The Gender of Some Amazonian Gifts: an Experiment with an Experiment

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Introduction

Any attempt to compare two large, internally varied, historically unconnected, and geographically remote ethnographic regions is fraught with epistemological problems. Are the apparent similarities significant and interesting, do they result from similar causes, or are they merely the product of evidence carefully selected and removed from context ? And are the differences really 'there' or are they simply a product of different regional ethnographic traditions informed by differences in theoretical bias ?

Let us begin with what, at first sight, might look like some relatively straightforward differences. In Melanesia, descent, both matrilineal and patrilineal, is widespread; in Amazonia, patrilineal descent is rare and matrilineal descent absent. Secret men's cults are likewise relatively widespread in Melanesia but their strikingly similar Amazonian counter parts are mainly restricted to Northwest Amazonia (henceforth NWA) and Central Brazil where they are associated with some kind of descent ideology which contrasts with an emphasis on cognatic kinship more characteristic of the region as a whole.

In Melanesia, marriage is organised sometimes by bridewealth transactions, sometimes by a principle of direct or indirect sister exchange. In bridewealth, bloodwealth, and many other transactions, objects can stand or substitute for aspects or qualities of persons. In Amazonia, a direct principle of substitution rarely operates in the context of exchange. The predominant principle is that of a life for a life, a wife for a wife, goods for goods, or food for food. 'Instead' of bridewealth we find brideservice.

Finally, Amazonians are enthusiastic domesticators of young animals and birds found in the wild but the only animals they breed are dogs.[1] Dogs are an important item of exchange but other animals are exchanged only as meat and other products and never directly as substitutes for people. In Melanesia, by contrast, the domestication of the pigs underwrites bridewealth transactions and elaborate systems of competitive, incremental exchange which have no parallels anywhere in contemporary Amazonia.

Important and significant as they may be, to catalogue differences in this way begs a series of questions. In both areas, the relevance and meaning of 'descent' has been the subject of considerable debate.[2] In the Melanesian context, the contrast between bridewealth and sister-exchange masks important continuities between groups who exhibit one or other form (see Strathern 1988: 228). Likewise, to lump all Amazonians together as 'brideservice societies' obscures important differences

between their various marriage arrangements. Furthermore, it is not for want of raw material that Amazonians have 'failed' to domesticate animals and exchange them or other valuables for people. They would have had no difficulty in domesticating wild peccaries (see Morton 1984) and their feather ornaments are another obvious potential candidate as bridewealth. The reasons why Amazonians have not exploited such possibilities appears to have less to do with opportunity than with their ideas concerning substitutability and their particular conception of the proper relations between people and animals - true domestication is probably something more inconceivable than impossible (see Descola 1994a).

Leaving aside the whole issue of two quite different colonial histories, there is also the problem of two different intellectual traditions. These traditions have common roots in exchange theory but it has been developed in two very different directions. In part, at least, these developments reflect the concrete experience of ethnographic fieldwork which has moulded each one to suit local conditions. As with Lévi-Strauss and the Bororo, other anthropologists tend to harmonise their thinking with the intellectual styles and practical concerns of the peoples they study. Building on the works of Mauss and Malinowski, the exchange theory of Melanesia has been predominantly that of gift exchange with its emphasis on economics and interpersonal transactions. The Amazonianists' exchange theory also has Maussian roots but, following Lévi-Strauss', this version has been largely that of marriage alliance with its global emphasis on system, category and classification, a version developed in tandem with a focus on mythology and cosmology, often treated in a similarly systemic, categorical and classificatory manner. In this scheme, economics tends to be squeezed uncomfortably between structuralism and cultural ecology, often figuring as unhappy compromise between 'symbol' and 'subsistence'.

Marilyn Strathern's The Gender of the Gift belongs in the long lineage of Melanesian exchange theory but it also signals a new departure. I cannot here summarise this complex work. Instead, I offer a brief outline of selected points based, in part, on Alfred Gell's (in press) lucid exposition of her work. Integral to Strathern's critique of the hidden realist and materialistic biases which she sees as underlying much of the Melanesian ethnography is her adoption of an idealist viewpoint. She presents the Melanesians' world not as one made up of humans, animals, and things which exist initially as independent and self-contained entities, a position from which they then enter into external or causal relations with one another, but rather as a system of meaningful signs. Because the elements of this system - people, pigs, pearlshells, potatoes - are the outcomes or products of previous relations - sex, breeding, feeding, manufacture, gifting, growing - all of which are included under an extended rubric of 'exchange', they are themselves relationally constituted. Because these already relational elements enter into further relations in different

contexts, their meaning or identity is not fixed or given in advance but instead is relative to how they articulate with other elements at any one moment of time. It is as if people who enter into social relations already carry within them the 'trace' of the relations between their two parents, or as if potatoes contain the 'trace' of the relations between of those who grew them; as if persons and things were merely the signs or vehicles of these relations; and as if it is the relations in which they engage which determine which aspect or component of their relational identity is pertinent (see also Strathern this volume).

In its formalism and its emphasis on the relational constitution of the elements involved, this Strathernian version of exchange theory shows affinities with Lévi-Strauss' structuralism and may thus offer a bridge between the two regional intellectual traditions mentioned above. But in other respects there are some very important differences which suggest the potential for using Strathern's Melanesia-based theoretical position to critique some taken-for-granted assumptions that underpin the ethnography of Amazonia.

In much of Amazonian and Melanesian ethnography, in particular in most analyses of secret men's cults, 'gender' is taken to be a fixed, unitary, and relatively unproblematic attribute of persons. If there is a 'problem of gender', this problem is seen to lie in men's initial dependence on their mothers which compromises their capacity to achieve a fully masculine adult identity, in their search for power over women and their envy or denigration of women's reproductive capacities, and in the fact that, in their position as in-married wives, women to threaten subvert the integrity of male coalitions and patrilineal groupings. For Strathern, the 'problem of gender' lies not in its achievement or affirmation by Melanesian men but precisely in the analysts' assumption that gender is something fixed and unitary. In her analysis, because persons are constituted through previous relations between two parents, in their unmarked or 'resting' state, they are of androgynous or mixed sex. In their marked or active state, as when they enter into relations with others, one 'pole' of their androgynous identity is eclipsed so that they assume, temporarily, a single sex identity in relation to a transactional partner who, from <u>their</u> point of view, now has an opposed, single sex identity; from that partner's perspective, the polarities are reversed.

Let us take a concrete example: a man of patri-clan X gives his sister to a man of patri-clan Y as a wife. As a person, the woman is mixed sex or 'male-female' but, as a sister, a part or extension of her brother and an agnatic, 'male' group, she is herself also 'male'. By detaching a 'female' bride and thus eclipsing a 'female' component of themselves, this brother and his agnates constitute themselves as 'male', now in an active state of potential in relation to 'female' wife takers and a 'female' future brother in law. From clan Y, the wife takers' perspective, they are collectively

'male' and the husband is 'male' in relation to his bride-to-be. With the transaction completed, all then return to a mixed-sex state.

The case above is an example of what Strathern calls a cross-sex or 'mediated exchange': as in the classic form of gift exchange, something passes between the parties involved. But exchange may also be single-sex and unmediated, as when a mother grows a child within herself. Here the child, boy or girl, is initially a 'female' extension or replication of the body of its now 'female' mother. At the end of the pregnancy, a gift from the husband / father provokes the detachment of the child as a counter-gift, allowing the mother to constitute herself as cross-sex in relation to the child which she now reveals as the product of her growing. As will be seen below, the same logic can be applied to the crops that women grow in their gardens, to the beer they brew in womb-like containers, and to the neophytes that all-male cult groups grow in equally womb-like houses or ritual enclosures.

Equally important in the context of initiation cults and ceremonial exchanges involving single-sex male groupings, is Strathern's critique of the notion that such ritualised collectivities represent, or serve to mis-represent, a higher-order, all-encompassing 'culture', 'society' or 'social structure' portrayed as the prerogatives of men, from which women and children are excluded as less than full 'members', and defined in opposition to 'nature', the 'individual', or 'domestic life' . As against 'top down' abstractions of this kind, Strathern begins from the other end, with a more concrete 'sociality', i.e. social relations, which are constituted, manifested, and modified through the ongoing play of exchange. In this view, public rituals and ceremonials and the clans and other groupings which they generate are not manifestations of 'society' or 'social structure' but rather one mode of sociality which is temporally constituted in relation to its complementary mode of domestic kinship and upon which it draws for rhetorical effect. By the same token, a ritual is not the playing out of a 'script' which is given in advance but rather a performance which allows people to display their capacities, the outcome of hard transactional work which provides a momentary summation of their particular claims. In this it is ultimately no different from the symbolic transactional work which is effected in any of the more mundane exchanges that make up the gamut of social existence.

In his reader's guide to Strathern's study of Melanesian gender symbolism, Gell observes that the 'Melanesia' of *The Gender of the Gift* is less a real place than ' the setting for a sustained thought experiment' whose methodological usefulness 'is not restricted to Melanesia, as opposed to Africa, America, Asia or anywhere else' (in press: 4). If this is so, then it should follow that Strathern's critique of analyses of secret flute cults in Melanesia in terms of men's domination over women, their appropriation of female reproductive capacities, and their need to establish an unambiguously male gender identity, might apply equally to similar analyses of the

such cults in Amazonia.[3] Following this cue, I shall attempt an experimental re-analysis of my own and others' data as if seen from the perspective of this imaginary place. In my own case, this amounts to a self-critique of two earlier works (S. Hugh-Jones 1979, 1995a) on which much of what appears below is based.

Like Strathern's 'Melanesia', my 'Amazonia' is also a semi-imaginary place. I shall be mainly concerned with NWA, an area I treat as if it were a single whole, often ignoring both differences between the peoples of its two major sub-regions and those between the theoretical biases of their different ethnographers. That said, I should explain that the northern part of NWA is inhabited by Arawakan-speaking Curripaco and Wakuénai and that in the southern part live some fifteen exogamic groups each speaking a different but closely-related Tukanoan language. My own field research was conducted amongst the Barasana and their neighbours in the extreme south but I shall also refer to the more northerly Tukanoan Desana and Wanano (see map x).

