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Hollywood movies, thanks to the variety of their genres, offer a rich history of the body in action. This 'action' can sometimes be radicalized to become the central element in the film. The term '*actioner*' then refers to a specific type of narrative resting on a series of high feats defining male characters as heroes. These principles determine the visibility of the characters' body and heroism is subsequently defined in terms of the spectacle it comes to offer. Cultural studies have thus frequently coined the body of the male hero in action films as the object of the spectator's gaze[1]. This type of display was not entirely new for American actors: long before Rambo's muscles got exposed on screen, Cary Grant and William Holden – among others – offered their bodies as eye-candy to moviegoers. Action movies however set a new standard for the male body, by engaging with excessive representations of triumphant masculinity. Paradoxically, this hard-coded masculinity came to suggest femininity as well, since the exhibition the body as the object of the gaze itself tended to be feminizing[2]. The position of *being looked at*, as Laura Mulvey demonstrated in her perennial 1975 article, was mostly reserved for women in most Hollywood genres.

Mulvey's framework offers a view of the hero where he is first and foremost the bearer of the look – a look that changes according to the genre of the film. In Westerns, heroes contemplate the horizon to better establish their power over the Land; in *noir* films, the private detective *looks* intently for clues. More recently, the image of the super-hero gazing at the city from a tower top has become a familiar trope of a new wave of action / comic book films. The definition of the hero in genre films thus rests on a complex interlocking of gazing and being gazed at.

Much criticism has followed Mulvey's work, including a comprehensive view of the male body as pin-up[3], especially in the cases of Arnold Schwarzenegger and Sylvester Stallone, both embodiments of a muscular and hyperbolic view of the flesh. However, Laura Mulvey does more than positing the concept of the gaze. When she speaks of the hero as "a figure in a landscape"' (Mulvey 13), she establishes a view of heroism defined in terms of space dynamics. My article hopes to examine the relationship between the contemporary Hollywood hero and the space he inhabits, and to determine how this relationship can at times affect a character's capacity to become a hero. Doing so, I seek to define heroism as a function of the body in relation to a specific space, usually determined by the movie's genre: jungles for action-adventure, spaceships and distant planets for science-fiction, etc.

The *actioner* itself must be understood as a subgenre, different from the broader category of action-adventure while still connected to it. Movies such as *Rambo: First Blood Part II* (George P. Cosmatos, 1985) or *Commando* (Mark Lester, 1985) harken back to Errol Flynn's bravado in *Robin Hood* (Michael Curtiz, 1938). However, they displace the production of the heroic body by refocusing on muscle and flesh, while the narrative seems to get less elaborate. In *actioners*, Action is no longer a function of the narrative but its very essence. The action genre rests on its hybridity: it constantly borrows from other Hollywood genres, while still defining a visual grammar of spectacle. Bodies, explosions and pyrotechnics conflate into the production of a spectacular, breathtaking entertainment. These aesthetics are also determined by the production of the action movies, and their subsequent status as high-concept[4] movies (on the production's side) and /or blockbusters (on the reception's side).

Despite the apparent simplicity of its aesthetics, the action genre utilizes the relationship between body and space in a number of ways. The male hero even seems to go from one excess to another in that regard. Body and space sometimes work in unison, as in *Rambo II* or *Predator* (John McTiernan, 1987). In those two movies, the bodies of Schwarzenegger and Stallone become the space they inhabit. As Rambo, Stallone hides in a mud column of sorts to ambush his opponents. When a Vietnamese enemy carefully approaches, oblivious to the trick, the audience only sees an eye open in a mass of earth, as if the jungle had turned human for a short instant. Schwarzenegger, faced with an enemy possessing the ability to fade into the jungle, mimics this skill and covers himself in mud – to finally defeat the creature. In those two cases, heroism seems to result from a close association between body and space.

