

Publisher's Note

We are pleased to add this new first edition to Salem Press' growing list of works that explore literature with expert critical analysis and original commentary. This title, *Novels Into Film: Analysis & Interpretation* offers a unique look at how a story makes its way from the printed page to the screen.

The 100 novels covered in this work represent a wide range of years, genres, and stories. While most of the films in this work have been adapted from full-length novels, some come from novellas, short stories, or plays. You will find classics, such as *All Quiet on the Western Front*, written in 1928 and released on film in 1930 and contemporary blockbusters, such the *Harry Potter* and *Hunger Games* series.

Essays are arranged alphabetically by film title, and each essay offers valuable top matter about both the book (author and date of publication) and the film (year released, director, screenwriter and actors). The body of the essay is divided into detailed sections—Context, Film Analysis, and Significance—and all signed essays end with Further Reading and Bibliography lists. Each detailed essay is made all the more robust with images, including movie posters, stills from the film, and photographs of actors and directors at work.

In addition to the essays themselves, the back matter of *Novels Into Film* is comprised of six significant indexes:

- Index of Print Works by Title, that includes the author of the work
- Index of Print Works by Author, that includes the title of the work
- Index of Print Works by Date of First Publication, chronological by work's published date with title of work
- Index of Films by Screenwriter, that includes the name of the film
- Index of Films by Director, that includes the name of the film
- Index of Films by Release Date, chronological by film's release date with title of film

This Publisher's Note is followed by a detailed Introduction that includes which books make the most successful adaptations and why, and significant differences between books and movies, beyond the obvious.

This new work will appeal to both book and film lovers alike, as well as offer serious value to film study curricula.

All Quiet on the Western Front

The Novel

Author: Erich Maria Remarque (1898-1970)

First published: *Im Westen nichts Neues*, 1928, in Germany

The Film

Year released: 1930

Director: Lewis Milestone (1895-1980)

Screenplay by: Del Andrews, Maxwell Anderson, George Abbott

Starring: Lew Ayres, Louis Wolheim, John Wray, Slim Summerville, William Bakewell

Context

Combat often has a profound, lasting effect on participants who survive the experience. From ancient eras to contemporary times, many individuals throughout history have attempted to illustrate what war does to the human psyche. In the early twentieth century in particular, conflicts encompassed ever wider territory and military technology advanced to allow greater carnage than ever before. During the course of World War I (1914-18), new, lethal inventions—tanks, flamethrowers, poison gas, airplanes carrying machine guns and bombs, torpedo-laden submarines—helped cause more than 37 million military casualties, including the deaths of more than 8.5 million soldiers and other service members.

World War I also resulted in an outpouring of literature about the war, including poems, novels, plays, and memoirs. British poet Wilfred Owen (1893-1918), who perished in the conflict, produced several important poems about the horrors of war, such as the sonnet “Anthem for Doomed Youth” (1917). American novelist Ernest Hemingway (1899-1961), who served in a volunteer ambulance unit during the war and was wounded in Italy, returned from the ordeal alive to write about the war in the novel *A Farewell to Arms* (1929). In 1928, another wounded veteran, Erich Maria Remarque, published a compelling account of soldiers in battle in a German newspaper. The following year, his writings were published in book form as *Im Westen nichts Neues*, which was soon translated into English and published as *All Quiet on the Western Front*.

The novel was adapted for film the year after its publication, under the direction of European-born American Lewis Milestone. *All Quiet on the Western Front* joined a panoply of well-wrought, character-driven films about World War I. Some, such as *The Big Parade* (1925), *What*

Price Glory (1926), and *Wings* (1927), were made earlier than Milestone’s epic. Others, such as *Grand Illusion* (1937), *Sergeant York* (1941), *Paths of Glory* (1957), and *Johnny Got His Gun* (1971), were made later. While many films were derived from works by war veterans, *All Quiet on the Western Front* is one of few internationally recognized cinematic masterpieces told from the viewpoint of German soldiers.

