



Elia Kazan: A Life

By Elia Kazan

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“This is the best autobiography I’ve read by a prominent American in I don’t know how many years. It is endlessly absorbing and I believe this is because it concerns a man who is looking to find a coherent philosophy that will be tough enough to contain all that is ugly in his person and his experience, yet shall prove sufficiently compassionate to give honest judgment on himself and others. Somehow, the author brings this off. *Elia Kazan: A Life* has that candor of confession which is possible only when the deepest wounds have healed and honesty can achieve what honesty so rarely arrives at—a rich and hearty flavor. By such means, a famous director has written a book that offers the kind of human wealth we find in a major novel.” —Norman Mailer

In this amazing autobiography, Kazan at seventy-eight brings to the undiluted telling of his story—and revelation of himself—all the passion, vitality, and truth, the almost outrageous honesty, that have made him so formidable a stage director (*A Streetcar Named Desire*, *Death of a Salesman*, *All My Sons*, *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof*, *Tea and Sympathy*), film director (*On the Waterfront*, *East of Eden*, *Gentleman’s Agreement*, *Splendor in the Grass*, *Baby Doll*, *The Last Tycoon*, *A Face in the Crowd*), and novelist (the number-one best-seller *The Arrangement*.)

Kazan gives us his sense of himself as an outsider (a Greek rug merchant’s son born in Turkey, an immigrant’s son raised in New York and educated at Williams College). He takes us into the almost accidental sojourn at the Yale Drama School that triggered his commitment to theatre, and his edgy, exciting apprenticeship with the new and astonishing Group Theatre, as stagehand and stage manager—and as actor (*Waiting for Lefty*, *Golden Boy*) . . . his first nervous and then successful attempts at directing for theatre and movies (*The Skin of Our Teeth*, *A Tree Grows in Brooklyn*) . . . his return to New York to co-found the Actors Studio (and his long and ambivalent relationship with Lee Strasberg) . . . his emergence as premier director on both coasts.

With his director’s eye for the telling scene, Kazan shares the joys and complications of production, his unique insights on acting, directing, and producing. He makes us feel the close presence of the actors, producers, and writers he’s worked with—James Dean, Marlon Brando, Tennessee Williams, Vivien Leigh, Tallulah Bankhead, Sam Spiegel, Darryl Zanuck, Harold Clurman, Arthur Miller, Budd Schulberg, James Baldwin, Clifford Odets, and John

Steinbeck among them. He gives us a frank and affectionate portrait of Marilyn Monroe. He talks with startling candor about himself as husband and—in the years where he obsessively sought adventure outside marriage—as lover. For the first time, he discusses his Communist Party years and his wrenching decision in 1952 to be a cooperative witness before HUAC. He writes about his birth as a writer.

The pace and organic drama of his narrative, his grasp of the life and politics of Broadway and Hollywood, the keenness with which he observes the men and women and worlds around him, and, above all, the honest with which he pursues and captures his own essence, make this one of the most fascinating autobiographies of our time.

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Editorial Review

Amazon.com Review

One of the most important theater autobiographies of the 1980s, *Elia Kazan: A Life*, has finally been released in paperback. The extra decade adds to the book's poignancy and its value: a history of backstage personalities and politics in the 20th century is included in this release. Elia Kazan was a founding member of the Group Theatre, was among those shouting "Strike! Strike!" on the legendary opening night of *Waiting for Lefty*, directed the two greatest Broadway dramas ever--*Death of the Salesman* and *A Streetcar Named Desire*--and earned countless other credits, but he also played a flawed role in the greatest real-life moral drama of his era: the McCarthy Communist witch hunts of the 1950s. Kazan offered names to the House Un-American Activities Committee. He cut his conscience to fit the fashion of the time, and his conscience continues to bleed. Though this book is framed, like so much of Kazan's best stage and film work, as a lifelong search for man's proper relationship to society, the book serves as a massive explanation and apologia for Kazan's one monumental lapse. He lived his life intensely, a life in which a single word could transform you, where a misdeed might be "never forgotten or forgiven." Such were the times, and Kazan captures them with appropriate drama.

From Publishers Weekly

According to PW, "flashes of sudden insight or eloquence keep the reader turning the pages of Kazan's garrulous autobiography." His expansive memoir makes no apologies for his decision to name names during the McCarthy era, and includes cutting portraits of Lillian Hellman and Arthur Miller, as well as glimpses of Odets, Cagney, Bankhead, Monroe, Brando, Goldwyn and dozens more. Photos.

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From Library Journal

Noted director Kazan has written a candid account of his amazing life. After years of struggle to be an actor, Kazan found his theatrical forte in directing. In the 1940s he was the toast of both Broadway and Hollywood, with such productions as *A Streetcar Named Desire* and *Death of a Salesman*, and films such as *East of Eden*. The 1950s brought problems with the House Un-American Activities Committee, with which he cooperated (in a controversial decision) after much soul-searching. Kazan is frank about his constant extramarital affairs. Most fascinating are the characterizations of friends such as Arthur Miller, Tennessee Williams, etc. Overlong, perhaps, but always interesting, this is an important addition to collections. Marcia L. Perry, Berkshire Athenaeum, Pittsfield, Mass.

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Users Review

From reader reviews:

Regina Rodgers:

Do you have favorite book? Should you have, what is your favorite's book? E-book is very important thing for us to be aware of everything in the world. Each guide has different aim or goal; it means that reserve has different type. Some people really feel enjoy to spend their the perfect time to read a book. They may be reading whatever they acquire because their hobby is usually reading a book. Think about the person who don't like studying a book? Sometime, person feel need book when they found difficult problem or exercise. Well, probably you should have this *Elia Kazan: A Life*.

Louise Schmidt:

The ability that you get from Elia Kazan: A Life may be the more deep you looking the information that hide in the words the more you get serious about reading it. It does not mean that this book is hard to comprehend but Elia Kazan: A Life giving you enjoyment feeling of reading. The author conveys their point in a number of way that can be understood by anyone who read it because the author of this e-book is well-known enough. This kind of book also makes your own personal vocabulary increase well. It is therefore easy to understand then can go along, both in printed or e-book style are available. We advise you for having this specific Elia Kazan: A Life instantly.

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William Lyons:

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