



culture shock without leaving home. I have been given the book SACRED SPACE by one Denise Linn, who describes herself as a healer and practitioner of Interior Realignment. She is probably being modest. My suspicion is that she is America's leading expert in Interior Realignment and that in that position she is quite

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unchallenged. This is the description on the back of her book:

"Our homes are mirrors of ourselves. Through them we can interface with the universe."

Everything in the universe is composed of constantly changing energy, including your home and its contents. This energy can profoundly influence your ability to be healthy, loving, creative, and abundant. By clearing and enhancing this energy you can transform your home into a sanctuary that radiates positive energy in ever-expanding circles.

In this fascinating and unusual book, Denise Linn shows you how you can dramatically change your life by changing the energy in your home or office. She combines information from her own Native American heritage with material she has personally collected from native traditions around the world to bring you practical easy-to-use exercises for balancing the physical, emotional, and spiritual energies in your home, including how to:

- Diagnose and solve problems with stagnant home energies,
- Use Sacred sound, spirit smoke, mystic symbols, and purifying fire for cleaning home energy,
- Discover the personal numerology of your home,
- Use the ancient art of Feng Shui for the placement of objects in your home,
- Call house angels and totems as house protectors,
- Use rituals to rid your home of unwanted spirits,

- Instantly uplift the energy in your home.

Your home can resonate, sing, and pulse with Light energy that can touch the lives of everyone around you. Your home can become Sacred Space.

Linn teaches you how to call house angels. Let me give Shakespeare's response "And so can I. And so can any man. But will they come?" As someone with a mathematical background I was curious to read the part discovering the numerology of your home. It turns out your house has one of nine fortunes and she gives a little explanation of what we learned in school as casting out nines from your street address to discover your house's fortune. My house is an "eight vibration" which indicates my house is really aware of cosmic consciousness, material prosperity (I wish), self-power, authority, and leadership. Well, none of the vibrations seems really to fit my house or suggest what I should do about the

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wasps who tend to nest in my Charmglow. (I hope Linn isn't suggesting "purifying flame.") Is there a good rule of thumb for telling the difference between a house that radiates positive energy and one that just has poor insulation? [-mrl]

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2. BELLWETHER by Connie Willis (Bantam Spectra, ISBN 0-553-37562-8, 1996, 256pp, US\$11.95) (a book review by Evelyn C. Leeper):

Though Willis has been saying at conventions that her next book would be a time travel story set in the late 19th century, this is not that book. Rather, this is a story set in the present, with statistician Sandra Foster researching fads. As part of this Willis, starts each chapter with the description of a fad of the past: hula hoops, the jitterbug, diorama wigs, etc.

I say that this is the present for two reasons First, there is the statement that it's Monday, October the second--which makes it either 1995 or 2000. Second, the fads described as being current (Power Rangers, the Lion King, and angels) are active now, but

probably will have been supplanted by the year 2000. In fact, this isn't really a science fiction novel at all, but more in line with Willis's other "social satires." (Many people have said that her "In the Late Cretaceous" is not science fiction either.)

One thing that adds to the realism in BELLWETHER is Willis's description of how the corporate culture works, even in hi-tech environments. She ranks with Scott Adams (creator of the "Dilbert" comic strip) in capturing the insanity of many corporate philosophies. For example, in a brain-storming session on objectives for "Guided Resource Intuition Management," one person lists:

1. Optimize potential.
2. Facilitate empowerment.
3. Implement visioning.
4. Strategize priorities.
5. Augment core structures.

When asked by Foster how she did that so fast, she replies that those were what she always wrote down. I figure that this list alone will save me hours at work.

The problem with BELLWETHER is that while individual parts are funny and pointed, the whole doesn't seem to go anywhere. Willis writes very good novellas, and for me this might have been better

at that length. As it is, it seems drawn out--drawn out, mind you, not padded. (They're not the same thing.) I like the writing, and I like the humor, and maybe I'm looking for more point than a short humorous novel is supposed to have. But when I finished BELLWETHER I felt vaguely dissatisfied. [-ecl]

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Capsule: Stevenson's classic of the potential for evil in us all is transformed into a feminist diatribe in which all men seem to be selfish and cruel, while most women are nurturing and victims. The telling is a dreary and dark twisting of a much better story.

