

clearly brings together the important research of many underappreciated scholars in the field of animal play. I hope many people read the book and find it as rewarding as I did.

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—Jon-Paul C. Dyson, *The Strong National Museum of Play*, Rochester, NY

### **Repairing Play: A Black Phenomenology**

Aaron Trammell

Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2023.

Acknowledgments, introduction, conclusion, notes, references, and index. 144 pp. \$24.00 paper.

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*Repairing Play: A Black Phenomenology* highlights the long-overdue need to explore how the American conceptualization of play becomes romanticized through a White racial lens. As the title suggests, author Aaron Trammell argues that our understanding of play is flawed, incomplete, and even harmful. To address these shortcomings, he suggests that our theory of play needs to be repaired. Following the introduction, he uses five chapters to present his argument for why phenomenology through the Black experience could help us establish a more complete lens through which we can view play.

Chapter 1 calls for the decolonization of play. In this chapter, Trammell attributes the development of play theory to the work of Johan Huizinga. He provides details about how and why this theory developed out of Western European thought and experience and the conse-

quences of such a narrow lens. Here, he criticizes Huizinga for viewing Whites as civilized and determining that play is what civilized people do, thus concluding that play is natural to White people. Furthermore, Trammell explains how this starting point in play theory development led to the play of Black Indigenous People of Color (BIPOC) being scrutinized, demonized, or ignored. Trammell's opening discussion sets the stage for his thesis that the study of play needs to be freed from its roots in colonization.

In chapter 2 Trammell examines affect as a product of play and offers the study of affect as vital to understanding the Black play experience. This chapter reflects on the range of emotions that play produces and specifically on the emotional burdens play carries for Black people. Recognizing the pain that can derive from Black play, Trammell criticizes Huizinga once again for romanticizing play as producing only pleasure. Although play enthusiasts may be tempted to ignore the potential for play to produce pain, Trammell suggests that by embracing affect in its entirety as a product of play, we can have a richer understanding of the complexities of play for Black people.

In chapter 3 Trammell challenges the voluntary nature of play. While he discusses power in chapter 1, in this section of the book he expounds on how power influences play. He defies the assumption that everyone voluntarily engages in play. He provides examples to highlight moments of coerced or involuntary play for non-Whites. He touches on arrest, captivity, and policing to further the argument for involuntary engagement in play for BIPOC in general and Black people in particular.

He points out clearly that there are those who get to play and those who get played.

Trammell further delves into the concept of involuntary play and examines torture as a part of Black play in chapter 4. He speaks to how torture has become legitimized and invisible in our society. This tolerance has allowed torture to remain present even today to serve as a form of social control. He presents the example of the slave and slave owner to show the intimacy of some forms of torture. This allows him to shift to the Black radical tradition of singing. He immediately follows the slave and slave owner example with a discussion about how slave songs have helped (and continue to help) Black people cope with such torture, yet song or singing have often not been recognized as forms of play. Trammell argues that because of White supremacy, Whiteness has become invisible and Blackness has become shameful. Notably, this chapter focuses on the gaming sector to offer two key points. First, he discusses the consideration some Black gamers give to hiding their identity and avoiding the harassment that may occur when other gamers discover they are interacting with a Black player. Second, this chapter provides examples of how Black game developers currently engage in the Black radical tradition through the development in their games of their own characters, storylines, and objectives.

Three things contribute to the readability of this book. First, the writing style and length allows it to connect well with play professionals, play advocates, and play scholars alike. It is readily digestible and provides heady insights throughout. Second, Trammell is careful to articulate fully his thesis that play can produce

pleasure and pain. This has been conveniently overlooked in previous discussions of play, especially where the play of Black people and other BIPOC communities are concerned. And third, the book offers hope. Trammell refuses simply to tell a sad story of Black people and their play as devalued. He offers points of light throughout the chapters as he highlights historical and contemporary examples of Black people reclaiming their play spaces and the stories around their play experiences. This book is a valuable resource that all protectors of play should consider adding to their library.

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—Harrison P. Pinckney IV, *The Pennsylvania State University, State College, PA*

**Brian Sutton-Smith,  
Playful Scholar**

*Michael M. Patte, Fraser Brown, and  
Anna Beresin, eds.*

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List of figures, images and tables;  
foreword; introduction; appendix; about  
the contributors; index. 180 pp. \$34.99  
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The aptly titled, *Brian Sutton-Smith, Playful Scholar* celebrates his contributions to the study of play published in what would have been the hundredth year of his play life. Written in clear, engaging prose, it highlights Sutton-Smith's ability to navigate playfully multiple disciplinary territories in his thinking, research, and writings about play. Collectively and individually, the chapters provide a glimpse into Sutton-Smith's views on play that, like his concept of adaptive variability, were constantly