As the eighties came to a close, however, the traditional context of the jungle, inherited from Vietnam War movies and revisionist tales[5] (*Uncommon Valor*, *Missing in Action*) was replaced by urban settings. The relationship between body and space subsequently shifted from osmosis to opposition. John McClane (Bruce Willis) epitomizes this motif in *Die Hard*. Repeatedly trapped in air ducts and elevator shafts, McClane's body cannot rely on the space surrounding him to perform his high feats. He must constantly be in opposition with his surroundings to prove himself worthy of his heroism: space is here defined primarily as an obstacle. Despite the apparent contrast between the two formulas, they both end up, in narrative terms, with the hero saving the day. With or without the help of space, the hero still manages to assert his heroism.

I would like to focus here on a very specific case, where space is neither an obstacle nor an ally, but appears as plainly anti-heroic. To do so, I will temporarily move away from the Action genre, to turn to a narrower corpus of films. The space of the office seems opposed to the construction of heroism in every way, firstly because it is a setting that seldom appears in Action films. When heroes want to prove themselves worthy, or when a common man has the occasion to save the day, they usually do so away from their home and work place, in exotic or monumental locales (from the jungles of *Commando* to the Nakatomi tower in *Die Hard*).

The cubicle appears as a photo negative to the traditional sites used by the Action film, as if no hero could ever emerge from an office. This framework predates the action films.

Consider the deconstructed body of Bartleby in Melville's *Bartleby the Scrivener*, or the despair conveyed in more recent narratives, such as *The Office* TV series (2005). Here, the modern office emerges as a space for anxiety, but also becomes a source of fascination. Contemporary photographers Steven Ahlgren and Phillip Toledano also offer representations of the office that are pregnant with a sense of unease[6]. The monotonous grid formed by the cubicles provides the viewer with an aesthetic experience of the familiar: boredom becomes sublime. Toledano's work taps into a different concept of the office, and defines it as a space for emptiness: the offices he shoots are all abandoned after downsizing. The aesthetic of ruins he develops informs recent Hollywood movies such as *Up in the Air*, which takes a close look at the aftermath of the 2008 financial crisis, criticizing the abstraction and inhumanity of the American offices.

If offices seem at first suspiciously absent from actions movies, they are frequently represented by other Hollywood genres. The filmic depictions of the office space are emblematic of the status of white collar work in the American society. *The Apartment* (Billy Wilder, 1960) focuses on the extreme organization of work: high-angle shots repeatedly emphasize the grid-like structure of the office. The *Mad Men* TV series (2007) recently reactivated this examination of the office in the sixties: in this context, where you work is who you are.

This bittersweet diagnosis seems quickly forgotten in the eighties, as movies get more and more fascinated by the aesthetics of the office. *Wall Street* (Oliver Stone, 1987) and *Working Girl* (Mike Nichols,1988) both construct their workspaces as bubbling with activity, notably by using a set of conventional images and sounds (the sound of ringing telephones or the documents flying around the room have since then become staples of the office subgenre). In terms of filmmaking, splits screens, rapid editing and shaky camera movements are all emblematic of the eighties office film: whatever non-bodily associations exist here are quickly dealt with by re-injecting action in an otherwise static environment. Later in the century, the anxiety associated with office work resurfaces. Written during the eighties, the Bret Easton Ellis novel *American Psycho* is only brought to screen in the nineties and brings to life the condition of the office worker in horrific ways.

In their 2003 study of the representation of the white collar male, Karen Ashcraft and Lisa Flores engage with a specific corpus of films, which I coined earlier as the office subgenre. In these films, male characters are featured as workers breaking free from an environment pictured as coercive and anti-masculine. *In the Company of Men* (Neil LaBute, 1997), *Fight Club* (David Fincher, 1999), *Office Space* (Mike Judge, 1999) and *American Beauty* (Sam Mendes, 1999) all frame masculinity in the context of the office and subsequently explore the possibility of a breakthrough for the main character(s). By the means of boxing, hypnosis or drugs, the men displayed in these movies go back to a more primitive, more natural – in a word, more masculine – self. The work routine is generally caricatured to emphasize its dullness, preparing the audience for the reformation of the male character. In two films (*Office Space* and *American Beauty*), this transformation necessitates to climb *down* the social ladder: the two main characters of these narratives settle for construction work and fast-food jobs, and reconnect with their inner selves in the process.

