

8 No nature, no culture: the Hagen case

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I Introduction

In describing some of the symbols to be found in their decorations and spells, we have asserted that the Hagen people of the Papua New Guinea Highlands make an association between two pairs of contrasts, wild and domestic things, male and female (A. and M. Strathern 1971). Other Highlands ethnographers have reached similar conclusions. But one of them, Langness, has also specifically questioned the analytical status of such constructs. He writes:

It seems plain that the distinction between the domestic and the wild . . . is widespread in the New Guinea Highlands (Bulmer 1967; Newman 1964; Strathern and Strathern 1971). Perhaps it is a universal dichotomy (Lévi-Strauss 1969). But whether universal or not, does it have the symbolic significance we are now attributing to it? And is it as symbolic to 'them' as it is to 'us'? . . . Even if we knew that a wild-domestic or *nature-culture* dichotomy was universal, and that it always had some symbolic significance, what about other symbols that do not appear to be directly associated with it? [1976:103; my italics]

Barth discusses Baktaman (central New Guinea) ideas with much the same scepticism. Referring to 'the Domestic : Wild : : *Culture* : *Nature* dichotomizations claimed for pig and marsupial symbolism, in areas of the Highlands (cf. Strathern 1968)', he notes that there is little to indicate either as basic constituting dichotomies in Baktaman cognition. '“Culture” does not provide a distinctive set of objects with which one manipulates “Nature”' (1975:194-5; my italics).

This presents something of a problem in cognition. Neither author is happy with the terms *nature-culture*, but in our case at least they are criticizing concepts we never employed. What, then, is the source of their equation? Why extrapolate from wild-domestic to nature-culture?

They provide some clues. Langness's comments arise in the context of discussions about male-female relations in the Highlands,¹ and particularly

1 In the same volume a similar extrapolation is made, with some reservation, by Meggitt. He suggests that the oppositions which emerge from Mae Enga stories between demons in the forest and humans in

notes Lindenbaum's account of the Fore (1976). These Eastern Highlanders make an explicit connection between resource management and social control:

The [Fore] opposition of the domestic and wild . . . has to do with control and safety which comes from regulation and management, in contrast to the danger which lies in the uncontrolled, unpredictable, and unregulated. Just as South Fore groups depend on regulated access to forest resources, so they depend on regulated access to women . . . Women's sexuality is the dangerous 'wild' which men must bring under control [1976:56].²

Barth's observation that Baktaman do not recognize a nature-culture dichotomy rests partly on the lack of any clear distinction between settlement and forest, persons and pigs moving freely between these domains, and on the readiness of Baktaman travellers to confront new environments without the aid of luggage, tools or weapons. All places, species, processes are of one unitary kind: nature is not 'manipulated'. Both writers are assuming certain meanings here, Langness in using the concepts of nature and culture, and Barth in dismissing them. Their chain of associations includes elements such as a boundary between settlement and forest,

settlements 'may perhaps be an expression of a more general view of a dichotomy between nature and culture' (1976:68). But he adds that he would not want to push the suggestion too far. Buchbinder and Rappaport comment on an explicit Maring opposition between the wild and cultivated, between the bounties and danger of nature and the cultural order, although they note that 'cultivated' or 'domestic' is an incomplete gloss for the opposite of 'wild'. Fecundity is an aspect of the wild, and they describe an ornamental plant which is set around a ritual oven 'for the benefit of women, domestic pigs and gardens' as lashing 'sociocultural ends onto natural processes' (1976:30). The same plant is put on graves, the fecund and the mortal being combined as female elements in opposition to male. They write: 'The conflation of vagina and grave is not unique to the Maring, and the identification of men with culture and spirituality and women with nature and fertility . . . is widespread' (1976:32).

- 2 Lindenbaum does not herself summarize these attitudes as a matter of nature and culture, though she does argue: 'In a sense, female menstrual cycles provide a physiological regularity, like the annual ripening of the pandanus fruit, which is an ecological given. For a society which can profit from an increase in numbers, it is adaptive to observe this regularity . . . Yet the order in this case poses a threat, since it is a structure provided by women, not men, a phenomenon Fore and other New Guinea groups attempt to neutralize by male rituals of imitative menstruation . . . performed characteristically during initiation . . . Men have taken on themselves the task of orchestrating the balance among continually fluctuating environmental, biological and social variables' (1976:56-7).

notions of control and manipulation, and culture as the works of man against the natural environment or human biology.

Insofar as such notions of nature and culture belong to a specific intellectual tradition within our own culture, some interesting issues are raised by attributing this dichotomy to the thought systems of other peoples. In the sense apparently intended by these writers, there is no demarcated 'nature' or 'culture' in Hagen thought. Hagen's own distinction between the domestic and wild is therefore worth examining in detail.

The exercise is illuminating for one reason: out of all the meanings which 'nature' and 'culture' have in the western world, certain systematic selections are made when the same ideas are imputed to others. There are at least two drives behind the selections manifested in the handling of New Guinea ethnography. One comes from ecological interests, which sees an analytical relationship between ecology and society echoed in other people's contrasts between the wild and the domestic. The second characterizes that area of feminist writing preoccupied by the relationship between biology and the man-made, a concern which echoes the way in which notions about male and female are in our own culture articulated with those of nature and culture.

These two viewpoints substantially impinge upon and draw support from each other. Indeed, I would solve the problem Langness and Barth set up by suggesting that a non-western wild-domestic dichotomy triggers off an interpretation in terms of 'nature-culture' *in the presence of* explicit themes of environmental control or of male-female symbolism. It is even arguable that a male-female distinction in western thought systems plays a crucial role as symbolic operator in certain transformations between the terms nature-culture. That we presented the Hagen categories wild-domestic in direct association with their own gender symbols accounts for, I think, the plausible but in this context ultimately absurd extrapolation that we were talking about nature-culture.

II The idea of nature-culture

What do we mean by nature and culture?

Langness refers the nature-culture dichotomy back to Lévi-Strauss. There is no doubt that impetus to incorporate these terms in symbolic analysis stems from their currency in structuralism, and the arguments of Edwin Ardener and Sherry Ortner, with which this book is partly concerned, acknowledge the background inspiration of Lévi-Strauss.

MacCormack offers a critique of these concepts within the structuralist frame, as from their different perspectives do Gillison and Harris. My own account bypasses the question of underlying structures, and the usefulness of these terms for apprehending the workings of the human mind. Rather

it is addressed to those styles of interpretation *which impute to other people* the idea of nature—culture as a more or less explicit entity in their mental representations. Whatever status these concepts have within 'rationalist' discourse, there has been demonstrable 'empiricist' (cf. Leach 1976) appropriation of them.

Nature and culture tend to acquire certain meanings as categories of analysis when those working mainly in an empiricist tradition turn to the exegesis of cognitive systems. First, they are given the status of surface components in the system under study — that is, explicitly or implicitly they are interpreted as substantive principles which make sense of indigenous categories in their own terms (metonymically), as 'consanguinity' or 'pollution' or 'initiand' may be said to do. Second, nature and culture are understood in an essentialist sense: that is, peoples apparently entertaining notions of this order may be thought of as wrestling with the same problems of control and definition as form the content of these terms for ourselves.

Such solipsism has been fully discussed by Wagner: although we allow, he says, that other cultures comprise sets of artefacts and images which differ in style from our own, we tend to superimpose them on the same reality — nature as we perceive it (1975:142). The point to extract is simple: there is no such thing as nature or culture. Each is a highly relativized concept whose ultimate signification must be derived from its place within a specific metaphysics. No single meaning can in fact be given to nature or culture in western thought; there is no consistent dichotomy, only a matrix of contrasts (cf. Hastrup 1978:63).³ The question then becomes how large a part of *the total assemblage* of meanings must we be able to identify in other cultures to speak with confidence of their having such notions.

Perhaps the problem tends to be ignored because the social sciences themselves commonly employ certain constituents of the nature—culture matrix, including those concerned with ecological systems and their environments, society and the 'individual', and the whole view which Sahlins (1976) has described of culture as production. Burrige (1973) points to that distinctive tradition in European thought long concerned with the opposition between things as they are and things as they might be; separation of subject from object and the construction of ideal or alternative forms of society are part of a dialectic between participation and objectivity. The combined capacity to participate in 'otherness' and treat that otherness as an object (of study) has made anthropology. This process depends upon a central conviction that man 'makes' culture, and insofar as this is true can also stand outside his own 'nature'.

3 Some of the historical changes involved are discussed in chapters 2 and 3.

Indeed, Goody (1977:64) notes that nature and culture have penetrated so deeply into cultural analysis that we regard their opposition as inevitable ('natural'). He directly questions whether such corresponding pairs of concepts are always to be found in other cultures, logically comparable to other conventional classifications such as right-left or male-female. To include a nature-culture contrast along with these where there are no explicit equivalents inadmissibly combines both actor and observer classifications. He characterizes the dichotomy itself as a 'highly abstract and rather eighteenth-century' (1977:64) piece of western intellectualism. If so, we need to account for its twentieth-century currency. In Sahlins' words: 'all our social sciences participate in the going conception that society is produced by enterprising action' (1976:52).

Jordanova and the Blochs demonstrate some of the ways past thinkers in the western tradition have employed such ideas. My own treatment will be essentially ahistorical, and draws on my understanding of our twentieth-century interest in these same terms. Let me sketch the main constituents of them in the empiricist styles of interpretation with which I am concerned, and start with the point that in our own thought nature and culture cannot be resolved into a single dichotomy.

When thinking of culture as common to the species we may refer to it as a manifestation of 'human nature': when thinking of it as particularizing mankind in relation to the rest of the world we envisage culture as an ingredient adding refinement to a given 'animal nature' we share with other species. As Benoist puts it: 'Is culture rooted in nature, imitating it or emanating direct from it? Or, on the contrary, is culture at variance with nature, absolutely cut off from it since the origin and involved in the process of always transforming, changing nature? The matrix of this opposition between culture and nature is the very matrix of Western metaphysics' (1978:59). Culture is *nomos* as well as *techné*, that is, subsumes society as well as culture in the marked sense. Nature is equally human nature and the non-social environment. To these images of the 'real' world we attach a string of evaluations — so that one is active, the other passive; one is subject, the other object; one creation, the other resource; one energizes, the other limits.

These values are not held in a fixed relationship but may adhere to either category. The location of the active agent shifts (cf. Wagner 1975: 67; Schneider 1968:107f.). At one point culture is a creative, active force which produces form and structure out of a passive, given nature. At another, culture is the end product of a process, tamed and refined, and dependent for energy upon resources outside itself. Culture is both the creative subject and the finished object; nature both resource and limitation, amenable to alteration and operating under laws of its own. It is rather like a prism that yields different patterns as it is turned — through it at times

either nature or culture may be seen as the encapsulated or the encapsulating element.

To gain analytical insight from these terms, the prism has to be kept momentarily rigid. For depending on our philosophical standpoints we can employ various parts of this matrix in support of certain evaluations — and do so by reducing involute combinations to a series of oppositions. One way of proving to ourselves that we have constructed a real dichotomy between nature and culture is to project aspects of it onto the societies we study. Such a projection may be encouraged by the discovery of indigenous symbolism which appears to set up parallel dichotomies between male and female or domestic and wild. This is the significance of the substantivist homology: when male versus female carries connotations, say, of collective versus individual enterprise, or when the domestic refers to a village in the clearing and the wild to bush around, we too easily assume the presence of a clear, objectified polarization between culture and nature.

In other words I would see ideological intention — there from the beginning according to the Blochs (p. 39) — in the desire to produce a dichotomy (nature vs. culture) out of a set of combinations (all the meanings that nature and culture have in our culture, rich in semantic ambiguity). It is the same logic which creates 'opposition' out of 'difference' (Wilden 1972). In selecting from our own repertoire of overlapping notions certain concepts envisaged in a dichotomous or oppositional relationship (nature vs. culture), we are at best making prior assumptions about the logic of the system under study, and at worst using symbols of our own as though they were signs; as though through them we could read other people's messages, and not just feedback from our own input.

I have already referred to certain modes of interpretation which illustrate this tendency. The essentially ecological model of the type Sahlins discusses in terms of 'practical reason' approaches culture as modifying the environment or adapting to it; it thus sets the creativity of culture against the givens of nature. 'Naturalism understands culture as the human mode of adaptation. Culture in this view is an instrumental order' (Sahlins 1976: 101). A homology may be perceived between the subject matter of nature and culture in indigenous thought and the observer's analysis of the place of that society within its environment. The reality with which we endow our own interaction with nature is thus imputed to the systems of those we study — even to the extent that an indigenous distinction between village and bush may be rendered as reproducing our evolutionary understanding of human society in terms of technology modifying resource. 'Nature' as 'environment' is the particular concern of these ideas. A second model is sometimes employed by those interested in relations between the sexes as a history of a power struggle: they see in the association of cultural artefacts and male creativity a process which by relegating woman to

a natural status has deprived her of social identity.⁴ 'Human nature' with its problems of consciousness, identity, and mind-body dualism is centrally at issue here.

