

Paul Fussell

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It's hard to talk about the culture wars today, because the culture wars has become so much the culture of peace time. We don't notice it any more, but especially in the US until the last year or so, when our relation to Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union began to loosen. The culture of the US was very much a wartime culture. In many ways that people were so used to, they didn't notice anymore. For example, our recent president, **Ronald Reagan**, although he was never in a war and never even wore a uniform, was accustomed to saluting, like this....when he left Washington. And he would salute the marines and soldiers who were helping him as body guards. That sort of thing would have been unthinkable in the days of **Woodrow Wilson**, when the days of **Theodore Roosevelt**.

We have very much a wartime culture here in significant ways. I call it the "yes sir" culture. Everybody is programmed to regard obedience as a good thing instead of a bad thing. And anybody in the west, which means anybody from Western Germany, or should now regard obedience as a very bad thing. It's something we inherited from the second world war. In the sense that orders must not be questioned, official emissions and propaganda must not be doubted and so forth. So in essence we have a continuing wartime culture, although nobody' being killed all the time, or at least not publicly. But the atmosphere of obedience and communal thinking, and a lack of skepticism and a lack of disbelief, is very much a wartime atmosphere and the kind you might expect to find in a wartime propaganda culture.

The effect of the second war has been profound, I think, on the US, for that reason. Much more that the effect of the first world war. But then the US was hardly in the first world war, just a very few months. It took us so long to train an army to send them to Europe, to put them on the line next to the French and the British. And by the time we got there the war was virtually over, although the weight of

the US was important in winning that war for the allies. The US was in the second war much, much longer and the impact of the second war on the US was much deeper. And as I've said it is still going on, the influence of the war is still with us.

Paul Fussell

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Antonello: What's the difference between the first one and the second one?

FUSSELL

Well, for Americans, we hardly were in the first world war. More sailors and naval officers were killed in one day in the second war on Dec. 7, 1941, than were killed in the whole of the first world war. So, by contrast with the second war and the first war for Americans shrinks to a very tiny event. And that's not of course true for the British or for the French, but it is true for the Americans. The war for Americans is the second world war, that was the one that enlisted absolutely everybody.

I was in university when it began, and everyone of my friends immediately enlisted in the army, the navy, the air force, the marine corp, the coast guard or something. Not to have been in that war would have been to disgrace yourself. So everybody was in it, everybody in the streets was in uniform.

Every element of national society was engaged somehow in the war and the the justice of the war was never debated. Everybody was of one mind about it, which I think was very bad for the general culture. Because the US and in the western society in general, is a parliamentary society and it operates by disagreement and debate and argument and skepticism. And the collision between different positions, all of that disappeared during the war. Everybody was of one mind. And I think the result of that cultural influence is to be seen even today where disagreement and debate and strenuous, or as we call it here, robust disagreement, are regarded still as somehow a little bit unpatriotic, in bad form surely. And that is one of the cultural remnants of the second world war.

Paul Fussell

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Antonello: Do you believe that somehow one of the reasons is because of mass production society?

That's part of it, yes. We could not have won the war, and the west could not have won the war. By which I mean the British and the Americans and the Soviets, without American mass production, which was extremely important in winning the war. This is something I like to emphasize here because it annoys many of my friends, who think the US won the war out of some greater virtue or greater courage. No we won it because General Motors produced more tanks than the Germans could produce, and Boeing produced more bombers than the Germans could produce. We won it because we were the world's greatest industrial power. And in the modern world, like the second world war, courage and nobility and honor are very little useful, they don't matter. What really matters is industrial strength and economic power, and the nation that has those things is going to win the war, even if most of the soldiers are lazy or cowardly. The war was really won by General Motors and Boeing. And not by people like me who fought in it. Of course we had to use their products and we had to make sure they got to the right place, did the right thing, but without that sort of industrial power behind one, the war would probably still be going on.

Paul Fussell

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Antonello: Can you tell us something about the relationship between war and technology?

Well at the moment, it is intense, of course. And this is one of the signs of modernism, is the fact that war has become almost wholly a technological matter, which makes such former human values as heroism and nobility and discipline of much less consequence than it used to be. War is now very likely fought by machines or people who are trained to be like machines. That's about all I can say on that. See that seems to be so clear that there's not much to be said about it. I mean, the idea of war is equally the idea of technology. And the side with the greatest

technology is probably going to win the war.

