



2020

Now Or Have Ever Been: The Politics of Films of the Hollywood Blacklist Era

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Recommended Citation

McCann, Breanna (2020) "Now Or Have Ever Been: The Politics of Films of the Hollywood Blacklist Era," *The Macksey Journal*: Vol. 1 , Article 84.

Available at: <https://www.mackseyjournal.org/publications/vol1/iss1/84>

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Cover Page Footnote

I would first like to thank Dr. Helena Vanhala, my thesis advisor, without whom none of this would have been possible. Your unrelenting support and boundless wisdom and enthusiasm made this process a true joy. To my family, most especially my parents and brother Brennan, your ceaseless support of and belief in me has made me the person I am today. Thank you so much for allowing me the room to grow and encouraging me every step along the way. Finally, I dedicate this to all the victims of the House Un-American Activities Committee and all the filmmakers past, present, and future who use their art to speak out against injustice even in turbulent times.

Now Or Have Ever Been:
The Politics of Films of the Hollywood Blacklist Era

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Abstract

The Hollywood blacklist era was a dark time in American history where many in the film industry were dragged before a congressional committee and interrogated about their political affiliations. Some lost their jobs, friends, or even their lives. The House Un-American Activities Committee carefully picked apart many films of the era in the search for subversive ideologies. As a result, filmmakers became more creative and subtle in their criticisms of the Hollywood blacklist. Director Elia Kazan and screenwriter Carl Foreman perfected this allegorical criticism through their creation of two films that reflected themselves and their respective decisions whether or not to cooperate with HUAC. Kazan's *On the Waterfront* and Foreman's *High Noon* served not only as cinematic masterpieces, but also as the pinnacle of the use of film as a political medium. In the current era of partisan turmoil, film serves the same purpose, so studying politically charged movies of the past helps to establish an understanding of the manner in which the medium is reflecting contemporary politics. Furthermore, given film's unique political and historical value, it can also be a valuable tool in political science classrooms.

Keywords: Film, History, Politics, Arts

Hollywood award shows have seemingly become a hotbed of political action and protest in recent years. An impassioned speech by an Oscar winner often catches the anger of

conservatives in the country, leading to the decrying of “Liberal Hollywood.” While this has seemingly become more prevalent in recent memory, it is not a new phenomenon and only appears more frequent because of instantaneous media coverage and responses. In fact, this backlash against the perceived subversive liberal ideologies of actors and writers was more ruthless in the period from 1946 to 1960. These fourteen years, referred to as the Hollywood blacklist era, witnessed proven or suspected communists, though in reality anyone suspected of having even the slightest liberal leaning could have been, hauled in front of the congressional House Un-American Activities Committee, or HUAC. In these hearings, the witnesses, some of Hollywood’s most prolific writers, actors, and directors, would be interrogated and each one was inevitably asked one question: are you now, or have you ever been, a member of the communist party? If the answer was yes, they faced a choice: name fellow party members and friends, or never work in the industry again. If they refused to answer, as many did, they frequently served jail time for contempt. The Hollywood blacklist ruined careers, friendships, and lives. Film consequently took on a political tone during this period to allow filmmakers the latitude to comment on and cope with the turmoil of the time, providing a rich field of study for film historians and political scientists alike. Given the contention that exists in modern politics, some filmmakers are again using the medium to make broader societal statements about American governance and values, such as equality and freedom. Studying past examples of movies-as-politics through the approaches of film and political analysis generates a deeper awareness of the manner in which these same artistic strategies are being employed today.

Historical Background

The American Communist party grew in membership and gained momentum during the Great Depression. Most of the members of the party at this time were not what one would call

Bolshevik revolutionaries. On the contrary, “most American Communists saw themselves as responding to the inequities and deprivation of the Great Depression by working to create a fairer and more egalitarian society through peaceful means” (Frankel, 2017, p. xi). Hollywood was no exception to this increased interest in communist ideals. Scott Van Wynsberghe (2007) references an estimate made by British author David Cate that starting in 1930, about 300 filmmakers joined the American Communist party, referred to as the CPUSA, but by 1950, less than 100 were still active members. In particular, support for communism fell after the transparent and brutal Moscow Show Trials of the late thirties and the Soviet signing of a non-aggression pact with Nazi Germany in 1939.