Another set of assumptions holds a common place in both formulations. These posit a link between nature=environment, resource, limitation, and human nature=universal capacities and needs. The (biological) 'individual' as opposed to 'society' can thus come to occupy a position analogous to nature as opposed to culture. When social science sets up the problem of conversion, from the (natural) individual to the role-playing person, it entertains a notion of human nature as raw biological matter to be moulded by society. The 'feminist'⁵ equation of culture as man-made can invert the values sometimes implicit in this position. (In feminist arguments of the 'expressive' type (Glennon 1979), the created is male, artificial, colonial, while females remain an uncontaminated 'human' resource.)

Each model thus sets up a dynamic opposition. The one sees primitive society as grappling with the same concerns for control over the environment as preoccupy the industrial west; the other demonstrates the insidious manner in which men's control over women is built into a notion of culture's control over nature, reason over emotion, and so on. They hold in common the idea of a *relationship between* nature and culture that is not static, but always involves tension of a kind. There is more than the notion of nature and culture as the halves of a whole (dichotomy). It may also be imagined as a continuum — things can be 'more or less natural', there are 'lower' and 'higher' degrees of what is cultural (civilization). We may think of a process. Nature can become culture — a wild environment is tamed; a child is socialized; the individual as a natural entity learns rules. And we may think of hierarchy. This can take an evaluative form — as in the claim

4 E.g. Reiter (1975:19) prefaces a collection of essays on women: 'These essays subject our notions of male dominance to specific analysis, and push us to understand that it is anything but natural. As an artifact of culture, such patterns have undergone changes that we can analyze, and are amenable to changes for which we can actively work.' Biology (science/fact/the innate) is important to one type of feminist argument. By showing that there is no biological basis to our own cultural symbols of male and female we can 'prove' that the symbols are 'false' (i.e. constructs which do not properly represent nature). From a different approach, however, insofar as humanity may be said to transcend nature, natural justifications for cultural discrimination cease to be valid (Firestone 1972).

5 There is, of course, no single 'feminist' position, and I use the term here as a shorthand for certain types of arguments (see Glennon 1979 for a discussion). It is equally a 'feminist' viewpoint that so-called personal and individual relationships cannot be differentiated from political ones, and that it is an attribute of a male-dominated ideology to separate out 'political' and 'personal' spheres of action.

that culture is everywhere seen as superior to nature; or it can be a matter of logic — thus nature, the higher order category, includes culture, as the general includes the particular.

These western nature–culture constructs, then, revolve around the notion that the one domain is open to control or colonization by the other. Such incorporation connotes that the wild is transformed into the domestic and the domestic contains within it primitive elements of its pre-domestic nature. Socialization of an individual falls as much within this scheme as taming the environment.

In spite of the fact that Lévi-Strauss's own suppositions about the relationship between nature and culture ostensibly deny hierarchy or incorporation, it is constructs of this kind which arguably lie behind much anthropological investigation, and which come to be ascribed to the cultures being studied.⁶ This is a point the Blochs (see chapter 2) also make. To link indigenous categorizations which appear to oppose something like culture and nature and our own interpretation of social forms is almost another instance of the totemic illusion. Other people's images of nature and culture are held to reflect the degree of control which actual societies achieve over their actual environments. The same imagery of control is repeated in the 'feminist' conviction that society is to be understood as imposing itself upon the (authentic/natural) individual, as men dominate women. In the concepts we attribute to others, we are seeking confirmation of our own motivated oppositions: and issues to do with 'control' (of the environment, of people) trigger this off.

Lévi-Strauss uses a wild–domestic dichotomy in relation to the human mind; but the types of homologies dealt with in *The savage mind* (1966) suggest that mythical thinking may locate men in a very different relationship to 'nature' from that they occupy in our own world (cf. Godelier 1977:208f.). The striking thing about 'empiricist' exegesis is the attempt to reproduce the *same* location of natural elements as informs certain versions of our own nature–culture constructs.

6 For example, Errington suggests that the Karavaran (New Britain) view of human nature constructs it as compounded of greed and violence, 'characterized by the untrammelled exercise of individual interest. The expression of unrestrained human nature is seen as a chaos of conflicting desires and activities' (1974:21). Social order is imposed upon disorder. These ideas are presented as very close to a nature–culture dichotomy, as emerges from the Karavaran claim that a time of total disorder ended at a specific historical point (when the first missionary landed and turned the hot sea water cool, bringing with him principles of social division and shell money), but that the state of disorder is ever-present as a condition of humanity; and from their use of male–female symbols as images for the 'domestication' of this disruptive condition.

Sahlins writes: 'reduction to biology . . . characterises the best of evolutionary anthropology. Yet in this respect our science may be the highest form of totemism. If totemism is, as Lévi-Strauss says, the explication of human society by the distinctions between species, then we have made an empirical science of it' (1976:53). I would add to this. The type of nature–culture dichotomy I am discussing takes for its 'natural' (=real) relationships not categories within nature but the domination of nature itself. Whereas totemic societies may use nature as a source of symbols to talk about themselves, 'we' use a hierarchical contrast between nature and culture itself to talk about relations internal to society, predicated on notions of transformation and process that see society as 'produced' out of the natural environment/individuals.

If control/adaptation as themes in other cultures' enterprises is one trigger which releases in us notions about nature–culture, another is symbolic ordering in male–female relations.

Gender as operator

Our own philosophies have brought contrasts between male and female into deliberate relationship with nature and culture. Simone de Beauvoir's description of woman as 'the privileged object through which [man] subdues Nature' (1972:188) – object to his subject, other to his self, and at the same time 'the fixed image of his animal destiny' (1972:197) – is a brilliant rendering of *one* of the ways in which we mesh together nature–culture, male–female, with all the elements of contest and subjugation (cf. Harris p. 70). It is a constitutional paradigm: culture is made up of bits from nature, and we contain within ourselves a nature prior to culture. Male–female symbolism can sustain the same opposition as those notions of 'control' and (conversely) 'adaptation', which set up a subject–object relationship between culture and nature.

Thus we use 'male' and 'female' in a dichotomous sense. They represent an entity (the human species) divided into two halves, so that each is what the other is not. The division makes clearest impact in biological reproductive terms, so that there is constant endeavour to collapse behavioural differences into biology. Yet insofar as we do not simply conceive of nature and culture as opposites of one another but also bring them into various relationships (continuum, process, hierarchy), these are re-directed back onto the male–female dichotomy to produce a whole series of *non-*dichotomous statements about men and women. Hence, from an equation between female and nature can flow the notion that (1) women are 'more natural' than men (at a particular point in a continuum); (2) their natural powers can be controlled by cultural strategies (as the natural world can be domesticated, a matter of process); (3) they are evaluated as inferior

(value hierarchy); and (4) have a generalized potential in relation to men's particular achievements.

Indeed gender may be the crucial metaphor in western culture which enables us to shift from a cultivated—wild contrast to a society—individual one and imagine that we are still talking about the same thing (culture and nature). Both can be rendered in terms of a male—female contrast — males are the creators and social/females biological and infrasocial. As Mathieu writes: '[An] absolutely essential point about . . . notions of "masculine" and "feminine" [in our society] is that they do not involve a simple relationship of "complementarity" . . . but rather of hierarchical opposition' (1978a:4).

Yet the male—female, culture—nature combination is seemingly so energizing that we find it hard to hold it steady. A scheme of this kind, as we shall see, underlies Ortner's persuasive presentation (1974). That particular hierarchical relationship has been criticized by Rogers (1978:134) as 'only one of several cultural perceptions, and certainly not universally accepted . . . Even within American culture, women are by no means always associated with "nature". The ideology of the American western frontier includes the notion of women as "cultural"-bearing or civilizing agents, who eventually subdued those rowdy anti-social males who had tended to revert to nature before the arrival of the "gentler sex". American sexual imagery portrays man with his "natural" animal lust channelled by more responsible and civilized women' (1978:134). Ortner herself had noted 'inversions' to her general scheme, including 'some aspects of our own culture's view of woman' (1974:86), to which she adds 'European courtly love, in which man considered himself the beast and woman the pristine exalted object' and an example from Brazil (nature/raw/maleness : culture/cooked/female-ness).

Certainly, in our culture, to make male—female symbolism 'work' and sustain culture—nature as a dichotomy we constantly have to shift its terms of reference, a characteristic Jordanova has already put in a historical context. Thus males may be seen as attuned to cultural needs, females to biological ones: an equation we *also reverse* in the image of males as self-expressive, capable of displaying base nature to the female's other-orientated artifice/sociableness. We say that in being closer than males to a pre-cultural state of nature females represent the general over men's particular achievements. Or, on the other hand, that in respect of their imperfect socialization they represent particularistic personal interests against men's social concerns. There is both constant effort to reproduce these concepts as oppositions, and no overall consistency (see fig. 1).

The apparent paradox at the heart of the equations — male can flip from representing the cultivated to the savage, culture can flip from being subject to object — rests, I believe, on genuine problems in our perception

male-female as symbols for culture-nature

	m		f	
	creativity		instinct	
	man-made		innate	
c	society		individual	n
	cultural		biological	
	cultivated		savage	
	savage		cultivated	
n	basic nature		superficial artifice	c
	self-expressive		other-orientated	

culture-nature as symbols for male-female

	c		n	
	doing		being	
	public		domestic	
m	cosmopolitan		confined	f
	active		passive	
	subject		object	
	object		subject	
f	tame		powerful	m
	subdued, restrained		violent, energetic	
	cultured		animal-like	

Note: This is a crude schematization of certain ideas I believe to be common to western formulations of gender and nature-culture. Here is not the place to properly demarcate the semantic fields concerned, and the rough nature of my suggestions is indicated by the haphazard grammatical status of the various words.

Fig. 8.1. Some metaphors in western culture

of the material world as resource and energy. It also turns on a crucial ambiguity in relation to concepts of the 'individual' – both naturally limited and naturally resourceful, both culturally moulded and the free agent who creates culture. And I would finally hazard a conjecture that in the relationship between male and female we also prefigure that combination of social rank/economic resource which informs notions about class. Both Wagner and Sahlins see the pursuit of production as the 'western' project. In this view we can perhaps account for the fact that of all the ways in which we employ male–female symbolism, an equation of female with nature is particularly salient.

Critiques of gender analysis, and a further critique

'Seeing woman as "natural" has, more or less explicitly, fascinated the Western world' (Mathieu 1978b:63). What prompts this observation is a critique of Edwin Ardener's original article on 'Belief and the problem of women' (1972).

Ardener suggested that in constructing their boundaries around 'the social' Bakweri men locate women in nature. Mathieu, noting in passing that Bakweri men are also thought to 'dominate' nature, suggests that Ardener's analysis 'stems from the same location of the female category in "nature" as he attributes to those he is studying' (1978b:63). Ardener (1977) has forcefully denied he ever intended an equation between woman and nature, and instead emphasizes the bounding problem presented by women when 'society' is defined by men. In a reply to Mathieu he reiterates the view that: 'In the conceptual act of bounding "society" there is a fortuitous homology between the purely ideational field . . . against which "society" is defined as a *concept*, and that part of the actual, territorial world which is not socially organised – the "wild" ' (1977:23; italics in original). Ardener's central concern is with the conceptualization of structures, and there is more to his account than can receive justice here. Perhaps his using 'nature' and 'culture' as vehicles through which to talk about muted and dominant structures is another 'fortuitous homology'. Nevertheless it is something of a puzzle that he should repeat the point: 'In rural societies the equation: non-social = non-human = the wild = "nature" is easily concretized', is a powerful metaphor (1977:23). Such a retreat into a symbolized ecology actually reproduces the same essentialist equation which Mathieu was criticizing. 'Their' non-social or wild can be read as 'our' nature.

This is not the place to go over ground already covered by MacCormack and others in this volume; nor do I intend to more than acknowledge the seminal importance of Ardener's paper. It is a masterly piece; so, with a very different orientation, is Ortner's paper, which addresses not a concep-

tualization of society but of culture itself.⁷ Here we find the view that in the interests of its own delimitation culture employs a symbolized gender. I cite this account yet again merely to substantiate the contention that of all the terms we use in cross-cultural translation 'nature-culture', by virtue of their polysemy in our own culture, cannot be attributed to others in an unanalysed manner.

