American expansionist strategy. Gender relations and family metaphors played a central role in promoting the myth of US exceptionalism, as the themes of paternalism and maternalism facilitated the enactment of the United States’ global power. Non-state actors, regardless of gender, race, religion, class, or age, also served as significant agents of US diplomacy and, through inter-cultural relations, played a decisive role in massaging the United States’ image abroad. The United States’ interactions with foreign Others, whether in Okinawa, West Germany, or elsewhere, also reveal how Americans imagined themselves and subsequently acted as “natural” leaders of the “free world.”

After reading this book, one can conclude that many parallels can be drawn between American foreign relations and family dynamics. As a result, we may come to understand better how and why many Americans, whether consciously or not, continue to view themselves as the “fathers,” “mothers,” “big brothers,” and “big sisters” of an invented global family.

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In the 1760s, most of Prince Edward Island’s 1.4 million acres was granted in 20,000-acre lots to about 100 proprietors. None of those proprietors was female. Yet, of the remaining 57 estates, comprising roughly 300,000 acres, expropriated under the 1875 Land Purchase Act, women owned at least 24. In this volume, Rusty Bittermann and Margaret McCallum examine four “lady landlards,” representing two generations of women who inherited estates on Prince Edward Island between 1785 and 1866. Sisters Anne and Jane Saunders inherited their estates from their father and great-uncle, who were among the original proprietors. Anne predeceased her husband, Robert Dundas, Lord Melville, and her estate eventually reverted to her eldest male heir. Jane, having survived her husband, John Fane, Lord Westmorland, regained control of one of her Prince Edward Island lots and bequeathed it to her daughter, Georgiana Fane. Fane gained control of the second lot upon the death of her younger brother. Charlotte Sullivan inherited her four lots from her father, a third-generation Island landlord. All four women were absentee landlords, although three of the four visited Prince Edward Island for extended periods.

Precisely how did these four women fit into the broader context? The Saunders sisters, representing the first generation of “lady landlords,” were minors when their father died. They came into their inheritance upon marriage, at the turn of the nineteenth century, a time when calls for escheat were becoming common in response to Island proprietors’ failure both to pay arrears in quit rents and to meet the settlement terms of their grants. As married women,
their roles in estate management depended very much on the nature of the marital relationship. Lord and Lady Melville managed their properties in common, while Lord Westmorland took control of the management of the marital property. Like other absentee landlords, the Melvilles and Westmorlands hired often unreliable land agents to manage their Island properties. In 1839–1840, Lady Westmorland, long separated from her husband, spent a year’s sojourn on the Island, coinciding with the period when Escheators held a majority in the House of Assembly. Based on her observations, she formulated an independent analysis of the issues underlying the ongoing problems in landlord-tenant relations and submitted a report to the Colonial Office.

The second generation of “lady landlords,” Georgiana Fane and Charlotte Sullivan, were single women who acquired their estates during a period when “land policy would come to be determined by the men who controlled the Island legislature rather than the men of the Colonial Office in London” (p. 140). The imperial government granted the Island responsible government in 1851, and, in 1854, the Island government began to buy land from proprietors. None of those selling were women. Why was it that women landlords did not sell? The authors suggest that women landlords, excluded from the halls of political power, may not have fully understood the changing climate of opinion. Yet both Georgiana Fane, who inherited her mother’s property in 1857, and Charlotte Sullivan, who came into her inheritance in 1866, travelled to Prince Edward Island and met their tenants. Moreover, they fully understood that, as landlords, their best hope was to appeal to the imperial government (p. 13). This is precisely what both women did. Both were prominent among the landlords who defended themselves against tenant challenges during the period prior to the 1875 Land Purchase Act. Both repeatedly rejected offers of purchase and continued to fight even after the passage of the legislation compelling landlords to sell. After Georgiana Fane’s death in 1875, Sullivan became the major British player in the landlord opposition to the Act. When the Island government appealed a ruling of the Island courts invalidating the sale orders made under the legislation to the Supreme Court of Canada, “Charlotte Sullivan alone defended landlord interests there — and lost.… The Supreme Court decision … marked the closure of some opportunities for women to exercise political and economic power” (p. 15).

Much more than the story of four remarkable women, this book is an important contribution both to Island history and to the growing body of literature on women and property in British North America. It also provides insight into the very personal “imperial dreams” of members of Britain’s landed aristocracy during a period when their influence was waning. As a team, the authors bring an impressive depth and breadth of knowledge to the subject, combining Bittermann’s expertise on the land question in PEI and McCallum’s expertise on property and inheritance laws to provide a lucid explanation of the intricacies of both. In situating their case studies within a broader comparative context, Bittermann and McCallum argue, “A variety of forces, including women’s limited access to informal sources of information about investment possibilities...
and government policy and their exclusion from formal roles in business and government, created gender-based differences in their economic and social opportunities and in the decisions that women and men made” (p. 142). Yet they further conclude, “Given the quite different circumstances of single and married women and quite different opportunities for resident and non-resident proprietors, it is not possible to assess whether female proprietors managed their estates differently from male proprietors” (p. 147). While the authors make the case for a certain level of representativeness by selecting four women whose experiences span almost the entire era of proprietorship in Prince Edward Island, the uniqueness of each story leaves the reader wondering about the existence and nature of “patterns” of female proprietorship. Of the four subjects, who was most typical: were “lady landlords” more likely to be married, widowed, or single? How many actively managed their own estates? How many were absentee landlords and how many resided on the Island? How many wrote letters to either the Island or the imperial government?

As a collective biography of four “lady landlords,” this is a fascinating book. It provides invaluable insight into the possibilities estate ownership afforded women, and it is suggestive of the ways in which women’s approach to landlordism may have differed from that of their male counterparts. But we are not told precisely how or why these particular four women were chosen. Is it significant that, of the 57 estates expropriated under the 1875 Land Purchase Act, theirs were among just eight that exceeded 10,000 acres? Despite such questions, the stories of these four women are intrinsically interesting and uniformly intriguing. Lady Landlords of Prince Edward Island is a meticulously researched and engagingly written book. Through a case study approach, this volume makes a signal contribution to the growing body of historical literature on women property-holders. It offers insight into the gendered dimensions of property-holding during an age when property conferred status as well as independence, on women as well as on men.

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In his 1993 presidential address to the Canadian Historical Association, Phillip Buckner criticized the separation between Canada and British Empire in recent history-writing. As Buckner explained, the separation had grown since the 1960s when Canadianists took a decidedly nation-based approach to their research, while historians of Empire became decidedly uninterested in the “White Dominions” of the Empire. Canada and the British Empire is Buckner’s latest attempt to reintroduce the British Empire to Canadian history, thereby mending this historiographical divergence. Focusing on the role of Empire in Canada, and especially attitudes in Canada toward “Britishness,” the important