Elia Kazan's Ever Reborn, Ever Pure, and Corrupted American Dream

Nicole Ollier

How can a dream be exclusively American? America has called a dream by its name, or to quote Lionel Trilling, America is: "the only nation that prides itself upon a dream and gives its name to one" (*The Liberal Imagination* 251). The myth goes, that if you work hard enough in America, wealth, success, everything is possible. In 1776 the Declaration of Independence claimed the right to Life, Liberty, and the Pursuit of Happiness. The goal was then to establish a democratic utopia of liberty, prosperity and public virtue according to Hugh Swinton Legare (Fourth of July speech, 1823). The term American Dream was established and popularized by historian James Truslow Adams (*The Epic of America*, 1931), with the motif of a new beginning as part of that Dream,[1] America being not only the home of the Dream but the Dream itself.

Therefore, to proclaim "I have a dream" in America carries a mighty destiny. The linguistic difference in each language is telling. In English, you "have" a dream, in French, you "do" a dream, while in Greek you "see" a dream. Which means it precedes your mental elaboration, and you receive, perceive the vision, and may then elaborate on it. In the Greek culture, dreams have significant forebodings or give clues to meanings in life: that is why Greeks have books to interpret dreams, called *oneirokritis*. As for artists, Greek or not, dreams and nightmares deserve analyzing, and interpreting by their therapists. For Kazan's fictional father, "dreams tell everything"[2] (A, 103). However, the author's family had a vital dream of America, to save them from extermination in the Ottoman empire: that dream was fulfilled. Elia Kazan, a Greek Anatolian by birth, moved to the USA at the age of four (Colombani 25-26), no one could guess then he would earn world-wide fame for his movies. This notoriety was never entirely matched by that of his books, first *America, America*, elaborated from the script of his mythic film of immigration staging Stavros, a spoilt naïve Greek boy in Asia Minor sent to America by his family to pave the way for them; then his first autobiographical novel, *The Arrangement*, written in Paris after the death of his first wife, and which he brought to the screen. Among his

[1] See Charles L. Sanford, ed., *The Quest for America,* 1810–1824 (New York: Doubleday, 1964), p. ix; Legare's speech is reprinted in full, ibid., pp. 3-20. James T. Adams, *The Epic of America* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1931), pp. 415, viii. See Robert H. Fossum et John K. Roth, *The American Dream*, https://baas.ac.uk/baas-archive/2010/05/robert-h-fossum-john-k-roth-the-american-dream/ visited on 7/12/2025.

[2] The quotes from Kazan's different books will carry the following abbreviations: *America, America* (A A), *The Arrangement* (A), *The Anatolian* (An), *A Life* (L) *Beyond The Aegean* (B A).

most convincing Greek novels came *The Anatolian*, followed by the sequel *Beyond The Aegean*. In his late years, he wrote a monumental autobiography, *A Life,* where he recalls his stupefying career, nevertheless tainted with disillusionment.

For the Dream was not unclouded for him. One of his regrets: committing a sin America would never forgive him, when during the Second Red Scare under the McCarthy era, he was summoned to name communist colleagues to the HUAC (House of Un-American Activities Committee). From then on his work allegedly gained in depth, especially around the theme of treason, mainly self-treason. Richard Corliss evoked this sad event in *Time Magazine* for his obituary, September 29, 2003, saying how he was never forgiven for giving himself in, as well as some of his old friends as being former communists. The homage to the old lion was booted, boycotted, cancelled—regardless of the fact an artist's most eloquent testimony is his work. Few were so unfairly castigated for a political reason: he paid for a lifetime for informing on others, and would never manage to erase that blemish on his name. Michel Ciment deplores the national misunderstanding of a man he judged "profoundly humane," (d'une profonde humanité)(Colombani 17). This disastrous episode, which partly nourished his creation, sums up the ambivalence of the American Dream for immigrants in his fiction.

