

Look Back in Bemusement: The New American Cinema, 1965–1970

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BY 1970, IT IS WORTH REMINDING OURSELVES AT THE OUTSET, film's recognition as an art form had not been in question for some time. Yet film, as it was mostly being made above ground in the United States at that moment, had very little aesthetic identity in the minds of its chief practitioners and enthusiasts, or at any rate its most vocal ones. There are several ironies here: unquestionably better, more mature, more salient and thematically sophisticated as many of America's new films had become, superior as a class as they were to the great bulk of American movies for a generation, they caused an excitement, an intensity and vigour of response, much beyond what was then accorded to the current theatre or new fiction. But this had almost nothing to do with any perennial or universal conceptions of 'art' and almost everything to do with political, sociological, and psychological phenomena that are either indifferent or actively hostile to such conceptions.

Let's call the New American Cinema of this period, the late 1960s and early 1970s, the cinema of make-believe meaning. Changes in the United States had, inevitably, changed the tone of its film industry; a college-bred generation of producers and directors (and screenwriters and publicists) had come into being – men quite different in self-estimate and hunger for status from the first few generations of American film practitioners. This latest filmmaking generation that had come to power (to *power* – quite unlike small independent or 'underground' filmmakers) operated comfortably within a cosmos of intense commercial pressure to which these men had nicely adjusted their ambitions for intellectual prestige. But this reconciliation prevented them from making the sheer entertainments, comic or serious, of the palmy Hollywood days – the 'sincere' days, as

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Jean-Luc Godard once described them with peculiar accuracy; and, of course, such a compromise also prevented fidelity to art and intellect. What we got were entertainment films on which ‘meaning’ was either grossly impasted or clung to only as long as convenient.

Robert Mulligan’s film of *Up the Down Staircase* (1967), for example, took several of the harshest problems of urban education and faced them with new, contemporary honesty – until it turned its back on them. From a reverse angle, the Western became adult in the form of Sam Peckinpah’s *The Wild Bunch* (1969), and the crime film became Freud-Marxist in Arthur Penn’s *Mickey One* (1965), so that we could go to Westerns and crime films without skulking embarrassedly in and out of the cinema. Even the glossy marital comedy (Stanley Donen’s *Two for the Road*, 1967) pilfered just enough from the new French film art so that we could know we were ‘keeping up’ as well as enjoying ourselves. (It even got praised for this pilfering as proof that the commercial film was maturing.)

Moreover, however visually acute these American directors had become, even visually they betrayed themselves by trying to give weight to flimsy material with otherwise superb cinematography (such as Haskell Wexler’s for a gimmicky race-relations thriller, *In the Heat of the Night* (1967), directed by Norman Jewison). They used close-ups that were meant to seem unconventionally truthful but that dared nothing and said nothing (like a dead dog’s paw or a singing convict’s mouth in Stuart Rosenberg’s *Cool Hand Luke*, 1967). And these directors strained to include entire sequences that were only inserted ‘arias’ for the cameraman, as was the Parker family reunion in Penn’s *Bonnie and Clyde* (1967). Or, again as in the case of *Bonnie and Clyde*, they struggled to contrive an overall moral statement in the visual aesthetics of their own filming.

Consider the last scene in Penn’s movie, when the hero and heroine drive into an ambush and are machine-gunned to death. It is a long scene, showing the two characters riddled with bullets, blood spurting out of dozens of punctures, their bodies writhing in death-agony as they are cast up by the force of the repeated bullet impacts. And yet, and yet . . . it is all so Beautiful, shot as it is in italicising, aestheticising slow motion, and featuring two Beautiful People, the actors Faye Dunaway and Warren Beatty, in the roles of Bonnie and Clyde. There is a dance-like quality to this scene and, besides that, a sensual rhythm of intercourse – of the two bodies in their coupled rising and falling. Here are the grace, the sexual release, and the lyricism that our heroes were really aiming for as they committed criminal mayhem across the American Southwest. This sensual, choreographed, almost beatific scene does not, however, exactly match up with the contemporary photographs of the event or with the homely looks, let alone the psychopathic natures, of the historic figures of

Bonnie Parker and Clyde Barrow. It is certainly so much a violation of the moral implications of the film's earlier scenes – in which innocent people are killed and their money or property stolen – that it can only be called an instance of supreme, not to say divine, decadence.