Ortner's propositions directly develop the notion of a culture-nature contrast whose constitution is the result of process.

Every culture . . . is engaged in the process of generating and sustaining systems of meaningful forms (symbols, artifacts, etc.) by means of which humanity transcends the givens of natural existence . . . In ritual . . . every culture asserts that proper relations between human existence and natural forces depend upon culture's employing its special powers to regulate the overall processes of the world and life . . . every culture implicitly recognizes and asserts a distinction between the operation of nature and the operation of culture . . . the distinctiveness of culture rests precisely on the fact that it can . . . transcend natural conditions and turn them to its purposes. Thus culture (i.e. every culture) at some level of awareness asserts itself to be not only distinct from but superior to nature . . . it is always culture's project to subsume and transcend nature [1974:72-3].

And she goes on to suggest that women's position in the symbolic order is to be interpreted as their being 'less transcendental of nature than men are' (1974:73).⁸ Women are 'seen' as closer to nature, they 'represent' a lower order, are 'symbols' of something every culture devalues. Even though she notes (1974:75) that this perception may be unconscious, it is clear that women's 'association' with the domestic and the 'identification' with the lower order (1974:79) as well as their symbolic ambiguity are to be taken as indices of a nature-culture hierarchy whose terms lie close enough to the surface to be described as part of people's self-awareness.

The culture/nature distinction is itself a product of culture, culture being minimally defined as the transcendence, by means of systems of thought and technology, of the natural givens of existence. This of course is an analytic definition, but I argued that at some level every culture incorpor-

7 Given the degree of polemicization which characterizes many debates, I record here my personal admiration for the work of Ardener and Ortner alike. Indeed, to paraphrase Ortner herself, it is less their arguments which I quarrel with than some of the things their arguments stand for, or have been made to stand for in the works of others!

8 Rosaldo and Atkinson note that an emphasis on biological fertility seems absent from Ilongot (Philippines) preoccupations (1975:63), and suggest that in societies which stress sexual functions, the celebration of female fertility 'implies a definition of womankind in terms of nature and biology; it traps women in their physical being, and thereby in the very general logic which declares them less capable of transcendence and of cultural achievement than men'.

ates this notion in one form or other, if only through the performance of ritual as an assertion of the human ability to manipulate those 'givens' [1974:84].

I would make the following comments.

(1) Her account ignores the multivalent nature of our own categories of nature and culture, taking the shifting boundaries between their semantic fields to be embodied in an actual fence. Ortner is thus able to present us with a dichotomy between nature and culture. (2) This dichotomization is logically necessary because she wants us to concentrate on the notion that nature is a 'force' which is acted upon by culture. That is, there is a specific subject-object relationship here, and one, as Gillison notes, she uncompromisingly represents in terms of hierarchy: 'The universality of ritual betokens an assertion in all human cultures of the specific human ability to act upon and regulate, rather than passively move with and be moved by, the givens of natural existence' (1974:72). Control - regulation - is the essence of the relationship between the two terms. (3) She assumes that conceptualizations of an interplay between nature and culture are *both* made by 'every culture' *and* correspond to what we recognize as nature and culture. (4) In the way in which she refers to women being 'seen' as closer to nature, as 'symbols' of what culture devalues, we are also meant to take it that these notions are relatively accessible constructs of people's own thought systems. The overall implication is of every culture's *self-awareness* of 'the' relationship between nature and culture. (5) Finally, she suggests that the actual symbols used are everywhere the same - viz. relations between male and female.

Quite apart from the question, then, of what we ourselves might mean by nature or culture, is the level at which we attribute comparable notions to other people.

Culture as classification

Lévi-Strauss writes that the contrast of nature and culture 'should be seen as an artificial creation of culture, a protective rampart thrown up around it' (1969:xxix). Ardener further comments that in the cause of this intellectual effort 'men have to bound themselves in relation to both women and to nature . . . If men are the ones who become aware of "other cultures" more frequently than do women, it may well be that they are likely to develop metalevels of categorization that enable them at least to consider the necessity to bound themselves-and-their-women from other-men-and-their-women.' Boundaries between societies thus comprise a stage in respect of the aboriginal demarcation of culture as such from nature. 'The first level is still recognizable, however, in the tendency to slip back to it from the metalevel: that is, to class other men and their wives with nature' (1972:142).

If we believed our division between nature and culture reflected an external 'reality', the issue of the extent to which other people might share such a notion could indeed be phrased as a matter of self-consciousness: how they represent their own boundaries. Differentiation of man from animal, social life from the wild and so on, might appear as explicit verbal concepts (like our own 'individual' and 'society'); be expressed through symbol and myth and thus be known in a less explicit though perhaps equally emphatic way; or be uncovered as properties of modes of classification and cognition which shape the actor's world view but are not known to him as principles or values logically separate from it. These degrees of self-consciousness would classify the kind of structure we attempted to describe.

In spite of their different intentions, in suggesting that societies may class themselves, and men and women, on a nature—culture axis, Ardener and Ortner both imply some indigenous self-awareness. These ideas are to be found at the first two 'levels' as well as perhaps at the third. In other words, through symbols, stereotypes and the treatment of the sexes, people are making known to themselves certain perceptions of culture and nature. Thus we can talk of such perceptions being part of this or that particular culture as relatively accessible constructs.

This is the level at which I approach Hagen ideas.⁹ Can we speak of Hageners operating a contrast between nature and culture formulated in verbal idiom or as an axis for symbol and metaphor? Do we require these ideas in order to make sense of ritual and what people say about their actions? If they represent their own society to themselves, is it done through an idea of man's achievements (culture) being superimposed on/controlling 'nature'; in particular, is the place of male and female in the symbolic and social order to be understood in such terms?

But another problem of level remains. Since our concern is with the way nature—culture has been related to male—female contrasts it is pertinent to ask whether we might be dealing with only male or only female models. Ardener raised this issue (1972) when he suggested that it is men who are particularly motivated to draw boundaries. Shirley as well as Edwin Ardener (1977) have since extended the notion of mutual and dominant models in relation to women whose representations of society they would argue are invariably englobed by men's. It is the dominant model to which the anthropologist has most ready access. E. Ardener (1977:24) writes: 'if the male perception yields a dominant structure, the

9 We do not have to search for a 'deep structure' (for example, the Ardeners' p-structures (S. Ardener 1977)) in which nature or culture might be motivating elements. My concern is with ideas reasonably articulate or accessible.

female one is a muted structure. It is an empirical contingency that the immanent realizations of muted structures are so often equated in this way with the nullity of the background, of "nature". In other words the dominant model has built into it a definition of its own bounds as a model, accommodating the subdued articulation of other models as one of its own terms (manifestations of nature). I am not sure that Hagen men's and women's differing perspectives are most usefully considered as differently constructed models (cf. Strathern 1981); however, this is not a point to pursue here. I am concerned with dominant and accessible concepts. An exclusively male source might skew the gender images these notions project, but the Ardeners do not postulate that only men would make a division into culture and nature.

Wagner (1975; 1978) has cogently argued that 'culture' is our invention, and that other peoples' ideas of the self and society may set up different dichotomies. He therefore provides us with something of a commentary upon the obsession which western culture has with its own self-definition. We visualize our culture through a conventional symbolization which 'defines and precipitates a sharp distinction between its own symbols and orders on the one hand and the world of their reference and ordering on the other' (1978:23). This is to be contrasted with self-signifying symbolization, as in the construction of a metaphor, which assimilates the symbolized within its own construction. All cultures employ both, but whereas our own tradition sees conventional symbolization as a legitimate realm of human action in the precise and orderly classification by human beings of the natural world they inhabit, other traditions regard the conventional order as innate.

The whole matter of which *kind* of [symbolization] is considered the normal and appropriate medium of human action (the realm of human artifice) and which is understood as the workings of the innate and 'given' is important . . . It defines the accepted and conventional form of human action . . . what things and what experiences are to be regarded as prior to [an actor's] actions and *not* as a result of them. We might call this collective orientation the 'conventional masking' of a particular culture. In the modern American middle class Culture of science and collective enterprise, with its emphasis on the progressive and artificial building up of collective forms, conventional masking amounts to an understanding that the world of natural incident . . . is innate and given. And in the world of the Daribi . . . with its stress on the priority of human relationships, it is the incidental realm of nonconventionalized controls that involves human action, whereas the articulation of the collective is the subject of . . . conventional masking [1975:49-50; italics in original].

He goes on to argue that cultures which conventionally differentiate approach the world with a dialectic logic that operates by exploiting oppositions against a common ground of similarity; whereas those, such as

our own scientific traditions, which conventionally collectivize appeal to consistency against a common ground of (natural) differences.¹⁰

Wagner is primarily concerned with symbolic form; at a very different level I take up what he also tells us about the content of various formulations. His argument is germane since the 'other tradition' which he describes most fully is that of Daribi, another New Guinea Highlands people. The Daribi contrast between what is innate and what is artificial holds a different position to processes of particularizing and collectivizing from its place in western culture. Thus the collective conventions of Daribi social life are regarded as given components of humanity and the universe, in respect of which individuals improvise, differentiating and particularizing themselves, whereas 'we' stress collectivizing controls which constantly have to work on individuating, innate motivation. For Daribi there is no 'culture' in the sense of artefacts and rules which represent a summation of individual effort; no 'nature' on which these are brought to bear.

Much the same can be said for Hagen. What renders this material particularly interesting are certain very explicit categorizations which Hageners make: a distinction between *mbo* ('domestic') and *rɔmi* ('wild') is brought into conjunction with that between things appropriate to men ('male') and those appropriate to women ('female'), a difference sometimes found in oppositional form as social versus personal orientations.

The Hagen domestic-wild distinction (*mbo-rɔmi*) is itself innate in the sense that it is treated as an attribute of the given world. It is affirmed or discovered, but not made, in contrast to our manner of constantly 'making' culture and in so doing re-making the relationship between culture and nature. Indeed, the lack of consistency demonstrable in our own images of nature and culture, or our own uncertainty as to which is encapsulated and which encapsulates, can be attributed to the way in which we struggle with the very distinction as an artefact, in Lévi-Strauss's phrase (p. 187). We make conventional symbolization a matter of human creativity. Hageners, who take the relationship between the symbols *mbo* (domestic)

10 'Consciously and purposively we "do" the distinction between what is innate and what is artificial by articulating the controls of a conventional, collective Culture. But what of those other peoples who conventionally "do" the particular and the incidental, whose lives seem to be a continual improvisation? . . . By making invention and hence time, growth and change a part of their deliberate "doing", they precipitate something analogous to our Culture, but do not and cannot conceive of it as Culture. It is not artifice, but the universe. The conventional, be it grammar, kin relations, social order ("norm" and "rule"), is for them an innate, motivating, and "creeping" (thus unaccountable) distinction between what is innate and what is artificial' (1975:87). In Wagner's view Westerners create the incidental world by trying to systematise it; tribal people create their universe of innate social convention by trying to change it or impinge upon it.

and *rɔ̃mi* (wild) and what they stand for as axiomatic, do not imagine that the one can be collapsed into the other.

For us, nature is given and innately differentiating. Thus we locate the ultimate differences between the sexes 'in nature'. Like 'the individual', these are of a biological order. Yet we regard 'culture' as putting these facts to varying use. At the same time, then, our collective endeavour to demarcate our human, cultural selves off from nature also creates the notion of irreducible, non-cultural differences, in the same way as seeing society as an artefact produces the 'problem' of its separate, constituent individuals. Since these distinctions are open to human definition, nature and culture are in a true dialectic – their meanings shift in relation to one another depending, as I have suggested, on the formulation of control or influence between the two domains. I have further suggested that what we perceive as an irreducible difference in nature (sexual differentiation) may be used to construct a differentiation between nature and culture itself as though it too were a given in the world. In other words, while the very construction of the notion 'culture' implies that the relationship between nature and culture is an artifice, we further try to legitimate that artifice by grounding it in nature itself. Gender is a crucial operator in this transformation.