We shall observe how the American Dream first materializes beyond hope for Kazan's heroes in the novels under study, but to a very high cost. After the hero painstakingly reaches the Dream, there still is a high price to pay: above all, an overwhelming fear, which paradoxically may either paralyze or stimulate him. Besides, the Dream has its limits: in spite of appearances, belonging is, at bottom, excluded. The dream of integration, of liberty does not keep its promises, and the Greek hero feels discriminated: far from becoming an American,[3] he is brought back to his condition of a *hamal* in Asia Minor, half-human, the scum. Therefore, a prophylactic mask, often a smile, not unlike the American smile, conceals the hero's authentic self. Silence covers his deep thoughts, the hero sports several identities, misleading strangers. The lure of money at the core of the Dream distorts and betrays original ideals: time to renounce one's illusions and recognize true values. Yet Kazan's hero, Stavros, after relinquishing the American Dream, finds he needs to recreate a substitute, the Dream of a Greater Greece. While symmetrically, after reaching the zenith of fame and success, Kazan's ultimate dream in America was to disappear in the books he wrote. A wish that some in the American audience all too easily subscribed to. This paper will examine Kazan's right to his American Dream and his endeavor to attain it.

[3] The allusion is to Henry James, *The American,* New York: Charles Scribner's and Sons, 1877, 1907. James' hero, Christophe Newman, also is a successful businessman who gradually grows a distaste for money and leaves for Europe, where the tradition of the old World annihilates his hopes and his marriage, but whose loyalty defeats his desire of vengeance.

The Dream Come True

Kazan's favourite movie, *America America*, was based on his Anatolian Greek family's story. Because of the threat of the Armenian genocide in Asia Minor spreading to the Greeks, the Topouzoglou send their son as a pilot to Constantinople. Stavros will finally make it to America and open the path for them. Leaving for the New World is truly an act of survival: "Our fate was a Turk waiting in a shadow, with an unsheathed scimitar" (*A Life* 397). The prodigal son's successful arrival in the new land amounts to an improbable exploit, a miracle: "When I land here I kiss the ground," (*The Anatolian* 416) Stavros recalls in *The Anatolian*. Kazan as well as his wife Molly, his trusted adviser, regretted his being persuaded to suppress this emotional scene from his movie. He truly felt "'The American-born don't appreciate their country'" (*A Life* 671). For Kazan's hero Stavros, as well as for his family, America meant the promise of freedom. But would that promise be held?

The transatlantic passage is the result of a formidable Odyssey, in which Stavros owes his survival to "a murderous curved dagger" (*The Anatolian* 47) which his grand-mother gave him before he left and which enabled him to stab the Turk who was about to kill him. She had prophetically warned him: "no sheep ever saved his neck by bleating" (*The Anatolian* 47). There is no glamour to his success, which is due to a series of losses, self-betrayals, vain sacrifices, endless thefts and wrongs he endures, and then treasons he himself commits, duplicity, treacherous behaviour, lies, identity usurpation. When Stavros reaches the promised land, he has learnt that dreams cannot come true through honest work nor moral acts, but only through sinful cunning, and violence, even murder. The very dream of America corrupts him, he arrives soiled, and his dream of being cleansed by the country is an illusion. Likewise, Eddie in *The Arrangement* is "a man who betrays himself, by dint of arrangements to reach his ends, a man whom the obsessional idea of America corrupts to the core" claims Colombani (104 my translation). Stavros soon begins to understand what America is and becomes cynical: "To reach his goal, he must deny himself, renounce his honour and his belonging to his family" (Colombani 104, my translation)[4]. Stavros, described before his departure from Anatolia as the image of "innocence and purity" (*The Anatolian* 47), leaves behind the hell of genocide; and America, instead of redeeming him, actually corrupts him (Columbani 105).

Fear Across the Atlantic: The Price of Dreams

One powerful agent in the immigrant's success in Kazan's work is fear, which drives him forward. A fear which Kazan experienced deep in himself the whole time he was shooting part

[4] « Kazan montre un homme qui se trahit, à force d'arrangements pour parvenir à ses fins, un homme que l'idée obsessionnelle de l'Amérique corrompt profondément » (Colombani, 104).

of the movie in Turkey—the rest would be shot in Greece, a safer place to work in: "I felt at home, but I also felt fear, fear that I was never to lose in Turkey" (*A Life* 588); "I was still afraid of Turks and would never get over it" (L 688); "I still felt what my hero felt: I've got to get out of here alive" (L 692). His creation unexpectedly benefited from that insecurity: "the effect of the place upon me; as it was a source of fear, it was a source of inspiration" (*A Life* 692).

