CHAPTER V

THE LAST TYCOON

For the first time in his career had Fitzgerald placed his protagonist Monroe Stahr in a social context, functioning as a figure of consequence in the world of public interest in The Last Tycoon. He would work very hard, including Sundays, incessantly with a missionary zeal, for he had no other obligation or pretence to live in this world after his wife Minna died. If fatigue was to kill him within a short while, he had nothing to grumble or yearn for the unfulfilled. Dr. Baer knew that Stahr could not be stopped from work or asked to rest because the latter preferred to die of fatigue:

Fatigue was a drug as well as a poison, and Stahr apparently derived some rare almost physical pleasure from working lightheaded with weariness. It was a perversion of the life force he had seen before, but he had almost stopped trying to interfere with it. He had cured a man or so—a hollow triumph of killing and preserving the shell.1

Dr. Baer was certainly aware, as much as Stahr, that work gives satisfaction, that work preserves the soul and protects the self from disintegration though the body yields. Preserving the outer shell of the body with or
extraordinary illuminating flight where he saw which way we were going, and how we looked doing it, and how much of it mattered. You could say that this was where an accidental wind blew him, but I don't think so. I would rather think that in a 'long shot' he saw a new way of measuring our jerky hopes and graceful roguries and awkward sorrows, and that he came here from choice to be with us to the end. Like the plane coming down into the Glendale airport, into the warm darkness.4

Stahr climbed very high into the sky on strong wings, tenaciously fluttering and beating, and hovering over the world, perching nowhere near the earth. Stahr, was thus, a romantic and a visionary with no real moorings on earth. He had neither education nor money to begin with, except a strong will and sharp intelligence. He knew how to make use of other's brains as a compensation for lack of formal education. In a conversation with the Communist leader Mr. Brimmer, Stahr unobtrusively accepted that he was not more brilliant than any of the writers employed by him for the hack work of script writing, but only benefitted by using them for which the world acknowledged him a genius:

'I never thought,' he said, 'that I had more brains than a writer has. But I always thought that his brains belonged to me - because I knew how to use them. Like the Romans - I've heard that they never invented things but they knew what to do with them. Do you see? I don't say it's right. But it's the way I've always felt-since I was a boy.'5

Stahr in his humility would confess when, Cathleen enquired,
that he considered himself a clerk and not a magnate:

"When I was young I wanted to be a chief clerk - the one who knew where everything was."

She smiled.

"That's odd. And now you're much more than that."

"No, I'm still a chief clerk," Stahr said. "That's my gift, if I have one. Only when I got to be it, I found out that no one knew where anything was. And I found out that you had to know why it was where it was, and whether it should be left there."

The chosen kingdom became Hollywood, and the chosen field of Stahr's activity, the film industry, perhaps realizing from the heights that the glamorous one here suited him the most. He must have perceived an opportunity in Hollywood film industry to recreate and project a new world of his imagination, men and women heroically striving while others awkwardly suffered. He could offer opportunities to the nameless thousands to vicariously participate in the action projected on the scene. By dint of hard work and superior intelligence over others who gathered around him, he had gone far ahead, beyond the reach of his partners, beyond everybody. Proof of his superiority in mental activity, Cecilia testified, could be judged from the amount of spying that went on around Stahr:

Proof of his leadership was the spying that went on around him - not just for inside information or patented process secrets - but spying on his scent for a
trend in taste, his guess as to how things were going to be. Too much of his vitality was taken by the mere parrying of these attempts. It made his work secret in part, often devious, slow - and hard to describe as the plans of a general, where the psychological factors become too tenuous and we end by merely adding up the successes and failures. 

Stahr's life was thus, another exemplification of the Alger-myth of a self-made man, rising to the coveted position of a tycoon. "Monroe is our production genius," he (Mr. Marcus) said. "I count upon Monroe and lean heavily upon him." Financiers and producers implicitly reposed faith in Stahr for his ability:

He had been able to figure costs in his head with a speed and accuracy that dazzled them - for they were not wizards or even experts in that regard, despite the popular conception of Jews in finance. Most of them owed their success to different and incompatible qualities. But in a group a tradition carries along the less adept, and they were content to look at Stahr for the sublimated auditing, and experience a sort of glow as if they had done it themselves, like rooters at a football game.

In addition to his ability to function like a precision calculator, Stahr had also been associated with good luck by many of his partners including Mr. Pat Brady, who amassed wealth because of the "boy-wonder" Monroe. Cecilia Brady recollected that Stahr had been the greatest producer of films:
He was a marker in industry like Edison and Lumiere and Griffith and Chaplin. He led pictures way up past the range and power of the theatre, reaching a sort of golden age, before censorship. 10

Stahr was surrounded by people of lesser intelligence and understanding, including the profiteering sharks of film-production. Maybe he felt sure of his instinct that he would be able to dominate over them, dictate his terms and arouse an awe-inspiring adoration for his talents. Stahr was unprepared to compromise on the standards of the films he was involved in production. The idea in the film was Stahr's and it would be imbued with his spirit. At one stage, Stahr was determined to proceed with the production of a quality picture which might entail a net loss of a quarter million. Other partners like Brady, the unscrupulous lawyer Fleishacker and the Greek Popolos, expressed shock at Stahr's insistence while believing in their sub-conscious that a trick had been played in them:

"Excuse me, Monroe," said Fleishacker persistently, while Brady and Popolos watched. "I'm fairly new here, and perhaps I fail to comprehend implicitly and explicitly." He was talking fast, but the veins on his forehead bulged with pride at the big words from N.Y.U. "Do I understand you to say you expect to gross a quarter million short of your budget?"

