Beyond Storm and Stress
Some reflections on War, Modernity and Youth after 9/11

Abstract

In the West, during the 'heroic' nineteenth-century century phase of nation and empire building 'youth' was placed rhetorically and actually in the front ranks of violent confrontation. Young men were cast as the main protagonists of class war and civil war, not to mention the 'war of generations', the struggle of the forces of modernity against tradition. In the process young women were effectively sidelined.

The First World War changed all that – a whole generation of young men all but exterminated by the technologies of modern warfare, young women pressed into war service first as nurses and then as mothers of babies who would replace those killed in the trenches. This process was critically interrupted by the Second World War. For the first time whole civilian populations were at risk as the result of the carpet bombing of the major cities. What had been rehearsed in the bombing of Ethiopia, Spain and Iraq was now unleashed on Coventry, London, Hamburg, and Dresden, culminating in the nuclear attacks on Nagasaki and Hiroshima. The vulnerability of young people was now emphasised to mirror the pervasive sense of horror and helplessness felt by their elders in the face of these new weapons of mass destruction.

In the so-called post war period however, the romantic/heroic image of 'youth up in arms' re-emerged. In the first place outside Europe, in the guerrilla wars of national liberation against colonialism in Africa, Latin America and Vietnam. However, as the generation of war babies grew up to become the angry young men and women of the sixties counter culture, this iconography re-appeared in the West – most notably in the student and anti-war movements that initially supported the anti-colonial struggle, and then in more recent and internationally based youth movements inspired by feminist and green politics challenging the violence of globalization.

I reflect here on this complex history, and consider whether 9/11 and the 'war against terror' do indeed represent its final moment (the so called end of history), or whether they are its continuation by other means. At a time when the boundaries between war and peace are no longer so easy to draw, and when the intimate links between modernity, panoptic technology and global polemics are being cemented into a new world order, what space and time is there to rethink the youth question beyond its all too familiar romantic ph(r)aseology as storm and stress - or dress - as something we all grow out of.

Introduction

In our new century, millions of young people are on the move from East to West, many of them in search of the material signs of a 'good life' disseminated relentlessly through Hollywood movies and television programmes, youth culture has become synonymous with the affluent life style associated with a cosmopolitan post-modern elite (Appadurai, 1998). Its most popular idioms become travelling stories, a lingua franqua of shared aspiration across the world; at precisely the moment when the anchorage of the nation in the territorial state has been decisively destabilised by processes of globalization, the notion of the nation which historically gave youth its raison d'être as a crucible of identity, is being given a new lease of life. This may be as a metaphor of diasporic or subcultural or post nation belonging – we have seen the emergence of the 'Hip Hop' nation, or the rap nation as a point of identification for local posses in Barcelona and Beirut, as well as in Birmingham, Alabama and Birmingham, England.

At the same time, who can deny that the nation has once again become a central focus of irredentist political movements linked to fundamentalist religious faiths within both Judaeo-Christianity and Islam. We have the skinhead international , that imagined transatlantic community of popular racism, we have the nation of Zion being proclaimed by a decidedly unholy alliance of 'born again Christians ' and Jews, a moral majority who want to make a last stand against globalisation in the name of a 'new ' world order, modelled on the Wild West, where the US Cavalry always ride to the rescue; and we have Nations of Islam which have fiercely repudiated the values of western modernity, which at the same time adopted and deployed its most advanced technologies; all this confirms the Great Fear of an oriental conspiracy whose aim is to destroy the foundations of European culture and replace it with what has be called the barbaresque.

Here, it seems to me, is a new nexus of contradiction defining the youth question in the era of globalization and one I want to explore in the context of recent events and debates triggered by 9/11.

After 9/11
In the debates that have unfolded since the attack on the World Trade centre, eighteen months ago, the dreadful clarity of perception that attended the first moments of the attack on the Twin Towers has become overlaid by layer upon layer of rhetoric and protective false consciousness (Joan Didion). As time has gone by and the political and military reaction has developed, the meaning of what was happening has become more opaque, more complicated, and more obscene (in the sense of referring to something going on behind the scenes). 9/11 has become a screen memory, a cover story, in which the real agenda and what was truly at issue becomes harder and harder to discern.

