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Women and austerity: the economic crisis and the future for gender equality

Helen Davies

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and, particularly, Octavia Butler. Appropriating Donna Haraway's notion that the vampire species 'promises and threatens racial and sexual mixing' (Haraway, 1997, p. 214, cited in Nayar, p. 132), he suggests that this promise and threat is 'a step toward the posthumanist species cosmopolitanism' (p. 132), a cosmopolitanism that can be found in Butler's work.

Nayar concludes his exploration of the posthuman by stating that '[o]nce we accept that we *are* difference, perhaps we will cease to be worried about difference as *Other*' (p. 156). This statement draws to a close his wide ranging study of critical posthumanism and sounds a positive note for those who might fear difference without recognising the fact that, in the twenty-first century, we are all, in effect, Other.

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Women and austerity: the economic crisis and the future for gender equality

MARIA KARAMESSINI and JILL RUBERY, eds, 2014

London and New York: Routledge

368 pp., ISBN 978-0-415-81536-9, £95.00 (hardback), ISBN 978-0-415-81537-6, £34.99 (paperback)

Shortly after the financial crisis hit the USA and Europe in 2008, commentators started to debate the gendering of this recession. Initial response from North America suggested that a 'man-cession' had taken hold; according to high-profile reports in the mainstream press, men were being disproportionately affected by job losses. For instance, *The New York Times* (Rampell 2009) cited statistics from the Bureau of Labor Statistics which suggested that 82% of job losses in the USA befell male workers and that such inequalities would 'put pressure on' traditional gender roles. Such rhetoric has spread across the Atlantic in recent years, with *The Telegraph* (Peacock 2011) offering a headline in 2011 that 'Women Do Better Than Men' in the recession. Of course, feminist groups in both the USA and Europe have belied such claims by offering compelling evidence to suggest that it is women's lives – economically, politically and socially – that have been particularly affected by the recession and the attendant government policies of cuts and austerity measures.

Against this backdrop, Maria Karamessini and Jill Rubery's edited collection of essays, *Women and Austerity: the Economic Crisis and the Future for Gender Equality* provides a crucial and timely exploration of the multiple sites of women's disadvantage in the current age of austerity. It is notable as the first academic study of the consequences of the recession on the economic and social conditions of women in a range of national contexts, and is field-defining in terms of future explorations of gender and austerity, particularly with regard to Europe. The collection is divided into three parts. The first section features an introductory overview of women's vulnerability to recession and austerity authored by Karamessini. Rubery's chapter in this part of the book provides a framework for analysis in thinking about the ways in which recessions and austerity measures become gendered. Jacqueline O'Reilly's and Tiziana Nazio's contribution studies the 'balkanization' of labour markets with regard to gender: the 'institutional rules

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