

mechanization, imports, and just plain raising wages.

Throughout *Mexifornia*, Hanson parades his own lack of prejudice. He incessantly says how much he likes Mexicans, despite providing many reasons why a normal man might not. He keeps stressing that his own family is intermarrying: he has a Mexican sister-in-law, Mexican nephews and nieces, and—hallelujah!—“[his] two daughters are going steady with Mexican-Americans.” (No word on his son. But no doubt he eats tacos).

Personally, I find this sort of truckling irritating, even peculiar. But it unquestionably reassures a certain type of reader. This may be the first immigration-reform book in the modern era that no reviewer has accused of Nazism—a notable breakthrough.

The problem is that Hanson’s open-mindedness appears to be a dogma. His one-word dismissal of Buchanan is not an aberration. Thus, in discussing the systematic Mexican underperformance that his own work shows is extending into the second American-born generation, he brushes aside any explanation from “racial or genetic pseudoscience.” Nine years after the *The Bell Curve* showed that Mexican immigrants do indeed lag American whites in average IQ, this is not good enough.

And Hanson describes Operation Wetback, the deportation program with which the Eisenhower Administration ended the very similar illegal-immigration crisis of the 1950s, as “infamous.” In post-publication interviews, he has endorsed yet another illegal-alien amnesty, apparently not realizing their disastrous history.

Plato concluded artists don’t understand their own work because they are inspired directly by the gods. At least the divinity that inspired the classicist Hanson’s creative frenzy was an American patriot. ■

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[*The Boys’ Crusade: The American Infantry in Northwestern Europe, 1944-1945*, Paul Fussell, *The Modern Library*, 184 pages]

The Good War

By Clark Stooksbury

THE 20TH CENTURY witnessed the rise of total war. The technological progress that made life better in so many ways also facilitated mass killing, and although governments came up with new ways to kill from a distance, the infantryman with small arms still had to close with and destroy the enemy. Few have done more to illuminate the perspective of the soldier on the frontlines than Paul Fussell. Both in his own books, such as *Wartime*, and in his promotion of others, such as the late Eugene B. Sledge’s *With the Old Breed*, Fussell aims to demythologize war. The true nature of World War II, in which Fussell served, has been obscured in the last several years, in part by Tom Brokaw’s syrupy paeans to the Greatest Generation. Fussell begins clearing away the fog in the preface of *The Boys’ Crusade* by addressing the rise of “military romanticism” and debunking the notion that war “contains desirable elements—pride, companionship, and the consciousness of virtue enforced by deadly weapons.”

Paul Fussell’s war contains a great deal of fear, shame, death, and hatred that was not always directed at the Germans. *The Boys’ Crusade* addresses themes familiar to readers of Fussell’s other works but narrowed to fit the particular circumstances of American soldiers who invaded France in 1944 and pressed towards Germany.

The book’s title comes from an Order of the Day issued by General Eisenhower to be read to troops just before the Normandy invasion. It told them that they were “about to embark on a Great Crusade.” Fussell assures the reader that soldiers responded to this state-

ment with the “scorn and skepticism” with which they greeted all official pronouncements.

Before embarking on their crusade, the boys that Paul Fussell chronicles landed in England. In that country, already ravaged by war, surely the locals appreciated the Americans who were coming to help rescue them? Not exactly. Hostility between American and English soldiers is only one area of conflict that Fussell describes. English soldiers resented their American counterparts’ superior uniforms, pay, and the advantage that these gave in competition for English women. The English complaint was that Americans were, “overpaid, oversexed and over here.” The American interpretation was that the Brits were “underpaid, undersexed and under Eisenhower.” In addition to conflict between the English and Americans, enlisted men disliked their officers, American officers disliked their English counterparts, and soldiers on the front-line disliked everybody to their rear.

Most of *The Boys’ Crusade* is dedicated to the actual war on the Continent, described in discreet episodes. Fussell focuses in on details that others might overlook. Take, for example, the plight of euphemistically named “replacements.” He isn’t here referring to parts for Jeeps or tanks—he is talking about boys, as he insists on calling the soldiers in the infantry. It is a fact of life that if you send a group of young men charging into the fire coming from enemy tanks, artillery, and rifles, many are not going to be able to continue due to death, dismemberment, desertion, or derangement. The first blow to the morale of the brighter draftees offloading at a Replacement Training Center came with the realization of the significance of the first word in the title. “The bright boy then must have wondered: Will a boy like me be killed or torn up or otherwise rendered unable to go on with the battle, to be replaced by me, probably to undergo the same experience in my turn?” Many of these unfortunates came from ranks such as the air corps and the Army Specialized Training Program where they thought they would

have an easy war. One problem that replacements faced came not from the Germans on the other side but from the veterans in the units that they joined. Since replacements entered as outsiders, joining otherwise cohesive groups, they were often looked down on and treated as more expendable. Fussell quotes one account from Anzio where a staff sergeant leading a platoon explained how eight replacements were lost in an action, while none of the veterans were, because they "weren't going to send [their] own guys out on point in a damnfool situation like that."