Gender in Hagen also acts as a symbolic operator, though not in a uniform manner. Similar to the domestic–wild distinction, physiological differences constitutive of the person are regarded as innate and axiomatic, not subject to human intervention. Yet, insofar as aspects of gender behaviour can also be regarded as 'created' or actively sustained by individual action, certain other distinctions between male and female hold a very different epistemological status. Thus 'male' and 'female' can refer to a domain of human behaviour, how men and women act in their relationships, where boundaries are more open to manipulation. In this sense, like the Daribi, Hageners conventionally differentiate, and 'male–female relationships . . . can be seen as acts of conscious differentiation against a background of common similarity (the "soul" and other collectivities of culture [e.g. the notion of humanity]), and thus as a dialectic between the particular and the general, man and woman, and so on' (Wagner 1975:118–19). So when 'male' and 'female' are in this kind of opposition, there is a dialectic between the terms (the possibility that persons or things classified as one may be disturbed or influenced by the other), whereas *mbo-rɔ̃mi* and gender as physiologically constitutive generally involve a simple notion of difference. The following account uses 'contrast' in a weak sense to cover either of these logical relationships.

III The Hagen case

The domestic:wild dichotomy

A pair of terms in the Hagen language can be translated as domestic and

wild. *Mbo* refers to things which are planted. Used in ordinary parlance for a cutting pushed into the ground,¹¹ and breeding pigs which represent a new point of growth, it also applies to people, who are 'planted' in clan territory.¹² Major named social groups (tribes, clans, subclans) are referred to as being 'one stock' (*mbo tenda*) and the autochthones or owners of territory as *pukl wamb* ('root/base people').¹³ Personal kin networks, extending beyond the clan, are one's *pukl* ('root/base people'). Indeed, the vegetative emphasis of this idiom is on rooting a piece of plant taken from its parent stock into ground that will nourish it — a matter of general potential for growth, rather than of the parent plant finding its particular replacement, as in Kaulong (p. 134).

In a contrastive framework *mbo* signals all that is human and associated with human activity as distinct from spirit (*kor, tipu*) or the wild (*rɔmi*). Thus 'human beings' are *mbo wamb* in contrast to ancestral ghosts and other spirits (*kor wamb*). 'Spirit' is not to be equated with 'wild', however, for spirits themselves are divided into *mbo kor* (the ghosts of once living people and still human) and others who lack the epithet *mbo* and among whom there is a class of 'wild spirit' (*kor rɔmi*). *Mbo kor* are associated not only with human activity but with human purpose and intention. Wild spirits on the other hand inhabit forests and tracts of otherwise uninhabited land around settlements. In comparison with people 'grounded' in relationship, wild spirits are either solitary ('one-sided', or with forest moss on their backs) or exist in undifferentiated plurality.

Such spirits are thought of as tending wild plants and animals as people do their domesticated varieties. By no means all plants have wild and domestic counterparts; but the chief tubers, taro, yam, sweet potato, are found in wild (*rɔmi*) form, divided in some cases into named varieties, and generally identified as *kit* ('bad') or *rakra* ('bitter').¹⁴ Wild plants are notably inedible by contrast with the 'true' (*ingk*) cultivated varieties (*kae*, 'good'; *tingen*, 'sweet').

An inedible—edible axis does not apply to all aspects of the *rɔmi*—*mbo* classification. In the case of pigs (domestic pigs are generally *mbo*, as well as the specially marked *kng mbo* intended for breeding), the focus of differentiation is the tameness of the domestic animal and the ownership people exert. They are truly creatures over whom human control is mani-

11 The main cultigens are propagated from cuttings (sweet potatoes), from the original base (taro, yam, banana) or a node (sugar cane).

12 Cf. A. Strathern (1972:19–20; 1977). One idiom for describing the clan is *pana ru*, 'garden segment/ditch' (A. Strathern 1972:101).

13 *Pukl* also refers to ownership of any resource, i.e. the *pukl wua* ('owner man') is the 'source' or 'origin' of the item in question.

14 Cf. M. Strathern (1969). *Note*: I make citations to our own work not on authoritative grounds but to indicate other contexts where Hagen ideas have been discussed.

fest, from the early days when their caretakers familiarize them with human smells and feed them tubers by hand to their ultimate fate on the ceremonial ground, to which they are brought by rope in squealing protest. Quite apart from the wild pig itself, other creatures of the forest such as marsupials may be thought of as the 'pigs' of wild spirits, and these are, with due precaution, hunted and eaten (almost exclusively by men). They have their own 'sweetness'.

These idioms do not really envisage man in his enclosure surrounded by a 'natural environment'. While woodland and bush is a source of *rɔmi* things in contrast with settlements and gardens, the concepts do not focus on a spatial division between (say) bush and settlement, nor designate discrete domains with the connotation of the inhabited area having been carved out of the wild. Indeed, there is no boundary between a wild and domestic area in a geographical sense. Most clan territories include tracts of bush, and the area over which men have control is not systematically opposed to 'wild' land.¹⁵ For land itself is neither *mbo* nor *rɔmi*, though human exploitation of its resources is marked in a contrastive manner: thus gardens may be demarcated as human rather than spirit property, whereas men hunting in forest seek products prized because they are wild. *Mbo-rɔmi* differentiation is in terms of the essence or character of certain resources. Nevertheless they incorporate the distinctions

cultivated	:	wild things
social	:	solitary/non-social attributes

We are certainly dealing with some kind of image of social life. I identify at least three different areas of concern: internal control; influence or the meeting with external sources of power; and a definition of humanity through idioms of nurture. They emerge separately in relation to pigs, spirits and plants.

(1) Hageners do not attempt to tame wild pigs — these are hunted only. They do sustain the domestication of tame animals by deliberate association — piglets are kept in human company, fed by hand and so on. But since pigs generally lack the complete minds (*noman*) which people possess, there is a limit to what can be internalized, and in the last resort pigs are

15 Certain sparsely populated areas, such as the Jimi valley, which yield a concentration of *rɔmi* things, come near to being considered a wild domain. Note that Hageners do not live in villages, but in homesteads and settlement clusters scattered over clan territory. Gardens are equally scattered, though there is often (not always) a general boundary between the total area of garden or fallow land which has been under cultivation and woodland or grassland not regularly used. Cordylines may be planted on garden boundaries to signify both particular territorial claims and the fact that the land has been made a source of human sustenance in which wild spirits should not interfere.

controlled by force. Unlike their *rɔ̃mi* counterparts, then, *mbo* pigs are subject to control.

(2) Interaction with the wild spirits as owners of forest creatures and uncultivated land revolves around a rather different point, the meeting of interests. People attempt not to subdue but to come to terms with them. When they hunt in the forest or clear gardens in wild places people disturb the spirits' spheres of influence, and may seek the support of ancestral ghosts to protect them from spirit hostility. The ambiguities of the situation are resolved to some extent by a division of wild spirits into 'good' and 'bad' forms. Whereas the latter attack with caprice, provoked by the simple presence of human beings, the former may also protect people's wandering pigs. (Analogously, of all uncultivated land — including swamps, riverain pastures, grassland — forest and mountainous areas are of special significance as the source of plants and creatures whose powers can be activated in spell or cult. Forest resources may thus be 'good' *rɔ̃mi* whereas swamps are 'bad' *rɔ̃mi*.) Wild spirits have affinity with named Spirits, who are the subject of cults, and with the nebulous Sky-Spirits. These Spirits were never people, though to some extent they embrace human intention and welfare within their aims. Indeed, the more accessible of such Spirits to whom appeal may be made in cults are sometimes referred to as *mbo* ('planted').¹⁶ At the same time their sources of power are definitively non-human. The division into 'good' and 'bad' wild spirits partly reduplicates this contrast, playing on a difference between those wild spirits who incorporate human ends within their own motivation and those whose intentions are sheer caprice.

(3) The primary plant category picked out by *mbo-rɔ̃mi* comprises tubers. Although luxury crops, banana and sugar cane, which grow tall and bear above ground may also appear in *rɔ̃mi* form, at the same time the high foliage of the planted varieties can itself provide cover for malevolent spirits intruding into the settlement. But if classification here is ambiguous,

16 Spirits attended to in cults are distinguished from ancestral ghosts.

Their origin is quite separate — they are not rooted in the ground but have affinity to Sky-beings (*tei wamb*), an appropriately cloudy category (A. Strathern 1970:573). These beings are a source of growth which lies beyond human capacity but is brought to bear upon it: thus in some parts of the Hagen area the *tei wamb* are spoken of as founding the essential *mi* substance (divination 'totem') of tribes. On this creative axis, *tei wamb* and named Spirits are distinguished from *mɔ̃i wamb* ('ground beings') (cf. A. & M. Strathern 1968:190). Vicedom (1943-8:2: ch. 15) refers to the *tei wamb* as first holding foodstuffs and pigs which they 'threw down' to men. The Female Spirit may be referred to as a *mbo mel* ('planted thing') i.e. an entity with whom there is a relationship of care-giving ('We look after the Spirit and kill pigs' etc.), but at the same time all non-ancestral spirits have affinities with the wild, and wild objects are used in her cult.

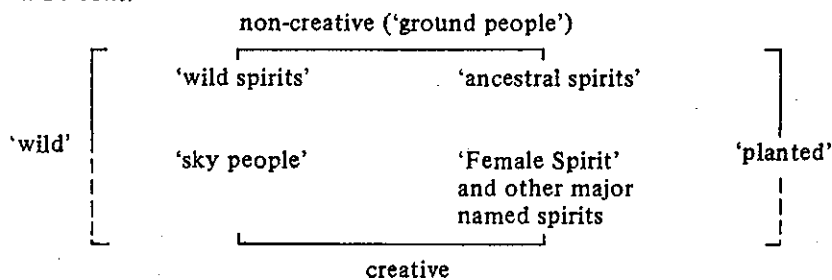
other plants are simply irrelevant to it. There is a whole range of green-stuffs, as well as minor animals and insects, which is eaten but not subject in any marked way to the *mbo-rphi* classification. These miscellaneous items may either be planted or picked wild, and to that extent be classed as *mbo* or *rphi*, but unlike the various tubers are not held to constitute different forms, in the way that 'wild' and 'planted' varieties of sweet potato are paired. The particular significance of this pairing perhaps lies less in the importance of these crops as subsistence items (since the subsistence-luxury classification actually cuts across them, taro and yam being associated with banana and sugar cane as luxuries) than in another characteristic: the edible part of tubers are all produced underground. A train of association links together the ground in which crops grow – the consumption of food – the creation of substance – and the development of human beings attached to territory (cf. A. Strathern 1973:29). Territory is soil upon which people are grown and a common source of sustenance produces in people a common social identity.

Indeed, 'domestic' seems rather a tame rendering of the Hagen *mbo*. *Mbo* refers to the human properties of consciousness and self-awareness, to the domain of human interaction, where control is internalized, as distinct from the caprice and isolation of wild spirits, or is seen as grounded in a common source of sustenance. Ardener identifies the Bakweri wild as a non-social domain. The wild is 'nature' (1972:141), and men bound off 'mankind' from nature (1972:143). Although the village-forest contrast provides concrete imagery for the Bakweri boundaries here, he argues that these boundaries are in the first place conceptual: the wild ('nature') is the 'non-social' (1977:23). If we accept for the moment that *mbo* in Hagen carries connotation of the social, is *rphi* really nature?

Is rphi nature?

Nature (in the empiricist definition described earlier) is for us a precondition of existence which provides the raw materials for life, including

n. 16 cont.



Categories of spirit being

bodily structure and capacity, and thus human needs and instincts, and a non-social environment. Nature sets limits to what men can do, as well as making requirements, but is open to manipulation. Degrees of culture can thus be measured in terms of the extent to which the natural environment is altered or subjugated. An important part of this view is the imputation of regularity (cf. Lewis 1975:200). Nature is not merely acted upon but a system with laws of its own, and it is these laws that limit the possible. Our constitutional idiom points to an ambiguous notion of control: on the one hand we are part of that system, and on the other able to use its laws for our own purposes, which render them separable and ourselves transcendent.

Rphi in Hagen comprises neither a domain of given features in the environment nor innate propensities in people. Missing is the crucial link between the 'natural' world and human 'nature' which for us sets up a homology between artefact and rule, between the material world men create and their social life, and which produces (Wagner 1975:21) the western notion of 'cultivation'. For through refinement and breeding we imagine that men can also domesticate themselves. Thus the one can become a measure of the other: the greater the refinement of artefact, the more advanced the civilization. *Rphi* is certainly about control. But it works in a very different way.

In no sense does *rphi* connote all that is given or innate. In some contexts *rphi* things are inimical to people's doings, in others they represent a source of power men can tap. These are powers which stand in antithesis to the ordinary bonds human beings create among themselves through nurture. Conceptualization of the wild thus serves to locate nurture, sustenance and the furtherance of social relationships as essentially 'human' characteristics.