To carry out my experiment in full would require too much space. Instead, I shall attempt to knit a few Amazonian motifs into the fabric of Strathern's Melanesian net-bag in return for inspiration drawn from selected elements of her work. In general, these are her view of gender as a categorisation of persons, objects, and events which draws on sexual imagery to make concrete ideas about the nature of social relationships (1988: ix), a function of particular social relations rather than an immutable attribute of whole persons and, secondly, her extension of the concept of exchange to embrace not only 'mediated exchanges' - as when one person detaches something of his/herself to give to another in the form of a gift - but also un-mediated exchanges - as in the production of material goods or the reproduction of people. More specifically, I draw on her re-analysis of initiation cults amongst the Gimi and Sambia of the Eastern Papua New Guinea (PNG) highlands, a re-working which highlights mythological and ritual exchanges of parts of persons - flutes, neophytes, bodily substances - amongst the participants.

Shortage of space also means that I must take both much of the original Sambia and Gimi ethnography and Strathern's re-analysis for granted. Relying mainly on Strathern, I ask whether her re-analysis might be used to present material 'closer to home' in a new light. In particular, given other striking parallels between Sambia initiation and the secret flute cults of NWA, I want to explore the possibility that the latter also involve something akin to the semen transactions which occur between senior Sambia men and neophyte youths, albeit in a less overt manner. I then move on to consider NWA ceremonial exchanges making comparative reference to the Daribi of the New Guinea Highlands

For Amazonia and Melanesia, both intra- and inter-regional comparisons have tended to compare like with like, flute cults with flute cults, exchange with exchange. Relative to Melanesia, the issues of gender and gift exchange have received relatively little attention in the Amazonian context. Where gender has been considered at all it has typically been treated as straightforwardly 'about' men and women. Gift exchange is rarely discussed as such. More often it figures as part of 'subsistence' or else it is subsumed under the more concrete and deceptively transparent rubrics of 'trade' or 'barter' (see Hugh-Jones 1992). A major component of *The Gender of the Gift* is the argument that the Gimi, Sambia and other Eastern Highland initiation cults can be viewed as transformations of the ceremonial exchange systems of the Melpa and other Western Highlanders. Few if any Amazonian peoples make use of true bridewealth, the sine qua non of Western Highland incremental exchange, but it is nonetheless apparent that, as celebrations of intra-clan relations of 'descent', NWA initiation cults 'make sense' in relation to inter-community exchanges of food and manufactured items which take place between affinally-related groups. If initiation cults are all-male affairs, NWA ceremonial exchanges are frequently conceptualised in terms of gendered groups and gendered products. In an earlier paper (Hugh-Jones 1995a), I explored this theme through the medium of architecture; here I build on this analysis but now with reference to exchange, using some ethnography from the Xingú region of central Brazil as a comparative counterpoint.

Flutes, Fish , and Manioc Tubers

I begin with a brief consideration of some NWA myths which account for the origins of the flutes and trumpets used in initiation. My treatment is necessarily selective, partly because space is limited and partly because I am concerned to relate these myths to stories about the origins of manioc.[4] Manioc products - raw pulp, cooked bread, and fermented beer - figure prominently in ceremonial exchange and also play a significant role in initiation. In one story, the flutes and trumpets are made from sections cut from a palm tree which springs from the ashes of an ancestor who was burned on a fire. The flutes are the ancestor's paired bones whilst his skull becomes a ritual gourd (see below). In another story, the instruments, now as proto-human ancestors, figure as the segments of the body of an ancestral anaconda who swims upstream from the Milk River in the East, his moving body giving rise to the river up which he travels, and who then vomits up his sons, one after the other. In yet another story, the burned body of this ancestor, now called Manioc-Stick Anaconda, gives rise, not to a palm tree and a set of flutes and trumpets, but to a manioc garden, his flesh as manioc and his bones as the burned logs of swidden cultivation. These stories suggest an analogy between bodily segmentation or vomiting as asexual

modes of procreation and the vegetative propagation of manioc from the broken stems of the plant, manioc tubers being the analogues of children.

In various ways, the myths also suggest an equivalence between flutes and fishes which re-appears in several other contexts: anacondas are the 'fathers of fish'; the flutes are stored under water in rivers; a wide-mouthed fish shows the women how the play the flutes; the Barasana call some fishes and all fish swim-bladders buhua, a term for all tubes including flutes. A further parallel is drawn between fish and male genitalia: comments on their common form and smell occur in conversation and several cases of transformation or mistaken identity occur in myths. To complete the circle there are many contexts in which manioc tubers are likened to both fishes and male penes. Journet's (1995) Curripaco material is especially rich in this regard. In Curripaco myth, fishes are responsible for opening the birth canal of Amaru, the equivalent of Woman Shaman (see below); in ritual exchanges, gifts of fish are said to 'call' an abundant manioc harvest; and in their daily lives, like their Tukanoan cousins, Curripaco women alternate between periods 'with' and 'without fish'. During menstruation and after giving birth women abstain from sex, from eating fish, and from working with manioc; in fertile periods, when pregnant or not menstruating, sex, fish, and garden work are all recommended (Journet 1995: 266 - 8 and passim). The same ideas figure prominently in the Xingú area. Here, secret flutes are directly identified with fish; both flutes and fish are said to cause menstrual bleeding; fish are considered to be both phallic and vaginal; a large-mouthed fish plays a female role in the invention of sexual relations; manioc tubers are directly identified with both male genitals and fish; and the women's processing of manioc tubers has marked sexual connotations (see Bastos 1978: 173-6, Gregor 1985: 71, 80-83).

NWA peoples also tell versions of the 'myths of matriarchy' which are equally thematic of male initiation in Melanesia.[5] These myths, which tell how a theft of sacred flutes led to a reversal of the current relations between men and women, also suggest an association between flutes, male and female genitals, and the onset of menstruation. In the Gimi myth, men steal flutes originally owned by women; men now have penises while women menstruate via the wound left by the removal of the flute-penis (Gillison 1980: 154-6). In the Barasana myth, the theft is more convoluted. Originally male possessions, the flutes are first stolen by women and later recaptured by men. Woman Shaman, the principle thief, is herself explicitly androgynous and also the counterpart of Manioc-Stick Anaconda with whom she is sometimes identified. Another episode of this myth reflects this androgyny and two-way transfer between men and women, inverting the story of the theft of flutes and the theme of a male ancestor as a phallic, tubular anaconda / palm trunk. Here Woman Shaman, now as a palm-tree womb, gives asexual birth, first to two manioc-tuber daughters and then to flute sons who menstruate like women. Later Woman

Shaman invites these sons to eat from a gourd of beeswax and powdered coca which she keeps between her legs. Instead of aggressively recapturing flutes which Woman Shaman has stolen, the men now refuse to accept what she willingly offers them on the grounds that it is something which properly belongs to her - her genitals and the smell of beeswax which emanates from them. Their refusal means they loose the full capacity to menstruate. Later she gives the men a lesser gourd which they now use in initiation rites along with the flutes and which underwrites their claim to be 'menstruating'.

As Strathern has shown for their Melanesian counterparts, as an alternative to interpreting them in terms of a zero-sum game in which one sex's gain is the other's loss, myths such as these might equally be seen as a reflection on the bodies of men and women, on the congruence between the form of their genitals, and on their respective reproductive capacities. Like rivers, anacondas, palm trunks, and flutes, the human body and its various parts - vocal apparatus, gut, bones, and genitals - are all tubes. Through couplings of these tubes and the passage of various substances - food, water, air, sound, semen, blood, faeces, children - along their interiors, the flow of life is ensured.[6]

Strathern's 'Melanesia' is characterised by two major constraints: that all transactions are gift transactions and that all gift transactions are gendered (see Gell in press 5). In this system, theft too is a gift transaction and falls under the wider rubric of exchange. From this perspective, the theft of the flutes appears in a quite different light. Rather than a capture of instruments of domination, a symbolic appropriation of female reproduction, or the invention of culture and society as an exclusive male domain, Strathern sees it as a transaction in which women retain as a part of their bodies what they also give up to men in objectified form. As total tubular persons, the self-reproducing, androgynous figures of the myths above, and as tokens of congruent inverted / everted body parts, the flutes signify a generalised capacity to reproduce which both men and women share. But in their detached, external, and objectified form as men's ritual possessions, the musical instrument flutes signify a more specifically male capacity to elicit and activate the more internal reproductive capacities of women.

The equivalent NWA myths can be considered in the same light. 'Theft', here as a two-way transaction between men and women is but one of several transactions of flutes which are enacted or evoked during the initiation. Besides teaching the neophytes a myth which is re-enacted through the rite itself, the senior men show flutes to the neophytes, give them flutes to play, blow trumpets over their exposed genitals, and 'vomit' (i.e. pour) water from the flutes' hollow interiors over their heads as they bathe in the river. These and other actions add up to an understanding that young boys are being endowed with the 'flutes' which will later enable them to

cause women to reproduce. At the same time the enactment of their 'vomited' birth reminds them where they came from in the past.

What Strathern says of the Melanesian Gimi applies equally well to the Tukanoan Barasana. Through these myths and ritual acts, the neophyte learns 'that what he has (his genitals) are signs of encounters with women that have already taken place' (1988: 112) and also signs of the future encounters for which he is being prepared. They suggest that, like the ancestors, the 'true man is ... pan-sexual and capable of reproducing himself without women' (ibid.). They also serve to demarcate boundaries of form and function between the inherently androgynous body parts of men and women, to mark off the limits of their respective capacities, and to recall the union of the parents of whom they are the androgynous product. This androgyny is reflected in the pairing of a gourd of coca and beeswax, simultaneously the womb and genitals of a 'female' ancestor and the skull of her 'male' counterpart, with musical instruments which are themselves paired as 'male' and 'female' and which have 'male' and 'female' origins in different myths..

