

THE WOMAN WITH THE ZEBRA'S PENIS: GENDER, MUTABILITY AND PERFORMANCE by Camilla Power and Ian Watts

TABLE 1. Syntax of Khoisan and Hadza gender construction.

In certain African cultures (the Khoisan and Hadza), gender appears mutable and paradoxical with respect to sex. During initiation ritual, girls acquire 'masculine' characteristics, such as penises and hunting weapons; boys are treated as menstruants. Anthropological models of a hierarchized 'masculine' v. 'feminine', correlated with biological sex, would not predict such reversals. Alternative models of 'multiple' genders fail to account for the structural similarities between female and male initiations, which tend to unify gender irrespective of sex. Using data on Khoisan and Hadza ritual and myth, with illustrations from southern African rock art, a 'native model' of gendered symbolic oppositions is presented. This indigenous model represents gender as mutable through time, and as correlated with ritual potency, not with biological sex; the model thereby supports predictions made by the 'sex-strike' theory of the origins of symbolic culture.

Sex or gender?

Does anthropology need the two words 'sex' and 'gender'? Recent sociobiological literature increasingly employs the term 'gender' as a redundant synonym for 'sex' in discussion of animal behaviour (e.g. Ridley 1993; and see Goodhart 1996). While biologists collapse gender into nature, some feminist theorists create a conflation of another kind. The philosopher Butler, for instance, argues that 'the distinction between sex and gender turns out to be no distinction at all', on the grounds that sex 'is as culturally constructed as gender; indeed, perhaps, it always already was gender' (1990: 7). For her, sex collapses wholly into culture.

Postmodernists stress context in the usage of the terms 'sex' and 'gender'. Even within the same volume (e.g. di Leonardo 1991; Miller 1993a), the meaning of the term 'gender' may vary: to some authors it connotes basic biological differences, while to others it signifies some undefined combination of biological characteristics and arbitrary cultural constructs. Feminist cultural anthropologists, having spent the last two decades attempting to distinguish between gender and sex 'in an effort to denaturalize asymmetry' (Morris 1995: 567), will surely object to descriptions of the selfish-gene-driven strategies of primates as 'gendered behaviour' (e.g. Sperling 1991). On the other hand, biologists are entitled to look askance at postmodern notions of sex as 'the effect of gender', of 'embodied sex' as purely socially constructed. No amount of wishing away the perceived threat of reductionism will remove certain anatomical constraints. One sex menstruates and gets pregnant; one sex does not. To be sure, culture can affect these processes. But such gene-specified developments may proceed without cultural intervention at all.

There can only be one reason for needing both terms - the same fundamental reason that two separate branches of anthropology exist. Symbolic culture differentiates humans from animals. Any serious discussion of the relationship between sex and gender entails problematizing the origin of symbolic culture itself (cf. Ortner 1974). In fact, as a means of provoking communication between both sides of the discipline, the problem of cultural origins can be reframed as the 'Origin of Gender'. This article is offered with a universalizing intent. We aim to make an assault on the muddle in the middle of sex and gender - somewhat in the spirit of Ortner (1974) in her landmark essay -by positing cultural universals.

There are occasions in the biological literature when 'gender' is used advisedly. An example is a recent article on hermaphrodite snails which states: 'the term gender

is used to indicate the behavioural nature of sexual function because such organisms cannot be labelled as either sex' (De Witt 1996: 345). Such anomalous examples reveal how sexual ambiguity forces authors, even biologists, to resort to use of 'gender' instead of sex. In these cases, gender refers to acts rather than essences. This idea has powerfully motivated the theorists of gender performativity, notably Butler. If everything could be unambiguously described in terms of sexual difference, what need would there be for the word gender? Butler presents 'drag' - performances of cross-dressing and cross-sex impersonation - as the arch-metaphor, the quintessential act of gender, which enacts and reveals gender's imitative function (1990: viii, 137; and see Morris 1995: 580). If gender fundamentally involves thumbing the nose at the necessities of sex, then we see unambiguously that gender is not sex, and sex is not gender.

In the two decades since Ortner wrote of gender as a structure of sexual hierarchy rooted in the essentials of reproduction, feminist anthropologists have been wrestling with the implicit reductionism of her compelling argument. To overthrow Ortner's position, it was necessary to repudiate any reductionist mapping of gender onto sex. Despite the persistence of the view of gender as a cultural construct independent of sex (e.g. MacCormack & Strathern 1980; Moore 1988; Overing 1986), no satisfactory theoretical grounds for this 'independence' have been established (but see Amadiume 1987). Indeed, much recent feminist work accepts that there is a biologically determined component to gender (e.g. Miller 1993b: 4; Nicholson 1994: 82; Worthman 1995: 599). This has left Ortner's model to haunt feminist anthropology with several of its assumptions intact: first, that gender consists in a universal dichotomy between 'masculine' and 'feminine'; secondly, that these categories ultimately correlate with male-female biological sex; and thirdly, that underlying all gender representations is a hierarchical relationship between the powerful masculine and the disempowered feminine.

In her single, dazzling image of gender as drag, Butler severs the Gordian knot of sex and gender. This bold gesture captures the parodic relationship between gender and sex which has eluded feminist research for the past twenty years. Yet as soon as Butler's theory is transposed beyond a contemporary capitalist environment, she, like Ortner, becomes vulnerable to the charge that she is imposing Western conceptual paradigms. Surely, only a Western conceit could imagine that gender is a 'free-floating artifice' detached from the binary constraints of mammalian sex (Butler 1990: 6). Butler's notion (after Irigaray) of women as the sex which is 'multiple ... unconstrainable and undesignatable' (1990: 9) yields a view of gender as a 'multiple interpretation of sex', permitting any model of gender desired. But does such licence to explore 'multiple models' match the realities of life for women in populations lacking contraception? After all, members of these populations have carried out the vast majority of gender 'performances' throughout the course of human evolution and history.

Drag artistes themselves rely on the underlying binary structure of sex to perpetrate subversive acts of symbolic reversal. If anybody can be any number of genders imaginable, what is being subverted? If collective expectations are not aroused, what is being imitated? Butler assumes that binary structure is implicitly hierarchical and must constrain gender within compulsory heterosexuality (the same presumption which Ortner made). But just imagine for a moment that gender emerged in a performance of compulsory non-heterosexuality. Retain the binary structure of sexuality, because we do in general retain male and female bodies. But suppose that gender, in so far as it is performance, is a function of ritual, performative power, not of biological sex. Suppose that a person's gender can be transformed as performance occurs or does not occur. Here, gender is constrained by a binary structure, but does not consist in sexual hierarchy since either sex may

'perform' the same gender at any given time. Gender has a mutable, non-mimetic relationship to sex.

