Garry ROBSON
Jagiellonian University in Krakow

BRITAIN IN TRANSITION: DIVERSITY, THERAPY CULTURE AND THE LEGACY OF NEW LABOUR

ABSTRACT: The core of the article is constituted around three topics: diversity, culture and the legacy of new labour. The author proposes to look at the British sociopolitical arena with particular focus on actions taken by the main actors of the political stage, operating in a multicultural "scenography". Cultural diversity – for long inscribed in the British context – provides reflection on how to interpret the phenomena present in the collective and individual life (society and the individual). Patterns of interpretation delivered by the media, disclose specific paradigms of social, political and economic phenomena which influence every member of modern society.

KEY WORDS: British culture, diversity, media, communication

Novelist Martin Amis caused a minor media storm in April 2011 by criticizing the British Royal family in the build up to the wedding of Prince William and Kate Middleton. In an interview with the *Le Nouvel Observateur*, Amis moved from criticism of the "philistinism" of the royals to a discussion of his upcoming book and its more generalised account of the state of contemporary British society and his feelings about its "moral decay": "The young women dream of becoming models. Celebrity is the new religion. And you want it to come to you just like that, with no effort, without having any merit. So it's a book about the decline of my country, about anger, dissatisfaction, bitterness, even subconsciously, caused by this decline.

It's perhaps subliminal. You can have the impression that life in London is rather pleasant. But everything is falling apart inside."[1]

Anyone familiar with the history of British culture and letters will know that such jeremiads about the horrors of the present are as British as constitutional monarchy itself.[2] But even in this context, the feeling that something is deeply wrong and that British society is in transition to a much less restrained, serious and coherent version of itself is gaining momentum. In citing the extraordinary growth of "celebrity culture," narcissism and "entitlement" in Britain, Amis' view is very much in keeping with the tone of the times; but the raging power of the moronic inferno of a celebrity-driven popular culture is expressive, this paper argues, of a deeper phenomenon: the transformation of the emotional mores and norms of the society in recent decades, away from the stereotypical British virtues of stoicism, rectitude, resilience and the rest of that bundle of characteristics that once comprised the "stiff upper lip."[3]

Anyone looking over the British media in the same month as the Amis interview appeared might also have been struck by a couple of other, apparently unrelated, stories receiving a good deal of coverage. At the centre of these were the leader and deputy leader of the coalition government, David Cameron and Nick Clegg. The former made a widely reported speech on April 14th about the discomforting and disjointing effects of large scale immigration into the country during thirteen years of New Labour government, citing the net figure of 2.2 million incomers since 1997, allowing for the numbers of British citizens who emigrated during the same period.[4] Clegg, on the other hand, admitted in an interview that the pressures of government were greater than he had anticipated while in opposition, and that he regularly found himself, in private moments, listening to music and crying.[5] Though this of course made him a figure of fun for sections of Britain's cynical and populist media, his admission was a telling one, and its connection to ongoing concerns about immigration was not, perhaps, as distant as it might seem.

This paper will argue, with this in mind and now that its era is at an end, that New Labour governments' attempts to both extend the range and depth of social and cultural diversity in Britain and transform its population into a reflexively self-aware and "emotionally literate" citizenry helped exacerbate the sense of vulnerability in

---

[1]   'Martin Amis Attacks Royal Family as "Philistines",' *Daily Telegraph*, 18 April 2011, at <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/uknews/royal-wedding/8456652/Martin-Amis-attacks-Royal-family-as-philistines.html>. 18 April 2011.

[2]   G. Robson, 'Fear, Fragmentation and Vulnerability in Contemporary Britain' in W. Kalaga (ed.), *Civilisation and Fear. Writing and the Subjects of Ideology*, Katowice (forthcoming).

[3]   Idem, 'Whatever Happened to the British Stiff Upper Lip? The Cultural Revolution, the "Broken Britain" Debate and the Evaporation of Respectable Society' in M. Misztal, M. Trawiński (eds.), *Current Issues in English Studies*, Kraków 2009.

[4]   N. Watt, 'David Cameron Says That Immigrants Should Learn English,' *The Guardian*, 14 April 2011, at <http://www.guardian.co.uk/politics/2011/apr/14/david-cameron-immigrants-learn-english>, 14 April 2011.

