CHAPTER VI
THE END OF THE DREAM

For Lycidas is dead, dead ere his prime,
Young Lycidas, and hath not left his peer.
(John Milton)
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The Last Tycoon is the most objective and intense statement in terms of Fitzgerald's art. It transcends the concerns of his earlier novels, personal and social documentation. He had relegated all other considerations to the dump-heap, and was now writing as a creative artist. The past had receded into the process of his impersonal history, and into experiences that had become irrelevant in the present context, distorted beyond proportion where sanity and wisdom became poignant remainders of a bygone era. However, from the distance of years, the undimmed past made him more aware of the mistakes, and what he had failed to attain. This made him cling to nostalgia, and he became more unrelenting in giving up the values he had imbibed and which had become the bedrock of his literary beliefs. He lamented to his daughter, Scottie:

When I was your age I lived with a great dream. The dream grew and I learned how to speak of it and make people listen. Then the dream divided one day when I decided to marry your mother... But I was a man divided --- she wanted me to
work too much for her and not enough for my dream .... you don't realise that what I am doing here is the last effort of a man who once did something finer and better. ¹

Apparently, Fitzgerald's most desperate obsession during his Hollywood years was to become the responsible serious artist and novelist. Budd Schulesberg's novel, The Disenchanted (1950) is about Fitzgerald's Hollywood years. Schulesberg contends that due to increasing alcoholism he could not salvage his artistic talent and be more of an artist; he uses the Darmouth fiasco of 1938 to justify his claims. However, Sheilah Graham in her biography The Beloved Infidel (1958) interprets the same otherwise. Anyway, the efforts he concentrated towards becoming a serious artist and novelist, despite tremendous pressures and circumstantial odds against which he was laboring, were no mean attempts. In sheer agony he often decided to quit for he could not afford to prostitute his great talents for the vague promise of economic security, nor could he barter away his artistic ambition for pecuniary gains that eventually left him as desolate and restless as ever, unable to cope with the dilemma:

Conditions in the industry [Hollywood] somehow propose the paradox: "We brought you here for your own individuality but while you're here we insist that you do everything to conceal it...." I think it would be morally destructive to continue here any longer on the factory workers' basis.2

He needed all the ingenuity and invention in order to struggle hard "not to look poor"; it was a professional hazard in Hollywood. He could not succeed even as a hack writer because that required "practised excellence" which he lacked. As his disappointments spiralled and his screen writing career seemed at an end, he paid greater attention to his novel, executing it with great care and artistic skill:

I think my novel is good. I've written it with difficulty. It is completely upstream in mood and will get a certain amount of abuse but is first hand and I am trying a little harder than I ever have to be exact and honest emotionally.

2. Ibid., p.304.
write it but nobody seems to be going to.  

He was willing to coalesce his artistic intentions with the changing perspective of what he thought to be the conflicting distinction between his concept of identity, individual and social, and the immediacy of the impinging reality of the present. In his copy of James Joyce's Dubliners, he had inscribed:

I am interested in the individual only in his relation to society. We have wandered in imaginary loneliness through imaginary woods for a hundred years --- too long.  

Thus the thematic concern of The Last Tycoon would be the dramatisation of what he had so far experienced as a persistent conflict between the ideals that he had cherished and the way they stood in relation to the demands of reality in his immediate present, and it would be the image of Hollywood that would live more intently within him as he became deeply immersed in the turmoils and internecine struggle of the Hollywood tycoons.

3. Ibid., p.369.
The writing of *The Last Tycoon* was a virtual release from his immediate predicaments. He became engrossed not only in a past beyond recall but more in what it stood for, the "old virtues of work and courage and the old graces of courtesy and politeness" into which he could recoil and seek reassurance when the changing world became too much for him. He lamented more the loss of his old self, the death of his literary reputation; he wrote to Maxwell Perkins in May, 1940, "to die so completely, for did not the American fiction bear my stamp -- in a small way I was an original". However, a new sense of urgency and a lust for life buoyed him up.

The new Armageddon far from making everything unimportant gives me a certain lust for life again. This is undoubtedly an immature throw-back, but its the truth. The gloom of all causes does not affect it -- I feel a certain rebirth of kinetic impulses -- however misdirected.  

Once more the talent that turned *The Great Gatsby* into a permanent art was reasserting itself:

I am deep in the novel, living in it, and it makes me happy. It is a constructed novel like Gatsby with passages of poetic prose when it fits the fiction, but no ruminations and side-shows like Tender. Everything must contribute to the dramatic moment.6

The art that he was perfecting, ought to well up from within his experience:

I am digging it out of myself like uranium... It is a novel a la Flaubert without 'ideas', but only people moved singly and in mass through what I hope are authentic moods.7

Hollywood is the most alluring golden image that Fitzgerald created and invested "with some human dignity, the pimp and pander aspects" of its world of glamour and gaiety for it provided Fitzgerald with the most perfect symbolic mode of the American capitalist myth. The tycoon as a solitary capitalist figure became crucial to the thematic statement in The Last Tycoon but it was largely a wistfulness for the past -- the bygone world of unmatched grandeur, unequalled

6. Ibid., p.146.
7. Ibid., p.149.
by the strident progress of the present, a simpler and more enduring world, whereas the new Hollywood was one where all hopes and romantic expectations had evaporated. Hollywood symbolically stands at the edge of the old vanished world that survived in the illusions recreated in motion pictures; but it is also an expression of the American experience in its increasing complexity and modes of new life for which the movies provide an appropriate image of materialistic vulgarity.

Perhaps Hollywood was the apt metaphor for American delusions of greatness envisaged in the old concept of the American dream now blurred by the crass material actuality, the widening gap between the old Edenic vision of Golden Age in a Golden Continent and the transcendent conditions essential to fulfill those dreams and hopes. American reality lacks conditions for a positive imaginative fulfilment because the sophisticated world, resplendent with the gorgeous display of wealth and excessive affluence, is not conducive to the idealised world of order, beauty and peace; on the contrary, it is indifferent, if not actively hostile, to the imaginative realisation of the ideal; it is actually opposed to the idealised just as the earlier simple agrarian world was opposed to the present sophisticated superficiality of modern existence. The illusions of an Arcadian world that Hollywood so well created in the motion
pictures is too fragile a veil to cover and barricade the harsh actuality. It symbolises that desire for refuge in illusions to which the American natural environment is so hospitable because it largely remains unravished, wild, unformed, new and "invites us to cross the common sense boundary between art and reality to impose the literary idea upon the world". Such a world of simplicity, innocence, trust, tranquillity and soft glow is what was lost in the march towards progress and what the motion pictures wanted to retrieve.

In his effort to make Hollywood a symbol dramatising potentially tragic events leading to Stahr's final doom and death, Fitzgerald felt almost an urging compulsion toward idealising it not as an intentional falsification of the actual, but what could counteract its crass materialism, its utter sordidness of affairs, its crushing commercialism. To his imagination, it had become an ambivalent symbol of time and eternity, the fallen state and Edenic life and art. He had indeed the art of transforming life into a permanent and artistic form; the feel for Hollywood comes out with that "extraordinary vividness" which is the requisite for richness and fullness of life. It is a symbol of a self-enclosed, self-sustained world, a miniature empire, a microcosm of American history and national identities, a

world free from outside unwelcome intrusion, sealed off even from the disturbing human presence, controlled by an isolated genius, an automation sharing power with responsibility. But its own inexorable logic makes it free from all human warmth, all palpable life, even to make it "a cold, frozen world of eternal winter". It is invested with symbolic implications with its primary emphasis on timeliness and relevance notwithstanding a system that is designed to destroy the very determined individualism and personal integrity that one tenaciously holds on to and defends. It became a mature expression of Fitzgerald's perception of the American experience and his increasingly complex attitude toward its relation to American history and national aspirations. It had become the contemporary image of the New World, now more vulgarised and dissolute, with a diminished stature of modern man. But, paradoxically it still had the power of evoking romantic glamour in its history, the illusions which could fill the gap between the old vision of the American dream and the present actuality and what it had cost in the loss of the old heroic vision and all idealism; there was no longer a possibility commensurate with man's "capacity for wonder".

