



Opposite page: Hamar men watering cattle—one of the few labors they perform in a society based on male supremacy. The Hamar and their parched land are movingly pictured in a new film



Rivers of Sand

by Robert G. Gardner

My first choice as a title for *Rivers of Sand* was *Creatures of Pain*. Though it evoked most aptly the central theme of the work, I was persuaded by friends not to use it. They felt, no doubt correctly, that it was too somber, too susceptible to wrong interpretation.

But what I heard in those words is what I felt as I made the film: an ordeal and a process by which men and women accommodate to each other, in the midst of the tension and conflict caused by their fidelity to traditional social roles.

The people portrayed in this film are called Hamar. They dwell in the thorny scrubland of southwestern Ethiopia, about a hundred miles north of Lake Rudolf, Africa's great inland sea. Anthropologists call them a "Turkana offshoot," since they share many traits of a much larger congeries of people living far to the south. The Hamar are isolated by some distant choice that now limits their movement and defines their condition. At least until recently, it has caused them to retain a highly traditional way of life.

Part of that tradition was the open, even flamboyant, acknowledgment of male supremacy. In their isolation, they seem to have refined this not uncommon principle of social organization—and personal relationship—to a remarkably pure state. Hamar men are masters and their women are servants.

The film is an attempt to disclose not only the activities of the Hamar, but also the effect on mood and behavior of a life governed by sexual inequality.

Robert Gardner, acting chairman of Harvard's department of visual and environmental studies, has made many films. Rivers of Sand is his latest. Its premiere will be held on October 18 (see page 8 for details).

The feather and the grindstone

Octavio Paz, poet and critic, looks at Rivers of Sand



In Hamar society, men are masters and women are slaves. Social order is maintained through punishment: marital beatings, flagellation of women and girls in public ceremonies. Above: a ritual whipper, switches in hand.

A society's relations with its deities are vertical. Offerings, prayers, and the smoke of sacrifices rise from man to god; grace and punishment descend from god to man. Relations between human societies are horizontal: commerce, war. Nevertheless, there is interweaving. Gods and spirits intervene with Homer's heroes, as with Spaniards warring against Moors, or Aztecs combating Spaniards. The intersection between the society of gods and that of men is one of the axes of war.

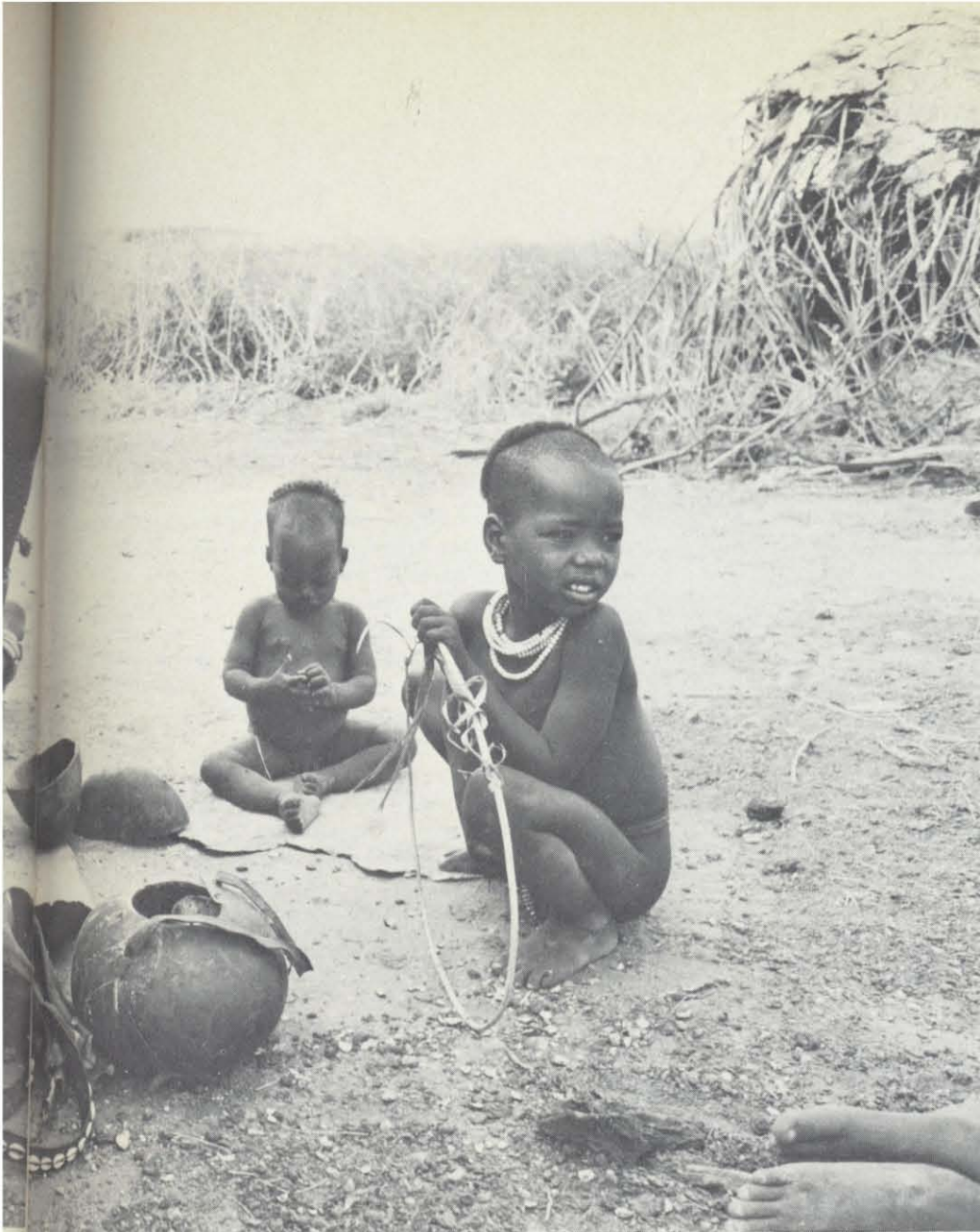
In *Dead Birds*, a film that is a masterpiece of the genre, Robert Gardner showed that war, even in an extremely simple society such as the Dani of New Guinea, is a knot of contradictory forces. Ghosts and spirits of the dead as well as natural forces—wind, rain, cold, night—all take part in these struggles. War is costly and bloody proof that imagination is no less real than what we call reality. Man is inhabited by ghosts, and the ghosts he fights against are beings of flesh and blood: himself and those like him.

