

(Un)Doing the Anatolian Smile: War and Redemption in Elia Kazan's Fiction

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Abstract

Elia Kazan's stage and film work is primarily related to American society while his novels mostly deal with cultures and histories with which many American critics and readers are not familiar. Kazan often felt at war with the Anatolian culture he was raised in, but was just as critical of the American practices and ideologies he had to interact with. The lack of critical interest in Kazan's fictional work does a disservice to his overall creative achievement. The essay discusses Kazan's novels *America America* (1961), *The Anatolian* (1982), and *Beyond the Aegean* (1994), which draw on Kazan's family history of subservience and persecution under the Ottoman rule in Asia Minor and their subsequent psychological and cultural traumas in America at the beginning of the twentieth century. With the complex view of both participant and observer, I argue that, in these novels, Kazan questions the unlimited opportunities that the dream of America offers and envisions new spaces of sociocultural resistance and alternative forms of happiness, which, however, usually come with the inevitable loss of one's personal integrity and free will, and which leave the individual stranded within a world where redemption and belonging seem to be always postponed.

Keywords: Elia Kazan, immigration, diaspora, war, Asia Minor, Anatolian smile, liminality.

[...] our image of happiness is indissolubly bound up with the image of redemption.
(Walter Benjamin, "Theses on the Philosophy of History" 245)

The Anatolian Smile and The Dream

It seems quite astonishing that Elia Kazan (1909-2003), the legendary director of American stage and cinema, a member of the Group Theater and co-founder of the Actors Studio, the winner of numerous prestigious awards, including two Academy Awards, as well as an honorary Oscar in 1999 for his lifetime achievement in the arts, has never received much acclaim from either critics or readers for his fictional work. Books in Film Studies, published interviews, selected letters, and articles shed light on and commend his exceptional talent as a director, as a "master of style of acting that gave America a new kind of male hero, a new kind of passion and honesty, a new definition of stardom" (Basinger 7).¹ Characterized as one of "the most important

¹ Dan Georgakas writes about Kazan's immense contribution to film and theater: "However one judges Kazan's political behavior and whatever the long-term value of specific films, the indisputable reality is that for nearly sixty years Kazan positioned himself at center stage in American cultural life. [...] During the zenith of American theater, he was Broadway's most important director of dramas, directing over thirty plays." However, "[h]is fiction still

disruptive forces in the modern American cinema” with films that negotiated “the interrelationship of the individual and the collective” (Ciment 7), Kazan was both loved and despised for his controversial personality,² especially after his testimony at the House Committee on Un-American Activities in 1952, when Kazan named names, signaling a turning point in his life and career. Film critic Dan Georgakas remarks that the testimony “was an affront to Kazan’s fundamental political and artistic principles” as he “had three options—flight, fight, or capitulation” (“Kazan, Kazan” 6). Naming names was probably a detrimental choice for Kazan and his posthumous reputation since his seven novels, which were published after the testimony (between 1962 and 1994), have not yet become the topic of scholarly articles and academic research in the English speaking world. Kazan’s second novel *The Arrangement* (1967) enjoyed first place for several weeks on the New York Times Best Seller List and became a Hollywood movie starring Kirk Douglas (1969). However, this novel, together with Kazan’s other fictional works, has only received laconic reviews that do not give much credit to his writing abilities.³

Kazan was not to be discouraged by this lack of critical attention, though. He admitted that it was not easy for him to begin his writing career at the age of 55, but writing made him feel “young, and interested” (Michaels 227). Indeed, it was in his fiction that Kazan became much more personal, and was able to draw on his Greek Anatolian home culture and family life as well as his complicated and volatile relationship with his strict, distant, and domineering father, which shaped him both as an individual and as an artist. Born in Constantinople (Istanbul) in 1909 to Anatolian Greeks and brought to America at the age of four, Kazan often felt at war with the Anatolian culture he was raised in. In his long and widely reviewed autobiography, *A Life* (1988), Kazan devotes a large section of the book to the discussion of his Anatolian roots, his family’s adherence to old-fashioned rules and customs, and his troubled relationship to his ethnic background. He also discusses his own efforts to escape his familial space and belong to the culture outside his home, to be accepted by American kids, and enjoy the ordinary and common things that they enjoyed (28-29). To his biographer Richard Schickel, Kazan revealed that “I essentially have the soul of an immigrant. I’m essentially an outsider. I still feel lucky to be here” (397). Simultaneously an insider and outsider of both the cultural spaces he inhabited, Kazan, as an author, combines adroit cinematic techniques, semi-documentary style, vividly realistic descriptions, intensely vocal dialogues, and unpredictable twists in the plot, with an often ironic narrative voice that questions the very grounds on which we perceive reality and approach history. Primarily, he interrogates assumptions regarding the inheritances of ethnic traditions, and so raises doubts about American cultural narratives, as in his novels *America America*, *The Anatolian*, and *Beyond the Aegean*, which follow the Topouzoglou family’s immigrant journey from Turkey to America and which are the focus of this essay.

remains without significant critical comment, but his incisive *A Life* seems destined to be a classic of its genre” (“Kazan, Kazan” 9).

² “Admirers and critics alike agree that Elia Kazan was ornery, charming, talented, unpredictable” (Georgakas, “The Anatolian Smile of Elia Kazan” 11).

³ Kazan’s autobiography *A Life*, however, has been largely welcome as a rich source of information about plays and movies of that time.