The earliest symbolism of Hollywood as a capitalist myth of success is to be found in the allegorical reverie, "The Diamond as Big as the Ritz". It is a recreation of the
infinite wonder of moneyed splendour of Hollywood motion pictures, what is made possible with an "unlimited amount of money", selfishness and brutality of a pioneering adventurer, Braddock Washington, the epitome of an avaricious and grabbing American tycoon who becomes the prototype of Fitzgerald's later Hollywood caricatures. He represents the extreme absurdity and madness of the American dream of wealth and power; he tried to bribe God with a diamond as big as the Ritz if only He could save him that day. He is a symbol of strident, modern capitalism, the banality and morbid bourgeois vulgarity and despotism of the American myth of success. However, he was disenchanted, and the mature perception cuts across the false charm of tasteless and hollow luxury of wealth that hunted and haunted the mesmerised dreamer.

The pattern repeats itself in the colossal vitality of Gatsby's illusions. Both Jay Gatsby in *The Great Gatsby* and Monroe Stahr in *The Last Tycoon* are the true functionaries of the American myth in the service of "a vast, vulgar, meretricious beauty", and its cynical, powerful corruption. They are the last of the breed of men who believe in and practice individualism and unlimited economic freedom. But as "outsiders" they are the trapped and tragic victims of a myth whose sole purpose seemed to be continuing prosperity envisaged as a basic corollary of the American dream. But
like their author, both Gatsby and Stahr are morally a-drift, knowing the falseness and yet clinging desperately to what they cannot themselves relinquish as something noble and what gives them their social stature, though it sharpens their moral vehemence. In *The Last Tycoon* Hollywood becomes that last citadel into which converge all hopes and dreams, desires and fulfilment, and what gives shape and purpose to American ambitions and the characteristic elements of its society. As Michael Millgate aptly observed:

Part of Fitzgerald's distinction as a social novelist derives from his perception that by presenting an "epic hero" whose business acumen, exceptional as it is, forms only one aspect of his total personality; he could at once increase the stature of the hero and decrease the importance of business, herein lies the special interest of Jay Gatsby and Monroe Stahr.9

The dream constitutes what the business tycoon aspires for, a combination of hope for wealth and the adjuncts of

youthful innocence, beauty and romance. For Gatsby they are embodied in the person of Daisy without whom life is material without being real. In *The Last Tycoon* Hollywood is a symbol of Stahr's empire, the "green light" of intense hope. The way to wealth is the dedicated path their destinies must follow. But it is equally their ironic destiny that in trying to redeem the promise they, as pathetic victims, are helpless "pioneer debauchees" of the dream; the grotesque shift of fortune makes them innocent pursuers of corrupted wealth, beauty and romance. The golden dream is tainted and slurred; Hollywood has eluded her. Besides, Stahr provides an insight into whatever justification was to be contrived for the moral survival of Hollywood. Budd Schulesberg who had been reared and nurtured in Hollywood, and had occasion to observe the social scene from close quarters wrote a bitter satire about it, *What Makes Sammy Run* (1940); Nathaniel West portrayed Hollywood as a moral and spiritual wasteland in his novel, *The Day of the Locust* (1939); but even though *The Last Tycoon* is a fragment it is nearer to the moral centre of the Hollywood dilemma than either of the above mentioned novels.

To Fitzgerald's mind Hollywood had become symbolically associated with the unfulfilled dreams, desires and the possibility of their ever being attained. This must have been the imaginative appeal of Hollywood that gripped him
powerfully in his idealistic moments for Hollywood was the only dream of America left to the seeker and what was found framed in Stahr’s projection room where “Dreams hung in fragments at the far end of the room, suffered analysis, passed -- to be dreamed or else discarded”. The American dream had become solidified in the glitter and glamour of golden Hollywood -- and the motion pictures had attained that golden moment which Fitzgerald had always evoked in his art. Hollywood would manufacture dreams where American hopes had been lost. Hollywood movies were more than art and entertainment; they revived a new capacity for hope, dream and illusion, a meeting, point for the American past a metastasis of American culture, a moulder of American identities and national destinies. This historical perspective comes out in a wider cultural and social context in Monroe Stahr than in Dick Diver who rendered it falteringingly.

It was in this sense of national history and American destinies that The Last Tycoon was an artistic construct recapturing The Great Gatsby. Even in that Hollywood atmosphere of newness -- new connections and contacts, new illusions, freshness and cold beauty -- there is the longing, a search for the warmth and burning glow of the past, of the “mining town in lotus land” which is the new world of Hollywood, peopled by those who have come to win
back, to retrieve to give shape and form and a semblance of reality to the American dream. Hollywood, like America itself, hankers for the rootedness and understanding of the past. The references to Andrew Jackson's homestead, the Hermitage near Nashville, the presidential figures of the past, Abraham Lincoln et al, create symbolic associations of a past that Hollywood needs in order to be connected with the authenticity of the American dream. Fitzgerald had linked the figure of Lincoln to "a symbol of the past through the... separate perspectives gradually broadening out to a perception of the essential links between the past and the present" because the Lincoln figure is not simply Hollywood's appropriation of the American past created as a movie entertainment as in the scene where a visiting Dutch nobleman, Prince Agge confronts the remote figure of Lincoln in period costume, but is a typical projection of an urge of Hollywood dreamland to forge an equally valid figure who could approximate itself to the standards and values of the past that American-Hollywood is hankering after. The symbolic value of the Lincoln image in terms of its historical-social significance is the focal point of Stahr's tremendous inner conflicts that sum up his aspirations, the goals he cherishes to attain and the reasons of his reaching the pinnacle of Hollywood hierarchy that Roxley, the English screen-writer understands:

He had been reading Lord Charnwood and he recognised 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 '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 Jayman.  

Stahr's own sense of values and aspirations make his reaching after the connections with the past a more appropriate and valid reason which gives Hollywood its significant purpose of the American national destiny which is simultaneously grasped and mocked.

