# *Im Westen nichts Neues* and *Johnny Got His Gun*: The Success of the First World War Anti-War Novel through Controversy and Depictions of Pain

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**Abstract**

Literature, films, and even the daily news often address war, an event that unfortunately has been a constant in modern society. Large scale, modern warfare with global involvement began with the First World War, and following the war, a global war literature boom occurred. Two bestselling novels whose anti-war themes still resound today, *Im Westen nichts Neues* (*All Quiet on the Western Front*) by Erich Maria Remarque and *Johnny Got His Gun* by Dalton Trumbo, emerged from this sea of literature. Both of these novels focus on the pain that is inherent in warfare and its detrimental effects on society as well as on individual soldiers. The graphic imagery and anti-war sentiment that is present in these novels has generated controversy throughout their histories; however, the popularity of both works has prevailed, and Remarque and Trumbo's novels remain two of the most referenced in academic disciplines as well as in popular culture. This thesis explores the long-lasting success of these two works as anti-war novels, as measured by initial sales and popularity as well as by a plethora of mass cultural adaptations.

## Table of Contents

Chapter 1: Introduction……1

1. Historical and Literary Context of the First World War……1
2. The Lasting Power of the Anti-War Novel……5
3. *Im Westen nichts Neues* and *Johnny Got His Gun*: So Much More than First World War Anti-War Novels……8
4. Outline of the Following Chapters……...10

Chapter 2: Textual and Thematic Analysis……11

1. Pain as *the* Central Theme……...11
2. The Lives and Masterpieces of Remarque and Trumbo……..14
3. The Writing Style……16
4. The Young Protagonists and Blameworthy Adults……23
5. The War Experience or Lack Thereof……28
6. The Injurious Nature of Warfare……..31
7. The Hopeless Ending and the Anti-War Message……...36

Chapter 3: Reception and Canonization Analysis……39

1. From Censorship to Canonization……...39
2. Laying the Groundwork for the Canonization of *Im Westen nichts Neues*: Marketing, Timing, Content, and Controversy……...42
3. *All Quiet on the Western Front* (1930): A Technological Wonder……49
4. Laying the Groundwork for the Canonization of *Johnny Got His Gun*: Shock Factor and Relation to the Vietnam War……56
5. *Johnny Got His Gun* (1971): Increased Hopelessness……60
6. Canonization: A Delicate Mix of Factors……65

Chapter 4: Conclusion……67

1. Historicizing the First World War……...67
2. What Differentiates These Two Novels from Other Bestselling Anti-War Novels?...68
3. Concluding Remarks……74

List of References……..75

Vita……82

## Chapter 1: Introduction

### 1. Historical and Literary Context of the First World War

In Elisabeth Krimmer's recent thematic and theoretical study about German literary war representations, she fittingly describes Erich Maria Remarque's masterpiece with shockingly violent imagery: "*Im Westen nichts Neues* contains horrifying accounts of the debilitating injuries incurred during battle and of the many atrocious ways of dying in combat. Bodies keep running even after their heads have been torn off. They run without feet on splintering stumps. Severed hands, arms, and legs are strewn across the battlefield. Soldiers kill their opponents by splitting their faces with spades."[1] In a similarly graphic, yet far more individualized manner, Trumbo's *Johnny Got His Gun* tells the story of one soldier who has sustained every form of war injuries but tragically still survives. Both of these works focus on injury and pain as a result of war. Yet what Remarque addresses through pure quantity, Trumbo deals with by specificity. In the critic A.F. Bance's description, "none of the war-books avoids horrors, but Remarque heaps them up unmercifully…"[2] throughout the book in wide variety of situations. By contrast, Jonathan E. Abel contributes that Trumbo's "…text cannot exist without the body, without the violence committed to the body…"[3] because this soldier's injuries are the center point of the novel – the reason why he discusses war.

For all of their differences, however, both of these works point to a basic truth of war. As Elaine Scarry writes in *The Body in Pain*, "the main purpose and outcome of war is injuring,"[4] yet it is this pain and injury and depictions thereof that evoke feelings of aliveness in the injured

[1] Elisabeth Krimmer, *The Representation of War in German Literature: From 1800 to the Present* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 95.
[2] A.F. Bance, "'Im Westen nichts Neues': A Bestseller in Context," *The Modern Language Review* 72 (1977): 363.
[3] Jonathan E. Abel, "Canon and Censor: How War Wounds Bodies of Writing," *Comparative Literature Studies* 42 (2005): 80.
[4] Elaine Scarry, *The Body in Pain* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985), 63.

and in the observer.[5] Neither Remarque nor Trumbo shy away from describing pain, bodily destruction, or the horrors of war, and as a result, they directly address the truth of war, at least as Scarry defines it, that injury is not merely war's unfortunate byproduct, but rather, even more dreadfully, the immediate product and the way it accomplishes future goals.[6] Referencing Scarry's research on pain, Jonathan E. Abel discusses literary depictions of death and injury in the midst of warfare in regard to censorship and canonization. In a claim that applies very directly to both Remarque and Trumbo, Abel argues that "literary representations that blur categorical binaries and challenge received notions of the distinctions between the 'speakable' and the 'unspeakable' or the 'living' and the 'dead' are taboo in periods when the maintenance of such distinctions is most important and canonical when the blurring of such distinctions is favored."[7] Although *Im Westen nichts Neues* and *Johnny Got His Gun* appeared within the context of vastly different political climates in Germany and America that have also significantly changed since the books' publications, this exposure of and focus on the liminal status of the body in the realm of war literature led not to only the censorship of these two bestselling[8] First World War novels. It also led to their literary canonization.

*Im Westen nichts Neues* and *Johnny Got His Gun* both respond very directly to The First World War and its uniquely modern character. The First World War began on July 28, 1914 with the shooting of the Austro-Hungarian Archduke Franz Ferdinand and ended over four years later on November 11, 1918 with a ceasefire.[9] The battles between the Central Powers (the German Empire and Austria-Hungary) and the Allied Powers (Russia, Great Britain, France, and

[5] Ibid., 22.
[6] Ibid., 72-73.
[7] Abel, "Canon and Censor," 76.
[8] Bance, "Bestseller in Context," 359. and "Dalton Trumbo's *Johnny Got His Gun*," accessed January 20, 2011, http://www.johnnygothisgunthemovie.com/home.htm.
[9] For historical background reading about the First World War, I used these two books which are cited fully in my list of references: John Keegan's *The First World War* and Michael Howard's *The First World War*.

later the United States) spanned the European continent as well as the Near East, Africa, and East Asia. By war's end, twenty-five nations had participated, and around seventeen million people died. The First World War was the first war in history to employ, on a large scale, massive, modern machinery like artillery, submarines, airplanes, aircraft carriers, and tanks, as well as chemical weaponry like poison gas.

After the armistice, a worldwide anti-war literature boom occurred. The twentieth century began with "…the dream of a machine, the whole romance of industrial technology that enchanted the cultural imagination of the nineteenth century, all of this was concluded and grimly disproved in the awful outcomes of mass mechanized warfare."[10] In the scale of its destruction, the First World War was like no war before and foreshadowed the nature of modern warfare to come. This radical change in combat affected the literary responses as well. According to Santanu Das, literature from this period was more personal and physical than literature from previous wars and from the Second World War. "Modern technological warfare may be said to represent the ultimate de-personalisation and perversion of this intimate sense as bodies are ripped apart by industrial weaponry."[11] Writing became a very personal, tactile form of therapy to deal with an impersonal and highly destructive form of warfare and to preserve what was destroyed by the war. Cultural and literary trends also account for the outpouring of war literature during and after the First World War. Previous pan-continental, European wars were rarely the subject of literature, but rather, the subject of newspaper reports.[12] In addition, pervading themes of modernism in literature and art during this period, the not too distant

[10] Vincent Sherry, ed., *The Cambridge Companion to Literature of the First World War* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 1.
[11] Santanu Das, *Touch and Intimacy in First World War Literature* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 23.
[12] A.D. Harvey, "First World War Literature," *History Today* 43 (1993): 11.

romantic themes of war that still lingered from the parade filled beginnings of the First World War, as well as the success of Tolstoy's masterpiece fostered an ideal environment for anti-war literature. In an overview of First World War literature, A.D. Harvey claims that "…a good case can be made for arguing that when the First World War began, the literary and intellectual climate was much more favourable to war literature than in any earlier period. Tolstoy's *War and Peace*, with its graphic evocations of combat and its interweaving of peacetime preoccupations and wartime catastrophes, was internationally admired as one of the world's greatest novels – perhaps *the* greatest – and was still recent enough to suggest imitation."[13] The nature of modern warfare coupled with the cultural environment of the pre-war era as well as the large amount of people and nations involved in the First World War explain the boom of the war literature genre.

Amid a strong wave of pacifism, a diverse group of authors produced more anti-war literature than had ever before been produced. At the same time, nationalistic, war-glorifying works that portrayed what George L. Mosse defined as "The Myth of the War Experience"[14] certainly flourished in this period as well. However, the anti-war works enjoyed more popularity, at least commercially.[15] Most of the literature came from Europe due to the large amount of European nations involved as well as the continent as the central point of the war.[16] North American authors also produced anti-war literature, but not nearly as much as their

[13] Ibid.

[14] Defined and explained by George L. Mosse: "The reality of the war experience came to be transformed into what one might call the Myth of the War Experience, which looked back upon the war as a meaningful and even sacred event. This vision of the war developed, above all, though not exclusively, in defeated nations, where it was so urgently needed. The Myth of the War Experience was designed to mask war and to legitimize the war experience…" See George L. Mosse, *Fallen Soldiers: Reshaping the Memory of the World Wars* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990), 7.

[15] See sales figures in footnote 21 as a measure of popularity.

[16] In the European realm, I will concentrate on Erich Maria Remarque's *Im Westen nichts Neues* (*All Quiet on the Western Front*) as well as Arnold Zweig's *Der Streit um den Sergeanten Grischa* (*The Case of Sergeant Grischa*), Henri Barbusse's *Le Feu* (*Under Fire*), and Ernst Jünger's *In Stahlgewittern* (*Storm of Steel*). The most famous English works are poetry and thus fall outside of the scope of this thesis. In the North American realm, I will concentrate on Dalton Trumbo's *Johnny Got His Gun*, Ernest Hemingway's *A Farewell to Arms*, John Dos Passos's *Three Soldiers*, and Charles Yale Harrison's *Generals Die in Bed*.

European counterparts. However, the themes in these works are quite similar; many authors drew upon their own personal experiences of the war and wrote about the futility and pointlessness of war, the evil power of the leaders and of the state, the camaraderie between the soldiers, and their difficulties with readjusting to normal life after the war. This type of literature was extremely popular in the years following the war, but there are only a few works that still today continue to enjoy recognition through literary canonization and pop-culture references, namely *Im Westen nichts Neues* (*All Quiet on the Western Front*) by Erich Maria Remarque and *Johnny Got His Gun* by Dalton Trumbo.

No other anti-war or even pro-war works concerning the First World War have been adapted as many times and as many different ways as *Im Westen nichts Neues* and *Johnny Got His Gun*. Their popularity persists because pain and violence are constants in wars, and these works function as anti-war chameleons, ready to adapt to the current anti-war message in a manner culturally fitting of the times. Metallica certainly did not reference *A Farewell to Arms* in their music video for the song "One," but they did reference *Johnny Got His Gun*.[17] Daniel Radcliffe, who famously portrayed Harry Potter, is not starring in the third remake of *Le Feu* (*Under Fire*), but he is starring in the third remake of *All Quiet on the Western Front*, coming out in 2012.[18]

**2. The Lasting Power of the Anti-War Novel**

Themes and depictions of the inevitable violence and pain associated with warfare unite a broad spectrum of works that fall into the war literature genre. This war literature genre includes

[17] "Dalton Trumbo's *Johnny Got His Gun*."
[18] "Daniel Radcliffe to Star in New All Quiet on the Western Front," *The Telegraph*, June 24, 2010, accessed January 20, 2011, http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/newstopics/celebritynews/7850861/Daniel-Radcliffe-to-star-in-new-All-Quiet-on-the-Western-Front.html.

both anti-war works and works that glorify war and nationalism. Both anti and pro-war literature appeared in many forms as well, namely, poems and novels; however, the anti-war novels from the First World War remain the most widely-read and popular works from this era. Despite thousands upon thousands of war poems, their importance today has waned. Literary historian Catherine W. Reilly lists 2,225 English poets alone, and "…scarcely a dozen are remembered, and perhaps fewer than a dozen have any real claim to be added to anthologies."[19] Mediocre literary quality in general, a limited scope of narrative warfare, and unavailability in other languages reduces not only readership but also the ability of a single poem to stand alone as a symbol or representation of a First World War experience. The prevalence and importance of poetry and verse also faded out as distance from the nineteenth century increased. These transitions in literary trends as well as a climate of widespread anti-war sentiment following both World Wars explain the staying power of the anti-war novel as well.

The signing of the Kellogg-Briand Pact in 1928, denouncing non-defensive war as an instrument of foreign policy, for instance, signified a widespread anti-war feeling mirrored by the literature of the time. Also, after seeing Remarque's success with *Im Westen nichts Neues*, many authors attempted to capitalize on this heightened anti-war boom and write their own version of the anti-war novel.[20] And although nationalistic works certainly still existed and rode the popularity wave of renewed interest in the First World War, especially in Germany and also in the rest of Western Europe, these works were routinely outsold by their anti-war counterparts.[21] But following the Second World War German nationalistic themes became taboo

[19] Harvey, "First World War Literature," 11.
[20] Modris Eksteins, "*All Quiet on the Western Front* and the Fate of a War," *Journal of Contemporary History* 15 (1980): 343.
[21] See Donald Ray Richards, *The German Bestseller in the Twentieth Century; a Complete Bibliography and*

and associated with the Nazi regime. "In Germany and Italy there were writers who had major reputations in the 1920s and 1930s but whose standing has been radically affected by the downfall of the German and Italian dictatorships in the 1940s."[22] The political climate in Germany following the Second World War sentenced many nationalistic, pro-war works into literary oblivion and dampened the popularity of others, like those of Ernst Jünger,[23] whose novel *In Stahlgewittern* (*Storm of Steel*) had rarely garnered positive, content-based reception in America[24] and was not even wildly popular in Germany in the period immediately following the war.[25] Finally, anti-war novels from the First World War whose content could be applied to future wars continually renewed their popularity. The First World War served as a blueprint, albeit an inexact one, for the narrative of all future modern wars – the West versus the East from the First World War, with many remaining alliances holding strong throughout the Second World War; Capitalism versus Communism throughout the Cold War and into the Vietnam era, and most recently, "Democracy and Freedom" versus "Terrorism" during the modern wars in the Middle East. These wars following the First World War all share a large reliance on modern technology in warfare as well as large-scale, global involvement. "The many dreads of the twentieth century find their prime type and defining instance in the four years (and more) of stalemated trench warfare…"[26] First World War anti-war literature that still applies to the wars

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*Analysis, 1915-1940* (Berne: Herbert Lang, 1968), 55, 62, and 84. By 1940 around 60,000 copies of *In Stahlgewittern* had been sold, and by 1931 around 155,000 copies of Ludwig Renn's *Krieg* (*War*) had been sold. Both of these anti-war works pale in comparison to *Im Westen*, which had sold 900,000 copies before the end of 1929.

[22] Harvey, "First World War Literature," 11.

[23] Elliot Yale Neaman, "Warrior or Esthete? Reflections on the Jünger Reception in France and Germany," *New German Critique* 59 (1993): 129.

[24] Thomas F. Schneider and Hans Wagener, eds., *"Huns" vs. "Corned Beef": Representations of the Other in American and German Literature and Film on World War I* (Göttingen: V&R unipress, 2007), 144-146.

[25] Hans-Harald Müller, "'Herr Jünger thinks war a lovely business' (On the Reception of Ernst Jünger's *In Stahlgewittern* in Germany and Britain before 1933)," in *Beiträge zur neueren Literaturgeschichte*, eds. Franz Karl Stanzel and Martin Löschnigg (Heidelberg: Universitätsverlag C. Winter, 1993), 328.

[26] Sherry, *Cambridge Companion*, 1-2.

of today, almost 100 years later, has enjoyed the most staying power because this genre served as the forerunner for later anti-war works, just as the First World War served as the model for later, modern wars.

