

Sarah Connor Gives Men a Reason to Fight

The Terminator, released in 1984, stars Sarah Connor, mother of the future savior of humanity. If you've never seen the movie you may know it from the famous line "I'll be back" (Cameron) stated by Arnold Schwarzenegger, a man who has a total of only 17 lines in the entire film. While Sarah Connor is the main character, this film is really a fight of ownership between the Terminator, a cyborg killing machine, and her rescuing hero, Kyle Reese. As Margaret Goscilo argues in her article "Deconstructing The Terminator" this film had an opportunity to challenge stereotypical gender roles in mainstream cinema but still fell back on the masculine hero storyline.

First and foremost, we're introduced to a frankly pathetic Sarah Connor. As Goscilo put it "Sarah's incapacity seems overstated; while on the one hand we have the very embodiment of ruthless male potency on a mysterious mission, on the other we see inadequacy, even fluffiness, in the menial, everyday task of waitressing" (39). While Kyle and the Terminator arrive from the future completely nude, showcasing their very masculine appearances and at one point even a shadow of Schwarzenegger's penis, Sarah is waitressing in her fluffy, juvenile outfit being addressed by her customers as "honey" and being demeaned even by a surreptitious boy who scoops ice cream into her dress while she just shrugs helplessly.

Later as Sarah preps for her date, entirely ignorant to the life and death action going on for her sake, we see flashes of every single Sarah Connor in the phone book being murdered in cold blood. Sarah is so unoriginal and expendable as a woman that "the narrative deprives much of her peril of any context beyond the omnipresent and misogynist equation of woman with victim of violence" (Goscilo 38). The Terminator didn't even attempt to deduce which Sarah was the correct one and the audience is expected to accept that those other Sarahs were either unable

to be saved or not worth the attempt. At one point, as the cyborg finally discovers his true target our Sarah tries to get help from the police only to be transferred around the station by male officers without getting help. It isn't until Kyle Reese, a man from the future, steps in that Sarah even has a chance of surviving.

However, Kyle Reese isn't much better than the men Sarah has already come in contact with as we see in the scene where he tells her "Come with me if you want to live" and later screams at her "Do exactly what I say. Exactly!" (Cameron) making him quite a masculine and demanding savior and causing Sarah to respond with "I'm not stupid you know" implying that she feels belittled by his rhetoric. Despite his gruff behavior Sarah is wooed by Kyle.

Unbeknownst to her, in the future, Kyle was given a photo of Sarah by her own son, the savior of humanity, to secretly ensure that Kyle would seduce and impregnate Sarah. If that isn't creepy enough, beyond the lack of consent, the photograph was taken as Sarah reflected on the single night she spent with Kyle while she nurses a clearly pregnant belly. So the photo given to Kyle in the future "besides endorsing their love beyond the connotations of sexual adventure... freezes the heroine's identity into an image registering male absence" (Goscilo 48) and that is the photograph that makes him fall in love with her. It's an image of her thinking about how much she misses him and carrying his child. So throughout all of this Kyle is really the hero and protagonist and Sarah is just the sanctified mother to ensure that there's a man to save all of humanity and so the guy has something to fight for.

Works Cited

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