**Remarque, Erich Maria (1898-1970)**

Born Erich Paul Remark in Osnabrück, Germany, Erich Maria Remarque is best known for his influential anti-war novel *Im Westen nichts Neues* (1929, *All Quiet on the Western Front*). First serialized in the *Vossische Zeitung* in 1928, *All Quiet* was launched with an unprecedented advertising campaign. Hailed as ‘the great war novel’ (Ekstein 352), the book spawned a world-wide readership with translations into over twenty-five languages, and a film (directed by Lewis Milestone) in 1930. Written within just a few months in 1927, *All Quiet* *on the Western Front* toys with autobiographical references. The protagonist Paul Bäumer is a nineteen-year old war veteran whose seemingly non-consequential death in October 1918, on a ‘quiet’ day on the Western front, stands for the shared fate of millions of soldiers obscured by the unprecedented violence and horror of World War I. Remarque changed his name after the war, dropping his middle name Paul, and adopting his mother’s name, Maria, while also Gallicizing the spelling of his last name, thereby blurring national boundaries.

Although Remarque had been wounded on the Western front, historians note that ‘Remarque’s war experience was not as extensive as his successful novel, and particularly the promotional effort surrounding it, implied’ (Ekstein 348). With war exploding into discourse in popular memoir, fiction, and film, *All Quiet* *on the Western Front* was at the centre of a modernist ‘war boom’ (Ekstein 346). ‘This book is to be neither an accusation nor a confession’, the novel’s epigraph avers ([v]), but *All Quiet* *on the Western Front* is precisely that: a scathing indictment of teachers who encouraged the sacrifice of German youth at no cost to themselves. The novel resonates with modernist lost generation motifs by attempting ‘to tell of a generation of men who, even though they may have escaped shells, were destroyed by the war’ (*All Quiet* [v]). Remarque depicted a cohort of soldiers, ‘little more than boys’ (29), betrayed by their authority figures. ‘Only the facts are real and important for us’, the first-person narrator Paul observes (21), but the grotesque circumstances of the war also find expression in startling surrealist images, such as Paul’s unsettling vision of finger nails continuing to grow after death (‘They twist themselves into corkscrews and grow and grow’ [15]).

After a stint in Switzerland to escape the Nazis, as Europe braced again for war in 1939, Remarque arrived in America with his first wife, the actress Ilse Jutta Zambona. *All Quiet on the Western Front* was banned by the Nazis in 1933; Remarque’s sister, Elfriede Scholz (<http://bit.ly/LE4bdi>) was convicted and executed by Hitler’s regime in 1943. In 1947, Remarque became an American citizen, but returned to Switzerland a year later, where he eventually died in Locarno, survived by his second wife, Paulette Goddard. He authored some fifteen novels, and several plays, but none of his other novels, several of which engaged with Weimar society (1937) as well as the Nazi regime (1941) and Holocaust (1952), reached the widespread popularity of *All Quiet on the Western Front*. Remarque’s papers are housed at the Fales Library, New York University.

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**List of works**

Remarque, E. M. (1929) *Im Westen nichts Neues*, Berlin: Propyläen Verlag, trans. A. H. Wheen, as *All Quiet on the Western Front*, Boston: Little, Brown and Co, 1929.

------(1936) *Drei Kamaraden*, Copenhagen: Gyldendal*,* trans. A. W. Wheen as *Three Comrades*, Boston: Little, Brown and Co, 1937.

------(1941) *Liebe deinen Nächsten*, Stockholm: Bermann-Fischer,trans. D. Lindley as *Flotsam* Boston: Little, Brown and Co, 1941

------(1952) *Der Funke Leben* Cologne: Kiepenheuer & Witsch, trans. J Stern as *Spark of Life*, New York: Appleton-Century, 1952.

**References and further reading**

Ekstein, M. (1980) ‘All Quiet on the Western Front and the Fate of a War’ *Journal of Contemporary History* 15 (2): 345-66. http://bit.ly/NyHtpQ

Fussel, P. (1975) *The Great War and Modern Memory*, New York: Oxford UP.