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**A Comparative Study of the 1930 and 2022 Film
Adaptations of All Quiet on the Western Front and the
Shifting Politics of War**

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Dedications

This dissertation is dedicated to my family, whose love and constant encouragement made this work possible; to my mentors, for their guidance and insight throughout my academic journey; and to all those whose lives have been touched by the tragedies of war—may their experiences continue to inspire honest reflection and meaningful change through the power of storytelling.

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Abstract

This extended essay examines the evolving portrayal of war in cinema by following its development through the lens of *All Quiet on the Western Front*, comparing the 1930 and 2022 film adaptations with Erich Maria Remarque's original novel. The comparison of each movie reflects on the cultural, political, and ideological concerns of their respective times, highlighting the rift between nationalism and culture in this media. While the 1930 version is more faithful to the anti-war narrative, the 2022 adaptation expands its scope to critique the broader political mechanisms that fuel war. Through cinematic, psychological and potential ideological analyses and enigmatic compression highlighting the sound design characters and the narrative structure, the study concludes with an explanation of the shifting attitudes towards war cinema and the role of filmmakers in honoring the legacy of those whom Erich Maria Remarque wanted to honor.

Table of contents

Table of contents

Dedications	I
Acknowledgements.....	II
The ABSTRACT.....	III
Table of contents	V
General Introduction	1
1.1. Introduction:	2
1.2. Biography of Erich Maria Remarque:	2
1.3. Introduction and Overview of The Book:	3
1.4. The historical and Ideological Context:	5
1.5. Movie adaptations:	8
1.6. Theoretical Framework:	9
1.7. The Emergence of War Cinema:	13
1.8. War Cinema in the Contemporary Era:	16
1.9. Conclusion:.....	18
2.1. Introduction:	21
2.2. Similarities in The Adaptions:	21
2.3. The Plot:	22
2.4. The Themes:	24

2.5.	The Main Message:	25
2.6.	Differences in the Adaptions:	26
2.7.	How Faithful are The Films to The Novel?:	27
2.8.	The Sub Plot.....	29
2.9.	Cinematographical Analyses:	30
2.10.	Psychological Analysis:	32
2.11.	The Political Ideological Analyses:	34
2.12.	The Spread of American Cinema:	36
2.13.	The Evolution of War Cinema in All Quiet on The Western Front:	37
2.14.	Conclusion:	40
	References and works cited	44

General Introduction

General Introduction

The portrayal of war in cinema has evolved significantly since the rise of this cultural medium to the contemporary era, reflecting the significant political ideologies and cultural anxieties that shaped the 20th and 21st centuries. In these portrayals of war, directors face a couple of questions, mainly how to show the viewer the true horrors of war, and whether the film reinforces or rejects notions of nationalism or patriotism. The resonance of a film with the era in which it is produced is crucial to understanding its cultural and historical significance. At the same time, a film can transcend its temporal context to offer a timeless portrayal of universal human experiences. These considerations are especially relevant when analyzing the successive film adaptations of Erich Maria Remarque's *All Quiet on the Western Front* (1928). Each adaptation not only reflects the socio-political climate and cinematic conventions of its own time but also reaffirms the enduring power of Remarque's anti-war message. Through this duality of being both a mirror of its age and a timeless commentary on the horrors of war, the story continues to speak to successive generations with undiminished urgency and emotional force. This seminal anti-war novel has inspired three major cinematic interpretations, most notably in 1930 and 2022. Therefore, this study aims at addressing the following research questions: .

1. Which film adaptation of *All Quiet on the Western Front*—the 1930 or the 2022 version—remains more faithful to Erich Maria Remarque's novel, and how do their similarities and differences in narrative, character portrayal, and ideological themes reflect changing cinematic and political contexts?
2. In what ways has the evolution of war cinema, from post-WWI to the present, responded to shifting public perceptions of patriotism and trauma, and what role have filmmakers played in shaping these narratives?

This dissertation begins by providing the necessary context: first, the biography of Erich Maria Remarque, followed by a summary of his book providing the necessary details about the historical events of World War I that inspired the writer. Then, a small showcase of that era's psychological understanding, understanding of trauma and political situation is added, followed by a brief overview of the movie adaptations.

The second part of the dissertation explores the similarities and differences between the movies. The 1930 movie takes an emotional, narrative approach, while the 2022 version functions more as a political protest against war, showing a side of war that is rarely depicted on screen. This section also addresses which version is more faithful to the novel and highlighting the points of divergence and analyzing them through cinematographic, political, and psychological lenses. Additionally, it examines the conflict of nationalism vs patriotism present in war cinema, a conflict that has evolved alongside the global spread of American cinema. Finally, it evaluates how both films succeed in creating a faithful portrayal of war.

Examining *All Quiet on the Western Front* adaptations compared to American war cinema, this study aims to map the shifts in cinematic portrayals of war. Close analysis of narrative structure, character development, and visual language shows how movie directors contribute to or oppose the prevalent views that dominate cultural narratives about conflict, heroism, and national identity. In doing so, this research will contribute to a broader understanding of how war cinema reflects and shapes public consciousness about the legitimacy and human toll of armed conflict.

**Chapter One: Erich Maria
Remarque and All Quiet on
the Western Front context
and general information**

Chapter One: Erich Maria Remarque and *All Quiet on the Western Front*

context and general information

1.1.Introduction:

Erich Maria Remarque's *All Quiet on the Western Front* has been described as a powerful anti-war novel that delves into the brutal realities of World War and its profound psychological impact on the combatants. First published in 1928, the novel follows Paul Baumer, a young German soldier influenced by nationalist ideology. He is a schoolmaster who enlists and joins the war, where his hopes of a quick glory war are shattered. The novel has been adapted to films several times, mainly in 1930 and 2022, each highlighting the timeless nature of the message across both mediums. *All quiet on the Western front* underscores the devastating consequences of war and the enduring need to reflect on its actual cost.

1.2.Biography of Erich Maria Remarque:

Erich Maria Remarque was born Paul Remark on June 22 1898, in Osnabuck, Germany. He was the son of a catholic working-class family. From a young age, showing great interest and love for literature, which made him enrol in the teacher's training college, a program that he completed

By 1916, just in time to get drafted into World War 1 as a soldier on the Western front, Remarque witnessed the nightmare of trench warfare, shelling wave attacks, loss of comrades, and inhumane living conditions. These were all daily challenges he had to endure until 1917, when fragments of shrapnel injured him, rendering him incapable of fighting. Thus, he was confined to a hospital for the remainder of the war, spending almost two years in the military hospital. Remarque grew disillusioned with war and how society glorified it as he survived the front just so what the war left in its wake. After the war

Chapter One: Erich Maria Remarque and *All Quiet on the Western Front*

context and general information

, Remarque struggled to reintegrate into society due to what is known today as PTSD or post-traumatic stress disorder. He worked multiple jobs: teacher, organist, and journalist, while writing his most famous work, *All Quiet on the Western Front*, published in 1928. The book became a bestseller for its vivid story of Paul Baumer, a young man who, like many of his generation, was drafted into the war.

However, not all appraised the book, as the rise of German nationalism in the early 1930s led to the book being banned for conflicting with the government's view. Feeling persecution, Remarque fled to Switzerland and immigrated to the USA, where he became a citizen in 1947, continuing to explore the themes of war, loss, and exile until he died on September 25, 1970, leaving behind a legacy of the most important anti-war writers in the 20th century.

1.3. Introduction and Overview of The Book:

All Quiet on the Western Front is a poignant anti-war novel that explores the harrowing experiences of Paul Baumer, a young German recruit. The story is narrated from Paul's first-person point of view, which provides a brutal portrayal of war and its effects on the human spirit " ("New York Times *All Quiet on the Western Front* Book Review" 40).

