

A NOTE ABOUT THE AUTHOR: HUMPREY COBB (1899-1944) AND THE DIRECTOR STANLEY KUBRICK

Humphrey Cobb was born of American parents in Siena, Italy. After early schooling in England, he returned to the U.S. in 1913. Expelled from high school in 1916, he traveled to Montreal and enlisted in a Canadian regiment. Cobb saw action at Amiens and was wounded and gassed. During World War II he worked for the Office of War Information writing overseas propaganda.

As a veteran of the trenches, Cobb had experience with ordinary humanity, institutionalized terror and the savagery of modern war. In contrast to *AQWF*, Cobb's novel and the subsequent film contain little sentimentality and have little use for nationalism. Nor does he focus particularly on pathos or stoic suffering of the common man. He emphasizes the inertia of modern bureaucracy in which individuals shrug off resistance or rebellion.

In 1933, two years before he wrote *Paths of Glory*, Cobb summed up his views on war novels when he wrote:

“Where the *All Quiets* utterly fail as anti-war propaganda, indeed where they become pro-war propaganda, is in the stoicism, the self-abnegation, the idealism and romantic nobility which they portray. How the actors hate war, but Christ, how nobly they suffer. The only available effective anti-war propaganda that I know is photographs of butchered bodies – the more horrible the better.”

Stanley Kubrick read Cobb's novel at age fourteen and remembered it deeply enough to return to it later. Kirk Douglas risked his own money to bring it to the screen. Although acclaimed now as one of Kubrick's best works, *Paths of Glory* received no Academy Award nominations in 1957.