[5]   '"I'm Not a Punchbag," Says Deputy PM Nick Clegg,' BBC News, 6 April 2011, at <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-politics-12987846>, 6 April 2011.

the face of growing complexity that that is one of the hallmarks of globalization. New Labour's often contradictory policies for social diversity and inclusion in a new Britain were at the heart of this process – in particular their fetish for "championing" diversity as an end in itself, and the cementing into social policy the idea that people, and above all those belonging to minorities, are somehow inherently "vulnerable."[6]

This is not to claim, of course, that the New Labour administrations of 1997-2010 were solely responsible for an explosion of personal insecurity and self absorption; the broader context is one of continuing globalization, the corrosive effects of which have been felt acutely, but far from uniquely, in Britain. Writing of the relationship between personal anxiety about worklessness and the open-ended restructuring of institutions and jobs in the era of global capital, Richard Sennett notes that "job apprehension," for example, is now endemic in Britain and the USA. The effects of the flexible, global economic order, from the splintering of families and fracturing of communities to the altered chemistry of workplaces themselves, produce a climate in which a sense of discontinuity with a more stable and predictable past makes more and more of us apprehensive at a basic level: "An apprehension is an anxiety about what might happen; an apprehension is created in a climate emphasizing constant risk, and apprehension increases when past experience seems no guide to the present."[7]

Zygmunt Bauman, as part of a more extended discussion of the dynamics of contemporary apprehension and fear, for him the central elements of the early 21st century *zeitgeist*, offers an account which emphasizes the psychologically destabilizing effects of living in continual uncertainty: "Unable to slow the mind-boggling pace of change, let alone to predict and control its direction, we focus on things we can, or believe we can, or are assured that we can influence: we try to calculate and minimize the risk that we personally, or those nearest and dearest to us at that moment, might fall victim to the uncounted and uncountable dangers which the opaque world and its uncertain future are suspected to hold in store for us. We are engrossed in spying out the «seven signs of cancer» or the «five symptoms of depression» (…). In other words, we seek *substitute* targets on which to unload the surplus existential fear that has been barred from its natural outlets (…)."[8]

Such preoccupations with cancer, with depression, with obesity, with cholesterol, with sunrays, with alcohol abuse, with crime, with paedophilia and much more – including the self and the threat of plummeting self esteem – saturate life in contemporary Britain which is, after all, one of the world's more globalized societies – if we take, for example, the penetration of neoliberal economics and global migration as indicators (see below). In an uncertain and dynamically changing world people become afraid and, yes, often less sure of themselves; and the central argument of this

[6]　K. Ecclestone, D. Hayes, *The Dangerous Rise of Therapeutic Education*, London-New York 2008.

[7]　R. Sennett, *The Corrosion of Character. The Personal Consequences of Work in the New Capitalism*, New York 1998, p. 97.

[8]　Z. Bauman, *Liquid Times. Living in an Age of Uncertainty*, Cambridge 2007, p. 9.

paper is not that the New Labour government generated this fear, but that by forcing a preoccupation with self-inspection, emotionality and vulnerability ever further into public discourse and social policy it exacerbated the problems it set out ostensibly to solve and helped weaken the capacity for resilience and stoicism with which the British were once associated.

THE STATE, HAPPINESS AND SELF ESTEEM

In November 2010 Prime Minister David Cameron announced that he had asked the Office for National Statistics to begin compiling a "happiness index" and instructed that work begin on constructing a methodology for measuring the national wellbeing.[9] The announcement triggered a lively public debate, centred on the twin themes of how, or whether, subjective emotional states can be recorded and quantified on the one hand and the desirability of the state making "happiness" an aim of social policy on the other. But Cameron's intervention, rather than being a radical innovation, is in fact the latest phase of a longer term process in which people's emotional lives have increasingly attracted the attentions of governments, New Labour having been a prime – we might say spectacular – example.