Stahr is primarily an artist; tremendous verve and action are necessary to demonstrate the effectiveness of his skill with an unequalled drive and initiative. He convincingly argues with Boxley why movie is an art form. Though Boxley has been rather skeptical of what is essentially an entertainment medium and what could be turned into an authentic experience from Stahr's own limited capabilities

11. The Last Tycoon, p.106.
and talents for it, Stahr eventually wins him over without losing much time:

"Suppose you're in your office. You've been fighting duels or writing all day and you're tired to fight or write any more. You're staring -- dull, like we all get sometimes. A pretty stenographer that you've seen before comes into the room and you watch her idly --. She doesn't see you though you're very close to her. She takes off her black gloves.... [goes] to the stove, opens it and puts them inside. There is one match in the match box and she starts to light it kneeling by the stove. You notice that there's a stiff wind blowing in the window -- but just then your telephone rings. The girl picks it up, says hello -- listens -- and says deliberately into the phone, 'I've never owned a pair of black gloves in my life. She hangs up, and just as she lights the match, you glance around very suddenly and see that there's another man in the office, watching
every move the girl makes.... Nobody has moved violently or talked cheap dialogue or had any facial expression at all". "What the hell do you pay me for"? demanded Boxley. "I don't understand the damn stuff".12

What Stahr effectively dramatises is the quality of a character in action which aptly makes explicit the action manifesting character, absolutely an artistic effort and achievement. It is always a subtle imperceptible sense of the dramatic that controls and propels Stahr's actions. He shares with other Fitzgerald characters a passion for willful action like that of Gatsby and Dick, as well as their restless and insuperable intelligent imagination. Stahr as a character with the gift of a heroic, romantic imagination and his developed intellectual powers is able to shape and chisel his own artistic talents. He is free from the shackles and constraints of a limited inhibiting and subduing intelligence. He is the epitome of what Fitzgerald evolved into progressively from Amory Blaine through Anthony Patch to Jay Gatsby and then Dick Diver, and he possesses "both an interesting temperament and an artistic conscience besides a romantic heroic predisposition and a versatile imagination". In the earlier novels, the Fitzgerald heroes

12. Ibid., p.32-33.
are imaginatively creative men who are able to contrive social settings in almost uniquely individualistic ways: Gatsby's orgiastic parties in his Long Island house which helped to bring together and regenerate a body of men and women long sunk in the stupor of changeless insignificance; Dick Diver's beach which he discovered and made to the extent of inhabiting it with individuals he helps to revive like a priest offering comfort and compassion to his congregation; however, both are victims of their overpowering circumstances and pathetic lack of self-understanding; their perennial quests thus end in ubiquitous failure. Monroe Stahr reflects a change. He is more coherent and committed to the special gifts of artistic talents and intellectual suavity that he brings to his authority and power in his spiralling career as a producer-director of Hollywood. As a creative artist and a powerful movie tycoon, he owes his status and rise to absolute authority and his role as a coordinator of all the diverse agencies needed for a collaborative venture. His practical wisdom and leadership provide Hollywood with a grand medium of mass entertainment in the motion picture industry, the most ambitious that history has known.

His extraordinary aspirations were beyond the capacity of what his past could have given him. Yet the American past of Lincoln and Andrew Jackson and what constituted the old
values of courage, loyalty and honour was all an aspect of the "imaginary past" enshrined in the symbolic image of Lincoln and the myth he gave shape to, and what added a new lease of life to American aspirations in the enlarged scope of the American dream. This sense of an unfulfilled historical destiny linked all the past aspirations to a future dream. Stahr encompasses the breath and vision of that past in his own aspirations and his symbolic climb to the heights sums up the lure of ambition and its fulfilment. Even Wylie White so callously indifferent and cynically innocent of the possibilities of the dream, is apparently touched:

He felt a great purposefulness. The mixture of commonsense, wise sensibility, theatrical ingenuity, and a certain half-naive conception of the common weal which Stahr had just stated aloud, inspired him to do his part, to get his block of stone in place, even if the effort were foredoomed, the result as dull as a pyramid.13

These are the heroic qualities that Stahr arrogated to himself. In turn they added a dimension of romantic lustre

13. Ibid., p.43.
to his concept as a man of destiny. Stahr is the modern hero who successfully evades being defeated by the forces, social and economic, over which he lost control; even though he is broken by them he remains unvanquished. It was the essential characteristic of his participation in the movements of history, the continuing flow of American aspirations that Stahr is identified with, and is the appropriate symbol of. What eventually leads to his submergence into the vast currents of social destiny is what has veered away from the established forms of social values and strains of economic struggle in an earlier age, to a more flexible and fluid order of things in the post war American decades of change and instability. It is typical of the Fitzgerald heroes that they subscribe to the old conservative aristocratic virtues of the older, saner America, and save themselves from being corrupted by the very values that protected the plutocrats, men who possessed the power of wealth. His men are certainly "visionaries of a moral order that the American past made available to them". They are manifest symbols of their nation's destiny in the dignity and magnanimity with which they confront the tragic pathos of individual lives. They have that imaginative daring and audacity to create formidable visions of bliss and felicity in their particular social environment which is the special charm of their heroic actions. If they are disillusioned and fail, it is largely the predicament of the entire social order which
failed to sustain them even though it provided the very ingredients to their audacious imagination and tragic fate. It is the moral grandeur of their lives which is the very essence dramatised in the conflict between their self and society, and which they seek to redeem.

The new conception of the tragic hero for The Last Tycoon came in the new, charming, captivating image of Irving Thalberg that Fitzgerald wrote about to Kenneth Littauer:

Thalberg has always fascinated me. His peculiar charm, his extraordinary good looks, his beautiful success, the tragic end of his great adventure. The events I have built around him are fiction, but all of them are things which might very well have happened, and I am pretty sure that I saw deep enough into the character of the man so that his reactions are authentically what they would have been in life. So much so that he may be recognised -- but it will also be recognised that no single fact is actually true. I've long chosen him for a hero [among] half a dozen men I have known who were built on a grand scale.
Certainly, if Zeigfeld could be made into an epic figure then what about Thalberg who was literally everything that Zeigfeld wasn't.\(^{14}\)

Monroe Stahr was closely modelled on the dazzling impression that Thalberg had created in Fitzgerald's imagination; he turned him into a tragic figure even when Thalberg's life was pathetic rather than tragic because he believed that tragic, doomed and heroic things do happen in Hollywood, Stahr will share Thalberg's hypochondria, his ruthlessness and impatience with mediocrity, his inability to take things easy, to live life at a higher pace than normal, and to have the same kind of bourgeois artistic taste. But Monroe Stahr in his humble, impoverished beginnings is also a continuation of what he had dealt with in The Great Gatsby, the Lincoln-Alger myth of from rags to riches; this legend and the need for a messiah figure coalesce in Fitzgerald's quest for a superman -- hero in the Nietzschean manner to save mankind from the holocaust of impending doom that the Second World War symbolised in the possible death of human civilization. However, Stahr succeeded only in being a tragic, heroic symbol of that myth.

Stahr's own will and imagination had helped him to become a Prince among entrepreneurs; moreover, he exercises genuine authority in a democratic, social set-up; but this is paternal, of the old capitalistic order, the last fading embers of what once glowed with power now lingering smoulderingly in the Hollywood precincts; it betrays sharp tones of what was once aggressive uncompromising individualism. It is indeed a significant image of American business civilization at a vital juncture of irreversible transformation in its national history.

Stahr represents the tradition of responsibility and power in the American business society becoming increasingly acquisitive because of its supreme accent on material success. A society in a state of perennial fluidity, like the contemporary American business society, cannot but become oblivious to the tradition of responsible power. Stahr, as the last tycoon, the tradition of dominant American barons, rules over a vast and complex empire with his dedicated will and intelligence, to make the powerful and popular motion-picture industry a medium for art form. But he succeeds only as "a symbol for vanishing American grandeur of character and role". His inevitable tragic isolation followed closely by his doom and death, is largely a matter of the symbolic end of a long-drawn losing battle of American pioneering aspirations. It means the end of an
era, end of an ideal and a dream. Stahr's struggles against the powerful interests in the Hollywood movie industry -- the banalities of big money, Communist gangsterism, and whatever there is that went against the grain of powerful and responsible individualism, are his symbolic fight against his unwillingness to compromise his artistic sensibility to the demands of an unscrupulous, insensitive and ruthless enterprise. He cannot relinquish his ethical responsibility and commitment to art at the expense of greed for money because by established conventions in Hollywood's economic democracy and the world of professional entertainment, the primary objective is greater profitability as a commercial proposition, the artistic permutations being only adjuncts to sustaining that objective, and subordinating all ethical considerations to enhancing of material wealth. 15

