They shoot screenwriters...

(Continued from page 2) much earlier because it has surely been thought by many people in the film industry to be too ‘down beat’ to have wide audience appeal.” His version makes it clear that he, too, believes this to some degree.

In particular, Mc Coy’s Gloria denies the traditional American faith in the power of the individual. She believes no amount of hard work or good work can prevent her being a failure, and she persists in that belief even when events look like they might prove otherwise. The translation, to make their version palatable, had two choices: change Gloria, or change the events. They chose the second. Thus, in the movie, things end differently. It looks as if Robert and Gloria do have a chance in the contest, till they discover it’s rigged—the winners will be charged with “expenses,” to be deducted from the prize money. Their hopes dashed, they quit, and the murder follows much like in the book. Pollack claims the original ending was meant to have seemed “arbitrary” to present-day audiences, but certainly his own is no less so. His purpose, quite in contradiction to what some may think of as the sense of McCoy’s ending by giving Gloria a reason for her pessimism, is that audiences still require are so different, and probably also out of a desire to make the production larger. Pollack has tried to increase the scope of the symbol. The whole marathon is now a “microcosm of life,” as some critics have put it; in more specific terms, the minor characters are filled in, the story is told from a third-person point of view, and present-time is shifted to the time of the marathon, with the trial shown in flash-forwards. (These unexpected interjections don’t work very well, but Pollack seems to value them as some modern technical advance, like wide-screen.)

Pollack excuses much of the rearrangement as necessary to flesh out the screen characters. It’s easy to see, though, how this also aids the change in outlook already described. The marathon is a microcosm of life; the marathon is rigged, and so is life; Gloria is justified in quitting the marathon, so she’s justified in quitting life. Again, the reasons that audiences still require are emphasized. There’s no lack of further examples, either—e.g., in Pina Bausch’s work, which Pollack seems to value as some modern technical advance, like wide-screen.

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