As the classic works on American society and the rise of the therapeutic ethos in social relations first noted,[10] there has been an increasing tendency since the second world war for governments in many countries to focus on elements of the hitherto "private" sphere, such as the emotions, relationships and self-esteem of their citizens. In the British context writers such as Sennett,[11] Furedi[12] and Ecclestone[13] have linked this to a crisis of political legitimacy and the weakening of trust in political institutions and parties. Politicians and governments, in short, "reach out" emotionally to electorates in lieu of a healthy civic domain or compelling political programme in which the public might believe. As Furedi put it in response to Cameron's idea of an index, happiness "has become the latest «big idea» to capture the attention of a political class which is otherwise running on empty."[14] In this sense, it could be argued

9   A. Stratton, 'David Cameron Aims to Make Happiness the New GDP,' *The Guardian*, 14 November 2010, at <http://www.guardian.co.uk/politics/2010/nov/14/david-cameron-wellbeing-inquiry>, 14 November 2010.

10   P. Rieff, *The Triumph of the Therapeutic. Uses of Faith after Freud*, New York 1966; Ch. Lasch, *The Culture of Narcissism. American Life in an Age of Diminishing Expectations*, New York 1978.

11   R. Sennett, *Respect. The Formation of Character in an Age of Inequality*, London 2003.

12   F. Furedi, *Therapy Culture. Cultivating Vulnerability in an Uncertain Age*, London-New York 2004.

13   K. Ecclestone, 'Resisting Images of the "Diminished Self" in Education Policy and Practice for Emotional Well-Being' in R. House, D. Loewenthal (eds.), *Childhood, Well-Being and a Therapeutic Ethos*, London 2009.

14   F. Furedi, 'Cameron's Happiness Index. Counting Smiley Faces,' *Spiked online*, 16 November 2010, at <http://www.spiked-online.com/index.php/site/article/9895/>, 16 November 2011.

that the coalition government of 2011 simply picked up from where New Labour left off. A "modernised," reinvented party with weak class roots, the party of Tony Blair and Gordon Brown represented a classic example of the appeal to the emotions, and its incorporation of the therapeutic ethos into social policy has done much, it is arguable, to negatively shape personal attitudes towards resourcefulness and personal fortitude in an increasingly uncertain and complex globalized world.

It is therefore worth considering briefly the origins of New Labour thinking in this area. The impetus towards a therapeutic dimension to social policy came from a corpus of social theory pertaining to arguments about "late modernity" and the shifting nature of social agency and personal identity. The key figure in all of this was Anthony Giddens, architect of the "Third Way" and intellectual mentor to many among the New Labour leadership.[15] The transmission of Giddens' ideas about late modernity into political discourse was especially significant. Late modernity, as opposed to "postmodernity," is a concept that defines our contemporary condition as continuous with modernity, and therefore as a part of it; but with the old certainties and institutions of early modernity weakened, individuals find themselves both more powerless and anxious in the face of increasing uncertainty and risk[16] and necessarily involved in developmental, reflexively self-aware processes of identity construction and maintenance aimed at achieving psychological equilibrium in the teeth of fragmented and potentially destabilising social experience.

These forces tending towards increases in anxiety and powerlessness are best handled, says Giddens, through the development of "reflexive self awareness," a conception of self-determined individuation drawn from the therapeutic context. This approach, he suggests, provides for the development of a reflexively ordered narrative of self as part of a process in which "(…) individuals are able (in principle) to bring their past into line with the exigencies of the present, consolidating a story-line with which they feel relatively content."[17] New, "progressive" forms of democracy could be based, it followed, on the development of therapeutically derived sense self-awareness – among citizens and policy makers both. The circulation of these ideas among the New Labour elite led, with a certain logic, to the integration of concepts such as "emotional literacy" and "self esteem" into social policy.

For Furedi,[18] this shift in governmental focus towards the self and the emotions has led to an amplification of a late modern trend in which "fear entrepreneurs," politicians among them, tend to promote the idea of personal vulnerability rather than resourcefulness, based on the notion of the "diminished self." This increasingly com-

[15] A. Giddens, *Over to You, Mr. Brown. How Labour Can Win Again*, Cambridge-Malden 2007; idem, *The Third Way. The Renewal of Social Democracy*, Cambridge 1998.

[16] U. Beck, A. Giddens, S. Lash, *Reflexive Modernization. Politics, Tradition and Aesthetics in the Modern Social Order*, Cambridge 1994.