### 3. *Im Westen nichts Neues* and *Johnny Got His Gun*: So Much More than First World War Anti-War Novels

Set against the backdrop of the first large-scale modern war, these well-written novels present non-nationalistic, starkly anti-war themes that apply to any modern war. I propose that *Im Westen nichts Neues* and *Johnny Got His Gun* transcend the First World War anti-war genre into the much broader anti-war genre by not only exposing the truth of war through copious, tangible depictions of violence, pain, and horror, but also by providing a warning against future wars through this very violence. A parallel love story or political allegory does not obscure the anti-war message in these books; instead, pain and tragedy clarify and intensify this message and, in fact, urge the two main characters to continue living and tell their story. Shortly before his death at the very end of *Im Westen nichts Neues*, Paul Bäumer is downtrodden and alone and realizes the hopelessness of his generation, yet he still acknowledges his innate will to live: "Ob ich [das Leben] überwunden habe, weiß ich nicht. Aber solange es da ist, wird es sich seinen Weg suchen, mag dieses, das in mir „Ich" sagt, wollen oder nicht."[27] (Whether I have subdued [life], I know not. But so long as it is there it will seek its own way out, heedless of the will that is within me.)[28] Similarly, at the end of *Johnny Got His Gun*, Joe Bonham, despite being a

[27] Erich Maria Remarque, *Im Westen nichts Neues* (Berlin: Aufbau Verlag, 1989), 181. *All Quiet on the Western Front*, 291.

[28] All German quotes from *Im Westen nichts Neues* were translated using the English version: *All Quiet on the Western Front*. See Erich Maria Remarque, *All Quiet on the Western Front*, trans. A. W. Wheen (Boston: Little, Brown, and Company, 1946). The page number from the English version will follow the page number from the

faceless quadriplegic, livens at the thought of serving as a corporal anti-war symbol: "Suddenly he took fire with the idea he got so excited over it he forgot about his longing for air and people this new idea was so wonderful."[29] The pain, violence, destruction, and death that are so central to these novels and to war itself enable the authors to convey this anti-war message through their dead or severely damaged narrators. An anti-war novel without pain and death, essentially without the truth of war, narrated by a happy, uninjured veteran is simply not effective or realistic. In contrast, the readers of these two novels observe pain on a grand scale and with an individualized focus, and according to Scarry, this experience causes them to feel alive, and thus the distinction between Abel's binaries of "living" and "dead" become all the more clear. These novels have also garnered controversy through their graphic violence, harsh language, unpatriotic undertones, governmental disapproval, and censorship[30] to have a positive effect on readership[31] and to be at the center of discussions about war. But they have also managed to avoid blasphemous offensiveness that many works in this genre were accused of.[32] The books' themes and controversial nature have caused renewed interest every time war becomes a hot topic, and these novels and their warnings have served as commentary or rallying points against the Second World War, the Korean War, the Vietnam War, and the more modern wars in Eastern Europe and the Middle East.[33]

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German version in the footnotes. I have translated all other German quotes myself, unless otherwise noted in the footnotes.

[29] Dalton Trumbo, *Johnny Got His Gun* (New York: Bantam, 1970), 224-225.

[30] Nicholas J. Karolides, *Banned Books: Literature Suppressed on Political Grounds* (New York: Infobase-Facts on File, 2006), 21-23 and 266-267.

[31] Researcher George Stevens found that controversial themes were a contributing factor in a novel becoming a best-seller. See John Harvey, "The Content Characteristics of Best-Selling Novels," *The Public Opinion Quarterly* 17 (1953): 92.

[32] Other anti-war works garnered too much criticism to remain at the forefront of the anti-war genre. For example, critics claimed *Le Feu* falsified details about actual battles and *Generals Die in Bed* tarnished the reputation of Canadian soldiers. I will explore this subject in greater detail in chapter four.

[33] *All Quiet on the Western Front* has three film versions, one released in 1930, another in 1979, and an upcoming release in 2012, respectively. *Johnny Got His Gun* is a film from 1971, a play from 1982, and a filmed play from

**4. Outline of the Following Chapters**

In chapter two I will provide a brief summary of each work and a textual and thematic analysis of these works as anti-war novels, particularly, the way in which they depict the horrors and violence of warfare. Chapter three will discuss the reception of *Im Westen nichts Neues* in Germany and in America and the reception of *Johnny Got His Gun* in America up until the releases of the first filmed versions of both works.[34] This chapter will also study the reception of the films as well as notable changes from the books to the cinematic adaptation in order to show the process of canonization these novels went through. After a thorough discussion of these two books, I will dedicate the concluding chapter to a brief overview of other European and North American First World War novels and why they have failed to either achieve the success of *Im Westen nichts Neues* and *Johnny Got His Gun* or why, albeit successful, they have not been adapted as many times in popular culture. This final chapter will also summarize the issues presented in this thesis and explain why these two works continue to prevail today in pop-culture as well as in intellectual and educational discussions about war and peace.

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2008. The book version was reissued in 1970 with a new forward from Trumbo about the Vietnam War and in 2007 with another new forward about the Iraq War from Cindy Sheehan, the mother of dead soldier. Teaching journals often list both books and films as recommended reading or viewing for anti-war or war protest studies in literature, history, and international relations.

[34] I could find almost no mention of *Johnny Got His Gun* in the German press, only a TV listing for the film in *Der Spiegel* shortly after the release of the film at Cannes.

## Chapter 2: Textual and Thematic Analysis

### 1. Pain as *the* Central Theme

Although the sheer catalogue of horrors in *Im Westen nichts Neues* and the extent of serious, debilitating injuries in *Johnny Got His Gun* may seem gratuitously sensational, historical sources prove otherwise. Joanna Bourke's investigation of the British Armed Forces' First World War reports in her book *Dismembering the Male: Men's Bodies, Britain, and the Great War* shows that of British soldiers alone, "over 41,000 men had their limbs amputated during the war – of these, 69 per cent lost one leg, 28 per cent lost one arm, and nearly 3 per cent lost both legs or arms. Another 272,000 suffered injuries in the arms or legs that did not require amputation. Sixty thousand, five hundred were wounded in the head or eyes. Eighty-nine thousand sustained other serious damage to their bodies."[35] Also, following the war in 1924, the German pacifist and anarchist Ernst Friedrich published *Krieg dem Kriege*, a starkly anti-war documentation of the horrors of war that included photographs and captioned explanations of tremendously graphic war injuries. His photographs show soldiers with severe facial deformities, missing faces, and multiple missing limbs.[36] Furthermore, two mid-1930s newspaper reports--one about a Canadian soldier injured very similarly to the fictional Joe Bonham and the other about a mangled British soldier--inspired *Johnny Got His Gun*. In an interview with *The New York Times* shortly before the film version of *Johnny Got His Gun* was released, Trumbo retells the horror he felt upon reading this article.

> 'In the mid-thirties, the Prince of Wales visited a military hospital in Canada. At the end of a hallway, there was a door marked 'No Admittance.' 'What's in there?' he asked.

[35] Cited in Joanna Bourke, *Dismembering the Male: Men's Bodies, Britain, and the Great War* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996), 33.
[36] See Ernst Friedrich, *Krieg dem Kriege! Guerre a la Guerre! War against War! Oorlog aan den Oorlog!* (Berlin: Freie Jugend Berlin, 1924), particularly 187-217.

> 'We'd rather you not go in there,' they told him. But the Prince of Wales insisted, and when he came out of the room, he was weeping. 'The only way I could salute, the only way I could *communicate* with that man,' he said, 'was to kiss his cheek.'…And there is one other atrocity that haunts Trumbo's mind: a British major so torn up that he was deliberately reported missing in action. It was not until years later – after the victim had finally died, alone, in a military hospital – that his family learned the truth.[37]

In a war marked by a large number of amputations, ghastly injuries, and "unknown soldiers" missing in action, Remarque and Trumbo both personalize and simultaneously exploit their characters by giving them names, personalities, and emotional ties to others.

Remarque and Trumbo's personalization of soldiers differs starkly from typical troop descriptions. Elaine Scarry claims that the language of war often depersonalizes injury and pain by equating a mass of individual soldiers with only the name of a country, company, or general. "With the exception of periodic body counts or 'kill ratios,'" she writes, "the intricacies and complications of the massive geopolitical interactions between two armies of opposing nations tend to be represented without frequent reference to the actual injuries occurring to the hundreds of thousands of soldiers involved: the movements and actions of the armies are emptied of human content and occur as a rarefied choreography of disembodied events."[38] Remarque and Trumbo both individualize and personalize the injury and pain of warfare and show bodies suspended precariously between "life" and "death." Their methods of presentations differ, but both are equally effective as tools to complicate this dichotomy. Remarque graphically describes the deaths and injuries of many different people, whereas Trumbo narrows his view of injury and pain to a single individual.

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[37] Guy Flatley, "Thirty Years Later, Johnny Gets His Gun Again," *The New York Times*, June 28, 1970, 11.
[38] Scarry, *The Body in Pain*, 70.

*Im Westen nichts Neues* and *Johnny Got His Gun* tell two very different stories in vastly different settings, but the themes of pain and violence as well as corporeal and generational destruction unite them. These works were both typical and atypical for the anti-war genre of the postwar period. A.F. Bance describes the structure of First World War novels as typically very detailed and organized around specific battles. Most novels also examined the war's causes and the historical context.[39] Both *Im Westen nichts Neues* and *Johnny Got His Gun* lack such details and explicit sociopolitical questions and accompanying answers. Instead, these works employ individual perspectives, a marked characteristic of most war novels from the late 1920's and early 1930's.[40] However, they differentiate themselves from the masses of war literature by using the perspective of a young infantryman, not an officer, which was the characteristic approach in French, English, German, and North American works.[41] In the following, I will examine five textual and thematic elements in *Im Westen nichts Neues* and *Johnny Got His Gun*:

- the authors' writing styles;
- their portrayals of young protagonists;
- the absence of specific details in battles or the complete lack of battle experiences;
- the emphasis on graphic injuries both during and after combat;
- the hopeless endings of the novels combined with implicit and explicit anti-war messages.

This analysis shows how these novels generalize the war experience and how they represent the role of pain and violence in the destruction not only of individual bodies, but of an entire generation.

[39] Bance, "Bestseller in Context," 361.
[40] Eksteins, "Fate of a War," 358.
[41] Bance, "Bestseller in Context," 362.

## 2. The Lives and Masterpieces of Remarque and Trumbo

Before a detailed textual and thematic analysis of both works, it is useful to briefly overview the lives of Remarque and Trumbo and summarize their novels.

Erich Maria Remarque was born in 1898 in Osnabrück, Germany, and at age 18 he was drafted into the Germany army where he served on the Western Front. Wounded by shrapnel in 1917, he spent the remainder of the war in a hospital. After the war he began to write again, including *Im Westen nichts Neues* and many other works with similar themes. He fled to the United States during the Third Reich and later returned to Switzerland, where he died in 1970. He remains best known for *Im Westen nichts Neues*, the novel that first appeared in the *Vossische Zeitung* as a serialized advanced publication from November 10 to December 9 in 1928. On January 29, 1929, *Im Westen nichts Neues* appeared in book form.

A young German soldier named Paul Bäumer narrates the story throughout twelve chapters. The book begins immediately after a battle in which half the men in the company have died. Paul explains that he and many of his schoolmates voluntarily joined the army because a teacher of theirs named Kantorek constantly spoke of the patriotism and grandeur involved in warfare and encouraged their participation in the war effort. Paul's company spends the duration of the book either on the Western Front in battle or in the pauses between the battles in which they know they must inevitably return to the front. This imminent return to the Front consumes their thoughts, free time, and conversations. During battles and the pauses in between, Paul and his comrades experience the animal instinct that rules warfare and mandates survival at all costs, the loss of their innocence, the differences and problems between the younger and older generations, the difficulties of returning to a normal life without war, the desire for peace, and the similarities between them and the enemy soldiers. At the beginning of the novel Paul and his

friends survive the trials of the Western Front, but they slowly begin to die off, leaving Tjaden as the only comrade who survives the war. The book ends ironically only weeks before the end of the First World War with Paul's death and the message: "…im Westen sei nichts Neues zu melden."[42] (…All quiet on the Western Front.)

Dalton Trumbo was born in Colorado in 1905 and began writing as a teenager. He became a famous novelist and screenwriter in Hollywood in the early 1940's, but his controversial works and association with the Communist Party led to questions from the House Un-American Activities Committee. He did not cooperate and was resultantly blacklisted and incarcerated for eleven months in 1950. Afterwards, he moved to Mexico and continued to write under a pseudonym. He eventually returned to the United States and died there in 1976. Trumbo released *Johnny Got His Gun*, his most controversial work and only novel still in print today, on September 3, 1939. His work was also serialized after publication during March of 1940 in the communist newspaper, *The Daily Worker*.

The novel divides itself into two books of ten chapters each, and Trumbo uses a third person narrator to tell the story of the severely wounded soldier, Joe Bonham. In the first book, "The Dead," Joe thinks about his childhood, his girlfriend, his parents, his hometown, and other insignificant memories from his past. These scenes from his past are interspersed with scenes in which Joe questions the meaning of many abstract words like liberty, freedom, democracy, and integrity. He also questions why he voluntarily joined the army. After each trip down memory lane, Joe discovers the absence of one of his limbs or physical senses. He finally realizes that he is blind and deaf, has no arms or legs, can no longer smell or taste or talk, and that he completely lacks a face; he can only think and feel with the parts of the body that he still possesses. In the

[42] Remarque, *Im Westen*, 181. *All Quiet*, 291.

second book, "The Living," he tries to measure time, and after four long years he finally masters the ability to communicate using Morse Code. The hospital calls in government and military officials, and they ask him what he wants. He responds by banging out the Morse Code with his head against the pillow: "Take off my nightshirt and build a glass case for me and take me down to the places where people are having fun…"[43] so that he can show the masses the true horrors of war. The novel ends with Joe's sedation following the government's Morse Code response: "WHAT YOU ASK IS AGAINST REGULATIONS WHO ARE YOU?"[44]

**3. The Writing Style**

The literary critic Elisabeth Krimmer has discussed the role of authenticity in war novels, especially in regard to the injuring of the body. "When dealing with novels of war," she writes, "the question of authenticity is indispensable. After all, truth is imperative where human lives are at stake."[45] I propose that Remarque and Trumbo selected their writing styles for these specific novels to increase their claims to authenticity. Remarque's earlier and later works do not match the style of *Im Westen nichts Neues*,[46] and Trumbo's style in *Johnny Got His Gun* is markedly different from his tendentiously political novels of the Depression Era.[47] Through their violence and pain, these novels depict war and its effects on the individual body and on an entire generation, but the style of these works -- a "report" and a thought transcription -- adds to the truth and validity of the form of mediation.

[43] Trumbo, *Johnny*, 225.
[44] Ibid., 234-235.
[45] Krimmer, *Representation of War*, 90.
[46] Eksteins, "Fate of a War," 351.
[47] William Solomon, "Politics and Rhetoric in the Novel in the 1930s," *American Literature* 68 (1996): 815.

