

# AN ANALYSIS ON AMBIVALENCE IN CINEMA: "THE LAST TYCOON" ELIA KAZAN\*

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## Abstract

Involved in filmmaking more than four decades, Elia Kazan had been a witness and an influence for significant change in the American film industry. His final phase includes four films, respectively, *America America*, *The Arrangement*, *The Visitors* and *The Last Tycoon* which are his most neglected films in film studies, compared to his previous successful films such as *On the Waterfront*, *A Streetcar Named Desire*, *East of Eden* and *Splendor in the Grass*. This study has focused on one of his late films for mainly two reasons; to fill the gap in the literature and present an analyses of Kazan's most structurally different film regarding its narrative complexities with the concept of realism. Realism is one of the key concepts to study Kazan in the research field, but distinctively, I have tried to find the realism within the mise-en-scène and ambivalence in the narrative.

**Keywords:** Elia Kazan, realism, mise en scène, ambivalence, *The Last Tycoon*, cinematic analyses.

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# SİNEMADA ‘İKİ TARAFILIK’ ÜZERİNE BİR İNCELEME: “SON PATRON” ELIA KAZAN\*

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## Özet

Elia Kazan'ın yönetmenlik kariyeri kırk yıldan uzun bir süreyi kapsar. Kazan, bu süre boyunca Amerikan film endüstrisindeki değişimlere hem tanıklık etmiş hem de katkıda bulunmuştur. *On the Waterfront*, *A Streetcar Named Desire*, *East of Eden* ve *Splendor in the Grass* filmleri Kazan'ın finansal başarı sağlamış ve eleştirmenlerce olumlu değerlendirilmiş filmleridir. Yönetmenliğinin son döneminde çektiği *America America*, *The Arrangement*, *The Visitors* ve *The Last Tycoon* filmleri ise finansal başarıyı yakalayamamış ve eleştirmenlerce olumsuz değerlendirilmiştir. Bu filmler aynı zamanda literatürdeki Elia Kazan çalışmalarında göz ardı edilen filmlerdir. Bu çalışma kapsamında yönetmenin son dönemine ait *The Last Tycoon* filmine iki temel sebeple odaklanılmıştır. Bunlar; Kazan'ın anlatı ve gerçekçilik bakımından yapısal olarak en farklı filminin analizini sunmak ve bu alanda literatürdeki boşluğu doldurmaktır. Film çalışmaları alanında Kazan filmleri sıklıkla gerçekçilik kavramı üzerinden incelenmiştir; bu çalışmada ise literatürdeki diğer çalışmalardan farklı olarak Kazan'ın filmlerindeki gerçekçilik, mizansen kurulumu ve "ambivalence" (iki taraflılık, zıtlık) kavramı üzerinden analiz edilmiştir.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** Elia Kazan, gerçekçilik, mizansen, iki taraflılık, zıtlık, *The Last Tycoon*, film analizi.

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## Introduction

Involved in filmmaking more than four decades, an Anatolian Greek, Elia Kazan had been a witness and an influencer of significant change in the American film industry. It is possible to say that there are four key points that shaped Kazan's life as an individual and a filmmaker. The first one is that Kazan was an immigrant. Although he felt as an outsider all his life he always kept his desire to tell a story about the country he was brought to, America. The films he made represented more than the themes of immigration and alienation. He gradually understood what America meant to him and discovered America's political and cultural position in the world. The second key point is Group Theatre and respectively the third, the Actors Studio and the last one his break away from Hollywood to become an independent filmmaker.

In defiance of Hollywood classical narrative mode, he resisted against the easy quick finales that left no room for ambivalence. Kazan created his characters in deep inner conflicts; counted on the performance of the actor rather than stardom and accepted to earn less money in order to make "quality pictures". In *The Last Tycoon*, Monroe Stahr is characterized as an extremely talented producer, a "production genius" who can tell whether a film is a "quality picture" or not. He pursues the aesthetic and narrative quality of a film at the cost of losing money. Parallel to Monroe, Kazan has tried to mediate between art and entertainment several times throughout his career; he chose his films over money when he had to. Kazan's personal ambivalence, like Monroe Stahr's, derives from his inner conflict about Hollywood. Although critical of it and feeling like an "outsider" there, he is still inside the universe of Hollywood where film-making is "business" and everything is money-oriented.