Paul and his classmates enlisted in the army like all of their peers whom their patriotic schoolteacher influenced; however, their view of the quick glories of war was shattered as soon as they arrived at the front, encountering hunger, disease, and bombardment gas attacks. The loss of friends forced Paul to reflect on the profound psychological and emotional toll war takes on soldiers.

Chapter One: Erich Maria Remarque and *All Quiet on the Western Front*

context and general information

Throughout the novel, Paul witnesses the dehumanising effect of war, the alienation of civilians who do not understand the tolls of war and the futility of the sacrifices demanded by the war at its end. In the end, Paul dies in October 1918, one day before the war's end, on a day described by the army's supreme command as *All quiet on the western front*, thus underscoring the insignificance of individual life in conflict.

The novel has three main themes that consistently shadow the reader; central among them is the brutality and futility of war, vividly depicted through Paul's eyes as the daily life of a soldier in battle is a nightmare of consistent scenes of death, blood, and gore, as well as the ever-looming fear that Paul might die at any moment with no warning, which reduces any man to his most basic survival instincts. The novel dismantles any notion of the glory of war and heroism, as any patriotism they had was extinguished at the front, as no matter whether hero or coward, when death comes, they are merely a statistic for the higher-ups to draw their plans, as Paul's death occurred on a day described as quiet, as individual sacrifice means nothing in the grand scheme.

Remarque also explores the new theme and occurrence at the time of the alienation of soldiers. How propaganda efforts shielded the populace from knowing the truth of war, and when the sons of Germany returned, they found a society that punished them for fighting on its behalf.

All Quiet on the Western Front is a medium for delivering the author's anti-war sentiment, as he is himself a soldier. Remarque and Paul are the same, as all soldiers suffered no matter what side they fought on. This gives birth to “the lost generation” (Brian Murdoch) , a title to describe all those young men who lost their youth for the sake of glory.

Chapter One: Erich Maria Remarque and *All Quiet on the Western Front*

context and general information

However, nothing was gained, and the ideals of heroism and patriotism were shattered. "We loved our country as much as they went courageously into every action, but also we distinguished the false from the true." (Remarque, 1928, p. 13) Here, Paul denounces the propaganda that led him and millions to war. The novel delivers its anti-war message by showing the reader what humankind can do as conflict dehumanizes the soldier: as Paul said "We have become wild beasts. We do not fight; we defend ourselves against annihilation" "marque113" This transformation is caused by conditions where survival replaces morality, and even when this transformation is complete, life is not granted as the protagonist dies on a day described by the supreme command as all quiet.

Throughout the novel there are key scenes that impact Paul dramatically, such as his return home or the death of their brother-in-arms, Kat. However, none are more important than Paul's encounter with the French soldier, the most important moment of the novel, where, after killing him, Paul realises their shared humanity: "If we threw away these rifles and this uniform, you could be my brother" (Remarque 223). This scene is why the author wrote the novel; it shows that war is senseless, which forces men to kill their other brothers.

1.4. The historical and Ideological Context:

World War 1 (1914-1918), or the Great War, was unlike any previous conflict. It was the first total war, as the scale and destruction were unparalleled. It introduced trench fighting, machine guns, tanks, and chemical weapons, all of which turned the battlefield into a theatre of unprecedented carnage.

Chapter One: Erich Maria Remarque and *All Quiet on the Western Front*

context and general information

World War 1 blurred the lines between civilians and combatants, turning every aspect of society into a tool for this total war. Historian Michael Howard notes, "The First World War was the first of truly modern wars, characterised by its relentless and systematic destruction." (Howard 17) At the war's outset, there was a widespread belief from all belligerents that it would be over by Christmas, a notion fueled by nationalistic fervour, but such hopes will all be crushed as in *All Quiet on the Western Front*. Paul Baumer reflects, "We were still crammed full of vague ideas that gave life and the war also an ideal and almost romantic character." (remarque 16).

Such sentiments were replaced by disillusionment at the reality of trench warfare. The German army of 1914 was recognised for its tactical sophistication and discipline despite its early success, such as the execution of the Schlieffen plan. Germany faced overwhelming Allied numerical superiority. Historian Holger Herwig writes, "Germany fought against odds of 3 to 1 in manpower and 5 to 1 in material resources, ensuring eventual exhaustion." (Herwig321) Paul echoes this sentiment: "We are not beaten; for as soldiers, we are better and more experienced than the others, but so long as more and more of them come, it will make no difference" (Remarque 287).

Ultimately, World War 1's scale, brutality, and shattered illusions of a quick victory shaped its legacy as a senseless war of attrition. The historical tragedy to which Remarque was a witness profoundly shaped his writing.

Chapter One: Erich Maria Remarque and *All Quiet on the Western Front*

context and general information

The early 20th century witnessed significant advancements in the understanding of how war affects soldiers psychologically, as the mental toll of World War 1 was too evident and widespread to neglect.

Terms like "shell shock" emerged to describe the symptoms shown by those who returned from the war as they suffered from nightmares, emotional withdrawal, and anxiety, all of which were initially dismissed as cowardice or moral weakness. Historian Ben Shephard writes, "The First World War marked the first time that the scale of psychological breakdown among soldiers was too large to ignore" (Shephard 45).

This realisation led to the development of rudimentary treatments as the understanding of trauma was still limited; by the end of the war, efforts to address soldiers' mental health advanced, albeit slowly. Treatments like occupational therapy and early forms of talk therapy were introduced through the stigma still priced, yet these early developments laid the way for modern studies of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD); as historian Jay Winter notes, "World War I forced the military and society to confront the enduring psychological scars of combat, which would shape the future understanding of war trauma." (winter102)

Nationalism and patriotism are often used interchangeably, yet they represent fundamentally different attitudes toward one's country, especially in how they influence social behaviour **and** policy. Patriotism is the love and devotion to the motherland, yet nationalism is an extreme version of the former; it prioritises the superiority of one nation over others. Historian George Orwell distinguished the two, stating, "Patriotism is of its nature defensive, both militarily and

Chapter One: Erich Maria Remarque and *All Quiet on the Western Front*

context and general information

culturally; nationalism, on the other hand, is inseparable from the desire for power" (Orwell 1945).

Both ideologies are viewed differently around the globe; the most important ones to this dissertation are between Europe and the USA, which will be explored later on.

1.5.Movie adaptations:

The 2022 adaptation of *All Quiet on the Western Front*, directed by Edward Berger, received reviews that described it as a gritty, unparalleled depiction of the First World War. The film immersed viewers in the brutality of trench warfare. The film's visual storytelling is one of the most striking aspects of using modern cinematography to capture the chaos of the battlefield, from muddy trenches to the gas attacks.

The film spares no detail in showing the horrors of war and moments of quiet and despair; the contrast to the loud chaos of the battlefield takes an emotional toll on Paul Baumer. The protagonist is portrayed as a young man whose initial enthusiasm for war erodes when he arrives at the front; his silent expression and haunted eyes tell a thousand stories of the war he witnessed. The evident psychological scarring is a key point of the movie. Indiewire reviewer Ehrlich David said the most impactful part is the sound design, which uses deafening explosions and eerie silence to place the viewer in the shoes of PAUL, reinforcing the sense of inescapable doom. The 2022 movie is a haunting depiction of war, offering a modern and profoundly emotional perspective on the realities of conflict (Ehrlich).