Remarque opens his book with an epigram that clarifies his claimed purpose for writing and the style in which Paul describes the war. "Dieses Buch soll weder eine Anklage noch ein Bekenntnis sein. Es soll nur den Versuch machen, über eine Generation zu *berichten*, die vom Krieg zerstört wurde – auch wenn sie seinen Granaten entkam."[48] (This book is to be neither an accusation nor a confession, and least of all an adventure, for death is not an adventure to those who stand face to face with it. It will try simply to tell of a generation of men who, even though they may have escaped its shells, were destroyed by war.) Regardless of the heavily debated truth of Remarque's claims as to why he wrote his novel,[49] *Im Westen nichts Neues* does appear as *ein Bericht* (a report). This journalistic, supposedly "apolitical" writing style that emphasizes facts and observations rather than interpretations or opinions was a popular genre of *neue Sachlichkeit* (new objectivity) literature in the late 1920s.[50] In Egon Erwin Kisch's foreword to his collection of reportage, *Der rasende Reporter*, he describes the reporter's role thus: "Der Reporter hat keine Tendenz, hat nichts zu richtigfertigen und hat keinen Standpunkt...Selbst der schlechte Reporter, - der, der übertreibt oder unverläßig ist, - leistet werktätige Arbeit..."[51] (The reporter has no tendency to promote, has nothing to justify, and has no standpoint…Even the bad reporter—one who exaggerates or is unreliable—accomplishes useful work.)[52] Remarque adapts a similarly "journalistic" writing style and allows Paul's war experiences to speak for themselves without a explicit political or anti-war statement. In its comments about the role of opinions in the modern world, the section "Tankstelle" of Walter Benjamin's *Einbahnstraße* offers a useful model for thinking about how Remarque artfully and implicitly injects anti-war opinions into his

[48] Remarque, *Im Westen*, 5. Italics added for emphasis. *All Quiet*, n.p.
[49] Eksteins, "Fate of a War," 351-352.
[50] See Bance, "Bestseller in Context," 364.
[51] Anton Kaes, ed., *Weimarer Republik. Manifeste und Dokumente zur deutschen Literatur 1918 – 1933* (Stuttgart: J.B. Metzlersche Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1990), 319.
[52] English translation appears in Anton Kaes, Martin Jay, and Edward Dimendberg, eds., *The Weimar Republic Sourcebook* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1994), 513.

work. "Opinions are to the vast apparatus of social existence what oil is to machines; one does not go up to a turbine and pour machine oil over it; one applies a little to hidden spindles and joints that one has to know."[53] Although Remarque's *Bericht* lacks specific names of battles and places, the novel still includes many military and numeric details. Paul opens the first chapter of the book by reporting: "Wir liegen neun Kilometer hinter der Front."[54] (We are at rest five miles behind the front.) He begins another chapter in a similar manner: "Man nimmt uns weiter als sonst zurück, in ein Feld-Rekrutendepot, damit wir dort neu zusammengestellt werden können. Unsere Kompanie braucht über hundert Mann Ersatz."[55] (They have taken us farther back than usual to a field depot so that we can be re-organized. Our company needs more than a hundred reinforcements.) Remarque uses this same style to convey tragic wartime occurrences. Additional commentary is not warranted because his simple, direct, concise, and sometimes emotionless style is sufficient. After an attack with heavy losses, Paul does not bemoan his fallen comrades, but instead relays their deaths through a typical military practice. "Nun ruft jemand die Nummer unserer Kompanie, es ist, man hört es, der Kompanieführer...Und noch einmal und noch einmal hören wir unsere Nummer rufen. Er kann lange rufen, man hört ihn nicht in den Lazaretten und den Trichtern. Noch einmal: ‚Zweite Kompanie hierher!' Und dann leiser: ‚Niemand mehr zweite Kompanie?' Er schweigt und ist etwas heiser, als er fragt: ‚Das sind alle?' und befiehlt: ‚Abzählen!'"[56] (Now someone is calling the number of our company, it is, yes, the company-commander…And we hear the number of our company called again and again. He will call a long time, they do not hear him in the hospitals and shell-holes. Once again: "Second Company, this way!" And then more softly: "Nobody else Second Company?"

[53] Ibid., 514.
[54] Remarque, *Im Westen*, 7. *All Quiet*, 3.
[55] Ibid., 89. Ibid., 138.
[56] Ibid., 88. Ibid., 136.

He is silent, and then huskily he says: "Is that all?" and gives the order: "Number!") Even in chapter eleven, when the war systematically eliminates the rest of Paul's close friends, he reports their deaths with minimal sentimentality. He then continues his report but never mentions them again. In its cold anonymity, this writing style mirrors the war itself; neither the war nor the novel stop on account of death. Nothing could halt the overpowering, modern processes of war and the destruction of lives in its path. Bance compares the limited possibility of political and social change at the end of the Weimar era to the helplessness of the soldiers at the end of the war. "The war in its later phase, the *Materialschlacht*, is highly symbolic of the mass industrial age voraciously devouring men and materials in a self-perpetuating system."[57] For example, after Detering deserts and is caught, Paul writes: "Wir haben nichts mehr von Detering vorgenommen."[58] (We have heard nothing more of Detering.) Paul describes Müller's death in less than a paragraph: "Müller ist tot. Man hat ihm aus nächster Nähe eine Leuchtkugel in den Magen geschossen. Er lebte noch eine halbe Stunde bei vollem Verstande und furchtbaren Schmerzen. Bevor er starb, übergab er mir seine Brieftasche und vermachte mir seine Stiefel..."[59] (Müller is dead. Someone shot him point blank with a Verey light in the stomach. He lived for half an hour, quite conscious, and in terrible pain. Before he died he handed over his pocketbook to me, and bequeathed me his boots…)

Modris Eksteins discusses the rhetorical effectiveness of this writing style in war novels. "The simplicity and power of the theme--war as a demeaning and wholly destructive force--are reinforced effectively by a style which is basic and even brutal. Brief scenes and short crisp sentences, in the first person and in the present tense, evoke an inescapable and gripping

[57] Bance, "Bestseller in Context," 364.
[58] Remarque, *Im Westen*, 171. *All Quiet*, 274.
[59] Ibid., 172. Ibid., 276-277.

immediacy. There is no delicacy. The language is frequently rough, the images often gruesome."[60] Even Remarque's style highlights and reinforces the unavoidable pain and destruction of warfare. His frequent use of the first person plural "wir" symbolizes not only Paul and his friends but rather the entire post-war generation and its subsequent destruction.[61] The only instance of extended use of the past tense and a sudden switch to an omniscient third person narrator occurs when Paul dies. Logically, Paul could not report his own death, and this omniscient narrator maintains the novel's style in its closing remarks but adds a touch of sentimentality and hopefulness through the use of the subjunctive that Paul was incapable of in the midst of the war. "…sein Gesicht hatte einen so gefaßten Ausdruck, als wäre er beinahe zufrieden damit, daß es so gekommen war."[62] (...his face had an expression of calm, as though almost glad the end had come.)

In contrast to Remarque's journalistic style, Trumbo injects more sentimentality and emotional appeal as well as explicit anti-war opinions. Trumbo's third person narrator regularly switches between the present tense in scenes from the hospital and the past tense in scenes from Joe's memory. He writes in a stream of consciousness style that frequently uses repetition and often lacks punctuation and complete sentences, literally mirroring thoughts and figuratively mirroring the brokenness of Joe's body. The main character is unable to write because he lacks arms and unable to speak since he lacks a mouth, so he must mediate his story to the reader through his thoughts, the only rational capability he still possesses. Just as Trumbo uses a single body to focus on the pain resulting from war, he also uses the extremely limited perspective of one veteran and his memories to focus on the effects of this pain on the psyche. Trumbo's

[60] Eksteins, "Fate of a War," 350.
[61] Krimmer, *Representations of War*, 93.
[62] Remarque, *Im Westen*, 181. *All Quiet*, 291.

stream of consciousness style appears like direct thoughts written verbatim on paper. In his article about American novels in the 1930's, William Solomon attributes this Trumbo's style to his appeal for authenticity. "Because of the protagonist's predicament, no other characters enter the narrative and draw our attention away from this speaking subject. The novel's few events are conveyed to us exclusively through the soldier's consciousness of them, a consciousness to which, it seems, we have unmediated access."[63] The reader can peer into Joe Bonham's thoughts even though the narrator cannot express them to anyone else because of his injuries.

The frequent repetition of words and phrases emphasizes Joe's plight and his helplessness, and such repetition appears more frequently when he is under duress. The scenes from his past and the scenes in the hospital when he begins to measure time and eventually communicate with the outside world lack this degree of repetition. He realizes initially that his arms are missing when he thinks about saying goodbye to his girlfriend before the war.

> 'Joe dear darling Joe hold me closer. Drop your bag and put both of your arms around me and hold me tightly. Put both of your arms around me. Both of them.' You in both of my arms Kareen goodbye. Both of my arms. Kareen in my arms. Both of them. Arms arms arms arms. I'm fainting in and out all the time Kareen and I'm not catching on quick. You are in my arms Kareen. You in both my arms. Both of my arms. Both of them. Both. I haven't got any arms Kareen. My arms are gone. Both of my arms are gone Kareen both of them. They're gone. Kareen Kareen Kareen. They've cut my arms off both of my arms. Oh Jesus mother god Kareen they've cut off both of them. Oh Jesus mother god Kareen Kareen Kareen my arms.[64]

[63] Solomon, "Politics and Rhetoric," 814.
[64] Trumbo, *Johnny*, 38-39.

Trumbo emphasizes the words arms, both, and Kareen in this passage to show Joe's horrific anguish after he realizes that he is an amputee and that his physical relationship with his girlfriend will never be the same. Similarly, after he discovers that his face has been completely blown away, he longs for his mother's help in a passage that again repeats words: "He couldn't live and he couldn't die. No no no that can't be right. No no. Mother. Mother where are you? Hurry mother hurry hurry hurry and wake me up."[65] Trumbo accentuates the words no, mother, and hurry to show the urgency of his nightmarish situation and how he desires his mother's comfort to rescue him from his aloneness. In addition to repeating words and phrases, Trumbo uses obscene and profane language to intensify a situation and show Joe's anger and the futility that he feels. After the government and military officials refuse his request to be shown off in a glass case, he loses all hope. "Curse [his mother] curse the world curse the sunlight sure god curse every decent thing on earth. God damn them god damn them and torture them as he were being tortured. God give them darkness and silence and dumbness and helplessness and horror and fear the great towering terrible fear that was with him now the desolation and the loneliness that would be with him forever."[66] This passage shows the result of Joe's emotional rollercoaster throughout the novel. His extensive physical injuries have embittered him against God and humanity, and he wants them to suffer with him. Shortly thereafter, the nurse sedates Joe, and the novel's style changes. At the very end of the novel, Trumbo switches to a bitter and foreboding future tense to warn against future wars. "You plan the wars you masters of men plan the wars and point the way and we will point the gun."[67]

[65] Ibid., 63.
[66] Ibid., 237.
[67] Ibid., 243.

**4. The Young Protagonists and Blameworthy Adults**

Unlike Henri Barbusse's *Le Feu*, Ernst Jünger's *In Stahlgewittern*, Arnold Zweig's *Der Streit um den Sergeanten Grsicha*, and other popular novels of this post-war period that feature officers as protagonists, *Im Westen nichts Neues* and *Johnny Got His Gun* focus their action on young infantrymen. This emphasis on undistinguished young men highlights how the war stole their youth and innocence and essentially destroyed the bodies and minds of a generation.[68] Paul Bäumer was eighteen years old when the war began, but he no longer thinks about women or a university education; rather, he thinks only about the war. "Wir sind keine Jugend mehr. Wir wollen die Welt nicht mehr stürmen. Wir sind Flüchtende. Wir flüchten vor uns. Vor unserem Leben. Wir waren achtzehn Jahre und begannen die Welt und das Dasein zu lieben; wir mußten darauf schießen. Die erste Granate, die einschlug, traf in unser Herz. Wir sind abgeschlossen vom Tätigen, vom Streben, vom Fortschritt. Wir glauben nicht mehr daran; wir glauben an den Krieg."[69] (We are not youth any longer. We don't want to take the world by storm. We are fleeing. We fly from ourselves. From our life. We were eighteen and had begun to love life and the world; and we had to shoot it to pieces. The first bomb, the first explosion, burst in our hearts. We are cut off from activity, from striving, from progress. We believe in such things no longer, we believe in the war.) The men volunteered for the army at such a young age that they had no opportunity to grow up and establish a life for themselves; their personal development into adults stopped when the war began. Remarque draws upon the classic, German tradition of the coming-of-age novel, the *Bildungsroman*, but shatters it through the war experience; these

[68] See Bance, "Bestseller in Context," 362. The French soldiers in Henri Barbusse's *Le Feu* are more sophisticated and have a broader perspective of the war than Paul and his comrades. Most American and British novels concern officers or "combatants who are officer-material." German works as well usually employ the perspective of a higher-ranked soldier. *Der Streit um den Sergeanten Grischa* is about a sergeant, and *In Stahlgewittern*, Ernst Jünger's rank increases as the novel progresses.

[69] Remarque, *Im Westen*, 59. *All Quiet*, 88.

young soldiers cannot develop into men--even though they must behave like grown men in battle--because the war destroys their lives.[70] The majority of the soldiers in this book and Remarque himself were not old enough to have something to return to after the war and not young enough to only experience the end of the war. A.F. Bance describes Remarque's characterization and how it effects this generation's portrayal. "In other war novels, characters are revealed, and perhaps warped, but not, as in *Im Westen*, entirely formed by the war situation. For Remarque's youngsters the war is a total experience, it is *the* experience…"[71] Paul and his friends realize how the war will affect their lives even if they can survive. In a lengthy discussion about their desired post-war lives, Kropp reinforces this notion: "'Kat und Detering und Haie werden wieder in ihren Beruf gehen, weil sie ihn schon vorher gehabt haben. Himmstoß auch. Wir haben keinen gehabt. Wir sollen uns da nach diesem hier' – er macht eine Bewegung zur Front – 'an einen gewöhnen.'"[72] ("Kat and Detering and Haie will go back to their jobs because they had them already. Himmelstoss too. But we never had any. How will we ever get used to one after this, here?"—he makes a gesture toward the front.) While on leave, Paul glimpses what post-war life would be like for him. He has problems communicating with others and discussing his war experiences, and he never feels completely at home.

What Remarque shows through a company that represents a generation, Trumbo shows through an individual. Similar to Paul and his friends, Joe Bonham was only twenty years old when he volunteered to fight. But in contrast to *Im Westen nichts* Neues, Joe's personal development stopped, not with the start of the war, but rather when he was seriously injured in battle. He literally cannot return to his old life or start a new one because he is confined to a

[70] Krimmer, *Representation of War*, 69.
[71] Bance, "Bestseller in Context," 366.
[72] Remarque, *Im Westen*, 58. *All Quiet*, 86.

hospital bed in an unknown location and cannot communicate with the outside world. Every memory from his past reminds him of something he can no longer do because, after the war and his injuries, he is incapable of anything. "He would never again be able to see the faces of people who made you glad just to look at them of people like Kareen. He would never again be able to see sunlight or the stars or the little grasses that grow on a Colorado hillside. He would never walk with his legs on the ground. He would never run or jump or stretch out when he was tired. He would never be tired."[73] But his injuries are more than physical; they are psychological as well. He no longer feels human and recognizes how his injuries separate him from pieces of his former life: "But he was so cut off from [his family] that even if they were standing beside his bed they would be as distant as if they were a thousand miles away."[74] The young age and lack of life experiences in both Joe and Paul and his friends intensify the damage and injury of war. As in *Im Westen nichts Neues*, the war experience consumes and destroys all of these young characters. They knew nothing of life before the war because they were indeed so young and nothing of life after the war because they were so seriously injured or dead.

As a narrative counterweight to the innocent, young protagonists, both novels introduce blameworthy characters or ideas that represent the older generation and extreme nationalism or patriotism. These people and ideologies only reinforce the younger generation's innocence and its tragic devastation through this contrast. Remarque uses two specific characters and the Kaiser himself to convey this sentiment. In the first chapter, Paul discusses Kantorek, their school teacher, who habitually spoke of the glory of war and of one's duty to country, although he never planned on taking part in the war himself. Kantorek represents Remarque's critique of nationalism, specifically how it propagates an image of war at home that differs starkly from the

[73] Trumbo, *Johnny*, 81.
[74] Ibid., 108.

daily realities of the front. Paul comments on this difference shortly after he first speaks of Kantorek. "Es gab ja Tausende von Kantoreks…Während sie noch schrieben and redeten, sahen wir Lazarette und Sterbende – während sie den Dienst am Staate als das Größte bezeichneten, wußten wir bereits, daß die Todesangst stärker ist."[75] (There were thousands of Kantoreks…While they continued to write and talk, we saw the wounded and dying. While they taught that duty to one's country is the greatest thing, we already knew that death-throes are stronger.) Towards the end of the war, Kantorek is drafted but is a terrible soldier. His extreme patriotism does not make him a good fighter, which betrays the emptiness of his rhetoric.

The next "adult" character that the novel introduces is Sergeant Himmelstoß. He trains Paul and his friends when they enter the military and often risks their safety and health simply because he enjoys wielding power over them. Himmelstoß represents the abuse of authority in war and shows how easily the wartime environment can transform people into petty tyrants. Finally, Remarque introduces the Kaiser at the front near the end of the war. Paul describes his visit: "[Der Kaiser] schreitet die Front entlang, und ich bin eigentlich enttäuscht: nach den Bildern hatte ich mich ihn mir größer und mächtiger vorgestellt, vor allen Dingen mit einer donnernderen Stimme."[76] ([The Kaiser] stalks along the line, and I am really rather disappointed; judging from his pictures I imagined him to be bigger and more powerfully built, and above all to have a thundering voice.) After this visit Paul and his friends discuss their bafflement because the principal symbol of their country and the war is an unimpressive, small man, both literally and figuratively.

Whereas Remarque uses specific characters and an actual person to widen the gap between the culpability of the older generation and the blamelessness of Paul's generation,

[75] Remarque, *Im Westen*, 14. *All Quiet*, 11-12.
[76] Ibid., 127. Ibid., 204.

Trumbo uses wartime slogans and buzzwords as well as unidentified military and government leaders to represent the emptiness of the older generation's patriotism and its exploitation of the younger generation. In the novel's second half, Joe begins to reflect on why he joined the army and on war itself. In one of his musings, he thinks about the value of dying for one's country.