In a paradoxical sense, Stahr embodies the spirit of anarchy against all bourgeois pretension of Hollywood, and for that reason, he turns into a professional cynic of the American dream. In that Hollywood realm of make-belief and masquerades, the unreal floating world, where highest artistic achievement was a taboo, where professional competence had to yield to modifications of uniformity,

Stahr's individualism, his sensitive temperament and delicate sensibility for artistic perception fell victim to an avaricious monolithic order. His individual propensities became evils that needed exoneration. A business tycoon like Stahr could not go against the tenets of his professional faith and ethics of the business world. His veering away from that ethical-economic order cost him his professional and social success for he failed to live up to the expectations in conformity with the demands that the Hollywood community put upon him, that is the fulfilment of goals through exploitation of commercial opportunity. The deviations from such well-established time-bound conventions provoked against Stahr the ire and hostility of the entire Hollywood monolithism. The well entrenched democratic politico-economic system recoiled only to unleash its pent-up energies to punish and destroy its recalcitrant tycoon. It is indeed in this incontrovertible level of personal charms and successes so ascendent in an era of individual competitiveness and in a society where the dominant moral ideas derive their nature from the ideal aspects of the economy that Monroe Stahr had hinged his fate to in Hollywood. His preoccupation with the pursuits of money, beauty, aesthetic pleasures, and innocuous maneuvering for the one particular direction, people's own good, became manifest in his re-creation of illusions in motion pictures. But the businessman and the artist are apparently,
antithetical figures; Stahr should fail as an artist where he succeeds as a businessman; the two could not be welded much as the socially crass personality, in a basically snobbish democracy, could not preserve the aura of its sacred image. Hollywood had completely merged itself with American national aspirations and historical identities. This insight into social depths of Hollywood community and movie industry delineated in the tycoon-artist figure of Monroe Stahr is nothing short of an exploitative use of the Hollywood myth. But Stahr could contain within himself the two worlds of business and art whose interaction seemed neither meaningful nor creditable pursuit in the realm of American historical yearnings and aspirations. Dick Diver too had failed to be a psychiatrist-socialite but for all the inflated contours of Stahr's portrait, he remains the only real aristocrat among the Fitzgerald heroes and is the closest Fitzgerald ever came to making an adult embodiment of what he hoped or desired for himself and his society. Stahr's life in the studio, projection room, story conferences of screen writers and all that completes the stereotypes, shows the kind of man he is, a typical Hollywood tycoon, hardworking, intelligent, determined, callous overbearing and difficult. However, he is untypical also in many ways.
The screenwriters story conferences are the most effectively presented scenes. It was Fitzgerald's own experience as a writer for the screen that gave him a close view of this aspect of the movie making process. It was one of the crucial moments in his Hollywood experience that made him realise why creative impulse was at a discount in the movie stories. It was certainly what a hack writer could do better than a novelist with a gifted sensibility; however, the movie was a better artistic medium than the novel. William Faulkner put this succinctly, reviewing his own experience as a screenwriter:

A few years ago I was taken on as a script writer at a Hollywood studio. At once I began to bear the man in charge talking of "angles", story "angles", and then I realised that they were not even interested in truth, the old universal truths of the human heart without which any story is ephemeral -- the universal truths of love and honour and pride and pity and compassion and sacrifice.¹⁶

A creative writer and artist has his individuality and independence; he cannot be a flattering, fawning underling.

The notion that Stahr as a producer-genius has an answer for everything is the typical idea of the Hollywood script conference for there is something like the Hollywood premise and everyone must fall in with it. The screen writers such as George Boxley know what it means to work under Stahr's supervening genius and his absolute mastery of the intricacies of film-making. The conference becomes symbolic of Stahr's public mask, his power and responsibility, his undeviating energies devoted to transforming the motion picture from a pure commercial venture into an artistic product from material satisfaction to aesthetic contentment. But behind that public mask lies the private figure.

The true centre of the novel, as of the hero, Monroe Stahr, is located in the ironic distance between these two positions, the public image and the private man in the sense of his containing within himself, within his unifying imagination, the private agonies and qualms of a tormented soul. The Hollywood motion picture he has made into an American national myth, the subjective and objective, of what we meet and what we intend discovering, the psychic wholeness, the forces that make for this totality, the man whose life and works are empires and private worlds:

an all fireworks illumination of the intense passion in Stahr's soul, his
love of life, his love for the great things that he has built out here, his, perhaps not exactly, satisfaction, but his feeling certainly of coming home to an empire of his own -- an empire he has made. 17

Though he has a feeling of satisfaction, happiness and triumph, there is also a "feeling of sadness with all acts of courage", perhaps because it is the end of the road with no more worlds to conquer. But Stahr is completely engrossed in the multitudinous practicalities of his world, restless, with a talent to drown his self and his personal predilection in work for he is a fighter and cannot hope to rest on his laurels. A glimpse of him functioning as a producer, managing his empire, moving from problem to problem with "a certain rebirth of vitality with each change" shows he is driven by a mysterious force that maintains his maddening pace till the "poison of exhaustion" sets in. But such an intrusion hardly penetrates the inner core of his private reality, much less uncovers the essential truth about him, for his professional stature as a producer insulates him against the life of the Hollywood community.

17. The Last Tycoon, Notes, p.135.
The characters who figure prominently in the script conferences, Wylie White, Jane Maloney, John Broaca, Reinmund, George Boxley, and others who collaborate in movie making, seemed "mental cadavers", the merchandise that Stahr would like to buy for what they have in their minds. He is paternalistic and admits:

"I never thought ....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".18

He knows precisely where in the hierarchy of movie making each one stands and what it costs to employ those who can fit in the allotted assignment; he tells Wylie White:

It takes more than brains. You writers and artists poop out and get all mixed up and somebody has to come in and straighten you out....You seem to take things so personally, hating people and worshipping them -- always thinking

18. The Last Tycoon, p.125.
people are so important -- especially yourself. You just ask to be kicked around. I like people and I like them to like me, but I wear my heart where God put it--- on the inside".19

His dedication is to his self-made empire, his motion picture industry. He wants that impersonal devotion and loyalty from everyone involved in the venture without which true art cannot be created. Being an artist, he demands an artist's undivided devotion to the exclusion of human considerations. His thinking is that of a typical business tycoon, to achieve the goals once fixed with no care for human or material costs:

That was one thing about Stahr -- the literal sky was the limit. He had worked with Jews too long to believe legends that they were small with money.20

He had long moved with moneyed men like Old Marcus and Mort Fleishacker who control and finance the big movie projects which are in awe of them. He himself "had been a money man among money men"; he was the "wonder boy" and the financial

19. Ibid., p.17.
20. Ibid., p.42.
wizard but with his maturing years, he had "grown away from that particular gift". Directors like Brady are susceptible to considerations extraneous to artistic excellence such as social and economic expediency.

Brimmer is the symbol of the Leviathan power of the labour unions and what motivates their functional efficiency. Stahr's waning vitality and physical resources lack the power to resist the growing tide of materialistic, exploiting onslaught on the creative and the artistic. But he is not completely anomalous in an age of industrial combines and capitalist oriented large profit-making organisations such as the movie studios. He represents the old-world paternalistic relationship between employer and employee when individual craftsmanship counted for what began as a self-sufficient, self-propelling profiteering institution was once the vision and enterprise of a single individual, his shadow and shaping power. He is now subsumed under the very organisation that he helped to build and nurture. It was his survival that faced annihilation and he struggled to clinch victory over the destructive forces piling against him. But he can fight only a losing battle against the monolithic empire; his puny strength is unequal to its mammoth power. What he symbolises in his struggle is the typical American dilemma of a super-organisation man; he has lost the battle in his own self; he has no fight left in
him to encounter the forces that undermine his power to cling to authority even when it is completely eroded by his own inability and tired will to ransom the last vestige of his outmoded heroism. His age would reiterate the tragic dilemma faced by him; he remains heroic till the end, the last tycoon; the irony of that epithet sums up his symbolic significance as the last post of a collapsing system. Brimmer fears his heroic figure which can inspire confidence and make capitalism attractive to the masses.

