

make playwork.” That adults using playwork skills—as opposed to using other methods of supervision—better encourage children to play freely is an untested (but widely held) belief in the playwork field. *People Make Play* disregards the complexities involved in the provision of supervised play—complexities recognized and debated within the playwork field and generally referred to as “the playwork paradox.” This lack of grounding in the playwork literature results in the potential for misrepresenting the nature and purpose of playwork, despite the author’s best intentions. For example, although the author alludes to the need for enabling children to access space for play, although he mentions the need for adults to avoid taking over children’s play space, and although he reproduces the Playwork Principles in full, he obscures and contradicts the well-documented rationale of playwork practice with statements such as “The best opportunities to play are shaped by people—the ‘software of play’” (p. xix). This rationale can be summarily described as employing a compensatory methodology that seeks to facilitate play in time and space only if children are unable to play unsupervised.

Jack Lambert in his *Adventure Playgrounds: A Personal Account of a Play-leader’s Work* (1974) wrote that “Play, like everything else, is political.” In my view, *People Make Play* demonstrates the difficulty that organizations waging a campaign have in designing and commissioning research. Commissioned by Play England at a time of dwindling funding for the national play strategy, *People Make Play* perhaps unsurprisingly calls for further funding for staffed provision. Of course, there is nothing essentially

wrong with gathering “evidence” to argue causes, but there is a marked difference between lobbying and research. Confusing these two makes *People Make Play*, a bit of a curate’s egg, one that gathers valuable source material but fails to meet its objectives or to produce meaningful findings. Unfortunately for those of us in the playwork field, the publication also runs the risk of disseminating inaccurate and unhelpful information about the overall purpose of playwork provision. As this report correctly states, there is much work to be done in terms of playwork research, and it is a great shame that this report itself missed an opportunity to be a better contribution.

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Babysitter: An American History

Miriam Forman-Brunell

New York: New York University Press, 2009. Illustrations, notes, bibliography, index. 315 pp. \$30.00 cloth. ISBN: 9780814727591

Baby-sitters performed the crucial function of enabling ordinary, middle-class parents to participate in the emerging leisure economy of the mid-twentieth century. With a baby-sitter at home, adults were free to play. Yet, as the cover of *Baby-sitter: An American History* suggests by reproducing Norman Rockwell’s famous 1947 illustration for the *Saturday Evening Post* (called *Babysitter with Screaming Infant*), the baby-sitter had many disputed meanings—some factual, some fictional, and some mythical.

Norman Rockwell's painting for the *Saturday Evening Post* fixes the point of conflict as one between a young girl sitter and a large, angry baby on her lap within the circumscribed context of the postwar home. Seated in a flowered padded armchair, the disheveled girl struggles with a hair-pulling, screaming infant. Although the clock shows twenty minutes to midnight—and an American history textbook stuffed into the chair hints that the girl had work to do—the parents haven't returned yet and the baby is still up. The young girl desperately consults a manual for baby-sitters whose cover depicts a tranquil scene of a woman sitting outside giving a flower to a baby, highlighting the contrast between the reality of baby-sitting and the ideal imagined by child experts.

For Forman-Brunell the painting epitomizes the different—and sometimes oppositional—positions that parents, child experts, popular culture, and baby-sitters themselves took concerning the practice. She focuses on four major themes in twentieth-century America: adult anxieties occasioned by changing mores of gender and sexuality; the emergence of youth culture, the teenage girl, and worries about girlhood; the social meaning of popular culture and vocational learning; and the ongoing ambivalence of the sitters themselves. She draws on a wide range of sources to explore this topic, ranging from girls' fiction, to feminist self-help books, from soft pornography to popular television and film, from magazine articles to advice manuals. She also consults statistics, court records, and other official documents and the first-hand interviews she conducted with baby-sitters in her family.