Elia Kazan had a changing aesthetic philosophy that followed a path from clarity to ambivalence that can be regarded as a progression. When Kazan made his first films, he believed in total thematic clarity, which caused over-simplification and lack of dimension of cinematic elements in his films. His first films such as *A Tree Grows in Brooklyn* (1945), *Boomerang!* (1947), *Gentleman's Agreement* (1947) and *Panic in the Streets* (1950) were criticized for their over-simplification whereas his later films brought out a new dimension starting from *On the Waterfront* in 1954 (Dombrowski, 2011). As Kazan's directorial skills grew mature, the lack of cinematic elements gave way to just the opposite and created a kind of depth when ambivalence as a narrative technique started to dominate.

Why Kazan's films are considered transformative in postwar American cinema is due to his dense consideration of human behavior. His films represented ambiguity through his directing of actors, use of contemporary themes and sticking to his own creativity with his insist on making films that are more personal - financially and thematically -. The more his films became his own and grew mature, the more they expressed ambivalence. He believed in con-

traditions in values and reflected it through his stories and characters. These contradictions were actually the essence of the Stanislavsky system. The drama dealt with contradictory feelings within the audience and put them into a position where they did not know who or what was right or wrong:

(...) Conflict does not mean a thing if it is mechanical and physical. It means something when the conflict is general, when it is not only between two forces but between values. That is what we face all the time in life. When you decide in favor of "A" you are not deciding in favor of "B." You are losing something when you decide. That is what makes a decision difficult; that is what drama is about. There's a loss and there's no way of getting out of it (Young, 1999: 250).

Kazan would prepare his work based on "the spine", the main action, and then "the subsidiary actions that come off it like ribs" (Ciment, 1973: 31). This was his version of Stanislavsky system and it served the ambivalence in several ways. One of them was that the characters in his films have psychological complexity but are not (entirely) out of control. These characters are not in a static state but dynamically changing throughout the film, sometimes for the better sometimes for the worse. It is noteworthy that the characters never act as if they are heroic; another point the Stanislavsky system emphasizes, but on the contrary, act as if there is a hero in every man. American myth of heroic man is challenged by the realism of personality: they become ordinary characters who do not have one strong sound feeling but have all kind of feelings and ready to make mistakes. There is a central character who has a conflict – or many conflicts - within and therefore he or she is divided. That character is not intact, so to say, complete and that lacking serves ambivalence (Neve, 2009). *The Last Tycoon's* Monroe appears to be the genius of the studio, the shining star who has tremendous power and is capable of doing everything. Nevertheless, the real Monroe is weak and fragile; he lets life pass him by until he falls in love and wants to be born again. He is ready to transform and search for the hero under cover.

Kazan's ambivalence towards America is another aspect of the dominating narrative in his films. Although he is very much sentimental about America, he is also quite critical of American myths and establishments. Kazan had both emotions; he loved America and resented it to a great extent. He loved it because he believed that if it were not for America, he would be another rug seller in the Grand Bazaar in Istanbul, as was his father. He resented it because he clearly saw how corrupted American institutions were and how its imperialist and capitalist power ruled the world by myths and lies in the name of democracy (Dombrowski, 2011).

The article will not review the HUAC hearings' effects which Kazan is notorious for since I do not aim to evaluate Kazan positively or negatively on this matter but rather analyze Kazan's *The Last Tycoon* in an aesthetic context.

## “The Last Tycoon”

“All that glisters is not gold.”  
William Shakespeare,  
*The Merchant of Venice*

Inspired by the Hollywood’s real history in 1930’s, *The Last Tycoon* (1976) is based on the life of chief of production, Irving Thalberg, also known as “Boy Wonder” of Hollywood. It is a screen adaptation of F. Scott Fitzgerald’s unfinished novel “The Last Tycoon” written by Harold Pinter and Elia Kazan. Unlike *America America*, Kazan did not prefer to write the script by himself, but his contributions to the story was significant. Because it is not Kazan’s own script and he co-produced rather than producing himself, it is particularly distinctive from his earlier films as it is also a studio picture of a legendary Hollywood producer’s life shot in Hollywood. Nevertheless, the film is a persistent product of his autobiographical turn that started with *America America* and like his other late personal films, the film failed commercially.