This is not just because politicians or political commentators have laid a carpet of lies or obfuscation over the events. It is because the situation itself is not easily analysable in terms of our received wisdoms, nor is it follies - concerning the conditions of war and peace. We are in a situation where the boundaries between war and peace have become fuzzy, where war has become a dominant metaphor for conflicts in civil societies, supposedly at peace with themselves (viz the wars continually being declared against drugs, crime, poverty, illegal immigrants). We have strategies of pacification that no longer distinguish between civilian and military targets. We are in a situation where the so called 'theatre of operations ' no longer obeys the classical unities of time and place, and where no one can tell where the front lines are, or who owns the backyards. Intelligence is a pre- eminent instrument of war, not only in its planning but in its actual conduct; war aims and objectives are continually shifting, so that no amount of simulation provides realistic scenarios of actual outcomes. In the language of game theory, decisions have to be made in contexts of non linear complexity, dominated by difficult decisions. I propose to call this the Gulf War syndrome, because it refers to a chronic and debilitating dis-ease in which no one can agree whether we are dealing with an organic disorder of the body politic brought about by self made toxic pollutants (alias the American way of life) or whether we are trapped in a state of numbness and shock induced by an overwhelming sense of helplessness in the face of the terrifying power of our own weapons of mass destruction, or both. Another way to describe this confused situation is simply to call it the third world war.

What about the Americans? In the midst of the moral certitudes of the Bush administration they are the most uncertain of all. As Senator Byrd put it, in his recent speech to the US Senate:

> To contemplate war is to think about the most horrible of human experiences. On this February day, as this nation stands at the brink of battle, every American on some level must be contemplating the horrors of war. Yet, this Chamber is, for the most part, silent, ominously, dreadfully silent. There is no debate, no discussion, no attempt to lay out for the nation the pros and cons of this particular war. There is nothing. We stand passively mute, mute, paralysed by our own uncertainty, seemingly stunned by the sheer turmoil of events.

This sense of paralysis afflicts even those of us who have been most vociferous in our opposition to the war, and not only because the spectacle of millions on the march evidently did nothing to turn our political leaders aside from a course of action about whose virtue their own military and foreign policy experts were in the gravest doubts. The fact is, that the debate on the war has largely been a case of the unanswerable in pursuit of the unquestionable, where those actively prosecuting the war against terror, proclaim certainties of moral or material victory most people no longer believe in, whilst those who challenge them have no difficulty in winning the argument against say, the war on Iraq, but continue to lose the battle for hearts and minds when it comes to proposing a credible alternative strategy to deal with the threat of attacks on the West, for what it has come to represent in the eyes of the rest of the world .

Against this background I want to think about the relation between war, youth and modernity. I want to start with two figures that play a central role in the mediascaping of contemporary world politics, but who at first sight seem to belong to opposite sides of this story, the eco-warrior and the suicide bomber. What on earth could these two figures have in common, the one associated with the greening of politics, the building of a gentler world, and the other with violence, terrorism and self destruction. They certainly come from different sides of the class tracks. On one side, there are those young people drawn largely from the ranks of the affluent middle class, who nevertheless are in revolt against affluence, or at least its consequences for others less fortunate than themselves and who use largely symbolic action to protest against the fact that the richest societies on the planet are precisely those who are most wasteful of its resources, having developed unsustainable technologies of economic growth and consumption that lays waste whole environments and cultures belonging to the wretched of the earth. On the other side, young people who have seen their land, their homes, their schools everything that might give them a sense of a viable past, present and future, destroyed in front of their own eyes and who armed with nothing more than a few sticks of gelignite or a set of bolt cutters and a belief in a higher religious and national cause worth dying for, have put the whole world order into a state of disarray.

It would seem that these two kinds of youth movement are worlds apart even if the young American or British peace activists, who stand in the way of Israeli bulldozers in order to protect Palestinian villages in Gaza from destruction, are frequently characterized as being objectively on the same side as the young militants of Hammas . But what if, in a deeper and more subjective sense, these are two trajectories of engagement with modernity that are complimentary, in the sense that they both reject the

telos of where that project has led us? What if that rejection has, after all, something generationally specific about it in a way that cuts across the usual divisions of ideology and social location?