> You can always hear the people who are willing to sacrifice somebody else's life. They're plenty loud and they talk all the time. You can find them in churches and schools and newspapers and legislatures and congress. That's their business. They sound wonderful. Death before dishonor. This ground sanctified by blood. These men who died so gloriously. They shall not have died in vain. Our noble dead. Hmmmm. But what do the dead say? Did anybody ever come back from the dead any single one of the millions who got killed did any one of them ever come back and say by god I'm glad I'm dead because death is always better than dishonor? Did they say I'm glad I died to make the world safe for democracy? Did they say I like death better than losing liberty? Did any of them ever say it's good to think I got my guts blown out for the honor of my country?[77]

Trumbo shows the emptiness of these statements through his "living-dead" narrator who, like Paul--dead, but representative of a specific generation--blurs the distinction between the binary of "alive" and "dead." There is no honor for Joe as a faceless quadriplegic. By the novel's end, Joe realizes why the unnamed government and military officials refuse his request to be an anti-war symbol. If they allow Joe to show himself as *the* product of a modern war, they will be unable to take advantage of other young men to fight in their next war. "Already they were looking ahead they were figuring the future and somewhere in the future they saw war. To fight

[77] Trumbo, *Johnny*, 114-115.

that war they would need men and if men saw [Joe] they wouldn't fight. So they were masking the future they were keeping the future a soft quiet deadly secret."[78] Trumbo criticizes the American government much more directly than Remarque criticizes the German government. In *Im Westen nichts Neues*, the government leaders and the older generation represent the emptiness of war and patriotism and the abuse of power, but for Trumbo, the government represents something far more diabolical: the exploitation of human lives. This contrast between the dead and wounded, innocent young soldiers and the not so blameless older generation emphasizes the pain of a generation due to their country's encouragement to participate.

**5. The War Experience or Lack Thereof**

With varied writing styles and portrayals of the exploitation of a young generation of soldiers, it is clear that Remarque and Trumbo treat the experience of war in their novels completely differently. Yet in spite of all of their stylistic and plot differences, the anti-war message is the same. *Im Westen nichts Neues* depicts four years of gruesome battle on the Western Front but does not once mention battle locations or names, whereas *Johnny Got His Gun* utterly lacks any combat experiences (with the exception of one memory) and takes place in an unknown hospital in undefined post-war years. However, despite these differences, the effect of their vagueness is similar. The war experience is generalized; it is no longer just a German or American phenomenon. Therefore, the injuries and deaths are no longer just German or American tragedies, but rather, a constant in war that affects soldiers from all nations. The divergence from nationalistic themes and an appeal to an international audience is also a marked characteristic of *neue Sachlichkeit* and, later on, simply the effects of globalization. In his article

[78] Ibid., 241.

in a 1932 edition of the *Berliner Tageblatt*, "Der Roman von heute ist international," (The Novel of Today Is International), Lion Feuchtwanger wrote, "Upon the invention of the railroad and the airplane, economic and political nationalism became senseless, and with it exclusively national literature."[79] Admittedly, nationalistic works still appeared, but these works went against the literary trends that Remarque and, later, Trumbo capitalized on.

Unlike most war veteran writers, Remarque did not explicitly depict his own First World War experiences. A.F. Bance writes comparatively about other war literature from this era, including works from Jünger and Barbusse, but describes Remarque's work as purely fictional. "The novel is not autobiographical to any marked degree, and it is remarkably free from the obligation to the documentary that is common to most war-books. Dates and places are hardly mentioned. The war does not fall into individual battles (Verdun, the Somme) but is a continuous undifferentiated process, like a conveyor belt. There is no indication of strategic awareness of the hostilities as a whole, and no analysis of the war as a historical event, such as can be found in almost any other war-book."[80] Remarque clearly reflects this "undifferentiated process" of warfare in that Paul and his friends are either engaging in battle on the front or awaiting their inevitable return to the front. This blurring of time and focus on battle occupies the minds of the soldiers because the war is a seemingly unending process. "Vergehen Wochen – Monate – Jahre? Es sind nur Tage. Wir sehen die Zeit neben uns schwinden in den farblosen Gesichtern der Sterbenden, wir löffeln Nahrung in uns hinein, wir laufen, wir werfen, wir schießen, wir töten, wir liegen herum, wir sind schwach und stumpf…"[81] (How long has it been? Weeks—months—years? Only days. We see time pass in the colourless faces of the

[79] Anton Kaes, Martin Jay, and Edward Dimendberg, eds., *Weimar Republic Sourcebook*, 526.
[80] Bance, "Bestseller in Context," 361.
[81] Remarque, *Im Westen*, 87. *All Quiet*, 133.

dying, we cram food into us, we run, we throw, we shoot, we kill, we lie about, we are feeble and spent…) Remarque even directly links a weapon of modern warfare to a conveyor belt with his word choice and then compares it to the war itself: "…aber diese Tanks sind Maschinen, ihre *Kettenbänder* laufen endlos wie der Krieg…"[82] (…but these tanks are machines, they are annihilation…) This modern, mechanized warfare in combination with a lack of historical detailing and the vague treatment of the enemy as a whole generalize Paul's war experience, and it is this generalization, Eksteins claims, that "…personalizes for everyone the fate of the 'unknown soldier'. Paul Bäumer became the individual everyman. In the tormented and degraded *Frontsoldat*--and he could just as easily be a tommy, *poilu*, or doughboy…"[83] Paul and his friends discuss the reasons for war and the French opposition but come to the conclusion that there is no grand difference between the Germans and the French. Kropp comments: "…'wir sind doch hier, um unser Vaterland zu verteidigen. Aber die Franzosen sind doch auch da, um ihr Vaterland zu verteidigen'..."[84] (..."we are here to protect our fatherland. And the French are over there to protect their fatherland.") and continues "'Richtig, aber bedenk doch mal, daß wir fast alle einfache Leute sind. Und in Frankreich sind die meisten Meschen doch auch Arbeiter, Handwerker oder kleine Beamte...Ich habe nie einen Franzosen gesehen, bevor ich hierherkam, und den meisten Franzosen wird es ähnlich mit uns gehen.'"[85] ("True, but just you consider, almost all of us are simple folk. And in France too, the majority of men are labourers, workmen, or poor clerks…I had never seen a Frenchman before I came here, and it will be just the same with the majority of Frenchman as regards us.")

[82] Ibid., 174. Italics added for emphasis. *Kettenbänder* means both the caterpillar tracks on which a tanks' wheels rotate and a conveyor belt. Note the inability of the English to convey this dual meaning. Ibid., 279.
[83] Eksteins, "Fate of a War," 358.
[84] Remarque, *Im Westen*, 128. *All Quiet*, 205.
[85] Ibid., 129. Ibid., 207.

Whereas Remarque blurs the occurrences on the front and omits specific battle details and descriptions of the enemy to generalize his main character, Trumbo completely leaves out the war and the enemy entirely. The details of the events that Joe experienced during the war are now completely irrelevant; the war has reduced him to nothing more than his injuries. Someone as debilitated as Joe no longer has a national identity, and this faceless, unidentified veteran generalizes the war experience, and more specifically, the body in pain. Joe himself recognizes pain and bodily injury as a leveling force in warfare. "In the first place a blast strong enough to tear his arms and legs off must have blown all identification to hell and gone. When you have only a back and a stomach and half a head you probably look as much like a Frenchman or a German or an Englishman as an American."[86] He repeats this allusion when he begins to realize the government's exploitation of the "little guy." "America expects every man to do his duty France expects every man to do his duty England expects every man to do his duty every doughboy and tommy and poilu and what the hell did they call the Italians? anyhow they're expected to do their duty too."[87] This generalization of the war experience from both Trumbo and Remarque shifts the focus from nationality and allows them to place the focus on the pain, injury, and horrors of war.

**6. The Injurious Nature of Warfare**

Elisabeth Krimmer argues that the body in pain as the central theme in war novels limits the realm of associated discourse and places the soldier into the role of either perpetrator or victim, but I propose that *Im Westen nichts Neues* and *Johnny Got His Gun* require the focus on this theme to show the material truth of war, unobstructed by extraneous ideologies. In a critical

[86] Trumbo, *Johnny*, 146.
[87] Ibid., 177.

manner, she concludes: "However, if a text *reduces* humans to the body, the only subject positions available to them are those of the victim or the beast. Remarque's novel cannot transcend the arena of war because it combines careful attention to the body in pain with an exclusive focus on the soldier as victim of war and politics."[88] Remarque's work and Trumbo's as well concern themselves only with the disastrous and painful effects of war; therefore, transcending the realm of war or bestializing a dead or debilitated soldier would only detract from their depictions of the detrimental and injurious nature of war.

*Im Westen nichts Neues* catalogues the horrors throughout Paul's experiences on the front – countless raids and attacks, planes and tanks, prisoners of war, amputation, dismemberment, shell shock, poison gas, death, and hand-to-hand combat. In particular, Paul's hand-to-hand combat with the Frenchman Gérard Duval shows their dual victimization and injury – corporeally for the Frenchman and psychologically for the German. Paul and the Gérard are stuck in no man's land in a hole during a raid, and Paul is forced to spend days with this dying man and then his corpse. With all this time, Paul discovers the identity of the Frenchman and personalizes his victim. This discovery of his identification, a photo of his family, and personal letters affects Paul emotionally and thus victimizes him as well. As Krimmer notes, "Remarque employs metaphors that depict war as a force of nature, as fire, water, and thunder. Admittedly, the figure of the soldier as victim or martyr is common in texts by authors who served during the last years of the war, but many of these writers such as Sassoon, Graves, and Owen also acknowledge a sense of guilt about their complicity in the crimes of war. Remarque's Paul, however, is always a victim, even when he kills."[89] Paul expresses his remorse to the dying man shortly after stabbing him: "Vergib mir, Kamerad, wie konntest du mein Feind sein. Wenn wir

[88] Krimmer, *Representation of War*, 79.
[89] Ibid., 99.

diese Waffen und diese Uniform fortwerfen, könntest du ebenso mein Bruder sein wie Kat und Albert."[90] (Forgive me, comrade; how could you be my enemy? If we threw away these rifles and this uniform you could be my brother just like Kat and Albert.) Paul recognizes that both men are victims of the war and elaborates on this theme further after Gérard dies. "'Heute du, morgen ich. Aber wenn ich davonkomme, Kamerad, will ich kämpfen gegen dieses, das uns beide zerschlug...'"[91] (…"to-day you, to-morrow me. But if I come out of it, comrade, I will fight against this, that has struck us both down…") Remarque also deals with the bodily injuries in warfare and declares that they are at the heart of war. After Paul and Albert are wounded, they are sent to a military hospital. It is there, roaming the halls, just as the Prince of Wales did in that Canadian military hospital, that Paul discovers the extent of war injuries. "Man kann nicht begreifen, daß über so zerrissenen Leibern noch Menschengesichter sind, in denen das Leben seinen alltäglichen Fortgang nimmt. Und dabei ist dies nur ein einziges Lazarett, nur eine einzige Station--es gibt Hunderttausende in Deutschland, Hunderttausende in Frankreich, Hunderttausende in Rußland...Erst das Lazarett zeigt, was Krieg ist."[92] (A man cannot realize that above such shattered bodies there are still human faces in which life goes its daily round. And this is only one hospital, one single station; there are hundreds of thousands in Germany, hundreds of thousands in France, hundreds of thousands in Russia…A hospital alone shows what war is.)

Trumbo also shows the psychological and physical injuries of war but limits the perspective to one severely wounded veteran. This emotional approach to victimization gives the reader limitless access to all of Joe's thoughts and memories. William Solomon discusses the

[90] Remarque, *Im Westen*, 140. *All Quiet*, 226.
[91] Ibid., 142. Ibid., 229.
[92] Ibid., 163-164. Ibid., 265-266.

effectiveness of this form of mediation to show the narrator's pain. "Only the most unsympathetic reader can resist being instantly drawn into the mind of this unfortunate individual. From the novel's opening to its conclusion, he is a compelling presence. As this blind, mute narrator tells us of his almost idyllic life before mutilation and describes for us his current, horrifying predicament, we feel we are lying on the bed next to him. We recollect and organize with him his past experiences, and we too struggle to keep track of time."[93] Due to the third person narration from Joe's limited perspective, the reader never receives outside information about his condition or location, and thus, graphic descriptions of his injuries are missing as well. Joe only faintly remembers the shell that wounded him so brutally, so the initial pain from his injuries is left out, although he references his phantom limbs a few times in the novel. However, his interaction with the nurses and his alienation from other human beings clearly show his horrific disfigurement as well as the psychological torture of loneliness and inability to communicate. When Joe begins to measure time, he also begins to differentiate between the nurses through their touch and the vibrations they cause as they walk through his room. "When a new nurse came in he always knew what she would do first. She would pull the covers off of him and then she would make no movements for a minute or two and he would know she was looking at him and probably getting a little sick. One of them turned and ran out of the room and didn't come back. That way he didn't get his urinal and so he wet the bed but he forgave her for it. Another one cried. He felt her tears on the chest of his night shirt."[94] Trumbo did not have to include a graphic description of a faceless quadriplegic; the reactions of the nurses show a wide range of emotions--from pity to disgust to fascination--and allow the reader to form their own image of Joe. Joe struggles the most with his alienation from others and the

[93] Solomon, *Politics and Rhetoric*, 814.
[94] Trumbo, *Johnny*, 143.

eternal blackness he lives in. Near the beginning of his hospital stay, he cannot tell the difference between dreams and reality and consistently has nightmares about a trench rat chewing on his phantom limbs. "It was bad enough to think of going on for years and years in loneliness and silence and blackness. But this latest thing his inability to tell dreams from thoughts was oblivion. It made him nothing and less than nothing. It robbed him of the only thing that distinguished a normal person from a crazy man."[95] He eventually masters the ability to distinguish between the state of sleep and wakefulness, and near the end of the novel, he dreams that he and a few fellow soldiers meet Christ in a train station before their demises. They are all playing cards and one by one describe the details of their looming deaths – a bullet to the throat, the flu, being blown up with no trace of the body remaining, and a trench cave-in.

> Everybody was still for a minute and then the little guy who had been winning said what the hell's this other guy doing here he ain't going to die. And then everybody looked at [Joe]. For a minute he didn't know what to say he felt like somebody who's come to a party he hasn't any invitation to and then he cleared his throat and said maybe you're right but I'm going to be the same as dead. You see I'm going to have my arms and legs blown off and my face shot out so I can't see or hear or talk or breathe and I'm going to live even if I am dead. They all looked at him and finally the guy who looked like a Swede said Jesus he's worse off than we are.[96]

Even the dead agree that Joe has the worst fate of the war. Remarque and Trumbo's depiction of war injuries and the resulting psychological pain that show the injurious nature of war are the focus of their novels, and all thematic elements serve to emphasize this reality.

[95] Ibid., 99-100.
[96] Ibid., 192.

**7. The Hopeless Ending and the Anti-War Message**

Although all the thematic elements in these works highlight the horrors of war, these themes alone do not create anti-war novels. The characters' reactions to these horrors and their fates determine the anti or pro-war sentiment of a book. For example, even Ernst Jünger's glorification of war, *In Stahlgewittern*, contains countless descriptions of the body in pain amidst warfare; however, he views these events as part of the inherent spiritual and mythical nature of warfare. In a comparison of Remarque and Jünger, Krimmer states: "And yet, although [Jünger] openly acknowledges these injuries, he also maintains that they are legitimized by the larger context of the war…Unlike Remarque, whose soldiers are primarily physical beings, Jünger defines soldiers as spiritual beings, thus minimizing the importance of their injuries."[97] Pain and graphic violence show the truth of war, at least according to Elaine Scarry, but the author's treatment of these horrors sets the tone of the work. Remarque and Trumbo do not glorify or even accept this violence as an "unfortunate" part of war, but instead, they cast a negative light on it through the hopeless endings of their novels and the anti-war messages within.