After the Germans invaded the Soviet Union, violating the non-aggression pact, support for the Soviet Union was commonplace as they fought alongside the Americans against the fascist German and Italian regimes. The tide began to turn against the Soviet Union again after the end of the war when Stalin’s brutality became common knowledge and especially pronounced and widespread. As a result, many members of the CPUSA grew disillusioned and disgusted and left the party, if they had not already done so after the events of the late 1930s. Concurrently, the second Red Scare began to grip the country, setting the stage for the Hollywood blacklist.

The House Un-American Activities Committee was first formed in 1938 by Texan Congressman Martin Dies. The committee was initially unsuccessful, except for dragging a few top celebrities of the time in front of the committee to deny any communist sympathies. The star-studded subpoenas included Humphrey Bogart, Katharine Hepburn, James Cagney, and several other Franklin Roosevelt-supporting stars. After Dies retired in 1944, the House Un-American Activities Committee fell by the wayside until it became a standing, permanent committee in

early 1945. At the same time, Hollywood itself appeared to take note of the lingering sympathy for the communist cause and formed the Motion Picture Alliance for the Preservation of American Ideals. A conservative organization aimed at stopping the communist subversion of the film industry, it boasted the membership of such box office leaders of the time as Clark Gable, Barbara Stanwyck, Ginger Rogers, and directors Cecil B. DeMille, John Ford, and King Vidor, with Gary Cooper serving as a founding member and Walt Disney serving as vice president (Frankel, 2017, p. 46-47).

The increasing pressure from HUAC and Hollywood's own conservative, anti-communist organizations came to a head when leftists in the industry responded in kind with a united statement from seventeen Hollywood guilds condemning the Motion Picture Alliance, branding it as "a subversive and dangerous organization, which comforts the enemy" (Frankel, 2017, p. 48). The trials kicked off in 1946 after the Republicans retook control of Congress and President Truman signed an executive order requiring the screening of all federal employees for loyalty, driving Attorney General Tom Clark to compose a comprehensive list of the organizations and associations that were suspected to be politically dangerous, or otherwise subversive. Two founders of the Motion Picture Alliance, screenwriters James McGuinness and Jack Moffit, were the first of many "friendly witnesses," that is, those who willingly cooperated with HUAC, to come before the committee (Frankel, 2017, p. 73-74). The House Un-American Activities Committee put out the bulk of its subpoenas on September 23, 1947, thus officially beginning the Hollywood blacklist (Lewis, 2000).

The HUAC trials were particularly painful for those subpoenaed as they faced the choice between naming names and betraying friends or refusing to name names and never working again, and this was a decision that everyone called before the committee had to make. Film was a

particular target of HUAC because it had long been considered leftist, and the pro-Russian films they made during World War II to support their wartime allies were no help. The famed first group brought before HUAC was the Hollywood Ten, a group of screenwriters and directors, all initially refused to name names and went to prison as a result, and this showed signs of what was to come both in the treatment of so-called “unfriendly” witnesses as well as the kinds of people called before the committee. The community of screenwriters was attacked especially hard by HUAC, with “nearly sixty percent of all individuals called to testify and an equal percent of all those blacklisted were screenwriters. Only twenty percent of those called and twenty-five percent of those blacklisted were actors” (Dhomhowski, 2002, p. 498). As the people writing the film, screenwriters had significant control over the script and consequently what ideas were expressed in the story. Directors then took the script and decided what would be shown to the audience, using visual cues to further the message intertwined in the dialogue by the screenwriters. Producers had the final say on the film, so they were also in a position to further any potential subversive ideology by providing the resources for and approving the final version of the film. Actors were less of a target to HUAC because, for all intents and purposes, they had almost no control over the creative process, or at least nowhere near to the extent that screenwriters, directors, and producers had. As a result, HUAC focused on those most capable of inserting their personal ideologies into movies, but screenwriters were also more capable of writing with fronts if blacklisted, as writers like Dalton Trumbo did with the 1954 hit *Roman Holiday*.