Hagen ideas would seem to lie much closer to Daribi,¹⁷ that sociability is innate. Although at birth individuals lack full awareness of their humanity, the child grows into social maturity rather than being trained into it; and is certainly not *rphi*. As its body takes in food it responds to nourishment, acquires identity, relationships with others and eventually self-awareness. Consciousness of humanity comes to the child less through acquisition of skills, or even ability to keep rules, than through appreciation of what relationships with others involve.¹⁸ So in their development Hagen children

17 Clay notes that among the Mandak of New Ireland 'social groups are constituted positively through the articulated variants of nurturing relationships . . . I found no indication . . . that the Mandak believe their social life to be fundamentally disordered, as Errington suggests for the Karavarans' (1977:150). See p. 181, n. 6.

18 Cf. M. Strathern (1968:555). The rare children who are markedly stunted in growth and/or mentally retarded may be called *rphi* – not because they display undeveloped or modified human nature, but



Plate 8.1 A garden is freshly made from old fallow. The casuarin trees in the background have been planted on the site of old gardens which will be brought into future production. The land belongs to the natal kin of the woman who is making plots from the section she has been allotted by her brother, here preparing strings to align the ditches.

are not thought of as recreating the original domestication of men. They are less 'socialized' than 'nurtured'.

This is all expressed in the gradual way children are thought to acquire *noman* – mind, conscience, consciousness, though not particularly speech, by which the Laymi mark maturity (pp. 72–3). *Noman* functions through being embodied in social relationships; it has no other context. *Noman* marks people out as human, *mbo*; the point is that *rophi* is not here used as a counter image of the pre-human. A concept of the pre-socialized child as 'nearer to nature' does characterize some western formulations, as Ortnor describes ('One can easily see how infants and children might themselves be considered part of nature . . . Like animals they are unable to walk upright, they excrete without control' 1974:77–8).¹⁹ Conversely there is no real counterpart in Hagen thought to our ideas that humanity lies in the propensity to make culture.

Insofar as we formulate human nature thus, we may mark off this universalizing ('cultural') aspect by thinking of our *given* natures as animal-like.²⁰ Needs, body build and emotional states held in common among people comprise our animal nature. When we denigrate certain behaviour as making the person 'like an animal', we bring to mind not only comparison with creatures whose existence is not regulated by culture ('the animals') but imply that the person has given in to impulse, thereby expressing what is normally regulated. Hageners use the same idiom ('like an animal') of someone who crosses a boundary; the import is that he is behaving in a non-human way, has lost the awareness of what relationships mean, and this has turned him, figuratively speaking, into something else (*kara ponom*, 'gone headstrong', *timbi ranom* 'changed into a wild pig'). He has assumed an appearance *at odds* with his fundamental identity. There is no particular idea that anti-social propensities lie beneath the surface of every socialized human being; nor, I think, do Hageners have any theory of human needs.

because they are metaphorically derived from non-human stock. People commenting on these characteristics may refer to them as changelings, the offspring of wild spirits substituted for the human child.

- 19 From the Hagen point of view we can make sense of Read's (1955) discussion of the person among the Gahuka-Gama (Eastern Highlands). For 'us', basic humanity comprises common and universalizing features of 'the human condition', a nature not embedded in culture but thought of as prior to it (and thus paradoxically, in a non-religious world, also as 'animal nature'); for the Gahuka-Gama basic humanity is expressible only through social relationships, so that morality appears to attach not to 'man' on universal criteria but to 'men' in particular roles.
- 20 The topic of Willis' book (1975) is the use to which notions about 'animal' are put in the classification of social existence and selfhood.

This puts the issue of control into a certain light. Our own analogies between human nature and the environment use the terminology of domination – we ‘tame’ nature, ‘fight’ its hostile manifestations, ‘carve out’ domains from virgin land. When Hageners cut new gardens on the edge of cultivated areas or in stretches of forest they may be apprehensive about disturbing a local wild spirit, if one is known to lurk nearby, or upsetting the troops of *kor waki* (‘little spirits’) found in swampy places. They are equally cautious of ghosts, if it is near a cemetery. But their intention is less to dominate such forces as to come to terms and prevent them from interfering with the venture in hand. A hunter, entering the forest, may through his ancestral ghosts send sacrificial meat to wild spirits, and in the past in certain areas offerings were made directly to *kor waki*. A fresh garden can disturb the sphere of influence of local spirits; cordyline boundary markers indicate the lines of new ownership – to other men and spirits alike. Yet we cannot interpret these as outposts of a domestic domain colonizing the wild.²¹ They are not a defence because areas of cultivation and social life are not thought of as under inevitable and generalized attack. Wild spirits do pounce on people, but such attacks are hazards or misfortunes rather than a manifestation of an on-going battle between wild and cultural forces. It is noteworthy that when sickness specialists pitch their own powers against these spirits and expel them or their weapons from an afflicted body, the wild spirits are not destroyed but are *sent back* to the areas where they belong.

It is clear that the *mbo-rphi* classification partakes of elements which inform our culture–nature distinction. But the intention of the opposition is different. Although we could translate one term as nurture (*mbo*) its counterpart is not really ‘nature’. *Rphi*, the ‘wild’, is best thought of as a category of power located outside the bounds of those relationships which rest on control and nurture. And only in a very restricted sense can what is defined against *rphi* (wild) be thought of as ‘culture’.

Is mbo ‘culture’?

As opposed to what grows wild, *mbo* signifies the act of cultivation. But its social connotations diverge from the western notion of the cultivated. We stress the orderliness of garden and field, the selective breeding of desired strains, a total process from modification of given resources to the profit

21 Wild pigs are no longer a hazard in the main Hagen areas, though they are still hunted in the Jimi valley. Fences and ditches round cultivated land are erected against the predations of *domestic* pigs which roam free during the day. (Pigs normally typify behaviour that is not under the guidance of mind (*noman*). Insofar as some pigs, like dogs, learn to recognize their owners, they may sometimes be said to possess *noman*.)

our energies yield in the form of produce. *Mbo* by contrast remains attached to a notion of planting,²² does not refer to any other horticultural stage, and is not applied to ground, gardenland as such nor to the tools people use (except in the general sense of 'pertaining to people'). Its connotations are of rootedness, the tethering of people to land and relationships. When used of breeding pigs it points to domestic growth and increase. *Mbo* makes no particular play on the possibility of taming elements that are by origin wild.

A. Strathern (1977) describes the very specific manner in which people are thought of as 'planted' in clan territory and the rituals which express this. The idiom of implanting may be used for teaching. 'Knowledge here is seen as a slip or cutting taken from the original stock' (1977:506).

If knowledge may be objectified as planted, aspects of material culture are also seen as things possessed. 'Our way of doing things', 'our customs' mark off regional variations between peoples in terms of house-styles or customary procedures at bridewealth. Through present-day contact with outsiders,²³ these forms of self-definition have become increasingly prominent. 'We Hagen' are self-defined as people who 'make *moka* ('ceremonial exchange')'. Hageners also contrast people sleeping in houses with wild creatures in the open. On all these counts we may say they have a concept of 'culture'. In the sense of different cultures differentiating peoples, the analogy with our own is close. The same idea also differentiates human beings from wild animals. What is missing is the cumulative, produce and profit connotations of our 'culture' which *put it in a particular relationship with 'nature'*.²⁴ The sense of culture as 'building something out of' nature is not there. Differing styles of life of neighbours or spirits or animals serve to define what is Hagen or human. They are not in addition measures of achievement and production.

It is true that Hageners like to see evidence of people and their works. Cleared, inhabited areas are *kona kae* ('good places') as opposed to the bush (*kit*, 'bad'); but this is a matter of habitation versus desolation. Thus the coastal city of Port Moresby may initially strike migrants or visitors as *kona kae*, and they praise the scale of building and numbers of people. This first impression frequently gives way to criticism when these do not turn out to be indices of nurture — local food is poor, money is hard to

22 *Mbo* is used for the activity of planting even when ordinarily 'non-domestic' plants are involved — e.g. forest trees set about a ceremonial ground.

23 Europeans have been in the area since the 1930s. Hageners nowadays know about the 'customs' of many other Highlands groups, as well as people outside the region altogether.

24 Godelier (1978:764) comments on how rarely 'labour' in other cultures contains 'the idea of a "transformation" of nature and of man'.



Plate 8.2. A woman soothes a pig and marks it with a streak of clay to signify it is committed to *mo'ka* (ceremonial exchange). This was a small showing of pigs, and the ceremonial ground has been only roughly cleared.

find, the soil is bad (= does not yield resources as a basis for wealth). They have been deceived.

Our own equation of 'culture' is not only with 'cultivated' but 'domestic'. There is fascinating ambiguity in the word 'domestic' which throws up a number of problems in the path of any attempt to assign domestic-wild dichotomies to a culture-nature axis.

On the face of it, domestication and cultivation in western parlance are homologues: the taming and rendering of (natural) resources for (cultural) use. Creatures brought within the human circle become 'of the house', and we use the former term generally for matters to do with the household and private family life. Housework is thus domestic work. Yet domestic work is not culture. Far from it; for us, the domestic sphere may be actually opposed to a public domain where issues of cultural and social significance are to be found.

This discussion began with Langness's and Barth's analogy that the wild is to the domestic as nature is to culture (domestic = domestication = cultivation = culture). Ortner equates the domestic with nature. She does this by setting up different equations altogether, interpreting the public and the social as culture so that its opposite, nature, has to be a private, semi-social domain of domesticity (domestic = house-bound = infra-social = nature). In her argument that women are everywhere seen as closer to nature than men, Ortner is drawing on certain specific suppositions (see pp. 86-7). Culture's transformation of nature is rendered encompassing: the control of natural forces, the control of personal nature and control over the human body. In this (western) view it is feasible to find within culture certain elements only partially transformed, as human nature itself is only imperfectly domesticated. Thus she argues that the frequently found opposition between domestic and public spheres of action reflects a universal awareness of domestic life - focussed on the biological family and fragmenting, particularistic concerns - as infra-social (1974:78-80). Women, through association with the domestic sphere, are thus symbolized as representing lower-level concerns, the nature which culture seeks to modify.

The steps in this argument contain one highly significant premise: that the transcendence of 'social' issues over the needs and wants of 'the individual' is an aspect of the culture-nature conversion.

Hageners appear to make similar equations. They certainly contrast things of the house with the concerns of the wider social world. Domesticity is thus denigrated in relation to the public domain. But neither *mbo* nor *rphi* nor the contrast between them are activated in relation to this dichotomy between social and domestic. A rather different association of domesticity with confinement, the mundane, dull, ordinary things may, however, be pointed up by a contrast with *rphi* in the sense of the exotic. Foreign, extra-social sources of power are thus *rphi*. But their counter-

part is understood to be the mundane – which may or may not be referred to as *mbo* in this context. Semantic focus is on the exotic as such.

Hageners thus oppose (in the strong sense) (1) domestic and social, and (2) domestic and exotic. *They do not, however, encompass both sets of meanings in a mbo-rphi framework.* Thus evaluation of the domestic (= private) and the social (= public) finds readier expression in a distinction between things which are rubbish (*korpa*) and things of prestige (*nyim*).

In some of our own versions of nature–culture, metonyms for evolution, we do compress all these ideas into aspects of a single transformational sequence. An enabling metaphor, I suggested, lies in the male–female dichotomy. Hagen culture also uses male–female as symbols for a whole range of ideas. It is to these that I now turn. Unlike Gillison, whose discussion is drawn from a specific domain (how Gimi conceive their ‘life cycle’), I rather unsatisfactorily use a number of different kinds of data. My rendering of Hagen gender images (both how the sexes are thought of, and how sexual qualities then come to be applied to other formulations) is thus composite. At the same time, my intention is to show that neither ‘male’ nor ‘female’ in Hagen usage can be reduced in an essentialist way to match some single overarching ideational principle in Hageners’ view of their world. Whereas Gillison points to potent ambiguities at the heart of Gimi notions of genital identification or the role of the sexes in procreation, I follow Hageners’ rather differently located preoccupations and describe the place of sexual idioms in other – and thus various – domains of social life.

The implications of gender symbols

Hageners bring together notions of male and female, *mbo* and *rphi*, but not in a single dichotomous frame (see figs. 2 and 3); Hagen men may be associated with either the wider social world or with the wild; women while prima facie confined and ‘domestic’ can also appear wild.

Culture in the empiricist formulation is the process, tools and results of transformation. While each individual must from birth be socialized, and while lack of responsiveness to control is always a threat to civilization, the works of men are cumulative, so that we speak of artefacts or social forms as evolving. If Hageners have a culture they define it against a non-cultural world rather than postulating that culture incorporates the wild within it. There is not a colonizing metaphor: the domain of *rphi* (wild) is not seen as being subjugated by things *mbo*.