The essential tragic irony of Stahr's destiny is his selfless caring for everybody, and caring too much; this is the doom that overtakes him as Wylie White comprehends. But in this ultimate representative role the American entrepreneur, Stahr becomes the moral symbol for the entire Hollywood community, the glittering Babylon of the West, the most romantic and glamorous city in the world. It destroys him as it has undone so many, yet it continues to fascinate and allure.

This moral point of view in the novel needed a distant objective perspective that the narrator-commentator Cecilia, with her background and heritage, could adequately provide. She exercises an honest, evaluative judgement to bring to the highly inflated picture of Hollywood a point of view
both involved and distant. She wishes to understand the moral enigma of Monroe Stahr.

The affair of Stahr and Kathleen, the emotional centre of the novel, is rather blurred, patchy and out of focus; its implications uncomprehendingly dim. May be she was to symbolise the restorative powers of love that he would lose as a result of his energies being completely absorbed in his career. He has a choice to opt out of his doomed fate into the love of Kathleen, leaving his care and career behind but temperamentally, and, perhaps burdened with a stricken conscience, he cannot abandon himself to a life of unshared responsibilities:

Stahr is overworked and deathly tired ruling with a radiance that is almost moribund in its phosphorescence. He has been warned that his health is undermined; being afraid of nothing, the warning is unheeded. He has had everything in life except the privilege of giving himself unselfishly to another human being.21

21. Ibid., p.139.
But Kathleen's romantic possibilities and what she could do to wean away Stahr from his strenuous task remains mysteriously unfulfilled. However, what eventually comes out of their relationship has a much larger and deeper significance for him than given in the novel. Inevitably, her glamour wears out, and marrying her would be against the logic of his life; the dilemma of his passionate involvement remains unsolved. May be it was Fitzgerald's personal involvement with Sheilah Graham, who was the model for the fading apparition of Kathleen Moore, that could not be crystalised into moments of deep and lasting passion. His death came in the way of his passionate ecstasy as it deprived Stahr and Kathleen, quivering on the heights of tragic grandeur. It would have been of moment to Fitzgerald had he lived to experience life at its consummating intensity, as it would have been for Stahr to know what his love for Kathleen would mean, the frozen moments in a changing life, the centre of stillness surrounded by silence, and the motion of the turning world. He was recreating a world that Scottie would remember and understand:

I think when you read this book, which will encompass the time when you knew me as an adult, you will understand how intensively I knew your world.... I am
not a great man, but sometimes I think the impersonal and objective quality of my talent and the sacrifices of it, in pieces, to preserve its essential value, has some sort of epic grandeur. \^22

As the most perfectly realised tragic character, Stahr is the most significant fictional hero of Fitzgerald. His tragic dimensions are deeper and intenser than Gatsby who is a mere projection of the narrator, Nick Carraways's tragic sensibility; or even of Dick Diver whose heroism is largely on the external plain; Stahr is tragic simultaneously from within and without; what enhances the tragic import of his struggles is the nobility and grandeur of his dream.

Fitzgerald achieves that near perfect feeling for experience the very quality of that experience in its common place ordinary vulgarity and a pervasive sense of evil. This was the meaning and relevance of Hollywood. The mature perception that he brings to an understanding of it is fully realised in the scene when Stahr first sees the figure of his dead wife, Minna Davis in the face of one of the women adrift on Siva's head on the flood waters after the earthquake:

\[\text{22. Letters, p.77.}\]
On top of a huge head of Goddess Siva, two women were floating down the current of an impromptu river. The idol has come unloosed from a set of Burma and it meandered earnestly on its way, stopping sometimes to waddle and bump in the shadows with the other debris of the tide. The two refugees had found sanctuary along a scroll of curls on its bald forehead and seemed at first glance to be sightseers on an interesting bus-ride through the scene of the flood.  

In one of the faces, "looking a little scared but brightening at the prospect of rescue" Stahr sees a past drifting in upon him unaware and unsolicited:

Smiling faintly at him from not four feet away was the face of his dead wife, identical even to the expression. Across the four feet of moonlight, the eye he knew looked back at him, a curl blew a little on the familiar forehead; the smile lingered, changed a little according to pattern; the lips parted --

23. The Last Tycoon, p.25.
the same. An awful fear went over him, and he wanted to cry aloud. Back from the sour room the muffled glide of the limousine hearse, the falling concealing flowers, from out there in the dark—here now warm and glowing.  

The Minna Davis -- Kathleen Moore image that flitted through Stahr's mind brought in a surge of memories. Such a particularisation of experience that smoothly glides through our imagination without the tangible material being forced upon us is a truly artistic achievement. Such a "wholly convincing representation of a world in The Last Tycoon is an image of an experience, and the most vital aspect of that image is the quality of experience it conveys". Fitzgerald creates a world which gives the impression of floating unreality filled with the ghostly echoes and what symbolises the condition that man faces in his half-finished worlds. He is constrained to portray the very queerness of ordinary experience present throughout in the novel because it is the inherent condition of life, moreso in the crass materiality of the Hollywood world. This is the vision that the book communicates, the vision of an externally

glamorous, glittering world enforced upon our imagination with such concentrated images of confluence of those poignant moments when past and present commingle as the one inseparable moment beyond time. But the illusion is dispelled once the telephonic conversation gives out what the voice knows of Stahr that he was the husband of Minna Davis. Stahr wonders if it was not all a trick, something well-rehearsed having appearance of reality on the screen, Stahr was perturbed:

As the whole vision of last night came back to him -- the very skin with that peculiar radiance as if phosphorous had touched it -- he thought whether it might not be a trick to reach him from somewhere. Not Minna and yet Minna. The curtains blew suddenly into the room, the papers whispered on his desk, and his heart cringed faintly at the intense reality of the day outside his window. If he could go out now this way, what would happen if he saw her again -- the starry veiled expression, the mouth strongly formed for poor brave human laughter.26

But the transience of the dream is part of that floating, incomplete world that Stahr is soon to discover in the "new little house" when through the wedge of light as the door opens he sees Kathleen for the first time:

There she was -- face and form and smile against the light from inside. It was Minna's face -- the skin with its peculiar radiance as if phosphorous had touched it, the mouth with its warm line that never counted costs -- and over the hunting jollity that had fascinated a generation. 27

The vision that illuminates Stahr's past is symbolic of the missed moments and irresponsible trust in the quality of mind that was at last to betray him. He had learned to rely on his intelligence, his ferocious capacity for work, his determination and will to overcome emotional barriers. But Kathleen's spell seemed to have robbed him of his former strength; he could no longer contain himself.

The consummation of their love is the most poignant moment that comes out in that scene which is the novel's sustained awareness of an ordinary common place experience for it is a

27. Ibid., p.64.
world which is afloat and mobile on the thin vastness of everything around. "It is an unstable world, constantly drifting, moving fumblingly towards nowhere in particular, but inevitably slipping into moments of wasted ecstasy.