Methodology

High Noon and *On the Waterfront* are two of the most popular American films ever made and both are very reflective of the time in which they were made, that being the height of the Hollywood Blacklist. Additionally, each film had a figure integral to their production called

before HUAC, *High Noon*'s screenwriter Carl Foreman and *On the Waterfront*'s director Elia Kazan. Each made a different decision when faced with HUAC and their respective experiences colored their films, making them distinct political statements upon the context in which they were created. To prove the political messages inherent in these films, in the more comprehensive version of this research paper, the films *High Noon* and *On the Waterfront* were examined using three primary research dimensions: tracking character development through the classical Hollywood three-act narrative structure, pinpointing and performing critical analysis on three scenes from each film in the three-act structure using film theory to find meaning, and looking at five primary comparison criteria to determine the level of similarity between the film's protagonist and the film's producer that was called before HUAC. For the sake of this abbreviated summary of the research, the focus will be on the comparison criteria and examining the creator and protagonist to see how much personal experience influenced these films. Additionally, this discussion will only touch on four of the criteria comparison as the conflict category is virtually the same for each, HUAC and the film's antagonist.

***High Noon* (1952)**

High Noon centers around Will Kane, the sheriff of a small town. On his wedding day, he finds out that Frank Miller, a man he put in jail, and his posse are coming to exact their revenge on Kane. After safely leaving town with his new bride, Kane decides he must go back and defend the town. He attempts to gather a posse, but no one will join him, leaving him to face Miller and the gang alone. Kane emerges victorious, and leaves the town that abandoned him for good with his new wife. The screenwriter of *High Noon*, Carl Foreman, faced HUAC while in the midst of the film's production. Exposed to leftist politics by his parents, Foreman had been a member of the communist party in Hollywood in the past, but also left as the evils of the Stalin

regime came to light. He chose not to name names to HUAC, and his story bears similarity to Kane's when examined through the main comparison criteria.

Choice to stand alone

The central decision in *High Noon* is Will Kane's choice to return to face Miller and his gang and do so alone. Carl Foreman clearly parallels this decision from his own experience; he makes exactly the same decision in an allegorically identical set of circumstances. Foreman's refusal to provide names to HUAC was a stand against authority in the same manner as Kane's refusal to run from his enemies. The isolation inherent in the choice is the crucial similarity between Foreman and his protagonist. Carl Foreman and director Stanley Kramer made several films together and were good friends and partners by the time HUAC called Foreman to testify, but the ordeal did irreparable damage to their relationship. After another member of the crew cooperated with HUAC, Kramer and others "increased the pressure on Carl to do the same" (Frankel, 2017, p. 186). When Foreman refused, he was removed from the film and banned from the set.

It bears a striking resemblance to the situation Kane finds himself in when the very same people who toasted his health at his wedding in the beginning of the film will not stand with him when he desperately needs them. Foreman's isolation bleeds through the film. For Foreman, "[w]ith the project he had worked on so intensely removed from his sight, and the hearings bearing down on him, Carl suddenly felt alone and afraid. The career he had worked so hard to build was unraveling, and there was nothing he could do to stop it. It was as if *High Noon* were truly happening to him" (Frankel, 2017, p. 197). In many ways, it was the reverse. Carl Foreman's HUAC hearings happened to *High Noon*, encouraging him to reshape the story to more directly reflect the climate of the time and his own personal experience. The allegory is

quite clear in Kane and Foreman's decision to stand firmly with their ethics, even if it meant standing entirely alone.