1930s and 1940s are considered the Golden Age of Hollywood when the studio system was at its peak. However, the effects of economic calamity of Great Depression on Hollywood was inevitable (Balio, 1993: 15-20). Based on the real characters and places -Irving Thalberg and MGM production- *the last tycoon* Monroe Stahr’s production company go through hardships but they manage to thrive thanks to the ‘boy wonder’s talents. He is characterized as an extremely talented producer, a “production genius” who can tell whether a film is a “quality picture” or not. Supervising all the studio’s productions and makes the final decisions, he is indeed the last tycoon to pursue the aesthetic and narrative quality of pictures; things will not be the same and the shift of production system in Hollywood will coincide with Monroe’s departure.

*The Last Tycoon* can be considered as Kazan’s summing up of all his knowledge on filmmaking and Hollywood. It is a self-reflexive and a “self-consciously Hollywood art film” (Neve, 2009: 188) in the sense of criticism on Hollywood. The film within a film notion existed earlier, but it was after the 1970s Hollywood started to become critical of itself (Weissenborn, 1998: 135). Kazan’s last film was one of these critical films. It did not seek to return the audience to the golden days of Hollywood but instead take them “to the very essence of the cinema itself” (Michaels, 1982: 113).

The opening shot of the film is from a black and white footage reminding of classic Hollywood films. Throughout the film, black and white footages are films within the actual colored film. In the very next scene, the audience sees the back of a man in a projection room deciding on the fate of raw film material. He makes statements and gives orders about the raw material: “it kills the surprise”, “make it shorter”, “stay on her, don’t go to him”, “she’s the one

we are interested in". This man, the audience will soon discover, is the protagonist, Monroe Stahr. From the beginning, the film suggests that Monroe will talk to the audience on how to make motion pictures as he molds the raw footage and edits several films at once.



Figure 1



Figure 2



Figure 3

Monroe sees Kathleen Moore for the first time while she is clinging to a prop, head of Shiva (Figure 1). Shiva is the god of destruction in Hinduism and as we will see at the end, the head as a symbol foreshadows Monroe's ultimate downfall. An earthquake hits the studio and there is a flood on the back lot. The head as a prop glides over the water, Kathleen, alone in the frame, comes into sight; she symbolically takes the place of the god of destruction (Figure 3). Throughout the film, specific objects establish emotional and psychological implicit meanings and the metaphorical use of some objects appear as symbols, which form the integral part of mise-en-scène.

Floating down a flooded studio set, Kathleen's entrance is spectral. The soft lighting on her face makes her an apparitional figure, as if she is not human (Figure 2). The use of twice-reflected light on Kathleen is important because it helps the audience to see the ghostlike effect on her. Kathleen is also identical to Monroe's ex-wife, Minna Davis, who was once a famous actress who died very young. Her ghostlike entrance explicitly reminds the picture of Minna Davis in the previous scene; a studio guide takes a group of visitors to the studios to show Minna's dressing room. Her portrait is at the heart of the frame, helps the audience to establish the resemblance between her and Kathleen. Another portrait of Minna, in which she looks like a ghostly figure, is behind Monroe's desk, a constant reminder that she is "watching" Monroe (Figure 4). Kazan repeatedly uses various props as an integral part of mise-en-scène and this contributes to the narrative.



Figure 4

Monroe is aware of cinema's capacity to shape and transform the reality in reality; he transforms his own life and shapes others, he ascribes qualities to Kathleen that she does not possess. Monroe sees his life parallel to films; he tries to place Kathleen in the "scene". Devoted to the studio and filmmaking, Monroe can't think of any life beyond props, sets and lighting. He has to control everything in his own life and films; from pre-production to post-production. His existence is almost only in films and he wants someone who would accompany him in his own film, which is doomed to fail. The denial of reality will hit him hard when Kathleen only wants a "quite life" in contrast to Monroe's colorful, audible and complicated way of living.