Paul Fussell

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Antonello: You talk about the jeep and that the jeep was not an answer to the Panzer tank. Did you ever see the small clips about the jeep?? OK, can you tell us something about the jeep and about american technology at the beginning of the war?

At the beginning of the war there was a good deal of hope that the war somehow could be won by technology alone, that is, without the vast casualties occasioned by the fighting on the western front in the first world war. Everybody was so mindful of the human damage caused by conventional warfare in the first world war. That is these two armies of people with bayonets and rifles and artillery facing each other for four years across France. That when the second war began there was a great deal of hope that somehow the second war could be won by technology, virtually alone. And consequently there were books like, "Victory Through Air Power," it was thought that by strategic bombing alone one could win a war in Europe, or a war in the Far East.

And at the beginning it was actually imagined that agility and speed be token by the beautiful little Jeep, would suffice to win the war, even in our position against the heavy weight tanks and artillery of **Hitler**. But we soon found out and of course wise people knew this from the start that wars are won only at the expense of casualties and murder and destruction and despair, those were the costs of winning a war. And we soon learned, it took us about a year, I suppose the pivot was Guadal Canal, the battle of Guadal Canal, in the South Pacific. We soon learned that our hope that we could win the war more or less easily by technology was a fantasy.

And that ultimately we would have to move, as I put it in that chapter from light duty to heavy duty. And heavy duty meant doing horrible things, bombing women and children in Hamburg and Dresden, bombing the population of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. The fighting all the way up Italy, this bizarrely wasteful and stupid battle and so on. Fought by foot soldiers freezing to death, in the mountains and so on. We

soon learned that it's impossible in a modern war to fight it easily.

And the American optimistic hope that the outset wasn't the worst, somehow could be fought easily. Without incurring a sort of horror that had marked the first world war. But we soon found out that was impossible. For the people who fought the war, like me, the result was a general disillusion with easy solutions to hard human problems. And I've been a skeptic ever since about bright ideas as ways of mitigating certain human, recurring human problems or constant human problems which can be solved only by massive effort and change of style, change of character and things that are very difficult to do. It can't be done simply mechanically by pressing buttons and hoping for the best.

We are a very technological people, the Americans especially, but all of western Europe too, at the moment. And there's still the hope that, although we ought to know better that when a computer messed up our bank statements almost every month, there's still the hope that somehow the computer or some sort of code breaking machine like the enigma is going to solve these problems. But ultimately wars are fought by two men facing each other and shooting at each other. And the one that kills the other wins the battle, and there's no other way of doing it, distasteful as that is. And those of us like me, who fought the war, learned that very rapidly. We learned that no amount of technology was going to win the battles we were in.

I was telling someone the other day, during the war I fought for something like 8 months in France. And during all the time I was fighting the Germans I saw one tank, one American tank. Because the war I fought was an infantry war, very much like the war fought in the American Civil War. We fought it with rifles, bayonets, and grenades and chasing each other and scaring each other to death, and so forth. We didn't fight it with airplanes, I saw one airplane also, all the time I was fighting in France. We didn't fight with airplanes, we didn't fight them in bombers, at least the war that I fought, we fought it on the ground very much like cowboys and indians. And it was terribly important to be young and to be hopeful and to be optimistic, if you were going to survive. It had very little to do with technology. Technology helped elsewhere, but I wasn't in the technological war.

That's something I like to

emphasize because people who don't know much about the second war get the impression it was fought entirely by the internal combustion engine, and by aircraft and by various technological devices or industrial devices. Where as, the bulk of the war was fought by men very much in the style of the first world war, or the civil war.

As I've said many times, I got the idea for writing the book about the first world war, that I wrote, called, "The Great War in Modern Memory." I got the idea for writing that book in the first world war because at one point my company was occupying some concrete implacements in Eastern France, that had been left over from the first world war. So I got the sense that we were sort of fighting a second act of the first world war, and indeed using the same implacements and fighting it more or less in the same place.

The sight of the second battle in the Marne, in the first world war, became a world war two battlefield as well. The use that it was made, the use that was made of the in the second war was very much like the first war, it wasn't a tank battle, it was a battle between men with rifles, and bayonets, and machine guns. And if you had gotten back a little farther then looked at it, you would have sworn that the first world war was still going on. So to me the ground troops, the war they fought in, was the first world war after a sort of twenty-five year armistice and then resuming again, roughly in the same battlefields, ironically many times.