[17] A. Giddens, *The Transformation of Intimacy. Sexuality, Love and Eroticism in Modern Societies*, Cambridge 1995, p. 81.

[18] F. Furedi, 'What Swine Flu Reveals about the Culture of Fear,' *Spiked online*, 5 May 2009, at <http://www.spiked-online.com/index.php?/site/article/6633/>, 5 May 2009.

mon view "regards most forms of human experience as the source of emotional distress…. [where people] characteristically suffer from «an emotional deficit» and possess a permanent consciousness of vulnerability."[19] In Britain, the "diminished self" conception of individual agency sunk deep roots in the country's social and political institutions during the New Labour period, and the recently-constructed concepts of "self esteem deficit" and "vulnerable groups" are now in widespread use. Here we are at the heart of New Labour's contradictory thinking about "minorities" and vulnerability; on the one hand the population is divided up into ever more finely grained minority groups, all of which require the help of the state in achieving self determination and gaining social inclusion. The "celebration" of diversity is therefore compromised by the belief that these groups lack the communal and individual resources to improve their lives under their own steam; people are, in short, condescended to as requiring the help of government and other agencies in building up their "self esteem" to the point at which they can begin to help themselves. Nowhere is the tendency to emphasise the connection between difficult social experiences and low self esteem more apparent than in the sphere of education. As Kathryn Ecclestone notes, "Images of a growing range of groups and «types» of individuals at risk of marginalisation and exclusion are now accompanied by references to the idea that formal education can raise people's self-esteem… This is related to a shift from traditions of radical pedagogy in further adult and community education to therapeutic interventions. These trends reflect a broader cultural demoralisation and low expectations among professionals about people's ability to act autonomously and to deal with challenge and risk-taking."[20]

But education professionals are not alone in this project; the redefinition of personal difficulty as a kind of pathological condition requiring professional management was one of the main drivers of the explosion of counselling and related services over the last two decades, in which battalions of experts have emerged to offer support and guidance in relation to just about every vicissitude of late modern life. These developments are significant for two main reasons. First, the "need" for them is used by government to justify increasing levels of state intervention in the personal and domestic lives of citizens; and second, they exacerbate the subjective experience of powerlessness, and make it more rather than less likely that individuals and communities will respond to the increasingly complex demands of globalized life in ways that express fearfulness, anxiety and vulnerability. It is into this context – of a state-supported cultural shift towards self absorption and narcissistic self pity on the basis of the notion of the "diminished self" – that we should place the tears of Nick Clegg. We can now turn to the issue which is perhaps most likely to make the majority population of contemporary Britain feel insecure.

---

[19] Idem, *Therapy Culture…*, pp. 110-414.

[20] K. Ecclestone, 'Lifelong Learning: Education or Therapy?,' *Spiked online*, 28 January 2003, at <http://www.spiked-online.com/index.php/site/article/6795/>, 5 May 2009.

IMMIGRATION AND DIVERSITY

Andrew Neather, a former New Labour advisor, caused something of a political storm in 2009 when he suggested that, in the early 2000s, New Labour had loosened immigration controls, implicitly and at least in part, in order to further diversify Britain as an attack on "the right" in particular and conservative notions if British national identity and culture in general.[21] Immediately seized upon by rightist commentators and anti-immigration groups, his message was quickly distorted and used to suggest that the government had initiated a deliberate policy of extending the multiculturalisation of British society for political and ideological ends.

A more balanced analysis would indicate that an implicit ideological commitment to diversity as an inherent social good was indeed at work, but was one of perhaps three key dynamics in a process that underpinned Britain's second, and unforeseen, phase of post-war mass immigration from the mid 1990s on. The first of these was the liberalization of arrangements for incoming workers at the behest of business interests, in the context of New Labour's conversion to neoliberal principles, booming economy and the expansion of the European Union[22]; the second was an explosion of organized people smuggling and a consequent upsurge in successful applications for asylum – an aspect of developments in the global economy of organised crime as well as migration[23]; and the third was, indeed, a deeply held belief among many of those on the progressive left – many of whom had cut their political teeth in the anti-racism movement of the 1970s and 1980s – that the extension of cultural diversity in Britain was a desirable goal *per se* and offered, since Labour had by now drastically severed many of its roots in the white working class that spawned it, an arena in which to continue to apply its rhetoric of social justice and equality.[24] The promotion of diversity and identity politics was, indeed, at this time lobbied for and supported by an array of non-state interest groups with strong connections to the party which were, in their way, as important in influencing government policy as the financial interests calling for more deregulation of controls for their own purposes.

