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**Book review: injustice and the reproduction of history: structural inequalities, gender and redress by Alasia Nuti**

**LSE Research Online URL for this paper:** <http://eprints.lse.ac.uk/103614/>

Version: Published Version

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**Online resource:**

Demir, Ebru (2019) Book review: injustice and the reproduction of history: structural inequalities, gender and redress by Alasia Nuti. LSE Review of Books (01 Dec 2019). Blog Entry.

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# Book Review: Injustice and the Reproduction of History: Structural Inequalities, Gender and Redress by Alasia Nuti

*In Injustice and the Reproduction of History: Structural Inequalities, Gender and Redress, Alasia Nuti explores the relationship between history and the provision of justice by focusing on women as a historical-structural group subject to historical injustices that continue to impact the present. This is a very welcome contribution to the literature, writes Ebru Demir, providing both deep and rigorous analyses of its case studies and proposing thought-provoking new terminology.*

***Injustice and the Reproduction of History: Structural Inequalities, Gender and Redress.* Alasia Nuti. Cambridge University Press. 2019.**

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Why should an unjust history matter for egalitarians seeking justice *in the present*? How and why does history relate to the provision of justice both theoretically and practically? Alasia Nuti's [Injustice and the Reproduction of History: Structural Inequalities, Gender and Redress](#) not only engages with such longstanding questions but also makes an important contribution to the existing literature as it centres on the argument that women as a historical-structural group (HSG) are the subjects of historical injustices.

One of the main arguments of the book is that 'unjust history that should normatively matter in justice-based considerations is present because it has been reproduced over time through different means' (4). In the first half of the book, Nuti builds this argument on very solid ground by engaging with the relevant literature and by providing examples to validate this very point. 'De-temporalising injustice', borrowed from Reinhart Koselleck's terminology, is significant and necessary in order to capture the relation between past and present injustices (13). The book contributes to the de-temporalising of injustice by suggesting that past and present injustices have possible connections and all backward-looking approaches to injustice consider only past injustices as significant enough to address (15). According to Nuti, past and present cannot be separated if one seeks to provide justice for historical-structural injustices (HSIs) that have been committed. For this very reason, the division between past and present becomes deceptive. The present reproduces the unjust past 'over time and through changes' (8). Thus, change also becomes a suspect in perpetuating unjust history.

The second half of the book forms a study of women as a group and as the subjects of historical injustices. [Although previously Catherine Lu has argued that women are a group suffering from enduring injustice](#), by carrying this argument one step further, this book provides a thorough analysis of how such a group is defined. Nuti, being aware of intersectional identities and differences, argues that to be categorised as a woman, one is not obliged to have been through systematic oppression: it is sufficient for one to be *more likely to be exposed* to unjust constraints and abuses (90). Therefore, possibility and potentiality become the requirements for being categorised as a group undergoing historical injustices.

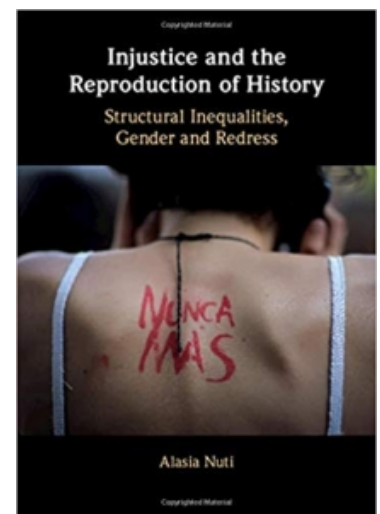




Image Credit: Verity sculpture, Damien Hirst, The Harbour, Ilfracombe, Devon ([Tee Cee CC BY 2.0](#))

Nuti argues that [Iris Marion Young's](#) 'structural violence' concept has turned out to be an umbrella term in 'that we lose sight of [...] the heterogenous nature of injustices at stake' (10). For this very reason, HSI are claimed to more effectively and specifically describe the injustices towards women. What are the HSI that women suffer today? More precisely, how are the HSI which women have endured throughout history being reproduced in the present time? In Chapters Six to Eight, three dimensions of HSI are discussed in depth: violence against women (VAW); the gendered division of domestic labour (GDDL); and occupational segregation. Nuti argues that historical gender inequalities and injustices become visible in these three key areas today.

This is a very ambitious argument. In order to illustrate its validity, Nuti engages with the Nordic countries where a cessation in the HSI committed against women might be imagined. Since the Nordic region has a reputation for gender equality, every form of VAW, and therefore HSI, towards women might be assumed to have greatly reduced, if not outright ended there, therefore challenging Nuti's argument that women endure HSI *globally*. To counter this, by presenting statistical data, it is argued in the book that in the Nordic countries 'the undoubted improvement of women's condition has not resulted in a significant reduction of the level of VAW', in particular intimate partner violence (IPV) (110).

The book therefore argues that VAW, as an HSI, continues today. In the book, to support this argument, the specific case studies, such as the IPV rates in the Nordic countries, are linked to global HSI. Yet, violence, in particular VAW, occurs in varied forms and to different extents around the world. Therefore, suggesting three particular dimensions – namely, VAW, GDDL and occupational segregation – as evidence for enduring HSI without exploring the variances in different contexts may be a limiting perspective. I do also question whether varied forms of VAW could be generalised to the extent that these fall into a single category: namely, HSI. Another important question which the book provoked in my mind is whether HSI towards women can (ever) be eliminated through the termination of VAW, GDDL and occupational segregation. In other words, how do HSI end and *do* they ever end?

What Nuti does attend to in the book is how HSI can be *redressed*. Throughout Nuti suggests 'three required (yet not exhaustive)' mechanisms to redress HSI' (180): namely *reparations* (Chapter Eight); *transformative policymaking* (151-52); and *counter-historical institutional interventions* (171-77). All of these mechanisms and their realisability are scrutinised meticulously in the book. Nuti deeply engages with the possible redress mechanisms for other HSGs (for example, African Americans (78)) in order to draw similarities in mechanisms of redress for women. However, the complexity of redress cannot be overemphasised, one of the reasons being that different structural injustices intersect throughout history. As Nuti observes, racial injustice has been *gendered* in its forms (167). Therefore, women as an HSG present an internally heterogenous group which has been marked by power imbalances within it (167). Nuti adjusts the mechanisms for redress accordingly: the complementary nature of the mechanisms of reparations, transformative policymaking and counter-historical institutional interventions might counter the power imbalances among women when redress is provided.

*Injustice and the Reproduction of History: Structural Inequalities, Gender and Redress* is a very welcome contribution to the current historical justice literature. Focusing on women as a group enduring historical injustice is the major novelty of the book. In addition to the deep and rigorous analyses of the case studies, the terminology which Nuti uses – such as historical-structural inequality and historical-structural group – presents an original and thought-provoking discussion.

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*Note: This review gives the views of the author, and not the position of the LSE Review of Books blog, or of the London School of Economics.*