Reaction from peers

In some ways, assessing the reaction from both Foreman and Kane's peers is difficult as the response was mixed, even from those they expected to support them. In the case of the fictional Kane, that is evident in the premise of the film. None of his friends are willing to stand with him against Miller and his gang, and try to convince him he is suicidal to stay and therefore should leave town as quickly as possible. In that way, Kane's peers have an adverse reaction to his choice to stand alone. On the other hand, while Kane's new wife initially reacts negatively to his decision, Amy eventually understands that he must stay and returns to help him. Kane also reacts positively to his decision in terms of upholding his ethical obligation. Consequently, Kane receives a mixed reaction from his peers. The vast majority reacted negatively, but when it truly mattered, Amy and Kane himself reacted positively, outweighing the negative response on the part of the townspeople, making the reaction from peers a positive in this case.

Carl Foreman experienced a mixed response to his decision not to provide names that was very similar to the one his protagonist endured in *High Noon*. Stanley Kramer teamed up with several studio executives to attempt to convince Foreman to cooperate, and Gary Cooper even suggested Foreman do so in an interesting role reversal from Will Kane. Also similarly to Kane, Foreman received positive responses to his decision not to cooperate with HUAC alongside the negative ones. After his hearing and his refusal to name names or provide any real substantive answers to the committee, Foreman's "house was flooded with telegrams, flowers, and phone calls of support. Someone even sent over a box of glassware addressed to *The Home of the Brave*" (Frankel, 2017, p. 201). The overwhelming majority of the reaction from

Foreman's peers to his decision was positive. Ethically and socially, his decision not to provide HUAC with names paid off for him. That does not lessen the impact of the negative reactions from people like Stanley Kramer, as Foreman did feel very alone going into his HUAC testimony (Frankel, 2017, p. 197). Despite the negative responses, Foreman was not dissuaded and stayed the course his conscience dictated, exactly as Kane does. Just like *High Noon*, the positive peer reaction outweighs the negative by the end. In Foreman's case, it did not end the trouble, but it proved to him he was not truly alone and was justified in his decision.

Betrayal by a friend or relative

Betrayal is the centerpiece of *High Noon*. In his hour of need, Kane's friends abandon him to face Miller and his gang alone. Carl Foreman faces this betrayal in much the same way as his protagonist. Stanley Kramer's turn against Foreman is clearly reminiscent of Kane's good friends leaving him to die. Foreman was initially betrayed by screenwriter Martin Berkeley, who had been incredibly involved with the Communist Party (Frankel, 2017, p. 168). Next to abandon Foreman was his good friend and partner Stanley Kramer, who took *High Noon* from Foreman and encouraged him to name names, threatening him "that if he didn't stay away from the set voluntarily, he would be barred physically" (Frankel, 2017, p. 168). Kramer essentially led the offensive against Foreman at the studio and on the set, a far cry from the close working partnership they had in the past. It is not difficult to see the real-life inspiration for the cowardice and betrayal of Will Kane's friends. Upon the release of *High Noon*, that parallel was immediately evident to some:

An anonymous editorial writer for *The Nation*, a progressive magazine, also got the message. "There must be times these days," the editorial declared, "when Mr. Foreman feels that he too has been deserted by those who should have helped him stand off the

bullies and tough guys whose aggressions have so largely destroyed the moral fiber of the Western town that goes by the name of Hollywood.” (Frankel, 2017, p. 259)

The betrayal that Foreman endured was a clear inspiration for that which Will Kane experiences, so much so that it was pointed out even upon the film’s initial release in 1952.

