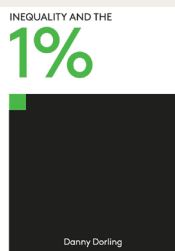


Spotlight on Europe

Rich and infamous

Inequality and the 1%

Danny Dorling,
Verso Books, £9.09



Danny Dorling's book is presented as an opportunity to explore the cost of the growing disparity between the very richest in society and the rest. What results, however, is an

attempt to correlate facts and figures to much broader societal trends, but not always with justification.

Dorling divides this short book into five chapters that consider the negative impact of the richest one per cent in society on the children, health, workforce, and property markets, of the remaining 99 per cent. Hidden in these chapters, among something of a statistical frenzy, are a few important observations that illustrate concerning aspects in society, such as the increased dependence across Europe on food banks.

Unfortunately these points are outnumbered, and as a result lost, by assertions that are at best tenuous, but at times simply not true. Travel to a country such as India, Dorling says, and 'you will observe the rich almost completely ignoring the poor'. Well I have, and I didn't. Such sweeping statements serve to undermine the credibility of much of what Dorling has to say, though that in itself is limited.

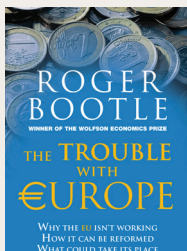
Indeed, the main problem with this book is that it seems to have only one message which it stretches over 180 pages. A lot of numbers are crunched in different ways, but all these seem to say is that the super rich are, well, super rich, and that that is not fair on the rest of us.

What could have been a timely assessment of inequitable wealth distribution, ends up feeling like a character assassination of the wealthy.
Hannah Bryce

Euro-sceptic manifesto

The Trouble with Europe

Roger Bootle,
Nicholas Brealey Publishing, £18.99



The trouble with British books about the European Union is that even when they pretend to be objective, they are all too often one-sided diatribes. It is certainly true of Roger

Bootle's latest treatise, which purports to tell us 'why the EU isn't working, how it can be reformed, and what could take its place'. It is no surprise that Bootle, a long-standing Euro-sceptic, concludes that the EU is dysfunctional and highly unlikely to be reformable at all.

His point of departure is that the euro has been flawed since its birth, and should best be broken up. He discounts the dramatic fall-out from such a process. And having weighed up the pros and cons of a British exit, concludes that on balance the UK would probably be better off outside the EU. Businessmen who protest otherwise are dismissed as mere 'widget manufacturers'.

The trouble is that he does not come up with any original or profound reasons why the EU does not work. He simply repeats at regular intervals that it suffers from a congenital bias towards increased bureaucracy and excessive regulation.

He declares that the EU has been an economic failure, comparing its performance with China and the Asian tigers, and using statistics heavily biased by the recent economic crisis. He completely ignores the cost of reunification in Germany, in seeking to show that the euro has not even been positive for Europe's most successful economy. It's all rather a pity, for when he is not obsessed by the iniquities of European institutions, Bootle is a perfectly respectable economist. This book is preaching to the converted.
Quentin Peel

Dutch fiction

Summer House with Swimming Pool

Herman Koch,
Atlantic Books, £12.99



Marc Schlosser is a well-known doctor whose client list includes most of Amsterdam's rich and famous. After the well-known actor Ralph Meier and his wife Judith invite

Marc to their summer let, Marc finds himself facing an offer he cannot refuse. A couple of weeks later, he is pitching a tent next to the Meier's swimming pool with his wife and two young daughters, Julia and Lisa. Joined by film-maker Stanley Forbes and his young beautiful partner Emmanuelle, the large group enjoy relaxing days in the sunshine, outings to the beach as well as copious suppers with fresh seafood and local cheeses. Marc finds himself unwinding, until a violent incident at the beach turns his family's holiday into a nightmare and pushes them to leave in haste.

Herman Koch's seventh novel contrasts the tranquil and idyllic setting of the Mediterranean summer with Marc's acute, and sometimes uncomfortable, psychological observations. It explores Marc's struggle between his professional duties, emotional needs and responsibilities as a father. As each event is revisited, readers are progressively exposed to hidden secrets and uncomfortable truths surrounding the holiday and the characters. Haunted by his quest to find the truth, Marc trusts no one, which later compels him to make a decision with irreversible consequences.

Koch is the Dutch author of the bestseller *The Dinner*. *Summer House with Swimming Pool* is skilfully constructed and, paradoxically, makes an ideal and easy read for a lazy afternoon at the beach.
Georgie Wright