"It's a quality picture," said Stahr with assumed innocence.
It had dawned on them all now, but they still felt there was a trick in it. Stahr really thought it would make money. No one in his senses -

"For two years we've played safe," said Stahr. "It's time we made a picture that'll lose some money. Write it off as good will - this'll bring in new customers."

Stahr left none in uncertainty as to the expected loss and his eyes were smiling, for he thought he was going to fulfill a duty to the public. It had almost become an obsession with Stahr to accept and to project the best, and not the next best as a compromise to expediency or easy money.

Stahr was backed by genuine ability in movie production and yet yearned for higher and better things. After a chance meeting with a Negro fisherman who had preference to study Emerson with profit, Stahr's pride as producer was hurt. His casual remark that there was no profit in the films, had rooked an industry most unwittingly. He determined to subject his productions to further scrutiny before launching:

A picture, many pictures, a decade of pictures, must be made to show him he was wrong. Since he had spoken, Stahr had thrown four pictures out of his plans - one that was going into production this week. They were borderline pictures in point of interest, but at least he submitted the borderline pictures to the Negro and found them trash. And he put back on his list a difficult picture that he had tossed to the wolves, to
Brady and Marcus and the rest, to get his way on something else. He rescued it for the Negro man.12

Stahr never hesitated to forfeit profits for attaining quality, to educate the public taste, for whom cinema is the only means of entertainment, to make a scene memorable in the minds of the spectators. Stahr craved for immortality in celluloid production - founded on an insatiable thirst for the best - in magnificence, vitality, balance and delicacy - "nice" in his own canon. It was Stahr's life-work and the perversion of his "life-force" was to create. His imagination struggled for creativity.

His imagination was haunted by the difficulty of recreating, over and over again, the tradition of responsibility that Stahr instinctively represents. The tradition is there, but the people who are capable of realizing it cannot see it, the fluidity of American society keeps them unaware of it, so that they are forced, against the odds, to recreate it from scratch each generation.13

Stahr was committed to the dream of creating a new world, though on the screen--an unreal medium of projecting the inner reality within an hour and thirty five minutes at his disposal,--a world of magnificence, vitality, love and understanding. Without this abiding inner motivation, it would not have been possible for Stahr to work on a picture through the night, an exertion which would adversely affect his already fragile health.
Stahr had that romantic yearning for capturing glimpses of beauty, poise and ility. His childhood background never provided him any opportunity to realize, as with Gatsby, his unconscious wish of living a life of magnificence and romantic wonder. This had become possible only in Hollywood where life was glamorous and instinct with a romantic veneer. With his imagination, sheer drive and will power he dominated over life at Hollywood as much as he dominated over the sturdier members of the gang.

Stahr's creativity, his tinsel dream, in depicting the inner reality his spirit yearned for, would make him a ruthless critic of insipid screen-play. He had no patience with the second rate intellectuals and sycophantic writers who would like to interpolate an excellent theme with mundane realities. To the horror of Wylie White, for example, Stahr let the draft of his screen-play fall physically on the floor, for the script tended to create an impression that the heroine was "one third whore." The film was to present the heroine as a stenographer with dumb admiration for her boss, who accidentally comes to know some secrets - and ultimately does the right thing. She was to be an upright, perfect girl who

stood for health, vitality, ambition, and love. What gave the play its importance was entirely a situation in which she found herself. She became possessed of a secret that affected a great many lives.
There was a right thing and a wrong thing to do - at first it was not plain which was which, but when it was, she went right away and did it. That was the kind of story this was - thin, clean, and shining. No doubts. 14

Wylie White thought himself brilliant to alter the course of action by introducing the unwanted elements of suspicion and labour troubles, with the image of the heroine in jitters.

Stahr's actions amply bear witness to his perversion—he refused to permit intrusion of reality into the films. He strove to represent the ideal world - the world free from labour trouble, women demanding suffrage; the world of individuals achieving glory and none in jitters, when as a matter of fact, the period in American history was filled with uncertainty. A poor girl soiling her hands in a factory, dreaming of a coveted wealthy male who would by implication free her from that drudgery, Stahr believed, would provide the "spectacular excitement" of social mobility America beckons. Stahr thus, assumed in himself the pristine glory of the American dream, and his life and work stood out as epitomes of the concept. Unlike Gatsby, Stahr, with his great insight, was able to perceive the contradictions inherent in the dream, what he termed as the "lousy condition."