Paul Fussell

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Antonello: Do you believe that during the process from the beginning of the war until the end that the people that were fighting the war, they became interchangeable parts?

Absolutely, you have to in a war, because the personnel, that's the cast of characters in a war, has to be uniform. A captain of artillery has to be the same captain, regardless of whether he comes from this part of the world, or is rich or poor or anything. You see whether he's a banker or a stockbroker or a high school teacher in real life, during the war he has to

be a captain of artillery and nothing else. So everybody becomes an interchangeable part. I was a lieutenant of infantry, and regardless of my character, my personality, which never showed, my character during the war, my role was that of a lieutenant infantry who acts in very different way from a lieutenant of ordnance, or a lieutenant of chemical warfare, or a lieutenant who's a bomber pilot. In other words, we have a limited number of roles which are theatrical and you have to play within them, there's very little room for deviation or personality, or eccentricity.

And that is one of the continuing influences of the war upon society, I think, the continual habit of typecasting and fitting everybody into recognizable categories, is something which the war emphasizes deeply. And which I think it's very hard for us to get over.

People are surprised because I'm a university professor and that I'm also a writer of outrageous books for the fun of it. Like my book class, on social class in America, which I had no right at all professionally to write. But I wrote it because it was fun to write it, and I wanted to raise some money, so I wrote that book and it just baffles people. People here get very distressed because you're supposed to be a university professor, in all times and places and not puzzle people by deviating from that character cliché, you see.

What happens in war is that all the clichés come rushing in, and become even less flexible than they are in so called peacetime life. The whole war becomes a cliché and this is why envisages such awful intellectual damage on people, which goes on for years and years, decades and decades afterwards. It teaches people to think in categories, the main category is US versus THEM. That is ourselves who are all supposed to be virtuous and wonderful, and the enemy on the other side, which is supposed to be all vile, and vicious, and hopeless, and disastrous, ugly as well like the Japanese, animalistic and so on. Or trivial like the Italians, or sadistic like the Germans and so on. Nobody can escape these classifications. And that to me as I've shown in the last book called, "Wartime," that to me is one of the worst effects of war on culture. One of the worst cultural effects is imposing these inflexible, popularly accepting classifications upon people's view of what's going on out there. It makes it harder and harder to see that the world is not divided into us and them, as it is in the war. But is a mass of colors and

competing interests and opposition, which are very hard to describe and which won't stay still long enough, even for you to study them.

In other words, the war is an assault on subtlety, and intellectual difficulty, it simplifies everything. And that simplification goes on and on as I've said, for decades after the war. And that to me is a curse that war brings with it, which is almost as bad as the destruction a war envisions upon, buildings and bodies and cities and other decencies. Most people don't think of the war as an assault upon mind, but it is essentially an assault upon mind, it's a simplification. A substitute of physical reality for intellectual reality.

Paul Fussell

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Antonello: Do you think since you have been talking about uniformity and division of labor and hierarchies, and also a class stratification within the army that somehow its the same blueprint has always been going on between the factories and the military since a long time ago. That the army or the military complex left a footprint on the civilian society?

You remember, I'm sure people watching this remember General **Eisenhower's** remark just before he left the presidency, where he says the one thing to be most cautious about was the influence in what he called the military industrial complex upon society, which is still going on. It's worse now than it was before.

War is always popular because a lot of money can be made out of it, not out of war, but out of defense so called, that euphemism. Out of preparing for a war that's not to be fought, and creating one set of weapons which will soon turn obsolete and have to be replaced expensively by another set of weapons and so on. All western society has been doing this ever since the end of the second world war. Which is why a number of Americans are sincerely but

secretly depressed by the detente taking place in Europe at the moment, which will require, if it's ultimately successful, the return to US of the half million soldiers, with no jobs to perform here.

Ever since the end of the second war has been regarded as normal that about one quarter of a country's economic operations will be bellicose, that is warlike or engaged in manufacturing weapons of war, which of course are never used. They're not designed to be used really, they're designed to be used up and declared obsolescence so that new ones can be made, and a great deal of profit can be made out of them. That was what Eisenhower warned against, but it did no good.