---

[21] M. Marrin, 'Labour's Secret Scheme to Build Multicultural Britain,' *The Times*, 1 November 2009, at <http://www.timesonline.co.uk/tol/comment/columnists/minette_marrin/article6898174.ece>, 1 November 2009.

[22] S. Hall, 'New Labour Has Picked Up Where Thatcherism Left Off,' *The Guardian*, 6 March 2003, at <http://www.guardian.co.uk/politics/2003/aug/06/society.labour>, 1 November 2009; G. Menz, 'Employers, Trade Unions and Labor Migration Policies. Examining the Role of Non-State Actors,' paper presented to the European Unions Studies Association Tenth Biennial Conference, Montreal 2007.

[23] M. Castells, *The Information Age. Economy, Society and Culture*, Vol. 3: *End of Millennium*, Cambridge (Mass.)-Oxford 1997; R. Ford, 'Britain Is a Soft Touch for People Smuggling, Say Traffickers,' *The Times*, 14 July 2009, at <http://www.timesonline.co.uk/tol/news/uk/crime/article6702471.ece>, 14 July 2009.

[24] S. Moxon, *The Great Immigration Scandal*, Exeter 2006.

A key aspect of New Labour's bequest to Britain, then, has been – conscious, deliberate policy or not – a startlingly high level of migration "churn," even for a society at the leading edge of globalization. The social and psychological effects of demographic and cultural change as rapid and profound as this are only now emerging as a subject for civilized debate; it is, in fact, no longer possible to ignore them.

According to the widely respected British Social Attitudes Report,[25] a majority of the population in Britain believes that multiculturalism has been a failure, with 52% considering the country to be deeply divided along religious lines; a further 45% say that religious diversity has had a negative impact on the country. Similar research by YouGov in 2010 found that 58% of respondents linked Islam with extremism and 69% believed it encouraged the repression of women.[26] These fears about the effects of the establishment of Muslim communities should be understood in two closely connected ways: first, as an aspect of broader concerns about social and cultural cohesion, with Muslims being not only widely seen as the most "other" of Britain's diverse communities but also the most challenging to older British norms, whether these be social, cultural, religious or legal; second, as noted, these concerns must be set in the context of the profound demographic change Britain saw throughout the noughties, a change in which emigration, as well as immigration, played a role.

This is because Britain is currently undergoing one of the most significant demographic shifts in its history, a fact which has become fully apparent to the public only recently. While the focus of discussion throughout the noughties was on increasing immigration, the much less discussed figures for emigration throughout the decade were also startling by British standards, since it has not been a country of large scale emigration for decades. According to the Office for National Statistics, in 2006 there were 591,000 immigrants to the UK and 400,000 emigrants, both the highest annual figures since records began, while it was reported a little later that that the number of people going to live overseas fell from a peak of 427,000 in 2008 to 371,000 in 2009,[27] still a significant figure. In short, throughout the decade there was very significant population *turnover*, with non-British immigrants becoming increasingly visible across Britain as part of this sort of double-shift, or churn, in population. The statistic that most clearly illustrates the new situation concerns the emergence of the next generation of British citizens; the proportion of babies born in England and Wales to mothers born outside the UK was, in 2009, at a record high of 24.7% – an increase of 65% on six years earlier.[28] Many Britons (of many ethnicities) have reacted to this abrupt demographic transformation with bewilderment, anxiety and anger, and the dishonesty of the political and media elites of the country, until very recently, in failing to incorporate these fears into an honest and open public discus-

---

[25] *British Social Attitudes 26th Report*, NatCen, London 2010.

[26] 'YouGov – Public Becoming More Hostile towards Islam,' UK Polling Report, 25 August 2006, at <http://ukpollingreport.co.uk/blog/archives/302>, 1 December 2010.