Dead Birds is a film about a central concern of the Dani, war. War is defined by two complementary and contradictory notes, similarity and strangeness. Warriors fight against other warriors: men who are their equals, but who belong to another society. In his new film, *Rivers of Sand*, Robert Gardner has chosen the opposite situation—relations between the sexes at the very core of a society. Again the complementary and contradictory notes are present, but in reverse. The relationship seen is between different members—men and women—of the same society. War is opposition between similar people who are strangers to one another; marriage is a union between different people who belong to the same group. Marriage is not horizontal, but vertical, hierarchical: man dominates woman. War is the battle between similar people who are equal.

At the beginning of *Rivers of Sand*, its principal figure, Omali Inda, says this with a powerful metaphor: "A time

Octavio Paz, the Mexican poet, critic, and diplomat, is visiting professor of comparative literature at Harvard.





The central figure of Rivers of Sand is Omali Inda. In the film, she speaks of Hamar life in her own tongue; translations appear as subtitles.

Omali Inda:

*A time comes
when a Hamar woman leaves her father's house
to live with her husband.
It's like smoothing the grindstone
with a piece of quartz. The quartz is his hand,
his whip, and you are beaten and beaten.*

*You are afraid of him.
You ask, "When will he beat me?"
When he does not, you ask, "Why not?"
He is beating you even when he is not.*

*Later you go to accept gifts from relatives.
You go together.*

*You get used to him, you become
one of his people.
You become reconciled to stay.
And that is that.*

*If I want to be someone else's wife, I cannot.
He married me, so he can beat me.*

*You just have to stay.
Where can I go? I cannot marry again.
If I run home, I must return.*

*You see my children here?
There would be no one to cook for them,
no one to fetch water for them.
It's for the children that I stay
and struggle on.*

It has always been this way for women.



Although the prestige of masculine activities is greater than feminine, their usefulness is frequently less

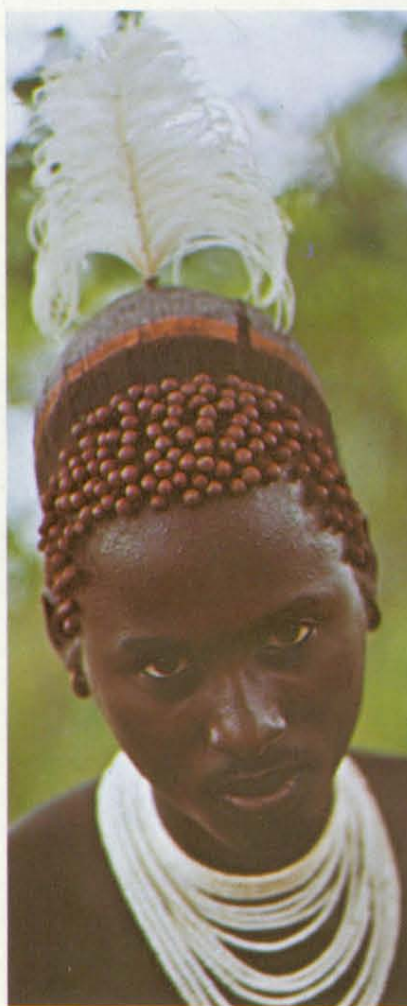


The Hamar woman's role is essentially productive, the man's ceremonial.

Above: A woman uses a slingshot to keep birds away from the grain fields.

Left: A girl tries to hasten the ripening of sorghum by playing a flute.

Right: Men who have killed important animals do their hair in a special way.



comes when a Hamar woman leaves her father's house to live with her husband. It's like smoothing the grindstone with a piece of quartz. The quartz is his hand, his whip, and you are beaten and beaten."