A problem for people recognizing this is the language to describe these things is constantly being euphemized. When I fought the second world war the part of the government that supervise war was called the war department, which was honest, and it was soon changed to the department of defense. And I would hear about the defense budget or the defense expenditures where the whole concept of war and battle and destruction is softened into a sort of genteel notion of defense. So nobody notices anymore that there's a vast of stupid waste of money, energy, intelligence that goes into this. Meaningless game of threat and counter threat, and supply and obsolescence and resupply and so forth.

Paul Fussell

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Antonello: Can you tell us something about strategic bombing?

At the outset of the war it was thought that strategic bombing was accurate, it was imagined that you could put a bomb pretty much where your bombsite told you to drop it. After about a year of the war all sides, including the axis and the allies together discovered that strategic bombing was a myth. Because you couldn't control drift, you couldn't control wind, and navigation itself was a great difficulty. You had simply to drop a vast number of bombs over a target large enough to absorb some of them, because you couldn't really hit anything with bombs, you could hit roughly in an area.

So strategic bombing began not as a tactically intelligent thing, it began as a necessary emergency thing to do with a lot of bombs. I mean you have to drop them, you have to use them, as if you can't drop them accurately, you have to drop them inaccurately. Consequently, you would select an immense target like the city of Munich, or the city of Hamburg, or the city of Dresden and fly over it with a thousand planes and just dump out the ordinance on to the city. Even then, probably forty percent of the bombs would never hit the city at all. They would be dropped five miles away on peoples' farms, or on hospitals, or on schools or God knows what. And it became clear that if you couldn't aim bombs you were going to hit a lot of things that in 1918, it would have been a shame to hit. But in the modern world you're not ashamed at all to hit them, you just drop the bombs on Hanoi, or on Dresden , or on Hamburg, Or on Hiroshima, or on Tokyo with the object of just a maximum destruction.

The irony was that this destruction originally designed to terrorize the population, and it caused them to agitate for an end to the war. The irony was that we discovered that it produced the opposite effect, it stiffened resistance rather than weakening it. And so the whole thing was an utter waste of time. It did nothing but destroy virtually all of Europe out of false assumptions.

(???) assumptions I think were the result of having a great bomber fleet which had to be used and having a vast number of bombs which had to be dropped. If you had these two things together, you've got to use them, you've got to drop the bombs no matter how inaccurate they maybe, and no matter how obtuse and ironic the purpose of dropping them may turn out be. Because it didn't help end the war at all, it simply prolonged it and ruined the continent of Europe.

Paul Fussell

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I wouldn't call that strategic, I call that tactical bombing. That was more successful, but very often as well the bombs were dropped on friendly troupes, so gradually the

army got very suspicious about that kind of tactical bombing. That's really a sort of replacement for an artillery barrage, preceding an attack, but it was found so inaccurate that they didn't do it very often.

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The bombing in the St. Lo(??) area of France during the invasion of Normandy, which was designed to release **General Patton**'s third army to scamper across France. The attack was to be preceded by a 500 bomber raid upon the German lines, which were to be entirely destroyed, so that we could walk over. What happened was that the bombs were dropped on the Americans, instead of on the Germans with vast demoralizing results. They also hit the Germans which allowed us to go through. But the bombs were incompetently or inaccurately dropped, and that's just one example. After that General Eisenhower forbade the use of bombers for the substitute for artillery in a tactical situation because they were so inaccurate. All you could do was throw the bombs out and hope for the best.

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FUSSELL

That story illustrates the immense but not often mentioned element of fear in warfare, which is much more important than most people will grant. The anti aircraft gunners protecting London were so terrified of German aircraft, that anything above them they would fire at. And frequently they fired at their own planes, very often and planes were being managed by Canadian crew. So after a while the Canadians refused to fly over London at all, because they knew the gunners were so terrified that they would shoot at anything.

A recent example is the way the US navy shot down the Iranian airliner, out of fear, only out of fear. They were afraid to let it get close enough, they thought it was a fighter plane, they were afraid to let it get close enough for identification. So they simply shot at it while it was too far away to be identified, and it proved not to be the thing they thought it was. I think the same thing is probably true that the shooting down by the Soviets, of the Korean airliner, some years before.