Resolution

In *High Noon*, Kane’s resolution is clear. He defeats Miller and his posse and leaves town with his wife and his life. Carl Foreman does not have as clear-cut of a resolution. As a result of his refusal to cooperate with HUAC, Foreman was blacklisted. He still made movies, such as *The Bridge on the River Kwai*, but he was forced to use false names and work out of the country. After being blacklisted, Foreman moved to England, a haven for blacklisted writers, but was denied his passport in 1953 when he tried to return to America. Foreman did not return to Hollywood until 1975 (Frankel, 2017, p. 309). It would be disingenuous to say Foreman received a clear or positive resolution. He faced severe consequences at the hands of HUAC that altered the course of the rest of his life, but he won the same moral victory as Will Kane. In some ways, the happy ending of Will Kane riding unscathed into the sunset feels like a bittersweet fantasy from the typewriter of a man who would not and could not experience the same peace from making the same choice. Foreman finally received credit as the screenwriter of *The Bridge on the River Kwai*, alongside the late Michael Wilson, receiving news that he would be recognized and receive a belated Oscar on June 25, 1984. Foreman died the next day (Frankel, 2017, p. 310). In many ways, Foreman at least had the final victory. He barely had the time to enjoy it, but he lived just long enough to see his faith in ethics pay off. Among these four criteria, Will Kane and *High Noon* show clear parallels to Foreman and his situation, proving its political nature.

On the Waterfront (1954)

Terry Malloy is a dockworker working on a waterfront controlled by a ruthless union boss named Johnny Friendly. After unknowingly playing a role in the union's murder of his friend Joey Doyle, Terry becomes disillusioned, eventually aligning himself with Joey's sister Edie and a waterfront priest named Father Barry who is intent on uncovering the corruption on the waterfront. Terry chooses to cooperate with the Waterfront Crime Commission, testifying against the bosses. He immediately puts a target on his back and instead of leaving town, goes to the docks for a final confrontation with Friendly, which he wins and the dockworkers join him, leaving Friendly alone screaming to no one on the docks. The film's director, Elia Kazan, faced HUAC just before the film went into production. Kazan, born in Istanbul of Greek descent, found his place as a minority with the leftist Group Theatre in New York and joined the Communist Party, but left in the 1930s after facing condemnation for not promoting the party's agenda enough in the Group's productions. When brought before HUAC, Kazan named names, arguing that he was no longer a member of the party and that he did not believe anyone would make that same sacrifice for him, so he did not wish to martyr himself for a cause he no longer supported. Kazan's experience with HUAC also displayed clear parallels with *On the Waterfront*, so much so that some referred to it as a justification for cooperating with HUAC.

Choice to stand alone

While Carl Foreman made *Will Kane* and *High Noon* as a whole more allegorical, Elia Kazan made Terry Malloy and *On the Waterfront* blatantly reminiscent of HUAC. Terry also faces a choice to testify before a committee, albeit one slightly different in purpose from the one Kazan faced. Terry Malloy eventually decides that he will testify against Johnny Friendly and shed light on the mob-controlled union and their business on the waterfront. Throughout the rest of the film, he sees three people die at the hands of the mob for their willingness to cooperate

with the Waterfront Crime Commission, one of which is his brother. Despite his clear awareness of the potential consequences of his action, Terry testifies against Friendly anyways. Father Barry and Edie support him, but there is no one inside his direct group of peers that publicly supports his choice. In that way, Terry stands alone among the dockworkers in his choice to testify. Again, it is important to note that none of his peers publicly support his choice, but the audience is led to believe, especially in the final scene, that at least several of them did commend his decision to testify but did not express their agreement for fear of the consequences.

In that way, Elia Kazan makes the same argument about his experience with HUAC. When he chose to provide names to HUAC at his second testimony, he had a decent amount of people supporting him, ranging from his wife to the studio heads. In terms of his direct peers, that being fellow filmmakers and people he worked with in the theater, Kazan found little sympathy. Even Marlon Brando, who would go on to a career-best performance as Terry Malloy, was distraught by Kazan's decision to testify and initially swore he would never work with him again, although that was short-lived. While it is difficult to assess many of his peers' private thoughts at the time, the final scene of *On the Waterfront* suggests that some of Kazan's peers maybe privately applauded his choice to cooperate with HUAC, or at least that Kazan imagined or hoped that some of his peers felt the same. In that way, Kazan clearly models Terry Malloy and his decision to testify after himself, even projecting his own perceptions and idealizations of his peers' reactions.