Strathern's work de-stabilises of some of the key assumptions - society / individual, male ritual as society, male / female, nature / culture, etc. - that lie behind previous analysis of initiation cults in Melanesia. I cannot pursue here the full implications of her critique for analyses of their Amazonian equivalents. With reference to gender, it is sufficient to say that the NWA material presented above, and Strathern's analysis of its Gimi and Sambia parallels, both suggest that to view gender difference simply as a fixed and naturally-given attribute of men and women does not do full justice to the richness and layered complexity of indigenous conceptions. In the NWA context, it also renders problematic any claim that initiation cults reflect or sustain male dominance in any simple or self-evident manner. Rather than providing clear answers to the question of men's powers, the rituals and myths appear explore a series of possibilities in something inherently ambiguous and ill-defined - what Biersak describes as 'a religious mediation on ultimate matters' (this volume p XX). It is doubtless for this reason that whereas some Barasana men assert that their rituals exemplify men's superiority over women, others describe them as a pretence.

To return to manioc and another story of theft and recuperation. A Desana (Tukanoan) story of the origin of manioc begins by describing how Baribo, the Master of Food, had a magical white stone, the source of all food, which he kept hidden under the bowl which is used to collect the starch and juice when manioc tubers are processed. The presence of this stone guaranteed an abundance of starch; present day Barasana keep such stones, the stone axes of their ancestors, in their gardens and in their starch bowls. When Baribo tells his daughter-in-law not to move the bowl she replies, 'You are not a woman. Women are in charge of these things. Why meddle in my affairs ?' Later, when Baribo goes fishing, she lifts up the bowl

and sees the stone which she takes and hides in her vagina. On his return, Baribo sees that his stone has gone. He casts a spell on his daughter-in-law, causing her to fall asleep with her legs apart. As she sleeps, starch seeps from her genitals. Baribo introduces his 'curved stick' into her vagina and extracts the stone, picking it up from the floor where it has fallen (see Buchillet 1983: M. 5 'Origine du manioc).

In Curripaco versions of the same story, the 'theft' of starch is presented as a voluntary transfer. Kaaritairi, Baribo's equivalent, puts starch, either directly in his daughter-in-law's vagina or, indirectly, in her mouth from where it dribbles down to her genitals, to see if she will be good at brewing beer. The indirect variant recalls Curripaco female puberty rites during which starch or manioc bread is placed in the mouths of young girls to ensure their future beer-making capacities (Journet 1995: 324). Versions of this myth are common throughout NWA. Taken together, they establish clearly what was already suggested by the myths considered above, namely that manioc is the body of a male hero, that despite being a woman's affair, manioc is also something 'owned' by men and, more particularly, that manioc starch may be identified with semen. This identification is reflected in the name Kaaritairi which translates as 'the master of white foam, semen or tree-sap' and in the belief that manioc starch is a source of male semen (Journet 1995: 241). Mingau, a ubiquitous Amazonian drink made from manioc starch boiled in water, has a glutinous texture, looks like semen, and is the subject of ribald comment.

These extended associations between the fertility of manioc and men's fecundity are counterbalanced by an equally strong association of manioc with women, with their fertility, and with their capacity to grow crops and children. Other myths identify manioc with the bodies of women, women are described as the 'mothers' of their manioc tuber 'children', and their processing of manioc and baking of bread is metaphorically associated with conception, gestation and birth. Such ideas would be immediately comprehended by the Gimi (see Gillison 1980: 148 and passim). Although cast in a more structuralist idiom, C. Hugh-Jones' (1979) and Journet's (1995 241 ff.) works on this topic in NWA are entirely consistent with Strathern's account of such processes in terms of the encompassing, totalising relationship between Highland PNG women and the crops they produce in a process of un-mediated, singe-sex replication or growing (see Strathern 1988: 250 -1). The stories of the women's 'theft' of their brothers' flutes and those of a woman's 'theft' of her father-in-law's stone assert that neither flutes nor manioc can be unambiguously assigned to men or women. Each sex retains in one form, proper to themselves, what they give up in another, the retained 'portion' providing the source for further transactions between them. Both sexes 'have' manioc but manioc-work is properly a woman's affair; both sexes 'have' fish and flutes, but fish-work and flute-work are the affairs of men.

Blood, Semen and Milk

To pursue these ideas further and to return to my theme of initiation cults, I need to consider briefly NWA ideas concerning conception. Regional variations in such ideas - the perceived differences between the relative contributions of women and men in the creation of children and the analogies or contrasts which different peoples make between semen, blood and milk - play a key role in Strathern's re-analysis of the Sambia and Gimi ethnography (1988: ch. 9). In the NWA context, I hesitate to set too much score on the reported variations for they appear to reflect, on the one hand, an interplay between differences of cultural dogma and differences of emphasis between ethnographers and, on the other, uncertainties and differences of opinion on the part of individuals due to the fact that conception is something hidden and mysterious, not something open to direct observation.[7]

For the Barasana, several views of the process coexist. Some say that boys come from their father's semen and girls from their mother's blood; some say that bone (and other hard parts - hair, skin, nails) come from semen and, by inference, that flesh comes from blood; and some say that the father's semen alone forms the body of the child, the mother's contribution being to provide a receptacle in which it grows (see C. Hugh-Jones 1979: 116). Also relevant is that the terms <u>ríí</u> ,'blood', rii, rií, ' flesh', <u>riia</u>, 'semen, children', <u>riaa</u>, 'egg', and <u>riaga</u>, 'river' are all close cognates, and that children receive soul-stuff or spirit essence both through their fathers' semen prior to birth and through the receipt of paternally-derived names soon after.

Inconsistent though they might appear, taken overall, these ideas suggest that blood and semen are considered to be close analogues of one another and that they come together to form the child, a view shared by the Curripaco (Journet 1995: 275). Menstrual blood is thus unproductive blood which is lost rather than blood creatively combined with semen. Although menstrual blood is carefully avoided, Tukanoan attitudes and behaviour suggest that their concern with menstrual pollution is mild in comparison to that of the Xinguanos and even more so when compared to some PNG Highland groups . There is, however, a difference between blood and semen, namely that whereas the child's blood comes directly from its mother through an un-mediated relation of replication or growing which is likened to that between women and their crops, the father's relation to his child is mediated through his semen. The Curripaco describe this relation as the father 'feeding' the child in the womb through repeated intercourse and state that the mother also transforms semen into milk which she then feeds to her child after it is born (Journet 1995: 247 and see Strathern 1988:238 on the distinction between mediated 'feeding' and umediated 'growing').

The implication of these ideas is that brothers and sisters share common substance which has two gendered manifestations, semen and blood. These

substances are transmitted in parallel linear flows, brothers transmitting semen to their offspring and sisters transmitting blood to theirs. To phrase it differently, one might also say that men circulate their own blood through the bodies of their sisters (see also C. Hugh-Jones 1979: 161 ff.). This image of 'flow' is especially apt for the Tukanoans: for them rivers and river-travel comprise some of the principle metaphors used to represent procreation and lineal continuity - this is already clear in the anaconda ancestor myth mentioned above and in the close relation between ria and riaga, the terms for 'children' and 'river' (see also S. Hugh-Jones 1995). However, I borrow the image from Wagner's (1977) account of Daribi kinship in the PNG south-eastern Highlands. Although the Tukanoans and Arawakans make no use of bridewealth, in other respects there are some clear parallels between them and the Daribi (see below).

If NWA conception theories seem vague and ill-defined, they appear more coherent when set against those from the Xingú region. In NWA, male semen figures as the analogue of both female blood and milk whilst in the Xingú it appears as the analogue of milk only, apparently in opposition to blood. Writing of the Kamayurá, Bastos (1978: 34-6) distinguishes between the indirect transmission of seminal substance by men and its direct elaboration by women. A man receives semen through his father but its ultimate source is from his patrilineal ancestors. A man's ancestrally-derived semen is stored in a special organ and is supplemented by the fish and manioc products which he eats. Semen is described as a 'kind of milk' some of which is the 'food of the vagina' and some of which contributes to the milk that women feed to their children. For the Xinguanos, the idea of intercourse as 'eating' applies to both sexes but it is considered more debilitating for men whose bodies, organs and substances are 'consumed' by their partners (Gregor 1985: 144). Barasana men appear less bothered by this problem - it is usually they or their penes which are said to 'eat'. The Xinguano child's body is made entirely from accumulated semen, the mother's womb being described as the child's 'house' which moulds the semen and transforms it into flesh, bones and blood (see also Gregor 1977: 261; 1985: 85-90 for the Mehinacu).

There are clear parallels between these Xinguano ideas of conception and those of the Sambia, both in general and in the specific notion of an organ for storing semen (see Herdt 1987: 77-8). In NWA semen, blood, and milk all appear to be considered as manifestations of the 'same' substance whose different forms either complement each other, or substitute for one another, in different contexts. For the Xinguanos, the affinities between semen and milk appear to be more strongly marked than they are for NWA peoples. In addition, the opposition between blood and semen appears to be manifest in the Xinguano practice of blood-letting, a practice not found in the NWA area. The Xinguanos would thus appear to conform to the pattern which

Strathern (1988: 245) describes for the Sambia. Xinguano men also share the Sambia concern with the risks of menstrual pollution, and like Sambia nose-bleeding, they frequently have recourse to bleeding. For the Xinguanos, blood-letting from the buttocks and upper legs is particularly associated with wrestling and male puberty seclusion and forms part of a more general complex of bleeding which includes menstruation and also the ritual piercing of boys ear-lobes, another practice absent in NWA. Like Herdt's interpretation of Sambia initiation to which he refers, Gregor's view of Mehinacu male ritual is cast in terms of male gender identity, socialisation, and men's anxieties concerning their identification with women. As a part of this more general thesis, he interprets ear-piercing and allied themes as being linked with ambivalence concerning the feminine components of the male self and as an imitation of women's menstruation to master something mysterious and feared (1985: 198). Though coming from a less psychoanalytic point of view, parts of my earlier analysis of Barasana initiation adopted the same line (see S. Hugh-Jones 1979: 130-1, 198-200).

Tentatively, I would suggest that Strathern's re-working of the Sambia and Gimi data can place these Xinguano acts of blood-letting in a different light. It also brings out an important difference between Xinguano and Barasana 'symbolic menstruation'. Xinguano men do actually bleed themselves but Barasana merely say that their rites are 'like menstruation', never having recourse to actual blood-letting. In the Xinguano case, there is a clear lineal flow of semen as a substance coming not from the genitor himself but via him from his patrilineal ancestors but no corresponding contribution from the genetrix (Bastos 1978: 35). I have found no unequivocal discussion of Xinguano ideas concerning maternal blood but it would appear that, as in the Sambia case, they consider that both men and women share circulatory blood regarded as female in either essence or origin and that, in addition, women also have their own menstrual-womb blood. In any case, the mother's blood seems to play no role in the feeding or formation of the foetus whilst menstrual blood is certainly considered antithetical to male strength in general and specifically to male semen.