It follows that the domestic sphere, which they distinguish quite emphatically from a public domain, is not ‘natural’ or ‘wild’ or even sub-cultural. Indeed, in one sense it is the heart of nurture, the place where food is prepared and consumed. Females and the household, nonetheless, symbolize affairs which are infra-social. They do represent particularistic,

personally-oriented interests, against the public interest of males. This opposition between individual and social turns on the problem of control among people. It uses male and female as symbols, but not a metaphor of nature and culture.

Yet *mbo-rphi* may contain something of a contrast between the social and the non-social. The focus, I suggested, lay in the areas of control, influence and sustenance. Let me return to these. (1) In the case of pigs it is the *domestic* animal which is seen as subject to control. Their wild counterparts are merely hunted.²⁵ The control of things domestic thus appears as a matter internal to social organization, and does not encounter an opposing force in nature. (2) In dealings with wild spirits, the aim is to influence them to keep out of the way, not tame or subjugate or kill them. (3) In the case of food crops it is the sharing of sustenance, nurture predicated upon dependency (on parents, other kin, clan land), which creates bonds. Animals who forage for themselves, spirits who snatch, are creatures without bonds. People (temporarily as anti-social, permanently as insane) ignoring the conventions of nurture, are greedy or irresponsible. Their acts are those 'of a pig', 'of a dog', or they have become *rphi* (wild). This is interpreted as a masking or transformation of behaviour, not an expression of human nature in some elemental, primitive form. Naming certain acts wild constitutes an attempt to recall the person to his or her senses, a reminder that he or she is not *rphi* and should not behave thus. When public interests are set against narrower ends, these are seen to be con-

male is to female	
as	
wealth, oratory	: poverty, speechlessness
<i>nyim</i> (prestigious)	: <i>korpa</i> (rubbish)
transaction	: production
public	: domestic
clan	: family
social interest	: self-interest
safety	: danger
life (cults)	: death (pollution)
spiritual	: non-spiritual
exotic	: mundane
the wild	: domesticated
birds	: pigs

Fig. 8.2 Some Hagen contrasts involving gender symbols

25 Cassowaries are caught in the forest and brought back into the settlement. There is little attempt to tame them: the birds are cooped up in small cages, fed wild fruits, their wildness preserved for the very reason that they will be presented in an exchange as exotica. If you go near a cage people will comment on their fierceness.

cerned with the management of people's minds (*noman*) rather than with basic anti-social 'natures'.

Women (in evincing 'female' behaviour) are regarded as less amenable to social control than men; they symbolize the autonomous individual with self-referring interests, and are more prone to wild behaviour. This does

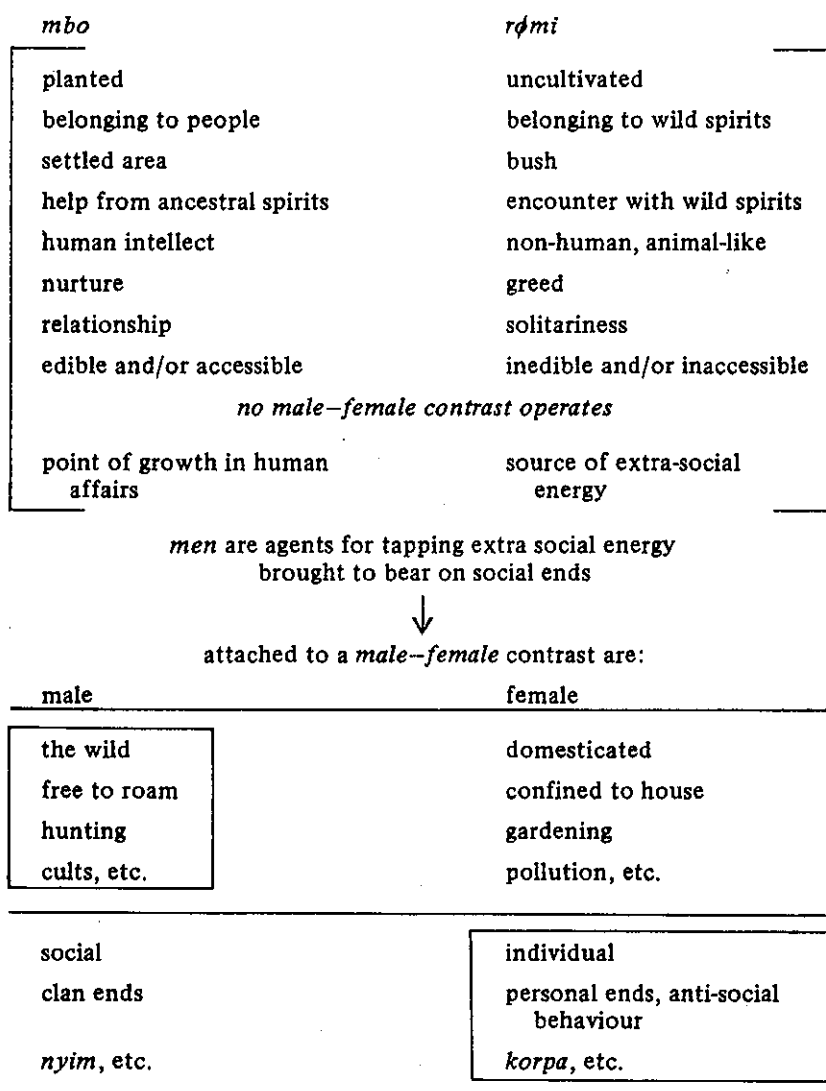


Fig. 8.3. Connotations of the *mbo-rphi* contrast: the boxed categories are both marked as associated with *rphi*.

not put them closer to nature, because one does not attempt to control 'the wild'. Moreover the fact that wayward women may be likened to wild pigs of the forest does not thereby make the forest a female domain. In any case the same epithet may be used of men. A group of recalcitrant clansmen who moved away from their home area, and were 'lost' to the clan, were likened to 'wild pigs'. There is a double metaphor here — that women or men are wild and that they are like pigs. One possible aspect of the Hagen 'wild pig' symbol, however, is the cryptic identification of woman and pig which in their domestic state are more or less biddable.

Now the wild does not merely have characteristics which are non-social — it is also a source of extra-social power. Seen in this light, it is men who are associated with wild things, who bring exotic powers to bear upon an ordinary world, who represent their individual achievements as the ability to step beyond social bonds.²⁶ Men have an access to the spirit world women do not enjoy. They travel, fetch valuables from strange places, hunt in the forest and on mountain slopes. But if men are associated with the wild, it is not in opposition to women who represent society or 'culture' — it is in opposition to women who are tied to the house, rooted indeed to the ground in which they tend their crops, to circumscribed paths and a mundane life. When male power is seen to come from outside society, this does not mean that females are associated with society, only that they do not have this power. A girl's upper teeth develop first, Hageners say, because they grow down, towards the ground over which women are always bent. A boy cuts his lower teeth first, shooting upwards, for men are like tall trees that grow towards the sky or like the birds flying there. Yet we cannot extrapolate from these metaphors into a generalized contrast, with women more rooted than men, more 'cultivated'. From the point of view of territory and clan substance, it is women who become rootless, moving from one area to another, while men normally remain planted. Through the perpetuity of the clan, ancestor worship and their spirit cults, males represent social continuity, whereas females are said to have brought death into the world.

On the surface Hagen mythology seems very little concerned with the beginning of things. The relationship between the forest and untoward events, between false/true appearances of wild or human beings, are certainly important themes in the stories collected by Vicedom (1977). But there are no culture heroes as appear, for example, in Hallpike's description of the Tauade (non-Highlands Papua) (1977). There, a dialectical relationship between the wild and the domesticated, he argues, is fundamental to the Tauade world-view. The domestic he translates as the tame, both in the sense of cultivated or controlled and without creativity or

26 To signify success at ceremonial exchange, a clan will top its gifts of valuables with exotic wild animals (snakes, cassowaries and so on).

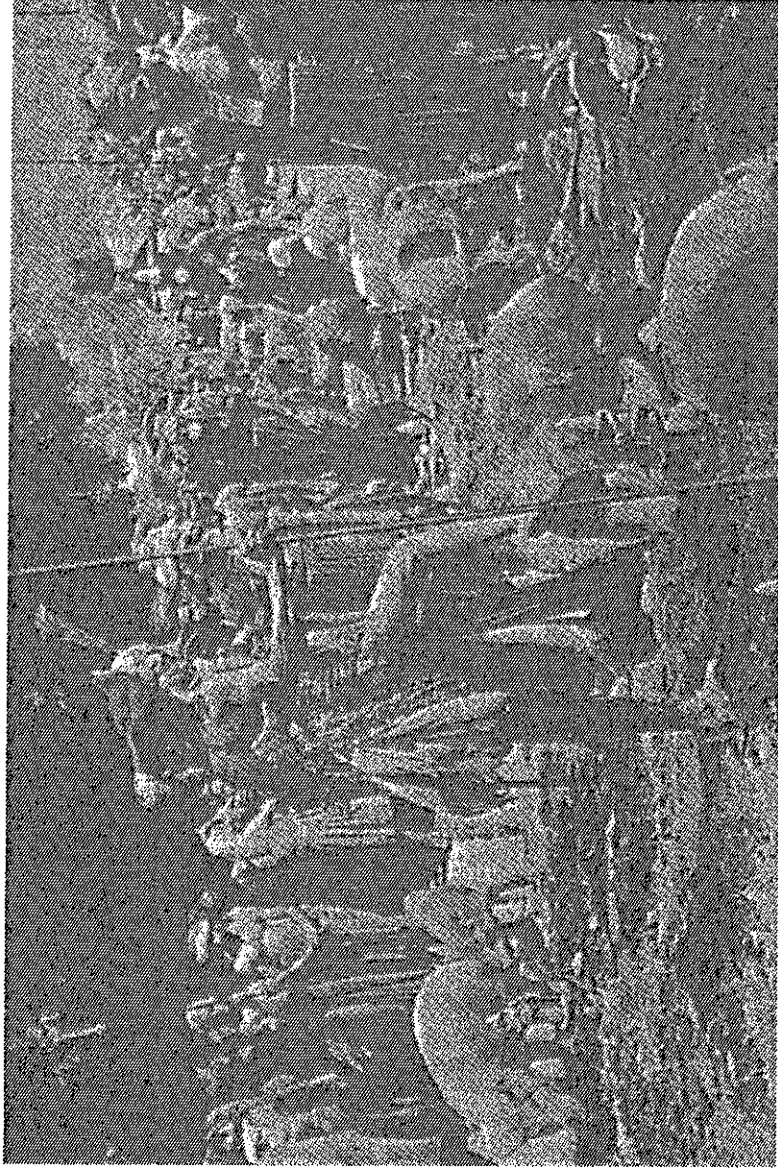


Plate 8.3 Ceremonial exchange: the pig is transferred by a stylized gesture and shout. The donor has removed most of his decorations, but his bustle is evident, ornamented with forest (*rōmfi*) plants. He has an axe in his belt, spear in his hand.

excitement. Women are depicted 'as the preservers of culture and social life, as opposed to the destructive force of the men' (1977:135). Men are destructive, but also creative, powerful, seekers of glory. 'The Wild is not merely the destructive alternative to social order, but is the source of life and of creativity in general . . . the primary forest is seen as the source of most of the domestic forms of plants' (1977:254). It is women with whom fire, cooking, string bags and the useful arts are associated; they are 'portrayed in the legends as the inventors and sustainers of culture' (1977:254). However, men control most magic, and through this means they promote the production of gardens, pigs, children and so on, the magic itself belonging to a domain of 'wild', non-human elements. Men thus promote an extra-social creativity, and have access to forces and energy which lie beyond the manufactured material culture with which women are associated. Hagen men enjoy similar powers, but not in antithesis to women as culture-creators.

