

Making (Anti)Modern Childhood: Producing and Consuming Toys in Late Victorian Canada

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Article abstract

Prior to the First World War much of Canada's toy supply came from Germany. When the guns of August sounded in 1914, Canadian consumers found themselves in the midst of a shortage of mass produced toys, dubbed the 'toy famine' in the popular press. Two incompatible solutions ultimately arose to deal with this problem of consumer demand and industrial supply. Middle class women, drawing on their work over the preceding decades distributing and producing toys for philanthropic means and the discourse of the conditioned child, turned to craft production using the labour of returned soldiers to refurbish second hand playthings and produce new ones as artisans. Canadian manufacturers, with the support of the state, pursued a policy designed to industrialize toy production in Canada for competition at home and abroad. In some cases, one group openly resisted the efforts of the other. Ultimately, these two visions made possible a debate about modernity and the role of industrial technology in Canadian family life and consumer culture.

Making (Anti)Modern Childhood: Producing and Consuming Toys in Late Victorian Canada

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Abstract: Prior to the First World War much of Canada's toy supply came from Germany. When the guns of August sounded in 1914, Canadian consumers found themselves in the midst of a shortage of mass produced toys, dubbed the 'toy famine' in the popular press. Two incompatible solutions ultimately arose to deal with this problem of consumer demand and industrial supply. Middle class women, drawing on their work over the preceding decades distributing and producing toys for philanthropic means and the discourse of the conditioned child, turned to craft production using the labour of returned soldiers to refurbish second hand playthings and produce new ones as artisans. Canadian manufacturers, with the support of the state, pursued a policy designed to industrialize toy production in Canada for competition at home and abroad. In some cases, one group openly resisted the efforts of the other. Ultimately, these two visions made possible a debate about modernity and the role of industrial technology in Canadian family life and consumer culture.

Résumé: Avant la Première Guerre mondiale, l'Allemagne était le principal fournisseur de jouets au Canada. Aussi, après le déclenchement des hostilités en août 1914 surgit ce que la presse populaire nomma la "famine" des jouets, les consommateurs canadiens faisant alors face à une pénurie de jouets fabriqués en série. Deux solutions incompatibles apparaissaient pour solutionner ce problème entre la demande des consommateurs et l'offre industrielle. En s'appuyant sur leurs efforts philanthropiques entourant la distribution et la production de jouets au cours des décennies précédentes, ainsi que sur le discours de l'enfant «conditionné», les femmes de la classe moyenne se sont tournées vers la production artisanale en utilisant la main-d'oeuvre des soldats démobilisés pour remettre à neuf des jouets d'occasion et pour en produire de nouveaux comme artisans. Avec le soutien de l'État, les manufacturiers canadiens ont poursuivi une stratégie destinée à industrialiser la production de jouets au Canada pour être compétitifs sur les marchés domestique et étranger. Dans certains cas, un groupe ouvertement résisté aux efforts de l'autre. Au final, ces deux approches ont rendu possible un débat sur la modernité et le rôle de la technologie industrielle dans la vie familiale et la culture de consommation au Canada.

No consuming subjects elicit more passionate responses than children. Debates about commodities that are designed for, and marketed to, kids are often fraught with anxieties about class, race, gender and technological and economic change. One particular conflict over the production and consumption of children's toys during the First World War sparked a debate between a nascent Canadian toy business and women philanthropists about the social meaning and place of industrially produced toys. The infant toy industry sought to promote the superiority and 'modernity' of toys produced using industrial technologies. In contrast, philanthropists touted the advantages of craft produced toys as a means to fuse the modernist objectives of philanthropy and social reform with the class and ethnically rooted antimodernism of the folk. These concerns had their roots in the closing decades of the nineteenth century. They were ultimately brought to a head by the so-called "toy famine" of the First World War. The beginning of the Great War in 1914 meant the end of toy imports from Canada's principle supplier, Germany. This galvanized existing tensions leading to an explicit debate about the meaning and place of industrial technology in the material and consumer lives of Canadian children and families.

Historians writing on the history of toys and children's consumption have done a superior job in documenting the relationship of middle class families to the toy commodity from the mid-nineteenth to the beginning of the twentieth century.¹ Bryan Ganaway's work in particular on German toy consumption analyzes the conflict over mass produced and craft produced toys in light of attempts by middle class German's to navigate the place and meaning of technology and modernity in their everyday lives.² Like the debate in Germany, the First World War toy famine in Canada helped demarcate the boundaries of the middle class and their relationship to technology. Additionally, the toy famine repositioned middle class constructions and representations of those outside this small social cross-section including racialized and working class children in a way that reinforce claims about the desirability or undesirability of manufactured or craft produced toys. Indeed, the debate about industrially produced toys drew primarily on popular

1. See Gary Cross, *Kid's Stuff: Toy and the Changing Worlds of American Childhood* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1997); Bryan Ganaway, *Toys, Consumption, and Middle Class Childhood in Imperial Germany, 1871-1918* (New York: Peter Lang, 2009); David D. Hamlin, *Work and Play: The Production and Consumption of Toys in Germany, 1870-1914* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2007); Keneth D. Brown, *The British Toy Business: A History since 1700* (London: The Hambledon Press, 1996).

2. Bryan Ganaway, "Engineers or Artists? Toys, Class and Technology in Wilhelmine Germany," *Journal of Social History* 42, 2 (2008): 371-401

understandings of children on the margins of the emergent consumer society, rather than children at its centre. This somewhat unexpected convergence remade the meaning of toy consumption for those at the centre and on the margins of Canadian consumer culture.

But what is a marginal child consumer? A 1908 speech by the child saver and social reformer Consuelo Vanderbilt, then also possessing the title of the Duchess of Marlborough, highlights the primary characteristics of marginal children and their connection to consumer culture:

The children of the rich are now perhaps overdone with toys - overdone with games. But the children of the poor have yet to enter into their heritage of play. This is our work - to create an attractive alternative for the life of the streets...[street] children...do not know how to play. They will not become interested in any game that they cannot gamble in.³

Vanderbilt's statement succinctly and directly highlights the class contours of toy consumption and play in many European and North American countries, including Canada. The marginal child consumer was defined by the absence of the material surroundings of middle class childhood and a tendency to engage in precocious and inappropriate behavior because of poor socialization.

The period from 1860 to 1900 saw a significant expansion in the number of mass-produced toys available to middle and upper class children in Canada and elsewhere.⁴ Though many historians of consumer culture generally have noted the expansion of consumer society among lower-middle and working class groups beginning in the middle of the nineteenth century, the children's market among these groups developed much more slowly prior to 1920.⁵ Canadian historian Neil Sutherland makes it clear that most gifts were "practical" and playthings played a small role in the Christmas giving of many families before the Second

3. "Women's Duties," *Montreal Gazette*, 4 Apr 1908, 11

4. Peter N. Stearns, "Stages of Consumerism: Recent Work on the Issues of Periodization," *Journal of Modern History* 69, 1 (1997): 107 and 110.

5. On the expansion of consumption among the working class between mid-nineteenth and early twentieth century Canada see for example David L. Monod, *Store Wars: Shopkeepers and the Culture of Mass Marketing, 1890-1939* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1996); Keith Walden, *Becoming Modern in Toronto: The Industrial Exhibition and the Shaping of a late Victorian Culture* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1997); Donica Belisle, *Retail Nation: Department Stores and the Making of Modern Canada*, (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2011). On the much later expansion among these groups of children's see for instance Daniel Thomas Cook, *The Commodification of Childhood: The Children's Clothing Industry and the rise of the Child Consumer* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2004) and Peter N. Stearns, "Stages of Consumerism," 102-117.

World War.⁶ Indeed as an analysis of the available data on the toy industry suggests, by the outbreak of the First World War, Canadians were spending only \$0.37 per child a year on toys, or roughly the cost of one inexpensive doll.⁷

For most Canadians outside the middle class toys were still relatively uncommon purchases.⁸ This does not mean, however, that the history of child consumers marginal to Victorian Canada's expanding consumer society, by virtue of their class or race, can be defined one-dimensionally by their lack of goods and shunted once more to the margins of the history of children's consumption. This is particularly important as those on the fringes of consumer culture still constituted a majority of the Canadian population. Despite their place on the edge of the world of commodities, the representations of marginal child consumers as an economic problem to be 'solved' by members of the middle and upper class profoundly shaped the attitudes and experiences of both marginal and middle class child consumers.

By using the term marginal child consumers, my intention is not to collapse the difference between race and class, but rather to describe the unified logic at work in the problematization of working class and racially othered child consumers. In her essay "The State, the Family and Marginal Children in Latin America," Donna J. Guy undertakes a similar effort around social welfare legislation showing how those on the margins of Latin American society, by virtue of their class, race or institutionalization can illuminate broader understandings of childhood.⁹ This paper simply extends such a formulation to the economic and material realm and should be understood as a means of describing the relative position of racially othered or working class child consumer to

6. Neil Sutherland, *Growing Up: Childhood in English Canada from the Great War to the Age of Television* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1997), 180-181.

7. This calculation is based on available information on inflation and the consumer price index provided by the Bank of Canada and Statistics Canada, as well as information on the Canadian population under age 15 provided by Statistics Canada. The total sales in the Canadian market was placed at around \$1 million at the outbreak of the war by newspaper articles and information supplied by the Department of Trade and Commerce. Adjusted to 2012 dollars Canadians were spending the equivalent of approximately \$18,000,000 on toys or roughly \$8.10 per child. While the data used in the calculations is subject to some issues around accuracy, the result is nevertheless quite suggestive.

8. On the importance of second-hand goods for working class consumers in America after the First World War see Susan Porter Benson, *Household Accounts: Working-Class Family Economics in the Interwar United States* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2007), 12.

9. Donna J. Guy, "The State, the Family, and Marginal Children in Latin America," in *Minor Omissions: Children in Latin American History and Society*, ed. Tobias Hecht (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2002): 139-164.

the ‘centre’ of capitalist consumer culture. To wit, the access of marginal children in Canada to toys was a matter over which many in the middle and upper class expended energy and funds in an effort to develop philanthropic and colonial projects through which toys would flow.