Following the success of his breakout novel, Remarque continued writing about conflict, especially its aftereffects and the struggle of veterans to return to civilian life. His novels *The Road Back* (1931) and *Three Comrades* (1936) deal with soldiers attempting to overcome the psychological trauma of war and reestablish themselves in societies wracked by increasing uncertainty and turmoil. Several of Remarque’s novels, including *Flotsam* (1939), *Arch of Triumph* (1945), and *The Night in Lisbon* (1962), involve refugees, immigrants, and other persons displaced by war or the threat of war.

Before directing the film adapted from Remarque’s novel, Milestone had mostly written or helmed romantic comedies, musicals, and light-hearted dramas. Afterward, many of his films incorporated scenes of combat. These included *The General Died at Dawn* (1936), *Edge of Darkness* (1943), *The North Star* (1943), *The Purple Heart* (1944), *A Walk in the Sun* (1945), *Halls of Montezuma* (1951), *They Who Dare* (1954), and *Pork Chop Hill* (1959). Another Milestone movie based on a Remarque novel, *Arch of Triumph* (1948), was set on the periphery of conflict. Many of Milestone’s later dramas, such as *Of Mice and Men* (1939) and *The Strange Love of Martha Ivers* (1946), did not feature scenes of combat, but had darker, more noir sensibilities than his early films.



Lobby card for the 1930 film *All Quiet on the Western Front*.

Film Analysis

The life-or-death, kill-or-be-killed aspect that makes war so harrowing also presents a dramatic backdrop for fiction and cinema. The setting of World War I, with falling bombs, whistling bullets, exploding artillery shells, and hand-to-hand combat—as well as the daily tedium of huddling in muddy, filthy, rodent-plagued, and lice-infested trenches between battles—provides endless opportunities to illuminate the strengths and weaknesses of character. Faced with the possibility of disabling injury or sudden death, individuals display a wide range of reactions. A few rush toward danger to become heroes, some run away or freeze up and are branded cowards, and most fall somewhere between those two extremes.

Both the novel and the film adaptation of *All Quiet on the Western Front* contain characters who display the full range of such behavior before, during, and after combat. In the concise, twelve-chapter novel, the narration is presented almost exclusively in the first person (sometimes singular, sometimes plural) and present tense. Both book and film focus on the viewpoint of protagonist Paul Bäumer (Lew Ayres), a sensitive, thoughtful, somewhat naïve German teenager. He and many of his high-school classmates, including Franz Kemmerich (Ben Alexander), Albert Kropp (William Bakewell), Müller (Russell Gleason), Joseph Behm (Walter Browne Rogers), and Leer (Scott Kolk), are inspired by a sense of patriotism and duty to leave school and volunteer for military service.

After training, they are sent to the front, where older, battle-hardened veterans—Stanislaus “Kat” Katczinsky (Louis Wolheim), Haie Westhus (Richard Alexander), Tjaden (Slim Summerville), and Detering (Harold Goodwin)—attempt to teach the new recruits how to survive.

Despite the lessons, the long, increasingly brutal war whittles down the troops. Many in Paul’s company are killed outright—vaporized or fragmented by high explosive rounds—or suffer mortal wounds. Others are grievously, but not fatally, injured or are driven mad by the constant bombardment. The survivors grow closer together as comrades in arms, become increasingly disillusioned and cynical about why they are fighting. During lulls in battle, when they are not scrounging for food, pursuing French women, or exterminating vermin, the men philosophize about the causes and culprits of the war. The hardships that the soldiers experience adjusting from the mayhem of combat to the relative safety of civilian life are well demonstrated when Paul goes on leave and no longer feels he belongs in the world he once knew.

The film is generally faithful to the book in mood, tone, content, and perspective. Both formats begin with Remarque’s brief prefatory statement of purpose in composing the work. However, in the film some scenes are reordered, abridged, combined, compressed, or expanded. Remarque’s story in the second chapter, for example, of Kemmerich’s fine boots being passed on after his leg is amputated, serves as the subject of a film montage: a succession of different men are shown wearing the same boots, only to fall in battle. Other scenes—such as sections of the book in which Paul, on extended leave, is assigned to guard miserable Russian prisoners of war—were eliminated from the film. The film also presents the German populace as more bellicose.