Of extremely uneven worth, movies like *Bonnie and Clyde*, and like the following group of films, not by accident all from the same year – *Midnight Cowboy* (1969), *Easy Rider* (1969), *Medium Cool* (1969), *Coming Apart* (1969), *Alice's Restaurant* (1969), *Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid* (1969), *Putney Swope* (1969), and *Downhill Racer* (1969) – were united in recommending themselves, or being recommended, as sophisticated agents of seized truth, windows on an actual world, which, stripped of illusions and 'false' stories, surrendered itself to the camera as to a long-awaited suitor whose triumphant virtue is his realism. These films shrugged off the consequences of presenting themselves as imagination in the act of containing the history of the age as it makes itself. We were meant to believe that we would be unable to know that history without them, without their realism, and, more than that, we were meant to believe that we were assured a species of power over that history by having had it placed in front of us in this way.

By 'history' I mean the sum total of moral and psychic, as well as political and social, events – human existence on the level of actuality before imagination begins to operate. Now it is always difficult to separate the aesthetic from the all too human and material in works of imagination (criticism can perhaps best be defined as the activity that attempts to accomplish such a feat), but this is especially difficult to do in relation to films, since they traffic with actuality in such a way and to such an extent as to put us under the continual temptation of seeing them as the recorder, interpreter, and, much more decisively, the legitimator of reality. Or, rather, this is one temptation; another and related one is that of seeing them as the validator (or even the source) of the myths which rise up from actuality, become indistinguishable from it, and in fact become, in great sectors of our consciousness and behaviour, new actualities themselves. But whether it was dealing open-eyed and realistically with the way the world looks and was therefore supposed to be, or transcribing various dreams about it, American film at this particular moment in its own history – from around 1965 to 1970 – tempted us into thinking of it as a chief supplier of the most useful and unmediated truths about society and the age.

Against similar temptations we at least partly managed to allow music, dance, painting, sculpture, poetry, even drama – but not fiction, the art form closest to film – to retain independent qualities and autonomous being, to establish their existences at strategic distances from our own, to be actualisations of what is not otherwise present in reality; to be, finally,

increments, augmentations, previously unheard-of alternatives or alternative 'facts'. But film, that medium the first stage in whose operation is to grant our eyes access to the visible world, was more and more being arrested at this stage, being asked to give us not new perception so much as a copybook of the world as we already thought or suspected it to exist.

After all, what did we mean by the cant declaration that 'film is the art of our time' except that film is particularly suited to the age, coherent with its presumed spirit, and, indeed, a central manifestation of that spirit? In the same way, the novel was once considered to have been *the* art of the bourgeois era, both for its social investigation and for its construction as narrative: the organisation of experience as sequential tale, that is, of life as one or another kind of progression. Yet even in its golden, or Balzacian, phase, the novel, *as art*, was never so much a reflection of society and the age as it was their counterforce and augmentation, novelistic image and idea establishing a life and epoch of their own.

In other words, the novel, like any art, occupies what we might call aesthetic time and not, except as a matter of mere chronology, the time of history, the time of the immediate and ongoing life of society – as society. Aesthetic time is peculiarly and properly out of joint with the age, which produces it disconsolately and with great suspicion, like any totalitarianism in whose midst an alternative persists. This alternative is ruled by chronometers of no practical application, and it occupies a dimension characterised by a crucial kind of 'inactuality'. Aesthetic time, like religious time, is a mode of inhabiting the non-historic and non-contingent, an abode for ways of being that are *unlike the present*. As such, art – as Pablo Picasso once remarked – is the lie that leads to truth.

Religious time, like religion itself, was nearly spent by the late 1960s, but aesthetic time was merely unfashionable. It wasn't present in consciousness to anything like the extent it had been in periods when art presumably existed for some 'sake' other than the utilitarian, the uses of art having undergone a severe pressure towards the actual, by which I mean chiefly the social and the political. The notion of art as something virtual slipped away, and any conception of aesthetic reality, especially that of fiction and film, as a 'lie' in Picasso's sense carried in many quarters a taint of something close to treason. (Think here only of the 'nonfiction novel' as it was invented and practised by Norman Mailer, Tom Wolfe, and Truman Capote; and think especially of the 'truth' of Capote's book *In Cold Blood* (1965), quickly turned into the faithful film *In Cold Blood* (1967), which itself resurfaced in the recent bio-pic *Capote* (2005).) To be sure, there was a large irony in the fact that film had come to play so central a role in the progressive abandonment of the notion that art is a strategic lie and in the rise of a corollary idea – that art can give us the

truth directly by its capacity to ensnare and overcome the palpable present through a sort of magical rite; that it can, as it were, capture the ‘enemy’ by capturing the enemy’s own image.

