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Points of view

by Eleanor Malin

WETHERBY — *Modern England*

Wetherby, starring Vanessa Redgrave, is one of the slickest, cleanest movies in recent times. It's composed of arrangements and rearrangements of the characters, in relationship to one another, and to a young man who commits suicide early in the film. With only one really jolting event, a bloody suicide, oc-

● CINEMA



curing very early on, you still get pulled into this movie by the constant interplay of personalities, the piecing together of seemingly trivial data, and the final patchwork what turns out to have been a gigantic puzzle.

Vanessa Redgrave plays a really good schoolteacher. She never married. In flashbacks, she appears as a young woman, being courted by a handsome young soldier. The girl is played by Redgrave's daughter, Joely Richardson. Both women are sensational. The young woman is very much in love with the soldier, but decides to go on to University while he's away in Malaya. She could have stopped him from going, but didn't. He doesn't come back, and it's a good thing she

has her degree and can support herself.

Among other mini stories is one of a young girl student in Redgrave's class. The girl can see no use in continuing school, as she is destined to be unemployed (possibly forever) anyway. She wants to run off with a young man. Redgrave can't really come up with any good reasons why the girl should stay in school. She is teaching under the theory that if you study and do well, you will be rewarded, but that's just not what's happening now.

By the judicious use of flashbacks, deftly intercut with the present, we find out what the characters are thinking, although we don't always find out what they want. They don't always know. Often they want more or they want something from someone else, but they can't get it, even though another person offers or seems to offer it. Time and time again, these people dive and come up empty-handed.

The characters start to compare themselves to the young suicide, who had seemed strange, but not all that strange. Toward the end of the movie, we find out the fate of the young soldier, who also met a senseless, violent end.

The two stories run parallel, and, as the suicide is shown, and the bloody wall is shown, and the young man who shot himself is discussed so thoroughly, the suicide begins to resemble murder of some sort — something like a communal lack of control.

Anyway, the story is very precisely structured, while not seeming to be. Seemingly unrelated details fall satisfactorily into a grander plan, although exactly what that is and wherefrom it derives . . . well, ours is a boundless universe among many.

This movie begins with Redgrave having a drink in a pub with the husband of a friend of hers. They're laughing and Redgrave remarks they've lived in this town too long. As the movie ends, Redgrave is again having drinks with the same fellow (played by Ian Holm). She tells him the young girl in her class ran away. He proposes a toast to escapes.

DEATH WISH III — *Urban American*

Start with a difficult point of view, that is, that there is a reason for everything. Skip to a

big one — war! It seems to me that one reason for war might be to thin the ranks of a burgeoning adolescent male population. Other species just kick them out when they get unruly, but we send them off to war. But now things have gotten really complicated. We can't have a war any more, and everyone knows it, even the Russians. So what we have is a lot of adolescent males causing trouble — unemployed, obnoxious, disrespectful, dirty and foul-mouthed.

As Kersey, a self-made vigilante, Charles Bronson goes about cleaning up a densely populated nest of ne'er-do-wells, in a run-down borough of New York, only this time he has the encouragement of the police chief. The police chief himself is obnoxious and foul-mouthed. He's also very cynical. The laws have evolved in such a way that the innocent are left open to all manner of injury and insult, while the guilty are protected in their raping and pillaging of decent folks.

In the same way that the teen hero films reassure young males that they can escape or survive punishment the military has in store for them, vigilante films help allay the fears of the common citizen regarding punishments in store for us by these same young males.

Bronson sets booby traps, flaunts designer theftables and "sends them a message" (shoots two of the creeps as they are dismantling his car), the audience was laughing and cheering.

An still hearty and handsome Charles Bronson knocks the bejesus out of these creeps, precipitating a gang war against the punks and the regular folks that comes to a fiery and triumphant ending, with the police chief out there shooting punks, and Bronson blowing the head creep away with a rocket launcher.

One point especially stands out. Bronson is not displayed larger-than-life, as would be a mythical hero. On the screen he looks like a little guy.

If you are a sensitive person you will hate this movie. If, however, you think our forefathers were a little hasty in outlawing cruel and unusual punishments for crazy and outlandish punks, you could have a good time.

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