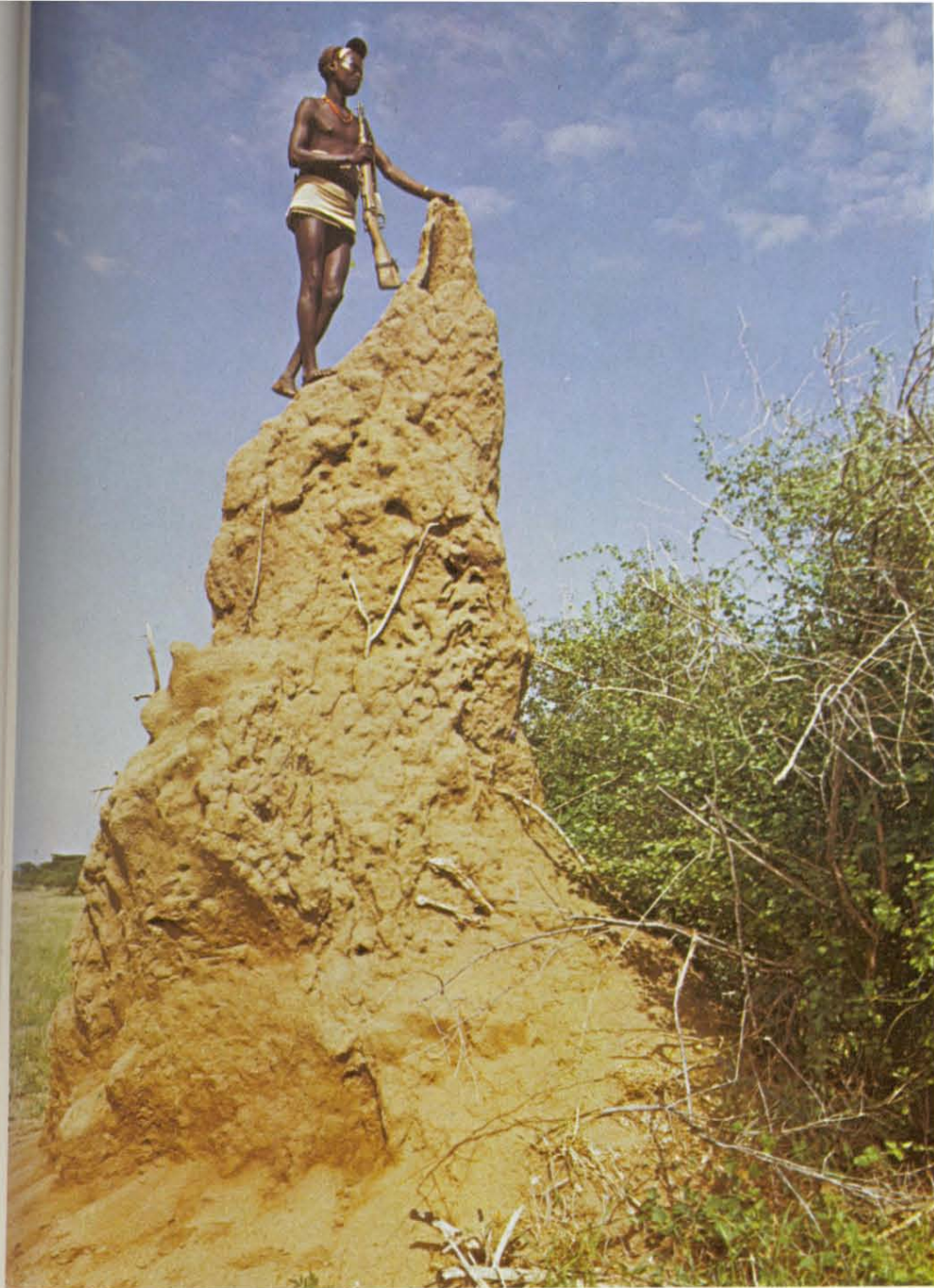
Omali Inda's metaphor, like all metaphors, has more than one meaning. It alludes directly to the corporal and sexual reality in which a woman is a grindstone and a man a piece of quartz. At the same time, the metaphor refers us to the social reality, domination: the quartz is not only a phallus, it is also a whip. Finally, the metaphor designates the division of labor: the sphere of a woman is that of peaceful tasks, that of a man consists of the hunt and the battle. The relationship begins with friction. A man beats a woman until he shapes her into a perfected grindstone.

In an impressive passage, Omali Inda explains the difference between the tasks of men and women. "What women do is work. Do women go raiding to find cattle or kill enemies? Women never went raiding. They raid by going to the bush, where they undress and kill lice... Grinding sorghum is how a woman hunts. Getting water is her way of raiding."

The Hamar society perceives these differences as natural and predetermined: "Did a woman ever have an erection and go raiding or hunting?"

Although the prestige of masculine activities is greater than the feminine, their usefulness is much less. Thanks largely to women, Hamar society is fed. Man seems a creature of luxury, not only because of the passion with which he cares for his physical appearance (especially his coiffure), but because of the predominantly gratuitous, esthetic, and frequently unproductive nature of his occupations.

The ostrich hunt, for example, is virtually a ceremony, evoking as much ritualistic behavior as target-shooting tournaments. Bodily beauty is an essential element of the hunt. The first thing the hunter does is to adorn himself with the feathers of the just-killed ostrich. The relationship of the society with the external world is inverted. Although hunts and wars are struggles with the



Omalindi:

*When a son is born, his father gives him a gun,
saying that he should go and kill wild animals.*

When a girl is born, leg irons are her gun.

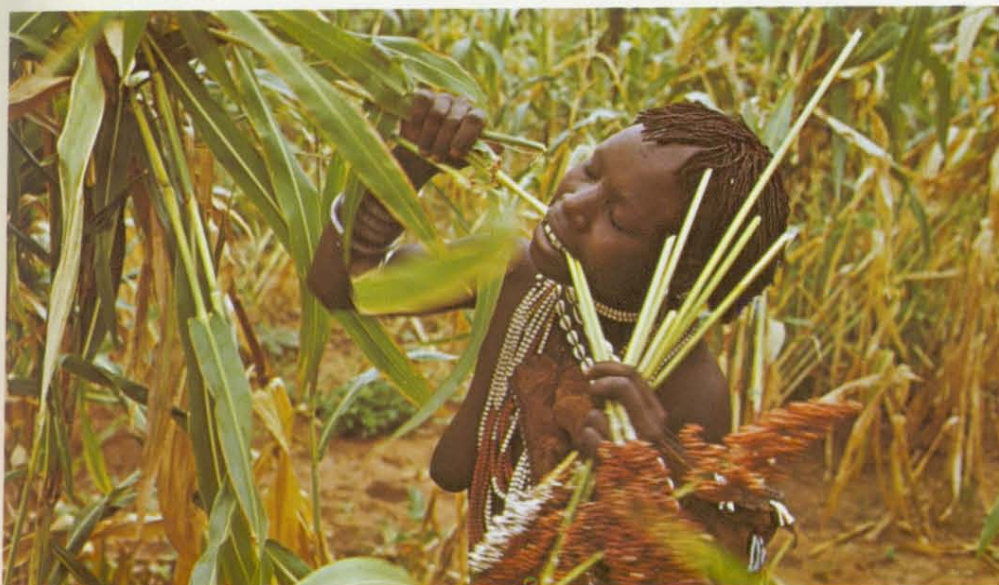
*What women do is work.
Do women go raiding
for cattle or to kill enemies?*

*Women never went raiding.
They raid by going into the bush,
where they undress and kill lice
until the sun sets.*

Then they collect wood and bring it home.

That's what women do.

