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Why The Politics of Breastfeeding Matter

By Gabrielle Palmer

Pinter and Martin,

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also available as an e-book.

Like many AIMS members, I suspect, I first read Gabrielle Palmer's groundbreaking book, *The Politics of Breastfeeding*, in 1988 and it changed the way I thought about the world. Picking up the new book, 'Why the Politics of Breastfeeding Matter', I didn't expect a similar effect but despite nearly three decades of living with her original message, her argument had lost none of its power and again I found it transforming my thinking.

Breastfeeding is vital for the health and well being of our global society in so many ways and becoming more and more important in a world besieged by humanitarian and environmental crises. Mass migration now affects the lives of 60 million people including five million infants who are particularly vulnerable to malnutrition and infection: mothers coming from Syria into Europe have already had their breastfeeding sabotaged causing appalling problems for aid workers. Gabrielle also discusses antibiotic resistance and climate change; greenhouse gas emissions attributed to milk powder are significantly higher because of extra processing so for every kilo of milk powder four kilos of greenhouse gases are emitted. Having been an HIV and Infant Feeding Officer for UNICEF and co-directing the Institute of Child Health in London in the 1990s she is well qualified to comment on legislation surrounding infant feeding, for example she contrasts the situation in India with that in China: in China the market for artificial milks for babies and infants grew by 90 per cent in the four years to 2012, whereas in India it grew by only 13 per cent because the Indian government has actually implemented the International Code of Marketing of Breastmilk Substitutes rather than simply signing up to it. The result has been childhood obesity in China. Thirty years ago the market in China had not opened up to infant 'formula', now it has, resulting in

manufacturing riches which some might consider to be beyond the dreams of wildest avarice.

The story is not one of helpful manufacturers who produce a breast milk substitute for the tiny number of women who cannot or choose not to feed their babies: it is a story of the triumph of neoliberal capitalism that has persuaded women that they can't successfully nourish their babies, causing 'commerciogenic malnutrition'. George Monbiot, (Guardian, 14 November), talks of human beings as being essentially both highly social and highly unselfish, and thus potentially able to avoid global catastrophe, but successful breastfeeding may have been a crucial part of the development of social beings.

Gabrielle exposes the process whereby women have been subjected to gross and overwhelming commercial pressures that inhibit their choices and wishes: she explains how misinformation and inept care crush their confidence and innate skills. 'All over the world there are breast milk famines, they are not caused by nature but by a loss of entitlement'. Gabrielle calls breastfeeding, 'the great equaliser', giving a baby born into poverty the chance to be as intelligent and healthy as one born into wealth. This book is a call to arms to protect nothing less than the future of the human race.

Gill Boden

The Princess and the Poo

by Lara Fairy



Available from AIMS soon

This story was lovely and though short and simple it held a useful and good lesson. I enjoyed the illustrations they contributed well to the story. I think that the word 'abundantly' is a good word but if little children were to read it they might not understand it but that is my only fault. I think many people would love this book. It is a magical story, excellent lesson and great topic.

A flawless and amazing story

Tilly Weston (aged 14)

Girls need to know how about poo – especially perfect princesses *'For if you know how to poo... you know how to have babies.'*

This book tells a fairy story and so with humour and a light touch teaches a lesson about babies and poo. It is not a biology lesson, but a lesson in life, an empowering lesson in life.

'The knowledge contained, In each little body, Knows all the moves, For birthing a baby!'

Every woman needs to be conditioned and empowered to know this and:

'There's no describing the power, That comes from within, As you deal with your pain, And face up to your fears'

Girls need to read this book to learn about poo and babies and the power of womanhood. Mothers and Grannies should read this to know how to be a crone and how to support their daughter and daughter-in-laws.

Finally, this book makes a hilarious one act play, when acted out at a conference.

A book for your bookshelf and possibly your toilet.

Ruth Weston