My aim here is not to go through this specific body of films but to draw from Ashcraft and Flores's critique of the discourses surrounding the modern day office and the white collar male. I wish to turn to their critical insight by focusing mainly on Action movies, or at least the seldom cases in which the office setting appears in the genre. Throughout the short history of the action genre, films such as *First Blood Part II*, *Die Hard*, and more recently *The Matrix* and *Wanted* have all sought to neutralize the potentially threatening connotations the office holds for the action hero.

The traditional occultation of the office in action movies is deeply rooted in the polarization between body and mind. This binary division belongs more widely to the Western culture, but its formulation in American movies takes a specific outline. In this framework, office work is associated with an urban, civilized, sedentary life, usually taking place indoors. Far from the classical 'adventurous' sites (jungles, distant planets), the office man is shown to mobilize his mind over his body. The use of the mind itself is not excluded from the action heroes' strategies, although the genre has been recurrently labeled as a lower form of entertainment, or as Yvonne Tasker has plainly albeit ironically coined it, '*dumb movies for dumb people*' if not '*Neanderthal*'[7]. As I will mention later, Rambo even asserts its use. The 'mind', as the white collar uses it has to be understood as an abstract, dehumanized series of tasks. In both *Wanted* and *Office Space*, iconic objects such as a stapler come to embody both the formal dullness of the office and the alienating quality of the work associated to it. Finally, offices are also connected to the wider realm of domesticity. Historically, domestication has constituted a threat for heroes and their masculinity, especially in the Western genre where the line was drawn between the outlaw who rode off to the sunset and the westerner who settled for marriage.

Mirroring this set of connotations, labor and handiwork emerge as a sign of a positive, potent, masculinity. Since the beginning of the 20th century, physical activity and mastery over the body have been coded as essential characteristics of the ideal American man. In the 1880s Teddy Roosevelt encouraged young boys to spend time outdoors and exercise as much as possible. A counter- model for masculinity started emerging in the shape of the *sissy*, typically the boy who was too scrawny, uneasy in his practice of sports and spent too much time in the company of women[8]. Back to the contemporary context of the workspace, it is important to remember that these connotations are also bespoken in terms of class. The body of the blue collar male benefits from more positive associations, since it is coded as a more natural, thus more American, image of masculinity. The concept of primitivism is central here. The action heroes, especially in the early eighties, work very hard to present their bodies as natural, when in actuality these bodies were the result of intense workouts and fitness programs (Schwarzenegger and Stallone being obvious instances of this tendency[9]).

Secondly, the office is not only culturally anti-masculine, but also feminizing. The progressive integration of women in the workspace that followed the Civil Rights movement literally feminizes the context of the office, as it threatens to weaken the traditional association between the workspace and male power[10]. In the eighties and nineties, a small cycle of films gave a voice to the male anxieties following this shift in the context of the office. *Fatal Attraction* (Adrian Lyne, 1987) and *Disclosure* (Barry Levinson, 1994) both pinpoint the presence of women in the workspace as threatening; furthermore, women are

eventually portrayed as unfit to hold a man's job, mainly because they show a boundless promiscuity. Contrasting the dangerous femininities incarnated by respectively Demi Moore and Glenn Close, the character of the good housewife ultimately relocates women to prior stereotyped contexts.

Office work, in this perspective, is doubly feminizing. Centered on the mind, it negates the primitive connection between the American male and his body, while the presence of women in the workspace deprives it from its original masculine connotations. Ultimately, masculinity is bound to be in crisis when it is set in a cubicle. This can explain why action heroes have traditionally been associated with blue collar work, even if the work itself is not necessarily portrayed within the limits of the given narrative. Bruce Willis is often cast as a cop, while Steven Seagal's debut in *Above the Law* (Andrew Davis, 1988) manifests the same grounding of the character in terms of class. Sylvester Stallone, when he is not portraying characters with a military background (in the *Rambo* franchise), famously embodied this blue collar masculinity in the *Rocky* movies. Stallone's stardom appears to be resting on this type of coding: in *Over the Top* (Menahem Golan, 1987), he plays a truck driver; later in his career, *Daylight* (Rob Cohen, 1996) and *Copland* (James Mangold, 1997) offer a similar framing in terms of class.