*Did a woman ever have an erection
and do raiding or hunting?*



*Is the grain turning color, girls?
"It is."*

*When it is ripe,
it must be cut.*

The oppositions and unions that make up the Hamar view of the world are translated into the language of rite



During the harvest, spirits rise. With plenty to eat, there is an abundance of energy. It is a time of dancing and ceremonies. Below, a boy jumps cows as part of his coming-of-age ceremony.

external world, the hunter establishes a link with his enemy that the warrior rejects. The hunt is somewhere between war and marriage. Like a woman, the ostrich is different; like an enemy, it is a stranger.

The coming-of-age ceremony (*Ukuli*) for male adolescents exemplifies another kind of relationship with the animal world. By jumping over a line of cows, a boy gives up his childhood name and takes that of the first animal in the line. Thus a link is established with the animal world that is more enduring than anything in the hunt, and more importantly, has a different meaning. Instead of struggle and death, the relationship establishes magical kindredness.

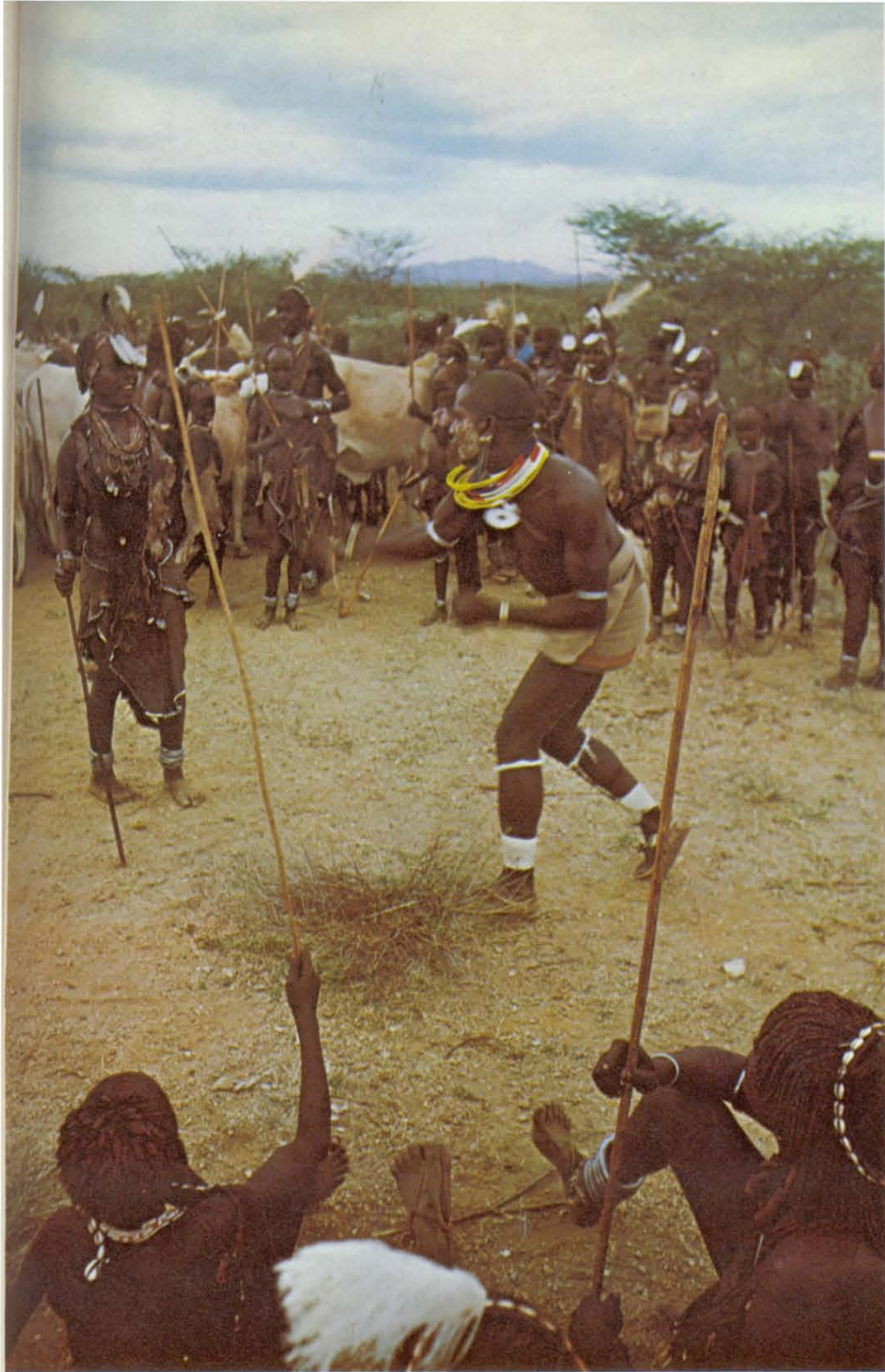
After the jumping of cows comes a ceremony involving flagellation of girls and women. The adolescent boys, who must live for a time under a vow of chastity, have the privilege of doing the whipping. Adorned, boisterous and laughing, the females gather in an

animated, motley herd. An equivocal ceremony: they fight for the honor of being lashed. They come forth, provoke the youth who brandishes the whip, and receive the stroke with visible pride and open sensuality. The attitude of the men is reserved. They whip with seeming indifference, and reject erotic incitement with vague gestures of disdain. A cruel ballet.