Reaction from peers

Terry Malloy faces a predominantly negative reaction from his peers after his decision to testify against Friendly. Most obviously, he makes himself the prime target for Friendly and his gang and their violent silencing tactics. Furthermore, after the scene where he testifies, there are

two particularly telling interactions that Terry experiences. Directly after his testimony, police are leading Terry in a hallway outside of the courtroom. Terry tries to greet a fellow dockworker who is walking past, but he snubs him and instead asks the police officers, “Who’s your friend?” (Kazan, 1954). Following this scene, Terry returns to the rooftop pigeon coop he spends many scenes in beforehand. As he ascends to the coop alone, a dead pigeon is thrown at him from out of frame. The thrower of the pigeon is a young boy who earlier expressed his admiration for Terry and is now crying and can barely look at Terry after learning he chose to cooperate with the Waterfront Crime Commission. Edie and Father Barry are incredibly supportive of Terry following his testimony, but after these two incidents of rejection by his former friends, he is determined to return to the waterfront for the final confrontation with Friendly. In that way, while Terry is pushed to decide to talk in the first place for his peers, he is pushed into this final confrontation by his peers.

Elia Kazan faced a very similar reaction to his decision to cooperate with HUAC. While he found wholehearted support from his wife Molly and the higher-ups in the film industry who encouraged him to talk in the first place, he was overwhelmingly condemned by most of his peers. Kazan’s decision would continue to garner adverse reactions from his peers in the worlds of film and theatre for the rest of his life, even to the reception of his Honorary Oscar at the 1999 Academy Awards. The Academy’s decision to give him this award was met with polarizing protests by those who were appalled a cooperative HUAC witness was to be honored and also by those who felt his objectively incomparable film career deserved recognition. His impressive film and stage career comes with an asterisk forevermore because of that one decision.

Betrayal by a friend or relative

Terry faces a blatant betrayal by a relative, in this case, his brother Charley. When it becomes evident that Terry is increasingly leaning toward testifying against Friendly, the mob boss decides he must nip Terry's initiative in the bud, choosing his right-hand man to do so. The complication arises from the fact that this man happens to be Charley Malloy. In the scene where Friendly gives Charley this assignment, he tries desperately to dissuade his boss not only from asking him to do the job but from doing it at all. When Friendly does not waver, Charley accepts the task. Later that night, he picks his brother up in a car and ends up pulling a gun on him to try and convince Terry to promise not to talk. Charley cannot bring himself to shoot his own brother despite Terry's refusal to promise that he will not cooperate with the Waterfront Crime Commission. Instead, he tells Terry to run and get out of town if he will not promise not to talk.

Kazan also faced what he believed to be a betrayal from someone who was like a brother to him, playwright Arthur Miller. The two were the gold-standard of artistic partnerships in the 1940s and 50s, with Kazan directing several of Miller's most successful plays. Understandably, when deliberating over his impending second trial before HUAC, Kazan turned to his closest friend for support. After Kazan testified in 1953, Miller would not speak to him, and they would not work together again until Kazan directed Miller's controversial *After the Fall* in 1964. In a conversation between the two of them that each man remembers differently in his autobiography, Kazan claimed that Miller essentially gave him permission to do what he felt he needed to do when he appeared before HUAC. Miller remembered thinking with fear that Kazan would give him up if he felt it beneficial, but regardless of the true content of the conversation, Kazan felt betrayed by Miller's cold shoulder in the wake of his testimony, showing a deeply hurtful betrayal at least in the eyes of Kazan that translates into Terry's own experience in the film.

Resolution

In *On the Waterfront*, Terry faces a positive resolution. He follows his own conscience in testifying against Friendly and casting off the yoke of oppression he held over the waterfront. Additionally, he emerges victorious over Friendly in the final confrontation and goes back to work on a free waterfront, making him the victor on all accounts. Kazan's resolution is less clear-cut, but at least from his perspective, a positive one. Elia Kazan felt he had done all he could on Broadway and wanted to work in film, which explains why he valued his career enough to name names to HUAC. *On the Waterfront* brought him the success he desired, winning several Academy Awards including Best Picture and Best Director. He would go on to make his best films after testifying, and to the end of his life, Kazan maintained he made the right decision and never went back on it. In that way, Kazan, in his own mind, grew into the messianic figure he molded Terry Malloy to be. While those who opposed his decision found the heroics of a character so clearly representing him as a HUAC informer appalling, it is evident from his own writing and that of those who study or knew him that he genuinely believed he stood alone against a greater enemy, just from his perspective that enemy was the Communist Party and not HUAC.