Such a model is a corollary of a recent theory concerning the origins of symbolic culture, the 'sex-strike' hypothesis.(n1) Knight (1991; 1997; Knight et al. 1995) posits a model of symbolic cultural origins based in a female strategy of periodically refusing sex to all males except those who supplied them with fatty meat. The symbolic domain emerged through collective female defiance expressed in ritual performance. The signature of sex-strike is a systematic reversal of the 'normal' signals of animal courtship (Knight et al. 1995: 84). While mate recognition in the animal world involves signalling 'right species/right sex/right (i.e. fertile) time', sex-striking human females would deter male advances through a ritual pantomime of 'wrong species/wrong sex/wrong (i.e. infertile) time'. In the light of sex-strike theory, gender at origin is inseparable from ritual power, and from ontological ambiguities in which humans can metamorphose into non-humans and females into males.

In many cultures, gender as a set of representations or fantasies is inculcated during initiation ceremonies. Repeatedly, we see in these ceremonies the signature of the sex strike: ritual power expressed as 'wrong sex'. While it is being ritually constructed, gender opposes 'normal' sex: female initiates enact the roles of males and male initiates acquire female attributes. Only when ritual constraints are relaxed is biological sex disambiguated.

From the viewpoint of Ortner's model of dichotomized sexual hierarchy, such a pattern is anomalous. Her model would suggest that initiation, as the ritual construction of gender, should emphasize masculine 'cultural' empowerment versus feminine 'natural' weakness. Recurrent conflation of the sexes, with deliberate transgression of human/animal boundaries, would not seem to fit.

Neither do the coercive aspects of initiation rites meet Butler's notion of 'free-floating' multiple models of gender. Rather, if gender correlates with ritual power, it will prove intolerant of multiplicity, preserving a digital on/off structure (cf. Rappaport 1979). Indeed, Butler herself is fully aware that performative force necessarily constrains multiplicity (1990: 24).

This article takes data on initiation ritual and tests predictions deriving from the three models of the relationship between sex and gender discussed above (Butler 1990; Knight et al. 1995; Ortner 1974).(n2) The material will be drawn from the ritual, myth and rock art of two African hunter-gatherer cultures: the Khoisan peoples of southern Africa and the Hadza of Tanzania. These are societies fundamentally structured by gender. First, we examine Khoisan and Hadza gender constructs, and then assess how well Ortner's model of a hierarchized masculine/feminine dichotomy accommodates our data. Next, we ask whether the metaphor of 'gender as drag' provides useful insights into Khoisan and Hadza initiation, and what licence these rituals give to multiple gender models. Finally, we examine the rituals in the light of sex-strike theory. In this model, gender is an expression of original ritual power. It is constrained within a binary structure - ritual power is either 'on' or 'off' - but is mutable with respect to sex.

Ideological continuity among the Khoisan

Despite considerable differences in their former subsistence pursuits, the Khoisan 'share a great number of common features of territorial organization, gender relations, kinship, ritual and cosmology' (Barnard 1992: 3). Their linguistic and genetic diversity suggest that their culture has great time-depth. Barnard (1992:

297) warns that the recent focus on the past two thousand years of hunter-herder interaction (cf. Wilmsen 1989) has highlighted 'those aspects of [Khoisan] culture which are most susceptible to outside influences - those related to production and trade'. These, he suggests, are the least 'structural' of cultural elements. Such an approach 'grants the Bushmen history, but it minimizes the uniqueness and resilience of their cultures' (1992: 298). To explain change adequately, Barnard continues, 'we need to understand the basic structure of belief' (1992: 298).

Few have done more to elucidate this 'basic structure of belief' than Lewis-Williams who has revolutionized rock art research through his decoding of Khoisan rock paintings in terms of trance experience. His fieldwork in the Kalahari with Biese (Lewis-Williams & Biese 1978) revealed significant correspondences between Ju/'hoan (!Kung)(n3) initiation and the ritual practices of the extinct/Xam of the Cape Province. The/Xam ethnography gathered by Bleek & Lloyd (1911), in turn, matched descriptions of certain Drakensberg rock paintings elicited by Orpen (1874) from a young Maluti Bushman. There are no reliable estimates of the age of Drakensberg paintings (Mazel 1993). However, Lewis-Williams finds the art and the nineteenth-century ethnography to be 'complementary expressions of a single belief system' (1981: 34). He demonstrates a coherence of structure and metaphor operating in menarcheal, first-kill and marriage ritual contexts, shamanic rainmaking and medicine dances. Ritual trance experience, in his view, was the prime ideological means of organizing the relations of production and exchange central to social harmony and healing (Lewis-Williams 1982). But, as Lewis-Williams himself originally showed (1981), and Solomon (1992; 1994; 1996) and Parkington et al. (in press) have recently re-emphasized, initiation is also represented in Khoisan art and clearly overlaps in its structure with trance.

Khokan ritual construction of gender: female initiation

The most renowned of Khoisan initiation practices is the Eland Bull dance, the climax of a girl's first menstruation ceremony. Prevalent in the Kalahari, this dance or its close equivalent probably belonged to southern groups as well. A painting at Fulton's Rock in the Drakensberg Mountains (fig. 1) has been interpreted as representing the dance (Lewis-Williams 1981: 41 sqq.).

The central figure - the secluded girl - lies under a cloak inside a hut, like a Ju/'hoan initiate. Among the Ju/'hoansi, the girl is 'created' an adult when women of the band dance, pantomiming the mating behaviour of elands. The painting expresses two strong antitheses, observed in ritual practice. One is between the menstruant in her state of potency and hunting weapons: in the panel, men and their weapons are kept to the periphery. The other is between the maiden and sexual contact with men. One man standing aside but watching has a large penis with a bar across. Other visible penises in the picture are similarly barred. This common rock art motif was first interpreted by Vinnicombe (1976: 257-9), in the light Khoisan ethnography, as a reference to the sexual abstinence required as a condition of hunting luck.

Yet, sex is occurring in this picture - a fantasy of animal sex. The women pretend to be eland cows, dressed with tails of ostrich eggshell beads, wagging their buttocks towards the girl in the hut. In typical Ju/'hoan or Nharo practice (Barnard 1980: 117-18), one or two older men may join the dance wearing horns as 'bulls' (two figures carry sticks in the picture). They sidle up to the 'cows', sniffing at their rears. According to older accounts, the dance could 'easily become indecent' (Schapera 1930: 119, but see England 1995: 264). The heavy, deliberate dancing, the clicking of adze blades as eland hooves and the women's Eland Song summon up the presence of the eland (stippled shape seen next to the ithyphallic man in figure 1).

