bloch (Jameson, 1976). In this appropriation of Ricoeur and Bloch, ideological analysis absorbs into itself the hermeneutics of suspicion (understanding ideology for the moment in the traditional sense as false consciousness); utopian analysis, on the other hand, carries on the

task of the hermeneutics of recovery, searching for the point where, espe-
cially in the very act of avoidance and concealment, the wish and hope for
something vastly new and better shows through in a cultural product.

Jameson pushes the relationship, or the dialectic, of ideology and uto-
pia to its logical conclusion. With the reminder of the importance of class
in all this, specifically a conflictual or Hegelian (master-slave) notion of
class consciousness, Jameson argues that "all class consciousness—or in
other words, all ideology in the strongest sense, including the most exclu-
sive forms of ruling-class consciousness just as much as that of opposi-
tional or oppressed classes—is in its very nature Utopian" (1981:289; see
1976:57–58). Along with the specific notion of class consciousness that op-
erates here, two further limiting factors close down the more dangerous
implications that Jameson wishes to avoid: the first—following logically
from the notion of class consciousness—designates "Utopian" as that
which "expresses the unity of a collectivity" (1981:291); while the second
turns the whole discussion on its head by specifying the proposition just
quoted as allegorical or figurative; i.e. that collectivities of whatever kind
imperfectly foreshadow the collective life of a future classless society. In
this sense, then, Jameson argues that ideology is utopian, and vice versa;
and thus that Marxian negative and positive hermeneutics can be sepa-
rated only at the peril of their analytic power.

It is Jameson's identification of ideology and utopia that forms the ba-
sis of the argument for the popularity of the *Terminator* films. For few
would doubt that these films constitute some of the most ideologically re-
pulsive material in mass culture today; yet at the same time they are pow-
erful and attractive because they tap into the utopian urge and drive,
which is normally deflected in so many ways. Identifying the negative
moments of the film from its structural connections to big business down
to Schwarzenegger himself is a reasonably straightforward task. There is
the Romantic notion that humans are somehow more than and better than
machines and yet threatened by them. The taboo "i" word of contempo-
rary market theory looms large in both films, namely, the various institu-
tions which attempt to crush the individual spirits of the characters: John
as subject to the welfare system of foster care; Sarah in the psychiatric
prison; the police force that tries to wipe them all out; even the overgrown
corporation that uses whatever means to get ahead of its competitors. The
connection between the Right's claim to the family and the valorization of
the family in this film needs no special elaboration. Schwarzenegger even
does his bit for the National Rifle Association with the by now traditional
trip to the gun store or weapons arsenal to stock up before piling the
screen full of bodies (thus in *Raw Deal, Commando, Total Recall,* as well as
Terminator 1 and 2). Schwarzenegger's intrusion as a star into the film has

already been noted, but here it is his own political activity which comes to the fore. Known as "Conan the Republican" he has campaigned for Reagan and Bush, despite being married into the Kennedy clan. More recently, Schwarzenegger appeared in Barcelona at the 1992 Olympic Games leading the official White House delegation to the Games on behalf of George Bush. Business connections are not far behind, for he was also in Barcelona to open yet another nightclub (known as Club Hollywood) as part of the combined business operations of himself, Sylvester Stallone (whose film-based political messages—e.g. *Cobra*—are much more blunt) and Bruce Willis. Such is the savior figure of T2.

However, what is most fascinating are the modes of utopian gratification in the midst of this reactionary turf. Apart from the collective utopian wish-fulfillment offered by the depiction of the disintegrated and reconstituted family, the fundamental utopian appeal of these films is based upon tapping into the political unconscious of people by means of the Christian savior story (a story with which most people who view the films will have some vague and nodding acquaintance). The films enthrall people by means of the self-sacrifice of Arnold for the human race; but Arnold's sacrifice is specifically designed to neutralize the development of Skynet (Internet? Bitnet?), the global computer network which is supposed to take over and then attack human beings. Indeed, Skynet is the real enemy in T2, and thus the T1000 disappears from view while the Skynet laboratory is being destroyed. (On a material level the T1000 and Skynet coalesce, since, as noted above, the physical production of the T1000 in the film was achieved by sophisticated computer graphics.)