For Xinguano men, partible blood, akin to the menstrual-womb blood of their mothers, is a disposable substance which they neither transmit nor benefit from. It contained them in the past but should not do so again in the future. Instead, like the Sambia in Strathern's analysis, the men appear to constitute themselves as the male containers of female blood and hence would be doing something rather different to imitating the women's menstruation - perhaps this is why Mehinacu state that ear-piercing is both like menstruation but also different from it (Gregor 1985: 188). By voiding blood, the men enhance their vigour by getting rid of something debilitating and female in essence or origin, perhaps also 'making room' for the ingestion of

foods which build up their supply of male semen (see Gregor 1985: 86). Significantly, it is above all fish, whose penile / seminal characteristics were noted above, that are forbidden to those who are secluded and bleeding but enjoyed immediately afterwards (Gregor 1977: 235-6; Basso 1973: 70). However, blood-letting is practised by both sexes and believed to make young girls stronger as well.[8] In the case of young girls, it could be that this 'making room' relates to their present status as daughters and their future destiny as wives. As daughters they receive seminal manioc and fish from their fathers but mediated through their mother's cooking; as wives such foods will come directly from their husbands and be cooked by their own hands.

In the Barasana case, where blood and semen are analogous substances which both sexes transmit, it would make no sense for either men or women to get rid of blood intentionally. Bleeding is considered to debilitate, not strengthen, the body and people take steps to conserve their blood and enhance its supply. When a baby is born, its parents keep a small bark-cloth bag filled with a lump of red powder (~gidaya) which represents the child's body and life-force. When the child falls ill, the parents ask a shaman to blow spells on its paint bag to revitalise their child's body. Adults use this same powder as a face- and body-paint and apply it to their temples and umbilicus in order to revitalise themselves. Produced by women and identified with their own, or Woman Shaman's, menstrual blood, this paint also figures as an important 'female' item in ceremonial exchange between affines.

Seminal Fruits and Green Milk

In my earlier work, I was already aware that Barasana ceremonial exchange involved relations between affinally-related groups while initiation was more concerned with intra-group descent relations but I had assumed that initiation was the maximal expression of a common ritual pattern of which ceremonial exchange was merely a simplified and attenuated form, thus failing to see the complementary, transformational relationship between the two (S. Hugh-Jones 1979: 37-8). Like the Melanesianists whose arguments form the subject of Strathern's extended critique, I had conflated the indigenous rhetoric of the clan, as a collective male unit which is manifest in initiation, with the anthropologists' 'society' or 'social structure'. In a more recent work (Hugh-Jones 1995a) I began to rethink my previous analysis, using the indigenous concept of the 'house' as a critique of the notion of descent and as a vehicle to explore the relation between initiation and inter-group exchange.

As I have already indicated, Strathern's critique of analyses of Melanesian initiation cults and of their theoretical underpinnings could be usefully applied in the Amazonian context. Rather than recapitulate her arguments at length, I want instead to extend my own re-analysis of Barasana initiation, picking out selected bits from a

complex whole and using ideas derived from Strathern's work to re-cast them in a form which makes them more directly comparable with Melanesia data. My earlier re-analysis was more concerned with the relatively static image of the house as a totalising representation of the different collectivities created during initiation and ceremonial exchange(see Strathern 1988: 115, 120 on similar totalising images of collective domesticity in Melanesia). This image is reduplicated the identification of the house, on the one hand with the world and, on the other, with the human body. The house itself is an androgynous production, its gender being relative to a given ritual context, 'male' in the case of initiation, 'female' in the case of ceremonial exchange. Bearing in mind the passage of rivers though the world and of substances through the body, I want here to shift focus to the more dynamic concerns of flow and growth. Specifically, I shall focus some of the transactions involving vegetable substances - fruit, powdered coca leaves, cigars, tobacco snuff, yagé [9], and manioc bread - which occur during initiation, to ask whether we can find any analogues of Sambia semen transactions.

I can give only a bare outline of the rites themselves. Initiation occurs in two stages. During the first, a set of less potent secret flutes and trumpets are revealed to the neophytes during 'house where fruit is brought in', a rite which also takes place on a regular basis, independently of initiation. At the start of the rite, the men carry large quantities of wild or cultivated tree-fruit into the house accompanied by the playing of the instruments. The men remain in the front of the house with the women and children confined in the screened-off rear section. The fruits come as a gift from the spirits of the wild who are represented by the musical instruments and the men who play them. Inside the house, the fruit is tipped into baskets in a manner which might be taken to suggest that it pours forth from the interior of flutes and trumpets themselves. The men also throw fruit against the screen which divides them from the women, sometimes pelting the women and children directly. This throwing of fruit would seem to emphasise both the separation of the men from the women and also the 'masculine' quality of the fruit itself. During the day, the men play the flutes and trumpets round the house, sometimes whipping the women and children to make them grow. At nightfall, the instruments are removed from the house, the screen is dismantled, manioc beer is served, and the women join the men in dancing. When neophytes are present ,the rite is extended, it is they who are the focus of the whipping and, for the first time, they play the sacred flutes, eat coca, drink yagé, smoke ritual cigars, and have snuff blown into their noses through a bone blow-pipe.

In the second stage, hee wii or 'house of sacred instruments', no fruit is involved. Instead, it is the neophytes themselves who are carried into the house where a set of more potent instruments are revealed to them. This second stage follows the same basic pattern as the first but it is much more serious and drawn out.

The rite itself takes two whole days and instead of being immediately followed by a dance, rite and dance are interspersed by a long period during which the neophytes are secluded in a special enclosure away from contact with the women. At the start of the rite they are painted from head to toe in black paint; the disappearance of this woad-like skin dye marks the end of their seclusion. During seclusion they are taught the mythological basis of the rites they have been through and, as part of their preparation as future husbands, they are also instructed in the arts of basket-making. The initial preparation of manioc gardens and the provision of the basketry used to process manioc are the husband's chief contributions to the married couple's joint production of bread, beer, and other manioc-derived foods. Baskets thus have important 'masculine' connotations and figure prominently as 'male' items in ceremonial exchanges.

Each day, the secluded neophytes are taken to the river where they bathe, drink copious amounts of water, and vomit. This bathing and vomiting is designed to cleanse the 'dirt' suffused throughout the neophytes' bodies, a cleansing which complements their special, pure diet. They eat only ants, termites, fruits and sireria, a special bread made from pure manioc starch. The insects are considered as especially appropriate food partly because of their own seminal associations and partly because their bodies contain no blood. The special bread is supplied by a woman who acts as the neophytes' ~basolio or 'adoptive mother', the counterpart of an 'adoptive father' (~basoli) who looks after them during the rite itself. The initiates' portion is but a small part of a huge supply of pure-starch bread which the women of the house prepare together during the seclusion period, under the ~basolio's supervision.[10] Together with the manioc beer which the women brew, a pile of this bread forms a centre-piece of the 'the house of manioc bread', a major feast which marks the young men's emergence from seclusion.

Whilst the initiation itself is a predominantly intra-clan affair, it is important that people from affinally-related communities should attend the dance which follows. Before the dance begins, the seclusion compartment is destroyed and the young boys, decked out in full finery, are presented to the women. The women now paint them from head to foot with red paint and present them with the newly-woven knee-bands they have been making. In return, the boys give them the products of their own basket-making. This exchange creates a ceremonial partnership (~heyeri - ~heyrio)between the boys and women which pre-figures the adult relationship between husband and wife.

Bearing in mind that Sambia men supplement their supply of semen not only directly from others but also by drinking tree-sap (Herdt 1987: 164), I begin by considering the role of the fruit in Barasana initiation. In my previous analysis, I commented that their connotations of growth and periodicity suggested an

identification between tree-fruits and the initiate boys. Although it was clear that the fruits were closely associated with the men who typically gathered them, what I did not then notice was their specifically agnatic and seminal connotations. Tukanoan rites involving tree fruits belong to the wider category of inter-group ceremonial exchanges. However, what distinguishes these exchanges of fruit from other exchanges is that whereas the latter typically take place between affinally-related communities, the former occur mainly between agnatically-related communities belonging to the same clan or language group (see also Chernela 1993: 116 for the Wanano).

In Barasana, tree-fruits themselves are known collectively as hee rika, hee being 'secret flutes and trumpets' and rika having the general meaning of 'arm' or 'appendage'. Like flutes and initiates in relation to palm-tree ancestors, fruits can thus be considered as the detachable components of the instruments. In the rites, it is as if both fruits and initiates spew forth from the hollow flutes as sprays of fruit and leaves emerge from the tops of palm trees growing in the forest. These parallels, which suggest the seminal character of fruit, are echoed elsewhere. Ahe, 'seed', is close to ahea, 'penis' and the names of several individual fruits or fruit products refer directly or indirectly to semen.[11] In addition, in a story widespread throughout NWA, the ancestor whose burned body gives rise to the secret flutes and trumpets is himself conceived from a caimo (Pouteria caimito) fruit given to his mother to eat. The glutinous juice of the fruit trickles from her mouth down to her genitals, making her pregnant (see for e.g. S. Hugh-Jones 1979: 262).

I have never heard individual men claim that they consume fruit to supplement their supply of semen. Nonetheless what all this appears to suggest is that, in Strathernian terms and in relation to a collective body, gifts of fruits between agnates and the ritual act of bringing fruit into the house can both be understood as unmediated transactions which replicate clan substance by augmenting a supply of semen and ensuring its continued flow. The rites are said to guarantee a continuous supply of fruit which can be understood literally as such and metaphorically as a supply of both semen and children. The fruit is taken into a house which, in this context, stands for the clan as a collective male body. Further evidence for this assertion comes from the contrast between the verbs ~soo-'to take in, incorporate' and eka 'to feed, give out' which marks the contrast between agnatic exchanges of fruit and the exchange of other foods between affines, respectively hee rika ~sooria wii, 'the house which takes in fruit' and baare ekaria wii, 'the house which gives out food'. This local contrast between 'incorporation' and 'giving out' matches Strathern's more general distinction between 'growing' and 'feeding' as, respectively, unmediated and mediated exchanges.