Figure 5

Monroe is precise, experienced and insightful about his work but his excessive involvement in pictures makes it hard to build a life of his own outside of cinema. He is ambivalent in several ways; he is sensitive and ruthless, violent and tender, an intellectual artist and an executive all at once. As will be seen in the following scenes, he is aware of economic dynamics and still not afraid to lose money to produce a "quality picture". He is trying to mediate between art and entertainment when he is at the top of his career, but he will see that the effort to harmonize culture and profit will not work after the moguls discharge him from the studio. Monroe's judgement, passion and sensibility about films distinguish him from the merely money-driven moguls. He struggles to strike a balance between the pressures of economy and his conscience.

In one interview, the co-producer of *The Last Tycoon*, -independent film producer Sam Spiegel-, shared Kazan's vision of the film and said that he wanted to "do something that hasn't been done in a long time - a gentle picture" (Kahn Atkins, 1977: 108). He was referring to increasing violence in productions and believed those films were not "quality pictures". Monroe shares the director's and the co-producer's vision which illuminates the structure of film industry; producers who have artistic endeavors will not survive, Hollywood is not a place to make prestigious pictures filled with artistic aspirations. It functions as a corporate and institution which is nature of Hollywood. Nevertheless, Monroe's cinematic achievements and his skills to make the moguls "swallow pictures of questionable profit for the sake of quality" (Callahan, 1978: 212) is noteworthy. Due to him, the production company makes tremendous profits; hence they let him make some quality pictures:

**Mogul 1:** What about the South American picture?

**Monroe:** We're going ahead with that.

**Mogul 1:** With the same budget? It's out of proportion. With that budget, we have no chance.

...

**Mogul 2:** But you have a budget of a million, seven-five-0 and you say you expect less than that in grosses? What about prints and advertising? Distribution costs. Interest on the money... and some profits.

**Monroe:** I'm not even sure we'll gross a million.

**Mogul 1:** Do I understand you to say that you expect to gross a half a million short of your budget?

**Monroe:** It's a quality picture.

**Mogul 1:** "Quality picture."

**Mogul 2:** What the hell are we...?

**Monroe:** We've played safe for two years now. It's time we made a picture that isn't meant to make money. Pat Brady (mogul 1) is always saying at Academy dinners that we have a certain duty to the public. Okay. It's a good thing for the company to slip in a Picture that'll lose money... write it off as good will.

A man willing to do many things for the sake of art, even if that means to lose some money, maneuvers in corporate battles but will not be able to carry on with his desires and dreams. Therefore, his existence is ambivalent; the more his mind rejects the reality surrounding him, the more he starts to turn into a fictional character.



Figure 6



Figure 7



Figure 8



Figure 9



Figure 10

After the first encounter with Kathleen, he goes back to his humble mansion, opens the door and sees Kathleen dressed up as his ex-wife in an imaginary take (*Figure 5*). In the next scene, Monroe makes several phone calls in order to find Kathleen (*Figure 6*). His search scene is intercut with dailies (*Figure 7*), which suggests that he is editing two films at the same time; his own life and the film on the screen. He is then in the projection room watching the raw material as he answers a call and gives information about Kathleen (*Figure 8*). There is an intercut to dailies again (*Figure 9*) and in the following scene, he hears the news that her address is found (*Figure 10*). During the sequence, the telephone as an object bind the scenes together. Alternating between the scenes, the abrupt cuts serve the elliptical narrative as the narrative of one film is interrupted by another narrative of the other film. The audience watches a film within a film; one named “Monroe’s Search for Kathleen” and the other classic Hollywood picture.



Figure 11



Figure 12

The supporting roles played by acclaimed but fading actors such as Tony Curtis, Dana Andrews and Jeanne Moreau, adds further sense of self-reflexivity to the film. Curtis as Rodriguez and Moreau as Didi are movie stars in the film within *The Last Tycoon*, which serves as an allusion to popular classics of Hollywood cinema. Apart from *The Last Tycoon*, the audience has the knowledge of once rising stars are now in supporting roles merely acting like stars, which is a moment of the film’s self-reflexivity. The shift from the actual film to classic films are with abrupt cuts; at first, the audience can’t tell whether he or she is watching the film within or the film itself. The director yells “cut!” (*Figure 11*) and, the black and white scene switches to the color motion picture film set (*Figure 12*). The film crew are in a rush to get the set ready for the next scene but Didi seems restless. In a minute, she is talking to the director and says she wants to play the scene again. It is crucial that the viewers get the chance to see the film universe from inside with its defects and artifices, where the theme of appearance versus reality walks in and merges with the ambivalence.