Paul and all his comrades, with the possible exception of Tjaden,[98] die in *Im Westen nichts Neues*. With a sense of tragic irony, Paul dies about a month before armistice. "Er fiel im Oktober 1918, an einem Tag, der so ruhig und still war an der ganzen Front, daß der Heeresbericht sich nur auf den Satz beschränkte, im Westen sei nichts Neues zu melden."[99] (He fell in October, 1918, on a day that was so quiet and still on the whole front, that the army report confined itself to the single sentence: All quiet on the Western Front.) After surviving so many

[97] Krimmer, *Representation of War*, 84.
[98] Tjaden's fate in *Im Westen nichts Neues* is unclear. Remarque never mentions his death, but in Remarque's later novel *Der Weg zurück*, the main character is named Tjaden and must deal with assimilating back into post-war German life. Critics debate if he indeed is the same Tjaden from *Im Westen nichts Neues*.
[99] Remarque, *Im Westen*, 181. *All Quiet*, 291.

horrors and the deaths of his comrades, Paul only finds peace through death. Remarque does not describe his death with any honor or military grandeur. Paul died for an empty cause. Trumbo's Joe suffers for these empty causes too and cannot even find peace in death. After the government and military officials deny his request, they sedate him and doom him to spend the rest of his miserable life unnamed, alone, and silenced. "Then he felt the sharp deadly prick of the needle. They were giving him dope again. Oh god he thought they won't even let me talk. They won't listen to me any more."[100]

Remarque's implicit anti-war statements culminate in Paul's death, whereas Trumbo fills his novel with explicit anti-war statements but follows Joe's sedation with a strong warning against future wars. Neither novel discusses the historical grounds for the First World War because these details are irrelevant to their anti-war messages. Perhaps the absence of these details suggests that there was indeed nothing to fight over. Instead, both novels focus on the pointlessness of war and the state's exploitation of its soldiers. Paul's company attempts to discuss the general reasons for war, but they can only vaguely pinpoint the beneficiaries – the Kaiser, generals, and other unnamed persons. "'Weshalb ist dann überhaupt Krieg?' fragt Tjaden. Kat zuckt die Achseln. 'Es muß Leute geben, denen der Krieg nützt.' 'Na, ich gehöre nicht dazu', grinst Tjaden. 'Du nicht, und keiner hier.'"[101] ("Then what exactly is the war for?" asks Tjaden. Kat shrugs his shoulders. "There must be some people to whom the war is useful." "Well, I'm not one of them," grins Tjaden. "Not you, nor anybody else here.") More explicitly, Trumbo discusses the dishonor of dying for one's country. "There's nothing noble in death. What's noble about lying in the ground and rotting?...You're dead mister and you died for

[100] Trumbo, *Johnny*, 238.
[101] Remarque, *Im Westen*, 129. *All Quiet*, 207.

nothing."[102] These two works aptly echo the irony of Wilfred Owen's canonical First World War anti-war poem "Dulce et Decorum est," because it is neither sweet nor fitting or honorable for Paul and Joe to die or suffer debilitation for their countries.[103] Throughout both novels, Trumbo and Remarque transform the enemy from the soldiers of other nationalities into the governments of their own countries by focusing so greatly on the characters or ideas embodying this unnamed entity and by omitting or personalizing the soldiers of the opposing armies. Whereas Remarque's depiction of a broken generation implicitly condemns war and shows its long-lasting effects, Trumbo's closing remarks combine a blunt anti-war statement with a warning. "We will use the guns you force upon us we will use them to defend our very lives and the menace to our lives does not lie on the other side of a nomansland that was set apart without our consent it lies within our own boundaries here and now we have seen it and we know it."[104]

[102] Trumbo, *Johnny*, 119.
[103] The 1930 *All Quiet on the Western Front* film and the 1971 *Johnny Got His Gun* film directly reference this poem. Also, the original title of the German translation of *Johnny Got His Gun* in 1962 was *Süß und Ehrenvoll* – the German translation of the Latin *dulce et decorum*. In 1981 the book's German name changed to *Johnny zieht in den Krieg*.
[104] Trumbo, *Johnny*, 242.

## Chapter 3: Reception and Canonization Analysis

### 1. From Censorship to Canonization

Why have there been so many adaptations of *Im Westen nichts Neues* and *Johnny Got His Gun*, and what is their cultural relevance today? The original *All Quiet on the Western Front* film appeared almost immediately after the novel's release and shortly before the Second World War began. The Vietnam War era produced the original *Johnny Got His Gun* film in 1971 and a made-for-TV movie version of *All Quiet on the Western Front* in 1979, a few years after the war's end. In 1989 Metallica produced their music video for "One," filled with clips from *Johnny Got His Gun*, as tensions mounted in the Middle East before the First Gulf War. And in the aftermath of the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, a filmed play version of *Johnny Got His Gun* was released in 2008 and a third version of *All Quiet on the Western Front* is scheduled to be released in 2012. This plethora of adaptations shows the continual cultural significance of these two novels over eighty years after their initial publication and the triumph of these works over censorship, blacklists, and bans. Continual cultural significance of a work relates closely to its inclusion in the canon. In his book about the Western Canon, Harold Bloom poses the question: "Where did the idea of conceiving a literary work that the world would not let willingly die come from?"[105] He explains that the idea of the canon originated in the middle of the eighteenth century as a catalog of approved authors.[106] Today, however, the term canon, how it is formed, and the works to include within it have become problematic. Bloom offers a few guidelines; most importantly, he lists the aesthetic value of a text and traditionally, its use in higher

[105] Harold Bloom, *The Western Canon: The Books and School of the Ages* (New York: Berkley Publishing Group, 1994), 18.
[106] Ibid., 19.

education. He also notes a work's value as a piece of memory,[107] and interestingly, its strangeness. Bloom asked himself what most works in the Western Canon have in common, and "the answer, more often than not, has turned out to be strangeness, a mode of originality that either cannot be assimilated, or that so assimilates us that we cease to see it as strange."[108]

Given that there has been no shortage of massive, global conflicts since the First World War, war is certainly a culturally significant event, and news and various forms of entertainment often prompt discussions about war and other related issues. But why are *Im Westen nichts Neues* and *Johnny Got His Gun* continually listed as important literary works in the realm of war and peace studies, history, and international relations? Bloom ultimately attributes a work's inclusion in the canon—the process of canonization—to its aesthetic quality.[109] But Jonathan Abel argues more specifically, that in the genre of war literature, a piece of censored literature later produces a different piece of canonized literature. "Marginalized, 'unspeakable' literature stands in relation to canonized literature such that there can be no canon formation without the attendant process of marginalization; no canon without censorship."[110] He continues with a similar logic: "…representations of living bodies in war literature stand in a binary relation to images of dead bodies; the concept of a living body needs that of a dead one to survive."[111] I agree that these war-related works blur the distinction between life and death, and because they depict bodies in pain so graphically, many have been censored; however, I disagree with Abel that these censored works and later canonized works cannot be one in the same. He claims that the injurious and deadly nature of warfare, according to Scarry, resurfaces in these censored

[107] Ibid., 15-17.
[108] Ibid., 3.
[109] Ibid., 27.
[110] Abel, "Canon and Censor," 75.
[111] Ibid., 76.

works. But "…the bonds between the living and the dead, the potential of the living to become dead and for the dead to resemble the living, is never entirely elaborated in suppressed war narratives,"[112] whereas canonized works solidify this link. As we have seen, both the military report of a dead soldier, *Im Westen nichts Neues*, and the glimpse into the mind of the living dead, *Johnny Got His Gun*, focus on the emotional and physical pain that warfare inflicts. Through their narrative techniques and choices of subject matter, these works blur the distinctions between life and death. Yet their continued post-war relevance does not rest solely on their status as skillfully executed works of literature of high aesthetic quality. Rather, their adaptations into film and, subsequently, the renewed interests in the books and the high sales and profits associated with them show their value as widely available material goods and the commercial elements that are involved in canon formation.[113]

Initially after their respective releases, both books enjoyed overall positive critical and commercial receptions, but shortly thereafter, massive protests by state and local governments as well as by school boards brought about blacklisting, bans, and censorship.[114] Yet their popularity continued. Military conflicts after the First World War also provided ample opportunities for renewed adaptations, which generated additional popularity and controversy for the original works. These works also bridged the gap between the war dead and the civilian survivors, with military and civilian victims solidifying this link through their memories and

[112] Ibid., 77.
[113] See John Guillory, preface to *Cultural Capital: The Problem of Canon Formation*, by John Guillory (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993), ix. He lists the ability of literature to be consumed as a significant factor in canonization. This factor is not only sociological, for example: the ability to read, but also economic, for example: widespread distribution.
[114] Both novels had a tumultuous political histories—see Karolides, *Literature Suppressed*, 21-23 and 269-271. Nazi Minister of the Interior in the German state of Thuringia banned *Im Westen nichts Neues* in 1930—see Eksteins, "Fate of a War," 357. California school systems banned the novel *All Quiet on the Western Front* in 1987 and 1988—see Karolides, 22. The school systems in Michigan, Wisconsin, Texas, Colorado, California, Vermont, and Illinois have all banned *Johnny Got His Gun* at one point for profanity, violence, unpatriotic and un-American sentiment—see Karolides, 270.

experiences. This chapter analyzes the initial critical reception of the novels up until the release of their first filmed versions and the reception of the films to show the process of canonization via censorship that Abel argues for. It also discusses changes from the books to the movies and notable cinematic techniques that intensify the anti-war messages or situate them in a specific post-war context. And finally, the mass amount of marketing and free publicity that both works have garnered through reviews, film adaptations, controversies, widespread availability, and applications to modern wars emphasizes the commercial value of these novels that also contributed to their canonization, which in the war literature realm, is caused by delicate mix of these various factors.

## 2. Laying the Groundwork for the Canonization of *Im Westen nichts Neues*: Marketing, Timing, Content, and Controversy

"First week: 'It's coming.' Second week: 'The great war novel.' Third week: 'All Quiet on the Western Front.' Fourth week: 'By Erich Maria Remarque.'"[115] The Ullstein Verlag, the publishing house responsible for the book form of *Im Westen nichts Neues*, filled Berlin with these advertisements in what Modris Eksteins describes as "…an advertising campaign on a scale never before witnessed in German publishing."[116] The Ullstein Verlag marketed the book so aggressively for a variety of reasons. The head editors thought the timing was excellent, and the head of production, a war veteran, notably thought that the book "…would be a great success because it 'told the truth about the war'…"[117] Another editor was "…'gripped by the unusual

[115] Eksteins, "Fate of a War," 352.
[116] Ibid.
[117] Ibid.

tone'…" of the novel.[118] A.F. Bance attributes the novel's initial domestic success not only to Remarque's stylistic and thematic writing techniques and the book's release in the midst of an anti-war boom, but also to the novel's marketing campaign.[119] The sales figures within the first few years of publication alone are astounding. Describing the phenomenon of Remarque's novel in a useful article about its publication history, Eksteins notes:

> At the end of January 1929 the book was published. By then about 10,000 advance orders had been placed. The rush now began. Within three weeks 200,000 copies had been sold, and within three months 640,000. The sale of 20,000 copies in a day was not unusual. English and French translations were hastily prepared. The English edition appeared in March, the American at the end of May, and the French in June. The American Book-of-the-Month Club selected the novel as its book choice for June and ordered 60,000 copies for its 100,000 subscribers. By the end of the year sales neared a million in Germany, with the Ullsteins using six printing and ten bookbinding firms to try and keep abreast of demand, and another million in Britain, France, and the United States together.[120]

But the novel's appeal spread far beyond Germany and the other main combatants of the First World War. Within three months, the novel had been translated into fourteen languages, and in less than one and a half years, the novel existed in twenty-three different languages,[121] providing at least twenty-three different countries access to Remarque's masterpiece in a very short time after its initial release. The widespread availability of this novel alone was an important factor in sales and popularity. Around this time, the Ullstein Verlag estimated domestic and international circulation to be somewhere around three million copies combined, with international readership

[118] Ibid.
[119] Bance, "Bestseller in Context," 359.
[120] Eksteins, "Fate of a War," 353.
[121] Bance, "Bestseller in Context," 359.

reaching around ten million.[122] Due to its massive global success, Eksteins describes this novel as "…the first genuine international bestseller."[123] Various marketing campaigns and the release of additional translations continued. Bance describes one particularly effective and noteworthy donation of the novels by the Ullstein Verlag. "The intensive sales campaign did not slacken: the first two thousand of the second million of the German edition were printed in Braille, and presented to blinded ex-soldiers in May 1930."[124] This stunning public relations move supplied the novel with even more positive press. The American film adaptation of the novel premiered in 1930 in the United States and abroad and certainly helped sales as well.

The initial critical response to *Im Westen nichts Neues* in Germany and in the United States was positive and enthusiastic and provided the novel with additional free publicity. Eksteins notes that the first reviews of the book were very positive, lacked criticism, and often highlighted what reviewers called the truth about war.[125] Especially in Germany, later controversies around the novel centered on this "truth." In the section of his article about the publishing history of *Im Westen nichts Neues*, Eksteins presents various domestic and international snippets from laudatory reviews of the novel.[126] In the first few months following the book's release, these types of reviews filled the *Vossische Zeitung* as well. The very first review announced the book release of the formerly serialized novel and discussed its esteem and popularity at the time. "So bekommt die täglich wachsende Zahl der Verehrer ihr ersehntes Buch, und die Dichtung der Zeit gewinnt in Erich Maria Remarque eine neue Hoffnung."[127] (The number of admirers that grows daily receive their sought after book, and the poetry of the

[122] Fritz Gaupp, "Das Buch der Millionen," *Vossische Zeitung*, May 28, 1930, n.p.
[123] Modris Eksteins, "*All Quiet on the Western Front*," *History Today* 45 (1995): n.p., accessed February 19, 2011, http://www.ebscohost.com/public/humanities-international-complete.
[124] Bance, "Bestseller in Context," 359.
[125] Eksteins, "Fate of a War," 354.
[126] See Ibid., 354-355.
[127] "'Im Westen nichts Neues'": Remarques Buch erscheint," *Vossische Zeitung*, January 31, 1929, n.p.

times gains a new hope in Erich Maria Remarque.) This same praiseworthy sentiment existed in American reviews of the novel. Remarque scholar Hans Wagener highlights the positive as well as isolationist nature of American reviews of Remarque's novel in his article about the reception of German war novels in the United States:

> There was no major American newspaper or journal that did not take note of *All Quiet on the Western Front* in one form or the other, and all American reviews that I was able to examine were positive…The German reviews, it seems—no matter whether from the political Right or the Left—have to be understood as products of the political quarrels of the time, whereas the American ones do not. This is the reason why the American reviews dwelt less on the implied pacifistic message of the book, concentrating more on its credibility and ability to persuade on a purely human level.[128]

Wagener continues by citing various positive reviews of the novel that emphasize the bluntness, sentimentality, and honesty of Remarque's book. Further American reviews discuss the international success of his novel and also use *All Quiet on the Western Front* as a point of comparison for all other war novels.[129] Interestingly, the "German-ness" of the book was not an issue at the novel's release; however, as the opposition mounted, the book's country of origin did become a point of contention.[130]

Whereas this isolationist, critical approach to Remarque's novel persisted in the United States, everything changed in Germany a few months following the novel's release. "However, as sales mounted through the spring and summer of 1929, an opposition began to organize and to voice its opinions as shrilly as the supporters. The extreme, communist left derided the novel as

[128] Thomas F. Schneider and Hans Wagener, *Representations of the Other*, 137.
[129] See Ibid., 137-140.
[130] Eksteins, "Fate of a War," 356.

an example of the sterility of bourgeois intelligence […] The book was seen as a fine illustration of the 'decline of the west' mentality," an allusion to Oswald Spengler's *Der Untergang des Abendlandes*.[131] "To the other extreme, the conservative and fascist right, Remarque's work was pernicious because it threatened the entire meaning of postwar conservatism. It is here on the right that the main opposition to Remarque…assembled."[132] The two main protests against Remarque's book from the right claimed that the book was either propagandistic or that it defamed German soldiers when it pacifistically equated the war with pointlessness and futility. The suggestion that Remarque should win the Nobel Prize for literature only fueled this fire of protests against *Im Westen nichts Neues*. The German *Offizierbund* staunchly disapproved of Remarque's nomination and released an official protest, which appeared in the *Vossische Zeitung*. They claimed that Remarque's book "[erblickt und verurteilt]…durch kitschige, maßlos verzerrte und tendenziöse Darstellung zugunsten der zweifelhaften Behauptung von der ‚Generation, die vom Krieg zerstört wurde,' das heldenhafte Ringen aller deutschen Stämme in den vier Weltkriegsjahren zu enstellen und herabzuwürdigen."[133] ([views and condemns]…through kitschy, excessive, distorted, and tendentious depictions in favor of the dubious claim about the "generation that was destroyed in war" to deface and vilify the heroic agony of every German household in the four years on world war.) Modris Eksteins cites another example of outrage from the conservative newspaper, the *Berliner Börsen-Zeitung*, which stated: "…if Remarque did receive the Nobel Prize, Lord Northcliffe[134] would have to be applauded, because Remarque had nothing to say that Northcliffe, the master propagandist, had

[131] *The Decline of the West* is the English translation of Oswald Spengler's work, *Der Untergang des Abendlandes*. Spengler wrote that Western civilization was in its twilight and doomed. He also had a grim outlook on capitalism and democracy. This philosophical worldview resounded with many in Weimar Germany.
[132] Eksteins, "Fate of a War," 355.
[133] Dr. Sven von Müller, "Krieg ohne Remarque," *Vossische Zeitung*, September 14, 1929, n.p.
[134] Lord Northcliffe was the British Director of Propaganda during the latter part of the First World War and advocated harsh punishment of Germany in the post-war period.

not said earlier."[135] Towards the end of 1929, foreign governments began to ban or censor *Im Westen nichts Neues*. The Czechoslovak war department banned the novel from all military libraries in November 1929, and the Austrian army forbade soldiers from reading the novel altogether. Shortly thereafter, Mussolini blacklisted the Italian translation for his entire country.[136] Despite the novel's extremely positive critical and commercial reception in America, the Little, Brown and Company's Book-of-the-Month Club judges censored Remarque's novel by deleting certain offensive words and phrases and completely eliminating a latrine scene and a sex scene.[137] Whereas the censorship or blacklisting in Europe was due to offensive political themes, in America, a few states and city governments censored and eventually banned the English translation of the novel for violence and obscene language.[138] But precisely this negative press and controversy about the book kept the work in the news and in people's minds.