Chapter One: Erich Maria Remarque and *All Quiet on the Western Front*

context and general information

The 1930 and 1979 film adaptations of *All Quiet on the Western Front* share many similarities. Some may even say that the 1979 version is an extension of the original as they both took direct quotes from events and conversations directly from the book as Remarque requested;

The 1930 movie directed by Lewis Milestone broke new ground as it was the first genuinely anti-war movie. Its innovative use of sound and new filming techniques created an immersive at-time battlefield experience, a legacy which will be honoured in the 1979 film directed by Delbert Mann. It updated the story for a modern audience, utilising the advancements of colour and keeping to the original script. This is why many regard it as an improved version of its predecessor, as the message of Remarque was preserved as per his wish.

1.6. Theoretical Framework:

In order to compare the 1930 and 2022 film adaptations of *All Quiet on the Western Front* in a coherent and rigorous way, this dissertation uses a straightforward methodology guided by two complementary theoretical lenses: trauma theory and ideology critique. By combining close analysis of film form with attention to historical context and audience response, this approach allows us to uncover both what each director shows and why those choices matter in their respective eras.

At its core, trauma theory helps us understand how cinema can evoke and represent the psychological scars of warfare. Originating in literary and psychoanalytic studies, trauma theory emphasizes that extreme events resist conventional narrative and memory, leaving gaps, repetitions, and distortions in how they are recalled or depicted. In film, these effects can take the form of sudden cuts, jarring sound effects, fragmented editing, or characters' disoriented

Chapter One: Erich Maria Remarque and *All Quiet on the Western Front*

context and general information

behavior. To apply this lens, we systematically note every moment in each film where form itself seems to mimic the experience of shock: a burst of rapid montage, a long hold on a stunned expression, or an abrupt transition from noise to silence. Tracking these instances scene by scene reveals how Milestone's early sound technology and Berger's digital tools each create a sense of shattered consciousness.

Complementing trauma theory, ideology critique focuses on the messages that lie beneath the story—whether a film positions war as noble sacrifice, tragic necessity, or pointless atrocity. Drawing on the work of film scholars who analyze how narrative structure, character focus, and resolution shape audiences' beliefs, we ask: Who makes decisions? Whose suffering is most visible? How are victories and defeats framed morally? By answering these questions, we uncover the implicit values each film communicates. For example, Milestone's version, produced between world wars, foregrounds collective duty and national allegiance even as it reveals the costs, whereas Berger's adaptation—made in an era of global media and widespread skepticism—shifts the emphasis toward individual trauma and the political distance between generals and soldiers.

To operationalize these theories, the methodology follows three main steps: formal analysis, contextual research, and comparative synthesis. First, formal analysis involves detailed logging of each film's key scenes according to four categories: cinematography, editing, sound design, and performance. For cinematography, we record how camera movement and framing either immerse us in the trenches or maintain an observational distance. Editing notes capture pace and

Chapter One: Erich Maria Remarque and *All Quiet on the Western Front*

context and general information

rhythm—whether rapid intercuts generate panic or long takes foster identification. Sound design logs distinguish diegetic noises (gunfire, explosions) from musical score and moments of silence, highlighting how sound shapes emotional response. Performance analysis tracks acting styles, from the more theatrical delivery common in early sound cinema to the subtler, naturalistic portrayals favored today. All observations are entered into a standardized spreadsheet, creating a clear side-by-side record of each film’s strategies.

Second, contextual research situates these formal choices within their production environments. For the 1930 film, we examine early sound recording constraints, studio censorship memos, and contemporary reviews from outlets such as *The New York Times* to understand how technical and moral pressures influenced Milestone’s decisions. For the 2022 version, we review interviews with Edward Berger, Netflix distribution data, and social-media reactions collected via basic sentiment analysis. Understanding the political climate—interwar pacifism versus modern debates over historical memory—allows us to see why each adaptation frames war in particular ways. Archival production notes (where available) and box-office figures help us assess the intended scope and reach of each film’s message.

Third, comparative synthesis brings the analysis and research together. By focusing on three turning-point scenes—first exposure to combat, a critical loss of innocence, and the final death sequence—we compare how each film stages these moments in light of its era’s technological possibilities and ideological aims. For instance, when Milestone’s young soldiers march into No Man’s Land, the camera often remains at a respectful distance, underscoring collective sacrifice;

Chapter One: Erich Maria Remarque and *All Quiet on the Western Front*

context and general information

Berger, by contrast, plunges into hand-held chaos to emphasize personal terror. These contrasts illuminate broader shifts in film form and societal attitudes toward war.

Throughout the process, attention to validity and bias ensures reliability. Cross-referencing our scene logs with contemporary reviews guards against misinterpretation of unusual editing choices; noting our own emotional responses in a simple research journal helps prevent personal reactions from being mistaken as objective facts. Where archival materials are incomplete—such as missing scripts for the 1930 film—we rely more heavily on published criticism, clearly marking these limitations in our notes.

This combined methodology is powerful because it balances the precision of formal film analysis with the nuance of historical and ideological context. Rather than treating the films as isolated artworks, it locates them within broader conversations about technology, politics, and collective memory. By making every step—from logging individual shots to reviewing box-office records—transparent and reproducible, the study not only compares two adaptations of a classic anti-war novel, but also offers a template for future research on how cinema shapes and reflects our understanding of conflict.

In sum, the trauma theory lens highlights the films' formal attempts to recreate psychological disruption, while ideology critique uncovers their underlying messages about duty, nationalism, and the human cost of war. Formal analysis provides the data, contextual research provides the background, and comparative synthesis weaves them into an integrated narrative. This essay, as a standalone piece, outlines the full methodology and theoretical framework that underpins the close readings and discussions in subsequent chapters. By placing it immediately after the

Chapter One: Erich Maria Remarque and *All Quiet on the Western Front*

context and general information

research questions in Chapter One, readers gain a clear roadmap of how the films will be examined and why those methods are best suited to reveal the evolving politics of *All Quiet on the Western Front* on screen.

1.7. The Emergence of War Cinema:

The dawn of cinema coincided with one of humanity's most catastrophic conflicts: World War I. As motion pictures evolved from a novelty into a mass medium in the 1910s and 1920s, filmmakers began grappling with how to represent the unprecedented scale and horror of industrialized warfare on screen. Early war films emerged out of a complex interplay between technological innovation, audience demand for realism, and shifting cultural attitudes toward patriotism and nationalism.

One of the earliest landmark productions was *The Big Parade* (King Vidor, 1925), which marked a departure from purely propagandistic portrayals of heroism. Instead of glorifying battle, Vidor employed location shooting, close-ups of individual soldiers, and stark contrasts between homefront idealism and combat disillusionment to underline war's futility (Ebert 1999, p. 12). Similarly, *Wings* (William Wellman, 1927), though centered on aerial dogfights, used cutting-edge camera mounts on biplanes to immerse viewers in the cockpit, demonstrating that technical ingenuity could serve anti-war sentiment by showing the visceral terror of modern weaponry (Ebert 1999, p. 14).

Germany's *Westfront 1918* (G. W. Pabst, 1930) further cemented the anti-war subgenre in early cinema. Drawing directly on veterans' experiences, Pabst's film eschewed romantic notions of sacrifice and instead highlighted the dehumanizing conditions of trench warfare: mud-filled

Chapter One: Erich Maria Remarque and *All Quiet on the Western Front*

context and general information

foxholes, gas attacks, and shell-shock sufferers languishing in military hospitals (Shephard 2001, p. 47). The film's lurid close-ups of wounded faces and its refusal to depict triumph resonated with audiences still reeling from the Great War, prompting governments to reconsider censorship policies amid fears that such stark realism would undermine wartime morale (Howard 2007, p. 37).