It can be interpreted that in the film all is “happening underwater” (Kazan, Silver, & Corliss, 1977. 43). At the end of the film, text and subtext relocate and the entropic pieces come together; the audience now has a track to follow

to watch the film, again, this time -to some extent- in a critical manner. One can possibly then realize that the subtext is delivered in the main text with allusions, ambivalences, metaphors, motifs and several particular cinematic elements. This may result in the film's transforming into a new film from within and it can be seen entirely different from the first view.

Monroe convinces Kathleen to meet him and takes her to his unfinished beach house. The house is just a raised wooden platform, a roofless scaffold, reminding an incomplete stage set. It could be viewed as a metaphor for a life of vast possibilities, but also the possibility of self-destruction. In the end, the house will also be the metaphor for Kathleen's and Monroe's incomplete relationship. Kathleen moves around in the beach while Monroe "watches" her and she asks him about a particular part of the house. Monroe answers that part is for the movie projector and Kathleen gives a pain smile. In the following scene, she tells him that she only wants "a quiet life" in contrast to Monroe's reality. Monroe falls in love with Kathleen instantly, but he can't help thinking what the mystery is. He knows that each film has one or several mysteries to keep audience alert and interested. As if they are in a film, Monroe asks Kathleen what she hides. His questions also raise suspicions in the audience and engage their curiosity. Before they leave the beach house, they have the dialogue below which indicates the romance between them will not survive Monroe's unhealthy and obsessive relationship with films:

**Monroe:** Do you ever go to the movies?

**Kathleen:** Oh, not much.

**Monroe:** Why not?

**Kathleen:** Should I?

**Monroe:** Millions of people do.

**Kathleen:** Why?

**Monroe:** Because movies are necessary to them. They give them what they need.

**Kathleen:** What you need.

**Monroe:** It's my life.

Monroe's vision of the world is revealed in this dialogue; he gives the audience not what they want but what he wants. As such, he sees Kathleen the way he wants to see which will lead to a tragedy and his downfall. After they make love, Kathleen discloses the mystery; she was once married to a real king who quit being one and became alcoholic. Kathleen ran away, an American man brought her to California and saved her life. She will marry him because all she wants is "a quiet life" where kings and chaos do not exist. For her, Monroe looks like a king more than her husband once did and she can foresee that Monroe is not a man of simpler life:

**Kathleen:** ... He wasn't really much like a king. Not nearly as much as you... But then none of them were... I want a quiet life.

**Monroe:** I can't stop looking at you. I don't want to lose you.

**Kathleen:** I want a quiet life.

Monroe's answers are ambiguous, for he does not know if he can meet Kathleen's needs. Kathleen on the other hand is very precise, like Monroe, when he is dealing with motion pictures. He fears pursuing Kathleen and eventually will lose her because of his unwillingness to commit to a quiet life and denial of reality. The next time they meet, Kathleen has decided that she will marry the man that saved her life, but Monroe is not ready to give up yet. He "directs" Kathleen with script dialogue; "stop walking, come back, closer, open your cape, open your eyes". She does what he says and gives him the last chance to commit to her, but Monroe fails to take it. The next scene in the car, Monroe and Kathleen drive around for the last time. Kathleen, who does not feel safe, speaks with allusions, each of the sentences corresponding to her vague relationship with Monroe. The audience sees her in the strange refracted light again, ghostlike, the same way when Monroe first saw her (*Figure 13*). Foreshadowing that she will soon disappear, Kathleen describes how night falls in California so fast without any twilight and, hopes some parts of America are gentle. When Monroe impatiently asks if she is leaving California and Kathleen answers she might, he suddenly stops the car.



*Figure 13. Twice reflected light on ghostlike Kathleen.*

Trying to make up his mind, he says "listen" with determination and looks at Kathleen, whose face reflects high expectations of him (*Figure 14*). She waits for what Monroe has to say, but he fails to take the opportunity; Monroe is not prepared to "undertake" any woman. Accepting what he is, he gives up and says "nothing" without looking at her. Kathleen is at a loss (*Figure 15*), she does not say a word, but the audience might "read" her face as if she were speaking. Just like in *America* when without any dialogues Stavros's face and the sound of the imaginary cough brings forth the ambivalence; with a few words, Kathleen feels in her bones Monroe's ambivalent feelings towards her. He does not want to lose her, but he is not capable of being with her either. In most of Kazan's films, including *America*, dialogue is a supplementary element rather than a central one. As Neve brilliantly pointed out about Kazan's films, "the important thing is in what is not said" (Neve, 2009: 183). Images, movement, composition and other visual elements allow Kazan's style of ambiguity to occur whereas dialogues limit many possibilities.