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Fear is terribly important but you can't ever mention it because it suggests that war is messier and less predictable than people want to imagine it. It is the most powerful element in tactics and in human behavior in war, but as I say seldom mentioned. I think there is all kinds of mistakes and errors and excessively hasty and thoughtless conduct, which very frequently destroy your own troops.

I suppose in my 8 months on the line in France in 1944-45, I apparently killed about 25 Americans by mistake. It is assuming the people I was throwing the grenades at were Germans, and then discovering after the grenades, a whole lot of American bodies on the ground they forgot the password. Things like this happening constantly, but these things are seldom mentioned because they suggest that war is less predictable, less manageable than we want to believe it to be. We want to believe that we could control events in wartime, and once you start a war, you can hardly control anything, it all gets out of control it sort of goes off, on its own. A lot of war lovers out..... They want events to mean something, and if events don't mean anything, they're all confused and let down, disappointed, quite true.

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FUSSELL

I'm fascinated by the way... I've never known anything about naval warfare, but I'm fascinated in what the psychology of fighting aboard a naval ship must be, because there's no escape. If you're a coward in the army, you can always go to the rear, or hide. But in a naval vessel you can do nothing but sit there and take it, so I think the psychology is very different.

Even worse....

Paul Fussell

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Antonello: Do you believe that making the bomb and dropping the bomb was the logical end of strategic bombing??

The key word is intensification, and in an industrial war, every moment leads to intensification. One side builds a big

tank the other side builds another big tank, a slightly bigger one and so forth. Every weapon tends to intensify, getting bigger and cruder as you go on. I think I mention in the book that it takes too long to make a good submachine gun in the US, as the Thompson gun. And therefore we made a thing called the grease gun which is stamped out of metal, which is very crude, and which spewed out 45 caliber slugs at a great rate, and very inaccurately but that didn't matter. In other words we have an intensification of the submachine gun. And delicacy and precision had to disappear.

This is very true of bombing, as well as strategic bombing. So the atom bomb was inevitable, and of the culture, if you like, of strategic bombing, it was bigger, it was better, it destroyed more. It was more indiscriminate, it was more brutal, it was more sadistic, it was more terrorizing, and therefore, it was inevitable that it happened.

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Sometimes people say the fact that we dropped it on the Japanese and not on the Germans indicates something offensive and racist about the American character. They're quite wrong, they'd forgotten that the bomb was first tested in July 1945 that the war against the Germans ended in May 1945. I have no doubt that we would of dropped it on the Germans, If it had been ready, with no compulsion whatever, even though they were not Asiatics, they were not dark skinned people. We dropped it on the Japanese, when the bomb was ready they were the only surviving target we could use it on.

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And so I think I said on that essay, the reason I said thank God for the atom bomb, was that it saved me the obligation of invading the home islands with my infantry. And that's when I would surely have been killed because I so demoralized from that time, and I wasn't any good. And it would have been a disaster on the beaches of Tokyo. The Japanese were, a very small part their army had been at all anymore, and they had millions and millions of troops ready who had never fought on the island...(??) Okinawa And Iwo Jima to repel us, it would have been a real bloodbath. So those of us who would have had to defeat the Japanese in ground warfare which we could not have survived, many of us by that time. All of us say thank God for the atom bomb. With an awareness of how rude and offensive that statement is, but we say it out of an awareness that war itself is rude and offensive, and

intolerable. And must be brought to an end by the fastest means, which is what the atom bomb did.

Paul Fussell

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Antonello: So your point of view was to drop the Atomic bomb was the right choice.

It was absolutely the right choice. It should be remembered horrible as it was, that when it was dropped we didn't know what we know now about radiation sickness, or genetic damage. All of that was news to us, we just thought it was a larger bomb.

Somebody once asked Sir Arthur Harris, who's the head of bomber command in Britain, whether he thought it was moral to bomb Dresden. He said, "Let me tell you something, war is immoral, war is immoral, on the basis, you cannot fight a war and be moral." And there are very few degrees of morality, when you kill women and children with normal bombing, the difference between that and killing them with atomic bombing is miniscule, so why bother.

