

the parent itself. The animal has become the symbol of its child. The real child is too young to be a real parent, so instead it becomes a symbolic parent. Ownership of the animal becomes important and petkeeping develops as a form of 'infantile parentalism'. It is no accident that, since becoming available as an exotic pet, the animal previously known as the galago has now acquired the popular name of bushbaby. (Parents should be warned from this that the pet keeping urge does not arrive until late in childhood. It is a grave error to provide pets for very young children, who respond to them as objects for destructive exploration, or as pests.)

here is one string exception to the second law of animal appeal and that concerns the horse. The response to this animal is unusual in two ways. When analysed against increase in age of children, it shows a smooth rise in popularity followed by an equally smooth fall. The peak coincides with the onset of puberty. When analysed against the different sexes, it emerges that it is three times as popular with girls as with boys. No other animal love shows anything approaching this sex difference. Clearly there is something unusual about the response to the horse and it requires separate consideration.

The unique feature of the horse in the present context is that it is something to be mounted and ridden. This applies to none of the other top ten animals. If we couple this observation with the facts that its popularity peak coincides with puberty and that there is a strong sexual difference in its appeal, we are forced to the conclusion that the response to the horse must involve a strong sexual element. If a symbolic equation is being made between mounting a horse and sexual mounting, then it is perhaps surprising that the animal has a greater appeal for girls. But the horse is a powerful, muscular and dominant animal and is therefore more suited to the male role. Viewed objectively, the act of horse-riding consists of a long series of rhythmic movements with the legs wide apart and in close contact with the body of the animal. Its appeal for girls appears to result from the combination of its masculinity and the nature of the posture and actions performed