Already outlawed in schools in Thuringia in 1930,[139] *Im Westen nichts Neues* reached its highpoint of controversy in 1933 with the infamous Nazi book burning. The Nazi Party had already advocated works that were anti-Semitic and glorified the homeland, but "am 2. April 1933…wurde durch die Reichsleitung der DSt [deutsche Studentenschaft] ein detaillierter Ablaufplan der ‚Aktion wider den undeutschen Geist' entworfen. Unter anderem war darin vorgesehen, am 10. Mai 1933 in allen deutschen Hochschulorten Bücherverbrennungen stattfinden zu lassen."[140] (on April 2, 1933…a detailed schedule of the "Action against the Un-German Spirit" was formulated through the Reich administration for the German student body. Among other things within this schedule was the planned book burnings that were to take place

[135] Cited in Eksteins, "Fate of a War," 356.
[136] Karolides, *Literature Suppressed*, 21.
[137] Ibid.
[138] Ibid., 22. In 1929, it was banned in Boston and confiscated at customs in Chicago.
[139] Eksteins, "Fate of a War," 357.
[140] "Geschichte: Auftakt zur 'Aktion wider den 'undeutschen Geist,'" *Bibliothek verbrannter Bücher*, accessed February 26, 2011, http://www.verbrannte-buecher.de/t3/index.php?id=87.

on May 10, 1933 at every German institution of higher learning.) The Nazi Party assembled a blacklist of books with Jewish authors, anti-Nazi themes, or "un-German" sentiments, and on May 10, approximately 25,000 copies of 120 different books were burned in more than ninety German cities. *Im Westen nichts Neues* was not the only anti-war book to be burned; the Nazis destroyed Zweig's *Der Streit um den Sergeanten Grischa* and Renn's *Nachkrieg* as well as German translations of Hemingway's *A Farewell to Arms* (*In einem anderen Land*), Dos Passos's *Three Soldiers* (*Drei Soldaten*), Barbusse's *Das Feuer* (*Under Fire*), and Hašek's *Die Abenteuer des braven Soldaten Schwejk während des Weltkrieges* (*The Good Soldier Švejk*).[141] Remarque's book remained banned until the end of the Second World War in 1945. But it was the strong, initial commercial and critical success of *Im Westen nichts Neues* in 1929 and 1930 that laid the foundation for its continued popularity today as well as its three filmic adaptations. On the eightieth anniversary of the novel's release, an article in the *Stuttgarter Zeitung* summarized the history as well as the cultural and literary importance of *Im Westen nichts Neues* and also provided up-to-date sales figures. "…Bis heute wurden vermutlich etwa 20 Millionen Exemplare weltweit in 50 Sprachen gedruckt. Das Buch gilt längst als Klassiker und als der Antikriegsroman des 20. Jahrhunderts."[142] (…Up until today, presumably around 20 million copies have been printed worldwide in 50 languages. The book is considered since long ago to be a classic and the anti-war novel of the 20th century.)

[141] "Bücher," *Bibliothek verbrannter Bücher*, accessed February 26, 2011, http://www.verbrannte-buecher.de/t3/index.php?id=56.
[142] Wilfried Mommert, "'Im Westen nichts Neues': Der Antikriegsroman des 20. Jahrhunderts," *Stuttgarter Zeitung*, January 30, 2009, accessed February 20, 2011, http://www.stuttgarter-zeitung.de/stz/page/1934485_0_4006_--im-westen-nichts-neues-der-antikriegsroman-des-20-jahrhunderts.html.

### 3. *All Quiet on the Western Front* (1930): A Technological Wonder

"'I hate it,' Sydney Carroll told his Sunday readers after seeing *All Quiet on the Western Front* in June 1930. 'It made me shudder with horror. It brought the war back to me as nothing has ever done before since 1918.' But then the Sunday Times' critic added that he admired the film too, for the same reason: its realism, 'its unshrinking crudity, …as colossal as the world-war itself.' And finally, with a flourish, he called *All Quiet* 'the greatest of all war films.'"[143] However, both praise and condemnation—and not the mocking sort that Carroll used—filled the reviews of Lewis Milestone's film, the first cinematic adaptation of Remarque's novel, shortly after Universal Pictures released it on April 21, 1930 in the United States and in a censored version[144] on December 4, 1930 in Germany. The film reviews in the United States and Germany generally mirrored the previous critical responses to the novel, and in the process, generated even more buzz about Remarque's novel. American reviewers, in addition to most critics from France and Britain, lauded the film for horrifyingly illustrating warfare and for portraying a universal soldier victimized by the war. In fact, the film was so well-received in the United States that it won Oscars in 1930 for Best Picture and Best Director. Amidst ongoing debate whether the film should be released in Germany or not, the overall sentiment of the reviews in German national newspapers was positive as well.[145] However, the far right disagreed profoundly, and in addition to their negative reviews and calls for a ban on the film, they

[143] Cited in Eksteins, "*All Quiet on the Western Front*," n.p.
[144] "The deletions included: the scene where the recruits in training dive into the mud a second time; that part of the conversation on the causes of war where the Kaiser is blamed; the end of Bäumer's speech to the school class; a number of scenes where the recruits eat ravenously; a scene where Himmelstoss does not join in attack but remains behind whimpering, and a scene where he receives a thrashing (the latter two scenes have now also been cut from most currently available editions); and considerable sections of the scene concerning the boots of the dying Kemmerich." Cited in Modris Eksteins, "War, Memory, and Politics: The Fate of the Film *All Quiet on the Western Front*," *Central European History* 12 (1980), 63.
[145] David Imhoof, "Culture Wars and the Local Screen: The Reception of *Westfront 1918* and *All Quiet on the Western Front* in One German City," in *Why We Fought: America's Wars in Film and History*, eds. Peter C. Rollins and John E. O'Connor (Lexington, KY: University of Kentucky Press, 2008), 187.

protested at many premières and showings. Controversy and protests already clearly surrounded the novel, but the actual physical location of a cinema aided the radicalization of these demonstrations because it provided a specific time and place to protest. Newspaper clippings from Berlin in the days following the film's release chart the crude tactics of the National Socialists in their attempts to halt the showings. The *Deutsche Tageszeitung* reported on December 6, 1930: "Bei der Aufführung des Films ‚Im Westen nichts Neues' im Berliner Mozartsaal, bei der zum ersten Male das Publikum frei zugelassen war, kam es am Freitag zu schweren Demonstrationen…Es entwickelten sich schwere Schlägereien...auch *Stinkbomben* geworfen wurden."[146] (At the showing of the film *All Quiet on the Western Front* in Berlin's Mozart Hall on Friday, which was also the first time that the public was openly admitted, massive demonstrations occurred. This turned into a massive brawl...stink bombs were also thrown.) On the following day, the *Neue Preußische Kreuz-Zeitung* stated: "Plötzlich erschienen auch überall im Saal ängstlich umherhuschende weiße Mäuse, die von Besuchern ausgesetzt worden waren."[147] (Anxiously scampering white mice that had been exposed by the guests suddenly appeared everywhere in the hall.) On the December 8, *Die Welt am Abend* described the protest situation quite cleverly with the title: "Der Krieg am Nollendorfplatz." (The War on Nollendorfplatz) "Die Demonstrationen der Hakenkreuzler dauerten von sieben bis elf Uhr abends, also über vier Stunden. Immer wieder nahm die Polizei einen Anlauf, um gegen die Schreier mit dem Gummiknüppel vorzugehen, aber immer wieder blieb es bei dem Anlauf."[148] (The demonstrations of the Nazis lasted over four hours, from 7:00pm until 11:00pm. Again and again the police began to advance against the screamers with batons, but again and again the

[146] Bärbel Schrader, ed., *Der Fall Remarque: Im Westen nichts Neues: Eine Dokumentation* (Leipzig: Reclam-Verlag, 1992), 132.
[147] Ibid., 135.
[148] Ibid., 139.

advance was only begun.) Amidst this sea of protests, the critical opinion of the far right prevailed, and the Berlin Censorship Board banned the film on December 11, 1930 because "board members claimed that it represented a threat to public order and 'German reputation' at home and abroad."[149] In September 1931 the film opened once again, though this time without ado and notably with additional cuts.[150] Eksteins notes the relative unimportance of this event. "However, the rest of the world hardly noticed—the damage to Germany's image had been done the first time around, not by the film but by the German response to it."[151] The presence of the film was once again short-lived; the Nazi government banned the film along with the book in 1933. The initial, mainly positive critical reception of both the film and the novel certainly laid the foundation for their later popularity and provided publicity for both works, but the negative reviews and bans of both initiated the move towards canonization, as Abel's model predicts. The blurring of life and death, represented by a posthumous war report that equated warfare with pointlessness, was a taboo topic during the Third Reich; however, this same topic after the First and Second World Wars was legitimate in Germany. Abel notes: "In short, the unacceptable representations banned from inclusion in the canon are considered false, while the canonical representations are thought to be authentic and real. Through the suppression and censorship of 'false,' taboo literature, canons are formed and maintained."[152] The later legitimacy and esteem that *Im Westen nichts Neues* garnered, coupled with its earlier blacklisting, resulted in the canonization of the work in the war literature genre.

[149] Imhoof, "Culture Wars," 187.
[150] Only one shot of the troops crawling through the mud was allowed. Both the scene in which the soldiers visit the French girls and the scene in which Paul returns home and speaks to Kantorek's class were completely deleted. See "1931 Zensurentscheidung von der Prüfstelle Berlin," July 8, 1931, Deutsches Filminstitut – *Im Westen nichts Neues*: Materialien: Zensurgutachten: PDF B. 29102, accessed April 2, 2011, http://www.deutsches-filminstitut.de/dframe12.htm.
[151] Eksteins, "*All Quiet on the Western Front*," n.p.
[152] Abel, "Canon and Censor," 78.

Technological advancements in the film industry with sound and special effects enabled the filmmakers to visualize and personalize warfare like no war film before had. Andrew Kelly discusses the continual significance of *All Quiet on the Western Front* as a forerunner of the modern war film through this technology. "*All Quiet on the Western Front* was a leap forward for cinema in critically addressing war and peace issues. Here the Great War is seen as it was: a brutal waste. No film up to then had shown this—indeed, had been able to show this as the time was not right and the camera was incapable, in the early sound era, of recreating the reality of trench combat."[153] What Remarque wrote of violence and total destruction in battle and about the enemy was no longer just an image in his readers' heads; Milestone's film showed a broad view of combat and he put a face to the "enemy," something most soldiers had not even witnessed due to the impersonal nature of trench warfare. The film's many battle scenes fill the screen with the images and sounds of gunfire, grenades, shelling, and bombings. The most notable battle scene takes place after the soldiers in the company are forced to spend days in a bunker, sheltering themselves from a French aerial attack. When the bombardment ceases, the soldiers rush outside into the trenches, and the director uses the first crane shot in cinematic history[154] to show the masses of helmeted men ready to combat the French ground assault. This aerial shot, with its affinities to avant-garde photography of the time, provides the viewer a perspective that no soldier in the war even ever had; it shows the extremely vulnerable position of so many trench soldiers. What follows became a model scene in the making of war films.[155] The French begin their charge and the camera's perspective alternates quickly between the

[153] Andrew Kelly, "The Greatness and Continuing Significance of *All Quiet on the Western Front*," in *The War Film*, ed. Robert Eberwein (Piscataway, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2005), 23.
[154] Jean Mitry, *The Aesthetics and Psychology of the Cinema*, trans. Christopher King (Bloomington, IN: University of Indiana Press, 1997), 61.
[155] Tim Dirks, "*All Quiet on the Western Front* (1930)," AMC Filmsite, accessed March 15, 2011, http://www.filmsite.org/allq.html.

charging French and the defending Germans as they exchange grenades and gunfire. The action briefly pauses to show a Frenchman's detached hands caught in barbed-wire after a grenade explodes directly in front of him. This image and the image of a dead body entangled in barbed-wire became iconic in war films, illustrating how war literally rips apart the human body.[156] After this pause, the actions speeds back up, and film critic Tim Dirks describes the camera shots like a machine gun, "…mowing down the incoming French troops (from left to right) in the useless charge - scores of them drop under the fire."[157] Hand-to-hand combat in the trench follows, and then the Germans begin their counter-attack, and the machine-gun like camera panning commences anew, this time from right to left and from the French perspective. At the end of this lengthy scene, the German and French soldiers are in the same position they were before the combat began, except with half as many men, showing the futility of this battle. Neither army advanced its position, and the battle lacked a clear victor; the only clear result is the loss of many lives. American critics noted the lack of romanticizing of battle as well as the film's technical prowess, which was even noted by German reviewers who did not approve of the film's content. "Der Film ist technisch zum Teil außerordentlich gut gemacht," (In parts, the film is technically speaking, exceptionally well made.) noted one reviewer in *Der Kinomatograph*, adding, "Die einzelnen Kampfszenen sind von erschütternder Echtheit...Im ganzen aber abzulehnen."[158] (These particular battle scenes are harrowingly realistic…but overall, the film is unacceptable.) The camera gave life to Remarque's words and showed the war experience and its widespread destruction from an all-encompassing perspective. "…[F]ew,

[156] The 1979 version of *All Quiet on the Western Front* and *Saving Private Ryan* used this exact image. *Johnny Got His Gun* showed the entire body.
[157] Dirks, "*All Quiet on the Western Front* (1930)."
[158] "Im Westen nichts Neues," in Kinematograph (Berlin), December 9, 1930, Deutsches Filminstitut – *Im Westen nichts Neues*: Materialien: Pressematerial: PDF (15), accessed April 2, 2011, http://www.deutsches-filminstitut.de/dframe12.htm.

even the relatives of those who had fought and survived, would have been aware of the *totality* of the suffering of the soldiers in the trenches. Those who had returned did not—sometimes, owing to disability, could not—talk about the deaths and injuries they had seen, the smell of war, the fouling of trousers, the lack sleep."[159] Milestone's film, focusing on a young soldier-protagonist who dies at the end, did indeed address all of these aspects of war and again stirred up discussions of pacifism and the point of warfare in popular culture from an angle no soldier had even ever witnessed.

