

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

time was spent in the home. Vickery also shares vast insights into domestic relations between different household residents — including husbands and wives, servants and apprentices, lodgers and tenants. Only children's domestic experiences seem to be excluded, and such information about that theme is undoubtedly sparse in the archives.

Vickery begins by looking at how the external perimeter of the house represented an ideological boundary: the house signified privacy, personal space, and domesticity, but it was also a low-trust site of conflict, where locks and keys were almost seen to signify civilization. Status determined the physical division of living space and the extent of privacy awarded to each person living in the house; the family lived on the first floor, while tenants, apprentices, and domestic servants lived in the basement.

One of the most important contributions Vickery makes is to reinsert “men back by the fireside” (p. 2). Refusing to accept that men were indifferent towards their domestic lives simply because they were not verbose about it, Vickery examines what domesticity meant to men in the gentry and middling sorts. Vickery shows that, though men had different domestic experiences than women, in fact, “the balance of burden and benefit in marriage obsessed” many men (p. 62).

Vickery's discussion of men's domestic experiences also leads her to explore a variety of household types that deviated from the traditional, paternalist ideal. This is an important strength of the book. By discussing a myriad of alternative households, Vickery shows that, while spinsters', bachelors', widowers', and servants' lodgings may not have followed the ideal household type, they were by no means out of the ordinary. By examining various sorts of households, Vickery is able to shed light on the domestic lives of those who were made dependent on others due to marital status, gender, or economic circumstances. Vickery shows that both married and unmarried men and women were somewhat dependent on others. While single men had considerably more freedom than single women, without the assistance of a woman, either as a wife or in the form of cooks, washerwomen, landladies, and nurses, men could not survive. Married men were also somewhat dependent on their wives — wives were usually the ones who held the keys to the home and were also responsible for much of its décor and appearance, which became particularly important in the age of visiting, politeness, and “taste.”

Yet Vickery is careful not to over-exaggerate her arguments, and she makes it clear that both married and single women were more dependent on their families than were men. Though married women may have had more status than spinsters, marriage was not a guarantee of domestic bliss. The domestic lives of single women were most precarious. Spinsters were often the first called when family members needed an extra hand, which meant their lives were often a “tour of kin” (p. 192). They could also be required to live in the household headed by a brother, or under an alien authority when a parent remarried, which could make their lives particularly difficult. Vickery also shows that single women's material lives were also precarious in comparison to married women of the

same status. Not only did spinsters find their residential options limited, but the average value and range of goods they owned were lower. These restrictions influenced the social life of single women; without being able to offer hospitality to visitors for lack of goods, many also felt it necessary to decline invitations.

The importance and meaning of household furnishings and decoration is another important theme of *Behind Closed Doors*. Decorations, furnishings, and wallpaper colour and pattern were not merely about fashion and taste, but signified a system of understanding — the decoration of homes conveyed rank, lineage, political membership, and religious affiliation. Décor was equally about propriety, decorum, and an understanding of the family's status in the social order as it was about fashion and taste. To demonstrate a proper understanding of the family's status in the social order and the appropriate position of the room in relation to the home, each room needed to be decorated in a proper manner. Vickery shows that deciding how properly to decorate a room produced a great deal of anxiety, especially as there was little guidance to help men and women differentiate "good taste" from tastelessness. Vickery is also interested in determining the extent to which certain objects, colours and patterns, styles, and rooms were associated with one particular gender. Though certain rooms, colours, and objects were more associated with men or women, Vickery shows that both men and women were involved in selecting the architectural styles, furnishing, colour patterns, and décor that made up the home.

By examining the interiors of homes and the experiences of household residents, *Behind Closed Doors* offers readers a glimpse into the domestic lives of Georgian Britons. While seemingly a mundane backdrop to life, the home, as Vickery shows, could be a battleground or a place of solace; an indication of one's status and place in society or a humiliating site of conflict; a beautifully decorated manor or a spare, damp room in a tyrant's home. Though preconceived notions about men's and women's responsibilities, objects, and styles existed, there were rarely clear lines of demarcation because both feminine and masculine tastes and preferences determined the interiors of homes. Vickery shows that gender and status influenced individuals' domestic lives and also makes an impressive case for why decorations, furnishings, and the interiors of homes are important.

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WALL, Sharon — *The Nurture of Nature: Childhood, Antimodernism, and Ontario Summer Camps, 1920–1955*. Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2010. Pp. 369.

Sharon Wall's recent history of the summer camp movement in Ontario may leave the reader with difficulty remembering the correct title — is it *The Nurture of Nature* or *The Nature of Nurture*? After reading Wall's study the reader will learn that the title could, in fact, be either. *The Nurture of Nature: Childhood,*