Everybody hates novelty because it requires of intellectual adjustment, and everybody hated the atom bomb because it seemed needlessly cruel. I think I mentioned in one of my books, to see what a bayonet does to a 16 year old boy's body, it jolts you as bad as to see what the Hiroshima bomb did to the Hiroshima maiden, so called, and the sort of plastic surgery required. War is ipso facto cruel and brutal, and if you want to be moral, stay out of it. Lots of people answer the question about the morality of dropping the atom bomb, all war's immoral and there are no degrees in it. Killing other people is indecent and offensive.

Paul Fussell

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Antonello: In reading your books I thought you would say dropping the bomb was a mistake. Not because of the people but because what it means for the future.

Nobody thought about the future then, as I said, we didn't know what we know now about genetic damage and about radiation sickness. And we felt the bomb was simply another much feared weapon. I think we also naively thought that it could be controlled by some sort of international body, this was well before the UN revealed its incapacity to operate properly. I don't think it was a nice thing to do, but then I don't think it was nice to bomb Berlin either. And both I think were necessary to win the war, and deplorable at the same time. This is what many critics of my book have not understood that it is possible to say something is necessary without saying its good. You can say it's necessary and deplorable, and the whole allied war was necessary and deplorable.

Paul Fussell

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Antonello: Can you tell us something about the relationship between war and the media? Talking about radio, television and also the films made by the office of War Information, Hollywood.

As you know in the second world war in this country, all communication was controlled by the government. That fact was sometimes shrewdly disguised, but the government, for example, controlled the supply of paper, issued the newspapers and magazines. If a journal did not cooperate it didn't get any paper and it was closed down. Although the government could argue that there was no official censorship. All of our war correspondence in effect, government servants. And everything that they published about the war was censored. So no actual data about the war was allowed to surface, unless it was cheerful and optimistic and conducive to victory.

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Consequently, the media delivered a very false version of the war, which was necessary. Now again I am saying that it was necessary but it was deplorable at the same time. People sometimes say would you prefer that there be no censorship. I say, no, the censorship was absolutely to sustain the morale of both soldiers and civilians. Censorship is a vile thing. Unless there's somebody who's interested in the free operation of

the mind. Censorship is a very vicious business, almost as bad as war itself. Even if necessary, it had very bad effects which I think are still lingering today. The ease with which the government can manipulate opinion by letting out news or withholding news, or letting out leaks or withholding them, and so on is another obvious knowledge, everybody knows that. I don't know what else to say about that.

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But the whole cinema industry was controlled by the government, every movie had to conduce to the war effort or it could not be made. And any movie depicting the armed forces had to depict them in a cheerful way. Because the movie had to use the material owned by the armed forces, that is, destroyers, or other naval vessels, tanks, landing crafts, and so on, which would be lent to movie companies by the services only with the proviso that the service, the army or the navy or whatever, be allowed to vent the movie. And to approve of it or disapprove of its release, consequently, nothing but cheerful news was ever shown on the screens. And this continued until well after the war.

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I know very few movies about war at all, that are truthful until maybe the Viet Nam movies. And I think those are possible only because we lost that war. If we'd won that war I think the lies would be going for generations about it, the way they handle now the second world war. Winning a war is very bad for you, it's much better to lose, I think, it's better for the mind to lose it. It acquaints you with the tragic understanding of life. Whereas it's possible to win a war and not notice that anything is wrong in the world because you won it, and not notice there's anything wrong with yourself because you won it.

Paul Fussell

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Antonello: Do you believe there is any difference between the way the media is used by **Goebbels** in Germany and the way it was used in this country?

Yes there is a difference, because Goebbels could have somebody shot, or imprisoned for not making the kind of films he wanted to do, and that couldn't have been done

here. Here you just lost your job, but you could get another job. You weren't killed, and your relatives went unmurdered and revenged.

I think that is the main difference and also I think the audience that Goebbels was making his material for was, by that time much less skeptical than the American audience. He could indulge in much broader effects as a propagandist than anyone in this country, because by the time he was making his films, they were issuing his newsreleases of his speeches, say in 1943. His audience had been subjected for at least a decade, to a stream of material without any qualification, without any subtlety, without any in-built critical mechanism and so on, that wasn't true here. Here the audience remained quite skeptical. And Americans at their best seem to be very skeptical people, who tend to govern by disagreement, and debate, and abuse, and satire and criticism, and exercise of the first amendment. And it's very hard to hood wink(???) them, I think in a way that Goebbels could wink the Germans. And made them like it too, by that time they really lusts after a very simplified form of understanding of the world. The Third Reich is correct in all ways, and everybody else is wrong, subhuman, brutal, Polish, Jewish, etc.. We never had that here, it was not as coarse.