The revelation came when he met his timorous cousin Stellio in Turkey and saw in him "the self I would have been if I'd not been brought to America by my father. I found my discarded self" (*A Life* 588). A form of determinism, if not in his genes, at least in his father's heritage, and upbringing, seemed to have crossed the Ocean: "[Stellio] had lived all his life under the eye of authority he knew to be hostile. Fear had ordered his life [...] I recognized myself in him" (*A Life* 592).

Now, in a similar climate of distrust and threat, when McCarthyism in America demanded that artists in LA give the names of their fellow communists in the profession, Kazan promised himself he would never betray his comrades: "I would not, under any pressure, name others. That would be shameful, it wasn't an alternative worth considering" (*A Life* 444)— until he finally felt cornered. The same act killed some of his friends, like Joe Bromberg, due to the stress he was under, or actress Mady Christians (*A Life* 462). *He* survived, but in a climate of such fear that he had to hire a guard to protect his wife and children in his home: "I engaged a young man to live in [the house] while I was away. He was gutter-smart, able with his fists; Molly trusted him, it would be many months before she lived without fear. She knew that most of my 'comrades' blamed her for my testimony" (L 511). In his late years, Kazan remained haunted by the fear of the taint reaching his progeny: "The sorrow that ate me most concerned my children, how in years to come they'd have to carry the burden of my 'informing' and be ashamed. The worry never eased" (*A Life* 508).

Fear is part of America for Kazan: his hero Stavros in *The Anatolian* sums up the country in this way: "Fear. America, America. Power and fear" (*The Anatolian* 58). The shortcut almost recalls the mafia.

America is no dream-life in his fiction, and even what seems a perfect form of happiness may prove so oppressive it becomes alienating. Colombani names this "The Reverse of The American Dream" (Colombani, 85, "L'Envers du rêve américain", my translation). The critic associates Kazan with his friend Arthur Miller, both detractors of the American Dream, especially in *Death of a Salesman*, where Biff says of his father Willy Loman in the "Requiem" after the burial service: "He had all the wrong dreams. All, all wrong" (110) to which Charley retorts: "a salesman is got to dream, boy. It comes with the territory" (111). Even the circumstances of Willy's death can be compared to Eddy's failed exit in *The Arrangement*.

Belonging: An Out of Reach American Dream

The Anatolian best illustrates the ruin of a dream. Even after years of work in America, Stavros still feels excluded; his dream, out of reach: "As for America, he saw it as a locked room to which he didn't have the key" (Ana 45). He admits his own disillusionment: "America, America, it's not what I thought" (*The Anatolian* 58). Nevertheless, his dreams and hopes remain alive: when he and his family manage to open an ambitious store for Oriental carpets, he speculates on their ultimate, definitive settling: "Then we will be Americans! Nobody will be better than us" (Ana 51). His mantra's intoxicating repetition is meant to have an illocutionary power and make the dream come true: "I want to be an American. […] I want to be powerful. […] I want to be rich. […] I want to be boss in this world. […] In America, everything possible" (Ana 62) he assures his mother.

In the sequel *Beyond The Aegean,* reflecting upon his years in America, Stavros again recalls: "America, America, they called me, because I had the idea that in America I would be washed clean. Become rich. Some joke!" (BA 92). The motherly pimp Thea (literally, "Aunt") begs him to forget about his romantic dreams, and be realistic: "You Greeks! Dreamers! There are no golden-hair American virgins who'd marry someone like you" (*The Anatolian* 134). Even though Althea assures him she would have accepted his proposal if he had not been so difficult: "How many times did you tell me that you wouldn't marry an American girl—hell" (Ana 398). Even Stavros's own brother, Demo, the one he felt bright enough to study and be his family's hope of success and respectability, betrays him and quits school, and denounces his senseless hope of integration: "This isn't Anatolia, *agha* tyrant, don't you know that? This is America. Which you will never be, American man. Better go back where you came from. […] Because you don't belong in this country, boy—never, never!" (*The Anatolian* 151).

Like Kazan, Stavros repeatedly professes a debt towards America: "I owe this country everything" (*The Anatolian* 159 & 422). Yet, not only has America not filled its promises, but it has pulled the Topouzoglou family apart: "Mommah, remember how we used to cry, 'America! We're going to America!' Now it's the opposite way, with a different voice. You were right, Mommah, it ruined your family, this country" (*The Anatolian* 360).