Two moments, one a significant scene not present in the book and the other a technical effect at the film's end, significantly amplify Remarque's anti-war message and clearly show the anti-war sentiment in America after the war's end and its influence of the changes to the film. While Paul is on leave near the end of the film, he visits his old teacher, Kantorek. Kantorek urges him to share stories with his students about the grandeur and heroism of battle. Paul is initially silent but then, in a frustrated outburst, tells them what life is actually like in the trenches. "I can't tell you anything you don't know. We live in the trenches out there. We fight. We try not to be killed. Sometimes we are. That's all."[160] His answers do not please Kantorek, whom he then personally addresses, playing on both Owen's poem "Dulce et Decorum est" and Horace's poem of the same name that is referenced at the beginning of the film. "I heard you in here reciting that same old stuff, making more iron men, more young heroes. You still think it's beautiful and sweet to die for your country, don't you? We used to think you knew. The first bombardment taught us better. It's dirty and painful to die for your country. When it comes to dying for your country, it's better not to die at all. There are millions out there dying for their

[159] Kelly, "The Greatness and Continuing Significance," 24.
[160] *All Quiet on the Western Front*, directed by Lewis Milestone (1930; Hollywood, CA: Universal Studios, 2007), DVD.

country, and what good is it?"[161] Whereas Remarque's book is implicitly anti-war, this scene alone in the film creates an explicit anti-war, pacifist message that shapes the entire tone of the rest of the movie. The Berlin Censorship Board partially edited this scene in 1930 and completely deleted it in 1931, calling it propagandistic and offensive.[162] In addition, the film's final scene eerily and silently shows a military graveyard blanketed by white crosses, superimposed with a close-up image of Paul and his comrades marching away from the camera into oblivion. "At the end of *All Quiet on the Western Front* most of the boys are dead; as their ghostly figures march away the look directly at the audience, accusing us of sending them to their death, challenging us not to let this happen again."[163] Although the written word could convey the bitterness and sadness in the soldiers' eyes, superimposition is a strictly visual effect, and the written word simply cannot show their see-through, ghost-like bodies against a cemetery background. The image of the military graveyard is also significant because its use acknowledges the loss of life from a post-war perspective. Just as a graveyard is a place to remember the dead, this film becomes a place or a way to remember how they suffered and met their deaths. Film scholar Andrew Kelly takes this sentiment further and describes the film as a literal memorial to the war, a memorial that has helped shape the way people view the First World War. "In the end it comes down to the fact that the outcome of World War I was not victory or glory: it was slaughter and waste. This is the view of the war today, for which *All Quiet on the Western Front* is partly responsible…It is a memorial—and an ever-present warning—as fitting and honorable as any that grace a village, town, or city."[164]

[161] Ibid.
[162] "1931 Zensurentscheidung."
[163] Kelly, "The Greatness and Continuing Significance," 27.
[164] Ibid., 28.

## 4. Laying the Groundwork for the Canonization of *Johnny Got His Gun*: Shock Factor and Relation to the Vietnam War

Although the themes in *Im Westen nichts Neues* and *Johnny Got His Gun* address far more than just occurrences from the First World War, both the book and film versions of *Im Westen nichts Neues* are usually discussed within the historical context of the First World War. However, the book and film versions of *Johnny Got His Gun* are very often discussed within the historical context of the Vietnam War, and this association solidified the novel's canonization because the war fiercely reignited an interest in the book and its themes. Abel's proposed process of canonization began with this novel when the publisher put it out of print during the Second World War and the Korean War because of its taboo themes. However, these themes resounded quite well with many protesters and students during the Vietnam Era, and the book regained its popularity because of its anti-war sentiment and the international release of its film adaptation. The novel was not released in the midst of an anti-war literature boom or with a grandiose marketing campaign like *Im Westen nichts Neues*, but its publication coincided quite well with another related event. Two days later after Germany invaded Poland on September 1, 1939 to begin the Second World War, France and Great Britain declared war on Germany, and on this exact same day, Dalton Trumbo released his explicitly anti-war novel *Johnny Got His Gun*. Trumbo started to write his novel in the mid 1930's after he read about and met with maimed veterans, but financial problems, his father's illness and subsequent death, and Trumbo's preoccupation with writing screenplays delayed the completion of *Johnny Got His Gun*.[165] Trumbo finished the book in 1938 during a time in which he describes pacifism as

[165] See Peter Hanson, *Dalton Trumbo, Hollywood Rebel: A Critical Survey and Filmography*, (Jefferson, NC: McFarland, 2001), 12-15.

"…anathema to the American left and most of the center…"[166] He released it in 1939 as pre-war tension in Europe heated up and the isolationist spirit overtook the center and the left in the United States. In the introduction to his novel, Trumbo provides the unique publishing history of his work. "Shortly thereafter, on the recommendation of Mr. Joseph Wharton Lippencott (who felt it would stimulate sales), serial rights were sold to *The Daily Worker* of New York City. For months thereafter the book was a rally point for the left."[167] But Trumbo's novel became far more than a piece of literary propaganda for Communists and other leftist opponents of the Second World War; it became a popular bestseller because of its content and relation to the war at hand as well as its originality and psychological complexity. Mainstream newspapers glorified his anti-war novel, and Trumbo won the 1939 National Book Award for the Most Original Book. A 1939 review in the *Los Angeles Times* highlighted the current importance of Trumbo's warning against war involvement. "Yes, I know [the book's content] is unpleasant. But so is the thing Europe is preparing for your tomorrow. One may as well know the facts, face the truth. Perhaps the Johnnies whom the little dictators want to kill tomorrow in order to make the world safe for their necks and pocketbooks will rebel if they face the facts. Perhaps America will be deaf to the next call from the barbarians overseas."[168] Just as some American critics of *All Quiet on the Western Front* noted the warning like nature of the film, many also noted the explicit warning in Trumbo's novel. Another positive review in the *New York Times* from 1939 focused on Trumbo's literary technique rather than just his anti-war sentiment, noting: "His novel is a *tour de force* which derives its tense but morbid interest not from any of the common allurements of fiction, but from the unraveling of an unusual physical and psychological puzzle.

[166] Dalton Trumbo, introduction to *Johnny Got His Gun*, by Dalton Trumbo (New York: Bantam, 1970), i.
[167] Ibid., ii.
[168] Paul Jordan-Smith, "Books and Authors: What I Liked Last Week," *Los Angeles Times*, September 10, 1939, C6.

The solution is one of considerable brilliance and probability, and it holds the reader engrossed."[169] The popularity of Trumbo's novel persisted until American involvement in the Second World War seemed necessary to many after the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor in 1941 because isolationism was no longer working.

Trumbo himself stated in his 1959 introduction to *Johnny Got His Gun* that, "after Pearl Harbor [the book's] subject matter seemed as inappropriate to the times as the shriek of bagpipes."[170] Trumbo's novel was never banned or blacklisted in the United States, but as American involvement in the Second World War increased and the war raged on, publishers quickly put the book out of print. Trumbo received many letters from military mothers and peace organizations that believed that Jews and Communists had suppressed his novel and violated civil liberties because his book was no longer available. They proposed a peace treaty to end the war and wanted to use *Johnny Got His Gun* as their rallying-point with Trumbo as their anti-war "cheerleader."[171] But Trumbo's opinions about the validity of the Second World War differed starkly from his opinions about the First World War, and he stated: "Nothing could have convinced me so quickly that *Johnny* was exactly the sort of book that shouldn't be reprinted until the war was at an end…, and I foolishly reported [the letter writers'] activities to the F.B.I. But when a beautifully matched pair of investigators arrived at my house, their interest lay not in the letters but in me. I have the feeling that it still does, and it serves me right."[172] The publishers reprinted the book after the end of the Second World War, during which time the novel enjoyed popularity with the left and anonymity with the right. During the Korean War, his

[169] Harold Strauss, "The Body Maimed," *New York Times*, September 10, 1939, BR4.
[170] Trumbo, introduction, ii.
[171] Ibid., iii.
[172] Ibid.

publisher once again put the book out of print "…at which time [Trumbo] purchased the plates rather than have them sold to the government for conversion into munitions."[173]

As American involvement in the Vietnam War increased and the government re-initiated a draft in 1969, anti-war sentiments also began to increase in American society, particularly amongst students. American opposition to the war mounted and, this time, Trumbo felt that the message in *Johnny Got His Gun* suited the war at-hand extremely well. Jonathan Abel confirms this popularity during the Vietnam era in his a section of his article about the censorship history of Trumbo's novel: "In Trumbo's mind, a book like *Johnny* is only necessary at moments when nationalist slogans misrepresented the realities of war…the book became a best-seller during the war in Vietnam, perhaps at a time when a group with power over the text deemed the slogans of war not to be real."[174] To further solidify the novel as a protest piece, Trumbo wrote an addendum in 1970 to his 1959 introduction that directly addressed and protested against the Vietnam War by citing staggering amputation and casualty statistics in hopes of waking Americans from their apathy. "Over breakfast coffee we read of 40,000 American dead in Vietnam. Instead of vomiting, we reach for the toast…An equation: 40,000 dead young men = 3,000 tons of bone and flesh, 124,000 pounds of brain matter, 50,000 gallons of blood, 1,840,000 years of life that will never be lived…"[175] Trumbo's protest and literary masterpiece certainly had an effect on the American people; the book became a bestseller again, roughly thirty years after its initial release, and served as a "moral manifesto" and a "must read" for Vietnam war protestors.[176] Trumbo wrote and directed the film adaptation of his novel in 1971, which only increased the popularity of the book and the breadth of its anti-war message. However, in the

[173] Ibid.
[174] Abel, "Canon and Censor," 88.
[175] Trumbo, introduction, iv.
[176] "Dalton Trumbo's *Johnny Got His Gun.*"

mid to late 1970's, many schools censored or banned *Johnny Got His Gun* from the classroom due to its profanity, violence, and anti-war and anti-American themes,[177] but the novel's adaptability to different wars, particularly the Vietnam War, had already solidified its position in the canon of anti-war literature and its future use in various forms of entertainment set against the cultural backdrop of a war.

### *Johnny Got His Gun* (1971): Increased Hopelessness

"'The intellectual attack on war has been going on for a couple of thousand years and has failed. I decided one should try an emotional attack, and that is what I attempted to do,'"[178] stated Dalton Trumbo about his own film. The original idea to adapt the novel into a film began in the early 1960's after Spanish surrealist director Luis Buñuel read the work and was inspired by its themes. He worked with Trumbo and planned to release the film in 1965, but the funding ran out. Dead set on producing this film, Trumbo pitched the idea to seventeen Hollywood production companies, and all of them rejected the film as "too depressing." But in 1970, Simon Lazarus, a long-time friend of Trumbo's and other blacklisted directors, raised $750,000 for the project, and filming began.[179] With this budget, limited by the standards of Hollywood studios at the time, Trumbo saved money by directing and producing the film himself. The actors also deferred their payments, and Donald Sutherland, who plays Jesus Christ, worked for free. With the persuasion of Luis Buñuel, *Johnny Got His Gun* was unveiled at the international Cannes Film Festival in 1971,[180] where the film won the Grand Prix Spécial du Jury—the second highest

[177] Karolides, *Literature Suppressed*, 270.
[178] Martin F. Norden, *The Cinema of Isolation: A History of Physical Disability in the Movies* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1994), 240.
[179] Ibid.
[180] "Trumbo's 'Johnny Got His Gun' Is Screened at Cannes Festival," *New York Times*, May 15, 1971, 20.

honor at Cannes—and the FIPRESCI Prize—an award celebrating enterprising film making. The initial critical response was quite positive, both at Cannes and in the domestic press, with many reviewers noting the film's cultural significance in relation to the Vietnam War. *Los Angeles Times* film critic Richard Lubetzky wrote: "'Johnny Got His Gun' is a masterpiece of the decade that should, and must, be seen by everybody—regardless of political views—who is in the least bit concerned about our country and what's happening to it."[181] Although "…*Johnny Got His Gun* remains a stark and effective reminder of the horrific effects of war,"[182] more recent critique has highlighted the negative effects on the film—uninspiring camera shots, repetition, and boring narration—of a tremendously low budget and Trumbo's overly experimental style. Film journalist and director Peter Hanson addresses these issues[183] and then summarizes the film's plot, providing insight into the significance of Trumbo's directorial choices in dialogue, props, color and lighting, as well as camera angles. The film follows the novel quite closely, but it is those scenes that do not or cannot exist in the novel, filled with Trumbo's cinematic effects, that most drastically flavor the film's hopeless mood.

The main changes from the novel create a darker, more desperate mood in the film in order to enhance this cinematic adaptation as a protest piece against the Vietnam War. Just like the novel, the film alternates between hospital scenes set in the present and scenes from the past, with dream sequences interspersed. Trumbo shoots the present in black and white and the past and dreams in color, "…a clever inversion of the cinematic convention of making the past seem less realistic than the present…"[184] The black and white scenes suggest historical authenticity, like stock footage, and they also represent death and hopelessness, whereas the color scenes are

[181] Richard Lubetzky, "Praise for 'Johnny,'" *Los Angeles Times*, October 3, 1971, R13.
[182] Norden, *Cinema of Isolation*, 241.
[183] See Hanson, *Hollywood Rebel*, 185-186.
[184] Ibid., 186.

often surrealistic, exaggerated, and fanciful, symbolizing the ridiculousness of Joe's return to his former, normal life. The actual appearance of Joe's condition is once again left to the reader's imagination because for the film's duration, a tent-like sheet covers his mangled body and a large mask covers his missing face. However, Trumbo addresses the gravity of Joe's condition, this time through outside perspectives, from the medical staff where he is hospitalized and also through characters in a dream. In the novel, the reader only glimpses Joe's perspective; by contrast, the film provides the conversations and commentary of the doctors and the nurses, which Joe cannot hear, as well as a larger role for Jesus in the dream scenes, with whom Joe often interacts. Trumbo introduces the doctors with their callous remarks about Joe, the patient they are operating on. The opening lines of the film establish the pervading theme of medical exploitation of the wounded during wartime,[185] an important ethical concern, especially considering the massive number of amputations and drastic surgical procedures carried out during the First World War. The doctors' dialogue in Joe's hospital room and in a notable dream sequence exposes the cruel abuse of Joe that is latent in the book. During the operation, the doctors discuss Joe's severe injuries and their belief that he is brain dead, but one excitedly notes: "Wouldn't you say…that it's worth a year of any doctor's life to observe a case like this?"[186] Later, Joe dreams of a medical conference while trying to justify his continued debilitated existence. Amidst doctors wielding tennis racquets in the background, which Hanson suggests correlates sport with medicine,[187] Trumbo makes a cameo as the lead lecturer, discussing Joe's case:

[185] Ibid.
[186] *Johnny Got His Gun*, directed by Dalton Trumbo (1971; Los Angeles: Shout! Factory, 2009), DVD.
[187] Hanson, *Hollywood Rebel*, 188.

> War has various meanings to various persons. To the scientist, war means that he has actually been set free to accomplish his most brilliant and most imaginative enterprises. For instance, in previous wars, each injury has resulted in a very serious loss to the taxpayers—the loss of a most expensively trained soldier. Or 'fighting unit,' as we call them now. However, in the next war, we shall be able to repair and deliver that same fighting unit to the front line trenches in three weeks or even less. And all because of the radical new techniques which this young man has taught us.[188]

This scene clearly demonstrates not only Joe's mistreatment by the medical community but also by the government, a major theme of Trumbo's book. The dream presence of a witty, impatient Christ furthers the hopelessness of Joe's situation. From a previous flashback into his childhood, the viewer is aware that Joe grew up with a Christian background, and after Joe realizes that he has no face, he dreams of meeting Jesus in a carpenter's workshop. Jesus ironically is busily making crosses similar to those in military graveyards and seems slightly impatient as Joe asks how to tell the difference between a dream and reality. Hanson writes that "…the inference is that while Christ is wasting his time dealing with the problems of one soldier, many more are dying. This speaks to one of the most disturbing assertions of the scene—that despite his extraordinary injuries, Joe's is a commonplace tragedy."[189] From medical statistics, we know that this is true. Christ's impatience turns into irritation as Joe continues to ask questions, and he finally asks Joe to leave. "Since your real life is a greater nightmare than your dreams, it would be cruel to pretend that anyone could help you. What you need is a miracle…Perhaps it would be better for you to go away now. You're a very unlucky young man, and sometimes it rubs

[188] *Johnny Got His Gun*, directed by Trumbo.
[189] Hanson, *Hollywood Rebel*, 192.

off."[190] Joe goes back to his reality of the gloomy hospital bed, without a miracle, and feeling as if God has abandoned him as well. He feels completely alone, even beyond the help of a spiritual being. Joe's desperation sets up the disheartening ending to the film.

After Joe masters the ability communicate through Morse code, he meets with military and government officials and makes the same request that he does in the novel—to travel around and show the physical effects of war. Once again, they deny this request, but in the film, Joe makes a second request. "If you won't let people see me, then kill me."[191] His suicide wish shows that he has nothing to live for and that he can help no one in the future with his anti-war message because the officials have silenced him; he is completely hopeless. A nurse stays behind and blocks his oxygen tube, temporarily redeeming the medical community and God, but then a doctor enters the room and unclamps the tube. This is not a heroic act of a doctor who values life; rather, the doctor wants to continue to use Joe for medical experiments and cover up the abuse and anti-war message of a mentally sound man. He then sedates Joe, and instead of launching into a foreboding warning against future wars as he does in the book, Joe acknowledges his fate. "If I had a voice, I could talk and be some kind of company for myself. I could yell for help, but nobody would help me. Not even God, 'cause there isn't any God. Couldn't be in a place like this…"[192] From the time of the book's publication in 1939 until the film's release in 1971, two additional wars had happened and one was in progress that entailed heavy American involvement. Joe's original warning in the novel was futile and ignored, and thus, Trumbo ends his film with three epigraphs with the uncanny, slow beat of a drum in the background. The first two allude to Trumbo's addendum to the novel's introduction in 1970:

[190] *Johnny Got His Gun*, directed by Trumbo.
[191] Ibid.
[192] Ibid.