Without resorting to a mythological or exotic Greekness or idealizing his ethnicity, without dehistoricizing the past or reifying home culture as isolated from everyday reality, something which other Greek American authors may choose to do, especially through the employment of ethnic stereotypes or cultural symbols, Kazan faces his ethnicity smiling his Anatolian smile, in other words in a paradoxical, unfathomable way. This smile is an apt symbol for Kazan and he uses it to depict the contradictory, burdensome, and yet revealing perceptions of one's diasporic self and the immigrant's thorny and mystifying relationship with the ethnic home. It is both a physical act and a rhetorical device in Kazan's work that aims at masking and unmasking the peculiar conflicting tendencies within the diasporic self. In his autobiography, Kazan reveals how hard it was for him to eradicate, or keep from betraying, the enigmatic (and subversive) possibilities of the Anatolian smile, a smile he inherited from his father, a cordial and cunning smile of self-preservation that masks resentment, fear, as well as a sense of cultural superiority, especially in the face of oppression (*A Life* 11).⁴

In Kazan's novels which follow the trials and tribulations of the Topouzoglou family, Greek subjects in the Ottoman Empire and later new immigrants in America at the beginning of the twentieth century, the (in)famous Anatolian smile of his protagonist is used as a rich and controversial symbol, which negotiates and perfectly encapsulates the multiple narratives of the self. Such narratives are marked by difference and (un)belonging, the performance of cultural accommodation in tandem with social resistance. As the narrator of *America America* explains: "This smile [...] has a strong element of anxiety. It is so often the unhappy brand of the minority person—whether Negro, Jew, or yellow man—the only way he has found to face his oppressor, a mask to conceal the hostility he dares not show, and at the same time an escape for the shame he feels as he violates his true feelings" (27). The Anatolian smile becomes a formula for representing a means of self-protection, as well as a cause for self-condemnation (and criticism) as it is both a metonymy of repression, a refusal to reveal any overt feelings, as well as a reaction to sociocultural pressure.⁵

Functioning as a mirror of one's fears and reasons for private and public shame, the Anatolian smile may prove more life-threatening and emotionally crippling than a literal act of violence. As long as the mysterious Anatolian smile persists and survives, acceptance and the concomitant defiance of existing actual and imagined defeat create an ironically symbiotic relationship, which may drive one to self-doubt and, as a consequence, self-annihilation; it may endanger one's moral integrity and psychological stability, and, most of all, one's self image as a human being under circumstances of social inequity and uprootedness in America, as the New World. Through Stavros Topouzoglou, Kazan's protagonist in *America America*, *The Anatolian*, and *Beyond the Aegean*, the author declares that when one lacks sociocultural safety and recognition by others both at home and abroad, the Anatolian smile prevents one from entering

⁴ See Georgakas, "Kazan, Kazan" 8-9.

⁵ As S. N. Behrman mentions in his Introduction to *America America*, the Anatolian smile is the one "with which Stavros confronts an inimical world; the smile of deference, the smile of conciliation, the smile to ward off a blow" (11). Behrman points out that this smile aims to ingratiate the enemy of a minority whose only crime is "being alive" (12).

the promise of American democracy unequivocally; in other words, demanding a share of America's social and political privileges means the Anatolian smile, with its interplay between the intertwined selves of the individual who suffers from an unrequited desire to find home under repressive conformity and the demands of assimilation, and so will be forever liminal. As Homi Bhabha argues, such liminality involves finding ourselves "in the moment of transit where space and time cross to produce complex figures of difference and identity, past and present, inside and outside, inclusion and exclusion" (1).

However, the Anatolian smile is also the means through which the racist and discriminatory practices as well as the sociopolitical inequalities of American democracy are attacked in Kazan's fictional work. Like his films that made him a Hollywood legend as they were "challenges to American cultural myths" (Georgakas, "The Anatolian Smile"14), his fiction aims at demystifying and unsettling national ideals, cultural assumptions, commonly-held moral bearings, and widely popularized ideological myths. For the author, America may appear to be a democratic society, but he wants to make a point of demonstrating that many people "survive by 'passing'" and "still wear the fez" (*A Life* 14). For Kazan, wearing the fez is a metaphor for an individual's efforts to fit in and gain respect by others, especially when one is an unwelcome social outsider, just like his paternal uncle was, who changed his last name from Kazanjioglou to Kazan, thus putting on a new Americanized identity. Such outsiders are always striving to remain "above criticism" while undergoing self-effacement (642), in their transplanting of old world practices and in their struggle to move from being underprivileged immigrants to becoming Americans. In particular, Kazan targets his sociopolitical critique against what he perceives as the tremendous chasm between the alluring promises of American democracy, on the one hand, and the realities of American life, on the other.

This chasm becomes even wider and not easily surmountable when, as Kazan's fiction reveals, the immigrants themselves resist the progress of modernity while clinging to the memory of an albeit dysfunctional and fragmented life back home they unsuccessfully try to recreate within a capitalistic society that victimizes them in ways not-immediately-recognizable. Totally inexperienced and ignorant of the Western demands on the individual and often naively carried away by the lures of America, Kazan's transplanted Anatolian characters may start with worshipping capitalist ethos as a ticket to freedom. This robs them of their initial conception of the American dream as the path to political and personal independence, and shatters whatever fragile continuity may exist with their home culture, which could offer them some stability and an imagined space of belonging. Consequently, the dream itself changes and eventually betrays them because in their efforts to accomplish it, they have to renounce a sense of integrity in order to become more socio-politically free, though more culturally liminal Americans. In an interview question about the autobiographical elements in the film *America America* and the relationship of the immigrants with their American dream, Kazan reveals:

I used to say to myself [...] that America was a dream of total freedom in all areas. I made two points about that. One was that America had a responsibility to the dream; the dream

has a responsibility to the dreamer. And furthermore, what these people availed themselves of when they got here, what they turned the dream into, was the freedom to make money. Money became their weapon; it was a symbol of strength. (Young 273)

Interestingly, in his fiction, Kazan shows that money is also a weapon of self-destruction, especially when the individual cannot resist the corrupting forces of a developed western economy and a strongly assimilationist ideology.⁶ The association of the American dream with a dominant capitalist ethos on which personal freedom and happiness depends is exposed and interrogated throughout the three novels. It is true that the conditions of war in the Ottoman Empire are the catalyst for the birth of Stavros's American dream, but Kazan shows that Stavros's Americanization had already begun before he even set his eyes on the first American ship at the docks of Constantinople.⁷ Therefore, Kazan, through Stavros's journey back and forth between Anatolia and America, questions the limits of democracy and proposes the immigrant's rebellion against compromising passivity and societal controls. For Kazan, the dreamer is ultimately the one who controls the fate of the dream, with or despite America, within or beyond America.⁸ The most debilitating irony is that the dreamer may not realize this in time for redemption, in time, that is, to construct a new, alternative narrative of the self within the diaspora.⁹

⁶ Kazan's novel *The Arrangement* is a characteristic example of the author's assault on moral corruption and existential insecurity in modern America as side-effects of the pursuit of capitalism, a false prerequisite of happiness and freedom.