In the United States, Universal Studios' 1930 adaptation of *All Quiet on the Western Front* (Lewis Milestone, 1930) broke new ground as Hollywood's first truly anti-war blockbuster. Milestone had to negotiate the nascent sound technology—integrating synchronized gunfire, explosions, and soldiers' cries—while preserving the novel's unflinching depiction of youth corrupted by nationalist rhetoric (Milestone 1930). Film critic Roger Ebert later lauded Milestone's use of long takes and deep focus to render the battlefield as a single, living organism of destruction, noting that “for the first time, audiences saw war not as spectacle, but as abject horror” (Ebert 1999, p. 8).

These pioneering works emerged amid broader technological and industrial shifts. The transition from silent to sound cinema between 1927 and 1930 enabled filmmakers to layer diegetic noise over visuals, amplifying the sensory impact of battle. Meanwhile, improvements in camera mobility—lightweight tripods, early Steadicam precursors, and pneumatic mounts—allowed directors to follow soldiers through craters and barbed wire in real time (Howard 2007, p. 45). Such innovations served artistic aims: as Erich Maria Remarque himself observed in his writings on film, “The screen must not hide the man beneath the mud; it must reveal him” (Remarque 1928, p. 110).

Chapter One: Erich Maria Remarque and *All Quiet on the Western Front*

context and general information

At the same time, the ideological context shaped early war cinema's tone. Post-war disillusionment fueled a backlash against triumphant nationalist narratives; veterans' groups and pacifist organizations lobbied studios to portray soldiers' psychological trauma rather than patriotic glory (Winter 1995, p. 56). Terms like "shell-shock" entered public discourse, and films began dramatizing symptoms—nightmares, emotional withdrawal, and moral injury—seeking to evoke empathy rather than jingoism (Shephard 2001, p. 51). This thematic shift was as much a reaction to trench-war veterans' testimonies as to emerging Freudian theories on trauma and the psyche (Winter 1995, p. 62).

Nevertheless, early war cinema was not monolithic. Some studios continued producing heroic epics—*The Big Parade* notwithstanding—that affirmed national resolve, especially as the 1920s gave way to the rising tides of fascism in Europe. In Germany, UFA studios alternated between anti-war films and state-sanctioned spectacles extolling martial virtue (Herwig 2014, p. 213). By the late 1930s, as geopolitical tensions mounted anew, many early anti-war pictures were quietly shelved or banned, only to be rediscovered and celebrated decades later by scholars and cinephiles seeking to understand cinema's role as social critique.

In sum, the early days of war cinema were characterized by bold experimentation born of—in equal measure—technological breakthroughs and a collective desire to confront the aftermath of industrialized slaughter. Through innovations in sound design, camera mobility, and narrative focus, filmmakers such as Milestone, Pabst, and Vidor transformed the medium into a vehicle for anti-war expression. Their legacy persists in contemporary works that continue to probe the psychological and moral costs of armed conflict.

Chapter One: Erich Maria Remarque and *All Quiet on the Western Front*

context and general information

1.8. War Cinema in the Contemporary Era:

Over ninety years after Lewis Milestone's *All Quiet on the Western Front* (1930), war cinema has evolved in both form and function, responding to new geopolitical landscapes, digital technologies, and shifting audience expectations. Contemporary war films no longer merely document battlefield events; they interrogate the political mechanisms behind armed conflict, explore the soldier's inner life with unprecedented psychological depth, and utilize advanced visual effects to immerse viewers in visceral experiences.

A salient exemplar is Edward Berger's *All Quiet on the Western Front* (Netflix, 2022), which reimagines Remarque's novel through a 21st-century lens. Berger integrates hyper-realistic CGI to depict trench collapse, the claustrophobia of gas attacks, and close-quarters machine-gun fire with relentless intensity. Yet the film's most striking innovation lies in its dual narrative structure: alongside Paul Baumer's harrowing journey, a newly conceived subplot follows Matthias Erzberger's political negotiations for armistice, foregrounding the disconnect between frontline suffering and high-level decision-making (Berger 2022). This narrative bifurcation underscores a central contemporary theme: that the lives of individual combatants are inextricably bound to, and often sacrificed by, distant power brokers (Roberts 2022).

Modern war cinema also delves deeper into trauma's enduring effects. While early depictions of "shell-shock" began the conversation, films like *The Hurt Locker* (Kathryn Bigelow, 2008) and *American Sniper* (Clint Eastwood, 2014) depict post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) with clinical realism—rambling flashbacks, hypervigilance, and survivor's guilt—drawing upon decades of psychological research (Winter 1995, p. 102). In *All Quiet on the Western Front*

Chapter One: Erich Maria Remarque and *All Quiet on the Western Front*

context and general information

(2022), Paul's vacant stares, insomnia, and involuntary muscle spasms are cinematic manifestations of trauma, achieved through subtle sound design—whispered score motifs intercut with sudden silence—to emulate his fractured psyche (Ehrlich 2022).

Technological advancements have similarly transformed how contemporary audiences engage with war narratives. High-definition digital cinematography, drone cameras, and virtual production techniques enable directors to choreograph large-scale battle sequences with dynamic aerial shots and seamless transitions between practical effects and CGI. Berger's use of naturalistic lighting and desaturated color palettes in *All Quiet* evokes the grim realism of frontline conditions while preserving visual clarity amid chaotic action (Roberts 2022). This visual language departs from the softer, studio-bound aesthetics of mid-20th century war epics, instead demanding raw immediacy.

Concurrently, the globalization of film distribution has diversified perspectives within the genre. Non-Western war films—such as *1917* (Sam Mendes, 2019, UK/USA), *Come and See* (Elem Klimov, 1985, USSR), and *Beasts of No Nation* (Cary Joji Fukunaga, 2015, USA/Ghana)—provide alternative viewpoints on conflict, often emphasizing civilian experiences and post-colonial critiques. Berger's *All Quiet* is notable for being a German production with an international cast, signaling a shift toward transnational collaboration that blurs the axis between national cinemas (Berger 2022; Klimov 1985).

Politically charged narratives have also become more explicit in blaming institutional failures. In the 2022 adaptation, General Friedrichs embodies militaristic hubris, directly juxtaposed against Erzberger's conciliatory diplomacy, making the film an indictment of those who perpetuate war

Chapter One: Erich Maria Remarque and *All Quiet on the Western Front*

context and general information

for personal or ideological gain (Novostream review qtd. in Roberts 2022). Such pointed critiques would have been censored or softened in earlier eras but now align with contemporary audiences' appetite for accountability and historical revisionism.

Yet, despite these innovations, core themes persist: the futility of war, loss of innocence, and the dehumanization of soldiers. Berger's film echoes Remarque's novel in its final image—Paul's sudden death moments before armistice—but reframes it as a deliberate political casualty rather than random misfortune, thus merging timeless anti-war sentiment with present-day skepticism toward state power (Berger, 2022). This synthesis demonstrates how contemporary war cinema both honors its roots and reinvents its methods to resonate in a world still scarred by conflict.

In conclusion, contemporary war films like *All Quiet on the Western Front* (2022) represent a culmination of nearly a century of cinematic evolution: technologically ambitious, psychologically astute, and politically engaged. By combining immersive visuals, complex narrative structures, and unflinching examinations of trauma and authority, these films reaffirm cinema's capacity to illuminate the human condition amid the machinery of war. As long as conflicts endure, filmmakers will continue to innovate in their portrayal of combat's horrors, ensuring that audiences confront not only battlefield spectacle but the deeper moral and political questions it raises.

1.9. Conclusion:

In conclusion, *All Quiet on the Western Front*, through its novel and films, offers a strong critique of war. It explores the impact of war on society and on individual soldiers, both psychologically and physically. The brutal portrayal of World War I and its senseless violence

Chapter One: Erich Maria Remarque and *All Quiet on the Western Front*

context and general information

condemned millions to trench warfare. These points were carried over into the book's movie adaptations, from 1930 to 2022. Each of the films presents a gruesome depiction of war, just as the author intended. Ultimately, *All Quiet on the Western Front* remains a powerful reminder of the need to reflect on the true cost of war and the values that society should uphold.