Indeed, the long struggle on the part of the cinema to be accepted as an art began with its having to get *past* the belief that it was merely reproductive or imitative, a matter of mirrors and not of new perception. The French New Wave, for example (despite the imprecision of such a designation and the fact that its individual instances were far from constituting a practice in absolute coherence with a body of theory), itself had been moving towards the specificity and eventfulness of the actual world. Yet the point ought to be made that the best of this movement’s films were still most importantly ‘truthful’, not because they were ‘true to life’, but because they were true to *aesthetic* notions – no matter how radically these notions may have departed from sanctified definitions and criteria, as they did in the work of an innovator like Godard.

French New Wave films like Alain Resnais’s *Hiroshima, mon amour* (1959), François Truffaut’s *Shoot the Piano Player* (1960), and Godard’s *Weekend* (1967) may have been truer than immediately preceding styles to what we might call the facts, the actualities of our political and social existence in the historical present. But, if so, their ‘truth’ was the result not of ever having made the capturing and rendering of such actualities a *raison d’être*, an end in itself, but of a movement of artistic renewal that begins with a repudiation of the inorganic artifices and sterilities of a medium which had been feeding off itself. The new postwar movements in cinema, predominantly the work of Italian as well as French directors, came into being precisely when film art was felt to have become unfaithful to both imagination *and* reality, such that film art had to free itself – as art through the ages has recurrently had to do – of the forms that previous artists had originated for the disposition of what had been new reality in *their* time. (It’s worth adding that only the narrowest and most preliminary form of freedom or liberation was bestowed at the time by such socially realistic British films as *Room at the Top* (1959), *Saturday Night and Sunday Morning* (1960), and *A Taste of Honey* (1961), with their temperamental and thematic rebelliousness but mostly traditional cinematic procedures.)

More than sixty years ago, even before the French New Wave, Italian neorealists such as Vittorio De Sica, Roberto Rossellini, and Luchino Visconti revolted against the sterile conventions of fascist bourgeois cinema. But they were soon followed by Michelangelo Antonioni and Federico Fellini, who grew up artistically with the necessary wish to dynamite the neorealists’ own petrifying ideas of what constituted reality – and who proceeded to do so from the mid-1950s to the early 1960s. What distinguishes Fellini, for example, from the neorealists is an insistence on the primary

force of human imagination. His characters are not solely motivated by externals – the theft of a bicycle, social indifference, child abandonment or neglect – as De Sica's were. Nor, like his contemporary Ermanno Olmi, does Fellini invert neorealism by studying only the human accommodation to such external circumstances. Instead, he denies the pure externality of events, choosing to show that reality and imagination interpenetrate. Thus Fellini's characters, in such otherwise realistic films as *I vitelloni* (1953) and *The Nights of Cabiria* (1957), never face a fact without dressing it up. It is in fact this 'force of human imagination', as I have described it, that unites the two halves of Fellini's career: the quasi-realist portion and the baroque bordering on rococo one that culminates in that masterpiece of flamboyant self-exploration, *8½* (1963).

Antonioni, for his part, remained a realist throughout his career, but he himself was reshaping the idea of the content of film drama by redirecting traditional audience expectations towards immersion in character rather than conflict of character, away from the social realism of his neorealist forebears and towards what can be called 'introspective realism' – in order to see just what remained inside the individual after the nightmare of the Second World War, with its Holocaust and its atomic bomb. Particularly in his trilogy consisting of *L'avventura* (1960), *La notte* (1961), and *L'eclisse* (1962), Antonioni arrived at a new and profoundly cinematic mode of expression or exposition, in which every aspect of style, of the purely visual realm of action and object, reflects the interior state of the characters. That style might be described as accession through reduction, the coming into truer forms, hence truer knowledge of our own existential alienation, through the cutting away of created encumbrances: all the replicas we have made of ourselves; all the misleading, because logical or only psychological, narratives; the whole apparatus of reflected wisdom, inherited emotions, received ideas, and reiterated clichés. In this way, Antonioni was not only reshaping the idea of the content of film drama, he was also reshaping time itself in his films: daring to ask his audience to 'live through' experiences with less distillation than they were accustomed to; and deriving his drama from the very texture of such experiences and their juxtaposition, rather than from formal clash, climax, and resolution.