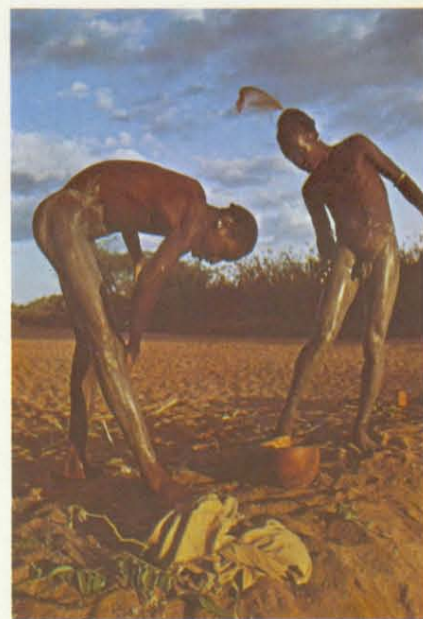
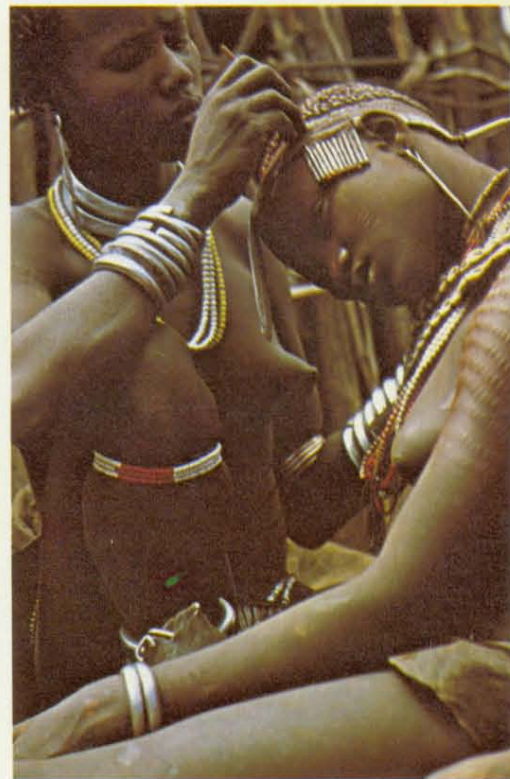
More than an illustration of *L'Histoire d'O*, the ceremony is a translation into the language of rite of those series of oppositions and unions that make up the Hamar view of the world. These oppositions are crystallized in the duality *man/woman*, which is itself, in turn, the root expression of the duality underlying all societies: *the One and the Other*.

Relationships between men and women are ambiguous because they are manifestations of the dialectic between the One and the Other. The opposition between husband and wife is destined to dissolve in sexual union, although only in





During ceremonial periods, women take added pains to look their best. Below: Men paint themselves with clay before a dance.



Above: The whipping of girls and women is part of the Ukuli, an elaborate series of rituals through which Hamar boys ceremonially come of age. A girl may be whipped only by a man of the clan into which she must marry.

Having jumped cows, the Ukuli boy will take a new name, bless cattle, and assist in other rituals. When his hair grows in again, he will be in a position to marry. Until then, he is ritually clean and powerful, and forbidden to sleep with a woman.

The dance, a frenetic intermingling of men and women, expresses the momentary abolition of their differences



Above: Women are scarified for the sake of beauty.

For the Hamar, dancing is "the momentary triumph of the One"—a return to pre-social equality. Below, a young man, his body coated with clay, joins in a dance with four highly ornamented girls. The other pictures show young women dancing.

order to be born again immediately, in the form of men's social domination of women. Sexuality, when it is fulfilled, refutes this opposition, and thus refutes the order on which society is based. Sex is subversive. The restoration of order is expressed in punishment: beating in marriage, flagellation in the rite. A ferocious pedagogy. The whippings are public. They are a ritual, and in them there is an element of erotic fascination.

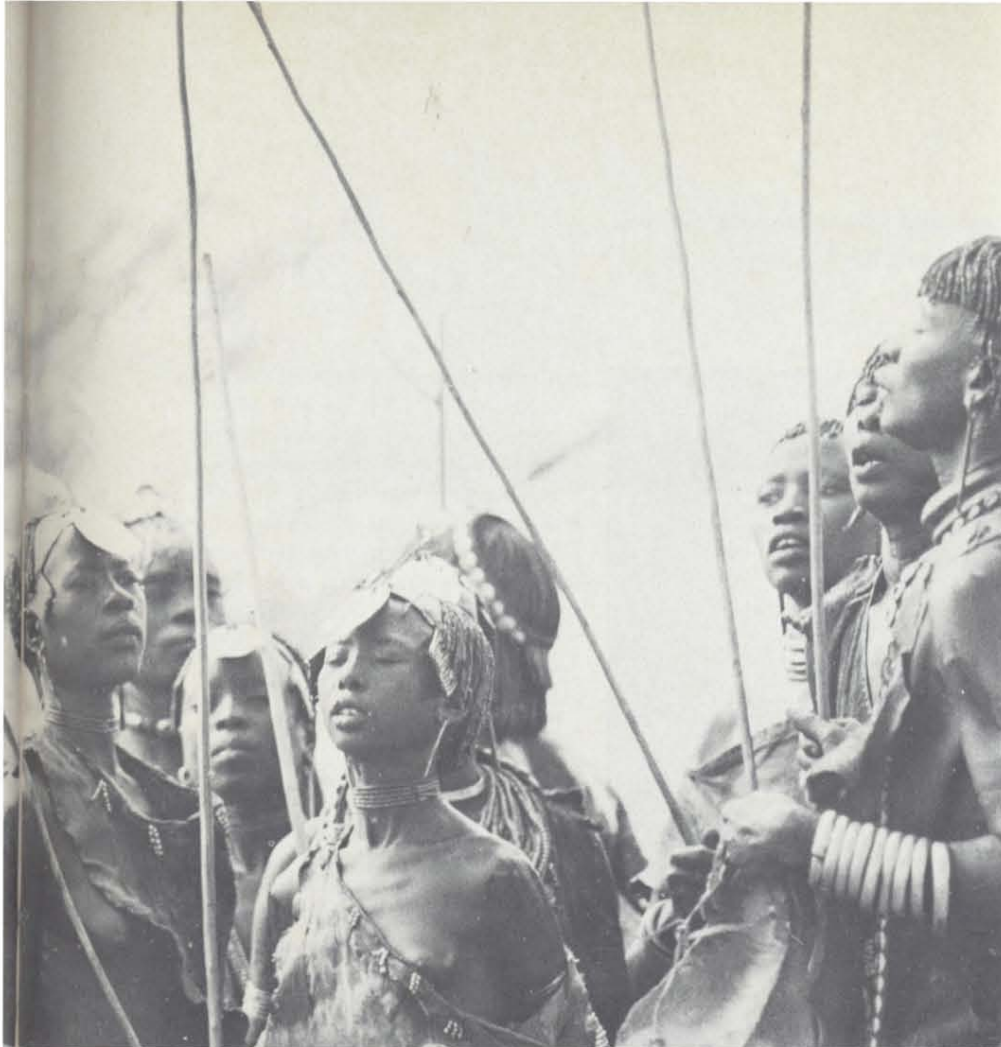
The images of *Rivers of Sand* suggest repeatedly that women's activity is oriented toward society's interior, and is characterized by production and reproduction. That of men is directed outward to the exterior—toward elimination, neutralization, or subjugation of other societies, be they human, animal, or of the spirits. Men's specialty is dialogue, a struggle, domination, accommodation with *otherness*: other men, and the natural and supernatural worlds.

