views of each republic’s diplomatic history plus current history, the more important diplomatic steps each republic took towards foreign policy independence from 1989-91. Such information gives the book value as a reference work, a quick guide to each republic’s diplomatic history.

The book’s greatest strength is the main point it makes about the diplomatic aspects of perestroika. The republican diplomatic revolt was an integral part of the general challenge to the Union state authority and viability. Gorbachev first encouraged the republics to become more active diplomatically, especially in international economic relations. However, they soon began taking more sovereignty than he wanted them to have, and the Union state which he headed began to lose control. He tried to reel them in but failed primarily because Russia joined the attack on his Union state’s powers and "history" was against him, the leader of the last great multinational empire. Yeltsin appointed Russian foreign ministers and began to challenge Gorbachev and the Union’s monopoly in foreign affairs. Andrei Kozyrev became Russia’s foreign minister in October 1990 and contested Soviet foreign minister Edvard Shevardnadze’s predominance a year before the dissolution of the Soviet Union.

The book’s greatest weakness is structural. There is too little on each country. The book carries a 1995 copyright, but its treatment in the main ends with the collapse of the Soviet state in December 1991, though there are some references to events that took place in the first quarter of 1992. We really need more material, a longer time period to see the new patterns developing. Brevity invariably leaves gaps, important holes such as the role of oil and gas in the diplomacy of Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, and Turkmenistan. The best remedy would be a new, larger edition. Nevertheless, Nichol has recorded the history of an important transition period, 1989-91, when fifteen proto-states began to reach for independence. Therefore, it would be prudent to add this book to research collections where it will have enduring value as a reference work.

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Russia* Women* Culture. Edited by Helena Goscilo and Beth Holmgren. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1996. xiv, 386 pp. $45.00 (cloth); $24.95 (paper).

Goscilo and Holmgren explicitly construct their anthology to fill a number of scholarly gaps: the absences created by an exclusive focus on canonical texts and culturally sanctioned female experiences within the field of Russian studies; the lack of women’s studies approaches in this area more generally; and the absence of Russian subjects within mainstream women’s studies. Their goal of establishing "alternative sight lines" on these areas has resulted in a fascinating, wide-ranging and uniformly strong collection of fourteen essays. The topics covered include women’s fashion, ritual fabrics, dance, high and popular literature, domestic albums and salon culture, among others. Taken together the essays testify to the myriad ways in which Russian women used "their social experiences and individual ingenuity [to] figure as crucial agents and sites of cultural mediation" in a number of cultural locations and in historical moments from pre-history to post-Communism.
As one framework for the collection, Goscilo and Holmgren evoke the metaphor of a rambling multi-roomed house in which all spaces are equally vital. This is an especially apt figure since so many of the essays take a spatial turn to focus on liminal terrains in between presumably fixed socio-cultural and aesthetic oppositions such as public and private spheres or high and low cultures. In the process these oppositions are destabilized, and previous conceptions about the social organization of gendered spaces are refigured. For example in her engaging and lively essay "The Second Fantasy Mother, or All Baths are Women's Baths," Nancy Condee explores the ways in which sex-segregated urban public baths function as a maternal space, permitting an escape from daily interactions and a symbolic clarification—even reordering—of male female relations: men flee the "false world" of gender relations to engage in transgressive behaviors in the presence of an idealized nurturing "mother"; women take pleasure in nurturing themselves in a form of "secular worship" whereby they literally don foodstuffs (coffee, eggs, salt and so on) to perform an act of consecration on themselves, becoming in the process "the holy body the sacred host . . . of the ceremony." Nadya Peterson's essay later in the volume ("Dirty Women: Cultural Connotations of Cleanliness in Soviet Russia") explores the significance of bathing in a vastly different social space: women's political prison camps in the Soviet era. Drawing on Mary Douglas's notions about the social meanings of cleanliness and filth, Peterson's insightful piece analyzes how communal cleansing rituals were among the ways that incarcerated women revalued dominant standards of purity (both physical and political) and formed familial prison groups that proved essential for their spiritual and physical survival in dehumanizing conditions.

Other of the essays focus on spaces always culturally connoted as feminine and ignored or trivialized as such—the kitchen or the beauty salon, for instance. In their essay on this latter topic, Nadezhda Azhgikhina and Helena Goscilo analyze some of the ways in which Soviet ideology "invaded people's private lives and dictated even the correct form of female beauty." Within the demands of this rigid ideological framework, the hair salon provided a refuge, an alternative social life for women; the possibility of altering their physical selves offered them forms of psychological self-defense and compensation and a means of self-expression, "a demonstration of their possible independence from the bleak deprivations of everyday life." The comparative aspects of this essay are a valuable reminder to Western feminists that images, discourses, and attitudes always must be situated within the particularities of their socio-historical context if we are to interpret them accurately. As Azhgikhina and Goscilo point out, whereas short hair on women or the "natural look" challenged mainstream assumptions about gender differences in the American 1960s, this same look was rejected in Russia because of its association with orthodox Soviet values. Similarly, Naami Wolf's The Beauty Myth proved unpopular in translation because of its perceived feminist polemic against women's aspirations to beauty, a fact mystifying to Western feminists until Russian cultural history is taken into account.

In their essays on salon hostesses in the early nineteenth and twentieth centuries respectively, Lina Bernstein and Beth Holmgren demonstrate the cultural importance of the (semi) private space of the salon and the crucial role played by salon hostesses in constructing public cultural change. Early nineteenth-century salons served as a