



This film has been compared to Bertolucci's 1900, and there are points of comparison; I also found myself thinking of Dickens's David Copperfield and his yearning for the writer's vocation, and the sudden wealth of William Dorrit. There is also Upton Sinclair's 1927 novel Oil!, the basis of Paul Thomas Anderson's film There Will Be Blood, or indeed the story of Charles Foster Kane in Welles's Citizen Kane, based on the life of WR Hearst. There is the eternal, toxic fascination of immense wealth, the success that most people might dream of while quite certain that they could never attain or deserve such a thing. And it's even more potent in the case of a writer who might dream such a thing into reality.

There's also an interesting echo of Elizabeth Taylor's 1957 novel Angel, about a young woman who becomes a bestselling author through sheer force of will and, like Eden, must angrily and ungratefully reject demeaning unartistic job offers early on in her life. Martin Eden is a sad story of a sad man who lacks the capacity for happiness and who is astonished to find that artistic success is as compromised as any other kind. But there is a kind of thrill in tracing his progress from rags to riches to annihilation.

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