Maiden as hunter. In Khoisan cosmology, the 'coldness' of menstrual blood opposes the 'heat' of effective arrow poison (Biese 1993: 196). A Ju/'hoan man will not hunt while his wife menstruates lest his poison 'cool' and he himself becomes hunted by carnivores (1993: 93). The same taboo exists among the Hadza (Woodburn 1982: 188). Hunters' fears of menstrual blood are recorded among the G/wi (Silberbauer 1981: 119) and !Xo (Heinz 1966: 209). A menstruating woman, then, negatively affects hunting and hunting gear. Yet, precisely in the context of initiation, when she is created as a gendered woman, the new maiden ritually and metaphorically takes up hunting weapons. Of the Ju/'hoan girl, people say: 'She has shot an eland' (Lewis-Williams 1981: 51). A similar metaphor is used by the Hadza for menarche: 'she has shot her first zebra!' a. Woodburn, pers. comm., 1993). Among the !Xo, this shooting is ritually enacted. On the final day of seclusion, a gemsbok-skin shield is hung at the back of the menstrual hut, and the maiden is helped by the mistress of ceremonies to shoot it with arrows. This is intended to bring the weapons luck according to Heinz (1966: 122).

Here, then, we have symbolic reversal in conjunction with menstruation: a hunter whose wife is menstruating risks becoming hunted, while the new maiden herself becomes a hunter. During seclusion, observes Lewis-Williams 'the girl becomes the focal point of the whole band. Everyone is actually or potentially in a ritual relationship with her' (1981: 52). Establishing the correct ritual relationships is vital if the girl's supernatural potency is to become a force for good. /Xam narratives are preoccupied with the devastating effects of any breach of menstrual observances. Yet through her potency, the new maiden is able 'to bestow the benefits of, specifically, "fatness", rain and successful hunting' (Lewis-Williams 1981: 52). The effect of the girl's potency on future hunting is channelled in the Fulton's Rock painting by the game shaman (seated, right) who points a finger of power at the giant eland summoned by the women's dance.

On her emergence, transfer of the new maiden's power was effected through ritual distribution of substances, typically red ochre, the aromatic herb buchu - antidote to excesses of potency - and scented eland fat. The Ju/'hoan maiden takes a portion of eland fat mixed with buchu to each fire in her camp. The effect is that 'everyone will be hot (eager) for eating and the men will want to go hunting' (Lewis-Williams 1981: 51).

Maiden as eland. Why an Eland Bull dance? !Kun/obe, an old Ju/'hoan woman, told Lewis-Williams:

The Eland Bull dance is danced because the eland is a good thing and has much fat. And the girl is also a good thing and she is all fat; therefore they are called the same thing (1981: 48).

Great energy is invested in stressing this identity of girl and Eland Bull. The ochre design painted on the young woman's cheeks and forehead may represent the eland's red tufted forelock (Lewis-Williams 1981: 70); her seclusion at menstruation may be described in terms of 'eland sickness' (Lewis-Williams 1981: 43); during that time, she must not eat eland meat (Biese 1993: 136) and must refer to elands by the respect or avoidance word dabba; on emergence, she must lower her eyes so that the eland will not see the stalking hunter (Lewis-Williams 1981: 51); and she is smeared with eland fat. Similar injunctions were placed on /Xam and !Xo maidens. Merely by looking up, the /Xam girl could make the game 'wild' (Hewitt 1986: 285). The !Xo ceremony is called the Eland Bull dance (Heinz 1966: 123-4), although the girl is painted with a gemsbok mask.

The menstruating maiden, then, is simultaneously a hunter and herself the hunted animal. This ambiguity matches that of the eland itself, which in Ju/'hoan thought is paradoxical and polysemic. The Ju/'hoansi informed Lewis-Williams that among all the antelope species they hunt, the female always has more fat, except in the unique case of the eland (1981: 72). An old bull eland accumulates so much fat around its heart that a man cannot put his arms around it. The bull eland - like the pubertal girl - is the emblem of 'fatness'. The girl undergoes the Eland Bull dance, according to !Kun/obe, 'so that she won't be thin ... she won't be very hungry ... all will go well with the land and the rain will fall' (1981: 50). The emphasis on the identical fatness of girl and eland confirms that she is the bull eland, that bull being curiously 'female' in its fatness. A Transvaal engraving illustrates this capacity of the eland to unite opposites (fig. 2): both male and female are shown within one outline. Androgyny and fatness mark the bull eland as the prime metaphor of transformation, the animal de passage of Khoisan initiation rites (Lewis-Williams 1981: 72).

Eating or drinking fat, writes Bieseile, is a Ju/'hoan euphemism for sex (1993: 86). Men, as carnivores, hunt and 'eat' women, as herbivores (cf. McCall 1970). Fat, as a liquid solid, is a mediator, 'the cool result of a union of hot and cold' (Bieseile 1993: 196). Consumption of fat, continues Bieseile, 'is metaphoric of the sexual mediation between semen (hot) and menstrual blood (cold)' (1993: 196). Implicit in this metaphor is an opposition between sexual availability and non-availability. The good hunter fears eating or sleeping with his wife in case his arrow poison cools. After a successful hunt, however, he would greet his wife 'with special fervour. He would "praise the meat" ... he would see her buttocks and her legs and would be happy "because the meat had fat and was fat"' (1993: 197). It is hard to tell, comments Bieseile, which meat - animal or woman - is being discussed: 'The metaphors tying women to the enchanted, hunted prey are so intricate as utterly to defy untangling' (1993: 197).

In the Eland Bull dance, the symbols of blood and fat, hunting and sex work in dynamic interaction. The menarcheal maiden is dangerous, potent, supremely unavailable; yet she is fat, a 'good thing', about to become available.

Maiden and the moon. This mutable gender of the secluded maiden is vividly expressed through her connexion to the moon. The Ju/'hoansi speak of menstruation as a sickness, sometimes called 'eland sickness', but often attributed to the moon. 'The moon torments me' is to have menstrual cramps (Bieseile 1993: 93). Among the Nharo, 'moon medicine' is used to treat menstrual discomfort (Barnard 1979). Bleek notes a Hadza belief that women become 'ill' when they see the moon (1930: 700). The /Xam called the girl's tiny seclusion hut 'the house of illness' (Bleek & Lloyd 1911: 201), and equated the menstruating girl and the moon through their commensurate powers of cooling arrow poison (Bleek & Lloyd 1911: 67, 77). In the story The moon is not to be looked at when game has been shot, the moon's dripping water, like liquid honey, falls on the game, cools the poison and revives it. The prohibition on hunters looking at the moon refers to the terrible consequences for a man if the secluded girl should glance at him: he is turned into a tree or a stone (Hewitt 1986: 79).