Stahr expounded the theory of the "lousy condition," perhaps from his own experience in Hollywood, when the
silently growling British novelist Mr. Boxley, a realist by temperament, was unable to peel out imaginary lore for public consumption. He simply felt he could not fit into the Hollywood managerie. Boxley wondered, further, how Stahr could afford to pay him despite his inability to write anything worthwhile for the films - hack-work, as the term goes. With a carefully developed smile of kindness, Stahr tried to pacify Mr. Boxley by accepting the premise that the standards in writing fiction are entirely different from those of composing scripts for films. Verisimilitude as a technique may be alright in fiction, but films demand something very much natural, moving, a new angle to enliven the jaded nerves of the multitude in order to be box-office hits. Stahr substantiated his theory by weaving an imaginary scene wherein a pretty girl, idly observed from a distance, getting prepared to light a stove with a single match-stick that is left over in the box while the wind blasts through, shouts into the phone that she never owned a pair of black gloves. The scene depicts the reality of her awkward poverty and yet she refuses to own it up and dreams of affluence, transcending the grim actuality. Stahr believed with such stuff a film should be made of.

Though basically a realist and conventionalist, Stahr knew, that Boxley's talent could be exploited and harnessed by igniting his imagination for creating romantic scenes
for the film industry. To convince Boxley that one has to adjust oneself to the prevailing if not the ideal conditions of work:

'That is the condition,' said Stahr. 'There's always some lousy condition. We're making a life of Rubens — suppose I asked you to do portraits of rich dopes like Bill Brady and me and Gary Cooper and Marcus when you wanted to paint Jesus Christ? Wouldn't you feel you had a condition? Our condition is that we have to take people's own favourite folklore and dress it up and give it back to them. Anything beyond that is sugar."

The lousy condition either in film production or writing a novel is the need to feed the people with fantasy—a boy's rise from rags to riches dressed up as Gatsby's or Stahr's prosperity or adversity in life and love — to start it all over again. The lousy condition is that the loved golden girl might marry somebody else, a gun may emit fire when the trigger, even playfully, is pulled; the flight may terminate in a crash; hearts may crack, as in real lives. The "lousy condition" refers to an acceptance of the pervading corruption in the Hollywood world, and yet working for salvation by producing quality work. Not only had Stahr infused confidence into the sagging morale of Mr. Boxley, but had evoked admiration for the lonesome efforts of Stahr in a complex organization like Hollywood film industry, fighting for his ideals.
single-handed. He was a leader like Lincoln:

he recognized that Stahr like Lincoln was a leader carrying on a long war on many fronts; almost single-handed he had moved pictures sharply forward through a decade, to a point where the content of the 'A Productions' was wider and richer than that of the stage. Stahr was an artist only, as Mr. Lincoln was a general, perforce and as a layman.16

Stahr revealed an amazing perceptivity and alertness of mind to accommodate himself to the worst of the conditions, if necessary. He, in fact was not boasting when he asserted, "I am the unity."

The unification of Stahr's self was evident more when his actress-wife Minna was alive. They looked a perfectly paired couple. Stahr discovered delicacy and granduer in Minna and he never repented having married her. Her death was as much a personal loss to Stahr as to the filmdom. From his childhood Stahr never developed any obsession for dames, never had"a series of emotional sprees" and never lost his head, even with Minna:

He had never lost his head about Minna, even in the beginning - it had been the most appropriate and regal match imaginable. She had loved him always and just before she died, all unwilling and surprised, his tenderness had burst and surged forward and he had been in love with her. In love with Minna and death together—with the world in which she looked so alone that he wanted to go with her there.17
Her death had caused a vacuum; instead of pining away for the irrevocable, Stahr expressed his energy through the creative channel of film making. His commitment to romance did not die with Minna, rather it sought extension through the films.

Though the instinct for death was there, Stahr resisted the temptation to perform a better duty he had assigned to himself - to educate the masses in individualism and personal grandeur. With a creative passion he had plunged into film production, relegating into the background any fear of death, which is inevitable and, for him, welcome too.

'You do what you're born to do,' he said gently. 'About once a month somebody tries to reform me, tells me what a barren old age I'll have when I can't work any more. But it's not so simple.'

It was never so simple for Stahr because perhaps, he knew that he would not live that long to suffer the ravages of old age. Indeed the personal life of Stahr had become apparently dull and devoid of poignancy:

It seemed that Minna had taken their poignancy with her; his appreciation of splendour was fading so that presently the luxury of eternal mourning would depart. A childish association of Minna with the material heavens made him, when he reached his office, order out his roadster for the first time this year. The big limousine seemed heavy with remembered conferences or exhausted sleep.
Other stars had shone over the Hollywood firmament but none matched Minna. At times Stahr desired the monotony of his routine life to be broken by the intrusion of a beauty. His wishful thinking almost touched reality when he chanced to encounter Kathleen, who looked like the merciful Minna returned to earth for his sake. Stahr at once stumbled into concluding that the girl was a replica of Minna:

It was Minna's face — the skin with its peculiar radiance as if phosphorus had touched it, the mouth with its warm line that never counted costs — and over all the haunting jollity that had fascinated a generation.

Suddenly Stahr discovered life flaring up in him, he felt exalted and happy. Kathleen not only resembled Minna in some particulars of physical features, she suggested delicacy and proportion, she was "nice."

She had not made a move or a gesture that was out of keeping with her beauty, that pressed it out of its contour one way or another. It was all proper to itself. He judged her as he would a shot in a picture. She was not trash, she was not confused but clear — in his special meaning of the which implied balance, delicacy and proportion, she was "nice."

