

by cooperation between England and its dependencies. Alert as a political geographer and social conservative to the virtues of local autonomy, he outspokenly favored partial devolution for the Empire and even for the British Isles themselves. In 1919, he proposed in Parliament a plan for subdividing England into three parts—London, agricultural England, and the industrial North—giving legislative powers to each, as well as to Scotland, Wales, and the two parts of Ireland. "Would my hon. Friend not go a little further and re-establish the Kingdom of Kent?" a critic mockingly inquired. Growing interest in administrative decentralization in Great Britain today makes Mackinder's scheme seem less fanciful.

Mackinder's fundamental concern, stated most fully in *Democratic Ideals and Reality* (1919), was to maintain the vitality of the British people. A country's manpower ("capital fixed in humanity") was its greatest asset. Nothing threatened Britain's manpower more, Mackinder foresaw, than massive unemployment, to which Britain's free-trading, specialized economy made her especially vulnerable. Though in theory profitable for any society, laissez-faire, he believed, would eventually impoverish imperial England, not by reducing its "wealth" but by undercutting its technical versatility and its adaptiveness. A united, educated citizenry, confident of its varied skills, was far more important than cheap imports. Therefore, although he had begun his career as a champion of free-trade imperialism, he quickly became a leader in the movement for tariff reform (i.e., protectionism). The trend of present-day liberal-internationalist thought interestingly parallels Mackinder's evolution.

The century's most famous geographer stands out as the embodiment of what he himself liked to call "outlook"—taking the long view. "I can see him now," recalled a former student, Sir Horace Wilson, "explaining the economic (and politico-economic) significance of the Urals, the Alps, or the Andes as if he were atop one of them—or was indeed a part of them."

—Alan K. Henrikson, '78

BEHIND THE VEIL IN ARABIA:

Women in Oman
by Unni Wikan
Johns Hopkins, 1982
314 pp. \$23.50

Unni Wikan is a young Norwegian anthropologist whose first book was an extraordinary work called *Life Among the Poor in Cairo* (1980). In it, she described the family lives of a small group of people in one of the slums of the sprawling Egyptian capital, painting a bleak picture of continual quarreling and malice, gossip and violence, suspicion, emotional crudity, and hypocrisy, all in a crowded and filthy environment.

Wikan's latest study took her to Sohar, a town that could hardly be more different from Cairo. Located on the coast of Oman, near the mouth of the Persian Gulf, it has a population of only about 15,000. Its menfolk live mainly by migrant labor, the cultivation of date palms, and fishing. In sharp contrast to Cairo, the town is relatively homogeneous in terms of

class, but ethnically very mixed. Only a little over half the people are Arabs, the rest mostly Iranians and Baluchis.

Wikan studied the Arabs, who are everything that the Cairene poor are not: blessed with beautiful manners, dignified, serene, and poised. They also mind their own business. If a wife is unfaithful, even if she prostitutes herself, that is a matter between her and her husband. Her neighbors, women of impeccable reputation, will treat her in the same polite and friendly way that they treat anyone else, whether visiting her in her home or receiving her in theirs. Even the transvestite male prostitutes have an accepted place. The Sohar women are also in the highest degree reserved and inexpressive. Under quite ordinary circumstances, a group of them may sit together for eight hours and exchange no more than a few dozen sentences.

The sexes are segregated in Sohar to an extent unusual even in the Islamic world. Women move in a tiny social circle consisting almost exclusively of the women and children of a few adjacent houses. Shopping is done by men, for a woman would be ashamed to go to the market. Fertile ground, one might think, for a women's liberation movement—or at least for resentment. Not at all, says Wikan: The women, far from objecting to these restrictions, welcome them as a sign that they are honored and protected by their men.

Wikan, a fine ethnographer, has an eye for everything that is distinctive about the culture and by the careful use of small details builds up a wholly convincing picture. Above all, there is a sustained attempt to penetrate the inner lives of these strangely serene people, an attempt that may lead other readers, as it did me, to ponder what individual sacrifices, intellectual and emotional, might be required to maintain a social facade of such unruffled calm.

—Frank H. Stewart

FRANZ LISZT: Vol. 1:
The Virtuoso Years,
1811–1847
by Alan Walker
Knopf, 1983
481pp. \$25.

“Franz Liszt was a delightful fellow.” So began the first biographical essay I ever read on Hungary's greatest composer. After 30 years of reading in the Liszt bibliography (which currently embraces over 10,000 items), I see no reason to challenge that verdict.

The man was improbably handsome, charming, decent, and unselfish—at least during the years covered by Walker in this new, definitive study. Later on, during his years in Weimar and through his *vie trifurquée* (Liszt's own phrase for his restless old-age wanderings in Italy, Hungary, and Germany), there would be outbreaks of melancholia and misanthropy, expressed in the savage, atonal music that his countryman Béla Bartók found so fascinating. But these black depressions were like spots on the sun: Liszt was too radiant a personality to indulge them for