The nine cleverly titled chapters of the

book proceed in loose chronological progression into the twenty-first century. For example, Forman-Brunell weaves shrewd, girl-centered feminist analysis through chapter 7, "Sisterhoods of Sitters" and chapter 9, "Coming of Wage at the End of the Century." Each chapter provides a succinct conclusion that effectively captures its argument, enabling the reader to read the book in multiple sittings by returning to the previous concluding section without losing the thread of the narrative. Yet because each chapter stands on its own, the reader can tackle sections out of order.

Readers will like the book on both a personal and academic level. As a boomer child who had baby-sitters, a girl who took the prescribed course but refused to sit, and the mother of a daughter who was a super sitter, I often saw reflections of my own life experiences as I read. At the same time, as a scholar of girlhood and of children's literature and culture, I appreciated the book's use of often-neglected sources like children's books (especially popular series books such as the 1980s series *Baby-Sitter's Club*), toys such as baby-sitter Barbie (1963), and baby-sitting board and computer games. Forman-Brunell sensitively mines these materials for insight, and her discussion of boys as sitters in relation to American ideas and issues of masculinity in the post-World War II period adds to our understanding of gender politics and identity. My only criticism is a slight one. As a Canadian, I could not help but notice that her discussion of Linda Bailey's 1993 young adult book *How Can I be a Detective if I Have to Baby-sit?* is not identified as Canadian except in the bibliographical information, and it left me

wondering how baby-sitting in Canada differed from the States.

Babysitter adds to the growing set of books Forman-Brunell has written or edited about girlhood and children's material culture. Like her *Made to Play House: Dolls and the Commercialization of American Girlhood, 1830–1930* (1993) and her coedited work *The Girls' History and Culture Reader* (2011), this book serves scholars teaching not only social history but also childhood studies, gender studies, girlhood and women's studies, and play history. Academics from a wide range of disciplines, as well as general readers, will enjoy it. That the examples of some of the artifacts discussed are part of the extensive collection of The Strong's National Museum of Play lends the book extra interest for readers of the *American Journal of Play*. Personally, I want to visit to see the baby-sitter Barbie doll with her pink striped apron! She may bear little resemblance to the exhausted baby-sitter in Rockwell's painting, but she presents another depiction of this important American institution that Forman-Brunell so effectively explores.

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The Exultant Ark: A Pictorial Tour of Animal Pleasure

Jonathan Balcombe

Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2011. Contents, images, notes, references, bibliography, index. 214 pp. \$34.95 cloth. ISBN: 9780520260245

Some years ago, my wife and I were hik-

ing along the rim of the Black Canyon of the Gunnison in central Colorado when a group of ravens suddenly appeared in front of us and began surfing the updrafts on the canyon walls. We watched them for a half hour as they swooped and whooped in the air currents like the kayakers at the white-water play spot in the river a few miles from my house. I could think of no explanation for the birds' behavior other than sheer joy. In *The Exultant Ark: A Pictorial Tour of Animal Pleasure*, Jonathan Balcombe combines anecdotes of similar events, recent discoveries in animal behavior, and stunning photographs to make the case that other species experience pleasure. The result is both intellectually and aesthetically satisfying.

I am not particularly fond of cute animal books, a genre which tends to feature mawkish images of chimps in diapers, sad-looking kittens, and big-eyed puppies. Thus, I approached *The Exultant Ark* with some apprehension. I was relieved to find it is not just another feel-good animal tome but an intriguing combination of science and art that also raises troubling ethical questions concerning our relationships with other species.

The Exultant Ark follows Balcombe's earlier, more scholarly treatment of this topic, *Pleasurable Kingdom: Animals and the Nature of Feeling Good*. The central argument of both holds that experience of pleasure is not restricted to *Homo sapiens*. In the first chapter of *The Exultant Ark*, Balcombe, who has a PhD in zoology, provides an accessible overview of the science of animal pleasure, which he calls "hedonic ethology." Arguing that "pleasure is nature's carrot," he correctly notes that the idea that human and nonhuman