The /Xam, the !Xu and the G/wi and G/ana released a menarcheal girl from seclusion at the appearance of the new moon (Bleek 1928: 122; Lloyd n.d.b: 4001-2; Valiente Noailles 1993: 94-7). The maiden in her 'sickness' and emergence dies and is reborn to wax fat with the moon. Through this identification with the crescent moon, the maiden is again gendered masculine, in a metaphor of transformation. According to !Xu informants, the new moon is said to be either a child or a man, the full moon a woman: 'as a man it comes, as a woman it dies away' (Bleek 1928:

122). A similar grammatical gendering- male crescent, female full moon -has been found by Silberbauer (1981: 126-7) among the G/wi, and by Marshall among Nyae Nyae Ju/'hoansi, Nharo, G/wi and G//ana groups (1986: 181).

Just as the potency of the maiden influences hunting success, the underlying associations of the moon's gender concern the future availability of food, especially of fat. Khoisan ethnography is replete with references to beliefs linking success in the hunt to lunar periodicity (e.g. Bleek 1920-21: 302, 328, 455, 469; Estermann 1976: 17; Kohler 1978/9; Lloyd n.d.a 5206-40; Silberbauer 1965: 101; Viegas Guerreiro 1968: 97, 297). The waxing phase is believed to bring hunting luck. The full moon, by contrast, is associated with satisfaction (Marshall 1986: 180), being the ideal time to provide large game as brideservice (cf. Potgieter 1955: 11). The gender mutability of the moon - like the eland's turns on its fatness. The eland and the moon appear to be interchangeable symbols in /Xam narratives (see Hewitt 1986: 214 sqq.).

Maiden and the rain. Galvanizing this shared identity of the maiden, the eland and the moon is a potent relationship between the maiden and the rain. This again involves a construction of gender. The /Xam distinguished between the desired, gentle 'female' rain, which fell softly, and the destructive 'male' rain (Bleek 1933: 309). The danger lay in the maiden's capacity to summon and unleash this 'male' power. Violation of menarcheal observances roused the wrath of the being !Khwa, manifested as a whirlwind, black pebbles, lightning or Rain Bull. This caused the utmost social calamity. Culture itself unravelled as skin bags reverted to their 'raw' form as game animals. The girl and her kin were transformed into frogs, the Rain's creatures (Hewitt 1986: 77-9). Female rain was never mentioned in puberty lore (Hewitt 1986: 284). The word !Khwa stood for water and also connoted menstrual blood (Hewitt 1986: 284). /Xam informants emphasized that !Khwa was attracted by 'the odour of the girl' (Hewitt 1986: 285). The girl's contact with water was rigorously controlled during seclusion (1986: 279). Yet, on her emergence, such contact was vitally necessary for preserving supplies. The maiden had to sprinkle the current water source with powdered haematite (Hewitt 1986: 281), otherwise !Khwa might cause the pool to dry up. She painted the young men with haematite stripes 'like a zebra', to protect them from !Khwa's lightning. 'When she is a maiden, she has the rain's magic power', explained the /Xam informant Dia!kwain. She could snap her fingers to call the lightning and 'make the rain kill us' (Bleek 1933: 297).

Lewis-Williams notes that a single adjective, //ka:n, is used in the /Xam phrases for 'new maiden' and 'new or fresh-fallen rain' (1981: 52). The word can also mean raw or uncooked. The new rain, like the new maiden, was in a state of special potency, demanding respect. The Ju/'hoansi, who also distinguish between male and female rain (Marshall 1957), share this view of the great potency (n/um) both of the rain that has just fallen and of the pubertal girl. An ancient symbolic association of rain and eland has been discovered through analysis of Khoisan music. The Rain Song and Eland Songs, used in the Eland Bull Dance, are composed in what England calls the Rain-Eland scale, comprising 'the oldest layer of Bushman tonal material' (1995: 264).

The G/wi and !Xu (Marshall 1986: 202) enact a direct symbolic association between the menarcheal girl and rain or lightning. Among the G/wi, Silberbauer saw the initiate, on her emergence, taken on a run through a 'symbolic shower of rain' by the young women and girls (1981: 152). Among the !Xu, the male spirit identified with the lightning (//gaua) led the initiate's dance. The girl was tattooed with marks in honour of//gaua (Bleek 1928: 122-3).

The eland is readily identifiable as a rain animal. Schmidt argues that before the coming of pastoralism the eland was the Rain Bull. The great antelope lay at the core of an ancient hunter-gatherer cultural complex which linked in a chain of symbols 'trickster/moon/lightning/rain/fertility/life/eland/horns' (Schmidt 1979: 219-20). In Ju/'hoan belief, people and certain large game animals possess a force called n!ow which influences the weather (Bieseile 1993: 87 sqq.; Marshall 1957). Ju/'hoansi hunters burnt eland horns to manipulate this force. The concept of n!ow directly links women's reproductive capacities with the killing of game. In Ju/'hoan thought, the most powerful and determinant effects of n!ow occur when the

n!ow of the hunter interacts with the n!ow of the antelope, the n!ow of the woman interacts with the n!ow of the child newly born ... when the blood of the antelope falls upon the ground as the antelope is killed, when the fluid of the womb falls upon the ground at the child's birth, the interaction of n!ows takes place, and this brings a change in the weather (Thomas 1959: 162).

Rain was conceptualized as the flowing of blood (cf. Bleek 1933: 309). Rainmaking ritual among the Auen involved sprinkling the ground with 'red earth', probably haematite (Schapera 1930: 196). The /Xam informant /Hannot equal to kasso spoke of celebrations for the new rains in these terms: 'they do this when the rain falls, they come out, they run about. They are all red' (Lloyd n.d.c 7463). Red, in both Ju/'hoan and /Xam thought, connotes beauty and joy, ceremony and ornament (cf. Lewis-Williams & Bieseile 1978: 21). The redness of the rain can be understood as a deep structure of Khoisan cosmology, associated with the periodic bloodflow of women and of the great antelopes. The seasonal periodicity of the flowing of the rain's 'blood' and the lunar periodicity of the initiate's bloodflow were brought into cosmic alignment by means of the dances performed to the ancient scale of the Rain Song and the Eland Songs. Emerging from darkness as the young moon which brings luck and light to the hunt, the new maiden possessed the 'rain's magic power'. As hunter and homed antelope herself, in the potency of her rawness and wetness, she was gendered 'male'.