Women in Hagen are a source of symbolism for what is 'female'. The definition of 'female' finds confirmation in the way 'women' are treated. As females, women constantly present to men certain problems of management. But controlling people from within society is very different from harnessing the 'wild' to social ends. Indeed the possibility of influencing or directing the minds of others is a fundamental premise of nurture. Nurture is manifested in two kinds of control. First, the subordinate, the dependant, who is fed as pigs are fed by hand, is in a way 'owned' by the person who feeds. A big man's male dependants (metaphorically 'fed by' him) are liable to be ordered about. These are people without, as women are without, wealth in their own name, who lack the powers of oratory and persuasion which enable important men to influence others. Women thus are directed by men, and, if recalcitrant, coerced. Runaway wives, one is told, in the past might be returned home slung from a pole as pigs are carried (M. Strathern 1972:187). On the other hand, in specific household roles, the sexes form a complementary relationship over land and food: wives feed (cook for) their husbands, even as they are fed (with produce off his land). Second, nurture also creates relationships based on common substance. An identity of interests such as binds clan members gives rise to joint action and concerted effort. Women, who at marriage normally change residence, are thought by men as more prey than themselves to conflicting interests. It nevertheless remains true that, between spouses, men's control over women exists in part in the husband's ability to present his wife with certain aims and the wife's own willingness to make those ends her own. Men appeal to women's minds (*noman*), to their volition and commitment to the relationships in which they are enmeshed. Management thus lies in influence over the intentions of others.

Male and female are used by Hageners as symbols of motivation. Males are assumed to have social interests at heart, whereas females are prone to

pursuing narrow personal ends. This is not simply a positive and negative evaluation: a high value is put on personal autonomy, and social goals are thought of as always involving alignment of personal orientations. For the Mandak of New Ireland Clay (1977:151) says: 'nurture does not eradicate individual antisocial motivations, but it opposes them in intentions and results'. Individual tendencies, she suggests, are 'harmful'. In Hagen the definition and preservation of the individual as an autonomous being is of great importance. Thus collective action must be seen to come from multitudinous personal decisions. The 'individual as antisocial' is simply a marked constituent of this overall category.

In presenting their aims to themselves men and women use idioms of status — devotion to clan affairs is a matter of prestige (cf. M. Strathern 1978). It is the rubbish who do not strive for eminence in this way. Females may be categorically 'rubbish' by contrast with males: household concerns and horticultural labour do not carry the prestige of group enterprise. When they define themselves as interested in prestige, committed to the clan, and thus rooted in society, males set their gender off from the potentially irresponsible and 'wild' propensities of females. Categorically (though not in terms of individual ascription, quite another matter) females are of lower status than males. In power terms, however, male supremacy is much more ambiguous. The dangers which they locate in females are a source of threat to themselves. In preserving autonomy, moreover, they have to allow autonomy in others. Here possibly is some of the significance of men's mystical access to the exotic 'wild'. In the latter context they assert a strength to which there can be no challenge, because the mystical forces harnessed through cult or rite stand in innate opposition to the weaknesses and harms of the mundane world. The Female Spirit cult, for example, is said to protect men from menstrual pollution: it defines male strength against that of the female.²⁷ It does not seek to cleanse the female or banish pollution, as in other cultures witch hunts seek to banish witches.

In short, where power is at issue men stress their extra-social strength,

27 Participation in Spirit cults is one of the key elements of men's claims to spirituality/wildness. Further discussion on this point can be found in M. Strathern (forthcoming). Access to ancestral ghosts is another dimension of men's power, from which women are largely excluded, but the ghosts are also nearer to home and are concerned with women's as well as men's everyday affairs. Hagen women do not have any special links with the spiritual world. Compare, for example, Polynesian Tokelau (Huntsman & Hooper 1975) where men's strength and control of both the social and extra-social world (animals and spirits) is set against women's sedentary 'inside' life on the one hand and on the other their entanglement with spirits — women have connections with animals and spirits which give them an innate mystical power.



Plate 8.4 Ceremonial exchange: a line of bearded men dance as a clan, facing an audience composed largely of women (evident with their hands raised to their heads to steady netbags). Ignoring them, a further group of girls and young women shriek above the men's chanting and execute a dance of their own.

where status is at issue they stress their social orientations (pursuit of clan goals) and cultural superiority (ownership of wealth, ability to make speeches). Hagen men thus locate maleness equally in social organization (their control of women, of things domesticated) and in extra-social forces (their access to the spiritual and the wild). Hagen women may locate femaleness at the heart of nurture, and in drawing men's ultimate responsibilities towards themselves and their children also individuate their interests from the 'social' pursuits of men.

Now these operations employ gender as a symbol in two distinct ways. On the one hand, it is used dialectically to structure different patterns of behaviour; yet, on the other, it posits that genital sexuality is an innate condition of the given world. The first employs elements of the *mbo-rphi* contrast in a differentiating mode to typify appropriate action; the second states that the physiological distinction between male and female is as much a given, and thus of the same logical order, as that between *mbo* and *rphi*. I treat these in turn.

There is great focus on manipulable aspects of gender identity based on ascriptions of behaviour. Whether people behave in a 'male' or 'female' way is linked to the evaluation of activities likely to bring prestige or rubbishness. Such maleness and femaleness are presented in turn both as a matter of choice (it is up to the individual whether he or she sets sights on social goals) and of no-choice (males have an innate capacity to perceive such goals against which females suffer a handicap). This is an idiom through which men attempt to influence one another and to interest women in their affairs. Control (directing others in the way they act), transformation (inducing certain states of mind), manipulation (structuring values in such a way as to impel participation in social events) are all notions applicable to behaviour. They rest on involvement and commitment among individuals. The manipulation of behavioural gender attributes is thus part of nurture, of how people act out their relationships. It differentiates: individuals can cross the boundary (low status men are 'like women', women of prestige are 'like men'). A change in status (a big man failing, a woman proving she is man-like) is always possible.

The mystical power of the wild which males bring with them, by contrast, is at a remove from control in inter-personal relations. This power is set against female characteristics, as the 'wild' is set against the domestic, an antithesis which marks a boundary no-one can cross. Or, if crossed, it is in appearance only — ultimately one's 'nature' as a denizen of the wild or as truly human cannot be changed; this is the theme treated frequently in myths. Hence, as far as celebration of the Spirit cults is concerned, men gain power but not identity. It is a male attribute to perform in the cults, as it is to hunt, but these activities do not make a person more male, only demonstrate the strength maleness entails. For sexual demarcation here rests on physiology; the sexes as genitally and functionally distinguished

are givens in the world. Genital identity is not open to 'creation'; there is no initiation ritual — as, for example, in Sherbro and Kaulong — and thus no endowment of the sexes with the appurtenances of their physical development. The differentiation of cult participants (all males of a clan, whatever their status, join in, all females are excluded) reflects an absolute cleavage. Genital sex is not open to change. There are no ritual transvestites in Hagen, no forces linking role to sex, no suggestion, for example, that men's organs came first from women. Sex is 'innate' and immutable. Maleness and femaleness are in this sense non-manipulable. On this axiomatic base women are excluded from the mystical domain. Within the Papua New Guinea Highlands, this particular contrast between what is given (physiological, genital sex) and what is open to alteration (gender characteristics as evinced in behaviour), is possibly restricted to Hagen and some of their neighbours. Elsewhere, especially in the many Highlands societies which have initiation rituals focussed on sexual identity, physiology is to some extent 'created'. The Gimi described by Gillison are a good example, though unusual in the Highlands for holding female as well as male ceremonies. This is not the place for a comparative review. I merely note that the Hagen concern with what is innate and what is manipulable is not anchored in the male:female idiom itself (e.g. males associated with creation, females with uncontrollable givens). Goodale (see chapter 6) has quoted Forge's comments, that in New Guinea women are considered a part of nature, and that their powers of reproduction and creation are considered natural and innate, while men to be creative have to be so culturally, mainly by the performance of ceremonial.²⁸ The point applies

28 Aside from the question whether 'natural' and 'cultural' are appropriate extrapolations, I would not, on the other hand, want to rule out this contrast between the innate and the created as a component of the symbolic systems of other Highlands societies. There is considerable concern, for example, in the Eastern Highlands region with the relationship between human reproduction/growth and death, physiological process being seen as linking human beings to the vegetable and animal world. Identity of physical substance may be the focus of ritual to an elaborate degree (as in initiation ceremonies), and possibly thus played upon, manipulated, 'created'. See Poole's (1981) account of Bimin-Kuskusmin (non-Highlands) interest in physiology, and the attachment of male and female qualities to bodily substances that can to some extent be exchanged between the sexes. An Eastern Highlands case of physiological crossing of boundaries is described by Meigs (1976). The Hua use a marker, sexual fluids, which classifies male and female states independently of genital ascription, though they remain of a manifestly physical nature. Elements of similar ideas are found situationally in various Hagen contexts, but not as a prime focus of cosmological attention. I am grateful to Gillian Gillison for discussion on this point (and see chapter 7).

no more to Hagen than it does to Kaulong. Hagen notions of female reproductive 'power' bear this out further.

It is men who give evidence of being able to harness the power of wild or spiritual elements. They derive a strength from outside society which females never match. Their manipulation of this power is done in the name of women as well as men, but also sets men off against them. Among various reasons given for women's exclusion from central rites in the Female or Male spirit cults is the fact that females are impure, they menstruate. This capacity is linked equally to fertility and death. This is a condition to be handled and met with, but little is added to our understanding by labelling it a 'natural' feminine power. It is certainly not referred to as a 'wild' characteristic. Women's capacity to bear children has no bearing on the situations in which females are associated with being *rphi*, although it is hedged with danger for men.

Female fertility is neither more nor less innate than the power males evince in interaction with ghosts and spirits. The reason why Spirit cults which have fertility as a theme are organized by men to the exclusion of women has to do with the association of males with social ends and females with personal interests: what is at issue is a conversion of fertility individually manifested into fertility for the clan. Thus in the Female Spirit cult fertility itself is defined transexually: the aim is increase for people and their stock/gardens together. Men are the sole human participants not because they are trying to make a female power into a male thing — but because as males they are in touch with forms of extra-social energy represented in the manipulation of *rphi* items (forest products and so on) which they bring to bear on the forces of growth within the domain of *mbo* (cf. A. Strathern 1970; 1979). Male sexuality is a theme of the Male Spirit cult, less often enacted. Here an explicit phallicism goes along with an emphasis on copulation, and the partial inclusion of women in the cult celebration. An assertion of the male role in human procreation is combined with an emphasis on clan solidarity. Women are in the background, but the genital complementarity of the sexes is quite unambiguous.

At an abstract level, then, Hagen men demonstrate their own powers of fertility, to which they bring an association with wild things. Their powers are expressed as a different order from women's. But men's capacity to act thus is as much a given of their sex as women's capacity to bear children. So while female sexuality may contextually be impure ('bad' or 'rubbish') it is not marked as 'natural' in contrast to male endeavours. Oppositions enacted through the cults do not stem from a necessity to bring natural forces under cultural control or from an assignment of the sexes to opposing sides of such a dichotomy.

Contrasts between men and women cannot be squeezed into a single social—non-social, let alone culture—nature set. By no means all Highlands ethnographers who have reported on a domestic—wild contrast have done

this. The elaborate antithesis between forest and horticulture which sustains Karam treatment of certain creatures and crops (Bulmer 1967) is linked chiefly to the definition of kinship roles and rights, setting certain claims off against others. Bulmer stresses that cassowary and pandanus, the prime elements of the uncultivated wild, 'are not merely undomesticated but *may not be domesticated*' (1967:17; his italics). The Hagen association of maleness with extra-social sources of power emphatically by-passes domestication. This power is efficacious precisely because it is non-tameable. Magic which incorporates objects taken from the wild cannot be represented as a control of nature, any more than domesticity is culture. I reiterate the point that 'the wild' is encountered and dealt with but not subdued. Wild forces are defined in antithesis to the domestic, rather than being thought of as potential components of it. The use of wild creatures and plants in spells and in cults is thus less a matter of 'control' being exercised over these items than a demonstration of differentiated power between human agents. Through males, extra-social forces brought to bear on human endeavours endow them with exotic efficacy.

Our empiricist nature-culture dichotomy in relation to that of male-female contains a significant component which Hageners formulate separately. This is the contrast between individual-social. On this axis, *when we equate social = cultural*, female can be linked to lower-level, individuating naturally-based concerns as against the higher order 'social', culturally-induced interests of males. Let me summarize what I understand to be the very different Hagen formulation.

- (1) In the definition of humanity, through notions of sustenance and nurture, *mbo* and *rphi* (planted and wild) carry connotations of human and non-human, the collective and the solitary. On this axis male-female do not appear as discriminators.
- (2) In the definition of internal social control versus personal autonomy, self-seeking and socially destructive behaviour may be called *rphi* (wild). Its opposite is the social orientation of the *noman* (mind), which is an attribute of being human (*mbo*). Females are seen as more prone to anti-social individualistic behaviour, more often as *rphi*, than males.
- (3) There are also what I have called extra-social sources of strength sometimes thought of as *rphi*, and here as mediators men have a prerogative of access. In this sense *rphi* is a male domain. The contrast is with things of the house, definitely associated with the circumscribed orientations of women, but not particularly *mbo*.
- (4) Possibly most illuminating of all is the fourth nexus, most salient in everyday reference and comment. This defines orientating values — prestige and status — and the contrast between the public and the domestic/private. In our own society, prestige, public achievement, cultural creativity and civilization all run together. In Hagen a contrast

between things which are prestigious (*nyim*) and rubbish (*korpa*) is intimately tied up with symbols of male and female. But *mbo* and *rphi* fail to enter the configuration.