Figure 14. "Listen."



Figure 15. "What?"



Figure 16. "Nothing."

Monroe is unable to move from the world of spectacle to the real-life relationships that require vulnerability, risks and commitment. Back in the world of stars, the end of the Didi-Rodriguez film is on the screen (Figure 18). The heroine, who echoes Kathleen's situation, has to make a choice between her husband and lover. Didi sings a song: "my ghost by day, my heart by night, you had the choice today" and the lyrics foreshadow that Monroe will lose his chance. A cut to Monroe in the projection room (Figure 19) makes it clear that the film affects him personally, especially when Didi says "I owe it to him, I must go to him" referring to her husband. Kathleen and Monroe's love affair reverberates the characters in black and white footages and furthermore, concurrent allusions to classic films call attention to the reflexivity of the film.



Figure 17



Figure 18



Figure 19

Monroe realizes that he has lost Kathleen for good and his is no longer in charge of his film. He lost Kathleen; and piece by piece, he is losing himself. Devastated, Monroe gets drunk and cannot handle the business deal he was supposed to take care of. The moguls announce his dismissal; they suggest Monroe take a long vacation because they no longer consider him competent. The last dialogue they have is very brief: Monroe says, "This studio will fall without me"; while the moguls are certain that everyone will see that the studio does not fall. The conflict between the moguls and Monroe is grounded in the dissonance of old and new Hollywood, where aging producers and the "boy wonder" come into conflict. He is concerned with quality filmmaking more than the commercial success; which money-oriented executives will never understand.

Back in his office for one last time, Monroe starts hearing dialogues from earlier scenes that belong to different moments of the film. Looking back, the audience can recognize that these iterations hint at several events to come and at specific themes as well. The first dialogue Monroe hears is a talk

between him and a screenwriter where Monroe explains how she wants the heroine to be. The screenwriter does not quite understand what he wants and asks: "So how do you want the girl?", and Monroe answers "perfect". The question echoing in his mind, he realizes he cannot have her -Kathleen- the way he wants. She is not a character in a film. Kathleen's dialogue comes next; she says, "I want a quiet life", as she did for several times which Monroe did not respond. The last flashback is the question by his doctor who came to examine him and asked, "Any pain?" to which he answers "some". He is in fact in pain more than "some" and it is all coming back to him now. He wanted to ignore the pain but now he feels everything strikingly. The dialogues that he remembers act as visual flashbacks and the subtext starts to rise to the surface. Dialogues used as motifs help the subtext come to light and help give new meanings to the film.



Figure 20



Figure 21



Figure 22

After the dialogues, there is a short silence. Right after, Monroe looks directly into the camera and breaks the fourth wall (*Figure 20*). He retells a story of an earlier scene; in which he invented a short narration to show to a screenwriter, Boxley, the secrets of filmmaking. Monroe says what Boxley wrote is "just talk" and they would "lose the audience". However, Boxley says "the men are dueling" when the conversation takes place, implying there is action. Monroe, ready to "show" how to make pictures, makes up a story:

**Monroe:** Suppose you're in your office... You've been "fighting duels" all day. You're exhausted. This is you. A girl comes in. She doesn't see you. She takes off her gloves. She opens her purse. She dumps it out on the table. You watch her. This is you. Now... She has two dimes, a matchbox and a nickel. She leaves the nickel on the table. She puts the two dimes back into her purse. She takes the gloves... they're black. Puts them into the stove. Lights a match. Suddenly, the telephone rings. She picks it up. She listens. She says, "I've never owned a pair of black gloves in my life." Hangs up. Kneels by the stove. Lights another match. Suddenly, you notice... there's another man in the room... watching every move the girl makes.