[27] <http://www.statistics.gov.uk/cci/nugget.asp?id=260>, 30 January 2009.

[28] <http://www.statistics.gov.uk/pdfdir/emig1107.pdf>, 30 January 2009.

sion has almost certainly exacerbated them; increasing numbers of people appear to be worrying as seldom before about the effects the new situation will have on social cohesion and the future character of British society. Britain's population, it should also be noted, is projected by Eurostat to increase by 25% by 2060, from the current figure of just over 61 million to almost 77 million, making it the largest country in the continent by that time in terms of population if the projection turns out to be accurate.[29] This is the context in which the Muslim population in Britain grew by more than 500,000 to 2.4 million over a four year period (2004-2008), that sector of the population multiplying "10 times faster" than the non-Muslim population, according to Office for National Statistics research collated for *The Times*.[30] This increase was attributed to immigration, a higher birth rate and conversions to Islam during the period in question.

In fact, this deep public anxiety about the increasing social diversification of Britain should come as no surprise to anybody familiar with Robert Puttnam's research for "*E Pluribus Unum*: Diversity and Community in the Twenty-first Century"[31] which found, disturbingly, a clear correlation (in the United States) between increasing levels of diversity and declining levels of trust, individual happiness and assessments of quality of life, and confidence in local governance, among other things. The research model used by Putnam has since been replicated in the Netherlands, with similar results and the same overall conclusion.[32] Though both studies assert that the decline in trust is not a permanent phenomenon but rather a characteristic of societies in transition, the debate over Putnam's decision to delay publication of his findings in full until he had formulated recommendations for positively handling increasing diversity through social policy led some to conclude that the latter represent a form of wishful thinking not strongly supported by his initial research.[33]

Whether temporary or otherwise, levels of trust appear to be extremely low in Britain according to recent research. For example, the BBC reported in January 2009 that people under 50 years of age in Britain appear to experience the lowest levels of trust and belonging in Europe, based on research conducted by New Economics

---

[29] 'Britain Will Be Europe's Biggest Country by 2060 with 77 Million People,' *Daily Telegraph*, 26 August 2008, at <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/uknews/2626859/Britain-will-be-Europes-biggest-country-by-2060-with-77mpeople.html>, 30 January 2009.

[30] 'Muslim Population "Rising 10 Times Faster than the Rest of Society",' *The Times*, 30 January 2009, at <http://www.timesonline.co.uk/tol/news/uk/article5621482.ece>, 30 January 2009.

[31] R. Putnam, '*E Pluribus Unum.* Diversity and Community in the Twenty-first Century – The 2006 Johan Skytte Prize Lecture', *Scandinavian Political Studies*, Vol. 30, No. 2 (2007).

[32] B. Lancee, J. Dronkers, 'Ethnic Diversity in Neighbourhoods and Individual Trust of Immigrants and Natives. A Replication of Putnam (2007) in a West-European Country,' paper presented at the International Conference on Theoretical Perspectives on Social Cohesion and Social Capital, Royal Flemish Academy of Belgium for Science and the Arts, Brussels, Palace of the Academy, 15 May 2008.

[33] J. Leo, 'Bowling With Our Own. Robert Putnam's Sobering New Diversity Research Scares its Author,' *City Journal*, 25 June 2007, at <http://www.city-journal.org/html/eon2007-06-25jl.html>, 25 June 2007.

Foundation (on the basis of data taken from the 2006-07 Europe Social Survey).[34] Reports of research of this kind now feature regularly in the British media, and play their role in late modernity's "feedback loop" of reflexivity, as individuals absorb and process findings about their society and its characteristics, in many cases perhaps heightening the sense that something is deeply wrong and has been "scientifically" proven as such. This possibility we must not discount, though it is not possible to examine the issue at length here. Other studies circulated by the media in support of the idea that the British are especially fearful these days include, to choose from a large number of possible examples, comparative research that found them to be the most fearful of public space[35] and of teenagers[36] in Europe. More recently, in 2010, 70% of respondents in a national survey said that they thought British society was "broken"[37] and in April 2011 – a bumper month, clearly, in which to collect data in support of the Britain-in crisis argument – *Action for Happiness*, a group spearhead-ing the "happiness movement", which is involved in advising the Prime Minister in matters relating to the happiness index, warned that "(…) unless we undergo a «radi-cal cultural change», Britain will slide into unprecedented depths of despair blighted by rising rates of suicide and depression."[38] High on the list of Action for Happiness' aims for the British renewal is the building of personal "resilience." It will be inter-esting to see, in the coming years, if this most characteristic of the old British virtues can be resurrected.