Other transactions involved in initiation may also be understood in this light. During the rites themselves, the men must not consume any normal food, 'food' here being understood as fish, meat, or manioc products which would come from women. The substances they ingest - coca, tobacco, yagé and manioc beer - are explicitly opposed to the normal foods of which they are analogues (see Hugh-Jones 1995b) and they served up exclusively by men. Leaving beer aside for the moment, these other 'non-foods' share in common an association with semen and with the male genitals. Coca (kahi) and yagé (idire ['drink'] kahi) are owned by men and propagated vegetatively from cuttings, a procedure which produces an unbroken 'male' line of agnatic continuity through time. The counterpart 'female' line is produced by the manioc cuttings that women plant and transmit to their daughters. Both kinds of kahi are alike in being considered part of clan identity and they stem from a common root-stock which is also that of the clan itself. Both plants are also said to have come from within the hollow interior of the flutes and trumpets. They would thus be the 'marrow' of the bones these instrument represent, bone marrow (badi) being a source or form of semen (also 'badi').

The act of planting coca also has sexual connotations which are amplified in a myth of the plant's origin. The daughter of Fish Anaconda, Yawira, herself both fish and manioc, asks ~Yake, the younger brother of her husband Yeba, to help carry manioc cuttings to her garden. There she seduces him, making love so enthusiastically that he dies as he ejaculates, his body giving rise to the neat rows of coca that men plant in the garden's blanket of manioc cuttings. Yawira becomes pregnant, the implication being that, in this context, the relationship between coca and manioc is analogous to that between 'male' and 'female'. Finally, in a previous section of the myth, Yawira gives Yeba tobacco, a gift from her father and the source of all tobacco. It comes in the form of a cigar which is at once a fish and her own father's penis (see S. Hugh-Jones 1979: 296-8 and also 1995b).

I emphasise the contextual nature of these gender associations bearing in mind not only Strathern's lesson but also that of the ethnography itself. I have already made clear the androgynous character of both the sacred instruments and of the bodies of those from whom they derive. This androgyny applies also to these 'non-foods'. If coca and yagé are 'forms of' semen, they are equally 'forms of' milk. Yagé is the milk of Woman Shaman and the ancestral stock of both coca and yagé is located in the Milk River whose waters are tinged with green (Reichel-Dolmatoff 1971:46). Like maternal milk, coca also satisfies hunger, the former being food for the body, the latter being soul-stuff and a food for the soul (see C. Hugh-Jones 1979: 228, 239 and passim). Finally, in a Desana origin myth, both coca and yagé come from the detached fingers of a woman's body (see Reichel-Dolmatoff 1971: 36-7).

Given the above it can, I think, be said that when the presiding shaman distributes the coca, snuff, cigar, and yagé on which he has blown protective spells, when the senior men circulate these substances amongst themselves, and when they are given to the neophytes, these exchanges can indeed be considered, in hidden, metaphorical terms, as being tantamount to transactions of semen which resemble those of the Sambia and which have a similar rationale. If this is so, then, following Strathern's re-analysis of the Sambia material, the gender of these substances, and that of the people from whom they are detached as partible objectifications, both depend on context and point of view. When the shamans blow snuff up the noses of the neophytes and other men, this act of 'insemination' can be seen either as an unmediated transaction between parts of a same-sex, all-male collectivity or as a mediated, cross-sex transaction in which a 'male' shaman 'inseminates' a 'female' neophyte with a 'male' substance. Likewise the coca which the neophytes eat from the bees-wax gourd can be seen variously as a 'male' seminal substance emanating from a 'male' source which grows the young men's bodies in a same-sex relation, or as that substance in its 'female' milk-like form, emanating from a 'maternal' shaman who stands in a cross-sex relation to the neophytes and who feeds them as her 'sons'. Both 'readings' are consistent with ethnographic evidence which, on quite different grounds, suggests the androgynous character of the shaman (see S. Hugh-Jones 1979: 125-6) and which mirrors the explicitly androgynous status of the bees-wax gourd as both male skull and female genitals (see above).

Let me now turn to the neophytes' post-initiation diet of manioc-starch and the requirement that they must vomit out the 'dirt' from their bodies. Given the associations between starch and semen explored above, a diet of starch can be seen as yet another manifestation of the flow of semen from seniors to neophytes, a flow which both represents the clan as a collective body, which extends this body via the boys, and which prepares them for fatherhood as semen- and flute-endowed men. But here it might be objected that the flow now comes from an 'adoptive mother', a woman not a man. Two things suggest that this 'adoptive mother' stands in a single-sex, 'male' relationship to the boys. Firstly, she is specifically an agnatic relative who stands as a father's sister to her brother's sons. She is thus an 'metonymic extension' of the collective male group. Secondly, her supplying of starch-bread is described not as an act of 'feeding' (eka-) but rather as one of 'growing' (bikio-) or 'adopting'(~basoo-). The significance of this contrast emerges more clearly in relation to pets. Eka- applies not only to 'feeding' but also to the taming or domestication of wild animals and implies a difference of identity between feeder and fed. When human beings are adopted, the emphasis is on the identity between the two parties which is reflected in the literal meaning of ~basoo-, 'to make human'. In conclusion, it would appear that what the ~basolio provides is clan 'seminal'

substance, but this time not in it's 'male' form as a 'non-food' but in its female form as 'agnatic food' or blood, a recognition of the agnatic blood that circulates in the bodies of clan sisters .

As Strathern shows for the Sambia and Gimi, the same act of vomiting can be seen in different lights depending on nuances of ethnographic detail and on the perspective that is adopted. Here I shall use her analysis to suggest three possible interpretations for the Barasana practice mentioned above. The 'dirt' that is cleansed by vomiting is specifically associated with food - this is made clear in relationship to yagé. Yagé and food are emphatically incompatible. One must always empty ones body of food ('dirt') before drinking yagé, and the drink itself induces further vomiting. Coming from the women who process and cook it, eating food would appear to imply an equation with the maternal body - though I have never heard it stated in such bald terms. If this is so, then the men's, and particularly the neophytes', vomiting can be understood as one part of the more general process whereby the men constitute themselves as an all-male, single-sex collectivity metaphorically identified with the body of the clan and clan ancestors. This they do by detaching themselves from women. At the same time, in the neophytes' case, this vomiting can also be seen as part of the process whereby the senior men substitute themselves for the neophytes' mothers, taking over their maternal role as the suppliers of seminal (non)-foods (see above). By vomiting out their mother's food, the neophytes constitute their bodies as hollow containers ready to receive the seminal substances they are offered.

It is also possible that voiding this 'dirt' can be viewed as the getting rid of bad maternal womb blood. This is suggested by the poisonous connotations of such blood. In a Curripaco myth, when Amaru gives birth to Kuai, the ancestor whose body gives rise to the sacred flutes, she puts him in a manioc sieve to separate him from the blood of the birth, an act which mirrors the culinary process in which manioc pulp is washed in a sieve to separate the poisonous juice and sedimented starch from the fibrous portion. The blood becomes a violent poison which can cause haemorrhaging in both men and women (see Journet 1995: 270). The voiding of bad blood is also implied in the gradual cleansing of black paint from the initiates' bodies during seclusion. Womb-blood is described as being dark or black and it is likened to a black sauce made from caramelised manioc juice (C. Hugh-Jones 1979: 224). The substitution of black paint by red paint, directly identified with life giving, circulatory blood, at the end of seclusion would thus mark the successful conclusion of this change of blood.

However, the story recounted above, in which a male ancestor detotalises himself by vomiting his male children from his body would, also suggest that vomiting is equivalent to ejaculation. Here vomit appears not as maternal 'dirt' but as

paternal semen, the initiates' vomiting pre-figuring their future role as husbands and fathers. More abstractly, vomiting, a reversal of the flow of substances through the gut, can also be understood as a general metaphor of potency and production. Quite apart from being a commonplace of everyday experience, the image of sound, semen, food, milk, vomit, fruits, and children spewing forth from various tubes is central to much of the mythology to which I have alluded. The myths teach that all such productions form part of the essential processes of life and that each partakes of the other. The gender of these tubes and of the substances they emit is not intrinsic but depends the context of use and on the identity of the user.

In the closing phase of the rite, each sex reveals the abundant productions of their different containers to the members of the opposite sex. The men reveal the handsome initiates they have produced in the house-body of their clan and the initiates reveal the piles of baskets woven in their enclosure. The women too reveal the products of their own 'gestations'- red paint and garters, a trough full of manioc beer, and a splendid pile of manioc bread. A panache of red macaw tails on top of this pile draws attention to the affinities between manioc-starch and blood, the same substance which, in paint form, the women smear on the emerging neophytes bodies. What each has produced as a single-sex collectivity, they now display to the other, entering into cross-sex exchanges mediated by the products of their hidden work.

I could continue in this vein, applying the appropriate Strathernian vocabulary to each of these and several other transactions - of flutes, feathers, names, and neophytes - exploring in detail different cross-sex and same-sex gender perspectives from which they might be viewed. But I hesitate to do so. Having already made the point, to go on would amount to no more than an exercise of ethnographic painting-by-numbers. I also hesitate because, like all such exercises, this one can be taken too far. Barasana people would be horrified by the parallels I have drawn between their own metaphoric subtleties and the literal-minded practices of the Sambia. But, the latter aside, some of their shamans might well accept much of my rendering of the material given above precisely because it is 'there'- in the myths, the ritual acts, the language, and the jokes. But putting them together and pursuing their implications depends on individual perspective, both theirs and mine. For them, such issues are shrouded in secrecy both because their implications are potent, dangerous, and worrisome and because, beyond a certain point, there are no commonly accepted dogmas, only individual speculation Some things are better thought than said or done.

