

## On Sue Gerhardt's 'Hard Times'

Dear Letters Editor,

I applaud Sue Gerhardt's courageous, erudite and elegant article 'Hard Times'. I loved how she linked 'structures of feeling' with social realities, and of course I was glad she mentioned the privileged abandonment of boarders. As one also trying to bridge the gap between the individual world of therapy and the collective political context, I welcome the opportunity to add a couple of points.

Although she does not say so, Sue seems to be talking about a British context. And here, although she mentions both bottom and top, she misses that these are *systemically* connected in Britain – *top-down* – in a way unknown in Europe or Asia. This specifically informs Britain's culture and psychology. For example, even Keith Richard's old school, Dartford Tech, tried absurdly to invent itself on public school lines.

Now, if a 'top-down' society already has a tendency towards poor attachments – and here the public schools, conceived out of deliberate social engineering, have a pivotal role – the whole society copies and invisibly normalizes it, so the tendency is taken for granted. This hierarchical psycho-culture is exported to whole 'Anglo-sphere', as Noam Chomsky calls it, whose societies are particularly hard. European observers comment on the disdain shown in the UK media for any striking workers; US workers were persuaded to reject their own health-care provision!

Secondly, important as attachment therapy is, it hasn't the reach, in my view, to account for Susan Long's 'culture of collective self-deception', quoted by Gerhardt. In *Wounded Leaders* I found I had to return to psychoanalytic defence mechanisms: the nineteenth century – known as 'the British century' – was underpinned, in my view, by rank dissociation, projection, objectification and normalization.

It instigated what I call the 'War on the Indigenous', both externally in the 'New World' and internally in citizens, leading to a hyper-rational culture that could support the notion of 'unpeople', as Orwell called the underclass at home or abroad. As a psychologically aloof colonial power, we either discounted the natives or exterminated them. The rule of what John Perkins calls the 'corporatocracy' follows in these precise footsteps. Domestically, by the start of the Great War, Britain had the biggest ever gap between rich and poor – economically and psycho-culturally – in history.

While this psycho-culture is still unrepudiated, we seem to be heading back there again.

**Nick Duffell**

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