Even the dream of freedom, the essential ideal of America, has been destroyed by Stavros himself, who is reproached with his tyranny by his siblings: "You used to say: 'This is America, here is freedom.' But you ordered us around like it was the old country, telling us what we must do, what we must think, what is right, what is wrong—" (*The Anatolian* 164).

Stavros thinks he understands why he is discriminated in his work, why he will never be the favourite salesman, or employee, it is because the country does not belong to newcomers with a foreign look and accent: "We come to this country too late, I think. The ones who get here first, they own it. The ones with blue eyes" (*The Anatolian* 177). To his beautiful Anglo girl-

friend, born in an affluent family, and who is the embodiment of "America" to him — "She is America," (*The Anatolian* 181) — "he admits his mistake: "Yes, we are safe, but this country belongs to your people" (*The Anatolian* 177). When she assures him to the contrary: "This country belongs to anybody who takes it" (*The Anatolian* 177), it is all rhetoric to him.

Stavros claims not to belong to the human race, his true nature is that of a half-human being, for he identifies with the scum of Constantinople, where he slaved in the gutter as a porter carrying a harness to earn the Turkish pounds which he realized would never buy him the boat-fare to America, he will forever remain: "A nothing [...] A hamal, that's me" (*The Anatolian* 305). A reminder of Kazan, who identified with black students at Williams college and, when he saw James Baldwin walk past Café de Flore in Paris, called him "my fellow nigger" (*A Life* 756), and probably shared with him Luther King's Dream. Baldwin's words were printed on the jacket of *America America*: "Gadg, baby, you're a nigger too" (*A Life* 43).

It took Kazan a lifetime to experience gratefulness towards his father for changing his destiny, as he realized in Turkey:

> If George Kazan had not brought his wife and sons in America in 1913, I could have been there now, [...] 'invisible'. If it hadn't been for my father's courage—a quality I had not until that day associated with him—I'd now be what my cousin was. / Perhaps it was the feeling of gratitude and reconciliation that brought on an extraordinary feeling late that afternoon. (L 689)

A Mask to Support one's Dream

We saw that honesty cannot bring a candidate to emigration across the Atlantic. Garabet admonishes his friend Stavros: "There are only two ways for people like us to get big money. Steal it. Or [...] marry it" (A,A 104). Nor can transparency help an ambitious young man. Kazan is haunted by the idea of masks, which stick to their wearers their life long. In *The Arrangement*, Ed indicates how his mother's deviousness protected him from the tyranny of his father. She helped him leave the Greek ghetto, enter the University and become educated. "It was from my mother I learned the art of the devious. It was from her that I learned the efficacy of silence. She gave me my first mask of compliance. [...] the only way I could get the things I wanted was [...] in silence and secrecy. [...]/ I went to school to my mother" (A 197).

Ed is overwhelmed by his mask: "My decent and faithful, fair, orderly, and considerate side was a mask, and [...] it just about choked me to death" (A 223). Kazan the author speaks alike in his autobiography: contemplating his portrait in his high school year-book, he sees there "a mask, not a person" (L 25). "I learned to conceal my longings and to work to fulfil them surreptitiously. [...] I learned to mask my desires, hide my truest feelings" (L 28). In his professional life, Kazan would keep the mask he had developed at college and, thus protected, would try and escape mentally: "I learned to live as an artist lives, empathetically, observing,

imagining, dreaming, all behind a mask" (L 28). Kazan advocates the legendary danger in real life of such a habit, which plagued him: "There is an old Greek myth of a demigod or human [...] who puts on a mask to disguise who he is, then after some time decides to take it off but isn't able to. It took me many years, as you will see, to take it off" (*A Life* 138). For sometimes indeed, as in the Greek myth, "the mask won't come off" (*A Life* 138).

This attitude is to be traced back to the history of his ancestors, and the strategy of survival of the oppressed under the Ottoman yoke: "So you wear the mask of affability, wait out the trouble, eat the insults, shrug and flash that good-natured, ever-ready smile" (*A Life* 635). Kazan mentions that endemic smile in the very first pages of his autobiography: "It's my father's sly face. I call it the Anatolian smile. The smile that covers resentment. And fear. I see the cunning in that smile. My father never wore that face at home. He was himself then. He kept that face for buyers" (*A Life* 2).