⁷ See Kalogeras about Stavros's "expeditious Americanization" as depicted in the film.

⁸ Georgakas remarks that Kazan's "Anatolian smile masked an ironic blend of contempt and fear as he sought to resolve the tension between the responsibility of the American dream to the immigrant dreamer and the immigrant dreamer to the American dream. In that sense he might be thought of as rebel who could never quite define his cause. Elia Kazan was ever an Anatolian with a lump inside" ("Elia Kazan: The Anatolian").

⁹ For an extensive and illuminating discussion of diaspora, see Butler.

1. *America America: Accepting the Mythology of America*

Fictionalizing his paternal uncle's immigration story and giving his protagonist a name symbolic of the burden carried on the road to redemption both for himself and the others,¹⁰ Kazan begins his fascinating and intricately woven saga with *America America*.¹¹ Published in 1962, at a time when the Civil Rights Movement in the U.S. was acquiring an unprecedented momentum along with a new interest in ethnic and minority literatures, the book introduces its readers to a pre-immigration past, which was probably largely unknown to the majority of his readers. As Yiorgos Kalogeras argues, with this book and the subsequent film, Kazan "re-invented himself as a writer and as an ethnic" (65).

Set in 1896, Ottoman Empire, the book recreates the psychological and historical traumas caused by the discrimination and systematic persecution of the Christian populations. In his characteristic unadorned, sometimes raw, style of directness and savage irony, Kazan follows Stavros's immense task to arrange for the safe removal of his parents, his four brothers and three sisters from Kayseri to Constantinople and finally to New York. The book, which reads like a script-like version of Kazan's most favorite and personal film, also took Kazan "into the dangerous territory of self-reflection" as Kalogeras notes (65), because it made him realize the opportunities and possibilities that Turkey would never have given him, had his father never brought them to America (Kazan, *A Life* 642-43). Essentially, for the first time in his career, Kazan started looking at his ethnicity, regarding it not like a great number of ethnic authors who view it as something sacred that should be revered and kept intact, protected from the contradictory forces of modernization. Kazan's ethnicity thus becomes a path towards critically validating and reclaiming his ethnic past in ways that would help him envision alternative forms of happiness and freedom in the present, that is, it becomes both a cultural blessing and a curse—a dangerous, yet enlightening, territory in-transit, in which the individual should evolve and constantly adapt in a chameleon-like fashion, just like Stavros himself.¹²

Not a "European boy," as the dust jacket of the book claims, but a fiercely angry, perennially curious, and morally unscrupulous twenty-year old Anatolian Greek, Stavros will stop at nothing to fulfill his manic desire to get to America despite "the moral duplicity which this requires" (Rosenbaum 33), continually transforming himself to expedite his purposes.¹³ In spite of being emotionally affected by the rebellious spirit and political anxiety for the future, which drives his Armenian friend, Vartan, to dream of escaping to America and subverting Ottoman rule, Stavros is not ideologically motivated to sacrifice himself in the uprising. Vartan, a former member of

¹⁰ The Greek proper name Stavros is the same as the noun "stavros," which is stressed on the second syllable and means a cross, symbolizing the biblical burden Stavros has to carry not only towards his own sacrifice and self-redemption, but also towards the redemption of his family from Ottoman rule, abuse, and persecution.

¹¹ The release title of the film in Britain was *The Anatolian Smile* (Neve 150).

¹² Stavros seems to carry all the anger that Kazan accumulated since he was brought to the USA "against the Turks, the American kids, Williams College, the fraternities, everybody" (Ciment 15).

¹³ Discussing Kazan's films *America America* and *The Arrangement*, Haden Guest argues: "both films feature decidedly unsympathetic and difficult protagonists, self-made and endlessly self-absorbed men who seem prepared to do anything not only to survive but also to succeed [...] these ruthlessly driven and ultimately selfish characters openly embody and enact the very negative qualities often ascribed to Kazan himself" (190).

the Turkish army, throws himself into certain death when he desperately attacks the Turkish officers who have trapped people inside an Armenian church in order to burn them alive, thus, teaching them a lesson in subservience. Witnessing his friend's murder, Stavros deems him a hero, but, apparently, it takes more than that to make the young Greek a political or social rebel.¹⁴ Interestingly, Stavros's political awakening aims at the pursuit of his personal interests and the protection of his self-pride, not at a communally-shared expression of shame and a subsequent common urge to resist life on the margins, battle expulsion, and finally flee the unfolding war.

Stavros's Anatolian smile and his extreme ego are his only weapons to gain recognition and create the opportunities to rise above his class and above his own perceived limitations, and pave his way for, and to, America. Being marginalized gives him the exact tools to combat ethnic discrimination and social injustice both at home and later in America. Although some critics see Stavros as a static character, Kazan really admired and defended his protagonist, when, talking about the film, he remarked that Stavros grows slowly, sacrificing "more and more of himself, to do anything. That is, he starts out as a very 'pure' and father-morality-ridden boy, and gradually he gets clipped of all his sense of worth. So he's left with his obsession, but without his character. In other words, the film is about what it *costs* to become an American" (Byron 152, emphasis in the original).¹⁵ The book, just like the film, is also about what it costs to be an ethnic Ottoman minority before becoming an equally obscure, or at least liminal, American one.