Ju/'hoan and /Xam first-kill observances: parallels with menarcheal rites

Among the /Xam, close parallels between menarcheal ritual and the eland-kill ceremony for boys have been noted by both Hewitt (1986) and Lewis-Williams (1981). Lewis-Williams has also revealed striking correspondences between /Xam and Ju/'hoan puberty and first-kill observances, as well as between the ceremonies for girls and those for boys within each culture (1981: 61; cf. Lewis-Williams & Bieseile 1978).

Like the maiden, the young hunter is symbolically identified with the eland. Where the girl suffers 'eland sickness', the boy limps slowly as the wounded prey; both boy and girl keep their eyes down, so that the game will not look about; both boy and girl are marked with specific 'eland' designs and smeared with eland fat in the course of initiation. The young hunter is conceptually identified with the menstrual girl from the moment he has shot the poisoned arrow into the antelope. The /Xam explicitly likened the first-kill hunter to a menarcheal girl (Lloyd n.d. b: 4386). The counterpart of the super-destructive !Khwa, guardian of menarcheal observances, is /Kaggen, a gender-ambivalent trickster (Hewitt 1986: 153-4). Creator and protector of the game, /Kaggen tries to trick the hunter out of his prey. During the critical waiting period after the animal has been shot and before the hunter can start tracking it down, /Kaggen provokes the hunter to break the tenuous link between himself and the animal by sudden or vigorous movements which would revive the game and counteract the poison. The hunter's slow limping mimics the desired effect of the poison on the prey.

Like the maiden, the boy is in an antithetical relation to hunting weapons: he cannot touch the shaft of the arrow (Hewitt 1986: 126; Lewis-Williams 1981: 58 sqq.). In both cases there are strictures concerning bloodshed and the cooling of arrow poison: if /Kaggen comes in the form of a louse and bites the boy, the boy cannot kill the louse because 'its blood will be on his hands with which he grasped the arrow and when he shot the eland, the blood will enter the arrow and cool the poison' (Dia!kwain's account, in Bleek 1932: 233-40). Where the boy limps painfully back to camp, a girl who starts menstruating in the veld cannot walk back, but must be carried. She must not draw attention to her condition but sit and wait silently for other women or girls to approach. A young /Xam or Ju/'hoan hunter remains silent and peripheral until approached. Like the menstruant, the first-kill hunter is secluded and tended as if 'ill' (Lewis-Williams 1981: 58). The same ritual injunctions are placed on both boy and girl: food avoidances and rationing, keeping away from cooking fire, keeping out of the sun, not moving and not touching the earth. The /Xam took precautions over the dangerous 'scent' of both boy and girl.

Ju/'hoan female and male ceremonies are structurally similar. An 'eland medicine dance' is held beside the freshly killed eland while the men are still in the veldt Performed 'in praise of the fat' with no women present, this may be seen as the male counterpart of the Eland Bull dance (Lewis-Williams 1981: 60). On the return to camp, successful eland hunters are greeted with a special praise-call by the women, also uttered to praise the menarcheal maiden as she takes small pieces of fat to each fire (1981: 61). Among the Ju/'hoansi, the same word is used to denote the 'creation' of the gender of the boy and the girl. Scarifications (involving bloodshed) are said to 'create' the new hunter; the Eland Bull dance 'creates' the new maiden (1981: 62). Both are then adults, eligible for marriage. Discussing the symbolic androgyny of the eland in relation to the initiates, Lewis-Williams describes both boy and girl as 'neither male nor female' (1981: 72). We suggest that maiden and hunter take on the potency of both male and female, a ritual potency symbolized by the eland representing a unified gender.

Themes of initiation in Khoisan rock art

The double-sexed image from Willcox's Shelter in the Drakensberg (fig. 3) makes the point. This belongs to a set of very similar images from Natal and Lesotho (see Vinnicombe 1976: 160-1), which can be included in a large general set of spread-legged figures found from the Cape to Tanzania. Solomon (1992; 1994; 1996), contra Lewis-Williams & Dowson (1989: 173), links these to Khoisan initiation rather than to trance. The figures are often enigmatic, difficult to sex; they may well refer to initiates in seclusion. The Willcox's Shelter image signals ritual potency through the metaphor of the 'female' whose attributes are 'male'. The maiden at menarche with a large red emblem of potency between the thighs becomes a unified power. She is a hunter with bow and arrows, yet herself an animal. She is the rain (cf. Solomon 1992: 315). She is bloody, fat and possesses both vulva and penis.

In the Sorcerer's Rock image (fig. 4), also from the Drakensberg, we see again the emblem of blood potency between the thighs and, in addition, a barred penis (just next to the figure's left foot). The 'hat' on the head could represent the cap worn by initiates of both sexes to keep off the sun (cf. Heinz 1966: 124). Thin red lines emanate from the figure and, touching the tips of arrows, extend towards some antelopes (off figure). Solomon relates this symbolism to the complex of beliefs linking secluded women, arrow poison and game (1992: 316; 1994: 346; 1996: 34). Here, the figure's stereotypically slender 'maleness' rather than animality is being stressed.

Initiation may also illuminate some of the most dramatic hunter-gatherer rock paintings of the Matopos, Zimbabwe, believed to pre-date 2,000BP (Walker 1987). Highly characteristic are obese, female figures with exaggerated 'flows' between the legs. They carry as their 'prime emblem' (Garlake 1995: 87) a crescent symbol. Figure 5 can be read as a powerful statement linking the maiden at menarche identified with the new moon, to the great homed antelope, which may refer to seasonal rains. A similar structure linking initiate through blood potency to hunted game is evident in figures 4 and 5.

Obese potent women with genital flows and ritual paraphernalia are often shown in pairs. The women in figure 6 have 'manes' of hair which, according to Garlake, are only otherwise shown on male hunters. Garlake (1993) denies that the genital flow refers to menstruation. The swollen stomachs, he believes, connote the activation and expansion of a potency similar to the Ju/'hoan concept of *n/um*. The release of this potency 'is represented by the streams that emerge from the chests and genitals of these painted figures, to a particularly extravagant extent in the case of some female figures' (1987: 51; our emphasis). We agree that these streams represent releases of potency, but we ask: Why are females in a condition of potency regularly shown with such genital flow? If the answer is only that menstrual blood is a substance bearing powerful *n/um*, then we are brought back to the potency of the menarcheal maiden at initiation. Given the evident Khoisan preoccupation with menstrual potency in initiation ritual, we can expect the portrayal of the same construct in rock art.