In filming *Rivers of Sand*, Robert Gardner has neither been indifferent to the extraordinary loveliness of the landscape, nor to the handsomeness—no less extraordinarily alluring—of men and women. His camera scans with precision and feels with sympathy—the objectivity of an anthropologist, the fraternity of a poet. Without relying on verbal explanation, Gardner has made visible for us the contradictory movement that animates the Hamar society, and which, at the end, constitutes its unity.

This opposition and this unity are symbolized by the grindstone and by the feather of the ostrich. There is a moment when the opposition is dissolved. That moment, a ritual homology and a metaphor of sexual copulation, is the Dance. The frenetic intermingling of men and women expresses the abolition of their differences; a return to the original indetermination, and, so to speak, pre-social equality. It is the momentary triumph of the *One*.

The unity of *Rivers of Sand* is expressed through Omali Inda: a character unforgettable for her beauty, dramatic gifts, intelligence, and the *authority*, composed of authenticity and simplicity, of her words. More than a great actress or orator, she is a kind of philosopher





A Hamar blessing:

*May all be well.
May the Hamar land be well.
May it be.*

*May it be well in the North.
May it be well in the South.*

*May my father's place be well.
May those herding be well.
May they have eyes like crows.*

*May the enemy not rise up and disappear
like the dove.
May they die.*

May all be well.

*Like a pregnant woman,
Like good water,
Like new buttered hair,
May rains fall.
May the river fill.
May the sky's womb empty.*

*May lightning flash.
May the clouds descend.
May the mists descend.
May they find our father's land.
May they ask for the Hamar.*

*May they find these homes.
May the pools fill.*

*May the rain be like sheep's fat.
May it smell sweet.
May it rest inside cattle.
May it rest inside goats.
May it rest inside children.
May they sleep full of it.*

Come.



What lies ahead for the Hamar? The goods and values of more modern societies? Or a land becoming too dry to support life?



Above: Robert Gardner looks through his camera at the thorn jungle of Hamarland.

Below: Rain can give only momentary life to the rivers. Within hours, torrents dwindle and disappear in the sand.

Opposite page: A Hamar "bull dance."

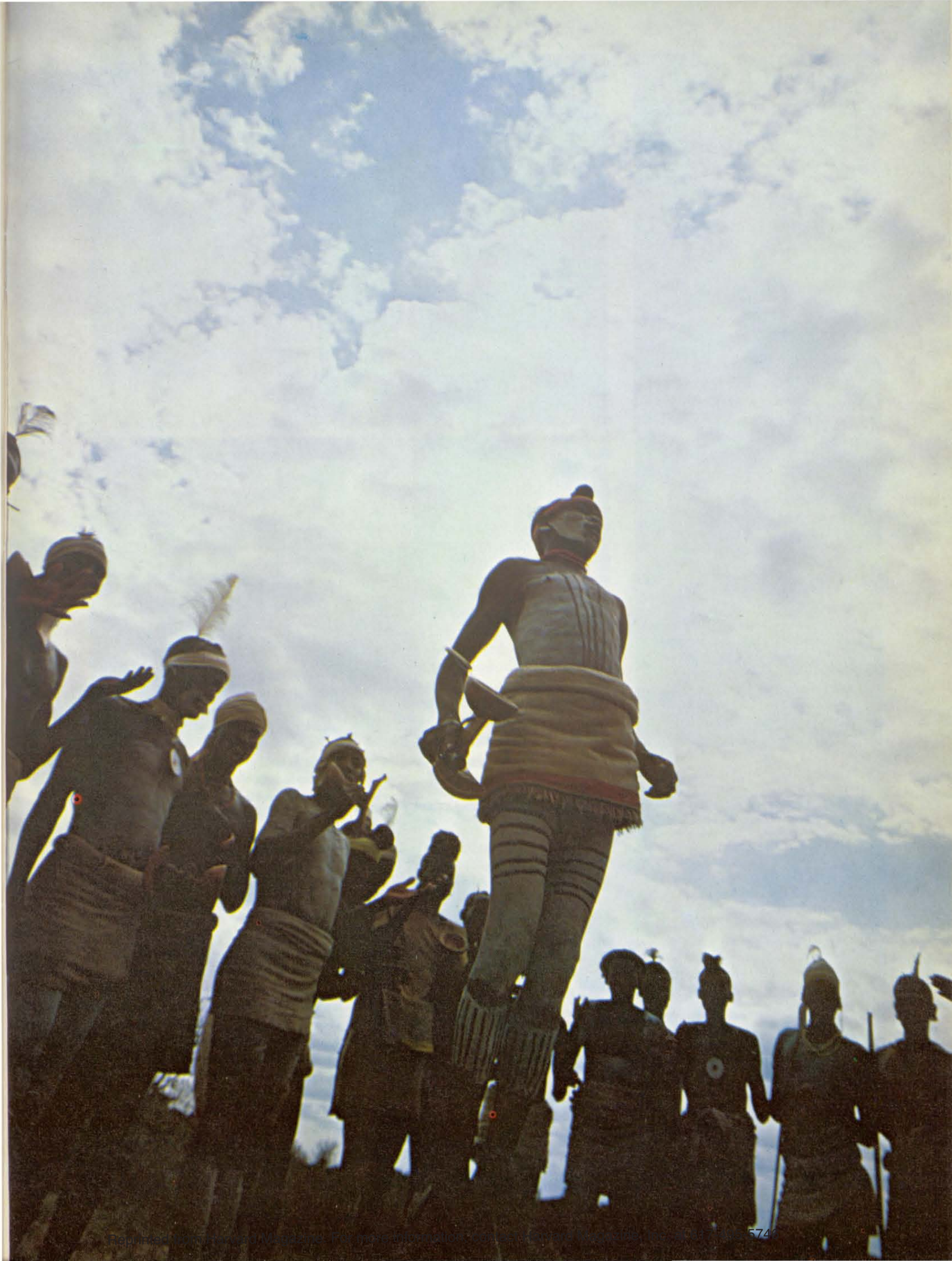
who exposes and defends the ideas of her people with clarity—as well as with an irony not at all frequent among us. Omali Inda fascinates us not by being an expression of the Hamar society, but because she is an exceptional human being. In her is embodied the contradictory duality that lives in all men and women—a duality that is designated by the words pleasure and duty, fiesta and work.