By the late 1960s, the influence in America of the cinema of Antonioni and Fellini – indeed, of the entire European regeneration in filmmaking – had been so assimilated or, more accurately, appropriated, that we were already on the high wave of something we can speak of today as a new, post-Hollywood cinematic morale and manner, though by no means as an independent and assured style. This morale and manner meant that the world, hidden for so long behind fantasy and illusion, as though by a conspiracy to keep us from *knowing*, came flooding onto the screen,

carrying with it every verisimilitudinous gesture, face, and act, all languages or vocabularies of currency, and the seemingly authentic brutalities, pathologies, and pornographies (as well as the stances that had been adopted against them) of the age and even of the moment. *The Graduate* (1967) and *Bonnie and Clyde*, two movies whose importance was of a rather different kind from that which their admirers claimed, mark this point in post-Hollywood, when American film began to take up in earnest the burden and question of America as a society: its self-consciousness and self-division, the very face and movement of its historical present, the weight and ache of its momentous past.

These and other films, which seemed to come to us from such different starting points and in so changed a light from the Hollywood of the immediate past, were the products of a complex background. That they were being made in such numbers is, of course, in large degree a technical and economic matter, as well as a sociological one, and that they were being made for the most part by a new breed of film person is another (related) matter. What everyone noticed first in looking out on this scene was the youth of so many of those who composed it – the youth of the new American filmmakers and of their films' entrepreneurs, performers, and hangers-on – the youth, especially, of their audiences. Like the new music of the time, film was a young man's game, and, like music, it was a game played in significant part out of a profound indifference, rather than a violent hostility, to the prevailing middle-class culture and values. But it was also played out of a desire to impose upon society a truthfulness – of event, emotion, and action – which society had until this point masked from itself (and nowhere more pervasively than in films) through fantasy and illusion, wishful thinking and ersatz, compensatory fictions.

This 'game' was not played out of a desire to impose on the world impressive monuments of sensibility – discrete and self-authorising artefacts of imagination in the tradition of the masterpieces by which we have judged the progress and importance of art for the past several hundred years. The new films participated in, and were exemplary and influential expressions of, that new spirit of political and cultural insubordination, that amateur and informal (anti-formal in some of its manifestations) call to order by which it was hoped that the frozen values and procedures of the dominant bourgeois society – forever faithful to sanctified forms and thus forever reproducing them – would be not so much overthrown as displaced. These films for the most part took themselves seriously only in the sense that they were serving something more serious than themselves, and what I mean by this is not art, not any transcendent or visionary mode of creation, but life itself – life reconsecrated and wholly consigned to the present.

This is an exceedingly human desire, but it is characterised by a naivety that determined the inferiority (for all its superiority to its own recent past) of the new American cinema to its European counterpart. To try to appropriate the truths of the world through an exclusive élan about what is palpably happening in society, to try to make ‘where it’s at’ (in Bob Dylan’s words) the basis of your vision, is to trust that the world will yield up its pleasures and secrets in the face of sincerity, or what I prefer to call *mere* sincerity. The tradition of art has never relied on that, which is why the search for new forms has always had to go on. Within that tradition at the time, filmmakers and writer-directors – Antonioni, Fellini, and Pier Paolo Pasolini; Truffaut, Resnais, and Godard; Carl-Theodor Dreyer, Robert Bresson, and Yasujiro Ozu; Ingmar Bergman, Eric Rohmer, and Luis Buñuel – all certainly worked at the renewed obligation to take account of the present, to be accurate and thoroughgoing in using the insistent materials of the here and now. They may even have wanted strenuously to change things. But they did not work by ceding their transformative vision to the public atmosphere, and they did not offer us portraits of how it is or ‘where it’s at’.

Of this group, Godard’s films were even more directly about life and art, imagination and the actual. For this reason he can be said to have been a more contemporary or radically advanced artist than any of these European or Asian directors, although he is not necessarily a greater one. But Godard made an even more explicit ground for his work in the struggle against the use of film as sheer illusion or story, and in an investigation of the pressures of actuality upon consciousness. The source of his influence, unequalled at the time among young filmmakers in either the United States or other countries, was pre-eminently his having taken up with brilliant force and diversity the question of what film, that opening onto nearly everything there is (including eternity), can and ought to do with its powers.