Conclusion

The wounds of the Hollywood Blacklist are still smarting. The divisions between those who talked and those who had not resurfaced, manifesting itself in the widespread protests at the 1999 Academy Awards. People picketed with signs both for and against Kazan outside of the venue, and inside numerous celebrities refused to stand and applaud when Kazan accepted the award, while others sat on their hands and refused to clap at all. Conversely, some celebrities, such as Warren Beatty, stood and applauded vigorously in support of Kazan. Even as recently as the past decade, screenwriting credits were restored to several screenwriters who wrote, and in

some cases won awards, under a false name. Out of this devastating time in both American and film history came two films that would not only define the time but would be so profoundly resonant that they remain critically acclaimed pieces of American cinema in the twenty-first century. *High Noon* and *On the Waterfront* are both unique in their contextualization in the midst of the HUAC era, but they are unparalleled historical documents even more so because of their direct connection to the blacklist; Carl Foreman and Elia Kazan both brought their own experiences and emotions to creating two of the most unforgettable films and protagonists ever made. Studying the comparisons between the creator and the character in both cases, especially when taken in conjunction with the film techniques used in portraying the protagonists at the key moments, show direct parallels. Both Carl Foreman and Elia Kazan recreated themselves, their situations, and their turmoil in their films, in that way demonstrating the inherently political nature of film.

This study set out to understand the intersectionality of politics and film, specifically examining *High Noon* and *On the Waterfront* as reflections of the HUAC era and their parallels to Carl Foreman and Elia Kazan's respective experiences with the committee. Through careful examination of the films, the lives of these filmmakers, and the historical and political context of the time in which they were made. In doing so, this study established clear parallels between the lives of Carl Foreman and Elia Kazan and their protagonists, proving that reflections of the HUAC era, even those that are allegorical, were deliberate. In that way, this study found that film is a medium uniquely apt for reflecting the political climate of the time in which it was made.

These findings pose two major implications. The first is that film, given the inextricable influence of the political climate on movies, can be used as a vessel for various kinds of political and social messages. Awareness of this phenomenon is crucial, as films that espouse dangerous

or hateful politics could be subconsciously influencing people. This applies to ideologies that prove a legitimate threat, such as Nazism or anti-semitism, that are typically espoused in propaganda films. Being aware of the capacity of film to hold secret messages, especially those that may inspire real danger is important. Conversely, the ability of film to hide messages of equality, peace, and positive forces for good is crucial as filmmakers can use the medium to make real political and social change. Despite the merit of the message, all of this constitutes propaganda. The main purpose of film is to make a profit for the studio, but sometimes a movie is also made to send a message. It is imperative to understand these messages, as they will influence viewers, even if it is in a positive way.

The second implication is that film can serve as a vital educational tool in the field of politics and history. Movies are a unique time capsule, providing an unparalleled look at the culture, values, and political climate of the time in which they were made. *High Noon* and *On the Waterfront* are stirring historical and political documents, and they would be exceptionally useful in a political science classroom setting. The educational opportunities presented by film are boundless, and it is a medium that enriches political and historical understanding in a deep and unique way. In that way, this study can be used as a contextualization for teaching about the history of HUAC through film.

In terms of recommendations for future researchers, the most significant would be to study other time periods of film using the same framework. This study is very limited in scope, studying only one time period, and only two films from that exceptionally prolific period. While it is helpful to make specific and diverse dimensions to study the film, and tie them to the narrative structure or another standardized framework, it is not a technique that applies only to examining the HUAC era. Using a variety of empirical categories to study and compare films

with their political atmosphere was very helpful in this study and allows for clear replication of the study.