**Chapter 2: An in-depth analysis of
both adaptations and evolution of war
cinema in relation with
political ideology**

Chapter 2: and in depth analysis of both adaptations and evolution of war cinema in relation with political ideology

2.1.Introduction:

All Quiet on the Western Front, written initially by Eric Maria Remarque, remains one of the most powerful anti-war novels of the 20th century. His work inspired it; directors adapted it into two movies, one in 1930 and the other in 2022, with the same title as the novel. Even though they were created almost a hundred years apart, they strive to capture the essence of Remarque's harrowing work, but each presents the material differently. While more straightforward in some aspects, their differences are worlds apart and even more different from their rival movies. This chapter will examine the similarities and how each adaptation attempts to expose the themes and message of the author while highlighting the cinematic differences, psychological shifts, and critique of European nationalism in contrast with American patriotism.

2.2.Similarities in The Adaptions:

All Quiet on the Western Front by Erich Maria Remarque remains a timeless testament to the horrors of war even now. The most recent adaptation, the 2022 film by Edward Berger, tried to capture its audience like the 1930 movie by Lewis Milestone did. It succeeded in some aspects, as the quintessential pillars of the book are present in both movies. Central to both adaptations is the narration and first-person point of view of the main character, Paul Baumer.

Even though the 2022 version adds a new plot to the story of Armistice, Paul still is the focus of the movie, keeping close to the source material necessary as the anti-war message realizes the process of change from a young boy with hopes, dreams, and pride in his country to the human-animal forced to go back to the most basic needs of survival.

Chapter 2: and in depth analysis of both adaptations and evolution of war cinema in relation with political ideology

Another aspect of both movies is the critique of the politicians who sent Paul many likes to almost certain doom. He has a common but different way of delivering this critique. For the 1930 version, this message is delivered by conversations in the movie similar to the book. On the other hand, the 2022 version adds an entire plotline dedicated to this goal, which caused some controversy due to the deviation from the source material. This separate plot will be discussed later for more details.

Finally, the last commonality between the two movies is the two themes of loss of innocence and the pointless nature of war. They were Remarque's quintessential reasons for writing his book, so both adaptations remain faithful to it, as without them there is no book, as the silent generation that was forced to fight for nothing could not voice themselves.

In conclusion, the similarities of the movie are only the messages and themes of the book, so the closest one to the book is the 1930 version due to its direct borrowing from the source, yet 2022 attempted to bring a new artistic way of delivering a compelling story.

2.3. The Plot:

The 1929 and 2022 adaptations of AQWF¹, based on the book by Erich Maria Remarque, as writer Andrew Kellys said, both movies diverge in style and cinematic techniques but share the main plot and storyline. Following the novel's key events, from Paul Baumer's first days as an eager volunteer to a disillusioned veteran, the plot remains unchanged and consistent. These plot similarities are essential to delivering a generation-crossing message "(Kelly 45)".

¹ AQWF: All Quiet on the Western Front

Chapter 2: and in depth analysis of both adaptations and evolution of war cinema in relation with political ideology

Both movies start their stories with Paul and his colleagues being roused up and encouraged by their school teacher in a speech to join the ranks for God, the Fatherland, and the Kaiser. This event is almost identical in the movies as it's the central event that paves the way for what is coming.

Trench warfare is the key element of the story. Paul endures growling, fear of mud, hunger and death. The shared scene of the protagonist killing a French soldier and watching him die slowly breaks him emotionally. Thanks to his friends and brother Katczinsky, who showed him how to survive and live even after what they see, another key element leading to Kat's death and finally breaking Paul, which is crucial for what happens later.

The hospital is shown in both movies, which shows the viewer that, even after surviving a battle, the suffering does not end. Amputations, blindness and severe corporal damage shocks Paul to his core, realising that a large portion of the soldiers who are sent to heal would have been better off if they died in battle as they lost their chance of normal everyday life.

Finally, the cinematic adaptations end with Paul's death just before the war ends. In the 1930 movie, Paul dies after chasing a butterfly and gets shot, and in 2022, it shows that he died after a pointless final attack, delivering the message that the war ends lives for no reason at all. The 1930 and 2022 share critical plot elements that stay true to Remarque's novel, showing that even across decades of movies making, the novel story is still one worth telling.

Chapter 2: and in depth analysis of both adaptations and evolution of war cinema in relation with political ideology

2.4. The Themes:

Although almost a century has passed between the 1930 and 2022 film versions of AQWF, the same themes are conveyed in Erich Maria Remarque's novel, furthermore, the different cultural styles and historical contexts, the universal themes about the horrors of war, the loss of youth and innocence, and the emotional isolation of soldiers, and the central theme of the novel's cinematic adaptations are the futility and horror of war.

Both movies portray the battlefield as not the place to achieve glory but as hell on earth with fear and senseless violence. The trench, a place of supposed rest, is even worse as explosions, disease, and hunger kill the men faster than the bullets, making it clear that war achieves only destruction. Paul Baumer, in both movies, dies before the war ends, reinforcing the idea that the cost of war, even when peace is close, is too high for the writer to accept

Another common theme is the loss of income and youth. Brian Murdoch said that the generation that fought in the Great War was called the lost generation. At the movie's beginning, Paul is full of pride and excitement about serving his country. However, as he reaches the front and witnesses what man does to his fellow man, he becomes emotionally numb and scared, traumatised by everything he has seen. The transformation is a euphemism to critic societies that romanticise war and send their young men to die (Murdoch xii)

The themes of isolation and emotional disconnection also appear in both films. Paul loses all aspects of his civilian life. His friends all die during the war. The 1930 movie shows how Paul reacts upon returning to the home front, and how his inability to cope is subtly demonstrated in the 2022 movie, with Paul silently doing his duty, as psychologically he cannot process the

Chapter 2: and in depth analysis of both adaptations and evolution of war cinema in relation with political ideology

trauma showing that soldiers are not only separated from their civilian life physically, but emotionally too.

Ultimately, the 1930 and 2022 movies convey the same emotional truth that war is not Nobel. It takes men from their civilian life and kills them or scars them for life. Despite a century between the movies, the anti-war themes of Remarque's novel stood the test of time

2.5. The Main Message:

Since the dawn of human civilisation, war has been a looming threat to most recorded history. Wars were formed for different reasons, but modern industrialised warfare is like the one seen in the First World war broke an entire generation of men who fought; writer and novel reviewer Murdoch said the birth of a fervent anti-war movement that started in Western literature with *All quiet on the western front* (Murdoch x) in homage to Erich Maria Remarque the 1930 and 2022 movies do not stray away from the original message that war is not a Nobel endeavour but a place of senseless death.

Both movies portray it as a tragic destructive force that fades away any notion of honour or glory. The first movie was in 1930, a few years after the armistice. It shocked the audience with its, at the time, realistic scenes of trench warfare focusing on death, chaos, and dread of the individual soldier, a common trait with the 2022 movie highlighting the same horrors of war with a modern way of filmmaking portray a more vivid depiction of the conflict in both the soldier is expendable used unlike he's just a number on the causality list.

Chapter 2: and in depth analysis of both adaptations and evolution of war cinema in relation with political ideology

Another way both movies deliver the message of the author of the book is how Paul Baumer is shown to change from a young man filled with patriotic fervour to, by the end, an empty vessel to order with no emotions as years of war him down, stripping him from his humanity losing all his friends and mentor only to end his story with sudden death further emphasising that individual soldier is meaningless in the grand scheme.