Surprisingly, this Ottoman, prophylactic, fake smile recalls the American smile, such as Jean Baudrillard observes and comments upon it in *Amérique*, and which he calls "pellicular," namely that of actors in "films":

> only the eternal pellicular smile, a mighty fragile protection. (Baudrillard 60, my translation)
>
> This smile only signifies the necessity of smiling. It is a bit like that of the Chester cat: it keeps floating on faces long after any affect has disappeared. (37)
>
> A smile at any moment available, careful not to exist and not to betray itself. It is without any after-thought, but it keeps you some distance away. [...] An immune, advertisement smile [...] Smile if you have nothing to say, don't you hide that you have nothing to say, or that you are indifferent to others. Spontaneously allow this vacuum, this deep indifference to appear in your smile. [...] For lack of an identity, Americans have wonderful teeth. (37)[5]

But wearing a permanent smile, you never are your genuine self. And you tend to behave as a schizophrenic, like Eddy: "So it was, I became what I became: a split man, compliant to the general view, a rebel beneath" (A 202). What is more, Kazan's father shared with Stavros in *The Anatolian* a piece of advice clashing with the chivalric code of honor: "Be smart, keep your honor like mine, safe inside you. No one can make me feel bad except myself" (Ana 402). Part of the explanation perhaps for his attitude towards the HUAC.

[5] « (seul l'éternel sourire pelliculaire, qui est une bien frêle protection) » (60)
« Ce sourire ne signifie que la nécessité de sourire. C'est un peu comme celui du chat de Chester : il flotte encore sur les visages longtemps après que tout affect a disparu. Sourire à tout instant disponible, mais qui se garde bien d'exister et de se trahir. Il est sans arrière-pensée, mais il vous tient à distance. [...] Sourire immunitaire, sourire publicitaire. [...] Souriez si vous n'avez rien à dire, ne cachez surtout pas que vous n'avez rien à dire, ou que les autres vous sont indifférents. Laissez transparaître spontanément ce vide, cette indifférence profonde dans votre sourire [...]. À défaut d'identité, les Américains ont une dentition merveilleuse » (37).

Kazan's illustration of a split personality is the wearing of different names according to each public identity, or social entity. Eddie in *The Arrangement* lists his different names according to each persona he dons: "In a way, I was two people. Well, not just two. [...] in one job I was Eddie Anderson, in the other Evans Arness; my wife called me 'Ev,' my mother 'E,' my father called me 'Evangeleh!' when he didn't call me 'Shakespeare'" (Arr 26). This wearing several names as so many masks is inspired from Kazan's family history in Anatolia, his personal memories go back to his grandmother, who in the old country was Greek, but donned a Turkish identity for her own safety: "My mother's grandmother's 'Christian name' was flamboyantly Turkish: Sultana. The family Bibles—I have one—were in Turkish" (L 12). The language they spoke changed according to whether they were in the private or the public sphere: "From the instant they walked out of their front doors, they said hello and goodbye in Turkish" (L 12). Ethnic dissimulation followed them to America where they must borrow a name that was acceptable and invisible in the local rug trade: "My father's brother, the man who brought us to America, was known in New York not as Avraam Elia Kazanjioglou but as A. E. Kazan. His nickname was Joe. [...] / You who live in safety may call it self-betrayal" (*A Life* 12).

Money, a Lure Jeopardizing The Dream

In all of Kazan's books, there prevails the cliché of America as a country where capitalism rules. In *The Anatolian*, Stavros harps on it: " Money buys everything " (Ana 27); "Money is their cannon here" (Ana 27); "Money, in this country, it's the pistol and the knife. They buy and sell people here" (Ana 389); "We're all whores here, we jump where money points" (Ana 299).

In the second half of his life, when Molly's ruptured aneurysm had tragically put an end to the golden marriage with "America" incarnate, Kazan experienced an altogether different second marriage: his second wife, an actress from a rather unprivileged backcountry in the South, awoke him to other values: "Money, ambition and rivalry had deprived me of brotherliness" (*A Life* 792). "Barbara enriched my work" (*A Life* 793).