This is perhaps the place to deal with the problem of "technolust," since the whole question is important to this stage of the argument. A major feature of the utopian gratification of films such as these lies in the consumption and thrill of the technological expertise which has gone into their production (consumption itself being an expression of utopian desire). Indeed the "special effects"—alternating with timed packages of violence—of T1 and T2 repeatedly topped the list as one of the most appealing aspects of these films. While the satisfaction of technolust is important for these films, arguments that focus on technology as such remain suspicious and unimpressive. I follow Jameson's suggestion that our awe and fear of communication and information networks, whose symbol is the ubiquitous computer terminal, are merely the displaced awe and fear of the global but unseen networks of the market, i.e. late capitalism. In a material sense these electronic networks are in fact primarily military and business tools. They therefore indicate in quite concrete terms the other reality of capitalism.

With this point in place it is possible to complete the argument. Skynet functions as a second major form of figuration in these films, in this case figuring the military and economic grid of late capitalism. The code of utopian analysis thus connects at this point with that of figuration: the real and .final terror and enemy is nothing other than the relentless and comprehensive market. This is where the utopian power of the films finally lies, since in depicting the destruction of Skynet they pick up and assuage the basic but hidden fear that people have of the market, displaced as it is onto technology. However, people are assured that what will overcome the market is not some state of brutal anarchy, but a cooperative utopia in which humans dominate technology and the market. In other words, the market's contradictions and threats are overcome and Judgment Day is averted.[6]

Although the family offers the picture of a utopian collectivity, and although the consumption of technology offers libidinal satisfaction, they remain important but secondary features of the utopian dimension of the *Terminator* films. The primary utopian factor is the hope and wish for a process of revolution, for the violent destruction—in response to the institutionalized and covert violence embedded within competition—of capitalism. Here I disagree with Jameson when he emphasizes the collectivity as the focus of utopian wishes; in these films the revolution takes equal if not prior position in the utopian schema.

Indeed the revolutionary process is central to a number of other films in which Schwarzenegger features. In the more superficial and crude *Commando*, revolution is given a negative assessment: Schwarzenegger deals with third world guerrillas and mercenaries in a style that would make Stallone's *Rambo* sit up and take notice. Although the physique of the former Mr. Universe plays a role in nearly all his films, it has become gradually less obvious as a theme. In *Commando* the theme is still quite strong (although it is by no means the dominant factor of the film as, for example, in *Pumping Iron* or *Hercules in New York*) although it must make room for other dimensions. A similar situation applies to *Conan the Barbarian*, but in this case the revolutionary theme becomes a little more in-

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[6] Judgment Day is of course the nuclear holocaust, brought about by the computer networks to rid the world of humans. There is another referent here, however, for T1 and T2 straddle the collapse of the Soviet Union and the communist governments of Eastern Europe. As these were rolled back, the threat, in the popular psyche at least, of nuclear confrontation seemed to disappear overnight. Its removal in T2 would seem to reflect this change in some way. The nature of the Terminators becomes interesting in this respect: the heavily armed Terminator of the first film is a confrontational figure while the Terminator of the second film is much more sinister and unpredictable, changing shape and form and taking on the appearance of familiar people. The enemy has become much more difficult to locate: it used to be over there in a clearly definable form and place, but now it may be amongst us.

teresting,7 for here Schwarzenegger struggles out of a youth spent in slav-
ery to overthrow the oppressive regime under which people must live.
Indeed *Conan the Barbarian* first gives us the classic features of the
Schwarzenegger revolution: a small band of revolutionaries overthrows
the tyrannical regime and gives everyone their freedom. Thus in *Running
Man* Schwarzenegger becomes the last fugitive hope against an oppres-
sive system which gives its "criminals" (political prisoners) the chance to
be released should they be successful in the wildly popular television
game show "Running Man," based on the traditional generic item of the
human hunt. In this case Schwarzenegger succeeds in outsmarting the
game and overturning the system itself.

Along with the *Terminator* films, however, the most sophisticated
treatment of the revolution comes with *Total Recall*. Not content with
worthwhile but disinherited citizens, in this film the revolutionaries sig-
nify their status as social outcasts by carrying in their bodies the gro-
tesque deformities induced by radiation (the contrast with Schwarzeneg-
ger's physique is quite deliberate). This fringe status is enhanced by the
situation of the struggle on Mars, where these outcasts carry on a subver-
sive operation against the oppressive control of the protective canopy by
those in power. In the battle for the supply of oxygen, which would then
give people freedom, Schwarzenegger assists the freedom fighters in their
revolution, the result being the release of a vast amount of moisture into
the atmosphere of Mars which gives everyone the freedom to breathe
their own air.