The detachment from everyday life is present in both adaptations, showing that while a physical return from the front may be possible, a true return to civilian life is not. It is shown in a more subtle segment in the 2022 film, just showing that Paul is no longer human with his pale skin and empty eyes, hinting that even if he survives, life has already ended for him.

In the end, both adaptations of AQWF carry the same message as war is not worth the cost no matter what, as it strips away the humanity of the individual to become an instrument of murder, leaving behind dead men whether they survive it or not.

2.6.Differences in the Adaptions:

All Quiet on the Western Front movie adaptations share the same end goal, yet the methods of achieving said goal are worlds apart. As mentioned earlier, the characters themes and messages are similar but different and different not only in addition to omitting one and adding a new plot line that in itself is a new message; furthermore, the various artistic and cinematographic choices are worlds apart, not only due to the significant period between the two but also due to a different political and cultural climate.

Chapter 2: and in depth analysis of both adaptations and evolution of war cinema in relation with political ideology

2.7. How Faithful are The Films to The Novel?:

Directors adapting a novel to a film face a difficult question, which is more critical: being faithful to the source or modifying it to be a modern interpretation of the story, such is the case with the film adaptations of AQWF by Erich Maria Remarque the book does provide a captivating timeless story, and message causing it to be the basis for two movies one 1930 and another in 2022 the former remains relatively faithful while the later takes some liberties altering the tone and focus of the story.

The 1930 film directed by Lewis Milestone is the most faithful adaptation of AQWF as it follows the story of Paul Baumer, a young German soldier through the horrific scenes of World War I. The movie realises heavily of the book as most conversations and key moments directly taken from the book with no altering capture the transformation from an eager young man to a disillusioned war veteran as the author of the book wrote it, showing his relationships with other soldiers and friends he mentors to present the story honestly to Remarque's narrative.

In contrast, the 2022 film directed by Edward Berger approaches the task of adapting the novel to the screen in a more modern way with more detail while still following the central theme plot and message but shying away from including more elements, most importantly, the addition of new subplot focusing on Matthias Erzberger, an honest German politician who negotiates with the allies for peace, while it provides a new perspective on the events of the story showing the contrast between the battlefield and closed of political meetings between that, decided the fate of millions which was not present in the book or the 1930 movie this subplot shows the modern

Chapter 2: and in depth analysis of both adaptations and evolution of war cinema in relation with political ideology

intensity in exploring the failures of leadership that prolonged the war instead than focusing on Paul and his comrade's life.

Another significant difference between the two movies is how Paul's life ends in the 1930 version. The protagonist dies on a pretty dull day on the front, almost too poetically symbolising the fragility of life and the randomness of war. At the same time, the 2022 movie shows a more brutal dramatic death as Paul falls in action after a final sales attack just minutes before the end of hostilities, which, in contrast, blames those responsible for war rather than war itself, showing that soldiers continue to die even when victory is no longer attainable making the 2022 movie a more blunt critique of war than the first one.

Despite these differences, the movies remain relatively similar in story, characters, themes, and message. Still, the modern adaptation is different due to the director's knowledge of the events and decisions taken by German politicians the government released to the public years after the release of the first movie and were not known by the author or the makers of the 1930 movie and shift in modern anti-war views.

In conclusion, while the 1930 movie is more faithful than the novel, the 2022 movie provides a fresh perspective that gives context to the events of Paul's story. Both succeed in capturing the book's essence in different ways, one seen by the soldiers who fought in the war and the latter in a more historically contextualised view.

Chapter 2: and in depth analysis of both adaptations and evolution of war cinema in relation with political ideology

2.8. The Sub Plot

The 2022 film based on AQWF introduces a new central subplot not present in the source material or the 1930 movie, a new storyline different from Paul's. It is the political negotiations or the Armistice plot line. It introduces General Friedrichs, a fictional wargaming old aristocrat who is opposed to peace, and his opposite, Mathias Erzberger, an actual historical figure who is the opposite of the general, striving for peace even if it means he will be branded as a traitor by the general staff. This plotline attempts to merge multiple scenes and moments from the older movie and book into a new story.

The subplot impacts Paul, yet the character is oblivious to it, not realising until the movie's end that his life and thousands like him are being gambled away for one man's pride. As Friedrichs' says, "What is a soldier without war?" this is an interesting way of depicting the different views of the war. As the novel and the 1930 movie hinted, politicians and generals are the cause of the war in small conversations between characters, but they did have a separate storyline. Still, here, the general is the antagonist, being the personification of war itself, as stated in the New Yorker article "Loud Noises on the Western Front", showing that modern society does not shy from directly blaming those responsible for the war, not to say that the silent generation did not voice their concerns with the war such as in the French mutinies and Russian revolution that both occurred in 1917 are a clear demonstration of anti-war movements.

It wasn't until the Vietnam War that movies and other media forms started to directly critique the war hawks who caused the wars, as General Friedrichs' reason for wanting to continue the war was that he had not yet achieved the glory that his father did in 1871 Franco German war which

Chapter 2: and in depth analysis of both adaptations and evolution of war cinema in relation with political ideology

is not unrealistic as many regimes argued that prior victories justified their warmongering or known as "quick and easy war", for example, President George W. Bush invasion of Iraq much like his father President George H. W. Bush in the Gulf War as journalist Farid Zakaria said: "Bush the son finished what Bush the father started." (Zakaria 34) or in the last days of World War Two when the upper echelons of NSDAP² refused to end the war sending more men, women, and children to die claiming that they won more significant victories in 1940 they could win again they refused to sue for peace as said by historian Ian Kershaw in his book "The End: Hitler's Germany 1944–45" in both examples.

It was soldiers like Paul Baumer and civilians who endured the suffering. The 2022 movie blames Paul's death directly on General Friedrichs, as the last attack he ordered was only 15 minutes before the end of the war. Unlike the book or the 1930 film, which blames no one, Paul was just another casualty in an all-quiet day on the Western Front, showing a shift from collectivism in the novel and first movie to individualism as in the 2022 film. Paul did not die on a quiet day. His life was intentionally wasted, showing that modern society puts more emphasis on the value of individual life rather than its fragility, as stated by director Edward Berger: "We wanted to show that Paul's death was not heroic, but rather a tragic waste, emphasizing the brutality and pointlessness of the conflict."

2.9. Cinematographical Analyses:

Cinema, in general, has advanced significantly since the first AWWF movie in 1930, so comparing it to the 2022 version is unfair, but a comparison could be made by explaining why

² NSDAP : Nationalsozialistische Deutsche Arbeiterpartei (The Nazi Party)

Chapter 2: and in depth analysis of both adaptations and evolution of war cinema in relation with political ideology

the directors used specific techniques that were available to them and if they achieved the goal that they were hoping for and how they compare best selling movies of their time.

First, the 1930 version directed by Lewis Milestone had to use available tools, as Ebert said in his 1999 article *Great Movies: the use of long takes and deep focus cinematography inspired by the aesthetic of silent films*, as cameras were often static while recording with battle sequences staged in expansive theatrical compositions, and the need to follow movement used tracking shots. Ebert (1999) says, This is, of course, in black and white, but the clever use of contrast and saturation creates dramatic or bleak scenes of war. Yet the sound design was important, as this movie was among the first sound movies featuring gun sounds, explosions, and the marching of soldiers. It was groundbreaking at the time but lacks ambient effects. However, the lack of sound in some parts of the movie is used as a tool to reflect moments of sorrow and contemplation. Relative to its competition, movies such as *Wings* (1927) or *The Big Parade* (1925), it garnered much acclaim for being the first anti-war movie and for its impact on its viewers, who felt deeply for Paul, as some of them were in his exact place not that long ago.