The swollen-bellied figures can also appear anatomically male (see Garlake 1995: 85). After puzzling over the way the 'imagery transcends designations of gender', Garlake suggests these figures are 'in a sense androgynous. This may be one of the sources of their power' (1993: 262). He compares this to the ideology connected with the fat male eland, the fundamental metaphor of initiation. As in the case of the eland, fatness signifying ritual potency represents a unified gender embodying both female and male.

Hadza epeme and initiation

Can the notion of 'gender mutability' be extended to African hunter-gatherers beyond the Khoisan region? Woodburn notes for the Hadza - as we have observed among the Khoisan - that 'the whole process of hunting big game (male productivity) is symbolically linked to the whole process of female reproduction (female productivity)' (1982: 188). The one stringent taboo is that a man whose wife is menstruating cannot hunt big game because his arrow poison would lose efficacy. The Hadza believe that women synchronize their periods with the moon (J. Woodburn, pers. comm. 1993). Hadza cosmology associates menstruation with dark moon (Bleek 1930: 700).

It is during the nights of dark moon that the major religious celebration, the epeme dance, is held. Most epeme rituals occur during conditions of dry-season aggregation when sufficient women are present to provide accompaniment of special epeme songs. Initiated men dance, embodying the sacred being epeme. Failure to hold the dance 'is believed to be dangerous' (Woodburn 1982: 190). Epeme promotes and maintains 'general well-being, above all good health and successful hunting'. The epeme dance 'stresses kinship and joint parentage' (1982: 190).

A pattern emerges in which rituals, associated with menstruation and prohibitions on hunting or sex at dark moon, precede and motivate hunting during the favourable period towards full moon. To this day, during the dry season, the most

productive form of Hadza hunting is night-stand hunting over game trails leading to water holes (Hawkes et al. 1992). This is necessarily restricted to moonlit nights around full moon (Bunn et al. 1988).

Epeme meat and the 'bloodying' of the mate candidate

Epeme is the name given to certain fatty portions of large game. This meat is sacred, supposedly reserved for the eponymous spirit being, but in fact eaten by initiated men at special epeme feasts. The men consume the meat secretly; attendance at the epeme feast is a male privilege from which women are excluded on pain of rape or death (Woodburn 1964).

A male candidate will already have proved himself as a hunter. Invited to join the other men at an epeme feast, he is offered some of the meat, and may at first be reluctant to eat it. Having revealed the 'secret' that they themselves, not the sacred being, eat the epeme, the men pretend to give the initiate a beating, threatening actually to beat him if he resists. To deceive the women, the men make the youth's nose bleed, covering him with blood and smearing him with fat and pot black. He is then carried over to the women and secluded in a hut. Treated like a menstruant, he is decorated with beads by his kinswomen and ceremonially reintroduced to each type of food. Thereafter, he becomes a member of the men's group.

Female circumcision and ritual violence

Menarche itself does not mark initiation for a Hadza girl but, as in the Ju/'hoan usage, she is likened to a hunter who 'has shot her first zebra!'. Female initiation is a dramatic, collective affair which sunders Hadza society along gender lines. The Hadza rite is one of group circumcision (Woodburn 1964). The operation is wholly under the control of the older women of the camp, who perform it on girls at puberty. Men regard the entire affair as 'women's nonsense'; they are rigidly excluded, and even little boys are sent away.

One significant aspect of this rite is that each woman undergoes circumcision on a number of occasions. Circumcision ceremonies may be characterized as establishing a definitive sex, effectively removing those parts of the genitalia which resemble the opposite sex. However, this does not explain why the women submit to the operation more than once. The Hadza female initiation is a rite of collective bloodshed which sexually active women endure repeatedly. Their behaviour immediately after the operation is anything but 'feminine'. As soon as they emerge, the women who have been circumcised start attacking the men with considerable force. Moreover, they are dressed as men. Having removed their leather skirts, they advance with buttocks naked, in the manner of hunters wearing loincloths. They attack ferociously, wielding sticks, and they target joking relatives who are potential or actual sex and marriage partners. Women are not supposed to hit their brothers or fathers-in-law since these are avoidance relations. The men are virtually driven from the camp. Woodburn describes the ceremonial violence as 'a recurrent assertion of femininity by the sexually active women of the group' (pers. comm. 1993). Certainly, it is an assertion of gender solidarity; but it does not exactly match the Western concept of the 'feminine'.

The woman with the zebra's penis

A Hadza myth links the symbolism of epeme to female initiation:

Long ago epeme meat used to belong to the women. The owner of the pot in which epeme meat was cooked was an old woman called Mambedaka. She dressed like a man with a wild castkin in front and with her buttocks naked. Under the wild catskin she had tied the penis of a zebra. She was married to beautiful wives and used to have intercourse with them using the zebra penis. She had a man's bow and used to hunt, but she only hunted male zebra. When she killed one, she cut off its penis and tied it onto herself ...

When men hunted and killed an animal, the epeme was cut off and carried to the hut of Mambedaka. She took out her pot and went with the meat to the women's meeting place. There the women ate the meat. The men stayed at home and had no share in the epeme meat ... (Woodburn 1964: 298-9).

The 'rule of women' was brought to an end by the violent humiliation of Mambedaka and the other women. Since that time, epeme meat has been the prerogative of men.

Mambedaka, the original owner of epeme meat, is linked to female ritualized bloodshed: she shoots zebra - the metaphor for the menstruant; she dresses as a hunter, making her the archetype of the female initiate. The word epeme signifies the following:

- i) the sacred meat;
- ii) the dark moon dance, emphasizing kinship relations, held when women are believed to be menstruating;
- iii) the sacred being.

Through ritual and mythology, the concept of epeme links:

- a) collectively menstruating and/or circumcised women;
- b) the dark moon phase;
- c) 'mare' violence or animality possessed by women; and
- d) access to sacred meat hunted by men.

Mambedaka, masquerading as a male zebra and hunter of male zebra, who has sex with beautiful 'wives', recalls the metamorphosis of the Khoisan 'new maiden' as an Eland Bull mating with eland cows, who is also a hunter of eland.