The question as to why such reactionary films should be so concerned
with the problem of the revolution brings us to the final and unresolved
contradiction of the *Terminator* films and those films like it. In each case—
Conan the Barbarian, Running Man, Total Recall, Terminator 1 and 2—the
pattern of a small band of freedom fighters destroying the oppressive
system is based not so much upon any notion of a revolutionary destruc-
tion of capitalism, but rather upon the revolution at the beginning of
capitalism. For the freedom fighters evoke the small but dedicated bands
of merchants who through their labors against great odds brought about
the collapse of the feudal order and the advent of capitalism. The model
for these films then is the bourgeois revolution of an earlier time, which
was in no sense a gentle process, but one which involved invasion, ex-
ploitation and violence.

The eternal return of the bourgeois revolution in these films indicates
that the wished for utopia on the other side is none other than a classical
liberal one, for liberalism itself remains a utopian quest—if only we could

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7 The libidinal cross-investment between sexual body and revolution is a further
element worth pursuing at another time.

get rid of state interference, if only we would let the market rule, then we could get about our wealth creation without hindrance and all would be golden. Even the iron foundry at the close of T2 expresses this nostalgic wish for a more classical stage of liberalism with its economic base in the heavy industry of a bygone era. The contradiction of course for the *Terminator* films is that they present the revolution as one directed against capitalism, but a liberal utopia beyond capitalism is a contradiction in terms.

DIALECTICAL FOLDBACK

I did, however, promise a complication of all this, which involves broadening the horizon beyond the cultural products themselves to include the interpreter or critic. This is a dimension all too readily forgotten in the work of Fredric Jameson, which has served as the model of interpretation thus far. In earlier works, particularly *Marxism and Form*, Jameson argues that "dialectical thought is in its very structure self-consciousness and may be described as the attempt to think about a given object on one level, and at the same time to observe our own thought processes as we do so" (1971:340). For Marxism "the self-consciousness aimed at is the awareness of the thinker's position in society and in history itself, and of the limits imposed on this awareness by class position— in short of the ideological and situational nature of all thought. . ." (1971:340). Yet if we view the whole of Jameson's corpus, this concern for the inclusion of the interpreter too often translates into the study of other critics and other interpretations. There is, in other words, a gradually diminishing effort to bear out in practice this axiom from *Marxism and Form*.

One of the consequences of the absence, or rather concealment, of the interpreter is that the selfsame interpreter is thereby enabled to attain some form of omniscience. Concealment and control tie in together here: not only am I able as critic to efface my presence through the interpretive tools I am using but by means of this self-effacement I am also able to achieve some interpretive omniscience. I suspect that the threat of the omniscient critic is not restricted to Jameson and that much criticism, biblical or otherwise, operates with a similar covert critic who in the final copy conveys little if any of the uncertainty and tentativeness of all interpretation.[8]

In order, then, to activate the mechanisms of deconcealment and factor myself into the interpretive process, as well as to widen the intertextual nature of my reading by including the "texts" of my own situation, I

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[8] A fascinating study would be to investigate the various ways such critical concealment is achieved.

will have recourse to three items, one methodological and two from the *Terminator* films: the Althusserian understanding of ideology, the function of Schwarzenegger himself in the films, and the generic item of hand-to-hand or warrior combat.

In a major contribution to the reassessment of ideology which lies behind the earlier discussion of ideology and utopia—"Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses (Notes Towards an Investigation)" (Althusser, 1971:121–73/1984:1–60)—Louis Althusser suggests that ideology "represents the Imaginary relationship of individuals to their Real conditions of existence" (1971:153). That is to say, ideology gains a more neutral and permanent function over against the traditional Marxist notion of false consciousness. Apart from the Lacanian sense of terms such as "Imaginary" and "Real" (it was Althusser's feat to incorporate Lacan into a structural Marxism), there are two dimensions of this definition which are important for this discussion. First, ideology is by this definition a form of mediation or mapping between individual and totality, rendering the relationship imaginable and possible, yet including at the same time signals of the difficulty of doing so. Second, one of the significant means of mediation between the individual and the conditions of existence is that of narrative. Ideologies are, in a sense, buried narratives or stories. I would suggest, therefore, that the *Terminator* films are ideological in Althusser's sense of the term: these stories assist me in mapping myself onto the context of late capitalism, as I suspect they do for a good many other people as well.

