

C.R. Owen

Review Article

Erich Maria Remarque Bibliography

Tilman Westphalen et al: *Erich Maria Remarque Bibliographie*
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Erich Maria Remarque Dokumentationsstelle, Universität Osnabrück
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When Remarque's famous novel *All Quiet on the Western Front* was published, at first serialized in the Ullstein paper *Vossische Zeitung* in 1928, there were over 200 war novels, diaries, eyewitness accounts etc. in print in Germany. Publishers advertised for more manuscripts from "front line soldiers" for publication, and then told those who submitted them: "Nobody wants to read that kind of literature anymore." Well, over three million did when Remarque's book appeared in 1929 in German, and the total figure including all translations may well have reached the 10-15 million range.

Remarque's novel was initially turned down by Fischer and hence went to Ullstein. After it proved a phenomenal success, Fischer resigned as senior director of Fischer Verlag, exclaiming that anyone who commits such a blunder has no business staying at the head of any publishing firm.

The novel's success was immediate and aroused the instantaneous wrath of the budding Nazi Party and of Goebbels in particular, who did everything in his power to get it banned in Germany. On May 10, 1933 it was identified as one of the select works to be burned by the Nazi goons at the behest of that "clumpfooted pathological liar" as Erich Kästner referred to him. The U.S.-made film had already been banned before this ludicrous spectacle was staged, Remarque by that time having moved to Switzerland. Later Goebbels realized that he had made a grave mistake in persecuting Remarque: after all, he had

become a figure of international prominence, he was not Jewish, and in fact he could be made "respectable" again. Goebbels offered Remarque the Prussian Ministry of Culture if he were to disavow any part in the production of the film *All Quiet on the Western Front*. Remarque, by way of a reply, took up permanent residence in Switzerland. He spent the war years in the U.S.A., his banishment from Germany and loss of citizenship in 1938 never being revoked. The fact that he was eventually awarded the German Distinguished Service Cross by the Federal Republic of Germany is almost more of an indictment than an honour, given that former members of the Nazi government were equally "recognized."

It seems incredible, that a "pacifist" novel like *All Quiet* could cause such a violent reaction, but that it did. Hundreds of condemnatory articles in newspapers, journals and books appeared, most of them originating in the Goebbels camp. Loyalty to the party-line and political doctrine seems to be observed to the present, as there are several major German Histories of Literature in print that fail even to mention Remarque's name, and some which do, merely list him together with the "also rans." On the whole one may state that Remarque is still not considered fully reputable in Germany—much less admired than Hemingway or Faulkner on this continent, to whom he has been frequently compared, and whom he considered his peers.

It is all the more laudable, then that a few years ago the University of Osnabrück established a Remarque Documentation Centre which has recently published a 2-volume Remarque Bibliography that is nothing short of monumental. A couple of bibliographies preceded this publication, the Fales Collection of New York University, a depository for over sixty thousand pieces of Remarquiana, including unpublished works of prose, poetry and drama, letters to and from Remarque etc. made some of its materials available to the Osnabrück research team. Tilman Westphalen, heading a team of equally dedicated colleagues, has now assembled a work of gigantic scope and minute detail. The bibliography is arranged chronologically by dates of publication in each of these sections: Primary Materials, Interviews, Letters and Diaries, Movie versions, Film scripts, Unpublished Manuscripts. The secondary sources, by far the larger portion take up 260 pages, against the 100 pages of the first part. The material is grouped into Bibliographies and References, Archives, Collections, Libraries (21 pages) Biographical References and Reception of Works including Histories of Literature, Comparative Studies, Dissertations, Radio and TV contributions, Parodies, Poems, Drawings and Pictures, Research Cen-

tres, Colloquia, Letters to the Editor, Exhibitions, etc (36 pages) critical assessments, of Remarque's works (98 pages); Manuscripts of Filmscripts, Collaborations in Scenarios (52 pages) and finally Biography and Related Areas (57 pages). This listing cannot give an idea of the careful attention to detail with which each chapter has been assembled. A series of indices (26 pages) conclude this very helpful work, an essential tool for all future research on Remarque. Since all the sections are arranged chronologically, the work and personal registers at the back are not just useful but indispensable.