Godard’s films consistently tested the relationship between fiction and reality, for example by rejecting narrative in favour of praxis, or the working out of social and political theory within the context of the cinematic process itself. To this end, his films became increasingly dialectical and rhetorical in structure starting in the early 1960s, and Godard himself called them ‘critical essays’. *Les Carabiniers* (1963), one of his first important works, was less a war movie than a series of propositions about war in the form of a fable, a parody, and a faux-documentary. A film of sociological enquiry, *Masculine/Feminine* (1965) itself was concerned not with its slender plot, but instead with illustrating fifteen distinct problems of the younger generation, ‘the children of Marx and Coca-Cola’, members of which are interviewed and interview one another in *cinéma-vérité* fashion. Recalling Godard’s own *My*

Life to Live (1962) and *A Married Woman* (1964) but an even more radical indictment of capitalist technocracy than these two pictures, *Two or Three Things I Know about Her* (1966) was a collage of images and interviews centring around a Parisian housewife who has turned to casual prostitution in order to keep herself in bourgeois luxury. And *Pierrot le fou* (1965), ostensibly modelled on the American B-film gangster thriller like Godard's earlier *Breathless* (1960), came close, in its disjointed and self-reflexive narrative style, to realising his idea of a film without writing, editing, or sound-mixing. (The idea for *Pierrot le fou*, incidentally, almost certainly came from the script for *Bonnie and Clyde*, which was first offered to Truffaut to direct and then passed on to Godard.)

Godard's enormous technical virtuosity in these films, breaking rules and establishing precedents as it exhibited itself, was, of course, no hermetic series of mere feats, no skill practised in the void, but a function – occluded and less than clarifying sometimes, it's true – of his profound and active meditation on the uses of film as consciousness. His technical vocabulary – the result of his refashioning the formal tools of naturalism – was widely adopted, but it wasn't the basis of Godard's most important effect on those he inspired or stimulated. What was chiefly seized was less a technical matter than one of morale, of a method of approach to, or a procedure for, the making of movies. In the possible rationales he demonstrated for the making of films; in his having addressed himself with such protean energy to the matter of the filmmaker's responsibility in political and social realms; in his attempt to articulate a freely changing aesthetic that would at the same time illuminate a mode of being or behaving in the world, Godard more than any other man changed the face of the screen during this period.

But American filmmaking that was influenced by him is mostly Godard minus Godard's embattled sense of the actual and potential misuses of film. For in granting a new elan to cinema, a new ethos for creating it, he simultaneously put under interdiction, in a far more revolutionary way than Antonioni, its chief traditional concerns and intentions: to tell complete, well-made, consistent stories, to make the world seem more coherent than it is, to replace ordinary sight with ideal or compensatory vision. Godard's quarrel with popular cinema – even, or perhaps especially, popular 'arty' cinema – was analogous to Bertolt Brecht's with popular theatre: they are 'culinary', made to be consumed, designed to satisfy; above all, designed to leave intact the sensibility and thought – and thus the world – that are brought to them. In fending off this culinary impulse on the part of audiences so sophisticated that they devoured the avant-garde the way their fathers did the retrograde, Godard was compelled to change radically his procedures with nearly every new film, so as to shake

his admirers loose from their belief that they 'had' him or had him figured out.

As much in the areas where Godard's influence had been paramount as in those where it hadn't, the New American Cinema of the late 1960s and early 1970s was still very much at the culinary stage. It was a new kind of diet, certainly – far more sophisticated, tougher, more suited to people's constitutions during this period. But it went down too easily, being almost wholly and instantly digestible. Certainly, what was being consumed was no longer debilitating fantasy; it was an ostensible portrait of the world. Yet in the very attempt to gain control over that world through realistic portrayal – through a refusal to allow it to be hidden or veiled in any detail – these new films shook no consciousness or sensibility. Instead, they reinforced what we were already conscious and sensible of, what was there waiting to be consumed in one more homogenised form.