This fits with Mariana Valverde’s assertion that the social emerged as a realm in which a myriad of ills - crime, poverty, sexual deviancy and so forth - came to exist as problems that could be dealt with and solved. Philanthropy, according to Valverde, was a response rooted not in the “indiscriminate alms giving” of charity, but in a modernizing effort to “[retrain] the poor in habits of thrift, punctuality and hygiene” through the use of various technologies of liberal governmentality.¹⁰ These efforts clearly impinged upon questions of consumption and consumer desire. It was not the toyshop window or the Eaton’s catalogue, as much as the orphanage, the residential school, the missionary or the toy drive through which the consumer desire of marginal children was cultivated and then satisfied.¹¹

Dealing with the issue of marginal children’s consumer desire above all required Victorian Canadians to construct what sociologist Daniel Thomas Cook has called a commercial persona. As Cook makes clear, such discursive constructs have a history and do not necessarily reflect the behavior of child consumers, or those consuming on their behalf. Instead, they provide a way of understanding children as a particular kind of consumer that encodes and helps resolve certain tensions between the market and other social fields.¹² Cook’s study of the children’s clothing industry is focused on the role of business in generating these discourses. However, other segments of society were instrumental in developing and modifying these constructs at various points. Cook envisions two distinct persona – the agentive and innocent child consumers. These personae

10. Mariana Valverde, *The Age of Light, Soap and Water: Moral Reform in English Canada, 1885-1925* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2008), 19

11. Though this terminology has been made famous by the application of Foucault’s theory of sexuality in the post-colonial work of Ann Laura Stoler, others working in the field of anthropology on consumption have pointed to desire as an important organizing principle for production and consumption. Fischer and Benson in particular have shown in the case of broccoli, that desire motivates both producers and consumers, albeit in markedly different ways. Here my meaning, though appropriated for an economic realm is to emphasize both the role of desire as an organizing principle for understandings of children’s relationship to the toy commodity, as well as to invoke the disciplinary aspects centred around cultivating and educating this *desire*. See Ann Laura Stoler, *Race and the Education of Desire: Foucault’s History of Sexuality and the Colonial Order of Things* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1995) and Edward F. Fischer and Peter Benson, *Broccoli and Desire: Global Connections and Maya Struggles in postwar Guatemala* (Palo alto: Stanford University Press, 2006).

12. Cook, *The Commodification of Childhood*, 5-7.

represent children as active desiring consumer agents with rights or as corrupted and incapable consumers duped by corporate capitalism, respectively. However, these are only two among many options.¹³

Patrick Ryan's work on the discourses of modern childhood, point to at least two other major discursive formations, the developing child envisioned by psychological science and the conditioned child of liberal theory and social reform.¹⁴ This later discourse is central to our present study and underpins the commercial persona of the marginal child consumer. According to Ryan, the conditioned child envisions children as the products of socialization by their surrounding and environment and points at the child saving and social reform movements of the nineteenth century as a group, which actively deployed this understanding.¹⁵ Furthermore, Ryan argues that this discourse was connected to that of the authentic child. The goal of conditioning children, ironically, was to create the conditions by which their authentic child-self might emerge.¹⁶ Innocence and authenticity were considered the end products of proper conditioning. In the context of the consumption, the discourse of the conditioned child was easily mobilized to produce the commercial persona of the marginal child consumer. This persona posited children's unsatisfied consumer desire as a cause of social disorder and moral peril. The provisioning of proper toys was considered one way to help the child integrate into Canadian social and economic life. Due to the particular status of marginal child consumers, toys distributed to and consumed by this group became embedded in complex processes of social reform, colonialism and technological change. Toys were recast as tools in the refashioning of working class and non-white children's lives.

This development was the product of the marginal child consumer's ability to galvanize racist and classist assumption into action in attempts to resolve tensions between modernity and antimodernism; a tension that technological change often brought into stark relief. As such, marginal child consumers had the status of being antimodern in the eyes of modernizers. As Gail Biederman has pointed out in *Manliness and Civilization* white Americans expressed repulsion and fascination with the characteristics of non-white and working class subjects.¹⁷ Fears that white middle class civilization was in decline and under threat in

13. Ibid., 12.

14. Patrick J. Ryan, "Discursive Tensions in the Landscape of Modern Childhood," *Educare Vetenskapliga Skrifter* 2 (2011): 11-12

15. Ibid., 15-17

16. Ibid., 19-22.

17. Gail Biederman, *Manliness and Civilization: A Cultural History of Gender and Race in the United States, 1880-1917* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995), 77-120.

numerous settler societies, including Canada, led to attempts to cultivate a controlled savagery among children in particular. Camping, Boy Scouts, warfare and other activities generally undertaken by children and youth were thought to be a remedy to these circumstances.¹⁸ Consequently, the very modernizing projects of social reform, industrial expansion and technological innovation were driven by the construction of certain subjects as marginal to but not outside Canadian economic and social life. The promise of technology, whether in the form of new appliances, cheaper goods, or in our case, ‘better’ toys, offered a convenient way to advance the cause of modernization and a point around which to indulge antimodern fascination with racial and class others.

Though a more frequent theme in environmental history, scholars like Ian McKay and Stephen Dutcher have demonstrated, the cultural and economic relevance of antimodernism as well as its assumptions regarding class and race. Indeed, the tendency for economic antimodernism to privilege craft production over industrial production constituted the major source of contention during the period.¹⁹ While working class and racialized consumers encountered toys and their status as marginal consumers in somewhat different contexts, they were in a very fundamental sense, regarded in much the same way by those intent on reforming them.

Working Class Children and Philanthropy

For children of the working class, toys were extended through a number of institutions and reform projects aimed at reforming their material and moral lives. The movement to save children formed part of more general efforts at “social reform” undertaken during the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. Xiaobei Chen has noted that these efforts included a specific focus on saving poor, delinquent and marginalized children in order to transform them into ideal obedient and industrious adults, in part through what she calls a “gardening governmentality.”²⁰ As Chen notes,

18. See Sharon Wall, *The Nature of Nurture: Childhood, Antimodernism and Ontario Summer Camps, 1920-1955* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2009) and Mark Moss, *Manliness and Militarism: Educating Young Boys in Ontario for War* (Don Mills: Oxford University Press, 2001).

19. Ian McKay, *Quest of the Folk: Antimodernism and Cultural Selection in Twentieth Century Nova Scotia*. (Montreal-Kingston: McGill-Queen’s University Press 1994); Stephen Dutcher, ““Looking Towards the Promised Land:” Modernity, Antimodernism, and Co-operative Wholesaling in the Maritime Provinces, 1945-1961,” *Acadiensis* 34, 2 (2005): 46-73.

20. Xiaobei Chen, *Tending the Gardens of Citizenship: Child Saving in Toronto, 1880s-1920s* (Toronto : University of Toronto Press, 2005), 67.

the focus of these disciplinary projects was overcoming the presumed, and sometimes all too real, violence and neglect children experienced through modifications in the child's environment in order to recondition them.²¹ For instance, prototypical child saver J.J. Kelso emphasized the role of middle class adults in supervising the play of working class children in order to "break up bad habits by keeping the children so busy with interesting things to do..." including "wholesome reading, recreation and amusement...[leaving] no idle time, or inclination for brooding over foul thoughts."²²

It is worth noting that according to André Trumel, there were substantial differences in the way that English and French Canadians organized these efforts, particularly among the working class.²³ However, the evidence regarding the distribution of toys suggests that these different institutional contexts sometimes had little or no impact on specific philanthropic efforts. Furthermore, there is little evidence that the tensions in French-English relations during the period translated into different responses to the toy box, even during the conflagrations of the First World War conscription crisis.

The efforts of child savers across Canada were ultimately reinforced along a number of trajectories. Fictional stories like "Lotte's Christmas" or "What a Dollar Did" provided narratives that stressed the worldly wisdom, virtuous conduct and the rarely satisfied burning desire for toys among working class girls in particular.²⁴ Similarly, the occasional reports in Canadian newspapers about child shoplifters and their tendency to take toys as part of their haul reinforced middle class assumptions of an absence of playthings and its connection to delinquency.²⁵ Stories like these helped to bestow a certain realism onto the commercial persona of the marginal child consumer that primarily emphasized the danger to their character and moral standing posed by leaving their abundant consumer desire unsatisfied and uneducated. The marginal child consumer was thus in need of greater training and conditioning in the estimation of the middle and upper class members of Canada's growing consumer society.

21. *Ibid.*, 1.

22. J.J. Kelso, "Bringing Up Children" and J.J. Kelso, "Helps to Purity in Life" in [Child Welfare Pamphlets and Leaflets], LAC, Amicus # 18684154.

23. André Trumel, "Historiography of Children in Canada," in *Histories of Canadian Children and Youth*, eds. Nancy Janovicek and Joy Parr (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), 11.

24. "Lotte's Christmas," *Church work* [4, 10 (Dec 1879)], 157-159!; "What a Dollar Did," *Pleasant hours* [1, 10 (24 Dec 1881)], 74; *Pleasant hours* [7, 26 (24 Dec 1887)], 202-203.

25. "City Items: Arrest of a Gang of Young Thieves," *Montreal Witness*, 5 March 1868, 3; "Child Shoplifters," *Montreal Gazette*, 28 Dec 1908, 5.