The 2022 movie directed by Edward Berger embraces an intimate and immersive cinematographic approach, as the use of handheld cameras puts the viewer in the middle of the battlefield with the soldiers, and the close-ups emphasize the dirty, bold, and gruesome moments, such as in the tank scene where it crushes a soldier. In addition to dynamic tracking that keeps the viewer close at all times to the story, here colors are present, and they are used to portray a bleak world with desaturation and natural lighting to achieve dark yet realistic scenes. The sound design choices are very noticeable, especially.

Chapter 2: and in depth analysis of both adaptations and evolution of war cinema in relation with political ideology

The score composed by Volker Bertelmann grips the viewer as it feels industrially fitting for this new type of modern warfare. It silences the ramp-up when moments of doom are imminent. Other aspects, like the sounds of war and bullet explosions, are also to modern standards, and silence is also used here. Especially when Paul looks at his watch before the final, which is a grim moment of emotional weight, unlike his contemporaries, AQWF. 2022 does not glorify war or heroism in any way, as it is a bleak war movie, more like 1917. Fury (2014) feels more like a Vietnam-era film like Apocalypse Now. Still, even that is not an accurate comparison, as the movie suffered backlash for diverting from the source material. Still, viewers praised it for being a war movie that does not contain any propaganda.

In conclusion, both movies were made with the best techniques available at their time, from recording style to sound design, and both were praised for their unique message, which is rare among these types of movies. Truly anti-war hits that shifted the perspectives of their viewers

2.10. Psychological Analysis:

Psychological toll is a central part of *All Quiet on the Western Front*, as Remarque's book delves deep into the human psyche, even though at the time there was little understanding of it, which was viable when trying to understand it in the 1930 movie, as any watcher would sympathise with Paul, but if not for the inner monologue, they would not notice, yet the 2022 film attempts to fix that with modern understanding of psychology and how trauma and stress affect not only the mental but even the physical appearance of the soldier.

The 1930 movie succeed and failed at the same time at trying to expose the psychological depth of the book. A simple answer to this dilemma is that the director understood what happened to

Chapter 2: and in depth analysis of both adaptations and evolution of war cinema in relation with political ideology

soldiers who went to war, but there wasn't yet a clear way of expressing. This is evident through the film. Although the subject matter is heavy, the actors often fail to convey that the characters are truly suffering, relying instead on conversations that lack emotional impact. This seems deliberate, even the light-hearted scenes use direct lines from Remarque's novel, as the actors couldn't replicate a soldier's experience on their own. The one exception is when Paul returns home after being wounded. This probably the closest the film comes to showing how difficult it is for a soldier to reintegrate into civilian life, as George Packer said in his essay the modern voice of war writing "war's ultimate crime is to make soldiers fit for nothing else " It was relatively easy to show this because, although not everyone went to war, everyone knew at least one soldier who had returned from it , with empty eyes, nightmares, and a general sense of unease. The film reflects an understanding, even back then, of what we now call PTSD known at the time as "shell shock."

Modern understanding of wars on the human mind is shown in every scene of the 2022 movie from the moment Paul, where the uniform moments where he stops or freezes to make a decision showing doubt or how he visually changes from a young man with standard features to skinny figure with circles under her dead empty eyes are very effective at exposing the psychological toll war without saying a word about it as in real life soldiers, discussed their trauma so to seem more authentic the director relied on what can the viewer see not what could be heard yet this movie does not include the homefront scene where Paul comes back to his town, a missed opportunity. Also, from the modern voice of writing by George Packer, " the omission is strange rendering a relentlessly grotesquely violent movie less wrenching ", meaning the movie delivers

Chapter 2: and in depth analysis of both adaptations and evolution of war cinema in relation with political ideology

the psychological effects of war but misses the opportunity to show how soldiers deal with returning home.

To conclude, both movies deal with the psyche of soldiers, yet for a modern viewer, the 1930 movie does not deliver, as the lack of understanding harms the delivery unless in the homefront segment; however, the 2022 movie does it right across the movie but appears to miss the key homefront segment.

2.11. The Political Ideological Analyses:

War films are often either propaganda or entertainment used to shape public perceptions and reinforce national pride. An apparent protest against war, such as *All Quiet on the Western Front*, stands apart from most other films in general, especially American ones, as the story for both adaptations comes from a book by the same name written by Remarque, a WWI German soldier. Bound by their agreement with the writer, Universal Studios could not modify a single word or segment from the book in the 1930 movie, and more recently, the 2022 film is directed by a European crew that shares the same views on the war and nationalism as the author, which is the opposite of what American patriotism does to movies.

American war movies highlight themes of heroism, sacrifice, and national pride. Movies like *Saving Private Ryan* (1998), *Hacksaw Ridge* (2016), and *Fury* (2014) show war as brutal yet serving a higher moral cause. In *Saving Private Ryan*, after showing the carnage of the D-Day landings, The soldiers become disgruntled by their mission to save one soldier, but the captain reminds them of their duty, and they give their lives for the mission. *Hacksaw Ridge* is the true story of pacifist Desmond Doss, who refused to carry a weapon but still served his country as a

Chapter 2: and in depth analysis of both adaptations and evolution of war cinema in relation with political ideology

medic to become a war hero everyone should aspire to be, and *Fury*, where the entire tank crew gives their lives for a hopeless last stand. All these movies suggest that despite the trauma and loss, war has a noble purpose: a sense of duty or defending freedom. In other words, there is a hero and meaning to this war, which could be traced to American exceptionalism and patriotism, being rarely touched by the horrors of war. Not since the American Civil War, which was the last to be fought on US soil, even in movies like *Platoon* (1986) that are anti-war, they criticize war but comment on the suffering it causes soldiers as US interventionism views war as a necessary evil. *AQWF* makes no excuses about the reality of war, simply meaning it is meaningless slaughter, as the European view on the German front has been shaped by devastating experiences from both world wars, a contrast to the American experience. Paul Baumer is not a hero; he has no opinion or moral code. He is just a young man who did what everyone in his class did: sign up to fight in a war. He was not brave or interested in an important mission; he cried and was killed because he feared being killed, and when he was called, he was just another casualty.

The story is the same for both movie adaptations of *AQWF*. Nevertheless, the recent addition of the article's subplot shows how Europeans view war as a consequence of nationalism, which is meaningless pride in one's country that sent him to die for the general to get more medals and politicians to ensure their position. The different types of war in movies are rarely noticed because most of them have been made by Hollywood. Author Maggie Stiefvater said, "As always, there was an American war hero to look to; something about him suggested valour and power," while Paul Baumer did not share any of those traits, which were intentional and are the reality. The European view of war is no more apparent than in Wilfred Owen's poem "Dulce et decorum est pro patria mori," in which he describes the death of his fellow soldier. He says these

Chapter 2: and in depth analysis of both adaptations and evolution of war cinema in relation with political ideology

exact words, which mean it is sweet and fitting to die for one's country, which he describes as the old lie.

The contrasting views on war drastically change what a movie is like, whether it is a tale of bravery and sacrifice for the greater good in American movies or the senseless, useless death of thousands for no reason in European movies. Both are caused by the historical and philosophical circumstances of each nation.