Generations at War

In the Grundrisse Marx wrote:

> History is nothing but the succession of the separate generations, each of which exploits the materials, the capital funds, the productive forces handed down to it by all the proceeding generations. And this, on the one hand, continues the traditional activity in completely changed circumstances, and on the other modifies the old circumstances with completely changed activity (Marx, 1985).

Marx, typically, dialecticises the notions of tradition and modernity, without abandoning their anchorage in the problematics of generation. It could be argued, that it is the planning and conduct of war which has driven the development of social technologies, not the other way round, for example the many social and technical innovations thrown up by post war reconstruction after 1945 (mass produced housing and the welfare state). This does not mean however, that we should see weapons of mass destruction as somehow socially productive as Paul Virilio seems to do.

However, war as a principle of periodisation and predicament has been a powerful marker of historical generations. We still talk of the pre and post war generations, the baby boomers of post 1945, the Cold war generation, and maybe now the 9/11 generation, because in the era of total war, these moments do have a totalizing impact that cuts across divisions of class, gender or ethnicity. Moreover the experience of war can serve to separate generations as well as to unite them. As in this account from a memoir by someone who was a child during WW2:

> People would always be talking to me about 'before the war ' and I remember going to people saying 'What is it? What was it like 'beforethe war '. And they would go into rhapsodies about all that they had. Ididn 't know what they were talking about. And then they would start talking about 'after the war ' and say 'we will have all these things again ', and again I had absolutely no idea what they were talking about.

The destabilizing of the chronotopes of war and peace**,** the fact that it is no longer so easy to tell where or when one ends and the other begins, is one major sign of our times. There are other ways in which the discourses of peace and war have become confused. In an interview given to the Daily Mirror, shortly after Tony Blair committed British troops to the USA coalition against terror, the Minister of Defence, Geoff Hoon had this to say:

> I was brought up surrounded by stories of war. It dominated everything. The tales of rationing, deprivation and the threat of bombs (we lived down the road from the Rolls Royce factory in Derby) made it seem more like the present than the past.... My father didn 't talk a lot about the war, but in our house Armistice Day was always respected. … A once strapping lad came home from being a Japanese POW, weighing six stone. He said he only survived as

the beauty of orchids visible from a crack in his tent gave him the will to live. That man lived across the road from us. He was affected by his experience and some of the kids would make fun of him. My dad saw this and fortunately I 'd not been involved. But he warned me I 'd not sit comfortably if I did. Only then did he explain a little bit about the things he 'd seen. It 's the only time I got a sense of what he 'd been doing out there in India and Burma and I saw it as frightening. The sort of horrors you 'd want to protect your children from. It 's very important to listen carefully to all these stories from those who have been through the war in deciding what our course of action should now be.

There are number things which are interesting about this statement. Firstly here we have the minister of defence, who by his own admission is one of the hawks in the Blair administration, drawing on his own personal testimony to illustrate not the glory or sacrifice in war, but its horror and trauma. It is hard to imagine Mrs Thatcher talking like this. There is a common thread linking the New Right discourse of the first Gulf war and the New Labour discourse of the second world war and that is the idea of a just war – a war against an evil foreign dictatorship, and it is this of course that makes possible the reference back to WW2 and the popular equation of Saddam Hitler.

But there is also an important difference. In place of the Thatcherite vision of war as a means of putting the 'Great ' back in 'Britain ', a vision realized of course in the Falklands campaign, we have the Blairite vision of a people united in fellow feeling around a shared sense of human vulnerability.