To conclude, I have said enough to indicate that, like those of the Sambia initiation cult, the exchanges in Barasana initiation can be described, in Strathernian terms, as promoting the internal replication of lineal, clan substance through the flow of partible objects (boys, flutes, coca, yagé,..) between the members of a single-sex,

all male cult group in such a way that the neophytes emerge as extensions of the clan and as signs of its internal strength and growth. Putting the clan's genesis into reverse, the flute-men constitute themselves as the re-totalised male ancestor who comes to adopt the neophytes as his 'sons', substituting himself for the neophytes' individual mothers and incorporating them into a collective body. The value of seeing initiation in these terms lies not in re-cycling old material through a new vocabulary but in my knowledge that this kind of comparison has helped me to better understand NWA ethnography and in my hope that it will also suggest avenues for future comparison. In addition, I would be now very hesitant to accept my own or anyone else's claim that Amazonian secret flute cults are simply or straightforwardly 'about' men's domination of women and their appropriation or mimicking of female reproduction. If they are about that, they are also about several other things which render this view problematic and coexist with it in a contradictory and tense relation..

I now turn from initiation to ceremonial exchange, from clanship to kinship, shifting my focus away from the Tukanoans towards the Arawakans and, comparatively, away from the Sambia towards the Daribi.

Dangerous Fish and Sterile Beer

Ceremonial exchanges between affinally-related communities occur throughout the NWA region. Overall, these exchanges conform to a common pattern. People from one community visit their affines in another community, bringing them gifts and dancing in their house. In return, the host community prepares a large quantity of manioc beer which is consumed during the dance. Later, the tables are turned. The erstwhile hosts now bring a reciprocal gift to the initial donors in their place of residence, dancing in return for the beer supplied by their hosts. The proceedings unfold in a characteristic pattern which serves to transform the relationship between the two parties from one of separation to one of mutuality. When they arrive, the guests are treated like strangers or potential enemies and remain firmly separated from their hosts. They do not enter the house, they dance alone on the cleared patio under the watchful and critical eyes of their hosts, and they sleep outside in temporary shelters.

In the morning, after presenting their gifts, the guests come inside the house to dance but still sit apart from their hosts as a clearly separate group. The atmosphere is initially one of tense formality mixed with ambivalent sexual innuendo, flirtation, and aggression but, as the time goes by, things become more relaxed and easy-going. Hosts and guests now sit and dance together and boisterous hilarity and gossiping increasingly drown out the drawn-out sessions of formally-chanted greetings and recitations of ancestral pedigree which earlier formed the main style of

communication. By the end of the feast, visitors and residents form a single, undifferentiated group. They eat together as a single commensal community and the initial gift is redistributed to hosts and guests alike (see Hugh-Jones 1995: 233). These gatherings are also marked by an emphasis on sexuality which is manifest in jokes, in flirtations and seductions, in the form and significance of the dancing, and in the layered symbolism of the different musical performances. This sexuality promotes the fertility of humans, animals and fishes and of animal species and ensures an abundance of manioc in the gardens. (see also Hill 1987 and Journet 1995: 266).

Despite this common pattern, there are some significant variations as to who gives what and to whom amongst the peoples living in different parts of NWA. In the south, amongst the Tukanoan Barasana and their neighbours, ceremonial gifts between affines are almost always restricted to items of food, principally smoked fish and smoked meat - hence the expression 'food-giving house'. The exchanges can be viewed from two perspectives. On any one occasion, the visitors, as wife-takers (WTs), bring a 'male' protein gift and receive 'female' manioc products - beer and bread- from their hosts and wife-givers (WGs) in return. This exchange parallels the domestic exchanges of protein and manioc between husband and wife (see Hugh-Jones 1995a). It also parallels the supply of meat and fish that a son-in-law provides for his wife's father in brideservice, a parallel enshrined in myth. Yeba, an uncivilised jaguar, marries Yawira, the daughter of Fish Anaconda and the head of the Fish People. Fish Anaconda provides Yeba with the manioc and other cultivated plants that he previously lacked. The plants are themselves Yawira and her sisters. In return, at the first and prototypical ceremonial exchange, Yeba kills game animals, his own people, and gives their meat to his father-in-law. As the myth suggests, from this perspective the ceremonial exchange celebrates a particular marriage and is built around a precise set of kin relations.

However, seen from another perspective, this short-term, asymmetrical exchange is but one half of a longer-term, symmetrical and reciprocal exchange of protein items, ideally meat for fish but sometimes one species of meat or fish for another - what matters is that they should differ in some way. The reversibility of these exchanges is consistent with the fact that, given the Tukanoan preference for direct sister-exchange, in global terms each clan is simultaneously WG and WT to its affines. Thus we find, for example, that whereas the Desana consider themselves 'male' in relation to their 'female' Pira-Tapuyo WGs, the Pira-Tapuyo see things the other way round (Reichel-Dolmatoff 1971: 18). From this more global perspective, the exchange underscores the on-going relationship between affinally-related clan-based communities. It also allows people to disembed exchange from its kinship

matrix and talk of different food items as circulating against each other in an independent sphere - like a non-incremental version of the Hagener's moka.

This is even more marked amongst the Tukanoan and Arawakan groups living further north. Here, in addition to exchanges of food, we also find exchanges of manufactured goods associated with a specialised production of particular items - baskets, sieves, stools, paint, manioc graters, etc. - by different groups. The 'system' remains poorly understood partly because it has been substantially affected by contact with outsiders and partly because the extant accounts tend, on the one hand, to view it from a utilitarian perspective as barter-trade associated with unequal resource distribution and, on the other, to mix up a theoretical, 'totemic' allocation of goods to groups with the realities of what people actually produce and exchange (see also Hugh-Jones 1992). For my present purposes, it is sufficient to note that the items exchanged are 'gender-marked' both as the products of men and women (as in my the basketry and red paint mentioned above) and as coming from WG or WT groups. Barasana refer to such exchanges in their myths but, in practice, they exchange manufactured goods on an individual basis and in non-ceremonial contexts. The only exception to this rule is a ritualised exchange of feather ornaments which sets up a special relationship- hee ~teyia - between two groups. Besides 'secret flutes', hee refers to all things connected with the ancestral state whilst ~teyia means 'in-laws' or 'affines'. This expression, and the form of the exchange, are indicative of the unrealised potential of feather ornaments as items of bridewealth.

The Wakuénai have yet another variant. Here an opening, male-owned gift of smoked fish or meat is matched by a closing, female-owned gift of processed manioc pulp. Hill suggests that the difference between this Arawakan exchange of smoked protein for raw vegetable products and Tukanoan exchanges of foods of the same kind reflects a difference in their respective marriage patterns. The Wakuénai prefer marriage with distant cousins or non-relatives and emphasise bride-service as a compensation for the loss of female labour. Ceremonial exchange, 'a loaning of the products of male labour to affinal sibs before a later repayment in the form of the products of female labour' is seen as 'a symbolic enactment in miniature of the practice of bride service, . a loaning of male labour in exchange for the eventual loss of female labour' (1987: 189). In the Tukano case, a preference for sister exchange and close-cousin marriage means that 'the same principle of direct, reciprocal exchange is evident in food exchange as in marriage' (1987: 190). In addition, whereas all Wakuénai affinal relations are tinged with ambiguity and contradiction, the Tukanoans polarise between balanced reciprocity with closely related affinal sibs and negative reciprocity between distant or unrelated affines. Finally, the equality of value between the male- and female-owned gifts of meat and manioc is taken to indicate that 'the relative value attributed to women's horticultural products and to the

status of women is somewhat higher among the Wakuénai than among their . Tukanoan neighbours' (1987: 191).

This is one reading of the gender of these gifts. Following Strathern on 'Melanesia' and Journet on the Curripaco, I want to suggest another. Superficially at least, it would appear that for both Wakuénai and Tukanoans, the difference between WTs and WGs is signalled by the gendered difference in what they exchange: male-produced, male-owned fish or meat from the WTs in return for female-produced, female-owned manioc beer from the WGs. This was the conclusion I reached in an earlier work (see Hugh-Jones 1995a). However a number of things would suggest that the issue of gender is considerably more complex. To begin with, there is the androgyny of both fish and manioc discussed above. The 'ownership' of manioc and its products is also ambiguous. A woman's manioc is grown in her husband's garden and the division of labour between them involves a set of unmediated cross-sex exchanges, their joint input into the final product . In addition, when manioc beer is distributed during the exchange rites, it is the men who distribute it and they do so in their own name. Manioc could thus be subjected to a set of gender permutations similar to those which Strathern applies to Melanesian data. It is at once 'male' as a single-sex extension of the male garden owner, 'female' as something ('children') which women produce in single-sex replication, and 'cross-sex' as the product of unmediated cross-sex exchanges. Finally there is Journet's report that, in addition to bringing 'male' fish, the visitors at Curripaco ceremonial exchanges may also bring pottery whilst the hosts may provide their guests with presents of baskets (1995: 262). As we have already seen, basketry is a 'male' product; pots are made by women and, throughout the region, much metaphorical play is made on the analogy between cooking pots and gestating wombs. Thus 'male' guests may also bring 'female' gifts and 'female' hosts may provide 'male' counter-gifts.

I shall follow Journet's (1995: 253 ff.) analysis in what follows. The Curripaco view ceremonial exchanges as being organised around a core-set of kinship relations, namely those between a father, his daughter and his son-in-law - as in the Barasana myth of Yeba and Fish Anaconda. The paradigmatic Curripaco exchange occurs as a man's acknowledgement and celebration of his daughter's marriage. He invites his daughter, now living in another community, to prepare manioc beer for him, promising her and her husband a gift of fish in return. Assisted by his brothers and son's, he marshals the necessary fish whilst his daughter, for her part, makes the beer, sometimes counting on her co-wives and female in-laws to help out.

The daughter's role in supplying beer for her father is prefigured in the rite she has previously undergone at puberty. After her first period, she spends a month secluded in a compartment eating a diet which is initially very restricted and later less so. Journet gives no details but I think we can say with confidence that it will be like

that of male Barasana neophytes - manioc-starch and small, bloodless creatures but no fish. The secluded girl must keep herself very busy making decorated pottery, the counterpart of the young men's baskets and their complement in the processing of manioc. At the festival which marks the end of seclusion, the girl offers her father and brothers manioc beer and pottery. In return, her father and other male agnates offer her an abundance of smoked fish.