Kathleen was radiant and aged around twenty five. Stahr was identified by the two girls Edna and Kathleen as the husband of the deceased actress Minna Davies, set out to judge if one of the two were a double to the latter.
He seemed to have been obsessed by identifying his dead wife in the physical appearance of the living than finding beauty or love in Kathleen.

In his mood, which was passionately to repeat yet not recapitulate the past, it was right that it should be that way. 22

Stahr expected Kathleen should fill in the gap caused by Minna’s death and wanted her to behave more like a "trollop"; he wanted to stop being Stahr the production genius, and hunt for love like any ordinary human being. It was more than possible that Kathleen, who functioned as a double to Minna looked, "more like she actually looked than how she was on the screen." 23 But Kathleen proved fatally inadequate, in spite of her robust sense of reality, to project Stahr’s passion credible.

The American experience Fitzgerald introduced in the novel The Last Tycoon could be identified in the scene of Stahr’s consummation of love for Kathleen. Two scenes were strikingly presented leading to that consummation—when Stahr and Kathleen danced at the Brady Party and the other at Stahr’s half—constructed house. At the outset, Stahr did not expect to meet Kathleen at the party, but when she was found sitting alone like a priestess at a table, imagined by Stahr as a big altar of a white table,

Vitality swelled up in him, and he could have stood a long time across the table.
from her, looking and smiling.

The incumbents of the table were crawling back - Stahr and Kathleen danced.

When she came close, his several visions of her blurred; she was momentarily unreal. Usually a girl's skull made her real, but not this time - Stahr continued to be dazzled as they danced out along the floor - to the last edge, where they stepped through a mirror into another dance with new dancers whose faces were familiar but nothing more. In this new region he talked, fast and urgently. . . . Her eyes invited him to a romantic communion of unbelievable intensity. 24

In the presence of the flesh and blood reality of Kathleen too, Stahr was haunted by the invisible presence of Minna. His romance was rooted in the past and looked ahead for a future. Both Stahr and Kathleen knew that their frequent meetings might make matters worse - they decided not to meet again - but instinct is stronger than discretion, they yearned for another meeting, as was suggested by the note intentionally forgotten by Kathleen.

The actual consummation of Stahr's love for Kathleen was enacted in the house under construction, mesmerically sounding place called Bel-air, which had no number to identify, at Santa Monica, with real grass on the lawns and sea waves splashing the walls. At this house had Stahr given a premature party - after only one room had been completed, a single bulb dispelling the darkness all around - perhaps signifying Stahr's obsessive love for Minna. The intimacy attained between Stahr and Kathleen
at the strange place, through an act of sex, tempted her into an exulting feeling that she had displaced Minna in Stahr's heart - she felt like "Venus." He had fallen to her and felt like holding her affection:

'I don't want to lose you now,' he said.
'I don't know what you think of me or whether you think of me at all. As you've probably guessed, my heart's in the grave -'
He hesitated, wondering if this was quite true. '-but you're the most attractive woman I've met since I don't know when.
I can't stop looking at you. I don't know now exactly the colour of your eyes, but they make me sorry for everyone in the world -'25

It looked a second coming for Stahr that Kathleen had become available to him. With the new found love, by corollary, a faith in the possibilities of life, Stahr gained a new kind of tranquillity and an assurance. Love became the champion of life, subduing the desire for death in Stahr.

The little trip they made was one of the best times he had ever had in his life.
It was certainly one of the times when, if he knew he was going to die, it was not tonight.26

Kathleen's glowing beauty and the "unexplored novelty" made Stahr spontaneously exclaim: "is this all" till the consummation was attained.

This sense of wonder and intensity of yearning had been the recognized traits of a person commonly labelled as a romantic. The reverse side of the romantic, an accompanying
inaction resulting in frustration, can also be found in Stahr. His consummation with "his girl" should naturally progress and mature into wedlock. Expectation was high, among both the partners in this regard:

"Where will we go tomorrow? he said. May be up in the mountains. I've got everything to do tomorrow, but I won't do any of it."

Stahr had to attend to his job - the production routine - which he was willing to sacrifice for the sake of Kathleen, to go up in the mountains for the romantic exultation, where perhaps, he would have proposed. But ultimately nothing happened, the American who was to marry Kathleen had changed his plans and was hurrying back. Stahr could have invited her to join him and she could have carried him to the heights of happiness with her love and understanding.

It is your chance, Stahr. Better take it now. This is your girl. She can save you, she can worry you back to life. She will take looking after and you will grow strong to do it. But take her now - tell her and take her away.

Stahr anxiously considered the situation, the slipping moments and in the agony, remained bogged in indecision. Stahr's hesitation ultimately cost him his love. After she stepped into her apartment, imagined by Stahr as an enchanted palace, he was impelled to walk past her into the house and take her. Stahr's procrastination for the morrow proved to be his bane - his intentions were disrupted
by the American, who arrived well in advance of his schedule and forced her, at mid-noon, to the registrar's office. Kathleen's sudden marriage had given an incredible jolt to Stahr, and again the emptiness of life returned. His memory remained tangled in the romantic moonlight, enveloped in disgust and helplessness. Clearly had Stahr failed to organize his personal life, perhaps due to the "fierce self-respect" Kathleen exhibited.

