heroes than is often acknowledged. Moreover, by remaining sceptical that Cartier’s exploits were in fact heroic, French-Canadian historians have demonstrated a certain respect for historical accuracy in their writing. In this important book, Gordon demonstrates quite eloquently that French Canadians have constantly re-imagined the past in ways designed to fulfil their evolving desires. Furthermore, French Canadians have not hesitated to exclude from their narratives seemingly important figures if they are in some ways problematic, even if these figures, like Jacques Cartier, might have served to advance a heroic version of the past.

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As Roy Loewen and Gerry Friesen make perfectly clear, Canadian multiculturalism has a history that long predates the rather famous federal policy of 1971. More to the point, this history is not rooted solely in Canada’s largest and seemingly most ethnically diverse cities — the great immigrant reception centres of the post-1970 era, Montreal, Toronto, and Vancouver. In some ways, then, Immigrants in Prairie Cities serves as a corrective to the MTV-centric focus of most studies of Canadian multiculturalism and argues that a “distinct variation on the Canadian model of cultural diversity” developed in the urban centres of the western interior over the course of the twentieth century (p. 3). Indeed, the authors maintain that “the western prairie and its leading cities have been a forcing ground for Canada’s discussions of multiculturalism for most of the twentieth century” (p. 7). But readers should not be misled by the tone of these comments, for this study is far more than just another western plea for inclusion in the larger narrative of Canadian history.

Rather modestly the authors claim that their work is largely synthetic. It is true that they have synthesized a vast amount of unpublished thesis and dissertation material as well as an expanding secondary literature related to the history and reception of immigrant groups in Winnipeg, Edmonton, Calgary, and — to a much lesser extent — Saskatoon and Regina. But they have also added some fascinating new research to the mix, most notably the oral histories conducted by Gerry Friesen and the reports and other work produced by scholars associated with the Winnipeg Immigration History Research Group. Moreover, Immigrants in Prairie Cities provides a state-of-the-art approach to the writing of both immigration and social history.

Simply put, there are no static categories of analysis in this book. Ethnicity/race, class, gender, ideology, generation, family, community, and faith are all portrayed as transmutable and interactive. In this regard, the influence of Clifford
Geertz, Edward Said, Fredrik Barth, Kathleen Neils Conzen, and perhaps especially Homi Bhabha can be felt at every turn in what is a fairly sophisticated analysis of the emergence of a profoundly “hybridized” western Canadian urban society. Further, this is only the tip of the theoretical iceberg, for just below the surface lies a considerable intellectual debt to Benedict Anderson, Franca Iacovetta, David Harvey, and Eric Hobsbawm, among others — an impressive cast of characters for a book that claims “it is really not about theory” (p. 5). Perhaps a better way to put it would be this: readers of the eight case studies that constitute the book’s substantive chapters are not inundated with the jargon-laden terminology all too often associated with works that are theoretically oriented. Rather, they get the best these theoretical perspectives have to offer, while reading clear, concise prose that carries forth the core narrative of “people meeting people.” The authors are not, of course, Pollyannas. They concede that these meetings were sometimes characterized by cultural and ethnic fragmentation and conflict, but at the end of the day what struck Loewen and Friesen the most was the “interconnectedness that has emerged in the cities of Canada’s western interior” (pp. 5–6).

The book is broken down into three parts, reflecting three loosely defined time periods (1900 to the 1930s, 1940 to the 1960s, and 1970 to the 1990s), and the two authors have contributed distinct chapters rather than co-authoring each one. Friesen was responsible for the three chapters on Winnipeg, while Loewen authored the five more broadly focused chapters on the “other” prairie cities — although he never ignores Winnipeg completely. This division of labour could have made the book feel disjointed, but Loewen and Friesen largely avoid this pitfall by crafting chapter introductions highlighting the linkages between each essay and by ensuring that every chapter carries out the central objectives spelled out in the introduction. Most notably the authors continually examine and re-examine two key phenomena: the development and evolution of ethnic webs in these prairie cities and the “imagined boundary zone” — Bhabha’s “third space” — where immigrant groups came into contact with the host society. In the first instance, the focus is upon the ethnic family and the social clubs, churches, and other community institutions through which webs of significance were created and adapted to the new place(s) of residence by the multitudinous ethnic groups who came to western Canada early in the century. However, far from being simple places of refuge from the “outside world” — the one dominated by Anglo-Canadians — where immigrants could avoid being integrated into the dominant culture by staying within comfortable ethnic boundaries, Loewen sees these ethnic kinship groups and cultural institutions not as “borders” but as constituting “the demarcation of a staging ground for integration” (p. 32). This, of course, leads to a consideration of the boundary zones — the initial places of contact (and integration) between immigrant groups and the host society. The imagined boundary zones are explored in the greatest detail in Winnipeg, the largest and most important centre of the prairie west for a very long time, at least in the first two parts of the book. Schools and political ideology — especially the politics of class — are given pride of place in
Friesen’s analysis of the early phases of cross-cultural contact in Winnipeg: the sort of contact that led to both conflict and “mutual accommodation” between 1900 and the outbreak of World War II. In his second essay, “Accommodation in Winnipeg,” these zones are widened considerably as the host society itself — having learned much from the problems of the earlier era, and from the experiences of World War II — became far more receptive to the immigrant groups coming into Winnipeg, both those coming directly from Europe and those who were taking part in the great internal migration from rural areas to city.