Rating: -1 (-4 to +4)

Robert Louis Stevenson's "Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde" was inspired by schizophrenics that Stevenson had studied and also by Edinburgh's notorious Deacon William Brodie--pious churchman and respected councilman by day and house burglar by night. (Jean Brodie claims him as a relative toward the end of the film *THE PRIME OF MISS JEAN BRODIE*.) Stevenson wanted to write first a horror story and second a parable about the latent beast in all of us. Valerie Martin's novel *MARY REILLY* retold the story from the point of view of Jekyll's maid, a character whom Stevenson neglected to mention. The newer novel transformed the story into a parable about the latent beast in all men and the cruelty of men toward women, peppering the story with bits of male misogyny from sources having nothing to do with Edward Hyde. Though subtlety was not a great concern of the book, what there was excised by Christopher Hampton's screenplay, directed by Stephen Frears. The resulting film is relentlessly downbeat and dark. It is as dark literally as it is in tone, seemingly set in a London that offers two kinds of weather: night and fog.

Mary Reilly (played by Julia Roberts) is a new housemaid at Dr. Henry Jekyll's household. Jekyll (John Malkovich) takes a particular interest in her for the interesting scars on her arms and neck and later for the unusual fact that she could read. The household is run by the authoritarian and domineering butler Poole who likes Mary even less for the interest that his master shows her. Mary is a gentle sort inordinately bothered by simple everyday household chores like skinning and slicing a live and wriggling eel. The camera shows us this spectacle in loving detail just as it shows us the carcasses of skinned meat hanging in the market street. But in spite of these minor annoyances Mary likes the Jekyll household and receives from Jekyll unexpected kindness, considering that he is a man. It is in fact the only male kindness

in the film. So things are really going the best that Mary has ever had them go for her, which is not saying very much. Then one day Jekyll announces that his assistant Edward Hyde (Malkovich) is to be given access to the house.

Hyde, when we finally see him, is a genuine let-down. This has got to be the least differentiated Jekyll/Hyde pairing in cinema history. Jekyll has a short, light mustache and beard; Hyde has shoulder-length dark hair. No obvious attempt was made to make them sound at all different. In a dim light one could easily confuse one for the other, which is unfortunate because dim light is something this film has in great abundance. Perhaps one other difference is discernible: Jekyll is the one that seems half asleep, perhaps exhausted from the labors of his research. Hyde seems at least mostly awake. The weakness of the performance is particularly puzzling in that Malkovich under Frears direction previously gave us such a compelling Valmont in *DANGEROUS LIAISONS* (also written by Hampton).

Julia Roberts does not look Victorian somehow and at least at first looks highly out of place in a maid's uniform. It takes a while to see her in this role and not think of previous roles she has played rather than as the Victorian chambermaid. Two fine actors under-used here are Glenn Close, almost unrecognizable as mistress of a bordello. (I believe the bordello is totally the invention of Valerie Martin's novel, incidentally.) Only slightly better used is Michael Gambon as Mary's nightmarish father. Gambon is a fine actor, best known perhaps for the British TV mini-series "The Singing Detective."

A peculiarity of this film is that to understand what is going on, one should already know the Stevenson story, yet if one knows the story, the new film is almost totally redundant. The film builds to its surprise revelation fully realizing that the vast majority of viewers entered the theater already knowing what is to be revealed. By telling the story from the housemaid's point of view, the most dramatic scene of the story has to happen off-stage. This robs the film of most of the story's dramatic impact. The pay-off scene is postponed until much later in the story. When we do see it, the good news is that it is done in a totally original manner, like no way it has been done before in any screen adaptation. The bad news is that nobody in their right mind would have wanted to do it this way. The way it is done adds very greatly to the implausibility of the story. It may well be the worst touch in the film.

George Fenton wrote a score as downbeat as the sunless visuals with occasional touches on the strings very reminiscent of Bernard Herrmann. Curiously, this film played in the same theater opposite *MUPPET TREASURE ISLAND*. Stevenson is not having a very good year. I may not be either. I give this a -1 on the -4 to +4 scale. [-

mr!]

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#### 4. BROKEN ARROW (a film review by Mark R. Leeper):

Capsule: Action films that deliver are no longer really uncommon. John Woo directs with nearly the same pacing he might give a Hong Kong film. And Travolta steals two thermonuclear devices and the show from Christian Slater. BROKEN ARROW offers nice effects, nice action scenes, and no surprises in the story. Rating: +1 (-4 to +4) [Some gaps in the plot are discussed in a spoiler section after the review.]

The plot is simple enough, with more than a few plot elements borrowed from THUNDERBALL. Vic Deakins (played by John Travolta) and Riley Hale (Christian Slater) are Air Force pilots who fly the sleek, fully digitized B-3 stealth bomber with live nuclear bombs. Deakins has also taken a fatherly interest in Hale, giving him lessons on the philosophy of winning while brutally beating him in the boxing ring. Of course he does not expect Hale to make much use of these lessons. Just a few hours later tries to kill Hale as part of his plan to steal two nuclear bombs. Hale, together and self-drafted National Park Ranger Terry Carmichael (Samantha Mathis) have race to recover the bombs before Deakins can get his intended use from the nuclear devices.