However, in elaborating on precisely how this might be so, we need to move on to the next item, which is the role of Schwarzenegger himself. In the preceding discussion I have designated the various characters of the films by their character names—John and Sarah Connor, Kyle Reese and so on—yet in the case of Arnold Schwarzenegger I used the actor's name rather than his movie persona as the Terminator.[9] The fact that this feature of the discussion was initially unconscious is perhaps even more significant: it signals to me a substantial libidinal investment in the glossy carapace which constitutes the public person of Arnold Schwarzenegger, which is much greater than the two *Terminator* films. There is, in other words, a half-conscious investment on my part in Schwarzenegger—once described as a condom with muscles—which has the sexual as its primary driving force. As a male in the dying years of the second millennium Schwarzenegger provides a sinister and reactionary point of identification in the context of the fundamental challenges of feminism. Yet my own identification or investment is not in the Terminator character alone; it is

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9 I owe this observation to Gary Phillips, who read an earlier version of this paper.

in the much larger projection or public persona which we know as Arnold Schwarzenegger, a projection which is enabled by and indeed fundamental to the star system as that has been developed by Hollywood. Schwarzenegger fills what is by now the familiar category of the Hollywood superstar with its complex and constructed collection of images and representations which constitute the "star" in question. Schwarzenegger then is much more Arnold Schwarzenegger in his films rather than any specific character or role, and I would suggest that my unintentional designation of Schwarzenegger by his superstar title rather than by the specific character of the films both reflects the Hollywood star system and its success in selling its various superstar commodities to consumers such as myself. Yet it is the star system, in producing the superstar Schwarzenegger, which also provides the ground upon which my own process of investment may operate.

There is, however, a curious twist to the star system as it applies to Schwarzenegger. A useful distinction here is that between the Hollywood star or superstar and the character actor who often plays a supporting role in Hollywood films but is more commonly found as a basic element of the television series.[10] It would seem that Schwarzenegger is the first to successfully bridge this gap; he is, therefore, a superstar character actor, or the first "McDonald's superstar," predictable and somewhat bland but immensely popular and successful. In an adaptation of the barb directed at Katherine Hepburn, Schwarzenegger has been described as having the ability to act out the emotional range from A almost to B. I would suggest that it is because of his inability to act that he has been able to combine superstar and character actor (it is not a coincidence that his greatest films—*Terminator* 1 and 2—are precisely those in which he plays the role of a cyborg, a character for which his inability to act is a virtue, for machines do not behave like humans). This combination of superstar and character actor has indeed made of Schwarzenegger an even more highly consumable item than is usual for the star system. It is at this point that the economic links up with the sexual: libidinal investment takes place all the more readily with this product's easy accessibility.

Let me sum up the argument thus far: the *Terminator* films serve the crucial ideological function of enabling me to map myself onto late capitalism and they do so by means of the star system in which Schwarzenegger has become the superstar character actor, both highly sexual and consumable. How might I then map my own situation as interpreter of these

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[10] John Candy may of course be cited as an example of a Hollywood character actor, but then his comedy films occupy a second or third level behind the blockbusters in which superstars are traditionally found. Candy has in fact shown glimpses, such as the appearance in *J.F.K.*, of ability beyond his usual character.

films? There would seem to be two processes going in my assessment of these films. The first offers a conscious criticism and attempts to account for their popularity. While this is going on the second, largely unconscious, is also taking place in which I identify with and appropriate these films as my own stories. On this level I might identify the following. From a gender perspective they allow me to glory in machismo and male dominance while professing to have disposed of these things. From a religious, or more specifically biblical perspective, they offer a way to relate my particular belief system, generated out of a European Calvinist perspective, to contemporary society. It is deeply gratifying to find the biblical texts forming part of the intertextual context of these films. Racially, as an Austrian by birth Schwarzenegger permits me—born in a colonial country from Teutonic (Dutch) parents—a fleeting if very submerged satisfaction in Aryan superiority. Physically and sexually, Schwarzenegger reinforces my associations between virility and the abnormal muscles produced by steroids and pumping iron. From a political perspective, a virulent opposition on my part to capitalism and the forces of the market is gratified by the figuration in the films of the destruction of precisely those forces (see above). And from the class dimension, I remain a member of that fraction of the middle class constituted by the intelligentsia, attempting eternally to flee that class but equally eternally caught up in its class consciousness. It is to the essentially monotonous and humdrum situation of the middle class that the video-store genre of "action" supplies a ready response. Here is all the excitement and stimulation the middle class seeks in order to escape its deadpan everyday existence, comparable in fact to the overpriced thrill-seeking activities such as white-water rafting or skydiving whose primary customers are white-collar employees of the large corporations. These films indeed provide an articulation of middle-class consciousness. My appropriation of all these dimensions of the *Terminator* films, while offering a rational critique of them, is signalled most clearly by that fact that I remain an avid consumer of Schwarzenegger's films.