Douglas Holt and Craig Thompson, in their 2004 social study show the great contradictions that American men are faced with in terms of role models, and can help us understand how blue collar masculinity offers a desirable ideal for men. While the 'breadwinner' is praised for his commitment to this family and his work, he is also deprecated, as the two authors go on to explain:

> Mass culture is flooded with portraits of breadwinners as organization men who are alienated by the conformity and subservience in both organizational and domestic settings. These stigmas came alive in the eighties as Americans resonated with Ronald Reagan's claim that innovation-stifling bureaucrats had caused America's decline in economic power (Wills 2000). Whether represented with pathos (*Glengary Glenross*), vilified as the vanguard of an oppressive or corrupt power structure (e.g., *Wall Street*, *The X-Files*), or lampooned (e.g., *Married with Children*, *The Simpsons*), men who are part of the establishment are readily coded as "failed fathers," sell-outs, petty bureaucrats, cowardly sycophants, or broken men. (427)

Holt and Thompson link the figure of the breadwinner to the ideal 'man-of-action character'(Holt and Thompson, 428), who defends family values and is often dedicated to his job – but behaves so outside of the boundaries established by society. It appears that white collar work, despite its desirability evokes more strongly conformity than blue collar work does. The blue collar worker functions as middle term: in symbolical terms, he manages to be committed to his work and family, without being feminized in the process.

Even when contextualized far from the office, the action hero still needs to locate his masculinity in relation to this threatening space. The office, because it suggests a lack of physicality and an excess of domestication, has to be repressed by the action hero. *Rambo II*

and *Die Hard* show several commonalities in the way their heroes negotiate with the office's set of connotations. At first, the two heroes establish a relationship of domination with the office, by destroying it in the most radical fashion. As Rambo vaporizes the American military's headquarters with an assault weapon, John McClane sets up another strategy: the battle taking place in the Nakatomi building turns the corporate environment into a Vietnam-like jungle. In a very self-reflexive move, computers and glass doors give way to smoke, rain and plants. The office literally *gives in* to a more primitive space.

Secondly, the two characters separate themselves from the office space by being opposed to bureaucrats. In *Rambo II*, Stallone's character has to deal with Marshall Murdock, a treacherous military man – coded as such according to the familiar motif of the untrustworthy government. Murdock believes in computers and programmed action, when Rambo upholds individual decision-making, as he states when saying: 'I always believed the mind was the best weapon'. The term mind, here, is not to be opposed to the body: the kind of intelligence Rambo refers to is deeply connected with instinct, therefore with a masculine type of physicality. I will show further on that the mind frequently gets redefined in physical terms to avoid the feminization fueled by the body/ mind dichotomy.

McClane's case is similar, albeit a little more complex since two characters come to incarnate these undesirable masculinities. Harry Ellis, the successful trader who works with McClane's wife, shows a low sense of morals, directly derived from his occupation. His capacity to negotiate financial deals quickly turns into a will to negotiate with the enemy: in the aftermath of the Iran hostage crisis that closed the Carter presidency, negotiating is clearly marked as anti-heroic – a framing that prompted many critics to label such films as *reaganite entertainment*[11].

Ellis is clearly coded as a villain, while the second character, Al, provides McClane with the only support he gets during the entire duration of the movie. Al is an African-American police officer who helps to save the day. Overweight, Al's body is played for laughs, as we witness the character gorge on Hostess pastries during his service. His implication in the action is limited to the conversations he holds over a walkie-talkie with McClane. Later in the narrative, Al confesses a traumatic experience – his accidental shooting of a kid – that resulted in his being removed from the streets. This relocates Al in a familiar stereotype, the *desk-jockey*: when Hollywood films usually praise the police corps for its courage and dedication, it never misses an occasion to poke fun at the police men who are supposedly not brave enough to be *on the streets*.