In *The American Dream*, Fossum and Roth take the example of Gatsby who makes a fortune in America, but "repudiates" an essential part of himself:

> Gatsby starts out poor and then amasses an enormous fortune through his own self-reliant (if unscrupulous) shrewdness. In a sense he personifies America and the American Dream as Fitzgerald perceived them. Springing from a "Platonic conception of himself," Gatsby has repudiated all but one part of his past in favor of a past, and consequently an identity, which he has invented for himself. (Fossum & Roth 19)

That repudiated part of himself is "Daisy Fay Buchanan, who incarnates all the youth and loveliness and wealth in the world to Gatsby" (Fossum 19). Not totally unlike Eddy in *The Arrangement*, who by marrying Florence, and becoming a wealthy businessman, repudiates

himself completely, while he later finds in poorer, less educated Gwen a form of moral redemption.

As he nears the end of his autobiography, Kazan sums up the disillusionment of immigrants' ideological and utopian dreams, eventually corrupted into a mere materialistic project: "These men who cried, America, America!, as the century died, had come here looking for freedom and all they found was the freedom to make as much money as possible" (*A Life* 803). Not only can The Dream fail to come true, not only can it bloom, and then fail and vanish, but it can also ruin your life, your relationships, and become generally toxic. The best things can be the end of you.

Toxicity of Success—A Dream Marriage Can Kill

Kazan uses the same words for Florence in *The Arrangement* as for Molly in *A Life* to describe the magically beneficial effect of his early married days: "[Florence] was [...] my talisman of success" (A 11). "'Molly brought us into America.' Mother meant our whole family. [...] she was, for many years, a talisman of success" (*A Life* 55).

But in *The Arrangement*, Eddie's adopted daughter points out to her father how even a perfectly wonderful wife can harm her husband: "She's all the virtues, isn't she? Still she's killing you. Daddy..." (A 138). Eddie admits this suppression of his person: "I had buried part of me alive" (A 87). He realizes that even this dream come true has become loathsome to him, and his subconscious acting out, a nearly fatal car accident, has finally proved a blessing by saving him from a life he could no longer stand: "I don't like my life. I don't like what I've done with it. I don't like what I am. I don't like the way I live. I don't like my home" (A 98). In short, "I had to find a catastrophe that might save me" (A 130).

Kazan expresses a blatant paradox, how the ultimate good can result in ultimate disaster, or vice versa: "She was the person to whom, for many years, I felt I owed everything. [...] She reassured me completely [...] Molly was my cure" (L 55). "For the first time in my life, I didn't feel *outside"* (L 59). And yet: "our life together was among other things, impossible" (L 453).

In the sequel to *The Anatolian*, Stavros has embarked for another dream, that of Greater Greece, re-conquering the lost Hellenic territory in Asia Minor, but he ends up leaving Smyrna in flames at the time of the so-called Great Catastrophe, the boat "left in its wake his dreams of a Greater Greece" (B A, 397). He manages to sail to the harbor of Athens, a refugee once more, considered as ~~s~~eed of the Turk, *Turkospori,* (BA 403) for being an Anatolian. He again survives thanks to an old Armenian who agonizes next to him, carrying a wallet full of money. He has the knack of repeatedly ruining any hope of happiness with the woman who loves him, and who has to banish him from her dreams. His Greek lover Thomna dreams of becoming

independent thanks to her typewriter, “Stavros was not in the dream” (B A, 414). When she finds him again, “He was not the person she’d been dreaming about” (B A 430). Their respective dreams as it were have become mutually exclusive. He tells her explicitly this dream of “a Greater Greece, a Greece like America” is well over, and suggests she herself should have her own dream (B A 435). The pendulum movement between two countries, two women, two antagonistic decisions, never stops. “That was the end of Stavros’s last dream” (BA 448). Kazan’s hero seems intent on ruining his own dreams as soon as they are about to be realized, and shifts from one to the other, as if doomed to ceaselessly run after them, without ever fulfilling any. He feels the helpless victim of this destructiveness: “I have some sort of devil in me, and there are days when he gets restless to destroy the best things I have” (B A 229).

In his glory and retirement from the turmoil of this world, Kazan states he has almost realized his dream of vanishing: “If I’d have a choice during my ‘big days’, I believe I’d have chosen to disappear. As I have now. I’ve vanished, people tell me. Where? Into myself. Into this book, for instance” (L 453).

