ELIA KAZAN (b. 7 September, 1909, Constantinople, Turkey; d. 28 September, 2003, New York, USA)

Elia Kazan is arguably one of the most influential directors of midcentury mainstream America. Kazan is renowned for his introduction of the Moscow Art Theatre’s Method Acting into American film and theatre, his semi-documentary style of shooting on location, and a thematic variance that “reflects changes and tensions in the national culture” (Neve 2) of the United States. His nineteen-film oeuvre continues to exert great influence in its pioneering of cinematic Realism.

Kazan’s career can be divided into two parts: his socially conscious films before his testimony in front of HUAC (House Un-American Activities Committee), and those after that reflect on its traumatic effect on his life as an artist and person. Nevertheless, an unforgiving dedication to contemporary social and political dilemmas resonates throughout his films: *Gentleman’s Agreement (*1947) deals with anti-Semitism, his masterpiece *On the Waterfront* (1954) concerns workers rights, and his adaptation of John Steinbeck’s *East of Eden* (1955) focuses on the modern American familial crisis. After the successful staging of plays by Tennessee Williams and Arthur Miller, Kazan’s film adaptation of Williams’ play in *A Streetcar Named Desire* (1951) further cemented his reputation as a dramaturge and actors’ director. Kazan’s long-take style of shooting, corroborated by an acute attention to mise en scène, grants a suspenseful yet clear atmosphere to the rather simple diegeses in all his films.

**References and Further reading:**

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Schickel, Richard. (2006) *Elia Kazan: A Biography*. New York: Harper Perennial.

Kazan, Elia. (1997) *Elia Kazan: A Life*. New York: Da Capo Press.

**Selected Filmography**

*America, America* (1963)

*Baby Doll (*1956)

*East of Eden* (1955)

*On the Waterfront* (1954)

*Viva Zapata!* (1952)

*A Streetcar Named Desire* (1951)

*Panic in the Streets* (1950)

*Pinky* (1949)

*Gentleman's Agreement* (1947)

***Paratextual Material***

* VIDEO: Look at the documentary, *A Letter to Elia* (2010), directed by Martin Scorsese and Kent Jones for Episode 6, Season 24 of the *American Masters* series on PBS: (<http://www.pbs.org/wnet/americanmasters/episodes/elia-kazan/about-elia-kazan/642/>)
* SOUND: Listen to critic John Powers’ comments on Kazan’s film and career on NPR: (<http://www.npr.org/2010/11/11/131250803/-elia-kazan-collection-a-must-have-for-film-fans_>
* POSTER: See the posters of a few Kazan classics, along with his full bio, on *Turner Classic Movies’* entry on Elia Kazan: (http://www.tcm.com/tcmdb/person/99584%7C46252/Elia-Kazan/biography.html)

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