Kathleen was a European, hard-boiled in the economic turmoil, who lived the life of a pauper selling cars, who lived for years as a mistress in a "roofless house." She never intended to be trapped into another roofless house, for she desired to marry and bear children. Stahr appeared a prospective husband - with money, reputation and a social status. In order to further her prospects, she did not hesitate to exhibit her vitality and desirability by enticing Stahr into a physical union. She was aware what the princes and the tycoons desire - a total surrender of the woman - but her self respect would not permit her to go beyond than proving her worth. She succeeded in arousing Stahr's curiosity and love despite her mysterious past, for he was immersed deep in his own past. In the struggle between the past and the present, Stahr seemed to have neglected nourishment in the present. He lost track of his own age, perhaps thirty five he thought, when Kathleen enquired. Kathleen vanished from his life as
suddenly as she had intruded, almost killing Stahr psychologically. His physical death later would serve only as a formal epilogue to the Hollywood tycoon, destroyed by the organization he had given life and breadth.

II

The real conflict in *The Last Tycoon*, near the unfinished end, appears to be the economic organization of Hollywood. Times had been changing, and the economic order of the past had no relevance when the group rivalries and competitive spirit had been raging, when talented organizers of trade unions to protect the rights of the workers had stepped in with the spread of communism. There were "slay feet everywhere." Though opposed to the idea of treading down the workers, Stahr had been an upholder of merit, as he himself had been an epitome of progress through rags to riches, in the tradition of the Alger myth. By temperament Stahr was a paternalistic employer, with a sense of personal responsibility for the welfare of those working under him.

He stood by the actor, for example, in his most depressing situation, rescued Pete Zervas from blindness and rehabilitated the camera man who ran out of favour with studios; encouraged writers to bring out their best by offering suggestions. Even Wylie White, parasitical, social climber without any pretentions to merit or hard work,
a man given to devious methods, had been tolerated by Stahr. Wylie White by juxtaposition contributes to the individualism and grandeur of Stahr - the former was willing to arrange rendezvous for Cecilia, whom he claimed to love, with the latter, to gain prosperity - simply, he was prepared to sell his soul for material possession. White proved his talent in pirating material where as Stahr strove for the best.

Stahr endeared himself to the workers - he was their man, their hero:

He spoke and waved back as the people streamed by in the darkness, looking, I suppose, a little like Emperor and the Old Cau. There is no world so but it has its heroes, and Stahr was the hero. Most of these men had been here a long time through the beginnings and the great upset, when sound came, and the three years of depression, he had seen that no harm came to them. The old loyalties were trembling now, there were clay feet everywhere, but still he was their man, the last of the princes.

Stahr had to spread his protective wings over the workers to see that no wage cut was affected by Brady and the group of unimaginative vultures and profiteers.

The credit of inventing a new system, of employing teams of writers on the given idea for quick results and perhaps for quality script, should go to Stahr. A turn in the events had now brought guilds and unions, over which
Stahr got ruffled. "His peculiar organizational problem in the new circumstances, was that even the directors had formed a union to fight and to bargain. As Stahr put it, "it's an endless battle. So how this director, tells me it's all right because he's got a director's Guild and I can't oppress the poor." \[30\] Stahr explained to the Communist union leader Brimmer how problematic it had become to deal with the spurious artists including the directors, how difficult it was to dismiss a worthless director:

>'Here's my typical experience,' he said very succinctly and clearly to Brimmer. 'The best director in Hollywood - a man I never interfere with - has some streak in him that wants to slip a pansy into a every picture, or something on that order. Something offensive. He stamps it in deep like a watermark so I can't get it out. Every time he does it the Legion of Decency moves a step forward, and something has to be sacrificed out of some honest film.\[31\]

As Stahr believed rightly, the red unions hinder some honest work by unduely extending cover to all types of workers - innocent as well as positively bad. He realized that his erstwhile colleagues in the industry, the writers and directors, never excused him after they had gone Red. Ideologically Stahr was poles apart why, he was positively against the union activity because all men are herded together, irrespective of their calibre, to conduct a
collective bargain for the petty common good which would naturally negate the possibility of individual endeavour to realize one's own dreams, in terms of the popular American ideas of affluence and personal glory.

Cecilia Brady envisaged some exciting confrontation when two most alert and conscientious men like Brimmer and Stahr met. Unable to convince Brimmer with the force of his arguments, excited by excessive consumption of alcohol, his health touching the rock bottom after Kathleen's marriage and his own loveless life, surrounded by the ferocious sharks in the industry who were not satisfied with anything short of his ouster, Stahr seemed to carry on "a losing battle with his instinct towards schizophrenia." He intended to confront Brimmer with his physical thrust. He announced:

'I'm going to beat up Brimmer,' he announced after a moment. 'I'm going to handle this thing, personally.'... 'I don't own dirty work,' said Stahr. 'I'm going to beat hell out of you and put you on a train.'

He got up and came forward, and I put my arms around him, grabbing him.

'Please stop this!' I said. 'Oh, you're being so bad.'

'This fellow was an influence over you,' he said darkly. 'Over all you young people. You don't know what you're doing.'

'Please go home,' I said to Brimmer.

