

Between 1951 and 1961, Elia Kazan (1909-2003) directed nine films, four of which are the subject of this thesis: *A Streetcar Named Desire* (1951), *On the Waterfront* (1954), *East of Eden* (1955), and *Splendor In the Grass* (1961). Although the settings are diverse, each film's central character is an outsider, one who is relegated to the margins of society by some version of destitution, whether financial or moral. Often set in the domestic interior, each film follows the outsider character as he or she fights for inclusion into a family or general society. By analyzing the settings or interior spaces in each film, and the characters' interactions with objects therein, the author endeavors to understand how Kazan used material culture to communicate his own ambivalent relationship to American society in the post-war period. For Kazan and the general American public, home was especially significant for physical and emotional shelter, and objects therein were projections of individual identity and social relationships.

The paper begins by analyzing the idea of the good life as interpreted in the post-war era followed by a life history of Kazan based on his biographers and interviews. Each of the four films is then treated as a separate chapter that examines issues of class, politics, family, and consumption as they emerged in the post-war period. The conclusion synthesizes the patterns found in the previous chapters, noting three distinct approaches to Kazan's handling of objects: as a means to describe specific relationships and create identity, to demonstrate class hierarchies and passing, and to comment on American post-war consumerism.

**“THE GOOD LIFE” IN POST-WAR AMERICA:
EXPLORING MATERIAL CULTURE IN FOUR FILMS BY ELIA KAZAN**

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