What will strike many readers as the most unique feature of this book, especially given that it was written by historians, is that its temporal focus is so recent. For example, while part 2, “Mid-Century: Urban Cross-Currents and Adaptation, 1940s–1960s,” contains two chapters that supposedly cover the era of World War II to the late 1960s, only Friesen’s chapter really goes into the war era in any detail. As a result, most of the material in this section deals with the 1950s and 1960s. Meanwhile, part 3, “Late Century: Globalization and the Prairie Newcomer, 1970s to 1990s,” actually contains four of the book’s eight chapters. The vast majority of this book focuses upon the second half of the twentieth century.

This does present a few problems. The immediate impact of the Depression and World War II on both the ethnic webs and the boundary zones deserves far more coverage than is provided, particularly in the non-Winnipeg chapters. Still this “recent history” approach allows the authors, Loewen in particular, to examine how changes in government policy, the resulting changes in the geographic place of origins and the racial/ethnic/religious/ideological composition of the immigrant groups, and the changes in the technologies that allowed for the newest forms of globalization (in economic and demographic terms) all interacted with changes in the host society to produce one of the most interesting segments in this story of “people meeting people.”

Chapters dealing with what might best be termed as “the global south meets Alberta,” “transnationalism and the post-modern Canadian prairies,” “gender and family in two — or more — worlds,” and “racism and its discontents” shimmer with vitality. Enlivened by the work of sociologists, political scientists, social workers, and community activists, as well as by the inclusion of oral history interviews, literary sources, local government and NGO reports, and the work of journalists, these four chapters tell the reader much about the complicated life experiences of the men, women, and children who came to Canada’s prairie cities over the course of the last three decades of the twentieth century. They also tell us much about the very different ways in which various groups responded to their new environments and both accommodated themselves to these and forced the host society to make some serious accommodations and changes of its own. While both authors are remarkably upbeat (if understandably tentative) in their conclusions about the hybridized society that has taken root in these cities, they do not shy away from discussing the all too real issues of racism facing visible minorities, of intergenerational conflict within certain groups, of the difficulties surrounding rapidly altering understandings of gender roles and family/kinship group structures — as well as several other problems. Thus, what Loewen and
Friesen have provided is a balanced and even-handed understanding of a still-evolving multicultural society in Canada’s western interior.

Still, no work is perfect, and experts on particular ethnic groups will find many small points with which to quibble. Far more readers will be disappointed that so little coverage is accorded to one of the largest and most visible groups of “internal immigrants” to the cities of the Canadian prairies — the people of the First Nations. True, it can be argued that these people can hardly be considered as immigrants in their own country, but, given that both authors bring up the numerical importance of Aboriginal people moving to the cities from northern reserves, one would expect far more discussion of their place in western Canada’s multicultural urban milieu. However, while this is a serious omission, it does not detract from what is, on balance, a truly fine piece of work that will become required reading for all serious students, not just of Western Canadian, but of Canadian social history.

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In *Catholic Women of Congo-Brazzaville: Mothers and Sisters in Troubled Times*, Phyllis M. Martin provides an alternative historical perspective of Congolese women’s social and spiritual experience from the late nineteenth century to the 1990s. The author places her primary focus on the Catholic women from the region of lower Congo that lies between Brazzaville and the Atlantic Ocean. In this work, Martin seeks to interweave “women’s experience as mothers and sisters, their movement into the church” into the writing of national histories, which are usually focused on male political and military leaders (p. 17).

The author begins her book with the arrival of French missionaries in the 1880s. The first obstacle the Holy Ghost Fathers and the Sisters of Saint Joseph of Cluny encountered was an inability to recruit young women to missions and convents. The author explains Congolese families’ reluctance to send girls for Christian training in terms of the confrontation between local social practices and Christianity. Natural disaster and colonial conquest significantly reduced the population in Congo in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Meanwhile, male labours were recruited or forced to work for European enterprises. In these circumstances, women and girls represented valuable human resources, over whom elder male members desired to maintain control.

More importantly, the social structure introduced in the new Christian missions subverted the traditional social order in equatorial Africa. The tradition through which mothers and elder women passed on “specialized knowledge relating to essential customs, rituals and prohibitions” regulating reproduction and motherhood to their daughters was known as *Kumbi*. In the Congolese world view, the