If it was possible for Geoff Hoon to put a human – or even a humanitarian face, on a war that would blow large numbers of the already wretched, off the face of the earth, it was by referring to another, earlier war story, in a way which demonstrated his belonging to a shared community of suffering. Yet of course he was talking about a world we have all but lost, in which war stories are a powerful oral tradition spanning the generations, where people are still said to be affected by their 'experiences ', rather than to be suffering from 'post-traumatic stress disorder '; a world in which the sanction of elders is respected enough to be effective against juvenile misdemeanours and where fathers can wallop their sons without being accused of child abuse. What we are fighting for, in this military adventure story, is to bring back this lost world, to rediscover, or re-invent it, not by harking back to the glory days of Empire, as Mrs Thatcher wanted to, but by invoking an almost Blakean vision of Albion, of Little England 's green and pleasant land, as figuring a world in which the beauty of nature glimpsed through a crack in a POW tent transcends the human wretchedness of war, *and all too magically redeems it..*

Through war, Hoon seems to be implying, generations will learn to speak peace until generation, and perhaps the class and race wars, too will be ended in and by the sense of international purpose engendered by the coalition against terror.

Civilising Missions
Sometimes WW3 is characterized, by those who want to understand it as a specifically new conjuncture, as a clash of civilizations – between the values of modernity, liberal individualism and representative democracy supposedly upheld by

the late Capitalist, lately Christian West, and those anti modern, illiberal and undemocratic trends in the non Western world, that in the current demonology have come to be represented by Islamic fundamentalism. Ghandi when asked what he thought about western civilisation, was wont to reply that it would be a good thing if only it existed. I want to argue that it is more about a clash of epistemologies, of ways of knowing and not knowing, and more than that, a conflict between two different ways of feeling and not feeling, that belong to rival definitions of civilisational values to be found within *European culture itself*.

 I am referring here to the competing traditions of enlightenment rationalism and the romantic movement, that from the18th century onwards have dominated so much of the debate in Europe about our common and divergent purposes both as educationalists and citizens. I cannot possibly resume this whole history here, but only point out some of its salient features.

Model
The model suggests that different forms of the body politic imply different conceptions of modernity and power, and that this in turn relates to different strategies for waging war and terror, and also to different paradigms of pedagogy, bearing on the characterization of childhood and youth. It further suggests that these linkages can be understood in terms of an opposition between rationalism and romanticism considered as two ways in which European culture has represented its civilizing mission to itself. But a word of warning here, obviously this is an ideal typology and empirical reality does not divide up neatly into these boxes. We will find lots of instances where the two sides of the civilisational story are straddled, or co-exist, despite their tensions in a variety of weak and strong combinations. Kant for example, could be regarded as a reasonable romantic, concerned to ground human ethical faculties in lived experience, while Hegel imbued reason with special teleological powers, governing laws of history that transcended short term calculations of self interest. Wars of national liberation may start in acts of romantic terrorism but if they succeed in mobilizing popular support, they grow into forms of organised violence, directed by an emergent state apparatus against the colonial power. Civic and ethnic nationalism may fuse together in civil war as we saw in ex Yugoslavia. The first phase of the new onslaught on Iraq has been code named 'awe and shock '. This certainly evoked the romantic model of sublime terror, even though it was delivered through the technological rationality of precision bombing that nevertheless managed to produce enough collateral damage to traumatize, if not kill thousands of civilians.

The history of pedagogy and child welfare reform is similarly characterised by romantic and rationalist elements. There has been a good deal of open warfare between contending schools of thought, between like the tradition stemming from Diderot and the encyclopaedists and from Rousseau, with now one and now the other in the ascendant, as well as many attempts to reconcile their differences in a variety of hybrid styles of teaching. Psychoanalysis is interesting because it could be argued that it attempts to transcend the romantic/rationalist split, or at least to put elements from each paradigm into a new kind of conversation with one another. But both in different phases of Freud 's own thought and in the rival schools that have grown up around his work, one or other tendency gets the upper hand: the rationalism of ego psychology versus the romanticism of gestalt for example.

Enter Psychoanalysis

In general, psychoanalysis views the child and the child in the adult, as a site of warring impulses, of love and hate, eros and thanatos. The rational calculating ego functions as a peace maker between the contending claims of a highly punitive conscience, driven by fierce romantic idealizations and an irrepressible libido seeking its all too crudely material objects of satisfaction.