Christian Slater should be almost as angry as his character in this since Woo seems to have not so much let Travolta steal the film as having goaded him into it. Travolta is given an arsenal of cinematic mannerisms, comments on the action, and even a few slow-motion entrances all intended to make the actor look oh-so-cool. Slater's dialogue and acting are by comparison much more restrained and why only Travolta got the Sergio Leone treatment is not clear. Samantha Mathis is an also-ran, as well as an also-jumped, and an also-fired-guns. She just does not seem to show up very well on

the screen and Woo did not polish her the way he did with Travolta. About all we learn about her is that she lives alone with her dog and for this script that seems to be enough. Woo seems to think that the National Park Service trains their rangers like Navy SEALs and gets their uniforms shipped in by rocket from the Planet Krypton. Delroy Lindo, who played so well off Travolta in GET SHORTY, gets less opportunity to do it here as an Air Force colonel pulled into the action.

The pacing of BROKEN ARROW is fast and you are never very far from the next action scene. This is a style pioneered by the Bond

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series taken to extremes that make those films slow by comparison. But even the Bond films spend more time building the characters. Graham Yost, who wrote SPEED, gave this film much or more of the same pacing. The action of BROKEN ARROW takes place over a period of about eighteen hours and the more serious events (if it is not a misuse of that word) are treated as just an extension of the boxing ring lesson at the beginning of the film, as if Slater is giving a rebuttal.

Of course BROKEN ARROW has lots of flashy visual effects: digitized flying scenes, a nuclear detonation, Travolta's performance, helicopter crashes, etc. Flying a helicopter in this film is a lot like wearing a red shirt in the first "Star Trek" series: it is really tough to do it and stay alive. Most of the effects are quite good though the computer digitized flying sequences are far too easy to pick out.

Driving BROKEN ARROW are its action sequences and they are well done. The plot is told competently, though in the spoiler section below I will mention some holes. But the script never fleshes out its characters. It would have been worth it to have two fewer fights and a little character development instead. I give it a +1 on the -4 to +4 scale.

SPOILER...SPOILER...SPOILER...SPOILER...SPOILER...SPOILER...

Three scenes particularly bothered me about the script. Somehow before the action of the film Travolta's character seems to have

tampered with the electronics of the bombs to change the arming sequence. As he put it "I used uncoded circuit panels." Since when do the pilots have anything to do with building the electronics into nuclear bombs? And just what are "uncoded circuit panels?" It sounds like it is just double talk to explain an impossible plot twist.

In one scene Travolta's opens a door panel on the train and there is Slater's character, waiting for him to open the door. How do you sneak up on a train with a helicopter and how did Slater not only know that a door was going to open, but just what door it would be?

The physics of Travolta's final scene is absurd. Why is only the bomb torn loose, why does it have so much momentum, why isn't Travolta's character crushed against the wall before the bomb ever gets to him? The bomb almost seems to turn into a rocket. [-mrl]

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5. ANGELS AND INSECTS (a film review by Mark R. Leeper):

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Capsule: Humanity is seen as an analogue of the insect world in this adaptation of a story by A. S. Byatt. William Adamson is a naturalist forced by circumstances to become part of an upper class English family in the 1860s. Their household melodrama parallels the insect world.  
Rating: low +1 (-4 to +4)

In the 1860s naturalist William Adamson (played by Mark Rylance) has come back ten years in the Amazon jungle but on the way lost all his notes and specimens in a ship disaster. His patron, the Rev. Harald Alabaster (Jeremy Kemp), has invited Adamson to visit the Alabaster country estate. The Reverend Alabaster has embraced the teachings of Charles Darwin, albeit reluctantly, and is looking to Adamson to help him sort out his crisis of faith in the face of changing ideas. Adamson is struck by the beauty of Alabaster's

daughter Eugenia (Patsy Kensit), but having lost everything he cannot hope to win her, particularly with Eugenia's snob brother Edgar (Douglas Henshall) reminding Adamson at every turn that while he is a guest at the Alabaster estate, he is of quite a lower station in life and must never think of himself as being anywhere near an equal. However, Eugenia's fiance committed suicide before Adamson knew her and with Eugenia's younger sister marrying Eugenia feels the need to be married. Knowing that she is considered out of his caste, Adamson offers what help he can give to Eugenia, even marriage, and is astounded when his unobtainable love readily accepts his offer. The marriage is an odd one and not wholly satisfying, but Adamson is able to channel his time into the study of ants on the Alabaster property. It is a study in which he is ably assisted by Matty Crompton (Kristin Scott Thomas), a quiet, spinsterish relation to the Alabasters also living at the estate. Adamson finds to his amazement that Crompton is at least his equal in intellect.