They did this in the first place by their lack of aesthetic, as opposed to thematic or technical, daring, by their continuing to present not new relationships between consciousness and reality but 'novel' stories. Structurally speaking, almost all of these movies were traditional narratives, relying on incidents moving in an inexorable line to an unsurprising conclusion; relying, too, on certain wishes and expectations on the part of the audience – in sum, a trust, which is not betrayed, that the story will come out right. Which is not to say necessarily happily; in this sophisticated epoch, unhappy endings that confirmed our previously arrived at unhappy conclusions about the state of society were more than acceptable. In this way, a film like *Medium Cool* was certain to have its protagonists die as a more or less direct result of the evil, in the form of a brutal police action, unleashed at the Democratic National Convention in Chicago in 1968, while *Easy Rider* would have its heroes killed down South as the inevitable outcome of American prejudice and bigotry towards 'difference', otherness, or dissent.

That these films were sequential narratives – a tale of American outlaw violence in *Bonnie and Clyde* or *The Wild Bunch*, of American youth's disaffection and dropping out in *The Graduate*, of sexual appetite and pathology in *Coming Apart* or political pathology in *Medium Cool* – is not what is crucial. What is, though, is that they were narratives *without impediment*, without counterforces to the tendency of film (as of the novel) to serve as a solacer, in that subtle way by which comfort is likely to come whenever we see experience presented as consecutive and orderly, shapely and coherent, with a beginning, middle, and end and the possibility of moral or ethical extrapolation. Thus to give us, in anecdotal form, a summary or description of what we had already experienced – this was the chief failure and insufficiency of the New American Cinema of contemporary acumen and worldly consciousness.

The irony here is that the world wasn't seen anew, with Brechtian distance, or even with renewed attentiveness, but was instead reflected through the clouds composing the zeitgeist, the public atmosphere of the moment. These 'raids on currency', all exploitations of what the moment held up as seductive, were functions, to begin with, of economic plausibility; they were what would sell to the new young audiences for film, as romantic fantasy or pseudo-sophisticated, pillow-talk comedy no longer could. But at a much deeper level such 'raids on currency' were functions of the inability of American filmmaking thus far to take hold of the lessons Godard and others had taught about actuality and the imagination, the nature of invention, and the artistic necessity of simultaneously adding to and subtracting from reality rather than simply trying to reflect it.

Audiences themselves were seduced by a giddy sense of contemporaneity: by pretensions to the nitty-gritty, by modish sorts of 'honesty', or by frissons arising from the breaking of taboos. *Midnight Cowboy*, for one, employed a troupe of real Andy Warhol cohorts for no organic reason, simply as a titillating presence from the place 'where it's at'. *Putney Swope*, a festival of chic clichés – about blacks, whites, politics, sex, Jews, advertising, and materialism – also offered a glossary of current, down-to-earth utterance, such as 'schmuck', 'dry hump', 'bullshit', and even 'mother-fucker'. *Coming Apart*, for its part, pretending to psychological verisimilitude, exhibited 'far-out' sexual activities with an air of announcing that it was *the first* to show them. And that, I think, goes to the heart of this strange condition of a sophistication that was at the same time a profound naivety.

The enthusiastic audience of *Putney Swope*, for instance – made up mostly of very young persons (myself one of them back in those days) – was responding in great part to what it had not yet heard or seen *out in the light*: to an experience, that is to say, of a crude, initiatory kind, full of emblems and icons of public awareness and of an eventfulness previously passed through in private, whether in actuality or supposition. And this eventfulness bristled with the sense of a social reality whose conquest by mimicry assuaged the audience's terrors and overcame for the moment its impotence. This is how I think that film in large part was being used at this time in America, the capacity of the screen to substitute for the world thereby bringing about a kind of treacherously false education and false regeneration – a feeling of conquest grounded on a mistaking of the mesmerising images or coerced reflections of the world and society for the truth about them.

Yet in art it is not life itself that makes the context – it is the objects of art themselves. This means that to accomplish a great work one must not merely observe life; such an effort alone is insufficient and even artificial. We observe life as we live it. To say that in order to create a person just has

to observe society or the world is simply wrong, for society and the world are always there in our experiences. Now, no one would claim that the then fashionable and aspiring American filmmakers were ambitious to create their own great works. They were not even interested in creating 'artworks' at all. But the truth of the above idea about aesthetic context applies to them willy-nilly. In the matter of making imaginary things, even in the making of such 'impure' objects as films, the context should not have been life and the observation shouldn't have been of society, the world, the here and now. We had already obtained these materials, these realities or truths, on our own. The point was, and remains, to subject them to the lie that resurrects and, in the deepest sense we have known so far, authenticates such factual materials at the same time as it transfigures them.