Psychoanalysis stands against all attempts to split the world into goodies and baddies, by insisting that the two are always intimately linked to the source of an original oedipal ambivalence. There is always the man you love to hate, the rival whose behaviour you find repulsive but whose every move you follow with obsessive fascination. You cannot have friends without making enemies, and as the Jewish proverb has it, 'learn to know you enemies ', because you will grow to be like them. In other words, the forms of symmetrical violence engendered by conflict, the 'tit for tat ' of it, produce a kind of narcissistic or sado/masochistic mirroring between the protagonists.

In order to provide a meta -psychological or cultural dimension for this analysis Freud introduced the notion of a narcissism of minor differences. Using the example of sibling rivalry, it was an attempt to explain why neighbouring countries, or cultures, that in many ways have so much in common, including sometimes origins, should end up the bitterest of foes. Freud argued that if it was precisely closeness that creates the need for distance, the similarity that provokes the insistence of difference, the familiarity that breeds contempt, it is because of narcissism – the taking of the self as a primary object of desire, that is, the desiring oneself as other – means there is no place for the real external other as site of projective identification, but only as an object of rivalry or hatred. Moreover, finding such an enemy is profoundly reassuring, since it provides a stable anchorage for feelings of hatred that might otherwise be turned against the self.

This idea was further developed by Melanie Klein and Bion with their notion of the internal saboteur or internal terrorist. We recognise the effect when we say someone is 'their own worst enemy ', or someone has just 'shot themselves in the foot ', but actually these kinds of self destructive behaviour are merely the more self evidential aspects of much more hidden and seductive psychic presence in which the death drive has been eroticised. Religious or political ideologies which offer a martyrology in which self destruction is transmuted into self sacrifice, provide a socially sanctioned outlet for this drive. In the case of the suicide bomber, conscious hatred of the Other and unconscious aggression against the self, are fused in a single redemptive act.

Psychoanalysis stresses the infantile roots of all aggression. The war in the nursery, or the classroom, is a microcosm - we might even say the laboratory - of the larger conflict between states, nations and armies, or when one big state bullies a little one, or two neighbouring countries fall out, then whatever secondary rationalisations they evoke to justify their actions, they are behaving like children. If more little Hitler 's do not grow up into big ones, according to this view, it is because of the intervention of teachers and parents who implicitly recognise them for what they are -little terrors who deal with their internal persecutory feelings by making other people 's lives unbearable. So the situation can best be dealt with by gently and playfully cutting grandiosity down to size and making these children realise that they do not need to be

omnipotent or push others around, in order to avoid feeling humiliated by what they do not know or cannot do.

It should be evident that to understand war and peace solely in psychoanalytic terms is profoundly reductive. The behaviour of nations and states cannot be explained in terms of the psychological motivations or dispositions of their leaders or even in terms of the collective psychology of particular groups or communities within them. Yet there are aspects of war, for example, the understanding and treatment of war trauma, the uses of techniques of propaganda and psychological warfare, to which psychoanalysis has directly contributed, often as part of the war effort itself. However, I wish to consider another area, which has been largely ignored, and that is how particular ways of imagining and remembering real wars ' get culturally encoded in collective representations that bear on what we might call wars other scenes.

Shockerlebnis
I want to turn now to the elementary structures of feeling, thinking and narration that have shaped the way children and young people have been placed on the front line of military and civilian conflicts , and which have also shaped the way that experience is made sense of..A long time ago, when the idea was still new, Marx famously wrote about modernity as 'The uninterrupted disturbance of all social content, everlasting uncertainty and agitation, this is what distinguishes the bourgeois epoch from earlier ones. All fixed, fast-frozen relations are swept away, all that is solid melts into air '.

Walter Benjamin coined the term 'shockerlebnis ' to describe this pervasive sense of being jolted out of complacent everyday bourgeois routines, leading to a profound the dissociation between perception and cognition, experience and understanding. For the modernists technology, was the new sublime - the source of awesome and pleasurable shock, and for many, including the young Freud, this sense of shock was especially linked to the advent of new technologies of transport and communication, as dramatised in the railway accident.