As the inch between them melted in darkness... she waited in his arms, moving her head a little from side to side... never taking her eyes from him... Then with her knees she struggled out of something, still standing up and holding him with one arm, and kicked it off beside the coat. He was not trembling now and he held her again, as they knelt down together and slid to the raincoat on the floor.28

While lying in the darkness Kathleen thought irrationally of the "bright indefatigable baby", she might have as the continuing possession of Stahr. But she is not capable of much tenderness; she will leave him to be married even before he can propose; he comes to know of her proposed marriage through a letter she had been trying to conceal.

28. Ibid., p.87.
The half-finished house that Stahr is building at Malibu where he and Kathleen consummate their love lies strewn with "concrete mixer, raw yellow, wood, and builders' rubble... an open wound in the seascape, [waiting] for Sunday to be over". The house has been given the semblance of reality in readiness for a premature luncheon. Just as the house looks real inspite of its unreality, in the same manner, in its symbolic insubstantiality Kathleen feels that Stahr loves her not for herself but for the shadow and apparition of his dead wife that she resembles.

The other woman was more missed in her absence. They were alone and on too slim a basis for what had passed already. They existed nowhere. His world seemed faraway -- she had no world at all except the idol's head, the half-open door.29

Kathleen has made the dormant image of Minna more palpable and vibrant with "her glowing beauty and unexplored novelty" that pressed against Stahr bringing back the old hurt once more though with a heaviness, welcome and delightful for she does "look more like she actually looked than how she was on the screen". To make it seem more real she for once would

29. Ibid., p.65.
like to have a familiar housewife appearance, to feel married to him. "She stared around critically. 'Of course we've just moved in', she said, '— and there's a sort of echo'." It is a world which creates the unreality of half-finished worlds, the impressions of unreality in a floating world filled with ghostly echoes, what symbolises a larger sense of human destiny.

Kathleen's fragile world of happiness is romantic and illusory, still unhindered by unhappy intrusions of despairing destructions of death. Her careful self-conscious evasion of permanence of love that she could have sought in Stahr's world shows her sense of insecurity and desirability of escape into illusions. On the contrary, the idea of death (death of Minna incarnated in Kathleen that Stahr loves) is a vital, living, psychological reality for Stahr. His love for Kathleen is a symbol of love with death. This reflects his desire for imaginative possession of what is permanent, not love of Kathleen but Minna in death:

As he walked toward her, the people shrunk back against the walls till they were only murals: The White table lengthened and became an altar where the priestess sat alone. Vitality welled up

30. Ibid., p.89.
in him, and he could have stood a long time across the table from her, looking and smiling.
When she came close, his several visions of her blurred; she was momentarily unreal... 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.31

The idea and image of death of Minna that struggles to ensure for itself a permanent existence is an ideal that Stahr carves for himself in the figure of Kathleen. But more significant is the fact of Kathleen being an outsider to Hollywood to which she can never belong. This helps Stahr in his imaginative idealisation of a person and place which acquire attributes of perfect peace, harmony and a happiness which is unadulterated and with the possibility of continuing permanence, free from the impingement of tinsel superficialities of Hollywood culture, for in escaping into Kathleen's love, Stahr is seeking refuge from a complex, artificially cumbersome and sterile confinement of reality that is Hollywood.

31. Ibid., p.73.
Stahr longs to escape into some great good place which would be a haven of ease and renewal of life, of attenuated time and healing, and a healthy ordered life. In appearance, Hollywood is a place of dream sweetness, of reason and order, and a sensible visible arrangement. But it is only an idealised world of dream-reality of motion pictures. Its dimension of reality is more complex and undefined. It typifies the American innocent expectations for a passionate and vigorous urge for an idealised vision in the face of a more harsher realities that they confront. He must languish in the throes of his loneliness inspite of Kathleen inviting him "to a romantic communion of unbelievable intensity". It is almost a world that crashes for Stahr as Cecilia saw it:

When she leaves him:

It was good dancing now, with plenty of room but it was lonely -- lonelier than before the girl had gone. For me, as well as for Stahr, she took the evening with her, took along the stabbing pain, I had felt -- left the great ballroom empty without emotion.\(^{32}\)

Kathleen remains an evanescent figure, a Minna dead but with a glowing nimbus, her tangled image floating above the stark

\(^{32}\) Ibid., p.77.
realities of death and evil, and she is the symbolic centre of Stahr's love, his one hope of survival against the poison of exhaustion, doom and death. As his love for her intensifies and as she becomes a more objectified, perfect innocence he becomes increasingly more taut with the possibility of the imminent death of a vision of life. Yet he would like to make redoubled efforts to preserve her ideal world:

"I'm building a house out here", Stahr said, "much farther on. I don't know why I'm building it".

"Perhaps its for me", she said.

"May be it is".

"I think its splendid of you to build a big house for me without even knowing what I looked like".

"It isn't too big. And it hasn't any roof. I didn't know what kind of roof you wanted".

"We don't want a roof. They told me it never rained here. It --- ". She stopped so suddenly that he knew she was reminded of something.

"Just something that's past", she said.
"What was it?" he demanded,
"--- another house without a roof?"
"Yes, another house without a roof".
"Were you happy there?"
"I lived with a man," she said," A long, long time--
too long...."33

The roofless house that Stahr is building is symbolic of his shelterless life, a not-home symbol, uprootedness and non-belonging; the home has vanished with Minna; the not-home feeling has been referred to by Carlos Baker as one "vast circumambient realm of nothingness and night"; all has disappeared into that night that engulfed Minna, the sense of good life, love and happiness, health and well-being, dignity and peace, but there is a very slim glint of hope. Maybe Kathleen is afterall an illusion of a home but she is at best a symbolic abstraction of the idea of love too, a momentary escape from emotional exhaustion, spiritual bankruptcy self, absolute and unrelieved loneliness; its symbolic import is inescapable; it is a perilous and paralysing vision of the times. Yet the necessity to build a house, a home, signifies a literal, spiritual or symbolic human need for companionship, for a sense of togetherness and social cohesion, the death that must shatter the veil of

33. Ibid., p.80.
illusion to usher in a new life, a renewal of vitality, a new urge for living. Kathleen too needs that sense of security that her past has failed to offer. She is eager to see the half-built house, the floating incomplete world that Stahr inhabits. But all round the house she finds builders' rubble, and all around are the feeble hills behind, and "barren glitter" of the scene. It is all symbolic of emotional and spiritual sterility, creative barrenness. But Stahr can arrange a make-shift home feeling for the love they are about to consummate, yet even love is barren and meaningless; he has lost his only chance to be saved, to live with greater vitality, his ability to love, for love is no longer a regenerative force. As the American business, he knows only one love, work; he is married to his work, to his studio; they are his home and wife. Though "the studio is really home":

he wanted the pattern of his life to be broken. If he was going to die soon, like the two doctors said, he wanted to stop being Stahr for a while and hunt for love like men who had no gifts to give, like young nameless men who looked along the streets in the dark.34

34: Ibid., p.90.
But Kathleen knows better:

She would not be part of his exultation, for it was defeat. So far it was a defeat. And even she thought that if she stopped it being a defeat, broke off and went inside, it was still not a victory.  

She carried as much the burden of the past as Stahr did. They are homeless people, fated to be loners for they have their secrets to be with; they can go nowhere, be nowhere except with their own selves.

The car is a symbol of mobility, and the urge to "jump in the car and drive somewhere" is what can take them away somewhere as if "fleeing from the spot of a crime":

Then they were in the car going downhill with the breeze cool in their faces, and she came slowly to herself. Now it was all clear in black and white.  