By using characters as counter-models, the two films show characters that become heroic by separating themselves from the realm of office work. In this framework, being behind a desk is reserved for villains and losers – as most police narratives remind us. Think only of Robert Duvall's character in *Falling Down* (1993), told to "watch out for paper cuts" when he resumes his desk at the police station he works at. The *desk jockey* comes to represent the ultimate setback for policemen: the context of the office equates a treason to the true nature of their job.

This dichotomy between the 'natural' man and the man behind a desk rests on a framing of masculinity in relation to technology. Among other sources, Ashcraft and Flores work from Susan Bordo's coining of the soft/ hard coding of the body in Western culture[12].

Bordo, herself drawing from Klaus Theweleit's analysis of the German *Freikorps*, shows that this coding informs our relationship to our bodies. It also shapes the way we look at technology, where *software* and *hardware* are distinguished and opposed. In the context of this discourse, technology retains a positive connotation as long as it can be used with the hands – that is, with the body. Contrasting this concept of a 'hard' technology, the 'soft' technology appears as fluid, transparent, and more recently digital.

Although these concepts can appear to be binary, they still allow some mobility for the action movies characters. The portrayal of the office man is not systematically negative, even if the categories I have sketched so far can seem to make room for such generalizations. For instance, the character of Gordon Gekko (Michael Douglas) in *Wall Street* inverts the feminizing nature of office work. As I have stated earlier, such a reversal supposes that physicality gets re-injected in an otherwise non-bodily environment. Camera movements are determined by Gekko's constant movement; the character yells and slaps his partners on the back in an attitude more reminiscent of a quarterback than of a white collar worker. Even if the office is opened to heroism at times, such associations work solely on a reworking of a previous grid that never ceases to contextualize the masculinities of the characters.

The cases I have laid out in this study can give the impression that opposition is the only way heroes can deal with the office space. Some films allow more mobility to their characters, and sometimes enable them to blur those classifications. The case of *Superman* (Richard Donner, 1978), central in the history of American heroism at the movies, offers a pattern of negotiation rather than blunt opposition. By going from one identity to another, Superman endlessly enacts the transformation of the office man into a hero, and vice versa. The transformation is never final, as the episodic structure of the narrative calls for renewed variations[13]. However, Superman's identity as an office man (Clark Kent) does not require him to destroy the office to become heroic. Furthermore, the foundation of his personality on a dual basis requires him to use the office, and the identity that is connected to it, as a way to protect his family and friends. This identity remains however clearly marked as undesirable, from the very first comic book series the 1978 film draws from : Lois calls Clark a 'spineless worm' and observes: 'I can hardly bear looking at him after having been in the arms of a <u>real</u> he-man! [i.e Superman]'[15].

In fact, the destruction of the office still takes place, but is displaced. Clark Kent doesn't need to destroy his office radically, because he destroys his suit. The iconic ripping of the shirt functions as a way to shed the soft masculinity associated with Clark Kent. I have labeled elsewhere Superman's transformation as a *masquerade* from nerd to hero. Using Mary Ann Doane's coining of the term, I then explained that this masquerade brought two opposite concepts of masculinity together, by way of a costume change, also interpretable as a dance. The use of sartorial effects to assert one's heroism is not limited to Superman's case. In fact, it has been widely used by action movies, especially during the nineties. In *Independence Day* (1996), the president of the United States strips from his official outfit to put on a jumpsuit. A similar transformation can be observed in *Executive Decision* (1996): Steven Seagal first appears as a classical action hero, sporting a military outfit. When he is killed early in the narrative, Kurt Russell's character, an engineer wearing a tuxedo, takes his place. To become the hero of the film, he progressively takes off his jacket, then his glasses – another signifier

of a soft masculinity, linked to the figure of the intellectual[14].Dealing with the office space is not only a matter of space in terms of geography: this space can also be quite personal, and requires candidates to heroism to deal with the office man *within*.