Mbo-rphi alone (1) is essentially a relation of difference (non-hierarchical). Gender differences as innate physiological givens are of the same logical order here as *mbo-rphi*, which therefore cannot be differentiated by them. The other three categorical relations, however, which all involve idioms of gender, create notions of opposition and tension. For gender is here being used to differentiate styles of human activity. To a greater or lesser extent it may recall the immutability of physiological sex or the creation of behavioural patterns. In the contrasts between social and personal interests (2) and the exotic and mundane (3), *rphi* (wild) tends to be the marked category. There is a cross-over in the application of male-female imagery, however, in the one case it being females and in the other males who are wild (cf. fig. 4). This is significant: in a dialectical mode

(1)	<table border="0"> <tr><td><i>rphi</i></td><td style="padding: 0 10px;">:</td><td><i>mbo</i></td></tr> <tr><td>(wild)</td><td style="padding: 0 10px;">:</td><td>(domestic)</td></tr> <tr><td>non-human</td><td style="padding: 0 10px;">:</td><td>human</td></tr> </table>	<i>rphi</i>	:	<i>mbo</i>	(wild)	:	(domestic)	non-human	:	human	<p><i>definition of</i> nurture-humanity</p>
<i>rphi</i>	:	<i>mbo</i>									
(wild)	:	(domestic)									
non-human	:	human									
(2)	<table border="0"> <tr><td><i>rphi</i></td><td style="padding: 0 10px;">:</td><td>social</td></tr> <tr><td>autonomous</td><td style="padding: 0 10px;">:</td><td>social</td></tr> <tr><td>female</td><td style="padding: 0 10px;">:</td><td>male</td></tr> </table>	<i>rphi</i>	:	social	autonomous	:	social	female	:	male	<p>internal social control versus personal autonomy</p>
<i>rphi</i>	:	social									
autonomous	:	social									
female	:	male									
(3)	<table border="0"> <tr><td>female</td><td style="padding: 0 10px;">:</td><td>male</td></tr> <tr><td>non-spiritual</td><td style="padding: 0 10px;">:</td><td>spiritual</td></tr> <tr><td>mundane</td><td style="padding: 0 10px;">:</td><td><i>rphi</i> (exotic)</td></tr> </table>	female	:	male	non-spiritual	:	spiritual	mundane	:	<i>rphi</i> (exotic)	<p>power relations/external sources of strength</p>
female	:	male									
non-spiritual	:	spiritual									
mundane	:	<i>rphi</i> (exotic)									
(4)	<table border="0"> <tr><td>female</td><td style="padding: 0 10px;">:</td><td>male</td></tr> <tr><td>rubbish</td><td style="padding: 0 10px;">:</td><td>prestigious</td></tr> <tr><td>(<i>korpa</i>)</td><td style="padding: 0 10px;">:</td><td>(<i>nyim</i>)</td></tr> </table>	female	:	male	rubbish	:	prestigious	(<i>korpa</i>)	:	(<i>nyim</i>)	<p>orientating values and status</p>
female	:	male									
rubbish	:	prestigious									
(<i>korpa</i>)	:	(<i>nyim</i>)									

(1)	<i>mbo</i> : <i>rphi</i>	::	human : non-human	
(2)	social : autonomous	::	<i>mbo</i> : <i>rphi</i>	:: male : female
(3)	mundane : exotic	::	<i>mbo</i> : <i>rphi</i>	:: female : male
(4)	male : female	::	prestigious : rubbish	

Fig. 8.4. Main metaphorical domains (Hagen).

gender notions effect a partial transformation of or application of ideas otherwise framed as given (e.g. genital characteristics are innate, or the distinction between *mbo* and *rømi* itself); but the application is only partial – that is, ultimately male and female cannot stand for the *difference between mbo* and *rømi*. Where male and female do stand for a total difference is in relation to ideas about prestige and rubbishness, which are the supreme domain of Hagen creativity.

IV Conclusions

My reiterated comparison between certain of 'our' (empiricist) notions of nature and culture and Hagen beliefs has been made to a specific purpose. Our own concepts provide a structure so persuasive that when we come across other cultures linking, say, a male–female contrast to oppositions between the domestic and wild or society and the individual, we imagine they are parts of the same whole.

For at times, in our collectivizing idioms, we equate social order with cultural systems, rule with artefact, human nature with environment, generating pairs of contrasts related between themselves, and reproducible on paper as opposing columns (cf. Goody 1977).

nature	:	culture
individual	:	society
innate.	:	artificial
personality	:	role, etc.

The further potent contrast between male and female symbolizes some of these oppositions, also turns them upside down, and introduces relations between them. It is the possibility of transformation from one column into the other (culture modifies nature, civilized persons revert to animal behaviour) which gives social science its problematic (how do 'individuals' become 'social' beings) and allows us in our descriptions of others to abstract culture as a human creation from the natural givens of the world. And the symbol of gender has led to further academic concerns. The imputation that our male–female stereotypes incorporate a dichotomy between subject–object stems partly from notions of property and partly from our view of the natural world as acted upon. Allied with this is the hope occasionally expressed that by eliminating culture as it is presently constituted and thereby better understanding our natures we could start anew; meanwhile, individuals can 'do their own thing', we do not have to be bound by society because society is simply an invention, and so on.²⁹

29 Cf. M. Strathern (1976). I take these preoccupations as both popular

Ortner was absolutely to the point as far as Hagen is concerned when she suggested that women come to symbolize socially fragmenting, particularistic concerns against those integrative social interests which preoccupy men (1974:79).³⁰ Hageners express human relationships through things, through food which is ingested, valuables which are exchanged; and from their occupation of clan territory and their ownership of wealth, males are predominantly transactors in relationships. They define themselves against females whose lack of 'culture' (in this sense) makes them 'rubbish' – but not 'objects', not 'natural'. It is our own culture which sets up males as creators and inventors and females therefore as perilously near objects, for we define 'culture' itself as manifested in things which are made and are alienable (cf. Dumont 1977:81). For us, women emerge as objects in a double sense, either as representing a natural resource over which culture is transcendent, or as the artificial end results of men's energy.

Lindenbaum's account of the Fore (1976) makes an explicit equation between the control of natural powers in persons (primarily sexuality) and the environment. The axes of her contrast are that of regulation and management as against the uncontrolled and unpredictable. In Hagen a notion of control arises as an aspect of domesticity or humanity (*mbo*) and is thus conceptually *set against* forces outside this sphere. Hageners do not transform *rømi* into *mbo* things, though they may try to harness *rømi* power for their own ends. Settlements in new areas involve a redefinition

and academic. They stem from our formerly religious and now evolutionary vision of man in relation to the animal kingdom/natural world, from a technology which rests on the belief that all material is malleable, within certain limits, so that the definition of those limits is important, as well as from a desire common to many moral systems to give social arrangements legitimacy by proving their inevitability ('naturalness').

Mathieu points to our notions of essence (1978a). Interest in the 'nature' of things is an interest in essential identity, in the given. Culture is posed against (1) a notion of raw material, and thus the elements which are subjected to our creative, experimental, modifying control; (2) the irreducible core, the limits to our technology, defiant individualism, the 'true' character that is merely overlaid with cultural forma. In demarcating different kinds of reality, this contrast between biological and social, innate and made, provides a limitless area of investigation for several disciplines (cf. Archer 1976; Lloyd 1976).

- 30 I do not go into the question of notions of self-hood. The stress Hageners lay on autonomy as an attribute of the person is to be seen as part of the particularistic nature of individuals, a source of their differentiation from the givens of the social world (following specific social goals as well as diverging from them may be interpreted as acts of will). For an exploration of certain equations between self-hood and nature–culture ideas see Willis 1975.

of power (what was once only a source of *rphi* elements has become a source of nurture) but this is a readjustment of spheres of influence rather than a conversion of one kind of power into the other. *Rphi* power can be brought to bear on human activity precisely because it is constituted always in antithesis to *mbo*, and cannot therefore be incorporated by it.

Many of the Fore contrasts are repeated in Hagen. Settlement is marked off from the forest; the wild is distinguished from the cultivated as a dangerous and fertile source of power; females are represented as wild and out of control, having to be tied to men with their larger vision of the social order. But it is clear that for Hagen at least we cannot combine these oppositions into a single series. Thus women may be compared both to domestic pigs (biddable) and to wild ones (not), men be regarded both as travellers able to tap the powers of the forest and as planted agents of society. Their use of gender in the differentiation of human activity is not to be confused with our own usages of a similar dichotomy to symbolize the relationship between nature and culture itself.

Nature and culture do not exist in Hagen as categories of the order, for example, of the clearly conceptualized distinctions between prestige and rubbishness, social goals and individual autonomy, or mind, body and spirit. These abstract entities are all verbalized to some degree and involve explicit symbolic representation. Such concepts are reasonably accessible, and we need to understand them to make surface sense of Hageners' own interpretations of their behaviour. Nothing at this level corresponds to 'nature—culture'.

Nor, as far as implied content of our terms is at issue, can one specifically equate *mbo* (domestic) and *rphi* (wild) with culture/nature. There is no homology between environment and human nature, nor between technology and social rule. The wild includes some items we classify as 'natural', viz. uncultivated plants, as well as antisocial motivation, and these are brought into opposition with *mbo* things which include the cultivated, the sociable, the socially-oriented. But *mbo* refers to immanent conditions of growth and a given humanity, not also to technology or the imposed rule. And *rphi*, wild, is not a constituent of things *mbo*, neither a resource to be worked on nor elemental components of the domesticated world.

Ardener, Barth, Langness and Ortner were discussing nature—culture in the presence of images (either their own or in the ethnography) to do with themes of control. Even if we were to allow that enough of our concepts of 'culture' corresponded to *mbo* or that there was reasonable overlap between the semantic domains of *rphi* and 'nature', the tension between the Hagen terms is different. *Mbo* and *rphi* are in an antithetical rather than a hierarchical, processual relationship. The domestic domain is not seen as colonizing the wild; the development of social consciousness in persons is not represented as culture transcending nature. These elements are alien to Hageners' ways of thinking. They use a notion of a realm beyond them-

selves (*rømi*) to signify the characteristics of human bonding (*mbo*), but this distinction itself is innate, subject to discovery not reformulation. Thus humanity is bounded off from the non-human, but does not seek to control it. Control comes from within, a self-defining attribute of the social world.³¹

There is no culture, in the sense of the cumulative works of man, and no nature to be tamed and made productive. And ideas such as these cannot be a referent of gender imagery. Hageners do use gender idioms to talk about social as opposed to personal interests, and the cultivated as distinct from the wild. But these two domains are not brought into systematic relationship; the intervening metaphor of culture's dominion over nature is not there. On the contrary, insofar as gender is used in a differentiating, dialectical manner, the distinction between male and female constantly creates the notion of humanity as a 'background of common similarity' (Wagner 1975:118–19). Neither male nor female can possibly stand for 'humanity' as against 'nature' because the distinction between them is used to evaluate areas in which human action is creative and individuating. Thus, indeed, the whole issue of control appears to be encapsulated within the notion of things *mbo*. Representations of domination and influence between the sexes are precisely about ways of human interaction, and not also about humanity's project in relation to a less than human world.

31 I have clearly taken liberties in reducing our own ideas to a simple scheme. Of course we use things expressively, of course as Wagner notes there is a dialectic between invention and convention, individual creativity and social norm. I am simply pointing to one line of thinking which for us produces associations that very plausibly translate other people's dichotomies into schemes of our own.

Although I have been interested in this topic for a long time, its present formulation owes much to recent analyses of Hagen ethnography by Andrew Strathern and to Roy Wagner's *The invention of culture*. Additionally I thank both of them for criticism of the present paper; versions of it have been read to the Anthropology Departments of Cambridge University, the Collège de France and the London School of Economics, from whose discussions I have profited. I am grateful also for the detailed scrutiny of Patricia Hill, Debbora Jones, Carol MacCormack and Marie Reay, many of whose comments are incorporated here, and for Marianne Leach's help with the final manuscript. Girton College generously assisted with typing expenses.

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