The contributors came to the conclusion that, due to a paucity of scholarly literature on the family outside Japan, it is difficult to map Asian family systems and analyze their processes and evolution. In addition studies are complex because of the diversity of regional, demographic, family, and cultural priorities, conditions, and practices. On the contrary, in Japan where family studies are advanced, research has clearly determined the diversity of family systems. Some regions have favoured mostly large-sized stem families as in northern Japan or large-sized extended families as in southwestern Japan while others have primarily been composed of small-sized nuclear families as in central Japan. Hence, historians have identified three different Japanese household forms with practices of early or late marriage, families encouraging temporary domestic service for non-heirs, and even for heirs in some cases. Stem-family and single inheritance practices in Japan have aimed at preventing property partition with the goal to secure the full transmission of the family assets (rural and urban) to one child from one generation to the next. The single child was generally the first-born son, but daughters were not excluded. Heiresses thus brought sons in the house, later to become “adopted sons.” In the other Asian countries, family studies as a recent field of research needs additional analysis to contribute to the mapping of family systems in Asia and globally.

This comprehensive contribution proposes a valuable synthesis on the current debates around the stem family. Yet further analysis needs to be undertaken to better justify regional diversity over time, to map European and Asian family forms and practices, and to propose a global, comparative approach in the study of the family systems and processes.

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Jay Gitlin’s The Bourgeois Frontier is a remarkable book that combines commercial history and genealogy to create an incredibly detailed yet easily digestible narrative that seeks to insert the story of the French — or more specifically French merchants — into the American grand narrative. Through an exploration of the French experience in the early American Midwest, Gitlin effectively shows that French merchants were no bit players in the expansion of the American empire, but rather helped “broker the transition to an American regime of settlement (p. 187).” These French merchants engaged in diverse activities as Indian agents, founders of towns, fur traders, land speculators, financiers and early industrialists. Gitlin’s ability to connect the dots between French towns and French merchant families leaves us with a web of commercial and kinship connections in what he identifies as the Creole Corridor from Detroit to New Orleans. Moreover, he impressively places these merchants and their families in a broader context and

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shows how they extended out along the Upper Missouri and southwest along the Santa Fe Trail to New Mexico, while still maintaining links to markets and capital in places like New York and London.

Gitlin begins by tackling the legacies of Francis Parkman and Frederick Jackson Turner, who he argues made the French vanish from history. First the French were partially erased through defeat at the hands of the British during the Seven Years’ War, and then they were more definitively expunged from memory as a result of being overrun by American settlement and the westward expansion of the frontier. The legacies of Parkman and Turner, with notions of backward French peasants and Anglo-American exceptionalism, have been remarkably durable, and Gitlin’s greatest achievement may be to finally put these myths and stereotypes to rest. Merchant after merchant, from Chouteau, Cerré, and Gratiot, to Campau, Robidoux, Vallé, Menard, and Pratte, Gitlin provides a nuanced account of how French merchants adapted to life under American rule and found ways not only to survive, but to prosper and wield enormous power and influence until the 1830s.

Gitlin argues that the Creole Corridor was a new west beyond the frontier that emerged out of the middle ground of the French and Aboriginal Pays d’en Haut. Based on trade relations and understandings of Native sovereignty, this new west was quite different from the trans-Appalachian west defined by violence and outright confrontation. Gitlin persuasively demonstrates how French merchants acted as intermediaries between indigenous peoples and American Federal officials, negotiating the relocation and removal of native peoples. According to Gitlin, French merchants were able to do this precisely because of their historical relationship with many of the Indian nations in the heart of North America. To Gitlin’s credit, he clearly explains that French merchants and their families profited from the process of American land acquisition, and that indigenous peoples did not fare well and often had little choice but to accept French mediation. The idea that French merchants were able to use their experience as “middle grounders” to adjust and succeed under American rule is innovative and should generate debate. After all, not all merchant families were able to parlay their middle ground experience under the French, British, and Spanish regimes into success under American rule. What of the numerous French and mixed-descent (métis) families that were not part of this successful merchant group? Gitlin hints at this bigger picture with material on the founding of towns, schools, and associations, as well as petitions to colonial administrators and state and federal officials. Yet for the most part, the larger French story is left untold. Still, what Gitlin has done is quite remarkable given the limits of the surviving records, which consist mostly of merchant family correspondence, and business and legal documents.

Gitlin notes that he saw this work primarily as an urban history, and towns such as St. Louis, Detroit, and New Orleans tend to dominate the book. However, a side effect of focusing on towns is that the question of mobility is never really addressed, leaving one to wonder if perhaps the spaces between the dots on the map were not, in fact, just as important as the dots themselves. How did the
experience of traveling between these places play into the bourgeois frontier? The story of mobility, highlighted by merchants and voyageurs traveling back and forth between towns, trading posts and forts would appear to be a crucial part of the bourgeois frontier. Moreover, how did crossing colonial and national boundaries affect the French experience? Gitlin does an excellent job of incorporating the story of French merchants into the American national grand narrative, but trans-colonial or early transnational links are left somewhat underdeveloped. For example, many these merchants regularly crossed shifting colonial and national boundaries, both for their own affairs and to assist others in settling long-distance family businesses. This was especially true for merchants like Gabriel Cerre´, and later Auguste Chouteau, who had strong family and business ties to both Montreal and St. Louis. Even as the Chouteau clan shifted their fur trading interests from Montreal to New York, ties to the former were maintained as the American Fur Company hired approximately one thousand French-Canadian voyageurs out of Montreal between 1818 and 1840, destined for St. Louis and the Missouri fur trade. Though Gitlin provides an impressively broad context, looking at New Mexico and mentioning places like Montreal, New York, and London, the effects of mobility and trans-colonial / transnational networks are ultimately left for future scholars to tackle.

These points aside, *The Bourgeois Frontier* is a welcome addition to both French colonial and early American history and should be mandatory reading for both. It questions the geographical and chronological boundaries of French colonial history in North America and challenges the American national grand narrative, and it succeeds on both fronts. Gitlin has exposed the blurred lines between family and commerce that came to define a very complex bourgeois frontier. He has given us a book that will not easily be dissected, will generate debate, and should help inspire scholarship in this area for some time to come.

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The appearance of a biography of J.B. Harkin, the “father of Canada’s National Parks,” was timely, as it presaged by a few months the 2011 centenary of the creation of Parks Canada. Perhaps completed for the occasion, the massive tome of over 500 pages took five laborious years to piece together. Author E.J. (Ted) Hart combed the departmental records of the Dominion Parks Service and related collections to craft a carefully-weighed and detailed account Harkin’s career. What emerges, however, is less a study of Harkin, the man, than of the administration of his organization from its formation in 1911 until his retirement in 1935.

Hart had several objectives in mind in undertaking the project: to resurrect and rehabilitate the reputation of Harkin and his contributions to conservation in...