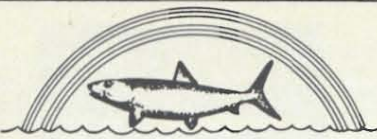
Postscript by Robert Gardner:

The Hamar cannot remain isolated. They will exchange their singularity of appearance and beliefs for the goods and values of traders, police, and other agents of modernity. What may not change is what already makes them most unexceptional—the painful difference between what they must be, and what they might want to be: as men and women, for themselves and for each other.

The future may hold yet another possibility. As if the life of the Hamar were neither poor nor painful enough, the likelihood now exists that the great drought sweeping across Sahelian Africa is bringing greater misery, and perhaps even extermination, to the Hamar. All that may remain of their land is *Rivers of Sand*. □







**RAINBOW BEND FISHING CLUB
GRASSY KEY**

Patterned after the old Florida Keys fishing clubs and recapturing their spirit, Rainbow Bend is for people of all ages who seek simplicity in natural surroundings.

Fish • Swim • Sail • Snorkel
Birdwatch or Beachcomb

Owned and operated by the Tucker family it is situated on the oceanside of Grassy Key, ten minutes from Marathon Airport.

phone (305) 289-1505
or P.O. Box 2447
write Marathon Shores, Florida 33052

Radcliffe Grant-in-Aid Society presents

Fiorello!

Nov. 7-9, 14-16, 21-23, 8 p.m.
Agassiz Theater, Radcliffe Yard
Tickets, \$2.50, \$3, from Holyoke
Center Box Office, Cambridge 02138.
Phone: (617) 495-2663



MAXWELL
Corrugated Box Company

25 Water Street
Charlestown, Massachusetts 02129
617-241-9450 617-242-0244

Creative Packaging Design and
Manufacture for Over Fifty Years

Massachusetts Envelope Co.
INNER BELT INDUSTRIAL CENTER
BOSTON (SOMERVILLE), MASS. 02143
(617) 623-8000

Envelope Suppliers to
Harvard University



**FUNERAL
SERVICE**

Personalized service in
keeping with your wishes.

All Price Ranges
All Religions
Any Distance

J. S. WATERMAN & SONS
Greater Boston Since 1832

with a Latin inscription: *Ecce quam bonum quamque jucundum habitare fratres in unum*. This is the first verse of Psalm 132 in the Vulgate—which, however, reads *et quam* for *quamque*—and of Psalm 133 in the King James version: “Behold how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity.” The shields and the inscription suggest that the goblet was made for some Harvard club dedicated to sport and to study, but a club with these shields and motto has not yet been traced. Information would be most welcome.

As your readers may recall from previous letters, the Collection of Harvard China was begun three years ago, under the auspices of the University Archives, to preserve for the future examples of the china made between 1927 and 1951, initially at the initiative of President Lowell, by Wedgwood for sale through the Harvard Alumni Association. The collection has come to also include examples of china with scenes of Harvard made by Staffordshire firms (curiously, not including Wedgwood) in the early nineteenth century, usually in sets illustrating notable American scenes. It also contains examples of china made for the Houses and the Business School. Since no funds are available for purchases, the collection has been created entirely through the generosity of many donors. Similar generosity has provided seven cases in the Library of the Harvard Faculty Club for the display of a considerable portion of the collection.

The Archives will welcome information about Harvard china, and especially the gift of actual pieces of any date or manufacture that have a Harvard connection and are needed to complete the collection.

In particular, as I said in a letter published by you in July 1973, we are eager to find the original drawings by Professor Kenneth Conant for the original dinner service of 1927, and those by Mr. Henry Russell Wood for the dessert plates of 1932. These were framed and hung respectively in the offices of Mr. Aldrich Durant, then business manager, and of President Lowell. They have not been traced.

We would also welcome any examples of the nineteenth-century Staffordshire with views of Harvard. And the collection lacks: complete sets of the blue-and-red dinner plates of 1951, with the Bicentenary views of Harvard; the 1941 platter in blue, with Professor Conant's view of the river and Houses; the Tercentenary Punch Bowl (1936) in sepia, as given to the members of the Alumni Committee

then responsible for the china; possibly four ashtrays, which Wedgwood says were made, but of which no examples have as yet been forthcoming; sets of any of the plates in bone china with gold edges; any china made for the dining halls of the Houses, graduate schools, or Radcliffe.

If persons willing to contribute china would write to me in Widener Library H, Cambridge, Mass., 02138, I will be glad to suggest arrangements for delivery to the Archives.