Two more recent films offer a similar take of the American hero. *The Matrix* (Andy and Lana Wachowski, 1999) and *Wanted* (Timur Bekmambetov, 2008) both frame their heroes by using a familiar paradigm of the *hard* technology (linked to the body) articulated with the *soft* technology (associated with the mind). The negotiation that ensues lies in the obliteration of the office rather in its destruction. Neo can first appear as an unlikely hero in *The Matrix* because of his characterization as a computer specialist. The introductory scenes reveal an abstract portrayal of the office, taking the shape of an impersonal grid. When Neo escapes the deceptive reality of the Matrix, he undergoes a second birth and joins a group of outlaws in the "real" world, described in post-apocalyptic terms. This shift in settings recalls a familiar dichotomy, when Neo and the outlaws are shown moving around in a battered metallic spaceship, made of bits and pieces. The Matrix and the spaceship are both artifacts, yet the ship appears as a more primitive embodiment of the advanced technology imagined by the filmmakers. In symbolic terms, leaving the Matrix equates renouncing to software, in favor of hardware. The computers the hackers use in *The Matrix* might be software, but their visual framing relocates their meaning as hardware. The very practice of hacking is redefined in physical terms: once Neo has joined Morpheus and his crew, the relationship with the computers involves fast typing and constant movement of the body, while the software used by the team aim to change the relationship to one's body, with fighting and jumping simulations.

Wanted offers a very similar interpretation of the hero. Like Neo, the character of Wesley Gibson starts as a common man, working in a cubicle. Harassed by his superior, betrayed by his best friend and girlfriend, Gibson suffers from repeated panic attacks, which turn out later to be a sign of his exceptionality. In a narrative arc close to plot of *The Matrix*, Gibson is contacted by a secret league of assassins. As the context of his office gives way to new activities involving heavy assault weapons, another reworking of the hard/ soft dichotomy becomes legible. As the desk jockey character embraces a new life, he too replaces a type of technology for another. The dematerialized work associated with computers is repressed to go back to a previous concept of the machine as an extension of the body. The assassins Gibson teams up with do not choose their targets, but receive their orders from an ancient weaving machine –that immediately evokes blue collar work. Interestingly, the machine uses a code to transmit its mission orders: yet this code is no different from the computer language, since it uses the same binary O/ 1 script. This 'hard' technology of the weaving machine can still be read as software, but software that appears under the guise of hardware. The means by which Gordon Gekko re-qualified his office work into a physical activity seem to be radicalized here. The physicality needed by the hero does not just apply to this body: the space surrounding this body has to reinforce the masculinity constructed by the action scenes. The 'soft' qualities of the computer need to be neutralized to be integrated in a heroic narrative. The figure of the machine (be it a ship or a weaving machine) serves to redefine the hero's environment as industrial more than digital.

Male heroes, when they assert their heroism, need to construct a strong image of masculinity all the while. The anxiety of feminization, coming from gender equality or more widely the new social roles claimed by women, has to be tempered in the context of Hollywood narratives. The excesses of the flesh, of the Action itself, can be interpreted in that perspective. Heroism, however, is not only a function of the body, or more precisely, it depends on the body insofar as the latter is connected to the space it inhabits.

Unlike the Vietnam jungle, the space of the office offers no easy path to heroism. On the contrary, the familiar workspace contextualizes masculinity by softening it. For this reason, American action heroes are shown to perform the most radical destruction of this specific environment. It is tempting to see Superman's masquerade as more fluid, as simply more subtle than Rambo's methods, but in both cases, the heroic characters perform a very nostalgic move. By destroying the office or the suit, they repress modern-day masculinity, perceived as conflicted and weak, to reconnect with a mythical masculine identity. *The Matrix* and *Wanted* seem to suggest something a little different. The office space and its corollary, the computer, are still present in the frame of the narrative, but they appear under disguise. If software is associated with a 'soft' masculinity, its recoding into hardware enables the film's discourse to draw from a different set of symbols and associations.