2.12. The Spread of American Cinema:

In 1945, IFOP surveyed the French public, asking, "Which nation contributed the most to defeating Germany?" At the time, 57% said it was the USSR, and 20% said the USA. Decades later, IFOP in 2015 asked the same question again, and the results were the opposite: 54% answered the USA, and 23% said it was the USSR in a France Inter interview. Cyril Dion gave his view on the matter, saying, "Since 1945, more than 200 movies glorifying Uncle Sam's liberation of Europe, thus granting the Americans a monopoly on the narrative of history, fictional movies that portrayed war with the lenses of American patriotism." Later on in the interview, they went to further examples, like Nazi Germany's use of movie propaganda to justify its actions, adding that the more views, the easier it is to shift the narrative, which was intentional, as the Marshall Plan gave America the right to 60% of Europe's movie publications, thus making sure that if any Western European went to a cinema, most likely, they would have seen an American movie. Yves Citton explains this phenomenon. "Fiction is a method to influence and manipulate actions; it makes the possible real." Thus, when 2019's AQWF was released, it received backlash as it was not the usual way. Many viewers were used to war not

Chapter 2: and in depth analysis of both adaptations and evolution of war cinema in relation with political ideology

being an honourable endeavour, a stark shift from the 200-plus movies that glorified it. Simply put, whoever controls the media writes the narrative.

2.13. The Evolution of War Cinema in *All Quiet on The Western Front*:

In the aftermath of any conflict, those concerned find ways to heal from the horrors of war and artistically portray the conflict for the next generation to learn without living the same experiences as those who faced this kind of cultural therapy. It is led by films made post-war, starting with *All Quiet on the Western Front* (1930) and the emotionally charged *The Deer Hunter* (1978), and the visceral *All Quiet on the Western Front* (2022). Movie makers took the responsibility of giving a voice to those who were silenced by violence.

One of the most impactful post-war films is Lewis Milestone's *All Quiet on the Western Front* (1930), based on Erich Maria Remarque's novel. The movie is an informative, violent portrayal of the conflict that ended a decade earlier. The film starts with a statement that it is "neither an accusation nor a confession but an effort to depict a generation destroyed by the war," which the movie achieved as viewers, especially veterans, saw the movie as the closest portrayal of World War I, a far departure from the silent movie era, setting a precedent for how war films could function as cultural reflection and critique.

Post World War II, American cinema dominated movie theaters across the world as movie directors felt compelled to give the heroes of war the same honor of describing their heroic deeds in a good light. Even movies like *The Best Years of Our Lives* (1946) took the viewer from the battlefield to the home front, depicting the life of an amputated veteran, even though the movie examines the suffering that soldiers endure post-war, as writer Mark Harris "The Best Years of

Chapter 2: and in depth analysis of both adaptations and evolution of war cinema in relation with political ideology

Our Lives is about the damage done to people by war, not just the obvious physical damage, but the invisible psychological wounds that they carry home." (Harris) said it attempts to justify their pain in an effort not to dishonor them.

In the latter half of the 20th century, the world had no shortage of war conflicts like the Korean War and the Vietnam War. All had, at one point or another, cinematic portrayals. At the same time, some glorified warfare as a necessary evil for the greater good, as the political climate of the Cold War ideological struggle forced the Western world to send their brave men to protect their way of life. Nevertheless, directors did not hide the truth that war was not a place of glory. It is about surviving to go back, like in Michael Cimino's *The Deer Hunter* (1978), while emulating the sense of duty. Its infamous Russian roulette scene is a metaphor for a soldier's duty. If conducted, there is no guarantee of coming back served. Critic David Denby observed that *The Deer Hunter* "turned the Vietnam War into a myth of national trauma," using intense visual and emotional storytelling to articulate the chaos and senselessness of the conflict (Denby, 1979). While filmmakers' role is not only to portray this legacy but to interpret it, modern films like *Hurt Locker* (2008) dive into the addictive, adrenaline-fueled psyche of modern soldiers, winning acclaim for its unflinching portrayal of war's psychological costs.

It is worth pointing out that post-war cinema is not restricted to Western perspectives. Films, like *Come and See* (1985) from the Soviet Union and *Grave of the Fireflies* (1988) from Japan, offer a glimpse into civilian suffering and generational trauma, showing that war is not a soldier's burden alone but society's as a whole. As director Elem Klimov of *Come and See* stated, "I

Chapter 2: and in depth analysis of both adaptations and evolution of war cinema in relation with political ideology

wanted to show the war through the eyes of a child so the viewer would feel what it means to lose everything" (Klimov, 1985).

Edward Berger's 2022 adaptation of *All Quiet on the Western Front* brings renewed intensity to the anti-war narrative, using modern cinematic techniques to deliver the same powerful message as its 1930 predecessor. The film not only depicts the horrific chaos of battle but also explores the often-overlooked political mechanisms behind the violence. It places greater emphasis on how the ideal of peace is at odds with the interests of those who wage war for pride and glory. These leaders, distant from the front lines, support the war through the blood, screams, and suffering of others, treating soldiers' lives as expendable. One haunting question from the film — “What is a soldier without war?” — reminds viewers that for those in power, war is not just a means to an end, but a way to maintain control and identity, regardless of the human cost. As noted in a review by Novastream, Berger's film serves as "a furious condemnation of the people in power who continue to send their citizens to fight in futile and imperialistic endeavors" (Roberts, 2022).

In conclusion, the cinematic legacy of post-war films is an ongoing process starting arguably from the 1930 adaptation of AQWF, directed by Lewis Milestone, shaping almost a century preserving the stories of those who fought from the early styles of the battlefield to the modern critic of the system and psychological scars of trauma, using this museum to make the viewer witness the violence and as questions inspire reflection and ensure that the scars of war are neither forgotten nor glorified.

Chapter 2: and in depth analysis of both adaptations and evolution of war cinema in relation with political ideology

2.14. Conclusion:

In conclusion, the 1930 and 2022 adaptations of *All Quiet on the Western Front* remain faithful to Remarque's core theories even though they each reflect their time's historical, technological, and cultural advancements. The 1930 version closely follows the novel; it is faithful to the written form on-screen, while the 2022 version, with modern cinematic techniques and the addition of the armistice subplot, voices the critique of those responsible for the war, making a more direct commentary on nationalism and unchecked power. Both films succeeded in their anti-war message and psychological toll. In the aftermath of any conflict, those concerned find ways to heal from the horrors of war and artistically portray the conflict for the next generation to learn without living the same experience.

GENERAL CONCLUSION

GENERAL CONCLUSION

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This dissertation has traced the ideological, political, and aesthetic evolution of *All Quiet on the Western Front* from its original literary form to its major film adaptations in 1930 and 2022 by examining each adaptation with its context, reflecting each era's context. At the same time, the 1930 version serves as a faithful anti-war narrative, and the 2022 version reframes Remarque's thought through a contemporary lens that blames institutional failure and systemic violence that resulted in the dehumanization of the modern soldier.

While both films' fidelity to Remarque's anti-war message remains a core component, the original movie emphasizes the enlisted man's emotional aspects and vulnerability. In contrast, the 2022 movie uses modern cinematic techniques—sound design, visual scale, and narrative expansion—to show that war is the mechanized slaughter of those who fight in it while examining the political influence. This shift does not take away from the movie. It reinforces the adaptability of Remarque's message.

Furthermore, this comparative study examines how both films portray the political ideals surrounding war, particularly the influence patriotism and nationalism, which were prevalent in both, yet filmmakers embrace patriotism as it gives purpose to what those men fought, yet the shifting attitudes in recent times provide no such excuses for war; cinema as seen in the 2022 movie where the critique of the systems which are responsible for the death of millions is shown in contrast to other war movies as filmmakers, as cultural agents, bear the responsibility of translating historical trauma into forms that resonate with contemporary audiences. In doing so, they influence how societies remember, interpret, and respond to the enduring scars of war.

GENERAL CONCLUSION

In its many incarnations, *Quiet on the Western Front* remains a vital cultural text. Its legacy lies not only in its condemnation of militarism and nationalism but also in its capacity to evolve artistically and ideologically alongside the societies it continues to challenge. This ongoing relevance underscores the importance of critical engagement with war cinema to interrogate both the past and the present.

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