



# Elia Kazan: A Biography

*Richard Schickel*

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## **Elia Kazan: A Biography** Richard Schickel

From the late forties through the sixties, Elia Kazan was the most important and influential director in America, and the only one who managed simultaneously to dominate both theater and film. In that role he manifestly shaped the conception and writing, as well as the presentation, of many of the period's iconic works, reshaping the values of the stage and bringing a new realism and intensity of performance to the screen. His various achievements include the original Broadway productions of *The Skin of Our Teeth*, *All My Sons*, and *Death of a Salesman* and such Hollywood films as *Gentleman's Agreement*, *Brando's Streetcar*, and *Splendor in the Grass*.

A non-traditional biography, this book combines social and political history with a sharp critical evaluation of Kazan's work. Schickel presents Kazan as a figure of his culture and time, much in the same way that David Remnick treated Muhammed Ali and the larger picture of American history in *King of the World*. History's view of Kazan is now colored by a single political act — his naming names in testimony before the House Un-American Activities Committee. By putting the actions, work, and words of this towering figure in context, Schickel not only defends his hero and his hero's work; he also helps the reader move beyond Kazan's most infamous moment to appreciate the larger American story in which he played such a pivotal role. The result is an intelligent and lively biography and social history.

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