Solomon's analysis of Khoisan gender construction: the Ortner model

Solomon regards gender as 'the most marked and enduring division in Khoisan societies' (1992: 291). In line with the assumptions of Ortner's model, she takes as axiomatic that 'differentiation by gender is inseparable from sociopolitical hierarchy, (1992: 292). Equipped with the hierarchized constructs of 'masculine' and 'feminine', Solomon attempts to fit the Khoisan ethnographic and rock art data into these categories. In the course of doing so, she posits a 'third gender category' (1992: 303), a residual class of anomalies. These turn out to be the most elaborated symbols and metaphors of Khoisan cosmology, crucial to initiation: notably the trickster deities, the eland and, we can add, the moon. Solomon is forced to set

aside the 'complexities of the gendering of deities and the eland' (1992: 304), unable to integrate these into the model. She presents a set of structured oppositions relating to gender polarity, which we reproduce in part here (1992: 299):

Feminine Masculine

Full moon New moon

Blood Water/rain

Death Life

Herbivore Carnivore

Prey Hunter

Gathering Hunting

Weak Strong

This classification, we suggest, cannot work. The proposed opposition between blood and water - ritually potent substances of extreme affinity - is untenable. Moreover, it is inconceivable, in the light of the rigorous nature of /Xam menstrual observance, that blood is 'weak'. Given the death-dealing potencies of male rain, how can an opposition exist between death and water? Can the /Xam hunter limping painfully back to camp, unable so much as to crush a louse that is biting him, reasonably be described as a carnivore?

Solomon argues that 'initiation ceremonial may be seen as a central reference point for these conceptualizations' (1992: 298). Under her classification, the Eland Bull - the archetypal metaphor for initiation - is herbivorous prey, therefore 'feminine', and ritually powerless. This is a manifest contradiction of the entire Khoisan system of belief. Solomon uses the 'prey as victim' structure to ascribe vulnerability to the girl in seclusion - the same girl who takes up hunting weapons, can kill men at a glance and snap her fingers to call down lightning.

Khoisan females, Solomon argues, are positively valued only when they are sexually available and desirable (1992: 302). She points to the convention in rock art by which females are depicted as squatting with legs apart. This posture, she suggests, connotes availability for sex, making females sex objects. But this posture is the very one which characterizes the 'bloody' female initiate, the supreme emblem of ritual potency and sexual taboo, as Solomon herself recognizes. If Khoisan art works by convention and stereotype, we may infer that the female squatting figures actually bear reference to ritual non-availability for sex. Solomon has recently revised her analyses of gender representation in rock art (1994; 1996). But her 1992 article demonstrates the inadequacy of Ortner's model of gender as sexual hierarchy when applied to Khoisan data. Such a model cannot account for the flexibility and sophistication of Khoisan conceptions.

Conclusion

Summary of data on gender construction. The logic of Ortner's model would suggest that initiation rites should construct young women as 'feminine' and young men as 'masculine', employing a polarized set of symbols to distinguish these two

counterposed roles. But Khoisan and Hadza material reveals a consistent ideology of merging and confusion of roles: initiate girls become hunters, and initiate boys become bloody and weak. The processes of production and reproduction are mystically intertwined. To menstruate is to shoot a poisoned arrow; to give birth is to kill a large game animal.

Initiates experiencing the performances which 'create' their gender are under strict constraints which militate against the emergence of 'multiple genders' (Butler 1990). Indeed, there is an insistence on performing what appears to be a single gender, irrespective of the neophyte's biological sex. Initiation creates and sustains a collective representation of an individual's new sexual, social and economic status. It may serve as an exemplar to which all future practice refers. The strictures of the menarcheal observances remain in force throughout a woman's reproductive career in the form of menstrual and pregnancy taboos. Similarly for youths, lifelong hunting observances and 'respect' customs refer back to the elaborate details of the 'first-kill' rite. Any failure to observe the menarcheal rite would imperil the girl's reproductive power and the group's productive future. Failure to observe the first-kill rite would likewise jeopardize the young hunter's productive power and hence, fundamentally, his procreative power.

Rather than permit proliferation of distinctions and categories, Khoisan gender ritual turns apparent opposites into conceptual equivalents. The gender-mutable moon, in its waxing, offers the fundamental metaphor for transformation from death to rebirth, cold to hot, wetness and blood to fire and fat. The major ritual preoccupation of the Khoisan, evident in both initiation and trance dance, lies in effecting these transformations. As ritual power is expressed through imagery of blood, death, male 'rain' or the whirlwind, categories of female and male, animal and human, become fused. The only effective means of containing these threatening forces is meticulous observance of ritual through the stages of seclusion and emergence. Respect for menstrual potency -whether coded 'good' or 'evil' - is vital to secure the benefits of soft rain, 'fatness' and social harmony. And it is there that the performative force of initiation resides. The ideological coding of these potencies is negotiable, potentially multiple; what is beyond negotiation, allowing no licence to multiplicity, is respect for the ritual syntax. The potency of the waxing moon marks initiation, hunting luck and the fattening of the eland; waning moon is ritually unmarked.

All that may be said of the Khoisan is even more apparent in the case of the Hadza. Their ritual focus on the dark moon - in conjunction with kinship and menstruation - is evident and vital to success in the hunt, health and harmony. In their initiation rituals, we see gender (and kinship) solidarity in action, accompanied by symbolic sex reversal. Such rituals clearly embody an ongoing sexual political struggle. To cheat women of epeme meat, male initiates must be symbolically bloodied and dumped at the feet of their mothers. As initiates, men dominate the epeme ritual. Yet women periodically seize back ritual power, as initiates united by bleeding together; when they launch themselves into action, their naked buttocks signal 'maleness'.

This symbolic exposure of the women, both Khoisan and Hadza, is ambivalent. In the Eland Bull dance, as we saw, the Khoisan women's nakedness has been described as erotic. But in the light of the Hadza material, we should reconsider its meaning. No Khoisan or Hadza woman in everyday circumstances would so expose herself. In a ritual context, this collective exposure carries a completely different connotation: it means maleness, animality and therefore non-availability. Such ritual exposure is an assertion by women of collective control over their sexuality.

Table 1 summarizes the ritual construction of gender among the Hadza and Khoisan. The syntax of initiation suggests that we take lunar time as the framework of transformation, with ritual action and initiation placed in waxing phase, and profane life in waning phase. The moon itself is male in 'ritual time' and female in 'profane time'. For these hunter-gatherers, gender is lunar-governed, ritually 'powerful' in waxing phase, 'weak' in waning phase. At initiation, boys and girls undergo essentially the same symbolic treatment, their shared gender during seclusion conforming to a logic of reversal governed by lunar phase.