Unsurprisingly, newspaper columnists were sounding the alarm throughout the Dominion over the shortage of toys among working class children. According to the *Toronto Daily Mail* young Canadians would learn soon enough “how some children receive costly presents while others just as good are passed by with dolls and toys not half so nice.”²⁶ As Quebecoise feminist and journalist Robertine Barry, known by her pen name Françoise, stated in her weekly column in *La Patrie* “How many children will receive no visit nor toys from Santa Claus or Baby Jesus. If you saw everyday what I see, the numerous children, noses pressed to the glass, examining avidly these marvels cruelly assembled before them, you would not smile [at the toy displays].”²⁷

In many instances, these concerns generated organized philanthropic activities. An 1894 report from the *Globe* encouraged readers to donate toys to the “homeless and hopeless...[children] of disease dirt and hunger” that had need of the services of the Children’s Shelter.²⁸ The Montreal Day Nursery, a day-care for working class mothers, faced a “serious problem” in 1913.²⁹ They required more dolls and toys for the 107 children they cared for and asked middle and upper class Montrealers for donations.³⁰ That Christmas, a further appeal was sent out for toys for 250 children, to be presented as gifts at an afternoon tea for the children and mothers of the nursery. The Catholic Church Extension Society of Canada listed the distribution of toys to the poor as part of their work.³¹ In 1912, the *Toronto Star* printed a quarter page appeal for donations to the Santa Claus Fund. Its main mission was purportedly “to meet the Christmas expectations of more than 5000 friendless children of poverty.”³² Toys were emphasized as part of their efforts: “Food and clothing do not minister to the natural childish desire to play. Indeed, when the body has been nourished and clothed, there arises within it more strongly than ever the craving for amusement. It is just this need which the Santa Claus Fund seeks to meet.”³³ Advice columnist Elinor Murray even solicited donations on behalf of the children in Toronto hospitals through her weekly column.³⁴ Sometimes these concerns

26. “Christmas Cheer,” *Toronto Daily Mail*, 3 Dec 1888, 5.

27. Françoise, *La Patrie*, 19 Dec 1892, 100-101. All quotations from French language sources have been translated by the author in order to enhance the articles readability.

28. “Cry of the Children,” *Toronto Globe*, 12 Sep 1894, 4.

29. “Day Nursery,” *Montreal Gazette*, 4 Nov 1913, 2.

30. “Ladies Have Contract,” *Montreal Gazette*, 17 Dec 1913, 2.

31. “Church Extension,” *Montreal Tribune*, 9 May 1912, 3.

32. “Santa Claus Fund \$400, Another \$3,500 is Required,” *Toronto Star*, 23 Nov 1912, 20.

33. *Ibid.*

34. Elinor Murray, “The Nursery: The Sick Child’s Christmas,” *Toronto World*, 19 Dec 1913, 8.

extended to rural Canadians for whom urban commentators assumed “there were no toy stores,” and as such, no access to toys. This prompted philanthropic distribution efforts in Northern Ontario and the West through church organizations and annual toy drives like that undertaken by the Sunshine Society.³⁵

Thus, the child saving and the social reform movements of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, in their effort to fashion children that resembled their own middle and upper class offspring, extended manufactured toys among the working class through philanthropic and charitable means. Unlike anxieties about their own middle class children’s overconsumption of toys, these individuals lamented the lack of toys among children in working class families and as such provided manufactured playthings in a comparatively uncritical fashion. While in all likelihood, many of the donated toys were second-hand playthings, it was still an important conduit through which a supply of toys could flow to marginal children in the late-nineteenth and early twentieth century. It ultimately legitimized their desire for toys, even in the face of hard to surmount economic barriers. In the underlying concerns about the long term implications of unsatiated consumer desire, it also clearly drew on the discourse of the conditioned child to make its case for providing marginal children with greater access to playthings. Consequently, it was central to elaborating the discourse of the conditioned child and its deployment as the commercial persona of the marginal child consumer in order to understand working class-children’s relationship to consumer culture and toys.

Toys, Colonialism and the Politics of Race

Though the consumption of the working-class offered something of a foil to the dominant understanding of middle class children’s toy consumption, the related case of the racially marginalized offered an altogether more complex phenomenon. On the one hand, race entered into the world of children’s playthings in the depictions of racial others in toy form that drew upon and reinforced negative stereotypes about certain ethnic and racial groups.³⁶ Toys like the “Sunbeam Coon Special Doll” or “Negro Doll” advertised in the 1907-1908 and 1909-1910 Eaton’s Fall

35. “Les Joujoux,” *Le Réveil* [1, 18 (5 Jan 1895)], 278; “The Children’s Work,” *The Canadian Church Magazine and Mission News*, Apr 1890, 86; “Sunshine Guild,” *Grain Growers Guide*, 23 Feb 1910, 27; “Santa Claus and the Annual Toy Mission,” *Grain Growers Guide*, 23 Nov 1910, 34.

36. Gary Cross, *Kids’ Stuff*, 97-100. On stereotypical images of African-Americans in popular culture specifically see Patricia A. Turner, *Ceramic Uncles and Celluloid Mammies: Black Images and their Influence on Culture* (New York: Anchor Books, 1994).

Winter Catalogues, respectively, caricatured subject of African descent in racist and stereotypical ways intended to amuse white consumer.³⁷ Similarly, the Jon Chinaman Doll and and Japanese Lady doll demonstrate a similar tendency to caricature non-white subjects. Though less sensational, dolls of other ethnic groups essentialized the characteristics of those from different nationalities.³⁸ As *La Reveil* put it in 1900, “nations are defined by their toys.”³⁹ Toys depicting non-white subjects certainly facilitated what Lorraine O’Donnell calls “virtual voyages.” However, these voyages all too easily slipped into imperial and colonial fantasies of domination as consumers could experience empire second hand through their commodities.⁴⁰

On the other hand, racially marginalized children in Canada and elsewhere were considered in need of “civilizing,” by white middle and upper class Canadians. Under these circumstances manufactured toys were considered universally valuable when compared with the playthings of indigenous cultures. At the root of these efforts was the binary logic, common among euro-Americans at the time, of the west as modern, developed, universal and superior while other parts of the world were portrayed as premodern, underdeveloped, particularistic, and ultimately, inferior. Ironically, accounts about the utility of toys for children rested upon assumptions about the universality of childhood and their general desire for toys. The fusion of accounts of western superiority and dominance, with those of universal childhood had profound implication for the discourse regarding the relationship of manufactured toys to non-white children.

The first major implication was that toys were often promoted as a transhistorical childhood object with the modern manufactured manifestation representing its highest form. Though manufactured toys were a relatively recent phenomenon, marketing efforts attempted to make them appear timeless and universal by connecting them with historical playthings around the world. Trade publications made these claims in the scripts they provided to would-be salespeople in order to encourage customers to buy manufactured toys. “The Origin of New Toys” boldly declared that “all “new” toys are, roughly speaking, the

37. *Eaton’s Catalogue, Fall & Winter, 1907-1908*, 285; *Eaton’s Catalogue, Fall and Winter, 1909-1910*, 157.

38. “Uncle Sam’s Big Doll Collection,” *Toronto World*, 30 Oct 1913, 5.

39. “Les JouJoux,” *Le Réveil*, 8 Sep 1900, 27-30

40. Kristin L. Hoganson, *Consumers Imperium: The Global Production of American Domesticity, 1865-1920* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2007); Lorraine O’Donnell, “Le voyage virtuel: Les consommatrices, le monde de l’étranger et Eaton à Montréal, 1880-1980,” *Revue d’histoire de l’Amérique française* 58, 4 (2005): 535-568.

adaptation of some old invention to modern ideas.”⁴¹ The article traced modern mechanical toys, like the two boxers or clowns controlled by twine to a twelfth century design by a German Abesse. Doll houses, spinning tops, horses and carts were traced to the 14th century with other articles claiming a provenance in the later medieval period.⁴² Similarly, *Montreal Life* contended that modern toys were connected to the playthings of ancient Egypt, imperial Rome, and the indigenous cultures of the South Pacific.⁴³

The discourse of universalism outlined above underpinned white middle-class responses to non-white children and their playthings. Since the arrival of European settlers, missionaries and state officials on the shores of the new world, colonization strategies attempted to influence and change the behavior of children in the hopes of thereby speeding up the assimilation of indigenous adults into colonial society.⁴⁴ In many cases, the very same magazines that provided advice on the place of toys in child development and parenting would often feature articles on manufactured toys demonstrating their cultural universality and ability to “uplift” racially marginalized children and their families. Articles dealing with children and missionary activities throughout the colonized world stressed the superiority and attractiveness of mass-produced toys along with the innate desire for them among children regardless of race or ethnicity.⁴⁵ In many instances, Canadian children were encouraged to

41. “The Origin of New Toys,” *Bookseller and Stationer*, Oct 1889, 13.

42. *Ibid.*

43. “The Origin of Modern Games and Toys,” *Montreal Life*, 8 Dec 1899, 58.

44. See for instance: Dorothy Tranck de Estrada, “Indian Children in Early Mexico,” and R. Todd Romero, “Colonizing Childhood: Religion, Gender and Indian Children in Southern New England, 1600-1720,” in *Children in Colonial America*, ed. James Marten (New York: New York University Press, 2007): 13-32 and 33-47; Teresa C. Vergara, “Growing Up Indian: Migration, Labour, and Life in Lima (1570-1640),” in *Raising an Empire: Children in Early Modern Iberia and Colonial Latin America*, eds. Odina E. Gonzalez and Bianca Premo (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2007) 75-106; Geoffrey Plank, “Childhood and the Expansion of the Eighteenth-Century British Empire,” *Annual Proceeding – Dublin Seminar for New England Folklife* 27 (2002): 93-111.

45. On India see “Hindoo Girls and their Dolls,” *Canada Presbyterian*, 3 Oct 1883, 646; *The Rural Canadian*, Oct 1883, 205; *Pleasant Hours* 28 July 1883, 119; “The Children of India,” *The Canadian Missionary Link*, May 1896, 142-143. See on Africa: “African Boys – Their Play and their Playthings,” *The Children's Record*, Nov 1888, 23; “Girls in Madagascar,” *Children's Record*, Jan. 1899, 26; “The Children of Algiers,” *Northern Messenger*, 13 Jan 1888, 152; “A Corn Doll,” *The Children's Record*, Nov 1892, 110. On Asia: “The Girl's Birthday Festival in Japan,” *The Young Canadian*, Aug. 26, 1891, 115; “How the Boys and Girls Play in Japan,” *The Sunbeam*, 17 Feb 1894, 174; “Japanese Feast of Dolls,” *Sunday School Guardian*, 25 Jan 1879; Isaac Taylor Headland, “Chinese Children's Toys,” *Ottawa Citizen*, 12 Oct 1900, 8. On Latin America: “Child Life on the Amazon,” *Manitoba Free Press*, 30 Aug 1879, 3.

send toys to missionaries as part of their Sunday school education to attract families that could then be proselytized too.⁴⁶ These articles clearly demonstrate the emphasis placed on children's toys as a way to entice children and families into a dialogue with colonial agents. This presumed effect rested on assumptions about the universality of childhood and the superiority of western manufactured toys.

