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From the Selected Works of Heidi Southworth

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Living Banned Books: Erich Marie Remarque Im Westen Nichts Neues

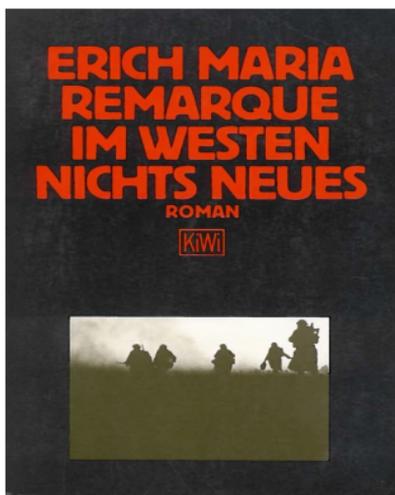
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- The novel combines realistic battle scenes and frank depictions of military service - drawn from Remarque's own firsthand experiences in World War I - to tell the story of Paul Bäumer from his initial fervor for war to his growing disillusion for both war and life.
- Published as a serial in November and December 1928 in the German newspaper Vossische Zeitung and after positive reaction by the public, it was released as a separate novel in January 1929.
- Immediately became a best seller, selling 1.2 million copies in Germany in its first year and over 2.5 million copies by April 1930 with translations in over 20 different languages.
- Has 2 "sequels"—Der Weg Zurück (the Road Back) in 1931 and Drei Kameraden (3 comrades) in 1937 which continued to explore the devastation wrought upon soldiers returning from war.
- Titled Im Westen Nichts Neues in German editions, the phrase literally means Nothing New in the West. For English language editions, translator Arthur Wesley Wheen altered the title to the familiar All Quiet on the Western Front, which was meant to be reflective on military dispatches like the one that ends the narrative.
- The Nazi's rise to power made Remarque an increasingly unpopular figure and his books were quickly viewed as slanderous to the Nazi ideals of home and fatherland. Remarque's works became a prime target for Joseph Goebbels' book burnings in Berlin in 1933. Both the book and the film were banned in Germany.
- According to Remarque, Putnam publishers in the United States refused to publish a book by a "Hun."
- Little, Brown and Company in New York did publish the book in 1929 but only after deleting words and two entire episodes so as to not "be in conflict with federal and Massachusetts law."
- In 1929 in Chicago and Boston, the book was banned on grounds of obscenity. The book has been challenged on the grounds of it being too violent, for its depiction of war as brutal and dehumanizing, for a hospital scene involving sex between a married couple, and for another scene related to latrines. It was not until 1975 that American editions were edited to include the original scenes.
- Most recent challenges were in 1982 in Canada and Oregon in 1993.
- The book was the basis for the 1930 Academy Award winning film All Quiet on the Western Front directed by Lewis Milestone and produced by Carl Laemmle, Jr. The film won 2 Oscars for Best Picture and Best Director. It was the first American "talkie" to be widely honored. The first public performance of the film in Germany ended in riots and it was quickly banned—although after editing, the film was allowed to be shown in Germany in 1931.
- In addition to other novels of 1929 such as Ernest Hemingway's A Farewell to Arms, Richard Aldington's Death of a Hero and Frederick Manning's The Middle Parts of Fortune, similar books censored or banned include: Red Badge of Courage by Stephen Crane, Andersonville by MacKinley Cantor and The Things they Carried by Tim O'Brien.



The author in his German Uniform with his dog, Wolf, ca. 1918. Photo from the Fales Library, New York University exhibition: A Time to Live: The Life and Writings of Erich Maria Remarque. Found online at:
<http://www.nyu.edu/library/bobst/research/fales/exhibits/remarque/documents/photo/wolf2.html>

Erich Maria Remarque—a Brief Biography

- Born June 22, 1898 in Osnabrück, Germany as Erich Paul Remark. In 1924, he would change his name to Erich Maria Remarque (an older spelling of his family's name combined with his mother's middle name).
- He was an academically gifted student who dreamed of becoming a concert pianist.
- He was conscripted into the German army in November 1916 at age 18 and was sent to an area in Belgium that saw some of the most intense battles of World War I. On July 31, 1917, he was injured at the Battle of Passchendaele and suffered severe injuries to his right arm, left leg and neck.
- After the war, he had a variety of jobs, including a tombstone engraver, a test-car driver and a street vendor. He eventually obtained a position as a cultural and sports writer with *Sport im Bild*, a sports periodical.
- He released his first novel in 1920, *Die Traumbude* (The Dream Room) which he had started in his teens, but it was not a success.
- 1925 marries Jutta Ilse Zambona (or Sambona), their rocky relationship was fraught with numerous bouts with infidelity on both sides and would end in divorce twice in 1931 and 1958.
- In 1931, he leaves Germany for Switzerland and after his citizenship is revoked by Germany, he comes to the United States in 1938 where he continues to write novels such as *Flotsam* (1941) and *Arc de Triomphe* (1945) which sells 5 million copies.
- In 1943, his youngest sister Elfriede Scholz is arrested and tried for her "comments against the war," though it was widely assumed that she was targeted as a stand-in for her brother. She was decapitated in December.
- He becomes a naturalized citizen of the United States in 1947, even writing a manual for the political re-education of Germans for use by the Allied Forces after the war.
- Returns to Switzerland in 1948 and continues to be an active anti-war writer and becomes heavily involved in Hollywood, writing plays and screenplays and romancing actresses such as Marlene Dietrich and Greta Garbo. After his second divorce from Jutta, he marries the actress Paulette Goddard in 1958.
- Dies on September 25, 1970 in Locarno, Switzerland. After his death, the childless Goddard bequeathed 20 million to the New York University to establish The Remarque Institute for the Study of European Affairs.