

for counseling although we're never quite clear what exactly it is that she's troubled about. Through it all, Janey continues to go through the motions of parenting, teaching, interacting with colleagues, entertaining in-laws, and her relationship with Hector. Somehow, the whole episode of Janey's depression and her turning to spirituality for comfort does not ring true to the character. One cannot help but feel that a different type of answer other than a spiritual one may have been truer to the character and the general theme of the novel.

Sorensen does, however, an excellent satire of the academic life, from portraits of Janey's colleagues and the relationships among them, to meaningless meetings, and research projects and conferences with obscure and nonsensical titles. This culminates with a scene in which Janey has too much to drink at a conference on decadence and lets fly all the "witty little quips" that pop into her head.

The large harmonium in the title is an organ that is "gathering dust in a Music Department practice room on the top floor of the university building." The instrument in question becomes the object of numerous jokes and even a plot to hijack the decadence conference.

Nevertheless, for Janey the phrase 'a large harmonium' symbolizes the harmony of her domestic life:

It sounds like harmony and then some, harmony with all the stops pulled out. Hector has played the harmonium for me. It is a ridiculous instrument but makes a fabulous noise.

Secondary characters in the novel are less developed. The best delineated ones are Jam and Blanche Grimm. Jam, short for James, has been Hector's best friend since they were fourteen.

Jam plays the French horn and

wanders around Canada, playing with various quartets and doing workshops in schools. He has no ambition to own a house or have a steady job, and boasts that he has slept with women from all ten provinces.

When Jam falls for Blanche Grimm, a new lecturer in Janey's English Department, and then they break up, Janey ends up playing the mediator between the two.

This is overall a lighthearted, witty, and funny debut novel, a Bridget Jones' Diary set up in the academic world. I look forward to her next novel.

*Oana Secieru is an Assistant Professor of Economics at the Royal Military College in Kingston, Ontario. She is an avid reader and, when she is not working, enjoys spending her time with her husband and their two daughters.*

## **THE NEW AFRICAN DIASPORA IN VANCOUVER: MIGRATION, EXCLUSION, AND BELONGING**

Gillian Creese  
Toronto: University of Toronto  
Press, 2011

### **REVIEWED BY SANJA IVANOV**

In her book, *The New African Diaspora in Vancouver: Migration, Exclusion, and Belonging*, Gillian Creese offers the first study to explore the relatively small population of Black sub-Saharan Africans living in the Greater Vancouver area, comprising some one percent of the of the population. Creese provides the first substantial academic study of their immigrant ex-

perience. At the centre of her analysis are testimonies of sixty-one participants, both female and male, from twenty-one countries in Africa, who struggle to integrate into Canadian society. Two researchers—African immigrants themselves—have collaborated with Creese on this project, with a goal to reinforce impartiality of the interviews.

Creese's case studies show that despite their desire for inclusion, immigrants are often racialized and perceived as the inferior "other" to the white Canadians. The author focuses on language issues of participants from Commonwealth and non-Commonwealth countries and utilizes Pierre Bourdieu's claims about erasure of linguistic capital of the immigrants, which shows the inextricable link between linguistic competence and power. Her study reveals that "African accent" functions as a factor for the exclusion of immigrants, with female participants experiencing stronger alienation in terms of language. Moreover, the educational credentials of African immigrants are often not recognized, which results in a downward mobility on the Canadian labour market and leads them to feel betrayed by the Canadian promise of multiculturalism and equality. However, according to Creese's results, this situation is improving for women, as they, unable to find any job, choose to take up post-secondary education in Canada, which often enables them to obtain better positions than the men. Moreover, once they obtain employment, the interviewees of both genders recall instances of marginalization, which further prevent them from complete integration.

In addition to the issues of belonging in relation to language and employment, the following chapters address the adjustments a family must undergo to feel like a part of the Vancouver society. As Creese

effectively shows, the experience of migration shifts the gender relations within many of the families of the interviewed, which in turn affects parent-child relationships. Further, Creese addresses the participants' positioning of themselves in the new society with regards to racialization, acceptance and enquiries about origins from Canadian society, which augments the significance of the larger Canadian community in defining the identities of the immigrants.

The grim picture of the immigrant repeatedly troubled by the question "Where do you come from" is replaced in the last chapter by a socially active immigrant, willing to position him/herself within Canada as a part of the emerging pan-African community in Vancouver. This study demonstrates that this negotiation is markedly gender-specific. Women stress the importance of networking and both informal and formal support for the fellow immigrants, and tend to focus on improving their situation within Canada, while most of the men express the need for creating African entrepreneurship and organizations which focus on Africa.

Creese puts emphasis on the pan-African identity that characterizes the community in Vancouver and their collective difference from the Canadian majority. However, certain differences within this community are not addressed. Creese curiously downplays the role of religion among African immigrants and in what ways this has an impact on integration into Canadian society. Notably, Creese's assistants did not interview anyone coming from predominantly Muslim countries such as Somalia, which has a significant number of immigrants in Vancouver. Despite the explanation by one of the collaborators that only ten percent of the African population in Vancouver are Muslim, their experiences with regards to belonging

to both the Canadian and the larger African community should have been explored. The research could benefit from a more specific analysis of the Africans who are not Christian, with regards to possible discrimination within the African and Canadian communities—especially gender marginalization.

Nevertheless, this study makes a valuable contribution to research and the existing literature by showing how this small group manages to create spaces of recognition by building a supportive community network. Creese's attention to gender dynamics and the different experiences among men and women further adds to this cogent study. Her findings are applicable to scholars in a variety of fields and lay the foundation on which further research on immigrant groups in Canada will build.

*Sanja Ivanov is an MA student in the Department of English at the University of Waterloo. Her research interests include various kinds of life writing, especially immigrant life writing and life stories in graphic form.*

## **BORROWED TONGUES: LIFE WRITING, MIGRATION AND TRANSLATION**

Eva Karpinski  
Waterloo: Wilfrid Laurier University  
Press, 2012

### **REVIEWED BY PAOLA BOHÓRQUEZ**

Working within a thoroughly inter-disciplinary framework informed by poststructuralist, feminist, and postcolonial approaches, Eva Karpinski's book articulates a novel and multifaceted concept of translation that approaches immigrant

women's life writing as a project of meaning transfer between differing signifying contexts. Through her nuanced close readings of migrant, diasporic, and postcolonial self-narratives, Karpinski's book displays the potential of translation to unsettle the conventions of the autobiographical genre, problematize monolingual understandings of the relation between language and subjectivity, and elucidate the historical and material conditions underlying the production of immigrant women's writing, as well as the cultural politics informing these texts' reception. What emerges through Karpinski's versatile back and forth between the memoirs and the more theoretical analyses is a rich account of the intertwined registers of translation as textual practice and lived experience for immigrant women writers.

Karpinski's translative reading strategies reveal the condition of in-between languages, cultures, subject positions, and genres to be a contentious and unstable space traversed by conflicting investments, demands, and desires. Thus, immigrant women's narratives are shown to be entangled in complex negotiation strategies: between the distrust of translation and the desire to domesticate one's foreignness in and through the receiving language and culture; between the fluid and unstable space promised by translation as an unending process of self-configuration and the imposition of debilitating categories that fix and objectify immigrant and racialized women as other; between intergenerational and intersubjective forms of belonging and re-membering, and liberal and androcentric ideologies of individuality with which the autobiographical genre is complicit.

Karpinski's sustained attention to the vicissitudes of transfer and interference present in each of the examined texts progressively reveals