With the nickname "America, America" (*America America* 102), an incantatory echo of Stavros's double self, uttered with scorn by the other *hamals* in Constantinople, Stavros spots the emblem of his freedom in the form of the American flag on a ship. From this moment until the end of the trilogy, the ship embodies Stavros's space and narrative of homelessness, or his home-in-transit, always unattainable, always reinvented, always interstitial. As a symbol of cross-geographical and cross-cultural movement, the ship gives Stavros the opportunity to be re-born, as he says to his would-be fiancée, by escaping shame: "I believe . . . I believe that . . . that in America . . . I believe I will be washed clean" (159). However, it is after his non-aggressive tubercular Armenian friend, Hohanness Gardashian, jumps into the sea on the journey to the Promised Land in order to put an end to his terminal condition that Stavros's American dream is reinforced. Adopting his dead friend's name, Stavros can now safely disembark and undauntedly envision America's potential to exonerate him from his sins, which include murdering a Turk and becoming the love toy of a married woman for passage money. Even so, such redemption will not be possible without the mask of the Anatolian smile. Just as W. E. B. Du Bois's concept of double consciousness, which suggests "new forms of cultural fusion as part of the necessary transformation of a misguided society" (Wilson 17), the Anatolian smile is a form of insight,

¹⁴ As Kalogeras claims, "Stavros's passage to political awareness reflects a process of working through not with revolutionary politics. His behavior is not determined by a politicization founded on his awareness of minority oppression" (69).

¹⁵ On his way to Constantinople, Stavros is swindled by a cunning Turk, who challenges Stavros's patience by saying to him: "'we Turks are primitive, while you Greeks are civilized. I envy you. You have learned how to bear misfortune, swallow insult and indignity, and still smile. I truly envy you'" (*America America* 81). Stavros kills him on his path to self-determination and freedom.

discovery, and cultural mediation, a strategically orchestrated means of secret empowerment and a simultaneous recognition of social disenfranchisement. What appears to others as concession is a masked repudiation of exclusion and prejudice in diaspora.

Witnessing the Ellis Island officials being bribed by his new boss and with his dead friend's name, Stavros is "baptized again. And without benefit of clergy" (*America America* 185). At that moment, he realizes that America may not actually be that different from Anatolia in terms of sociopolitical intolerance and discrimination against undervalued and dispossessed individuals like himself.¹⁶ Crossing Anatolia on the road away from war, and in an exhibition of naïve nonchalance, Stavros's last smile before stepping on American soil is "superior and determined, half scorn, half affection, unswayable" (179). Before kissing the ground, not as a "returning national hero"¹⁷ but as a promising new American, he bursts into an ironic, skeptical, victorious, and condescending laughter, which uncovers his conviction that he has kept his sense of moral principles intact. His cry of joy also testifies to his realization that freedom and security are largely contingent upon one's determination to put one's self-interests over what is commonly good, honorable, and socially and culturally non-disruptive and legitimate. So, according to Kazan, in order for immigrants to belong to America, they should learn to live within another sort of war, one between their real self, which may resent and resist absorption to the dominant culture and society, and that of their public image, which competes for an equal and unambiguous membership in American identity and ideology of white supremacy even if this means betraying one's moral principles.¹⁸ Perhaps this is Kazan's idea about the cost of redemption.

2. *The Anatolian: The Lures of Capitalism*

The definite break Stavros has caused in the family's historical continuity and internal unity by his immigration to America and his subsequent determination to bring them over¹⁹ escalates in *The Anatolian* (1982). The book spans a decade from 1909-1919, during which Stavros's family experiences the irreparable ruptures and tormenting tribulations of diasporic life in the New World, which undergoes great demographic developments and unprecedented economic growth. The war continues—but on new territorial grounds and with new rules. Notably, the book is dedicated to "The Unredeemed," a term used for those Greeks outside Greece proper

¹⁶ See Kalogeras 70.

¹⁷ See Malkki 55.

¹⁸ At the end of the book, Stavros has already thrown away his *hamal's* harness on Ellis Island and is wearing a straw hat, which his Armenian-American lover has sent him, as a symbol of the class he is hoping to enter. Later, on American ground, we see Stavros wearing the same hat while expertly serving his customers at a shoeshine parlor in New York. In the film, the same scene is depicted with a black boy who is trying to solicit customers, but who is pushed away by the Greek owner of the parlor. Toni Morrison regards this scene as "race talk," which, for her, is the "most enduring and efficient rite of passage into American culture" as it includes "negative appraisals of the native-born black population," which the immigrants, as depicted in popular culture, condone in order to be allowed to belong to white America. When later Stavros owns his own shoe parlor, he exhibits the same attitude as his first boss and treats his Greek boys from Bulgaria in a totally dehumanizing way, calling them "*vlast*, stupid Greeks," "turds [...] like animals" (*The Anatolian*, emphasis in the original 63).

¹⁹ Because, as Stavros says, "For everyone that is able to get here, there is a fresh start" (*America America* 188).

who had not been freed yet from foreign rule. The term could also apply to those immigrants in America, like Stavros, who might continue sacrificing their personal dignity and relinquishing their home culture, wearing thus a metaphoric fez, without openly acknowledging the ethical losses incurred and without critically examining American identity and the ideology of its exceptionalism. Positing as a cultural mediator who re-imagines, subverts, and re-articulates aspects of his ethnic heritage largely unknown to an English-speaking public, Kazan places a large part of the responsibility for self-redemption on the “unredeemed” themselves, especially those who cannot conceive of alternative ways of sociocultural resistance or convergence because they cannot reinvent themselves anew in diaspora despite and beyond their new Americanized names or citizenship.

