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Danny Dorling, *Injustice: Why Social Inequality Persists* (Bristol: Policy Press, 2011), 400 pp., ISBN: 1847424260, £8.79 paperback.

Along with his other recent titles *So You Think You Know About Britain* (2011), *Bankrupt Britain* (with Bethan Thomas, 2011) and *Fair Play*, (2011), Danny Dorling is emerging as a powerful voice in contemporary research about the shape and texture of inequality in the twenty-first century. A geographer by trade, Dorling has the rare gift of the polymath, able to synthesise and communicate complex measures of wealth and resources in a way which is endlessly engaging, fluent and jargon-free. *Injustice: Why Social Inequality Persists* is a dense book, packed with statistics, summaries of reports, policy documents, and yet it does not feel heavy to read. Dorling interspaces sections of evidence with inventive metaphors and anecdotes which bring the numbers to life. His book brings a sociological imagination to statistics. Dorling is a natural raconteur.

The book examines the five beliefs that Dorling sees as upholding the material realities of social inequality: ‘elitism is efficient’, ‘exclusion is necessary’, ‘prejudice is natural’, ‘greed is good’ and ‘despair is inevitable’. Dorling charts how these beliefs have come about, how and by whom they were promoted, how they saturate institutional practices and how they regulate and stifle meaningful attempts to tackle inequality. Dorling demonstrates powerfully on every page how inequality is allowed to persist, even flourish, because of the enduring authority of these five myths. Dorling, however, resists the temptation to write a populist book – that might locate the source of these myths in the echelons of only the super-rich – and instead argues that these beliefs flourish because we *all* have a stake in them, whether we benefit or not. Those with obvious economic power have a clear investment in circulating and maintaining the myths of inequality, but so too are these myths propagated in the institutions of the media, the government, industry and the academy. The reader does not escape lightly in this book, but is directly challenged on the ways that they too, perhaps, find security in the mythologies of aspiration, exclusion and the comforts of privilege. As in his other work, Dorling does not ask that we commiserate about injustice, but that we excavate our attachments to precarious lives which exacerbate those injustices.

The significance of this book and the scholarship it presents cannot be overstated in the current austerity regime, where the five myths of injustice that Dorling identifies have extended across political and popular discourse. The re-vitalisation of damaging stereotypes such as that of the underclass – who are seen to occupy the bottom rungs of society through their failure to work, failure to embrace opportunity and failure to aspire – can be seen in austerity regimes which seek to reduce welfare relief and ‘responsibilise’ what is seen as a stagnant multigenerational strata. Dorling engages productively with these stereotypes and argues that the very ways that we think about poverty hold us back from confronting it. He disentangles the multiple kinds of social injustice that are levied when different groups are labelled as delinquent, debarred, debtors, discarded, depressed and disenfranchised, which together compound into experiences of lived poverty for multiple and often overlapping fractions of the population.

What is perhaps most impressive about this book – and there is much to be impressed by – is the deftness with which Dorling traces these five myths throughout different governmental periods since the establishment of the welfare state and the ideas of Beveridge. He draws clear and compelling links between the five ‘social evils’ conceptualised by Beveridge in his advocacy work for a welfare system which would support its citizens from cradle to grave, and the five myths that work to create consent in the broad vision of injustice as natural and inevitable. Contemporary injustice mythologies, Dorling argues, have emerged ‘out of the ashes’ of the social evils identified by Beveridge, and this phoenix has become so thoroughly embedded throughout our social institutions that injustices are not only tolerated, but accepted and even advocated. Contemporary commentators have only recently begun to identify the inequalities produced within and through the recession and subsequent austerity policies, but their analysis only goes back as far as the financial crisis of 2009. Dorling, however, makes a powerful case for looking back much further, to when social and economic divides first started to really open up in the 1970s with the institutionalising of neoliberal policy, marketisation and the promotion of home-owning across greater swathes of the population. It is here that more desirable/less desirable distinctions begin to attach to different locales, schools and neighbourhoods, and the British population start to sift into different groups which only become firmer and more secure across generations. The story of growing injustice is also a story of gradually congealing social mobility: even as the fantasies of meritocracy become ever more elaborate.

Dorling's work is sometimes described (often admiringly) as 'angry'. It is angry, and this is one of its profound strengths. There is much to be angry about, particularly when the multiple registers of inequality are mapped out so cogently and evidenced so compellingly. What is most admirable about angry writing is the way that it infects us with a desire for change. Along with other titles which document the personal and social costs of injustices for all of us, the haves as well as have-nots (see for example *The Spirit Level* 2009 by Richard Wilkinson and Kate Pickett), this book is an example of public-minded social science. It reminds us of the material realities of experiencing multiple, overlapping kinds of injustice, asks us what stake we have in defending their existence and most significantly dares us to imagine a world where they are indefensible. This book will be of interest to anyone interested in economic and social inequalities and injustices, engaged in related research across sociology, geography, politics and history, activists and advocates looking for an excellent reference point for contemporary debates on issues of exclusion, and students of social class, mobility, privilege, neoliberalism and social issues.