this sharply satirical and humorous novel, the near future of New York City is depicted as a place where citizens have ostensibly been freed from pressing everyday material concerns, where rents are very low, food is available to all and the city's homeless population have become housed. This is a landscape of a new citizenship where the evacuation of risk from democracy is nearly complete as it secures populations for a managed life where human needs and desires become mere effluents of the media empire, known as the Media Hub, which is the only corporation that everyone, it seems, works for in some capacity.

The novel highlights an unnamed female narrator and her lover Nadine as they wrestle with the vicissitudes of love and companionship amidst a soul-sucking social order that is as deceptive as it is alluring. Schulman has managed to weave her characters' personal lives into a story about the social and economic order that asks implicit questions about the nature of social justice activism and interpersonal relations. Schulman, true to form, mines her vast experiences as a social activist, weaving together in an uncertain tapestry an emotional recognition of love, sex and sociality, the uncertain rhythmic pacing of the lovers' personal lives coalesced into indistinguishable form with the public life of work and the new social and economic order. Her characters are swept along with a visceral sense of uncertainty, the shimmer of unreality where what appears as new institutional arrangements in social and political life is, at one and the same time, creating desires and meeting needs ahead of the characters' anticipation of them; the super corporation organizes lives, language, and desires commensurate with the bottom line—the cultural, social economic and political totality that the Marketing super hegemony that the Media Hub has become. The characters face a familiar horror of the banal, highlighting the way individuals become inducted into inhuman circumstances and modes of living that are deeply alienating, as the murder, taking place late in the book, seems to underscore.

The novel soars when it details the intricate emotional, verbal and gestural qualities of the uncertainties and sweetness of love and lusts, of being together and forging a life in the midst of an unforgiving context of work and survival. However, *The Mere Future* is less than satisfying when it tries, perhaps too hard, to be "futuristic" by naming new objects and practices without an accompanying context or narrative development, reminiscent of a geek-gadgetry obsession that one is more likely to find in sci-fi undertaken by a less than expert hand. Here, it seems to come as a surprise, yet it is not too flagrant as to detract from a complex narrative arc and the fullness of character that Schulman employs to drive the narrative.

This is a novel of biting satire and sharp humour which presents us with the dreadfully recognizable scenario of how lives are lived under the reign of a corporate behemoth that has reached deep into the consciousness and desires of its characters' lives, revealing an highly ambivalent state of "corporate citizens" in this mere future of New York City.

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A LARGE HARMONIUM

Sue Sorensen
Coteau Books, 2011

REVIEWED BY OANA SECRIERU

Sorensen's first novel is a year in the life of the protagonist, Dr. Janet Erlickson or Janey, as she's known to close friends. Janey is a university English professor at an unnamed university in Winnipeg, mother to three-year old Little Max, and wife to Hector Des Roches, a music professor at the same university. Sorensen's funny and witty style follows Janey as she juggles career, motherhood, self-doubt and depression.

The novel begins in April, in the last week of classes, when Janey's depression typically hits as she contemplates the summer ahead struggling to pin down an ever-elusive research project. Janey muses over writing about female characters in Robertson Davies, bad mothers in children's literature, writing a murder novel in which her mother-in-law is the victim, or starting an online academic journal, none of which gets too far off the ground since Janey gets easily side-tracked.

Deeply in love with her sexy husband, Hector, Janey needlessly worries that he's in love with his research assistant, Chantal. Janey's insecurities also seep through her role as the mother of a rambunctious toddler. Despite Janey having it all, something is weighing her down.

> I examine my life and wonder what is the matter. All I can see is what ought to be health and happiness. Lovely boy, handsome and caring husband, blah blah blah.

Unexpectedly, Janey turns to Jake, the minister at her church,

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 Secrieru 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 experience. 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 im-migrants 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