If all this sounds a little bit like a Jane Austen plot, the answer is yes, it is a little bit like that, but it is also very different in theme. There is also some Charlotte Bronte thrown in. And something more. The story, the photography, and even details like the costume design are intended constantly to compare and contrast the upper class society with the society of insects, particularly ants and butterflies. It does so as the odd behavior of the Alabaster family is developed. The problem is that the we note the odd behavior for so long that we start to wonder why we are being shown so much upper-class weirdness we no longer really want to understand the family. Eventually the viewer gets tired of waiting for some concrete development. It is not that there is not some interest to the study of the ant world and its comparison to the Alabaster family social structure. But the film seems aimless for too long before things tie together. The screenplay is by Belinda Haas who edited the film Philip Haas who directed. The same team did the same tasks on 1993's THE MUSIC OF CHANCE, which was a

better film. While it was perhaps even more enigmatic than this film, it seemed like an enigma to better purpose.

ANGELS AND INSECTS is a bit of a disappointment and rates a low +1

on the -4 to +4 scale. Incidentally, don't look too hard for angels. The book ANGELS AND INSECTS had two novellas, one having to do with angels, one with insects. This is an adaptation of "Morpho Eugenia," the novella about insects. [-mrl]

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6. RUMBLE IN THE BRONX (a film review by Mark R. Leeper):

Capsule: First-class acrobatics, second-class comedy, a third-class plot. This is a pleasant enough film for sitting back and watching some incredible physical feats, but there is little else of quality in the film. Rating: 0 (-4 to +4)

Take this review from whence it comes. I am absolutely floored by the mental agility of Thomas More in A MAN FOR ALL SEASONS. The skill to fight with agility just has never been one for which I have much appreciation. I suppose I am about equally impressed with a good martial artist and a good juggler. I can appreciate that each can perform with what appears to be a high degree of skill. I will watch each for the moment they are performing and then move on without envying or even being impressed too much by either. So perhaps I am the wrong person to see a Jackie Chan film, whose plot is little more than an excuse to string together fighting sequences.

Keung (Jackie Chan) is a prize-winning martial artist in Hong Kong who comes to the United States to attend his uncle's wedding. He quickly discovers that his uncle intends to sell the Asian grocery the uncle owns. Keung find himself attracted to the new owner and decides to stick around and set up the grocery. This means defending the woman from a gang of cartoonish bikers who prey on the grocery. When one of the bikers steals some loot from some apparent Mafia types, the fight becomes a three-way battle.

One of the problems of the script is that Keung's abilities seem inconsistent and seem to come and go. It is unclear why in some scenes he seems so easily defeated and in others he seems unbeatable. Nor is it clear why once the street gang has discovered a winning strategy for beating Keung, they never again use it against him. Also, we see early on that he has only limited ability to dodge flying objects, so presumably he has even less ability to dodge bullets. Yet while people threaten to shoot him, nobody actually tries it, even just to disable him. The appearance

is that even Jackie Chan does not have moves for dodging a bullet that look convincing on camera and so the scriptwriter just does not let the situation arise.

Beyond the action scenes little attention was paid to production values. For just about every other aspect of the film the words that come to mind are "adequate" or "mediocre." There is little acting in the film and what is there is intended only to showcase Jackie Chan. Far more could be done with Chan, of course. The man has considerably more screen presence than either Steven Segal or Jean-Claude Van Damme. This film does what it can to capitalize off Chan's personality, but a larger budget, a more polished production, and above all a much better script are needed to make this a really professional product.

Ironically, the point of the film that generates the greatest emotions is the closing credits. Chan shows outtakes where stunts went wrong. It combines some of the best laughs of the film with some of its most poignant moments. We see two or three cases of actors performing stunts that go wrong and ending up being put in the back of an ambulance. One wonders if this practice does not frighten away prospective performers from appearing in so dangerous a film to shoot.

For those who, like me, have only a limited appreciation for Chan's athletic moves there is not much that this film offers. For people who have similar tastes to mine I rate RUMBLE IN THE BRONX a 0 on the -4 to +4 scale. [-mrl]

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The plural of anecdote is data.  
-- Ben Wattenberg

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