With twelve years of wretchedness and incessant exhaustion from hard work in the Promised Land, completely disillusioned, but always haunted by his father’s exhortation that “if you don’t allow yourself to feel it, shame doesn’t exist” (*The Anatolian* 6), Stavros builds his own doctrine of financial success and individual freedom, which never directly resists the assimilationist demands of America. At the same time, he does not really seem to be “a young king of a transplanted family,” as the narrator sarcastically pronounces him (30), but a “condemned man” (27) since, on the one hand, he has taken over the duty to safeguard their home traditions and ethnic practices under the pressures of modernization, and, on the other, he has to translate, and so re-invent, America for his family in order to, he hopes, help them adjust to their new environment. Insisting that they learn English and, above all, learn to play with the rules of capitalism, Stavros, a self-proclaimed new “capitalist” (64), warns them that the only way to survive in America—or “America America” as he calls it—is to instill in others power and fear (64).²⁰ Admirable for his social flexibility and moral readjustments, Stavros again uses the weapons used against him for his own personal advancement, without feeling any particular connection to other immigrants, nor, apparently, needing their emotional or practical support. When confronted with American middle-class hypocrisy, moral emptiness, and insatiable love for money, Stavros conveniently and temporarily takes pride in his Anatolian origins and cultural superiority although by now he has already been largely estranged from his initial American dream. In a highly ironic mode, Kazan underlines that ethnicity should be approached and used in a realistically constructive but not a self-serving way. Ethnicity for Kazan should remain an open and flexible form of identification, malleable to suit one’s needs, but not abused when performed in a dishonest way.

Stavros’s desperate and often violent efforts to apply an Anatolia-fashioned moral order inside the home while endorsing the capitalist work ethic outside are likely to collapse due to the incommensurability of the two sociopolitical and cultural systems he simultaneously inhabits. His Anatolian smile is now transfigured and disfigured by the dream of money, lots of money, not only to escape impoverishment and exclusion but to empower himself as a new American

²⁰ As Stavros explains to one of his brothers: “Everybody cheat everybody in this country. Same like Turkey. You will see” (*The Anatolian* 65).

citizen. Following his family's arrival in America, Stavros explains to them how this new war needs to be fought:

[...] Because in America the story is work. Work is the life here. Because of that there is hope that one day we will be rich. When you have money here, it's stronger than guns and powder. [...] Money is their cannon here. We will earn it and it will protect us." (*The Anatolian* 29)

Later, in a heated conversation with his mother, he confesses: "I want to be American. [...] I want to be powerful. I want to be an American. I want to be rich. I want to be an American. I want to be boss in this world" (69). Having opened a family store, prominently decorated with an American flag, Stavros, also known in the rug business as "Arness the Anatolian" or "Joe the Hamal" (222), has turned into a far more arrogant, opportunistic, and disagreeable person, always attracted to what he does not have, be it money, power, or blond American girls, always bitter and lonely, always dissatisfied and insecure, always seeking a place of comfort and safety, a place to call "home." It is no surprise that Stavros idolizes, secretly envies, and is impressed by a cosmopolitan, post-ethnic, rich expatriate: his intimidating, ruthless, and shrewd Armenian boss, who never talks of his two sons and wife killed during the Armenian massacres by the Ottomans in 1896.

Mr. Fernand Sarrafian, his Anatolian elderly boss, sneers at the idea of justice, patriotism, and liberty, dresses his deteriorating frailty of age in luxury, and can shamelessly befriend any government whose policies suit his business tactics in war profiteering. The narrator sarcastically describes him as a "perfumed nomad" (*The Anatolian* 131), whose philosophy is encapsulated within his two favorite mottos "Trust no man, no government, no god" and "'Don't worry' [...] 'Things will turn around bad'" (279). Belonging to the class of privileged immigrants, Mr. Fernand is the only one who agitates Stavros and makes him wonder about the meaning of his new life in America, disorienting him further from his plan of self-redemption and alienating him from his family. For his boss and Stavros, who imitates the Armenian's cynical ideology, impeccable appearance, and aloof attitude, the war is a great opportunity for business profit provided that they take full advantage of the political turmoil and economic chaos in Anatolia before the Germans do. Having convinced his boss that he is the most suitable and fearless person to enter what is familiar territory for him, and believing that "'War is business. Big wars big business'" (141) because war is "continuous, never stops, and is alternately commercial and military, then military and commercial" (333), Stavros transforms his American dream into a self-motivated idiosyncratic Anatolian dream of sheer profit and ruthless exploitation of the dejected and impoverished people back home.

When Greece declares war on Turkey in 1917, Stavros fiercely objects to his brother, Michaelis, enlisting to fight in Turkey: "I'm speaking to you as a hamal now. I carried the rich merchants' loads until I envied the donkeys. But I didn't make the money, they did. Patriotism is something the rich invented. There are no patriotic hamals; they have no reason to go to war, to

fight each other” (*The Anatolian* 189). Later, discussing the idea of a Greater Greece and its political and commercial background with his conniving boss, Stavros, who loves calling himself an animal, emphasizing his instinct for survival and his ability to endure all kinds of hardships, frankly admits:

“You know I’m not damn Greek.” [...] “An Anatolian—who knows what he is? As much as a Turk maybe. I am also citizen here. But for practical reasons. I am not an American.”
 “Then what would you call yourself?”
 “A nothing. A man like you, with no country. A hamal, that’s me. My only interest is—my own interests.” (351)

Having been a *hamal* for two years in Constantinople taught Stavros how to suffer physical pain, disgrace, humiliation, social invisibility, and extreme loneliness while trying to retain a level of sanity and self-respect. It also taught him that love for one’s nation and culture is an idiotic, and potentially dangerous, myth because the dispossessed constitute a special class beyond national borders and ethnic boundaries, always inhabiting the spaces in-between cultural, social, and political zones. His failure to become the American he wanted to be, that is rich, powerful, and boss in this world (69), reinforces Stavros’s conviction that survival and belonging in the jungle called America means stripping oneself of any democratic ideal, national attachment, and familial duty while turning a deaf ear to the pangs of conscience. The goal is to remain alive and hopefully gain some momentary happiness and recognition by others. The survival of the fittest dictates a new moral code, which is expediency regardless of the price to be paid.