Stahr's suit was made of slippery cloth and suddenly he slipped away from me and went for Brimmer. Brimmer retreated backwards around the table. There was an odd expression on his
face, and afterwards I thought it looked as if he were saying, 'Is this all? This frail half-sick person holding up the whole thing.'

Stahr tried to prove his allegiance to virtue in a different form, which a Communist leader like Brimmer would neither understand nor appreciate. As T.C. Coleman in his dissertation observed,

Physically weak but normally superior to the hostile environment. He discovers that such traditional virtues as unselfish love, service and integrity may serve as substitutes for the lost virtues of youth.

Stahr's loss of self control was so sudden that Cecilia who wanted to project her hero as a technological virtuoso, controlling the entire Hollywood film industry with personal skill and qualities of leadership could do nothing at the break down, at the precipitous fall. She only saw Stahr going behind the trees and was sick. His toil, the unending strife for quality and control of the studio cost him his balance. Stahr like any Icarian had soared very high into the sky that his wax wings melted, precipitously landing him on the ground with a bump. It was a shattering experience for Stahr whose self splintered and scattered away like the pieces of a human body in a violent accident.

III

As Fitzgerald seemed to have planned and Edmund Wilson carefully assembled and organized the material, The Last
Tycoon would have ended with an air crash as the novel had opened with a flight. Fitzgerald seemed to have given careful thought to the symbol of flight in composing the novel.

Fitzgerald makes the flight metaphor central throughout the novel. Stahr's whole life has been an 'aerial adventure.' It is flight that has given vision and insight.34

The flight had served as a new beginning for Stahr, but it had also been burdened with delusions, and with a loss of identity. Stahr was wrongly identified by his erstwhile colleague, once a great producer now broken, Schwartz who warned him of enemies in Hollywood:

You are the best of them all I have always admired your mentality so when you turn against me I know it's no use! I must be no good and am not going to continue the journey let me warn you once again look out! I know.35

Schwartz, after signalling a warning to Stahr in the assumed name of Mr. Smith, quietly walks to the hermitage of Jackson to commit suicide, for he discovered to his satisfaction that he had no place in the changing environment of Hollywood. The death of Schwartz incidentally provides a premonition to the fact of Stahr too losing grip over reality.

Schwartz's death gradually unmasked the identity of Stahr, the Hollywood magnate in film production. His
return to his perch in Hollywood did not improve upon the theme of confusion. There had been the Communist infiltration among the workers, partners like Brady had already affected a fifty per cent pay cut to the workers by bluffing, and gangsters had been engaged to liquidate him. Stahr was convinced that Brady had to be eliminated and so had employed thugs for that purpose, and went off to New York, by flight, to achieve final victory over his enemies. On his way had Stahr realized with repugnance that he had slipped down from his pinnacle of moral superiority by debasing himself, by adopting the same stratagems as Brady had. He decided to call off the planned murder, on his flight, but before the communication could be put through, the mysterious crash occurred, killing all the occupants. The flight then, proved to be a beginning as much as an end for both Schwartz and Stahr—a symbol of destruction.

Stahr had been apparently struggling against inevitable failure in a changing world, his standards of life had no valid correspondence. Stahr's vitality had been expended on the purveying of dreams and on workers whose loyalty he took for granted. His failure appeared a foregone conclusion from the manner in which Cecilia set out to narrate the story.
Fitzgerald considered *The Last Tycoon* more like *The Great Gatsby* than any of his other novels, and also made a mention of it in a letter to his publisher and editor of a magazine in which he intended to serialize, that he had "set it safely in a period of five years ago to obtain detachment, but now that Europe is tumbling about our ears this also seems to be for the best. It is an escape into a lavish, romantic past that perhaps will not come again into our time." In spite of the claim of objectivity, the distance of five years could neither evoke any sense of nostalgia nor romantic yearning to grab and re-live the past. The imminent technical virtues of *The Great Gatsby* in the suggestive phraseology, compact and loaded observations of the twenties, and above all the hard core of moral embankment and romantic nostalgia in trying to recapture the past, had only been alluringly offered by Fitzgerald in *The Last Tycoon* without fulfilling the promise.

Cecilia Brady, a fragment of the writer's own personality like most other characters, who was to narrate the story is in no way comparable to Nick Carraway with his feet firmly planted in the family (moral) hardware business, who would return West with the burden of wisdom from observing and participating in the cataclysmic events
in the life of a committed romantic like Gatsby. Technically Nick Carraway in *The Great Gatsby* and Cecilia Brady in *The Last Tycoon* occupy the same niche, participating and at the same time remaining outside the main stream of the story. But Cecilia does not retain her position of objectivity, for she had been in love with Stahr and in a sense, she seemed to narrate the success or failure of her own adventure with her hero. She had been a convalescent in a sanatorium, hypersensitive to emotional volitions, she was intended to be modern girl, neither good or bad. Cecilia had the disadvantage of not knowing the main characters intimately. She knew Stahr as her father's partner in film making business and was distinctly younger by ten years - which indicates the generation gap in the fast moving American culture. Still remote was her acquaintance with Kathleen, a character of some significance in the novel, for Fitzgerald indicated in the outline that their "love affair is the meat of the book." As a matter of fact, much of Cecilia's energy and ingenuity were invested in trying to locate and identify her rival.