35. Ibid., p.86.

36. Ibid., p.86.
The car is Fitzgerald's recurring symbol of American loss of identity and placelessness for mobility and constant wheeling around is not what makes for permanence, stillness, calm and restfulness which are after all static. What connotes home has a vibrant, tangible quality of peace and security found in human contact, love, warmth and a feeling of oneness. Carlos Baker feels that like a roofless house, the car too, a not-home symbol, has an interwoven "tragic pattern of fatigue and suffering, loneliness, defeat and doom"; the car that Stahr and Kathleen ride on their first journey is also roofless. Hollywood itself becomes the broad social reference to their fate for it is the common American predicament that repeats itself in their relationship:

Sullen cars were leaving the wet beaches and starting back into the city. Further on they ran into the fog -- the road lost its boundaries on either side and the lights of cars coming toward them were stationary until just before they flared past. 37

The lights too, like cars, are symbols of incomplete, fluid and floating worlds where nothing is static, nothing solidifies into the strong granite of permanent

37. Ibid., p. 86.
relationship. The lights too symbolise false glamour, an outward projection of glittering flashes to make up for the inner paucity and lack of love, warmth and human security. Light signifies not simply the rich, blatant arrogance of material possessions as the lights of the "climbing bungalows" but the inner working of passion and the sudden urge to possess lest one might slip:

Lights were on in the climbing bungalows -- he turned on the headlights of the car. Stahr felt heavy in the pit of his stomach.
"We'll go out again".38

They go, shelterless and unhappy, dreading the chance they might lose forever. They consummate their love for the doubtful moments that bring peace and tranquility, slip into darkness and oblivion, and the despairing moments of separation, doom and death. Thus the house, the car and lights are symbols of betrayal and debauching of the innocent dream. Kathleen would disappear into the "waning night" being at the most "a single thrilling stranger" bound to Stahr by a few slender hours"; she was gone as her letter said, "to be married soon", to another man:

38. Ibid., p.85.
The car, the hill, the hat, the music, the letter itself blew off like the scraps of tar paper from the rubble of his house. And Kathleen departed, packing up her remembered gestures, her soft moving head, her eager sturdy body, her bare feet in the wet swirling sand. The skies paled and faded -- The wind and rain turned dreary, washing the silver fish back to the sea.39

What had departed with Kathleen was an idea, a moment, and "Minna died again on the first landing, and he forgot her, lingeringly and miserably again, step by step to the top."40 It was a reversion back to "Minna and death together.... the world in which she looked so alone that he wanted to go with her there."

The letter and telegram are portentous symbols of disaster the harbingers of fate, the lurking ominous agents of evil and destruction like the unsuspecting rain Stahr and Kathleen meet on their journey to Malibu; here too the rain has the same symbolic connotations of disaster as in

39. Ibid., p.98.
40. Ibid., p.98.
Hemingway's *A Farewell to Arms* which the foredoomed lovers, Catherine and Fredrick Henry suffer.

Stahr emerges as the most brilliant and convincing portrait of the American businessman - hero. He is typical of his class since perhaps no other businessman in literature has been so highly regarded for his business pursuits. Even when the business of American has been simply business, the mentality that goes into successful enterprise has been subjected to derision and unalloyed ridicule. The babbity disqualifies him to be taken as a man with creative artistic talents. The fusion of business and art are unthinkable as they have been supposed to be mutually exclusive activities; for the sheer business acumen and abilities, a businessman is regarded unworthy to be "a large-minded, generous, disinterested heroic character". Stahr singularly transcends not only the inherently associated limitations of a businessman, but attains the heroic proportions and aura of doom and tragic grandeur. The spiralling ascent of his career made possible by his inherent talent, skill and imagination is mauled by the overpowering leviathan of the business organisation. He is the victim of his own expansive imagination, caught up in the labyrinth of his complexities and is enmeshed by his own larger successes. His studio is too vast an empire for his ruling. The internecine struggle
for domination because of his weakening hold, results in the divisive and disparate break-up of his movie empire. He is primarily an artist who must revolt against any threat to his artistic, creative pursuits. His imagination cannot regard motion pictures merely as commodities to be traded for commercial profits. Such an attitude goes against the very business ethics of the big financiers whose sole aim of fiscal investments is commercial exploitation of the movies for increased profit, not artistic excellence. It is to prevent such exploitative materialistic motives contaminating a fine medium for artistic delineation of life and human experience that he must pay a price. The exigencies of art demand creative freedom unrestrained by money and its exploitative devices. The struggle between him and Brady symbolises the struggle for a pre-emptive control and domination of the entertainment medium by art and money. He is virtually hemmed in from all sides; the big financiers, labour unions and all such collaborative agencies as engage themselves in the enterprise are out to put impediments in the way of his artistic endeavours. He must inevitably give in to forces that have become too unwieldy for his control. In the successful movie venture the most important functionally situated position is that of the director, who must command the unquestioned obedience and loyalties of all subservient to him in the collaborative venture. Stahr holds that authority, but he must share it
equally with other artistes engaged with him and answerable to him. Inspite of his implicit faith in the efficacy of creative freedom it is ultimately his unifying imagination which holds final responsibility for the resultant artistic product. There is a secret conspiracy to pass this unique authority that Stahr combines and concentrates within himself to lesser but more envious and manipulative directors like Pat Brady whose very incompetence and lack of imagination qualifies them for the status quo of economic profitability for which the big financiers had formed their monopolistic trust.

The Last Tycoon specifically delineates the imperceptible forces in modern American society that covertly support the myth of capitalist success and would find its overt fulfillment in the Hollywood myth. Infact a real economic situation is symbolically transposed to Hollywood, lending it the same psychological and symbolic overtones associated with Daisy in The Great Gatsby. Monroe Stahr, in his dreams and aspirations and the hard work he puts into realising them, represents the old Hollywood and the pioneering frontier phase of American history. He repeats the Alger hero's quest with all the central features of the myth, humble beginnings, early poverty, little education, untouched by traditional culture, but gifted with the quality of leadership, a spark of genius, an indomitable
faith, the will and determination to succeed, to be the top man in his field, and he is bound to succeed. He is Theodore Dreiser's Frank Cowperwood who became much more than what he aspired for. Stahr's genius, intelligence and capacity for taking pains have taken him "through trackless waste of perception into fields where very few men were able to follow him". He had the character and ability of a man of action, a capitalist businessman, an empire builder, a "merchant prince":

He looked spiritual at times, but he was a fighter -- somebody out of his past knew him when he was one of a gang of kids in the Bronx.... He walked always at the head of his gang, this rather frail boy, occasionally throwing a command backward out of the corner of his mouth. 41

With such a magnificent mind and good luck for a start, Stahr would reach that "extraordinary illuminating flight" which would take him to new heights of power and responsibility. But his artistic ability, compassion and humanity make him an ideal capitalist, a benevolent tycoon. He thus represents the golden age of American capitalism now

41. Ibid., p.15.
about to be over; he is the last tycoon of the great line of paternalistic entrepreneurs. Like others of his class, he had grown up "dead cold", but unlike them he learnt "tolerance, kindness, forbearance and even affection like lessons." He combines in himself idealism and practicality, and has resisted pressures and demands of economic and business considerations, and has taken the movies "way up past the range and power of the theatre." But in his will to crush the power of organised labour, his determination to eliminate industrial paternalism and collusive racketeers it tends to project the unfortunate development where the fate of Stahr, the last tycoon, overshadows Hollywood. His idealism sets in the process of his self-destruction as of Hollywood after him. The pall of decay and ruin hangs over Hollywood, and there is sadness not only for what is overtaking Stahr but an era of American past as the old Hollywood itself dying with him.