However, it is important when considering these developments not to characterize non-white subjects as passive victims or dupes. Indeed, reactions to toys probably ran the spectrum from genuine enjoyment and fascination to active resistance resulting from an implicit or explicit recognition of the cultural politics of white superiority.⁴⁷

Cultures beyond the borders of the Canadian state were not the only "others" that held a fascination for white Canadians. Throughout the nineteenth century, interest in indigenous cultures and children around the world included Canadian indigenous groups. In Canada, as elsewhere, the belief in the "disappearing Indian" sparked a renewed interest in documenting and investigating these cultures.⁴⁸ In the written accounts of aboriginal child rearing practices produced by official and unofficial colonial agents, toys were presented in a similar fashion to those in articles on other colonized peoples. Writings like those of S.L. Frey and Irving C. Rosse portrayed children's desire for and use of toys as universal even though non-western toys were portrayed as inferior in composition.⁴⁹ Though aboriginal children were thought to enjoy playthings and had many of them, the presumption persisted that they required manufactured playthings to replace their "dolls that are rags."⁵⁰

Drawing on this prevailing discourse, bureaucrats in the Department of Indian Affairs and their missionary allies in residential schools promoted

46. "The Missionary Doll," *The Sunbeam* [10, 21 (19 Oct 1889)], 82; "The Missionary Doll," *Pleasant Hours* [3, 11 (2 June 1883)], 86; "A Peace Making doll," *Pleasant Hours* [16, 46 (14 Nov 1896)].

47. Robin Bernstein, makes this case regarding the relationship between African-American children and black and white dolls. See Robin Bernstein, *Racial Innocence: Performing American Child and Race from Slavery to Civil Rights* (New York: New York University Press, 2011), 198.

48. See Paige Raibmon, *Authentic Indians: Episodes of Encounter from the late-Nineteenth-Century Northwest* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2005).

49. S.L. Frey. *The Mohawks: An Inquiry into their Origin, Migrations and Influence upon the White Settlers* (Utica Herald Job Dept., 1898), 17; Irving C. Rosse. *The First Landing on Wrangel Island with Some Remarks on the Northern Inhabitants* (New York: s.n., 1883), 194-195

50. "Playthings of the Indian Children," *Pleasant Hours*, 9 June 1888, 90. See also "The Alaskan Child," *The Children's Record*, July 1887, 100 and "Very Far North." *Northern Messenger*, Jan 20, 1899, 22; "The Children of the Red Man," *The Canadian Home Journal*, Dec 1896, 76.

modern manufactured toys amongst indigenous Canadian children. As part of the colonization strategy of the Canadian government, aboriginal children were encouraged to attend the infamous residential schools—where physical, emotional and sexual abuse were real dangers—in order to receive an assimilationist education in the trades or home management. Each of these schools was required to submit reports at the end of the year that were subsequently compiled and published in the Department of Indian Affairs' annual report. The 1887 statement of expenses for the High River Industrial School indicates a payment of \$25.01 for the purchase of toys.⁵¹ Alfred Hall, the Principal of the Indian Girls' Home in Alert Bay, B.C. reported on the quality of amusements, which included dolls, a doll house, block letters balls and skipping ropes.⁵² Similar reports exist from many schools across Canada throughout the 1890s and first decade of the 1900s.⁵³ These “thoroughly and distinctly white toys,” as one Principal put it, were considered significant to assimilationist efforts. Like soap and other commodities fetishized in response to crises of imperial valuation, the connections of toys to non-white subjects highlighted the undervaluation of aboriginal culture and the overvaluation of commodities as the foundation of middle class domesticity.⁵⁴ The attraction of aboriginal children to these amusements served as evidence for colonial officials of the superiority of manufactured toys while simultaneously reinforcing the universal utility and appeal of toys to children.⁵⁵ The universal value ascribed to manufactured toys became central to their value and prestige in civilizing efforts. In the case of non-white children characterized as marginal child consumers it is clear that the discourse of the conditioned child was applied in a similar fashion to those in the working class as colonial agents attempted to remake their material lives. However, the institutional and cultural context of the circulation of toys situated it within established imperial and colonial hierarchies.

51. Dominion of Canada, Department of Indian Affairs, *Annual Report. 1887*, 191.

52. Dominion of Canada, Department of Indian Affairs, *Annual Report. 1896*, 429.

53. For example Dominion of Canada, Department of Indian Affairs, *Annual Report. 1899*, 288, 392, and 405; *Annual Report. 1900*, 347, 420 and 424; Dominion of Canada, *Annual Report. 1901*, 335, 394, 412 and 417; *Annual Report. 1902*, 327, 330, 401 and 409; *Annual Report. 1903*, 355, 357, 361, 410, 421 and 425; *Annual Report. 1904*, 333-334, 338, 394, 396-398 and 442; *Annual Report. 1905*, 310-311, 323-324 and 361; *Annual Report. 1906*, 358, 397, 400, 436 and 438;

54. On the connection of commodity fetishism and imperial/colonial systems of domination see Anne McClintock, *Imperial Leather: Race, Gender and Sexuality in the Colonial Contest* (London: Routledge, 1995), 208.

55. Dominion of Canada, Department of Indian Affairs, *Annual Report. 1888*, 146.

German Toys and the First World War Toy Famine

The issue of German toy production and the First World War toy famine demonstrate how discourses of race, class and childhood fused with those around technology and modernity. German toys dominated world markets, and in particular, those of small countries with limited indigenous production of their own, like Canada. The preeminent place of imported toys in the material life of Canadian children was similarly indicative of the weakness in Canadian manufacturing. Attempts to establish large scale manufacturing firms in Victorian Canada often failed, like the Ontario Toy Company of London Ontario. Founded in 1882, the company was bankrupt by 1883.⁵⁶ Before the First World War, the Canadian Manufacturers' Association lists only four members as toy manufacturers.⁵⁷ An industry notorious for its boom and bust cycle resulting from low margins and a seasonal market failed to respond to tariff inducements. Rates reached thirty-five percent *ad valorem* on children's toys in the 1880s. Yet importing toys from efficient and cost effective manufacturers elsewhere in the world proved a more practical way to satisfy toy demand than attempts to establish toy manufacturing in Canada.

Up to 1890, the United States toy industry provided a high degree of competition to German imports. By 1895, however, it had become clear that Germany was emerging as the dominant player in the Canadian toy trade (Figure 1). By the closing decade of the nineteenth century, German imports accounted for around half of the toys brought into Canada between 1890 and 1914, capturing market share from American and British manufacturers. As the *Globe* declared in its assessment of the Dominion Navigation Returns for 1900, "Germany furnishes us with the bulk of our toys and dolls, with the United States a poor second."⁵⁸

Germany's domination of the toy industry initially held a certain exotic interest for Canadian consumers. There was a tendency to invest German-made toys with the class, and I would add racially, based antimodern narratives of what Ian McKay has called "the folk". By the folk, McKay is referring to the process by which "urban cultural producers...constructed the Folk of the countryside as the romantic antithesis to everything they disliked about modern, urban and industrial life."⁵⁹ McKay is explicit in his claim that this was an international

56. "Manufacturers' Notes," *The Monetary Times* 30, 14 April 1882, 1268; [Ontario Toy Co. Closed], *The Monetary Times* 31, 28 Sep 1883, 345.

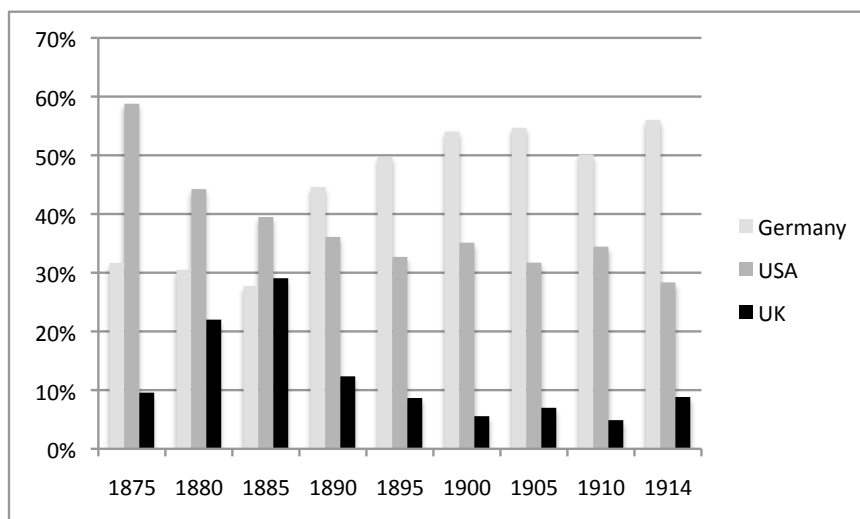
57. [List of Members of the CMA]. *Industrial Canada*, June 1908, 967.

58. "Trade and Navigation," *Globe*, 12 Dec 1900, 8.

59. Ian McKay, *Quest of the Folk: Antimodernism and Cultural Selection in Twentieth*

phenomenon rooted in antimodernism. It is clear that certain elements of maritimes folk culture McKay describes, like tartanism for instance, relied heavily on ethnic and gender essentialism as well. The romantic interest in, and later condemnation of, German toy production drew on similar antimodern assumptions about class, ethnicity and gender. In its simplest formulation women and children's labour in toy production was coded as antimodern while the labour of men in factories was identified as modern. Those who envisioned German toy production as an antimodern industry offered both positive and negative assessments of German toy making along these lines.

Figure 1 – Canadian Toy Market Share by Country of Import



Source: Department of Trade and Commerce, "Dominion Navigation Returns," Dominion of Canada Sessional Papers, (Ottawa: Queen's Printer).