Paul Fussell

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Antonello: Talk about typecasting. You said that during the war people were sending souvenirs using Japanese skulls. We have been watching a lot of movies and propaganda movies...Can you tell us something about this?

This is very common at Pacific theater, lot so because the Japanese were regarded as subhuman, very much the way the Germans regarded the Jews, or the Poles of the Gypsies, or the Russians as subhuman, it's the same psychological operation on both sides. I'm sure a German housewife would have been as little horrified to receive from her soldier son, a polished thigh bone of a Polish peasant, or a western Russian soldier as a souvenir. It would have been as little surprise as an American housewife to receive from her soldier husband or son, fighting in the South Pacific, say a paper knife made out of a shiny ivory like bone of a

Japanese soldier's thigh, thigh bone. The same thing operated on both sides.

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It's interesting the Americans couldn't do this with the Germans and the Italians, who seemed to them like, "white people", I mean the same European stock that we are. And so the propaganda about them was very different. The Japanese were depicted as simply bestial and subhuman, and anything you did to them was alright if it would help win the war. Or even if it would help avenge Pearl Harbor.

I think I said in the book that the slogan in the war was, Remember Pearl Harbor, it was never Remember Poland, which is what the war was ostensibly about, not about Pearl Harbor. The great world war was about the sovereignty of Poland. It was a violation by the Germans in 1939, presumably that was what the war was about, if it was about anything. As I said in my book, I think the war was about the war, I mean, it became a soap-opera, a self-running enterprise. By the time it ended it ended fittingly in mad events like, the dropping of the atom bomb or the bombing of Dresden, or incredible insensate violence, only for the sake of violence. But violence in aid of ending the war by any means.

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The habit, as you know, persisted as long as Americans fight Asians, because in the Viet Nam war as you may remember, souvenirs were very popular. Including penises cut off and dried of the Viet Cong, ears which are frequently worn in a belt around the waist, almost like Indian scalps in the 19th century. Fingers were popular, some were sent home, but most were just kept as totems of one's own heroism and so forth. There's something about Americans fighting Gooks, that is, Asiatics, which brings out the worst in the American racist impulse, I would say.

And interestingly, it is Black Americans who can play the games against Asians just as well as white Americans. It's not really about color, it's about American revenge against poverty and a different society. So a society can never understand. Something I love to quote from the Viet Nam war, this was said by Colonel George Patton 3rd, that the European Patton was G. Patton Jr., this was his son who went to West Point. And he is quoted as saying in Viet Nam at one point, somebody said do you like being in Viet Nam, he said, I more than like being in Viet Nam, I love fighting the Viet Nam war. Somebody said, why is

that, he said, because I love to see the arms and legs fly. What he meant was when the artillery falls and blows the body apart, he enjoyed it. And I think he probably wouldn't of enjoyed it so much, if he'd been dropping the artillery on Germans or Italians, or British or Brazilians or something like that. It was the fact that he was dropping them on Gooks that made all the difference.

Paul Fussell

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Antonello: Do you believe that there is a connection between this kind of racism and slavery in this country? And the fact that in the WWII there was a segregated army? And also because of the Indian wars in this country?

I'm not certain what the effect was of the segregation of Blacks in the army. I can't really deal with that, I don't have anything bright to say on that subject.

Paul Fussell

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Antonello: Can you tell me something about advertisements and also that fact that all the major generals like Montgomery, McCarthy were moving around with a public relations office?

In the US, especially, because the arts and advertising were the most developed in this country, when the war began as compared with the European countries. From the outset of the war, it was a publicity operation, everybody running it realized that it had to be won as well by publicity and advertising as by industrial means. You could say anything about the war and have it go down, if you said it in the right public relation or advertising means,

Well consequently, for example as I say in the book when the war started. The first thing the US Marine corp did from its headquarters in southern California, was to send to NY to number of advertising agencies for 25 or 50 of best ad men they could find to go on

the Marine corp staff, in order to glamorize the marine corp, which they did beautifully. Every army unit had its public relations officers, which is something quite new, that was unheard of in the first world war.