Having toiled twenty long years in America and always self-conscious of his position as an outsider,²¹ Stavros realizes he made a tragic mistake by bringing his family to America, and quite impulsively decides to travel back home in 1919 in order to implement what the narrator calls his “invasion,” his commercial conquest, as a shrewd, competent, and cold-hearted American capitalist (*The Anatolian* 493), and not as a diasporic returnee, who takes the trip back in order to get in touch with one’s cultural roots. However, Kazan has Stavros perform an inconsistent and confusing double role, which is unsurprisingly doomed to fail because it forcefully tries to combine two irreconcilable strivings. Stavros begins thinking and behaving like an unredeemed Anatolian²² after being shot at by Mr. Morgan, a xenophobic employee at Mr. Fernand’s business and his American lover’s father. Stavros is miraculously saved by a Greek Anatolian guerilla, who had come to him for protection, acting spontaneously and selflessly, covering Stavros with his own body (304). So, towards the end of the book, Stavros seems to have intuitively bonded with his Anatolian roots again, dreaming of old world values, clearly defined

²¹ In a very emotional talk, Stavros blurts out to his mother “I don’t want to fight all the time, Mommah. Twenty years I work. My whole life. But this country belong to the people it belong to. Why should they give me part of what they have? Meantime, I have no life here, no happiness! [...] I am nothing here. A foreigner with a small business! Push, struggle, sweat!” (*The Anatolian* 193).

²² At an event organized to convince the Americans to donate to the cause for a Greater Greece, Stavros publicly proclaims: “I am one of the unredeemed. I am an Anatolian. [...] separated from our home country” (*The Anatolian* 409).

patriarchal gender roles, and closely-knit family ties, which, he thinks, have all been contaminated by progressive America, a too-civilized country for him, as the narrator sarcastically notes.²³ In a naturalistic scene, Stavros is approaching Anatolia on a ship, with the narrator commenting that perhaps you cannot escape heredity, you cannot change who you are, and you cannot refashion your fate:

Facing the unknown, he was humbled. [...] Here he was again, seeking redemption, throwing himself at the land where he's been born and raised, to help redeem it and so redeem himself. That was his hope and his faith. [...] It never occurred to Stavros that it might be too late. (500)

3. *Beyond the Aegean: War and the Dream's Rebirth*

Resuming exactly where *The Anatolian* has left off, *Beyond the Aegean* (1994), also translated in Greek, is Kazan's last work of fiction and the most adventurous, intense, and complicated novel of the three. Establishing the historical background of the war before the actual beginning of the novel, Kazan announces his aim to write historical fiction based on well-researched and possibly unknown details about the war. Without sanctifying either the Turkish or the Greek Anatolian culture, Kazan masterfully and realistically fictionalizes the darkest moments of the Asia Minor catastrophe, laying bare its inner workings and reprehensible truths for all parties involved. As Kalogeras argues about the film *America America*, Kazan's "intentions are not to develop a narrative of lost Greek lands, of national victimization as some have claimed" (67). At the same time, Kazan complicates Stavros's role and character further, having him dangerously participate in key historical moments that will determine the outcome of the war, such as his meeting with the Greek prime minister and the Greek king, as well as his ferociously resolute effort to, unsuccessfully, prevent the lynching of the Archbishop of Smyrna by a wildly vengeful mob. What is more, in this book Stavros constantly oscillates between his American and his Anatolian status,²⁴ conveniently and smoothly shifting between his masked identities without any remorse or sense of obligation towards anybody, and most importantly, towards himself. For instance, while the Greek army is advancing victoriously, Stavros cloaks his fervent Greek nationalism (the *Megali Idea*) of a new state in control of Turkey with the rhetoric of democratic egalitarianism in order to impress the local Turkish official, the *wali*, and the admiring crowd. In a demonstration of kindness and moral grandeur, as paradigmatic of the benevolent invading nation, Stavros proclaims:

²³ "Oh, how he wanted to go back to Anatolia, where you could tell when a man wanted to rob you because he showed you his knife or pulled his pistol out of his belt! And where women stayed in the kitchen! He hadn't been home in twenty-two years. Well, soon he would be" (*The Anatolian* 486).

²⁴ Kazan writes before the actual novel begins: "The Turkish nation, over whose body this struggle was to be fought, was too weak to protect itself against the invasion" while "The Greeks believed it was not an invasion but a reclaiming of land that was historically and rightfully theirs. Their plan was to create a Greater Greece, a state that would reestablish their small country with its minimal resources as a world power [...] Their landing would be a foothold, the first step of a great campaign and conquest" (n.p.).

Now we've come here to make a new state [...] a new state where there will be justice and peace and where everyone can live as they do in America, without fear [...] we must work together now. [...] You can't kill all the Greeks, we can't kill all the Turks. Also we have Kurds, Armenians, Jews, Arabs, and all the children of Islam. We have to find a way to live together. (52)