By way of conclusion, Prophetical words

We saw that the impossible hardships to reach the promised land implied for Kazan’s hero to lose his innocence and purity and become a corrupted villain, whom America will further corrupt. Fear, the corollary of power, prevails both in the old and in the new countries. Money is the only goal that can be reached, not freedom, and it perverts human relationships. Perfection, in marriage for instance, proves toxic and becomes annihilating. Kazan’s hero is inhabited by a dream-destructive devil which dooms him to remain unfulfilled and unhappy.Yet, not unlike Gatsby, “His dream must have seemed so close that he could hardly fail to grasp it” (Fitzgerald 171). He has perhaps found another way of ending his adventures, Great Gatsby-wise: “And so we beat on, boats against the current, borne back ceaselessly into the past” (172).

Kazan would have preferred Marlon Brando to Kirk Douglas to play Eddie in *The Arrangement*. However, Douglas was the son of Russian Jewish immigrants who fled the pogroms; as he neared a hundred years old, his words acquired a prophetic quality. Today’s president of the United States was running for his first election to the White House, when Douglas claimed that some new immigrants now felt the stigma of being treated as aliens, a betrayal of the words of welcome at the foot of the Statue of Liberty. He could not recognize “the American values that we fought in World War II to protect” (*Huffington Post*). Kazan is not here to witness the contemporary destiny of the American Dream. But he might have deplored its waning, like just like the Dream of a Greater Greece.

Millions of people have pursued the American Dream. But what if America itself were a dream? Philosopher Baudrillard qualifies that hypothesis:

> America is neither a dream, nor a reality, it is a hyperreality. It is a hyperreality because it is a utopia which, from the start, lived itself as realized. Everything here is real, pragmatic, and leaves you dream-like. It may be that the reality of America can appear only to a European, since he alone finds here the perfect simulacrum, that of immanence and of the material transcription of all values. (Baudrillard 32, my translation)
>
> What you need to do is enter the fiction of America, America as fiction. That is the way it dominates the world. (33)

> The idyllic conviction of Americans to be the center of the world [...] is founded [...] on the miraculous presupposed of an embodied utopia, of a society which [...] is instituted on the idea that it is the realization of everything the others have dreamed of—justice, plenty, law, wealth, liberty: [that society] knows it, it believes it, and eventually others believe it too. (76-77)[6]

For Baudrillard, Americans "live in the paradox [...] of a utopia realized" (78). For British authors of a pamphlet on the American Dream, they may have grown to doubt that that dream is obtainable:

> To be an American is to dream, for good or for ill, that is the American heritage. If Americans are no longer so certain that their multi-faceted Dream is realizable, or that the future itself is limitless, that uncertainty may be a sign of their maturity. (Fossum & Roth 37)

Unlike his hero Stavros, Kazan no longer doubted, nor hoped for the impossible, or for a utopia. He understood that the Kazan clan, his extended family, was the best he could expect from life in America, he knew he had everything he could dream, that in a way, he had had his own American Dream, in all its nuances, and he only needed time to further enjoy it. We may deplore some enduring reluctance to celebrate Kazan, due to his old attitude towards the HUAC, quite disproportionate to the artistic debt we might owe him for his prodigious work.

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[6] « L'Amérique n'est ni un rêve, ni une réalité, c'est une hyperréalité. C'est une hyperréalité parce que c'est une utopie qui dès le début s'est vécue comme réalisée. Tout ici est réel, pragmatique, et tout vous laisse rêveur. Il se peut que la vérité de l'Amérique ne puisse apparaître qu'à un Européen, puisque lui seul trouve ici le simulacre parfait, celui de l'immanence et de la transcription matérielle de toutes les valeurs » (32).
« Ce qu'il faut, c'est entrer dans la fiction de l'Amérique, dans l'Amérique comme fiction. C'est d'ailleurs à ce titre qu'elle domine le monde » (33).
« La conviction idyllique des Américains d'être le centre du monde, la puissance suprême et le modèle absolu n'est pas fausse. Elle [...] se fonde [...] sur le présupposé miraculeux d'une utopie incarnée, d'une société qui, avec une candeur qu'on peut juger insupportable, s'institue sur l'idée qu'elle est la réalisation de tout ce dont les autres ont rêvé — justice, abondance, droit, richesse, liberté : elle le sait, elle y croit et finalement les autres y croient aussi » (77).
« [...] eux vivent dans le paradoxe (car c'est une idée paradoxale que celle d'une utopie réalisée) » (78).

May this modest contribution allow Kazan's voice to be heard above what might appear like the attempts of some form of cancel culture to mute it.

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