The father's orchestration of his daughter's seclusion, his careful timing of events, and the fish he offers her are all ways of establishing control over her menstrual cycle and thus over her fertility. As noted above, throughout NWA infertile women abstain from fish whilst eating fish both signals and contributes to actual or potential fertility. In addition, fish spirits are often held responsible for menstrual problems, abortions, still-births, and neonatal deaths. The fish take human children in revenge for the fish children that humans catch and eat.. Like the fish that he offers, a woman's father can also cause such problems - husbands often blame the jealous fathers-in-law for the death of their young children.

If the father's gifts of fish are both sign and vehicle of his control over her blood and fertility, the daughter's gifts of beer and pottery can likewise be understood as manifestations of her capacities as a wife and mother who will transform or 'cook' her husband's semen and manioc tubers into children, bread, and beer. Just as her father and his fish imply the potential to both create and destroy life, so also do she and her beer imply a potential control over life and death. Like their Melpa sisters, women in NWA are 'women-in-between' caught between conflicting loyalties to their own and their husband's kin. Infanticide is both a perceived threat and real possibility. When babies die, the father may accuse his wife of conspiring in their death; when a wife is angry with her husband or his kin, she may kill her new-born child in revenge.

Beer too stands mid-way between life and death. On the one hand, the production of beer evokes the metaphors of gestation and birth that surround the processing of all manioc products. Manioc tubers, the 'children' of men and women, are first separated into their component parts - fibres, juice, and starch which stand in analogical relation to bones, blood, and semen. These parts are then re-assembled and cooked into different foodstuffs in a process likened to the creation and birth of children, the products of transformed semen and blood (see C. Hugh-Jones 1979). On the other hand, beer itself lies at the extreme end of this culinary process. It is made from manioc bread burned to a toast, mixed with manioc juice which is poisonous when raw, and then allowed to ferment. Curripaco are explicit in describing beer as 'rotten' and are ambivalent about its strong taste (Journet 1995: 271). People also use beer as the favoured vehicle for delivering poison to their enemies.

Bearing these points in mind, let us return to the parallel between puberty rites and ceremonial exchange. At puberty, a girl prepares beer from her father's manioc and gives it to him in return for his fish; on marriage, she makes beer from her husband's manioc and gives it to her father in return for his fish. The husband has thus substituted himself for the father as the source of the woman's manioc. As Journet makes clear, it is precisely this substitution which is played out in brideservice. Globally, at the level of inter-clan relations, women are said to be exchanged for other women and, from the perspective of a father, the daughter-in-law he gains may be a replacement for the daughter he looses. But from the perspective of a new husband, wife and sister are not equivalent: his wife will provide him with the children but his sister cannot. Before his father-in-law will cede his rights over his daughter's children, the husband must demonstrate his capacity to provide for her. This he does by making a manioc garden for his wife's parents and by providing them with fish and meat (Journet 1995: 238-41).

The exchange of fish for beer can thus be understood in two ways. On the one hand, seen prospectively, the exchange can be understood in terms of sexual complementarity. The new wife offers beer to her agnates as a sign of her own fertility. Like her children, the beer is a transformed, 'female' form of her husband's semen / manioc. Her agnates contribute a complementary 'male' substance in the form of fish. The Curripaco say that fish 'call' manioc and guarantee the abundant harvests needed to supply quantities of beer (1955: 266); by implication they also call forth many children. These children will belong to the husband - as does the beer made from his manioc and distributed by him. On the other hand, seen retrospectively, the beer can also be understood as a recognition of the power that a woman's agnates still hold over her children, a power contained in the blood they share with her. In the beer they are given, they receive in 'rotten', substitute form what they might otherwise claim for real - their sister's or daughter's spoiled fertility in the form of unproductive blood and still-born children.

During the rite, the guests incarnate the spirits of the fish they bring. These fish-spirits also threaten to claim their due by taking their 'children' - the fish the guests have killed and now offer to their hosts as a present. For their part, the hosts incarnate terrestrial animals who offer their children in the form of manioc and beer. Each party thus offers to the other as 'food' what to themselves represents their own 'children'. Like the delicious but potentially lethal fish offered by the guests, the hosts' beer also carries a double message - wholesome drink or vehicle of poison. Through its staged transformation of potentially hostility into a relation of mutual trust, the rite itself enacts the creation of the good faith upon which its success depends.

The visitors at Tukanoan exchange feasts frequently vomit out the beer they are offered. In part this is an effect of the yagé they drink. Sometimes it is also the only way they can avoid loosing face by failing to finish what their hosts offer them. From one perspective, this vomiting can also be understood as the voiding of a potentially lethal substance which is also tantamount to poisonous blood but it can also be seen in a more positive light. The beer is served from a large trough hollowed from a trunk of wood in the manner of a canoe. The Desana name for the anaconda in which the ancestors travelled prior to being spewed out as human 'sons' , ~pabiri gasiru, 'fermentation canoe', suggests that this beer trough is none other than the ancestral anaconda itself. In order to enhance the fermentation of beer, the women first chew and spit out some of the ingredients, using their saliva to convert starch to sugar. If fermentation is a form of gestation, vomiting beer and spitting out chewed manioc would appear to be signs of male and female fertility which play upon beer as an ambiguously gendered substance.[12]

In conclusion, Journet's account of Curripaco ceremonial exchange is consistent with Hill's argument that Arawakan ceremonial exchange is intimately linked with brideservice. However, despite the fact that they prefer close cousin marriage, the Barasana myth of Yeba and Fish Anaconda (and much other evidence not given here) makes it clear that this is true of the Tukanoans as well. This myth inverts Journet's account: instead of WGs who incarnate the fish that they bring to their sister and brother's-in-law , with the latter as incarnations of terrestrial animals, we have a WT, Yeba, himself a terrestrial jaguar, who brings his own slaughtered kin, in the form of meat, to present to his father-in-law, Fish Anaconda, the father of the fishes. The rite and the myth, as two moments in the same process, revolve around the same set of kin relations and draw on a common natural idiom.

Instead of Hill's suggestion that the difference between Arawakan asymmetrical food exchange and Tukanoan symmetrical exchange is correlated with the former's preference for distant marriage and brideservice and the latter's preference for close sister-exchange (see above), I would rather see them as different possibilities allowed by the same overall system and seen from two different perspectives. Like symmetrical exchanges of food and goods, 'sister-exchange' represents the global, clan-based perspective of affinity. Here exchanges are all of a kind but in different spheres - food for food, goods for goods, women for women. But from a local, kin-based perspective, they appear less as affinal exchanges of food, women or labour and more as asymmetrical transactions between particular individuals involved in the production of wives and mothers, husbands and fathers which bring about the particular marriages around which collective affinal relations are built. To treat such exchanges though the commodity logic of 'loan' and 'repayment' masks a gift logic in which husbands substitute for fathers and beer

substitutes for children and in which clan sisters and male semen are exchanged as the detachable components of persons. Northwest Amazonians do indeed speak of their gifts as being male- and female-owned but, without going further into the details of their various permutations as cross- or single-sex, mediated or unmediated, I hope that I have said enough to indicate that the gender of such gifts is in fact more complex.

Conclusion

By way of some comparative conclusions, I turn first to Wagner's (1977) paper on Daribi analogical kinship. If Barasana initiation, as manifesting an unmediated flow of semen within a collective all-male group, shows parallels with the Sambia flute cult, there are also clear parallels between NWA affinal exchanges and those of the Daribi. As for the Tukanoans, Daribi embryos result from a double parental contribution which is manifest the substance flow of both father's (semen) and mother's (blood) linealities. Flows of detached, partible women, meat, or shells between wife-exchanging units of different substance stand in apposition to an internal, lineal flow of common semen within the clan. Meat, as an externalised, partible equivalent of semen, is both given out and consumed to increase internal vitality. WTs represent their flow to both their own offspring and to their WGs as a flow of maleness, giving the latter meat or male products. They regard the lineal flow of their WGs as a flow of female substance and, along with wives, they receive female wealth-items from them. The WGs themselves regard their gifts of women as a lineal flow of 'male' substance but represent it as 'female' in the gifts they give, thus distinguishing it from the male flow which passes to their offspring. 'Women (thus) emerge as the detachable objects of mediation (who) embody a male flow from their kinsmen that the husband's kin interpret as female flow. Departing from their kinsmen as metonymic gifts, ... they present themselves to their affines as metaphoric gifts, totalising the identity of the maternal connection' (Strathern 1988: 372n; see also p 207-8).

Remove shells, add fish, and substitute the appropriate male and female products and Strathern's paraphrase of Wagner's Daribi could well be a summary of Tukanoan ceremonial exchange. But there are also some important differences. Unlike the Tukanoans, Daribi prefer leviratic marriage and avoid of marriage with close kin, features which are reflected in a terminological identification between a man's sister's child and his own child. Furthermore, whereas northwest Amazonians re-apply the original distinction between paternal and maternal linealities (or 'WTs' and 'WGs') in the next generation in accord with their preference for repeated, close marriages, the Daribi pay 'child-price' to set up a new differentiation between the two linealities in each generation (Wagner 1977: 641). But even here the parallel holds

good. The Curripaco son-in-law's (WT) gift of beer, a detached, partible equivalent of the substance flow which unites father and daughter, 'pays off' the father-in-law' s power to curse his daughter's children. If it is not explicitly recognised as such, it is nonetheless the analogue of the Daribi 'childprice'.

Another difference is of course that the Daribi 'have' bridewealth whilst NWA groups 'have' brideservice 'instead'. Without denying the institutional consequences that can result from this 'presence', it is still true that behind this supposedly radical contrast lie some important points in common. For the Tukanoans, as for the Daribi, women 'are defined as extractable from their natal kin by virtue of being owed to another' and in both cases they 'reify partible components of male identity' (Strathern 1988: 228, 229). Nowhere in Amazonia does the direct substitutability of wealth for women reach Melanesian proportions but in NWA ceremonial exchange, both food and wealth items appear to substitute for aspects of female identity, albeit to a more limited extent. Above all, in view of the more than superficial parallels between Barasana and Sambia initiation and between NWA and Daribi ceremonial exchange, I would not accept Collier and Rosaldo's view that 'the apparent commonalties among certain bridewealth and brideservice peoples - in terms of polygyny, gerontocracy and exclusive male ritual practice and so on - are .. the product of distinctive processes in .. radically different social formations' (1981: 280).