However, such an effort at mapping briefly undertaken above can never be complete, and this incompleteness is itself suggested by precisely that element in the films which may be said to provide primary ignition for such existential identification in the first place. This element both opens up and problematizes my investment in the films. It is of course the generic item familiar from folklore—and this includes the Bible—of hand-to-hand or warrior combat.[11] Essentially a pre-capitalist folk motif, rang-

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[11] That many generic conventions carry through from folklore to popular culture needs further exploration, but the possibility opens up a potential crossfertilization of methods from one to the other. This is the way, it seems to me, that biblical studies may make greater use of cultural critical theories.

ing from David and Goliath to medieval jousting, it closes out three of Schwarzenegger's films—*Commando, Terminator* 1 and 2—and constitutes a major plot item in *Predator*. In each case it is a duel to the death, or at least destruction. That my investment is in some trouble, however, is signalled by the fact that Schwarzenegger is not always the victor. In *Commando* all is well: the old antagonist of special agent Matrix (Schwarzenegger), now working as a mercenary for a tinpot third world island despot, meets his well deserved end. The problems begin with T1, for here it is Schwarzenegger himself who comes to an extraordinarily violent end as the Terminator at the hands of Reese and Sarah Connor, only to be restored as temporary victor in T2 before he goes to a second death. This ambiguity of victor/victim is best played out in *Predator* in which there is a fine interplay of hunter/hunted, between the human commando (Schwarzenegger) and the highly sophisticated and superior yet also barbaric and revolting alien. This film indeed leaves itself all too obviously open to psychoanalytic interpretations focused on questions of internal conflicts between good and evil, barbarism and civilization, same and other, and so on. Thus, in the alien creature the human predator meets himself face to face and sees prefigured in the self-destruction of the alien his own destruction, for the alien, as Schwarzenegger in T2, is not destroyed by another but commits suicide. Warrior combat, then, constitutes a point of ideological entry into these films for the viewer and critic: this is where individuals may begin the process of locating themselves in the larger totality, yet this same feature indicates the complexity, incompleteness, and ultimate uncertainty of precisely that effort of mapping.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

I have argued that the *Terminator* films have rich intertextual connections with the biblical text, particularly those sections which are messianic, Christological, and apocalyptic. Yet the films make their own unorthodox contribution to the intertextual situation through what I have termed Christological slippage, a feature which has a logic of its own: the significant slippage of the function of savior from John Connor to Schwarzenegger sets off a series of connections which locate the ultimate figuration or referent as the market itself. The displaced savior story does service in the attempt to eliminate the terror of the market, but in the attempted process of elimination it plays upon and redirects the utopian theme of the revolution. At the same time the films and the superstar Schwarzenegger provide an opportunity for my own libidinal investment as well as an incomplete articulation of how I imagine myself as a refugee

middle class consumer within the context of late capitalism. It would seem then that the *Terminator* films touch on fundamental questions of human existence under capitalism. They serve both an ideological function in providing narratives which assist individuals in locating themselves within the totality and, unconsciously aware that capitalism is not much of a life, they seek a futile escape by a revolutionary, but regressive, transformation to an impossible utopia.

In the process of this argument a number of codes or methods of reading were used in order to explicate the intertextual situation of the *Terminator* films: theology (with biblical and Christological emphases), psychology, figuration, utopia, and ideology. The codes were also grouped under the various reading strategies of Fredric Jameson—transcoding, figuration, utopia and dialectical foldback—with a note that Jameson himself makes inadequate use of the latter. His own analyses would benefit from a greater consideration of this item. The use of the various semi-autonomous codes, however, would seem to constitute an effort in transcoding, or "inter-methodology" (metacommentary is a better term), where the strengths of the various possibilities were strung together into the one argument. This is to my mind a useful and versatile mode of interpretation, although its contribution to the notion of intertextuality remains to be explored.

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