In Cecilia's moral background, the prospects become bleak. She accepts the pollution, squalour and corruption of Hollywood on which she opened her eyes, "with the resignation of a ghost assigned to a haunted house. I knew what you were supposed to think about it but I was
obstinate unhorrified.37 She was not equipped with the moral backbone to be able to judge others dispassionately; she was herself a contender to Stahr's affections while flirting with Wylie White in addition to other provocations. Inheriting, as she did, the Hollywood morality, Cecilia was deprived of the moral fibre and so could not effectively erect murals for others. Hollywood waste-land culture ran through her veins.

Hollywood was no paradise as Fitzgerald had, to his dismay, discovered for himself. He reached Hollywood as he once went to New York, to conquer - in obedience to his dream, to attain unification of his self in the tradition of Shaw-Byron-Goethe. As New York failed to measure up to his expectations, Hollywood too turned out to be a land of purveying dreams, a glittering mirage, a self-deluding scene and symbol of success and failure. Hollywood turned out to be an opulent world of guilt, as much as a land of mystery and promise.

Hollywood offered no second chance to any one for reconstructing himself - efficient directors like Mr. Ridingwood had to quit at a moment's sniff, prominent producers like Mr. Schwartz had to put a bullet through and blast themselves. Stahr had early realized the ruthless conditions under which he had to work; he had been a leader of a gang at Bronz early in his youth - he was conscious
of his power to dominate over others. Ever since he descended on Hollywood, he had been dictating his terms in matters of taste and production. "The "queerness" of American experience found a veritable replica in *The Last Tycoon*. As Arthur Mizener pointed out:

The queerness of experience is everywhere in the novel, inherent in the crass and ordinary life of Hollywood... When Martha Dodd, the faded star of silent pictures, remembers her days of fame, she says with a wistfulness all the more moving for its incongruous expression: 'I had a beautiful place in 1928 - thirty acres, with a miniature golf-course and a pool and a gorgeous view. All spring I was up to my ass in daisies. When Cecilia, hearing some one moaning in the closet of her father's office, rushes over and opens the door, her father's secretary with a wonderful name of Birdy Peters 'tumbles out stark naked - just like a corpse in the movies' - except that she is faint and covered with sweat from the heat of the closet."

The queerness was reinforced by Cecilia's description of a "bulky, middle-aged man who looked a little ashamed of himself" turned out, to her horror, to be her own father.

The absence of moral values was conspicuously projected in the texture of the novel - a middle aged script writer recollecting her three day affair with a director, Cecilia's own jealousy and surrender to Wylie White, Kathleen's promiscuity and her trying to exploit Stahr for economic security - prove the crassness of the culture.
Obviously Hollywood was a corrupt world which Stahr with his incorruptible vision had acquired as his seat of power. In Fitzgerald's canon, John Aldridge remarked, "to be incorruptible . . . however, is to be corrupted by a larger corruptive force," of the Hollywood culture.

Hollywood had been a world of make-believe and deception; pandering to unreality and depicting illusions for reality. The atmosphere was surcharged with "motion," endlessly moving towards a destination which might be destructive, catastrophic or wasteful. The industry was itself alive with a rapid projection of the negative print on the screen, hectic activity and quick co-operation of various technicians in the making of a film, the back lot in the studio was a veritable fairyland where to everybody's surprise an earth quake disrupted the bund to inundate the entire area.

The catalytic earth quake, flooding the back lot, rapidly moved toward the drain, corresponding to the phenomenal economic depression which wrenched the American dream and reality apart. The flood water destroyed and carried away the artificial erections on the stage, including the image "siva." Significantly the image of Siva's head had been presented as floating like a boat carrying two passengers. The primeval images of water and
boat connoted elemental and natural association with the Biblical flood of destruction wherein Noah was ordained to save himself from the catastrophe my getting into an arc.

"Siva" is associated in Hindu mythology with the forces of destruction - his violent dance is supposed to signal cosmic destruction. The rolling head of Siva's image during the artificial inundation of the studio back lot suggests in unmistakable terms the approaching doom to the commercial civilization that typified Hollywood. If Stahr was to be saved, like Noah, the woman clutching to the curls of Siva's head which resembled a boat, might be the only hope. Stahr had been sleeping through the earth quake and was confused to see the wreck, to see two girls seemingly on an excursion, and was further confused to discover Minna's resemblance in one of the two.

Perceiving the associative significance of the saviour, Stahr soon decided to trace the girl. He tried to draw strength through Kathleen as he had drawn through Minna's love. The past he was trying to make a new beginning played him false. Kathleen did not fulfill the natural assignment, because she could not find in Stahr the ability to function as "one" - he had been "two" persons all the time, even after seducing her. He committed another crucial error in Kathleen's presence, mistaking an orang-outang for
the President of the country, and yet going through the long distance call, which must have determined the fate of her association with him. This confusion of a simple mind in Stahr had also been reflected throughout the novel, through mistaken identities.