Stavros's colonizing vision of building in Turkey a multicultural democracy that will be founded on political harmony, non-discrimination, and a communally approved and exercised work ethic based on the American model is aimed at deceiving, exploiting, and revenging his former oppressors. Indeed, far from embracing such democratic model but, as a self-indulgent and ambitious Western conqueror of what he clearly views as a backward and barbaric nation of gullible and naïve people, Stavros now tries to invest in selling the same hopes with which the promise of America at first inspired him to transplant himself and his family in the New World more than two decades earlier. At the same time, feeling more aggrieved, distressed, and devastated than ever before because of his loneliness and lack of attention from his former American lover, Stavros is dreaming that the Greeks "can make Anatolia into our America" by offering "meat and bread" to the Turks to keep them under leash (92). He cleverly camouflages his secret plan to prey on the poverty-stricken locals in order to increase his capital, put his humiliating, dark *hamal* days in America behind him, and, simultaneously, redeem himself of the profound guilt of believing in the masked power of the Anatolian smile. He finally, and embarrassingly, admits that the smile has betrayed him, however, he fails to see his own definitive role in such betrayal. As Stavros confesses to his brother Michaelis, who is preparing to take part in the war in Smyrna: "Anatolian people don't fight wars. They let other people shoot each other" doing it "Without blood. We are Anatolians, not Turks. We are Anatolian Greeks, not Americans. We do our work in another style. [...] To kill with no blood on your hands, they call that civilization. How to do that is Mr. Fernand's specialty. What is his weapon? Money" (76).

Kazan castigates nationalism and capitalism, viewing them both as interrelated evils and corrupting agents that equally, systematically, and resolutely poison and victimize both conquerors and conquered. On the other hand, he presents the "Great Idea" as an initially laudable patriotic dream aimed to free the unredeemed ethnic Greeks in Anatolia, but a dream that was soon infected by foreign involvement and ill-fated, dreadfully poor political decisions on the part of the Greek government. That is why Kazan, in a rather inelegant, yet powerfully effective narrative choice, leaves his protagonist literally stranded in a country where chaos and disorder prevail and where he has no choice but to put on his *hamal* identity²⁵ again, as well as

²⁵ "A *hamal* keeps his eyes to the ground, shows no bias or allegiance. Stooped under his burden, he trots with little donkey steps—tuk, tuk, tuk, tuk—then again—tuk, tuk, tuk, tuk. [...] There is a knife in his belt. A *hamal*'s eyes don't connect with those of other humans, who are nothing but obstacles in his path; a *hamal* is indifferent to other creatures. His model is a donkey. No more than that beast does he show a reaction to what's going on. [...] A *hamal* doesn't have reactions a donkey would not have. For instance, he has neither pity nor horror. He is indifferent to it all" (383).

whatever “mask” is offered to him by the given circumstances. As the doomed national plan to free the unredeemed fails, leaving them dead or homeless, so is Stavros left to be always occupying liminal, indeterminate, and fragile positions, marred by violence, pain, and loss.

A series of incredibly fortunate as well as utterly atrocious events bring Stavros on the verge of death more than once, and most importantly, encourage him to overlook his self-interests and validate his emotional and sociopolitical connection to other Anatolian Greeks in a quite unexpected and possibly unconvincing way. At the same time, Kazan makes us witness the rise and terrible fall of the Greek nationalist dream and its unavoidable consequences; the reduction of patriotic ideology to dangerous propaganda by the official Greek state; the devastating end of Smyrna and the extermination of its Christian population by the forces of Mustafa Kemal; the awful plight and fateful death of the refugees as the result of the failed “Great Idea;” the brutal irrationality of ethnic cleansing and the detrimental effects of war for all sides involved; the commercial games of international forces at the expense of the innocent people in the politically weaker nations; and, amidst all these, the ramifications of the rediscovery of one’s connection and duty to their home culture and roots. Remarkably, once the Greek army begins to suffer defeat and Stavros is afraid of his brother Michaelis’s life, he becomes more actively engaged with the war, for still particularly selfish reasons. At this self-awakening moment, Stavros starts perceiving his own fate as firmly grafted to the fate of the “Great Idea,” as the narrator underlines: “Anatolia had to be saved; the danger had to be met. Everything Stavros had in the world was here, everything he owned, what was left of his family, his dearest memories, his hopes” (183).

Overwhelmed by the despair, desertion, and death he encounters on his way deep into the unfamiliar eastern territory where he carries out his business transactions, Stavros feels equally betrayed by the Allies and the Greek officials’ appalling lack of concern for the innocent victims and the dispirited Greek soldiers. Suddenly, Stavros renounces his moral duty towards his home again and is fully determined to save his own skin as well as offer a safe escape to the Anatolian Greek woman he intends to marry. Conveniently, he resorts to his American identity and his position as a successful businessman to ask, hiding his despair, the same Ottoman governor, the *wali*, whom he had earlier denigrated shamelessly, to offer him protection. The *wali* aptly accuses Stavros of being a cunning pseudo-American, who is trying to corrupt Turkish people by flaunting his American dollars, and characterizes him as “Mr. Greek-American-Anatolian Businessman Efendi” (250). This thoroughly fitting and deeply ironic title given to Stavros epitomizes the heterogeneity, unpredictability, and discontinuity of diasporic identity as well as the problem of articulating one’s complex location within multiple and overlapping spheres of subject positions and power relations. Stavros ends up beaten and naked like a crawling animal, barely resembling the “man who had come to Smyrna to help create a ‘Greater Greece’” (380). Being miraculously lifted on an American warship from the bloody waters of burning Smyrna, Stavros has no choice but to abandon both his home and his Americanized Anatolian dream, swallowing his Anatolian smile of cultural pride and moral superiority.

Still, the dream goes on. Compelled by his feelings of guilt towards the refugees, Stavros sets up small rug factories and closely-knit communities for the refugees who arrive in large numbers in Athens.²⁶ Five years later, he has managed to fulfill his new dream of creating, what he names as, “a little piece of America here in Athens” (446). In a peculiar twist of fate though, the promise of unlimited freedom and self-redemption that America initially propelled Stavros’s immigration is now made real in Greece, not because the famous cradle of democracy allows it, but because Stavros enthusiastically makes it happen, albeit within an enclosed group of uprooted and marginalized Anatolians. His American dream is thus reformulated in Greece as a more pragmatic dream of sociopolitical justice, financial independence, equal partnership, and solidarity among members of a refugee community, a dream completely at variance with the more self-oriented and idealistic plan with which Stavros embarked on his first trip to the New World. However, it is the victims of the Greco-Turkish war that enable the approximation of Stavros’s vision of a democratic, unprejudiced, and progressive society and his, by now utopian, dream of self-redemption. Only through engaging in the daily “war” of hard work and innumerable challenges of life in the periphery of America, and only through the anguish and pain of the actual war in Anatolia, can Stavros finally reassemble and reassess his past traumas, and become fully aware of the fact that he could have changed his life, that the dreamer is also responsible towards the dream.

