ful description of the outward behavior of international shopping, and reminds readers that American power and prominence have come not just from being an exporter of goods and fashions, but from being an importer, as well.

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Work and Play: The Production and Consumption of Toys in Germany, 1870–1914. By David D. Hamlin (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2007. x plus 286 pp.).

Germany as 'belated nation'—lagging behind its Western European peers to enter into economic and, more fatefully, political modernity—has long been a favored interpretive model in German historiography. As part of the more recent, on-going revision of this view, spearheaded in the 1980s by David Blackbourn and Geoff Eley, David Hamlin takes that most humble, intimate, and whimsical of objects, the childhood toy, as a prism through which to re-evaluate Wilhelmine Germany's economic and social modernity. And indeed, in this fascinating, ambitious account, the toy industry proves an ideal case study for the topic. Since they were often inexpensive, toys became an early cross-class, mass consumer good; the toy industry grew more quickly than the rest of the domestic economy, and Germany became a major, global exporter of toys—all hallmarks of a modern, consumer economy. Toys were also drawn into contemporary debates about cultural modernity, both as spectacular objects vital to urban visual culture and as emblems of the autonomous individual because of their role in fostering freedom through expressive play.

In crafting his analysis, Hamlin pulls together a rich variety of material regarding toy production, distribution and consumption: changes in industrial techniques; regional nuances and environmental factors; shopping habits based in familial relationships; shop window displays and urban culture; pedagogical literature on cognitive development; colonial fantasies and imperialist policies; and reform movements seeking to counteract the ill effects of mass consumerism and the exploitation of workers. This multifaceted approach provides a deep understanding of the processes and attitudes behind the rise of modern consumerism.

Take, for instance, the soaring interest in mechanical toys at century's end, which Hamlin does not take for granted as a necessary development, but instead dissects in all of its origins and implications. On the level of production, metal toys lent themselves more readily than wood or cloth toys to industrial mechanization, giving metal toy producers distinct advantages: the increased volume enabled by mechanization led to lower prices, while mechanical standardization often resulted in higher, more uniform levels of quality, making mechanical toys more attractive. Mechanization was also predicated, however, on specific, regional developments. Nuremberg, which up to mid-century was a locus of wooden toy production, later became the primary center of metal toy production partly because it had a social geography conducive to the change—as
a center of metalworking more generally, it had a pre-existing network of machine salesmen, engineers and repairmen to service the machines—and partly because of the rapidly rising price of wood in the Nuremberg area (as opposed to wood-rich areas like the Erzgebirge).

The rise of mechanical toys was also based on cultural factors, however, such as the importance of Christmas in smoothing over tensions within the bourgeois family. Nineteenth century parents found themselves “caught between a Foucauldian mission to discipline their children and a Romantic demand to allow them to develop into the individuals nature intended.” (15) The tension between these goals led to a daily routine of surveillance, tempered by Christmas as an occasion at which to relax the strictures of discipline in favor of unadulterated expressions of joy. To create this moment of release, parents sought toys with strong, immediate visual appeal—in particular, spectacular mechanical toys—that could spark feelings of pleasure and affection in children. Retailers also promoted mechanical toys, but for their own purposes. Nineteenth century toy producers rarely approached consumers directly or created distinctive brand names, relying instead on retailers as middlemen. Retailers in turn used the toys to sell themselves as desirable shopping venues. At Christmastime in particular, department stores found that moving toys were an effective way to capture the attention of distracted shoppers, and thus privileged electric trains, automobiles, and other mechanical toys in their display windows.

The growing popularity of mechanical toys spawned an aesthetic critique of the toy industry. As Hamlin argues, however, aesthetic reformers were not simply cultural pessimists fighting a rearguard action against modernity per se. Instead, they objected to the passivity induced by modern (mechanical) toys through their tendency to encourage spectatorship, not active, imaginative play. Rather than succumbing to anti-modern cultural despair, aesthetic reformers furnished an alternate vision of modernity through their discussion of toys, and thus avowed a belief in cultural renewal.

The latter point is tied to the overarching theme of Hamlin’s work: Wilhelmine Germany was a fully modern society, with a well-developed, consumer-based economy. Even the growing number of Heimarbeiter (domestic producers in cottage industries) was not a sign of Germany’s backwardness, as is often assumed, but rather a rational response to increased consumer demand by those branches of the toy industry unable to mechanize their production techniques (small wooden toys and hand-painted tin soldiers in particular). For these producers, greater self-exploitation and child labor represented a way to keep up with Germany’s modern consumer economy.

Hamlin never quite explains, however, how this modern economy changes our view of Germany’s political modernity. He implies a revisionist stance towards the Sonderweg thesis when he acknowledges that: “To argue that Wilhelmine Germany harbored a growing consumer society inevitably asserts the modernity of Germany before World War I—that it was not a semifeudal society dominated by preindustrial norms.” (6) Yet he never spells out exactly how consumer confidence affected politics, how it changed the balance of power, or whether the ‘marriage of iron and rye’—the conservative alliance of heavy industry with large, aristocratic landowners—was undermined by consumerism and its more liberal proponents. While Hamlin expertly connects economics,
culture and social issues, he spends less time on consumerism's political ramifications.

Consumer reception, and specifically how children appropriated toys, is also underplayed in Hamlin's account. Hamlin defends this lacuna by pointing to the difficulties in reconstructing childhood experiences through adult memoirs fashioned to conform to conscious life narratives. Nonetheless, by avoiding such sources, Hamlin gives an overly privileged position to the normative assumptions of pedagogues and parents. This becomes problematic, for instance, in the example of dolls, which were regarded by adults as the only suitable toys for girls. Hamlin takes these assessments as evidence that toys reinforced gender hierarchies in successive generations. However, other studies have indicated, on the basis of German memoir literature, that children often played with their siblings' toys, regardless of their gender designations. Understanding such cross-gendered play practices helps to explain not only how the habitus of femininity rooted in motherhood was replicated, but also how it could be undermined as toys inspired young girls to expect greater mobility. If some girls at the fin-de-siecle were playing with their brothers' safari sets, zeppelins, and electrical trains, this might provide a clue to the marked increase of female aviators, safari hunters and other women adventurers in the early twentieth century. Such private play practices are largely opaque to authority figures, and can only be recaptured through the voices of the actual consumers/users. This kind of reception history would have added an important element to an otherwise rich and stimulating book.

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SECTION 2
RACE

Challenging U.S. Apartheid: Atlanta and Black Struggles for Human Rights, 1960–1977. By Winston A. Grady-Willis (Durham: Duke University Press, 2006. xxii plus 288 pp. $22.95).

Winston A. Grady-Willis has made an important contribution to the historiography of the black freedom movement. He offers a fresh perspective by examining Atlanta, an important southern protest city. Drawing on archival research and oral interviews, Grady-Willis’s work challenges traditional interpretations that view the 1960s and 1970s as a struggle for civil rights; instead he frames black activism in terms of human rights. The former approach is problematic because, according to the author, “activists spoke in broader and more transcendent terms, embracing less confining descriptors such as freedom struggle and rights struggle” (xvii).

In addition, Grady-Willis places the human rights struggle within the broader context of international movements for self-determination. His second interpretive frame employs the term apartheid to describe “the scope of institutionalized