

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

an ethics of translation animating her reading strategies. Rather than simply taking a celebratory or critical stance in response to each text's success or failure at dwelling in the aporetic space of in-betweenness, *Borrowed Tongues*, refuses a gesture of semiotic closure and pays close attention instead to the necessarily ambivalent, unfinished, and symptomatic transactions occurring between asymmetrical languages and cultural imperatives. In this sense, Karpinski's work importantly demonstrates that the ethos of decenteredness, hybridity, and multiplicity embraced by so much contemporary critical discourse constitutes, in fact, a collective achievement, for without immanent forms of social solidarity and intersubjective witnessing, all efforts at sustaining the space of in-betweenness become double binds.

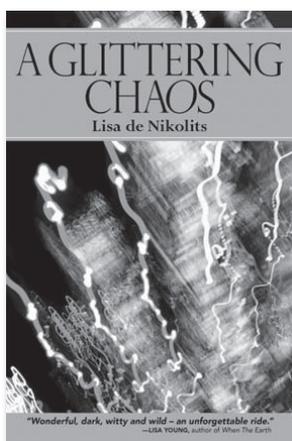
If immigrant women write in "borrowed tongues," Karpinski's book compellingly exemplifies what it means to listen with a "borrowed ear" (Derrida *The Ear* 35). Thus, the author's transversal reading of Laura Goodman Salverson's *Confessions of an Immigrant Daughter*, for instance, allows her to explore the tensions attendant to configuring a subjectivity marked as "female, ethnic,

proletarian, and immigrant" and to complicate prior critical readings of Salverson's memoir which, in privileging gender alone, fail to consider the material constraints within which she writes and how these conditions shape the strategies through which *Confessions* "translates the experience of female embodiment." Similarly, Karpinski's beautifully articulated reading of *in the second person*, examines how Kamboureli's productive distrust of translation—with its promises of equivalence without remainder and full arrival into the language of the other—allows her to trace "the processual, mobile, and unfixed nature of subjectivity." In understanding Kamboureli's experimental translative strategies within intertwined conditions of privilege and marginality, Karpinski engages in a situated analysis of the text's economy of loss that raises crucial questions regarding the possibilities and limits of translation as work of mourning. Lastly, and drawing much more explicitly on postcolonial theories of translation, Karpinski's reading of Marlene Nourbese Philip's *Looking for Livingstone: An Odyssey of Silence* and Jamaica Kincaid's *The Autobiography of my Mother* focuses on the problem of translation "when

there is only the target language." For both African Caribbean writers whose linguistic identity has been shaped by an agonistic relationship between a devalued Creole and a Standard English experienced as extraneous to the Caribbean, writing in English entails resignifying the adversarial language through articulating its foreclosed difference, while simultaneously revealing the language's complicity with imperialism and colonial domination. Karpinski's analysis of "the rhetoric of negativity" that informs Kincaid's text, as well as of its uses of allegorization, deconstructive mimicry, and parodic repetition as translative strategies raises intriguing questions regarding the reader's implication in constructing, deconstructing, and perhaps missing or misrecognizing, the meaning of the text.

"Passing through the ear of the other, the *autos* of the autobiographical subject is displaced into the *otos* of "otobiography." As Karpinski eloquently exemplifies, while such displacement reveals the structurally intersubjective nature of the self and foregrounds the act of reading as constitutive of textuality, it also compels us to ask how to listen otherwise to the displaced voices of those who say

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“I” in borrowed tongues. Karpinski’s heteroglossic reading of immigrant women’s life writing attunes our ear to such voices, thus allowing us to listen to the self writing itself in translation.

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## **BREADWINNING DAUGHTERS: YOUNG WORKING WOMEN IN A DEPRESSION-ERA CITY, 1929-1939**

Katrina Srigley  
Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2010

### **REVIEWED BY NINA KAYE**

In *Breadwinning Daughters*, Katrina Srigley paints a detailed portrait of Depression era Toronto from the perspective of the city’s young working women. An extension of Srigley’s doctoral thesis at the University of Toronto, the book is academically rigorous while still being engaging and readable. Srigley’s approach to the subject is influenced by oral history and feminist social history. She is careful, however, to remain balanced in her presentation of the material. Srigley’s book is well-researched and organized, improving and expanding upon existing schol-

arship. Her bibliography cites over one hundred interviews along with approximately three hundred other references. *Breadwinning Daughters* is an important work, offering a new perspective on the Depression era by showcasing the experiences of young working women in Toronto.

*Breadwinning Daughters* attempts to correct the omissions of earlier research on the period which focused on male unemployment, politics, and economics. In contrast, Srigley focuses on social history and women’s experiences, drawing on interviews, court records, newspaper articles, census statistics, novels, memoirs, and history books to detail the lives of young working women. Srigley argues that these young single women, or dutiful daughters, provided financial support for their families when their unemployed fathers and brothers could not. Their experiences, Srigley asserts, are integral to a full understanding of the period.

As Srigley’s research reveals, young single women had better access to employment than their male counterparts during the Depression. As such, many dutiful daughters were suddenly thrust into the role of family breadwinner. This circumstance was important in shifting traditional family structures. Additionally, working had a significant impact on the lives of the young women in question. Certainly, many women felt pride and an increased sense of autonomy as a result of their labour, yet many also felt sorrow at lost opportunities for education and marriage.

*Breadwinning Daughters* offers a detailed overview of life in the Depression for young working women in Toronto; providing an important cultural and social context for the period; exploring how young women’s work experience impacted their family life; outlining the labour market for women in Toronto; discussing sexuality, criminality, and women’s

safety at home and at work; and examining the leisure activities that young working women engaged in during the period. Throughout each chapter, Srigley is careful to point out how race and class were factors that affected women’s experience of the Depression. *Breadwinning Daughters* is an invaluable compendium of women’s lives in the 1930s. However, due to the extensive breadth of the book’s subject, it contains occasional generalizations, and is not always able to fully address the issues that it raises.

Katrina Srigley’s impressive accumulation of subject interviews enriches her portrait of the era. Following in the footsteps of oral history chronicles of the period such as Broadfoot’s *Ten Lost Years*, Srigley argues that personal accounts are instrumental in “allow[ing] scholars [...] to change the focus of history.” The interviews acknowledge the contribution of women’s marginalized voices, preserving memories which would otherwise be lost. The interviews also provide a unique opportunity of understanding the effect that working during the Depression had on the lives of young single women.

Despite its value, Srigley does admit that oral history can be problematic. Memory is subjective, changing over time. The interview process is similarly subjective. Srigley cautions that the circumstances of the interview and the perceived relationship between her and the interviewees coloured the information she attained through this process. Interviewees, for example, avoided discussion of sexuality as inappropriate, perhaps inhibited by Srigley’s youthful age. Srigley is careful to supplement the interviews with other sources of research in order to present a more complete picture of the time period. She delicately navigates the varied sources, conscientiously noting any divergences between them.

*Breadwinning Daughters* is a won-