According to *the Journal of Education for the Province of Ontario* "toys for the million were peculiar to the age...the chief seat of their manufacture is in the dense woods of Germany." From Germany flowed not only cheap toys "sold at a profit for a penny" but also "some of the best modeled toys in the world".⁶⁰ Even as late as 1912 *Maclean's* was celebrating the "old-time fairy story" of the Leipzig toy fair, and the generations upon generations who have continued to make children's playthings in Germany's "toy towns".⁶¹ Yet some articles made the case

Century Nova Scotia (Montreal-Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1994), 4.

60. "Children's Toys – Where they are Chiefly Made," *Journal of Education, Province of Ontario*, Sept. 1872, 139.

61. Morey J. Edwards, "Selling the World's Toys," *Maclean's* 25, 2, Dec 1912, 131-136.

that German dominance was ensured by the use of the labour of women and children in the production of toys.⁶² Commentators highlighted the organization of labour in the German toy industry into a hybrid system featuring elements of both the cottage industry as well as newer industrial methods. German toy production was situated within narratives of antimodern exoticism and social backwardness. The organization of production became the basis for articulations of ethnic difference and superiority.

Many writers felt that the dominant position of the German toy industry was the result of its origins and persistence as a “medieval” industry that deployed “domestic” labour, namely women and children, in an organization like the early modern- putting out system. This could be contrasted, positively or negatively, with toys produced in other countries, like France, whose materials may have been “mere scraps” but whose labour was allegedly done by men in modern factories.⁶³ The *Montreal Gazette* saw the particular organization of German toy production as a source of wonder and interest, but also as one of social primitiveness:

[B]ack among the hills in some remote part of Germany there are families...it is said by travelers...whose members have done nothing else for the last three or four generations...the father, mother and sons may all be engaged in the one occupation and know no other handicraft...through years of practice and labor they become...proficient as artisans.⁶⁴

Despite the seeming respect for the “timelessness” of German toy production, it was the questionable use of cheap, rural and non-adult male labour, according to the *Gazette*, that kept Canadian producers from being competitive with German manufacturers.⁶⁵

As tensions between Britain and its empire and the German Reich deepened after 1910, commentary became more explicitly anti-German. The presumed use of child labour in German toy production became a particular source of outrage and condemnation for critics. The antimodernism attached to German production was emphasized less and less as a positive characteristic. A member of the American Consumer League, Florence Kelly, was invited in November of 1913 to the Margaret Eaton School to give a talk on exactly this issue. According to Kelly, Canadian mothers should refuse German toys unless they can be sure they were not made with child labour as “it was a well-known fact

62. *Op. Cit.*

63. “French and German Toys,” *Canada Bookseller and Stationer*, Jan 1896, 17.

64. “Santa Claus’ Wares,” *Montreal Gazette*, 19 Dec 1903, 13.

65. *Ibid.*

that children of 3 years of age assisted in the making of [German] toys for the foreign markets.”⁶⁶ Ultimately, even toy retailers would cease to defend German toys. In 1912, Henry Morgan Co. boasted, “Germany has contributed not more wonderful toys than these.” A year later, the tone of the toy seller was decidedly less celebratory regarding the presence of German goods: “Only by importing in big consignments direct from German and French makers have we been able to obtain better values.”⁶⁷

According to David Hamlin’s study of toy production and consumption in Germany, Canadian understandings of German toy manufacturing were an oversimplification of a complex production network.⁶⁸ The German toy industry responded to the rise of a global mass market in the three decades prior to the First World War by developing “extremely heterogeneous ways of fabricating toys.”⁶⁹ While areas like Nuremburg that specialized in metal toys expanded the use of machinery and built ever-larger mechanized factories, areas like Sonneberg that specialized in dolls saw the expansion of independent producers working under a system of contract labour and semi-industrial divisions of toy component production.⁷⁰ Meanwhile the wooden toy producing area of Erzegebirge simply worked harder for longer hours and less pay in order to meet increased toy demand and falling prices for their wares.⁷¹ In Sonneberg and Erzegebirge where labour predominantly happened in homes and involved the efforts of multiple family members, the exploitation of women’s and children’s labour presumably increased in the face of increased competition and significantly reduced prices for their goods. However, in Nurremburg production increasingly occurred in a factory setting. While only partially correct, Canadian understandings of German toy production demonstrate how antimodern nostalgia in the form of the folk was easily co-opted to service a discourse of ethnic superiority and imperial jingoism that self-consciously portrayed itself as the modern foil to an antimodern and exploitive system of production.

Shifts in popular understandings of German toy production were reflective of the tensions inherent in the concept of the folk and its connection to projects aimed at modernizing antimodern subjects and lifeways. When the toy supply of all Canadian children was suddenly threatened at the outbreak of the First World War, the social fissures highlighted by modernizing efforts targeted at marginal child consumers

66. “Do Babies Assist in Toy-Making?,” *Toronto World*, 25 Nov 1913, 4.

67. [Murphy's of Montreal] (advertisement), *Montreal Gazette*, 13 Dec 1913, 24.

68. Hamlin, *Work and Play*, 62.

69. *Ibid.*

70. *Ibid.*, 78-92.

71. *Ibid.*, 92-95.

formed the basis for the conflict between craft and industrial toy production.

A ban on German toy imports following the declaration of war in 1914 placed upward pressure on prices for toy consumers across Canada. Retailers, women and children French and English alike faced a singular challenge, as their principle source of toys became unavailable overnight. Newspapers were quick to sound the alarm about the impending “toy famine.” The *Montreal Daily Mail* lamented that “Santa Clause will have to get along with native products this year...”⁷² The *Saskatoon Phoenix* was more sullen, wondering if “the war put Santa Claus out of business?”⁷³ This was not merely a Canadian concern. According to the Department of Trade and Commerce “As is the case nearly all over the world, the Germans to a large extent control the market for toys in the British overseas Dominions.”⁷⁴ Indeed, it seemed to many that the world supply of toys for Christmas 1914 was in question.⁷⁵

If newspapers and government officials were concerned about where toys would come from, Canadian retailers were positively panicked. Numerous department stores tried to find a speedy replacement for German toys in the form of Japanese imports. Several Canadian mass retailers sent buyers to Japan, with German samples in tow, to see if they could procure suitable imitations for the lost German supplies at comparably low prices. In one instance, an unidentified Western Canadian department store sent over 8000 samples to Yokohama in 1914 in order to have imitations produced.⁷⁶

Japan had emerged as an important minor player in the Canadian market in the opening decade and a half of the twentieth century. In some cases, Japanese production was a welcome addition to the toy supplies of Canada and the rest of the British Empire at the outbreak of the war. However, there was also a great deal of dismissal of Japanese toys and toy manufacturers on largely racist grounds, limiting Japanese market share in Canada. While ethnically non-white dolls may have made an exotic addition to doll collections before the war by offering the opportunity to act out imperial fantasies of possession, the case of dolls produced in Japan to look “white” during the war was a different matter.

72. “Local Toy Famine May Come From War,” *Montreal Daily Mail*, 10 August 1914, 1.

73. “Toy Famine May Come as Result of German War,” *Saskatoon Phoenix*, 10 Aug 1914, 3.

74. Department of Trade and Commerce, *Weekly Report*, 28 Sep 1914, 1629.

75. Department of Trade and Commerce, *Weekly Report* 12, Oct 1914, 1815; *Weekly Report* 23 Nov 1914, 2182; *Weekly Bulletin*, 12 Jul 1915, 94; *Weekly Bulletin* 2 Aug 1915, 276; *Weekly Bulletin*, 25 Oct 1915, 1030 and 1045; *Weekly Bulletin*, Dec 13 1915, 1441; *Weekly Bulletin*, 10 Dec 1915, 1495.

76. Department of Trade and Commerce, *Weekly Bulletin*, 10 Feb 1919, 249.

As the Canadian Trade Commissioner for Australia was intent to point out in 1915, “Some Japanese dolls are quite good, but the dolls having black hair and eyes, do not appeal to white children, not having the complexion of their own race.”⁷⁷ A year later, a British consular communiqué reprinted in the Department of Trade and Commerce *Weekly Bulletin* was even less enthusiastic about Japanese toys:

The Japanese point of view differs so radically from that of the British child that it is extremely difficult, almost impossible, for a Japanese toy designer to originate anything suitable for the British trade... Wherever these [doll] features require “touching up” by hand, the Japanese instinct or ideal of slanting eye-brows, greenish eyes, and “rosy” cheeks in the wrong place unfortunately mar the result...their efforts to meet “foreign” taste results in productions which are certainly foreign to any sublunary race.⁷⁸

Thus, as the instance of Japan highlights, claims regarding the inferiority of non-western toys had a major impact on the response to the toy famine. Much as German production faced increased criticism because of certain features deemed antimodern by critics, the very fact of Japanese producers’ racial status as non-white made it impossible for consumers to accept their toys as substitute goods. While the sentiment that Japan would never be able to replace German manufacturing on its own was pronounced within the toy trade, Japan was still understood as an important source for cheap toys, “driving out” German goods of comparable “low quality.”⁷⁹ Despite this denigration of Japanese playthings in official and popular circles, its increased market share points to the important role played by Japanese toy imports during the First World War.⁸⁰

The racial hierarchies of toy production, where the products destined for the “civilized” Euro-American world and its settler colonies were contrasted with the “uncivilized” playthings manufactured and used by non-whites, ultimately acted as a justification for the creation of an indigenous toy manufacturing industry in Canada. Total imports actually declined during the early years of the First World War, only recovering in 1918 due to limited supply.⁸¹ The Department of Trade and Commerce

77. *Weekly Bulletin*, 25 Oct 1915, 1030

78. “The Japanese Toy Trade” *Weekly Bulletin*, 3 Jan 1916, 22.