It came to be recognised that the overwhelming terror and sense of helplessness experienced by the victims of these accidents, had its own specific psychological effect. The emotional backbone of the personality had undergone a severe shock, even been shattered, quite independently of whether or not there was any physical damage to the spine. The way was thus open for Freud and Breuer to advance their theory of hysterical symptoms, and later for Freud to argue, that the sudden breaching of the psychic shield that held the bodily ego into some kind of dynamic equilibrium with its environment, came about as a result of some overwhelming or life threatening external stimulus. This in turn led to a series of reparative measures designed to deal with the shock, these included amnesia and emotional numbing, the compulsive repetition of the original scene in nightmares, and acting out behaviour, and states of chronic anxiety.

 It was from starting point that Freud elaborated his theory of war neurosis related to the experience of shell shock amongst troops in WW1. At the same time his developing ideas about the unconscious led him in a different direction, from the original event back to a founding matrix of childhood trauma, which he associated with themes of separation, abandonment, sexual seduction and the primal scene, elementary structures of feeling and thinking that had been largely repressed but

which now surfaces and replayed in the context of a profound shock to the psychic system. Whether the direction was prospective or retrospective, the actual meaning of the event was entirely over determined by its re-presentation in and by the trauma. Whether it had really happened or was merely imagined, became a secondary consideration.

So it was that Freud took trauma into realms of life history, and the interplay of phantasy and memory, fact and fiction. At the same time there was a countermove initiated by the medical and legal professions that took trauma outwards into society, into a framework for defining and regulating risk, for developing strategies of social insurance, and accident prevention. This would ultimately be taken up by the state, through its emergency services, within the new apparatus of disaster planning. Here the issue was not the causation or meaning of the individual trauma, but the identification of its chronic patterns of incidence so that precautionary, prophylactic or remedial measures could be put in place. The contingencies of human existence were submitted to a relentless calculus of probabilities. The aim was to limit the liability of private companies or public bodies ' claims to compensation and to ensure that civilian morale and social order was maintained under conditions of maximal threat. In this way accidents that were previously waiting to happen, no longer did, and potential disasters could be turned into non events.

These two developments, one inscribing trauma in the inner life of the child , and the other in the apparatus of social insurance and state regulation, belonged to two quite separate universes of discourse but they had one concept in common – the notion of the protective shield . What Freud called the ersheid, meaning the psychic envelop that maternal care wraps, like an invisible shawl, around the baby 's body, enabling it to survive and develop, in even the most adverse material circumstance – that same idea was externalized as a prosthetic arm of the state, to create a carapace of monitoring and surveillance, wrapped initially around the mother/child couple and then extended to the adolescent by new agencies of welfare, education and training. It is to the question of adolescence we must now turn.

Sturm und drang revisited: the strange case of Young Torless
The discovery of adolescence as a distinctive stage of the life cycles is intimately bound up with its association with modernity and the shock of the new. The notion starts by being firmly located within the romantic movement, and its cult of 'sturm und drang '. What was so stormy about adolescence, and so stressful for the parents of adolescents, was the fact that it marked a hiatus between the position of the child considered as an object of legal, moral and pedagogic surveillance, and that of the adult, considered as a fully enfranchised citizen of the state, with all the rights and responsibilities that flowed from it. Into that gap were concentrated all those aspects of human behaviour that could neither be rationalized or sentimentalized in the then current schemas of scientific discourse – first and foremost of course, sexuality and human desire. As a privileged subject of desire, adolescence became a key moment of 'bildung ' or cultural formation, a process that was so important to the Romantics in defining the essential human capacity to transcend mundane existence and experience the sublime. In the bildingsroman from Goethe 's Wilhelm Meister onwards the adolescent is portrayed as having a heightened awareness of the passionate and hence tragic condition of human existence – the prototype of the existential hero.

At the same time, however, adolescence was reconfigured within an enlightenment framework as being a force for progress set against the 'dead hand of tradition '. It was this association which connected youth to the process of 19th century nation building, and to the revolutionary movements, especially in Germany, Russia and the Balkans that sought to overthrow the vestiges of Feudal absolutism or foreign despotism. It was the power of young people to sublimate their passions in the pursuit of ideals of political freedom, social justice or national liberation, embodied in a democratic state, that made them seem such a powerful force for the rejuvenation of these old societies.