**Boxley:** What happens?

**Monroe:** I don't know. I was just making pictures.

**Boxley:** What was the nickel for?

**Monroe:** Jane (another screenwriter), what was the nickel for?

**Jane:** The nickel was for the movies.

**Boxley:** What do you pay me for? I don't understand the damn stuff.

**Monroe:** Yes, you do... or you wouldn't have asked about the nickel.

This time, it is Kathleen in the leading role, burning not the gloves but letters Monroe sent her and the other man watching is her husband. Monroe repeats his story while the film cuts to insert shots of Kathleen, in one of them kissing her husband (*Figure 24*) the exact same way he kissed Monroe before (*Figure 23*). Then the audience –and Monroe- hears Boxley ask, "What happens?" with which Monroe concludes, "I don't know. I was just making pictures."



*Figure 23*



*Figure 24*



*Figure 25*

In the following scene, there is a cut from a frontal close-up of Monroe (*Figure 22*) to a matching close-up of Kathleen, (*Figure 25*); it is as though are looking at each other. Monroe talks to her "through the audience" and says, "I don't want to lose you". His voice-over on the studio's image echoes through the same sentence; he does not want to lose studio either (*Figure 26*). Kathleen's eyes, looking directly at the audience -breaking the fourth wall as well-, are filled with tears. They are both looking at the camera to evoke a sense of artifice; that they are merely film characters.



*Figure 26. Monroe's voice echoes: "I don't want to lose you."*



*Figure 27*



*Figure 28*



*Figure 29*

The film's final image is a long shot of Monroe entering huge, dark and empty sound stage (*Figure 26*). The only life he has is in pictures, his own life becomes a picture and he watches his own film. As the both films end, Monroe himself turns into a ghost, being swallowed up in the darkness of the studio (*Figure 27*). He is "engulfed in his environment finally, and that's where the moguls die. They get engulfed in their environment; they go lower and lower" (Kazan et al., 1977: 41). But before he goes, he catches the coin Stavros (in *America America*) threw up in the air. It is the nickel and the nickel is for the movies.

## Conclusion

With *The Last Tycoon*, Kazan advanced his skills to create a thoroughly visual cinema in which he graduated from "being a director of dialogue to a director of pictures" (Ciment, 1973: 62). In addition, while his earlier films framed famous Method Acting performances, his last works express the character's relationship with environment through staging, movement and composition. It is not the stars who attract the audience's attention the most, on the contrary, acting becomes another cinematic element contributing the same amount to filmic equilibrium. As the acting rather than stardom also becomes an aesthetic tool just as important as other elements, the films grow more unpredictable and the director's ability to define the aesthetic and narrative spines of the text and the sub-text become evident. And in contrast with conventional Hollywood, Kazan's late films embody ambivalence in the narrative. *Tycoon* represents the realism emerging from the conflict in the characters and between the external forces surrounding him/ her; Monroe is caught in the middle, his passion for filmmaking will not/cannot outweigh making money.

So, it can be claimed that a convincing drama takes place when there is inner conflict. These conflicts come together with ambiguities, complex individual personalities of characters that are not stereotypes, open-ended stories and therefore, create an ambivalent product. Bordwell claims that classical Hollywood never allows ambiguity in narrative. If there is ambiguity in the narrative, psychologically complex characters exist; and if there are inconsistencies in time and open-endings, that film can be called an art film. According to Bordwell, art films motivate their narratives by realism (Bordwell, 1985: 205-228). I have also claimed that Kazan's films cannot be considered classical Hollywood films because they allow ambivalence in the narrative along with other elements mentioned. But Kazan's films are not considered as art films in this study either. His films are considered realistic in the sense that they break certain rules of classical Hollywood and become anti-Hollywood films. This also creates an ambivalence because Kazan behaves like an outsider in Hollywood whereas he can be not; he is still inside the Hollywood. In *Tycoon*, we can see this conflict clearly.

To surpass the common question, "Are you for or against Elia Kazan?" (re-

garding HUAC investigations) and add a new perspective to literature, this article has focused on Kazan's artistic view. I have argued that what constructs Elia Kazan's art as a director is mainly composed of the mise-en-scène elements, ambivalence in narration and his personal experiences. Particularly in *The Last Tycoon*, we can observe Kazan's evolution of his films parallel to his personal evolution as an individual.

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