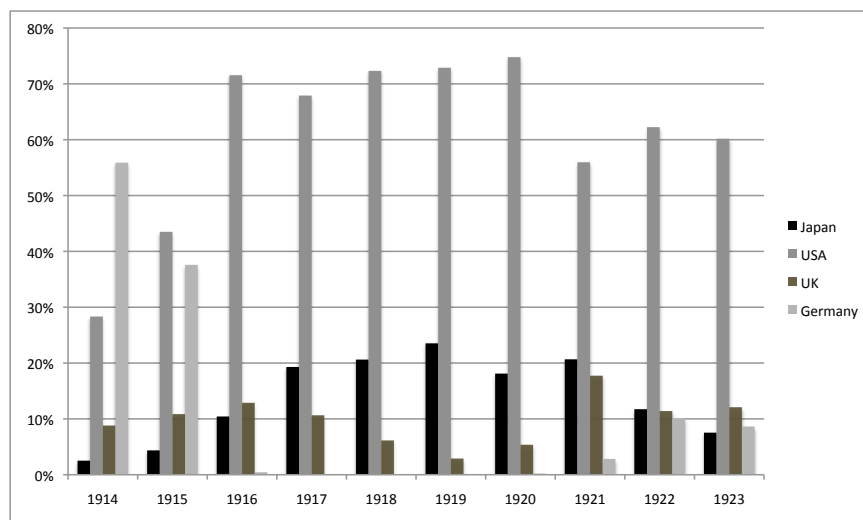
79. “Local Toy Dealers Speak of Change,” *Victoria Times*, 4 Dec 1915, 13; “Japan Now Busy in Making Toys,” *Montreal Daily Mail*, 8 Dec 1915, 34. “The Making of Toys,” *Montreal Gazette*, 21 Feb 1920, 8.

80. According to Kenneth Brown the relatively weak position of U.K. imports in Canada stemmed from the fact that much of British production went to domestic demand. Keneth Brown, *British Toy Business*, 82-83.

81. See Dominion of Canada, *Trade and Navigation Returns* [1914-1919] (Ottawa: Queen’s Printer).

included in its *Weekly Bulletin* for 31 July 1916 a supplement titled “Toy Making in Canada” which pointed out that the Canadian market required over 1 million dollars in toys to satisfy demand. Imports for 1915 and 1916 fell well below this mark, generating upward pressure on prices.⁸² Thus, the Canadian government and the business community worked diligently throughout the war to establish a Canadian toy industry that would compete in the world market under the well established assumption that mass produced toys were the answer to the problem of insufficient supply.

Figure 2 – Percentage of Total Toy Imports by Country of Origin



Source: Department of Trade and Commerce, “Dominion Navigation Returns,” Dominion of Canada Sessional Papers, (Ottawa: Queen’s Printer).

Government, business and media boosterism of the toy industry was framed both in terms of the necessity of satisfying children’s consumer desire, combating child labour and as a patriotic effort designed to win the war.⁸³ Part four of the *Toronto Globe* series on new industries in Canada focused on the toy industry, declaring that “Canadian Santa Claus has lost his “Made-in-Germany” sack...His new sacks will be labeled “Made-in-Canada” in big letters...the new Canadian toys for Canadian children are made by adult labor, under proper conditions.”⁸⁴ According

82. “Toy Making in Canada,” *Weekly Bulletin*, 31 July 1916, 251 and “Toy Fair at National Exhibition,” *The Monetary Times* 84, 11 Aug 1916, 43.

83. “German and Austrian Goods Are Boycotted By People of Britain,” *Toronto World*, 24 Aug 1914, 1; “Extending War on German Trade,” *Winnipeg Free Press*, 24 Aug 1914, 10; “Canada’s Opportunity,” *Toronto Star*, 14 Oct 1914, 1.

84. “Santa Claus Loses His “Made-in-Germany” Sack,” *The Globe*, 25 Sep 1917, 10.

to the *Victoria Daily Times*, “the point is that Canada hopes never again to require anything in the way of toys from Germany.”⁸⁵ For the *Monetary Times*, the success of the German toy industry could not be divorced from the workers it employed “over half of whom are women and girls,” a method, the magazine claimed, that Canadian manufacturers would not adopt.⁸⁶

The Department of Trade and Commerce was busy as early as 1908 finding export opportunities for the small number of Canadian toy manufacturers then present in the Dominion. In 1914, its efforts went into overdrive.⁸⁷ Long serving Minister of Trade and Commerce Sir George W. Foster, a Conservative who had first cut his teeth in the Trade and Commerce portfolio in the 1890s, and his Deputy Minister and former trade commissioner to Jamaica, Watson Griffin along with a cadre of trade commissioners led the public push in support of the fledgling Canadian toy industry.

One of the major efforts undertaken in this direction was the organization of toy exhibitions beginning in 1916. The first of these was the Toy Exhibition and Conference held in the Royal Bank Building at the corner of Yonge and King in Toronto. According to the Department of Trade and Commerce “the object of this exhibition is to show the style of toys formerly imported into Canada and the toys now being made in Canada, and to stimulate Canadian manufacture of the same...”⁸⁸ The Conference portion, which commenced the day after the exhibition on the 28 March 1916, was chaired by George Foster and was designed to provide networking opportunities between Canadian toy manufacturers, retailers and wholesalers and all other manner of “practical toy men.”⁸⁹ Indeed, the dominance of male decision makers in government and industrial production became a significant feature of the toy industry. While almost no government or business records survive documenting the toy exhibition and conference, the events received national press coverage. The *Monetary Times* thought the Exhibition and Conference “proved very successful...toy buyers from all quarters the world will find it advantageous to visit Canada once a year to order Canadian toys as they formerly visited Germany.”⁹⁰ One of the more significant outcomes was the organization of what a few months later would become the

85. “Local Toy Dealers Speak of Changes,” *Victoria Daily Times*, 4 Dec 1915, 13.

86. “Toys for the Children,” *The Monetary Times* 53, 23 Oct 1914: 2.

87. See Department of Trade and Commerce, *Weekly Report*, 1 Dec 1908: 832 and 836.

88. Department of Trade and Commerce, “Toy Conference Mar 28,” *Weekly Bulletin* 13, Mar 1916: 529.

89. “Toy Conference In Toronto Next Week,” *Toronto World*, 25 Mar 1916, 7.

90. “Canada’s Toy Industry,” *The Monetary Times* 64, 14 Apr 1916, 22.

Canadian Toy Manufacturers Association (CTMA) by the 40 or so toy manufacturers and toy buyers.⁹¹ The creation of a lobby group for the toy industry came at the direct encouragement of George Foster, who declared to the conference participants “if you want to have the Department of Trade and Commerce help you, you must put yourselves in the form of a permanent organization.”⁹² Though officially allied with the Canadian Manufacturers’ Association, the committee that a few months later would become the CTMA was technically an autonomous organization designed to “promote the production of toys for home and foreign consumption and for the holding of an annual toy fair.”⁹³

Though happy to wrap themselves in the flag for the purpose of business, it is clear that some of the manufacturers were far less comfortable with the anti-German propaganda being disseminated regarding the toy industry, in particular as it applied to child labour. In truth, there was nothing particularly German about the use of cheaper child labour to produce toys. Thus, many in the toy business attempted to normalize the use of child labour despite its use by the media and others to justify the support of domestic toy manufacturing. As P.R. O’Neill’s “unusually interesting” speech stated “There is an exaggerated idea in Canada in regard to the extent to which Germany employs child labor.”⁹⁴ While O’Neill conceded that it was used “to a limited extent” he also made the case that this was not unique to Germany, as on his last trip to Britain he encountered factories where toys were being made by children after school hours.⁹⁵ According to O’Neill, Canadian children would do well to work two hours after school making toys like their British counterparts as “it would train their eyes and their hands and they would be better men and women afterwards.”⁹⁶ According to O’Neil, his own son’s work making toy “aeroplanes” provided the anecdotal evidence of the advantages of a little productive labour over spending all ones time in “idle play.”⁹⁷

91. “Has German Exhibits,” *Toronto Star*, 29 July 1916, 2; While there were 40 firms by 1916, only two years earlier in 1914 there were 24 firms, see “Local toy Dealers Speak of Changes,” *Victoria Daily Times*, 4 Dec 1915, 13; To appreciate the degree to which the first world war sparked the establishment of toy manufacturing firms see also Industry Canada Fonds, Corporations Branch, LAC, RG 95, Vol. 2748, Vol. 2776, Vol. 2699 and Vol. 2740.

92. “Has German Exhibits,” *Toronto Star*, 29 July 1916, 2

93. [Briefs], *Alderson News*, 11 May 1916, 2; “Toy Makers Organize,” *Victoria Daily Colonist*, 30 Mar 1916, 9.

94. “Canada’s Toy Industry,” *The Monetary Times* 56, 14 Apr 1916, 22.

95. *Ibid.*

96. *Ibid.*

97. *Ibid.*

While perhaps not so bold as to defend German toy production, interviews conducted with various toy manufacturers demonstrate the importance manufacturers placed on children's involvement both in manufacturing and in providing feedback on the quality and desirability of the toys they produced. Ralph Connable, General Manager of Woolworth Canada felt that providing women and children with money for doll manufacturing conducted in their homes would be a good way to stimulate toy production in Canada.⁹⁸ Two years after the conference, Mr. Wildman, proprietor of the Beaverton Toy Works, while swearing off child labour to "maintain the race that won at Vimmy" conceded that the firm relied on "getting hints from children" on which toys appealed to them in order to improve their designs and final products.⁹⁹

The nascent Canadian toy industry placed children as actors in their own right at the symbolic centre of their business as the consumer, possible labourers, and product testers whose contributions were central to solving the current toy shortage and guarding against any future supply issues. Though an annual Toy Fair had been decided upon, the CTMA and the Department of Trade and Commerce would wait only a few short months, before the next toy exhibition, this time held as part of the Canadian National Exhibition in August of 1916. The CNE exhibit was designed to be larger and for a different audience.¹⁰⁰ The Canadian public, more than "toy-men," were the target of the CNE exhibition in order to promote Canadian toys directly to consumers.¹⁰¹

By 1917 there was a growing confidence in the Canadian toy industry. Victoria celebrated the successful attraction of new toy manufacturers.¹⁰² Canadian dolls and rocking horses were declared a success in several markets.¹⁰³ Others claimed the Canadian toy industry was "stabilized".¹⁰⁴ For industry, the Canadian state and their supporters, ending the toy famine was only possible through the creation of a modern toy industry using modern technological methods. Yet, as the sometimes strange

98. "Canada's Opportunity," *Toronto Star*, 14 Oct 1914, 1.