When, on one of his trips, Stavros finds himself in Constantinople again, he lacks most of his prior anger and passion, and he has established his permanent home in his favorite sofa, which travels with him everywhere he goes. As a synecdochic representation of a home, the sofa connotes temporary rest and repose, unlike the safer and longer rest of a bed. The sofa also functions as a subversive symbol of the impossibility of any sort of sociocultural permanence in his life; a symbol that, by its very existence, illuminates the unattainability of belonging and the constructed, illusory idea of redemption due to its placeless, ambiguous state. Realizing, as the narrator says, that “He had nothing to live for” and feeling “lonely as a ghost,” Stavros finds his life meaningless as he “left himself with nothing—no family, no mistress, no business, no employees” (446-47). Remembering his hopes that in America he would be washed clean, Stavros discovers that “America America [...] was not the country for that,” and, as the narrator declares, “Nor was he a man capable of self-purification” (447). While walking the streets, Stavros recites an old Turkish verse “*Geldi, getti*,” which means “he came, he left,” accompanied by the old *hamal* rhythm of his steps, tuk, tuk, tuk (449, emphasis in the original). Stavros’s life has come full circle. Announcing soon afterwards to his fellow poker players that he is happy, Stavros bursts into a self-mocking laughter of bitter regret that hides his self-accusation. His characteristic Anatolian smile, which has saved him from numerous life-threatening and

²⁶ Stavros is deeply shaken by the condition of the refugees in Greece, who are mostly despised by the locals and members of the government alike. It is for them that Stavros urgently demands in cash his share of the rug business he has built with Mr. Fernand, saying to his business partners: “There are a million souls in Greece today [...] Refugees, the lucky ones who got out before the Turk came. Some of them are the people who wove the rugs that made us rich. Their fingers have not forgotten. [...] All we have to do is give each family the yarn, the dyes, and the patterns we want. [...] Maybe we can save our souls by saving their lives” (418).

disgraceful situations in various forms of private or shared oppression, finally and abruptly fades into a caricature of itself. In this utterly theatrical moment, the idea of America as the land of unlimited promise collapses under the force of the self-tormenting awareness of one's tragically limited possibilities in life.

Conclusion: Insurmountable Chasms of Dream and Reality

If the mark of a good historical novel is to see “the present by looking at the past (and vice-versa)” (Devanport 646),²⁷ *Beyond the Aegean* succeeds in fictionalizing a war that killed more than one million people and created hundreds of thousands of refugees, and transfiguring it into a medium through which Stavros’s present is exposed like an open wound beyond healing. In a blatantly realistic, morally unguarded, and directly overpowering style, Kazan penetrates the mysteries of his protagonist’s Anatolian culture, often sympathizes with him, but also attacks him mercilessly. Had it not been for Stavros’s return home, not as *nostos*, but as the implementation of his capitalist dream, he would never have awoken himself to his moral commitment towards the ethnic group of his origins, he would never have been so passionately involved with the war, and he would not have risked his life to heroically prevent the Asia Minor catastrophe; thus, he would never have realized that he had spent all this life rebelling against nothing. The disturbing irony is that this realization comes too late, proving Stavros’s deplorable inability to be responsible towards his dream, at least not responsible within the conventions of the “American dream,” in that his realization comes upon a return to the land he had escaped to fulfill or pursue a dream. Yiorgos Anagnostou remarks that ethnics may fail “to translate their own historical experience of marginalization into a progressive usable past” (157). For Kazan, Stavros has failed to embrace his ethnic past in a way that would validate his struggles as an immigrant and enable his individual progress.

Talking in an interview about his film *Viva Zapata!*, Kazan said that John Steinbeck and he “were interested in [a] tragic dilemma: after you get power, after you make a revolution, what do you do with the power and what kind of a structure do you build?” (Ciment 88). In Kazan’s Anatolian trilogy, Stavros makes a revolution and acquires immense power only to defeat himself with his own duplicity, his own Anatolian smile, his chameleon identity. Not having the ability, nor perhaps the desire, to construct for himself a fixed and secure place to call home, Stavros will always be deprived of happiness, and will keep fighting, or denying, his other self.²⁸ Contrary to the biblical story associated with his name, he will never succeed in rescuing and reclaiming himself fully. In a way, he will always see the *hamal* in himself, carrying his own as well as others’ burdens in order to barely survive. Having endured the terrors of real and

²⁷ Gary Devanport argues that although Kazan has “a brilliant and dramatic (or really cinematic) sense of scene,” “he is not always able to generate that sense of identity between past and present that makes for a genuine historical novel” (649).

²⁸ Bharati Mukherjee writes that “Immigration holds too many secrets, too many memories, and too many enemies for standard judgment” as it involves cutting oneself off “from history” and condemning “oneself to a world of ghosts and memories. It is to admit that having survived terror and poverty means nothing. It is to submit to a present in which past nightmares are continually relived” (689).

psychological war, both in Anatolia and in America, Kazan's protagonist ultimately fails to redeem himself because he has made war his home; perhaps more enigmatically, his state of ongoing internal war constitutes an eternal liminality that undermines any ability to create the stability deriving from conventions of belonging, something he has learned in his pursuit of an American Dream. For Kazan, the chasm between one's dream and one's life as it is can never be surmounted.

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