Symbolic reversal: gender as drag? Ortner's theory of gender origins is rooted in the model of cultural origins proposed by Levi-Strauss (1969). Levi-Strauss did not claim that his model was testable or yielded explicit predictions. But it is clear that the ritual domain disturbed him as a source of anomaly. Guardians of the ritual order consistently failed to conform to the heterosexual, exogamous, sister-exchanging stereotypes of alliance theory. On the contrary, the shaman or other ritual leader, Levi-Strauss complained, is not a normal spouse but is typically bisexual, or a transvestite, or half-animal:

There are myths which say that, for ritual to be invented, some human being must have abjured the sharp, clear distinctions existing in culture and society; living alongside the animals and having become like them, he must return to the state of nature, characterized by the mingling of the sexes and the confusion of degrees of kinship ... (1981: 679).

Such anomalies led Levi-Strauss (1981: 675) to counterpose myth to ritual, denouncing the latter as the very negation - the 'bastardization' - of culture-creating thought. Where Levi-Strauss saw confusion and loss of boundaries, Needham sought to explain 'ritual reversals' by proposing that they served to mark boundaries. Our survey of Khoisan and Hadza 'rituals of inversion' is a step towards making sense of what Needham termed 'those practically universal usages and beliefs by which people create disorder, i.e. turn their classifications upside down or disintegrate them entirely' (1963: xxxix).

Through her metaphor of gender as drag, Butler has forcefully posited symbolic reversal as intrinsic to gender. This metaphor can be applied to both the Khoisan and Hadza traditions, in that initiates are made to enact and imitate roles and attributes of the other sex. Gender proves to be performative, Butler argues, in constituting its own identity; it does not refer to, or express, some underlying absolute truth or falsity of identity (1990: 25). The subversive or doubly parodic force of drag lies not in mimicking some 'natural' or 'original' state, but in parodying 'tine very notion of an original' (1990: 138). The whole thrust of Butler's work implies the domination of cultural constructs over any possibility of 'naturalness'. The Khoisan and Hadza rites, like all initiation rites, can be interpreted as 'culture' asserting itself over 'nature'; this is expressed most graph,cally by constructs which defy reality, such as the notion of women with zebras' penises. In accord with Butler's theory, we agree that gender as performed in Khoisan or Hadza ritual does not refer to any natural or original sex. However, we argue that it does in some sense re-enact an original gender. By understanding initiation ritual as meta-performative of gender in Rappaport's (1979) sense, we imply that such ritual may contain a paradigm of the creation of gender. In re-presenting a primordial union of form and substance, words and bodily acts, gender ritual can both conventionalize the natural and naturalize the conventional (Rappaport 1979: 202). The interface of sex and gender, as analysed by Butler, consists in just such an interplay between 'the anatomy of the performer and the gender that is being performed' (Butler 1990: 137).

'Wrong species, wrong sex': the 'gender of power'. Butler's metaphor appears vindicated, but the sex-strike model (Knight et al. 1995), entailing a strict binary structure, generates predictions that match the African hunter-gatherer data more precisely and account for the centrality of lunar/menstrual periodicity in Khoisan and Hadza cosmology. The model posits a 'time-resistant syntax' preserved in the structure of ritual and myth (Knight et al. 1995: 91). According to this syntax, ritual power is switched 'on' by blood/wetness; dark/crescent moon; the extinguishing of cooking fires; hunger (prior to hunting); and abstention from marital sex. Ritual power is switched 'off' by light; full moon; cooking fires; feasting; and marital sex (see Knight 1997). This syntax is closely borne out by the gendered oppositions derived from Khoisan and Hadza data in Table 1.

Knight et al. (1995: 84) argue that while courtship 'ritual' in the animal world involves signalling 'right species/right sex/right time', sex-strike 'by the same token would most emphatically have been conveyed by signalling "wrong species/wrong sex/wrong time"'. Culture dominates nature - and gender overrides sex through such reality-defying ritual metamorphosis of ordinary human women into the 'wrong species' and the 'wrong sex' at the time of menstruation.

We therefore propose that women originally established their gender identity by becoming 'animal', 'male' and 'bloody'. The fundamental ambiguity here is that the biologically female process of menstruation was itself culturally constructed as 'male'. We term the gender first acquired by women during ritual sex-strike the 'gender of power'. Women who needed to resist aggressive or unco-operative males would have drawn on their sons and brothers for support. Ritual power was necessarily mobilized in alliance with male kin, symbolized by shared blood. Thus both sexes indistinguishably become ritually empowered. 'Gender', in this model, transcends and negates sexual difference. Simple, fixed male/female dichotomies are ruled out because, in the phase of the sex-strike, the newly constructed domain of 'gender' includes equally females and males. We conclude that while ritual power is mobilized, both sexes have identical gender; namely, the gender of power. The opposite category, 'weak gender', corresponds to the profane status of marital availability when taboos are relaxed. Again, both sexes share the same gender: a weak gender state where the sexes are clearly polarized. Hence, gender is a periodic function of ritual power, waxing and waning with lunar phase.

This model predicts that initiation rites should have the following features:

1. Both women and men are characterized by 'bloodiness', kinship itself being conceived as 'blood relationship'. 2. Within kin groups, there is a conflation of sexual attributes, with penises belonging to sisters, wombs to brothers, etc., amounting to a general state of androgyny 3. Men, in identifying with their bleeding sisters, also identify with bleeding game animals, and are themselves wounded; conversely, menstruating women in identifying with brothers are also 'hunters'.

These predictions can now be incorporated into the ritual syntax described earlier:

Ritual power on Ritual power off

gender of power weak gender ritual performers in 'animal mode' all partners 'human' women are 'male', 'sacred' women are 'female', available men bleeding, 'wounded' all flesh 'cooked' conflation of sex attributes clear polarity of sexes androgyny heterosexuality

In all this, the most basic point is that the symbolic reversal of sexual and/or human/animal categories has been central to gender since its earliest construction.

Thus, sacred androgyny can be accommodated within a binary structure without recourse to a 'third gender category' (Solomon 1992: 303). We are now in a position to turn Ortner's nature/culture dichotomy on its head. Just as culture asserts itself over nature through the universal mechanism of ritual (Ortner 1974: 72), so the ritual 'gender of power' dominates the 'weak gender'. But there is no necessity for these binary hierarchies to map onto sex. Far from it being the case that females have everywhere been denied access to ritual and cultural power because of their biology, ritual power in its very origin was predicated on a model of female biology: ritual menstrual solidarity. To be powerful, it is necessary to be wounded and periodically bleed.