99. Melinda Young, "Manufacturing of Toys Now A Stabilized Industry," *The Globe*, 27 Aug 1918, 14.

100. "Has German Exhibits," *Toronto Star*, 29 July 1916, 2.

101. "Canadian National Aims to Excel Previous Marks," *Toronto World*, 24 Aug 1915, 2. On the importance of the CNE for educating Canadians in modern consumer practices see Keith Walden, *Becoming Modern in Toronto: the Industrial Exhibition and the Shaping of a Late Victorian Culture* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1997), 119-166.

102. "Would Manufacture his Invention Here," *Victoria Colonist*, 18 May 1919, 15; "Toy Factory is Established Here," *Victoria Colonist*, 30 Nov 1919, 40.

103. "Canadian Toy Manufacturers." *The Monetary Times* 65, 23 Feb 1917, 7.

104. Melinda Young, "Manufacturing of Toys Now A Syabilized Industry," *Globe*, 27 Aug 1918, 14.

commentary of the toy manufacturers indicates, this boundary between what was modern – large industrial factories – and what had previously been deemed antimodern – the use of women and children in toy production – was not clear cut. In particular, the toy manufacturer's representations of children as a commercially-savvy, able-bodied source of labour and commercially relevant information contrasted with the persona of the marginal child consumer and their need for proper conditioning. Naturally, this raised the possibility of conflict between those who favoured responding to the toy famine through means more closely associated with the world of philanthropy and the emerging Canadian toy industry.

Women philanthropists, craft producers and feminist groups offered an altogether different solution to the toy famine. They blended the modernizing objectives of philanthropy with the antimodern romanticism of craft toy production. Drawing on their experience with the marginal child consumer before the war, craft producers and women's groups organized local exhibitions of toys in cities across Canada, including Montreal, Vancouver, Victoria, Edmonton and Halifax.¹⁰⁵ Though designed to encourage the growth of Canadian toy production, these local exhibitions were of a markedly different character than the National Exhibition. These local efforts placed an emphasis on handicraft toys and worked to promote them to Canadian consumers. The Canadian Handicraft Guild, centred in Montreal, and other women's organizations across the country took a leadership roll in offering an alternative organization of the Canadian toy industry through antimodernist folk production and philanthropic distribution.¹⁰⁶ Drawing on their previous experience in the social and moral reform movements from the preceding decades, women's organizations preferred the "workshop" or "home" to the capitalist divisions of labour prevalent in the "factory".

Beginning in 1914 and continuing throughout the war, several stories and columns in Canadian publications encouraged women to become involved in toy production as a handicraft rather than as a mass produced commodity. Janet Brooks, writing for the *Montreal Daily Mail* in 1914 claimed that "One of the first things that suggests itself as work for

105. "Toys for the Holidays," *Quebec Telegraph*, 2 Sep 1915, 23; "Working for Canadian Made Toys," *Quebec Telegraph*, 2 Sep 1915, 30; "National Council Had Very Busy Day," *Toronto World*, 28 Oct 1915, 4.

106. In her study of the Guild, Ellen McLeod offers a brief summary of the competitions run by the handicraft guild for Canadian-made toys. McLeod also points out that while the guild included members from both genders, the war time circumstances transformed it into a predominantly female organization. See Ellen McLeod, *In Good Hands: The Women of the Canadian Handicraft Guild* (Montreal-Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1999), 174.

women is toy making. The season is opportune and the distraction of toyland for many weary months offers an opportunity that will not occur again for at least a generation...Toy making is easy: It is suited to women."¹⁰⁷ The *Toronto World* claimed that women who "otherwise would have been in distress and want are happily engaged in making soft toys."¹⁰⁸ Similarly, an article from *Saturday Night* by Leslie Horner, published four years later, endorsed women's work in the toy trade and in particular the high quality of their craft produced toys.¹⁰⁹

Thus, while women's labour in Germany was still questionable, the participation of Canadian women in craft production was generally endorsed as part of the solution to the toy famine. Women's groups, in adapting their own experience in philanthropic distribution to the issue of production, advocated the use of disabled soldiers as possible craft toy producers. This surprising fusion of modern philanthropy and antimodern craft production is only intelligible in the context of their experience constructing and assisting the marginal child consumer through similar means. The Canadian Handicrafts Guild (CHG) as well as organizations like the Khaki League (KL) and the Quebec Home Workers' Patriotic Toy Industry Committee (QHWPTIC), all operated at this juncture largely by middle and upper class women, encouraged the employment of returned soldiers in the production of craft toys.¹¹⁰ Begun by Mrs. Lorenzo Evans, the QHWPTIC worked throughout the war, creating craft toys using the labour of disabled soldiers and put on exhibitions of these toys in Quebec City at the Chateau Frontenac and other venues.¹¹¹ The craft toys also went on tour to exhibits in Montreal and Toronto.¹¹² By 1917, their toys were being exported to the United States as well as being consumed locally and Mrs. Evans had also established a similar organization in the Bahamas while vacationing there in late 1916.¹¹³

Similarly, the KL workshop was busy turning out Noah's Arks and

107. Janet Brooks. "Many Opportunities Are Open to Women," *Montreal Daily Mail*, 31 Oct 1914, 4.

108. "Employment for Women," *Toronto World*, 28 Feb 1915, 38.

109. Leslie Horner, "Jewellery and Toy Making as Professions for Women." *Saturday Night*, 3 May 1919, 25

110. "Made in Canada Toys," *Montreal Gazette*, 1 Dec 1915, 4. The use of disabled soldiers in toy production dates back to the Napoleonic wars. On the infantilizing discourse regarding disabled soldiers that facilitated this convergence see Seth Koven, "Remembering and Dismembering: Crippled Children, Wounded Soldiers and the Great War in Great Britain," *American Historical Review* 99, 4 (1994): 1167-1202.

111. "To Encourage Home Industry," *Quebec Telegraph*, 16 Dec 1916, 9; "Prizes for Home-Made Toys," *Quebec Telegraph*, 23 Aug 1917, 3.

112. "Home Made Toys Made by Soldiers," *Quebec Telegraph*, 19 Dec 1916, 8.

113. "Home Made Toys Cause Pleasure," *Quebec Telegraph*, 26 Feb 1917, 3; "Patriotism in Bahama Islands," *Quebec Telegraph*, 6 Feb 1917, 3.

other Christmas toys by 1917 using the labour of returned soldiers.¹¹⁴ By December, they claimed they had produced enough to meet the Christmas demand for the city.¹¹⁵ The toys made by these soldiers were often described in positive terms such as “practical and ornamental.”¹¹⁶ The St. Jean Baptiste Society sponsored a show of toys produced by wounded and sick soldiers recovering in France, which included model tanks and appliances.¹¹⁷ In the promotion of these craft toys, individuals like Ms. Evans hit on the themes of patriotism, thrift and philanthropy: “It behooves every patriotic and loyal Quebecer to encourage their home industry and buy Quebec made toys [as] they are unique in their way, and they are at the same time inexpensive.”

While the push for craft toys produced by the labour of women, the disabled, or the unemployed was centred in Montreal it enjoyed influence in other parts of the country. In the organization of the Victoria Toy Exhibition, women’s groups took a very active roll, bringing the idea to the Chamber of Commerce and assisting in the organization of a conference, which included toy manufacturers as well as craft toy makers.¹¹⁸ In Toronto the unemployed were set up making craft toys for philanthropic distribution by the Walmer Road Baptist Church and Industrial Toy Association starting in 1914.¹¹⁹ In Edmonton, the Suffrage League suggested that idle carpenters be redirected towards producing toys for the Christmas trade and were able to get the Hudson’s Bay Company and Pryce Jones to agree to purchase the local production.¹²⁰ German POWs held at Hearst in Northern Ontario were even put to work manufacturing mechanical toys for the Canadian market as part of their punishment and rehabilitation.¹²¹ In some instances, promoting toys that were produced by such deserving labour as disabled or wounded soldiers became a selling point for local retailers.¹²²

Women’s organizations also inserted themselves into the question of a national toy industry in the area of distribution and consumption. The war led to a significant rise in prices for toys. Consequently, the number of

114. “Soldiers Work on Christmas Toys,” *Montreal Daily Mail*, 22 Aug 1917, 2.

115. “soldiers Busy on Christmas Toys,” *Montreal Gazette*, 7 Dec 1918, 14.

116. “Former Soldiers Offer Nice Toys,” *Montreal Gazette*, 11 Dec 1920, 3.

117. “Toys Made by Soldiers,” *Montreal Gazette*, 4 Dec 1918, 4.

118. “Manufacture of Toys Discussed by Board,” *Victoria Daily Times*, 29 Sep 1916, 6; “Toy Making,” *Victoria Daily Colonist*, 29 Sep 1916, 4.

119. “Work is Provided for Many Classes,” *Toronto World*, 16 Jan 1915, 5; ““Made in Germany” Toys are Doomed,” *Toronto World*, 6 Mar 1915, 7.

120. “Calgary Women to Drop Suffrage Campaign,” *Calgary Daily Herald*, 22 Sep 1914, 10.

121. “Prisoners of War To Work Up North,” *Toronto World*, 11 Jan 1915, 3.

