

... became a recourse for artists whose aims to do innovative work were hampered by the continuing hegemony of Socialist Realism in art forms aimed at adults” (p. 153).

Kelly has used an impressive number of sources, mainly located in archives in Moscow, St. Petersburg, and Sverdlovsk: popular and professional journals, children’s artwork and literature, diaries and memoirs, encyclopaedia articles, syllabi and curricula, films and novels, the observations of Western visitors, caregivers, parents, and teachers, as well as an impressive number of interviews (a crucial source of information for the post-war period, in particular). Furthermore, her familiarity with the latest scholarship on theories of child-raising and pedagogy enables her to place Russian/Soviet history in an international context. Finally, no fewer than 114 illustrations of nurseries, orphanages, Pioneer camps, posters, children at play, and family portraits personalize this fascinating story of continuities and discontinuities in representations of childhood over the years.

With *Children’s World*, a massive, encyclopaedic book that admirably blends exceptional details and interpretive insights, Catriona Kelly (University of Oxford) adds to her reputation as an eminent scholar of Russian and Soviet history. This is social and cultural history at its best!

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McKAY, Iran — *Reasoning Otherwise: Leftists and the People’s Enlightenment in Canada, 1890–1920*. Toronto: Between the Lines, 2008. Pp. 656.

Ian McKay’s comprehensive history of “first formation” socialism has much to offer North American historians interested not only in the history of the Left, but also in the intellectual currents that animated political and social debate in Canada in the period from the late 1880s to the First World War. Characterized by extensive research, especially in published sources such as socialist newspapers, journals, and pamphlets, *Reasoning Otherwise* is particularly valuable for its focus on this relatively unstudied era of Canadian socialism. McKay’s survey offers us breadth, detail (sometimes rather too overpowering), and complexity. The book begins with an exploration of the intellectual context and early organizational history of the Left up until 1902 and ends with the cataclysmic period of World War I and 1919 General Strike. These historical endpoints bookend four thematic chapters on class, gender, religion, and race that illuminate important new perspectives on the Left’s shifting understanding of these issues. Some of the thematic chapters seem more robust than others. For example, the chapter on “race” is thinner, with a long, general introduction covering known events like the Komagata Maru, but perhaps this was due to a paucity of primary sources. In contrast, the chapter on class is a rich and detailed analysis of socialist thinkers and organizations — from the lesser to the better known — which explores some of the overlap and differences between various socialist currents of the time.

Part of McKay's mission is to rescue intellectuals whom he sees as underappreciated or misunderstood. Arguing that Herbert Spencer's writing encompassed far more than reductionist notions of "survival of the fittest," McKay does an admirable job of presenting his ideas as constituting an evolutionary "language of politics" (p. 117) that influenced many strands of socialism. McKay's interpretation of Spencer's influence, however, is somewhat different from earlier (and some current) feminist scholars who portray his influence on debates about women's equality in a less positive light. Also, one does wonder whether Spencer was as overwhelmingly influential as McKay suggests. Surely it difficult to ascertain, for instance, whether "[s]o many merchant seamen seem to have come down with 'Spencerism' that it could have been listed as one of the occupational hazards of seafaring life" (p. 35).

The value of this book lies in its extensive research, its refreshing exploration of new historical themes, and its painstaking reconstruction of personalities and organizations of the Left. However, I am less convinced that it offers the entirely new methodology for studying socialism that the author terms "a radical reconnaissance." It is puzzling that this methodology, already sketched out in McKay's earlier *Rebels, Reds and Revolutionaries*, has not been engaged critically by historians, given our exposure to decades of post-structuralist writing emphasizing that no writing is neutral, that language matters, and that politics are inherent in all aspects of our scholarship. McKay claims that a radical reconnaissance attempts to "scout" out the past, providing us with a "preliminary examination or survey" (p. 1) rather than authoritative conclusions. He insists that his method encourages us to "[see] the past more clearly" (p. 2), contextualize, be fair-minded by describing political positions "accurately" (p. 11), accept historical "contingency" (p. 3), and understand the difficulties of generalizing "beyond the particular" (p. 3). This description of method, in fact, sounds a lot like liberal pluralism — or even sound, careful historical research!

We would all likely endorse openness to new ideas in our scholarship; however, it is questionable whether we can really make "preliminary" observations about history, un-tethered from judgmental hierarchies. As McKay himself notes, his approach is not "neutral," nor is it bereft of politics or criticisms. His analysis, if sometimes understated, suggests the issues he sees as important to the Left, and, indeed, those which also *should have been* important to the Left. Also, he clearly favours some historical writing as "better" than other interpretations. Indeed, in spite of McKay's stated antagonism to polemical writing, he dismisses the writing of others as "sectarian or sentimental, point scoring, tiresome, politically counterproductive," and "God like" in its judgments. His claim that past writers treated the first formation of socialism like a "toxic waste dump," with socialists portrayed as "simpletons seduced by the political equivalent of snake oil salesmen," is not backed up with evidence and citations. McKay's insistence that his radical reconnaissance is superior to the flawed "linear, Great Man, ancestor worship and scorecard history" produced by past authors thus seems disingenuous. Does this really offer us a new methodology that is "post-polemical" (p. 3)? I think not. Approach and emphasis matter, and if they do not announce

themselves with pointed polemics, they are no less present. In fact, McKay's many references to the "liberal order" (the word liberal may appear as many as seven times on a page), a theory he developed, provides an approach, a framework and political assumptions, if not a synthesis (a word he dismisses out of hand as "bad") that embodies a political world view, and the author implicitly assumes this conceptual framework offers a new and better approach to Canadian history.

McKay wants to move scholarship on the Left beyond institutional studies, and he has helped to do precisely that by providing us with a detailed, textured treatment of socialist ideas and organizations, introducing interesting new players, and placing issues of race and gender at the centre of his analysis. Still, his open-ended definition of socialism — reasoning otherwise — raises some questions about exactly how elastic, indeed how "social democratic," our definition of socialism should be and how much we need to tend to differences as well as commonalities between varieties of socialists, given that these did matter a great deal to protagonists of the time. I wonder whether, in these bleak times of unending neo-liberal successes, McKay feels we need to be Unitarians, welcoming any and all who appear to object to the status quo. As he writes, "each period makes its own leftism" (p. 11), and this is undoubtedly true of the present as well as the past.

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VICKERY, Amanda — *Behind Closed Doors: At Home in Georgian England*. Princeton: Yale University Press, 2009. Pp. 382.

What does a home signify? This is the central question that Amanda Vickery has posed in her new monograph, *Behind Closed Doors: At Home in Georgian England*. Concentrating on the experiences of men and women in the upper and middling sorts, as well as those who were chronically strapped for cash, Vickery analyses the meanings attached to the domestic sphere and the experiences of household residents. In her exceptionally well-researched book (Vickery examined over 60 archives), Vickery examines the pleasures and tribulations of domestic life by evaluating the physical changes to and mental associations of the home. Blending together architectural history, gender history, material history, and economic history, Vickery expertly addresses a variety of topics, including privacy, power, architecture and design, gender roles, status, economic constraints, fashionable tastes, handicrafts, visiting and sociability, and marital relations.

Throughout the work Vickery focuses on two central themes: interpersonal domestic relations, especially those between husbands and wives; and the physical changes to homes, both architecturally and decoratively. In tracing the changes to the physical layout and appearance of homes, Vickery provides a wealth of information about how the rise of sociability, visiting, privacy, architecture and design, and the growing importance of taste influenced the interiors of homes and how