CONCLUSION

For many of us, life in the age of advanced globalization is characterised by insecur-ity, anxiety and fearfulness. This can by now be regarded as a given, and the expres-sion of these aspects of the late modern condition permeates the products of social theory, the arts and popular culture alike. One way for the social and political insti-tutions of Britain to have supported its people through the transformations of glo-balization might have been to encourage the maintenance of personal resourceful-ness, resilience and the stoical perspective for which they were once known – or at

---

[34] M. Easton, 'Map of the Week. Trust and Belonging,' BBC News, 2009, at <http://www.bbc.co.uk/blogs/thereporters/markeaston/2009/01/map_of_the_week_trust_and_belo.html>, 1 December 2010.

[35] 'Fear of Crime Makes Britain Most Watched Country in Europe,' *The Independent*, 26 April 2004, at <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/this-britain/fear-of-crime-makes-uk-most-watched-country-in-europe-561265.html>, 1 December 2010.

[36] J. Margo, M. Dixon, *Freedom's Orphans. Raising Youth in a Changing World*, London 2006.

[37] 'Broken Britain?,' *The Times*, 9 February 2010, at <http://www.timesonline.co.uk/tol/comment/leading_article/article7019841.ece>, 9 February 2010.

[38] M. Wardrop, 'Britons Becoming "Increasingly Miserable," Warns Action for Happiness Campaign,' *Daily Telegraph*, 18 April 2011, at <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/uknews/8445786/Britons-becoming-increasingly-miserable-warns-Action-for-Happiness-campaign.html>, 18 April 2011.

least which were once attributed to them and widely accepted as ideals. Instead, and perhaps inevitably as part of Britain's accelerating post-imperial cultural revolution, successive New Labour administrations embraced the "therapeutic turn" in Western culture signalled decades ago by Phillip Rieff and embarked upon a programme of improving the self-esteem of the nation, supported by a plethora of interest and professional groups which supported the government's values and rhetoric. The result has been to exacerbate the fearfulness and insecurity of contemporary life by downplaying the "conservative" virtues of the old Britain and the promotion of a culture of essentially narcissistic self-inspection, disclosure and, in the end, vulnerability; the emergence of the entitlement-without-effort phenomenon is an inevitable outcome of the overblowing and careless attributing of self esteem to people who have forgotten – as they have forgotten much else – what their predecessors knew very well: that self esteem was something that was to be earned, through personal struggle, and that overcoming frustration and failure could be the real building blocks of personal development and the capacity to bear life's slings and arrows with some degree of fortitude. By importing the "diminished self" conception of social agency into social policy while at the same time ushering in a period of social diversification too rapid and dramatic for many citizens to absorb with equanimity, New Labour made objective social reality more unstable, worrying and difficult to deal with while simultaneously undermining tried and trusted modes of subjective resourcefulness.

Garry ROBSON, PhD – Professor of sociology, graduated from Goldsmiths College, University of London, in 1998. Since 2002, he has been teaching sociology and cultural studies at Polish universities, mostly in Krakow. He is currently a Professor at the Institute of American Studies and Polish Diaspora, JU. His research interests include Globalisation and Social/Cultural Change; Sociolinguistics (of English); Digital Culture and Surveillance in the Western Democracies; Popular Culture in Contemporary Britain and the USA; Sport, Social Class and the Body. Among his publications are: 'Social Change and the Challenge to RP. Approaching the British Cultural Revolution through Accents and Dialects' in I. Ramos Gay (ed.), *New Trends in English Teacher Education (Linguistics, Literature and Culture)*, Cuenca 2010; 'Whatever Happened to the British Stiff Upper Lip? The Cultural Revolution, the "Broken Britain" Debate and the Evaporation of Respectable Society' in M. Misztal, M. Trawiński (eds.), *Current Issues in English Studies*, Kraków 2011.