

## Document Citation

Title	<b>Crunch, zap, and a dab of ketchup</b>
Author(s)	Derek Malcolm
Source	<i>Guardian (Manchester, England)</i>
Date	1979 May 10
Type	review
Language	English
Pagination	
No. of Pages	1
Subjects	
Film Subjects	Agatha, Apted, Michael, 1979



Left: Michael Beck in *The Warriors*. Above: Dustin Hoffman and Vanessa Redgrave in *Agatha*. Right: Cybill Shepherd in *The Lady Vanishes*

**DEREK MALCOLM** reviews *The Warriors*, *Agatha*, and *The Lady Vanishes*

# Crunch, zap, and a dab of ketchur

whether, had the *Agatha* of the title not been Christie, it would stand up by itself as a piece of film-making. That said, it would be churlish to grumble unduly. Apted's work for the cinema has been variable in the past — *Triple Echo*, *Stardust* and *The Squeeze* each promised more than was eventually achieved.

But *Agatha* is more confidently handled throughout, a Christie-like mystery which happens to be about Christie herself, and contains a performance from Vanessa Redgrave in the central part that constantly pushes the film into areas the woman in question's books never ventured.

Kathleen Tynan's solution to the continuing question of exactly what happened in December, 1926 when Christie disappeared from home, only to appear again 11 days later, after a huge and unavailing search, is neat and ingenious. And her screenplay, developed by Arthur Hopcraft, is economical and intelligent.

But Dustin Hoffman's introduction as the American columnist, beaver away to

find her before the police can, is not the happiest of its inspirations. He is too much the star doing a character turn to give the whole proceedings the resonance for which Redgrave strives so hard. Indeed one would seriously ask why he is there at all but for the obviousness of the answer — as a necessary sop to the American market.

Without all this, and the rather feeble romantic interest that goes with it, we might have had something more interesting as a psychological rather than logistic thriller—and a further broadening of the part as Redgrave plays it, suggesting the painfully shy and vulnerable woman betrayed by her pig of a husband (Timothy Dalton) and only befriended by a woman at the hotel (Helen Morse, the Australian star of *Caddie*) who lacks her stifling class repressions.

Still, the film is well-mounted and shrewdly set in its period. It has style if not a great deal of content. And in Redgrave it has a performer who transcends its shortcomings while at the same time underlining them.

**The Lady Vanishes**

The basic doubt about Michael Apted's *Agatha* (Prince Charles, A) is