Fussell attributes the Army's difficulty in handling this issue to its failure to take into account actual human behavior—no shock to anyone to dealing with the government or the military. The

troops were casualties. Many others failed to perform up to expectations. The battle in the forest was so horrific that it "produced a whole parade of 'unmanly' behaviors: unordered flight and even rout; flagrant disobedience; bursting into tears; faking illnesses; and self-inflicted wounds." The 28th infantry division had a particular problem performing. One of its members was Private Eddie Slovik, who had the dubious distinction of being the only American soldier shot for desertion since the Civil War. After the war, the 28th produced a booklet called *28th Roll On: The Story Of The 28th Infantry Division* that Fussell describes as a masterpiece—of omission, evasion, and cheerful euphemism, and necessarily so: How do you inform a proud mother about the body

treatment of dead bodies. One of the insanities of war that Fussell notes is the way that medical personnel treat the enemy, upon being wounded: as patients to be saved instead of soldiers to be killed. He also briefly illuminates the role of Graves Registration Details who had the grim task of collecting and disposing of dead bodies on all sides. Because these men would not have known the dead that they were collecting, it was emotionally less difficult than if the front-line troops had been forced to do it themselves, but Fussell advises that consuming alcohol was "a practical necessity for this kind of work." In similar fashion to medical personnel, the members of the Graves Registration Detail buried German soldiers and collected their dog tags. The only difference in their treatment was that American dead got individual graves, while dead Germans were buried in pits.

Towards the end of *The Boys' Crusade*, Fussell describes the reaction of troops discovering Nazi slave-labor camps. They were of course, appalled, and discovery of this made the "crusade" metaphor that Eisenhower used before the Normandy invasion more plausible. It hardened American soldiers' attitudes toward the Germans, who, unlike the Japanese, had not attacked the United States. He describes instances where American troops allowed inmates at newly liberated camps to take revenge on their guards.

Paul Fussell doesn't go into graphic detail describing what happens to a rifle company engaged in close combat—for that see the final chapter of *Wartime* or *With The Old Breed*—but he does inform the reader, "[E]ven when writers describe gruesome experiences and sights, the most appalling details have probably been excised or softened. Things were worse than they were allowed to seem, and many were literally unspeakable." ■

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DESERTERS WERE ESSENTIALLY **TRADING THEIR HONOR** FOR THEIR LIVES.

Army failed for most of the war to understand the role of shame in the face of one's comrades in motivating men in small groups to continue fighting. "It was more powerful than patriotism or ideology or hatred of the enemy in extracting uncowardly behavior from soldiers ... replacements entered the line as individuals, knowing no one. Missing was their critical audience of buddies whose disapproval they feared more than anything."

Unfortunately, at times uncowardly behavior yielded to the cowardly. Fussell notes the Army jargon of soldiers who "retired" from the battlefield, as opposed to the more appropriate terms, "fled," "ran away," or "hauled ass." He notes this as a particular problem with replacements, but they were not alone in this.

The battle in the Hürtgen Forest—along the border of Germany and Belgium—was the sight of many soldiers "retiring" from the battlefield. According to Fussell, many of the "boys," looking back at the distance of 60 years would remember this as their worst time, even compared to D-day itself. During this month-long battle, 33,000 of 120,000

of a high-school boy blown apart and left in snow and ice in the midst of untended-to mines and booby traps? At the beginning of this little booklet, the soldier owner, presumed to be proud and cheerful, is invited to fill in blanks about his battle actions, making him complicit in lies and optimism too.

One method of escaping the front line—the self-inflicted wound—neatly illustrates the unfathomability of total war to those of us who have not experienced it. Deserters were essentially trading their honor for their lives. Others preferred to maintain the semblance of honorable behavior by blowing a finger or toe off. This sort of behavior is unimaginably irrational under normal circumstances. Under the manifestly irrational circumstances of combat, such behavior makes sense. Just as people may incur small hardships to avoid more serious ones, such as getting a flu shot so as to avoid the full-fledged diseases, many men chose to inoculate themselves against being blown to pieces by sacrificing a finger or a toe.