When collating a work of this scope certain basic decisions have to be made, and the Osnabück team settled on a consequent and consistent chronological sequence for all entries in the Bibliography. Each entry is coded as to its source and whether it has been physically verified or whether the reference has been taken over from some other source. No other comment is provided and that is unfortunate in my estimation. Even without expanding this massive resource book unduly, some critical comment might have been added. As it is, a valuable or even vital contribution may appear next to, or hidden among, a plethora of inconsequential or partisan dribble. This applies particularly to the German criticism from 1930 to the end of the Nazi Reich in 1945. Nonsense, misinformation, prejudice and plain incompetence, however, were not the exclusive domain of German critics; there are North American, even "academic" contributions that rival the worst that the Nazi hacks turned out; it would have been extremely useful to have provided some kind of commentary especially since there are some sources available that have already analyzed secondary Remarque material critically.¹

The arrangement is somewhat awkward, if one wanted to use this Bibliography for further research, which, I take it, is the primary purpose for publishing it. Under entry 1.6.2.011, *All Quiet on the Western Front*, Editions in English, we find the Crest Book edition of 1979 marked "Complete edition." It is of some significance that all North American editions of this work from 1929 to 1979 were severely expurgated and mutilated and became known as the "Kindergarten" edition; Crest Books (Fawcett Publ) were the first to issue this book in its entirety, alas still in the original deficient A. When translation taken over from Putnam's, London, 1929, half a century after its original publication. Some indication could have been provided to the effect that this is a unique edition in the publication history of this best selling novel and the only English one in the USA that is complete. Under Section 5 (p. 97) we find the heading "Unpublished Manu-

scripts,” with a subsequent listing including some published works. Subsection 5.2.2. “Journalistic and Political Texts” appears to list some unpublished works as do the subsections 5.2.3 and 5.2.4.

Section 6.3 (“Remarque in Reference Works”) should have indicated that by far the majority of these publications are full of misinformation which, once having appeared in print, became the authority for a nearly unsurvivable subsequent permutation of mistakes, false claims and deception. Remarque’s own publishers may have contributed in part some of these spurious statements by advertising highly inflated publication figures in order to increase sales even further. Remarque almost never entered into discussion with writers, journalists or editors who more often than not wrote and published fiction around Remarque, rather than facts. Neither did he ever correct such erroneous statements. It is interesting to follow some of these fairy tales, such as the invention of a journalist who claimed that Remarque was a pseudonym and that his real name was Kramer (Remarque spelled backward). The story caught on and dozens of articles subsequently cited this not very ingenious quip as fact—some with the further elaboration that “Kramer” was really a Hungarian Jew! In *All Quiet on the Western Front* the protagonist, Paul Bäumer, volunteers for active duty at age 16 in 1916 and is sent into battle at age 17; he is killed one year later. Remarque was drafted into the army on November 5, 1916 at the age of 18, and discharged 2 years later. Since it became common to identify Bäumer with Remarque, i.e. to consider *All Quiet on the Western Front* an autobiography, subsequent confusion was unavoidable. These dates are interchanged freely by journalists and interviewers, with the result that ultimately they were not even sure of Remarque’s age. The proliferation of “Remarque volunteered at age 16” and “subsequently saw four years of warfare” and other nonsense should be pointed out in the appropriate entries. These illustrations must suffice to indicate the unreliability of much of the secondary literature and the caution one must exercise in relying on such printed statements as well as the need to indicate their unreliability in the bibliographical references.

Perhaps one of the most useful sections is the one dealing with resource materials, aids and research centres (Section 6). It is pleasing to note that important theses are being written at the University of Osnabrück and elsewhere, and that unexpected caches of Remarque materials have been discovered, and there are prospects of more important letters to come to light (Section 6.5.2). The Fales Collection of New York University holds some vital material, much of which is

still unsorted but which, nevertheless is being microfilmed for the Osnabrück centre; most important of all, the depository contains the diaries of Remarque which will remain sealed until after the death of Paulette-Goddard Remarque, (Sections 3.3 and 10.15). There is plenty of scope for future scholarship to research as yet unknown aspects of Remarque's life and works. And that seems perhaps surprising after perusing the bibliography under discussion, which might persuade one that the topic has been exhausted. Not so: the bibliography is exhaustive, the subject is not.

Professor T. Westphalen and his dedicated research team are to be congratulated on this mammoth publication. It should become a standard work for every reference collection.

NOTES

1. For readers of German, H. Rüter's book *Im Westen nichts Neues ein Bestseller der Kriegsliteratur im Kontext* (Paderborn: Schöningh, 1980) is indispensable. C.F. Barker and Wm. Last's excellent contribution: *Erich Maria Remarque* (London: W. Wolff, 1979) and my own *E.M.R. A Critical Bio-Bibliography* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1984) will supply extensive critical analysis. The two dissertations from the G.D.R. are most useful as bibliographical aids and critical analysis: J. Brautzsch, "Untersuchungen über die Publikumswirksamkeit der Romane 'Im Westen nichts Neues' und 'Der Weg Zurück von Erich Maria Remarque vor 1933'" (Phil. Diss. Potsdam, 1969) and I. Wegner: "Die Problematik der 'verlorenen Generation' und ihre epische Gestaltung im Romanwerk Erich Maria Remarques" (Phil. Diss. Jena, 1965).