I mentioned in this discussion the visual and narrative tradition of the Western genre that has endlessly informed action films. Speaking of heroism in relation to space, one image immediately comes to mind in this context: the outlaw riding off the sunset. In an age where 'open space' refers to the most secluded and sometimes alienating of environments, heroes have to find new ways to recreate this dramatic image, namely by circumventing the complexity of today's masculine identities. Recently, the movie *Avatar* (James Cameron, 2009) suggested that the return to our most primitive selves, which still seems to be obligatory, will be achieved through the most advanced technology – and perhaps initiated something of a reconciliation. The office and the broader context of computerized information paradoxically form the base of a new frontier, even if the crossing of the latter circles back to the unavoidable reality of software and dematerialized knowledge.

Notes

[1] Steven Neale explains the process of feminization while commenting on Rock Hudson's career: 'Hudson is presented quite explicitly as the object of an erotic look. The look is usually marked as female. But Hudson's body is feminised in those moments, an indication of the strength of those conventions which dictate that only women can function as the objects of an explicitly erotic gaze' (14-15). The feminization is a consequence of a prior coding of the gaze.

[2] See Yvonne Tasker (1-15): 'The visual spectacle of the male body that is central to muscular movies puts into play the two contradictory terms of restraint and excess' (9).

[3] Richard Dyer's work is of importance concerning this matter. The position of being looked at has feminizing connotations and must be compensated for: 'Even in an apparently relaxed, supine pose, the model tightens and tautens his body so that the muscles are emphasized, hence drawing attention to the body's potential for action' (22).

[4] For a further definition of high-concept movies and production elements, see Wyatt (1-22) and Schatz (15-17).

[5] During the eighties, a few films reveal a 'revisionist' content, in their rewriting of the Vietnam War. Such a goal is achieved in a variety of ways as Susan Jeffords shows in *The Remasculinization of America* (126-127).

[6] Britt Salvesen's article in the *Believer* offers an overview of the quoted photographer's work, and notably of Chauncey Hare's legacy in the matter. See the 'Inside the Office' series by Stephen Ahlgren and the 'Bankrupt' series by Phillip Toledano.

[7] See Yvonne Tasker's article "Dumb Movies for Dumb People" (242).

[8] See Gaylyn Studlar's discussion of the young boys' reformation from the late 1880s to 1910. Boyhood then came to incarnate an ideal masculinity, while parents were encouraged to let their young boys engage with outdoors activities to prevent excessive feminization (29-33).

[9] Yvonne Tasker notes that the very function of the muscles is doubtful outside of the performance in a dedicated chapter: "Muscle Culture: The Bodybuilder as Hero and Star" (1993; 77-83).

[10] The integration of women in the workspace can be seen as a consequence of a larger movement that bridged the gap between the domestic and the public sphere in the 19th century, thus progressively disabling the traditional split between masculine and feminine spaces. See Margaret Marsh for a historical take on this subject (113-117). Yvonne Tasker also provides a cultural background to this issue in *Working Girls* (126-135).

[11] In the context of reaganite entertainment negotiating appears, according to Susan Jeffords, as a negative aspect of the feminine (155). Action and negotation thus become opposite, and a man of action cannot negotiate and still be coded as a hero.

[12] Bordo posits: 'To be exposed as "soft" at the core is one of the worst things a man can suffer in this culture. . . If a man is seen as soft at the core – as, for example, Bill Clinton has been – he is permitted much less latitude, and constantly has to prove that he can "play hardball," "take a firm stand," and so on' (55).

[13] The question of Superman's 'real' identity has been much discussed. I have argued elsewhere that Superman's nature is precisely none of the two identities he enacts, but the *in-between* space laid-out between these two roles. In this perspective, Superman's identity is not in Clark Kent or Kal-El, but in the repeated path that leads from one to another.

[14] Lichtenfeld links the use of the suit with the symbolic aspects of the glasses, speaking of a scene where Kurt Russell's characters loses the accessory: 'While on the surface, this loss seems like a liability, and thus a ratcheting up of the film's dramatic stakes, in actuality, it signifies something more: in the movies, glasses have long been an emblem of the cerebral, especially at the expense of the physical . . .The breaking of Grant's glasses marks his transition from a man who knows something about terrorism to one who does something about it' (177).

[15] See Feiffer's book for early comic book reprints.

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