Pat Brady and Brimmer are symbols of what will replace Stahr once he disappears from the scene. They are the new breed of men, the destructive tycoons, symbols of materialism and selfishness, and what has perverted the ideals set forth by the breed of believers in the American dream of individualism and economic freedom to make the myth of success a reality. They represent the collective, collusive forces of dehumanised capitalism and organised brutal labour
power. Pat Brady is a composite image of the Wall Street, enormous leviathan, depersonalised concentration of capitalism of the East, corporate capitalism trying to destroy individual enterprise. He amply symbolises the loss of individual entrepreneurial identity. He is the destructive tycoon who belongs to the gangster capitalist of the bootlegging, Prohibition era of the Twenties:

Money is the evil that defeats them. As soon as they strike rich they begin to behave like idiots and get themselves hopelessly involved.\(^\text{42}\)

Brady's loss of identity is so complete that he never confronts directly. He lurks in the background like the impending doom, as Schwartz senses him, and as Cecilia finds out:

I began to see that his strong will didn't fill him out as a passable man. Most of what he accomplished boiled down to shrewd. He had acquired with luck and shrewdness a quarter interest in a booming circus -- together with young

\(^{42}\) Bosley Crowther, *The Screen Review*, p.73.
Stahr. That was his life's effort -- all
the rest was an instinct to hang on.\textsuperscript{43}

Obviously, he made a fatal slip on the financial tight rope of Hollywood; his impending doom is not too far; even his daughter knows that his rise to power has been pure luck, a chance and trading on other peoples' talents. He has learnt a little about the "feel of America" and has no talent for film making; his luck has been Stahr else he's a mere exploiter and manipulator. Both of them would have, however, struggled and destroyed each other for the control of Hollywood, symbolically a destruction of the American capitalist industry. It was Stahr who was to be defeated, and with him his individualism against the corporate forces of capital and organised labour.

The most significant contrast between Stahr and Brady, as between Gatsby and Tom Buchanan, is in their affair, their approach to sex, the women they love. For Stahr, Kathleen is the symbol of his romantic yearning, whatever the ultimate fate; even here he preserves what is now a dying European and American tradition. On the contrary Brady's materialism and unethical conduct is best illustrated in the episode where Cecilia stumbles on the figure of Birdie Peters in her father's closet. She had gone to him to plead for Martha

\textsuperscript{43} The Last Tycoon, p. 28.
Dodd, Johnny, Swanson, Evelyn Brent and other such "discarded flowers" who had made money for producers and directors at their prime but were only allowed to slip away into misery eked out with extra work. She finds him trembling and his shirt soaked through, and he blames it all on the high-handedness of Stahr who's "in my hair night and day.... I'm half crazy." Hearing a long, low moan from the closet she was first startled, then transfixed and then brave enough to open it only to find:

Father's secretary, Birdie Peters, tumbled out stark naked -- just like a corpse in the movies...a mistress stuffed naked into a hole in the wall in the midday of a business.44

No wonder he kept people like Martha Dodd walking up and down his office, guaranteeing them regular appointment. On the other hand there is Monroe Stahr to whom the handsome actor, Roderiguez comes because he never saw a situation where Stahr didn't know the way out; even if he advised him to commit suicide, he would. His problem is a very personal one, nothing to do with the industry; his film has broken all records, grossed thousands, his fan mail's up but:

44. Ibid., p.103.
"I'm through... I'm washed up... Esther and I sit opposite each other at dinner, and I'm ashamed to look at her. She's been a good sport about it, but I'm ashamed.... I am afraid to go home at night, afraid to go to bed. 45

He had gone to Pat Brady who had given him a lot of "phoney advice"; he had tried it all but nothing had worked. Monroe spends time with him, tells him what to do, and later he comes to thank him.

Hollywood thus is only a fading reflection of the epic grandeur. It is Fitzgerald's statement of a lost vision of agrarian past supplanted by the gospel of wealth and industrial capitalism. It is the paradox of the age, how to attempt to reconcile the contradictory forces of heroic ideal of individualism with the monster of greed and rapacious urges that must end in exploitation and tyranny. The New World indeed had paid a tremendous price for its reconstruction. Perhaps The Last tycoon could retrieve something:

I hope it will be something new, arouse new emotions, perhaps even a new way of

45. Ibid., p.35.
looking at certain phenomena. I have 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 the ultimate sense the tragedy of Monroe Stahr, as of Jay Gatsby, depends as much on the intensity of the hero's hope as on the finality of its disillusionment.

Hollywood movies exercised a curious fascination on Fitzgerald's mind. As an artistic medium, the motion picture had made a new cultural conquest, supplanting old traditional values by investing and merchandising new ideas and attitudes to life, even to the extent of perpetuating its dominion over a large segment of American society. To Fitzgerald, the movies had "a more glittering, a grosser power than had ever before existed to seduce and enslave the mass mind." He intended to explore and portray the motion picture industry as a cultural and social phenomenon, the Hollywood community with its fantastic, glamorous life determining the romantic social aspirations and urges of the

46. Ibid., p.141.
American people. It became a larger than life symbol, a world vaster and grander than the ordinary one, a world of splendorous golden haze. The movies could display wealth and success as a glorious dream, for, in his imagination, they were locked up together, and he saw them as synonymous with his pursuits the one implying the other. Like his extremes of imagined riches, Hollywood too became an emblem of extravagance with its unlimited amount of money to create phantasmagoria of incredible ingenuity of human imagination. But all this dreaming of the "money and glory" was almost inaccessible, beyond the impregnable walls of the Hollywood that he hoped to conquer.

It was this new reality of Hollywood that Fitzgerald tried to capture in The Last Tycoon. Though he took the Hollywood theme with a hesitating uncertainty. Perhaps he knew too much and it was painful to record what he knew as Aldous Huxley points out:

May be the total reality is always too undignified to be recorded, too senseless or too horrible to be left unfictionalised. All the same it is exasperating if one happens to know the facts, its even rather insulting.47

In choosing this most complex of American themes, Fitzgerald was perhaps making a magnificent gesture to repay all that Hollywood had taught him. Even though he had been used cheated, neglected by it, his indebtedness remained.

It is only in its new technique of montage that *The Last Tycoon* was new and different. It has a new sentiment, the nostalgia of the future, what might be lost, the paralysing fear of what will be gone with the wind. Such was the unintended nostalgia, the intent behind Stahr's actions, his impending failures and defeats, that gave to the novel its new fictional stream. It tried to combine the thrilling, recurring themes of the dream of money, love and the movie stage in the happy alliance and interflow of the novel and the movie joining and altering each other's course.

Hollywood becomes the vantage point of Stahr's artistic observation of society which the movie represents as an articulated experience. It symbolically pertains to a thickening inter-connectedness between the self of Stahr and the social world which he dominates and which provides that privileged moment crucial to his relationship with Kathleen, his most intimate contact with the outside world. But an intenser and more anomalous relationship is between him and the Hollywood community without which the unfolding experience and the meaning would be submerged in irrelevance.
and inanity for the novel is primarily a symbolic statement regarding a representative man and a society at a particular point of their disintegration. Stahr's isolation, in perspective, is one which enwraps the fictional totality to unravel the enigma of the American dream and the fading hopes of it ever being realised except in that most dynamic illusion of the American nation, the dreamland of the Hollywood movie world. Fitzgerald had at last found the most cogent and authentic symbol for his final indictment of the American dream and its disillusioning impact; even in its fragmented version the meaning could hardly go unheeded. Besides, it came not a day too soon as America was getting ready to enter what till then (Dec. 1940 when Fitzgerald breathed his last) had been a European war and to experience once more the shattering impact of illusion to end all illusions.