MASON HAMMOND

Cambridge

Admissions policy

To the Editor:

I wanted to comment on Alice Hutter's letter in the July-August issue (page 4) in which she writes about Harvard's admissions policy, and concludes by expressing the hope that the day will come “when outstanding applicants from every part of the rich fabric of our society are sought for the freshman class at Harvard, not in spite of their non-white, non-male, non-affluent status, but because of their talents and achievements.”

I would only say that, truthfully, if Harvard admissions were made today solely and purely on the grounds that she suggests, I think the make-up of the class would probably be just about what it was in 1965. So I think perhaps she should be quiet for a while.

CLARK GESNER

Brooklyn, N.Y.

Picture credits

Page 11, Sarah Landry; 15, 18, 31, Rick Stafford; 16, Von Behr; 21 (bottom), courtesy Henry H. Richardson III; 22 (top), Harvard Archives; 22 (bottom), 24, 27, courtesy Shepley, Bulfinch, Richardson and Abbott; 23, courtesy Boston Athenaeum; 29, Paul Birnbaum; 30, 32, Dale Russakoff; 41, Dick Raphael; 42, 49 (left, top right), 53, Clark Worswick; 43, Stewart Gardner; 44-51, the black-and-white pictures are by Michael Mathers and Worswick; 46 (top and right), 47 (bottom left), 49 (bottom right), 52, Mathers; 47 (top left), Robert Gardner; 55-58, Olive R. Pierce; 59 (top), Christopher S. Johnson; 59 (bottom), Bruce Saunders; 66, Bill Ray; 67 (top), courtesy Museo Gioivo, Como; 67 (second from top), courtesy Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna; 67 (third from top), courtesy National Portrait Gallery, London; 67 (bottom), courtesy Maritiem Museum ‘Prins Hendrik,’ Rotterdam.

HARVARD Magazine

October 1974
Volume 77, Number 2

Editor:

John T. Bethell '54

Managing editor:

Christopher Reed

News editor:

Barbara Breasted '63

Assistant editors:

Judith Parker

Hilary Horton

David Lagomarsino '69

Josh Rubins '70, J.D. '74

Art director:

Daniel J. McCarron

Business manager:

Corinna P. Gauld

Reader-services manager:

Jane Wilson

Contributing editors:

Anne Fadiman '74

Christopher S. Johnson '64

Jane Watkins '51

Advisory Committee:

William Bentinck-Smith '37

Max Hall, Nieman '50

James C. Thomson Jr., Ph.D. '61

Alden Whitman '34

Directors of the Harvard Bulletin, Inc.:

Philip M. Cronin '53,

President and Publisher.

James F. Dwinell III '62,

Treasurer.

Philip S. Weld '36

Henry Lyman '37

Nora C. Sayre '54

William O. Taylor '54

Robert H. Weiss '54

Charles T. Barr '60

Harvard Magazine: Formerly *Harvard Bulletin*, founded in 1898 as an independent publication. Published monthly. SUBSCRIPTIONS: All subscription orders, as well as correspondence regarding service and changes of address, should be sent directly to Harvard Magazine, Subscription Service Department, P.O. Box 301, Uxbridge, Mass. 01569. Rates, \$12 a year in U.S. and possessions, \$13 foreign. Single copies: \$1. Second-class postage paid at Boston, Mass. OFFICES: Wadsworth House, 1341 Massachusetts Ave., Cambridge, Mass. 02138 (617-547-5558). ADVERTISING: Space may be purchased outright or through the Ivy Group, the Mortimer Berkowitz Co., 850 Third Ave., New York City 10022 (212-759-9855). POSTMASTER: Send form 3579 to P.O. Box 301, Uxbridge, Mass. 01569. PRINTER: Rapid Service Press, 375 Broadway, Boston, Mass. © 1974 by the Harvard Bulletin, Inc.

Women in science: An analysis of a social problem 14

How are we to explain the extraordinarily meager representation of women in science, particularly in upper echelons? What should we do about it? By Evelyn Fox Keller.

The making of a "Richardson building" 20

H. H. Richardson was one of America's leading nineteenth-century architects. Now, a fascinating exhibition of Richardson's drawings lets viewers follow the master through the design process, step by step. By James F. O'Gorman.

Supernac 30

What's a nice guy like Patrick J. McNally, one of pro football's likeliest draft choices, doing at a place like Harvard? Earning straight A's and hoping for a Rhodes Scholarship. By Scott Kaufer.

Rivers of Sand 43

The Hamar people of southwestern Ethiopia are movingly pictured in a new film by Robert Gardner. Critical notes by Octavio Paz, poet and scholar.

Needed: A new way to train public servants 54

Alan Otten, Washington reporter for The Wall Street Journal, talks with Harvard president Derek C. Bok and Don K. Price, dean of the School of Government, about an innovative, multi-disciplinary program of graduate study.

Insects from the Eocene 59

Tiny flies and spiders, embedded in the first large amber deposit found in this country, are giving scientists new insights into life on the American mid-continent more than 60 million years ago.

Master mariners, viewed by a master historian 66

The Southern Voyages, completing Samuel Eliot Morison's monumental study of the European discovery of America, is reviewed by Professor C. R. Boxer.

Are there any questions? 72

Books 66

Classified advertising 70

The College Pump 64

Events 7

Explorations 11

John Harvard's Journal 61

Letters 4

Picture credits 6

Puzzles 71

Soundings 9

Opposite: At the west front of University Hall, Daniel Chester French's bronze statue of John Harvard (1885) has been greeting a new crop of sons and daughters. Photograph by Christopher S. Johnson.

On the cover: Paul Birnbaum's photograph shows the interior of Trinity Church, Boston, an important building by the great nineteenth-century architect H. H. Richardson. The man and his work are illuminated in "The making of a Richardson building," which begins on page 20 of this issue.

In coming issues: The glass menagerie, forerunner of Harvard's celebrated glass flowers... Shakespeare's true identity... Brainwashing... Northwest Indians... Conversation: Leon Kirchner... Secrets of Easter Island... Latin America and revolution.

HARVARD

Magazine

October 1974
One Dollar

The making of a "Richardson building"
page 20