Adolescence was thus produced at the intersection of the romantic and rationalist projects, and fused together elements of ethnic and civic nationalism in a more or less combustible mix. As a result, the culture of adolescence was constructed as a unique nexus of contradiction, oscillating between recapitulation and rupture, the static and the volatile, between what was fleeting and eternal, between the alienation of the individual and the compulsive solidarities of the group.

The political history of youth in the twentieth century has largely been about the attempt to reconcile these opposites, to incite adolescent passions while conscripting them into various kinds of national service. Often this containment was institutional – and involved military conscription. Often it has been about trying to inscribe adolescent body politics within the bio-politics of state or church as in various uniformed youth movements. Sometimes it has involved trying to steer the oedipal dynamics of adolescent revolt against an older generation, as in the case of the Red Guards in Mao 's Cultural revolution. Many of these projects have failed. The German 'wandervogel ' – the epitome of a romantic youth movement resisted being incorporated into the Hitler Jugend despite all its 'volkish ' outdoor pursuits. Instead, they formed gangs with names like The Mutineers, The Club of the Golden Horde, The Dusters, The Snake Club and most famously Swing Youth who listened to jazz, and performing other acts of cultural defiance.

The tensions between the two faces of adolescence were explored to brilliant effect in Robert Musil 's novel *Young Torless* which was published in 1906, when the author was twenty-two. The story concerns the actions and thoughts of four boys in a military academy on the flat desolate Polish frontier of the Austrian Hungarian Empire. The hero, Torless, assists in the systematic bullying carried out by two of his friends on another boy who has been caught stealing. Torless ' sexual awakening is focussed on the scenes of humiliation and torture which he voyeuristically witnesses. The way in which the rigid code of discipline imposed on these military cadets becomes suffused by sado-masochistic homosexual phantasies enacted by the boys, is Musil 's central theme. The hothouse of the Academy is both intellectual – the boys heatedly and repeatedly discuss Kant and Hegel, and emotional - the affinities and enmities in this homosocial world are intimately bound up with a desire that dare not, at this period at least, speak its name. Yet Torless somehow survives the experience and gains some critical distance from it. Musil wrote:

> He knew how to distinguish between day and night; actually he had always known it, and it was only that a monstrous dream had flowed like a tide over these frontiers, blotting them out. He was ashamed of the perplexity he had been in. But still there was also the memory that it could be otherwise, that there were fine and easily effaced boundary lines around each human being, that feverish

dreams prowled around the soul, gnawing at the solid walls and tearing open weird alleys.

Back to the future
That monstrous dream is still with us, but it has taken a new and untoward form Today, those of us, who as teachers and youth workers, are charged with providing solid walls, a safe environment in which young people are free to learn and to question what is happening in the world, without fear of intimidation, find that we are on the front line of a war against terror, albeit in a rather different sense to the one being waged by George Bush. In Britain and the USA, terror has over the past ten years increasingly invaded the classrooms and playgrounds of schools and colleges. It takes the form of increased levels of bullying, and physical attacks on teachers and fellow students, often linked to issues of race, or class, or sexuality. It may also concern the traumatising experiences of war or domestic conflict that immigrant children and young people bring with them as both background and sometimes foreground to their formal learning in school. It may relate to the moral panic surrounding child abuse or the public anxieties focussed on academic performance. As a result of these problems, and not least through the very measures that are introduced to deal with them, a culture of fear has grown up in a way that makes it very difficult for anyone to deal realistically with any of the issues. Carefully orchestrated public fears of internal failure and external threat play off each other to create an increasingly discordant counterpoint to the educative process. The more the school, or the youth project is expected to provide an oasis of peace, sanity and rational enlightenment, in a world that is perceived to have gone dangerously and often violently mad, the more it is sentimentally imagined as the heart of an otherwise heartless world. The more teachers and young people find themselves in the glare of the public eye, making the headlines, every movement ceaselessly monitored by CCTV cameras, and now electronic sensors, designed to keep child molesters, rapists, criminals, and rogue state terrorists at bay. The more their respective performances are subject to increasingly intense level of public surveillance and audit.