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And the leaders in the war:

Montgomery, Eisenhower, Patton, General Mark Clarke and so on, were surrounded constantly by their own corp of cameramen who knew their right, their best side to photograph. And reporters to take down their remarks and publicity people in general to glamorize them, and to keep the public from learning the truth about them. For example, Eisenhower's mistress, this beautiful young girl, nobody knew about that until after the war.

It's, part of the obligation of his publicity toads, although I admired Eisenhower greatly to keep this not just from Eisenhower's wife, but from the populous in general.

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So it was uniquely a publicity war, not just on our side, but on the (??) of Goebbels side as well, and certainly the British side. But the Americans taught the other sides essentially how to use advertising and publicity as a way of forwarding their own war aims. In the contrast I think there is less between friend and enemy in the second war, or the various allies in the second war then everybody contrasted with the first world war. When it was very little development in the advertising and publicity trades to render the war in that way.

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The result I think as I said in my book, is that you didn't know where you were at any time, you were constantly being bombarded with a fictive war in a fictive world in which it is being fought. And unless you were there to question yourself with your own censors what was going on, you had to accept that fictive version of things. I think the difference between that scene and the scene today is not terribly wide. I think that we have to do that as well, even with television, even with mechanisms that we believe are conveying the truth somehow to us. I think we have to construct a sort of fictive country to live in, which is persuing fictive, noble ends all over the world and so on. And some are being generated by the arts, and they are arts of publicity and advertising and so on.

Paul Fussell

00:23:56:02

Antonello: What do you think today about the atomic bomb?

When I think about it, I think it will never be used, I think it just blew up accidentally. But if it's controlled by computers, the same computers that control my bank statement, it's very likely to go off next Tuesday, without anybody assisting it. I mean just automatically. What can I say about it, I think it's deplorable but I think it also has a guaranteed that there has been no world war since the last one. I think it has kept the peace ironically, because it's too horrible to use. I think people recognize that if one side uses it, the other will too, so nobody can use it at all. It may mean the end of war, except for little wars fought by quiet states and mercenaries, as we did in Viet Nam and as we would perhaps do in Nicaragua. It's a mixed horror, it is a horror and it's an awful thing but also ironically it is a sort of a blessing. Because it is too awful to be used.

Paul Fussell

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Antonello: Do you believe that science and technology are leading us toward progress?

Progress, no, I don't think so. But you have to designate the kind of progress. What to me is progress, I never use the word. I'm so skeptical of it, that the idea never passes through my brain. Anytime somebody says progress, like (???) and Goebbels, I release the safety catch from my revolver. It's just not the world of language that I live in. To me the idea of progress is an idea invented in the 17th century, that died in 1918, and to mention now is a joke. So I don't feel that it ...I deal as little in technology as possible because I don't like it. I don't have an automobile anymore. I don't have a word processor, I don't use a computer, I have an electric typewriter, but I got that about three years ago. And everything I've written, I written on old royal standard manual typewriter. I don't like technology in general, I think it dehumanizes people. It deprives them of their personality and individuality, as

well as yet in the staying power. I don't participate in it at all. I don't really teach modern literature, I teach 18th century writing, and I teach the history of literate criticism, but only up to 1945. So my relation to the modern the contemporary world, is rather removed, sometimes. Although I write about it frequently, but some of the from a really contemporary stand point.

Paul Fussell

00:27:03:02i

Antonello: What do you think is going to happen now that there is detente?

I think it's wonderful. The Wall Street Journal asked me a couple of days ago, to give my hopes for the 1990's, and I said I have two hopes; one is the utter demilitarization of Europe, and the second hope is long life and safety for Saloman Rushdie, you know the author of the book that the Islamics don't like, those are my two things. No, I think Europe is in for a wonderful, wonderful refreshing moment. I'm very anxious to have a half million illiterate american soldiers brought back here and put to some productive use. They've been sitting on their fannies, at my expense for about 35 years, doing absolutely nothing, but learning German , not learning Italian, not doing anything but just sitting there and getting paid for it. And I think it's a massive waste of time, and I think it's very bad for Europe and very bad for the US. So I'm hoping that Europe will become demilitarized. I think it's a very good time for doing this is 1992, when the Europe currency goes into effect and so on. Now I'd like to see a new Europe based upon a policy of absolute demilitarization.