Furthermore, tracking study of the films through the four levels of meaning discussed in the methodology and implied throughout the case studies allows for a standardized examination. The first level, the referential content, is merely a basic synopsis of the facts of what happened in the film with no further analysis. The next level, explicit content, pertains to the obvious lines of dialogue or events that show clear development and convey explicit messages; it is the meaning of the movie. The third level, implicit content, takes observations to the next level of inferences. While it is abstract and an interpretation of the deeper meaning, it is still based upon the explicit observations of development and dialogue. The final and deepest level is the symptomatic interpretation where the studier analyzes the film as a product of the time in which it was made, contextualizing it with historical and political developments of the time. This level of meaning connects the film back to the culture and time in which it was made.

This study examined both *High Noon* and *On the Waterfront* following these four levels of meaning. Looking at the former first, the referential meaning is that an aging marshal in a western town must face a gang of outlaws returning to the town alone. Looking at the next level, the explicit content of the film is that Kane must face these men alone because no one in the town is willing to help him, which is made clear through the obvious plot developments and lines of dialogue. This suggests that one cannot trust anyone else, and that fear controls people and their actions. The implicit content in the film suggests that Kane is a very principled man, but that the townspeople are not. Kane knows he must stay and fight and tries to implore those who are supposed to be his friends and companions to do the same, but they refuse, only wanting to associate with him after he defeats the outlaws. All of this implies a message that in trying times,

the true measure of a person reveals itself. Taking all of these levels of meaning in conjunction with the symptomatic interpretation, the HUAC parallels are clear. Kane stands alone in principle against a mob and is abandoned by friends, and *High Noon* screenwriter Carl Foreman endured the same exact fate at the hands of HUAC. As such, Foreman and Kane are one in the same and *High Noon* is the allegorical representation of Foreman's own experience with HUAC. In examining the totality of factors, it becomes evident that *High Noon*'s central theme is that in times of political crisis, HUAC in this instance, a person's worth is measured by their actions.

This study found similar meaning in *On the Waterfront*. At its most basic referential level, the film is about a dockworker who is forced to choose whether or not to speak out against the mob that ruthlessly controls the docks. The explicit content is that Johnny Friendly and his mob control the docks and that anyone who speaks out against them is silenced, but whenever Terry finally works up the courage to stand up for his peers, he is rejected and must face the mob alone. This suggests that mob mentality is a real, prevalent phenomenon, again implying that fear controls people and their actions. Looking implicitly at this film, the content suggests that Terry is a reluctant informant, but the influence of a romance and his brother's murder push him to confess and face the deeper consequences of his decision to speak, consequences that in some ways imply he may have been better off not to speak. The symptomatic interpretation of this film when taken in the context of HUAC and the personal history of Elia Kazan is very clear. The evidence put forth in this study proves that Terry Malloy represents Kazan, and that this film serves as a direct parallel and likely justification for Kazan's decision to cooperate with HUAC. More strikingly, the theme of this film is exactly the same as *High Noon*: in times of political crisis, a person's worth is measured by the actions they take in response. In that way, *High Noon* and *On the Waterfront* are the same film. They take different approaches, but they have the same

central theme, making them intrinsic not only to a rich understanding of HUAC, but to one another.

By following the framework of empirical categories of study and comparison through these four levels of content, this study can be replicated and applied to various other periods of film. There are several other politically and socially charged periods of film that deserve study, including the Prohibition and Great Depression era, both the Pre-Code and the height of the Hays Production Code eras, World War II and the years immediately before and after, the Vietnam era, the Reagan era, and the post-September 11 era into the twenty-first century. As such, the most significant recommendation for future researchers in political science is to apply this same framework to studies of films from different political eras to understand how film served the same purpose of reflecting and commenting upon the atmosphere of the time. In that way, there can be an even deeper comprehension and awareness of the hidden messages in film and the way they resonate politics, as well as an understanding of how the use of film as a political medium has evolved over time.

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