For the last fifty years, young people in the West have had to carry an increasingly heavy burden of representation. Everything they do, say, think, or feel is scrutinized by an army of professional commentators for signs of the times. Generation X studies and teen 'coming of age ' movies continue this genre up to the present day (Lewis, 1997). But there are more subtle pressures too.

In the 'old ' societies of the West, within which we must now include the United States, the Great Fear of ageing and the search for 'eternal youth ' has produced an apparently unquenchable desire to 'keep up with new times ' amongst all age groups, but especially amongst those over 40, who can afford it. Post modernism provided this 'new old ' middle class with a ready made template for an ironic plagiarism that enabled them to pursue a masquerade of 'youthfulness ' with a semblance of style. As a consequence, young people - especially those who are not able to enter into the middle class world of studenthood - have to continually improvise fresh ways of asserting their difference from elders, as well as from their more advantaged peers. Increasingly the most excluded young people re-appropriate 'youth ' by adopting an implicit rhetorics of progress and modernity, usually by assimilating new technologies of consumption and using them to restate localized prides of place. The trick is to be seen to be growing up faster, doing things sooner and going one bigger and better than those on the other side of the class

and race tracks. For example, using a mobile phone provides a magical connection to a global information economy from which, in reality, the user may be cut off.

Chronic prematurity in the realm of streetwise 'body politics ' has increasingly gone along with the retardation of skills required to stake out claims to public amenity and resource in any wider and more civic terms.This predicament is today perhaps best exemplified by ageing 'home boys ', young men in their twenties and thirties still at home, unable to make the transition to full time work, a decent wage, or independent living as a result of the feminisation of many service sector jobs and the decline of manual labour. Pubs, parks and football terraces may still provide them with public platforms on which to perform more or less aggressively racialised styles of masculinity; but the painful fact of their redundancy – both as message and material situation is only amplified in the process. Home boys may be a special case but there are many more young people unable to make the transition to the kinds of mobile individualism demanded by the new cultural economy, who are no less stranded, and whose sense of frustration leads to less visible, if often more self destructive patterns of response

These young people do not have access to the politics of great causes that inspires the young Palestinian suicide bomber or the eco warrior. They have the option of creating little stylistic revolts, forms of storm and dress that may create local stirs , but they find themselves still stranded in a moratorium not of their own choosing between forms of learning they experience, as irrelevant and forms of labour in the knowledge economy which are beyond their reach. The generational division of labour based upon relatively stable patterns of apprenticeship to and/or inheritance of fixed assets and skills has collapsed (Cohen 1999). And so too have the normative frameworks of vocation and career that sustained a sense of lifelong investment in particular métiers or professions, and ensured the transmission of intellectual or cultural capital associated with their pursuit from one generation to the next (Sennett 1998). Against this background, the enlargement of adolescence, its encroachment on childhood and prolongation into what used to be adulthood is clearly both culturally driven and required by the collapse of secure strategies of social reproduction for all but the most privileged.

For some this may open up a space of new possibility, a kind of prolonged studenthood that sustains a vital political counter culture.I think this is what has underwritten the anti globalization movement, as well as single issue campaigns, spanning environmentalism, cyber-activism, bio-politics, and gay rights. This is a youth politics that is neither cool, nor self ironising, even if it is not entirely free from the narcissistic pull of 'feel good ' factors created around its own self proclaimed idealisms. It amounts to a formidable counter narrative to the political cynicism that increasingly monopolises the media of public debate; yet as I have stressed, it is one within which young people who remain cut off from mainstream educational opportunities, do not find their voice. The task for educationalists and youth workers - and indeed for youth researchers - is to find ways of reconnecting youth politics of the relatively privileged with the youth cultures of the dispossessed, in a way that takes both beyond the old and the new nationalisms. We need to enable young people to find a habitation and a home that is both local and global, a place and time they can call their own and where they can make their lives in a world that is neither overwhelmed by storm, nor overcome by stress. That is not an easy challenge, but it is one which this conference in both the breadth of its concerns, and in the detailed focus it is giving to strategic aspects of the contemporary youth question, is most surely attempting to meet.

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