

vor, Mozart became increasingly solitary and, judging by letters to his wife, somewhat mad. Yet it was during these last years that he produced some of his more triumphant works, including *A Little Night Music* and *Don Giovanni*. Immediately upon Mozart's death, Viennese society, once tired of him, began hailing their "little genius." Then the myth-making began.

A BARTHES READER
edited and with an introduction by Susan Sontag
Hill & Wang, 1982
495 pp. \$20

Literary critic, semiotician, sociologist—these were but a few of the labels affixed to the name of one of France's leading intellectuals, Roland Barthes. Though a quiet and unassuming figure (unlike Sartre or Camus), he created a stir in France with his controversial book, *Writing Degree Zero* (1953). In it, he argued that literature should not serve political or utilitarian ends; the "utopia of language" was its own ample justification. Barthes seldom failed to be provocative, whether analyzing the allure of Greta Garbo's face, the language of fashion, or the treatment of death in Tacitus's *Annals*. In his more self-reflective essays, he lived up to the standards of Montaigne, discovering universal truths in personal quirks. His essay on Voltaire, "The Last Happy Writer," exposed the shallowness of that much-overrated philosophe: "He ceaselessly dissociated intelligence from intellectuality, asserting that the world is an order if we do not try too much to order it. . . . This conduct of mind has had a great career subsequently: We call it anti-intellectualism." Before his death in 1980, Barthes's lectures had become popular events. These 30 selections help explain why.

Science & Technology

THE TANGLED WING:
Biological Constraints
on the Human Spirit
by Melvin Konner
Holt, 1982
543 pp. \$19.95.

Somewhere between *Aegyptopithecus*, a small apelike monkey who lived some 30 million years ago and who "makes as good an Adam as any," and the Cro-Magnon people, who 25,000 years ago drew "masterpieces of realism" on cave walls, a distinctly human

brain evolved. To probe the biological foundations of behavior and emotions in our "brain-burdened species," Konner considers major scientific advances in anatomy, psychiatry, genetics, and his own field, behavioral anthropology. One aim of this comprehensive overview is to put a "human face" on the findings of pioneers in such controversial fields as neurobiology and behavioral genetics. Citing such works as G. Raisman and P. M. Field's 1973 demonstration of the structural differences between male and female brains, Konner argues that a frank acknowledgment of the physical bases of gender differences need not hinder women's progress toward equal rights. High testosterone levels in criminals and the role of heredity in schizophrenia are among other biological factors that should be considered by those who ordinarily look only at social and cultural determinants of behavior. Recognizing that behavioral biology has been speciously employed to support racial and sexual prejudices, the Harvard scientist likens his field to "a powerful, dangerous physic, potentially healing if used properly, poisonous if not."

**JOHN VON NEUMANN
AND NORBERT WIENER:
From Mathematics to the
Technologies of Life and
Death**

by Steve J. Heims
MIT, 1982
547 pp. \$10.95.

Child prodigies and personal friends, Hungarian-born John von Neumann and American Norbert Wiener were leading figures in 20th-century mathematics. Heims has taken their radically different careers as the substance of this meditation on the morality of science. Wiener (1894-1964), a Harvard graduate at 18 and the founder of cybernetics, made the search for patterns of statistical probability the focus of his work. His view of man as having incomplete information about the world undergirds "Wiener's Measure," an approach to making qualified predictions where experimental proof is not available. By contrast, von Neumann (1903-57) devoted his energies to constructing comprehensive axiomatic systems, two applications of which were computer and game theory (the latter adopted by economists and