Two companions to combat are the care of the wounded soldiers and the

MUSIC

Eve of Destruction

By Anthony Gancarski

THOSE WITH MORE on their minds than the vicissitudes of the pop-music marketplace might be forgiven for thinking that “protest music” died some time between “Peace With Honor” and the Rockefeller Vice Presidency. The prevailing mainstream view for the last couple of decades has been that the music of the Vietnam era (specifically, white Top 40 music) was singularly powerful and an impossible act for subsequent generations of musicians to follow.

Despite the ubiquity of that claim, it doesn’t stand up to close examination. Much of the “popular” protest music—to name two songs, the Temptations’ “Ball of Confusion” and Marvin Gaye’s “What’s Going On?”—came well after the 1968 Tet Offensive. Tet signaled for many cultural elites that, as Walter Cronkite put it famously, “the only rational way out ... will be to negotiate, not as victors, but as honorable people.”

If the Vietnam War was considered unwinnable as early as 1968, then what risk was there for a musician protesting against it? More importantly, what legitimate protest has there ever been in soundtracking the desires of the media elites? Those questions are barely asked in the mainstream media—let alone answered—and such omissions from the public record speak for themselves. And so it could be argued that, during the Vietnam era, as well as before it and certainly in the present tense, the most vibrant, meaningful, and true protest music hailed from the musical underground.

The Last Poets, formed in 1968 by three Afrocentric poets and a drummer, embodied the underground spirit in a

way more commercially viable acts either wouldn’t or couldn’t. Umar bin Hassan, a charter member of the Poets, explained their name rather allegorically, saying, “[W]hen the moment hatches in time’s womb there will be no art talk. The only poem you will hear will be the spear-point pivoted in the punctured marrow of the villain. ... [W]e are the last poets of the world.”

Umar and his band of bards couldn’t be marketed to the mainstream like some Motown vocal quartet, however. Not when they challenged the evisceration of black culture and pride as bluntly as they did on “When The Revolution Comes,” a standout track from their 1970 LP (sample lyrics: “When the revolution comes/some of us will catch it on TV/with chicken hanging from our mouths”). These lyrics, caustic in their dismissal of black passivity, more closely adhere to the doctrine of personal responsibility promulgated by Friedrich Hayek, Frank Chodorov, and Russell Kirk than much of the contemporaneous white music of rebellion, which often conflated political consciousness with the embrace of fuzzy-headed hedonism.

But not all white protest music of the 1960s could be dismissed as a Learyesque call to “tune in, turn on, and drop out.” Bob Dylan’s lacerating “Masters of War” laid waste to the war planners who “lie and deceive ... like Judas of old.” Phil Ochs’s searing “Ballad of the Cuban Invasion,” likewise took the Kennedy administration to task for

namely, that the government leads America into unwinnable conflicts, all the while making arrangements that run counter to the interests of the common people. These are points with which many populist conservatives would agree.

Even before the Vietnam Era, songs of confrontation made more than one artist’s legacy greater than it would have been if protest themes had been avoided. “Strange Fruit,” Billie Holiday’s signature vocal performance, described the corpses of southern lynching as “a strange and bitter crop” of “the gallant South.” And in 1959, on the cusp of the decade of Camelot and quagmire, free-jazz icon Charles Mingus cut a side, “Fables of Faubus,” that took the “sick and ridiculous” Arkansas governor to the woodshed for rejecting integration in his state’s public schools. A year after “Faubus,” drummer and composer Max Roach (along with singer Abbey Lincoln, a woman whose pipes Roach liked so much he married her), released the seminal *We Insist: Freedom Now Suite* on Candid records. Roach, arguably Jazz’s greatest ever percussionist, was heavily influenced in this period by Malcolm X and other figures in the Civil Rights movement who argued that black empowerment could only come with concerted, spiritually rooted effort.

Given that effective, interesting protest music builds an artist’s reputation like little else, why isn’t there more of it? One reason is that radio, locked in an endless cycle of consolidation and enforced

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“spending my country’s gold” on the disastrous Bay of Pigs incident. And Buffy Sainte-Marie’s “Universal Soldier” was singular in its condemnation of the soldier who “knows he shouldn’t kill/but knows he always will.” All these songs point, like “When the Revolution Comes,” to a sobering conclusion,

homogeneity, loathes featuring potentially offensive songs in heavy rotation. Especially in the last couple years, radio music that challenges the *status quo* has become much harder to find; it’s easier these days to find an ad for a porn shop on the radio than it is to hear a song denouncing war.