The Appropriation of a Commercial Trademark: The Golliwog as a Cultural Marker

Abstract

Peebles is an ancient small rural town in the border region of Southern Scotland. It was granted a Royal Burgh Charter in 1140 by King David I of Scotland. A major claim to fame is that it is the home of and a key breeding center for the worldfamous Border collie. Infamy surrounded the town in June 1991, when what should have been a joyous annual children’s parade turned into a national incident over a small number of children who were “blackened” up in a minstrel/Samboesque mode of dress. Critics of the costumes and “blacken-faced” young people saw them as golliwogs, a highly criticized doll-like figure from Enid Blyton’s “Noddy Series” of children’s books. Others saw them as a golliwog, the international trade character, of a major British jam manufacturer, James Robertson and Sons. Numerous dimensions that surrounded this incident and many other related points of view will be critically analyzed.
Golliwog. Quite the same Wikipedia. Just better. The golliwog, golliwogg or golly is a black fictional character created by Florence Kate Upton that appears in children's books in the late 19th century usually depicted as a type of rag doll. It was reproduced, both by commercial and hobby toy-makers as a children's toy called the "golliwog", and had great popularity in the UK and Australia into the 1970s. The doll is characterised by black skin, eyes rimmed in white, clown lips and frizzy hair. Though home-made golliwogs were sometimes female, the golliwog was generally male. For this reason, in the period following World