Another difference between the book and film is in structure. The first chapter of the novel begins with Paul and friends at the front, already veterans of battle, and previous events are recalled in flashback. The novel often moves freely forward and backward in time, reflecting the protagonist’s mental and emotional disorientation, a literary depiction of shell shock. In contrast, the film adaptation is chronological in structure. It begins with a sequence in Paul’s hometown that shows troops marching off to battle, accompanied by martial music and cheering citizens. Immediately afterward, Paul and his friends are shown in a school classroom, where Professor Kantorek (Arnold Lucy) exhorts the young men in a stirring jingois-



Carl Laemmle holding the 1930 Oscar for All Quiet on the Western Front, produced by his son Carl Laemmle Jr. on Universal Pictures.

tic speech to fight for the fatherland (the novel merely alludes to the professor’s address).

Near the end of the film, Paul, on leave, is called on by the same professor to convince a new class of students to join the war. However, he can only talk about how painful it is to fight and die for one’s country. Though memorable, this scene does not occur in Remarque’s novel. Likewise, the famous ending of the film, involving a butterfly, symbolic of the ephemeral nature of life, is not the same as the novel’s conclusion.

All Quiet on the Western Front employed a full range of production techniques. The cinematography contrasts low-lit extreme close-ups showing character reactions to wide shots taken with an innovative camera crane. This helped capture fast-paced, frighteningly realistic battle sequences, faithfully reproducing detailed descriptions from the novel. The battles also incorporated many actual German expatriate war veterans as extras. Scene changes were handled simply, favoring dissolves rather than cuts, which were mostly reserved for the tightly edited battle shots.

Production of the film was completed in the spring of 1930, when movies were still in transition from silent to sound. A silent preview, with comedic actor Zasu Pitts as Paul's mother, generated unwanted laughter from the audience, so her scenes were recast with Beryl Mercer as Frau Bäumer. The film was released in both synchronized sound and silent versions (the latter to allow for foreign translations to be added or to permit playing with title cards or subtitles in theaters not yet equipped for sound). The initial version was 152 minutes in length. Despite its release prior to the 1934 establishment of the Motion Picture Production Code, the film was often censored. Certain scenes—German soldiers trading food for sex with several French women, battle shots graphically depicting dismemberment, dialogue containing content deemed political—were left on the cutting room floor in less permissive venues. Later rereleases were edited in a variety of ways, producing versions that range from about 105 to 133 minutes. Complete prints of the 152-minute original are considered lost.

Significance

Remarque's novel was first seen in serialized form in a German newspaper in late 1928. By the time of the film's general release in the summer of 1930, the novel *All Quiet on the Western Front* had been translated into more than twenty languages and had sold more than two million copies. Despite the author's introductory disclaimer explaining that his fiction had no political aspirations and was merely intended as an account of "a generation destroyed by the war," some Germans felt Remarque had criticized the war effort and was advocating pacifism. Within a few years, ascendant Nazis banned and publicly burned the novel, and organized mobs assaulted moviegoers in Germany. The film, like the book, was banned in Germany, Austria, Italy, and Australia throughout the 1930s and early 1940s.

Remarque, who fled to Switzerland to avoid prosecution in 1932, was stripped of German citizenship in 1938. He went into exile in the United States in 1939, remaining

there until the end of World War II. Other members of his family were not so lucky. His sister, Elfriede Scholz, was arrested in 1943 on trumped-up charges of defeatism. She was convicted and executed by beheading. Remarque was unaware of her fate until after the war.

The film adaptation of the novel, meanwhile, was critically acclaimed in the United States and most of the rest of the world where it was allowed to be shown. The film is still considered among scholars as an outstanding cinematic achievement. Lewis Milestone won the Academy Award for best director and Carl Laemmle Jr. won for outstanding production. The three credited screenwriters and cinematographer Arthur Edson were also nominated for Oscars. The American Film Institute ranked *All Quiet on the Western Front* among the top ten epic films of all time.

—Jack Ewing

Further Reading

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