122. [G.A. Holland’s] (advertisement), *Montreal Gazette*, 28 Jun 1919, 2.

children for whom toys were suddenly out of reach through purchase may have increased. In many cases the charitable activities of organizations charged with providing marginal children with toys before the war simply expanded to include the children of soldiers in their annual distributions at teas, orphanages and other gatherings.¹²³

Along with creating the craft toy industry and ensuring that needy children were provided with toys, Canadian women and their organizations also made it a point to flex their muscles as consumers. They challenged toy manufacturers to produce toys that lived up to their standards as “the chief purchasers of toys.”¹²⁴ At the Meeting of the Local Committee of the Women of Toronto, a resolution was passed immediately after the conclusion of the first toy conference on the matter of what women expected of this new industry. The resolution grew out of consumer and child labour activism undertaken by the Canadian National Committee of Women (CNCW) and other groups in previous years. As Bettina Liverant has argued, consumer activism on the part of women in the decade before the war centred on price inflation.¹²⁵ Lobbying efforts led to two government investigations into the cost of living as well as the collection of the first systematic statistics on the changing price of goods.¹²⁶ In a related fashion resolutions had been passed in opposition to child labour and the need to identify good when manufacture in Canada in the years prior to the toy conference.¹²⁷ The resolution on toys drew from all three sources and its timing coincided with inflation in toy prices. While explicit ties were made to the earlier “Made-in-Canada” resolution and there is a claim to unwavering support for the emergent industry “due to the fact that in this country child labour is not used” the resolution itself sets out clear guidelines for manufacturers of toys to follow.¹²⁸ According to the text, toys had to be “durable, artistic and otherwise satisfactory to child nature...[and] that Canadian artists be

123. “For Soldiers Children,” *Montreal Gazette*, 1 Dec 1915, 2; “Children’s Aid Will be Holding Tea and Shower,” *Saskatoon Pheonix*, 28 Nov 1914, 6; “Xmas Treat For Soldiers’ Kiddies A Great Success,” *Saskatoon Pheonix*, 25 Dec 1915, 3.

124. Toronto Women’s Committee Resolution re: Canadian Toy Industries. National Council of Women of Canada Fonds, LAC, MG 28 I25 Vol. 68 File #4.

125. Bettina Liverant, “The Promise of a More Abundant Life: Consumer Society and the Rise of the Managerial State,” *Journal of the Canadian Historical Association* 19. 1 (2008): 229-251.

126. *Ibid.*

127. Child Labour Resolution, National Council of Women of Canada Fonds, LAC, MG 28 I25 Vol. 68 File #4; Made in Canada Resolution, National Council of Women of Canada Fonds, LAC, MG 28 I25 Vol. 68 File #4.

128. Toronto Women’s Committee Resolution re: Canadian Toy Industries. National Council of Women of Canada Fonds, LAC, MG 28 I25 Vol. 68 File #4.

employed in the work of designing Canadian toys.”¹²⁹ It also included advice to retailers that they create a special department for made in Canada toys. The resolution also took issue with toy wholesalers and retailers who imported Japanese toys, stating that “the importers of toys from countries of the Allies...[should] purchase only those toys used in the respective countries – not those made there especially in accordance with the ideas prevailing there as to what foreign trade demands.”¹³⁰ It didn’t take long for women’s groups in other parts of the Dominion, including Alberta, British Columbia and Quebec to endorse the resolution as well.¹³¹

The resolution clearly demonstrates women asserting authority in the toy industry as consumer activists intent on securing products that met their needs, but also as major advocates and regulators of children’s involvement in consumption. Their demand that toys must “appeal to child nature” clearly indicates a partial emphasis on how children would use these toys under the supervision of adults.

Though the toy manufacturing industry established by business concerns and the federal government and the craft toy industry established largely through the work of women’s organizations maintained a formal cordiality towards one another and clearly offered a collective response to the toy famine, there were sites of tension between these models. In a *Saturday Night* article on the British toy industry, the parallels with Canadian developments were clear. The article claimed that the wholesale trade was in chaos in part because “the idea seemed to prevail that any kind of labor, however unskilled or unsuitable, could be switched on to produce playthings....[because] all the philanthropic sentiment in the country seemed to be bent on starting toy making industries...doomed to failure” while proper toy factories ultimately survived and flourished.¹³² Certainly this article about the “British” toy industry was designed to apply to developments in the Canadian context.

In contrast, there were many women columnists and journalists who praised the handicraft toy as superior to the manufactured toy. If the Folk was no longer evident to Canadians in the German industry, it had easily found a new home in the support of craft toy production. Janet Brooks, a columnist with the *Montreal Daily Mail* wrote a series of opinion pieces singing the praises of the craft toy industry and warning against the toy manufacturing industry. Brooks supported the use of women and disabled

129. Ibid.

130. Ibid.

131. “Women’s Canadian Club Endorse Resolution of Toronto Meeting regarding Home Industry,” *Victoria Times*, 23 Aug 1916, 5.

132. “British Toy Making,” *Saturday Night* 30, 4 Aug 1917, 27.

soldiers as a source of labour for producing craft toys.¹³³ For instance, she declared that the attempt to start a Canadian toy industry was worth celebrating because it “appealed to quiet home loving people.”¹³⁴ It was her opinion that it was not the mechanical toys or the newest inventions that children enjoyed playing with. Instead, “the toys that are really best beloved by children are the hand-made ones of wood and rudely colored.”¹³⁵ Indeed, the use of simple paints and organic materials, like wood, seemed indicative of the craft-produced toy’s potential to satisfy consumer desire.

In 1916, writing about the planned toy fair at the CNE, Brooks attacked Japanese toys on grounds that imported toys “have no national significance”, as well as manufactured toys, stating:

Of late years commercialism has dragged itself over everything, toys included, and whereas, it was formerly the case that a nation’s toys reflected its artistic leanings, its ingenuity and above all its ability to think back to childhood...expediency and a desire to coax the dollars to the home...have spoiled even the children’s [toy]. It makes as great a difference in the child’s character to play with a frankly commercial toy as it does to form habits of deceit and to practice dishonesty.¹³⁶

In contrast to the heady pronouncements of business, the government and certain journalists, Brooks 1917 article “Toy Making not Well Developed” took aim at the inability of large toy manufacturers to produce cost effective goods in sufficient quantities for home consumption, let alone export.¹³⁷ Indeed even amongst those sympathetic to the nascent toy industry, the quality of production did not necessarily lead to better value for consumers.¹³⁸

In his survey of a similar debate in Wilhelmine Germany, Bryan Ganaway has argued that at the centre of conflicts between factory and artisanal toys was a profound disagreement over the relationship of technology to middle class values.¹³⁹ The Canadian debate demonstrates similar trends, yet the role of ideas about marginal child consumers in shaping middle and upper class responses to the toy famine suggests a

133. Janet Brooks, “Second Toy Fair is of National Importance,” *Montreal Daily Mail*, 17 Aug 1916, 5.

134. “Should Encourage Toy Making Industry,” *Montreal Daily Mail*, 14 Dec 1915, 4.

135. Janet Brooks, “Many Opportunities Are Open to women,” *Montreal Daily Mail*, 31 Oct 1914, 4.

136. Janet Brooks, “Second Toy Fair is of National Importance,” *Montreal Daily Mail*, 17 Aug 1916, 5.

137. Janet Brooks, “Toy Making Industry Not Well Developed,” *Montreal Daily Mail*, 17 Jan 1917, 6.

138. “Trade in Toronto,” *Toronto World*, 29 Dec 1917, 14.

139. Bryan Ganaway, “Engineers or Artists?,” 371-401.

more complex picture characterized by the collision of divergent accounts of the consuming child.

Contrary to popular hopes, the end of the war did not wipe Germany off the map, allowing new entrants like Canada to dominate the world's toy markets.¹⁴⁰ Rather, this was just the beginning of a German resurgence and the ultimate decline of Canadian production, as indigenous firms were reduced to minor finishing work on American and European imports.¹⁴¹ By the mid-twenties, many of the toy manufacturers that celebrated their founding in 1914, would be long defunct.¹⁴²

The so-called "toy famine" of the First World War rendered what had previously been a problem associated with marginal child consumers, either by virtue of their class or racial status, into a problem of supply shortage for all children in the Dominion. The Canadian government and the toy manufacturers were central to the establishment and promotion of Canadian toy manufacturing as a modern industry during the First World War central to creating a modern Dominion following hostilities. This industrial capitalist model of toy production and distribution as a response to shortage was at first complimented, and later challenged, by production and distribution models centered on the fusion of craft production and philanthropy, largely under the control of middle and upper class women. Drawing on modern and antimodern ideas alike, this later model was in many respects a continuation and intensification of philanthropic efforts established in the late nineteenth century to "save" poor, non-white and institutionalized children. It is important to note that while these two groups offered sometimes competing models, they in many ways shared a similar logic: the need to promote, regulate and ultimately satisfy the desire of child consumers through the provisioning of "good" toys. Rather than a radical alternative to industrial capitalism, the model of craft production and philanthropic distribution is another example of what Joy Parr has called the "briskly accommodating resistance," characteristic of the consumer and social activism of women around commodities and consumer technologies.¹⁴³ Activism on the part

140. See Dominion of Canada, *Trade and Navigation Returns* [1914-1919] (Ottawa: Queen's Printer).

141. See "German Exports to Egypt Increase," *Quebec Daily Telegraph*, 15 Dec 1922, 48; "German Toys in Britain," *Montreal Gazette*, 16 Oct 1920, 10; "German Toys Sold in Local Shops," *Montreal Gazette*, 6 Dec 1920, 3; "Belgium Making Toys," *Montreal Gazette*, 30 Oct 1920, 10; "Fine Exhibition of Canadian Toys," *Montreal Gazette*, 7 Dec 1918, 4.

142. Industry Canada Fonds, Corporations Branch, LAC, RG 95, Vol. 2748, Vol. 2776, Vol. 2699 and Vol. 2740.

143. Joy Parr, *Domestic Goods: The Material, the Moral and the Economic in the Postwar Years* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1999), 4.

of women during the toy famine was made possible by the authority they claimed to speak on behalf of children through the commercial personae of the marginal child consumer: a discursive construct they helped to create in the first place and ultimately expanded during the toy famine to include their own middle class offspring. In this way the response to the shortages in supply that resulted from Canada's mobilization for total war had profound implications for understandings of children's consumption across class and racial divides. In the end, the toy famine of the First World War demonstrates the complex tensions that often result from changes in industrial methods and technologies, in particular around discourses of modernism and antimodernism and the racial, classist and gendered assumption they rely on.