"War dead since 1914: Over 80,000,000. Missing or mutilated: Over 150,000,000."[193] The final epigraph shows the utter pointlessness of war and references, just like *All Quiet on the Western Front*, Owen's famous anti-war poem with this final message: "*Dulce Et Decorum Est Pro Patria Mori*."[194] The ending serves as a post-war condemnation for ignoring the corporeal destruction of the First World War and the wars thereafter since the original warning in the novel was of no avail.

**Canonization: A Delicate Mix of Factors**

Aesthetic quality is an integral part of canonized literature, but with war literature, a work's original censorship plays a key role in initiating this heavily debated process: but certainly not every censored work becomes canonized. In these cases, the commercial and economic success of *Im Westen nichts Neues* and *Johnny Got His Gun* attributed to their canonizations, as evidenced by their critical reception histories that mirror shifting national politics, widespread international availability, and masses of free publicity for both of the novels and film adaptations. Another pivotal factor includes the adaptability of these works to wars beyond the First World War. The analysis of both film adaptations and the key changes from the novels to the films show the flexible nature of the anti-war content. An American, explicitly anti-war spin was put on Remarque's implicit anti-war sentiment just one year after the novel was released to better suit the feelings of the American public. But even now, the annual Peace Film Festival in New York City selected *All Quiet on the Western Front* in 2010 as a crucial anti-war film, amidst showings of newer documentaries about wars in the Middle East and survivors of the atomic bombings in Japan. Trumbo revamped the introduction to his novel as well as the

[193] Ibid.
[194] Ibid.

film adaptation of *Johnny Got His Gun* to specifically address the Vietnam War and its ensuing casualties. In 2008 an educational DVD version of the play was released to address the current themes of war and history, philosophy, and nursing in the book and film. The combination of pure literary quality and the subsequent, initial commercial and economic success, reinforced by factors such as marketing and release timing, initiated the move towards canonization. The censorship and bans that followed, followed by a booming, renewed interest in both novels solidified the process of canonization for both novels. However, their adaptability to future wars reflects the political and ideological climate surrounding the war at hand and is also a marked feature of their popularity since most modern wars have been met with heavy protest.

## Chapter 4: Conclusion

### 1. Historicizing the First World War

Anti-war literature was certainly not unique to the aftermath of the First World War. Yet due to the conflict's large scale and the fact that it involved nations from around the world in combat, an outpouring of all sorts of war literature occurred during this so-called "anti-war literature boom." The First World War set a trend, both in literature and in the modern nature of warfare, and this war changed the way historians and authors view and write about wars after 1918. In his review of recent scholarship about the First World War, J.M. Winter writes: "It is true that because of the 1914-18 conflict and popular understanding of its costs and uncertain outcome, the outbreak of war in 1939 was not greeted with patriotic bravado[195] […] Elite romanticism about war did indeed take a battering during the 1914-18 war, and wartime and postwar literature helped to discredit it further."[196] But the consequences of the First World War do not concern merely historians and academics; they concern society as a whole, even today. Historian A.D. Harvey explains the lasting effects of the First World War: "We live in a world which the events of 1914-1918 helped to shape – for example both Iraq and the still not-quite-dead federal state of Yugoslavia were creations of the post-war settlement – and, more important, our perception of modern warfare is to a large extent something which has been transmitted to us by those who experienced the 1914-1918 war at first hand."[197]

Both *Im Westen nichts Neues* and *Johnny Got His Gun* are byproducts of each author's experiences with the war. Remarque himself was a soldier on the front, and Trumbo was alive

[195] J.M. Winter claims that for those outside of Nazi Germany, Fascist Italy, and the Soviet Union, war lost its patriotic grandeur.
[196] J.M. Winter, "Catastrophe and Culture: Recent Trends in the Historiography of the First World War," *The Journal of Modern History* 64 (1992): 531.
[197] Harvey, "First World War Literature," 12.

during the war, though not old enough to fight, and based his novel on wounded veterans that he met and read about. Both novels focus on the injurious, violent, and painful nature of warfare to show the inescapable destruction that always occurs in battle, and by focusing on these themes, both novels highlight the fact that "the main purpose and outcome of war is injuring,"[198] which according to Elaine Scarry is often circuitously contested by omission of graphic details. This blunt view of warfare along with, at times, politically offensive themes caused the censorship and banning of both novels at one point or another since their publications. But the popularity and adaptability of both works, proven by the multitude of adaptations throughout the past decades, has kept *Im Westen nichts Neues* and *Johnny Got His Gun* at the forefront of the anti-war literature genre.[199]

**What Differentiates These Two Novels from Other Bestselling Anti-War Novels?**

*Im Westen nichts Neues* and *Johnny Got His Gun* were certainly not the only two bestselling, anti-war novels written about the First World War, though I argue they remain the most popular and most frequently discussed in a variety of discourses: amongst anti-war activists, historians, and even in popular culture. Neither work shied away from addressing the graphic nature of war or avoided controversy, but both authors managed to find an appropriate balance thereof to show their anti-war feelings. Other famous European anti-war novels, like *Le Feu* (*Under Fire*) by Henri Barbusse and *Der Streit um den Sergeanten Grischa* (*The Case of Sergeant Grischa*) by Arnold Zweig, encountered too much negative criticism and suffered from

[198] Scarry, *The Body in Pain*, 63.
[199] As a measure of long-lasting and current popularity, an upcoming adaptation of *Im Westen nichts Neues* will be released in 2012. The most recent adaptation of *Johnny Got His Gun* was released in 2008. In comparison, the most recent adaptation of *Der Streit um den Sergeanten Grischa* appeared in 1968, and the most recent adaptation of *A Farewell to Arms* appeared in 1966. I could find no adaptations of *Le Feu*, *Three Soldiers*, or *Generals Die in Bed*.

bad timing with their respective releases. Two famous American anti-war novels, *Three Soldiers* by John Dos Passos and *A Farewell to Arms* by Ernest Hemingway, are indeed still popular today but contain other themes, like love and politics, which overshadow the anti-war messages within these works. Another work from North America, *Generals Die in Bed* by Canadian Charles Yale Harrison, portrays violence in warfare as explicitly, or perhaps even more explicitly, than Remarque or Trumbo, and although this work carries a stark anti-war message, its content was simply too brazenly graphic to remain popular. With the exception of *Generals Die in Bed*, the Nazis burned and banned all of these works in their infamous 1933 book burning. A brief analysis of these works follows and shows the variety of novels that emerged out of this anti-war boom as well as why these novels, for different reasons, were not as popular as Remarque and Trumbo's works.

Henri Barbusse, a French soldier, published a serialized version of *Le Feu* in 1916 in France, while the war was still raging on. The English translation appeared in 1917, and the German in 1918, though notably released in Switzerland. By the signing of the Armistice, around 200,000 copies had been sold.[200] This book was the first popular anti-war novel spawned from the First World War. It served as a model of sorts for later anti-war novels because it portrayed trench warfare and criticized militaristic governments. Yet critics blasted the book because it blurred fact and fiction, which was particularly problematic for a book released during the war. Barbusse stated about his novel: "…'something like this happened in the trenches of the Western Front,'"[201] never clarifying what events he actually experienced and what events he altered or created for literary effect. French literature professor Jean Norton Cru reserves very harsh criticism for Barbusse, claiming that he had created "…a concoction of truth, half-truth and

[200] Harvey, "First World War Literature," 10.
[201] Jay Winter, introduction to *Under Fire*, by Henri Barbusse, trans. Robin Buss (London: Penguin, 2003), xiv.

total falsehood… a phony war, one filled with morbid images remote from the mind of the soldiers."[202] Although Barbusse laid out a blueprint for First World War novels which Remarque thematically followed, Remarque avoided this fictionalization critique by omitting place names and battle details. Trumbo also evaded this problem by writing an anti-war novel that does not take place on the battle field.

Arnold Zweig, a soldier in the German army, published *Der Streit um den Sergeanten Grischa* as a serialized novel in 1927, and it was initially extremely popular, in Germany and abroad. This novel vilifies the murderous, abusive, and inhuman government and military officials because they take full advantage of their soldiers in the German war effort. Similarly to *Im Westen nichts Neues*, many translations appeared, and the American Book of the Month Club selected Zweig's novel to be on its reading list.[203] Jost Hermand describes the international popularity of the novel. "Nach der New Yorker und der Londoner Ausgabe dieses Romans kamen 1929 in Madrid, Kopenhagen, Amsterdam und Riga, 1930 in Warschau, Stockholm, Mailand, Prag und Paris weitere Übersetzungen des *Grischa* heraus, so daß die Gesamtauflage dieses Werks schnell in die Hunderttausende stieg."[204] (After the New York and London edition of this novel, further translations of *Grischa* came out in 1929 in Madrid, Copenhagen, Amsterdam, and Riga, in 1930 in Warsaw, Stockholm, Milan, Prague, and Paris, so that the entire circulation of this work quickly reached into hundreds of thousands.) In addition, two film versions were even created, one in the United States in 1930 and the other in the GDR in 1968. But two main reasons explain why Zweig's work has not retained its former popularity. First of all, the release of *Im Westen nichts Neues* followed Zweig's work by roughly a year and

[202] Ibid., xiii.
[203] Jost Hermand, "Arnold Zweig: *Der Streit um den Sergeanten Grischa* (1927): Eine 'systemkritische'Analyse," *Amsterdamer Beiträge zur neueren Germanistik* 11 (2003): 201.
[204] Ibid., 201-202.

completely overshadowed its popularity as a German anti-war novel, as well as the popularity of many other anti-war works. In fact, many today still consider Remarque's novel the definitive anti-war novel. Secondly, Zweig was a much more controversial figure than Remarque or Trumbo. He was Jewish, a Freudian, a Zionist, a beloved figure in East Germany, and politically far left.[205] This combination of the unfortunate timing of the book's release and the personal associations with Zweig in Germany detracted from the fame of his work today. The afterlife of Zweig's work has been markedly affected by his political and religious associations, which shows the importance of future cultural and political climates on the way a work is received.

"No publisher would take *Three Soldiers* for a year: it was too frank and realistic for the public, they said. Finally, an agent placed it and it became a bestseller, and made Dos Passos famous overnight."[206] This book appeared in 1920 and became the American model for the anti-war novel. It undoubtedly contains anti-war sentiment, but the book contains other themes that detract from and soften its anti-war message. First of all, structurally and formally, *Three Soldiers* is a modernist novel, very unlike other anti-war works. Also, Dos Passos uses the war as a backdrop to discuss American life and culture, but mainly Socialism. In his article about the political themes woven into Dos Passos's works, literary critic Granville Hicks writes: "It was not blood and death that he wrote about in…*Three Soldiers*, but tyranny, exploitation, and purposelessness."[207] Whereas Remarque and Trumbo address the government and military officials' exploitation of innocent soldiers and the purposelessness of war to further their anti-war message, Dos Passos addresses these themes to promote Socialism. Dos Passos's participation in the First World War represented a political turning point in his life. Hicks

[205] Ibid., 204.
[206] Micheal Gold, "The Education of John Dos Passos," *The English Journal* 22 (1933): 91.
[207] Granville Hicks, "The Politics of John Dos Passos," *The Antioch Review* 10 (1950): 88.

explains this phenomenon: "If, on the one hand, the war had shown Dos Passos the sheer repressive strength of organized society, it had, on the other, revealed the existence of unsuspected and powerful movements of revolt."[208] One of the soldiers named Chrisfeld asks his comrade Andrews, who is often likened to Dos Passos, about protests occurring in France at the time: "'Say, Andy, d'you think there's anything in that revolutionary business? Ah hadn't never thought they could buck the system thataway.' 'They did in Russia.' 'Then we'd be free, civilians, like we all was before the draft. But that ain't possible, Andy; that ain't possible, Andy.' 'We'll see,' said Andrews…"[209] Although both Remarque and Trumbo wrote works that the left identified with and although Trumbo himself was a Communist, the main point of both their novels was to expose the pointlessness of war, not to a promote a set of political party beliefs.

Released in a serialized version in 1939, *A Farewell to Arms* by Ernest Hemingway also contains themes set against the backdrop of the First World War that overshadow its anti-war content. This time the themes do not concern politics, but rather love. Based loosely on Hemingway's own experiences in Italy during the First World War, the novel traces a romantic relationship between an ambulance driver, Frederic Henry, and a nurse, Catherine Barkley. The themes show a parallel between the destructive nature of war and also of love and relationships. Like these other anti-war novels, *A Farewell to Arms* was also a bestselling novel that battled censorship, and in addition, two film adaptations were made, one in 1932 and the other in 1957. However, the plot focuses on the love story between Frederic and Catherine and thus overshadows the horrors in battle and injuries that Frederic sustains. In her article examining Hemingway's writing style and treatment of the First World War, Margot Norris concludes: "*A*

[208] Ibid., 89.
[209] John Dos Passos, *Three Soldiers* (New York: George H. Doran Company, 1921), 405-406.

*Farewell to Arms* ends as a love story masking and protecting a war story from the truth of its own violence, and its own lies. If from classical times, literature reflects how war lies about itself—as Wilfred Owen claimed ("The old Lie")—then Hemingway's own separate peace with his resistant readership is to give us a novel that textually performs just this function of war."[210]

Finally, unlike the two previous North American works, Charles Yale Harrison's *Generals Die in Bed*, released in 1930 in England, does not obscure its anti-war themes with a political allegory or a love story, but rather, it bluntly addresses them in one of the most horrific and violent war novels ever written. At a Canadian literary conference, Jonathan F. Vance discussed the exceptionally graphic nature of this novel. "One by one, the men in [the narrator's] platoon meet their deaths in ways that can only have been calculated to shock the reader."[211] The same could easily be said about the violence present in both Remarque and Trumbo's novels; however, what differentiates Harrison's bestseller from the other two is its poor literary quality and its content. Critics openly attacked his writing style and his inclusion of Canadian soldiers committing war crimes, namely looting and shooting unarmed soldiers, acts for which Harrison blamed them fully. Vance illustrates how including atrocities affected the novel detrimentally. "Other ex-soldiers took the book considerably more seriously. Cy Peck[212] attacked it as 'pure obscenity, totally unrelieved by the slightest flash of genius. It's a gross and shameful slander on the Canadian soldier, by a degenerate minded fool.'"[213] Indicting soldiers is always a touchy

[210] Margot Norris, "The Novel as War: Lies and Truth in Hemingway's *A Farewell to Arms*," *Modern Fiction Studies* 40 (1994): 708.
[211] Jonathan F. Vance, "The Formulation of Historical Consciousness: A Case Study in Literature" (paper presented at the Canadian Historical Consciousness in an International Context conference, Vancouver, British Columbia, 2001).
[212] Cyrus Peck was a commanding officer in the Canadian Army and received the Victoria Cross—the highest honor in the Canadian military.
[213] Vance, "Historical Consciousness."

subject in and around wartimes, and although Remarque and Trumbo do not steer clear of potentially offensive topics, they wisely never blame the individual soldiers.

**Concluding Remarks**

Although *Im Westen nichts Neues* and *Johnny Got His Gun* tell two completely different stories in the context of the First World War, the message is the same. Simply put, they are purely anti-war novels. All the textual and thematic elements within these works concern themselves with conveying or enhancing this message; no parallel story obscures or softens this sentiment, and no explicit details from actual battles blur the distinction between fact and fiction. The result is two pieces of literature and many subsequent films and cultural references that have adapted themselves to a variety of literary, historical, philosophical, and medical discussions concerning not just the First World War, but all of modern warfare. The feelings of pointlessness, waste, and destruction that followed the First World War, vibrantly highlighted in these two works, have carried over to most of the wars of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. And subsequently, the themes in *Im Westen nichts Neues* and *Johnny Got His Gun* have adapted themselves to these wars. This mix of adaptability, literary quality, an appropriate amount of controversy, and excellent use of marketing techniques like free publicity, timing of the novels' releases, and advertising, caused the grand economic success, commercial popularity, and canonization of these two works as the leading anti-war novels of the twentieth century.

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## Vita

Stephanie Morrissey completed her BSBA undergraduate degree in Finance and Economics along with a German minor in 2009. Immediately thereafter she began graduate school, pursuing an MA in German. Her first year of studies took place at Universität Stuttgart in Germany. After this incredible experience abroad, she returned to the United States to finish her degree, teach introductory German at the University of Tennessee, and complete her thesis.