Stahr travelling incognito was wrongly identified as Mr. Smith, Kathleen was called a Smith before being properly identified, Stahr mistook one girl for the other on the day of the flood, Kathleen was later married to a man called Smith with whom she severed connexions for his association with Brady in plotting the murder of Stahr. Crowning all was Stahr's identification of Kathleen with Minna, his dead wife. Stahr never knew who Spengler was and mistook him for some movie celebrity. Mention of Spengler's name becomes an appropriate ironic commentary on Stahr's heroic individualism, soon to be beset by his subtle and unscrupulous inferiors. Another mistaken identity was that Johnny Swanson was to be invited to Stahr's funeral,

and asked to officiate as pall-bearer along with the most intimate and important of the dead producer's friends. Johnny goes through with the ceremony, rather dazed; and then finds out, to his astonishment, that his fortunes have been gloriously restored. From this time on, he is deluged with offers of jobs.

Similar good luck and idealism were to be reflected by the young school boy Jim whose fortune it was to rifle Stahr's
possessions from the wreckage.

Along with the confusion in names, wrong assumptions and pretenses played a vital part in the novel. Brady pretended to be younger by four years, Cecilia pretended to look smart by putting on riding clothes, Kathleen announced that she was never married, though she had been a mistress for the best part of her youth. The effect brought about in Prince Agge when taken around the Emissary, was ghastly. He had been instructed to respect Abraham Lincoln for his idealism, but was frightened to see an "extra" simulating the great Lincoln.

He had been told Lincoln was a great man whom he should admire, and he hated him instead, because he was forced upon him. But now seeing him sitting here, his legs crossed, his kindly face fixed on a forty-cent dinner, including dessert, his shawl wrapped around him as if to protect himself from the erratic air-cooling - now Prince Agge, who was in America at last, stared as tourist at the mummy of Lenin in the Kremlin. This, then, was Lincoln. Stahr had walked on far ahead of him, turned waiting for him - but still Agge stared.

This, then, he thought, was what they all meant to be.

Lincoln suddenly raised a triangle of pie and jammed it in his mouth, and, a little frightened, Prince Agge hurried to join Stahr.41

It had become obvious that one of the greatest Presidents of America, Lincoln could be represented by a dressed extra, whose services were hired at a very low rate - and imposed on the world as an exemplary character. This was an
imposter's world where spuriousness was certified as genuine.

Kenneth Eble's objection that the "feel" of Hollywood had not been properly communicated in the novel, stands exposed:

In its intentions, at least, it may have been the most conscientious and informed novel to be written about Hollywood. But even that intent raises the question of whether a great novel is likely to result from a documentary study, and particularly from one of such a limited and artificial world as Hollywood. Despite all the care Fitzgerald took to make The Last Tycoon authentic, the novel seldom communicates the sense and feel of Hollywood.42

Fitzgerald's choice of the narrator, Cecilia, who is a kind of center of revelation, was imbued with the traditions of Hollywood.

Stahr's self started disintegrating, perhaps from the day of Minna's death, or may be the inner contradiction inherent in his dream of an aristocratic tradition to which he was wedded, proved exorciating. He controlled and guided the film-industry by transferring his tinsel dreams on to the screen for as long as the creativity burst forth. Perhaps memory of the past betrayed him to such an extent that he became a victim of it. Malicious materialism or the interference of the Unions in the industry were the external thrusts Stahr could have easily withstood had not his inner self been deluding him. Stahr was a man of action and not
simply a dreamer whose individualism was presented in
hyperbolic terms. Fahey rightly remarked,

In fact, The Last Tycoon is, in a sense, The Great Gatsby turned inside out, with the
career of the man of action no longer merely
hinted at but brought to the focus of
attention and examined in detail. . . . Monroe
Stahr's love is a ghostly memory, flaring into
new life with Kathleen Moore in the midst of
a destructive career as a creator of American
illusion.43

Stahr not only lived by the illusion but strove to create
the dream in others. The paternalistic film-maker became
an anachronism in the industrialized culture of America,
controlled by finance capitalists and labour unions.
Stahr's death by a plane crash becomes a fitting finale
to his career as a tycoon - the industry he nurtured so
carefully ultimately destroyed him. To quote John Hart,

It is the tragedy of being deluded by the
iridescence and glitter of a world that
seems to be made of diamonds, but is only
rhinestones.44
NOTES

2. Ibid., p. 19.
5. Ibid., pp. 150-51.
6. Ibid., pp. 96-97.
7. Ibid., pp. 35-36.
8. Ibid., p. 57.
9. Ibid., p. 56.
10. Ibid., p. 35.
15. Ibid., pp. 127-28.
16. Ibid., p. 128.
17. Ibid., p. 117.
18. Ibid., p. 100.
19. Ibid., p. 76.
20. Ibid., p. 79.
21. Ibid., p. 97.
22. Ibid., p. 108.
24. Ibid., pp. 89-90.
25. Ibid., pp. 113-114.
27. Ibid., p. 139.
28. Ibid., p. 139.
29. Ibid., p. 34.
30. Ibid., p. 149.
31. Ibid., p. 149.
32. Ibid., p. 152.
34. John F. Hart, "Fitzgerald's 'The Last Tycoon': Search for Identity. (Vertical File, American Studies Research Centre)
36. Ibid., p. 172.
37. Ibid., p. 5.
40. Fitzgerald, The Last Tycoon, p. 159.
41. Ibid., p. 60.