

and elsewhere, one can hear an echo of the last public lecture Cannadine gave before departing for America, in which he assailed Britain, its governing establishment, and its treatment of history and historians. Many of these essays lead to implicitly politicized and prescriptive conclusions—never very acceptable, nor considered quite correct taste, in traditional British academe. This will hardly trouble a man who can cheerfully write, about historian Peter Gay's *The Education of the Senses*

(1984), that "Clio and the clitoris have never been so close." It would be a mistake simply to relish these essays as so many canapés before the publication next November of Cannadine's magnum opus, *The Decline and Fall of the British Aristocracy*; they also represent a uniquely subversive style of high entertainment.

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NEW TITLES

Contemporary Affairs

SOVIET WOMEN: *Walking the Tightrope.* By Francine du Plessix Gray. Doubleday. 213 pp. \$19.95

Francine du Plessix Gray, an American novelist of partly Russian descent, investigates a side of Soviet reality little known to most Western readers—the world of the "second sex." Much of what she reports will come as revelation. How many Americans know, for example, that only five percent of Soviet women have access to birth-control pills or IUDs, or that the main form of birth control in the Soviet Union is abortion, or that the national average is 14 abortions per woman? In terms of sex education, one of Leningrad's few sexologists observed, "the Soviet Union is among the most backward countries in the world, somewhere on the level of Bhutan [or] Afghanistan."

The quotidian complaints of Soviet women will come as less of a surprise to their Western sisters. Working hard all day, queuing in long lines at the stores, and coming home to husbands who won't share in the housekeeping or child-rearing constitute the fate of many Soviet women. But if their plight sounds familiar, their response to it is not. The Soviets du Plessix Gray interviewed scorned Western feminism, often dismissing it as unnatural.

Reluctant to question traditional gender

roles, Soviet women instead tend to ignore their indolent men and forge bonds with other females: friends, mothers, and grandmothers. The old Russian matriarchy survives in a society where strong, self-sacrificing, self-sufficient women dominate passive, emasculated husbands. None of du Plessix Gray's subjects felt the need to compete with men. Indeed, the author began to wonder which sex was more in need of support: "After dozens of evenings spent with distraught, henpecked men and with a dismaying abundance of superwomen, I reached the conclusion the Soviet Union might be . . . in need of a men's movement."

All the same, Soviet superwomen are fed up with being superwomen on the job. "American women are still struggling for the freedom *to*," du Plessix Gray notes, "whereas Soviet women are struggling for the freedom *from*." The Revolution gave women the right (actually the responsibility) to work outside of the house and to receive equal wages. But practice has lagged behind theory: For the majority, women's "liberation" has become an overworked, underpaid nightmare. Nearly half of Soviet women



A Soviet poster: the working woman as hero.

work at unskilled, often backbreaking jobs; most warehouse workers and highway construction crews, for example, are female. "We are like [American] blacks!" complained one woman. The social services, health care, and child-support that enabled an earlier generation to bear the double burden of work and family deteriorated during the Brezhnev era. The heroism and outright despair of today's Soviet women are expressed in the aphorism, "Women do everything, and men do the rest." The strongest desire of most women du Plessix Gray interviewed was to raise their children themselves and not to work outside of the home.

Soviet Women may be slanted—almost no peasant women or women living outside major cities are interviewed—but overall it has the ring of recognizable truth. Soviet women, trapped between traditional values and contemporary expectations, are living simultaneously in the 19th and 20th centuries. Du Plessix Gray's account of a society fragmented not only among nationalities but even between different eras hints at the difficulties facing reformers in the age of Gorbachev.

WARPATHS: *The Politics of Partition.* By Robert Schaeffer. Hill and Wang. 306 pp. \$22.95

In 1921, the war-weary British hoped to bring an end to the Irish problem by dividing the island between Catholics and Protestants. Instead of solving the conflict, partition brought 70 more years of bloodshed, with no end in sight. It was hardly an auspicious precedent for a practice that would soon be applied to conflict-ridden nations throughout the world.

Schaeffer, a journalist who specializes in security issues, surveys the results of partitioning in, among other countries, Palestine, India, Germany, Korea, and Vietnam. He comes up with a staggering body-count: Since World War II, "wars in the divided states have claimed nearly 13 million lives." Partition has also "uprooted millions from their homeland . . . [and] led to internecine war within and between divided states and [drawn] superpower states into intractable regional wars."

"Partition is the expedient of tired states-

men," Conor Cruise O'Brien once observed. Schaeffer musters little sympathy for the cause of their fatigue—the fact that they had tried other solutions and repeatedly failed. What then does Schaeffer suggest? That we heed the examples of Abraham Lincoln and Martin Luther King, Jr. Lincoln saved the United States from partition by rejecting the South's right to secede; later, King rejected the goal of Black Power separatists by invoking Lincoln's logic: that true democracy lies not in partition but in guaranteeing a minority's rights. Schaeffer passes lightly over the fact that, between Lincoln's decision and King's activism, a non-partitioned United States underwent a bloody civil war and then a century during which minority rights were mostly denied.

Indeed, Schaeffer skirts over any facts that support the case for partition. Europe with a partitioned Germany enjoyed its longest period of prosperity and peace in modern times. And in some areas like Korea, partition enabled the superpowers to limit their disagreement and avoid another world war.

When Schaeffer quotes Lincoln on secession, however, he hints at a problem even more basic than partition: self-determination. If a minority secedes, Lincoln warned, it forges a dangerous precedent, "for a minority of their own will secede from them." It sounds as if Lincoln were describing the Soviet Union today, where Abkhazians are threatening to secede from Georgia if Georgians secede.

Warpaths is thus timely in its underscoring of a paradox of contemporary politics. Many problems today—of nuclear weapons, of economies, of ecology, of terrorism—can no longer



A South Korean guards the 151-mile demilitarized zone dividing North and South Korea.