Wagner's essay on Daribi analogic kinship is also a critique of descent theory which assumes that lineages are a manifestation of analytically prior or given connections. Instead, he argues that lineality must be continuously produced by limiting and constraining the analogical flow of kinship which would otherwise render all kinship relations alike. Seen in this way, 'descent groups' too appear not as 'things' which some groups 'have' and others lack but rather as the outcome of the same kind of contrived differentiations which, in other regimes, produce different outcomes. This critique links up with that of Strathern when she observes that, in their conflation of kinship with descent, anthropologists have swallowed the indigenous rhetoric which treats collective clan action as if it was kinship writ large rather than a specific transformation of the particularities of kinship (1988: 257). In the analysis of 'secret flute cults', the conflation of collective clan relations with 'kinship' or 'social structure' often goes together with the argument, first proposed by Allen (1967) for Melanesia and Murphy (1959) for Amazonia, that the cults themselves are a reflection of the divisive presence of in-married women in exogamous patrilineal regimes and a ritualised manifestation of a male-dominated and male-produced 'social structure'. I myself argued along these lines in my original account (1979) of Barasana initiation. But I am not alone. Much of the analysis of NWA kinship has suffered from treating the mytho-political rhetoric of

collective male ritual, linguistic exogamy, and inter-clan relations as 'social structure' rather than as being an alternative, transformed mode of domestic sociality. My (1995a) paper was offered as a partial corrective to this view.

As part of her comparison between the peoples of the Eastern and Western New Guinea Highlands, Strathern suggests that whereas the collective initiation and marriage rituals of the Sambia and Gimi appear as 'an adjunct to the way in which kinship produces more kinship', in the Hagen case 'male collective life appears to create (political) forms of its own' (1988: 261). This distinction is allied to Gregory's contrast between restricted, balanced exchange and incremental, delayed exchange of wealth items, and to Godelier's contrast between great-men and big-men systems which goes together with that between direct sister exchange and marriage exchanges mediated by bridewealth. Part of my aim in comparing initiation cults and ceremonial exchange in NWA has been to suggest that, despite the near absence of bridewealth and incremental exchange, such distinctions might also usefully be applied in Amazonia.

Viewed from this perspective, and inserting them into a wider, imaginary 'Melanesia', the peoples of NWA might be described as falling midway between the Eastern and Western Highland 'types'. If their initiation cults are concerned with the production of kinship, they are equally concerned with the production of clanship through the ritual construction of an all-male collectivity conceived of as a single male body separated from others by a rule of exogamy and by its detachable sisters. It is precisely this which underlies the unique (for Amazonia) 'patrilineal' cast of NWA social systems. Furthermore, whilst ceremonial exchanges are built around particular marriages and here involve asymmetries between the parties involved, there is much slippage between the perspectives of kinship and clanship. As in the Hagen case, on a collective level male, affines behave as though they were equal exchange partners and the evidence suggests that, in some contexts, the ceremonial exchange of wealth items took on a life of its own as a relatively detached and independent sphere.

This 'take off' of ceremonial exchange as a self-contained sphere of collective male political activity whose goals and values are relatively independent from relations of kinship and marriage seems to be even more apparent in the Xingú area. As in the Western Highlands, here too the significant organisational role of ceremonial exchange goes together with the formation of larger groupings (see Strathern 1988: 47). Although not cast in the language of gift exchange, Basso's (1973) and Gregor's (1977) brief accounts of the Xinguano uluki ('intervillage trade ceremony, formal barter sessions') suggest something quite similar to the Hagener's ceremonial exchange. In its most prestigious form, the intervillage uluki is an exclusively male affair which involves bouts of wrestling followed by the exchange of valuables such as shell belts, necklaces, decorated pots, feather headdresses, bows

and guns, the specialised productions of different groups. The exchanges are sponsored and organised by factional leaders who represent their villages. These leaders, the richest men in their villages, accumulate and distribute wealth in their own right and also orchestrate the exchanges of other villagers, urging them to display the generosity which they themselves exemplify. They are 'big men' not only metaphorically but also literally as men who are physically taller and renowned for their prowess as champion wrestlers (Gregor 1977: 199). Finally, and perhaps uniquely for contemporary Amazonia, the valuables exchanged in the uluki also figure as the bridewealth payments that mark a woman's first, arranged marriage (Basso 1977: 88, 96).

In sum, in both NWA and the Xingú region, we find secret flute cults and systems of ceremonial exchange. In the former case, these are associated with 'patrilineal descent', with both brideservice and an ideal of direct exchange of women in marriage. In the latter case, they are associated with a bilateral, cognatic emphasis, with an ideal of repeated but more distant marriage exchanges between kin-groups, and with the simultaneous presence of both brideservice and bridewealth.[13] However, the lesson of these presences and absences should not be to encourage an analysis in terms of variation but rather to suggest that, as in the case of Strathern's 'Melanesia', these permutations are better seen as the expressions of a common underlying logic. Although space does not allow a full analysis of the Xingú data, my analysis of NWA material suggests that there too that logic is one of gift exchange in the extended Strathernian sense.

And that brings me to the subject of gender. Thus far, and when compared to Melanesia, gender and gift exchange have played relatively minor roles in the Amazonianists' analytic tool kit; understood in Strathern's sense, they have not figured at all . Where gender does figure, most prominently in the analysis of secret flute cults, it has been seen as an inherent attribute of whole men and women. As Descola's chapter explains, understood in this sense, gender takes its place alongside a set of other contrasts - kin / affine, close / distant, centre / periphery, inside / outside - under which it is often subsumed. The contrast between predator and prey, which has proved so useful in the Amazonian context (see Descola 1993, Viveiros de Castro 1993), also forms part of this set. This contrast, itself intimately linked with the absence of domestic animals and with a corresponding emphasis on hunting, gives Amazonian systems a characteristic inflection which appears to be less evident in Melanesia. However, precisely in NWA and in the Xingú region, where ceremonial exchange goes hand-in-hand with the development of integrated regional polities, attitudes to hunting take on a different character to those elsewhere in Amazonia (see Hugh-Jones 1996).

In an effort to move things forward, I have used Strathern's destabilisation of analyses of Melanesian men's cults experimentally to destabilise my own (1979) Amazonian version. In doing this, I do not wish to imply that my previous analysis, or those of other colleagues, are 'wrong', merely that in looking at the same phenomena from several different angles, each perspective is nuanced and enriched by the other. Externally, the phenomena in question, men's cults and their associated mythology, display considerable variation between our two regions. Internally, each is a complex, multi-faceted whole anchored within the wider historically-specific culture, experience, and way of life of a given group of people. To some extent, the cults and myths are indeed formally and logically ordered - were this not so, anthropologists would not have recognised the common cultural patterns they do. But as Gregor and Tuzin (this volume) make clear, they also disorder and subvert, describing or physically enacting attitudes and behaviour which are simultaneously violent, aggressive, terrifying, attractive, exciting, and arousing. These emotionally-charged acts are accompanied and enhanced by an overt display of sexualised Oedipal themes which create an atmosphere of contradiction and moral ambivalence. To these performances, each participant, included or excluded, male or female, senior or junior, savant or fool, brings his or her own perspective which s/he may then share, in part, with inquisitive anthropologists. Combining these tangled or interwoven perspectives with their own, anthropologists construct their analyses, each one an approximation of something that 'says' and 'does' many things at once and for which there can be no one true account

Comparing data from one region with those from another within a common analytical frame, be it social structure, gender politics, personality dynamics, psychoanalysis, or any combination thereof, anthropologists have already made considerable progress in making sense of Melanesian and Amazonian men's cults. In the Amazonian context, what is interesting about Strathern's perspective is precisely that it is not the same as these other perspectives but different from them. But the issues of gender politics, sexuality, or psycho-dynamics are not thereby laid to rest. I am not fully convinced by, or perhaps do not fully understand, Strathern's (1988: 325 ff.) discussion of domination and, in my view, a satisfactory squaring of her perspective with those that have gone before is work that remains to be done.

Notes

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1. I use the ethnographic present intentionally to indicate the abstract, ahistorical, and 'floating' nature of any such broad scale comparison.
2. See Hugh-Jones 1995a for a recent Amazonian contribution.
3. See for example Gregor (1985), Hugh-Jones, S. (1979), Jackson (1996), Murphy (1959), Murphy and Murphy (1974), Nadelson (1981).
4. Full versions of the myths to which I allude are given in S. Hugh-Jones (1979: 262 - 308)
5. See Bamberger 1974 for Amazonia and Gewertz ed. 1988 for Melanesia.
6. Despite being cast in a different idiom, there are some very obvious parallels between Strathern's analysis of tubes and containers and Lévi-Strauss' discussions of the same theme in Amerindian myth (see Lévi-Strauss 1985)
7. Also relevant here are Cecila Busby's (1997: 32-3) remarks on the importance of distinguishing between intuitive, practice-based knowledge and reflexive, intellectualised discourse in relation to native theories of procreation.
8. Scarification and bleeding of women occurs only in exceptional circumstances - after an eclipse, and prior to a ritual of role reversal during which women wrestle (Gregor pers. comm.).
9. A hallucinogenic drink prepared from the Banisteriopsis caapi vine)
10. See C. and S. Hugh-Jones 1994.
11. Thus badi is both 'fruit of Erisma japura' and 'semen, bone marrow'; ~ree badi is 'Mauritia flexuosa pulp'; siti, is both 'umari (Poraqueiba sericea) seed pulp' and slang for 'penis'; iye is both 'fruit of Porouma cecropiaefolia' and 'oil, grease, energy'; the pips of toa (unidentified) are squeezed between thumb and index finger and 'shot' at private parts in a game between the sexes; etc.
12. See also Viveiros de Castro 1992 on the ambiguous gender of Araweté beer and Butt 1957 on the fertile connotations of beer brewing in Guyana.
13. Whether they are bridewealth in the same sense as in Melanesia is a moot point. However, what these Xingú payments and the Tukanoans' use of gifts of feather ornaments to set up relations of ritual affinity both indicate is that, in two areas of Amazonia, the development of regional polities appears to go together with peoples hovering on the brink of creating bridewealth systems. I cannot explain why they went no further but one wonders what went on in the larger-scale chiefdoms of prehistoric middle Amazonia.

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