

have rather a heavy suckling burden and because the breasts are so obviously a part of the feeding apparatus, we have automatically assumed that their protruding, rounded shape must also be part and parcel of the same parental activity. But it now looks as though this assumption has been wrong and that, for our species, breast design is primarily sexual rather than maternal in function.

Leaving the question of feeding, it is worth looking at one or two aspects of the way a mother behaves towards her baby at other times. The usual fondling, cuddling and cleaning require little comment, but the position in which she holds the baby against her body when resting is rather revealing. Careful American studies have disclosed the fact that 80 per cent of mothers cradle their infants in their left arms, holding them against the left side of their bodies. If asked to explain the significance of this preference most people reply that it is obviously the result of the predominance of right-handedness in the population. By holding the babies on their left arms, the mothers keep their dominant arm free for manipulations. But a detailed analysis shows that this is not the case. True, there is a slight difference between right-handed and lefthanded females, but not enough to provide an adequate explanation. It emerges that 83 per cent of right-handed mothers hold the baby on the left side, but then so do 78 per cent of left-handed mothers. In other words, only xx per cent of the left-handed mothers have their dominant hands free for action. Clearly there must be some other, less obvious explanation.

The only other clue comes from the fact that the heart is on the left side of the mother's body. Could it be that the sound of her heart-beat is the vital factor? And in what way? Thinking along these lines it was argued that perhaps during its existence inside the body of the mother, the growing embryo becomes fixated ('imprinted') on the sound of the heart-beat. If this is so, then the re-discovery of this familiar sound after birth might have a calming effect on the infant, especially as it has just been thrust into a strange and frighteningly new world outside. If this is so then the